



## “STAR WARS” (1977)—George Lucas’ Original Vision

By Dr. John L. Flynn

### Introduction

“Star Wars” (1977), that wonderfully innocent pastiche of the “Flash Gordon” and “Buck Rogers” serials of the 1930’s, not only became one of the highest-grossing movie blockbusters of all time (with worldwide receipts of \$10 billion in 2003) but also influenced a whole generation of filmmakers with its splashy, “gee-whiz” special effects and its simplistic good-versus-evil storyline. Each generation seems to have its seminal motion pictures; for those fans growing up between the world wars, the science fiction film was “Metropolis” (1926) or “King Kong” (1933); in the 1950’s, it was “The Day the Earth Stood Still” (1951) or “Forbidden Planet” (1956); in the late 1960’s, it was “2001:

A Space Odyssey” (1968), and in the 1990’s, it was “The Matrix” (1999). For science fiction fans in the era of Watergate, Vietnam and disco, that film was “Star Wars,” and nearly every one of them can remember exactly where they were when Princess Leia’s Rebel Blockade Runner blasted across the screen, followed by the Imperial Star Destroyer. While it may be difficult for us to imagine today, what with the huge merchandising of toys, comics and video games and the worldwide fan following that its two sequels and two prequels have generated, “Star Wars” was a risky venture for 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox in 1977. In fact, executives at Fox were banking on “Damnation Alley,” based on Roger Zelazny’s nightmarish novel, to be the big science fiction blockbuster of year. Little did anyone realize, at the time, that George Lucas’s sprawling space opera of heroes and villains, 'droids, and creatures of a thousand worlds would go onto break all existing box office records.

The story for George Lucas’s original 1977 film, otherwise known as “Star Wars: Episode Four—A New Hope,” did not begin as one fully-developed, high-concept pitch but rather evolved over a five-year period from a simple thirteen-page story idea through a variety of scripts and story treatments. In fact, the origins, original storylines and development of the characters are just as fascinating as anything that appeared in the final film, its sequels and/or its prequels. But like all great sagas, one must go back to the beginning, back to that first spark of the imagination, to find out how it all began.

### **In the Beginning...**

“There's a whole generation growing up without any kind of fairy tales," Lucas first stated in 1972, thinking in very nebulous terms about a timeless fable that would

help teach children about the differences between right and wrong, good and evil. "And kids need fairy tales--it's an important thing for society to have."

After failing miserably to satisfy the corporate executives at Warner Brothers with his first feature film, "THX 1138" (1970), George Lucas began submitting ideas for two other motion pictures to several of the other studios. One of his ideas, which was drawn from his youthful experiences growing up in Modesto, California, eventually became the hit movie "American Graffiti" (1973). The other was a remake of Alex Raymond's "Flash Gordon." Lucas had long since dreamed of making a space adventure that would evoke the Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers serials of the thirties, and tried unsuccessfully to purchase the movie rights to several Raymond properties. (Federico Fellini had already optioned them, and the film "Flash Gordon" would eventually be made by Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis in 1980.) Still obsessed with making a big budget space-fantasy, George obtained tentative approval from David Picker at United Artists for a completely original story he had yet to write.

While he was completing his final touches on "American Graffiti" in February 1973, Lucas started sketching rough ideas for his film. He wrote every morning, and spent his afternoons and evenings researching fairy tales, mythology and the writings of Joseph Campbell (in particular, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*) and Carlos Castaneda (notably *Tales of Power*). He also consumed every work of science fiction, from the classics of the genre by Edgar Rice Burroughs and Alex Raymond to the more contemporary tales of Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert, E.E. "Doc" Smith, and Arthur C. Clarke. But George knew that he was much more of a conceptualist than a writer, and admitted to having great difficulty getting his ideas down on paper. He was still

struggling with those ideas when he first met Ralph McQuarrie, an illustrator for Boeing Aircraft who had also worked for NASA. Lucas asked him for suggestions how to visualize his concepts for the screen, and McQuarrie contributed some of the earliest drawings for the film.

By May 1973, George Lucas had completed a ponderous thirteen-page story treatment. Handwritten on notebook paper, it told "the story of Mace Windu, a revered Jedi-bendu of Ophuchi who was related to Usby C.J. Thape, a padawaan leader to the famed Jedi." His agent Jeff Berg and attorney Tom Pollack didn't understand a single word but, nonetheless, agreed to help him submit the idea to United Artists, which still held first option on his "big sci-fi/space adventure/Flash Gordon thing." David Picker reviewed Lucas's treatment for "The Star Wars," as it was then called, and passed on the project fearing how much it would cost to make. Universal Pictures, which also held an option on George's next picture as part of the "Graffiti" deal, was equally cautious, and eventually declined to develop the project.

Somewhat discouraged, Lucas finally consented to meet with Alan Ladd, Jr., then studio executive at 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox. (Prior to that meeting, his agent had managed to smuggle prints of "THX 1138" and "American Graffiti" to the studio head; Ladd was impressed with what he saw. He had a special eye for talent, and desperately wanted to work with the young director.) Once George had finished pitching his complicated story to Ladd, the executive agreed in principle to a deal, even though he really didn't understand the concept. (Lucas later relied on production sketches from Ralph McQuarrie to further cement Fox's offer to back a big-budget space-fantasy.) Less than two weeks after Universal had turned "Star Wars" down, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century-Fox Film

Corporation agreed to pay George Lucas \$50,000 to write and \$100,000 to direct a film that would eventually gross \$250 million. Of course, Lucas was still without a workable script.

When his first \$10,000 check from 20th Century-Fox arrived in September 1973, George was hard at work on a script. "I was fascinated by the futuristic society, the idea of rocket ships and lasers up against somebody with a stick," he later commented, but he still had problems fleshing out the characters. Lucas looked everywhere for ideas for "Star Wars" and borrowed very liberally from his sources. The major influence on his writing was Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon* serials. Light bridges, cloud cities, space swords, blasters, video screens, medieval costumes and aerial battles were all lifted from the crude serials of the thirties. From Asimov's *Foundation* trilogy, he incorporated ideas dealing with political intrigue on a galactic level; from Frank Herbert's *Dune*, notions of rare spices (ultimately dropped), galactic traders and spacing guilds and a desert planet; from Edgar Rice Burroughs's *John Carter of Mars*, banthas and huge flying birds (also discarded); from E.E. "Doc" Smith's *Lensman* saga came his notions about the Jedi knights and the Force. He also borrowed ideas from his own "THX 1138," including the robot policeman (who became stormtroopers) and the underground dwellers (Jawas). "Star Wars" would be derivative of every great science fiction theme and yet, at the same time, would remain completely original.

For two and a half years, he struggled with his worst fears, and went through dozens of ideas. He started with one storyline, but soon realized that it was too long for a single picture. He cut it in half, and then divided each half into three episodes. The "Star Wars Trilogy," as it exists today, is actually the second part of that larger story; "Star

Wars: The Phantom Menace” and Star Wars: Attack of the Clones” make up two-thirds of the first part of the story. “Star Wars: Episode Three,” which was under development at the time of this writing, is the bridge film that unites the two prequels with the original trilogy.

On March 25, 1976, George Lucas began production of the first film in the bitter cold of the Sahara Desert, and slightly more than seven years later watched his collection of ideas become the most popular film series in cinematic history.

### **The Original Story Treatment**

*May 1973*--The original story synopsis for "The Star Wars" told "the story of Mace Windu, a revered Jedi-bendu of Ophuchi who was related to Usby C.J. Thape, a padawan leader to the famed Jedi." Far above the blue-green planet of Aguilae, a silent battle takes place. Six sleek, fighter-type spacecraft rocket toward an orbiting speck, which is a gargantuan space fortress, and fire their laser bolts. The small ships are no match for the fortress, and are easily dispatched. The explosions echo across the vastness of space, and a roll-up explains that "it is the twenty-third century, a period of civil war . . ."

Leia, a rebel princess accompanied by her family and retainers, flees across that sector of space, pursued by Imperial forces of an evil sovereign. She is protected by General Luke Skywalker, an aging man who is the last of the Jedi knights. She carries 200 pounds of a rare cargo of spice and two terrified, bickering Imperial bureaucrats aboard her ship. Forced to land on Aguilae, she and the others hide from an Imperial patrol in the ruins of a religious temple. There, they discover a rebel band of ten boys (aged fifteen to eighteen) who are planning to attack an Imperial outpost. Skywalker

reluctantly accepts their help, and the group of allies heads toward a shabby cantina on the outskirts of the space port. (Leia hopes to make contact with the rebel underground, and hire a ship to take her to Ophuchi.)

Betrayed by an Imperial spy, they narrowly escape the port in a stolen space freighter, only to be chased across the galaxy by Imperial starships. Their ship is hit several times by laserblasts, and they are forced to hide in an asteroid belt to make repairs.

When they resume their trek across space, the ship is again fired upon by Imperial troops, and crippled beyond repair. Skywalker maneuvers the doomed ship toward the mysterious jungle planet of Yavin, and orders everyone to jettison safely away with rocket packs. Their group is separated, attacked by giant furry aliens, and eventually reunited by a grizzled old farmer (who is married to one of the alien creatures). Leia, however, is not as fortunate as the others, and finds herself captured, then sold to Imperial troops, by the furry aliens. (She is to be taken to Alderaan, capitol of the Empire, and exchanged for a huge bounty posted by the Sovereign.)

Determined to free her from the clutches of the evil galactic emperor, General Skywalker trains the boys to fly one-man "devil fighters." Then, with their ships disguised as Imperial rangers, the small armada flies right through the defenses of Alderaan. They penetrate the prison complex, and free the princess from her captors. Several of the boys are killed in duels with laser guns and swords, while the others fight their way through the Imperial fleet in a laser-blasting dogfight in space. Once back on Ophuchi, the boys and General Skywalker are greeted with a great ceremony to welcome the conquering heroes. They are rewarded with medals and offered commissions in the

guard by the princess, who reveals her true "goddesslike" self. The two bureaucrats get drunk and stumble off into the darkness, "realizing that they have been adventuring with demigods."

Though somewhat crude and unpolished, the thirteen-page story treatment sketches out most of the action that will follow in the series. The group's adventures on Aguilae (in the desert and cantina), Leia's rescue from the prison complex, the dogfight in space and the rewards' ceremony all survive to the final draft of "Star Wars." The chase across space, and in the asteroid belt, and the intrigue on the city-planet of Alderaan form the basis of "The Empire Strikes Back" (1980), and the jungle battle finds life in "Return of the Jedi" (1983). The characters also remain surprisingly faithful to their first inception, even though certain changes do occur. Leia continues as princess, while the character of Luke Skywalker is made a teenager (replacing the rebel band of boys). The aging General becomes Ben Kenobi, the desert rat and aging Jedi knight. The two bumbling bureaucrats are transformed into two bumbling robots; the furry aliens evolve into both Chewbacca, the Wookiee prince, and the Ewoks, and the Sovereign becomes Emperor. The only central character that is missing from this early screen treatment is Darth Vader, but he would turn up later as two villains.

### **Subsequent Revisions**

*May 1974*--After working for more than a year, George completed the first draft screenplay to "The Star Wars." The story introduced the Jedi Bendu, who were the chief architects of the invincible Imperial Space Force and personal bodyguards of the Emperor, and pitted them against the evil Knights of the Sith, a sinister warrior sect. The hero Annikin Starkiller, eighteen, his younger brother Deak, and their father Kane - the

last of the Jedi Bendu - have been hiding out on the desert planet of Utapau for many years. When Deak is killed by a seven-foot tall black knight, who comes looking for them, Kane decides that it's time to end their exile.

Meanwhile, on the cloud city of Alderaan, the Emperor Cos Dashit launches a final assault on the last of the independent systems with secret orders to destroy the last of the Jedi on Aquilae. Luke Skywalker, an aging general in his sixties and former Jedi master, tries to mount an adequate defense against the assault; but the leaders of Aquilae decide to settle for peace when an armored battle station, the size of a moon, approaches. (The small "devil fighters" are no match against the fortress.) Skywalker suspects a trap, and urges the Imperial family (with their fourteen year-old daughter Leia) to hide. When Kane and his son Annikin arrive, Luke enlists the aide of the young Starkiller (who wants to learn the ways of the Jedi from the old master) to escort the princess and her family to safety. (The King is eventually killed, and the Queen demands that Leia and her two brothers, Biggs and Windy, be taken to Ophuchi.)

During the one-sided battle, two construction robots (Artwoo Detwo and See-ThreePio) on the battlestation complain about the laserblasts (striking nearby their location) and are ejected to safety in a space pod. They crashland in the Jundland wastes of Aquilae, and stumble across the royal party. The robots join forces with Annikin, Luke and Leia, and the others and travel to the space port at Anchorhead.

The invasion force, led by General Darth Vader and Prince Valorum (a black knight of the Sith), enter the capitol city of Aquilae, and discover that all have fled to safety. Valorum is angered, and demands that Vader produce both the royal family and the last Jedi-Bendu. Determined to find them before they can escape the planet, Imperial

troops are dispatched to all the major space ports, including the one at Anchorhead. At the same time, Luke has managed to contact Han Solo, a huge green-skinned smuggler who might have a space ship fast enough to get through the Imperial blockade.

Han produces the ship, a "Baltarian" freighter, but unfortunately it lacks an integral part for one of the freezing chambers. (Imperial troops cannot identify lifeforms frozen in suspended animation, and that's the only way they'll get through a blockade.) Kane, who has already admitted that he is slowly dying, sacrifices himself by pulling the power unit from his cybernetic armor; Annikin is torn with grief, but comforted by both Leia and Skywalker.

Once outfitted with the new part, their space ship easily manages to slip through the Imperial starfleet, but is later spotted by a routine patrol. Han decides to flee the enemy craft by flying into an asteroid belt; however, the fragile freighter sustains massive asteroid damage, and they are forced to eject their lifepods over the forbidden jungle world of Yavin. On Yavin, the princess is captured by trappers and exchanged for bounty from Imperial troops. Annikin is separated from the others, and frees Chewbacca and other Wookiees from the same trappers. They reward his courage with their allegiance against the Empire. Luke, Han, C-3PO and the boys meet anthropologists Owen and Beru Lars, who lead them to the Wookiee camp. Finally reunited, the group convinces the Wookiees to attack the Imperial outpost to free Leia, but discover much too late that she has been returned to Aquilae.

General Skywalker is determined to free her from the clutches of the evil galactic emperor, and trains the Wookiees to fly one-man assault fighters. Meanwhile, Annikin has slipped aboard the battlestation, disguised as an Imperial starraider, to locate and free

Leia from her detention cell. But before he can reach her cell, he is brought down by stormtroopers. Vader takes the young captive to the control room, and begins torturing him in front of a disgruntled Valorum. Then, as the Wookiees attack the space fortress and Han coordinates an uprising on the planet (among members of the spacing guild), Valorum has a change of heart. He frees both the princess and Annikin Starkiller, and escapes with them in a lifepod. The battlestation is destroyed, and the Imperial ground troops are beaten. Once the battle is won, Queen Leia rewards Luke, Annikin, Valorum and the others with medals in the magnificent throne room of Aquilae. Artwo and Threepio are simply relieved all the excitement is over, and exit the hall of honor.

This first draft screenplay alters and expands much of the original material, but is still very crude and bloated in cinematic terms. Lucas's year-long effort introduces two villains: a sadistic general named Darth Vader and Prince Valorum, a Black Knight of the Sith. The characters are both interesting but still, at this point in the saga, somewhat one-dimensional. By making them into one person, who starts out as the embodiment of evil then changes in reaction to another's evil deeds, Lucas has the essence of the space-fantasy's tragic figure. Also, George seems to transpose Kane Starkiller's disability (--he must remain in protective cybernetic armor to maintain his life systems--) onto later conceptions of Vader. Han Solo, the huge green-skinned smuggler, remains somewhat unchanged (except in appearance) by the final draft. Owen and Beru Lars would eventually become farmers (not anthropologists), and place a much more important role as Luke's uncle and aunt. Of course, the two bumbling bureaucrats are now bumbling robots.

Other sequences, like the group's adventure in the desert and cantina of Aquilae, Leia's rescue from the prison complex, the dogfight in space and the rewards' ceremony also continue untouched to the final draft of "Star Wars." The asteroid chase and cloud city remain in tact to "The Empire Strikes Back," and the jungle battle, which would eventually form one of the key sequences in "Return of the Jedi," has been fleshed out in much greater detail. The earlier sequences (on Utapau and in the capitol of Aquilae) also provide interesting clues to characterization; for example, Grande Mouff Tarkin appears, not as a governor, but as a religious leader, and Kane's decision to leave his son in the hands of a master is similar to that made by Ben Kenobi, surrendering Luke to the master Yoda. But there was still much work to be done before the script could be a film.

*July 1974*--Two months later, Lucas produced a slightly revised version of the first script. Although the central action remains the same, several names and concepts have been reworked (for inexplicable reasons). Luke is still an aging General, but now he is identified as a former Dai Noga who master the great space Force. "Force" is used, for the first time, to identify a metaphysical power which only Dai Nogas can utilize. Princess Leia has become Zara; Annikin Starkiller is now Justin Valor, and Wookees are referred to as Jawas. Captain Dodona replaces Prince Valorum as a member of a warrior sect known as the Legions of Lettow. He has been given the task of hunting down and destroying the remaining Dai Nogas; but he, like Valorum, undergoes a change of heart. Other changes, for the most part in name only, appear throughout the story, and provide a surface, somewhat cosmetic change to the whole saga.

George Lucas knew the script was still a mess, and worked hard to produce another version.

*January 1975*--The second screenplay was finished with the title "The Adventures of the Starkiller, Episode One of the Star Wars." The new story was set in the Republic Galactica, which was ravaged by civil war, and focused on a quest for the Kiber Crystal, a powerful energy source which controlled the Force of Others. [Fans of Allan Dean Foster's "Star Wars" novel *Splinter of the Mind's Eye* will no doubt recognize the reference to the crystal.] The roll-up concluded with a prophetic promise: "In times of greatest despair there shall come a savior, and he shall be known as 'The Sons of Suns.'"

The Jedi-Bendu, led by General Skywalker and his twelve children, represent the good side of the Force (known as the Ashla Force), while Lord Vader, a seven-foot-tall black hooded knight, dominates the dark side. Obsessed with possessing the powerful crystal, Vader has been eliminating the Jedi-Bendu one-by-one. Luke Starkiller, a teenage boy, has lost both of his parents on a planet destroyed by the Death Star, and seeks out a nameless "seer" for advice about the Force and his future. Meanwhile, Leia's rebel cruiser has come under the attack of an Imperial warship, far above Luke's homeworld, and her efforts to provide a detailed map of the location of the Kiber Crystal to General Skywalker has failed. That map, along with vital construction data about the Death Star, is concealed in a small robot and jettisoned to the planet below.

After discovering the small robot (and his talkative android companion), Starkiller journeys to the spaceport to enlist a star pilot. There, he meets Han Solo, a young Corellian pirate who was formerly a cabin boy. Solo is burly, bearded, and flamboyantly dressed, and has a guinea pig-like creature named Boma for a girlfriend and a two-hundred year-old Wookiee companion named Chewbacca. They join forces with Luke, and eventually link up with General Skywalker and his twelve children. (Skywalker has

been training his children in fighter craft for an assault on the Death Star, and the information provided by the small robot gives them the edge they need.)

Luke manages to rescue both Leia and his older brother Deak from Vader, and during the final assault on the Death Star, he takes aim at its singular weakness. Starkiller destroys the Empire's battlestation, but there is still much to be accomplished. Vader is still on the loose, and the Kiber Crystal is still hidden in an unknown region of the galaxy. The script ends with a teaser, entitled "The Princess of Ondes," in which Leia and her family are kidnapped and a perilous search begins.

This screenplay had finally brought George Lucas's epic vision into focus. While the story remains consistent with his original synopsis, the action, broken into three distinct locations, was certainly manageable from both an aesthetic and technical point-of-view. He had pared his story down, blended characters and discarded material that would eventually comprise the other two films. Lucas had also transformed the two most endearing characters in the saga into their final forms. Darth Vader was now a Dark Lord of the Sith and the chief adversary of Luke and the forces of good. Han Solo is no longer a green-skinned alien (like the bounty hunter Greedo) but a young Corellian pirate. In fact, Solo's character is drawn as a thinly disguised version of George's own mentor, Francis Ford Coppola. And although the Kiber Crystal would ultimately be dropped from the series (as the physical embodiment of the Force, Lucas had found the central impetus (--Hitchcock often referred to it as a "maguffin"--)) upon which the action would turn.

Lucas now also knew that this story was only part of a much greater whole. In May 1975, he retitled "The Star Wars" as episode four in "The Adventures of Luke

Starkiller,” and sent a synopsis of the screenplay to Alan Ladd Jr. The Fox executive greeted the draft with much enthusiasm, but questioned George about the other episodes. It seemed strange to everyone (but Lucas) to start a motion picture in the middle of the action.

While writing and revising the various drafts of the screenplay for "Star Wars," Lucas had kept changing his mind as to the focus of the story. He scribbled out in longhand on specially selected blue-and-green lined paper various story synopses. Between drafts one and two, he wrote a prequel of sorts that dealt with Luke's father and his relationship to Darth Vader and Ben Kenobi. George decided he didn't like the storyline, which would eventually become the basis for “Star Wars: The Phantom Menace” and “Star Wars: Attack of the Clones,” and wrote a completely different treatment with Luke as the central figure. The plot was not all that different from the second screenplay (or the finished film, for that matter), but featured Han Solo as Luke's older, battle-weary brother. He returns to Tatooine to enlist Luke in the rescue of their father, an old Jedi Knight. At one point, Lucas even toyed with the idea of making Luke a young girl, who fell in love with Solo; but the climatic assault by hundreds of Wookiees on the Death Star remained unchanged. Several revisions later, George knew he had enough material to make several motion pictures. He determined that the first trilogy would tell the story of a young Jedi named Ben Kenobi, Luke's father and the betrayal of Darth Vader. The series would be set twenty years before the action in "Star Wars." The middle trilogy would feature Luke as a young man, struggling to learn about the Force, and the final three films would focus on Luke as an adult helping to dismantle the last

remnants of the Empire. The whole saga would take place over a sixty-year period, with C-3PO and R2D2 as the common narrative thread to the whole series.

*August 1975*--The third screenplay demonstrates Lucas's command and final understanding of his great saga. The narrative, which is tighter and considerably more focused, tells a story that seems very familiar. Luke, son of the famous late Jedi Knight, Anakin Starkiller, works as a farmboy for his bitter uncle Owen, who has stolen his nephew's savings to rescue his farm. His older brother Biggs has already gone to the Space Academy, and he longs to follow him there. But when Luke discovers a holographic message from Princess Leia in the memory systems of an R2-D2 unit, he seeks out General Kenobi, his father's comrade. Ben Kenobi is "a shabby old desert rat of a man," who may be insane (according to Owen); however, after he manages to save Luke from the sand people, the young farmboy begins to doubt his uncle's words.

Allied in a common cause to save Leia and return R2 to the rebel forces, Luke and Ben seek out a "tough James Dean-style starpilot," named Han Solo. Solo and his copilot, a Wookiee nicknamed Chewie, agree to take them and their two robots to the rebel base on their space freighter which they use for smuggling. The group is ultimately forced to blast their way out of the spaceport when Imperial troops arrive to arrest Luke.

Later, while traveling through hyperspace, Kenobi feels the presence of a mysterious force, the Kiber Crystal, and orders that they penetrate the defenses of the Death Star to obtain the crystal. Once aboard the battlestation, Han and Luke rescue Leia, who has been using the mind-control powers of a witch to keep the interrogators at bay. Ben also searches for the Kiber Crystal and encounters his former nemesis, Darth Vader. The two struggle in a fierce battle with light-sabres, and Ben is wounded but

saved by Han and Luke in the nick of time. The aging Jedi knight passes the crystal onto Luke, who then uses its magical powers to destroy the Death Star. (During the climatic space battle, Luke's older brother Biggs appears as one of the rebel pilots.) They are welcomed as conquering heroes at the rebel base, and Leia rewards them with medals and honorary titles.

Even though the dialogue is still somewhat crude, the third screenplay captures the spirit and imagination that would become the "Star Wars" movie. Now all Lucas had to do was polish some rough edges and rethink his notions about the Force. He would eventually jettison the Kiber Crystal in the fourth screenplay, and convey the Force in metaphysical terms.

*March 1976*--The fourth screenplay was actually the one that George Lucas chose to film. The narrative covers most of the action in the movie, with two important deletions. In the script, Biggs, who is now Luke's older friend, returns to Tatooine to discuss the Space Academy and his decision to join the rebels in their war against the Empire. This scene was actually filmed, but later trimmed during the final editing of the motion picture. The other sequence details Han's negotiations with Jabba the Hut prior to his liftoff from Tatooine. Again, parts of this sequence were filmed but later discarded, and ultimately added to the special edition of "Star Wars," released in 1997. George Lucas also changed Luke's surname from Starkiller to Skywalker, and took out any references to the Kiber Crystal or Leia's witch-like powers. The final product of "Star Wars," which many consider to be one of the great motion pictures of all time, is a testament to Lucas's persistence and creative imagination.

### **Characters in the Space Saga**

The inspiration for many of the characters in the "Star Wars" saga came from many of the sources George consulted while writing the first film; whereas the characters themselves may have undergone various changes in gender and form, their basic personalities remained firmly rooted in mythic or literary traditions. Lucas studied dozens of ancient legends, including King Arthur, read a variety of fantasy and science fiction stories, including Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, and isolated the most common elements and archetypal characters in an effort to produce a story that is somewhat universal. It's fascinating to view these characters in hindsight, to see how certain premises and personalities were kept intact and how others were transformed or simply abandoned.

Luke, the hero of George Lucas's space-fantasy, was originally imagined as a swashbuckling freebooter like Flash Gordon (from Alex Raymond's famous series) or John Carter (Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Warlord of Mars*). Adept with both sabres and blasters, the character had risen to ranks of General and Jedi knight. In the thirteen-page summary, General Skywalker leads a rebel band of teenage boys against the Empire. By the first draft screenplay, Luke was still a general in his early sixties, and the hero of the piece was now Annikin Starkiller, aged eighteen. Several revisions later, Luke was again the center of the story. He had become a teenager, who must rescue his brother Deak from the clutches of Darth Vader. George felt there was much more room for character development, if he introduced a young innocent who must grow to manhood, and kept the story central to him. By the next to final draft, Luke had become a farm boy, son of a famous Jedi knight, who must deliver R2D2 to a rebel stronghold on a faraway planet. The evolution of his character was nearly complete; all he needed was a mentor.

Throughout the many rewrites, Luke's thoughtful, old mentor who appears as "a shabby old desert rat" was to have been the central role in the piece. Lucas saw the character as a cross between Gandalf the Wizard in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy, Merlin the Magician and the samurai swordsman often played by Toshiro Mifune. (In fact, George first imagined Mifune in the role of Ben Kenobi, but later went with Alec Guinness when he realized that distinguished actor was available for the part.) He wanted Ben (Obi-Wan) Kenobi to be a kind and powerful wizard who had a certain dignity and could influence the weak-minded. As first envisioned, Kenobi was probably the early General Skywalker; then, in later drafts, Kane Starkiller, an anonymous "seer," and finally the crazed desert hermit who was also a Jedi master.

Leia was first conceived by Lucas as an amalgamation of Dejah Thoris (from *A Princess of Mars*), Lady Galadriel of Lothlorien (from *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy) and Dorothy Gale (from *The Wizard of Oz*). Never really named in the original story treatment, she was an eleven year-old princess, with "goddess-like" powers, who needed rescuing from Imperial troops. Subsequent drafts of the screenplay portrayed her as sixteen year-old princess who fell in love with Han Solo, the central male figure, and finally the twin sister to Luke Skywalker. At one point, in the third draft, George Lucas even gave Leia the mind-control powers of a witch, but later revised that when she became Luke's long lost sibling.

Han Solo was first introduced in the first screenplay as a huge, green-skinned monster with gills and no nose, and only later developed into a human. Lucas probably saw Solo as an amalgamation of all the great sidekicks in literature and film, from Lancelot (in the Arthurian legends) to Tonto (in popular culture), but he eventually

evolved into a fully-realized, leading player. By the second screenplay, Han had been transformed into burly individual resembling Francis Ford Coppola. Though somewhat comic in appearance, with flamboyant clothes and a guinea-pig girlfriend, he was clearly a person to be reckoned with. Lucas later made him a cynical smuggler, and thought of him like a James Dean, "a cowboy in a starship: simple, sentimental and cocksure." That persona stuck to Han Solo in the first film, but he gradually emerged as "a sexy Clark Gable," in the subsequent films, easily winning Leia from Luke.

Artwo Detwo and See-Threepio began life as two bumbling bureaucrats in the original treatment, George's primitive notion of comic relief. Their characters are derivative of Samwise Gamgee and Pippin Took in J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy and the famous comic duo of Laurel and Hardy. Much later, after George had made them bumbling construction robots on the Death Star, they began to evolve into personalities all their own. See-Threepio was the overbearing android who complained too much, and Artwo, as his much smaller counterpart, was the brunt of Threepio's angry jibes. While Artwo resembles any one of the hapless drones in "Silent Running" and Threepio the Robotrix in "Metropolis," they were both original creations of Ralph McQuarrie. Lucas had given him free reign to create whatever he thought was appropriate, and McQuarrie relied upon his background as an illustrator for Boeing Aircraft and NASA to visualize George's ideas.

Lucas used Ming the Merciless, the evil ruler of Mongo (and later Mars) in the Flash Gordon comics, as the model for his emperor. Several early drafts described the Emperor as simply an evil sovereign who had taken control of the Alliance and proclaimed himself king. But Lucas was not satisfied with that back story, and began

thinking of the character in terms that a contemporary audience would recognize-- Richard Nixon. The Emperor became a corrupt politician who, with the help of his two cohorts (General Darth Vader and Valorum, the Black Knight), destroyed all but one of the Jedi-Templar. Then, in a time of great chaos, he had himself declared ruler. By the final draft, the evil sovereign had evolved into a master of the Dark Side of the Force, as well as the tutor of Kenobi's young apprentice, Darth Vader.

The evolution of Dark Vader is also interesting. He was conceived by George Lucas as the epitome of evil, the Black Knight in the Arthurian Tales or Sauron from Lord of the Rings. Though he did not appear in any form in the original treatment, the character had two roles in the first draft screenplay: General Darth Vader, and Valorum, the Black Knight. In the second draft of that screenplay, Vader (under the name Captain Dodona) was an intergalactic bounty hunter, who was hired to track down and murder Jedi Knights for the Emperor. Then Vader became a Dark Lord of the Sith, and Lucas created Boba Fett from that early concept of Vader as a bounty hunter. However, in the novel *Star Wars* and the final screenplay, the reference to Vader as some sort of bounty hunter remains. According to Obi-Wan, Vader betrayed and murdered the pilot Skywalker, then "helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights." Darth Vader was also given Kane Starkiller's exoskeleton to help him survive, and a background story was worked up by Lucas to explain his severe injuries. (Apparently, many years before, Ben Kenobi and Darth Vader fought a fierce light-sabre duel, and Vader was driven into the molten lava of an active volcano. He survived, but his body was ruined, and he was forced to wear an ominous black breathing mask that also hides his disfigurement, like *The Man in the Iron Mask*. No much more is revealed about his

character in the first film; but by the third audiences learn that he was, in fact, Anakin Skywalker, a former Jedi knight and father of Luke.

George Lucas's vision for "Star Wars" began as a simple thirteen-page story treatment, and evolved into its own galaxy of heroes and villains, 'droids, and creatures of a thousand worlds. The series of three films also broke all existing box office records, and went onto become the most successful movies ever made. Perhaps, many of those discarded story ideas, characters and creations will one day resurface in a new saga set "a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away . . ."

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