

Walt chose ABC over NBC because the new  
Pres. Leonard Goldenson close friend with  
fellow commie hunter "Ronald Reagan." p 216

"Because of Mr. Disney's position as the foremost  
producer of cartoon films in the motion picture ind.  
and his prominence and wide acquaintanceships in  
film production matters, it is believed that he  
can be of valuable assistance to this office..."

Conf. inter - office FBI memo

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**ward kimball ufo**

## UFO UpDates

A mailing list for the study of UFO-related phenomena  
'Its All Here In Black & White'

Location: [VirtuallyStrange.net](http://www.virtuallystrange.net) > **UFO** > UpDates Mailing List > 2000 > Mar > Mar 17

### Re: The UFO/Disney Connection

From: Stan Friedman <[fsphys@brunnet.net](mailto:fsphys@brunnet.net)>  
Date: Fri, 17 Mar 2000 07:46:12 -0400  
Fwd Date: Fri, 17 Mar 2000 07:09:54 -0500  
Subject: Re: The **UFO**/Disney Connection

>Date: Thu, 16 Mar 2000 16:35:46 -0500  
>From: Bruce Maccabee <[brumac@compuserve.com](mailto:brumac@compuserve.com)>  
>Subject: Re: The **UFO**/Disney Connection  
>To: **UFO** UpDates - Toronto <[updates@sympatico.ca](mailto:updates@sympatico.ca)>

>>Date: Thu, 16 Mar 2000 00:23:00 -0500  
>>From: Sue Kovios <[bradford@globalserve.net](mailto:bradford@globalserve.net)>  
>>Subject: The NASA/Disney Connection  
>>To: [updates@sympatico.ca](mailto:updates@sympatico.ca)

>>Source: Marshall Space Flight Centre History Office>>

>><http://history.msfc.nasa.gov/sf/disney.html>

<snip>

>>EXCERPTS:

>>Von Braun served as technical advisor on three space-related  
>>television films that Disney produced in the 1950s. Together,  
>>von Braun (the engineer) and Disney (the artist) used the new  
>>medium of television to illustrate how high man might fly on the  
>>strength of technology and the spirit of human imagination.>

<snip>

>>"The Disney-Von Braun Collaboration and Its Influence on Space

>>Exploration">

>>by

>>Mike Wright

>>Marshall Space Flight Center Historian

>And Now, (with apologies to Paul Harvey)

>The Rest Of The Story!!!! !!!!! !!!!!

>Seeing this history of Disney's involvement with NASA and von  
>Braun, and especially the mention of **Ward Kimball** brought back  
>memories of 20 years ago. Although many people heard, perhaps  
>few remember (or are around to say) what **Ward Kimball** told the  
>MUFON symposium in 1979 (I think; or 1978 if not 1979).

>I met Kimball in 1980. I was at his house. I saw his tremendous  
>collection of model trains... that filled a litte building in  
>back of his house. Kimball was not satisfied with toy trains,  
>however, He also had a REAL TRAIN (engine and coal car) and  
>about 500 ft of track. He told me that back in the good old days  
>(fifties, sixties) when he had parties at his house in Beverly  
>Hills that he and Walt and the boys would get up a head of steam  
>in that old engine, shove into forward, and scream along the  
>track until the slammed on the brakes, stopping jus short of the  
>end of the track. Fun.

>Probably a lot of people about the train. Probably not as many  
>knew about his collection of **UFO** books, magazines, etc. Yes, the  
>untold story: **Ward Kimball**, production director (?) of  
>Cinderella, promoter of the NASA-Disney connection, etc. Good  
>Old Ward was a **UFO** Buff!

<snip>

I appreciate Bruce bringing up the **Ward Kimball** story.

It was at the Saturday Night program of the July, 1979, MUFON  
Symposium in San Francisco. Kimball spoke first, then Allen  
Hynek, and then me. Ward also noted that after being promised  
footage with nothing being delivered, he spoke with a USAF  
Colonel. The latter told him that there indeed was plenty of **UFO**  
footage, but that neither Ward, nor anybody else, was going to  
get access to it.

I should add that I have recently been told that the late Dr.  
Hans Nieper, a rather remarkable German Physician, has told  
people that Von Braun told him that indeed aliens and flying  
saucers were real.

Stan Friedman



From: "Stan Friedman" <fsphys@brunnet.net>  
Date: Wed Jul 10 17:36:38 2002 (PDT)  
To: <presidentialufo@canada.com>  
Cc: <bcox@flatoday.net>, <nids2@earthlink.net>  
Subject: Re: Ward Kimball

---

Grant:

Ward was as I recall a late add on for the Saturday Night Program with a short presentation. He was followed by Hynek and then by me. We had about 1000 people there. I certainly know of no other place where he might have said the same things. Obviously there is no paper in the Proceedings. I don't know if somebody might have recorded the talk. You might ask John Schuessler or perhaps Walter Andrus. I don't even know who invited Ward. Presumably that person might have known of his interest. CUFOS might have some correspondence between him and Hynek.

Sorry I can't be of more help. My wife's maiden name is Kimball so I was especially interested.

Stan Friedman

----- Original Message -----

From: <presidentialufo@canada.com>  
To: <fsphys@brunnet.net>  
Cc: <bcox@flatoday.net>; <nids2@earthlink.net>  
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2002 6:44 PM  
Subject: Ward Kimball

> Stanton

>

> As you may be aware Ward Kimball has just died.

>

>

> <http://www.latimes.com/templates/misc/printstory.jsp?slug=la%2Dme%2Dkimball9jul09>

>

>

> <http://www.sacbee.com/24hour/entertainment/v-print/story/460496p-3686290c.html>

>

>

> [http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/uniontrib/wed/news/news\\_1n10kimball.html](http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/uniontrib/wed/news/news_1n10kimball.html)

>

>

> <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2002/07/09/obituary0754EDT0034.DTL>

>

>

> <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/10/obituaries/10KIMB.html>

>

>  
> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A47020-2002Jul9?language=printer>  
>  
> You mentioned your short discussion with him at the  
> 1979 MUFON Symposium when he talked about Disney being  
> approached to make the UFO documentary.  
>  
> I have searched and am unable to find a copy of his  
> 1979 presentation. Was there one printed somewhere?  
> Are there any other places you would know that Kimball  
> told this story?  
>  
> Grant  
>  
>  
> The Presidents UFO Story  
> [www.presidentialufo.com](http://www.presidentialufo.com)  
>

---

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From: bruce maccabee <brumac@compuserve.com>  
Date: Wed Jul 10 20:25:32 2002 (PDT)  
To: "INTERNET:presidentialufo@canada.com" <presidentialufo@canada.com>  
Subject: Ward Kimball

---

Thanks for the message.  
You wrote:

>As you know Ward Kimball has just died. See  
Did not know he had died. Actually I had assumed he  
died years ago!

>You mentioned on UFO Updates that you met him. See:

>[http://www.google.ca/search?q=cache:05hvW7HczRsC:www.virtuallystrange.net/  
ufo/updates/2000/mar/ml7-005.shtml+%22War>d+Kimball%22+UFO&hl=en&ie=UTF-8](http://www.google.ca/search?q=cache:05hvW7HczRsC:www.virtuallystrange.net/ufo/updates/2000/mar/ml7-005.shtml+%22War+d+Kimball%22+UFO&hl=en&ie=UTF-8)

Yes. Recruited him to be on National Board of the Fund  
for UFO Research.

He agreed but then never communicated again with  
the fund even though we sent him proposals for  
evaluation and letters.

>Did you ever see a copy of his presentation to MUFON  
>.where he tells of Disney being approached?  
Heard him speak, I think San Francisco, 1979?

>How is it that you met him?

Met him through a lady... name escapes me.... who was  
an early supporter of  
the Fund, who was a resident of  
Beverly Hills and who know Kimball.

>Did you discuss UFOs, or  
>the important story he told about Disney being  
>approached to make the UFO documentary?

I visited his house. Saw his model trains and his full  
size train! I saw  
the trains mentioned in the obituary. However, I did  
not get a ride in his  
steam locomotive. HE told me that in the old days  
(old days already in  
1979!) he and the boys (Disney, etc.) would get down a  
few cold ones,  
first up the locomotive and see how fast they could go  
on the 900 ft track  
before slamming on the brakes to avoid hitting the  
barrier at the end.  
I presume we discussed ufology in general., Don't  
recall specifics( was 23  
? years ago). Don't know if we talked about Disney.  
What I recall about  
that came from his public presentation to MUFON.

>I am interested in the Kimball story because it seems  
>to be part of a pattern. As you already know  
>Emenegger/Sandler, Linda Howe, and Vallee/Hynek were  
>all given similiar visits about UFO documentaries.

Yes. Kimball placed the Disney with the AF probably in  
1955 or 56 before  
the Man in Space  
stuff Kimball worked on. Kimball worked with Von  
Braun, as I recall. This  
was BEFORE Sputnik.  
As I recall., Kimball said that when the AF first  
contacted Disney the AF  
indicated that some saucer  
footage would be made available. Then, after Disney  
prepared script or  
whatever to incorporate  
same, the AF withdrew the offer and so Disney left  
saucers out of the Man  
in Space production.

Kimball, at the MUFON symp, showed a short movie  
starring comedian Jonathan  
Winters in little  
vignettes which were embedded in a cartoon of "space  
creatures" created by  
the animators.  
Winters was great as the old lady who saw a saucer, the  
general who came to  
talk to her about it  
(and convince her that she didn't see a saucer) the  
little boy in his  
bedroom with a telescope who  
was surprised when an alien came down through the  
telescope and then he had  
to hide this  
from his parents (I think.... been a LONG) time.  
There may have been  
other vignettes as well.  
Don't know what happened to this short film that  
Kimball had in 1979.

>Hope you have something to add to this important man's  
>death.

Nothing that I haven't already "added."

<

## Orlando Sentinel

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/business/tourism/orl-bizdisney17071702jul17.story?coll=orl%2Dbusiness%2Dheadlines>

# Disney researcher joins spy agency

By Richard Verrier  
Sentinel Staff Writer

July 17, 2002

LOS ANGELES -- Eric Haseltine is moving from one top-secret organization to another.

Uncle Sam has plucked Walt Disney Co.'s chief of research and development to become head of research for the National Security Agency, which uses highly sophisticated technology to gather intelligence and break codes to protect sensitive government information systems.

Haseltine worked for a decade at Walt Disney Imagineering, the company's design and development group. As such, he would seem an unlikely choice for his new government mission. But the worlds of the NSA and Walt Disney Imagineering aren't so dissimilar. Both organizations include a diverse group of top-level scientists and share a penchant for security and secrecy (Disney won't say how many scientists it employs). There's a certain institutional quality to the unmarked, drab buildings that make up the sprawling Walt Disney Imagineering complex in Glendale, Calif.

Beyond developing innovative ride systems for theme parks, Disney's research and development team also has expertise in areas with military applications, including virtual-reality technology and information systems. Disney scientists are at the forefront of interactive TV and developing systems for protecting the company against Internet piracy.

Haseltine, 50, who holds a doctorate in physiological psychology, also is no stranger to the defense world. He spent 13 years at Hughes Aircraft Co., where he also managed R&D projects and was known as a leading expert on flight simulation. He joined Disney in 1992.

His new job will not be built around family fun. His role will be to lead a research and technology team for the spy agency, a division of the Department of Defense that employs 30,000. Neither NSA nor Haseltine will detail his exact responsibilities.

"I'm taking the job because I want to contribute my skills to helping the country," said Haseltine. "I'm particularly motivated because of what happened on September 11. Under ordinary circumstances, I would never have dreamed of leaving Disney, but these aren't ordinary circumstances."

washingtonpost.com

## Disney Animation Pioneer Ward Kimball

By Adam Bernstein  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Wednesday, July 10, 2002; Page B06

Ward Kimball, 88, one of the sultans of film animation, who helped parent and polish such characters as Jiminy Cricket and Mickey Mouse for Walt Disney Studios and became one of the legendary "nine old men" of the Disney organization, died July 8 at a hospital in Arcadia, Calif. He had pneumonia earlier this year.

Mr. Kimball worked for Disney from 1934 to 1973, making major contributions to the pioneering film animation of the last century. John Canemaker, author of a book about the nine key animators, wrote that Walt Disney viewed them as his "Supreme Court of animation."

Mr. Kimball worked on feature-length projects, including "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (1937) and "Pinocchio" (1940), that were considered risky ventures. They were among the first cartoons to run as long as a live-action film.

Mr. Kimball's great desire, he once said, was not to dazzle moviegoers with technique. Getting them to laugh was good enough.

Jiminy Cricket was among his most enduring creations, the top-hatted, umbrella-toting, wisecracking conscience of the wooden title character in "Pinocchio."

Mr. Kimball said Disney came to him one day to make Jiminy, who figured small in the original story, a prominent character in the film.

One problem with crickets -- generally dark-colored leaping insects related to locusts and grasshoppers -  
- Mr. Kimball said: "They're pretty ugly."

He eliminated cricket characteristics and crafted a bug that took on traits of a Charles Dickens creation -  
- "a Mr. Pickwick in a vest and spats, and he's only a cricket because we say he's a cricket."

Mr. Kimball also helped animate "Fantasia" (1940); the jive-talking crows in "Dumbo" (1941); the title-song sequence in "The Three Caballeros" (1945); Lucifer the cat in "Cinderella" (1950); Tweedledee and Tweedledum and the Cheshire Cat in "Alice in Wonderland" (1951); "Peter Pan" (1953); and "Mary Poppins" (1964).

Two of the animated shorts he directed received Academy Awards: "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom" (1953), in which a wise owl offers a primer on the development of musical instruments; and "It's Tough to Be a Bird" (1969), about the fine-feathered population.

Animation was not his only interest. An accomplished trombonist, he formed a Dixieland band called Firehouse Five Plus Two with a fellow Disney artist.

From the late 1940s to late 1960s, the band recorded a handful of lively albums and appeared on the Milton Berle and Ed Sullivan television shows. The more raucous recordings were punctuated with a

siren that demonstrated the group's freewheeling style.

Mr. Kimball also delighted in collecting trains, and his assemblage was a fantasyland for any locomotive-lover: It was life-size and sat smack in his back yard in San Gabriel, Calif.

The Grizzly Flats Railroad, as he called it, consisted of enormous engines and passenger cars he restored over the years. It included a full-size 1881 steam locomotive and a 19th-century Japanese streetcar. He offered picnics and rides to visitors on more than 900 feet of track.

Inside his home, he put a Wurlitzer organ in the dining room and a five-foot-tall toothbrush in the bathroom.

Ward Walrath Kimball was born in Minneapolis and attended the Santa Barbara School of the Arts in California. His ambition was to do illustrations for the Saturday Evening Post and other prominent publications.

One of his teachers urged the promising 20-year-old student to submit a portfolio to the Disney studio in Los Angeles, which was advertising for animators.

Mr. Kimball told Canemaker that he drove to the studio and requested an immediate answer on job prospects. "I don't have enough money to buy gas to come back," he said.

He was hired within the month and began working on cartoon shorts, grateful for the work in those Depression years. He said the work was harder than he figured it would be -- often sitting for eight hours at a stretch, studying and discussing animation and in desperate need of comic relief.

He said he particularly enjoyed watching Tex Avery cartoons. "Some of the guys thought his animation was pretty crude, but in six or seven minutes you had to get laughs and he always got laughs," he told the Vancouver Sun in 1991. "I never lost sight of that."

Many of the animators used crude drawing techniques in those years. It was common to trace the outlines of coins to show where a character's head and pants were.

"For close-ups we used the silver dollar everybody carried around with them, a 50-cent piece for a medium-close shot, a nickel for medium-long and a dime for a real long shot," he said.

Techniques in illustration and shading changed by the late 1930s, and Mickey Mouse was overhauled. Mr. Kimball was ordered to add eyeballs to the mouse for more expression, replacing what Canemaker called Mickey's less-realistic "sliced pie-shape eyes."

Mr. Kimball also directed and co-wrote Disney television shows on space travel, including "Man in Space" (1956).

While at Disney, he completed a book of parodies of famous paintings, "Art Afterpieces," published by Simon & Schuster in 1964.

Survivors include his wife of 66 years, Betty Kimball; three children; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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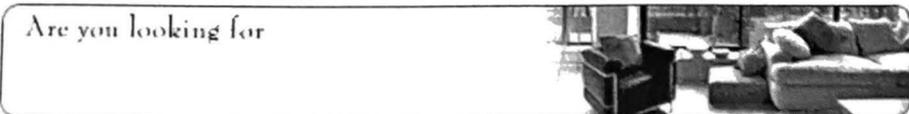
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Past 30 Days



## Ward Kimball, 88, Disney Animator, Dies

By ARI L. GOLDMAN

**W**ard Kimball, a Disney animator who created Jiminy Cricket, updated Mickey Mouse and brought the crows to life in a famous scene in "Dumbo," died on Monday in Arcadia, Calif. He was 88 and lived in San Gabriel, Calif.

Mr. Kimball was hired by Walt Disney in 1934 and became part of his inner circle of animators, known jokingly as the "nine old men." He worked as the animator or directing animator on such Disney classics as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," "Fantasia," "The Three Caballeros," "Cinderella," "Mary Poppins" and "Peter Pan." In 1938, he was part of the team that redesigned Mickey Mouse, giving him more expressive eyes and puffier, friendlier cheeks.

Mr. Kimball also headed the group that produced two Oscar-winning shorts, "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom" (1953) and "It's Tough to Be a Bird" (1969).

John Canemaker, the author of "Disney's Nine Old Men and the Art of Animation" (Disney Editions, 2001), said yesterday that Jiminy Cricket, Pinocchio's effervescent conscience, was a lot like his creator. "Ward was a feisty, plucky short guy with a big personality who wasn't shoved around by any man or cricket," Mr. Canemaker said.

"There was something of the old song-and-dance vaudevillian in both of them."

Ward Kimball was born on March 4, 1914, in Minneapolis and attended the Santa Barbara School of the Arts with the intent of becoming a painter and illustrator. In March 1934, an instructor there urged him to submit a portfolio to the Walt Disney Studio in Los Angeles. Mr.

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In 1938, Ward K of the team that Mickey Mouse, expressive eyes, friendlier cheeks

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Kimball started a month later and remained with Disney until he retired in 1973.

Among his favorite work was the animation of the crows who laugh, sing and strut while giving Dumbo an important lesson in self-confidence. He also took pride in the madcap finale of "The Three Caballeros" where Donald Duck, Jose Carioca and Panchito zip madly about the screen performing the title number as props appear and disappear. Mr. Canemaker, the author, said that the scene was MTV before anyone knew what MTV was.

Another characteristic Kimball scene was in "Cinderella" where the cat, Lucifer, sneaks up the stairs. "Kimball has the cat's body conform to the shape of the staircase as he goes up, with the legs paddling in a very natural way," Mr. Canemaker added. "It was naturalistic animation but very cartoony, a true Kimball moment."

In a 1978 interview, Mr. Kimball recalled his early days with Disney. "I worked the first two weeks for nothing and then got \$15 a week," he said. "There was no pay for overtime and no air conditioning. We stripped to the waist in the summer and if a guy was taking himself too seriously we'd stick a flutter pad under his seat so he'd make a rude noise when he sat down.

"There were 180 people at the studio, including the night watchman and the janitors," he added. "Today, it's a corporate structure, large and complicated place."

Mr. Kimball was also a Dixieland jazz trombonist who recorded with a group called "The Firehouse Five Plus Two," and a railroad enthusiast. He had model trains in the basement of his home and a real coal burning locomotive plus 900 feet of track in his back yard.

He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Betty; three children, John, of Pasadena, Calif.; Kelly, of Altadena, Calif.; and Chloe Lord of Los Angeles; and five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In the 1978 interview, Mr. Kimball reflected on youth. "We thought we

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were always going to be 21 years old," he said. "We thought we would always be putting goldfish in the bottled drinking water, balancing cups of water on the light fixtures, changing the labels on cans of sauerkraut juice. We were 21 years old, Walt was 30, leading the pack. Working there was more fun than any job I could ever imagine."

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## Jiminy Cricket's creator dies

**Ward Kimball, 88; key Disney animator**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

July 10, 2002

ARCADIA – Ward Kimball, a master animator who designed Jiminy Cricket and was one of Walt Disney's trusted "Nine Old Men," has died. He was 88.

Mr. Kimball died of natural causes Monday at Arcadia Methodist Hospital, said Howard E. Green of Disney's Buena Vista Pictures Marketing.

Mr. Kimball joined Disney Studios in 1934. During a career that lasted until 1972, he animated or served as directing animator on such classics as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," "Fantasia" and "Peter Pan."

Disney jokingly dubbed him and other top animators his "Nine Old Men," derived from a description of the Supreme Court by President Franklin Roosevelt

"Ward's passing is a tremendous loss to the animation community and to our studio," said Roy E. Disney, vice chairman of The Walt Disney Co.

Mr. Kimball's contributions include redesigning Disney's most recognizable character, Mickey Mouse, in 1938, and creating the look of Jiminy Cricket for the 1940 cartoon "Pinocchio." The top-hatted bug who is sidekick and conscience to the wooden boy became a favorite Disney character.

It wasn't easy to create him. Mr. Kimball said he drew more than a dozen versions of Jiminy, but Disney disliked them. He finally ended up with something that didn't look much like an insect but "like Mr. Pickwick, but with no ears, no nose and no hair."

Mr. Kimball also was credited with animating the famed crow sequence in "Dumbo" and was chiefly responsible for the designs of



the Cheshire Cat, The March Hare and The Mad Hatter in 1951's "Alice in Wonderland."

Mr. Kimball is survived by his wife Betty; and three children, John Kimball, Kelly Kimball and Chloe Lord.

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This story is taken from Entertainment at sacbee.com.

## Pioneering Disney animator Ward Kimball dies

**The Associated Press - (Published July 9, 2002)**

ARCADIA, Calif. (AP) - Animator Ward Kimball, who became one of Walt Disney's trusted "Nine Old Men" and helped develop or refine such characters as Mickey Mouse and Jiminy Cricket, has died. He was 88.

Kimball died of natural causes Monday at Arcadia Methodist Hospital, said Howard E. Green of Disney's Buena Vista Pictures Marketing.

Kimball, who joined the Disney organization in 1934, animated or served as directing animator on such classics as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," "Fantasia" and "Peter Pan."

The top animators hand-picked by Disney to work on his classics during this era became known as the "Nine Old Men." Disney sought to improve his cartoons by having the animators attend seminars, take art classes and analyze movement by studying live action films and earlier cartoons.

"You were a real student of animation then ... spent your noon hour running film on moviolas, and talked about it, and you worked late at night - no unions, of course," Kimball recalled in Leonard Maltin's book "Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons."

"Ward's passing is a tremendous loss to the animation community and to our studio," said Roy E. Disney, vice chairman of the Walt Disney Co. and nephew of founder Walt Disney. "He was a brilliant animator and filmmaker with a distinctive style and humor all his own."

Among Kimball's contributions were the redesign of Mickey Mouse and the creation of Jiminy Cricket for "Pinocchio." Kimball said he drew more than a dozen versions of Jiminy before ending up with a figure that "looked like Mr. Pickwick, but with no ears, no nose and no hair."

After a stint as an animator on "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," he was promoted to animation supervisor on "Dumbo," "Fantasia," "The Three Caballeros," "Alice in Wonderland," "Cinderella" and "Peter Pan."

Kimball also directed the Oscar-winning shorts "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom" in 1953 and "It's Tough To Be a Bird" in 1969.

Kimball wrote the stories for and directed a landmark trio of shows for the "Disneyland" television series - "Man in Space," "Man and the Moon," and "Mars and Beyond."

The trilogy is often credited with popularizing the concept of the government's space program during the 1950s, Green said.

He retired from Disney in 1973, but re-emerged five years later for a whistle-stop train tour that traveled from Los Angeles to New York City in celebration of Mickey Mouse's 50th birthday.

Besides creating animated characters, Kimball formed a Dixieland jazz band in 1948 called the Firehouse Five Plus Two. The group recorded 12 albums and appeared on the Milton Berle and Ed Sullivan television shows, with Kimball on the trombone.

He also created a book of parodies of famous paintings called "Art Afterpieces."

Kimball is survived by his wife of 66 years, Betty; three children, John Kimball, Kelly Kimball and Chloe Lord; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

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## OBITUARIES

# Ward Kimball, 88; Key Disney Animator

By CHARLES SOLOMON  
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

July 9 2002

Ward Kimball, the most colorful and eccentric of the Nine Old Men, the key group of Disney artists whose work set the standard by which all animation is judged, died Monday at Arcadia Methodist Hospital in Arcadia. He was 88 and died of natural causes.

In addition to his work on the classic features "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," "Fantasia," "Dumbo," "The Three Caballeros," "Melody Time," "Cinderella," "Alice in Wonderland" and "Mary Poppins," Kimball directed the Oscar-winning shorts "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom" (1953) and "It's Tough To Be a Bird" (1969).

"Ward is one man who works for me that I am willing to call a genius," Diane Disney Miller quoted her father as saying in "The Story of Walt Disney." Born on March 4, 1914, in Minneapolis, Kimball attended the Santa Barbara School of the Arts, intending to become a painter/illustrator. In March 1934, an instructor persuaded him to submit a portfolio to the Walt Disney Studio in Los Angeles. Kimball later told an animation historian, John Canemaker, that he had insisted that the studio accept or reject him on the spot, declaring "I don't have enough money to buy gas to come back!"

Kimball began work at Disney a month later and remained there until he retired in 1973. He received his first solo assignment in 1935, animating a grasshopper-musician in the "Silly Symphony" "Woodland Cafe." Kimball quickly rose through the ranks to become a supervising or directing animator.

He spent months animating a sequence for "Snow White" in which the dwarfs eat the soup Snow White has prepared for them; he was ready to quit when it was cut from the film.

He made an appointment to see Walt Disney, but Disney began talking about "Pinocchio" and how he wanted Kimball to animate the cricket who would serve as the title character's conscience. Recalling how deftly Disney had defused a problem on one film by building his enthusiasm for the next one, Kimball said, "Walt was a salesman!"

The design of Jiminy Cricket proved difficult. Kimball explained, "Normally, an artist caricatures an animal by learning to draw it correctly--then the caricature becomes a simple problem of degree. But a cricket looks like a cross between a cockroach and grasshopper. I did 12 or 14 versions, and gradually cut out all the insect appendages. I ended up with a little man who looks like Mr. Pickwick, but with no ears, no nose and no hair. The audience accepts him as a cricket because the other characters say he is."

Kimball ranked as among his best work the animation of the jaunty but sympathetic crows who give Dumbo confidence in the form of a "magic feather." A jazz fan and a musician, he found the crows "exactly what I had in mind for animation: I realized you had to create a personality for each one, just as Walt had always insisted that the Dwarfs had to have seven distinct personalities with clean demarcations between them."

But the madcap finale of "The Three Caballeros" (1945) is generally considered Kimball's finest and most characteristic work. Donald Duck, Jose Carioca and Panchito zip around the screen, performing the title number as props appear and disappear. The song ends with Panchito holding the last note for an impossible 20 seconds, while Donald and Jose scramble for ways to silence him. Director Clyde Geronimi objected to Kimball's illogical cutting within the sequence: Donald may exit to the right and re-enter from the left.

But Disney liked the effect and, as Kimball noted, "that was all that mattered."

In 1948, Kimball formed a Dixieland jazz band, The Firehouse Five Plus Two, with other Disney artists, including Frank Thomas, another of the Nine Old Men, on piano. They began playing for noon dances on studio sound stages, with Kimball leading and playing trombone. The Firehouse Five soon graduated to nightclubs, including the Mocambo in Hollywood, appeared on the Milton Berle and Ed Sullivan television shows, and recorded 12 albums (which have been reissued on CD). In his later years, Kimball received fan mail--and royalty checks--for his work with a group that disbanded when the members tired of "the late hours, the extra effort and the frenzy."

After working on the spoiled cat, Lucifer, in "Cinderella," Kimball animated Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the Mad Hatter and the March Hare and the Cheshire Cat in "Alice in Wonderland" (1951). Although he found the finished film disappointing, Kimball said, "I didn't realize it at the time, but the Cheshire Cat is the maddest thing in the whole picture because he was underplayed. He didn't move much--he'd finish a word and accent it with a quick flipping back and forth of the tail, then he'd go into that grin. I didn't realize it was so mad." Kimball's increasingly stylized approach to animation didn't fit into the personality-driven features of the '50s, and Disney assigned him to direct two short films for release in 1953. "Adventures in Music: Melody" was the studio's first 3-D cartoon; "Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom," Disney's first CinemaScope short, won an Oscar for Best Cartoon. He directed a second Oscar-winner in 1969, the 22-minute "It's Tough To Be a Bird," which featured stylized visuals and irreverent humor.

He followed the shorts with three one-hour programs for the "Disneyland" TV series: "Man in Space" (1955), "Man and the Moon" (1955) and "Mars and Beyond" (1957). Kimball described these off-beat mixtures of animation, live action, fact, fiction and humor as "the creative high point of my career." He later worked on the live-action musical "Babes in Toyland" (1961), and produced and directed 43 episodes of the syndicated series "The Mouse Factory" (1972-73).

Kimball retired from the Disney Studio in 1973, but emerged for special assignments. In 1978, he served as the conductor on the "Birthday Special," a whistle-stop train tour from Union Station in Los Angeles to New York City in celebration of Mickey Mouse's 50th birthday. He also helped to design the 1982 "World of Motion" attraction for the Epcot Center in Florida.

These projects combined two of Kimball's great loves: animation and railroads. In 1938, he bought a full-sized 1881 steam locomotive, which he restored and installed with other cars and engines on a track in the backyard of his San Gabriel home: the Grizzly Flats Railroad. He amassed an extraordinary collection of model trains and helped to fire Walt Disney's interest in railroading. In 1992, he donated some of his rolling stock to the Orange Empire Railway Museum in Riverside.

An irreverent, iconoclastic man, Kimball was an exceptional caricaturist: During the late '30s, he and his assistant Walt Kelly, the future creator of "Pogo," drew countless gag cartoons about each other. The same quirky spirit pervaded his animation, as Canemaker concluded in his recent book, "Walt Disney's Nine Old Men & the Art of Animation":

"Ward Kimball's contribution to Disney animation was unique; it represents an exciting alternative approach to character animation and narrative--open, fresh, and experimental. It reflects the man himself, who had within him the spirit of an independent filmmaker."

Kimball is survived by his wife of 66 years, Betty; three children, John Kimball, Kelly Kimball and Chloe Lord; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Services will be private with plans for a remembrance to be announced later. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations be made to any of the following: Berklee College of Music (Boston); Ward Kimball Memorial Fund (California Institute of the Arts, 24700 McBean Parkway, Valencia, Calif.); the Cartoon Art Museum (San Francisco); or the Orange Empire Railroad Museum (Perris, Calif.)

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