

Meeting Marty Sklar: A Disney Vacation Club Member Event Review

by Adam Clagg, PassPorter Guest Contributor

It's not every day that you meet a Disney Legend!

I mean, most of us fanatics are very proud to know the names written on Main Street windows so we can impress friends, so I was more than excited to get an email from Disney Vacation Club the day before our long-planned trip in November saying: "Members invited to meet Disney Legend Marty Sklar on Nov. 19."

That got my attention! I skimmed over the email, then with my heart racing, I read it again slowly:

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☐"Disney Legend Marty Sklar, the longtime leader of Walt Disney Imagineering and the only Cast Member to have been part of every Disney Theme Park opening on Earth will sit down with Disney Files Magazine Editor Ryan March for a colorful on-stage interview just for Disney Vacation Club® Members and their Guests on Nov. 19"

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☐We all know how hectic the day before a Disney trip is, but thankfully I had my PassPorter nearby. I opened it and turned to the planning pocket for Nov. 19 and ... YES!!! We are already planning to be at Hollywood Studios that same day AND we have an early lunch at Sci-Fi. The day and timing is perfect! I quickly completed the RSVP, then got busy preparing to drive to Florida the next day.

In case you don't know, Disney Legend Marty Sklar began working for the company in 1955 as the editor of the Disneyland newspaper. He was a key figure in many important decisions and events. Marty led Walt Disney Imagineering for many years and recently retired.

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☐Seven days after receiving the email, I was as giddy as a 33-year-old husband and father of two beautiful girls could be. Before lunch I located the Premiere Theatre in the Streets of America area. There were two cast members there that confirmed there was a private event later that day.

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☐My excitement grew even more! When I arrived at the venue, the ropes were up, a line formed, and cast members with clipboards and walkie talkies were present. They checked for my name, asked for my DVC membership card, showed me where to buy Marty's book, reminded me that DVC members get 10% off items, and told me the doors would open at 1:30.

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□As I walked into the Premiere Theatre, I was surprised to be welcomed by the 2013-2014 Walt Disney World Ambassadors, Tye Arnold and Rich Tamayo. I had read about the Ambassador program before and knew they represented Walt Disney World at important events around the globe. They were extremely nice, looked like they walked off the cover of GQ Magazine, and had personalities that most politicians dream for. Ambassadors are the crème of the crop of cast members. Again, I was reminded that this was going to be a BIG DEAL.

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□As I waited for the event to start, I found a great second row seat and began reading Marty's new book, Dream It! Do It!: My Half-Century Creating Disney's Magic Kingdoms. Right on cue, the Walt Disney World Ambassadors introduced Ryan March, the editor of Disney Files (the Disney Vacation Club magazine), who told a few stories and introduced Disney Legend Marty Sklar. On the stage, there were two chairs separated by a table holding two glasses of water. The one-on-one interview show had begun!

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□Then for two hours, our group of less than 200 people listened to amazing stories from a man who spent five decades working on and designing the places and attractions that we love. He shared personal stories about Walt, including his task of writing Walt's obituary on the day of his death. He told funny stories like the day that Walt, himself, revealed the secret that it was the Walt Disney Company that was buying up all that Florida land, when he showed his driver's license to a server at one of the only restaurants in the area.

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□As you would expect from an event hosted by an Imagineer and a magazine editor, there were great pictures and videos on two large screens to go along with the great questions and funny stories. The conversation was much like Marty's book - reminiscing about events and people from the beginning days of WED Enterprises, Disney trivia, and the reminder that Walk Disney Company is built upon main principles that Marty consistently discussed with people. He shared the "Ten Commandments of Mickey" and told us he actually has a few dozen commandments that he has presented to cast members throughout the decades. Some people refer to Marty as the Jiminy Cricket of the company.

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□Our small group of invited guests sat at the edge our seats, enjoying every minute of this conversation. Even though Hollywood Studios was just outside, we were so glad that Marty and Ryan didn't keep looking at the clock. They showed a wonderful video clip of Marty's retirement party, when Dick Sherman sang "Never fearing, Imagineering Mar-ty Sklar-e-docious" to the tune of "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious." At

the end, we, of course, gave Marty a standing ovation and waited for instructions for the book signing.

□ We formed a line in the back of the theater, chatted with other DVC members and cast members who gained entry on their off day. Tye and Rich definitely helped the time pass as they expertly talked with guests, asking questions, and sharing funny stories. I met a couple who got married that week in Disney's Wedding Pavilion and a cast member from Disney's Old Key West (my home resort).

□ When I neared Marty's table, I handed the event cast member my iPhone and asked her to take as many pictures as possible. Marty shook my hand and was very nice. As he signed my book (with a personal inscription) he asked where I was from. I told him Tennessee and then asked him if he had spent time in Tennessee. He said he visited Knoxville for the 1982 World's Fair. I thanked him and said, "God bless you." (Remember, I am a pastor.) He seemed to appreciate the blessing. I thanked the cast members and left the theater. After three hours, I joined my family and thanked my wife for watching our two young girls. What a fun day!

About The Author:

□ Dr. Adam Clagg is a pastor in Tennessee who also writes and teaches. He and Jenny were married in 2006 and have two beautiful girls. Adam's love for Disney has grown and evolved as he got married and had kids. He and Jenny are Disney Vacation Club members and are looking forward to taking Jenny's parents to Walt Disney World in October 2014 for Jenny's mom's first visit.

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