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Chuck Jones' birthday present

Veteran signs new contract

Animation director and union leader **CHUCK JONES**, the creator of cartoon characters such as the Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote, has signed a long-term agreement with Warner Bros. The contract announcement coincided with an eighty-fifth birthday celebration Warners threw on the lot September 17 in Jones' honor.

Jones signed his first contract with Leon Schlesinger in 1934, at \$20 a week. Seven years later, he led the Schlesinger employees in a strike that led to recognition of the Screen Cartoonists Guild. Details of the current pact were not disclosed, but Jones allowed that this new contract is better than the first.

Under the agreement, Warner Bros. will continue to consult Jones in matters of historical accuracy in new uses of the animated characters he created for the studio, such as Michigan J. Frog, the mascot for the WB Network. Although not required of the animation virtuoso, Warner Bros. welcomes any new projects Jones may develop.

Jones' production company, Chuck Jones Film Productions (now closed), also created animated short subjects for theatrical release, including *Chariots of Fur*, *Pullet Surprise* and *Father of the Bird*.

Good news, bad news at WB, Sony

At **WARNER BROS. FEATURE ANIMATION**, the good news is that *Iron Giant*, their next feature, has at long last been greenlighted. As the staff winds up work on *Quest For Camelot*, management has quietly informed staffers there will be sizable layoffs after the picture ends. *Iron Giant* will have a smaller cast and fewer crowd scenes, and will therefore require fewer artists to complete it.

SONY/ADELAIDE is wrapping work on several series and handing layoff slips to some of its crew. The next series to go into work is *Godzilla* (based on the Sony live-action feature of the same name), but work on the series will not start for a few months.



From the President *Chutes and Ladders*

I was talking to Mark Kausler the other day and he asked me: "In the cartoon you did for the September *Peg-Board* with the studio heads stepping on our faces to get ahead, were you trying to tell us to beware of our bosses or our fellow artists?"

My response was, "Both".

We all know how insane people get when doing last minute gift shopping on Christmas Eve. There are those who lose their Christmas cheer for a few hours and have a wild, desperate look in their eyes as they fight over that last gift. One Christmas Eve I was in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art Gift Shop doing some of that last-minute scramble. When I finally got up to the exhausted cashier, she and I had time to exchange some reflections on the day.

"Gee," I said. "This must be the ugliest day's worth of shopping you have to work."

She smiled. "Actually, it's not. You know what the roughest day is? It's the day the museum's employees can spree shop alone. Can you believe it? You'd think because we're all employees together they would understand and go easy on you. No way, they have just as much attitude with you as any sour old rich patron with a foundation membership!"

Tempus fugit

The summer that Disney started their Canadian satellite studios, I was standing outside Disney TV Animation waiting for a friend to come down for lunch. I noticed a large group of executives pile out of an elevator and march across the lobby with a

determined gait. I soon recognized them as old animator buddies I knew back at Nelvana fifteen years ago. We used to hang out at the Skipper after work and throw back beers and bitch about Patrick and Clive. Now here they were, the heads of studios. Power people in jackets and ties, they looked like O.J.'s defense team. I hope they're as nice people to work for as they were to hang out with.

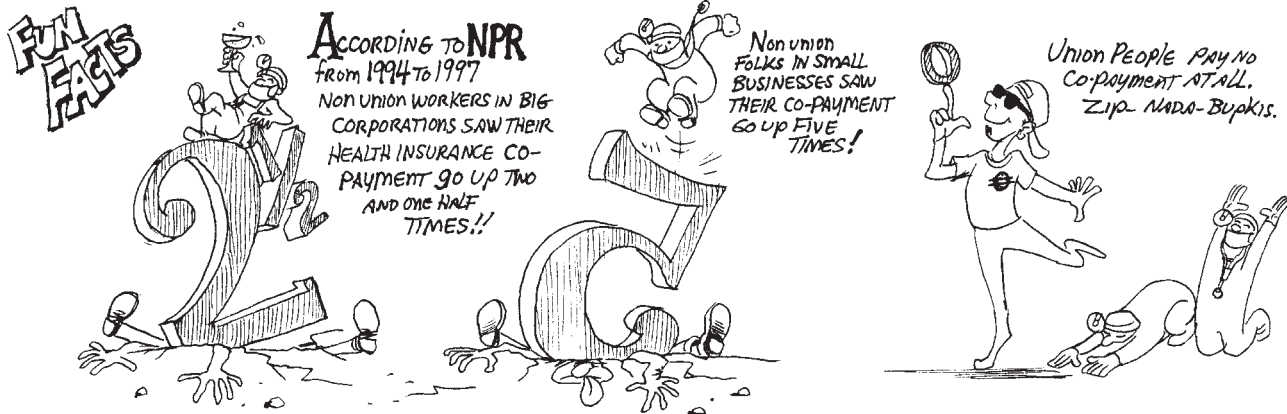
Hollywood Animation is a great game of Chutes and Ladders. Many of us at one time or another will find ourselves in charge of other artists, either as a supervisor or studio head. It's a daunting role. Up until then your job performance was judged on your work at the drawing board alone, now your performance is based on your ability to motivate people with the force of your personality to do their jobs correctly. Execs call it "management skills".

The thing to keep in mind, as the philosophers told Cyrus the Persian, "one day this too shall pass" For every Bill Hanna or Friz Freleng who never looked back, lots of us wind up back at a desk or terminal next to the people we once bossed around, with a former employee giving us orders now. It's no shame, it's just the way the game works. Some of us are relieved to be rid of the burden of responsibility and just draw, others know their turn will come again.

Nice guys (sometimes) finish first

There's a lesson to be learned when you do one day find yourself in charge of others — can you keep your humanity and still get things done? Filmation's Lou Scheimer has the enviable reputation of having once owned a company employing hundreds, yet to everyone he remained a gentleman and a pleasure to work for. Likewise people remember the

(see FROM THE PREZ, page 4)



From the business representative

Technology, the artists' friend — part 2

If you work in television animation, then you probably know that an electronic storyboard system called "Animatics" has become all the rage. Studio after studio over the past couple of years has clasped this new cyber-technology to their collective bosoms and set up rooms full of PCs, with people busily working in front of them.

And what exactly is animatics? Put most simply, it's a story reel on a computer — with production storyboard drawings scanned and synched up to computerized sound tracks.

The joys of animatics

It sounds swell, doesn't it? No longer do the guys with ties have to puzzle over big, awkward pages of a production storyboard, trying to figure out what the written dialogue and little drawings with those pesky arrows mean. Now they just sit in front of a seventeen-inch phosphor screen, press a button and view the upcoming production, complete with sounds and images. No guess-work, no muss or fuss. They get to view the production before production, just like their high-priced brethren in feature animation have done for sixty years.

Except that animatics has an unpleasant side effect: it runs up production costs with little or no discernible improvement on the end product. I found this out while sitting in a variety of animation directors' offices. The directors all agreed that animatics is helpful for highlighting story problems. But they also agreed that animatics creates production headaches and extra work.

"Animatics seems like a spiffy high-tech tool," said Ted at Warner Bros., "but I've kind of come to the conclusion it slows everything down." (Ted is not his

real name and WB is not his actual studio, but hey, I'm a biz rep. I protect the mouthy.)

"The computer story reels are making production boards more complicated," Ted went on. "Producers look at animatics and want to know why we hold on one drawing so long. We tell them it's a storyboard and we don't do all the drawings needed to *animate* it, but they want to see more drawings anyway. So we add drawings with Buddy Bear's head moving right, then left, then straight ahead. Makes it seem more like a real cartoon. Makes the bosses feel good."

Technology and efficiency

Other directors and timers have echoed Ted's sentiment. Most see the usefulness of computerized story reels. But few think the extra headaches, labor and added expense are worth it.

"You end up adding the drawings, synching the sound, doing rough timing of the show on the computer. Then you time it again to make the thing work for the animators overseas," a veteran confided. "The artists in Taiwan and Korea are not going to be referring to the animatics reel. They're going to look at the storyboards and sheets. That's what they've always relied on. What they have to rely on."

Being the simpleton I am, I asked the vet if animatics streamlined the process in any way. Or cut out anybody's job. (Us business reps are always worried about job elimination. It's in our



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FROM THE BUSINESS REP

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genes.) The old-timer looked at me as if I'd beamed in from the planet Neptune.

"You kidding? With all the extra drawings? With having to re-time the production boards a couple times? It *adds* work. Slows everything down."

"Then what's good about it?"

The vet thought for a minute. "Keeps the executives happy."

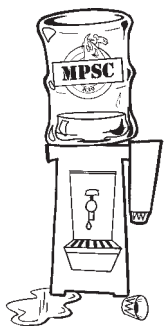
I observed that had to be worth something. He looked at me sadly again.

"You been away from production too long, boyo. It's worth *everything*. You know how miserable it is around here when the suits *aren't* happy?"

I nodded with a (hopefully) knowing air — that part I *hadn't* forgotten. And I went away both educated and relieved.

Technology marches on.

— Steve Hulett



At the water-cooler

MARTHA GOLDMAN SIGALL, proud veteran of Leon Schlesinger and "Termite Terrace," recently returned to see how Warners' ink-and-paint department had changed. A hint: paints, paint brushes and cels have been replaced with Silicon Graphics computers and Animo.

SHERYL and **SCOTT SACKETT** (he's the artist who drew our Water-Cooler logo) became the mom and dad of Shay Alexander Sackett on September 6 ...

In far-off Minnesota, **ED BAKER** and wife **MARY** welcomed their new daughter Sally Rebecca on May 2 ... **DARRELL VAN CITTERS** and wife **CAROL** became the proud parents of an 8 pound, 13 ounce son, born September 15 ...

There's something in the water at Rich Animation ... **LENA KRAVETS** and husband **EUGENE BERCHENKO** welcomed their first son, Daniel Gregory, on August 7 ... and **PATRICK GLEESON** and his wife **LISA** had their second daughter, Gilliam Emiko, on August 22 ...

FROM THE PREZ

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atmosphere of Bill and Sue Kroyer's *Fern Gully* with fond nostalgia. Being in charge doesn't mean you have to suddenly become a total S.O.B. to everyone you once counted as friends.

True, getting a film done is not a popularity contest, sometimes discipline and hard choices have to be made. You'll meet employees who want to push your buttons just to see how much they can get away with. Being a "Goodtime Charley" bending over to everyone's will is not doing the job well either.

But after the project is over, the film is in the can and the production company is a memory, would you rather be remembered as a strong fair boss who stood up for his or her staff, or a paranoid martinet who made the project a living hell with everyone laughing behind your back now that you're making the rounds portfolio-in-hand like the rest of us?

Good luck in the great game. Just remember the words of Daddy Warbucks: "Don't kick anyone on the way up you plan meeting on the way down!"

— Tom Sito

In memoriam

Former Local 841 president and charter member **FRANK LITTLE** died on April 15 at the age of eighty-nine. He worked as an animator in New York, for Famous, Terrytoons, Audio Cinema, Van Beuren and Loucks & Nordling, and worked for many years at the Signal Corps Photographic Center in Astoria, L. I.



Retired Disney animator **DICK LUCAS** died on August 27. From 1942 to 1982 he worked as an inbetweener, assistant animator and animator on many shorts and over a dozen features, from *The Three Caballeros* to *The Rescuers*. He worked on effects animation for *The Fox and the Hound* and *101 Dalmatians*, and was involved in the story work on *Winnie the Pooh* and *the Blustery Day*. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Motion Picture and Television Fund Foundation, 23300 Ventura Boulevard, Woodland Hills, CA 91364.

In the news

Saturday morning has shaky launch

The first weekend of the official Saturday morning children's TV launch was a downer, with the four major broadcast networks off a combined five share points vs. last season.

In preliminary Nielsen household results from the top 38 "metered" markets, CBS' all-FCC-friendly live-action lineup was flat vs. last season's cartoon debut, while ABC's Disneyfied cartoon block was off 11%, leaving Kids WB with a narrow lead for the morning.

Most notably, kids TV leader Fox Kids Network suffered a 31% decline from the comparable week of the 1996-97 season, falling to a 2.4 rating and an 8 share from a 3.5/12. In the 8 a.m. to noon common time period, Fox also suffered vs. the prior week's 2.9/7, when coverage of Princess Diana's funeral on other networks all but wiped out kidvid competition.

Kids WB finished with a 2.6/8, up from a 2.3/7 in last season's bow, followed by ABC's 2.5/8, down from 2.8/9, and Fox's 2.4/8. CBS did a 1.3/4, flat in ratings terms with last season's 1.3/5.

Women in Film honors McCurdy

On September 13, Women In Film honored Warner Bros. Television Animation President and Kids WB! Programming President **JEAN MACCUDY** with a Lucy Award, in honor of the late Lucille Ball. This is the fourth annual presentation, but the first time that a woman in the animation industry has received this award.

Cartoons top video sell-through

As of August 31, 1997 the top two home video companies were (big surprise) Disney Home Video and Warners Video. And the top video sellers for each company? Disney had *The Grand Adventures of Winnie the Pooh*, a new direct-to-video feature from Disney TV Animation, and Warners cashed in on *Cats Don't Dance*, the theatrical feature that came and went from neighborhood bijoux in an eye blink last Spring.

Farewell to Valentine

DEAN VALENTINE, head of Disney TV Animation, departed the Mouse House in September to take the helm of UPN, the fledgling Paramount network. Valentine will replace Lucie Salhany as chairman of the network.

And who will replace Dean Valentine at Disney TV? If the trade papers are to be believed (and why would they lie?), Mr. Valentine will be replaced by **CHARLES HIRSCHHORN**.

MGM appoints Phillips

The MGM Worldwide Television Group announced the naming of **RICHARD L. PHILLIPS** as executive vice president — MGM Networks, including MGM's television animation division.

Phillips' professional background is diverse, encompassing film (Disney), investment banking (Goldman Sachs) and cable (Liberty Media and United International Holdings).

He worked as a creative executive for Walt Disney and Touchstone Pictures, where he managed feature-film projects including *White Fang*, *Three Men and a Little Lady* and *Alive*. In addition, he was a financial analyst with Goldman Sachs & Co., and worked for ACT III Communications.

Canada gears up toon shops

Thanks to the increasing global demand for animated product, Ontario's animation industry is reveling in its own prosperity, with Walt Disney Animation churning out home-video product, while local ani companies continue to create product for an ever-hungry international market.

And with prosperity comes the need for workers. Disney recently upped the competition for Canadian talent by hiring more than 200 animators to keep their Toronto and Vancouver studios humming ...

This quest for able-bodied tooners is a far cry from recent years, when aspiring animators faced a dismal future. Indeed, animation has become such a popular career field in Ontario that **ROBIN KING**, director of new media development at Sheridan College, the prestigious an training ground, now sees 4,000 applications each year for a total of 150 spaces in the school's three-year classical-animation and eight-month computer animation programs. "It's become a very sexy industry," says King. "We reject about 97% of the portfolios..."

Katzenberg lawsuit proceeds

On September 16, a judge rejected a bid by the Walt Disney Co. to remove the legal team of former executive **JEFFREY KATZENBERG**, clearing the way

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LETTERS

(continued from back page)

you didn't have a clue. You threw out two names without any idea if either one were actually hiring or not.

I turned to the pulse of the industry, my fellow artists.

I was told Film Roman was hiring. I was soon hired until the end of the project. After which I was hired by another non-union shop to work on several projects. Now that those projects have ended, once again I find myself looking for work. Hitting the Union shops first, I find that once again nothing seems to be happening. However, the non-union studios seem to be booming. If I had my choice, I would take Union just to build my medical hours. I've been out of work now for three months, trying to hold out for a Union job, at this time I will take any job over unemployment.

I wish there were some way I could wave a magic wand or sprinkle pixie dust and get a Union job.

Thanks for taking the time to let me vent.

Thanks for your eloquent letter. Yes, we don't always know who is hiring and who is not. On many Mondays studios tell us they have no need for new job applicants, and on Wednesday they are hollering for all available background artists and storyboarders, immediately. Go figure.

But we will try to do a more energetic, thorough job of tracking union studios' hiring needs. We can always do better.

You mention that union means health plan. And yes, it's what most members think of when they think "union." But we are much more than that. We provide overtime protection, and wage minimums, and free legal advice, and two different pension plans (most non-union shops are considered to be wonderful if they offer only one).

If you are one of those blessed souls with a shining, white-hot talent that's in constant demand, maybe you don't need a union. Shakespeare did fine without one. So did Tolstoy and Dickens and Samuel L. Clemens. But if you are like most of us mortals, you are a tiny individual against a huge, multi-national corporation bristling with lawyers, and you probably won't have a snowball's chance in a deep fat fryer getting what you deserve unless you have some counterbalance. A union evens up the scales a bit.

I know this to be true because I have seen many wretched seventy-year-olds traipse through my office with little to

show for their years of work in the industry. They spent the flower of their careers working for non-union shops who offered glory but no pension, and now they are unemployable and a little desperate. Social Security doesn't cover expenses. Savings are gone. And I sit wishing there was something I could do for them, some way I could wind back the clock. But there isn't, and I watch them go on their bedraggled way.

And I know this is true because I've had thirty-five-year-olds plunk down in my office, after spending five years at Film Roman or DIC or some other non-union shop, and say to me: "You know, I really liked the place I was working, but you know, when I had some trouble, the only person I could go talk to was a suit in management, and it got a little ... er, tense. I really had a hard time asking the people who made my problem to solve my problem, know what I mean?"

I understand exactly what they mean.

Ultimately, this union — like any union — is no better and no stronger than its individual members. If Warners' union artists free-lance for non-union NickToons or Games, we are that much farther away from getting that studio under contract. If staffers at DIC, Film Roman or Nickelodeon decline to sign confidential representation cards, those studios will remain outside our contract. And little by little, bit by bit, wages and working conditions will go downhill.

The cold, hard fact is, the future of the Los Angeles animation industry is in your hands, and the hands of every artist and technician who works in it. Whether multi-conglomerates like Fox and Viacom become contract studios is up to all of us. Whether our collective future is brighter or dimmer is up to all of us.

— Steve Hulett

The truth is out there

A message from the Internet newsgroup alt.disney.secrets:

I was just told by a friend that Disney employees do not sweat because they are given some special kind of pill. Is this true? It sounds a bit crazy to me. How much control does the Disney company have over the employees, anyway? Does anyone here know from experience? Thanks in advance for your responses ...

This, of course, is totally untrue. The pill doesn't prevent them from sweating — it prevents them from complaining ...

STEPHAN AND STEVEN'S INVESTMENT TIPS

by
**Stephan Zupkas
and
Steven Hulett**

Please know that Stephan and Steven are not financial advisers and are not acting as such. They are just relaying information you might find of use.

BROADEN YOUR INVESTMENTS

As your 401(k) contributions grow in value, it might be useful to consider other investments that will complement the mix of investments in your 401(k) Plan.

For instance, if your 401(k) investments are weighted heavily toward stocks, you might consider small denomination double EE *savings bonds* (available through payroll deductions or most banks), or *Treasury bonds* (available directly through the Federal Reserve Bank Los Angeles, POB 2077, Terminal Annex, Los Angeles, CA 90051-2077).

A third alternative is *zero-coupon bonds*, available through most brokerage houses. Zeros are similar to lower denominated Double EEs, in that they are deep-discounted from their face value, but a word of warning: they are taxed as if they were paying out annual interest, so your best move with zeros would be to tuck them inside a tax-deferred account, such as an IRA.

Another alternative to the accounts in our 401(k) would be various mutual funds traded over the counter. There are more mutual funds than there are stocks, but

there are blessedly fewer mutual fund *families* (that is, companies that offer many different mutual funds.)

In the September issue of *The Wall Street Journal's Smart Money* magazine, funds and fund families were analyzed and rated good to less good.

The top five fund families rated for service were:

Fidelity Investments (800) 544-8888
Vanguard Group (800) 662-7447
Janus (800) 525-8983
Scudder, Stevens & Clark (800) 225-2470
American Century Investments (800) 345-2021

Among the top Mutual Funds, as rated by *Smart Money* (percentages shown reflect five-year rates of return):

AARP Growth and Income [19.4%] (800) 322-2282
Vanguard/Windsor II [19.4%] (800) 662-7447
T. Rowe Price New American Growth [20.1%]
..... (800) 638-5660
Vanguard International Growth [15.7%]
..... (800) 662-7447

For more details (and a lot more mutual funds) pick up the September copy of *Smart Money*.

IN THE NEWS

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for a trial on his \$250 million breach-of-contract lawsuit.

In denying the motion, Superior Court Judge John Ouderkirk said he found no evidence that Helene Hahn, a former Disney executive on Katzenberg's team, acted improperly when she obtained information about Disney's accounting practices from a former employee. "There is no evidence that Ms. Hahn has disclosed anything obtained from her employment at Disney," said Ouderkirk.

Katzenberg left Disney in 1994 after Chairman Michael Eisner decided not to promote him to

president. He is seeking \$250 million from Disney based on his claim that he should be entitled to some of the studio's profits from blockbusters such as *Beauty and the Beast* and *The Lion King*. Disney has repeatedly denied Katzenberg's claim, saying he relinquished his rights to share in the profits from those films when he opted out of his contract early.

Lawyers for both sides have been taking depositions all summer, and the trial is scheduled to begin November 18.



Letters

Dear Steve:

I am writing in response to your letter of September 4 ... I have been in the Union for about seven years now, and I have worked both side of the fence, but mostly in the Union. I would like to share with you my thoughts and questions.

First let me start by saying I support the Union 100%. Not because I know why, but because it seems like the right thing to do. I asked other Union members my age, "why do you support the Union?" and their response is always the same, "for the health benefits." That's all they know.

I, too, am in the same group. I realize the benefits are great; however, non-union shops have comparable health benefits. So what I'm asking is, could you please explain what else the Union does for me. Nothing long, just the basics.

I would also like to tell you the problems from the artist's point of view. I was at a union shop for about a year and a half, and worked as a designer. I watched management let the studio go downhill, letting talented artists go at the first problem they had. There was (is) a huge feeling of: "screw you

artists, anyone can do your job." Two managers started the idea that they could take anyone who could draw a stick figure and put him into a high-paying artist's position at a lot lower pay.

Here's what I'm talking about: Instead of keeping an artist on staff who had been with them for years, one who's made a fair amount of money, they lay him or her off and replaced him with a P.A. or security guard. It sounds funny, but it's true. Talent was (is) not an issue with them. I know artists who have talked to the Union about this problem and nothing happened.

I also feel you should be better informed about who is hiring. When our crew was laid off, I called the Union to see who was hiring. The conversation went like this:

Me: Yes, I was calling to find out who is hiring right now."

Union: Ummm...try [Studio X].

Me: Yeah, I just got laid off from there.

Union: Okay, try Disney.

Me: All right, thanks. It didn't take long to realize,
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