

Mouse Tales: A Behind the Ears Look at Disneyland: A Disney Book Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

In between Disney vacations, we all want a bit of Disney magic, and one of the ways I've found of keeping the magic alive is to read all about Disney.

☐ *Mouse Tales: A Behind the Ears Look at Disneyland* by David Koenig immediately jumped out at me, as unusually it was about Disneyland, rather than Walt Disney World. I'm fascinated by anything that gives you a behind the scenes look at the parks, and I loved the idea of learning more about the west coast Disney park.

The first thing you need to know before approaching this book, and something I didn't realize, was how old it is. It was written in 1994, which means there's no mention of Disney California Adventure, and this took some getting used to. For the first chapter, it doesn't matter in the slightest, as the author takes you back in time to the opening of Disneyland in 1955. I'd heard some of this before, but I truly never had an idea just how disastrous day one really was, particularly in terms of the live TV broadcast. Reading all about that infamous day does make you wonder how on earth Disneyland ever became a success, but thankfully it did. The rest of the chapter then takes you through the next 40 years of the park's history, so if you weren't familiar with it before, at least you're up to speed.

☐ Chapter two covers secrets of the Kingdom, but that felt quite disjointed to me, as it seems to cover everything that wouldn't fit anywhere else. All the same, there are some interesting stories in there, with my favorites including the section on the animals at Disneyland. The story about Mickey's friend, while slightly sick, still made me laugh (sorry, no teasers).

Then you're into the real meat of the book. Its focus is mainly on what it's like to work for Disney, and what those Cast Members encounter. Some of it is funny, some of it is scary, particularly the chapter on violence at Disneyland and crime, while some of it is just mind boggling, especially when you get to the lawsuits that have been thrown at Disneyland over the years.

☐ I found the chapter that introduces Cast Members depressing in a way, as it starts off so positively, with so many people desperate for what was then regarded as one of the top jobs in the area. Over the years, the perception of the job changes, as do the people who take on

the roles, eventually leading to strikes, and bad feeling. Despite that feeling as I read it, there were still many entertaining comments from the Cast Members interspersed along the way.

□ If you're of a slightly nervous disposition, I'd avoid the chapter on ride operators, as some of what they've done over the years really isn't great for the safety conscious. Most of the jokes weren't at the guests' expenses, but even so, knowing what the operators got up to on some of those ride vehicles made me shudder!

□ By far the most entertaining part of this book is the section that looks at the stupid things guests do. The stories the Cast Members tell really makes you shake your head in disbelief. Perhaps the most inspiring bit was about lost and found, including the story of a family who came to Disneyland, just after their daughter died of leukemia. They lost the roll of film that had the last ever photos they'd taken of her, but in the spirit of Disney magic, one of the three films turned in that day was theirs. Now that's a story to warm your heart.

□ Sadly, the chapter on violence and crime does exactly the opposite, and some of the stories in it placed a real chill in my heart. Heard the story that no-one's ever died on Disney property? Read this, and you'll realize that is only half the story. Perhaps more disturbing to me was how Disney apparently handled some of these incidents. The section looking at the Yippee movement of the 1970s was fascinating though, particularly as it's an era that I'm not familiar with, having been too young to remember. It was certainly an aspect of Disneyland history I'd never come across before.

□ The most interesting chapter to me, by far, looked at the legal action Disneyland has faced over the years. You'll be shocked by which attraction attracted the most lawsuits up until the end of 1992, and no, it wasn't the Matterhorn, or Space Mountain. Some were genuine cases, but the more entertaining ones were the ones that weren't. The story about how Pooh Bear beat up a young girl was pure genius on Disney's part, with Pooh himself making a courtroom appearance, which helped to ensure that he was acquitted.

□ All in all, Mouse Tales was a very interesting read, and I certainly learned a lot from it that I didn't know before. It wasn't perhaps full of revelations in the way I was expecting, but what I did read still fascinated me. The only real problem I had with the book was how outdated it now is, which is why I mentioned that at the start. It took me a long while to get past that, but if you can, it's a good read about the original Disney theme park.

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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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