



Newsletter.

Issue 35

September 2004

Inside The Newsletter

Saturday 25th September 7:30pm Meeting

Join us at this meeting as we look at the many aspects of the World of Disney from Animation, Theme Parks, and collectibles. A special look at Disneyland and much more.

Come and join us for this exciting meeting.

Location:

St. Marks Anglican Church Hall.
Cnr. Auburn Rd and Hume Hwy Yagoona. (Near Bankstown.) Just 150m from the Yagoona Railway Station.

The Down Under Disneyana Newsletter is a publication of the Down Under Disneyana Club. The newsletter is published quarterly and distributed to members. Contributions to our newsletter are welcome.

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Down Under Disneyana Club is the Australian Chapter of the National Fantasy Fan Club of the USA, and our club is not associated with The Walt Disney Company in any way. **Ph: (02) 9644-1034**

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Welcome to Issue 35 of the club newsletter.

Latest Australian Disney News

The Wonderful World of Disney now on Saturday evenings on Channel 7 at 7.30pm.

Disney's Home on the Range – the next Animated feature opens in cinemas on September 23rd.

Disney's The Three Musketeers – Starring Mickey, Donald and Goofy is being released on DVD in this month.

Upcoming Club Events

Saturday 25th September 7.30pm

Join us at this meeting as we look at the wonderful worlds of Disney. Bring your favourite Disney memory to share.

St Marks Anglican Church hall

Cnr Auburn Rd and Hume Hwy Yagoona only 1km along Auburn Rd from our old meeting location.

In this newsletter read about the upcoming 50th birthday of Disneyland celebrations. Mission Space at Epcot and a wonderful crossword challenge put together by Julie and Jim Curtis. Also advance notice of our special Disneyana Auction evening to be held in February 2005 to raise money for charity. On a sad note read about the passing of two Disney legends and a look at their legacy. Enjoy this issue of the newsletter.

Wayne

John Hench, Disney Legend and Artist, Dies at 95

Source: Disney press release

John Hench, long-time Disney artist whose designs were found in both animated features and theme parks and who was the official portrait artist of Mickey Mouse, died Thursday morning, February 5. He was 95 and lived in Toluca Lake with his wife of 65 years, Lowry. Hench died of heart failure after a brief illness and hospitalization at Providence Saint Joseph Medical Centre in Burbank.

"John Hench taught me and so many others about the essence of the Disney legacy. He was at Walt's side during the creation of so much classic entertainment and continued to be a vital creative force for our company right up until the end," said Michael Eisner, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of The Walt Disney Company. "John's creative legacy will live on in the current generation of Disney designers he nurtured and inspired. He will be greatly missed by all of us who were privileged to work with him and by everyone who cherishes Disney family entertainment."

Hench began his career with Disney in May 1939 in Disney's old Hyperion Studio in Los Angeles as a sketch artist on "Fantasia." He worked in story editing, layout, background, effects animation and special effects on such legendary Disney films as "Dumbo," "The Three Caballeros," "Peter Pan" and "Cinderella." In his unprecedented 64 years with the Walt Disney Company, he was instrumental in the design of Disney theme parks and resorts and was the official portrait artist of Mickey Mouse. Hench painted likenesses of Disney's famous mouse for the character's 25th, 50th, 60th and 70th birthdays. Until two weeks ago, Hench came to work every day at Walt Disney Imagineering in Glendale, where he was actively involved in the design of Disney's latest theme park in Hong Kong.

Hench was born June 29, 1908, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and grew up in Southern California. He attended the Art Students' League in New York City and received a scholarship to the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. Hench also studied at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco and the Chouinard Institute in Los Angeles.

After completing his art training, Hench researched motion picture colour processes at the Vitacolor Studios in Hollywood and then worked in special effects at Republic Studios. He also created seasonal themes for window displays and newspaper advertisements for the Broadway department stores.

After "Fantasia," Hench worked as a background painter on "Dumbo" (1941), a layout artist on "The Three Caballeros" (1945) and "Fun & Fancy Free" (1947), an art supervisor on "Make Mine Music" (1946) and on colouring and styling for "The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad" (1949), "Cinderella" (1950), "Alice in Wonderland" (1951) and

"Peter Pan" (1953). He developed the cartoon art treatment for the combination live action and animated feature, "So Dear to My Heart" (1949) and the animation effects for the True-Life Adventure "The Living Desert" (1953). Hench received the lead title special effects credits on "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea," which won the Academy Award(R) in 1954 for special effects.

In the early 1940s, Hench was paired with artist Salvador Dali to create storyboard sketches for a proposed, but not completed, film called "Destino." Walt Disney Feature Animation recently used the original artwork as inspiration for a short film of the same name, which was just nominated for an Academy Award(R).

In 1954 Walt Disney asked Hench to leave the world of motion pictures and join a small team of artists and designers working on Disney's idea for a new kind of themed amusement park. The group was WED Enterprises which later became Walt Disney Imagineering, the creative arm of Disney theme parks and resorts worldwide. Hench worked first on the creation of Tomorrowland at Disneyland and in the process discovered a new career as a Disney park designer. After Walt Disney's death in 1966, Hench became one of Imagineering's chief designers and played a key role in the creation of every one of Disney's 10 existing theme parks, as well as Hong Kong Disneyland, now under construction. He oversaw the creation of Walt Disney World in Florida in 1971 and the addition of Epcot in 1982. He helped supervise the design of Disney's first overseas park, Tokyo Disneyland, which opened in 1983 in Japan.

Hench's talents were applied to other Disney projects, including the Olympics and the 1964 World's Fair. In 1960 Hench and his team of Disney artists and designers created the backdrop for the VIII Winter Olympic Games at Squaw Valley, Idaho, staged the opening and closing ceremonies and oversaw production of "snow statues" and other elements seen throughout the Olympic village. Hench also helped develop the four Disney shows that debuted at the 1964 New York World's Fair: "Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln," "Carousel of Progress," "it's a small world" and "Magic Skyway."

Hench continued to work with and inspire a new generation of Disney designers in the creation of Disney-MGM Studios in Florida (1989), Disneyland Paris (1992), Disney's Animal Kingdom in Florida (1998), Disney's California Adventure (2001), Tokyo DisneySea (2001) and Walt Disney Studios in France (2002).

In 1990 Hench was named a Disney Legend, an honour awarded to individuals who have made major contributions to the company. In 1998 he was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Themed Entertainment Association, an industry trade group. This month, John was honoured with The Winsor McCay award from the International Animated Film Society in recognition of lifetime career contributions to the art of animation.

Hench's recently published book, "Designing Disney: Imagineering and The Art of the Show," is already in its second printing. The book chronicles the years John spent working side-by-side with Walt Disney and the lessons he learned.

"Other than Walt Disney himself, no one symbolizes The Walt Disney Company more than John Hench," added Martin A. Sklar, vice chairman and principal creative executive at Walt Disney Imagineering, who spent 48 years working side-by-side with Hench. "He was an accomplished artist, designer and stylist who had a tremendous influence not only on the movies and theme parks he worked on, but on the thousands of people he worked with during his many years with the company."

"John Hench's influence will long continue at Walt Disney Imagineering through the generations of designers and artists he inspired during his career. Through his commitment to delighting visitors through his work, John embodied the essence of Imagineering," said Don Goodman, president, Walt Disney Imagineering.

Hench is survived by his wife, Lowry.

Mission: SPACE.

Offering guests a one-of-a-kind 'astronaut-like' experience, Mission: SPACE launches guests into a simulated space adventure - from pulse-racing lift-off to weightlessness in outer space.

General Facts and Figures:

- It took more than 650 Walt Disney Imagineers more than 350,000 hours to develop Mission: SPACE.
- The 29 missions that the United States and the Soviet Union sent to the moon between 1959 and 1976 are each designated on the moon sphere in the Planetary Plaza of Mission: SPACE.
- Nearly 100 shades of red were mocked up before Imagineers decided on the colour of the red planet that dominates the dramatic facade of Mission: SPACE.
- Jupiter, at 16 feet in diameter, is the biggest celestial body in the Planetary Plaza of Mission: SPACE. Earth is 10 feet in diameter and the moon is 12 feet in diameter.
- In Mission: SPACE each guest performs a role vital to the mission -- commander, pilot, navigator or engineer.
- Guests travel in the X-2 rocket on their mission to Mars. The design of the rocket is based on advanced propulsion technology, which could conceivably take astronauts into deep space in the future.
- Close inspection of the Gravity Wheel reveals the logo for the one-time Epcot attraction Horizons affixed to the hub of the wheel. Horizons, which was located on the site of Mission: SPACE, featured a look at plausible future habitats, including ... space!
- Trevor Rabin, a one-time member of the rock band Yes and a prolific composer of motion picture scores, composed the music for Mission: SPACE.

- There are 10 legendary quotes by famed space explorers and supporters of space exploration located around the walls of Planetary Plaza. They include:
"Look upward...From this world to the heavens" - Plato
· "The Universe...stands continually open to our gaze..." - Galileo Galilei
· "We set sail on this new sea because there is knowledge to be gained..." - President John F. Kennedy
- Story Musgrave, a six-time NASA shuttle astronaut whose career in the NASA space program spanned more than 30 years, is serving as an ongoing consultant on the project. Musgrave called the attraction "a place where Guests can imagine our future in space and their role in it, walking in the footsteps of heroes and building on the wealth of technology we've developed to date."
- Mission: SPACE is believed to have cost Disney more than \$100 million to develop and construct.

The Planetary Plaza

As you approach the pavilion you will notice in the plaza outside the building, four planetary objects. The first is of the Planet Earth, which has the "Mission Space" Logo with a Space vehicle appearing to be taking off in front of it.

To the far left you will pass by a scale model of our moon, which has different coloured markers that indicate the 30 landing sites of missions to the moon between 1959 and 1976 that were flown by all world countries of Earth.

The third planet is multi coloured and is to the right near the exit area. The large red planetary object is where the entrance to the attraction is and where you first enter the attraction queue line. The entrance contains a series of railed off areas that separate the Fast Pass return line visitors, from the Stand-By line and the Single Riders Line Distribution area to enter where you pick up your Fast Pass that will allow you to return later for your ride. Digital displays located overhead, let you know the wait time for each line category.

Along the outer walls of the planetary plaza area, you will see plaques that have quotes from famous people pertaining to space flight through the ages.

You can always tell how good a ride will be, by the number of warnings posted. Before they enter the building and the queue, guests can check out the Recruiting Centre to determine if they'll be able to handle the ride. There are large posters warning guests throughout the attraction with the usual cautions such as those with back and neck injuries, but also includes warnings about claustrophobia and motion sickness.

The Queuing Area

Our story takes place in the future, but not too far in the future. You are entering the International Space Training

Centre (ISTC) to determine if you have what it takes to be an astronaut.

On a wall of history at the ISTC you will see photographs of the first man in space, the first woman in space and other space achievements. Since interstellar travel has become more or less routine and the International Space Station has been around for a while now, the ISTC has already played host to the first family, including the first pet, in space.

Walking through the ISTC you will see a slowly turning, 35-foot-tall wheel that acts as a space simulation laboratory complete with offices, sleeping areas and exercise rooms. In fact, it is the actual studio prop used in the 2000 Touchstone Pictures movie "Mission to Mars." A model of the ship from that movie also hangs from the ceiling, as does an actual back-up Apollo Lunar Rover on loan from the National Air and Space Museum.

Then it's on to Training Operations where banks of monitors prepare guests for their missions to the Red Planet.

The Pre Show

The "Ready Room" introduces CapCom, the NASA ground control stand-in. We are introduced to our CapCom controller played by Gary Sinise, who tells us of our simulated mission to the Red Planet. We are told what to expect on our mission and what roles will need to be played by our team (Commander, Pilot, Engineer and Navigator). Here you are instructed not to turn your head sideways during the ride, nor close your eyes, as it will aggravate motion sickness felt.

Warning signs are posted in the pre show area also. Our CapCom controller makes the suggestion that those who do not wish to ride may proceed to the Advanced Training Lab (see post show activities).

The Ride

Mission Briefing

Crewmembers proceed to Mission Briefing, just outside the launch doors where your role is assigned and your tasks are outlined. Crewmembers will have specific duties to execute, but they will only subtly alter the ride experience.

The ride itself will last about five minutes.

The Space Capsules

The astronauts proceed to their space capsule, a closed in pod with four seats facing electrical equipment and their own 'window'. There's plenty of wiggle room in your capsule seat and the safety bar that comes down over you is no more uncomfortable than any roller coaster restraint system. The wall in front of you folds down so your face is just inches from the computer screen (hence the

claustrophobia warnings). A constant stream of cool air blows on your face to help alleviate that closed in feeling.

Each person in the crew will experience a shuttle launch, weightlessness, acceleration, hypersleep and a landing on Mars, as well as a couple of other surprises...

Post Show Activities

Mission Space Race

In this high-energy Mission Control training exercise, guests work as a team to overcome obstacles and challenges that might be encountered on a mission. Throughout the game, two teams race against time. Approximately 50 to 60 players, per race, can join in the game. Space Race was patterned on NASA's integrated missions simulation training.

Space Base

A three-story, rocket-and-gantry-theme play area is ideal for younger cadets who aren't ready to be blasted into orbit. Junior astronauts can climb the gantry, crawl through a rocket, check out a lookout tower and enjoy other mini challenges. The kid-friendly launch station features Mission Control audio messages, a "bouncy" floor sprinkled with colourful space dust, zany mirrors and fun-filled outer space backdrops.

Expedition: Mars

Using a joystick and jetpack button, guests test their skills on a mission to rescue their fellow astronauts in a high-tech simulation game. Martian obstacles like dust devils, quicksand and polar ice make the rescue mission a challenge for guests of all skill levels.

Postcards from Space

Guests can create a video postcard from outer space -- choosing from among eight space-theme backgrounds -- and e-mail the postcard to friends anywhere in the world. Guests can record a personal video message from space with scenarios that put them in the middle of an alien abduction, a saucer invasion or life on Mars. Fun facts about the galaxies test guests' knowledge of the universe.

Mission: SPACE Cargo Bay

A 1.3 meter high, 3-D portrayal of Mickey Mouse outfitted in an astronaut space suit with one foot planted on Mars beckons guests into the 1,500-square-foot retail space. Astronaut-inspired gear and supplies are displayed beneath a 12-foot mural featuring Astronauts Mickey, Minnie, Pluto, Goofy and Donald on the surface of Mars with the X-2 shuttle streaking across the stars.

The Technicalities of it all.....

At the heart of Mission: SPACE is a centrifuge -- a spinning wheel with seats at the end that exposes the rider

to varying G forces depending on how fast the arm is turning.

One G is normal gravity, while two G's makes you feel like you've doubled your weight.

Ten four-person vehicles, each capable of independent motion, will share a single centrifuge, and there are 4 centrifuges in the attraction, so if fully loaded 160 guests can move through the ride at a time.

Each group of four ride inside what amounts to a full flight simulator complete with individual monitors, control sticks to move and buttons to push. They've added layers of audio, video, lighting and special effects to create an experience that helps support and tell the story. You are completely surrounded by the latest, most sophisticated flat panel plasma computer screen with high resolution graphics, digital stereo system with dozens of channels of sound, and an interactive display of buttons and switches.

The electronic brains behind the attraction include two primary computers that control the entire ride, while 30 motion-control computers control the tilting of the capsules. Another show-control computer deals with the interactive functions within each capsule.

After your pre-flight instruction and assignment as a commander, pilot, navigator or engineer, the 'astronauts' board the fictional ISTC X-2 rocket. As the video begins and the countdown to launch commences, the centrifuge is started up. The motion is so smooth you don't feel it, but at lift-off there's no doubt you feel like you're moving straight up and rapidly accelerating. The G forces kick in and for just a moment or two it takes some effort to lift your arms up over your face.

As the ride delivers sustained positive G forces for an extended period of time, riders will gradually adjust and recalibrate their bodies to interpret the sensation as the earth's normal gravitational pull. If the centrifuge abruptly stops, riders will experience the return to 1G as momentary weightlessness.

NASA has cooperated with the development of Mission: SPACE at every step of the way. For example, solid hydrogen fuel, aerospike rocket engines and hypersleep all are technologies mentioned in Mission: SPACE, and all are being pursued in some way by the space agency, officials said.

Sometimes the technology moved faster than an attraction's script and a ride became outdated. A good example is when Walt Disney World opened in 1972, its Tomorrowland featured the fictional ride "Mission to the Moon," even though Apollo 11 had landed three years before. That ride eventually became "Mission to Mars," and then "Alien Encounter."

To avoid that situation from happening with Mission: SPACE, Disney Imagineers built into the attraction the ability to reprogram it to take advantage of the latest discoveries in space.

By Matthew and Nicole Mifsud

Ratings

Nicole

As a ride it is definitely out of this world, but due to the wooziness felt I would definitely limit myself to a maximum of one or two rides in any one day.

Matt

Again, Again, Again!!!

Disney acquires the Muppets

The Walt Disney Company and The Jim Henson Company today announced that they have entered into an agreement under which Disney will acquire the beloved "Muppets" and "Bear in the Big Blue House" properties from Henson. The transaction includes all Muppet assets, including the Kermit, Miss Piggy, Fozzie Bear, Gonzo and Animal characters, the Muppet film and television library, and all associated copyrights and trademarks, as well as all the "Bear in the Big Blue House" characters, television library, copyrights and trademarks. The parties have signed a binding purchase agreement and expect the transaction to close within two months, subject to receiving the necessary regulatory clearances. The transaction does not include the "Sesame Street" characters, such as Big Bird and Elmo, which are separately owned by Sesame Workshop. The deal also includes non-exclusive production and consulting agreements under which Henson will develop potential new programming featuring the "Muppets" and "Bear in the Big Blue House" for Disney.

Brian Henson, who with his sister Lisa is co-chair and co-chief executive officer of The Jim Henson Company, said, "This new and very important relationship will enable our two companies to combine our respective talents and resources in ways that will fully realize the tremendous potential of the Muppet and Bear franchises. Michael Eisner's long-standing passion and respect for the Muppets gives me and my family even more confidence in Disney as a partner."

Lisa Henson said, "In the months before his death in 1990, my father Jim Henson pursued extensive discussions with The Walt Disney Company based on his strong belief that Disney would be a perfect home for the Muppets. As such, the deal we announced today is the realization of my father's dream, and ensures that the Muppet characters will live, flourish and continue to delight audiences everywhere, forever. My brothers and sisters -- Brian, Cheryl, John, Heather -- and I are so proud to have the Muppets living under the same roof as Walt Disney's own timeless characters. We could not possibly be more pleased." "Since the time I worked with Jim Henson on the first Muppets TV special in the 1960s, it was obvious to me that his characters would make a deep imprint on the hearts of families worldwide, and this announcement is the culmination of a long-time desire to welcome them into The Walt Disney Company," said Michael Eisner, Disney chairman and chief executive officer.

"Kermit and Miss Piggy are well-known and beloved around the world and will have an opportunity to be seen and loved by millions more well into the future through Disney's distribution channels at home and abroad, including home video, family television programming and consumer products, in addition to the existing theme park presence at Walt Disney World and Disneyland Resort. We are honoured that the Henson family has agreed to pass on to us the stewardship of these cherished assets. We are also pleased that this transaction puts us in a position to work with the Henson company on future projects," Mr. Eisner said.

Disney, which owns broadcast and cable networks reaching over 120 million households worldwide, operates or licenses theme parks on three continents, and offers home video and consumer products worldwide, is planning to re-launch the Muppets with new TV specials and series. Disney also expects to expand and enhance the global licensing and home video initiatives based on this new production for the Classic Muppets, the infant/preschool property Muppet Babies, and Bear in the Big Blue House. The Jim Henson Company, which was purchased by the Henson family in July 2003 from the German media company EM.TV, will retain all other assets of the company including Jim Henson's Creature Shop and ownership and rights to all other characters and entertainment properties in The Jim Henson Company's extensive film and television library, including "Fraggle Rock," "Farscape," "Dark Crystal," "Labyrinth," "Storyteller," "The Hoobs," and various other properties. The Jim Henson Company will also actively pursue partnerships and other strategic arrangements to exploit these and other existing and new properties and to build their value over the long term.

Twilight Zone Tower of Terror – Disney's California Adventure – A first look

With the Tower set to open in the near future, we've been given a brief description of what you can expect inside of the tower itself. Don't read any more if you want to keep it a secret... spoilers lie ahead.

After you board the elevator it pulls back with a flash of lightning and the roar of thunder. Rod Serling gives you the rundown about being "passengers on a most uncommon elevator". The lights in the room fade to black and you find yourself in a star field. "But this much is clear... a reservation has been made in your name for an extended stay". The elevator rises up to the first stop and the doors open to reveal a huge hall length mirror showing a reflection of your group on the elevator. Wind blows and lighting flashes, hitting the mirror causing your reflection to change into a "heat image". The lightning exits the mirror towards the car, causing it to shake. "Say goodbye to the real world, for you have just entered the Twilight Zone". The doors close and you rise up to the second stop. When the doors open you're looking down a long hotel hallway. This scene is almost identical to the Florida version, but instead of a window at the end of the hallway you are instead looking at another set of elevator doors. Inside of that elevator you see the five people who vanished in the

tower so many years ago. Their elevator fades into a star field and it starts to float away from you... backing off into space before it suddenly drops out of sight. A few tenths of a second later you drop as well, starting of a great series of drops and rocket trips back to the top of the tower. Our sources have highly praised the final moments leading into this first plunge... claiming that no matter how many times you ride it, this moment always seems to catch you off guard.

One major difference between this new DCA version and the WDW version is in the queue itself. The boiler room on the DCA version is a massive two story room, built up on a much grander scale than the WDW version. The reason for the bigger room is that unlike the Florida version that has two side by side loading stations for each drop shaft, the DCA version has a top and a bottom loading station due to the entire ride being contained in a single shaft. Each shaft has two vehicles... while one is running in the shaft, the other is parked in the loading station. So the vehicles do still have a little bit of horizontal movement to them... but only when they are backing away from the load position into the drop shaft and back again.

Elephant Family Grows Again at Disney's Animal Kingdom It's a Girl! Second Baby African Elephant Calf Born at Disney's Animal Kingdom

The Walt Disney World Resort animal care team welcomed a 230-pound bundle of joy to Disney's Animal Kingdom earlier this week. The female African elephant calf arrived Tuesday evening to join its 18-year-old mother Vasha after 22 months (gestation) in the womb. Kianga is her name, which means "Sunshine" in Swahili.

Both Kianga and her mother appear to be doing well, according to veterinarians and elephant managers, who are cautiously optimistic about the calf's likelihood for survival. The first-time mother experienced a very short labor. With assistance from the animal care team, the newborn became comfortable using her "newly discovered" legs and began nursing successfully from Mom soon after her birth. She is already feisty and very active.

"African elephants are endangered and difficult to breed, and having a successful birth is a significant event both for the species and for our talented and experienced team of elephant experts who have been working on this breeding program for more than five years," said Dr. Beth Stevens, vice president of Disney's Animal Kingdom. Vasha, who is on loan from the Dallas Zoo, became pregnant through natural breeding on Oct. 4, 2002, when she mated with Jackson, a bull here on breeding loan from the Pittsburgh Zoo. This arrangement is part of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) Elephant Species Survival Plan (SSP), a consortium of zoos and wildlife parks working cooperatively to conserve elephants.

"The next critical milestone is for Kianga to continue the bonding process with her mother who will teach her important lessons and protect her as she is introduced to the herd," said John Lehnhardt, animal operations director for Disney's Animal Kingdom. Going forward, the focus of the elephant managers and veterinarians at Disney's Animal

Kingdom will be on the health and welfare of Kianga and her mother.

In the near future, guests will be able to see Kianga's progress on camera monitors at Rafiki's Planet Watch at Disney's Animal Kingdom. It will be several weeks before the calf and her mother will join other elephants on the savannah.

Lehnhardt noted that breeding African elephants is a challenging process, so it is especially exciting that this is the second African elephant to be born at Disney's Animal Kingdom. A male calf, Tufani, was born in May 2003 and has gained nearly 600 pounds in its first year of growth. Lehnhardt said that because many of the elephants giving birth in zoos and wildlife parks are first-time mothers -- just as several of the elephant cows at Disney's Animal Kingdom are -- it is not unusual for the animals (both in the wild and in wildlife parks) to lose their first calf, either through a still birth or following the birth. He is optimistic that observation and interaction with Tufani has helped the other elephants gain additional maternal knowledge, thus improving the success rate for the Animal Kingdom breeding program. Two other elephants at Disney's Animal Kingdom are pregnant and due in 2005; one is expected next spring and the other in late winter.

Disney Debuts New Safer, Quieter and More Environmentally Friendly Fireworks Technology; First Major Pyrotechnics Breakthrough in Decades

After years of research and testing, Walt Disney Imagineering has perfected a new innovation in fireworks launch technology, marking the pyrotechnic industry's first major breakthrough in decades.

The new technology uses compressed air to lift fireworks, virtually eliminating the need for smoke-producing black powder and other materials at launch, significantly reducing ground-level smoke and noise while continuing to provide a highly entertaining show. The air launch system debuted when the Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California, recently unveiled its new summer fireworks show, "Disney's Imagine -- a Fantasy in the Sky."

"The development of this cutting-edge science is the result of many years of hard work, testing and a long-term initiative," said Walt Disney Imagineering Chief Scientist Dr. Ben Schwegerler. "We are proud to be pioneering this innovative and beneficial technology."

As a recognized industry leader and the world's largest producer of fireworks shows, Disney is in the process of donating all seven patents associated with the new air launch technology to a non-profit organization so these patents can be licensed to other pyrotechnic providers. Those efforts are being applauded by the American Pyrotechnics Association (APA), www.americanpyro.com, a nationwide advocate of fireworks safety standards.

"It is commendable for Disney to share this breakthrough with others," said Julie Heckman, APA Executive Director. "This environmentally friendly air launch technology demonstrates how Disney continues to set a high standard in the fireworks industry."

Disneyland in California is showcasing the air launch technology which is planned for other Disney parks around the globe. The advance is another important step in the

Company's ongoing commitment to improving its technologies, including fireworks.

"Our creativity extends to all parts of our business, especially to the magic of technology," said Don Goodman, president, Walt Disney Imagineering. "The Imagineers who tackled this challenge are thrilled with the breakthrough -- and they're already working on the next advancement."

The innovation comes from Imagineering's ongoing commitment to "raise the bar" with each new project. The Research and Development team is now turning its attention to developing next-generation low-smoke substitutes for black powder and other materials, which have been used in pyrotechnics for hundreds of years. "We are delighted to be the first park to showcase this technology," said Matt Ouimet, president of the Disneyland Resort. "Walt Disney began the tradition of fireworks at Disneyland nearly 50 years ago and this innovation ensures generations will enjoy the shows for decades to come."

Source: Walt Disney Imagineering

Stitch's Great Escape! Promises Pandemonium For Walt Disney World

Mischievous Alien Busts Loose at Magic Kingdom in November 2004

Fans of Walt Disney Pictures' hit film "Lilo & Stitch" know him as a cuddly but destructive alien prone to hilarious fits of havoc. But what was Stitch like *before* the movie? This fall, Walt Disney World guests will find out when they come face to face with the mischievous character in a new Magic Kingdom attraction -- **Stitch's Great Escape!**

Under construction on the former site of The ExtraTERRORestrial Alien Encounter, the kid-friendly Tomorrowland adventure will put guests in the middle of the mayhem caused by the naughty "Experiment 626" -- a.k.a. Stitch -- when he's captured by the Galactic Federation and teleported to a processing centre for alien prisoners.

Park guests are recruited to provide additional security as the six-limbed alien arrives with a reputation for playful disobedience -- and an appetite for chaos that exceeds all limits. Sights, sounds and -- *ewwww!* -- smells add to the pandemonium.

Walt Disney Imagineers are tackling the challenge of bringing a character from an animated film to life as an Audio-Animatronics figure. The result is a 39-inch-tall version of the unstoppable blue menace animated with a breathtaking degree of realism, one of the most complex creations of its size, custom-made by Imagineers with more than 350 detailed, hand-machined parts and more than 40 separate functions.

John Cutry of Walt Disney Imagineering helps bring Experiment 626 (a.k.a. Stitch) to life for his Fall 2004 debut in *Stitch's Great Escape!*

In addition to *Stitch*, the fun-filled attraction will feature several characters familiar to fans of the film, including the Galactic Federation's Grand Councilwoman, Captain Gantu and Agent Pleakley, with voices supplied by the movie's original actors. Skippy, the hapless alien "volunteered" for a teleportation demonstration in *The ExtraTERRORestrial Alien Encounter*, will return in a new role.

Also featured will be two "plasma cannons" that follow Stitch's DNA whenever -- and wherever -- it move.

Stitch's Great Escape! will offer Disney's FASTPASS, the innovative free service available to all guests that eliminates the need to wait in long lines for popular attractions.

Source: Walt Disney World Resort

Osborne Family Spectacle of Lights Returns to Walt Disney World

Back by popular demand at Disney-MGM Studios is one of Disney's biggest holiday spectacles -- the Osborne Family Spectacle of Lights. This Disney holiday tradition returns to Disney-MGM Studios bigger and better than ever before. After eight years of holiday cheer on Residential Street, Disney-MGM Studios took a short break from the tradition last year to begin construction in the area on the new "Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show" (opening 2005). Now the lights will once again brighten the Streets of America backlot inside the theme park.

Illuminating everything from trees to spinning carousels, some of Jennings Osborne's original creations include 3-D and motion-based displays, a giant holiday-light Mickey Mouse, dozens of flying angels and several giant Santa Claus light creations. Plus, "Florida snow" and other surprises are in store for guests.

The holiday light display on the theme park backlot features more than 5 million sparkling holiday bulbs designed by Osborne, an Arkansas businessman and philanthropist. The Osborne Family Spectacle of Lights display started at the Osborne home 18 years ago when Jennings strung 1,000 red lights as a Christmas gift to his daughter Breezy. Soon their 22,000-square-foot home was covered in millions of lights. By 1995, the display had made its way to the guests of Walt Disney World Resort when it made its first appearance at Disney-MGM Studios.

Dates for the sparkling spectacle are Nov. 24, 2004, through Jan. 2, 2005. Included in Disney-MGM Studios admission.

Source: Walt Disney World

New Epcot Gallery

Art lovers will have a new reason to visit Epcot beginning in August when the Walt Disney World theme park opens its sixth gallery, American Heritage Gallery, with an inaugural exhibition exploring the connection between historical African art objects and their influence and significance as interpreted by contemporary African-American artists. The new gallery will be located in the American Adventure pavilion in World Showcase.

"**Echoes of Africa**" will feature important pieces from the Walt Disney-Tishman African Art Collection, considered to be one of the most significant and respected collections of African art in private hands. The collection was amassed over twenty years and spans the entire region of Africa, focusing primarily on Western Africa. During the three-year run of the exhibit, 15 to 20 pieces from the Walt Disney-Tishman African Art Collection will be on display

at any one time, side by side with the works of approximately one dozen contemporary artists.

The Disney-Tishman African Art Collection has played a vital role in the world's understanding of African culture. The study of the objects contributed to some anthropological breakthroughs. Had this collection not been preserved and studied, experts say, some of our understanding of African culture would have been lost to history.

The collection was originally assembled by Paul and Ruth Tishman. The Walt Disney Company acquired the collection from the Tishmans in 1984. The collection has been included in world-class exhibitions since it was acquired by the Walt Disney Company. Objects from the collection are currently on exhibition at numerous museums around the world, including the Louvre, Smithsonian, Monastery of Our Lady of Prado (Valladolid, Spain) and the Museum for African Art, New York.

Renowned author and educator Dr. Lizzetta LeFalle-Collins will serve as guest curator for the exhibit. Dr. LeFalle-Collins is a noted scholar of African-American art and has curated exhibitions for the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, the American Federation of the Arts in New York, the California African-American Museum in Los Angeles, and the 22nd International Biennial Exhibition in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

As the sixth World Showcase gallery, the American Heritage Gallery joins galleries in the Mexico, Norway, China, Japan and Morocco pavilions. Entry to all of the galleries is included with Epcot admission.

Source: Walt Disney World Media Relations

Disneyland's Official Press Release

SAY "CHEESE!"

**DISNEYLAND® RESORT INVITES THE
WORLD TO BE A PART OF
"THE HAPPIEST FACES ON EARTH...A
DISNEY FAMILY ALBUM"**

ANAHEIM, Calif., July 17, 2004 – In a visually spectacular kick-off ceremony this morning in front of Sleeping Beauty Castle at Disneyland in Southern California, Disneyland Resort President Matt Ouimet joined over 1,000 Disneyland Cast Members, plus their friends and families, in formally launching an exciting new program that will be a major part of the global celebration of the 50th anniversary of Disneyland next year.

"The Happiest Faces on Earth . . . A Disney Family Album" is an unprecedented invitation to people around the world to send in their cherished Disney memories (especially their favourite Disneyland memories) in the form of photographs, snapshots or digital images (both old and recent). The hundreds of thousands of anticipated submissions will be woven together to create "The

Happiest Faces on Earth . . . A Disney Family Album," a series of extremely unique photo collages of classic Disney characters and images from the last half century.

By contributing their favourite Disney photo memories to the oversized photo collages of "The Happiest Faces on Earth . . . A Disney Family Album," people the world over will become active participants in the milestone "The Happiest Homecoming on Earth" 50th anniversary celebration of Disneyland, officially launching on May 5, 2005. The collages will then be on exhibit throughout the Disneyland Resort for 18-months during the entire duration of the celebration.

"Starting today on the 49th anniversary of Disneyland and extending through December 31 of this year we invite everyone in the world to send us their most treasured and special Disney photos, especially those of their unforgettable visits to Disneyland," said Ouimet. "This is an amazing program that will allow everybody to become part of this one-of-a-kind tapestry of memories during our upcoming milestone 50th anniversary."

To visually demonstrate the collage concept, "The Happiest Faces on Earth . . . A Disney Family Album" program was launched this morning via the creation of an enormous photo collage of Mickey Mouse in front of Sleeping Beauty Castle. Each of the more than 1,000 participants held a square, 3' x 3' colour Disney image over their heads and when properly arranged and combined, created a gigantic smiling (and even winking) image of Mickey Mouse. The impressive visual was produced to accurately illustrate the photo collage technique that will be utilized in creating "The Happiest Faces on Earth . . . A Disney Family Album."

Everyone is encouraged to submit their colour or black and white photos beginning today 8:00am via information available at www.disneyland.com/photos. All photos must be received by December 31, 2004 to be considered for use. A photo release form is available online and must be included with all photo submissions, along with appropriate contact information (name, address, email and phone number). Participants in the program are encouraged not to send original photos. Not all photo submissions will be used for various reasons. Confirmation emails and letters will be sent in spring 2005 to all participants confirming receipt of photo and, if the photo is used, notification of the general placement of the photo in the collages.

Photo imagery can also be sent via the following mailing options:

U.S. Postal Service
Happiest Faces on Earth
PO Box 30464
Salt Lake City, Utah 84130-0464

FedEx/UPS
Happiest Faces on Earth
c/o Data Services Direct
2481 S. 1560 West
Woods Cross, Utah 84087

Premiering on May 5, 2005 "The Happiest Homecoming on Earth," an extraordinary celebration of the 50th anniversary of Disneyland, will pay tribute to the millions of guests and Cast Members who have contributed to the rich legacy of "The Happiest Place on Earth" over the past five decades. The 18-month long occasion represents the biggest event in the history of The Walt Disney Company and is the first truly global Disney celebration (with commemorative events planned at each of the Disney theme parks around the world in an international salute to Disneyland).

To learn more about "The Happiest Faces on Earth . . . A Disney Family Album," please visit www.disneyland.com/photos. For general Disneyland information, or information on "The Happiest Homecoming on Earth" 50th anniversary celebration, please visit www.disneyland.com.

For general information, call (714) 781-4565.

50th Birthday Celebrations Disneyland (1st update) - Disneyland press release

The Walt Disney Company announced

Today the biggest celebration in its history – the “Happiest Celebration on Earth”, an extraordinary event marking the 50th anniversary of the original Disney theme park –

Disneyland. Beginning on May 5, 2005 and extending for 18 months through 2006, the event is so monumental in scope that it is taking place in all of the Disney Theme Parks around the world. The global "Happiest Celebration on Earth" will not only consist of new attractions, shows and the exclusive "Happiest Homecoming on Earth" festivities at Disneyland, but the debut of new shows and attractions at Walt Disney World Resort in Florida, Tokyo Disney Resort in Japan and Disneyland Resort Paris in France.

Disneyland

Sleeping Beauty Castle – The Crown Jewel of Disneyland.

Will be transformed into a breathtaking focal-point for the "Happiest Homecoming on Earth". Gowned in swaths of richly coloured royal banners, bejewelled with precious stones, trimmed in gold and topped by five regal turret "crowns", representing five decades of wondrous achievement, Sleeping Beauty Castle will impress with unprecedented magic. By day, this majestic showpiece will be the stage for numerous fanciful celebratory moments. As night falls the Castle will be transformed into an animated, kaleidoscopic canvas of ever-changing whimsical colours and charming imagery, enchanting the Castle as never before. The castle's stunning "new look" will be officially unveiled on 5th May 2005.

Main Street Opera House to Spotlight – "Disneyland – the First 50 years"

Premiering at the Main Street Opera House on May 5, 2005 will be an amazing new exhibit entitled "Disneyland – the First 50 Years" where guests will be able to journey through 50 years of Disneyland memories! Through never-before-seen artwork, models and designs, guests will journey through the creative process that created the park and continues to conjure up new dreams for the future. This Homecoming attraction will feature a film showcasing new footage, most of which has not been seen in over 40 years, highlighting the evolution of Disneyland. Narrated by Walt Disney, the film is a tribute to fifty years of the original Magic Kingdom. "Disneyland – the First 50 years" is sure to stir fond memories of the past, and will be a source of amazement and curiosity for all ages.

50th Milestone Celebrated with "Walt Disney's Parade of Dreams"

The parade an all-new "street spectacular" that will delight audiences of young and old alike. Disney dreams come to life through spectacular new musical numbers from such beloved Disney films as "The Little Mermaid", "The Lion King", "Pinocchio" and "Alice in Wonderland" – culminating in an incredible "Happy Ever After" finale. Featuring one of the largest casts of Disney Characters and performers ever assembled, "Walt Disney's parade of Dreams" will surround guests with classic Disney songs and fun. Audiences will be overwhelmed by the grandeur of each larger-than-life rolling stage as it stops along Main Street, USA to present a series of over-the-top musical numbers. Featuring amazing acrobats, intricate puppetry, floating bubbles, dancing fountains and colourful costumes.

"Remember..." The most elaborate fireworks ever!

The "Happiest Homecoming on Earth" will take to the skies in an unbelievable display of pyrotechnic artistry in and all new fireworks spectacular entitled "Remember... Dreams come true".

The nightly extravaganza, starring Jiminy Cricket, shows how a simple "wish upon a star" can make fantastic dreams come true. With the help of Tinker Bell, who unveils an amazing new flight pattern, guests are taken on a flight in the skies through 50 years of Disneyland fantasy, adventure, laughter and romance.

An incredible musical score, sound effects, dramatic pyrotechnics, lighting effects and a whole new generation of never-before-seen fireworks will amaze guests of all ages.

New "Buzz Lightyear Astro Blasters" to land in Tomorrowland.

In this fun-filled attraction guests will become members of the Universe Protection Unit of the Space Ranger Corps. They will twist, turn and fire laser cannons for points that will help protect outer space from the evil Emperor Zurg! Guests will pilot their own Star Cruiser through a comical interactive space mission, competing for points to become the top junior Space Ranger. When it opens in 2005 the attraction will feature the first real-time on line component where guests aboard the attraction will compete with players at home on the Internet.

Space Mountain Returns with new out of this world thrills!

In 2005 guests will welcome back one of the most popular Disneyland attractions of all-time – Space Mountain. Space Mountain opens as a re-imagined 21st Century thrill attraction.

Guests aboard the rockets of Space Mountain will encounter a whole new galaxy of excitement. With an all-new queue and Space Port, and an exhilarating onboard audio soundtrack, the out of this world experience has been enhanced with amazing new effects and new surprises. Blasting into the dark, past a field of shooting stars and celestial satellites, guests will experience Space Mountain as never before.

Block Party Bash

At Disney's California Adventure the festive, party atmosphere of the Homecoming continues with the premiere on May 5th of the Block Party Bash. Throughout the park guests will find themselves surrounded by spontaneous street parties featuring favourite Disney characters.

Showcasing cool surf tunes, pulsating 70s disco, 50s rock and roll and 80s retro, each unique party will feature wacky entertainment, irresistible music and unexpected surprises!

Walt Disney World

Cinderellabration

Inside the Magic Kingdom guests will be enchanted by this all new musical spectacular from Tokyo Disneyland Park celebrating "Cinderella's Royal Coronation." Guests will

celebrate Cinderella's special moment with their favourite Disney friends at this charming and romantic show at the Castle Forecourt Stage of Cinderella Castle.

Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show

With the premiere of "Lights, Motors, Action! Extreme Stunt Show" guests to the Disney MGM Studios will be on the edge of their seats as the secrets behind Hollywood's most astounding stunts unfold in an all-new show opening in 2005. Inspired by the popular stunt show at Walt Disney Studios Paris, the high-octane show experience features specially designed cars, motorcycles and jet skies, plus special effects – with the audience members pulled into the fun.

Soarin

At Epcot guests will go sweeping fly-over above the wondrous Golden State for a birds-eye view of the state's rich landscape when "Soarin" (from Disney's California Adventure Park) opens in 2005. Guests are lifted 40 feet into the air for a breathtaking tour over the scenic wonders of California including the Golden Gate Bridge, the Redwood forests, Napa Valley, Yosemite, Disneyland and more.

Lucky the Dinosaur

From the research labs of Walt Disney Imagineering comes the first-ever free-ranging Audio-Animatronics creation, Lucky the Dinosaur. After a successful run at Disney's California Adventure Park, Lucky will interact with guests as he walks the streets of Dinoland, USA at Disney's Animal Kingdom Park.

Hong Kong Disneyland Preview Centre

Also at Epcot, guests will get a sneak peek at the beginning of the next 50 years of Disney theme parks at the Hong Kong Disneyland Preview Centre. An enormous and intricate scale model of the park and never-before-seen renderings showcase the park, scheduled to open in 2005/early 2006.

Tokyo Disneyland

Tokyo Disneyland, Disney's very first international theme park, honours its namesake with a very special tribute in the summer of 2005 that pays homage to Walt Disney's dream of Disneyland.

Lost River Delta Thrill Attraction

This new attraction will be the first such attraction at Tokyo Disney Resort to feature a vertical 360-degree loop and will offer guests a thrilling experience on a high-speed ride through special effects employing fire and water when it opens at Tokyo Disney Sea in 2005.

Disneyland Paris

Disneyland Resort Paris will be the European headquarters for the Happiest Celebration on Earth and will delight guests with an unbelievable new fireworks spectacular.

Wishes

Wishes is a dramatic combination of glittering fireworks and Disney music, set to light up the skies over Sleeping

Beauty Castle in Disneyland Park every night from 9th July until 28th August 2005.

More information on the upcoming celebrations in the next newsletter.

Disney animator Frank Thomas dies

Thursday, September 9, 2004

Frank Thomas, one of Walt Disney's top artists who animated two dogs romantically nibbling a single strand of spaghetti in the 1955 Disney film "Lady and the Tramp," has died. He was 92.

Thomas died Wednesday at his home, said Howard E. Green of Disney's Buena Vista Pictures Marketing.

Thomas had been in declining health following a cerebral haemorrhage earlier this year.

In his 43-year history at Disney, Thomas, often working with old friend and collaborator Ollie Johnston, also animated the dancing penguins in "Mary Poppins" and Thumper teaching Bambi how to ice skate.

Walt Disney jokingly dubbed Thomas and other top animators his "Nine Old Men," derived from a description of the Supreme Court by President Franklin Roosevelt.

"Frank was a giant in our field, and he meant everything to me and to all of us who loved the art of animation," John Lasseter, creative head of Pixar Animation Studios and a former Disney animator, said in a statement.

Thomas, born in Santa Monica, graduated from Stanford University, where he majored in art, drew cartoons for the school newspaper and met classmate Johnston, forming a lifelong friendship.

The two started working at the Walt Disney Studios in 1934 and were members of the team that created "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," the first full-length animated feature.

Thomas then directed the animation of the title character in "Pinocchio," and drew the "I've Got No Strings" musical number. His other credits include the wicked stepmother in "Cinderella," the Queen of Hearts in "Alice in Wonderland" and Captain Hook in "Peter Pan."

"Frank is an important part of the Disney legacy and one of the most amazing talents to ever work at the studio," said Michael Eisner, chief executive officer of The Walt Disney Co.

Thomas and Johnston both retired in 1978 and went on to author several influential books on animation, including "Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life" and "The Disney Villain."

The pair were the subject of a 1995 documentary film "Frank and Ollie," written and directed by Theodore Thomas, the animator's son.

"Besides being one of the key guys to help elevate animation from a novelty to an incredible art form, he was so generous in passing along his knowledge and experiences to the generations that followed," Lasseter said.

Frank Thomas, Legendary Disney Animator and One of Walt Disney's 'Nine Old Men,' Dies at Age 92

Created Timeless Animation for Such Films as 'Pinocchio,' 'Bambi,' 'Peter Pan,' '101 Dalmatians,' and Authored Four Landmark Books

Frank Thomas, one of the most talented, inventive and influential animators in the history of the art form, a member of Walt Disney's elite "Nine Old Men," and a pioneering animator who worked on many classic shorts and features during his 43-year career at the Disney Studios, passed away on Wednesday (9/8) at his home in Flintridge, California. He was 92 years old. Thomas had been in declining health following a cerebral haemorrhage earlier this year. In addition to his achievements as an animator and directing animator, Thomas (in collaboration with his lifelong friend and colleague Ollie Johnston) authored four landmark books: *Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life*, *Too Funny for Words*, *Bambi: The Story and the Film*, and *The Disney Villain*. Thomas and Johnston were also the title subjects of a heartfelt 1995 feature-length documentary entitled "Frank and Ollie," written and directed by Frank's son, Theodore (Ted) Thomas.

In a career filled with milestones, Thomas' remarkable animation included such indelible moments as the first date and spaghetti dinner in "Lady and the Tramp," Thumper teaching Bambi how to ice-skate, Baloo the bear telling the man-cub Mowgli that he can't stay in the jungle in "The Jungle Book," Pinocchio trapped in the birdcage by the evil puppeteer Stromboli, the lovesick squirrel whose heart is broken in "Sword in the Stone," Captain Hook playing the piano in "Peter Pan," the dancing penguins in "Mary Poppins," among others. He also animated several of Mickey Mouse's most impressive scenes in such films as "The Pointer," and "Brave Little Tailor."

Noted animation historian/author/filmmaker John Canemaker, described Thomas' special talents in his book, *Walt Disney's Nine Old Men*. "Thomas is particularly known and admired for his ability to animate emotionally sensitive material; the saddest scenes, the most romantic, most deeply felt sequences, the sincerest heart-tuggers usually found their way to his drawing board."

Commenting on Thomas' passing, Michael Eisner, CEO of The Walt Disney Company, said, "Frank is an important part of the Disney legacy and one of the most amazing talents to ever work at the Studio. From 'Snow White' and 'Bambi,' up through 'The Rescuers,' he helped to shape the characters, performances and movies that Disney produced and that are loved all around the world. He was a wonderful person who brought a lot of joy to our lives and he will be truly missed."

Dick Cook, chairman of The Walt Disney Studios, added, "It was a thrill and a great pleasure to have known and worked with Frank Thomas here at Disney. His youthful spirit, gentle humour, and enormous talent, left a big imprint on the Disney animated features. He was truly one of the greatest talents the industry has ever known."

David Stainton, president of Walt Disney Feature Animation, commented, "All of us at Disney join the animation community and movie fans around the world in celebrating the life and legacy of Frank Thomas. His work

set a standard that we all continue to strive for and our art form is where it is today because of the foundations he established."

Academy Award(R)-winning filmmaker John Lasseter (head of creative for Pixar Animation Studios and director of the "Toy Story" films and "A Bug's Life") said, "Frank was a giant in our field and he meant everything to me and to all of us who love the art of animation. Besides being one of the key guys to help elevate animation from a novelty to an incredible art form, he was so generous in passing along his knowledge and experiences to the generations that followed. The books that he wrote with Ollie had a big impact on so many of us working in animation today. Frank was one of my main mentors and a tremendous influence on me. I feel very privileged to have known him."

Leonard Maltin, animation historian, film critic, and author, observed, "Frank helped to invent animation as an art form and took it to incredible new heights through his work at Disney over four and a half decades. He and his lifelong friend and colleague, Ollie Johnston, had a remarkable gift for explaining and articulating how they did what they did. That's a rare quality in an artist. Even in his nineties, Frank retained a youthful spirit and indomitable sense of humour." Born in Santa Monica, California, Thomas moved to Fresno with his family at an early age. At Fresno State College, he became president of his sophomore class, and wrote and directed a film spoofing college life for a school project. The film won much acclaim and was run in the local theatres, where it earned a profit that was contributed to a school fund. That project sparked Thomas' ambition to go seriously into the arts in some form. His father promised to send him to an art school of his choice if he would finish his education at Stanford.

At Stanford, Thomas majored in art and won recognition for his cartoons for the school newspaper, *Chaparral*. During his Stanford years, he met and became friends with another art major, Ollie Johnston. The two formed an instant friendship that was to last for over 70 years. After graduating from Stanford, Thomas moved to Los Angeles where he attended Chouinard Art Institute and studied under Pruett Carter. Another young artist and Stanford graduate, James Algar, lived in the same rooming house and was employed by the Walt Disney Studios. At Algar's suggestion, Thomas applied for an opening as an "in-betweener" in the animation department and started working there on September 24, 1934. After six months, he moved into Fred Moore's unit and became the star animator's assistant. His earliest assignments included the short "Mickey's Elephant."

Thomas made animation history as a key member of the animation team on "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," Hollywood's first full-length animated feature. He was one of eight animators who concentrated on the dwarfs in three sections of the film. This was followed by a top spot animating the title character in "Pinocchio." Thomas helped to design the character and did some outstanding animation on such scenes as the "I've Got No Strings" musical section. For "Bambi," Thomas experimented for over six months to get the proper look and characterization for Bambi and some of the other animals. He worked "hand in glove" with fellow animator Milt Kahl to solve some tough design and animation problems.

In 1941, Thomas joined Walt Disney and a contingent of 18 artists, and story men from the Studio on a goodwill trip to South America. He was the only animator in the group that toured Brazil, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia and other countries. Two films, "The Three Caballeros," and "Saludos Amigos," resulted from the trip.

For the 1949 feature, "The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad," Thomas was promoted to directing animator and handled the scene with the superstitious Ichabod riding home on a dark and scary night. He made the switch to villains, starting with "Cinderella," for which he animated the wicked Stepmother. This was followed by a star turn animating the Queen of Hearts in "Alice in Wonderland." Next came the nefarious Captain Hook in "Peter Pan." Thomas designed and supervised this colourful character with the fiery temper.

Thomas struck a romantic note with the classic scene of a cocker spaniel named Lady and a rover named Tramp sharing spaghetti and meatballs on a "Bella Notte" in the 1955 feature, "Lady and the Tramp." He went on to animate (with Ollie Johnston) the three good fairy characters for "Sleeping Beauty" and the lead adult dogs in "101 Dalmatians." Thomas had one of his personal favourite scenes in "The Sword in the Stone," where a love-struck squirrel encounters the once and future king who is temporarily inhabiting the body of another squirrel. He went on to serve as directing animator on "The Jungle Book," "The Aristocats," "Robin Hood," and "The Rescuers." After working on some early story development, character design, and animation for the 1981 feature, "The Fox and the Hound," Thomas retired from animation in January, 1978.

Over the next five years, Thomas and Johnston devoted full time to researching and writing the definitive book on their craft, Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life. The book distilled forty years of knowledge and experience into what many consider the finest book ever written about animation. Too Funny for Words was published six years later and explored the gags, humour and story elements that went into the features and shorts. Walt Disney's Bambi: The Story and the Film (1990) told the behind the scenes story of the creation of one of the greatest animated films of all-time. Their final collaboration, The Disney Villain (1993), explored the richest and most colourful rogue's gallery in film history.

In addition to his career as a top animator, Thomas also expressed his musical talents as the piano player in the popular jazz group, The Firehouse Five Plus Two. Formed in 1940s, the group consisted of other Disney employees, and achieved success with their numerous Dixieland jazz recordings and personal appearances. They officially disbanded in 1971.

In 1995, Thomas was the subject of a feature length documentary, "Frank and Ollie," released by Walt Disney Pictures. Written, produced, and directed by Frank's son, Theodore (Ted) Thomas, and produced by Ted's wife, Kuniko Okubo, the film played film festivals around the world and received acclaim for its insightful look at the lives, careers and extraordinary friendship of the two legendary animators.

Thomas is survived by his wife of 58 years, Jeanette; son Theodore and his wife, Kuniko Okubo; son Doug, and his

life partner, Dan Poirer; son Gregg and his children, Ukiah and Micah; and daughter, Ann Ayers, her husband, Andy Ayers, and their son, Marshall.

No funeral is planned but details regarding a life celebration will be announced shortly. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests that donations be made in Frank's name to the Character Animation Program at CalArts (California Institute of the Arts) in Santa Clarita, California.

Source: Walt Disney Studios