

## Stories from a Theme Park Insider by Robert Niles: Disney Book Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

When I ordered this Disney book, the first thing that struck me was the price, as it was a good deal cheaper than many other books on Walt Disney World.

The reason quickly became apparent when it arrived, as the book only runs to 139 pages. Despite the book's length, there's lots of great information packed into those pages.

*Stories from a Theme Park Insider* is written by Robert Niles, who started the website ThemeParkInsider.com, and he spent five summers working for Mickey before becoming a reporter.

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□ I think the first thing to say about this book is that these stories are not recent ones, given that Robert had his interview for his job at the Magic Kingdom back in 1987. But as it turns out, that really doesn't matter at all -- all these tales relate to theme park classics, such as the Pirates of the Caribbean and the rafts that go out to Tom Sawyer Island. Perhaps my favorite story of the whole book is one about Pirates of the Caribbean, entitled "The One With the Security Camera." Now, when you get a warning at the start of a chapter, saying that if you're easily offended... you can probably guess where it's going. It was something I read (and my husband, spying on the book next to him on a flight, did as well) with a mixture of incredulity and amusement, and it's certainly a salutary warning that the Mouse really is watching you at all times when you're in one of his parks.

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□ There are moments in this book when you'll probably think that you could contribute to some of the points made, particularly the chapter about "How to Have a Horrible Theme Park Vacation," which sets out the ways to not enjoy your days in the park. And that's the nice thing, as it does include readers' comments. Often these comments come from other Cast Members, sometimes endorsing what you've just read, and sometimes putting a different perspective on things, which I found really interesting.

Something else that's interesting are some of the things you learn as you go through this book, such as the activities of the stroller police, or as the book describes them, the Stroller SWAT Team. I hope none of you have ever had the misfortune to be on the receiving end of these guys, from reading their exploits, although sadly I came to the end of the chapter and concluded that their role is a vital one, helping to keep exit

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doors and pathways clear.

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□ I particularly enjoyed the parts of the book that dealt with interaction with the guests, including "The Most Difficult Question, Ever" (and trust me, I think I'd agree with that assessment) and the section about that immortal question we all know and love. All together now, "What time is the 3 o'clock parade?"

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□ Another theme throughout this is Mother Nature, and the impact her downpours, her storms, and even her snow have had on the parks over the years. But my favorite story has to be the one of the sunbathing alligators&hellip; right by the mainland dock for the rafts over to Tom Sawyer Island. I particularly liked the matter-of-fact approach from management, who wanted to know how long it would be before the rafts were up and running, and the equally matter-of-fact response from the animal control team, who basically told them the "gators would stay as long as they wanted, as they don't move them.

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□ The beauty of this book is that it's one you can read whenever you have a couple of minutes, which is how I often tend to read, rather than sitting down with a book for an hour or so. The chapters I've mentioned throughout this article are almost like very short stories, generally running from between two and six pages, which means you can read one chapter quickly, and enjoy the whole story, and then put the book down, saving the next story for the next time you have time.

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□ This is a fun, and personal retrospective of a time in the author's life, that you can tell he enjoyed immensely. As a result, it's also an exceptionally fun read, and while it doesn't perhaps give away as many secrets of a Cast Member's life as some other books I've read, that really doesn't matter in the scheme of things, as it's enjoyable, and you certainly have a lot more sympathy for Cast Members once you've read it.

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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