

“Tough Competition”

Considering the perceived size and other features of Disney, one can hardly imagine “competition” for this entertainment corporation; but it wasn’t always the case that the company was so large and recognized. Even Mickey Mouse was once more modest looking.

Walt Disney was the founder and namesake of Disney. When I was a boy, he would appear on Sunday’s night Disney hour to introduce the production or feature for the evening. I can’t express how exciting it was to watch the program whether an animation or actual human-movie. Besides the usual cartoon characters were cast featured in such movies as: “The Castaways”, “Treasure Island”, and “Old Yeller”. Some of the movies were released much later on VHS so, along with my children, I got to enjoy them all over again...and again...and again. How many times can you cry when Yeller becomes rabidness and turns on the boy?

Beginning his interest in animation with a love for drawing, Walt Disney experiences some successes and some setbacks in his early years. Considering that his business ventures continued through The Great Depression, the obvious setback could have been the dire economic circumstances of the decade. Still, being in comedy could have been a plus considering the dire need for comic relief in the dismal and bleak period. One of the major setbacks was the loss of much of his animation to a powerful movie production company, Universal.

“I have been up against tough competition all my life. I wouldn’t know how to get along without it.”
- Walt Disney

Besides developing his drawing skills, Disney could also “do voices” for the characters. With the aid of his long-time partner, Ub Iwerks, he developed the renowned character Mickey Mouse; and thereafter, launched his first sound movie, *Steamboat Willie*. By the 1930’s, Mickey surpassed the competition as the most popular of animated characters...or cartoons. One might say that *Steamboat Willie* “steamrolled” the competition. Other notable characters followed to include: the cantankerous Donald Duck, Pluto and Goofy. Many of these old productions were among the collection amassed on VHS when my children were young; and I must admit that I don’t recall seeing most on TV or at theater. **You’re never too old to enjoy an old Disney...**

Much followed in the successes and, rather than summarize the details, I’ll just say that “the rest is history”. On a sad note, Walt Disney died while Disney World was under construction in Florida; but by this time, he had received unprecedented recognition for his contributions to comedy, animation and entertainment.

The story of Walt Disney seems fascinating unto itself; the passion of drawing, the early setbacks and, always, the competition of one form or another; yet above all, he seemed to love what he did! **Maybe it was his love or passion for this imaginary or somewhat fantastical world that offered the child-like quality of being too young to know that nothing is impossible.**

Competition arrives in many forms: we compete with ourselves when we *wrangle or wrestle* over whether something our objectives, ambitions and dreams; we compete with others in various school and personal interests and requirements; and sometimes we compete with our siblings or others for attention, love or respect. Competition is obviously good according to Walt Disney.

One of my favorite animated productions is “Captain Hook”; and especially the character of the Captain himself as he engages Peter Pan while evading the crocodile. On the one hand, he is relentless while on the other hand (oops, I mean hook), he is absolutely paranoid of the “tick tock”. From memory, I can still recite a few lines of script where the Captain is challenging Peter Pan high above the deck. At Peter’s mercy, he says “I’m a Codfish”...and so I remember it from the many viewings and sometimes even playacting with my children.



In some sense, we may have been competing to see who could remember the lines from a Disney movie such as Peter Pan; naturally, I always had to play the Captain – but I don’t remember who played the crocodile.

Anyway, the Captain always had to lose (the competition) because it was in the script.

Sometimes you just have to take your losses – especially when it’s written in the script.

Who knows, Captain Hook may outrun that crocodile, find his ship in the clouds, and return...to Never Neverland.