

Family says 'Philadelphia' was ripoff of lawyer's life story

■ **LAWSUIT:** The plaintiffs claim the Oscar-winning film was taken from Geoffrey Bowers' life

NEW YORK (AP) — Relatives of a lawyer who was fired after contracting AIDS will try to prove to a jury this week that his story was stolen by the creators of the movie Philadelphia.

Trial is set to begin Tuesday in U.S. District Court on a \$10 million lawsuit filed by the family of Geoffrey Francis Bowers.

Philadelphia won an Oscar in 1994 for actor Tom Hanks for his portrayal of lawyer Andrew Beckett, a fictional char-

acter fighting his dismissal from a law firm because of AIDS.

Like the movie character, Bowers worked for a major law firm and was fired in 1986 after workers noticed that he had disfiguring facial lesions of Kaposi's sarcoma, an AIDS-related cancer.

Bowers died in 1987 at age 33, shortly after testifying against the New York law firm of Baker & McKenzie in his own lawsuit claiming that he was discriminated against because he had AIDS. The state human rights board later ordered Baker & McKenzie to pay \$500,000 for discriminating against Bowers.

Lawyers for TriStar Pictures Inc., Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc. and individ-

uals who played key roles in the movie's development concede in court papers that two emotional movie scenes were inspired by Bowers' case.

They were a courtroom scene in which Beckett opens his shirt to display his lesions, and one in which Beckett's mother encourages his fight, saying "I didn't raise my kids to sit in the back of the bus."

However, the lawyers maintain both moments were described in published stories that were in the public domain.

Bowers' family, from Medford, Mass., said in their lawsuit that they had negotiated to have a movie made about his struggle but were left out after telling

their story to Scott Rudin, a defendant and one of the producers of Philadelphia.

Defendant Ron Nyswaner, who wrote the movie's script, said in a court document that Rudin approached him in 1988 about writing a screenplay based on the Bowers story.

He said Rudin gave him a copy of an article about Bowers but never told him anything he had learned from his discussions with the Bowers family.

Nyswaner said he did extensive research, and talked to people diagnosed with AIDS. And he noted that at the time, one of his own nephews was dying of AIDS, as was a close friend of the movie's director, Jonathan Demme.

Long-time 'Late Show' producer moving on

■ **LETTERMAN:** The move was an amicable one, says Robert Morton

NEW YORK (AP) — A long-time co-executive producer of "Late Show with David Letterman" was abruptly dropped from the program this weekend in the latest change in the comedian's behind-the-camera staff.

Robert Morton, who has worked with Letterman since the early 1980s, will now produce a new comedy, *The High Life*, for Letterman's production company, Worldwide Pants.

Morton, a familiar face to Letterman viewers for brief, but frequent appearances on the show when Letterman introduces "our producer Robert Bob Morty Morton," said he will not be on the air anymore.

Morton said he was told of the move by Letterman late Friday. The producer said there was nothing unseemly behind the unusual weekend announcement or other recent staff moves on *Late Show*.

"I don't think anybody's acting malicious here," Morton said. "I'm personally very pleased with this shift and I'm very encouraged by what we can

achieve in the future."

The change comes as Letterman prepares to return from vacation March 25 with a new set, including a different desk and chairs.

The *Late Show* has slipped in the ratings since July, falling behind NBC's *Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. Recently, Letterman has begun to catch up.

Morton will be replaced as executive producer by Rob Burnett, the show's top writer. Morton will also produce another comedy, *The Bonnie Hunt Show*, and will have an expanded role with the Letterman company.

Recently, Letterman's long-time director, Hal Gurnee, and his announcer, Bill Wendell, retired. Staff members said Gurnee had wanted to retire for some time but stayed on to smooth the transition when Letterman moved from NBC to CBS in August 1993.

The show also recently lost one of two segment producers, Daniel Kellison. The other executive producer, Peter Lassally, recently took an expanded role with Letterman, taking charge of *The Late Late Show with Tom Snyder*, another Worldwide Pants production.

Museum of Cartoon Art opens

■ **COMICS:** Mort Walker founded the museum in 1974; Charles Schulz donated \$1 million to the project

BOCA RATON, Fla. (AP) — Good grief. Charlie Brown's new home opened Sunday, and his comic-page neighbors were all there, too: from Dick Tracy, Mickey Mouse and Prince Valiant to Calvin and Hobbes.

The International Museum of Cartoon Art houses 160,000 works by more than 1,000 artists. The \$15 million museum was conceived after the displays outgrew cramped quarters, first in Greenwich, Conn., then in Rye Brook, N.Y.

Its dedication Friday night drew the kings of American comics — *Peanuts* creator Charles Schulz, who donated \$1 million to the museum, Fred Laswell (*Snuffy Smith*), Jim Davis (*Garfield*), Mort Walker (*Beetle Bailey*) and others.

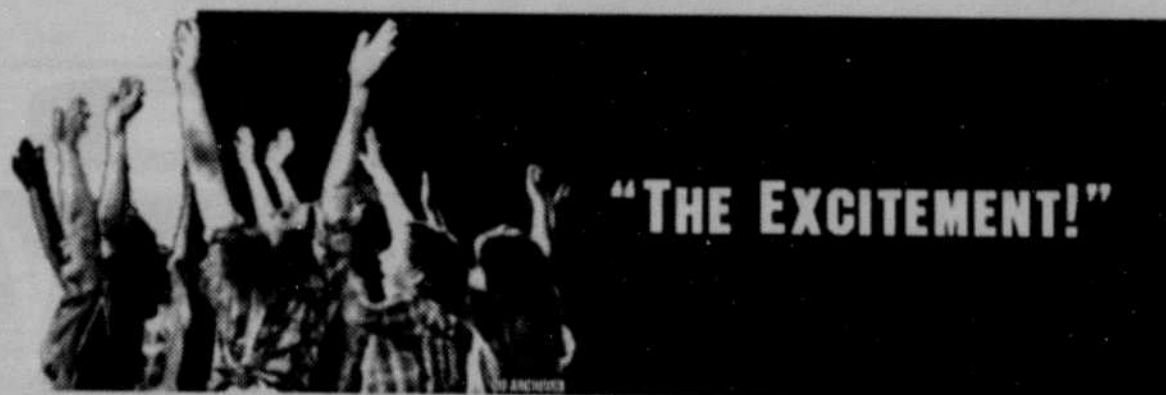
Walker, also the creator of *Hi and Lois*, founded the museum in 1974.

"People all over the world see cartoons every day," Walker said. "Cartoons cause us all to laugh and think, grow and change, and there are few forms of art in the world that have this impact."

The collections span over 200 years of cartoon art. There is an 1897 watercolor of America's first newspaper comic strip, *The Yellow Kid*, by Richard Outcault. And there are cartoons by Ben Franklin and Paul Revere that helped inspire the American Revolution.

There are also 1,000 hours of animation art, original cels, story boards and sketches of the Road Runner, Bugs Bunny, Yogi Bear, Donald Duck and Goofy, among others on display. The story boards include Walt Disney's *Plane Crazy* from 1928, featuring the first drawings of Mickey and Minnie Mouse.

The cartoons also include exhibits from Russia, Israel, England, Japan, Argentina, Nigeria, Norway, the Philippines, Australia and 37 other countries.



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