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While unrealized in his lifetime, Willis "Obie" Obrien's mastery of animation has helped inspire the mind's eye of generations. This pioneer's monstrous legacy was cultivated through years of developing innovative techniques.

The Oakland born California native gained life experience before stepping into motion pictures. O'Brien's winding artistic road began in his teens working briefly as a cowboy, boxer and cartoonist. These interests would resurface in his later works. Obie's focus shifted to sculpture, consisting of mainly human and animal figures. He would add molded rubber to their surfaces giving his pieces both character and freedom of movement.

It was said that during a particularly slow day of work, Obrien and a coworker created tiny boxers out of clay and proceeded to stage a boxing match. Through this "play", the seeds of stop motion were planted in O'Brien's mind. Though in their infancy, this thought process would grow into years of collected knowledge – leading to Willis' greatest accomplishment…*Kong*.

Obie's innovative methods caught the attention of the Edison Company, who hired him to produce several prehistorically themed shorts. In his early pieces, Willis' characters consisted mainly of clay. As both his career and skills grew, so did the intricacy of his models. Complex articulated armatures covered with rubber skins would dominate the models Willis would build and design. Some of O'Brien's designs even included a rubber bladder that allowed his creatures to "breathe". By inflating and deflating the bladder, his creations could fight, move, and give the appearance of breathing – stirring both our fears and imaginations.