



John Dunn Class of 2020

John graduated from Oroville High School (OHS) in 1938 and was active in dramatics and journalism. While still a student, John drew cartoon advertisements for local businesses and had cartoons published regularly in the Oroville Mercury-Register. His first published work in the newspaper was a weekly cartoon, "Julius Orvilla". He also wrote monthly movie schedules for the local newspaper.

A 1937 article in the Mercury-Register suggested that John had been made aware of the possibility of a career in animation: "A career in the movies was in the offing today for John Dunn. OHS senior, whose interpretations of "Julius Orvilla", mystical citizen, entertains Mercury readers. Dunn has received an offer from MGM studios to become an inbetweener." Dunn never followed up on the offer.

Following his graduation from OHS, John worked for Western Pacific Railroad at the Roundhouse in Oroville and then immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, enlisted in the United States Army, serving from 1942-45. He volunteered to go overseas, but was rejected due to astigmatism and therefore was stationed all over the Western part of the country. While in the service, John created a comic strip for the Army newspaper featuring a character he called "Colonel Wrightflank". The strip was printed regularly in The Army Times.

Upon his honorable discharge in 1945, and thanks to the GI Bill, John studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland and at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago.

The Scottish born Dunn's long and distinguished career as a cartoonist began in 1952 when he was hired by Walt Disney. His first story credit, "Man in Space," received an Oscar nomination. For the next 31 years, John was a prolific cartoonist, screenwriter and story man in the world of cartoons and show business. In 1963 he moved to Warner Brothers Cartoons, where he began with "The Pied Piper of Guadalupe", also nominated for an Oscar. Following the closure of Warner Brothers, other agencies with whom John shared his talents were Hanna Barbera and DePatie-Freleng Enterprises. His creative genius was a driving force for the success at the latter company.

In addition to his work in printed cartoons, John also experienced tremendous success in the world of film. Noted best-seller animated movies in which John was involved included "Peter Pan", "The Lady and the Tramp" and "101 Dalmatians". He was a member of the crew that created the movie "The Pink Panther". The last movie to which he contributed was the Daffy Duck movie, "Fantastic Island", at which there was a dedication to John prior to the film's release. During his brief work in television, he came up with the idea for the successful series, "I Dream of Jeannie".

John's work on The Pink Panther cartoon received the Venice Film Festival Silver Plaque, The Krakow Film Festival Award and the U.S Golden Eagle Certificate. His most rewarded work was creating the cartoon character, "The Pink Panther" and crafting the story for the Pink Panther, for which he received the nomination and the Oscar for the Best Animated Short at the 1964 Academy Awards.

Amid Amidi, publisher and editor of the highly acclaimed magazine Animation Blast wrote: *"As a youngster, John would gather local kids around an area they called, "the claim" (now Hewitt Park) and he would tell tales of the cowboys and Indians who had occupied the Oroville area only a few years before him. In later years, Dunn would often attribute his narrative sensibilities to his mother who had told him many stories when he was young"*.

“John Dunn was truly the last of a breed: a story artist who understood gags as well as he could write them. Despite the fact that he got his first short credit in 1961, well before TV has struck a death blow to the short subject, Dunn remained a creative powerhouse for decades.”

“He wrote more shorts in the 1960’s and 1970’s than any other storyman in the business. While the dreary circumstances of the era often kept his ideas from being executed to their fullest potential, his virtual anonymity today is undeserved. Dunn was a one-of-a-kind artist, equally talented as a writer, storyboard artist and character designer. He was the last great storyman of the theatrical shorts era.”

John was born in Coatbridge Lanarkshire, Scotland on February 5, 1919 and passed away on January 18, 1983 in San Fernando, CA. His family moved to the United States in 1926, when John was six years old. He and his wife Marcella were married in 1939 and they had three children. His younger brother Alvin Dunn was inducted into the OUHSD Hall of Fame in 2018.