

# Savannah College of Art and Design\*

## Jen Library Archives and Special Collections

<b>Collection Name:</b>	Don Bluth Collection of Animation
<b>Collection Number</b>	MS 007
<b>Dates:</b>	1979-2004
<b>Size:</b>	
<b>Provenance:</b>	Donated by the Don Bluth Films, Inc., Bluth Group LTD, Banjo Productions
<b>Restrictions:</b>	none
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**Abstract:** The collection consists of cels, animation drawings, storyboards, color models, and other materials created by Don Bluth Productions and later incarnations of this company in the production of animated features and video games between 1979 and 2004. Also included in the collection are administrative, legal, and other documents, as well as scripts, concepts, and publicity related materials. Other formats, such as film, sound, VHS, photographs, slides, and other media, are part of the collection. The studio operated in both the United States and Ireland, and was at various times, affiliated with other production companies.

### **Biographical Information for Key Individuals:**

#### **Don Bluth**

Don Virgil Bluth was born in El Paso, Texas on September 13, 1937, the second oldest of seven children. His parents were Emaline Pratt and Virgil Bluth, who was a policeman, and later a private investigator. The family moved to Payson, Utah, when Bluth was 6. The family owned a farm and he remembered that time as, "milking 24 cows morning and night and singing Disney songs." At the age seven, Bluth saw his first Disney animated feature, *Snow White*. He remembered the effect it had on him. "...I was extremely impressed with it and when I got home I tried to draw Snow White, the dwarfs, all of them."

In 1954, when Bluth was a senior in high school, the family moved to Santa Monica, California. He attended Brigham Young University, in Utah for a year. That same year, he submitted a portfolio to the Disney Studio in Burbank, and was hired in 1955 as an assistant animator. But after only two years, he left Disney. Having been raised in the Mormon faith, Bluth performed his proscribed two year mission in Argentina. On his return to Los Angeles, he worked at Disney as an assistant on *The Sword in the Stone* for around a year, but his main efforts were in live theater with his younger brother, Fred. They opened the Bluth Brothers Theater in an old supermarket in Culver City and produced musical plays with local talent. Often, Bluth was the musician, playing the piano. After a few years, he returned to college, graduating with a degree in English Literature.

Then, in 1967, he went back to animation at Filmation, where he worked in layout on *The Archies* and *Sabrina*. In his spare time, Bluth organized a group of young singers and called them "The New Generation." He was not happy with the quality at Filmation and decided to try Disney once again. In April, 1971, he entered the new training program at the Disney Studio. After only two months, he reached the rank of animator, with projects such as *Robin Hood* in 1973, and *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too* in 1974. In 1977, he moved up to directing animator for *The Rescuers*, then to animation director on *Pete's Dragon* (1977). In 1978, he was the producer-director on *The Small One*. But after Walt Disney's death in 1966, the Studio had been changing and the quality was not the same. Bluth began to look again for other opportunities.

While at Disney, Bluth met Gary Goldman and John Pomeroy. With similar thoughts on animation, the three became friends and began to think of starting their own studio. Around 1973, they started purchasing and collecting animation tools and equipment and began writing, directing, and producing their first animated film in Bluth's garage. They produced a project for television, *Banjo the Woodpile Cat*, completed in 1979. That same year, Bluth and his friends left Disney and began their own studio in Studio City. Their first project was a two minute animated sequence in the movie, *Xanadu*. Bluth Studios began work on their first full length feature, *The Secret of NIMH*, which they completed in 28 months and released in 1982.

In 1982, also, the studio joined with two other companies to form Magicom, Inc. and produced the first interactive animated video game for laser disc arcade games. *Dragon's Lair* was released in 1983 and was an instant hit, and also helped turn around a sagging arcade market. Following closely behind, their second game, *Space Ace*, was released in 1984.

After seeing the *Secret of NIMH*, Steven Spielberg contacted Bluth to discuss a joint project on an animated feature. With the video games taking up so much of his time, he was not able to begin work on *An American Tail* until 1984.

### **Gary Goldman**

Gary Goldman was raised in Watsonville, California. He began his training as an electrical technician in the US Air force. He attended and graduated from the University of Hawaii with a degree in Fine Arts. In 1972, he began working for Walt Disney Productions, first as an assistant animator and then as an animator. He worked on *Robin Hood*, *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too*, *The Rescuers*, *Pete's Dragon*, *The Small One*, and *The Fox and the Hounds*. Goldman met Don Bluth at Disney Productions and the two became friends with a mutual interest in classical animation, in the early Disney style.

In 1975, they began, along with John Pomeroy, producing an animated TV special, *Banjo the Woodpile Cat*. It was completed in 1979 and won several awards. That year, Goldman, Bluth, and Pomeroy resigned from Walt Disney Productions to establish themselves independently and pursue their interest in classical animation.

Their first feature was *Secret of NIMH*, released in 1982, followed by video games *Dragon's Lair* and *Space Ace*. Following that, the studio worked with Steven Spielberg on *An American Tail* beginning in 1984. In 1986, with Morris Sullivan's backing, the studio moved to Dublin, Ireland. While there, they completed *Land Before Time* and several others.

Goldman returned from Ireland in August, 1994, to head up the Fox Animation Studio located in Phoenix, Arizona. He and Bluth shared the creative leadership. In 1997, they completed production on *Anastasia*. They also produced *Bartok the Magnificent* in 1999 and *Titan A.E.* in 2000.

In 1999, Goldman, along with Don Bluth, John Pomeroy, Rick Dyer and David Foster formed Dragon's Lair, LLC to develop new 3D games. Their first project was to with a revamp the 1983 game *Dragon's Lair*. Don Bluth Films, Inc., a production company, has also been reestablished by Goldman and Bluth. They have created a web site to provide animation information and to answer questions from visitors to the site in a personal way.

### **John Pomeroy**

John Pomeroy was born in Los Angeles in 1951. He was an artistic child with an early interest in sculpture. He loved Disney characters and reproduced characters from productions such as *Snow White*, which he placed in backgrounds. He took his interest in puppetry and sculpture to Riverside City College, where he majored in architecture, and the Art Center College of Design, where he majored in illustration. He also staged several one-man shows.

Pomeroy joined Walt Disney Productions in 1973. In 1976, he was promoted to the position of animator. He worked on several projects such as *Winnie the Pooh and Tigger Too*, *The Rescuers*, *Pete's Dragon*, *The Small One*, and *The Fox and the Hounds*. In 1979, he left Disney to pursue a career in classical animation with Don Bluth and Gary Goldman.

### **Morris Sullivan**

Morris F. Sullivan was born in Seattle, Washington, and graduated from Seattle College in 1940, with a degree in Business Administration and studied at the Alexander Hamilton Business Institute. He went on to work with the Austin Company, which built Naval Defense bases in the Pacific Northwest. Following WWII, he founded Sullivan Waldron Products, Co., which specialized in products using pressurized air. He moved to Southern California where he acted as a financial consultant and a mergers and acquisitions broker to many major corporations.

In 1984, Sullivan met Don Bluth, Gary Goldman, and John Pomeroy. At that point, he was semi-retired. The Don Bluth Studios were in financial trouble, and Sullivan intended only to give them some short term advice and financial assistance. However, as Sullivan came to respect and admire the talent of the three, he dedicated himself to the establishment of a framework to keep them viable. Sullivan Studios was established in Van Nuys, California and in Dublin, Ireland. *An American Tail* was produced mostly in California, but the cel painting was done in Ireland. On the release of *An American Tail*, the studio made their final push to move to their new base at the Sullivan Bluth Studios Ireland, Ltd. Sullivan was the Executive Producer of *All Dogs Go to Heaven* in 1989 and *Rock-a-Doodle* in 1991.

### **Institutional History:**

**Don Bluth Productions, Inc. 1979-1984** Bluth established his own studio, with the backing of Aurora Productions, a company headed by a group of ex-Disney executives, and started production on a feature, *The Secret of NIMH*.

**Don Bluth Animation, A Partnership, 1984-1986**

**Sullivan Bluth Studios Ireland, Ltd. 1986-1992**

**Don Bluth Entertainment (Ireland), 1992-**

**Fox Animation Studios (Phoenix) 1994-**

**Dragon's Lair, LLC 1999-present**

**Don Bluth Films, Inc. 1999-present**

### **Subject Headings:**

Animation.

Animation (Cinematography).

Animated films.

Animators ~ United States.

Banjo Productions.

Don Bluth Studios.

Bluth, Don.

Goldman, Gary.

Pomeroy, John.

**Series Notes:** The collection is divided into a number of series. The series may be related to a particular production or a particular type of materials. The collections' production series follow a similar system used by the studio. For the most part, artwork such as drawings, color models, storyboards, backgrounds, and cels, are found under the series for the production that originated them. Occasionally, the production series contain administrative papers. However, most documents relating to office management and administration, promotion and publicity, contracts, legal matters, and other matters of a more general nature, are found in topical series. If the material in one of the topical series relate to a particular production or project, that is noted in the folder title. If not, or the material was related in a more general way to the studio, it has been described as general. The series reflecting artworks from a particular production are arranged by production.

Production series are organized chronologically by release date. After those, series are named for the type of materials they contain. These series designation are similar to the organization by the studio. See individual series for collection inventory.

**Series:**

1. Banjo the Woodpile Cat, 1979
2. Xanadu, 1980
3. The Secret of NIMH, 1982
4. Dragon's Lair, 1983
5. Space Ace, 1984
6. An American Tail, 1986
7. The Land Before Time, 1988
8. All Dogs Go to Heaven, 1989
9. Dragon's Lair II, 1991
10. Rock a Doodle, 1992
11. Thumbelina, 1994
12. A Troll in Central Park, 1994
13. The Pebble and the Penguin, 1995
14. Anastasia, 1997
15. Bartok the Magnificent, 1999
16. Titan AE, 2000
17. Dragon's Lair 3-D, 2002
18. You Are Mine!, 2003
19. Ice Whale /Little Blue Whale
20. Concepts
21. Filing Cabinets
22. Merchandise
23. Photographs
24. Producers Files Correspondence Publicity
25. Reels
26. Scripts Model Sheets Storyboards
27. Miscellaneous

**Sources cited:** From biographical information found in various files in the *The Don Bluth Collection of Animation* and from *The Animated Films of Don Bluth* by John Cawley, <http://www.cataroo.com/DBconts.html>