

DISNEY (Continued)

where he arrived with an old suit, a sweater, some drawing materials, and \$39.98 in cash. Behind him in Kansas City were sizable debts which took him years to pay off.

Walt's spectacular rise in Hollywood is pretty well known: how he formed a partnership with his brother Roy, who brought into the company its only tangible assets, \$250 in cash; how their Uncle Robert loaned them another \$500 and let them live in his house till they got on their feet; how an order from an independent New York distributor for a series of pictures finally set them up in business; how, with the aid of two girls they hired for \$15 a week apiece, they made their first "Alice" cartoon; and how the studio grew from a little shack in Burbank to the multimillion-dollar corporation it is today.

One of the girls, Lillian Bounds, later became Mrs. Walt Disney and the mother of their two daughters—Diane, now Mrs. Ron Miller, and Sharon, who works as a secretary in her father's company. Miller, a former football star, also works for Walt as an assistant director, but Mrs. Disney long ago gave up working in her husband's enterprises. As Walt puts it, with a grin, of course, "She only spends my money now and can't understand why I'm so broke."

Walt's being "broke," by the way, is the topic of constant jibes among his family and employees. Recently, when told that he had purchased a quarter-horse for \$1,500, his secretary asked: "What with?" But as another member of his organization puts it: "We should all be as broke as Walt!"

SUCCESS OFTEN DEMANDS a big price. In Walt's case it nearly ruined his health.

The more successful he became, the harder he worked on new ideas, new developments, new

techniques—until he reached the breaking point. Seven years ago he was close to a nervous breakdown when his doctor insisted he cut down to a five-day week, learn to relax, and get himself some hobbies which would release his tensions.

It's not surprising that, just as his work pleases young and old alike, Walt would pick a pastime that fits the same pattern—a miniature railroad with a half-mile of tracks crossing his Holmby Hills estate. At first his neighbors were distressed by the constant tooting and whistling. They felt it didn't belong in the most exclusive section of Los Angeles, but they quickly got used to it.

A good portion of the equipment was built by Walt himself when he worked as an apprentice in the studio's machine shop. However, Walt admits, "I was promoted quite fast."

When he first told his wife Lillian about his project, she thought he was kidding. But when he suggested naming the engine "Lilly Belle," after her, she discarded all objections.

In fact, one has the feeling that just as Walt is able to look at life through the eyes of all age groups, Mrs. Disney treats her husband the same way, depending on his moods. The railroad is but one example. His French poodle, Lady, another.

Walt has been fond of pets since he had a whole flock of them—including dogs, cats, roosters, and lambs—when he was a farm boy in Missouri. His favorite at the time was a German Shepherd.

Mrs. Disney had no objection to dogs when their children were young, but she seemed nowhere as delighted a few years ago when her husband suggested getting another pet. And she may never have agreed to the purchase if her eldest daughter, Diane, hadn't insisted: "Mom, you just have to get

a dog for Daddy. He wants one so much."

When Mrs. Disney weakened, Walt followed up his advantage by letting her choose the dog, "because this way she couldn't pick on it later on. It became her dog as well as mine."

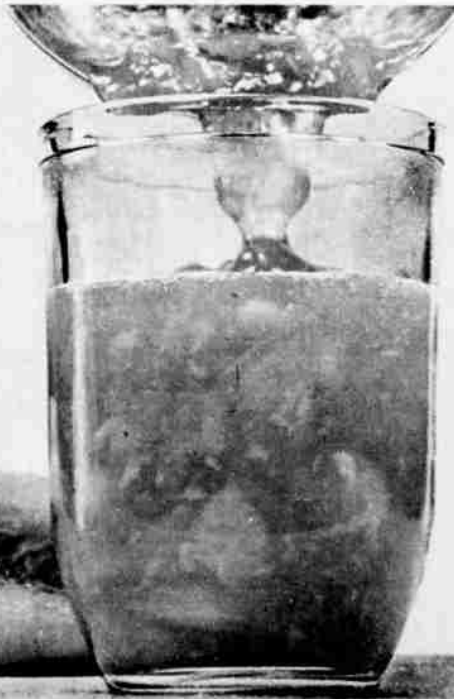
Walt is only teasing when he refers to his wife's "objections" to some of his ideas. Theirs is one of Hollywood's happiest marriages, and Lillian Disney wholeheartedly goes along with her husband's pastimes, including the baseball games they watch by the hour (Walt used to be part-owner of the Hollywood Stars, a Pacific Coast League team now defunct). She even holds back her anxieties when Walt plays polo.

Today, the miniature railroad is stored at the studio, because Walt has found a bigger hobby—Disneyland. This biggest amusement center in the world grew out of Walt's disappointment when he couldn't find a park to his liking when his daughters were little. But what they missed out on, Walt's two oldest grandchildren are able to enjoy thoroughly in the company of their grandfather! At age one, Tamara Marie Miller is too young to be taken along to Disneyland. But on nice warm Sundays, other spectators can often watch Grandfather Walt take Christopher Disney Miller, not quite four, and Joanna Sharon Miller, two, on the various rides while he explains the signs, switches, signals, and other fascinating gadgets with the same seriousness with which he told the reporters about Brian Connors, king of the leprechauns.

In the final analysis, one feels that the real secret of Walt Disney's magic touch is his ability to see, to talk, to discuss, to visualize things—even leprechauns—so that they come excitingly to life for everyone to enjoy.

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