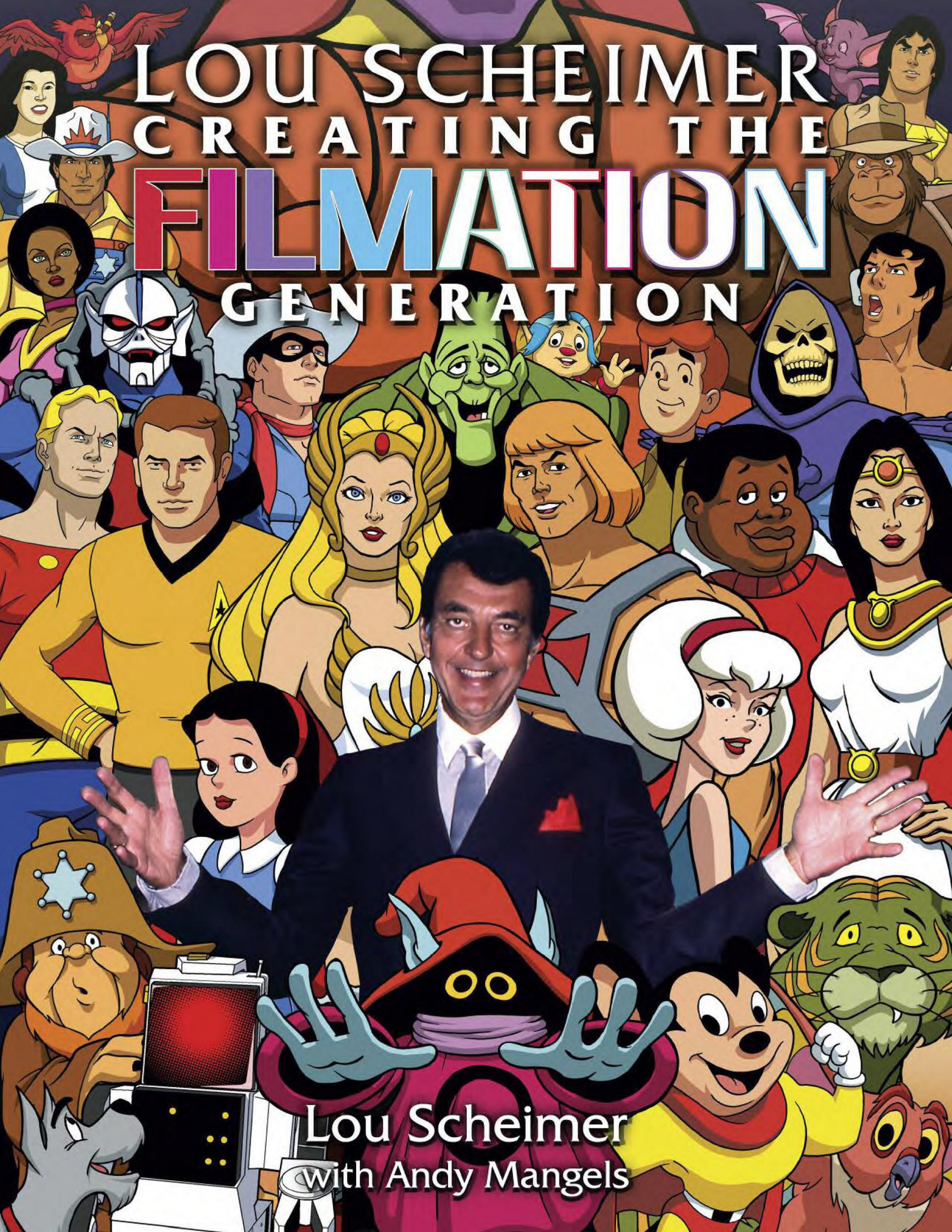
LOU SCHEIMER
CREATING THE FILMATION GENERATION



Lou Scheimer
with Andy Mangels

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LOU SCHEIMER: CREATING THE FILMATION GENERATION

FILMATION

by Lou Scheimer with Andy Mangels

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LOU SCHEIMER: CREATING THE FILMATION GENERATION

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DEDICATIONS

To my loving wife, Jay Scheimer, who was always there for me.
Lou Scheimer

To Lou Scheimer, the man whose entertainment helped shape a generation. Thanks for the adventures and morals, and for allowing me to help chronicle the amazing work of Filmation.
Andy Mangels

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Above:
Caricature by animator Eddie Friedman, 1980s

Opposite:
(l to r) The three associates of Filmation: Norm Prescott, Hal Sutherland, and Lou Scheimer in the 1960s and 1980s

PREFACE...

Of all the stories in Filmation history, there's one story that defined what we would do to survive and how we would build Filmation Associates, the home of animation for over 25 years....

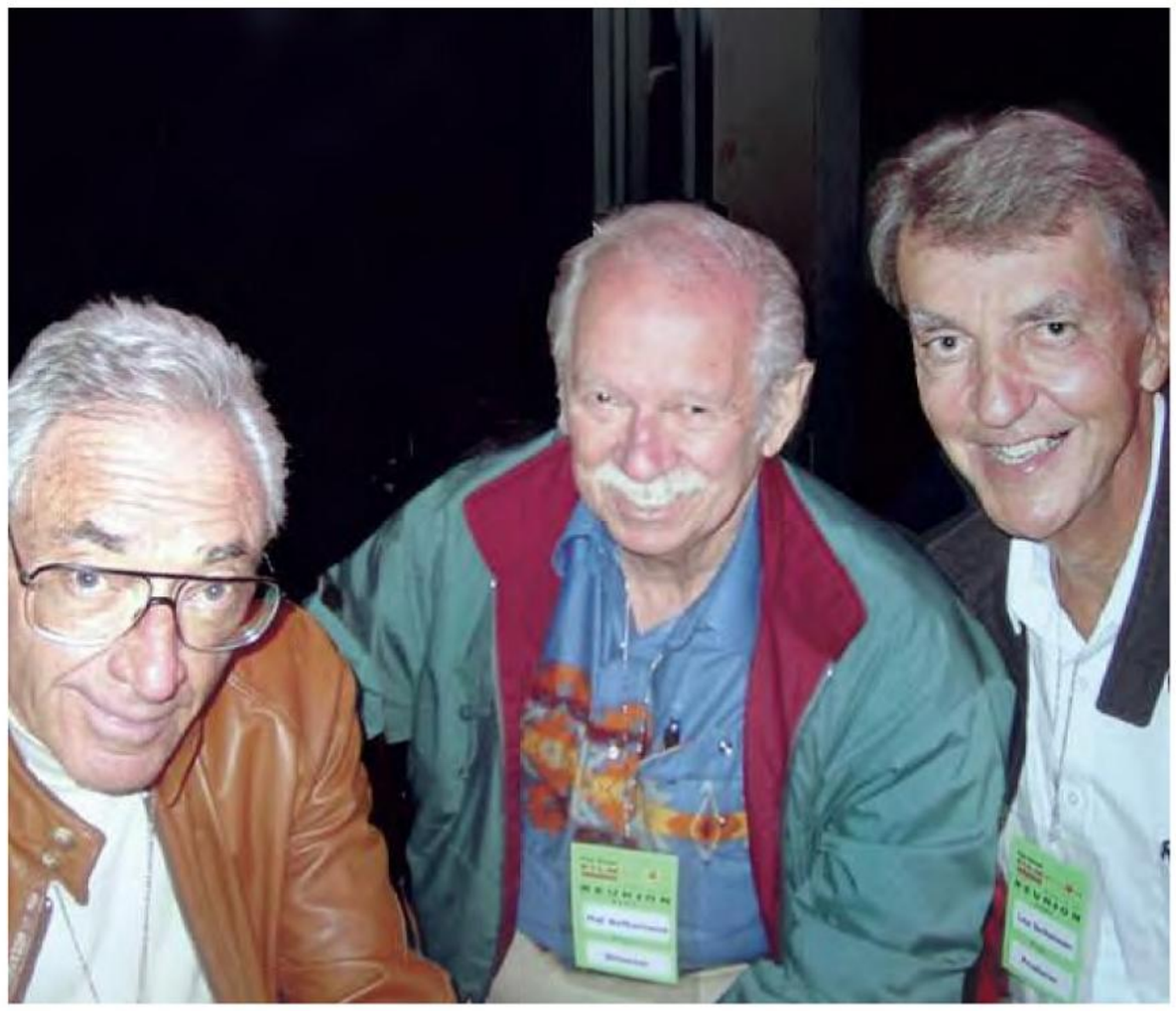
It was 1965, and after only a few years in business it looked like Filmation Associates was going to have to close its doors. The studio was now down to two employees—myself and Hal Sutherland—and a shut-down was imminent. Norm Prescott was doing his best to try to raise money from someone, somewhere, somehow. We did have one other "person" in the office, but we never paid her and she didn't say much.

At the front of our office was a desk, and behind it we had a secretary. She wore glasses and a hand-me-down dress from my wife, Jay, and sometimes when we would have visitors they would talk to her for a moment or two before they realized that she was a mannequin!

We had 24 empty desks and some equipment gathering dust. We didn't have a Moviola to sell, or it would have probably been gone already. One day the phone rang, and Hal answered it. A moment or so later his eyes got wide, and he said, "Louie, maybe you'd better talk to them!" Knowing we didn't have any money to pay bill collectors, I said, "Well, what is it? Did you tell...."

He had a peculiar look on his face; "He says his name is Superman Weisinger calling from DC. He's looking for Prescott!" I said, "Let me talk to him. Is it long distance?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Is it paid for?" He said, "Yeah." So I got on the phone and said, "Hello, Mr. Superman, are you calling from a phone booth?" I figured it was a prank call.

The voice on the other end said, "Mort Weisinger here. I'm the story editor on Superman, and I'd like to talk to Norm Prescott." I explained to him that Prescott was in a hotel on Sunset Boulevard and was going to leave for New York the next day, and told him to call him shortly.



I hung up and quickly called Norm and said, "There's some guy going to call you, and his name is Mort Weisinger; he's got something to do with Superman, but I don't know what in the hell is going on. It may be some kind of work for us. I won't close up the company until I hear from you."

Days later Norm called and said they were asking us to do a new Superman series. Then he dropped the bomb. He said National wanted to send a guy named Whitney Ellsworth to come see the studio. I said, "What studio? There's me, there's Hal, there's 24 desks!" So, I thought fast and came up with a story....

You'll learn how that particular story turned out in a future chapter, but before I get to Filmation I want to tell you a bit about how I got there.

I'd also like to warn you that every now and then I may use some language that might be a bit saltier than you'd ever hear on a Filmation show, or even tell a story that would never make it past the Standards & Practices division of any network at the time. But I'll try to keep such moments to a minimum. After all, one of the things I hear most from the people that have been dubbed "the Filmation Generation" is how much they learned in their "growing up years" from our music, our heroes, our stories, and, most importantly, our morals.

Along the way I'll also try to tell you something about the art and culture of animation for television and the ways in which animation changed from its early days up to the dawn of the multiverse of channels available today. And I'll try to make it as factual and fun as possible, with names and dates and particulars, aided ably by my mustachioed co-writer on this project, Andy Mangels. You see, I'm 80-something as you read this, and while I can still do the voice of Bat-Mite or Orko or spin a great yarn about the incredible people that worked at Filmation, sometimes the details are elusive.

So, whether you're a fan from the old days or became an enthusiast with the DVD releases of our library, I welcome all of you who are part of the Filmation Generation. These are my stories, and I suspect they'll lead into your stories as well.

CHAPTER ONE

1928–1946

WHEREIN MY FATHER PUNCHED OUT ADOLF HITLER YEARS BEFORE CAPTAIN AMERICA DID

As many have said before me, it's best to begin at the beginning.

I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on October 19, 1928, at the Passavant Hospital. I don't remember much about it other than I was coming through a tunnel. I was 13-and-a-half pounds, and my mother was very short. I was her first child. After that birth, needless to say, I was also her last child. I mean, there was nothing left of my mother's uterus!

My Hebrew name is Yisroel Lieb after my uncle on my mother's side. What you take out of that is the 'L' sound in Lieb. The closest in English is something like Lou or Lonnie. My birth name, however, was Louis Scheimer, though it is amusing to note that on the birth certificate for me filed on October 24, 1928, I'm just listed as "_____ Scheimer" as my parents had apparently not settled on the name yet. Given that they misspelled my mother's maiden name on the same form, though, maybe they were just having a bad day.

My mother, Lena Kessler, was originally from Russia, where she was born sometime in July 1895 in Annapol, Russia, in an area which was sort of an amorphous section somewhere betwixt Poland and Russia. Her father left Russia and came to the United States before the beginning of World War I because he didn't want to get stuck in the Russian army. By the time he got out of there, though, the war had started. My mother, her sister, brother Lieb, and her mother were still in Russia. They didn't have a *grosh* to their name (that's about a penny in Russian form).

In Russia my mother's family somehow got a letter from the United States,

Opposite:
Lou in 1931

Above:
Lou as a baby, 1928

where her father had arranged for them to get a boat in Poland someplace. My mother had to go to Warsaw to communicate with her father through a society called the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) that had headquarters or an office in Warsaw. It was the only way you could communicate to your Jewish relatives outside of Eastern Europe. She was 14 years old and she walked from her little, tiny village of Annapol—which was a mostly Jewish town or shtetl that was later destroyed in World War II—to Warsaw, which was hundreds of miles away. She was a tiny little thing, and she was the oldest daughter there, as her older sister, Eva, was already in the United States with my grandfather.

Outside of Kiev many of the settlements were Jewish. The Jews then were wanderers. Half of the Jews that you think are from Russia are probably from southern Poland, and half of the Jews from northern Poland. They all sound alike with Yiddish as a common language. Yiddish is really medieval German, and as they moved from country to country they'd add new words to it that they brought in from that country. And these were Ashkenazi Jews from the Germanic areas, not the Sephardic Jews who came from the eastern part of the Mediterranean.

By the time my mother returned with the tickets from Warsaw, her brother, Lieb, had fallen out of a tree and died, so it was just my mother, Lena; her sister, Sora; and their mother, Ester, that had to escape. The family had friends who were not Jewish, and these friends put them in a hay cart and piled hay all over them. As they were travelling, they were stopped by Russian soldiers, who forced bayonets into the hay to see if anyone was hiding there. Luckily, they escaped being bayoneted. They were driven in this wagon part of the way, and then they walked across Europe, through Poland and then to Bremen, a seaport in Germany. From there they sailed to Antwerp, a seaport in Belgium, and then to the United States. The rest of my mother's family never got out of Russia. The little town of Annapol was soon after decimated.

The official records when my mother immigrated listed her hometown as Bratzlaw, also known as Bratzlav, and noted that she was 20, but they also spelled her name as Lea and Lena and put her height as 5' 5" and 5' 7" when she probably wasn't even five feet tall, so I suspect record-keeping might have been a bit spotty. The family departed from Antwerp Belgium on the ship Lapland, on March 23, 1922, and arrived at Ellis Island on April 2, 1922. They initially stayed in New York, but I'm getting ahead of the story.

My father, Salomon Gedeljech Gundersheimer, was German and born on October 3, 1894, in Mittlesinn, Lower Franconia, at the northern tip of the state of Bavaria in Germany. Unlike my mother's family, his family was fairly well-to-do. They had vineyards, and they made wine in Würzburg, another city in Lower Franconia. I never saw my paternal grandfather, Moses Abraham, as most of their family didn't get out of Germany. Salamon had one brother, Manasse, and three sisters, Hedwig (Helene), Mina, and Rosa. His mother, Regina, died in 1904 shortly after his tenth birthday.

The Gundersheimers were Social Democrats, which is sort of a liberal party. My father joined the German army when he was a teenager and served in munitions, cavalry, and artillery. He was 18 years old during World War I when he was shot seven or eight times and gassed once. One of the times he was shot, the bullet passed through his leg just behind the knee, through the horse, out through the other knee, and then the horse fell on him. He also lost one of his kidneys to war wounds. He was eventually awarded the Iron Cross First Class, their version of a Medal of Honor, I believe, because he saved his battalion one night. I still have that medal in my home.

After the war my father went back to Würzburg, and he became sort of active politically. The rise of anti-semitism started in Germany, and my father became active in this whole argument. In the early 1920s, there was a young Austrian man named Adolf Hitler, who was running around Germany raising all sorts of hell about the Jews. He'd give speeches about how the Jews were taking the country over, and the Jews had all the money, and the Jewish women had all these furs. This was well before the Beer Hall Putsch in late 1923, so I would guess it was around 1921 or 1922.

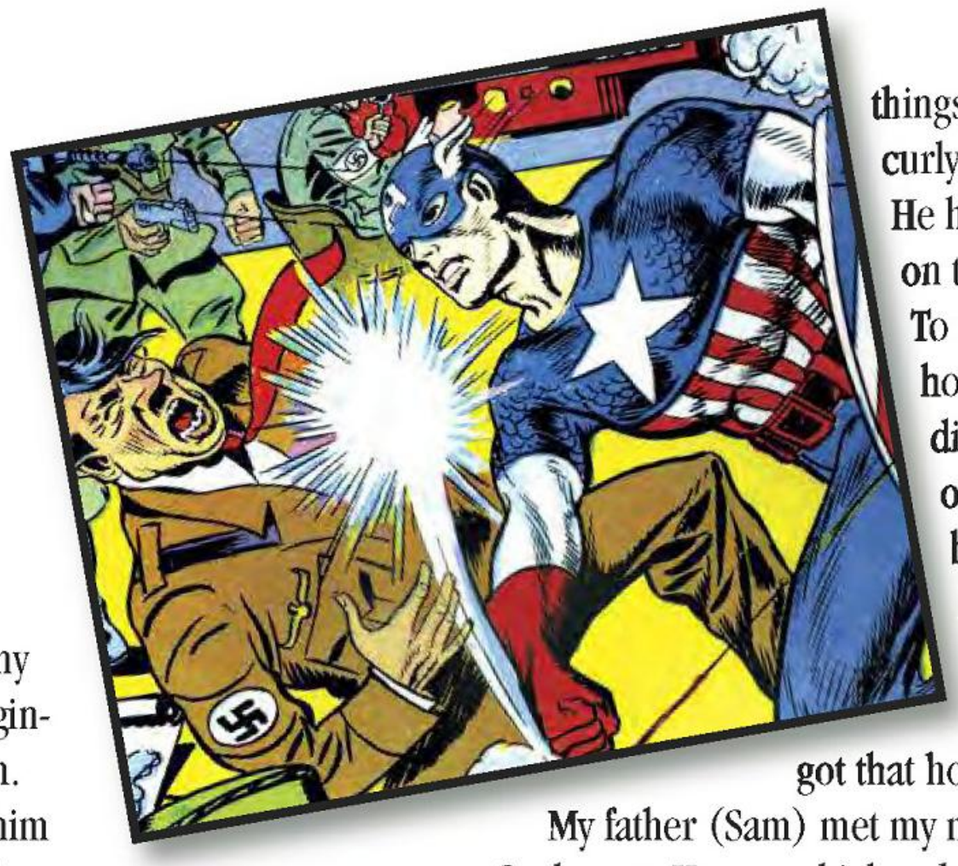
Hitler came to speak at a big meeting hall in Würzburg. He was haranguing the populace about the evils that the Jews were perpetrating on Germany and yelling and screaming about how Jewish people had all the money and the poor real Germans had nothing. My father and another group of young men had stationed themselves around the hall and started creating a ruckus. My father jumped up on the stage and just smacked him one, knocking him out.

My dad was a big guy, almost six feet tall, with very broad shoulders, and he probably weighed about 220 lbs. He had huge hands. You didn't screw around with him. The average German's height was around 5' 7" to 5' 8" at the time, and Dad was 5' 11" and change. After he died I once tried on one of his specially-made shirts; I was taller than him, but the seams for his shoulders came down to my elbows. That's how big he was.

After the incident with Hitler, Salomon was coming home and a bunch of young Nazi bastards attacked him. He fought them off, but they were all arrested. The judge questioned them all and found out that most of the guys who had jumped my dad were malingerers who had not really served in the Army. He checked my father's Army record and saw that he was an Order of the Iron Cross First Class, and he just threw the whole thing out and released him because he was a war hero.

The funny thing in relating this story is that my dad never really talked to me much about that. It wasn't something he wanted to brag about: punching out Adolf Hitler. The reason I even knew much

about it was that years later, when my family owned a small store in Pittsburgh, a man named Mr. Siegler, who had gotten out of the concentration camps, used to come down to the store with his wife to talk about the old days with my dad in German. I heard them talking about the Hitler thing, and, although it seemed unbelievable, I knew it was true. My dad was just so matter-of-fact about it.



After that my father had to leave Germany because the Gestapo—or what was the beginning of the Gestapo—were looking for him. And up until World War II, his family told him they were still looking for him. He's lucky he got out. His younger brother, Manasse, had already come to the United States in 1914, where he now lived as "Max (Maximilian) Scheimer" in Dormont, Pennsylvania. Max had actually fought in World War I in the American Army, but neither brother knew they were both in their respective armies at that time!

Anyhow, Salomon left Germany from Hamburg on November 17, 1923, on the ship *Resolute*. He arrived in New York on November 27, 1923, where he listed his occupation as "shoemaker" on the ship's manifest and had $25 to his name.

As for the rest of the Gundersheimer family, he also had a nephew named Maxi Stern, the son of one of my father's sisters, who came to America about the same time as him. Some of the rest of the family got out of Germany in 1938 just before they would not have been able to make it out at all. Around then I suddenly had a lot of new relatives that I never knew I had. There was Uncle Seeshman, Uncle Salmial, Uncle Tevyish, and they all had kids. All of a sudden there were like twelve of them or something around. The rest of my aunts and uncles and cousins I assumed never got out of Germany alive because I never heard of them after that time.

My father, now having taken the name "Sam Scheimer," came to Pittsburgh to live near his brother, even though they had never really gotten along too well. Things were tough for Sam because he did not have a vocation, and I don't think he was trained to be anything specific. Max had a large grocery store in Dormont, a borough of Pittsburgh. My father got a job in a slaughterhouse called the Oswald Hess Company, and for quite a while he worked there. While there he lost the use of his thumbs due to cuts; he got blood poisoning, and they had to remove bones from his thumbs, but due to his heart they had to do it without anesthetic while he was awake!

My mother's father, Jankel Schweitzer, which means "Jacob the Black Man," had also ended up in Pittsburgh and had brought his family there. He was an interesting guy. He was tall, bony, tough, muscular, like everything inside him was made of strings and things, and he had a very dark complexion, curly dark hair, and a handlebar moustache. He hated his wife. Years later he used to spit on the ground every time he walked by her. To make a living, he had a little cart and a horse—he called it a *ferd*, which was Yiddish for horse—and he sold vegetables off of it as he went around from neighborhood to neighborhood. Even when he couldn't really work anymore, he kept the horse in a little garage and fed it for years. He said, "As long as I've got that horse, I can make a living."

My father (Sam) met my mother (Lena) at the Irene Kaufmann Settlement House, which today would be kind of like a community center. These settlement houses were in various cities, and they helped with everything from child-care to schooling to employment. Young people would gather to meet other young people, and that's how they met. I don't think my mother even went to school in Russia, and she was basically considered illiterate, since she spoke no English. My father spoke a little English probably. She spoke Yiddish, so they could communicate with one another, and obviously it worked out. They must have been an odd couple, though, because my father was huge and my mother was tiny.

They got married on June 20, 1926, in Pittsburgh, but they didn't talk about it much. A lot of what I know about their past came from stories their relatives would tell when I was growing up. My mother and father did have another child who would have been my older sister, but she died shortly after birth. And about the time I came along in October, 1928, my father lost his job. It was just before the Great Depression. For a while my family lived in a house owned by Mr. and Mrs. Vinshinsky, who had a great little white dog with black spots. Then, we moved into a room upstairs at my maternal Aunt Sarah's house, where we lived until I was about four. Sarah's husband, my Uncle Lou, used to call me "Bum," but I called him "Uncle Bum" because that's what my father called him.

The area we lived was known as the Hill District, which was kind of a sociological study. It became predominantly Irish in the 1800s, and then the Irish sold to the Jews and moved further out. So, the Jews moved down to the Hill, and they all had little stores down there. Everybody on the Hill at that time spoke Yiddish. So, I grew up to the age of four speaking Yiddish. I didn't know there was another language.

Opposite:
Lou's Father, Sam

Above:
Captain America Comics #1, art by Jack Kirby, 1941

Left:
Young Lou, 1933

For a short while, we lived in a part of Pittsburgh called Oakland, which was within smelling distance of the mills. Every time those blast furnaces went off, it scared the hell out of you. And smelling that odor from the mills—after a while you didn't notice it, but, when we moved, we realized there was something else in the air! I think it was in 1932 that my father borrowed $200 from his brother, Max, who was doing fairly well, even though it was the Depression, and bought a tiny, little grocery store at 7113 Kelly Street in the Homewood section of Pittsburgh, which then, basically, had no Jews.

And when I say "little," I mean it. It would have fit in most living rooms. We lived in two rooms behind the store. There was light and there was water, but it was sort of under the ground floor in the basement of a tenement building. It was four or five stories tall, and our store was on the right-hand side of the building. An old lady named Mrs. Coates sold it to him with what little bit of stuff that was in there: a little cash register and an old icebox. And I mean icebox, not refrigerator.

So, my parents now had this little grocery store. I remember my first impressions of going to that store. It was late in the afternoon and sort of dark. I think Uncle Lou drove us over because he had a car. It was sort of a dingy, ugly cellar, and the walls were like rock! There was a tiny bathroom with no light, and there were two small rooms and a tiny kitchen. It was like being in a cave. It sort of frightened me!

I remember my parents talking about the fact that they'd never run a grocery store and didn't know how it was going to work out because the big stores were up the street, about a block and a half away, and people would go to the big stores because the A&P would sell stuff cheaper. But, we moved into there, they moved my crib in, and I slept in that crib for the next 13 years! When I grew too big for the crib, they cut holes in the bottom of it and put a chair with a pillow there, so there was a place for my feet to stick out! Eventually, I moved into the living room and slept on the couch.

I should point out here that even though both my parents were from a Jewish background, my father was essentially, I think, areligious and probably an agnostic. He was a Jew, and he felt he was a Jew, but he was not kosher, and my mother was! Every once in a while, she used to hear the slicing machine going out in the store because the food we sold was all non-kosher. He'd be sneaking slices of ham, and my mother knew because the little rooms we lived in were right behind the store; there was a little bell on the door of the store, and, if she ever heard the slicing machine going and she hadn't heard the bell, she knew he was out there sneaking some ham or something! He never went to synagogue and basically never left the store. It was open seven days a week, 12–13 hours a day, just so we could eke out a living.

Eventually, I started school in Homewood. The only problem I had was that I didn't speak English! I was born here, I was raised here, but my first tongue was Yiddish. I started kindergarten, and I didn't know what the hell was going on. I went back to my dad and said, "They're talking some strange language. I don't understand any of it." So he said, "Well, you have to learn it." I was terrified when I'd go to school. I couldn't read either. I think the only reason I actually got out of kindergarten was because I could draw a little bit. One of the first things I can remember doing is drawing.

When I got to first grade, every time it was my turn to read, I hid under the desk. And Mrs. Price, an old lady with a white hair bun—she looked like a comic strip or a cartoon teacher—would always threaten to take me to the cloak room and strike me with a stick. I thought, "Oh geez, I gotta learn to read this stuff because this may be dangerous." I literally don't know how I learned to read. I guess I just listened carefully from then on because it was a very, very bad idea not to read. One day it was my turn to read, and I looked at those symbols on the page; it was a story about Peter Rabbit and the Cabbage Patch, and I could read it! And it was like a revelation. I think Mrs. Price was as astounded as I was. My whole life changed; a whole new life opened up for me… the wonder of reading!

Mrs. Albright was the art teacher, and I was always the art teacher's pet. I was the only one who wanted to be there. And, it was a way of entertaining yourself. After a while I used to draw my own comic books. When I would get sick and have to stay home, I'd draw a comic book. I also modeled with clay, and I really enjoyed that. I remember a clay plaque I made, with a little paper clip in it to hang it up. I painted a little house, a tree, and sunshine on this little clay plaque. It was my ideal place, a place that would be just perfect. My mother put it on the wall. I once made a whole little city out of clay and asked my father to come see it at school. That was a big day for me.

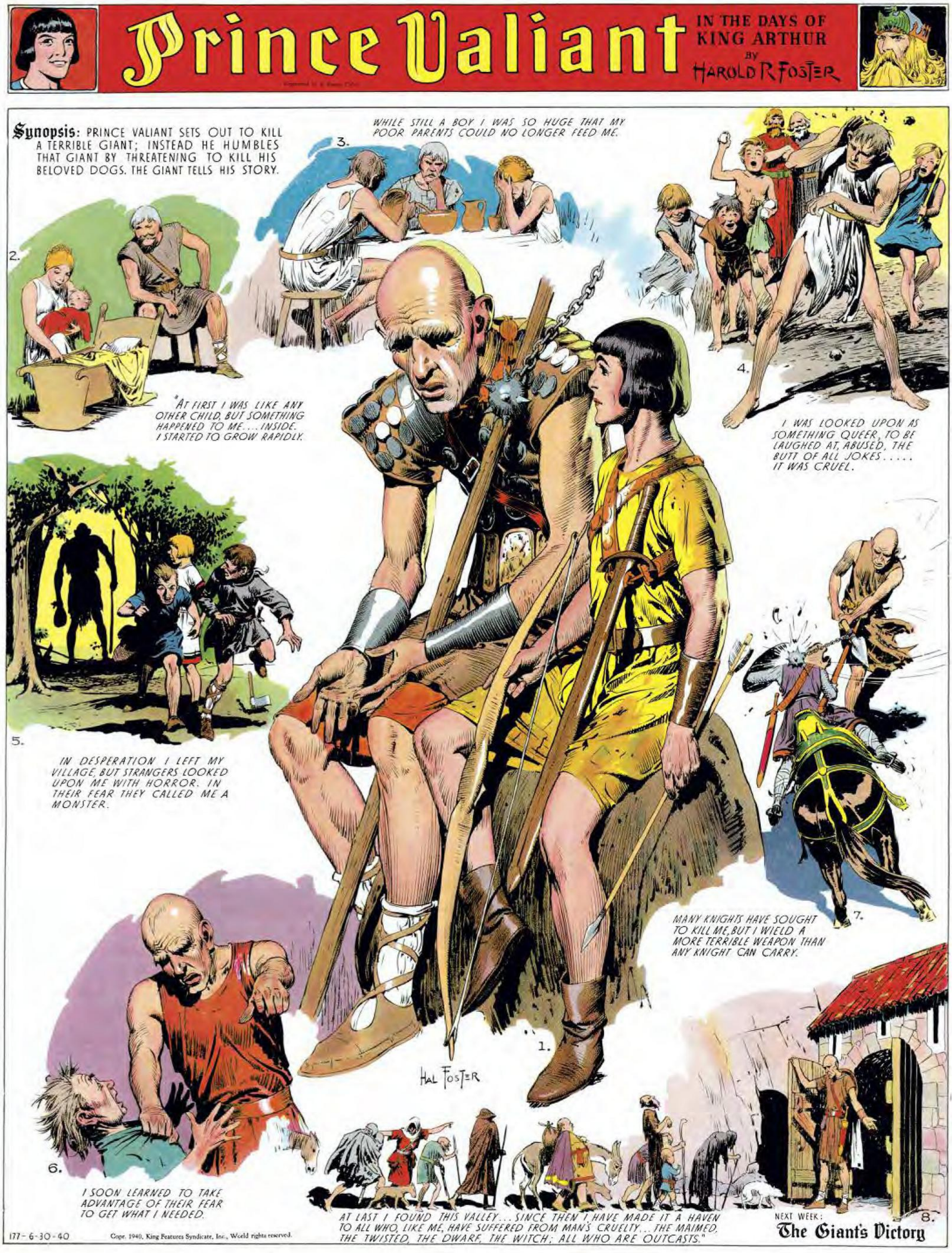
I used to draw at the store too. At our store we'd sell the newspapers, and I would get the comic strips before anybody bought any, I'd read them, and then I would draw from them. *Prince Valiant*—man, that was the best! *Prince Valiant* was magnificent. Hal Foster was a wonderful draftsman, and his ability to draw the human figure and evoke the time and space and atmosphere of early medieval days.… I remember one story about a giant that Prince Valiant had to fight; it was a large illustration, and I remember drawing it on a great big piece of paper. I would copy that stuff. Art gave me an outlet, I guess.

I think that reading the comics helped me learn to read as well because I really wanted to know what they said. But I'd have to be very careful because I'd have to fold them back up to look like they hadn't been used, so my parents could sell the papers! I couldn't even keep any of the comics because the newspaper people would pick up the ones that didn't sell. If I wanted to keep a comic strip, I would have to draw it.

In light of my later work with Filmation, you can really see where I was influenced by the comic strips. Some of my favorites were *Flash Gordon* and *Prince Valiant*. I liked the adventure comic strips. *Buck Rogers* was great stuff. *Flash Gordon* and the one above *Flash Gordon, Jungle Jim*, were drawn by Alex Raymond. I also liked Tim Tyler's *Luck*. *Alley Oop* was great stuff.

Popeye was around, but, you know, *Popeye* didn't really make an awful lot of sense to little kids. Adults read the newspaper comics in those days. The cartoons, I didn't understand the humor; I didn't know what the hell they were laughing at.

Comic books as we know them now weren't really around yet. There were Big Little Books though! The thing I didn't like about the Big Little Books was that they redrew the stuff from the comics. Their



Above:

A *Prince Valiant* page by Hal Foster that a young Lou would redraw, 1940

drawings weren't as good, and they were all black-and-white, but there was weight to them. You could pick them up, and they felt heavy. Most of the Big Little Books I read were thrown away by other people.

We didn't sell the *Post-Gazette*, which had *Dick Tracy*, so I had to find it in rubbish barrels. I used to go behind the building we lived in and take papers and magazines out of the rubbish barrels so I could take them and read them. I couldn't afford any of this stuff myself because we were really... I hate that "poor Jew" crap, but we really were poor Jews. In later years my wife, Jay, would often say, "I don't want to hear any more of that 'poor Jew' crap that you got me with." But you'll have to suffer through a bit more of it while I tell my story.

So, besides reading newspaper comics and Big Little Books, the other form of entertainment I'd enjoy, when I could afford it, was movie serials. The main memory I have of going to serials is: one, you got a dime; two, you got a little brown bag with a sandwich in it; and three, you could stay and see the serials a second time around.

Well, you had to cheat a bit to get that second viewing. You'd get the serial, and then there was a short, which was usually a cartoon, then two features. And then you'd have to duck under the seat, so the ushers didn't see you before the serial would play over again.

I remember one time... it was the 1936 serial *Undersea Kingdom*, with Crash Corrigan. It was summertime, and I stayed there for three showings of the last episode, Episode 12. My father and mother thought I'd been kidnapped. I went at eleven o'clock in the morning, and I came back at nine o'clock at night. I had never stayed at a movie that long, and it was the last time I did that. I remember the whacking I got.

I think the serials cost a dime back then, which was a lot of money, but they were made in chapters, so you had to go back for 13 weeks in a row! That was the equivalent of $1.30, but I didn't buy any candy. I took my own candy, but I'd have to duck down and not crinkle the paper because they didn't like it when you brought stuff in. But if you missed a week of the serials, wow, you were in trouble!

I went to the Highland Theater, and next door was the Bellmar Theater. I think it was 15 cents at the Bellmar, so I never went there. I think they showed cartoons there more often, but I'm not sure I enjoyed animation just yet. I don't remember whether I saw *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* when it was first released or not.

The other place I liked to spend time was the library. Homewood grade school was right across the street from the library, and our store was about a block-and-a-half from the school. I lived at that library. I started with all those great books, the Brownie books, fairy tales—just another world! I would sneak into the adult section too when they weren't watching. I went and read dictionaries; I read encyclopedias… I was fluent in *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

What's really funny is that, though I read the science parts of it, I didn't understand most of it. For instance, when I was about nine or

Above:
Undersea Kingdom
serial poster, 1950

Opposite:
(top to bottom)
Big Little Books
Tarzan, 1935 &
Flash Gordon, 1935,
two projects Lou would later license for Filmation

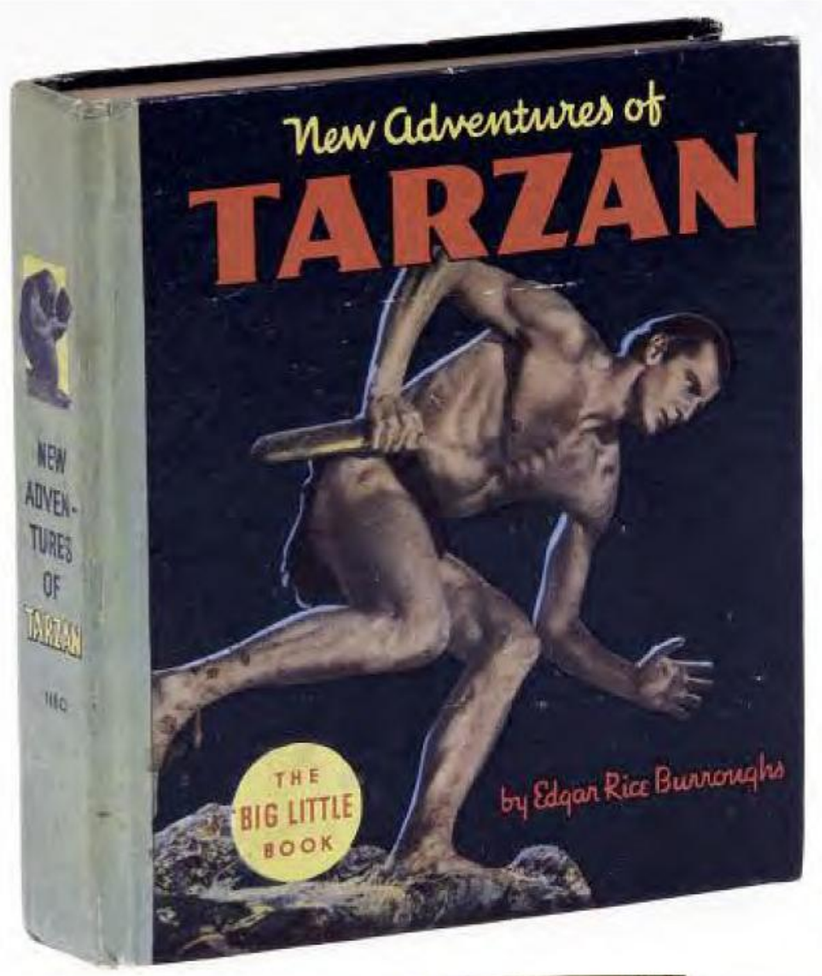
Lou in the knickers he hated

ten, I read about how the earth was conceived. On weekends I was going to a Hebrew Sunday school up on top of a magazine store on Homewood Avenue, and Eddie Claytman was the Sunday school teacher. The first week I went there, Eddie Claytman said, "Now we're going to talk about the creation of the earth. Does anybody in this class understand how it happened?" I said I understood, so he asked me to explain it. So I said, "There are two heavenly bodies that theoretically crashed, and out of it came a huge chunk, and it created the earth." And he said, "I don't want that version." I said, "You mean there's another version? What happened to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*?" I was all confused then! They didn't ask me any questions after that.

There were other terrible problems to solve for young Louie Scheimer though. I was the only kid in that damn school that wore knickers! Do you know what knickers are? Go look it up on Google if you don't. They were made to make me feel inept. At school all the other guys had long pants, and Louie had knickers. I hate knickers! And I remember my grandfather brought me a little fake fur coat, a teddy bear coat.

The other kids left me alone during the daytime, coming home from school, but they would become werewolves at night. My job in the grocery store when my dad was still alive was to take the rubbish out at night. It was like walking through death row because the other boys would hide and wait for me to beat the crap out of me. These were the same guys I would be playing with earlier in the day! I went home every night, and they beat the crap out me. I dreaded taking the rubbish out.

The toughest kid was Nonie Getz. For years I didn't know that his real name was Homer. I thought the name "Nonie" was the worst name in world, but Homer is pretty bad. He had a brother named Howard, and they lived nearby. I had inherited a two-wheeled bicycle from my cousin, as well as a green beanie, which had a propeller, but I could never get it to propel. But that beanie was important to me because I had inherited it. If I lost it I would just die. It didn't matter



that in my knickers and beanie I was the closest thing to a nerd that you could find in the 1930s.

Nonie had a better bike than mine, and one time he came riding by and grabbed that damned green beanie off my head and went riding off! I thought I was going to die, I would never see the green beanie again, and I may as well go and get last rites from the church. I went after him, but, the next time I saw him, it was like it had never happened. I was still worrying about dying because of that green beanie. Damned Nonie Getz!

I enjoyed the radio shows, but we didn't have a radio. I'd go to the apartments at the front of our building—we called them the welfare apartments because every Tuesday everyone got their check—and go to Barbie Gallow's. He repaired things, and he had two boys who had a radio, so I was really nice to them. I'd go over every afternoon and listen to whatever they wanted to listen to. Thankfully it was the good stuff. It was *Tom Mix*, it was *Buck Rogers*, it was *Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy*. I thought for years, they were calling them the All-American *Goy*.

We listened to KDKA radio—also called WJAS—owned by Westinghouse and reputed to be the first commercial radio station in the country. When I was ten, just a short while after my birthday, I was sitting out in front of the welfare apartments listening to the radio with some of the guys. They had turned on *Mercury Radio Theatre*. They started the show, and there were these news reports about aliens invading New Jersey. That was right across from us! There were people yelling and screaming. Everyone believed that it was really happening. This was on October 30, 1938, and it turned out to be that infamous *War of the Worlds* radio play—but we didn't know that at first!

Speaking of war, World War II was right around the corner. By the time it started, I was going to George Westinghouse Junior High School. My uncle would come and pick us up on the weekends and take us to my aunt's house. I remember being there in the house all by myself on Sunday morning; I had no idea where everybody else went. There was no one to talk to, so I listened to the radio. I

couldn't believe what I was hearing. It had to be real; it wasn't Orson Welles or any actor. It was the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. I wanted to talk to somebody, but there was nobody around. I was all by myself and didn't know what to do.

We went back to the house, our little grocery store, that night. The next day, Monday, we were in school, sitting in Ms. Murphy's classroom for geography, and they put the radio on. President Franklin D. Roosevelt talked, and we were all glued to that little radio. I remember listening to him saying all the terrible things that the Japanese had done. He had a dynamic voice, which usually gave you a feeling that everything was going to be okay, but this was frightening.

On April 24, 1942, my father signed up for the draft. He was 47 years old then, and had lost some of his height, and his hair was grey, but he was going to fight if they wanted him. I was far too young, of course, but I did my part.

They had fake air raids, and I volunteered to be a bicycle courier and deliver messages. I'd run around on a bicycle going from air raid warden to air raid warden and tell them nothing happened. That was my way to help the cause.

In October of that year when I turned 13, I had my Bar Mitzvah. In order to have a Bar Mitzvah, you had to be able to read your portion of the Torah in Hebrew! All Jewish kids used to go to Hebrew school or have someone visit them to tutor them in Hebrew. My parents found some old geezer, Mr. Weinstein, who made a living tutoring at home, so Mr. Weinstein used to come to our little place twice a week to teach me Hebrew. He taught it phonetically, but I was not taught the meaning of words! I must've been the worst pupil Mr. Weinstein ever had, and I used to drive him crazy. I would be at the little kitchen table in our little cellar, which was below the level of the sidewalks. All the kids would come by and listen to Louie reading the "funny stuff" through the windows by the sidewalk. I made it in time for my Bar Mitzvah though. I had a blue suit, which was my very first suit. I said my little speech; I was so happy. I got my quota of fountain pens, but one of the presents I got was a $100 war bond. They really cost only $50, which was still a lot of money in those days, but you had to keep it for about 30 years before it was worth the whole $100. Even better, though, I no longer had to see Mr. Weinstein!

I was getting very large by then. I was six feet tall and overweight—I was 170 pounds or so. They took me to see Dr. Frederick Roth, and he found that I had a glandular problem—a pituitary or endocrine imbalance. That was a young science, and nobody knew what the hell was going on in those days. I got shots twice a week and was put on a diet.

I had terrible nightmares, and the family thought I was crazy. I used to have a recurring nightmare about logs rolling down my throat, and these logs were all chained together and made huge, rumbling sounds. I'd wake up in a terror, all sweaty. I used to sleep right behind the store, and I got involved with compulsive neuroses; I'd count the Oxidol boxes and the Gold Dust boxes—soap chip boxes—and try to fall asleep, and I knew that, if I did not do all my little counting exercises, I would fall asleep and die. Well, one day it got so bad, I figured I was better off dead, and I fell asleep without counting, and I've never done it again!

Meanwhile, at Westinghouse I had a lovely art teacher named Miss Viola Broskey. She was very young and had probably just graduated from our training school a year or two before she started there at Westinghouse. She bought me a bunch of pens and oil paints, and I became a hero of sorts. I could draw fairly well for having no training. Once, she brought me this great big piece of paper and stuck it up on an easel and told me to paint whatever I wanted. I painted a guy standing under a streetlight, a sad, little guy in a sad, little place, smoking a cigarette in the dark night. I thought it was very important stuff. I even started taking some Saturday morning classes at the Carnegie Museum, but I wasn't as talented as some of the others there.

My father was very proud of my drawings though. I remember distinctively one evening, early in the war during the blackouts, a guy named Victor Saudek, who was the assistant conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony, stopped by the store to make a phone call. Some of my drawings were laying around, and my dad came up to get me to introduce me to Mr. Saudek and showed him all the drawings.

I also used to draw all these lovely, naked women, except for this blank area down between the legs because I had no idea what was there. I used to roll them up and stick them in a little space between the wall and the rocks behind it. I also had found a little dirty book, a ten-page Tijuana Bible or something, with Tilly the Toiler and Mac doing terrible things to one another, and I'd brought that home. One day I reached down there to get these drawings, and they were gone. I was terrified. I think my parents threw them away, but nobody ever said anything.

Westinghouse was a giant school with like 2,000 kids in it. I used to get

Above:
Lou & his mother, Lena

Opposite:
Lou's high school photo

A's all the time because I didn't take any tough courses. The only teacher in school who really couldn't stand me was a guy named O. H. "Pro" Burton. He was the football coach, and he was the toughest guy. By then I was the tallest guy in the class, and he would line everyone up in P.E. class from tallest to the shortest. There was another guy named Bobo, who was a big African-American guy, but he, unfortunately, was an inch shorter than I was. He was always right behind me saying, "I'm going to get your ass, you white boy. Get you out on the field, and I'm going to kick your ass and kill you!"

At that time in our neighborhoods, the racial lines were pretty severe. The school was 60% Italian and 40% black—and three Jews, including me. I told everyone else I was Italian. The day the black kids found out that I wasn't an Italian, it was the end of the world. The bell would ring for you to go from one classroom to another, and they would kick the sh*t out of me. I tried to talk to them, especially this terribly crippled black kid who hated me. Once they knew I was Jewish, I said, "Black kids get the sh*t kicked out of them by the Italians all the time. What do you hate me for?" I hated prejudice and discrimination, and it was completely disorienting for me. I could not understand why people would hate or even dislike each other for having a different religion or skin color.

But that didn't matter because I was getting killed at school. I came home, and my dad asked what happened to me. I said, "Well, the black kids are beating up on me." His response was, "The black kids are beating up on you, not the Italians?" I said no. He went to school and cornered the Vice Principal, Mr. H. L. Pedicord. In his thick German accent, with all the menace that was in his big body, he said, "I would like to see this black boy that has been beating up on my kid." Pedicord responded, "We can't do that." My father repeated himself more forcefully, and they finally brought one of the boys in. My father reached over, picked him up with one arm, and said, "If you ever touch my boy again, I will destroy you." He put him down… and that was the end of the black kids beating me up.

My dad did have a quick temper, and I would fight with him more as I got older. It wasn't always that way—I remember him once whittling me a wooden sword, so I could play "King of the Hill" using a garbage can lid as a shield—but, by my early teens, we did fight more. In the spring of 1943, he had had a violent seizure, and I had to help him to bed. I tried to get doctors to come out to the house, but it was difficult. I thought he was getting better. When you're young, you keep thinking of your parents as immortal, but I wasn't terribly right about immortality at that time.

On May 19, 1943, one of the local priests came to the school and called me home. They told me my father was very sick, but I knew it was worse that that because they were calling me home. I ran all the way and got to our tiny, little store, and there was a little crowd of people. Father Solomon was there, a priest from the Holy Rosary Church. I walked back into the rooms where we lived, and there were my two uncles. My father was sitting on the toilet. He was feeling bad and had gone to lie down and just made it to the toilet, where he sat down and died.

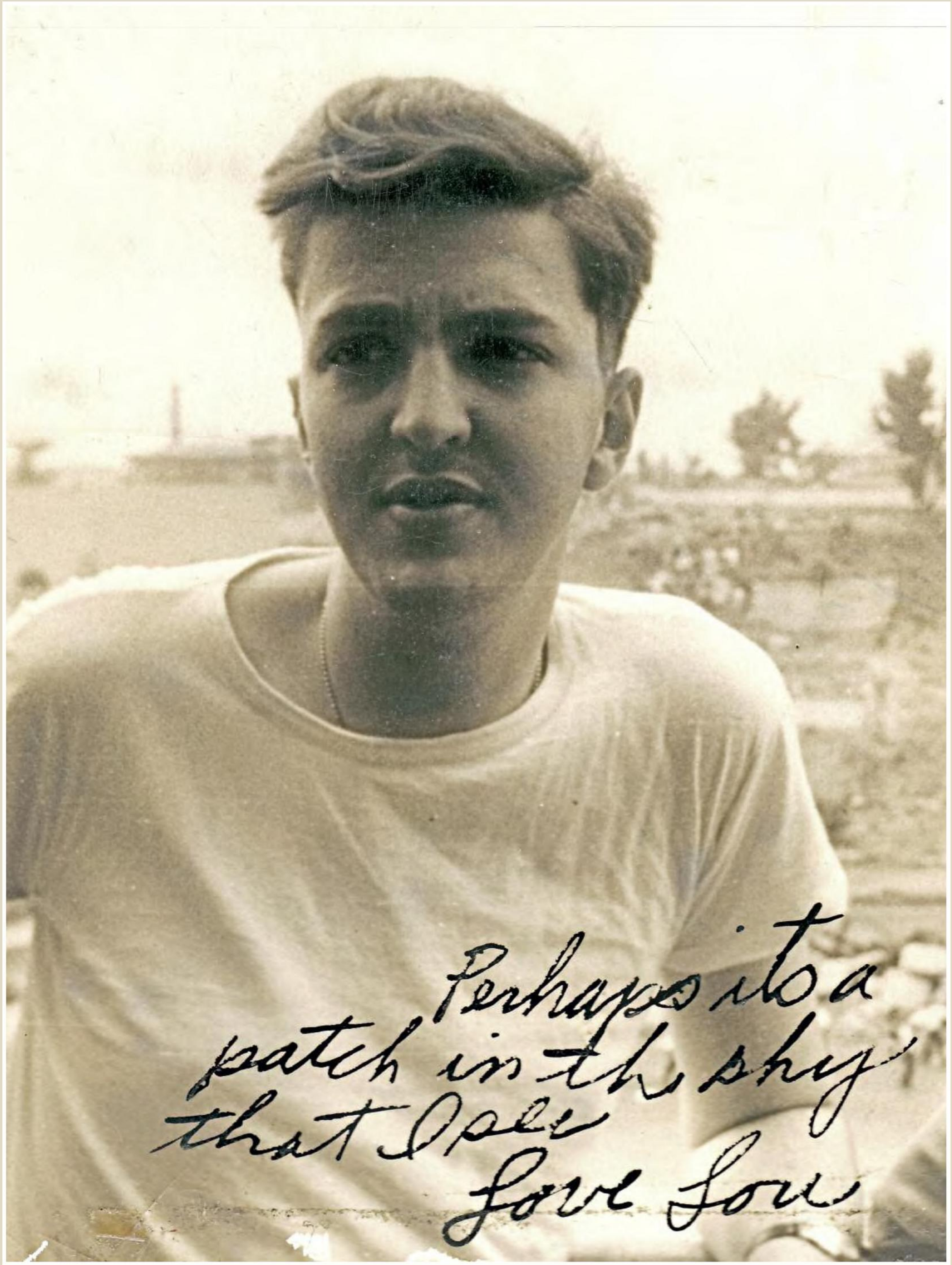
He had a heart attack at 48. His family had a history of heart disease; his brother died of a heart attack at 50 and his sisters had died in their early 50s. On top of his bad heart condition, he had his war wounds, which meant only one kidney, plus there was the blood poisoning from his work at the slaughterhouse, the missing bones in his hands, his weight nearing 300 pounds, along with other problems.

But I didn't understand all that. I felt like it was something I had done. I'd had an argument with him the day before. I had gotten him all upset, and he was yelling at me. To this day I still feel semi-responsible for it, even though he would have died sooner or later. In those days there was really nothing that you could do with that kind of heart condition. But it was one of those things as a kid… whew!

My mother began taking care of the store full-time, but she couldn't read or write. When people would buy things or run out of money because welfare hadn't come yet, she would take the same item and make a pile on the floor. I would come home from school and there would be piles of beans or soup or cigarettes or other things all over, and she would remember who had taken what. Then she would have me write up an order and count things up, and, when everyone's money came in on Tuesdays, they would come pay her back. It was a different time.

In June, 1946, at age 17, I graduated as class valedictorian—an honor shared with Dolores Jefferson—from Westinghouse High School. I could have gotten a scholarship to go to the University of Pittsburgh to become an attorney, but I knew that wasn't for me. But my mother had been fairly ill by then. The doctor said, because of her heart, she would not be able to continue running the store, and we didn't have money to send me to school. So, I decided to go into the Army to try to earn enough money. With the G.I. Bill, if I joined for 18 months, I would get three years of school out of it. But I couldn't join at 17 without my mother's permission.

I pleaded with her, and she signed the papers. I was joining the Army.


Perhaps it's a
patch in the sky
that I see
Love Lou

1946-1948

CHAPTER TWO

DRIVING JAPAN CRAZY

I was in the Army now, post-war, at 17. My official entry date was September 25, 1946. They sent me to the closest camp for training, in Maryland. That's the first time that I ever left Pittsburgh really. The war was over, so they didn't even need to train people very well. At the camp was a corps that took care of machines, which was not really the place for me. But, they were sending people to the camp closest to where they had enlisted. They gave you eight weeks of training to go overseas. They just needed bodies at that time to replace the guys who really fought the war.

It was a miserable eight weeks in basic training. The beds were assigned up and down. I tried desperately to get a top bunk; I didn't want any little squirts up above me irritating me at night. But I didn't get what I wanted. Instead, I got "Tiny." Let me tell you, Tiny was the biggest person I had seen in my life outside of Bobo in high school. Tiny must have weighed at least 800 pounds. He was a nice guy, but I was sleeping in the bunk underneath him. When he would climb in, his bunk would sink down and land on me; I couldn't turn at night. I think sleeping underneath him frightened me more than anything else in the Army. The closest I came to death was sleeping under Tiny.

The second closest I came to death was from the Southern guys who were saying, "We are going to kill that Jew." I was the only Jew there. There were songs made up every night of them killing me; anti-Semitism was everywhere.

The eight weeks went by amazingly fast, and then because I was going overseas I got to go back to Pittsburgh for a few days. My mother had gone to live with my Aunt Sarah. I spent a couple days with my mother, my Aunt Sarah, and my Uncle Lou. They had their two boys by then, and I played around with them for a while. From there I went to Fort Lawton in Seattle, which is where they shipped personnel to Japan. That was the end of 1946. Some of the streets at the Fort were made of dirt, and because it rained all the time the dirt would turn to mud, and I got to spend my time mopping it up. I never saw Seattle as anything but a city of mud.

I ended up with a miserable cold when I departed on December 10, 1946, aboard the *U.S.S. General LeRoy Eltinge*. It was a transport ship that had been used by the Navy and recently transferred to the Army. I arrived in Japan on the 27th of December. The rumors were that half of

Opposite:
Lou in Japan, 1947

Above:
Lou's Army photo, 1946

us were going to go to Korea, where the Ninth Corps was, and the other half of us were going to be sent up to Sendai. I knew neither was a good place to go, but that's all I knew. I hated it.

So there I was in Japan in the middle of night; the only guy that I knew there was a guy named Setcher who had joined up with me. Setcher and I were wandering down this road, and I was really not in good shape. Setcher was an interesting guy, but he was nuts. He goes up to a poor Japanese farmer who was riding a horse and says, "Get off that horse. I'm going to ride that horse. We've won the war." I said, "You can't take the guy's horse. He's a farmer and you're crazy." The poor Japanese guy got off his horse, stumbled around and bowed, and handed Setcher the horse. I said, "Have you ever ridden a horse?" And he said, "No." I said, "What are you going to do with the guy's horse? Someone is going to kill you for this." Setcher couldn't ride a horse; he just wanted to take it with him. I finally talked him out of it. That was the quality of our armed corps. Later on Setcher ended up going up to Sendai… without a horse.

I finally made it to camp. It was cold; it was awful. They gave us a little blanket, and we were basically sleeping outside. It was the middle of the night, and I had just fallen asleep when the loudspeaker came on, and this voice said, "Private Scheimer report to headquarters." It was three o'clock in the morning, and they had announced my name. The worst thing in the world is for somebody to know your name in the Army. They had my name. I was afraid they were going to shoot me about that damned horse. I had been with Setcher, and I figured they probably got him already. I was afraid they were going to think I was a horse thief too!

So I went up to headquarters and banged on the door, and a voice said, "Come on in." Herbie Stein was sitting alone looking at papers. Herbie and I had been very close friends from the time we were five years old. He said, "What in heaven's name are you doing here?" I said, "What do you mean?" He didn't know that I had enlisted. I said, "I joined after you did, Herbie." I suddenly realized that Herbie was drunk. I never knew Herbie to drink. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I'm drinking booze, and you're a lucky son of a bitch. I'm in charge of telling you where you're going to go to serve out your term here." I said, "You?" He said, "Yeah, that's my job." I said, "Herbie, what am I going to do?" He says, "You're going to go to Tokyo. You might even get into the Honor Guard for the general." He was talking about MacArthur. He told me that was the only place he could send me, but first I would have to go help at the Japanese finance department. Well, I didn't want to be in the Honor Guard and wear those shiny helmets and look like a statue, so I knew I had to do something.

We spent a couple of days at the station before being shipped out again, and in that time I found a newspaper called the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*. I thought maybe I could work there; maybe they needed an artist. the *Stars and Stripes* had a headquarters on the second floor of a building near the Imperial Palace, which was where MacArthur's headquarters was. The first floor was a Japanese newspaper called the *Tokyo Times*. It was published in English and actually had been published all through the war in English. It was also near a railway station, and there was always a train passing or noise from drunken Japanese wandering about because there were also a couple of booze places right next door.

So, I got there and walked up to the *Stars and Stripes* offices. I knocked on a door and this guy answered. I said, "Who do I talk to about getting a job?" He said, "Are you crazy?" I said, "I don't think so." He said, "You don't walk in here and get a job; this is the Army. You apply, and you go to see the head of your unit." And I said, rather cockily, "That's too bad. I'm really pretty good." And he said, "What do you do?" And I said, "Well, I'm an artist." I was not an artist. But I was as good as anyone that they had there. What I didn't know is that they had lost their artist!

The guy in charge of the art department was named Blackie—a really nice guy. He previously had a guy there doing all the art material for him that had to be done, including a daily cartoon. I said, "I'm the perfect guy for that!" And I got the job!

Stars and Stripes was a daily newspaper, plus a Sunday edition,

probably ten to twelve pages a day, tabloid size. The Sunday was a little heavier. Most of the paper was run by guys who were leaving because they had already served four or five years in the Army and had gone all over the Pacific. The new guys coming into the shop were about my age. One guy that had been there a while had been with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—which preceded the CIA—during the war. He had made some big mistake on an assignment in Europe at Arnhem Bridge, had gotten kicked out of the OSS, and ended up at the paper. One of the kids there with me was Pete Hynes, whose father, John B. Hynes, was the mayor of Boston.

Anyhow, Blackie gave me the job as the replacement for Bill Mauldin. I said, "Bill Mauldin? He's a genius!" He says, "Well, you're in charge." I ended up doing three or four cartoons. He immediately decided that I was not appropriate and that there was no way that I was going to take over where Bill Mauldin had left off. So, he replaced me with the syndicated version of Bill Mauldin. But at least he kept me onboard.

I started helping Blackie with all the mechanical stuff that he was doing at the newspapers. They had these big manual typesetters banging and crashing all day long because it was early typesetting. They would put asbestos panels in the shape of a press drum, and then they would put lead into that and produce these big plates to print from. Those would need to go down to another Japanese newspaper because the *Tokyo Times* didn't have the number of presses that would allow them to print the *Stars and Stripes* and their own newspaper. So one of my jobs was to take the big metal newspaper plates down to the Japanese paper where we were printed.

I didn't tell them this, but that was a problem too. You couldn't carry them down by hand; they had to go down in a Jeep. Well, I couldn't drive! I didn't know what to do. The Ginza was very busy with all these people and cars. They gave me the keys to the Jeep, and I said, "Is anybody else going with me?" "Oh no, no." Well, I knew how to get the Jeep started, and I knew how to go forward, but I forgot about the brakes. So, I was going down this alley, and I knew a couple words of Japanese. I knew the words for "Danger, danger, danger, jump out, jump out, jump out!" I'm yelling this because I didn't even know how to honk the horn! It was like the sea parting. There were Japanese jumping all over the place. After a couple days, I could get from our offices to the *Nippon Times* safely. I never hit anybody, thankfully, but I'm sure they thought I was a maniac.

On the bottom floor of the paper there were plate glass windows, and that was the front of the *Tokyo Times*. They had guys sitting at desks writing, and there were some presses in the back. In my second week, I forgot about the brakes again. I drove up, forgot to put the brake on, and drove through the f*cking window! There was glass flying everywhere and people hiding under desks. And the Jeep was a wreck.

The guy in charge of the newspaper was Macabee, and he was one tough guy. I was very lucky. Macabee just looked at me and said, "I'm going to teach you, young man." There was a quiet, frightening aspect to Macabee, like he was going to do something terrible to you. Every time that I screwed up, Macabee would just look at me. We had someone commit suicide in our building once; he jumped to his death. I was afraid Macabee was going to blame me. He had me totally, constantly in fear of him. I was next to his office, and he looked in every once in a while. I think he was just making sure I wasn't destroying the place.

I had a friend there named Matteo Lacroce. Mateo was one step down the ladder from me. If I did something badly, he did it worse. Between the two of us, it was a disaster for the Army. One day Mateo and I and two other guys were sitting in a Jeep outside of the paper. These other guys started talking about Macabee. I said, "He is evil. He is the worst thing that you can possibly be. He was sent by the

Opposite:
Lou with Herbie Stein

Above:
Lou working at the *Stars and Stripes*

devil to kill us." I looked up, and there's Macabee looking at me. I tell you, I fainted. I didn't know what he was going to do. He said, "Scheimer." I said, "Yeah?" "Just checking." I've never been so terrified in my life. Macabee never did anything wrong to me, but he had me terrified for a year.

I found out that Herbie was in Yokohama, so after I finally learned how to drive, I would take the Jeep down to see him, with Mateo. We would go out and drive around. I remember driving once, and it was not a good road. Herbie yelled, "Oh my God!" There was a big semi-covered ditch in front of us. I panicked. Instead of hitting the brakes, I hit the gas, and we flew over the huge hole. They never let me drive again.

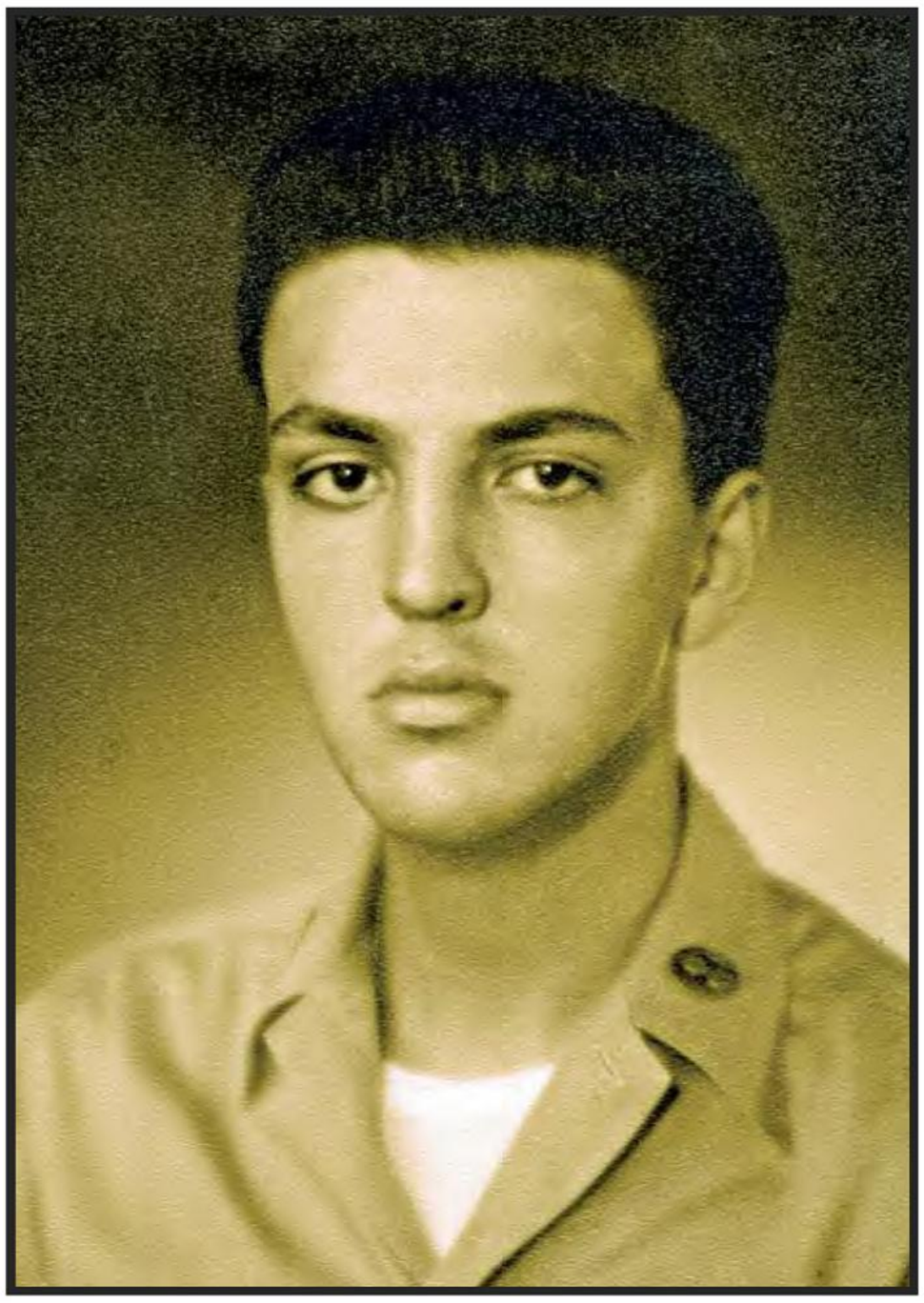
One night we were all going out to eat at a Japanese restaurant in a semi-hotel. Everybody was there, and the guys were all having beer. I had never had beer; I didn't drink anything. I'd gorge on ice cream. I was the only guy who went to the ice cream parlor every day. So, everybody was getting drunk, and I was all by myself. I decided to go to the men's room, only there was no men's room. I said something in Japanese, and a guy pointed to a door. I went in, and there was a little, old lady sitting naked in a tub. She must have been 90 years old. I mean, a majorly old lady. I tried to back out, and she stood up and started bowing, naked. So I started bowing. I bowed my way out the door and didn't pee for a day because of the sight. That was the first naked woman I had ever seen in my life… a 90-year-old Japanese lady.

Another time Herbie, Matteo, and I went to a Japanese golf club. I said, "I can't play golf. I can barely walk; I can't do anything like that." But they insisted. So, I was out there trying to hit that ball. We had a Japanese caddie with us, and he's rolling his eyes. I hit the ball, like, 72 times. I didn't realize you had to get the ball into a hole; I was just hitting it around. Finally, the Japanese caddie picked up the borrowed golf clubs, lifted them over his head, and smashed them on the ground while screaming at me! Well, that was the last time I played golf.

Herbie and Mateo and I went to Mount Fuji once, and decided that we were going to show them how to climb this mountain. We got to the base of the mountain, and started trudging along. At 200 feet , we started puffing. We got to 300 feet, and we felt like we were dying. And then this Japanese woman of about 120 years old — with this big, big thing on her back that she's carrying — walks right on by us going three times as fast. We never got to the top.

Before this devolves into the "Misadventures of Lou Scheimer", let's return to the newspaper. My cartoons were terrible. I didn't know how to make them funny. I do remember one of them. I hated going through the fish market because of the smell. I did a cartoon with a Japanese guy bowing to a Japanese lady. The guy's carrying a stick and has black glasses on and can't see because he is blind. And he is talking to this barrel of fish and saying, "Hello, Mrs. Yahama." Old lady smells like a fish equals not very funny. I did do another one that I thought hit it out of the park, but what they needed was somebody who could draw cartoons for the paper, not somebody who smashed up the Jeep all the time.

I did do one other artistic job on the paper, though, and it scared me even more than the others. I was told that when pictures of General MacArthur were to be published, I was to make sure that there were no wrinkles in his chin, on his nose, under his throat, or on his forehead. They told me how to use an airbrush, which I had never used before. This was about 60 years before Photoshop, you know! I was told I would probably be executed if any of the wrinkles got printed in the paper. But MacArthur really looked awful. He had wrinkles all over the place. I think I missed a wrinkle once, and his



aide-de-camp, Faubion Bowers, called the paper, but I wasn't executed.

I had another job that wasn't very artistic, which revolved amongst those of us there. Once a month or so, it was my turn to be the guy that stayed at the paper at night to make sure that it wasn't destroyed by drunken Japanese, because we were so near the bars. Basically, I was a security guard for the night. They wouldn't let us have a gun, and I didn't like to shoot guns anyhow. Somehow, however, I had found an old Japanese sword.

One Saturday night, I realized that the place was surrounded by drunken Japanese soldiers. So I moved the cot close to the second floor near the door, and I got out my sword. I said "I'm going to kill any son of a bitch who comes up here." Well, the first thing that came up the stairs were two hookers, and they saw my sword, and ran the hell out of there! Then a bunch of drunks came up, and they saw me and I scared the sh*t out of them. I said "I'm doing pretty well here." I went back to bed, and took my sword with me from then on if necessary.

We practically adopted a Japanese kid at our building. When we first got there, we saw a little guy in a perfect American G.I. uniform, but he was miniature. I thought at first he must have been a dwarf that was drafted. But he was a war orphan, and he told us his name was Jimmy. The guys who had been there before had kind of adopted him and had a seamstress make him his own uniform. Matty and I took care of him for a month or so, giving him food and hiding him around where he could sleep. He ate a lot of ice cream. And then one day Jimmy disappeared. We went looking for him, but we could never find him. I'd like to know what happened to that kid.

As my year in Japan began to draw to a close, I was still at the *Stars and Stripes*. I wanted to go home, but I really loved Japan. I met some of the most interesting people in the world, and I started to develop a point of view that was not the point of view I had living in Pittsburgh. I found this exotic, wonderful world, and it was great to learn the Japanese could be beautiful people after spending ten years of my life with the wartime media drumming it into me that they were hateful, horrible beasts. I really started to appreciate the beautiful form and texture that you could only find in Japan. The art, the calligraphy… it was so graphically interesting, mysterious, romantic. I knew that the things I was doing there would be things I would never forget. The people, the way of life, the literature, the look, the feel, the architecture... it was an incredible experience.

It was also the first time I'd ever been on my own. I found out that not only could I survive, I could do very well. Because I had been thrown in with a lot of older guys from the military, I knew that I didn't want that as a career. I wanted to go to school and be something more. My time in the Army was benefitting my future, and I was enjoying the moment, but at the same time I couldn't wait to get the hell out.

I left Japan on December 17, 1947, on a ship. As we were in Yokohama Bay at five o'clock, six o'clock in the morning, we could see Mount Fuji rising up into the sky in the sunrise. It was magnificent.

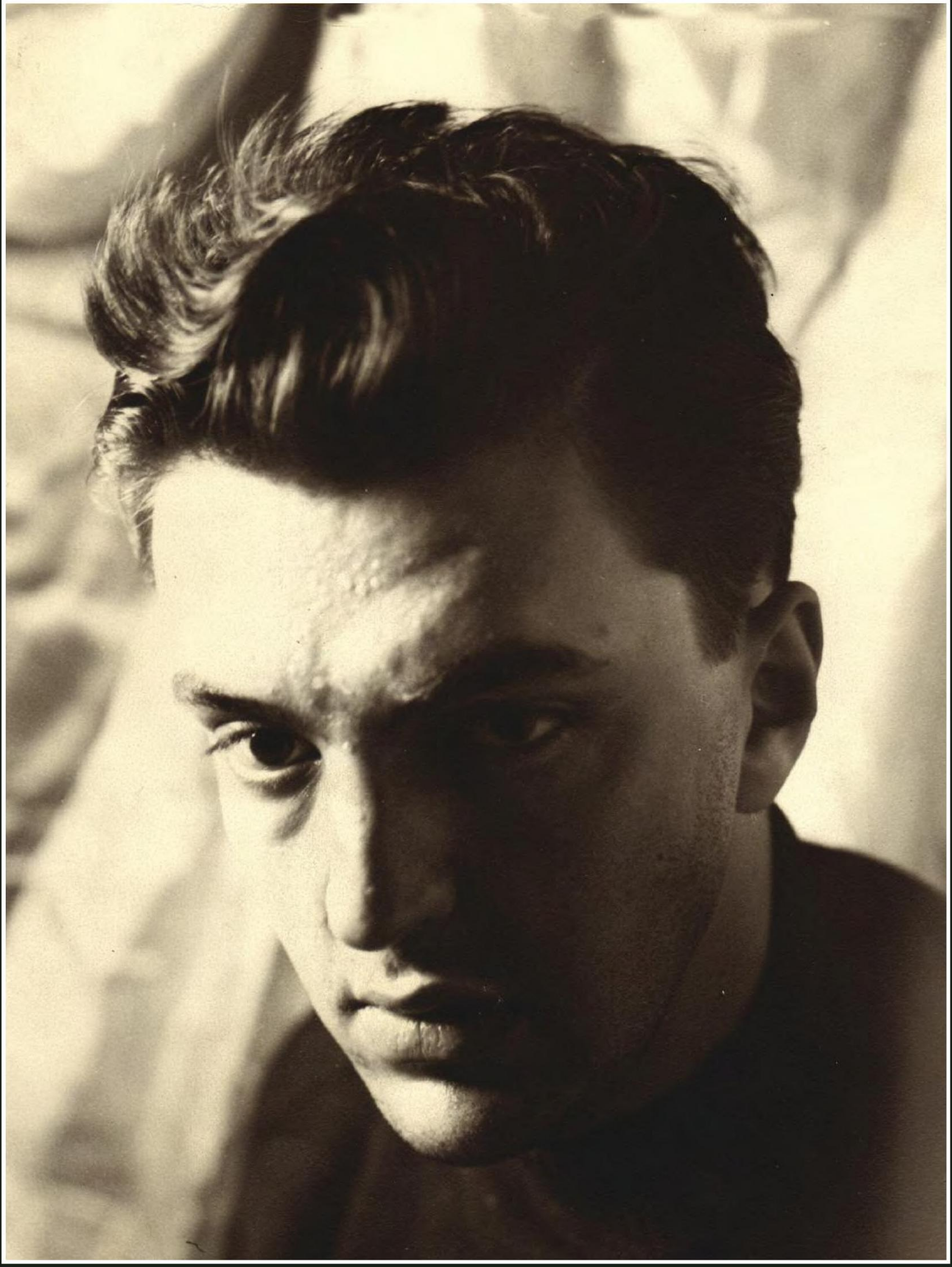
I arrived back at Fort Lawton in Seattle on December 29, 1947, and was discharged from the Army—Honorable Discharge—on January 5, 1948. They gave me a train ticket to get home to Pittsburgh. I only had about 50 bucks in my wallet; the rest I had sent home to my mother to save for me. The G.I. Bill would pay for three years of college, and I had saved enough for my fourth year.

I was going back to live with my mother and aunt and uncle for a while because I couldn't get into a school during midterm, so I had until September before I could start. But, somewhere between my copying of *Prince Valiant* as a child and my horrible cartoons for the *Pacific Stars and Stripes* as an adult, I had decided what I wanted to do.

I was going to be an artist.

Opposite:
Lou in Japan, with a Jeep he hadn't wrecked

Above:
A later Army photo of Lou



1948-1955

CHAPTER THREE

CARNEGIE AND AN EARLY PROPOSAL

So, I had my calling I thought: I knew I wanted to be an artist, and I knew that schooling would help shape me into one. I applied to the Pratt Institute, a very good commercial art school in New York. My mother didn't want me to move there. At the same time, I took the technical test to get into Carnegie Technical Schools, more commonly known as Carnegie Tech. It was a very difficult school to get into, and I really did not think I was going to be able to make it. Of the freshman art class each year, only about 20 would end up graduating—not very strong odds.

I had taken SATs before, but at Carnegie they didn't look at anything you had done in the past. You had to go to school there for a couple of days and they would spring tests on you to determine whether or not they felt you had the ability to go there for four years.

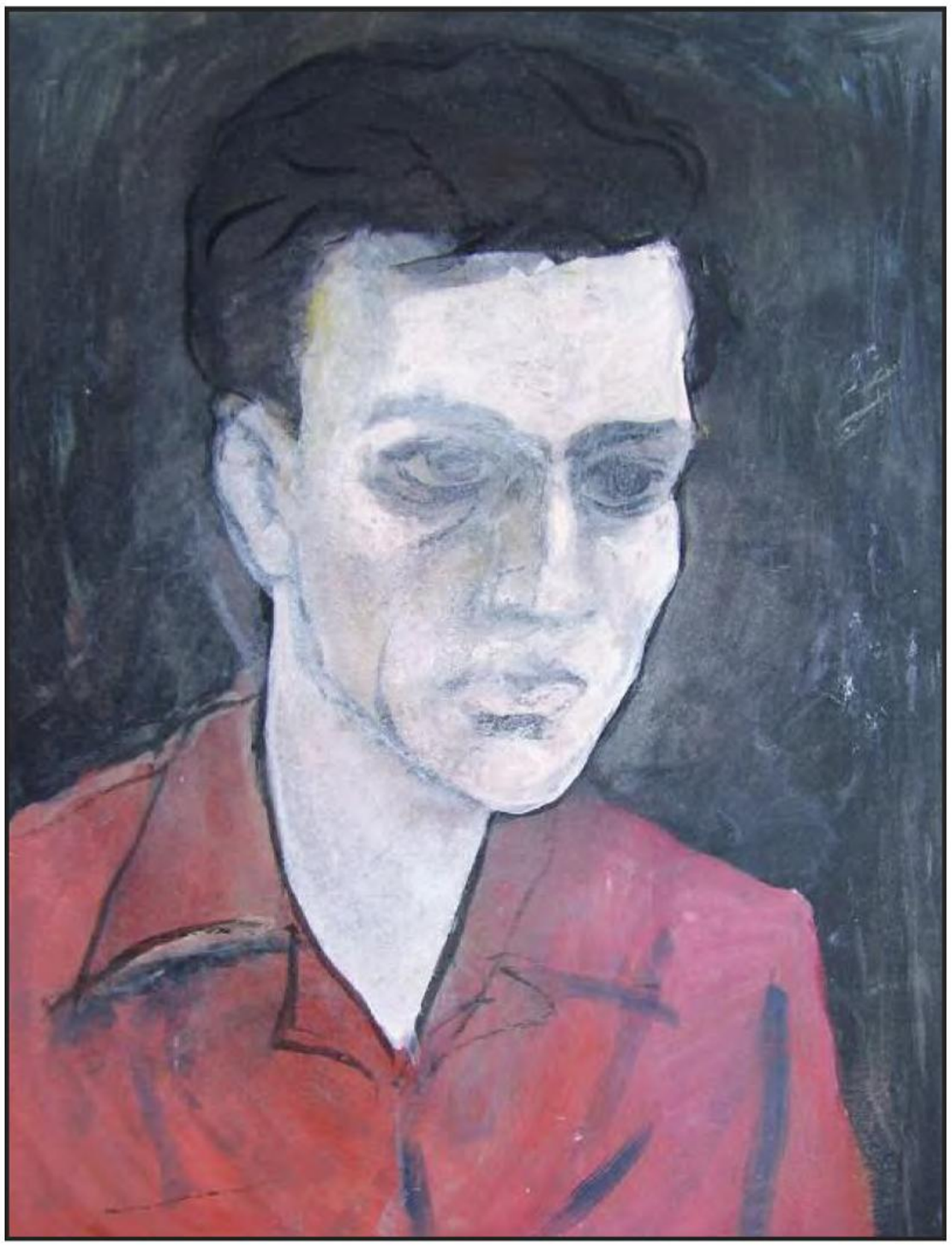
I'll tell you about one of those tests, but first you have to understand how the school was laid out. As I recall, the first floor was for drama, and they were one of the best drama schools in the nation. The music school was on the second floor, the school of architecture was on the third floor, and the fourth floor was the painting and design school. All the arts were there in that one complex. One of the days I was trying out there, one of the drama guys ran into our classroom, and he stood there for five or ten minutes, talking and wigglng, yelling and screaming, and going through all sorts of nutty stuff. Then he left, and the teacher said, "Do a portrait of him." And we had to try to get the feel of what he was like and what he was doing. All I remember was that he didn't have a shirt on, and he was wearing what I thought was a top of a potato sack, but it was all wrinkled and you could see through it. I watched what everybody else was doing before I started mine.

Surprisingly, I was accepted to Carnegie Tech, and I started on September 17, 1948. Going there was a pivotal point in my life, in my development, I think, as a human being because it wasn't just an art school. Every year, besides the art courses, you took an academic course. And Carnegie Tech's philosophical approach to teaching was not to teach you facts, but to teach you concepts. Every part of the school had a point of view where the instructor's object was to teach you to solve problems—all sorts of problems.

Learning art at Tech was an interesting experience. I really loved

Opposite:
Lou, the Artist

Above:
Early art by Lou



it, and it probably meant more to me than any single thing that I have done in my life because I concentrated on the art and worked hard, and they had difficult, difficult problems to be solved. And, there were some interesting people in the school at the time.

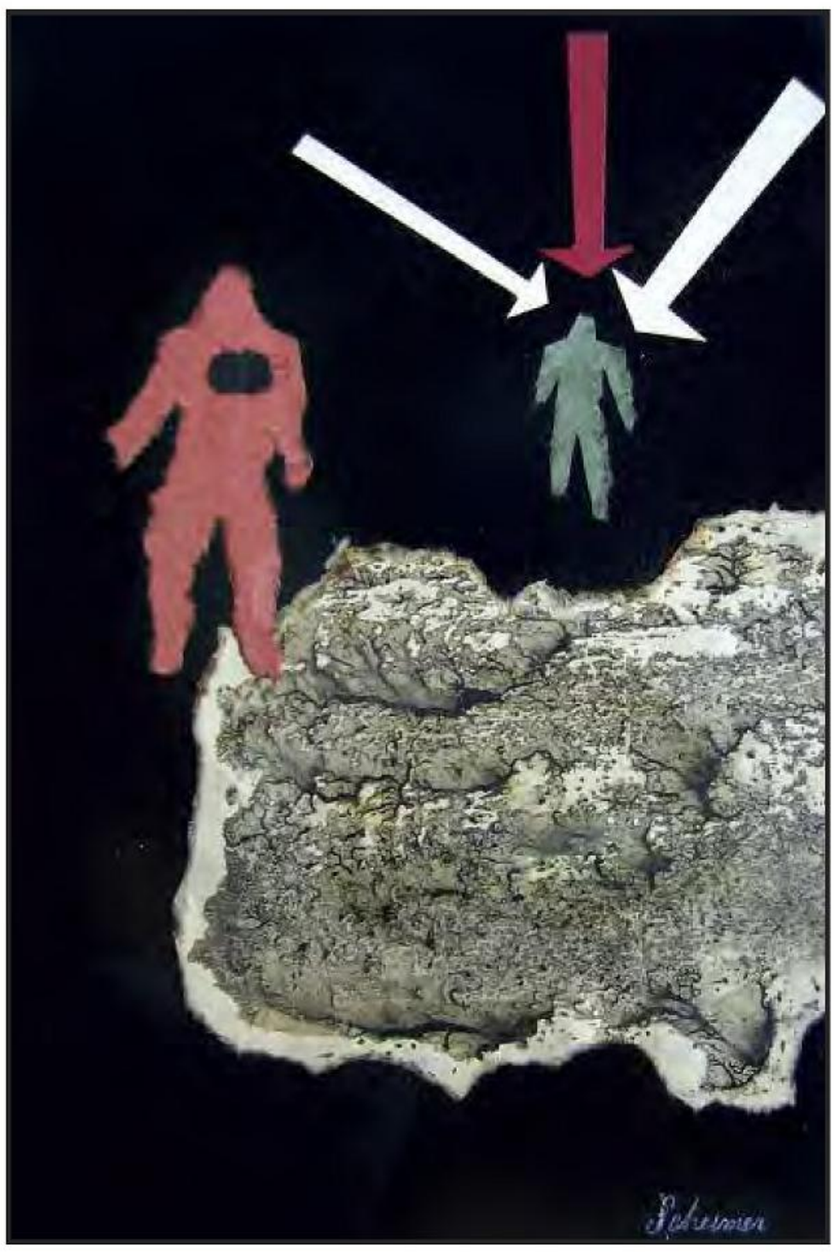
I went to school with Andy Warhol. His name was Warhola then. He was a year ahead of me because he had not been in the army. Everybody thought he was of Polish descent, but he had a Czechoslovakian background. He was really a nice guy, but the oddest guy I'd ever met in my life. You'd be talking about the sun, and he'd be talking about the moon, but you wouldn't know. I mean, it was always something sort of like what you were talking about, but off someplace different. He used to walk to school, and I walked with him sometimes. He'd come up those terrible hills from where he lived down in the steel mill sections of Pittsburgh.

Andy was always on the list of people who were being warned that they were on the verge of being thrown out of school, and yet he ended up probably being the most successful man to ever graduate from that school. He spent four years being told constantly that he was not doing the problems sufficiently correctly in the eyes of the teachers. He could draw, but, if they wanted you to draw a stick, he would draw a river! He could draw like a son of a bitch, but he flunked every test because he never, never solved a problem the way they thought it should be solved.

I was friends with a guy named Bill Shaffer, and he was a friend of Andy's. They had graduated from the same high school. Bill probably was the most talented guy in the class. I don't know what he's doing now. He was working for the *L.A. Times* for a while doing illustrations and comic stuff. Another guy in the classes was Philip Pearlstein, who is today one of the foremost neo-realists in the country. There was another guy named Arthur Reisz, and he was a bit like Andy, but he seemed smarter than Andy. When Arthur didn't do a problem, he knew he wasn't doing the problem. I don't know whether Andy knew that he wasn't doing the problem; he was just solving it his way. Reisz was a genius, and I had a funny situation happen once where I asked him to do something off-campus with me only to have someone else warn me that he was gay. But he was fun and brilliant.

Here I was in the class with guys who could really, really draw and had total control of what they wanted to put on the paper... and I'd sweat it out just trying to get along. I mean, I knew art was the only thing I wanted to go to school to do, but going there and seeing what could be done and how people with a lot of talent can do magnificent stuff where you know exactly what they're trying to say and exactly how they're doing it and they totally control the medium… it's humiliating because, when you're not quite that good, you're fighting all the time. And the teachers start to know which students were really shining.

Shaffer and I decided to do some projects together. One of them involved painting and color relationships from the cold colors to the warm colors. You'd cut them up, and you'd put them on pieces of paper and cardboard to see how the gradations worked. Shaffer and I decided we were going to save some time, so I did half of the colors and he did the other half, and our papers were exactly the same. He got an A, and I got a D. The funny thing was because our names were so close our stuff was always hung next to one another, so the guy who looked at those color charts saw the two of them at the same time and said one was wrong and the other was right! But I kept forging ahead.



One thing they didn't care about in college was that I was left-handed. It was never brought up. It might surprise people to know about it nowadays, but back then it was a big deal in school. In high school they would tie your left hand behind you, so you couldn't use it and were forced to use your right hand. I was lucky because that could really have screwed me up, but it didn't affect art at all. Brushes and bottle tops work just as well for a left-handed artist!

I'm going to break time frame here and tell a story about another alumni of

Carnegie Tech, so if you're skipping ahead you're gonna miss this little gem. Two decades or so later, I was wearing my Carnegie Tech ring at the Filmation offices, and one of our most popular voice actors came in. He saw my ring and asked me when I went to school there. Turned out we had both been in the class of 1952, but I was in art and he was in drama. I used to pass him all the time, but he had hair back then. That guy was Alan Oppenheimer… the future voice of Skeletor on *He-Man*!

Anyhow, during the summers and times when I wasn't in school, I worked a variety of jobs. When you got out of the Army, you got $20 a week for 52 weeks, which you could live on, but I needed more than that. One of my close friends' father worked for this group of stores, and they had a place where they put all their spoiled goods to be returned or to find out why they had gone bad. I worked that job in this hole with bugs rolling around and guck coming out of broken cans; I lasted in that job for about two weeks. I went back to my aunt's house that first day, and she squirted me with the hose before she let me in the house. There was a milk strike, and all the milk companies were trying to get back into the good graces of the people they had offended by not delivering milk. So, I took a job running around trying to sell milk to people. That didn't last very long though. Then I got a job in a shoe store on Squirrel Hill. That lasted for quite a while, even when I was at school. I would go to Tech during the week and sell shoes on the weekend at my uncle's shoe store. I probably did better selling shoes than I did in schooling. I think I was making about $200 a month.

My mother and I were still living with my Aunt Sarah and Uncle Lou and her family at 3316 Parkview Avenue.

My mother didn't really need much money, and my aunt never charged us for anything although they fed and housed us. Sarah treated my mom more like her own mom than as a sister; they used to do everything together. My mom was fed and she had clothes, and, although I had sent her money from the Army, she never touched it. She had $4,000 when my father died, and she never touched that either. We had just given the store away; it really wasn't worth much by then. At my aunt's house, my mother slept in the same bed as one of their sons, and I slept in the nursery. My cousin Irving, who was gay, lived there as well.

I didn't really know whether my cousin was gay or not at that time; he was just such an unusual guy, and there was a meanness about him that I did not like, especially toward his younger brother. There had been one gay kid in the neighborhood where I grew up. He was a really handsome young man, an Adonis, but he was very fluffy. He was always the subject of people making fun of him. His name was Georgie something, and they would call him "Georgie Porgie." I liked Georgie, but he was in a world all of his own. I did not know what "gay" meant and probably didn't find out until I was in the Army. I think I first heard the word "queer" in college, and there were a number of gay people there. But I had no problem

Opposite Above:
A self portrait

Opposite Below:
An illustration of men

Above:
A colorful illustration of gears and pinwheels

Left:
An expressionistic illustration of a queen

with them because I understood that they faced the same kind of discrimination I had faced as a Jew and that the black kids had faced all through school. Anyone who has gone through bigotry like that should have learned that you would never want it to happen to your children or your friends or anybody.

Between the Army and college, I had really been broadening my mind. When I had any free time, I was back to one of my favorite hobbies: reading. I read a lot of science fiction. One book that really stuck with me was *The Story of Philosophy* by Will Durant. It got me thinking about modes of life, reasons for living, the philosophy of life, people's points of view, and how people have artistic and philosophical points of view graphically too. The broader you are, the more you try to expand your own horizons, the more that shows up in your work.

On a personal level, my dating life was not nearly so expansive as my academic life. I had dated a girl briefly before the Army, but had gotten a "Dear John" letter while I was in Japan. And I didn't indulge in shenanigans in the Army. So, with the exception of some kissing and a little bit of feeling around, I was pretty inexperienced when it came to women.

And then Jay Wucher happened.

I was between my sophomore and junior year at college. It was June 29, 1950, and I was 22 years old. One of my extended relatives, a distant cousin named Margot Sellig, or "Maggie" as we called her, was having a party. She was going to Penn State. I went to the party with some friends, Lynn Helferd and Howard, and we were very adult because we had a bottle of booze with us. We decided we weren't going to give our bottle to anybody else if that was the only bottle of booze. We peeked into the windows and saw they didn't have any booze in there, so we were going to leave. As we were leaving, a second cousin walked by named Norbert Weikers, and he recognized me, so I was stuck. I had to go to the party.

Maggie had invited one of her college friends to the party with her, a girl named Jay Wucher. I walked in the door of the party, and I saw this buxom blonde broad with a low-cut purple peasant blouse and a tan skirt, and I said, "Wow!" So I decided to stay at that party. She walked up to me and said, "You got a ciggie-boo?" meaning a cigarette. She was 18 and gorgeous. She had long blond hair at that point and one white eyebrow and one dark eyebrow. I later found out the white eyebrow came from her being hit by a car when she was a child. I didn't have any ciggie-boos, but I did smoke in those days. Eventually we found some and went outside to smoke.

And then she had to say goodnight to her date! She had come

with this guy named Marvin Reidbord, who was her next-door neighbor, and he had a headache and had laid down for a while then decided to leave. So, she walked him back out to his yellow Pontiac convertible, and he asked her, "You're going back to that guy, aren't you?" She said, "What guy?" He pointed to me, the guy who was walking across the lawn and looking at the car every 30 seconds. She told him that she was just going to stay over with Margot, then, sure enough, she came back in. We went to talk in the kitchen, and I started to flip coins. I have no idea why I started to flip coins. I didn't know what to say, but I desperately wanted to talk to her. It was a game called "pitch penny" or something.

I couldn't win, but she pretended that she was losing because she didn't want the game to end. I was losing and didn't know what the hell I was doing. I was looking down her dress, then I was looking at her face. I fell in love. I had never really done anything spontaneously, but I was drinking too, and I got a bit beschnockered. Finally, I said, "Do you want to take a walk?" We went outside and walked down the street. We stopped under a tree—it was like 10:00 at night—and I got down on my knees and asked her, "Will you marry me?" She looked at me like I was crazy and said, "Yeah, I'll marry you." She thought she had a maniac on her hands. She did accept, but she didn't really mean it I found out later. I did not know that she wasn't Jewish, something that would later cause a lot of trouble in my life.

She did stay the night at Margot's that night, but so did I. We didn't fool around or anything, although Lynn and Margot did! Jay spent the night fighting off my advances, but it was a very easy fight-off. She was wearing a damn blue rubber girdle that I still curse to this day. She spent the night on the couch, and I think I got the floor. I remember waking up and feeling not too well. Lynn came up, bragging that he had screwed my cousin, which I did not want to hear. The four of us ended up going to a park that day and spending the night again. The next day we went out together again and came back to find Maggie's parents had come home and found a subway token in her room that was clearly not hers. Her mother came out with a

carpet beater and went after me, thinking I was the one who went after her daughter. She even got me in the head with the beater, which may explain some of my craziness all these years!

We took a streetcar out to where Jay lived, and I waited on the corner of Liberty Avenue for her to get her car. It was a black Lincoln! I never knew anybody who had a black Lincoln. It was almost the last time I saw her though; she was going up to a lake with a bunch of old friends, and I went to work the next day. Some time went by, and I was telling one of my co-workers at the shoe store, a black kid named Irving, about her. He said, "Man, you better call that girl because, if you like that girl and you don't call her, then you're a jerk." So, I went down the street to a restaurant. It was rowdy in there, and, as I called her, I saw these two guys carrying this knocked-out guy outside after a brawl. I told her about that and then said I'd like to see her again. And then we started seeing each other practically every weekend!

Between the job, my girlfriend, and school, I was happier than I had ever been in my life and yet crazier than I had ever been. Things started to fray, but I didn't know it at first. Jay and I started seeing each other fairly frequently; she would come down from Penn State—I later found out that she was hitchhiking! I thought I was doing great in school until I was put on probation at the end of the first quarter and told I was flunking practically all my courses. Well, I had no idea! It was very difficult in art school because everything is subjective....

Four times a year, they'd have judgments. That means all the work of all the people in your class was displayed. There were specific objects and specific problems you had to solve. And the faculty would be pushed, like on a trolley, past each one of these groups of works, and your grades depended upon how that faculty reacted to your ability to solve those graphic and aesthetic problems. The people judging our works were young guys, old guys, and a couple of women. Some wanted stuff in a very contemporary fashion, others did not, and somehow it boiled down to whether it was acceptable or not acceptable. Well, I obviously wasn't on the right wavelength that year because I almost got my ass thrown out of school. And I tell you, when you start getting incompletes or fails in art, you don't know what to do because what you think is the proper solution to a problem is not the proper solution; there is no formula that allows you to say, "2 + 2 =" because it doesn't work that way. Somehow, I was perceiving the problems in a way that no one else was. Something had happened to me. I guess it was love.

I got called up to the dean's office and put on probation. I was so confused when they told me I was doing everything wrong. I didn't know what to do. But, when I was made aware of what the hell was happening, I somehow straightened out what I was doing. If it had not been for that half year, I probably would've graduated with almost a 4.0 average, but there was no way after that year!

In my third year, I had to choose what kind of an artist I wanted to be: I could pursue teaching, industrial design, or painting and design. The option I decided on was painting and design because I was not interested in industrial design, and I was definitely not interested in teaching art. Strangely enough, given where my life went, the appeal of teaching art in a grade school or high school was lost on me; while I could see a bit more appeal to teaching art in college, with more stimulation and thought and pushing, I still didn't think teaching was for me. I'm not criticizing teachers, who I think are wonderful, I just mean that it was not something I saw for myself.

But my choice came with its own problems. If I was going to be a painter, how was I going to make a living? Jay told me to take painting and design, and we'd go to Paris and paint and live there when we got married. I thought she was nuts. I just wanted to make sure I could get a job, and she wanted me to go to Paris. But I chose painting and design. By the third year, you were sort of off on your own. You made your own decisions—this is what I want to do, this is what I want it to look like—but the style they had taught us the first two years really lived with me and has throughout my life. If you thought about the problem and you looked at the problem and you decided to do something with it, then you could proceed. Never start something without having some knowledge of what it is you're doing, where you're going, why you're doing it.

In design there's size, shape, position, direction—those are things you play with, and you rearrange them, and you come up to something, and you say, "Hey! That's about as good as I'm going to be able to do with this specific problem." Well, you can translate that to anything. And being able to solve things graphically really is wonderful because it's a point of view that allows you to think about many problems. It's not just your head; it's all those emotions that come out at the same time—position, shape, direction, texture,

Opposite Below:
A college photo of Jay Wucher

Opposite Above:
Lou, Jay, and a friend, in their college years

Above:
A symbolic painting of skulls

color—I mean, there's life in there! There were times when we would limit ourselves, working in black-and-white for months, no color at all, and get as much as we possibly could out of that. Or work with nothing but line and the quality of the line and the texture of the line and what a line can do to define a form. It becomes part of you, and after a while it becomes second nature and is not a conscious process.

And, although I finally started to really enjoy what I did—with the hundreds and hundreds of drawings, paintings, design problems—I could never get to where I really felt I had mastered anything. I always felt uncomfortable with the drawing. I never got the feeling that I had really been able to get exactly what I wanted on that paper or on the plywood or on the masonite I was painting on. In my class there was no one other than Bill Shaffer that I would have traded my talents for, but I just didn't feel that I was as good as I wanted to be.

But, I got through Carnegie Tech, and, by the end of the fourth year, I thought I did have a background in how you'd prepare art for reproduction. It seemed like that could be a career path. I was really much more interested in illustration, perhaps even easel painting. But it wasn't likely one could make a living as a painter. Most of the guys who ended up making their living as painters were also teaching.

During this period of the early 1950s is when I really started seeing animation blossom. There were some animated films that were so unique, so daring, and so unlike anything anyone had ever done that I became intrigued with animation. I did not really think about getting involved in animation, but I at least saw it as a new way of communicating. I especially liked the work of the studio called UPA, or United Productions of America. Their *Gerald McBoing-Boing* things were coming out along with the early *Mr. Magoo* stuff. They did Thurber films such as *The Unicorn in the Garden*, and each one of those was like a little, moving painting. They were just marvelous. I said, "Look at what people are doing out there! They're making art move!"

I'd seen all the Warner Brothers shorts, but I'd never thought about those as art. I thought about those as storytelling. But, when UPA started, I thought about that work as art in motion, in time. They did wonderful graphic work. And, maybe in the back of my mind, there were the seeds of an idea being planted. But it wasn't something that was ready to grow yet.

I graduated on June 7, 1952, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Pictorial Design degree. While I was looking for a good job, I had started working on a project with some other guys to publish a magazine called the *Pittsburgh Spectator*. I had devoted months to it as the art director for free because the guys had no money. We got some issues out and sold some advertising. I was doing it while I was still going to school, and we continued to do it after I graduated hoping the thing would succeed and I would become an art director on a real magazine. It seemed to me that if you had to make a living that would not be a bad way to do it.

At the same time, we found out that my mother was suffering from cancer of the cervix. She had one operation to remove her cervix, and, after that first operation, I thought she was going to be okay. She looked good and started gaining some weight. This was just before I graduated. And then she went back into the hospital in September, and it was a ghastly time. She suffered greatly. It was a long and painful for her in that hospital. We never told her that she had cancer, but I think she probably realized it.

In the two-plus years I had been dating Jay, my side of the family hadn't accepted her much because she was a *shiksa*, which was a condescending word for a non-Jewish woman. And Jay's family wasn't very accepting of me either. But, during my mother's sickness, she finally came to accept Jay. Jay would come down to the hospital to help, and she would cry because my mother was looking skeletal. Then my mother's legs became gangrenous—that's one of the things that happens with cancer. They were going to amputate one of her legs, and, by the time she had died, she was subjected to morphine because she was in constant pain. I was there every day and every night, and Jay was often with me.

Mrs. Goldfarb was one of my mother's friends who lived on the hill, and she would come to visit. She was a wild woman, and I really liked her. She used to speak Yiddish to me and my mother. She was in the hospital room with me, and we both thought my mother was asleep. Mrs. Goldfarb was saying to me, "Liebel, I have such a girl for you. You should meet this girl," and this little voice came from the bed. Mother said, "Mrs. Goldfarb, do no good. He's going with a nice girl. She's a *shiksa*, but she's a really good girl." It made me feel so good. It was really terrific. One time, near the end, it was Jay's birthday, and my mother remembered, and she said, "Did you get something for Jay?" She gave me some money, even though I had money, and made me go downtown and get her a gift for Jay.

I really think that she knew she was going to die soon, and she was happy that I had a woman I loved. The night before she died, she woke up and spoke to me in Yiddish. She said, "Liebel, where are we? We're in a strange place. What world is this?" And it was so frightening to me because she did not know where she was. It must've been a vision of death. I have no idea what it was. I left the room for a couple seconds to go and find my aunt, and when I returned she was dead. Long after her body had given out, her heart

had stopped beating.

It was November 24, 1952. She was buried next to my father at Beth Abraham Cemetery in Pittsburgh. Jay came down for the funeral. I was a wreck. All the months of seeing my mother in so much pain and knowing that there was nothing good that was going to happen out of that… it took its toll.

Unfortunately, the *Spectator* magazine folded around that time as well. It never made enough money. I had a big fight with the guys who had started it. I was involved with it from the very beginning, but some of them turned out to be crooks. Many of the ads were fake ads that were never paid for. Not only could they not pay us, they couldn't pay the printing presses either. So, it was over.

My mother had left me $4500, which was the money my father had left her, plus interest. I kept looking for a job, and I finally found one at a little advertising agency called Rothman and Gibbons. I started there at the end of 1952, I think, or the beginning of 1953. I was making $150 a month or something. It was a crumb-bum job, and I was the only artist and the art director; I was directing myself. I did sh*tty little jobs retouching photos of storm windows and putting highlights on photos of aluminum windows. I did drawings of houses for some outfit they had called Swift Homes and pasted up type. It was an awful job, but it was a job! I tried to get into an advertising agency, but nobody needed anybody. My portfolio did not intrigue them.

In 1953 Jay and I got officially engaged. Even though we had been dating all that time, she was still away at school most of the time and felt strange about it. We went down and got the ring from a wholesale diamond merchant that I knew; they lived across the street from my Aunt Sarah's. I was never satisfied that the ring was big enough. We got a tiny little diamond. We took it home together, and Jay said, "Aunt Sarah, look how beautiful this is!" And Sarah said, like a true Jewish woman, "Hmm, it's pretty small." But it was a good diamond, and it had no flaws in it.

Jay's father was a doctor, and we were sure they weren't going to be very accepting of me as their son-in-law, so Jay didn't tell her parents for a very long time. But she graduated from college herself, and my Aunt Sarah and Uncle Lou had really grown to love her. When Dr. Frederick Vaux Wucher and Jay's mother, Isabelle, finally found out that we were engaged, they talked with Aunt Sarah and told her that their daughter would never be able to live under such "deprivation," and that she was spoiled, and they didn't think this whole thing was going to work.

We decided we were going to get married over the Christmas holidays on the 29th because we had met June 29th. That would be three and a half years after we met. But, we were unable to find a rabbi to marry us, and we were afraid that without a rabbi my family wouldn't come. So, we decided to get married out of town.

We were married on Tuesday, December 29, 1953, at a Presbyterian church in Crewe, Virginia by minister Robert C. Vaughan Jr. The wedding notice showed our full names: Jo-Anne Louise Wucher and Louis Erik Scheimer. Yes, by then I had gained a middle name because Jay wanted me to have one! We got a little apartment together on the east end of Pittsburgh, and our long life together began.

Jay became a school librarian and an English teacher in a really tough part of Pittsburgh. They seemed to grow the guys in the school just to play football. They were big and scary. She had the two worst guys in the class sitting on either side of her desk. And they would lift the desk up slowly, slowly, but she didn't give them the satisfaction of knowing she was terrified. She was barely a few years older than they were, but she was tough. She used to frisk some of the guys in the library to make sure they weren't stealing books. One big guy she hit right in the balls.

She was on Pittsburgh Public Television, WQED, once on a live educational show. She took her class with her in the audience. I went down to a local department store to watch her and turned all the televisions on. Jay removed her jacket, and it caught on a big bracelet she was wearing and threw her completely off-guard. She started yelling for Mary, a woman who was there, for help. "Mary! Mary! Mary!" It was the worst. So, when she went back to school, all the kids in the hall would throw up their arms and scream "Mary! Mary!"

That next summer, 1954, we went to New York for our vacation for two weeks. It was really our honeymoon because we didn't have a honeymoon until then. We spent five days of the time out at a little place called Sea Bright, New Jersey, which was just terrific! But, while we were in New York, I tried to get a job. I ran all over New York with my portfolio, and I bought a funny little straw hat and a suit. I was trying to be the advertising agency guy. I went through all the agencies I could find. Nobody was interested. I finally went to *Esquire* magazine, and they told me that they could probably hire me. *Coronet* was another magazine that they owned, and they wanted an art director for *Coronet*. I was very excited.

The guy I was to replace was going into the military, so they told me, "We'll hire you in about a month; he's going to be leaving then. You go back and keep in touch with us." I went back and then found out that the guy had come up 4F and wouldn't be leaving! So, I didn't get the job at *Esquire* or *Coronet*.

I kept working at the horrible agency, and Jay kept working at the tough school, but we knew we had to get out of there. So, in July 1955, we decided to go to California for a few weeks on our vacation. We decided to look around to see if I could find a place to work in a field that I thought was starting to show a lot of interesting promise.

If I could take my portfolio around to the studios, maybe I could get a job in animation.

Opposite:
Lou at college graduation with his mother, June 7, 1952

Above:
Lou and Jay's wedding photo, December 29, 1953

1955-1965

CHAPTER FOUR

CLOWNS, CATS, ROCKETS, AND JESUS

I'm not sure when the light bulb above my head went on, but it occurred to me that, although I had no experience specifically in the animation field, the experience in painting and illustrating that I did have would allow me to paint backgrounds, which are creatively very interesting and also take the least amount of technical knowledge. I didn't have to know how the animation cameras worked.

So, in the late summer of 1955, Jay and I went out to California on vacation and stayed at a motel on Sunset Boulevard that was near a couple of animation studios. I took my portfolio to all the animation studios I could find. I went to Ray Patton's, UPA, and some art service places too. I found one studio called Kling Studios, which was a commercial studio located on the corner of Highland and Sunset Boulevard. It had previously been the Charlie Chaplin Studio. The guys at Kling saw my stuff and said, "Gee, that's nice stuff. We'll hire you to paint backgrounds if you come out, but we don't want you to move out here just because of us." I said, "Hey, that's enough for me. If I have a job here, I'll move out here."

Jay and I drove back to Pittsburgh. I gave the advertising agency that I was working at their two weeks notice. Jay went into the school where she was working at the time and told them that she would not be able to return in September. We packed all of our stuff and drove back to California. *Again*. This was our third trip driving cross country in a very short period of time, but we were excited at the prospect of something new! We arrived here on September 9, 1955.

I went to Kling to report for duty. I was all ready to go to work, and they said, "Oh, I'm sorry, but we don't really need anybody now. We hired somebody else." That was really frightening. I thought I was going to die. What could I do now? I had no job, and we had very little money. We had a couple thousand dollars, which would not last very long. And the movers were bringing our stuff across the country already.

I started running around to some other studios, and nobody needed anybody. I didn't realize how bad the animation business was

Opposite:
Lou illustrating a background

Above:
Kling Studios

here. All the majors were actually closing their studios. Those were the days of the beginning of television, and all the theaters didn't want to pay the extra cost for having a cartoon because they weren't doing that well. A lot of the studios had moved to producing animated commercials. After a couple of weeks, I got a callback from the Kling people, and they said, "We need another guy. We'll hire you." Well that was terrific!

I went to work at Kling, and my desk was actually in what had been Charlie Chaplin's bedroom! It had been converted for us to work in, but I still had to get my water to paint backgrounds with from this strange little sink that was near the toilet. It turned out to be a bidet, which was something I had never seen before. I ended up with a wet face!

I was doing backgrounds for Kling, and I was working so long and so fast that I was putting out a lot of backgrounds. I was doing so many damn backgrounds that I was putting some of the other guys out of work. I got a call from the business agent of the union, and he said, "I've got to talk to you." I thought it was because I hadn't joined the union, which I had no problem doing. This was the first time that I really had to think about what unions were and how they worked. But that wasn't what he wanted. He said, "You're putting guys out of work. You're doing about three times the amount of work that's necessary." And I said, "I don't want any trouble from the boss." And he said, "Yeah, but your friends are having trouble. You're going to put them out of a job if you're not careful." So, I slowed down.

Chaplin's house was very quiet. There was another guy working near me named Roy, who I later hired at Filmation. He was doing assistant animation work, which means cleaning up the animators' rough drawings and putting them on a character. One day I was cutting a matte to paint a straight line, using an X-Acto knife. It went slicing through a finger on my right hand, and I screamed as loud as I could. Blood was spurting out of my hand. Roy fell over and fainted. He scared me more than the damned finger. They took me to a hospital, and they had it fixed up. But, ever since then, I've missed that fingertip! Thankfully, I'm not right-handed, so it didn't do much damage.

But the story isn't quite over. Jay had to take me to the doctor the next day. We were driving down the street, and we stopped at a red light. I looked over and saw a guy in a yellow Buick convertible. And I said, "My God, it's Clark Gable!" That was the first movie star we had ever seen. I started to point and said, "Jay, Jay look at this!" I didn't realize the window on the car was closed, and I hit it with my raw finger. I screamed in pain. Clark Gable saw me, hit the gas, and flew across the street. He must have thought he was being attacked. He was nearly a block away by the time Jay said, "It *is* Clark Gable!"

Despite all these problems, I still felt like animation might have some promise for me. Shortly after I got hired at Kling, Jay and I decided that it was silly for us to be paying rent on a place and began looking for a house. We went out and bought a house at 7430 Louise in Van Nuys for $17,500, which was pretty extravagant as I was making only $70–106 a week. When we called back to Pittsburgh and told our families that we bought a house, they thought we were crazy. It was a lovely little house though, with a back yard. There were two tiny bedrooms and a third larger bedroom. It was about 1,200 square feet, had lots of windows—and it was ours.

No sooner had we bought the house then there was a strike at Kling. I was forced to be out carrying placards, and I didn't even know what the hell was going on! I didn't dare tell Jay I was out of work again, but I had to. And she didn't dare tell her family because, as far as they were concerned, it was bad enough that she married a Jew. But now she had married a Democratic Jew!

When I wasn't striking, I worked my butt off to get freelance jobs, and that's how I kept going. I met up with a guy named Robert Givens, though we called him Bob. Givens was the guy who did the first model sheets for Bugs Bunny, and he was just one of the legends I got to work with over the years. With him, I got a freelance job at Walter Lantz Productions doing one of the cartoons they did for Universal Studios. I showed Lantz my portfolio, and he said, "I do have a job for you guys." They did three short cartoons a month. So we got to work on one called "The Talking Dog" a *Maggie and Sam* theatrical cartoon. What we didn't realize was that it was awfully similar to the now-famous Chuck Jones "One Froggy Evening" cartoon, which had been released in December 1955. That's the one with the talking frog. Well, we had a talking *dog*.

Anyhow, I worked with Bob, and we did a magnificent job painting the backgrounds for that. We did all sorts of wild stuff that Lantz had never seen the like of: collages, pasting up photographs, painting into the thing. It was really fun. Lantz looked at our stuff and said, "That's really not the kind of stuff we normally do. It looks like the sort of thing that UPA does." I said, "Did you like my portfolio?" He said, "I didn't need your portfolio." I said, "My portfolio that I showed you, so you could hire me," to which he responded, "I hired you because you look like my brother Michael!" So, apparently, I went to school for four years and got the job because I looked like his brother. Damn, that was really annoying!

But, he ended up using these crazy backgrounds we did, and it was released theatrically on August 27, 1956. I wasn't credited because they only listed a few people back then, but it was thrilling. I never saw the damn thing on film though, so I didn't know what it looked like. And then the strike was over, and I went back to work

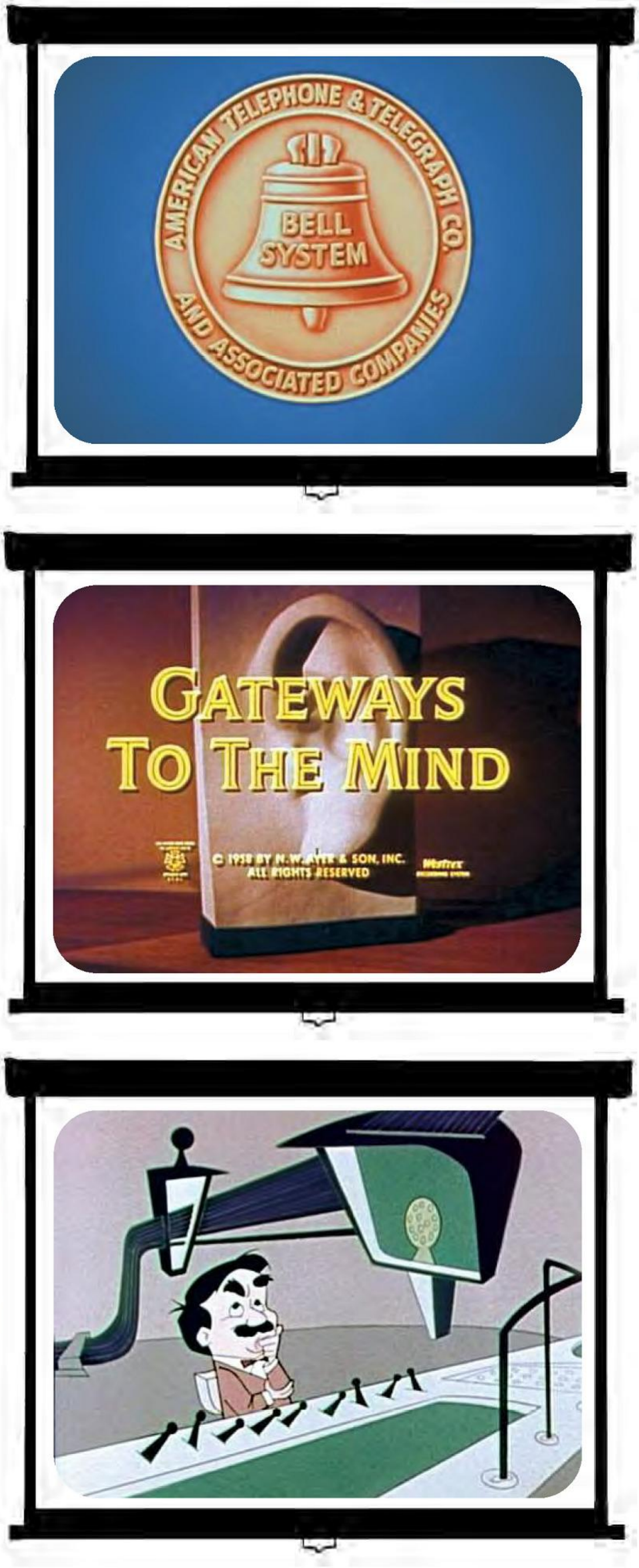
at Kling.

I worked for Kling a few more times, and then they ran out of work. So, I went over to see Ray Patton at Ray Patton Productions. Ray Patton was the old man who talked to the people who were buying animation for their commercials. But he didn't really get involved with the day-to-day stuff. So, I showed Gus, the office manager, my portfolio and got hired. There was something strange about Gus though. He'd come in wearing the same sort of clothes that I'd wear in the morning: overalls, blue jeans—normal stuff. He would come by and say, "Hi, Lou, good morning." And then in the afternoon he would come by again in a suit and tie, and I'd say, "Hello." He would look at me like he didn't know me. It went on like that for a while before I finally found out that he had a twin brother!

Three years after we got married, Jay and I had our first child. Lane Vaux Scheimer was born on Tuesday, December 25, 1956, in Van Nuys. Right after that, Patton ran out of work again, and I was off to find employment once more, but this time with three of us to take care of!

For a short time, I worked at Song Ads, where I was hired by Lee Mishkin, who was more of a classical animator. He was a very, very nice and very, very talented guy. I remember we came in one morning, and he was really distraught, so I asked him what was wrong. He said, "It's my birthday." And I said, "What's wrong with your birthday? You should be happy." He said, "Nah, you can't be a boy wonder after 30." I liked working for him because he was so nice, but I was a wreck all the time because work was so inconsistent. Somehow Jay would make it all work and stretch out the bread and butter; she never wanted to ask her family for money. We made it through all these ups and downs, but she had to drive me to work most days because we only had one car. And, because we were living out in the Valley and all the work was in Hollywood, it took longer because there were no freeways back then.

I was beginning to understand the business I was in and was becoming technically pretty proficient. I could do layout for animation, and I knew how to make the thing work, how to make it tick, how to design a picture that could be made, and how to storyboard a picture. I never became an animator, but I could do any other function. I understood the process of the medium. I understood the camera. I knew what the camera could and couldn't do. There were times I still wanted to be a better artist; I didn't feel that I could really quite capture what I wanted to do. It always eluded me.



Of course, I was working with storyboards when I was doing the backgrounds. And, although I did enjoy painting backgrounds, they weren't really mine; I mean, somebody else designed them. The guy who would be doing the layouts was designing and laying out the backgrounds, especially with commercials. All a background artist had to really do was clean up their pencil drawing of the background on a piece of art board and color it. There were some guys who were magnificent background painters though.

I have to tell you one sad thing about that time. Most of that art didn't survive because they would throw it away. Especially the cels. It would cost them, like, three cents a cel, so they would wash the cels off and paint over the top of them again. Nobody had any idea that the stuff would ever be worth anything.

Anyhow, my rising proficiency

Opposite:
Image from "The Talking Dog" with backgrounds by Lou

Above: (top to bottom)

Bell System screen credit

Title screen from *Gateways To The Mind*

Backgrounds by Lou for *Gateways To The Mind*

helped me when I finally got a job at Warner Bros. They were doing a Bell Laboratory Science Series. They needed somebody to do layouts and storyboards. It was a long project and would probably last close to a year. So, I went out and saw a guy named Johnny Burton, who was the production manager at the Warner Bros. animation studio. He was sort of a grumpy fellow. He said, "You wait here; I've got to go talk to boss." I was just standing there, looking straight on, and I heard somebody say, "Those goddamn guys from outside always want more money! That's all I ever hear from you guys!" I looked down, and there was this tiny, little man, who apparently ran the studio. I asked him what he meant, and he said, "You want $100 a week." I said, "Well, yeah, but that's scale. I don't want anything more than anybody else." He said, "Well, it doesn't make any difference if that's scale. It's too much for you." I said, "Okay, but you can't pay me less if you hire me." He said, "Yeah, that's the problem." I said, "Well, what are you going to do?" He hired me, and I went to work for Chuck Jones's unit.

The Bell Series was sponsored by the Bell Telephone Laboratories. It was a series of educational films about an hour long each that were made for schools. They mixed live-action footage with animation and were hosted at the time by Frank C. Baxter, who played "Dr. Research." Frank Capra actually produced the first four of them. There were two of them being worked on in 1957 for 1958, but I worked on *Gateways to the Mind*, which was about how your five senses worked.

This was a really classy outfit. They had guys coming in from universities working as advisors. Owen Crump was the director and producer of the film, and he worked with Chuck Jones to do the animated portion. That's how I met Chuck. Of all the guys that I worked with in the animation world, Chuck was probably the only genius that I ever met. He was really incredibly gifted guy. Very, very talented, and he could talk for an hour on just about anything and know all about it. I had lunch with Chuck every now and then over in the commissary. We worked right across the street from the main Warner studio. Any of us could walk in the studio and wander around and do whatever we wanted. Chuck would wander around and come over and see us at least once or twice a day.

I worked with a guy named Willie Ito. Right across from us was the studio, and there was a casting office there. As soon as Chuck was gone, Willie was over looking through the window blinds to see what was going on at casting and what pretty girls were coming in. I said, "Willie, you're going to get killed!" He didn't have any problems because he was working full-time at Warner Bros, but I wasn't a regular employee, and I didn't need any trouble. Willie had this snubby, little nose, and he stuck it right in the middle of the blinds. Well, Chuck came in one day, and he pulled the blinds shut with a snap and almost cut Willie's nose off. Willie almost fainted, and Chuck giggled away. Chuck was quite the ladies' man himself. He screwed anything that moved. If a rock was in motion, he'd be all over it.

Chuck didn't really say anything nice to me about my art, except once when I was working on a drawing of a hand he told me that it was "really pretty good." But I think him commenting on that one drawing convinced the others that I was okay. I would sit at their table at lunch. Some of the guys were legendary to me: Mike Maltese, who wrote most of Chuck's stuff; Maurice Noble, who was head of backgrounds for Chuck; Abe Levitow was a brilliant animator, and he later directed some Pepé Le Pew cartoons and others.

I met Friz Freleng, but if you were in Chuck's unit you didn't get too close to Friz, and you didn't laugh at Friz's stuff when they were showing it. Nor did Friz's guys laugh at Chuck's stuff when it was shown. It was weird like that. Chuck and Friz were both on the bottom floor, and Robert McKimson was upstairs. There was a pretty girl who was a receptionist, and she was actually Friz's daughter.

That year Chuck invited me to the Christmas party for his gang. I thought, "Boy, this is it. I'm being invited to an animation icon's party." Jay and I got there, and he had a lovely house. Chuck was acting like he always acted, aloof but friendly. And then I heard some terrible gagging. I went outside, and Jay was vomiting over his porch, all over his damned back yard! I just knew I was going to get fired. Chuck came up and said, "What's the matter with her?" I said, "Oh no, this happens to her every once a while. Maybe she's pregnant or something." I didn't know what the hell to say. She was drunk, not pregnant.

Anyway, Warner ran out of work because they finished the science series for that year. They stuck me on to do some of the normal stuff at Warners, but I knew that wouldn't last long. I knew this was going to be trouble. I was working for Maurice Noble then. Maurice was the head storyboarder and also a background artist. He was another icon, and he was very fussy. I hated working for fussy people; they find something wrong even if they have to look at the back side of background sheets. But there was a lot to learn from him too. He worked meticulously.

Since I was the new guy there, I knew that they weren't really going to put me in the real animation unit. But I painted the backgrounds for one of the shorts they did called "The Mouse That Jack Built." It was essentially Jack Benny as a mouse, so we were using Jack's place, and I painted backgrounds of Jack Benny's home. I worked with Bob Singer on that, who later went over to Hanna-Barbera and had a long career. He's the one that got the credit though!

Speaking of Hanna-Barbera, I had talked to them to see if they needed anybody in layout. Backgrounds are fun to do, but they're

not as important because you really don't have to know what's going on technically. In layout you do. As a background artist, I was very careful to find out what I was doing and why I was doing it. The reason why a background has to be done lightly or darkly or in specific colors is generally because the characters will be working against it. But with layout you're working for the size of the field. You have to do the character in a pose that is appropriate for what the actions can be for what the animators are going to work at. You really have to know what you're doing. You have to know how the camera works and what you can do with the camera. And how the hell I found out this information along the way, I don't know!

I put in about eight months at Warner, and then I went to work at Hanna-Barbera. At this point they were a relatively new studio. Together, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera had been directors, writers, and creators for MGM since 1939, including creating Tom and Jerry. When MGM closed in 1957, they set up their own shop, and Hanna-Barbera Enterprises was born in July of that year. They rented offices on the lot of Kling Studios and brought a lot of their own guys over with them.

Their first big job, other than commercials, was an original property for television. TV was a new field, and the networks were already doing kids' shows on Saturday mornings, but there really wasn't any new animation being done for them. CBS was showing old Terrytoons and doing well though. NBC had bought a group of Columbia Pictures' old film cartoons, but there wasn't really anything big in the package. So, with prompting from Screen Gems, which was the TV side of Columbia, they decided to hire Hanna-Barbera to do a new series of shorts which could be paired with the old Columbia cartoons. Those, in turn, would all be hosted by a live-action host, who would introduce the cartoons.

Hanna-Barbera developed a show called *Ruff and Reddy*, which was about a dog in a collar and a cat in a bowtie and their various adventures. It was serialized, so it had some story continuity, but it was aimed at a very young audience. They also had a very low budget for the new shorts, so they developed a quick and dirty style of limited animation. The collar and bow tie meant that, if the characters' heads were animated, the bodies could remain the same cels, and only the heads from the neck up would have to be animated.

So, I got hired at Hanna-Barbera to work on *Ruff and Reddy*, and I was back at Kling Studios! It was the toughest job I ever had. I worked day and night and did around 125 of the shorts. Although the shows were aired in black-and-white, the animation was done in color, so we had to take all of that into consideration in production.

I had the worst trouble drawing one of the damned bad guys. I don't remember which one it was, but the background guys had to be able to use the drawings, and the animation was so limited that stuff hardly moved. Every time I sent drawings of the damned bad guy through, they would return them to me and say, "Not on character, please do over." But it was it was as close as I could get to on-character. Every morning that f*cking thing would come back. So, I went in to see Joe, and I said, "Joe, you know how to draw this character; show me what I'm doing wrong." And he picked it up and looked at it, and he drew it. And I said, "Is that correct? If I turn that in, I won't have any problems?" It was Joe who was sending the stuff back to me every day. And he said, "No, that's perfect." So, I took it back to my desk and put all the scene numbers on it. I sent his drawing in, and the son-of-a-bitch sent it back the next day. It said, "Do over, not on character." He rejected his own drawing! So I said, "Screw this, I gotta get out of here." There was clearly no way I was going to win.

I went down to Larry Harmon's place, which was in the old studio then called Producer's Studio at 649 North Bronson Avenue, near Melrose Avenue; these days it's called Raleigh Studios. I heard he was opening up a place and was going to do a new series. He had bought the rights to this character called Bozo the Clown in 1956, and he wanted to do a series of cartoons with them, which he would put with a show that aired around the country, hosted by a live Bozo the Clown. I went in to see him, and he hired me right away.

I was with Larry for about four years, from 1957 to 1961, I think, so the things I'm going to relate about my time there may be a bit out of order. It's easier to remember stories by studio than it is by years. This is over 50 years ago, you know! I was in charge of layout and did a lot of jobs for Larry. We produced 165 *Bozo the Clown* cartoons during that time, and I laid out a lot of them! Outside of Filmation, I worked there longer than any other place. I was one of his first employees and his last employee.

Harmon was really a very nice man, but he was also a strange man. Larry wanted to do Bozo basically so that he could do the voice. Actually, what he really wanted to do was be half the team of Laurel and Hardy. He got his money from outside sources, including some money from France. But Larry couldn't speak any French. One

Opposite:
Lou's backgrounds for "The Mouse That Jack Built"

Above:
Warner's Commercial and Industrial Film animation crew in 1958 (l to r) Chuck Jones, Leo Salkin, Lou Scheimer, Maurice Noble, Owen Crump, Carol Chaka, and Richard Hobson

day he brought a French guy to the offices to try to show him what we did because he was trying to raise money off of him. The French guy was a little guy who looked like a mummy corpse. All you'd have to do was wrap bandages around him, and he'd be Imhotep the Fourth.

So, Larry was screaming in his office, and we could barely understand him. And I suddenly realized that Larry was speaking with a French accent. He said, "In zis corner ve have ze lab department." And this French guy was going nuts, not understanding what Larry was saying. Larry figured that if he spoke English with a French accent, this guy would understand him!

Larry may have been nutty, but he was not stupid. He'd go from city to city and sell the *Bozo* TV show. And he would talk them into hiring a local Bozo so they could have their own children's hour hosted by the clown. There ended up being one in just about every major city. Willard Scott, who did the weather for umpty-dozen years on *The Today Show*, was one of the Bozos. In Los Angeles, the son of the guy who created the Bozo character played Bozo, though Larry wanted to do it himself. Elsewhere, Larry would audition guys to play Bozo. It was really a good idea, and it became very, very successful. He ended up with a lot of half-hours.

At Harmon's, I first met one of the most important people in my life and the history of Filmation: Hal Sutherland. Hal had been an assistant animator at Disney. I remember the cake that his wife baked him when he made full animator on *Bozo the Clown*! Hal and I basically ran Harmon's place creatively. Not in the writing area, but everything from layout and storyboards to the animation. We ended up being very close.

At one point one of the directors at Warner was starting his own studio. He called me in and offered me $350 a week, which was an enormous amount—I was making a couple hundred dollars a week, I guess, with Larry. The guys I was working with told me to use that offer to get more money from Larry, but I didn't want to, so I decided to leave. I went in to see Harmon, and he said, "You can't leave." I said, "But, Larry, I promised the guy that I wasn't going to negotiate with you. I feel very bad about this. I guaranteed him that I was absolutely not going to use the number he offered me." And he said, "Why, what's that number?" He finally got me to tell him my offer for 350 bucks a week.

Larry said, "Well, I'll give you that starting next week. Next week, not this week." I felt guilty, and I said, "Wait a minute. Let me call my wife." So, I called Jay, and I told her he was offering the same amount as the other guy, starting the following week. She said, "Let me talk to Larry." Well, he knew her, and he didn't want to talk to her, but he finally did. He kept saying, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay." He got off the phone and told me, "The $350 starts this week." That was how I got to be the highest-paid layout man in the city!

I hired all the guys who came in on background and layout. I met a lot of the guys that ended up working for Filmation later on. One of the guys I hired on at Larry's was Ervin Kaplan. He had been working at UPA, but was out of work. Larry always knew when somebody was coming in to look for a job because they would be in a shirt and tie.

Irv and I would work on ideas for shows we wanted to sell. One time Irv and I had to go someplace, and the guy who was bankrolling Harmon offered us a ride. He had a chauffer and everything. He and Larry never got along too well though. So, we got into his car, and he said, "You know, there's one thing that I really can't stand. I can't stand people who are not loyal to people who they are working with." I thought, "Oh no, he's going to get me fired." I was afraid he was going to tell Larry that I was trying to raise money from him—which I was—but it turned out that he was talking about Larry, not me! He said, "Someday, Larry will understand that." And I said, "Oh yeah, he'll understand someday." I understood immediately.

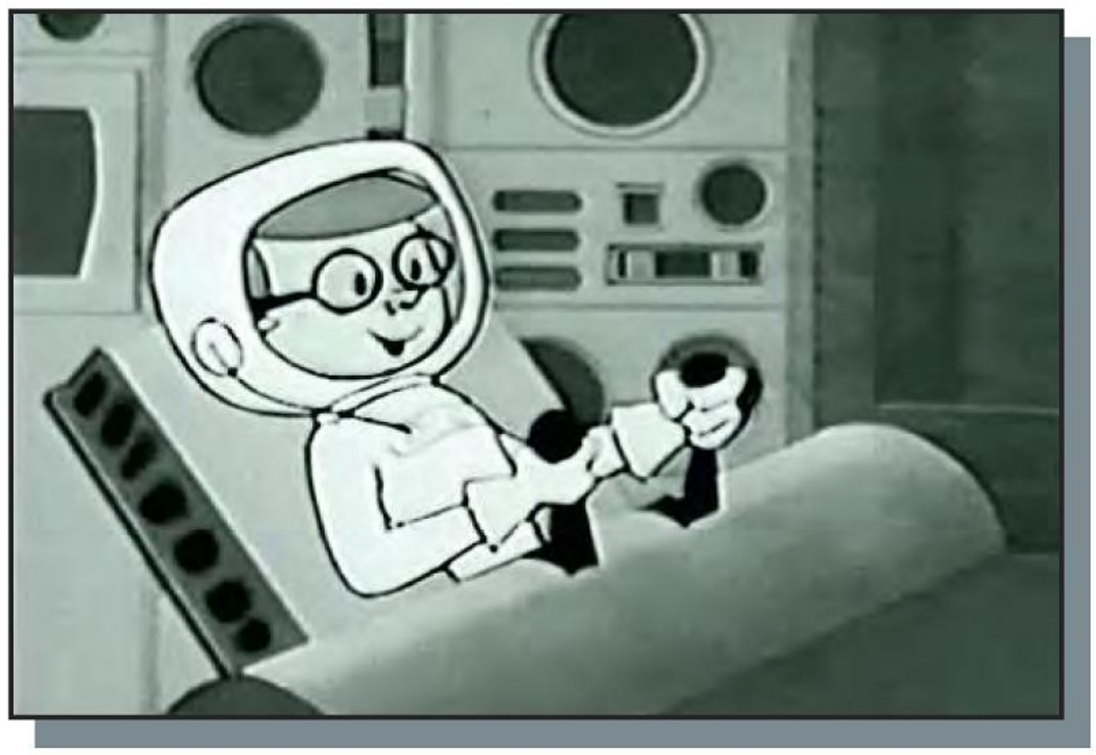
Irv and I had worked up a proposal for a show we were going to try to sell called *The Adventures of Stanley Stoutheart*. It was a big dog and a little kid who rode on top of him. It was original to us. Sarcastically, I'll say that it was *so original* that nobody wanted to buy it.

Working on that, we got a call from Ted Knight, who wanted to be involved in it. We had met once years before. He looked like a defrocked priest back then. He was wearing a black jacket and a white shirt, with his big white hair. He started out as the host of a children's show in Providence, Rhode Island. He had a gay ventriloquist dummy named Duncan. The thing was scary! Ted couldn't talk straight at all until he got that damned dummy. It was something called a Davenport doll, not like a Charlie McCarthy dummy. It looked like a real face because there were no mouth lines. It had some sort of rubbery face. It was sort of a handsome looking puppet with eyebrows and purple eyes and eyelashes. And that dummy would wink at you; it used to make me nuts. It was scary!

Many years later, when Ted died in August, 1986, Jay and I went to his house after the funeral. Comedian Charles Grodin was there. He and Jay's brother went to high school together, so we had known Chuck a long time. Everybody was drinking, and we decided we were

going to resurrect Duncan, but nobody could find the damned puppet. So Ted Jr. went up and got Duncan out, and I damn near fainted. Duncan started winking at me again, and I thought Ted was coming back from the grave to make me nuts!

When work finally started winding down on *Bozo*, we started letting people go. Larry wasn't able to raise any more money for more new shows because we had so many. I was basically the last guy left in the animation department, and Larry didn't want to let me go. I finally had to lay myself off. I said, "Larry, this is crazy. I'm sitting in a room all by myself with nothing to do." But that put me in the position of having to look for work again. And my lovely daughter, Erika Carroll Scheimer, was born on March 28, 1960. So, it was really important that I had steady work now with a family of four. That's how I ended up at a studio called True Line.



Here's where a lot of the history gets a bit jumbled because it's really where bits and pieces of Filmation started coming together. Hal Sutherland had gone to work for True Line, which was a small company run by a guy named Lou Livingston that was doing commercials and other small stuff. One of the other guys behind True Line was Marcus Lipsky, who owned Reddi-wip, the whipped cream company. One day, Hal and I were working, and this disreputable accountant named Steve Gold came in and told us we were going to start working on a communist show called *Red Racket*. I said, "What's *Red Racket*? Are you sure it's not *Rod Rocket*?"—which is actually what it was. It was also, therefore, despite his malapropism, *not* a communist show.

Lipsky had connections in Chicago, and they were financing *Rod Rocket*, but as Gold explained it, "These guys in Chicago have been putting up the money, but the studio is a farce, and they can't get it done. They don't know how to do it, and the money's getting lost, and we figured you guys could do it." They were calling themselves SIB Productions in their logo, but in the trade papers like *Variety*, they were Space Age Productions.

True Line was disorganized, and we knew it was going to fall apart if we didn't do something. I turned around to Hal, and Hal turned around to me, and we decided we were going to do *Rod Rocket*. We were afraid the other animators would think we screwed them, but, the next day, Hal and I put on our shirts and went up to True Line and told them we were taking over *Rod Rocket*.

The series was a syndicated show with 65 five-minute stories, so that, when you put five of them together, you got a half-hour show. It was a space adventure series about bespectacled youngster Rod Rocket, his little blond friend Joey, the wise scientist Professor Argus, and Cassie, who was the Professor's granddaughter. They would go out on missions in a spaceship called the *Little Argo*, and there were some educational things put into each episode, though the science was predicated on what was known at the time and mixed with science fiction as well. The kids often were menaced by Russian cosmonauts, which was indicative of the time, but they had been given the unfortunate name of "Space Sniggers" due to their laughter. This had entirely unfortunate connotations when said in the reedy voice of Sam Edwards as Joey. Hal Smith played Professor Argus, and Pat Blake was Cassie.

Within a week we had 100 people working for us. We took over the top floor of the Director's Building at Paramount. It was just loaded with people. We had a big job to do on this damned *Rod Rocket* series. And we did it—we completed it, we did it on budget, and we put the whole thing into shape. Hal and I were directors for the episodes, which were written by Dick Robbins.

It turned out, though, that the "Chicago guys" were some kind of Japanese gangsters. On the days we got paid, we had to go down and get our checks cashed at the Sumitomo Bank in downtown Los Angeles because, if you didn't go down the same day you got the check, it was going to bounce the next day. I told Hal, "We've got to get out of here. We're going to go nuts!" The business was awful! We really needed something else.

I had been freelancing for Walter Bien on these commercial jobs—I had known him from when he produced the Bell Science Series—doing storyboards for Paramount Television Commercials, which he was in charge of. I did some Gillette commercials that had an animated bird mixed in with some live action, and a commercial for Marathon Oil with some kind of machines stomping the ground. And I recall some commercials we did that were kind of done like

Opposite:
Lou & Bozo the Clown

Above: (top to bottom)
Scene from *Rod Rocket*

The first credit for Filmation Associates

Lane with baby Erika Scheimer

detective stories.

Those commercials really began what Filmation was to become. There was one that Walter Bien hired me to do, which was going to be very difficult. It was a combination of live action and animation. There were supposed to be color searchlights introducing the 1962 Fords. They could not photograph color searchlights against a dark sky. So they called me in and wanted to know if we could animate them. Hal Sutherland and I did the commercial together, and we got a lot of dough for that. There were traveling mattes, combinations of live action and animation, automobiles speeding, and animated searchlights against the sky. Hal had done some special effects animation, and I knew how to rotoscope, so we did the rotoscoping on a car and searchlights. We would take the car footage and shoot it back in an animation camera, frame by frame, so we knew where the car was so we could do the animated searchlights and make sure that they didn't touch any portion of the car. It was really a tough job, but it turned out to be a great looking commercial.

So, I said to Hal, " I think I could round us up enough work to go on our own. Would you be interested working with me? I think I could get us some money." Hal said, "Let's not worry about the money, Lou. We have friendship. That's all we need." Well, we needed more than that because our "office" was the back of Hal's station wagon while I tried to find us more work outside of True Line, but, thankfully, that didn't last long.

I found an outfit called Family Films run by a Jewish guy named Stan Hersh. They had done a live-action TV series called *This Is the Life* sponsored by the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, but Hersh wanted to do a series of ten very limited animated films about the life of Jesus Christ. So I went to Walter Bien and made a deal with him. If he gave us the commercial work, and we did the Christian stuff for Family Films, we could make a go of it. He agreed, and we began setting up the shop at Paramount. That got us out of True Line, and we didn't have to worry about running down to cash our checks or being afraid of mobsters getting mad at us.

We set up a studio in a big room on the fourth floor of the Director's Building at Paramount; I did the layouts and designed all the backgrounds, Hal did the animation, and Erv Kaplan did the backgrounds. Kaplan was working at Ed Graham Studio, and at first we farmed out the backgrounds to him, which he'd paint when he wasn't at work. The scripts for the shows were written by somebody at Family Films because I'm Jewish, Hal is Catholic, and this was for the Lutheran Church. We also got some religious advisors who were doctors of divinity, so we were theoretically correct on our theology. I had to find out what the Holy Land looked like back in the time of Christ!

I had met a guy named Ira Epstein through Jay. She played cards with a woman named Nottie, whose husband, Ira, was a lawyer who worked for Harmon. We became friends, and I guess I was his first real client. When we decided to incorporate our new animation company, Ira put the corporation together. Ira's boss got mad at him because their firm was representing Harmon, but Harmon and I weren't in competition with each other. Ira had been looking for a reason to go out on his own, so he left the firm and represented us. I gave 10% to Ira and 10% to Hal, and I kept 80% of the company because I had gotten all the work together and made all the deals.

When we decided to incorporate, we had to name our studio something. We talked about it a lot and finally came up with our solution. We were working on film, but doing animation, so if we put them together it became "Filmation Associates." There were times I thought Filmation was an ugly name, but it seems like it kept us all happy for a lot of years.

We were officially Filmation Associates as of September 1962. But we were still involved with True Line and Paramount. It was kind of a messy situation. We were credited as Filmation on *Rod Rocket* and the ten *Life of Christ* films though, and Hal and I got larger screen credits than we had received up to that point. I directed *Rod Rocket* up through Fall 1963.

One day in 1962, I think, I walked into the commissary at Paramount, and there was a guy named Norm Prescott having lunch with Walter Sharp, who was a music director. Norm had somehow gotten some financing together and started to do an animated sequel to *The Wizard of Oz* over in Europe. But, he wanted to move things here to the U.S. and asked me if I wanted to produce the *Oz* picture. So, I went to Bien, and I said, "Hey, we've got a chance to produce an animated feature." I told him the cast: Liza Minnelli, Paul Lynde, Ethel Merman, Milton Berle, Mickey Rooney, Danny Thomas, Margaret Hamilton, and Paul Ford. The score was by Conrad Van Heusen, with a script by Fred Ladd. It was an interesting project, and Norm had gotten all the voice cast to record their parts very cheaply. It was one of the first animated projects, if not the first one, which had an all-star voice cast. These days they're very common, but, back then, that wasn't the case.

The problem for us was there was very little dough to do the *Oz* picture; Norm had a very limited amount of money. We negotiated and negotiated, and finally Norm became a client.

We started to do the *Oz* picture while we were still at Paramount, but then I had a terrible problem with Bien. I found out he was trying to screw me out of the studio. He was making a deal with Chuck Jones. Chuck had some sort of relationship with MGM, and MGM was going to do more *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, but they were doing

them on the basis that Bien had an animation studio working with him. That studio was really me, but he was trying to screw me out of the whole thing. So, I decided, "That's it, I'm leaving." Bien owed me a lot of money, and I never got my profit money on *Rod Rocket* that was owed us—like, $70,000, which was more money than I knew existed in the whole world. *Rod Rocket* had been syndicated all over the world by Desilu and was quite successful. Meanwhile, those Tom and Jerry cartoons that Chuck Jones did were produced under the production name "Sib-Tower 12 Productions," which was Chuck and Les Goldman. That company later got bought and became MGM Animation/Visual Arts.

But, before we left, we were doing a very complex commercial—another combination of live action and animation. It was a black-and-white commercial for Marathon Oil that had animated and live-action shapes, and I knew that there was enough money coming in from that commercial that we could afford to leave.

I called Norm and said, "I'm leaving Paramount. I'm no longer involved in guaranteeing anything. This guy over here is trying to screw me, and it's not going to work. If you want, I'll continue to do the *Oz* picture, but I don't know whether I can finish it because the amount of money you have to finish the picture—$33 a foot to complete the picture—I don't know how that's going to happen."

So Norm said, "Lou, it's okay with me. You take off. You still have the picture to do." So, we had $23,000 coming in on the finished commercial. In January 1964, Hal and I left Paramount and carried our 24 animation desks right across the street. We rented the building at the corner there that used to be Larry Harmon's ink and paint department. It was in the old bank building called Producer's Studio on North Bronson Avenue. Small world, huh? We had a few animators and kept some guys busy, but we had no money really. The $23,000 came in from that commercial, and that had to go into the *Oz* picture because we had a small percentage of it at that point.

I called Norm one day and said, "Norm, this isn't going to work. We can't do this picture." He said, "Well, let's do it some other way. Instead of me being a client, why don't I get in and be a partner somehow? We'll all own whatever it is on the picture if we can get it done." I said, "Yeah, okay!" We were going to go down the tube anyway. I said, "From now on we're partners."

I tried to figure out what to do. I couldn't take any percentage from Ira or Hal, since they only had 10% of the company. I had 80%, so I gave Norm half of what I owned in the company. So, he and I both ended up with 40% of the company, and Hal and Ira retained 10% each. We started to do the Oz picture, and we were going deeper and deeper into the hole. It was disastrous.

Every once in a while, we would also pick up little commercial jobs to do, and that's how we kept going. We did a short film in 1963 for the American Pavilion at the World's Fair of 1964. It was a fascinating little film on water conservation. Hal and I did the damn picture all by ourselves. I did all the storyboards, all the layouts, painted the backgrounds, and designed

Opposite:
Scene from *Life of Christ*

Above: (top to bottom)
The first Filmation offices

The four shareholders of Filmation: Norm Prescott, Lou Scheimer, Hal Sutherland, and Ira Epstein

Lou with Lane and Erika

the characters, and Hal animated the whole picture. We also did a spot for Bank of America up in San Francisco in which we had to animate a picture of a bull or a buffalo rising up from a coin, showing that they could make your money work for you. We won the second place award for Animated 20-Second Commercial in the July 1964 Advertising Association of the West Awards for that one. We also did a Reddi-wip commercial for Marc Lipsky, and my kids, Lane and Erika, played the kids in the commercial!

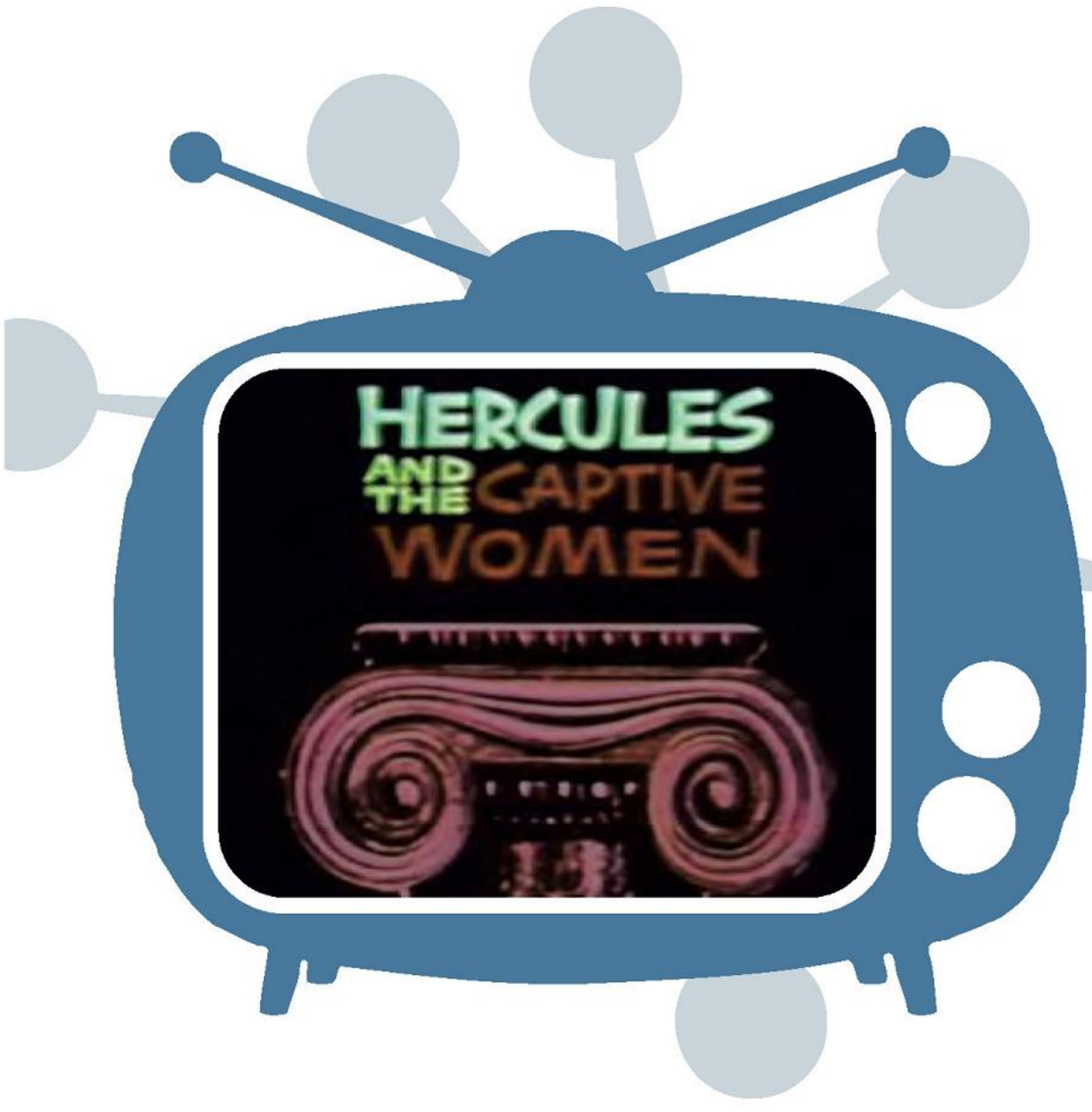
I'd pick up a job every now and then from Joe Westheimer, who later was a special effects artist on the original *Star Trek*. He ran The Westheimer Company on Seward Street in Hollywood. They did visual effects, optical titles with lettering over the live backgrounds, matte shots, and more. We did the animated optical title sequences for imported Italian giallo horror films like Mario Bava's *Blood and Black Lace*, and action films such as Reg Parks' *Hercules and the Captive Women*, as well as some other films.

We kept trying to sell *Stanley Stoutheart*, and Ted Knight had done the voices for a demo reel. By now we had changed the name from *Stanley Stoutheart* to *The Adventures of Yankee Doodle Dandy*. The boy was Dandy, and the dog was Yankee Doodle. This show, by the way, would have been the first one in which we had morals at the end that kids could understand and live by. We tried to sell it to some crazy guy who was running Dr. Ross Dog & Cat Food Co. because he was afraid the Communists were 90 miles from American shores and coming to take over. But we couldn't sell it.

Norm had done another film with a Belgian animation company called Belvision Studios. That was *Pinocchio in Outer Space*, and it had no connection to us other than Norm. It was released by Universal Studios in December 1965 and was one of only two new animated feature films released that year, I believe.

Since Norm had a relationship with Universal, we showed them the finished footage on *Oz*, trying to drum up some more money. We showed it to other studios too, but we just couldn't get anybody interested. And finances were getting worse and worse. Norm had financed the picture very strangely. His brother was running an airline, flying supplies to Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, which was being financed by the United Nations. It was a private airline, and Norm somehow talked them into putting whatever profit they made into financing this animated film. When the Congo crisis was over, the airline went out of business, and they no longer had any money! So, *Oz* lost its funding.

Norm called me up and said, "It's all over, Louie. We don't have any more money." We had this half-finished *Oz* film, and we had to lay all the guys off. The fact is, even while the guys were there, Hal and I were on unemployment—I would go in on Mondays and Hal would go in on Thursdays for our unemployment interviews—because we weren't drawing a salary. But we were paying these other guys! I had already borrowed $5,000 from my mother-in-law just to pay the rent on the studio. We'd gone for two or three years without any real income to speak of.



We were getting pretty discouraged! I knew I could have other jobs—we all could—but, if we did not make it work then, I would never try it again. I felt like this was the last chance I would ever have to really go out on my own, and I just didn't want to end it. Being my own boss was worth so much to me that I would do anything in order to make that company work. I knew that we could do it! I proved it with *Rod Rocket*. I took an enormously complicated job and turned it around and did it right and got it done. We took the *Oz* picture, and, even though we couldn't finish it because we didn't have enough money, we were doing it for less money than anybody else could do it for, and we were pretty good at it!

Norm was in debt, too—he owed $50,000—and he came out one day to meet with us. We decided that was it, we couldn't continue, we were going to have to close the studio and dissolve it.

It was 1965, and, after only a few years in business, it looked like Filmation Associates was going to have to close its doors.

Opposite above:
Freddi-Reddi commercial starring Lane & Erika

Opposite below & above:
Stanley Stoutheart art

Left:
Movie title by Filmation

1965-1966

CHAPTER FIVE

AND WHO, DISGUISED AS A REAL ANIMATION STUDIO...

The studio was now down to two employees—myself and Hal—and a shutdown was imminent. Norm was doing his best to try to raise money from someone, somewhere, somehow. We did have one other "person" in the office, but we never paid her, and she didn't say much.

At the front of our office was a desk, and behind it we had a secretary. She wore glasses and a hand-me-down dress from Jay, and sometimes when we would have visitors they would talk to her for a moment or two before they realized that she was a mannequin!

We had 24 empty desks and some equipment gathering dust. We didn't have a Moviola to sell, or it would have probably been gone already. One day the phone rang, and Hal answered it. A moment or so later his eyes got wide, and he said, "Louie, maybe you'd better talk to them!" Knowing we didn't have any money to pay bill collectors, I said, "Well, what is it? Did you tell...."

He had a peculiar look on his face, "He says his name is Superman Weisinger calling from DC. He's looking for Prescott!" I said, "Let me talk to him. Is it long distance?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Is it paid for?" He said, "Yeah." So, I got on the phone and said, "Hello, Mr. Superman, are you calling from a phone booth?" I figured it was a prank call.

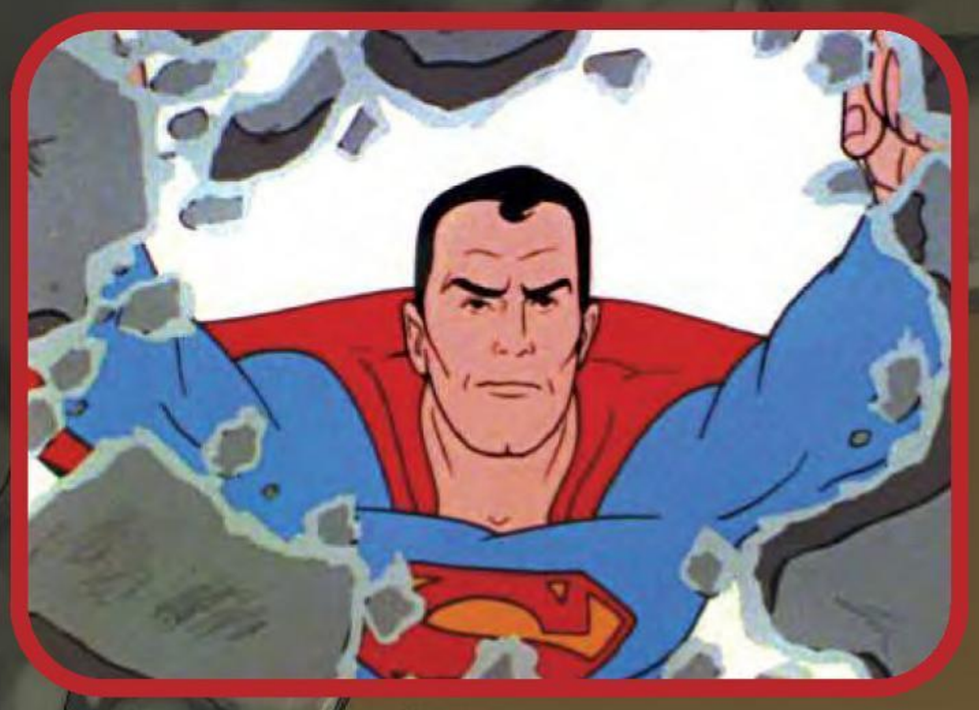
The voice on the other end said, "Mort Weisinger here. I'm the story editor on *Superman*, and I'd like to talk to Norm Prescott." I said, "Well, Norm's not here right now. Is there anything I can do to help?" He said, "No, I've got to talk to Prescott!" I explained to him that Prescott was in a hotel on Sunset Boulevard and was going to leave for New York the next day and told him to call him shortly.

I hung up and quickly called Norm and said, "There's some guy going to call you, and his name is Mort Weisinger. He's got something to do with Superman, but I don't know what in the hell is going on. It may be some kind of work for us. I won't close up the company until I hear from you."

He said, "Well, I know who the guy is! He's the story editor at DC Comics. The reason I know him is that I went up to see him when I was doing *Pinocchio* and talked to him about the story to get some suggestions!" So, Weisinger called Norm, and it turned out that Fred Silverman, who had just started at CBS, had decided that he

Above:
Norm Prescott, Hal Sutherland, and Lou in 1965

Opposite:
The super-hero who saved Filmation



Above:
Image from *The New Adventures of Superman*

Opposite:
Whitney Ellsworth

could turn around the Saturday morning schedule at CBS and do something that nobody had ever done, which was buy stuff specifically for Saturday morning. Up until that time, advertisers would supply shows, or the network would buy up used stuff. Nobody really programmed for Saturday morning, and Silverman had gotten in touch with National Periodical Publications—which is what DC Comics was called at that time—and told them he wanted to buy *Superman* as an animated show. The live-action show with George Reeves, *The Adventures of Superman*, had ended in 1958, but it had been put in syndication again and was a hit.

Weisinger had called Norm because he understood that Norm knew something about getting stuff animated overseas, and they were thinking about doing it overseas. He asked Norm to see him in New York, and Norm told them, "You'll never get it done overseas. You'll get over there, and they'll tell you it'll get done, but it won't." He wasn't lying; this was before the production companies overseas could really do anything regularly. It would take forever to get a project done, and there was no way of doing it on a weekly basis.

I got a phone call from Norm, and he said, "Lou, do you think we could do this series ourselves?" I said, "How much are they offering?" He said, "$36,000 a half hour." Well, I knew then that Hanna-Barbera was getting about $45,000 a half-hour for animation. I said, "Sure, we can do it. What the hell? We're out of work anyway. What's the worst that can happen? We can't do it?" I had no idea what we could do it for, but I knew that was better than we were getting.

Then he dropped the bomb. He said National wanted to send a guy named Whitney Ellsworth to come see the studio. I said, "What studio? There's me, there's Hal, there's 24 desks!" So I thought fast and came up with a story. I called Ellsworth and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Ellsworth, but we really don't have visitors here during the working day. It's just too difficult, and people can't concentrate. We only allow visitors in the studio on Wednesdays between twelve and one. If you can come next Wednesday at lunch, I'll take you through the studio and show you what we're doing." Ellsworth had been the guy who was in charge of the live-action *Superman* show, too.

A short time before this, I had tried to get *The Lone Ranger* to do as a show, but it went to Herb Klynn at Format Films, also, coincidentally, for CBS. At that time we had a similar tour request happen, and I had "padded" out my staff to make us look bigger and more successful than we were. But that's when we actually *had* a staff! This was far more dire.

As soon as I was off the phone, I started contacting every animator I could think of. If we couldn't make this look like a working animation studio by Wednesday, we were going to lose the one job that could save us. I called one wonderful Korean assistant animator, Kim Wong, who had written me a letter saying, "I are starving, please hire." Another guy, Jack Mach, ran a fan mail service for celebrities. Some of the guys were already animators, like George Reilly, Eddie Friedman, Lou Kachivas, Rudy Larriva, and Eddie Green. There was one guy who I called, Harold Alpert, who was a CPA, but thankfully he couldn't make it. I found out later that Harold was a friend of Whitney Ellsworth, and, if Whitney had walked in and seen his CPA friend sitting behind a desk pretending to draw, it would've blown the whole scene.

I also brought in Ted Knight, my actor friend. He knew nothing about animation except having done the voice work for us, and he wasn't famous yet, though he had been working in Hollywood since the late '50s. We borrowed a Moviola to make it look like we really had an editorial department, and I told Ted, "If the guy asks you any questions, just tell him there's trouble at the lab, and you can't talk to him right now because you don't know what you're talking about!" Ted always had a tendency to overact. He said, "Yeah, don't worry, Lou."

So, Ellsworth walked in, and I had the place packed. There was only one empty desk, and it was the guy who thankfully didn't show up, Harold Alpert. We'd passed out scenes on *Oz* to all the people there. Don Peters, who did gorgeous backgrounds, was in there pretending to paint backgrounds. Jack Mock didn't know what the hell he was doing. He just held a pencil and looked peculiar. The studio was humming. I think we even had the mannequin out there, but the mannequin looked okay. We may have passed that off as a joke. We had, like, 20 people in there, everybody furiously at work, but it was twelve o'clock, and half of these guys had to take off and get back to work! So, we showed Ellsworth some of the stuff from *Oz* that was sitting there in our little office that Hal and I had. It was really a pretty big office.

There was a knock on the door. It was George Reilly, and I knew George had to get back to Hanna-Barbera. George opened the door and said, "Can I come in?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Lou, I've got this toothache. Do you mind if I take off and go to the dentist?" I said, "Okay, George, you can go to the dentist." He shut the door, and I turned around to Hal and said, "Make sure we dock that son of a bitch!"

Everything was going fine, and Ellsworth seemed impressed, when all of a sudden we heard, "There's trouble at the lab! Trouble at the lab!"—in 20 different voices. Ted Knight was out there running around, pretending he was a lot of different guys, yelling that there was trouble at the lab. He had apparently gotten bored or wanted some attention or thought he was helping. Ellsworth said, "What the hell's going on? You guys must have an awful lot of work. There can't be that many guys involved with trouble at the lab!"

Whitney finally left. He called back to New York, to a guy named Jack Liebowitz at National Comics, and told him, "They have a little studio, but they run a tight ship." Liebowitz trusted us, without a completion bond or anything, and gave us the job. It was our first network show, with a budget of $36,000 per episode; although we didn't lose any money, I have no idea how we budgeted that show. And, it was all done in the United States.

Several of the guys who were part of our fake animation team to

impress Ellsworth did end up getting hired by me at Filmation, by the way, and some of them worked with me for a long time.

Norm went back to New York and met with Jack Liebowitz. Norm told me that Liebowitz pulled a gun out of his desk drawer. Norm thought he was threatening to kill him if we did anything wrong! But Liebowitz said, "You know Norm, if anything happens and you guys don't deliver on this thing right… I'm going to have to shoot myself." Well, nothing went wrong, and we ended up with a relationship that lasted for years.

The *Superman* deal was about November 1965. With the *Superman* job coming up, we needed to get a bigger building. We found a former animation studio that was for rent right across the street from Hanna-Barbera. It had been, interestingly enough, the place where Ray Patton had a studio. He was going out of business, so we rented his studio.

There was a lovely man named Allen Ducovny who had been the developer on the radio version of Superman back in 1940, since he was working for National as their press agent. They hired Ducovny—or "Duke" as people called him—as contact with us. For the first year, I think he used a lot of the people who had done the radio shows as writers. Actually, it was an odd situation because they controlled the writing, and they decided not to do half-hour shows but to do three seven-minute stories per show, plus some extra stuff. It was two Superman adventures, plus Superboy and his dog Krypto in a middle story.

National really wanted to provide the writers because they felt that gave them more control over the stories. That was fine with us as long as the stories worked for animation. We could do things that they couldn't do in live action, which is why we had so many more super-villains and aliens and super-powers, but there were still limitations because of the time we had and the budget. The two writers they used most were Oscar Bensol and George Kashdan, but there were others besides them. Kashdan was actually a writer and editor up at DC. But Duke worked with us on a daily basis. We were either on the phone, or he was out here. It worked out fairly well because it gave us time to do what we could do well here.

They actually recorded the Superman voices in New York, at the same radio studio in which they had recorded the *Superman* radio show. Clayton "Bud" Collyer was the voice of Clark Kent and Superman. He had played those roles back in the 1940s radio shows and also for those marvelous Fleischer *Superman* theatrical cartoons. He really pioneered that deep voice for Superman and the mild-mannered persona of Clark Kent. He was terrific. He fell right into it again, and he was a very talented guy. Joan Alexander was Lois Lane as she had been also on the radio show and Fleischer cartoons. Jackson Beck was the Superman announcer and the voice of Perry White, a job he had also done on the radio shows. He was also the voice for Bluto on *Popeye* by the way. Jack Grimes, who was one of the radio Jimmy Olsen voices, reprised that role for us as well.

We recorded Bob Hastings, who was Superboy, here in Burbank. And Ted Knight was obviously done here. Ted was the announcer for "Superboy." Janet Waldo, who was our Lana Lang, had been Judy Jetson and later became Josie James in *Josie and the Pussycats*. She had done previous work for Hanna-Barbera and radio shows before that. Recording the voices in New York really wasn't the best way to do a show, so, for the second batch of *Supermans*, we moved some of the voice work to California. And, once we started on *Aquaman*, we did everything here. Norm directed the voice actors here, but I didn't really take part in it then. We worked together on selecting the voices, but I was really busy.

I was reading every script. I went over every storyboard. I went over every layout. I don't know how the hell I did it, but, you know, when you're young, it's easier to do that. I worked with the writers, and to me the most important thing you could do is get a good script, because without it, I don't care how well the animation works, nobody's going to like it.

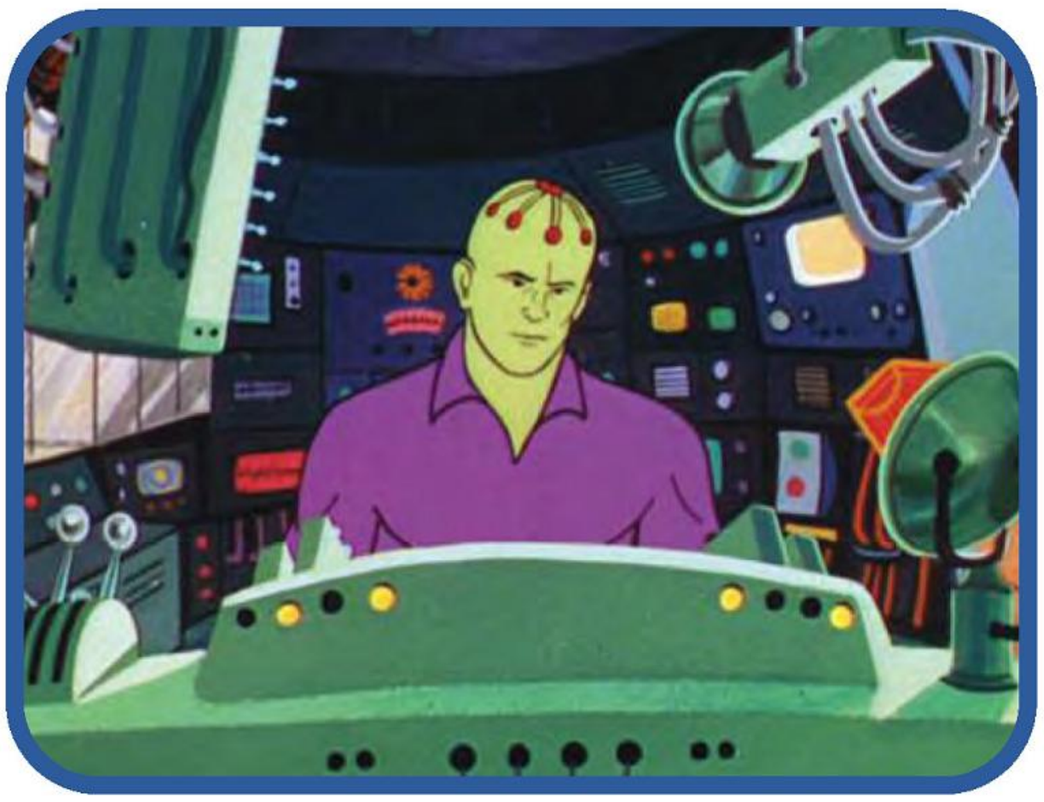
One of the things we developed on *Superman* became kind of identified with Filmation, and that was the stock animation system. I started to think about how it was tough to get stories to be seven minutes exactly, so we would add extra scenes of Superman flying if we needed to fill a few seconds, or trim a few seconds. Nobody got upset if they got to see more Superman flying! And then we realized that it was crazy to do new animation for the same flying sequences. So we started to use and reuse the flying sequences. We also began to document and chart the scenes and do storyboards that utilized the previous material. The storyboard artists would literally break a script down and create a comic book sort of version of the script, with scene numbers and background numbers, and they would ask for various previously viewed scenes. That all started with *Superman*, and, when we started doing a lot of other stuff, it became a very organized system. It really saved us all kinds of time and money, and we had very little of either.

Nobody in the business could really afford to put full animation into characters for television because of the budgets and the delivery speed, but I think we really solved the problem first. After a while, over the years, we got to the place where we did stock material for almost everything we did. Eventually, we even began to create the stock material before we even wrote the stories: close-ups, long shots, running, walking, talking, flying, swimming…. *Aquaman* had a lot of stock material added too. No one had ever done that before, but it was a matter of necessity, and, actually, we ended up with a better show because we could afford to do that stuff extraordinarily well. I've read people who critique our shows and complain about the stock material, but the audience really grew to enjoy it because they knew what the characters acted like and moved like. And our stock stuff looked great! We didn't hide it from anybody. It worked.

There was one major problem with doing stock, though, when we did *Superman*: the damned "S" on his chest! We couldn't flop the scene; we couldn't do the right scene and the left scene… the damn "S" had to change all the time. Consequently, all our stock scenes for *Superman* had to be done twice!

A lot of fans are pretty happy with how close the *Superman* animation was to the comic books at the time. We took our models directly from the comics. I think eventually that we may have even gotten some Curt Swan model sheets to work from. Superman's co-creator, Jerry Siegel, came out to the studio once to meet everyone. It was sort of a sad thing. Those guys were so young when they created Superman and signed over the rights to the comic people. And these poor guys only ended up with an honorarium for this famous character.

I want to mention Freddie Silverman again, and I'll be doing a lot of that from here on out. There was a lady who represented DC Comics, and she peddled *Superman* to Silverman. She worked for herself, and she did very well. DC had not had much history of peddling properties to television at that point; they wouldn't even know who to go to. Anyhow, Freddie was a very young guy; he was like 23 or 24 years old then. Shortly before that time, I had shown him a seven-minute pilot that Hal Sutherland and I had worked up for *Buck Rogers*, and he liked it. He didn't care about the Buck Rogers property, but he liked what he saw on film.



At that point, he was working for CBS out of New York. So, he came out, and we went to lunch. Freddie and Hal and I went to the Smokehouse, which was right across the street from Warner Brothers. He had never really seen much of Hollywood or met very many people who had worked out here. We ordered our food, and Fred got a splinter from the chair in his hand. I thought he was going to have a fit, and nobody paid any attention to him. He got mad because all the waitresses were running around serving people food, and he was there bleeding! I didn't know what to do; I wanted to stick a sliver in my own hand to make him feel better. I was afraid we were going to lose the job because of the sliver. All day long, all he could talk about was the sliver. But we had a long working relationship after that, and he also ended up hiring Allen Ducovny to work for CBS as well, in children's programming.

Freddie was in charge of all daytime programming, but he couldn't do very much with it because the soap operas had been done years before he started. There was very little he could change or do except on Saturday morning, and he found this area that allowed him to do something that had not been done before: He created a whole batch of new shows for Saturday morning. Prior to that the network would get a show usually from an advertiser or sponsor. Kellogg's or General Mills would come in with a show, produce it, give it to the networks, take two commercials out of it, and the networks had no control over the body of the show. But Freddie saw what could happen with Saturday mornings, and he created the Saturday morning phenomenon. As a result of his decisions, all three networks ended up doing children's programming.

Not all of it, but most of the new animation that was being done for TV was being done for primetime. Stuff like *The Flintstones, The Jetsons*, and *Jonny Quest* were nighttime shows. Nighttime shows were family shows, and what was developed for Saturday mornings were children's shows. Fred Silverman programmed Saturday morning, and he was a success. He spent $8 million in revamping that schedule, and it paid off. He eventually ended up as president of CBS, then later ABC and NBC. Freddie was brilliant.

Back to *Superman*… the network liked the seven-minute format for the show because the stories weren't interrupted by the commercial breaks. Also, National Periodicals didn't have the writers who really were used to working for half-hours. I mean the comic book stories did not just automatically turn into an animation story!

We did 18 half-hours of the first *Superman* season, so 36 "Supermans" and 18 "Superboys." Seasons became 17 episodes shortly after that, but this meant that if a network reran the series, they had three to four reruns a year. If they bought an additional eight for the second season, they would use them to introduce the season and then mix in reruns for a minimal cost.

I'll talk a little bit about some of the people who worked on the shows. Hal was the main director and executive vice president of the company and in charge of all the directing and the animators; I took care of everything else. I handled scripts, background, storyboards, and layout. And, of course, I had hired Erv Kaplan to be in charge of backgrounds, which made things easier. But it was challenging because, running the studio, you had to have your hand on every phase of production. Luckily, we hired some exceptional people.

Layout artist Wes Herschensohn was working for us for a while, and, one year on vacation, he went to France. As he was walking along the beach, he saw a guy making sand drawings, and the waves would come in and the drawings would disappear. He got closer and almost fainted when he realized that the guy was Pablo Picasso. He walked up, and he didn't know what to do because he wanted to save the art from the water, but he couldn't. So, he introduced himself to Picasso, and Picasso was really interested in the fact that he was an animator! Wes wrote a book about Picasso called *Resurrection in Cannes: The Making of the Picasso Summer*, and that became a film in 1969 called *The Picasso Summer!*

Bill Hajee was another animator and a funny guy. He had a funky British accent. Xenia DeMattia was one of the few women animators in the business. Her ex-husband was also an animator, and he worked for us on some shows. You'll notice she only used her first name in the credits; it's because

Opposite & Below: Images from *Superman*

that's what everybody called her, and she didn't like her last name after the divorce. Len Rogers was a soldier who had been a prisoner of war in the Bataan Death March. Jack Ozark looked exactly like the Mad Hatter. He was slightly nuts. We later had a guy work for us for years named Joe Mazzuca, who was a writer and production manager. As a child he had been the double for some actor in a jungle movie called *Bengal Brigade*, and he got to film in Africa and ride elephants and stuff. One day, Ozark walked into his office and looked at him and said, "You don't look so tough," and walked out.

Ted Littlefield, who did backgrounds for us, was the guy who designed the first Filmation logo with the smiling face. It's not supposed to be a TV set, though some people think it is, with antennas on it. I think I saw the happy face for the first time on a Gillette billboard, as I remember, and I thought, "There's something nice about that." It looked like to me it should've been a billboard for kids.

Takashi Masunaga was another background animator. He was probably the first Japanese animator who came to work in the U.S., and we trained him over here. Paul Xander was a really brilliant background painter. He could imitate any style. Norm had him doing stuff for his house. He drank a lot, but, unlike some people, the drunker he got, the better he got.

Film editor Joe Simon just died recently. He came over to the U.S. when the Hungarians revolted against Russia in 1956. He got here at 15 or 16 and went to school alone; his father had to go back to Hungary to try to get their mother out. We first hired him to assist in the editing, but he was fantastic. I could trust him with anything. He ended up being a coordinator for all our stuff. I'll note that this Joe Simon is not the comic book gent of the same name who co-created Captain America.

We hired Gene Gropper on camera because he had his own camera. We didn't have a camera, so he moved his in. But, it would fall apart all the time, and we didn't have enough money to get a really good camera. His father was William Gropper, a very famous painter during the Roosevelt administration when they had hired people to work for the WPA.

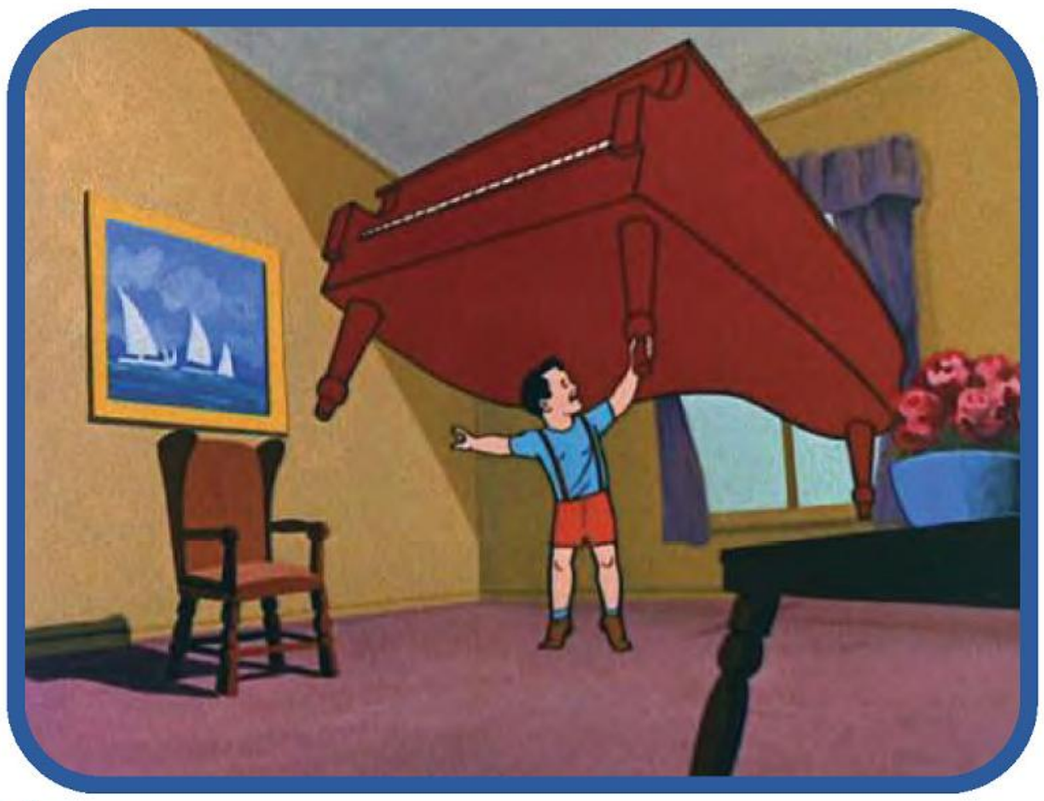
Most of the music for the series was by Gordon Zahler. He had a little company that created music and sound effects, and we used Gordon for the first year or two. He was in a wheelchair, and he had a guy to push him around all the time. As a kid he had jumped into a swimming pool, and there was no water in it. Physically, all he could do was move his hands and talk, but he was an amazing guy. The first year he also provided the sound effects, and that's where I met George Mahana, who later came to work for us. Everybody remembers the Filmation music because it was very important to us to do as well as we possibly could; some companies didn't really realize how important sound is, but we were going to prove music was important soon enough…

Some of the music was done in New York as well. Over time we built libraries of music with composers. We would tell them we needed running music, we needed shocking music, we need ten batches of something, and they would do various short and long pieces of music. We would get about two hours of that, and, within the context of those two hours, we could do damn near anything if the composer really knew what they were doing.

We didn't own the *Superman* music though. Later on, when we did music, we owned the publishing rights, but this was being done by National Periodicals. We did the musical supervision, which was basically taking the music that we got from them and re-cutting that music so it fit the shows. At the beginning, Norm handled all the music issues.

If you watch the end credits on *Superman*, Norm Prescott's name and my name are on the same line, but his is technically first when reading left to right. We had argued over whose name would be listed first. He said that if it hadn't been for him we wouldn't have gotten the job. That was a good excuse! But I said that if it weren't for me, we wouldn't have been able to do the show.

Before we finish up this section on *Superman*, I'll tell you a funny story about "Superboy." We were doing these shows so quickly, and time was so tight, that we just barely made the air dates. I don't think we ever missed an air date, but things were always



close. One day, we were working on mixing the sound into the finished footage on "Superboy," and there was a scene where Krypto flew over a forest fire or something like that, and all of the sudden I saw him lift his leg and he peed on the fire to put it out. It hissed and everything! I said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Wait a minute!" Thankfully, I caught that. There was one time on *Batman* that I didn't catch something, but I'll tell you about that later.

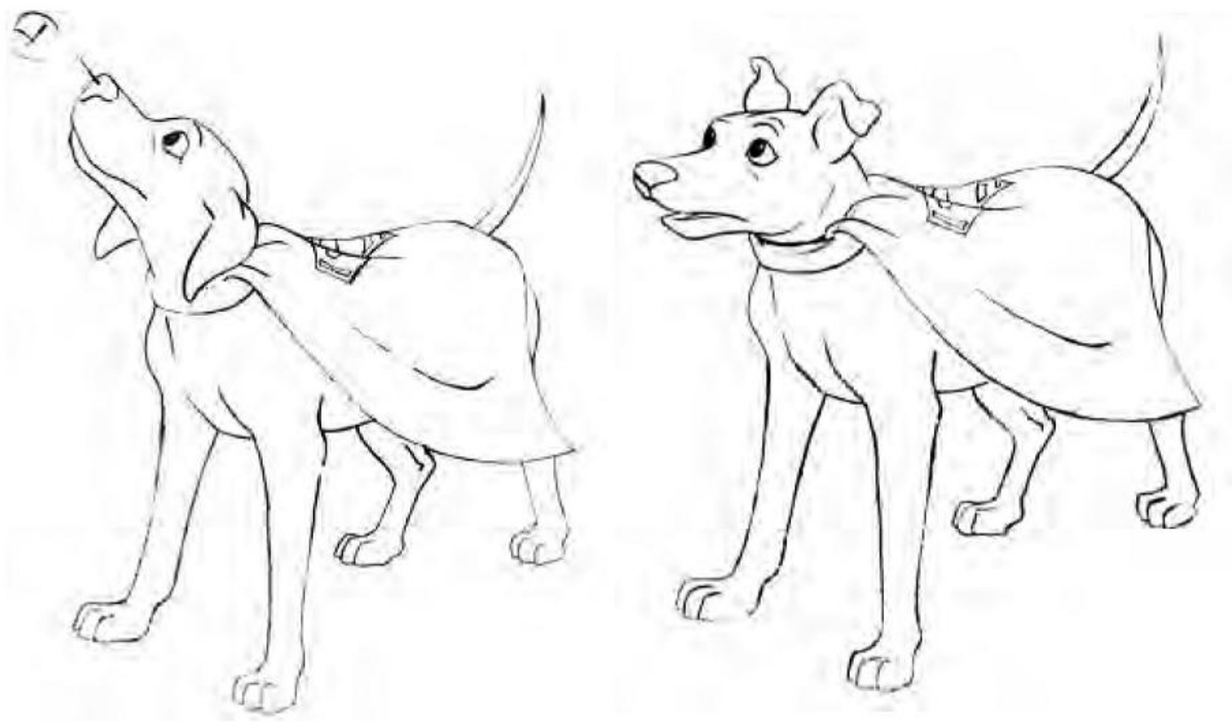
As for the impact the show had on us, simply put, it made us. And it made CBS a big winner! The *New Adventures of Superman* premiered on September 10, 1966, at 11:00 a.m. We were up against *The New Casper Cartoon Show* on ABC and *Cool McCool* on NBC. We slaughtered them. There was nobody even close to our ratings for *Superman*. And once the other networks saw the ratings, it started a rash of imitations. Superheroes were all over the networks within two or three years. But *Superman* was unique and so potent that some of the imitators really screwed it up. Some of them led to the problem of violence on Saturday morning television. Whereas *Superman* was done, I think, with some degree of sensitivity toward the audience, other programs that were sold later just increased the tempo.

Filmation was suddenly successful, but due to our financial problems when we started out, even with the *Superman* show, we had absolutely no money. Money was going out as quickly as it came in. We had nothing to spare, and it was a very difficult way to do business. Often, Norm and Hal and myself didn't take home as much pay as some of the guys who were working for us.

But those were good times because for years we had been waiting for an opportunity like this, and, all of a sudden, it was presented to us. We proved that we could do it, which was the most rewarding part of it, besides being able to think about a paycheck every week. We worked long and hard hours.

In 1966 we were right in the middle of *Superman*, I guess, or the next batch of *Supermans*, when we moved to another studio at 10635 Riverside Drive in Toluca Lake—where animation company Film Roman would get their own start in 1984—which was much larger and more efficient for us. Dick Clark from *American Bandstand* came over and was wandering through the studio. As we wandered through, I knew everybody's first name… I mean, everybody in the whole studio. And one of the things he said was, "Hey, you may be able to do that now, but some day you're going to turn around, and there are going to be so many people that you can't possibly remember every first name."

But for the next three years, Filmation did very well. We kept selling more and more shows. Coming up for us were more superheroes, some crossovers with Hollywood, and the surprise debut of a red-headed teenager from the comics who was going to change the rules of Saturday morning animation yet again.



Opposite top:
Original Filmation logo design by Ted Littlefield

Opposite bottom:
Images from *Superboy*

Top:
Credits from *Superman*

Above:
Model sheets for Krypto

Left:
Image of Krypto the superdog

CHAPTER SIX

1967 THE SUPER SUPERHEROES

No animation studio worth its cels is going to stay content doing one project, and, even as we were working on *Superman*, we were working on other projects. The money from *Superman* allowed us to actually complete a few of them while others never got beyond the development stage. Since the seven-minute segments worked so well for *Superman*, all of the pilots we did produce were that length.

Our next deal was announced in the trade papers in February 1966. It was set to be *The Marx Bros.*, a new comedy series. It was supposed to have 156 seven-minute shorts, and Groucho Marx had signed on as the technical advisor. Miles Films was going to distribute us, repped by Jerry Liddiard as sales director. Jay Burton, Mort Goode, and Mike Maltese were the writers, and Hal Sutherland directed the pilot short, "A Day at the Horse Opera." I believe that I designed the characters, and I did all the layout.

We had two guys do voices for this pilot: Pat Harrington and Ted Knight. Pat was Groucho, and Ted did the other voices, except Harpo for obvious reasons. Well, there was an old vaudeville guy who played the Indian.

Groucho was a lovely man, a really sweet, gentle man, but he couldn't do the voice. One day Groucho called. He said, "Lou? I've got a perfect voice for you, to play me." And I said, "Well, who is it, Groucho?" He said, "You're talking to him." It was Pat Harrington, Groucho's friend. He was the perfect Groucho. He was also the nuttiest guy in the world. He seemed like he was straight and forward, but boy could he get strange. I'll tell you some stories about him in a bit, but you'll have to send the kids out of the room.

We also announced an animated musical special called *Three Billion Millionaires*, which was based on an album that had been released in 1963 that benefitted the United Nations. Norm had made a deal for us to adapt it as a public service kind of show. People who had contributed to the album—and were thus going to be on the show—included Bing Crosby, Jack Benny, Danny Kaye, Judy Garland, Sammy Davis, Terry Thomas, Carol Burnett, George Maharis, and Wally Cox. Judy sang a song in it called "One More Lamb," and others sang as well. Bob Allen was the songwriter and album producer, with book and lyrics by Peter Farrow and Diane Lampert, and the story was about a six-year-old from the land of Goo who comes to the United Nations as a delegate in about 2015. Ray Ellis conducted the music, and he would later come on to do most of Filmation's stock music library. I don't know why this never happened, but it was one of the many deals that Norm came up with. There are a lot of them that never got to the drawing boards, but, like many studios, you make deals and announce things, and sometimes they fall through.

By August 1966 we were working on four other short pilots: *Bulldog Bonnd, Dick Digit, The Kid from S.P.Y.*, and *The Green Lantern*. We were negotiating with National to do other DC characters, but that was the first one we announced.

Opposite:
A montage of Filmation's animated superheroes

Above:
Image from *The Marx Bros.* pilot

Bulldog Bonnd holds a bit of a soft spot in my heart. It was a spy show, and it was the last picture that I ever laid out. I designed the characters as well. I really wasn't happy with it then, but, in looking at it recently, I like it. Tony Benedict, Hal's stepbrother, wrote the script for this. There was a radio show character named Bulldog Drummond, and then, obviously, James Bond was popular, so we kind of combined their names for this spy spoof. I don't think I ever showed it to a network. I was sort of embarrassed with it when I did it, but looking back it may have been way ahead of its time. It was limited animation. It was clean layout with very clean characters. It's kind of like some of the spoof shows that air on Cartoon Network these days.

Robert Strauss was the voice of Bulldog Bonnd. He was best known for his role in a war movie called *Stalag 17*, about American prisoners of war in Nazi Germany. He had this deep, gravely voice, which was a perfect voice for animation, but he couldn't do too many voices because his voice really was that gravely. Nice man. I think Ted Knight may have done some of the voices as well. I may have even voiced a little Japanese guy in it named Tomo, but I'm not sure. I'm a bit embarrassed by the racially caricatured nature of Tomo's design, but it was reflective of the times, and no other character was all that good-looking either.

The third pilot we announced was called *The Kid from S.P.Y.*, and it was about a group of teenagers who fought crime after school. I don't think we ever really did anything on it, at least in terms of formal animation. We dropped it from active development before 1966 ended.

Then there was *Dick Digit*, which we later called *The Adventures of Dick Digit*. Anybody who sees it now—and it's out there on the Internet—will wonder what we were smoking. It was a weird superhero show with a circus performer called the Jester, and he has a puppet named Dick Digit, except, as the pilot ends, Dick Digit gets replaced by a real guy—from outer space—who just happens to be supersmall. I think Ted did most of the voices, but I also think that Norm played the announcer. We did a seven-minute pilot for that one, but it was just too strange for anyone to want. We kept offering it to people for quite a while though. It did eventually get released in England by Video Gems, in 1982 on a *Blackstar* videotape!

In late December we made a deal with

BULLDOG BONND

THE ADVENTURE OF DICK DIGIT

AQUAMAN

National to develop even more of their heroes for animation. DC actually asked us to do *Aquaman*, but I wasn't convinced the network would buy it without seeing a pilot. He wasn't as famous as Superman or Batman. So we did a beautiful looking pilot titled "The Great Sea Robbery," which I think we retitled and used when the show was played. Nothing like it had been on the air. The undersea stuff really looked interesting, and it was visually fascinating. That got Freddie Silverman's attention. Announced to the trades in early January were *Aquaman*, to begin on CBS in September 1967, and *Batman*, to begin as soon as the live-action show went off the air at ABC.

We didn't reveal anything about which network *Batman* was going to be on, as we were talking with ABC about another show, and yet CBS had our other DC heroes. It was kind of a touchy situation because ratings were already going down on the live-action *Batman* series, and the network had not yet ordered a third season for 1967–1968.

In March 1967 *The New York Times* did a piece on Saturday morning animation in which it was Hanna-Barbera, not Filmation, that had to take a beating over limited animation, and DePatie-Freleng who were attacked over content. They blamed the networks, saying, "Right now they want the blood, guts, and gore that are inherent in the 'supers.'" Now I'm not sure that I ever saw any blood, guts, or gore in any Saturday morning animation, but superheroes were definitely hot. In that same article, Norm talked about Filmation developing Green Lantern and Green Arrow, announced we would be doing the *Superman Hour of Adventure*, and gave them a photo to publish of Aquaman and Aqualad astride their seahorses. It was the first public image of the animated Aquaman.

Daily Variety gave us a huge compliment in April, saying that Hanna-Barbera and Filmation produced "the Tiffany stuff" for the networks, and *Broadcasting* magazine called us a "heavyweight contender" the following month. They also revealed what our fall line-up would be: an animated version of 20th Century Fox's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* for ABC, with half-hour complete stories; and *Aquaman* for CBS, now paired with DC guest heroes including The Flash, Green Lantern, Hawkman, Doom Patrol, B'wana Beast, and The Atom, among others as yet unannounced.

We were opening up a new market for *Journey to the Center of the Earth* because it was one of the first—if not the first—time that an animated TV show came from a live-action film. We saw that as a trend for the future; just like the superheroes were known properties from the comics, so too were feature films known properties.

Through Norm we also saw that music had a potential future in animation. At the end of June, we made a deal to animate a 2½-minute film clip for a new children's duo named "Elmo and Almo" for Warner Records. Elmo and Almo was a boy-girl duo created by Charlie Koppelman and Don Rubin, also known as K&R, that they intended to exploit with music, animation, and more. Our clip was supposed to be used on a *Kraft Music Hall* episode with an Elmo and Almo song. Unfortunately, after only one release—"When the Good Sun Shines"—the group faded away and did not become the "teenybopper" hit that the producers hoped for.

As we were working on the new projects and the second set of *Superman* episodes, a bit of public backlash was coming down against action shows. We were totally aware of that and worked hard to make sure our stories were appropriate. The networks considered the base audience to be six years old and thus more impressionable. We included lines in *Superman* that real people couldn't actually fly, and we also tried to make sure that children weren't kidnapped or exposed to great danger in the stories. We changed one "Superboy" story in which he was going to stop a truck with his bare hands; we didn't want any kids to do the same thing. But, as I told *Variety,* we could have kids help adults: "Animated adults can be exposed to danger because somehow kids think adults can take care of themselves. They like it when kids help adults out of danger."

There were other things we had to be careful on with Superman and Superboy especially. We did not want kids jumping off of roofs trying to fly, and there had been stories about that. So, we basically showed Superman jumping up in the air. And then, the next thing you knew, they were up in the air. We didn't show them jumping off a wall or off a roof. We'd see a guy go straight up in the air and then cut to him flying. There's no way a kid could do that. We tried not to do things that could be duplicated. The people working with kids talk about such things as "imitatable behavior." Kids love to imitate things, so we had to make sure they didn't imitate anything harmful. We did that same thing on any of our superhero shows, even live shows later on like *Shazam!* and *Isis*.

THE SUPERMAN/AQUAMAN HOUR OF ADVENTURE

Aquaman had a whole different look to it because the series was mostly set underwater. I think it was Erv Kaplan that developed some of that unique look. We could do some really interesting stuff visually and colorwise, and it didn't have to be like the world up above with us trying to reproduce reality. *Aquaman* was a much more visual show than *Superman* as far as the use of color and the watery effects. We just wanted to make it look better.

The way we would do the underwater effects is that we would rub stuff like baby oil on a clear piece of acetate. And then, when we shot the animation, we would put the oily acetate closer to the camera lens and move it at a different speed than the background. We did not do that all the time as it would make your eyes go crazy! Some scenes would have it, and then it would fade out, and in other scenes you'd bring it in. Seven minutes of it would be too much though.

We added in a few animal characters like Imp and Storm, the seahorses—who had appeared in the comics—and Tusky, the walrus, but we didn't want them to talk or anything. Aquaman could talk to the fishes, but they didn't talk back. We changed Aquaman's costume a little bit just to make it more visual for animation, but mostly he looked like the comic character. The water-throwing powers he had were for the same reason; it just gave him something more visual to work with.

As with *Superman*, DC provided all of the scripts. Mort Weisinger story-edited the series again, and a lot of the scripts were written by Bob Haney, who actually wrote the *Aquaman* comics during those days. We also got a small percentage of the profits for the DC shows that year, and they upped our budgets for these and the second run of *Supermans* from $36,000 per episode to around $50,000 per show.

In terms of the shows, we started a few new things for what was now going to be called *The Superman/Aquaman Hour of Adventure*. I believe that Ted Knight rerecorded the opening narration, and we had all the non-Superman voices done here. We also added some secret codes in as bumpers around the commercial breaks, so that the kids would keep watching

during the commercials and so that they had an activity to take part in. All those secret code segments have disappeared because the network and Warner didn't use them when the shows got split up.

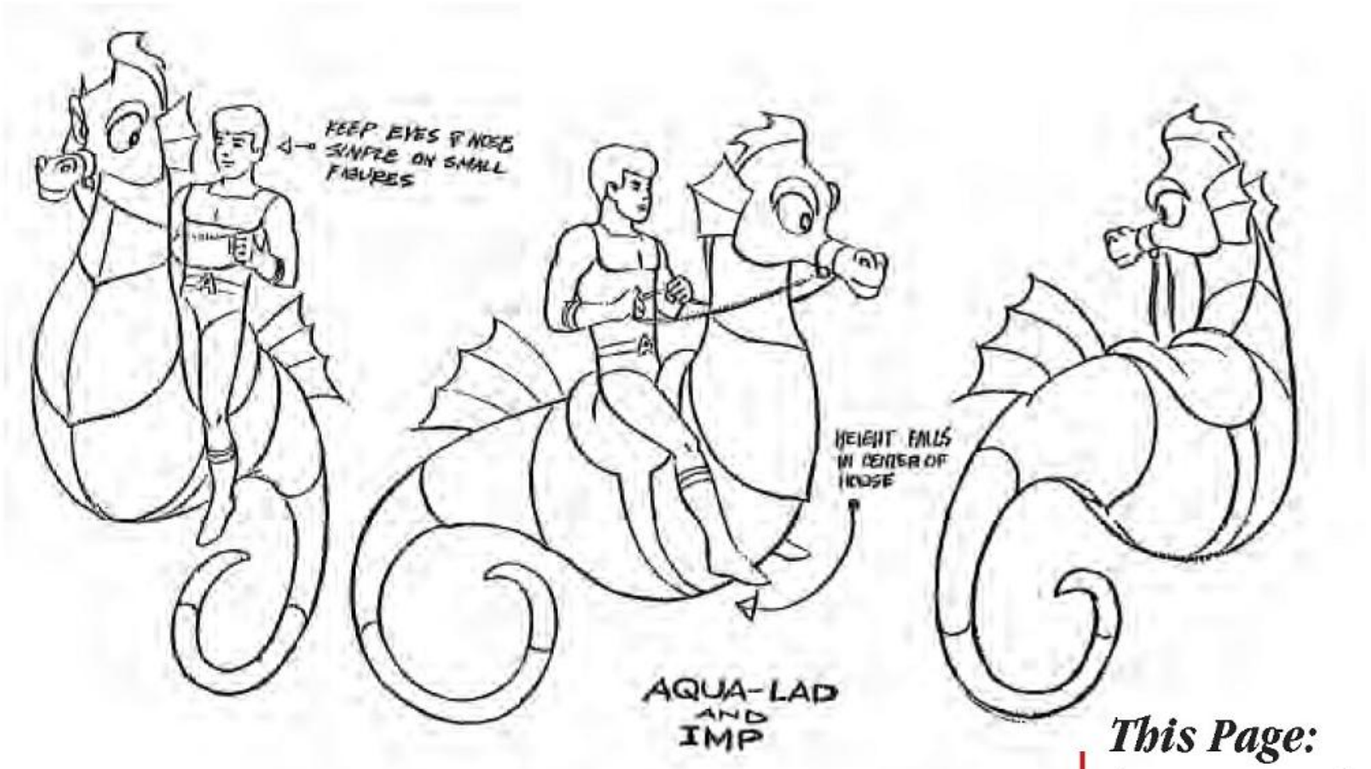
And here's something most people don't know: the *Hour* show didn't just have the Superman and Superboy stuff in the first hour and the Aquaman/Guest Hero stuff in the second hour. We actually mixed them up more, so there might be a mixture of shows! In later seasons when they split the shows up, they were kept in their own segments, but they didn't start that way.

We tried out a bunch of voices for Aquaman. In fact, when we were working on this book, we found some of the reel-to-reel tapes of the auditions. We auditioned: Lennie Weinrib, who later did a lot of stuff for Hanna-Barbera and Sid & Marty Krofft, not to mention, us; Rich Little, who was a popular impressionist at the time; Ed Prentiss, who had been radio's Captain Midnight; Jack Lester, who had been radio's Sky King; Keith Andes, the voice of Hanna-Barbera's Birdman; Shep Menkin, the voice of *The Lone Ranger*'s Tonto; Rick Jason, an actor from *Combat!*; Tol Avery, an actor and hypnotist; Arnold Moss, who was a radio guy and Shakespearean actor; Dane Clark, who was kind of a character actor, but who hadn't done any voices; and Jim Mills, Bruce Hays, Larry Alexander, and Lin Johnson. Auditioning for Aqualad were Sam Riddle, Bob Diamond, Patrick Regan, *Huckleberry Finn* film star Eddie Hodges, and sportscaster Gil Stratton. And here's a bit of a surprise; we also auditioned at least one woman to play Aquagirl instead of Aqualad!

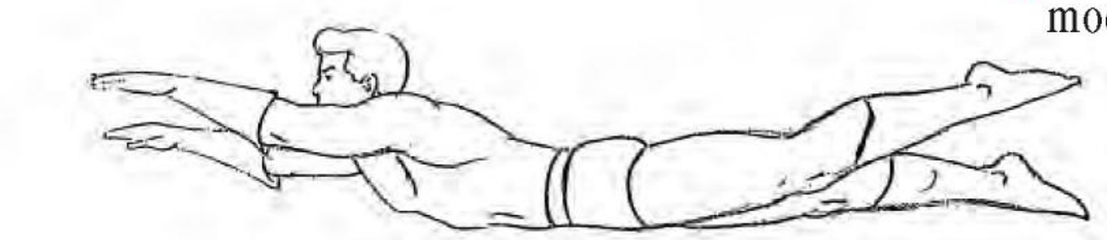
We finally settled on Marvin Miller, who was really famous for doing a show called *The Millionaire*. He had a great baritone voice, and he did a lot of commercials. Aqualad was Jerry Dexter. He was a nice looking blond kid as I recall. I say "kid" because he was younger than Marvin, but I think Jerry was older than I was. He was also the host of *Good Day L.A.*, a local morning talk show on KABC-TV. I don't remember much about Diana Maddox, who played Mera, except that she was British. And Ted Knight did all the other voices, including the announcer and the villains, and even the seahorse whenever it made sounds.

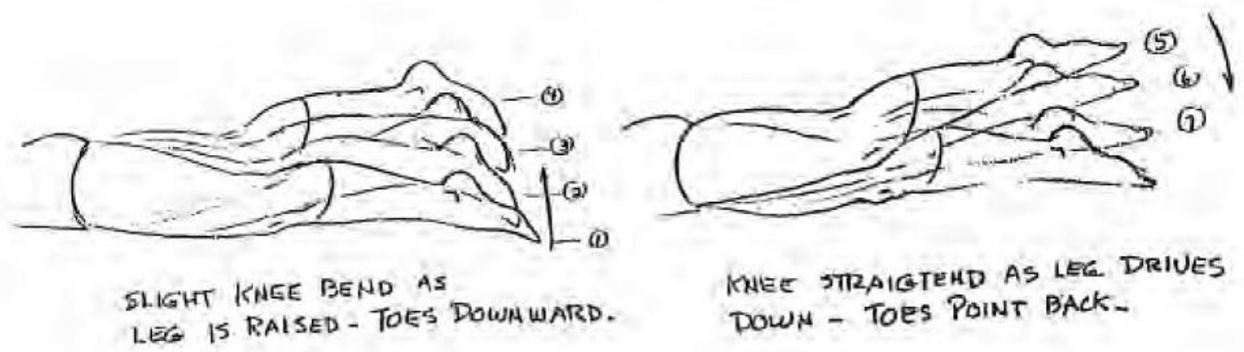
With "Aquaman" we were doing two segments per show, plus a "Guest Hero" segment. I can't remember why we didn't do an "Aqualad" solo story or a "Mera" solo story, but I think it was an easy way for us to test out some of the other National superheroes for their own shows. We talked about a lot of them and even had presentation art created for several of them we didn't use. We had the Blackhawks, which was a squad of fighter pilots. We also developed Plastic Man, Challengers of the Unknown, Metal Men, B'wana Beast, Green Arrow, and Wonder Woman.

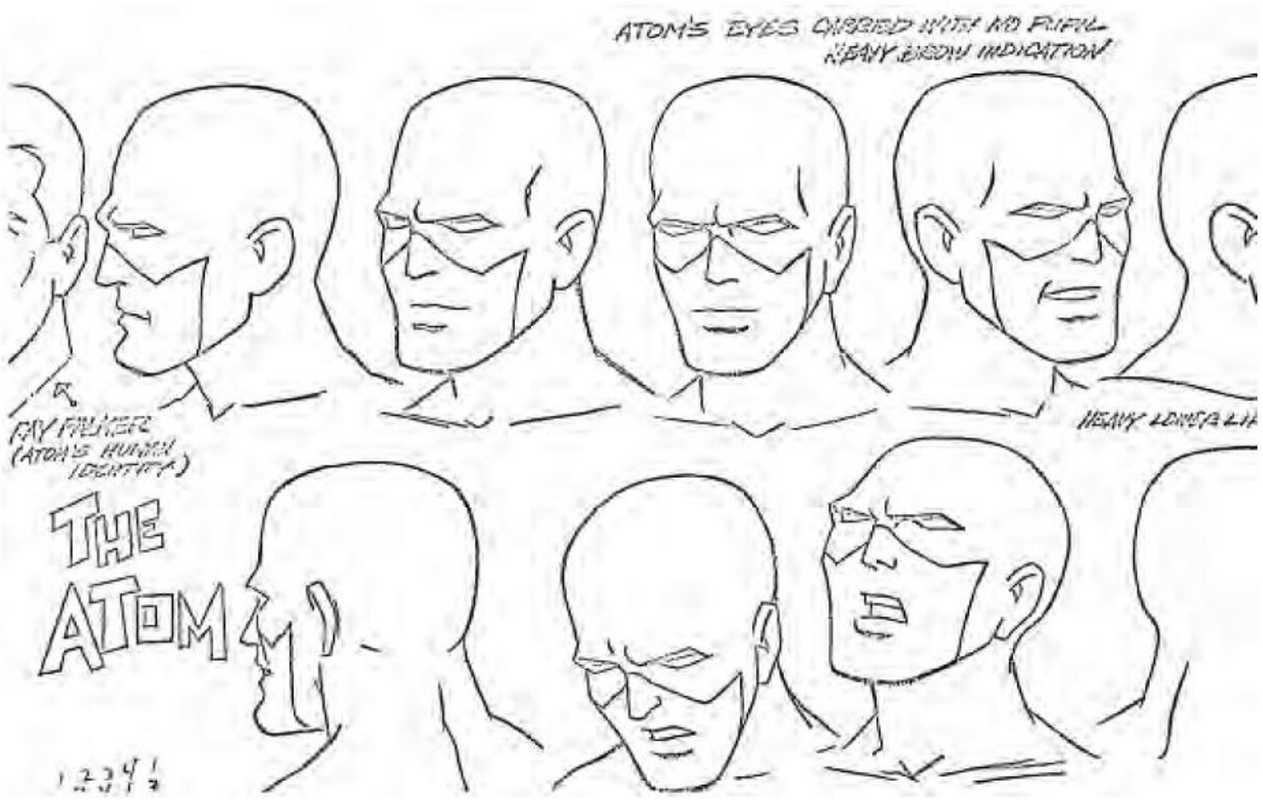
We also talked about Metamorpho, and, though there are rumors that we did a pilot for Metamorpho, I don't think we ever did, and neither do Hal nor my lawyer, Ira, remember it. Pilots were very expensive, and the chances were that maybe you couldn't sell it, and then what were you going to do with the damn thing? I do know we had art done for most of these though, with some of it by Wes Herschensohn or Jack Ozark. To make things a bit more confusing



This Page:
Aquaman and "The Atom" model sheets







for die-hard fans, DC Comics even ran an ad in a few comics that said we were going to do Wonder Woman, The Flash, Plastic Man, and Metamorpho. They kind of jumped the gun on that one though.

The ones we decided to do were Green Lantern, The Flash, Hawkman, The Atom, Teen Titans, and the Justice League. They were all visually very different from each other. Green Lantern had been the one we looked at doing early on, but didn't. I don't remember why though. In the end we did 16 new "Superman" shorts, eight new "Superboy" shorts, and 36 "Aquaman" shorts, plus 18 Guest Hero segments.

Pat Harrington Jr. played The Atom and also Speedy in the "Teen Titans." I told you I had some stories about him, but they're a bit rough, so send the kids out for ice cream. I'll tell you about recording voices while you wait. We didn't have a recording studio in our building yet, so we had to record voices in Hollywood at Ryder Sound Service. We would record voices on Fridays, and that went very quickly. We could do a half-hour show within an hour or an hour-and-a-half. And nobody was around to bother us. No network representative poking their nose into it, telling the actors to do it a little better. Norm did a lot of the recording. He was really very, very good and he enjoyed that.

But after we would record the voices on Fridays, some of us would go out and get drunk. I was not a great drinker, but I used to get drunk, and Jay would be pissed off when I came home. So, when we'd go back to the studio, half the time I'd just lay on the office floor and pass out. There was one night I remember I was in the office, on the floor. I knew I had to get up and go home. And all of the sudden there's water or something coming down on my face. I looked up to see Pat Harrington standing there and he'd just pissed all over me!

Another Friday night I saw him sitting talking to one of the girls in the ink and paint department. She was a pretty redhead girl. He was drunk, and he was holding the script in his hand as he sat there. I looked over, and he flipped the script up, and he had his dick hanging out. Again! She never saw it, but every time I looked over he'd flip up the script, and there he'd be exposing himself.

So, those are my memories of Pat Harrington. He later made it really big on that TV show, *One Day at a Time*, playing the handyman. And we now return to our regularly G-rated conversation.

Some random thoughts on names in the credits for *Aquaman*.... Lou Zukor came to work with us then, and he had a long history in the business. He used to work for the Fleischer Brothers on *Betty Boop*, and he did that *Gulliver's Travels* movie with them in 1939. He was a director with us for a long time. Norm McCabe had also been working since the 1930s in animation and had been at Disney and done a lot of stuff at Warners.

Don Christensen got the art director credit on the show, though I had first hired him about the same time that I hired Kaplan at True Line. He stayed with us for a good long time. We had a falling out in later years over *Zorro*, which I still regret. We also started giving credit to all of the Layout guys, which is how it should have been. Layout is important because they put the characters in the area where they're supposed to be. They design the backgrounds—in pencil, not ink and paint or color. They could all draw beautifully.

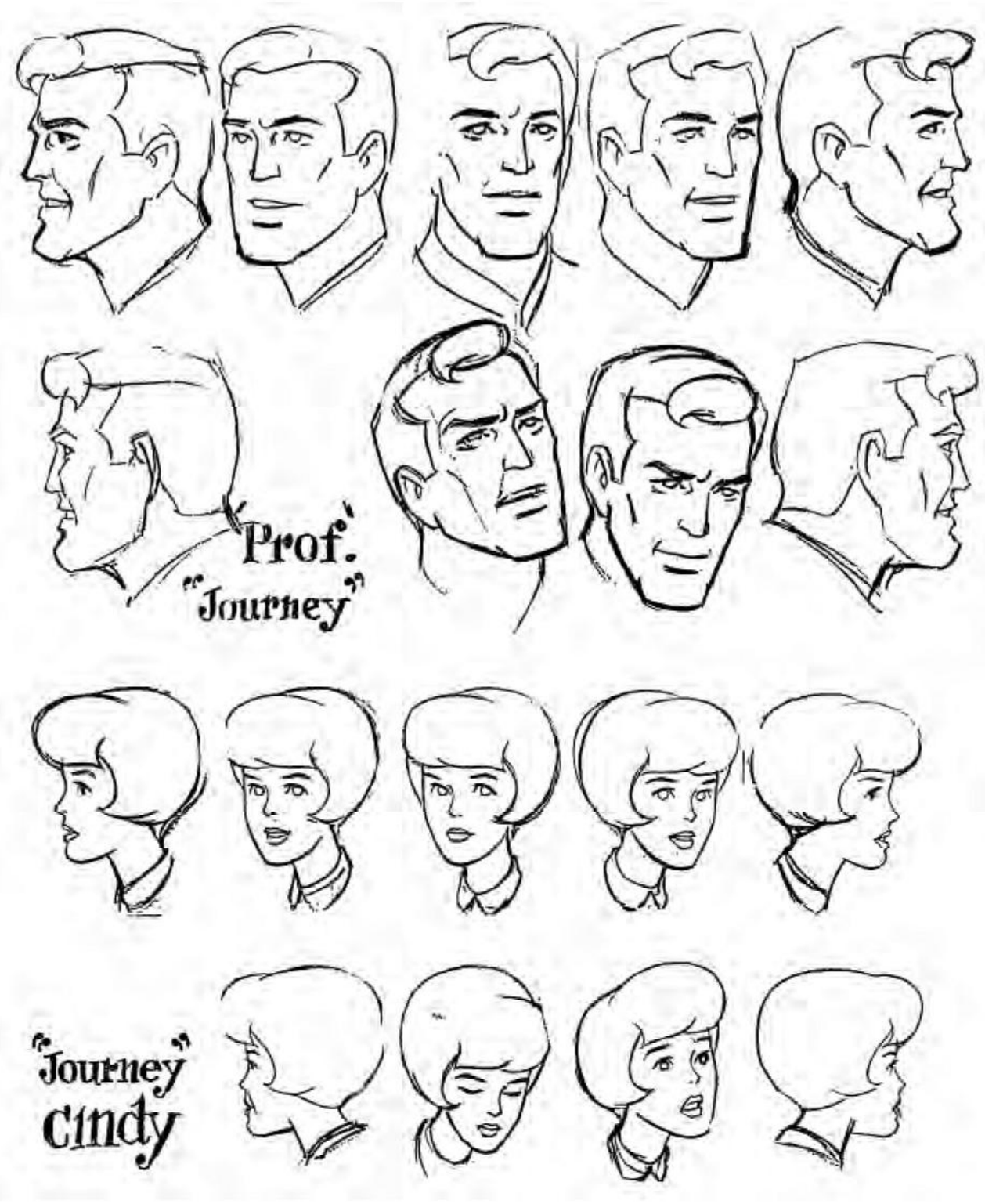
Sherman Labby did storyboards for us, and he actually became a very successful major motion picture illustrator and storyboard

Above:
Ad from DC Comics that jumped the gun on characters Filmation was animating

artist. He left animation when the business got really crappy, but he did really well for himself.

Mel Keefer was one of our layout guys, and he did a lot of comic books and comic strips and has had a great career. He did beautiful art. He was another one I lost touch with when I had to lay him off at one point early on because we didn't have any work. What I didn't know was that his wife was dying of cancer then. He wouldn't talk to me for a long time after that. Eventually, he remarried, and they're doing very well. His wife is a well-known philanthropist. I saw him recently, and he was very sweet. We shook hands and talked, and he showed me some of his art. It felt good to reconnect.

Martha Buckley was our Ink and Paint Supervisor. She worked with us from the beginning, and for a long time. Eventually her assistant, Betty Brooks, took over. Ink and Paint was almost an all-women department, which was a tradition in the industry. Ink and Paint people got less money, and I suspect that men wouldn't take those jobs when they started in the business because they wouldn't make enough money to keep a family going. So, it probably went more to women as a second income for the family. I imagine that's how it started. Most of the men in that department were doing more of the special effects, sometimes with airbrush.



We hired more women in other departments than any of the other studios though, as you can see even from our early credits. I mean, if you were a good animator, I didn't give a damn what your gender was; you were a good animator. One gal at the company was Venetia Epler, and she looked like she came out of a 1915 black-and-white picture. She was a very pretty, little woman and if she heard the word "sh*t," you knew she was going to fall apart. So, of course she worked in Erv Kaplan's background department, and his swearing would make her crazy!

Eddie Friedman was an animator who later became a director for us. He just died a few years ago, at the age of 92. He ran in the 1932 Summer Olympics that were held here in California. He had worked for almost everybody in the business, and he was with us from the beginning to the end of Filmation. Lenn Redman was an animator, but he was also a great caricaturist. He did a caricature of Norm and Hal and I that we used for years. He was the hairiest looking son of a bitch, and he'd sit there wearing only shorts on a hot day. I think he was an exhibitionist, but nobody wanted to see it. But, boy, could he draw caricatures.

Virgil Ross was another animator on the shows. He worked at Warner for years. He was Friz Freleng's top animator, and anybody who knows anything about animation will remember Virgil. Tiny, little guy that looked like Tweety Bird. I think they used him as the model for Tweety Bird. He didn't like working around anybody and liked to be all by himself, but we knew that he worked really hard. He went looking for a place when I hired him, and he found a closet upstairs. He worked in that closet, and he covered it with cardboard boxes, so you couldn't see him work. You'd open the door, and he'd be behind a cardboard box. But you never had to worry about it; he did brilliant stuff.

That takes care of the superheroes for now. Now let's head underground, and I'll tell you a bit about *Journey to the Center of the Earth*. The live-action feature film from 20th Century Fox had been released at Christmastime in 1959, and it had been a hit. Of course it was based on the Jules Verne book, but we wanted to tie in to the movie. We met with some of the people on the film to get their blessing, and they were mostly just concerned that we wouldn't harm what they had done. We made a deal with Fox, and they retained distribution rights for it, with us as their partner. And then we sold it to ABC.

As I mentioned earlier, this was done with half-hour stories, which weren't being done for Saturday morning animation at that point. This was a leap of faith for the network to believe that young audiences would get it. Beyond that it was sort of a serialized show. It didn't continue from episode to episode with cliffhangers, but the story continued as the characters were on a quest. We couldn't do serialized stories because, if the network moved the episodes around during repeats, the audience might get lost. So what we did was, during the main title we talked about how they got lost when they went to explore the center of the earth and were now trapped there. We showed the relationship between the good guys and the bad guys and told how our heroes were searching for specific clues to help them get home, which gave them all a reason for their quest. We opened the show that way each time so that viewers knew that we were continuing the saga.

Promoting the series at the time, I gave interviews in which I said, "Working with material from a Jules Verne novel gives us an opportunity to let our imagination run wild, much in the same manner as Verne himself. Verne's wonderful ability to write of mad, marvelous adventures in settings of the future afford us the chance to use his ideas to thrill a new generation of science-fiction lovers. The Saturday morning audience is comprised of many children who have not heard of Verne's work, yet they watch with interest a show like *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, thrilling to many of the same things which children of past generations read about."

Journey to the Center of the Earth was the first series that Filmation hired writers for, since National provided all the superhero scripts. Norm and I went after several live-action television writers, including Ken Rotcop, who had done some *Star Treks*; Larry Goldman, who had generated adventures for *Daktari*; and some others. We also brought in a guy named Ken Sobol, who I'll tell you more about in a later chapter.

We barely changed the characters from the movie, although it had made changes from the novel. The explorers were now Professor Oliver Lindenbrook; his faithful strongman guide, Lars (changed from the movie's Hans); the student Alec McEwen; and Lindenbrook's niece, a young girl named Cindy Lindenbrook, who we added to replace the movie's grown woman named Carla Goetaborg. We wanted kids to identify with the characters more, so we had those two younger characters be very integral to the plot. The villains remained Count Sacknussem and his henchman Torg, and we resurrected Gertrude the duck, who had died in the film.

Voicewise, we had a familiar cast. Pat Harrington voiced Lars, Torg, Alec, and Gertrude. Ted Knight was Professor Lindenbrook and the villainous Count Sacknussem, plus other voices as needed. And Jane Webb, who was new to us, played Cindy. Jane was with us for a long time and did quite a number of our shows.

There isn't much more to tell about the series. We did 18 of them, and had dragons and cavemen and dinosaurs and lost civilizations and all sorts of stuff. And we showed that a girl could be just as spunky and tough as the boys.

There was one ironic point that happened with *Journey* though; it became our first series to appear in a comic book based on our stories rather than the other way around. ABC did a one-shot special with Marvel called *America's Best TV Comics*, in which they had short stories of almost their entire line-up. It included a ten-page *Journey to the Center of the Earth* story in it!

Working on both these shows, the studio expanded further, moving up from 116 employees to 150. In addition to the shows we were working on, we still did a few commercials here and there, including a spot for Pacific Power—booked for us through McCann-Erickson advertising firm—and six one-minute spots directed by Hal for Copeland Meats, a company out of Jacksonville, Florida. We also did three 60-second spots for Chrysler Corporation for their Dodge Division.

Norm and I even got to travel some now that we were getting network attention, heading to Paris for industry meetings in July. And Norm agreed that Filmation would produce an album of songs by Ted Knight, which at that point was to be titled *Close Your Eyes*. More on that later.

All the networks debuted their new Saturday morning line-ups on September 9, 1967. ABC tried to counter our DC heroes with Marvel heroes, debuting both *The Fantastic Four* and *Spider-Man*. *Journey to the Center of the Earth* was on ABC right after those two, at 10:30 a.m. *The Superman/Aquaman Hour of Adventure* aired on CBS from 11:30– 12:30, up against a new show called *George of the Jungle* and *The New Beatles*.

Superman/Aquaman was soon certified by both Arbitron and Nielsen as being the highest-rated show on Saturdays with an 8.9 rating, and *Journey* came in as the second highest-rated with a 6.6 rating.

Expansion continued after our fall debuts. We made a deal for a 60-minute *Aladdin* special for the '68–'69 season with Tony Ford Management and Henry Jaffe Enterprises. The score was going to be by Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen, who had won three Academy Awards for Best Song and were regular writers for Frank Sinatra. That was another of Norm's deals that never happened though. He knew Cahn and Van Heusen from his music days.

We also made a deal with Rockney Productions for a series called *Yank and Doodle*. This was a redo of our earlier Yankee Doodle Dandy concept about the boy and the dog. Rockney was a company run by Sidney Miller and Austin "Rocky" Kalish. The idea behind the series was to use two comedians in the title roles, sometimes filming them live, and sometimes animating them. Miller had worked on shows like *Get Smart* and *The Monkees*, and he was going to direct the pilot, while Kalish, who had written for *My Three Sons* and *The Flying Nun*, was going to write with his wife, Irma Kalish. We even announced a nationwide talent search. Nothing really came of this, but Sidney did invite us up to a party at his house once, and Sean Connery was there. The only thing I remember about Connery was that he had a shirt that was open down to the waist, and he had the hairiest body I'd ever seen!

Behind the scenes, we were also working on another deal that first got leaked in an animation union newsletter late in 1967. In it they noted that "an all-new animation series, *Archie*, is all but in the bag there." But what could Filmation, the company built by superheroes and adventure stories, do with a comical teenage series like *Archie*?

Opposite:
Model sheets from *Journey to the Center of the Earth*

Above:
Images from *Journey to the Center of the Earth*

THE Archies

©1968, Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

Archie's here...Betty's here, Veronica, too.

Reggie's here...Hey, here comes Jughead and Hot Dog, too. Now EVERYTHING'S ARCHIE.*

*from *Archie's Theme* copyright ©1968 by Don Kirshner Music, Inc. • Words and music by Jeff Barry

Watch for **"THE ARCHIES"** in color every Saturday morning on the CBS-TV network.

FILMATION ASSOCIATES Produced by Norm Prescott, Lou Scheimer and Hal Sutherland

CHAPTER SEVEN

1968

THE FANTASTIC SHRINKING BAT-TEENAGER

We did a ton of superhero shows, and by '68 it was obvious there were just too many of those types of shows around. So, we got the rights to Archie Comics, and it was interesting because it was the first of the non-superhero comic books that was brought to television, and it was an extraordinarily successful show.

The first word of our new 1968 schedule leaked out to the trade papers in late March. *Variety* did a story on the new CBS Saturday mornings, which were coming up on some changes since some of the series had two-year commitments. They revealed both *Batman* (alongside *Superman*) and *Archie* on the CBS schedule, and *Fantastic Voyage* on the ABC schedule, though they only gave Filmation credit for *Batman*. On April 21, CBS officially announced its ambitious fall schedule, with 2½ hours of comedy followed by 2½ hours of adventure, carrying a total $4 million price tag. Freddie Silverman was not going to let his Saturday morning dominance flag, and he had even stolen Bugs Bunny away from ABC. That same week ABC announced we would be doing *Fantastic Voyage* for them. In addition to the three new shows, CBS was going to rerun our *Aquaman*, now as its own half-hour show on Sunday mornings, and ABC was going to rerun *Journey to the Center of the Earth*.

With *Batman, Archie, Fantastic Voyage*, and an order for eight more *Superman* half-hours—16 "Superman" shorts and eight "Superboy"—our workload shot up dramatically. It was a total of 59 new half-hours for the season, with the budget moving upwards to around $60,000 per episode! Additionally, we had four animated specials we were working on, and we were still trying to sell *Yank and Doodle*. We had found our leads for *Yank and Doodle* when Norm and I were in New Orleans and spotted entertainers Marcus Grapes and Allen Yasni performing there.

Now, I liked *Aquaman* a lot, but the way the networks bought shows in those days was generally for two years unless they were a total flop, and then they had to figure something out. It didn't mean that they paid for new ones in year two, but they pretty much had to schedule them. And it wasn't that *Aquaman* was doing poorly in the ratings; it was doing great as part of the hour. But they wanted to do *Batman* as part of the hour to freshen it up, and, as you'll see in

Opposite:
The back side to the first record for The Archies.

Above:
An ad that ran in Hollywood trade papers showed Filmation's 1968 lineup.

a bit, there was some backlash against adventure shows, so they decided to move *Aquaman* to Sunday. There was a lot of public service and religious programming on Sundays, but Freddie Silverman thought he could develop a kids' block there.

As for the raise in prices, with the addition of more and more new shows on TV—and we were competing mostly against Hanna-Barbera for ratings and workers—it was getting more and more difficult to get people. We had to pay more for newcomers, and there were automatic raises on a yearly basis for those who had been with us a while. In animation the budgetary costs are mostly personnel. The rising cost to $60,000 sounds like nothing now, but back then it was a lot of money. If a show went into its third year, like *Superman*, that's where most of the profit would start to kick in. You recouped your investment and made a modest profit by the end of the second year, but the third year, if they added a few new episodes and ran reruns the rest of the time, that was profitable.

At that point we didn't do our own international distribution. In those days the networks could demand that you give them international distribution. Ouch! Eventually, we fought that and sometimes won, but that's a story for later.

The week of April 15–20, we left our smaller studio and moved into a new building in Reseda at 18107 Sherman Way, right across the street from the Bank of America. Our space went up from 6,500 square feet to 26,500 square feet, which allowed us to double our personnel from 150 people to 300 people. We were now able to put in our own sound studio to record voices, and make a lot of other changes. We eventually put some people in a building across the street as well, including veteran animator Virgil Ross, whose office again became a closet.

We almost bought the place, but we couldn't afford to do it yet. We did sign a long-term lease, and we redeveloped the interior of the place. We hired an architect and rebuilt the inside of the building so it functioned as an animation studio. Upstairs was to be layout, development, animators and assistant animators, and other offices. Downstairs we had writers, camera, background, ink and paint, editorial, and the so-called "executive offices," which was me and Norm,who shared one office. When we had started Filmation, we each had a little office in Patton's building, and Hal had a little office, and we found ourselves always meeting in our so-called "conference room." I said to Norm, "If we ever get the room, we ought to be in one office because we never spend any time in our individual offices." So the whole time that Norm and I were partners, and he was working at the studio, we always shared an office. It just was a nice way to work. I mean, we didn't have to call each other since we were always there. It worked out well for us. Hal worked upstairs with the animators and the directors, which was where he should have been. I worked mostly with the layout men, as well as the writers, who were downstairs right next to our offices when we moved.

As for the recording studio, it was amazing how many people we could get into that studio. Most of our shows were done there between '68 and '86. That's almost 20 years. We did everything but the lab work and the final sound stuff. I mean, we would cut the effects and music there, although the symphony orchestra work would be done in Europe.

Anyhow, once the *Archie* cat was out of the bag, we put out a call to find any *Archie* radio show actors who were still alive. We had thus far been unable to find any of the original cast members, but, since the technique had worked well for us on *Superman*, we wanted to duplicate it for *Archie*—at least for the speaking voices. It wasn't until early May that we inked the deal with Don Kirshner and announced that he was going to be packaging 17 songs for the new series and developing a musical group. Kirshner had previously been the head of Screen Gems and was famous for his work with *The Monkees*. The news wasn't greeted with much excitement in the press; after all, what success could an animated musical group for children have?

Batman, meanwhile, had an order for 17 new half-hours, with a second-year option for an additional nine. The ABC option to pick up the live-action series ran out on April 1, so there was a bit of a gamble on CBS's part when they announced the show; all the decisions were made pretty close to the wire. ABC had finished filming the series, and then finally cancelled it. Then NBC made an offer, but all the sets were gone, but during that same time CBS had to make their decisions about the cartoon!

One of the projects we were working on setting for the future was a one-hour telefilm of *Gulliver's Travels* called *The Adventures of Gulliver*, which was going to be a combination of live action and animation. We signed Kirk Douglas to narrate and sing, and Saul Turtletaub and Bernie Orenstein—who were working on a variety series for Phyllis Diller—to do the screenplay. Douglas's Bryna Productions was a co-partner, and we were going to feature original songs as well, a must for cartoon films. As with everything at the time, Hal was going to direct it. We got a whopping budget estimated at $1,200,000, our biggest at the time.

We had actually talked to John Wayne about doing *Gulliver*, but Kirk Douglas was a major star. He would have been

Above:
The new Filmation building in Reseda.

Opposite:
Images from *Batman*

live, and all of the other characters would have been animated. We desperately wanted to do some live-and-animated work because what would happen is we would do the work for television and start really, really hard in March to May. The networks would only buy the shows a couple of months before they went on the air. In the intervening time, a lot of people were forced to take three or four months off, which they could ill afford. So, I always wanted to do something that would allow us to keep the animators and writers on, and the only way I could see how to do that was to do some feature films. But we couldn't get *Gulliver* financed, and I couldn't figure out why. That whole deal was put together by GAC, which was General Artists Corporation, our agents.

We also made a deal with Toho to produce a live-action *Godzilla* movie and try to sell an animated series for the 1969–1970 season. That never happened, though I don't remember why.

The media was beginning to pay more attention to violence on television, especially following the June 5th shooting of Senator Kennedy. Saturday morning was deemed an especially violent time, and it was decided that kids' shows should be cleaned up. This didn't affect us too much, though it meant that even the cartoon fights in *Batman* would have to be carefully monitored. *Daily Variety* wrote that there were "still the subhuman holdovers from last year, the steeped-in-mayhem weirdo half-hours that the webs can't easily dispose of this year without taking a financial beating." As they labeled the pack of shows "unconscionably violent," Norm dutifully gave them a quote, saying that, "We had to offer the networks what they were seeking," but, thankfully, Filmation was not taking the blame for most of the so-called violence. Shortly thereafter, words were massaged, and action-adventure shows were redubbed as "adventure-comedy" shows. Animation wasn't the only industry facing scrutiny though; some newspapers began dropping strips like *Little Orphan Annie* and *Dick Tracy*, saying they were too violent.

Announced to the press in July was a new series planned for NBC's 1969 season called *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*. It was brokered by Larry White, NBC's vice-president of daytime programming, and David Gerber of 20th Century Fox, who was going to co-produce. The plan was that any action in the series would be done as a way to stress chivalry among the knights of old.

All of this expansion meant more hires and some promotions. In late August we upped our staff to 350 people and publicly announced some appointments that we had already made internally. Rock Benedict—also known as Rock Benedetto—was now the production coordinator of all of our shows, while Anatole Kirsanoff was made senior director of animation under Hal Sutherland. We gave the full title of directors to industry veterans Amby Paliwoda, Don Towsley, Lou Zukor, and Rudy Larriva, and Joe Simon was made supervising editor, as he now had a staff under him. Each series was now to have its own story editor as well, with Bob Ogle assigned to *Archie* and Ken Sobol to *Fantastic Voyage*.

I'm going to write about each of our three shows that year individually, even if that means jumping around in the timeframe a bit. Let's talk about *Batman* first because that was the one we were dealing with the longest.

When *Batman* was on the air live, it had started off really well. I guess what that show did brought the comic book back to life—the comic book itself was not doing well—and what we did with the cartoon helped sales as well. Unlike the live show, we planned the series as relatively straightforward adventures, or as straight as those comic books were. They made jokes in the live show that were just absurd.

We did pull one element from the live shows, which was that we did cliffhangers. There was a 14-minute two-part story in each half-hour, with a cliffhanger in the middle, and then a short seven-minute story. I really didn't like doing these shorter stories—it was a holdover from what cartoons used to be—as I felt it didn't allow us to do very interesting stories.

We didn't really have a lot of violence in the series, certainly not in comparison to the live series. Most of the violence took place off-screen, although there was plenty of action and bright colors. We would occasionally run into issues with the network censors, but time was so tight that, if anything needed to be changed, it had to be changed for the second airing. Often when they punched, they would punch toward the camera, so you didn't see it connect. We used that same technique almost two decades later on *He-Man*!

This came back to bite us once. In an early episode somebody painted an ABC logo on a wall in the background, because the live show had been on ABC. None of us caught it, from layout to backgrounds to dailies. They had ordered the show so late that we would get the shows delivered on Friday to air on Saturday, so they didn't have time to proof it. Freddie Silverman called me up after the show aired, and he was going nuts about an ABC logo appearing on a CBS show! We ended up redoing that scene for the next time it aired, but it was on the air that once.

Olan Soule was cast as our Batman and Bruce Wayne. He had been a very popular radio actor on a show called *The First Nighter Program*, where he worked with Les Tremayne, who later did *Shazam!* for us, and Marvin Miller, who was our Aquaman. I loved Olan's voice. He was just a wonderful guy, truly talented. When you saw him you were surprised because he sounded ten feet tall, but he was just this little guy with glasses. And he was gracious. He had never done an animated show before, and I think he was a little startled when he found out how easy the work was. Voice actors don't have to memorize anything!

The guy playing Robin was Casey Kasem, who was a disc jockey

on KRLA 1110 in Los Angeles and a sometime actor. He hadn't started his *American Top 40* show yet. We interviewed a lot of guys for that job, and what we'd do is we'd send out character listings to various agents. There were a couple of agencies that dedicated themselves mostly to voice-over people, and we dealt with them most of the time because we didn't really go out looking for big name voices. Big names were a pain in the ass because they wanted more money, and we couldn't afford it. A lot of these agencies were doing voice-over for radio, and those were perfect guys for us. We would send them a three- or four-page script, and they would send back tapes. We'd listen to the tapes, and then we would call them and have people come in; otherwise, we'd have had hundreds of people coming in all the time. The agents did half the job for us.

By the way, Soule and Kasem did a great job for us, and later on, Hanna-Barbera used them both on their *Super Friends* series as well. So, they liked our casting choices too. Maybe they should have given us a cut of profits!

Ted Knight was the narrator, plus he played Alfred the Butler, Commissioner Gordon, and the villains. Jane Webb did Batgirl and Catwoman and the other female characters. And I did some of the minor voice work here and there as well, for the first time.

Visually the "wipes" that we did to move between scenes became more pronounced with Batman. Cross dissolves were a pain, but working in twirling batarangs or capes was easy, and the swooping bat shadow was easy. We could switch locations or switch time periods, and viewers would know they had moved. They also added more gusto to the show. We also did something neat with the Batmobile: since it was all black, we color-keyed it with white lines instead of dark lines. We called it "W over D" for "White over Dark" or "W over B" for "White over Black."

We used multiple villains in many of the episodes instead of just one villain. It took more animation, but it made for a more fun show. We also reused a lot of the city backgrounds. You might see the same one a dozen times in a show. But it's not like we were the only ones. You saw the same thing on *The Flintstones* or any number of other series. We also would occasionally have the characters put their hands up by their mouths as they talked—as if they were scratching their chin or thinking—which meant we didn't have to animate their lips. And Batman and Robin didn't have eyes that blinked in their masks.

As a director Anatole Kirsanoff worked just

BATMAN SUPERMAN HOUR

underneath Hal Sutherland. "Toly" was a nobleman from Russia whose family had escaped to America during the Russian revolution. He celebrated Christmas at a different time due to being in an Eastern religion, so we'd have a second Christmas party every year at Toly's house. Don Towsley was an associate director who had just started working for us.

Herbie Hazelton did a lot of our character drawings. We also used a layout artist named Mike Ploog on *Batman and Superman*; he had just gotten out of the Marine Corps, and he later went on to have quite a career drawing comic books. If you look over the credits on *Batman*, you'll see that Kay Wright is listed on some of them twice! Hope he didn't have to pay double union fees that year!

We also credited Bob Kane on the *Batman* series, as National wanted. Kane was a really strange guy. He gave me the creeps. I had one meeting with him, but it was basically a non-meeting. He looked like he could be Dracula, with these dark circles around his eyes. He came to the studio, and he wasn't really listening to us at all; as far as I could see, he really didn't give a sh*t about what the hell we did. I think he just came to say hello. Ducovny got a special credit at the end as well for his production company, which was really just him. National gave us a certain list of credits we had to use.

Speaking of credits, starting with this season I instituted the policy of giving most of our creatives working here what was called the "gang credit." What that did was to give most of our animators, in particular, a screen credit even if they didn't happen to work on that particular show. I had a lot of respect for animators, which was why I billed them as "animators," rather than just "animation" like all the other companies did.

This season, for example, I gave the animators of *The Archie Show, The Batman/Superman Hour*, and *Fantastic Voyage* credit on all three, even if they only worked on one of those three. Some of them would jump from one show to another as needed, but most were specifically assigned to just one show for that whole season. I was especially proud of giving our female animators, starting with Xenia De Mattia, prominent screen credit too. The funny thing about it was that some of our adventure animators couldn't draw a comedic character if it killed them—and it seemed sometimes that it did—and some of our comic guys couldn't draw a straight character if their lives depended on it.

Fantastic Voyage was our second show to do

with 20th Century Fox and our second show for ABC. We had the second year of *Journey to the Center of the Earth* as well, but no new episodes were ordered for it. *Fantastic Voyage* was based on a 1966 motion picture that was all about scientists on a nuclear powered submarine that were miniaturized and sent into a human body. It had Raquel Welch in it, and she was very sexy. I think that ABC picked up *Fantastic Voyage* mostly because they were just running around trying to find other shows that might possibly work. It was tough being any other station than CBS because CBS had controlled the morning! But this paired well with *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and people knew the name of the series from the movie.

In the motion picture, when they were shrunk down, they only went into the human body, wandering in and outside of veins and arteries and so forth. We wanted to do something more expansive, even if the show was about shrinking. So, we had them going into all sorts of things—anything. They went into enemy countries, they went into outer space… I think once they even went into a penny!

We didn't use anything from the movie at all other than the concept and the name. The concept was really the most important thing for this series. We created a top-secret organization called C.M.D.F., for Combined Miniature Defense Force, which had a team of characters who would shrink down inside their ship, the *Voyager*, for adventures. They were Commander Jonathan Kidd, a mysterious Hindu mystic named Dr. Guru, a young female biologist named Dr. Erika Lane, and a scientist and inventor named Busby Birdwell. They worked under a military man named Professor Carter.

Commander Kidd was an easy design, as he was a standard character from one of our shows, with an eye-patch. Batman with an eye-patch! Dr. Guru was kind of interesting because we recycled his type of character for a live-action *Isis* episode much later. Busby Birdwell was the kind of brainy kid that we had in a lot of our later shows as well. And as for Erika Lane… in case you missed it, her name was the names of my daughter and son put together!

Marvin Miller, Jane Webb, and Ted Knight did most of the voices in the series, and by now they were pretty much regulars for us. Marvin had finished doing *Aquaman* by then.

The first episode actually set up the storyline and showed the team coming together, and many fans have noticed that this was a very serious

show with science-fiction concepts like we later did on *Star Trek*. We also gave them a 12-hour limit for their shrinking—there had been a time limit in the movie as well—which gave the show an element of danger without there being violence. We even had a colorful countdown clock, so viewers could see time ticking away.

Fantastic Voyage was one of our early merchandising hits. They did a model kit of the *Voyager*, which sold very well. They also did a View-Master set from the show, and Gold Key did a pair of comic books. The comics were pretty good versions of the show, although, they misnamed the group as Civilian Miniature Defense Force.

Ken Sobol was our story editor on *Fantastic Voyage*, and he wrote several of them. He was great, but one guy at the network did not like him. Ed Vane was in charge of daytime programming at ABC, and he was a very likeable guy. He had a guy who worked out in California for him, and he used to have more of a day-to-day relationship with us. Given the short amount of time we had to produce episodes in, the only thing the networks could usually pick apart were the scripts. Once the script was done, there wasn't a hell of a lot they could do until they started to see finished film. So, they would read the scripts thoroughly and come back with their suggestions. It was always a pain in the neck, but you had to listen to them, and you had to assume that they had some degree of ability. One day I got this call from Ed's guy, and he said, "This Ken Sobol that you've got working on this stuff is just no good. Every time he does a script, there's something that causes trouble for us. We've got to do something about that."

So, I told him we'd get another writer. I called Ken in and told him he'd need to change his name. He said, "Who am I gonna be?" And I said, "I don't know, and I don't care what you call yourself, but you're no longer Ken Sobol on this script." So, he pretended to rewrite the script, sent it back in under a fake name, and we got a phone call from the network guy saying, "Lou, you found the guy that we want to use!" And the only change we made was Ken's name, so they clearly had something against Ken Sobol. But we didn't and we kept using him.

Opposite:
Images from *Batman*, including rare *Batman Superman Hour* logo
Above:
Images from *Fantastic Voyage*

This brings us to *Archie*. The concept was brought to us by Irv Wilson, who was our agent at the time. Irv had approached John Goldwater, who was one of the guys running Archie Comics, about licensing his books out for a TV show. Irv called me and said, "Do you want the rights to *Archie*?" And I said, "What the hell is *Archie*? Is it something kids know?" I had never seen the comic book, even though it had been around since 1942. I didn't read comic books that kids were reading then, which was a mistake, and I didn't know how successful a book it really was. He said, "Oh God, Lou, every kid in the country knows what it is."

I think I flew out to meet with John Goldwater, who was a very nice man. We made a deal, and it was a very legit deal. We both owned 50 percent of whatever shows we produced. We actually owned the negatives for the film as I recall. And it was an easy show to sell.

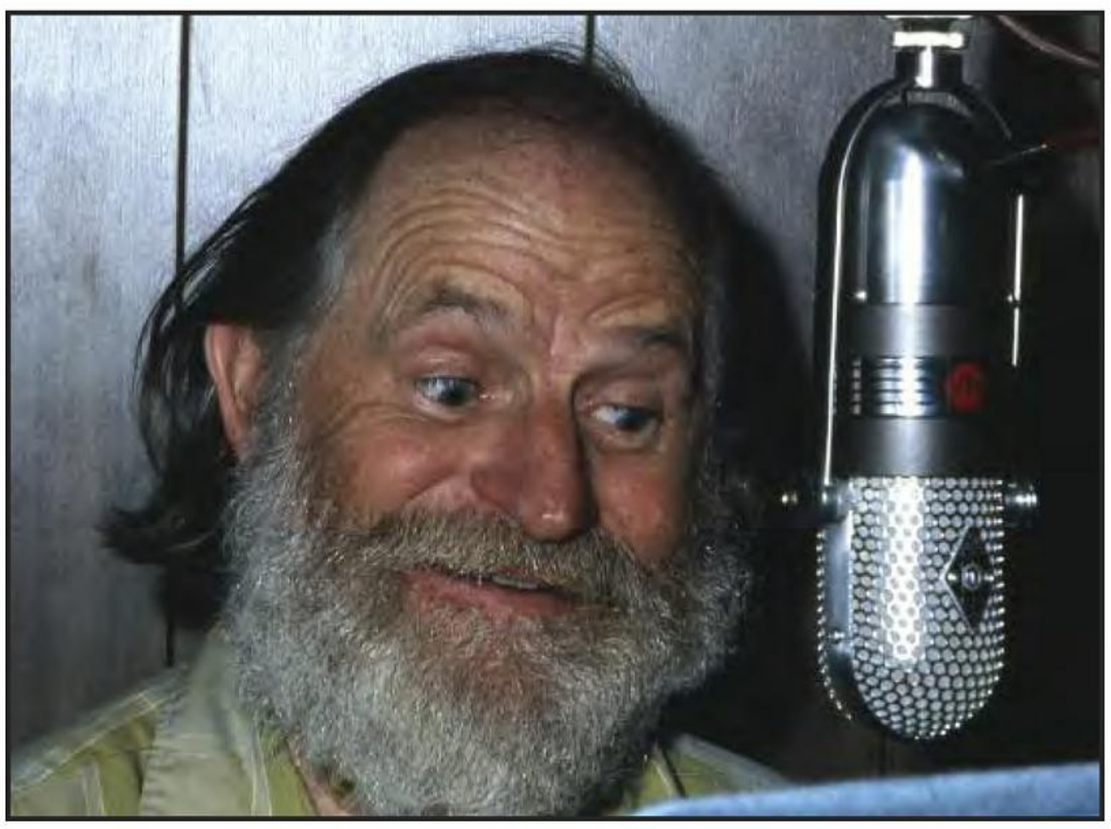
The show existed in a way already; the comic book was there; the characters were there. So we presented it to Freddie Silverman with a stack of comic books. It was the cheapest presentation we ever made and probably one of the most successful shows we ever produced.

The reason I knew it was going to be successful was that Silverman started laughing and clapping, and he never did that at anything. This really hit him right where he understood it; he knew what would happen with those characters, and how they could be used.

CBS liked it immediately because the air was polluted with adventure shows, and there was nothing like *Archie* on the air. And then we got the idea to make music an integral part of the show. That was not being done for children's shows; it became the first time that a children's show had a group created for them! The Beatles had been adapted, but it wasn't something new; it was just taking their already existing music and using it.

Now when I say, "We got the idea to make music an integral part of the show," I should point out that The Archies did have a band that first appeared in *Life with Archie* #60, in April 1967. In that issue the editors asked readers to write in and let them know if they wanted to see the band again. Whether we knew about that group or had been in talks with Archie by that point and perhaps influenced its comic book genesis is a mystery lost to the ages.

Back to 1968, when CBS bought *Archie*, we made the deal with



Don Kirshner. In 1967 he'd had a bad breakup with The Monkees, the musical group he had been instrumental in turning into a hit recording group. Norm called Kirshner up, and he was happy to come work with us. What he really wanted to do was to create the Monkees again to show Columbia Records that he didn't need them or The Monkees… or even real people!

The plan for *The Archie Show* was to have two eight-minute stories, a three-minute musical segment, and other dance and joke segments. The music wasn't specific to any of the plots, so we let Kirshner go off and work on that on his own.

For the most part, we took everything directly from the comics. The characters were warm, soft, and friendly, and kids could relate to them. We had Archie Andrews, his buddy Jughead Jones, his rival Reggie Mantle, and the two lovely girls that Archie and Reggie were after, Betty Cooper and Veronica Lodge. And then there were their various parents and teachers at Riverdale High.

The one significant change we made was creating Hot Dog. He literally became the voice of the characters upon occasion because you could hear him speaking through what he was thinking. It gave us a vehicle to talk about the kids and the show. He would talk to the audience, straight into the camera, breaking the "fourth wall" with the viewers. And also it gave us an animal, which was sort of a nice thing to animate. We had done Krypto and Gertrude the duck, but, unlike some other companies, we weren't big on doing strictly funny animals. And for those who might say, "Hot Dog appeared in the comics before the TV show was on the air," in *Pep Comics* #224—cover-dated December 1968, but on sale a few months earlier—I'll remind you that we had been developing *Archie* since 1967.

The voice cast was interesting. I don't recall why we didn't use Bob Hastings, who had been Archie on the radio show and our Superboy, but for some reason we didn't. We never did find any of the other radio voices even though we tried. And the people who were to do the TV show voices were not the same people who were to do the songs.

The guy who played Archie and Hot Dog was an actor named Dallas McKennon. At the time he was playing a bartender on the *Daniel Boone* series. He was magnificent man, had a great voice, and he looked like he was about 122 years old, and that was giving him the benefit of the doubt! He had an enormous grey beard. He had also been doing voices for cartoons since forever, including stuff for *Woody Woodpecker, Q.T. Hush*, and *Courageous Cat* and *Minute Mouse*, and he was often the voice of Gumby. So here we had this old guy—he was actually 49 then—playing America's favorite teenager!

Howard "Howie" Morris was Jughead. He was a Hanna-

Opposite Above:
The TV logo for *The Archie Show*

Opposite Below: (l to r)
The voices for *The Archie Show:* Dallas McKennan (Archie's speaking voice), Howie Morris (Jughead), Ron Dante (Archie's singing voice), Ron Dante and others recording Archie vocals

Above:
John Goldwater & Don Kirshner

Right:
The Archie Cast

Barbera regular, and, as a comedy actor, he was popular on Sid Caesar's *Your Show of Shows*—he was the little guy that was always wrapped around Sid Caesar's knees getting pulled across the floor—and *The Andy Griffith Show*. And Jughead, really, in his own way, was the star of the show. Archie was always the good soul, doing things right, keeping people happy, and falling in love with two girls at the same time. But Jughead provided all the fun. He did everything wrong, and somehow he came out right all the time. And he handled the dog. He and the dog were alike in many respects. They were two dumb characters that were right all the time.

Jane Webb handled both of the girls. As I've mentioned before, we did a lot of work with Jane. She was a lovely, gracious, beautiful woman, and very talented. If you had 20 women in a show, if it were legal, she'd have done all 20 of them. She was a young girl in Chicago, like 14 or 15, when she started in the business of doing voiceovers. She was a voice in the radio show *Tom Mix*, which I used to listen to!

John Erwin, who later became *He-Man* for us, was Reggie. I think this is the first time he worked for us. John is the kind of guy that you can't get on the phone; the agent was the only one who'd talk to you. He was very, very bashful. John was extraordinary, and he created a character for Reggie Mantle that you couldn't create just by drawing. I mean, he gave it life, and you could write stories just because you knew what John could do. He had previously done a bunch of episodes on the western show *Rawhide*, with Clint Eastwood in the lead. But he moved into mostly doing voices once he came onboard with us.

Unlike the National/DC shows, we didn't use any of the writers who actually worked on the *Archie* comics. We hired some good comedy writers for the series. Bob Ogle was first, and later came Chuck Menville and Len Janson, Jim Ryan, Bill Danch, and some others. Danch was an interesting case because I hired

him for a week. Then it was two weeks. Then it became two months. Then it became two years. Then it became five. Danch worked for all the radio comedians. He worked for Bob Hope; he worked for *Fibber McGee and Molly*; he worked for Chuck Jones and ABC… and he also won more prizes than anybody in the history of prize winning. He was on *60 Minutes*. He had won over 6,000 prizes, and he wrote a book about how to win prizes.

Working with all of these elements, we had a show that was really unlike anything else airing for kids. Most shows were really aimed at twelve and under, and there was nothing for young teenagers. Nobody was doing shows about dancing and singing and dating and high school and problems that youth have, and it was about time to do a show that could be appreciated by an older group of young people. The *Archie* cast were teenagers and wanted to do the things teenagers wanted to do, and they cared about love and money and food and fun. And they all liked music.…

When it came to the songs, we'd tell Kirshner what we wanted to do, what the attitude should be, and what kind of stories we were doing, and then he would produce the songs and deliver them to us whole. He had several songwriters working for him, including Jeff Barry, Richie Adams, and Mark Barkan, and he hired a group of singers and musicians to "be" The Archies. The majority of the male voices were done by a very talented guy named Ron Dante, and the female voices were by Toni Wine and some others. Producer Jeff Barry did the singing voice of Jughead for some songs by him. I didn't meet any of them until later because Norm handled all the music with Kirshner.

The music scenes were kind of like early music videos. We'd show the Archies playing their guitars and drums and singing, and there would be groovy effects behind them. We also taught a "Dance of the Week," which were some very weird dances put together by a bunch of animators who were not teenagers and probably not dancers either.

The final element that we added to *The Archie Show* that made it different from any other animated series at the time was a laugh track. It was the first Saturday morning show to use a laugh track. Why did we use a laugh track? Because it made the audience want to laugh with all the other people who were watching, and they felt like part of the show, more than just observers.

About that time we were also setting up our music division. Shermley Music was the name of

Above Left:
Betty, Archie & Veronica

Middle:
The Archie Show gang

Bottom:
Betty & Reggie

Above Right:
Mime Marcel Marceau

our ASCAP publishing arm—the name was a combination of the two streets we were on, Sherman Way and Lindley—and we contracted for two years with KEC Music Company for eight singles and two albums. KEC was Kirshner Entertainment Corporation and was on Don Kirshner's Calendar label, distributed through RCA Records. First out, of course, was going to be The Archies, and ads for the first Archies album appeared in *TV Guide* the same week as the show started.

That debut was September 14, 1968, as the new fall season blossomed. *The Archie Show* aired at 10:00 a.m. on CBS, up against reruns of *Spider-Man* and *The Flintstones*. And, in a move that was kind of a nail-biter for us, from 10:30–11:30 a.m. was *Fantastic Voyage* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth* on ABC, up against *The Batman/Superman Hour* on CBS. The retitled *The Adventures of Aquaman* debuted at 9:30 a.m. on the following day. On both days the majority of the content was now being provided by either Hanna-Barbera or us, with a handful of other studios providing packages of old theatrical stuff or some new content.

As expected *Superman/Batman* was a hit, and *Fantastic Voyage* did all right, but the real surprise was *The Archie Show*. I was still worried about it though. Every Saturday morning Erika would watch westerns because she didn't care about our cartoons. Randolph Scott was her hero. Freddie Silverman would call once the shows were over, and I'd have to grab her from watching television. "Tell him the show you just saw on CBS was good because otherwise your dad's going to get killed!" I needn't have been too concerned about *The Archie Show's* health though. It was soon a solid hit. More about that in a few paragraphs, but speaking of "hits," here's one I took....

Three days after our great premieres, on Tuesday, September 17th, I was part of a panel on television violence sponsored by the TV Academy. It was moderated by Dr. Frank C. Baxter, who had hosted those Bell Science shows I worked on before, and Lee Rich, and other panelists included Leo Burnette—a producer on the war show *Rat Patrol* and advertising executive—who argued that violence was not new, but television was bringing real violence to audiences faster; director Norman Tokar; writer Frank Tarloff; Christopher Knopf; and Rita Lakin, who was the lead writer on the soap opera *The Doctors*. And there I was, representing cartoons, and I had to choose my words very carefully, putting blame on neither us as suppliers, nor the networks. The fact that I didn't think our shows were violent wasn't really germane. There were about a hundred people in the audience, but it made front-page news in the trade papers.

Following up the panel in September, the debate on Saturday morning violence reached a critical juncture quickly, and, on October 4th, the trade papers reported that both ABC and CBS were making pacts to eliminate violent programming for the 1969–1970 season. Fred Silverman noted that only *Superman and Batman* would be retained—he knew what ratings juggernauts they were—and that comedy would rule the airwaves. Meanwhile, Lloyd Gaynes, ABC's western daytime programming director told reporters that Filmation was developing a show that might involve Harry Belafonte.

This latter bit of news was important, as it would have been the first time that African-Americans would be portrayed on Saturday mornings, though that historical nugget was lost amongst the clamorous discussion of violence. But that moment was indicative of a cultural time in which trade paper touted "Negro On-Air Newsman" or "2 Negro Companies Film" as headlines. That same month I donated twelve executive chairs, and Bill Hanna donated twelve animation desks, in support of the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Local #839 program at the Performing Arts Society, which was aimed at training teenage African-American students to become animators. In retrospect it was baby steps towards the onrushing movement for civil rights for all, but we were taking them nonetheless.

At the end of September, we finalized a deal with 20th Century Fox to do a series of six half-hour specials with none other than world-famous mime, Marcel Marceau! He would be filmed live, as one of his characters named Bip the clown, interacting with animated elements. David Gerber and production chief William Self were involved, and we put together a presentation to shop to networks and sponsors. What I recall of the story is that somebody from the animated world stole something from Bip, and he had to enter the world of animation to get it back. The first story was going to have a western motif. Marceau was one of the nicest people in the world. He came over and we tried to sell the show with him along; the networks and everybody were delighted to see us, but nobody gave a sh*t about doing the show.

Meanwhile, The Archies album, available on record and 8-track cartridge tapes, was a monster hit. On November 17th, *The Ed Sullivan Show* featured two animated clips of the group from our series, singing "Bang-Shang-A- Lang" and performing the dance, "The Bubble Gum," both from our pilot episode. And by November 20th, the first single, "Bang-Shang-A- Lang/Truck Driver," had sold over 500,000 copies! It eventually reached #22 on the Hot 100 charts, although a second single, "Feelin' So Good (S.k.o.o.b.y.-D.o.o.)/Love Light" didn't fare quite as well, not quite cracking into the Top 50.

I remember that the radio deejays were very resistant to playing The Archies. We'd get reports from different markets, and in one of them the station manager had written, "Oh Lord, Why Lord.!" (sic) after our entry. But, we kept getting radio play, despite that predisposition and despite there being no live-action "face" for Archie.

Filmation was riding high on the success of our superhero shows and *Archie*, and the music and its spill-over publicity. The *Archie* format had us announcing in *Billboard* that we would be willing to animate "promotional films" for the recording industry: three minutes for $3,500-$5,000. And in November we made a deal with literary agent Ned Brown, licensing Robert Heinlein's *Glory Road* for $25,000 to adapt as a feature film.

In late November I went to New York to pitch to the networks for the fall schedule. NBC had already announced that, due to protests over violence, it was going to drop Hanna-Barbera's *Birdman* and DePatie-Freleng's *Super President* in January 1969, mid-season, a move which was going to be costly for them due to their two-year commitments. But what would their move—and the concerns about cartoon violence—mean to the future Saturday morning schedules of ABC and CBS and to the animation market?

HARDY BOYS

CHAPTER EIGHT

1969 GOLD RECORDS AND WITCHES

By February 1969 the word was beginning to leak out on our plans for fall, as the trade papers reported on what a huge boon Saturday morning was to advertising dollars (at $11–12K per minute) and ratings. They revealed that we would be adding another half-hour of Archie to the schedule, debuting it with *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*. We weren't the only ones doing spin-offs of popular shows, however, and other licensed series such as *The Pink Panther* were getting scheduled as well.

Unfortunately, superheroes and action shows were on their way out—the networks were running scared of the so-called "moral watchdogs"—and so *Aquaman* was gone, *Batman* got moved to Sundays, and *Superman* got flown over to an afternoon spot. Gone too was *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and no new *Fantastic Voyages* were ordered. Luckily, comedy and music were "in."

We did a presentation that year, I think, for a show called *Those Magnificent Men and Their Flying Machines*, which was based on a 1965 comedy movie released by 20th Century Fox. The presentation was mostly basic drawings and very basic animation mixed in with footage from the film. It had a very unusual look, which was based on the movie poster and credits art by Ronald Searle, and might have been tough to animate had we sold it. But we couldn't sell it. Coincidentally, that fall Hanna-Barbera did a show called *Dastardly and Muttley in Their Flying Machines*, which was extremely similar to this concept. We did another presentation for *Paul Bunyan* with Babe, his blue ox, but it didn't sell either.

Archie was getting a 47 rating regularly in the 2–11 age bracket, which was huge, and was soon sold to a whopping 71 foreign countries to air! So 20th Century Fox jumped on the bandwagon (so to speak) and asked us to do another music show, with a twist. They had planned to do *The Hardy Boys*, a series of popular teen mystery books created by Franklin W. Dixon, as a live series with NBC, but that didn't work. So, instead, they pitched us as the animators for a new *Hardy Boys* series that incorporated music alongside the mystery-solving adventures of the title characters. ABC took the bait and signed us for the show in February, for a fall debut.

The Hardy Boys' music was to be produced by Chicago's Dunwich Productions, published through Fox's Fanfare subsidiary and released under the RCA Calendar label, as with The Archies. A promotional tour was set for ten cities, starting August 25th, with a live band performing songs. RCA's $100,000 in promotion paid off; the first Hardy Boys single, "Love and Let Love," was getting great airplay by mid-August. The early PR from the music then fed interest in the show, which had yet to debut.

For *Hardy Boys* we created the band's characters, including among them Saturday morning television's first-ever regular African-American character (predating Hanna-Barbera's Valerie in *Josie and the Pussycats* by a full year)

Opposite:
Logo and images for *The Hardy Boys*

Above and Below:
Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines art

and—amusingly enough given the series' title—a teenage girl. In those days it was tough—*tough*—to get a black character on the air, and everybody would give you whatever the reason was, but they just didn't have the guts to do it. Once we had our designs and characters, the band was then cast based on people who resembled our series. We had live clips that were mixed around the animated stories, and we would do the songs as well.

Although the live singers did the music bits, the voices for the animated characters were our regular folks: Dallas McKennon, Byron Kane, and Jane Webb. Byron was not a young guy, and he had been a radio voice before as well. Dallas voiced Frank Hardy and Chubby Morton, Byron played Joe Hardy and Pete Jones, and Jane was Wanda Kay Breckinridge. The actual band members were Reed Kailing, who was Frank; Jeff Taylor, who was Joe; Bob Crowder, who was Pete; Norbet "Nibs" Soltysiak, who was Chubby; and Deven English, who was Wanda.

There were two stories for each show, generally adapted from the books, for a total of 17 half-hour episodes. Each episode had a song, so we did 17 songs. On the show the kids were on a world tour, and they solved mysteries along the way. Any resemblance Hanna-Barbera's mystery-solving teens on *Scooby-Doo* that fall had to our characters was entirely coincidental, I'm sure. After all, their show had a goofy food-loving guy and his semi-talking pet dog, a concept that Jughead and Hot Dog might have enjoyed if they weren't already popular on another network.

We also had some public service announcements starring the characters on the *Hardy Boys* series, which was really the first time that had been done on Saturday mornings. It was a precursor to the morals that we started adding on to all of our shows. Between our stories and the PSAs, kids learned about the perils of drugs and smoking and the importance of wearing seatbelts among other things.

For the end credits on *The Hardy Boys*, we started to use a circle with my name and Norm Prescott's name in it. You may recall that previously, I told you we had argued over whose name would be listed first. I said to Norm, "We gotta do some other way that doesn't hurt anybody's ego. Why don't we do a circle and have it move all the time, so neither of us is listed first." So, that's what we did, but he worked it out so that his name always ended up on top at the last rotation, that S.O.B.! It got my goat once I figured that trick out. Norm and Hal and I got a fun little tribute in May 1969, when the Archie people did something cool in the first issue of *Everything's Archie*. They actually had the Archie gang come out to California and visit the offices of Filmation! They did a whole comic book story with the kids meeting us. I got a little peeved though, because my two partners were very nice looking in this book, and I didn't like the way I looked; I looked just the way I look now, which is why I don't like it.

It wasn't the first time the show was referenced in the comics though; the first story was two months prior, in *Archie* #189, in a story called "The Music Man." In it, Mr. Lodge introduces the group to music producer Don Kirshner, or as Jughead calls him, "the man with the golden ear." They even performed pieces of "Truck Driver" and "You Make Me Wanna Dance" for him before he signed them to Calendar Records. As if that wasn't enough hard-sell, Archie then promoted the records and TV show for three more pages! National/DC never gave us that much respect when we were doing three shows for them!

The Archie Comedy Hour, meanwhile, which incorporated *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, was signed to debut the characters in a primetime special sponsored by Bristol-Myers. Sabrina had first appeared in *Archie's Madhouse* #22 in October 1962, created by George Gladir and artist Dan DeCarlo. Two years later ABC debuted a live-action sitcom called *Bewitched*, which was about a pretty witch and her husband, and which was supposedly based on the film *I Married a Witch* and the Broadway show and film of *Bell, Book, and Candle*.

We were always looking for concepts that already had an audience or a proven interest, and I had actually been interested in doing *Bewitched* as an animated series. We met up with the guy who produced it, William Asher, who was married to the star, Elizabeth Montgomery, but he didn't have the rights, so it didn't work out. But then I got a call from Freddie Silverman, who was on vacation down in Mexico and had been looking through a stack of Archie comics. He said, "Did you know that your friend Goldwater already has a teenage witch character in the Archie books?" That was how we decided to do *Sabrina*.

We needed *Sabrina* to help freshen up the *Archie* world, even though we were adding other characters in to that part of the show, new music, and a few new comedy and joke segments similar to *Laugh-In*. We weren't terribly concerned about putting a witch on a kids' show because she was a good witch, and there were no real villains. No demons or warlocks or dark mysteries, just her two aunts and her boyfriend and cat, and whatever goofy stuff they would get into.

We brought in Jack Mendelsohn, who had started out as a comic strip artist doing *Jacky's Diary* and then moved in to comedy TV shows like *Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In* and *The Carol Burnett Show*. He was writing for *Archie* and for *Sabrina*, and developing new stuff for us, including a monstrous concept called *Monster Inn* that we thought we might introduce in a future

Above:
The Hardy Boys band

Opposite: (top to bottom)
The new circular credit for Lou and Norm

Hal, Norm, and Lou from *Everything's Archie* #1, 1969

Promotional art for *The Archie Comedy Hour*

season of *Archie*.

Norm did most of the hiring, and I only got to hire people when I saw portfolios that really looked interesting, like Don Bluth, who later became a big name in animation. I saw his portfolio, I think, before anybody else did. He's a really talented guy and can draw like a son of a gun. Don did layouts on the *Archie* special which introduced the new season. I gave him work when he needed a job and was happy when he was a success. I won't say much more about him, though, because he was not very pleasant to me when I saw him later.

Jane Webb, who did the voices of Betty and Veronica, also did all of the voices of *Sabrina*'s lead characters: Sabrina, Aunt Zelda, and Aunt Hilda! There were times when she would have a three-way conversation with herself! In one of the rare instances where we cast a second female voice actress for a show, we used Treva Frazee, who played Sabrina's best friend, Ophelia. We also used Howard Morris on this show, as well as Larry Storch and Larry D. Mann. Don Messick played Sabrina's boyfriend Harvey and Chili Dog, and I think it was the only time we used him, since he was a Hanna-Barbera guy. They didn't like it when their people worked for us and even jokingly called such people "traitors" around their offices.

Other than our shows, Filmation's biggest news of the year was when we were acquired by cable television group TelePrompTer Corporation the week of June 23rd. At the mid-June National Cable Association annual convention, cable TV—and the ramifications of multiple new channels with specific content and a new technology being developed with video-recording cartridges—were the talk of the industry. TelePrompTer head Irving B. Kahn stated in *Daily Variety* that their purchase of Filmation was so that they could move toward "total production capability with emphasis on program packages for cable television in addition to TV."

The deal with TelePrompTer had been put together by Marvin Josephson, who was one hell of an agent. Back when we had first sold *Superman*, Marvin somehow got our number and called us. He said, "I think I would be able to, at the right time, put you together with a company that needs something like you guys. I don't think that you're ready for it yet though." He would call every couple of months and say, "It's Marvin again. It ain't time yet, guys." And then one day in 1969, Marvin calls, and he says, "I've got the right company for you. I'd like you and Norm to meet the man; he'll be in Los Angeles next week sometime."

We went for a meeting with Irving Kahn at a restaurant in Beverly Hills. He said, "We could use something like you, and you could use something like us. I want to be not in the business of just bringing other people shows into their homes, I want to be in a position of doing programming. I can't buy a major studio, but you guys would be terrific, and we could do it with children's programming. And we have the money to help you guys with doing the stuff that you have to do." Afterwards, Norm and I went and talked to Ira and Hal. The four of us made the decision to sell, and Ira really did the final negotiations with Marvin Josephson, who represented us in the sale to TelePrompTer.

Now, other companies had tried to buy us already at that point, including Screen Gems and Columbia Pictures. But we went with TelePrompTer. Kahn said, "Now, one day you're going to watch the cable world, and it's going to be bringing programming into your house, but it's going to be programming produced by the cable companies. It ain't gonna happen right away, and it may take a long time, but there'll be one day when you won't use newspapers, and it's gonna be replaced by the cable companies." He really was a visionary!

We made a deal, and TelePrompTer acquired the company for stock. In other words we acquired TelePrompTer stock, and they acquired the company. We did it for a number of reasons: number one, it was financially appropriate; and two, it was the beginning of cable television. TelePrompTer was not at that time the largest cable company, but would become so shortly. It was our dream to be able to think about the possibility of producing programming for cable, ultimately going directly to the viewer rather than going through the middleman of the network, which was always frustrating because you weren't dealing with the public; you were dealing with somebody telling you what the public would see or not see. I felt that, sooner or later, cable television would be the forerunner for a whole other kind of communication in this country. Unfortunately, it took a lot longer than any of us perceived back then, but it did happen.

Kahn was not a difficult guy to do business with. He was generous and he was easy with us. He just wanted us to do what we do. I remember we were in a car with my mother-in-law and Jay, and Kahn

said to me, "The thing I like about you, Lou, is you don't steal too much from me." It was because of him that we were able to eventually finish *Journey Back to Oz*, and we did another cable show for him that I'll tell you about later called *Guest of Honor.*

That buyout helped with our increasing workload, as it meant we could hire even more people and add another 6,000 square feet of studio space.

In July we signed for film rights to adapt the book *Maybe I'll Pitch Forever*, a biography of Leroy Robert "Satchel" Paige by *St. Louis Post Dispatch* columnist David Lipman. Robert Chenault was developing it. We also had meetings with Paige, a legendary pitcher in the Negro leagues and a legend of Major League Baseball, about appearing in the project, but we were unable to ultimately sell it to anyone.

That summer, RCA released the second album for The Archies, *Everything's Archie*. It featured the song that would become our monster hit, "Sugar, Sugar." The song was written by Jeff Barry and Andy Kim, and sung by Ron Dante, Toni Wine, and Andy Kim. "Sugar, Sugar" was initially a tough sell to radio stations, who considered the young audience beneath them, but finally KFRC in San Francisco began playing our song, followed by Los Angeles stations. Bill Drake soon had it playing on all of the RKO stations, and it exploded. It entered Billboard's Hot 100 on July 26th and hit number one eight weeks later, on September 20th, staying there until the week of October 11th. Ed Sullivan featured the song and another animated clip of The Archies. It was certified as a gold record in August and eventually became not only the #1 song of 1969, but also the #24 song of the decade!

The Archies were getting a ton of publicity as well from a crunchier place. Post Cereal did a promotion on their Super Sugar Crisp, Honey Combs, Crispy Critters, Alpha-Bits, and Raisin Bran cereals, with not only all sorts of Archie offers—stickers, buttons, hats, and more—but also records that kids could cut directly off of the Super Sugar Crisp cereal boxes! Four of the records included a variety of Archies hits and promoted the TV show immeasurably.

ABC did the *ABC Super Saturday Club Special* on Tuesday, September 4th, which was a primetime offering hosted by the cast of the TV series *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir.* In it a preview of *The Hardy Boys* aired, and then the "real" Hardy Boys band materialized in front of the cast to perform! *The Hardy Boys* actually debuted early on September 6th at 10:30 a.m. The network followed up with a Super Saturday Club for kids to join, with pins, pennants, stickers, posters, and newsletters.

Primed by the music of The Archies and The Hardy Boys, our new fall offerings debuted on September 13th, sponsored by Bristol-Myers' Pals' Vitamins, with *The Archie Comedy Hour* from 11:00–noon on CBS. Reruns of *Fantastic Voyage* were on ABC at noon for a half-hour, and then reruns of the retitled *The New Adventures of Superman* aired on CBS at 1:00 p.m. The retitled *The Adventures of Batman and Robin* got moved to its own Sunday slot the following day.

Archie and His New Pals was our first primetime special, airing on CBS at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, September 13th. It debuted the song, "You Need an Image," which was actually about our story rather than a random song, as well as another song, "Get on the Line," sung under the special's end credits. *Variety* called the *Archie and His New Pals* special "only mildly amusing," but noted that its storyline about the school election voting for class president could have "passed for educational." They also offered a bit of snark about how Sabrina looked like a younger Samantha from *Bewitched*, apparently ignorant that Sabrina had been a comic book character (and ignorant of our own pursuit of *Bewitched* too!) for much longer.

Sabrina, I recall, started doing better than *Archie* almost immediately in the ratings. *Sabrina* had everything. There weren't really a lot of animated shows with a girl as the star. Sabrina was a really interesting character, and you could do stuff with her that was not normal. I liked her character a lot.

A third album for The Archies, *Jingle Jangle*, came out in the fall, featuring even more hopeful hits. The title track became the next single, and, although it was successful, it wasn't quite the hit "Sugar, Sugar" was. CBS supported it with our second primetime special on December 12th, called *The Archies' Sugar, Sugar, Jingle Jangle Christmas Show*. I don't remember much about it, but I don't think it had anything new in it; maybe some voice-overs were new.

The Hardy Boys weren't quite as successful as The Archies, though they did have some success with two albums: *Here Come the Hardy Boys* in 1969 and *Wheels* in 1970. Gold Key did four *Hardy Boys* comic books in 1970 and 1971 as well, and there were costumes licensed, a game, a toy car, and a View-Master set. Filmation also ran The Hardy Boys Fan Club, and members got a membership card, bios of the band, newsletters, stamps of the band members and show logo, and even a 45-rpm record with band member interviews.

Although we did profit a bit from The Hardy Boys, the success of the Archies' music didn't affect our bottom line too much, since we didn't get much of the proceeds. But, it did mean that we were still on top in the animation business as far as popularity.

Over on NBC primetime, Paramount's *Star Trek* had been cancelled as of the fall season, but we saw the opportunity to do something cool with it. We had gotten in touch with them while the show

was still on the air, but I remember that Paramount and Gene Roddenberry, the creator, weren't really getting along.

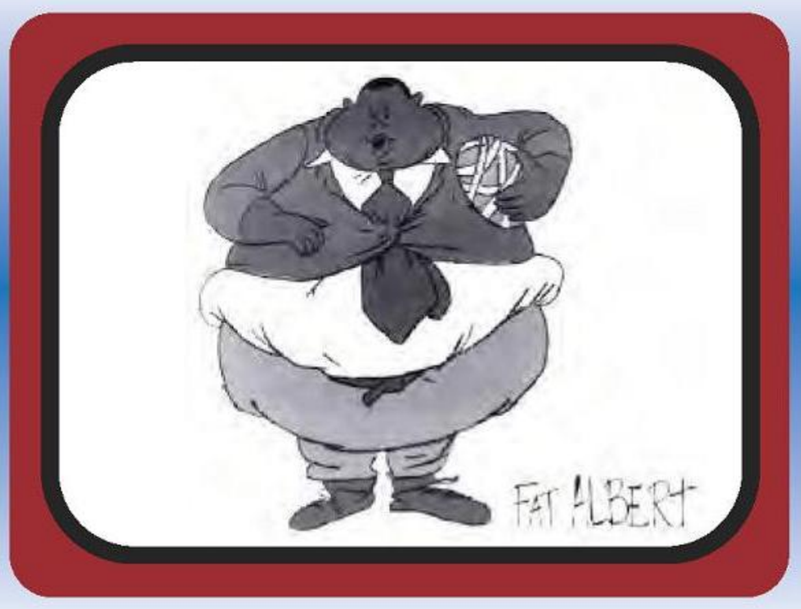
We worked with Philip Mayer, the director of special programming for Paramount, and a writer/animator named Don Christensen to create a proposed animated series. It was quite different from the TV series, targeting a younger audience. His concept was that the main *Star Trek* cast would help out on a new training ship called *Excalibur,* on which they would train a group of teenagers about space exploration. NBC wanted the show to be broken up into specific teaching and story segments, but Mayer talked them out of it. Still, they wanted a heavy emphasis on education. The characters and their counterparts were: Spock and young Vulcan Steve, McCoy and a young African-American boy named Bob, Sulu and his Chinese counterpart Stick, Chekov and Chris, and others I've since forgotten. According to memos and art that I have, Kirk was in the series with a young protégé, Scotty was to have a moustache, Uhura had a cute girl counterpart, and there were characters named Tun-Tun, Stormy, and Ploof.

Christensen turned in multiple plot synopses, including one with Klingons involved, but Mayer wanted more emphasis on education and suggested that Chekov and Chris be dropped. Sometime following October 15th, the project as it existed faded away for several years.

Star Trek wasn't the only series that got its start with us in 1969 by the way. Comedian Bill Cosby had done this comedy record called *Revenge* in 1967, and he did a routine in it that introduced a character named Fat Albert. I approached Bill's people about doing Fat Albert as an animated series through General Artists Corp. We met with Cosby's manager at the time, Roy Silver, to talk about the possibility of making a joint arrangement to do that. We worked for weeks and weeks, months and months on the thing, did drawings, did little storyboards, and then I picked up the papers one day and saw that they decided they were going to do it on their own. Silver and a guy named Bruce Campbell, who was also involved with Cosby at that time, set up their own animation studio and sold two specials to NBC! I called the two of them because I was furious about it; it seemed like such a dishonest thing to do. They had been dealing with us on the possibility, with us coming up with ideas and concepts for shows… and then they decided to go do it on their own. I really thought it was a bad idea, and I didn't think they were going to be able to do it.

As it turned out, they couldn't do it. They delivered one show, and they spent as much on one show as they got for both shows, and the thing was a fiasco. It was an odd show. It was creative visually, but incomprehensible to the audience. Their primetime Fat Albert story was about a weird tackle football game. And they tried to do it very contemporary, with shaggy lines and an absolutely immense Fat Albert. The animation was not done with ink and paint; it was done with the animators drawing directly onto the cells. They also used live-action backgrounds of buildings, which was weird, and it had a jazzy score by Herbie Hancock, which was nice. But nobody understood what the hell the show was about. *Hey, Hey, Hey, It's Fat Albert* aired on primetime on November 12th, and it damn near killed *Fat Albert*, even though it got okay ratings. None of the networks were interested after that.

Then my agent called and said there was a problem. There was supposed to be a guarantee to produce two half-hours for $400,000, which was a considerable amount of money back then. But the producers had spent everything on the first one. Bill got rid of them. I still wanted to do *Fat Albert*, and I saw this as a way to do it, but I had to convince TelePrompTer to let us produce the second one and guarantee the $200,000 cost. We eventually did that second special, but it would be a few years before it was completed and we could partner with Bill to sell *Fat Albert.*



Meanwhile, Children's Television Workshop's *Sesame Street* began in the fall of 1969, underwritten by the U.S. Office of Education, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Ford Foundation. Filmation produced two new Superman spots and three new Batman spots for early *Sesame Street* episodes, expounding on the meanings of letters, talking about concepts such as up and down, or cautioning youngsters about proper street-crossing safety. This was not the last time we would draw either character, but I'll write more about that in future chapters.

As all this was going on, we made a deal with The Newspaper Enterprise Association, which was the head of United Features Syndicate, to adapt many of their daily comic strips for animation (except *Our Boarding House*, commonly known as "Major Hoople"). Of particular interest to us was adapting *Alley Oop*, the long-running caveman strip created by V.T. Hamlin. We planned to do an anthology with the comic strips, but weren't yet sure how or when.

As the year drew to a close, we got one of our strangest jobs yet; we built a nine-foot tall model of the Empire State Building for General Electric… for something to do with new "super engines" they had developed. We also made a deal with Warner Bros. to produce animated films for them. It was about that time that I had also gone to New York to sell the next season's shows….

Opposite:
Images from the *Archie & His New Pals* special

Above: (top to bottom)
Early *Star Trek* concept art

Early *Fat Albert* design art for non-Filmation special

1970-1971

CHAPTER NINE

HEY LADY! MORE MONSTERS & MUSIC!

As a new decade began, we were firmly entrenched on television and on the music charts, and, for whatever early success the superheroes had enjoyed, *Archie* was eclipsing them. But the success wasn't enjoyed solely by Filmation; animation in general was booming.

In March the trades reported that an expected 100% of the animation workforce would be employed within a month. The animator's union IATSE 839 had 1,058 members locally, and more than a third of them were at Filmation. We had a firm order for 57 half-hours of new material for the fall, including one hour each for *Archie's Fun House* and *Sabrina and the Groovie Goolies* on CBS, plus reruns of *The Hardy Boys* and the new *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* on ABC. The work meant our people could plan employment through October or November… or further if we got more projects going. Additionally, *Superman, Batman*, and *Aquaman* were going to enter into daily syndication in the fall, meaning that viewers would be seeing Filmation on their TV screens almost every day of the week.

One of the new shows we pitched was a favorite of mine and really struck at the heart of where I felt animation was lacking: educational entertainment that also showcased diverse casts. We pitched an educational series called *The Great Young Americans* that would have taken the great figures of American history—like Abraham Lincoln or George Washington Carver—and shown what they were like as youngsters. Norman Corwin, who had worked with us on *Guest of Honor*, wrote 26 scripts, and we shot four of them as pilot shows, but the networks weren't ready to bite at anything educational, despite the success of the weekday series *Sesame Street*.

On April 27th NBC reaired the *Hey, Hey, Hey, It's Fat Albert* special, sponsored by Mattel. It kept interest in the property alive, but behind the scenes things were changing for Cosby's hefty brainchild.

It was about this time that we had our first big lawsuit, by the way, and it was against CBS, represented by Ira Epstein. We had no ownership position on the National/DC heroes, though on one of them—either *Aquaman* or *Batman*—we had a ten-percent net profit participation.

On *Archie* we actually owned or co-owned the negatives, and we got a license agreement with Archie Comics where they got a royalty. But CBS was controlling the syndication rights for foreign and domestic distribution of our shows, and that was an anti-trust violation. We sued CBS on that basis and got back the syndication rights to our series. We also got a very favorable settlement.

Meanwhile, the news that we would be working with the popular Jerry Lewis was met with a front-page story in Daily Variety, and ABC's *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* gained buzz. The series was designed to showcase characters from throughout Jerry's film career and was expected to be goofy and loose with a laugh track and lots of jokes.

The title of the series may not make much sense to audiences these days, but back then there was a very popular game show called *To Tell the Truth*, and in it they would always say at the end, "Will the real _____ please stand up?" So, rather than calling this *The Jerry Lewis Show*, we felt that the title could reflect him playing multiple characters.

Now I'm going to say something you won't hear often from a

Opposite:
The cast of *Groovie Goolies*

Above:
The cast of *Will The Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down?*

producer: It was a terrible show. I mean, we didn't do him justice, and it was tough. We didn't *want* to do it terribly, but given the fact that we had a real interesting talent involved it was not as good as it should have been. But I will say that he wasn't involved that much. He didn't want to do any live material, which would have helped. I don't think he wanted to do the voices either; publicly, we said that he said it was because his voice was not the same as it had been when he made the movies. He also didn't want to be actively involved in the plotting or scripting, though he gave us some input, of course.

Jerry suggested a guy named David Lander for his voice. I think he was working as Jerry's chauffer. Ironically, he was a graduate of Carnegie Tech as well. This is about five years or so before he got cast on *Laverne & Shirley* and really hit big. This may have been one of his first jobs. He certainly could do the Jerry Lewis character voice, so we used him principally for that. We used Jane Webb in the female roles, including the girlfriend, Rhonda, and Howard Morris played the rest of the characters other than Jerry specifically. The funny thing was that Howie had played Lewis's father in *The Nutty Professor* in 1963, and here he was playing the Professor!

The plot was that Jerry's character worked at the Odd Job Employment Agency. Out on jobs, he would meet characters he had played in his movies like *The Family Jewels, The Nutty Professor, The Bellboy*, and others.

One important change about the Filmation shows, starting with *Jerry Lewis*, I believe; in the closing credits, Hal Sutherland's name got written with a fancy script. Since Norm and I got the circle, he got his own bit of style, and believe me, he earned it!

Before we get into our next big hit show, I'm going to backtrack for a bit to cover where The Archies had been this year and where they went.

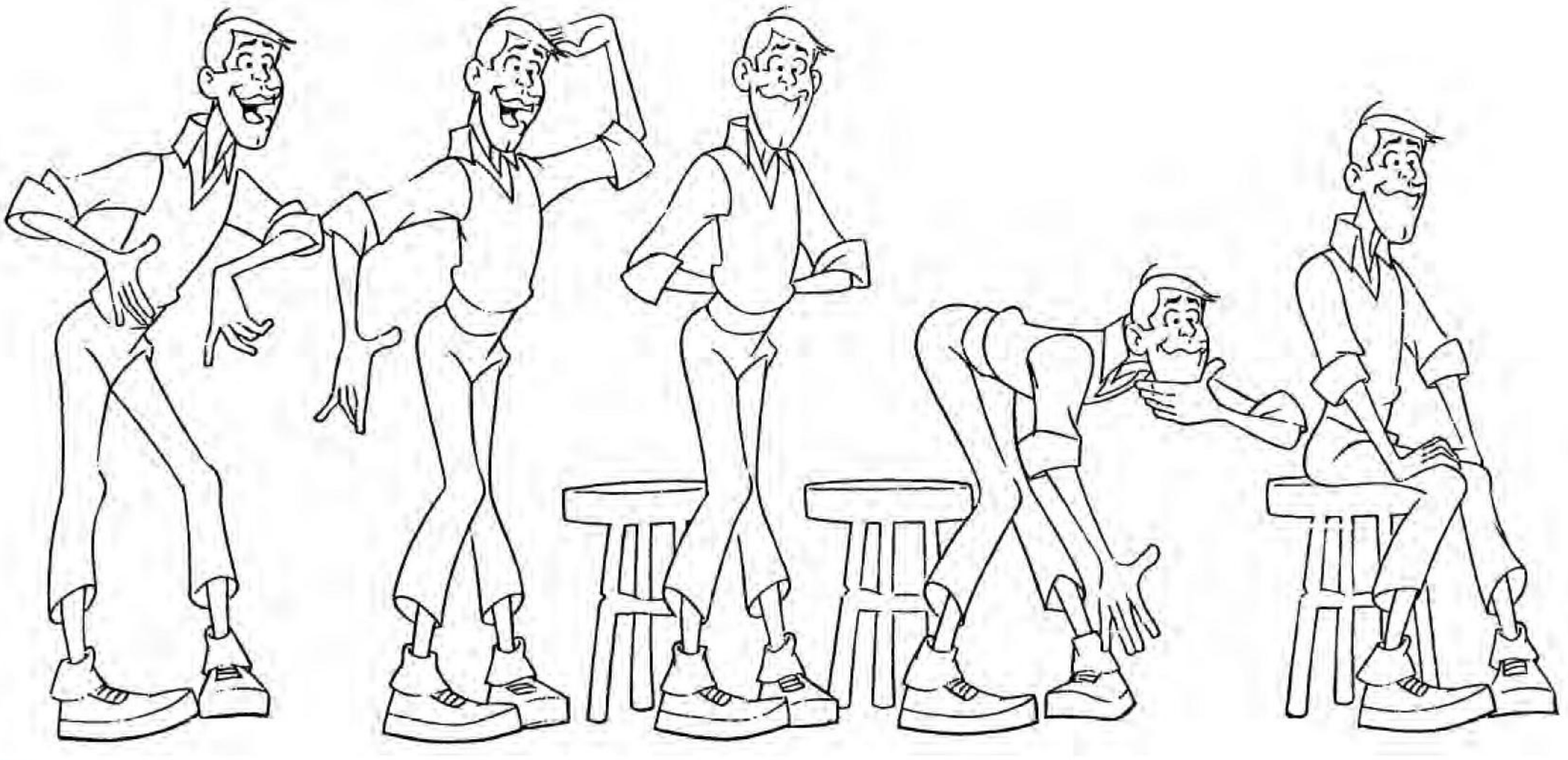
On January 4, 1970, *The Ed Sullivan Show* featured its third appearance of The Archies, with Ed introducing the animated clip for "Jingle Jangle." On February 7th, the song hit #10 on the pop singles chart. By mid-March "Jingle Jangle" had gone gold, and the next single, "Who's Your Baby?" had already sold 600,000 copies.

On Sunday, March 22nd, CBS aired its third *Archie* primetime special, titled *The Archie Sugar, Sugar, Jingle Jangle Show*. This was mostly a rebroadcast of *Archie and His New Pals*, but with a different opening title and the songs "Sugar, Sugar," "Jingle Jangle," and "Who's My Baby?" mixed in. It would be the final time this particular show was repurposed, though the music would survive for many decades thereafter.

Archie Comics was still supporting us in a big way. In addition to featuring blurbs about the shows on their covers and relentlessly pimping them in their news pages in the books, *Everything's Archie* featured the band regularly. And in *Archie's Pals 'n' Gals* #57 in April 1970, they did a third story that referenced the show and music directly, called "The Big Hit Fit," in which the halls of Riverdale High became awash with the sounds of "Sugar, Sugar."

Meanwhile, RCA pumped out more Archies records, with a new album called *Sunshine*, a re-release of the first Archies album under the new title "Sugar, Sugar," and, eventually, *The Archies Greatest Hits*. "Sunshine" was the sixth single, and by August the cumulative total for the six Archies singles was over ten million copies sold! This was better than The Hardy Boys were faring, who only managed two albums and three singles before fading away into bubblegum pop history.

As we began work, the Archie entry for the 1970 fall television season was given an unwieldy full title of *Archie's Fun House Featuring the Giant Juke Box*—though everyone called it simply "Archie's Fun House"—and the hour-long show was set to feature three new songs per episode. We also filmed a live-action opening with kids in the audience watching The Archies onstage by the Giant



Juke Box. One of those kids, an African-American boy in the front row in a yellow shirt, was Darrell McNeil, who would grow up to be an animator at Filmation and co-author of the book *Animation by Filmation*. My two kids were also in the front seats, and Hal's kid was sitting right beside them.

In terms of the songs, we repeated a few of them, but we sometimes changed the animation going with them to make them seem new. There were 30 new songs in all. And speaking of repeats, only a half-hour of the actual show was brand-new; the rest was repeated material from the earlier two seasons.

That brings us to our third show of the 1970 season, *Sabrina and the Groovie Goolies*. Now *Sabrina* had been doing great. But as far back as 1968 we had been developing a concept with Jack Mendelsohn and Jim Mulligan. I always wanted to do a show with the monsters Dracula, Frankenstein, and a werewolf as comedy characters. Every once in a while, they'd make fun of these guys in the live-action theatricals, but they were perfect comedy characters. And there was certainly no way we could do horror characters any other way for animation.

In the fall of 1968, Jack and Jim had turned in work on a show we were then calling *Monster Inn*. It had what would essentially be the *Groovie Goolies* cast already in place: Dracula as a fun-loving, stay-out late playboy; Wolfman as a surfing and cycling flower child hippie; and Frankenstein as the harassed one of the group who was always worrying. There was also Bella LaGhostly, a Vampira-like switchboard operator; Hagatha the hotel cook and witch; and Icky and Goo, a pair of mischievous baby gargoyles. The villain of the story would have been Sir Sydney Sneaking-Slyly, who knew of a treasure hidden somewhere in the Monster Inn and was determined to find it. The Inn would be constantly visited by other ghosts and monsters and would have doors that would open up to strange settings, including live footage of things like cannons firing and such.

Even at that point we'd planned to have monster-themed musical segments with Wolfman on guitar, Frankenstein on drums, and Dracula at an organ. The first script also featured a quick Archie and Jughead cameo, as well as another by Batman and Robin!

At some time in the development the name was changed to *Rock 'n' Gools*, and the two gargoyles were changed to three kid-like characters named Ratso, Batso, and Gauntleroy. The Inn was also changed to Horrible Hall, and the concept of other ghoulish bands making appearances came in. Guest bands were given names like The Mummies and the Puppies, The Japanese Beatles, The Rolling Rocks, The Door Jammers, and The Snapping Turtles. We had short segments called "Dracula's Ask-It Basket," "Frankenstein's Wild World of Sports," "Hagatha's Bed Time Story," "Dracula's Eerie History Lesson," "The Mummy Wrap-up," "Wolfman's Wild World of Animals," and "Bella's Horror-Scope" among many others.

By January 1970, we had crystallized the concept into pretty much what it was going to be, although at that point the title of the group was *The Kookie Spookies*. Dracula was generally known as "Drac," Frankenstein was called "Frankie," Wolfman was now "Wolfie," and we had added regular characters like the vaudevillian Mummy and a hand-in-a-glove known as Hoolahand. One of the musical groups that might have guested was the catchily-named Sinus & Carbunkle. And some of the short departments were now grouped together in a segment called "The Weird Wall." Bella's car was a psychedelic vehicle known as The Bug, which could fly and hold any amount of occupants, like a circus clown car. We also tied the cast clearly in to the world of Sabrina, as the teen witch had to use all sorts of explanations to help keep her friends at Riverdale High ignorant of the supernatural elements of her "black sheep cousins."

By March the title had been changed to *The Googlie Goolies* and, finally, to *The Groovie Goolies*. We made some other minor changes, such as turning Gauntleroy into Hauntleroy, but otherwise the things we had developed stayed.

Opposite Top:
David Lander

Opposite Bottom:
Model sheets for the *Jerry Lewis* show

Left: (top to bottom)
Hal Sutherland's new onscreen credit

Images from Archie's Fun House

Future Filmation animator Darrell McNeil is seated with hands on chin, above Hot Dog's foot.

The tone was a lot like *Laugh-In*, with a lot of speedy gags, a laugh track, and very short stories, without much of a plot connecting it all. Whatever plot there was often connected to the songs.

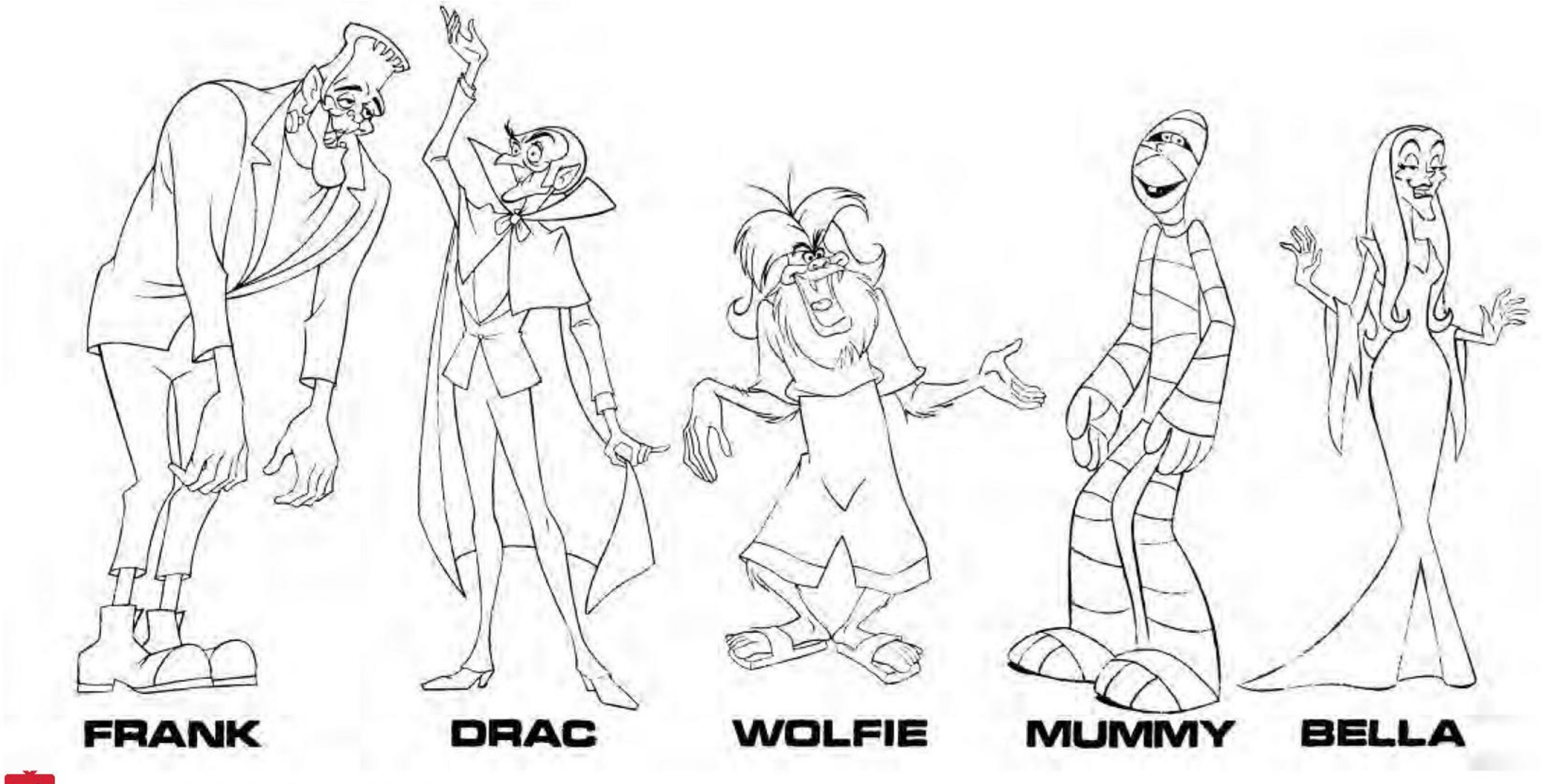
Richard Delvy Productions was in charge of producing the music: 36 songs for the season, with two per week. Mostly they were written by Sherry Gayden and Janet Martin, including the theme song "Goolie Get-Together." Richard Delvy, Ed Fournier, and Dick Monda produced the songs, and under the pseudonym of "Daddy Dewdrop" Monda later had a huge hit with one of the Goolies songs, "Chick-A-Boom." The four "guest bands" that we regularly featured were The Mummies and the Puppies, The Spirits of '76, The Rolling Headstones, and The Bare Bones Band.

We had a great bunch of voice actors for the series. Howard Morris was Frankie and Wolfie, and he played them similar to Boris Karloff and popular DJ Wolfman Jack. He also did the Mummy as if it were Ed Wynn, plus Ghoulihand and the bratty little Hauntleroy. Jane Webb was Hagatha and Bella La Ghostly, and Larry D. Mann was Boneapart, Batso, and a few others.

We also used Larry Storch a lot in this as Drac, Ratso, and some others. I think he did 15 voices total. He had this list he used to carry around with him of voices he could do. If it was on the list, he could do it, but he never knew until he looked at the list. When he came in for this one, I asked him to do the voice of Henry Daniell, who was Moriarty in some Sherlock Holmes films and always played a great British villain. He said, "Wait a minute," and called his wife. She said, "It's #252," and he looked at the list and said, "Oh yeah, 252, Henry Daniell, I can do that." And he did it. He didn't listen to anybody do it first! I don't know how the hell the list sprang what it did in his head, but, if someone was on that list, he could do their voice. I think there were about 150 voices on his list. He had gotten his start as an impressionist when he was Frank Morgan's chauffer, and he did an impression of his boss good enough that he sometimes filled in for Morgan on radio shows!

RCA had the rights to the recorded music, although we owned the publishing rights. They wanted another blitz like The Archies and thought maybe they could be as successful as "Monster Mash" from 1962, by Bobby Pickett. They had a three-piece band set to tour the country playing fairs and concerts, while six groups of lookalikes were going to tour the country to promote the music at record stores, supermarkets, radio stations, etc. Of course, any promotion would help the TV ratings as well.

The debut Groovie Goolies album was released the first week in September, as well as the single, which featured "Save Your Good



Lovin' for Me" and "The First Annual Semi-Formal Combination Celebration Meet the Monster Population Party." The album featured live actors as the head trio. Our animation art only got a small clip on the front cover, but Filmation got some major PR on the back of the album, with our logo, plus Norm, Hal, and I getting noted.

All the new fall shows debuted on September 12, 1970. At 9:00 a.m. on CBS was *Sabrina and the Groovie Goolies* for an hour, followed at 10:00 a.m. on ABC by *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* for a half-hour. The hour-long *Archie's Fun House* began at 11:00 a.m. on CBS, leading into *The Hardy Boys* reruns at noon on ABC. We didn't have any Sunday shows that year.

As expected, *Sabrina and the Groovie Goolies* was a solid hit, and *Archie's Fun House* continued to do well in the ratings. *Jerry Lewis* didn't do as well though. Everyone thought it was going to be a very successful show. I'm not too sure whether it was the fault of ABC, whether it was the concept... I just don't know. It was not a disaster. It just didn't go through the roof. Jerry made no money on it to speak of, nor did we. But them's the breaks.

Also in September we set up a deal with one of the major oil companies to produce six one-hour cassette tapes of The Archies, offering a tour of the United States, to be available at gas station. Bill Danch and Jim Ryan did the scripts. We also planned a series of "spoken word" tapes for The Archies and Groovie Goolies, which we would own the rights to release without RCA since they did not contain music. I don't recall what happened to either of those projects! They may have never been released. We also began switching our old material from film to videotape and announced in *Billboard* that we would eventually be releasing videotape versions of our shows. Talk about prescient!

Thanks to our successes and the backing of TelePrompTer, on October 12th, *Journey Back to Oz* finally resumed production. We were doing 60–100 drawings per foot, a significant leap up from our television animation. We also made a bold public announcement that the film would be released for Easter 1972, along with a self-released soundtrack album and a spoken-word storytelling album with narrator and dialogue.

In early November, I spoke to officers of various government agencies in Washington DC, about how to incorporate themes such as ecology into children's programming. Following that, Jay, Lane, Erika and I went to Pittsburgh to visit family, and to be interviewed for my first cover story in my hometown. *The Pittsburgh Press TV Graphic* featured a wild picture of me sporting my goatee, a fashion move I received much ribbing for.

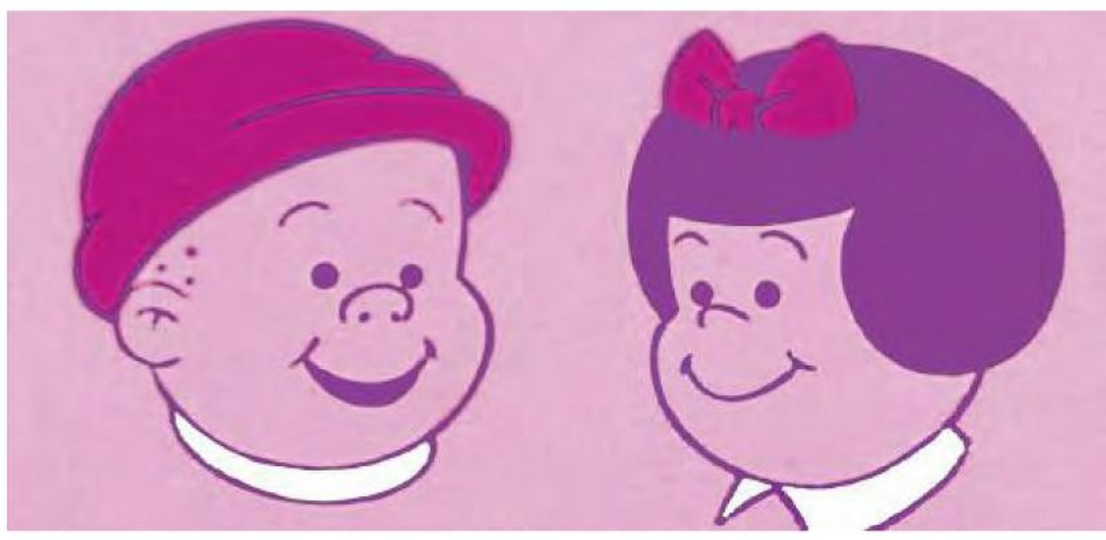
I have one funny story about *Groovie Goolies* that happened that year, similar to the Krypto story I related earlier. It was nearing Christmastime, and we were watching the dailies of the animation. All the directors were there and as many animators as could fit into the room because they wanted to watch the stuff. So we were watching *Goolies* footage with sound already cut in, and onscreen the Frankenstein monster walks on and says, "Hi, Lou, have a nice Christmas!" And the guys all started giggling. It was Hal who had organized it.

Just before Christmas in 1970, a *Daily Variety* article spotlighting Bill Cosby's expansion plans for his newly restructured company, Jemmin Inc., noted that he was doing another *Fat Albert* special for NBC and *Fat Albert and the Gang* for a future date—both with Filmation.

Above:
(across the top)
Images from *Groovie Goolies*

Opposite:
Opposite: Lou tries a "hip" new look for 1970

Below:
(across the bottom)
Model sheets for *Groovie Goolies*



CHAPTER TEN

1971 FUNNIES, GAMES, AND FABLES

In mid-January we announced that we were developing multiple live-action syndicated television programs to be offered through TelePrompTer cable. They were *Guest of Honor; Judgment*, an ecological show; *Kinder Kastle*; and *Johnny Horizon*. All of them were designed to have educational appeal, and a few of them had segments that were designed for local cable stations to slot in their own experts to speak about the topic at hand.

The *Judgment* pilot was to be shot in February, to show the format of the series. In it historical figures were put on trial, with a spot for local historians—specifically local to whatever area the show was on in the cable markets—to discuss the trial afterwards. The pilot featured the trial of Robert E. Lee (played by Dana Andrews), with William Shatner and Burgess Meredith playing the two attorneys. Future episodes were to include Benedict Arnold, Jesse James, and Adolf Hitler! Irv Tunick wrote the pilot.

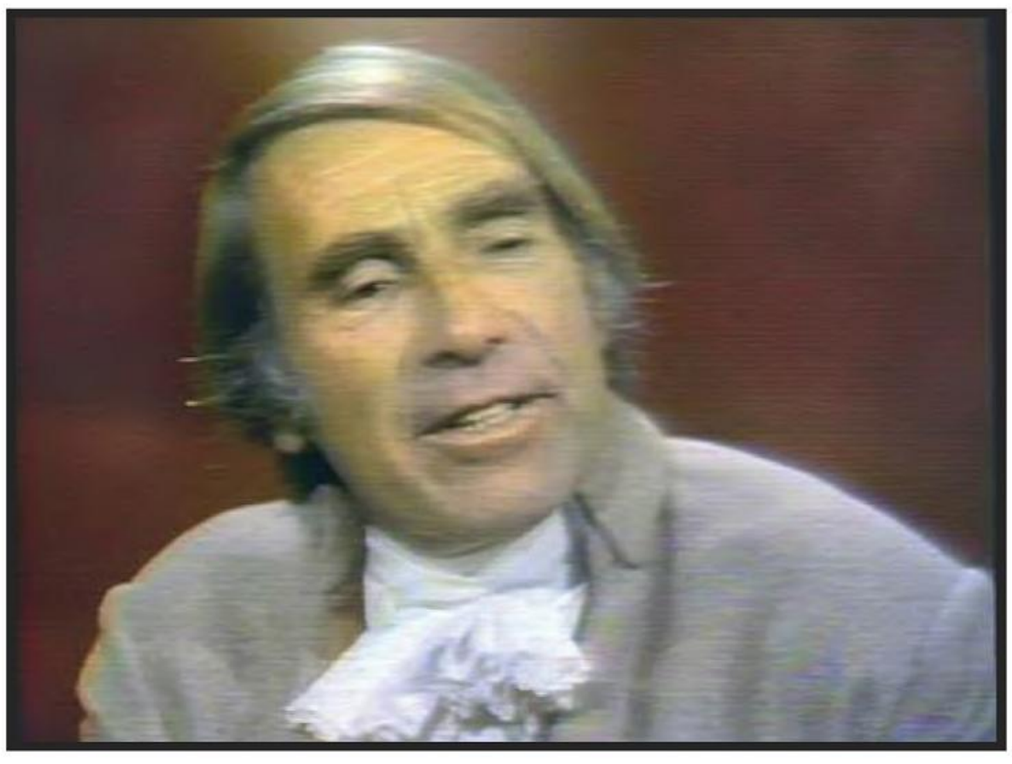
Guest of Honor was another series that offered a look at historical figures, this time with a host in period clothing "interviewing" a guest from a specific time period. Leslie Nielsen hosted the European history shows, and Gary Merrill hosted the American history shows. We filmed nine or ten of them total before we stopped, although we had 16 half-hours written by Howard Fast and another 16 written by Norman Corwin. I think Emmett Lavry did some too. They were historically accurate, and it was classy stuff.

Howard Fast is the guy who wrote *Spartacus* and a bunch of stuff on American history. Norman Corwin recently passed away at a hundred-and-one years old! I've found that the greater the talent, the nicer the person. They were the easiest people in the world to deal with. They were delighted to get involved in something where nobody was making them crazy going over the stuff to change it.

Guest of Honor was Norm's baby to produce, though I had come up with the idea originally to do it in animation. But Norm thought we could do it live, and he booked some big name actors, and *Star Trek* director Marc Daniels to helm all but two of them, along with Michael Kane and one surprise. Marc was a very well known director for television, and he loved the concept of what we were trying to do with this thing.

The pilot for *Guest of Honor* filmed in mid-January, and each episode cost about $7,500 to produce. Lloyd Bridges played Alexander Hamilton in the pilot, and Robert Ridgley did one as well. Other characters and stars included Dolly Madison (Barbara Rush), Paul Revere (William Windom), Florence Nightingale (Dame Judith Anderson), Thomas Chippendale (Patrick Macnee), Sir Walter Raleigh (Anthony Quayle), Guy Fawkes (Laurence Harvey), Jane Austen (Lynn Redgrave), and Gouveneur Morris. And that surprise? The Paul Revere episode was directed by none other than William Shatner, making his directorial debut 24 years before directing his first *T.J. Hooker*!

A lot of people got the same idea of introducing people from the past on interview shows. Steve Allen did the same thing a few years later. He did a



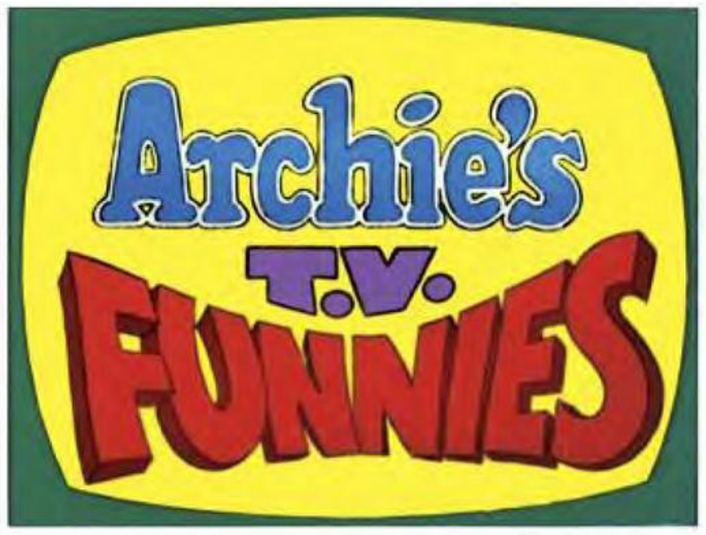
Opposite:
Archie T.V. Funnies
The Captain and the Kids
William Shatner in *The Heroes*
Bill Cosby in *Aesop's Fables*
Nancy and Sluggo
Leslie Nielsen in *Guest of Honor*
Dick Tracy

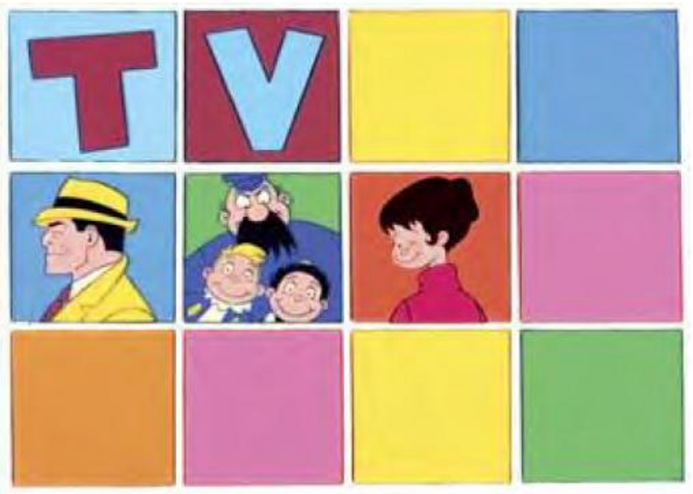
Above:
Gary Merrill hosting *Guest of Honor*

series of shows on PBS called *Meeting of the Minds*, where he did interviews with people of the past. I don't know whether he ever saw any of our shows, but it sure was suspiciously close to our concept. I know that word got around Hollywood because our show used such big names, and TelePrompTer shopped it around.

The ecological show was a half-hour show to star Henry Silva and a group of students; we were planning to shop it to the networks first. *Kinder Kastle* was a kid's show set to provide educational and entertaining elements. And *Johnny Horizon* was being developed with the Department of the Interior, as he was their conservation mascot.

On February 1, 1971, more information came out about our deal with Warner. The agreement was that we would create animated films based on existing WB film and TV characters, titles, and properties, which would then be distributed exclusively off-network on a global basis. We were also supposed to animate feature films for Warner. Said projects would be sold around the world by Licensing Corp. of America (which was licensing Warner and National-DC properties at the time), although CMA remained our agent. Although WB TV head Gerald J. Leider announced the deal, our contact at Warner was Jacqueline Smith—no, not the later *Charlie's Angels* actress. This deal led to a very strange collaboration in 1972, and a few other interesting projects, before changing into something else entirely.





In early February CBS did some major restructuring of their schedules, and their early draft for Saturday morning seemed destined to be a very different place. Announced from us was *Alley Oop*, based on the long-running comic strip with ecological messages mixed in, and *Saturday Funnies*, an hour-long anthology series featuring various United Features comic strips. The popular Archie, meanwhile, was planned to move to Sundays, along with Hanna-Barbera's *Scooby-Doo*.

Don't remember that particular schedule? Probably because it didn't happen. Soon enough, a very different schedule emerged, with ABC rerunning *Jerry Lewis*, CBS combining franchises with the comic strip shows becoming part of *Archie's TV Funnies*, Sabrina getting her own show, and *Groovie Goolies* moving to Sunday. That meant less work for us on the face of things, but we were still developing the second *Fat Albert* special for

Above: (top to bottom)
Logo, images, and presentation art from *Archie's T.V. Funnies*

NBC—officially titled *Second Bill Cosby Animated Special* in the trades—and we had another Cosby special up our sleeves, plus *Journey Back to Oz*.

I haven't talked much about how the networks bought shows or what presentations were like. I would go alone to New York to do the presentations to the network suits, and I would take 20 or 30 presentations with me. Early on they were just boards with original art on them, but they eventually became much more involved. One year when I pitched *Paul Bunyan*, I had a plastic tree trunk, and I opened it up and the drawings came out of it. That thing weighed a ton.

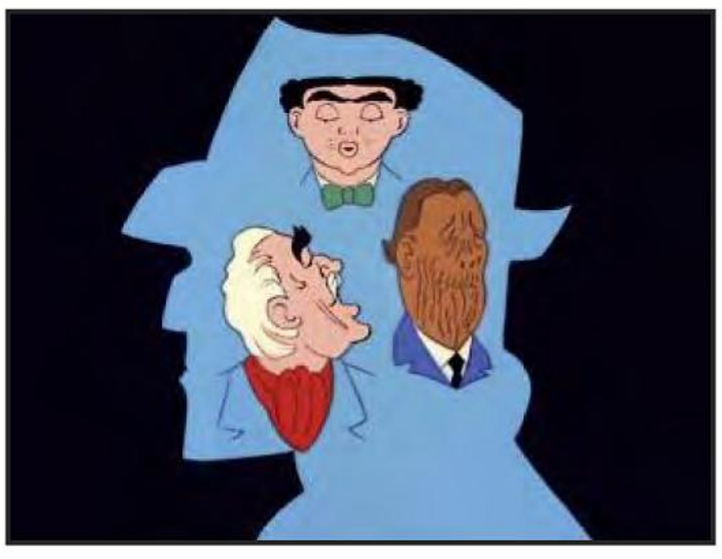
If we had actually done animation on the project, we had to show them a film. This is long before videotapes were available outside a studio, and early on you couldn't transfer film to tape anyhow. So, you'd have to set up a room with a projector, and sometimes I'd even have to show footage to somebody on a Moviola. And, for every one idea that sold, there were probably 20 that didn't.

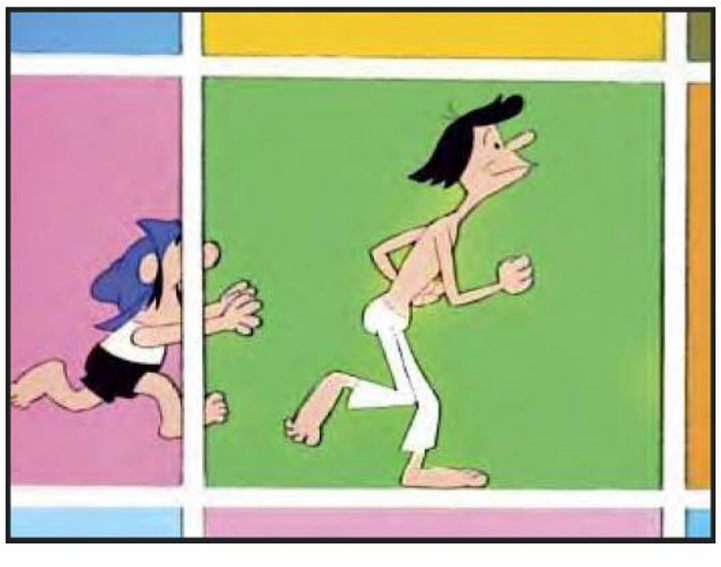
We started working on the new presentations within a week or two after the new season started, once you had an idea of what was getting ratings or working with the public and the networks. Presentations were generally made in November, but I'd have to keep going back to New York for more meetings all the way up through May. All of the children's executives were in New York then.

For a long, long time, NBC didn't buy anything from us for Saturday mornings. I would see Bud Grant, but he wouldn't buy. He never made any terrible decisions, but he never made any great decisions either. And they had never gotten to first place in Saturday mornings.

I had prepared the presentation for *Alley Oop, the Teenage Stone-Ager*—with a title song by Ed Fournier—and somehow Bud Grant got the deal fouled up, and Fred Silverman ended up going to Hanna-Barbera to get them to do a *Flintstones* spin-off called *The Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm Show* instead. I was pretty mad about that situation, but what can you do? It meant that not only was *Alley Oop* dead as its own show, but we also couldn't use it in our *Funnies* show. Not *Archie's TV Funnies* anyhow.

Since I brought up both *Flintstones* and *Alley Oop*, I'm going to backtrack a decade or so and relate a story. Way back when I was working at Hanna-Barbera, I was doing layouts in a little closet next to where the writers were. One day a writer named Charlie Shows came in and talked with all the other writers. He said, "I've got a great idea! You take *The Honeymooners*, and you take *Alley Oop*, and you put them together, and you've got a great story!" And that was the birth of *The Flintstones*! So, although lots of people argue about how The Flintstones was created, I credit him with the creation of that concept, and I was there when it happened.





What was *Archie's TV Funnies*? Well, for starters it was our first *Archie* show that cut out music. We knew the show was still popular, so we decided to use it to launch the other properties into a series. Basically, Archie Andrews and the kids all helped run a Riverdale TV station, and they showed cartoons in between segments with them. The cartoons were mostly from our deal with Newspaper Enterprise Association/ United Features Syndicate, though, we had to make deals for others with Chicago Tribune and New York News. We did: Chester Gould's detective strip, Dick Tracy; Rudolph Dirks' *The Captain and the Kids* (based on *The Katzenjammer Kids*); Marty Links' *Emmy Lou*, based on the comic strip *Bobby Sox*, but updated to be more popular for pre-teens; Ernie Bushmiller's *Nancy and Sluggo*; Howard Post's desert island strip *The Dropouts*; Frank Willard's *Moon Mullins*; Bill Holman's *Smokey Stover*; and finally, Russell Myers' *Broom Hilda*.

The comic strips back then were not written for kids; they were written for adults. *Broom Hilda* was really an adult strip, and little kids didn't quite get it, even though she was a wonderful, funny character. Broom Hilda, probably, was the only female comic strip character that was ever animated smoking a cigar! That would not happen today.

The voices for *Archie's TV Funnies* were by our regular cast of characters, Dallas McKennon, Howie Morris, Jane Webb, and John Erwin. By the way, check out the Riverdale TV

Above: (top to bottom)
The Captain and the Kids
Nancy
Broom Hilda
Dick Tracy
The Dropouts

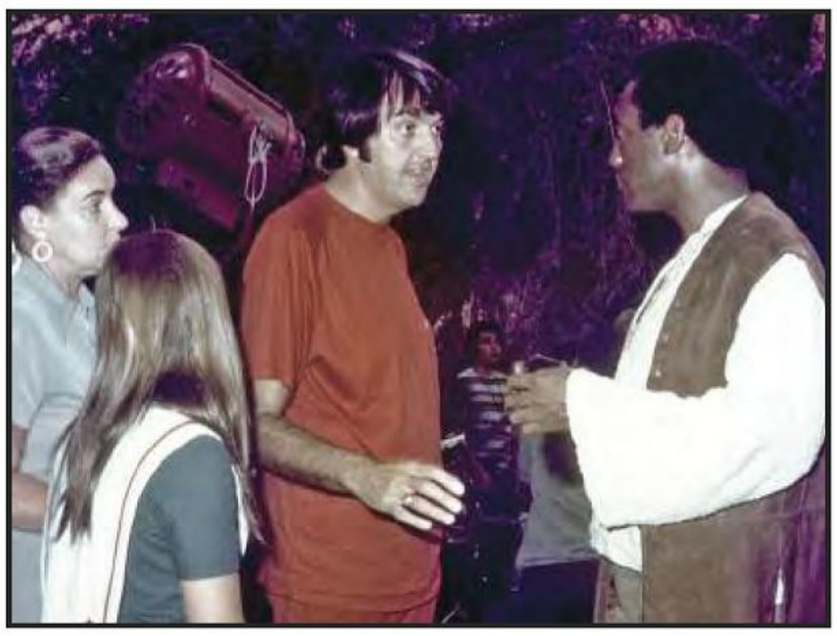
station, which bore an interesting resemblance to the Filmation building!

Even though we weren't doing new Archies songs, with multiple records behind us, we also made plans to record a series of records called "The Funnies," to be based on the *Archie's TV Funnies* segments. The plan was to release singles on September 18th for each of the shows and an album of all the show's singles plus the theme song. We also planned to have a band called The Funnies tour in a 90-minute mega-show called "Funnies on Parade," incorporating the Groovie Goolies, who were already touring. The Goolies played for two weeks at Harrah's in Lake Tahoe that summer and were booked for the Michigan State Fair starting August 27th for two-and-a-half weeks. Rob and Wes Dawn, who had done costumes and makeup for the *Mission: Impossible* TV series, handled the look of the live Goolies.

Meanwhile, work on the *Journey Back to Oz* film was going so smoothly that completion seemed foreseeable, and we actually took out a funny three-page ad in the trade papers that teased a bit of scandalous goings-on with page one come-ons like, "What is Ethel Merman doing to Mickey Rooney?" In June we announced our plans to start up a series of live Oz roadshows integrating actors, music, and animated segments. Plans were to now debut the film in fall 1971 and try out the live show in Milwaukee around Christmas. The live show would have included sets and costumed characters lip-syncing to the film score. "We're going to sell family fare in ways it has never been sold before," I boldly told *Weekly Variety*. "The soundtrack alone is very valuable, and if the technique really works we'll merchandise it in as many new ways as we can think up." It sounded very hucksterish—perhaps worthy of the salesman who was the Wizard of Oz—but we had been working on the film for so long, we wanted it to be an event.

The *Oz* announcement got a quick response from one party: Liza Minnelli. Following the written permission of her mother, Judy Garland, the then-underage Minnelli had recorded the soundtrack for *Oz* back in the early '60s (although for some reason, probably due to her not wanting to reveal her true age, it was being touted as recorded in 1965). But in late June, while filming *Cabaret* in Munich, Germany, Minnelli called Filmation and asked us for the opportunity to re-record her vocals. She wanted better sound, but we liked the rough edge and the fact that her teen voice sounded almost exactly like her mother's voice had in the original *Wizard of Oz* film. I don't recall if Liza ever did re-record her music, but we were willing to allow the rising star to do so at the time.

On August 23rd we officially announced our new Bill Cosby project, which was to air on October 31st. *Aesop's Fables* was going to be a live-action and animated special for primetime on CBS, with Bob Chenault directing Bill Cosby in live sequences and Hal Sutherland directing the animated portions. Donald McKayle was the choreographer, from a musical score by Richard Delby, with script and lyrics by Earl Hamner Jr. Lorimar was on board as our production partner.



The week before the new fall season was to debut, we announced a new deal for syndication through TelePrompTer in September 1972: adapting the Phil Rapp-created radio show *The Bickersons* for animation. Someone else had been working on the project as a primetime show for CBS for 1971, but when that project fell through we came in. *With All in the Family* causing shockwaves on the air, *The Bickersons* seemed a slam-dunk for audiences interested in sitcoms that weren't about perfect marriages. Rapp was set to write the show, with a $60–70,000 budget per each of the planned 21 episodes.

Rapp was a funny guy. Not a very happy guy, but a funny guy. We went to dinner with him one night, and the waiter came up and asked him if he wanted a glass of water. Rapp said, "Oh no, no, God no!" and made a face. I said, "Why no water?" He said, "Fish f*ck in it!"

In late August word reached a few papers that we were planning a pilot for a live-action ecological adventure series, which we described as a cross between *Route 66* and *The Mod Squad*. The pilot was set to star Henry Silva as an ecology professor who was touring the country on a government grant, assisted by four multicultural students, as they fought to protect the environment. I don't remember if we ever shot that or not.

Then in September we shot the pilot for *The Heroes*, a live-action show created by Fred Heider and KGIL's Dick Whittington and scripted by Heider. It was a more modern show, with host William Shatner interviewing heroic celebrities such as astronauts, sports stars, and scientific figures. We shot three episodes total of that. We did baseball star Willie Mays, Greg Morris from *Mission: Impossible*, and Wally Schirra, one of the *Mercury 7* astronauts.

Above: (top to bottom)
Behind the scenes on *Aesop's Fables* with Lou, Hal, and Bill Cosby

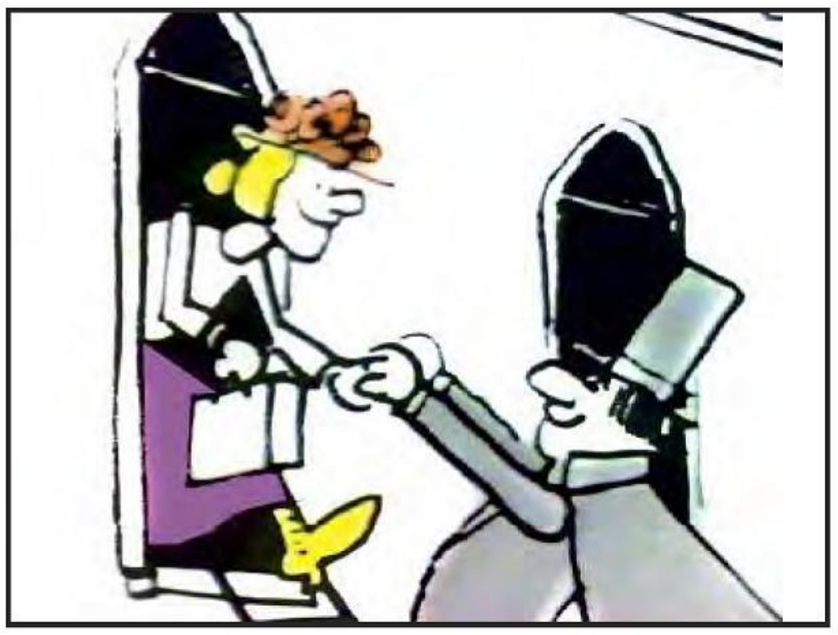
Images from *Aesop's Fables*

On Friday, September 10th, ABC aired a special called *Children's Preview*. Hosted by the *Brady Bunch* kids, the special previewed the fall Saturday morning line-up. The fall 1971 season officially began on September 11th, and we debuted *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down* at 8:00 a.m. on ABC, with *Archie's TV Funnies* at 10:30 a.m. and *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* at 11:00 a.m. on CBS. *The Groovie Goolies* was moved to Sundays at 9:30 a.m. That same evening, NBC reran the *Hey, Hey, Hey, It's Fat Albert* special at 8:00 p.m. (its second rerun, following an April 17, 1970, airing).

On September 22nd, ABC announced a new hour-long series for fall 1972 titled *Saturday Morning at the Movies*. It was one of the first moves of Joseph Taritero, moving from ABC's advertising head over to "Director of Children's Feature Films" under a guy whose name would become synonymous with kids' movies about a decade later: Michael Eisner. Each of the films was to be produced by various studios, and, although we weren't officially named, we were indeed a key provider, as you'll see soon.

On October 24th we filmed our next live-action project at the studios of KTTV, in front of a live audience. It was the pilot for a 60-minute syndicated game show called *The Origins Game*. Produced by Norm and I, in conjunction with Arnold Shapiro, it was directed by Howard Morris, written by Bill Schwartz, and hosted by Dick Patterson. It was an educational game show for kids about the origins of various social customs or things, such as opera and kites. We used life-size puppets—they were pretty weird looking in retrospect—filmed against a black background to tell stories, and four child contestants had to use cookies to vote if the story was true or false. We also had several animated segments that Filmation produced, and *Hogan's Heroes* star Bob Crane appeared to tell one story.

The reason we developed the game show was that TelePromp Ter wanted several concepts that could show how good material could be done and still be entertaining. There was also, by the way, a "pre-pilot" for *The Origins Game* that had been taped using the same script, hosted by Batman actor Burt Ward and using adult actors and contestants, but I think it may have predated our direct involvement and been meant as a presentation.



Above:
Images from *The Origins Game* with Bob Crane and Dick Patterson

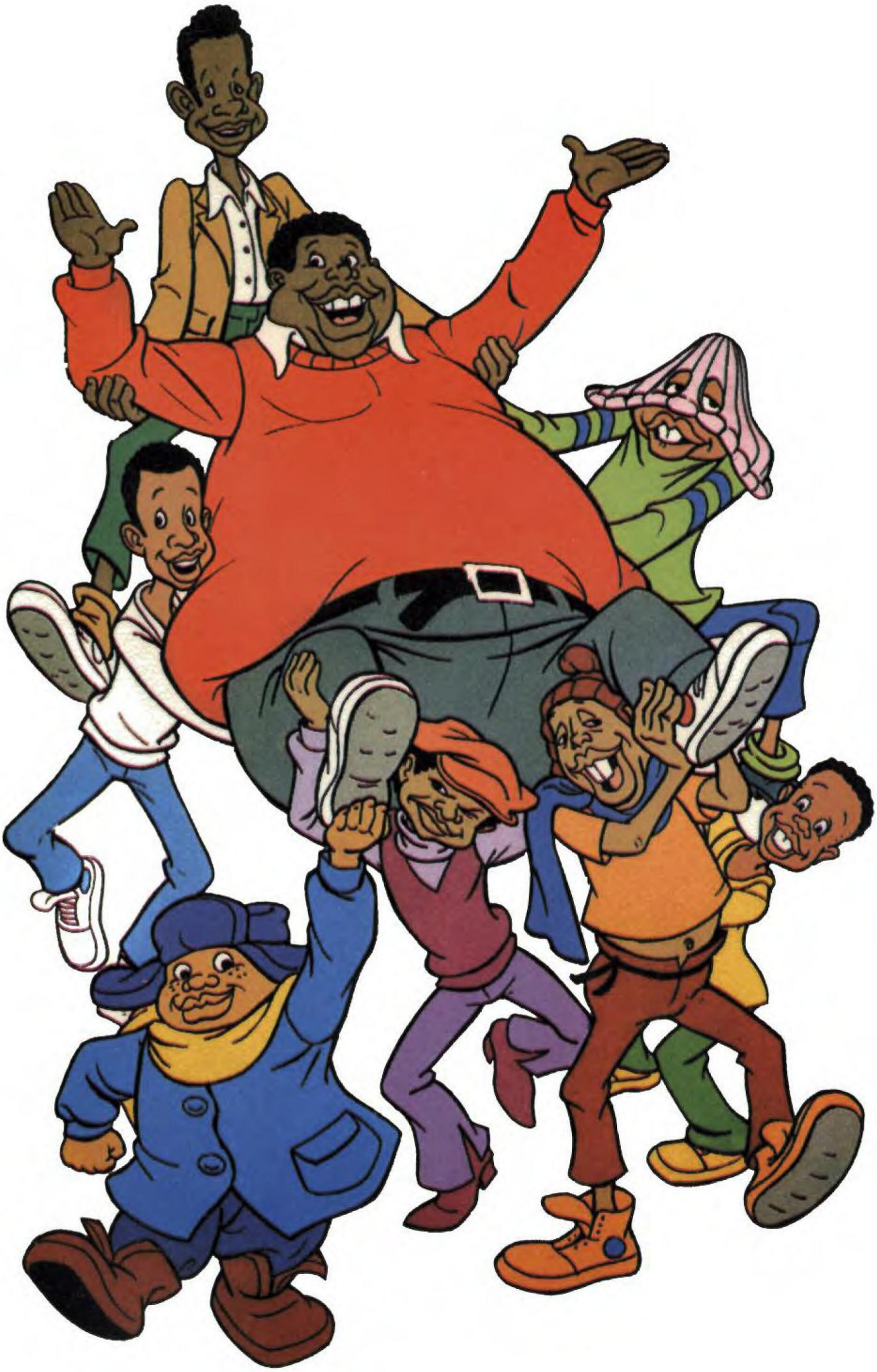
Below:
Images from *The Heroes* with William Shatner and Greg Morris

So, let me tell you a bit more about *Aesop's Fables*. It was actually the first thing we did with Bill Cosby. Even though it was kind of open-ended that there might be more of them, I didn't think it was going to go into a series, but I wanted a vehicle for Cosby so that we could do something for primetime. It was the first nighttime special we did that had live action in it. The idea was that two kids, played by Keith Hamilton and Jerelyn Fields, were out playing in the woods, and they came across this storyteller named Aesop, played by Cosby. And Aesop told them the story of "The Tortoise and the Hare," which was animated, with voices by John Byner, John Erwin, Dallas McKennon, Larry Storch, and Jane Webb. It was, I think, the only time we worked with Byner, who later became a stand-up comedian.

The funny thing about the kids is that we used Jerelyn Fields later on in a show called *Kid Super Power Hour* in some live-action segments! It was an interesting project, and you couldn't tell whether it took place yesterday, today, or tomorrow. We shot it out in a forest-like area east of Burbank. What Cosby did as Aesop, in a way, sort of preceded *Fat Albert* because the storytelling had a moral for the kids to live by. It was really a nice show.

Aesop's Fables aired on Sunday, October 31st at 7:30 p.m. on CBS, as planned. *Variety* gave it a great review, calling it a "notch above the usual kiddie primetime fare in conception and execution" and singling out the cartoon segments as having "quality animation." *The Boston Herald* reviewed it, saying it was "particularly delightful" and that it had "the appropriate moral made clear and done in cartoon form at its best." Both criticized the network, however, for running a Cosby-starring commercial for Crest during the show.

In early November the trades reported that one of our co-ventures with Warner was going to be an ABC series of the Road Runner. Let's just say that plans for that went the way of most of Wile E. Coyote's plans… but it didn't mean our deal with Warner wasn't about to take some interesting turns.



1972-1973

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THAT'S THE WAY THEY ALL BECAME... THE COSBY KIDS!

In mid-January 1972, Warner announced an expansion on their agreement with us from the previous year, with ten feature animated films—each budgeted at $1 million and set at 90-minutes—announced as a co-production. The three-year project was noted in trades as being the largest deal of its kind in animation history. The tagline for the series of films was "Family Classics," and Warner held network and syndication rights. Titles announced were: *Oliver Twist, Cyrano De Bergerac, Swiss Family Robinson, Don Quixote, From the Earth to the Moon, Robin Hood, Noah's Ark, Knights of the Round Table, Arabian Nights,* and *Jack London's Call of the Wild*. All of the works were based on books or concepts in the public domain, but not animated by any other studio. Warner was owned at that point by Kinney Services, a cable TV company, and with us owned by TelePrompTer the cable market—and the eventual home video market—was being closely eyed for these films as a continual revenue stream, not unlike Disney's features. For us it meant we could employ an animation team of 400 people year-round!

A potential change in unions occurred in February 1972, when the Writers Guild of America filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to represent animation writers, who had previously been under the cartoonist's union with IATSE 839. It was seen as a smart move, as many of the writers we were using—as well as those Hanna-Barbera was using—were WGAW members. Plans were that when the IATSE four-year contract finished on January 31, 1973, WGAW would take over.

Nobody really objected… at first, but, by late March, IATSE 839 had voted to oppose the petition, citing the difficulty in separating WGAW-style script writers from "old animation-style" storyboard writers, who often wrote segments as they boarded. IATSE 839 ordered all writers and storyboarders to stop working on Hanna-Barbera's *Funky Phantom*, causing some trauma to that series as it entered preproduction. WGAW struck back in April, filing a new petition that would cover all animation companies in the Animated Film Producer's Association, not just the TV producers. The AFPA, by the way, included Filmation Associates, Hanna-Barbera Prods., MGM, UPA Pictures, Walt Disney, Walter Lantz Prods., and Warner Bros.

Meanwhile, back at Filmation, in mid-February we announced more on our bold expansion into live-action syndicated television, with five new series to be offered through TelePrompTer cable. They were *Guest of Honor, Judgment, The Origins Game, The Heroes*, and another show not yet revealed.

Opposite:
The cast of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*

Above:
Lou, Bill Cosby, and Arthur Nadel

We also planned a few more projects during the year, including a *Martin Luther King Special* and *The White House Kids Special*, but I don't recall what happened to them. Probably our strangest potential series was when we talked with CBS about doing a *Young Cannon* series. *Cannon* was a detective show that starred William Conrad. I'd try to sell anything that I knew we could do something interesting with. *Cannon* was really working, so I called Freddie Silverman and said, "What about doing Y*oung Cannon*? He's a fat kid who solves crimes!" We got the rights from Quinn Martin, who was a really good guy, and I did a presentation, but Silverman didn't buy it.

In early March *Aesop's Fables* garnered us our first major award, the Christopher Award, which was given to books, television shows, and films based on their "affirmation of the highest values of the human spirit, artistic and technical accomplishment, and a significant degree of public acceptance." Of the 16 awards presented at a ceremony in New York City, *Aesop's Fables* was the only animated program.

In April the new fall schedules were announced. CBS picked up *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids,* plus reruns of *Sabrina* and *Archie*. ABC picked up *The Brady Kids* from us, as well as segments of *The Saturday Superstar Movie*. NBC, as usual, ignored us on Saturday morning.

The order for *Fat Albert* was for 16 new episodes and a two-year commitment, and as I said in the press, "This is the first time a superstar has been involved in children's Saturday programming to this extent." We really pushed the educational elements and had worked with CBS to hire a board of educators to help guide the series. They included UCLA Assistant Dean of the Graduate School of Education Dr. Gordon Berry and University of Massachusetts Dean of the Graduate School of Education Dwight Allen. That latter was the school where Cosby had been doing some further studies.

After the NBC thing, it took a lot to convince Bill to go with us, but he finally did. But Filmation had to produce the second *Fat Albert* special for NBC as part of the deal. That made selling a series to another network a bit tricky. But, luckily, Freddie Silverman wanted Cosby to do a nighttime variety show for CBS. So, I met Cosby in New York in winter 1970, and we went up to see Silverman. I'll never forget it. He and I got onto the elevator at CBS. It's the middle of winter as far as I was concerned—really cold—and Bill was in a white tennis outfit with shorts as I recall. I think he had his cigar in his mouth, but he got rid of it before we went into Freddie's office.

Now, we had tried already to sell *Fat Albert* as a series to NBC, but the guy there made some nasty comments about Jews in the business and some racial comments as well. It was not very pleasant. I never told Bill some of the things he said because it was just awful. I went in with the idea of showing what we were doing with *Fat Albert* and how it would be a worthwhile show for Saturday morning and how Bill was always quoted as doing good work for kids—he later even won awards for his work in children's television—but it turned out that the NBC guy was a bigot. I was astonished that he was so racist and biased.

But Freddie wasn't a bigot. Unfortunately, he wasn't completely sold on *Fat Albert* either. But he wanted Cosby for the variety show, so if Bill would agree to do that, as a bonus he would pick up *Fat Albert*. Now, the funny thing is, *The New Bill Cosby Show* that premiered that fall wasn't a big hit at all—there were too many variety shows on the air—and I'm not sure it even lasted a whole season. But *Fat Albert* lasted on CBS for 13 years!

Silverman was concerned about one thing only in regard to the animated show, and that was that he wanted us to create a show that had some values that were not like normal Saturday morning shows. That's what we wanted to do anyway! He thought he could use the show as a demonstration to the Action for Children's Television people that CBS was aware of the necessity for worthwhile entertainment for children. And that was his second reason for trying to do the show. Bill liked that idea too, and I think he would have probably fought for it if he needed to because he had power.

Our concept for doing something worthwhile had really not been appreciated by the other people we had pitched the show to. It was the heyday of guys flying through the air in union suits. The pressure groups hadn't really started to become effective yet, so the networks didn't have much reason for doing worthwhile material. To those of us in the business, it was a sad thing. We saw mindless chewing-gum-for-the-mind entertainment on Saturday morning, and, if you had any feeling for the health and welfare and mental health of the audience, it was time to do something worthwhile.

We had already been working on the second NBC show because we had gotten TelePrompTer to agree to let us do it, even though there wasn't much money, in order for us to make the deal with Bill for the rights to sell the show. We re-designed the characters for that second special, pretty much looking like you saw them the rest of the series. Most of the designs were by Randy Hollar, with Michelle McKinney, working under Ken Brown. The second special wasn't very good because we had to produce it so fast, and Bill didn't film any of his live-action segments for it. It eventually aired on NBC on May 4, 1973, as *Weird Harold Special* (listed in some sources incorrectly as "Bill Cosby's Weird Harold Special")—not even using the *Fat Albert* name, most likely due to inter-network rivalry—although the title of the story was "The Great Go-Cart Race!" I never liked the damn thing, and I never used it on the series; in fact, I don't even think it was included in the episodes that we syndicated. But it got us the rights, and Bill saw what we could do with his characters, and it enabled us to design everyone how we wanted.

Once we got the series sold, we dove into making it. I had gotten Bill to agree to introduce and pop in and out of the shows, which meant that he had a live presence on-screen. And we designed it so he could do a whole season's worth of intros and pop-up segments within one or two days of filming. All of his material was written beforehand,

and he would throw in his own stuff. His schedule at first was really full because he had the nighttime show, so this was mostly the extent of his involvement, except for when he would do voices.

The junkyard set that we filmed was actually done in several places. It was a couple of set pieces and was relatively easy to do. You just put a bunch of stuff on the floor, and a stool for him to sit on, and a fake fence behind him so they all looked like the same place. Much later on we filmed some of the scenes at the sound stages we had in our own studio out in the western part of the valley—Filmation West. But that's a ways in the future. All the Cosby live action stuff was filmed the first year or so by Robert Chenault, and eventually, he was replaced by Arthur Nadel. Art filmed Bill Cosby's live wraparounds for quite some time, but eventually he wanted to move on to other projects. Art was a ham radio afficianado, and, while chatting with other people via the ham radio—kind of like today's internet chat rooms—he met a cameraman named Bernie Abramson. They became friends, and Art gave Bernie a job directing the Cosby spots.

Unlike Jerry Lewis, Bill wanted us to use his voice. He recorded all over the place. We'd send people up to him in Vegas, and we'd get a lot of scripts ready, so he could do more than one at a time. He once walked off the street into a radio station—I think in Alaska—with a script and asked the guys if he could record there. He was terrific, and we got the stuff on time! Bill met with all our writers at least once, but he didn't really make many changes to what we did because he felt very comfortable with what we were doing with the stories and the characters.

One of the things that worried me early on was that we had committed to doing a worthwhile show, and we didn't have any kind of specific background in doing that other than that most of us were parents. But what we thought was appropriate and what was right and what was positive for children may not have been the best thing. I called our PR guy and asked him where to find somebody who could act as an educational and psychological advisor for the concepts of what the stories should be about and what kind of problems we could do with this audience. He suggested that I contact some of the universities.

I called USC and asked to talk to somebody in their educational department, but the guy was gone and I couldn't talk to him. So, next I called UCLA, and they got me in contact with a nice young man named Dr. Gordon Berry, and I told him a little bit about what we wanted to do. But I really wanted to meet him and show him stuff from the series, so I went down to UCLA. He was the temporary dean of the graduate school of education, and his secretary had me go into his office.

I walked in, and there was this African-American gentleman sitting there behind the desk. And I just couldn't hold myself in. I said, "Holy sh*t! Am I in luck!" And he looked at me very perplexed and said, "What?" It just seemed so appropriate to have a black educator involved with *Fat Albert*. And Gordon, as a result, became the first of the educational and psychological advisors to the networks on children's programming. We became very close friends from that point on. He's really a good guy.

I told him what we wanted to do and that we wanted somebody who had the ability to make decisions about what the content should be. Not just someone who would put their name on the end after the show was completed, as some had done and later did… we wanted his direct involvement. I told him that we wanted him to work with our writers from the beginning and come up with a list of situations and areas that were appropriate for the target age group, which was somewhere between five and eleven.

Gordon's idea was to put together with himself a team of professors accomplished in a number of different areas—some from education, some from history, etc.—all of whom might have different attitudes and abilities. We were going to pay them to help us plan the series out so that it was emotionally and intellectually important for kids, and they helped us work out what would eventually be called "pro-social messages," which many people mock these days, but which are good messages for kids to hear.

The bible for *Fat Albert* actually had an admonition to writers. They had to be able to answer "yes" to two questions: "1. Can the show provide a positive contribution to the problem we are considering? 2. Will this be an entertaining show? No film, however worthy its intent, however altruistic its makers, is fulfilling its primary obligation if it does not entertain!"

While the writers and professors were developing the stories, the various departments were developing the look of the show. We had already developed the characters, but we had to create their regular backgrounds and homes. We used a lot of stock system animation in the show, particularly when you had the whole gang walking or cheering or singing. Because they all had different styles of movements and the scenes were complicated, it made sense to make those stock.

Fat Albert Jackson was always played by Cosby. He based the character on a buddy of his from when he was a kid named Albert Robertson. Fat Albert was everybody's great uncle. Bill also did the voices of Mushmouth and, obviously, Bill Cosby.

Mushmouth was based on another friend of Cosby's. One day Bill came to me and said, "Lou, I want you to send my checks this year to this guy," and he gave me the name of a guy in Philadelphia, and we sent him all of Bill's checks. I said, "What are you doing that for?" He said, "Well, because I stole his voice. He was really Mushmouth." But he paid the guy very well for it!

One of the questions I get asked most is, did Mushmouth actually have real dialogue and they then went through and added the B's, or was it written as incomprehensibly as he talked? That was all Cosby. Nobody else could do it. Bill really is a talented, talented guy, but it looks like it comes out so easily from him that people don't realize how hard that is to do. If you listen to what Mushmouth says, only some words come out mushy. We'd also

Opposite & Above: Images from *Fat Albert*

do something visually though, so you knew what he was talking about. We could have made a game though: What Did Mushmouth Say?

When we wanted to find voices for the other kids in the Junkyard Gang, we sent scripts out to the agents and told them we were looking for black kids with interesting voices. I don't know how many kids we auditioned, but we came up with a number of them that were really good. Eric Suter, who played the smooth-talking Rudy, was probably the oldest of the group. He was probably 18 or something like that at the time. Rudy was one of the most interesting characters, because he was kind of the troublemaker. Without Rudy we couldn't have done a lot of the stories. We had to have a character like that who got in trouble because he did something wrong, and then we'd have to set him right, and he would realize what he had done… usually.

Gerald Edwards was Weird Harold, the clumsy guy who dressed a little strangely. Jan Crawford was Bucky, the kid with the huge teeth. He also played Russell, who was Bill Cosby's little brother in real life and on the show. He was like a funny, little Napoleon kid with his big hat and jacket and scarf no matter how hot it was. Jan was the youngest of the three boys on the show. He was probably 12–13 when he started.

People ask me why I played the role of Dumb Donald. The reason is that he was introduced in the *Weird Harold Special* for NBC, where he had one line or something. And I said, "I ain't gonna pay an actor to do one line!" So, I did Dumb Donald for that first show. One line, but it was a funny line and the writers liked it. We didn't tell Bill that I had done the voice, and Bill liked how it sounded. So the writers kept writing more lines for Dumb Donald as the show progressed, and I kept recording them. I also played Albert's father, but I don't know if Bill ever knew that. I had a hard time doing his lines and not making them sound wrong.

Some of my other family members got roles in *Fat Albert* as well. Jay played the role of Fat Albert's mother, Helen, and she also played the role of Miss Wucher, the teacher, and the other teacher, Mrs. Bryfogel. Wonder where they got the name and job of Miss Wucher? And Erika and Lane played some of the other kids on the show, under the names "Erika Carroll" and "Lane Vaux." One time Bill called me up and said, "Lou, my wife, Camille, and I have been listening to the show, and we're hearing an awful lot of white kids doing black kids' voices." I said, "Those are my kids! I can't afford real actors sometimes." And Bill said, "Let me tell them how to do it from now on." He never did give them any pointers though. The guy credited as "Keith Allen" who did voices was Hal Sutherland's son, using another name again.

The Junkyard Band the kids played in was put together by producer Richard Delvy, and many of the songs were written by Ed Fournier. Singing on the songs was done by a combination of

Michael Gray playing Fat Albert (not the same Michael Gray who later starred in our *Shazam!*), as well as Fournier and a young Kim Carnes!

Fat Albert went on the air, and it was an amazing hit. It really, really worked. And over the years we did some interesting stories that taught kids a lot; you name a teenage problem that you can talk about, and it was there. We talked about smoking, drugs, vandalism, teenage pregnancy, truancy, venereal diseases, stealing, alcoholism, homelessness, depression, racism, and all sorts of stuff. We even had stuff about kids not talking to strange people who might do things to them. That's not to say that every message was about something dire; sometimes the messages were about honesty or courage or believing in oneself or accepting differences in others.

In all the years we did *Fat Albert*, I don't recall that we got any letters or negative feedback about him being fat. It bothered me more than anybody on staff because I had been a fat kid. Gordon Berry—and later Don Roberts—wanted us to do stories about what you eat and how it affects your body, with the irony being that the show was called "Fat Albert." He couldn't ever really become skinny.

We didn't really get any negative letters from bigots about it being an African-American show either. At that point the only other all-black cartoon shows had been *The Harlem Globetrotters*, which CBS did in 1970, and *The Jackson Five*, which had been on ABC in 1971, but they were entertainers, not really characters. *Fat Albert* was about characters who happened to live in a poorer part of town, but they were making the best of their life in their homes, their school, and playing in the junkyard.

Unfortunately, though, African-American children were almost disenfranchised on Saturday morning. There were no black faces for the most part. We had done the first black lead character for Saturdays on *The Hardy Boys*, and a few others had followed our lead, but one could look at Saturday morning at the time and almost assume that there were no black people in the world, no ethnic minorities in the world; you turned on Saturday morning, and everybody was lily white and pure, with no problems. The world they lived in was unreal. So, we, in our own way, tried to get at least some characters and stories in our shows, where there was a balance of types.

Overall the letters that came in on *Fat Albert* were phenomenal. In most of the letters that came in Fat Albert was not even perceived as being a "Black show." It was perceived as a show about an interesting group of kids with problems, and the show seemed as significant to any kids in the audience as it was to the black kids in the audience. And people loved *Fat Albert* for years. It was by far our biggest and longest-running series.

I'll talk more about *Fat Albert* as this book progresses, but that gives you a little insight into the show.

The Brady Kids happened because we made a deal with Sherwood Schwartz. Paramount got distribution on the show, but Sherwood owned the underlying rights, and he was a very easy man to work with. He was really a solid citizen, perfectly honest, good guy. We never had any problems with him at all. I was more interested in doing a show with the Brady kids than I was with the *Brady Bunch* family because we were doing children's shows. It separated the show as far as Sherwood was concerned, so he ended up with a different thing out of it.

I heard that Sherwood's kids were fans of The Archies too. And we had the Brady Kids in their own little singing group just like The Archies were. For a lot of the musical numbers, we actually reused Archie song movements. They had a dog too—Mop Top instead of Hot Dog—and this magical mynah bird named Marlon.

Marc Richards wrote all of these shows. Marc was the head writer for *Soupy Sales* when the writing was really good, and Marc needed a job at that point in time. I think he just came to see me, and it didn't take long to know the guy was really terrific. He had never done animation, but he caught on very quickly. He worked alone, and I never, ever, really saw him working. He'd be sitting in his office doing things, but not writing, but his shows would come out on time. He was an incredibly gifted guy. I mean other guys were working their asses off to do what he could get done. I don't ever think he did rewrites. You'd read one of his scripts, and they were funny in every sense.

Opposite:
Fat Albert & The Junkyard Gang

Above:
The Brady Kids

Left:
Wonder Woman's first television appearance ever, on *The Brady Kids*

We introduced the Brady Kids as part of ABC's *Saturday Superstar Movie*. It was a standalone story that was a one-hour show. It wasn't just two episodes smushed together, although we did later split them up as part of the series. The ones that went to series helped us because doing the first show cost about six or seven times as much as doing the sixth show because of all the development that happened. By the time a show went into series production, we could amortize the costs over the series of all the stock footage and character designs and such. Doing those movies gave us an opportunity to develop the shows without it being a financial disaster.

One of the elements of *The Brady Kids* that fans remember best is that we had some very famous guest stars: Superman, Wonder Woman, and the Lone Ranger. I think we wanted to see if Superman could be revitalized as a series and if action could make a return. And, with Wonder Woman, I thought there was a chance for a real show all by itself. But it was tough to sell a "woman's show." I don't recall if we used the same designs we had done for the National/DC guest hero segments for *Superman/Aquaman*, but we probably did. She had a real charm. And out of my desire to have a strong female heroine and to sell a series with a female lead eventually came Isis, and later on *She-Ra*. The Wonder Woman episode, "It's All Greek To Me," was the character's first appearance on film or television, by the way.

As for the Lone Ranger, this was our second time going round with him, but the first time we animated him. The guy who owned the rights was Jack Wrather, and he was involved with TelePrompTer. So, when we wanted to use Lone Ranger and Tonto, it was a bit of corporate synergy, though that phrase hadn't been invented yet. It was just "good business" back then. So, I called and made a deal with him.

In the first season, the Brady kids were all voiced by the actors and actresses who played them on the live-action show. The Brady kids did all their own songs too, and I think they released five records. The second season, they went on strike for more money. Now, realize, with voice actors you get three voices out of them by contract. If you want more, you pay for another three voices. But with the Brady actors, they were only doing one voice each, and sometimes they only had a few lines, but they got paid the same either way. And that was expensive because there were six of them! On top of that, they all wanted raises, and more than the top voice actors were getting. So, they went on strike, and the three older actors left.

I replaced them in the second season with my kids. Erika took over Marcia's role, and Lane took over Greg's role. Keith Allen, Hal Sutherland's son, did Peter's voice under the nom de plume "David E. Smith." And they did other background voices as well. Larry Storch played the animals and some teenage boys who went to the same school as the Bradys, and Jane Webb was pretty much any girl or woman's voice.

The Brady Kids was our first production team-up with Paramount since we had discussed *Star Trek*, but behind the scenes it wasn't our last. Nor was it our last go-round with either Sherwood Schwartz or Jack Wrather. More about those in future chapters, but with Wrather we also got the rights to *Lassie*. So, this year, as part of that *ABC Saturday Superstar Movie* thing, we introduced *Lassie* in animation. That and the Brady movie gave ABC some "name" characters they could use on the movie series.

The pilot was a movie called *Lassie and the Spirit of Thunder Mountain*. On the TV show in the 1960s, Lassie had been working with the U.S. Forest Service, so it made sense to use her in that aspect again.

The movie introduced the Turner Family, who owned a ranch near Thunder Mountain National Park: the dad, Ben Turner; his wife, Laura; and three kids named Ben Jr., Jackie, and Susan. We had some cute animals, which would appear to help Lassie out in the wild, including an owl, a skunk, a raccoon, an old mountain lion, a crow, a turtle, and others. The kids on the show loved the dog, and viewers loved the dog. It was a charming show. It was the highest-rated of all of the ABC movies in that series, which pretty much guaranteed we'd get a series out of it. And we did, with *Lassie's Rescue Rangers* in 1973.

Jane Webb and Ted Knight did the adult voices, and Hal's son, Keith Sutherland, did some of the kids' voices. Lane did some of the voices as well, but for some reason we used the pseudonym "Hal Harvey" for him. Every now and then, I think my daughter, Erika, pitched in as well.

As for Ted Knight, it was the first time we had used him in a while. I had gotten a call from Freddie Silverman at CBS one day, and he said, "You use that white-haired son of a bitch on another one of your shows, and I'll never buy from you again!" He got tired of hearing him, probably because *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* was on CBS at the time, and Ted was both popular and omnipresent. But this was an ABC show, so we could use Ted!

I have a Ted Knight story to relate, and here's about as good a place to put it as any. Ted was the cheapest actor in the world; he would appear in Las Vegas, but he wouldn't have anybody write his comedy material, and he'd be almost booed off the stage. So, he went to New York to appear on David Frost's talk show. Jay and I were in New York, and we went to the show to be with Ted. He said, "I'll be in trouble if I go out and say, 'Hi, guys,' like I do on *Mary Tyler Moore*, and nobody laughs. I don't have any material after that." I said, "Why don't you get a writer? Have them write for you like they do on your show, and you pay them." And he looked at me like I was insane. "Pay them? Pay them? Pay the writer?"

So, he went on *The David Frost Show*, and he said, "Hi, guys," and the audience burst into laughter. After that, he couldn't say anything wrong. I mean, they had his persona in their minds, and, no matter what he said, it was funny. It was taped in a theater, and, as we left the theater that night, everybody was just jumping over Ted, and we were standing there and got pushed aside! It was really weird to be with a personality that well known. It was actually kind of scary. Later, as we were walking up the street, he said, "See that girl standing in that hallway over there? She's giving me the eye." I said,

"Ted, that's a hooker." He was incredulous. "Oh, that couldn't be a hooker." I said, "That's a hooker, Ted. I don't know hookers, but that's a hooker!" He said, "Oh, you've got to be kidding me, no." The next night we were walking up the same street, and he saw her again. He said, "You know what, Lou? That's the same girl. She's a hooker!"

The third *Saturday Movie* was *Daffy Duck and Porky Pig Meet the Groovie Goolies*. That was the weirdest project for us and really sprang out of that deal we had with Warner Bros. We had the rights to use some of their characters, so we did this special in which the Warner Brothers characters came out to Hollywood and wanted to meet the Groovie Goolies. We used a lot of the main Warner characters, except Bugs Bunny and the little mouse guy, Speedy Gonzales. And I think it's the only time we used that wonderful voice actor, Mel Blanc, although he may have been ill then. He had a terrible accident, and that may be the time his son did some stuff for us, imitating his dad.

There was a live-action segment in this special with the Goolies as well, in which they went through "Mad Mirror Land" into the real world, chasing after the disguised Phantom of the Flickers. We filmed it in a kind of stop-motion called "pixelation," so they had kind of a cartoon feel. That even enabled us to have Drac appear to fly by flapping his cape without using wires to hold him up. It was filmed in Westlake Village near Thousand Oaks. The four guys who portrayed the live-action monsters were: Michael Richard Monda, a.k.a. "Daddy Dewdrop" (Drac); songwriter Jeffrey Thomas (Wolfie); musician Emory Lee Gordy, Jr. (Hauntleroy); and music producer Ed Fournier (Frankie). They did a great job portraying their animated counterparts, and, if we had pursued any live Goolies show, they would have been a lock for it. The villain of the story was "Claude Chaney," which was our little nod to Lon Chaney and Claude Rains. Overall, it was really a strange project.

At a three-day conference in Hong Kong from May 3–5, Warner Bros. International screened for theatre representatives ten upcoming films it planned to distribute internationally. Among them was *Journey Back to Oz*, finally completed. It wasn't a public debut, but it was the first time an audience outside the studio had seen it. Warner did a European conference May 22–24, and a Central/South American conference on June 5–7, repeating the film for representatives from those territories.

Our film deal with Warner fluctuated a bit as projects were *developed* by May. *The Three Musketeers* and *Treasure Island* had been added, while in June *Huckleberry Finn* came onboard, and *Arabian Knights* became *Scheherazade*. Although we were developing these all along, actual production work was set to begin July 7th.

In July we revealed the fifth show on our planned live-action slate: *Laugh, Don't Cry*. Set to be a celebrity style game show hosted by Marty Ingels, the panel was to consist of Anne Elder, Robert Clary, Mitzi McCall, and John Myers. We set a shoot date for the final week in July at Columbia.

In August Warner Bros. TV made a deal to get the worldwide syndication rights to not only the live-action *Superman* show of the 1950s, but also all 69 half-hours of the *Superman/Batman/Aquaman* shows created by Filmation. Television Programs International had been representing the shows up to that point. It was an obvious move on Warner's part, and one which let them profit significantly more from the very popular series.

September 9th saw the debut of the first *The Saturday Superstar Movie* on ABC at 8:30 a.m., with *The Brady Kids* on tap. Although *Variety* reviewed the story as being titled "Jungle Bungle"—which was its name in the script—the official on-air title *was The Brady Kids on Mysterious Island*. The story, by Marc Richards, found the kids ballooning onto an island that was home to purple alligators, giant crabs, a friendly abominable snowman, a Venus dog trap, and two Chinese pandas, as well as a visit from Father Nature. It was a fanciful far cry from the sitcom-era *Brady Bunch* stories. We followed those up with the other shows I previously discussed: *Lassie and the Spirit of Thunder Mountain*, which aired on November 11th, and *Daffy Duck and Porky Pig Meet the Groovie Goolies*, which aired on December 16th.

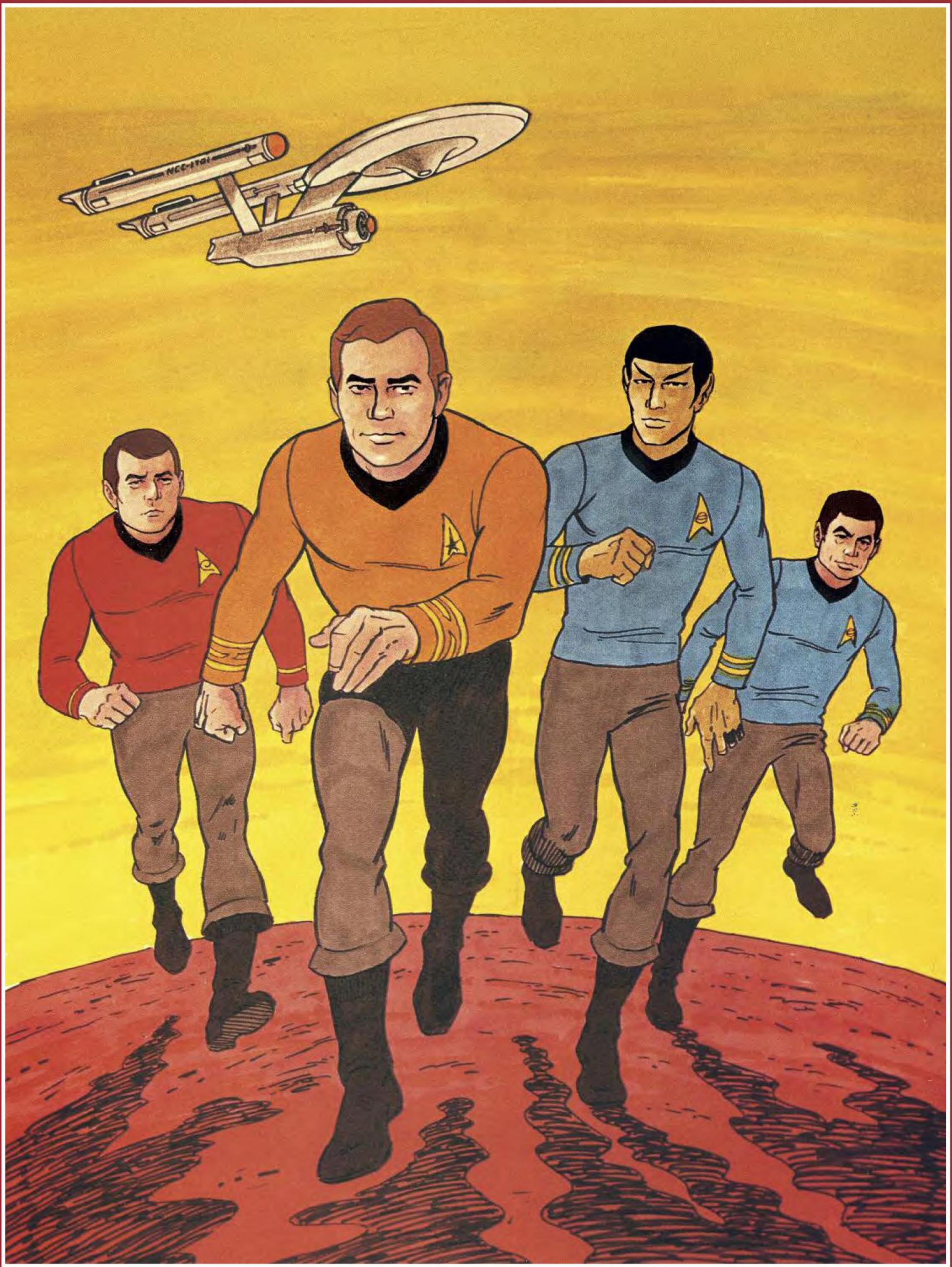
So sure were they that *The Brady Kids* would be a hit that ABC aired a *Saturday Morning Preview Special* on Friday, September 15th at 8:00 p.m., again featuring the live-action Brady kids, though the show was technically hosted by comedians Billy Barty and Charlie Callas. The new fall schedule officially began on September 16th. *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* was at 8:30 a.m. on CBS, while the *Saturday Superstar Movie* was at 9:30 a.m., followed by The Brady Kids at 10:30 a.m., both on ABC. *Archie's TV Funnies* was at noon on CBS, followed by *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. CBS also moved *Archie's Fun House* to Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

By mid-September our deal with Warner had been expanded to 20 films, and as I revealed in a UPI wire interview, "We're geared for mass production. Our films won't be fully animated, and we'll be introducing animal characters into the films. It adds a touch of fantasy. Fantasy is fun. You can't cut out a kid's imagination just because there's action and perhaps a little violence involved." The latter line was clearly referencing some of the more dangerous elements in *Treasure Island* and *Oliver Twist*, our first two productions.

Filmation, meanwhile, was planning to boldly go where no animators had gone before in the upcoming season.

Opposite:
Image from *Lassie and the Spirit of Thunder Mounatin*

Above:
The live-action *Groovie Goolies* trio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1973-1974

CHAPTER TWELVE

EXPLORING STRANGE NEW GALAXIES

In February we made a deal with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Records to release the soundtrack to *Fat Albert*, and Ringling was considering concert and fair appearances. It was supposed to be through their Wheel Records label.

In March Norm gave an interview to the *Hollywood Reporter*, boldly proclaiming "Disney Yesterday—Filmation Today." It was hyperbole, but at that point we were riding high. Our production deal with Warner meant the films we were doing had funding; on the boards at that time were *Oliver Twist, Treasure Island*, and *Huckleberry Finn*. And our production deals for *Star Trek* and *My Favorite Martians* became public knowledge as of this article.

At the end of March, NBC announced their new fall schedule, decimating their previous line-up. Seven first-season shows were cancelled in an attempt to stop the hemorrhaging that the network was feeling on Saturday mornings. They finally bought a series from us: the aforementioned *Star Trek*. William Shatner, who had already worked with us on several previously mentioned live-action projects, agreed to reprise his voice as Captain James T. Kirk, which gave us a powerful chip in dealing with the other actors and the sure-to-be-vocal *Star Trek* fans. Nichelle Nichols signed on in May.

A few weeks later, ABC and CBS both announced their schedules. ABC was keeping *The Brady Kids* and adding new episodes, as well as picking up *Lassie's Rescue Rangers* and *Mission: Magic!* as new series. CBS dropped *Sabrina* from the schedule, but kept *Archie* under a new title, *Everything's Archie*—although no new episodes were ordered, making this a rerun season—in addition to keeping *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* and adding *My Favorite Martians*. That meant four new shows, two returning series with new episodes, and one all-repeat show, on all three networks. To put it mildly, we were doing well.

In June CBS stole our consultants. By now Allan "Duke" Ducovny was director of children's programs for CBS, and he liked our use of consultants on *Fat Albert* so much that he hired Dr. Gordon Berry and Dr. Roger Francesky to oversee the development, planning, and concept for all of CBS's kids shows. Berry credited Filmation in interviews, noting that we had responded well to any changes or critiques

Opposite:
Presentation art for *Star Trek*

Above:
Image of the animated *U.S.S. Enterprise*

in developing worthwhile material for youth and also gave praise to Bill Cosby. The hiring meant that we couldn't use Berry on any shows not on CBS, but we knew the type of people we wanted now if we needed them on another network's series.

I'll also point out that hiring Gordon and Roger was a wise move on Duke's part for multiple reasons; not only was he working to bring more quality to the shows, but the move also insulated the network somewhat from the increasing clamor from the Action for Children's Television (ACT) group. ACT was a group formed in January 1968, in Newton, Massachusetts, by Peggy Charren and other housewives who banded together to begin a grassroots campaign to make the quality of children's programming better. Charren was publicly anti-censorship with the group, but ACT clearly wanted to have an effect on what was offered in television programs and often interacted with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Over the years they lobbied about violence, education, and particularly the commercials that were aimed at kids. The move by CBS—and our promotion of strong educational and moral values in *Fat Albert* (which won The Children's Theater Association Seal of Excellence this year)—made us friends with ACT more often than not.

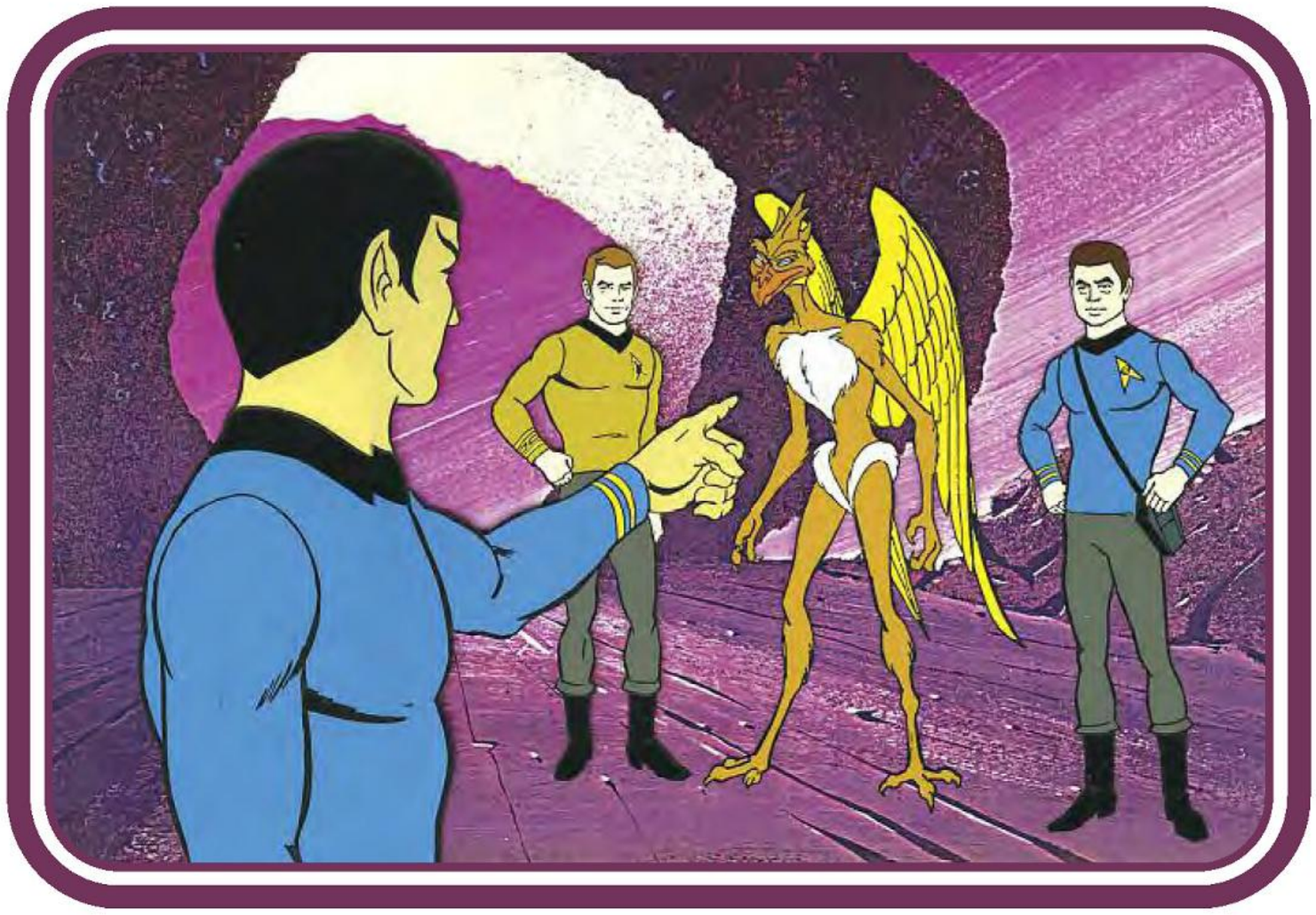
By far, the show that would garner us the most attention in 1973 was the animated *Star Trek* series. If you skipped over some chapters, you may want to go back to the one for 1969, in which I wrote about the early days of us working with Paramount to develop a new television series. While those plans were abandoned, we were able to finally make the deal in 1972. Dorothy C. Fontana would later say that the date she was told about the deal was February 14, 1972, so it would appear that it was sometime close to that time that papers were signed. And it was a guaranteed two-season show with 22 episodes planned over two seasons.

I had been talking to Paramount, but they could not do any series without Gene. And there had been a schism that had developed between Roddenberry and Paramount. So, I would talk to the guy at Paramount and then go talk to Gene and his attorney. It took a lot of doing to get the deal finalized, and I had to get them talking to each other first. I think the way that we worked it out is that Paramount had a third, Gene had a third, and we had a third. Paramount would do the selling internationally, but not domestically. We sold it domestically to the network. And Roddenberry had total creative control, which made him happy.

The network had absolutely zero creative control for *Star Trek*; they had to accept the show or not accept the show, and I believe that was the first time that happened in the history of Saturday morning animation. I actually don't think it ever happened again either. NBC wanted *Star Trek* so desperately that they gave us that creative control. It was so wonderful. If they'd say, "Well, gee, Lou, we've got a problem here," I'd respond with, "Well, Gene likes it that way." I loved having Gene involved with the show!

Gene was an easy man to talk to. I expected nothing but difficulty with him at first because we kept hearing how he demanded stuff to be the way that he wanted it. He was always fighting with the networks or the studio. But our relationship was easy. Despite the direction of our earlier proposal, we didn't want to do a children's version of *Star Trek*, and neither did Gene.

In June 1973, Norm was interviewed for a Newspaper Enterprise Association story about *Star Trek*, in which he said, "This is the first attempt to do an adult show in animation. Never before has an adult audience been challenged to watch a Saturday morning show. We feel it is a bold experiment." Hal Sutherland added, "The problem is



that kids have not had a choice on Saturday morning. We're going to find out if they'll go for more sophistication." The story was carried nationwide, showing pictures of our animated Spock and Kirk next to their live-action counterparts.

To accomplish the best *Star Trek* show, we not only worked with Roddenberry, but we also hired original *Trek* story editor Dorothy C. Fontana to story edit our series, on the suggestion of Gene. She was an angel—hard-working, dedicated, and devoted to Roddenberry. She called on writers from the original series to come back to the fold, unfettered by the budgetary restraints they had in live-action. One of the first writers to come onboard was David Gerrold to do a sequel to his award-winning "The Trouble with Tribbles" script. Also onboard quickly was Samuel A. Peeples, who had done the original *Trek* pilot, plus Stephen Kandel and Margaret Armen. Other writers from the world of science fiction were contacted, including Larry Niven. There was some kind of live-action writer's strike going on sometime around then, but the live writers could still write for animation because that was a different union.

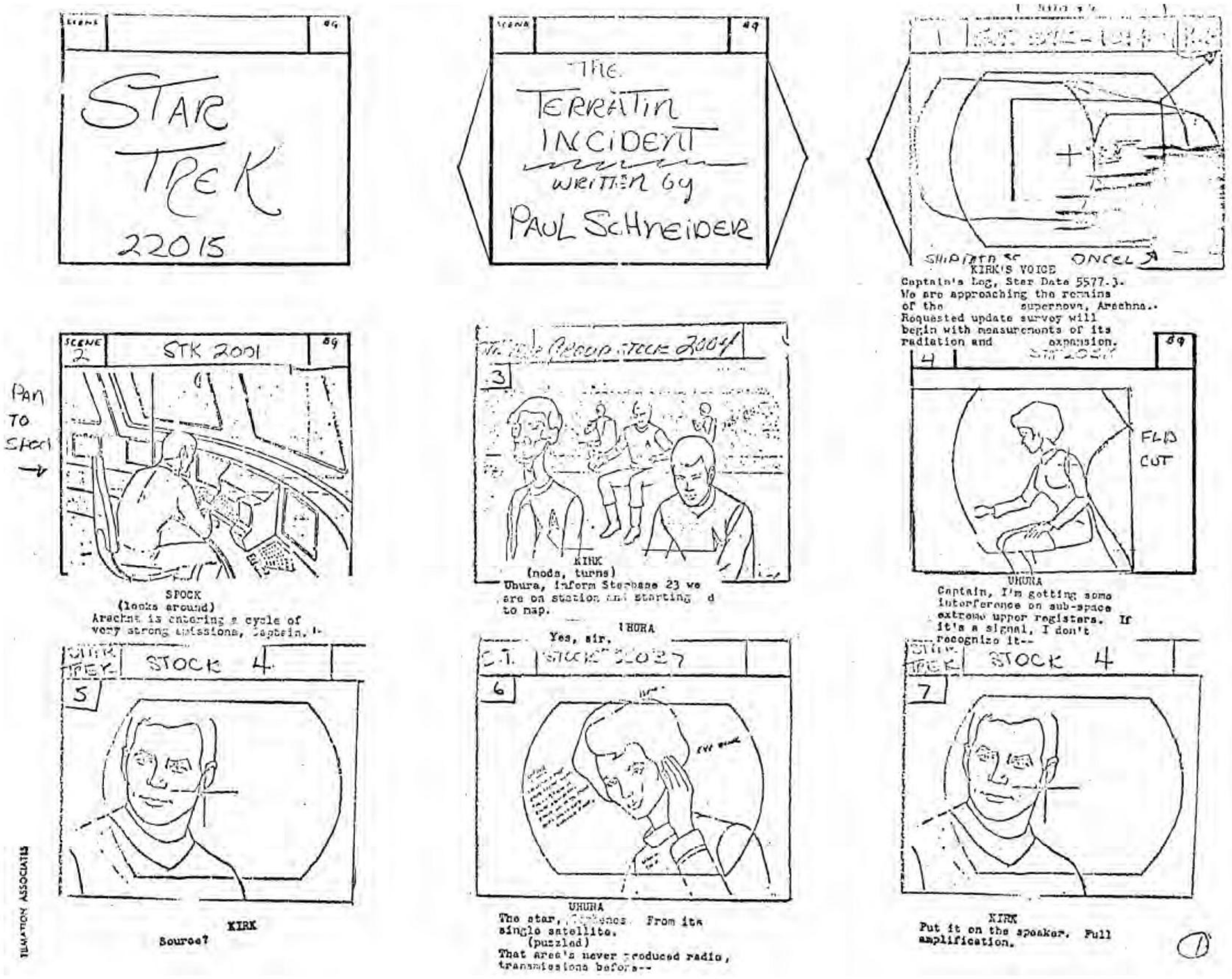
We told Gene and Dorothy and the writers that they could do almost anything. If they wanted a volcano to blow up, we'd do it. Painting backgrounds was not the tough part! About the only thing we couldn't do that the live-action show did was the sexy stuff. The way that some of those ladies looked on the original shows and the implications that Kirk was constantly having sex with them… well, that wouldn't have flown with the network, creative control or not!

We got, for the first time since the show had ended, almost the whole cast together to do the voices. None of them had ever done any voice-overs for animation at that time. We did have a problem with Leonard Nimoy at first, though, because we weren't using the character of Chekov in the show, and the kid who played him, Walter Koenig, was out of work then. Dorothy and I talked about it and gave Koenig a couple of scripts to write, at least one of which we shot. So, at least he got some work on the show. Early on there was also some question as to whether we were going to hire Nichelle Nichols and George Takei, and, when Nimoy brought it to our attention that we would be cutting the two minority actors from the series, we were horrified at our unintended slight, made all the worse because we were the one studio who had been championing diversity in its output. So, although their characters weren't in every episode, we did use them.

We started recording voices in June 1973, and the first three shows were recorded as an ensemble. After that, though, it became too difficult to get everyone in the studio at the same time. Per guild rules, actors could do three voices on the shows, and James Doohan often did multiple voices, as did Nichelle and Majel Barrett. I did some of the incidental voices like guards or aliens, and even David Gerrold did a voice for an episode. Nimoy and William Shatner were the hardest to schedule, as they were touring around the country doing plays. Nimoy recorded some of his lines at a studio in Arlington, Massachusetts, while on tour with a production of *Camelot*. William Shatner recorded his lines while touring with another show, in a Warren, Ohio, studio.

DeForest Kelley, who played Doctor McCoy, was a saint. He was a gentle soul; what you saw on screen there as Bones… he was that character. He didn't have to act; he was that guy. He was considerate and never said a bad word about anyone. I always had the feeling that

Opposite & This Page:
Images from *Star Trek*

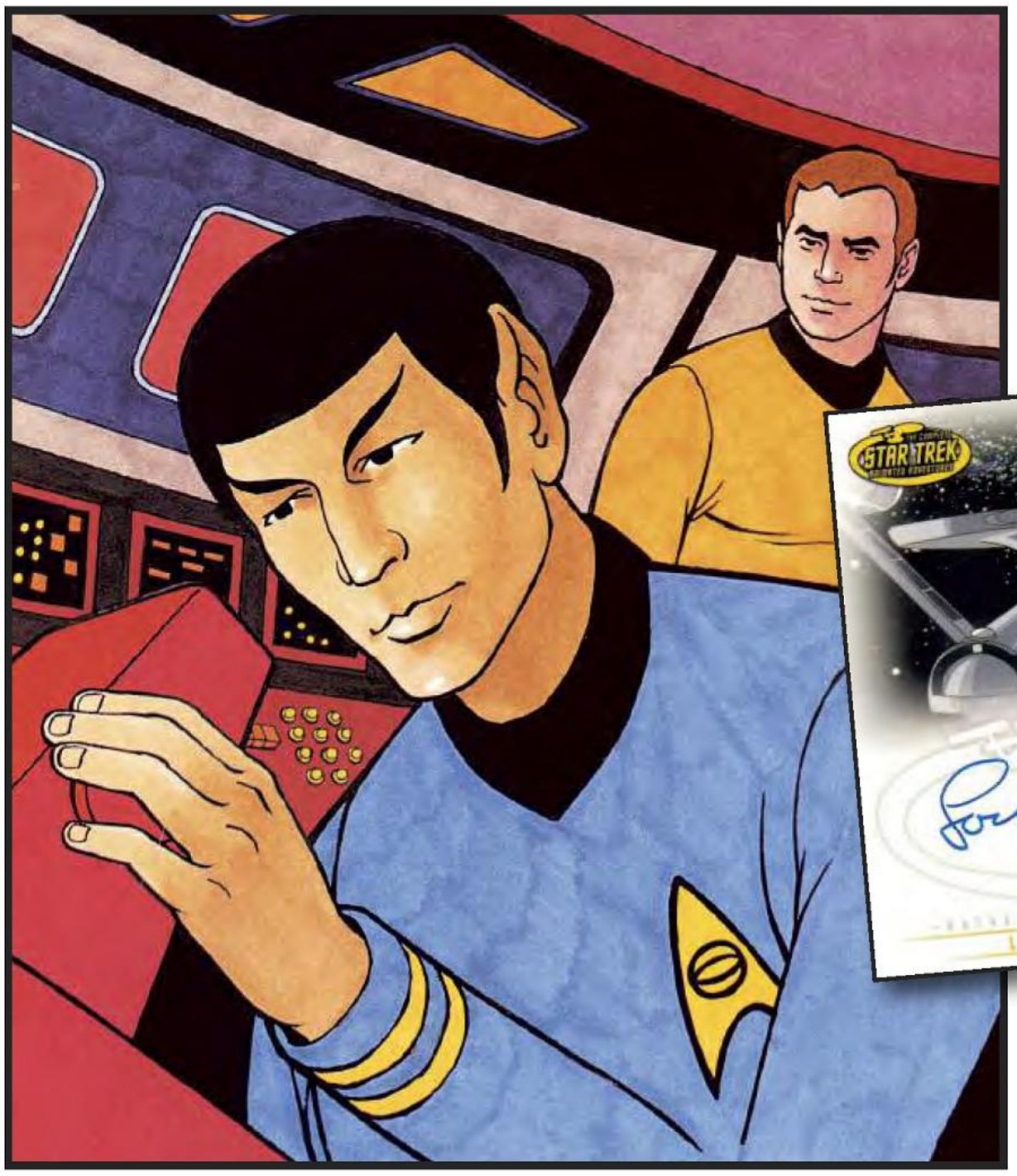


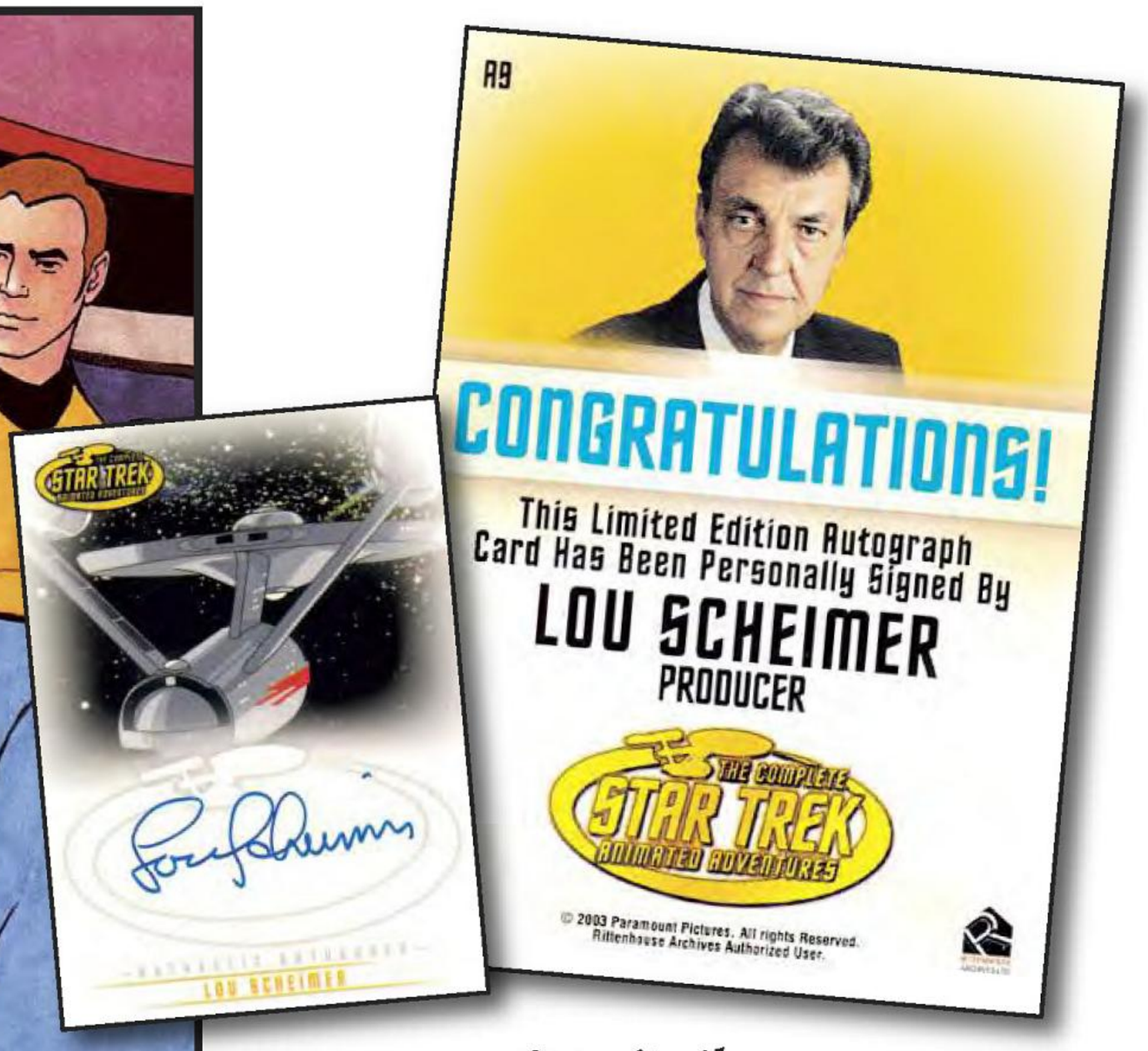
something terrible had happened to him someplace back in the day, but he never even swore. Which was fine… I swore enough for both of us!

I also remember that Nichelle Nichols was prettier in person than she looked on screen. And she was sweeter than she was on screen too! During the table read of the script for one episode where Uhura got to take command of the *Enterprise*, Nichelle yelled happily, "What? You're kidding! I actually get to run the Enterprise? Really?" It broke the whole room up. I thought there were going to be all sorts of problems with the giant egos, but there really weren't any. About the only problem was that Shatner and Nimoy counted their lines. If one got too many more than the other, we'd hear about it!

Our budget for the new *Trek* series was $75,000 per show, a $5–10K jump above the average price for animated series. We needed that extra money because we had to pay a full cast of actors a good rate and because, even though we could draw special effects or aliens or other planets, the show had to look terrific. We did do stock action and images of the main characters. Don Christensen was art director on the show, and he supervised a young guy named Bob Kline, who did most of the design work, along with Herb Hazleton and George Goode. We kept the outfits the same, though we had to make the chevrons on their tunics bigger to make them easier to animate. And to make sure that the likenesses were strong, our animators cut apart 35mm film of the episodes so that we could trace the characters for stock footage, a process known as "rotoscoping." This gave us both realistic characters and a version of the starship *U.S.S. Enterprise* that was almost as realistic as the models they filmed for the TV show. Special effects artist Reuben Timmins oversaw all the shots involving the *Enterprise*.

At one point I appeared on a panel at a *Star Trek* convention alongside Dorothy Fontana. The Trekkies were very skeptical about the show initially. I got up and started to talk about what we were going to do. And I heard a girl's voice say, "I hope it doesn't turn out like all the rest of that Filmation sh*t!" Well, I didn't know what to say. I thought they were all going to kill me because I was going to mess with that which they worshiped. Luckily, Dorothy had my back. She was always supportive of the show because we were trying so hard to put out something good. Wherever she went she begged the fans not to hate the show because it was animated, or it might kill the chances of *Star Trek* ever becoming another TV show or a movie. And once the fans heard how faithful we were being and how much care we were taking to respect the intent of the original series, they soon came over to our side. Word began buzzing to the 3,000 or so *Star Trek* fan clubs that *Star Trek* was coming back!





Opposite Above:
Star Trek storyboard art

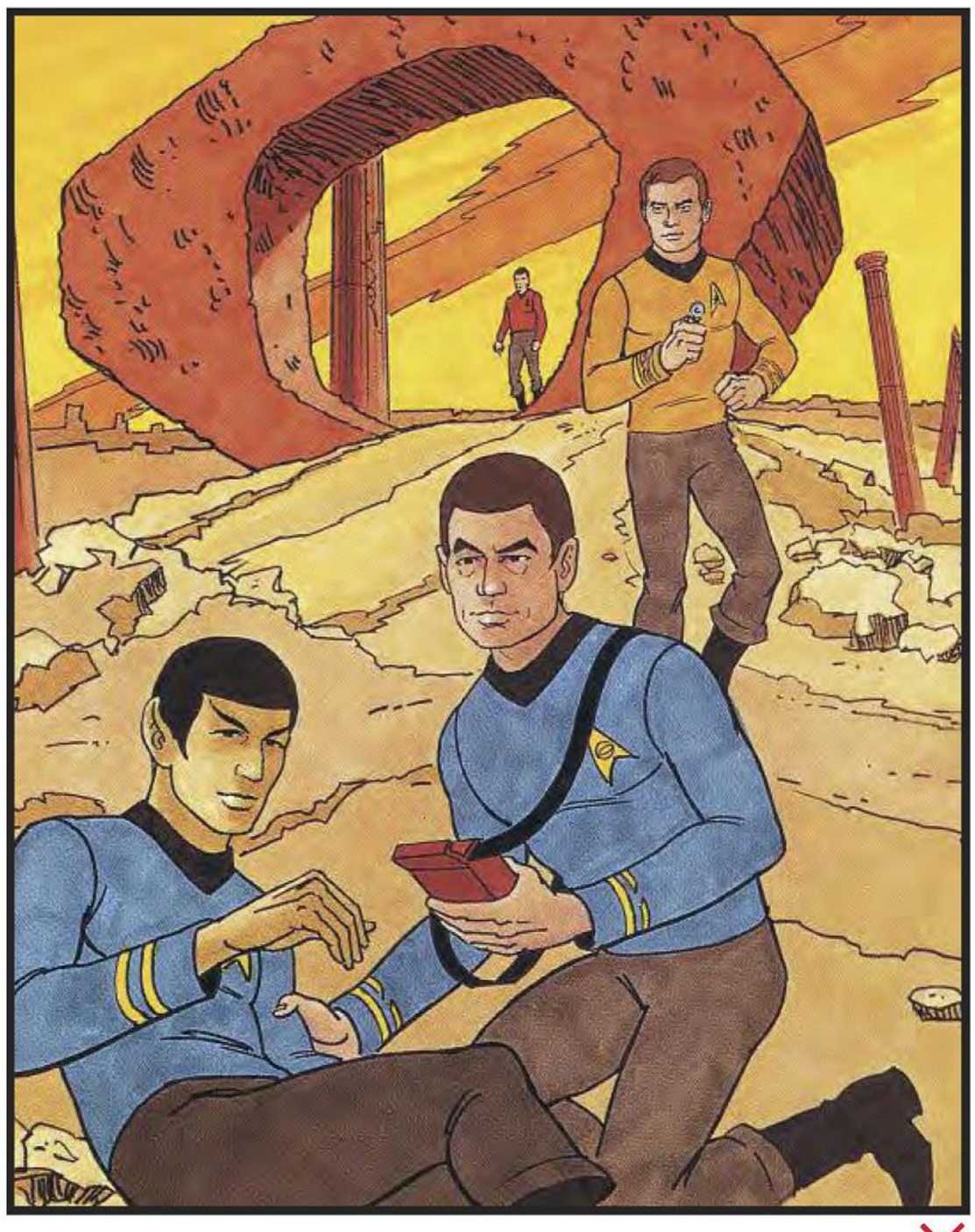
Left and Below:
Star Trek presentation art

Above:
Lou Scheimer autograph card from 2003

Even Nimoy was supportive after the early hiccups. He was a godsend for publicity, as he gave interviews throughout the country; as he travelled promoting his plays, he also promoted the *Trek* animated series. One of my fans recently told me that Nimoy even did a walk-on promo on the game show *Jeopardy*!

As the work on the series progressed, it got closer and closer to the debut, and things started piling up. Gene would actually approve the story concepts that Dorothy gave him, and give his input. We didn't think that we were going to make it because the stories weren't coming out fast enough, and sometimes Gene wanted changes at the last minute. As director, Hal Sutherland handled almost all of the storyboards himself because we had to make sure the stuff was perfect, and we had so little time to do it in. He and Gene were friends and worked very closely together; truthfully, the series would not have been as successful as it was without the hard work of Hal. But one day Roddenberry wanted to change something. Hal said, "We can change that, but we are not going to make the air date." And Gene knew how important that was, so he told us not to change whatever it was.

Gene got to be close to us all at Filmation. I remember when he and Majel Barrett had their little baby, Eugene Wesley Roddenberry Jr., they invited us to the christening. He had a rabbi there, and a Catholic priest, and a Protestant reverend. He said, "There is no way that this kid is not going to go to heaven." Afterward booze was flying everywhere. It was a wild christening! The California governor was there—I'm pretty sure it was Ronald Reagan then—and his wife was already drunk by the time I got there. Since they had a rabbi there, I thought they were going to circumcise him there as well, but they didn't.

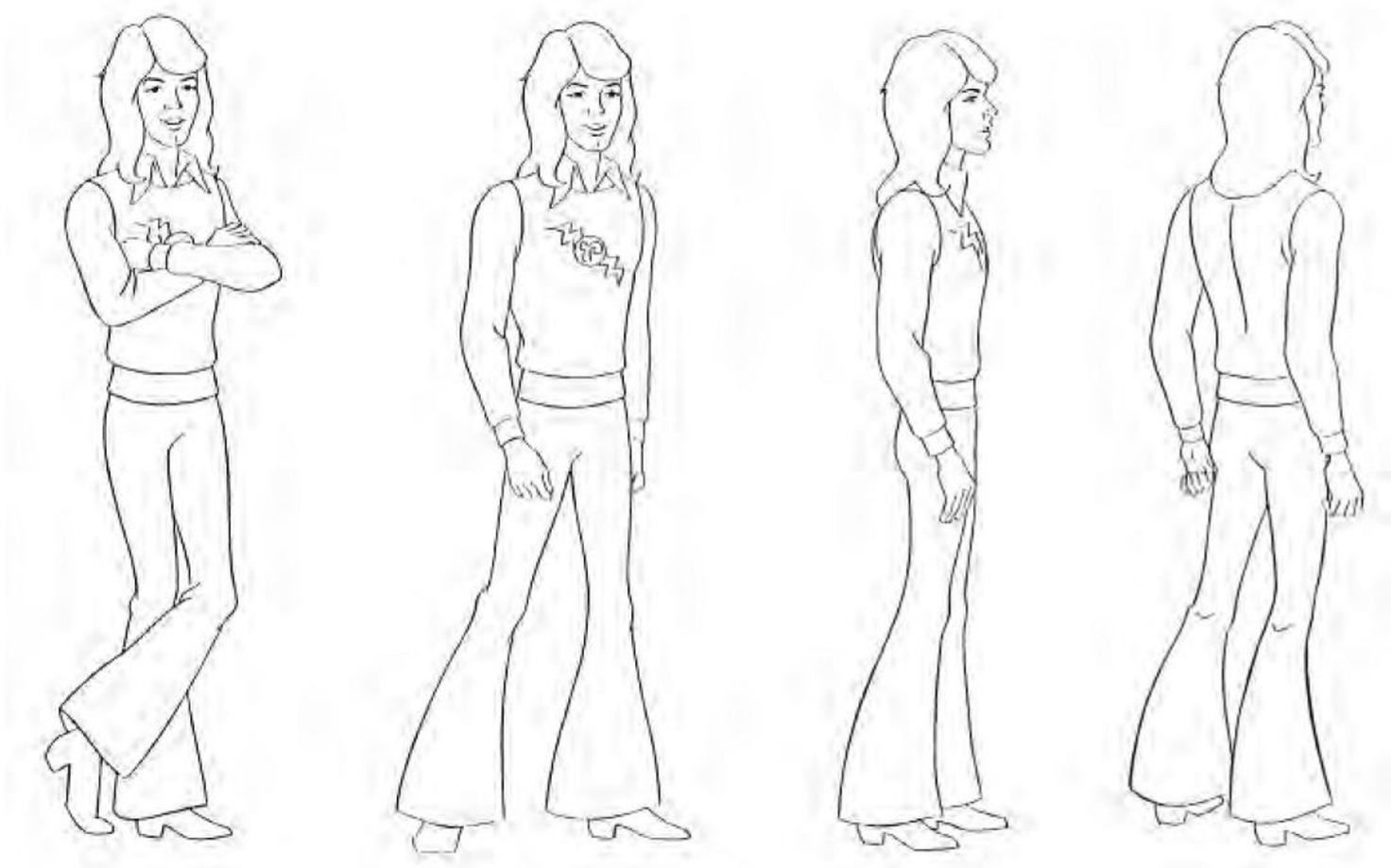


As big as *Star Trek* was—and would become—another new show we were producing in 1973 was *Mission: Magic!* As part of our pitches for 1973, I proposed to ABC that they let us do something that was indicative of how important a teacher could be to children. We wanted to do a teacher who had this wonderful rapport with this mixed group of kids who were in her class, and we had already designed a teacher for the second season of *The Brady Kids*, named Miss Tickle, who was perfect for this. We sold Michael Eisner at ABC the show, which would have the teacher and the kids of her "Adventurers' Club"—and her cat, Tut-Tut—going through a magical blackboard and having wonderful adventures.

Marc Richards had written a lot of these scripts when Eisner told us out of left field that he wanted us to use this Australian guy named Rick Springfield as a singer on the show. They had some kind of deal with promoting him. We finally solved the problem by putting him on the other side of the blackboard, and, whatever world the kids visited, he would be there telling them what's going on. It enabled him to do a song in every show, which is what they really wanted him to do.

Mission: Magic! was Rick Springfield's first network show after he came to America from Australia, though, he later did soap operas and got very famous. He was a charming guy. He was not difficult at all, and he was happy to do the thing. The music songs that he did, he had already written, and we mostly just had to figure out a way to work them in.

I think we got an additional cost to pay for him. His manager used to come to every voice recording session. Rick was treated as though he was a star who was being formed. The show did him no good at all. I mean, it didn't hurt him any, it just didn't help him



Above & Left: Presentation art and model sheet for *Mission: Magic!*

Opposite: Images from *Lassie's Rescue Rangers*

any. He could have not done it and been just as well off. It just wasn't the right vehicle for him.

We had a very multicultural cast of kids in this show, with some white kids, an African-American boy, and an Asian girl, as well as a chubby boy. What we were really trying to do was to be more representative of what the country's population was really like. The kids—Vinnie, Socks, Franklin, Carol, Kim, and Harv—were played by my son and daughter, Lane and Erika, and Howard Morris.

Lola Fisher played the voice of Miss Tickle. She was the wife of the manager of an actor we later worked with, Jackson Bostwick. She had been an opera singer and had a magnificent voice, and her husband asked us to try to see if we could do something with her voice. She did not sound like one of our regular voice actors, and we did give her one song in the series. If we hadn't been asked to put Rick Springfield into the series, she might have sung a lot more songs, but once he was there we used him. Lola was a nice lady, but, boy, her husband turned out to be not as easy to work with later.

Miss Tickle, by the way, as a character name, if you say it fast, it sounds like "mystical." A lot of people never got that pun in her name. She wasn't really inspired by Sabrina; she was inspired more by Mary Poppins. She was a charming, lovely, gracious, warm teacher that inspired the kids and told them wonderful stories and let them try to learn from them. The stories all had pro-social messages, which were becoming more standard for Filmation, making sure that kids watching learned something rather than just watched things move around.

One of the coolest things about *Mission: Magic!* was what happened when the kids went through the magic blackboard. Some of the designs of the other worlds allowed our designers to really have some fun. It was a way to give the show a different look and to make the show better. We even did some stuff that looked kind of like it belonged in a Peter Max psychedelic painting or in Heinz Edelmann's designs for the *Yellow Submarine* movie.

It was very trippy and more interesting visually, but it was not necessarily the best way to communicate stories. But with these stories, we tried to make the place look like they should feel for the story. That was a bit of a pain in the ass for us financially, as we had to do a lot of stuff without stock animation. The lead characters could be done with stock, but every week would have a completely different style of other characters and backgrounds. It made it a more expensive show to do, but it looked good.

There were a lot of things we tried to do in the series that made it educational and fun. With the cat Tut-Tut and Rick Springfield's owl Ptolemy, we were referencing Edward Lear's nonsensical poem "The Owl and the Pussycat" and an ancient Greek mathematician and astronomer. We had stories about the zodiac, various artists, and world landmarks.

Mission: Magic! was a fun series, but not as successful as we'd hoped it would be. We only did 16 of them. PBS later did a show with a very similar theme called *The Magic School Bus*, based on a series of books that started in 1985. And Rick Springfield did release an album of the songs in 1974, and it's still being sold today!

Our third new show of 1973, *Lassie's Rescue Rangers*, modified the pilot concept from the previous season, putting the Turners in charge of the Forest Force, which helped fight fires, stop drug smugglers and charity thieves, search for downed space capsules, and other such adventure-like themes. They also got a helicopter, Rescue 1, which either the dad or the mother flew. She was as adept as he was!

At times Lassie was outfitted with some equipment allowing her

to hear and broadcast sounds and images from the home base. It allowed us a bit more flexibility in not giving her an anthropomorphic "voice." Lassie's barks were provided by the dog playing Lassie at the time, whose real name was "Hey Hey." Kind of funny, given the catchphrase of Fat Albert… "Hey, hey, hey, it's Fat Albert!"

By the way, the *Lassie* movie and series may have been the first time that an animated series had a blind regular character. Ben Jr. was blind. We also featured a Native American character as a regular on the show.

We did have one episode with a Russian cosmonaut that was voiced by Les Kaluza because he had a thick Polish accent. He had the perfect Eastern European accent for it. He was Polish, and his wife was Czechoslovakian, I think. He was a good animator too.

We did 15 new episodes of *Lassie's Rescue Rangers*, which, when added to the split-in-two *Lassie* and the *Spirit of Thunder Mountain* film—which got some new wrap-around segments—meant we had 17 total episodes. The series did all right. You don't get big hits with those shows, but you don't get great losses either. We added one-minute public service announcements with Lassie and Jackie to the end of each episode, and pretty much started doing either that—or moral "tags"—on our shows regularly from then on.

Our final new show for 1973 was *My Favorite Martians*. Jack Chertok owned the original TV series this was based on, which aired from 1963–1966 on CBS. We got a great deal when we negotiated that series. Chertok got a big piece of each episode, but we got a budget of over $100,000 per episode! In negotiations the guy from CBS, Bob Daly, told us, "Lou, I'm going to pay Filmation more than we've ever paid anybody for Saturday morning." And then one day, I got a call from Bob, and he told me, "I have a problem. I've got to pay you more." I said, "Why? We made a deal. I'm not reneging on it." He said, "No, no, it has nothing to do with that. I told you that you would get more than anybody ever got at CBS. And I had to pay somebody more than I paid you, so I'm paying you $5,000 more to keep my word." I couldn't believe it! Daly was very ethical; he ended up being chairman of the board at Warner Bros. later and, eventually, bought the Los Angeles Dodgers! It was always a pleasure to do business with him because you knew that you were not going to get hurt.

So, we had *My Favorite Martians* to develop. The original show starred Ray Walston as a Martian who crash-landed on

Earth and Bill Bixby as the guy who "adopted" him as his "Uncle" Martin. When we were developing it, we needed to have it appeal more to kids, so we added Uncle Martin's nephew Andromeda, who was nicknamed "Andy." His Martian powers weren't as strong as Uncle Martin's because he only had one antenna instead of two. Andy had actually appeared in the live-action show in one third-season episode, and, had the live show continued back in 1966, he was supposed to have become a regular character.

We also gave Tim a niece named Katy and the Martians a pink alien sheepdog named Okie Dokie. Other characters were carry-overs from the live show, though we gave snoopy neighbor Security Officer Brennan an equally snoopy son, Brad, who had a pet chimpanzee named Chump.

For the voices, the original actors wanted too much money or something, so we went with new voices. Howard Morris was Tim and most of the adult male characters, and Jane Webb was most of the female characters. My son, Lane, got to do the voice of Andy, and he was really good in it.

But the biggest addition to the voice cast was an actor named Jonathan Harris. It was the first time he did a series for us. I met Jonathan at a New Year's party out in Malibu at Howie Morris' house, and he was a fascinating guy. Just listening to him talk, he was a great, great raconteur. You could talk to Jonathan for hours, and you just listened. He had a perfect British accent… which was a phony, but he was so identified with it that it's the way he talked all the time.

Now, if you know Jonathan from *Lost in Space*, where he played Dr. Zachary Smith, you may be surprised that he wasn't British. His real name was Jonathan Charasuchin, and he was a Russian-Jewish guy from the Bronx. He had been a pharmacist before he became an actor. I once asked him, "Where the hell did you learn to speak with that accent?" He said, "Louie, it cost me a fortune!" He had been in the old Yiddish theater groups and spoke perfect Yiddish. We were in a restaurant once, and Jonathan was telling me a joke in Yiddish. This guy came up and told us he was a rabbi, and he said, "I want you to know, Mr. Harris, I've never heard Yiddish spoken more beautifully," and he walked away. Jonathan had a lot of dignity, and he couldn't stand being taken advantage of. That would come into play later on in our relationship, but I'll tell you more about that in a few chapters.

We did 16 episodes of *My Favorite Martians* for CBS, but despite their investments in it, it wasn't a great hit. Sure, the live-action show was in never-ending syndicated reruns, but maybe those adventures were enough for the audience.

For the first time ever, Filmation got primetime airtime on all three networks in one evening, on Friday, September 7th. At 8:00 p.m., ABC aired their *Saturday Morning Sneak Peek* hosted by Jack Burns and Avery Schreiber, with guest stars Rick Springfield and Lassie, among others. Also at 8:00, CBS aired a repeat showing of Bill Cosby's *Weird Harold Special*. And at 8:30 p.m., NBC did the NBC *Starship Rescue* special, hosted by Randolph Mantooth and Kevin Tighe and the cast of *Sigmund and the Sea Monsters*, but, as one could glean from the title, the gem in the crown was a preview of *Star Trek*.

The new fall season started for everyone on September 8, 1973. Unfortunately, two of our shows were pitted against each other. ABC put *Lassie's Rescue Rangers* on at 10:00 a.m., while CBS put *My Favorite Martians* up against it in the same timeslot. *Star Trek* followed on NBC at 10:30 a.m., though it really should have been aired later. ABC booked us with the second season of *The Brady Kids* at 11:00 a.m. and *Mission: Magic!* at 11:30, and CBS scheduled *Everything's Archie* and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* for the noon hour. This meant that if you channel-hopped, you could watch Filmation shows from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. every Saturday!

The strangest part about the debut of *Star Trek* happened in Los Angeles. Although everywhere else in the country saw the pilot episode "Beyond the Farthest Star," L.A. audiences saw "Yesteryear." Why was that? Because George Takei was running for a city council seat, and FCC television rules said that, for any local candidate that got airtime, the station had to give equal airtime for other candidates! The second week, the show was preempted in L.A., after which, I believe, the series played as normal.

Now, what makes the debut episode of *Star Trek* important otherwise? Well, "Beyond the Farthest Star" was written by Samuel A. Peeples, who, as I mentioned before, had done the original aired *Trek* pilot—the one with Captain Kirk called "Where No Man Has Gone Before"—and he later wrote our *Space Academy* series. But more importantly the debut date, September 8, 1973, was exactly seven years to the day that the original *Star Trek* series had debuted in primetime. Talk about kismet!

Star Trek would soon be succeeding beyond our expectations, and we were about to not only finally get our feature film done, but also enter the live-action market and simultaneously re-enter the superhero market as well!

Opposite & This Page:
Presentation art and image from *My Favorite Martians*

1974–1975

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

DOROTHY, GILLIGAN, AND CAPTAIN MARVEL WALK INTO A BAR...

I know we just talked about *Star Trek*, and you're eager to learn more about our other projects in 1974, but I want to talk about how the series progressed once it got going. "Yesteryear," the second episode, was written by Dorothy Fontana. Not only was this exceptionally well written, but I understand that it established elements of the *Star Trek* mythos that were later used in the movies and the TV shows and books. Dorothy also wrote a scene that had NBC concerned, where Spock's pet animal died, but we had creative control, so they had to allow it. Dorothy handled it touchingly and provocatively. As it turns out, not only did the network not get any complaints, but when we submitted that episode to the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for the First Annual Emmy Awards for Daytime Programming, it scored a nomination in the category of "Outstanding Entertainment Childrens Series"! "Yesteryear" was also probably my favorite episode. It sent a message to kids to be positive in the face of death. I also think it was the first Saturday morning show that dealt meaningfully with the subject of death.

One of the most popular *Star Trek* episodes we did was "More Tribbles, More Troubles," written by David Gerrold, who had originally done the "Trouble with Tribbles" episode of the live show. It was a funny story, and *Trek* fans loved the Tribbles and the Klingons. Gerrold had originally written the script to be a third-season episode of the live show, but it never happened. The episode after that, "The Survivor," introduced M'Ress, a feline woman who sometimes replaced Uhura as the communications officer. Majel Barrett did M'Ress' voice with a purr. After that was "The Infinite Vulcan," written by Walter Koenig, who had played Chekov.

"The Magicks of Megas-tu" was another one that scared NBC. Originally the writer, Larry Brody, wanted the crew to encounter God, but, when they balked at that, it got changed to a satanic character named Lucien! There's also a scene where Sulu almost embraces a woman before she transforms into Lucien, who was a shirtless male demon; this was a long time before actor George Takei came out as gay, but in retrospect it's kind of funny. And speaking of taboos, one episode almost had a joke by the animators in it that I was reminded of by one of the writers at my 2005 appearance at Comic-Con International; in one scene Doctor McCoy had his back to the audience and urinated. The studio publicist and the network censor, Ted Cordes—who were watching footage on our Moviola—caught it, and it was thankfully cut.

Other episodes we did the first season brought back the shyster Harry Mudd, written by his creator, Stephen Kandel, while another one had that

Opposite:
Jackson Bostwick was the first Captain Marvel in *Shazam!*
Above:
Spock's pet sehlat dies and the pesky Tribbles return in *Star Trek*

exploding volcano I told Roddenberry he could have. We also featured more appearances of Klingons—including a female Klingon—and the lizard-like Gorn, as well as the introduction of Larry Niven's catlike Kzinti. He adapted a short story of his into an episode called "The Slaver Weapon," and the Kzinti were regular characters in his books. We pushed the network again, allowing characters to be killed on-screen, and we also didn't feature Captain Kirk at all! Our final show of the season, "The Jihad," not only had some really sexy dialogue and some aliens that have since been used in the *Star Trek* novels, but it also featured writer David Gerrold doing a guest voice. That episode aired in mid-January 1974, which leads us into beginning the rest of the year!

For those wondering, or who think *Star Trek* did poorly, it didn't. It had a huge following on Saturday morning, but the numbers for kids watching were not as strong. It was adults and older kids watching the show, and they didn't matter to the networks or advertisers on Saturday mornings as much. If it had been a hit with kids as well, it might have changed the very type of material done for Saturday morning, but it just didn't have the kid numbers.

One other point I'll make about *Star Trek* is about the music, which a lot of fans really like. We didn't use the main TV theme by Alexander Courage. The credited music was by Yvette Blais and Jeff Michael, but here's a secret about that; it was mostly done by Ray Ellis, with input from Norm Prescott. We wanted to get the same feel as the original series, and Ray was very good at that. He was an amazing man and a jazz legend. He used to be the musical director for Billy Holiday!

Ray did the background music for almost all of our shows, and we would reuse a lot of it from one show to another. The reasons he didn't always use his own name had to do mostly with royalties and various music publishing companies. Ray had multiple pseudonyms: Yvette Blais was Ray's wife's maiden name; "Spencer Raymond" was a mix of Ray's middle name—he was Raymond Spencer Ellis—and his first name; "George Blais" was Yvette's brother; "Marc Ellis" in any 1960s credits was for one of his sons; and "Mark Jeffrey" was a combination of his two son's names, Mark and Jeffrey. In the late 1970s, he did some composing work for us with his son, Marc Ellis.

As for the other name in the music, "Jeff Michael" was a mix of the first names of Norm Prescott's two sons. We controlled the publishing rights to the music under our company, and Norm got a cut on all of the music, which is pretty standard in music rights deals.

If you recall a few chapters ago, I told you about some of the *Brady Kids* actors who left the show. In 1973, Barry Williams and Christopher A. Knight filed a suit against ABC and Filmation, attempting to get damages and an injunction against the show being aired because their contracts were not properly approved due to them being underage performers. However, at the end of January 1974, Santa Monica Superior Court Judge Lawrence C. Rittenband ruled that although they could attempt to collect monetary damages, there would be no injunction.

On March 11th, Joe Taritero announced NBC's fall schedule for Saturdays, and, as expected, its highly rated series *Star Trek* was on the returning schedule with six new episodes. At the end of March, CBS announced that they would be bringing back *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* and also ordering new episodes of a patriotic incarnation of *Archie* called *U.S. of Archie*. Meanwhile, *My Favorite Martians* was shuttled to Sunday mornings, but CBS picked up Filmation's first live-action series, *Shazam!* A few days later, ABC announced their own fall schedule, replacing *Lassie's Rescue Rangers* with another live-action-to-animation spin-off, *The New Adventures of Gilligan*, although Lassie was scheduled for Sundays.

Announced on April 25th were two nominations for Filmation in the Daytime Emmy Awards, in the category of "Outstanding Entertainment Childrens Series": *Star Trek*—submitted was the "Yesteryear" episode—and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids.* The other nominees were *Captain Kangaroo* and PBS's *Zoom*. On May 28th

the First Annual Daytime Emmy Awards were held at Rockefeller Plaza in New York City, hosted by Peter Marshall. Despite our two nods, *Zoom* won in the category. Still, the nominations proved that our shows definitely had value for the viewers.

Meanwhile, after years of work and 1973's overseas showings, we were finally set to start rolling out *Journey Back to Oz*. We held distribution rights in the U.S. and Canada while Warner Bros. was taking care of the rest of the world. We made a deal with Max Youngstein to consult on the release of the film; he had been highly successful marketing an independent action movie called *Billie Jack*. We also pacted with A. Eicoff & Co. of Chicago to handle our marketing and advertising and Seymour Borde & Associates to distribute through 13 western states. The U.S. premiere was set for Wichita.

We developed a number of different commercials for *Journey Back to Oz*, including a 90-second spot—a length no feature film had ever been advertised with on television—in an attempt to reach different aspects of the market, from kids to parents. We even intended some commercials to just consist of interviews with viewers raving about the film. It was a marketing maneuver that got us some major ink in the trade papers, and a lot of studios watching to see if it was successful.

We did test screenings of *Journey* in Sacramento, Fresno, Portland, and Seattle beginning June 19th, with costumed characters visiting theatres and handing out free 45 rpm records, and coloring contests for kids in the newspapers. By August 7th the film had opened in a few other cities, including San Diego and Houston; in some places it was a success—Seattle and Sacramento were booked for an extra three weeks—while in others, it was less popular. We made a deal to open in 211 New England theatres and another 200 theaters nationwide the weekend of October 18th, then Dallas theatres in November.

Now, I've talked a bit on and off about *Journey Back to Oz*, but, since this year was its official premiere year, I'll go into a bit more background. To remind you, I had met Norm Prescott through Erv Kaplan in 1958 or 1959, and we started working on the *Oz* picture with him in 1962 when we were still at Paramount. He had started the animation in Yugoslavia, but it was too complex for their animators at the time. But he had the recording with this stellar cast, which I think was done in 1960.

It was the first animated feature that I know of that used a bunch of big names in order to draw attention to the picture. It featured Liza Minnelli as Dorothy, Mickey Rooney as the Scarecrow, Danny Thomas as the Tin Man, Milton Berle as the Cowardly Lion, opera star Rise Stevens as Glinda, original movie witch Margaret Hamilton as Aunt Em, and Paul Ford as Uncle Henry. Then we had a bunch of new characters like Pumpkinhead played by Paul Lynde, Woodenhead the horse played by Herschel Bernardi, Mombi the witch by Ethel Merman, and Mombi's crow played by Mel Blanc.

Although Danny Thomas was the Tin Man, we couldn't really use his voice. His sessions just weren't very good. We had to get Larry Storch to imitate him. Danny never knew that he had been replaced; he thought he did a great job. We replaced pretty much everything except the song that he sang. We also re-recorded the voice of the Scarecrow; it had originally been done by Peter Lawford, but we had Mickey Rooney come in to redo it. There are actually two soundtrack records that were released, and one of them has the Lawford songs on it, plus some of the songs that were changed or cut!

Anyhow, as you've followed along, you've seen that we often ran out of money, but the film was always being worked on when we had money. Little by little we'd get work done. I think the final budget was somewhere over $2,100,000.

Opposite:
Congratulatory ad for Filmation's first Emmy nominations

Above:
Images from *Star Trek*

When we finally opened, it got good reviews, but, even though we had hired all these guys to rent theaters and do promotions and advertising campaigns, it didn't end up doing as well as it should have. We learned a valuable lesson for films: don't distribute them yourselves. Later on we sold the television rights, and it did pretty well after that. We did one version where Bill Cosby was the live-action host and one where Milton Berle was the host.

We costumed Cosby as the wizard, and he was flying around in a balloon with a parrot that he talked to and two kids playing munchkins named Sprig and Twig. We built a basket, and then strings went up, and then we built a gondola. Then we built a tiny little balloon that we shot against the blue sky; we could zoom in and see Cosby standing there, and he'd talk, and we'd cut to what he was talking about, and it worked pretty well. We only contracted for two uses with Bill, so, later on when SFM Distribution got the syndication rights, we did the intros with Milton Berle. He did it almost as a favor, since somebody else had turned us down. The Cosby version aired first on ABC-TV on December 5, 1976. The SFM Holiday TV Network often aired it around either Christmas or Easter, and the years I know about include 1978, 1979, 1980, and 1983.

Let me return to 1974 though. *U.S. of Archie* was our attempt to go back to the fun of Archie's animated adventures, while providing an educational story for viewers as well. CBS particularly wanted a more pro-social message in the shows, and they were mindful that the nation was coming up on its bicentennial celebration in 1976. While they thought we could get a head start on it, I privately was afraid that the show wouldn't last until 1976.

It was, however, a good show, and one of my favorites of our *Archie* run. The Archie gang and their ancestors would interact with famous historical people, such as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington Carver, Paul Revere, Lewis and Clark, Thomas Paine, Alexander Graham Bell, Susan B. Anthony, and Harriet Tubman. What a wonderful way to learn history! It was historical, it was worthwhile, and it was really a good, all-around wholesome, funny show. You could pass a test the next day about history with the Archies. And we did it with comedy and music. It was fun to work on too.

We added a member to the Archie cast this season, Chuck Clayton, who was African-American. We didn't create him—he had been in the comics off and on since August 1971—but this was a good time for us to introduce him to the Riverdale gang. I felt that he should have been in there a long time before that.

We did have songs on the series, but they were produced by Jackie Mills, since Don Kirshner and Ron Dante were now working for Hanna-Barbera. By then, *Archie* stuff was being licensed all over the place too, but we didn't have much to do with it. Even though Hot Dog was kind of our character, Archie Comics owned him, and they could do whatever they wanted.

This ended up being basically our final *Archie* show for CBS, although we did some stuff for syndication in 1976 and an NBC revival in 1977. *Archie* had a great run. We had eight different shows come out of the one series, and not many shows can say that. *Super Friends* might be one of the few. But Archie was a unique show, and a lot of people tried to do the same sort of thing, using the same kind of characters, but they were never *Archie*.

The New Adventures of Gilligan was another show we licensed from Sherwood Schwartz because Gilligan's Island was a huge hit in syndication. We had first approached him about doing it in 1971, but he was still trying to sell a live revival of the show and passed. He passed again in 1972 and 1973. But, by 1974, with the networks all turning him down for primetime despite the syndication success, Sherwood finally agreed, as long as he could have lots of creative input. We welcomed him with open arms.

This new show was more of a straight-up version of the *Gilligan's Island* sitcom than *The Brady Kids* had been from its parent show. Our show had all of the same characters as the TV show, plus a pet monkey named Snubby. Almost all of the actors from the live-action series came back to do voices, except for the two girls. Dawn Wells, who was Mary Ann, was busy doing theatre in the Midwest at the time, and Tina Louise didn't want to be associated with Ginger anymore, so we even had to redo the character to look different. Jane Webb did both of the voices, but she used her maiden name in the credits—Jane Edwards—so it would look like we had two actresses.

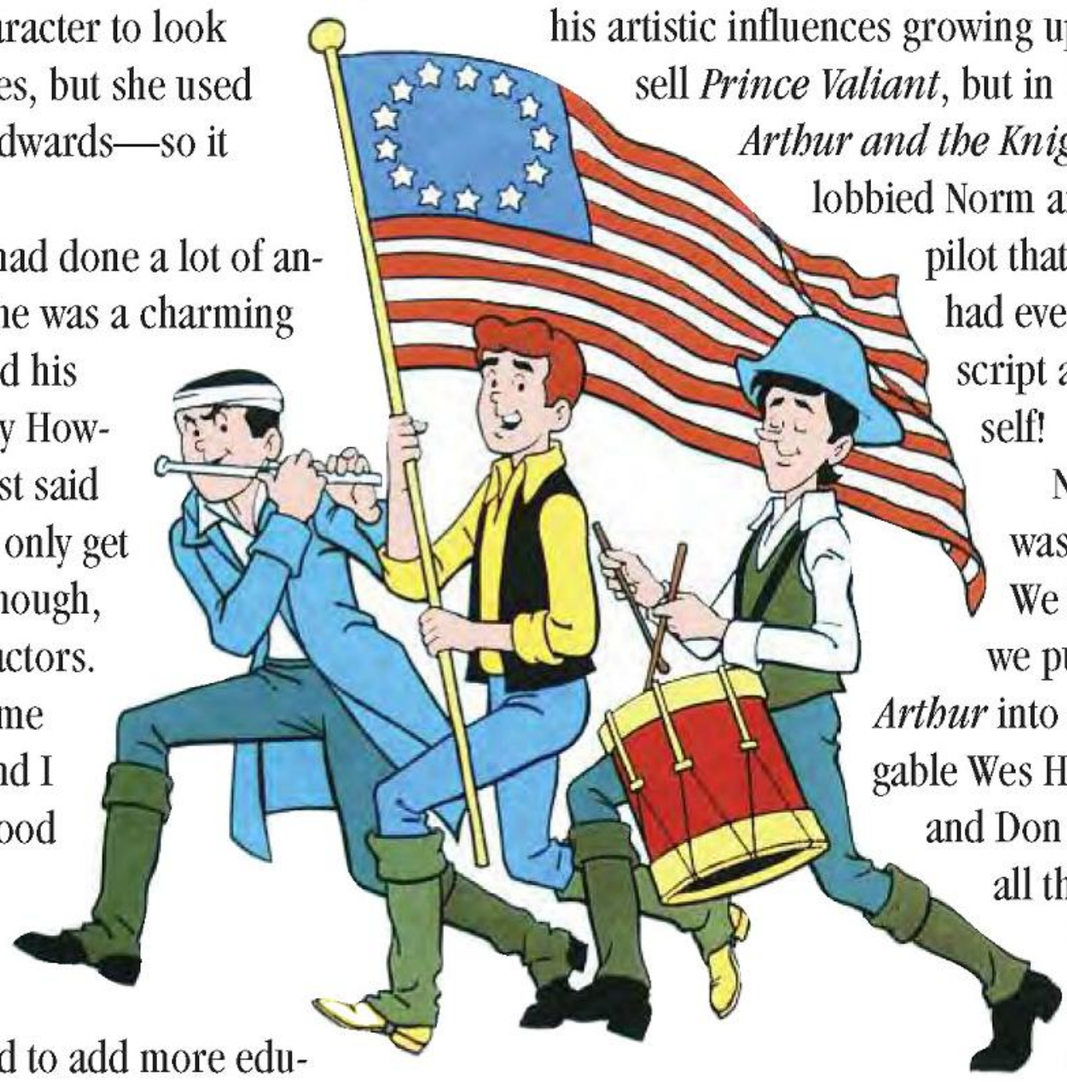
Jim Backus, who played Mr. Howell, had done a lot of animation before. He was Mr. Magoo, and he was a charming easy guy to work with. The gal who played his wife, Natalie Schafer, really was like Lovey Howell. She didn't do any acting at all. She just said it the way she normally talked. We could only get one voice out of the live-action people, though, instead of multiple voices like the voice actors.

We also had the cast sing the new theme song, which was written by Sherwood. And I played the monkey… as usual. I was a good monkey talker. Ook ook!

In addition to original material, we adapted some of the early *Gilligan's Island* scripts for the show, though we tried to add more educational content into the stories. We were really trying to make the stories have some meaning and some relationship with what kids were living for. It made for better stories because they had some meat and potatoes in them. It made parents feel that their kids weren't wasting their time, and the kids liked it because they could talk about it. Dr. Nathan Cohen, one of Gordon Berry's associates at UCLA, did most of our consulting on this show.

We also added one-minute educational tags at the end of the show. This was because of not just our desire to have more educational content, but also because there was a mandatory reduction in advertising time for network children's shows, so the shows were a bit longer. For *Gilligan* and *Shazam!* we added the educational tags—or "morals" as the fans call them—while on *Fat Albert* we had longer songs, and on *U.S. of Archie*, which was already mostly an educational show, we did scenes from the next week's show and made the song segments longer.

Let me go back to *King Authur* for a bit. We had some extra money in our company coffers and some production down time in 1974, and the combination of these and one person's passion finally created this unique little side project in our oeuvre. Our creative director, Don Christensen, was known around the studio for not being very high on superheroes. He could execute them as well as anyone on staff, mind you, but his preferences ran toward the high adventure type of hero, both in heroic fiction and in the comics. Many of those heroes we happened to produce during Don's tenure here—Lone Ranger, Tarzan, Zorro, and Flash Gordon, for example—fit his criteria, but one of Don's all-time favorite comics was the legendary *Prince Valiant*, which he cited as one of his artistic influences growing up. We later did license and try to sell *Prince Valiant*, but in 1974 Don resurrected our *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* idea and lobbied Norm and I to do an actual presentation pilot that we would own and could sell. He had even had Marc Richards write the script and had done the storyboard himself!



Norm and I thought that if Don was that enthusiastic, what the hell? We had the time and some money, so we put his eleven-minute pilot of *King Arthur* into production. Don and the indefatigable Wes Herschensohn laid the picture out, and Don decided to use "hard shadows" all through the production, à la Doug Wildey's 1960s *Jonny Quest* series. The voices were supplied by our adventure all-stars—Marvin Miller, Ted Knight, and Jane Webb; that latter talented actress not only played the female characters, but also Arthur's teen male sidekick! We never were able to sell the pilot as a series, but we were able to utilize it much later as a segment of a *Groovie Goolies* syndicated package, combined with the live-action Goolies segment from *Daffy Duck and Porky Pig Meet the Groovie Goolies* and some new animation wraparounds. It was also released in England on a *Blackstar* videotape in 1982 by Video Gems.

In mid-June we began converting 10,000 square feet of our facilities into live-action studio space. We also cast Les Tremayne and Michael Gray for *Shazam!* Warner Bros., who owned international distribution rights to the series-to-be was already selling it overseas before it ever debuted.

The fans tell me that *Shazam!* is one of their favorite of the Filmation shows, and I'm glad that memories of it still survive, but, boy, was it a tough show to get going. It was our first live-action show for Saturday morning that was a go. As you can tell from some of our other attempts I've written about, it

Opposite:
Images and art from *Journey Back to Oz*

Above: (top to bottom)
Image from *U.S. of Archie*

Image from *King Arthur*

was apparent to us, sooner or later, that other forms of programming for children would be viable. With animation it was one form, one way, one medium. But sooner or later there'd have to be live shows. We just didn't expect it to be a superhero show!

We had our previous relationship with National/DC, but they had now licensed Superman and many of their other superheroes over to Hanna-Barbera for *Super Friends*. So we licensed the animation rights to Captain Marvel and planned to do it animated. He was the closest thing to Superman that they had available, but for legal reasons we couldn't call the show *Captain Marvel*—although we could call the character that—so it had to be titled *Shazam!*

The funny thing about renaming the show is that the exclamation of the word "Shazam!" was already popular before our series, and not directly from the comic books. Jim Nabors had used it all the time on *The Andy Griffith Show* and its spin-off, *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* It was already part of people's lexicon. So, after I explained to CBS why we couldn't call the show "Captain Marvel," they were fine with *Shazam!*

So, we did a presentation, and I showed it to NBC, ABC, and CBS. At CBS, Fred Silverman said, "Yeah, I like that. That's a good idea." I was ready to shut the case up, and he said, "Oh, Lou, I want to do it live. Can you do it live?" I said, "Of course we can do it live." Do you sense a pattern with me saying, "Of course we can," when I really had no idea how to do it?

So, I went back and sat down with Norm and told him we had sold *Shazam!* as a live show, and we both looked at each other and said, "Yeah, that's gonna be great." And we groaned. When we developed the show, we had to develop something that we could afford to do on Saturday morning, so we decided to do it all on location. We came up with the idea of Billy Batson and Mentor travelling around in a motor home. It worked because, with them travelling, we didn't have to use stages for much of anything, and we could shoot it all outdoors. We rarely saw much of the interior of the vehicle even.

I think we made a deal with the Open Road company for that big motor home. I don't think we bought it at first. But they got a credit. When they filmed it for close-ups, our second grip, a huge guy named John Carroll, would bounce it up and down with a stick to make it look like it was moving.

We decided to have Mentor as the older character rather than the wizard Shazam. For a TV show, it just didn't make sense to have all the stuff from the comics with the wizard and the radio station, so we just got rid of most of it. But the hero was still Captain Marvel, and he had the powers and the costume and the Elders, and even Billy had his costume and mentioned the radio station once or twice. We never showed the origin story, so, if fans wanted to imagine there was a wizard, they could! Later, in fact, in DC's *Shazam!* #26 in November-December, 1976, the comic world's Uncle Dudley grew a moustache and began wearing turtlenecks and safari jackets like Les Tremayne, and he and Billy embarked on a national tour for WHIZ in a motor home! Carmine Infantino worked as our advisor from National/DC, and later Sol Harrison took over.

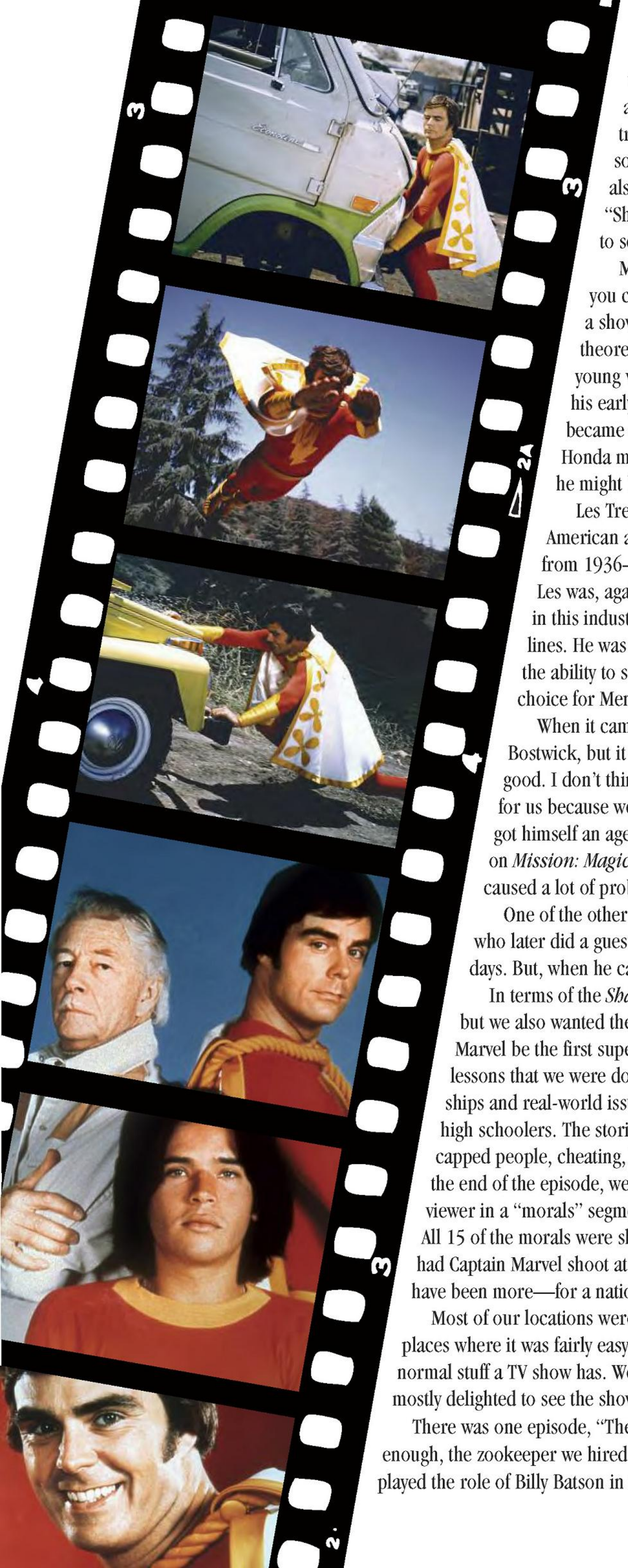
Speaking of the costume, it was a direct ringer for the comic book costume. Everything that wasn't a red leotard was made of silk, and it cost about $750, including $250 for the yellow boots. Contrast that to the superhero costumes of today, which often look nothing like their comic book counterparts and cost thousands of dollars.

The Elders who gave Billy his powers were Solomon, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles, and Mercury, and they were animated—albeit mostly only their mouths moved—with some optical effects on top. I did most of the voices for the Elders, and Norm did a couple, like Solomon. I remember that Marc Richards, one of the writers, did a voice or two as well. By the way, if you're wondering why the characters were called "Elders" instead of "Gods"—despite some of them being mythological gods—you can blame the network's Standards and Practices.

The transformation sequence with Michael Gray turning from Billy into Captain Marvel was done by Joe Westheimer's people at The Westheimer Company, for whom we had done movie titles. We did the stock material shots of Billy in front of a blue screen—it

Above:
Presentation art for *Shazam!*

Opposite:
The cast of *Shazam!* included Les Tremayne as Mentor, Jackson Bostwick as Captain Marvel, and Michael Gray as Billy Batson



wasn't a green screen back then—and they put together the matte and animated opticals of him changing with the lightning bolt. The transformation was exciting and well rendered, and would inspire some of our later animated hero transformations at Filmation. We also had some effects by Sonex International. The shots of Billy saying "Shazam!" were all done live as I recall, with some smoke coming in to sell the gag.

Michael Gray had been on the edge of stardom a couple times, and you could kid him about being a has-been at the age of 20. He had done a show in Hawaii called *The Little People*, and he was well on his way, theoretically, to becoming a big star, except it hadn't worked. He was very young when he did this, but not as young as he was portraying. He was in his early 20s probably. He was the first person to be cast, and he and Les became really close friends. Michael was also quite a prankster and had a Honda motorbike on set until we took it away because we were afraid that he might be a bit reckless on break.

Les Tremayne, who played Mentor, was born in England, but he was an American actor. He did the popular radio show *The First Nighter Program* from 1936–1942 with Olan Soule, who had been the voice of Batman for us. Les was, again, one of those wonderful souls that you find every once in a while in this industry, who was easy to work with, always on time, and never blew his lines. He was a true professional and a very, very nice human being. Les also had the ability to seem fatherly and godlike in a way and that was why he was a good choice for Mentor.

When it came time to cast Captain Marvel, I don't know how we got Jackson Bostwick, but it was probably because his agents sent us pictures and he looked good. I don't think he'd done anything major on television really, and that was good for us because we didn't want anybody that anybody could recognize. Jackson later got himself an agent or manager whose wife was Lola Fisher, who had been a voice on *Mission: Magic!* for us. In my opinion the agent really hurt Jackson's career and caused a lot of problems. But we'll get to that more in the next chapter.

One of the other guys who was up for the role of Captain Marvel was Mark Harmon, who later did a guest spot for us on *Uncle Croc's Block*. He's pretty big on TV these days. But, when he came in for *Shazam!*, he had just gotten out of school.

In terms of the *Shazam!* stories, we wanted them to have super-adventure elements, but we also wanted them to have educational stuff in them. We wanted to have Captain Marvel be the first superhero who would teach young people essentially the same kind of lessons that we were doing in *Fat Albert*, with a little bit more of interpersonal relationships and real-world issues. They were targeted to a slightly older viewer—junior high and high schoolers. The stories dealt with drug abuse, prejudice, peer pressure, stealing, handicapped people, cheating, lying, and all sorts of moral issues that kids grappled with. And, at the end of the episode, we'd have Captain Marvel or Billy come out and talk directly to the viewer in a "morals" segment that reinforced whatever the message of the episode had been. All 15 of the morals were shot out at Franklin Canyon Reservoir in Bel-Air, in one day. We also had Captain Marvel shoot at least one public service announcement (PSA)—and there may have been more—for a national reading program.

Most of our locations were out in the desert someplace or at Paramount ranch. They were places where it was fairly easy to keep people away. We did some stuff in the city, and we had the normal stuff a TV show has. We had a couple of policemen on set for security, but people were mostly delighted to see the show filming.

There was one episode, "The Braggart," that we filmed at the Los Angeles Zoo. Surprisingly enough, the zookeeper we hired who worked there was Frank Coghlan Jr. It turned out that he had played the role of Billy Batson in the twelve-chapter *Adventures of Captain Marvel* serial from

Republic Pictures back in 1941! He was working as a PR guy at the zoo, and, when Art Nadel went there to set things up, Coghlan told him; we wrote a part especially for him.

We shot two *Shazam!* episodes a week, with a couple of days rehearsal time, and just barreled through them. Robert Chenault was our first producer, and he tried to have the locations at the end of one episode be in the same spot that the next episode would start; it wasn't to give the show a bit of continuity, but instead to save on location fees. Later on, when Chenault turned out to not be a very nice man, he was justly fired at the end of season one. Art Nadel and Dick Rosenbloom were put in charge. Dick was a rough and tough, knowledgeable, glorious man, but he had never done anything quite like the way we were doing it.

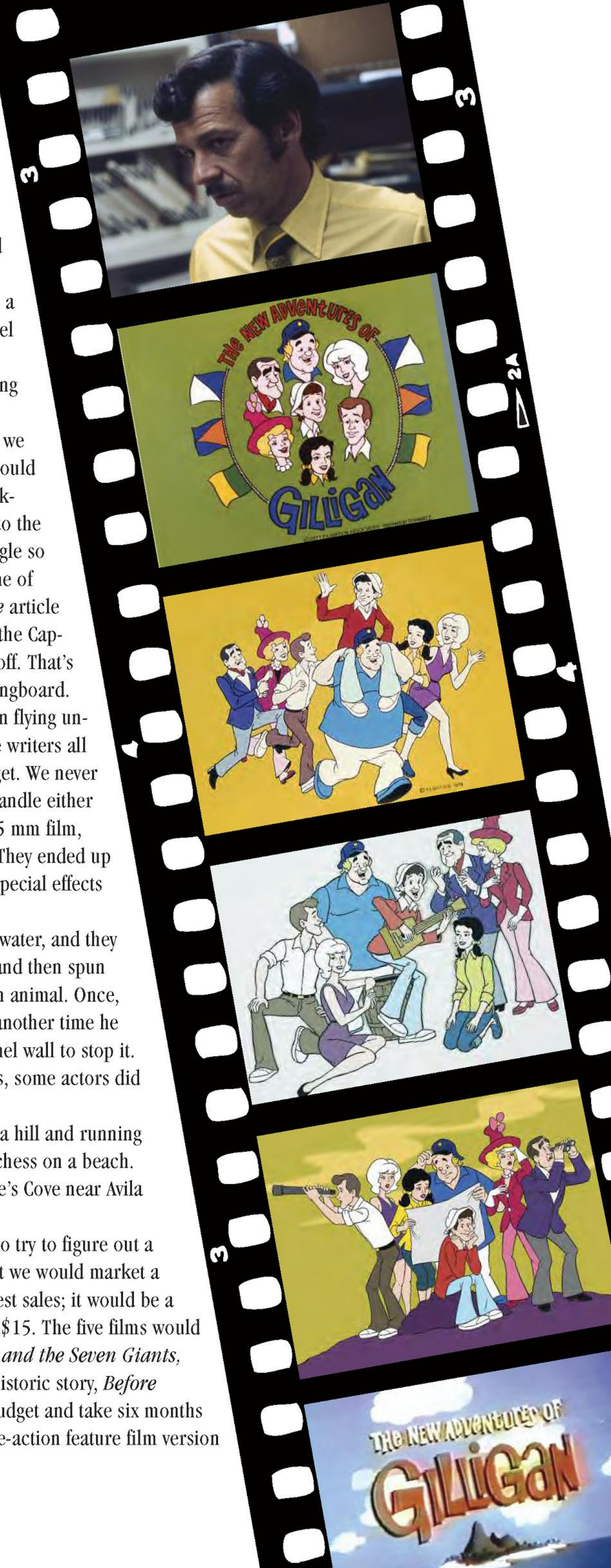
The flying sequences were done in a variety of ways. Sometimes we would have Captain Marvel hoisted up on ropes or wires, and we would shoot around them. Those scenes were done on a stage, with a background. We also had him lying on a padded diving board attached to the top of a camera car, and we shot him stretched out and from an angle so you couldn't see the board. There are some photos of us filming one of those sequences on Ventura Boulevard that appeared in a *TV Guide* article about the show; our first big article in that popular magazine! And the Captain would jump off ladders to land and use a springboard to take off. That's why he did that little hop before he took off; he was hitting the springboard.

You'll notice too that he never carried anybody or anything when flying unless it was a close-up. The stunts were dictated by our budgets. The writers all knew what we could and couldn't shoot, so they wrote for the budget. We never had the Earth crash and stuff like that. We did stuff that we could handle either on-set or with the use of Joe Westheimer doing opticals. We shot 35 mm film, not 16 mm, so it was easier to handle, and we got a better quality. They ended up on 16 mm for prints, but the network got 35 mm. It's tough to do special effects on 16 mm. You could do them, but it would look like dirt.

We did one stunt with Captain Marvel where he was drilling for water, and they hung Jackson Bostwick upside-down off a piano wire and a crane and then spun him around. Other times he would lift up heavy things or wrestle an animal. Once, he was towed behind a boat to simulate swimming super-fast, and another time he was on the top of the motor home and grabbed the mouth of a tunnel wall to stop it. Another time he hung off of a helicopter runner; back in those days, some actors did their own stunts even if it seemed a bit foolhardy.

Michael Gray got to do a few stunts too, including rolling down a hill and running from a bear in one episode, and in another he and Mentor played chess on a beach. What they didn't know—at first—is that it was a nude beach: Pirate's Cove near Avila Beach!

Meanwhile, back at our Sherman Way offices, Norm continued to try to figure out a new way to market *Journey* and on September 16th announced that we would market a "Children's Film of the Month Club" for November and Christmas test sales; it would be a booklet of movie tickets to see five of six new Filmation movies for $15. The five films would be: *Journey Back to Oz, Knights of the Round Table, Snow White and the Seven Giants, Noah's Ark, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Jack London's prehistoric story, *Before Adam*. Norm told the press that each pic would have a $500,000 budget and take six months to complete, and also said that we were working on a $750,000 live-action feature film version of *Fat Albert* for May 1975.



Norm was also working deals to revive the *Gulliver's Travels* live-and-animated project as a TV film and was discussing a science-fiction project with Harlan Ellison. He also made a deal to develop a live-action show with Phyllis Diller and an animated series for the comic strip *Smokey Stover*. And we were trying to market our previous live-action patriotic shows anew for the nation's bicentennial. There was even talk of melding together segments of our various *Archie* series and episodes of *Shazam!* into feature-length films to release to theatres for weekend matinees. If you haven't figured it out by now, Norm worked very hard spinning projects to see what we could make work; some, like *Knights of the Round Table*, were repurposed TV pilots, while others never got past concept art or "deal talks" stage. If there hadn't been changes at TelePrompTer, and *Journey Back to Oz* had done better, it all might have actually happened.

The new season officially started on September 7th, and we were on all three networks again. *The New Adventures of Gilligan* debuted at 9:30 a.m. on ABC, and *Shazam!* flew onto CBS at 10:30. *Star Trek* had its second season on NBC at 11:30, The *U.S. of Archie* followed at noon on CBS, and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* followed at 12:30. And although there were no new episodes, *My Favorite Martians* moved to Sunday at 9:00 a.m. on CBS, and *Lassie's Rescue Rangers* trotted over to 10:30 on Sundays on ABC.

The ratings on our shows were going great as well. Although *Land of the Lost* was the top-rated show with a 10.4 ratings average, *Shazam!* was in second place with 8.6, *Gilligan* followed in third place with 8.1, and *Fat Albert* was seventh place with 7.2.

In early September, animation union IATSE Local 839 representative Lou Appet fired a front-page complaint about animation producers for sending work overseas and thus depriving American animators of work. He singled out Hanna-Barbera Productions as the lead offender, while noting that Filmation kept all of its work in America.

We had completed work on *Oliver Twist*, and I think even on *Treasure Island*, from our deals with Warner. And then Warner changed their mind and decided to drop the "animated classics" line. I think they did one test screening for *Oliver Twist,* which didn't go well, and they just dropped it all. And we were then out $50,000 per picture because we put in more than they give us to do them.

On December 16th we rented out the Encino Theatre as a Christmas present for our employees and their families, and showed them *Journey Back to Oz*. Then on December 23rd CBS rebroadcast *Aesop's Fables* in primetime, garnering a 13.3 rating and a 23 share. So, we wrapped up the year with success on the TV, with *Journey* heading to recoup all of its years of costs, and good will from the union, the networks, and even the TV watchdog groups who loved our programs for their educational and moral messages.

So, why wasn't I jumping for joy?

One of the most crushing things that happened to me since Filmation began happened in 1974: Hal Sutherland left the company. When TelePrompTer bought the company in 1969, they gave five-year employment contracts to Norm and Hal and I, with options past that to continue in executive capacity if we chose to. Hal wanted to pull away from the city, and even by 1972 he was wanting to leave to begin painting full-time. So, by 1974 he had fulfilled all of his commitments to us and his contract, and he had put into place a fantastic system that directors and animators could follow. And then he left. He moved his family—his wife, Fay; and his kids, Lisa, Jay, and Keith—up to Bothell, Washington, and got a ranch. And he became a rancher and painter full-time; he did beautiful paintings of the Old West and cowboys and Native Americans and such.

But Hal had been with me, literally, from day one of Filmation. It was tough to see him go. We stayed in touch, and he came down to visit a lot. And in future days, whenever I got in trouble at Filmation—and it was real trouble—he would come back. But he did it strictly as an employee. He got paid as handsomely as he deserved and maybe even more. But he came back down to be a friend, not a Hollywood animation guy.

But Norm and I pressed on without Hal… right into a year that saw both our greatest honor and our worst failures….

Opposite:
Hal Sutherland and images from *The New Adventures of Gilligan*

Above:
Newspaper ad for Filmation's 1974 TV projects

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

1975–1976

SATIRE, LAWSUITS, LEGS, AND BALLS

As with the previous chapter, I'll start this one talking about *Star Trek*. That isn't because I know there are hardcore Trekkies reading this book—though I'm certain there are—but because *Star Trek* figured into our triumph for the year, and a tragedy that would haunt me for nearly three decades.

With Hal gone from the company, Bill Reed stepped in to direct the final six *Star Trek* episodes for season two, a small order that should have signaled the end was near. Dorothy Fontana had less of a direct part in the series as well, but the quality didn't suffer. Howard Weinstein wrote the first episode of the season, "The Pirates of Orion," and he was only 19 at the time, making him the youngest *Star Trek* TV writer ever. He had submitted the script for the first season, but it got caught in a mail loop when Dorothy left, so he resubmitted it and sold it.

David Gerrold wrote another script, "BEM," and in it he mentioned what James Kirk's middle initial stood for: T was for Tiberius. That became a part of *Star Trek* lore thereafter, yet another example of our show being accepted into "canon" even though some fans argued it wasn't. That episode was originally going to be part of season one, but got delayed. The next episode, "The Practical Joker," introduced the first holodeck aboard the *Enterprise*, marking another way we inspired later stories.

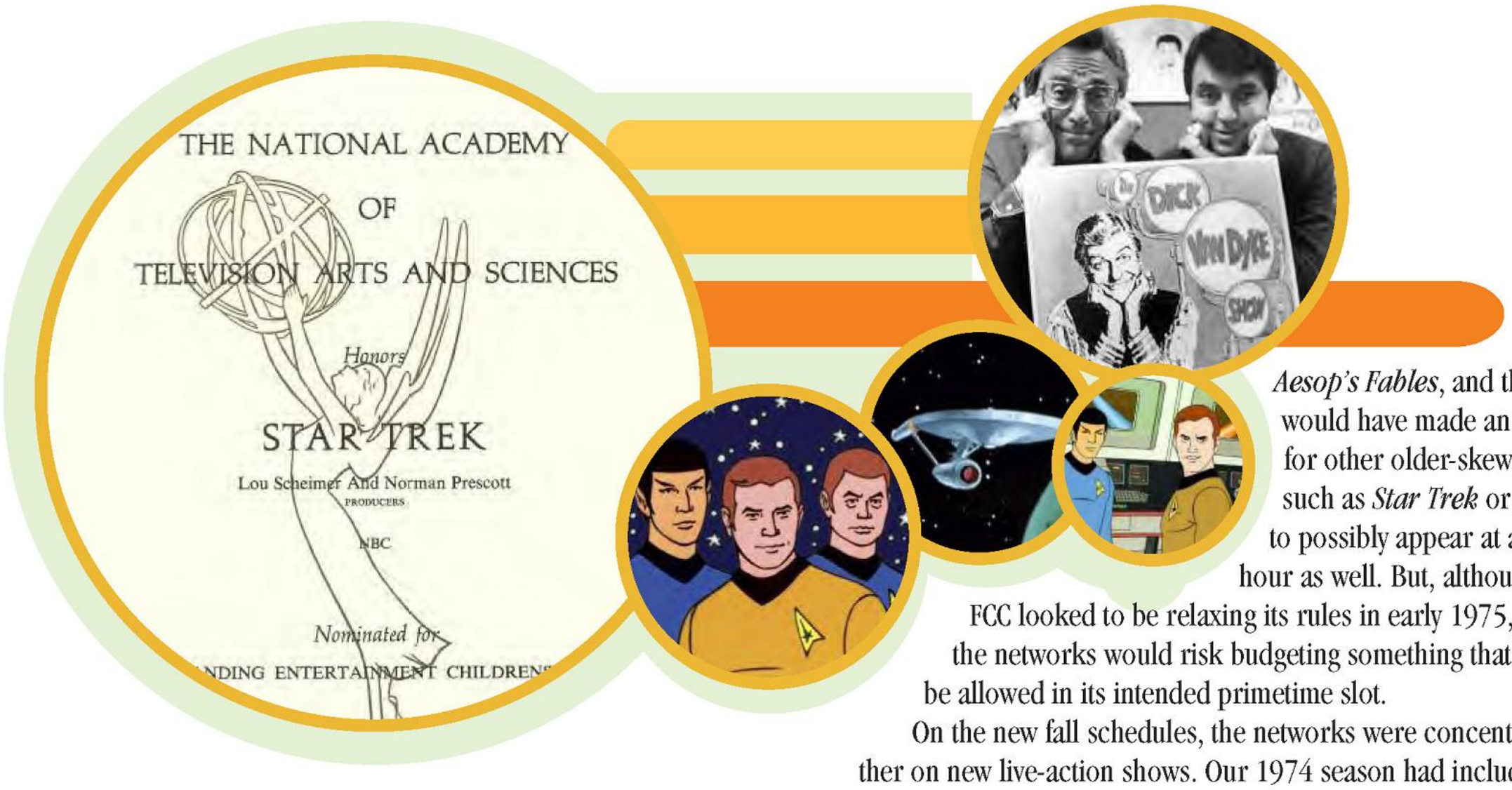
The next-to-last episode was "How Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth," written by Russell Bates and David Wise. Russell was a Native American, so it was fitting that this story had Native American elements in it. This episode would become very important to Filmation in early 1975. The final episode of the series, "The Counter-Clock Incident," was written by Fred Bronson, who was NBC's publicist; he was afraid it would look improper to get a credit though, so he used the pseudonym "John Culver." Bronson established here that the *Enterprise's* first captain was Robert April, another fact that stuck in canon.

And that, unfortunately, wrapped up our production of new *Star Trek* episodes. We did some really good stories, and the press was unlike anything else that had ever been done on Saturday morning. The show could have continued if NBC had played their cards right. If it aired today with the same ratings as it had back then, it would be considered a whopping hit. I always hoped it would air at night. It was not a child's program; it was a young adult program.

Gene Roddenberry became a good friend, and we stayed in touch with each other. Although some sources have said that he disavowed the show, we talked with him about doing it again—possibly a version of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* that would have been animated. Then he went on a trip with his attorney, and he went back to one of the islands, and shortly after that he died. It's been amazing that the show has kept its impact up all these years, with websites and even a guy who is animating new episodes in

Opposite:
JoAnna Cameron in *The Secrets of Isis*

Above:
Images from *Star Trek* episodes "BEM" and "How Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth



the Filmation style!

In early March we announced we were continuing our plans to do feature-length theatrical recuts of our TV fare, including a *Shazam!* film and an Archie weekend festival. Needless to say, those plans didn't quite come through.

In early April Ohio State University's Institute for Education by Radio-Television gave a special award to *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. The award said, in part, "A popular and proven format previously reserved for childhood escapism is now successfully adapted for purposeful and yet informal instruction. The goals of the program are effectively reinforced through the integration of Mr. Cosby's live performance in combination with the antics of Fat Albert and the other cartoon characters… a significant and socially useful animated Saturday morning children's program." The press also gave Bill Cosby significant glory with the *New Jersey Courier-Post* noting the he and the series were "inherently delightful, graceful and dignified as his approach to the issues and children he speaks to." Independent studies were also showing that the *Fat Albert* characters were not being perceived as black, and children were indifferent to the racial makeup of the characters instead of noting that they were different from them.

We were being noticed outside of Saturday morning as well. We were invited to show an episode of *Fat Albert*, "The Runt," at the 13th International Television Festival at Monte Carlo. The American Cartoon Festival in late April at the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., also asked us to submit episodes of *Fat Albert, Gilligan, Star Trek,* and the film *Journey Back to Oz*. And scripts for *Fat Albert* were being provided to educators as part of a reading program for minority youth that utilized video presentations and scripts that youngsters could read along with.

That good attention for Filmation didn't help in the primetime area though; in 1974 a Federal court ruling and a resulting FCC decision essentially killed ABC and CBS plans to expand programming into the 7:00–8:00 p.m. Saturday evening slot. CBS was planning to include four special *Fat Albert* episodes as well as another repeat of *Aesop's Fables*, and the move would have made an opening for other older-skewing series, such as *Star Trek* or *Shazam!*, to possibly appear at a later hour as well. But, although the FCC looked to be relaxing its rules in early 1975, none of the networks would risk budgeting something that might not be allowed in its intended primetime slot.

On the new fall schedules, the networks were concentrating further on new live-action shows. Our 1974 season had included 55 half-hours, of which only 15 were live. But, for the 1975 season, even though we had 96 half-hours, 53 of them were live. That's 55% of our output that was live, and, given that only 32 half-hours of animated would be new instead of reruns, it was a blow. We weren't the only animation studio feeling the pinch, as Fred Calvert Productions was forced to downsize and Hanna-Barbera went from seven new shows to two, losing work to Krofft Productions and others. IATSE Local 839 was alarmed and vowed to find ways to gain more work for the animators.

Our live shows included more *Shazam!*, a new companion show called *The Secrets of Isis*, and a new comedy called *Ghost Busters* for CBS, plus live segments of *Uncle Croc's Block* on ABC. Animated shows included the new *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty* on NBC, animated segments of *Uncle Croc's Block*, and more episodes of *The New Adventures of Gilligan* for ABC and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* on CBS. But, as I told the *Hollywood Reporter* in June, "There have been a lot of pressures on animation. The cost is way up and it is almost possible to do live action for the same amount. There has also been pressure against animated shows for being too violent. Frankly, we never received one complaint about any of our shows… In our animation shows, we are reflecting the trend away from role-playing."

I also told them that, due to the cutback in the amount of commercials, the networks were charging more for the spots, but not raising the amount of money given to a studio. "A live-action show costs in the middle-80s to do, and they give us $75,000 or $80,000. What you do is shoot for that gold ring and hope that you get a lot of episodes done so you can syndicate them." Still, we held out hope that the FCC would change some of their rules, and our live-action shows such as *Ghost Busters* could transition to 7:30 p.m. primetime fare.

The primetime element was a particular carrot to dangle over network heads,

Above: (l to r)
Star Trek's Emmy nomination and promotional art

Norm Prescott and Lou do a presentation for an animated version of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*

as a significant number of famous comedy actors were doing Saturday morning shows, including Jim Nabors, Bob Denver, and Ruth Buzzi. And we cast Larry Storch and Forrest Tucker, the two stars of the 1964 sitcom *F Troop*, for *Ghost Busters*, as well as a range of comedians including Charles Nelson Reilly for *Uncle Croc's Block*. In a story syndicated nationally by the Associated Press, Norm Prescott pointed out that actors who did kids' shows were reaching an audience of 35 million kids who would grow up knowing who they were. Another benefit for the actors was the multitudes of personal appearance fees that actors embarked on during the times their shows weren't filming. In those days before Comic-Con made it big, car shows, boat shows, fairs, circuses, and shopping center openings meant big bucks for TV actors who didn't mind meeting their audiences.

We started developing a series with Dick Van Dyke, and another one with Buddy Hackett called *The Assistant Wizard of Oz*. And, on a completely different front, we were prepping for our first Filmation-produced record album… with Ted Knight! Our parent company TelePrompTer didn't mind; they also owned the profitable Muzak company. But Ted's album was hardly the stuff for elevator listening. More on that later in this chapter.

We submitted the *Star Trek* episode "How Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth" to the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and it became the second *Trek* episode to get an Emmy nomination! It didn't seem right in some ways to get a Daytime Emmy nomination because we didn't think of it as a daytime show. We thought of it as an adult show that was animated. It made more sense for *Fat Albert* to be nominated, but it wasn't that year. We were up against two other nominees: *Captain Kangaroo* and *The Pink Panther Show*.

The 2nd Daytime Emmy Awards were held on May 15, 1975, in New York, on a boat out in the harbor that just went around in circles. CBS was broadcasting the show live, hosted by Monty Hall and Stephanie Edwards. I went to New York with my family: Jay, Erika, and Lane. There was a lot of wine and stuff being served on the boat, and initially I said, "No wine." What if I had to get in front of that audience? I really hated the idea of having to talk in front of a lot of people I didn't know. And there were a lot of people out there watching. And I knew that everybody back at the studio would be watching too.

At one point Laney went downstairs, and he came back out and said, "Dad, don't worry. You didn't win." I said, "How do you know?" They were rehearsing down below, and he overheard them. They'd said *Captain Kangaroo* had won. Well, to me that was perfectly legitimate and reasonable, and so I started drinking the wine. I was so relieved that there was no chance that I would have to get up on stage.

Then they get to our category, and the English stage actor Cyril Richard was up there giving the names and he said, "... for Best Children's Program... Lou Shimmer." He mispronounced my name. But I was thinking, "Oh my God! Oh no, no, no, it can't be." And he continued, with, "... Filmation for *Star Trek*." Lane jumped over Erika and hugged me, and Jay kissed me from the other side. I stumbled out into the audience, in between the seats, and out of nowhere came Friz Freleng. He was a sweet, sweet man. He hugged me, and I actually think he kept me from falling. I got up there and made a speech, and I had no idea what I was saying or what I was doing. But, for the record, here's what I said:

Below: (left to right)
Jay kisses Lou as *Star Trek* wins an Emmy
Lou accepts the award at the *Daytime Emmy Awards* show

"My son overheard the rehearsals and he heard it was Captain's Kangaroo, so I don't know what to say... except a very, very special thanks to my very, very special friend and co-producer, Norm Prescott, and my lovely family, my wife, Jay... my son and my daughter, Lane and Erika, and to all those great, great people who produced for us—in the art of animation, at Filmation—those wonderful shows. Thank you very, very much."

It wasn't a bad speech, except for one terrible thing: I didn't mention Hal Sutherland's name, and he had been such a major part of developing *Star Trek*. I found out later that he had been watching the ceremony with his family, and he was mortified. He had told all of his friends about it. And I forgot to mention him. It was one of the most shameful things I had ever done, and my only excuse was that I was drunk. I felt awful. And I didn't have the guts to call him and tell him after the whole thing was over.

I went back down into the crowd and saw Bob Keeshan, who was Captain Kangaroo. I said, "I'm really sorry because I think that you should win. But you've probably got so many of these." He said in a very sad voice, "Lou, I've never won an Emmy." So, I felt terrible again. Thankfully, he won three Emmys a few years later.

The situation with me forgetting to thank Hal Sutherland at the *Star Trek* Emmy ceremony gnawed at me for years, but I won't make you wait as long as I did to resolve it. Unbeknownst to me, it had gnawed at Hal as well. We remained the best of friends and finally talked to each other about it privately in 2007. Then, in 2008, when Warner brought us both together for a documentary interview for the *DC Heroes* DVD set, all the shame I had felt for 29 years finally came to the surface. I was able to apologize to him publicly and thank him for how much he had meant. We were both crying, but it was such a healing moment.

Below: (left to right)
Image from *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty*

Our ballsy live-action bulldog

On May 24-26, 1975, there was a Star Trek and Science Fiction & Fantasy film convention called Equicon/ Filmcon in San Diego, and the main cast of Star Trek were there as guests. They were doing an Awards Banquet, and we sent writer Russell Bates down to get it. Ostensibly, it was for writers Len Janson and Chuck Menville for their episode "Once Upon A Planet," but as Russell was to find out, it was really a way for Dorothy Fontana — dressed in a belly-dancing outfit — to publicly recognize Russell for co-writing his Emmy Award-winning Star Trek episode.

Journey Back to Oz was still making its way into theaters, including Minneapolis in February, Sacramento, Stockton, and Modesto in June, where a *Sacramento Bee* reviewer called it "original, imaginative, and exciting." In July we were back in Hollywood, and the Tin Man made special appearances and did giveaways of records at the Broadway Valley store chain.

By summer we were deep into production on all of our animated shows, and filming on the live shows was commencing. As we did all the live work, it became necessary for us to open a second studio for live-action material. The building was about four miles away in Canoga Park, was 26,000 square feet, and became known as "Filmation West." Most of the buildings around us were industrial, and our building had offices in the front, and the production area and sets and storage in the back. We knew that the live-action trend was going to continue, and we were already developing more shows for future seasons that would need sets.

One would think that the easiest of the live shows to shoot would be *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty*. After all, it only contained live-action wraparounds, with two cats, a bird, and a dog. But you know that old showbiz maxim about never working with kids or animals?

Waldo Kitty was one of our three satirical shows for the fall, as we attempted to break into doing some more humor; clearly, we had gotten over our earlier aversion to satire, and with the popularity of *Laugh-In, Mad* magazine, and other media properties, it seemed the time was right. We wanted to do something that was really for kids, but that older viewers would get some joy out of because they knew what we were making fun of. *Waldo Kitty* was a good idea, was well produced, and it was a little bit more adult than some of the other stuff that we did for Saturday morning. It started out live-action, with a cat and his girlfriend—Waldo and Felicia—and a big bulldog named Tyrone that was always after them. When Waldo would get into real trouble, and the bulldog got close to him, Waldo would imagine himself turning into one of the characters that he liked from television. This enabled us to do take-offs on some of our own shows and some that we hadn't done… yet.

Catzan was a vine-swinging jungle hero, whereas The Lone Kitty was a masked western hero, and Robin Cat was a medieval archer. Catman and Sparrow were superheroes, and Captain Herc was the captain of the starship *Second Prize* on a show called *Space Trek*. Those were all the animated segments, and they were cute. It was parody, so we didn't have to have the rights to the original characters. In retrospect, that took a lot of chutzpah because some of them were people we had worked with, were working with, or wanted to work with!

The live-action segments were mostly filmed in and around a yard and a house, and we had to work with real animals. The cats were fine, but the problem was with the damn English bulldog. We usually were shooting him from the back because he was chasing the cat and all you could see were giant testicles! Every time he turned around, these *monster* balls were hanging down there, swinging back and forth. So, we decided to paint those things black so they didn't show, but he didn't like it very much. He kept trying to lick that paint off all the time. It closed up his pores or something, and it was the middle of summer and very hot.

Howard Morris was the voice of Waldo, while Jane Webb was Felicia. Allan Melvin was Tyrone, and he was a great character actor and comedian. You'll remember him mostly from *Sergeant Bilko* and as Sam the butcher on *The Brady Bunch*. He had a hoarse, very deep voice.

We had a couple of problems on *Waldo Kitty*, one of which I'll get into at the end of this chapter. The other was that we had a layout person, a beautiful and very talented girl named Lorna Smith, who later married Don Bluth's second-in-command. She was a big cat lover, and she raised a fuss because she said she had come up with the idea for the show. I don't remember all the particulars, but it was very strange because she wasn't a story person. But we settled with her and give her a credit on the show: "Based on an idea by Lorna Smith."

Another problem was that NBC reduced its orders for shows that year from 16 new episodes to 13 new episodes. Originally, all five of the parody concepts would have had three episodes each, but it turned out that only three of them got three, and the others got two each. Doing only 13 episodes was terrible. You could hardly sell them to foreign markets. The more you had, the better they liked it because they showed them every day. With 13, they'd have two weeks and then all of a sudden they were out of stuff. So you were always taking a chance that you were producing something that was going to have no value except on commercial television in the United States. And as it turned out, *Waldo Kitty* was a mistake on many levels.

Our next new show was *The Ghost Busters*. I talked to Marc

Below:
The cast of *The Ghost Busters:* Larry Storch (in suit), Forrest Tucker (in vest), and Bob Burns (in gorilla suit)

Richards about developing it; he had done *The Brady Kids* and other stuff for us. I went to Mark and said, "Let's try to do something that's different, more adult than we normally do. Maybe we can work something out for Saturday morning that goes nighttime." I think he said something like, "Well, what about something like *Gang Busters*, but we call them *Ghost Busters*?" Marc was brilliant and fast. And I said, "Gee, that sounds fun. What can we do?" "We'll take all those monsters who've ever been in the movies, stick them in one place."

So Marc sat down and started working on it. He came back to me and said, "I've got the detective agency, and they're ghost hunters, and we give them some stuff that kills ghosts, but it really doesn't kill them, and we call the characters Spencer, Tracy, and Kong. Spencer is one of the guys in this agency, and Kong is his partner. And they've got a gorilla who works with them." And I said, "The gorilla's Kong!" He said, "No, the gorilla's Tracy." I said, "Why is he Tracy?" "Because it's funnier." I figured, "Okay, he's right." Marc did strange things. So, it was Spencer, Tracy, and Kong.

We took the concept and did some presentation drawings, and Marc did some premises. So, when I went to New York on a rainy February day and made my presentation to Freddie Silverman, I told him about this concept we had to do a spooky, laughable show. He liked the idea. He said, "You've got to get somebody the kids will know to do the lead characters. I mean, you've got two guys who are live, and you've got a gorilla." I said, "Well, it probably ought be easier to find the gorilla than the live guys."

I went back home, and I think our agent had realized he knew who represented Forrest Tucker. We called him and Larry Storch, who had been on *F Troop* together. Storch had also done *Groovie Goolies* for us. And *F Troop* was a very successful comedy show, with a huge audience, so they were a comedy team like Abbott and Costello. They were also crazy, crazy people. We had a meeting, and I told them what we wanted to do. Storch turns around and says, "What do you think, Sarge?" just like his character from *F Troop*. They wanted to do it, and just like that we had our stars. Except for one… we still had to find a gorilla.

On our budget we couldn't afford both an actor and a gorilla suit, so we needed to try to find an actor who owned a gorilla suit! We put a call out to all sorts of agents and the casting people working for us, and set up a time for me to meet the potential gorillas. I spoke at some function, and a girl who worked at CBS heard me talking about needing to find a gorilla. I guess she knew one, so she went back and told him. On the day of the auditions, I walked into the office where Norm Abbott, the director, and Marc Richards were set up, and there were three or four gorillas sitting there. There's one gorilla sitting there reading *Daily Variety*, and I said, "That's a smart gorilla." The guy in the suit had his eyes painted black so his eyes really looked like a monkey. I walked over to him and asked him for his agent. He said, "Tarzan." I knew we had our guy.

The guy in the suit was Bob Burns, who has this incredible collection of science-fiction and horror memorabilia. He was a film editor at CBS in Los Angeles, and he always wanted to do something with a gorilla suit, so he and his wife had made it. He had never really done anything with it until he came into our offices. But just knowing the guy had a gorilla suit made for himself, you know he's just not a normal guy! He later chose to have his screen credit read, "Tracy trained by Bob Burns," and a lot of people thought Tracy really was a gorilla!

We put Bob together with Tucker and Storch, and they fell in love with him. They cuddled him. They nourished him. Because he couldn't stay in the gorilla suit too long. He'd start sweating under the sun or the heavy lights; it was awful! If he stayed in there ten minutes, he'd start to faint! Every time the gorilla would almost faint, Tucker and Storch would catch him. They started making him take more breaks so that he wouldn't faint. And the guys also let him get a lot of the good reaction shots because they knew people would laugh more at the monkey.

Marc Richards started writing on the show, and I told him we needed more writers. He wanted to know why, and I told him we had to have a script a week. I knew he could write an animated short in a week, but he said he could do the scripts with more than enough time to spare. All of them! It turned out that the son of a gun was one of the fastest we ever had. He'd bring in a script on Monday, he'd do a story, Tuesday we'd rehearse, Wednesday we'd shoot—we shot for two-and-a-half days—and Mark would go write another script. He did 15 scripts for that season—two a week—but I almost never saw him sitting down to work, so I don't know when he wrote them. He had some ghosts in there doing it. Or, maybe there were ghostwriters?

We built the sets on sound stages. They were mostly the Ghost Busters' office, a graveyard, the outdoors and halls of a castle, and various rooms in the castle. And then we got an old 1925 car for them to ride around in for outdoor scenes. It was the worst automobile in the world. When we found it, it had been used as a taxi in Argentina. Don't ask me how we found it. We got this car, we got some mechanics, and they got it to work to turn it into the Ghost Busters' car.

Tracy, the gorilla, became their chauffeur. We shot all the location

stuff up on these windy hills in a little town called Piru in East Ventura County, at a store where the Ghost Busters got their assignments. We kind of made fun of spy shows like *Mission: Impossible* when they got their mission for the episode. I did the voice of Zero, the guy who gave them their assignments. They filmed all 15 of the intros in the first couple of weeks up in this horrible desert. It was hot and miserable, and Tracy was fainting all the time.

In the midst of it all, Larry was a connoisseur of fine liquors, and Forrest a hard-drinking man. They decided they were going to meet each other for breakfast every morning. Well, I didn't know that "breakfast" was two bottles of champagne. Part of the deal we had to make with them was that Storch wanted two gallon jugs of white wine any time we shot. With Tucker it was a case of beer. I got a call from Tucker after the second week of shooting, and he said, "Forget the case of beer a day; from now on it's Jack Daniels." They would start out drunk and get sober by the end of the shoot!

There was one time that Storch was supposed to be staying sober, and he came into my office and asked for a big glass of white wine. I started to hand it to him, and his wife came in the door. He quickly handed the glass back to me, and I had to pretend it was mine and drink it. I was wrecked for the rest of the day. All to keep him from getting in trouble!

There was one time that Tucker had an outdoor party at his house. Now, I didn't drink that much, but I went to the party and got carried away. Everybody was getting loaded, and I started to drink like they were drinking, pretending I could do that. And I suddenly realized, "This f*cking floor is coming up to hit me in the head! How can that happen?" And, smash, the floor came up and hit me in the head. I was told later that it was the other way around; I went down and hit the floor with my head. My son, Lane, somehow dragged me into the car. Jay really got mad at me about that. I never tried to drink with those guys again.

Okay, send the kids out of the room again for the next three paragraphs....

Forest Tucker was not only a big guy at 6' 5", but he was renowned as the man with the largest penis in Hollywood. Bigger than Milton Berle's. There was some actor nicknamed "Long John," but, according to the experts, he didn't compare. Tucker had one scene where he was supposed to go up to the door of the castle and smash through the door. Well, he did, but he forgot it was locked, and he hit his groin and moaned. One of the guys came running in the office to see me, and he said, "Lou, Lou, we've got a terrible problem! Tucker's hit himself in the groin with a door handle on the castle!" And I said, "Well, take him to the hospital!"

I found out later that he never wore underwear. The guys went up to the hospital, and one of them came back looking pale. I said, "What happened?" He said, "The nurse fainted." I said, "What do you mean the nurse fainted?" "We got him to the hospital, and they started to unbutton his pants, and he wasn't wearing any underwear, and she saw it! And she fainted."

I later asked Tucker why he didn't wear underwear, and he told me underwear was stupid because when he sat down it hurt if it was tight. I guess with what he had, it made more sense not to. But he risked it that day and made a nurse faint. He and Milton Berle had a contest once, and Berle came in second place. But you've got to remember, Berle was Jewish; he had a bris, so he might have *lost* a little. That's all a true story, by the way.

Okay, call the kids back in. I'll be clean again for a while.

We cast a lot of well-known comedians in the guest roles as the ghosts. They loved the scripts. Most of them had never done anything for Saturday morning, and, when they read these scripts, they were funny. We had Howard Morris, Jim Backus, Billy Barty, Ted Knight, Marty Ingels... they all got to play ghosts and monsters. It was one of the funniest shows ever done for Saturday morning, truly a wacky comedy. I hate the word wacky, but that's what it was.

One more thing I'll tell you about *Ghost Busters* here; nepotism works. I hired my son Lane to be a stand-in for Tucker. He was the only guy around who was bigger than Tucker. My son was a big guy. And he's also the ghost in the main title! Nobody really believed him when he would tell them once the show got popular: "Oh yeah, I'm on television. I'm a ghost in a main title."

Our third new show of the season was *Uncle Croc's Block*, and, boy, was that a train wreck. It was a one-hour show, and the concept was that it was a satire of Saturday morning kids' shows with hosts. We had Charles Nelson Reilly playing Uncle Croc, a bitter and unlikable man dressed up in a crocodile costume, who hated kids and hated cartoons and hated his job, which was hosting a show called *Uncle Croc's Block*, in which he showed cartoons. The three cartoons he presented were "Fraidy Cat," "Wacky and Packy," and "M-U-S-H." Part of the reason that Uncle Croc hated his job—besides the ridiculous costume—was the horrible and disdainful way that the show's producer/director—Mr. Basil Bitterbottom, played by Jonathan Harris—treated him. Also in the cast was his sidekick, Mr. Rabbit Ears, played by Johnny Silver in a giant pink bunny costume. And in between cartoons Uncle Croc would welcome various "guest stars," who were parodies of famous TV and literary characters.

Charles Nelson Reilly... that poor man only did the show because I got ABC to promise him a nighttime pilot that they would do for him. He hated *Uncle Croc's Block* for real. He didn't want to have anything to do with that show. Then he had to wear this crocodile

Above: (left to right)

Rose Marie as Red Riding Hood with Uncle Croc

Charles Nelson Reilly as Uncle Croc

Left: (left to right)
Images from segments of *Uncle Croc's Block:* M-U-S-H, Fraidy Cat, Wacky & Packy

suit, and he hated to be in that costume. As soon as he could, he'd rip it off and wander around in his leopard-skin shorts, ogling and winking at the cameraman. He hated everything but the cameraman, and the cameraman was a nervous wreck with him around in his short shorts. I got the hell off the set as soon as the shorts started coming up. It was a strange sight. Reilly's manager was a nice guy, and he was always calming him down. "Now, Charles, we're doing this so we can have a nighttime show." And he'd be simpering, "I hate this show! I hate being here! I hate everything but the cameraman!" Which just made the cameraman even more nervous.

The first Mr. Rabbit Ears was Johnny Silver, but he was too cute in the suit. We wanted everybody to just look wrong, and he looked like he really could be the cute guy in the rabbit suit. Squire Rushnell, who was the head of kids' shows at ABC, came into the studio, and he was really pissed off. He saw the stage for *Ghost Busters*, and it was really elaborate, and the one for *Uncle Croc's Block* was designed to look so bad and so cheap. Rushnell went nuts. "That's a crummy looking set!" I said, "It's supposed to be a crummy looking set!" He says, "Well, that's too crummy! And you've got to get rid of that rabbit." I said, "What do you want to get rid of him for? He's perfect for it." So after, I think, five shows got filmed with Johnny, we got rid of him and hired Alfie Wise to play the rabbit.

Jonathan Harris and Reilly didn't get along either, for real. They were always parking in each other's parking space. I had to go down almost every day to talk to Charles Nelson Reilly about parking in Jonathan's parking spot. There was an argument on that set every day.

Mack Bing, who was the director of the live stuff, wore a chain that he claimed was what saved his life when he was going overseas during the war and his ship was hit by a torpedo and sank. All the crew guys would look at him and wonder what the hell he was wearing around his neck.

Most of the live stuff was written by "Frick and Frack": Chuck Menville and Len Janson. I used to call them "Frick and Frack" because I couldn't remember which was which. They were really good writers who had met when they were in school. They did a lot of *Fat Alberts*, they could do adventure shows, and they worked together for many years as a team. They thought the *Uncle Croc* stuff was funny. I thought the stuff was funny. ABC thought it was awful.

We had a lot of famous guest stars do the guest-star roles, and we filmed about three shows a week. Robert Ridgely was Steve Exhaustion the $6.95 Man and also Captain Klangaroo. Robert Ball was Old Fogey Bear. Bob Burns was King Klong Jr. Charlotte Rae was Dorothy, with Alfie Wise as Pinocchio and Richard Balin as the Tin Woodsman. Phyllis Diller was Witchie Goo-Goo. Carl Ballantine was Sherlock Domes. Rose Marie was Little Red Riding Hood. Marvin Kaplan was Captain Marbles. Billy Holmes was Sik-Ning the Sea Monster. George Gobel was Tarman of the Grapes. If only we had put Paul Lynde on there, we could have had the whole *Hollywood Squares* cast.

The guests all did the show on scale pay because they wanted to do it. They liked the scripts. And as you saw from "Captain Marbles," we even made fun of our own show. But Squire Rushnell, who bought it, never, never got that it was supposed to be satire. He thought it was going to be a real show where the guy was really introducing cartoons. But even the cartoons were satire.

The cartoons were six-and-a-half-minute shorts, with three per half-hour, plus wraparounds. The three cartoons were "M-U-S-H" (Mangy Unwanted Shabby Heroes)—instead of *M*A*S*H* —"Fraidy Cat," and "Wacky and Packy." We kind of decided to take normal things and do absurd things with them. "M-U-S-H" was a good idea for a show because you're supposed to laugh at it, not with it. It was a cast of dogs at an arctic Mounted Police outpost, but they were all parodies of *M*A*S*H* characters. There were 30 of these shorts written, but only 23 finished.

Wacky and Packy were a caveman and his pet mastodon that were running around in the world of 1975. I don't remember what the background of the story was, just that they were there, and they fought and argued and tried to find food, and somehow made things work out. There were 17 of this show written, but only 16 produced.

Below:
John Davey takes over the role of Captain Marvel

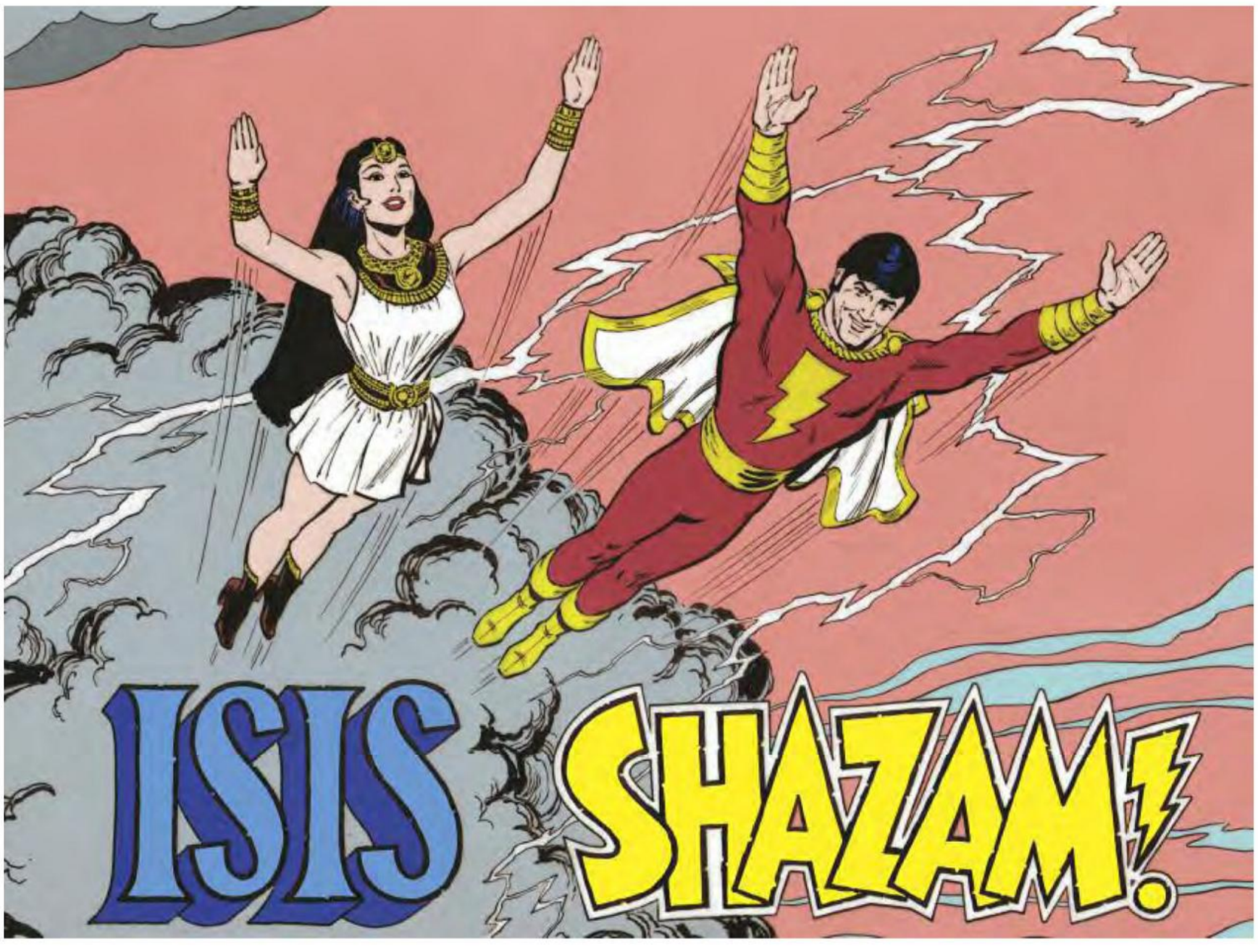
Bottom:
Promotional art for *Isis* and *Shazam!*

Fraidy Cat was a cat who'd had nine lives and, unfortunately, used up eight of them. He had one life left, and the whole show was about him getting into trouble where he's going to get killed at any moment and how the hell he gets out of it, which was a pretty funny idea with a cat. I liked that show because here we had a cat that couldn't dare do anything that was going to be too tough or dangerous, and he was haunted by the ghosts of his previous lives. There's nothing like impending death to say fun for Saturday morning kids. "Eat your cereal while we kill this kitten." But it really was funny and pushed the envelope. Kids got it. There were 19 of them written, but only twelve completed.

But Saturday morning was not ready for Uncle Croc's kind of nihilistic bitter satire, as you'll see, soon.

Speaking of satire, I'm not sure where this story fits in the timeline, so you'll get it now. I was at a dinner with Allen Ducovny, who was working for CBS at the time, so it was some time between 1973 and 1975. He took my wife Jay and I to the Friar's Club in New York. We were all dressed up, and the waiter came up. He had a tray with the Saturday night special, and it was all seafood and butter and stuff. He tripped, and the food fell all over me. I had lobsters falling on my head and crud dripping down my legs, and I said, "This is a really classy place!" The clean-up guys kept running up with brooms, and all they cared about was the carpet! I'm sitting there with seafood and butter all over me, and they've got to clean the carpet. I said, "What about me?" They said, "We'll get you another dinner."

We had started production on the second season of *Shazam!* toward the end of June, with all of the cast back. There were only going to be seven episodes in season two, plus some crossover episodes with *Isis*, the new companion show. Then on July 1st the *Shazam!* hit the fan. That was the day that Jackson Bostwick—who was playing Captain Marvel—didn't show up for work. My memory is that we had some very heated conversations—and I don't remember whether it was with his agent or the actor—about him wanting to double his salary, and so he called in sick with the cast and crew all out waiting for him. I said that if he didn't show up, we'd get someone else to do it. My feeling was that Michael and his mentor, Les Tremayne, were really the stars of the show as far as the kind of warmth and feeling we wanted to get out of it. Normal call time was 6:00 a.m., but he got a deadline to show up by 1:00 p.m. that day, or else. Supposedly, he had a doctor call in and say he had hurt his eye, and that was why he couldn't work, but in my recollection we never got that call, and that wasn't the story we were getting from the agent.



So, I called up Jerry Golod, who had taken over for Allen Ducovny as director of children's programming at CBS on June 1st—and who I knew from when he was working as the ad buyer for General Mills products for Saturday mornings—and told him what was happening. I told him that this was a big problem, and I wasn't sure we could work with him anymore,

and we sure couldn't change the budget. Golod told me to fire Bostwick and hire somebody new, as we had threatened to do. Bostwick was a nice kid, but his agent or manager was really pulling some bad strings for him.

We had a crew sitting there with cameras and audio equipment, and they could film other scenes that day, but I had to find a guy in the next couple of hours to film on July 2nd. So, I and our casting lady, Meryl O'Loughlin, called an agent I knew named Ivan Green, and he represented a guy named John Davey, an ex-boxer-turned actor, who was the right size and look to fit the costume. The agent called Davey, and Davey apparently tried to call his wife to consult with her, but couldn't reach her, so he asked his eight-year-old son, Tommy, what he thought of the idea. When his son exploded with excitement, Davey called back and took the job.

I remember that, after I first spoke with the agent and gave him the deal and the address, I called him back and said, "If he's got a moustache, tell him to shave it before he gets there." Wouldn't you know it, Davey had a moustache. Two hours after he agreed to do it, he was suited up on-set out at Topanga Park doing stock stunts as Captain Marvel. In addition to filming the episode that was already delayed, we had to replace all of the credits footage and stock scenes of Captain Marvel as played by Bostwick. The first thing he had to do was jump off a seven-foot ladder onto a pad, to look like he's landing from flying. Then they did shots of him running, lifting a vehicle, and flying on the slant board. I think that Norm and I drove out to go look at him in costume to make sure he looked right.

He was a good guy, and he looked great in the role, though he was a bit rougher looking than Jackson. He had to lose a little bit of weight, too, because the costume didn't really forgive a belly. But he got along with the cast and crew really well, and everybody liked him; Les Tremayne had not been too fond of Bostwick apparently. John never caused any problems, and I don't think we ever got a single letter about why Captain Marvel suddenly looked different. It's funny that fans tell me now that they knew there was a different guy—and they pick their favorites, even though Jackson did 17, and Davey did 14 counting the Isis shows—but at the time we didn't hear from anybody about the change.

Unfortunately for Davey, the role did kind of trap him in typecasting for a while. He was a good actor, but I guess he was in some movie that had intense scenes in it. And I hear that when he came on-screen, people said, "Look, there's Captain Marvel." He didn't have a huge career, although he should have. And for that matter, neither did Bostwick, though we continued to have troubles with him, which I'll tell you more about shortly.

As mentioned, we had created a live-action companion show to *Shazam!* called *The Secrets of Isis*. It was easy for me to come up with wanting to do a show that involved a heroine—I was surrounded by females at my house with my daughter, Erika, and my wife, Jay. I had thought about this for a long time. You've got to think about doing shows that relate to girls too. There weren't any superheroines on TV at the time; there had been an awful *Wonder Woman* telefilm for primetime in 1974, but the Lynda Carter show wouldn't debut until November 1975, two months after us. The Bionic Woman had appeared on two episodes of *The Six Million Dollar Man* in March 1975, but we had already sold *Isis* to the network by then.

We needed a concept though, and that's when I brought in Marc Richards to develop it. The man was phenomenally gifted. He came up with the concept of a chemist named Andrea Thomas who went on an archaeological trip and dug up an ancient Egyptian piece of jewelry that gave her all sorts of powers. The mythological background explained the powers, and that kind of exotic feel always helps the superhero stories. I went back to CBS, showed them what we had done, as well as a bunch of drawings—similar to the stuff we used in the main title—and they bought it.

The original storyline was more of a mystery show, with the cast of characters helping to solve crimes using forensics and Isis saving the day and helping them. But, before Allen Ducovny left CBS, he came in for a meeting with us and the writers, and we changed the

Left to right:
The cast of *The Secrets of Isis* included JoAnna Cameron as Isis, Joanna Pang as Cindy Lee, Brian Cutler as Rick Mason, and Tut the crow

Below:
The cast of *The Secrets of Isis*

concept. Instead of being crime fighters, the characters were now going to be high school teachers, with Andrea as the chemistry teacher, Rick Mason teaching math, Dr. Barnes as the principal, and Cindy Lee as a student assistant. That worked for me because, having been married to a schoolteacher, I knew the value of teachers. And, like in *Mission: Magic!*, I wanted to do something where a school teacher was the hero. Putting her in a high school meant that the stories could be older like they were for *Shazam!*, and she could really talk about what it was appropriate for her to talk about in that episode.

Art Nadel was the story editor on the show and directed it, and Russell Bates turned in the first script with the revised concept, "The Lights of Mystery Mountain." Like we did on *Shazam!*, many of the stories were written for teenagers and featured issues that teenagers could relate to. And we put the morals on the end, with Isis reinforcing the lessons the episodes had taught that day.

Since this was a companion show for *Shazam!*, we made a deal with National/DC and the network so that the characters could visit one another. Filmation kept the rights to the *Isis* episodes and characters, while National and Warner kept the rights to the *Shazam!* episodes and characters.

In mid-May we started looking for actors to portray the *Isis* series regulars, and Norm and I sat in for a lot of the audition process. The first guy we cast was a handsome guy named Brian Cutler, who had done a lot of guest-star roles on TV. He was a nice guy. He had a charm to him that seemed appropriate for a teacher. Later on he became a teacher in a way when he opened his own acting studio. He got along with everybody, and he was easy to work with.

We had Brian read with a lot of female actresses for the part of Andrea Thomas/Isis. One of them who almost got the part was Veronica Hamel, a brunette who later made it big on *Hill Street Blues*. Eventually, we found a girl named JoAnna Cameron—though sometimes it was spelled Joanna Cameron with a small "a"—who was a very, very beautiful, very, very talented young lady with great legs. That first day she wore a short skirt and a tight top. I think we brought her back for a second look before casting her.

The role of the teenage Cindy Lee went to a young dancer and actress named JoAnna Pang. I think it was actually Ducovny who suggested her because she had been on some CBS children's programs filmed on the East Coast. At the start of June, she flew out to California and auditioned, and we cast her quickly. I felt we should have at least one minority character among the three leads, and Joanna fit the part. And we knew from the start that we wanted a girl because it reinforced the fact that we had a superheroine in the lead.

The fourth member of the cast—if you didn't count Andrea's crow, Tut—was the occasionally appearing school principal, Dr. Barnes, played by veteran actor Albert Reed. And as for Tut, I don't know how you train crows. That bird was always doing the wrong thing. It would fly off or wouldn't fly. The crow was a menace. He'd go up in the rafters every once in a while, and he wouldn't come down.

Working under the direction of art director Don Christensen, artist Bob Kline developed a lot of the look of *Isis,* including the costume, the art you saw in the opening credits, and the logo for the series. We wanted to show off her legs, so we gave her the short skirt, but we also didn't want it to be too sexy for kids, so we didn't show much of her bust. She wore a medallion on her forehead and around her neck that was the symbol of Isis. The amulet necklace was also what allowed her to make the change into our heroine; instead of thunder and lightning like Captain Marvel, her transformation scenes when she said "Oh Mighty Isis!" were a lot more peaceful, with a swirl of fog and her theme music playing.

Isis also had these magical chants that she did, calling on the powers of the earth and skies and elements. Most of them were rhyming couplets that sounded kind of Shakespearean. A married pair of writers for us, David and Susan Dworski came up with the most famous one, which was "Oh zephyr winds which blow on high, lift me now so I can fly." And then she would twirl around and rise up into the air. We shot a lot of the flying stunts with wires and backdrops instead of the tougher kind of jumps and landings we did for Shazam! And I'll tell you, none of the crew ever minded having to help string Joanna up in her short skirt on the wires! Then there was a matte effect they did for the backgrounds sometimes, and wind machines with some smoke to look like clouds.

The first day we shot for Isis was July 8, 1975, on an episode called "Fool's Dare." Like *Shazam!*, we did two shows a week. Dick Rosenbloom was the producer. They would shoot the high school stuff or anything with extras usually in the middle of the week. The rest of the time, they'd be off on location throughout the area. The high school was in Reseda or Sherman Oaks, and it was closed for the summer, of course. Andrea's classroom was a set in the studio though. That led to some funny scenes when they would run into the guys from *Ghost Busters* or *Shazam!*.

Given that they had done voices for me, I've had people wonder why neither Erika nor Lane appeared on *Shazam!* or *Isis*. Erika was 15 at the time, but Lane was older and probably too big for those shows. But neither of them had expressed any great interest in acting. Lane

did a little because he thought actors made a lot of money and didn't have to work hard. But Erika wanted to go to Stanford—and she later did—and she had other dreams and aspirations. I didn't want to push them into the shows just because they were my kids; they had to want it.

Now, JoAnna could be an odd lady to deal with. Even just delivering scripts to her was strange. We had to leave them someplace down on Ventura Boulevard near a post office or something and somebody would come and pick them up. We never saw who it was that came and picked them up.

We were filming the last episode of the first season, and I was very happy with the show. JoAnna came up and said, "I've gotta talk to you, Lou." I thought, "Oh, this is gonna be trouble," because she didn't talk to me normally; she didn't talk to anybody normally. She just came in, did her stuff fine, looked fine, and always knew the lines. Arthur had said she could be a bit difficult to direct, and he did a lot of those shows, but he could handle her. So she said to me, "I'd like to direct part of the next batch if this goes to a second season."

I thought I was going to faint. I mean, she had never directed anything. I didn't even know if she had any background in directing. She was hired on the basis of her looks, and the stately quality about her, and her great legs. She came off as a very strong person, but I didn't know if she could be a very strong director. She didn't really talk to the other people on the set. I mean, there was sort of a mystery about her. You never knew who she was or what she was or where she came from.

It wasn't because she was a woman asking to direct, it's just that as far as I knew she didn't have any experience. We were doing two shows a week. Experienced directors had terrible trouble. That's a lot of work! But what was I going to tell her? I didn't know how to get out of it. I said, "You know, I've got to think about it." I think if I had said, "No," she would not have done the next batch of shows. I talked to Arthur about it, and Arthur was an extraordinary human being. You could not get mad at him, but he was a very strong character. I think that he had a more serious discussion with her than I did. The fact of the matter is that I had no experience in directing. We had done a bunch of live shows, but to see what a director had to do was formidable, and you had to get along with people. It was my experience that she really didn't get along with people very well.

Arthur was the best. He was dedicated to the shows and dedicated to doing the scripts in a way that was satisfying to the writers. Directors had so little time to do anything different from the scripts, and it was my job to make sure that when they got a script it was going to be as good as they could make it for them with our limitations. But the writers always loved when Arthur directed their scripts.

We shot another live-action pilot in summer 1975 called "Motorscouts." Dick Rosenbloom was in charge of it. I don't think it was a full pilot as much as it was a bunch of different shots showing the types of stories we could tell. The interesting thing was Mickey Rooney's son, Tim Rooney, was one of the Motorscouts. He was a tall, skinny kid and looked liked a stretched version of Mickey Rooney. He died in 2006.

We were really trying to take advantage of the motorcycle craze.

Below: (left to right)
Art Nadel directing Joanna Pang in *Isis*
Joanna with Captain Marvel stunt double

Kids wanted motorcycles in those days. I showed it to all the networks, but they were not interested. Our real problem was probably that we didn't really have a standout character. It was a team, but nobody had special powers. If you take a look at what we did that worked, there was always a super-power in there. If it had been "Rocket Scouts," it probably would have sold.

On September 4th at 8:00 p.m., CBS aired the *Dyn-O-Mite Saturday Preview Special*, hosted by *Good Times* star Jimmie Walker. The half-hour show previewed the fall kids' line-up. The following evening, September 5th, ABC did their own preview at 8:00 p.m. titled *Funshine Saturday Sneak Peak*. Hosted by Jim Nabors and Ruth Buzzi, it spotlit *Uncle Croc's Block* and other new series. That same night at 8:30, NBC showed their *Saturday Preview Review*, hosted by Michael Landon, Johnny Whitaker, Billy Barty, and the dance group The Lockers.

The new TV season debuted on September 6th, and we were primed for the future. *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty* was on at 9:30 on NBC. *The New Adventures of Gilligan* was at 10:00 a.m., followed by *Uncle Croc's Block* from 10:30–11:30, both on ABC. Unfortunately, that put them up against *The Shazam!/Isis Hour* from 10–11:00 a.m., which led in to *Ghost Busters* at 11:30 and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* returning at 12:30, all on CBS. *The U.S. of Archie* got moved to Sundays at 9:00 a.m. on CBS, the graveyard for dying shows. By the way, due to the combined title for *The Shazam!/Isis Hour, The Secrets of Isis* got retitled on-screen to just *Isis*, although the series was still known by its full title, and the opening narration I did referred to it that way as well.

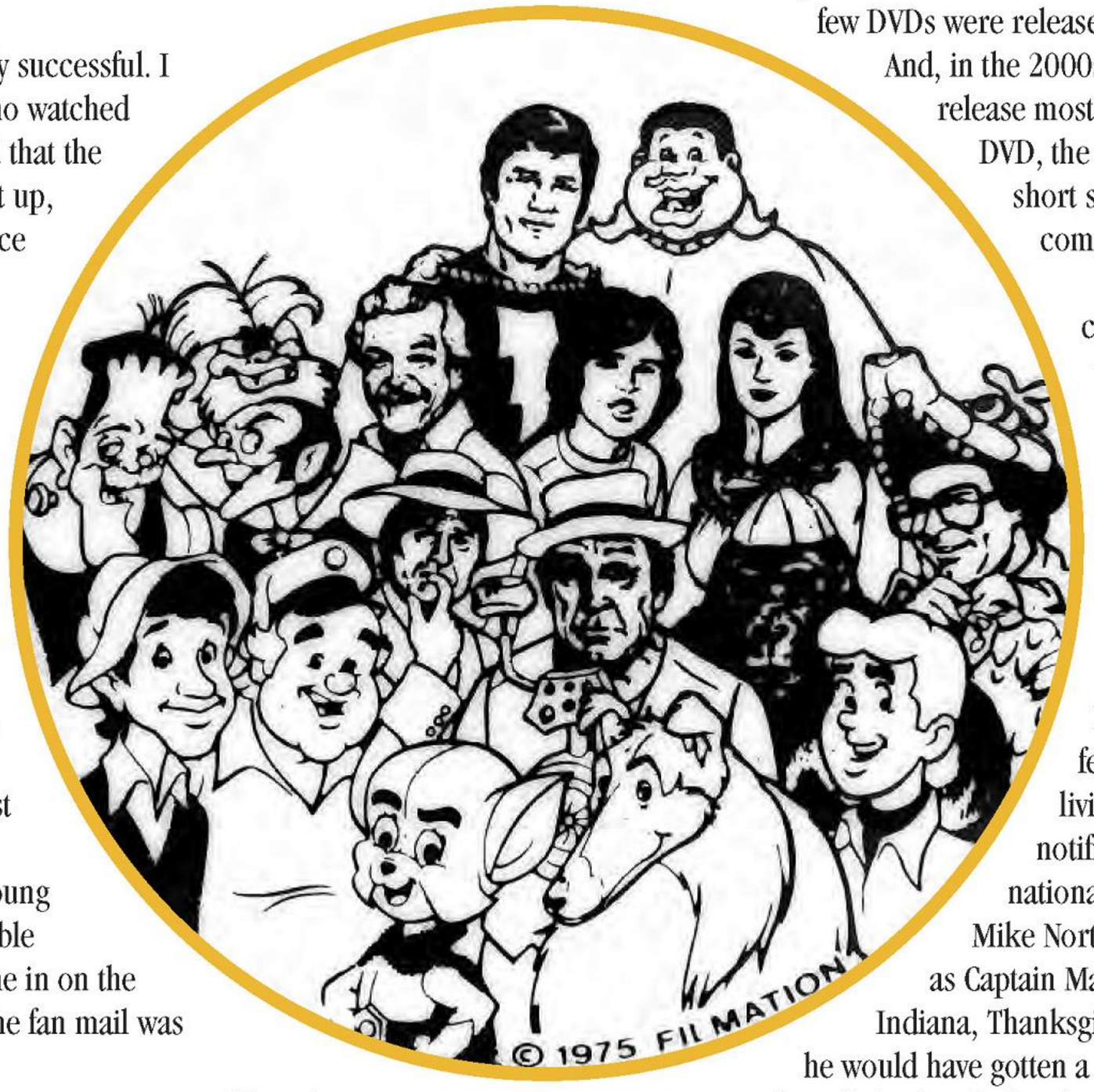
Isis got slammed by *Variety*, who noted that the show "represent[ed] such a stretch of unrelieved boredom for an adult, it makes one yearn to flip over to a cartoon. Isis, a supergirl as played by JoAnna Cameron, might be amusing to women's lib advocates of all ages, however." They labeled *Ghost Busters* as "vaguely remindful of *The Three Stooges*," and said of *Uncle Croc's Block* that "it's a clever idea, but terribly overdrawn in the premiere."

Nevertheless, at week two, *The Shazam!/Isis Hour* was the #1

show in the ratings, with a 10.7 rating and a 40 share, which was 2.4 ratings points ahead of the second place show, *Scooby-Doo!* All of our CBS shows performed well, taking the top ratings in each of their timeslots.

The *Ghost Busters* was enormously successful. We picked up an audience that was significantly older. We'd find out that kids in college wouldn't go do their classwork until after *Ghost Busters* was over! In October the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner* did a huge article about the big USC vs. Notre Dame game, a huge football meet. But the article wasn't about the team practicing plays, it was about the team and the coaching staff watching *Ghost Busters* together pre-game! It was an honest, true hit. Tucker and Storch felt that it was going to go to nighttime as soon as somebody from the network really watched it. Unfortunately, it never happened. I don't know whether anybody from the network outside of Silverman ever watched it.

Isis was extraordinarily successful. I think some of the boys who watched might secretly have hoped that the wind would blow her skirt up, but we had a huge audience of girls and women who loved that there was a character for them. And she didn't solve problems with force, like other superheroes. She did it magically, and we used nature a lot more. And, as a schoolteacher, she was much more involved with the local kids. I was especially proud of *Isis* because it was the first time a woman had been presented as a hero for young people. We got an incredible amount of letters that came in on the show, mostly from girls; the fan mail was absolutely monumental.



Uncle Croc's Block, however, was in trouble right out of the gate. The network already hated it, and, when it got some negative reviews and the ratings weren't great, things got ugly. They only aired seven of the one-hour shows (from September 6th to October 18th), and then the show got cut back to a half-hour show, and reruns of *Groovie Goolies* got put into the second slot. We had to do a lot of cutting and editing to get the shows down. A lot of the live stuff got cut out—even though it was already filmed—and some of the cartoons were in peril of not being finished. "Wacky and Packy" and "Fraidy Cat" were pretty much jettisoned. The 16 episodes of *Uncle Croc's Block* finished airing on December 13th, although the actual complete series—as conceptualized—never aired.

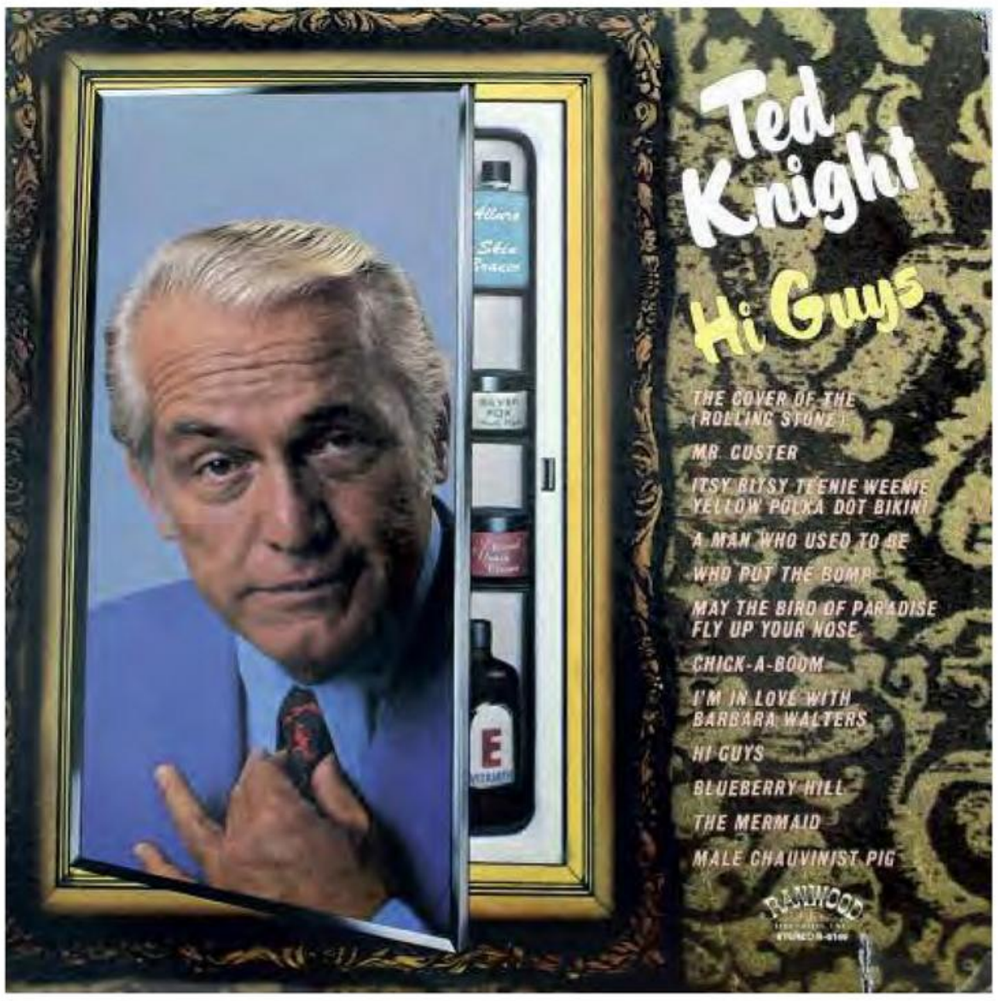
But the indignities didn't end there; the series was cancelled on February 14, 1976, which was the first time one of our shows was cancelled mid-season (it was replaced by reruns of *Super Friends*). It was also the last time that ABC bought anything from us; they hated our show that much! Oddly, it's one of the few shows that we made a profit on during the production because they had to pay us for the whole series. So, we ended up making more money on *not doing* the rest of the show than we would have ever made on doing the whole show!

Unfortunately, *Uncle Croc's Block* has never been shown in its entirety and probably never will be. Each of the three cartoon segments was put into syndication later, as part of the *Groovie Goolies and Friends* package, or overseas on their own, but none really enjoyed much attention. Oddly, *Fraidy Cat* became the first DVD ever put out of Filmation material when an unscrupulous seller sold some prints of the show to some DVD companies, telling them the material was in public domain! The show was so little known that a few DVDs were released, though not the full series. And, in the 2000s when BCI Eclipse was set to release most of Filmation's library for DVD, the three *Croc* cartoons got short shrift yet again when the company went out of business.

Remember back when I called casting agents and said we needed somebody in the Captain Marvel suit? It turned out to be a *lawsuit*. In early November Jackson Bostwick filed a $790,000 damage lawsuit against Filmation, TelePrompTer, and Norm Prescott for allegedly interfering with his right to earn a living. Reportedly, we had notified his agent at ICM (International Creative Management), Mike North, that he could not appear as Captain Marvel in the Evansville, Indiana, Thanksgiving Day Parade, for which he would have gotten a reported $5,000 fee. I don't remember all the details, but the newspaper clippings I have show that Bostwick and his lawyer, David Kornblum, actually argued that the character of Captain Marvel was in public domain, which was news to National/DC. Oddly, those same newspaper articles put the damage amount sought at $750,000, $790,000, or $1.25 million—and listed Bostwick's episode count as 15, 17 (correct), and 26 shows—so I guess not everything in the press is correct! About the same time, he filed a complaint with the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG), seeking an arbitration hearing for what he said was a breach of contract for his firing.

And remember that Ted Knight album I wrote about earlier? It was released on November 24th. Called "Hi Guys," it was a set of

Above:
1975 promotional art of Filmation characters used on a flying disc!



13 novelty tunes such as "May the Bird of Paradise Fly up Your Nose," "Itsy Bitsy Teenie Weenie Yellow Polka Dot Bikini," our *Groovie Goolies* hit "Chick-A-Boom," "I'm in Love with Barbara Walters," and others. To say Ted sang would be an overstatement, but it's apropos that the background vocals were credited to "Ted Knight and the Poops" and the deejay who wrote the liner notes for the album's backside noted that Knight "can't be all that much a Superior Being." And even though we were supposed to release the record—and Norm and I got our names and Filmation logo on the back cover—the record, cassette, and 8-track tape were released by Ranwood Records, a company owned by Welk Music… owned by none other than Lawrence Welk.

In late December Mrs. Helen W. Thurber and Samuel Goldwyn productions filed an infringement lawsuit against NBC and Filmation, claiming that *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty* was copied largely from James Thurber's *The Secret Lives of Walter Mitty*. They wanted no less than $500,000 for copyright infringement and unfair competition. Nothing ever became of the suit because there were major differences in the concept. But NBC cancelled the series after one season, not even showing it for the second year. In 1977 we made it a part of a syndicated package called *Groovie Goolies and Friends*, removed all the live-action segments—and thus any residual similarities to the daydreaming Walter Mitty—and changed the title cards to read a new name: "*The New Adventures of Waldo Kitty*."

Meanwhile, on December 22nd, Jackson Bostwick failed to get a court injunction against Filmation for the alleged harassment because we wouldn't allow him to appear at public functions as Captain Marvel; in actuality it was reported in the press that we had threatened legal action against anyone hiring him as Captain Marvel, not against Bostwick himself, but the particulars are dim 35 years later. Although L.A. Superior Court Judge Norman Dowds didn't throw the whole $790,000 damage suit out, he did rule that there was no pressing need for an injunction against us.

I'm going to skip forward just a bit to tell you the end of this part of the saga. In early February 1976, Bostwick's arbitration hearing with SAG happened, and all he could seek from that was back pay for the remaining five episodes in his *Shazam!* contract. SAG ruled that we were "unreasonable" in our response to the firing and awarded him the pay for the five episodes, which amounted to $3,657. The lawsuit that he filed, however, I don't recall that it went anywhere, though he did make some personal appearances in his Captain Marvel costume later, including one on February 9th at the Wadsworth Hospital Center as part of a visit to hospitalized war veterans.

The sad part is that Jackson is still apparently so angry about the whole thing. He gives interviews and makes all sorts of nasty comments about Filmation and Norm and I. I'm sure a lot of them had to do with him being friends with Robert Chenault, who had tried to steal the business from us and been fired for it. But Jackson was not a bad guy. He had the right muscles, and he was a very handsome guy. I really blame what happened to him on his agent.

Ah well. At least we were about to go from agents and lawyers flinging feces to working with real monkeys as 1976 loomed ahead.

Above:
Ted Knight's album cover

Left: (l to r)
Lou reflects on 1975's triumphs and tragedies
Images from *Waldo Kitty*
Jackson Bostwick as Captain Marvel

ARKII

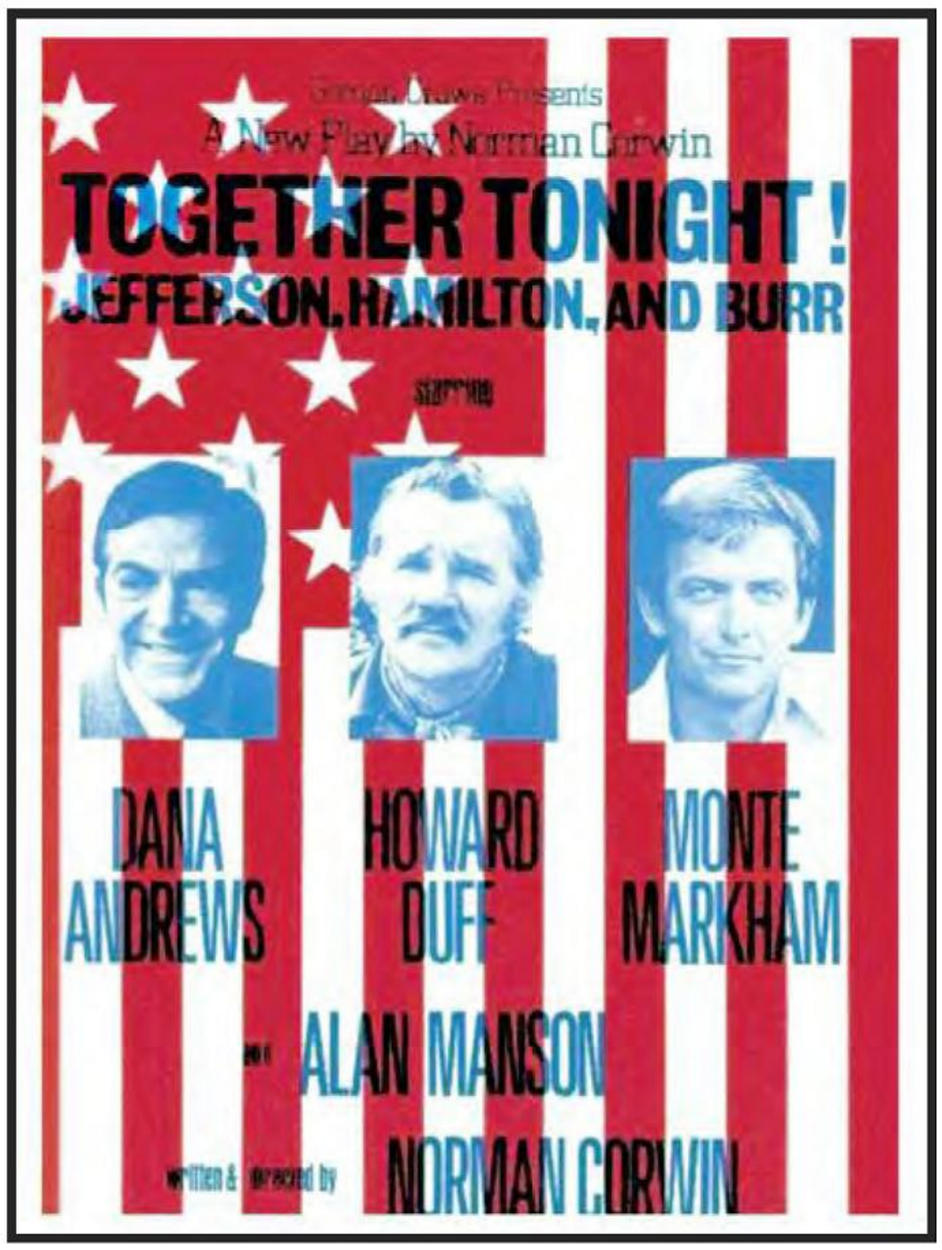
CHAPTER FIFTEEN
1976–1977
OF APES AND ARKS

In 1976 we embarked on our first-ever legitimate live theatre production. Remember the *Guest of Honor* and *The Great Young Americans* shows we commissioned, shot, and pitched as an educational series? With those shows functionally dead in the water, we decided to take three of the best scripts and create three one-act plays for the college theatre circuit. We used Norman Corwin's scripts about Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and Aaron Burr and began approaching colleges, and Columbia Artists in New York. We got producer and actor John Houseman—from *The Paper Chase*—involved as a potential director, but he wanted us to combine them all as one single play.

Corwin rewrote them, but we had some theatrical flash-forwards and asides to the audience, which Houseman didn't like, so he dropped out, as did Columbia. Then one day Joe Cotler, who worked at Warner Bros. TV syndication, called us from the offices of Gordon Crowe, a theatrical producer and agent. Shortly thereafter Crowe signed on as a co-producer. We began booking the show, now called *Together Tonight*, in which the fictional John Lenox moderated a conversation between the tough Aaron Burr, the humble Thomas Jefferson, and the elitist Alexander Hamilton, set at a Philadelphia meeting hall in winter 1799. Corwin directed it.

Together Tonight! Jefferson, Hamilton, and Burr debuted at Indiana University in January 1976, with Monte Markham as Burr, Howard Duff as Hamilton, Dana Andrews as Jefferson, and Alan Manson as Lenox. It played Western Michigan University on January 24th, at Philadelphia's Philadanco as of April 20th, and in Huntsville, Texas. Because of the bicentennial, we did 75 playdates set up at 65 colleges nationwide, touring through mid-April. We had put about $200,000 into the entire project from the original pilots to the stage show, though only about $75,000 of it was for mounting the show. Little by little it brought in a profit.

Together Tonight! was later broadcast on National Public Radio on election day—November 5, 1996—under the title "No Love Lost" with voices by William Shatner as Jefferson, Lloyd Bridges as Hamilton, Jack Lemmon as Burr, and Martin Landau as Lenox. It was a live performance at the Museum of Broadcasting in Los Angeles, which had been filmed and recorded on August 6th of that year. And on May 7, 2011, Corwin celebrated his 101st birthday at a new performance of the show at the Beverly Garland Holiday Inn in Hollywood, with Markham returning to the show as well, though this time playing Jefferson. Filmation's involvement in the play isn't well known or well publicized—we weren't even listed in the ads—but we were there from the start.

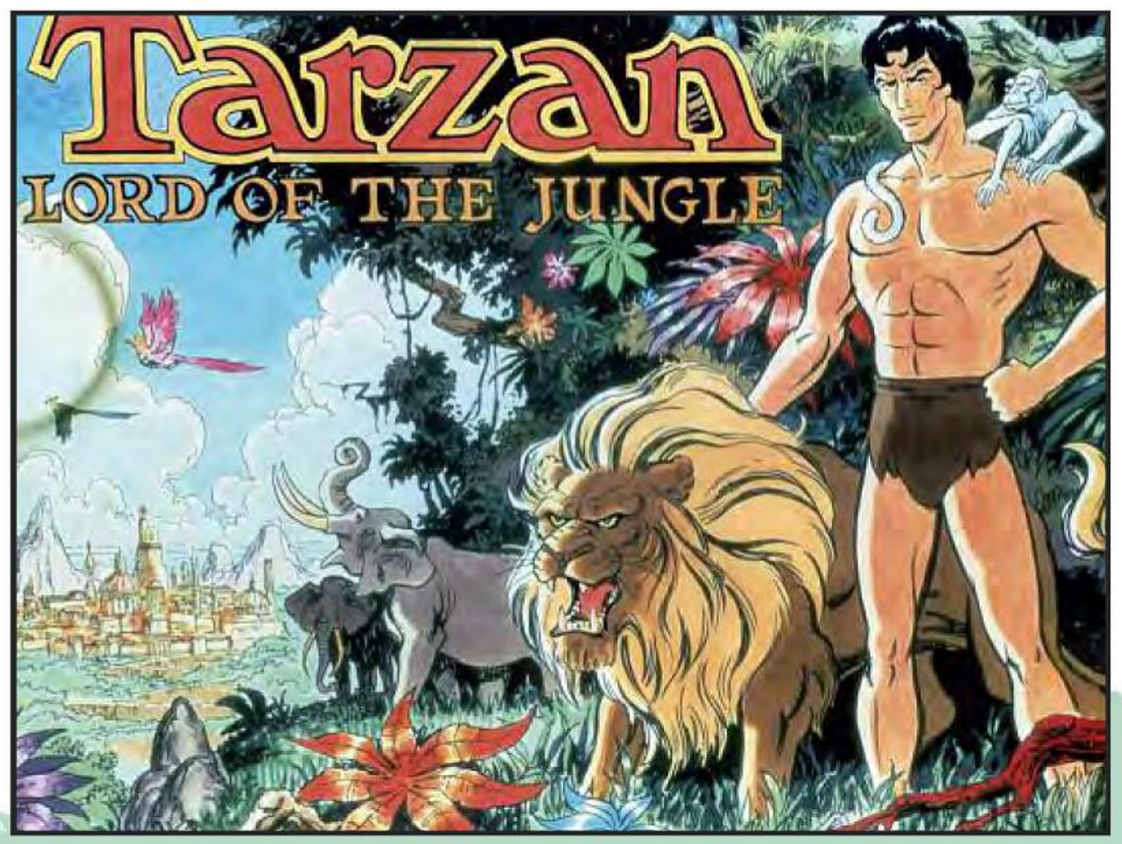


Opposite:
Promotional sell sheet for *Ark II*

Above:
Program cover for *Together Tonight!*

Also in January NBC aired a news segment on one of their shows, about nonviolent shows for kids, and made a rare request; they asked us for permission to use clips from *Shazam!* and *Isis*. This kind of cross-network promotion wasn't common at the time, but we quickly granted it. Betty Rollins was the news correspondent, but I don't recall which show it was on. Shortly thereafter, under a headline of "Laughs and Lessons through the Looking Glass," CBS took out an ad in the trade papers, highlighting the "fun, fantasy, knowledge and guidance" their shows provided, noting several Filmation shows as leaders.

Fall lineups came out in March, as usual. As mentioned, ABC never bought another show from us, having cancelled *Uncle Croc's Block*—and the reruns of *Groovie Goolies*—on February 14th. Instead, ABC became the domain of mostly Hanna-Barbera and Krofft shows, while NBC similarly dumped *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty* and spread their schedule between reruns of vintage toons and new live-action shows.



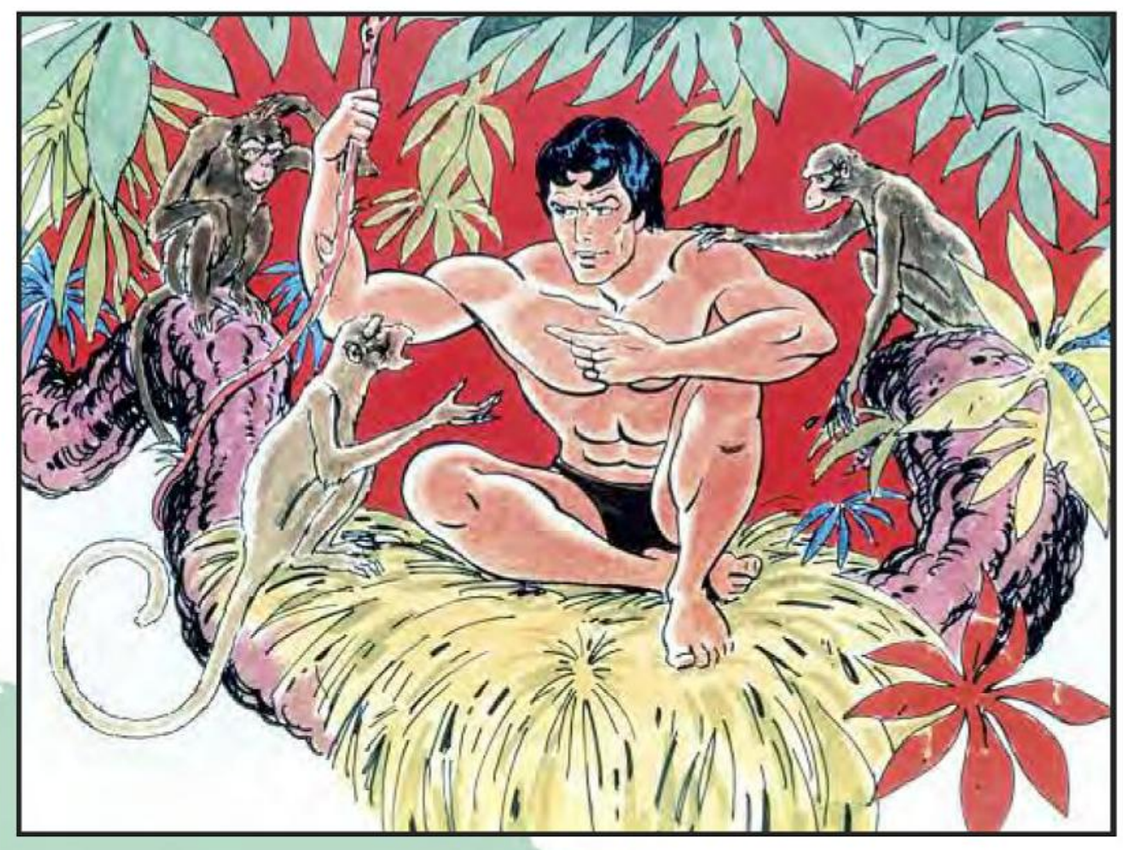
Thankfully, our loyal friend at CBS, Jerry Golod, stuck behind us, giving us two-and-a-half hours of their four-and-a-half hour schedule, buying *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle*; new episodes of *The Shazam!/Isis Hour;* our new live show, Ark II; and eight new shows of our stalwart, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. This bottom line was not great, however, as we were down from 96 half-hours in 1975 to only 53 half-hours for 1976.

In mid-April the Daytime Emmy nominations were announced for the 1975–1976 season, and we were in the running again. This time *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* scored its second nomination in the Outstanding Entertainment Childrens Series category. Ultimately, it did not win, but it was far from the only accolade the series was garnering. One syndicated article called Bill Cosby's humor on *Fat Albert*, "inherently delightful, graceful and dignified as his approach to the issues and children he speaks to."

In late May word started hitting the press about our newest educational gambit; we were teaming up with McGraw-Hill Films to put videos of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* and teaching guides out to schools for use in the third grade. The materials were prepared by our staff, working with Dr. Gordon Berry, and episodes included our stories about stereotyping, making new friends, lying, going to the hospital, using drugs, and accepting personal limitations. The move was the first time a commercial property had been used in that manner; public television's *Sesame Street* had predated it for earlier grades.

We were also working with the governmental Bureau of Land Management on their "Johnny Horizon" campaign, to produce *Fat Albert* PSA commercials urging kids to help preserve and protect the environment and to not litter. And in June the Westwood Methodist Church in Los Angeles began teaching a religious school class called "Learning Values with *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*."

Meanwhile, Bill Cosby was working on a new variety series for ABC, and, for the past six years, he had also been working



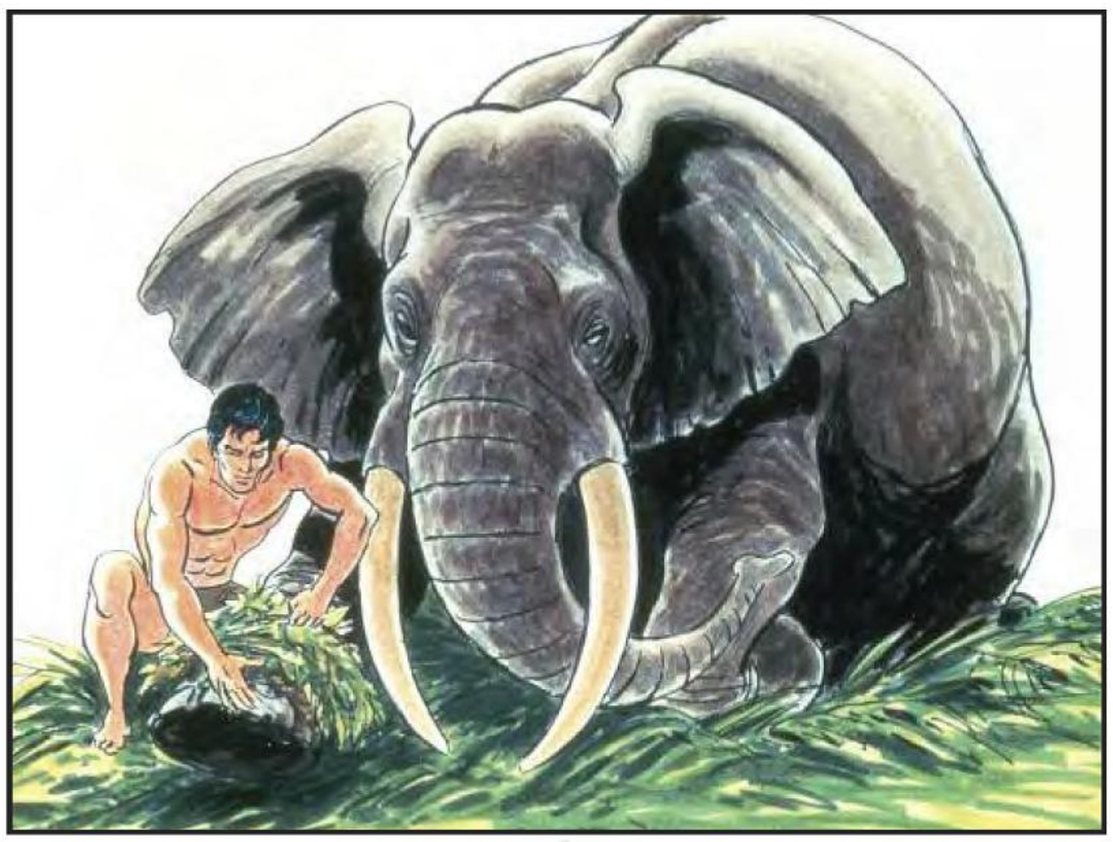
on something else between gigs: his doctorate degree in education at the University of Massachusetts (where he had earned a master's degree in 1972). His 242-page, 48-footnote dissertation was titled "The Integration of the Visual Media Via *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* into the Elementary Schools Culminating as a Teacher Aid to Achieve Increased Learning"; I think you can guess what it was about. He was awarded his doctorate degree in May 1977. At the party at his home after the graduation ceremony, a Fat Albert ice sculpture was on the buffet table.

Other than *Fat Albert*, one of our most beloved shows—and from my understanding, the one fans most want to see on DVD other than *Shazam!*—was *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle*. It took a while for me to get the rights. By this time our family lived in the town of Tarzana, on top of one of the tallest hills. Our home looked down on pretty much everything in the valley. Tarzana was named after Tarzan because Edgar Rice Burroughs

lived there. In the early 1900s, he had bought a ton of land there and built Tarzana Ranch on it. As he sold the land off, the town sprang up around it and eventually became known as Tarzana.

Back in 1923 Burroughs incorporated himself so that his works would be protected under a business, and his family ran Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. (ERB) after he died in 1950. So, I got it into my head at one point that I wanted to do a Tarzan cartoon, and I went down the hill to see them in their offices on Ventura Boulevard. The office was like walking into the 1920s. It had all the original *Tarzan* books there, the drawings that were made for the books, and the material that they collected from all over the place. It was just fascinating to go down there and spend time with those people. The family was very protective for obvious reasons. It was a very difficult deal to make, but I knew that it would be a perfect property for a Saturday morning show.

I had a bunch of lunches with them, and talked about what

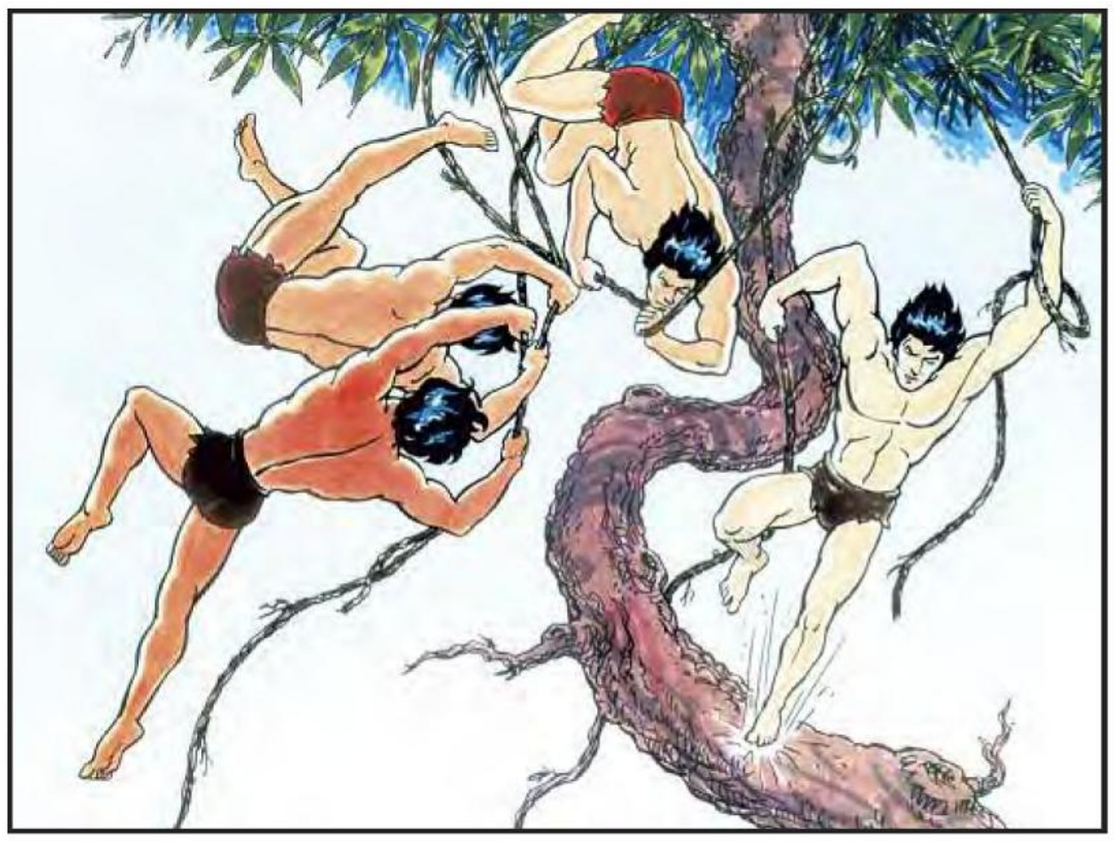


Filmation would do with *Tarzan* and how we would keep to the spirit of the books. I wanted to do a feature film introduction as to how he was born and where he came from, but we couldn't work that out. David Gerrold even wrote up a script and met with Danton Burroughs, Edgar Rice Burroughs' grandson, but that did not go well. Danton didn't like some of the changes David had made, which were really to make the story flow a bit better. Danton got very testy with David, apparently, and that verbal tussle ended up being part of the cause for David leaving Filmation after that to work for Krofft. Later, though, the Burroughs estate and Filmation worked things out, and they were very easy people to deal with, except for the deal itself, which is really what their concern was. I think we ended up with being equal partners.

But the money wasn't the most important part to me about *Tarzan*. The most important part was to do a show with a hero who was really sort of a normal adult. He couldn't fly, he couldn't do all the superhero stuff, but he had that capacity to work with animals, and was raised by an animal. And there was no place in the world where you could go where you couldn't see or sell Tarzan. I mean it eventually sold like hotcakes all over the world. It was very, very successful.

Below: *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle* presentation art

Danton Burroughs and I became very close to one another. Danton did all of Tarzan's yells. Actually, there was only one main yell, and we just kept using it over and over. The funny part is that Danton lived down a hill and across the street from me. I could hear him doing those damn yells every morning; it used to drive me nuts sometimes because you could hear it wafting up over the hill. Danton was a collector, and in his house were thousands and thousands of things. They weren't all Tarzan related, although there was a lot of that; there were toys from all over the world, and little statues. I couldn't figure out



how you could keep that house clean. You'd need a whirlwind to get rid of just the dust that those damn things collected, but he somehow took care of all that.

Once we got the rights to Tarzan, we sold it to CBS. Jerry Golod was behind it immediately. Then we had to figure out what stories to tell. There were 24 novels, and we developed our stories from some of them and created others that were more appropriate for our more enlightened time, or more fun for children. I'm not going to say that Edgar Rice Burroughs was not contemporary, but we tried to keep it so that there was some talk about preservation, how to treat animals, and treating the other human denizens of the jungle—or lost civilizations—with sensitivity. And we made the decision to have him speak, unlike some of the movie Tarzans. He was fully articulate and intelligent, even if he wasn't always a perfect speaker. And we put in lots of animals because children love animals, and it was entirely appropriate for this show to

have them.

We wanted this to have a lush, illustrative feel to the art and animation, like the work of famed *Tarzan* comic strip artist Burne Hogarth, but we also had to be mindful of our budget. Other studios reused animation as much as we did, or sent their work overseas and cheated American animators out of work, but we felt that, if we built an excellent set of scenes as a stock system for *Tarzan*, it would work. We wanted the anatomy to be very realistic, and this included muscular definition and even details such as painting in the eyes completely instead of having them be just the dots used on many adventure series.

So we ended up shooting a lot of live-action footage of a model walking, running, jumping, diving, swinging, and doing the things Tarzan did. We did close-ups of faces and hands as well. Then we rotoscoped over the live-action to create our stock, projecting the film so that artists could draw it exactly like a real body moved. Our rotoscope model was a bartender from the bar down the street from Filmation, called The Dug-Out, where all the animators would disappear at two or three o'clock and didn't show up for hours. There was another bar nearby called The Bunker that was also very popular.

We had to do a lot of stock because Tarzan did a lot of action. The guy was just a very spectacular human being, not a superhero. He was jumping through trees, grabbing vines, and running and swimming. Superman was easy; he just flew through the air and picked up a log or a truck or a crook every now and then. But Tarzan moved all the time doing things. And on top of his physicality, he had the animals working with him!

The main animal was N'Kima, a spider monkey that hung around with him. I did the voice of N'Kima, but he didn't talk so much as he just made noises. I guess I did good monkeys. Or cheap monkeys anyway. All they had to do was feed me a couple of peanuts. We had gorillas and elephants and lions, and, eventually, we even had an episode with Jane, the woman Tarzan would fall in love with. That episode was specifically requested by the Burroughs estate, which wanted to resecure the rights to the Jane character, who hadn't been used in visual media since 1959.

We did get to do Tarzan's origin in brief form in the opening title montage, which was storyboarded and laid out by Bob Kline. It was probably the first time in animated history that opening narration talked about the death of parents, but it was important to show where Tarzan was from, and why he was raised by apes.

The pilot episode of *Tarzan*, written by Len Janson and Chuck Menville, was "Tarzan and the City of Gold," which was adapted directly from one of Burroughs' books. Len and

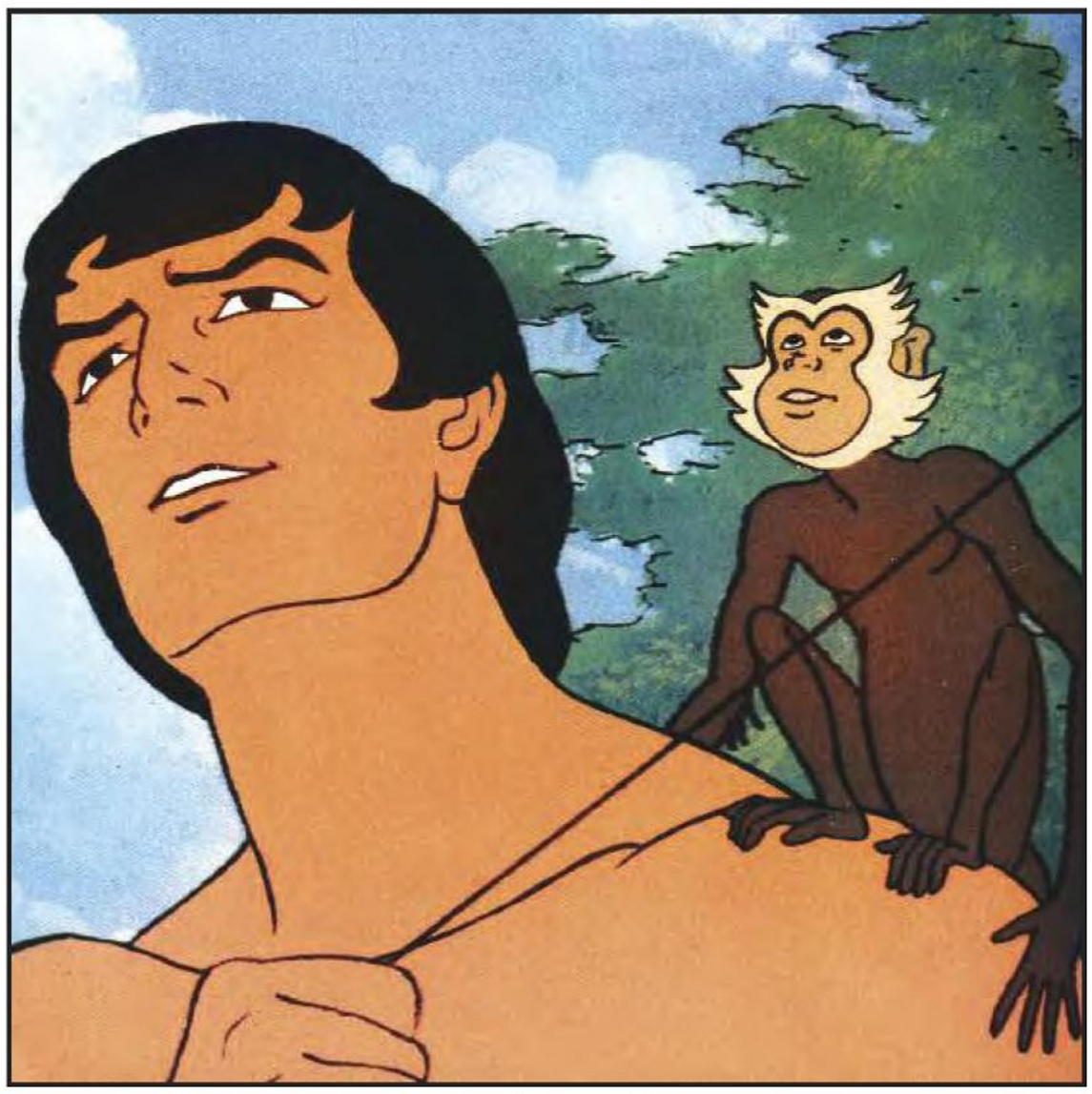
Chuck wrote a lot of the scripts, either as a team or separately. The first few seasons of *Tarzan* were all full-length stories, though, in later seasons, we did have to do shorter stories and, in some cases, even cut long episodes down to shorter lengths. That was always tough because they were difficult to shorten. We always had Tarzan come on at the end and give a moral about the episode as well.

Robert Ridgely was the voice of Tarzan. He was one of the funniest men I ever met, and was a big handsome guy. He did other voices for us, and appeared in some of our live shows like *Ark II*. Later on he was in a bunch of Mel Brooks' movies. Other than Robert, and me as the monkey, there weren't any other regular cast members for the show, so in some ways it had the smallest cast of anything we had done. But in other ways, since Tarzan was always discovering new civilizations and lost tribes and so forth, it meant we got to do new characters in every episode.

Over at Filmation West, *Ark II* was our next live-action show in development, and it harkened back to my love of science fiction, as well as addressing many of the ecological concerns that were very big at that period of time in our country. The series was set in 2476, after the Earth had become a biological wasteland. It was a world that had gone to hell because of what man had done to it, and we had a group of three scientists aboard a futuristic vehicle known as *Ark II* who would roam around the country, looking to help the people who were left and return them closer to humanity, or what humanity should be. The three scientists were: a bearded blond guy named Jonah, who used a flying backpack called the "Jet Jumper"; a gorgeous Asian-American woman named Ruth, who was the medic; and a young technological genius named Samuel. Travelling with them on *Ark II* was a hyper-intelligent talking chimpanzee named Adam.

One of the key elements of the series is that we wanted another show that we could film basically outdoors, without a lot of huge sets. But we also had to have a main set that would be the Ark II, which we needed to be the coolest vehicle ever seen on TV. CBS gave us the money without any trouble; Jerry Golod liked the idea of the show. Our original look for the Ark was more like a British double-decker bus, with a jeep that had a bubble over the top functioning as the Roamer.

Curtis M. Brubaker, the head of The Brubaker Group, did some new designs, and we loved them. The vehicle was created by his company, which had also created the Batmobile for the 1960s *Batman* TV show. The Ark II's body was made of fiberglass-reinforced plastic panels (sandwiching a urethane foam), built over the top of a five or ten-ton Ford series C-700 truck chassis that had been a garbage truck they'd bought in St. Louis. The truck base was worth about $75, and we spent $75,000-100,000 to fill it with this stuff around it! Brubaker added an additional axle and a steel cage for the body, then put World War II aircraft parts near the axles of the fourth wheels to look like futuristic nuclear-fueled nitrogen turbine engines.



Opposite:
Storyboards from the opening sequence of *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle*

Above:
Tarzan and N'Kima

The truck itself had nothing in the interior; it was just the truck and some driver's seats and a cinematographer's platform—and a raisable periscope that could come out of the top for a character to scout with—but it sure did look neat. It was 44 feet long; it was a damned big thing! Theoretically, it carried the Ark Roamer, and the back would open up as an electronic docking ramp, and the car would come out of the back end. The resulting vehicle could drive and was fully functional—including the back ramp—but visibility was kind of an issue because it was so big. Also, the actual driver was down below in the nose area; the "driver" seen through the cockpit windshield was relaying directions to him!

The Brubaker Group also designed a second vehicle called the Ark Roamer, which was kind of a futuristic dune buggy. They modified their build-it-yourself "kit car" called "the Brubaker Box." The top of the car was assembled on top of a Volkswagen chassis. Since one of our actors was too young to drive, an automatic transmission was put in.

The Brubaker Group built the vehicles in 40 days—30 for the Ark, 10 for the Roamer, with 30 people working round-the-clock—and we drove it up the freeway to Paramount Ranch to shoot the series. People thought they were seeing the space shuttle land. This was a sleek looking sucker, and that was the early days of space flying. It was really awesome.

Left and Right:
Behind the scenes photos of Nelson Tyler flying the Jet Jumper and Jay & Erika Scheimer with Moochie

Below:
The cast of *Ark II* included (l to r) Jose Flores as Samuel, Terry Lester as Jonah, Jean Marie Hon as Ruth, and Moochie the monkey as Samuel

Opposite: (top to bottom)
Samuel and Adam on set

Ruth and Samuel aboard the Ark Roamer

Nelson Tyler wears the Jet Jumper

Unfortunately, the truck kept falling apart underneath the exterior; we had a lot of breakdowns, and we had a stand-by welder and other truck crew people on the set whenever we shot the vehicle.

We shot a lot of scenes of the Ark going really fast out at Edwards Air Force Base at Dry Lake, where we could use chase cars and not have to worry about traffic or big rocks or anything else. Most of the rest of the exteriors for show were shot around the Paramount Movie Ranch in the Santa Monica Mountains, and Point Dume beach, because it had to look like a world that was semi-devastated. We needed room not just for the Ark, but also for people on horseback or using horse-driven carts. Some of our sets had actually been used in the *Planet of the Apes* movies.

We later used the front of the Ark on *Space Academy*, but, when CBS wanted the whole vehicle back, they didn't own the body of the truck, so all they got was the chassis. I don't know what the hell they did with it because it wasn't a very good truck.

Probably the thing people remember most about the show is Jonah using his flying backpack. The "Jet Jumper" was a modified Bell Rocket Belt, like the one seen in the 1965 James Bond film *Thunderball*. It was later used in the Olympics opening ceremonies of 1984. It was propelled by five gallons of 90% pure hydrogen peroxide!

The Jet Jumper was not flown by Terry Lester, who played Jonah, but by Nelson Tyler. These days, Nelson has his own company, Tyler Camera Systems, which specializes in stable camera mounts for helicopters. We were the first TV show to use the backpack though. Nelson had to put on one of Terry's suits, and the thing was so baggy all over him we had to sort of tape it down so it fit him because Terry was a big guy.

That thing was wild to watch. We shot a lot of footage of it. We had it for a couple of days, and we shot hundreds of feet of footage of it, so that we had a lot of different stock scenes: different views, different scenery, going down through a hill and over a mountain. Everybody wanted to be on set those days when he was flying around.

He could fly for about 40 seconds total. The backpack had a hammer gizmo in the guy's helmet that would clunk him on the head when he was about to run out of hydrogen peroxide. He then had about 15 seconds of flight left in which he would have to land. There was once that he forgot, or it didn't tap him hard enough, and he didn't have enough fuel to get all the way down. He fell about 20 feet, and almost got killed. I asked him if he ever got headaches from the thing bopping him on the head.

We had another fake backpack, which Terry wore for his scenes. I don't think he ever flew at all though. I don't think they would let him do it. The shots in the show where it's a close-up and it looks like him flying around were just camera tricks, or him standing on a platform with wind blowing at him. And then we'd cut to a shot of the other guy.

Bob Kline designed the looks of the main

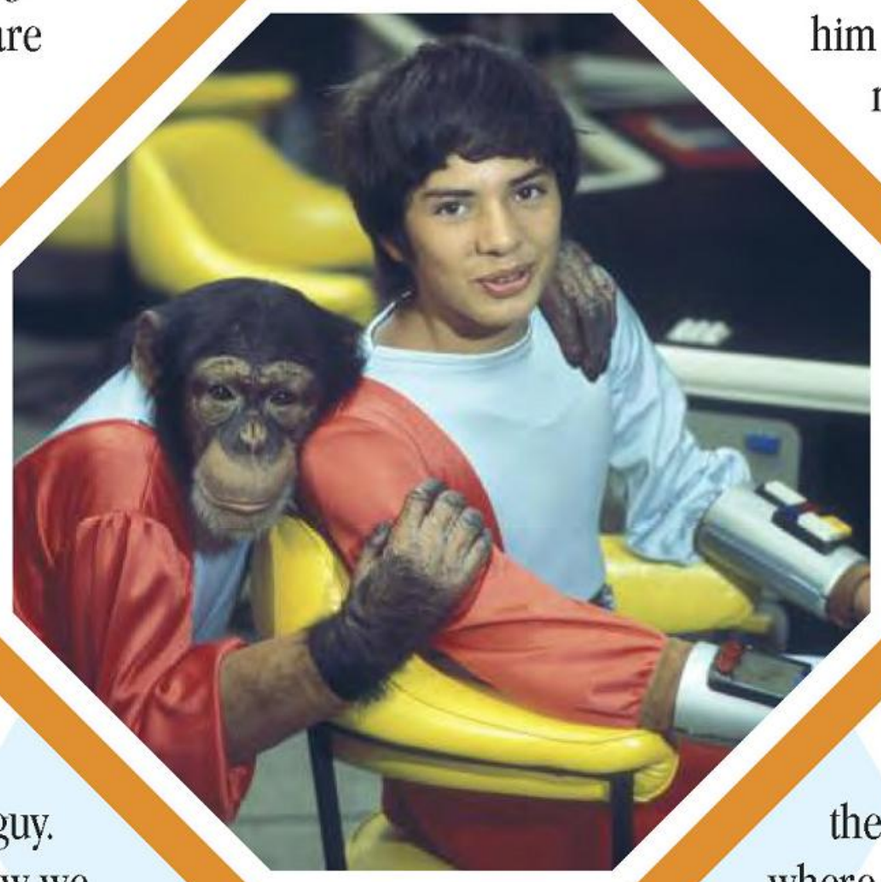
characters' uniforms, and they still look great. We had talked about them having one bare arm at one point, but decided against it. And they had stuff on their belts, and "wrist teleradios," and cool first aid kits and such. The design of the show overall was great. The actors would have to take the tops of their costumes off though when on location because they were very hot.

Terry Lester was the perfect guy for Jonah. I think Mark Harmon may have come in for this part as well, but I know that Terry was perfect. He was a very handsome and charming guy. He came in with the beard, and that's how we shot him. It wasn't a hippie thing or a Biblical thing like the references in the show; if he had been clean-shaven, that's how we would have shot him. I think this may have been Terry's first real role because I don't think he had done anything prior to this other than maybe a guest spot or something. He was a young guy, about 24, and later on he became a pretty big soap opera actor. He died in 2003, quite young.

Jean Marie Hon was lovely. I just saw her a few years ago filming materials for the DVD set, and she's still beautiful. She's now a pharmacist. She was a contract actor for NBC prior to working with us.

Jose Flores played young Samuel. His parents didn't speak any English, but he spoke it fine, unless he had been talking to them right before a shot. His parents were on the set all the time with him. We wanted a Latino character in the show, and he did a great job. It was very unusual to have a Latino lead character in a show back then, especially on Saturday morning. It might have been another barrier that we broke.

They were an easy cast to work with. They liked each other. The monkey was another story though. The monkey was named Moochie, and he was a mean little son of a bitch. Had I known what it took to make him work, I would never have stuck the monkey in as a live thing.



I heard that the trainer was awful to Moochie. The actors told me that he beat the crap out of this monkey once with a chain, and the crew had seen other stuff. And our network guy, Jerry Golod, once saw him hit it with a 2 x 4. He told me to get rid of the monkey. If he had ever hit it in front of me, I would have gone off on him; I don't like people hurting animals. But it made the monkey mean. There was one episode where Ruth was taking the monkey down the steps from the Ark, and he turned around and bit her finger. He also had to wear a diaper because you couldn't tell what the monkey was going to do or when he was going to do it. So, we made it look like it was part of his uniform. And, when he wasn't shooting, they'd take the costume off, and he'd wander around in his diaper.

I did the monkey's voice. I basically talked while I was inhaling. It was tough to do, and I coughed a lot. I couldn't do Shakespeare with him.

We had a lot of good guest stars on *Ark II*. We had Helen Hunt as a young girl, Jim Backus, Robert Ridgley, and Jonathan Harris. Jonathan played Fagon, who collected this group of kids and they were off on hell-raising adventures. We actually used him as Fagon in a few episodes because there was some talk of doing a spin-off series with Fagon and the kids. It almost happened. Malachi Throne was in one, and he was a powerful actor, with great presence. We also had one show with Robby the Robot from *Forbidden Planet* on it.

I don't recall how the concept for *Ark II* came about, or who created it. Martin Roth was our story editor, and Robert Specht wrote a lot of the episodes. But even though all of the characters were named after Old Testament

Jewish people, it wasn't meant to be a Biblical series. It just had a Biblical feel to it, with the earth starting all over again. I know we weren't influenced in any way by *2001: A Space Odyssey* or *Silent Running* or *Damnation Alley*, three movies a lot of people seem to connect the series to. But we did appropriate other themes, like bits of *Lord of the Flies*, and *Oliver Twist*.

Ark II was filmed two a week, like our other live shows. We couldn't film any scenes at night due to both the lack of visibility with the Ark and the fact that Jose Flores was a minor and was working under child actor laws. We started filming in late June and finished up in early September, the same week the show debuted! Like our other shows, this one had a moral at the end, a lot of which had ecological themes.

The Secrets of Isis filmed seven episodes in its second season, and Joanna Cameron guested in two episodes of *Shazam!* I don't recall why, but we changed the young girls on the show from Joanna Pang as Cindy Lee to Ronalda Douglas as Rennie Carrol. I would not have changed actresses because Joanna was a good gal. She was doing it well. As far as I recall, the word came down from the network to make the change.

When we recast we were not looking specifically for an African-American actress, though we did want a minority actress because I believed so strongly in diversity, and Albert Reed was mostly not on the show for season two shows. Ronalda was charming and bubbly. She wasn't in the Actors Guild at that point though, so we had to help her get into it. She was terrific. Both of the girls were. I saw them again when we did the DVD set for *Isis*, and it was the first time they had ever met each other. I wish we could have used both of them on the show!

On September 7th at 8:00 p.m., CBS aired *Hey, Hey, Hey, It's the CBS Saturday Preview Special*, hosted by Fat Albert. In the storyline, Fat Albert and friends discovered an old TV set in the junkyard, and got it to work, with the help of Captain Marvel and Isis! Showing on the TV was a preview of the CBS fall schedule. Unfortunately, preview shows such as this one have been lost to time; they were only aired once, and unless fans had early video recorders, the shows were gone. The reason that I've listed them in the book is that at times—such as with the above-mentioned show—they even featured material specifically created for the special.

Four days later, on September 11, 1976, CBS debuted *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle* at 9:30 a.m., *The Shazam!/Isis Hour* from 10:00–11:00, *Ark II* at 11:00, and our stalwart *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, returning at noon. ABC, meanwhile, burned off reruns of *The New Adventures of Gilligan* on Sundays at 10:30 a.m. Interestingly enough, due to its popularity, *Isis* was moved to the first half-hour of the combined show, with previous forerunner *Shazam!* taking the secondary slot!

To make the deal sweeter, the opening show was actually a two-parter directed by Arthur Nadel, guest-starring Captain Marvel, and titled "Now You See It…" and "…Now You Don't." Even though these were the last two shows as far as production numbers, we felt it was an important-enough two-parter to open the season with, and took out a full-page ad in *Variety* to support it. They rewarded the move a few days later with a positive review in which they said, "In form and spirit, *Isis* has a great resemblance to the old Saturday morning serials" and called it a show "current in all prevailing fads… kung-fu, magic, vans, CB and W. C. Fields."

There was another ulterior motive behind that decision. That two-parter also featured a group of teen detectives, including magician Ranji—Evan Kim (C. J. Howe), Ranji (Ranji), Craig Wasson (Feather)—who were collectively known as The SuperSleuths. We were using the show as a "backdoor pilot," to try to sell *The SuperSleuths* to CBS, but it didn't work.

Reviews were strong for our new shows. All the *Fat Albert* news for the year wasn't great, however. On September 24th, Philadelphia artist Kenneth Brown filed a breach-of-contract suit against Bill Cosby, Filmation, and a whole bunch of *Fat Albert* licensors, claiming that he had originally drawn the *Fat Albert* characters in 1970 and 1971 for Cosby's Jemmin Inc., developing the looks of Cosby's childhood friends. He was paid $6,500 in lump sums by Jemmin, and $250 a week until the characters were used in a cartoon. He claimed that when he refused to sign a letter of agreement terminating his old agreement in June 1971—and take a $1,600 payment—that Cosby had brought his sketches to us, whereby we created characters identical to or similar to those he had done. He also claimed that we had offered him 25% of profits from the show.

The suit was thrown out in mid-July 1977 by Judge Alfred L. Luongo of the U.S. District Court. The judge noted that the statute of limitations in California for such suits was two years, meaning that Brown should have filed closer to 1971.

Also in the fall of 1976, a funny switcheroo happened. DC Comics licensed *Isis* from us, to be a comic book companion to *Shazam!* She first appeared in the September-October issue #25 of *Shazam!*, and then debuted in her own title, *The Mighty Isis*, in October-November. The comic didn't follow the TV show closely at all; the characters looked essentially the same, but the adventures were more superheroic and magical, benefitting from no need for a special effects budget or actor safety regulations. The *Isis* series lasted for eight issues, up through December 1977-January 1978.

On November 6th CBS redid their schedule, moving one show earlier in the day, making the schedule as follows: *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle* at 10:00 a.m., *The Shazam!/Isis Hour* from 10:30, *Ark II* at 11:30, and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, still at noon.

Filmation made a major announcement immediately after Thanksgiving, telling the press that we were making a full-court launch into primetime live-action programming for 1977. Planned were: evening episodes of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* on CBS; evening episodes of *Isis,* concentrating on the superheroine saving lives outside the school setting; the game show *Origins Game*, resurrected from 1971; and *Haunted Island*, a 90-minute horror telefilm pilot for NBC. The variety of concepts was purposeful, but the inclusion of family-friendly elements was not, especially in a TV industry that was grasping for more family entertainment that weren't sitcoms. "We probably have more expertise than anybody in doing that sort of thing," I boldly told *Variety*. In retrospect, perhaps it was too boldly, given that none of those plans came to fruition

Journey Back to Oz—with Bill Cosby's live-action wraparounds—received its first televised airing on Sunday, December 5th, on ABC from 7:00–9:00 p.m., sponsored by Procter & Gamble. Thanks to an Associated Press headline and story carried throughout the country, it received tremendous notice.

According to the 1976 TelePrompTer Annual Report, due largely to the sales of *Archie and Sabrina* into syndication, Filmation posted record revenues of $9,500,00 and a pre-tax profit of $1,338,000. We had been climbing steadily for years, and 1977 looked to be the year we would launch not only into the space-borne serials of my youth, but see us Bataranging back to revisit a certain set of Gotham City crimefighters.

Opposite: (top to bottom)
Jonah, Ruth, and the Ark II

Above:
Ronalda Douglas joined the *Isis* cast

Image from the *Isis* episodes that served as a backdoor pilot for The SuperSleuths. (l to r) Evan Kim, Ranji, Ronalda Douglas and Craig Wasson

BATMAN
15
SEC.
MAIN TITLE

SC
BG

FADE IN

B-MAIN TITLE

S/A STAR FIELD TRANSITION.

SC 1 CONT.

REVEALING BATMAN & ROBIN

NARRATOR
Villains beware!

DOORS TO THE BATCAVE ELEVATOR OPEN ...

THEY RUN & LEAP INTO THE BATMOBILE.

NARRATOR
Here come Batman and Robin!

SC 3 CONT.

DISS. THRU STAR BG

BATMITE FINALLY SNAPS OUT

1

SC 2 CONT.

BATHOBILE EXITS STRETCHING OUT BATMITE'S ARM.

BATMITE POPS ON HOLDING ONTO TAIL FIN.

BAT-MITE
And me,...Bat-Mite!

THE *NEW* ADVENTURES OF
BAT MAN

1977–1978

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HOLY SPACE ADVENTURES, BATMAN!

As the year began, we exhibited the Ark II and the Roamer at the Greater Los Angeles Auto Show, to great fanfare. It may have been the only time we actually allowed the public to see the vehicles in person, although the show was doing gangbuster ratings. Later in the year, Curt Brubaker noted in a *Variety* interview that he was actually getting fan mail for the vehicles!

But the biggest news was to come in February. We had made a deal with Jerry Golod at CBS to do *The New Adventures of Batman*, and he wanted to do an unprecedented mid-season debut on the series. By reusing designs from our previous *Batman* show, we were actually able to get a jump on production and make the deadline for February airing. The debut would be February 12th. I think we made the deal in November or December.

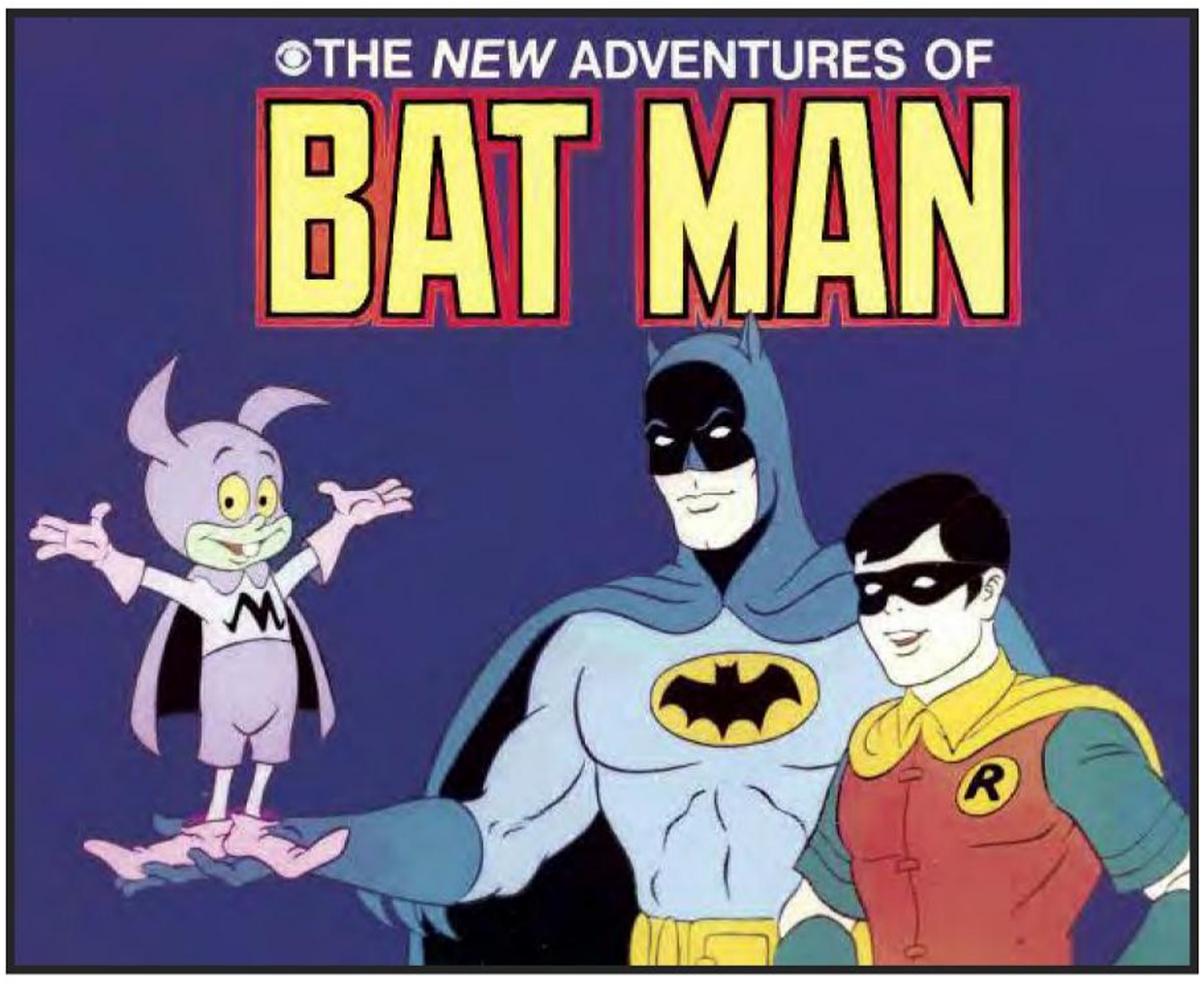
One of the biggest coups that we got for the new *Batman* was in hiring Adam West and Burt Ward to vocally reprise the character roles they had played in the 1960s live-action series. Adam was delightful to work with, and Burt had already worked with us on some live pilots before. We had them tone down the campy elements of their live approach, though we did have some of Robin's "Holy Insert-the-word-here, Batman!" phrases pop up again.

Many fans have asked how we got the rights to do Batman and Robin on CBS, when both characters were also starring in *Super Friends* over on ABC, for Hanna-Barbera. The truth is, I don't recall, but it was likely some loophole that DC Comics had in their contract, allowing the exploitation of the characters by two companies for two networks, simultaneously. But we never heard from Hanna-Barbera about that. Basically, we didn't talk to them, and they didn't talk to us.

As for the look of the show, as I mentioned, we mostly reused earlier designs for the characters, though there were some differences here and there. One big difference? Robin's costume got a black "R" on a yellow circle, instead of the other way around. Batgirl was a bit sexier as I recall, and so was Catwoman. We didn't use Alfred the Butler this time. And strangely, although we put the Riddler in our opening credits, he wasn't in the show because Hanna-Barbera had the rights for him!

Other than the Riddler, we were limited in terms of which DC villains we could use. We used Joker, Penguin, Catwoman, Clayface, and Mr. Freeze, but we also created some new villains such as the Moonman, Sweet Tooth, Professor Bubbles, Electro, the Chameleon and Dr. Devious, and Zarbor, who was like an evil version of Bat-Mite from the same magical dimension.

And then there was Bat-Mite. Now, some fans blame Filmation for Bat-Mite, but they don't know their history very well if they do. Bat-Mite first appeared in *Detective Comics* #267 in May 1959, and he was in about 19 stories through the 1950s and 1960s, including *Batman* and *World's Finest* tales. He always had the magical powers which complicated the adventures, and he always wore the goofy version of Batman's costume, but I think we may have added that he had a crush on



Above:
Storyboards, model design and logo for *Batman*

Opposite:
CBS promotional image for *The New Adventures of Batman*

Batgirl. We also changed up the costume some so that he didn't look exactly like a shrunken-down caped crusader, and we gave him a greenish tint to his skin, yellow eyes, and buck teeth.

I was the voice of Bat-Mite (and the Bat-Computer and Clayface), but I didn't work with the other voice actors in an ensemble setting. I worked by myself after-hours. I felt uncomfortable working with those people because they were the veterans. I didn't hide that I did it from them. I just told them I wasn't good enough to do it with them around watching me and laughing at me.

Doing the voice of Bat-Mite was the first time I think I used a machine called a "harmonizer." It was a way that we could control the pitch of the audio without altering the speed of the sound. I couldn't really talk as high as Bat-Mite, though I did try to record it as closely as possible to that sound, so that we didn't have to mess with it too much. "All I wanna do is help!" was the phrase Bat-Mite said in almost every episode.

Melendy Britt came on to do Batgirl and other female voices. It was the first voice she did for us, and I think it may have been the first voice she did for animation. Later on she became our She-Ra. Lennie Weinrib played Commissioner Gordon and all of the villains. Lennie was a standup comedian and a talented guy. These people who do voices are usually more talented in many ways than the people who are just face actors. I mean, they have to do with their voice what a face actor has to do with their whole body. They're terrific. Lennie went to live in Chile for a number of years after he did *Batman*.

One of the biggest changes between our old *Batman* and the new *Batman* was that we did all the writing this time; DC Comics didn't have anything to do with the scripts. They were pretty much straight-out adventure, with very little in the way of educational elements to them. We did the Bat Messages at the end of each show to bring in a moral point, but they were a bit weaker than our other series.

Like *Tarzan*, we shot some live-action footage of running, jumping, swinging, and other things, and rotoscoped over the footage to create extremely fluid superheroic movement for Gotham City's protectors. We also beefed up our background art and made some changes to the various Bat-gadgets and Bat-vehicles.

The February 12th debut of *The New Adventures of Batman* necessitated another schedule change for CBS. Now the shows aired in the following order: *Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle* at 10:00 a.m.; *Batman* at 10:30; *The Shazam!/Isis Hour* at 11:00; *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* at noon; and *Ark II* at 12:30 p.m. That meant a three-hour uninterrupted block of Filmation on CBS! Almost immediately, the new *Batman* was a big hit. CBS was happy, and it meant that our spring pitch sessions to the networks went more smoothly.

In April we furthered our prior announcement of evening expansion by revealing to the press that we had deals in place for several more properties for CBS and NBC, and that we were in talks with ABC for primetime shows, now the domain of Fred Silverman (we were still locked out of Saturday morning). Confirmed at CBS for the fall Saturday line-up were: *The Batman/Tarzan Adventure Hour; The Secrets of Isis*, now under its complete name; the live-action *Space Academy;* and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*. CBS planned to move *Ark II* to Sundays and bring back *The Ghost Busters* for reruns there as well. NBC, meanwhile, had picked up *The New Archie/Sabrina Hour*—with longer stories instead of the skits—and *The Young Sentinels*. Sonny Fox was newly in charge at NBC, and he literally redid their entire Saturday morning schedule!

Announced further by us in the press were: two primetime *Fat Albert* specials (Halloween and Christmas); a feature-length *Flash Gordon* movie for NBC for fall 1978; a 90-minute live-action *Plastic Man* movie for NBC, based on the DC Comics character; and the return of *Groovie Goolies, The Adventures of Gilligan*, and the singing group for *The Archies*. And we were in discussions with Bill Cosby to introduce another animated series we would create with him.

The *Plastic Man* movie wasn't the only live-action DC project we were planning for the year, although *Shazam!* was leaving the air. In addition to doing the voices for their characters, Burt Ward and Adam West were initially going to reprise their characters for live-action wraparounds on *The Batman/Tarzan Adventure Hour*, even

Above:
The *New Adventures* Batgirl

Left:
The Clown Prince of Crime, the Joker

Opposite: (top to bottom)
The Space Academy model

The young cast of *Space Academy*

Brian Tochi, Ric Carrott, and Ty Henderson aboard The Seeker

though we weren't doing any new episodes. By mid-July the plans for a live *Batman and Robin* had dropped, though I don't recall why. Nor do I recall what scuttled our plans for *Plastic Man*, other than that we tried our best to sell him to the networks, but they weren't interested. The following year Ruby-Spears sold him for a 1979 animated show, and the show we had tried our best to sell got us in a bit of legal trouble. More on that soon.

We weren't the only ones making a *Flash Gordon* feature; so was Dino de Laurentiis, who licensed the film rights from King Features in August. More about that in a future chapter, but the era of science fiction was about to explode on television and film—and licensing—thanks to two words that shook the galaxy: *Star Wars*.

Now, for those readers who feel that we were riding the wave of *Star Wars* mania that swept the country by creating *Space Academy*, I'll point out that *Star Wars* didn't premiere until May 25, 1977, and nobody knew it was going to be a hit. We had already developed and begun creating *Space Academy* before Luke Skywalker ever took up his lightsaber!

That isn't to say that we didn't benefit from *Star Wars* when it came to production. Several of the people who worked on *Space Academy* were *Star Wars* veterans, and others were effects designers who had grown up in a post-*2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Star Trek* world. I went out to a little place in Van Nuys, and I was looking for people who could make three-dimensional models, because we had to make some ships. And there was an outfit out there that had been doing a movie in England that was going to be released later on that year… *Star Wars*! And in the corner of their shop was a robot—R2-D2—and it's got cobwebs all over it, and there was C-3PO, and X-Wing fighters, and ships lying around all over the place. I thought these guys were nuts! I mean, how can you do that stuff? So, I hired a bunch of them.

Rob Maine, who ended up being one of the effects supervisors, had actually talked us into building the Academy on an asteroid rather than a space station. The asteroid was painted Styrofoam, while the three geodesic domes were inverted champagne glasses and the exhaust pipes were painted cigar tubes. The original Academy model cost about $200 in supplies. John Erdland, Lorne Peterson, and Paul Houston also did models for *Space Academy*, creating the spaceship and the Academy itself in a garage workshop, out of model kit parts from tanks and other vehicles.

Sets for *Space Academy* cost about $300,000 and included the interior Academy sets, a planet set with a movable cyclorama backdrop, the Seeker launch bay (with the nose of the Ark II doubling as The Seeker spaceship), and an effects set. Chuck Comisky, who is now a pretty big name in special effects with James Cameron and such, also helped supervise the effects; we didn't know he had kind of fudged his résumé to get hired, but he did an excellent job. He came up with a great way to do outer space, which was to hang a black curtain on a wall, and to have little Christmas tree lights all over it that they could make twinkle.

But I'm getting a bit ahead of myself. Just in case you aren't familiar with the show, here's the gist of *Space Academy*: Under the guidance of their instructor Commander Isaac Gampu, the young cadets of Blue Team One who are attending Space Academy in the year 3732 include Captain Chris Gentry; his telepathic sister, Laura Gentry; action-oriented Tee Gar Soom; brainy Lieutenant Paul Jerome; and the pretty, young Adrian Pryce-Jones. Joining the group for learning and adventure are the robot Peepo and the blue-haired, mysterious space orphan Loki.

I owe thanks for this show to Allen "Duke" Ducovny, who at that point was working for ABC on special programming. He called me and said, "I've really always wanted to do a radio show called *Space*

Academy. Why don't you think about developing a show for Saturday morning about a Space Academy that trains young people to live in space, work in space, and do it in an interesting, fascinating, worthwhile, and pro-social way?" We ended up really doing something marvelous with it, and we brought in some great writers, like *Star Trek*'s Sam Peeples and others, who gave it a real flair. Also, our cast had a great ethnic balance and really showed that people who worked together could make a difference.

In terms of the cast, I talked Jonathan Harris into playing Gampu. We had been working together since *My Favorite Martians*, and apparently he forgave me for the debacle of *Uncle Croc's Block*. And since we didn't sell the Fagon spin-off from *Ark II*, here was a chance for him to shine in another way, as a heroic character.

Ric Carrott was a brilliant young actor, and he played Chris. Chris' sister, Laura, was played by Pamelyn Ferdin, who these days is quite an animal rights activist, and who had done a *Shazam!* for us. She had been in an episode of the original *Star Trek* with Brian Tochi, who played Tee Gar. When I saw him a few years ago for the DVD set, he somehow managed to look as young as he did 30 years ago, although I also found out that he had barely turned the required age of 18 when we hired him (younger actors couldn't work as many hours). Playing what was I believe her first role in Hollywood, Maggie Cooper was Adrian, and Paul was played by Ty Henderson, who had been in two episodes of *Shazam!* and who later did some voices for us on *Fat Albert* and *Superstretch* and *Microwoman*.

Then there was Eric Greene, who was quite small because he was only a kid. We gave him blue hair and a slightly sparkly skin-tone because we wanted him to be an alien. But, truthfully, his headshot that was sent to us in the casting process looked enough like an alien that we believed it. He was a bit goofy looking then, but he grew up to be very handsome, and he's a Stanford graduate lawyer doing pro-social work for the public today! He was also a big science-fiction fan, and ended up writing a book on *Planet of the Apes*. He and Jonathan Harris became very close, and Jonathan used to read to him on-set, and tell stories to the young kids in the cast.

And for once I didn't play the voice of the robot, though I did do some other voices on the show. Instead, my daughter Erika did the voice of Peepo. She didn't get paid enough—or anything, probably. By the way, Loki was originally called Peepo, and the robot was originally Sparky, but we switched the names around by the time we started shooting. I'll tell you, Peepo was a pain to work with because he was always breaking down, but, the way they remote-controlled him, he had so much personality that you grew to love him even if he did break down. Roger Broggie created Peepo. These days Peepo "lives" in one of the bedrooms of our house; he's one of the few props I kept from any of our series. I also have an extra arm for Peepo that we used for scenes in which he had to grasp something. I do not use it to grab cans in the pantry though!

On the set, a young man named John Berwick was eventually the script supervisor, and he did any on-set dialogue that would be recorded later. Whenever Peepo was supposed to speak, he would operate the controls that made his face or chest light up. And then Erika would loop the lines in later. John almost got the role of Chris Gentry, and he helped out a lot on the show, doing stand-ins, guest-starring, and being Art Nadel's assistant often. You'll hear more about John in a later chapter.

We also had some fun guest stars on the series, including George DiCenzo, who you'll read more about shortly, Dena Dietrich, who played Mother Nature on a very popular set of Chiffon margarine commercials in the 1970s, our voice actors Howard Morris

and Dallas McKennon, and a young girl named Paula Wagner, who grew up to become Tom Cruise's production partner!

We wanted to show that even though they were responsible, that kids in space did some of the same type of things kids on Earth did. One of the ways we did that was having made-up words they would say. Two phrases that popped up often were "Camelopardus!"—which roughly translated to "Holy cow!"—and "ORACO," which was kind of military sounding and stood for "Orders received and carried out."

Space Academy was very popular, and I think one of the reasons was that the team of kids really functioned as a family of sorts. They were all different and had individuality, but they created a community. The actors did that also, becoming a bit of a family on the set, and that showed through in their performances. And beyond that, the show had nice stories and great special effects!

Shortly after working with us to create *Space Academy,* in late May, "Duke" Ducovny resigned his position at ABC and took a job as Filmation's Vice President in charge of East Coast operations. His job meant that he would help represent us with the networks, agencies, and sponsors, as well as work on development of new programming. Our company was expanding, and others in it were promoted: Don Christensen was now VP in charge of overall studio production, and Joseph Simon became the new production supervisor.

One of the new shows we were working on for the fall was *The Young Sentinels*. It was about the superheroic adventures of three young humans who were transported to an otherworldly domain centuries ago, where a cosmic computer entity known as Sentinel One granted them astounding powers and eternal youth. They became the super-strong, blond Hercules; shape-changing African beauty Astraea; and a lightning-fast Asian man named Mercury. They had a spaceship and a little robot named M.O. (Maintenance Operator), and they saved humanity from aliens, time-travelers, supervillains, and even vengeful deities.

When we sold it to NBC, we did a presentation video showing everybody's origins, with the camera passing over the development artwork that we did, which we normally would have just shown mounted on boards. It wasn't really "animated," but it was a cool presentation and made it clear that the cast was multi-ethnic and multi-gender. Astraea turned out to be the first African-American superheroine featured in a Saturday morning series—and she was the team leader—and I suspect that Mercury was the first Asian superhero in animation as well!

George DiCenzo was Hercules and Sentinel One. He had an excellent deep voice, and he was an easy-going guy. His biggest role I think was when he played the lawyer on the *Helter Skelter* movie. He later did *Blackstar* for us as well. Dee Timberlake was Astraea, and she was an African-American actress that did a lot of TV guest roles. Evan C. Kim was an Asian-American actor, and he played Mercury. He did a bunch of movies, including a *Dirty Harry* film, and he liked martial arts. I think he and Ronalda Douglas from *Isis* had a little romance going for a while; they met because he was in two episodes as

Opposite: (top to bottom)
Eric Greene is read to by Jonathan Harris during a break in filming

Peepo the robot and *Space Academy* script supervisor John Berwick

Ric Carrott and Pamelyn Ferdin

Left: (top to bottom)
Original title card for *The Young Sentinels*

The first African-American super-heroine on TV: Astraea

The cast for the live-action *Young Sentinels* pilot

one of the members of the SuperSleuths.

I was the voice of M.O., using the name "Ross Hagen." At least I think it was me! With M.O. and Sentinel One, you have to remember that this was before computers had really done much in our society, and to stick a computer into an animated show really was graphically interesting. I loved the lights on it. And we had a giant holographic head, too, kind of like the wizard used in *The Wizard of Oz*, with maybe a touch of the holograms from *Star Wars*. The little robot I played was meant to look kind of like the robots in the movie *Silent Running*.

Len Janson and Chuck Menville had developed the series, and also served as its associate producers and story editors. A lot of the episodes were written by David Wise or Michael Reaves. David had been the co-writer on the Emmy-winning episode of our *Star Trek*, and Michael had started with us on *Isis*. Both of them have been very successful since then, writing for animation and books.

We also filmed a 12-minute live-action "talent test" of *The Young Sentinels* for an anthology show that would have been called *Space Express*. Evan Kim was in *The Young Sentinels*, but I don't know who played Hercules or Astraea. When we did the DVD set for The *Young Sentinels* in 2006, we included both the presentation pilot and the live-action pilot on the set.

We filmed another six-minute live pilot segment for *Space Express* that featured four recognizable faces as a rock band that toured space in a flying van. Looking back on the video, I recognize pre-*BJ and the Bear* Greg Evigan as the bandleader, Dal; *Brady Bunch*'s Maureen McCormick as Maura; Craig Wasson as Maura's guitar-playing smart-alec brother, Wuzzie; and what appears to be *Leave it to Beaver*'s Tony Dow as uptight Gig. They sang The Beatle's "A Hard Day's Night" in the pilot.

There's one other live set of segments that we filmed, and, while I truthfully have no recollection of it, the sets, timing, and star place it within this year. We filmed a variety of costumed segments for *Major Majic and his Fun Ship*, starring Charlie Dell as a guy in a green space suit with yellow and orange cape, who lived aboard a satellite called the Fun Ship with Cosmo, a tall, fuzzy, yellow-furred alien in a red clown suit, and a pink rabbit puppet. Telling riddles and jokes and doing silly magic tricks, Major Majic introduced various animated show segments. Sometimes they would interact with the LAPD's Officer Mike and his Macaw, Officer Byrd, who would give various safety-related tips for kids. Officer Mike—in reality Michael Simonsen—and Byrd later did safety segments in schools and for TV stations from 1977 through the 1980s. I believe that he's the one who made the "Stranger Danger" campaign famous.

The five segments of various *Major Majic* shows were: "*The Adventures of Humphrey*"; "*Fables of the Green Forest*," based on early 1900s books by Thornton W. Burgess; "*Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*," based on a live-action Australian show from the 1960s; "*The Adventures of Black Beauty*," based on Anna Sewell's 1877 novel; and "*Swiss Family Robinson*," based on Johann David Wyss' 1812 novel. I don't recall what kind of development work on those animated shows was ever completed, but I can tell you that the Fun Ship model was clearly made by our *Space Academy* crew, and I narrated the opening and closing.

Back now to shows that did sell. Our other animated show for NBC was *The New Archie/Sabrina Hour*. After an eight-season run, CBS had cancelled our *Archie* franchise in 1976, but when the syndicated *Archie* package sold through the roof, NBC was convinced to order new shows. The hour included a twelve-minute *Sabrina* episode, followed by a 24-minute *The New Archies* episode and then another 12-minute segment called "Surprise Package," which might feature any of the cast.

In the *Sabrina* shows, the fetching witch spent much of her time trying to make people forget they had seen her use magic. Meanwhile, the *Archie* shows were largely the same type of stories, just longer than before and with two musical numbers per show.

We also added a Hispanic teenager named Carlos into the show, with Jose Flores from *Ark II* doing his voice. He had never done a voice-over before then. Talking about putting another minority character in *Archie* makes me realize that there was one major minority we didn't feature in Riverdale; shouldn't there have been some Jewish people? I should have had a rabbi in there or something!

We also put in a new robot character that Dilton Doily created, named Q. That probably was our nod to *Star Wars*, but you also have to remember that, at that point in time, robots were starting to

appear everywhere, even on primetime shows: *Six Million Dollar Man* and *Bionic Woman* had robots, *Wonder Woman* had robots—they were a part of what was going on in the entertainment culture.

On July 30th, eight of the top studios joined the International Animated Film Society (known as ASIFA) as corporate members. Joining up were: Filmation Inc., Hanna-Barbera Productions, Stephen Bosustow Productions, Walter Lantz Productions, Quartet Films, Pyramid Films, Bill Melendez Productions, and DePatie-Freleng Productions. Our main competitor, Hanna-Barbera, was having a rocky year with IATSE 839, the animation union; early in the year, they were under public fire for pushing their animators to speed up their output, and, in September, H-B began laying off workers in the middle of the season, even as other companies were hiring more. And, as IATSE filed with the government for additional unemployment compensation for workers in November, Hanna-Barbera again took blame for sending more and more of their work overseas to cheaper companies.

The 1977 fall season allowed us to set a record for Saturday morning television, as we had ten half-hour shows on the air, mostly with new material. That beat the previous record, in 1975, when we had aired eight. We were riding high indeed!

Thursday, September 8th, CBS aired their *Wacko Saturday Preview* from 8:00–9:00 p.m., with appearances by Jim Backus, Soupy Sales, Loretta Switt, and… Darth Vader! Amusingly enough, CBS's ad featured a larger picture of our animated Batman and Robin than they did of the galaxy's greatest villain. Jonathan Harris also appeared, though I don't recall if it was in character as Gampu or not. NBC's one-hour special aired on September 9th from 8:00–9:00 p.m. and featured the uninspired title of *C'mon Saturday*. It was hosted by Broadway's *Annie* star, Andrea McArdle, with appearances by Arte Johnson, Leonard Nimoy, Muhammad Ali, and Ruth Buzzi, and clips from the various new shows.

That new season debuted on September 10th. *The Young Sentinels* was at 9:00 a.m. on NBC, followed by *The New Archie/Sabrina Hour* at 9:30. Viewers could then switch over to CBS at 10:30 for *Space Academy*, followed by *The Batman/Tarzan Adventure Hour* at 11:00, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* at 12:30, and *The Secrets of Isis* at 1:00 p.m. Sundays saw *The Ghost Busters* at 9:00 a.m. and *Ark II* at 9:30, both on CBS.

Space Academy became our newest license to sell, as Hasbro made a deal with us in September, just a week after the show debuted, to produce toys. For those who might be lucky enough to have the *Space Academy* dolls or outfits, you may notice they were released by Aviva. That actually was a division of Hasbro.

In other licensing news, even though the show had been off the air for two years, through the new science-fiction film & television magazine *Starlog*, we began selling numbered and hand-painted sericels of *Star Trek* animated scenes. The process by which we made them was the same as any other cel, but they were mass-produced. *Starlog* also gave us some publicity on our shows, though they seemed lukewarm to any animated fare.

In early September, Filmation was served with another lawsuit, this time by writer Silas Jones, who also filed against CBS and writer Marc Richards. Seeking a multimillion-dollar finding in Los Angeles Superior Court, Jones alleged that we had all conspired and agreed to infringe on his literary property, "*Tom-Tom and Sudani*," when we created *The Secrets of Isis*. Despite the fact that his project was an African-based children's superhero story, he claimed we had used its original format, characters, costumes, and even jewelry for *Isis*. Nothing ever came of this suit, although Jones later published his book, now titled *Children of All: (The Adventures of TomTom and Sudani)* in October 1978, illustrated by Karl McIntosh.

In mid-September Metromedia Producers Corp. made a deal with us to syndicate *Groovie Goolies and Friends*, a package that included 104 half-hours of Filmation-controlled shows: *The Groovie Goolies* (16 half-hours), *The Adventures of Waldo Kitty* (13), *Lassie's Rescue Rangers* (17), *The New Adventures of Gilligan* (24), *My Favorite Martians* (16), and a segment featuring *M-U-S-H, Wacky and Packy*, and *Fraidy Cat* (18). The plans were for the syndicated series to launch in September 1978.

Airing on October 24th at 7:30 p.m. on CBS, *The Fat Albert Halloween Special* was the seventh most-watched show for the week. The story, by Bill Danch and Jim Ryan—and directed by a returning-for-a-visit Hal Sutherland—dealt with the kids trying to play some tricks on older people in their neighborhood, including a cranky man who worked at a movie theatre, a crafty old man named Mudfoot, and the elderly widow

Opposite: (top to bottom)
The *Young Sentinels* team
The cast of the *Space Express* pilot
Charlie Dell in filmed material for *Major Majic and his Fun Ship*

Above: (top to bottom)
The cast of *The New Archie/Sabrina Hour*
Space Academy's Loki doll released by Aviva

Mrs. Bakewell, who lived near the cemetery. Along the way, the kids learned a lesson about compassion and sympathy for older people, and about helping people become happier and not taking things for granted. *Variety* loved it, calling it "a witty enough presentation" and "a success." But perhaps one of the most memorable elements of the project—in a bad way—was the racist-sounding headline of a story about the show in New York's *Syracuse Herald*: "Halloween spooks spook Cosby Kids." One hopes the writer for that insensitive headline was called in for a little office chat.

On November 19th, NBC made changes to our schedule. *The Young Sentinels* changed titles to *The Space Sentinels*. I think it should've stayed *The Young Sentinels*. The network thought it should be something more about space though, so we changed the name. Also, *The New Archies/Sabrina Hour* was split into two separate shows: *Superwitch* and *The Bang Shang Lalapalooza Show. Superwitch* was now comprised of the *Sabrina* story and the "Surprise Package" segment, while *The Bang Shang Lalapalooza Show* was *The New Archies* stories.

Now, there's a weird story behind this *Archie/Sabrina* thing and how it got Sonny Fox fired from NBC. Sonny was a game show host and children's show host from back in the 1950s. He had hosted a comedy game show for kids on CBS in 1976 called *Way Out Games,* and after that he got a job as the executive vice president of children's programming at NBC. He had a lot of experience with children's programming, but he was having a dreadful time trying to get hit shows. But he bought *Archie/Sabrina* from us because it had been such a hit on CBS and in syndication. And, as I mentioned earlier, the entire NBC schedule for 1977 was new!

So, we did *The New Archie/Sabrina Hour*, but nobody watched the show. I'm not talking about a few people. I'm talking about nobody watched that show. So Sonny says, "We'll change the name." So, we changed the name of the show and split them up into separate shows. And still nobody watched it! It wasn't just us though; they couldn't get anybody to watch NBC. I mean the kids were so entranced by CBS that it was all they watched. Back in those days, it was before remote controls, so kids had to get up to switch the channel; the networks knew this and designed their shows so that kids would stay on one channel all morning.

So NBC fired Sonny. He came to me and said, "You son of a bitch! Here's a show that was on CBS, it was doing great, you sell it to me, and nobody watches it. What did you do to it, Lou?" I felt so bad. But the real problem was just NBC; they didn't have an audience, ever.

Even *The Space Sentinels* didn't work. Nothing worked. Every single show they did was in third place. Sonny wasn't the only one fired though, as NBC got rid of about 300 people, got rid of Sonny's job entirely, and rebooted their schedule again for the following season.

CBS also made changes to their schedule on November 19–20th, replacing *Wacko* with *Secrets of Isis* at 11:30 on Saturdays, and moving *Wacko* to Sundays to replace the reruns of *Ark II*.

That same weekend of November 19–20th, we tried an experiment in 61 Michigan theaters, rereleasing *Journey Back to Oz* for a weekend run. Despite the fact that it had been released before—and shown on TV—the results were impressive. We renewed our plans for theatrical releases of some of our properties, now consisting of new theatricals for *Fat Albert, Groovie Goolies*, and *The Archies* in animated form, and *Isis* and *Space Academy* in live-action. Our budgets were projected at $400,000-$600,000, and we planned to offer the films immediately before and after Disney feature films had debuted.

As the year neared completion, we signed a new seven-year management contract with TelePrompTer, who were discussing with us very seriously the prospect of doing a cable channel targeted specifically at children, with five hours per day of new programming on five days a week. TelePrompTer saw where cable was headed and was planning ahead. Part of that forethought was because Congress was increasingly looking into Saturday mornings, and the future of programming there had a lot of companies fearful that the market might be gone within the next five years. Advertisers were even asking us for "act of Congress" release clauses, which would terminate their contracts, just in case shows were yanked due to governmental decisions!

I was part of a special panel on December 13th at the monthly Hollywood Radio and Television Society luncheon at the Beverly Wilshire hotel. Joining me to discuss the increasingly i nvasive scrutiny by the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission into Saturday morning programming were Joe Barbera and Marty Krofft. Parental groups were calling on the agencies to ban advertising from children's shows completely, a move that would have had catastrophic consequences in the industry.

After showing clips from *Fat Albert* and *Space Academy,* I made my remarks, in which I acknowledged that pressure groups had done some good things, but that they rarely viewed the very programs they were denouncing, saying, "the watchdogs aren't even watching." Joe Barbera was more of a firebrand, saying that, due to the pressure groups, cartoons were becoming "dull, uninteresting pap," and putting out a recommendation that a parent learn to turn

the TV off if they were offended by children's entertainment. He closed with a pretty funny line, saying he hoped there would come a day again "when a cat chases a mouse, he doesn't have to stop to teach him how to blow glass or weave a basket." That last line got a lot of laughter from the room, except for one disgusted member of a watchdog group that moved from the front of the room to the rear in a grand show. We didn't take any questions.

The Fat Albert Christmas Special aired on Sunday, December 18th—delayed from an originally scheduled airing on November 29th—and delivered excellent ratings and great reviews. *Variety* said that our story, which concerned the owner of the junkyard wanting to close down the kids' clubhouse, and a little boy who had an out-of-work father and pregnant mother in need of a home, "deserves to be an annual event," while *Hollywood Reporter* called it "meaningful, and the children in us will get the message." As with the *Halloween Special*, this story, originally titled "Silent Knights," was written by Bill Danch and Jim Ryan, and directed by temporarily returned Hal Sutherland. Kellogg and Kenner were the major sponsors of the show.

One of the reasons the *Fat Albert* specials looked better than some of our others might have is that because it was a nighttime show, we got paid a little more, which allowed us to do more new material and use less stock material. Probably a bigger chunk of money went to Bill Cosby too. That was good for us this year, as CBS had not ordered any new episodes for Saturday morning, instead rerunning from the 36 already-produced shows. The strength of the show was, with as few episodes as they did each year, the numbers didn't go down. So this year, instead of buying new ones, they got the two specials.

Despite its story elements that were similar to the Nativity, the Christmas special was non-denominational and not even particularly religious. Yes, the pregnant lady and her family are trying to find a place to sleep, but the birth was with contemporary people, and there were no Godlike messages. The kids just happened to be reliving something that was very proper for that time of year. It wasn't that we were taking the story of the birth of Jesus Christ and remaking it with black people in an urban ghetto, which some cynical people have said.

For that matter, it never seemed to us that *Fat Albert* really lived in a ghetto. The characters in *Fat Albert* never complained about where they lived. They never complained about what was being done to them. They were typical American kids who sometimes played around in a junkyard because it was fun. It was our intention from the beginning of the time we did *Fat Albert* not to make them ghetto kids, but to make them normal kids. If you painted them white, you wouldn't change a word of dialogue. The show was not about racial struggles; it was about human struggles.

That's why it sometimes made me upset when people made a "Black show" out of *Fat Albert*. There's nothing wrong with shows that are aimed at the African-American community, but this is the show that broke through all of that. *Fat Albert* is for all kids. It isn't for black kids, brown kids, white kids… it's for people! And the kids who were watching understood that.

It was also one of the nice things that Cosby delivered as a comedian; he never did any "Black humor" like Richard Pryor or some other comedians. Cosby even talks about the fact that you don't talk funny, you talk so people can understand you. When Bill started out, he didn't start out as a funny black man. He started as a funny man. And as he got more and more important, it was more and more obvious that he did not belong to the group of comedians who wanted to make their jokes about race and swear a lot.

I don't mean to sound defensive about the issue, and, because we were the first animation company to break the racial barriers on television—and continued to showcase ethnic diversity in every show we did—I can understand why people have the perception. And *Fat Albert* was definitely important to the black community, and a milestone for television. But it was also a milestone for kids of any color, and it reached them just the same.

The studies all showed that, as I've mentioned before. And the advertisers knew it, as did the licensing companies. We had more and more companies signing up to feature *Fat Albert* on everything from View-Master reels, to drinking glasses (which never reached the public because they had lead in the paint), to charm bracelets, to candy, to coloring books. Perhaps the oddest licensing for *Fat Albert* to date came at the end of 1977, when we made a deal with the Bubbles Company of Van Nuys, California, for two kinds of cookies: the Fat Albert oatmeal cookie and the Dumb Donald peanut butter cookie!

All in all, despite the problems with NBC, 1977 was the best year of Filmation so far, and the future looked to get even better.

Opposite:
The Fat Albert Halloween Special

Above:
The Fat Albert Christmas Special

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
1978-1979
ANTHOLOGIES AND EXPANSION

Early in 1978, as we edged into the pitching season for the networks, we made a decision to offer a range of anthology shows, pairing shows that were already successful with new concepts we felt could be short-run hits, even if they probably couldn't sell an entire series.

Thus, in late March, third-placer NBC announced its revamped schedule, offering yet another almost entirely new line-up, with all but one of their 1977 series cancelled! We got picked up for *Fabulous Funnies*, another comic strip anthology as we had done with *Archie's TV Funnies*, utilizing *Alley Oop, Broom Hilda, The Captain and the Kids, Emmy Lou*, and *Nancy & Sluggo*.

A few days later, CBS announced their own new schedule, which included our first 90-minute show called *The Super Seven*—to include *Batman, Tarzan*, Star Command, Isis and the Fantastics, *Web Woman*, and Super Duos—plus the returns of *Space Academy, Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, and reruns of *Ark II*. CBS also ordered *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse* as a potential mid-season replacement series; a new strategy they saw as a success thanks to *Batman* in 1977. ABC, not surprisingly, did not feature any of our shows. Total for the fall season was 103 half-hours, with 57 new shows and 46 repeats.

Unfortunately, CBS did not order any new Saturday-morning episodes of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids,* something we made quite a stink about in the press in May. Although the show was still the #1 show in its time-slot, the 36 episodes had been getting rerun over and over. And, with 16 of those 36 being used in the McGraw-Hill school programs, we felt that the network wasn't behind the show. Norm Prescott told a *Variety* reporter, "The kids in the country are being cheated. The network talks out of both sides of its mouth because it uses *Fat Albert* to go to Washington to convince the politicians and the action groups of the terrific job that they're doing… and on the other side they don't order new episodes for two years in a row because they use *Fat Albert* as the crutch to keep their budget down." Instead of ordering eight new half-house at about $1 million (about $125,000 per show), they paid us a rerun fee of $400,000 (about $7,500 per

Opposite:
A montage of model sheets and photos for the *Tarzan and the Super 7* segments

Above:
A comic book advertisement for CBS's *Super Seven* lineup, drawn by Neal Adams' Continuity Studios

show). Norm also made a not-so-subtle dig that Fred Silverman would know how to properly deal with *Fat Albert* if he were still in charge. It was a risky move to publicly gripe about network programmers, but we wouldn't know what it meant for some time to come.

Meanwhile, thanks to a Nielsen report that showed that certain kinds of animation were big hits with older audiences—as proven by our two top-rated *Fat Albert* specials—CBS primetime put in an order for three more *Fat Albert* evening shows, and NBC announced that *Flash Gordon* would have a spring 1979 debut.

Originally, *Flash Gordon* had been written as a live telefilm by Sam Peeples, who wrote the *Star Trek* pilots (live and animated). But, when we told NBC the budget for live would be $10 million, they balked and asked us to do it animated. We managed to get a commitment out of them for $1 million, but even that was too low. The film was going to have 22 voices and be done with full animation, and King Features wanted a hefty percentage of the fee. Norm solved the budget problem by pre-selling *Flash Gordon*'s foreign television and theatrical release rights to Dino de Laurentiis for $1,500,000.

That latter deal was essentially a pay-off fee, as de Laurentiis wanted to do his own $12 million live-action *Flash Gordon* film, but, because we owned those rights, he had to make a deal with us, even if he wasn't going to do anything with the animated version. But we had another deal in place with him.

In early May we made a bold announcement in the press. Producer Dino de Laurentiis was backing us with a $4 million dollar budget to produce our first full-length live-action theatrical film. The film was to be called *Seven Warriors–Seven Worlds*, and it was to be scripted by respected science-fiction author Harlan Ellison.

We were also prepping a network presentation for NBC for a two-hour live-action *Batman* reunion show that would catch up with Adam West and Burt Ward ten years after their series left the air. Filmation animator Darrell McNeil described the story in an article once, saying that it was originally 20 years in the future, and all the heroes and villains were retired until aliens came to Gotham City and used their technology to de-age everyone by ten years. According to him, we also planned to give them an orbiting headquarters and a space-worthy Bat-ship. I don't recall any of those details, but Darrell was quite the comics fan, so I suspect that they're true. Reportedly, the script was either by Marc Richards or Sam Peeples.

Meanwhile, we put out casting notices in June for *Jason of Star Command*, and they were as follows: Jason, 20s, athletic, young Errol Flynn type, lead, regular; Nicole, mid-20s, pretty, athletic, lead, regular; Parsafoot, 40s, scientific character, Jason's sidekick, mentor, and friend, regular; Vanessa, 30s, femme fatale, sultry, seductive, bewitching, hard, regular; Dragos, any age, play half-human and half-robot villain type, will be costumed, regular; available guest stars with recognizable names to play cameos.

We were originally going to use Jonathan Harris as Gampu, reprising his role from *Space Academy*, but we had a falling out. We had to negotiate with him for a raise, and Jonathan wasn't happy about what we offered. He came to me and said, "Louie, never take me for granted. I am a professional, and I demand to be treated as a professional. I do not negotiate." And I said, "Jonathan, you're absolutely right, and I apologize," and asked him what he wanted. He responded, "I want not to do it from now on," and he walked out. I had apparently hurt his ego, and he didn't speak to me for a long time. Years later we finally made up, and used to go to lunch once a week or so. But, since we didn't have Jonathan, we brought in Jimmy Doohan to play the role of the Star Command leader, Commander Canarvin. He was the perfect guy to do a Saturday morning live-action sci-fi show.

By the way, my daugther, Erika, had come to work for us that summer, working for Joe Mazzuca. She was supposed to answer phones, but she wasn't very good at it and kept hanging up on people. So, Joe assigned her to help with casting on *Jason of Star Command*, and she did a lot better at that. It helped her push her limits. She had previously hung around Hal Sutherland a lot because he was such a family friend, and he taught her animation directing. He even let her direct a small sequence on a *Fat Albert* episode!

Jason of Star Command was really a breakthrough show. It was a sequel to *Space Academy*, and even used some of the same sets,

spaceships, and characters, but it showed the adventures of the grown-ups rather than the kids. And it was really done as if it were a serial, with a season-long continued storyline, a cliffhanger ending each week, evil villains, and alien creatures. It was also probably the most expensive Saturday morning show ever filmed, costing about $200,000 per quarter-hour episode!

For the lead role of Jason, a daring soldier of fortune, we tried to find a guy who was a lot like Han Solo from *Star Wars*, but not as roguish. Jason needed to be tall and charming and look like a hero. We found Craig Littler, who was just perfect. He auditioned for Art Nadel and I, and we offered him the role before he had even left the building!

We had to find somebody to match him to play the villain Dragos—the self-proclaimed "Master of the Cosmos"—and for that we got Sid Haig, who had done lots of motorcycle pictures before that, and TV villains. He was always riding a motorcycle and killing somebody. He was a perfect villain, and very big. He was also a gentle guy, but a frightening-looking guy when he wanted to be. And he had quite a deep and sinister laugh.

Sid and Craig were the same height, so, when we costumed Sid, we ended up putting him in six-inch platform boots, so he was about 6' 10". They used a mold made to conform directly to the shape of Sid's head and poured a foam compound into it to create Dragos' distinctive helmet. He also got to wear a big cape and order around all of his alien minions. Craig was dressed like a typical space hero, with tight pants and shirt.

I have a funny story to relate about Sid Haig. Filmation West looked basically like a warehouse in an industrial park. We always had salesmen stopping by to sell something or other. Art Nadel was one of the few people who had his name on a parking spot right near the door, so all these salesmen would come in asking for him because he was clearly the guy in charge if his name was on the parking spot. Just inside the building was a foyer with a receptionist and the coffee machines, and then past that were the studios. So one day a salesman came in, very insistent that he should get to see Arthur Nadel. The receptionist kept telling him that Arthur was very busy, but the guy insisted on waiting. As he was sitting there, Sid Haig came out for coffee, in costume, with his cape and platform boots and scary look. He says hello to the receptionist, gets his coffee, and exits back to the studios. The salesman's eyes bugged out, and he asked, "Who was that?" And the very quick-thinking receptionist responded, "That was Mr. Nadel." Needless to say, the guy left in a hurry and never bothered us again!

Charlie Dell was cast as the comic interest, Professor E. J. Parsafoot. He was very funny and quite animated, and it was one of the first television jobs he had done. He really made the most out of that role. Susan O'Hanlon got the role of Captain Nicole Davidoff, who was the female sidekick for the show. She was a tiny woman, but was very sweet.

We reused Peepo the robot in some of the episodes—still voiced by John Berwick during filming, but an uncredited Erika Scheimer for the show—but Jason also had his own miniature robot named W1K1. That little thing was a pain in the ass because it never wanted to work. It had all sorts of electronics in it so it would light up and beep, except it never did what it was supposed to do… at least when the cameras were rolling. It would walk along on little wind-up feet, and sometimes it flew on wires. Although I don't remember this, according to Darrell McNeil, the voice of W1K1 was actually sped-up soundtracks of Larry Storch doing the Ping and Pong characters for *Brady Kids*.

Instead of reusing the Seeker models all the time from *Space Academy*, we created new ships for Jason and the others to fly—the Starfire—and then Dragos had a big Dragonship, which was a very large, very heavy model. Dragos also had a lot of

Opposite (left to right, top to bottom):
Craig Littler as Jason
The logo for *Jason of Star Command*
Charlie Dell as Professor Parsafoot
Jason's *Starfire* and Dragos' *Dragonship*

Above (left to right, top to bottom):
James Doohan as Commander Canarvin, Jason, Susan O'Hanlon as Nicole, Sid Haig as Dragos, a stop-motion monster, the W1K1 robot, the *Star Command* cast

little fighter drones called "Red Dragon Interceptors," and we made sure to mention constantly that they were unmanned drones so that, if Jason blew one up, he wasn't killing a living being. A lot of the space sequences were done with models, but we also had full-size sets of the ship interiors. The buttons and knobs would all light up, and, if Jason looked out the window, it looked like space was outside.

Chuck Comisky, who had worked on *Space Academy*, came back as production coordinator in charge of the effects, and by now things were far better than they had been the previous year, and he built a very talented team of people, including John Grusd, Paul Huston, Ease Owyeung, Jim Veilleux, Diana Wooten, and Michael J. McAlister. They could use computers to do repeated moves with the models, which meant that they could swoop around in space, and they could also generate mattes of space in the camera, making it look like the stars were moving along with the ships.

Effects artist Jim Aupperle worked with Stephen Czerkas on stop-motion visual effects, including a lot of creatures and the famous insect monster that we used in the pilot and the opening credits. These were done in the same way that Ray Harryhausen had done stop-motion in the old days; the models were sculpted foam over the top of metal skeletons and were moved a little at a time. Then they used front-projection or rear-projection to blend the live actors with the miniature stop-motion creatures.

Samuel Peeples wrote the first six *Jason of Star Command* adventures. Art Nadel directed all of the shows, and I took part in an unseen way, providing various voices heard at Star Command, for a variety of aliens, and for the series narration.

One of the guest stars in an episode was John Berwick, reprising a role he had played on *Space Academy*. He also played some of the various monsters in suits seen in episodes. Our biggest guest star was Julie Newmar, who played Queen Vanessa, who wasn't quite the series regular we had originally envisioned. Still, we had Catwoman on the set, and Julie was stunning.

On June 28, at the independent production segment of the Television Critics Association seminars at the Sheraton Universal, Don Curran, president of Field Communications, revealed that they had committed to our plans with the newly-formed Program Development Group (PDG) to do a live-action prime-time version of *Broom Hilda* for syndication to independent TV stations. More about that soon.

In early August, the 30th annual primetime Emmy Award nominations were announced. *The Fat Albert Christmas Special* was nominated in the Children's Special category. It was *Albert's* third Emmy nomination, but our first primetime nomination. That was followed in early September, when Action for Children's Television (ACT) gave a National Achievement Award to *Fat Albert*.

I won't make you wait until the next chapter to tell you what happened with *Fat Albert*'s Emmy nomination. It didn't win. *Fat Albert never* won an Emmy. Cosby once said to me, "Don't submit it again, Lou." And I said, "Why, Bill?" He said, "Because it's a black kids' show, and you're going to make me crazy, and yourself crazy, and it's never going to get an Emmy." I thought that was a terrible feeling to have, but I couldn't figure out why the hell we weren't getting an Emmy for *Fat Albert*. It was doing 65 rating shares, and we were getting accolades left and right from politicians and newspapers and family groups and educators. But the way the Emmys were done for children's programming then was that a so-called "blue ribbon committee" would vote. I think they got the color wrong, and they were a "white ribbon committee." For the primetime Emmys, the whole membership would vote, and we still didn't win. It was horrible that it never won; it was just wrong. I still get mad thinking about it.

On to happier topics… *Tarzan and the Super 7*—as it was now called, with a numeral—was put together very intricately. Each 90-minute episode had a half-hour of *The New Adventures of Batman*—reruns from the previous season, despite the name—and an hour featuring the other components. There were six new *Tarzans* produced, but they weren't the 22-minute shows. Instead, there were two 17-minute shows and four eleven-minute shows. There were 16 *Jason of Star Command* episodes at eleven minutes each. "Isis and the Fantastics" was renamed *The Freedom Force*, and there were five eleven-minute episodes. *Web Woman* had seven episodes at eleven minutes each and three at 17 minutes each. The Super Duos

concept was split up as *Manta and Moray*, with seven episodes at eleven minutes, and "*Superstretch and Microwoman*," with seven episodes at eleven minutes each and four episodes at 17 minutes each.

It was all very complex how these fit together, but, according to records, we worked out a pattern. One week the shows would air as follows: *Web Woman, Tarzan, Jason of Star Command, Freedom Force,* and *Batman*. The following week, the shows would air as follows: *Superstretch and Microwoman, Tarzan, Jason of Star Command, Manta and Moray*, and *Batman*. Some shows obviously repeated more than others, with *Jason* repeating the least.

We had a seventh series that we were going to do, called *Sunlight and Starbright*, which would have made the *Super 7* title make sense, but, after we had done model sheets and started developing that segment, CBS told us to kill it. All of the segments had naturalistic superhero designs—not overly muscular—really diverse casts, well thought-out stories, and well-conceived and well-produced animation.

One of the components was *The Freedom Force*, and it contained an animated version of Isis, Hercules from our *Space Sentinels* show (now riding the winged Pegasus), master magician Merlin, superadventurer Sinbad, and the giant, shape-changing Super Samurai. They operated out of their mystic pyramid in the Valley of Time and faced all sorts of mythical villains. We had a lot of different ethnic groups in that show, including the first Middle Eastern superheroes on television, and what may have been the first Japanese superhero created in America, with Super Samurai and his alter ego, the young Toshi. The reason for that was very simply our commitment to diversity; out there in that audience, not everybody is a white guy or gal. It was a very imaginative and worthwhile show. Voice actors for the show included Diane Pershing as Isis, Bob Denison as Hercules, and Michael Bell as Merlin, Sinbad, and Super Samurai.

Web Woman was the adventures of a galactic superheroine named Kelly Webster, who was a redheaded NASA scientist who rescued an alien creature named Scarab from drowning. Scarab then endowed her with the strength and powers of insects throughout the world, as well as a utility belt and some technology. She had a Web Ring that could create forcefields and shoot solidifying webs and sleeping gas, and she could communicate with insects to help her. She also flew a spider-shaped ship called the Web Track that was equipped with a powerful Web Computer and a grappling towline Web Anchor. She was aided by Spinner, a furry alien creature who had big bat-like ears, and was sent on missions on Earth and throughout the galaxy by Scarab, speaking from his headquarters, Citadel Seven, who would summon her to an underground lair with the Web Call.

To transform into Web Woman, Kelly would hold out her arms like Isis and chant "Insects of the world, small creatures of the cosmos, lend me your powers now!" Linda Gary was the voice of Web Woman, and it was her first job for us, though she later returned for many of our shows. I was the voice of Scarab and Spinner, though the latter mainly spoke in sped-up gibberish. Her villains included Tsetse, Dr. Abyss, Madame Macabre, the alien Rax, Dr. Jack Frankenstein, and Doctor Despair.

Superstretch and Microwoman starred a first for Saturday mornings: a pair of married African-American crime-fighters! They were Chris Cross, who could stretch his body into any shape, and Christy Cross, who could shrink down to tiny sizes. Aiding them on their adventures in fighting villains was their plucky puppy, Trouble. Ty Henderson, who was on our *Space Academy* show, voiced Superstretch, while Kim Hamilton, who had been in *The Fat Albert Christmas Special,* played Microwoman, and Howard Morris was their ally, Lieutenant Buzz Tucker. In addition to the characters they played, both Ty and Kim were African-American. They fought villains such as Felonious Whip, a.k.a. The Ringmaster, Sugar Spice, Granny

Opposite: (left to right, top to bottom)
Cast members of *Tarzan and the Super 7*: Batman, Tarzan, Web Woman, Moray, heroes and villains of *Jason of Star Command*, Isis, Microwoman, Superstretch, and Manta

Above: (left to right, top to bottom)
More *Super 7* scenes: Tarzan, Superstretch and Microwoman with puppy Trouble, Web Woman and Spinner, Batman, the Freedom Force pose, Manta and Moray with sea lion Whiskers, the Freedom Force powered up, Manta, and Web Woman's Web Track

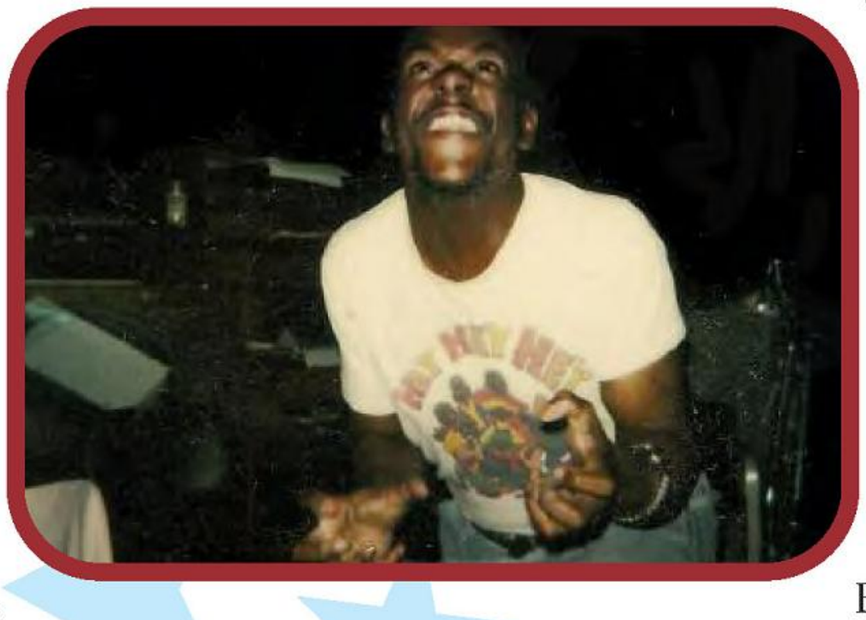
Candy, the Toymaker, Polaris and his robot Toe-D, and evil doppelgangers Superstarch and Magnawoman.

On a side note, African-American animator Darrell McNeil came to the annual Filmation Halloween party dressed as Superstretch. He had also made up a black Barbie doll as Microwoman. Guess who won first place that year?

That same year, talented layout artist Dave Hoover came as Tarzan. He was a muscular guy, and he had an identical twin brother, who also worked in layouts, named Rich. When he left animation, Dave worked in comics for many years, and taught art. Sadly, he passed away in September 2011.

Darrell noted once in an article that he had seen designs for Web Woman done at Filmation labeled "Spider Woman," but since Marvel debuted their own character by that name in *Marvel Spotlight* #32—cover-dated February 1977, a year before we sold the show to CBS—and she had her own series already by April 1978, it's unlikely that anyone at Filmation kept that name around for long. Our Web Woman had almost no similarities to Spider-Woman other than superficial ones. As for how DC Comics reacted to *Super 7*? You'll have to wait until later in this chapter to find that out.

Manta and Moray starred two humanoid "Monarchs of the Deep," who protected the world's sea creatures alongside their friendly sea lion named Whiskers. Manta was the last survivor of the water-breathing civilization of Mu, while Moray was a blond female human who had been rescued from a plane crash. While Manta could communicate with sea life, Moray could hold her breath for incredibly long periods of time, and often rode atop the female grey whale Guppy. Like Superstretch and Microwoman, Manta and Moray were married. Joan Van Ark, who later became big on *Knots Landing*, voiced Moray, while Manta was Joe Stern. Villains they fought included a radiation-mutated kelp monster, evil whale-hunters, treasure hunters, amphibious fish-men, and others. "Manta and Moray" could probably be called the world's first eco-friendly superhero show, as many of the stories revolved around people abusing the oceans and environment.



I have to note that you're going to see Darrell McNeil's name pop up quite a few times in the course of this tome. He was only in our employ for a short time—on staff in 1978 and freelance from 1979–1983—but he made an interesting and colorful impression during his time with us. Darrell got his first on-screen credit on *Super 7*. He wasn't even 21 yet, and he had worked at Hanna-Barbera during the previous season, but part of the reason he came over to Filmation was because of our generous credit policy for animators. He co-wrote a book called *Animation by Filmation* in 1993, with storyboard artist Michael Swanigan, which I'll discuss in a future chapter, and he retains one of the most prodigious minds when it comes to Filmation history. I always like to joke that I hired Darrell because he wouldn't leave our lobby; he kept showing up every day, and I finally had to hire him just to get rid of him! In truth, that wasn't the case.

Darrell was one of a group of young employees who came to our studio by means of an idea spearheaded by creative director/producer Don Christensen—whom everyone called "Chris," but I'll continue to call Don because it might confuse people. Don noted that during the 1976–1977 season, crosstown rival Hanna-Barbera had instituted a program to train young artists just emerging from art schools and colleges to become the next generation of animators, as most of their and our staff artists were in their 40s and up into their 70s in many cases. Don proposed—and Norm and I agreed—that it would be a good idea for us to do the same thing, as we were experiencing the same age/experience issues at Filmation, not to mention it would expand the pool of available talent we could draw upon here in Hollywood. Especially with the increase in production we were experiencing, I was still determined to keep all our production here in town.

As they had done at Hanna-Barbera, we would conduct our training classes after working hours, usually from 6:00–9:00 at night, free of charge to those who fit our qualifications, with Don as our lead instructor and others serving as teachers when they had time. No one was paid extra for his or her teaching time; fortunately, the vast majority of our staff was eager to be involved with our newbies. Our classes were different than Hanna-Barbera's in one major way, however, and that was in terms of what we stressed in our production versus what they stressed. Because of our differing approaches to production, Hanna-Barbera's were focused on the workman-like mechanical aspects of their animation productions, much of which might be broken up to go overseas. But for Filmation, thanks to the Burne Hogarth-like approach to our adventure shows like *Tarzan* and *Flash Gordon*, we became known more as a studio that emphasized strong and meticulous character posing and drawing and—led by an exceptional designer named Leo Swenson, whose sole task was designing intricate and engaging line art background drawings—we thus became known as more of a layout-oriented studio. I've written about how limited animation was necessary—for all companies—for budgetary and time reasons. Since so much of the work involved not moving things, Filmation felt that using stronger graphic design and posing would give our viewers a visual that would make up for the lack of actual animation. So, layout, design, and strong art were what we taught in our training classes.

Darrell was one of the first graduates of our training program, along with fellow layout artists Lorenzo Martinez, Mitch Schauer, Curt Walstead, and Michael Mitchell, and young storyboarders Tom Minton, Eddie Fitzgerald, and Mike Joens. The thing about Darrell, though—which I didn't know at the time—was that, at the time of our afterwork classes, he was also working full-time at Hanna-Barbera and rode the bus everywhere he went—and still does. Hanna-Barbera was two hours away from his South Central home, and we were two hours away from Hanna-Barbera for him, yet he still made

the long trips, from Hanna-Barbera to us and then from us here in Reseda back to South Central L.A. late at night! He was probably the first actual *fan* of our shows we hired to work here—he was also a fan of Hanna-Barbera; no accounting for taste, I guess—and often during his employ would voluntarily work late hours without asking for overtime. He loved working that much. There would be times that the only people in the building would be him and Don Christensen.

Darrell and other fellow young artists had a penchant for practical joke pulling during working hours. To be honest, I was unaware of most of their wilder pranks, as Norm and I were dealing with the 10,000 other details that running Filmation entailed, so it was up to Don, storyboard director Bob Kline, and layout supervisors Herb Hazelton, Jim Fletcher, and Alberto DeMello to keep their rowdy artists in line. They succeeded, mostly. Darrell told me of some of the following escapades when we reunited for the DVD commentary tapings. I don't know what shocked me more when Darrell related some of these to me: the fact that they happened in the first place or that at least a couple of them had a racial base to them, seeing how, as I've previously mentioned, Darrell is an African-American—though he personally prefers the term "black." Back then race wasn't really an issue with him for the most part; he could dish it out and take it, if it was delivered in the right spirit. The following, he assures me, was aimed that way, though if I had known about it at the time, heads would have rolled.

Darrell related that he was at the time working in the layout bullpen, which was a large room in the back of the second floor where six of our layout people worked. Most of them were in two-man offices, according to seniority. One day, fellow layout artist Les Kaluza sidled up to his desk while he was working, with a smile on his face. Les then proceeded to take a long sheet of layout pan paper—a longer piece of animation paper that we used to design repeat pan backgrounds with—rolled it into a shape approximating that of a pointed KKK-like hood, and put it on his head. After casting smirking glances over his shoulder, Darrell said, "I can top that." He reached over to Les's cubicle, lifted his T-square, took a match, and lit the plastic end of the T-square, setting it on fire, creating in essence a "burning cross!" The two of them then started "marching" down the studio hallway, breaking up everyone as they passed by their offices. Now, I wouldn't have found this the least bit funny…

…and neither did Don Christensen, who was coming down the hall from the opposite direction, with executives from CBS in tow! He rounded the corner, saw the strange procession, spun on his heel, and all but shoved the network people into his office, hoping they hadn't seen the spectacle. Too late! They raised a fit, ranting along the lines of, "These are the people we trust *Fat Albert* with?" Needless to say, Darrell told me that he and Les got a major dressing down from Don later that day.

Another time, it was storyboard artist Eddie Fitzgerald's birthday; to our young studio pranksters, that meant another opportunity to raise controlled chaos in the studio. Eddie believed—as did many people in the business at that time and even today—that the late Walt Disney, after his death, had been cryogenically frozen in a vault, to be unfrozen later. So, while several of his fellow boardmen took Eddie out to lunch, others turned his office into a virtual "Walt's tomb." They dumped a carload of torn-up newspaper into the cubicle he shared with Mike Joens, dressed Mike up in a parka—in 85-degree weather with broken air conditioning, a common occurrence back then—sprayed the entire area with snow spray, hung fake icicles all over his workspace, and hung a large paper thermometer labeled "Walt Disney's tomb" outside the door!

Want a few more Darrell stories? Okay, just a few that he recently told me about: On Fridays we would have after-work "wrap parties," where our personnel would unwind, socialize, let their hair down, and get more drunk than they usually did during working hours. At one of those parties, legendary animator and *Beany & Cecil* creator Bob Clampett had been invited to screen some of his most legendary cartoons of the 1940s, including some of the racially oriented ones produced by his unit at Warner Bros. during that time, such as 1943's infamous "Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarves." As Darrell was one of the few African-American artists at Filmation at that time, most of the people at the party were wondering what his reaction was going to be.

Within the first three minutes of "Coal Black" running, Darrell launched into a raging sh*tfit, ranting and raving to everyone that this was truly racist horsesh*t and totally disgusting, and asking how dare they run this kind of crap in a studio with a black character as their figurehead. He stomped out, swearing that, when he came back, some asses were going to be kicked. He tells me that the color drained right out of many peoples' faces. And it reportedly put a chill on the gathering. About 90 minutes later, after the cartoons were over, Darrell returned, still under a full head of steam, and roared, "You f'in' crackers done yet?" and then broke into a big smile, reached out to Bob Clampett, shook his hand, and hugged him. He then said, "C'mon, Bob, you owe me dinner!" It turned out, although nobody knew it, that Darrell had known Bob for years, and they'd concocted the whole stunt just to see what a rise they could get out of everyone. Darrell said that some of the guys were a little peeved with him, but he was just a "kid," so all was forgiven.

Darrell also related that he once had an after-hours *Star Trek* saucer-gun battle through the Filmation halls with the usually humorless Don Christensen, which no one believed happened the next day until they saw a trail of little toy discs up and down the hallways. This last story, which Darrell told me during a recent get-together, encapsulates what working "in the trenches" of Filmation was like back then.

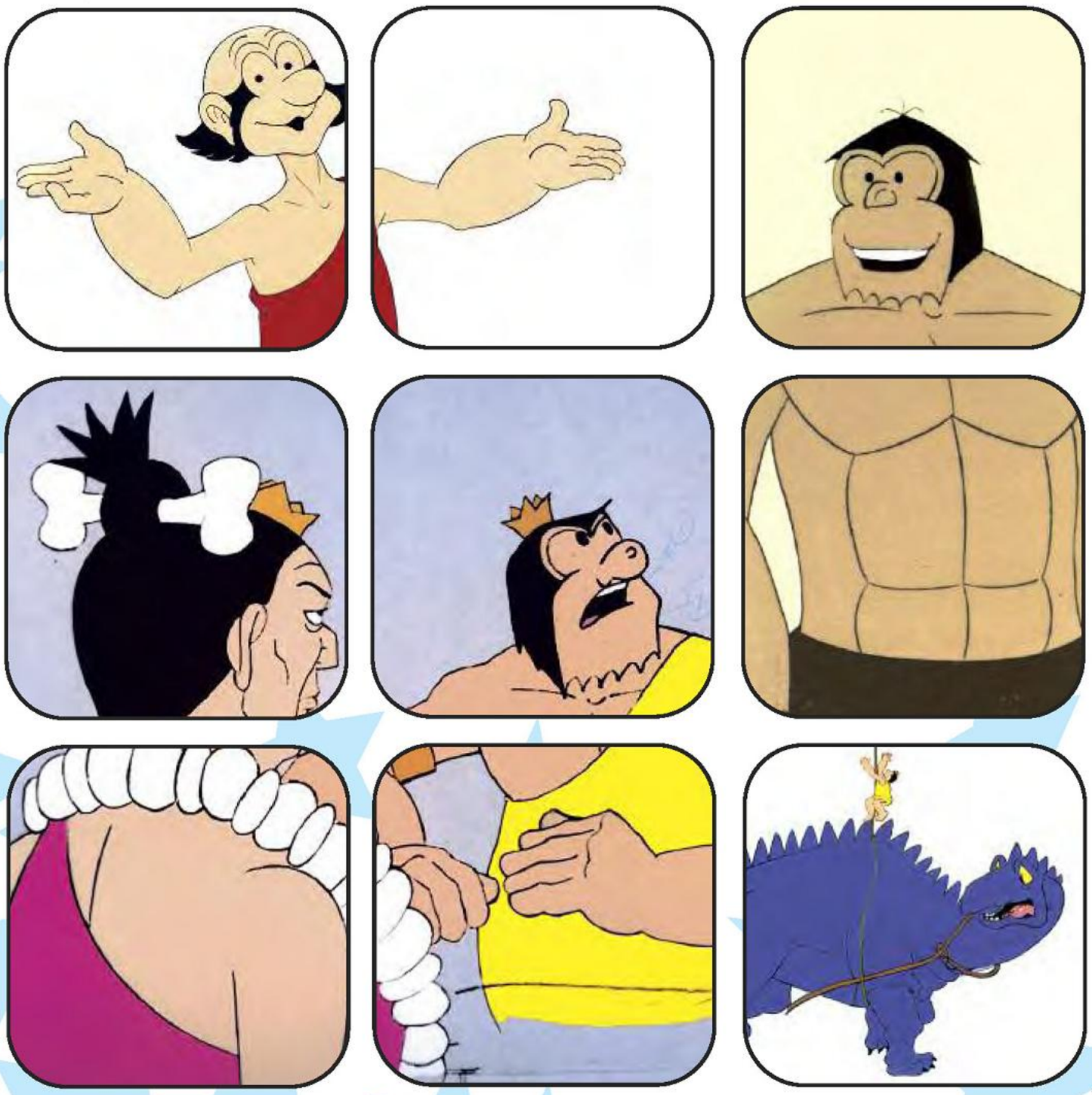
When *Fabulous Funnies* and *Super 7* had finished production

Opposite:
Darrell McNeil at Filmation in the late 1970s

Above:
Darrell and Lou in 2012

in late November of 1978, and before *Flash Gordon* had gone into full production, Darrell had been transferred from layout to assistant animation for a few months, until *Flash* had fully staffed up. This irritated him, as he preferred being in layout, but he had no choice in the matter. Most of the people in the animation/assistant animation departments were much older than Darrell was, and some of them were a lot quirkier. Two examples were an elderly female assistant animator, whom Darrell remembers as Jane Nordin, who was so paranoid that she had her entire cubicle surrounded with mosquito netting, and wore gloves while she worked, and another older assistant who had been an actual Nazi soldier during World War II—Darrell remembers his first name as "Al." If you remember my earlier anecdote about my father and Hitler, plus the fact that we were doing a sequence with an animated Hitler in the upcoming *Flash Gordon*, you'll see what an unbelievably small world we all live in!

Now, Al wasn't living by any past principles anywhere in the studio—at least that we knew of—and generally kept to himself, as did Jane, but, of course, their office space was where Darrell was put by assistant supervisor Lew Irwin. They weren't happy about it, and neither was he, but all made the best of it. Darrell tells me that he didn't make matters easier by mock clicking his heels every time he came into the room, or by placing a quick sketch of a black character under Al's animation platen every night before he left, so that an African-American face would be the first one he saw when he came to work that day. Al never said anything about it, but, honestly, as much as I like Darrell, I probably would have demoted him at the least if I knew about it then. But something happened shortly afterwards that changed everything… and, yes, this does work back to the whole practical joke theme of the last few paragraphs.



Darrell's birthday was coming up, and he was eagerly awaiting what his layout/storyboard pals were going to do to him, unlike Don who proclaimed that he was going to take his birthday off. Well, the morning came and went, and nothing happened. No surprises, no joke, nothing! Darrell was disappointed and seriously felt his friends in his prior departments had abandoned him, and loudly let it be known that that wasn't cool. He spent the rest of the day grousing and, at the 3:30 break, was intercommed into Lew Irwin's office to see him about a scene. Fifteen minutes later, after Darrell returned, irritated because he felt that Lew had wasted his break time, he returned to his cubicle to find a king-size birthday cake and a "welcome to our home" sign. It was from Al and Jane, who told him it was their idea to welcome him and let him know they hadn't forgotten him. Darrell couldn't believe that the paranoid mosquito-netter and the ex-Nazi he ribbed would do that for him, and it formed a bond between the three of them that, in a microcosm, exemplified the kind of spirit we tried to foster in our employees at Filmation. By the way, when Darrell's former layout colleaguers on the other side of the building heard about this, they threw Darrell a party of their own the next day, giving him a goofy birthday card. It was a good crew, and no matter what kind of clowning around they all did, they never missed a deadline. But, I do have to note that there are some things I was better off not knowing at the time!

I'll also take a moment here to mention some of the secretaries. My secretary was Jenny Trias, but in 1978 she was leaving to go work for ABC. This young lady named Joyce Rivera walked into our offices one day, with a stroller and her infant son, and asked our receptionist if there were any openings. It just so happened that there was, so she filled out an application, and the receptionist took it to controller Bob Wilson, who brought it back to Norm and I in our office. It turned out that Joyce only lived a few blocks away and had just decided to go back to work and was walking her baby when she decided to check in with us.

With her baby waiting patiently in the stroller, we hired Joyce on, and she and Pat Ryan worked for Norm and I for about three years before she left to have another baby. Becky Rue then became my secretary for about two years before starting the Human Resources department, then Joyce Loeb became my new secretary. When Joyce Rivera did come back to the company, she transferred to the writing department, where she worked with Pam Vincent for Arthur Nadel until 1989.

Digressions over, it's back to our 1978 season: Our other big new anthology show of the year was *Fabulous Funnies* for NBC, which bore no relation to an NBC variety special hosted by Carl Reiner way

back on February 11, 1968—which had highlighted comic strips and their creators. However, you may remember that back in 1971 we did our first anthology of shows featuring comic strips translated for animation, *Archies TV Funnies*. That year I had also pitched *Alley Oop, the Teenage Stone-Ager* to NBC, who "appropriated" our idea and asked Hanna-Barbera to do the *Flintstones* spin-off with Pebbles and Bamm-Bamm as teenagers. Well, now, we got our day in the sun… and it was at NBC!

Fabulous Funnies was supposed to contain new adventures of V.T. Hamlin's *Alley Oop*; Russell Myers' *Broom Hilda*; Rudolph Dirks' *The Captain and the Kids* (based on *The Katzenjammer Kids*); Tom Ryan's *Tumbleweeds*; Ernie Bushmiller's *Nancy and Sluggo*; and Marty Links' *Emmy Lou*, based on the comic strip *Bobby Sox*.

Unfortunately, one of the dumbest things I ever did—to that point—at Filmation was when I put *Tumbleweeds* in this show. I thought we had a deal for the characters in *Tumbleweeds*, so we put them in the show. Buzz Dixon wrote three or four, following some go-arounds with NBC over how we were going to treat the Native American characters and whether we were going to use Native American voice actors. The oft-mentioned Darrell McNeil laid out the first one, several others were storyboarded, and we animated the first one. Then, the weekend after the first episode aired, I got a phone call, and it was the creator, Tom Ryan, and his agent. And he told me, "You don't have the rights." I said, "I don't have the rights? That's illegal!" And he said, "Yes, that is illegal. But, if you stop showing it right now, I won't do anything." I said, "That's very, very nice of you," and I got off the phone, and I said, "How did I do that?"

What had happened was that there was a mix-up in communication between what he told our lawyer and what we were told. He had apparently given tacit approval based on whether or not he liked the scripts and designs once he saw them, but we understood that the deal was a go. Whoops! But Tom was a very nice man; he could've sued us, he could've taken us to court, but he knew it was an honest—if costly—mistake. We edited *Tumbleweeds* out of the opening credits after that and never aired any further stories with his characters.

Fabulous Funnies was the Sunday funnies translated directly into animation. We had five to seven different comics that were in the newspapers, and you could start with them on Saturday morning, rather than on Sunday morning. The art style for each one looked just like the actual comic strips. For the animators it was like working on four or five shows all at the same time because the characters were designed differently in each show, and the kind of animation and the kind of movement that you got in each show was different. It was not easy. And we couldn't rely on a stock system, nor even on realistic animation like we used on superhero shows. But it was interesting to do a half-hour that had six or seven different kinds of characters, working in different kind of animation.

Many of the *Fabulous Funnies* were written by a young writer named Sam Simon, who had just started with us, as well as Bill Danch. Unfortunately, Sam left us in 1979. While I went on vacation, we had somebody else doing things that I normally did, they said something that Sam didn't like to hear, and he quit. He went on to become the producer of *Taxi* and helped create *The Simpsons*! I wish whatever happened hadn't happened because we would have loved to have him stay at Filmation longer.

The shows all featured *Alley Oop, Broom Hilda*, and *Captain and the Kids*, and the other two strips appeared as we wanted to feature them. The show had Alley Oop's friend Foozy as a commentator/emcee, and he came on in-between shows to introduce them. He spoke mostly in rhymes. Each half-hour had an overall theme that was educational of some sort, with topics that included schoolwork, drinking, ecology, voting, good health, smoking, and other things. We even did one full-episode *Alley Oop* show about the death of a pet that was pretty bold for a Saturday morning show, and another full-length *Broom Hilda* show about her alcoholism that included cans of beer

Opposite:
The cast of *Alley Oop*

Above:
Fabulous Funnies also featured *The Captain and the Kids*, *Broom Hilda*, and *Emmy Lou*

and scenes at a seedy bar. Those two episodes later won some awards, though I don't recall which ones.

I do remember that we got into a bit of hot water over doing so many "pro-social" values in our shows because the networks hadn't caught on to the importance of that yet. During show pitches at the start of the year, I had one network executive tell me, "If you ever show me another one of those bullsh*t f*cking shows with those f*cking little moral things at the end, that make them worthwhile, I will never buy a show from you again!" Amazingly, the foul-mouthed executive was a woman!

On the other hand, the network censors were all over us on this series. It was very difficult to do characters like the Katzenjammer Kids and not have them be the anarchic brats they were in the comics. "Imitatable acts" were not allowed.

Speaking of censors, I thought we had run out of Darrell anecdotes for this chapter, but no such luck; he had laid out the beginning and ending sequences and the bar scenes for the *Fabulous Funnies* alcoholism episode. Among those scenes was a panning shot of Broom Hilda's bed, with what turned out to be a covered up pile of beer bottles and cans she had left on it that she has quaffed the previous night. The way Darrell drew it, however, it looked like a sleeping fat man with a totally erect penis! He knew what would be shown once Broom Hilda whipped the covers off, but just wanted to see if he could get it through the aforementioned censors and on the air. He did! And no one caught it! What a daffy kid…

Anyway, the voices on the *Fabulous Funnies* were by June Foray, Jayne Hamil, Bob Holt, and Alan Oppenheimer—misspelled in credits as "Allen". This was the first time we had ever worked with June, who is a legend in the industry and has an incredibly gifted animation voice. She did Broom Hilda, Oola, Fritz, and both of the Katzenjammer Kids! Alan Oppenheimer did a million voices for us… maybe a million and a half voices! Later, he did the voice of Skeletor as well as the Captain in the *Captain and the Kids,* and he did the voice of Grelber on *Broom Hilda*. Grelber was a great character. He was easy to animate because you couldn't see him; all you heard was his voice. Jayne Hamil was Nancy and Emmy Lou, while Bob Holt got the largest amount of lines as the host, Foozy, Alley Oop, and King Guzzle. Jayne later became a writer for *The Nanny*, but I think we may have been the only voice acting she did for animation. Bob was mostly a Hanna-Barbera guy, though he later did his most famous work doing the gremlins' voices for the 1984 movie *Gremlins*.

Friday, September 8th, NBC aired *The Bay City Rollers Meet the Saturday Superstars*, their preview special, from 8:00–9:00 p.m., with appearances by various Krofft characters, Scott Baio, Erik Estrada, Joe Namath, and Kaptain Kool and the Kongs. CBS didn't do a preview special that year.

The new season debuted on September 9th. *Tarzan and the Super 7* was at 10:30 a.m. on CBS, followed by *Space Academy* at noon, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* at 12:30, and *Ark II* at 1:00 p.m. NBC aired *Fabulous Funnies* at noon, against *Space Academy*. CBS also had little inter-show segments called "In the News," and we did introductions for them featuring Batman and Jason.

In late September, Marc Richards was made the vice president for new program development for primetime television. He was tasked with trying to develop sitcoms and telefilms. Under his domain were our deals with Program Development Group, Metromedia Producers Corp., SFM Media Service Corp., and Viacom. The deal included *The Origins Game, Broom Hilda, The Original Animal Amateur Half-Hour,* and an unnamed school-based sitcom and unnamed afternoon sci-fi/comedy show. All of them were live-action.

The Origins Game had now morphed into an adult game show for SFM, with four show vignettes that would be acted out by the improv group Off-the-Wall Players of Los Angeles. *Broom Hilda* was now planned for a late-night 11:00 p.m. show, subtitled "The Last of the Red Hot Witches." PDG had ordered two scripts from Marc Richards, which were going to form a one-hour pilot. PDG was financing 80% of the project, and had booked us on KTLA, WPIX, and other Field stations.

Metromedia was booking *The Original Animal Amateur Half-Hour,* which was set to be a half-hour scripted show that featured animal acts and animal talent scouts, with the animals doing something unexpected in their acts, with a *Gong Show*-style element to it. Viacom had the two unnamed shows, one of which was set to resemble *Welcome Back, Kotter*, and the other of which was designed for afternoons, with special effects by our *Space Academy/Jason* crew.

I don't recall why any of these projects fell apart. However, this, combined with what we were seeing in the future of cable TV as a member of the TelePrompTer family—which included Viacom's Showtime as of September—would plant seeds for our eventual syndication plans.

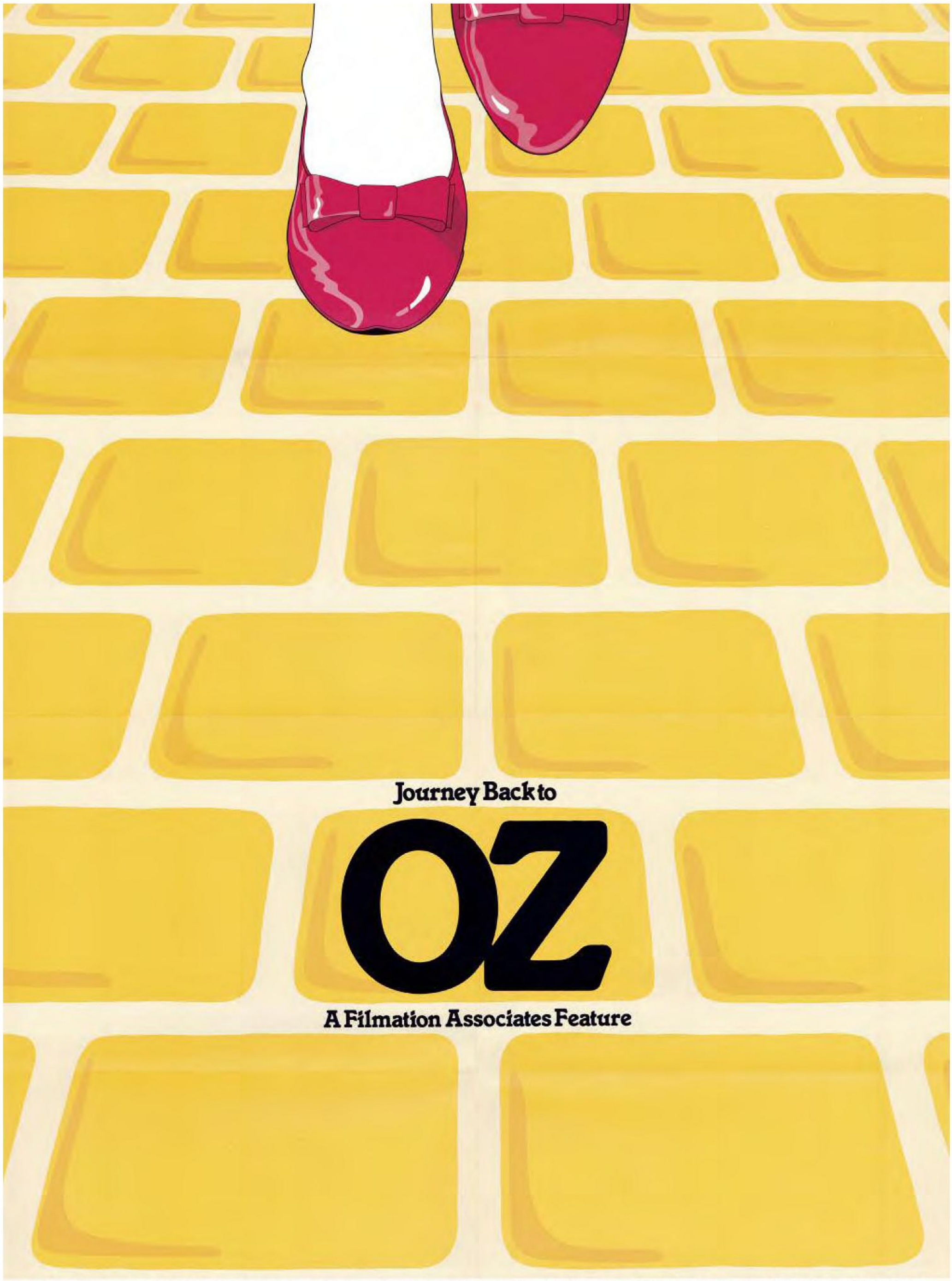
CBS re-aired *The Fat Albert Halloween Special* on October 25, 1978. Again, it got great ratings—garnering a #1 spot for its timeslot with a 35 share—as did *The Fat Albert Holiday Special*, re-aired on November 29, 1978.

Meanwhile, on November 4th, the hemorrhaging NBC revised its schedule yet again. They were running 66% behind CBS and 18% behind ABC. Thankfully, *Fabulous Funnies* stayed where it was… for the time being.

In late 1978 DC filed a lawsuit against us in New York. Basically, they alleged that we had infringed on their copyrights of Aquaman, Mera, and Tusky when we created Manta, Moray, and Whiskers, and that we had infringed on Plastic Man when we created Superstretch. They claimed trademark infringement, unfair competition, breach of contract—for not selling the *Plastic Man* series—and a breach of confidential relationship. They wanted damages and equitable relief, among other things. The case did not go to trial until October 1979, so you'll hear about the verdict in the next two chapters.

On December 8th—in some cities—and the 10th—in others—the SFM Holiday Network aired *Journey Back to Oz*, garnering their top ratings to date, with a 10.4 rating in 7,750,000 households! It was a better way to end the year, even if our lawyer was having to work on the holidays.

Opposite:
SFM Holiday Network poster for *Journey Back to Oz* TV airings



Dorothy comes home for Christmas in a full-length animated movie hosted by Bill Cosby and featuring the voices of Paul Lynde, Milton Berle, Mickey Rooney, Herschel Bernardi, Danny Thomas, and Liza Minnelli (Judy Garland's daughter!) as Dorothy.

SFM Holiday Network

FLASH GORDON

1979–1980

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE YEAR OF LEGAL DISCONTENT

Despite the fact that they hadn't bought anything from us since *Uncle Croc's Block*, we actually made some headway with ABC as 1979 began. As reported in the press in mid-January, we were negotiating with Squire Rushnell, ABC's vice president in charge of children's programming, and Peter Roth, the West Coast head of the same division, for a very unusual Saturday morning star. The project we were planning to deliver was *The Dracula Hour*, which was going to include animated short adventures of Dracula, Frankenstein, and The Phantom Spaceman, as well as a new live-action serial called *Dracula in Space*. Unfortunately, ABC head Michael Eisner killed that project after we had gained some serious momentum.

Days after the *Dracula* news broke, NBC made an early pre-buy of *Flash Gordon* for Saturday mornings, even though we had yet to finish the feature-length movie for them. Mike Brockman, who was then the vice president of daytime programming offered us 24 episodes of the series for a two-year run, and our old buddy Fred Silverman quickly signed off on the deal. At the time, when networks were buying 13–16 episodes for a first season, and three to eight for a second year, the fact that NBC pre-bought 24 episodes was "precedent-shattering," as Norm Prescott told reporters.

In mid-February, TelePrompTer announced its revenues for the year, and, for the first time, Filmation was down from a previous year. The discrepancy was easily explained, however; the 1977 grosses had included the very large amount paid to us for syndication rights for the *Archies* packages, whereas no huge sale like that had been made in 1978.

By late February we were back with our regular announcements of big plans, this time touting to the press that we were developing a slate of five films for self-distribution to theatres. We gave a date of October 5th for a full-length feature of *The Fat Albert Movie*, but did not name the other four films-to-be. Additionally, we were opening up the remainder of the Filmation library for syndication as of September 1980, including 36 *Fat Albert* episodes, 22 *Isis* shows, 15 each of *Ark II, Ghost Busters*, and *Space Academy*, and 13 each of *Space Sentinels* and *Fabulous Funnies*. We felt that we could make a better deal by selling the syndication to specific advertisers and letting them place the shows where they wanted them, not unlike some of

Opposite
Flash Gordon promotional art and model sheets

Above:
Model design for Emperor Ming

the syndication deals of the 1950s and 1960s. We already had interest at that point from the Post-Newsweek station group to syndicate *Fat Albert* for primetime airing.

Fat Albert was finally getting the network attention it deserved, as CBS not only ordered eight new shows for the 1979–80 season—its ninth season—but also guaranteed the series a network run up through 1982, and ordered a prime-time Easter special for 1979 and another prime-time special for Valentine's Day 1980. With the planned syndication as of fall 1980, *Fat Albert* would only be the second series in television history—after *The Flintstones*—to be featured concurrently on Saturday morning network and syndication.

Soon, the new fall schedules were announced. ABC passed on *The Dracula Hour*. NBC had already ordered *Flash Gordon* and cancelled *Fabulous Funnies*. So, the only question was what would CBS do? For the first time in ages, we "only" had about half of the CBS schedule, with three hours. A new hour-long show was *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse* and *Heckle and Jeckle*, plus *The New Fat Albert Show*, and a new second season of *Jason of Star Command*. Going into reruns was *Tarzan and the Super 7*, now cut back to an hour and minus *Jason* as a segment. All told, we had 56 new half-hours of animated programming, plus 12 new half-hours of live-action programming to produce.

On Monday, April 9, 1979, ABC aired the 51st Academy Awards ceremony from the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion in Los Angeles. At the ceremony Robin Williams presented an honorary Academy Award for Lifetime Achievement to Walter Lantz, "for bringing joy and laughter to every part of the world through his unique animated motion pictures." Accepting the award alongside Lantz was an animated Woody Woodpecker. Filmation animated the Woody sequence, under the direction and key animation of Virgil Ross, and we had Woody come in and shake hands with Lantz live. It was very tricky because it all had to be lined up correctly and timed so that audiences watching on TV live would see it correctly. We didn't ask for any money to animate that clip; I was happy to do it for Walter. Some of the other guys who worked on that clip were Jack Ozark, Wes Herschensohn, and Darrell McNeil.

In late April we put out casting notices for a new character to appear on *Jason of Star Command*: "Samantha, mid-20s, black, superhero, adventuress, very physical, Lindsey Wagner type, major continuing role." That role went to Tamara Dobson, who was a beautiful, beautiful black lady, who was over six feet tall. She's passed away now, but if I had ever had another part for her, I would have hired her all over again. The only problem we had was that she had been in several "blaxploitation" movies as Cleopatra Jones, which were a bit more adult than your average Filmation fan could handle, and she had even been in *Playboy*'s "Sex Stars of 1973" article in December 1973. It wasn't that we objected per se—JoAnna Cameron had been topless in *B.S. I Love You* prior to being *Isis*—it was just that we didn't want the public to necessarily associate our kids' shows with sexy movies.

So, *Jason of Star Command* went on to a second season, and we did away with the season-long serialized stories, since the show was now a half-hour on its own. We did, however, do stories in two- to four-part arcs, to keep people watching week-to-week. In addition to casting Tamara Dobson to replace the departing Susan O'Hanlon, we also had to replace James Doohan. He got the news that they were finally going ahead on a *Star Trek* movie, and had to pull out of *Jason* for that. We were very happy for him, but now had to replace him.

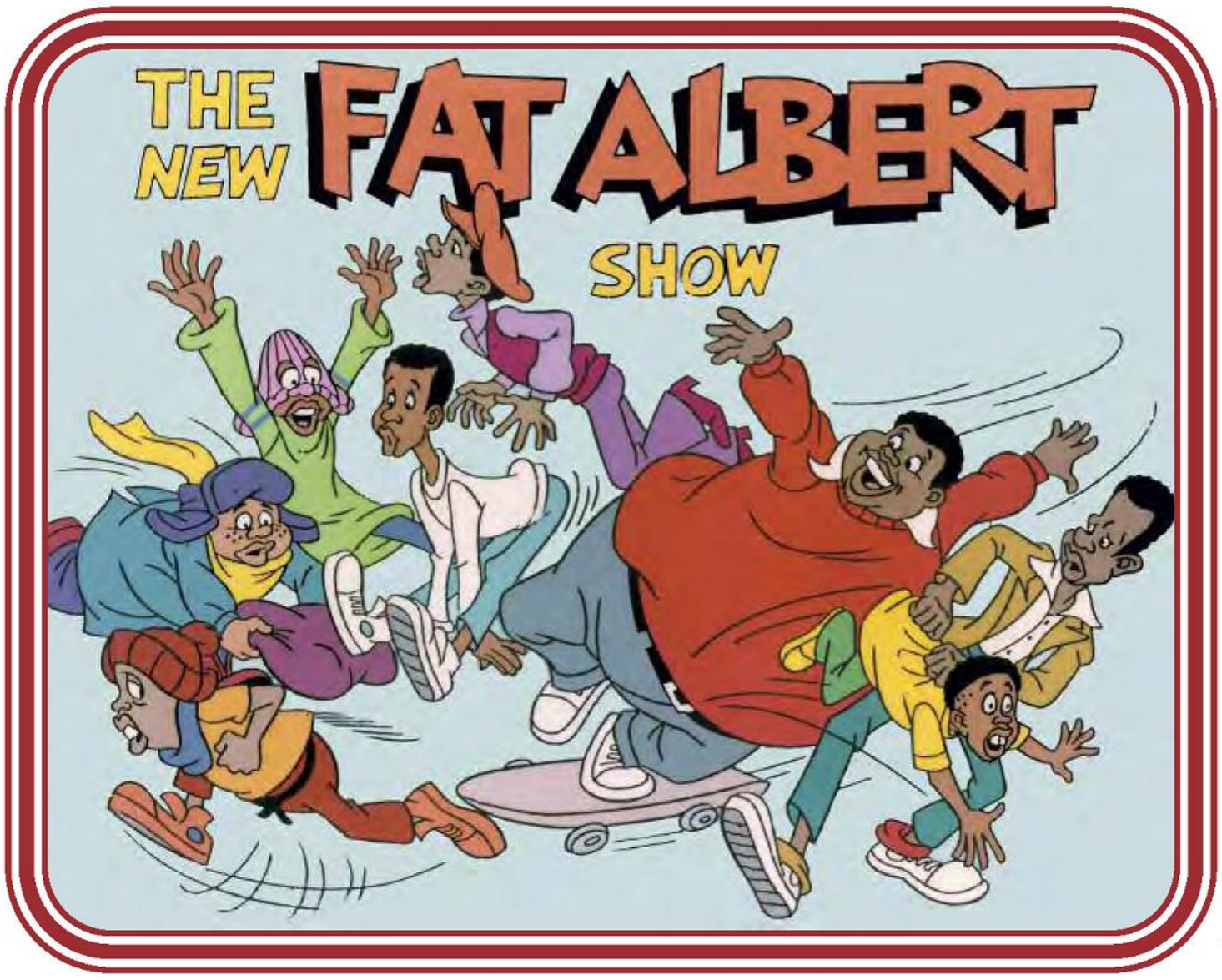
We cast John Russell, who had done a lot of westerns on TV and in the movies, as Commander Stone, an alien from Alpha Centauri. We decided to make his skin blue, which meant that he had to sit in makeup a lot, but he didn't complain much. His character had a bit more of a combative relationship with Jason, which gave the scripts some spark, and with him being 6' 4" and Craig, Sid, and Tamara all over six feet tall, we had one of the tallest regular casts on Hollywood!

We made a few other changes to the show as well for the second season. Dragos got a new Dragonship, the three-foot model

Above:
The season two cast of *Jason of Star Command*

Insert:
John Russell as Commander Stone

for which now sits in my office after being in my dining room for years. We also had a new makeup guy come in named John Carl Buechler, who was very talented, and who did a lot of new aliens for us. John went on to direct some popular movies, and is one of the top creature effects makeup guys in Hollywood these days. All of our special effects guys have had pretty big careers actually. And Sid Haig is still in demand as a movie villain; he told me he got cast in a pair of Rob Zombie horror movies because Rob Zombie was a big *Jason of Star Command* fan! Craig Littler, meanwhile, is better known to today's audience as the Gorton Fisherman in lots of commercials.



In late June, Sports Billy Productions, a company in Stuttgart, West Germany, began their push in licensing the character of Sports Billy worldwide. The concept behind *Sports Billy* was to utilize young Billy and Susy, two sports-loving youths, as mascots in America; they were already popular in Europe, Asia, and Latin America, and were the mascots for FIFA, the world soccer federation, and the 1978 World Cup tournament. The first stop on their plans to win over America was to make a deal with Filmation, to do an animated series and to help them license and merchandise their brand in the United States.

Besides the new name—*The New Fat Albert Show*—we planned some changes to freshen up *Fat Albert*, including dumping the musical numbers. We also created a five-minute "show-within-a-show" called "The Brown Hornet," which Albert and the kids watched on their clubhouse's TV set. The Hornet was a character that Bill Cosby had used in a radio show and comedy albums, parodying *The Green Hornet*. The stories Cosby did were more like Sam Spade detective stories, but that wouldn't have made for very exciting television, so we changed him up. The hope was that the Brown Hornet would be popular enough to get his own series.

In the new series, the Brown Hornet was a space-faring superhero who had a sidekick named Stinger and a small female robot named Tweeterbell. Bill Cosby did the voice of the Hornet, while I was the voice of Stinger, and my daughter, Erika, was the voice of Tweeterbell. Many of the Brown Hornet adventures paralleled the stories that were happening in the *Fat Albert* episodes. Almost all of this season's shows were written either by Bill Danch or Sam Simon, with a few others stepping in.

We wanted the "Brown Hornet" segments to look visually different from the main body of the show. By an amazing coincidence, this partly happened due to the aesthetics brought to them by a primarily African-American crew doing the majority of the initial segments: designer/layout supervisor Jim Simon, layout artists Robert Tyler and Wally Sides, animator Leo Sullivan, and assistant layout/animator Darrell McNeil.

We also moved the kids to a school in another part of town, where they could meet new kids and encounter more diversity and a wider range of experiences and lifestyles. One of the first episodes of the season even had the kids dealing with a "sissy" boy who did ballet, yet who also prevailed in the boxing ring against a bully. And we introduced a new teacher for the kids in their new school: Miss Wucher, voiced by my wife, Jay, whose maiden name, you may recall, was Wucher. Jay had also been the voice of the kids' original teacher on the series, Mrs. Bryfogel.

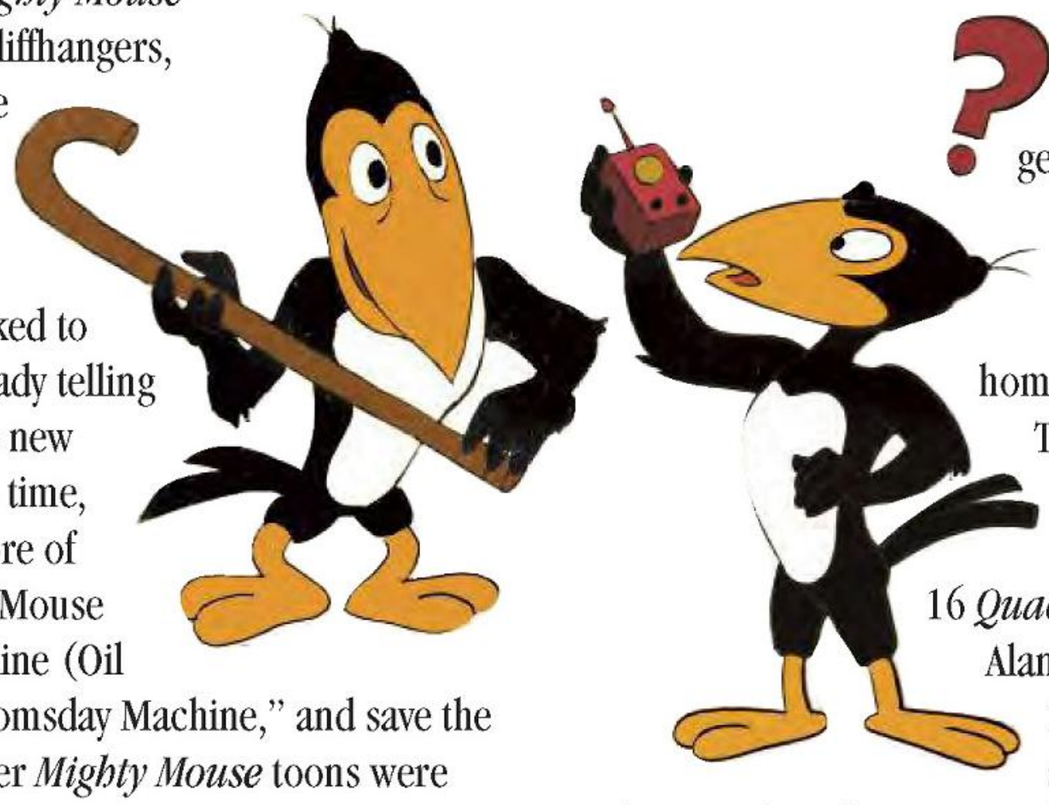
Due to reasons I can't recall at this point, the *Fat Albert Easter Special* didn't get made that year, and in fact would not air until 1982. But *The New Fat Albert Show* kept everyone busy.

The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle was a licensed show that came about because CBS wanted it on the air, but I don't recall why. We developed the two Terrytoons projects, along with *Quacula*, a new project of our own, as a one-hour anthology aimed at younger audiences, with a crowd of anthropomorphic characters.

Above:
Promotional art for *The New Fat Albert Show*

Left:
The cast of "The Brown Hornet"

Many of the original Terrytoons *Mighty Mouse* shorts actually began as if they were cliffhangers, although the stories wrapped up at the end of each, so it was more of an "in media res" style of storytelling. So, when we began developing *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse,* we looked to the style of serial stories we were already telling with *Jason of Star Command* and the new *Flash Gordon*, and did the same. This time, the serialized adventures had a bit more of an outer space feel though, as Mighty Mouse had to save the galaxy from the evil feline (Oil Can) Harry the Heartless and his "Doomsday Machine," and save the regal Queen Pearl Pureheart. Our other *Mighty Mouse* toons were more traditional Earth-bound stories. Unlike some of the theatricals, however, we dispensed with the operatic oratories that were sung by the hero and his castmates. We also dispensed with much of the cartoon violence that had been acceptable for theatrical toons, but not okay for modern television standards and practices departments, replacing the mayhem with satire and slapstick.



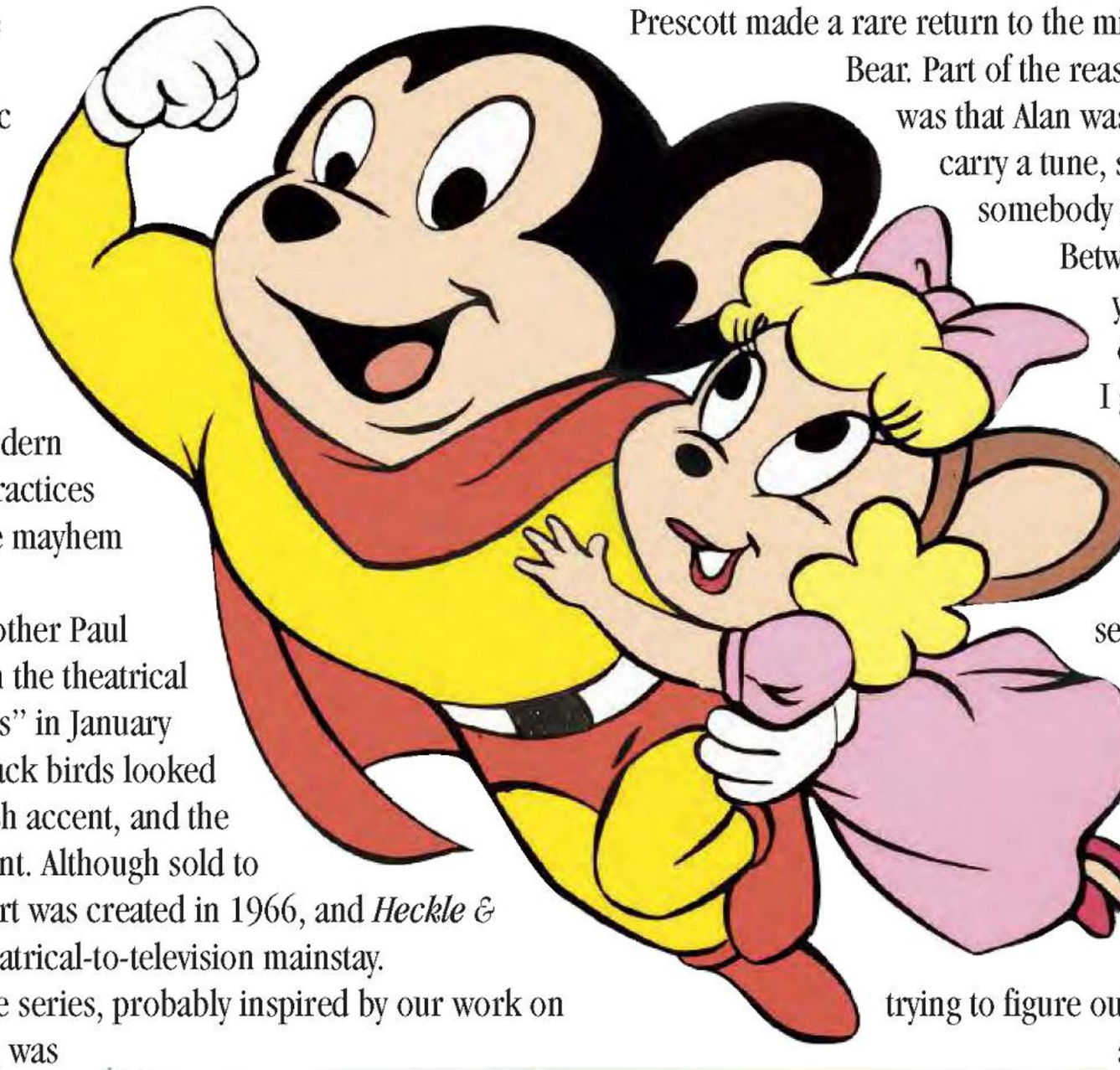
Heckle & Jeckle was another Paul Terry creation, first seen in the theatrical short "The Talking Magpies" in January 1946. Although the two black birds looked like twins, one had a British accent, and the other had a Brooklyn accent. Although sold to CBS in 1955, their last short was created in 1966, and *Heckle & Jeckle* became another theatrical-to-television mainstay.

The third element of the series, probably inspired by our work on the unsold *Dracula* series, was *Quacula*, about a vampire duck who lived in an egg in the basement of a run-down home owned by Theodore H. Bear. Quacula didn't drink blood; he fed on fear by scaring Theodore, or others. Unfortunately, he wasn't always very good at accomplishing his fear factor goals.

Each week, *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse* and *Heckle & Jeckle* would have two seven-minute *Mighty Mouse* traditional shorts, as well as one episode of the science-fiction serial, "The Great Space Chase." There were also two *Heckle & Jeckle* shorts, and generally one *Quacula* short. We also included short safety tips and "environmental bulletins" in each show, hosted by Mighty Mouse, as well as homonym segments from Heckle & Jeckle. Total story count was 32 *Mighty Mouse* shorts, 16 *Mighty Mouse* serial chapters, 32 *Heckle & Jeckle* shorts, and 16 *Quacula* shorts.

Alan Oppenheimer was the voice of Mighty Mouse and Oil Can Harry, Diane Pershing was Pearl Pureheart, the legendary Frank Welker was Heckle, Jeckle, and Quacula, and Norm Prescott made a rare return to the microphone, voicing Theodore H. Bear. Part of the reason we did away with the songs was that Alan wasn't going to sing, and I can't carry a tune, so we would have had to hire somebody else to do the singing.

Between Welker and Oppenheimer, you could get a hundred voices out of those guys. Oppenheimer I got to know fairly well because we worked together for years. But Welker, you never saw him beyond doing the show. We recorded as an ensemble whenever we could get them all together, which usually was once a week. They did a better job when they were all together because they helped each other. It wasn't standing alone, doing just your voice, and trying to figure out what the other guy just said, and it was easier on the director because you didn't have to remember what the other guy said and how they said it. I did a lot of the voice directing starting that year. But I recorded my voices separately. I didn't have the guts to work with those professionals. I wasn't trying to fool anybody; I belonged to the union and did all that stuff. But

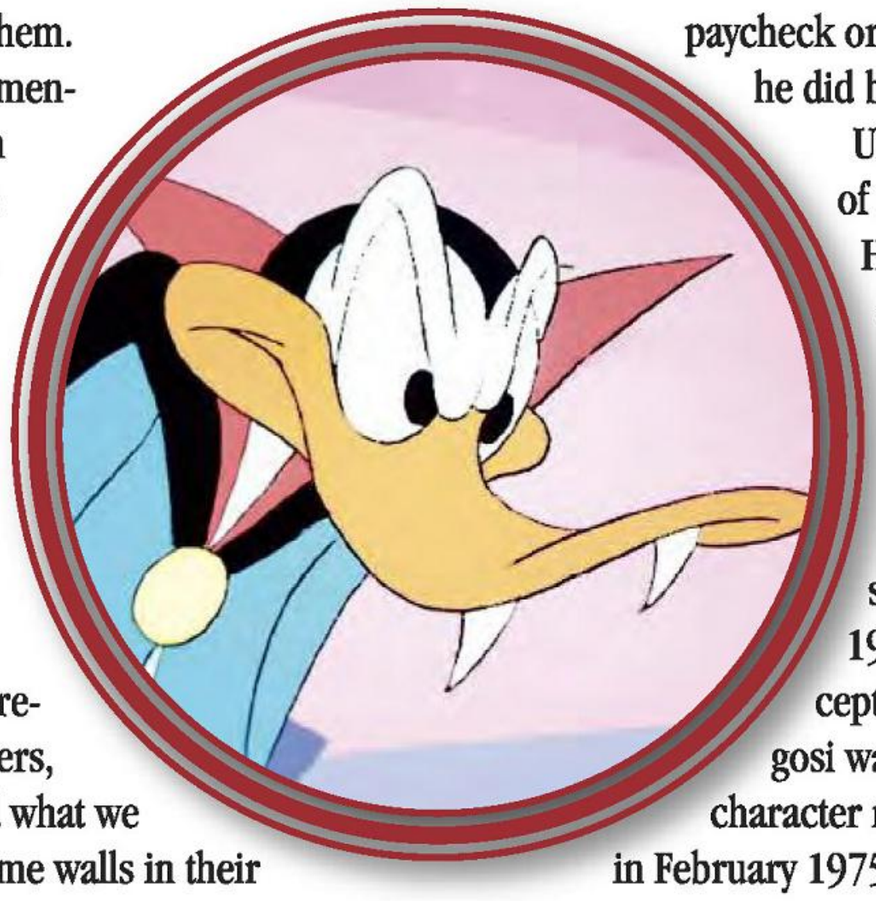


Top & Bottom:
Images from *Heckle & Jeckle*

Middle:
Mighty Mouse & Pearl Pureheart

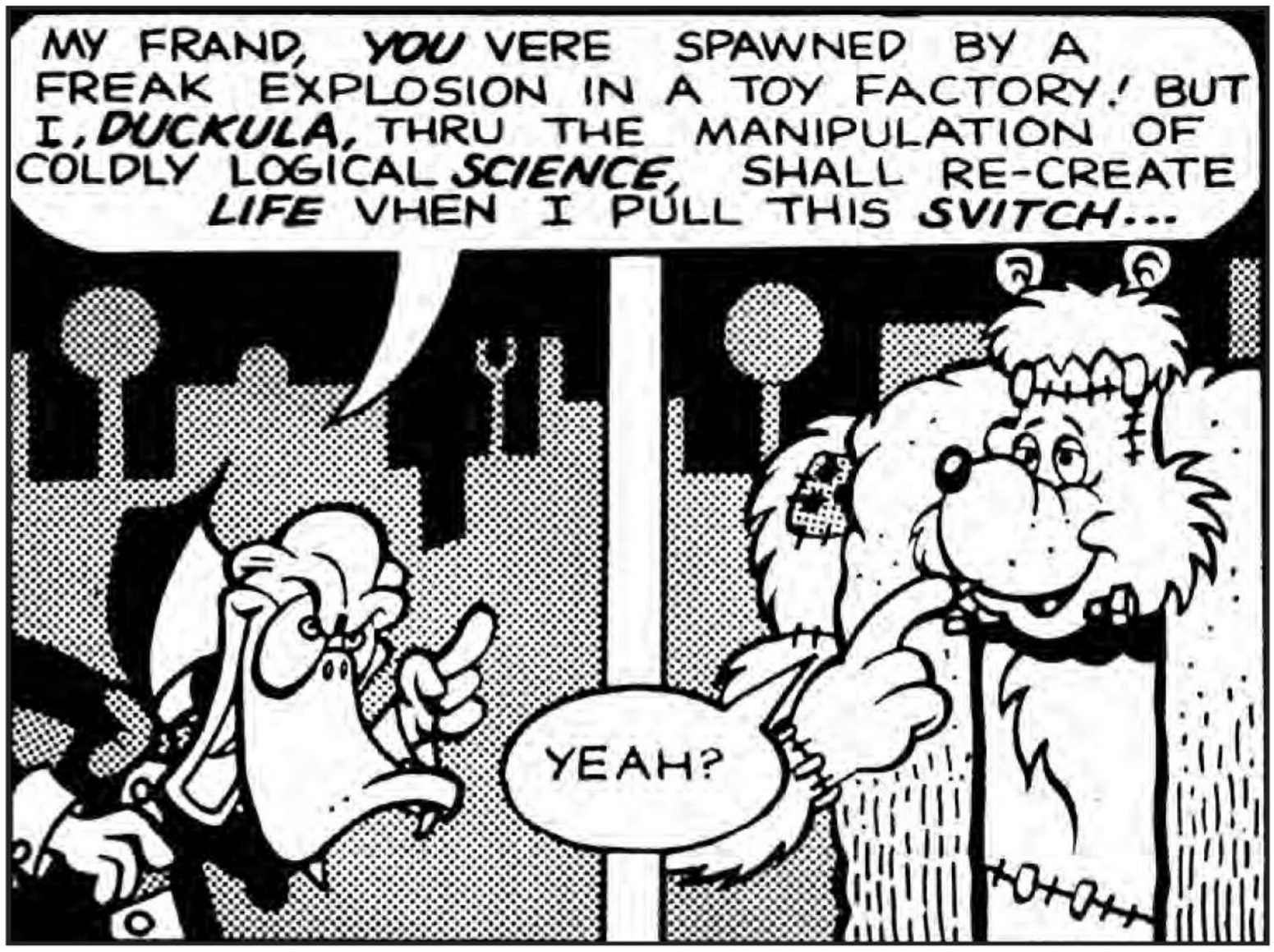
I didn't have the guts to work in there with them.

By the way, due to one of our previously mentioned studio training programs, run by Don Christensen, we brought a lot of new people in and gave them their start in animation on this show, *Fat Albert*'s "Brown Hornet," and others. Because we rigidly kept all our work in America, we were hiring more than any other company and teaching working animation to the next generation. A lot of the young folk wanted to break the rules, not understanding the limitations put on by network strictures and economic realities. Some became more famous than others, and some eventually understood why we did what we did because they would go up against the same walls in their future at other companies. Popular superhero producer/writer/story editor Paul Dini cut his writing teeth on the *Quacula* and *Heckle & Jeckle* series. If I remember right, when he first got hired, he was lighting models for us. His dad was a friend of Norm Prescott's. He had just gotten out of school and sent us a script, and it was funny, so we gave him some work.



Two other members of the "young folk" who worked on *Mighty Mouse* were board artists Tom Minton and Eddie Fitzgerald. Both of them later worked on Ralph Bakshi's *Mighty Mouse* revival for CBS in 1987. Tom described his scripts/storyboard work on that show as, "revenge for what we couldn't do at Filmation." To that I say—and I like Tom—that times change and the rules were different a decade later. That really is the heart of it.

Ren & Stimpy creator John Kricfalusi got his start on "Quacula" too, and our *Tom & Jerry* show the following season. Kricfalusi later became an ungrateful jerk, ragging on Filmation publicly and saying he wasted his time there. He didn't have to accept a paycheck or get a start in the industry through us, but he did both.



Unfortunately for us, *Quacula* got us in a bit of trouble. It seems that cartoonist and Hanna-Barbera animation layout artist and character designer Scott Shaw! had created a character named Duckula in a comic called *Quack!* published by Star*Reach Productions. Duckula appeared in the first issue of *Quack!* (July 1976) in a one-page story, and in the second issue (January 1977) on the back cover. Although the concept of a vampire duck dressed like Bela Lugosi wasn't new—Daffy Duck had faced a character named Duckula in issue #92 of his comic in February 1975—the fact that a bear was involved in both *Quacula* and *Duckula* struck Shaw! as a bit too close for comfort. Duckula's bear was Bearzanboltz, a dimwitted Frankenstein pastiche, whereas Theodore H. Bear was just a dimwitted bear with a penchant for saying "Ooh Ooh" like Arnold Horshack of *Welcome Back, Kotter*, or Joe E. Ross's exclamations from *Car 54, Where Are You?*

Still, Shaw! filed a lawsuit against us for plagiarism. We settled out of court for around $30,000, and dropped *Quacula* from the *Mighty Mouse* line-up the following season. Ironically, Warner Bros. had an animated special, "Daffy Duck Meets Drakeula" in development, but they dropped it as soon as this all got brought up. I had no hard feelings against Scott; he was very talented. A few years later, I brought one of my nieces to meet him when he was doing a signing for the funny *Captain Carrot and His Amazing Zoo Crew* comic book

Top & Bottom:
Images of Quacula and Theodore H. Bear

Middle:
A scene of Duckula and Bearzanboltz from Scott Shaw!'s comic story

series he co-created.

Our final new series for the fall was *The New Adventures of Flash Gordon*. The long-in-the-works telefilm was planned to air on September 7th, to introduce the new series. I've talked some about the whys and hows of the films, but I'll get into it a bit more here.

The telefilm was a far more adult affair than we could do on Saturday morning. In the story, Flash Gordon was a former Olympic athlete who was acting as an American agent in Warsaw in 1939, at the start of World War II. When he discovers that Adolf Hitler and Ming of Mongo are planning to conquer not only Earth, but the universe itself, Flash heads for Mongo in a spaceship with Dr. Hans Zarkov and journalist Dale Arden to stop Ming. There, they must join forces with King Vultan, the rotund ruler of the winged Hawkmen; King Thun, the leonine leader of the Lion People; and Prince Barin, the Errol Flynn-esque leader of the tree folk of Arboria. Meanwhile, Ming develops an unhealthy interest in Dale Arden, and Ming's daughter, princess Aura, similarly takes note of the handsome Flash Gordon. Along the way, the plot included spaceship battles, Lizard People, and more.

Although Flash Gordon had made a brief appearance in a 1972 *ABC Saturday Superstar Movie* called *Popeye Meets the Man Who Hated Laughter*, alongside almost every major King Features comic strip character—and he had appeared in live-action serials, movies, and television series—amazingly, he had never been the regular star of an animated series. When we designed the NBC film, we took great care to follow the design and feel of the original Alex Raymond strips, updating them only slightly. The costumes for the women were sexy, and even Flash Gordon gets some skin time as his clothes get progressively torn away like Doc Savage, until he changes into his familiar red-and-blue bodysuit toward the end of the story.

We shot extensive live-action footage of human actors for rotoscoping, so that the human animation would have fluidity. One of the women we filmed was Don Christensen's secretary, Karen, who was both very good at running in slow motion for rotoscoping, and also an excellent belly dancer. For some reason, we never had any problems getting male artists to work on footage of the *Flash Gordon* girls!

Above:
Scenes from
Flash Gordon

Beyond that, we also developed clay models and maquettes of the characters, ships, and creatures. The models of the ships—worked on by John Grusd and Paul Huston—were painted white and covered in thin black lines, then filmed in live-action with a computerized camera. The film negatives were then printed as cels, creating "positive" versions of the ships for the animators to use. Combined with early computer animation, this was essentially the nascent beginning of the kind of CGI motion-capture technology now used in feature films today… and we were pioneers of the technique on *Flash Gordon*!

Because we had developed all this material for the film, we could transfer it to use as stock for the Saturday morning show, and thus have a show that looked fantastic. We also made the decision to use some of the footage from the film for the first four episodes or so of the series, but that decision created problems of its own. We couldn't use the Nazi material or the stuff on Earth, so the show basically had to begin with them reaching Mongo. That took out a big chunk of the animation.

We also couldn't use all of the same costuming for Saturday mornings as for primetime; the women had to be covered more, and so did Flash Gordon. So, we took a lot of the animation we had done and redid it with the costumes changed. Princess Aura was still sexy, and there were still harem girls, but not quite as many as in the film. And Flash got into his red-and-blue jumpsuit much quicker.

There were other changes we had to make as well. We couldn't use Earth guns, and the space weapons had to be more fantasy-oriented. In the movie, there were many references to death, which we had to excise. The city of the Hawkmen was clearly destroyed in the movie, but we couldn't do that for kids. And although the movie ended with a bit more of a final note regarding whether Flash, Dale, and Zarkov would ever get back to Earth, we had to leave that door open more in the series. Add to those changes the fact that we had to make up time for all the now-missing footage—meaning

we added characters and sequences not in the film—and what we ended up with to start our series was an exceedingly alternate telling of the *Flash Gordon* tale than our movie.

The first season of *Flash Gordon* was mapped out and written entirely by Sam Peeples and Ted Pedersen. The story was essentially serialized, with Flash, Dale, Zarkov, Thun, Barin, and Vultan traversing the planet Mongo and interacting with the various peoples, creatures, and species they meet. I say, "interacting," but with this being a science-fiction adventure serial, they mostly fought against those they met. There were underwater cities and Gillmen, Beast Men, snow dragons, giants, witches, and more. Through the stories, we adapted elements from Raymond's comics, and tried to stay true to the feel and tone of the original *Flash Gordon* adventures.

Don Christensen produced the first season, and we asked a very talented lady, Gwen Wetzler, to direct some of it. She ended up directing parts of the first season and maybe even scenes of the movie, and did a fantastic job. It was very unusual to have a woman directing animation at that point in time; I believe that the first woman in the U.S. to direct for animation was Gwen Batchelor in 1935 for a *Robin Hood* theatrical, but it was not common at all on television. Gwen had worked as an animator at Bakshi's and Hanna-Barbera before coming to us, and she was great. Not all of the guys agreed though, and there was a lot of resistance to having a woman direct. But she was talented, and it was absolutely the right thing to do.

The voice actors for the feature were Robert Ridgely as Flash, Diane Pershing as Dale, Bob Holt as Ming, David Opatoshu as Zarkov, Melendy Britt as Aura, Vic Perrin as Vultan, Robert Douglas as Prince Barin, and Ted Cassidy as Thun. Unfortunately, Cassidy died shortly after he recorded the movie lines—it became his final role—and we were forced to replace him for the series.

Cassidy wasn't the only one missing, however. We had to replace multiple actors for the series, and although I don't remember why today, it was likely strictly budget concerns. For *The New Adventures of Flash Gordon*, the voice actor lineup was as follows: Robert Ridgely as Flash and Barin, Diane Pershing as Dale, Alan Oppenheimer as Zarkov and Ming, Melendy Britt as Aura, and Allan Melvin as Thun and Vultan.

Above:
Scenes from
Flash Gordon

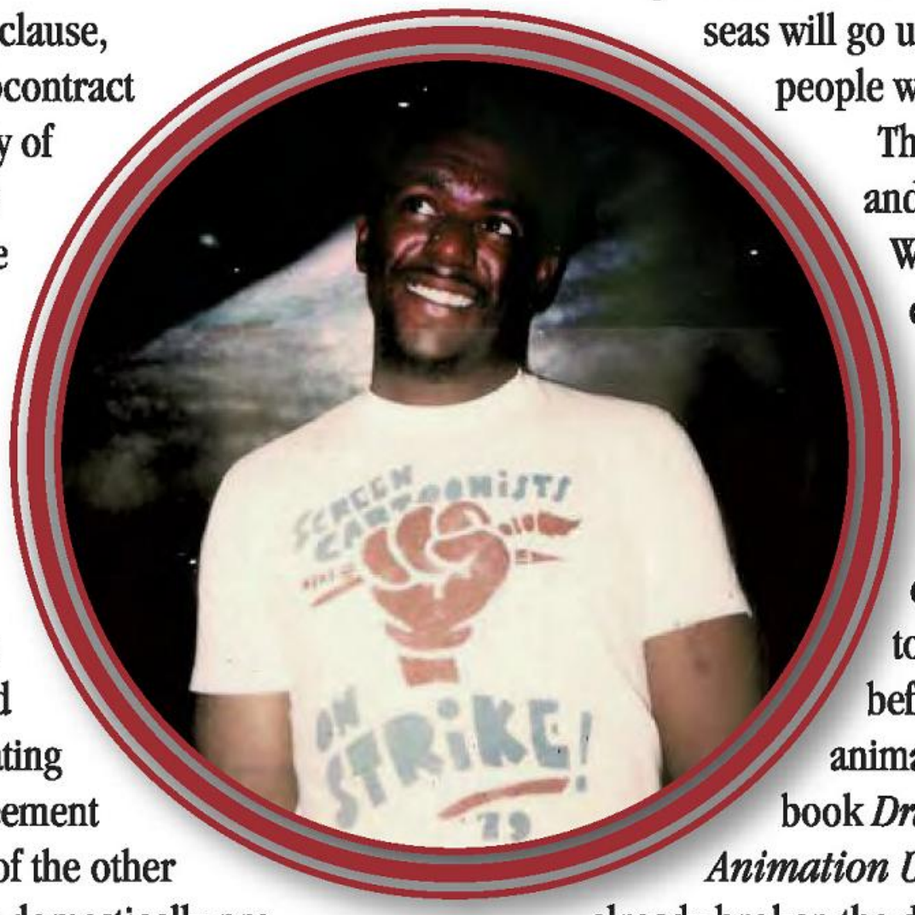
As work proceeded forward on our new shows, Filmation had multiple styles and an infusion of new talent. The comedic funny animal and "squash-and-stretch" humor cartoons were represented by *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle* and *Quacula*, as well as the "Brown Hornet" shorts. Lush, naturalistic animation was being done for the *Flash Gordon* film and series. And traditional Filmation-style animation—somewhere between the other two extremes—was being done for *The New Fat Albert Show.* Adding to that our shows in development—including work on a new telefilm called *A Snow White Christmas* that was to begin in August—and our live-action work on *Jason of Star Command*, and we were creatively hitting a high point. The same wasn't exactly true of other studios, however.

On August 1st, under relatively new president Morris "Moe" Gollub and business agent Harry "Bud" Hester—Lou Appet had finally retired as business agent for the union in 1978—IATSE Local 839 held a meeting about authorizing the first animation strike in 32 years. The strike was being threatened because so much work was being shipped to overseas animation houses—mostly in Taiwan and Australia—and the fears that most of the labor would be shipped there over the coming year. This kind of deregulated action was even given a name in the business: "runaway production."

Hanna-Barbera had been the first major studio to engage in massive runaway production, subcontracting work out to a studio they created in Sydney, Australia, beginning in 1971. Later, they moved more work to low-cost studios in Taipei, Taiwan, as well as Spain, Mexico, and South Korea. DePatie-Freleng also used Taiwan studios, and Ruby-Spears and some smaller independent studios sent work overseas as well. Local 839 had been trying, since 1969, to get a protective clause in studio animation contracts regarding runaway production,

but they had been unsuccessful.

The August IATSE meeting was overseen by Gollub, Hester, and an executive board, which included Tom Tataranowicz, Dave Teague, Ayalen Garcia, Jim Hickey, Gene Hamm, and Steve Zupkas. All the board members but the latter two either worked for Filmation then or in the future. The intent of the vote was to force animation studios into adding a runaway production clause, which said in part, "No Producer shall subcontract work on any production outside the county of Los Angeles unless… sufficient employees with the qualifications required to produce a program or series are unavailable."



Targeted were Hanna-Barbera, DePatie-Freleng, Ruby-Spears, Marvel, Ralph Bakshi, and a few others. Excluded from the purposes of the vote were small studios that produced commercials, Walt Disney Studios who said they had no plans for overseas work, and Filmation, who said the same. We also signed an agreement stating that we would go along with whatever agreement was reached with the other studios. None of the other studios would sign the clause to guarantee domestically produced content. None of them!

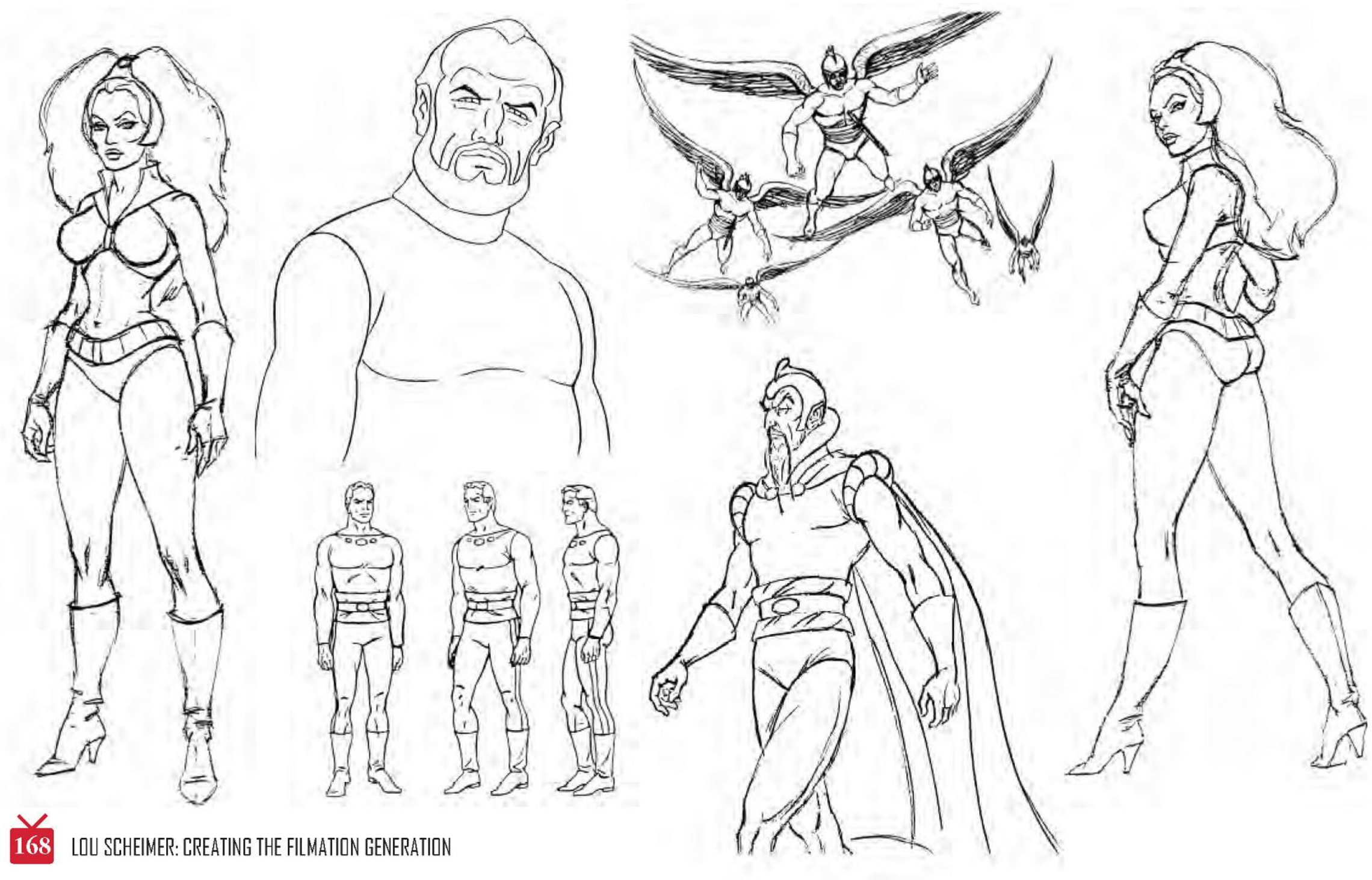
The result of the vote was a strike, which began on Tuesday, August 7th, and during which animators walked off the job and onto picket lines in front of almost every animation studio. Not everyone was locked out of work. Filmation continued working because we were not one of the companies at fault.

The strike made national news, leading to my first appearance on national TV since the Emmy Awards. On August 21st, I was on *ABC World News Tonight*, commenting in a story on the strike. About sending work overseas, I said, "I think it will kill the business. I think it will destroy animation as we know it in this country, and I think that, sooner or later, we will become a service organization for foreign studios. And I think when that happens, the prices overseas will go up because we will be at the mercy of those people who are producing the work."

The strike lasted less than two work weeks, and in the end the other studios buckled. With the fall season coming up, they couldn't afford to miss network deadlines, or the fines and lawsuits alone might close their doors for good. Hanna-Barbera, Ruby-Spears, DePatie-Freleng, and the others quickly signed the runaway production agreements forcing them, in theory, to request permission from the union before sending work overseas. According to animator and union historian Tom Sito, in his book *Drawing The Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions*, within one week, Ruby-Spears had already broken the deal and incurred their first $50,000 fine!

The union victory was slightly bittersweet, however, as the other studios—although not Filmation—knew that the union contracts would run out in three years—in 1982—and they began brokering advance deals for studios in Canada, Taiwan, and Korea. More about what happened there when we get to that date in the history.

For some reason that I don't recall now, our *Flash Gordon* movie was pulled from NBC's primetime schedule before its September



debut, thus losing us our series lead-in. One encyclopedic animation tome (which has many other facts wrong about the telefilm and series) posits that we were unable to sell it on television and Dino De Laurentiis bought our theatrical and TV rights and pushed for it to be mothballed. However, I'll remind you that we had sold the project to NBC in 1977, and we had sub-licensed only the theatrical and foreign television rights to Dino, and we were working with Dino on various projects already. Besides, Dino's movie didn't get released until December 5, 1980; I'm not even sure how far along in filming he was by the time the NBC telefilm was to have aired. I don't recall why NBC delayed the telefilm, but it had nothing to do with Dino.

Due to the cartoonists' strike, the networks delayed their new season debuts. CBS didn't do a preview show, and a casualty of the delay was NBC's preview special, *The Gary Coleman Saturday Morning Preview: The Thing Meets Casper & The Shmoo*, which was to air Friday the 7th, but never aired at all.

The season got a staggered roll-out. CBS debuted some new shows on September 8th, including *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle* airing from 8:00–9:00 a.m., and *The New Fat Albert Show* at 11:30 a.m. The following week, on September 15th, CBS debuted *Jason of Star Command* at noon, and *Tarzan and the Super 7* from 12:30–1:30 p.m. NBC, meanwhile, debuted *The New Adventures of Flash Gordon* at 10:00 a.m. on September 22nd.

In the fall and winter of 1979, we began offering more numbered and hand-painted sericels through *Starlog* and its sister magazine, *Fangoria*. These included 15 images from *Star Trek*, four images from *Batman*, two from *Tarzan*, and one each from *Groovie Goolies, The Archies, Journey Back to Oz*, and *Fat Albert*. Because these were offered in color full-page ads, usually on an inside cover, they did quite well.

The DC COMICS, INC. v. FILMATION ASSOCIATES lawsuit went to a federal jury trial in New York on October 17–19, 22, and 30th, and I flew in to testify there. On November 1st, seven of the eight claims by DC were upheld against Filmation, and the jury awarded them compensatory damages of $389,091.75 for the Aquaman claims and $817,765.50 for the Plastic Man claims, for a total of $1,206,857.25! DC issued a public statement which read: "DC Comics believes the verdict is significant because the suit sought protection for the unique and distinctive composition of the characters under the federal laws of unfair competition rather than for the characters' graphic or sculptural depiction under the copyright law." DC also requested a permanent injunction against Filmation, an accounting, destruction of the Filmation films and underlying materials, and attorney fees. We filed motions to seek a reversal of judgment, or a new trial. As expected, this dragged on for a while. We'll meet you in our next chapter for the final verdict. See, I can still do cliffhangers….

As the year ended, we announced a new deal for one of our old properties; we had made an agreement with the estates of the Marx Brothers to sell a different animated series than the one we had attempted to sell in 1966. The expectation was to sell it to primetime, and we budgeted it at around $500,000 per episode, our highest rate yet. We were talking with S. J. Perelman—who scripted the Marx Brothers films *Monkey Business* and *Horse Feathers*—when he passed away, so the search was on for new writers. We only secured the rights to Groucho, Harpo, and Chico, leaving out Gummo and Zeppo. The rights were granted for primetime-only, with an expiration date of June 1, 1980, to make a sale, with a minimum of 13 episodes.

Opposite Above: Darrell McNeil wearing a strike shirt

Opposite Bottom & Left: Character designs and model sheets for *Flash Gordon*

THE TOM AND JERRY COMEDY SHOW

CHAPTER NINETEEN

1980-1981

SILVER BULLETS AND SOCCER BALLS

As the decade rolled over, the new year brought much change.

Early in 1980 Marc Richards left Filmation after over six years, to take a job with an independent film company, Portal Productions. He had done well with us, but wanted to spread into new ventures.

A week later we announced that we had a firm deal with Sport Billy Productions to produce at least 16 half-hour cartoons, with an option to do ten more if things worked out. Our plan was to debut the first of the toons at the Marche International de Producteurs conference (MIPCOM) in April at Cannes, which meant we were working on them in the off-season when the fall 1979 shows were finishing up, but before the fall 1980 shows were starting.

In March we revealed to the press that we were working on a new series concept with Bill Cosby that would be aimed at eight- to 15-year-olds and be live-action mixed with animation, for a potential weekday afterschool series.

On March 21, 1980, the U.S. District Court in New York decided the matter of DC COMICS, INC. v. FILMATION ASSOCIATES. The judge rejected our contention that the Lanham Act was not as narrow as we contended—we argued that its scope was mainly for advertising and not "ingredients" of characters such as physical abilities or personality traits. The judge agreed that DC's broad argument was too broad, but our argument was too narrow, and the points went to DC. We also argued about the insufficiency of evidence, which resulted in the 7th claim, for Aquaman, being thrown out. Basically, the court said that DC didn't prove that we had used any of their Aquaman materials to create Manta and Moray.

As to damages, the judge found that despite the jury damages regarding Aquaman versus Manta and Moray, DC Comics did not lose any potential profits from sales or licensing, nor was there sufficient evidence that we had caused any confusion among licensors, viewers, or the general public. The damages of $389,091.75 for the remaining two Aquaman claims were thrown out.

The four claims in the matter of *Plastic Man* versus *Superstretch* and *Microwoman* were more complex, but the judge decided that although the evidence did support a finding of some damages, the amount was "seriously excessive." The judge threw out two of the claims immediately, due to lack of sufficient evidence that there was any public confusion about the characters, or direct copyright violation.

However, because we had licensed and tried to sell a *Plastic Man* show prior to creating *Superstretch and Microwoman*, and had not succeeded, our actions became suspect. We had sold *Superstretch* to CBS during the time we had an option on *Plastic Man*, and then DC had sold—through Ruby-Spears—their own 1979 *Plastic Man* series to ABC. The jury and judge found that DC might have sold their show earlier had we not done *Superstretch*. This meant that we were found to owe damages in two claims: breach of contract and breach of confidential relationship. Damages were based on lost television profits and potential negative effects on licensing revenue; no damages were incurred by the declining sales of the *Plastic Man* comic book series though.

Opposite:
Promotional art for *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* and character designs for *Lone Ranger* and *Journey Back to Oz*

Above:
Lou enters the 1980s

The amount of damages was recalculated. The option to produce *Plastic Man* would have cost $40,000, and the network was paying Ruby-Spears $188,000 to do their *Plastic Man* show. The judge chastised DC for not entering our profits from *Super 7* into evidence, and refused to accept those as part of the damages, as, "we do not think that (DC) should profit from its own sloth." By taking into account the option monies and network monies, and adding a premium "to reflect the diminution in value stemming from (Filmation's) unlawfully gaining the market a year earlier," the judge dropped the damages to a maximum of $200,000 for lost TV profits. In terms of lost potential licensing costs, the estimated amount was set at $21,339. The total damages on the two counts for *Superstretch and Microwoman* was thus $221,339.

The judgments had gone from eight counts to two, and the damages awarded went from $1,206,857.25 to $221,339. The judge would not grant a new trial, though they did agree that the DC lawyer had repeatedly stressed "wrong law" to the jury in his assertations about the physical similarities between DC's characters and Filmation's, which was not a part of the law he could argue. DC was not given attorney's fees, an accounting, or destruction of the Filmation films and underlying materials. DC was granted an injunction, the result of which, I believe, was that we would not make any further *Manta and Moray* or *Superstretch and Microwoman* cartoons.

DC and Filmation were directed to "settle a form of judgment and decree within ten (10) days," which we did. A Warner lawyer said that they considered the much smaller amount and injunction a victory, and saw no need for any further trial. The DC COMICS, INC. v. FILMATION ASSOCIATES suit is often cited in copyright law discussions today, as it established that in dealing with superheroes, trademark protection can be applied to character names, nicknames, physical appearance and costumes, but not for physical abilities (i.e., super-powers) or personality traits. This affected DC and Marvel negatively, as no longer could they bring about the kind of lawsuits that put Captain Marvel and other characters under in the 1940s and 1950s.

Several sources in print and online have stated that Marvel Comics joined the suit against us for Spider-Woman versus *Web Woman*, but neither I nor my lawyer remember any such suit, nor is there any reference to it in the legal paperwork regarding the DC suit. Regardless, erring on the side of caution, we removed *Manta and Moray, Superstretch and Microwoman*, and *Web Woman* from our licensing program. We continued to air the shows, selling them to NBC as part of a repackaged *Batman and the Super 7* series which lasted from fall 1980 to fall 1981. Once those shows left the air, however, the trio of superheroes were relegated to the dusty back shelves of Filmation inventory; they were not offered nationally for syndication, though they may have been available internationally. Today, they are some of the shows I get the most questions about, especially as most of the Filmation library has come to DVD. Could they get a release now? Hard to tell, as the copyright laws have changed so much since that time, but I hope they'll one day be seen again.

On April 12th, *Flash Gordon* moved to 12:30 p.m. Ratings were not at all what NBC was hoping for, but they were committed to a second season. The problem was that shows generally repeated four times a year. When a specific episode would get great ratings, they would play them more. Doing cliffhangers that were going to be repeated four times a year really made the networks crazy because they couldn't change the order. So they couldn't repeat *Flash Gordon* based on ratings due to its serialized nature! The move didn't help, as in early May, the series was announced as cancelled for the fall, even though NBC was committed to a second season!

The weekend of April 25–27th, SFM Holiday Network scheduled another syndicated airing of *Journey Back to Oz*. Its slate of family-friendly pictures were gaining more independent stations and advertisers, and *Journey Back to Oz* was a gem in their crown. We also made a deal with detergent company Texize for the soundtrack album. They guaranteed $1 million in print and display advertising in newspapers and supermarkets, and would provide a coupon with their product. With the coupon, the soundtrack LP would be only $2.00. It would not be available in any store, and would contain 14 tracks as heard in the film. There actually is a Japanese version of the soundtrack that was released at some point later, under the title *The Return to Oz*, but this was a bootleg LP that featured the original singer Peter Lawford—instead of Mickey Rooney—and two alternate songs!

Above:
Theatrical poster for *Journey Back to Oz*

In late April the fall schedules were finally finished. CBS was picking up two new series from us: *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* and *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger Adventure Hour*, while keeping a half-hour version of *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle*—now minus *Quacula*—and *The New Fat Albert Show*, and reruns of *Jason of Star Command* on Sundays.

NBC meanwhile picked up an amalgamation of an older show; the newly configured *Batman and the Super 7*, which included all-CBS reruns, but which was new to the Peacock network. I don't recall for certain that this had anything to do with our settlement with DC, but it is notable that by selling reruns of *New Adventures of Batman*—which would bring revenue in to DC—alongside the very shows they had just sued us over, we may have made some kind of deal to smooth things over. Also, NBC was still constantly revamping their schedule—trying to get something to actually get ratings. As mentioned, NBC also had an eight-episode second season order for *Flash Gordon*, but they had announced the show was cancelled, and it was not on the immediate schedule. In all we would be doing 56 new network half-hours for fall, plus 16 for *Sport Billy*, and our regular development.

On April 29, 1980, NBC finally aired the *Treasure Island* telefilm we had done back in 1972 for Warner, albeit in a drastically edited form. The 87-minute film was cut down to an hour and aired at 4:00 p.m. on a Tuesday as a "Special Treat" show, hosted by Melissa Sue Anderson from *Little House on the Prairie*. Timed for commercials and the host segments, a full half of the movie was cut. *Treasure Island* would eventually get released on video and DVD in its final form, but not ever in a theatre.

So let's chat about our new shows for the year.

Probably the strangest choice for a show for us to do for television was *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* because the characters were created by Bill Hanna and Joe Barbara! That was MGM's decision. They didn't like what Hanna-Barbera had done with the characters in their last series, *The Tom and Jerry/Grape Ape/Mumbly Show*—which went through a variety of title permutations from 1975–1977. So, they came to us to do a new series, to try to bring some life back to the characters. But the network Standards and Practices really didn't like the violent cat versus mouse aspects of the series, so we had to come up with something new. We made the characters more rivals than enemies, and had them competing all the time. We also removed the damned red bowtie from Jerry, which was one of those Hanna-Barbera animation shortcuts that allowed them to only animate a head from the tie up. There were two seven-minute shorts per show of *Tom and Jerry*.

The other component of the show, in a single seven-minute short, was "Droopy," a sad-sack dog character created by Tex Avery for MGM theatrical cartoons back in 1943. The character hadn't had any new shows since 1957, but we really liked him and wanted to use him. It was fun to pit him against the villainous wolf character, who one of our artists named "Slick." We also used other old MGM characters such as a bulldog named Spike and his son Tyke, plus Barney Bear and Tuffy. Due to the budgets, we couldn't put the same quality of animation that they had done for the theatrical shorts, but we did try to let our people go wild as much as possible and add a lot of slapstick. A lot of the scripts were by Coslough Johnson or Jack Hanrahan, but animators Steve Clark and Jim Mueller—among others—contributed so much to the stories they got their names added to the credits.

The *Tom and Jerry* cartoons had almost no voices, but the "Droopy" cartoons did. Frank Welker did the first six shows for us, but when a Screen Actors Guild strike hit, he couldn't continue work. I had to come in and do all the voices as the producer.

For the second year in a row, *The New Fat Albert Show* got an order for new episodes. This time it was for eight shows, which took us up to 52 episodes, enough for one per week for a whole year. We didn't change the style at all, and continued telling strong stories, with added "Brown Hornet" segments.

Flash Gordon had its order for the second season, but no fall debut date. Because of the poor ratings on the serialized first season, Fred Silverman said, "We've got to change it somehow and make it work so that the audience won't have to worry about what's going to happen next week, so they can pick it up any time they want to." Because if you missed two or three shows, forget it!

So, we did the second year of *Flash Gordon* for a little younger

Top:
Image from *Treasure Island*

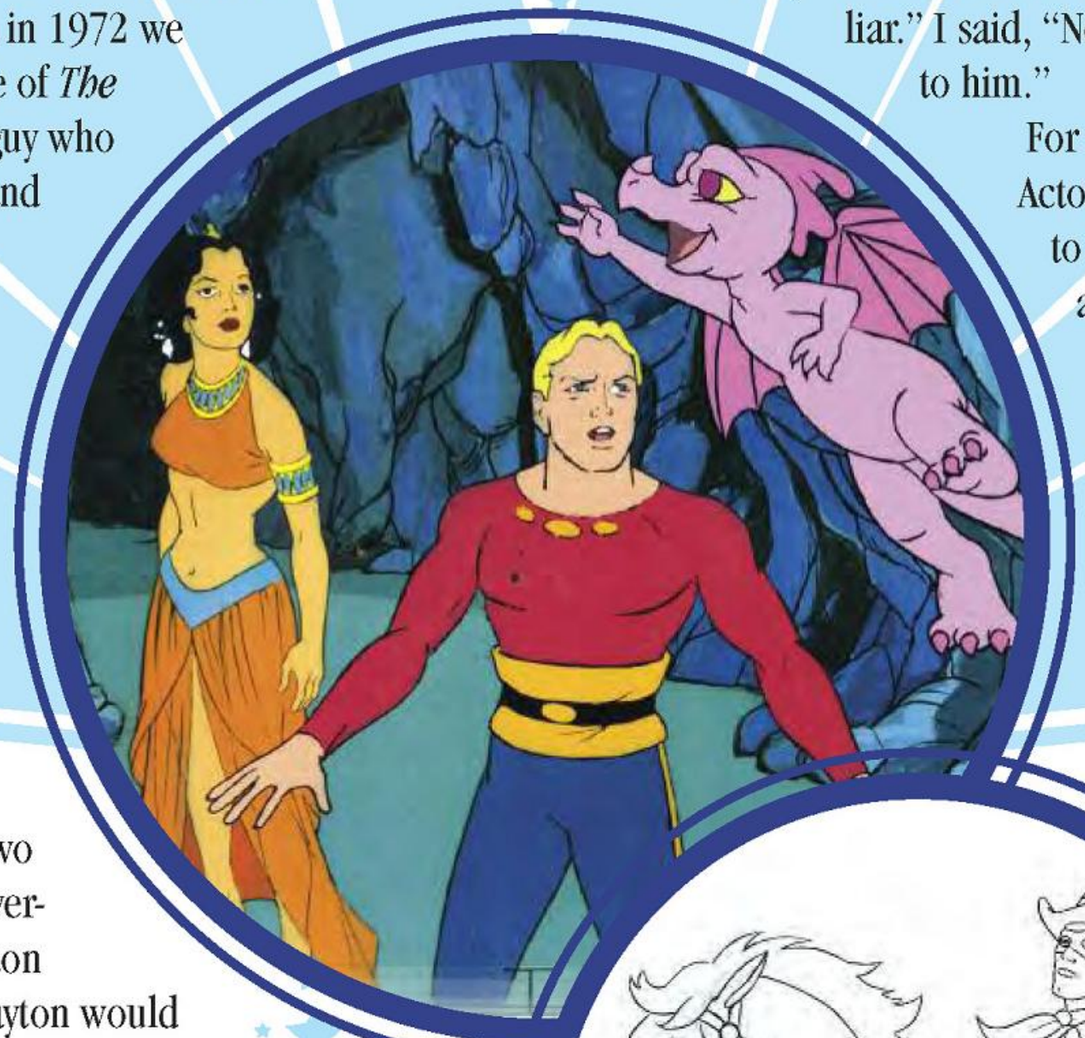
Middle:
Image from *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show*

Bottom:
The star of the "Droopy" cartoons

audience, and stuck a baby dragon in it named Gremlin. The stories were also shorter. We had eight half-hours, but we split those up into two stories each. So, viewers got two stories with the regular cast plus the baby dragon. It was a little more fun, but, personally, I liked the first year better.

One thing that was done with *Flash Gordon* was that we had spent a great deal of the budget on this first season, with all the development and the movie changes, so by the time we got to the second season, there wasn't a lot of the budget left. So, I put Gwen Wetzler in charge of directing a smaller crew whose job it was to just work on *Flash Gordon*, and they had kind of a mini-studio over at Filmation West. She had animators and storyboard and layout people, but she also used a lot of newcomers and assistant animators, and trained them how to do animation on the job.

Now, I had been trying to get the Lone Ranger on TV for a long time, as you may recall, before we finally got to do his adventures in *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger Adventure Hour*. We had tried to get the rights to the show back in 1965 and lost them to Herb Klynn at Format Films, for CBS. Then in 1972 we used the character in an ABC episode of *The Brady Kids*. You may recall that the guy who owned the rights was Jack Wrather, and he was a major stockholder for TelePrompTer. Wrather was a very nice man, and easy to deal with. I think he just enjoyed seeing something he owned make it on the air because he didn't really make very much money on it. But in 1980 we finally sold the series to CBS, and had 16 episodes to do, plus eight new *Tarzan*s to freshen that series up!



Originally, we wanted to use the two TV actors, Clayton Moore and Jay Silverheels in the voice roles. I called Clayton Moore's agent, and I asked him if Clayton would see me, and I asked if he could also send Jay Silverheels. Obviously, he figured out I was going to talk about Lone Ranger. I showed them the presentation we'd shown the networks, and I said we'd like to use their names and their voices. And I told him how it was a fairly easy job because they just had to read their characters in the proper voices and would be a quick paycheck. I said, "You've just got to read the material, you don't have to memorize any lines. It's an hour's work tops every week."

Moore had come in with these big dark glasses on, like his mask. And he said, "You can't do that. You can't do a half-hour show in a half-hour or hour. You've got to rehearse it. The Lone Ranger always memorizes." I said, "No, it's an animated show. No one's going to photograph you or anything. You can read it!" He said, "I don't think I could do that as the Lone Ranger." And he turned to Silverheels and said, "Mr. Silverheels, how do you feel about this?" And the guy said, "Any way you want to go Mr. Moore." And he turned back to me and said, "I'm sorry, we can't do this without the proper amount of rehearsals." And they turned and walked out of my office!

So, I called John Erwin, and asked him to do both voices, and he agreed, but then I thought better of it. Having John Erwin playing a Native American character was not the best way to go. So, we rethought it, and John was fine with that because we were always giving him work. We auditioned a Native American named Ivan Naranjo, and he was just terrific. We gave Tonto a lot more dialogue than he had previously had on radio or TV; he was very well educated.

And then I got a good idea for the Lone Ranger. I called William Conrad, who you may recall we tried to pitch a *Young Cannon* show with back in 1972. I asked him to do the voice of the Lone Ranger, and he said he'd do it. And then I remembered something. I said to him, "One more thing… I've got a guy who's been working for me for years. He's a virtual liar in every respect, and he said to me, 'If you're going to go over and see Bill Conrad, ask him about the time he flew the P-38 under the Golden Gate Bridge… upside down." And Conrad said, "You must be talking about Danch!" I was amazed. I said, "I am talking about Bill Danch. You mean he's not a liar?" He said, "He's not a liar. He tells strange stories, but he's not a liar." I said, "Now I've got to go back and apologize to him."

For some reason, possibly related to the Actors' Strike, William Conrad didn't want to use his own name on the show. I've also heard that his agent didn't want him associated with a kids' show, despite the fact that he had been the announcer on the original *Bullwinkle Show*. So, we spelled his name backwards, and he became "J. Darnoc."

The music on *The Lone Ranger* was a very important aspect of the show. It was so identified with the "William Tell Overture." No one knew it as the "William Tell Overture" for years because it was the *Lone Ranger* music! There was no way that you could use the Lone Ranger without using the "William Tell Overture" because everyone would say, "That's not the Lone Ranger!" So, every time you heard that wonderful theme coming over the horizon, it just added to the excitement of the show. It was also cheaper to use because it was in the public domain. And we used some of the same opening style as the old radio and TV shows as well.

As with our other more realistic shows, we did some rotoscoping

Top:
Flash Gordon and Dale meet baby dragon Gremlin

Bottom:
Design art for *Lone Ranger*

on *Lone Ranger*. This time out, we had to rotoscope some stuff with horses though, to make sure we got the movements to look right.

One of the toughest things about doing *Lone Ranger* was that we had to be very sensitive about the use of weapons. Even in the radio show, he used a gun, but he only used it to keep people from hurting themselves or being hurt, never for purposely hurting others. And he got in lots of fistfights and brawls. We had to come up with tricky ways to get around that, using his guns for sharp-shooting techniques, and taking out the fighting. Despite the fact that it was in all the original TV shows and kids saw reruns of those and other westerns all the time, it wasn't okay for Saturday morning cartoons to show gun or fist violence. But the Lone Ranger was the best guy on a planet with a six-gun, so it was okay to shoot a gun out of a bad guy's hand or use trick shooting to save a life or foil an evil plan. But he never shot to kill, and he never shot at anyone.

This was a period show, so we came up with an interesting tactic to bring in some of the prosocial or educational messages in the stories. It was more likely that they would be talking about where they lived and what the world was like then, and Tonto would talk about stories of the West, and the Lone Ranger would do historical stuff. If we featured somebody like President Ulysses S. Grant in the show, they would discuss who he was and what he did. We had characters appear like Nellie Bly, Mark Twain, Alfred Nobel, Fredrick Remington, Jesse and James Frank, Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, famed naturalist John Muir, even fictional Tom Sawyer… you name them! If they were around, they were used! We also put little educational tags on the end of each episode, with Lone Ranger or Tonto describing some historical fact about the episode.

Most of the episodes were written either by story editor Arthur Browne Jr. or by Dennis Marks, but we did have one episode called "The President Plot," written by the talented Tom Ruegger, who later helped create *Animaniacs*, *Tiny Toons Adventures*, and *Pinky and the Brain* among others. In it, the Lone Ranger and Tonto were helping at the Promontory Point, Utah, golden spike ceremony for the first transcontinental railroad. There was a villain who was trying to stop it, and our story had President Grant on the way to Promontory Point. In 1999, when they did the *Wild, Wild West* feature film, it had almost the exact same story! I wonder if they watched the *Lone Ranger* cartoon from Filmation?

Above:
Images of Lone Ranger and Tonto

Despite what it says in online sources, although preliminary development had begun in 1979, we didn't animate *Sport Billy* until 1980, and the show was first broadcast in Germany that year. We made the deal with this German group, and we had no ownership in the show as I recall; we produced the show, and they sold it all over the world themselves. We did make a royalty profit from it past the initial production fees of $200,000 per episode, for a total of $5,200,000. The biggest reason we took it was so that I could keep my animators working during the off-season. The Germans didn't have the same kind of delivery time for the fall that the U.S. networks did, so it enabled me to give more work to the people working at Filmation. I guess it was the opposite of "runaway production," as we were bringing work to the United States instead of taking it away like other studios.

The Sport Billy character was already really popular throughout Europe and South America in comic books and toys, mainly connected to soccer, but we knew that the character needed to be broadened out, so we brought in all sorts of other sports that he got involved in. And we could teach fair play, teamwork, sportsmanship, and healthy concepts to kids watching.

I don't remember how much of the backstory came from the comics, if any of it did, but the initial early concepts were by Rolf Deyhle. We had a twin planet for Earth called Olympus that rotated on the opposite side of the sun from Earth, so we never saw it. That's where all the god-like beings from mythology were from. And Billy came to Earth, along with a little girl named Lilly and a talking dog named Willy, to promote sportsmanship and the other values I mentioned. They travelled around in a spaceship that looked like a giant wind-up clock, and it could also travel through time, so we could go to different time periods. We also went to many different countries on the show, including Spain, Japan, Mexico, China, Norway, the Middle East, Peru, Russia, and all over Europe.

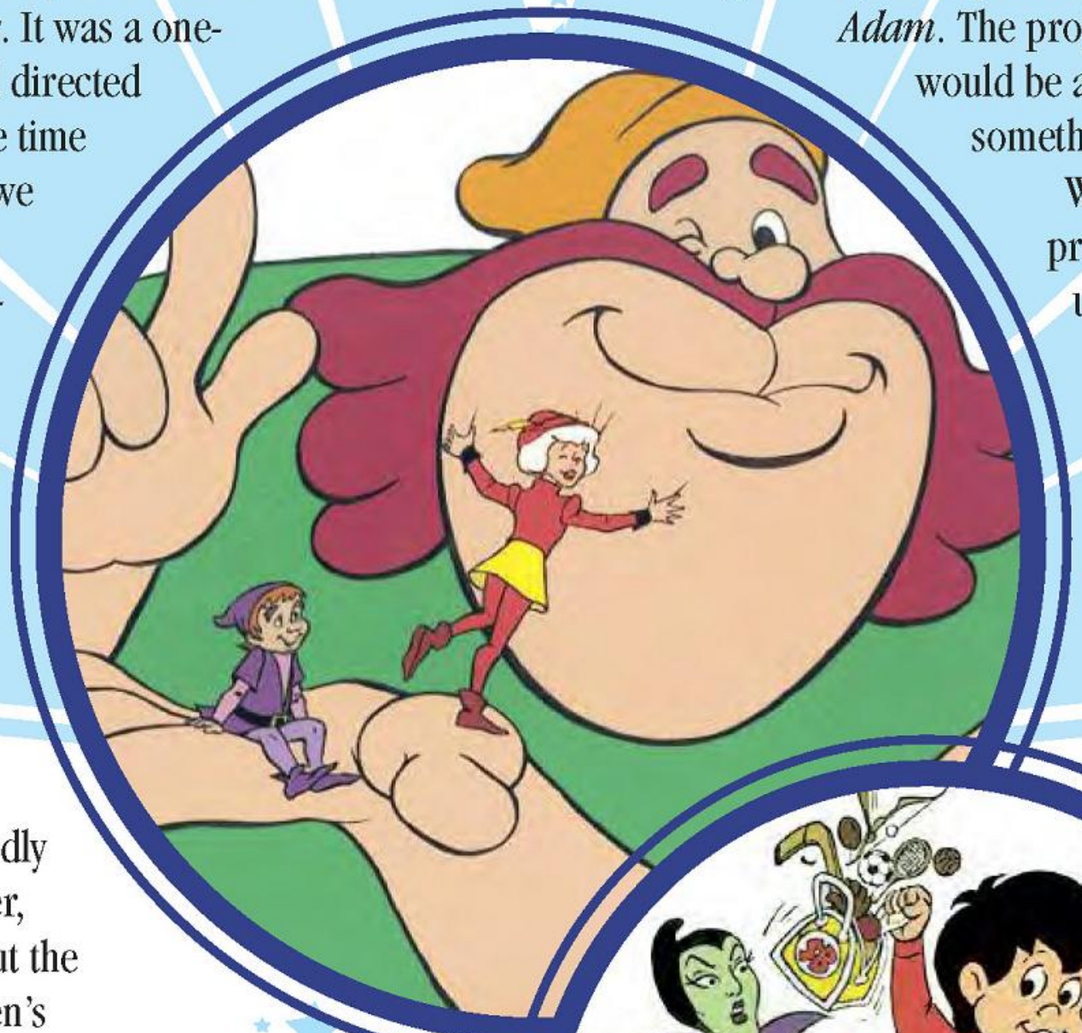
Billy carried a magical bag with him called the Omni-Sack, which looked like an ordinary gym bag, but from which he could pull all sorts of wondrous things if they needed them on their adventures. He would pull out a miniature car or helicopter or baseball bat and they would grow to full size for him to use. And because every hero needed an adversary, they had an evil witch chasing them around who hated fairness. She was Queen Vanda from Vandalusia, and she had a groveling little henchman named Snipe. The head guy from Olympus was named President Sportikus XI.

The shows were generally dubbed, though sometimes they were subtitled. The English language voices were my son Lane Scheimer as Sport Billy; Joyce Bulifant, who was in CBS's primetime series *Flo* at the time, as Lilly and Queen Vanda (not Linda Gary as has been

reported in some places); and the great Frank Welker as the talking dog, Willy. This was Lane's last voice work for Filmation, I believe. He was in his early 20s, and I think that's about when he got married and took off to be with his family. I did the voice of the computer on the show, and I think my wife, Jay, might have been the wife of Sportikus. There were also songs that ended each episode about the theme of the show.

Sport Billy was a big hit in Germany, so they picked us up for the second season very quickly, ordering the remaining ten episodes. The series was aired eventually in England, Spain, Italy, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Portugal, and a bunch of other places. It eventually aired in the U.S. in syndication and on NBC in the summer of 1982, though it took them forever to make that deal. The Sports Billy group had their own salespeople, although it was mainly dealt with by a Swiss guy named Pierre Rochat, who worked for the German gentleman, Wolfgang Stein, who put up the money for the series.

Our final new show for 1980 was only a one-shot for CBS, called *A Snow White Christmas*. It was a one-hour special written by Ron Card and directed by Kay Wright. The story was set some time after the events of the fairy tale story we all know, and Snow White and King Charming have raised a young daughter, also named Snow White. At Christmastime, Snow White is planning to make a royal decree, allowing children to play in the spooky, old deserted castle on the mountaintop. But when the Wicked Queen returns to the castle, she freezes the kingdom below. The younger Snow White and her friend Grunyon enlist the help of seven friendly giants (Finicky, Corny, Thinker, Hicker, Tiny, Weeper, and Brawny) to thaw out the citizens of the land and stop the Queen's magical menace.



This was the first show that I did which featured my daughter, Erika, in the lead role. The best part of the whole thing, for me, was to watch her do something that she had been doing for years anyway, but she got to do a primetime special, which had a much bigger audience. She had done so many voices for us, since she was about six years old, and now she was a grown woman, and she would soon be working full-time with me at Filmation. She had done graduate work at USC and eventually got a Master's Degree in cinema at Stanford University. I was very proud of her.

We had a big voice cast in this. Melendy Britt was the Wicked Queen, and Charlie Bell was Grunyon. Larry D. Mann was the Queen's Mirror, and Diane Pershing was the voice of the Queen Snow White. In terms of the giants, Arte Johnson was Brawny, and Clinton Sundberg was Thinker. Arte was the little guy from *Laugh-In* who would always say, "Very interesting," and he did a lot of comedy stuff. And Charlie Bell had been with us on *Space Academy*. Clinton Sundberg had worked with W. C. Fields, and he's the guy W. C. Fields said to, "There's a lot of the tomboy in you."

The reason we did the Christmas special is that it's relatively easy to sell a Christmas special because they're used all the time, especially in animation. And there had been no stories that ever did anything about what happened to the Snow White characters after the ending of the original story. We had been thinking about doing some more sequels to classic stories for years, and this was our first opportunity. The network liked it because we had the giants instead of the dwarves.

That wasn't our only classic story developed in 1980, however. We came up with a set of presentation art to do 13 animated productions under the umbrella title of "The Classics," though I don't recall now whether it was for television or film. They were: *The Three Musketeers; Cyrano de Bergerac; 20,000 Leagues under the Sea; The Adventures of Ulysses; Treasure Island* (possibly using our earlier version); *Buffalo Bill; Swiss Family Robinson; A Midsummer Night's Dream; Robin Hood; The Arabian Nights; Don Quixote; Beauty and the Beast;* and Jack London's *Before Adam*. The project never panned out though, and it would be another five years before we mounted something similar.

We also developed another classic property as a full series, but, unfortunately, the pitch never went beyond a piece of presentation art for a cover and budget breakdown, dated May 28, 1980. *The Yellow Brixx Road* promised a new Oz, in live-action. Or not, since this didn't go any further.

By June 1st, we were unable to sell a *Marx Brothers* show to anyone, so our option lapsed, and, sadly, that project went away for the second time.

In early August, following criticism from the Cartoonists' Union regarding more companies finding ways to create "runaway production," I had finally had enough. In an interview with *Variety*, I criticized the union for its "shotgun attacks" and for failing to recognize companies such as Filmation that were "adhering to the letter of the contract." I also criticized the union for having ineffectual leadership and for allowing some of its members to freelance non-union and cut prices, thereby hurting

Top:
Image from *A Snow White Christmas*

Bottom:
Image from *Sport Billy*

productive union members and animators. Figures quoted in the article showed our payroll at that point as 410 people on staff, for the 72–75 half-hour shows being produced for the new fall season.

Local 839 was planning to picket the networks to bring attention to the "runaway production" problem, including CBS on August 13th, NBC on August 23rd, and ABC on August 30th. They claimed that the pickets would call attention to short lead times that forced production to be sent overseas, but I noted that it was "silly to picket the networks when they (the union) don't have a contract with the networks." I felt that the chief reason work was going overseas from other companies was lower costs, not the short lead times.

The networks were more concerned with other problems, as they were in the middle of an Actors Guild strike and a strike by the American Federation of Musicians. We were mostly unaffected by the actors' strike, as we had recorded many of our shows in advance, or we had production staff like my family do the voices. Plus, we were not doing any new live-action shows at the moment. And the AFM didn't stop us at all because we were one of ten companies who made a deal with the AFM for a union-friendly interim waiver.

In early September, in preparation for the NATPE (National Association of Television Program Executives) conference, Viacom announced that it would be preselling twelve shows. One of them was *The Yellow Brixx Road*, a 30-minute series for kids with live-action elements. It would be a Filmation production, and we were in the scripting stages. Plans were for a "munchinette" section that taught good eating habits and a "world building" segment. Our target audience was for kids who were outgrowing *Sesame Street*. As noted previously, *The Yellow Brixx Road* never led anywhere.

On September 6, 1980, the new season started. *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle* airing at 8:00 a.m., cut back to a half-hour on CBS, followed by *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* at 8:30 a.m. The following weekend, on September 13th, CBS debuted *The New Fat Albert Show* at noon and *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger Adventure Hour* from 12:30–1:30 p.m. *Jason of Star Command* was moved to Sundays at 8:30 a.m. Following some baseball-related preemptions, NBC debuted *Batman and the Super 7* from 11:00–noon on September 27th.

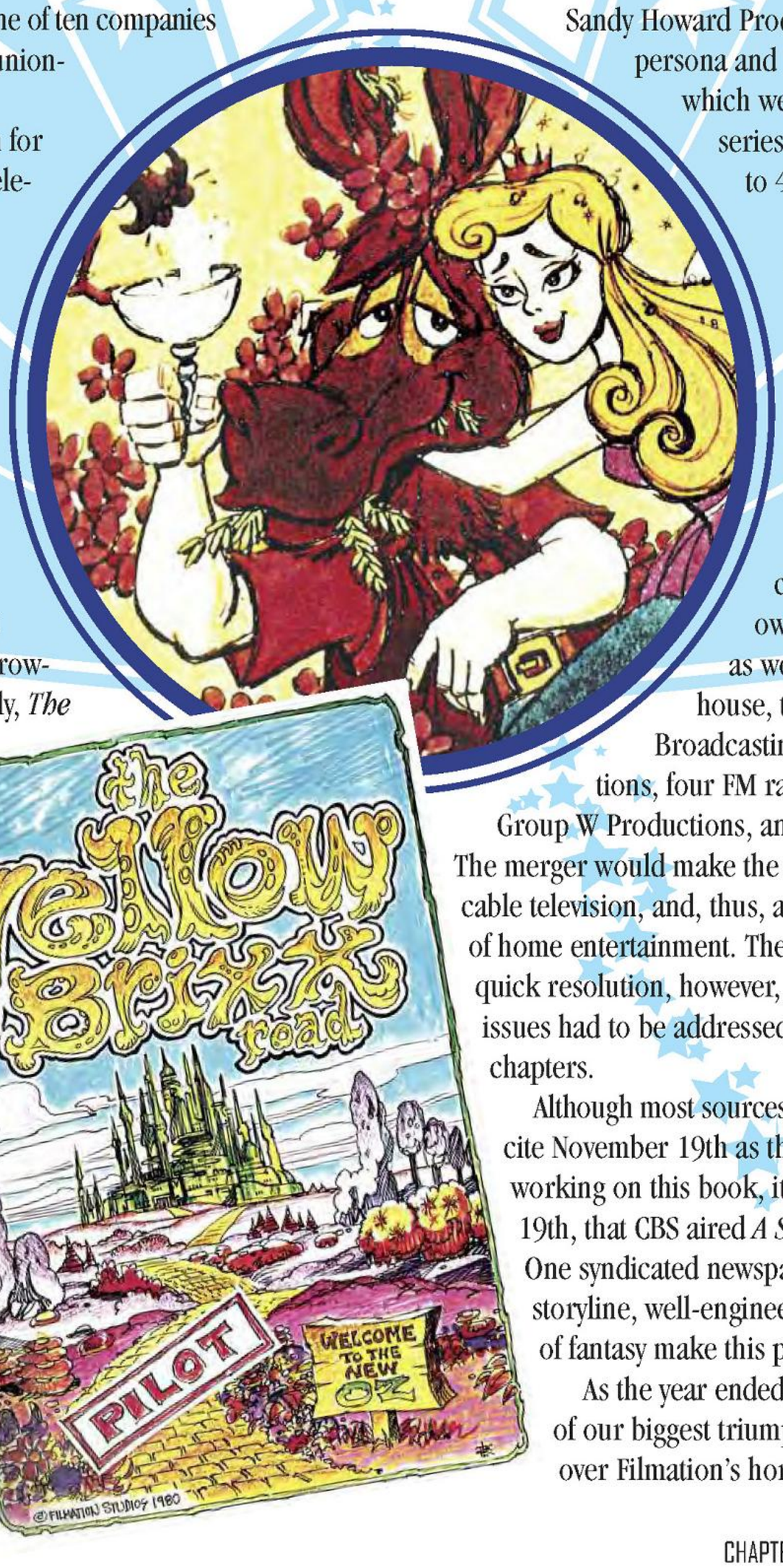
The second season of *The New Adventures of Flash Gordon* was a problem child, however. Basically, NBC didn't know when to schedule it. It was not on the 1980 fall schedule, and there wasn't even room for it, as most of NBC's shows were preempted on the West Coast by baseball for quite a while. Dino De Laurentiis's *Flash Gordon* movie came out on December 5, 1980, and for a few weeks, *Flash Gordon* was hot again… until the movie crashed like a rocketship on Mongo. As of the end of August 1980, the show was off the air, but where was NBC going to run the second series they had paid for? You'll find out two chapters from now!

In early October we announced plans to start development on two live-action science-fiction films with producer Sandy Howard of Sandy Howard Prods. We also licensed the rights to the persona and vocal character of W. C. Fields, which we planned to develop as an animated series. And by now our employees were up to 465.

On October 15th, news came that rocked the entertainment industry. Westinghouse Electric Corp. announced that they were proposing a merger/buyout of TelePrompter Corp., and that they had already bought up over 27% of TelePrompter's stock. Generally considered to be the world's largest cable operator by then, TelePrompter owned 50% of Showtime with Viacom, as well as Filmation and Muzak. Westinghouse, through subsidiary Westinghouse Broadcasting Co., owned seven AM radio stations, four FM radio stations, smaller cable company Group W Productions, and other even smaller cable groups. The merger would make the company the second largest force in cable television, and, thus, a major player in the expanding field of home entertainment. The proposed merger would not have a quick resolution, however, as many governmental and antitrust issues had to be addressed. I'll write more on this in the next chapters.

Although most sources, including our eventual DVD release, cite November 19th as the premiere date, as we discovered working on this book, it was actually on Friday, December 19th, that CBS aired *A Snow White Christmas* at 8:00 p.m. One syndicated newspaper reviewer said that the "simple storyline, well-engineered suspense, and a pleasing sense of fantasy make this production appealing."

As the year ended, we headed into the '80s with some of our biggest triumphs—and biggest tragedies—just over Filmation's horizon.



Top:
Presentation art for *The Classics: A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Bottom:
Presentation art for *The Yellow Brixx Road*

THE TARZAN/LONE RANGER/ ZORRO ADVENTURE HOUR

CHAPTER TWENTY
1981–1982
FORCED TO RUNAWAY

By winter 1980–1981, *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle* had been shuttled to Sundays at 8:00 a.m., and the Saturday schedule on CBS was rearranged. It was now *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* at 8:00 a.m., *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger Adventure Hour* from 10:00–11:00 a.m., *The New Fat Albert Show* at noon, and *Jason of Star Command* back on Saturdays at 1:00–1:30 p.m.

More details on the Sandy Howard deal that we announced late last year began to emerge. The first of the live-action science-fiction comedy films was budgeted at $4,800,000 and was to be written by Barry Blitzer and Tom Ruegger. Filming was set to begin in June at the Warner Ranch, with effects by our own effects shop.

In January we made a deal with Columbia Pictures Television to utilize their library of movies and TV shows to develop new animated series for them to distribute.

In mid-February, after six years with us, Arthur Nadel was promoted to vice president of development and creative affairs. Later that same week, Teleprompter Corp.—who now spelled their first name with only one capital letter—reported record earnings. Filmation had gained them $13,692,000 in revenue and $3,097,000 in income.

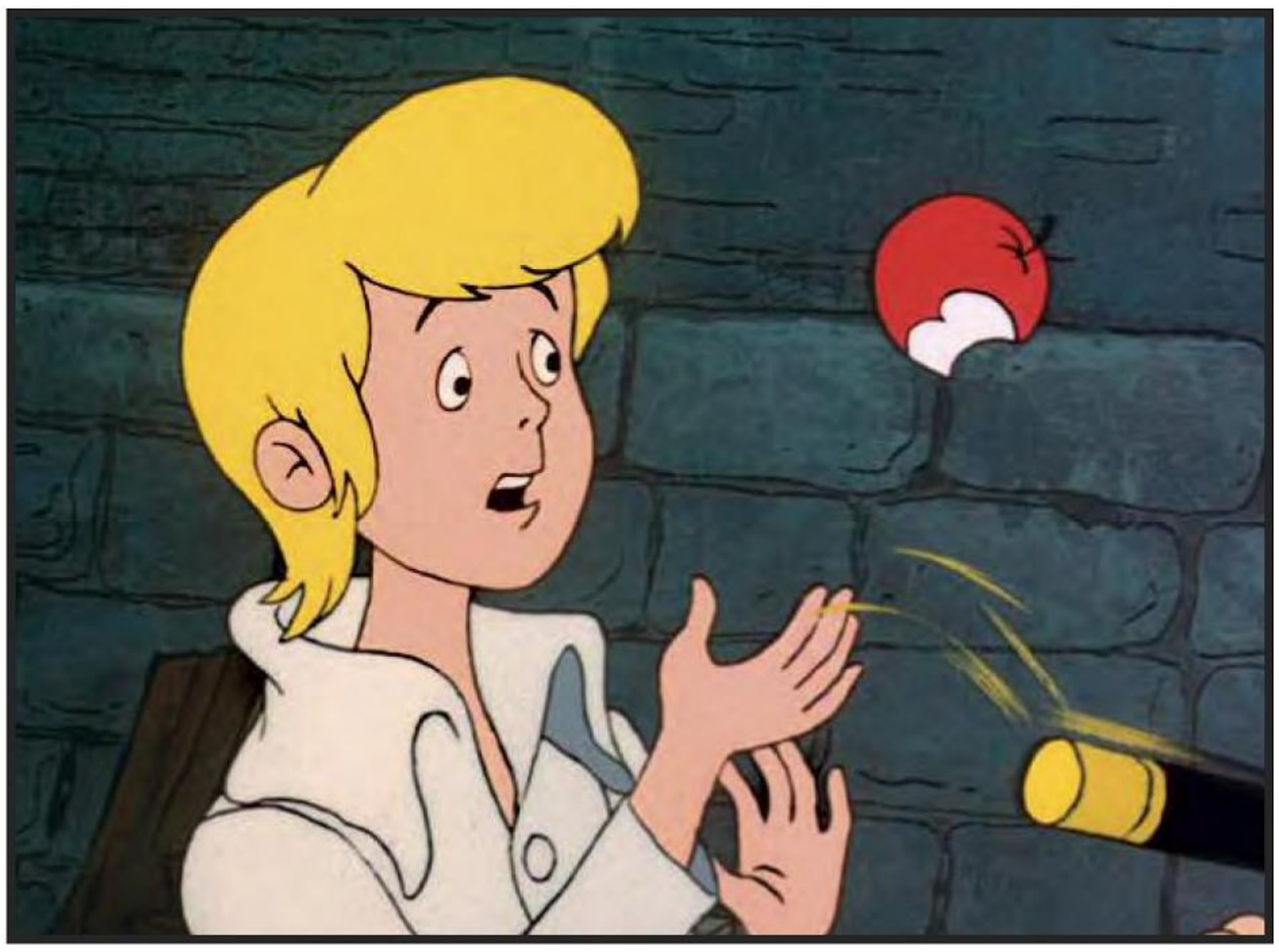
On March 5th, Norm and I gave a speech at the UCLA campus on "Today's Cartoon Industry." Shortly after that, we announced to the industry that we would be licensing 250 half-hours of television to advertisers and syndicated stations, including *The Archies, Star Trek, Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down, Jason of Star Command, Space Academy,* and *Gilligan's Island*. The U.S. syndication market was starting to open up more as cable became commonplace, but we were also planning to sell the shows across the globe.

We also debuted an advertising campaign in the trade papers with Seidem & Moiselle to showcase our 15th anniversary. The eight partial-page ads ran on March 6, 1981, and noted it as our official 15th anniversary date.

In mid-March, we promoted Joe Mazzuca to production chief in the animation wing, and Don Christensen to vice-president and animation producer-director. We also completed the work on the final ten episodes of the second season of *Sport Billy*, giving Telemundi plenty of time to sell worldwide rights prior to the 1982 international World Cup. Most of the foreign countries were going to start airing the show in October 1981.

In late March we set up a deal with Kid Stuff Records to release four records of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* songs. A few weeks later, we sold *Fat Albert* into syndication in 29 countries for the 1981–1982 season. And we licensed the rights to the British novel by William Horwood, *Duncton Wood*, which was a fantasy story about a race of moles in England. It was compared by many critics to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and we liked the allegorical nature of it. We were also talking with Shari Lewis about doing a new puppet show with us.

Remember how Warner Brothers and NBC burned off our *Treasure Island* telefilm in spring 1980? Well, almost a year to the date after,

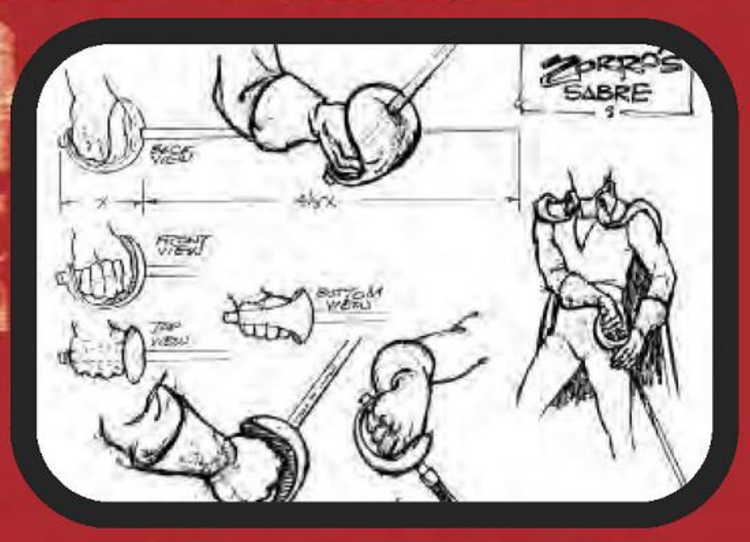


Opposite:
Promotional art and character designs for *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger/Zorro Adventure Hour*

Above:
Image from *Oliver Twist*

on April 14, 1981, NBC aired our *Oliver Twist* telefilm as another "Special Treat" show at 4:00–5:00 p.m. As before, they cut the 75-minute film down in half for a 60-minute special, including commercials. This film was a bit more faithful to the original Dickens novel, and featured a voice cast that included Josh Albee in the title role, *Shazam!* star Les Tremayne as Fagin, Monkees star Davy Jones as the Artful Dodger, and voice contributions from Dallas McKennon, Larry Storch, Phil Clark, Cathleen Cordell, Michael Evans, Lola Fisher, Robert Holt, Larry D. Mann, Billy Simpson, Jane Webb, and Helene Winston. It was eventually released years later on video and DVD in its feature-length form. *Variety* panned it, saying, "Neither Dickens nor the youngsters watching will profit much from this one," though they did commend our animation showcasing the streets of London.

New fall schedules were announced in April. CBS had picked up reruns of *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* and *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle*, new episodes of *The New Fat Albert Show*, and freshened one old show with new components in *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger/Zorro Adventure Hour*. They picked up one new fantasy series from us, called *Blackstar.*



NBC, meanwhile, took one hour-long show from us, though it combined two concepts: *The Kid Super Power Hour with Shazam!* In all, with the addition of ten new *Sport Billy* shows to produce for the German market, and the delayed *Fat Albert Easter Special* for spring 1982, we were doing about 76 new half-hours! It was a crazy amount of work. I got a call from Silverman, and he wanted to do another series, which I turned down. He said, "No one's ever turned down a job!" I said, "I'm turning it down! We can't do it!" I didn't realize it yet, but we had already accepted more than Filmation could handle; success would shake us to our foundation.

In May we put out the following casting notice for *The Kid Super Power Hour*: "Available parts: male, all-American boy, blond, blue-eyed; femme, all-American girl, beautiful, intelligent, sense of humor; male, benevolent delinquent, conceited but lovable; femme, teenage Machiavelli, mischievous, enjoys causing problems; femme, black, diminutive, naïve, eager, fun-loving, persistent; male, overweight, moody, punk rocker, comes on cool but is really a pussycat. All actors must be 18 or over and be able to play high school age. Singing and ability to play instruments a plus." As you can see, the characters of Weatherman and Punk Rock were originally one character.

The feature film *The Legend of the Lone Ranger,* which factored into CBS's decision to buy the series from us the previous year, as well as new episodes this year, was released to theatres on May 22, 1981. It had tremendous negative publicity and bombed badly at the box office. We knew even before the fall season began that our show had probably just been shot down by a silver bullet.

Our next bad news came in mid-July. Faced with a very short lead time on our shows, we were forced to finally send our first TV series overseas to Japan to complete animation. It was a crushing disappointment to me, and it brought the swift wrath of the animation union, IATSE 839, who filed their first runaway grievance of the season—though not their last, as other studios followed suit—against Filmation. The fault was mostly in the hands of the networks, which were delaying approvals on the majority of the scripts for both us and Hanna-Barbera. We were busy hiring as many people as we could to complete the shows we had orders for, but we knew that *Zorro* was going to miss the delivery date thanks to the network delays.

The network delays were the subject of a *Variety* story in late July, in which they interviewed Norm and I. The article was one of the first times I was so explicit in stating my hopes that the cable TV market and syndication would be the savior for children's television. Since Filmation was owned by Teleprompter, we should have had a leg up. Little did I know that the statements would both hurt us and be a foretelling of our not-too-distant future.

As July ended, my daughter, Erika, was given a title at Filmation: Production Assistant. It was even noted in the press, though her familial lineage was not. She didn't start working there full-time until fall 1983, however.

But that news wasn't as seismic a shift for our company as what was happening behind the scenes. On July 30th, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) finally agreed that Teleprompter Corp. could be sold to Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. as long as certain cable systems were dropped—thus avoiding antitrust issues—and affirmative action hiring requirements were met. The $646 million merger would create the second largest communications Multiple System Operator (MSO) in the world.

The merger was still opposed by many in the field, with one main competitor shouting the loudest; Ted Turner was calling for antitrust

guidelines to come into play, largely because Teleprompter and Westinghouse did not carry his Cable News Network (CNN). A temporary stay was ordered by the U.S. Court of Appeals on August 13th, but the stay was lifted on August 18th, and the merger went through. As of that date, the ownership of Filmation for the future was going to change. We just didn't know how much or when. And, so, business continued as normal.

I already noted that *Zorro* was being sent overseas, so let me fill in more about the show and how it came to be in the state it was in.

Zorro was an interesting story. It had never been done in animation. It was based on a 1919 short story written by Johnson McCauley, but the character had been in numerous serials, movies, and TV series since the 1920s. We sold *Zorro* because it was a recognizable name. It was always difficult to sell shows that had never been seen or heard of before. But with this show, even if you had never seen one of *Zorro*'s adventures, you knew the name.

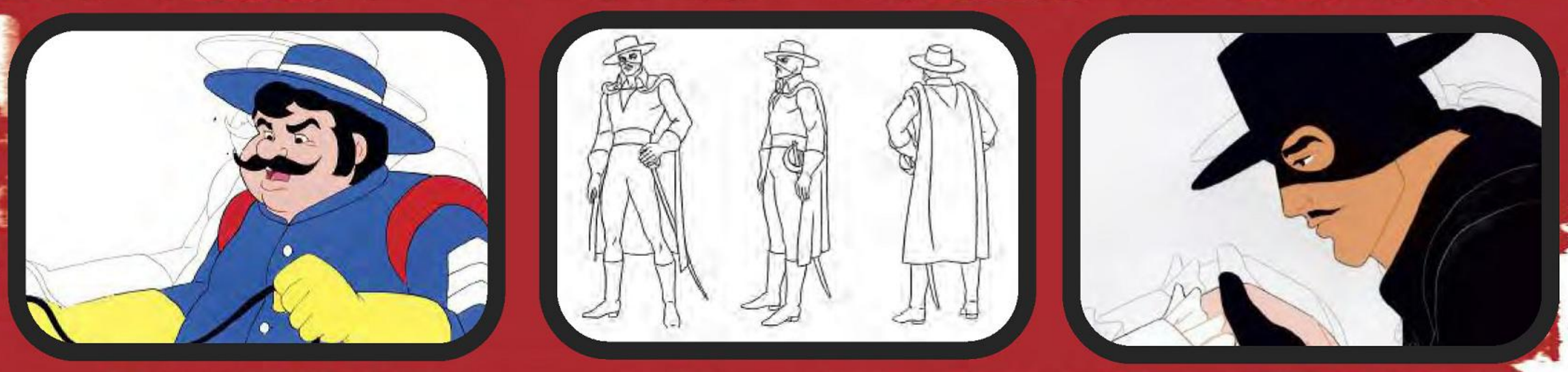
Zorro was the first animated show for certain—and possibly the first U.S. show of any sort—which featured a cast composed entirely of Spanish or Latino actors and actresses. Originally, we announced that Fernando Lamas would be the voice of Zorro, but in July, as production began, Lamas had to cancel out on us. We chose Henry Darrow to replace him as the voice of Zorro and his alter ego, the wealthy Don Diego de la Vega. Julio Medina was his faithful sidekick, Miguel, a.k.a. Amigo, and the female leads on the show were Christina Avila, who played Diego's love interest Maria de Varella, and Socorro Valdez, who played sexy pirate Lucia.

Don Diamond, who played Sgt. Gonzales—and who had starred in the 1950s *Zorro* live-action show—was an incompetent bad guy mostly played for laughs. We also had Eric Mason as the ruthless villain Captain Ramon, Carlos Rivas as Zorro's father, Governor General Don Alejandro de la Vega, and Ismael "East" Carlo as the Mission's priest, Fray Gaspar.

Arthur Nadel was in charge of the writing department for the company, but the scripts were mostly written by Arthur Browne Jr. or a talented young guy named Robby London, except for a few by Ron Schultz and Sam Schultz and by Marty Wagner. Robby was a fan of swashbuckling stories and told me he even had fencing lessons as a kid! Arthur liked him a lot, and Ted Field, one of the guys in control at CBS, liked his stories as well.

As noted, this was the first show we had to send overseas, and it was all due to the network being so late at approving story premises and scripts. There was no way we could deliver all the work in time with the people we had working, who were already working on our other shows to deliver. So we sent the 13 episodes overseas to an outfit called Tokyo Movie Shinsha (TMS), who were a very good Japanese animation studio. But they had a terrible time. They only had five weeks to deliver the first episode back to us completed.

We sent Don Christensen over to Japan to work with TMS. He loved the way the Japanese worked; he said they would come in and work all day, then sleep at night at the office, and wake up in the morning at their job. He was a very close friend of mine, but we had been drifting apart; he said I was a roadblock to getting things done, without me yet knowing that the opposite was the case. So, it was getting difficult for me to work with him. He wanted to go off to Japan, and I said, "Whatever you want to do Don." He was in charge of all the layout people at Filmation, and when he left, the place really started to hum and work. He had apparently driven them crazy. He would stay there at night and work overtime, and he had actually become the bottleneck. But now he was off to Japan to work with TMS to get *Zorro* produced correctly, and Filmation's layout department became a calmer place.



It was not a good way to work, but TMS tried hard, and Filmation tried hard, and we all did as well as we could. I probably should not have taken the show on; I should've refused to produce it. We just had too many shows to do this year. It hurt a lot to send this stuff overseas, and TMS broke their bones to try to get it to us on time, but there were little mistakes in it. The work looked good, but in some places it was not up to our normal standard, and it was not TMS's fault; they did an impossible job.

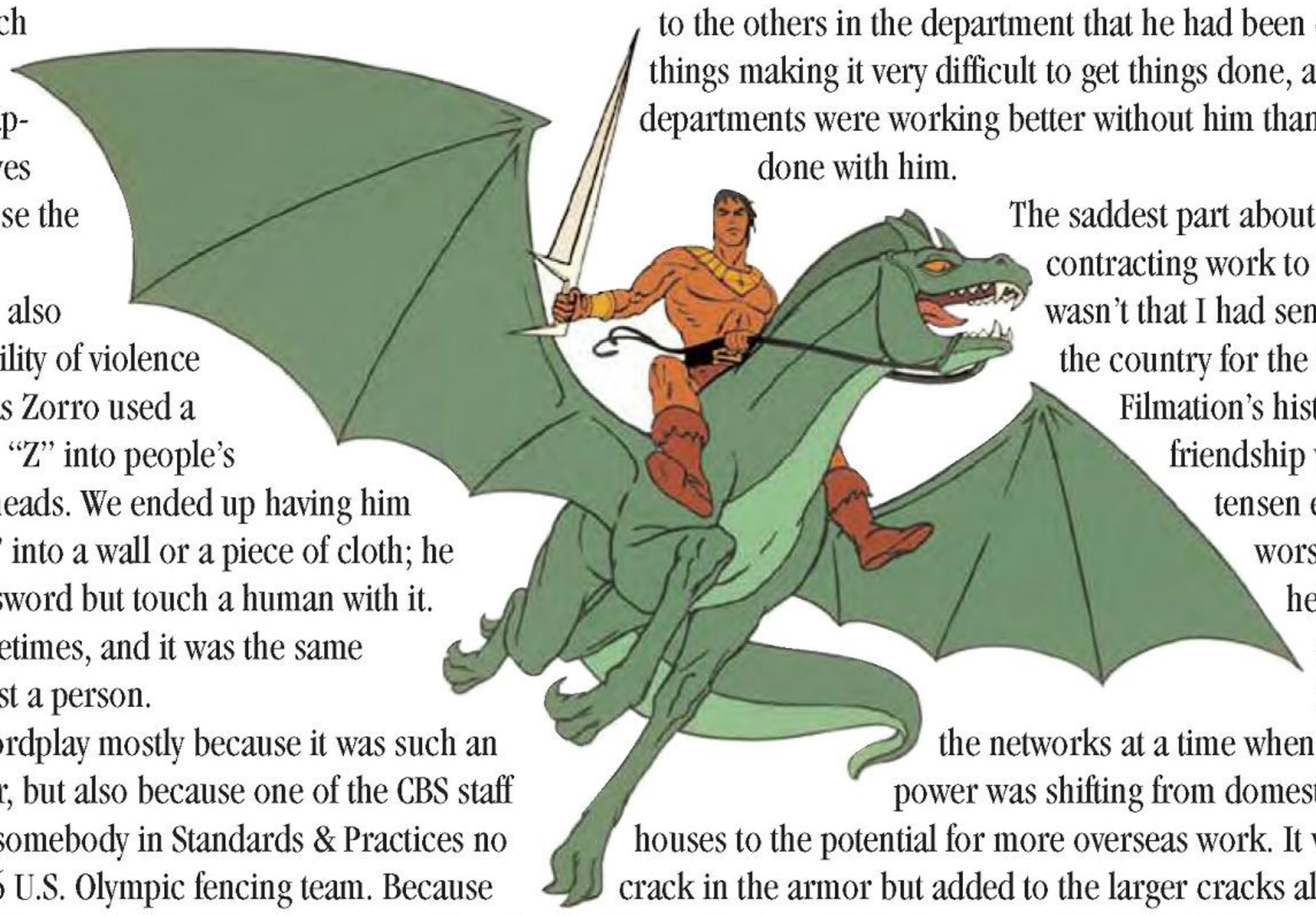
One of the elements that made this show difficult was that it's hard to animate a character dressed completely in black. You have to use white lines instead of black lines to encompass the body, so that you know where to do the

Opposite & Above : Designs and images from *Zorro*

paint in the back. If you watch the episodes closely, you'll probably see some stuff disappear right in front of your eyes every once in a while, because the lines were colored wrong.

As with *Lone Ranger*, we also had an issue with the possibility of violence portrayed by the good guy, as Zorro used a sword and slashed the letter "Z" into people's chests and cheeks and foreheads. We ended up having him generally slash the letter "Z" into a wall or a piece of cloth; he would do anything with his sword but touch a human with it. Zorro also used a whip sometimes, and it was the same story; he never used it against a person.

We got away with the swordplay mostly because it was such an integral part of the character, but also because one of the CBS staff members—I believe it was somebody in Standards & Practices no less—had been on the 1976 U.S. Olympic fencing team. Because he was so supportive of the show—and had the chops—we filmed him as our rotoscope model for the Zorro swordfights.



to the others in the department that he had been one of the things making it very difficult to get things done, and the departments were working better without him than they had done with him.

The saddest part about us subcontracting work to TMS in the end wasn't that I had sent work outside the country for the first time in Filmation's history, nor that my friendship with Don Christensen ended. The worst part was that it helped a Japanese studio get a foothold into the networks at a time when the balance of power was shifting from domestic animation houses to the potential for more overseas work. It was only a small crack in the armor but added to the larger cracks already caused by Hanna-Barbera, Ruby-Spears, and DePatie-Freleng—and the actions of the animation union that were to come in 1982, it was a crack that I regret ever having contributed to.

As with *Lone Ranger*, we had Zorro do little informational educational messages at the end of each episode, often talking about the history of California, or teaching viewers Spanish words or phrases. It was nice to have an ethnic character that no one else had ever used quite like this before. We did the tags that would appeal to a Spanish audience and yet also be of interest to a non-Spanish audience.

Speaking of history, in 1983, Henry Darrow starred as Zorro in a live-action Disney sitcom called *Zorro and Son*, and from 1990–1993, he played Zorro's father in another live-action syndicated *Zorro* series!

After *Zorro* was over, Don Christensen came back and told me that he didn't want to work anymore for anybody else. He wanted to give a shot at trying to start his own series. He tried to sell stuff on his own, but you just couldn't do that at the time. So, eventually, he and I went to lunch, and he asked to be hired on again. I told him that he could come back at the same wage—which was a lot more than the other guys were making—but not doing the job he had been doing. He got angry and wouldn't even look at me or shake hands with me. And I lost a friend. But I knew by then from talking

In addition to the 13 new *Zorro* shows, we did twelve new 11-minute *Lone Ranger* episodes, which could bracket around the *Tarzan* or *Zorro* episodes to create the hour-long shows. Most of those were written by a new female writer, Misty Stewart. We also got another eight-episode order for *The New Fat Albert Show*, plus the Easter special. And then there were our other two new shows.

Blackstar was a fantasy show with magic in it. I said, "Let's get a guy from Earth, put him in outer space someplace, make him a superhero, and give him some powers that would allow us to have some fantasy on Saturday morning." We came up with an astronaut named John Blackstar whose space shuttle is pulled through a black hole, and he finds himself crash-landing on the distant planet Sagar. There, he's rescued by the tiny Trobbits, who were seven little dwarf-like creatures. The planet of Sagar was threatened by the Overlord, a dark magician who possessed the Power Sword, which was one half of the powerful Powerstar. After Blackstar gained the other half of the weapon—the Star Sword—he allied himself with the Trobbits, plus a shape-shifter named Klone, a sorceress named Mara, and a dragon named Warlock, to fight the Overlord and bring

peace to Sagar.

Blackstar was very popular almost immediately. He didn't have any real powers; he was just a human in a strange situation having to fight for what was right. It was similar in some ways to *Flash Gordon* or *John Carter*. I feel that we were really world-building, and we could have done something more later, if we had more half-hours to do it. But, we only had 13 episodes to explore Sagar.

In our original model sheets, Blackstar was an African-American, but by the time we shopped it to the network with presentation art, we had decided to make him Caucasian-but-vaguely-Native American instead. It wasn't motivated by any racial prejudice; we had led the way in utilizing ethnic diversity in the industry since the 1960s. He wasn't the only one who went through skin color changes; the Trobbits went from blue to green to purple to bright orange before I picked the dark pink color that they were on the show.

George DiCenzo, who had worked with us before on *Space Sentinels*, was our John Blackstar. Linda Gary was Mara, and Alan Oppenheimer was the villain, the Overlord, as well as one of the Trobbits, the beaver-like Carpo. Frank Welker played three of the Trobbits; the flying Gossamear; dim-witted, mustachioed Burble; and the cook, Rif. Finally, a new guy to us, Pat Pinney, was Klone the shape-changer; as well as two Trobbits; the magician, Balkar; and the farmer, Terra. Pat Pinney was the roommate of the brother of Ted Field, who was the guy who bought the show at CBS. So, when Ted called and asked us to get Pat some work, he got it. And Pat has gone on to do a lot of animation work after *Blackstar*!

It was funny that in the first script that was written, the vocal characterizations for the cast called for Blackstar to sound like James Garner or Han Solo, Mara to be like Greta Garbo or Carole Lombard, Balkar to sound like Orson Welles, Carpo to be Wally Cox, Gossamear to mimic Mickey Mouse, Rif to be Walter Brennan, Burble to sound like Goofy, and Overlord to bring to mind the dulcet tones of Darth Vader!

The Trobbits were kind of a cross between *Snow White's* seven dwarves and Tolkein's hobbits. There were originally only going to be three of them, and they were creepier creatures, but we were urged to make them cuter by the network and do seven of them. We used them mostly for comedy relief, but we made sure that each of them had something special about them, and the writers really developed their personalities as much as they could given how many characters there were.

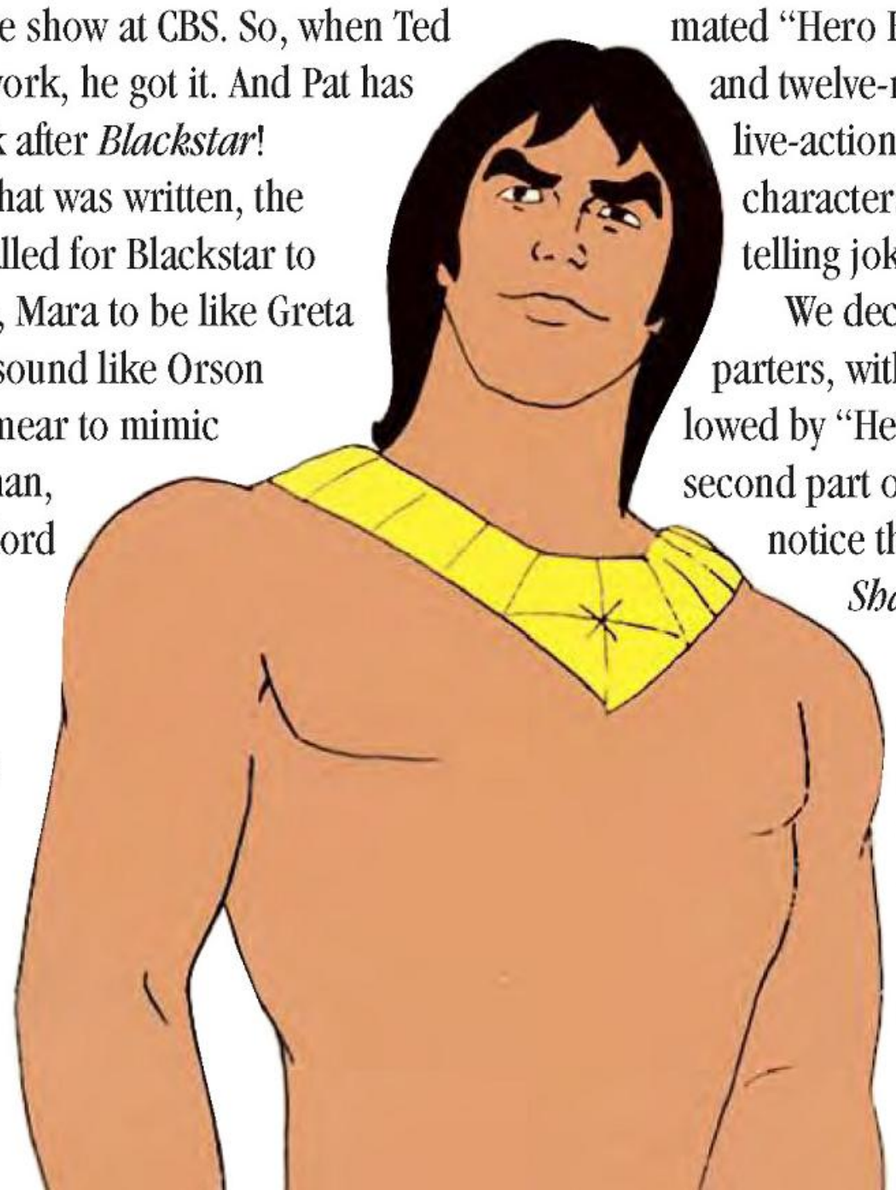
We had some really talented people writing for *Blackstar*, and they came up with wild stuff. J. Michael Reaves, Tom Ruegger, Marc Scott Zicree, and Robby London wrote most of them. There were underwater battles, gargoyles, dragons, air whales, ice creatures, dinosaurs, merpeople, volcanoes, flame people, zombies, evil clones, vampires, and more. We also had a lot of creatures that were combined from other animals such as Piranha-Hawks, Alligator-Serpents, Antler-Bats, and more. Our model people became kind of like mad Doctor Dolittles, taking the head of one animal and putting it on the body of another animal to create a new creature. It was a wild show!

Working on *Blackstar* and seeing what we could do with the world around him really gave us an entrée into what happened with *He-Man* a few years later. *Blackstar* was really the grandfather of *He-Man*. Mattel actually did a toy line with *Blackstar*, and they were the ones who came to us with *He-Man* only a year later.

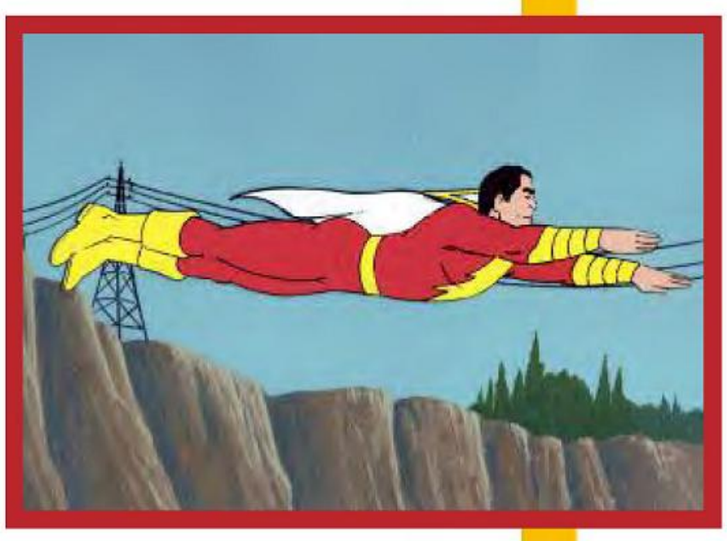
The Kid Super Power Hour with Shazam! for NBC was essentially three shows. The "Shazam!" segment was its own half-hour, and it was animated, with 12 episodes. Mixed into that was the animated "Hero High," and there were 13 each of eight-minute and twelve-minute stories. The third component was the live-action group The Heroes, which was the "Hero High" characters as a live-action rock band, hosting the show, telling jokes, and singing a song. It was very ambitious.

We decided that the *Shazam!* episodes would be two-parters, with the first part ending with a cliffhanger, followed by "Hero High" stories, and then leading back to the second part of *Shazam!* Only when it was far too late did we notice that we had 13 of the 'Hero Highs" but only twelve *Shazams!* Whoops!

In developing the new *Shazam!*, we decided to go almost directly from the comic book sources rather than adapting our live-action series. After all, we weren't held back by special effects or costume budgets, so we could have supervillains or



Opposite & Above: Images from *Blackstar*



Above:
The cast of *Shazam!*

show lots of people flying or zooming into space or fighting robots, or even a talking tiger. So we went back to the original Captain Marvel concepts where Billy Batson worked at WIZZ-TV (instead of WHIZ-Radio) and was Captain Marvel, his sister Mary was Mary Marvel, and lame newsboy Freddie Freeman was Captain Marvel Jr. Their chubby, bumbling Uncle Dudley also dressed up as Uncle Marvel, and they had a friend who was a well-dressed talking tiger named Mr. Tawny. Their villains were Dr. Sivana and his cretinous children, Ibac, Mr. Atom, Black Adam, the wormy Mr. Mind, and others.

I don't know why we didn't approach any of the actors from our live *Shazam!* show to voice the animated version, but it was probably because they were so different, and it had been so many years since we had worked with them. John Davey had moved out of town by then, I think. The voices we used were Burr Middleton as Billy and Captain Marvel; Barry Gordon as Freddy; Dawn Jeffrey as Mary; Alan Oppenheimer as Sivana, Uncle Dudley, and Mr. Tawny; and me as WIZZ manager Mr. Morris.

For the look of the series, we went straight to the comics again, basing the looks of the characters mostly on the C. C. Beck art. We even included the squinty eyes for Captain Marvel, which our animators loved to make fun of, especially after a company-wide memo was issued saying that he could not lose "the strong, squinty look associated with the comic book character." We even did a cameo appearance in one episode, with C. C. Beck and DC editor/writer E. Nelson Bridwell appearing in a scene and being called by their names! We were the first animated series that ever went to those lengths to spotlight the show's origins. Darrell McNeil, working freelance for us, did the majority of the Mary Marvel character layouts. She was his favorite comic book heroine when he was a kid. There were many future and former comic book people who worked on the show as well, including writer Paul Dini, and layout artists Russ Heath, Dave Hoover, and Bruce Timm.

Because we wanted the show to be cohesive, we had members of the Marvel family appear in a few "Hero High" segments, and the kids guest-starred in one of the *Shazam!* episodes as well. Captain Marvel and Mary Marvel appeared in one show each, while we trotted out our own *Shazam!* compatriot Isis for an appearance on another episode. We did have some references to the live TV show as well, including one episode in which Mary Marvel calls on the Elders, using the same incantation Billy had used on the older TV series.

As for the "Hero High"/"Heroes" stuff, Darrell McNeil swears that Filmation had created presentations for a show called *The Super Archies* to sell to the networks, but we abandoned it very early in the process and created our own teenage superheroes. I don't remember anything like that happening at all, and given what had happened with us with DC Comics recently, it probably wouldn't have been the smartest idea to do so. However, if we did do some presentations for *The Super Archies*, we clearly made wholesale changes before we created our own characters and settings for "Hero High." It would be hard to find any hint of Archie-dom in it, other than the generalized elements of teenagers and a high school.

What I remember happening is that I was looking back at the concept we had done for the potential live-action *Batman* reunion. I'd always wanted to do a show about an over-the-hill gang of superheroes, with them sitting there in their little home, retired. No network wanted to do that for Saturday mornings, with Batman not being able to… er, Bat, and Superman not being able to fly. I said, "Why don't we do a show about a high school that trains superheroes? Why don't we make a musical group out of them, just like the Archies or the Hardy Boys or other musical shows we've done? We'd hit everything! We'd have superheroes, we'd have kids, we'd have high school, and we'd have songs. That would really be a good show!" So that's how we mashed up the concepts; as far as I recall, The Archies had very little to do with it.

We cast live actors to play the "Hero High" characters onstage live, and then they did the voices for the cartoons as well. Captain California was the perfect surfboard-riding superhero, and his counterpart was Glorious Gal, who was ultra strong and could fly. They had two rivals, Rex Ruthless, who had boots that allowed him to change height, and Dirty Trixie, who had a magic bag of dirty tricks. Then there was Misty Magic, who could do some magic with her wand; the chubby Weatherman, who could almost control the weather and floated around on a cloud; and Punk Rock, who was sonically loud with his voice

and guitar. There were lots of other characters around, including the principal of Hero High, Mr. Samson, who was a retired strongman, and Miss Grimm, who was also a retired superhero. See, I did get some retired, old super-heroes in the show!

The actors who played the characters were almost all newcomers to Filmation, but two of them had been there before. Jere Fields played Misty Magic, and she had done her very first acting role for us, way back in Cosby's *Aesop's Fables!* It was now ten years later, and she was a beautiful young lady. And John Berwick, who had worked on *Space Academy* and *Jason of Star Command*, became our Rex Ruthless. That was funny because he was playing a nasty guy, but he was really a very nice guy. He ended up marrying Arthur Nadel's daughter, and they've been together over 25 years!

The other actors were: Christopher Hensel as Captain California; Becky Perle as Glorious Gal; Jim Greenleaf as Weatherman; Maylo McCaslin as Dirty Trixie; and Johnny Venocour as Punk Rock. I got to see Johnny again when we did commentary for the DVD sets. He's a comedian and actor now, and still a crazy, funny guy, though he spells his last name "Venokur" now. Maylo McCaslin later married 1970s TV star Willie Aames and appeared with him in a religious DVD series *Bibleman*.

For animated voices on the show, Alan Oppenheimer played Mr. Samson, and my daughter Erika was Miss Grimm and the whiny younger hero Bratman. Norm Prescott was the narrator, and I did voices here and there when needed.

We filmed all the live-action stuff on a stage over at Filmation West. Most of the songs were written by Dean Andre of Mizzy Music Productions, with Norm Prescott producing and writing lyrics. We hoped to send The Heroes out on tour to promote the show, and maybe get a record or two released with them. Unfortunately, the only time The Heroes got an audience was when we were filming; then we had an audience of kids that the Heroes would greet at the end of each episode. The audience was mostly made up of the children of our Filmation employees.

We recorded at least 26 songs with The Heroes. Several of them appeared on the 1980 album *Rock 'n' Roll Disco* by Fat Albert & The Junkyard Band, though they were rerecorded by different performers. The songs used on that album were: "Saturday Sunday Monday Funday," "Skippin' Out," and "Goodie Goodie Goodie."

Robert Lamb was hired as an apprentice storyboard artist during this very busy season. One day after groaning over a "Hero High" script, Rob asked Bill Danch why the jokes were so lame, not knowing Bill's history or reputation. True to form, Bill quipped to the still wet-behind-the-ears upstart, "Yeah, you can say that now, but where were you when the page was blank!" A few years later, those words came back to haunt Rob as he stared at the blank page in his IBM Selectric typewriter when he became a staff writer for the second season of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*.

Gwen Wetzler did a lot of directing on "Hero High," and on some of the other shows, and with Don Christensen over in Japan, Gwen became one of the best people to work with newer animators as our season got so busy. She not only did her own job, but she helped teach and mentor a lot of assistant animators who were becoming full animators as we needed them. I remember that she recruited three young men graduating from the animation program at Sheridan College in Canada, and one of them was a little person. He was getting homesick and wanted to leave, but he was learning so much. She looked in the phone book and found the number of Billy Barty, the famous little person actor, and called him and explained the situation. He invited the animator over and began introducing him to other little people and gave him a social life. When he went back to Canada in 1984, he helped found the first Little People of Canada group! Another of the guys she brought down, Glen Kennedy, later founded Kennedy Cartoons, a successful Canadian animation company. Gwen was one of the good ones, and I was proud to have her working for me.

I've refuted that "Hero High" came from The Archies, but I'll share with you how our series led directly to another very popular animation series. Tom Ruegger wrote an episode called "The Big Bang Theory," in which his villain, The Big Brain, wanted to take over the world. That episode was storyboarded by Eddie Fitzgerald, and worked on by Tom Minton. In 1993, Tom Ruegger was working on the WB series *Animaniacs* when he created a new recurring series called "Pinky and the Brain," about a

Above:
More images from *Shazam!*

villainous mouse who wanted to take over the world. He based the two title characters on Eddie Fitzgerald and Tom Minton! When we did the DVD set for "Hero High," Tom Ruegger even told me that "Pinky and the Brain" would not have happened if not for them working together at Filmation!

In early July, the animators at Filmation "published" a photocopied 'zine called "Filmation Laff Parade" that was mostly one-panel gags on the shows we were doing. Much of it was adult-oriented, and we can't show you. Some of the more risqué elements showed our characters in various adult situations, and others were decidedly non-politically correct. But others made fun of our stock scenes, costume designs, or crossovers between characters. There were several poop-related jokes, and a *Playboy*-esque shot of Dirty Trixie that Maylo McCaslin had signed. The funniest was a series of images for new, weird, amalgamated creatures that would show up on *Blackstar*. These included the Skunk-Bat, the Stork-Toad, the Buffalo-Bunny, the Giraffe-Poodle, the Hippo-Cobra, and the Shrimp-Goat. I'm not sure if a second issue was ever published, but the first one definitely had some "laffs."

Despite our busy schedule—and the fact that we were now staffed to capacity with over 500 employees in both buildings—we still had to make plans for the future. In late August Norm talked to the press about our plans for a *Zorro* movie, a *Fat Albert* movie, and another *Oz* movie. He also revealed that we were working with Richard and Robert Sherman on an updated version of Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf" for a TV special. We also had the licensed rights to W. C. Fields, King Features' *Prince Valiant*—my childhood favorite—and *The Phantom*, *The Flying Nun*, and *Bewitched*, all for animated development and hopeful network sales. And we had a deal with ABC to develop one of the biggest properties in children's books, *Sweet Pickles*, as an animated show.

The fall schedule, beginning September 12th, saw a minor juggling of the schedules, and the return of the multi-hour Filmation block on CBS. *Blackstar* was at 11:00 a.m., followed by *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger/Zorro Adventure Hour* at 11:30, *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* at 12:30 p.m., and *The New Fat Albert Show* at 1:00. NBC wisely didn't pit us against ourselves, scheduling *Kid Super Power Hour with Shazam!* from 9:30–10:30 a.m. *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse and Heckle & Jeckle* stayed where it was, on Sundays at 8:00 a.m.

In addition to the Halloween parties we used to have, we would also have wrap parties to start the season and celebrate the "wrap" of the first episode of each show. Since 1981 was our biggest year so far, we went all out and had a huge dinner with lots of food and lots of alcohol. So, the evening of September 12th, we were ready to celebrate the start of the new season. The studio had rented out this restaurant and everybody was there.

Everybody had been working hard, but, at the end of each day, I was still the producer, and I had been there late into the night each night and early the next day. I had gotten about three hours of sleep each night in the week prior. So, I was really

tired. *Really* tired. After we finished the salad course, the waiter came around to get the plates. Tom Ruegger told me what happened next because I obviously don't remember it; the waiter asked to take my salad plate and put his hand out next to my head. Apparently, I was so tired and out of it that I just laid my head down on his outstretched hand as if it were a pillow, and fell immediately to sleep! I woke up and couldn't figure out why everybody was laughing so hard.

Kid Super Power Hour was the first of our shows to get into ratings trouble, largely, we felt, because NBC had put it on too early. The live-action segments that played like *Laugh-In* with superheroes skewed toward older viewers, who weren't watching shows this early. Becky Perle, who played Glorious Gal, did win the "Best Young Actress in a Daytime Series" award at 1981's Third Annual Youth in Film Awards. *The Kid Super Power Hour* was also nominated for "Best Children's Television Series," but did not win.

In late September Warner Bros. TV International sold international syndication rights for *Batman* and *Tarzan* to foreign markets through 1983. Batman got 21 countries, while *Tarzan* beat him out with 30 countries!

By October the Westinghouse/Teleprompter merger was complete, and the entire family of entertainment groups came under the name "Group W," including Filmation Associates.

In mid-October, Norm Prescott flew to London, where he went to a special viewing of the stage musical *Cats*, from Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. Upon his suggestion, Filmation immediately made a seven-figure offer for the film rights. Unfortunately, we didn't get them.

On December 5th, CBS changed its Saturday morning schedule. For the first time since fall 1975, *Fat Albert* was taken off the air, although it was only put "on hiatus" until February 6, 1982, while sports programming overtook the early afternoon slots. The new schedule was *The Tarzan/Lone Ranger/Zorro Adventure Hour* at 8:30 a.m., *Blackstar* at 11:30 a.m., and *The Tom and Jerry Comedy Show* at 12:30 p.m.

Also in December, we made a deal with SFM Media Group to try to sell *The Origins Game* show yet again, with SFM promising to finance a new live-action pilot with animated elements. SFM's Stan Moger and Jordan Ringer came on as co-executive producers with Norm and I. Arnold Shapiro, who had helped conceive the original show with Norm, was not involved. We set February 6, 1982 as a date to film the new pilot.

As Christmas approached, the *Van Nuys Daily News* did a feature story about Filmation, interviewing Norm and I about our company, the way we used our animation "stars" to impart socially aware lessons to viewers, and more. In response to them talking about how George Lucas made more money off licensing than he did from *Star Wars*, I noted, "It may be true for Lucas, but merchandising is not a major part of our profit picture. Saturday TV shows just don't generate the same emotional impact which translates into buying merchandise based on our shows. And we never put out gadgets, etc., in our shows with the ulterior motive of merchandising them." We also revealed in the story that we still had our *Gulliver's Travels* movie in the development slate.

Little did we know that Filmation was about to go through some stunning changes… including one that would end an era.

Opposite Above:
Becky Perle as Glorious Gal in *The Kid Super Power Hour with Shazam!*

Opposite Below:
The animated cast of "Hero High"

Left: (top to bottom)
Becky Perle as Glorious Gal

Maylo McCaslin as Dirty Trixie

Jere Fields as Misty Magic

The live-action cast of *The Kid Super Power Hour with Shazam!*

HEY HEY HEY

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

1982-1983

A FAREWELL TO NETWORKS / THE LAST MAN STANDING

As planned from last winter, we filmed yet another pilot for *The Origins Game* in February, and this one was really quite slick. It looked like a major show. It was hosted by Bob Eubanks, written by Mike Metzger, and directed by Chris Darley. It featured a green-screened disembodied head named "Doctor O" who would give answers to Eubanks' questions, and the three players had to decide whether the answer was correct or false. Filmation also did three animated short films that the players (and viewers) watched. It was still educational, but more like a big league game show.

Also as planned, *The New Fat Albert Show* returned to CBS's schedule on February 6th.

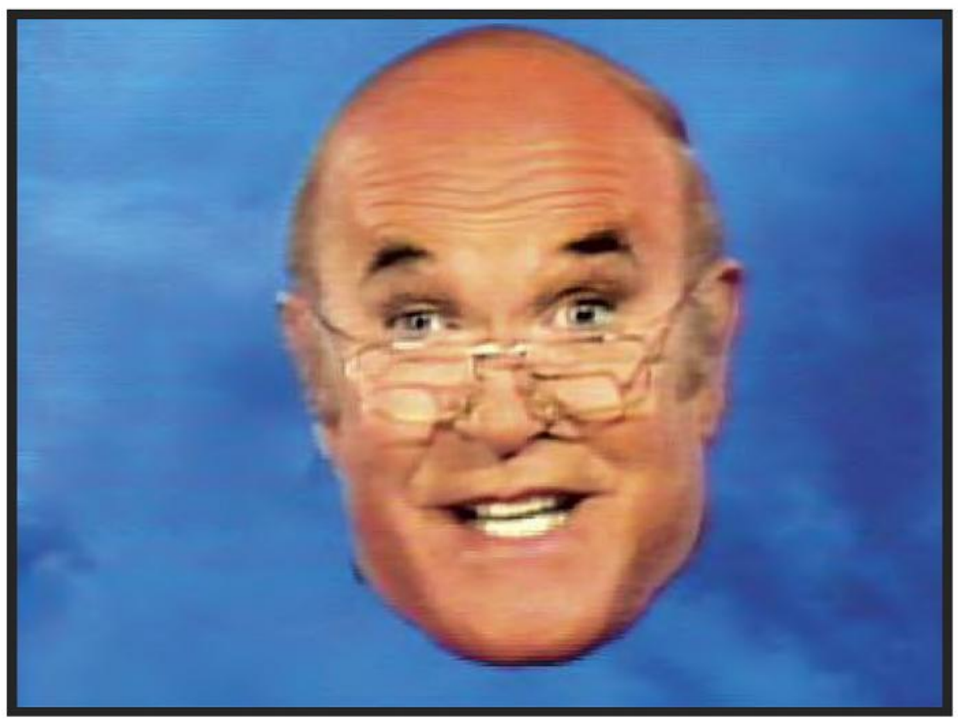
In January we made a deal with Columbia Pictures Television to utilize their library of movies and TV shows to develop new animated series for them to distribute.

In mid-February, after six years with us, Arthur Nadel was promoted to vice president of development and creative affairs. Later that same week, Teleprompter Corp. — who now spelled their first name with only one capital letter — reported record earnings, with Filmation garnering a large part of them.

On March 5th, Norm and I gave a speech at the UCLA campus on "Today's Cartoon Industry." Shortly after that, we announced to the industry that we would be licensing 250 half-hours of television to advertisers and syndicated stations, including *The Archies, Star Trek, Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down, Jason of Star Command, Space Academy*, and *The New Adventures of Gilligan*. The U.S. syndication market was starting to open up more as cable became commonplace, but we were also planning to sell the shows across the globe.

On April 12th, I got a new man over my head when Group W Productions assigned Edward Vane, their president, to oversee us. That same day my partner of 17 years, Norm Prescott, abruptly announced his retirement from Filmation.

Let me backtrack a bit because Norm's departure was only publicly abrupt, though I hadn't had that much more notice about it. The previous year, when Westinghouse made the offer, I got a call first from Jack Wrather, the guy who owned the Lone Ranger and was a big owner in Teleprompter. He said, "Lou, there's a company trying to buy us out, and I'd like to have you and Norm and Ira go down and meet them." I said, "Who are they?" And he said, "I really can't tell you."



Opposite:
Fat Albert and his iconic saying

Above:
Images from *The Origins Game* with Bob Eubanks

So, we didn't know who the other company was; they didn't want anybody to know because they figured that somebody would start a bidding war for the company. They didn't buy Teleprompter to buy us. They bought us to buy into Teleprompter because we owned some of the stock. So Ira, Norman, and myself had to go down to the airport and go to a hotel there, and we didn't know whom we were meeting. We had a room number, and we knocked at the door. The door opened and the guy was standing there with a light behind him. I thought it was Ira, except Ira was with us. It was a little Jewish lawyer about the same size as Ira.

He told us that he was with Westinghouse Broadcasting. I said, "You're putting me on!" You might remember that I went to George Westinghouse Jr. High School. I lived down the street in Pittsburgh from a Westinghouse factory. I was surrounded by Westinghouse almost all my life, and, all of a sudden, there's somebody from Westinghouse telling me that he's gonna own me!

So, we went inside, and there were a couple of other guys there. One was a slim, little fella, who turned out to be one of the nicest men I've ever met in my life—and he was the CEO of Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. Dan Ritchie was his name, and he loved owning Filmation. He had more fun and more joy out of that, personally, because he knew what we did.

Now, in terms of the history of television in syndication and cable, there is an important point I want to make. Teleprompter was basically a cable company only. They came into your house with a cord. They provided the method of transmission; they were a better antenna on your television set, and gave you more stations, and all sorts of stuff. Filmation was really the part of them that was producing material, but despite our attempts otherwise, it had mostly been for networks, and then sold into syndication later. At first, nobody was producing for cable. That's where Westinghouse and Group W came in. They were selling new material to syndication and to cable. So when Westinghouse bought Teleprompter, they now had a major cable company to deliver to the public, and companies—including their own and Filmation—that produced content for cable and syndicated stations. It was a brilliant move and a game-changer in the industry.

I'll tell you another funny digression: When we moved out to our house in Tarzana, the valley wasn't very developed, and we were on top of one of the highest hills in the area. But because TelePrompter owned us, they brought cable all the way out to the valley. So, we became the first house with cable, and they eventually branched out with cable to half of the valley because they had already come out for us. If you were to dig down under our driveway, you'd find 35-year-old cables down there!

In terms of the potential sale to Westinghouse, remember that we didn't own any part of Filmation. When we were "sold" to TelePrompTer back in 1969, we got TelePrompTer stock. I think it was a total of about 4% of the TelePrompTer stock. So part of the reason Westinghouse met to buy us was they wanted to acquire a lot of Teleprompter stock.

When Westinghouse bought the company, they bought our stock for cash, so they paid us off. Norman got paid, I got paid, and I struck a new contract with Westinghouse. What it was I can't remember exactly, but it was equivalent to what I was making. I had a salary, but I didn't have stock anymore. I didn't get any Group W stock. They owned the company outright. I got a piece of whatever we made, kind of like a royalty.

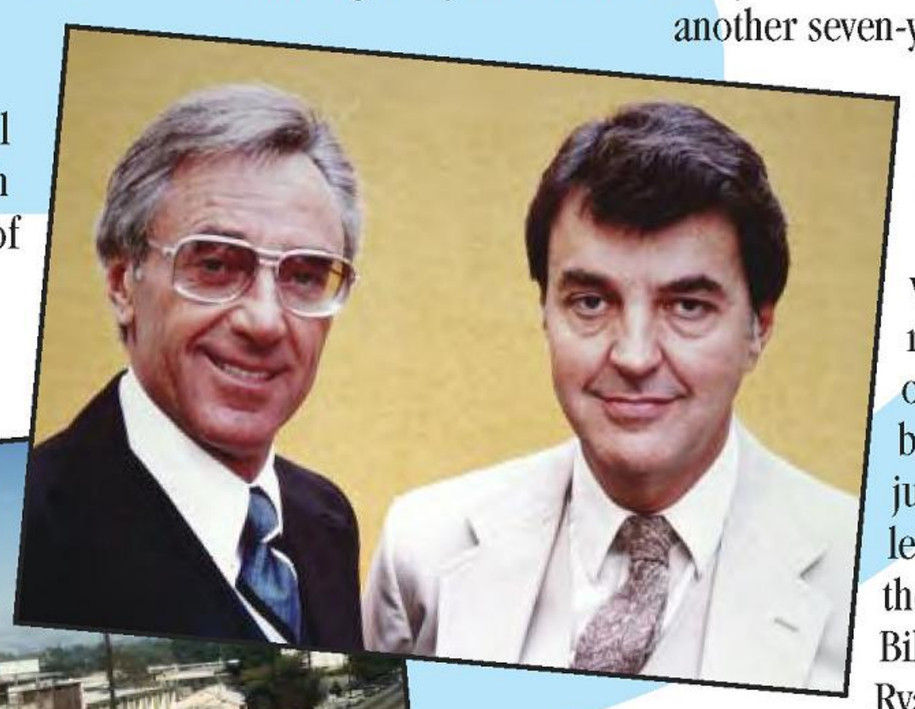
Back to January 1982: when Norm knew what was going to happen with Group W overseeing us, he talked to me about it. He didn't want to work with them. He had worked for Westinghouse back east at radio station WBZ in Boston when he was a very popular disc jockey. He said, "They're gonna drive us nuts, Louie. They're going to come in here with their black suits and white stockings, and they're going to make us crazy! They're gonna be over everything we look at, they're gonna pick everything apart. You won't be able to breathe without someone from Westinghouse looking down your throat."

He wanted to start over, with a new animation studio. I said, "Norman, that's crazy. We've got a studio; we've got all the people working here. If we quit and start over, we've gotta lay them all off. They don't work for us; they work for Westinghouse. No one's gonna come in and take over!" And he said, "We'll hire them back!" I told him that I just couldn't see it happening. And he said, "Louie, I'm gonna leave."

I didn't want him to leave because, first, he was my friend. And, second, I didn't worry about any of the business sh*t. I would go back to the network, and I would make all the presentations, and I would argue about some prices and sh*t like that, but when it came to just running the place on a business basis, I didn't get too involved. That was Norm working with our lawyer, Ira.

And he said, "I'm not gonna quit; I'm gonna retire." He had done very well. He was very, very bright, and he did stuff that I didn't. He bought bonds and stuff like that when the going rates were getting 18 percent a year. I mean, it was extraordinary. Even if he retired, he was going to do very well.

Norm agreed to stay on as a consultant for Filmation for the remaining two years of his seven-year contract, but, faced with signing another seven-year contract, decided to back away. He joked to the press that he would rather play golf.



For 16 years I'd worked in a great big room with Norman, and all of a sudden it was going to be a great big room with just me. But after Norman left nothing changed with the way things ran. I felt like Bill Danch working with Jim Ryan. Jim quit, and Danch just kept going and did the one show a week. I realized that I could do the job alone. The systems were all in place by then. Norm would come back every once in a while, and we'd have lunch or whatever, but it was the strangest break-up of a partnership because nothing else really changed.

This left me as the last man standing of the trio who had begun Filmation Associates. Hal Sutherland was in Washington—though he still occasionally came down to do a job or two for us, including directing for us this year—and now Norm was gone.

On April 13th—not the 3rd, 4th, or 11th as some sources cite—CBS finally aired the last of our *Fat Albert* specials, the *Fat Albert Easter Special*. In this one, Rudy sets up a practical joke that ends of injuring old man Mudfoot, and the kids have to learn their lesson. *Hollywood Reporter* gave it a good review, noting that, "There's elements here that could appeal to adults as well as children." *Variety*'s review had mixed messages, saying it was "mildly diverting" before noting that "the kiddies never had it so good."

Meanwhile, in presentations for fall, the networks turned down almost every new show we pitched them that year. We couldn't really explain why, but some of it had to do with the fact that Hanna-Barbera was producing shows cheaper than anyone else because they were sending so much work out of the country, and paying people in other countries what amounted to slave wages. Other companies were also sending work overseas and cutting prices. And because contracts were running out and the cartoonists union was angry about all the "runaway production," there was trouble with the union brewing on the horizon, so the networks were choosing a lot fewer new shows, in fear of a strike. They didn't want a repeat of 1979. It didn't matter that Filmation wasn't one of the runaway companies, nor that we had been exempted from the first strike and had met our deadlines.

So, in May, NBC announced their fall schedule. It had one single Filmation show on it: the returning-but-completed *Flash Gordon*. CBS didn't announce their schedule until all the way into late June. From us, they picked up only the new *Gilligan's Planet* series, and reruns of *Blackstar* and *The New Fat Albert Show*. More reruns of *The Lone Ranger/Zorro Adventure Show* shifted over to Sunday. Gone was newcomer *Kid Super Power Hour with Shazam!* and our other shows in rerun, as they had run their course.

If one looked only at the production pages of *Variety*, they would think that Filmation was going out of business. With only *Gilligan's Planet* getting new episodes, our season order plummeted from 76 half-hours of the previous season down to only 13 half-hours! It was indeed a leaner year, and we had to come up with something big to save the company.

In June Group W began "evaluating" the Filmation library and made plans to put our entire stock of shows into television syndication.

On June 12–13th, a summit meeting was held of the animation studio heads in the United States, Canada, and England at the New Directions in Animation program at UCLA. The summit was organized by animation producer Bob Kurtz and animation critic and historian Charles Solomon. Attending from overseas were Richard Williams and Academy Award winners Frank and Caroline Mouris. Among the U.S. attendees were Chuck Jones, Bill Melendez, Ralph Bakshi, Don Bluth, and myself. Animation pros mingled with each other and with students, discussing and lecturing about the state of the industry and where it was going for the future. Nobody could foresee at that point though that events of the following few months would wreak havoc on the animation field.

I think it was for this symposium/summit that we produced an 11" x14" booklet called "Animation at Filmation." It walked people through the 13 basic steps of animation: Script, Storyboard, Recording, Track Reading, Layout, Direction, Animation, Background, Xerox, Paint, Camera, Editing, and Music & Effects. We used drawings in the booklet, which showed people in our departments working on shows like *Flash Gordon, "Superstretch & Microwoman," "Webwoman,"* and others. The artist for these was Boyd Repana or Dagel Esparza. For many years after that, whenever we had to give out educational material, we used this booklet.

As talked about in the booklet, here are the basic steps it took to create one of our shows:

1 – The script was written, edited, and revised/rewritten.

2 – The voice actors recorded the script.

3 – Using the previously done model

Opposite: (left to right)
Filmation is hit by an animation strike

Norm Prescott and Lou before the split

Left:
The *Animation at Filmation* booklet

sheets, and the stock footage catalogues, the director and the storyboard artist produced the storyboards.

4 – The storyboard went to the animation department, where the animators made about 24 drawings for each second of the show.

5 – The art was checked, corrected, and duplicated onto celuloid sheets (cels), then sent to Ink & Paint.

6 – The Ink & Paint artists would ink character outlines in black on the cels. They averaged 85 outlines per day.

7 – The Ink & Paint artists would paint color onto the back of the cels, filling in the outlines. They painted in an average of 50 per day. A seven- to eight-minute segment would take about 2,600 finished cels.

8 – The finished cels were sent to the camera department with the painted backgrounds, where they would be filmed, one at a time. Cameras cost about $30,000 each. Cameramen could average 125 feet of film per day. A seven- to eight-minute segment would be about 720 feet of film.

9 – The finished film footage went to the Editing department to be edited.

10 – The edited footage went to the Music & Effects department to mix the voices, music, and sound effects, and balance them together for a completed show.

I'm going to break continuity here for a bit and discuss in full the second big animation strike because it affected Filmation deeply, and changed the course of animation in America forever.

On July 6th, the Screen Cartoonists Union IATSE 839 held a meeting, discussing whether or not they would go on strike again. By a vote of 389 to 70, the members agreed that the negotiating committee who were engaging in contract negotiations could call a strike without a further vote. Unlike other union contracts, which ended September 15th, the 839's contract was set to expire on July 31st.

As before, the biggest element of the contract was dealing with runaway productions, as more and more companies were sending work to Korea and Taiwan, even though many U.S. animators were unemployed. Other than our earlier experience with *Zorro*, Filmation had kept all its work in-country. The union also had 16 other demands related to screen credits, residuals, seniority, sick leave, safety code provisions, and "catch-up" minimum wage increases of 13%. The negotiating committee was meeting

with Hanna-Barbera, Filmation, Disney, and Warner Bros., with a deadline for final offers set for July 20th.

At a meeting on the 20th, the union members rejected the studio offers, which had, essentially, rejected the top four of the union's requests. A strike was imminent if things didn't change in the next ten days. Only Marvel Productions, which had moved past us into the #2 slot of Saturday-morning producers, was potentially exempt, as they had a separate contract from the others of the "Big Four."

Because the contract expired on July 31st, a Saturday, and the union negotiators were in Winnipeg during the previous week at the IATSE convention, a three-day extension was given, drawing tensions out even further. The new deadline for strike was midnight on Tuesday, August 3rd, and, at a meeting that night, picket captains were chosen and strike support committees were formed. Pickets were planned at five major animation studios—now including Marvel—as well as 36 other signatory smaller studios.

All the 11th-hour negotiations were for naught, and the second major animation strike for television animation began on Thursday, August 5, 1982. IATSE 839 filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board that same day, saying the producers were not bargaining in good faith. On Friday, August 6th, the Alliance of Motion Picture & Television (AMPTP) producers—representing the four major animation studios—filed a counter-complaint alleging the same thing, and criticizing IATSE for not extending their contracts to September 15th like other unions.

Not everyone was striking. Voice actors, who worked under Screen Actors Guild (SAG) contract were not covered by the strike, and would be contractually obligated to cross picket lines. Hanna-Barbera told the press that they might record voice actors at a different site so that the actors wouldn't have to literally cross picket lines. Meanwhile, camera, sound, and editing personnel were likewise obligated to cross picket lines due to their own contracts, but they were mostly working on material finished six weeks prior.

IATSE 839 was considering an independent deal clause with producers—like Filmation—who agreed to

sign a contract agreeable to local 839, but the union had not yet made a decision. So, despite the fact that Filmation was not the main target, all four studios were treated the same, and picketed. Hanna-Barbera wanted a "favored nations" clause in their contract allowing them to pick and choose contract elements that other studios would have no choice over; the company also reportedly bullishly refused to negotiate over runaway production. In the press, IATSE business agent Bud Hester called Hanna-Barbera the biggest offender in sending work overseas.

As the strike continued, Hanna-Barbera threatened to send all their work overseas to meet the fall schedule deadlines. They also proposed a guarantee to keep 39 half-hours of programming in the U.S.—26 half-hours in-house with union labor, plus 13 half-hours in Los Angeles labor (possibly union)—but this was rejected by the union since they couldn't police the promise.

To make matters a bit stranger for us, the Group W Cable studio employees were on their own strike, in its fifth week by this point. Group W/Westinghouse was our parent company, but the strike didn't directly affect Filmation.

On Monday the 9th, IATSE met with Marvel and Aurora, but Marvel had problems with the runaway productions clauses, and smaller animation house Aurora had issues with the monetary demands. The picketers marched on Disney on Tuesday the 10th—singing strike songs to the tune of the Mickey Mouse Club theme song—while the union reps and studio reps met with Federal mediator Leonard Farrell to discuss grievances. IA president Walter Diehl flew into town to meet with the AMPTP and Group W both, even as the union threatened to ask the public to boycott Saturday morning shows in support of the strike.

On Wednesday the 11th, the picketers hit their main enemy, Hanna-Barbera. On Wednesday the 18th, the AFL-CIO put Hanna-Barbera, Filmation, Disney, Warner Bros., and Marvel on their "We Do Not Patronize" list, and picketers joined the Group W strikers in solidarity. The union also met with Filmation that day for further negotiations. The following day Bud Hester told the press that the time at the meeting was "an afternoon well spent," and noted that Filmation and the union had reached "agreement on a lot of things." Unfortunately, neither he nor we could comment on specifics due to a mutually-agreed-upon news blackout. However, Hester did note that continued progress with Filmation "could" mean that we would be pulled off the strike list.

I don't remember what day—or days—it was that Filmation was picketed, but I had one request of the union: I asked that the picketers outside Filmation be only Filmation employees, not strangers. And then I actually went out and *joined* the picket line. I believed in what the union was doing, and I wanted my employees to know I upheld their demands. Many of them couldn't believe that the head of the company was actually joining them to picket his own company, but I did. Unfortunately, to my knowledge I was the only animation producer to do that. At one point, someone showed up in a truck with strike signs reading, "Keep jobs in America!" The truck was, ironically, a Japanese-made truck.

On Wednesday the 25th, IATSE had a union meeting and proposed to make a deal with any studios to call off the strike if they agreed to sign a 13-point contract. One of the points missing from it was the mandatory wage increases. The move was meant to isolate larger studios like Hanna-Barbera and Disney, which the union was having the biggest problems with, and against which the strike would continue. The union membership voted overwhelmingly to approve the deal, although president Mo Gollub reportedly almost got in a fistfight with a Don Bluth animator who demanded to be able to return to work at Bluth despite the company's refusal to sign the new contract. After three weeks off the job at what should have been their busiest time, tempers were flaring.

The next day, reps from the studios and AMPTP again met with IATSE and the Federal mediator. The meeting lasted over ten hours, but the results were grim, with *Variety* reporting a "near total breakdown of negotiations." On Monday, August 31st, micro-studio Welcome Entertainment/Ziggy Productions was the first to sign the new 13-point contract, and animators returned to work there after 26 days on strike. They barely made their schedule for an ABC special, *Ziggy's Gift*, which would later win an Emmy Award.

On Wednesday, September 1st, front-page news touted that Filmation was going to be the first major animation studio—and the second studio overall—to sign with the union. Unfortunately, the deal wasn't signed yet, but that didn't stop about 30 of our animators from returning to work immediately. Thankfully, we signed that day, and the rest of our employees legally came back on the 2nd. But with only one show to produce, our workforce was one of the smallest we had ever employed.

Don Bluth Prods. signed a deal on the 2nd, but the backers of his latest feature film chose that moment to walk out, meaning his 60 striking animators were now truly out of work. Bluth quickly booked a commercial so his people could work again. The union continued striking the other studios and attempted to bring political pressure to bear in the fight. Five more smaller companies agreed to the union contract on September 15th. Hanna-Barbera continued their hard-line stance, breaking off talks on September 24th unless everything other than the runaway productions clause was stricken from negotiations. Marvel met with IATSE on the 24th, although they only agreed to a runaway formula that would keep part of their work in the U.S. Disney, meanwhile, was unable to complete for release its "Mickey's Christmas Carol" theatrical short, and the opening titles for MGM's *Trail of the Pink Panther* film were likewise delayed.

It was a hot summer and fall. The union had no strike fund, so everyone was not only out of work, but out of money as well. Some workers had been "scabbing"; picking

Opposite:
The remainder of the *Animation at Filmation* booklet

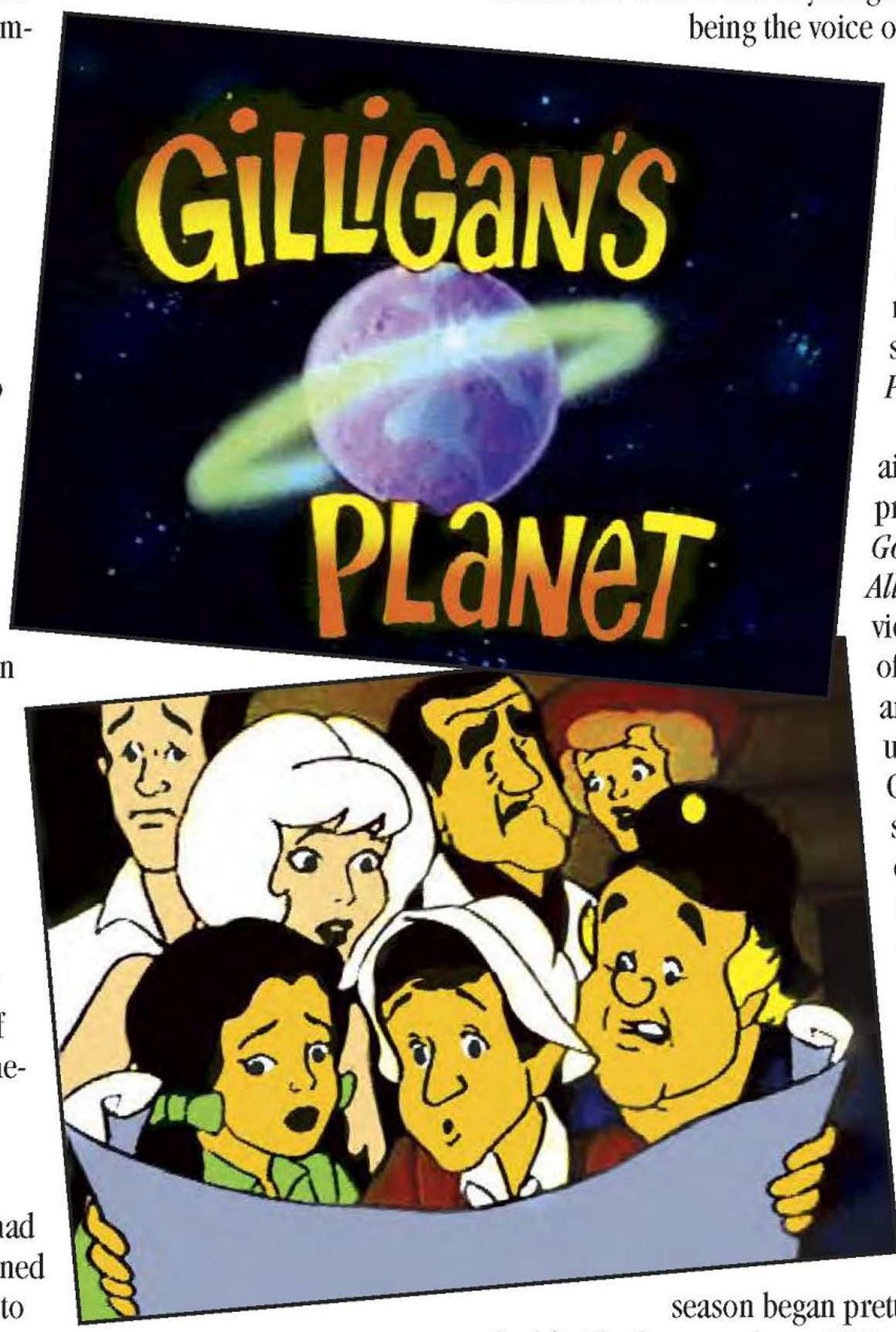
Above:
Norm Prescott & Lou

up work covertly to do at home. A group of union animators would stake studios out and photograph the scabbers, who were fined. A Disney lawyer found a loophole—based on religious deferment—that allowed union members to legally resign from their union but still be protected by union rules and benefits. Disney and Bluth artists began resigning. There were angry confrontations with labor police, studio heads, picketers, and more. Some of the studios had completed their shows—as threatened—in Taiwan and Korea.

IATSE 839 again met with Hanna-Barbera on October 7th, but the studios outlasted the cartoonists. On October 10th, after over two months on strike, IATSE 839 members voted to end the strike. The voting margin was 2 to 1. Members felt that some work was better than no work. Hanna-Barbera, Warner Bros., and Disney had broken the union.

It was expected that 150 of the 250 technical employees of Hanna-Barbera would not be given their jobs back. Even worse, Hanna-Barbera later published the names of all the artists who had scabbed for them, betraying those who had helped them! IATSE's Bud Hester said in the press that the union had been "slaughtered by Hanna-Barbera." That company's pre-strike offer of 39 half-hours in the U.S. was immediately cut to only 30 half-hours guaranteed… for now.

Disney, meanwhile, wanted amnesty for all the workers who had crossed the picket lines and returned to work early. Disney also agreed to only notify the union when it sent work overseas; the question of whether they would send animation overseas in bulk was now moot. Defeated, the members of IATSE 839 all reported back to their jobs—if they had them still—by October 16th. Anyone with tenure in the business saw the end of American animation coming at them… hard.



Even while the strike was ongoing, Filmation still had "new" projects coming out, although most of them were shows that were completed.

Beginning July 31st, NBC aired six weeks of *Sport Billy*, replacing *Bullwinkle* at 12:30 p.m. It would be the show's only network airing, though it was sold into syndication throughout the country.

Our one major new show for the year was *Gilligan's Planet*. I still had a good relationship with Sherwood Schwartz, and I called him and said, "Why don't we do something else with the characters being lost in space? We put them in a rocket ship; they get off the island, and end up stuck on this planet. The plots and characters could essentially be the same, but the setting and stories would be different." We also replaced the monkey Snubby with a little reptilian alien creature named Bumper.

All of the cast members who had done *The New Adventures of Gilligan* came back, and we also got Dawn Wells to come onboard. Dawn had played the original Mary Ann on the show, but hadn't been able to do the voice the first time. Now she could, and since Tina Louise still didn't want anything to do with Ginger, Dawn ended up being the voice of both Mary Ann and Ginger! Dawn was a nice gal and easy to work with. They were all nice people.

Remember earlier in the chapter when I said that Hal Sutherland came down to direct for us every now and then? Well, you may surmise, since we were only doing one series, that Hal directed *Gilligan's Planet* for us.

On August 21, 1982, NBC finally aired the *Flash Gordon* telefilm in primetime. It was now titled *Flash Gordon: The Greatest Adventure of All*, and it garnered absolutely rave reviews. *Variety* called it, "wild and often imaginative and mostly a hoot, and the drawing is far above the usual Saturday morning fare." Judith Crist in *TV Guide* said it was, "Great stuff and delectable nonsense… enjoy it you will with its straight-forward, no-nonsense, adventure-filled storyline… its wonderfully imaginative creatures and creations; and, of course, its very classy hero."

Because Hanna-Barbera had sent work overseas, and other studios had pushed workers to produce work in advance, stockpiling it for the future, the fall season began pretty much without a hitch. Filmation had finished our work on *Gilligan's Planet* on time. So, September 18th saw the new Saturday morning line-up begin for us. CBS had *Gilligan's Planet* at 9:00 a.m., *The New Fat Albert Show* at 12:30 p.m., and *Blackstar* at 1:00 p.m. Once again, we were in competition with ourselves as NBC put *Flash Gordon* at 12:30 p.m. Reruns of *The Lone Ranger/Zorro Adventure Show* shifted over to Sunday in a half-hour format at 7:00 a.m.

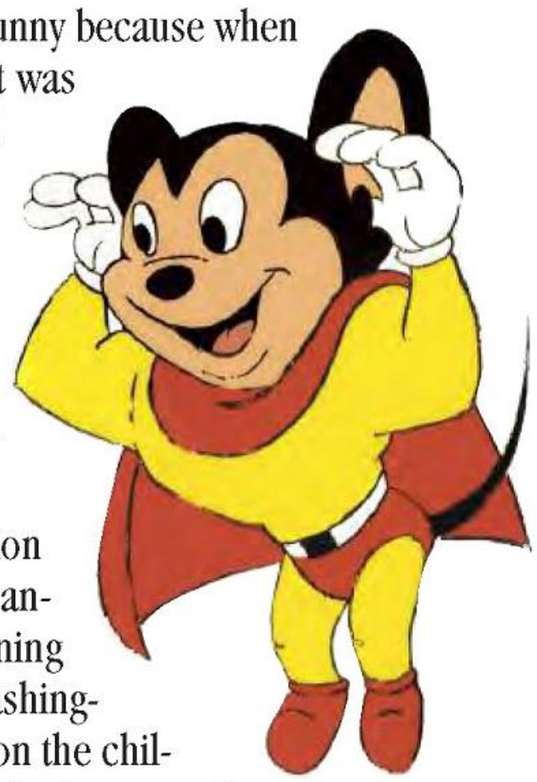
The second season of *The New Adventures of Flash Gordon* was the problem child that had been cancelled in 1980, although NBC had pre-commissioned the second season. They now had eight new half-hours to show, with each episode being two shorter stories that featured the baby dragon Gremlin. The show was apparently preempted a lot, and I've heard from many viewers—especially on the West Coast—that they didn't even get to see the whole show until years later when they were released on DVD!

There was a major on-screen change to Filmation's shows as of the 1982 season. Instead of the spinning circle with the names of Norm and myself, there was now a single card at the end of the

opening credits which read "Lou Scheimer, Executive Producer." My name was actually done as an approximation of my signature.

In September we got an important addition to our staff in Alice G. Donenfeld, who became our executive vice president. She had jumped ship from Marvel Entertainment Group, where she had been the vice president of business affairs since 1977. One of the things that made the circle complete in her coming to Filmation was that she was the second wife of Irwin Donenfeld, who was the son of Harry Donenfeld, the original publisher of National Allied Publications, better known today as DC Comics. Irwin co-owned the company from 1948 to 1967, the latter years of which found him—as executive vice president—approving deals to partner with a certain animation firm about which I've written. So, Alice had some working knowledge of Filmation already—she was married to Irwin until late 1969—and she became an indispensible part of the company.

One of Alice's first jobs was working with Group W Productions to license our content to the European market for home videotapes. That market was still relatively new, but we saw the potential for home use of the shows, many of which had never been aired in European syndication. It was funny because when she had first come to see me, it was to license some of the material for video, but it was easier to hire her to do it for us. With her, we started our own distribution and sales company, and it made a huge difference to us because we actually made a profit.



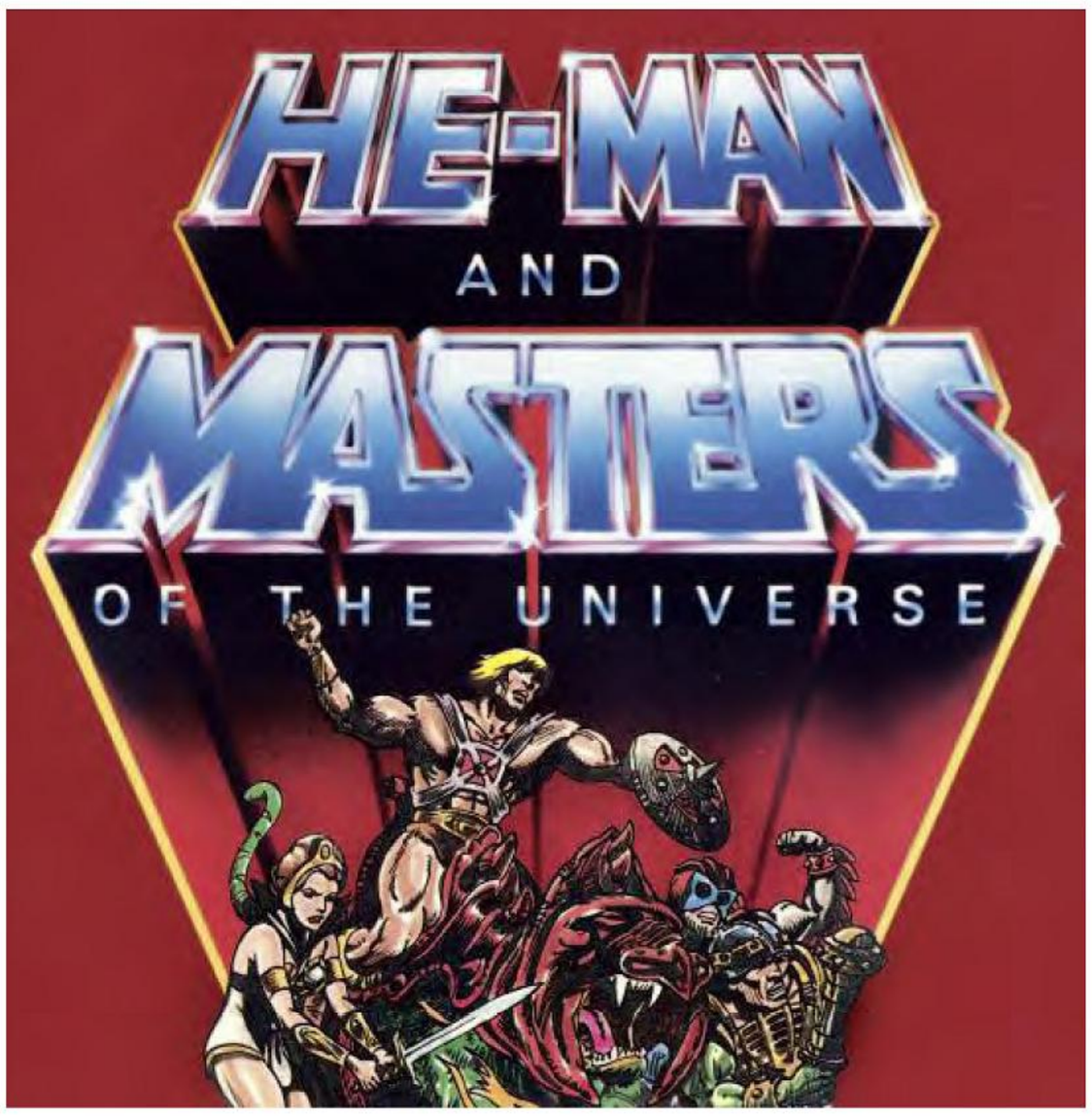
Just after Thanksgiving, Action for Children's Television made another run in the courts, petitioning the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington to force the FCC to decide on the children's programming rules they had proposed twelve years prior. The FCC continued to drag their feet, but ACT didn't get a victory; the judge dismissed the suit without prejudice, telling ACT that the FCC had exclusive jurisdiction on the matter.

In early December a company called DFS Program Exchange began syndicating 17 animated series from various suppliers, including most of the Jay Ward cartoons, a few from Hanna-Barbera, and Filmation's *Sport Billy*. Frankly, I suspect *Sport Billy* did fewer numbers in syndication than *Bullwinkle, The Jetsons*, or *Jonny Quest*, but more than *Space Kidettes, Roman Holidays*, or *Young Samson*.

On December 10, 1982, we released *Mighty Mouse in The Great Space Chase* to theatres as a kid's matinee film. The 86-minute feature was edited together from the various serialized short stories we had done. It didn't have a long theatrical life in the United States, but it was more popular worldwide, and received multiple videotape releases.

Early in December I made a joint announcement with Thomas Kalinske, Senior Vice President of Marketing for Mattel Toys, and Edwin T. Vane, President of Group W Productions; we would be producing the first daily animated children's adventure series, with 65 weekday half-hour episodes available to the syndication market as of September 1983. The title of the series was *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, based on the explosively popular new Mattel toy line. The week before Christmas, we took out a double-page ad in the trade newspapers, promoting the new series. No one was completely sure we could sell the series in enough markets—Group W wanted a 60% clearance rate in the nationwide market to give the show a "go" by early February—but hopes were high.

We were putting the entertainment world on notice that we would not be cut down by the whims of network scheduling or the job-slashing, throat-cutting moves toward runaway production. A new era was about to dawn for syndicated television animation, and Filmation was opening that door wide.



Opposite:
Images from *Gilligan's Planet*

Above Left:
Alice Donnenfeld & Lou

Above Right:
Mighty Mouse starred in his own film

Left:
Early promotional art for *He-Man and Masters of the Universe*

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO 1983-1984

WE HAVE THE POWER!

Our announcement of first-run syndication on *He-Man* was almost immediately echoed by new company DIC, which announced that they would also do a new first-run series for fall 1983 daily syndication, called *Inspector Gadget*. DIC was a French company at that point, and partnered for the series with Nelvana in Canada. DIC was very anti-union; they did their writing, designs, storyboards, and some other things in the U.S., but they outsourced all the animation work to Japan's Tokyo Movie Shinsha and Taiwan's Cuckoo's Nest Studios. Like *He-Man*, they were offering 65 new half-hours, but they didn't have the track record that Filmation did, and so sales weren't as brisk.

Gadget's creator and DIC's chairman and CEO was Andy Heyward, a former Hanna-Barbera writer. On January 27th, he wrote a piece for *Variety* extolling international co-productions as a way to "maximize production income and secure a quality of production otherwise unavailable." Glossing over the loss of jobs for American animators, he discussed how subcontracted foreign labor was cheaper—even if costs were rising—and how the rise of computer-assisted animation would get rid of "the time-consuming process of inking and painting individual cells (sic)." He also talked about working with licensing companies and manufacturers early in the creative process of a show, citing DIC's work with Bandai and Filmation's work with Mattel as examples. Nowhere in the article did it state he owned one of the companies discussed. Nor was he privy to exactly what our relationship with Mattel was. More on that in a bit.

As we began marketing our library internationally, some of our ads pointedly included a new tagline: "All made in the U.S.A." Alice Donenfeld traveled to Monte Carlo in February, repping Filmation at the Group W booths. She signed Rete 4, a major Italian station, for *He-Man*. Other markets soon followed. By the time of March's NATPE conference, we had presold *He-Man* to 38 markets, domestically and internationally, and started discussing a major deal with RCA-Columbia Home Video.

We also licensed five titles from our library in the U.S. to Family Home Entertainment (FHE) for home video distribution: *The Lone Ranger, Lassie's Rescue Rangers, The New Adventures of Zorro, Blackstar*, and *Shazam!* They released the five as one-hour titles in the spring at $29.95 each, which, in the early days of the market, was an excellent price for a kid's video. FHE had broken records with their sales of *Strawberry Shortcake*

Opposite:
Image and character art for *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*

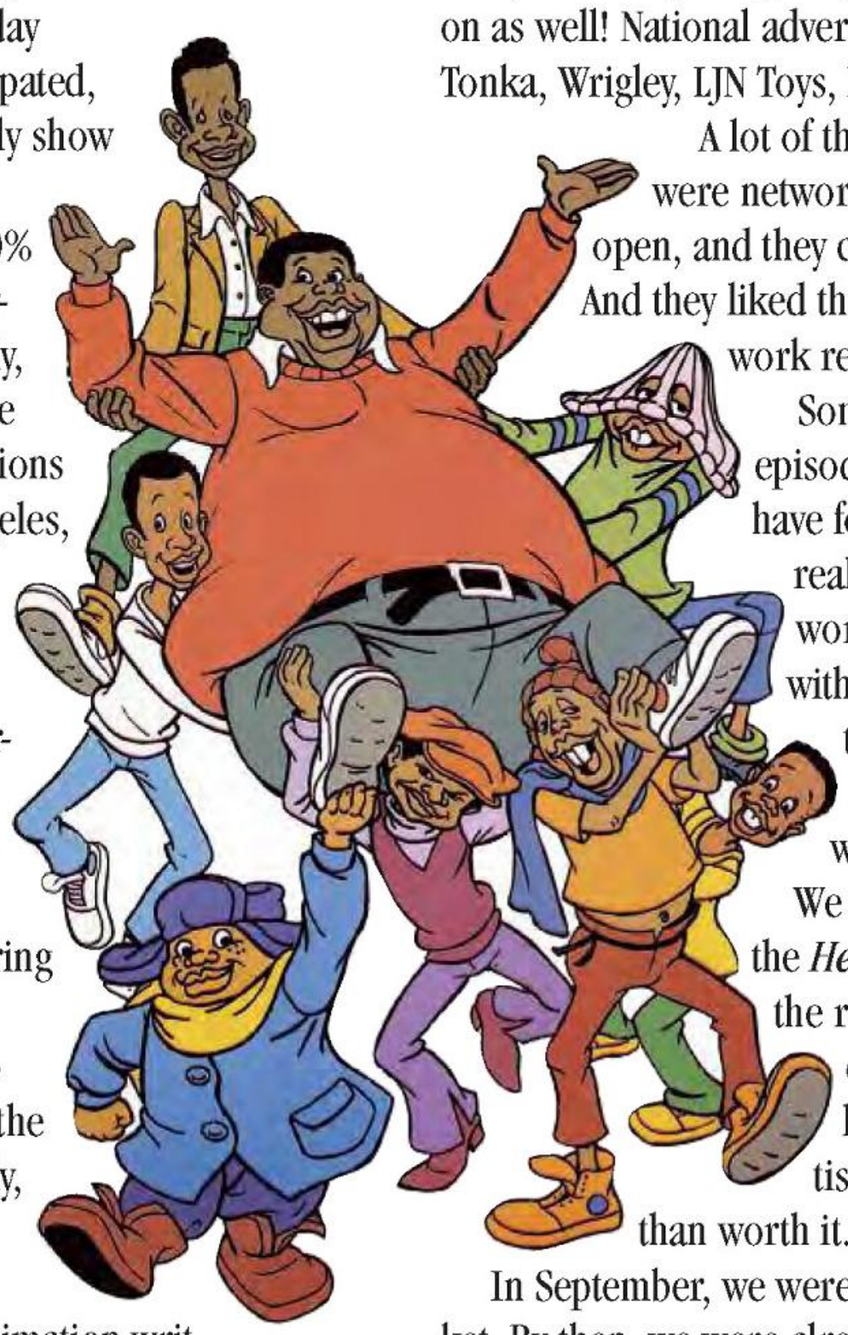
Above:
Castle Grayskull

videos at that price; most "kidvid" titles sold about 5,000 copies, while Ms. Shortcake took a much larger bite with initial orders of 25,000 copies. Keep those numbers in mind….

For April's MIPTV market in Cannes, I attended to help sell our shows, and brought my wife and daughter, Erika, along. There, we closed our deal with RCA-Columbia, but couldn't announce it yet. We also made a deal with Thorn EMI Home Video to release videocassette volumes for *Fat Albert* and *The Archies*. And we contracted with Western World Television to sell and distribute the Filmation library in Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Spain, Latin America, and South Africa.

Meanwhile, on network television, by spring 1983, CBS had ganged all of our shows together. *Gilligan's Planet* was running at noon, followed by *The New Fat Albert Show* at 12:30 p.m. and *Blackstar* at 1:00 p.m. On March 30th, CBS repeated *The Fat Albert Easter Special*. And in late April the fall Saturday morning schedules were announced. As anticipated, the networks had all but boycotted us. Our only show was on CBS: *The New Fat Albert Show*.

By early June we had cleared more than 70% of the country for *He-Man*, as well as eight foreign markets including England, Australia, Italy, and Argentina! It was a success already, and we hadn't even aired anything from it. Among stations carrying it were heavy-hitters KCOP in Los Angeles, WNEW in New York, and WFLD in Chicago. Stations signed up for eight airings of the 65 episodes over two years on a barter basis, meaning that they got four minutes of commercial time per show, while Group W and Mattel got two minutes. Video game company Coleco had already signed up as a national advertiser for a 30-second ad on a 52-week cycle. Bartering meant that the advertising money would more than make up the show's budget—and lead to profitability—before the shows were even on the air. England's ITV, which didn't run shows daily, bought eight runs of each episode for a five-year period.



In mid-July a dust-up occurred between animation writers represented by IATSE 839 and the Writers Guild of America (WGA). That latter group still wanted to rep animation writers—and took the fight to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)—as they had since they first petitioned for the change back in 1972. NLRB refused to review the request, a decision backed by not only IATSE 839, but in a rare move of solidarity, also by Filmation, Marvel, and Hanna-Barbera!

In late July we announced our deal with RCA-Columbia; they would bring out the first of three volumes of *He-Man* videotapes to the market in August, prior to the show's official debut, at the lowest price ever offered for home video content. What made the deal so rare was that, at the time, most product was priced for the video rental market, not for home buying, and an untried property was seen as a risk. RCA-Columbia was doing the video with two episodes on it, for $24.95. Videodisks were also planned. Even *Variety* called the plan "unprecedented."

In mid-August, we made a deal with The Corporation for Public Broadcasting to do a one-hour *Fat Albert Special* as part of a new show they were developing called *WonderWorks*. I'm not sure what happened to that project, but new *Fat Albert* was very much in the forefront of Filmation's mind, even if new shows seemed an impossibility for CBS to consider.

Also by mid-August, with only a month to go before airing, *He-Man* had cleared 90 stations in the U.S., including the top 20 markets, meaning it would reach about 80% of homes with televisions. And our foreign market had exploded. In addition to the previously mentioned countries, we were now set to air in Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Columbia, Ecuador, Uruguay, Paraguay, Costa Rica, the Bahamas, Trinidad, Jamaica, Barbados, Puerto Rico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Hong Kong. Oh, and the Armed Forces Network had signed on as well! National advertisers now included Nabisco, Shasta, Atari, Tonka, Wrigley, LJN Toys, Lever Bros., and Leisure Dynamics.

A lot of the stations that ended up buying *He-Man* were network stations that had an afternoon block open, and they could put children's programming in there. And they liked the idea of an all-new show, not just old network reruns or even older theatrical packages.

Some people have asked why there were 65 episodes. That number allowed the stations to have four runs a year, Monday to Friday. That was really about the same amount of reruns a network would do for a Saturday morning show with 16 episodes per year—with preemptions, they'd get about four airings—but the difference was that they were on only once a week.

We were well on our way to completing half of the *He-Man* episodes by the end of August, with the rest finishing up by November. The total cost for the 65 episodes would be $14 million, but the returns from the barter advertising prices looked like they would be more than worth it.

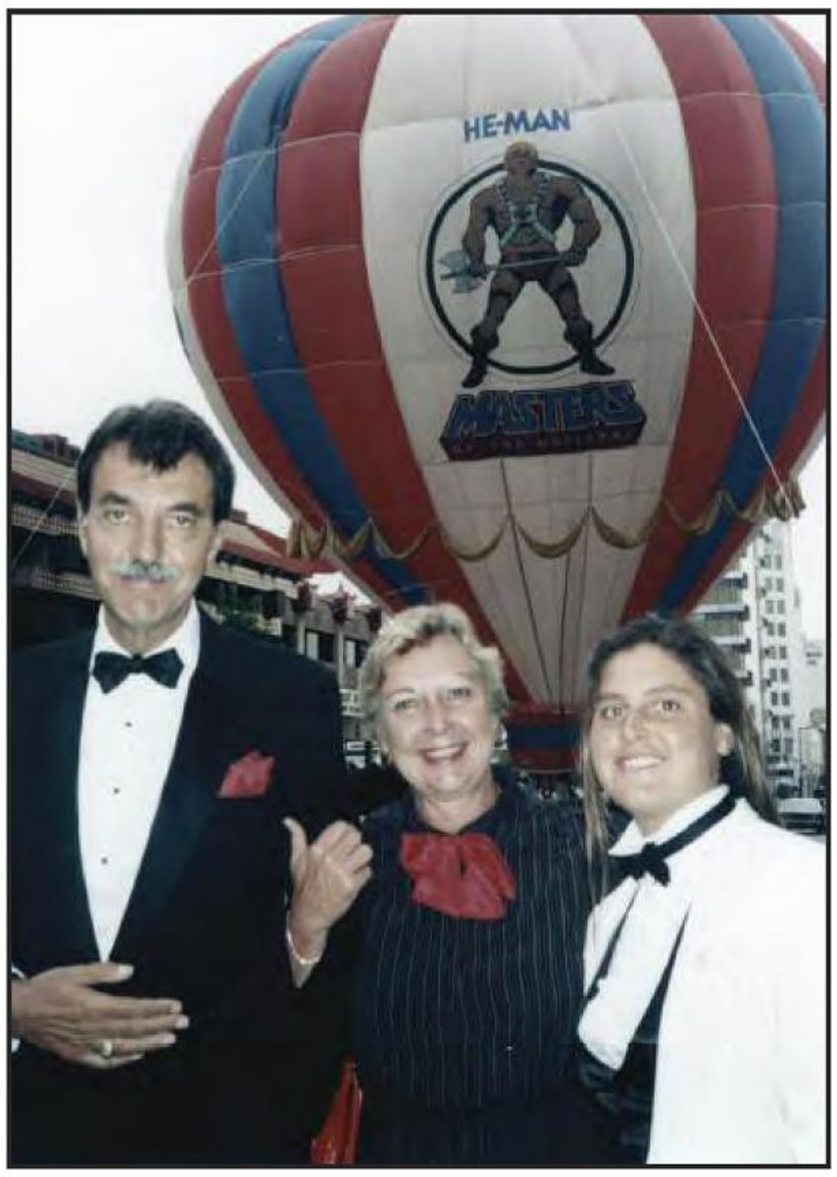
In September, we were off to sell at the London Multi-Media Market. By then, we were already getting approached by videogame companies to use our characters and animation in their upcoming games; the entertainment market was buzzing with the success of *Dragon's Lair*, a game which combined Don Bluth animation with laserdisc technology.

On Saturday, September 24th, Mattel and Filmation screened a special *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* movie event in ten cities throughout the country. We combined three episode of the show into a 70-minute story, and Mattel did a focus invite to children's groups in each city. The biggest of the events was at Mann's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard, where live-action versions of He-Man, Teela, Skeletor, and Orko marched down the street, engaged in a mock battle in the shadow of a full-size He-Man hot air balloon, and did a live stage show indoors. It was a red carpet show for me and my family, and others from Filmation, who saw the excitement of the audience, and knew, without a doubt, that we had a

hit on our hands.

That evening, Jay and I held a black tie cocktail-and-dinner party and invited those who had been instrumental in making *He-Man* a reality. And that's a good segue; since I haven't really written about exactly how *He-Man* was created, let's launch into that!

Ever since *Star Wars* and the unprecedented success of its action figure line, every toy company tried to figure out what the best way to make boys' action figures sell was. In late 1980 a toy designer named Roger Sweet, who worked for Mattel, created the prototypes for the He-Man action figures. Apparently independently, the Mattel people had been negotiating with the *Conan* movie people about doing some kind of toy based on the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie. Conan was created by Robert E. Howard—an odd fellow to begin with—and in my opinion that property as he wrote it was certainly not appropriate for youngsters. Mattel later got sued by the Conan people, but Mattel won because they were able to prove that they had already been developing their own barbarian character named He-Man.



I believe that the He-Man toys were first introduced in an ad in *Toy & Hobby World* in July 1982, but we knew about them before then. Tom Kalinske, the vice president of Mattel at the time, called me and said they had this character called He-Man, and asked if we would be interested in developing it. I thought it was quite a weird name, and sounded like he was a male chauvinist pig, but I agreed to meet with him. We had done *Blackstar*, which was similar. It was on its way to being a good concept, but, ultimately, it didn't really quite work. But it was sort of a stepping stone to where we should go with *He-Man*.

Mattel came to me with this wild barbarian with blonde hair waving in the wind, hatchets, axes, and all kinds of weapons and mayhem going on. They showed me a comic book—I think it was one of the early DC licensed comics—which was terrible and very violent. I said, "You can't do that for kids!" With Action for Children's Television running around, and parents all concerned about content, there was no way anybody would let this on the air. I couldn't believe they wanted to sell kids toys that were so violent. I said, "I don't think this is going to work. It can't sell. If you give us some time, and we come up with a concept that you feel is appropriate, and that we feel is appropriate, then I think there's a chance it could happen."

I assumed at the time that it was going to be for Saturday morning because it was the only way you could get something done. As I've described, I'd go to the network and try to sell the show; if they bought the show they usually paid you almost enough to do it, and then the foreign sales would make up the difference. But I also knew we were coming off of a very bad year, and we weren't going to be very busy. Plus, I knew that I was really getting to a place where it was very difficult to sell the networks any shows. Production was going overseas, budgets were crazy, and the networks were making everything so unrewarding, creatively. I thought the world was coming to an end because there was no way of continuing with network shows and making do.

I went and tried to sell it to the networks. I went to ABC, I went to NBC, I went to CBS, and nobody was interested. But then I said, "We gotta do this for two reasons: one, if we don't, we'll be out of business, and, two, I'd like to really show the networks we don't need them." The best thing that ever happened to Filmation was that the networks wouldn't buy *He-Man* because they would have ordered 16 shows that probably wouldn't have done very well, it probably would not have gone on a second year, and they would have taken all the goodness out of the show. And, instead, we *slaughtered* the networks by having five shows a week; we were like another network! And Group W got a lot of the advertising dollars that the network would have gotten; they were getting $14,000 for a 30-second spot, which in that day was a lot of money.

When I couldn't sell *He-Man* to the networks, I went to Westinghouse and said, "You've got to sell this station-to-station, for once-a-day airing, five days a week. We can do one show and have as much work as we need. I can keep my animators working all year, and we'll be the best studio in town." And Dan Ritchie said, "You're right, it's a good idea. I've got all these salesmen running around selling live programs. Why can't they sell the new animated show too?"

So, we made a deal with Mattel. They owned 50 percent of the animated show, and we owned 50 percent of the animated show. The toys were all theirs, but on some

Opposite:
The Fat Albert gang were Filmation's last network survivors

Above:
Lou, Jay, & Erika attend the *He-Man* movie premiere

Left:
The live-action Skeletor outside Mann's Chinese Theatre

of them that we developed, we split three percent of the sales cost of the toys. Mattel eventually sold two billion dollars worth of toys, and we made a little money on them.

Two things about the contract with Mattel were different from most licensing at the time: first, we financed totally, which we had never done before, and we could only do it because of Westinghouse, and, second, we had complete creative control over the content. The only other time we had complete control of content we didn't own was with *Star Trek*. But with *He-Man*, we wanted to develop it completely. The figures looked inherently violent, and I didn't want action for the sake of action. First of all, it's not right. And it just doesn't work. You've got to entertain, but kids want content, and I also believe they want some inherent social value.

The prominent characters that had been developed by Mattel as toys when they first approached us were He-Man and Skeletor, and they may have had some of the other characters, like Beast Man. They had Snake Mountain, where Skeletor lived, and Castle Grayskull. Most of the toys were created as we went along with the show. They would come up with new concepts and show them to us, and it was our choice in how—or if—we were going to use them. Every once in a while, they would come up with one where it would be appropriate. The one that most horrified me was called Snake-Man, where they ripped open the chest and snakes came out of the guy. I said, "There ain't no way, guys. You'll have kids crying at night, waking up sobbing, jumping out of windows." And they said, "Yeah, but they'll love it!" I said, "Yeah, they'll love it for about one time, and then it's a nightmare." Needless to say, we didn't feature a character with snakes coming out of his chest.

In addition to the mini-comics that came packaged with the toys—which started out as illustrated books packed in with the first set of toys in 1981—DC had licensed *Masters of the Universe* for some comics. They did a crossover with Superman in July 1982's *DC Comics Presents* #47, then an insert comic in November's #51. Because comics were usually published three months before their cover date, that means that the first DC stuff started appearing on newsstands around April 8, 1982. DC also did a three-part mini-series cover-dated December 1982–February 1983, so it actually finished up before 1982 was done, and about the time we publicly announced the new series. All those comics were developed by writer Paul Kupperberg and editor Dave Manak, with Mattel's Mark Ellis. DC also produced the mini-comics that came with the 1982 toys, which were written by Gary Cohn.

The reason I make an important point of those dates and credits is that there is a *Masters of the Universe* bible online that was written by Michael Halperin in December 1982, which has a lot of the concepts that were used in the show, but which we were already developing for the series before that. For instance, we made He-Man a completely separate identity from Prince Adam. We had a lot of experience with superheroes with

Above:
First trade advertisement for *He-Man and Masters of the Universe*

Opposite:
Model sheet of the Evil Warriors and the Sorceress

dual identities. It became kind of like Captain Marvel in *Shazam!* One character is the kid, and one is Captain Marvel. It was also important to me to have a superhero who had the ability to be hurt because it showed kids that things can hurt them. If you shot Superman while he was dressed up like Clark Kent, the bullet didn't hurt him, but if you hit He-Man while he was Prince Adam, he was in bad shape.

I wanted to do Prince Adam as a normal human being who was flawed, had sensitivities as to whether he was capable of doing stuff, and wondered if his father really respected him. We did his cat, Cringer, as if he was afraid of everything, as children sometimes are. Children make mistakes, and children wonder about whether their family appreciates them. To keep Prince Adam from being a boob was difficult. We wanted enough to happen up front so that you could appreciate what he does, so he doesn't bail to He-Man until things are really nasty. Adding some doubt and flaws to the character really humanized him, and I think made him more relatable to those kids who were watching.

The transformation was another of our creations. Mattel had done this one commercial for the toys, and there was a little boy in the commercial who was talking to his dad about the toys, and said, "Now, I have the power." It was just a throwaway line. Mattel, I don't think, understood what they really said there. But when I listened to it, I said, "Gee, that kid really has power now, because he controls this toy, and the toy has all this strength; it's like Billy Batson becoming Captain Marvel." And that's how the Prince Adam transformation came about, with him saying "I have the power!" and lightning coming down and hitting his sword to transform him and Cringer into He-Man and Battle Cat. Bob Kline was the guy who storyboarded the famous He-Man transformation scene, by the way.

As I mentioned, I hated the name He-Man when I first heard it. But the name lost its ugliness, and it became almost just a sound. I finally got to a place where I could say it without cringing, as the show became something else. It was no longer "the guy who didn't give a sh*t about anything but himself," it was "the guy who did good." But I always thought he really should've been called "He-ro."

One of the characters we created was Orko. We needed a character like Orko to have a character children could relate to. We didn't have very many youngsters in the show, but Orko was everybody's youngster! Anybody could be Orko because you never saw his face. We took his hat off once, for a love story, but he was shown only from the back. I guess Orko was Dumb Donald in another form. But Mattel didn't know what to do with him.

Orko's original name was "Gorpo," but I wanted to do something with a letter on the costume. And I remembered that when we did Superman—with the damn "S" shield—we couldn't flop the animation scenes. The damn "S" had to change all the time, so all our stock scenes had to be done twice. I said, "We ain't never going to do that again, we're going to use 'O's from now on, so we can use the stock either right side or left side." That's why Gorpo changed to Orko and why he had the "O" on his cloak.

There was also a lot of confusion over who, exactly, the "Masters of the Universe" of the title were. I know the first script written by Robby London referred to the villains as the Masters of the Universe, but subsequent scripts referred to the heroes by that title and the bad guys as "the evil forces of Skeletor." Confused? Yeah, us too! I'm not sure that Mattel or Filmation ever quite got that figured out.

Anyhow, I think we worked with Halperin for a while, and so did Mattel, but he was writing things that were appropriate for the toy, not necessarily the cartoon. He had never worked in animation before. We wrote the bible we ended up using, although it certainly incorporated parts of Michael's stuff, and things that we had jointly developed. I think it was Art Nadel and some of our writers who wrote the one we used at the start. A lot of the staff producers and writers and artists went down to the Mattel offices on Hawthorne to see the toy line and development materials, to get inspiration.

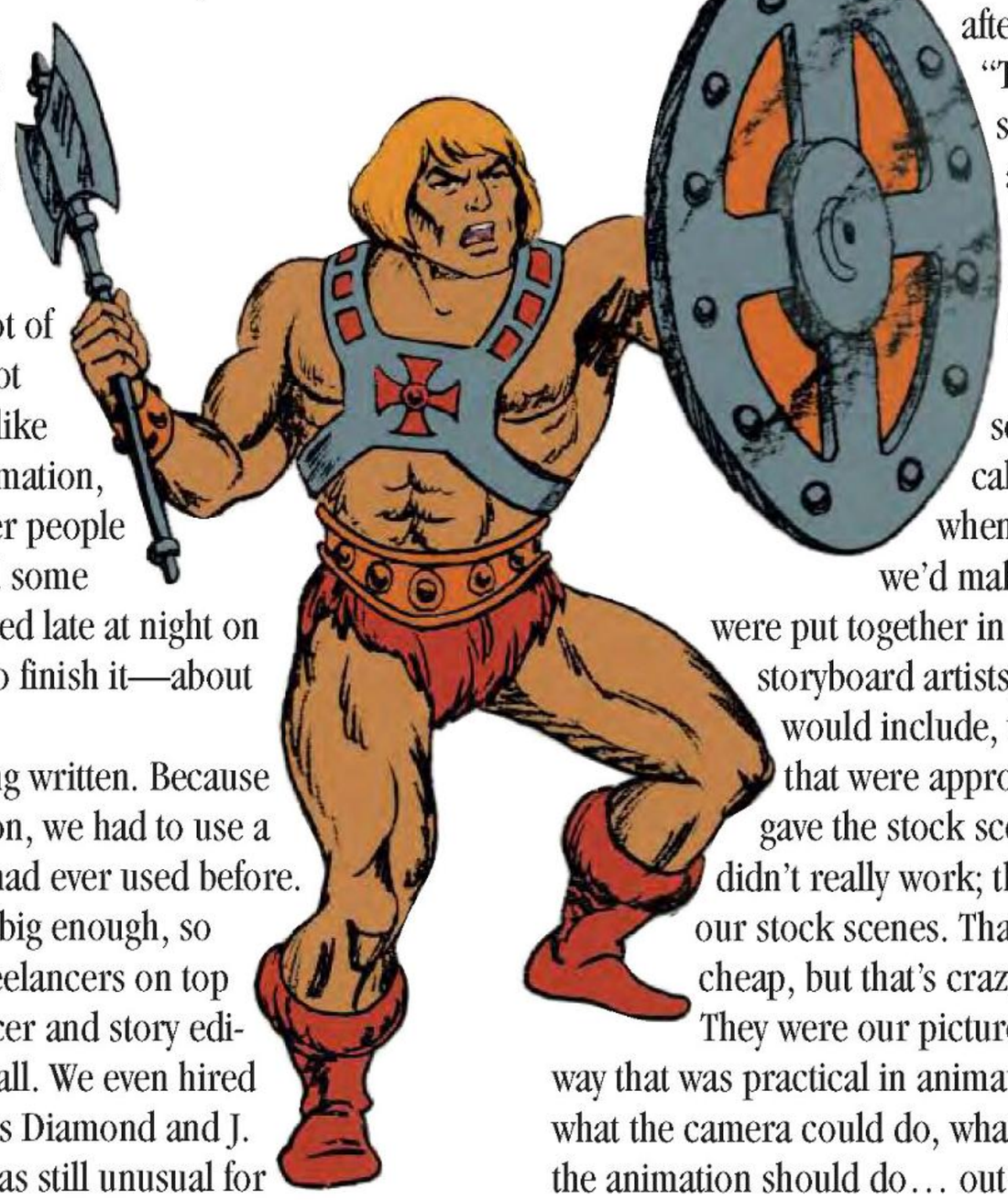
We just ignored the comic strip booklets that came with the original toys. We could not adjust them to make it work, mostly because they were more violent. For us, the ultimate thing was going to be the show itself. And I never heard from anybody at Mattel about the comic books.

Sometime toward the end of 1982, we produced a slick 24-page full-color book that featured concept art for the characters and series, and information about the characters from our bible. We gave them out at Monte Carlo and NATPE and other markets, to prospective buyers. Looking at it now, there are a lot of things that changed

by the time the show was actually being animated. King Miro became King Randor, Gorpo became Orko, and many other details got tweaked.

Now, a funny thing happened when we were at NATPE in early 1983. We were showing off a bunch of drawings of the characters, some photos of the toys, some storyboards and concept art. People came up, and they saw these drawings and liked the characters. We talked about the fact that we were going to do them with pro-social values built into the show. I looked up at one guy, and he was looking at some of the drawings. It was Arnold Schwarzenegger! He was looking at these drawings, grunting, and you could tell he was ticked off! This was before his *Conan the Barbarian* movie came out. Boy, I'm glad he didn't know me! He's not a very big guy. His cowboy boots add about two inches to his height. But he's tough!

Some time shortly after that, we did our first *He-Man* animation. It was a commercial for Mattel. I think we did only about one minute of animation. I told Mattel that it would be a way of showing what the character might look like, but the fact of the matter was, it was not the way the character would end up looking. It was highly modeled and three-dimensional looking, with a lot of scratches and shadows. We could not have afforded to animate the series like that. Gwen Wetzler directed that animation, mostly during time when she and her people were doing other projects. She used some ex-Disney animators, and they worked late at night on it. They had a really tight schedule to finish it—about three to four weeks.



Meanwhile, the scripts were being written. Because there were 65 episodes in one season, we had to use a lot more freelance writers than we had ever used before. Our staff writing department wasn't big enough, so we hired more staffers, and used freelancers on top of that. Arthur Nadel was the producer and story editor, and he controlled the tone of it all. We even hired a few woman writers, including Janis Diamond and J. Brynne Stephens; unfortunately, it was still unusual for women to be writing for animation back then.

Robby London turned in his first draft of the pilot script, "The Diamond Ray of Disappearance," on November 30, 1982, and, by the end of 1982, we had a total of seven scripts completed. Five more were done in January, and production really amped up from there. The final script of the 65 to be finished was a two-way tie between "House of Shokoti Part II" and "Heart of a Giant," both initially delivered on June 16th. By July 12th, all scripts were locked in their final draft form.

The animation department also began building up a bigger stock animation library than we had done for any show so far. Hal Sutherland came back to work with us on that. Mattel had some models who promoted the toys, but Hal and his crew went around to find some male and female bodybuilders so that we could film them for stock scenes, to get the movements down right. They would storyboard the shots they wanted, then film them in live action, and then rotoscope animated versions from the live action. There was a lot of running and jumping and tumbling and lifting and sword-raising. There wasn't a lot of fighting because we were still committed to making the show as non-violent as we could, while still having a lot of action in it. Our live He-Man model was a bodybuilder we found through an ad. We had a female as Teela, and another guy as Skeletor, and they were in approximations of the costumes, with lines painted on their faces, chests, and abdomens for reference.

All the departments grew, because 65 episodes was a lot of work. We brought in a lot of new people, and they were pretty much guaranteed a year's worth of work, instead of only a few months that other studios were offering. We needed to deliver five half-hours a week, and we had never done anything like that. Two of the new guys we brought in were Tom Sito and Tom Tatarakowicz, who I worked with for a long time after that—more on them in the future. "Tom T." worked on a lot of the rotoscoping, plus models and doing key art for the stock scenes. He had come to us after working for Ralph Bakshi, Hanna-Barbera, and some commercial outfits.

As for creating the *He-Man* stock scenes, we did it very, very methodically. We saved scenes that looked great when they'd come in on the dailies, and we'd make stock scenes out of them. They were put together in notebooks that were given to all the storyboard artists, who would work with a script, and would include, when appropriate, the stock scenes that were appropriate for the script. At one time we gave the stock scene material to the writers, but that didn't really work; they really couldn't start writing for our stock scenes. That was going too far. I mean, cheap is cheap, but that's crazy. The storyboards were the bible! They were our picture in comic book form, but done in a way that was practical in animation. The storyboard artists knew what the camera could do, what an animator could do, knew what the animation should do… outside of the script, the storyboard was the most important element before the animation.

Speaking of storyboards, here's another tale about Rob Lamb: Jack Ozark once surprised Rob, now a journeyman storyboard artist, when he burst into Rob's office and pointed at the *He-Man* board Rob was drawing. "I can't do that!" Jack exclaimed, his energy and wild hair reminiscent of Christopher Lloyd in *Back to the Future*. "What do you mean, Jack?" Rob reportedly asked. "You've been animating long before I was born!" Jack thumped his chest and shook his fist. "I can take any character and bring him to life. Make you laugh. Make you cry. Make you care about the person in these drawings. But I can't read a script and imagine the staging and camera angles and build a sequence of action from a few lines of type. I can't do what you do!" Completely dumbstruck by Jack's declaration, Rob replied, "Then it's a good thing Lou hired both of us because I can't do what you do either!"

Most *He-Man* episodes would take about eight months to go from script to screen. At the height of productivity, at least two scripts were completed each week, and that was kind of an overlapping system. They delivered them on Friday to the storyboard department. The storyboard artists each did a whole show themselves, and they had six weeks to board a show, so there were about a dozen guys boarding multiple episodes at staggered intervals. That also meant that every Friday, the storyboard department had to deliver two finished boards to the layout department, and Layout needed to send stacks of layouts to the animation department. Basically, there might be six or seven episodes at various stages of production. And then everything would move to film, editing, music, sound effects, dialogue, and so forth.

One of the things we wanted to do with *He-Man* was to keep a sense of moral values to the show. As I wrote before, I had worked for years with Dr. Gordon Berry at UCLA, as an educational and psychological advisor, to help us craft content that was where it should be for young audiences philosophically and psychologically. But CBS had hired him as their in-house educational advisor, and I was having a hard time figuring out who could be an educational consultant on *He-Man*.

My daughter, Erika, was finishing her senior year at Stanford, and was taking an Education and Children class from Professor Don Roberts. In his very first class, he said, "The only good programming for kids is on PBS, except for *Fat Albert*. That's a good show." At the end of the class, Erika went up to him with tears in her eyes and asked him if he meant what he said about *Fat Albert*. When he said yes, she told him who her dad was and that she had done voices on the show. A few weeks later, she asked him to come to dinner with Jay and I. He came with his wife, and we had a lovely time, and, a week or so later, I called to talk to him about *He-Man*.

Don was terrific to talk with. I explained to him that we wanted to make sure that *He-Man* was not the violent type of show that one might have expected from the barbarian looks and the comics that came with the toys, even though it was still action-adventure. I said, "You've got a chance to make a difference in children's programming." He said, "But you won't really listen to me; it's just you'll use my name." And I said, "No, we actually let you read the scripts, you'll make suggestions, and we'll change things."

I sent him the script for "The Dragon Invasion," written by Michael Reaves, and in part of the story, Orko had a food fight. I knew it wasn't a very good idea, and he knew it was a very bad idea. He suggested we change it around so Orko had some reason for being upset, and learned cooperation, and we made a change on the spot. The story was already being storyboarded, so the changes were expensive, but he was correct. I conferenced Arthur Nadel and a few other folks in on the call, and we discussed it.

He and Arthur Nadel would talk on a daily basis, and I could just see Don glowing with the fact that here was an academic who had a voice, had a reason for having that voice heard, and somebody who'd listen to him and actually change things because of what he said. He was a joy to work with. We sent him the initial premise and outline, then the various drafts, and he got us notes back within 48 hours, sometimes quicker. He also met with many of the writers, and even went out for drinks with them at least once, and he toured the studio so that we could show him each aspect of the process of creating animation.

I believe he got about $13,000 a year to vette the scripts for *He-Man*. He worked very closely with Arthur and the writers to make sure that the morals of the show were an integral part of the stories, not just something tacked on to the end. They were both very concerned about story and character development and doing nothing that would harm our young audience. And I know Don is very proud of his work with us; he still has art from *He-Man* hanging in his college offices today!

He-Man was played by John Erwin, who had done the voice of Reggie on the *Archie* show. I couldn't get him to believe that he could do He-Man, but I was more concerned with Prince Adam's voice than I was with He-Man. With He-Man, you only needed 25 pounds of balls to do the right voice! But Prince Adam was more normal. John eventually felt very deeply about the responsibility of being He-Man. He really put his heart and soul into being He-Man and Prince Adam. And then Alan Oppenheimer did Skeletor. He was so versatile. I remember telling him, "Oppenheimer, you've got to make this guy sound bad, but love him at the same time." It's nice to have a villain like that: an acceptable villain, but a villain children are not terrified of. He was not a normal villain who was all black; that type of villain has no character. Skeletor had a personality.

Linda Gary was Teela and most of the other female characters. We would send the voice actors drawings of the characters in advance, and they would think about what was appropriate for the characters, and what they should do with the voices. I got a lot of

Opposite:
The first *He-Man* animation, done for a Mattel commercial

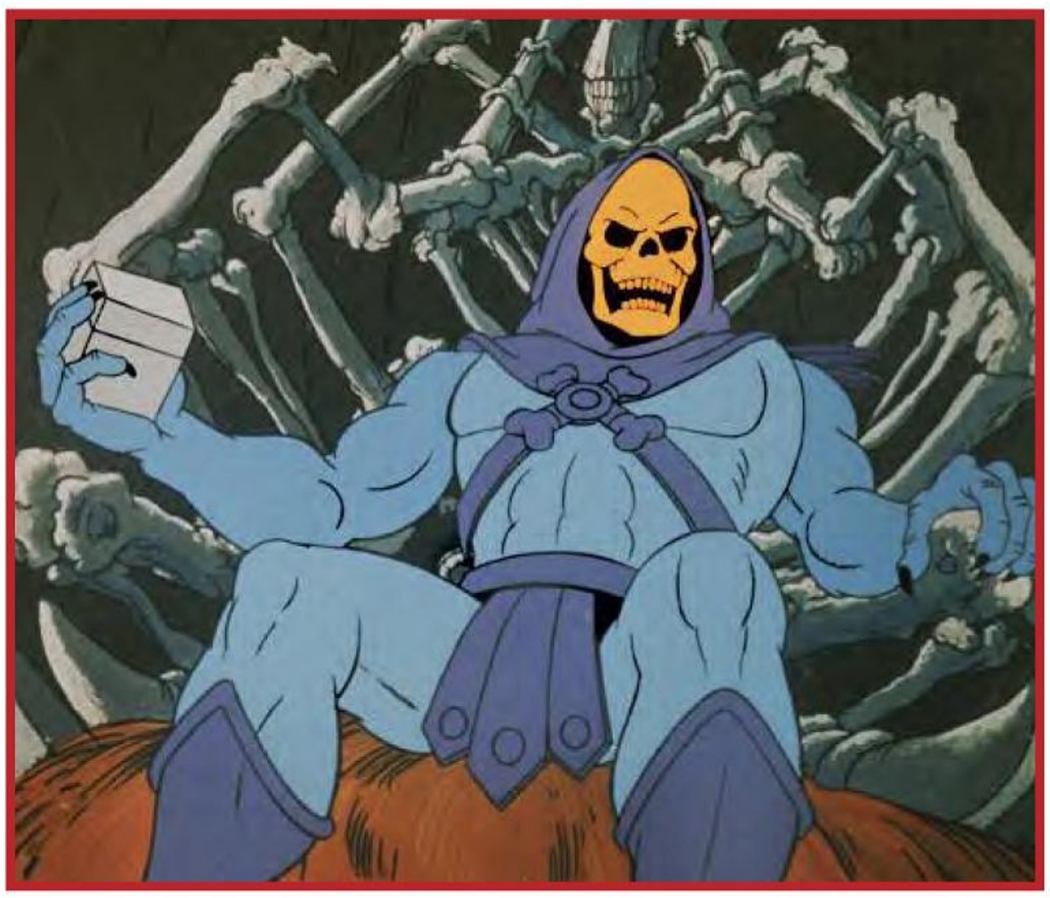
Above:
Live models are costumed and marked for rotoscope filming, alongside Filmation personnel

joy out of directing voice sessions, and those actors were superb. We would record them as an ensemble, and they could switch from voice to voice, line after line, straight through the show. They were incredible.

The recording process for the show was pretty much the same as we had always done it. We could do anywhere from one to three half-hours in a day's work, as well as pick-up lines that might have been messed up, changed, or added to previously recorded shows. Generally, if we were doing one half-hour, it would take about four hours or so. Usually we'd record once a week.

I did most of the voice directing for the first year, and Erika came on to do the job for year two. Because of this, I ended up doing several voices on the show. I did Orko. I would do it in this squeaky voice, but then we sped it up ten percent with a device called a Harmonizer. Orko was also great for the animators because we never saw his mouth, so they didn't have to sync his lip movements. They could put any dialogue they wanted there and just have him hover or move around. If we needed to change the dialogue, it was easy!

I also did King Randor, trying to imitate Ted Knight, which I used to be able to do in the old days. I also did Trap-Jaw and some others. I am not a great actor, but I'm an inexpensive actor, and I was always there, and I paid my union dues. My wife, Jay, did a few minor voices if we needed her. The main voice actors could only do three voices, so if there were more than that, I usually did them.



I used a pseudonym as a voice actor because I… I was sort of embarrassed by doing it. I was taking a real actor out of a job. But the other actors all knew I was doing it. My pseudonym actually came from my father's name when he came to this country—Gundersheimer. He took the last part of Gundersheimer and made Scheimer out of it when he came to Ellis Island. I always thought the first part of it, "Gunder," was really a nice name. When I needed a pseudonym, Jay said, "Why don't you take Erika's name, so now you're Eric, and take the first part name of your father's last name?" We changed it a bit, and I became "Eric Gunden." It was better sounding than Louie Scheimer!

As for the other characters on the show, I wanted to do a superhero that had a real family. Man-At-Arms was really the father figure. I mean, the king was around there every once in a while, but Man-At-Arms was the guy who raised him and taught him the martial arts. Teela was the love interest. One of the really interesting stories was Teela finding out the Sorceress was her mother, and she really is the daughter of Man-At-Arms. No one ever did that with kids' shows… created a whole world, where there were real relationships and there was so much value in it. The fact that He-Man's mother was an American astronaut from our world, we did a show about that. They were rich characters.

By the way, I have been asked why Man-At-Arms had a moustache on our show and didn't have one as a toy. I suspect it was to make him look more like an older father figure rather than the same age as Prince Adam and Teela. Either that, or the toy shaved.

I do think that most of the villains were under-developed. The subsidiary villains were not villains that had any character. You didn't know who they were, or what made them what they were. You knew Evil Lyn was smarter than Skeletor, and one of these days she was going to take over the company, but she never did anything important. The other villains would appear in one or two shows. Beast Man and the other guys were just funny-looking, they were all terrified all the time, and obnoxious. You had two massive characters in He-Man and Skeletor, and they dominated the show. Those subsidiary villains were only around to fill up space.

Tom Sito reminded me a few years ago about an older animator named Jim Logan that worked on the show who couldn't remember the names of the villains. He called Beast Man "Dog-Man," and Mer-Man was "Fish-Man," and Skeletor was "Bone-Man." Those names made about as much sense as He-Man.

I don't remember a lot of specifics about individual *He-Man* episodes, but I'll relate some of what I can recall. The first one that was written was "Diamond Ray of Disappearance" by Robby London, directed by Lou Zukor. In that one, Robby had to not only introduce a lot of characters for the first time, but also tell a good story. We couldn't just do a line-up of the key characters, but Robby found a way to introduce the villains in one way and the heroes in another.

Another episode was "The Shaping Staff," written by Paul Dini and directed by Lou Kachivas. In it, He-Man ended up fighting his evil twin, who was called Faker. Everybody thought He-Man had gone bad. I was watching the footage with an editor, Rick Gehr, on the Moviola, and at the end, He-Man and Faker were wrestling on a cliff, and the twin went off the cliff. Originally, it almost looked like He-Man had caused him to fall, and, when I saw that, we brought in the writer and director and reworked the scene with some new dialogue, so that it was clear that He-Man wasn't the cause of Faker's death.

"The Dragon Invasion" was written by Michael Reaves and directed by Gwen Wetzler. It had a mother dragon in it that was trying to protect her eggs, which was nice, but it also had an Asian villain in it from the toys, named Jitsu. We never used that character again, as we felt a little worried about what the character might represent.

Paul Dini wrote one called "Prince Adam No More," directed by Gwen Wetzler. In it, Prince Adam had an identity crisis and vowed to prove himself worthy without becoming He-Man. It was one of the

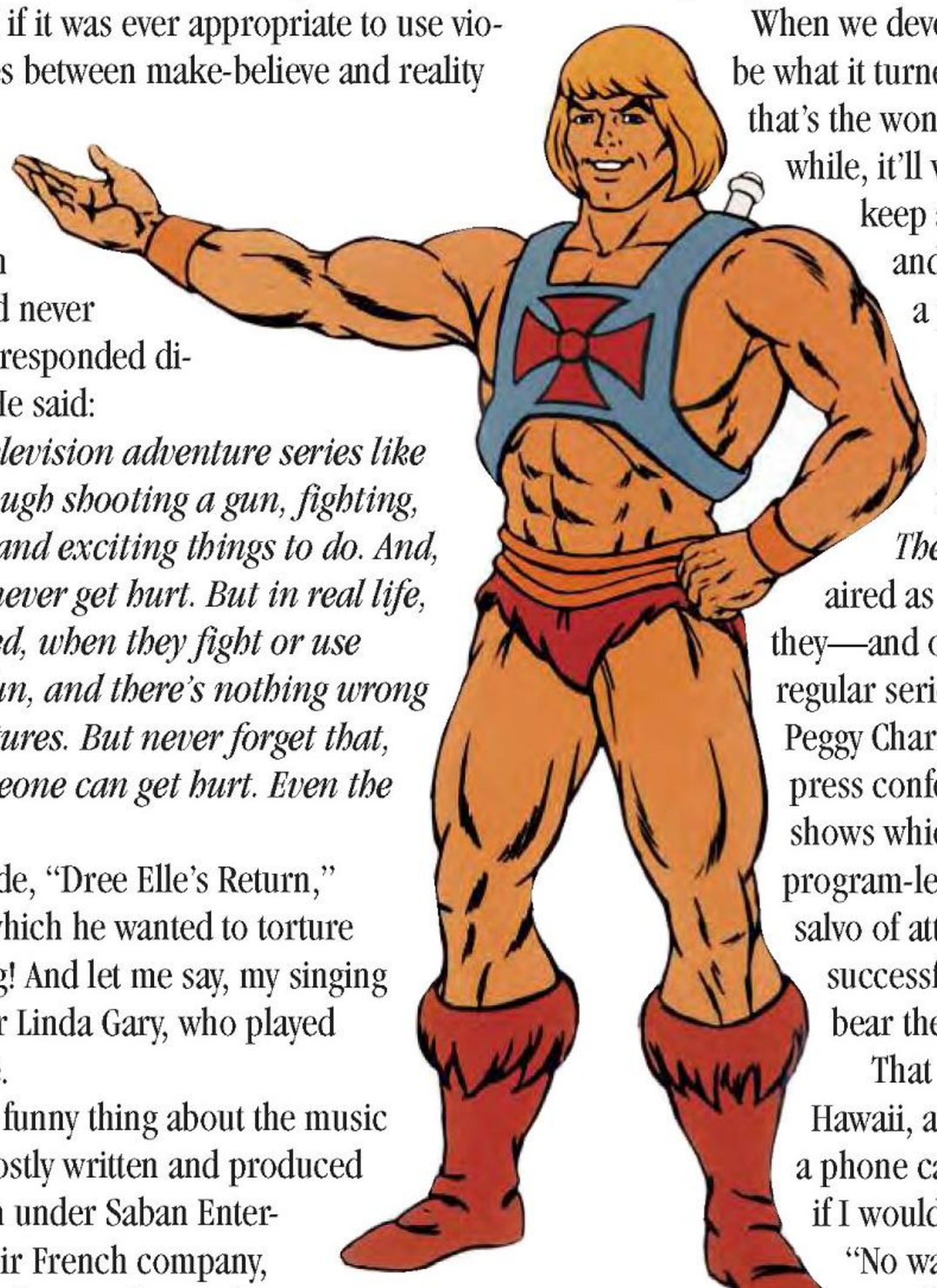
Above:
Skeletor's debut, in the episode "Diamond Ray of Disappearance"

Opposite:
He-Man presented positive moral messages

most touching shows because Prince Adam felt sad that his father didn't recognize him for what he was capable of doing. It's something all children go through, wanting their parents to be proud of them. Everyone wants to have this magic moment where they are able to do something big for their parents. I really loved that show. My father died when I was young, and he never had an opportunity to see me grow up as an adult. To have a show that allowed the son to do for his father something that was worthwhile, it struck a personal chord in me.

One of the women on our staff, Janis Diamond wrote an episode that had a very strong moral element; "Wizard of Stone Mountain" was really about what it meant to be evil, and whether someone was born that way or became that way.

In an episode written by Robby London and directed by Gwen, called "Double Edged Sword," we took the controversies that were happening around the show and used them for the plot. It was all about violence, and when and if it was ever appropriate to use violence, and what the differences between make-believe and reality were. We also referenced death, which was rare for a cartoon show. And He-Man directly talked about television shows in the moral, which had never been done before, and which responded directly to some of our critics. He said:



Sometimes movies and television adventure series like this one make it seem as though shooting a gun, fighting, and taking chances are fun and exciting things to do. And, what's more, the good guys never get hurt. But in real life, people do get hurt, even killed, when they fight or use guns. Make-believe can be fun, and there's nothing wrong with imagining great adventures. But never forget that, when it's the real thing, someone can get hurt. Even the good guys. Even you.

Robby also wrote an episode, "Dree Elle's Return," directed by Lou Kachivas, in which he wanted to torture me for a bit. He had Orko sing! And let me say, my singing voice is not very magical! Poor Linda Gary, who played Dree Elle, had to sing with me.

Speaking about music, the funny thing about the music for *He-Man* was that it was mostly written and produced by Shuki Levy and Haim Saban under Saban Enterprises USA, a subsidiary of their French company, Saban Records. Not only were they producing the music for *He-Man*, they were also concurrently producing the music for DIC's *Inspector Gadget* series, our only daily syndicated competition on the market! If you know your animated history, you'll also recall that Saban later became a significant force in the animation and children's television world, eventually partnering with Fox Kids Worldwide before being bought by The Walt Disney Company. But back in 1983 they were our music maestros.

The reason Ray Ellis didn't do the show had to do with how the composer was paid. Composers weren't paid anything up front. They made their money from the use of the music. Every time their music ran on a show, the composer got paid for it. Before we sold *He-Man*, Ray wasn't sure the music was going to go on the air, so he decided not to do the show. It turned out to be a mistake on his part. And I always said, "Ray, why?" I mean, he'd done so much work for us. He knew that somehow we were going to do something with it. And then Haim showed up and said, "I'm ready to do it. I'll give you more music; you tell me when, and I'll give you more." And he did a terrific job on it.

Although it debuted in England's ITV on September 5th, *He-Man*'s U.S. television debut was on Monday, September 26th — also the first day my daughter Erika officially joined Filmation. Most stations aired *He-Man* between 3:30 and 5:00 p.m., at the time kids were getting home from school. It quickly became the number one show in the major markets it aired in—even beating out the early evening news in many cases. It also became "appointment viewing" for kids, who knew that because there was a new show every Monday through Friday, they had to watch every day.

When we developed *He-Man*, I had no idea it was going to be what it turned out to be. You can't plan hits. I mean, that's the wonderful part of show biz. If a show is worthwhile, it'll work somehow. I just knew it was a way to keep a lot of people working for at least a year, and it became extraordinary… it was just really a phenomenon.

The popularity of *He-Man* led other studios to consider spawning their own syndicated daily strips, based mostly on kids' toys or videogames. *G.I. Joe, Care Bears, The Charmkins, Monchichis*, and more had aired as specials or as limited run mini-series, and they—and others—were now being fast-tracked for regular series. But this brought the renewed wrath of Peggy Charren and ACT. On October 11th, she held a press conference, petitioning the FCC to regulate these shows which "flaunt its own policies that pertain to program-length commercials." It was the first of a new salvo of attacks she would be firing, and as the most successful of those series, *He-Man* would eventually bear the brunt of her group's wrath.

That same day, my wife and I were vacationing in Hawaii, as we had a condo there at the time, and I got a phone call. It was somebody at ABC wanting to know if I would be a guest on *Nightline* that night. I said, "No way! I'm sitting here in Maui." They said, "We'll fly you to our sister station in Honolulu; this won't take very long." I said, "I'm not going to go." And Jay said, "Yes, you are." So, they sent a limo to pick us up, and it took us to a little airport in Maui. There was a little, little airplane sitting there. A pilot got out and said, "I'm taking you to Honolulu." I said, "What the hell is that?" It was apparently the best Italian plane built, but it was tiny.

We finally got to Honolulu and landed, and he said, "We'll pick you up at midnight. By then, we'll have everything fixed up." I said, "What?" He said, "Well, the problem we had with the engine. It happens all of the time; we'll take care of it." Then, another limo picks us up, and it was a Daimler-Benz that had been previously owned by the Queen of England. It was the biggest limo I'd ever been in. We

got in, and I told the driver that, before we went to the station, I had to go to a bar to get a drink and calm my nerves after the plane ride. So we drove up to this rickety old bar in this Daimler, I got my drink, then we went to the station, and they stuck me down in front of a blue screen. I was wearing a pink outfit, my face was green by then, and the host, Ted Koppel, comes on the screen and asks, "Are you ready, Lou?" I said, "I'm not ready." I didn't know who the other people on the show were going to be.

The other guests were Peggy Charren; Squire Rushnell, the head of children's programming for ABC; Alvin Ferleger, Senior VP of Taft Entertainment; and Bruce Fein, General Counsel for the FCC; as well as Tom Shales, the TV critic of *The Washington Post*. They were discussing the so-called "program-length commercials" and the level of violence in children's television. *Fat Albert* was cited as the best of children's programming, with a clip of me—sporting a moustache—interviewed at Filmation earlier in the year. "I was told by one network executive last year that if we showed them another pro-social show, automatically, they would not buy it. I was horrified. And when I say 'pro-social,' I mean the kind of programming that *Fat Albert*, in fact, really is. It was designed to entertain and inform. Those shows are basically impossible to sell now."

Charren complained about the new fall shows that, "When the name of the program is a product, and when products appear throughout the program, it is an ad. And the FCC has recognized this already." She also noted that "vested-interest speech" such as toy-driven animated shows would keep free speech programs off the air. Interestingly, she also noted that ACT was not "saying that they're not commercials, good program-length commercials. We're not talking about the quality of what they say. We're talking about the fact that they are commercial speech, and that's not fair… the problem is that we have turned product into programs."

My response was, "What Peggy just said was offensive to any one of us who does our job properly. *He-Man, Masters of the Universe*, is a concept that I acquired from Mattel over two-and-a-half years ago because I thought it was a good idea. What we look for constantly are intriguing, novel, wonderful ideas that our audience will respond to. *He-Man, Masters of the Universe*, is one of those. I produce *Fat Albert*. The care and sensitivity that we bring to *Fat Albert* is brought to this show. It is not a commercial. It is a show. The fact is that we took those toys, and we worked delicately and laboriously to make sure that we injected love, family, humor, and a whole cast of characters that aren't even existent in those toys. We liked the idea, we knew that children would respond to it, and that's why we chose to produce that show. It had nothing to do with the commercial aspect of those toys as far as we were concerned."

Asked by Koppel if I was uncomfortable with the fact that toys were sold by our series no matter what our intent, I stated, "I'm not uncomfortable at all about what we do. What I am uncomfortable about is the emphasis that this show is taking tonight. What I really think we were supposed to be talking about is program content, and that, to me, is the most important single aspect of children's programming." Pushed by Koppel, I responded, "From my point of view, we are producing a show that has entertainment value and hopefully some information that will be worthwhile for those young people. I don't think there's anything we could do that would sell more Masters of the Universe games, dolls, whatever. It just happens that's a phenomenally successful show—er, successful product. We did not know that was going to be the case when we acquired the rights to this. We acquired the rights before the toys were ever produced."

When asked about sales of the toys since the show debuted, I said, "The program's only been on the air two weeks. I have no idea whether the toys have been impacted at all by the program." Koppel joked about a gentlemanly wager that sales would go up, and I responded, "I don't think in this particular instance that's going to happen. That could possibly happen with some of the other shows that Peggy is taking about. As far as I know, Mattel can't even produce enough of these things to fill the shelves. They're flying off the shelves, and it was previous to the toy and the show being together. I mean, the toy's been sold for almost a year-and-a-half."

Charren asserted that regardless of content toy sales were helped by the programs, to which I said, "I am not in the toy business. I'm in the business of producing television shows. That may well be true. I really don't know." Asked by Koppel why we didn't just create something original, I said, "That's very simple. It's almost impossible to sell original concepts. And it is a predicament that we face because of the way networks buy. If you look at what is sold on Saturday morning, it becomes an impossible task to sell an original concept. So, what we are forced to do is find commodities that exist that have some value, some name value. And that becomes a very difficult problem for us. We are very sensitive to those areas that we choose to acquire rights in because we have that innate knowledge that we know, if we're going to go to the network, you're going to have to have some pre-sold commodity. What do you do? You have to find the commodity that you believe is a proper show. And that's what we did with *He-Man*."

Interestingly, Peggy acknowledged that ACT was in support of the kind of shows "Lou really wants to make," and that she hoped that their actions would "open the marketplace so the networks won't be able to say to the Lou Scheimers of the world, 'Hey, if you don't give us the product for the program, we're not going to put it on the air.'" After Koppel jokingly called Squire Rushnell a villain, Squire and Peggy got into an argument about products versus commercials, and Squire agreed with some of the points I had made. Ferleger, however, said that I had "a very restricted idea about what a social idea is" and cited *The Smurfs* as providing a pro-social experience for children!

Above:
He-Man promotional art

Opposite: (top to bottom)
Ted Koppel hosts *Nightline*

Lou in a pink shirt

Peggy Charren of Action for Children's Television

The FCC's lawyer, Fein, equivocated briefly, basically making no commitment beyond investigations of Charren's complaints, while Shales noted that Charren didn't stand "a ghost of a chance" under new FCC chairman Mark Fowler's new policies of de-regulation of television, and advised the networks to "get out of the Saturday morning cartoon business."

To wrap up, Koppel asked me what I would do about children's TV if I could wave a magic wand. "I'd make critics watch it, that's number one. I have a feeling that Mr. Shales hasn't watched as much children's television as I have. There used to be a lot of live children's television. We did *Isis*, we did *Shazam!*, we did *Ark II*, we did *Ghost Busters*. There used to be wonderful shows. I'm sure there should be more of those. Cartoons are not mindless. They don't have to be mindless. We had a death on a cartoon in 1973 in *Star Trek*. Won an Emmy for the show that year. It was a marvelous show, great stories. I think there's a lot of mediocre dross on the air, and that's the problem all of us have to face. And it's not the problem of whether these are half-hour commercials or not, it's whether the half-hours themselves are worthwhile. In many cases, I think they're not, and that's unfortunate."

Asked what the solution was and if there was a villain, I responded, "Yes, there's a villain. The villain is, if you're not number one, you may lose your job if you're a network programming executive. It's not whether or not the quality of your programming is number one, it's whether the amount of people watching it are there. And that's very difficult for a network executive to cope with. As a result, they go for the lowest common denominator, and you end up with programming that is not as good as it should be."

In all, I got the lion's share of the show's 37-minute segment, and Peggy Charren complimented me twice. Even Ted Koppel was very nice to me. But Squire—who had once referred to *Fat Albert* as "Black Albert"—was very ticked off because *He-Man* was really succeeding in syndication. Massive numbers of people were watching *He-Man* that they never got on Saturday morning, and the networks were upset because Saturdays were a profit center for them. And because it came from toys, the children's organizations were upset even though they really didn't know what the show was; and I always found it strange they were criticizing something they weren't watching. But we were happy because we were doing something worthwhile, and we were happy with the audience's reaction.

October 3–7th, Filmation exhibited at Vidcom in Cannes, a newer marketplace for worldwide entertainment groups that concentrated on home video, home computers, and video games. We made a huge deal with the French home video company Cinetheque there, for French video rights. I also gave an interview that was quoted in the October 6th *Daily Variety* under the front-page headline "Filmation's Scheimer Touts Use of Hollywood-Based Union Animation Workers." It was another bold strike at our competitors, who were sending so much work overseas that the results were crippling the American animation industry. Of the 1100-plus members of IATSE 839, we were employing 450 of them on *He-Man*, either full- or part-time. And in a jab at the TV companies that had abandoned us on Saturday mornings, I noted that our budget for *He-Man* was $200,000 each—the same as a network show—except that, "we don't have interference as we would from the networks."

After a successful first video release, October saw our second video release from RCA-Columbia with *He-Man: The Greatest Adventure of All*, the "film" compilation we had released to theatres just before the show aired. It was a combination of the first three episodes of the series—"Diamond Ray of Disappearance," "Teela's Quest," and "Colossor Awakes"—with some new animation to bridge sequences, and some new narration by the Sorceress.

Meanwhile, my daughter worked with Filmation's development department, on all the new projects we were working on. This enabled her to help a lot with the development on She-Ra, He-Man's twin sister, about which I'll write more in the next few chapters. She worked very closely with Arthur Nadel.

In the first week of December 1983, we jointly announced that we would be bringing *Fat Albert & The Cosby Kids* to first-run syndication, with 40 of the best network shows, and 50 all-new episodes created for daily airing as of September 1984. We also revealed that we would be doing 39 more new *He-Man* episodes, and a *He-Man* feature film, for a total budget of $28 million dollars.

As the year ended, we had 300 full-time employees, and were planning on hiring at least 200 more to deal with the upcoming workload.

Thank you

LOU SCHEIMER

for being a friend to the American animation industry by keeping the work here.
More importantly, thank you for being our friend.

With love, admiration and gratitude from all the members of your FILMATION family.

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Gary Allen
Peter Alvarado
Barry Anderson
Robert Arkwright
Richard Arons
Rose Arra
Lada Babicka
Carlos Baeza
Edward Ballerini
Kathy Barrows
Rex Barron
Arland Barron
Bronwen Barry
William Barry
Christine Beck
Estelle Beck
Barbara Bell
Carl Bell
Deborah Belovitch
Barbara Ann Benedetto
Munir Bhatti
Patricia Blackburn
Thomas Blake
Russell Blandino
Martin Bloomquist
Mary Bloomquist
John Blough
Barbrey Bocek
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Hee-Ja Cho
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Don Manuel
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Warren Marshall
Leandro Martinez
Lorenzo Martinez
Hal Mason
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Teri McDonald
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Walter Menendez
Christie Meyer
Daniel Mills
William Mims
Flavia Mitman
Sue Miyazaki
Louis Montoya
Gale Morgan
Ludmilla Mucerino
Sharon Murray
Stephen Murray
Constantin Mustatea
Mark Myer
Arthur Nadel
Donna Narhuminti
Sharon Nash
Dennis Neil
Brett Newton
Marcus Allan Nickerson
Diane Nielsen
Vance Nielsen
Stephanie Nies
Gregorio Nocon
Jane Nordin
Armando Norte
Jeanette Nouribekian

William Nunes
Barry O'Brien
Joan O'Brien
Susan O'Brien
Michael O'Connor
Susan Odjakjian
Michael Olinger
Michael Louis Oliva
Rolando Oliva
Eduardo Olivares
Naomi O'Loughlin
Thomas O'Loughlin
Michael O'Mara
Philip Ortiz
Rosalina Ortiz
Lewis Ott
Douglas Pakes
Philip Pakes
Donald Van Parmele
Virginia Parmele
Catherine Parotino
C. Jeffrey Patch
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Leyla Pelaez
John Perry
Christopher Peterson
Philip Phillipson
Marilyn Pierson
Sean Ray Platter
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Letha Prince
Richard Quiroz
Patricia Racine
Virgel Raddatz
Gilbert Ramos
Beverly Randles
Susan Reagan
Yolanda Rearick
Frank Recinos
Nelson Recinos
William Recinos
William Reed
Dana Reemes
Sharon Rehme
Jean Remmel
John Remmel
Becky Reu
Gregory Reyna
Young-Kyu Rhim
Colene Riffo
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Steven Rogers
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Charles Rychwalski
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Randy Alan Sanchez
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Connie Lee Schurr
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Donald Schweiker
Sara Seaberry
Barton Seitz
Barbara Selkirk
Susan Semer
Stan Shanahan
Thomas Shannon
Kunio Shimamura
James Shull
Karen Marie Silva
Mary Sime
Joan Simmons
Joseph Simon

Thomas Sito
Lewis Sleeman
Karlis Smiltens
Bruce Smith
Gay Smith
Jay Won So
Ka Moon Song
Ann Marie Sorensen
Michael Sosnowski
Michael Sowa
Carmela Spencer
J. Michael Spooner
Robert Stanton
James Burton Steel Sr.
Catherine Stein
Virginia Stevenson
Virginia Stockton
Jim Stocks Jr.
Daniel St. Pierre
Bruce Strock
Monica Stroud
George Sukara
Cynthia Ann Surage
Hal Sutherland
Michael Anthony Swanigan
Thomas Talaranowicz
Louis Tate
Roxanne Taylor
Carmi Teves
Dean Teves
Karen Texter
Amanda Thompson
Kristin Thorpe
Bruce Timm
Robin Tismeer
Marshall Toomey
Macario Torres
Michael Toth
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William Tremellen
Maureen Bushman Trueblood
Richard Trueblood
Keith Tucker
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Dardo Velez
Irma Velez
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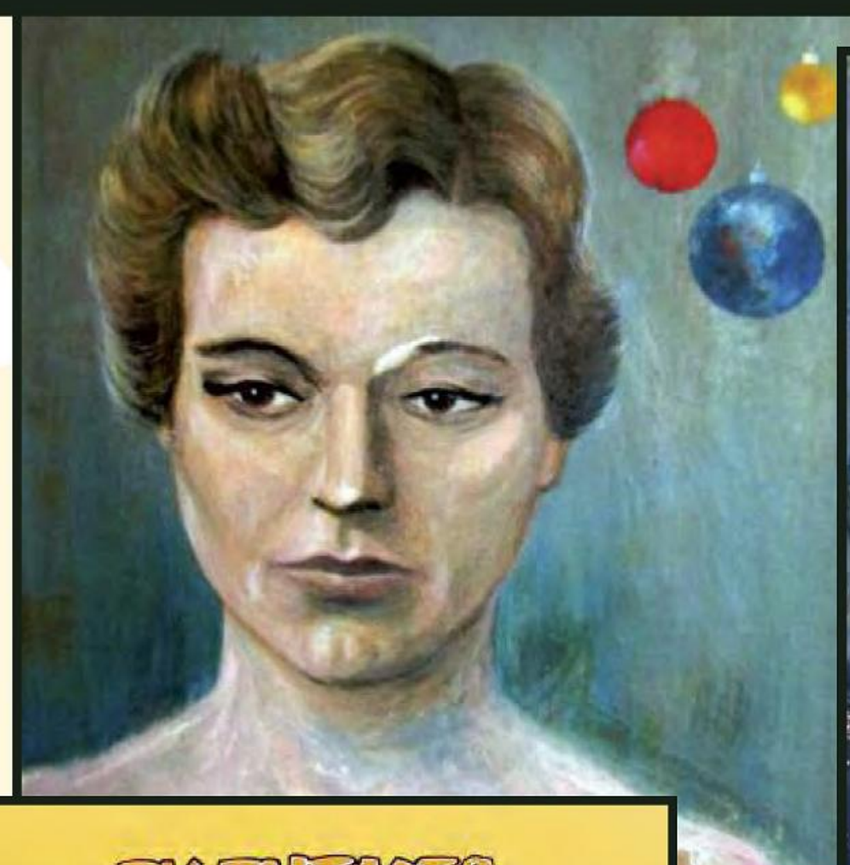
Hal Waite
Valerie Walker
Mark Wallace
James Walsh
Curt Walstead
Neal Robert Warner
Manon Washburn,
Donald Watson
Wendell Watts,
Chris Weber
Debbie Weithart
Sherilan Weinhart
David West
Sherry Wheeler
Lawrence Steven White
Vicki Jean White
Helen Whitman
Jerry Lynn Whittington
Kathleen Wilbur
Jim Willoughby
Robert Wilson
Leslie Wolchuck
Leonor Wood
Lenore Wood
Ellen Woodbury
Dora Yakutis
Won Yoo
Mi Ri Yoon
Eun Ok Yu
Frederick Ziegler
Kathleen Ziegler
William Ziegler
Janet Zoll
Craig Zukowski

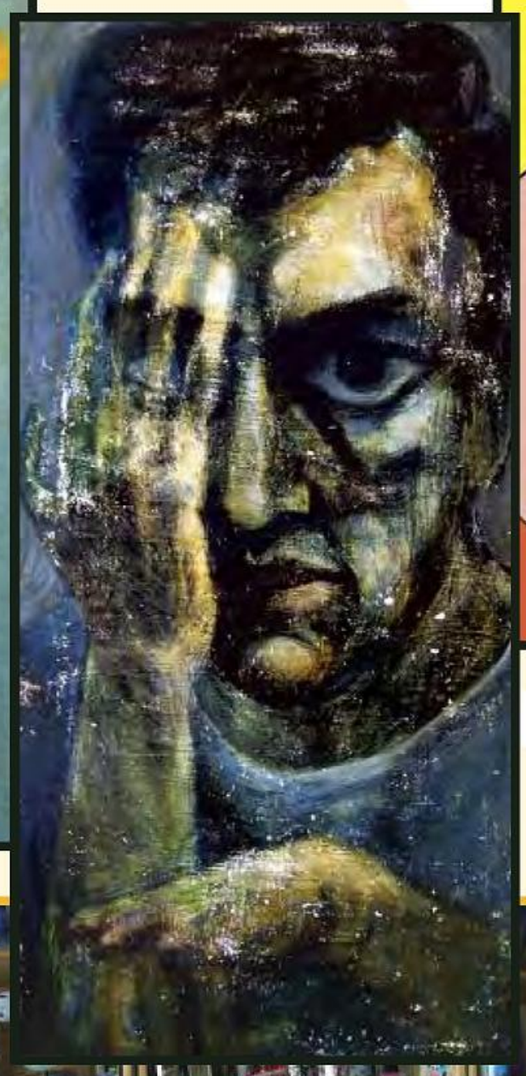
Above:
Industry ad paid for by Filmation employees, March 1985

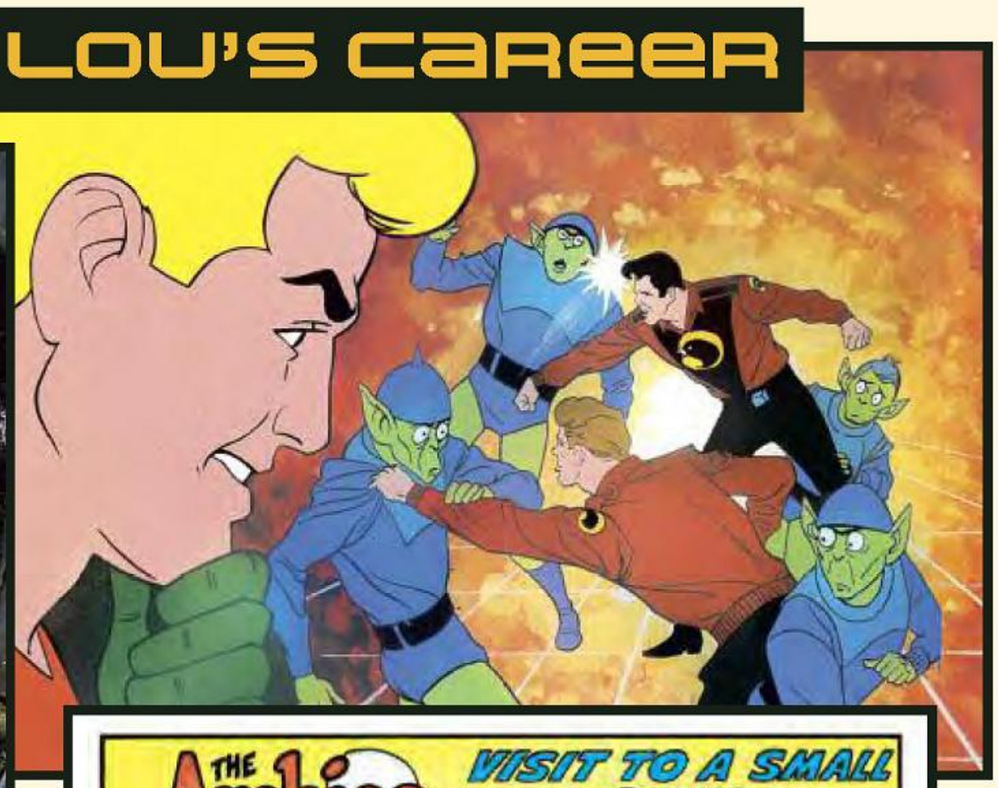
COLOR GALLERY

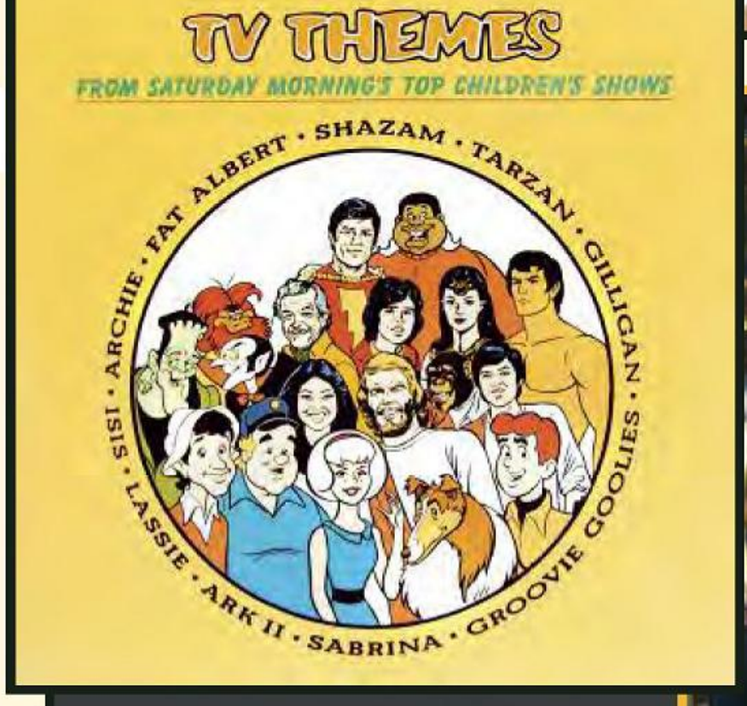
Above:
Rare animation "How To" poster featuring He-Man and She-Ra, 1985

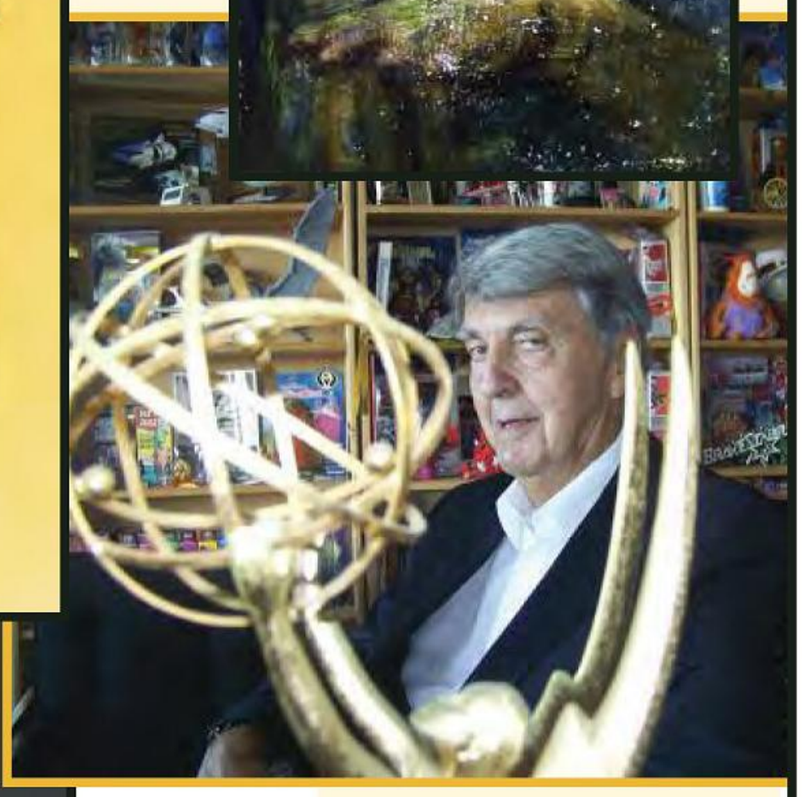
SOME TREASURES FROM LOU'S CAREER

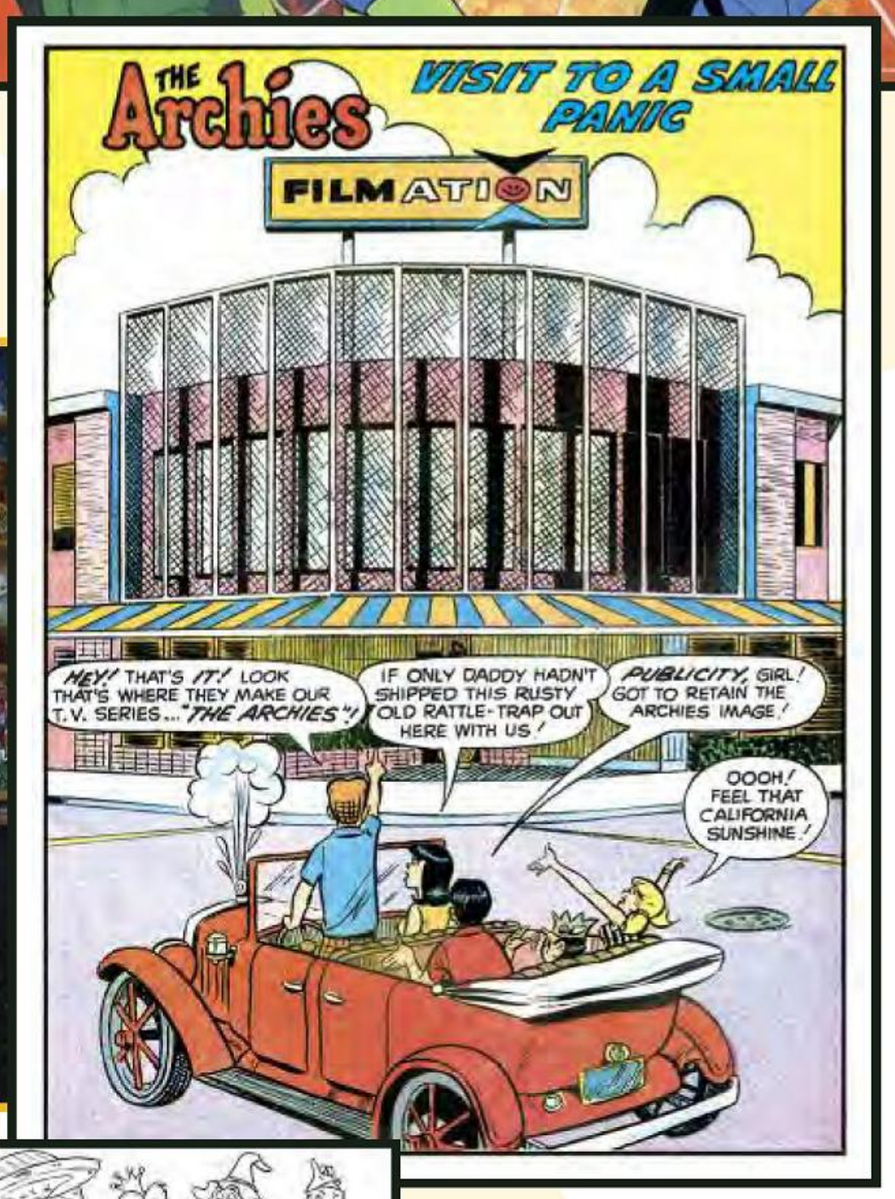


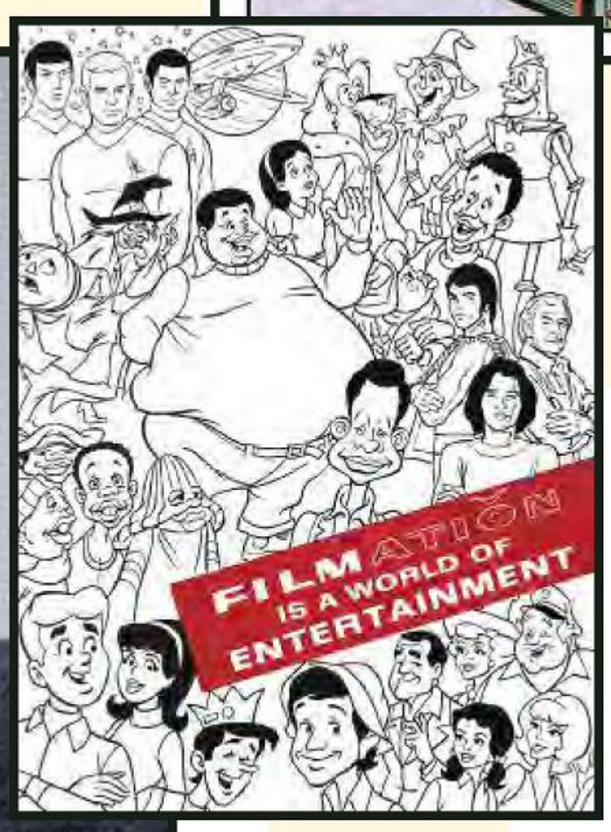












Above: (left to right)

Portrait of Jay Scheimer by Lou

Self-portrait by Lou

Presentation art for DC heroes *The Blackhawks* with Aquaman

The cover of a never-released Filmation theme song record from 1977

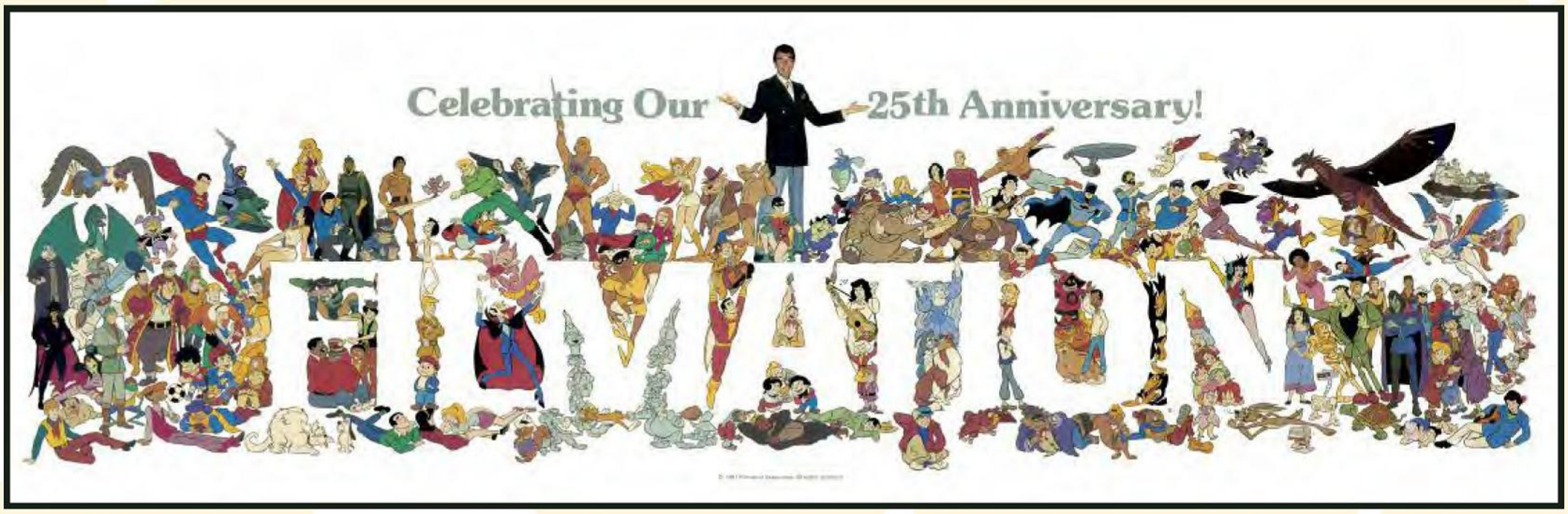
Lou in his home office

Filmation appears in *Everything's Archie* #1, May 1969

Lou's ANNIE award

The Emmy Award for *Star Trek*

Filmation folder cover from 1974



Above:
(top to bottom)

Filmation 25th Anniversary Poster

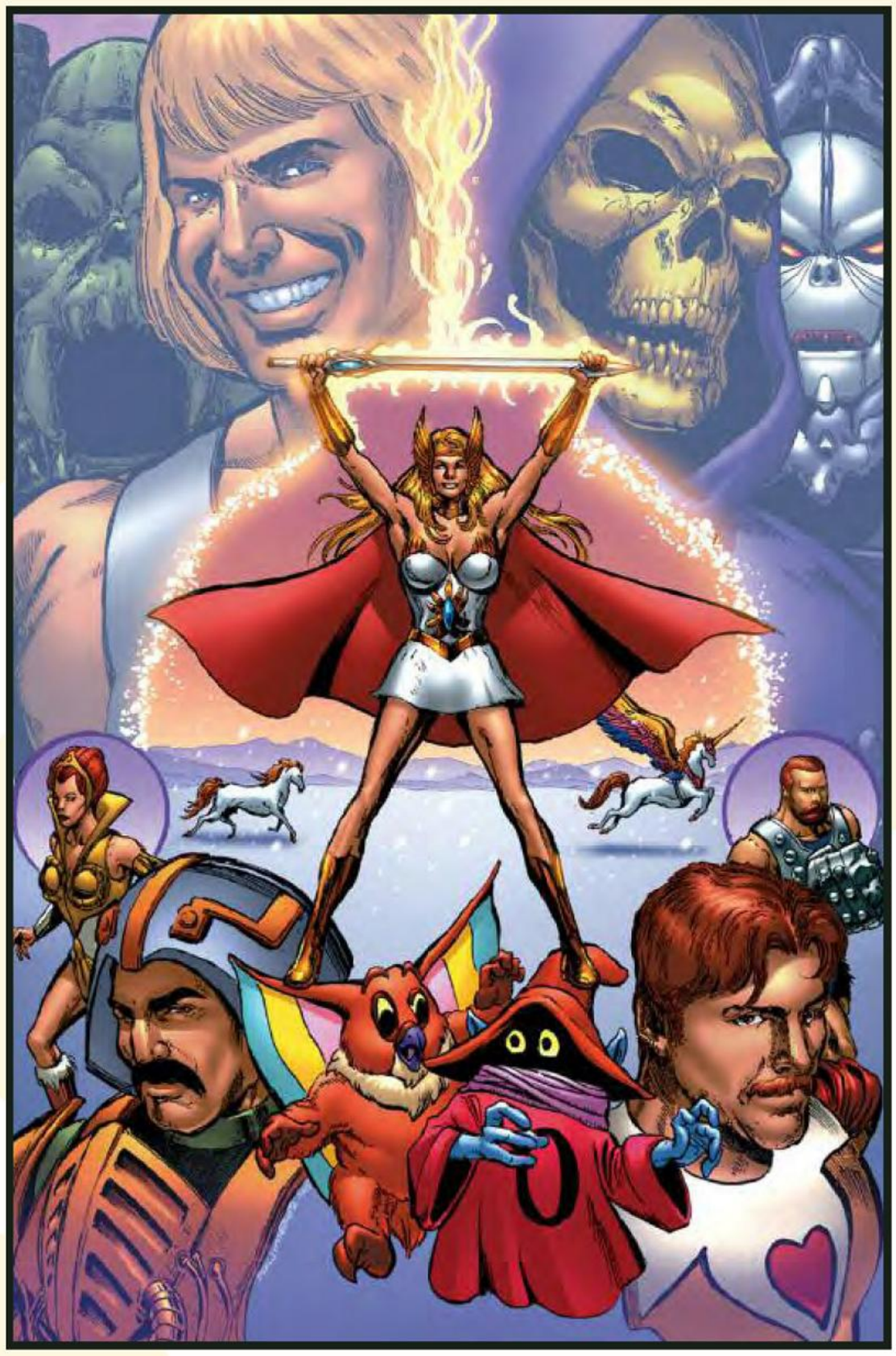
Original Filmation title card

Logo for Lou Scheimer Productions

He-Man's friends vs. foes DVD postcard art by Mike McKone

FILMATION

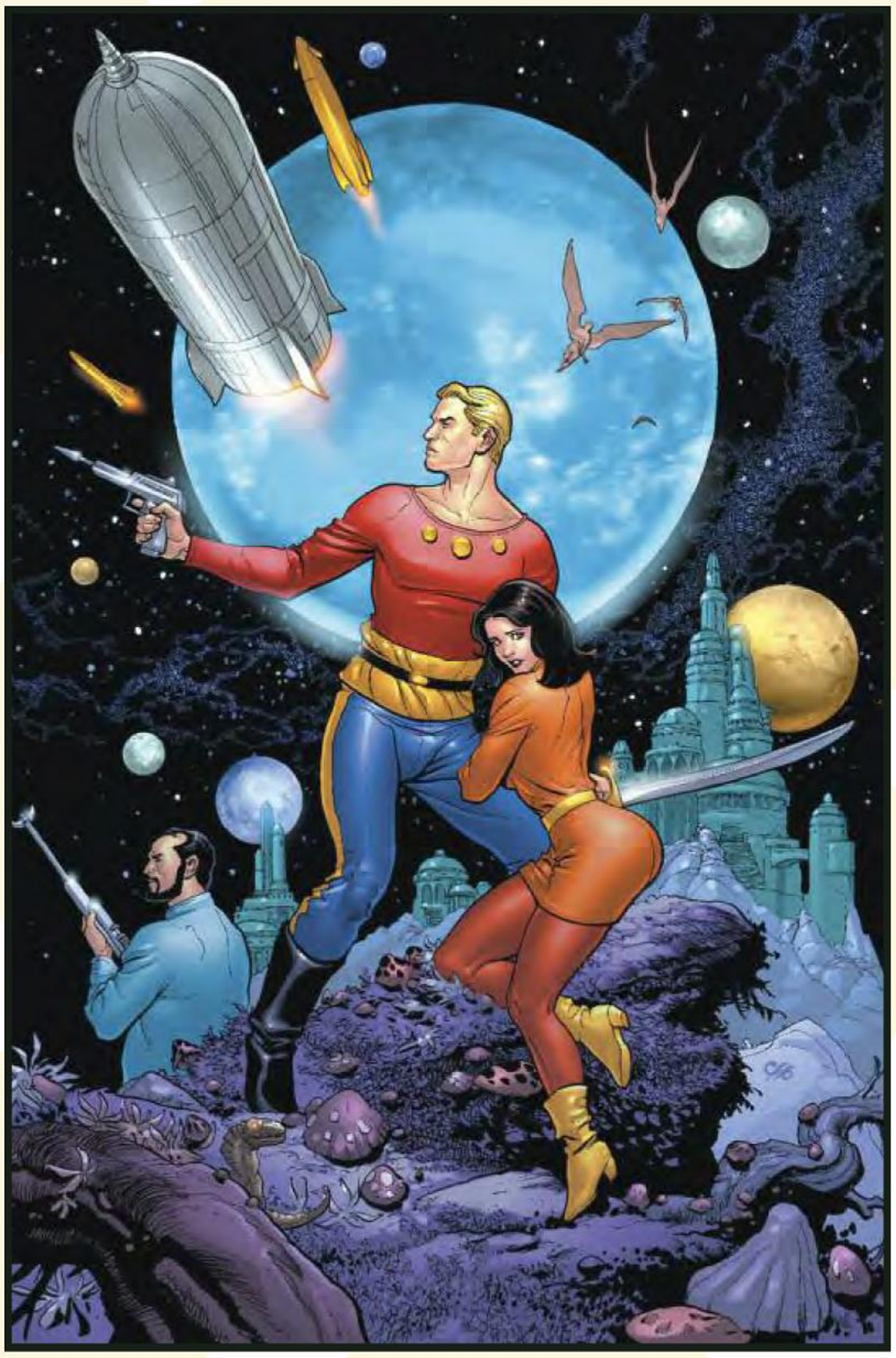
Lou Scheimer PRODUCTIONS

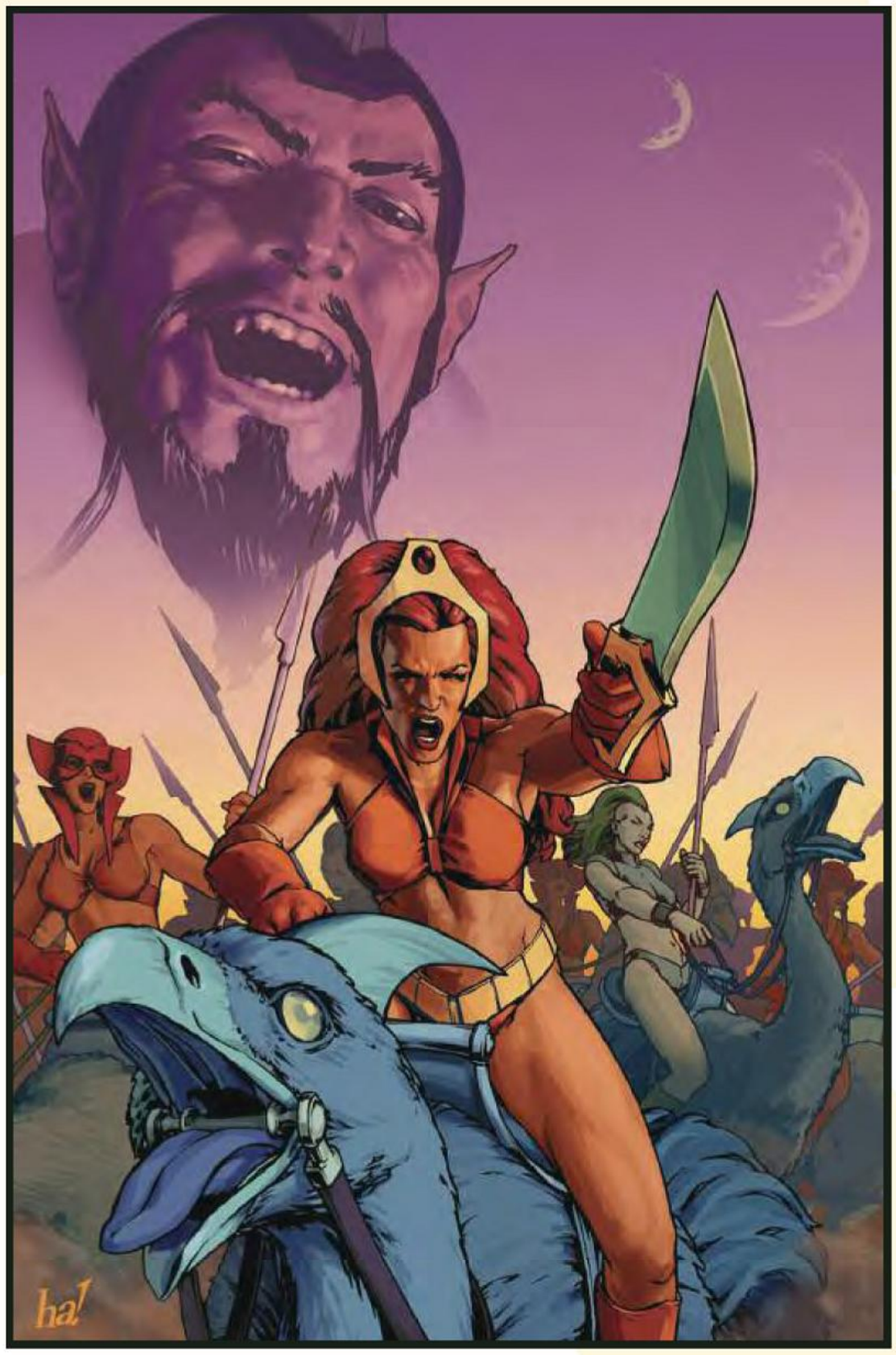


Upper Left:
He-Man and Sorceress DVD postcard art by Adam Hughes

Upper Right:
She-Ra and her allies and enemies DVD postcard art by Phil Jimenez

Right:
He-Man and friends battle for Eternia DVD postcard art by Alex Ross





Upper Left:

Flash Gordon and friends DVD postcard art by Frank Cho

Upper Right:

Ming and Princess Aura DVD postcard art by Gene Ha

Left:

He-Man vs. Skeletor DVD postcard art by Bruce Timm

YOUR NO. 1 SOURCE

FOR

NO.1 RATED CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

No. 1 Rated Children's Show
Throughout 1983-84 Season.

HE-MAN™ AND THE MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE™

More Powerful Than Ever —
with 130 Episodes. 162 Stations.
91% Coverage.

©1984 Mattel Inc., Filmation
Source: NSI Cassandra

No. 1 on CBS for 11 Years.
Now in Syndication.

**Bill Cosby's
The Adventures of**

FAT ALBERT™

90 Episodes — 50 Brand New.
TV's Most Acclaimed
Animated Series.

©1984 Wm. H. Cosby Jr., Filmation
Source: NTI 1972-83

COMING NEXT YEAR:

SHE-RA™, PRINCESS OF POWER

He-Man's Twin Sister

Produced by
FILMATION
A DIVISION OF GROUP W PRODUCTIONS / WESTINGHOUSE BROADCASTING AND CABLE, INC.

Distributed by
GROUP W PRODUCTIONS
WESTINGHOUSE BROADCASTING AND CABLE, INC.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

1984-1985
MORALS AND MEDIA BATTLES

As I noted before, we had no idea that *He-Man* was going to be the hit show it became. Not only did we see great ratings, but the letters started pouring in. It wasn't just a hit, it was a phenomenon. It was probably the first show that was that successful in the history of animation. And because it was such a hit in syndication, it altered the animation business in so many ways, not only in how shows were produced, but how they were broadcast as well. It really created a new business model that eventually led to Nickelodeon and the Disney Channel and Cartoon Network that all dominate children's television today.

There was a dark side to the success as well, which I'll write about in a short while. But the effect it had on us with our previous television "partners" was very clear. The networks really got mad at us, and wouldn't talk to us. Why were they so mad at us if we were on weekdays instead of Saturday mornings? It was mostly because we cost them advertisers. The companies that would have spent dollars on Saturdays now were spending them in syndication. And it hurt the networks' bottom lines. I was in New York once with Jay, and I ran into Squire Rushnell, and he said, with venom in his voice, "Oh… you!" That didn't really matter though because we had 50 new *Fat Albert & The Cosby Kids* to produce, and we had expanded the second season of *He-Man* from 39 new shows to another 65!

February 1984 saw our executive VP Alice Donenfeld and Account Executive Ed Ballerini going with Group W to the sixth Monte Carlo film television and video market—as well as the bigger NATPE convention—to offer the new *Fat Albert* show. The intent was to sell the series on a four-year cash fee-plus-barter basis. We promoted the show in the trades with a full-page ad showing the Junkyard gang being tutored by their teacher—who had written "Filmation" on the chalkboard—and "Head of the Class" as a headline. Promised were the 50 new episodes, which, combined with the 40 network shows would give an impressive 90 *Fat Alberts* for syndicators… enough for 18 weeks of uninterrupted shows!

Domestically, we sold *He-Man* to twelve more TV markets, putting us on 126 US stations, extending our reach to 83% of the national viewing audience. It was an unprecedented success. By February 3rd, Group W Prods. had presold *Fat Albert* in eleven major U.S. markets, and we announced to the press that we were planning a new first-run syndicated series to launch each year for the future.

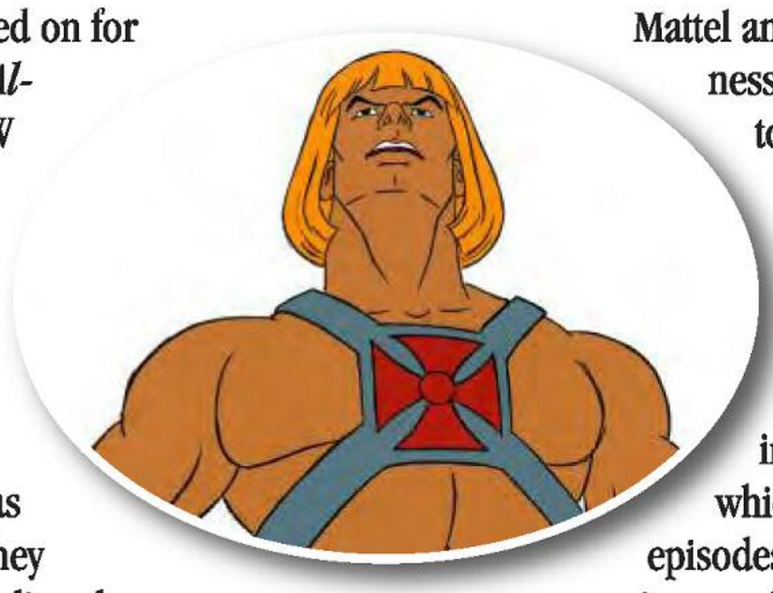
CBS, meanwhile, moved reruns of *Tarzan* on Saturdays beginning February 11th, plus they acquired a number of episodes of *He-Man* to air at 12:30 p.m., followed by reruns of *The New Fat Albert Show* at 1:00 p.m. By the fall of 1984 though, Filmation was off the Saturday morning schedules entirely. As I mentioned, the networks wouldn't even talk to me anymore.

On February 12th, Group W announced that with 14 U.S. station presales alone, they had almost recouped the $8,000,000 investment they were making for the new *Fat Alberts*. The funds came from license fees, as well as sales of two 30-second ads for the first two

Opposite:
Filmation syndication advertisement

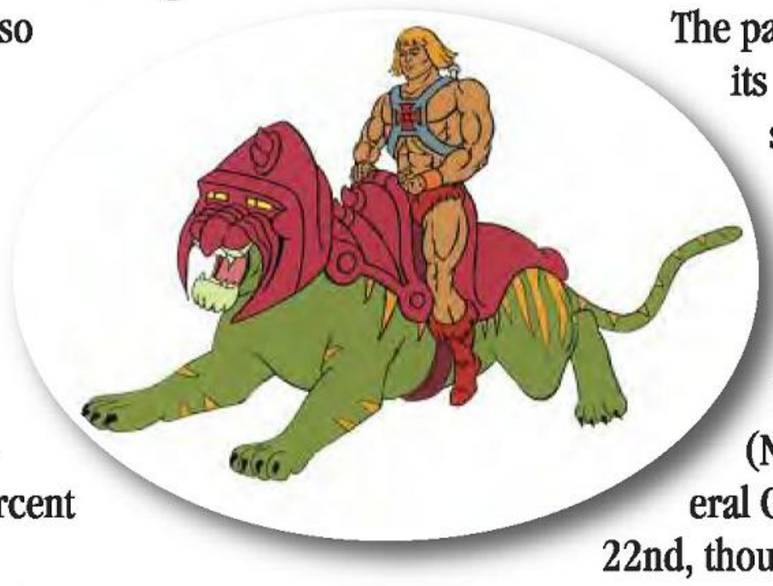
Above:
An industry ad touts the success of *He-Man*

years of a four-year deal. Kellogg's quickly signed on for one of the ad spots. Between *He-Man* and *Fat Albert*, and a few game and news shows, Group W had moved to the top of the syndicated food chain, with 20 hours of new programming a week, almost double the amount of their nearest competitor, Paramount. The numbers were even stronger by mid-March, with 26 U.S. markets presold for *Fat Albert*.



I do want to point out that while *He-Man* was important to Westinghouse/Group W because they were making a fortune on it, Filmation was not directly profiting off the show. The way Filmation made their money on the deal—and therefore employed its animators and staff for the entire year—was the budget for the show. I gave them a number, and, if we spent more than that, then it came out of Westinghouse's profit. If we spent less than that, we would be screwing the toy company. So we had to keep it on the level.

When the show was sold, ten percent of the money automatically would go towards our budget. Of the remaining 90 percent, half of it would go to Westinghouse, and half to Mattel. Because that sounds so complex, let me put it this way: If *He-Man* brought in $10, one dollar went automatically toward our production costs, and $4.50 each went to Westinghouse and Mattel. But, before there was any distribution of profit, we had to show that we'd made enough to produce the show and anything that came in over that, Group W and Westinghouse would take 50 percent of it, and the toy company the other 50 percent of it.



He-Man definitely sold well enough in the U.S. to cover its budget with the ten percent, as well as generate a profit for Westinghouse and Mattel to split. On top of that, Filmation sold the show overseas. Westinghouse did not sell overseas. We sold it internationally, and that basically would be all profit to split. And since Westinghouse was our parent, we were therefore making them profitable. So, we didn't directly profit, but we did in the sense that we could stay in business and employ everyone and spend more on shows next year.

There were some deals in place for some of the later stuff, such as the *He-Man* live stage show, or the comics, and Westinghouse and Mattel shared in profits from that, but it didn't get shared with Filmation. The same went for characters or concepts that were created completely by Filmation, like Orko. Filmation didn't get any direct profit from those. For some of it, we got that ten percent toward production taken out first, before the 50-50 split, but not everything. *He-Man* made an immense amount of money for Mattel and Westinghouse, and we were staying in business and prospering. The lack of any direct profit to Filmation eventually meant that we got screwed, but we didn't know that at this point. That would take a few years to happen.

We made a new video deal with Prism Entertainment Group on March 13th for more of our video library. Their 1984 VHS releases included *Freedom Force, Fabulous Funnies*—which oddly had its laugh track missing on a few episodes—*M-U-S-H*, and others. Family Home Entertainment (FHE) also continued to release our properties as well. Around the same time, we made Gary Allen the director of licensing for a new merchandising division for Filmation. The division was called Filmation Licensing International (FLI), and offered domestic licensors rights for a percentage basis.

One of the things we offered to the foreign markets was *Filmation's Fantastic World of Adventure*, which was a cartoon package composed of five shows grouped together; *Blackstar*, the animated *Shazam!, Hero High, Lone Ranger*, and *Zorro*. The package contained 73 half-hours, and even had its own theme song that outlined the plot of each show… and, oddly, featured one brief clip from "Fraidy Cat" in it. I no longer have records about which countries took this package.

After an initial complaint on April 4th, the National Association for Better Broadcasting (NABB) filed a formal complaint with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on June 22nd, though they targeted not specifically Group W, Filmation, or Mattel, but L.A. TV station KCOP. They essentially claimed that the *He-Man* show was a program-length commercial. I fired back in an interview with the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, saying, "These are the same groups you find kicking and screaming about children's television, where what they're really thinking about is power and glory for themselves."

We had shown NABB representatives two episodes of the show before airing, back when they were claiming the show would be ultra-violent. "Then, suddenly, the focus of their indignation moved to the supposedly excessive commercialism," I revealed. The NABB president Frank Orme did not deny my account of the story, but said, "I'm disappointed in Mr. Scheimer. I'm sure he doesn't really believe it." It would take literally years for the FCC to make a ruling on the complaint, but I'll spare the suspense: on June 1, 1989, the FCC decided that the complaint was denied.

There was one time that I met with some young psychologist who was talking to me about our shows and how

Opposite: (top to bottom)
He-Man & Skeletor stock images

He-Man & Battle Cat from "The Secret of Grayskull"

Teela stock image

Trap Jaw from "Song of Celice"

This Page: (top to bottom)
Two pieces of Snake Mountain layout artwork from "Teela's Trial"

Castle Grayskull layout artwork

they were bad for kids. It irritated me. I said, "How old are you?" He was in his 20s. I said, "Did you watch our shows growing up?" and he said, "Of course." I said, "Were you bothered? Did they hurt you at all?" He said, "No." He was the perfect example of one of these guys that "looked" at our shows but *really* didn't watch our shows. They would pre-judge based on the name or image of *He-Man*, without ever watching the shows. I made sure that Filmation put out quality shows. I was much more concerned about what the audience felt about our shows.

By June *He-Man* was on 151 U.S. stations (89% coverage), and no end seemed to be in sight. Article after article across the country appeared in newspapers, mixing tales of children—and their parents—who loved *He-Man* and various "experts" who would either argue about violence that wasn't in the show after all, or about the fears of overt commercialism. And my defense of the show became almost a second job. In an *Orlando Sentinel* article, I again took on the NABB. "If we were doing an abysmally bad show that literally preyed on young people, I'd say their criticism was justified. We do the best show we can do. If that show works for those young people, it's madness to talk about whether it's a half-hour commercial. Was the Disney hour a commercial? Are the Snoopy and *Peanuts* shows half-hour commercials?" I also took a dig at the networks. "If we were doing it for a network, they would be pounding for more action, more stuff on screen—keep those kids watching! By going into syndication, we were able to get more content, humanity, real personality, fun into the shows. We worked hard on getting values into the shows. It's easy to do a violent show, but

who wants to?"

Mattel, meanwhile, was indeed on fire with *He-Man* sales. Their expectations were to sell 55 million toys during the year, leaving Cabbage Patch Kids rotting in the 2-million-selling mulch. Meanwhile, over 190 He-Man-related products were being sold, many of them based on our animated designs rather than the toys. Some, like a talking toothbrush, even used Filmation voice tracks. It was a marketing ouroboros—a snake eating its tail—as the show derived from the toys was now creating material to be made into toys.

I'm going to backtrack a bit to talk about *Ghost Busters*. You remember our live show from the 1970s? Well, it seemed that other people didn't… or so they would claim. In the early 1980s, Dan Akroyd wanted to make a comedy movie with a similar theme, about a group of guys who fought ghosts—without the help of a gorilla. He sold the initial script to Columbia around 1982, and word of the sale hit the trade papers. That's when our lawyer, Ira Epstein, got involved.

Ira sent a letter out to Columbia, telling them that they were infringing on our title, and if there was any similarity in concept, we would hold them liable. Nothing happened right away, but later the general counsel for Columbia called Ira and said, "We've got this letter here, and we want you to withdraw the letter." They tried to tell him that we didn't have any right to stop them, and he asked, "If we have no right to stop you, why should we withdraw the letter?" So their guy says, "Are you negotiating with me?" And **Ira said, "No, I'm not negotiating with you, I just don't want you to use the name."**

We didn't hear anything else about it from Columbia until October 1983. Ira was in New York to see actor Carroll O'Connor, and, as he was walking up to Lincoln Center to get some opera tickets, there was a big commotion up Sixth Avenue. He asked what it was all about, and somebody told him that they were shooting a movie called *Ghostbusters*! So, as soon as he got back to the office, he fired off a cease and desist letter to Columbia. Shortly after that, we got a call from our parent company, Westinghouse, and they said, "We got a call from the head of Columbia saying, 'Ira Epstein's causing a lot of problems. Can you get him to drop the letter?'" Needless to say, we didn't drop the matter, and soon we were having a meeting with Columbia.

The meeting was Ira and myself and the guy who was head of Columbia Pictures at the time. And he said, "Well you did an animated Saturday morning show, and we're doing a live-action movie called *Ghostbusters* that has nothing to do with your animated show." I said, "Number one, it was a live show," and he said, "Uh oh," and I said, "It was the same concept that you've got on film right now. You guys don't have the right to do that."

Now, it turns out that the movie had been filmed with some alternate dialogue, just in case, with the characters saying "Ghost Breakers" or "Ghost Smashers" or something like that, but Columbia really wanted "Ghostbusters." They went ahead and released the movie on June 8, 1984, and it made a boatload of money. We went to court over the matter, and in mid-June, after appearing at L.A. Superior Court, Columbia settled with us, paying us for the use of the title. Their obstinance really cost them a lot. They gave us $608,000 for the use of the concept and allowing them to utilize the name and the title, plus we had like one percent of the profit.

That profit percentage was a mistake on our part. If you know anything about Hollywood, you know that no picture ever makes a profit. No matter what it brings in at the box office, the accountants have ways of making sure that on paper, no picture is ever profitable. So, taking a piece of the deal was a mistake, as we never got another dime. But we did get $608,000, which was okay. The one other mistake we made in the settlement—and it was my fault for not thinking about it—was that Filmation didn't keep the rights to any animated

Above:
Fat Albert storyboards for "Cable Caper"

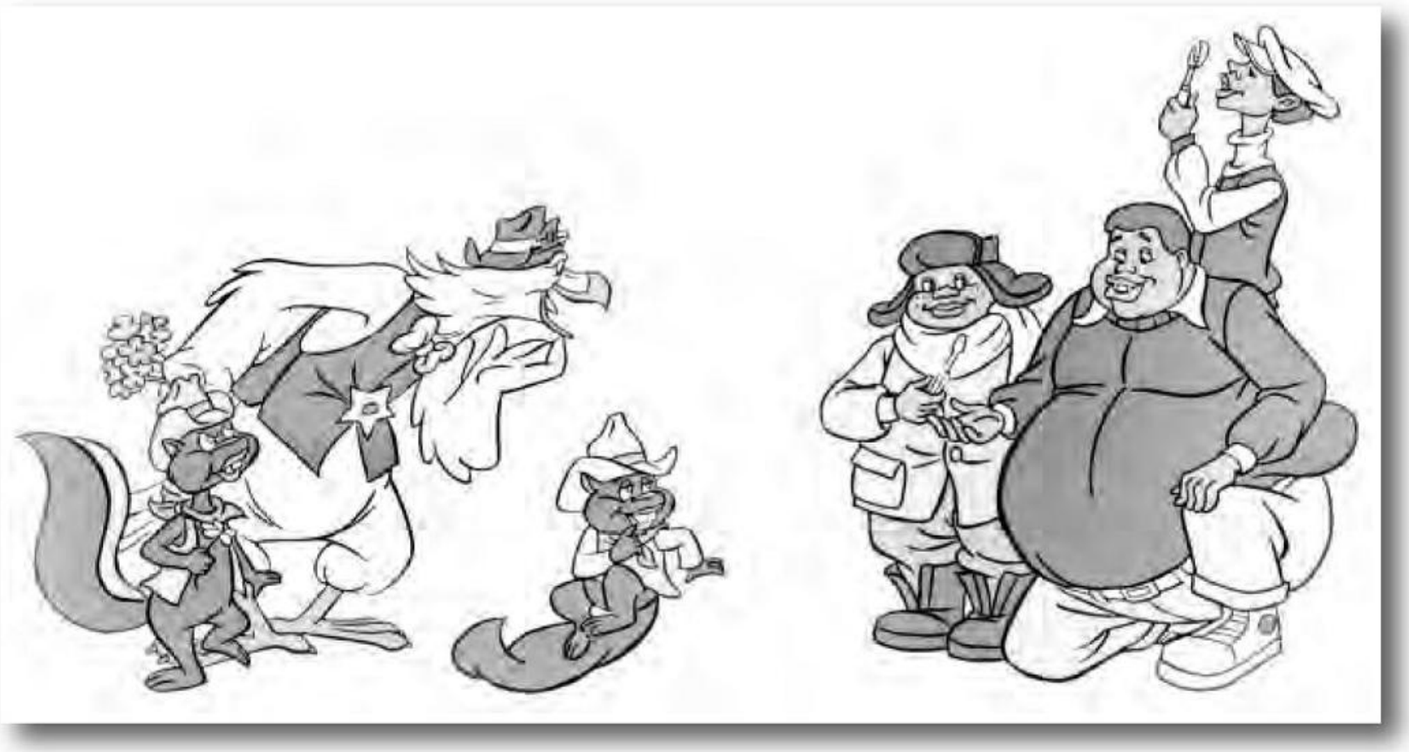
Opposite:
Promotional art with Legal Eagle, Gabby and Moe meeting the Cosby kids

version of *Ghostbusters*. That would end up being a much bigger mistake, and I'll write about that more in the next chapters.

In July Group W made a decision to offer a four-year extension to U.S. syndicators of *He-Man*, though this time, instead of getting barter for advertising, they intended to ask for cash license fees. Very few stations balked. *He-Man* had been the number one syndicated show among children 2–11 in the November, February, and May Nielsen ratings. Meanwhile, shortly afterwards, *Fat Albert* had sold to 55 U.S. stations, including the top 25 markets.

Now's a good time to talk about the new *Fat Albert* and *He-Man* Season Two, and how we developed and changed things in both shows.

The new *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* shows really enabled us to tackle tougher subjects. I didn't tackle those really tough ones for the networks because they'd make you crazy. We had started out doing stuff like kids who wear glasses, but the show got more mature in its stories the longer it was on the network. With syndication I didn't have to worry about anybody bugging me. We were freed from network restrictions and Saturday mornings—and knowing that our show already reached an older audience—we set the new *Fat Albert* shows to have an even more daring tone of relevance to kids' lives than their predecessors had contained. In our run of new episodes were stories about sex discrimination, gang warfare, gambling, neighborhood watch programs, going to court, kidney transplants, and even one bold episode that saw the kids participating in a "Scared Straight" type of program.



Arnold Shapiro was a friend of mine, and he had done these two TV documentaries—*Scared Straight!* in 1978 and *Scared Straight! Another Story* in 1980—in which young juvenile delinquent kids were taken to prison where a group of convicts basically scared them so badly that they turned their lives around. It was an incredible idea, and it really worked. I called Arnold and told him we wanted to do a version on *Fat Albert,* and he said, "Yeah, that's good, go ahead and do it, Lou." Our story was called "Busted," written by Don W. Harmon.

After a special viewer warning from Cosby that the episode following had especially strong subject matter, we had the junkyard kids go to the prison for a minor crime, where they got scared by inmates. In one scene, one of the convicts calls one of the kids a "little bastard," and we also used the word "damn." Well, Westinghouse never checked any of our shows, and, after that show eventually aired, phone calls started coming in about us using those words, not from parents, but from some of the stations. One station in the South was even threatening to drop the show. A guy at Westinghouse called us in a panic and asked, "Lou, is it true that you used the word 'bastard' on an animated show?" And I said, "We did *Scared Straight*. I mean, what are you going to have him call them? A sissy?" He talked to the station guy and explained it, and we did not lose the station.

We did another show that dealt with venereal diseases, called "Kiss and Tell." It wasn't that Fat Albert got VD, but somebody did. Dumb Donald did not get the clap. I know that for sure because I was Dumb Donald. It was a script that Robby London wrote that had a kiss, and then somebody got a sore from it.

We did stories about alcoholism and showed an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, and even a story about overeating. Fat Albert was at least partially the product of overeating. We did one about child abduction and the importance of kids getting fingerprinted for identification, one about graffiti, another about organ donation, and even one about understanding the Amish! We didn't tackle some of the issues kids faced back then that we might if the show were on these days. For instance, though we did do a story about teen pregnancy, we didn't do any gay characters. We did do one about a boy who wanted to be a dancer, but that was about the closest, and the explicit lesson was more about being different.

We introduced a new segment on *Fat Albert* during these new shows as well, to alternate with "Brown Hornet." "Legal Eagle" was about a Southern lawman eagle and his pair of dumb squirrel deputies named Moe and Gabby, who enforced the law in Fine Pine Forest. These little shorts were much more about cartoony slapstick and humor, though they always had some element that related directly to our main story as well. Like "Brown Hornet," "Legal Eagle" was another way for us to work a backdoor pilot show in for a potential series. Unfortunately, "Legal Eagle" didn't work very well. It just wasn't as fun. I was never happy with it.

In at least one *Fat Albert* episode written by Rowby Goren, we brought Bill Cosby in to interact directly with the kids. Called "Cosby's Classics," we wanted to possibly spin off a show with Bill being a teacher-like character who taught about famous American characters. This pilot story was about Paul Bunyan, Babe the big blue ox, and their friend, Brimstone Bill. Brock Peters, who had a beautiful voice and is probably most famous for his role in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, came in and did Brimstone Bill. We were all really excited for the day he came in and recorded his lines. That was part of the last batch of half hours that we completed. I wanted to see if there was some other way we could do something more with *Fat Albert*, but it never really happened.

Now *He-Man*'s second season was essentially going to be more of the same types of stories, but we now had the equivalent of five seasons of a network show on which to build. Because the shows were on daily, viewers really did have a sense of continuity. It was not dissimilar to a soap opera in that way, except that our stories generally were not continuing. But the characters and situations could be built upon over time, and that allowed the stories to become more sophisticated. The animation was able to become fuller as well, since we had a good stock library going and could now expand on it. Even the

directors were given more freedom to grow.

As mentioned earlier, we had gone from 39 new shows to 65 new shows, thus providing the Filmation employees more work. I believe that those 65 episodes may have been split over partial seasons—33 new in 1984 and 32 new in 1985; my records are incomplete there, but that appears to be what happened. We abandoned an idea to do a *He-Man* feature film, although some good premise work was done for it by Robby London, in which we would have found out the origins of He-Man and Castle Grayskull.

A very talented writer named Larry DiTillio updated the show bible for season two, putting in a lot of relationship material that had been built up by then. Larry worked a lot with Joe Michael Straczynski, and together they created a lot of mythology for the show as well. We started to concentrate stories on some of the other characters, such as Teela, the Sorceress, Queen Marlena, and even Cringer. One of the concepts they introduced in an episode by Joe—"The Origin of the Sorceress"—was an alien villain race called "The Horde." That was actually planting the seeds for something we had in the planning stages.

One day, Art Nadel sent out a memo to all writers that henceforth all scripts had to be turned in with a maximum two-day turnaround. It was a joke, of course, based on the fact that Straczynski had completed an entire *He-Man* script in one day. He had been in a competition with Larry DiTillio to see who could write the fastest—on their IBM Selectric typewriters no less—and Joe had won. That feat earned him the nickname of "Speedy."

One of the other big changes was that Erika took over voice-directing both *He-Man* and *Fat Albert*. She did some of the voices as well. She would record Linda, John, and Alan together, and then she and I would record our stuff separately. Since we did mostly minor characters, it was easier that way. It was terrific working with Erika. The nice thing about Erika was that she could tell me to piss off. Nobody at the studio, except a couple of guys, would tell me when I was really full of sh*t. But Erika could do it very easily. The other guys would worry about it: "You can't call Lou an *sshole." Well, his daughter does!

Speaking of full of it, one of the letters we received about Skeletor was quite strange. Upon occasion, as you know by now, people would be upset at what they'd see on screen, or what they thought they saw. The letter was accusing us of doing Satanical things and something about the anti-Christ. I had no idea what they were talking about. Apparently, it was all about Skeletor's scepter, which had a ram's head on it, like the toy. I have no idea what the ram's head represents, but, supposedly, it's something bad. It obviously was never put in by us to irritate anybody, but people find evil all over the place. Evil's easy to find if you have an evil mind.

We actually made a decision to start moving away from having Skeletor in every show, even though we liked him, because we didn't want him to become too much of a stock villain. However, one of the silliest shows of season two was by Rowby Goren, called "The Greatest Show on Eternia." It was wild. It had a circus, a train, a clown, and a trapeze battle between He-Man and Skeletor. One of our guys, Tom Sito, kept storyboarding in sequences of He-Man doing his stock laugh, but most of those got cut before it got too weird.

Bob Forward and Tom Tataranowicz worked very closely together on a great episode called "The Problem with Power," in which He-Man was tricked into thinking he had killed someone and gave up his powers. Bob and Tom's working relationship would solidify well over the next few years and into a future show of ours called *BraveStarr*.

There was another episode called "Not So Blind," written by Robert Lamb, in which He-Man got blinded and had to be helped by a blind child. Rob was a storyboarder at the time, but he transitioned into writing for the show regularly after that. We heard from parents after that, including the parents of a young boy named Josh Johnson, who was a *He-Man* fan who had become blind. Some of his last sighted memories were of watching *He-Man* in the hospital.

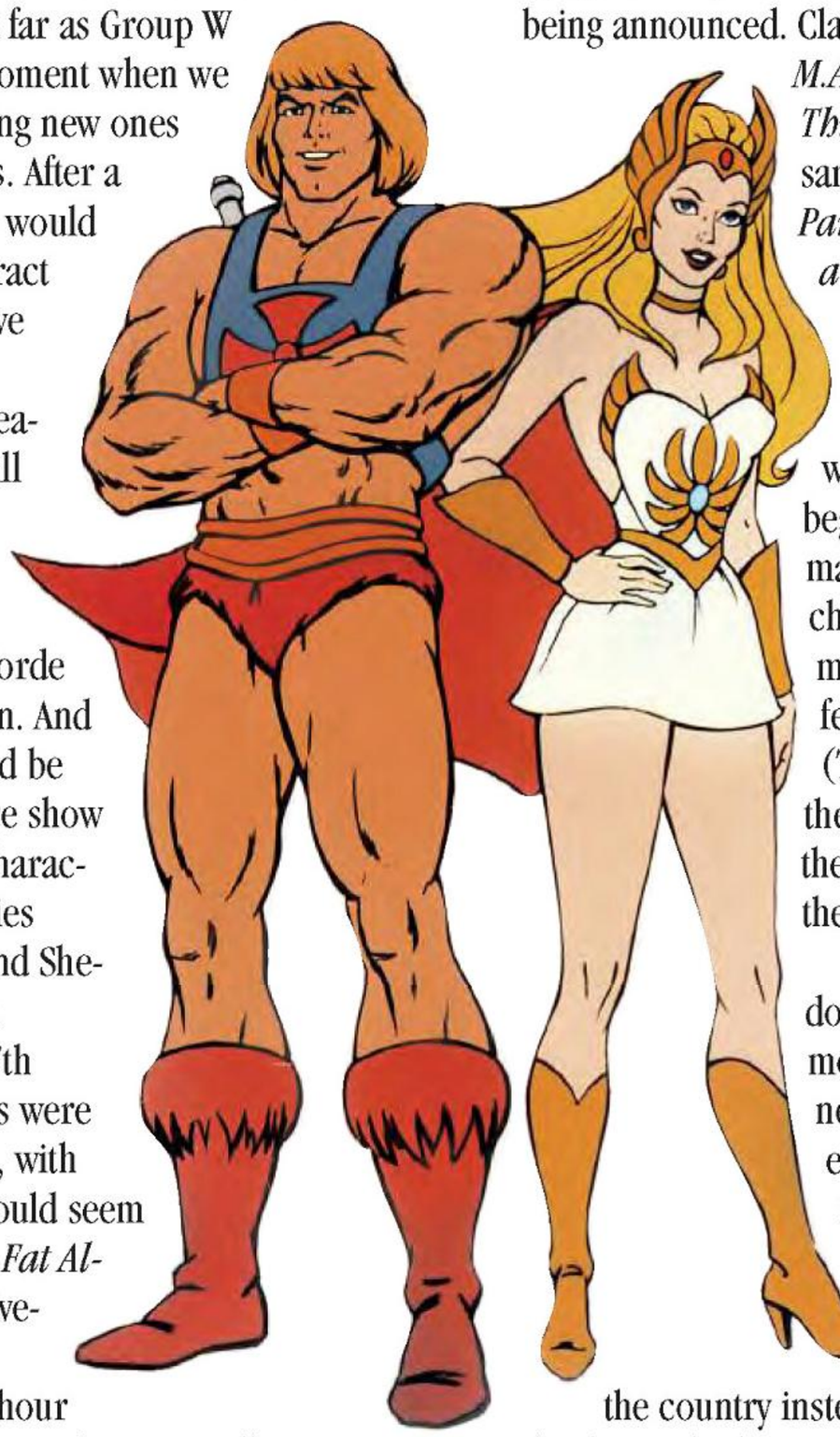
After hearing from Josh's parents, we got John Erwin, who's a very, very sensitive, caring guy, and Alan Oppenheimer to record a message to him as He-Man and Cringer, wishing him well and offering their friendship. We included some audio from one of the unaired episodes as well, "The Cat and the Spider." It made me feel good to know that not only was our show well received by kids, but that we could do something special for this young man in specific. You'll read more about what became of Josh in a future chapter.

As *He-Man* production began to wrap up, there was a sense of pride involved from everyone. *He-Man* made people in and out of the industry very aware that children should be given programming that is appropriate for them, and that they can take it in many, many different directions. They can do it with comedy, they can do it with humor, they can do it with adventure, and they can do something worthwhile. One of the things that worked for *He-Man* is that we got writers who had never worked for animation—some of whom had never worked in the industry but had done science fiction—and we got them to enjoy working on the show. Beyond that, we brought adventure storytelling back, with good versus evil conflict tied in to morals and characterization.

Even with all the issues that media watchdogs brought up, doing *He-Man* was an uplifting experience for me. It was the most successful show we ever worked on. I loved the characters and what they represented. I loved what they did for youngsters. You couldn't get mad at that show. You couldn't hit it with a baseball bat and hurt it. It was one of those shows that was like Teflon, like the Reagan

presidency… no matter what you threw at it, it just slipped off because the audience knew it was right, I knew it was right, the folks working on it knew it was right.

People have often asked why we ended *He-Man* when it was so popular. We had 130 episodes, and, as far as Group W was concerned, we had reached the moment when we couldn't make any more money by doing new ones than we could by reselling the old ones. After a while we'd be spending money that we would not get back. With the changes in contract terms to the TV stations meaning that we would be losing commercial time, we would be losing money doing a third season. We knew that the audience was still huge though, and, luckily, we were working with Mattel on a female counterpart to *He-Man* called *She-Ra, Princess of Power*. That's where the Horde mentioned earlier was going to come in. And all our creative people knew they would be transitioning from one action-adventure show to a similar one, albeit one with new characters and settings. And there would be ties between the two of them, as He-Man and She-Ra were going to be brother and sister.



Debuting the week of September 17th along with *Fat Albert, He-Man*'s ratings were solid, with a 5.4 rating on 157 stations, with 86% national coverage. And while it would seem that the timing was perfect for the new *Fat Albert* shows—on NBC primetime, the live-action sitcom *The Cosby Show* had quickly become the highest-rated half-hour of the new fall season—the show didn't perform as well as we had hoped. *Fat Albert* garnered a 1.9 rating on its 51 national stations. It wasn't a bomb, but it wasn't a hit either. One writer for the Columbus Dispatch suggested that to goose ratings, the series should be renamed "Fat Albert and the Masters of the Universe."

In November we took out a two-page ad in the Hollywood trades with He-Man publicly introducing the first view of She-Ra. In press stories, I gave the quote, "Colorful characters of great dimension have been created for *She-Ra: Princess of Power*. The storylines are imaginative and place heavy emphasis on proper social behavior." Promising 65 new half-hours to debut in September 1985, we had already pre-sold *She-Ra* in 50 percent of the U.S., including 20 of the top 25 markets. It was easy to do, as television stations were planning on putting *He-Man* and *She-Ra* into a one-hour block together, with the same kind of four-minute local/two-minute national advertising barter deal as *He-Man* had begun with. The extended four-year deal for the 130 episodes of *He-Man* was also set to go active for the following September.

But we weren't the only ones expanding our market. As NATPE 1985 neared, more and more syndicated toy-based programs were being announced. Claster had *G.I. Joe* and *Transformers*, LBS had *M.A.S.K.*, Telerep had *Smurfs*, Telepictures had *Thundercats*, and more were in the offing. At the same time, classic older shows ranging from *Pink Panther* and *The Jetsons* to *Bugs Bunny* and *Tom and Jerry* were seeing their ratings fall, and TV stations wanted newcomers.

And the sales tactics were changing as well; as if the controversy over toy-based shows wasn't ugly enough, when Telepictures Corp. began to sell their new show, *Thundercats*, they made a rare offer to stations, offering them a chance to share in profits of the toys. It was a move that inflamed Peggy Charren. Trying a different tactic, Television Program Enterprises (TPE) began marketing a syndicated version of the hit *Smurfs* cartoon show for fall 1986, but in the process required stations to "bid" on getting the project by offering the best time slots.

By December *He-Man* had reached 166 domestic stations—most showing episodes each morning and afternoon—and had an audience of nearly nine million people, with 30% of the audiences girls. On top of that, it was a hit in 37 different countries. According to *The New York Times*, Mattel was reporting sales of 55 million toys in the U.S., and 70 million worldwide, and was air-freighting shipments into the country instead of shipping them via boats, trying to meet the demand. The action figures alone had now brought in $350 million to Mattel, with other *He-Man* licensed products topping $1 billion. Thanks to Filmation, parent company Group W had never been more profitable. And workers at Filmation—who had been employed year-round for the second year in a row—took pride in the success, touting new acquisitions as "the car that *He-Man* bought" or "the house that *He-Man* built."

Thanks to our ground-breaking syndicated hits, in the course of a little over a year, Filmation had gone from shunned by the networks to being the largest—and perhaps the most successful—U.S. television animation studio.

Opposite:
Skeletor's supposedly "evil" staff design

Above:
Promotional art for He-Man and his sister, She-Ra

Left:
He-Man fan Josh Johnson in 1984

SHE-RA™ PRINCESS of POWER™

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

SISTERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES

As 1985 began we were still completing and airing the new *He-Man* and *Fat Albert* seasons, but the majority of our energy was being spent on preparing the new *She-Ra* series, and on some new projects. But we were pleasantly surprised when, in *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year" issue, they awarded our show "He-Man of the Year" in an article that cheered the series, and quoted me about *She-Ra*, saying, "We tried to endow her with powers of nature rather than strength, but she can do damn near anything that He-Man can."

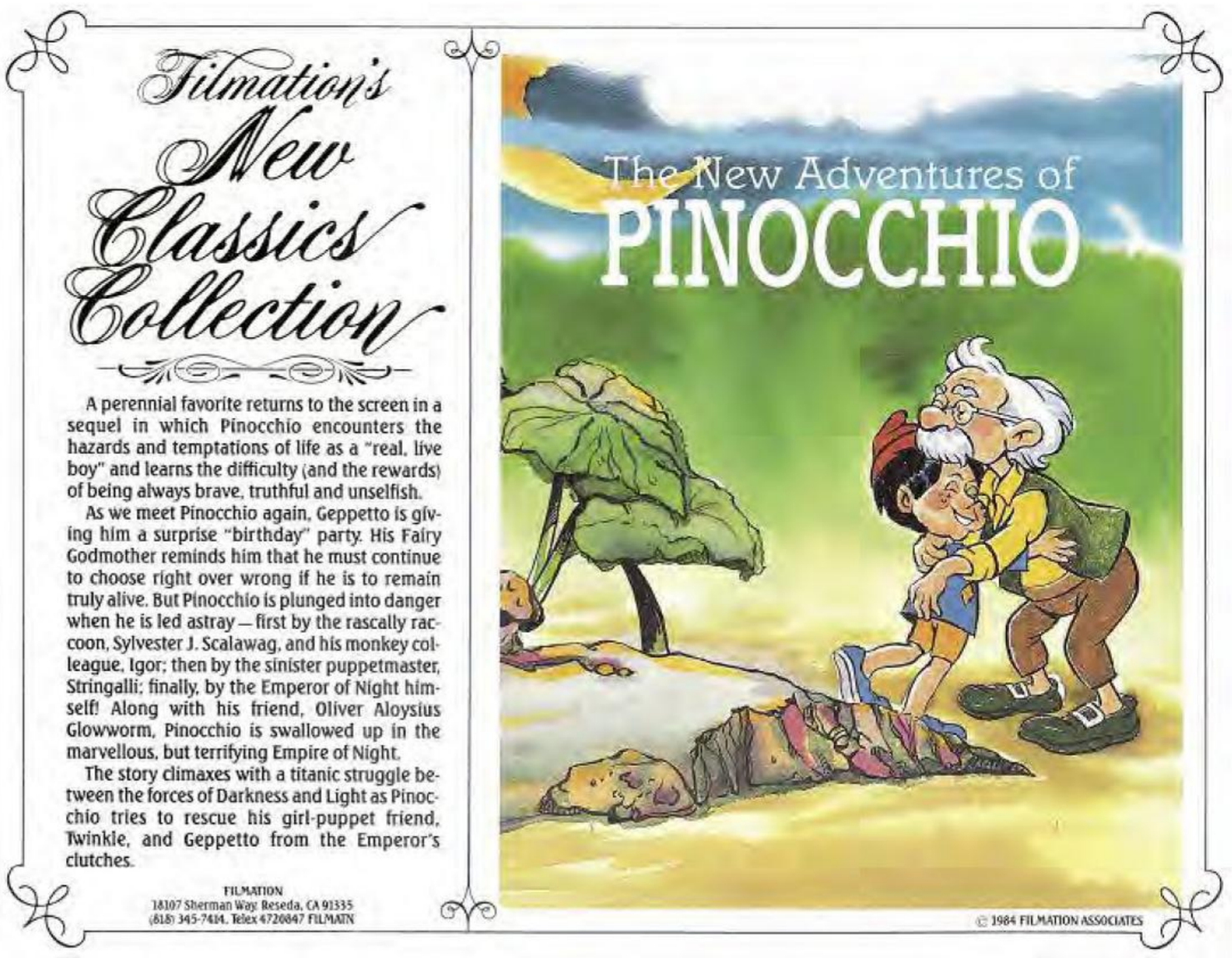
On January 22–26, Filmation was off to Melbourne, Australia, to sell our shows at the inaugural Pacific International Media Mart. We were also set to go to the American Film Market in March. As mentioned before, the new *He-Man* terms would be offered as a cash and barter deal, with Group W getting one minute of commercial time to sell for the first two years and no commercials but all cash for the second two years. By mid-January *She-Ra* had already cleared 70% of the U.S. market, and by early March the number was 78%, just barely behind *He-Man*. Video rights to *She-Ra* were quickly snapped up by RCA/Columbia Pictures Home Video, who were already doing great with their *He-Man* releases, which sold between 20,000–40,000 of their nine volumes, and earned over $3 million wholesale. Scoring gold video certification—similar to gold record status—the *He-Man* videos would have at least another four releases during this year.

At the end of February, Filmation held a news conference, touting plans for a series of 13 animated films under the umbrella title of "Filmation's New Classics Collection." The plan was to produce feature-length stories for theatrical, video, and broadcast, and possibly to spin off animated series from them. The first in our series was going to be *The New Adventures of Pinocchio*, with production set to start in March 1986 and a $6 million budget. A sequel to Carlo Collodi's 1883 children's book, our *Pinocchio* would have followed the story of what happened once the puppet became a real boy.

The other 12 films were set to be: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfelles; The Challenge of Cinderella; Time Machine II: The Man Who Saved the Future; Bambi: Prince of the Forest; 20 Million Leagues across the Universe; Frankenstein Lives Again!; The Further Adventures of Gulliver; The Son of Sleeping Beauty; L. Frank Baum's The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus; The Continuing Adventures of the Jungle Book; New Tales of Arabian Nights;* and *Alice Returns to Wonderland*. Nico Mastorakis was going to oversee the projects. I narrated an eight-minute video presentation for the concept which used presentation art to show what the films would be.

The L.A. Herald Examiner did a big story on the new line on March 5th, calling me, "a tall, emphatic man whose voice sounds a great deal like James Stewart's." The story revealed that Pinocchio would have a new insect friend named "Gee Whillikers," and that the Filmation staff had now grown to 600.

We began selling rights to *Filmation's New Classics Collection* at the American Film Market in March, and took out trade ads showcasing



Opposite:
Cover of promotional folder for *She-Ra, Princess of Power*

Above:
Presentation materials for *The New Adventures of Pinocchio*

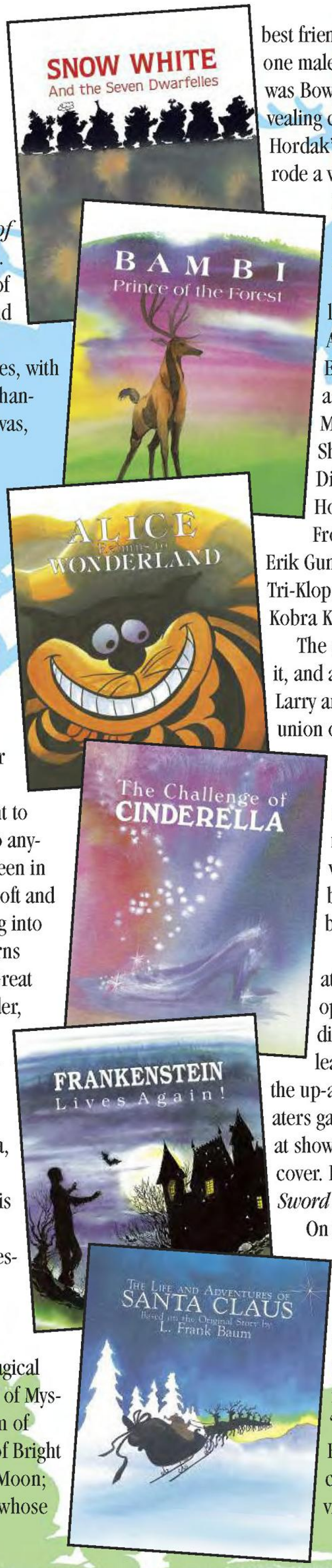
some of our character designs. For the various markets, we printed up some very deluxe color packets of sell sheets, each containing an early image and text information about the storyline of the feature. We also presold *Secret of the Sword* to international markets.

The *Secret of the Sword* was to be a film version of the first five episodes of *She-Ra: Princess of Power*, edited into a slightly shorter feature length. Since it guest-starred He-Man and told the origin of She-Ra, we could bill the film as a *He-Man* film and introduce the new characters and concepts to our audience. Larry DiTillio wrote four of the five stories, with Bob Forward writing the third part. Five directors handled the action, including Ed Friedman, Lou Kachivas, Marsh LaMore, Bill Reed, and Gwen Wetzler.

The concept of the new series—and film—was that Etheria was a world of magic that was in a parallel dimension to Eternia, He-Man's world. It had been taken over by the evil Horde, but bands of rebels fought for their freedom, especially in the Kingdom of Bright Moon. When the Sorceress sends He-Man and Cringer across dimensions to aid in the battle against the Horde—with a jeweled sword similar to his own power sword—they are captured by Adora, a captain of the Horde guard. Adora is soon made aware of her true heritage; as a child, she was stolen from the side of her twin brother, Prince Adam, and brought to Etheria to be raised by the Horde. Unbeknownst to anyone, He-Man is her twin brother. Realizing she's been in the thrall of evil, Adora holds the jeweled sword aloft and chants, "For the Honor of Grayskull!" transforming into the mighty She-Ra! Freeing her brother, She-Ra turns against the Horde, and she and He-Man help the Great Rebellion fight the forces of the Horde and its leader, the evil Hordak.

Like Skeletor, the armored, transformable Hordak had quite a number of creepy evil henchmen, including: Shadow Weaver, a robed floating witch whose true face was as mysterious as Orko's; Catra, who could turn into a savage feline; Mantenna, a four-legged creature who could fire beams from his bulbous eyes; Leech, a creature with lamprey-like suckers for hands, feet, and mouth; Scorpia, possessor of great strength and a strong prehensile tail; and Grizzlor, a furry beast-like prison keeper.

The rebels were a more comely lot, consisting mostly of female characters who had their own magical powers: Castaspella, magical ruler of the Kingdom of Mystacor; Frosta, ice-powered empress of the Kingdom of Snows; Glimmer, light-powered teenage Princess of Bright Moon; Queen Angella, winged monarch of Bright Moon; and Madame Razz, the confused and wacky witch whose best friend was her talking, flying broomstick, Broom. The one male member of She-Ra's group of freedom fighters was Bow, an archer with a penchant for hearts on his revealing clothing. Magical creatures were on both sides; Hordak's pet was the shape-changing Imp, while She-Ra rode a winged unicorn named Swift Wind and had an owl-like sidekick named Kowl. Like He-Man, She-Ra had her own home base containing secrets: the glitteringly spired Crystal Castle.



The voice cast was filled with Filmation regulars. John Erwin was He-Man, of course, while Alan Oppenheimer was Skeletor. Linda Gary was Eternia's Teela, Queen Marlena, and the Sorceress, as well as Etheria's Shadow Weaver and Glimmer. Melendy Britt returned from her Batgirl days to play She-Ra and Madame Razz, while *Blackstar*'s George DiCenzo was both the heroic Bow and the creepy Hordak. My daughter Erika was Queen Angella, Frosta, and Imp, while, under my nom de guerre of Erik Gunden, I was Eternia's King Randor, Trap-Jaw, and Tri-Klops, as well as Etheria's Swift Wind, Kowl, Mantenna, Kobra Khan, and all the robotic Horde Troopers.

The story for *Secret of the Sword* had a lot of depth to it, and also featured some real emotion and sentiment. Larry and Bob did a good job writing it, especially the reunion of the families. It had a bit of *Star Wars* to it, a bit of Robin Hood, and a bit of *Wizard of Oz*. It also had some very neat and groundbreaking optical effects in it, especially in the transformation and magic scenes. Our effects department really worked overtime to get it right, which was made a bit more difficult because all the colors were very bright and pastel.

The Secret of the Sword was released to theaters on March 22, 1985, in selected markets, and opened in 750 theaters nationwide on May 24th, distributed by Atlantic Releasing Corp. We had learned our lesson about self-releasing films after the up-and-down fate of *Journey Back to Oz*. Most theaters gave out free eight-page *Secret of the Sword* comics at showings, which included a contest on the inside front cover. By the time it left theaters in August, *Secret of the Sword* had grossed $7,500,000.

On the evening of March 29th, we held a special cast and crew invitation-only showing and reception of *Secret of the Sword* at Beverly Hills' Samuel Goldwyn Theatre. Erika was very excited because she had written and sung a song that was in the film. She and Jay were just giddy in the theatre that night. We eventually did a music video of the song, "I Have the Power." Brett Hisey directed it with Erika heavily involved, using previously created cels and new backgrounds and effects. The music video was intended for use as promotion not only

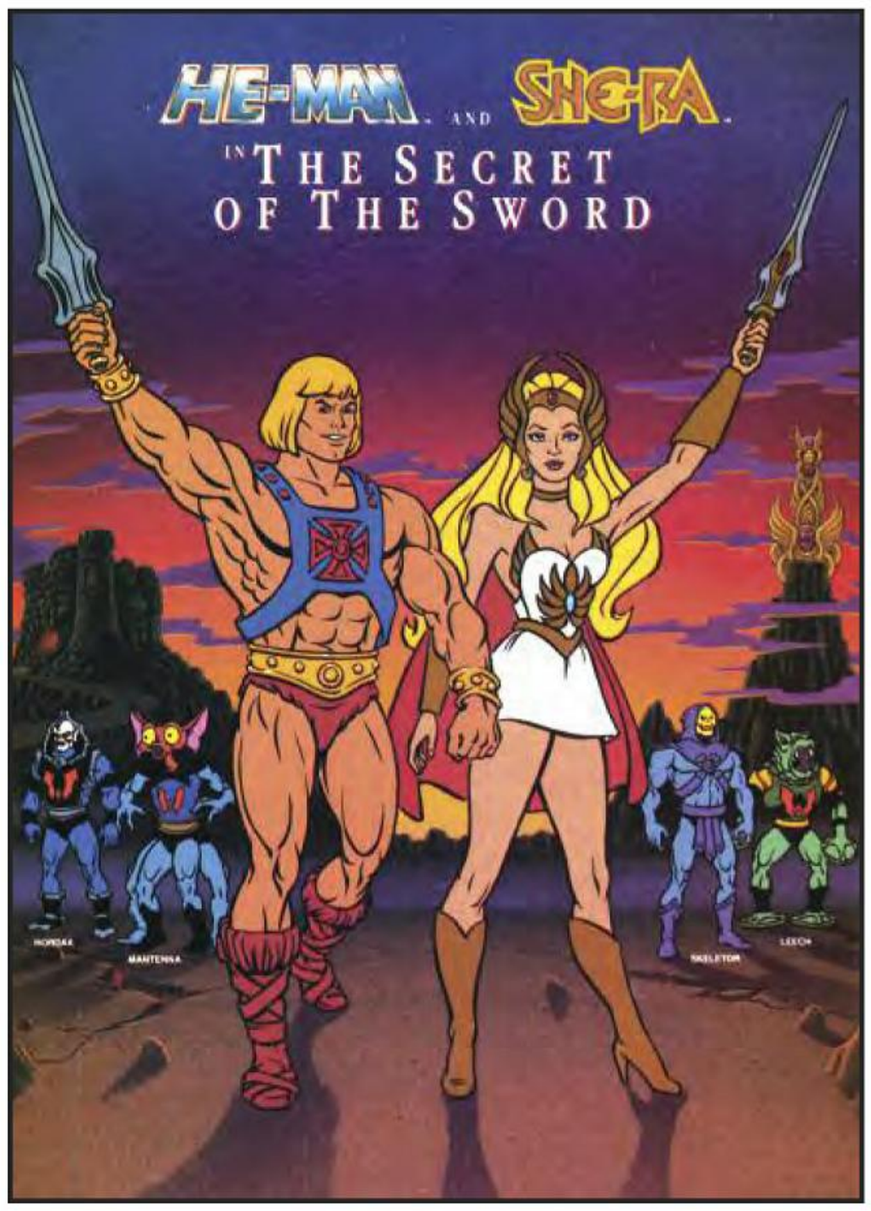
to TV stations in the U.S., but to French broadcasters as well.

Earlier on the 29th—and repeating on April 5th—the Filmation staff presented me with a very unexpected present. In the trade newspapers, a full-page ad read "Thank you Lou Scheimer for being a friend to the American animation industry by keeping the work here. More importantly, thank you for being our friend. With love, admiration, and gratitude from all the members of your Filmation family." It was signed by the names of nearly 500 employees. I opened up the paper, and it was there one day. I was thunderstruck. It was a very proud moment to know that I was keeping those people working, and that they considered me a friend.

Unfortunately, a week later, to our embarrassment, Filmation found that we had unintentionally omitted a series of credits from the theatrical prints of *Secret of the Sword*. We took out an ad in the early April trades to rectify the mistake and credit those folks without whom we couldn't have had such a good film. We also had misspelled Larry DiTillio's name in the credits, but he had pointed that out to me in the theatre, at which point I let out some rather non-kid-friendly exclamations. That wasn't fixed until years later when the guy who wrote this book with me made sure the spelling was corrected on the DVD version!

Reviews for *Secret of the Sword* varied. *Variety* called it, "Subpar animated kiddie fantasy," and declared that, "the film, notwithstanding its obvious appeal to children, is visually diverting because of its optical effects rather than its animation." The Champaign, Illinois *News-Gazette* called it, "an 87-minute ad," and noted—without a hint of irony that they were reviewing a children's film—that, 'If you took a Ralph Bakshi fantasy adventure and removed all its violence, vulgar language, and eroticism, you'd have something very much like *Secret of the Sword*." The *San Francisco Examiner* slammed it as, "a feature-length comic strip of great ugliness and terrible lip-sync. The film is utterly defeated by a massive overdose of plot," while their competitor, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, noted that the film had, "a very involved plot, but one that moves at a spritely pace." *The Chicago Star* was more enthusiastic, calling it, "an exciting, fast-paced movie which the whole family can enjoy." *San Jose Metro* said, "Executive producer Lou Scheimer should take a bow for the first rate visuals and effects."

Speaking of taking bows, a series of *Fat Albert* PSAs we produced garnered Filmation an award from the Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America. We had done 60-, 30-, and 10-second spots, which were distributed to stations across the country and aired for free. Candace Young, who was on the national board of BB/BSA, came out to California in March to present awards to both Group W's Ed Vane and myself.



Disney swung at us with a mouse-eared baseball bat in early April, filing with the Federal Court in Los Angeles in an attempt to stop us from releasing seven of the thirteen films we planned for the *New Classics Collection*. They filed a lawsuit claiming that we were basing our stories on their copyrighted animated films—rather than the public domain fairy tales they had used for their own adaptations. That was bullsh*t because those same stories had been done all over the world by a lot of other people. It was the first strike in what was to become our biggest legal battle.

We swung back at Disney in mid-May, asking the court to throw out Disney's copyright claims. Our lawyer, Ira Epstein, argued that, "By this action, Disney attempts to use the judicial process to achieve its own anticompetitive ends. … What Disney clearly intends is to prevent the entry of a new competitor into the market place." He also argued that since the films they were wanting to bring an injunction against had not even been created yet, "Disney purposely has filed this action prematurely at a time when its claims are speculative, remote, and overbroad."

In the April 21st *Washington Post*, an editor and mother named Jane Welch wrote an editorial titled "He-Man Is a Wimp-Master: A TV Superhero is Turning Kids into Bleeding-Heart Liberals." In it she suggested alerting notorious conservative Jesse Helms and sounding a liberal-bias alert because the show wasn't violent enough for her, He-Man didn't kill his enemies, and Teela was treated as an equal by the men on the show. The character, she suggested, was "really nothing more than Alan Alda with muscles. He refuses to cut down trees and has a Bambi-complex about hunting." She deemed the show a "moral morass." Ironically, I had already written a response, unaware that the timing would be perfect to respond to this woman.

On April 22nd I wrote an editorial for the *Broadcast Daily* newspaper, which I'd like to reprint in its entirety here, as it clearly delineated Filmation's thinking at the time. Under the title "Responsibility to Children a Must in Animation," I wrote:

When you have a hit on your hands—as Filmation certainly does with He-Man and the Masters of the Universe—people start asking you about the secrets of your success.

Opposite: (top to bottom)
Filmation's New Classics Collection
promotional art
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfelles
Bambi: Prince of the Forest
Alice Returns to Wonderland
The Challenge of Cinderella
Frankenstein Lives Again!
The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus

Above:
The Secret of The Sword
theatre giveaway comic cover

In the case of our company, which is nearing the quarter of a century marking this business, I would cite several guiding principles.

Quality animation.

Entertaining shows.

Generous amounts of dedication and determination.

And this very important plus: Responsibility,

By that, I mean being responsible to your viewers. In most cases, they are youngsters at very impressionable ages from two on up to their teens. Young people by the millions all around the world.

They are going to spend hour upon hour looking at the product we turn out—and they quite possibly may be influenced by it.

That has a tremendous responsibility for anyone in the field of children's programming. I know it is for us at Filmation.

We have a good time putting together our shows. How can you not when you're dealing with a collection of colorful characters (the ones on the screen and the ones behind the scenes). But we take the business of producing fun very seriously.

And we wouldn't think of putting something on the screen—whether for theaters or television or home video—without building in pro-social values.

Always a part of our philosophy, that emphasis on content asserted itself dramatically in the early '70s when, in association with Bill Cosby, we introduced Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids on network television.

Each Fat Albert episode, combining on-camera appearance by Bill with the animated figures based on the children he grew up with, was woven around a theme covering moral and ethical issues. (Isn't it fitting that Bill Cosby's sitcom, the highest rated new show of the American TV season, is founded on the same wholesome ideals?)

Expert Consultants

To make certain that each story conveyed attitudes and ideals with which young people could identify, we called upon expert counsel, Dr. Gordon Berry, Professor of Educational Psychology in the Graduate School of Education at UCLA. He has been our consultant from the start of Fat Albert. He has given us direction on needs to be covered by stories and has verified the content of our scripts, suggesting ways to make them more meaningful. Fat Albert has touched on everything from the danger of drugs to the importance of reading. Not the stuff of which most cartoon shows are made,

The result: over a dozen years of praise from educators, parents, and children, and all sorts of awards for the 112 episodes of Fat Albert we have produced, some for CBS and most recently for syndication. "Proof positive," TV Guide has called it, "that high entertainment, education, and social values can be commercial."

When we created He-Man and the Masters of the Universe two years ago, we called upon Dr. Donald F. Roberts, a university professor and author of The Rule of Television in the Formation of Children's Social Attitudes, as Educational-Psychological Consultant. His advice has helped steer us in making this series high in pro-social values.

A familiar and highly praised feature of He-Man is the message at the end of the episode. As the action concludes, the animated characters make a point about the story that has just been shown.

The messages are easy to arrive at since significant content is a basic ingredient of He-Man, the most popular daily children's show on television.

They range from the necessity of being responsible for one's actions to the value of teamwork and cooperation to condemnation of violence and aggression.

Examples

Example: When a monster from another dimension attempts to conquer Castle Grayskull, it takes everyone's efforts to stop him. Fisto, an ally of He-Man with a giant metallic fist, observes:

"There are always jobs or problems that are too much to handle alone. And when that happens, you should never be ashamed to admit you need help. Likewise, when someone asks for help, give them a hand. Yours may not be as big as mine, but it'll still be appreciated. And if I can ever give you a hand, just let me know!"

In another episode, Orko, the tiny mystical alien, draws this conclusion:

"In our tale today, Snoob learned a very important lesson. He found out that when young people and older people work together, they can accomplish a great deal. You see, older people have experience that can help younger people, if they're willing to listen. And that's why you should always respect older people and pay attention to the advice they give you."

He-Man and Teela summarize the message of one of the adventures like this:

"Lord Todd appeared to be a generous and good person, and Moak looked like a monster," He-Man recalls.

"But then we found out that it was Todd who was the monster and Moak who was kind and good," Teela says.

"You learned that real goodness comes from inside and that people who appear good may be covering up their evil," He-Man adds.

And Teela concludes, "Remember not to judge people simply by the way they look. It's what they're really like inside that counts."

Other characters make statements about various themes: the value of books, the virtue of patience, the effects of compassion, and the danger of discrimination.

Large Response

The response has been greater than any series we have ever done.

Kids play He-Man at home. Classes in schools have produced their own He-Man plays—complete with moral at the end. Parents have written to praise He-Man for its good work.

"I know I speak for quite a few mothers," wrote a woman from Encino, California. "They are content with the fact that what their children are watching is good entertainment and

what they are learning is also good."

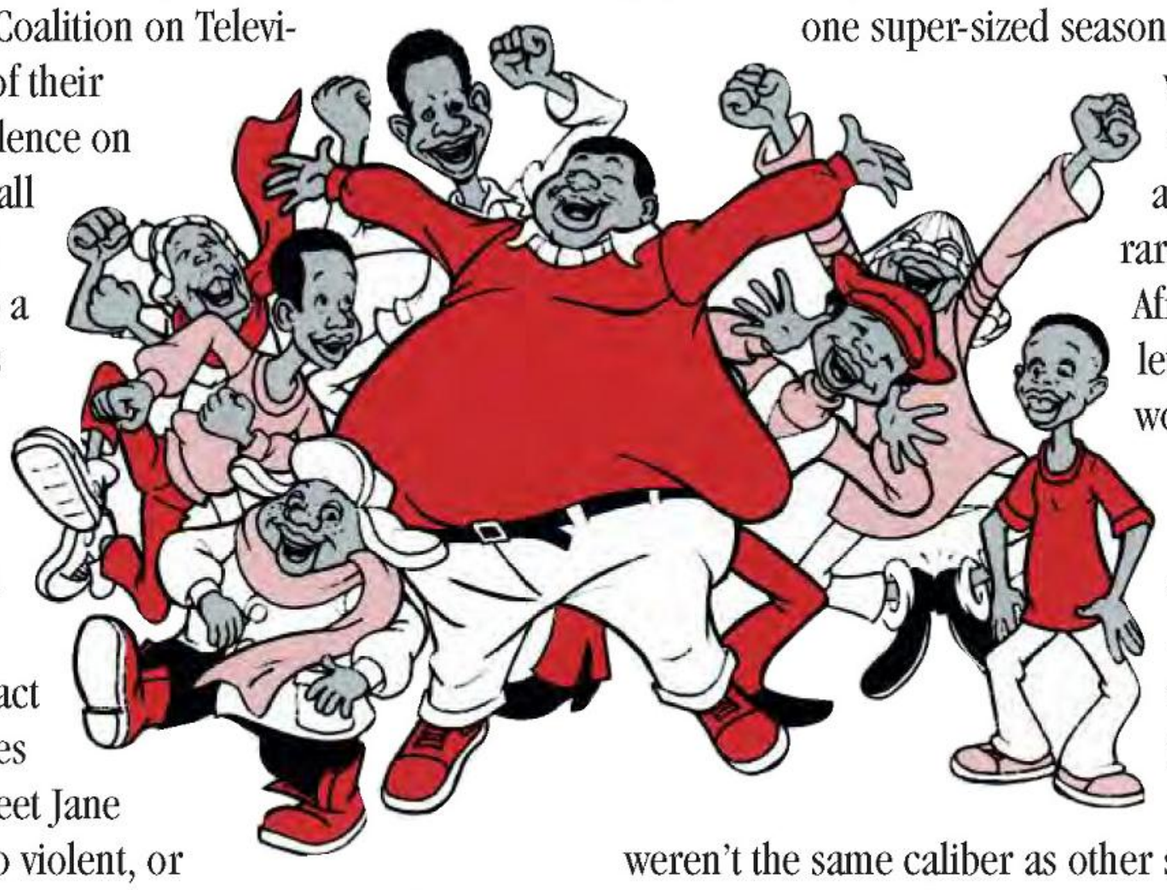
A young viewer in Tulsa, Oklahoma, called He-Man "the best cartoon available today." The effects of the time spent by young people in front of TV sets "would be turned for the better if more shows would teach good lessons as in the case of He-Man," he observed.

A seventh grader from Chester, New Jersey, wrote, "I applaud you on your He-Man because it teaches kids good lessons. Even my five-year-old brother pays close attention when it explains the lesson at the end. Although it teaches, it is still a very exciting and interesting program."

First graders at Smyrna, Tennessee, wrote and produced their own He-Man play. It concluded with this moral from the Sorceress: "Although He-Man uses bombs and fighting to protect the good of the universe, it is not a good idea for people to fight or use bombs. This could cause serious injuries and harm people." Everyone in the production then says: "So be careful!"

And we at Filmation are careful, as all producers should be, that our programs make positive statements that won't cause injuries or harm people—and might even help them.

Shortly thereafter, the National Coalition on Television Violence spent several pages of their newsletter decrying the intense violence on *He-Man*, saying, "This series, like all superhero series, teaches a way of thinking that is favorable to war, to a violent means of action, and that is alien to democracy. It teaches a value system that is the exact opposite of the teachings of Jesus Christ," and added, "Scheimer has steadfastly refused to commission even the smallest study on the impact of the violent programs he produces on television." Hmmm… NCTV, meet Jane Welch of the *Washington Post*. Too violent, or not violent enough? We'll let a mother's letter to the editor of a paper which ran Welch's article reply: "To me, He-Man is the epitome of this hope. Rather than turning our children into bleeding hearts, *He-Man* is showing them how to live successfully on the knife-edge of conflict."



In late May, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* was nominated for a 1985 Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program. We were also nominated the following year for the 1986 Daytime Emmy Award for Outstanding Animated Program. Again, I won't drag out the results: in both years, we lost out to Jim Henson's *Muppet Babies*. As *Fat Albert* aired the last of its new episodes ever in 1985, we held the "distinction" of being one of the most celebrated educational series ever on network and syndicated television to have never won an Emmy.

I maintain steadfastly that *Fat Albert* should've gotten an Emmy. Bill Cosby again said to me one day, "Why do you keep submitting it?" I said, "Because it should be honored. It's worthwhile. It's the first pro-social show on the air. It blazed new trails. We did something good with it." He said, "They're *not* going to give it an Emmy because they're black kids, Lou." I couldn't really believe that, but you know what? I wonder. I really do. How could that show not have gotten an Emmy?

Not that the show was without recognition. Presented in mid-May by Philadelphia's Religion Communicators Council, *Fat Albert* won a Wilbur Award for teaching and advancing values. The specific award was given for the episode "Amiss with Amish," written by Evelyn A. R. Gabai and directed by Marsh LaMore. In September the Associates for Troubled Children presented the 1985 Scott Newman Drug Abuse Prevention Award for Outstanding Programming to the *Fat Albert* episode "The Runner." The writer of the episode, again Evelyn Gabai, was awarded $10,000, and she, Arthur Nadel, and I attended the awards banquet. Also in September, the episode "Wheeler," written by Bill Cox and directed by Lou Kachivas, was given a commendation award at Superfest '85: A Media Festival on Disabilities, for its "contribution to excellence in media materials dealing with disabilities."

I want to wrap up with some final thoughts on *Fat Albert*. Those 50 new *Fat Alberts* were, unfortunately, the end of the line for the popular series, which had lasted twelve seasons on network TV and one super-sized season in syndication. The one thing I was surprised at the whole time was that we didn't have a lot of reactions from bigots; there was rarely any feedback that was anti-African-American. We did get a lot of letters, but, oddly, more letters would come later, when people would write about what *Fat Albert* meant to them as a kid. And despite the snubs from the Emmy Awards, I know that *Fat Albert* was one of the *best* things Filmation ever did.

Some of the shows we did weren't the same caliber as other shows. Some you have a passion for and you know that that's what you were created for, to do that. If I never did anything more than helped *Fat Albert* get on the air, I would have considered myself a success. It taught kids important messages, it kept people working, and it made television a better place to be.

A final story on *Fat Albert*: Jay and I were on a cruise, and for some reason we had a butler who helped us, who was African-American. So Jay said to him, "My husband did *Fat Albert*." This butler told all the other butlers, and, all of a sudden, we were celebrities on the cruise! Jay ended up trying that line out later; she realized the power of knowing there are people out there who saw these things, and appreciated them, and whose lives, somehow, had been changed by them. She saw better than I sometimes that people did love the characters and the show.

Down under in Australia, the first of our video titles was released in June by Sundowner Home Video. Our deal with them was made in Australian dollars, which had become economically stagnant at

Above:
The *Fat Albert* cast celebrates

that time, somewhere around the 69–70-cent mark. Still, Sundowner was relatively certain the popular titles would be a hit in the sell-through video market. Vestron Video grabbed *She-Ra* video rights for the U.K., Spain, Scandinavia, and South Africa. Our international TV sales continued as well: the second season of *He-Man* and first of *She-Ra* sold to England's ITV, Taiwan TV, and Italy's Channel Five; Gabon grabbed *He-Man, Fat Albert*, and *Blackstar* for broadcast; Kenya signed on for the forthcoming *Ghostbusters*; and Israeli TV licensed *Blackstar*.

June 4–8, 1985 was the biannual International Animation Film Festival of Annecy in France. It was the show's 15th event, but represented a huge expansion as it tried to become an international market player for the worldwide animation scene. Gilbert Wolmack, the head of France-Animation and Radio Monte-Carlo Audiovisuelle, was the market chairman, while I was named as the vice-president. I don't even recall what my duties were other than speaking some. Over 40,000 people attended, as did representatives from most of the major networks and U.S. animation studios.

On July 16th, U.S. District Judge Alicemarie Stotler dismissed most of the copyright and unfair competition counts Disney had brought against us in court. She did say that Disney could proceed with potential litigation based specifically on three copyright infringement counts related only to advertising for the project. Disney retaliated with a request for a restraining order against any advertising material for the three projects—*Pinocchio, Alice in Wonderland*, and *Jungle Book*—but they were again denied in early August. We spent four or five million dollars protecting ourselves, and in the end all they got was our guarantee that we wouldn't utilize any elements too close to theirs, which was already in line with what we were doing. We also had to change some of our titles. If I had to do it all over again today, I probably would have not changed any of the titles and Disney would probably not have won any suits.

In the lawsuit process, we found that Walt Disney's cousin, Roy Disney, was a gentleman, and was easy to talk to. I had nothing but respect for him. Someplace deep in the heart of all this trouble was Michael Eisner, who we had worked with before at ABC. But now he was neither a friend or foe, but a difficult man and not a nice person.

After finally securing the rights to *Masters of the Universe*, producer Ed Pressman announced plans in late July for a $22-million live-action film. As is Hollywood's style, they ignored completely the show that made the franchise so popular with kids, and Mattel had no creative or financial involvement past approving the first draft of David Odell's screenplay. I met with Ed Pressman once, and he didn't know the characters or know what to do with them. He said he would bring them back to Earth so they could do it cheaply. I said, "You're f*cking the audience! This is not what they grew up on; it's not what they want to see. You're really hurting yourself." I don't remember much about the film when it came out in 1987 other than being horrified at Skeletor's rubber mask, and that it got horrible reviews and tanked at the box office. Maybe he should have listened to me?

On June 11th, Prism Entertainment released videos for *M-U-S-H, Fabulous Funnies* volume 2, and *Journey Back to Oz*. Meanwhile, Warner Home Video brought out four compilation videos in July, collecting our Superman, Batman, Superboy, and Aquaman shorts from the 1960s, at a $24.95 cost for one hour. It was the largest block of titles Warner had released in any animated block. Unfortunately, sales were not as high as expected, and Warner never released further volumes. They would, in fact, wait almost 25 years before once again releasing any of the Filmation shows to the home market… although they remained a frequent sight in the syndication and—eventually—cable markets!

As *He-Man* continued its reign as the number one-rated show for kids on television, the debates still captured much ink in newspapers. In Willoughby, Ohio, a priest at the Immaculate Conception Parish wrote an editorial in July saying, "I am tired of the bad press that *He-Man* has been getting," and, "I have found profound Christian doctrine and principles at work in *He-Man*." A mother quoted in a Raleigh, North Carolina, paper talked about how her son was potty-trained easily because he didn't want to mess up his *He-Man* underwear! Perhaps that could have been an episode?

The thing that was scaring me more than the endless debates about *He-Man* was that runaway production to overseas had now become so commonplace. On July 30th's episode of *Showbiz Today* on CNN, I said, "I think animation in this country could be on its deathbed. … The cost of overseas production is so low that people just went overseas. … I think there's something like approximately 2,000 in the animation industry in Hollywood. There's 30,000 in Tokyo." By now, Filmation was employing nearly a *third* of the American animation business.

The second week of August, we announced that our next syndicated daily series would be 65 episodes of *Ghostbusters*, based on our original live-action series. The sales terms to the market were similar to our others: barter, with three-and-a-half minutes given for local advertisers and two-and-a-half minutes for national spots in the first three quarters of the contract. The final quarter would switch to a four-minute local/two-minute national split. Remember that it was the national commercials which paid our budget costs. The series was budgeted at $20 million total—approximately $280,000 per episode—with Tribune Broadcasting coming on board as a co-sponsor and pre-booking all their stations except one. We also announced a line of toys was imminent.

A week later, Columbia announced that they, too, would be bringing a 65-episode animated *Ghostbusters* series to syndication for fall 1986, going head-to-head with ours. Remember when I wrote that we'd made a mistake in our deal with Columbia? Now it had come back to bite us. Their show was to be based on the feature film, with characters, concepts, logo, and theme song carrying over—even though the actors were denying likeness rights for their characters, Harvey Comics was suing over the logo's similarity to one of the Ghostly Trio, and Huey Lewis was suing over the similarity of the theme song to one of his songs!

As we had already nailed down a fifth of the U.S. stations for our show with the Tribune stations, Columbia was likely to have to partner almost exclusively with the independent and Metromedia-owned channels. Beyond that, as I told *Television-Radio Age* magazine, "We're in production, we've got characters, we've got animation,

we've got 30 scripts. We've been working on this thing for months."

I've often been asked why we just didn't make a deal with the studio ourselves and do a single project. I'll tell you: I tried. The guy who was running television at Columbia was Herman Rush, and he used to be an agent for Filmation. Nice guy. After the *Ghostbusters* film made it big, I went to Westinghouse and said, "Why don't we do 65 half-hours based on our *Ghostbusters*?" And we decided to do it. And then I got a call from Herman to tell me they were thinking of doing their movie as a syndicated cartoon as well. So I talked to Ed Vane, the head guy at Westinghouse, about going down to see Herman. I said, "We should really make a deal with them to co-produce the show. If we don't make it with them, they have every right in the world to go out and do it without us. I'm a friend of Herman's. We can make a deal to do the show, and they'll pay for half of it, we'll pay for half of it, and everybody will be happy."

But Ed said, "No, we don't need them." I said, "Well, let's go down and talk to them and offer a deal." Ed said, "We'll use your version. It'll save me all kind of headaches because then I won't have to deal with the people that did the movie, and we'll get the money like we do on our other shows." I told him that was silly because they had the right to do the screen version—which everybody knew—and our version, even though they stole the concept, didn't have the same cache. Ed was sure that they would never do their own show because they weren't an animation company.

Well, they did. They gave the job to DIC to animate their version of *Ghostbusters*. And it ended up confusing the hell out of everybody, which I'll talk about more in the next chapter.

I hadn't mentioned it previously, as my own file copies are incomplete, but Filmation had started a monthly company newsletter in mid-1985, called "Filmation's Celmates." It included company news and notes about employees, plus items of interest to animation devotees. In the fourth issue in August, I broke news to the company that Filmation would finally be moving offices to a new building sometime around the end of the year. The 60,000-foot facility would enable us all to be in one building—or so we thought—and was located at 6464 Canoga Avenue in Woodland Hills, at the intersection of Canoga Avenue and Victory Boulevard.

Also printed in 1985 was the Filmation Layout Manual, a comprehensive look for all the newcomers as to how Filmation did storyboards, layout, backgrounds, animation, camerawork, and more. Gary L. Hoffman produced the 64-page book.

I'll also point out a proposed anthology show we developed in 1985 called *The Young Astronauts*. It hearkened back to the days of *Space Academy*, but proposed a group of shows that all featured kids in space in prominent roles. The segments included: "Cadet Force," about teens training in the space program; "Star Academy," an updated version of our older show, with families living on a space station; "Moon Rovers," about families and kids living in a moon colony; "Star Riders," about kids who find a downed alien spacecraft and take it joyriding for adventures in the galaxy; "Starbase Delta," about an orbiting space city that functioned as a waystation for inbound and outgoing ships; and "Space Quest," about kids on a spaceship who became lost in space due to a space warp. Acting as our technical advisor was going to be Dr. Robert L. Forward, who was not the Bob Forward already working at Filmation, but both a senior scientist at Hughes Research Laboratories in Malibu and a science-fiction author. Unfortunately, *The Young Astronauts* never made it off the launch pad.

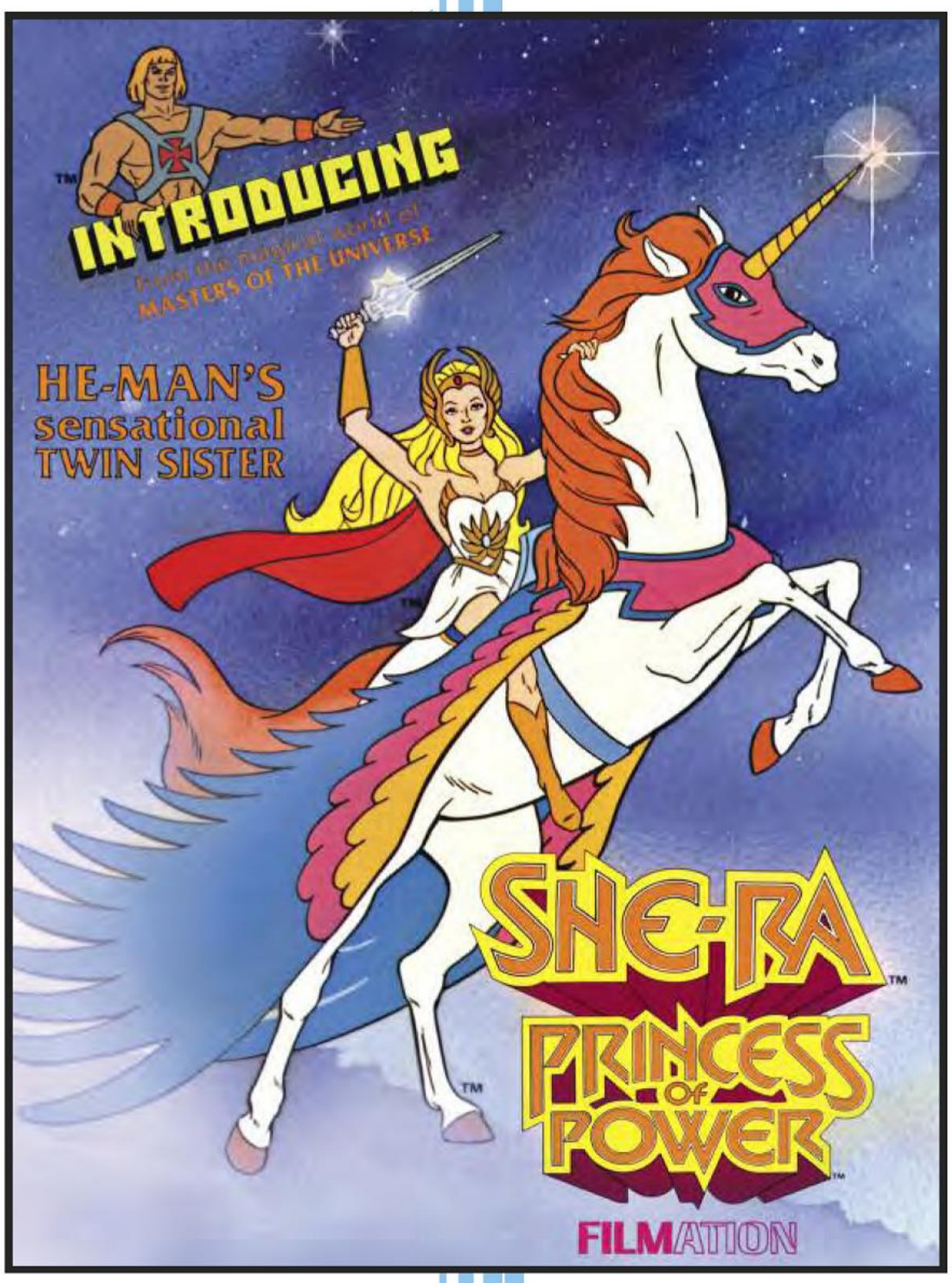
As the new fall season neared, more and more newspaper articles appeared which were alarmed at the number of toy-based shows. Sensitized to the criticism, six of the twelve new shows had hired children's consultants to work with them on providing proper messages for children. Despite this, they didn't quite have our success. In an interview with *Broadcasting* magazine, *Thundercats*' consultant, Dr. Robert Kuisis, was a bit rough, noting that violence in that show's scripts "caused us horrendous problems… There are certainly passages in this that I would be unhappy with if a three-year-old was watching. If a parent can't have some control, I can't write a show that takes care of every single human condition, and every single age unregulated." Ouch. The message was a far cry from Filmation's intent to provide strong entertainment and be pro-social in teaching valuable lessons. Speaking of which, we welcomed Dr. Gordon Berry back to our fold to consult on *Ghostbusters*'s development and scripts, and even touted him in our industry advertising.

There was one aspect of the anti-toy-to-TV rhetoric that most people missed, which I had referred to in an interview I did with New York's *Newsday*: stimulating imagination and further play.

Above:
Early *Ghostbusters* presentation art

"Many of these TV shows we're talking about give kids new ideas for playing with the toy," I said. "That's their purpose, to broaden the concept." I also revealed that we had initially talked to Mattel about doing a Barbie show for girls, but, "They feel a TV show might do more damage than good because Barbie already exists in the mind of a child." In other words, we wouldn't have been able to have the kind of creative freedom with Barbie as we would have with *She-Ra*.

Which brings us back to our heroine of the year, and how she came to be. *She-Ra* was really born because of our relationship with Mattel. I wanted to do another show to latch onto the back of *He-Man*. I was in an Italian restaurant having a dinner conversation with somebody at Mattel. And I said, "Wouldn't it be appropriate if we could do something with a girl, a superheroine?" I wanted to do a superhero that had a real family. We had done some families on the *Super 7* and others, and I said, "I'd like to give He-Man a sister." The guy says, "But she can't appear after 20 years." And I said, "What if they didn't know they were twins?"



Shortly after that, we started development on *She-Ra*. At one point, He-Man was originally going to be called "He-Ro," and they suggested that the new character be called "She-Ro." But I said, "You can't do that because it's not feminine." Then they wanted to call her Hera, which was the name of the Greek goddess who was the wife of Zeus. But for some reason they couldn't do that. So Larry DiTillio, who was the main guy who helped develop her in the early days, came up with the name "She-Ra" because he was reading a book on Egypt, and in Egyptian mythology "Ra" was a word for a god. Larry was also the one who came up with the main background for She-Ra, with the twin sister who was kidnapped at birth, the parents who were threatened, and how she grew up being trained by Hordak, Skeletor's nemesis and friend, who really conquered the universe!

Mattel liked the idea, but I really think that they weren't able to make it successful as a toy because they didn't merchandise it as well as they could have. She-Ra could have been just as much a boy's toy as it was a girl's toy, but when they gave it perfume and all the girly stuff, boys didn't like it. But I'll tell you that as far as the audience, we saw that the boys loved *She-Ra* just as much because of the characters and the adventure; they just didn't want to buy the girly toys.

It was easy for me to want to do a show that involved a heroine again. I was surrounded by females at my house, with my daughter and my wife. My son wasn't living at home then. I remembered that we had a girl trip and fall in a show that we were doing—I think it was the *Hardy Boys*—and, even as a young girl, Erika said to me, "Why do the girls always have to slip and fall, and the guys never do?" It was a valid question, and I always kept that in mind when we were developing female characters. I was motivated to have strong women and girls on our shows. That's the way we had done it with *Isis* as a counterpart to *Shazam*!, and now we could do it with *She-Ra* as a counterpart to *He-Man*.

She-Ra was a very different female character than Teela or the Sorceress were on *He-Man*. Teela was a warrior and was impulsive, and the Sorceress was kind of serene and stand-offish. But She-Ra was generally very mature and almost proper, but with a sense of fun about her. And she wasn't very different whether she was Adora or She-Ra.

In an interview with *Video Times,* Art Nadel was interviewed about *She-Ra*. "We're trying, as we have done in the past, to portray women as being resourceful and capable, rather than the traditional television idea of having the woman turn to the man for help. She-Ra executes heroic exploits at the head of the band of women." It wasn't meant to have a political message of feminism to it directly, but it was meant to show that women and girls could do the same types of things boys and men did if they wanted to.

Larry DiTillio worked on the *She-Ra* bible, with some input from Joe Straczynski, and the principles of the series were right in the opening pages: "There will be action tempered by gentleness… adventure mixed with compassion… characters that will appeal to young girls as role models, without losing the interest of boys… rich in the currency of non-violent ideals… The series will highlight high fantasy and vivid characters, action and comedy, drama and gentleness—something for everyone… *She-Ra, Princess of Power* will reinforce the fact that one person can

Above:
Promotional art for *She-Ra, Princess of Power*

make a difference. Man or woman, boy or girl, you have the potential to make the world a better place."

We again chose Donald Roberts to work with us on the messages and morals we wanted to showcase in the stories. But instead of doing a rotating mixture of characters to tell the morals at the end, as we had done with *He-Man* and other shows, we developed an entirely new character who would do that job. The new guy was Loo-Kee, a tiny elfin child in colorful clothes. We made a game out of it, with the animators hiding Loo-Kee somewhere in the episode itself, his head peering out from the branches of a tree, or from behind a bush or rock. It became an interactive challenge, and kids watched closely to try to spot Loo-Kee. At the end, he would ask them if they had spotted him, reveal where he was, and then tell them the message of the episode. Because he was always watching the story also, and he was small like a child, Loo-Kee was kind of a proxy for the viewers themselves, and they listened to him even more. Erika was the voice of Loo-Kee.

The world of Etheria was developed to be similar to Tolkein's Middle Earth, except more colorful and magical. But the Horde had come in and replaced nature with machines and technological monstrosities. We were careful to say that not all technology was bad, but the misuse of it could lead to ecological or physical ruin. Also, because the Horde had ruled Etheria for a long period of time, not everybody rebelled against it or saw it as evil. This gave the writers a chance to bring shades of gray to the storylines and ancillary characters, so that not everything was a clear-cut choice.

There were lots of other characters introduced beyond the ones I described earlier. The Whispering Woods, where the rebels camped, was also home to the Twiggets, who were kind of gnome-like tricksters who lived in the trees, and whose names all began with the letters "Sp": Sprint, Sprocket, Spragg, Spritina, etc. We also gave She-Ra a mysterious and all-seeing magical presence to commune with named Light Hope, who appeared in a secret room in her magical retreat, the Crystal Castle. I was the voice of Light Hope. The bad guys also had occasionally seen characters, such as Horde Prime, the ruler of HordeWorld and commander of Hordak. He was like the Emperor was to Darth Vader, fearsome and mysterious.

As I mentioned before, Erika did all the voice direction, which was done as an ensemble with the main cast, and then she and I would go in and do all of our voices separately. And when we needed to, such as with Loo-Kee, we used a harmonizer to make a voice higher or lower or add effects. Erika also worked closely with Art Nadel to look at the scripts so she was familiar with how they should be recorded. She sometimes had a week to prep a script, and sometimes only three days.

Past the first five episodes, we wanted *She-Ra* to stand on its own from *He-Man*, so we limited the number of crossover episodes, though there certainly were several. It was funny that in the writing it was clear that the writers were making She-Ra a bit smarter than He-Man, or at least Adora was smarter than Adam. The transformation with the power swords raised and the "By the Power/By the Honor" were, of course, very similar, and we had She-Ra shouting, "I am She-Ra!" in the same way He-Man shouted, "I am He-Man!" I can just imagine that those families with boys and girls both had them trying to out-transform each other.

One of the funny elements of the She-Ra design was that she was dressed in a white skirt, rather like Isis had been. But we had to be aware of propriety for the kids, so Dori Littell-Herrick, who worked in the animation department, took on the job of making sure that She-Ra's skirt didn't fly up too much, and that her modesty was always kept intact. The male artists loved drawing all the pretty girls, but every now and then we had to have them toned down.

I don't recall that we did any live models or rotoscoping for *She-Ra* as we had done for *He-Man*, possibly because we had a lot less lead time to work on it. That's also why there wasn't as much stock footage early on because we were developing the stock as we went. There was a bit of a tighter turnaround on getting *She-Ra* completed.

When Larry was working on creating the series and characters, besides the name of the lead character, there were some other changes. Because Adam was "Adam," we originally had Adora as "Eve," which might have been a little strange contextually since they were twins, not mates. The Crystal Castle was originally called "The Palace of Power." Hordak was originally "Reaper," and Glimmer was first called "Shimmer." They changed that because it was hard for actors to say, not because it sounded too similar to my last name!

Arthur and Larry got several new writers on *She-Ra* that hadn't worked for us before, due to a 1985 strike from the Writer's Guild. They were striking over residuals from the home video market. And since they couldn't write for films or live TV, some of them drifted over to work in animation for a short time. Francis Moss was one of the guys who came to us during the strike.

I don't remember a lot of specifics about episodes, but I'll tell you some of the things that stick out. Early on, we had a pirate character show up called "The Sea Hawk," and the leader of the pirate ship was a dashing fellow who was reminiscent of Errol Flynn or Han Solo. He was quite roguish, and he was very sweet on Adora. Larry DiTillio wrote all of Sea Hawk's appearances, and he used to ask the secretaries to help come up with funny lines for the pirates. Pam Vincent, who was working for Art Nadel as script liaison, used to give some of those to him. The artists always liked the pirate episodes, but the boarders and directors didn't like them quite so much because the backgrounds changed all the time on the boats.

There were stories about censorship, about racism, about book burning, about slavery, and we brought in some female villains and opponents because we didn't want to say that all women were pure and good. One of the villainesses was Octavia, who was a green octopus woman. A few years later, Disney's *Little Mermaid* had a villainess named Ursula who was a purple octopus woman. I'm sure it was just a coincidence. We also had stories about Etheria's past, and Eternia's past, and even about Adam and Adora's ancestors. There was one episode that Joe Straczynski wrote which was one of our patented backdoor pilots, called "MagiCats," which was about an alien race of magical cats. It never got developed further though.

Arthur Nadel asked Robert Lamb, who by now was a staff writer, to write a story featuring Loo-Kee and to make it a crossover with *He-Man*. In "Loo-Kee Lends a Hand," Hordak gets a new time-stop device from the Horde catalog which freezes time in a limited area. The device is smuggled into the Rebel Camp and freezes the heroes.

For the first time the audience sees Loo-Kee looking for a place to hide. There was a lot of humor as everything was frozen except for him, making it not only a fun episode, but a cost-saving show as well. After all, characters stuck in time are single held cels with no animation! By the time the episode was in final edit, Rob had moved back to the storyboard department. I called him from the edit suite to say how much I liked the story. Unfortunately, the only phone in the storyboard department was in the office of Bob Arkwright, the storyboard supervisor. It was afternoon break, and in the background I could hear the other board artists make kissing-up sounds while Rob tried to carry on his congratulatory conversation with me!

One of the other crossover episodes was "Horde Prime Takes a Holiday," and, overall, it was kind of a funny show about conflict between Skeletor and Hordak while Hordak was watching Horde Prime's ship. But the moral was what captured a lot of attention. I'm reproducing it below:

> He-Man: *She-Ra and I want to talk to you about something that's very personal: your body.*
> She-Ra: *Remember, it's your body, and no one should touch you in a way that you feel is wrong.*
> Orko: *I'll get anybody who tries it!*
> She-Ra: *It's not that easy, Orko. It's hard for a young person to admit that he or she has been touched in a bad way.*
> He-Man: *If you've been touched that way, don't be ashamed. Tell someone you trust, like your parents, your doctor, your teacher or councilor, or you minister or rabbi.*
> She-Ra: *Right, Orko?*
> Orko: *Right on!*

We got a call after that episode aired from a mother. She had been watching *She-Ra* with her daughter, who was very young, but had been molested. She couldn't really talk to her mother about it because she didn't know how, and her mother knew about it but wasn't sure how to discuss it. So they watched this moral, and the little girl turned around and said, "Mommy, I want to tell you what happened to me." And the mother called us to tell us about it. It helped them so much. Arthur Nadel, God bless him, in all the years he had been in television and motion pictures, he had never received a phone call that moved him so much. We really did change a life and help a family. And that's good stuff.

Larry DiTillio wrote the final script of *She-Ra* season one, called "The Greatest Magic." He and Joe Straczynski had been doing a lot of work on *She-Ra* almost like story editors, and they came to me and Art and wanted better credits; on a résumé, "story editor" was more prestigious than "staff writer." There was some resistance to that from some people though, and Larry and Joe decided to leave Filmation and look for other jobs. We were sad to see them go, and wished them the best. They were very creative, and great writers. And they both did go on to have very successful careers after that.

She-Ra: Princess of Power debuted on September 9, 1985, in 120 U.S. markets, covering 84% of the country. It was second only to newcomers *Thundercats* and *G.I. Joe* in pre-sales. Those numbers changed by November, as the 19 syndicated shows were tracked with *Transformers* taking #1 (139 markets/91%), *Kids Incorporated* as #2 (123 markets/ 85%), *She-Ra* at #3 (120 markets/84%). *He-Man*, meanwhile, dropped to #4 (111 markets/81%) and *Fat Albert* leveled at #18 (61 markets/68%). As far as ratings were concerned, *G.I. Joe* came in at #1 with a 4.6 share, *She-Ra* was #2 with a 4.3, and *Thundercats* was 4.2.

With the last 32 of the new episodes in its split second season, *He-Man* was still going strong. In August, characters from *He-Man* began appearing at the Hanna-Barbera Land theme park near Houston, Texas, alongside their competitors. And in September Mattel began a contest wherein a child could win a $100,000 college scholarship by designing a new *He-Man* character in a "Create-a-Character" contest. The contest ran from September 8th to December 8th, and the eventual winner was a boy named Nathan Bitner for a character named "Fearless Photog." If you want to know the weirdness that resulted, try Googling his name. Suffice it to say that his character never made into the toy line or as a character on the show, though Mattel did release it as a 2011 Comic-Con International exclusive figure.

On Friday, September 13th, TV station KTXS-TV of Abilene, Texas, decided to remove *He-Man* from the air, replacing it with news show *America* and the rather kid-unfriendly *Three's Company*. KTXS had gotten into a beef with Group W and decided to cancel our show. The reaction was swift and shocking. KTXS switchboards were deluged with calls from parents and children, and two mothers—Rixie Hults and Tammy Shipley—decided to do something about it. They organized the "He-Man Movement," aired radio PSAs, collected 1,400 petition signatures, staged a protest march on October 1st, and unleashed a letter-writing campaign upon the station. Mothers, pastors, children, and even the head of a group home for children wrote in, many of them talking about the show's positive values and moral messages. A 350-signature petition was also delivered from Hardin-Simmons University students.

KTXS scrambled to remedy the problem and came back to Group W with their tail tucked between their legs… though negotiations were stalled for a brief time by Hurricane Gloria. A new contract was signed, and on October 14th, *He-Man* returned to the air. Mattel decided to capitalize on the campaign, and sent a spokesmodel dressed as He-Man to sign autographs in Abilene. Though he was supposed to descend to the waiting crowd at the West Texas Fairgrounds in a hot air balloon, high winds scuttled those plans. Still, he needed all of his strength to deal with the 8,000–10,000 screaming mothers and children who were waiting for their chance to meet the hero. After a short time though, police feared kids would be hurt, and He-Man was escorted away. But at least the young were able to get home in time to watch *He-Man* and *She-Ra* on TV.

Sometime during this period, we produced a full-color poster called "Animation Magic," that had He-Man and She-Ra showing how animation was created. It was a charming poster, and I don't remember what we did it for or where we gave it out, but I suspect it was a gift at any animation presentations our employees might make, or to anybody with kids who toured the studio.

The MIPcom market at Cannes ran October 8–12th, and that's where we really had to go head-to-head with Columbia over *Ghostbusters*. By now, *their* show was rechristened as *The Real Ghostbusters*, a title which implied that ours were fake. Still, by

Halloween, Group W had presold *Ghostbusters* to 47 stations, covering 65% of the country!

In early November, *He-Man* was nominated for "Best Family Animation — Series or Special" in the 7th Annual Youth in Film Awards. Sadly, we lost to *The Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show*.

On the November 28th episode of *The Today Show*, Willard Scott reported the weather with the help of Skeletor, She-Ra, and Hordak, in celebration of 107-year-old Grace Shafner's birthday. Grace loved the *He-Man* cartoon. I don't recall if we produced new animation for the segment or whether it was live actors, but it was a nice—if odd—promotion for our series.

We also began selling the broadcast rights to *He-Man and She-Ra: A Christmas Special* for one airing between November 27 and December 11, 1985. By early November we had 109 markets signed up, covering 81% of the country. As with our other shows, it was sold barter, but this time Group W got a larger three minutes of national advertising to book.

The *Christmas Special* was essentially two episodes put together, and it was another crossover show. But this time we had a big twist where Orko accidentally ended up on our Earth! There, he met two children who were getting a Christmas tree, and he learned all about the holidays from them. Meanwhile, the combined heroes of Eternia and Etheria worked together to get Orko back, but when they did they brought the children and their puppy back to Eternia as well. It also happened to be the time of Adam and Adora's birthdays, so the season was very festive. When Horde Prime saw the happiness, he dispatched Hordak and Skeletor to cause trouble.

It was a crazy show that featured almost all of the major characters from both series, as well as having a coherent storyline and three different worlds! Bob Forward and Don Heckman wrote it, and Bill Reed and Ernie Schmidt directed it. Erika wrote another song for the show.

The main thing I remember about the *Christmas Special* was a scene where the dog licks the face of Skeletor, and Skeletor says, "Ugh! Can't stand kisses, can't stand love!" When they recorded those scenes, everybody was hysterical because you could tell that, even though he was the bad guy, Skeletor had sensitivity. He really did like the puppy.

In December *The New York Times* ran a big story debating the nature of toys and TV violence, once again misusing *He-Man* as a target, but more correctly raising an alarm about a new *Rambo* cartoon and toy line for 1986.

Around that same time, *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report* on PBS did an eleven-minute segment called "Toying with TV"—filmed back on August 23rd—about… you guessed it, toys spawning television shows. And prime on their list was *He-Man*. In response to Peggy Charren, I was asked if my program was a commercial. "Absolutely, unqualified, not," I responded. "I wouldn't permit them to be, I wouldn't want them to be, and if they were, they shouldn't be on the air."

Defending our shows, I said, "I think that the quality of shows can always be looked upon critically. And I think that there are way too many toy companies involved in the editorial concepts and inherently involved in production. I don't think they should be. It doesn't make the concept wrong of doing shows that are commercially viable for young people. I think *He-Man*'s really a very good show." As for Mattel, I noted that, "They don't have film approval. They don't have script approval. We send them storylines. I mean, they own those characters. What if we were to do something with those characters that hurt the characters. There's a vested interest in making sure that we don't hurt those characters."

Phyllis Tucker Vinson, VP of programming for NBC also made a strong point, saying that people like Charren don't talk about *Sesame Street* and its numerous toys because, "They're really making a judgment on the program, not on whether or not it is a commercial for the toy. They're making programming judgments." PBS also talked to the FCC Commissioner James Quello, who pretty much squashed any FCC intent to regulate kid's programming any further… at least under his administration.

"Toys are a phenomenally successful commodities right now," I said, closing out the report. "Why do kids want to buy those toys… without television shows or with television shows? They struck some responsive chord in that young audience. You'd be crazy not to look at what kids do with the way they play with toys and not utilize that information in some way in developing shows that appeal to kids."

That statement was about to be put to the test for Filmation. *He-Man* and *She-Ra* were toy-based and were ratings juggernauts. F*at Albert*, though hardly a failure, was slipping out of the top 20. What would our non-toy-yet-brand-name original series *Ghostbusters* mean to our future? Could the knowledge and talent we had gathered on these shows translate into another hit for us?

Above:
Promotional art from *He-Man and She-Ra: A Christmas Special*

1986-1987

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

LET'S GO GHOSTBUSTERS!

In early January, Filmation held a press conference to show the industry footage from the first episodes of *Ghostbusters*. It was a preemptive strike toward Columbia, about whom I said at the conference, "I don't think it's likely that they will do a very good job of doing domestic syndication deals. We will, by the time the show airs, probably have over 80% of the country sold. Very frankly, if we have a disaster on our hands, I don't think any of the stations would buy another *Ghostbusters*. If we have a hit on our hands, it would be foolhardy for someone else not to buy the real *Ghostbusters*. I think Columbia has a real problem." The language I used was important, as Columbia was debuting their show to the market buyers at the mid-January upcoming NATPE convention in New Orleans. We had, by now, already cleared 70% of the U.S. markets. And, by using the term "real Ghostbusters," I was co-opting the very name that Columbia was using.

I also spoke again about our concerns about runaway animation. "We're the only guys in America that are still doing animation in America. Domestic animation companies have literally become almost extinct because of foreign competition. We happen to be owned by a parent company that, I think rightfully, believes that the animation industry as an industry and art should remain viable in this country."

That same month, I gave an interview to New York's monthly *View*, in which I noted that our concerns at Filmation were not entirely different from Action for Children's Television's, though we had different ways to accomplish our goals. I said, "I think it's terribly dangerous when a toy company has total control, and can put in practically anything it wants. That's when you come perilously close to producing a half-hour commercial, as opposed to a half-hour show." Our shows were different from the more commercially oriented fare now clogging the airwaves, and our audience appreciated it. "There is no audience that responds more honestly and forthrightly than the young audience. When they like it and you know that no one is responsible except the studio, you feel very proud."

ACT didn't listen, and rekindled their sideswiping of toy-based shows, including *He-Man* (though rarely was *She-Ra* included). What was interesting though was something Alice Donenfeld discovered as she worked to license our shows internationally; many foreign broadcasting companies were government-owned and were very

Opposite & Above:
Ghostbusters promotional art

concerned with both pro-social and anti-violent messages. And in those markets, under that scrutiny, Filmation shows were prospering where other shows were being rejected! Foreign governments of all types agreed that our shows were good for kids!

Domestically, as 1986 began, our shows had slipped a little in the ratings for kids 2–11, though not by much. The top five were *Thundercats, Transformers, G.I. Joe, He-Man*, and *She-Ra. Fat Albert* was #25 in ranking for syndicated kids' shows. By February sweeps the order had changed, and *She-Ra* was only two-tenths percent behind the leader in ratings as follows: *Thundercats, She-Ra, G.I. Joe, Transformers, He-Man*.

On the catch-22 flip side of the toy/cartoon debate, from February 9th–18th, we attended and exhibited at the American International Toy Fair, showcasing video from *Ghostbusters* and promoting our other projects in a suite at the Helmsley Palace Hotel. Schaper Manufacturing Company also exhibited the *Ghostbusters* toy line for prospective toy buyers, with twelve figures, three vehicles, and both small and large playsets. I remained convinced then, and still do today, that the licensing was not leading our storytelling or development, unlike other companies; licensing was an adjunct to our series, not the purpose of them.

Immediately after Toy Fair we went to the American Film Market, where we showed a promo reel of animation from our *Pinocchio* feature, even though we were only taking offers, not specific distribution bids. We were, however, selling *Secret of the Sword* to outside markets such as Bolivia and Peru—to supplement releases in France, Argentina, Mexico, and Central America—as well as our television fare. We sold various past TV shows to Greece, the U.K., Korea, and Scandinavia. Attending were myself, Alice Donenfeld, and two sales guys, Paul Backus and Ed Ballerini.

We also announced our next new syndicated series for September, 1987, debut: a science-fiction space western called *BraveStarr.* It would have 65 half-hours, as the others did; at a cost of $275,000-$300,000 per episode, the series budget was $19.5 million. The sales terms matched *Ghostbusters*: barter, with three-and-a-half minutes given for local advertisers and two-and-a-half minutes for national spots in the first three quarters of the contract. The final quarter would switch to a four-minute local/two-minute national split. Stations would get a two-year contract. Mattel had already licensed the show to produce a toy line, and would take some of the advertising for other toy lines. A separate *BraveStarr* theatrical feature was also planned, budgeted at $3.5–4 million.

While at AFM, we also made a deal to handle the international distribution for four live-action films from Omega Entertainment, all directed by Nico Mastorakis: an action movie called *The Zero Boys*; a Kirstie Alley thriller called *Blind Date*; a comedy called *Sky High*; and an Adrienne Barbeau science-fiction film called *The Last One*—also released as *The Next One* and *The Time Traveler*. We didn't do any animation work on these projects, just helped with the distribution.

Mid-March was the National Cable Television Association convention in Dallas, Texas, and we exhibited there, selling *Ghostbusters*. So did Columbia, with *Real Ghostbusters*. The same happened at the National Association of Broadcasters conference in April, where I was on a panel discussion titled "What Works in Children's Programming."

One of the projects we hoped might work for kids and adults was a comedy show called *A Terrible Parable*. Using just a voice track, sound effects, and presentation artwork, we produced a nearly seven-minute short for one episode, called "The Elephant and the Tiger," about a slow and careless elephant that learned to make better decisions thanks to the advice of Seven Wise Men, and spurred on by a tiger who chased him to eat him. It never went beyond this presentation reel.

Back home, as mentioned in the last chapter, we had outgrown our studios in Reseda, and in April we began renovation on our new address about two miles away at 6464 Canoga Avenue in Woodland Hills. The total footage of the four-story building was around 65,000 square feet, which would enable us to have most of our studio in the building top to bottom. The building housed a large screening room, a recording studio, a music and effects studio, the xerography department, camera department, ink and paint department, layout staff area, assistant animator area, directors and computer facilities, and more. Our lease ran from August, 1985, to December 31, 1990, with a five-year option to extend it.

The building site had once been part of Warner Ranch, where countless western films had been lensed in the 1940s through the 1960s. A local paper profiled the move, and interviewed first-graders about it. One boy, wearing a *He-Man* shirt, was afraid He-Man would be bored in Woodland Hills. I responded in print by saying, "I don't think He-Man will find it a bit boring. He'll be patrolling the streets of Woodland Hills, and there are a lot of moral injustices for him to correct."

Although the majority of Filmation's move was made on July 12th–19th, the final bits of the transfer would take until late October before they were completed. We also leased an 11,000-square-foot facility at 6416 Variel Avenue, only a few blocks away. This second building, which was rather nondescript and not publicly identified, was where the "Classics Unit" was housed, animating on the *Pinocchio* and *Snow White* features. That was where we were training animators in full animation for film, not television animation.

One other big change happened about this time; Filmation began to get more computerized. But while Hanna-Barbera was computerizing its cel painting and filming process—thus leading the way to replace even more American animation jobs—we instituted a barcode program for all of our

Right:
The new Filmation building in Woodland Hills

projects, making every component easier to track within the now-enormous Filmation system. With a varying range of 500–600 animators—40% of the animation union members—a clearer tracking of jobs was necessary.

I do have something funny to relate about our new offices; next door to us was a women's health spa, and they had a deck or something on which women would lay out for sunbathing. The male animators quickly figured this out, and they had a codeword that they would say over the company intercom whenever it happened. Suddenly, they'd all go stampeding over to watch. Well, that didn't sit well in some circles, and eventually the female artists were put on the side facing the health spa, with the men being moved over to the other side!

In late May we announced a second and third season for *She-Ra*, with 14 new shows for fall 1986 and 14 new for early 1987, with a budget of around $7,700,000. This would take our final total to 93 episodes. All 28 of the new scripts were completed by June 23, 1986, allowing us to work on the shows in bulk. The writers were all familiar with the characters and settings by now, but we no longer had Larry DiTillio or Joe Straczynski aboard. Bob Forward wrote several of the shows, as well as other staff or freelance writers. One was written by Barbara Hambly, who later became a popular science-fiction and fantasy author.

The new *She-Ra* stories contained a few He-Man crossover episodes, and included a handful of romantic subplots. One of those was in "Romeo and Glimmer," directed by Tom Tataranowicz. He was really trying to add a lot of personality to our stock animation, and I know he tried to work a lot with female animators to help the characterization beyond that of the male animators, who were more than happy to draw pretty women but might miss some subtleties.

Tom directed another episode with a bit of romance in it, which was "Sweet Bee's Home." The character of Frosta was quite enamored with He-Man in the story, to the point of making him uncomfortable with her romantic overtures. In one scene, Frosta was grabbing He-Man, and he was struggling to get away. Tom decided to have some fun at my expense, and he cycled the animation for that scene over and over, taking it beyond comical into something that could be seen as overtly risqué. I remember watching it in dailies, and I probably would have been more pissed off if everyone hadn't been struggling not to laugh as they waited for my reaction!

May sweeps saw the ratings switch up again, with the top five shows as *Thundercats, She-Ra, He-Man, Transformers*, and *G.I. Joe*. July saw things get really strange as a few new shows entered the market, leaving the top seven at: *Thundercats, Gumby, He-Man, Transformers, Plastic Man, Scooby-Doo*, and *She-Ra*. *Fat Albert* had risen to #19 by then at least. Speaking of *Fat Albert*, as previously mentioned, May saw the final Emmy nomination come in for the series.

By July we had begun assembling the voice cast for our next Classics film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfelles*. Phyllis Diller was signed on to play Mother Nature, joining singer Irene Cara as Snow White, and actors Dom DeLuise, Ed Asner, Malcolm McDowell, Sally Kellerman, and Carol Channing in other roles.

So, we're halfway through the year, and I haven't told you much about the development of *Ghostbusters*. Let me remedy that now...

Ghostbusters was a modern updating of our live show. The leads were Jake Kong and Eddie Spencer, the sons of the original detectives, and Tracy, the gorilla who aided them on their cases. Working out of a headquarters known as Ghost Command, and riding in their time-traveling jalopy known as Ghost Buggy—or "G.B."—the boys were sometimes aided by television reporter Jessica Wray, 30th-century sorceress Futura, comical gypsy Madame Why, and a friendly bat named Belfry. Their catchphrase/rallying cry was "Let's go, Ghostbusters!" By the way, Eddie's last name was alternately spelled "Spencer" or "Spenser" on both the show and in our materials; amazingly, nobody caught that until it was too late.

Opposing them was the nasty Prime Evil, the ghostly wizard leader of evil spirits, who resided in the fifth-dimension-breaching Hauntquarters and manipulated others with his Bonetroller. Other villains included flying rat Brat-A-Rat; robot skeleton Scared Stiff; the English Haunter, who could transform into a vehicle; Mysteria, the mistress of mists; Sir Trancealot and his horse Nightmare; two-face ghost Fib-Face; illusion-casting Apparitia; evil music conductor Float-Zart; and werewolf Fangster, among others. As I told *Licensing Book*, "One of the tremendous advantages of producing 65 episodes of a series is that it allows us enough screen time to develop and become familiar with a large number of characters. Both the creators and the audience get to know these characters as real personalities."

Ghostbusters was meant to be a blend of comedy and adventure. For two years, we had been doing *He-Man* and *She-Ra* as action-adventure, with *Fat Albert*'s semi-comic social stories mixed in, but there wasn't really a lot of outright comedy in any of the shows. *Ghostbusters* was a different discipline for the artists working on it because they had to animate in a more cartoony style again. Tracy the gorilla got a lot of the cartoony scenes, as well as the little bat guy, Belfry. Some of the animators really wanted to just work on scenes with them because they could do more broad comedic animation.

We had to develop a whole new set of stock for *Ghostbusters*, and the artists put a lot of work into designing a really elaborate transformation sequence that we could use when the Ghostbusters left their headquarters, Ghost Command. We've been criticized by some people for reusing the transformation too often, but kids really like those repeating sequences. And if you watch them, they're really well done!

Production on *Ghostbusters* went smoothly, though we moved very quickly once we were up and running. The pilot script, "Statue of Liberty," by Candace Howerton and J. Larry Carroll, was done in July 1984. The rest were scripted between July 1985 and July 1986. Larry Eikelberry and Herb Hazelton developed the Ghostbusters logo which included retro touches to our original series combined with mood-changing ghost faces. Although early designs had been done for presentations and sales, the final character designs were completed in August and September 1985, many by Larry, Herb, and Lew Ott, with Diane Keener and Dale Hendrickson handling the female designs, and others in the department contributing models for ancillary characters, props, and settings.

The first five *Ghostbusters* episodes we aired—though they were

scripted halfway through the production cycle—were written by Robby London and Rowby Goren, and told the origin story for the team. I don't recall if we were thinking maybe they could be cut together as a movie or something, but the storyline really went all over the place as the original Ghostbusters from the live show decided to retire and pass the business to their sons. There was a lot of time travel and dimension hopping involved, and it was a pretty complex story. We had Camelot, the future, ancient Egypt, and even prehistoric times, where we had a caveman who looked an awful lot like the love child of Tarzan and Alley Oop!

As with all our shows, we had morals at the end of each episode, which were developed with Dr. Gordon Berry. Most of these were done with a bone-headed television named Skelevision, often with the help of Belfry and sometimes the other characters. Once, we even had Jake explaining to viewers that they were watching a television show and that ghosts weren't real! Additionally, we produced a series of *Ghostbusters* anti-drug public service announcement commercials.

We used Alan Oppenheimer on the show as Prime Evil, and Linda Gary on lead females, while I played Tracy the gorilla. Susan Blu and my daughter, Erika, did other voices. We had two new guys—for us anyhow—playing the two male leads: Peter Cullen was Eddie and Pat Fraley was Jake. We were very loose about what other characters they could play. I would usually bring them into my office and show them model sheets of characters and let them kind of give me voices they thought might be right. Erika would direct them later, and we recorded two shows on Tuesdays and two shows on Thursdays. Most everybody worked in an ensemble, except for any parts that Erika or I were going to record.

Tom Tataranowicz was one of nine guys who directed the 65 episodes of *Ghostbusters*, along with his later studio-mate, Tom Sito. The sequence in the show titles where the Ghostbusters all jumped up and high-fived each other was done by Sito. Everyone was trying new things because, with the weird premise that allowed us to move through time and space, the stories could literally go anywhere, and the comedy also allowed for a lot of visual latitude. Tataranowicz directed one episode called "The Looking-Glass Warrior," and he did some wild stuff in the alternate looking glass universe. I could really see his talent, and his enthusiasm meant that the people who worked on his shows were willing to really try new stuff. Those skills and innovations led me to offer him the job of directing the upcoming *BraveStarr* movie.

Although I liked *Ghostbusters* a lot, I don't remember a lot about specific episodes. I do know there was one show, "The Great Ghost Gorilla," in which we poked fun at Hanna-Barbera a couple of times. We also had a vampire in "Shades of Dracula" that seemed more than a little reminiscent of Drac from *Groovie Goolies*, but that was nothing compared to "The Girl Who Cried Vampire," in which we used direct designs and animation from the *Goolies*! Another episode, called "Whither Why" by Bob Forward, was designed as a possible spin-off series called "Batz," featuring Belfry, Rafter, Eaves, and Beauregard. It never went further than the one episode.

Ghostbusters debuted on September 22nd. The final count was 75 stations, covering 82% of the U.S. Columbia hadn't yet gotten their syndicated show running, but they had gotten ABC to sign up for a run of 13 original episodes on Saturday mornings. Making things a bit more confusing were the shelves of video stores, where Columbia had its massively popular live film, and Continental Video had released volumes of our older live TV show under the title, *The Original Ghost Busters*. Continental's sales were sluggish however, holding at about 2,000 copies sold, compared to half a million for the fim.

Doing two *Ghostbusters* shows eventually turned out to be a huge error. It muddled things in the audience's minds. Our *Ghostbusters* was a great show, and I loved it a lot, but people got us confused with Columbia's show. I got a phone call once, from a very angry African-American man from someplace in middle America. He was furious with us because we had taken the black Ghostbuster and made him into a gorilla, and he thought we were racist! I kept trying to explain to him that ours was the original show, based on the

original concept from the 1970s live show, and that we hadn't taken any black characters—or any characters of any color at all—and turned them into a gorilla! He was really upset, and I wasn't sure he actually believed me. He finally said, "It's really terrible," and hung up! I felt awful after that, but I had done my best to tell him the truth; he just didn't want to believe it.

That same month, Mattel brought its major toy buyers to a deluxe private show in Tucson, Arizona, for a look at the upcoming *BraveStarr* toy line, which was debuting for Christmas. The buyers were ushered into a western-themed saloon, where they were able to drink futuristic drinks and play with the early versions of the toys. The buyers left impressed. By this point we had cleared 80% of the country for *BraveStarr,* with 50 stations onboard.

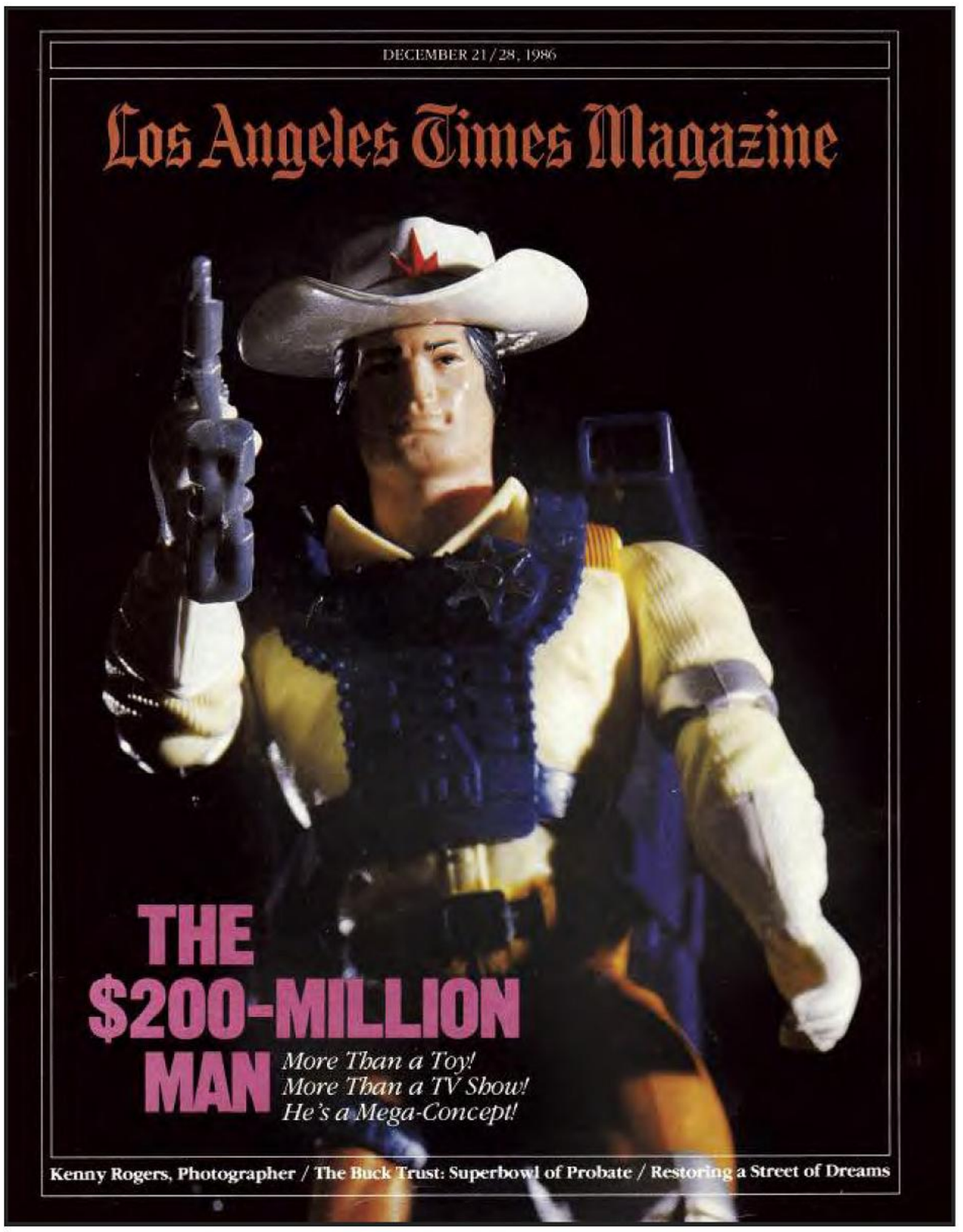
October's MIPCOM was in Paris, and we sold *BraveStarr* to Italy and *Ghostbusters* to Spain, as well as other shows and video rights to South Africa, Greece, Scandinavia, Iceland, France, Brazil, the U.K., and Israel. Over in the U.K., Video Gems became the first video licensor for *Ghostbusters,* planning to release six one-hour tapes. We next headed off to Milan for the MIFED festival, for more sales. Sometimes it seemed that I was travelling almost as much as I was at home in the offices!

At about the same time, Dori Littell-Herrick, who I mentioned before and who was the key assistant animation coordinator, was also working with the storyboard departments to consult on the reuse of stock footage. She had friends in most of the departments of our studio, including an ex-husband in the camera department. Dori gathered together a bunch of the exposure sheets from various shows, as well as stock materials from shows, and stock backgrounds everyone was tired of using. They then assembled this really long shot using all of this stock, and shot it at night in the camera department.

For my birthday that October, I was in the room watching dailies with everyone who wanted to do so, and it was supposed to be for one of the later episodes of *She-Ra*. And then all of a sudden, Fat Albert walked through the scene. Then She-Ra flew by, and her hair came by a few seconds later. There were all these weird characters and mistakes and errors and backgrounds, and I was getting really confused. And finally, at the end, there was a big drawing that said "Happy Birthday, Lou!" That was fun!

In late October, one of our top writers and a good friend, Robby London, left his post with us as executive story editor and associate producer. He went to DIC, where he became the VP of Creative Affairs, a post created specifically for him.

The 14 new episodes of *She-Ra* aired beginning the week of October 27th, airing 2–3 per week through the week of November 24th. Despite fan sources which list different airdates, Filmation records of airdates show a very different running order than online sources do.



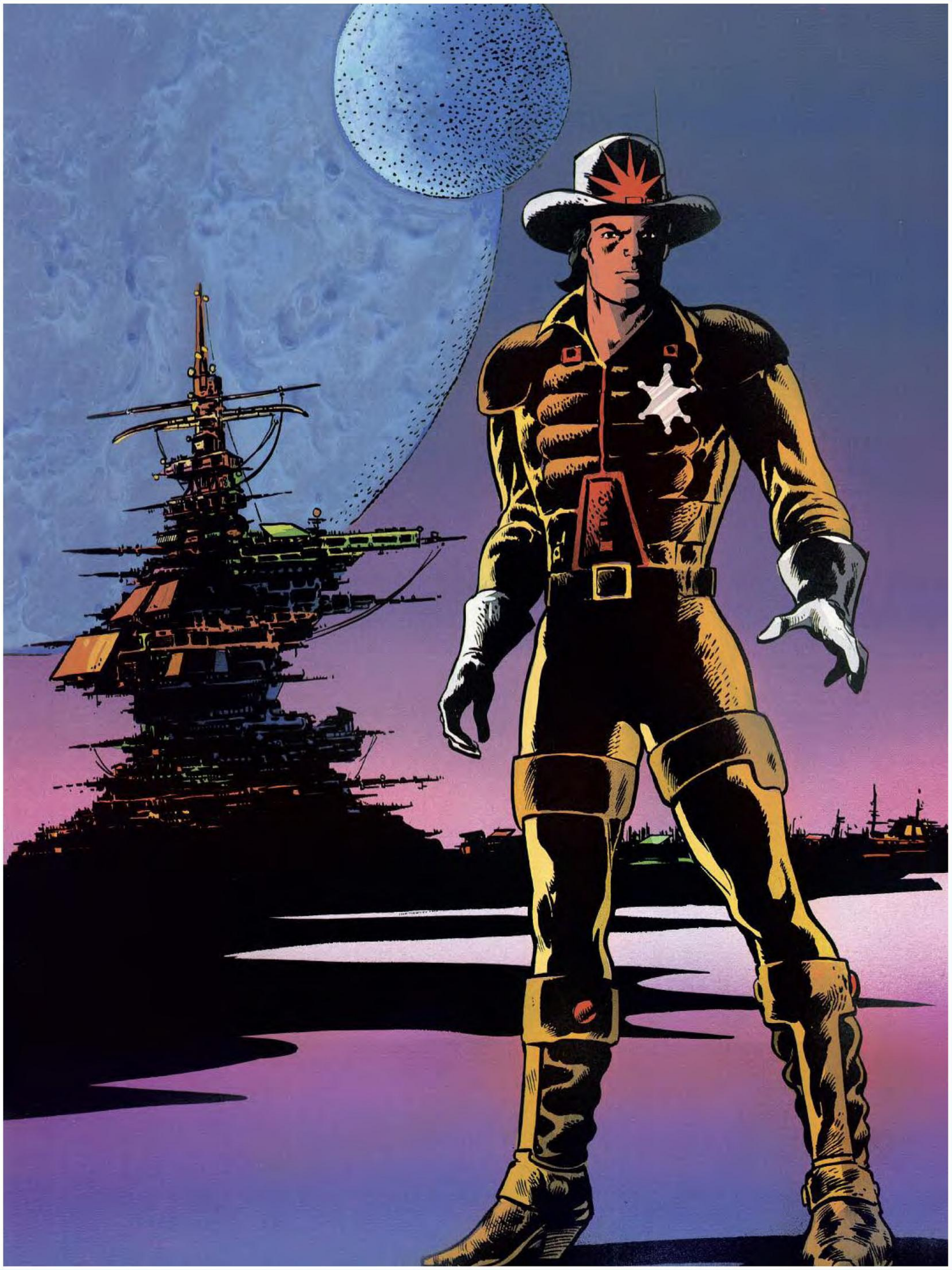
By November, production on *Pinocchio* was in full swing, but the film was now titled *Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night*. Hal Sutherland was back to join us as the director, from a screenplay by Robby London, Barry O'Brien, and Dennis Michaels. The voice cast included Ed Asner, Tom Bosley, James Earl Jones, Rickie Lee Jones, Don Knotts, William Windom, Lana Beeson, Linda Gary, Scott Grimes, Frank Welker, and our old friend Jonathan Harris. Music was by Anthony Marinelli and Brian Banks, with lyrics by Will Jennings, Barry Mann, and Steve Tyrell.

On December 21st, the *L.A. Times Magazine* did a cover-featured six-page color story on *BraveStarr*, calling the character "The $200-Million Man." It was the kind of major publicity any show would love to have. The article tracked how *BraveStarr* had been developed from concept to upcoming TV show to upcoming toy line and hoped-for licensing juggernaut. A whopping $15 million worth of the Mattel toy line had actually shipped to stores in November for the holiday season. But without a show to support it, could *BraveStarr* the toy survive in the new kids' world?

It was a question we were all wondering as 1987 began….

Opposite:
Image from *Ghostbusters*

Opposite:
Los Angeles Times Magazine, December 1986



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX
1987-1988
BRAVE NEW FUTURE?

Everything was riding on *BraveStarr*'s success, as the *L.A. Times* article suggested. *He-Man* and *She-Ra* had been licensed, and *Ghostbusters* was—for better or for worse—tied to the popularity of its doppelganger. So, *BraveStarr*, Filmation's first completely original concept to hit the new licensing-heavy world and syndication market, would really hold our future in its hands.

We felt that the fictional future was ripe for exploration, as I told the L.A. Times. "The world we live in is different today. Kids have computers, not just radios. Children don't play cowboys and Indians anymore—they play cowboys and aliens." The genesis for *BraveStarr* had actually begin with its villain, Tex Hex, who had been developed for the *Ghostbusters* series back in 1984. When I saw him, I told Art Nadel to develop a series around the villain, and he and art director John Grusd got to work. About 15 staffers began developing the concepts further, including Bob Forward.

The series was to follow the adventures of Marshall Bravestarr in the year 2349 on the planet New Cheyenne, where the valuable mineral Kerium had created a new gold rush in space. Bravestarr was Native American, and had special powers he could call upon that were tied to animal totems: the eyes of the hawk, the ears of the wolf, the strength of the bear, and the speed of the puma. Instead of the magical mysticism of Captain Marvel, He-Man, or She-Ra, or the elemental powers of Isis, Bravestarr was aided by the powers of the animals.

Once *BraveStarr* had been developed and refined—different versions were studly superheroes or comedy goofs—and several ancillary characters were also created, including half-horse transforming cyborg sidekick Thirty/Thirty, we took the concepts to Mattel. The toy company immediately saw value in the project, as western toys hadn't been in development for years and were due for a comeback, and the "futuristic" toy elements of infrared sensors could be incorporated into the line.

Mattel made up prototypes and mock-ups for kids' groups to focus-test, and came back to us with the word that they wanted Bravestarr to wear blue, as yellow could be seen as a non-masculine color. I was pretty adamant about Bravestarr's color scheme as we

Opposite:
Promotional art for *Bravestarr*

Above:
Presentation art for *Bravestarr*

planned it, which was a yellow-gold like sunlight, but we eventually compromised and gave him blue boots and accents on his chest. We also agreed to shorten his ponytail, as the manufacturing process would make a long ponytail difficult. A major change we also made at Mattel's behest was to change the name of Bravestarr's new home from New Cheyenne to New Texas; they didn't feel kids would understand the Old West reference of Cheyenne.

In addition to Mattel, other *BraveStarr* licensors lined up, including Hallmark, textile company Burlington, Blackthorne Comics, and Putnam Publishing. Filmation garnered an 8-12% licensing fee of the wholesale price, and we developed a style guide for the products, to make sure that all *BraveStarr* products were similar even in their packaging style.

Let's back up for a bit to the beginning of 1987, as work was wrapping up on *Ghostbusters* and ramping up on *BraveStarr*. *Ghostbusters* had debuted well to start with coming in as the number one syndicated show for kids ages 2–11 in 24 of its 75 markets. In other markets, it was generally in the top ten, sharing space with *He-Man, She-Ra*, and other adventure shows such as *Transformers, Thundercats, G.I. Joe, Silverhawks*, and *Jem*. But as advertising showed in the industry papers, ratings could be manipulated to sell shows to further markets; ratings could be for age ranges, time slots, new versus reruns, etc. Worse though was the fact that ratings were down for all syndicated shows by an average of 29%; there was such a glut of action-adventure shows that many were being scheduled prior to kids getting out of school, and, thus, ratings were tanking.

The January issue of the industry magazine *Toy & Hobby World* was its Silver Anniversary issue. To celebrate they chose "25 Who Made a Difference," citing "25 individuals whose contributions have molded the course of our industry over the past quarter-century." The entries were in alphabetical order, so some might have been surprised to see Peggy Charren listed as #2, but the editors recognized the good that Peggy and ACT accomplished to benefit kids. I was 23rd in the list, and the write-up praised *The Archies* and *Fat Albert*, as well as *He-Man*, "an important milestone not only for its record-busting ratings but for its precedent as a first-run syndicated series… Networks be damned, Lou has the poweeeeer!!!"

Speaking of which, on January 13th, Landmark Entertainment Group debuted a $3 million live stage show in Memphis called "The Masters of the Universe Power Tour." With a troupe of acrobats and dancers, magical acts, a black light circus, and roller derby scenes, the Power Tour combined the stories of both He-Man and She-Ra, along with a variety of other characters from Eternia and Etheria. It was very high-tech, with video screens and lasers and more. The performers who played He-Man and She-Ra were actually a husband and wife named Jack and Leslie Wadsworth.

Jay and I went to the New York premiere at Radio City Music Hall. Filmation wasn't really involved with the production, though they did base a lot of stuff on our cartoons rather than just the toys. They had Skeletor, Hordak, Orko, King Randor, Man-at-Arms, Evil-Lyn, Beast Man, and Teela, plus a new character named Songster, who sang songs and was the narrator of the show.

It was really a nice show, and it was interesting to see those guys running up on stage, but I'll tell you, that's the night those kids, those 10,000 kids held up their little glowing power swords and turned their lights on and said, "I have the power!"… man, that was awesome! I thought I was going to faint! I mean, to have that kind of impact on an audience… you may see the ratings or get letters or see sales, but that's different than being in that cheering audience. Those kids did have the power that night!

The Power Tour played 19 nights at Radio City, and I believe it holds the record for attendance there. It then became a very successful touring show that went around the country for two years to 60 cities.

In early February Filmation exhibited at the International Film, Television & Video market in Monte Carlo, and we brought along a special guest: Dr. Gordon Berry. Our consultant met with many foreign broadcasters who were concerned about the levels of violence in animated fare. Germany had already rejected *Thundercats* as being too violent. But Berry assured them that despite its "Wild West in Space" theme and action-adventure content, *BraveStarr* would be responsible in the way it treated young viewers.

The American Film Market was next, in Los Angeles from February 26th to March 6th. We were the only major animation studio to attend. There, we presold both *Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night* and *The Legend of BraveStarr* feature films. We showed promo reels for both films to industry audiences at the Beverly Center Cineplex 14. By now *Pinocchio* had been presold to many countries in Latin America and Europe, and *BraveStarr* had been picked up by England, Mexico, Argentina, and Ecuador.

In an interview with the *Hollywood Reporter* during the market, I revealed that we had scaled back our feature plans to one film per year, and addressed the reasons behind our *Classics* line. "When you come in with a name in features, you've got to have a star. Nobody has seen us do this kind of work before. Had I wanted to do something that was personally satisfying, we probably would have done originals. Doing classical property sequels seemed to be a way of building name recognition. After a couple of them, hopefully we won't need it." I also highlighted our training program, saying, "One of the reasons we're doing them is that a lot of young people have never had the opportunity to work on full-length animated features, and that's the only way to learn this business." Finally, I apologized for the quality of *Secret of the Sword* in comparison to our upcoming work. "That was just a five-part television show, and I'm sorry I did the damn thing."

Meanwhile, word in the industry was that the networks were going to severely cut back on Saturday morning schedules, and syndicators were swooping in to offer blocks of programming. DIC had the "Weekend Funday" package, while Worldvision offered "Funtastic World of Hanna-Barbera," and Lorimar pitched "The Comic Strip." Even more alarm was being raised over programming that was interactive with specific toys, such as *Captain Power* and the *Soldiers of the Future*. If Peggy Charren and ACT were torqued before at shows based on toys, you can imagine how they felt about shows which *required* toys! Ed Vane quickly distanced Group W and Filmation from this trend, promising that we were planning nothing

of the kind, and that the company would not be involved in "a relationship of the haves and have-nots." A few months later, I would echo this in *Variety*, saying, "Peggy Charren is just as angry as ever, and thank God. Her group performs a necessary function."

Speaking of toys, in March Mattel began laying off 150 employees, blaming falling toy sales for *Masters of the Universe* and *Rainbow Brite*. Worse still were the sales of *BraveStarr* toys; the gamble hadn't paid off, and the line was underperforming. Still, Mattel hoped that once the show came on the air, that sales would pick up.

Now I want to back up a bit and point out that we had wanted the *BraveStarr* film to come out before the toys and before the TV show. The value of the film was that the film got out there before the toys, and it sold the other commodities. I tried to explain that to Mattel. When we did *He-Man*, the cartoon reached the audiences shortly after the toy was released, and the audience could then see the toy and know how to play with it. When we sold them *BraveStarr*, they were so desperate for another hit that they released the toys way before we had the movie or the shows ready. Kids would look at those toys and not know how to play with them; they didn't know what the relationships were.

I couldn't stop Mattel because I had made a deal with them to have the rights. It never dawned on me that they were going to release the toy line before the show was released! And then I wasn't able to convince Teleprompter to get Mattel to wait because they needed something to tell their stockholders. But it was so basic. It's not like the toy was going to introduce the show. The show was going to introduce the toy. But they couldn't think like that; it didn't make sense to them, and the toys were a disaster.

During February and March, Filmation produced artwork and a video presentation for a new series we wanted to do called *Hardchrome, The Last P.I.* It had originally come out of an idea called *Hard Core*, about the first private investigator in ancient Rome, and then the last one in the future. It was going to be an animated series for adults, with crime, violence, and sex. It was very pulp hard-boiled detective, but with a science-fiction twist.

Hardchrome was an illegal private investigator who operated in Frisco City, the largest city in the world with 400 million people. The city was built in levels that went two miles up. The top level was Alpha, where all the rich people lived. Next down were the parks of Epsilon Sector, the suburbs of Theta, the industries of Lambda, and the heavy city maintenance machinery of Phi. The lowest level, down near the ground, was where Hardchrome lived, and it was seedy and dark. The reason P.I.s were outlawed was because the police force became robotic, but, as an ex-cop, Hardchrome straddled both sides. Due to being run over by a speeding groundcar, he had a chrome steel skeleton and right hand.

Two gorgeous women were Hardchrome's main assistants. Shere Courage—pronounced "sheer"—was the sexy computer hacker and fighter. Honey Sexton was the spoiled rich girl whose life Hardchrome once saved. He was also aided by a gang of street kids called the Omega Sector Irregulars, a superstitious conman named Trinkets, and mysterious benefactor Stinker DePew and his cyborg dog Freelance.

The few surviving cops who controlled the mechanical cops, or "MACS," had a love-hate relationship with their ex-compadre. The villains of the series were under the control of enormous crimelord Stainman Whyte, also known as "Whyte Underbelly." There were also the biologically created Ratso Butchers and Salamutes who lived in the sewers; Torquemada, the mobile torturer; the McKenzie Sluts, a gang of female terrorists who were called "The Rosebud Liberation Army" in the early versions of the proposal; and the Ninja Chainsaw Assassins.

Hardchrome was a great story and a great idea, with a tough-talking, two-fisted gumshoe and guns and girls. I went a bunch of places with it, but nothing happened. It would have been a groundbreaking adult animated series, but nobody had faith that kind of thing could be done.

In mid-March we got bad news from our parent company. Dan Richie was stepping down as chairman and CEO of Westinghouse on May 1st. When he decided to quit, he asked Jay and I to come to New York. I didn't know why he asked, but we went and had lunch with him. He said, "I want to tell you before you heard it anyplace else that I'm leaving the company, and I just want you to know that it had nothing to do with you guys." He told me the history of why he was leaving, which was a very sweet thing to do.

It was devastating news for us because Dan had always had a good vision as to how we could work together and where to go in the future. Dan was an amazing guy,

Above:
Presentation art for *Hardchrome, The Last P.I.*

honest and decent, and had shared our vision of producing material directly for syndication. When he left the company, the spirit of the company changed. It really left a hole in the earth as far as I was concerned because there was no one at Westinghouse headquarters that I could talk to that had any inkling of what we were trying to do.

Ed Vane, who had been at Group W for quite a while, became president and CEO. Dan was replaced as chairman by Burton Staniar, who was basically an accountant. He didn't see any future in what we could do and how we could do it. He was a nice guy, but it didn't work out. The bean counters were not bad people, but all they wanted to know was how much we were going to make, what it was going to cost to make, and when we were going to have it ready.

Ed and his wife did come out to visit the offices, and we went to dinner at a nice restaurant that doesn't exist anymore called Chasen's in Beverly Hills. Thank God I wasn't drinking too much because, when we left the restaurant, I was driving them back to their hotel, and I heard a police siren behind us. I was trying to make a left turn from the right lane!

The policeman pulled us over and said, "May I see your license, sir?" I handed him the license, and he went back and did whatever they do on their computers and intercoms. He came back and said, "Mr. Scheimer, I sure like your cartoons." And I said to him, "Really? Does this mean I don't get a ticket?" He said, "Oh no! You got a ticket all right, but your cartoons are still good." And there was a little laugh from the backseat from the new president of the company.

In April Filmation went to MIP-TV at Cannes, repping *BraveStarr* and *Ghostbusters*. We also were selling the international distribution rights for Saban's 26-episode anime series, *Macron I*. For the trip I accompanied Alice Donenfeld, Gail Munn, account executives Paul Baccus and Pat Ryan, and Joe Simon, our post-production general manager. It was odd to be pushing an animated show that wasn't Filmation's, but there we were.

Also in April we began development on a concept called *Hero and the Land of Legend*. We got quite a bit of production art and designs completed, as well as some story and character development, before the project was shelved. I'll talk more about what became of this project in a future chapter.

In May Gail Munn was part of a panel at Cannes' Micel licensing market, discussing television programs and merchandising. She came down hard on toy companies in a *Weekly Variety* interview, saying, "I came here to say the toy companies are ruining the business. Their business is selling toys, and they regard their TV shows as commercials. For them, TV is there to drive the sales of their toys. They don't treat the TV industry as a real industry, and they are blocking out somebody else's industry where people's livelihoods depend on film production and the need to make quality programming suitable for children." Indeed, the practice of licensing income demanded by popular toy-based shows was coming dangerously close to old-fashioned payola.

The feared animation cutback at networks didn't come, with NBC surprising everyone by ordering a massive 133 new half-hours for the fall schedule compared to their usual 90 half-hours. ABC and CBS also held strong, while crowing smugly about the decline in syndicated ratings due to the glut of programming. And advertisers were being choosier; there were enough ad dollars to support five shows a day, but not 20. Ad costs had dropped from $15,000 for 30 seconds to $7,000. And by now, most everything—network or syndicated—was being produced overseas, with Filmation being the final holdout of all-American animation. I told *Variety* that animation was "the most vulnerable segment of the entertainment industry. Animation could disappear in the United States."

As summer rolled around, it became time for the semi-regular strike against animation studios. This time it was the Screen Actors Guild, which was tub-thumping for the almost 200-member voice actor contingent. Talks began in April, with a planned walkout after May 13th if contract demands were not met. A week after that date, talks reached an impasse. The strike began on June 15th, with picketers hitting each of the studios, beginning with Disney on the 16th, DIC on the 17th, Marvel the 18th, Hanna-Barbera on the 19th, and Filmation on the 22nd.

The strike didn't immediately affect us, as we had already completed our voice work for the season. Still, I was ticked off at SAG, as voice actors were extremely well paid. I told *Variety* that, even as we were trying desperately to keep all of our work in the U.S., what SAG was "asking for is going to put another nail in the coffin of TV animation in the country."

Talks happened with SAG a few days after we were struck, but then we all reached an utter deadlock and broke off discussions. On June 30th we put an ad in the trade papers for non-SAG voice-over talent auditions. It was our way of saying we were ready to continue with or without SAG actors. We weren't the only ones, as Disney was also auditioning non-SAG actors. SAG struck back with full-page ads urging actors not to "scab" work for non-union roles. Meanwhile, on July 1st Hanna-Barbera signed an agreement with SAG, backing themselves out of the strike.

Talks finally resumed on July 22nd, and after 39 days of striking, an accord was reached. Ratified on July 23rd following a 16½ hour

bargaining session, the new three-year agreement called for a 10% pay raise, a reduction in recording session time from eight hours to four hours, and a 10% automatic bonus if the actor provided three voices in any one recording session. The pact was fully ratified on August 11th.

Filmation held the world premiere of our *Pinocchio* film at The Art of the Animated Image: The Walter Lantz Conference on Animation held at Los Angeles's American Film Institute on June 12–14th. In an interview that same week with *Variety* about the state of animation, I revealed that instead of meeting its $6 million budget, *Pinocchio* had actually cost $9.5 million; what I didn't say was that the film had only cost about $4 million, but the Disney suit had bulked up the rest of the cost. "We spent too much money. We shouldn't have, but we did learn a lot about the craft in the process. I don't care how much television you've done; this is a whole new world. That big screen is not kind." The budget for *BraveStarr* had gone up as well, from $3.5–4 million to $4.5 million. The pictures would have to be a success… or we'd be in trouble.

In early July New World Pictures agreed to distribute *Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night* theatrically for the Christmas season. It would be their first foray into animation, and our first major studio release.

Also in July a producer at Dino de Laurentiis Productions approached Filmation to develop an animated spin-off of their *King Kong* movies. At the end of *King Kong Lives*, King and Queen had a kid, and they wanted to develop that concept for a show. John Grusd's development department was busy with other projects, but Rob Lamb was on a short hiatus after the *BraveStarr* storyboard season and had expressed interest in moving into development. Rob was dispatched over to de Laurentiis' Beverly Hills office to meet with the producer… who didn't have a clear idea of what the series should be. He proposed that we could have Kid Kong do anything: grow as large as a mountain, fly through space, shoot laser beams out of his eyes, turn invisible, blow buildings down with his breath, etc. Rob responded that giving a character god-like powers, though visually interesting, creates problems in storytelling. A real hero overcomes his limitations to save the day. The producer accepted Rob's suggestion to limit Kid Kong's powers to growing as large as his father and shrinking to the size of a mouse. The rest of the time he would be normal ape size, which is easier to stage with other characters.

Next, the producer opined that Kid Kong could go to other planets, all over the universe. Rob pointed out that the Earth is quite interesting on its own, and most planets in other stories are based on Earth locations, such as an ice planet, a jungle planet, a water planet, a desert planet, etc. When Rob said his favorite adventure show from his childhood was *Jonny Quest*, the producer's eyes lit up. They decided that *Kid Kong* would be an action-adventure concept set in exotic locations around the world.

The producer's budget for presentation art bought two weeks of Rob's time. Rather than create a few full-color pieces, Rob generated dozens of pencil sketches and wrote a mini-series bible with character descriptions and vehicle and prop designs. Rob figured it might help him get into the development department. When the work was finished, a meeting was set up between the producer and myself. Rob walked the two of us through what he had created. I thought it looked like something Filmation could do and dismissed Rob, so that I could talk business with the producer. Unfortunately, the producer said that Dino just wanted a work-for-hire deal, and wasn't interested in the partnership arrangement I had in mind. So, 20 minutes into the meeting, the deal was off. *Kid Kong* never went anywhere else. I did, however, have further contact with Dino sooner than I expected.

On August 1st I appeared on a weekly British show called *Right to Reply*, which was a *60 Minutes*-like show from the U.K.'s Channel 4. The topic was that old bugaboo, concerns over whether TV shows promoted toys and violence. In taped segments, I trotted out my general comments that were by now becoming almost rote when discussing *He-Man* and *She-Ra* in this context, supported by Andy Allen, the head of Britain's ITV, who said *He-Man* was a superb example of animation. Amusingly, in reviewing the special, *Weekly Variety* called our program "He-Man and the Master Race"! I'm fairly certain that an old Jew like me wouldn't have produced that show under any circumstances.

Pinocchio debuted in West Germany on August 6th, and in London sometime thereafter. We held a private screening in Boston in October, which was attended by the press. *Variety* said, "Adults will find the animation weak and the story largely derivative, but understanding kids should have a good time."

September 12th was the day that we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Filmation. I don't recall a lot of what went on that day—by which I probably mean that a lot of celebratory drinks were imbibed—but one of the cool things we did was to produce a poster for the event. The poster contained 173 characters animated—or shot in live-action—by Filmation since we began, and arranged in stacks and rows so that the negative space between and around them spelled out the letters of the Filmation logo.

Standing in the center, on top of the "A," was me

Opposite & Above:
Rob Lamb's design art for *Kid Kong*

in a photo with my arms outstretched. I felt a little strange being the only one on top of the poster, but Norm had quit the company, and Hal had quit the company. I did start the company, and I was running it, so I got over the feeling. The poster was an astonishing piece of work, and I wish I could recall how many or which artists worked on it. That photo, by the way, was taken with me standing atop my own desk in my office, and it has been repurposed for the cover of the very book you're reading now!

The final 14 episodes of *She-Ra* aired in 1987 as part of an abbreviated third season, but I don't have records of their airdates. The ratings on the show had started to slow down, as did the sales on the toys—at least in the U.S., though both were still hot worldwide—and it was fairly clear that if we had gone for a full second season of 65 episodes, it might have hurt us financially. I don't remember much about the final shows, except that one of them, "Brigis," written by Coslough Johnson, pretty closely "borrowed" its plot from *Brigadoon*. We had another Sea Hawk episode as well, and those were popular.

We only did a couple more crossovers with He-Man, though we did do an Orko-specific episode. Tom T. and Bob Forward put a script together for an episode called "The Silaxian Wars," which was going to be a crossover with *He-Man*, and which used a lot of stock footage fight scenes from various episodes, and somebody died in it. But Don Roberts, our consultant, said that the show went too far with action. Even though the action sequences were all scenes that had been done before, stringing them together was too strong. He said, "There's a difference between giving a kid an ice cream cone and letting them loose in an ice cream factory."

The final *She-Ra* episode was "Swifty's Baby," about the birth of She-Ra's magical winged unicorn's child. It was the only story that Arthur Nadel worked on directly for credit on *She-Ra*; he got a story credit, and J. Larry Carroll worked on the story and did the teleplay. That was also the last story that Arthur ever created for us. He worked on *BraveStarr* in his capacity as executive vice president of creative affairs, but that birth was his final direct gift to the animation world.

By the way, I'll digress here for one final story about Arthur. Tom Sito reminded me once of a funny story involving Arthur and his dry sense of humor. There was one day when a writer answered the call of nature and retired to the men's room. There, he saw Arthur standing at the urinal, with one hand directing his business, and the other hand holding some text-covered pages. He was engrossed in the text. The writer asked, "Are you reading scripts in here?" to which Arthur replied, "No. These are instructions."

I'm going to return to talking about *BraveStarr* again, and discuss the movie and the series together, even though the movie came out in 1988 after the series had been on the air for a while. *BraveStarr* was the show that I think that was the most novel, and the one I enjoyed as much as any other show we ever did. It was a Native American in outer space, in the future. It was cowboys and Indians with rocket ships and ray guns. We had a wonderful and interesting hero and incredible bad guys in Stampede and Tex Hex.

The tagline for *BraveStarr* was, "The planet of New Texas needed a thousand lawmen… They got one!" As we showed in the film, the mystical Shaman escaped the destruction of his home world by the villainous phantom Stampede, then used his mystical powers to save a young child named Bravestarr. Years later, in 2349, lonesome space cowboy Marshall Bravestarr is one of the toughest lawmen in the universe, and he is called to help keep the peace on the planet of New Texas, a wild and lawless world overrun with the worst outlaws in the universe.

Bravestarr teamed with the shape-changing technohorse Thirty/Thirty, the lovely Judge J. B., and the underground mole-like Prairie People— including Deputy Fuzz—to tame the wilderness and protect the settlers and miners from the rogues. The town of Fort Kerium, which served as their home base, also had a saloon—which was unusual for a cartoon series—and there was a huge bartender in it named Handlebar.

BraveStarr the movie was written by Bob Forward and Steve Hayes. I really don't know Steve Hayes very well, but I do know Bob Forward, and he's as talented a guy as I've ever had the opportunity and pleasure of working with. The funny thing about Bob was that he was also our model for Bravetarr. If you look at the poster art and key art of Bravestarr leaning up against the wall, that was based on a photo of Bob in costume.

Tom Tataranowicz—who everybody called "Tom T." mostly because they would massacre his last name otherwise—was the director, and it was his

Above:
Bob Forward was the live-action model for *BraveStarr*

first feature film direction. As I mentioned before, he directed other shows for us, and did a lot of the *BraveStarr* episodes. He had worked on the storyboard, and he really knew the picture backwards and forwards, and he brought a lot of his soul and spirit into the thing. There was a kiss in the movie that was all his idea.

Even before he started on the movie, Tom T. shot and directed the live-action material we used for rotoscoping to create stock sequences. He filmed an actor and an actress at a studio in Ventura, making sure to get a lot of footage of them in traditional western poses. We didn't have the normal gunfights that westerns had, but we did have laser gun fights, and lots of stare-downs as Bravestarr or the villains faced each other. Tom T. also decided to use a lot of lighting tricks on the feature, which added shadows in from fire or during night scenes, or special effects sequences.

The movie actually introduced all the characters and settings, and was supposed to come out before the series. We had the little Prairie People coming out of the earth, the big villain coming out of the sky, the Indians in the beginning… all the background and origins you could want. It also had some really early wireframe computer graphics in it, which was still quite revolutionary at that time.

I don't know if we ever explicitly said that Bravestarr was a Native American, but it was clear in his coloring and habits, and he worked with a mystical tribal shaman and so forth. Being set in the future and on another planet, we figured that "Native American" might not be as important a distinction for them to make—they were all settlers on New Texas, and it was the aliens who were natives—but, at the same time, we wanted a non-traditional hero who wasn't just another Caucasian guy. Oddly, none of the press really picked up on the fact that we had a Native American hero… and hadn't made a big deal out of it.

Thirty/Thirty was kind of absurd, but at the same time was really quite cool. He was a horse who acted like a human, but was part robot. J.B. was the girl judge in the show, and the love interest for Bravestarr, and she was based on Judge Roy Bean, the legendary judge and saloon owner from Texas. The prairie people were the little animals that were always included for the funny parts because we knew that even in a serious show we had to have those for younger viewers. But even with the comic relief, we showed that some of the folks were kind of prejudiced toward the Prairie People, so we tried to inject a bit of lessons into their storyline.

Bravestarr was played by Pat Fraley, the man of a million voices. He was a nice guy and kind of looked like the character. Alan Oppenheimer was the overall bad guy, Stampede, but he did a whole different villain voice than he had done as Skeletor. He added a lot of very weird sounds to the role, and he also played Outlaw Skuzz and Handlebar. Judge J.B. was Susan Blu, and she was charming. These days she is a voice director herself. Ed Gilbert was both the Shaman and Thirty/Thirty. Playing Tex Hex and Deputy Fuzz was Charlie Adler, and he was a—I'm not going to say anything more about him.

Erika directed the voices again, including me—I mostly played various gang members who worked for Tex Hex, including various coyotes and a pig—and she even dabbled in working on some of the sound design and sound effects.

One ironic thing about us doing *BraveStarr* was that Art Nadel, as executive VP of creative affairs, was ultimately in charge of the stories, and he had been a director and writer of many old Hollywood western shows and films… some of which had been filmed at the same site on which the new Filmation offices now stood!

Remember in the early chapters about how I grew up watching western serials and science-fiction serials? When we did *BraveStarr*, I basically felt like we couldn't get any cooler. There were some great visuals in it, a combination of prairies and mountains and foreign and exotic-looking villages. Visually it was wonderful!

BraveStarr also tried to do something worthwhile within the context of the show, using the same educational foundation that we tried to put into all of our shows. And with its retro feel, plus guns and cool graphics, I thought that it had the ability to appeal to an adult audience.

Within its context, we did some meaningful shows. "Eye of the Beholder" written by Tom T. and Michael Stevens was about Tex Hex falling in love with a blind girl, so she didn't prejudge him based on his looks, and it let us see a more human side to the villain. We also did one about drug use called "The Price," written by Bob Forward, and, at the end of it, Bravestarr laid a wreath on the grave of a teen boy who died because of his addiction. It was pretty powerful, and something we never would have gotten to do on a network.

Rob Lamb did one show called "Tex But No Hex," which was kind of a "clips show"—as they say in sitcoms—where Tex Hex was put on trial, and it let us show flashbacks to bits and pieces of other episodes. Rob's wife, Shawn Lamb, also did a story called "Thirty/Thirty Goes Camping" that centered on our weird technohorse. Another one called "To Walk a Mile," written by J. Larry Carroll, was about the dangers of using guns, and "Sunrise, Sunset" by Bob Forward even had a woman giving birth to a child!

We had two scripts we commissioned—"To Forgive, Divine" by Bob Forward and "The Return of Billy the Kid" by Don Heckman—that we didn't end up using because we wanted to do a two-part special episode as a backdoor pilot. It was "Sherlock Holmes in the 23rd Century" by Bob Forward, which we wanted to do as one of our future shows. It was a show that today would be called "steampunk," and it was set on Earth in the future.

In the long run, I was both right and wrong about *BraveStarr*'s appeal. By its debut, *BraveStarr* was on 88 stations, with an 85% national coverage. But due to the massive glut of new shows in syndication, we got horrible time slots. *BraveStarr* needed to be on at four in the afternoon, not seven in the morning. And I think that it may have been a little too old for the young audience, and the older audience obviously didn't—or couldn't—find it. Years later I would find out that a lot of people really liked it and appreciated its quality, but in the time that it was released, it just got lost.

I don't recall why we didn't debut the *BraveStarr* film before the show. But the film, unfortunately, didn't find an audience either. It was sad because it was the best film and one of the best series that I ever was involved with. It really looked great, and the concept was very cool.

By October ratings were in for the fall syndicated season. *Bravestarr* was number seven in the rankings, but was the only Filmation show now in the top ten. Columbia's *Real Ghostbusters* had knocked us heavily, weighing in at the number two show. And Disney was slaughtering everyone, thanks to their first syndicated series, *Duck Tales*, which easily hit number one.

At October's MIPCOM, we sold *BraveStarr* and our other shows internationally, as well as *Pinocchio* and the *BraveStarr* film. We also showed a reel for our *Snow White* picture, and drummed up interest for it. For the first time ever, we got shows of ours into Poland, although they were an odd family of titles: *He-Man, Zorro*, and *A Snow White Christmas*. Iceland and Peru picked up *Zorro* and *My Favorite Martians*. Both films went to eight Spanish-speaking countries and Portugal.

For its 54th Anniversary issue, I wrote an editorial for *Variety*, which I'm going to reprint below in its entirety:

Animation: Vanishing American Art Form

Filmation Studios celebrated its Silver Anniversary on Sept. 12. What should have been a joyous occasion for me was tempered by the fact that the future of animation in the United States has never appeared to be more dismal.

Animation has faced difficult times before. When I started out in this business in 1955, the studios were in a process of cutting back, retrenching, even closing, and television was still in its adolescence and was a minor customer for animation. What really sustained a great number of animators then, including myself, was doing commercials.

But even in those difficult days we all had faith in the capacity of animation to come into its own—and indeed it did. Within a decade the creative thinking of our animation artists opened up a marketplace in both network and syndicated television. The animation industry prospered and grew.

And yet today, in 1987, I fear for its very future.

The reason? Runaway production—the shift of work from American craftspeople to foreign production lines—a direct consequence of runaway domestic costs.

In the 25 years since I founded Filmation, the cost of producing a series has doubled, then tripled to the point where only the highest rated domestic production stands a chance of showing a profit. I'm afraid that within the next four or five years, no animation company will be able to afford to produce all its artwork in this country.

But is sending work overseas the answer? I think not. Doing so creates problems of its own. It not only puts skilled, dedicated Americans out of work, but the relinquishment of creative responsibilities to foreign studios—no matter what the apparent economic advantage—ultimately carries within it the seeds of its own destruction.

For when we no longer have the capability of doing the work ourselves, we may well be at the mercy of foreign studios—not only creatively but economically, as well.

Lest there be any doubt, consider this: the prices now being charged by Japan for this artwork are almost the same prices being charged in this country. And now the Japanese are farming out our material, sending it to Taiwan, and believe it or not, it doesn't always stop there. I've seen this practice spreading and spreading. The work is going from the U.S. to Japan, from Japan to Korea, Korea to Taiwan, and sometimes even to the Philippines.

Heaven only knows where your work is actually being done.

And so to those producers of animation who say, "Okay, we're going to do the storyboards and the layouts here, and we'll send everything else overseas," I say, "Do that and you've given up effective control of your product." There's a further problem with sending work overseas, one that particularly concerns me, and that's the question of the effect our productions have on our young audiences. Because our programs are primarily addressed to children, I have always felt a sense of responsibility as to their content and quality.

In order to honor this responsibility we need to control each and every step from script and storyboard through final editing and first-answer print. This is not possible when a large amount of the work is sent overseas.

Obviously, I feel very strongly about keeping animation in this country. Animation is one of the things we do in the United States as well as anybody, in any other country in the world. But if you're going to do it right, you've got to do all of it.

I am proud of the fact that, to date, Filmation has fought to keep all of its production here. But it is a losing battle. It is no secret that we lost money last year, we're going to lose money this year, and we're probably going to lose money next year.

Encouraging

I would like to note here that despite this loss our parent company, Westinghouse, has been fully supportive of my efforts to find a way to continue producing all of our work in this country. However, when a company has a negative cash flow, it has no choice but to start looking around for ways to be more cost conscious, and find the means to do the same quality work for a lower price.

I'm sad to say that we at Filmation can no longer hold out by ourselves. We are now reluctantly planning to send a small portion of our work overseas. It is quite possible that our theatrical

Christmas feature, Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night, may be the last animated feature produced entirely in this country. As of now, our following feature, Snow White—The Adventure Continues, will probably have a portion of the ink and paint work done overseas.

This situation could ultimately change by the introduction of computer technology to electronically paint the cels. At the moment, we are engaged in developing and creating a unique process designed for our particular needs. As with all new technology, the cost is high and the progress slow.

This technology may be animation's saving grace—a way to cut costs without hurting quality. But technology is not creative. For that we must always look to the gifted people who have made animation the art form that it is.

So while we have lost the battle, we have not yet lost the war. I believe it is still possible for us to bring the American Animation Industry back to life.

It will not be easy.

It will demand new thinking, open minds, and an honest realization of the way things really are.

It will require the full cooperation of both labor and management.

Right now, the unions don't have the ability to keep the work in this country—they've lost that power. What they have to do—what we have to do—is think about how to regain it. We're not going to regain it by fighting and arguing or living in a world that no longer exists.

It is time to use that which binds us together rather than the differences that tear us apart.

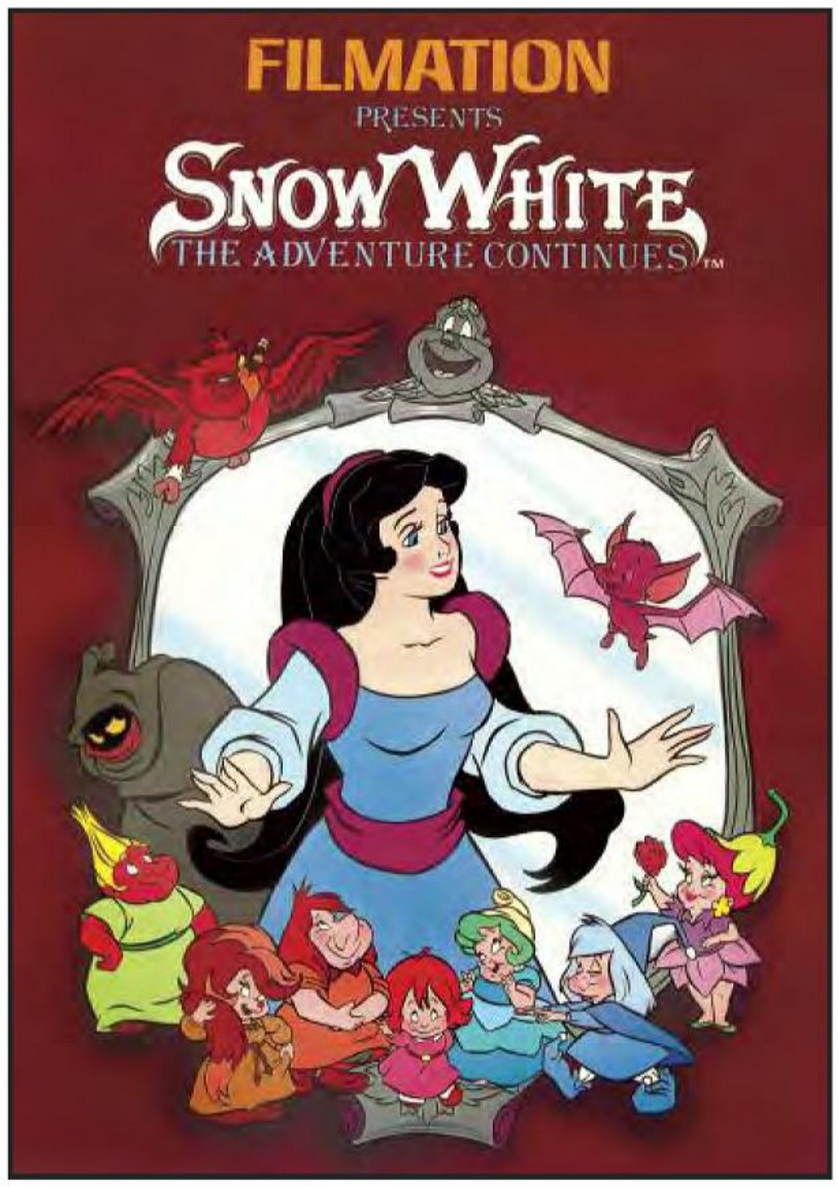
This next year is crucial for Filmation. We will continue to produce animation here. We will be as cost-conscious as we can be commensurate with quality. Westinghouse has promised to take a fair look at what we are doing and how we're doing it. And they will evaluate it to see if it's an economic reality to keep our work in the U.S.

All of us have pledged ourselves to make this happen.
I believe we can do it!

As the editorial alluded to, we had finally been forced to face the future of animation. On August 14th, I did an interview with L.A. station KABC-7's Lonnie Lardner. "I used to say that our competitors did it because of greed. I think that may well have been the case ten years ago. We did our work here then. We did our work here last month, we're gonna do it here next month, but we've come to the place where it is just costing us so much." That day they also filmed me being confronted by a crowd of crying women from the ink and paint department in front of our building. "Unfortunately, you're doing something that cannot be done in this country anymore. We can't afford it in this country, or you're going to lose 550 other jobs up there… I made, consciously, the decision to talk about the possibility of sending ink and paint out of here, and it's a very difficult thing to do because I'm talking about real live human beings."

Later, the *CBS Evening News* did an interview with me for the August 29th edition, talking about animation losing jobs to Korea. "We're losing money this year; we're gonna lose money next year, and probably the year after," I said. "I don't have a choice. We're sacrificing maybe 100 to 125 jobs to save 550 or 500 jobs. I don't know any other way to do it."

I had held out as long as I could, but I was now forced to cut costs by sending ink and paint work overseas. We were paying about $8 per cel for ink-and-paint, while every other studio that had gone overseas was paying only $1.60 per cel. Thus, about 100–125 ink and paint workers were laid off, but we scrambled to see if we could retrain them in other areas of the company and still keep them employed if possible. We also raced to try to get a computerized coloring system like that used by Hanna-Barbera, which perhaps might have allowed us to save more jobs. The earliest we could get the $7 million system up and running though would be in 1988.



I publicly blamed Westinghouse for forcing the cuts on us, and for making us send the work overseas. I even considered resigning from Filmation entirely, but I felt that if I did so, the company would probably cease operations entirely. In the *L.A. Times* I said, "The only thing that matters is how I feel about myself. If I can save 500 jobs by reducing 100, that's a lot more reasonable than losing 600 jobs." In the same article, Westinghouse spokesman Charles Furlong said, "We think we have fought longer than anyone to preserve the domestic production of animation." DIC President Andy Heyward spoke up to the *Times* as well about my difficult decision saying, "He believes in trying to support the U.S. animation industry. He's held out longer than anybody, but in doing so he's found it very difficult to compete."

As the month wore on, things took a turn even further for the worse. On Friday, November 20th, I was forced to lay off an additional 325 staff members at Filmation. We had no new shows for fall 1988, and only the remaining *BraveStarr* episodes and *Snow White* or proposed projects on which to work. It was the largest layoff in our company's history, and put one-fourth of the 1,250-member animation union out of work. About 230 people kept their jobs, leaving us at less than half of what we had been just a month or so

Opposite:
Thirty/Thirty and Marshal Bravestarr

Above:
Promotional art for *Snow White, The Adventure Continues*

before. We didn't know if or when we could rehire anyone, though April 1988 seemed the earliest possibility. We weren't the only ones hurting, as DIC was expected to make deep cuts before the year was out as well.

On December 8th we took out an ad in the *L.A. Times* offering an outplacement program to help our laid-off workers find employment, coordinated through Becky Reu, our human resources manager. We conducted seminars on finding new jobs and résumé preparation, as well as financial advice. We sent fliers extolling the virtues of our employees out to dozens of major employers and chambers of commerce in the area, and offered to help arrange interviews. The ad said that they were "employees with a keen sense of loyalty, masterful skills, and real commitment to their job," and noted that, "We are proud of our long association with these people we call 'family,' and we will miss them deeply." The sentiment was completely true.

We had a few minor victories, but, in the face of what had happened, they seemed too small. In early November *Ghostbusters* garnered an award nomination for "Best Animation Series or Special for Family Viewing" from the Ninth Annual Youth in Film Awards committee. We lost to *The Flintstone Kids*. Pushing to recoup losses, we relicensed the *He-Man and She-Ra: A Christmas Special* to 90 TV stations in the country for rebroadcast for the first time since 1985. It had, by now, aired in over 40 countries.

In the midst of this, *Pinocchio's* wide release was imminent. A 12-foot-tall costumed Pinocchio appeared with Don Knotts at a Hollywood screening on December 5th. I did an interview with Philadelphia's KYW-TV news station about the film on December 9th, and another around the same time period with Pam Thompson of L.A.'s KABC. In that latter one, I said, "These films cannot make back their original investment if you're just going to do them for this country alone, so we chose properties that have international value. Obviously, *Pinocchio*, in Europe, is a major star… There's a real audience out there waiting to be served, waiting to have good films presented to them. I think the real problem has been up until recently a lot of the animated films you're talking about have been toy properties, based on—I don't want to go into which toys. We all know which toys they are—and they've been hypes for something other than the film itself. There are no toys for this *Pinocchio* film. It is not a merchandising effort."

But there was a full-court publicity effort. We had deals with major retailers across the country, including May Company, and would give away expandable Pinocchio noses and run coloring contests. The Jack in the Box restaurants were running a kids' meal program with *Pinocchio* through December 31st, and Marvel Comics published a comic book adaptation. A charitable tie-in with the 40th Anniversary of the Marine Corps' Toys for Tots program meant that 22 cities got an early screening of the film on December 5th, 12th, and 19th, with admission based on donations to the program. The film was supported by $4 million in advertising from New World, and would open nationwide in 1,000 theaters on Christmas Day. New World hoped for a $20 million gross for the film.

The voice cast for *Pinocchio* was quite strong. Broadway actor Scott Grimes was Pinocchio, while *Happy Days* star Tom Bosley was Mister Geppetto, Pinocchio's creator and adoptive father. Rickie Lee Jones was the Good Fairy, and Don Knotts was the new bug sidekick Gee Willikers, working with Jonathan Harris as Lt. Grumblebee of the Royal Air Bugs. Villains included James Earl Jones as the Emperor of the Night, with Edward Asner as raccoon Scalawag and Frank Welker as the monkey Igor, both con artists. Also in the cast were William Windom as the evil Puppetino, Lana Beeson as girl marionette Twinkle, and Linda Gary as Beatrice.

A few quick asides about the cast: Don Knotts was one of the sweetest, loveliest men in the world. I did not know that he was practically blind. He almost had to memorize his lines because he couldn't read them. William Windom was recording once, and he asked me for a glass of liquid. I passed him the glass and thought it was water. It wasn't. It was alcohol. At 7:00, 8:00 in the morning!

Back to our film: In the story, Pinocchio celebrates his first birthday as a real boy by venturing out into the world. Sent by Gepetto to deliver a magical jewel box to the Mayor, Pinocchio is warned not to go near a newly arrived carnival ship. But, after warnings from Gee Willikers, Pinocchio is tricked out of the box by Scallawag, and in shame he runs away to join the carnival, where he's turned back into a puppet by Puppetino, who is working for the lord of evil and temptation, the Emperor of the Night. Whether Pinocchio can be released from his Faustian bargain with the Emperor, save Gepetto, and retrieve the magic box are some of the obstacles challenging the puppet boy's future.

Due to the Disney problems earlier, all of our PR made it clear that we were basing the story and characters on Carlo Collodi's original story, celebrating its 95th birthday this year. That said, we did point out the success of Disney's rereleases for *Cinderella* and *Snow White* to theaters, as well as Universal's *An American Tail*, which brought in over $40 million at the box office. There was reason for hope.

Unfortunately, reviews were mixed, and generally couldn't help but mention comparisons to Disney at least once every few sentences. *The New York Post* said, "Go see the non-violent, non-filthy,

non-disease-ridden, good, clean fun movie… it's joyous and delicious." *Hollywood Reporter* said that the "lush backgrounds reflect the arduous work poured into *Pinocchio* by hundreds of Filmation artists and technicians, the characters themselves lack chiaroscuro, and look rather flat." *The Toronto Star* noted that, "the visuals are spectacular," but warned that, "with its emphasis on the demonic, the movie was scary for the youngest audience members." *The Boston Herald*'s reviewer wrote a scathingly attacking review, noting that, "The creators at Filmation have been churning out animated garbage for 25 years, and nobody has been able to get rid of them." *The Cincinnati Post* was nicer, saying it was "a handsome, beautifully made cartoon… a welcome holiday arrival, almost as much fun for adults as it is for children."

Despite hopes for its success, *Pinocchio* only made $602,734 on its opening weekend, and eked out just $3,261,638 in the United States before it left theaters. It was a far cry from $20 million, and not even a third of its production costs. Yes, there were still all the foreign sales, but, as far as its domestic release and New World was concerned, it was a disaster. And since we had to incorporate the $4–5 million costs of the Disney lawsuit into it all, it was an even bigger loss. This did not bode well for the retitled *Snow White—The Adventure Continues* or the next planned film after that, our sequel to *Frankenstein*.

Toward the end of the year, we put together an incredible presentation and plan for Group W to capitalize on the Filmation past and future and give TV stations a consistent programming schedule. We produced a full-color hardcover binder and twelve-minute video presentation for The Kids Network. What we proposed was 52 weekday episodes of a new half-hour show to debut fall 1988, and an additional two-hour weekend program for Saturday or Sunday that would consist of 13 episodes of a new show, 52 episodes from Filmation's Greatest Hits series, 104 classic episodes from the Filmation Off-Network Classic Library, and 52 live-action celebrity-hosted segments, to create a new experience 52 weekends of the year.

In the subsequent seasons of The Kids Network, the new weekend series would be supplemented with 52 new episodes and move to the weekday slot, which would become an hour containing the previous year's show and the new show. A new 13-episode show would then debut on the weekend. On year three, the process would repeat, and the two-year-old show would go away. Year four would contain only the 13 new episodes for weekends, unless the Network was so successful that the cycle would continue. This would allow for a completely renewable show base.

The investment for Group W for the four-year plan would be $67,673,000, to include 215 new half-hours of animation and 208 celebrity-hosted segments. The TV stations would become part of the franchise in a bold marketing approach; they would share in the barter revenue and make no cash investment other than broadcasting the shows during specific prescribed hours.

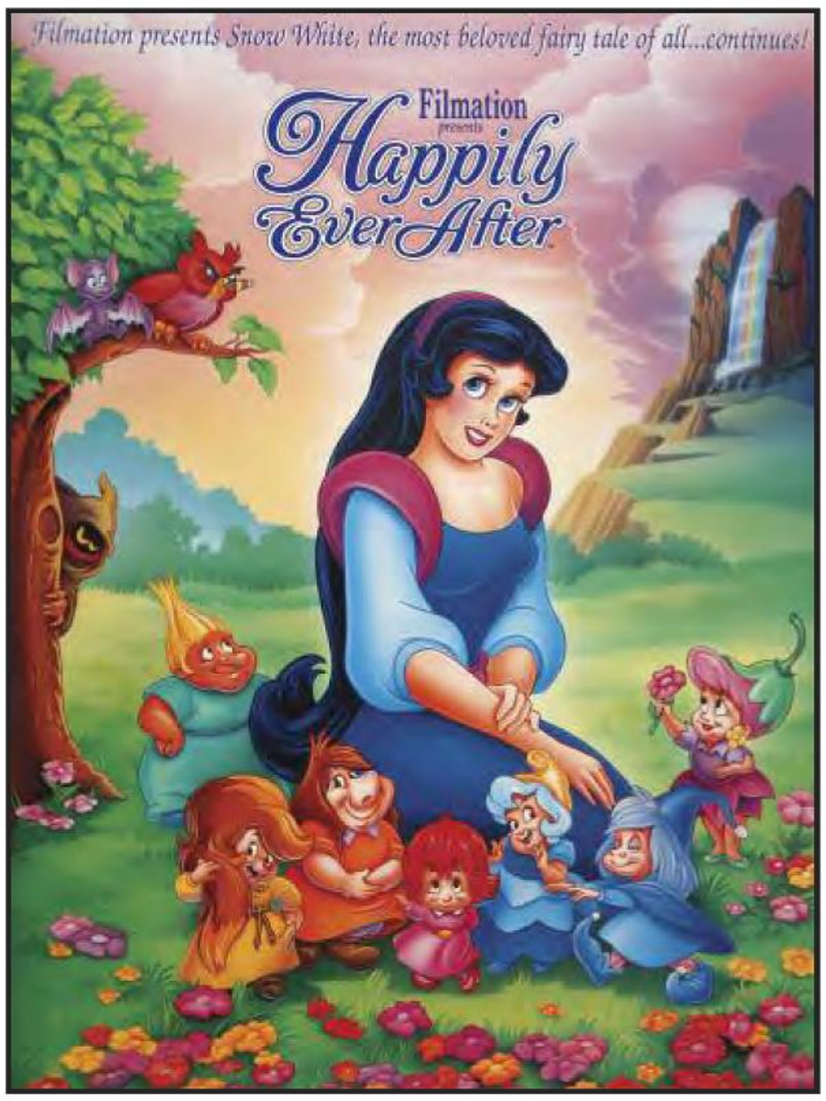
The shows we were proposing were: *Quest of the Prairie People*, a spin-off from *BraveStarr*; *Bugsburg*, a spin-off from our *Pinocchio* film; *The Seven Dwarfelles*, a spin-off from our upcoming *Snow White—The Adventure Continues* film; and finally, *Sherlock Holmes in the 23rd Century*, our steampunk spin-off from *BraveStarr.* Meanwhile, the two-hour weekend block would have an overall title of *The Gee Willikers Show*, and would feature the glowbug co-hosting a look into Filmation's library with a live-action guest-host each week. The hosts we had lined up included Bill Cosby, Scott Grimes, Emmanuel Lewis, Tony Danza, Carol Channing, Tim Conway, Tracey Ullman, and others.

The Filmation's Greatest Hits segments included *BraveStarr, Fat Albert, Ghostbusters, He-Man,* and *She-Ra*, including various holiday specials. The Filmation Off-Network Classic Library would include the various *Archie* shows, *Ark II, Blackstar, Fabulous Funnies, Fraidy Cat, Freedom Force,* the live *Ghost Busters, Groovie Goolies, Hero High, Isis, Jason of Star Command, Lassie's Rescue Rangers, Lone Ranger, Mission: Magic, M-U-S-H, My Favorite Martians, Sabrina, Shazam!, Snow White Christmas, Space Academy, Waldo Kitty*, and *Zorro*.

Despite the enormous planning that went into the proposal, Group W decided not to go forward with The Kids Network… or for that matter with any new show *at all* for 1988! As the year ended, Group W announced that Filmation was developing three new half-hour syndicated shows to offer for fall 1989 at NATPE: *Bravo!*, the renamed *Quest of the Prairie People; Bugsburg;* and *Sherlock Holmes in the 23rd Century*. Group W's Ed Vane told *Broadcasting* magazine that our parent company hoped that the crowded animation syndication market would thin out some by then, and that in today's market "it is difficult for any shows to garner sizeable ratings." Indeed, with literally dozens of new daily shows—all produced mostly or wholely overseas—everybody's shows were hurting for viewers. For kids there was a cornucopia of options; for animation companies it was a fight for survival.

And it was a fight for our survival as well. Earlier in the year, I had told *Variety* that animation was "the most vulnerable segment of the entertainment industry. Animation could disappear in the United States."

I had no idea how prophetic my words would be.



Opposite:
Promotional art for *Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night*

Above:
Promotional art for the renamed *Happily Ever After*

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

1988–1989

THE LAST OF THE RED-HOT ALL-AMERICAN STUDIOS

Our hopes for The Kids Network crushed, and with no new shows for 1988, Filmation attended January's INTV convention, as part of the Group W presentations there, repping *Bugzburg*—now with an alternate spelling to highlight the buzzing sounds of flying insects—and our older shows. We also went to NATPE on February 25th–29th in Houston. By the end of both—with the syndicated animated glut even worse than before—we had still managed to sell *Bugzburg* to 41 stations. It seemed that the TV stations had more faith in upcoming Filmation projects than our parent company did.

The "sales" of *Bugzburg* were on the same barter basis as our other syndicated shows had been, meaning we didn't get any upfront monies—or any money at all—until the show was ready to air and we sold the national advertising spots. Because we were still doing animation work in the U.S.—even if ink-and-paint had been shipped overseas—episodes were coming in at $250,000 each, instead of the standard $200,000 or less that other foreign-animated shows were being animated for. Still, respected New York media firm Petry Television had called *Bugzburg* "very promising" in a report to TV stations, and compared it to Disney's "Silly Symphony" cartoons.

We had changed horses at the right time, as children's television was beginning to move away from action-adventure shows and into "softer" more humorous shows, as well as live shows such as *Pee-Wee's Playhouse* and *Double Dare*. As a comedic show, *Bugzburg* had the right appeal at the right time.

The premise of *Bugzburg* was that it would follow the adventures of Gee Willikers, the tiny wooden glowbug sidekick introduced in our *Pinocchio* film, as he attempted to negotiate life among real bugs in a tiny town. Also starring was the popular Grumblebee, who was the breakout favorite from the film. Everything in *Bugzburg* was insectoid. The police bugs rode on bug patrol cars, and Gee Willikers, who was a reporter for the *Daily Buggle*, wrote his stories on a typewriter-bug. We had biker bugs, fortune-telling bugs, a bum bug named Maggot, and even a Mae West-like bug who was Mayor McFlusterbug's wife.

The failure of *Pinocchio* at the box office meant very little to *Bugzburg*. They were great characters within the context of the picture, but they were not besmirched by the movie. I mean, nobody saw *Pinocchio*, so the bugs weren't going to make it a failure or not a failure. They were just funny characters that nobody knew yet.

Bravo! was along the same lines. We had started work on it in 1987 under the title *Quest of the Prairie People*. Although it had started out as a *BraveStarr* spin-off, the project had taken a more

Opposite:
Gee Willikers, the star of *Bugzburg*

Above:
The flying Bravo, hero of *Quest of the Prairie People*

comedic turn as it developed. The pilot was finished on January 29, 1988, and recast the Prairie People as their own society. The cute little guys had a life of their own. When one of them is captured in the future of New Texas and taken to the Stone Age, Bravo rounded up a group of powerful Prairie People to take the TrekArk 10,000 years into the past to stop Bitter Root from enslaving their ancestors and changing the future!

Bravo was the hat-wearing inventor hero of the series, different from the others because he could fly and his thumping feet could start small desert quakes. Bravo was the prince and leader of the Fuzzy Folk, a set of lovable stone age creatures that included the sorceress Leadra, the 3,000-year-old Grumpaw, giant weed fighter Goataar, speedy girl PDQ, strong Fossel, spunky girl Teeta, young Wizzle, and con man Slick. Their lives and existence were threatened by the evil and incompetent plant person Bitter Root and his companions, who blundered through confrontations with the Fuzzy Folk. Bitter Root's villainous and wacky allies were the Weed Riders and the Cactus People, and included Yukka, Rukkus, Thorn, Stumpweed, Stinkweed, Fireweed, Milkweed, Locoweed, Belladonna, and the Weed Rats.

We also were going to do something fairly revolutionary with the show by breaking the fourth wall and making it "metatextual." We filmed a group of live children watching the show and reacting to it, and then matted them over the top of the screen in certain parts. It was similar to what they would later do with *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*, only without robots and snarky comments. MST3K had taken the concept from some *Looney Tunes* cartoons, but whereas all of those used silhouettes, we were using live kids. There were also moments where the characters would "break the fourth wall" and speak directly to the audience, or sometimes the writers and animators on the show, telling them to cut to commercial or beef up their roles. The *Bravo!* cast knew they were in a cartoon!

Around this time, we also put back into development *Seven Warriors – Seven Worlds*, the concept that we had announced as a Dino de Laurentiis-produced, Harlan Ellison-scripted live-action theatrical film in 1978. Now, we reimagined it as a series concept. The year was 2300, and mankind had long ago branched out to the stars, but, after the Third Planetary War, the galaxy was dangerous and destabilized. A group of pacifists, led by a father-and-teen-son team, Jacob and Obadiah, now sought refuge on the barren planet New Hope. Unfortunately, the relentless attacks of space pirates, led by the villainous Yang, threatened their peaceful existence. Obadiah embarks on a quest to find a group of seven mercenaries—led by Captain Stix—who will help defend New Hope and defeat the pirates. Any story resemblance to Akira Kurosawa's 1954 film masterpiece *Seven Samurai* was probably intentional. Unfortunately, it didn't meet any better fate on this second go-around.

The third week of January, Ed Vane resigned as president and CEO of Group W, and Dick Zimmerman became the new president. Dick had resigned as the head of Fox Television Stations the week prior. With Ed gone, following Dan Ritchie's exit last year, we now had nobody on Filmation's side in the Group W offices. The support for our feature films all but evaporated. The people in charge—Staniar and Zimmerman—didn't know anything about the animation business, and all they could say was, "What are you gonna make next year?" We made a fortune for them with *He-Man* and all they could see was doing more of that, and it wasn't that kind of world anymore. You can't create hits. They work or they don't work.

I said, "I gotta get out from under the Westinghouse thing," because it was getting to the place where the attorneys, and the money people who were running the company, had no feeling for what we did or how to handle it. They couldn't be effective salespeople. It was unpleasant. I had to take out some guys in the sales department whose job it was to get the shows on the air; they weren't really working on it. They didn't give a sh*t! I told them, "If you guys don't place this stuff, I'm gonna get you fired." And I would have done it because there were hundreds of people whose jobs depended upon them doing their job.

But because of their decisions, we had nothing completed and ready for 1988, so we could only sell for the future. But we still had to keep producing the work in preparation. The new guy comes in and he's saying, "You're not that busy this year. Just take the year off. We'll bring in stuff next year." He didn't understand that it took time to make the shows, and that we needed to keep the animation staff working, or we wouldn't be able to make the shows! So, I started to try to find a way to buy the company back or find a buyer… and that was a very bad mistake.

Between the lawsuit with Disney and trying to make sure multiple shows were running and movies and dealing with the lack of any allies at Group W and all the travelling and selling, it was getting overwhelming. I guess I should have had more people helping. It was really tough. All that stuff was going on at the same time, and I had

no one to talk to except myself; even Hal was not around because he had gone back up to Washington. I had to keep the workers happy. I had to keep Westinghouse happy, and then Westinghouse decided they were not going to do anything for 1988, but we'd go ahead and finish the shows for 1989… it was the dumbest thing I ever heard of!

In March we were at the American Film Market, showcasing *BraveStarr: The Movie* and *Snow White—The Adventure Continues*. We quickly sold *BraveStarr* and *Pinocchio* to Televicine in Mexico.

It was around that time that our lawyer, Ira, got a call. He said, "Lou, somebody wants to buy the company." I said, "That's a great idea. Let's talk to them and see what they really are wanting." I talked to Group W and told them that there was a possibility that somebody wanted to buy the company, and that I thought that they were not really heavily involved in it and didn't really care anymore. Why not sell it to somebody who wants it? And the guy who was running Westinghouse was delighted. He said, "Yeah, pursue it Lou," and I did.

Attending MIPCOM in Cannes in late April were Alice Donenfeld, Patricia Ryan, Carmela Spencer, and myself, and we tried to sell

secretive about his life. HHe and his brother bought controlling interest in a company called Parafrance in 1985, then grouped it with other companies into a larger company called Paravision. That company was owned by Paris-based cosmetic company L'Oreal, which was in turn owned mostly by Swiss chocolatier Nestle SA, based out of Vivey, Switzerland. L'Oreal had announced in fall 1987 that they were now looking to expand into television programming and had put up $500 million to acquire properties all over the world.

It all seemed to good to be true. The acquisition of Filmation would give them a library of properties and a way to expand. The library was the second largest animated library in the U.S., and was more than half the size of the Worldvision/Hanna-Barbera/Ruby Spears library.

Unbeknownst to me, the mogul went back to the company and told them that they should buy the company, but shut down production and just use our library of properties. They could then use the money that would have paid for further production to buy other media companies.

The fact that I didn't know about this plan for months was disastrous.

Bugzburg, Bravo!, and a show called *Dive to Adventure*. We also repped other Group W shows, including, ironically, the Murakami-Wolf-Swenson hit show, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. We sold our properties to Italy, France, England, Finland, Denmark, Norway, Argentina, Columbia, Portugal, Gibraltar, India, Singapore, Bahrain, and Canada.

Dive to Adventure was a live-action underwater show directed by Jack McKenney. We "produced" it with Jeff Hughes Productions, and Barry Clark was the series producer, with Bob Abrams executive producing. I think there were 13 episodes produced, ranging from topics about the Florida swamps, to the Red Seas, to sharks. The reason I put "produced" in quotes is because I don't recall that we actually did anything on the shows other than help get them distributed, but that got us a production credit. Alice sold the hell out of those shows, especially overseas. Here in the U.S., the show aired on the Discovery Channel, and even garnered a Cable Ace Award nomination in October 1989, but it is mostly forgotten today, without even an IMDB listing.

I met with the potential buyer for Filmation while I was at MIPCOM. It was a real estate mogul from London who was quite

Meanwhile, potential legislation was heating up to limit the amount of advertising time that could be sold for any children's show, animated or not. If the legislation were approved, many shows on the cusp of bare profitability might lose one commercial spot and become unprofitable. And over in the U.K., the new British Action for Children's Television (BACTV)—inspired by Peggy Charren's U.S. group—had sprung up to attack toy-related children's show imports.

In what little time I had of a private life, I had commissioned L.A. architect—and co-founder of the Southern California Institute of Architecture—Ray Kappe to design us a beach house on 16th Street in Manhattan Beach. We tore down an older house and had Kappe and Dean Nota design a round home with a three-story atrium, and a 10' x 40' lap pool deck on the roof. Like our home in Tarzana, we included a lot of glass in the design, here mostly so that we could look out over the Pacific Ocean. It was completed near the end of the year, and was not meant to replace our Tarzana home, but to be a comfortable beach house.

In June a complete 33-page financial profile was

Above:
Development art for *Seven Warriors Seven Worlds*

done of Filmation by investment firm L. F. Rothschild & Co., Inc. to give to our potential buyers. In it, the state of our finances was introduced: "Although sales of new series were reduced in 1986–87 in response to a current industry-wide product glut, Filmation still enjoyed 1987 revenues and operating income of $29.2 million and $5.4 million, respectively. As part of the Company's overall performance, library sales have generated over $18.5 million in revenue over the last five years."

In July Celebrity Home Entertainment licensed *BraveStarr* for domestic video release. Their first 101-minute tape, priced at $39.95, was set to go to stores on August 30th, followed by a video release of the first animated *Ghostbusters* volume on September 20th.

You remember Herman Rush, the head of Columbia back during the *Ghostbusters* tussle? By 1988 he was running a company called Royal Animated Art, and he began an aggressive campaign to purchase animation production cels and art in August to resell it to the public and to gallery stores. Chief among their early advertised offerings were three Filmation shows: *The Archies, Fat Albert*, and *Lone Ranger*. We had actually talked about destroying a warehouse full of past Filmation art when Herman had offered to sell it for us, paying us a royalty. He wanted to control the business of selling animation

NBC because they didn't have an audience for their shows, ever. I mean, it was the same show, and viewers were the same kind of kids, but they were turning the knob because it wasn't on CBS.

As mentioned in the last chapter, *BraveStarr: The Movie*—also called *Bravestarr: The Legend* in early prints—came out following the conclusion of the new episodes of the syndicated series. I believe that we did an early screening in L.A. on March 18th, but opened it to selected national theaters around August 17th, whereupon, it tanked. A *L.A. Times* reviewer noted that we tried "to move an old-fashioned, shoot-'em-up western into a *Star Wars* setting, but achieves only limited success… The film boasts some impressive computer-generated special effects, and the computer animators did their job almost too well. The three-dimensional renderings of machines move in realistic perspective—which makes the limited drawn animation of the characters look even flatter and stiffer by comparison."

In October, for my 60th birthday, Tom Tataranowicz gave me a gorgeous piece of original art from *Prince Valiant*. Dated January 16, 1944, it showed Val and other characters using poles to steer a raft in the rapids. I think that it's the only official piece of comic book or comic strip art that I own.

cels. I said, "Herman, you're crazy!" and he said, "Oh no, I'll make it work. I'll give you money down." So, we made a deal, and he took over the warehouse. Eventually, it became a mess because there's a limited amount of people who are overly interested in that material. He started making wholesale deals, selling them off to other companies. But whatever the deal he made with me was, he always lived up to. Herman's an absolutely honest guy.

The news that Group W had begun talks with L'Oreal to purchase Filmation leaked out to the press in mid-August. When the rumor broke in *Variety,* Group W refused to comment on the possible sale. It would be six months before the outcome would be known. But things were beginning to heat up.

Cable channel USA Network unveiled an ambitious schedule for a fall 1988 debut. They booked *She-Ra* and *Fat Albert* as daily shows from 5:30–6:30 p.m. Meanwhile, Phyllis Tucker Vinson, an African-American woman, was NBC's vice president of children's programming. She put reruns of *Fat Albert* on the air for its Saturday morning schedule in September 1988–1989. It lasted only one season. It died. It was like it had never existed for 13 years on CBS and in syndication. As far as I was concerned, the real problem had to be

In early December our attorney, Ira Epstein, confirmed to the press that Group W was in talks with a French firm to buy Filmation. A few weeks later, LBS Communications signed a deal with Mattel to produce a new *He-Man* animated series that would be entirely independent of the Filmation series. The new series would be planned for 1990 airing.

At the NATPE convention in Houston in January 1989, we finally cleared 70% national coverage with *Bugzburg* sales; ironically, the fact that we were pre-selling *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* for Group W had probably helped our sales on our own property.

Preparing for Toy Fair in February, we created a four-page color brochure for *Bugzburg* that promoted the characters and concepts and emphasized the licensing appeal of the series. We were also still working on materials for *Bravo!* as well, and printed a fold-out brochure promoting the show, promising "Old-Fashioned Comedy… New-Fashioned Comedy… Action and Adventure… Fantasy and Magic… Audience Involvement… *Bravo!* offers a lot of slapstick… a load of laughs… a bit of whimsey… even a touch of '*Moonlighting*'… and a ton of action. An innovative mix that will have viewers around the world shouting: *Bravo!*"

We also had a bunch of prototype stuffed toys made of the *Bravo!* characters. We were going to see if we could get the manufactured overseas, but nothing ever happened with them. I have the prototypes in my office, collecting dust on the shelves.

Behind the scenes I found out that L'Oreal deal was about to happen. Their public buying price for the company and "all works in progress and certain other assets" was $25 million. I also found out that they weren't interested in keeping the company running. I thought that they would keep the company going, producing new work. At worst they would force me to move even more production overseas.

That wasn't the case, as I now found out.

The library was actually what they wanted. They didn't give a sh*t about the rest of the stuff. It was the worst of all outcomes for Filmation. Westinghouse was delighted because all they wanted was to make money and get the hell out of it. If they sold, they would be making, in reality, around $38 million, plus they had millions of dollars worth of international money coming in from stuff we had sold all over the world. They would end up with probably around $50 million, which doesn't sound like a huge deal in Hollywood today, but we were not a huge company. It was a lot of dough for back then.

The local Westinghouse guy, whose job it was to keep them from losing money, saw a real thing with L'Oreal; the money was on its way. He told me there was no way he was going to interfere with this deal because he could just go back to Westinghouse and say, "Look what we've done! We've done terrific! We've made $30 million! I've sold the company, and you don't have anything to worry about." So he turned Dino De Laurentiis down, and my plan to get Dino to buy the company failed.

I had two days left, but there was no way to stop the deal and save the company. The reason timing was so specific was because a new federal law was going into effect on February 4th that required any plant that was closing to give workers 60 days notice before shutting doors. So the deal had to be completed and the company had to be shut down by Friday, February 3rd.

I think it was Wednesday the 1st or Thursday the 2nd. I came in to the office and there were these four or five pricks in black suits and white stockings and black shoes—a Westinghouse crisis team from Pittsburgh. And they said, "We're going to start talking to people to tell them all they are out of a job, and the company is closing." And I said, "No, you're *not*. I will not let you talk to those people. If you call those people in, I'll tell them to go home before you talk to them. You will let me talk to them because they've never seen you; *I've* never seen you!"

So I called a meeting. It was around 10:00 in the morning as far as I can remember. We had a large auditorium we used for showing dailies. It could hold a hundred people, but it didn't have a lot of luxury at the time. But we crammed in as many people as we possibly could. It was all of the department heads and a lot of others, and some of them would later have to tell those who couldn't make it to the meeting.

I told them exactly what had happened, where we had gone, what I had done, and what I had tried to do with the French people. They knew that I had been talking to the French people about buying the company, but they had no idea they were going to be fired. I told them what I had tried to do with de Laurentiis. I was honest about everything. They did ask questions, and I answered them to the best of my ability. At the end of what I had to say, they all stood up and clapped, except one guy. I had hired him a week before, and he came up and said, "Lou, what'd you hire me for? You hired me to fire me?"

So, with only about three days before a sale was about to go through, I decided to make a last-ditch effort to buy the company back to salvage it. I called up Dino de Laurentiis because I knew that he had been interested in buying the company years prior to that, and he could raise the money. I said what I'd really like him to do, if he was still interested in buying the company, is to get him on the phone with Westinghouse, and he could tell them he was interested and he'd like to take the place of the French guys who wanted to close us down.

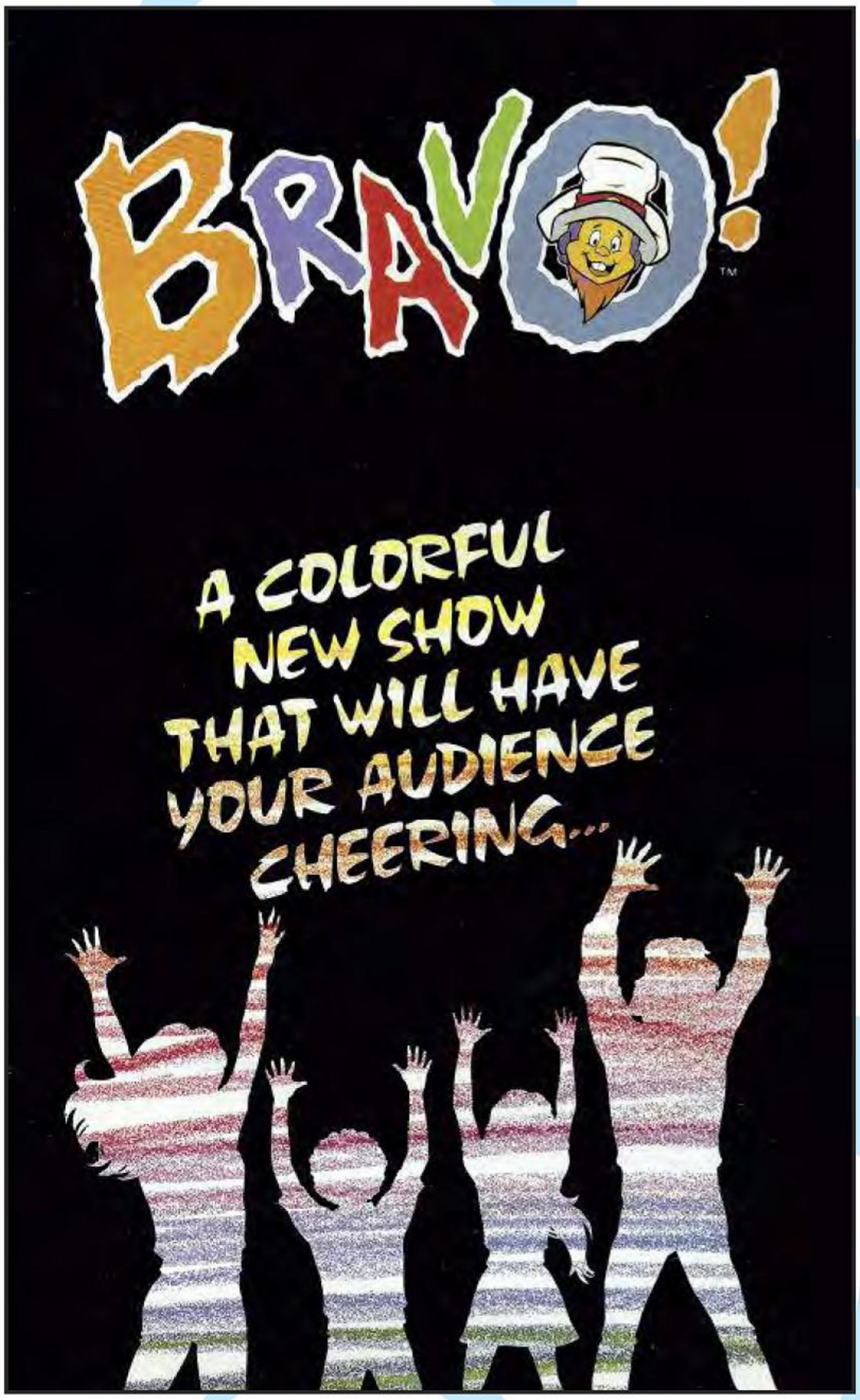
I told him who the buyer was, and he went berserk. "He's a f*cka!" he shouted in his accent. He told me he would do anything to destroy the guy, "f*cka him, f*cka his mother, f*cka his grandmother, f*cka his children, f*cka everybody he knows!" So I got Dino on the phone with the guy who was running the Westinghouse offices out here in California, and he didn't want to hear about it. All he knew was that he was getting $30 or $40 million from the French guys. He didn't give a sh*t that Dino could raise more money if given a little bit of time; it was nothing for him to worry about. He was just delighted with not having to worry about Filmation anymore.

Above:
Images from *Bugzburg*

Everybody left the auditorium and started packing up their stuff. Westinghouse had checks already written out. The rest of the time was pretty blurry for me. I remember that Alice Donenfeld, who was a tough broad, sat in her room, and, as she saw people leaving, she was crying. That really threw me for a loop. I mean, I couldn't imagine her crying at her own death.

On our bulletin board in the offices, one of our artists had put up a cartoon which showed a female praying mantis devouring her mate. Written on the mantis was the word "L'Oreal" and her prey was labeled "Filmation."

So, on Friday, February 3rd, Filmation closed its doors at the end of the business day, and the remaining staff of 229 animators were let go. Group W promised the workers outplacement assistance—a program we had retained since the previous cuts—and many of them were immediately snapped up by DIC, whose business was booming, and Warner Bros. TV, which was hiring for its newly revitalized animation unit, which was beginning development on *Tiny Toons Adventures*.



Westinghouse gave some bonuses to people who had been there as managing department heads, or those who had been there x number of years—there were a lot of people who had worked here 20 years or so. Westinghouse made it sound like they were being nice guys, but it was all bullsh*t.

There was a staff of about 20 people who were kept on until the deal closed, which was expected sometime in the second quarter of the year. Mostly they were just there to help pack everything up. There was one guy, whose name I won't mention, who had a tough Detroit background. He was packing up a lot of the stuff that was unfinished. He asked, "Do you want me to f*ck up all the stuff ? I can make them look okay, but they'll never figure out how to finish them." I told him not to do it.

Some of those who stayed on were Tom T., Joe Mazzuca, Bob Pope, and Alice. Basically, it was the people who were heading up departments who could wrap things up. Meanwhile, my lawyer, Ira Epstein, represented the interests that Norm still had in the company, and mine as well, to make sure that our settlements were correct. So, other than myself, Ira was the only person who worked for Filmation from Day One to the end. He wasn't an employee directly—he was outside counsel—but we were his clients, and he was a good friend.

A week after our closing, on February 10th, I took out a full-page ad on Friday in both *Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety*. Rather than transcribing its text, we will reproduce the ad in this book. Every word in it is as true today as it was in 1989.

A few days later, the Motion Pictures Sound Editors announced the nominations for their 36th Annual Golden Reel Awards. *Pinocchio and the Emperor of the Night* was up for an award for Animated Features – Sound Effects Editing. At the March 18th banquet, the award went to Disney's *Oliver & Company* instead.

The future of *Bugzburg* was thrown into question by the sale of the company. We had already had all 65 episodes written, and most of the voices had been recorded. The show was designed, and at least two episodes were completed. And by the date of closing, the series had cleared 72% of the country. L'Oreal was studying the books to see if the project could be profitable if completed, and if they could bring an investment partner in. If they decided to proceed, Filmation could be reinstituted and hire staff members back, though some work would be outsourced to overseas companies.

Also in question was *Bravo!*, the spin-off from *BraveStarr*. Like *Bugzburg*, much of *Bravo!* had been completed. All 65 scripts were done, all designs were finished, the voice tracks were all recorded, and at least two episodes were completed. Most of our feature film *Snow White – The Adventure Continues* was also done, and it was similarly orphaned.

It was expected that if *Bugzburg* would go forward, Group W would still handle the distribution because they had already worked out the deals with TV stations.

Bugzburg and *Bravo!* could have worked out. We were up to $9 million in expenses on each of them when the studio got closed, but we had enough European sales to pay to finish them. And the dumb *ssholes at Paravision, all they had to do was finish them….

Alice Donenfeld was under contract to Group W for Filmation sales until May 31st, but she set up her own international distribution company called Alice Communications Ltd. At the MIP-TV market in Cannes in late April, she repped Group W and Filmation and

her own company. Coming full circle, some of the first projects she represented were my early effort *Rod Rocket*, as well as UPA's *Mr. Magoo and Friends* and *Dick Tracy*.

As soon as we returned from MIP, in the first week of May, I formed a new company called Lou Scheimer Productions, and moved offices to 20300 Ventura Boulevard in Woodland Hills, not far from our old Filmation home. I took with me some of the Filmation staff members who were still packing up the company. The old Filmation offices were released to the landlord, Topanga-Warner Associates, while a small group of Group W salesmen remained in the offices to sell properties. The move made the front page in the trades, not showcased as the last death rattle of Filmation, but as a new beginning.

One of the things we tried to do was to buy back the rights to *Bugzburg*. L'Oreal wasn't interested. They would rather kill everything that was done than allow anyone else to do it.

In August, United American Video announced plans to release several budget VHS releases at $5.99: Filmation's *Space Sentinels, Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids, Blackstar, My Favorite Martians, Groovie Goolies*, and *The Secret Lives of Waldo Kitty.*

In their least stupid move regarding the Filmation brand, in October, Paravision/L'Oreal announced that Alice Communications would be the international distribution representative for Filmation for territories outside the U.S. and Western Europe. Paravision would handle those two territories. A full-court press was made for MIPCOM in Paris that month, with advertising that showcased "*He-Man, She-Ra, Ghostbusters, Brave Starr* [sic] and Many, Many more!" without mentioning Filmation anywhere except in the tiny copyright notice.

In its almost 27-year history, Filmation had produced and aired over 1,200 episodes of 50 different series, as well as five feature films. We had made one network a ratings giant, become the largest television provider, been banned by the networks, and reinvented ourselves as a syndication provider, creating a new market that then swallowed us.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE FORMER EMPLOYEES OF FILMATION STUDIOS

Dear Friends,

After twelve hundred television episodes, fifty series and five features we are, regretfully, no longer working together.

To those hundreds of you who made up the Filmation family, I send my love and appreciation for your loyalty, your creative skills and for your friendship.

It was a marvelous and exciting twenty six years and through your efforts Filmation became a leader in the sensitive field of children's programming. We can all take pride in the care we took to be certain that our product was commensurate with our responsibilities. I am justly proud of our reputation for putting the best interests of children ahead of our own.

I cannot say goodbye. I can wish you all good things and pray you are given the opportunity to prove to others that which you have so well proven to me.

And that is, quite simply, that you are the best!

Until we meet again --

Love,

Lou Scheimer

To those companies looking for superb craftsmen and craftswomen I respectfully suggest you take advantage of this veritable windfall of superb talent. They are a joy to work with and I unhesitatingly recommend each and every one.

In addition to their great expertise they share an all too uncommon trait.

They care!

When Filmation first started, it was such a small company, and we knew everybody, and always had Christmas parties at our house. And then it got bigger and bigger, and then one day there were 875 people working for us! In the old studio, we used to have artwork that was exhibited by workers every Friday, and we had a little wine tasting at Friday night parties. I didn't really realize how much fun we were having. I never really thought about losing the people working for me, honestly, and always thought we would be working together. Animation is really an art that can only be practiced by teams who work together successfully to get along. I was used to talking to artists, or writers, or background people, or actors, and dealing with those personalities was excruciatingly and extraordinarily fun. And then it was gone.

I held off on sending work overseas as long as I could because the people who were working in the industry deserved to have the industry thinking about them; without them, there is no industry. That's why we did stock animation; we didn't do it because it was cheaper, we did it because we couldn't afford to do it any other way. If there was a way I could find of cutting costs, I did. And, with those costs cuts, it meant that people worked all year long. We were known as a cheap place to work, but the artists worked for twelve months a year, and nobody else did that.

Toward the end we had hired some people to devise a digital way of coloring animation so we wouldn't have to go through the acetate cels. We would've had computer-generated ability within a year or two; we were that close to it. It is very expensive to do an animated show; it is labor-extensive, but it might have been helped with CGI.

I should've never let Filmation be sold. I thought we were opening up other areas when I talked Westinghouse into selling the company to the French company. My biggest regret in life is that I ever got involved with that.

Opposite:
Bravo! promotional art

Above:
Lou's open letter, February 10th, 1989

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

1989-2004

STARTING OVER

Unlike previous chapters, from here on I'll be writing about many projects and life events in a more general sense. Much of what I've worked on from 1989 to the present day has been over a period of time, rather than in month-by-month increments. Hope you don't mind the format change. But if you do, at least the book is almost complete!

1989

As mentioned in the previous chapter, following the destruction of Filmation by L'Oreal, I formed a new company called Lou Scheimer Productions, located at 20300 Ventura Boulevard in Woodland Hills. I worked with my daughter, Erika, and several ex-Filmation staff members, including Joyce Loeb, my previous secretary, and Joe Simon, our longtime editor.

After our failure to resecure the rights to *Bugzburg*, I began developing new properties and looked to some classic licensable properties to develop.

One of our first shows in development was *It's a Junkle out There*, which was a show about two groups of tiny elves—the Junkles and the Elfles—who made their home inside an enormous junkyard. While the Junkles thrived on garbage and pollution, and wanted to preserve their fouled home, the Elfles delighted in purity and nature, and wanted to clean up their environment. While the concept had an ecological theme, we planned to bring action and comedy into the mix as well.

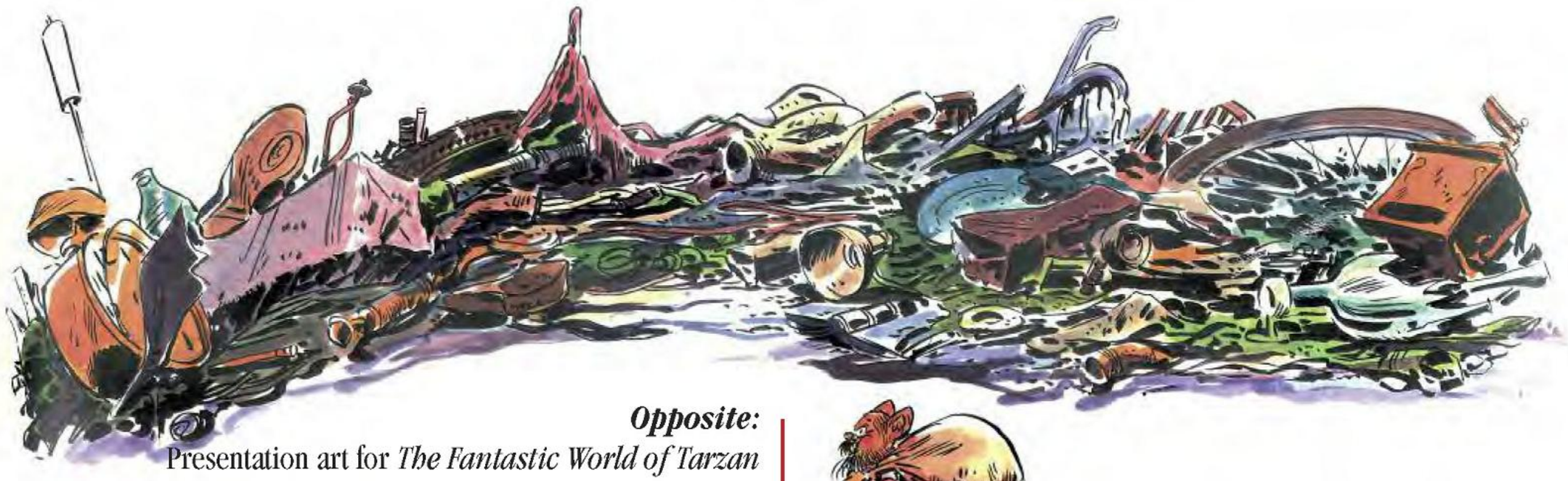
The Elfles lived in a remote corner of the Junkle, in an area known as Elfdale. There, they had recycled rubbish and created Rube Goldberg-like contraptions that brought their barren wasteland back to nature. The narrator of the series was a kooky but lovable genius named Elfbert Einstein, who was the first to bring restoration to the junkyard. Elfis Bump was the youthful hero of the show, and a boy who could commune with animals. He was also secretly in love with Cookie Kunkle, the daughter of King Kunkle. With her father the villain of the show, Cookie's romance with Elfis had a Romeo and Juliet quality.

Elfmer Dinklebottom was Elfis' clumsy nerd best friend, while Mayor Elftwiddle was the bumbling leader of Elfdale. Trixilina was the half-butterfly/half-girl guardian of the environment, whose magical powers helped the elves when she wasn't pranking them. On the villains' side were the ten-inch-tall, monstrous, stinky Skunkle; the chubby trio of Grubby, Gritty, and Grungy; and various other friends to the rats, cockroaches, and grime.

The other show we developed this year was a return to an old favorite of mine. I wanted to get the rights to *Tarzan* because I had another point of view about what to do with it. Even though we had done it as Filmation, the underlying ownership was still with the Edgar Rice Burroughs estate. So I went over to see them. I would have liked to have the rights to John Carter of Mars, but they were already negotiating those.

I paid them a good sum of money to get the rights to Tarzan again, and we developed a really more accurate storyline with Tarzan learning to speak French before he spoke English because he did that in the books. The Frenchman was a character in my presentation. The way we set up the show was a little more worldly in the kind of problems that Tarzan would get into. We called it *The Fantastic World of Tarzan*.

Like *Junkle*, we intended the show to have an environmental element to it, which made sense given the original setting for the novels. But we were creating a more magical world, with prehistoric elements and modern concepts working together. We also used many concepts from the books, including Pellucidar. Tarzan's animal friends included Ator the eagle, Nkima the spider monkey, Tantor the elephant, and Jad-Bal-Ja



Opposite:
Presentation art for *The Fantastic World of Tarzan*

Above:
Development art for *It's A Junkle Out There*

the golden lion. Jane Porter was a redheaded photojournalist and safari guide who occasionally had personality clashes with Tarzan because she was very independent. Also, a ten-year-old native boy named Quai would often leave his tribal home to be mentored by Tarzan.

The villains of the show included Dr. Mu-Tant, a Moreau-like brilliant scientist who was creating genetic hybrids and loosing them on the jungle, including cyborg dinosaurs known as "mechasaurs," man-eating plants, and anthropomorphic animal men. Another villain was the seductive La, the Queen of Xenopia, a planet in a distant galaxy, whose damaged ship, *The Opar*, had stranded her and her insectoid warriors in the jungle. Achmet Zet was a terrorist, slave trader, ivory merchant, poacher, and thief, who led a band of cutthroat *Mad Max*-like mercenaries. Gangster Nickolas Rokoff and his pirates lived aboard their amphibious vessel, cruising the waterways of the jungle and poisoning the area with toxic waste.

I thought I'd have no trouble selling *Tarzan*, and it was sort of sad that it didn't sell because it was a terrific concept. I went to all three networks and got turned down at every one of them. They still didn't like me because I had caused them so much trouble with the amazing performance of *He-Man* and *She-Ra*, and what the resulting rise of syndication did to the ad dollars companies would spend to support animation. It could have been a terrific series, but I couldn't get past the doors to even present the thing in some cases. It was very upsetting because it was a terrific presentation.

Going back to the networks showed me that the world was going to be rough and difficult. And the thought of trying to do what I had done at Filmation with our own distribution and all the domestic and international sales was never going to happen because it just took too much energy and too much money.

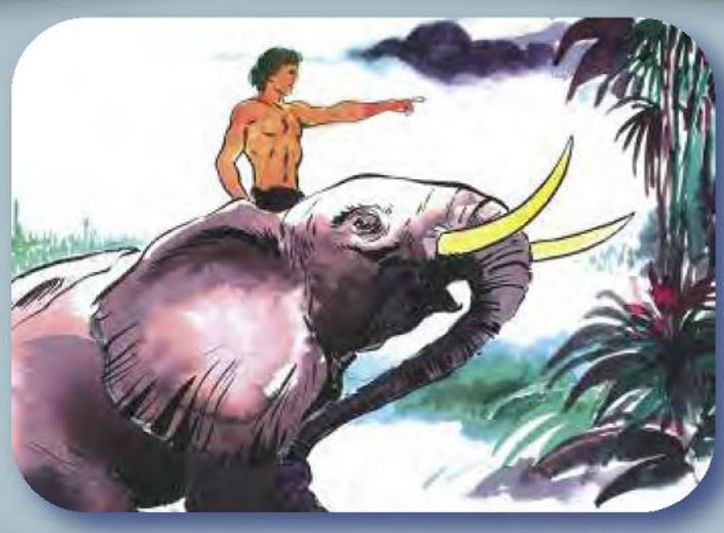
I started to think of what I could do possibly with nighttime since we had done a lot of live action, but I feared that I would never have a chance in hell of selling a nighttime show. So I went to see an old friend of mine, Freddy Silverman, previously of NBC, ABC, and CBS. I told him I had an idea and I thought maybe he might be interested in us doing it together, and he said, "Absolutely, I'd like to work with you, Lou." He had a lot of clout with the networks. They were afraid to not buy from him because they were afraid he was going to come up with something that they didn't understand as being good, but which would really work.

I had this concept of doing *The Sheroes*, a battalion of female cops who had all kinds of adventures that you could do on primetime. He liked it a lot, so we got a young lady who had just graduated from college and had some nighttime hits, and she wrote a script that was really not very good. Freddy probably destroyed her. I mean, going through some story sessions with him and that girl, I thought that it might not be worth it. Freddy started shouting at me the way he shouted when he was at the networks and buying from me, and I said, "Ah, shut up," or something like that. He said, "What?" He was incredulous. I said, "We're f*cking partners. You're not buying from me now! No more shouting." And he said, "Oh, damn, that's right." He couldn't stand it.

We made a bunch of presentations, and even he almost couldn't get anyplace. We made a development deal with ABC, I recall, and the girl wrote the script. By the time Freddy was finished with that script, that girl was ready to go to an asylum for a week or two. He was not an easy man to work with. So, I decided that was not a good idea, and we parted ways again.

1990

In January 1990, Celebrity Home Entertainment upgraded their line of videos to Just for Kids Home Video, and started placing videos in Kay Bee Toys and airport shops. These included copies of both sets for *BraveStarr* and the animated *Ghostbusters*. Meanwhile, United American Video was putting out super-low-cost versions of *Journey Back to Oz* and *Fat Albert*.



In February Alice Donenfeld began repping *The New Adventures of He-Man* from Parafrance to international markets at the American Film Market. That new show was created by Jean Chalopin's Jetlag Productions, with Mattel. Jean was the French guy who created DIC back in 1981, and then Andy Heyward bought it out in 1986. Jean was a really nice guy. I used to see him frequently over in France when I would go over to MIPCOM, and we'd have dinner. We always had a good relationship, so after L'Oreal bought Filmation, Jean came to me and said that they had come to him and asked him to do a sequel to *He-Man*. He said, "I don't want to do it if it bothers you in any way." I said, "It doesn't bother me." And it really didn't. I said, "I know what's going to happen. Mattel's going to run this thing, and it's not going to be *He-Man*; it's gonna be something else. An awful lot of people in the audience are going to feel cheated when they could've been done appropriately and profitably, and I don't want anything to do with it." I told Jean that he had my blessing; I wasn't going to stop him from getting a job.

Above:
Presentation art for *The Fantastic World of Tarzan*

Opposite:
Images from *Happily Ever After*

I never saw any of the episodes of *The New Adventures of He-Man*, nor did I see any of the third *He-Man* series when Mike Young Productions did it in 2002. They weren't fake, but they had nothing to do with the character people knew. It was like that damned live motion picture they did. I guess the third series did try to be similar to the Filmation shows in some ways, and I've seen the toys, but they all look like anime characters, like they could've been designed in Japan.

On February 22nd Art Nadel passed away at the age of 68 from complications due to diabetes. He wasn't the first Filmation staffer to pass away, but he was one of the people whose contributions made the company so much of what it was.

In May ex-Filmation employee Robby London was promoted to senior vice president of creative affairs at DIC.

One of the things I had been able to do when L'Oreal closed Filmation was to negotiate for the domestic rights to Filmation's *Snow White* film, and it was finally completed in 1990. They could release it internationally, but I got a small percentage of any profits. I also got the domestic rights for *Pinocchio*. *Snow White* had gone through several name changes, from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfelles* to *Snow White – The Adventure Continues* to *Snow White in the Land of Doom* to *Snow White: Happily Ever After*. Finally, the name of the heroine was removed entirely, as the film was retitled to *Happily Ever After*.

The film was test-marketed in Long Island, New York, and Wisconsin around June 8th, and released in France on June 20th. Amusingly, the Filmation name was all over the advertising for the film, but my "Lou Scheimer" signature logo was also on the ads. There was some kind of dispute with the releasing company, First National Film Corporation, however, and the film was not opened wide.

Although I've talked about the film in general, I haven't said much about the specifics, and since it was technically Filmation's final production, I will now. The script by Robby London and Martha Moran used the conceit that one of history's most beloved fairy tales didn't end with the words "happily ever after." The magical adventures of Snow White and her prince continued, but this time there were new friends—and foes—to join them. As Snow White's wedding to the prince approached, Lord Maliss, the brother of the evil queen, planned to stop it. Attacking as a dragon, Maliss stole the prince away to the Realm of Doom. Unable to find the dwarves who had previously befriended her, Snow White teamed up with the rambunctious Seven Dwarfelles, the magical cousins to the original Dwarves. Setting off on their new quest, they needed to find Mother Nature to help save Snow White's true love from Maliss… and the mysterious Shadow Man.

Singing superstar Irene Cara played Snow White, with Michael Horton as her prince. The dwarfelles were: weather-powered Thunderella and sleepwalking Moonbeam, both played by Tracey Ullman; plant-powered Blossom, voiced by Zsa Zsa Gabor; animal-communicator Critterina and water-powered Marina, played by Linda Gary; light-powered Sunburn, voiced by Sally Kellerman; and earth-powered Muddy, brought to life by Carol Channing. Comedienne Phyllis Diller was the ditsy Mother Nature, aided by her talking plant Sunflower, voiced by Jonathan Harris. The villainous sorcerer Maliss was played by the always excellent Malcolm McDowell, while Dom DeLuise gave voice to the Looking Glass; and Maliss's two minions, Scowl the Owl and Batso the Bat were played by Edward Asner and Frank Welker, respectively.

In press video we shot for the press kit, I said, "You know, parents always have a problem about finding an appropriate film for their family, and especially for the very, very innocent and tender youngsters, and here's a summer that's going to be action-packed with all sorts of violence, and if I were the parent of young children, I would really be concerned about what to be able to show them this summer on a big screen… There's something in entertainment beyond violence, beyond bombs exploding, beyond people's heads being ripped off. There's beauty in entertainment, there's wonder in entertainment, there's imagination in entertainment. Fairy tales have a very special place in our lives. I mean, they mean things to all of us. The Snow White legend is a thing that many of us have grown up with: being able to cope with adversity, but doing it with love and beauty and kindness and tenderness… I think that's a nice thing to be able to say.

"We've always been interested in doing family oriented programming with prosocial messages, but with fun at the same time. It was about five years ago that we started the picture, and it was just about the beginning of the feeling that there is a problem with our world, our environment. And I said, 'What can we do with Snow White that will introduce some of these things that youngsters are going to be worried about, three, four years from now when we're finished with this thing?' And you'll notice that what we did with the dwarfelles; they have all the powers of nature. So we have a film that has a small message, a lot of fun, a lot of action, and I think something that's appropriate for everybody in the family."

A lot of people commented on our colorblind casting of Irene Cara as Snow White. Even she said it when we came to her. She said,

"Why do you want to use me? I'm not white." I never even thought the fact that she was black would make any difference; it was her talent we were talking about. She was a bit difficult too, but I didn't realize it when we hired her.

When we finally did have the New York premiere, we had a dinner party in New York with the cast. It was a f*cking ugly evening. Dom DeLuise was sitting next to me, and Phyllis Diller was sitting next to him, and I think Zsa Zsa was at the table. Everybody had a lot to drink, and then Irene Cara started in with, "We're black, and we haven't been given the same opportunities that the whites have." And I thought, "What the f*ck is going on? Did I not hire her in a completely colorblind way?"

Zsa Zsa says, "Don't get involved there. You've got to be careful with them." Dom DeLuise just kept eating. He took everybody's plate. He just didn't want to hear any of this other sh*t. Tons of food went into him. He said, "I don't wanna talk; I don't wanna talk." It was not one of my great evenings. I had to calm Irene down, and it was awful, and there were hundreds of people in that restaurant. I didn't even know what the hell was going on, and I was sober!

We did presentation and proposal work for two new series in 1990: *The Nighty-Knights* and *Buck Rogers*.

The Nighty-Knights concept was to be a series of dolls marketed along with a series of videotapes, both designed to help children sleep and overcome their fear of the dark, or of monsters under the bed, or other things that might cause children anxiety at bedtime. The videos were to have included four 15-minute animated stories starring the dolls, each dealing with a child-oriented problem in an entertaining and reassuring way.

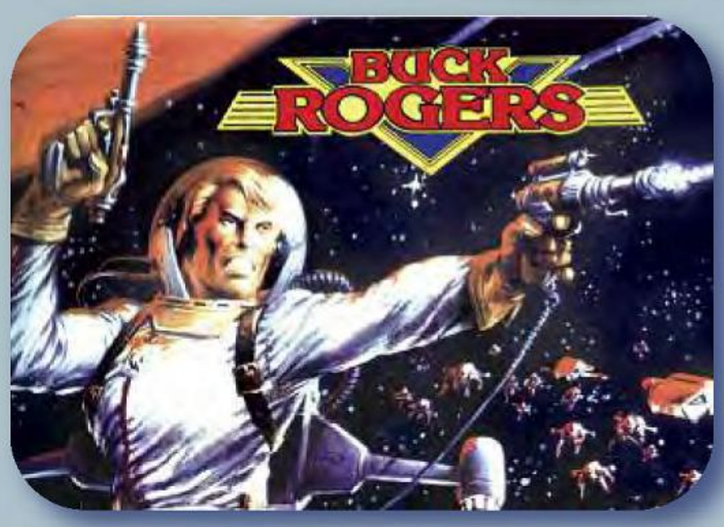
Dressed in a combination of pajamas and armor, the Nighty-Knights were the champions of the Land of Nod. They were the heroic Sir Dreamaway, the noisy Sir Snoreslot, the hefty Sir Goodrest, and the musical Lady Lullaby. Others in the kingdom included sleepwalking King Yawn, napping Princess Beautysleep, wacky Moonbeam the Magician, young magical assistant Nap, and tiny dragon Snoozles. The enemies of the Nighty-Knights were King Nightmare, Prince Nastybrat, and Wideawake and Tossenturn.

Buck Rogers was, of course, based on Philip Francis Nowlan's hero who debuted in *Amazing Stories* in August 1928 and continued in pulps, comic strips, a movie serial, a radio show, multiple television shows, and comic books. Amazingly, nobody had ever done an animated *Buck Rogers*, although some Daffy Duck cartoons spoofed the concept as Duck Dodgers!

Our proposed *Buck Rogers* series was designed to be relatively faithful to the origins of the concept, while still adding new and updated elements. In the year 1999, a courageous test pilot named Anthony "Buck" Rogers volunteered for a suicide mission to stop an alien spaceship. Cryogenically frozen in the battle, Buck is found in 2456, and woken up five centuries into his own future! Buck was filled in on his history by his rescuer, the space mercenary Black Barney, who told him that Earth had been enslaved by the Draxxons from Alpha Centauri.

Later, captured by the aliens and imprisoned on Earth's moon, Buck escaped with the aid of Wilma Deering and roughneck Killer Kane. The pair then enlisted Buck's help to fight Earth's Second War of Independence, but unbeknownst to Buck, Kane was a double-agent for the Draxxons and intended to frame Earth's oldest hero. Other characters that would appear included: the half-android Dr. Huer; supreme commander of the Draxxons, Emperor Tal; and genetically engineered beauty Princess Ardala. Familiar elements of Buck's gear would also have appeared, including a rocket pack, jumping belt, magnetic boots, and a pulse laser pistol.

Unfortunately, neither of the projects ever went further than proposals and presentation art.



1991

In April ex-Filmation vice president of international administration at Filmation from 1975–1989, Patricia Ryan, stepped into the same role at DIC.

In May 1991 charges of anti-Semitism and fascist support hit L'Oreal due to revelations made by a former executive. The CEO of L'Oreal's American arm, Jacques Correze, came under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice for being a Nazi collaborator in June. Paravision quickly took steps to distance themselves from L'Oreal, even as they tried to aggressively market the Filmation library to U.S. TV stations. Correze was forced to leave the United States by the DOJ, and died a week later in Paris.

Following the test-marketing release of *Happily Ever After* to theaters, First National Film Corporation negotiated a deal for the TV rights as well. The contract included a clause for a minimum performance guarantee of $7.3 million.

1992

Following the closing of Filmation, and concurrent with her job at LSP, my daughter Erika went back to school. In 1992, she earned

her Masters of Fine Arts in Cinema and Television from the University of Southern California.

In October, ex-Filmation Production Manager Joe Mazzucca was appointed to be the vice president of production at American Film Technologies, Inc. The following month, another of our ex-production managers, Charles Mitman, was made vice president of production at CST Entertainment Imaging, Inc.

1993

In March ex-Filmation employee Jenny Trias was promoted to the post of president of children's programming at ABC. She had been vice president there since 1987, after leaving Filmation.

Happily Ever After had a second opening in over 400 theaters on Memorial Day weekend 1993. It was timed for release five weeks before the eighth reissue of Walt Disney's *Snow White* film. I'm sure that if Disney could have sued the ghost of Filmation again, they would have. They did, in fact, go over the film frame-by-frame, and signed a confidentiality agreement allowing its release. First National's vice president, Ray Busby, said hyperbolically in the press, "It's going to be the Super Bowl of Snow Whites this summer, and the public is going to be the winner."

This time the Filmation name was all over the advertising for the film, but my signature logo was missing. Oddly, no mention was made of the picture's previous debut in the press materials.

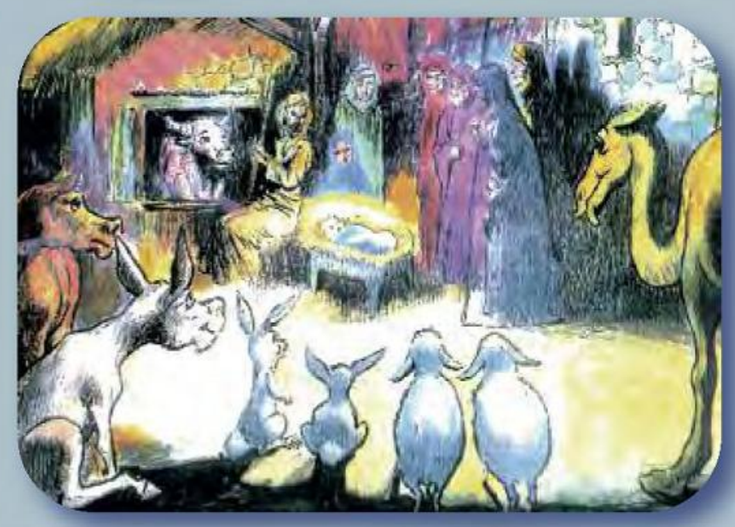
Unfortunately, the release was a disaster. It earned only $1,756,050 on its opening weekend, and $3,299,382 for its entire theatrical gross, which didn't even cover the original budget. As I recall, the company had never released any films before. The guy running it raised a lot of money from a number of investors from Texas who funded the completion bonding. But there was some kind of problem that came up later, where it became clear that not all of the money raised went into the distribution of the film.

DIC continued their mining of ex-Filmation employees in August, picking up Claire Kilfoyle as director of international sales administration, and Linda Garcia as manager of sales servicing.

A deal was announced by press release on September 28th, for a new Bible-based animated series called *The Ark Angels*. The four partners in the venture were: Glenn Aufderhar, the head of the Adventist Media Center; former Lorimar video head Jerry Gottlieb; former MGM/UA President Norman Horowitz; and myself. Our initial announced plans were to pitch a pilot to the networks and produce a special for late 1994, as well as release the shows to video. Aufderhar was responsible for the initial financing, while the other two guys raised further funding. I was in charge of the animation production, as well as licensing and merchandising. In a *Variety* article, Horowitz said that the show would be non-denominational, and joked that it was "written by a Catholic, financed by the Adventists, and [was] being produced by three Jews."

How *Ark Angels* got started was that I got a phone call from Dennis O'Flaherty, who had written some stories for us. He had been talking to the Seventh Day Adventists, and they wanted to do an animated version of the *Bible* in 90 minutes. And I said, "Are you crazy? Did you tell them you could do it?" And he said, "Well, yeah, I told them I could do it." I said, "Well, you can't do it! I mean, you know how many stories are taken out of the *Bible* for other productions, and they do a whole movie about just specific sections. You can't condense the whole thing into one movie. They don't want to do something that's going to look like you're buzzing through the *Bible* and not seeing anything. You'd need to do a series."

He said that they didn't want to do a series, but asked me to talk to them. So, I went out to see them at their offices. I had not known very much about the Adventists. I met them, and they were the nicest people I've ever dealt with. They were decent and honest, and I said to them, "I don't think you should do this. No matter how much money you put into this, you can't do the *Bible* in 90 minutes." So the head guy, Glenn Aufderhar, asked me to work with them on a series. I said, "You don't want me working with you. I'm Jewish." And he looked at me and said, "Lou, Christ was a Jew." So I said, "Okay, if you accept that, I'll accept it."



They really wanted to do *Bible* stories for youngsters. Their feeling was that they had lost youngsters reading the *Bible*, and they wanted to make the *Bible* interesting and also captivating. They didn't want to push their own religious beliefs. They really wanted to do something that anybody who read the *Bible* could either understand it better or enjoy it more. I suggested that we do it with animals. Not the *Bible* with anthropomorphic animals, but take a group of animals out of Noah's Ark, for instance, and follow them through all these adventures. Non-chronologically, we also chose the donkey that Mary rode on.

We made the animals kind of immortal. The main ones were: Barney/Barnabas the donkey, Zeke/Ezekiel the camel, Abbie/Abigail the rabbit, and Becky/Rebecca the lamb. We

Opposite:
Presentation art for *Buck Rogers*

Above:
Presentation art for *Ark Angels*

also had an elephant and an owl who were their friends. On the villainous animal side, we had the original Garden of Eden snake himself, Lucifer—played by Jonathan Harris—a hyena named Gimel, and a vulture named Aleph. There were, of course, human characters in the stories, such as Noah, Joseph and Mary, Daniel, and others.

In terms of the money, I had told the Adventists that it would cost about $400,000 per 30-minute episode. One of their investors put up somewhere between $600,000 and a million, and we were on our way. We got enough to do four of them, and I delivered the first one or two, and it was charming. They invited a bunch of their Adventists to a big luncheon and showed the picture to little kids, and it was terrific.

There were a total of four *Ark Angels* episodes produced from 1993–1995. "Ark of Triumph" was written in November 1993. "A Child Is Born" was written in February 1994. The other two were "A Star Guides Them" and "David's Destiny." Almost everybody who worked on them were ex-Filmation crew who were hired on through Ka Moon Song's A-1 Production, Inc. Dennis O'Flaherty wrote them all, and they were directed by Ka Moon Song, Rich Trueblood, and Lou Kachivas. My daughter, Erika, story edited with Amy Meyers. Voices were by Ed Asner, Corey Burton, Linda Gary, Ed Gilbert,

Jonathan Harris, Alan Oppenheimer, and Frank Welker. Back using our nom de plumes were Erika, using the name Erika Carroll, and myself, recording as Erik Gunden. The songs were all written and produced by Ed Fournier, and he sang them with Erika and Tracy Coley, with recording by Richard Delvy. Gordon Berry was also back aboard as our educational consultant.

But the problem was with how to distribute the stuff. I really didn't think it was the kind of stuff they could sell to a network. They just didn't do this sort of thing, religious films. Not that they shouldn't, but they just didn't. I told them about the whole concept of doing material that could be sold directly to the audience on video. A year went by, and they couldn't sell it to anyone. Norman Horowitz was a fairly important name in the sale of material directly to foreign distributors and stuff like that, but no one seemed to get the concept. One guy looked at it, and he said it wasn't religious enough. It was too much fun. I said, "It's for children!"

Unfortunately, *The Ark Angels* never did sell, though we kept trying to place a 13-episode order up through 1995. The Adventists did put out some DVDs of the episodes eventually, but they're quite hard to find today.

Sometime in 1993, Black Bear Press published the first ever book about our company. *Animation by Filmation* was written by Michael Swanigan and Darrell McNeil, and featured information about all of our broadcast shows, as well as cast information, title listings, model sheets, and storyboards. Swanigan had been a storyboard artist with us from 1981–1986, and McNeil—who has been mentioned a lot so far—was in layouts from 1978–1983. The 176-page book quickly sold out its print run, and became a collectible.

I made a deal with Lord/Weaver Productions in September to develop a live-action *Fat Albert* movie. The company was run by Tony Lord and Matthew Weaver. Unfortunately, I ran into problems with Bill Cosby over the film, leading to some tense messages from him to the company. Tracy Coley was cast for the title role.

Lou Scheimer Productions did three more presentation packs for proposed series in 1993: *The Ace, Paws*, and *Horny Toad*.

The Ace was developed with Jerry Golod—whom I had previously sold shows to at CBS in the 1970s and who had produced his own series such as *Tales from the Darkside*—and was intended as a primetime series that mixed animation with live action. The concept owed much to old pulps and comic books, as during World War II, Anthony Charles Edwards was injured and nursed back to health by gypsies. He discovered that he had developed super-powers—telekinesis, hypno-projection, and bio-empathy—and control over some mystic arts. Offering his services as a masked mystery man to President Roosevelt, Anthony became "The Ace," fighting Nazis, fascists, and spies as an international crime-fighter.

Each episode would have begun with a comic book of The Ace being opened, and the comic book panels gradually moving from static art to animation to live action. Some backgrounds and transitions would be animated as well, while other transitions would find the "page" turning to establish a new location.

Paws was a proposed live-action series that featured four dogs who escaped from a laboratory where an unethical scientist has been performing gruesome experiments on animals. The four who escaped—German shepherd Arlo, Doberman Kitty, mutt Roy, and basset hound Dugal—find their way to the side of young Ian Todd, the son of a veterinarian. Whether due to the experiments done on them or due to his empathy, Ian could understand what the dogs were saying. The series would have followed the adventures of Ian and the "Dog Squad" as they came up against polluters, burglars, and a forest fire, and helped people in trouble.

Horny Toad would have been different from any project I had

ever worked on before. Created with Barry Blitzer, the proposed series was set in the Old West, and told the adventures in a saloon and whorehouse run by Madame Polly. But, beyond its bawdy premise, the series would have been shot using puppets! It was essentially a bizarre cross between *Cheers* and *The Muppet Show*, with lots of outrageous double entendres, busty women, drunken cowboys, bar fights, gambling, a bumbling sheriff, a hatchet-wielding prim prohibitionist, the "Bang Bang Gals," a volatile Indian medicine man, a transvestite mail order bride, and even a gay horse named "Silver Hoof!"

As this is likely the first you've ever heard about any of these projects, it almost goes without saying that nothing became of them.

1994

In June, Tom Ruegger, one of our excellent ex-Filmation creators was given a multi-year deal with Warner Bros. Animation as an executive producer. He was one of several Filmation employees who had flowered at Warner, including Bruce Timm and Paul Dini, whose *Batman: The Animated Series* had broken records and reinvented the style of superhero animation for decades to come.

A company called Panda Pictures attempted to acquire the Filmation library from Paravision, but found that lawyers from the firm representing them also represented Paravision… and were trying to sell the library to Broadway Video. Panda had raised $45 million to buy the library—which included a film library of titles as well—when they found out about the conflict of interest. A $100 million lawsuit against the firm Loeb & Loeb was quickly filed.

1995

Neither Panda Pictures nor Broadway Video bought the Filmation library. Instead, in early January 1995, Paravision sold the Filmation library to Hallmark for somewhere between $20–30 million. The Hallmark Home Entertainment video line planned a line of sell-through videos of our shows, and talked about putting our shows on their own network.

In mid-June my name was back in the headlines as I made a deal with Simitar Entertainment, a Minneapolis company who specialized in budget videos, and who would be the first independent company to release DVDs, in April 1997. They hired me on as a consultant to help develop a new line of family entertainment, under the title of New Family Films. The president of Simitar was Ed Goetz, who would be playing a role in Filmation's future in the mid-2000s as well.

The Simitar job was actually different for me because I was doing something I'd never done before. I'd never been a buyer. I worked out of my offices with my own staff, aided by ex-Hemdale executive Tom Schon. And I started going back to Europe for Cannes and other film festivals to buy stuff. A lot of the people that we had sold Filmation stuff to had their own studios now, and I was acquiring projects from them!

November saw the release of Hallmark's first video: *A Snow White Christmas*, priced at a paltry $9.98.

1996

The Simitar line was changed to New Family Movies, and the first release I did might have sounded familiar to readers of this book, but it wasn't quite what you might think. Released on video in January 1997, *G.Whilliker!* was not the animated adventures of our *Bugzburg* star finally freed. Instead, it was a live-action kids' film that somehow involved three Southern boys, a pig, a professional wrestler, a dead dog, a stolen raccoon, and drunken rednecks.

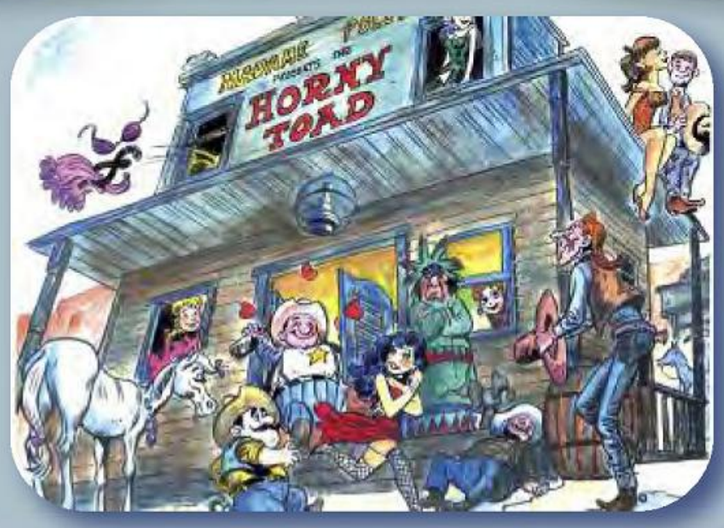
I did a proposal and presented it to Andy Heyward and Robby London at DIC in 1996. I had an idea on how to revive *He-Man*, which was to make him a father and introduce his son to the world. The concept was *He-Ro, Son of He-Man, and the Masters of the Universe.*

In the proposal, we returned to the Eternia of our series, though many years later. Skeletor had long ago been banished to the Frozen Lands, and Prince Adam had ascended to become King, taking Teela as his queen. He-Man didn't actually father a child, but instead adopted a Tarzan-like wild child named Dare. When Dare used He-Man's Power Sword, he was transformed by the power of Grayskull into He-Ro, a young-but-mighty warrior. We also set up sidekicks for him with Craven, a pet crow who could become Battle Bird, and Kay-La, the warrior girl who was Man-at-Arms' teenage niece. I don't think we had Skeletor have any kids like Skeleteenager; after all, who would bone Skeletor?

The presentation art that was worked up included designs that were updated and more anime-inspired than the Filmation looks, but were still recognizable as the same characters.

I don't know why *He-Ro* never went anywhere, but DIC eventually let the project go.

By the way, I did want to relate one story about Andy that didn't really fit anywhere in the book previously. Back in the 1970s or early 1980s, Andy had



Opposite:
Images from *The Ark Angels*

Above:
Presentation art for *Horny Toad*

been writing for Hanna-Barbera. Eventually, he got fired there, but I was a friend of his dad's—Louis "Deke" Heyward—so I hired Andy to write for Filmation. Now, he was the world's worst writer, but I couldn't fire him because he and his dad were my friends. He came into my office one day and said, "I've got this offer from an outfit overseas, a guy named Jean Chalopin, and he wants me to go to work for him in France. I don't want to walk out on you, Lou, and leave you in the lurch." I said, "Oh, don't worry about it! We'll work it out somehow!" I thought, "Wow, we're getting rid of Andy without anybody getting pissed off at me!" Andy later took over Chalopin's company and created DIC Entertainment and the *Inspector Gadget* show and did quite well for himself.

In March 1996 ABC's *The Dana Carvey Show* did a cartoon segment called "The Ambiguously Gay Duo," created by Robert Smigel and animated by J. J. Sedelmaier. The look for the short was directly based on the 1960s Filmation superhero shows, most specifically *Batman* and *Superman*. The short got rerun later that year on *Saturday Night Live* as part of a segment called "Saturday TV Funhouse." Early in 1997 they did another Filmation-style short series called "The X-Presidents." Both series would occasionally run up until 2007, though a live-action *Ambiguously Gay Duo* short was shown in May 2011.

At one of my previous Comic-Con appearances, animator Sedelmaier, who was apparently a long-time Filmation fan, came up to meet me. He told me that he hoped that his Ambiguously Gay Duo animation, playing off of our style, hadn't offended me. "Me? Are you kidding?" I asked. "I loved them!"

1997

In February 1997 I made a similar deal with K-Tel as I had with Simitar… or so the press made it seem. But I was in charge of acquiring material for release to video. This time, though, I was acquiring or working on the development of animated fare. There were twelve movies in the works that K-Tel was going to distribute when they were finished, starting in August with *King of the Birds*.

On September 8, 1997, Steven Spielberg's *Animaniacs* aired their debut episode of season five. In a story called "Back in Style"—written by Tom Minton and directed by Liz Holzman—Yakko, Wakko, and Dot romped through other company's animation departments. In one scene, two "Phlegmation Studios" characters looked back on their interaction with the Warner trio. One was "Obese Orson," a fat white man who sounded like Fat Albert, thanks to the voice of Jim Cummings, and the other was "Lem Botchitt, Film Sprocket Supervisor," an equally obese white guy voiced by Frank Welker, who complained that, "The Warners fouled up our stock scene system something awful."

In 1997 Alice Donenfeld brought a guy to see me named Dirk W. Peschar. He was working with a Dutchman named Rens Benerink, and they had this idea about seven weird, little, creepy guys. They wanted to do an adult animated show for nighttime. They were like gremlins, but he called them "The Dreamweavers." They were really kind of a dumb idea, but it was work. Dirk wanted a girl in the project. It was the time when the Internet was becoming popular for bringing entertainment into the home, so I said, "Why don't we do the first child born in computer land?" So, we built this sort of fascinating concept of this mechanical device giving birth to this girl named Robin who could come out into the real world and affect the real world, and then go back into the computer world. That was the start of our strangest project, a film called *Robin and the Dreamweavers*.

Peschar, who teamed up with another Netherlander named Arjen de Groot, wanted to do this as a sexy movie and series, with cartoon semi-nudity and sex, but, in addition to the film, they also wanted it to have an animated series with 26 episodes, CDs of the soundtrack, a clothing line, and all sorts of ancillary products. Peschar's company was American Dream Entertainment, Inc., and de Groot's company was Dreamweavers N.V. There were all sorts of confusing financial transactions between the two, and it was tough to tell who owned what.

As we developed it, I felt that even the material we were doing for the so-called adult audience should have some reason for existing. So, since they wanted it to have sex, we came up with a concept that when sex goes too crazy, it can cause troubles. This was embodied in the show by the evil XXX—pronounced Triple X—the female cyberspace avatar of lust. She wanted to escape cyberspace to infect mankind, so that she could feed off their lustful energy and gain a physical body.

The heroine was Robin, a human girl born from virtual reality cyberspace, and brought into the real world as a fetus by Dr. Ridenour. Robin grew up in a bio-chamber in Ridenour's lab until an attack forced the scientist to escape with her. Unfortunately, Robin's "father" didn't survive. Twenty years later, a grown-up Robin went to a virtual nightclub called Netrave, run by Internet entrepreneur Brenda Plump and virtual architect Reed Stokes. There, Robin

befriended Brenda, got a job as a virtual DJ, and felt romantic sparks with Reed.

At Netrave, Robin was sucked into cyberspace, where she met the Dreamweavers, a group of creatures from the Dreamzone, who told her about her destiny and trained her to control her super abilities—turning her thoughts into physical substance—in virtual reality and the real world. The Dreamweavers were: Sass and Frass, a fat creature with a bickering second head coming out of his skull; Flit, a flying, adorable, troll-like creature; Creep, a ninja in night clothes who talked in computer talk and could travel through shadows; Notion, a troll with a light on his head; and Randy Rabbit, a perpetually horny hare. Meanwhile, XXX seduced boyfriend Reed, and when Robin returned into the real world, XXX had used her powers to turn the world on.

I *told* you it was weird.

The weirdest part was the Dreamweavers. I didn't know what the hell to do with them. I mean, they were strange, they were dumb, but that concept was how it all started out, so we couldn't abandon them. The interesting thing to me was the villains we created, and how you could do adult stories with animated characters. The whole concept of sex dominating what people were really doing… it was good. We didn't know exactly how much the Internet was going to be used for porn, but we saw it starting. But to do sexy looking stuff, it scared the sh*t out of me! It was so different from anything I had ever done before. There was a lot of CGI work as well, which was really early in the days of CGI animation. The characters were all 2-D animation, while the props, vehicles, and settings were mostly CGI. Greg Johnson wrote the script for the film, and Ka Moon Song directed it.

I mentioned earlier that Ka Moon Song had done the animation work for *Ark Angels*—with ex-Filmation staffers—through A-1 Production, Inc. Back around 1980 at Filmation, we had hired Ka Moon, who was Korean, and he became one of the best animators we had working for us at Filmation. After the studio closed, he opened up a little business called A-1 Production, Inc. that he ran, which produced animation for American productions. It was the basic animated stuff—animation, ink and paint, and camera—not the scripts or development or sales. Ka Moon moved into the same building as Lou Scheimer Productions, so when we had real animation to do, as for *Ark Angels* or *Robin and the Dreamweavers*, he assembled the team to do it. We hired a couple of people full time, a bunch of people part time, and the rest of it was done overseas. A lot of ex-Filmation people had moved to overseas production. Bob Pope, who had been working for me, moved to the Philippines and opened up a camera service.

Finally, in 1997 we put together a proposal to develop and produce another set of full-length animated films for theatrical release, television, and home video. It was a familiar concept: *The Greatest Stories Ever Told – The Next Generation*. Yes, once again, we were looking to sequelize classic fairy tales and novels. The projects we looked to do hearkened back to those we had developed earlier at Filmation in two of our earlier "Classics" concepts, with a few others sprinkled in: *Frankenstein Lives Again!; The Son of Sleeping Beauty; L. Frank Baum's The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus; The Challenge of Cinderella; 20 Million Leagues across the Universe; Son of Robin Hood; Alice Returns to Wonderland; The Return of Swiss Family Robinson; Time Machine II: The Man Who Saved the Future; Dare, Son of Bambi;* and three others unnamed.

Conceptually, we planned that each feature could also be broken up into five episodes of a continuing TV series, thus allowing a complete story to be told each week, with 13 stories making 65 episodes. Our proposed production schedule was 18 weeks to prep the projects, and then deliver a film every six months. The proposed budget was $4 million each for theatrical, and $2 million each to recreate as the TV episodes. In our proposal, we noted that, "A cost-effective and modest theatrical release, while neither creating losses nor providing revenue, will provide substantial exposure and promotion for the feature films." This is considered part of the marketing campaign to launch a potent and effective video release for feature films. In other words, we were saying that the theatrical film likely wouldn't make money, but the home video release would.

To support that contention, we had a number of graphs and charts, as well as hard numbers for mid-level sell-through titles in the family and animation category. Interestingly enough, it showed that *Happily Ever After,* released by Republic, had sold 1,585,258 copies—outselling *An American Tail*—and had been more than profitable, bringing in $19,768,167 in gross revenues!

Unfortunately, we weren't able to sell *The Greatest Stories Ever Told – The Next Generation* to anyone.

1998

Although we had planned an earlier release, my first

Opposite:
Images from *He-Ro: Son of He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*

Above:
Images from *Robin and the Dreamweavers*

release with K-Tel was on July 28, 1998. It was *Once Upon a Tune*, a musical that we adapted from a 1989 Spanish film called *Los 4 Musicos de Bremen*, directed by Cruz Delgado. In our revised story, musical animals—Preslee the rooster, Bingo the donkey, Buddy the circus dog, and cool cat Frankie—escape the farm and their lives and travel to Tunetown to become a band.

The new version of *Once Upon a Tune* took the film from 86 minutes to 70 minutes. It was supervised by myself, produced by my daughter, Erika, associate produced by Amy Meyers, and re-edited by Joe Simon. Jim Ryan adapted the screenplay, while Frank Becker composed and performed the music, and Ed Fournier did the songs. The voice cast was all Canadian.

We could have released more with these characters if the video had proved popular enough; the film launched a 1989 Spanish series called *Los Trotamusicos*.

When I acquired these foreign pictures, Jim Ryan rewrote all the scripts. It wasn't just a translation because you have to fit the same amount of English words into the mouths of the characters who were animated speaking foreign words. Jim did a terrific job, even though he'd never done that kind of scripting before.

I don't remember how many of these foreign jobs we did, or even what the titles are. Other projects I *may* have been involved with for K-Tel were released in 1998: *Jungle Bungle, King of the Birds,* and *Sammy the Squirrel.*

I do remember that there was one where the Danish people got pissed at us. They had a thing where a dog had pissed all over another character. They couldn't understand how this scene would be a problem in this country. It's not funny to American parents though to see a dog piss all over a cat or something. So we had to go through and change those things. I had lunch with the guy who directed it, and he said, "Why did you destroy my picture?"

1999

Not much happened of note in 1999, except that we continued work on *Robin and the Dreamweavers*.

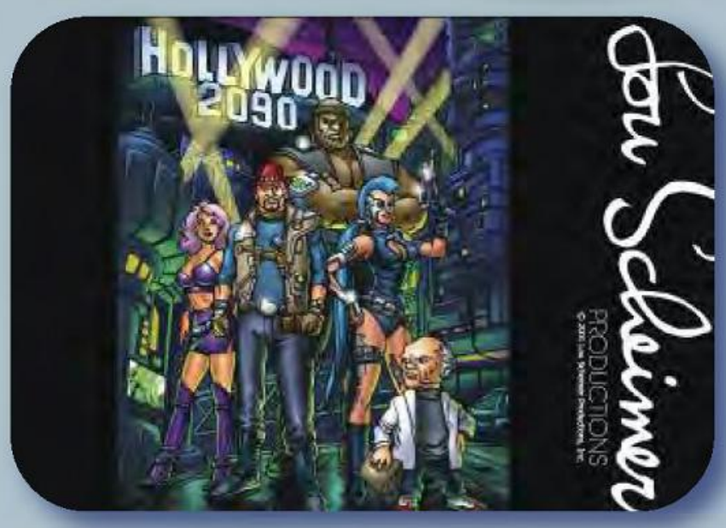
Lou Scheimer Productions did start working with Andy Berman, an ex-sales leader at New World Pictures, The Entertainment Network, and TMS Entertainment. In 1999 Berman founded his own company, ARB International, to specialize in worldwide sales and distribution and marketing of film and television projects. Berman would hopefully be able to help sell some of our projects.

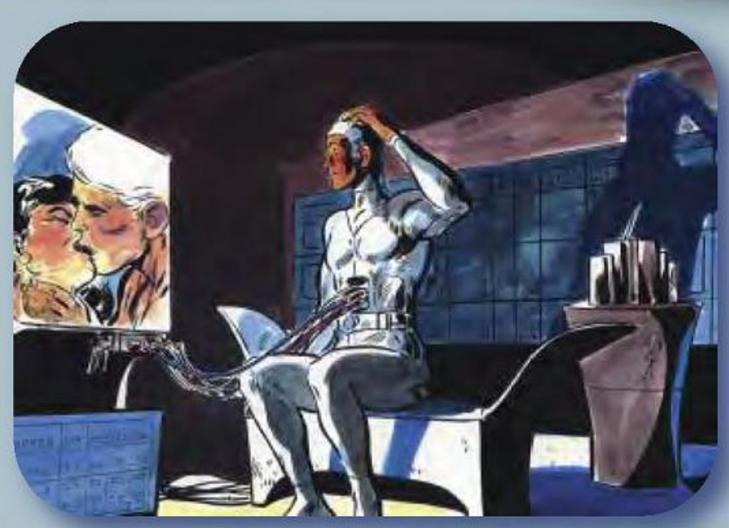
2000

As we got closer to completing *Robin and the Dreamweavers*, American Dream Entertainment planned to exhibit the finished product at MIPCOM conference in Cannes, France, in October 2000. By April they had made distribution agreements for *Robin*, with The Fremantle Corporation in the U.S. and Tempo Media in Denmark. They had supposedly already presold the film and television series in 35 countries around the world, pushing it as a nighttime program. I'm not sure that claim wasn't hyperbole, however.

I know that, domestically, they met with the Playboy Channel and almost sold it there. When they were selling it, they traded a lot on my history as an indication that there was a pretty good chance this was going to be a hit. I was fairly well known throughout the rest of the world, more so than I realized. I hate to say it, but they used me, and I used them. I mean, it kept us going for another year or so with an interesting project.

We eventually delivered the film project completed in fall 2000—and could have made the first 13 episodes by spring 2001—but they were never successful in raising the amount of presales to support the series. I guess a record of the theme music was released overseas. I think that if he had sold it, the company never would have come close to the $13 or $17 million they spent to develop it. So, they might have been better off. I don't think that *Robin and the Dreamweavers* ever did get an actual release, though it was offered on video by a few Internet companies.





These days there are lots of animated shows on the air that have more adult content, like stuff on Comedy Central or late-night on the Cartoon Network. But we were just a little bit in front of where companies would buy it. By the time those shows were possible, the networks didn't want to buy it from people who had the concepts; they wanted to do it themselves. They want to do the distribution, they want to own it, and they want to have the ability to sell the product and all that. I understand that. But it just got tougher and tougher to try to sell something. If I had wanted, one of those cable networks probably would have hired me, but I didn't need a f*cking job. I didn't want to work for any of those people. I wanted to either enjoy it and to make sure it was worthwhile, or not to work on it.

American Dream Entertainment was interested in trying to sell two other projects we were developing: *Cleo, Empress of the Future,* a family-oriented cartoon with Cleopatra, the main character, and her confrontation with the Roman Empire; and *Hollywood 2090*.

With some of the other projects we had developed, I had come to believe that adult animated material really could work on television.

Hollywood 2090 was for adults. I did a really interesting presentation about a private eye/undercover cop in ancient Rome… and then I found out there was a series of British books that featured a private eye in ancient Rome! So, I decided to go to the future and find out what a P.I. was like then, and what he would have to cope with.

The lead character was a pulpy tough guy named Jack O'Diamond, a private justice or "P.J." who functioned as both a detective and a cop. An ex-cop, Jack left the force when he was framed because he wasn't crooked like the rest of the department. Jack was short and ugly, balding, and sported a ponytail. Jack's assistant was Andy 1000, a cut-rate techdroid who was strong and had some crime-solving skills, but had his processors damaged in a mugging. Jack's secretary was Marta, a curvy but tough dame who had once been a hooker. Jack had a tough ex-wife named Ziva, and a pretty teenage daughter named Keri.

The main villain of the piece was Max Mogul, the head honcho of the biggest entertainment conglomerate in the world. Another bad guy was police Captain Knuckles, the top cop in Tinsletown, and the guy who framed Jack. Occasional helpers included the Hollywood Boulevard Irregulars gang, street snitch Dot Com, aerial stuntman Flyguy, homeless crone Baghag, disgraced boxer Chromedome, and tough streetwalker Mama Cyclops. Had *Hollywood 2090* gone forward, we were planning a lot of it to be CGI.

world that featured emerging tribal cultures and aliens, fantastic creatures and high-tech robo-organic Chromosaurs, cave dwellers and monsters. It was the mythical Land of Legend, a brave new world still in its infancy. On the side of good were the Naturals, tribespeople who were both humanitarian and ecological. Opposing them were the Saurians, a reptilian race who wanted to subjugate—or eradicate—humanity.

Hero was a young member of the Tree Tribe named Jak, who could access supernatural powers and turn into an older warrior version of hisself. When Jak would place one hand on his heart and hold the other above his head, and recite the chant "Magic and Strength, guided by Heart," he would transform into Hero. His powers included a magical ability over organic beings, plants, and animals, and he was able to transform some of his animal companions into mighty creatures to help him.

Jak had a counterpart in the young girl named Kara, a member of the desert nomad RoadTribe. Having discovered the magical Brainstorm, Kara was granted the power to become the charismatic Leadra, a super-woman who could bend the powers of the elements to her will. With Hero and Leadra, we were actually hearkening back to doing a kind of prehistoric Captain Marvel and Isis. But, as with so many projects we proposed, we never got further than the presentations.

2001

We produced two presentations for series in 2001: *Santa's Story* and *Hero and the Land of Legend*.

Santa's Story was our third or fourth attempt to sell a project based on L. Frank Baum's *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*. The plot followed the story of young Claus, a mortal who was born in the human world, but who crawled through the portal in a secret doorway oak and ended up in the Land of Immortals, in the Forest of Burzee. There, he was raised by nymphs and elf-like forest folk called Knooks. Claus would grow up to fulfill a prophecy that he will defeat An-Garr, the evil leader of the Awgwa hordes. The rest of the story revealed the origin of Santa Claus's flying reindeer, toy workshop, and iconic look.

Hero and the Land of Legend was a project we had begun at Filmation in 1987, then abandoned. It had nothing to do with the *He-Man* sequel *He-Ro* that we did with DIC back in 1996, except that they both had fantasy elements. *Hero* was the story of a prehistoric

Also that year we made a verbal agreement with Bill Cosby and Norman Brokaw of the Brokaw Agency to develop a pro-social animated series based on Aesop's Fables. It would star a CGI version of Cosby as Mr. Aesop, the most popular teacher at Mid-City Middle School, whose stories helped to entertain and enlighten kids.

Finally in 2001, we also began our first website, www.louscheimerproductions.com. It would last until 2004 before we took it down.

2002

In March 2002 the live-action *Fat Albert* movie finally gained traction with Lord/Weaver Productions. Filming would begin in Philadelphia in April, with Forest Whitaker directing, and Bill Cosby and Charles Kipps scripting. My name was still attached to the project as an executive producer. Omar Benson

Opposite:
Presentation art for *Hollywood 2090*

Above:
Presentation art for *Santa's Story* and *Hero and the Land of Legend*

Miller was newly cast in the title role. Before filming began though, the project was put into turnaround.

The August 3–9, 2002, *TV Guide* featured a cover story on the "50 Greatest Cartoon Characters of All Time." Fat Albert was on the first page group illustration, and made #12 on the list, just after SpongeBob Square Pants, Eric Cartman, and Bart and Lisa Simpson. Not bad company!

In the fall of 2002, some past Filmation staffers began lobbying for me to get the ASIFA (Association Internationale du Film d'Animation) Winsor McCay Award for Lifetime Achievement in Animation. A presentation was put together with letters of support from Robby London, Joe Gall, Evelyn Gabai. Tom Tataranowicz, Andy Heyward, Gordon Berry, Doris Plough, Hal Sutherland, Larry DiTillio, Woody Yocum, Ervin Kaplan, and a variety of fans. And while I wasn't given the McCay Award, at the February 1, 2003, presentation of the 30th Annual ANNIE Awards, I was honored with a Special Achievement Award – For Service to the American Animation Industry. The presenter was a past employee, Tom Sito.

In October 2002 the written presentation of the animated series now entitled *Bill Cosby's Aesop's Story Shop* was sent to Bill and his wife for comments and notes. We got comments from Bill's academic advisor, Harvard's Dr. Alvin F. Pouissant in December.

into the emergency room, and then the trauma ward. I ended up having quadruple bypass surgery! Merry Christmas to me…

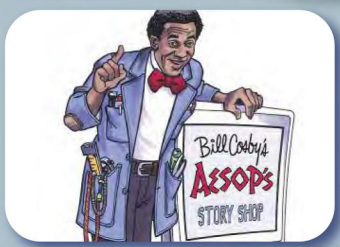
2003

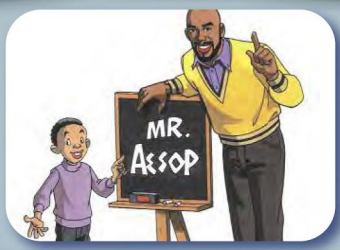
After my surgery I took the next six to eight months to get over what the hell had happened with my heart. I could really see the end for me in animation.

Meanwhile, though, work proceeded on the Cosby *Aesop* show. We incorporated Bill's friends' comments, and sent the presentation packet in to Pat Nugent, the senior director of children's programming at PBS. She put some concerns together and asked for some modifications, which we made, and she agreed to support the show if we could find enough sponsors.

Unfortunately, Nugent left her post in July, and her replacement wanted further revisions. Working with Gordon Berry, we made the changes, and my daughter, Erika, went to Washington, D.C., in December to present the presentation to PBS.

We also worked on a live-action yoga video/DVD with renowned yoga expert Ana Forrest in May 2003. While preliminary editing was done on the release, Ana started a clothing line in October, necessitating a reshoot in January 2004 to feature the correct yoga costumes from her line.





There was another website launched in 2002 which people thought was us because of the name, but it was run by somebody else. The site was filmationarchives.com, and they sold autographed scripts, storyboards, videos, cels, and memorabilia from Filmation. It was actually the site for Sunday Funnies Animation & Comic Art, a company run by Joe Cesaro in Chatsworth, California. I did indeed sign a lot of materials for Joe, and gave them stuff from our files to sell copies of, but we got a fee; it wasn't our company. That site shut down in 2004, I believe.

On Saturday, November 2, 2002, from 6:00–10:00 p.m., I attended the first ever Filmation Reunion, in Calabasas at the Money Pancho restaurant. Both Norm Prescott and Hal Sutherland were there, as well as almost 300 Filmation alumni. Even a few lucky fans made the event! Doris Plough did most of the organizing for the reunion, as well as a guy working for us named Richard. Norman and I hadn't gotten together in years. It was glorious to see everyone and know that they had good memories of working for us.

At home, I had been regularly having chest pains for months, but hadn't been saying anything. I just kept popping pills and thought I had a cold or whatever. Then on December 22nd, the pains got really bad. Jay called my brother-in-law, who was a doctor. I got rushed

The last two new projects we worked on this year were a show called *Elfbert Einstein*, and an interactive show called *Youngstar*.

Elfbert Einstein was one of the characters we had developed for the proposal *It's a Junkle Out There* back in 1989. He was a brilliant little elf that always knew the answer to every question, but often inserted himself into the story, whether it was helping cavemen start fire or helping Washington cross the Delaware. In our series Elfbert was only visible to children, like young Marie and her brother, John. I was delighted with it. I literally created a bunch of characters that were really fun for it. It was really—and still is—a good idea, and probably more effective today than it would've been back then.

We actually got pretty far on *Elfbert Einstein*, though I was working with a game show guy that Deke Heyward introduced me to. We went to Chicago and did a presentation to Sears Roebuck, and they made a $2 million offer to produce a pilot. But the guy we were working with said, "No, no, we want the whole pile. We want to do 45 of these, not just a pilot." And like a shmuck I listened to this other putz; well, a shmuck listening to a putz ends up with a prick. I told him, "We ought to listen to these guys, and just do a pilot." And he said, "No, Lou, you gotta let me run the business end of it."

After over 30 years, I was so tired of doing the business end of it, and I let him have his way. He then blew the chance to do what was a really worthwhile project. And it blew up because I didn't listen to my heart… or what was left of my heart after the surgery.

As for *Youngstar*, buried back in my noggin someplace was the idea of doing something specifically for youngsters the way magazines were done for them. I wanted to create a monthly, animated magazine called *Youngstar*. And Youngstar was the child in the audience who was watching the show. They were the Youngstar who had some ability to process the stuff that was seen onscreen.

That was the last project that I really put any heart and soul into.

2004

Following the PBS presentation, the Cosby project was revised even further. It was now to be called *Mr. Aesop*, and the teacher figure no longer looked like Cosby himself. I believe that Cosby wanted him modeled somewhat after his son, Ennis, who had been murdered in 1997. Ennis had been studying to be a special education teacher at the time of his death. In *Mr. Aesop*, he was no longer a teacher, but was instead the school counselor, and it was hinted that he might be a descendant of the original Aesop. He was able to transport kids to Fable World, where anything could talk, and stories could be played out that related to predicaments in the kids' lives. Cosby would no longer be CGI, but would instead introduce and provide tail-ends to each story in live action, as he did on *Fat Albert*.

I don't remember why *Mr. Aesop* fell apart, but, eventually, the project went away. Probably the victim of "too-much-revision-itis."

In March 2004 the British company Entertainment Rights bought the Filmation library from Hallmark, who had all but ceased doing anything with it. Entertainment Rights already owned some major U.K. properties, including *Postman Pat, the Little Red Tractor*, and *Basil Brush*. Reportedly, the asking price for the Filmation library was now down to $20 million.

In a PR article on *Shrek 2* for its premiere at the Cannes Film Festival, several staff members and producers on the film were interviewed, including Shrek "himself." When asked how he got his start in toons, he said, "I did some in-betweening work on Filmation's *Shazam!* and then moved on to the animated *Star Trek* series, also done by Filmation. Lou Scheimer and I were tight." It was an unexpected—and slightly anachronistic—call-out.

Jack Mendelsohn, one of our favorite writers at Filmation, received the seventh annual Animation Writing Award for Lifetime Achievement on November 4th at the Writers Guild of America West headquarters.

On Christmas Day 2004, the live-action *Fat Albert* movie was released, having filmed starting April 14th. Although the script was still by Bill Cosby and Charles Kipps, Joel Zwick had directed instead of Forest Whitaker—who had left over creative differences—and Lord/Weaver Productions was not a part of it. I was gone as well, as neither I, nor Filmation, got any credit. I don't even recall that any of the animators who worked on the film's animated segments had worked for Filmation.

As 2004 was waning, some 42 years after I started Filmation, and one year shy of my 50th year in the animation business, I decided to call it quits. My health was starting to go south; as if the quadruple bypass wasn't bad enough, I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. I had seen my old friend Danton Burroughs struggling with it, and knew what was potentially to come.

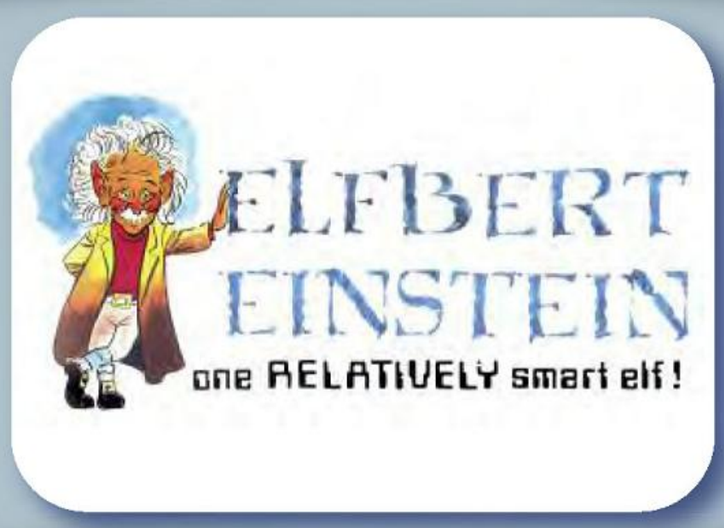
I felt like I had done nothing but a bunch of blunders after I left Filmation. I felt out of it. Everything I touched turned to sh*t. I couldn't go back to the networks even if I tried because most of the networks were now part of multi-conglomerates and owned their own animation studios. Consequently, they were not going to be interested in buying from any other people. And I only wanted to do stuff that I felt was worth doing. Beyond that, I wouldn't have known a network buyer if I fell across them. I looked around one day, and all the guys that I used to work with—who I knew—were old, retired, dead, or inept.

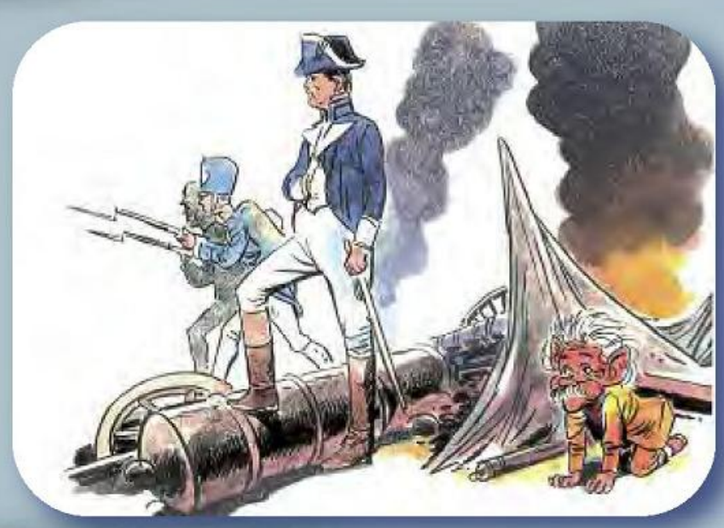
I am close to *all* of those, by the way.

I had done presentation after presentation after presentation, and I couldn't sell them. The office was costing a ton of money. I got to where I was really unhappy. I felt like I had wasted 15 years in semi-retirement trying to get things started again, and had not been able to be successful at it.

So, I quit. Erika closed up Lou Scheimer Productions, and boxes of materials from my office went into storage or my house.

It was a depressing ending to my career… or so I thought.





Opposite: (left to right)
Jay Scheimer's Filmation reunion pass

Presentation art for *Bill Cosby's Aesop's Story Shop* and *Mr. Aesop*

Above:
Presentation art for *Elfbert Einstein*

HEY, HEY, HEY! HOW COME YOU DON'T LOOK ANY OLDER?

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

2004-2010

GETTING TO KNOW YOU... THE FILMATION GENERATION

As we near the present day, a lot of my memories relate less to business dealings than they do to interactions with people who grew up watching Filmation shows. It was something I always knew was happening—we had gotten fan mail all along—but as the Internet came along, and the webpage brought me my first major interactions from the fans, the knowledge that there was an entire "Filmation Generation" was becoming more apparent.

And speaking of "parent," one of the things we learned was that the kids who had grown up watching Filmation shows were now having kids of their own, and wanted to share some of the magic they grew up viewing with their children. And once our shows started coming out on DVD, they finally had that opportunity.

2005

During late 2004 and into 2005, Classic Media and Urban Works released a line of *Fat Albert* DVDs. These were collections of about twelve episodes per set, though some had more. They were mostly bare-bones, with little in the way of special features. Still, they were a better value than an earlier release set from Time-Life had been back in 2002; those DVDs had only featured three or four shows per disc!

I'll flash back a bit to June 2000, when Ed Goetz had left Simitar Entertainment and come to a company called BCI to start an independent DVD company. He brought with him a guy named Greg Glass, who had distributed a lot of titles through the Handleman Company to chain stores like K-Mart and Walmart. Then in October or November 2003, BCI was bought by the Navarre Corporation, a huge home entertainment software wholesaler, and they wanted to really ramp up their releases. So they started looking around for things to acquire the rights to.

One of the titles they actually released on DVD early on was a Filmation title, though they had been told it was public domain. That was *Fraidy Cat*, in 2001, under the company name of Brentwood. My co-author on this book, Andy Mangels, reviewed that DVD in his massive book *Animation on DVD: The Ultimate Guide* in 2003. BCI's head of acquisitions, a nice, young man named Jeff Hayne, approached Andy toward the end of 2004 with an offer. He also approached Val Staples, the head of a popular website called He-Man.org and past writer and publisher of *Masters of the Universe* comics.

Jeff had negotiated the rights to release *He-Man* on DVD, and he brought Andy and Val down to California for a meeting in early 2005. After a day-long conference with BCI personnel and a video director named Reed Kaplan, Andy left the meeting with an agreement to produce all the special features content for a massive multi-volume set for He-Man, while Val was brought onboard as a consultant to make sure the content was everything fans of Eternia would want. Andy planned a series of 16 half-hour documentaries, as well as commentary tracks and other content. Val got to work on the other content with a British kid named James Eatock, and a fantastic Italian artist named Emiliano Santalucia.

The first *He-Man* release was announced for July 12, 2005, debut; it was a set of *The Best of He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, with the top ten episodes chosen by fan voting at

Opposite:
Aging characters with an ageless Lou, a present from Filmation staffers for Lou's 50th birthday in 1978

Above:
He-Man has the power on DVD for a new generation

He-Man.org. Production had to move very quickly, and a filming trip to Los Angeles was set for March 14th–23rd. My buddy Ed Goetz called me on the morning of March 4th and told me about the project, and shortly thereafter I was in contact with Andy about filming interviews with myself, my wife, Jay, and my daughter, Erika, at my home in Tarzana.

After his crew filmed five days on interviews with past Filmation writers, animators, and editors at a Burbank hotel, Andy and Reed prepared to come to our home. There was a bit of a difficult negotiation, as Jay wasn't wild about the idea of a film crew disrupting our house. Due to a knee replacement, she was walking very poorly, and with a cane. Eventually, we agreed that the interviews would be confined to the pool area outdoors for Erika, the living room for our family interview, and my upstairs office for my talk.

The shoot was Monday the 21st, beginning at 10:30 a.m. I remember that it was really windy out by the pool, which made Erika's interview a bit tougher than we would have thought. And then all three of us—Jay, Erika, and I—sat on a couch in our living room, and talked about Filmation and *He-Man*. Jay was very funny when she talked, but a lot of the stuff that we said couldn't be used because of the swearing. It took a bit to remember to filter our language.

When we shot the interview with me upstairs, I remember there were Reed and his two crew guys in the office with their cameras and microphones, and Andy sat across the desk from me, doing the interview. They also had a pretty makeup and hair girl to make me look presentable, but she stayed outside and read most of the time. They had put a big sign up that said, "Repeat the question as part of your answer," since the interviewer wouldn't ever be on film. It was one of those things that I guess documentary folks learn; if the person answering you just launches into an answer without context, it can be tough to use.

The room was really warm, and by now it was afternoon. We couldn't have the air conditioning on because of the sound. At one point, I was rambling on about Filmation history, and while waiting for the next question, Andy and I looked over, and all three of the crew guys were in various stages of falling asleep from the heat! It was pretty funny. Luckily, their cameras were locked on target.

The next day, Tuesday the 22nd, they were interviewing a few fans out in Sunland, California, at a store called Fantastic Family Comics. One of them was a gay comedian who used He-Man in his act, and the other was a kid named Josh Johnson. You may remember me writing about him in the earlier chapter. He was the kid who had been a *He-Man* fan, who had gone blind, and whom we had gotten Alan and John to record a message for.

So, Josh came in with his dad, Brad Johnson, who was in on the surprise. And Andy did the interview with him, talking about what *He-Man* meant to him, and how he remembered some of the last things he ever saw was watching *He-Man* in the hospital. He was now looking forward to showing them to his twin daughters once they were out on DVD. He loved one episode more than the others—"The Problem with Power"—but he identified a lot with "Not So Blind," the story we did about the blind boy who helped He-Man. He talked about what the morals had meant to him, and how the good messages had helped shape his life. At the end he said how much he wanted to meet John Erwin, Alan Oppenheimer, and Lou Scheimer, but expected that he'd never have the chance. He didn't know that I was standing there the whole time, with my eyes all misty after hearing how much our shows had meant to him.

So at the end, with the cameras still on Josh, Andy said, "We have one more thing we want to do here." And then I stepped into the camera frame, and in my squeakiest voice, said, "Hi, I'm Orko!" Josh recognized my voice immediately, and I introduced myself. This incredible kid was almost speechless, but I felt really happy to hear what he had said.

I had worn a special *He-Man* crew jacket—my personal jacket—to the shoot. I remember when I left the house, Jay said, "What are you doing with that jacket? You don't need a jacket today!" And I told her I was giving it away. She said, "Are you crazy?" But right then, when I gave Josh my *He-Man* jacket, and he felt the stitching on the back, I knew it meant so much to him. Everybody except Josh was getting all teary-eyed, and I think the only reason he wasn't was just that he was so surprised. Andy ended up using that footage at the end of one of the *He-Man* DVD documentaries, and it felt kind of like one of those special "Oprah moments." I did get the chance to interact with Josh and his dad again at Comic-Con several times after that, and he's a great kid.

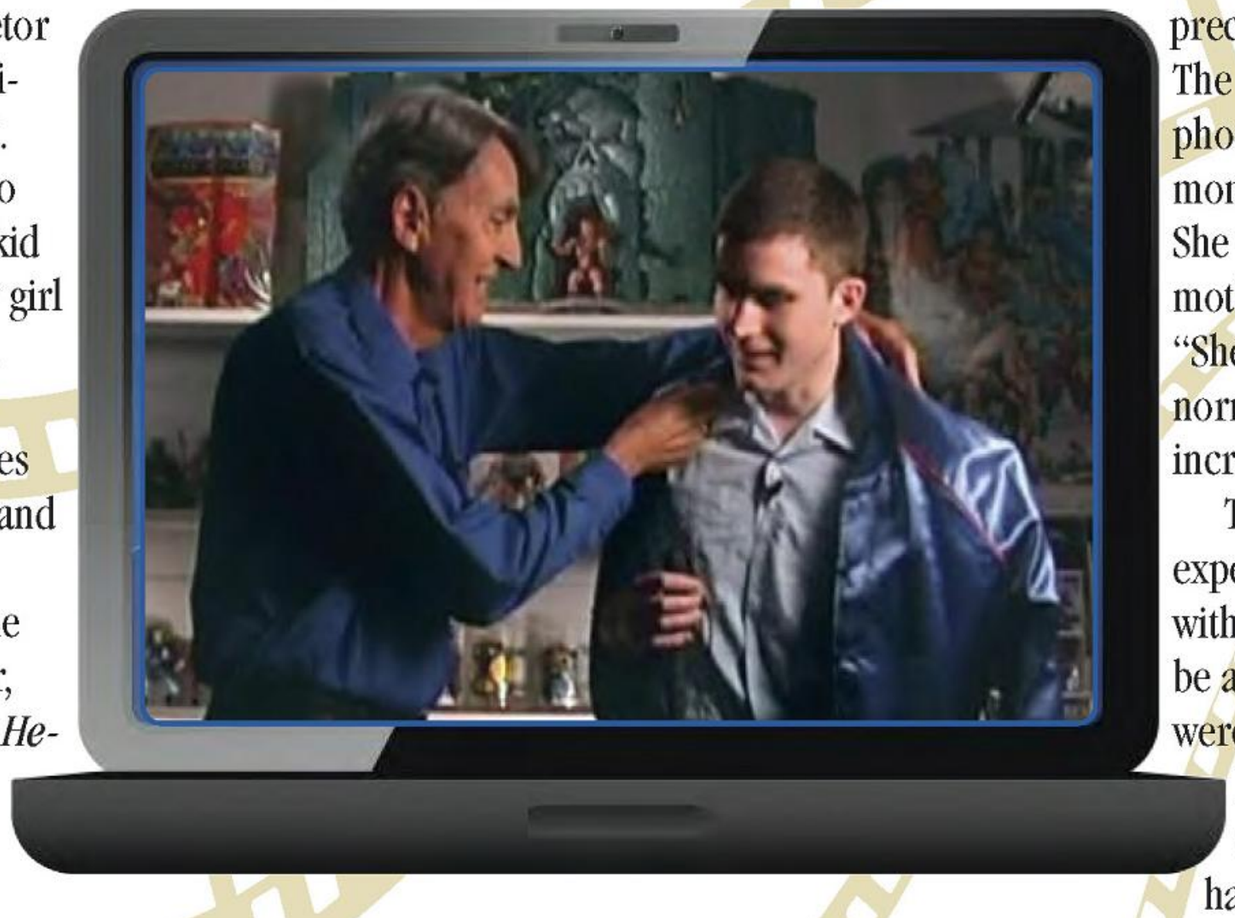
That summer Filmation's history got its second most major blow after the closing of the company. On July 2, 2005, around 2:00 in the morning, Norm Prescott passed away of natural causes. Ira, my attorney, was actually the one who called and told me. Norm was 78 years old, and was survived by his beautiful wife, Elaine, two sons, and three grandchildren. He had gone through a lot of operations and was in bad shape, but I never thought of him as being mortal. We hadn't been as close in later years once he left the company, but we still considered each other as great friends. It was also sad that he didn't get to see the later renaissance of Filmation's early material on DVD.

The first *He-Man* set came out concurrently with Comic-Con International in July 2005, at which Andy Mangels had arranged for me to be a special guest. I had gone to Comic-Con in San Diego in 2003, but it wasn't a big deal. I think I did an impromptu signing, but mostly I just wanted to see the event. This time was much different for my family and me. For two days there, I was scheduled for a "Spotlight on Lou Scheimer" panel on Thursday the 14th, and a "*He-Man* on DVD" panel on Friday the 15th, as well as autograph signings at the Tower Records booth.

BCI was unable to get a booth, so they partnered with Tower, one of their top buyers at the time. Paul Dini and Bruce Timm came by and did autographs with me on Thursday. It was nice to see them, and to know how successful they had been in their careers. We had all sorts of wild fans show up. One guy had He-Man tattoos, and a lot of them had cels they had bought. A lot of the He-Man.org people showed up and took pictures with us. One guy named Sean told me that when he was a kid, some of his first words were, "I have the power!" He used to drive his family crazy shouting it.

Another young lady was a writer and filmmaker herself. A young man was now a voiceover artist. There were fans from all over the U.S. and even Germany! A lot of them were parents, and they brought their kids to meet me. One guy even flew out from New York—at the last minute—just to meet me! A girl dressed as Frosta from *She-Ra* came up to Erika, and that was one of the characters Erika used to do the voice for! The costume was great, and Erika thought it was terrific!

The DVD artist—and also the guy who did this very book's cover—Emiliano, had his 30th birthday on Friday, and while he did a signing at the BCI booth, Andy got the crowd to sing him "Happy Birthday." Another fan had Skeletor tattooed on his back and had a license plate with "Skeletor" on it. And this tiny, little kid came up to the booth with his dad, and the kid was dressed as He-Man. A pretty girl came up dressed as She-Ra, too. The two of them won a costume contest that BCI did and got prizes presented by Tom Tataranowicz and Tom Sito.



This woman named Erin came up to us as well, and her brother, Mark Bruland, had been a huge *He-Man* fan. He had passed away recently after a long battle with cancer. She brought with her a photo of Mark and his room, which was covered with He-Man stuff. She told me about how much the show had inspired Mark and helped give him strength, and her as well. Their mother was there as well, and they just wanted to meet me and tell me about Mark. It was very touching. Jay even started to cry when they were telling us about it.

Because of her troubles walking, and the size of the enormous crowd, Jay was in a wheelchair, and was pushed around the Con by Erika and her partner, Amy. Both Jay and Erika were on the Spotlight panel. I talked a lot about Filmation, of course, and Erika and Jay talked about growing up with the company and doing voices for our shows. Jay didn't really say a lot, but she appreciated the attention and applause.

The *He-Man* panel was Erika, myself, Tom Sito, Tom Tataranowicz, and Jeff Hayne from BCI. Joe Straczynski was supposed to be on the panel, but he never showed up. It was a bit better attended than the Spotlight panel had been, and we talked and joked a lot about *He-Man*'s past.

Between the Comic-Con experience and the DVD release, I was delighted. The shows had been gone, and nobody was seeing them, and then the DVD releases created a whole new world for all the material that we had done. I was really in seventh heaven. It made them available for kids who had never seen them. I loved going to the Con; I loved signing the things the fans brought up to me. It was really wonderful. I didn't get paid for doing it with any money; I got paid in joy. All the people who would come up and tell us about how are they were affected by our work… it was like somebody came back and told me that my life was worth living. All that stuff I used to hear—the f*cking networks telling me that our shows were sh*t and there may be a lot of people watching them, but they didn't want to put them on the air—that made me nuts. And to find out now that we did something that was really worthwhile, that it had affected some people, was really great.

After some of the sets came out, I got an email from a woman who had an autistic daughter. The mother was divorced and had raised the girl by herself. And she would show our programs to her daughter—shows she herself had watched as a child—because they were appropriate for her, and the girl really responded to them and communicated with them. I called to tell the mother that I really appreciated what she had said to me. The girl actually answered the phone, and she said, "Mommy, mommy, Mr. Scheimer is calling!" She was like 17 now. And her mother got on the line, and she said, "She really doesn't talk like that normally." I mean, that was just incredible.

There were dozens of emails and experiences like that. So, I figured with every one like that, there had to be a thousand other people who were affected. It brought me back to life. Jay and I would take trips and stuff like that, but I never had the satisfaction of knowing that what we at Filmation created had lived through the years.

There were three total *He-Man* DVD sets released in 2005: *The Best of He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*; *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*: Season One, Volume One Boxed Set; and *He-Man and She-Ra: A Christmas Special*. The first set ended up winning a DVD award on November 7th at the Third Annual TV-DVD Conference for Best 1980s Series. The sets were really great. They came with postcards illustrated by famous comic book artists interpreting our characters; Andy worked with the artists to find a really eclectic and fun mix of guys and art styles. The *Christmas Special* was kind of a trial to see what the interest for *She-Ra* would be like. All of the sets sold very well, thankfully.

On December 8th Erika and I came in to record a few commentary tracks for *He-Man* with Larry DiTillio. We recorded at a small rock-and-roll studio near Bob Hope International Airport, called Stereotrain. The recording

Opposite:
The Scheimer family is interviewed for a *He-Man* DVD documentary

Above:
Josh Johnson meets Lou in March 2005

was kind of down-and-dirty, as we all used different kinds of microphones, and watched the episode on a small TV as we chatted. It was my first set of commentaries, and I had to remember to keep my language age-appropriate.

2006

On January 27th and 28th, Andy made a quick stop at our house prior to meeting with BCI about upcoming releases. He also began "raiding" what materials I had from Filmation—which were scattered throughout multiple floors of the house and the pool house—to find new material for the DVD special features. We didn't know it yet, but that was the start of the excavation work for this book.

In February 2006 BCI finalized a deal to license out the remainder of Entertainment Rights' Filmation library for DVD, as well as several Heart Corporation properties, including *Flash Gordon*.

Another round of DVD shooting took place in March at Stereotrain, where we recorded as much as we could—except for when rock bands were loudly rehearsing in other studios, or planes were landing or taking off at the nearby airport. On Saturday the 11th, I recorded commentary tracks for *She-Ra* episodes and the *BraveStarr* movie, while on Tuesday, March 14th, I was back in the booth for commentaries for *Journey Back to Oz* and *Secret of the Sword*, reunited with Hal Sutherland and some of my favorite Filmation folk. Speaking of reunions, on Thursday the 16th to Saturday the 18th, I was reunited with cast and crew members from our live-action shows for *Isis, Ghost Busters, Space Academy, Jason of Star Command, Kid Super Power Hour,* and *Ark II,* as well as animated shows like *Blackstar, Flash Gordon*, and *Groovie Goolies*. That latter interview was done by the wacky voice actor and *Goolies* fan Wally Wingert, though we later had to reshoot the interview when he decided to go in a completely different direction with his *Goolies* documentary.

Reuniting with the live cast members and crew was even more surprising than the animation folk. Most of the actors I hadn't seen since their shows were on the air, and it was great to learn what had become of their lives. Very few of them were still acting, but most of them were successful in other fields. Some were parents, and although they looked different, some of them also looked fantastic! Eric Greene, who had been little Loki on *Space Academy* was the most surprising; he had grown from a weird-looking little boy to a strikingly handsome young mad who was working in the legal department for the ACLU and several charities. It was so worthwhile to see them after all those years, and to find that they had loved the old stuff and they had remembered it fondly as part of their lives.

If you watch the interviews on the various discs, you'll note that I'm in a variety of outfits. As we were discussing dozens of shows for release, we spread the interviews across a few different days, though most were on the 16th and 18th. For the latter set, I even brought an old *Space Academy* jumpsuit I had in the closet to wear! Everyone teased me about it, but at least it still fit, even if I had lost a few inches in height.

On June 19th BCI announced that they were renaming their animated programming line of DVDs under the new title of "Ink & Paint" brand. I also started to do more interviews to promote the DVDs, including a lengthy multi-part chat for Newsarama. It gave me a new drive to discuss the past the more I heard that it had mattered to so many people.

The *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*: *Season 2, Volume One* boxed set was released on June 6th, and it contained a special documentary Andy put together called "The Magic of Filmation." Unlike the others in the series, this one was not *He-Man*-specific. Instead, it covered the founding and history of Filmation, and included interviews with a few dozen past employees and myself. I was a bit embarrassed when I saw it, as a lot of it was people saying very nice things about me, but mostly they were appreciative comments about the work ethic at Filmation and the fact that I fought so hard for meaningful shows and to keep our animation business in America.

My third visit to Comic-Con International was July 19–23, 2006. Once again, BCI teamed up with Tower Records for a booth, and Erika, Jay, and I attended, to promote the *She-Ra* and *Flash Gordon* DVDs. I was a bit naughty at the Ink & Paint panel on Friday the 21st, as I was a bit unhappy with Mattel, and I kept saying "F*ck Mattel!" even though Andy tried to get me not to. The crowd thought it was hilarious, but I thought he was going to faint. I guess there was somebody from Mattel in the audience who was not as amused. The day of the panel, I wore my infamous white suit, also known as the "ice cream man" suit. It was one of my favorites, alongside a blue blazer I often wore in public. The He-Man.org fans posed for a group picture with Erika after the panel.

Both Erika and I signed at the booth on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, along with Tom Tataranowicz. Other Filmation staffers did their own signings, including Rich Arons, Darrell McNeil, Brooks Wachtel, Michael Swanigan, Marc Scott Zicree, Michael Reaves, and Larry DiTillio. Plus, they had artists signing including Joe Chiodo, Adam Hughes, Gene Ha, Frank Cho, Brandon Peterson, and Emiliano Santalucia. There was also a very pretty model dressed as She-Ra at our booth, and BCI gave out *She-Ra* T-shirts to anyone who bought the DVDs.

BCI also sponsored the printing of the Con's "The Gay Agenda," a newsletter published by the non-profit group PRISM Comics, a group that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered comics, creators, and readers. Speaking of which, one lovely young man came up to me at the booth and said, "I want to thank you, Lou, because you gave me a show that I could really understand and feel." I said,

"What was it?" He said, "*She-Ra*." I said, "Not *He-Man*?" He said, "No, I'm gay. You gave me a show that I could understand, and I loved, and it was about a woman. I'm a woman; I just happen to have a body that's not a woman's! I found something there that I could watch, and it was appropriate for me. You really helped me." I never thought of that! The guy made me think. It had always been important for me to feature African-American and Asian characters in Filmation series because it was important to reflect the world around us. Maybe today if I were producing shows, I would have a gay character in it. That would be interesting to do.

Following the Con, Erika and Amy put up a new website as a way for fans to interact with me. It was louscheimerproductions.org, and it was active from 2006–2009. If anyone emailed me there, and I didn't respond, I apologize; I did read every email and tried to respond to some, but it was a bit overwhelming at times, and I am an old guy who wasn't born in the age of computers and emails!

From July to December, BCI released DVD sets for *She-Ra, Flash Gordon, Blackstar, Space Sentinels & Freedom Force*, more *He-Man, Groovie Goolies, Journey Back to Oz*, and *Ark II*. Most of the releases included a slightly re-edited version of "The Magic of Filmation" documentary. Additionally, Paramount finally released *Star Trek: The Animated Series* as a DVD set on November 21st. They interviewed Hal and I for the documentary, and Andy helped them find materials for the set.

In the fall of 2006, Andy first asked me about writing this book, which was originally titled *American Toons: Lou Scheimer, A Life in Filmation*. I had a hard time believing that anyone would want to read about my life or the company, but he was persistent. He proposed the book to John Morrow on November 22, 2006, and it was announced at Comic-Con 2007, but it was October 2007 when the book deal was first drafted, and July 2008 before a final contract was agreed upon. Publishing takes a long time! By then, the book had the alliterative title it now has.

In the latter part of the year, Entertainment Rights announced that they were going to acquire Classic Media, the library-holder for projects such as *Gumby, Lassie, Casper, Richie Rich, Pat the Bunny*, and *The Lone Ranger*, among others.

2007

In January 2007 Warner shot a documentary interview with me for their August 2008 *DC Super-Heroes* DVD release, which collected all of the "Guest Hero" segments from the *Aquaman* series. Michael Brosnan was the very nice gentleman who directed the documentary, which was really a spotlight on my life and history with Filmation. Interviewed were my daughter, Erika, Hal Sutherland, Bob Kline, Paul Dini, Darrell McNeil, Tom Tataranowicz, Joe Gall, Rick Gehr, and Andy Mangels. They shot the scenes with both Hal and me in a local movie theater, and it was a very emotional time.

In the interview we talked about the 1975 Emmy Awards win for *Star Trek*, and how I had not said "thank you" to Hal on the broadcast. That bugged me for years, for years. And I didn't have the guts to tell him that because I didn't know how much it hurt him. And when I did tell him, then he told me how much it hurt him, but he was the kind of guy who didn't ever say anything about it. Hal is a unique human being in the sense that "unique" means "very few are that way." He's one of a kind and, had it not been for Hal, my life would have been very different, and Filmation never would have existed.

It wasn't a matter of making up with Hal. It did not really interfere with our relationship, except it was back there hiding, and it was an ugly feeling. Hal felt worse about it than I did because I, like a schmuck, didn't think of it for a long time. But in my heart I always knew that I needed to apologize for what I had done so many years ago. In 2006 Erika had finally gotten us together, and we talked about what happened. And I was able to apologize, truthfully, for having hurt him so many years back by not recognizing how important he was. We made up then, and he joked that he wanted to marry me, which was okay as far as I was concerned, but it really might have pissed Jay off.

So, at the interviews for the Warner documentary, all of this got brought up again. Hal had tears in his eyes as he talked about it, and I was choked up myself. But at one point I turned to the camera and said, "Thank you, Hal."

Pending the purchase of Classic Media by Entertainment Rights, the Weinstein Company and Genius Inc. made a pact in April 2007 to release projects to DVD, including Filmation's *The Archies, Sabrina,* and *Fat Albert*. They again hired on Andy to produce the special features, working with co-producer and director Reed Kaplan for the documentaries. On April 14th they shot an interview with me in my home office, this time discussing *Archie* for Genius, and *BraveStarr* for BCI.

My fourth trip to Comic-Con International was on July 27–28, 2007. This time around BCI was paired with its sister company, Funimation, a recent acquisition for Navarre. We did another Filmation panel, which was overloaded with talent, and each panelist was able to tell three or four anecdotes during our 90-minute session. It included myself, Erika, Bob Burns, Eric Greene, Craig Littler, Sid Haig, Brian Cutler, Ronalda Douglas, Joanna Pang, and Tom Tataranowicz. Joining us on the panel was Ron Dante, the singing voice for *The Archies*; even though those DVDs were coming out

Opposite:
Andy and Lou after a day of documentary filming, March 2005

Above: (left to right)
After recording commentary tracks in March 2006 with Brian Tochi, Craig Littler, Jay, Lou, Johnny Venokur, John Berwick

from a rival company, BCI allowed him to sit with us. I did a signing with Ron at the Van Eaton Galleries booth, shilling the DVDs, Ron's album, and some Filmation art they were selling. They were quite nice to us, but, ironically, Steve Schanes, who had recently bought the remaining warehouse of Filmation cels, was also offering work from our shows directly opposite our row!

Unfortunately, the rest of the con was a bit of a train wreck. The booth was poorly designed, and nobody knew who was signing or when. Passersby only saw the backs of our heads as we did autographs. Andy Mangels had done an excellent job getting cast members from our live shows—*Isis, Space Academy*, and *Jason of Star Command*—and animation all together for autographs, but it seemed as if the BCI staffers who remained—Jeff Hayne and Barrett Evans had departed the company by this point—were so disinterested in helping promote the DVDs and signings that one could almost call their behavior sabotage. The Funimation/BCI booth did give out *Isis* T-shirts and temporary tattoos, but nobody seemed to know that.

I know that most of us who signed there on Friday and Saturday were shocked at how poorly the BCI staff treated us—and how they mistreated Andy, who was working his hardest to correct the situation—during our time there. Many of the actors even loudly questioned why they had come to the show with that kind of treatment, and they were right; it was disheartening at best. Still, for several of them, it was worthwhile to meet some of their fans, and I know Joanna Pang was excited to go with her family to attend the *Lost* panel, at which Andy had managed to arrange prime seating for them.

BCI again sponsored the printing of "The Gay Agenda" by PRISM Comics, but this time there was a personal element to it. My daughter, Erika, had done an interview with PRISM. It was her public "coming out" as a lesbian, though it didn't send shockwaves to anyone.

We had known Erika was a lesbian for a long time, of course; it just hadn't been made public. She knew even as early as twelve that she liked girls, but we loved her no matter what. Whether she's gay or not gay has nothing to do with love as far as I'm concerned. It's just the way she is. I can't imagine loving her more than I love her now. And we had a lot of gay people who worked at Filmation over the years, so it wasn't like it was new to Jay or me. Erika's partner, Amy Rosenberg, is the sweetest woman, and very talented and intelligent. She is one of the family.

2007 saw the largest amount of Filmation DVD sets being released. There were more volumes for *She-Ra* and *Ghostbusters*, plus *The Ghost Busters* live action, *Jason of Star Command, Mission: Magic!, Hero High, Happily Ever After, BraveStarr, Isis*, and *Lone Ranger & Zorro*. Genius also released *The Archie Show* set.

By the end of November 2007, Navarre Corporation was looking at large losses from BCI, mostly due to some non-payment from some major retail accounts, and a "restructuring" of the company was publicly announced. The problems had been going on for months internally, with 85% of the staff fired in September, but it took a while for news to reach the public. Still, BCI limped along with a skeleton staff of about ten people.

2008

By phone and by email, Erika, Amy, Andy, and I started discussing putting together another Filmation reunion in 2008, with Filmation fan Jon Mankuta and ex-staffer Pam Vincent working on potential locations. Then on April 22nd to May 1st, Andy flew down for a round of book interviews, covering 1980 through the present day. But the timing was bad, as my mind was on other things.

My wife, Jay, had been experiencing heart problems, and she was hospitalized. I was worried that I would lose her. Erika and Amy had been with us a lot, but they got a bit of a break while Andy was there, as he could take me to the hospital to see Jay.

I was having more health problems of my own as well, which I haven't talked about very much in the book. I had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2004, and was dealing with the symptoms of that constantly. It's a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system, and it causes tremors and shaking to the body, as well as a general slowing down.

Parkinson's can attack cognitive functions. In my case, one of the things it attacks the worst is memory. While I can remember a lot of details about a lot of things, in the last five to six years, my memory has gotten far worse. Mostly what escapes me are very specific items, such as names; I can remember the events and details, or even colors or things that are said from the past, but the specific name might fail me. The story I told earlier in the book about John Wayne? When I told it, all I could remember at the moment was it was a cowboy actor, but with Jay's help I was able to remember which cowboy actor it was. This made assembling this book a challenge for my co-author, as he had to research a lot more details than expected to make sure that none of the facts were incorrect.

With Jay sick, and my Parkinson's, mortality was staring me in the face. And it was about to stare harder.

On Tuesday, April 29th, Andy and I were at IHOP eating lunch after visiting Jay, and he had the tape recorder on the table, interviewing me. Suddenly, a familiar figure approached our table: Danton Burroughs, the grandson of Edgar Rice Burroughs, and the yodeling voice of Filmation's *Tarzan*. You may recall that he lived down the hill from our home. There was something else we had in common; Danton had Parkinson's as well. He was only 63 though, and in terrific shape. He talked to me a bit about how well his medication was working for him. I introduced him to Andy, and we talked about him coming over to go through Danton's files on the

1st, before he left for home. That was the day Danton was going to be named chairman of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc., but he agreed because he wanted to be sure *Tarzan* was well represented in the book. He also told us how excited he was about the work on the *John Carter* film that was going to be filming soon. After a short while, Danton wandered off, and we resumed our interview.

The next night there were sirens down the hill from us. We didn't know what they were. We didn't hear from Danton though, that day or the next, so we assumed he might be too busy to meet with us on the 1st, and Andy departed for Oregon. Shortly thereafter I ran into a local firefighter and found out two things: that Danton's home had been badly damaged by a fire the night we had heard the sirens; and that Danton himself had passed away from heart failure on the 1st! Having just seen him, it was eerie.

As the year progressed, the Filmation DVD releases for 2008 trickled almost to a stop due to BCI's decimation and a crash in the general DVD marketplace. BCI managed to release a few more *BraveStarr* sets and another *Lone Ranger* & *Zorro*, as well as some omnibus sets featuring several titles, but several other releases were abandoned entirely. Navarre finally shut BCI down on December 17, 2008, and began selling off their backstock.

Genius put out a second *Archie* set—*Archie's Funhouse*—as well as a *Sabrina* set, but declined to put any extras at all on the *Sabrina* release, and dropped further development on future sets for *Fat Albert*. The biggest release of the year was Warner's *DC Super Heroes: The Filmation Adventures* on August 12th; DC Comics actually featured significant advertising for the set, hearkening back to the old days when our shows received some of their earliest promotional appearances in the pages of their books.

Meanwhile, in November, Gang of 7 Animation studio, run by Tom Tataranowicz, announced that they were proceeding forward with work on L. Frank Baum's *The Life and Adventures of Santa Claus*, although their version was a new one developed for CG-animation, not the long-in-development project I had shepherded through multiple attempts at Filmation and Lou Scheimer Productions. Gang of 7 was working with Hyde Park Entertainment and Toonz Entertainment. Tom T. wrote the script with Mark Edward Edens, and was planning to co-direct it with Rich Arons and Dick Sebast, all ex-Filmation staffers.

Tom brought me into the Gang of 7 fold as a consultant, though I didn't really contribute anything that was meaningful to what he was doing. I just liked to go up and see the guys work, looking like a real studio again. I'd give advice if they asked. But Tom knew what he was doing, he knew where he was going, he knew what he wanted to do with the thing, and he didn't need my help. It was just very nice of him to help me feel better. I did record a voice-over for the *Santa Claus* trailer, though they didn't end up using it on the finished version.

I wanted to give a few thoughts on CG stuff, and now's as good a place to do it as any, as we're nearing the end. CGI versus hand drawn animation… they're very different, and the difference is not necessarily a thing that allows you to say one will replace the other. It's going to be unique someday in the near future to have a fully two-dimensional animated feature. Right now, I think you're dealing with a group of people who grew up with two-dimensional, but saw the interest and the fun of a three-dimensional film. After a while, the three-dimensional films are going to look just like stuff that can be done live action. It used to be the great fun of animation was that it was things you couldn't do in live action. It was impossible. Now it's possible to do it in CG and mix it with live action and I'm not too sure that it helps a story; ultimately, what you're really interested in is the story, the characters, how they appeal to you, and what you get out of it. I'm not too sure that those 3-D images are going to live the way the two-dimensional images live. Disney's *Pinocchio* is still better than any three-dimensional film that's been done.

Another element of this is that with CG, you lose the ability to let the work of single animators come through. The people who are great animators are great actors. Now you don't have to be a great actor to make the thing look pretty good because you've created the thing in the computer someplace, and you can pull it out. The human presence is not as effective as it used to be—or as important as it used to be. There is an awe of seeing it done by humans. I think the awe is diminished somewhat when the human hand doesn't seem to be doing it anymore.

I saw *The Incredibles*, and even though it was CG, it still had a retro feel to it, and that was interesting. But then you get something like *Happy Feet* with all the penguins. All those penguins looked the same to me, even the lead one. The only distinctions besides maybe the change of some colors, is with the voices. Well that ain't the way it is in hand-drawn two-dimensional animation. There would have been some penguins that would have had real character in the way they were drawn. And maybe the CG artists can do that, but I haven't seen it done yet. The penguins all looked like penguins to me.

The Pixar stuff is considered classic, but it will be interesting to see what else evolves and what holds the test of time for CG animation. They look so different now that people are going to say they're amazing, but a couple years from now they're going to say, "Was it a good story or a bad story? Were the characters interesting or not interesting?" I don't really know, and I ain't gonna be around to test it either.

As for today's more adult animation, I have to say that I like *The Simpsons*.

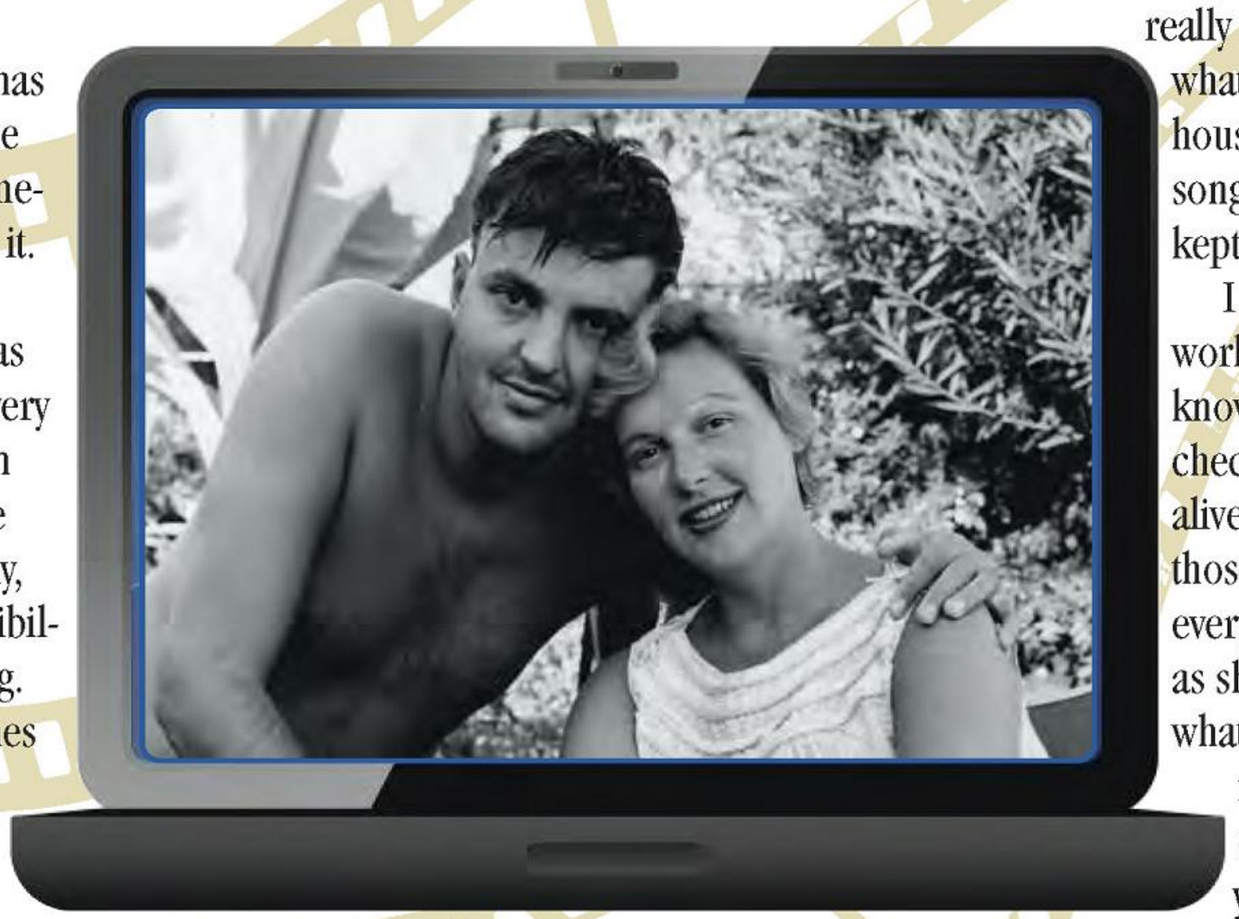
Opposite:
Erika and her partner, Amy Rosenberg

Above: (left to right)
Comic-Con 2007 (l to r) Eric Greene, Brian Cutler, Joanna Pang Atkins, Lou, Bob Burns, Ronalda Douglas Lombardo, Craig Littler, and Andy (kneeling)

They're using a lot of old Filmation employees on that show. Some other primetime animated shows I've seen, and I don't watch them very much anymore. But even if they say they're made for adults, just saying they're made for adults doesn't mean the kids don't watch them; the kids watch them all the time. Whether or not it's appropriate all the time, I'm not too sure. But I don't think some of those shows are going to get the kind of response that we got—that I didn't know we would be getting 20 years later, 25 years later—and whether they will mean as much to those kids watching them now. They may entertain them, but will they actually affect their lives? Are they appropriate for them?

The networks have walked away from shows for children—not for adults—and I think that's absurd. I mean, they're using the public airways, they have a commitment to do worthwhile programming for children, and they all say they do it and they don't do it! And that's wrong. Whether it's two-dimensional or three-dimensional or non-dimensional. They've walked away from it. So many of the so-called kids' shows now exist solely for merchandising or for entertainment alone; they don't exist to help kids while they entertain them.

Now a show like *South Park* has a satirical element to it, but, at the same time, it often does have something to say as well, if kids watch it. It's sometimes a good show, although I'm not too sure that it was appropriate to see a kid killed every week like they used to do. I mean that must have some effect on the kids that watched it. But hopefully, parents are taking some responsibility in what their kids are watching. Ultimately, they need to be the ones making those decisions, not just putting it off on the networks or animators.



2009

Jay's health had continued to be on the decline, but she seemed relatively stable. She was basically bed-ridden for months. Amy and Erika had already moved back in a couple of days a week to help take care of her. On Wednesday morning, February 18th, Jay woke up and said to me, "Lou, I feel terrible." I called the doctor, and he said, "Bring her in to the hospital." We brought her in to Tarzana Medical Center, and she died late the next day.

We could have kept her, theoretically, alive for another day or so. But she was not there. She could not see you, she could not hear you, she could not talk, and she was inevitably going to die. I did not think it was proper to keep her alive in such a horrible way. The doctor told me that he thought I was right to make that decision, and they stopped most of the medications. I was there, in the hospital, at about 11:30 p.m., and they said, "Nothing's going to happen probably until tomorrow." So, we went home, the phone rang, and they told us she had died.

I don't remember the last thing I said to her. I didn't really think she was going to die when I took her in there. It was rather unexpected for me.

Jay died from a multitude of stuff inside her, all of which gave up and quit one day. And none of it was helped by the fact that she had smoked for 50-something years, and quit ten years prior to her death. But it probably was the most influential part of whatever it was that killed her. So don't smoke. There's your message, like those in our old shows. Don't smoke. Just don't.

I didn't know what to do when Jay was gone. I never thought of the world without her. We had been together almost 58 years. We were together, beautifully.

Jay was cremated, and I have a box with her in my bedroom, staring at me, and laughing at me, and watching me constantly. And, every once in a while, I wake up in the night, and I say, "Hey, Jay!" and I suddenly realize she's not really there.

We asked friends and fans that, in lieu of flowers, any donations in honor of Jay be made to the National Parkinson Foundation.

A lot of friends of mine—and my family—expressed concern that I might not last very long myself after Jay passed away. I didn't really want to, but I did. I don't know what kept me going at first. The house I live in… it sounds like a song, and I think in an odd way, that kept me going.

I had friends—people who had worked with me, people I had known for years—who would check in, but that doesn't keep you alive. It makes you okay. And slowly, those people don't call every day, or every week. My daughter inevitably, as she always is, was there to do whatever could be done. Erika kept me going, physically. I didn't cry, I didn't sob... I loved the years that I had with that lady, and I love them to the day she died.

Jay didn't have a funeral. She didn't want one. I didn't want one. I don't like them; I don't think they do sh*t for the person who died. Funerals are for the person who lives. I've got that box there, and that's what's left of her, and one day I'm going to be part of that box, I'll be stirred around in there, and we'll be thrown into the back yard. That, to me, is the kind of afterlife I can understand, if I'm underneath that soil, and we come up with a flower.

2010–2012

There's one last bit of Filmation business we have for this book: Jeff Hayne, who had brokered the deal for Filmation properties at BCI, got a new job as the vice president of product acquisitions for Mill Creek Entertainment, another budget independent DVD company, in mid-2010. Though it took a while, Jeff eventually renegotiated a new Filmation deal with Classic Media, and began re-releasing bare-bones versions of the Filmation library to DVD, including *He-Man* and *BraveStarr*, among other titles. Most of the amazing extras from

the BCI releases were not used, and some of the sets were "best of" rather than "full series" sets, but at least fans had an option to find the titles again for less than the scalpers were asking on sites like Amazon.

I recently recorded a video interview for Shout! Factory's *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids – The Complete Series*. The DVD set was supposed to come out in summer 2012, but I understand as of this writing that it's been pushed back to a future release.

I also recorded another small voice-over for TheDeepArchives.com, along with June Foray and Lucille Bliss, for a short independent animated project. I'm not sure when it will be released, but it was fun to do.

Recently, just to show that I'll never get rid of that "pesky kid," Darrell McNeil, I have to go back to that old adage of "just when you think you're out, they drag you back in." Darrell's currently in production on a twelve-part live-action webseries homage to both the old movie serials and our old live-action shows, among others, called *The Adventures of Kaitlyn 'Kittykat' Kay*." Over the years Darrell's given me copies of old Filmation shows that aren't commercially available, so, partly to pay him back—and partly because I can't get rid of him—I offered to perform an offstage character for him for *KKKay*: that of the heroine's dad. It wasn't easy. I am an old guy, and Darrell's scripting was kind of hard to wrap my tongue around—he loves alliteration way too much for my taste—but I gave it my all. He enjoyed, as he said, "bossing me around for a change!" Why I oughtta fire him! That's it, Darrell! You're fired!

Truthfully, he's a dear friend and a wondeful employee, like the majority of people whom Norm and I employed over that quarter-century of Filmation's existance. And every time I see one of them again, or hear from one of them, it makes me happy.

I saw several familiar faces at Comic-Con 2012 in San Diego. There was a Filmation Generation panel on which Andy had gathered Tom Tataranowicz, Darrell McNeil, *Jason of Star Command* actor Sid Haig, and writer Buzz Dixon. There were lots of fun stories told, and Andy showed a few minutes of our *Marx Bros.* pilot, but the biggest surprise was when a representative from Comic-Con came up to present me with their prestigious Inkpot Award for "Achievement in Animation Arts." It's a cool statue, and heavy, and it will go up on my shelf next to the Emmy and Annie awards! I also did a signing of some promotional cards for this very book at the TwoMorrows booth with Andy and *Shazam!* star Michael Gray, and later did a signing at Steve Schanes' booth with Darrell McNeil. Steve now sells the majority of the Filmation cel library. It was great to meet the fans again, but this will probably be the last convention I attend. It was fun but exhausting!

About the same time as Comic-Con, movie studio DreamWorks Animation announced that it was buying Classic Media, the current owner of the Filmation library, for $155 million! This will give DreamWorks the rights to all of the Filmation properties, as well as the Jay Ward shows, the Christian *VeggieTales* series, and characters such as Lassie and the Lone Ranger. The line will be rebranded under the name DreamWorks Classics. Could this mean new life for Filmation shows? Time will tell…

Speaking of new life for Filmation, my great niece in Pittsburgh, Skyler Martz was on a school field trip to Pittsbugh's ToonSeum, a museum celebrating the art of cartooning. When she met the Executive Director, Joe Wos, and told him she was related to me, he went crazy with excitement. This led to them dedicating a new, permanent gallery on November 12th, 2011. You can now visit the Lou Scheimer Gallery at the ToonSeum! Joe told the press, "Lou's contributions to cartooning and pop culture made him the obvious choice for this great honor. Lou and Filmation had a tremendous impact on generations in their appreciation of the cartoon arts."

So, now I'm at a new phase of my life. I've got a couple of years to live. All I want to do is live them quietly, nicely, with people I enjoy. I've recently taken some trips, including some back to Pittsburgh to see family and friends.

My son, Lane, lives in Hawaii with his wife, Mele. She's from Tonga, and they married in July 1984. They have two adopted kids. I haven't talked about Lane a lot in this book, as he has lived a sometimes crazy life, and he didn't always get along with everyone in his life. He can make me nuts, but I do love him dearly.

My daughter, Erika, is a shining joy in my life, and it's been such a pleasure to raise her, and to work with her for as many years as we did. It's funny that as a kid neither she nor her brother were all that excited about our shows, but she played a big part in the later years of Filmation. She was certainly there for Jay and I for so long, and then for me alone. And her lovely partner, Amy, I cannot say enough good things about. In the end, what I wish for them is that they'll be able to live in a world that accepts them for what they are, and for how good they are.

This talk about my kids brings me back to what my life has been about: creating appropriate and fun and entertaining and educational shows for our audience. We did what we did as well as we could possibly do—shows which were appropriate for kids—and we have nothing to be ashamed of. And much to be proud of.

Opposite:
Lou & Jay in the late 1960's

Above:
Lou and Erika at the Lou Scheimer Gallery at Pittsburgh's Toonseum

Above:
Lou Scheimer,
Yesterday & Today

Lou Scheimer

CHAPTER THIRTY

AFTERWORD

I've been asked about whether there would be a place for Filmation in today's market. Absolutely. It would have changed. I mean, you have to change. You're not going to do the same thing year after year after year. Don't forget that Disney stopped doing Mickey Mouse. We would be doing something else with someone else, as I tried to do with He-Man and his son, which would have been an interesting character. I don't know what the messages we would give kids would be now. We were affected by what was happening in the world around us. I imagine we'd be doing a lot of stuff about religion and people being different. Not just racially, but what being different meant in the world of today.

I've been asked if Filmation could even be done again, but I don't think so. Not the way we did it. We did it all here, under one roof, except for the one time with *Zorro*. The writers and the animators and the artists who painted the backgrounds, and the people who did the voices… they were all done in one building! You'd start in the upstairs floor with the writers and the directors were down one floor below, and you could go down to the bottom of the building where the cameramen were, and you could see a project go all the way through. You'd never have to go anyplace else but inside that building, and then outside to the audience.

That can't be done anymore. It could be done, but it's not likely that it's ever going to happen again. Most stuff that's done for television is done partly here, and partly overseas. The way of doing the art has changed now, with so many things being done by computer. I think it's sort of sad because the human hand is not having the same kind of ability to control, and that's what's so wonderful about animation. In the computer, nothing is done by accident. There's no magic spontaneity. And that, I think, is a loss.

As you've read this book, I hope it never sounded like I felt like I did everything. Filmation was a lot of very talented, very gracious people. In retrospect, I realize that it was an extension of my family. And when I no longer *could* do it, I realized how much it meant, not just to me, but to all the other people who had been touched by the place.

When I became a producer, it wasn't because I was such a good artist that I deserved to go elsewhere in the animation business. The importance that I got from being "an artist," turned out not to be that I was a physical artist in the way that I was painting stuff. I learned that I dealt better with people than I could with a paintbrush or pencil. I found out that what I could do better than anything was to get a team of people and make them work together, and yet at the same time make sure that they had enough freedom to utilize their talents. I stopped drawing when I realized that there were a lot of people who drew a lot better than I drew. There were a lot of people who painted better than I did. There are better guys out there! There are better women out there! But there were not an awful lot of people who could get those brilliant, artistic people together to work as a team.

You don't succeed with a team by yelling and shouting; you do it by really liking people. And by making things enjoyable, and having the

ability to make changes that you know have to be made without offending anybody. Working in animation, you work with artists who do so many different things, and yet they all have to wind together, come together, and work together… otherwise, it's chaos.

I loved working with the people at Filmation; they're the best people in the world. My real fun was spending ten or twelve hours a day with those terrific people. I was a lucky son of a bitch! I hired the best people I could hire, I loved them dearly, and they became friends. They became the people who came up and talked to me. And they still do.

These days, there are a few folks from Filmation with whom I interact semi-regularly. Ira Epstein is still my good friend and counsel when needed. Ervin Kaplan and I have lunch together almost weekly whenever I'm in Tarzana, and Hal Sutherland still comes down to stay with me regularly. It's amazing to think that all four of us have lived through about 50 years of the business together!

Beyond that, there's Tom T. and Darrell McNeil, whom I see relatively often. I got a phone call from Robby London recently, and he said, "I just had to call you, Lou, because I love you and I just wanted to say hello." That was really touching. And there are the people who are not here anymore like Arthur Nadel and Norm. And incredible people who are still here like Gordon Berry. The people I've met and been lucky enough to work with, there's a joy in that, and I think about that frequently.

Who knows what the future will bring? Ten years from now, the Filmation shows might be all but forgotten again. I'll certainly be gone, as will a lot of the people from Filmation's early days. And the folks who worked for me will be the elder statesmen in the field.

I'm thrilled every time I see the success of one of the people who used to work for us. They were young Turks at the time, and now some of the animators and directors and writers and storyboarders who worked for us are some of the top folks in the business!

When I look back at my history in this book, it's hard to say what my legacy is. On one hand, I have to say my legacy is family, my kids, and how important they are to me. On another hand, it is having been lucky enough to work with the people I've worked with. And then there's the positive effect that our shows had on the audiences.

Finally though, the thing that I'm proudest of with Filmation is that we literally kept the animation industry alive in California and the U.S. for about seven or eight years, when nobody else was hiring people, nobody else was training people, and everybody else was running overseas because it was cheaper. Their actions were a disaster for the animation industry; it seemed cheaper, but it ended up being more expensive. When you lose the opportunity to train people, you can't hire people to take the jobs if you decide to do it back in the U.S. So all the companies were stuck overseas, and if the prices were raised, they were out of luck!

Filmation kept a lot of people working, and trained a lot of people. For our 25th anniversary, we put together a list of people who had worked for the company up to that time, and there were over 2,000 people on that list. In those 25 years, we trained new animators, we trained new directors, we trained new layout people, we made work available for voiceover artists, we kept the work in this country, and we were faithful to the union contract.

There's a part of me that still wonders what this book—and the history of Filmation—will mean to animation. People in Hollywood that really think about animation seem to favor Hanna-Barbera or Warner or Disney. They were all important as well, but I think that Filmation has a major role in the history of television animation, and especially American animation. Whether Hollywood will recognize that in the long run, I don't know. And whether that part of our history is as important as what we did for the audience is another question. Is our legacy what we did as a business, or what we did as artists and entertainers?

It's amazing when you suddenly realize that there are an awful lot of important things that you're doing when you're doing these shows because you're touching hundreds and thousands and millions of people.

When you do these shows, you never think about that lasting effect. You think, "Oh, I did a good show, and I made sure it had reasons for existing." Bugs Bunny and those early-animated shows were not made for children; they were made for adults to laugh at. My feeling was that we were making the stuff for kids. And, if you do it for kids, you should lead those kids. Rather than finding a new reason for a character to get bonked on the head week after week after week, we tried to find things that were part of the character and characterization.

Since the revival of Filmation on DVD, and as we've worked on this book, it's brought back a wonderful time to me. It's been thrilling to me to see that we have had a group memory with the audience, and that the magic of Filmation has become alive and awake again. It seems extraordinary that people find our shows so interesting even now, and so meaningful to themselves that they want their children see the material.

Hopefully, for those of you who are reading, you'll have enjoyed yourself, and you'll keep enjoying the work Filmation did. And if you have children and share our shows with them, I hope it does for your children what it did for you.

I really want to thank the people who watched our shows for making my life better in many, many ways, but mostly emotionally. That brings such satisfaction, and makes me feel that we did something worthwhile. We touched you in some way that made your life a little better.

I have a whole generation of people who've grown up watching the work that I helped to make happen. If you've read this far, you're likely one of them!

So, in the end, I want to thank our fans, the Filmation Generation. Your stories, support, and enthusiasm, make all of us who worked on the shows feel very, very good.

Fondly Yours,

Lou Scheimer
April 2012

FILMATION

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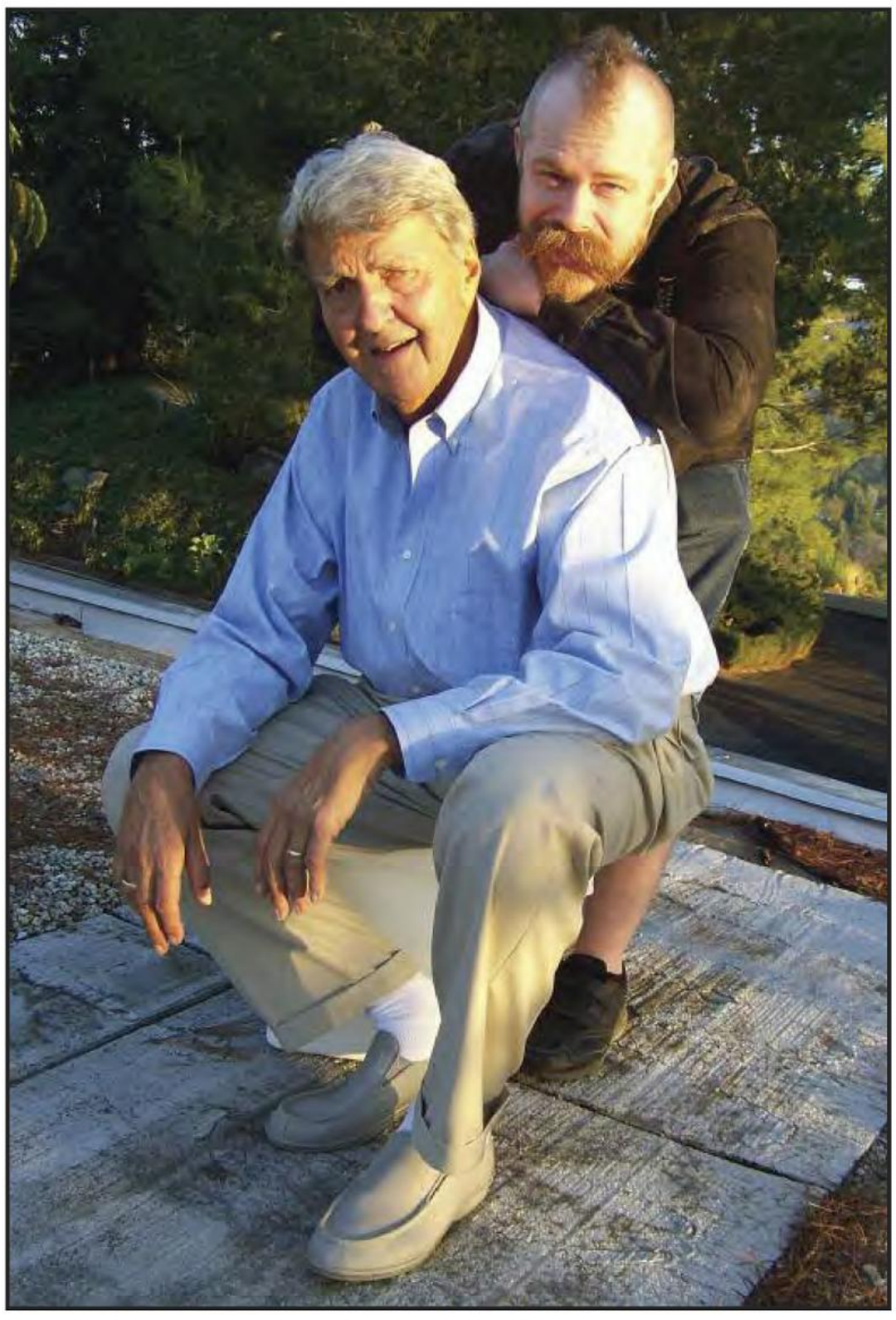
FILMATION

ABOUT THE CO-AUTHOR

Andy Mangels is the *USA Today* best-selling author and co-author of over twenty fiction and nonfiction books—including many *Star Trek* and *Roswell* books, as well as *Iron Man: Beneath The Armor, Star Wars: The Essential Guide to Characters* and *Animation on DVD: The Ultimate Guide*, and other tomes. He also co-wrote an adventure story that heavily referenced the Filmation series, for Moonstone Books' *Tales of Zorro* anthology. He is next working on books about Wonder Woman and Stephen King, among other projects.



In addition to his publishing work, Andy produced, directed, and scripted documentaries, hosted commentary tracks, and provided award-winning Special Features for over forty fan-favorite DVD box set releases. The majority of these were Filmation series, and included *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe, She-Ra: Princess of Power, The Archies, Flash Gordon, The Ghost Busters, Ark II, Space Academy, Jason of Star Command, The Secrets of Isis, Blackstar, Hero High, Groovie Goolies, The Lone Ranger, Zorro, Journey Back To Oz, Space Sentinels, A Snow White Christmas, Ghostbusters, Bravestarr, Mission: Magic!*, and *Happily Ever After*. He assisted Paramount with their *Star Trek: The Animated Series* set, and Warner with their Filmation-based *DC Super-Heroes set*.

His non-Filmation DVD production work includes *Dungeons & Dragons, The Real Ghostbusters, Defenders of the Earth, The New Adventures of He-Man*, and *Prince Valiant*. Additionally, he appeared in documentaries as an expert for Warner DVD sets for *Wonder Woman, Batman*, and *Super Friends*. He's appeared in minor acting roles on the TV shows *Grimm* and *Leverage*, as well as the film *Comic Book: The Movie*, and is a major interviewee in the 2012 documentary, *Wonder Women! The Untold Story of American Superheroines*.

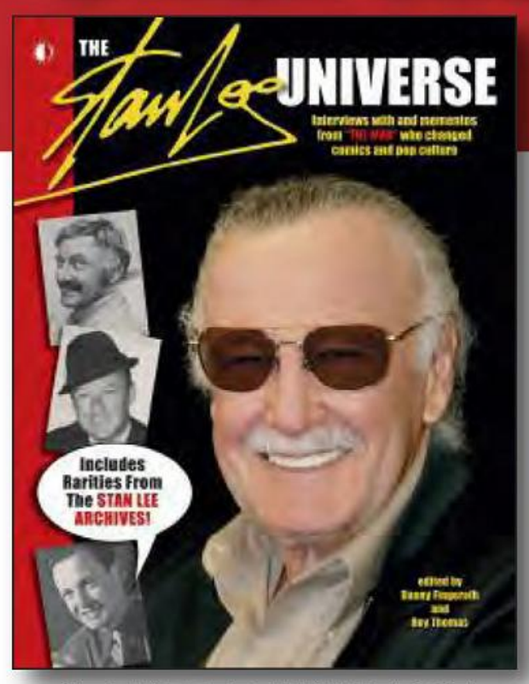
A member of the International Association of Media Tie-In Writers, Andy has written licensed material based on properties from Lucasfilm, Paramount, New Line Cinema, Universal Studios, Warner Bros., Microsoft, Abrams-Gentile, and Platinum Studios. Over the past two decades, his comic-book work has been published by DC Comics, Marvel Comics, Dark Horse, Wildstorm, Image, Innovation, WaRP Graphics, Topps, MVCreations, Arcana, and others. He was the editor of the award-winning *Gay Comics* anthology for eight years. Andy has also written hundreds of articles for entertainment and lifestyle magazines and newspapers in the United States, England, and Italy. Writing as "Dru Sullivan," Andy spent some time penning the exploits of "Miss Adventure," for the late, lamented *Weekly World News*. He regularly writes for the TwoMorrows magazine *BACK ISSUE*.

Andy is a national award-winning activist in the Gay community, and has raised thousands of dollars for charities over the years, including over $135,000 raised for Domestic Violence programs during his October "Women of Wonder Day/Wonder Woman Day" events. He is also a Board Member of the non-profit organization PRISM Comics. In 2012, he was awarded the prestigious "Inkpot Award for Achievement in the Comic Arts" at Comic-Con International.

He lives in Portland, Oregon, with his long-term partner, Don Hood, and their dog Shiloh. Visit Andy's websites at AndyMangels.com and WonderWomanMuseum.com.

Center:
Andy Mangels and Lou Scheimer, January 2010

OTHER BOOKS FROM TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING



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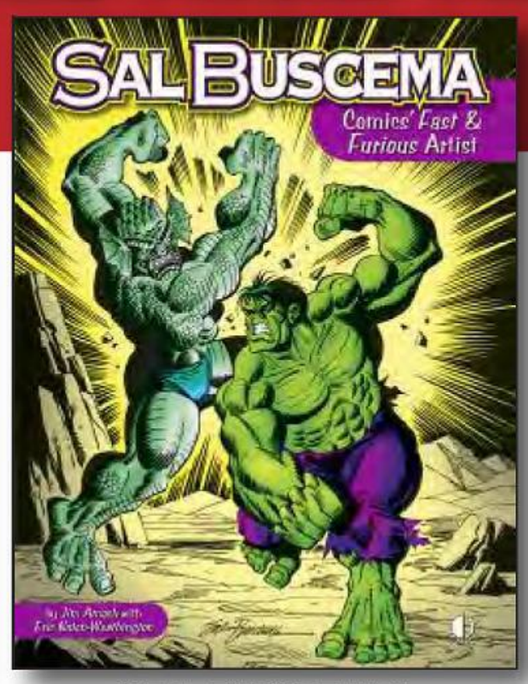

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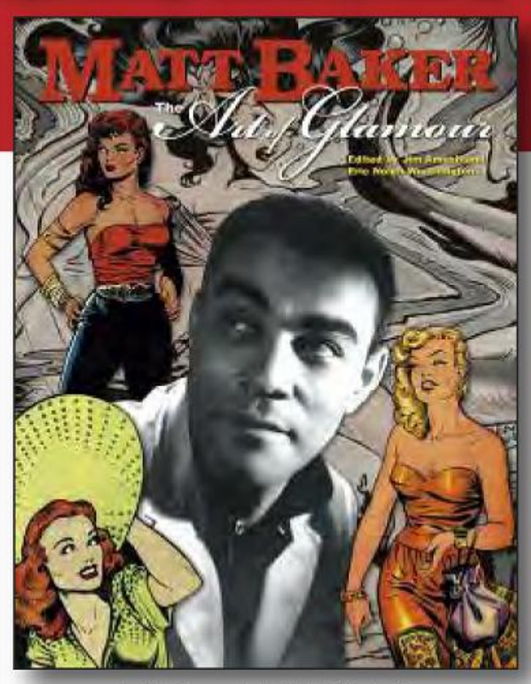

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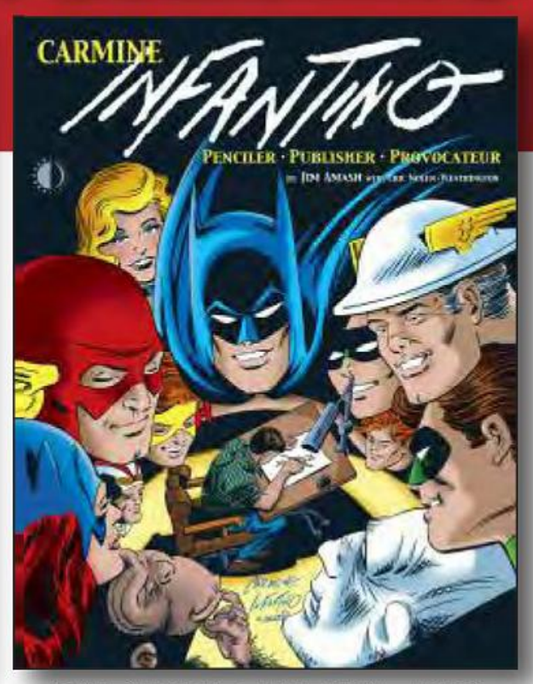

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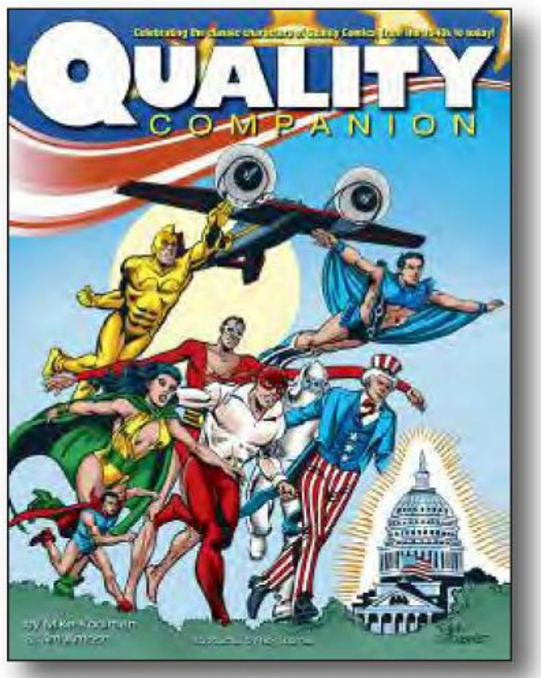

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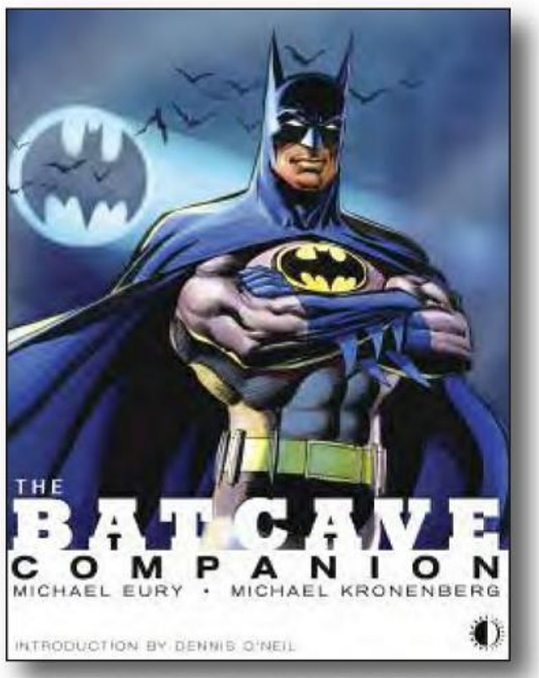

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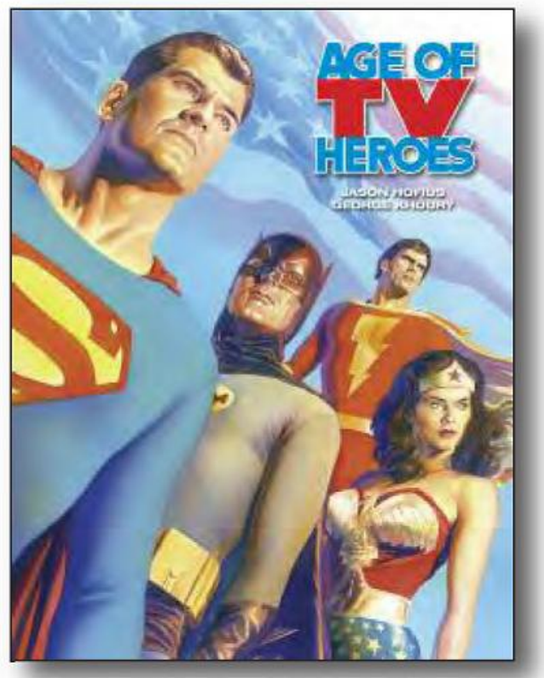

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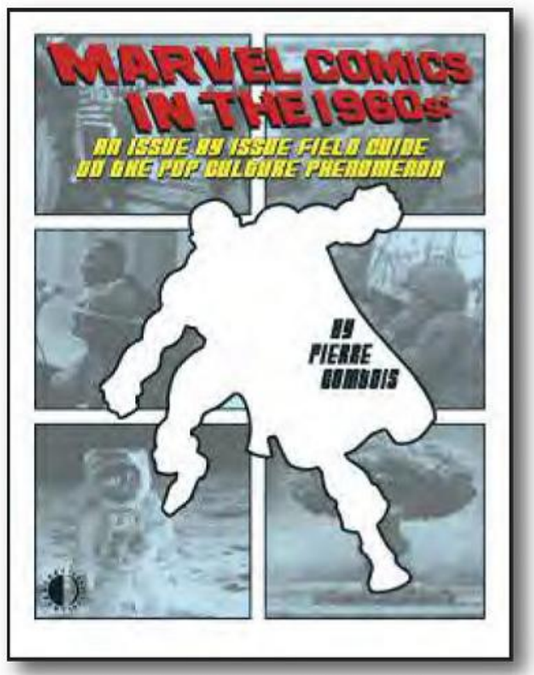

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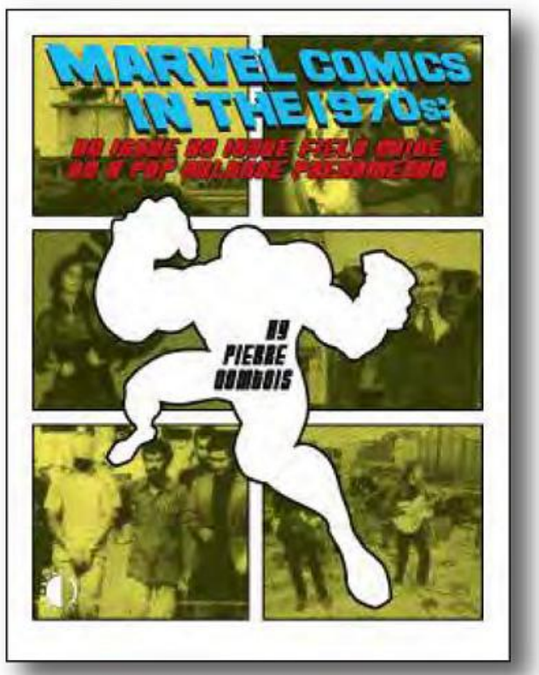

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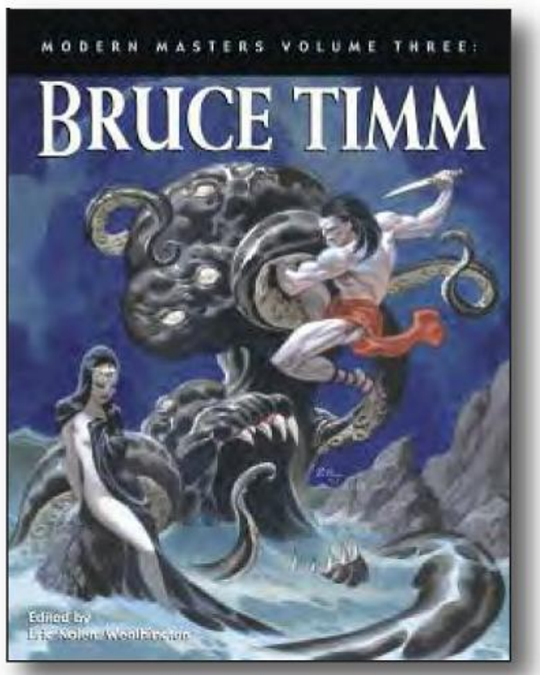

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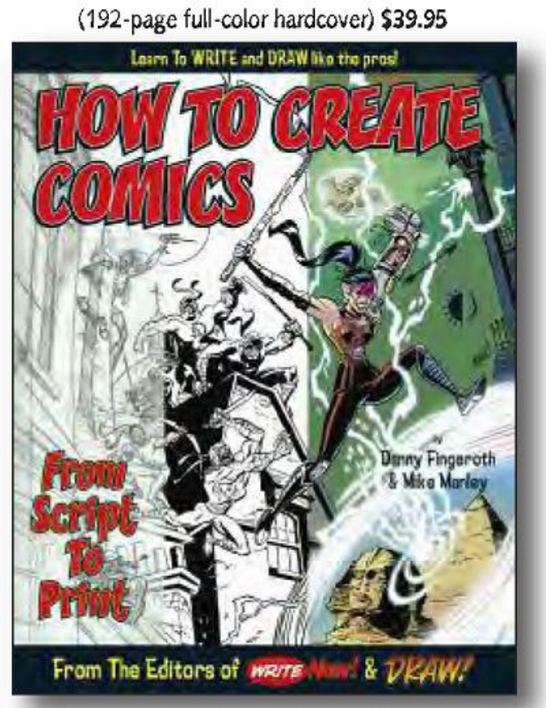

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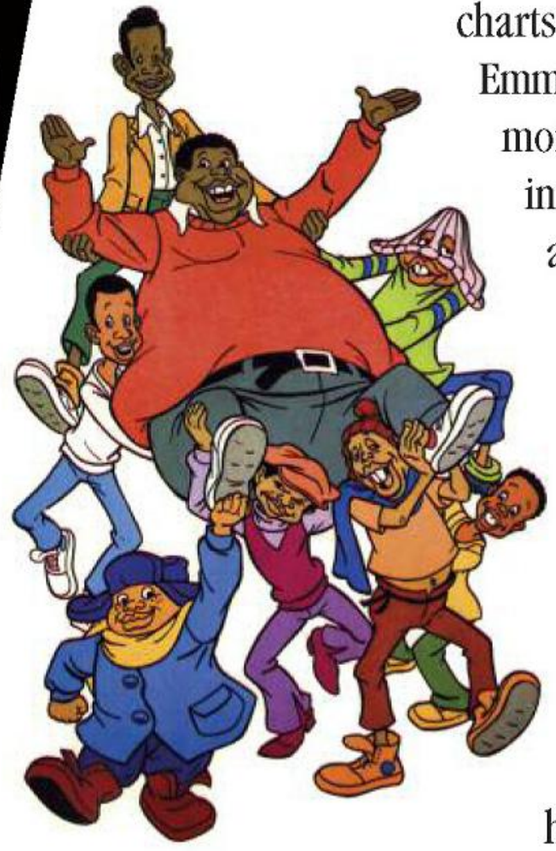

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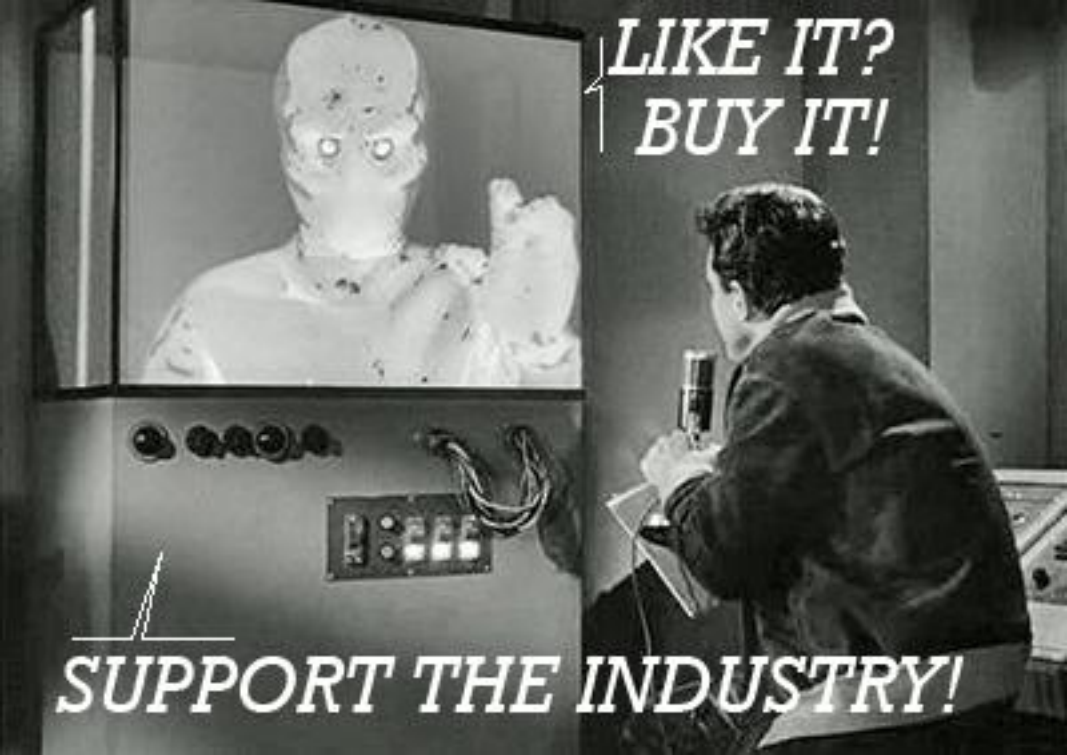
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