

Biography of Joe Hale – A Disney Animator

Joe Hale was born to Vern and Chloe Hale on June 4, 1925, in Chelsea, Michigan. With seven sisters and a brother sharing the modest house on Madison Street, Hale, at times, took refuge at his small hometown movie theatre. It was there that a 35-year career with Disney readied for motion. After watching the Walt Disney production *Bambi* seven times in three days, an adolescent Hale set his course to become a Disney animator.

However, epic events of the era put his dream on hold for a few years. With WWII raging in Europe, the 18 year-old Hale dropped out of high school in 1943, and with his best friend enlisted in the Marines. Before his discharge in 1946, he saw combat at Iwo Jima and gathered memories he would rather not dwell on.

With his service to the country over, Hale returned to Michigan, received his high school diploma from the Class of 1947, and then attended the Michigan Academy of Arts in Saginaw. He finished his training at the Lukits Academy of Fine Arts in Los Angeles. He married his wife of more than 60 years, Beverly, and started a family, raising two sons.

With his sights still set on drawing for Disney, Hale joined the company's animator training program in 1951. That was the beginning of a storied career that would span four decades and witness the first golden age of Disney animation. Hale worked alongside Walt Disney's Nine Old Men, a group of core animators, and right-hand men, who created some of Disney's most iconic animation.

Hale himself worked with the Walt Disney and on more than 100 projects as an animator and cartoon layout artist for the production company. He worked for ten years on *Wonderful World of Color*, a Disney television series in the 1960's. He also made important contributions to such classics as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Mary Poppins*, *Lady and the Tramp*, and *Pete's Dragon*.

He was part of Disney's production, *It's Tough to Be a Bird*, and *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom*, both of which won an Academy Award for Best Cartoon Short Subject. He also received an Academy Award nomination in 1979 for Best Animated Visual Effects for his efforts on *The Black Hole*.

Hale was named the producer for Disney's 25th full-length animated feature, *The Black Cauldron*, in 1980. He rewrote the script at that time and was in charge of all aspects of the production of the film. *The Black Cauldron* was released in 1985 and he retired from Disney the following year.

In 2008, Hale was honored with a NFFC Disney Legend Award presented by the National Fantasy Fan Club in recognition of his significant contributions to the Disney legacy. He also continues to make appearances on behalf of Disney at conventions.

In his retirement, Hale has remained active in the arts through personal projects of sculpting, carving, and drawing. In addition, he volunteers with the Board of Directors for the Moonlight Amphitheater, a live theater in San Diego County, and has been a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences for more than 40 years.

Hale has also maintained his relationship with the Marines throughout the years. Since retirement, he finds time to coach new recruits in skeet and trap shooting at Camp Pendleton in San Diego County, California. And he started a cactus garden at the shooting range as a memorial to the Camp Pendleton Marines who have died in the Iraq War.

From his simple beginnings in a small hometown to reaching the height of his dream career, Hale has remained generous with his talent and true to its art.