RULES' TALE[1]

aka ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dan F. McLaughlin, Jr. died March 15, 2016, then I got this manuscript. My name is Dan McLaughlin. My Dad died that day.

Other salient points: Dad had been working on this book for decades. He had been making independent films for decades. He taught animation to 800 students and oversaw 700 films. That took decades, too. He had taken decades to complete films. Others had been completed in less time. For decades he had worked on The Book (this Book). A few years before he died he had suffered a stroke. Before the stroke he had finished the words, and allegedly the artwork for The Book, which was "in the storage unit someplace." (In the time before the storage unit, the artwork had been "in the office someplace.")

Salient facts about me: I am the eldest and only son (with two younger sisters). I am reference librarian. I have self-published several works of both fiction and non-fiction. In my youth, I made a few animated films using UCLA equipment, and later worked on a few of Dad's projects.

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1. You know, reading this you might get the impression I did all the work in getting this book ready for publication as the heroic and solitary work of filial duty. Nothing could be further from the truth. Four of my father's UCLA colleagues, Celia Mercer, Phil Denslow, Doug Ward and Steve Engles provided prompt, courteous, thorough and comprehensive answers whenever Dad left tantalizing clues to the identity of a student or the intricacies of a process. Doug and Steve in particular deserve credit for going through the three boxes of potential illustrations I culled from my Dad's stuff, which I dragged up to the animation room at UCLA (Doug consistently arranged for free parking, no matter how many times I showed up, and advised me on whether the item I had pulled from Dad's effects actually did illustrate a particular concept in Dad's text. In many cases they had suggestions or alternatives to my initial finding that were much better. They also listened to the choices I made in regards to the entire project and offered helpful critiques and advice. Overall, basically anything I asked for from the UCLA animation community was quickly and I would say lovingly provided. Every time I asked for help or assistance from just about everyone, the answer was always preceded with some variation of "Your father meant so much to animation, and all of us, I would be happy to help."

So anyway in that kinda, "Hey this wasn't supposed to happen now/We all knew it was gonna happen soon" stupor soon after he died, my sisters and I gathered. At one point I asked, "So what about The Book?" One sister, who had been closer to him for the past couple of decades, said, "I think I have a copy of it." My other sister, who had been the closest of us all to him for decades, said, "And I think the art for it is in the storage unit someplace." We all laughed. "Mind if I take a look and see about getting it published?" They said no. "Any of it digitized?" I asked. We all laughed, again.

Next salient point: The words were way more done than the pictures. Rather quickly, my sister had gotten to me The Book in the form of a box containing various paper[2] drafts of the book.[3] After comparing them, I assembled and then OCRed what I think was meant to be the final version of each chapter. Basically, I chose the longest version of each chapter that had non-sequential illustration numbers, i.e. 5-17, 5-18, 2-47, 3-6, 5-19. I assumed that those versions reflected revisions of earlier chapters where the illustrations had been in order. In general, each subsequent version seemed longer than the one that preceded it, and had fewer notes made by Dad commenting on the text. Based on clues in the text, it looked like the last times various sections had been touched varied from 2002 through 2007.

Next salient point: Sections of the text that were completely outdated were intertwined with useful, interesting or relevant material. For instance, in the section on copyright (dated), there is a story of a student who left a piece of art for Elton John that attracted his attention and charmed him enough to give her the rights to one of his songs for her film. In another instance, in the midst of a discussion of current computer technology (very dated), he inserted a discussion of the artist as tool user vs. the engineer as toolmaker. It became clear to me that to simply delete the dated material would render the surrounding material meaningless and disjointed. On the other hand, correcting the dated material would be a daunting task outside the scope of my ability or time I wished to devote to this project. So I made an Editorial Decision: The text would stay pretty much as is, and any updates or corrections (which are extensive in many areas) would be made in the form of footnotes.[4] The only time I altered the text was when I attempted to corral his Hegelian-like sentences that suffer from a lack of pronouns or verbs or both. After I took a crack at at it, Kristina Haar proofread the book, and the author's granddaughter, Rose La Follette, indexed it.

Next salient point: Dad liked to repeat himself. Both verbally and here in The Book, he delighted in saying the same thing over and over. But since this book can plausibly be read non-linearly, I kept in almost all of the repeats.

Next salient point: I also assumed that at some point in time in the storage unit, I would find a box with "illustrations" written on the outside, and filled with folders labeled 2-47, 3-6, 5-17, 5-18, 5-19. Alas,

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2. Yes, paper. He even meticulously laid out several pages of tables with tabs which OCR simply could not handle. If there any readers who are intending to leave a *magnum opus* behind for someone else to finish, remember, digital is good, label your drafts and leave the layout to the layout people.

3. And to be fair, there WERE a handful of floppy disks with drafts of texts and about 40 pieces of complete art. Also, his wife Marilyn Powell at the time of his death had a Word file of the introduction and first chapter that she emailed me from her home in Canada. Margit Schmitt also had variations of copies of these two files.

4. You know, there's always a section in these things where someone says something like, "I would like to thank X, Y and Z for their invaluable assistance, but all errors remain my responsibility." Well, in this case, not so much. This is Dad's book. Cleaned up, yes, but this is really his book.

this never really happened. However, as I climbed over and among the 120 boxes that filled the storage unit, I made an Editorial Decision:

First Editorial Decision: This book, The Book, would show the creative steps, and more important the missteps, that are made before the final project is put in front of an audience. Also, I decided to include things which are admittedly tangential to a book on animation but illustrated more of Dad's creative and professional life. The decision to show the author's drafts, missteps and rejection letters was made easier by the fact that the author was dead and not around to contest it.[5] Under the tangential category I have included among other things a letter that Dad sent President Nixon, along with a copy of his film *Peace* (fig.1-8). *Peace* had been shot on a protest day for the Vietnam War and consisted of people at Venice Beach saying, "peace." Dad sent a copy of the film to the White House along with a request that the White House provide back a translation of the North Vietnamese for the word "peace." Under the process category, I have included a series of pencil tests from Dad's film *Claude* that nicely illustrate in detail how what looks so right in the final film is usually a result of considered thought and experimentation (fig. 7-78).[6]

Next salient point: While in many ways the author was a humble person (I would argue that the reason for his success as a teacher was his ability to transcend himself when considering a student's film and not impose his will or aesthetic on it), at the end of the day he was a UCLA professor who was used to things magically appearing because he was a UCLA professor and a heck of a nice guy. Among the things he thought would magically appear were images from major studios that he could use to demonstrate various animation techniques and styles. Consider his letter he sent to the Legal Department at Disney (fig. ar-1). Since Disney never got back to him, I made another series of Editorial Decisions:

First Editorial Decision (Art): First, I used a ton of art taken from the 120 boxes of Dad's stuff as illustrations, including art taken from films he never finished. Hence here seen for the first time is art from *Harry*, the story of a rather ordinary man who receives the answer to all the world's problems and a mandate to share it; and *Easter Island*, the story of what happens on Easter Island after the tourists leave. I used these images primarily as examples of storyboarding and character research.

Second Editorial Decision (Art): Rather than rely on or borrow images from others, I decided to simply ask the UCLA community to come forward again and provide images taken from their films to illustrate the diversity of the types of films that can be called animation. So I sent a series of emails to everyone who had attended Dad's service (held and hosted most graciously by UCLA---They even covered parking!) asking for artwork from their films. Phil Faroudja, Phil Denslow, Ron Saks, Valeria Lattera, Jay Shipman, Celia Mercer, Brian Wells and Tami Tasik responded. I also reached out to Emily Hubley because her mother Faith Hubley and my Dad were close (fig. 2-34), and she responded with a scene from *Adventures of an* * as well as several corrections/suggestions of Dad's text that I had sent her. Jerry Beck responded with much useful advice and encouragement, and I also heard from Bob Dickson, long time friend and film maker, and Maureen Furniss at Cal Arts.

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5. It also helped that he saved pretty much everything from his life including his first contract as a Hollywood extra at the age of 2 months and the Christmas cards he received from Disney animators.

6. Here is the first plug for the DVD of my Dad's films called *11 Films by Dan McLaughlin* available through, Pyramid Media (2004).

Third Editorial Decision (Art): I hired two incredibly talented artists to supply art that wasn't gonna come from anyplace else. Adam Holmes took Dad's rough sketches of the character Harry and then went through all the steps in designing a character and model sheets. Mike Schmitt took a rather minimal sketch showing a two shot and extrapolated from it a wide variety of camera angles and design elements. He also took the characters from *Claude* and used them to illustrate elements of design taken from classical painting. Both of these artists are available for employment.

Next salient point: While many of the above steps were being done, my lovely wife Vendi Elmen then designed the look and layout of the book, and then laid out the book in a program called InDesign combining over 250,000 OCRed words with over 1,000 individual illustrations. It sorta took over her creative life for about a year. We are, as of this moment, still married.

Penultimate Editorial Decision: I am self-publishing this book through Createspace, which allows me to set the price. Since this book was clearly intended by my Dad to be his legacy to the world of animation, I, with my sister's consent, have decided to sell this book at cost.

Final Editorial Decision: So to keep the design easier (words in one book, illustrations in the other), to keep the physical size of the book a reasonable one for a paperback, to lower the costs of the individual books and to allow the inclusion of more art, I decided to separate the words from art into two physical books. You have in your hands the word book. The other book is called *Animation Rules: Book Two* isbn 1541104048.

So that's basically it. I am sure this is not the book that my Dad had in his head. Nor should anyone regard each word or statement as gospel truth. But in retrospect, I believe this work is better because I went through 120 boxes of stuff rather than finding a neat folder or floppy disk that said "illustrations." What this book loses in topicality I think it gains in perspective in many ways. First, it reflects a moment in time when traditional hand-drawn animation co-existed with computers, and this book talks about both worlds as equally viable. Next, by considering the aesthetic through the ethical and ending up with the economic implications of the life of the animator, the book is filled with insights that transcend technology. Next, this book emphasizes process much more than final results, and shows the rejections and failures that even a successful artist has to go through to reach a final result. By seeing the failures, I believe the reader is better equipped to deal with and overcome them in their own work. Finally, this book has become much more of an homage to both my Dad and the UCLA Animation Workshop. For those of you who knew my father, this close relationship comes as no surprise. For everyone else, this book is an excellent memorial. As a son and a scholar, I am proud to bring this work to your attention. For all its flaws, this book is in his own words and is filled with his art. It is good. It is him.

Enjoy.
Or as he would say,
Peace.

Dan McLaughlin
Pasadena, California

c estate of Dan F. McLaughlin, Jr.