ART BABBITT interview

Recorded June 4, 1975
NY Sheridan, Room 1066,
56 Street and 7 Avenue,
NYC 8-11 pm

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ART BABBITT interview - June 4, 1975 - NY Sheidan 56 & 7th, Rm 1066, 8-

John Canemaker: First of all, I want to say what an honor it is to me you, I've admired your work for many years.

Art Babbitt: Thank you; I wish my kids could hear this.

J.C.: They'll read it. Do you still get excited and nervous by a new project, such as the Raggedy Ann feature you're now assigned to?

A.B.: Not excited, but nervous, and people think this is a put-on. Bu actually, every scene that I've ever started has scared the wits out o me. I'm absolutely positive its not going to work out. And when I see pencil test that happens to turn out all right, I'm the most surprised delighted guy in the world. And I find that this is not a put-on. I fi that just today Emery Hawkins, who is a very fine animator, said the ve same thing, you know, and he's been animating for 95 years.

J.C.: Do you feel like an actor about to take on a new role?

A.B.: Ah, well, I've known all different kinds of actors, you know? S of them are very secure, and my wife is an actress and she's very in-secure and she's damn good. And has been doing it since she was broug on stage as a baby in Madam Butterfly at the Metropolitan Opera. Her s name, which happens to be her real name, is Barbara Perry. Very funny comedienne, a helluva dancer, but can do Shakespeare, too. She studied the Royal Academy in London.

J.C.: She sounds as versatile as an actress as you are as an animator

A.B.: Well, I don't know how versatile I am. But Bill Tytla was equal nervous or more hervous. I don't know if I'm repeating myself or not, every time he started a new scene or a new sequence, he'd come to me a say, "Art, I just can't do it. Can't do it. I'm going back to New York I don't belong here. I can't do it!" (laughs)

J.C.: Where and when were you born?

A.B.: I was born October 8, 19 hundred and 7 in Omaha, Nebraska.

J.C.: How many were there in your family?

A.B.: You mean at various times? (laughter) Well, four children died, we finally wound up with 4 children, one girl, three boys , and at dif ent time there were adopted children running around.

J.C.: What was your father's occupation?

A.B.: He didn't really have one. I suppose the one that was the most stable, and that went bankrupt too, was a general store that we had in Souix City, Iowa. See, we moved to Souix City when I was 6 years old and I went through high school there. And I came to New York, although had no money, with the thought in mind that somehow or other I would w my way through Columbia pre-med. Because even before I had entered high school I had selected the doctors I was going to study with in Vienna.

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Dr. Shild and Dr. Cowder (check spelling), I was going to be a psychiatrist...my interest was aroused by the prinipal of a public school there who was very much involved in psychology and so on. And also by a teacher that I had in Senior year in high school, Mr. Littlejohn, who knew of my interest and completly wiped out the necessity for my doing tests or reading books in the psychology class. He suggested things that I should look up in the library, and he'd keep me after school and help me

J.C.: Did you also draw as a youngster?

A.B.: Very badly. And I was inspired by a gangster. Let me clarify that a little bit: when I was in the second grade in public school, there was a kid who sat across the aisle from me; we all called him "Twinkles". And the reason for that was his eyes would blink constantly, and he stuttered, and he had a little indelible pencil about that long, and he would lick the pencil as he blinked and studdered and then he'd make a little drawing and keep licking the pencil and it always turned out to be the same drawing. And what it was was a cameraman grinding a hand-cranked movie camera and the cameraman had his hat on backwards and wore puttees, and God how I wished I could draw like that! And I tried licking an indelible pencil and blinking but none of that worked...he did become a gunman, no kidding, yeah, Twinkles. Some of my nest friends are in the best penitentiaries.

Oh, we were terribly, terribly poor, and I'm not trying to elicit sympathy, but it was just one illness after another. My father was extremely unsuccessful at whatever he touched. My mother had her hands full with the kids. My father worked very long hours, 14, 15 hours a day, in the store or whatever he did...from the time I was 6 years old, I was helping out in some way or another. I drove a horse and wagon when I was six, and went through the usual bit of selling papers, and carrying papers and being a caddy at the country club, and working as a stock boy in a department store. Oh, everything -- you name it.

J.C.: You came to New York without being accepted by a school?

A.B.: I didn't have money to enter. Absolutely broke; and again, not to illicite sympathy, for the first six weeks in New York, I slept on a wooden bench under the stairway of a church. I had a very simple diet. You could buy bananas that were just about ready to be thrown out for a penny a piece and day old milk for five cents a quart container, and day-old bread for five cents a loaf, apples, too. So one day I'd have bananas and milk and bread and the next day I'd have apples, or if somebody was very kind, they would cook the apples and I'd have applesauce and bread. I was 16 and ½. (I spent my days) trying to find a job. I had discovered that you had to pay tuition in college and you had to have a job before you earned the tuition. I finally determined, well, what can I do to fool

the public? I figured well about the only thing I could do is to some kind of drawing and because I had been the high school cartoonist, that was only to get out of Latin class.

J.C.: So you did have some talent for drawing.

A.B.: Well, that's been debated for many years...my first job was in a grocery store up in the Bronx. I weighed 90 lbs at the time, the storekeeper, a kindly Mr. Zimmerman, had me hauling hundred pound bags of sugar all over the place. And it sounds like a bad movie, but I did find a card in the street, a business card to an advertising agency. And I called up and they said, "Sure. C'mon over!" And I signed a contract with them for nothing a week. One name was Stern, the other began with an "H", but I can't think of it. (My job involved) lying to creditors, delivering packages, things like that. Answering the phone and saying he wasn't in. It was on Fifth Avenue and 29th or 30th Street. Then they had me doing dummies, roughs, for advertising, and after about 3 or 4 days they began to use these roughs for actual reproduction, and their consciences bothered them. So they said they would pay me $.40 an hour for the time I would be spending on art work for reproduction. The other time was free, you know? Well, after a while they discovered that I was earning as much as $16.00 a week. So they brought on a new agreement --put me on a flat $10.00 a week salary, whether I worked on reproduction or not. (I left after) about 3 months because I had been invited to my own birthday party and they thought it was very inconsiderate of me because I didn't stay and work that night...I somehow or other had managed to bring my whole family here from the mid-west, and we all lived in a basement room, with a little casement window, all of us, and that was my home...in the Brooklyn area. By this time my father was paralyzed, see, this sounds like a cheap movie. He was paralyzed for 14 years before he died...his mind was alert, but his body was inert.

J.C.: And you were the breadwinner.

A.B.: Right. I quit, and I had to go look for another job. Now I had samples. And I got a job with another company, an art service for $12 a week and again it was a matter of running errands and so on, but I did get to work on actual production stuff. There was one complication: it was the Harold W. Simmons Company on 28th Street and Simmons was a very talented man and the artists who worked for him were very good, but Simmons was a drunk. Friday was our payday, and it was my job to go down to the speakeasy and get him out and back to the studio before he could spend all of our salary. But Simmons didn't let us keep it that simple; he always insisted that I wrestle with him first, and he weighed about 200 and I weighed 90. Finally we were paid regularly. That (job) lasted about 3 months and Simmons struck a slow period, so I was let go, cause my $12 was cutting into the budget quite a bit. And I free-lanced, and

the first two weeks I earned $3, I think. I couldn't afford a bottle of rproof ink, I remember nor any real decent pen points, and I didn't have a drawing table and I remember standing up at a bureau in the bedroom where my father and mother were asleep, all hours of the night drawing with this very bad pen and ordinary ink. I remember one of the first jobs I had was Roy-tan cigars...actually it only took me a year to really get on my feet and start earning decent money as a commercial artist and this led to very simple animation for medical films and things like that. And then as I learned a little bit about it I became involved in business films, things like Western Electric.

J.C.: How did you first learn to do animation?

A.B.: By doing it. It was very simple, very simple. It was mostly like drawing extremes, getting to the next place in the easiest way possible. But I was doing silent commercials for theatres, things like Listerine, Flit, "Quick, Henry. The Flit!" if you'll recall. That's where I first met Henry Guisell, Dr. Seuss. Ted Guisell. He was doing commercial art, cartoo I took anything that came along, men's fashions, women's fashions, imitati wood-cuts, layout, lettering, photo retouching, simple animation, very, ve simple animation. And I didn't really get into doing entertainment animation until I joined Terry's, Paul Terry's in 1929.
Friend of mine in an art studio said that Paul Terry was organizing a group to do cartoons with sound. I said, "That's for me!" At that time, I wasn't overwhelmed (by the cartoon films of the period). My tastes certainly weren't developed, and I was willing to accept the Fleischer cartoons and things like that. It was only after I had seen the first Disney cartoons in a theatre that I became enthusiastic about animation. Skeleton Dance was the first one I saw, I believe. ... I met Bill Tytla at Terry's. George Gordon (was there), he's been directing for many, many years. No, Ferguson was already out on the coast with Disney at the time. I never met Grim till I came out to the coast. I met (Sears) out on the coast, too (Sharpsteen) on the coast. I knew I. Klein in New York thru Bill Tytla; Klein at that time was doing many cartoons for the New Yorker. I met Jimmy Culhane on the coast, same evening I met Grim.

J.C.: Tell me about Terry.

A.B.: Well, let me see if I can clean this up. He was a skinflint, and h had a vulgar sense of humor, and he kept a file, you know? Gag "A" is a belly-laugh, Gag "B" is sort of a medium laugh, Gag "C" is a titter, and let's see, if we take 3 of the Gag "A"'s and 2 of the gag "B"'s, and a couple of titters, and then make a parade on a pan, you've got a picture! (laughter) There was just about that much thought went into it. And his partner, Frank Mosher was no better. Mosher always bragged about that fact that he was the fastest animator in the business; so I told him very

undiplomatically that's like being the fastest violinist in the world, he can't play worth a damn but he can sure play fast. I don't think he understood it. But Terry was not mean to me, except when I quit him he spent a whole day trying to run me down to find me someplace so that he could tell the new boss to fire me. I did a commercial film, Buster Brown shoes for Frank Goldman who was with Audio-Cinema at that time, and this was sort of an interim step before I went to California, I didn't go to Disney's, I went to California.

J.C.: What were some of the Terry films you animated?

A.B.: One was the music from Carmen, Spanish thing, another was a Russian thing, but I don't recall the names...John Terry was a very decent guy. They weren't rivals, John Terry worked for Paul, and John was an older brother.

J.C.: But John also had his own studio that Bill worked at.

A.B.: Yes, but I was not connected with John at that time, and John was very helpful to me, showed me certain things, and then there was a period when John was very ill when I ghosted for him on his comic strip - Scorchy Smith or something like that -- and John Terry would start to laugh uncontrollably for no reason at all he'd be laughing like mad and he would say, "Every day is gravy." And then we understood, because he had been through a very serious operation and people didn't think he would recover, but he did and he lived for quite a few years after the operation. Paul Terry's wife was a great gal. She died a few years ago of cancer, Irma. Irma would turn to me and say, "How much are you earning now?" I'd tell her. She'd say, "Well that's not enough." I'd say, "Well, what should I do?" She'd say, "WEll, go in and tell Paul you want $15 more a week or you're going to quit, and then you'll get five." So then I'd go in and tell Paul...and I'd get a $5 raise. And periodically, every four weeks she'd say, "What are you earning now?" So that's the way I got my raises.

J.C.: What happened to your dream of being a psychiatrist?

A.B.: OH, well, that went a-glimmering because I always had people to suppo

J.C.: When did your interest in animation become more than considering it just a job? When did it take form in your mind as an art form? That this might be something in which you could excel in. At Terry's?

A.B.: No, certainly not at TerrY's, cause it was just a job.

J.C.: How were you regarded? You got raises, you must have been good?

A.B.: No, really I wasn't.

J.C.: You mentioned once that Bill Tytla taught you some things.

A.B.: Yeah, Bill taught me a great deal. Bill taught me to invent, to have the courage to invent. But let me get this straight, about my whole attitude as far as animation is concerned, and this may be very disillusioning to you. I'm somewhat akin to a dentist who determines to study den-

tistry because that's a way of earning a good living, and he studies for many years, he worked very hard at it. And then when he becomes a dentist he reads a lot and attends symposiums and so on to become a better dentist so he can charge more. But after he pulls teeth all day, he doesn't go home and pull more teeth. And I feel the same way about my activities. I have tried to be fairly good at my craft becasue I earn a good living at it. I never for a moment draw when I come home from work. It was only two years ago at the insistence of my wife that we finally hung up some 40 year old ~~[illegible]~~ cariactures that I had made, and they're not hung in a prominent place. I'm not a compulsive artist, you know --"I have to draw t live, or to sculpt or to paint or something"- I've done all these things. I've studied art. I've painted, I've done watercolors, I've sculpted. But this was just so I could pull teeth better. This is not a put-on. This is my honest evaluation.

I see too much of this fraud, this phoneyness in our industry. Where somebody learns to do inbetweens and that gives him the license to wear a funny hat with a feather in it, or to be tempermental at home. That's a lot of baloney. I do think this: I have tremendous respect for the craft itself, for what the craft could be, not ~~[illegible]~~ what it is because even the very very best of Disney which was done in the late '30's and '40's is just a kick-off point, that's the beginning. And of course, the craft is bothered by the Saturday morning shows, entrpreneurs, and the first step that is necessary is to get back to the craftsman ship of the 30's and 40's and then progress from there. Because there's a whole world of literature that has never been tapped, a whole world of music, a whole world of design, of color, of caricature, of acting, they haven't touched acting! Haven't touched it at all. And that is the excitment in it for me. I'll never be able to partake of it becasue I'm not going to be here 200 years from now. I may be exaggerating--150 years. No, it could happen very rapidly just as these tremendous advances were made in the craft at Disney's in the '30's in ten years. You know it went from Steamboat Willie to something really (TAPE ENDS SIDE ONE)

(TAPE ONE - SIDE TWO)

J.C.: Do you think Bakshi is going in the right direction?

A.B.: At least he's breaking the mold. I've spent some time with Bakshi. This man is bright, he's not a hack, he's a painter, he's cracked more tha one book. He claims he did the Fritz the Cat as a porno because the only way he could attract the audience's attention was to hit them in the fa ce with an axe. Well, I don't know about that. But at least its refreshing to find somebody with ~~[illegible]~~ new ideas whether you like him or not. Instead of most of the producers who simply rehash everything they've rehashed before.

J.C.: Is William's also advancing the art?

A.B.: Yeah, yeah. I have tremendous faith in Williams. That's why I'm connected with him now. He's a man of impeccable taste, he has a brilliant mind, terrific discernment, he can spot things that I don't spot till I've seen 10 times. He has energy, drive, enthusiasm, youth, he draws like a son-of-a-gun. His whole life is devoted to it, You know if you weren't a fanatic on the subject you couldn't tolerate it. Its like being an overdevout Catholic and you're trying to convert the world. Yeah, I think there...

...I'm on the shorts board of the Academy and you see a great variety of films, you see laser films, and computor films, and the experiments in the colleges, and stop-frame films, and you see great design, and great color, and a great idea. But no depth of characterization, no articulation that's worth a damn in the characters, no acting, nothing. And none of these films can sustain interest for more than five minutes. They're just teasers. My own taste is for decent literature, decent music, acting, direction, color, design, and I don't care what the hell the design is, conventional or modern, as long as its good. Something, a play to sustain interest for an hour and a half has to dig into character, just has to.

J.C.: Did Disney's come to you?

A.B.: No, God, no! I had letters to all the studios in Hollywood at that time but none to Disney's. But I never went to the other studios, never. I knew that I wanted to work for Disney. I arrived in Hollywood with a return trip ticket being superbly confident as usual, and I couldn't get to see Disney. So I sent a big letter to his secretary, about 15 by 20 feet. I actually had to get down on the floor to paint my letter. The essence of the letter was that I wanted an appointment. And I folded it up and sent it registered, special delivery, everything to impress the secretary, and I got a phone call the next day telling me I had an appointment with Disney.

I was with Disney, and I started to tell him how great Bill Tytla was And he wanted to know, "Well, when can we get this Tytla guy out here?" He wasn't at all interested in me...well, (Disney) was reluctant (to hire me). He said we can't afford any more people. I said well, I'm not asking you to pay me anything, I'll work for nothing. At the end of three months you either fire me or you pay me what I'm worth. So that sounded good to him. He said, we have no space. I said well, I only take up about 4 feet by 3 feet, that's all the space I need. He said, well, I'll call you. I said, well, OK, at least do me the courtesy, don't throw my name in the wastebasket until I close the door. The next day I got a call, I was fully prepared to work for nothing; he said well, we don't do that here. And so he started me at $35 a week, in July of 1932.

J.C.: What were your first impressions of Walt Disney?

A.B.: I knew I had a shrewd customer on my hands. There was electricit between us right from the very start. At first it was sort of a friendly antagonism where you feel each other out. But I wondered about the man because of the way the office was set up, and this sounds terribly small but the guy being interviewed faced the sunlight. You know, it was the old Mussolini trick... inspite of the fact that I ~~was an inbetweener~~ had screen credits and so on, they gave me a job as an inbetweener for Chuck Couch. A whole bunch of pirates running up the mast and that sort of stuff, a Mickey Mouse black and white cartoon, a lot of junk. And so about a day and ½ later, I brought the scene to the animator. He said, "What's the matter, Something wrong?" I said, "No, its finished." "It can't be!" "Well, it is." He said, "Well, we better test it." So they went and tested it and glory-be it was alright. So that got around ~~the~~ all the studio. So Ben Sharpsteen thought he'd take a wild chance and he gave me a five foot scene of Pluto. And I did that and that seemed to be all right. Klondike Kid... this was just about vacation time and eve body was entitled to a vacation, except me because I was a newcomer; and so they loaded me up with work. Well, I wound up doing a hell of a lot of that picture, animating a hell of a lot of it, That was the first picture I worked on...within a year I was earning $160, and within a year and ½ or two years at the most, I was earning $15,000 a year, about 300 a week.

J.C.: Were your folks still living in New York?

A.B.: Yeah.

J.C.: ~~Were they still living in New York~~ Did they ever come to Cal.?

A.B.: No.

J.C.: Was Freddy Moore at Disney's at that time?

A.B.: Yeah, in fact I was in the same room as Freddy Moore...well, he was a natural to begin with. Freddy had a high school education, had never gone to art school, to my knowledge, his characters were always round, and luscious, and inoffensive, beautifully articulated. But I think that even in those days, the content of the pictures passed him by. I'm sure that the Beethoven Pastoral, bad as it was, was over his head, way over his head. But he did a beautiful job on the Pigs and Mickey. There were four of us who animated Three Little Pigs: Dick Lundy, Norm Furgeson, Freddy Moore, and myself.

J.C.: Why is that film considered the big personality breakthru? Weren' Mickey and Minnie full of "personality"?

A.B.: Not until later. I really think that the Three Little Pigs was the first breakthrough as far as characterization, you could call it.

J.C.: Did you feel that way when you were working on it?

A.B.: No, not at all. I'm sorry to disappoint you.

J.C.: Was Ben Sharpsteen a bastard?

A.B.:..An author who shall be nameless wrote a book and he wanted to know about Ben Sharpsteen, this was not too many years ago, where was he and so on. So I wrote to him Ben Sharpsteen was retired, lived up in northern California and the property where he lived, a very valuable mineral had been discovered on this property and it was making him wealth. And the only good thing I could find to say about Ben, and I got this second hand, was that he had saved a six year old boy from drowning. So I wrote this to the author and the author said, excuse my language, that this valuable mineral that was discovered on Ben's property was chicken-shit and the boy he saved from drowning owed him some money. (laughter) That's the nicest thing I can say about Ben Sharpsteen.

(Norm Ferguson) was not a draftsman, butI'm sure you've seen some of the model sheets of Pluto. But he had the essence of action and acting within himself. He himself was not very demonstrative, very quiet unassuming guy. Very nice person. Uneducated as we all were, but like Bill Tytla, he was a hell of an actor, inside.

J.C.: Did you participate in the art classes?

A.B.: Again, if you'll pardon a lack of modesty, regardless of what you've read elsewhere, the art classes as they developed started in my home. This was in the old French village across the street from the Hollywood Bowl, it doesn't exist anymore, but that's where it was. And there were 8 of us working in this room, and it occurred to me that it might not be a bad idea if animators knew how to draw. So I invited all of them to my home, and it was sort of a studio affair. And Hardy Gramatki told us where we could hire a model, you've seen Hardy's illustrations, water-color. And the first evening, 14 guys showed up instead of the eight I'd invited. So then we scheduled a class for the following week, I invited those 14 and 20 some guys showed up, they had to sit on Orange boxes all over the place. The next morning I was called in by Disney. He says, "I hear you've been running an art class at your home." I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, that's not such a good idea." I said, "Whatsa matter?" He said, "Suppose it got in the newspapers that a bunch of Disney artists were drawing naked women in a private home. It wouldn't sit very well." I said, "Well, what should we do?" He said, "Well, how about using the sound stage here?" "Fine, great!" He said, "How much do models get an hour?" So I thought fast--they were getting $.60 an hour at that time, in the art schools. I said, "A dollar twenty an hour plus carfare." (laughter).

And it was Hardy Gramatky who stirred me to Don Graham who was teaching at Choinard's at the time. Don Graham will tell you this himself that I was the one who got him to come to the Disney studio. And this developed

into quite a thing. Special building put up for the art classes and so on...I'm not qualified to teach art; I was sort of a monitor, counted noses.

J.C.: Did it become manditory to go to the classes?

A.B.: No, it was never manditory, but you better go! (laughter)

J.C.: How did you get to specialize in Goofy?

A.B.: I had to fight for that. There was a black and white picture called Mickey's Garage and in it theres a small sequence of Goofy on this cylinder block of a car. And he reaches down in one of the holes of the cylinder block and his own hand comes up behind him...God, I wanted that. It was originally planned as a 7 foot scene; it wound up 57 and I was accussed of padding, I don't know why. And Walt was in this story meeting, and I said, "Gee, I want that.""Naw, I've got you scheduled to do Pete, Pegleg Pete. I said, "I'll do Pegleg Pete, but give me Goofy, too." And so that was the final deal, that I'd do Pegleg Pete and get Goofy for dessert. Goofy originally was a sort of stock character in mob scenes, so on, but nobody had attempted to do anything with him, so I can't say that I created Goofy, but I was the first one that made him a character. I liked the character; there were all sorts of possibilities. I might approach it somewhat differently(now), I wouldn't be as crude about it as I was at that time. You know that was 41 years ago.

J.C.: What about Country Cousin and the famed drunk scene.

A.B.: I must tell you a story about that, again. Am I using up too much of your tape? (laughter) I'd just finished doing Goofy--let me fix you a drink. Shut off your damn tape machine...(laughter).

...you know it was Walt's habit to stimulate an animator on the new projects. Usually you'd still be working on one and he was getting you all excited about the next one. Well, he came into the music room when I was picking up my assignment on The Country Cousin and I had just finished Moving Day and he liked it and he said, "Now I want you to do the same kind of stuff that you did in Moving Day." That was the piano thing with Goofy, and of course, there's no connection at all. And Walt had absolutely no sense of humor at all. I know this sounds revolutionary. He said, "I want you to get the same kind of thing that you got in that Moving Day." So with a very straight face, I said, "Well, Walt, I'm gonna have to have a 'research fund'." He said, "Waddaya mean, a research fund!? The front office is complaining about expenses now!" Isaid, "Well, If I'm going to do a drunken mouse I should know what alcohol tastes like, and I should have money for a bottle of liquor." So, you know, one eyebrow went down and the other went up, and he went out of the room.

Well, months later, when The Country Cousin was being previewed and it got a good reception at the ~~box office, he handed me~~ theatre, he was

waiting for me out at the box-office, and he nudged me and said, "Hey, Art. How about a cocktail!" (laughter)

J.C.: Were you always a"firebrand" -- your description of yourself.

A.B.: Well, I talked loud and waved my arms a lot, but I guess, I was indecreet, I was not a politician, I said what I felt. I have learned thru the years that you can get better results if you don't say, "Hey! That stinks!" If instead of that you say, "May I make a suggestion?" See it works better.

J.C.: How did Walt take your--candidness.

A.B.: I don't think he appreciated it at all. There were, I just wanted to be reppected for my work. And I still feel the same way today. I don't give a damn about what anybody thinks about my character, or my home life. There are very few people that I'm concerned about --my family and my dear friends. However, otherwise, I don't care. Its not important to me. I don't want to impress anybody, I don't want medals. I want my kids to know finally that I'm not a fuddy-duddy, that I was a swinger, then maybe they'll respect me, that's about it. I have no illusions about the importance of what we're doing.

J.C.: I interviewed Ward Kimball and he said you're one of his favorites because you always invited him to your parties on Tuxedo Terrace.

A.B.: Right! (laughter)

J.C.: He said, "I could describe Art Babbitt this way: he was the only guy who could afford a Capehart record player." He said you were a sort of Playboy of the 30's.

A.B.: Yes, I was. Again, if you'll pardon the language, my attitude was if it moves, screw it. (laughter)

J.C.: You did the wicked queen when she is beautiful in Snow White?

A.B.: Right. There were other animators involved but I know I had the main assignment, the bulk of it.

J.C.: How, after doing a Goof and a drunken mouse, did they think you were the one to animate this character?

A.B.: I don't really know.

J.C.: Was that Walt's idea? Part of his great intuition?

A.B.: Yeah, yeah. Oh, I guess maybe because I'd done kids with a certain amount of tenderness, delicacy...No, I didn't find her especially difficult. It was matter of drawing which was important there, simplifying, refining, things like that.

J.C.: Does this look familiar to you? (SHOWS BABBITT WITCH CLEAN-UPS)

A.B.: God, yes. Where in hell did you get that? (FLIPPING DRAWINGS) Yeah. I'll be damned. She looks like a voice-gal I know now, Joanie Gerber... Well, course in Snow White that was the first time they used live-action and it was used wrong. They rotoscoped Snow White, actually traced the

live-action photography and the prince, too, and of course, it looked like it. Later on they became smarter about it and used live-action as it should be used. And I'll go into that for just a moment. When you trace live-action, its the equivilent of tracing a photograph and calling it a caricature. Its completely vitiated, it becomes a nothing. However, if you use live-action, you should use it as a reference,as information. For information, I'm not a ballet dancer, I don't know the steps. But I can photograph a ballerina doing the steps, study them very carefully, file it away and give my impression of what I have learned, but never, never copy exactly what you have seen because thats fatal.

J.C.: Were you caught up in the excitment of S.W.? Frank Thomas told me how you all worked overtime, etc. How were your relations with Disney, too?

A.B.: They were good at the time. However, I wasn't as devout, as Catholic as those guys were. We all worked long hours. And there was this excitement, enthusiasm about the work. And when somebody discovered something new, because we were inventing and discovering constantly. We had...

(TAPE ENDS SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE)

-ooOoo-

(TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE)

A.B.: ...that's right. We were very enthusiastic about what we were doing. And I think the enthusiasm showed in the films that were being produced at the time.

J.C.: How did you feel about your next assignment, Geppetto?

A.B.: Again, you know, I didn't turn somersaults over the thing. (in Snow) I did little subsidiary scenes of the dwarfs, but the emphasis was on the queen. (and in Pinocchio) on Gepetto. (I did) a big portion of his scenes...I think its the best picture they made...

J.C.: When did you become interested in music?

A.B.: Well, as a kid...fifty cent piano lessons, and fifty cent violin lessons. However, at Disney's in the very early thirties I knew that something like Fantasia was inevitable. And so I took piano lessons every day of the week including Saturdaysand Sundays. And they were hour and a half lessons, first 45 minutes were devoted to reviewing what I had learned yesterday, then I would go on to something else. I started from scratch and within a year and a half I was playing Chopin Etudes. Not well, but I was playing em. I credit the teacher, (SPELLING?) Viola Koosack, who never bother with beginners, but she was experimenting, and I was the laboratory rat. She wanted to see if it could be done; she was a task master. I might play 4 pages of music and make a mistake on the 4th page, I'd have to start all over again. We'd be driving along in the car and she'd say give me the left hand on page two of so and so. Because she believed firmly that you learned the music first and then you apply yourself to how it is played.

And thats where the effort really comes in. And I agree.
(Disney) heard I was taking piano lesson. I've told that story. Well, he called me in, couldn't have been more than a year or two later, and he was going to let me in on some private information, "Hey, Art. You know, a lot of good music was written a long time ago." I said, "No kidding!" He sez, "Yeah, theres this fella Beethoven, and Bach and Tchaikovsky and Brahms." "No kiddin'?" He sez, "You may not like it, but it was good." And of course there are some great stories that involve Deems Taylor, and Stravinsky and Stokowski and Dinney, and I was in on the meetings. There was a meeting for Fantasia before I did the mushrooms dance, and I was picking up on it. They had some beautiful models of the mushrooms, but they were getting no-place trying to do something that had any relationship with the music. So it seemed very simple to me, and I'm not a musicologist, so I may be using the wrong terminology. I said, what it is you have a statement, you repeat the statement, then you have an answer, then you come back to the original statement, or something like that. And Walt turned to everybody, and he said, "That's what we need. We need more statements."

J.C.: What did you think of the mushrooms?

A.B.: It was another assignment. I wasn't that thrilled about it...I had a student in an animation class, Paul Julian's sister, Maggie Julian at USC when I was teaching there 18 years ago. Now Maggie is up in San Francisco and she has students of her own, and she took em all to see Fantasia and they asked her if those guys who did Fantasia, were they on drugs? I wrote back and said yes. I personally was addicted to Pepto Bismol and ~~Phenefinement~~ (SPELLING). FEEN-A-MINT.

(The perspective as a subsidiary action in the mushrooms sequence) happened, you know. There was no deep philosophical meaning underneath, it was instinctive. (The studio) liked it, in fact, I got a fan letter from one of the other animators at the studio, which is very unusual.

J.C.: What do you think of the mushrooms, Carol?

Carol Millikan: Oh, I love them.

A.B.: But isn't it sad that people remember what you did 40 some years ago. They don't remember that I could make chicken and wine yesterday.

J.C.: I've studied your mushrooms on a Steenbeck and I've flipped thru your clean-ups at the Disney morgue. Some of the drawings were on paper with side peg holes.

A.B.: That was probably a vertical scene, where he was marching up between the columns. I don't know. (LATER, OFF TAPE, BABBITT MENTIONS HE STUDIED A KNEE ACTION OF THE THREE STOOGES FOR THE MUSHROOMS)

J.C.: Did they have trouble casting you because you could do anything?

A.B.: Its sort of a gag of mine, but its true. When I first came there I was cast for villains and babies. Then after Country Cousin I was cast

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J.C.: Did they have trouble casting you because you could do anything?

A.B.: Its sort of a gag of mine, but its true. When I first came there I was cast for villains and babies. Then after Country Cousin I was cast

for drunks, after Snow White I was cast for women. My repitoire grew.
J.C.: Everyone always describes your animation as "beautiful".
A.B.: That's due to a limited vocabulary.
J.C.: Do you do a lot of preparation?How are you preparing for the camel?
A.B.: I think about it a lot. I'm a very slow study. Yesterday the man who did the voice for the camel came in and he did a very corny, amateurish type of dance. But it should not be a professional dance for this character. I keep thinking about it. I don't know how I can use it, but I have ideas I wish they could incorporate. Dick mentioned something that was a kick-off point, and that is that the hind quarters are not related to the front quarters, its like two guys in ahorse suit. So this brings to mind all sorts of possibilities, like the front legs starting off and the hind legs have to catch up.
C.M.: One or two humped camel?
A.B.: Double hump. I don't know whther thats a camel or a dromidary.
J.C.: Do you do a lot of thunbnail sketches?
A.B.: No, but I do a hell of a lot of sketching. Bill Tytla used to do little thumbnails. But I do full-size sketching and I sweat blood, Its not unusual for me to make 20 drawings to arrive at one extreme. I really have a terrible time, I work very hard, and I'm very jealous of the guys who can sit down and whip out a drawing like Williams can. I really have to struggle with drawing.
J.C.: Do you work in blue pencil? AB.: Sometimes. I saw your dance drawings for Hubley. They're clean-ups, right?
A.B.: Clean drawings, I made all of the drawings, including the inbetweens on the stuff that Hubley has. I just delivered a lot of other stuff to him recently, sort of abstract characters, I don't know if you saw that.
J.C.: Yeah, the faceless man and woman. Grim says he learned how to deliver a punch from you.
A.B.: Yeah. Again this was one of the discoveries that we made during our learning years. I learned things from other guys, for instande, things about dialog, about the fact that the whole face articulated when somebody spoke, it wasn't just a mouth swimming around on a shape. I think Ham Luske and Freddy Moore influenced me, but I discovered things, for instance if you turn it one way the shapes and the features on the face slide around instead of actually turning the whole shape. But if you displace the inbetween position, the intermediate position, then the whole thing turns. This was my own discovery. I learned certain things about the articulation of feet and hands, so on. How you can achieve complete flexibility by successive breaking of joints, like a snake dancer. You'd think her arm was a rubber hose but it isnt at all its just joints breaking, successively.
J.C.: And you can animate that without using a rubber hose style?

A.B.: Oh sure. Sure. (DEMONSTRATES)

J.C.: Your notes from the Dick Williams seminar are being passed about here as if they were Galileo's.

A.B.: Just so they won't burn me at the stake. Course you know those notes are very incomplete.

J.C.: Are you doing a book?

A.B.: I want to, and I have notes and material that I've been collecting for 17, 18 years. But I must have a grant to do it cause I'd have to stop working for 3 or 4 years. And there would be thousands of drawings, exposure sheets, there would be film to go with it, to show you what the results are of different timings of something. You know, the average animator knows one walk, whtehr its a man or a woman or an elephant or a horse or a drunk. When I teach animation I start out with 40, 45 different walks...some of the people in the Cartoonists Union have tried and they find out if theres a friendly response, its somewhere in the area of $25,000. Well, hell, that wouldn't even get me started...I need somekind of a guarantee, some sort of security so I suddenly don't find myself in mid-air. Because its not just a matter of supporting myself as I do this thing, I would have to hire assistants, inbetweeners, pay for animation camera time...its the sort of thing that will definitely not be a best seller. An actual how-to has never been done...I would like to leave some sort of a legacy...Dick feels strongly about it... he will tell you the people doing his commercials, with the exception of one man, are people who did not animate before I went over there two years ago to teach. And they are doing commercials, and damn good ones. We just heard to day that Dick had won 4 new awards, 2 clios and 2 others.

J.C.: What did you do on Dumbo? Supervising animator? did you animate?

A.B.: Little bit. The stork, and I did some of the clowns.

J.C.: Were the clowns caricatures of the strikers?

A.B.: No, people attached political significance to what happened there. You know, "lets go on strike" and so on.

J.C.: "Hit the big boss for a raise?"

A.B.: Yeah, we weren't thinking strike at the time. In fact there never would have been a strike if it hadn't been forced on us. Well, Disney, I think was ready to negotiate, not because he was kindly disposed to us Bolshiviks, but it seemed the practical thing to do. But the vice-president and legal head of the studio, Gunther Lessing, and a man by the name of Tony Rourke, or O'Rourke, who was a turncoat really, because he had been a labor representative for the garment workers union of L.A. and he was hired as a personnel labor negotiator for the Disney studio. Those 2 guys convinced Disney that a strike would be a good thing, because they knew we had no funds. I think we had $50 in our treasury and a strike

would break us. The union first started, I believe, at MGM, there were people like Bill Littlejohn, oh God, I can't think of the names...No, it didn't start for that reason(salary raises). My assitant was Bill Hurtz and he was earning $25 a week and I tried to get him a raise, a 2½ dollar raise, and Disney accused me of being a communist. So I said OK, if you can't afford it, I'll give him the money. So that didn't sit well with Disney, the next day 12 Or 13 assistants got 2½ dollar raises. But that had nothing to do with the strike. The strike came about for a couple of reasons. One was that first of all we wanted union recognition. And the money issue was a very minor one...once you're recognized as a union you're able to come in and bargain, representing a body of people as opposed to one person.

J.C.: Disney was opposed to a union.

A.B.: Right, cause that's communist. And then toothere was a Wagner labor relations act that gave you the privilege of organizing employees and he was against that. See, he wanted to be the benevolent uncle, if good was to be done, he was the guy that was gonna do it. And you must never fight the system, you must go along, play along. Anyhow I'm digressing.

J.C.: Did Disney take his ire out on you?

A.B.: Oh yes, in no uncertain way. First he tried to win me over. He called me into his office at one time I recall. He said, "You know, Art, my father was a socialist." I said, "Well, does that make you one by osmosis?" I said, "Mussolini and Hitler were socialists, too." That didn't sit well. Incidently, he was an admirer of Mussolini, he had an autographed picture of Mussolini. At one of the story meetings, I remember Roy Disney and Walt Disney were both there. This was at the time Hitler's armies were going through Holland, Roy Disney says, I don't know in what context, "What the hell. We can do business with him."

This sounds like sour grapes now. Mind you, I want to give full credit to the genius of Disney as far as his being an entrepreneur, a very forceful guy who was willing to risk everything for quality, who surrounded himself with the best people, who was a helluva editor. He was not a creator, he was not an artist, but he could pick out what was good, and I say this sort of tongue-in-cheek, its not out of bitterness or anything like that, its sort of a wise-crack when I say he had the innate bad taste of the American public. He was audience-wise. And if it hadn't been for him, I don't think the medium would have made the advances that it did. In fact, I know it wouldn't have. He did set a pace, he was searching for something good. But as far as his politics were concerned, they were medieval. He was a caveman, and the politics at the studio to this present day are still medieval. Disney was an America-firster, as was his brother, I was investigated till hell-wouldn't-have-it by the FBI and the Office of Naval Intelligence. My Marine Corps enlistment was cancelled and I hadda fight

to be taken into the Marine Corp as a buck private. You know, I could go on, this would be a whole book. You'd have to run homw for more tape.

J.C.: Is it true you shouted to Disney, on the strike line, "You ought to be a shamed of yourself"?

A.B.: That's true...he started coming for me and all of the pickets close in on him, and he thought better of it and he got back into his car and drove off And the reason I said you ought to be ashamed of himself was he put on this air of bravado and John Garfield was making a speech over our microphone at the time, on our side, y u know, Disney drove thru the line of pickets like he was having a helluva good time. That's when I said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

J.C.: How long were you in the Marine Corps?

A.B.: Three years. But during that time, my law cases were being tried. My labor board case against the studio and I won in Los Angeles, I won at the Labor Board in Washington, D.C., then it went to the Ninth Circuit court in San Francisco which was notoriously anti-labor and they found 100% in my favor, then it went to the US Supreme Court which refused to review the case which meant that they agreed with the Ninth Circuit Court I was fired (by Disney) four times. Excuse me, I'm going to the little boys room. (CUT TAPE)

(CONT.) J.C.: You were a Marine Sargent.

A.B.: Master sargent, if you please. Just so you don't say Army.

J.C.: I was Army.

A.B.: OK, I'll forgive you. See how tolerant I've become.

J.C.: Did you give em hell in the Marine Corps?

A.B.: When I first entered the Marine Corp I was put in the motion picture section, and I had to fight to get in, too. I had a lot of people go to bat for me. I went in to the motion picture department to be involved in animation but I saw that they had no plan, they didn't know what the hell they were going to do. And it was arranged for me to be transferred and I wound up in Terrain Intelligence...oh yes, I spent most of my time overseas...in the Pacific, Marine Corps, Marine Corps.

J.C.: You won the case. Why did you go back to Dinney's?

A.B.: To prove a point...the bitterness exists (at the Studio) to this day...but I will say this, last year when I was in London, I got a phone call from Mel Powell of the California Institute of the Arts and they wanted me to come and teach there. And I said are you off your noggin or something? I mean don't you know my history? "Doesn't make any difference. We want you to come and teach at the California Institute of the Arts. I said, well, in the first place, I'm committed here (London) I won't even be back in Los Angeles until September, and, you know, just for get about it. "Well, no. We(re very serious about it." I'm trying to

dissuade him. I said, well look, the money that I could earn there is about a third of what I'm accustomed to earning. "Well we'll make it up to you someway. We'll put you incharge of another department, or two more departments, we'll make it work out. Isaid, well, this sounds just too fantastic. I got three calls, to London. Finally, he says that when you come back to the states that you'll call me. So I called him the day I got back and he said "Can you come over to the house? The board is going to be meeting here at the house." And everything was hunky-dory, everything was fine. And I said, Mel, this all sounds so glorious, could you put it in writing? Which he did. I got this glorious letter a couple days later, and Sandy...(TAPE ENDS SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO.)

(TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO) I didn't hear from Mel for a week. Then he called me and said could we have lunch, I've got something to tell you. What he had to tell me was this: first of all I had asked him who had recommended me for this job? Well, it turns out it was Milt Kahl, Eric Larson, Marc Davis, Kem Anderson, I don't know who else, had recommended me, for this teaching job at Cal Arts. You know its a Disney sponsored school. So what he had to tell me was the fact that all hell broke loose when he brought this thing to the studio, hell broke loose among management and the Disney family stepped in. The essence was that if I were to teach at Cal Arts, the Disney Studio would, the Disneys would withdraw all financial support from the school. They support the school, almost entirely. I've since found out that they couldn't do it because of certain agreements in the trust funds and government support and so on. You know, but who the hell wants it in the first place.

(I remained at the studio) about 13 months after I came back. But we didn speak. I'd pass him almost everyday and I had been asked by the personnel man not to start a conversation with him because it might make trouble so I said OK fine. So I'd pass him just about everyday and I'd keep staring at him. And he'd have coughing fits. But I never spoke to him...his own secretaries got hold of me the first day I returned, I was still in uniform, and both of them said to me, and they were very mild little ladies, and they said don't let that son-of-bitch get away with a thing.

J.C.: They put you on a project that was never completed. What was it?

A.B.: This was some musical project, and I remember animating a Mexican jota, a hat dance.

J.C.: With Donald from 3 Caballeros?

A.B.: No, no, this was a completely different character. It wasn't an animal. (A person) And later on, the director of the thing told me that later on after the work had been completed there was never any intention of making that picture.

J.C.:Is it true you had your carpeting tacked down?

A.B.: You're damn right! You see there was a caste system at the studio... If you were an animator under contract, established and so on, you got

you got wall-to-wall carpeting nailed down. If you were a promising animator, but not under contract, you got carpeting but at least a foot of linolium showed around the sides. If you were just an assistant or an inbetweener, you got linolium, period. So when I returned, since the verdict was that everything was to be exactly the way it was before I was let go, I was to be put back in my same sort of circumstances with the same rate of pay, everything being the same, I made em make it the same, including the wall-to-wall carpeting, and a corner room, and a preview moviola...(and a window)...oh yeah, sure.

J.C.: When you left did you go to UPA?

A.B.: No. I was going to retire. I had money enough to retire what with the settlement from Disney, the sale of the house, money I had saved, and so on. And I had been accepted by the (SPELLING) Bellis Artus Institute in Rio to study painting. Again, not because I wanted to be a painter, but it was too late to bedome a psychiatrist. And I had four years of schooling coming to me under the GI Bill, at that time living in Rio was very, very cheap, very cheap--you could just revel in luxury for $25 a week- I wanted to (go there and study), but then I was prevailed upon to work on another project in Paris, which was a miserable thing and I got out of that within two months...it was a puppet thing that I just wasn't interested in at all. They wanted me to direct it, but I could see where it was going and I got out of it. So I just lived in Europe and had a good time for a year and a half...I came back and I'd been back a month or so when John Hubley asked me to come to work at UPA...first assignment I think I had was something called Ragtime Bear...was that the first MaGoo? Where the bear finds this banjo and it sort of plays itself and he wonders what the hell is happening?

J.C.: And you did the lawyer in Rooty Toot Toot.

A.B.: Yeah the defense attorney...sort of balletic thing, you know. And a lot of the gal, Frankie, and the slinky gal, you know, the part where she in the rrom with the guy who plays the piano, and the screwball piano-player, thats all my stuff.

J.C.: What about the scene where she's pure and the guy keeps popping in and around the set?

A.B.: That was not mine. That was Pat Matthews that did that, I think.

J.C.: How come you have adapted to new styles and others, i.e., Tytla, Moore, Ferguson, somehow couldn't and were frustrated?

A.B.: I think they could have adapted if it had been necessary and if they hadn't had tragedies of all sorts. (Moore) became an alcoholic. (Ferguson) had a falling out with Walt. I really don't know what the troul was...a number of those guys never read a book, never saw a show.

J.C.: Do you think , like a good dentist, you were intelligent enough to

adapt?

A.B.: Well, yeah, frankly. I think it was because I kept growing. I've read a lot, traveled a lot, I'm interested in all the arts.

J.C.: What do you think of your work at Disney's in looking back and your work since then?

A.B.: Well, I've done nothing (SINCE DISNEY'S) that I'm very proud of, except for a couple of things at UPA, like Rooty Toot Toot. But the rest of the time I've been involved in commercials, oh some of the commercials I'm not ashamed of. Like the Worchester Sauce, I don't know if you ever saw that, and John and Marsha, the Ford doctor, I don't know. If you'll pardon a lack of modesty, I have something like 80 awards for commercials.

J.C.: Have you ever worked for any of the other studios, like MGM?

A.B.: No.

J.C.: Any in Europe?

A.B.: No, except for Williams'...I did an exploratory test on the Cobbler last year when I was there and Dick liked it.

J.C.: Did you ever have the desire to start your own studio and make your own films?

A.B.: Yeah, sure. But unless it could be the sort of a project I wanted t do, I wouldn't even start. Sure, I would like to, or, there was a time whe I would have liked to do a picture of my own. I have my own ideas on how it should be developed and how to handle it in a business way, altho I am a lousy businessman.

...I left UPA in 1952, infact, I'm still on a leave of abscence. I took th leave of Abscence to help some friends of mine who were in trouble on some busines films. So for almost 2½ years I directed mostly live-action for educationa s, training films, business films, so on...I like live-action. I'm not interested in doing beer pours, or closing doors on cars. I like live action where it involves delving into a little bit of acting with humans.

J.C.: How did you get involved with Hanna-Barbera?

A.B.: There were several steps inbetween: things like the worchester sauc were done on a free-lance basis for Hubley, Storyboard, and then I became an animation director for Hubley, one of the directors there. When Hubley moved to New York, we formed Quartet Films, and I was the president for 5 years, in California. I sold my interest in the company in 1961 and opened my own place of business with a very original name: Arthur Babbitt Films for Television. And it was very, very successful. Very small operation, I could pick and choose my commercials. I was very fortunate in tha I had two or three of the biggest agencies in the country supplying me wi work -- lot of Kellogg's things, not Tony the Tiger, we did that at Quart Films, but I did other things. I forget what they were exactly. All anima tion. But, and I won't belabor this, I broke down in November 13th of 196

The final analysis was that I had undergone a first-class male menopause. And my addendum to that is I'm the only boy on the block that can't get pregnant. (laughter)...I was written off 100%. Barbara, my wife, was told that I would never come out of the hospital. It took me two years to recover and there was a long period of recuperation where I had lost my memory completely and I did cross-word puzzles and things like that trying to restore my vocabulary.

J.C.: What about you animation?

A.B.: Oh there was none. Oh yes, there was some during that period. About a year after this collapse, I don't remember this, mind you, I don't remember a damn thing, and this is reconstructed. I must have called Bill Melendez and told him I'd like to do a commercial for him. And evidently he gave me a minute spot to do, and evidently he gave me the hand out, and evidently I did it, and the only way I could reconstruct the fact that I had done some animation was that at the end of that particular year I got this W-2 form that I'd been paid by him. About three years later Carl Urbano pointed out to me there was a photographic reproduction of one of the frames in this commercial, it won some kind of award in 1965. I don't remember one damn frame in that film! I don't remember doing it, I don't remember anything.

J.C.: You must have animated on automatic pilot.

A.B.: I don't know. I don't remember a thing about it...if I act strange now you know why. (laughter)

...I was asked to come (to H-B) as a director by, guy that recommended me was the sales manager for the commercial division and this was in 1966, September of 1966.

J.C.: With a mind toward this being published, can you give me your opinion of H-B and its commercial division?

A.B.: Well, it was strictly a business venture. Hopefully the commercial department had a good reputation, it seemed to have had...I will say this: never for an instant did I get any interferance from on top. I had a completely free hand. If I wanted to go outside for anybody, which I did, I was always going outside for animators, for layout people, for background people, usually the very good people at the studio and there are some, were in supervisory positions, and you couldn't get to em half the time. But I had a completely free hand I did the budgeting, scheduling, holding hands with the clients, making trips, hell last year I made 4 trips to Tokyo, cause we've been doing work for Mitsubishi Company...we've done Kellogg's, Dodge cars, Bardal Oil, Vitamins, cereal,(all animated)...technically I'm on a leave of abscence. And then this is not for publication: I have left Hanna-Barbera. Under the best possible circumstances. I will say that all the big shots there were just wonderful to me. And they wanted to know if there were any more like

me at home.

...the reason I teach, and its very difficult to do a day's work, and then go teach, even once a week, because as you know, you have to prepare, is because I think the craft deserves to live. That it has so many untapped possibilities. And there are some surprising talents, not many, but there are some startling talents. People who draw well, and drawing is the vocabulary, you know, lets not kid ourselves. You wouldn't think of a writer attempting to write a book if he couldn't express himself in English.

J.C.: I like your comparison of an actor with no arms or legs.

A.B.: Right. So I feel very firmly that you come to this prepared. An actor is usually unless he's one of these rare naturals, has had training of some sort of another, a musician has had some sort of preparation, and yet people think the only equipment you need to be an animator is the desire. It takes a helluva lot more than that...the first time (I taught) was at the behest of the Cartoonist Union about 21 years ago.

J.C.: Then USC came to you to do it?

A.B.: Yes. Well every time its been that way. Williams asked me to come to London...excuse me...(CUT TAPE)

(CONT.)J.C.: Trying to learn about the art of animation is such a struggle today. That's why we glom onto your notes, even tho they are second hand, My writing just began as a way to find out information, and it just snowballed into this history thing...it was just to get some information...

A.B.: I'm amazed at your tenadiousness...that you're able to stick with a subject like this, you know.

J.C.; I hope eventually to be able to concentrate on animating my own film (CUT TAPE)

J.C.: "Socrates, trained as a scuptor, urged artists to represent the 'workings of the soul' by accurately observing the way 'feelings affect the body in action' ". Has that been one of your motivations--to show emotions thru animation?

A.B.: Well, thats part of it, you know. And this is very high-flown, you know. I heard of this guy Socrates before, you know. He couldn't animate worth a damn!

J.C.: But Degas was a good animator.

A.B.: He could have been. Daumier could have been pretty good, too. Disney might not have appreciated him because he was too political. There was also a contemporary of Daumier that hasn't been recognized, not as good as Daumier, but good, Foreh (SPELLING).

J.C.: Was Heinrich Hey a Fantasia influence?

A.B.: He was studied by some guys who could read and see pictures.

Yeah, he was an influence, but this was only later on and this was only an influence for the intellectuals, you know.

...I just as soon that you wouldn't print it, but what (Disney's) are doing now is regurgitating the stuff that has been done years before, and the reason for it is that the people are just not equipped. The good animators are still there, there are a handful of them but you have Milt Kahl, Ollie Johnston, Frank Thomas, John Lounsberry, people like that, but how in the hell can you compare the mentality of a Woolie Reitherman with a Dick Williams. Theres no comparison...I saw Woolie Reitherman a couple of weeks ago before the night of the Academy Awards, and he had a story to tell us. I don't remember what the story was, but it was so crude, so stupid, I don't care how dirty a story is if its humorous. But this was just dumb, just stupid. The sort of thing high school kids tell to each other. Thats the mentality.

J.C.: He worked on the dinosaurs in Fantasia?

A.B.: Yeah. It was not bad.

J.C.: But it was dinosaurs. He did the whale in Pinocc?

A.B.: He did part of the whale. The most important scenes of the whale were done by Bill Tytla. That's true, and Woolie keeps getting credit for it.

J.C.: What scenes? Where he woke up?

A.B.: I can't tell ya...(it) probably was Bill. Wherever there was any warmth or personality, you can rest assurred that was Bill. Woolie did some very good things. For instance, he and Bill Roberts did the Clock Cleaners, the Goofy things...no, I didn't. I had nothing to do with that. I only worked on three or four Goofy pictures. And then it was passed onto other guys. The "How-to" series I had nothing to do with that, and I'm dam glad I didn't.

J.C.: Are you a collector? Cels, drawings?

A.B.: No. No. Nothing. The only collecting I've done are random caricatures that I've made through the years... I saw T. Hee, too, recently, about a week ago. He's sort of semi-retired, so on. He wants to be the garlic king of America, he has 2½ acres of garlic, he hsa chickens, I think; black Angus chickens or something (laughter). This is something new...this again is not for publication. T. Hee's caricatures are intelligent, well-drawn but they're cold. The best caricaturist there was Aurie Battaglia...yeah, he's been through the mill I know.

J.C.: Why did you draw yourself like that? (REFERS TO PIC IN ASIFA BOOK)

A.B.: This is the Cobbler...

J.C.: You're taller than I expected.

A.B.: That's because I've been in traction twice a day.

J.C.: I have a couple of things to show you about Bill. (SHOWS PHOTOS)

A.B.: You know his stuff was so dynamic. Nobody has ever approached the vitality that he has gotten into, or the tenderness, his...
(END TAPE TWO - SIDE TWO)

After taping, talk continued for another half hour. Subjects touched on: Les Clark and Art going to L.A. burlesk to film Eddie Collins, comedian, with a noisy movie camera. For Dopey study. Also took some shots of the girls "for educational purposes". Almost thrown out because of noisy came
Les was "never really appreciated" by Disney. He did some wonderful thin
Art still remembers a Clara Cluck recital that was a "masterpiece".

Art says they were called supervising animators because "we supervised ou own live-action tests". Recalled working with Christian Rub for Geppetto. He kept hamming up a tender scene (taking Pinoc to bed?) Finally Rub blew up: "I've been doing it this way for 40 years!" Art, in front of large sound stage crowd: "And now you're going to do it the right way!" Rub did

Art mentions he has live-action footage used for Dance of the Hours study. Claims this was an example of the "right use of live-action" as caricatur

I question how you show or get weight into a character and his action. Art responds by demonstrating a man pitching a bale of hay. "Hay is made up of little strands of straw overlapping each other...if youbget some resistance in the thrust of the pitchfork, and maybe make it bend a little as you pull upwards, then the release as the hay goes over the shoulder, that gives you the feeling of weight." Art demos a man picking up a pebble;and a hugh boulder, crouches down, knews bent, sweet, strain to to Example of balance, too.

Art demos several variations of a walk by just exaggerating the cross-over of a step. "Here is how almost every animator does a walk." Art walks across room, very dull walk, no personality. "Now if you cross the legs a little more over each other, it becomes more interesting." He does and it does. "Now if you do it some more, it can become drunken. And here it becomes feminine. Now if you add a little lift and kick, you've got this...any little thing, a turn of the head, the arms, the hands, all can make your walk different and interesting. Take those black dudes, with their shoulders high and stiff, and their arms dangling and they walk..." Art does double-bounce step.

Art repeats he is"scared to death"about starting the new project. Says he will try to do his book. Returns to the coast Saturday.

BABBITT:

2 Punched Nerve Disks in Neck.

from traffic isle accident in London Truck grazed him — "I was a bloody mess."

Old Age — In Traction at home