

The Super Sonic Speed of Time and Flying Squirrels

Written by Vivian Bikulege



On October 22, Alex Anderson Jr. died. He was the creator of Rocky and Bullwinkle, cartoon characters from the 1960's. I first read about Mr. Anderson's passing in *USA Today* while having breakfast at a Hampton Inn in New Jersey, and it cast a bit of a sad shadow on my bowl of Honey Nut Cheerios and me. I grew up with the flying squirrel and Canadian moose, their buddies, and the villains who tried to bring them down.

I love cartoons and *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle and Friends* was not like the Warner Bros.

Looney Tunes

featuring Bugs Bunny and his gang, or Disney's Mickey Mouse. Rocky and Bullwinkle battled cold-war figures Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale, and in between those escapades, Dudley Do-Right, Mr. Peabody and Sherman, and a series of

Fractured Fairy Tales

narrated by Edward Everett Horton filled my developing brain with fantastical thoughts of a squirrels in goggles, a magician moose, and bad-guy spies taking orders from their fearless leader. The cartoon was a bit over my three year-old head, and just like the flying monkeys and the wicked witch's soldiers chanting their "oh-ee-oh's" in

The Wizard of Oz

, the R&B animations creeped me out a little bit, and that is precisely what kept me coming back for more.

Reading about Mr. Anderson's death hit a middle-aged nerve in me, and I wondered if twenty-somethings picking up the *Life* section of the October 27th newspaper stopped to consider the small picture of the moose and squirrel, or if they just moved on to articles about

American Idol

judges and

Spy Kids 4

The Super Sonic Speed of Time and Flying Squirrels

Written by Vivian Bikulege

. When I took time to learn more about the TV cartoon show, I found out that it was first televised in 1959, was broadcast 5 days per week, and continued running as

The Bullwinkle Show

until it ended in 1964. I was born in 1958 and my generation is known as Late Boomers or Generation Jones. My husband is an Early Boomer, and my mom is a Depression baby or part of the Silent Generation. Kids today are part of iGen thanks to Steve Jobs and Apple, and newborns may end up being classified as “Recession Babies” or “Tea Bags” as they blossom in the era of the Tea Party Express, but I digress.

What gave me pause when I read the news about Alex is just how far away Rocky and Bullwinkle seem. The little black rocking chair I would position just so in front of our black and white TV set now occupies a nook in my nieces’ home hundreds of miles away in Texas. The “cherry bed,” my constant companion and personal version of Linus’s blanket, whose name was deceiving because I thought the little red roses on it were cherries, basically disintegrated, falling victim to the wear and tear caused by an aggressive thumb-sucker who rubbed and cuddled the silk blanket to death. And then there is me. Fifty years separate me from the little girl who grew up in Pittsburgh in the 60’s. Now, I rarely watch cartoons, and it took the passing of a man I have never met to remember a time when it was possible to believe a squirrel could fly over mountaintops and swoop down to save a moose rolling in snow to become a giant snowball, heading for certain disaster as he careened toward a cliff.

Instead of my mom making dinner in anticipation of my father arriving home from work on weeknights, I am preparing supper for her and my husband while Oprah or Ellen babbles in the background. Instead of a limp blanket and a rocking chair, I move between the kitchen and my home office with a giant cup of tea to sit in front of a computer screen, greeted by the animation of a screensaver whose message pleads with me to be positive, live simply, and love generously.

Alex Anderson passed away, but I have not. I still have opportunities to create and grow. As I plodded along in writing this essay, I Googled Rocky and Bullwinkle incessantly, and guess what? They are still alive and thriving on the Internet. If someone is really interested, DVDs of the cartoon episodes are on sale on Amazon. I bought the *Best of Fractured Fairy Tales* to share with my niece and nephews over the Thanksgiving holiday. They will moan and groan over the thought of watching such nonsense. I can hear them now. “Crazy Aunt Vivian. You always make us watch weird movies.”

I will smile and play the DVD anyway. (Unless there is a teenage mutiny or Thanksgiving football games prevail!) I will think back to times when I would sit and wait for Bullwinkle to say,

The Super Sonic Speed of Time and Flying Squirrels

Written by Vivian Bikulege

“Hey Rocky. Watch me pull a rabbit out of my hat,” and instead of a rabbit, a bear or lion or rhinoceros would appear. And I will recall when Boris and Natasha’s grand schemes were always foiled by the innocence and good intentions of a fearless squirrel and naïve moose because good should always triumph over evil in cartoons and in real life.

Today, I cannot wait for a cartoon character to surprise me. I need to surprise myself. What’s next when I reach into the unknown and what will appear? Am I courageous enough to try? Do I have the imagination of an Alex Anderson, or the faith to trust in the direction of a future speeding by faster than a gray flying squirrel, so far away from the small steps of a child moving a rocking chair from one side of the living room to the other? Does the world *want* to see me pull a metaphorical rabbit out of my hat? Will it care? Do I care?

Stay tuned for the next adventure of Vivian and her super beagle Toby as they dodge fiddler crabs in the marsh, maneuver Beaufort’s waterfront sidewalks, and bay at the crescent moon. It is a fractured, real-life tale with an ending that will play out in the Lowcountry and end in the Beaufort National Cemetery. But unlike Mel Blanc’s tombstone, my marker will not say “That’s All Folks.” I want it to read “BeLoved” with a capital L.

[Read more Whatever](#)