

THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS

from Disneyland to Walt Disney World



a pocket history

I. AN UNFORGETTABLE GRAND PREMIERE

"I think that everyone here will one day be as proud to have been at **this** opening as the people who were there at the dedication of the Eiffel Tower." An excited Bob Cummings was talking on camera, one of many video "superstars" of the day who were gathered for the 90-minute grand dedication. It was July 17, 1955, and it was live television. The applause was real. There were no canned laughs, no studio magic tricks, and no editing miracles at hand to save any miscues.

Art Linkletter walked through the first castle to be constructed this side of the 17th Century and temporarily lost his microphone. Trying to regain his composure, he nervously introduced Captain Hook and his crew of pirates as "Captain Crew."



Comedian Alan Young spun madly about on a giant-sized teacup while Jerry Colonna clung to the controls of a "runaway" Casey Jr. Circus train. Danny Thomas rode a horseless carriage right back through time to the turn of the century and Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis, Jr. drove along a miniature futuristic freeway for a preview look at the next century.

Nearby, Fess Parker as Davy Crockett . . . already a national hero on Walt Disney's year-old television show . . . was riding through newly planted pine forests in a false answer to a gunshot which was misfired on camera. Actress Irene Dunne christened the beautifully constructed "Mark Twain" riverboat with a bottle of water from American rivers. She immediately declared "we're listing" as an overflow crowd poured aboard. And at one point, Walt Disney himself accidentally appeared on camera ahead of schedule, talking to one of the TV crews manning 22 cameras straining to capture the excitement of it all.

The telecast was delightfully spontaneous . . . exhibiting the freshness and honesty of live video coverage in its earlier days. Although the humorous miscues were held to a minimum . . . the number of stars, celebrities and public figures on hand seemed almost endless. It was a grand premiere unlike anything Hollywood ever saw before.

Prominent roles were also played in the festivities that day by then California Governor Goodwin Knight and future governor Ronald Reagan. But the future "showman of the world," Walt Disney, played the greatest role. This was his finest moment . . . a moment of triumph for a man who dared to dream and boldly reach out beyond his contemporaries. It was a moment of truth for his critics who had predicted that his unique idea would be a "Hollywood spectacular . . . a spectacular failure." Other pundits had christened it "Disney's Folly."

Never before had Walt Disney taken on a project so vastly different. Certainly he had already fashioned a remarkable pioneering career in the world of show business. He had given animated films a voice, added color, a sense of depth,

stereophonic sound and full-length feature status. He had expanded man's awareness of the wilderness through his True-Life Adventures and expanded man's sense of humor through the antics of his unique cast of characters led by Mickey Mouse.

But this was different. Now he was taking his greatest film endeavors and translating them into a form of three-dimensional "reality." And he was taking the theater audience right out of their seats and placing them right in the middle of the action.

It was a far-out idea . . . the first total theme show: a controlled entertainment experience in which every element to the last detail — the architecture, landscaping, food, merchandise, attractions, entertainment . . . the colors, sound effects and even the costumes the employees wore and the roles they played . . . everything would be themed to a specific motif and atmosphere. They would together provide a total, coordinated experience that would become one of the most important entertainment milestones of the 20th Century.

"I don't want the public to see the world they live in while they're in the park," Walt Disney said. "I want them to feel they are in another world." And with that Walt Disney dedicated 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."

II. THE TWENTY-YEAR DREAM

How did the idea of Disneyland begin? Was it an "overnight revelation" or did it represent the next logical step in Walt Disney's long career of entertainment achievements? Actually, it was neither. The genesis of Disneyland began quietly more than 20 years before it became reality.

"Disneyland really began," Walt said, "when my two daughters were very young. Saturday was always 'Daddy's Day' and I would take them to the merry-go-round and sit on a bench eating peanuts while they rode. And sitting there, alone, I felt that there should be something built, some kind of a family park where parents and children could have fun together."

So, between films and other projects, in his "spare time" Walt began to dream and plan a new kind of family entertainment recreation center.

Members of his staff recall Walt talking about building a "magical little park" adjacent to his Burbank studio. It was to be about



two acres in size, with pony rides, "singing waterfalls," a train and statues of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Pluto, Goofy and other famous Disney characters alongside which visitors could pose for pictures. It would be a place to be visited by studio tours and where Disney employees might spend relaxing weekends picnicking with their families.

This, however, was just an embryonic idea and it would have to wait — there was too much work to be done elsewhere. World War II intervened and the Disney animated characters "enlisted" to star in a variety of training and morale films to be viewed by millions of American and allied servicemen.

But the "magical little park" idea was far from forgotten. In fact, in the ensuing years the concept was becoming more "magical" and less "little." Soon designs for authentic, themed movie sets were being worked into the plan to give it more flavor. And it was becoming clear that two acres, although fine for a few ponies, would be too confining for a train ride of any magnitude.

By the early 1950's the project had outgrown any available land space that was near the Disney studio, so Walt sent a team of employees "off to the country" . . . to rapidly growing Orange County, in search of wide open spaces. Surely a 160-acre orange grove adjacent to the modern spacious Santa Ana Freeway would provide enough room for this new "magical large park." Besides, it was all Walt could afford at the time anyway. By now, the project was evolving into something that would require a major amount of capital expenditures and few people other than Walt and his brother Roy had faith that this bold new idea would ever breakeven — let alone make a return on the investment.

"I could never convince the financiers that Disneyland was feasible," Walt later recalled, "because dreams offer too little collateral." Years later in retrospect, NEWSWEEK magazine would report that "to build Disneyland, Walt and his brother Roy Disney borrowed to the corporate hilt, and then Walt sold his vacation home at a loss and borrowed against his personal life insurance policies."

Collectively, some of the more indifferent and reserved groups toward the concept of Disneyland were the nation's amusement park owners and operators . . . the very people whose entertainment Walt sought to offer relief from. Early in 1954, key members of the Disney staff assigned to develop ideas for Disneyland, toured major amusement parks across America, learning far more about what **not** to do rather than what to do. Recalls one: "We could have paid for the entire trip with a few dollars from each person who told us, 'if you don't put in a roller coaster or ferris wheel, you'll go broke.'"

A family park? — A park without "whips" and "shoot-the-chutes"? — A park sans barkers, baseball throws and a tunnel of love? Top amusement park men couldn't believe it. "All of that money just for theming and landscaping? They've got to be kidding. It'll never go!"

In the final analysis . . . beyond the usual Disney perserverance and stubborn belief in a good idea . . . the financial catalyst in bringing Disneyland to reality was television. Just when all remaining doors appeared to be closed, Walt Disney Productions and the American Broadcasting Company signed a seven-year contract that called for Walt to produce a weekly, one-hour television show.

Unlike many motion picture producers who viewed this new medium as a threat to their entertainment organizations, Walt Disney saw television as an ally. It would be a natural way to bring the story of his new concept into homes of millions of American families. The name for his new show would, of course, be called "Disneyland."

Disneyland, the new family television show made its debut in the Fall of 1954 and the magic of Disney entertainment immediately became a household event across the face of the nation. Even more important, through the terms of the ABC contract, there was now finally enough money to bring Disneyland, the theme show, to reality.

III. "IMAGINEERING" THE DREAM

The land, as Walt Disney remembered, was "all flat — no rivers, no mountains, no castle, or rocket ships . . . just orange groves and a few acres of walnut trees."

Because it had no precedent, there would be no simple solutions in its design and construction. Everything would be one-of-a-kind. And yet, the uniqueness of Walt's concept was nearly equalled by the uniqueness of the "imagineering" team he formed, WED Enterprises, to help bring his dream to reality. The creative demands that would be placed on WED (an acronym for Walt Elias Disney), would call for a harmonic blend of talents unequalled in the annals of the entertainment industry. There would be artists, sculptors, designers, architects, engineers, story tellers, special effects men and many others.

In order to find most of these talents, Walt turned to the field he knew best . . . motion pictures, and in many cases he selected the people he knew best . . . those already skilled in the Disney approach to family entertainment — key members of his own studio staff who had open eyes and open minds for new ideas.



One key Disney designer later recalled, "When we began designing Disneyland, we looked at it just as we do a motion picture. We had to tell a story . . . or in this case, a series of stories. In filmmaking, we develop a logical flow of events or "scenes" that will take our audience from point-to-point through the story.

"If we were to 'leapfrog' from scene one to scene three, leaving out scene two, it would be like sending the entire audience out to the lobby for popcorn in the middle of the film. When they came back, how could we expect them to understand what's happening in the film?

"There was also another thing we had to keep in mind, in further developing our Disneyland 'story.' In filmmaking, although we can control the sequence of events, the viewer might walk in late and through no fault of ours, miss scene one and never catch up to the story. But in Disneyland, we had more control . . . we designed the entire park in such a way that the guest couldn't miss scenes one or two, etc . . . from the minute he entered our 'theatre,' that is, our front gate, 'scene one' would begin for him."

Thus, in Disneyland's design, everything would be a form of storytelling. The Disneyland audience would not simply sit before a screen. They would physically experience an adventure . . . seldom as spectators . . . almost always as "participants" in the drama.

As Disneyland's design evolved, two important considerations were always kept in mind . . . maintaining the theming of each area and insuring easy accessibility for the audience.

For decades, World's Fairs and Amusement Parks had been confusing, environmental "nightmares" of design, in which each show or pavilion would compete for the visitor's attention, not unlike billboards along a highway. There were "Wild West shows" next to Circus acts next to international exhibits offering a potpourri of visual contradictions. And they were usually tang-

led in a maze of criss-crossing streets and sidewalks. The result ultimately left visitors totally disoriented, often lost, exhausted and usually unreceptive to the idea of ever coming back again.

Disneyland's design was an unprecedented approach in which five distinctly different themed areas would be **not** competing, but working together complementing each other to contribute to the total guest experience. "Scene One" was Main Street, U.S.A., where turn-of-the-century America would be relived. Walt would later write: "Many of us fondly remember our 'small home town' and its friendly way of life at the turn of the century. To me, this era represents an important part of our nation's heritage. On Main Street we have endeavored to recapture those by-gone days.

"Here is America in 1890-1910, at the crossroads of an era. Here the gas lamp is giving way to the electric lamp, and a newcomer, the sputtering horseless carriage, has challenged Old Dobbin to the streetcar right-of-way. America was in transition; the discoveries of the late 19th Century were changing our way of life.

"For those of us who remember the carefree times it recreates, Main Street will bring back happy memories. For younger visitors, it is an adventure in turning back the calendar to the days of grandfather's youth."

At the end of Main Street fanning out from a central hub like spokes in a wheel were the other "scenes," easy to find, easy to exit, each a complete thematic land bringing to life many of Walt Disney's greatest filmmaking endeavors.

Adventureland: (Based on Walt's popular True-Life Adventure films) "The spirit of adventure is often linked with exotic tropic places. Many of us dream of traveling to these mysterious, far-off regions of the world.

"To create a land which would make this dream reality, we picture ourselves far from civilization, in the remote jungles of Asia and Africa. The result is Adventureland, 'the wonderland of nature's own design.' "

Frontierland: (Recreating the pioneer days of Davy Crockett and frontier America) "All of us have cause to be proud of our country's history, shaped by the pioneering spirit of our forefathers. It is to those hardy pioneers, men of vision, faith and courage, that we have dedicated Frontierland. Here you can return to frontier America, from the Revolutionary War era to the final taming of the great Southwest. Our adventures are designed to give you the feeling of having lived, even for a short while, during our country's pioneer days."

Fantasyland: (Bringing Walt Disney's famed cartoon characters to life in fantasy attractions) "When we were planning Fantasyland, we recalled the lyrics of the song, 'When You Wish Upon a Star.' The words of that melody, from our picture 'Pinocchio,' inspired us to create a land where dreams 'come true.'

"What youngster, listening to parents or grandparents read aloud, has not dreamed of flying with Peter Pan over moonlit London, or tumbling into Alice's nonsensical Wonderland? In Fantasyland, these classic stories of everyone's youth have become actual realities for youngsters — of all ages — to participate in."

Tomorrowland: (A meaningful, entertaining look at what the future holds in store) "Tomorrow can be a wonderful age. Our scientists today are opening the doors of the Space Age to achievements which will benefit our children and generations to come.

"In Tomorrowland, we've arranged a preview of some of the wonderful developments the future holds in store. You will actually experience what many of America's foremost men of science and industry predict for the world of tomorrow.

"The Tomorrowland attractions, and many others, have been designed to give you an opportunity to participate in adventures which are a living blueprint of our future."

On July 16, 1954, ground was broken and a construction project unlike anything ever seen before was begun. There were times

during the ensuing 12 months when the stumbling blocks inherent to the new project appeared insurmountable. One man recalls tagging the orange trees to be retained with strips of red paper and those to be removed with green paper. As fate would have it, the bulldozer operator was color-blind.

A construction supervisor remembers his glow of pride as waters flowed into the Rivers of America in Frontierland for the first time . . . then his feeling of desperation as the river promptly leaked its contents into the sandy soil of the former orange grove. Loads of clay soil had to be trucked in to "waterproof" the leaking river.

But the dream was indeed slowly becoming reality. Disney landscape artists replaced orange trees with tropical jungles and pine forests . . . with formal floral gardens of Gay 90's America and whimsical miniature versions of medieval European countrysides including a giant "patchwork quilt" of flowers and shrubs. "Walt Disney depleted our nurseries from Santa Barbara to San Diego," wrote Hollywood columnist Hedda Hopper. Once the precious plants were in place in their new environment, Disney landscapers strove to make them look "like they had always been there." They were protected with massive doses of "TLC" — tender loving care — as cement, cobblestone, logs, bricks, steel and every other building material known to man sprang up around them in thousands of shapes and sizes. There were castles and cottages . . . forts and cabins . . . rocket ships and freeways . . . streetcars and horseless carriages.

A 20-foot earthen berm rose up around the park sealing out the "outside world" for good. Soon tracks were being laid on the berm to carry 1890-style passenger trains on a grand-circle tour of Disneyland. It was the one and only holdover idea from the original magical little park concept of two decades before — a train ride.

Not all the action was taking place at the building site, however. Just for the design and development of Main Street alone, for example, hundreds upon hundreds of books, pictures, histor-

ical magazines and other items were studied to get an exact feel of the total atmosphere of a typical small town at the turn of the century. A treasure hunt extended across the country into antique shops, private homes and out-of-the-way junk shops in small villages. The searchers tracked down relics of the past ranging from old lighting fixtures to well-worn hitching posts. There were small park benches from San Francisco and grill work and railing from old plantations in Nashville and Memphis. And when important items could not be found in good working order, such as "horseless carriages" and sternwheel steamships, they were hand-crafted by Disney employees at the studio from the ground up.

For the buildings themselves, there would be a not-so-subtle difference between the Main Street buildings and a movie set. The latter is to be seen but not touched or entered by the audience — its structures mere facades behind which little or nothing exists.

Main Street and the other four lands would be worlds to be entered, of sights and sounds, touch and smell . . . of three-dimensional reality. Also, historically speaking, this Main Street was quite unlike the real Main Streets of yesteryear. Here, everything would always remain fresh and new. And the rows of old-time shops and the traffic vehicles and all the other elements would function together in harmony and unison unlike anything grandfather ever experienced. As one Disney imagineer put it, "This is what the real Main Street should have been like."

One by one, each "scene" in the Disneyland story neared completion, and finally, a year and a day after construction began, Walt Disney's persistent idea — his "new concept in family entertainment" — became a prodigious reality. Disneyland opened to the world. But for Walt Disney, this was only the end of the beginning. "Disneyland will never be completed," he said, "as long as there is imagination left in the world."

IV. "THE GREATEST PIECE OF URBAN DESIGN IN THE UNITED STATES"

No description of the amazing years that followed that historic opening could possibly be complete. The public acceptance of Walt's "far-out" idea was overwhelming. As early as Disneyland's second birthday, Time Magazine wrote, "Thanks to Disney's pixilating power to strike the youthful nerve of Americans, Disneyland is proving to be America's biggest tourist attraction."

Never content to rest on their laurels, each year Disney Imagineers added exciting new attractions while continually upgrading the original ones. From 22 attractions and an opening day investment of 17 million dollars, Disneyland grew to encompass more than 55 major attractions with an investment exceeding 150 million dollars. True to his word, Walt saw that Disneyland indeed would never be completed. Entire new areas were created like New Orleans Square while others were totally reshaped like Tomorrowland, which became "Todayland" even sooner than Walt Disney had predicted.



New transportation systems, like America's first Monorail and PeopleMover were introduced. And "electronic pixie dust" came of age in the form of Audio-Animatronics, a space-age system of animation to "bring to life" hundreds of new performers for the Disneyland show. Through this new breakthrough, an incredibly life-like figure of Abraham Lincoln would stand and address the audience, dozens of scurvy "Pirates of the Caribbean" would ransack a seacoast village, scores of tropical birds would sing in unison, and hundreds of other colorful audio-animatronic stars would perform "on cue" throughout the park with far greater precision than did their human counterparts during that first grand opening telecast.

From around the world, over 140 million visitors from more than 120 nations have come to see the "spectacular failure" that the early day critics had predicted for Walt's dream. Included among them have been dozens of heads of state . . . kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers and premiers. This international popularity prompted the Christian Science Monitor to write that Disneyland has become "almost an instrumentality of American foreign policy." To this, Walt Disney replied, "We love to entertain kings and queens, but at Disneyland, every guest is a VIP."

Of all the visits by celebrities, dignitaries and public figures, however, perhaps the most publicized event was a "non-visit" by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in 1960. Barred by the government from the park due to security precautions, he launched into a nationally televised "temper tantrum" and the resulting "international incident" set off a remarkable chain reaction.

Author Herman Wouk wrote, "I don't blame Krushchev for jumping up and down in rage over missing Disneyland. There are few things more worth seeing in the United States or indeed anywhere in the world."

Bob Hope quipped to an audience in Alaska, "Here we are in the 50th state. Alaska - that's halfway between Krushchev and Disneyland."

And in New York City, the day following the Soviet Premier's complaint heard 'round the world, an officer of one of the nation's largest brokerage houses telephoned a Disney executive in Burbank, California. "Maybe you don't remember me," he said. "I'm the one who said we don't finance 'kiddylands' when you were looking for construction money. Now I want to visit your place. If Krushchev can get so mad over not seeing it, then Disneyland must be a lot more than a 'kiddyland'."

Not an amusement park . . . certainly not a 'kiddyland' . . . not anything that the world had ever experienced. Perhaps the highly respected master-planner and builder, James Rouse, (creator of the new town of Columbia) was closer to understanding Disneyland better than anyone outside the Disney organization. In his keynote speech before the 1963 Urban Design Conference at Harvard University, Mr. Rouse said in part:

"I hold a view that may be somewhat shocking to an audience as sophisticated as this: - that the greatest piece of urban design in the United States today is Disneyland. If you think about Disneyland and think of its performance in relation to its purpose; its meaning to people - more than that, its meaning to the process of development - you will find it the outstanding piece of urban design in the United States. It took an area of activity - the amusement park - and lifted it to a standard so high in its performance, in its respect for people, in its functioning for people, that it really has become a brand new thing. It fulfills all the functions it set out to accomplish unselfconsciously, usefully and profitably to its owners and developers. I find more to learn in the standards that have been set and in the goals that have been achieved in the development of Disneyland than in any other single piece of physical development in the country."

Walt Disney probably smiled broadly when he read Mr. Rouse's comments. Two years later, at Disneyland's 10th anniversary celebration, he looked at his staff and remarked, "These past ten years have only been a dress rehearsal. If any of you wants to rest on his laurels, forget it." Walt Disney was getting ready to launch plans for his last and greatest dream: Walt Disney World.

V. MICKEY MOUSE MOVES EASTWARD

If Walt Disney had been able to go back and start Disneyland all over again, secure in the knowledge of its coming success, he most assuredly would have changed one thing. He would have somehow managed to acquire more land . . . much more land than the original 160-acres. The growth of the family recreation area around Disneyland was positively phenomenal in response to the overwhelming public demand. As the "outside world" from which Walt sought to insulate his family park, pressed closer and closer, Disney designers cleverly "Imagineered" the existing acreage to accommodate a growing worldwide audience.



Why not build another Disneyland somewhere else? Time and again, in many places throughout the United States and even in foreign countries, Walt was given offers of free land if he'd do just that. There were offers which promoters said Walt "would not be able to refuse," but he did just that. "There will never be another Disneyland," he said, and he began to look for unique new ways to apply the training, and imagineering experience his organization had acquired. He then took a giant step from West to East . . . from California to the 1964-65 New York World's Fair, where the popularity of his family entertainment might be tested with a whole new audience. It was the world's largest international exhibition of the '60's but the dominant figure was pointed out in headlines that read, "Walt Disney-GIANT at the Fair." And indeed he was. Four Disney-developed shows, General Electric's Carousel of Progress, Ford's Magic Skyway, Pepsi-Cola's It's A Small World, and the State of Illinois' Great Moments With Mr. Lincoln were easily the most popular shows at the exposition.

At the Fair's end, all four shows were dismantled and sent Westward again for later use in Disneyland. But Walt Disney's interest remained in the East. The location for his greatest dream would be thousands of miles from his studio headquarters somewhere in the eastern United States . . . somewhere where there would be enough land for a project to keep the Disney staff busy, in Walt's own words, "for the next 25 years."

So once again, a decade after their first land expedition in Anaheim, California; Disney representatives set out in search of property to acquire. This time they would be cloaked in necessary obscurity. With the now established success of Disneyland, the slightest hint of Disney interest in an area anywhere would be enough to skyrocket the real estate prices beyond imagination. However, not only did there have to be available land, but the location would have to be in a heavy tourist-oriented area where excellent weather would permit year-round operation and where there would be major highways to enable visitors to get to the project as they could easily do at Disneyland.

By October, 1965, the Disney planners had quietly purchased 27,443 acres of pine forests right in the middle of America's sunshine state and number one vacation mecca - Florida. And the giant parcel of land was located near excellent roads that would make getting there a breeze for future visitors.

In almost no time, Walt Disney was sitting in a planning room in California, surrounded by an incredible array of plot plans, artist's renderings, sketches, road maps, blueprints, and giant aerial photographic mosaics. Here and there, designers were scurrying up and down rolling ladders, bringing new data to an already awesome display of material mounted on 16 foot high windowless walls. Where flip charts, drafting boards and scale model layouts were not . . . conference tables, swivel chairs and motion picture cameras were. And Walt Disney stepped before those cameras for a special film presentation unveiling the most significant undertaking in the history of Walt Disney Productions.

"Welcome to a little bit of Florida here in California," Walt began. "This is where the early planning is taking place for our so-called 'Disney World' project. We're now developing a master plan that encompasses the theme park and all the facilities around it that will serve the tourists — hotels, motels, and a variety of recreation activities."

Walt walked over to a towering map of his project and pointed to one small section toward the top. He continued, "In fact, this little area is five times the size of Disneyland in California."

"As you can see on this masterplan, the theme park and all the other tourist facilities fill just one small area of our enormous Florida project.

". . . Here in Florida, we have something special we never enjoyed at Disneyland — the blessing of size. There's enough land here to hold all the ideas and plans we could possibly imagine.

". . . We know what we hope to accomplish, and believe me, it's the most exciting and challenging assignment we've ever tackled at Walt Disney Productions."

VI. THE LARGEST PRIVATE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT IN THE WORLD

Although Walt Disney died shortly after introducing his concepts, it quickly became apparent that his greatest dream was left in competent hands. Led by his brother Roy, the Disney organization plunged ahead with the masterplan and for the next five years continued the long process of turning sketches, blueprints and models into reality.

As the project began to jell, it was clear that Walt had incorporated the ideas and philosophies of a lifetime. Because of its size and scope, the masterplan would have to be completed carefully by phases over the years ahead. Phase One would begin with a complete "vacationland" including "The Magic Kingdom," a theme park similar to Disneyland, and a series of themed resort hotels and a wide variety of land and water recreation facilities.

Where the Disneyland visitor could have a "theme experience" for the day, the Walt Disney World visitor's theme experience would extend from the Magic Kingdom all the way to the resort-hotels . . . in all reality — an entire theme vacation.



Recalls one key Disney designer, "When we were planning phase one, we were once again very careful to avoid any contradictions in architecture and design. The challenge was not just in the theme park this time but outside the park because for this project we had total control . . . we owned all the immediate surrounding land. The first two resort hotels were literally designed and located as extensions of the Magic Kingdom. We designed the Contemporary Resort and located it to offer an architecturally compatible backdrop to Tomorrowland. And the Polynesian Village was located so as to provide a themed background to Adventureland."

In both cases, it not only worked in theory on the plot plan but in reality. Today, the Magic Kingdom visitor sees the magnificently styled Contemporary Hotel rising in the background behind the many and varied futuristic structures of Tomorrowland. The South Seas themed Polynesian Village with its palm tree-lined beaches is a natural backdrop to tropical Adventureland. No contradictions . . . no confusion.

In a way, the outside world, which was shut out at Disneyland, was opened up in Walt Disney World, because this "outside world" was still Disney . . . still part of the themed experience. There was land for everything. Land to tax the most creative mind. Land to challenge the most resourceful building engineer. Land that soon became the largest private construction project in the world.

In Florida, transforming raw land and water into a "Vacation Kingdom" while maintaining the beauty and ecology of the natural environment would be a complex task. Nonetheless, it was a standard that Walt Disney had established and one that his brother Roy had insisted upon. It would require a basic commitment to the land and a great amount of time, effort and money.

Legislation was passed by the State of Florida in 1967 establishing the Reedy Creek Improvement District. Two municipalities were created . . . the cities of Bay Lake and Lake Buena Vista.

A vast and imaginative land improvement program was launched, including water control and utility planning. More than 40 miles of canals were created to protect Walt Disney World's 43 square miles from possible environmental damage due to flooding. One planning engineer remembers being directed to make the canals winding with sufficient landscaping to make them pleasing to the eye, like natural rivers.

After careful soil analysis and extensive aerial mappings . . . which saw Roy Disney himself surveying the area closely by tree-hopping helicopters, the clearing and earth moving began that would ultimately involve more than eight million cubic yards of soil. More than 8000 workers flooded the site, representing every conceivable type of building skill.

Walt Disney had envisioned that his Florida project would be "a showcase to the world for the ingenuity and imagination of American free enterprise."

The ensuing months saw many innovative systems and construction methods used . . . many for the first time anywhere. The first two theme resorts utilized a remarkable new lightweight steel "modular construction" where the actual hotel rooms were manufactured at an assembly plant miles away and trucked to the building site. Before leaving the assembly line, each room was completely outfitted . . . walls covered, bath fixtures installed, and mirrors in place. When they arrived "on location," each was lifted up by giant cranes and virtually plugged into place in steel frame structures, practically ready for the maid to walk in and make up the bed.

Disney designers had only one natural body of water to work with for their masterplan . . . beautiful Bay Lake, covering some 500 acres. But early in the planning stages, they had decided to expand its water recreation potential even further so they went about the unheard task of creating a large adjacent man-made lagoon . . . just the perfect setting for a Polynesian Village. However, this was no backyard swimming pool they were creating . . . where does one put millions of cubic yards of earth? That's

easy . . . right over in the theme park . . . for fill, mountains and top soil. Florida's high water table would require that the theme park actually be built on a higher elevation anyway, so they happily "robbed Peter to pay Paul."

Like a giant jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of Walt Disney World began to come together from all around the United States. Massive monorail beams came by rail all the way across the country from the state of Washington. Old-time steam locomotives were located in Mexico, and refurbished in nearby Tampa, Florida. There, also, much of the Walt Disney World navy was being constructed . . . from Jungle Cruise boats to steam launches. From WED Enterprises back in California came literally millions of individual pieces to be assembled into computer-controlled, super-sophisticated advanced versions of many of Disneyland's most popular shows and attractions.

This time the local nurseries would not be depleted as during Disneyland's construction. On a Disney tree farm nearby, landscape designers had grown almost all of the thousands of plants, trees, shrubs and flowers for which the project was having an almost inexhaustible appetite.

Probably the most unique thing of all about Walt Disney World as construction progressed was the fact that Disney creativity was being applied to new elements "Backstage" as well as in the public view. A unique and very advanced central energy plant was built to help furnish electricity and hot water for heating and cooling systems. A special waste water treatment plant was built to treat effluent and direct it to the nearby tree farm where phenomenal growth rates were attained including up to one foot per month for one species of tree. And true to the Disney tradition of cleanliness, a unique central trash collection system AVAC was installed to help keep the Magic Kingdom absolutely spotless.

7,500 acres were set aside permanently as a conservation area and wildlife preserve with still more scheduled for reforestation and beef production. But it was the construction area that com-

manded the most attention, because it became the largest private enterprise construction project in America, if not the world.

As opening day drew near, Walt Disney World was in all reality, an entire city . . . with fire protection, environmental protection, a phone company, its own landscape department, security and dozens of other departments. Onstage was a network of exciting attractions, themed shops, restaurants, resort-hotels, campgrounds and recreation facilities. Backstage was a network of utilities, supply and maintenance facilities and criss-crossing subterranean service tunnels connecting the vast "underworld" hidden away from public view. A sophisticated computer system stood by to monitor vital functions and every minute detail in each show.

Although the 500 million dollar project only covered 10% of the property to this point, it was already the largest employer in the state. More than 9000 cast members put on the finishing touches to their show and stood by for the October 1, 1971 Grand Opening. Surely nobody had to ask Roy Disney how he felt that first day. He had been a vital, moving force in steering his brother's greatest dream on a path toward reality.

Once again the entertainment world's reigning "superstars" were on hand to participate in a bit of history. And once again television's cameras and technicians, 16 years more advanced and now armed with the magic of video tape and "instant replay," were there to capture the excitement . . . this time secure in the knowledge that what they were about to record would be an "instant success."

With a sense of great pride, some personal, but the majority for the organization he was now guiding, Roy Disney stepped forward to dedicate Walt Disney World.

"WALT DISNEY WORLD is a tribute to the philosophy and life of Walter Elias Disney . . . and to the talents, the dedication, and the loyalty of the entire Disney organization that made Walt Disney's dream come true. May Walt Disney World bring joy and inspiration and new knowledge to all who come to this happy

place . . . a Magic Kingdom where the young at heart of all ages can laugh and play and learn — together."

For Walt Disney World, would the same success pattern hold true which took Disneyland to the very pinnacle of public appeal? No one had to wait around to hear about the wonders of "The Vacation Kingdom of the World." A constant stream of the world's press came during the early weeks, some curious . . . some expecting to find a "carbon copy" Disneyland . . . some not knowing quite what to expect. But even a cursory look at the 43 square miles Disney had fashioned into a destination vacation resort would convince the most experienced news reporter that here indeed was something different. Their reaction was matched only by the reaction of the guests themselves. After an intensive three-day visit, one travel editor remarked, "My only concern is that this place is too far away to bring my family on weekends and too close not to bring them on our vacations. Once they see this, I'm afraid our trips to other places will be few and far between."

Disney monorails, trains, hotels, castles, people and audio-animatronics performers graced the covers of major publications around the world. And there were many writers who looked beyond the vacation-recreation elements and quickly recognized Walt Disney World's city-like characteristics: New York magazine's architectural editor Peter Blake proclaimed "Mickey Mouse for Mayor" as he suggested that the Disney people, as creators of the "first great vibrant new towns in America," should apply their expertise to ailing New York.

Sally Davis, writing for Los Angeles Magazine seemed to be only partially kidding when she pondered the question, "Should we let Disney redesign Los Angeles?"

Perhaps the most perceptive comments of all came from David Brinkley who reported on his nationally televised news program: "It is the most imaginative and effective piece of urban planning in America. And that is totally aside from the Mickey Mouse amusement park area itself. It is outside the park, on Disney's

own land, which is about twice the size of Manhattan. On this they have built roads, transportation systems, lakes, golf courses, campgrounds, riding stables, stores, hotels. And they all fit together in a setting of land, air and water better than any other environment in America.

"We all remember seeing years ago those slick, futuristic drawings saying what the future of American cities is going to be — gleaming buildings, fast monorails, people in one place, cars in another. Well, this is the future and none of this has happened. Nobody has done it except Disney."

Press reviews are one thing, but what about the public? The ultimate success of Walt Disney World would be measured not by the "visitor count" of the world's press so much as its citizens. The answer was not long in coming. Disney planners had deliberately opened Walt Disney World in a "non-peak tourist period" to work out any operating problems. But the arrival of the first holiday tourist period brought the most intense traffic jams in Central Florida history. And inside Walt Disney World, even a 500 million dollar investment in facilities was not enough to meet the public demand.

There were seemingly endless lines to transportation systems . . . to attractions, restaurants and stores . . . to drinking fountains and even restrooms. The Disney employees struggled with an effort that was almost heroic as they tried to meet an overwhelming public demand with the same attention to courtesy and guest service that had long been a tradition at Disneyland. Instead of the originally projected 6.7 million first-year visitors, 10.8 million came through the turnstiles, including an assortment of public figures and celebrities that even rivaled Disneyland's "honor roll" of distinguished citizens. A new kind of challenge was placed on Walt Disney World . . . It was clear that expansion would have to come sooner than even the most optimistic persons had ever dreamed of. The masterplan would have to be geared to increase capacity as soon as possible.

A capital expansion program of more than 200 million dollars was launched with one of the major goals to increase the Magic Kingdom theme park capacity within several years from 45,000 to 70,000 rides per hour . . . a level it took Disneyland in California more than 18 years to obtain. Thirteen major new attractions were added, from a Frontier-themed Tom Sawyer Island to the Pirates of the Caribbean and finally, the major expansion of Tomorrowland, including RCA's Space Mountain and the introduction of the world's first linear-motor powered transportation system . . . the PeopleMover.

Elsewhere on the Walt Disney World property, expansion was also under way. Guest accommodations were increased with the addition of a new golf resort hotel and additional campsites at Fort Wilderness. New dining and entertainment facilities were created, and transportation capacity was more than doubled with the addition of special ferry boats, aluminum launches, trams, buses, and new monorail trains.

Other major construction took place in Walt Disney World's nearby community of Lake Buena Vista . . . A second home vacation community along winding waterways and the fairways of still another Disney championship golf course. Here, treehouse homes and residences were added to an initial townhouse development along with an important new clubhouse facility. The Lake Buena Vista Shopping Village, a complex of 32 individual specialty boutiques, shops and restaurants opened in the Spring of 1975.

By the end of 1975, Walt Disney World represented a total investment of more than 700 million dollars, and had, in a few short years of operation, become the number one destination resort in the world.

VII. "IMAGINEERING" FOR THE FUTURE

Walt Disney's uncanny foresight and fascinating ability to plan far ahead into the future insured that the final chapters in the stories of Disneyland and Walt Disney World would never be written. Today, Disneyland, unmatched in its originality and uniqueness . . . the one that started it all . . . still continues to change. Disney Imagineers masterplan the dynamics of an ongoing program dedicated to adding exciting new attractions and constantly refining existing ones. Even as this is being written, bulldozers, cranes, cement trucks and other tools of construction are once again being gathered to help bring to reality new "scenes" in the Disneyland story. They are a familiar sight to veteran Disneyland employees. They have seen them time-and-again through Disneyland's first two decades. And they know they will see them again in the future.

Meanwhile, thousands of miles away in Florida, Disneyland's younger brother is actually just getting started. Disney designers have already begun plans for "phase two" including the "World Showcase" where nations from around the world will present their history, culture, and commerce through the universality of Disney's long-established "international entertainment magic." But even this is just one more step toward Walt Disney's ultimate goal for Walt Disney World, EPCOT . . . an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow" . . . a community which Walt predicted, "more people would talk about and come to look at than any other place in the world."

It is an awesome legacy, and it surely must bring to the minds of the Disney staff, echoes of another Walt remark many years ago . . . "We're just getting started. If any of you wants to rest on your laurels, forget it."

A RETROSPECT ON DISNEY MAGIC

What is the success formula responsible for the incredible public appeal of Disney Outdoor entertainment?

Needless to say, the face of America has changed dramatically from the one its citizens knew at the time of Disneyland's opening two decades ago. Today, there is almost an endless variety of "theme experiences." Dining experiences, ranging from Old English Taverns to Roman Gardens to World War I Air Bases, and much more. "Shopping experiences" in the form of environmentally controlled malls in almost every major community across the nation. And there are new forms of "recreation experiences." For example, dreary, museum displays of fish life in conventional aquariums have evolved into oceanographic shows and sea-going experiences in park-like settings. And there is a new generation of planned residential communities and municipalities . . . consciously avoiding some of the visual contradictions so prevalent just a few years before.

All in all, a concern for the needs and comfort of people has become much more evident today in many ways. Perhaps the astonishing success of Disney theme entertainment and its inherent concern for people have served to accelerate this new awareness of "the human factor." Even so, in the wake of these changes and others which could at least indirectly trace their lineage to a Disney influence, both Disneyland and Walt Disney World remain unique while their popularity continues to grow.

Is there really some "magical" equation that accounts for the popularity of Disneyland and Walt Disney World?

Although TIME MAGAZINE called it, "Disney's pixilating power to strike the youthful nerve in Americans," the "magic" long ago transcended American shores to circle the globe. To the outside observer, the first factor in the success formula is the indefinable, worldwide mystique that surrounds the name "Disney" . . . an integrity and image that can't be bought at any price.

Then there is the remarkable "sixth sense" that permeates the Disney organization . . . an ability to somehow perceive what the public wants . . . and a viability to discard what fails to meet the public need and replace it with a better idea.

And still another, more measurable factor is the respectability in the financial community . . . a respectability born out of the Disney ability to run their diversified organization in a responsible business-like manner unparalleled in the entertainment industry.

But these are the visible factors. The Question still remains — What is the Disney "secret ingredient?"

The key Disney imagineer smiled almost unperceptibly as he heard the question. It was the same kind of question that had been posed by hundreds of people during his two decade involvement in Disney theme shows. We stood at the end of Main Street USA in Walt Disney World during the early morning as the park was just opening. Several gardeners put the last touches on a newly planted carpet of bright yellow "mums" that marked the entrance to Tomorrowland. Behind us, a painter completed his usual pre-opening round of touch-up work with one last artistic brush stroke on an ornate sign. Here and there, costumed cast members were scurrying about, providing a temporary fashion microcosm of two centuries.

The Disney designer then addressed the question. "Well, this theme show idea really works at both the conscious and subconscious levels in the guest's mind. There are a number of things that happen to them which they may very well remember . . . a ride . . . a personal contact with an employee . . . a lunch . . . a particular show . . . or any one of dozens of others. But equally important, if not more so, is the sum total of all the thousands of little details of which the guests are never quite fully aware . . . details working at the subliminal level."

He turned and pointed to the Cinderella Castle towering above us and continued. "Take that castle, for instance. Most people

walk up to this point and take a picture. In fact, more pictures are probably taken right here of that castle than anything else perhaps in the world. But if you walked up and asked a guest WHY he likes the castle . . . WHY is it worth photographing? . . . He could never tell you. He'd probably stammer out something like, 'Because it's just beautiful'. And yet, when he gets back home and shows his pictures, the feeling will never be the same that he experiences simply standing here.

"The fact is, as we stand here right now, there are literally hundreds of stimuli etching an impression . . . and an experience in our minds through every one of our senses. Probably the most conscious and obvious stimulus is visual . . . we are looking at that castle and we think it is beautiful. Yet consider the factors that are playing on our sense of vision . . . the colors . . . the lighting, the shapes and designs. There is a static nature about the castle structure itself that makes you think its been standing there for centuries. And yet there is motion . . . the motion of those flags, and the trees around us made by the wind. The movement of people, vehicles and boats, water, balloons, horses, and the white clouds passing by overhead.

"Look up at the top of the castle. At the base of the highest tower are a series of tremendously detailed gargoyles which you can barely see from the ground. And yet they are also part of our 'magic formula'. They are part of a thousand little tiny details we are looking at right now but don't consciously perceive. Individually they are nothing. Collectively they add up to a visual experience that the guest can't find anywhere else.

"Now consider what is happening at this moment to our sense of **hearing**. As we stand here, we are hearing something that the best stereo or quad system in the world can't duplicate. We are hearing an everchanging background . . . music, the sounds of waterfalls, horses' hooves, bells, a marching band, popcorn popping, and even the familiar crowd murmur that we usually sort of consciously tune out.

"Think about the sense of **touch** . . . inanimate objects like this rockwork . . . animate objects like that horse pulling that trolley car. Or those fantasyland characters in the castle's forecourt. Those things are not projected film — they are real. If you close your eyes, you can reach out and touch them . . . feel them.

"These flowers aren't plastic . . . you can **smell** them.

"That popcorn . . . you can go over and **taste** it.

"Think about it carefully. As we stand here and look at that castle, every one of our senses are coming into play. This is total involvement. You can never capture this moment and take it home with you in a camera or tape recorder. You can only take this experience home in your mind. Now, multiply this moment by an entire day . . . by a week . . . by a thousand other different experiences . . . and you start to get some idea of the Disney theme show.

"Of course, there are some limits to how far you can go in a theme experience. We don't want to add smoke to the fire effects in the Pirates of the Caribbean . . . that would be a negative stimulus. In **our** jungle we keep the real insects to a minimum. In Frontierland we could be more authentic by making dirt streets, eliminating air conditioning in the buildings and replacing restrooms with outhouses. How many medieval castles ever had piped-in music or drinking fountains with chilled water? Frankly, if we created a totally perfect, authentic themed experience where we had complete realism, it would probably be ghastly for contemporary people living here in the 70's.

"What we create is a "Disney Realism", sort of Utopian in nature, where we carefully program out all the negative, unwanted elements and program in the positive elements. In fact, we even go beyond realism in some cases to make a better show. Don't forget, people are coming here to be entertained . . . it is a show, you know. We create a world they can escape to . . . to enjoy for a few brief moments . . . a world that is the way they would like to think it would be.

"The Jungle Cruise is a good example of what I'm talking about. It began in 1955 at Disneyland as an adaptation from our "True Life Adventure" films. We created an attraction where all the things that you might see on a jungle river journey actually do happen. The truth of the matter is, you could probably spend two years on a real journey like that before you'd see everything.

"Later, in selected Jungle Cruise scenes, we further enhanced the entertainment value by adding a touch of fantasy here and there. Take the elephant bathing pool, for example. Our guests know that *real* elephants wouldn't lurk under the water and then rise up to squirt the boat. And they know that a *real* herd of elephants wouldn't be quite so happy with a strange boat in their midst. Real elephants would have either retreated defensively into the jungle or smashed the boat to pieces. But again, we've programmed in a Utopian realism, added a touch of fun and fantasy and the guests love it.

"Interestingly, for all its success, the Disney theme show is quite a fragile thing. It just takes one contradiction . . . one out of place stimulus to negate a particular moment's experience. Take that street car conductor's costume away and put him in double-knit slacks and a golf shirt . . . replace that old gay nineties melody with a rock number . . . replace the themed merchandise with digital clock radios and electric hair dryers . . . tack up a felt-tip drawn paper sign that says "Keep Out" . . . place a touch of astro turf here . . . add a surly employee there . . . it really doesn't take much to upset it all.

"What's our success formula? Well, it's attention to infinite detail . . . the little things, the minor picky points that other companies just don't want to take the time, the money, the effort, to do right. As far as our Disney organization is concerned . . . it's the only way we've ever done it . . . it's been our success formula in the past and it will be applied to our future projects as well. We'll probably still be explaining this to outsiders at the end of our next two decades in this business."

In this volatile business of ours, we can ill afford to rest on our laurels, even to pause in retrospect. Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly on the future.

I just want to leave you with this thought that it's just been sort of a dress rehearsal and we're just getting started. So if any of you start resting on your laurels, I mean just forget it, because . . . we are just getting started.

WALT DISNEY

LOOK TO THE NAME

WALT DISNEY

FOR THE FINEST IN FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT