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Backstage Disneyland : A Personal History

Van Arsdale France

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Backstage
Disneyland

A Personal History

By:

Van Arsdale France

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B A C K S T A G E

D I S N E Y L A N D

A P E R S O N A L H I S T O R Y

BY:

VAN ARSDALE FRANCE

MANY BOOKS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT WALT DISNEY
AND THE DISNEY ORGANIZATION. . . MANY MORE WILL FOLLOW.

But in 1980, Disneyland will be in the spotlight. On
July 17, 1980, we'll celebrate our 25th anniversary.
The event will be well covered by every branch of the
media.

For those of us who were involved in this new gamble of
Walk Disney's, it will be quite an event. After all,
the "experts" predicted it would be a "Hollywood Spectacular",
a spectacular flop...a failure.

Instead, it has become what I consider a unique one-of-a-
kind, a world institution. Along with Mickey Mouse, it
is part of the world culture. There are many castles in
the world, but our ~~Snow-White~~ Castle is a symbol...a
symbol of fantasy around the world.

Sleeping Beauty's

I've thought of stealing a title from a Disney film series,
and calling it "PEOPLE AND PLACES IN BACKSTAGE DISNEYLAND."
But, I'd miss too many people and too many places.

This is exactly what the title implies...a personal history
of Disneyland.

My story actually starts back in 1953...months before the
first bulldozer began to knock down the first orange tree
in that little town which was best known as part of a
running gag in the late Jack Benny's program.

An actor playing the part of a Santa Fe train announcer
would drawl out..."Now leaving for Anaheim, Azusa, and
Cucomonga". People across the land would laugh like hell.

A lot has happened since those days. This is one person's
story of a life in BACKSTAGE DISNEYLAND.

Van Arsdale France

One:

I Meet Walt Disney

It was the day that changed my life. It was the day I met Walt Disney.

One summer day in 1954, C. V. Wood called me at my office on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. We'd worked together in Fort Worth, Texas, where he was the Director of Industrial Engineering and I was in charge of training at Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation...now General Dynamics.

From deep in the heart of Texas, I'd gone overseas with the Army to England and Germany, and eventually headed West. We had occasionally crossed paths during that ten year period. So, I was only moderately surprised when he called to ask me out to the Disney Studios where, he said, he was Vice President and General Manager of something called "Disneyland".

The appointment with Woody was at four. I'd left my office, caught the Hollywood Freeway before the rush hour, took the off-ramp at Barham Boulevard, found my way down Riverside Drive past the Warner Studios to Buena Vista Avenue where Security passed me underneath a sign that identified WALT DISNEY PRODUCTION.

I parked, and was waved in by another Security officer. With eyes wide open, I walked down Snow White Lane past Dopey Drive to Mickey Avenue, where I found what was called the Animation Building.

I located Woody's office, and his secretary lead me right in. Characteristically, he had his feet on the desk and characteristically, he left them there. Equally characteristically, he was ENTHUSED. He was the Vice President and General Manager of "Disneyland" with a budget of FOUR MILLION DOLLARS.

Let me digress to mention that in 1955 four million dollars was a lot of dollars...particularly to Woody and me. He made it sound as if anything either of us had done before was drab and uninteresting in comparison to what was going on at the place he called "Disneyland", which was really no place at all....yet.

It was about five o'clock when a dapper looking fellow in a sport shirt walked in and plopped down in a chair. I knew damned well it was Walt Disney.

The way I had been trained was that when the BIG BOSS comes in to talk with a Lesser BOSS, visitors leave. But Woody, feet still on the desk, waved me back to my seat.

Woody introduced me to Walt. We shook hands. I remember that hand shake. I think I had imagined that Walt Disney would somehow be soft -- that of an artist. On the contrary, my hand met the hand of a sturdy construction man.

At that time, there were just a few people on the payroll of what was called "Disneyland, Incorporated." Two of these, Owen Pope and his wife, Dolly, were living on the "studio" grounds in a trailer...and were raising and accumulating horses and ponies for Disneyland.

A small well-dressed man named Nat Wyncoff came in with a book showing how the horse and pony acquisitions were being made. Walt talked about the problems of getting people to understand what Disneyland was all about.

It seemed like a good time to get the hell out. Woody...feet still on the desk...waved me out with, "I'll see you."

I'd shaken hands with WALT DISNEY, but the idea of "Disneyland" didn't really touch me. After all, Woody had been in some crazy deals before.

ABOUT THE NARRATOR. . .by the narrator

I was born in Seattle, Washington, but moved to San Diego at the age of about 12 where my father wrote a column for the local paper, a political asset which helped me get my first descent job.

After graduating from what was then San Diego State College, my first job (at \$21.00 per month) on a freighter going from San Diego to England and Canada and back. Then my Grandmother helped me get a job as a dishwasher on a river boat going from Pittsburgh to New Orleans.

Coming home, a friend got me a job in a local kelp processing plant. I made 43¢ per hour, and that wasn't too bad during the Depression. Fortunately, the government came up with an unemployment program called the National Youth Administration, and I became an Administrator with that organization in various parts of California.

A couple of months before World War II, I was hired as a Training Director by an aircraft company for what was then Consolidated Vultee, in Fort Worth Texas.

From that time, till I went to work for Disney, my average time on any job was less than three years. I went from the aircraft company with the Army to set up training programs for returning servicemen, in Freckleton, England and Heidelberg.

I came back to the USA to be hired for Kaiser's first Aluminum Reduction Plant in Willow Run, Michigan, as a Director of Labor Relations...then back to a variety of consulting and organization jobs in Southern California.

I had a dream...to set up an organization, called Small Plant Management Company...which would bring my expertise to small business. A bit of a bummer. But, I made ends meet doing work for UCLA, the Navy and...among many others, a brassier factory.

The rest, as they say, is history. . . and DISNEYLAND.

Two:

A Handshake Deal

I'd forgotten about Woody and this thing called "Disneyland", and was occupied in hacking out a living as the Saviour of Small Businesses.

I wasn't doing too well, I'll admit, when Woody called me to ask if I'd like a consulting job setting up a training program for this venture.

He'd seen what I did...and it was well done...in turning 35,000 Texans into competent airplane makers. I guess he thought this was about the same.

I expressed an interest, but consultants have to always sound busy and prosperous...even when we aren't. We made another appointment, and I headed back to Mickey Mouse Blvd., and the animation building.

The job was there, but we had to talk money...at which I'm very poor. Fortunately, I'd done some work for him while he was at Stanford Research. He'd pay me \$60.00 a day, and then mark me up by 100%...or better, if possible.

Figuring from that base, I thought that \$200.00 per week was about the least I could take. He too had thought it over, and he's many times as good a negotiator as I... so I let him name a price.

He named the same figure.

Today, when people are interviewed for jobs, they always ask about benefit programs...retirement...group insurance, and that sort of thing.

Protocol dictated that I think it over for a bit. But... there wasn't much time to play games. It was just on a weekly basis...no future promised. And things like benefits were never even mentioned.

We shook hands on the deal...no paper work of any kind. I took a week to clean up some things, and then headed back to the start of a new career...at the tender age of about 40.

Three:

Springtime in Burbank

I rented a room on Riverside Drive within walking distance of the studio.

I had no complaint about my occupational life until that springtime in Burbank. I'd done interesting jobs in unusual places, but I'd always thought of them as, "going to work."

In my new role, I didn't feel as if I was "going to work." It was more like I was, "off on another day's adventure."

Most of my previous work life had been in industry...aircraft...a hot and sooty aluminum production plant...and an auto assembly factory.

Unless you've seen the ugliness...smelled the odors...and been deafened by the bumps, grinds, and dropped hammers, you can't imagine my amazement...and "born again" feeling when I reported for work at the "studio."

My idea of a "studio" had been a small series of rooms with skylights. The "studio"...home of Walt Disney Productions...was much more like a good-sized university. It was, in fact, called "The Campus."

But the solidity of the buildings was delightfully softened by park-like landscaping...trees...lawns...meandering roads...and street signs with names like "Dopey Drive" and "Mickey Avenue."

My senses were bombarded by the sights, the feel, the total feel of this very unusual working environment. For a person indoctrinated by the starkness and formality of industry, some aspects of my working life were unbelievable! How about...

- * People playing ping pong, volleyball, basketball, softball, or just lying around the grass.

- * Buildings with names like "Ink and Paint," or "The Shorts Building"...standing for "short subjects" rather than underpants.
- * Lunch in a cafeteria with popular celebrities...including Walt and Roy Disney and "movie stars."
- * And a cafeteria which sold...unbelievably...
BEER!

There were other differences to boggle my mind and force a radical change in my thinking:

- * I'd always called bosses by last names with a solid "Mr." until I got to know them. Here it was the policy...subliminally enforced...to call people by their first names, especially Walt and Roy.
- * Here there was a place to cash checks... and hope it would take a few days for them to clear.
- * Here the Personnel Department was in a little old building which seemed friendly...not threatening.
- * Here the Security Officers were friendly and had evidently been trained not to act like FBI agents.

Much is said today about a "working environment." As usual Walt Disney was way ahead of his time. Our "working environment"...was frantic, hectic, but informally friendly. It was a madhouse...and I loved it.

Office space was at a premium...I should say that desk space was at a premium. From day to day, my desk space would change...pre-empted by some newcomer. I found an unusual dressing room which was an excellent place to work, but from which I was removed when the Mickey Mouse Club needed it.

I had to make another major change in my thinking about artists and Art Directors. I'd imagined such people as flamboyant in dress and with fiery temperaments.

Quite the contrary, the highly creative Disney artists could pass easily at any Rotary Club. Those I met were uniformly considerate, moderate in dress, and friendly.

The rest of us, who must have appeared as "intruders," were not really sure how each other came to be there. Friendships and alliances were made quickly...and often became permanent.

It was a bit like an Army assignment. The "buddy system"... for those of us lost in a strange crowd...was almost a necessity.

Four:

The Cast of Characters: Studio Days

We tend to forget that Disneyland was a new and revolutionary concept...a major development in the history of entertainment, and something totally new for the Disney organization.

Disneyland was such a tremendous departure from anything that had gone before that perhaps Walt Disney was the only man who could harness the talents and enthusiasm of so diverse a group. He was the master Executive Producer and lined up a cast of characters which was unique.

Here, in order of appearance are those I was to meet.

WALT DISNEY

I always worked for people who worked for Walt. Most of my information came second hand and after that first meeting in Woody's office, I'd see him around the studio occasionally.

There have been and will be many books written about Walt. I can only mention those qualities which endeared the man to me.

He didn't like pretentious, status-seeking, title-happy people, or stuffed shirts. He either put them down or got rid of them. I liked that.

He didn't like organization charts...wouldn't have them. I don't know the reason for his dislike of these lines and boxes. My guess is that he felt they inhibited team work and created little empires. I loved that.

He could dream dreams, but he could also be realistic. It was great just to be a member of his cast.

C. V. WOOD, JR.

"Wood," "Woody" or "C.V." is a character in his own right. He was born and raised in Amarillo, Texas...escaped that town to Hardin Simmons University, helped by a scholarship for rope twirling.

He received a degree in Petroleum Engineering, and moved on to be the Director of Industrial Engineering at the Fort Worth Division of Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation...now General Dynamics, which is where we met.

Soft, brown eyes hid a brilliant, computerized mind. He was warm and loyal to his friends, but cold as steel when necessary. He can turn on a hidden charm button and sell anybody almost anything.

He disarms people with that country boy Texas accent, "PO-lice Station," with the accent on the PO, or "SO-DEE pop," with the accent on the "SO." Up against Woody, P.T. Barnum might lose in the persuasion category.

While the Disneyland dream was becoming a reality, Walt retained Stanford Research Institute to make a location study. Woody was Project Director, and his plans and predictions were to prove amazingly reliable.

FRED SCHUMACHER

How people get into a job always intrigues me. It's particularly interesting and pertinent when it comes to Walt and Woody's original cast, since none of us ever trained for the work or planned to be there...and hardly anybody thought of it as a new career.

Fred had been one of Woody's aircraft associates...an Industrial Engineer by profession. In fact, he always kept a stop watch in his desk drawer. Not that he used it, but to remind himself that he could always get a job should he quit or be fired.

Fred was about six feet two inches tall...thin, grey, and erect. He could have easily passed as a model for a Senior Citizen community. In fact, I think he did a few years later when he was the first General Manager of Lake Havasu City.

No more unlikely relationship than Schumacher/France could have been created. For starters, he was tall, and I'm not. He was precise and I'm basically sloppy. He loved policies and procedures, I hate them. He didn't drink, I did. This did not mean that he hadn't consumed his share in the past. It was just, as he said, "That I got sick and tired of waking up sick and tired."

Fortunately, we'd both grown up in San Diego, and shared mutual friends and background, so we got along fine. He was interested in labor relations and employment and not at all in training and orientation. So, I had a free hand.

DOROTHY MANES

In planning Disneyland, one of the places that Walt had studied was Children's Fairyland in Oakland, California, where he met Dorothy Manes, the Manager of that charming spot.

Later he hired her to set up youth activities at the Park...working with the Boy Scouts and such organizations. Dorothy arrived at the Studio about three days after I did, by which time I was an "old hand."

She, too, had been passed along to Fred Schumacher, who immediately introduced her to me. It was a bit like the blind leading the blind, but we became friends.

She helped immensely in setting up my first training program. A charming person with a beautiful sense of humor, she had delightfully good taste in earthy jokes.

She was outspoken, would fight for her rights and her programs...and contributed much to the organization.

JACK SAYERS

I was an old-timer after being at the studio for a few days, so I became an unofficial tour guide. Woody or Walt would introduce the newcomers to Fred, who would turn them over to me. My next introduction was to Jack Sayers.

Jack had known Walt for several years before coming to the Disneyland project. He'd been with the original Gallup Poll organization and had done studies with Walt for his movies. He was West Coast Manager of Look Magazine when Walt called him.

He'd previously turned down offers to join Disneyland. I understand Walt said, "Jack, I never get turned down three times," and Jack joined up.

He was as tall and thin as Fred and I felt like a water boy on a basketball team when the three of us decided to go "off campus" for lunch at a bar and grill called The Olive Branch. When the waitress asked us if we wanted a cocktail, I hesitated...not knowing show biz protocol.

But Jack came right out with a request of his favorite, a Vodka Tonic. Since he'd been hired by Walt, I figured it must be OK, and immediately changed my order to a Scotch. It was the start of a working relationship and close friendship.

Jack had been a radio announcer before going to New York and joining the Gallup organization. He knew show business...and had perhaps the best idea of what Walt's "Disneyland dream" was all about.

He was my coach...adviser...booster, confidant, and was to become another one of my many bosses.

JACK OLSEN

I frankly don't remember how I met Jack, but he was to be a great help and good friend. An outstanding artist in his own right, he had joined Disneyland as a result of his connections with Ken Peterson, of animation.

A brilliant person, he advised me to spend all the money required to do the job right and of the best possible quality. Then, he explained, if it wasn't successful, Walt would know that economizing was not the fault.

I followed his advice, and I know that our first orientation handbooks cost \$3.73, because Fred Schumacher was to remind me of that...many times, later on.

DICK NUNIS

The next key character was one who was to play an important role throughout the entire Disneyland story.

In studio terms a "GO-FER" is one who is told to "go fer this" and "go fer that." He's a helper and apprentice. Dick was the first person I hired. He was my "go-fer." As it's working out, I'm ending up as his "go-fer." Today, I report to HIM.

The tempo was increasing. My training program was coming along, but I needed help. Jack Sayers was having the same problem, so we both went to Fred.

Fred had an application which he said "looked pretty good", and Jack beat me to it. But as it turned out, Jack was never able to get the young man on the phone. I asked if I could try.

In those days, the phone company used prefixes instead of the numbers system we now have. I figured that Jack might have been dialing the wrong prefix, reading "Pleasant" for "Prospect," or something like that. I called, got an answer, and set up an interview for the next day.

A clean-cut young man arrived on time and I hired him on the spot. His memory of that interview is more vivid than mine...and to this day he reminds me of it.

He had been wearing a brand new pair of suede shoes and I was of the old school believing that suede shoes were for city slickers, used-car salesmen and pimps. I told him never to wear them again.

He alleges I also told him the job would pay \$2.00 per hour, but when he signed in the wage was \$1.80. He has never forgotten and reminds me of it everytime I ask for a raise.

Our relationship has lasted for more than 25 years and if I were to have something written on my tombstone it would be, "Be nice to your go-fer, because you may end up being his." Dick Nunis is today, Executive Vice President of Disneyland, Walt Disney World, and Recreation.

It is a unique relationship. Usually, the young guy would prefer to get rid of the old mentor. In this case, quite the opposite has happened. He is totally responsible for keeping me around -- even to work on this book.

Five:

The Hybridized Organization

There were many others in the cast assembled by Walt and Wood. It was mass confusion where nobody seemed sure who anyone else was. As I was able to observe it, Walt had created one of his more massive jobs of cross-pollination. It was a hybrid group composed of...

THE ENTRENCHED STUDIO EMPLOYERS. These were the many brilliant people who had been around for a long time. They knew Walt and his methods. The ones I met were all helpful and friendly...a Disney tradition.

On the other hand, some didn't share Walt's enthusiasm for this new venture. It is understandable. The predictions were that Disneyland would be a financial disaster, and that would certainly have affected their futures.

THE WED ENTERPRISE PEOPLE. This group was inter-related with the studio, but had been picked by Walt to design and build Disneyland. They combined studio skills with those of architecture.

WOODY'S TEXANS. Woody needed a loyal staff to help build his power base within the organization. Further, as a kid he had headed up a Tom Sawyer type band of friends who were called, "The Bombers." The group included some who were down on their luck, but it also brought in some very bright guys who were a key to Disneyland's success.

WOODY'S AIRCRAFT AND STANFORD PEOPLE. Fred and I and a few others belonged in this group. These were people that either Woody or Fred had worked with in the aircraft industry.

LESSEES. These were representatives of institutions like Swift and Company or Eastman Kodak, who were there to coordinate the opening and operation of their exhibits. The groups also included lessees who were planning to make money in other lessee operations.

WALT'S PERSONAL HIRES. Walt hand-picked others for specific jobs. This included Jack Sayers and Dorothy Manes.

Actually, there were only a small number of people on the Disneyland payroll. Many of us...I included...were there on a consulting basis.

Out of this mixed bag, the Disneyland organization was formed, and I was not alone in not really knowing what the hell I was doing.

Six:

Walt Disney's Dream

I'd been involved in training people to produce airplanes, aluminum ingots, automobiles and many other things. This was my first experience in harnessing human effort to produce a dream.

There are many versions of the story of Disneyland, but since I've been involved in writing a lot of handbooks about it, and making training films and giving classes on the subject, I feel entitled to my version.

As Walt told it, the dream of Disneyland began when he'd take his daughters, Dianne and Sharon, to an "amusement park" on Saturdays which the girls referred to as "Dad's Day."

There were the usual rides and attractions for the kids, but nothing for him to do except sit on a bench and wait in unattractive places. The places were also uniformly dirty with carny operators and cotton candy all over the place.

One thing I learned in my studio orientation was that Walt never made cartoons or movies "just for kids." He realized that...in those days...adults had to take the kids and pay the freight. His products were always entertaining to adults.

I understand that there were preliminary plans found that dated back to 1930, a bit early for his daughter's "amusement park" age. One might speculate that he was going to those places to research the idea in the back of his mind.

One of his expressions was the, "We played around with this thing," and he may have been playing around with the Disneyland idea...the dream...for more than 20 years.

It seems possible since in addition to going to amusement parks, he also made his home a bit of one. He built... much with his own hands...a railroad around his home which incorporated everything that is involved in the building of the Disneyland railroad.

Recounting history makes liars of us all. The story I accept is that...sometime before I joined the dream producers...he had "played around" with the concept to the point where he was thinking of building a "Mickey Mouse Park" across from the studio...on land in or around that famous burial place...Forest Lawn.

At some point, I speculate, Walt wanted some objective, outside viewpoints, so he retained Stanford Research Institute to do a study for which he paid twenty-five thousand dollars. This, of course, is where Woody entered the picture.

Stanford searched out a variety of possible locations, settling on Anaheim, which until then had been associated in the public mind with a character on the Jack Benny radio show who announced, "Anaheim, Azusa, and Cucamonga."

As I understand it, the resources of Walt Disney Productions were then harnessed to buy up 240 acres of land at a price of about \$4,500.00 per acre...

The dream. Walt and his brother Roy had been born and bred in the middle west, and Roy was to say, "Only God can make an acre." They were practical men.

I speculate there were some practical ideas behind the dream.

- * Taxes: I feel that Walt disliked paying taxes. He wanted to spend the money on the organization as he wished...for his purposes. When a Disney movie was a smash hit, most of the profits went to taxes. A "Disneyland" would provide a source for reinvestment of profits before sending taxes to Washington.
- * Tourism and Studio Visitors: Before the time of Disneyland, tourists came to Southern California to pick an orange, see the Pacific Ocean and...if possible...visit a movie studio. Studio visitors upset production schedules. A Disneyland would be a place where people could sight-see, without needing to be guided through the studio.

- * Building: This is not speculation. Walt said that one of the great things about Disneyland was that it was not like a film that you produce and put into a can for distribution.

Disneyland was a place which he would be able to constantly change...add to...develop. I'm sure that when he said, "Disneyland will never be completed as long as there is imagination left in the world," he was totally honest. Besides, the records shows he loved to build. It was his life.

Walt knew about all things practical. He learned about operating a lathe when he built his own trains. His life was a total educational process...and he always retained the best possible instructors.

Thus, the Disneyland dream had a solid base. By the time I arrived, it was well on the way to reality...although the outcome was still in doubt. Some felt it was a nightmare.

Seven:

My Education begins for a New Life

Working at Disneyland, I found, would involve lifelong learning. I found myself in a friendly foreign land at the studio, badly in need of training, if I was going to train others.

I read everything I could find about Walt and the Disney organization. I was a pack rat for anything I could take to my room at night. Jack Sayers and Dorothy Manes were helpful instructors...with a good insight into what Walt had in mind for Disneyland.

But it was Nat Wyncoff, the guy who provided the basic orientation for lessees and key people, a dapper little guy with a pencil moustache, who was the source. Nat had worked with Walt on other ventures, and was a damned good salesman. He had a room set up with various sketches, although the primary visual aid was an oil rendering by Herb Ryman.

Herb, a brilliant artist in his own right, was a genius when it came to putting Walt's descriptions into pictures. He had created beautiful renderings of what Disneyland was to be.

I don't know where that original painting is. It would be worth a fortune. As I recall, it included a picnic area where "It's a Small World" is now located. It included also many places which exist at Disneyland today, and others, like a giant balloon, which never happened.

Nat would refer to the drawing and talk about Disneyland as something of a "permanent World's Fair"...a park-like place where families could have pleasant times together.

If you've ever wondered about the kind of ticket book to purchase at Disneyland, you may be surprised to learn that in the beginning nobody even thought of them. In fact, Nat would say in his soft voice that the entrance price was to be twenty-five cents for adults and fifteen cents for children. The only reason for any price was to keep undesirables out.

With input received from various people, my basic training program was taking form. Fortunately, I've always been fast...if woefully inaccurate...with a typewriter. I could take my ideas back to the Sterling Arms at night, and work on a handbook. In the morning, I'd ask Jack or Dorothy to check over the ideas.

I had reached the point where I needed an artist to help with visual aids for my handbook. Fred suggested I contact Ken Peterson. Ken, pleasant and talented, was head of animation, and said:

"Van, I have 700 artists and the reason I have 700 artists is that I need every one of them." I got the idea. But, I was desperate and persistent. Fortunately, he had a resume from a young man named Ned Jacobi who turned out to be perfect for the assignment.

The tempo at the studio was speeding up...if that was possible. Woody would hold weekly...and sometimes more frequent..."progress meetings," but otherwise I seldom saw him. Most of the time I was working on a drafting table in Fred's office and only saw him at an occasional lunch.

My studio days were but a short period in my Disneyland life, but they are deeply etched in my memory. I'd walk down Riverside Drive "to fun"...rather than "to work", return to do my typing back in my room...eat...absorb any book or article I could find...and look forward to the next day.

I made one major mistake. On a new job, I always have a lot of ideas and observations and one night I sat down and typed out 13 brilliant ideas. The next day, Woody squeezed me in for an appointment. My first brilliant idea was that...in this totally new concept...we should "work" in a totally new way. Thus, my first idea was to eliminate timeclocks.

I'd always felt that timeclocks were degrading symbols of lack of trust and some companies were actually getting rid of them. So, naturally, I had that recommendation at the top of the list.

Woody made a careful distinction between "will," which was tentative, and "shall," which was totally positive. He immediately responded. "Van, we SHALL have time clocks." I tried to argue that point, but it was futile. He was so adamant that I couldn't even get him to look at the other 12 brilliant ideas, which I've since totally forgotten.

I was never to forget another experience that occurred about three months before opening. Most of Walt's efforts had been involved in the designing, financing and building functions. There was no clear cut idea of how Disneyland should be organized for operation purposes.

I was in Fred's office when Wood came in with an urgent request.

"The boss has a crazy idea about Park organization. He wants to have guys in complete charge of each of the Areas." (At that time that consisted of Main Street, Adventureland, Frontierland, Tomorrowland, and Fantasyland.)

"As he sees it, each of those guys would be like the Mayor of a town. My God, to find guys like that, we'd have to pay forty thousand dollars a year." (A big sum in those days.)

Turning to Fred, but including me, he said, "Let's draw up a job description so complicated and extensive that we'll be able to prove there aren't people around with those qualifications."

Fred was brilliant with this sort of thing, and I'm really pretty good...plus Wood's thoughts...produced a profile of an individual only slightly less qualified of running a complicated city like New York, Chicago, or San Francisco.

Evidently, Wood used the complex job description to sell his point. My educated guess is that at the time Wood wanted to have his own team in positions of responsibility, and none of them had the necessary qualifications.

We were to open with a modified, watered-down version of Walt's plan. There have, of course, been changes and adaptations, and many years later the "area concept" was adopted.

But I've often wondered...and I'll never know...what might have happened if Walt had actually hired five competent Mayors or City Managers to head up the various lands at that time.

Disneyland's history might have been quite different, but since it has been so fantastically successful, it's hard to argue against the way it turned out.

Meanwhile, more people were joining the project. Opening day was getting closer by the day and would soon get closer by the hour. My pleasant days at "the campus" were about to come to an end.

Fight:

Hi Ho, Hi Ho, It's to the Site we go.

During my first weeks at the Studio, I constantly heard about "the site," the place down the Santa Ana Freeway in a town called Anaheim where construction crews were working at a frantic pace. It was never called "Disneyland"...only "the site."

I'd been through Anaheim many times when it was just a route through interminable orange groves, but I wanted to see "the site" because aside from mere curiosity, I had other very practical reasons. From past experience, I knew that space for training was the lowest priority in most new organizations. I also knew I would need a base of operations...a place where people could congregate.

But, I didn't know anybody at "the site." Once again, I went to Fred for help. He made a call and arranged for me to meet Earl Shelton and I headed for "the site."

Earl took me on a jeep tour just as he would with Walt, pointing out various sights, but I couldn't have cared less about all the earth movers and construction. My mind was on "territorial possession."

I had found out on previous projects that where deadline production was in process, there was no place for training, except maybe a tent.

Out on what is West Street...where most recently there was a driving range for the Disneyland Hotel...was an old building called, at that time, "The Vandenberg House," later to become what we called, "The White House."

I asked to see it. It looked old and dusty, ready to be torn down...but beautiful.

I pointed out that this old house was essential to our program...to the future of the personnel at Disneyland. I was granted possession of this beautiful old Anaheim home...our "White House"...where the training program would be developed. Much later, this program was to be called, "The University of Disneyland."

I was now planning on moving from "The Studio"...as a stranger...to "The Site"...as a stranger.

Nine:

We Move to "The White House"

Although Disneyland brought "progress" to Anaheim, I can see why some resented the intrusion. Having almost always lived in apartment houses, I thought frequently about how great it must have been to be raised as a Vandenberg in this beautiful old home...our "White House"... which was now our headquarters.

In spite of the fact that the City Fathers of Anaheim had actively worked to bring Disneyland to their town, there were some old-time residents who were opposed to this intrusion by what they considered "those Beverly Hills types"...and, actually, I hardly blame them.

That the many square miles of delightful orange groves and little farms should disappear in the name of progress was one thing. But when the key resident on our property sold out, they were leaving their homes. And, those homes were lovely.

Dick and I had the keys to the Vandenberg house. The family had moved out several months before, and the place had accumulated dirt and dust. He cleaned it up and decorated it and made it quite attractive...while I took care of the necessary political manipulations.

But that old house. What a lovely place! It was a home. There were about five bedrooms...a charming living room... a spacious and comfortable porch. There was a cellar for storing food. There was an abandoned chicken coop...and avocado trees...along with the oranges.

In the evening, after a long day, we would sit in the rooms and have a few drinks. We had a neighbor, Mrs. Mohn, who still had chickens which would cluck around...and there were, still, orange trees with their fragrance. I had a little office in somebody's past bedroom...with a little porch...and the evenings were aromatic and soft.

It must have been a wonderful place to live...to grow up...to raise a family. I don't see how those who sold out could have found any other home, and life style, which could compare.

Other homes were to be torn down to make room for the park. My adopted family home remained for two years more and was finally torn down to make room for a driving range...in the name of "progress". I didn't see that happen. I might have cried.

Ten:

A Beach Head in a Battleground

I'll have to admit that scrounging that old home as a place for orientation was a stroke of pure genius.

It was on West Street...a couple of blocks north of where the Disneyland Hotel was being built. It was removed from "the site" which was a construction madhouse, and that was a great advantage. We were right across the street from the Employment office, which was housed in another old home.

Thanks to Earl Shelton, we borrowed some craftsmen who knocked out a wall between two upstairs bedrooms, which made a cozy training room holding about 30 people. Just about the right size.

We'd acquired a lot of Disney pictures and fan cards and Disneyland renderings at the studio. I picked up a key, and Dick and I moved down to see our new surroundings.

We couldn't get anyone else to help and Dick worked over that place like a "White Tornado" which he is sometimes called today. He swept up, cleaned windows, and did a lot of things with our pictures which actually made the place quite attractive.

Many of the people who were to arrive later couldn't find a place to light so they came to our Beach Head. Before opening we were to be the home of the Safety Department... the Fire Department...the Medical Department...the Wonderland Music Company...and finally the temporary home of special details from the Anaheim Police Department and the California Highway Patrol.

We were now counting days, and those days were hectic. But in the evenings, I could sit there on a porch outside my office and have a drink...if I wasn't attending an evening of "Happy Hour" in Woody's office.

Eleven:

Cast of Characters at "The Site"... *As they came on stage*

Associations made at the Studio continued at "the site" and warmed into friendships and alliances. But a new cast was emerging from the dust and mud of our acres in Anaheim.

EARL SHELTON

As I've mentioned before, Walt never paid much attention to titles. It was the person who seemed to matter and I mention this because I never did know what Earl Shelton's title was or if he had one. He served as the "site coordinator."

He was in charge of just about everything except the actual construction during the last hectic months before opening. Earl, or "Cob," was one of the original Amarillo Texans... one of those youthful "bombers."

A Navy pilot during World War II and Korea, he'd lost most of his Texas accent...was quiet, with an introspective sense of humor...and had a mind like a computer memory bank. I had to write things down, since I'm an omniverous note-taker, but not Earl.

When he indicated that I could have the Vandenberg House, it was with a grunt and nod, though he immediately followed up with Fred. If one was in need...a nod or a grunt was better than a signed memo.

FRED NEWCOMBE

Fred had been down at the "site" for months before I came on the scene. He was the first person Fred Schumacher hired, being one of us "aircraft people." In the midst of the excitement and confusion, he was unflappable. I can't remember his ever losing his cool.

Normally, training is part of the Personnel Department, which was not the case here, at that time. But functions had to mesh. He was a unique Personnel Manager. He'd graduated from Stanford...was highly intelligent...as honest as a personnel man can be, with a very good heart.

He also had a quiet sense of humor, and enjoyed a drink. I was never really certain that he liked my training plan, but he endorsed it and we worked together for years.

CHUCK WHELAN

Because we didn't want any "carny types" at Disneyland, we'd established a rule that nobody could be hired with a visible tattoo. The one exception was Chuck Whelan, the Employment Manager!

Chuck worked for Fred. If Fred was unique as a Personnel Manager, Chuck was equally unique as an Employment Manager. Perhaps I mean that he was definitely not the kind of person who went to college and wanted to get into "Personnel Work."

I don't know how he came to Disneyland, but he certainly didn't get the tattoo, or the sense of humor, at Harvard. On the other hand, he trained a lot of young guys who are now top executives with the company.

JAN AYERS

Jan was cute and perky...a pioneer who worked with Chuck and Fred initially on employment. Later she was in charge of Group Insurance. Unfortunately, she was almost as much of a hypochondriac as I am.

She was also empathetic, and every time anyone came in with an insurance claim, she'd have a sympathetic ailment. She had a new pill for every claim. But I can't remember her ever being sick enough to take time off.

In fact, she was instrumental in helping me with many activities, such as the Disneyland Recreation Club. When last she called for a letter of recommendation, she was working with some service organization in Las Vegas. If she stayed there, she may own the place today.

EDDIE MECK

Eddie couldn't have been much more than five feet and weighed 100 pounds. He was an old-time movie public relations guy. He could have played the part of the man walking around with a hat and cigarette promoting some new movie. He'd done that...and well.

Eddie loved Disneyland. There is no other expression. I wouldn't want to knock our present extensive Marketing Department, but he did what a dozen now do. He knew every newspaper and magazine editor in the country. He and Walt Disney were to sell Disneyland to the world.

He also sold my training program and we worked closely together. He finally settled into the preferred office in City Hall at Disneyland where he could greet the press...and see the guests.

ED ETTINGER

Fred, Chuck, and Jan were my working neighbors on West Street and we were all out of the construction confusion on the "site."

The Administration Building was inside what we call "the berm" that surrounds Disneyland...the earthen wall that separates the outside world of "today" from the inside world of "yesterday, tomorrow, and fantasy"...as the plaque says above the tunnel entrances to Disneyland.

Actually, the "Administration Building" was made up of two old Anaheim homes, one of which belonged to the present Vice President for Disneyland operations, a nice guy named Ron Dominquez.

I would go there daily for information and meetings with a man I'd only known casually at the studio, Ed Ettinger, Director of Public Relations. I'd heard that he was in marketing work, and had been introduced to Walt by his Aunt, a Hollywood reporter named Maggie Ettinger.

Along with many others, he was to become my real ally and booster. He was brilliant and instrumental in the success of Disneyland in the early days. I refer to him as my "fellow twitch" with real affection. He was as nervous as I am, and as careless with cigarette ashes.

After he left Disneyland to go on to other ventures, we worked together on some consulting jobs including the opening of Universal Studio Tours.

I remember one meeting where we were with two very quiet and phlegmatic types. Neither he nor I can sit still for more than two minutes, so we were both jumping up at different times, moving around and dropping ashes all over. The other two hardly moved and at the end of the session, the place was a disaster.

JOE FOWLER

Joe Fowler was a retired Admiral actively at work in constructing home developments when Walt and Wood went to see him about heading up construction at Disneyland. Walt could, of course, charm snakes out of trees, and Joe took on what looked like an impossible task.

At this pre-opening point, Joe was not in the periphery of my working cast of characters, but as head of construction, I knew how important he was. I checked out Who's Who and learned about his outstanding career as an Admiral in the Navy. The write-up was extensive.

He was in his early sixties at the time, but worked at a frantic pace. He was a brilliant organizer, and it is yet another reflection of Walt's genius that he'd found him.

On those occasions when I'd sit in on a meeting where he participated, his confidence and calm in the storm of anxieties was contagious. Walt or Wood would ask him to perform some virtually impossible task, but I don't think I ever heard the word "impossible" cross his lips.

One felt his strength and capacity to command. The answer to the most impossible requests was usually, "CAN DO!"

I don't know how he accomplished the "can do's"...but he did. When, later on, he was asked to take over operations of the Park by Walt, I'm sure the answer must have been those two simple words, "CAN DO!"

Although there was a "cast of thousands" who built the Park one year after ground-breaking, Joe deserves most of the credit for getting it done. He knew when to swear and when to charm.

And, he had that extra sense of knowing how to work with Walt. The Mark Twain and the Columbia, on the Rivers of America, were two of his pet projects...along with his submarine Navy in Tomorrowland.

When you head out past Bear Country, you'll pass "Fowler's Harbor." I last saw him at a reunion of old timers. He was 82...straight as an arrow. He has one of the biggest barns in Maine, and had just finished the haying season.

He was also involved in real estate development in Florida. When I asked him his secret for such health and productivity in his eighties, he smiled and said, "Work, Van, hard work."

Twelve:

"You'll Create Happiness"

It was a weekday morning late in May, 1955. Assembled in the training room converted from two bedrooms upstairs in the Vandenberg House was a jury which could have hung me before sunset. The group was composed of a few friends, plus the top executives of Disneyland, the Bank of America, Eastman Kodak and Swift and Co.

Walt wasn't there, but his brother Roy was...sitting right next to the Vice President of the Bank of America. I could not be faulted for planning or hard work, and Dick had compensated for my weak areas. But...now came the moment of truth.

The opening of Disneyland may have been important to Walt but this session was life or death for me. We had the place dressed up as well as Dick and I could do it. Dick would run the projector and I would explain the slides. First, I had each person introduce himself.

Then the Theme. I always believe in an intangible theme for any training program, so now, I got up to tell this audience, which included the men who had millions of dollars riding on Walt's dream that our purpose was NOT to make money. "You are here NOT to make money"... You are here because...

"YOU'LL CREATE HAPPINESS!"

In retrospect, that took a lot of guts. Nevertheless, I believed it then and I believe it now. Let me explain:

First...the Disney tradition had been one of entertaining others, and from what I'd read till that time, Walt was concerned about producing a good product, realizing that the profits would follow.

Second...we really didn't know what we were doing. Walt had said that. So, I could say that you might prepare food or park cars or operate attractions or keep things clean, but that is not the end product, the reason for Disneyland was to bring happiness to other people.

Third...I believed then and believe now that the only way that YOU...as I told the Vice President of the Bank of America, and the other top executives...can find happiness is to give it to someone else.

Our visual aids were rather primitive by modern standards, but were effective. We had a flannel board, on which we could place creative "pitch cards" by Ned Jacobi, and some slides to show what this place across the street would eventually look like.

We devised concepts which were to be copied by theme parks across the land...

- * "We don't have customers, we have guests."
- * "We aren't employees, we are hosts and hostesses."
- * "We don't have "crowds"...we have an "audience."

And...a major point was incontrovertibly true. In the past, the Disney organization had had no direct contact with the audience. If a theatre was dirty, or the popcorn was stale, the theatre owner was to blame. But at Disneyland, we represented the entire organization on a person-to-person basis.

In view of these factors, each of us had a responsibility to look our best...and to represent the entire Disney organization, both within Disneyland and in the surrounding area when we were, as we pointed out, "off stage."

I remember the inception of some ideas which are still included in orientation 25 years later. Dick came up with, "the Magic Mirror of Your Smile." "It's Been My Pleasure," is the response when someone says, "Thank you." That was Dorothy Manes. Jack Sayers came up with, "It All Started With a Mouse."

In fact, that first training program in the Vandenberg House was the start of a lot of things which still remain in the heart and arteries of Disneyland and Walt Disney World, and soon, Tokyo Disneyland.

I was not, of course, naive enough to feel that Walt Disney didn't want to pay off the money owed for Disneyland and make a profit. And, there were detractors I knew would question the "happiness" theme.

But I was convinced then and I am now that Walt was not in it for the money. As I'd explain in the orientation sessions, the Disney studio was the only one that owned all of its films. It still does.

These are called "residuals." Every few years we bring out those timeless classics like Snow White, and they bring in more money than they did originally. So, I'd explain that Walt could have just sold those residuals and lived the life of a multi-millionaire.

That day in May sold the program. It motivated me, and Dick too. I could give the same damned program today, and get re-motivated. I sometimes do. Fortunately, I had some professionals in there, and they are a good audience... people like Roy Disney and Jack Sayers and Dorothy Manes and Card Walker, now President of Walt Disney Productions.

They knew that I was a bit scared, apprehensive and thinking that I might bomb out. So, they laughed at the jokes, smiled when they should...and provided the confidence which I sorely needed.

Since I was a Wood selection, I'm sure he breathed a sigh of relief when Roy Disney, a financial genius, and the President of Walt Disney Productions gave his approval and blessing.

Dick had been sweating right along with me. We were both damned relieved and happy when the day came to an end and we could have a drink in the evening...smell the orange trees...and watch our neighbor, Mrs. Mohn, feed her chickens.

Thirteen:

From Happiness to Highways

After that historic (for me) orientation presentation, I had a lull...for maybe two days. Then, I got a call from Woody who asked me to get over to his office for a meeting.

This Administration Building was also in a converted bedroom of an old home, the Dominquez House, but on this occasion we met in another little bedroom whose furniture was used as conference table...lunch table...and sometimes Walt Disney's table.

The group included Harrison "Buzz" Price who was with Stanford Research and who was later to set up his own company which was to do feasibility studies for many other Disney ventures, and many in the booming Orange County area.

But the guy who was to become a friend and working partner was James Thompson, one of the Stanford Research group.

Here was a man of about five foot five, and weighed about 300 pounds. He had a bushy moustache, long before they were popular, and wore a huge Texas hat as part of his basic wardrobe. He had Wood's full confidence, justifiably, he was brilliant...had a fine tuned, cynical sense of humor...was a practicing nudist, a sight which I couldn't imagine.

At this point...which could only have been about eight weeks before July 17, the construction which would make "the site" into Disneyland was a challenge which took all of Walt's genius, time, and energy.

That was a problem being handled by Walt, Joe Fowler, the WED architects, studio people, and the Prime Contractor, the McNeal Construction Company.

But the outside of Disneyland was also a disaster area. It was obviously necessary for people to get to Disneyland and leave. Six weeks before opening, the plans were behind schedule.

To complicate matters, there were several agencies involved in this crash program...the City of Anaheim...the State Department of Highways...the Orange County Road Department...the Anaheim Police Department...the California Highway Patrol, and perhaps some agencies I've forgotten.

We had enough problems without worrying about traffic clogged arteries. Since we had an orientation program, I called Dick and told him to take over the orientation program. He did...and splendidly. Years later, he was to admonish me, when I was developing another young man, "Don't throw him into it, the way you did me." He was lucky. He didn't have to worry, like I did.

Fourteen:

Hooray for the Homefolks

It would be almost impossible to describe the Anaheim and Orange County of 1954 to the suburban swingers of today.

Orange County...the home of ex-President Nixon, was solid, a conservative area which was a peer among conservative areas.

And here we came...show people..."outsiders"... "Beverly Hills types"...suede shoe folks. There were, and still are, some people who didn't like the invasion. And, after my days in the Vandenberg House, I can't blame them a bit.

But the people I met and dealt with were all enthusiastic boosters. In Anaheim, the Mayor, Frank Pearsons, was a solid booster.

Mark Stephenson, the Chief of Police, was young and aggressive, even with his great disappointment at not being able to have a real branch of his police station in our City Hall.

Fran Cheatham, from the County, knocked himself out to help, and became a personal friend, as did Her Noll of the California Highway Patrol.

This is not an historical document, and it would take pages to name names.

But here, with a City Manager who called Anaheim "the City With Muscle", we found people who backed us in every possible way.

When ground was broken in 1955, the City of Anaheim had a population of 29,000. Today, it numbers over 200,000... and growing.

The population of Orange County was 295,000, and today it is 2,008,200.

It was...and perhaps still is...one of the fastest growing counties in the nation. But then...it was that running gag on the Benny Show.

And here came an idea that was supposed to fail. But the "locals"...most of them...got behind and pushed. Without this local boosting, Disneyland would have had greater problems.

And today, strangely, they have enthusiastically adopted the California Angels and now the Rams from Los Angeles... with the same type of boosterism and help.

The locals got in there and had a piece of the action.

THE THEORETICAL PEAK DAY . . . T.P.D.

A bit of a flash back is needed here to explain the concern about roads, highways, and traffic. Actually, it should be noted that the crystal ball research work done by Walt, WED, the Studio and Stanford was amazingly accurate...in the long run.

At the time, there were few comparable attractions on which to base Disneyland audience projections. Those that were checked included Knott's Berry Farm, the San Diego Zoo, and Forest Lawn Memorial Park. Although the numbers are different, Forest Lawn still enjoys the same peaks and valleys of revenue that we do.

The result was the establishment of a Theoretical Peak Day. the theory was this:

- * 92% of the people visiting Disneyland were supposed to come by car. On the basis of studies of places like the San Diego Zoo and Forest Lawn Memorial Park, each car was supposed to bring 3.7 people.
- * 43,500 guests were supposed to arrive at Disneyland at about 9:00 a.m. and then leave at about 1:00 p.m.
- * Then, another 43,500 guests were supposed to come in after 1:00 p.m., and stay until sunset.
- * It was on this basis that a peak day was supposed to bring 87,000 people. And, it was on this theoretical projection that an original parking area of 100 acres was established.

The thought of having a night time program was as yet to come. If it hadn't been for Wood's persistence in pushing the traffic situation, and the enthusiastic cooperation of all government agencies, we would have been in deep trouble.

Today's visitor would have a difficult time visualizing what it was like. The Santa Ana Freeway was far from complete. There were still many signal lights. The local roads were all two lane. And, we were in the country. Sidewalks, curbing and gutters were to come later.

I might add that these were all totally new problems for me. But almost everything else up to that point had been "new," so I felt, "what the hell." And, we got busy transforming dusty paths into travel worthy streets, thanks to the Anaheim Police Department, California Highway Patrol, and the community in general.

Fifteen:

A Pressure Release with the Peltzer House

A family named Peltzer had...before selling out...lived in another old home right where the north end of the parking lot is now. It had been used as an office by some personnel from the McNeal Construction Company.

It had to be torn down before the grading and surfacing of the parking lot could begin. Rather than simply using a bulldozer, somebody suggested that we have a house wrecking party. Woody approved, with the thought that it might be a good way to release some tensions before the final pre-opening push.

Somebody provided liquor. How and why nobody was hurt amazes me. There were windows broken...chandeliers to be pulled down...stairways to be wrecked...walls to be hacked at and plumbing to be torn out.

I helped out Safety Engineer to keep a semblance of order, and when the crowd had thinned out, we left to have another drink in more quiet...and safer surroundings. Eventually, somebody dropped a match and the fire department was called.

The last of the old homes on the site was gone. The next day parking lot construction began. We newcomers...the carpet baggers...and the Texans didn't realize the significance of this destruction of the last of the old homes. It was the end of an era and Anaheim would never be that quiet, sleepy little town again.

Now it was back to the serious and tension filled days which lay ahead.

Sixteen:

Deadline Days

The opening of Disneyland was different from anything that I ... or anybody I know, for that matter...had ever encountered.

The test flight for a totally new airplane is a thrilling experience. Lives and reputations are at stake. I'd observed ten thousand people bursting into a spontaneous cheer at the test flight of a B-24 bomber. But...the date of the date of the flight can be postponed until everything is favorable.

Broadway plays open in a small town...and can be radically changed before they hit the big time. Movies can be tested, cut and altered in sneak previews.

But Disneyland was right there in Anaheim...and could not be tried out in other hick towns. And there had to be a deadline for the opening.

I've been asking why July 17 was picked as the opening day. I speculate that there were many practical reasons:

- * First, since ground had been broken only a year before, it was the only practical possibility for production time.
- * Second, it had to be on the day of the Disneyland TV program, with the buildup which had preceeded it. And, TV time for a national program aimed at 90 million people has to be planned at least a year in advance.
- * Third, it was the latest possible date for capitalizing on the summer tourist season.

I've also been asked why the address for Disneyland... 1313 Harbor Boulevard was selected. The best I've been able to find out is that it was the license plate on Donald Duck's car. And...since Walt could have picked any number, it may have appealed to his fine tuned sense of humor. To pick a supposedly unlucky number, two of them, took a lot of guts.

It also was a number which would have appealed to Wood's sense of humor.

I was to find later that if you don't have a deadline for opening, construction has a way of lagging along until the money runs out. And...in the case of Disneyland...the final days and hours before opening created a form of mass adrenalin flow which makes everyone perform at, perhaps, 200% of their ability.

If you were there for the first 17 days of July, 1955, you could challenge my description of those last, frantic days before our scheduled opening. Since the odds are that you weren't, you'll have to rely on my random memory of the longest days, occupationally, of my lifetime.

By this time, we were giving our orientation to a variety of community groups, in addition to our own people. We'd found a charming young woman who could give a solid presentation, and Dick...as had happened to me...was now branching out into a wide variety of other things.

Since time began, older people have worried about the so called "younger generation." Dorothy Manes had said, in effect, "If other young people are like Dick Nunis, I have no fear of the future."

Dick was "borrowed" by many other people. He was helping the safety coordinator...assisting with interviews and physical examinations. Through the orientation program, Dick and I were able to meet just about everyone...and they met Dick.

He became everybody's go-fer. The White House...along with the bees and chickens...had become the off-site meeting place.

Although July 17 had seemed a reasonable date, the time had been shortened by having the wettest season in Anaheim history. There had also been a national plumbers strike...which affected the building of restrooms and drinking fountains...basic necessities.

We were now counting down the days and hours before that fateful day when "the site" would become "Disneyland" and the "guests" would become real people searching for the "happiness" we had promised.

There were thousands of stories. I can only tell mine with a few flashes like you'd find in a modern multi-image projection show...

WOODY'S HAPPY HOUR

Most nights we'd gather in Woody's office for a progress report and coordination. These were rather large meetings and all business. But, if the situation required it, Wood would say, "Let's get out the old Loud Mouth," and we'd talk and have a few drinks.

WALT'S BICYCLE

You just didn't get things done through procedures. It was a matter of using guile, bluff, stealth, friends, or other forms of coping. The best name to use was that of Walt Disney.

As an example, a friend of mine had a bicycle to get around in, but it broke down. So, he sent it out to some shop with a note to "please repair this bicycle for Walt." It got instant action. Walt either rode in a Jeep...or walked...a slow walk that covered amazing territory. I can't remember his ever using a bike.

THE "HORSE PEOPLE"

I think I managed to schedule almost everyone through orientation, with one exception. My only failure was with the people who were to operate the horse drawn vehicles. This operation was controlled by a crusty man named Owen Pope, whose headquarters were in what is still called "The Pony Farm."

When I cornered him, he explained by saying, "Van, you're dealing with people people. We're horse people out here." He finally sent me one or two of his men.

But, he was doing his own training program. He was worried about horses "spooking" with all the sights and sounds of Disneyland. So, a recording of sounds from arcades and shooting galleries, and yelling kids was made up. This was used as an audio aid for horse training.

Since the horses were not directly on the payroll, they had to be carried as assets. All were given names. They all received names of people in accounting. Lucy Cotton, for example had a mule on the records named, "Lucy Mule."

THE UNIONS ARRIVE

Since Disneyland, Inc. was a separate corporate entity, Woody had insisted...whenever Fred brought up the subject of unions...that we weren't going to have any. As a result, time was involved in fast and hard negotiations in those final days.

Perhaps Walt hoped that Wood was right. He carried the scars of a bitter strike at the studio which had occurred years before. We were over the barrel:

- * The construction unions flatly said that if we didn't recognize a union, we wouldn't open... a totally unacceptable fact.
- * And, the unions which were searching for jurisdiction presented a major problem. The American Guild of Variety Artists, AGFA...wanted jurisdiction over the Jungle Cruise operators. The Inland Boatman wanted it over the Mark Twain. And their rates were very high.

After the panic button was pushed, we settled for negotiations with the Orange County Central Labor Council. AFofL. Negotiations were conducted in Fred's office, which was right across the street. I was only a partial observer. In between my other duties, I arranged for sandwiches for them around the clock sessions.

We ended up with 29 unions. Since there wasn't a union for the kinds of attractions we were to operate, we had an understanding that we would be helpful in putting these young people in the Teamsters.

It was a shotgun marriage, which has been loosely held together over the years. As we get ready for our 25 year anniversary, it is becoming increasingly difficult to live together...and we finally had our first major strike.

GOLDEN TIME

These final days weren't all bad...particularly for the union construction workers. Most were working long days... and seven days a week. And, some worked under very good agreements.

As a result, many were getting more than the normal time-and-a-half. The hours got into double time, and in some instance more than that. That is called "golden time"... and, even in those days, it amounted to nearly a thousand dollars a week for some.

In fact, Dick, my go-fer, who still complains that I offered him \$2.00 an hour and he only was paid \$1.80 worked from a time card which I signed blind. Everytime he accuses me of under paying him, I accuse him of making more than I was at a flat two hundred a week. To this date he has never denied it.

WALT AND LILLY'S ANNIVERSARY PARTY

Bob Thomas, in "Walt Disney," does a beautiful job of telling about Walt and Lilly's thirtieth wedding anniversary. He couldn't of course, have known too much about the background. Picking from the Thomas book:

"The completion of Disneyland coincided with Walt and Lilly's 30th wedding anniversary...and an invitation went to 300 people for the "Tempus Fugit Celebration."

Where: Disneyland...where there's plenty of room.

When: Wednesday, July 13, 1955 at 6:00 in the afternoon.

Why: Because we've been married 30 years.

How: By cruising down the Mississippi on the Mark Twain's maiden voyage, followed by dinner at Slue-foot Sue's Golden Horseshoe!

Hope you can make it...we especially want you and by the way, no gifts, please...we have everything, including a grandson!

Lilly and Walt

Walt had been working all day at the Park, and welcomed the chance to relax with his friends and co-workers and show off Disneyland.

His daughter Diane recalled the party...and her narration ended this way...

"...but I just said, Daddy, can I drive you home? He said, "Well, sure, honey." No problem at all. He was meek and mild and willing. He just climbed in the back seat of the car. He had a map of Disneyland, and he rolled it up, and tooted in my ear as with a toy trumpet. And before I knew, all was silent. I looked around and there he was, with his arms folded around the map like a boy with a toy trumpet, sound asleep. I knew he didn't have too much to drink, because the next morning he didn't have a hangover. He bounded out of the house at 7:30 and headed for Disneyland again."

Meanwhile, Dick had started out the day giving an orientation program. He then helped out with the physical examinations and did a bit of interviewing for employment.

Then, as the afternoon progressed, we loaned him to Security, where he donned a Security Officer's uniform while the guests were coming into the Park. And then, for another change of clothes, he served as a bartender at the party. And...if I know Dick, he ended up the evening doing janitorial work...counting and securing the liquor and sweeping up the Mark Twain.

Jack Sayers, meanwhile, was with Walt at the Main Gate at six o'clock...and nobody had showed up. I remember his escaping for a while to tell me.....

"God, Walt keeps saying, 'Where is everybody?' and I don't know where they are. He's blaming me because the guests are probably hung up in traffic."

Eventually, the guests began arriving in busses and cars, and the evening ended...as Diane described it...a great success.

But the Park was not completed that day. We were still working around the clock, and the next four days were as busy...and productive...as any that went before.

And here was that successful man, Walt Disney...more Oscars than anyone in movie history, world renowned, a major force in the nation, a proud and happy contented husband and father...and "like a boy with a toy trumpet."

And...now we had three days to go before a party for 90 million people!"

THE MOVING BANDSTAND

I mentioned some of the times I met Walt. Sometime earlier than Walt's anniversary party, Main Street was still quite incomplete...and still dirt and dust.

And, Sundays were less frenetic than the other days. I was out working and had taken my daughter along. We went into the park. Walt was there, by himself...looking at a bandstand which had been designed to be in Town Square, right where the flag now is.

I intruded...to the extent of introducing my daughter. He was gracious, said all the right things, but was preoccupied.

Then he looked back at the bandstand. Talking to himself, he said something like, "There's something damned wrong with where that bandstand now is." I took my daughter and left.

The next morning, I could see that bandstand being moved down to another location, this time where Carnation Gardens is now located. It turned out that he didn't like it there, either. It was moved to about seven different places, before and after opening.

I've heard it is now in a very fancy nursery in Newport Beach. It is this kind of personal attention that Walt gave to just about everything which makes Disneyland unique in history...a one-of-a-kind, a Picasso, a Van Gogh, a Walt Disney original.

Seventeen:

'Twas the Day Before Opening

Actually, there were...no "days." Hours and days all melted together like an Einstein conception of time. It was a Boulabaisse of memories. Here is something of what it was like:

THE TV SHOW CREW:

The TV crew was in the Park, and Jack Sayers would give me reports on the confusion. Joe Fowler had to complete the Park for opening. So, there was a constant fight between those who wanted to rehearse and those who had to build.

The Producer had a heart attack and was taken to the hospital. They carried on.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE:

The Special California Highway Patrol was headquartered in our orientation room, and the Anaheim Police used it as a headquarters. We had the best communications set up any place...thanks to Herb Null.

IN THE GUTTER...

The crews were still working on West Street...in front of the Disneyland Hotel, installing curbs. To keep the crews going, I went out and bought several cases of beer, and would drop by with these incentives.

ON HARBOR BOULEVARD...

Fran Cheatham was out with a crew putting stripes on the two lane road.

AROUND THE TOWN...

A group was putting up illegal direction signs to help people find their way to and from Disneyland. Jim Thompson was, with the help of the CHP and the Anaheim Police, putting out his own invention of signs which could be converted to "left turn", "right turn", as the occasion demanded.

ASPHALT...

Was still being poured within the Park, and sometimes on the roads surrounding it.

The Goodyear Blimp...was located about where the Disneyland Hotel now is, and Herb Null and I had a couple of trips to check things out.

The Boy Scouts...were at the White House, after I'd brought some fried chicken. I was running up what ended up as an eight thousand dollar bill for fried chicken at the only operating food place in Disneyland.

Walt's Uncle...was to do the invocation at the opening ceremonies, and was to fly in. We worried about getting him there through the traffic. The Captain of the Anaheim Police said, "Don't worry, Van, I'll get him there if I have to put him on my motorcycle."

In my own areas of responsibility, the curbs on West Street were finished after dark...the lines were painted on Harbor. The off ramp, completed two days previously was OK.

I'm sure that the mass confusion inside the "site" which was to become "Disneyland" lasted throughout the night. I had a couple of drinks at the White House with the guys from the Highway Patrol...looked out at a West Street with curbs...smelled the oranges...watched Mrs. Mohn's chickens... and headed for home and Newport Beach.

I can't possibly remember, but I guess I was in bed by twelve and up at four looking forward to the Premier Opening. I suppose that the opening of a play where there is a predicated audience is one thing...

But...the next day was something that nobody could really predict.

Eighteen:

The Preview and Grand Opening

It was the best of days and the worst of days. It was July 17, 1955. It was the grand opening of Disneyland in Anaheim, California, USA.

An estimated 90 million people were waiting to watch the event on TV. I've never known how many SPECIAL GUESTS jammed the place, and I don't believe anyone else does. It might have been five thousand or fifteen thousand. One thing is certain, however, and that is that there were too many.

For me, it was wonderful, exciting, mass confusion. But I'm, peculiar. I can get upset about some small problem, like a flat tire, but when...as was the case for the preview... confusion is King...I love it.

Unfortunately, this was billed as a "press preview"...for members of the press and the greatest names in Hollywood. These people expect the very best of VIP treatment. But, many of us had been handing out Silver Passes, generously. I had used them as payment for the many favors I'd received from those with whom I'd worked.

Consequently, the members of the press and other dignitaries found themselves in a mob. And, the production of the TV show took precedence over special treatment for guests. As a result, we received as much unfavorable publicity as favorable.

Jim Thompson and I were working with the Highway Patrol and the Anaheim Police. Whether we were of much help is debatable. We helped move signs around, and I purloined hamburgers for the working patrol.

I was taught one thing about directing traffic. When, as was to happen, people were trying to drive home in many directions, and trapped in long lines, they would ask how to get to Los Angeles, San Diego, or any other place. There is, I was taught, only one reply..."Straight ahead, sir." We could only hope they would eventually find their way home.

The TV program was hosted by Art Linkletter as master of ceremonies. He was assisted by various Hollywood luminaries who maintained their humor throughout the confusion. But, I wanted to sneak back to the White House to catch some of it.

But Jim Thompson was against it. "What?" he said, "And miss all this fun?" I wasn't going to desert, and continued with the "fun." I wasn't to see the tape of the TV show until 10 years later.

It was total confusion...both on camera and behind the scenes. But, it was the celebration of the birth of a dream.

WHERE'S A DRINKING FOUNTAIN?

The fact that we'd had the rainiest year in a decade had delayed construction. But a plumbers strike had interfered with two basic necessities...restrooms and drinking fountains.

We were told by the contractor that we had a choice between having restrooms and having drinking fountains...a Hobsons' choice at best. We chose the restrooms. As a result, there were no drinking fountains on opening day.

Instead, we had young men carrying water on their backs...our version of Gungha Din. Along with other bad publicity, we were accused of depriving our guests of water to force them to buy Coca Cola and Pepsi.

Even with the restrooms, they were totally inadequate for the needs of the people. The lines were almost as great at these facilities as they were for the attractions.

And, since Walt did not want big signs saying "MEN" and "WOMEN" on his theme stages, they were hard to find. As a result, there was confusion in Fantasyland where they are named "PRINCE" and "PRINCESS." Some thought they were attractions.

On Main Street the restrooms are hidden behind our flower display. One guest asked for restroom directions for her child, and was told "behind the flowers"...and took the direction at face value...and went...behind the flowers.

There are as many stories of that preview day as there were people. There are a few that have been told when the pioneers get together...

DICK NUNIS...remembers with clarity seeing women with high heeled shoes losing them in the soft asphalt which had been poured only a few hours earlier.

JACK SAYERS...remembers the confusion on top of confusion when the TV Producer had a heart attack the night before opening.

SCOTTY CRIBBS...remembers walking down Main Street early in the morning with two cups of coffee when he ran into Walt. Walt yelled over to him. Scotty thought he was going to get chewed out for having coffee out on the stage area, but Walt just wanted to know where he could get some coffee. Scotty gallantly gave him his.

EARL ANDERSON...a carpenter, got a call to repair a gate which had fallen off the Mule Pack Adventure, "But I didn't have the slightest idea where that was," he recalls.

In the multi-image reflections of my own memory, I recall going into the Park on some mission, and being hailed by Woody. This cool, calm and collected man was alarmed... and understandably.

At that time, Sleeping Beauty's Castle, our symbol, was merely a facade. On the outside, it looked like a real castle, but there was nothing inside except ladders for the workmen. But...and this is a bit typical of the day ...we'd forgotten to lock the doors.

Sure enough, a few dozen people had walked up to the parapets and were surveying the action. Wood said something like, "Van, for God's sakes get those people out of there before they kill themselves."

The first person I could find to help was Larry Tryon, our Controller...and with his help we helped the people down from their precarious perch, without injury.

We sometimes have referred to that preview day as "Black Sunday". We had our problems...some of which took years to live down. We got some bad press. And because of the traffic...which could have been worse... people stayed away on Sunday out of fear of traffic jams.

But I prefer to remember a picture of Walt on this opening day. It is of Walt...in a sport shirt before putting on his suit. It looks to me as if he was near tears, but they were held back tears of joy...of accomplishing the impossible...of seeing a dream of twenty years come true.

Nineteen:

Further Reflections on the Opening

The Disney brother's had, in the past, gambled heavily on pioneering movie ventures such as Snow White and Fantasia. But Snow White...a major break-through in full length animation...was only a 5 million dollar gamble.

In addition, a movie can be previewed, and then changed and cut on the basis of audience reaction.

But along came Disneyland...a 17 million dollar gamble, and a gamble it was. With the inflation of 25 years, the investment would be comparable to 100 million. Walt had hocked everything he could, including his life insurance, on this totally new dimension in family entertainment.

It if should turn out to be...as the experts predicted... "A Hollywood Spectacular...a spectacular flop," it could lead to bankruptcy and damage to the Disney name and reputation.

One could see why Walt...and his brother Roy, who was the financial genius on the brother team, would be concerned.

The preview on Sunday had been for FREE. The thousands of "special guests" came with invitations...Gold or Silver. The cash flow was flowing in one direction...out. There was justifiable concerns that we'd open the gates and nobody would come to PAY.

With the money going out, Walt had decided on a new gate admission of 90¢, rather than the original 15 and 25 cents I'd heard in my orientation. In 1955, that would be about the same as \$5.00 now, in 1980.

Twenty years of dreaming, and years, months, days and hours of effort and financing had not, as yet, been proven to be a good investment. To this day, I don't understand how Walt Disney could take the gamble...against the advice of bankers, "experts"...and many people in his organization.

A story told by Roy Disney at a meeting of pioneers who were at Disneyland in 1955, expresses the concern of many. I had suggested that various people give their own stories of that day when Disneyland opened to the paying public.

This meeting was after Walt's death, and Roy Disney was our key speaker. I'd asked others to share their experiences of that day when we worried about have a "show where nobody came."

Perhaps there is a tape of his words, but I wouldn't know where to find it...even if it now exists. You'll have to go along with my recollection.

GOD BLESS 'EM: LET 'EM PEE

Roy had a little glint in his eye, and his wife, Edna, seemed to have that worried look which wives have when their husbands get up to speak. His words went something like this...

"Well, on that day, I headed down the Santa Ana Freeway, and I wondered where all the cars were going. The traffic was heavy...and it could have been people going to the beach.

I finally entered the Disneyland parking lot, and there were cars and people all over the place. A young man recognized me, and came up in a bit of a panic. He wasn't familiar with our first name policy, and said...'Mr. Disney, people are jamming the parking lot, and children are peeing all over the place.'

With a great sense of financial relief, I answered, "God bless 'em, let 'em pee."

The gamble in a totally new concept in entertainment was not as yet proven, but the guests were coming. Those of us who had jobs to do were involved in a variety of realities.

Fortunately, the guests wanted to come see Sleeping Beauty's Castle. They wanted to share Walt's dream. Now, we had confidence in searching to find the best way to operate Walt's dream park.

Twenty:

Early Learning Years

The curtain had risen permanently. The show was on the road.

Now, the theories, construction and planning were behind us. We had real, live people to protect, care for, feel and entertain. We couldn't turn the show over to some theatre operator. Walt had produced the show, and now we had the responsibility of operating it.

I feel it is safe to say that nobody...including Walt...knew exactly what we were doing. Walt had been producing films...not worrying about selling popcorn. The rest of us knew either nothing about Disneyland, or had experience in different fields.

Walt had specifically decreed that we not hire people with experience in fairs or amusement parks. But even for the few who had related experience, it was a totally new concept.

On opening day, Walt had said, as I noted earlier, "Disneyland will never be completed as long as there is imagination left in the world." It was a prophetic promise. Imagination was needed in the entertainment and operational aspects. It was more obvious from the purely ascetic standpoint.

We had, after all, been rolling out grass and laying asphalt the night before opening. The beautiful landscape one sees today was, at that time, non-existent or struggling to grow. There were, however, weeds. Rather than tearing them out Walt had signs placed in the areas with proper Latin names.

After taking a trip on the Santa Fe and Disneyland Railroad, one guest wrote to complain, "Why should I pay 35¢ to see Walt Disney's construction area."

The lack of drinking fountains remained a problem for what was to be a very hot summer.

For the first weeks, the average guest was lucky to enjoy one or two attractions during an entire day. Breakdowns were frequent. Jungle boats would conk out on the Nile River, and operators wouldn't know what to do.

And, although Walt had an amazing control through the force of his personality, he did not have total control. We owned and managed all of the attractions, but other basic services were...because of lack of funds...leased out.

These included the parking lot...security...all merchandise...all food...janitorial...sound technicians, and many maintenance services. And, many of us were on an informal contract basis, including our now world famous band and Golden Horseshoe Revue.

Two of Walt's observations are etched in my memory:

Sometime after opening, we found that...in addition to the seventeen million of accountable costs, there was another \$90,000.00 worth of expenses which were not covered by any purchase orders or records. I'd contributed about \$15,000.00 to that figure in buying food for the Highway Patrol and in other ways as well.

Undismayed, Walt told the press, "Well, if you do big things, you make big mistakes." He seemed almost happy about it.

At a later date, there was a great debate about the wisdom of having a New Year's Eve party. Most executives were against it, since there would be no liquor. Walt ruled in favor by saying, "Well, you can't tell until you try."

To try things...and make mistakes...was the premise on which our learning years were based.

Twenty-One:

Opening Cast of Characters

I've used this statement attributed to Walt in many handbooks:

"You can dream, create, and build the greatest place in the world, but it takes people to make it a reality."

It was certainly true of Disneyland. Shakespeare may have said that, "the world's a stage and we are but actors on it." Disneyland was a stage of about 170 acres of former orange groves with both the actors and the audience on it.

Through orientation, I'd had a chance to meet many of the 600 people in our original cast. And, through my other activities, I'd worked with most of the key people. We were a motley group.

On your next trip to Disneyland, you might look up while walking down Main Street. There are many names in the old time windows which are the names of what could be called some of the "founding fathers."

In addition to my friends and associates from the studio, a new cast of key characters was to influence my life... and to influence the future of Disneyland during those early learning years:

TOMMY WALKER...had been brought into the organization by Walt Disney. At USC, Tommy had been known as "Tommy the Toe." He was a fantastic drum major, but had also specialized in kicking the point after touchdown, changing from his drum major's outfit to a football suit at the proper time.

He originally was assigned to Jack Sayers, but later was to become the Director of all live entertainment in the park. Tommy was to tell me later on that Walt had said something like, "Tommy may come up with 99 wild ideas out of 100, but that one that is good is worth it."

Tommy would come up with a lot of wild ideas, but many of them...including the Disneyland Band...the Christmas Parade...the Tour Guides... are all still important parts of our show. He outlasted many of the original key men, but finally lost favor with Walt when he produced... on his own...a Fourth of July fireworks display which competed with ours at Disneyland. It cost us some attendance, and you did not tamper with Walt's gate.

Tommy went on to gain a national reputation for producing outdoor spectaculars, such as several Super Bowls, the Spokane World's Fair and his annual Fourth of July Fireworks Display in Anaheim.

GEORGE WHITNEY JR...had been retained, along with his father, as a consultant. His family had owned Whitney's At The Beach in San Francisco where he had met Walt on one of his research tours.

George was one of the few who had had previous experience in a related field. He was young, rich, bright and temperamental. He also had a good understanding of what Walt's dream was all about, and could be totally honest with him...a privilege many did not share.

He was one of my teachers. One of his early lessons was that...in our business..."you lose money on peak days." We still have some people who don't understand this reality. The point is that people who are forced to stand in line can't spend their money, leave with it, and it is lost forever.

EUGENE "DOC" LEMMON...was one of Wood's Texas blood brothers from Amarillo. In those early days, we had far more than the average number of Texans. Some were either weeded out or left shortly after opening. Doc was one of the good ones who stayed.

He soon became what we called a Director of Operations, in charge of all on stage activities. He had an infectious smile, was a fun loving person, and could get a bit wild and rambunctious after a few drinks.

He was respected by Walt and Woody, and was a good leader. Doc didn't believe in desks for his managers and supervisors. He felt that if they had desks, they'd sit at them...when they should be out in our areas with their people and the guests.

Doc had an unusual outlook on life. One was to pick a liquor store, and find out when they sent the checks in to the bank. This was in the days before the computer. Payday was on Friday. As a result, he would do business... and check cashing...only with those that saved their deposits to Thursday night.

Doc was one of the first to capitalize on his Disneyland experience to move on to other top executive jobs. Doc was picked to head up a park in Sandusky, Ohio...and received one of our better farewell parties. He's presently working with Wood and General Manager of Lake Havasu City.

At one time Walt thoroughly chewed him out for not having enough trains on the Disneyland Santa Fe Railroad in operation. When he looked depressed later, Walt patted him on the back and said, "Doc, don't ever lose your sense of humor."

MILT ALBRIGHT...was the eighth person on the payroll when it was formed as Disneyland Incorporated. We'd met back at the studio where he was handling accounting in a cubicle in the Shorts Building.

He moved in with us when he came to the site, and had his accounting group in a horrible little shack, called the "snake pit." We were to work closely together in organizing the Disneyland Recreation Club.

Although trained as an accountant, Milt had a flair for show business. Fortunately, during those early days, people were not type cast into specific jobs and left there. Milt was to be selected to manage one of our "mistakes" called Holidayland, and eventually became the original Director of the very successful Magic Kingdom Club. He still has his first name tag on his desk. It shows that he was Number Eight, but he's now the longest service person still on the payroll.

VIC GREENE...was one of the key WED artists, an ex-studio artist turned Disneyland architect. He was the Art Director for Tomorrowland, working closely with Walt. He was typical of most WED people...talented, helpful, and a charming person to be with.

We worked together during a short period when I was Manager of Tomorrowland, where we had our Rocket to the Moon attraction. So, we were both interested when the Russians sent up their Sputnik in 1956. We were, in fact, the only two people who left a bar called The Lancers to watch it go overhead on one of its trips across our Anaheim viewing area.

KEN ANDERSON...was a Studio Art Director who was primarily responsible for the design of Fantasyland. After the opening, Storybookland was one of the first new attractions to be built. Since I was handling training at the time, I would arrange tours to show people how the building of the miniature world was being accomplished.

On the day before it opened, Ken's wife and daughter were out for a preview tour. He invited me to join them, and gave us a thorough orientation concerning all of the wonderful fairy tale stories which are told there.

I was totally thrilled with it when he dropped me off at the dock. As I was thanking him for the trip, I started walking away forgetting the curve of the dock. I walked right into about five feet of water with...of all things... a brand new suit.

The suit was not damaged, but it was embarrassing to slose my way down Main Street, USA and to have to borrow some pants from wardrobe.

PAUL PEASE...was the comptroller for Walt Disney Productions. As a key finance man he spent quite a bit of time at the park. He was a brilliant man and a talented musician. He also had a hearing aid, which, I was told, he would turn off if a meeting became boring.

Strangely, Paul was one of my boosters, having been in our first orientation program. One time we were having our drinks at the Gourmet Bar at the Disneyland Hotel, when in a spirit of comraderie he turned to Ken Anderson and said, "This Van is a nice guy." Ken quickly responded..."Hell, he's paid to be a nice guy." A bit of truth which hurts.

LARRY TRYON...the Finance Director, was perhaps one of the most important people around during these early "short money" days. He was very serious at work, but had a jar of nuts on his desk to prove that the "big ones" rose to the top.

It was strange, but Larry was a "true believer" in Disneyland. I remember him saying that, "Today the Studio is the dog, and Disneyland is the tail... eventually Disneyland may be the dog."

"The Studio" is still "the dog." But Disneyland has also become a dog. Larry could be deadly serious at work, but afterwards could be a riot of fun.

CHARLIE THOMPSON...was the roolly polly first Manager of Adventureland. He was another of Woody's Texans from Amarillo, who was converted into being a key person during the Disneyland learning period.

He was a "good old boy," but he was also a brilliant man with a delightful sense of humor and a talent for cutting through the underbrush to get to the heart of a problem. I credit him with much of the development of the Jungle Cruise, including the tag line in the narration of, "If your mother-in-law is still with us, you've missed a golden opportunity."

He and Howie Vineyard left at the same time to head up a new enterprise in Denver. These departures were a good reason for a big bash, and we had a great one for the two of them.

AND A CAST OF DOZENS...

It is a policy of the Disney organization that we don't give credit to individual people. In fact, the only names you'll see at Disneyland are on the mosaic tile walls entering Tomorrowland.

I don't know why this was, but perhaps it was something that Mary Blair...an "outside" artist, insisted upon. But during these early days, there were so many men who contributed to Disneyland's future success that I must mention those who I knew.....

BILL EVANS...had worked on the landscaping of Walt's home, long before Disneyland. He and his brother were retained to design and plan all of Disneyland's now beautiful landscape.

They brought in rare plants from around the world, along with tracing freeway growth to beg, buy, or steal trees which were due to be cut down to make way for construction.

They did their best to save the original orange trees, but it was difficult. At one time, they marked the trees which could be cut down with green tags, with red ones for those to be saved. We found out after several red tagged trees had been cut down that the construction man was color blind.

HERB RYMAN...was responsible for the original renderings and designs of Disneyland. He worked very closely with Walt in the development of many of the attractions...and was essential in keeping the dream quality of the show after it was in operation.

DICK IRVINE...was the head of WED, and the Art Director for the entire park...reporting directly to Walt. He was a bald, intense person whose serious dedication compensated for the more fun loving nature of some of the rest of us.

JOHN HENCH...is presently the President of WED, and was a key artist and planner of Disneyland. He is a suave and charming person...a bit like the actor David Niven. It's not just the near moustache and the ascot. He's a true man of the world...with a beautiful sensitivity concerning what Disneyland is all about.

BILL COTTRELL...was quiet and retiring as opposed to most of the founders who were more outgoing. He was Walt's brother-in-law which was, of course, an asset and a handicap. We always think of in-laws as being picked for relationship rather than talent.

But Bill had a good track record with other studios, and I always felt he played a quiet, but important role as an intelligent confidant of Walt's.

BILL MARTIN...was the Art Director for Frontierland. Here was another quiet, pleasant guy with a bundle of talent, and a great understanding of what Walt really wanted.

And, along with those of us who were on Disneyland's payroll or on a consulting basis there were lessee representatives who were involved in those early days of learning. He always smoked a favorite pipe - sort of a peace pipe, and still does.

JERRY ARZEROUNI...was in charge of the Eastman Kodak Center, a charming person who was a good photographer in his own right. Many of our best pictures of Walt and Roy were taken by Jerry. Because Eastman was important to us, anyone with any sense got along with Jerry. On the other hand, he met everyone more than half way. In fact, a camera I still use is one that Jerry gave me long before he retired.

CHRIS PORTILLO...was a citizen of both the United States and Mexico. Although he made money...a lot of money...out of his Mexican Village in Frontierland. He knew what Walt wanted, and combined money-making souvenirs with some fine merchandise. Chris is now retired in Puerta Vallarta, where he is living nicely and is known by the local people as a "Grande."

THE JEFFERYS...were a charming man and wife combination who had the original Guatemalan Shop. Always outgoing and friendly, they could make any of my training programs a success with their encouragement.

TOMMY SCHEID...operated the original Chicken Plantation for Swift and Company. It was located in the same area where the Haunted Mansion now stands. Tommy was a WILD liar, but a very competent guy. We had a nice working relationship.

There were many more people in the different working areas of Disneyland. There were many who were just out for a buck, or just needed the job. But Disneyland had a way of making true believers out of many people who might have been cynical at the beginning. Without such people, we might not have made it through that learning period.

Part Two:

The Learning Years

Twenty-Two:

From Theoretical Peak to Reality

The public just didn't cooperate with our original projections. To survive, we had to come up with a series of changes which had not been anticipated in any research or design.

Walt was the first to realize that we had to change and adapt...to gamble on new ideas. During these learning years, there were probably more basic changes in operations than have been made in the 25 years of our existence.

OPERATING HOURS... "WE NEVER CLOSE"

We'd plan on those 87,000 people coming to Disneyland in two groups of 43,500. And they were supposed to come during the day. In those early days, an audience of 15,000 was cause for celebration. Today, we can handle 65,000 with equal ease, and such days are par for the course in the summer.

To build attendance and spread out the audience, we established extended hours and provided special night time entertainment. When we first had a meeting of supervision to announce that we were going to stay open till midnight in summer, Doc Lemmon came out with one of his good laughs.

When asked what was so funny, he replied, "I can just see a sign on our marquee which will eventually say 'WE NEVER CLOSE'."

FIVE DAY WINTER WEEKS

We'd start out with a planned seven day operation throughout the year. There were several problems with this.

First, Walt liked to walk the park when it was empty... always coming up with a pocket-full of ideas and suggestions.

Second, it made construction and maintenance difficult. In those days we had so few attractions that Walt insisted that no work be done on his stage when the guests were there. Today, due to the size of the park, we've had to change that policy.

Third, it was difficult to get and schedule the people for seven days during the school season...resulting in too much overtime for others. And fourth, we were losing money anyway, so why not reduce the losses.

We chose to close down on Mondays and Tuesdays. And, for the first time in entertainment history we had an advertising program to tell people not to visit Disneyland on those days.

ATTENDANCE...was difficult to predict. We'd be swamped with people on a Tuesday when we didn't expect people, and be overstaffed on weekends and holidays when they stayed away.

OFFICE SPACE

Although today we have a rather extensive Administration Building, in those days the last thing that Walt would pay for was office space. He considered it, I've been told, (and I've always agreed)...a waste of money.

The Operations Department was housed in a bunch of old shacks, which were called "Tijuana Row." Accounting was in two places. One was a wet, hot and uncomfortable shack... repeat "shack"...called the "snake pit," and another group were housed in an old construction shack with a corrugated roof which let both the sun and the cold in without interruption.

PRICE RESISTANCE AND TICKET BOOKS...became critical. It was rumored that it cost \$40.00 a piece to visit Disneyland, and many stayed away for that reason. And, there were many in the park who felt that our "preview price" for admission was too high, and wanted it reduced.

When it came to lowering the gate admission, Walt finally raised his right eyebrow...a show of irritation which could make people turn white, and said, "Don't tamper with my gate." We now have so many types of admission that I can't remember all of them. But we never tampered with Walt's gate admission, which is now five dollars.

THE WEEKS AFTER LABOR DAY...were periods of panic, cut backs and reorganizations. The money would roll in during the summer, but then it was like turning off a faucet with only small dribbles of cash coming in...combined with bundles of money going out in overhead.

RUMORS...of all kinds would crop up during our slow periods. It was rumored, for example, that we'd close down for the month of January...or operate only during summer, weekends, and holidays...as many places do today.

RAINY DAYS...were confusing. Many were involved in deciding if we should close down, and save the payroll money, or stay open and pray for sunshine. It sometimes seemed that the best way to bring out the sun was to close down...with the sunshine and guests arriving a bit later, after we were closed.

EMPLOYEE FACILITIES...were bad, or non-existent. The center of activity was in a tent...called HARLEY'S TENT... named after the owner and operator of the sandwich concession.

It was totally democratic, with Walt frequently sitting down to have a hot dog...along with everyone else. And, as "roach wagons" go, this wasn't too bad. In addition to providing shade, it was the betting place for football pools. Also, I believe that Harley had a way of booking horse races. I'm not sure of that, but it was a fact that he'd lend out \$5.00 to be repaid with six on pay day.

Today we have two wonderful employee cafeterias. In fact...and it is rare in my experience in other organizations...there are very few complaints. But, I'm not sure that Harley's Tent wasn't more democratic and friendly.

HOURLY PAID EMPLOYEES...had to fight to get enough hours to survive during the low attendance period. And salaried people grew weary from 70 hour weeks.

A BUDGET TO FIT THE SITUATION

Today, the budget for training, communications, the recreation club, publications and a very extensive employee relations program amounts to a few hundred thousand dollars a year. We have some great programs.

But in those early days, I remember having to justify my activities for training...recreation...publications...foreman training...and a few other activities.

At that time we had a very extensive "Pony Farm" with not only the horses for our horse drawn vehicles, but mules for the mule pack adventure and horses to carry our stage coaches.

And, we had to pay to haul away all of the extensive manure. I found out that the bill for this was about \$12,000 per year. Fortunately, Fred and Wood had a sense of humor and I suggested that my activities should deserve as much money for spreading it as for hauling it away, and I got the \$12,000.

FIRST MONDAY CLOSING

At the time, I handling guest opinion polls, and had to check the effectiveness of our advertising campaign informing the public of our new operating hours. We had missed badly on the Mexico market, and disappointed many of these important guests by being closed when they assumed we would be open.

And then, while I was at the Main parking entrance, a couple drove up in a chauffeured limousine. We had, it seems, not gotten the message into Florence, Italy where they were from.

Dave Young was with me, and we gave them a special tour of the park, followed by a lovely lunch. They had a better time than if the park had been opened. And, years later when Dave's daughter went to school in Florence, they entertained her in even greater style.

FANTASY IN THE SKY...WOW!

Tommy Walker and a pyrotechnic specialist, Bennie Wells, came up with the idea for a summer fireworks display. It was designed to be produced at nine p.m., which would keep some day people in the park, and bring some night audience in for the display.

Some residents complained about the noise, but even more of them enjoyed watching them every night from their homes. And, those who didn't want to pay, lined up in cars to see the display. Today, I still see people pulling onto the shoulder of the road to watch our spectacular display.

Dave Young had a tape made to announce the fireworks starting at six p.m. He'd say something like, "In three hours you can enjoy our new, spectacular, Fantasy in the Sky!" Then there would be small announcements until the big moment when he'd say...at nine..."And now, FANTASY IN THE SKY!" The tape had little things in it which were supposed to break up these announcements.

But, tapes cannot always be trusted. On the first day, at six o'clock, the first announcement came on...followed immediately by all of the segments and ending up with the final punch line which cued the fireworks. It all happened at six...instead of nine...three hours later.

Walt was there with Dave, after this mishap, and instead of firing him on the spot, he stood there, right along with all the guests, exclaiming, "WOW!"

THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE REVUE...AND WALLY BOAG

Walt Disney personally cast the performers for this show in Frontierland. A singer..."the silver voiced tenor"... named Don Novis, knew Walt and was selected by him. Walt wanted a comic, and Don suggested a person he knew and had worked with named Wally Boag.

Wally had been doing his act all around the world, but some of his act might have been rated "parental guidance"... not in the Disney image of family entertainment. But when asked by Walt, he immediately said, "I can clean it up."

Wally was hired on a two week contract, but was an instant success. Wally was one who became a "true believer" in Disneyland. On stage, he couldn't be any funnier. But off stage, he can be serious and introspective. He was to co-found many of our employee activities.

Walt was frequently in the audience. As a trained show man, he knew just when to laugh, which he did heartily. This is a responsibility of showmen not, unfortunately, shared by many people today who are silent and unresponsive observers of T.V.

The show is just as great now as it was 25 years ago. In Wally's case, it has a Palliachi...laugh clown, laugh, twist. We got to know each other socially. His daughter was a charming and beautiful young gal, who was struck with a brain tumor. They took her to the best doctors in the country, without cure.

And...for months...Wally would visit her everyday at the UCLA medical center, and at the same time be the Top Banana...for five shows a day. One of his proteges is, by the way, the popular Steve Martin. If you've seen his act on TV...or live...it contains most of the elements of the act he first learned from Wally.

THE DISNEYLAND BAND AND...VESEY WALKER

Tommy Walker's Dad, Vesey, had lead bands all over the world, frequently taking Tommy along with him. He'd semi-retired and was operating a music store when Walt decided on a marching band...particularly for the opening day.

Tommy suggested that Walt retain Vesey for the job. Vesey, along with many of us, came to Disneyland on a contract basis. Vesey could be a crusty and demanding man, but he was the best in the business.

The band was an instant success...and we badly needed it. He and the band were just right for Main Street. Walt and Vesey developed a common bond of appreciation. Vesey was to stay on the payroll for life...even after he couldn't march down Main Street any more.

THE SOUNDS OF DISNEYLAND...DAVE YOUNG AND "WALT WHO?"

Dave Young was a radio announcer who had worked with Jack Sayers. There was a great need for a professional to help with public announcements, and to train hosts and hostesses in narrations.

Dave was a man small in stature, but large in voice and character. He would quietly tape our narrators and work with them on improvements. His voice was...for quite sometime the voice you'd hear announcing the Disneyland train.

The summer lines at the Jungle Cruise were brutally long, and Tommy had an idea that never worked...and perhaps Dave could be partially blamed. The idea was a train a Mina Bird to be caged above the Jungle Cruise in the waiting line, and then say, "Hi there, My name is Mickey Mina, what's your name?"

The Mina was caged on the roof above the Golden Horseshoe where a tape constantly played the words that Mickey Mina was supposed to say. The name of Walt Disney was, of course, magic to everyone. One day Dave took me up to watch the training. With a malevolent look, he turned off the tape and said, repeatedly, "Walt, Walt WHO?"

The poor bird must have ended up in some special cage for schizophrenic Mina birds.

DO IT YOURSELF CHARACTERS

Today we have well trained "characters" whom you've seen in their uncomfortable but effective costumes. They do that exclusively. But in our learning years, we couldn't afford such full time entertainers.

TRINIDAD...our first Main Street "white wing" was specially selected by Walt. In addition to sweeping up after the real live horses, he became a local character, and the most photographed man on the street.

Let me interject a thought here. Along with my great good fortune in working with young people, we sometimes run into terms which they use and I can't understand, and terms that I use which they have never heard.

I should explain...as I've had to do with them...that a "white wing" is the turn of the century street sweeper always dressed in a white uniform with a high, white hat. Today we can't find anybody who will do the job.

BLACK BART...was a delightful and greasy "bad guy" who, along with SHERIFF LUCKY, would serve as greeters and security people, while playing regular shoot out scenes in Frontierland.

OUR TOMORROWLAND SPACEMAN...was, in those early days, a young man named John Catone, who is now one of our managers. The suit was hot and heavy, but a bit oversized. John became a popular guy with all of us, because he could sneak a battery radio in the outfit, and keep us informed of the summer baseball scores.

AND WALT DISNEY

One of the most frequently asked guest questions in the early days was, "Is Walt Disney in the park?" It was an easily answered question because just about everyone knew of his whereabouts from the time he left the studio.

Walt's apartment was...and is...located above the Main Street Fire Station. He'd come down and check in and usually walk down to take a trip on the Jungle Cruise. I'm told that at one time he commented...when the crocodiles and other animation were not working, "I know damned well these things work. I saw it on television."

And, the story has it, at one time two maintenance men hid behind the bushes and manually worked the crocodiles until Walt went by. And, until he caught up with the scheme, a masterful showman, Lee David, would be ready to handle the narration for Walt...on either the Jungle Cruise or the Tiki Room.

People who see some of our standard live "specials" might feel that they just sort of "happened." Nothing could be farther from the truth. Tommy or Jack or somebody would get an idea.

They might "bounce it off Walt" if he was in the park just to get a reaction. Tommy Walker was good at this when it came to live shows. Dick Nunis was to become sharp at it when it came to stage operations.

But, if it looked like the idea might "fly," there would be days of research and brain storming by many people, ending up in a storyboard presentation which would be given to Walt and others...with Walt as the final judge.

Then, the storyboard would become a reality, and it was "on with the show." Some things sound better on a storyboard than in actuality. Walt felt that all possible money and talent should be expended on a show. And he felt it was necessary to learn from mistakes.

Even today, when I see a balloon ascension, I think of Nat Lewis. When I see the fireworks, I think of Bernie Wells and Okhaoma Ben Meister. I see our waterfalls, but think of the plumbers.

In Disney's movies, like People and Places or Nature's Half Acre, nature did most of the work, but at Disneyland there's always a person behind the place.

And, when I'm doing something like redecorating an apartment, or even a book like this, I remember Walt's comment when we took a big risk on a New Year's Eve Party..."You can't tell until you try."

He also figured that in doing anything new, mistakes were bound to happen...and we made plenty of them.

Twenty-Three:

From Mule Packs to Computers

BIG THUNDER....Disneyland's newest attraction opened in October of 1979. It was a few months later than anticipated. In addition to having had a bit of a strike of maintenance personnel, our problems today are mainly with new and amazing uses of computer technology.

But to me, the important point is that this one attraction cost a little bit more than the 17 million dollars poured into the total Disneyland which opened in 1955.

And, in 1979, we had the money to build it...and Walt Disney did not have to hock his personal life insurance or hassle his staff to buy stock.

During those early years, we had to come up with spectacular shows, but events which didn't require a lot of hard investment bucks. As a result, this was a period for learning a lot through experience.

For example.....

THE DISNEYLAND CIRCUS

A few weeks before Christmas were probably the most deadly and depressing of the entire year. Attendance was low... even in good weather. Lessees would moan about their loss of revenue, and we could see lots of money going out and nothing coming in.

Walt, of course, was a circus buff, so I can only speculate that the idea of a Disney Circus to hype the attendance might have been his own...or one he readily sparked to.

Art Directors were assigned to the project. It was an ideal time to sign up circus acts...since it was a dull time for them. It was a GREAT time for many of us who were involved...especially for me.

I was back at the White House, and we had many of the performers stationed there. I was developing sawdust in my veins with the excitement of it all.

Professor Keller had his famous lion act...complete with dangerous animals whose claws had been removed, and who were fed tranquilizers. His greatest fear was having a lion go to sleep and fall on him from the perch to which he'd been driven...by the courageous Professor.

Many of us were recruited to wear character costumes for the Circus Parade. Howie Vineyard had a problem when he made a pass at a fellow character who happened to be his wife!

On opening night, the female trapeze artist lost her brassiere when flying through the air with the greatest of ease. The lady with the trained monkey was reputed to be in love with the beast. Llamas would escape the tent... running down Main Street, with Doc Lemmon and his staff in pursuit.

It was memorable...fun...exciting. But the public were out shopping, getting ready for Santa Claus. It was a financial turkey...a bummer which lost, I've heard, nearly \$400,000.00. In this instance, a few heads did roll, and although I don't really know...it may have hastened Wood's eventual departure.

Today, the situation is not nearly as bad. My advice to friends is to visit Disneyland the week before Christmas. We are beautiful, with lights twinkling in mature trees... and all the special entertainment for our great Christmas show.

Conversely, the worst time to visit is the week after Christmas when we have more people than we can comfortably receive. Since all outdoor entertainment places are bombed after Christmas, my theory is that families have had too much togetherness, and everyone says, "Let's go to Disneyland."

THE RABBIT...WITH FROZEN ORCHIDS IN THE SKY

Tommy had another great and grand spectacular idea. On Easter there would be the Easter Parade, down Main Street... just like it was in the movie with Judy Garland and Fred Astaire...but better.

As the band played on Main Street and the massed choir sang, a helicopter would drop down over Town Square, and a rabbit would peak out and drop orchids over the amazed and appreciative throngs.

Fortunately, everything went well...just like on the storyboard, as Walt approved it. Only two things were forgotten:

First, as the helicopter descended, a suction force was created which sucked up everything loose...the music of the musicians and the choir...hats...skirts...limbs of trees.

Second, the orchids had been frozen...like the spinach you might buy in the frozen food section of the store. Unfortunately, they hadn't thawed. In panic, and perhaps to make sure they earned the fee, the rabbit threw them anyway...plop, plop--thump,thump... like little orchid bombs!

We didn't try that again, but I still think it is one helluva idea.

STAGECOACHES

During the early days we had real, old time horse driven stage coaches in Frontierland. They were food for atmosphere, but lost money, and when one turned over...with minor injuries to passengers...they were eliminated.

In orientation...and in other training programs we would explain that for guests it had to be a "fresh show every day"...indicating that we couldn't let down in quality. During the early years this was true in many ways.

Since we didn't have money to build new attractions, we had to make do with the talents which were available.

OUR MULE PACK ATTRACTION

Although we still call it "The Pony Farm", and although we still have a big area for our beautiful horses, pigeons, and security dogs, in the early days our largest population in the area was our mule pack.

The mules served as a good attraction for several years. I don't think they made any money...and "working the mules" was in about the same category as "working the shooting gallery" or even "the buckets" (the Sky Ride to guests: "Hemmoroid Hollow" to some hosts).

NATURE'S WONDERLAND

One of our early bigger investments was in Nature's Wonderland. I always loved that attraction, and for a reason. Walt didn't like the first narration...so Jack Sayers, Dave Young and I put on costumes and worked for days bringing it to life.

At first...as was the case in many attractions...the narrations were live, not taped. The problem was that the narrator was in the back train, and wasn't seeing what the guests were seeing in front.

I thought what we worked out was rather good, but eventually it got the local name of "The Mine Train"... with a taped narration. It lasted much longer than the mules, but ended when it was replaced by the present Big Thunder...a good attraction, by the way.

MERMAIDS

At what was called our SECOND OPENING...done beautifully and professionally in 1959, we went through the total casting process to get real live girls to serve as mermaids. The applicants out numbered the final mermaids by about 100 to 1.

Although much prettier than mules, they didn't add enough show to justify the cost.

OUR NON-PADDLING INDIANS

Out where you now find Bear Country, we made quite a deal of our Indian Village. It was a good show. Unfortunately, regardless of what you may have read in history, our Indians didn't know how to paddle their own canoes... requiring special training.

FRONTIERLAND SHOOT-OUTS

Wally Boag and Sheriff Lucky would have regular shoot outs with Black Bart, in Frontierland. That too, eventually succumbed to progress and education in our unique brand of show business.

Walt constantly preached "show" and insisted that every guest get his or her money's worth, which one certainly doesn't get when standing in line...even to go to a restroom. But money remained short for new and expensive attractions.

We tried everything from the standard monkey with Organ Grinder to an acrobat hanging by his heels in mid-air.

Eventually, the WED Imagineers and Walt came up with a new technique which was to revolutionize what was already a revolution in family entertainment.

AUDIO-ANIMATRONICS

Audio Animatronics...as the name implies...is a unique combination of the most advanced, George Orwellian, 21st Century science. The first working attraction was the Enchanted Tiki Room, which adapted some of the techniques for getting to the moon into Disney entertainment.

It was a major change from our years with experimenting with live entertainment to the creation of many of the new attractions that are enjoyed at Disneyland today.

Actually, I suffered some sadness at the departure of the Mules...the Mermaids...the Indians...many other live shows. And, they were important in those early days.

But those who dream of the "good old days", never spent eight hours a day lifting, strapping, and unlifting people off of mules.

And, although I feel we have taken the challenge out of roles where live narration is better than tape, on balance, audio animatronics and other technological advances have improved the Disneyland show.

It is perhaps the only way that one can afford to produce a show for 10,000 people on a slow day or 80,000 people on a big day.

And...from a cold, financial viewpoint, and a human viewpoint...Abraham Lincoln doesn't get the feeling that HE is the most important person in the entire show.

And, to this date, Abe Lincoln hasn't complained about his breaks...working overtime...his supervision...or even the guests.

Hopefully, as we adjust to modern technology, we'll find the right balance between audio animatronics and real live people.

But...till this time of writing, I've never heard anyone complain about NOT "working the mules".

Twenty-Four: You can take the boy off the farm, but...

You can't take the farm out of the boy, or girl...as the case may be. And in most cases, that applies to Disneyland people.

I recently had some drinks with a guy who had left to become Vice President of Sambo's, the restaurant chain. Rather than talking about what Sambo's should be doing, he spent most of the time talking about WE...meaning Disneyland.

There would be many changes during the early days of Disneyland. Mistakes had to be made, and somebody had to assume the blame. Then...there were those who were just miscast. And then there were others who left what they thought was a sinking ship.

It was inevitable that Walt and Wood would come to the parting of the ways. They were both men of strong convictions, and at times the convictions went in opposite ways.

And, to a great extent, Woody was developing his own organization within Walt's organization... as with the Texans--this was a threat.

Walt, in my opinion, had read the maxim "divide and rule", and didn't mind friction between individuals. On the other hand, in a great Canadian Broadcasting Company interview...which was never broadcast locally...he was asked to define his greatest accomplishment:

"To be able to build an organization... and hang on to it"...was his reply.

So, in one week, Wood was holding his regular meetings as usual...with an office crowded every minute of the day. And, just about overnight, he was out as General Manager, and Jack Sayers was in the job.

On the day of his departure, his usually busy office was empty. The psychophants and favor seekers were gone. Jack and I went up to suggest a farewell drink, and he accepted, with pleasure.

The divorce was...as I understood it...a fair one. Wood received what was then a healthy bonus, and for years billed himself as "The Master Planner of Disneyland."

I was then moved over to work for Jack, with a set of duties outlined in this old memo that I dug up from my company files. (See page 82)

After Wood's departure, many Texans immediately learned to speak good English, and several stayed on to do important jobs.

Jack was great to work for...brilliant...a good show person...and a True Believer in Walt's dream. But Administration was not his strong suit...and it's not mine either. He made many contributions, but...with equal suddenness...it was announced that he would take over as a Director of Lessee Relations, and Joe Fowler...a masterful administrator...would take over the managerial job.

And Walt now had another idea, which still remains in the organization. Rather than have a GENERAL MANAGER, he'd set up a committee. I had a chance to help. Joe was to be the CHAIRMAN OF THE PARK OPERATIONS COMMITTEE... a group composed of the key men from the Studio, the Park, and WED.

I ended up a man without a boss. I had a choice of two bosses, and picked Tommy Walker. He's a great showman, but his ideas and mine for training people didn't jibe.

Several of Wood's team had followed him to other projects. And he finally landed one for a theme park called "Pleasure Island" in Wakefield, Massachusetts. It was financed by as solid a sounding name as you can imagine... CABOT, CABOT, AND FORBES. If there was a Cabot or a Forbes in the organization, I never saw one.

file
JCS

DISNEYLAND, INC.
MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS
BULLETIN NO. 84

TO: ALL SUPERVISION OF DISNEYLAND, WDP AND WED.
SUBJECT: STAFF ASSISTANT TO CHAIRMAN OF THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
DATE: September 12, 1957

Van France has been assigned the duties of Staff Assistant to the Chairman of the Operations Committee. As well as the normal Staff Assistant duties, he will carry out specific duties as outlined below:

1. Employee Training
2. Supervisory Training
3. Training Publications
4. Employee Magazine "The Disneylander" --
Disneyland Management representative.
5. Opinion Survey supervision.
6. Road and Highway Development coordination.
7. Periphery Property, coordinating with Public Relations and General Services.
8. Assist Customer Relations Manager in coordinating special programs.

Your cooperation in assisting Van in carrying out these above duties will be appreciated.

Jack C. Sayers
Jack C. Sayers, Chairman
Operations Committee

JCS/dw



At any rate, my usual period on a job was over the three year limit, and when Wood, through Earl Shelton, offered me another consulting job, I took it. It was another week-to-week deal at \$60 a week, but at 7 days a week plus a full expense account near Boston, it was a good deal.

As it so happened, at the time of my resignation, the Disney Studios were suing Wood to cease and desist from calling himself the Master Planner of Disneyland. I'll admit that it sounded a bit like Walt was helping Wood create Disneyland.

Pleasure Island was fun. Unfortunately, it went broke. That was followed by seven months in New York, on a project called FREEDOMLAND. The pressures of opening were similar to those of Disneyland, but it also went BROKE...a major bath for the investors of about \$30 million, but good fun and good money for me.

I returned to the West Coast to the consulting business. I was rather happily doing some consulting for a friend who was the City Manager of a town called Costa Mesa. We worked out a plan for the city based on Disneyland.

Disneyland had, by the way, been called an ideal to be followed for city planners.

In our master plan for Costa Mesa, we had similar neighborhoods and even a train to be used as public transportation. A great idea...now lost someplace.

And then I get a call from Joe Fowler. I don't know, and I've never asked, but my guess is that it was prompted by my first go-fer, Dick Nunis, who was then Director of Operations.

Joe and I had lunch, and back again I went to Disneyland as a consultant. Two thoughts are etched in my memory:

1. I went to work for Dick...as his go-fer. One of the first things he commented on was the way I tied my tie...the old fashioned four-in-hand. I was told to learn to tie my tie the modern way.

Second, he informed me that I was making enough money to afford decent shirts. One day he caught me with a shirt with a frayed collar, and...to make his point...took the shirt right off my back.

2. Dick also took me to the studio for re-orientation. When we were leaving the Executive Dining Room, a voice yelled out, "Hey, Van."

I looked around, and finally realized it was Walt. He observed that he was glad to see me back, and that I must have learned a lot while I was on other projects. He made me feel "at home." He was a great guy.

But back to that farmer boy. In 1959 Disneyland had what Walt called "the second opening". He was going to capitalize on all the mistakes made in the first opening.

And, it was a great one...including then ^{Vice} President Nixon and Meredith Wilson. . . . with 76 trombones marching down Main Street.

Where did I, and some other Disneyland expatriates see it? On TV in a motel room in Wakefield, Massachusetts. We wouldn't possibly have missed it...even though the opening of Pleasure Island was days away.

Yes. You can take the person out of Disneyland...but you can never take the Disneyland out of the person, even though they may have only worked one summer.

Twenty-Five:

The Winter Olympics of 1962

This was one of those Disneyland "spin offs" which I mostly missed.

I say "mostly", for a couple of reasons. First, Walt Disney had been appointed Chairman of the Pageantry for the Winter Olympics of that year. At the time, Tommy Walker was responsible to Walt...and I was serving out my last days before leaving Disneyland with Woody.

By this time just about everyone knew that I'm a good organizer and a lousy administrator. So, during my very last days...no party and no severance pay...Tommy had me in a back room helping him work up the organization for the Pageantry Committee.

And then...after I'd returned from my ventures in the East with Woody...the opening was getting closer. And, two of my old friends from the California Highway Patrol...both having been promoted...asked me to take a trip up to Squaw Valley with them, to find out how much of a staff of Highway Patrolmen would be required.

So, up to Squaw Valley we went in a State Car. Let's face it. The Disney guys were nice to me. But also, they had to be nice to Inspector Herb Null and Captain Don Watkins, who were to make very essential recommendations on the number of men to be assigned.

Unfortunately, we were an embarrassing trio. They were dressed in California "show clothes"...old World War II boots and jeans. And I was in strictly "city" clothes, with back street shoes and slacks.

Tommy Walker and Doc Lemmon were, however, in the dress that was the thing...those fancy ski pants and expensive parkas. So, for them, it was a bit like entertaining country cousins in the Big City.

Saying to go "out on the town" in Squaw Valley is not saying much, but ~~both~~ Doc Lemmon and Tommy Walker were both generous with what Woody would call "Old Loud Mouth" or Fred Schumacher called "jump steady."

So when Tommy woke me the next morning with my head banging along with his knock, it was with a sense of urgency. Art Linkletter, who worked with Walt on many openings, had to get to the Sacramento Airport. Would we drive him?

Herb Null was impressed with Art's celebrity status and asked, "what shall we talk about?" Knowing that Art and Herb were both handball enthusiasts, I suggested that he might start with that.

Since Art and I had both gone through San Diego Schools and San Diego State together, we bantered about that for a while, and then Art started on handball, and moved on with stories about his other ventures.

It was a short and pleasant trip...and it was fun to at least see the one Disneyland venture in which I didn't take part.

There were some great stories about that one. You'll have to ask Dick, or someone else about them. One I do remember is that on opening day...and those Olympic Opening Ceremonies are BIG, it began to snow like hell.

Meanwhile, there were hundreds of Boy Scouts and others who would do the music...a very difficult thing with metal wind instruments. The international TV cameras were all set, but couldn't see through the snow.

But...just at the scheduled start, the snow stopped...the skies cleared...the ceremonies went on schedule. With the last commercial, the snow came back. "Disney weather", it was called.

Meanwhile, we got Art to the plane...just in time for him to miss buying us the drink on which we'd planned.

Twenty-Six: New Directions

When I left Disneyland, training and orientation was not even a one-man job. It was a part of many jobs.

In fact, when I was in New York, a visiting friend informed me that another guy had gotten a demotion. "Why?", I responded. Well, he was dropped down to your old job. I didn't think of it that way, and didn't spring for another drink for the guy.

But when I came back, the challenges were greater than they were before. It was sort of the difference between romance and marriage. In those early days, it was something new every day, and not much organization.

But five years later we were getting organized, learning to live together year after year. There were some logical reasons for this:

1. Our 31 unions were becoming more aggressive-- and jealous--of their perogatives.
2. "Divisions" and "Departments"...as happens everywhere...were becoming protective of their perogatives.
3. People who had started out on a "summer job" were finding that they couldn't do as well on the outside, and coming to the realization that this might become a permanent occupational wedding.
4. Being friendly and courteous to people is not all fun. It can be damned tiring and difficult, particularly when you have your own problems.
5. The "errors" in "trial and error" management were not as excusable as they once were.
6. We were getting premature hardening of the mental arteries...not making changes when changes were inevitable.

Perhaps the worst mistake was that the guy who was "demoted" to my former job had stayed with the same old "You'll Create Happiness" theme...without updating the approach to fit the existing conditions.

New supervision had been added...many lacking any skill in human relations. New policies and procedures had been added...necessary but restrictive. And, many of the jobs had lost their glamour due to the obvious fact that we have some boring, routine tasks.

As a result, the concept of "creating happiness" had been turned into a negative connotation with "Don't give me any of that damned pixie dust".

Well, to this day I feel that our product
IS pixie dust, and our reason for being
IS to create happiness for others.

And so, Dick and I began a massive turn around which would do a better job of combining reality with romance. My remembrances of those things past may be out of chronological sequence, but what we did was...

ESTABLISH "THE UNIVERSITY OF DISNEYLAND"

First, I'd always disliked the term "training department," and "education department" was equally sexless. People feel that they are...even if they can't read, write, or spell..."educated" just because they get a degree.

Second, and it is still true, we were in a totally new enterprise which was part of the Leisure/Service revolution. In my opinion it needed a totally new curriculum.

Third, I'd tried to work with our tax supported educational institutions, and found them short-sighted, small minded, and not interested in anything for which they did not get reimbursed by the state.

I'd worked out a program with one local college, in which our growth people could get a short course in various aspects of our business...sociology...psychology...physiology...marketing...and things like that.

It was working fine until some typical school bookkeeper found out that the State wouldn't pay for it. Basket weaving, yes, but training people for a new profession, no.

The character in my little history included mostly those who I'd known before, but two now moved into the foreground of my life.

DOROTHY ENO

I'd known Dorothy in those early days when she was a secretary scrunched in a little office in Adventureland, which has now been converted into an air conditioning room. How Dorothy, Charley Thompson's 250 pounds, and a couple of other people fitted in there, I'll never know.

But, as is the case with so many great women who become Executive Secretaries, she had educated Doc Lemmon, and was...when I arrived back...educating Dick, in his job as Operations Director.

Fortunately, she took me on as a ^{and innocent} student, and was a key to my survival. With ^{and innocent} very young face, she had a mind like a computer and an Eagle eye. If she checked my copy or a handbook, I knew it was OK.

And, I learned to detect her rating plan. If it was bad or just average, she had one expression. But if it was good, I could tell from her reactions, it was OK. I don't know how many times she saved my life.

But...At one time when I had to commute to San Diego, which meant catching the three o'clock train, she would interrupt Dick to say, "Van, it is your train time!"... and I'd dash to my car.

BOB ALLEN

Bob had been a host going to school after a tour of duty in the Korean War in 1955: He'd moved along...scrounging for hours to get the money to start a family, and I think may have started in supervision when I left.

He moved right on up in the organization, and was a delightful friend. At a critical time, Bob was Manager of our Celebrity Sports Center...in Denver. A project which has now been sold.

He'd invite me up, and some of my fondest recollections... at a very critical time in my life...were sitting and reorganizing Celebrity Sports Center, Disneyland, Walt Disney World,...and the world in general, while having a few pleasant beers.

RON DOMINQUEZ

If there is a cord that connects old time Anaheim and Disneyland's 25th anniversary, it is handled with competence by Ron Dominquez, a tall good looking guy who happens to be Vice-President for Disneyland Operations.

He was, you see, just a kid spraying Orange Trees when Disneyland was just a dream. And, his family...one of the great old Orange County families, were living just about where Adventureland now is.

There was at one time a rumor that Walt promised Ron's father that he could have a job for life if he sold the property. But the reality is that he just hired on for a summer job like the rest of the pioneers.

This has nothing to do with the fact that Ron is a very competent guy who got promoted on the basis of his personality and ability, rather than the place of his birth.

Twenty-Seven:

Professionalizing a Unique Show

The theme, "You'll Create Happiness" was a goal for all Disneyland employees. We were sufficiently disorganized to make that goal possible.

I have a difficult time comparing the life of an organization to the span of years of all of us. As it so happens, however, most organizations today do develop hardening of the mental arteries...frustrations of middle age and, rather than dying nicely, they end up as being "merged," rather than buried.

The early days of Disneyland can be compared to labor or birth pangs. It was painful. It would have died if it weren't for being nurtured by Walt Disney.

Disorganization in the park gave way to organization... and nobody really liked it. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES were being created to control the freedoms of the past. This, of course, seemed to come along with the "success" we were experiencing.

"Morale," I was told, was "lower than its ever been." I've heard that dozens of times since...even as this is being written. By that time, Disneyland was not a risky thing going down the financial tubes. It was becoming "successful." And 31 unions and variety of Divisions and Departments and Units and Functions were becoming protective of prerogatives and security.

Things have not changed. Fortunately, Walt Disney's dream keeps it alive. My own "good old days" go back to 1955. For others, the "good old days" might be two years ago...1978.

There were highlights and low lights, and the history of the next few years has to be controlled by memory...

"YOU'RE ON STAGE!!"

Show Biz has always been, and always will be a romantic thing. But, it is perhaps the most disciplined, toughest, enterprise.

Disneyland was, and is...a new branch of show business, although even today people who work here think of the fun, rather than the discipline.

Since "pixie dust" and "You'll Create Happiness" were not selling, I came up with a new approach which Dick supported. We had a handbook and a training pitch which said, in essence...that "We'll Create Happiness, of course. But to do that requires a lot of disciplines which none of us like."

There are, of course, many stories of being in show business. One is about the guy who cleaned up after the elephants in the circus. The circus management kept adding elephants but would not give him any help. Further, he smelled just terribly.

When he was complaining to a friend, the friend suggested, "Why don't you quit?" The answer was..."What!...and give up show business?"

I had to take the approach...which I continue to do... that our job at Disneyland is to create happiness for others. Pixie dust is our product. We produce our show on a giant stage where the actors and audience react together...and where the sky is a giant backdrop.

But...there are some routine jobs, and people can be a problem. There are, and always will be, problems. But in show business, one can find the toughest disciplines one can find in any way of making a living.

At one point, in a leadership development session, I actually got some horse droppings, which I spread out on the conference table. I was trying to get across the point that it was useless just to complain about it. Somebody had to get in and clean it up.

"BACKSTAGE DISNEYLAND"

Another way we tried to mix reality and pixie dust was with a magazine for our people. My key editor was Wally Boag, a great guy who had a good idea of Walt's sense of humor.

With a lot of help from my friends, we came up with a dummy of the publication which spoofed a lot of existing problems, including WED, the sacred saints of creativity... and named after Walter Elias Disney.

Dick...who correctly believes that "timing is everything," carried around that dummy for weeks. He finally found the right moment to show it to Walt, and explained what we were doing. Walt understood...and liked it.

With his blessing, we went ahead to spoof a variety of things. After all, there is not a great deal one can do about many problems...parking...wardrobe...supervision... coordination. By bringing them in the open and making fun of them, one is able to detonate bombs of frustration, rather than letting them blow up at union negotiation time.

FROM "THEME PARK" TO INSTITUTION

Today, I become irritated when Disneyland is referred to as the "Granddaddy of Theme Parks"...or as an "amusement park."

There was a basic reason for it's being called a "theme park", in the first place. The public...and some of those working at Disneyland, didn't know what Walt was really dreaming about.

As happens today, some thought it was just a "kiddie park." So, by calling it a THEME park, it helped to describe what it was. But today there are more than forty...or maybe 400...places that call themselves a "theme park."

As for example, "Magic Mountain" in Los Angeles calls itself a "theme park", when there really isn't much of a mountain and not much magic.

Disneyland was fast becoming an institution...a key spot on any tour for dignitaries from around the world. This change was taking place when I came back, and is an even greater matter of metamorphosis today.

Money was still tight. Financially, it was a long, long time from the end of one summer to the beginning of the next. Even today, the money folks at the studio get a bit of a shock when the cash flow drops at the end of Labor Day.

So, with Dick's help, I began to "borrow" people who were hosts and hostesses on attractions. The system was most scientific. I'd either run into some person who seemed to have talent, or sometimes they'd come to me.

This gave me a part-time staff during slow periods...and they were around for their regular jobs during busy periods. They would come up with ideas and a lot of help for various special programs.

I don't count Wally Boag, who was a constant ally and supporter. He was close to Walt...a fund of ideas, and a TRUE BELIEVER. Wally had used Claude Plumb actually a clerk in Plumbing, to help out with gags. Claude was a total movie buff.

So, with Claude Plumb, in his work in the Plumbing Department, we came up with a couple of publications which will be mentioned later.

One year we needed some new kind of training program, which was done almost entirely with "borrowed" help. In Disney, we always simplify copies of letters by doing them alphabetically. Some of these guys have stayed around and...now I go to them for help, and sometimes they borrow me.

- * Randy Bright is now a key guy at WED Enterprises, working on some exciting stuff you'll see eventually in EPCOT Center
- * John Catone is ^{now} ~~not~~ in charge of all files and communications...periodically new phone systems, and a variety of stuff.

- * Jim Cora...is now Managing Operations Director of Tokyo Disneyland, and Chairman of the Park Operations Committee... a counselor...confidant, and friend in need, if you happen to be a friend and want some free passes.
- * Gary Conk...is a key manager of Cash Control, and that is a lot of cash.
- * Gary Fravel...has moved on to a job as Personnel Director up in Yellowstone Park. He was a loaner, who I finally stole...on a full time basis, and contributed much.

"THE DISNEYLANDER"

This was sort of a homegrown "house organ". In retrospect, we did this before I went on my sabbatical. My warning was not to let it become a typical Company House Organ. But, since the company pays, that is difficult to prevent.

We now have an award winning DISNEYLAND LINE...a fine publication. Unfortunately...and this is old fashioned, I don't think the greatest house organ in the world will replace the more durable...and usually more accurate...informal "grapevine".

We were working on a way to professionalize a dream, with certain reality. Dick came up with a slogan which we still use...a basic..."SAFETY, COURTESY, SHOW, AND CAPACITY."

This doesn't seem too creative, but it was a concept which was totally new for a new branch of show business. In a recent handbook, we're changing "capacity" to "efficiency". Today, we try to sugar-coat everything.

But capacity was damned important, and still is. We have a limited number of seats, for example, on the Jungle Cruise. And the attraction has a cycle time (the time from start to finish) of seven minutes. If the operator is under that time, the guest is getting shortchanged, but if it goes longer...by even a few seconds...the lines are too long, and guests are not happy.

YOU LOSE MONEY ON PEAK DAYS

As I said before, you lose money on the busier days. There is a bell shaped curve that shows that the ideal number of guests is about 20,000. That's enough to create a happy group feeling, but not enough to create any significant lines. At that point, our normal per capita spending will be at its peak...between twelve and fifteen dollars.

"THE ONLY PEOPLE TRAP EVER BUILT BY A MOUSE"

There has always been a conflict between "show" and "business" in the show business of Disneyland.

It's obvious that we have to make money to keep the place well maintained, clean...with money left over for expansion. But we spend more, I'm sure, than any other place to continue Walt Disney's advice to young executives:

"Give the people what they want. Keep the place clean. Make sure the people are friendly and courteous. It's just good business."

We get justified complaints, both internally and from the guests, when the park is too crowded, or when too many attractions are, what we call, "down for rehab." But people mostly get their money's worth.

And, as a friend of mine once said, "I'll bet your business at Disneyland is like sex. When it's good it's terrific, and when it's bad, it's still pretty good." The comparison was, and is, quite accurate.

A NEW SHOW EVERY DAY

I hope that you've noticed that the early days, now called the "good old days," were not all that good. But, since everyone thought they were temporary and we didn't know what we were doing, it may have been a more carefree work environment.

After a few years, most people were in jobs which paid better and were more fun than jobs on the outside. People who had just considered their work an affair, now felt married to the job. And that changes a relationship in either case.

As I would explain in orientation, the studio could make a movie, put it in a can, and then have a cast party, and forget about it.

But in our case, we'd entertain 60,000 guests until one in the morning, and then have to be clean and fresh the next morning. For the guest it was a new show every day, and we had to act as if it were new for us.

The cost of doing this constantly goes up. By this time, the maintenance of Disneyland costs about \$2.00 for every guest. It costs about 50¢ for every guest to keep it clean and swept up and to have the gum scraped off the walkways.

We were making some headway in professionalizing a show which many felt would be long dead by this time. I was fortunate in having not only Dick's backing, but also his input.

In addition, Walt Disney knew the importance of friendly and efficient people. As a result, a small idea was to grow into a fairly large organization today...

Twenty-Eight:

Corporate Survival

By the 1960's Walt and Roy Disney had come along way from the days when they were working together in their Uncle's garage, surviving on borrowed money and Roy's pension from the Navy.

Walt Disney Productions may have been about 496th in Fortune's Five Hundred, but it was sizeable, and had all the good and bad points of many successful, growing organizations.

And...during those years, there were many successful books and movies which were not flattering to the Corporate Life; books like "The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit"... "The Corporate Jungle", and many others. In fact, such books sell well today.

I had my own share of bumps and bruises...and ego deflations. But I've stayed on, sometimes half time and sometimes full time. And...although I don't have any formula, there are some reasons, over and above the need for money. I'll share them, although one or two basic words...which every kid from the age of two is familiar with...might be rated "Parental Guidance":

First, on my first good corporate job, an "old timer" of perhaps forty years advised me as follows: "Van, if you are going to work for a corporation, you have to learn to eat shit. And the higher you go the more you have to eat...and the more pleasant you have to be about eating it." I imagine this ingredient is part of the normal diet of any top executive today.

Second, in my job hopping days, the changes were always for the purpose of upward mobility. Training Directors are low paid compared to Labor Relations Negotiators. But, when I reached that goal, I found that I hated it.

Third, I'd found through bitter experience that this idea of "owning your own business" is not all that great. You trade problems with bosses for problems with bankers, suppliers, and clients.

Fourth, there are normally many more benefits working for a Corporation than for yourself. I mean "normally" because I know some people who are happy selling their hanging baskets at Swap Meets.

Fifth, I think I finally developed a bit of personal objective evaluations; namely: I write good training handbooks and reports. I'm a better-than-average communicator inter-personal, and in speaking.

But Sixth, I'm a good organizer...but a lousy manager and/or supervisor. Maybe I knew that when I'd quit a job for what was a better one...or more exciting...bit of work.

As a result, when I was suddenly replaced by a new Manager of the University to sort of a "Dean Emeritus" status, I didn't pick up my corporate marbles and move along. I went home and got drunk...and typed out a "you'll miss me when I'm gone" memo, which I tore up the next day.

And, because there is always a bit of corporate guilt in these things, I was allowed to go back to half time... to do the stuff I liked at Disneyland, and to make consulting money in things like opinion polls, handbooks, and leadership development.

And...I hate to confess...the Universities of Disneyland in Florida and California have been growing and improving ever since.

But Seventh...I had an advantage few others have. Dorothy Eno, Dick's secretary, named my little missiles "Veepograms". And so, when I'd get mad, I'd go home... have a few drinks, and type out my complaints and frustrations.

Some of these I'd tear up or keep, but most of them I gave to Dick...rough, spilled Scotch, cigarette burns and all. It was a positive outlet.

Theoretically, I feel that every executive...to survive... needs some way to get out his frustrations. Golf, tennis, punching bags have their place. I've preferred writing out my frustrations...sometimes finding out in the process how dumb I am.

And so, for a few years...and even now...I can scatter my mistakes, and when I get a good program outside of Disneyland, I can bring that in...and vice versa.

But every day around the world, there are people leaving organizations like the Telephone Company or IBM, waiting for the structure to fall apart in their absence.

Twenty-Nine:

The New York Experience

Strangely, I blank out when I try to remember where I had an office when I came back. Dick still was located in what was called "Tijuana Row"...a bunch of old shacks used for what was called our "Operations Division".

I'd use the Fantasyland Theatre for some meetings... called, as one Union Grievance man said..."A Brainwash in the Mouse House"...or in a restaurant room in what was then the Red Wagon Inn.

But eventually, we needed more permanent quarters for meetings. At the time there were no extra spaces, and no reason to build any. So Dick came up with another suggestion...a trailer.

We spent several days looking for trailers, and then got help from Joe Fowler and his crew, and we brought in the first...of what are now many...trailers. This gave the University of Disneyland it's first home.

And then...along came the New York World's Fair. And, with the guys I'd borrow, I was actually able to steal some people legally...I actually had a STAFF.

I've already mentioned some of them. Those that stayed... or made it, moved on to bigger and better things. One, Bob White...and very bright...now heads up training at Knott's Berry Farm. Another, Lew Johnstone is Vice President with some big outfit in Los Angeles.

We'd start the day out discussing some recent political event, and then possible lag quarters, getting ready for the day's work. It was a nice group, and we could work both on Disneyland stuff, and also get ready for the big trip to the Big City of New York.

THE NEW YORK EXPERIENCE, was both bad and good.

Dick with his foresight in these things, and perhaps some hindsights remembering the White House Days, had leased us some training facilities in a place right across from the Fair.

Without that, I don't know how we would have done the job. We were able to dress the place up, and with the help of top talent like Ralph Kent, we had a very unusual and attractive place in which to train all of our own people...and about 400 volunteers from UNICEF.

Unfortunately, my wife was getting towards the end of a battle with the Big Casino, but just barely well enough to go along. As a result, Dick let me borrow Ted Crewell, at that time Director of Maintenance...now Vice President of all facilities...as a back up man.

And, I was able to take a detail guy named Chuck Burns, who was an ex-clown...a good showman...and perfect compensation for my sloppy ways.

The Good:

I thought it was one of my better orientation programs. We had our room fixed up with card tables and checkered table cloths...like a New York Restaurant. Our handbooks and hand-outs were excellent.

And, we'd worked out a tricky system where at the end of the presentation of the basics like THE MAGIC MIRROR OF YOUR SMILE and FRIENDLY PHRASES...it spelled out AMBASSADOR OF HAPPINESS.

The UNICEF and the PEPSI PEOPLE liked it. It was also good because I happen to like New York, and the Manager of the Fir Motor Inn where we had our training would advance me cash when I needed it.

The Bad:

First, there is almost a law in these matters. On the opening...of anything...there are bound to be mistakes. At this point, I hadn't checked with anybody but Dick, and here were those who had influence who didn't think those checkered tables, and other effects, were as proper...or as good as they should be.

At best, there were those who "could damn with faint praise". And...anything that went wrong could happily be blamed on the orientation and training program.

And, Dick had been told, I feel "to take the ball and run", which he did. So he got the blame for anything I...or anyone else...did.

We both ended up with some bruises...and I'm sure Dick got many more than I. On the second year, most of the mistakes had been made...and everything went very smoothly.

Disneyland was then to end up with a beautiful combination. We had the right to bring ll of the attractions back to Disneyland from New York, at the very time that Mary Poppins was making bundles and bundles of money.

Disneyland today owes a lot to that New York World's Fair and Mary Poppins. And both Dick and I learned a lot which was to prove advantageous when Disney's biggest financial gamble...Walt Disney World...was to open.

Thirty:

The Magic Kingdom Moves East

This is, of course, a personal history of Disneyland. But it was to be blended with a new venture of Walt's in Orlando, Florida. Since dozens of people have written about Walt Disney World, I'll throw my experience into the communications pot.

I've heard...and I believe it...that when Walt was dying in the hospital across from the Disney Studios...he was planning EPCOT and Walt Disney World on the ceiling.

He had said, at one time when he was asked to run for Governor of California, "Why be Governor when I'm King of Disneyland." But the success of Disneyland...along with the continued success of the Studio, made it possible to dream a new dream.

At Disneyland, he'd been frustrated by not having enough money to buy the property to protect the periphery. In Florida, he could see a chance to build his own idea of a Utopia.

EPCOT...The Experimental Community of Tomorrow...was Walt's greatest dream, a dream of designing and operating a Utopian, environmentally oriented community. And, although Walt was a flag waving free enterprise man, his dad had been a socialist activist in Kansas, and Walt...and his organization, were and are a "family."

When I made a recent trip to Walt Disney World, I was impressed with progress that had been made towards Walt's utopian community. There are roads and a solar energy plant...many green belts...a modern transportation system... just about everything that a community needs.

But when I first went there it was something quite different...

LOOK OUT FOR THE SNAKES

I was getting ready for a vacation. I was at fairly loose ends emotionally, having gone through my wife's death. And Dick knew this. He suggested that I mix a bit of business with my vacation. That would pay my way to Florida, and for a trip around the state.

By that time, we had a company plane, so I hitched a ride as far as New Orleans, and then on to Orlando. At that time, about the only thing which existed on our 27,500 acres of land was what we called a "tree farm." We were planning ahead for the landscaping.

I rode out to the place on a Jeep with Bill Evans, who was to work his landscape miracles in this new location. I was walking around looking at things when Bill advised me to watch my step, because of the Cotton Mouth Moccasins, Florida's version of our western rattlesnakes. I got back into the Jeep and waited to get the hell out of there.

Checking out the tourist industry, I travelled the length of the state. I'd always wanted to drive down that many-bridged highway to Key West...an official home of President Truman, but also the home of Ernest Hemingway and his famous bar. I fell in love with the place, and stayed more days than I'd intended.

I returned again for a fairly long stay to set up a training program...an experimental thing we'd used at our hotels. At the time, I was working for one of my many bosses, a nice guy named Dick Milano...who now owns one of the most active restaurants in Orlando.

Once again, we had a deadline for opening, and I didn't see how we could possibly make it. I wasn't to go back there until 77 days before opening. At that time, the prospect of opening looked so dismal that Dick was sent back to be in charge of the final construction and the opening.

I took one look at the place...all mud and unfinished buildings, and immediately, Dick really laughs at me, sold most of my Disney stock...a very, very foolish thing.

I'd not reckoned on what Dick could do in the construction area, nor did I have all that faith in what I called "The Nunis Mafia." He flew about 100 people back there from various branches of the Disneyland operation... all hand picked to work for Dick with total loyalty.

The pre-opening push was about as bad...maybe worse... than it was for Disneyland. It is a story which is still unfolding, as we move ahead to what is called the World Showcase and...eventually...EPCOT...Walt's Utopian Community.

Somebody else could tell the Walt Disney World Story, but I have one little incident which typifies the friendly, democratic approach of the Disney brothers, in this case, Roy Disney.

I was staying at a Hilton Hotel, and went down for dinner on a Sunday. At that time, Orlando had a no alcohol on Sunday blue law. Roy came in with Joe Fowler. He stopped to talk to some Disney executives who were there with their wives, then he and Joe came over to my table.

"Put your book down, Van, we're going to join you," which they did. We had a delightful dinner, with Roy telling more about the progress at the California Institute for the Arts, which the Disney family financed.

When the check came, Roy reached for it, but I said, "Roy, it would look good on my expense report if I took you to dinner." He immediately agreed. "Sure, Van, it all comes out of the same pot."

Thirty-One:

The Day that Walt died...

...is seared into my memory as much as the first day I met him after walking down Mickey Avenue to Dopey Drive to the Animation Building in the studio.

We'd heard that Walt had to go to the hospital for a bit of surgery on an old problem resulting from his polo playing days. We'd heard that he came out, and then went back in. We'd heard it was serious now.

On the night of his death I was speculating about it with Jack Olsen...who had good communications with the studio. His theory was that we wouldn't know anything about it until it happened.

We had a couple of drinks at the Disneyland Hotel, and then headed home. About half way to Laguna Beach, it came on the radio that Walt had died. Most of us didn't really face up until the next day.

I cried...but not openly. Others, with perhaps more courage did. Walt had had...as his brother Roy pointed out...a unique capacity to reach out and touch people. At Disneyland, this had applied to everyone he met... regardless of job or status.

Food hosts and hostesses...attractions people...maintenance people...educated sweepers...everyone felt this sense of great loss, which was expressed in tears.

Dick had to make the decision whether we should close or not. Many...including particularly the media...felt we should close, that "business as usual" was bad. But Lillian Disney, Walt's wife, felt that "the show must go on," which it did. A sad show day, but we operated.

At day's end, there was a very informal wake at the Gourmet Bar of the Disneyland Hotel. It was, just before Christmas. The many tonned star was atop the Matterhorn. But, it had been proved to be just too complex to have it turn on an axis. It was tough enough to get it UP there.

Through some strange communications, I saw people who had been gone for some time drop in. It was a sad night. I'm sure there were other crying wakes in other bars in the area.

After my own drinks, and while I could still drive home, I remember Jack Sayers attacking Ted Crowell, the Director of Maintenance with "If Walt were alive, that star would be turning."

Part Three:

A Personal Tour

Thirty-Two:

A Backstage Tour of Disneyland

Any damned tour can get too long...for the tour guide as well as the walkers, or in this case, the readers. But let me take you on a tour of Disneyland's backstage. Let's find out how the show is produced.

Let's start out at what we call the West Street "Gate," which is just across the street where I started out in the White House. Before we move along, a few general facts and figures...

- * The parking lot is slightly more than 100 acres in size, and can park slightly more than 12,500 cars at one time.
- * The total maintenance area is now about 90 acres.
- * Our winter staff of permanent people is about 4,400 and the summer staff is about 7,500.
- * We'll first see some of the maintenance shops which employ about 700 people represented by 16 different craft unions. The budget adds up to about \$20,000,000.00 a year, or about \$2.00 for each guest. That is exclusive of a budget of five hundred thousand dollars, or 50¢ per guest for keeping the place clean.
- * When it comes to maintenance and some other services, Doc Lemmon's comment that "we never close" is right. People are working 24 hours.

Now let's begin.....

PAINTING THE TOWN...is the job of the painters, whose main office is located just opposite the gate as we come in. Working from 4,000 cards which show the paint exactly as WED designed it, they roll and brush on enough paint to handle a good sized suburban community.

The thousands of cans of paint stored in the main shop sound like a park tour, with special shades for "Mr. Toad", "Jungle Natives", or the "Tobacco Shop Indian."

And, in case you haven't noticed, all of our trash cans are themed to each area. There are 700 of them, all regularly touched up. And, to keep the horses on the Caroussel fresh and unchipped, there is a constant painting rotation for our farm of 85 horses.

Speaking of the Caroussel, the next time you are there, note the gold leaf around the marvelous old time wood sculpture. On the last re-hab program, there was about \$50,000.00 worth of pure gold leaf.

Beyond where you see a crew painting boats and other things is our sign shop. To help you get around, there are 20,000 different signs...all of which have to be constantly touched up.

MOVIES CAME TO DISNEYLAND...with what is called the "Staff and Plaster" shop. Here you have the group of technicians who preserve an art which was created in Egyptian times... developed in movie studios...and a key factor in the make believe facets of Disneyland.

I suggest that you don't bet on whether the wood in Frontierland...the iron in New Orleans...or the rocks on the Matterhorn...are real or fake. These technicians will fool you every time. Here is where, for example, an elephant is sculpted from careful research, and then created in a true-to-jungle representation.

THE MILL...is across the way, and is the place where our crew of skilled carpenters, using over 130 different types of tools, maintain a fleet of 269 boats and all of the wood sculpture throughout the park. Please...when you get back "on stage"...look up and down at the artistry-in-wood, most of which was personally approved by Walt Disney.

WATER...is generally a dry subject, but at Disneyland it is an important part of the show, and the PLUMBERS, are the show people for the 22 different waterfalls, the 18 rivers and riverlets which cascade through the park. Oh. In case you appreciate them later, they maintain enough rest rooms for 300 homes, plus 222 drinking fountains... very necessary on a hot day.

AIR CONDITIONING...in case you haven't noticed, keeps it cool in most of our attractions, and cools it for drinking fountains. These guys are also involved in our electronic shows, which need proper cooling and air conditioning to operate.

THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT...is next to the Mill and is something unusual. We use to do maintenance on demand, but now we have planners, estimators, and schedulers who plan every little job months ahead.

The nicely landscaped building off West Street is for MAINTENANCE ADMINISTRATION...five mobile homes joined together. Another mobile office is headquarters for our MAGIC KINGDOM CLUB with 15 million members across the country. Before we head back towards the West Street Gate, there is one of our staging areas for the school bands who sometimes march down Main Street.

THAT BIG EARTHEN WALL...with the trees growing on it... is what we call THE BERM. It is the wall around our outdoor stage. In fact that section which is just behind Bear Country cost us some extra money. Walt wanted to hide everything from the outside world, but there were some raised power lines in this area, and we had to pay to have them buried.

Retracing our steps, we go by the PIGEON HOME on our right. That is where the pigeons come home after flying away from the nightly flag lowering ceremony. And, there is what we call our PONY FARM. Actually, you'll see mostly those large Percherons which haul the Main Street Streetcars. By the way, we've had people complain about how hard they work. Actually, they do better than humans. They work only six hours, with frequent break periods...and they are taxied back and forth to their work locations. We have a person who punches their time clocks for them.

Up ahead there you'll see those two huge buildings which store OUR PARADE EQUIPMENT and costumes. Year around maintenance is required. And that huge warehouse is where our merchandise is stored. Presently, there are more than 200 million different items stored there, enough for the total population. The warehouse itself is large enough to contain 150 three bedroom houses.

I wouldn't feed those POLICE DOGS, although they are perfectly friendly, if you know them. They are good company for our night long inspection trips by our Security Officers.

To your left is another maintenance building. Here you'll find.....

THE ANIMATION GROUP...who make certain that the Hippos hop and wiggle their ears, along with 2,000 other animated figures. They get these funny requests for repairs, such as, "the dancing natives would not dance last night"...or "somebody stole the witches apple in Snow White."

THE MACHINE SHOP...makes certain that your trip down the Matterhorn or up into space is safe and working properly. It's the most unique shop of it's kind in the world...with men and women who work on all of our unique dream making machinery.

THE WELDING SHOP...makes sure that all the tracks in the park...8 miles of them...are in constant repair. They also work with WED "Imagineers" and MAPO (Mary Poppins) group who build our new unique attractions.

MAINTENANCE SERVICES...is a service organization for the entire park. Among their many duties is that of operating an internal moving company...as with moving about 5,000 chairs from here to there for special events.

THAT GARAGE to your right? Well, that's our own service station. To help people get around in a hurry, we have about 90 cars and trucks, 160 scooters and motorcycles, and then, our fleet of 160 Autopia cars that need daily service. A busy place.

THE ELECTRICAL SHOP...has a shocking responsibility. Our annual electricity bill is \$2,300,000.00 a year...and going up. We use enough to light 10,000 homes a year, and among other things, it takes 2,500,000 lights to produce the summer electrical parade.

THE COMPUTER SYSTEMS SHOP...is where many of our attractions are controlled by computer...as is our Fire and Security system. Here the audio-animatronic show systems are capable of controlling 1,000 channels of animation that change every forty milliseconds. Please don't ask me what a "millisecond" is. Maybe it's one thousandth of a wink.

LANDSCAPING...is in that cute little trailer there with the nice flowers around it. Disneyland has perhaps the largest and most varied collection of trees, plants and grasses in the United States. And, our landscaping people are artists in showmanship...not just planters.

A few facts are in order. Every year, we plant about 350,000 flowering plants...care for about 50,000 shrubs, and replace more than 8,000 square feet of sod. They produce a separate show for each season...Poinsettias at Christmas...Lillies at Easter...vibrant colored plants in the summer...and fall colors in, you guessed it, the fall. Plants have been brought to Disneyland from 40 different countries.

DECORATING...is located in those buildings behind It's a Small World. This fantastic crew does for Disneyland what all of the Props and Dressings people do for the moview. You'll see their work throughout the park. Among their many functions is decorating our fabulous Christmas tree.

The tree is picked by a special crew from a stand of trees in Northern California. Then, it is brought down, and we do some corrections on nature's own design by amputating some limbs and replacing others to get the perfect proportions. Then decorating has the job of adding 5,000 ornaments to make it what we feel is the most beautiful tree in the land.

THE ARCADE SHOP...makes certain that people don't get frustrated and kick on of our 600 game machines which vary from horoscopes to hunting...from baseball to brain quizzes.

THE SOUND CREW...is located upstairs, downstairs, and all around the park. You'll seldom see them, but they are checking or operating 133 projectors...2,000 spotlights...and making sure that 198 birds...79 animals...650 people and 122 flowers are all singing on cue.

Before we go to another backstage area, there on our left is our unique "round house." Here is where we store and maintain the four steam engines and cars for the Disneyland Railroad, plus the three trains for the first working monorail in the United States. Here, also, are the diesel tractors which daily maintain the 2½ miles of monorail track. And, if you worry about changing tires, our monorail has 44 of them on each train.

Now...let's move along past the marvelously landscaped berm towards another part of the park. I might add that one can walk around the berm and in the backstage landscaping, and find what seems like a real forest. In fact, at one time, I'd take my lunch into our Disneyland woods, and read or nap in our woodsy areas.

"FRIENDSHIP POINT" is a local name for the main way for our hosts and hostesses to enter Disneyland. It gained its name from the fact that here people meet for group rides and outings. One can smell the musk as summer begins, and our young seasonal personnel are finding dates for the summer parties.

Here is also the entrance to what we call our CASTING OFFICE, or where people apply for jobs. For every person you may see "on stage," there are at least 3 people who work backstage.

Many work in various jobs in our Administration Building, which replaced the old Tijuana Row. It's a unique building, in that it is a "wrap around" building for our Disneyland Railroad. As you go on the train through the Grand Canyon and the Primeval World, you'll be passing...on either side...our various offices for accounting, marketing, merchandising, wardrobe, and other administrative services.

We'll walk through our ultra-modern clock house, and end up in the WARDROBE AREA. This is the second largest working wardrobe in the world. The only one larger is in Walt Disney World.

Every costume is specifically designed to the theme of an area, as you've probably observed. Each host and hostess has three sets of summer costumes and three for winter. It adds up to 325 different types of costumes and a total of 450,000 individual articles of clothing.

If you worry about cleaning costs, our bill for this runs a bit over one million dollars a year.

Now, let's meander along past our SECURITY DEPARTMENT, which is responsible for the care of our guests and personnel...and our FIRE DEPARTMENT...which is totally covered with 2 million sprinkler heads. Please note our CENTER...where people can come to just sit...or watch TV...or study. We could drop by the INN BETWEEN, our employee cafeteria, for a bit of food.

Instead, we'll pass by our SAFETY DEPARTMENT...which houses not just our accident prevention group, but also our LOST PARENTS meeting place for children who are separated from Mom and Dad. There is also an efficient first aid center, staffed with Registered Nurses for guests and personnel.

Now, let's cut across the HUB to our BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS HEADQUARTERS. This is where we have that department of 200 people who have created our reputation for cleanliness. Interestingly, this must be the best educated group of janitorial people in the world.

Many of these people worked their way through college here, but after receiving their degrees, the professional opportunities were limited. The work is vitally important... although a Master's Degree is not really required.

Each guest leaves about one pound of trash of some kind; papers, popcorn boxes, and things like that. In addition, early in the morning, our gum patrol is at work scraping off the gum dropped by our more sloppy guests.

Our backstage tour could go on for days...or many pages, but let's wind it up with a few additional backstage highlights:

RIVERS AND LAKES: There are 18.5 million gallons of water in our seven bodies of water which includes lakes, rivers, and waterfalls.

Disneyland is also the only place in the world which has a forest, a jungle, and lush river banks in one location.

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS: 26 million hand towels are used every year, a bit more than 2 per guest.

1,000 brooms...500 dust pans...and 3,000 mops are used for daily house-keeping.

OUR FOOD BILL:

Disneyland guests buy, every year:

- * 4.5 million hamburgers
- * 2 million hot dogs
- * 4.5 million orders of french fries
- * 3 million boxes of pop corn
- * 3 million ice cream bars

And enough soft drinks to fill a 5 acre lake.

ATTRACTIONS:

When we opened, we had 22 major attractions, many of which broke down frequently. Now we have 60 major attractions...all of which work most of the time.

INVESTMENT:

Disneyland's original investment was \$17 million. Today, its about \$200 million. The average cost of land at opening was \$4,500 an acre...now selling by the front foot.

GUEST AUDIENCE:

During our opening year, 3.8 million people visited Disneyland. During our most recent year, we entertained 10.8 million. This is greater than any other attraction...including national parks...in the west.

FOOD & LODGING:

When Disneyland opened, Anaheim had 5 hotels and 2 motels with a total of 87 rooms. Today there are 130 hotels and motels with 10,000 rooms. There were 34 restaurants, with about 2 bars. Today there are 300 restaurants, and so many bars they can't be counted.

SKILLS & TALENTS:

More than 500 different skills and talents are required to produce the Disneyland show...more variety than any city payroll.

THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE:

Starting opening day, the Golden Horse-shoe Review has completed 45,000 performances...breaking all previous show business records.

MARITIME POWER: With 215 passenger carrying craft, Disneyland has one of the world's largest maritime fleets, ranking 8th between Brazil and India.

SUBMARINE FORCE: Our fleet of submarines, is the 8th largest submarine fleet in the world.

MONORAILS: Our monorail system has carried 67 million passengers over 1½million miles. That's well over 70 trips around the world at the equator.

TELEPHONE RECEPTION: Our receptionists receive more than 4 million calls a year. The most frequently called person is...you guessed it...Mickey Mouse.

DISNEYLAND BAND: Since its inception, the Disneyland Marching Band has stepped off more than 3,000 miles...the width of the good old U.S.A.

GRADUATION NIGHTS: One and a half million young high school graduates have attended our night long grad parties. They are locked in, and love it.

FIREWORKS: "The rockets red glare" of our fireworks display have blasted off for 2,000 shows.

TREES: Trees vary in size from the 150 year old dwarf lodgepole pines in "Storybook Land" to the spectacular 60 foot wide South African Coral Tree which serves as a marquee for the Jungle Cruise...or the all steel Swiss Family Robinson Treehouse with its 750 man made leaves.

The 22 delicate topiary shrubs which garnish "It's a Small World" requires from 3 to 5 years to develop...must be constantly pruned, and are watered with carefully measured cups.

Our olive trees are treated to prevent having ripe olives drop all over our streets and guests.

FAMOUS GUESTS:

Since Disneyland's opening, more than 100 heads of state, members of royalty high government officials and space travelers have been our guests.

Kruschev, head of Russia, made national headlines when he couldn't come. Walt and Lilly Disney were almost as disappointed. Walt wanted to point with pride to his submarine navy, but there was a problem with security so the trip to Disneyland was denied.

NAMES INVOLVED
IN DISNEYLAND:

Many great companies have been associated with Disneyland as participants... The Bank of America...AT&T...Eastman Kodak...Monsanto...GAF...Sunkist... Hallmark...and Polaroid...to name just a few.

In addition, there are other companies who are involved closely in the Disneyland operations:

WED...the architectural and design group of "imagineers" who are responsible for the designing of Disneyland.

MAPO...builds what WED creates. It was organized during the Mary Poppins period, with Mary Poppins money, as a result...MAPO.

RETLAW...is a Disney family owned company which owns and operates the Disneyland Railroad and the Monorail. The name derives from "Walter" spelled backwards.

At one time, Dick assigned me to work the graveyard shift. I didn't like the hours, but I did enjoy the experience.

It is a totally different experience than working daytime. The men are a different breed, more open, more clannish, more fun loving than most of the people who work days.

And, I could get around and see the total backstage. I can't think of a more beautiful walk than being out in Frontierland when the sun is coming up.

Backstage Disneyland is an exciting place. This is the end of your tour. Please tell your friends, and come back again.

Now, let's take another look at what happens out on stage where you've been. Maybe you have missed something.

Thirty-Three:

A Very Special On-Stage Tour

"Here you leave today and enter the world of yesterday, tomorrow, and fantasy."

When I go out to our Inner Lobby, I notice that most guests are looking at a hand full of ticket books or the Mickey Mouse flower portrait at the Main Street Train Station (replanted seven times a year)...or other people. Not too many look up at the plaques above our two "tunnel" entrances to the Disneyland stage, which is printed above.

But, that is what Disneyland is all about...a nostalgic experience into the past, and an exciting look into the future. And, as people move into our Town Square, most are too mesmerized by the whole thing to look at the plaque at the flag pole...

DISNEYLAND

TO ALL WHO COME TO THIS HAPPY PLACE:

WELCOME

DISNEYLAND IS YOUR LAND. HERE AGE RELIVES FOND MEMORIES OF THE PAST...AND HERE YOUTH MAY SAVOR THE CHALLENGE AND PROMISE OF THE FUTURE.

DISNEYLAND IS DEDICATED TO THE IDEALS, THE DREAMS, AND THE HARD FACTS THAT HAVE CREATED AMERICA...WITH THE HOPE THAT IT WILL BE A SOURCE OF JOY AND INSPIRATION TO ALL THE WORLD.

JULY 17, 1955

It's worth your time to take a look at these plaques which, to a great extent explain the reason for Disneyland. We talk about "escape" and reality," but I've been told that when Billy Graham visited Disneyland, he commented on that "real world" outside our berm.

Walt's response, as I've been told was "this is the real world as it should be." Perhaps he was saying that the world we live in is all plastic and fighting and confusion, and that Disneyland was more real than smog and freeways and neon signs.

Let me explain some of my personal recollections when I walk through the park...

IN THE PARKING LOT...I think of that comment of Roy's which was mentioned. I think sometimes of the Peltzer house where all of the busses now park. I think of "cone races" during windy days when the parking hosts and hostesses, in what we call the "asphalt jungle," bet on which cones are blown the farthest.

Or, I wonder how frustrated people might have been when, on one day, a couple of hosts...now supervisors...parked all of the Volkswagons coming into the park in one section...causing people to search every car to find their own.

AT THE INNER LOBBY...OR MAIN ENTRANCE

Here, I might think of opening day, when it was designed... not for ticket books, but for one admission price. And, in the confusion, Milt Albright points out, money was coming in so fast and there was no storage, so it was just thrown on the floor.

THE BANK OF AMERICA...remains a place of turn-of-the-century charm. In the first year, there was a Manager who was totally mis-cast as a Bank Manager. He liked his martinis at lunch. One day, he had too many, and ended up in my White House to sober up. He had a cold shower, and ended up quite able to go back to the bank and work the combination which locked the safe for the day. He left, and we worked together on Freedomland.

GREAT MOMENTS WITH MR. LINCOLN: Here, I remember the press opening. Fortunately, we had a very good handbook, and the hostess in charge knew her history. When Walt made one statement, she corrected him...and he was gracious about it.

I'm also reminded of a note from Walt, which I've had framed. It shows the warm and personal side of the man. I'll quote it:

Dear Van...

I appreciate your sending me copies of the training handbooks and have enjoyed them very much. The Lincoln one I was especially interested in. As you go along I would like to be kept on the list.

By the way, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on the wonderful way you have gone about setting up the training programs and carrying on the business of the University of Disneyland.

Keep up the good work.

Walt

MAIN STREET MAD HATTERS...is one of my favorite places to buy hats for kids and little old ladies from Pasadena. They love it. In fact, I've bought Mickey Mouse "ears," as we call them, for staid business men who wore them with pride.

THE PRE-VUE CENTER...is interesting. I remember it better when it was the Wurlitzer exhibit, with a live musician playing any song on request.

THE DISNEYLAND RAILROAD...is an attraction which should not be missed. I remember Walt's love for the train. I also recall...during opening weeks...the person that complained about having to "pay to see Walt Disney's construction area." Now, it is a great attraction.

I also remember Walt's saying to Joe Fowler, when we opened the Grand Canyon, "There's nothing wrong with this, except it should be a hundred years longer."

THE CITY HALL...reminds me of when I was working there for Tommy Walker.

AND THE FIRE HOUSE...reminds me of my hastening the death of the head of Security, Alex Bero. Walt's apartment is above the Fire House and is decorated in beautiful taste.

I'd needed something new for an orientation tour, and had borrowed a key. People really enjoyed seeing it. It caused people to want to be trained. But, on one rainy day one of the folks almost knocked over one of Lilly's indoor planters. He caught it, but gravel was spilled.

Little did I know that:

- a) Two of our young male hosts had a key, and were using...God forbid...Walt's bed for non-sleeping purposes.
- b) That Walt was coming down that same weekend after we'd spilled the gravel.

The gal cleaning up the place found the spilled gravel, and the beds with indications that someone had been using them. Security was alerted. Everyone was alerted. It was much worse than finding Russian cigarettes in a CIA office.

Since then, there has never been a tour of that lovely place. But, the fire station is worth a closer look.

THE EMPORIUM...is much the same as it was at opening. But, at that time it was leased out to a man who was a multi-millionaire. And, the reason he was a multi-millionaire was because he was a cautious merchandiser, who would frequently approach me to get somebody to see things like Nylons...in a turn-of-the-century Emporium.

TOWN SQUARE...reminds me of many things. At the top, is that great day when Tommy Walker's helicopter idea nearly destroyed our Easter Day celebration.

THE HORSE DRAWN VEHICLES...are loaded with reminiscence. But, what stands out is the woman who stepped on a real, live horse dropping and commented, "Oh shit, I stepped on some horse doo-doo."

THE MAIN STREET CINEMA...is a place I usually take people, because it is fun, and a real bit of old time movie history. Where else can you get eight movies for a dime. I do believe that young couples enjoy it for other reasons.

THE WINDOWS...above Main Street are a combination of the history of a turn-of-the-century town and the names of some instrumental people in the building of Disneyland... along with a tribute to Walt's father.

THE GAS LAMPS...deserve a bit of attention, since they are the real thing, bought in St. Louis, as I understand the story.

THE MARKET HOUSE...is still fun, but it reminds me that for a while I had an office right behind the player piano and, one occasion which I'll now confess, I sneaked out and pulled the plug causing, I'm sure, some guest to lose his or her dime.

THE SUNKIST HOUSE...is the work place of a guy named Bo Foster. Bo is a lessee Manager, but has Disneyland in his veins. He may have done more for morale at Disneyland than I and all of the University staff. I suspect that he has a file of jokes which, once or twice told, will travel through the park like a virus.

His is also the one place where the sons and daughters of Sunkist and Disneyland people can be hired at the age of 16. He has started many people on careers, including a beautiful but, at that time, naive young gal. "Mom," she said, "he calls us all 'dumb shits'." But his people love him.

THE ENCHANTED TIKI ROOM...was our first audio-animatronic show...a patented combination of sound and animation. This is one of the many one-of-a-kind shows personally directed by Walt.

And, I remember Jim Cora's story of the press opening. The show was about to begin, but people were hanging around, and in typical Walt fashion, he said, "Either get the (explicative) in or get the (explicative) out, we're starting this show."

THE JUNGLE CRUISE...was by far our best attraction at opening, and remains a "must see" attraction. I remember when an African King came to visit a VIP, and then was being taken to Los Angeles. He insisted that his party go back to Disneyland, so we re-opened the park, just so he could have a few special trips.

THE TAHITIAN TERRACE...when it is open in summer, is my favorite place to eat lunch. It is also the favorite of many other Disneyland people...and is sort of a high class employee's lunch place.

THE PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN...is a "must see." This was one of those attractions which was designed and directed by Walt...and is loaded with earthy humor which only he would approve. It will never be duplicated. At today's prices it would not be feasible.

THE CLUB 33...is the only place in Disneyland one can get a drink. It's a private club for companies who are institutional leesees at Disneyland. Others can join for \$35,000 when there is a space.

As with other spots in the park, this was designed by Emil Kuri. Emil was Walt's home decorator...an academy award winner for the props for 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, and for ten years he was in charge of the sets for the Academy Awards.

NEW ORLEANS SQUARE...by the way...is a wonderful place just to browse and shop. At one time I had to drag a sophisticated New Yorker to Disneyland. She thought it was a kiddie park, but I had to drag her away from the One-of-a-Kind shop, where really valuable antiques are combined with reproductions.

COUNTRY BEAR JAMBOREE...is not my favorite, but it is for some. Only recently did I discover that they have some nice jewelry in the little Trading Post shop. And, I just enjoy seeing the trees and waterfalls...and eating down by the river.

TOM SAWYER'S ISLAND...is basically for younger kids, but it is fun exploring for anyone. It is, of course, a nice place for teenage love making...but I feel we patrol it almost too closely. After all...love must find a way.

THE HAUNTED MANSION...is not one of my favorites either, except for the fact that the tombstones carry names of many of the designers who worked on it...guys who I know, most of whom are still alive.

THE MARK TWAIN...is a good resting spot. During the hectic early days, Joe Fowler told me that Walt said, "Joe, if things get too rough, we can always go out and ride around on the Mark." I've taken that advice many times.

EXCELLENT FOOD...at the Casa De Fritos...some great buys at the Pendleton Shop. It's probably the best selection of Pendleton stuff anyplace in the world.

THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE...was one of Walt's favorite shows, and mine. It has the best of costumes, and a marvelous group of entertainers. Wally Boag...the Top Banana...was personally selected by Walt, and has helped me every time it was needed. His side kicks, Fulton Burley and Betty Taylor have become wonderful Disneyland institutions. The shows stay just as fresh as ever...but now it is timed down to the second.

THE PLAZA PAVILLION...Meander around the Hub and enjoy the side lights. There are always free shows at the Pavillion. The Plaza Inn is my second choice in eating, but then I'm queer for the old Victorian era, after which it was designed.

FANTASYLAND...I still choke up a bit when I cross the moat, and hear, "When you wish upon a star" coming out on the original tape. It's the greatest Carrousel in the world. My favorite is still Peter Pan, which is totally safe now.

During the first week of opening, one of the little ships that fly fell down. The guests thought it was part of the action.

STORYBOOK...is still a charming attraction. I'd like to take you, since I have the best narration. There is one problem. I take so long that all the other boats are held up. So, I can't work there...even at our Christmas parties where we work and the kids play. Unfair. I could take a half hour to tell about it.

IT'S A SMALL WORLD...I know the song by heart, from playing it back in New York. Walt would talk about "plussing" an attraction...adding to it...always making it better.

Here it is typical. It was a great attraction in New York. But, when we brought it back we added at least six million dollars of Mary Poppins money. It is on my regular tour. I've been there dozens of times, and still see something new.

THE MATTERHORN...is great, if you like that sort of thing. You can see the Abominable Snowman better from the sky ride...which gives you a nice view of the park.

THE SUBMARINES...are very popular. When we were planning them, I didn't think they would be any good, since I have claustrophobia. But, once again, I was wrong. And yet, we have had some people panic...in spite of the fact that one is never really under water...totally.

SPACE MOUNTAIN...is a must for young people. Without a doubt, it is the most interesting...if not the most exciting..."thrill" attraction we have. Try to keep your eyes open and see all the great stuff flying around in the void of space.

THE AUTOPIA...is the favorite attraction of a lot of youngsters, and THE MISSION TO MARS...needs improvement.

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL...is free, sponsored by the Bell Telephone System, and staffed by their people. Some of the clothes the people in the film are wearing are a bit out of date, but I still get a bit teary eyed seeing America as it used to be.

Even a competent guide, which I consider myself to be, can be distracted by the attractions...the things we know about and see...the things that move and attract us.

But, I'm afraid that I drifted away from my main point. You can spend several thousands of dollars on a trip to Disneyland.

Rings and Things on Main Street has some very fine jewelry, well priced. You can spend quite a few bucks in the Clock Shop...or go all out at the One-of-a-Kind Shop, like in the thousands...or out-fit yourself at Pendleton.

You can, however, just come and walk around...as in a park...or institution which Disneyland now is...you can enjoy the marching band, and various special shows.

By all means, enjoy the flowers and trees. They are an important part of the show. And the details...the intimate details which you'll find everywhere, if you'll just look up, and around.

And, of course, "people watching" is still the favorite attraction. Your guide is, of course, very clean cut and clean minded...but some of the outfits are bound to distract one from the more quiet views of the lovely swans in front of Sleeping Beauty's Castle in Fantasyland.

Thirty-Four:

The Wrap Up...for 25 Years

If anybody had even speculated...back in early 1955... that I'd still be around Disneyland in 1980...25 years later, I would have considered them insane.

With a lifetime occupational batting average of 2 1/2 years in any one job, that possibility would have been a million to one bet.

And, I joined the organization at the age of 41...at an age when some of my friends in industry were slowing down on that long road to retirement. This, of course, helped immensely. When the going would get tough, all I had to do was visit some old friend in an aircraft plant...and realize how much more fun I was having.

I've seen our marketing plan for celebrating Disneyland's 25th Anniversary. Unless you are on a desert island someplace, I'm sure you won't be able to escape the hoopla which is planned for this event.

Our young people talk about the "good old days"...those days never being exactly defined. I hope you know now that they weren't all so damned good.

Thirty-Five:

Join us in a "Club 55" Meeting

The Club 55 is an informal group of people who get together every year on July 17th to break bread and bottles together...sharing old tales, and some lies... like war veterans.

And, like an Army reunion, one thing is certain, everyone will be 25 years older in 1980. You could stay around for hours listening, but some tales keep coming up. And through retirement, death or quitting, the group gets smaller every year.

In fact, parties which once lasted until the wee hours are now usually over in time for the eleven o'clock news. But, here are some stories you might hear...

DISNEYLAND GRADUATES MENTIONED HERE HAVE MOVED ON TO MANY THINGS...

C. V. WOOD has recently retired as Chairman of the Board of McCulloch Oil Company. He's probably better known as the Planner and Builder of Lake Havasu City...the man behind the moving of the London Bridge...and the retired Chili Champion of the World.

As this was written, he is totally occupied in the production of the International Chili Championship cook-offs...attracting more than 40,000 observers and participants from around the world.

Hopefully, I'm still on his mailing list for December 17th, at which time he sends out a very formal announcement stating:

"This is to remind you that December 17th is my birthday."

STEVE MARTIN...at the time of writing, is the Top Banana of comedy in the nation. His movie will be out before this is published. He tells stories about playing chess by phone from the Main Street Magic Shop, and...since he apprenticed under Wally Boag, refers to him as "My God"... when it comes to comedy.

RON ZIEGLER...graduated from the Jungle Cruise to the nationally prominent position of Press Secretary for President Nixon. I've been told that he could give the Jungle Spiel at the most formal of meetings.

JACK SAYERS...is only semi-retired. He continues to work on new developments for Sea World, Knott's Berry Farm... and, when we last talked, was deeply involved in a new attraction in Hawaii. In between times, he takes golf tours all over the world. Although he'd never confess, I'd bet his wife, Gwenn, gets lower scores.

"DOC" LEMMON...when I last heard, was General Manager of Lake Havasu City. If my information is obsolete, I'm sure he is involved in some other project where his talents are needed.

CHARLEY THOMPSON...the original Manager of Adventureland, was...at last report...Vice President in Charge of Fountain Hills in Arizona.

FRED SCHUMACHER...when last reported, was retired in Arizona...happily playing golf, and hopefully happy working the stock market.

SKILES AND HENDERSON...two lovely, zany guys, play all around the country, on TV, and sometimes in Vegas. I understand they use their experience as Disneyland Tour Guides in some of their acts.

THE CARPENTERS...a singing group, hit the ^{big} bit time in a song telling Mr. Girder about our grooming policy.

THE OSMOND BROTHERS...received a lot of career help in their work at Disneyland.

JOE FOWLER...at some amazing age like 84, is still going strong with the biggest barn in the State of Maine, and in new developments in Florida. When I last saw him at a Club 55 meeting in Anaheim, I asked his secret... "Work, Van, work is what keeps you going."

ED ETTINGER...is involved in a variety of projects all around the world. He still is one who never really left Disneyland...but is using his expertise and imagination for other clients.

DOROTHY MANES...is happily retired in Anaheim. When last seen, she was helping Anaheim Memorial Hospital with their development program.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO CAME BACK...after "retirement". The Disney organization is...at this time...branching out into the EPCOT CENTER in Florida and A Disneyland on Tokyo Bay in Japan...TOKYO DISNEYLAND.

And so now I see people like Bill Evans...Herb Ryman... Rollie Crump...men who are back having lost none of their creativity. They may have lost some of my pleasure in traveling and jet lag, but I can't speak for them.

OF COURSE...SOME HAVE DIED

Fortunately, Dick and I agreed on not ringing bells for those who have died. There is no moaning at the bar.

AND MANY HAVE STAYED

Many have stayed. Some have moved along to positions of executive responsibility, and others are dedicated to producing that new show every day.

We have, I'm certain, the most unique working group in the country. About 60% of the jobs which now exist, at Disneyland did not exist...in their present form...25 years ago.

Disneyland opened at just about the start of the Leisure/Service revolutions. Most...if not all, of us...thought it was a temporary occupational venture.

Through negotiations, we arrived at some strange rates. A person starts out as what we call a "Casual/Seasonal"...and the rate is just a bit more than the Federal Minimum rate.

It is ideal, since the school vacations and our busy summer guest season harmonize perfectly.

But then there are weekends and holidays, and a person can become Permanent Part Time...an ideal way to get through college. This type person gets a rate increase on the basis of hours, and it can become rather good.

In 1980 terms, a Host or Hostess can be earning more than \$7.00 per hour...a better annual earning rate than he or she would get in many professional fields for which he or she has been educated.

And...in our fast changing world, there are frequently no jobs...as in teaching...available for the person with a degree. As a result, many of the people who are hosts and hostesses on our attractions have advanced degrees, including Doctorates.

A classic...but oft repeated...story is of the father who points to one of highly educated Janitorial Hosts, and then says to his son, "See what I told you. If you don't go to college, you'll be doing that."

And...after 25 years, many of our younger people are still asked, when are you going to get a REAL job?

Roy Disney died shortly after the opening of Walt Disney World...a promise I'm sure he made to Walt.

At my age...in an organization of young people, I'm sort of an institution. People will ask me if this or that would be happening "if Walt was alive". I don't know.

At the time of his death, he was totally absorbed with his Utopian community in Florida...EPCOT. He might not have sold Disneyland, but he might have put it in hock...as with his life insurance...for his new dream.

When he couldn't borrow any money, he commented that "there was no collateral in dreams". But the dream turned out to be unusually successful. Disneyland really was "a people trap built by a mouse".

Land that was bought for about \$4,000 per acre now sells by the front foot. The original opening day investment of about 17 million is now way over 200 million... much of which was with pre-inflation money.

And, with a fantastic cash flow and healthy profit percentage, more than one company has tried to buy it. Although we are our own worst critics, it is still a fantastic place... "a road map of Walt Disney's mind", as Marty Sklar has called it.

Every day, Disneyland is mentioned in the media in one context or another. For example, there was recently an article about Leonard Godlenson, Chairman of the Board of ABC. In one place it pointed out that:

"Against everyone's advice, including his own Board of Directors, he had loaned Walt Disney \$4.5 million in 1954 to complete the Disneyland amusement park in Anaheim. In return, Disney created the "Disneyland" TV program, the cornerstone of the ABC programming. In addition, ABC made a hefty \$7.5 million on the venture."

At the tenth anniversary of the opening of Disneyland, there was a part for all of the people who had been at Disneyland on that first year. Bob Thomas, in his excellent book, "Walt Disney...American Original", wrote from the talk Walt gave at that meeting.

Since Walt was in great form...and since it is my favorite tape...and since it mentions some of the people I've mentioned here, I think it should be quoted in full... here:

WALT DISNEY SPEECH AT
DISNEYLAND 10 YEAR DINNER

1965

WALT

I CAN GO BACK BEYOND TEN YEARS ON THIS DEAL. I REMEMBER A FEW LITTLE THINGS THAT WENT ON BEFORE THE OPENING. I WAS TRYING TO PUT A SHOW TOGETHER FOR THE GOLDEN HORSESHOE. WELL, I'D KNOWN DONALD NOVIS FOR YEARS AND DONALD HAD BEEN AROUND TO SEE ME. AND I SAID, "WELL, THERE'S SUMPIN' WE CAN DO", I SAID, "CAN YOU GET ME A COMIC?" HE SAID "YES, I KNOW A FELLOW I WAS IN AUSTRALIA WITH. AND UH...", HE SAID, "HE'S GETTIN' A LITTLE BORED LIVING OUT OF A TRUNK AND GOIN'...TRAVELIN' AROUND THE COUNTRY. HE'S BEEN IN THE NIGHT CLUB..AND HE MIGHT BE INTERESTED." SO, I HAD A LITTLE INTERVIEW OVER AT THE STUDIO. IN CAME THIS FELLOW. HE HAD A LITTLE BAG WITH HIM AND IN THE BAG HE HAD A DUMMY. AND HE HAD SOME OTHER THINGS. AND HE HAD SOME BAGPIPES. HE CAME IN THERE AND HE CAME IN ON THE STAGE ALL ALONE. AND I SAID, "WELL..UH..WE WERE TRYIN' TO PUT A LITTLE SHOW TOGETHER," I SAID, "YOU KNOW THIS IS DISNEYLAND, IT'S GOIN' TO BE A FAMILY PLACE.." AND UH.., HE SAID, "WELL I HAVE SOME ROUTINES I'VE BEEN DOIN' 'EM IN THE NIGHT CLUBS.." HE SAID, "I CAN CLEAN 'EM UP!"

(Much laughter from audience)

AND HE CLEANED 'EM UP, YOU KNOW. WELL..THERE'S..I THINK THERE'S JUST A LITTLE HANGOVER ON A FEW OF THOSE JOKES IN THERE. BUT IT KIND OF SLIPS BY AND NOBODY REALIZES IT. BUT UH..THAT WAS WALLY BOAG. AND UH..WALLY, WE'VE BEEN VERY HAPPY, WE HOPE YOU'LL STAY WITH US. I HOPE YOU'VEEN HAPPY AND UH.....

WALLY BOAG

WE'RE STILL IN REHEARSAL, WALT.

WALT

YEAH..THAT'S MY TAG LINE. YOU STOLE IT FROM ME. OH, I CAN GO BACK TO JOE FOWLER, WE WENT UP THERE...WE HAD TO HAVE SOMEBODY YOU KNOW, THAT COULD REALLY PUT THIS THING TOGETHER. SOMEBODY THAT COULD TAKE AHOLD OF THIS THING AND REALLY MAKE IT WORK. SO WE WERE TOLD ABOUT THIS RETIRED ADMIRAL...

(Laughtèr)

THAT HAD RUN THE SAN FRANCISCO NAVY YARD, COMMANDANT OF THE NAVY YARD, WHO HAD BUILT SHIPS IN CHINA AND ALL THAT..AND HE WAS STARTIN' A SUBDIVISION UP IN SAN JOSE, YOU KNOW. SO I REMEMBER, WE WENT UP TO SEE HIM. WE WENT OUT AND MET JOE AT HIS HOME AND HIS LOVELY WIFE AND WE HAD DINNER THERE. AND WE HAD STEAKS... THEY WERE WONDERFUL..YOU KNOW. AND UH..SO WE SORT OF PREVAILED UPON HIM TO COME DOWN AND SORT OF..OH KIND OF BE A CONSULTANT FOR US..AND THINGS. AND UH..LITTLE BY LITTLE WE GOT HIM SORT OF TRAPPED INTO THE THING..GOT HIM SO WRAPPED UP IN IT THAT HE SAID "TO HELL WITH THE SUBDIVISION." AND I THINK HE OWNS HALF OF NEWPORT BAY, OR SOMETHING, NOW, I DON'T KNOW.

(Laughter)

WELL, WE HAD A LOT OF PROBLEMS PUTTING THIS THING TOGETHER. THERE WAS PRESSURE FOR MONEY. A LOT OF PEOPLE DIDN'T BELIEVE IN WHAT WE WERE DOING. AND UH...WE WERE PUTTING THE SQUEEZE PLAY WHERE WE COULD. UH..I REMEMBER THAT WE WERE DEALING WITH ALL THREE NETWORKS...THEY WANTED OUR TELEVISION SHOW. AND I KEPT INSISTING I WANTED THIS AMUSEMENT PARK. AND EVERYBODY SAYS, "WHAT THE HELL'S HE WANT THAT DAMN AMUSEMENT PARK FOR?" AND

Walt continues...

I DIDN'T...I COULDN'T THINK UP A GOOD REASON EXCEPT THAT UH..I DON'T KNOW..I WANTED IT. SO I REMEMBER..WE HAD A SESSION WITH NBC. THEY WANTED THIS DISNEY TELEVISION SHOW. AND WE WERE STUBBORNLY INSISTING THAT WE WANTED TO START AN AMUSEMENT PARK WITH IT. AND DAVID SARNOFF WAS SITTING IN ON THAT THING. HE SAID "I WANT YOUR TELEVISION SHOW, HE SAYS, "BUT WHY DO I HAVE TO TAKE THAT DAMN AMUSEMENT PARK?" SAME THING WENT FOR CBS. YEAH, THEY WANTED THE TELEVISION SHOW BUT THIS INSISTENCE ON BACKING AN AMUSEMENT PARK...ABC NEEDED THE TELEVISION SHOW SO DAMNED BAD THAT THEY BOUGHT THE AMUSEMENT PARK. WELL, FIVE YEARS LATER, MY BROTHER FIGURED WE BETTER BUY THOSE GUYS OUT. THEY HAD A THIRD INTEREST. THEY ONLY HAD A HALF MILLION DOLLARS INVESTED IN THAT PARK. BUT MY BROTHER FIGURED, HE SAID, "IF WE DON'T BUY 'EM OUT NOW, WE'RE GONNA BE PAYIN' 'EM A LOT MORE LATER..." MY BROTHER PAID THEM, AFTER FIVE YEARS, SEVEN AND A HALF MILLION DOLLARS FOR THEIR FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLAR INVESTMENT. AND IT WAS A SMART MOVE THAT HE DID AT THAT, YOU KNOW.

WELL, MY BROTHER'S HAD THE WORRIES OF GETTING THIS MONEY AND FIGHTING THE BANKERS AND THINGS. AND THERE WAS A TIME, I THINK IT WAS AFTER WE OPENED THE PARK, THAT OUR BANKS..OUR BANKERS SAID TO MY BROTHER, THEY SAID, "NOW ABOUT THAT DAMN AMUSEMENT PARK, WE'RE NOT GONNA LET YOU PUT ANOTHER NICKEL IN IT." AND MY BROTHER SAID, "WELL, IF YOU'RE GONNA START RUNNIN' OUR BUSINESS, WE'RE GOIN' OUT AND FIND SOME OTHER PLACE WE CAN BORROW MONEY. AND BY GOSH, THEY FINALLY GAVE HIM THE MONEY. BUT IT'S BEEN NIP AND TUCK. I MEAN WHEN WE OPENED..IF WE COULD HAVE BOUGHT MORE LAND, WE'D HAVE BOUGHT IT. THEN WE'D OF HAD

Walt continues...

A CONTROL AND IT WOULDN'T LOOK TOO MUCH LIKE A SECOND RATE LAS VEGAS AROUND HERE. WE'D HAVE HAD A LITTLE BETTER CHANCE TO CONTROL IT. BUT WE RAN OUT OF MONEY. AND THEN BY THE TIME THAT WE DID HAVE A LITTLE MONEY, EVERYBODY GOT WISE TO WHAT WAS GOIN' ON AND WE COULDN'T BUY ANYTHING AROUND THE PLACE AT ALL, YOU KNOW.

(Laughter)

WELL, A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T REALIZÉ THAT WE HAVE SOME VERY SERIOUS PROBLEMS HERE, KEEPIN' THIS THING GOING AND GETTIN' IT STARTED. I REMEMBER WHEN WE OPENED, IF ANYBODY RECALLS, WE DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH MONEY TO FINISH THE LANDSCAPING AND I HAD BILL EVANS GO OUT AND PUT LATIN TAGS ON ALL THE WEEDS. WE HAD A LOT OF INQUIRIES ABOUT THIS....

(Much laughter from audience)

WELL, THAT'S A FACT. YOU ASK BILL EVANS. 'COURSE, EVERY WEED, TO BILL EVANS, HAS GOT A LATIN NAME, YOU KNOW.

BUT AT THIS TIME..TEN YEARS..I WANT TO JOIN MY BROTHER IN THANKS TO ALL YOU PEOPLE, WHO'VE BEEN HERE WITH US AND BEEN A PART OF MAKING THIS THING COME ACROSS. BUT I JUST WANT TO LEAVE YOU WITH THIS THOUGHT. THAT IT'S JUST BEEN A SORT OF A DRESS RE-HEARSAL AND WE'RE JUST GETTIN' STARTED. SO IF ANY OF YOU START TO REST ON YOUR LAURELS, I MEAN, JUST UH..FORGET IT.

(Laughter and applause)

BECAUSE UH..I'VE HAD DICK NUNNIS ON MY TAIL AND HE SAYS UH.. "YOU KNOW," HE SAYS, "WE'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF THESE PEOPLE.." HE'S GOT ME WORKIN' HARDER THAN I'VE EVER WORKED BEFORE TRYING TO ENLARGE THE PARK TO TAKE CARE OF THE EXTRA MILLIONS HE THINKS

Walt continues...

WE'RE GONNA GAIN EVERY YEAR. NOW UH..HE'S GOT US WORKING HARD.. HONESTLY..I MEAN, HE SAYS, "WALT," HE SAYS, "WE GOTTA EXPAND FANTASYLAND. WE GOTTA EXPAND THIS.." HE SAYS, "WE GOTTA TAKE.." AND HE SHOWS ME THIS GRAPH WHERE YOU STARTED HERE WITH THREE MILLION AND THE WAY HE'S GOT IT GOING IT'S GOIN' UP TO TEN MILLION AND HE MAY BE RIGHT, BECAUSE THIS YEAR, I MEAN, WE'RE JUST UH..JUST BULGING AT THE SEAMS HERE. BUT WE DO HAVE PLANS TO EXPAND IT..TO OPEN UP AREAS THAT WILL...IT'S LIKE A SPUNGE. YOU HAVE TO HAVE THESE AREAS TO ABSORB THE PEOPLE, YOU KNOW. AND WE HOPE TO HAVE THESE THINGS GOING. WE HAVE A WHOLE NEW PLAN FOR TOMORROWLAND. WE HAVE UH...OF COURSE, YOU KNOW OF OUR PLANS FOR UH..NEW ORLEANS AND EVENTUALLY THE HAUNTED MANSION. WE HAVE A NEW FANTASYLAND COMING..THAT'LL BE IN NEXT YEAR. AND UH...REALLY, WE'VE GOT ABOUT FORTY MILL..FORTY PLUS MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF STUFF PLANNED OUT FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. NOW, UH..I DON'T KNOW WHETHER WE GOT THE MONEY TO DO IT WITH BUT UH...

(Laughter)

...THANK GOD FOR MARY POPPINS OUT THERE. IT'S...

(Laughter and applause)

I ALWAYS UH...YOU KNOW MY OFFICE IS ABOVE MY BROTHER'S AND I LOOK DOWN AND WHEN I SEE HIM WALKING ON THE CEILING..YOU KNOW.. THAT'S THE TIME I GO DOWN AND SAY, "LET'S PUT ANOTHER TEN MILLION IN DISNEYLAND." AND LATELY HE'S BEEN WALKING ALL AROUND THAT CEILING.

(Laughter)

WELL I KNOW..ARE YOU GONNA HAVE SOME DANCING? THESE BOYS

Walt continues..

HAVEN'T DONE A DAMN THING ALL NIGHT. THEY'VE BEEN SITTING
OVER THERE...ON DOUBLE TIME, NO DOUBT, HUH? AND I THINK THAT..
UH..THAT WITH JUST A THANKS AND APPRECIATION TO MY BROTHER. TO
JOE FOWLER...TO ALL THE BOYS,.THE TOP BOYS AND ALL YOU PEOPLE
DOWN THE LINE, WHO'VE BEEN A PART OF THIS THING..AS I SAY, WE'RE
JUST GETTIN' STARTED, YOU KNOW. THE SHOW GOES ON NEXT YEAR..
YEAH.

(Applause and music)

Although there are some who today, are resting on their laurels...even though they didn't have any to rest on in the first place, there are still enough around who are dreaming and pushing to make Walt's opening day prediction alive and true:

"Disneyland will never be completed, as long as there is imagination left in the world."

So, that's the end of my history. There will be others. Although I'm only paid for being around 20 hours a week, my boss, Dick Nunis, usually charms me out of an extra ten hours...for free. That should make Walt happy.

But, I still get just as much of a kick as ever when I can take a picture of a couple of grownups who want to be all together. And..damn it...we DO "create happiness for other people"...and I can't think of a better way of making a living.