
ANIMATED CARTOON

By WALT DISNEY

THE documentary film cartoon has conclusively proved its efficacy as a widely applicable medium for instructional purposes. It has been especially useful in reaching adults often beyond other channels of timely information. And while its history is as yet comparatively brief, its possibilities are considered almost limitless in the broad areas of education.

Our experience in developing animated cartoon techniques as educational adjuncts is thought to have considerable value for workers in the visual aid field for adults. On that assurance, I am only too glad to give an account of our pioneer efforts for whatever value they may have.

The first experiments in reaching civilian populations were worked out in alliance with the Office of the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs during the Second World War years. They dealt chiefly with problems of health, sanitation and elemental education in Latin American areas regarded with concern by their respective governments.

We made the documentaries on invitation, in closest co-operation with South and Central American countries, and Inter-American Affairs distributed them in accord with local authorities.

Preliminary research for development of our patterns involved social and political considerations as well as medical and hygienic. Races of various culture and levels of enlightenment added complex human elements to whatever technical formula we might work out. Thus these particular instructional films posed very special kinds of preparatory research.

Yet, basically, the job was to find the most direct address to great masses of people who could be benefited and enlightened by what we could very simply visualise on the screen in from 10 to 15 minute fact films.

To get first-hand knowledge of our intended audience we made an invitational staff survey of people, places and conditions in certain districts of Mexico, Salvador and Guatemala.

Conditions and needs there observed were typical of many other Latin American regions so that our pictorial lessons were found equally serviceable throughout much of the hemisphere.

In every instance government officials, health and educational authorities pointed up the problems to be encountered and eagerly co-operated.

This survey was followed by seminars at our Burbank studio, where Latin American delegates sat with us to plan and outline our projects. These were the policy advisers, familiar with the needs of the people to be reached. They told us about the limitations and prejudices of segments of their populations, especially the backward Indian folk in remote regions. Many of them fatalistically accepted scourging disease; were primitive in hygienic practices. Many of them were almost beyond the reach of ideas and remedies through language. Myriads of them had never been taught to read, or had forgotten how.

These were the people who might be reached through pictures—moving pictures conveying elemental facts and truths, principles and practices that would make their lives more endurable, comfortable, safer for themselves and their neighbours. The very nature of health and the causes of disease was a mysterious, superstitious thing to them.

This vast audience to which we had to adjust our approach and techniques, we realised, would offer perhaps the greatest conceivable test for the instructional potency of the cartoon documentary.

It would be almost miraculous if one brief showing of a film cartoon—one primary lesson in what to do about malaria, hookworm or other infectious scourges—could take root in the mind of such benighted folk and start a chain of remedial action.

Yet that is just what occurred; just such miracles were later reported all through the areas where these films were shown. Whole villages began to co-operate with governmental health authorities to alleviate their miseries.

Often the films were projected on screens set up in village streets and plazas and shown under great handicap. Many of the beholders had never before seen a movie. Audiences stood, amazed at what they beheld, and were further reassured by narrators who brought the film from the nearest government health department.

The same thing occurred over and over in other parts of the world to which prints of the health documentaries, especially, were quickly distributed by our government agencies.

Immediate benefits of these films were in a good measure intended for protection of our military elements in many parts of the world as well as for the welfare of the native population. Education in this case had critical immediacy. It was intended to promote quick results in helping reduce all sources of contamination from bad drinking water; all focal points of infection and epidemic, wherever our troops were stationed.

So well did we hit our target that these same films are still in wide and steady circulation from the U.S. Government library. A total of some 1,600 prints in 16 mm. have at one time or another been in non-commercial use.

And in this connection it must be made clear that only under war-time urgency could they have been thus produced and distributed, for they were costly non-profit films. They required sponsorship on a national scale to make them at all possible.

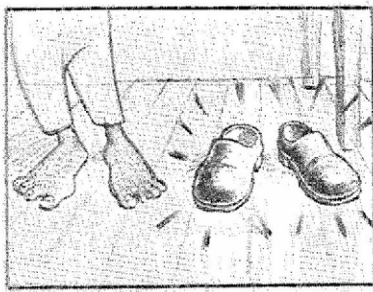
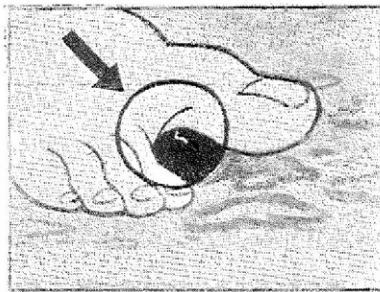
I dwell on these circumstances because they indicate the kind of research and intense effort which brought to birth the early documentaries for adult education—research of living human beings who were to be the beneficiaries, rather than a delving into books and case histories for necessary information.

This told us not only what to say, but how to say it most effectively in such documentaries as *Water—Friend or Enemy*, *Defense Against Invasion*, *The Winged Scourge*, *Hookworm*, *Tuberculosis*, *Nutrition* and *The Grain That Built a Hemisphere*, the graphic story of corn.

Of course we had to have experts to advise us about correct technical procedures. When our projects were outlined and before we actually began production, panels of experts supplied by the Inter-American Affairs administration sat in with us at the studio as guides and consultants. Surgeon General Parran of the U.S. Health Department came out from Washington for story conferences on the malaria film, *The Winged Scourge*. General Dunham, attached to the U.S. Army and head of the Latin-American health programme, detached an assistant to work with us and to get whatever technical information we might require. As each project demanded, we got similar medical, technical assistance, extending from the clinical details to the broadest humanitarian levels.

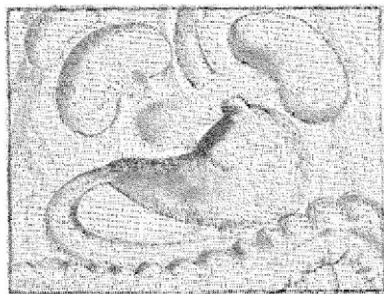
Health, hygiene and nutrition topics, of course, had additional vast library sources of accurate available information. But here, too, we relied on our consultants to translate and focus special knowledge into the direct screen values we needed to give our 10- to 15-minute documentaries practical worth. The watchword was constant counsel and supervision by the best available authorities on any subject. For we at the studio are artists, animators, story tellers, showmen, rather than scientists or specialists in any other line.

More than in any other field of visual communication, the documentary animator must have the required information for any subject literally at his finger tips. He conveys ideas, teaches, with his drawing pencil. He can't quibble or evade. He can't take refuge in words. He has no props. He's got to talk straight in the world's oldest language—pictographs—things the eye instantly comprehends and transmits to the mind.



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How the hookworm invades the human system through the feet and the blood stream is indicated in one of these sketches for *Hookworm*, and the protective value of shoes in the other.



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These sketches, used as guides by animators for *Defense Against Invasion*, illustrate the use of analogy in the particular problem involved. The citadel at the right is shaped like the human body organs to point up the most vulnerable regions of invasion by germ enemies.

Now, as we came to actual production processes in these early documentaries, the animating artists took over from the medical and scientific experts. They were saturated with specific information.

Their job was to tell in unmistakable terms the story of how the anopheles mosquito spreads the dread malaria and how the scourge can be stamped out. They had to make clear to untutored minds the story of the hookworm and how that enervating parasite enters the human system. They had to tell half-starved people in mobile drawings how and what to eat, with diets at no greater cost. How tuberculosis can be conquered and checked; how, in picturesque abridgement, a native grain was cultivated to found the great Mayan civilisation. They had to tell not only how vaccination operated in *Defense Against Invasion*, but in a way calculated to eliminate the dread, especially in youngsters, of the prophylactic needle. In *Water—Friend or Enemy*, the dangers of deadly pollution as well as the life-giving necessity of water

had to be unmistakably impressed. These and half a dozen other major projects—all in terms with symbols the most backward and illiterate of people could comprehend and profit by.

Before the storymen and the animating artists can put this kind of information into precise form—and at the same time keep it fascinating to the beholder—they themselves must resolve a subject into its very essence. Every action of characters, every scene and situation, must have clear-cut meaning. They must be patiently checked and rechecked with their criteria or their collaborative experts for unquestionable accuracy.

Simple as A B C they had to be as they finally went to the screen—these picture stories addressed to untutored people. For that is literally what they were: primary lessons for handicapped adults in matters most closely affecting their daily lives and fortunes.

Often the documentary craftsman gets his point over with a laugh. A linear sight joke. It's a quick way to a beholder's mind—to acceptance of a statement or a premise. It works as well with adults as with children; is as agreeable to the sophisticated as to the ignoramus, by that strange spell the moving cartoon can exert.

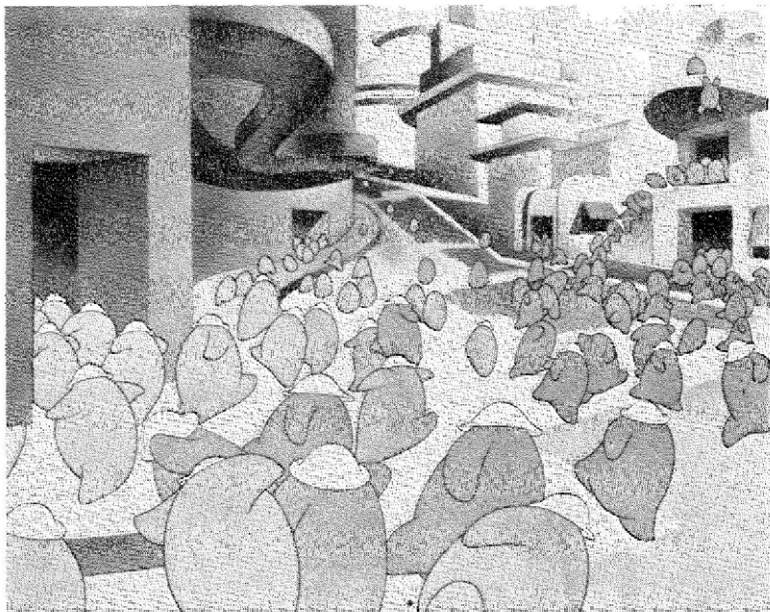
A case in point: In telling our story of malaria, we used some fabled characters long associated with happy, humorous entertainment wherever pictures are shown around the world—the seven Dwarfs from our *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

From the instant they appeared on the screen in *The Winged Scourge* and explained how malaria can be stamped out, Happy and Doc, Bashful, Grumpy, Sleepy, Sneezy, and Dopey were implicitly believed—even in the remotest regions of motion picture territory.

If the Dwarfs said it was so and advocated the way to deal with a plague, there was no question about it. They exercised more authority with their amusing antics than some of the learned doctors from state bureaux of health, as the doctors later agreed.

The serio-comical demonstration of the seven little fabled men was an educational wedge which local health and educational authorities were quick and happy to use in their disease prevention campaigns. It taught us a valuable lesson, too, in formulating our documentary techniques for subsequent projects. It was this:

Let the informative material ride along on entertainment as much as possible; use comic anecdote and character antic freely. For, although it has been said by pundits of psychology that painful experience is the most effective spur of memory, we have found in analysing our informative entertainments over many years that the fun factor is even more potent. That was the ancient way of fable, and it is still a sure way into the minds and hearts of people.



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From *Defense Against Invasion*. This scene shows the defensive soldiers in the blood stream, reinforced by vaccine troops, mounting the parapets to defeat the invaders.

But fun must never imply that the documentary cartoon is insincere. We had to guard against this possible misconception among people accustomed to associate cartoons entirely with fantasy. You can discount the truth with excessive laughter as well as with the boredom of ponderous belaboured soberness. This is a latent property of the very nature of the cartoon—its caricatural exaggeration.

From our early experimental efforts with the animated cartoon we have come to see its enormous possibilities both in entertainment and educational fields. The cartoon documentary can probe into and explore the nature of things completely beyond the scope of the camera, the microscope, and other scientific implements.

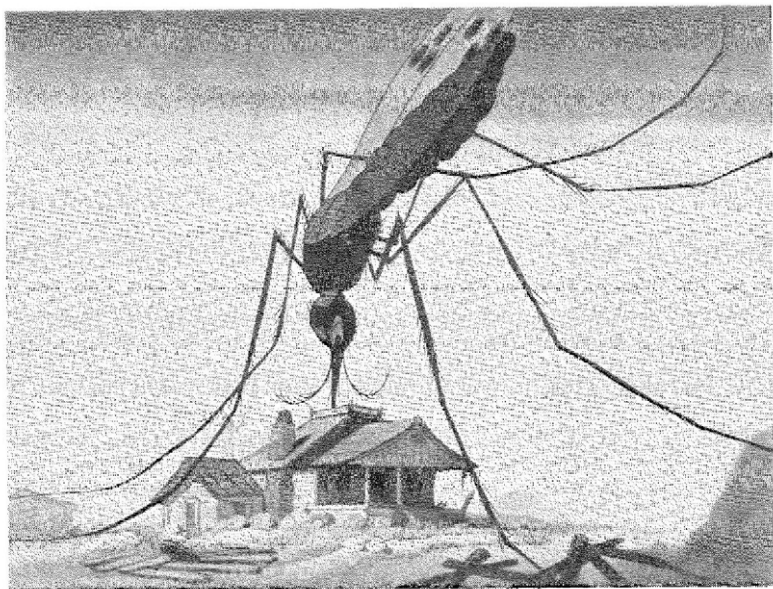
Anything the mind of man can conceive and logically anticipate, the hand of the intelligent animation artist can represent. The functions of the human body; the structure of the atom; a truth, a principle, a phenomenon about our physical universe and living nature which is beyond the reach of the human eye and the camera's lens.

We have recently applied the documentary approach to our wild-life nature factuals, the True-Life Adventure series. For these features our naturalist-cameramen photograph what they actually see in the field. Here patience and vigilance and the

repertorial accuracy of the colour cameras take the place of the short-cuts the cartoon documentaries can effect. There is no editorial tampering with the facts of living nature, filmed in dramatic sequence. These features, too, have been declared of educational value.

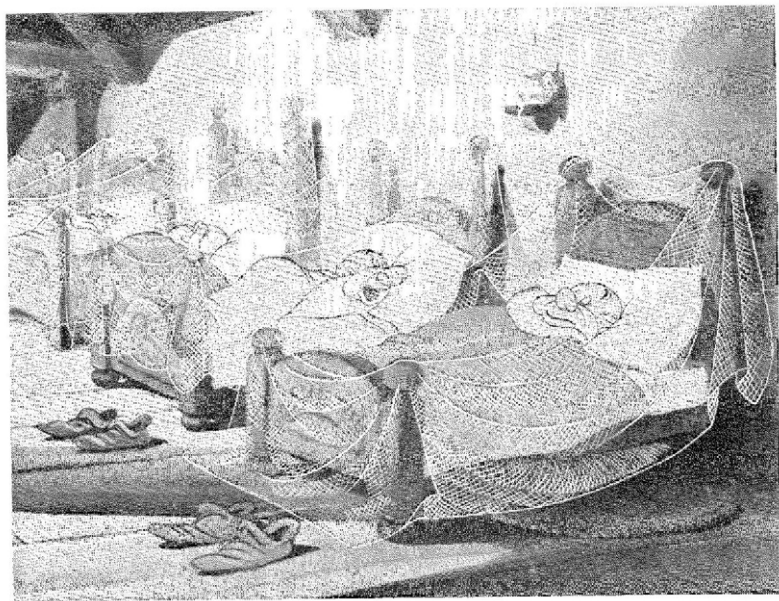
Whereas our wartime documentaries took an average of six months to prepare and produce, True-Life Adventures like *The Living Desert* and the forthcoming *The Vanishing Prairie* were fully three years in the making. *The African Lion* and *The Elephant Story* out of Africa, completely authentic living documents out of nature's own wild archives, also will have been over three years in filming by the end of this year.

May I be permitted here to pay my respects to the animation artists who practise this unique and comparatively new method of visual education? The efficacy of the animation documentary depends upon their practised skill, their amazing resourcefulness, their genius for communicating ideas and various phases of knowledge through their facile fingers, with pencil and brush. I hold them second to none in the arts of teaching, and their craftsmanship an invaluable supplement to text book, lecture and laboratory in the whole expanding sphere of education.



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From *The Winged Scourge*.



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From *The Winged Scourge*.