We've had such enthusiastic reaction to the various reminiscent stories about the animated cartoon business, written by I. KLEIN for CARTOONIST PROfiles, that we're publishing here the first of several installments of a new article that Kleiny has written about his experiences with CHARLES R. BOWERS, the pioneer producer of Animated Cartoons.

In previous issues of our magazine, Klein, the longtime animator and New Yorker cartoonist, has written the 'Mighty Mouse' story, 'At the Disney Studio in the 30's', 'The Golden Years at Disney's—featuring Bill Tytla', 'Memories of Milt Gross', etc.

Pioneer Animated Cartoon Producer CHARLES R. BOWERS

by I. Klein

When Charles Bowers died in November of 1946 the following obit appeared in New York's Herald Tribune:

CHARLES BOWERS DIES; PIONEER IN FILM CARTOONS.

Jersey Writer, Director and Producer's Career Began at 6 on a Tightwire.

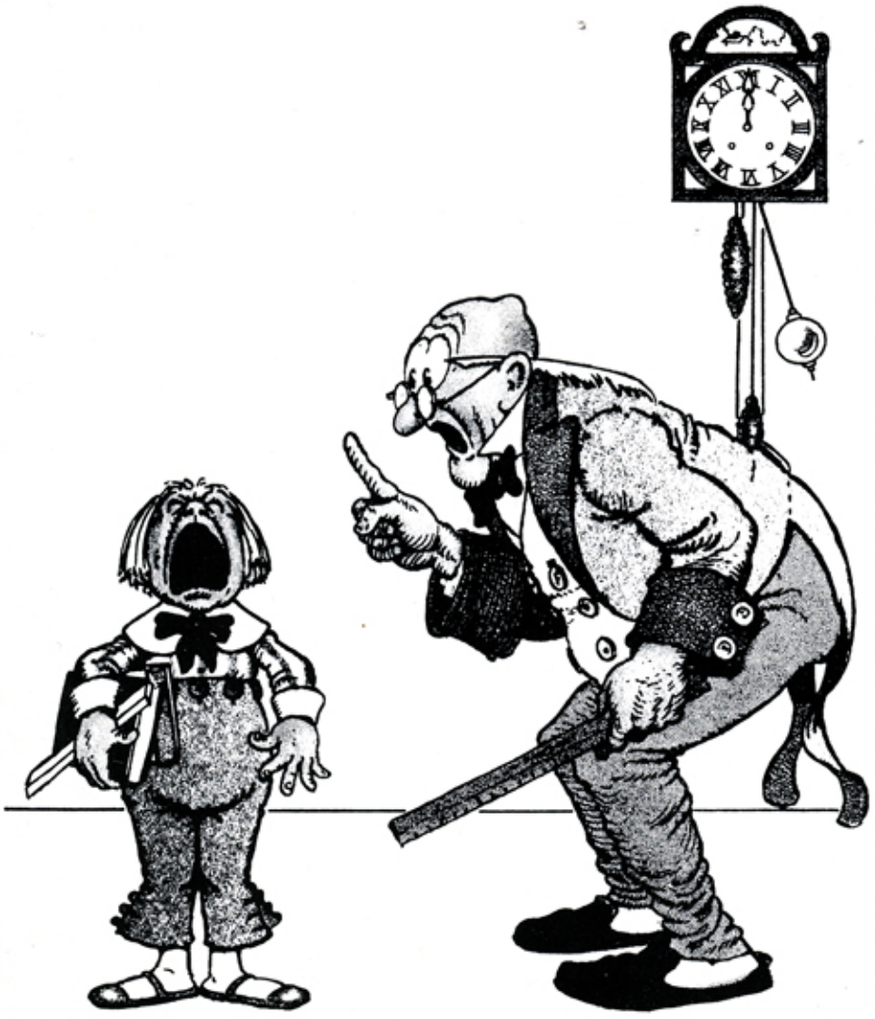
POMPTON LAKES, N.J. Nov. 26 (1946). — Charles R. Bowers, fifty-seven, a pioneer in the field of animated cartoons and at one time a wealthy producer of motion picture comedies, died Sunday at St. Joseph's Hospital, Paterson, New Jersey, after an illness of five years. His home was in Pompton Lakes.

Mr. Bowers was born in Cresco, Iowa, and started in the career of amusing his fellow man by appearing in a tightwire act in a circus at the age of six, and in the next twenty years he played in the circus, in stock companies, painted signs, designed posters and painted murals.

He became a cartoonist for "The Chicago Tribune" and "The Chicago Star", then went into the field of animating cartoons, and was one of the founders of The Animated Motion Picture Corporation. He animated the ancient

The animation drawings on these pages were first printed in 'The Bowers Movie Book' (Book 1-Mother Goose), and copyrighted in 1923 by Harcourt, Brace & Co. Inc., New York.

Paired up with this first drawing, shown below, is another one involving the same characters on the following left-hand page. By flipping the two pages back and forth, you'll see the animation.



A díller, a dollar,
A ten o'clock scholar,
What makes you come so soon?
You used to come at ten o'clock,
But now you come at noon!

cartoons of "Mutt and Jeff" and the "Katzenjammer Kids".

Then he went into the field of writing, directing, producing, photographing and acting in what were called novelty-type comedies, as principal stockholder of the Charley Bowers Comedy Corporation.

The titles of his ephemeral productions are not impressive, but people laughed at them: "He Couldn't Help It." "Now You Tell One." "Many A Slip." "Say A-ah." "Whoosit." "The Valiant Rider." and "You'll be Sorry."

Mr. Bowers worked prodigiously. He turned out illustrated books for children, writing the text and making the cartoons himself. He lived in Wayne Township N.J. for eight years, and did cartoons for "The Jersey City Journal."

In 1941, when he became seriously ill, he was not able to keep up with the commitments of his contracts, and he could not find an artist or writer to do them for him. He taught his wife, Mrs. Winfred Leyton Bowers, to do some of the work — she learned to draw so well that her work is now on exhibit at the Pompton Lakes library — but the contracts lapsed.

His wife is his only survivor.

The above obituary is a bare outline of this very colorful man's life. I can add something to his history from my own association with Charley Bowers . . . that is what this article is about.

I covered my first job at an animation studio in a previous article. That job lasted from about early April until July 6th of 1918 when the studio, Hearst's International, folded. With that studio closed, my budding cartoon career as an animator came to an abrupt end. At least it seemed that way. I was left in midsummer without a job. Instead of looking around for other work, I just mooned around still under the spell of the film magic. Then through some chance encounter I found out about another studio way up the line near Bronx Park, called Barre-Bowers Animated Cartoon Studio. Also called The Mutt and Jeff Studio. So two weeks after my seeming finish as an animator I was on my way to far-away Bronx. It was a long trek from Newark, New Jersey.

On the studio door was the name Barre-Bowers, Mutt and Jeff Studio. I believe the name of the creator of Mutt and Jeff, Bud Fisher, was also on the studio door.

Now I am ready to open the door and enter the studio. But let me go back a bit. I jumped in one leap from Newark to what I just called the Bronx. This section of the City was called Fordham. To get there involved a long ride up the old, now long demolished, Third Avenue Elevated line, (the EL) to its last stop, Fordham Road, Bronx Park. Fordham University was within walking distance. We were far from Seventh Avenue and 49th Street, in the heart of the theatrical district where Hearst International studio was located. No high-rise buildings were on 190th Street and Webster Avenue. The studio was in a long, low building called Fordham Arcade Building. A row of stores with one floor of offices above. The architecture was bastard Moorish. Its entrance was on Webster Avenue. An arcaded passage-way ran through from Webster Avenue to Decatur Avenue in the back. Part way in the arcade to the left was a narrow stairway running parallel to the wall which then turned into the building. There was a street number, the one I had written down, on the wall at the foot of the stairs.

Up the stairway I went, then along a long hallway. There were several doors along the way. One had the name I was looking for, "Barre-Bowers, Mutt & Jeff Studio. Bud Fisher." (As I remarked above.) The name "Bowers" sounded familiar to me. There had been an editorial cartoonist on the "Newark Evening News" by that name. That connection merely passed through my mind as I was about to turn the door knob. I opened the door and walked in.

I found myself in a space separated from a very large room by a low railing with a gate. I walked to the restraining barrier. The room had rows of now familiar animation desks, with people sitting at the desks, working. Mostly men, though there were several girls. It seemed that everyone at the desks looked up at me as I opened the studio door.

Though this was a sunny day, the room was in a twilight gloom. This dimness was due to the green paint which covered the studio windows. A glow of light illuminated a face here and there from the animation boards. One of the men arose from his seat and came forward. His name I learned afterwards was Dick Friel; full name Richard McShay Friel. He was a tall, dark haired chap, rather good looking. He asked what I wanted. I answered that I was looking for a job. I told him I had been working at Hearst's International until that studio folded up. He asked what I did. I hesitated for a moment, then replied I was an animator. Friel asked me to wait and retreated to somewhere far in the rear. In a short while he came forward with another fellow. It was Burt Gillett.

Burt Gillett years later was to direct "The Three Little Pigs" for Walt Disney. He was on the animation staff of Hearst International and had been bounced out together with the rest of us two or three weeks before, with the abrupt closing of that studio. (He told me afterwards that he had rushed up to Fordham the same afternoon of the shut-down and got himself placed right away.) Burt Gillett confirmed that I had worked at the business. He asked me to wait while Friel returned to his animation desk. Burt walked to another room on one side of the studio. He remained inside for a few minutes then came out; beckoned me to go into that room. I did.

In the room which I entered a man was sitting behind a desk. He was a thin man with a mop of brown curly hair, parted on one side. He had a thin nose, slightly flaring nostrils, rather large eyes with heavy lids. His face narrowed down to his chin. He wore pinch-nose eyeglasses. The skin of his face was lightly pock-marked. He was Charles Bowers.

The interview was very casual. I felt he allowed me to come in just to be nice. Then he said that he had about all the staff he needed. As I arose to leave I asked if he was the Charles Bowers, editorial cartoonist for the Newark Evening News. He answered "Yes". This was a big moment for me, meeting a great cartoonist. I couldn't help telling him that his work was held in great esteem and I was a great admirer of his cartoons. Mr. Bowers suddenly developed a new interest in me, asking more about my art schooling and more details about my job at Hearst's International Studio. After hemming-and-hawing, Mr. Bowers said he believed there was room on his staff for me . . . not as a full animator, but he would have me do an occasional scene between some other studio work. He told me my salary and that I could start as of then.

Charles Bowers explained that the owner of the studio was Bud Fisher, the creator of "Mutt and Jeff". The studio produced "Mutt and Jeff" animated cartoons for movie houses. The partner in managing and directing the studio was a French artist, Raoul Barre. Mr. Barre was away from the studio at the time. During our conversation I explained to Mr. Bowers that I was in the animation profession only since the early part of that year, that

Photo by Buck Peters

I. Klein holding the National Cartoonists Society 'Silver T-Square'. The inscription reads, 'To I.Klein for his distinguished service and devotion to our Society and our profession. Presented with the esteem and affection of his fellow members, April 22, 1974.'

nevertheless I had done some satisfactory animation at Hearst's International, for Mr. La Cava. I also told him of my art school studying both in Newark, N.J and New York. Then to my surprise he gave me a scene to animate as a starter.

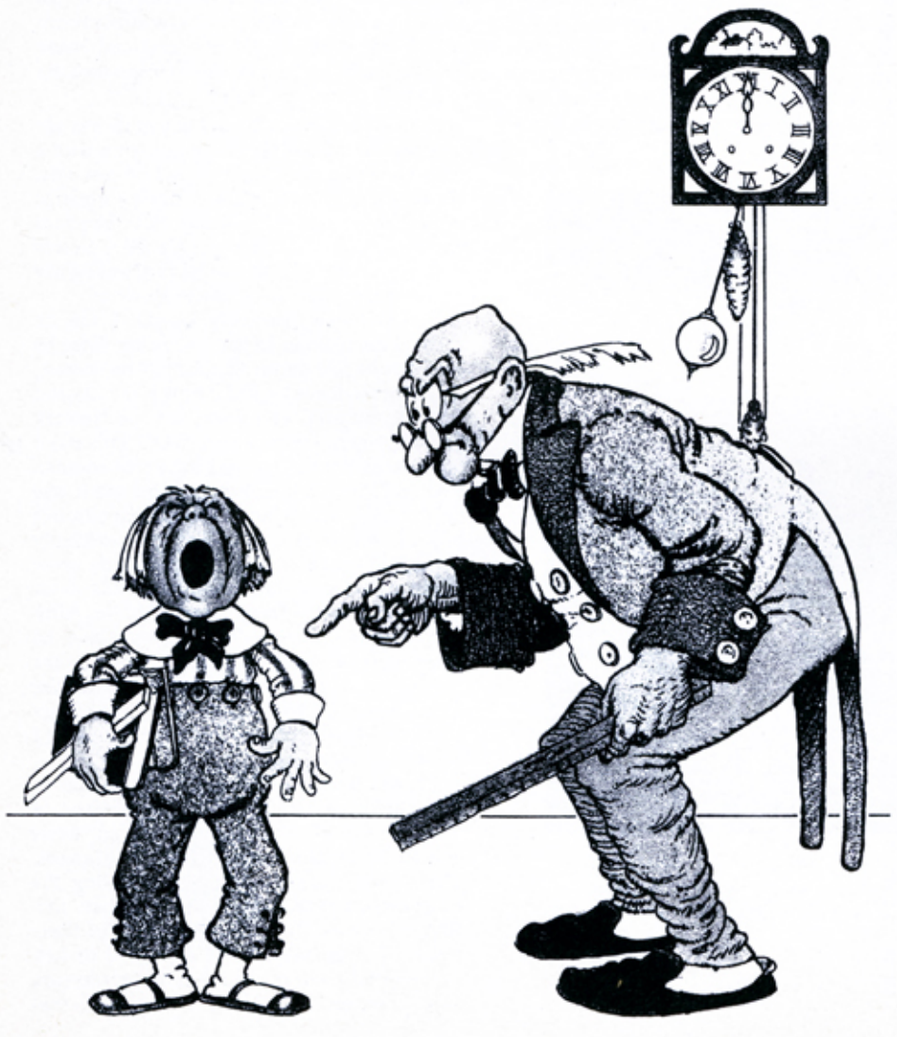
I was given a place at an animation board which was part of a long row of such animators' desks with tiers of shelves for the finished work. The scene assigned to me had a background of a long shot of a tall building. Mutt and Jeff were to run into the scene and up the side of the building, defying the laws of gravity, then across the roof and down the other side of the building and out. When I settled down at my place, Burt Gillett came over, seeing that I got the job. I showed him the layouts for the scene. He gave me some suggestions as to the handling of the action. (This being the pre-sound days, there were no technical problems of matching a sound track.) It was straight-ahead animation.

There were two young fellows to my right at their desks. One of them was lettering a "balloon"—a balloon being a loop of inked line which enclosed the words spoken by the cartoon characters. The balloons were placed under the animation camera, in front of the person who spoke—like in the comic strips. The difference being, the balloons remained on the screen only long enough to be read. The balloons would pop off and the action continued. The young guy doing the lettering was Ted Sears, (later to be an important story man at the Walt Disney Studio). He was about seventeen at this time, a slim boy with light brown hair combed back. He had small eyes that always looked amused, a small turned-up nose, a longish upper lip and a wide mouth.

It took me a little while to become acquainted with all of the staff. When I did, I got to know them better than the people at Hearst International Studio. During the first week Burt Gillett pointed out in an awed whisper one of the animators. He was a stocky, bald headed man who had a perpetual grin on his face as he worked. "That man there . . . he is "Vet" Anderson." I knew the name. "Vet" Anderson was a famous editorial cartoonist of that period. He signed his name "Vet" so that the word looked like a rooster, the letter "V" the tail plume. Every kid who wanted to be a cartoonist knew the work of Vet Anderson. He was a veteran of the Spanish-American war. He left the studio shortly after I started working there.

The studio consisted of a very large main room and three other rooms. The main room was really enormous but only half of it was used. The back half had vacant desks covered with dust. Further to the rear were many cardboard cartons packed with magazine and newspaper clippings from clipping services about our top boss, Bud Fisher. New material came in from time to time to be added to this collection. On his infrequent visits to the studio, Bud Fisher never looked at those printed notices of his fame.

One of the smaller rooms contained the camera stand and the animation camera. Of the two other rooms, one I had recently mentioned — Mr. Bowers' office. Connected to Bower's office through a doorway, was the business office occupied by a fattish man with a black mustache who was the bookkeeper. I don't remember his name. The other person in that office was Grace Ashton, a tall blonde young woman. (She became Mrs. John Foster, one of the early animation pioneers.) One of Grace's chores was making out exposure sheets. Anyone in the animation business knows what the exposure sheets are. If you are not in this particular profession . . . in its simplest form, they are like ledger sheets with all the combination of animated drawings numbered in their proper order and the number of times they are to be shot under camera. (The film is exposed to the light each time it photographs a drawing, hence "exposure sheet".) In those early days of animation, to save time for the animator at this studio, someone was assigned to make out the exposure sheets for each scene after it was animated. Bowers gave Grace Ashton this job. She was supposed to riffle the scene through her fingers to get an idea of the action and then mark down the exposure numbers. She sat in her office, often chattering with a friend as she did her work. Animators often grumbled that their animation wasn't receiving the proper attention. But that was the system and you had to abide by it.



The system in this studio, unlike the method at the Hearst International, was that the animators inked-in their own animation. There was a system of tracing of parts of drawings remaining in fixed positions. Very accurate tracing. Also certain parts of the line-drawn backgrounds had to be traced on the animated drawings. That was done by "tracers". When I had no animation to do, I did some of this sort of tracing. I also operated the camera from time to time, but I'll come back to that as my narration progresses.

The stories for our Mutt and Jeff cartoons were written by Bowers. He also assigned the work to the animators. The most frequent word in his scripts was *ad-lib* . . . Mutt walks into a scene . . . ad-lib . . . meaning that the animator should improvise some funny business at that point. In other words, the stories were only outlines of a general theme. The humor within the scenes depended on the individual animators. Bowers would rough out the background and make some overall sketches of several key positions.

So the stories went into this studio's animation mill. A very noisy mill it was. Everybody seemed to have their noses in their work, but somehow they managed to be talking, whistling and singing. Those noises came from the inkers and tracers and those whose job was to erase the pencil lines from the inked-in drawings. There were also the painter-inners who painted in with black paint the black areas on the drawings such as coats and shoes or whatever. The animator would make a pencil-cross on the drawings where needed. All those were the happy noise-makers . . . male and female. The animators were the quiet ones. Every once in a while an eraser would fly through the air, making a near miss at someone's head. The things that were thrown were usually out of annoyance. Once an alarm clock came flying across the room hitting a side of a desk. Another time there was an exchange of an inker's pen whizzing into another helper's table and a return missile in the form of a large jar of black paint bursting like a black bomb on the side of the pen-thrower's desk. An accurate hit. The clock

was thrown by Dick Friel after an exchange of kidding remarks that gradually became nasty and unfunny. The other fellow, whose name I've forgotten, topped his witticism with a dirty remark about the Irish. Then Friel's smile vanished and the alarm clock made its near hit.

Dick Friel was the studio's top animator. He was Mr. Bowers' first lieutenant in the studio. He was considered a "tough guy" and a brawler outside work hours. There were many stories about those brawls. In the studio he was a hard worker. He was fast, doing more "footage" than the other "Mutt and Jeff" animators. He was the highest salaried animator in the studio.

While on this 'pitching missiles' subject . . . the flying paint jar was also the result of bantering. The jar-pitcher was Frank Sherman. Frank sat in a little alcove, apart from the main room but an extension of the same. His job was chief tracer. He would pick up the scenes from the animators together with the background drawings. By going over the scene carefully, holding the drawings over the animation board light, he would plan the parts of the background to be traced on the drawings. He would also follow the animator's notes and plan the necessary tracing of figures or parts of figures. Then he would hand out the work to the tracers and inkers. Everything was, of course, in stark black and white, on paper. The background was carried on one overlay celluloid rendered in ink.

Frank Sherman was a tall, broad shouldered, red-headed young man. We became good friends after I became settled on this job. He developed into an animator, but his career was cut short in 1934 while eating breakfast with his wife. He died of a blood clot from an injury sustained while playing golf.

On the second or third day of my employment at this Barre-Bowers Studio we saw Bowers leave the studio in a hurry. Everyone, of course, saw him go. Several hours later Bowers returned. It was all very dramatic (ham-actor drama). First, the studio door opened. Bowers stood in the doorway long enough to attract everyone's attention. Then he carefully closed the door. His next move was to put a hand into one of his pockets and produce the studio door key. He flourished it for all of us to see, then he turned and locked the studio door. Beyond a doubt he had the audience in a state of expectant excitement, in fact, scared excitement. He now had us all involved in what seemed an impending catastrophe.

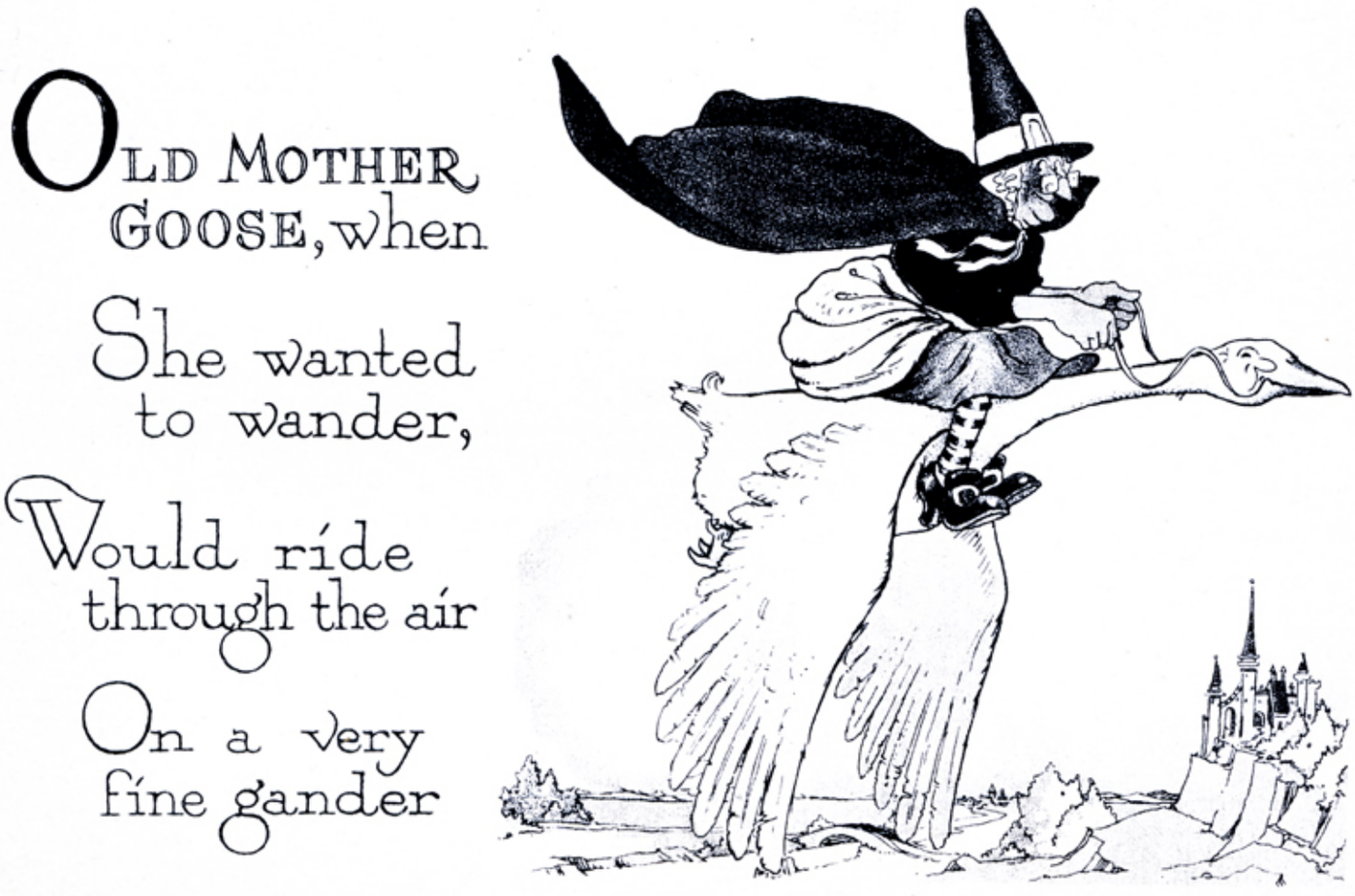
There followed a significant pause. Then in a loud stage whisper: "RAOUL BARRE HAS CRACKED UP . . . HE'S GONE CRAZY THIS AFTERNOON . . . he is on his way up here to wreck the studio and to shoot me dead!" Then Bowers continued: "Barre has withdrawn all the money from our joint bank account . . . all in small bills. He is scattering the money out on the streets and at the same time is waving a revolver and hollering, "I'm going to shoot that crook, Charlie Bowers." Those were Bowers' own words. Bowers then explained that all this was reported to him by a friend . . . that is had happened several hours before . . . that was the reason he had gone out earlier, perhaps to confront and calm down Mr. Barre. There was no confrontation and now he was sure Raoul Barre was a dangerous lunatic.

The studio door remained locked and Charlie Bowers retired to his office. (No one could go out to the lavatory in the outside hall.) Nobody could work, expecting the glass of the door to be smashed any minute and a mad man to come through blazing away with his revolver. An hour or so elapsed. The studio was in a sick room-like-hush . . . A phone rang in the office . . . There was a pause and then Bowers came out and announced that we were out of danger. Mr. Barre had been captured by the police without a struggle.

I never did meet Mr. Barre. He was a very early pioneer in the animation profession. I was told by Otto Messmer, also an early animation artist, that Raoul Barre invented the use of celluloids in the process of animation. Or, at least introduced it to this country. Someone else took out the patents and got the credit.

As the story was told to me, a Frenchman came up to one of the few animation studios in New York City . . . the year was around 1915. He showed the cartoon producer the transparent celluloid. The idea was to ink the figures on the celluloids with the background showing through the "cels". (Actually the celluloids were used only in a limited way to begin with. The cels were too thick. It wasn't until a fine gauge celluloid was manufactured that these transparencies could be used all the way.) The Frenchman was Raoul Barre. He got into a partnership with Charles Bowers sometime before I joined the studio. He was "put away" as the saying goes, after the wild action of his that I have just related. He was released after a period of time and gave up animation to become a commercial artist.

I wish I could recall all the names of the Bowers staff who were there at the time. Some of them I continued to work with in other studios as time went on. Others dropped out of sight. I have already mentioned Dick Friel, Burt Gillett, Ted Sears, Dick Huemer, Frank Sherman. There was also Lubotsky, Helen Kroll, Renzi, Frank Nankerville and his daughter Edith. Edith helped the cameraman. I can't remember the cameraman's name. I do recall that he was elderly, tall, seamy faced, and had previously worked at something quite



foreign to animation. He had been a railroad conductor for forty years. Also on the staff was Manny Davis, F.M. Follett, Albert Herter, Dick Boyle and George Stallings. He was the George Stallings whom I worked with at my first job at animation at the Hearst International Studio. I had mentioned "Vet" Anderson who was "just passing through". F.M. Follett, an early animation pioneer, had experienced a brief day of "glory" with a short-lived comic strip, "The See See Kid". That "day" was somewhere around 1905. He was the only white haired man in the studio.

There was no clock in the studio. There were no bells or other signals to tell us when it was lunch time or quitting time. But everyone got up promptly at twelve o'clock and at six in the evening. It did not take me long to catch on. The time signal came from Albert Herter. Albert would look at his watch, put it back into his vest pocket, reach for his hat and coat and head for the door. Then a scraping of chairs, shuffling of feet and the studio would be emptied. Albert Herter's watch was always correct and Albert was always prompt. The same Albert Herter was called to join the Disney Studio in the early 1930's at the strong recommendation of Ted Sears. He took part in designing the seven dwarfs in the Disney cartoon feature "Snow White".

Albert Herter was the only real artist in the Charles Bowers Studio. He had studied art in Switzerland and in Germany. He was a Swiss-German with a German accent. He must have been around forty years old at this time . . . blond hair parted in the middle, deep-set eyes, pleasant smile. I think he was of medium height. I soon learned to accept Albert as the authority on Art. His description of the vivid colors of Vincent Van Gogh's paintings, accompanied by rapid sketches of the compositions was enlightening. So were such sketches, dashed off, on the art of the German penman-draftsman Heinrich Kley. Albert's personal style was influenced by Kley. I think he talked more to me because he knew I had several years of art school studying by that time, which was more than any of the other young guys in the place had. He could be caustic as when one of the boys showed Herter a sketch he made and asked: "What is wrong with this sketch?" Albert glanced at it and observed: "Vot's wrong with this picture? Noddings is right vitt it."

When some realistic animation was required, it was done by Herter. Despite the fact that animation was still a new art or profession at this time, it had already become set in rigid patterns as to how to animate a walk, a run and other forms of motion. The reason for this I believe was that the animators had little or no real art training so that their draftsmanship was very limited. They learned a series of set formulas at which they became proficient according to their individual abilities. Herter was an exception. His greater ability as a draftsman gave him wider scope. However, the work done by the average animator was satisfactory, or so it seemed at that period.

From time to time Mr. Bowers asked us to work overtime. (No extra pay in pre-union days.) If the boss was around, some work would be accomplished, otherwise the evening was spent working out some practical joke or form of horseplay. One night, about six or seven of us were asked to stay for the several hours to catch up with the lag in animation footage. We all went out for dinner (fifty cents allowed us for the meal). When we returned in about an hour, our boss was gone. We started off at our animation, then someone got a bright idea. I think it was George Stallings. He took a cardboard and cut a stencil the shape of the heel and sole of a shoe. By using the stencil as a guide, Stallings chalked out a footstep on the floor, then another step and a third. We all watched and quickly joined the game. More stencils were cut out and we all got busy chalking footsteps. The steps wandered all over the place, up the walls, into the office of Grace Ashton and the fattish man with the mustache, right over the desks and into Mr. Bowers' office. Someone spent at least an hour and a half stenciling steps across the large room, out into the hall, into the men's room ...lots of steps in the men's room and back into the studio. George Stallings (six foot four inches tall) with his long arms and the help of a chair, stenciled footsteps up walls and around the ceiling. Next morning the studio was in a hilarious uproar at the sight of this practical joke. When Mr. Bowers came in later in the morning, he had already seen the stenciled footsteps in the hall, he said not a word . . . just surveyed the mess, and walked into his office. Then we heard Grace Ashton's voice: "Mr. Bowers . . . did you see it? They've even footmarked my room and my desk." She was answered with a great laugh from our boss . . . a continuous laugh, then he said: "Grace, this is a cartoon studio. It's to be expected."

I continued my two hour commutation each morning and another two hours for my return trip. After several months I told my parents that the four hour trip each day was too strenuous, that I must move into New York near the studio. I added that I would continue contributing from my salary towards the family income as I had been doing. However all this would depend on getting a raise in salary to cover my New York room rent. The next day I went in to see Mr. Bowers in his office. I told him what I had told my father and mother. He said: "Sure, that's no problem. Find a room for yourself, tell me the amount and I will add that to your weekly pay. In fact, I noticed some signs on the apartment houses on Decatur Avenue, the street in back of the studio, advertising rooms for boarders." I soon got myself a nice bedroom. I rented it from an elderly lady whose youngest son had been drafted into the army.

Mr. Bowers was as good as his word. He added the amount I paid for my room rent to my salary. He even came up to look at the room to see that I was not cheated. (Or that he wasn't cheated?)

At the studio, Ted Sears would talk to me about a fellow by the name of Milt Gross who had been drafted into the army. He had worked at this studio and some other animated cartoon studios before the army took him. This is the same Milt Gross who some years later became famous for his comic strips.

Because of the war going on, World War One as it is now called, our Mutt and Jeff pictures often had war themes. One such cartoon showed how Mutt and Jeff captured the German Kaiser. It was in this animated cartoon, or another war subject, that a number of scenes were about a fake peace conference set up by enemy agents. The conferees on the Allied side consisted of President Wilson, Lloyd George, the French leader Clemenceau, and other important Allied statesmen. The trick was that all of these great men were wax dummies made by the German spies. Mutt and Jeff caught on to this fakery, so that at the proper moment they proved these figures to be dummies by knocking off their wax heads with vigorous swings of hefty clubs.

Since the Allied leaders' faces and figures had to be realistic, the drawing and animation was assigned to Albert Herter. Herter did a good job of it. All the faces were easily recognizable. They looked like the real thing on the screen when shown to the staff at a screening at the studio. President Wilson's head and the other heads flew off the characters' shoulders with each whack of the swinging clubs. Some of the fellows started to kid Herter about those scenes. They pretended to be serious: "Albert, you might get into great trouble with our government, knocking off the heads of all them Allied leaders. You speak with a German accent . . . We know you are Swiss, but will you be able to convince the police you are not an enemy German alien." He answered: "Go away . . . those were wax dummies I animated . . . not the real people. I know you are making jokes with me."

Several days later a surprising thing happened. By that time I had moved down to East 23rd Street in Manhattan in a studio apartment with several other young artists. Mr. Bowers, knowing the location of my new living quarters, would ask me at times to pick up a can of motion picture film for shooting our cartoons, at Breulatures's, on 32nd Street off Fifth Avenue, on my way to work. He made such a request on that particular morning. I got the film after the film place opened at 9 a.m. Then I strolled up to Grand Central Station on East 42nd Street to take the subway uptown. As I was walking through the huge station, I heard my name called. I turned. There stood Albert Herter. I was startled to say the least. What was Albert Herter doing downtown on a work-day at ten in the morning. He greeted me by saying: "Do you know what has happened?" My heart sank. The studio must have burned down during the night. He answered his own question. "I am going to California now. I sat up all night thinking should I go or not go. I decided I should." He reached into his pocket and pulled out his California train ticket. It was an accordion-

folded string of tickets which unfolded from his hand down to the ground. "Tell Mr. Bowers I'm sorry to leave him without notice. Say goodbye to him and to everybody." We shook hands, good bye, I wished him luck. I did not see Albert Herter again until the mid-1930's when I joined the staff of the Walt Disney Studio. He had been working for Disney for a while previous to my joining that studio. I must add that Herter said nothing to me as we parted about that head-knocking-off animation of his.

Upon my arrival at the studio, I went into Bowers' office. I told him about Herter. He was thunder-struck. He had me repeat my encounter in detail. He couldn't believe it. Herter was irreplaceable . . . so it seemed at the moment.

When I came out into the general bull pen I announced: "Listen. Albert Herter has just quit. He has left for California." General consternation. Also, unbelief. I recited all the details of my accidental encounter down at Grand Central Station. Everyone agreed that Herter ran scared because of that animation sequence. Perhaps. Unpredictable things happen to some people's thinking during war hysteria.

While all the talking was going on after my "report", there was one young fellow who remained uninformed and puzzled. He was one of the tracers. He was stone deaf. He could do a certain amount of lip reading, but the talk was too scattered for him to follow. He grabbed Dick Friel by the arm and asked what had happened. Dick turned and saw who had asked the question, so without hesitation he answered so that the deaf man could read his lips: "Albert Herter died last night." Quickly adding, "We're collecting from everybody for flowers to send to poor Albert's funeral." Friel held out his hand and received a quarter from the deaf boy, Hesler, who was in tears. Others pretended to give money to Dick. Then Dick Friel added some money of his own and sent out for ice cream cones. (Five cents each in those days.) In a short while the ice cream cones were passed around. Hesler received one, much to his astonishment.

Albert Herter was missed, but the studio continued to operate as usual.

Raoul Barre, Bowers' ex-partner, recovered from his "nervous breakdown" and was released from the institution where he had been confined. He never returned to the studio. I never had the opportunity to see Raoul Barre, which I regret very much.

The boss behind the scene was Bud Fisher, the creator of Mutt and Jeff, our studio's animation character. He had been overseas in some capacity related to the war, military or civilian. Now that the war was over he'd visit the studio once in a while. On those occasions he always arrived with two tall show-type girls. Never with the same two. He'd stroll around the studio with his hat on, thumbs in the armpits of his vest, the girls holding on to his elbows, his head tilted back in regal fashion. From his Olympian Height he couldn't see the hired help.

Bud Fisher had no dealings with the studio workers. Bowers was in charge. We were all paid in cash, in pay envelopes. The business between Bowers and Fisher was carried on by Bud Fisher's lawyer. One afternoon of the s ond summer of my employment, Mr. Bowers rushed out of his office putting his hat on as he went out. He seemed to be in a great hurry. Naturally, everybody was aware, all heads turned in the direction of the studio door. Then a buzz of conversation followed

Albert Herter displays his railroad tickets as he prepares to leave for California.

The dialogue balloon animated up, remained long enough to be read, then exploded or whirled away. While it was held, only the character's mouth animated in a simple 3 drawing cycle with no attempt to form words or syllables, as was necessary later when sound came in.

. . . what th'heck is going on, everyone asked his neighbor.

Just as the buzzing was dying down, the door opened again. In walked, not Bowers returning, but Bud Fisher's lawyer followed by Dick Friel. They walked into Mr. Bowers' office. Shortly after, each employee was called in, one at a time. In due time, I was asked in. The lawyer was sitting at Bowers' desk. Dick Friel was behind him. They both smiled at me. The lawyer asked what was my salary. I told him. The amount was written down. He thanked me, said that was all, and the next employee was called in.

The studio was buzzing with excitement and surmises. What could it all mean? We found out soon enough. Dick Friel had double-crossed his boss, Charles Bowers, by informing on him to Bud Fisher. The behind-Bowers'-back information was that Charles Bowers had been padding the payroll. In other words, Bowers' list of employees' salaries as given to Bud Fisher's office was higher than what the studio staff was receiving. The charge was that Bowers pocketed the difference. How Dick Friel became aware of this trickery, I never found out. The questioning routine proved the charge to be true. The motive on Friel's part was to dislodge Bowers from his top job and for himself to take over. He was successful. Bowers was sacked and Dick Friel took over. The trap was set up in a real conspiratorial fashion. Friel did not return to work after lunch. He met with Bud Fisher's lawyer outside the studio by pre-arrangement. They went into a nearby drug store where there was a clear view of the studio's entrance. Dick then telephoned the studio and spoke with Bowers in a pained and groaning voice saying that he was badly hurt in an accident and that he was in a downtown hospital . . . St. Vincent's in Greenwich Village. He must have put on a convincing act, judging by the way Charlie Bowers dashed out of the studio. The conspirators saw Charlie hail a cab and get into it. Then the questioning of the employees followed. When Bowers returned from his wild goose chase, he was promptly fired by Fisher's lawyer. (I wondered at the time what salary I was supposed to be receiving.)

Friel was now the head of the studio. Bowers' name was scratched off the studio door. Only "Bud Fisher, Mutt & Jeff Studio" remained. Dick, together with some of the older animators cooked up the story plots. Otherwise things continued as before. However, a man by the name of Mr. Pincus appeared at the studio. At first irregularly, then almost daily. He would walk around, look over people's shoulders, make remarks which showed his complete ignorance of the animation business. In no way did he interfere with production. Mr. Pincus was there, we quickly learned, representing The William Fox interests. Mutt and Jeff animated cartoons were a William Fox release.

Well, Charlie Bowers was not as easily buried as it at first appeared. ●

(CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE)

Pioneer Animated Cartoon Producer CHARLES R. BOWERS

••Part Two••

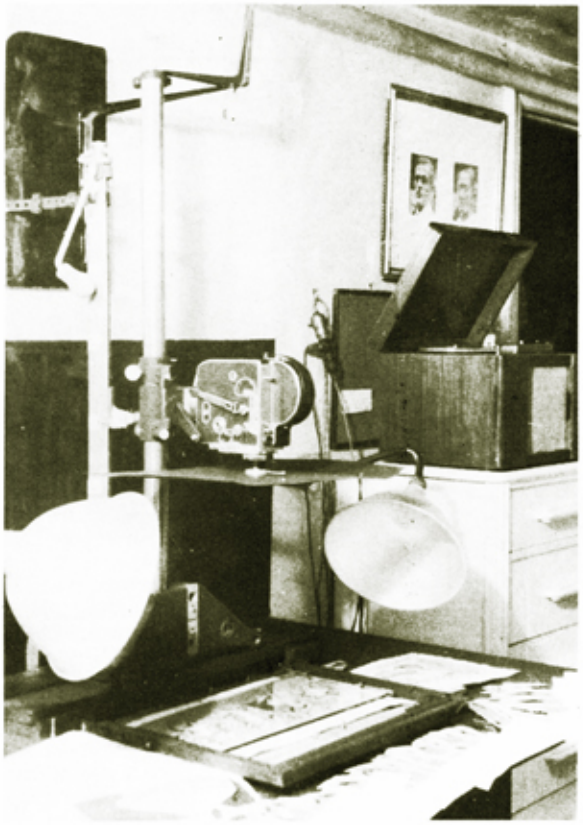
by I. Klein

This is the second installment of I. KLEIN's reminiscences about CHARLES R. BOWERS, the pioneer animated cartoon producer, and about many of the events that happened during those early years.

In previous issues of our magazine, Klein, the longtime animator and New Yorker cartoonist, has written the 'Mighty Mouse' story, 'At the Disney Studio in the 30's', 'The Golden Years at Disney's—featuring Bill Tytla', 'Memories of Milt Gross', etc.

As we finished the first installment, Bowers had just been fired from the Mutt & Jeff studio by Bud Fisher's lawyer, and his name had been scratched off of the studio door. But it developed that Bowers was not as easily buried as it at first appeared.

Here are some photos of the animation camera stand which I. Klein has in his home studio, and which he uses for shooting his own animated cartoons.



The camera is a Bolex 16mm for frame-by-frame shooting. It is mounted on a Bolex titler set up on a heavy, firm table in a vertical position. This titler was made for shooting titles horizontally. Some adjustments were made on the carriage carrying the camera which rides on two bars.

About a month later Bowers walked into the studio with a story that had been ordered from him. I don't know how that came about. He must have done some fast talking to the right people. Of course his appearance caused a sudden suspension of work and an awaiting to see what would happen next. We knew he was bringing in a story because he stopped near the office door, waving a large brown envelope in the air: "A fresh story! A damned good story!" That he exclaimed in a dramatic voice. After leaving his material in the office, he came out and called me aside. "I'm going to do a series of Mutt and Jeff cartoons directly for Bud Fisher at my own place. I want you to work with me as my assistant. You'll receive your regular salary from this place and I will pay you an additional amount." I was happy to agree. He was sure he would have no difficulty making the arrangements with Dick Friel. But Dick Friel had no intention of allowing Charles Bowers to get a new foothold. This nice arrangement for me was turned down with a loud *NO*.

Several months went by, my personal feelings for the studio left me. When I heard through a friend that there was an opening in the art department of a trade magazine, I went after it and got it. I told Dick Friel I was quitting, he didn't try to dissuade me. Just wished me luck at my new job. We shook hands. I went around saying good bye to the fellows and girls. I believed I was taking a new turn in my career as a commercial artist. This was at the start of nineteen-twenty, around February. About two weeks later, while at work I received a phone call at the office. The call was from Charles Bowers. How he got this telephone number I never found out. He asked me to come up and work for him. I answered that I had decided to change my profession from animator to commercial artist. He then offered me a tempting salary, as an animator. I weakened and agreed to see him in Mount Vernon (N.Y.) where he lived. He gave me full directions on train and locations.

I took a train up to Mount Vernon that evening. I had to walk a distance from the station. The house was in a suburban setting, brightly lit up. Bowers was waiting for me on the porch. This was not his home. It was a country club with a dance going on. Very gay and bright. Music. Many dancing couples. Mr. Bowers led me to a small side room where there were some tables and chairs. On the way he was greeted by some men as we passed. Also on his suggestion we picked up coffee and cake from a long table near a wall. Over this light repast we quickly settled our business. He gave me his home address in this same town. I was to start on the following Monday. Then he walked me to the front porch and I returned to the railroad station.

The waiting room was large, dimly lit and very quiet. Some people were sitting on benches presumably waiting for a train. I sat down, then got up and walked around. I was restless and excited about my new prospects. The train was long in arriving. I felt self-conscious pacing that room. I thought I'd awaken those sleeping people who pretended to be reading. In one corner of the station was an exceptionally large weighing machine.

As I passed that machine I stepped up on it and dropped a cent into the coin slot. Then as the dial swung around to indicate my weight a most tremendous din started suddenly ...it sounded like a hundred tin cans rattling and sledge hammers pounding on a steam boiler. I was nearly shocked out of my wits. Then I realized it was music coming out of the weighing machine to accompany the weight

revelation. Perhaps to cheer you up if you were disappointed with your avoirdupois. I never noticed my own weight as I looked around and saw all the waiting people staring at me. Just then the train pulled into the station.

Came Monday morning, I was up in Mount Vernon again. The address was of a private house. Mr. Bowers introduced me to his wife, an attractive dark haired woman. I was given a tour of the house, upstairs and downstairs and the finished basement. Everywhere were autographed photographs. They were all photos of actors. So I was told as I was shown around, with a further explanation that the house belonged to an actor friend who had rented the place to them.

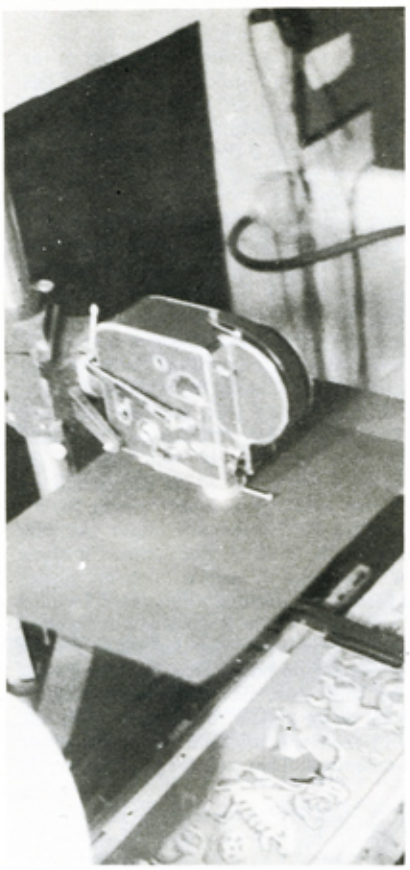
The tour wound up in the finished basement. Two animation desks and chairs were there but it did not look like a studio. There was a washing machine and other domestic apparatus besides a coal furnace. There was also a bookcase well stacked with books and some newspapers. Bowers explained that we are not quite ready to go into production. That he has to go out to attend to some business. I could amuse myself with a book. I picked up a newspaper. Prohibition had become the law-of-the-land about a month before. The paper was spotted with items concerning "The Great Experiment" ... about "bootlegging" and poisonous bootleg whiskey. Bowers returned at about 3 P.M. (his wife had served me a nice lunch). He told me to go home and to return the following morning.

On the following morning I arrived early at the Bowers' home. He went off out of the house as soon as I came in. Before leaving he said he was going out to rent a studio, told me to browse through the books lying around. About noon Mrs. Bowers called me upstairs to have lunch. Mr. Bowers returned just as I finished eating. He had a man with him in overalls. The three of us went down into the basement and on my boss's instructions and with his help, we carried up to the street two animation desks and some cartons loaded with art materials and animation paper. Also two chairs. The moving wagon waited for us in front of the house, horse-drawn. We loaded everything on this vehicle and the three of us sat on a board which served as a driver's seat. The man in overalls took the reins and off we drove.

Our destination was a two story brick building around the corner from the Mt. Vernon (N.Y.) City Hall, just a half block from the railroad tracks, which ran through the city below street level. A bridge, level with the street crossed this railroad gully to Front Street, Mount Vernon's main thorofare. The railroad station was located nearby. The next moving step was to carry all the things up one flight of stairs and along a hall to a room on our left. The room was of medium size with one very large window on the left of the doorway. The view from that window was of another large window across an air space of about five or six feet. We could see an office, a white haired gentleman sitting at a desk and a young woman at a typewriter. It was an office of the Mt. Vernon City Hall. Neither that window, nor ours had window shades. Our "studio" boasted of another smaller room connected by a door with the main room.

After our moving was completed, Mr. Bowers gave the mover five dollars which was a most generous fee at that time for a small moving job. As the man was leaving, Bowers asked him to wait. Then he reached into one of the boxes and took out a bottle of Scotch whiskey. This Bowers gave the moving man as an extra tip. Considering that we were in the beginning of the Prohibition Era, this gift was a grand-stand play. A true Charley Bowerism.

Directly under camera is a cardboard shield, with a dull-black underpart to prevent reflections from the metal trimmings of the camera on the pressure glass below.



When we were alone Bowers called me out into the hall. Directly across from our door was a double door. My boss tried one of the doors ...it was unlocked. We walked in. Before us was a large assembly type room full of chairs facing a speaker's platform. There were banners and pictures on the walls indicating that this was a meeting hall for clubs and lodges. Bowers: "I think we can use a few of these chairs. They will never miss them." So we helped ourselves to a half dozen and carried them into the smaller of our two rooms. The lodge hall also had a smaller room the size of our "large" room. Among other things, this room had several small office desks. One of these desks found its way into our studio, with our help. This desk also "would not be missed."

We had hardly completed our extra moving job when there was a knock on our door. We admitted two women. One was elderly, plumpish and not more than five feet tall. The other was tallish, thinnish and spinsterish looking. They were the owners of the building, mother and daughter. They were interested in our animation desks; each with a pane of glass set in a tilted drawing board. The pilfered office desk and chairs they accepted as our own.

During our moving-in process and the visit from our land-ladies, I could see the white haired man and the typist across the airway. They were busy with their work, never looking into our room. They could see us as clearly as we could see them but they paid no attention to us whatsoever. They ignored us throughout the entire time the studio stayed there; even when the staff was increased.

Now Charlie Bowers opened a box containing scenes from a "Mutt and Jeff" cartoon he had been animating by himself, during the previous weeks. Its title was "Mutt and Jeff" in a "Trip to Mars." The animation was all finished except for a few scenes that were in pencil and needed inking. (Animation in those days was all done on paper. The drawings were not transferred on to celluloids as it is done today. Celluloids were used, but in a supplementary way. The animation was done in pencil and inked directly on the paper.) Bowers told me to ink-in those scenes so the picture would be completed for the camera and then delivered to Fox Films. He had promised to make me a full time animator, but this cartoon had to be finished so he could collect his money. Besides, he did not have a new story ready.

The inking kept me busy for the entire week and part of the following week. I could have been done much sooner but for my boss' entertaining conversation. I had a key to the studio and would arrive promptly at 8:30 A.M., an hour or more before my employer. I would get right down to my inking. When Bowers arrived he always was full of interesting talk. Very often it was some amazing experience he had earlier that day or the day before. Or else it was an exciting anecdote, or a funny joke. All these stories he would tell in the most minute detail. Of course I couldn't work while he was talking. I thought his jokes were hilarious, but his own adventures held me spellbound, even though I was anxious to return to my inking. I knew he had been an editorial cartoonist on the Newark Evening News. He dwelt not only on cartooning but also on his newspaper reporting. How he met on personal terms with Governor Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey before Mr. Wilson became President. Also "Teddy" Roosevelt and other political notables. They all called him by his first name, Charley.

Charley had also been an actor and a high-wire walker in a circus. He had also been a cowboy. Also, if I were to believe him all the way, he was a mystic. Charles Bowers, the physical man could lie on a couch, go into a trance and separate his "astral" body from his material body. His astral body would float up from his physical body and he would see himself lying down below in a sleeping attitude. Since his astral self was invisible, he would sometimes spy on his fellow actors (he had this power only during his acting career days) and later tell those actors some personal things about themselves, much to their surprise.

I finally finished my inking. For the first time I was able to follow his animation. He drew exceptionally well, in a loose cartoon style and his animation was smooth and flowing. He set a good example in his work for a young animator to follow. As I said, "The Trip to Mars" was finished. Bowers had been taking the inked-in animation, as I finished each scene down to the Fordham (Bronx) main studio. There the parts that needed tracing were attended to and the photography on movie film was done there. Later that week, when every scene had been delivered, Bowers dashed into our little studio in a great rage. I had heard him running up the stairs. He swung our door open, stood in the doorway holding a

small roll of film at arms length over his head for a moment, then flung it to the floor, shouting "ITS A DIRTY TRICK!". The roll unraveled into a long belt of celluloid. I picked up one end of the film and held it up to the light of my animation board. At first glance it seemed to be the regular title-format used on the Mutt and Jeff animated cartoons. In the upper left corner was a small profile of Mutt and in the opposite corner, Jeff. Each had their name under their picture. The title as a whole should have read: William Fox presents, Mutt and Jeff by Bud Fisher, in "A TRIP TO MARS". That's what it appeared to be. The single frame of film was only about an inch wide. Then Bowers ordered me to look closer. I did. Now I could see that Bowers face had replaced Mutt's picture and my picture had been put in Jeff's place, of course both were caricatures of us. The title really read: William Fox presents CHUCK (for Charles) and Izzie (Isidore) by Bud Fisher, in "A GYP to Mars." I couldn't keep myself from laughing. But Bowers was mad as hell. This was the first sign that Dick Friel showed his resentment of our Mt. Vernon operation.

I had told no one that I had started to work for Bowers. I had seen none of the fellows since leaving the Fordham studio, but I had received a phone call while Bowers was out, asking for the boss. I said Mr. Bowers was out and gave my name. The voice on the phone said: "Yeh, so it is," and hung up.

Several days after the "Gyp To Mars" title trick on my boss, while I was alone in the studio, the door opened slowly and Bowers' head appeared in the doorway. He had a worried look on his face. "Anybody here with you?" He asked. When I said "No", he came in carrying a large box made of cardboard. Then taking our door key from his pocket, he held it over his head, at the same time opening the door to look up and down the outside hall... to see if he had been followed. Being assured that he was not, he shut the door and locked it. Now he turned to me, saying: "Dick Friel is going to break our arms." Now Mr. Bowers put the cardboard box down on a chair, looked up at me, "Dick Friel doesn't believe you went to work for a trade magazine. He thinks you went to work for me directly, and you have double-crossed him. He is mad at me for making a come-back with the William Fox people ...anyway, he has threatened to bust our arms if he catches either of us on the street alone." While Bowers was talking he untied the string around the box and took off the lid. Inside was a set of boxing gloves. "Nobody is going to bust our arms. We are going to sharpen up on our art of self defense." Then without further ado we pushed desks and chairs against the walls, put on the gloves and started sparring with each other. The white haired man in the office across the airway and his typist continued their work without looking in our direction. (Boxing gloves were familiar to me. My older brother David had bought a second-hand set when I was a kid and we would play at boxing. Dave is seven years older than myself. My kid friends would also play at this boxing game among ourselves with our old gloves. This did not make me a pugilist by any means. But Bowers' skill at boxing was no more than mine despite his tall tales of athletic prowess. So, each morning for about a week, as soon as my boss arrived, the room was cleared for action and we hopped around tapping each other. During that week Mrs. Bowers came to the studio with a tall young man. Bowers insisted that we each spar around for a few minutes with this fellow. We did, without damage to anyone.

The climax to all this warming up for a show-down was nothing at all. Bowers asked me to go down to the Fordham studio. He wanted me to pick something up for him. I went down by train from Mt. Vernon to the railroad station in Fordham. By chance I met Dick Friel on the street. He greeted me with a big smile and a handshake. I don't know and never did find out if the arm breaking threat came from anywhere but Charley Bowers fertile imagination.

After finishing inking "A Trip to Mars" I found myself idle. Bowers hadn't written a new story, he was busy outside making arrangements for an expanded set-up. I decided to try writing a cartoon scenario myself. As I had mentioned several pages back, the Prohibition Era, that is the Constitutional Amendment prohibiting the manufacture and sale of hard liquors, wine and beer, was now the Law of the Land. "Prohibition" was only about two months old but already the newspapers had stories about people making their own concoctions called "Home Brew". Very often the home-made liquor had dire effects on the drinkers. The recipes for home brew, according to reports, included raisins and yeast. I was inspired with an idea. I named the scenario, "Three Raisins and a Cake of Yeast." The plot was that Jeff made a home brew concoction based on a raisin and yeast recipe. Mutt took over the finished product, gulping down a glass full. Result: Mutt had violent reactions, multiple vision and comic hallucinations. That was the gimmick of the story.

After I had written the scenario in full detail and Bowers was still busy with his outside activities, I asked him if I could go ahead and animate on it. Of course I expected him to ask questions and read the story. Instead, he just waved his hand and told me to go right ahead. I did. My boss still spent more time on the outside than in. After I had the animation well under way, one morning he picked up my animated scenes and flipped them throught his fingers. He said: "Good, now tell me what the hell it is all about." I gave him my scenario to read. He chuckled over it and told me to go full steam ahead. Later that week he sat down at his own animation board and animated the last few scenes himself. I inked all of my work and his. The picture was finished and Bowers took all of the picture down to the Fordham studio to be finished and photographed. Several weeks later, I was sitting in a Newark movie house with some friends, when there flashed on the screen "Three Raisins and a Cake of Yeast." "William Fox Presents" and credits to Bud Fisher and Charles Bowers. I turned to my friends ... "That's my story and my animation ... most of it, my animation." My friends said "Oh yeh, where's your name". I started to explain about who gets screen credit, but there were shooshes from people sitting around us. Nevertheless it was a great thrill to see my work on the movie screen and hearing many laughs from the audience.

Just about the time "Three Raisins" was finished, Bowers announced to me that now his studio was really organized and, several animators besides myself will be on his expanded staff. Two are to start on Monday and several others will follow shortly. They were Carl Meyer, known as "Mike" Meyer, F.M. Follett and Ted Sears. Ted was not an animator, he lettered the balloon titles (remember, these were "silent" pictures.) Bowers wrote the stories (most of them). In this small studio room, we looked like a big operation.

Bowers' story plots were based on a simple gimmick with Jeff, the little fellow being the butt of Mutt's schemes. Mutt insuring Jeff against injury for a large sum of money. Then a series of sneaky Mutt plots to severely injure Jeff. Or getting Jeff to box a champion (Stand up and fight the champion for three minutes and win $1,000.) Mutt's schemes always

Camera lights set in reflectors on each side of camera, set back far enough not to be reflected in the pressure glass.
The compound set on the table under the camera is set up for stationary and pan-move pegs, with a pressure glass set in a frame with handle for holding the art work (animation) while shooting.
There's an arrangement for bottom lighting when needed, and an opening cut in the table with opal glass over it. Also included is a guide for zooming-in on various parts of the shooting field. This isn't seen in any of the photos but is attached on the right side of the table.

backfired on himself. The same ideas were often, in later films, both animated and live comedy, used again and again by other film makers.

Bowers continued telling his adventures to his expanded audience. However, he reserved his autobiographic experience when we all ate out together, which was quite often. At the studio we all concentrated at turning out animation "footage".

Bowers did not know that behind his back his crew did not take his adventures seriously. In fact Mike Meyer would really embellish them to a high degree. Mike's version of "Chuck's" (as he always called Bowers behind his back) circus high wire walking act, was that Chuck did his act high over the streets, while the crowd looked skyward, Chuck's "old man" moved through the crowd pick-pocketing the pockets of the spectators. Mike served in the U.S. Navy in World War One. He had done some animation before going into the service. Some years later and for a short period he did sports cartoons for "The Brooklyn Eagle." He was about twenty-six or twenty seven years old at this time which I am telling about. In later years he became a story man for animation for several studios, particularly for Famous (Paramount) animated cartoon studio. He did many of the "Popeye" animation stories.

Ted Sears must have been about sixteen or seventeen at this time. In around 1930 Ted joined the Walt Disney studio where he did important story work. Aside from working on stories for Disney "shorts", he did story adaptation for "Snow White", Pinocchio, Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland, Peter Pan, Sleeping Beauty. Also story work on "Saludos Amigos, "The Three Caballeros", "Fun and Fancy Free", "Melody Time" and "The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad". Ted was bright with a sharp wit.

The third man, F.M. Follett, was much older than Mike, Ted or myself and older than our boss. He was white haired and red faced. He had caused a very slight ripple in the comic strip field around 1900 with a short-lived strip called "The See-See Kid." He had a unique way of animating. In the course of animating a scene, all animators called for trace-backs of parts of bodies that remained stationary through a sequence of several drawings. (All the animated drawings were numbered in their progression.) The animator would write the number called for tracing. Like a shoe from drawing 8, or a hand from drawing 19. A tracer would follow through, making a careful tracing. When an animator flipped a finished animated scene through his fingers he would see the flow of action, and until the tracings were made, he'd see the trace-back numbers popping up at intervals inside the action. However, with Follett, he had contrived a very complicated system of calling for trace-backs, so that the animated drawings had more numbers on them than pictures. He'd call for trace-backs of noses, ears, buttons, fingers, so that in flipping one of Follett's scenes you'd see mostly numbers jumping around erratically and very little flow of action. Nevertheless, when all the tracings were made and the scene shot on film, the Follett animation was rather good.

Two more older cartoonists joined our staff several months later, when summer had arrived. We were all busy at our animation boards on a particularly warm day when we were roused by several hard knocks on our door, which was open. We all looked up. The rapping was done with the head of a cane. We all hollered in unison, "Come in". In came an elegant gentleman in a white suit, straw hat and the cane which he had used for rapping on the door. He was tall, trim and good-looking. White-haired. The white hair came out ducktail from behind his straw hat. He looked like an old time Shakespearean actor. The man stepped into the middle of the room, took off his hat with one hand, with the other he swung his cane to the floor, leaned on it. It was all a theatrical posture. "I wish to see Mr. Bowers", he announced. "My name is Leighton Budd." We told Mr. Leighton Budd to take a seat, Mr. Bowers would be around soon. Bowers did arrive soon after. It turned out that he had already engaged this man as another animator, in fact Mr. Budd sat right down and was assigned some scenes to animate. Leighton Budd had been a magazine cartoonist on "Puck" magazine, defunct even at this time, though the title is still owned to the present day by the Hearst Publications. He was a fair animator. He was also a fine-arts artist but that side of his talents was not called upon by Mr. Bowers.

Our staff was completed shortly after Budd's arrival, with another magazine cartoonist Louis Glackens, also a gentleman type of the old school. I found out later that he was born in Philadelphia in 1866, was a cartoonist for "Puck" for 20 years and did illustrations for important magazines. He was among the very early animators. I might add that he was the brother of the celebrated artist William Glackens. Louis Glackens and President Taft were the only non-circumnavigators of the world who were members of The Circumnavigators Club.

Mr. Bowers had a prankish streak which would come out once in a while. During this particular summer, on a particularly hot afternoon, when we were slowed down by the heat, even though the large window was open and the hall door was open and a fan was whirling, Mr. Bowers called a recess. He pointed to the room across the airway. By this time we knew it to be the office of some official in the Mt. Vernon City Hall. As I had mentioned previously, that was a side-wall of that building. Bowers, in a whisper: "That white haired so'n so and his secretary get my goat. They have never looked our way even once. They act like they are facing a blank wall. They must have noticed that we were doing something interesting ... each of us working at an unusual drawing board with a lighted window. "I'll fix them!" He beckoned us to follow him into the smaller of our two studio rooms. Then gave us instructions.

We were all out of sight from our City Hall neighbors even though the door between our two rooms was open. On the floor of this room lay many books including twenty volumes of an old encyclopedia. We each picked up some volumes of the encyclopedia while Bowers pulled our one big electric fan into the outside hall, close to the open door, but also out of sight of our neighbors. (This was long before the invention of air conditioning. All windows and doors were wide open for air circulation.) As I said above, Mr. Bowers gave us instructions and a cue word. As the electric fan whirled, our boss thrust the pages of a telephone book against the spinning blades of the fan. The resulting sound was of a loud buzz saw cutting lumber. Bowers then shouted in his loudest on-stage voice: "TIMBER!" That was our cue, we all slammed our books flat against the floor. CRASH! This entire farce of buzz sawing, "TIMBER" and slam-downing was repeated several times, each time louder and more deafening than before. Then Bowers calmly walked back into the studio and we all followed. Our white haired City Hall official and his secretary were leaning out of their window staring into our room. We all pretended that they were invisible, but Bowers with his back turned to them went into hysterics of laughter. We all joined him in a much milder way. Then the boss wiped laugh-tears from his eyes, said: "It's too damn hot to work any more. Let's call it a day." BIG DEAL, as we would say nowadays, it was only about a half hour before our regular quitting time.

I think this prank was enjoyed only by the young guys of the staff, Ted Sears, Mike Meyers and myself. The other three "old guys" Leighton Budd, F.M. Follett and Louis Glackens went along with the gag, but grumbled and swore as they picked up the heavy books and dropped them to the floor.

Leighton Budd was a very dignified gentleman. He had a studio apartment on the top floor of a famous restaurant which was then located on Broadway in the East thirties. Leighton lived in that apartment rent-free in payment for the mural paintings he had rendered for this restaurant. Leighton Budd told me this himself. The subject of this restaurant came up one time. Bowers, one day became talkative during work hours. (Since he had enlarged his staff he saved his conversation for table talk during restaurant eating time.) This is what he suddenly said: "There are several restaurants in mid-town that are hang-outs for queers, for fairies. The most notorious is Blank-Blank, naming Budd's patron's place. (I don't know if Bowers named the place out of ignorance of Leighton Budd's association with the place, or purposely. But my guess is that he did it out of another of his prankish impulses.) Well, as soon as Charley Bowers made that statement, Budd jumped out of his chair, waved his arms, shouting: "I beg your pardon sir, but that is entirely untrue! Mr. So-and So is a dear friend of mine and he would not permit such things to take place in his establishment." Bowers: "I hope you're right, but I'm informed that the hottest fairy orgies are regular goings on there, but I apologize anyway." That was the end of that flurry. Leighton seemed pacified. Not long after this, perhaps a week or so later, the boss was out and we were all very quietly working away at our animation when Leighton Budd stood up from his chair, said: "I feel all cramped up and musclebound. I'll just limber up." He did. This dignified gentleman put his arms behind his neck and slowly began to revolve his stomach, then intensifying into twisting and sinuous movements ... a real belly dance. No one said a word. The motions subsided and Mr. Budd sat down and back to his work, the rest of us did likewise.

I mentioned earlier that Louis Glackens was a non-circumnavigator member of The Circumnavigators Club in New York City. Glackens lived in a boarding house in Mt. Vernon while he worked at the studio. One noontime he returned from lunch dressed in a tuxedo suit, stiff, starched shirt and winged collar and black tie. Diagonally across his chest was stretched a broad diplomatic-type of sash. Glackens quickly explained. The Circumnavigator s Club's periodic dinner and meeting was taking place that evening and he had to catch the train directly after he left the studio. He was quite a sight sitting in that outfit of his, working on a Mutt and Jeff animated cartoon. I failed to mention that Glackens was of middle height, plumpish and grey-haired. He left the studio a few minutes before the rest of us, stopped at the door, made a mock bow, saying: "I trust all you plebians will arrive safe and sober at your labors tomorrow at the crack of dawn." ●

(CONTINUED IN OUR NEXT ISSUE)

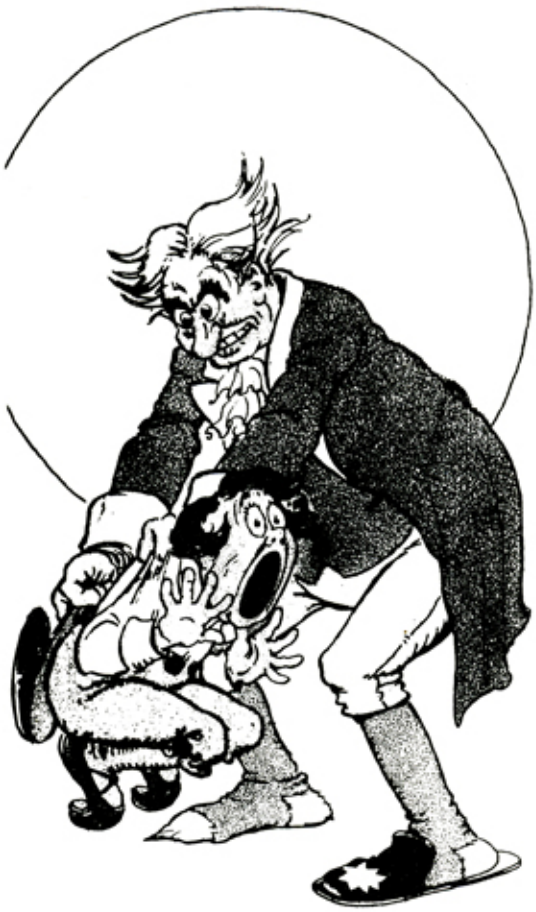
Pioneer Animated Cartoon Producer CHARLES R. BOWERS

••Part Three••

by I. Klein

This is the 3rd and concluding installment of I. Klein's reminiscences about the very colorful pioneer animated cartoon producer, Charles R. Bowers. Rather than recapitulate all that has gone before, we refer you to Issue No. 25, in which the series began, and to No. 26 for the 2nd installment.

When we worked over-time, which we did from time-to-time, Bowers would take us out to dinner at the Mt. Vernon Y.M.C.A. There was a large table which could seat us all. On a wall about fifteen feet away hung a large painting. The subject was of a commemorative nature. A brass plate was attached to the frame. On it, in small etched lettering was a lengthy explanation of the subject matter. The first time we were all having dinner there, Bowers suddenly said: "How many of you can read what's written on that plate under the picture, right here from this table?" We all shrugged off the challenge as impossible. Bowers then asked me to walk over and check the words as he read, sitting at the table. Mr. Bowers read and he was accurate word for word. "Well, fellows," he said, "there is nothing like spending time with your rifle out on the prairies to sharpen your eye-sight to pin-point vision." We all murmured approval, though this was the first time any of us heard that he had spent time with a rifle out on the Western plains. What we were all certain of was that he took the trouble to have memorized the lines, probably copying them down some time previously. That was Bowers the ham actor taking bows.



Bowers was constantly busy with business outside the studio. I'm sure it had to do with financing the weekly pay-roll. Nevertheless he kept us supplied with the cartoon scenarios. One afternoon he turned to me asking me to cook up an idea for a Mutt and Jeff story. He had been too busy, he said to concentrate. I did come up with an idea after rattling my brains around. I might add that Bowers suggested that the theme should be a Western. This "rattling around" in my brain brought up a recollection... a Newark friend had told on the previous week-end that they had a frightening experience at their home. He had been awakened one night by the sound of a foot-dragging sound in the dark passageway outside his bedroom. That foot-dragging, after he listened a while, seemed to be moving into his sisters' bedroom. He picked up a baseball bat, tip-toed into the hall and into the girls' bedroom. Quickly, he turned on the light switch. Nobody was in the room except his sleeping sisters. Clutching the bat, he opened their closet. Nobody there. Then he looked under their bed. There was the intruder... a very small one... it was their cat. One foot was stuck to fly-paper. The cat had been dragging the fly-paper with his stuck foot. That gave me the theme. A Western theme: Mutt and Jeff are fly-paper salesmen out west. They are demonstrating their wares in a dance-hall type of saloon. Then the word spreads that Cactus Charlie, the super-bad man is coming to town. Everybody scatters. The climax of the plot is that Jeff somehow lures the tough guy into a room spread with fly-paper and so thereby snares him in this sticky trap. This fly-paper gag situation was to become a standard animation gag that was even used later in a Disney cartoon.

After I wrote this story out in a loose scenario form, I gave it to my boss. Bowers read it, shook his head, said it was a good little plot but not a typical western. I put it away in my desk drawer. Then, about two days later as he was leaving the studio, he asked me to give him the script. Bowers took it and never spoke of it again. But later that year, I saw my fly-paper story on the screen. It had been animated by the art staff at the Fordham studio. By chance I met Manny Davis, one of the animators at that studio. I told him that I had seen my "western" at a movie theatre. Manny Davis looked surprised, and said: "Bowers brought in that story and we all took it for granted that it was his story." (Manny Davis was one of the early animators. He continued as animator and director of animation into the 1960's when he retired. He never animated for the West Coast studios, only in the East. The greater part of his animation career was with Paul Terry and Terrytoons.)

In the smaller of the two studio rooms Bowers kept his file of business records and also his "morgue". The morgue is a collection of picture clippings for reference. I had an occasion to hunt for something in this file when I came across a full page from the "Jersey City Journal" ...Sunday edition. It was an autobiography of my boss, Charles Bowers, with several illustrations by himself. One drawing was of himself as a boy doing a high-wire act over a city street. I asked Bowers about this page. "This is my true story," he said, at the same time taking the page from me, folding it up and tucking it deep into the filing cabinet. "Y'know," he continued, "I was invited to The Friars Club several years ago, to address the members. My subject was my own adventures and experiences. I felt honored. Well, on that evening I appeared upon their platform and the chairman introduced me in this manner: "Tonight, our guest speaker is no other than Charles Bowers ...the modern Baron Munchausen". I stared at the chairman for a minute, then I swung a punch, hitting him square on the jaw. He staggered back from the blow... he was a big son of a bitch. I stalked off the platform, but the audience shouted no! no! no! So I gave the talk. There was loud applause and this article is the report, word for word of my address."

Bowers had an automobile. In fact he was the only one of our group who owned a car. It was a Hudson Super Six, 1919 or 1918 model. We called it his Hudshun Shooper Shix following the pronunciation by an auto mechanic who came up to the studio, announcing: "Mr. Bowers,' your Hudshun Shooper Shix is all fixed now and ready for shervish." Even Bowers called it from then on by that shish-shish name. Every so often we would all pile into this Hudshun Shooper Shix and Bowers would drive us down to the Fordham Studio to have a preview of one of the "Mutt and Jeff" cartoons we had turned out. The first time we made this trip we found that Dick Friel was no longer there. He had been replaced by Burt Gillett . There were new faces among the beginners. Two of them were

The animation drawings on these pages were first printed in 'The Bowers Movie Book' (Book 1-Mother Goose), and copyrighted in 1923 by Harcourt, Brace & Co. Inc., New York.

Paired up with this first drawing is another one involving the same characters on the following left-hand page. By flipping the two pages back and forth, you'll see the animation.

Manny Gould and Ben Harrison. Ben and Manny were later on to open an animation studio of their own. Later still, in Hollywood they would be directors in Hollywood for the Charles Mintz, Screen Gems, animation studio. Ben Harrison returned to New York City in the early 1940's and was among the first producers of TV animated commercials. Manny Gould remained in Hollywood and to this day in the early 1970's his ability as an animator is still in demand. Ben Harrison's TV animation studio lasted only several years. The reason, I believe was that it was organized along the lines of the theatrical studios with contracts which ran for yearly periods. The TV commercial cartoon business operated from feast to famine. The famine periods quickly consumed the profits of the prosperous months. The studios that came into being for TV cartoon commercials in the early TV years, caught on to this economic problem. They put very few people, if any on staff. They only used free lance workers... very little over-head... but that is jumping way ahead. I was to be associated with Harrison and Gould in the production of many animated cartoons.

"Mutt and Jeff" cartoons such as we saw at the preview at the Fordham studio were made from negatives photographed (shot) on the animation camera stand at this studio. The prints for viewing at theatres were made at the Fox Studio, but the negatives were developed up here in Fordham at the old Edison Studio. That studio was ready to pass out of existence, ready to fold, at the time I am writing about. I must back-track to the time when Mr. Bowers was in charge of the Fordham studio and I had been working there about a year, to tell an anecdote concerning the developing of the negatives.

One day a man came to the studio dressed in a fancy chauffeur's uniform. He walked directly into our camera room and shortly afterwards came out carrying a film can. His next appearance about two weeks later, was in shabby street clothes. Again he walked into our camera room and came out with a film can. I figured that the man had lost his chauffeur's job, but why the film can? I asked Ted Sears who sat next to me. Ted: "Oh him? That's Mr. Hennley. He's the watchman at the Edison Studio a couple of blocks away from here. The studio isn't being used right now, but it has to be kept in order. There are a couple of guys doing that caretaking job. Hennley is one of them... he's mostly a night-watchman there, but he has made some sort of a deal with Mr. Bowers to develop our film for our Mutt and Jeff cartoons. He comes here to pick up the film after it's shot. There are developing facilities at that studio. That man's favorite saying is 'Its a LALLAPALOOZA'."

I said, "I thought he was somebody's chauffeur and then he came in looking like a bum... I remember now that the first time I really saw him, I thought it was a cowboy coming to this place. I didn't connect him with the others... but this cowboy, come to think of it, went into the camera room and came out with a film can. I still don't understand." Ted's answer was simple. Hennley helps himself to suits and uniforms from the studio's wardrobe. It makes him feel important. He never takes those clothes home... in his own clothes he looks like a bum.

From then on I kept an eye open for this "Lallapalooza" of a Mr. Hennley. He did arrive in a variety of costumes, in almost everything except a suit of armour or an Indian war bonnet.

My one visit to the Edison Studio was about two A.M. one summer night, also around that period. Bowers had asked me to work overtime at the animation camera to complete the shooting of the last scenes of the animation just completed. (I was on occasions a cameraman). My instructions were to stay as late as necessary, take the film out of the camera when finished and deliver it to Hennley who would be waiting up to do the developing. Bowers told just where the Edison studio was located, about six or seven blocks away. I got started at seven P.M. (Alone in the place) and finished about 1 A.M. (The negative had to be delivered in the morning). I was plenty wide-awake while I worked. As soon as I shot the last frame I was asleep on my feet. I turned off the camera lights and left the studio. The door locked automatically behind me. Out in the hall I suddenly awoke, remembering my instructions to deliver the film for development processing to Hennley. I had no key to the place. What I did to get back into the place seems fantastic to me now. It was a double door with a glass hinged transom above. The transom was operated from the inside, for opening and closing by a long vertical rod. This transom window was closed. I grasped some part of the door, placed a foot on the door-knob and so lifting myself up to the transom. Balancing myself on the two doorknobs, I pushed against the transom window, forcing the inside bar to bend inwards and thus making space enough for me to climb through and drop down inside. (I was quite slender in those early years.) I took the film out of the camera with a red light turned on, placed it in a film can, taped the edges and walked out firmly clutching the can of film. On my way out I tried to straighten the transom push-up rod without success.

I walked over to the Edison studio. Hennley was sitting on a chair at the studio door. He looked at me as I said: "Mr. Hennley?" His answer was: "It's a lallapalooza... you're here at last." Then he asked me inside, gave me a tour of the place... a huge amphitheatre with several separate interior sets. The whole area was dimly lit. It was uncanny. Hennley then took me to his developing laboratory. That was an anticlimax. Oh yes, he showed me the wardrobe and costume room. There were enough costumes for the man to play around with forever. I got to bed about 3 in the morning even though the place I boarded at was nearby.

I arrived at work at the usual time. Very few of the people noticed the bent transom rod, but Mr. Bowers did. In fact just as he came in. "Hey, what the hell happened here! he hollered. "Looks like some-one tried to break into the place." He then asked me if I heard anything while I was at the camera. I said I was too busy concentrating on shooting to have heard outside noises.

Bowers: "Maybe it was Barre... Raoul Barre, wanting to do me dirt. Must have been scared off when he saw a light in the cameraroom." Then Bowers looked up at the transom again. "Barre could never have squeezed through that narrow space..."

To return to the Mt. Vernon studio. This operation at Mt. Vernon, N.Y. continued for about a year, when suddenly Mr. Bowers announced that we were moving back to New York City, not downtown, but to Fordham, about one mile north of the Fordham studio. That very same afternoon a small open truck, horse-drawn, pulled up to the front of our building ready to do the moving. Without further ceremony, upon Bowers instructions, we all pitched in to load the truck. When we were finished, the truck was piled high with animation desks, chairs, fans, two filing cabinets, lots of books and other paraphernalia. The desk and chairs which Bowers had borrowed from the lodge meeting place across the hall were left behind. When everything that was to go was on the wagon, I went up with my boss for a last look around. While we were so engaged the old landlady and her elderly daughter walked in. They must have seen the truck with all the stuff on it outside, and now they were looking at this bare room. The elderly daughter spoke up: "Mr. Bowers, I must remind you that there is still the matter of the lease." Charlie Bowers did not blink an eye, he simply took them to the smaller room, pointed to the desk and chair:

"You see ladies, I am keeping my office up here in Mt. Vernon. I am just moving my artists down to Manhattan. Bowers walked out and I followed him. I heard the old lady murmur: "Some people have a funny way of doing business."

We all climbed up on the truck among the

studio's fixtures. Only Bowers sat next to the driver. We must have been quite a sight as we drove out of Mt. Vernon. Ted, Mike and I might have been ignored, but not Leighton Budd. It was a cold day, we all wore our hats and overcoats. Leighton Budd was perched on chair at the crest of the pile on an armchair, his lean chin held high, his white mane blowing in the wind, left hand resting on his knee, his hat in that hand, right hand gripping the head of his cane. He was the picture of a French Royalist riding the tumbril on his way to the guillotine, keeping his cool.

Glackens and Follett sat at a lower level near Budd. Glackens smoking his pipe, leaving a trail of sparks... more sparks than smoke. The pipe stayed lit for about a minute and went out. Glackens kept re-lighting it, letting the half extinguished wooden matches fall as they may. It was a wonder that the whole wagon load didn't go up in flames. It was most fortunate we did not carry celluloids. The "cels" used in animation at that time were highly combustible. This transfer of location took place just about a year after Bowers and I settled in the small Mt. Vernon studio.

The moving wagon followed the route used by our boss when he drove us in his "Hudshun Shooper Shix" to the Fordham studio, but we turned off at on Mosholu Parkway and Webster Avenue, about a mile north of that studio.

The new studio was a two-storied building. The second floor covered only half of the ground floor. It could be called a deep balcony. We reached this upper floor by two short narrow stairways. There was a closet for our coats and hats at the head of the first stairway. The animation studio occupied only this balcony. The main floor was to be for real actors. Bowers had some scheme for plastic puppets to be combined with live people. This could not be called a sound stage since we were still in the "silent" period. It was to be a separate enterprise from the cartoon animation. There were several laboratory work rooms branching off the large studio area.

We lost no time getting back to work as soon as the desks were put in place. It was sort of funny with all of us cramped on the balcony room while the large studio room remained vacant. Bowers was out of sight most of the time. He was mostly busy in his laboratory rooms. At that time he had no other people working for him except ourselves and a caretaker named Oscar Limback, (or Limbick.) He was a retired seaman. He smoked a pipe on and off. When he was through smoking he was careful not to leave his pipe any old place. He would go up to the closet between the two stairways leading to the balcony and put the pipe away in his coat pocket. This was cause of some brief excitement. We were there working away at our animation when one of us smelled smoke. Smoke was coming up from the stairs. We all ran down the upper steps. Smoke was coming from the closet. Opening the door, there was Oscar's coat with smoke and small flames coming from his pocket. The coat was pulled out and stamped upon. Oscar joined us from below. He only looked sad. Then Bowers joined us. He was told what happened. Instead of getting mad he handed Oscar a five dollar bill and told him to buy a new jacket... second hand.

There was a small sequel to this incident. Bowers didn't know how well voices carried from below up to our location. The day after this near-fire Bowers was below with his wife and several other people. He was explaining things... up above were his animators ... he'll have to relocate them... he told how we were trapped by a fire from that closet and how we were in a panic... the closet was in flames... he dashed up the stairs with a bucket of water and splashed out the blaze... the fellows had to go home in damp coats... it served them right because the pipe belonged to one of us animators.

As I have remarked, Bowers spent most of his time in his small laboratory rooms. He not only did his plastic puppet thing there but also wrote our cartoon stories.

One day we did have some action on our movie production area. Bowers called Oscar to move in the big lights, which he did, and also set up a motion picture camera. The reason for this activity was a test made on an actor Bowers had "discovered." The actor was a pompous little man with a dark pointed beard, wearing an alpine type hat. He looked like a professor from a European university. In reality he was a man who made deliveries for the firm which supplied Bowers with plastic material. After he made his deliveries he would come up to our balcony and talk with us. His conversations consisted of his big scientific plans and experiments. He sounded cracked. Bowers joined us on that particular morning and listened for a few minutes to this little pompous man's talk. Then abruptly Bowers exclaimed: "Stop, hold everything." He looked at the errant man with an appraising eye. "Yes, you are the very type I am looking for. I'll make an actor out of you. I'm going to give you a screen test right now." Then Charlie Bowers leaned over the balcony, ordered Oscar to roll out the lights and the camera, but before the order was followed through, Bowers ran down below. The messenger man looked astonished at first then took the situation in his stride as something he had expected. Then the boss called the newly discovered actor to come right down and get himself ready. This man must have really been in a tizzy, and he started to climb over the balcony rail. We grabbed him and pushed him down the stairs. (The drop from the balcony was ten or twelve feet.)

Bowers now ordered the "actor" to go into one of the small rooms to be made up for camera. Bowers added: "And sir, of course you must strip down to your shorts." Man: "My shorts? ...oh of course." Bowers: "But wear that fine hat and your shoes and your cane." As soon as the man was out of sight and the door closed, Bowers pointed to the camera: "NO FILM".

When the actor came out ready for camera he wore a towel loin cloth. He explained that he did not wear shorts but winter "longies". The lights were turned on, Bowers as both director and camera man ground away at the empty camera, while the actor went through the wildest paces. It was like a "follow-the-leader" game, Bowers ignoring the camera after a while, doing crazy stunts and the man solemnly tried to do the same thing in his nearly naked attire. Suddenly Bowers stopped, said in a painful voice: "Cheez this ain't fun. Go on and get dressed and go home, you dumb S.O.B." The man again looked astonished. Bowers reached into his wallet, brought out two single dollar bills: "Here, take these two bucks and buy yourself some brains." All through this so-called screen test none of us laughed. I think that was what spoiled the gag for Charley Bowers.

Charles Bowers in his enlarged studio was now doubly active. He continued supplying us with "Mutt and Jeff" scripts for our animated cartoons and he was busy with developing his plastic puppets for animation. He had several people helping him at that end, but they were kept apart from the animators. Nevertheless Charley Bowers couldn't resist his pixey-whimsy impulses.

As an example: Bowers had hired a salesman to operate with him on the sales pitch for the puppets. This was a brash young guy, snappy dresser and fast talker. He would barge into the animation room to boast of his amorous exploits in France during the War... World War One which had ended only two years before. This boaster got short-shrift from us... his recital was not only a bore, but cut into our work time.

This fellow had his office down in the puppet department. Their windows faced a back yard, while our work room looked out on to the street. One afternoon, right after lunch this man barged in and we all groaned... "Uh-oh" but he only asked us to look out of our window. Parked at the curb was a bright vermilion roadster. "Mine", he said. We all went down to the street for a brief admiration of his car.

Late that afternoon this salesman again came up to our animation room. Bowers came in with him. He had a forced smile on his face. Salesman: "Okay fellows, who did it, ha-ha, which one of you guys did it? Ha-ha-ha. All

afternoon people have been coming into my office wanting to buy my new car. I kept chasing them out. One of them pushed one-hundred and twenty-five bucks into my hand and demanded the ownership ticket. All the time I was busy with Mr. Bowers's business. I just now went outside and saw the reason! Somebody had soaped on my windshield 'FOR SALE $125.00. ENQUIRE IN OFFICE!' We all looked innocent... and we were. Bowers, standing behind the salesman winked at us repeatedly, pointing at himself. He couldn't resist a practical joke.

In April of 1921 I decided to spend the entire summer up in Hudson, N.Y. painting landscapes. I won't go into details as to how I had arrived at this decision. I took my boss by complete surprise when I told him I was resigning, but he wished me well just the same.

It was a wonderful summer for me and I returned to New York flat broke. I went up to see Bowers. I saw him all right but his animation department was no more. He was now concentrating on his puppets combined with live action. He was not in production, but still experimenting.

Charles Bowers owed me ninety dollars. That was an accumulation of salary hold-backs when he was short of funds during the first months of my employment, when I was his sole employee. He had repaid me some of this debt, but there was still that ninety dollars. So now I reminded Mr. Bowers of this amount which he still owed me. Could I have some of it now on account since I was really hard-up. He said cheerfully: "No problem." Thereupon he took out his check book and wrote me a check for sixty dollars. I thanked him very much and parted with a handshake and mutual good wishes.

It was still early in the afternoon and the Corn Exchange Bank at Fordham Road and Webster Avenue was only a mile away. I had plenty of time before the bank closed to cash my check. When I got out into the street I wondered how long this outburst of generosity would last for Mr. Bowers. I decided to take no chances. So without further ado I made a fast dash, running that mile at a speed which must have shattered some records. The cashier cashed the check without hesitation.

Several years later Ted Sears told me this: He had dropped in to see Charles Bowers several days after my money-visit. Charley Bowers said: "That fellow Klein must be a champion runner. I gave him my check for sixty dollars after he told me a hard luck tale. I gave it to him to make him feel good. Then after giving him a bit of a head start, I called up the Corn Exchange Bank to stop payment on that check. They told me the check was already cashed. I guess the kid didn't trust me. By golly he must be a fast runner."

My next association with Charles Bowers took place in 1924. By that time he was in sort-of production with his plastic puppets in Astoria, Long Island. He said that he was again opening an animated cartoon studio. The location would be in Long Island City, on Long Island, not too far from Astoria. He put me on staff as an animator and told me to report for work at a given date which was within a week or two... the address... Jackson Avenue near Queens Plaza. I reported on time. The studio was a large loft in a three story frame building. The animators besides myself were Burt Gillett, Ben Harrison, Manny Gould and George Rufle. There were also several younger fellows to do the tracing. One of them quickly developed into a top animator and is still at his animation board in Hollywood at this writing. His name is Sid Marcus.

When I arrived for work the studio was set up with animation boards on tables. Shelves on the same tables behind the animation boards. Also shelves and cabinets for paper and other supplies. Part of the loft in the back was partitioned off as the camera room. The cameraman was Clyde Gillett, Burt's brother. He owned the animation camera and camera stand. This was a typical small animated cartoon studio in the silent film days.

Charles Bowers arrived with a large package containing our first story. It was a "Mutt and Jeff" scenario wherein Mutt insured Jeff against accidents, then Mutt proceeds to double-cross Jeff into having a serious bodily mishap. He trips Jeff, causing him to fall off buildings and cliffs and under cars. Fate saves Jeff each time until Mutt makes a "hit" on Jeff. Then Mutt carries the banged-up Jeff to the insurance office only to find the company had gone out of business. That plot sounds "old hat" now because of its subsequent uses in cartoons and even live comedy, but it was a first in animated cartoons. Bowers then split up the scenes among the animators and returned to Astoria.

This Astoria Studio remained Bowers' home base. His visits to the Jackson Avenue studio were infrequent. The stories would be picked up by one of the animators whenever the boss phoned that a story was ready. On the occasions when Bowers did visit us he acted the part of Big Papa. He would treat his animators to a fine lunch at a stuffy but expensive German restaurant several blocks from the studio. Another place he would take us to at noontime would be to The Chamber of Commerce restaurant in a building facing the open air platforms of the Queens Plaza subway station. The Queens Chamber of Commerce is still located at the same place. At those luncheons Mr. Bowers behaved just as he did in Mount Vernon at lunch, he told us tales of his prowess. They were tall tales, but worth listening to. Besides, the free lunches made up for any strain on our credulity.

As time went on Harrison, Gould and Gillett stayed apart from George Rufle and myself. They often talked together in whispers. Then, about four or five months after the Jackson Avenue studio went into operation, Burt Gillett called everybody together. Harrison and Gould flanked Gillett. He made an announcement. This is no longer the Charles Bowers Studio. It is now The Associated Animators Studio. Mr. Charles Bowers is no longer part of this animation operation. Then Burt told that the new bosses were himself, Harrison and Gould. There was another animator partner who was working at the time for Max Fleischer Studio. (It turned out that this man backed out of the partnership.)

After Gillett made his announcement, he added that the three of them were going to Astoria to inform Mr. Bowers that he was OUT! Our three new bosses left and were gone for the rest of the morning. Then at about one-thirty in the afternoon Mr. Bowers walked into the studio with two moving men. They removed everything in the studio, animation boards, desks, chairs, cabinets and they even pulled down the partition which separated the animation camera-room from the rest of the Studio. Clyde Gillett had to remind Bowers that the camera and camera stand belonged to him, Clyde Gillett.

The new partners must have been standing on the opposite side of the street and saw this wholesale demolition of the studio. They walked in about five minutes after the clean-sweep. It was a bare loft that confronted them with only the camera-stand and camera as a reminder that this had been an animated cartoon studio. The staff was standing or sitting on the floor.

How the Associated Animators got going from this point on, is a story to be told at another time.

I lost complete personal contact with Charles Bowers forevermore. He never returned as a producer of animated cartoons. However he did persist with his animated plastic puppets. In 1940 when I returned from Hollywood with my wife and two daughters, we all attended the first New York World's Fair several times. On one visit we encountered a Charles Bowers Production in one of the exhibition halls. It was a motion picutre of animated plastic puppets combined with live action. The theme was wax. It showed the multiple uses and applications of wax. It was a very well-executed job.

I did see Charles Bowers once again at a distance, one afternoon on Fifth Avenue in New York. This was about two years before his death. He was walking briskly. From the distance he looked exactly as he did in the 1920's. I tried to reach him but he was lost in the crowd by the time I crossed the street through heavy traffic. ● *THE END*