

Leisure World cartoonist was there at creation of 'Fantasia'



Fifty years ago, Leisure Worlder George Rowley was part of the team creating the whirlpool scene from "Sorcerer's Apprentice" in the Disney film 'Fantasia.'

There under the listing of animation in the original 1940 program issued for the opening of "Fantasia" is the name of Leisure World resident George Rowley.

It is part of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue," and Paul Dukas' "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," two of the sequences from the Walt Disney classic.

Fifty years after its first release Fantasia is back in the theaters. An animated film, with music of the great composers played by the Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Leopold Stokowski, it was a pioneering tribute to Walt Disney, whom Rowley classifies as a tough taskmaster—and a genius.

In 1940 it brought classical music from the orchestral stage to the movie screen enhanced by animated creatures and special effects that enthralled millions. It is colorful, humorous, scary, beautiful and exciting.

Rowley, a longtime Leisure World resident, was an animator with Disney Studios from 1934 to 1951.

He has animation credits on such Disney classics as "Snow White," "Pinocchio," "Song of the South," "Cinderella," "Peter Pan," and "Lady and the Tramp," among others.

One of the "others" was Paramount Studios "The Ten Commandments," where Rowley was responsible for the special effects, fire, water and lightning," which earned a special effects Oscar.

Those who recall the film will have seen Rowley's contribution: a pillar of fire with writhing fingers which wrote out the Ten Commandments on stone tablets.

Although he retired from the movie industry 20 years ago, (his last stop was with Hanna Barbara Productions) Rowley has not totally stilled his penchant for cartooning.



Using one of his master's spells, sorcerer's apprentice Mickey Mouse gains control of the stars in a scene from "Fantasia."

Each year he creates a cartoon promotion for the Leisure World Aquadettes and he still loves to draw Mickey and Minnie for his friends and their friends.