

The Vault of Walt by Jim Korkis: A Disney Book Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

As you've probably gathered from my many articles for PassPorter News over the years, it's rare that I'm at a loss for words.

But that's exactly what happened to me when I read the *Vault of Walt* book.

For those of you who haven't come across this book before, let me explain about it. It's written by the wonderful Jim Korkis, a name familiar to anyone who subscribes to the All Ears Newsletter (as well as PassPorter News of course!) or who listens to the weekly WDW Radio podcoasts (again, as well as the PassPorter Moms podcast!). Being already familiar with the author through both these media, I knew immediately before I even turned a page in this book that it would be superbly written, and rich in detail.

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□ I don't often use the blurb from books, but in this case, I think it sums up the author perfectly. It describes him as "an internationally respected Disney historian," and I think that's a great way of putting it. He's a Disney fan through and through, and has met so many Disney animators and Imagineers over the years, as well as digging out long forgotten documents, to piece together fascinating snippets of Disney history.

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□ The beauty of this book is that it isn't your standard Disney book, in that it doesn't just concentrate on the Disney theme parks, it's devoted just about everything Disney. The book is divided into four parts, the first covering stories about Walt Disney, the second looking at the Disney movies, the third focuses on the theme parks, and the fourth is stories about all the other worlds of Disney.

The first part was an instant draw for me, as I just love finding out more about the wonderful man who started the dream all those years ago. The way this book is written, you can tell just how much research has gone into it, as it transports you to the incidents being described, and you feel as if you're there with Walt, celebrating his 30th wedding anniversary (and wow, what a celebration it was!), and watching him play Santa to the hard-working team at his studios. I learned so much about his life, including his love of polo, and how that led to almost continual pain for him in later life. That is a shame, as it was a sport he evidently adored.

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□ The fact that Snow White and the Seven Dwarves premiered on my birthday means it will always hold a special spot in my heart. I loved reading all about its premiere in December 1937, which was brought to life even more by the photos I'd previously seen of this. As Korkis describes them, the dwarves looked like, "Blow-up dolls from a mail order company with mouths frozen open in an oval shape and dead eyes not anchored, but staring out." See what I mean about immediately being transported to the event that's being described?

□ Now, who would've thought that Walt Disney would've wanted to collaborate with surrealist painter Salvador Dali, or that the Aristocats had secret origins? Both are covered in this part of the book, along with another premiere story, one that lovers of Splash Mountain will appreciate, as it's all about Song of the South.

□ As you enter the section focusing on the Disney parks, there had to be a chapter on Cinderella's Golden Carrousel. I was delighted to see this, having heard Jim speak so eloquently about this in the past, and knowing what a rich history it has. Much of this chapter focuses, unsurprisingly, on Disneyland, as it's the only park to open in Walt's lifetime. There are looks at Storybook Land and the Sleeping Beauty Castle Walkthrough, although there are also chapters devoted to Walt Disney World, including a particularly fascinating one on Captain Eo. Once again, there are those wonderful, "Well, I never knew that," moments, particularly when Korkis writes about Zorro in Disneyland (yes, seriously!).

□ The final section is a bit of a mish-mash, as shown by its title; the other worlds of Disney. It's made up of those tales that don't fit into any of the other categories, and this is the part of the book that really does blow your mind with the stories. If anyone can honestly put their hands on their hearts, and say that they knew all of the information in this section before reading the book, I'll be amazed. My personal favorite is the story about Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's visit to the United States, as it just has such an unexpected twist to it. The story about the FBI (again, yes seriously!) comes a close second, and is pretty much guaranteed to make your jaw drop as you read it.

□ This is one of those books that, as you turn the last page, you really don't want to stop reading. You just want to carry on devouring the wonderful stories about Disney, which are all so brilliantly written. I also found that the Vault of Walt really added to my appreciation of everything Disney, something I didn't know was possible. I found myself on my next visit to Walt Disney World wandering around Walt Disney: One Man's Dream, looking at the exhibits, and thinking, "I remember reading all about that."

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□ In short, if you don't already have this book in your collection, it's one that every Disney fan should have. But be warned, once you start reading it, you may find it hard to put down.

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!](#)

Article last updated: 03-21-2013

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