

LOU SCHEIMER CREATING THE **FILMATION** GENERATION

Lou Scheimer
with Andy Mangels

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1928-1946

CHAPTER ONE

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 Mittelsinn, 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. Salomon 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



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,



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 wiggling, 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 col-

ors 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



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:

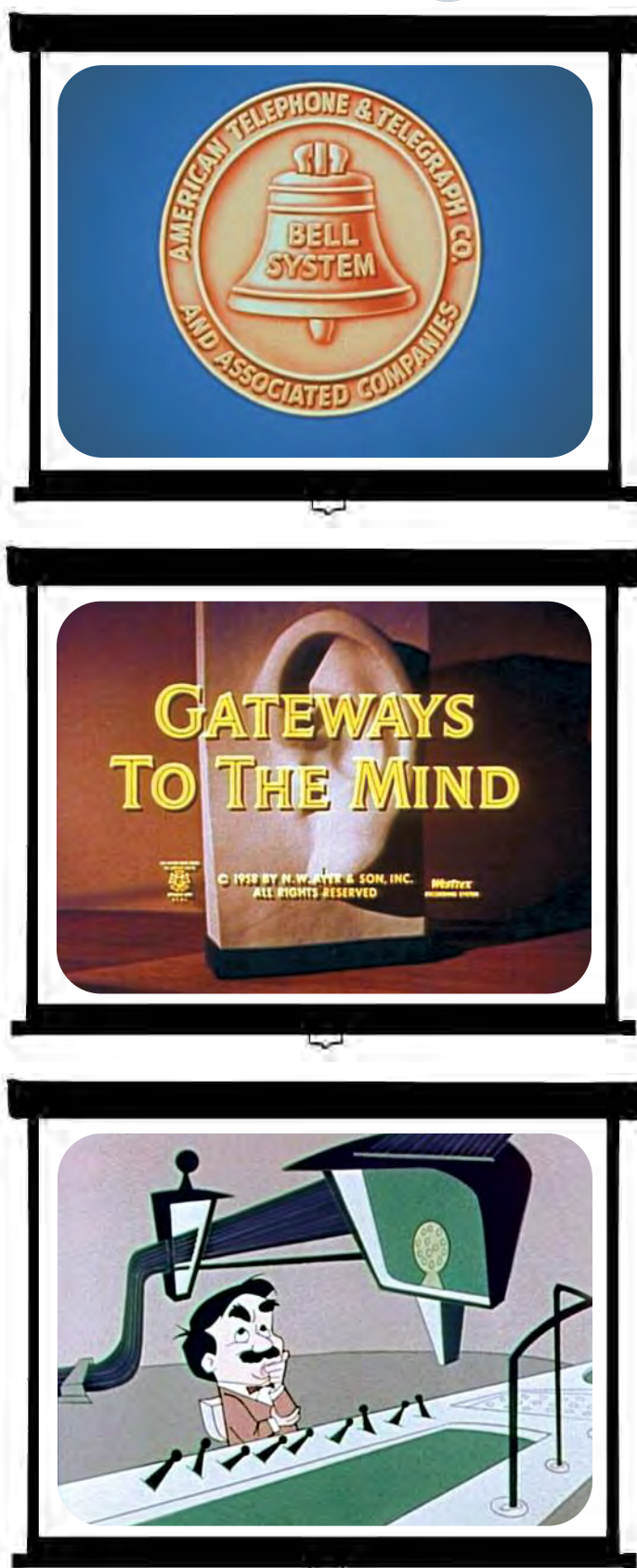
Image from "The Talking Dog" with backgrounds by Lou

Above: (top to bottom)

Bell System screen credit

Title screen from *Gateways To The Mind*

Backgrounds by Lou for *Gateways To The Mind*



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

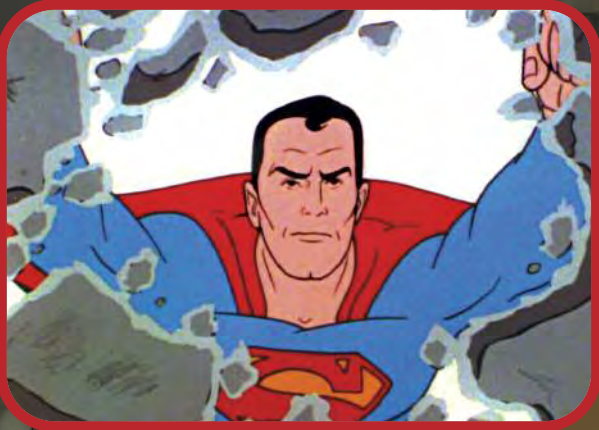


Above:

Norm Prescott, Hal Sutherland, and Lou in 1965

Opposite:

The super-hero who saved Fimation



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 am 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





CHAPTER SIX

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, gravelly voice, which was a perfect voice for animation, but he couldn't do too many voices because his voice really was that gravelly. 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 super-small. 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.

THE Archies



ARCHIE



BETTY



VERONICA

© 1968, Archie Comic Publications, Inc.

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



REGGIE



JUGHEAD



HOT DOG

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.



Produced by Norm Prescott, Lou Scheimer and Hal Sutherland

CHAPTER SEVEN

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.

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.



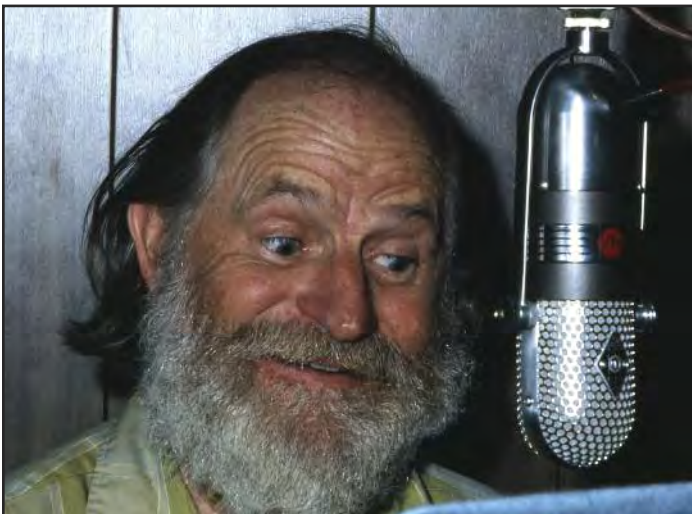
The reason I knew it was going to be successful was that Silverman started laughing and clapping, and he never did that at anything. This really hit him right where he understood it; he knew what would happen with those characters, and how they could be used.

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 McKennon (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



THE ARCHIE SHOW



CHAPTER EIGHT

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 Filiation! 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*



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 chauffeur. 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

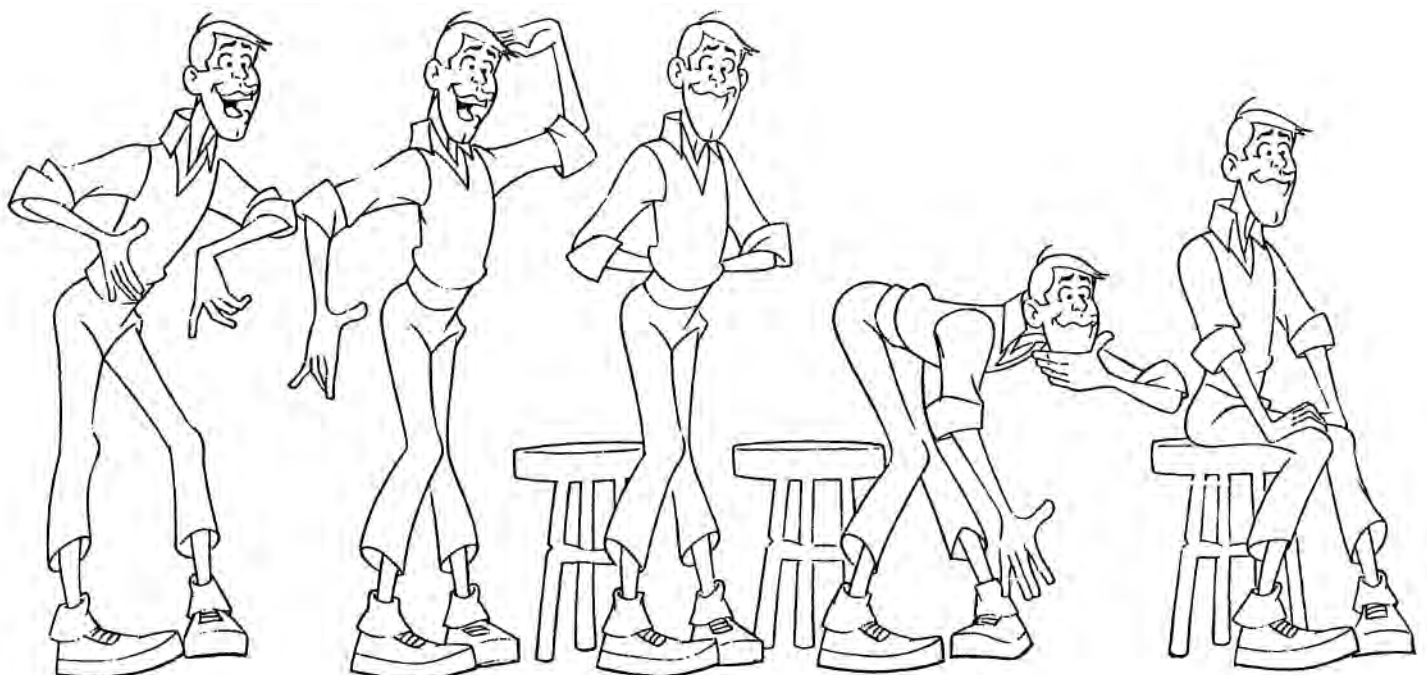
appearance of The Archies, with Ed introducing the animated clip for "Jingle Jangle." On February 7th, the song hit #10 on the pop singles chart. By mid-March "Jingle Jangle" had gone gold, and the next single, "Who's Your Baby?" had already sold 600,000 copies.

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





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*



HAGATHA



ICKY



GOO



HAUNTLEROY



BATZO



RATZO



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.

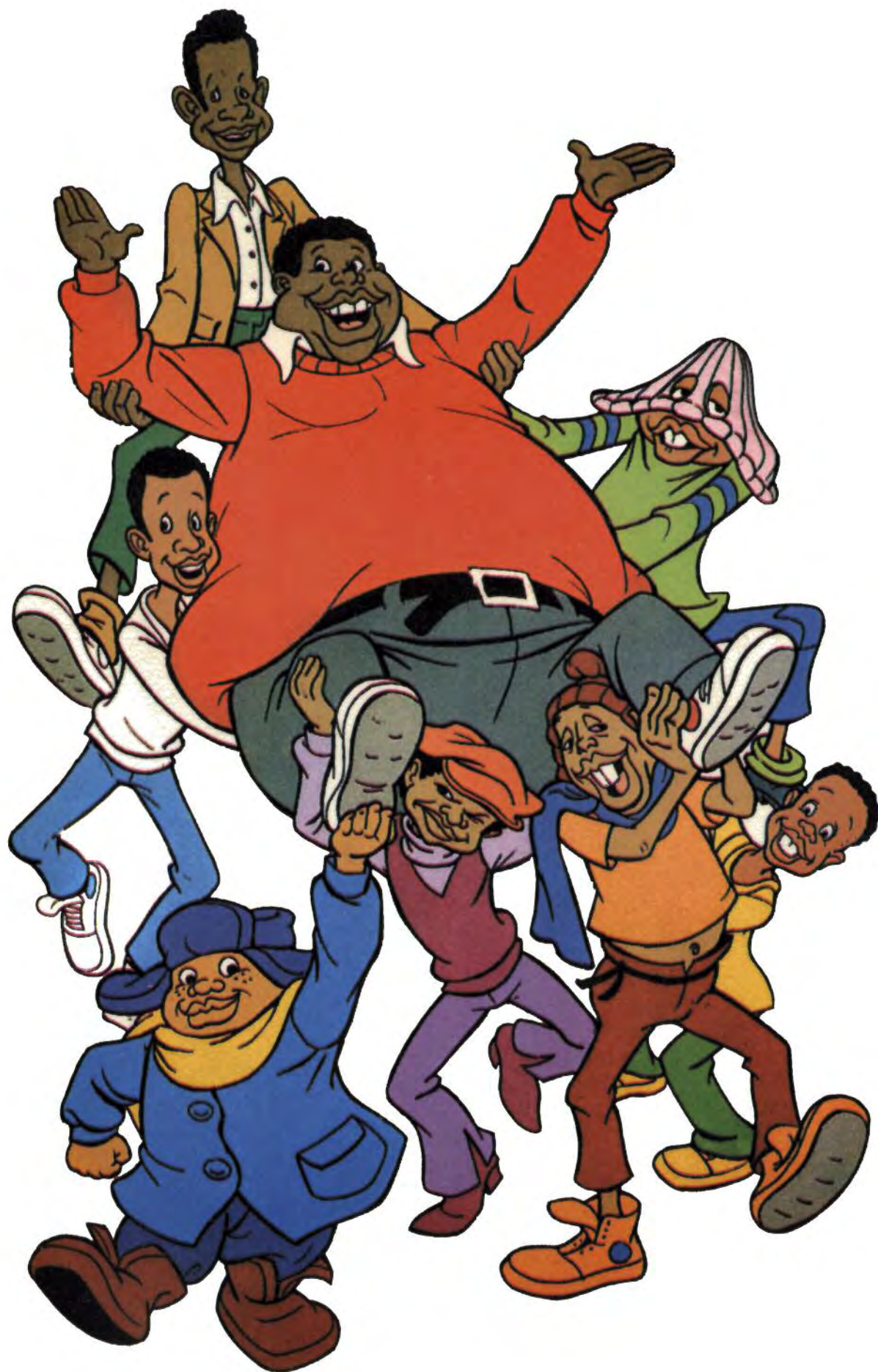
In early February CBS did some major restructuring of their schedules, and their early draft for Saturday morning seemed destined to be a very different place. Announced from us was *Alley Oop*, based on the long-running comic strip with ecological messages mixed in, and *Saturday Funnies*, an hour-long 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*





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 storyboards 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 *Young 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

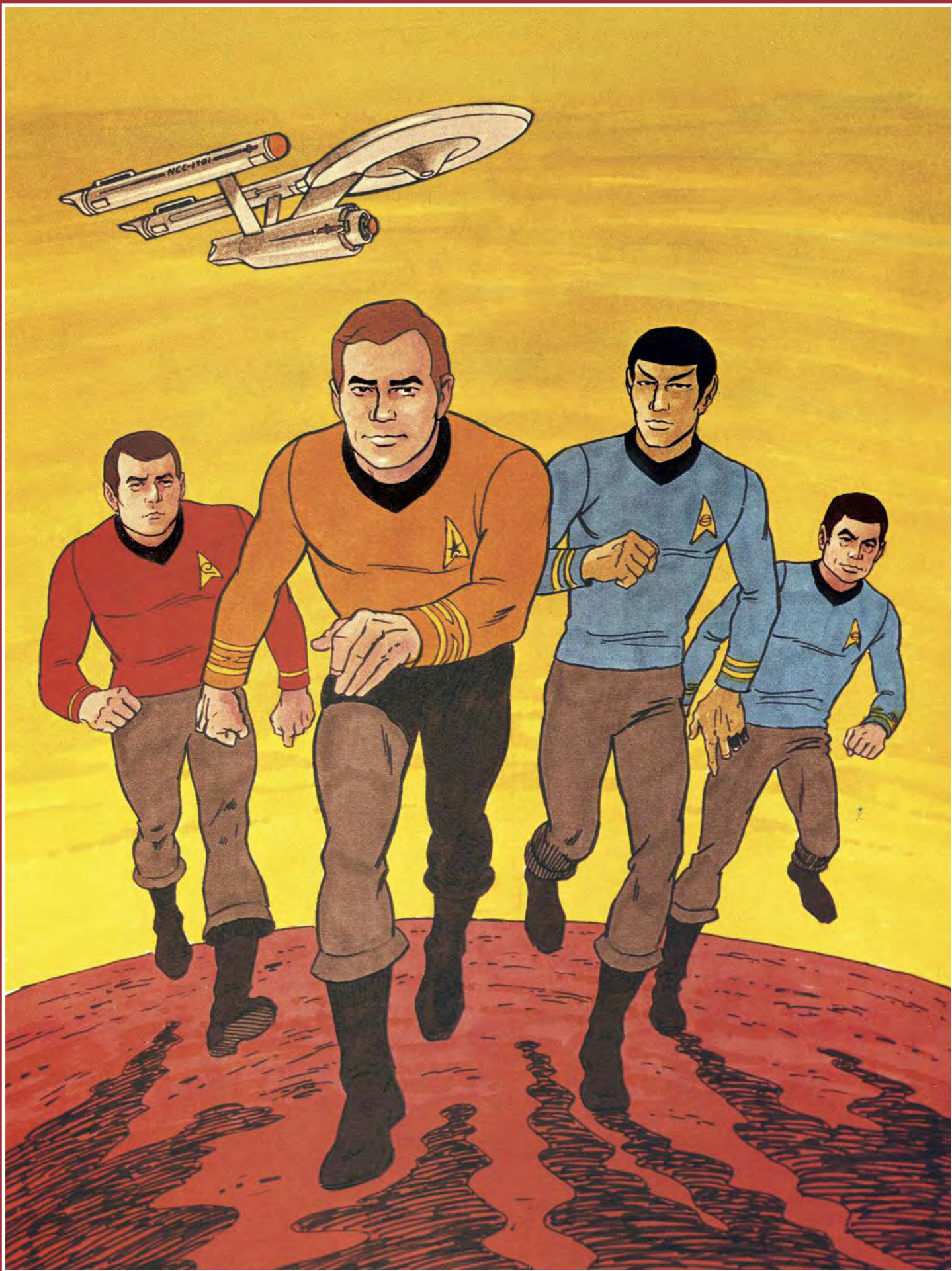
mental health of the audience, it was time to do something worthwhile.

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,





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

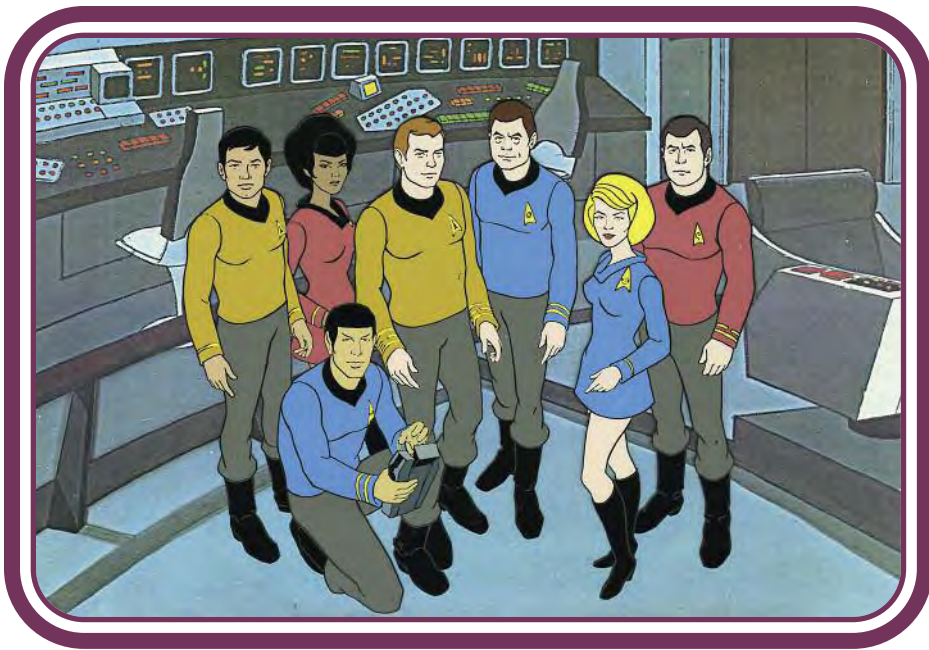


Opposite:

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.

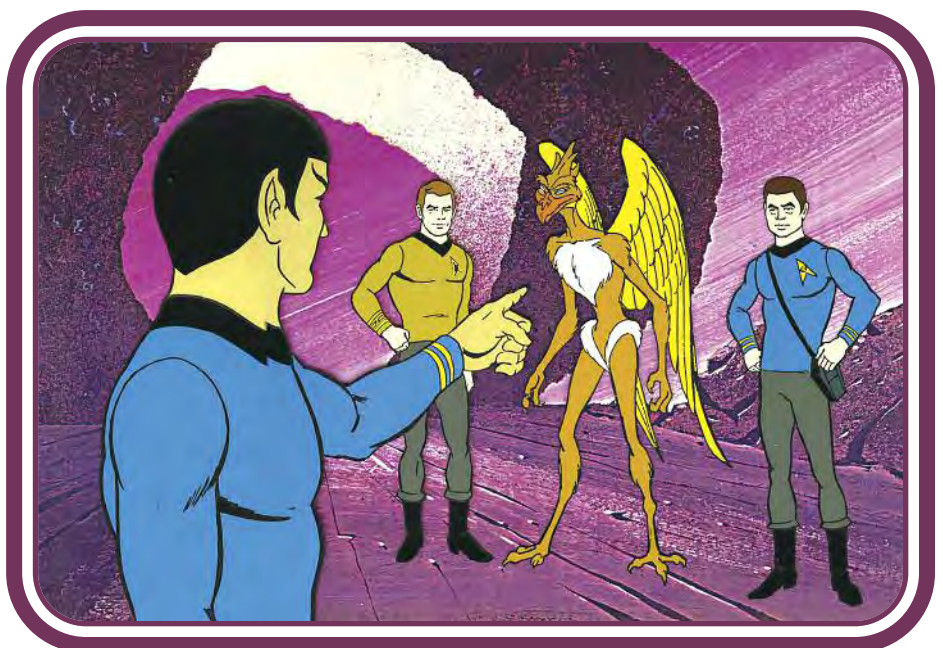
I had been talking to Paramount, but they could not do any series without Gene. And there had been a schism that had developed between Roddenberry and Paramount. So, I would talk to the guy at Paramount and then go talk to Gene and his attorney. It took a lot of doing to get the deal finalized, and I 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





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 Filma-tion, 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 Filma-tion'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 Filma-tion in the Daytime Emmy Awards, in the category of "Outstanding Entertainment Childrens Series": *Star Trek*—submitted was the "Yesterday" 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*

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

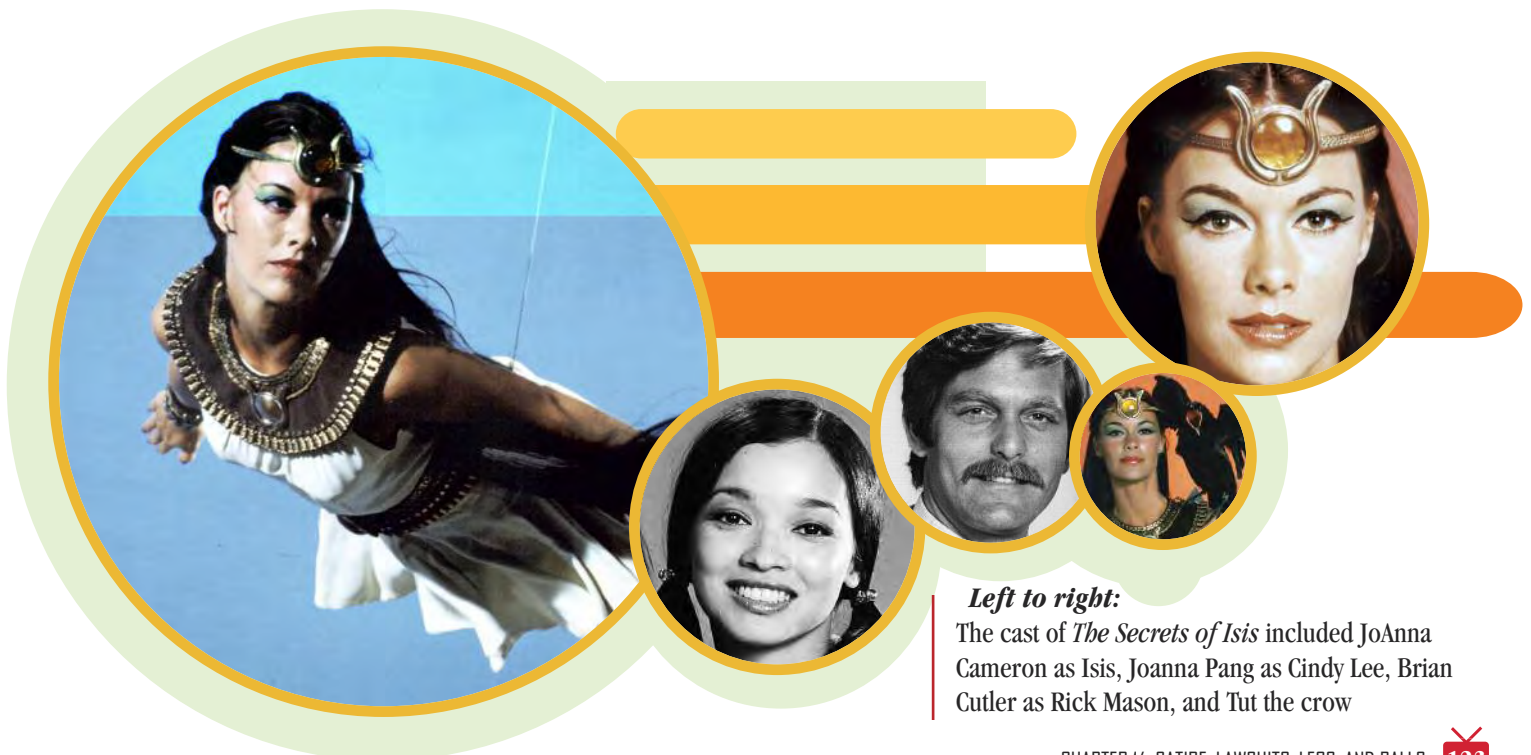
guy—and they pick their favorites, even though Jackson did 17, and Davey did 14 counting the Isis shows—but at the time we didn't hear from anybody about the change.

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

ARK II



1976-1977

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

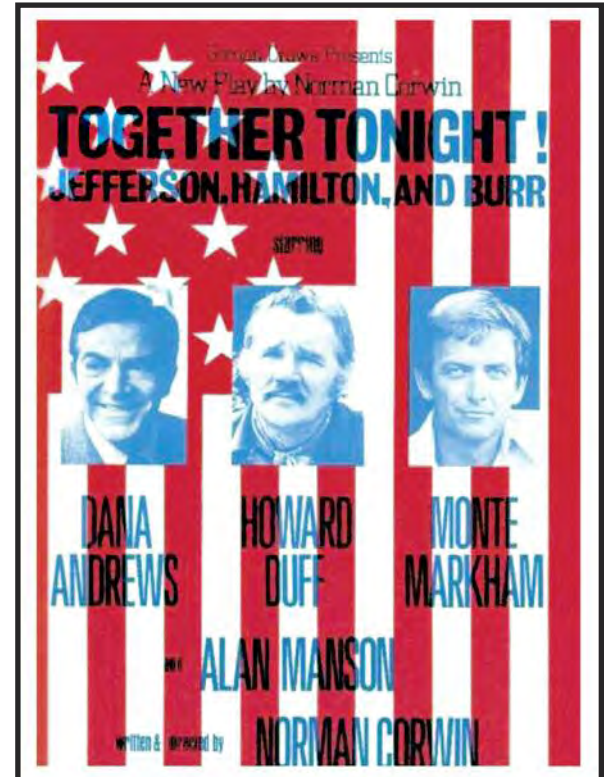
OF APES AND ARKS

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:

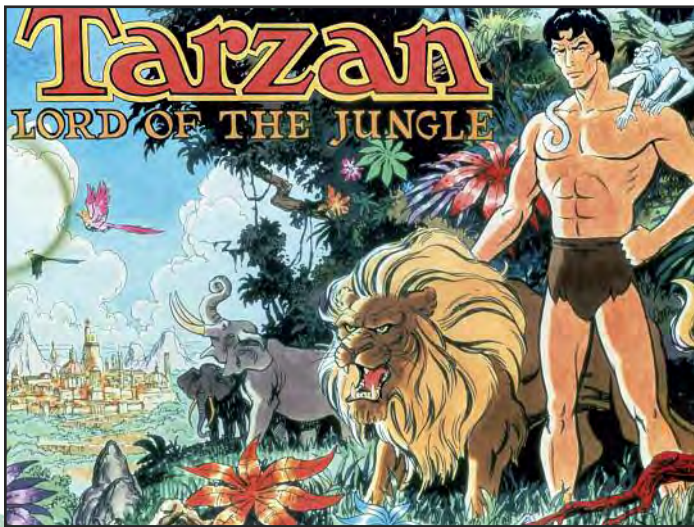
Promotional sell sheet for *Ark II*

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.

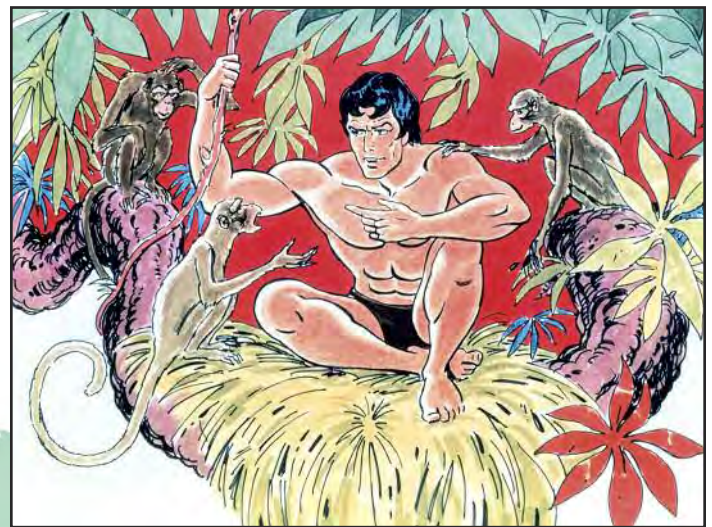
In mid-April the Daytime Emmy nominations were announced for the 1975–1976 season, and we were in the running again. This time *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* scored its second nomination in the Outstanding Entertainment Childrens Series category. Ultimately, it did not win, but it was far from the only 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

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.

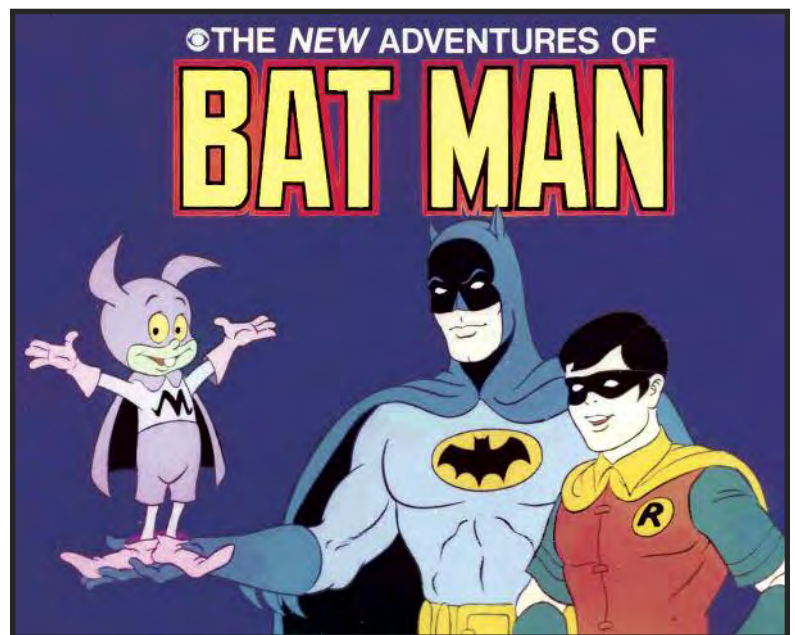
One of the biggest coups that we got for the new *Batman* was in hiring Adam West and Burt Ward to vocally reprise the character roles they had played in the 1960s live-action series. Adam was delightful to work with, and Burt had already worked with us on some live pilots before. We had them tone down 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 Fimation 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*



1978-1979

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

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. Filmmaker 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.

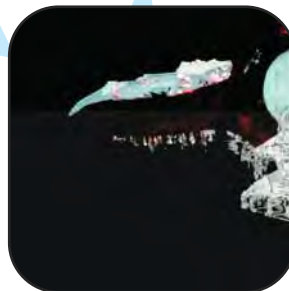
We were originally going to use Jonathan Harris as Gampu, reprising his role from *Space Academy*, but we had a falling out. We

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 daughter, Erika, had come to work for us that summer, working for Joe Mazza. 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,



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.

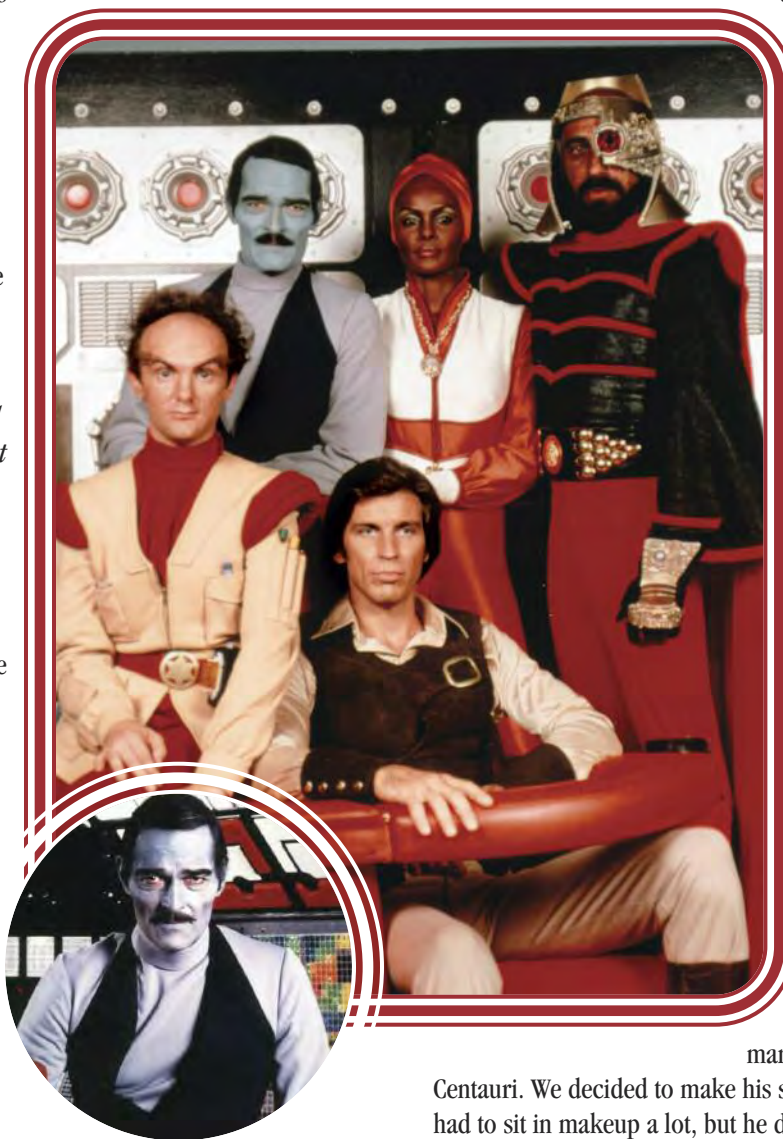
In late April we put out casting notices for a new character to appear on *Jason of Star Command*: “Samantha, mid-20s, black, superhero, adventuress, very physical, Lindsey Wagner type, major continuing role.” That role went to Tamara Dobson, who was a beautiful, beautiful black lady, who was over six 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” arti-

cle 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

1980-1981

CHAPTER NINETEEN

SILVER BULLETS AND SOCCER BALLS

As the decade rolled over, the new year brought much change.

Early in 1980 Marc Richards left Filimation 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

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

Above:

Images of Lone Ranger and Tonto



from Filimation?

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 Filimation. 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

1981-1982

CHAPTER TWENTY

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. Filmmation had gained them \$13,692,000 in revenue and \$3,097,000 in income.

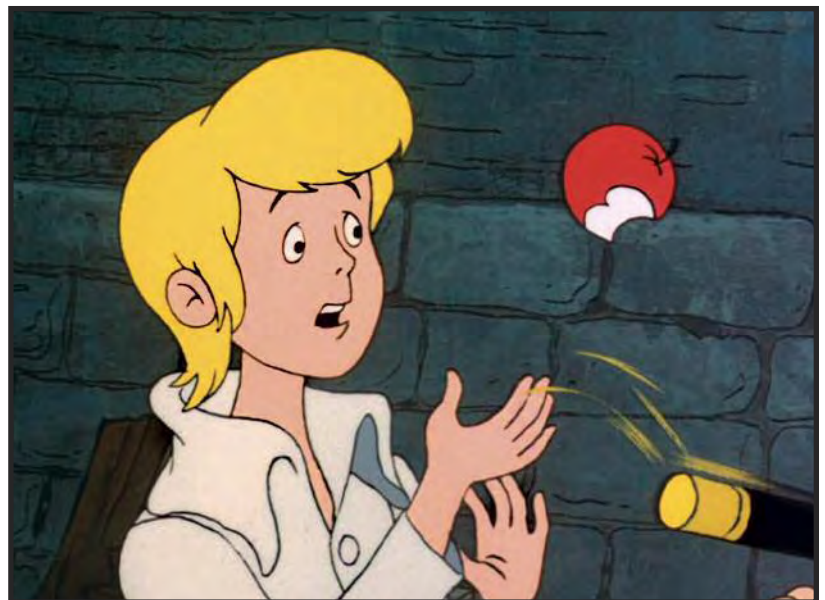
On March 5th, Norm and I gave a speech at the UCLA campus on “Today’s Cartoon Industry.” Shortly after that, we announced to the industry that we would be licensing 250 half-hours of television to advertisers and syndicated stations, including *The Archies*, *Star Trek*, *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please 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 & Moisselle 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*

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.

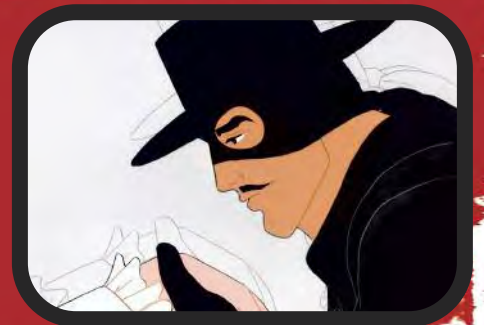
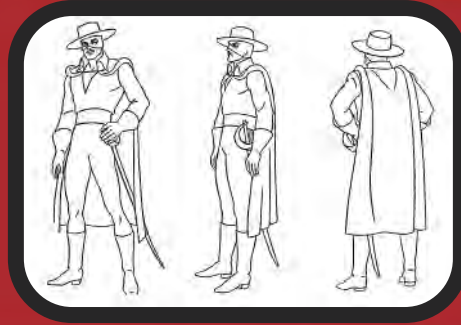
Zorro was an interesting story. It had never been done in animation. It was based on a 1919 short story written by Johnson McCauley, but the character had been in numerous serials, movies, and TV series since the 1920s. We sold *Zorro* because it was a recognizable name. It was always difficult to sell 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 pro-

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.



duction 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

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.

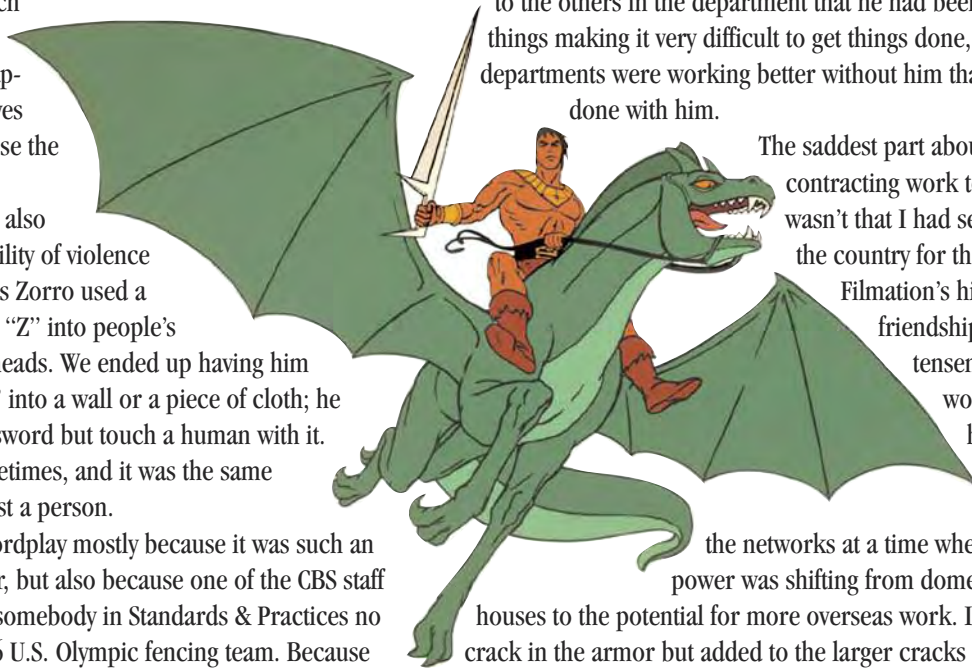
As with *Lone Ranger*, we also had an issue with the possibility of violence portrayed by the good guy, as Zorro used a sword and slashed the letter "Z" into people's chests and cheeks and foreheads. We ended up having him generally slash the letter "Z" into a wall or a piece of cloth; he would do anything 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



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

that I regret ever having contributed to.

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

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 Fimation, 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 Fimation 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 Fimation 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

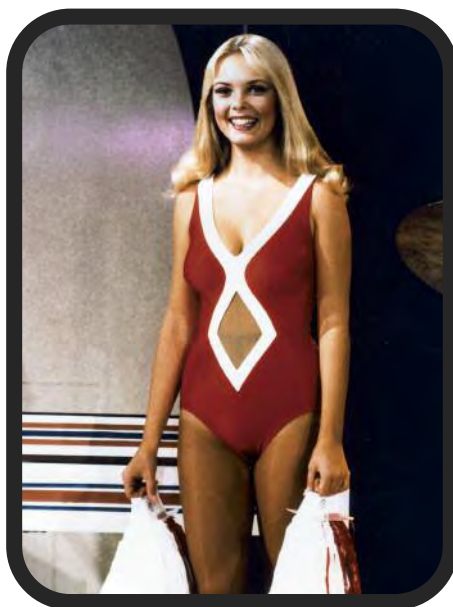
version of Prokofiev’s “Peter and the Wolf” for a TV special. We also had the licensed rights to W. C. Fields, King Features’ *Prince Valiant*—my childhood favorite—and *The Phantom*, *The Flying Nun*, and *Bewitched*, all for animated development

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





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.

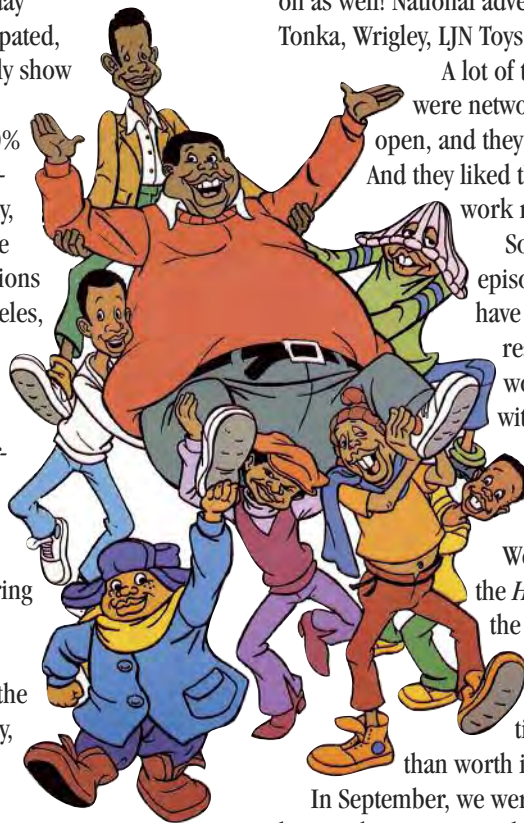
A lot of the stations that ended up buying *He-Man* were network stations that had an afternoon block open, and they could put children’s programming in there. And they liked the idea of an all-new show, not just old network reruns or even older theatrical packages.

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.

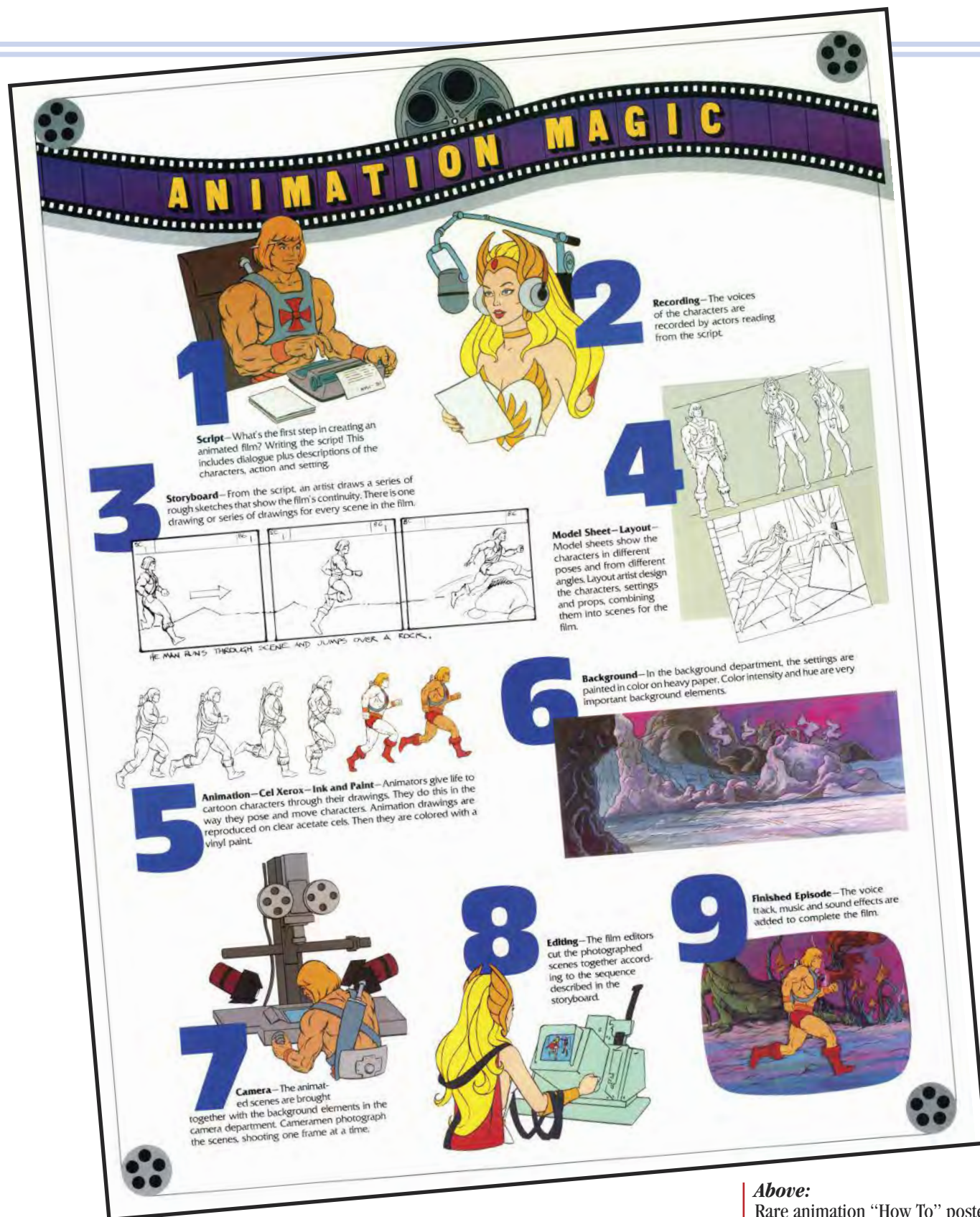
On Saturday, September 24th, Mattel and Filmation screened a special *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* movie event in ten cities throughout the country. We combined three episode of the show into a 70-minute story, and Mattel did a focus invite to children’s groups in each city. The biggest of 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



LOU SCHEIMER

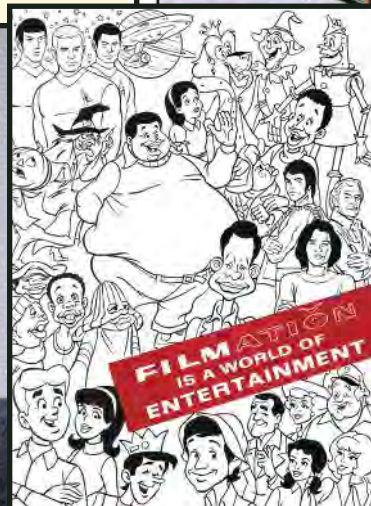
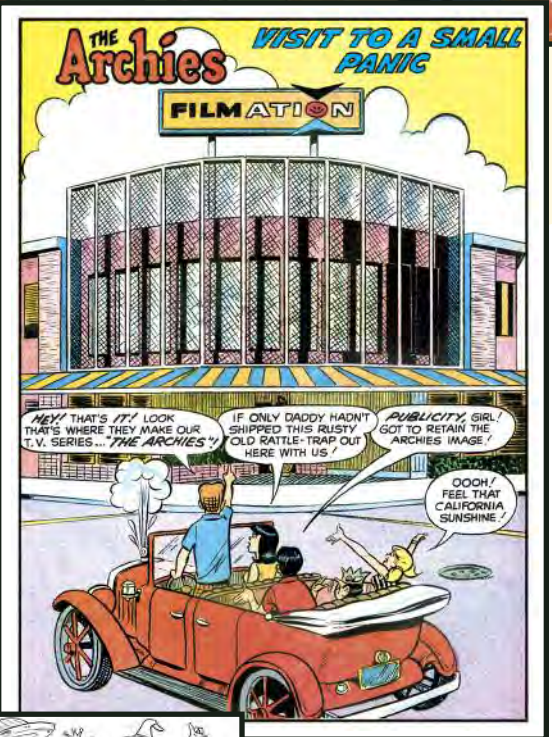
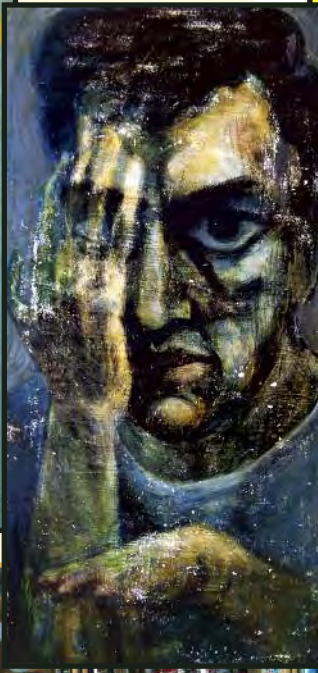
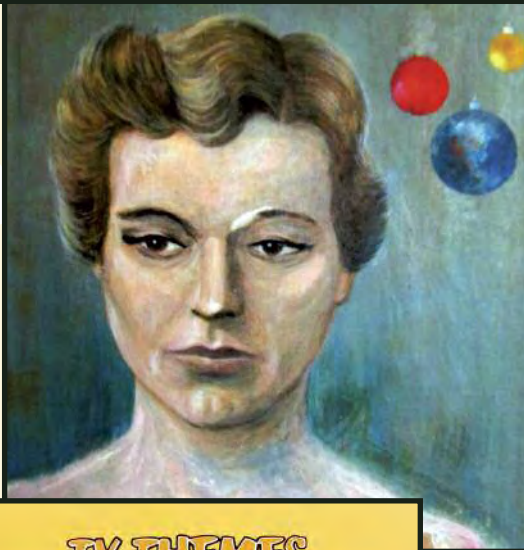
CREATING THE FILMATION GENERATION

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 Filmination theme song record from 1977

Lou in his home office

Filmination appears in *Everything's Archie* #1, May 1969

Lou's ANIE award
The Emmy Award for *Star Trek*

Filmination folder cover from 1974

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

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

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LOU SCHEIMER Creating the FILMATION Generation

Hailed as one of the fathers of Saturday morning television, Lou Scheimer was the co-founder of Filmation Studios, which for over 25 years provided animated excitement for TV and film. Always at the forefront, Scheimer's company created the first DC cartoons with Superman, Batman, and Aquaman, ruled the song charts with The Archies, kept Trekkie hope alive with the Emmy-winning *Star Trek: The Animated Series*, taught morals with *Fat Albert* and the *Cosby Kids*, and swung into high adventure with *Tarzan*, *The Lone Ranger*, and *Zorro*. Forays into live-action included *Shazam!* and *The Secrets of Isis*, plus groundbreaking special effects work on *Jason of Star Command* and others. And in the 1980s, Filmation single-handedly caused the syndication explosion with *He-Man* and the *Masters of the Universe* and its successors. Now, Lou Scheimer tells the entire story to best-selling author Andy Mangels, including how his father decked Adolf Hitler, memories of the comics of the Golden Age, schooling with Andy Warhol, and what it meant to lead the last all-American animation company through nearly thirty years of innovation and fun! Profusely illustrated with photos, model sheets, storyboards, presentation art, looks at rare and unproduced series, and more — plus stories from top animation insiders about Scheimer and Filmation's past, and rare Filmation art by Bruce Timm, Adam Hughes, Alex Ross, Phil Jimenez, Frank Cho, Gene Ha, and Mike McKone — this book will show the Filmation Generation the story behind the stories!!

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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

such a hit in syndication, it altered the shows were produced, but how they were felt that eventually led to Nickelodeon and late children's television today.

while. But the effect it had on us with our previous television to us. Why were they so mad at us if we were on weekdays in-

Opposite:
Filmation syndication advertisement

Above:
An industry ad touts the success of *He-Man*