

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“Things are seldom what they initially appear to be.”

Anon.

For many years, prior to the opening of Disneyland in California, most people assumed that Walt Disney was very rich; after all, his cartoons and films were well known all over the world. But, in fact, Walt did not have a pot to piss in or a window to throw it out of, and could not have bought a ten-cent hamburger on credit if his life depended upon it. His brother, Roy, did at least manage to sell enough Mickey Mouse wristwatches, coloring books for children, and other such things, to help cover some of Walt's losses; which prevented Walt from going under but did not provide a cent in the way of profits.

Everybody in Hollywood clearly understood Walt's true financial condition, having already been given more than enough of his rubber checks, so he had to pay for everything that he required in cash, up front; no checks, no credit, no payment after the fact. Thanks but no thanks, Walt; let me see the color of your money; otherwise, take your business elsewhere.

Disneyland itself was built for only one reason: it was an outright scam intended to get Walt out of debt. It was supposed to fail miserably, and quickly. A failure that was supposed to make Walt rich while everybody else that was involved was supposed to lose their ass. That, at least, was the plan. And the fact that it did not fail was certainly not Walt's fault, nor was its success due to any efforts on his part.

In a desperate attempt to get out of debt, Walt and an associate of his came up with an idea that they believed might save Walt's ass; so then they went to a lot of people like Coca Cola, Borden's, Hershey, etc., and talked them into putting up all of the money required to build Disneyland, in return for which they were promised exclusive sales rights for certain types of their products, cold drinks, candy bars, etc. But, in fact, very little of the money that came from such people was actually invested in Disneyland; instead, Walt used most of it to pay off his debts, stuck a lot of it in his pocket, and used only a small part of it to construct Disneyland.

Then, afterwards, after Disneyland failed, or so the plan went, Walt intended to claim that he had done his best and that the failure of Disneyland was not his fault.

Having no confidence in the success of Disneyland, Walt purchased only a very small parcel of land; which, afterwards, proved to be a major mistake on his part. Because, by the time Walt realized that Disneyland was actually going to be a success, everybody else realized it as well; and then the value of nearby land went through the roof.

Disneyland did not fail primarily because of two factors that nobody anticipated; one, the enormous influx of tourists into the Los Angeles area that occurred following the Second World War, and, two, the introduction of commercial television. While he had lost his ass on every cartoon and film that he ever made, Walt nevertheless still owned hundreds of cartoons and films, and since television was then desperate for everything in the way of programs Walt was able to sell all of these films for a second time without the need to spend anything on them in the way of an additional investment; and, secondly, the use of his films on television provided him with an enormous amount of good publicity for Disneyland, free publicity that attracted thousands of tourists.

For many years Walt was given a full hour of free television publicity on a major network every week, an hour of prime time exposure; which provided him with nothing more nor less than an hour-long commercial for Disneyland every week. Later yet he got even more free publicity on television with his Mickey Mouse Club programs.

When it finally became obvious to Walt that Disneyland was going to be a success, in spite of his initial plans, he called the man who was primarily responsible for the building of Disneyland in the first place into his office, got up from his desk and turned his back on the other man while looking out the window and said . . . “Well, where are you going next?” In effect . . . “You are fired; I don't need you anymore.”

The Arthur Jones Collection

Later, having learned from their mistakes while building Disneyland in California, when they expanded their operations by building Disney World in Florida, they proceeded in great secrecy; bought up a large part of central Florida before anybody even became aware of their plans. And, by that point, they did not have to borrow a dime in order to build the second place. The rest is now history; although, at the moment, their expansion into France has been a major fuck up, has produced losses running into the hundreds of millions of dollars. Nevertheless, the man running Disney today is by far the highest paid executive in the world; paid himself more than two-hundred million dollars for one year of his time recently, while still paying most Disney employees little if anything above minimum wages.

At a time when I was operating several B 25 medium bombers in my business, Disney was also operating a B 25 for filming purposes; they modified the nose of their airplane in order to permit them to film from the front of the plane. Then they lost an engine and were forced to limp into New Orleans on one engine; and then realized that the engine had to be replaced before they could fly again. So they came to me in an attempt to buy an engine for their plane, since I was then the only source of such spare engines in that part of the country. I gave them a price quotation for a spare engine that was very reasonable, but insisted that they had to pay for it in cash; which they could not, or would not, do. So I never did sell them the engine they needed; their plane was still sitting on the airport in an unusable condition several months later because they could not come up with two-thousand dollars to pay for the engine.

That was my only personal contact with any of Disney's people until many years later, but it was typical of the way that Disney conducted business for most of his life. For many years, my credit in Hollywood was almost without limit while nobody there would extend a cent of credit to Disney or any of his people. Paraphrasing what Lincoln said . . . "You can fuck some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fuck all of the people all of the time." But apparently Disney failed to take note of that clear warning.