

How Vintage Tomorrowland Attractions Became Our Modern Family's Favorites: A Walt Disney World Attraction Review

by Julie Long, PassPorter Guest Contributor

There's a great big beautiful tomorrow, shining at the end of every day, there's a great big beautiful tomorrow, and tomorrow is just a dream away. - Walt Disney's Carousel of Progress

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□ That little phrase can get every member of my family singing at home or in the car. If you're a Disney fan, chances are you know the tune well. If you don't know it, please don't turn in your Disney fan card! It's from Walt Disney's Carousel of Progress ride in Walt Disney World's Tomorrowland at Magic Kingdom. Somehow, it's a ride I have not been on as an adult until our recent April trip.

Yet, it became a Disney moment for our family, when our 11-year-old daughter fell in love with Carousel of Progress during our time in Tomorrowland, and we made a point to ride it a second time during our trip. Our whole family now adores the ride, and we learned more about why it's such a special and nostalgic attraction.

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□ Carousel of Progress is not a thrill ride - far from it - but it does have the honor of being one of the oldest attractions in Walt Disney World. It's also one of the only attractions at Disney World that Walt himself was a part of creating.

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□ According to the narrator at the beginning of the ride, Carousel of Progress was "Walt's own idea from beginning to end." He introduced it at the New York City World's Fair in 1964 and it has the record of more performances than any other stage show in the history of American Theater. After the World's Fair, it moved to Disneyland in Anaheim, California, where it stayed from 1967 to 1973. It was then replaced by another attraction at Disneyland, but traveled cross-country where it opened in Walt Disney World in 1975.

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□ Walt Disney loved the idea of progress, and the ride follows the American Family through the 20th century, experiencing all the new wonders as they were invented. The family's father, named "John," is the narrator in each scene. Fun fact: Did you know that Jean Shepard voices the Carousel of Progress dad? He's known for his role as the narrator in the classic holiday film A Christmas Story. The dad tells the story of the

latest technology inventions in each generation with the help of his wife, young son and teen daughter, and even grandma, grandpa, and Uncle Orville! Orville is voiced by the famed Mel Blanc, who brought many Looney Tunes characters' voices to life, including Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. For us, the dog in Carousel of Progress is quite the show stealer, sitting at John's feet in every scene, and our daughters wondered why Rover never ages!

There are four separate acts or scenes, capturing 1900, the 1920s, the 1940s, and the 21st century. True to the ride's name, after each scene the whole audience is "in the round" and the entire section of seats in the auditorium moves sideways to the next scene like you're on a carousel. As you move at the end of each act, the ride's theme song Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow is played. The legendary Disney songwriters, The Sherman Brothers, wrote the catchy tune. I did discover that when Carousel of Progress moved from Disneyland to Walt Disney World, the song was actually changed to The Best Time of Your Life until the original song was brought back in 1994 after a big refurbishment. I'm so glad Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow won out!

☐ Carousel of Progress never had a wait when we visited in April, and it was a great place to cool off, too. The show runs just over 20 minutes. It sits near the back of Tomorrowland across from Buzz Lightyear's Space Ranger Spin, and also right near another classic ride we'd never done with our daughters -- The Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover.

☐ The PeopleMover is something I now consider a Disney World must. Full of nostalgia, it's a relaxing ride that takes you on a tour throughout Tomorrowland at Magic Kingdom. The open-air, emission-free tram gives you a break from long lines, because this attraction usually has no line, or at most a 5-minute wait. It can be the perfect way to get off your feet and talk with your family as you glide along.

☐ You are on a raised track over Tomorrowland, which offers you a chance to leisurely take in some amazing views of the rest of the park, like Main Street and Cinderella's Castle. You even go inside Space Mountain for a portion of the ride! Another section of the ride takes you over the Tomorrowland Speedway, an original 1971 opening-day attraction to Magic Kingdom that is beloved by so many families.

☐ Disney history buffs may also like to know that Walt himself was looking at the PeopleMover as a major mode of transportation for his utopian city in Florida that he was going to call Epcot, or Experimental Prototype Community Of Tomorrow. Instead, the plans for the city never saw reality, and Epcot became a theme park.

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□While our family may have originally headed to Tomorrowland for our Space Mountain FastPass, we uncovered true vintage Disney when we hopped on Carousel of Progress and Tomorrowland Transit Authority PeopleMover.

About The Author: Julie is an avid Disney fan who lives in LeRoy, N.Y., (the birthplace of JELL-O) with her husband Rob and two daughters. She works as chief public relations officer of a private college, and before that was a TV news producer. Julie enjoys blending her love of Disney with her digital scrap-booking hobby, and loves to document their latest Disney trip and other family memories.

Article last updated: 09-22-2017

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<http://www.passporter.com/articles/vintage-tomorrowland-attractions-disney-world.html>

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