

Tooning Up for Relief

by Patrick Aloysius Murphy

A group of local cartoonists and the director of a local senior center have put together the biggest fundraising event of the year for flood victims in Santa Cruz. The Artists' Rainbow Exhibition, featuring more than 300 original works of printed and film animation from comic strips and major studios, will be held Monday, May 17, through Sunday, May 23. The event includes an art exhibition, an animated film festival, an auction and luncheon.

Anne Singer, director of the Live Oak Senior Center, decided to start this project because of the many seniors in the county victimized by the January storm and flood. Scores of film animators who live in the Santa Cruz-Monterey area will be participating, including Lee Blair, Bob Carlson, Robert DeGrasse, Dave Hilberman,

country. Yet his secret dream is to "someday have time for art work without daily deadlines."

Producer Goldman is an outspoken ambassador of the animated film industry. His career includes an Oscar for his captivating short, *Dot and the Line* (a romance in lower mathematics). It's based on Norton Juster's book about a straight line that vies with a squiggle for the affections of a dot.

Goldman expressed his disdain for the way in which American film students are treated today. "There are hundreds of students every year studying animation," he said. "Disney has a program for training people but out of 135 students selected for the program last year, only six were retained on the staff. To get a job and earn a livelihood, students must do the type of film programs you see on Sat-



Anne Singer of Santa Cruz's Live Oak Senior Center is flanked by local animators who have donated work for flood relief. They are (from left) Eldon Dedine, Gus Arriola, Les Goldman and David Hilberman.

Frank Hill and Ed Parks, all formerly with Walt Disney, as well as Academy Award winner Les Goldman (*Dot and the Line* animated film). Cartoonists Gus Arriola, "Gordo"; George Crinshaw, "Belvedere"; Jim Davis, "Garfield"; Lee Holley, "Pony Tail"; Hank Ketcham, "Dennis the Menace"; Dick Rogers, "Johnny Wonder"; and Futzie Nutzle are also participating. All of these artists agreed to help out with donated art work. Once the word got out, artists from all over the country started donating work, and the event has steamrolled.

Recently, this reporter had the opportunity to chat with animators Blair, Arriola and Goldman in preparation for the fundraiser.

Blair worked for the early pioneers of animated film during the 30s, including the Walt Disney studios. "Disney had the taste of Mr. Joe Smith America," said Blair. "He wasn't too sophisticated. I remember this one fella was a great admirer of El Greco. He had a big El Greco reproduction in his room. Walt was quite impressed with it. One time we were in the 'sweat box' and Walt was criticizin' this guy's animation. Walt said, 'I don't know why you don't make it like that fella, El Gracko.'"

Blair left Disney after completing the story development of "Tocata and Fugue in D Minor" for the film *Fantasia*. He spent 20 years in New York with his own company doing commercial and educational films before he moved to Santa Cruz several years ago.

When you first meet Gus Arriola, it's hard to believe that this distinguished-looking gentleman produces a lackadaisical, chunky Mexican tourist guide called Gordo, plus a barnyard full of characters. "I read an article on earthworms and found out they had to stay moist to survive," he said. "So I thought, what better way than to have a couple of drinking worms. Plus animals can make more caustic comments than earthworms."

Arriola has produced the comic strip "Gordo" for 40 years, six to seven days a week. The strip is shown in 153 newspapers all over the

urday morning TV." Goldman claimed, however, that Canada and Yugoslavia are two outstanding areas today for film animation—the industry in those countries receives state support.

"I did a computer survey to find out what private and public foundations supported animated films in this country," he said. "The computer spit out three—one for \$2,100, one for \$1,500 and another for \$1,000. That was the total support for film animation."

Goldman said there is a big "hole in the market" today for G-rated animated films. "Exhibitors are looking for G-rated family films but there are very few. Why spend millions for a G-rated film when shock films and *Animal House*-type comedies are drawing the audiences?" he asked rhetorically. "The movie audience of today ranges from 15 to 25 years of age. Younger kids aren't safe going to the movies now, with reefer and coke going up the aisles rather than popcorn."

All the money raised from the Rainbow Festival will be used to assist flood and mudslide victims. The gallery exhibition is \$1, the auction and luncheon is \$25, and the animated film festival is \$5/\$2. See you there.

The Artists' Rainbow Exhibition for flood relief in Santa Cruz County runs Monday, May 17 through Sunday, May 23, 11 am to 6:30 pm at the Gallery, 1411 Pacific Ave., S.C. \$1 donation.

The special auction and luncheon will be held Sunday, May 23, 11 am to 4 pm, at the Cocoanut Grove, 400 Beach St., S.C. \$25 donation.

The animated film festival, featuring a selection of first-rate animated works, will be held Sunday, May 23, 7 & 9 pm at the Loudon Nelson Community Center, corner of Laurel and Center streets, S.C. \$5 adults, \$2.50 children.