

GRAPHIC
BIOGRAPHY

Walt Disney





The name Walt Disney is known all over the world. He was the creator of Mickey Mouse and a pioneer* in the making of animated cartoons.



For millions of people who watched his weekly television program, he was an important part of something the family did together. He was a self-made man, and this is the story of how he did it.

He was born in Chicago in 1901, the fourth of five children. His father, Elias Disney, was working as a building contractor at the time.



His mother, Flora, was a school teacher before her marriage, but gave it up to raise her children.

* to originate or take part in the development of

When Walt was four years old, the family moved to a farm near Marceline, Missouri.



There was a lot of hard work to be done, and Elias made sure that his children did their share.

The two oldest boys didn't take to this new life. They ran away from home and went back to Chicago.

C'mon, Skinny!



Walt's best friend was his brother Roy. Roy was eight years older than Walt.

Look, Roy! I made this picture of Skinny!

That's great, kid!



Walt's father tried to make a living selling the apples from his two large orchards. After five years he knew he couldn't do it. He sold the farm and they moved to Kansas City.



A year went by. Roy finished high school and left home as his older brothers had done.

I wish I could go with you, Roy.

Me too, kid, but you've got to finish school.



Walt continued going to school and delivering papers. And on Saturdays he went to art classes at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Very good, Walt!



Sometimes in the evening, Elias Disney let his son go to the movies with a friend whose father owned a theater.



The movies they saw were silent. The actors would move their lips to speak, and the audience could read what they were saying at the bottom of the screen.

Walt used some of the jokes he saw in the movies to put together an act for the local amateur shows.



In 1917, the year the United States entered World War I, Elias Disney sold the paper route and invested his money in a jelly factory in Chicago. When the family moved, Walt stayed behind to finish the school year.

That summer he worked as a "news butcher" on the Santa Fe Railroad.



In the fall he went to Chicago. He also worked in the jelly factory and took art classes at night.



One day, after school was out, Walt got a message from Roy. He was passing through Chicago on his way to a navy training camp and asked Walt to meet him at the train station.

Gee, kid! It's great to see you! You've gotten so tall!



They talked until the order was given for Roy and the other recruits* to board the train.

You there! On board! Train leaves in half a minute!



The officer had taken sixteen-year-old Walt for one of the recruits. It made him feel proud ... and it gave him an idea.

* a newly enlisted or drafted member of the armed forces

Walt came back to the States in 1919. He headed for Kansas City to look for work as an artist.

His first job was at Gray's Advertising Company. There he met another young artist by the name of Ub Iwerks.



By December, both Walt and Ub had been laid off.

Why don't we start our own business? We could do ads and letterheads and things like that.

Sure! Why not?



A small newspaper gave them some office space in exchange for artwork. Walt bought supplies with money he had saved. They were in business!

We got two new ads today.



A few months later, they went out of business.

Walt and Ub were not doing well when they heard of a job opening at the Kansas City Film Ad Company.

Forty dollars a week! That's more than we both make together!

Why don't you take the job? I'll stay over here.



Disney convinced the company to hire Ub too.

At Kansas City Film Ad Company, Walt learned to make animated cartoons using cut-out figures with moveable parts.



In his spare time, he used a borrowed camera to make his own cartoons. A little later he sold these to a local theater.



These "laugh-o-grams" as he called them, used drawings instead of cutouts to create motion.

Soon Walt had enough money to start his own company, Laugh-O-Gram.



But within a year the company went bankrupt.

Walt ate once a day at a Greek restaurant where the owners gave him credit. At night he slept in the Laugh-O-Gram office.



Young Walt Disney was broke.

When Roy was well, he and Walt borrowed five hundred dollars from their uncle, rented a tiny office, and set to work on the *Alice* films.



Roy had trouble cranking the old-fashioned movie camera at a steady pace.

Alice keeps speeding up and slowing down. Looks like we need a professional cameraman!



A real little girl was photographed against a simple backdrop. Then Walt would draw cartoons, which were photographed and printed on top of the live film.

Walt asked Ub Iwerks to move from Kansas City to Los Angeles to help with animation.



Hey, look who's here!

They made one *Alice* cartoon after another adding to the staff as they went along. The profits they made were used to buy better equipment and materials.

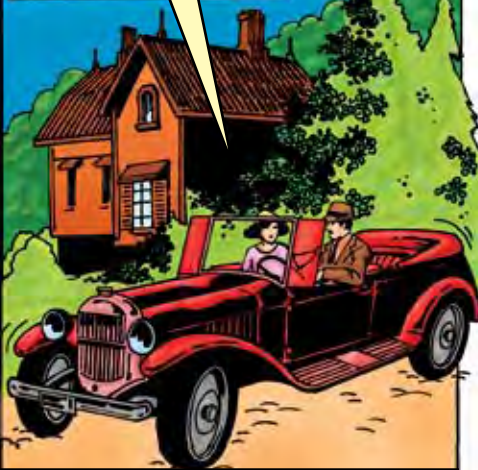
It's a good thing I like beans. We can't afford much else.



Walt and Roy rented an apartment together.

One new employee was a young woman named Lillian Bounds. Walt soon got in the habit of driving her home after work.

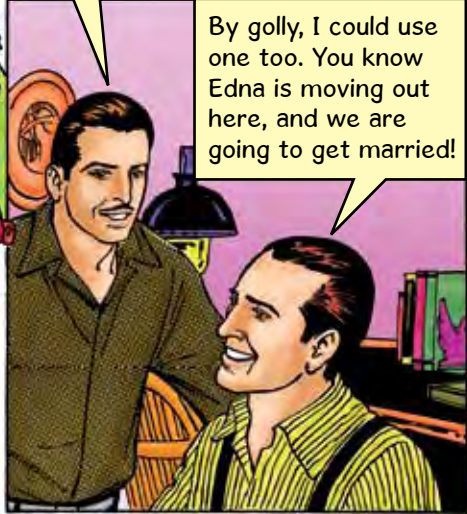
Are you sure you won't come in for a minute?



Walt was too ashamed of his old clothes to go in and meet Lillian's family.

Then one day ...

Roy, I'd like to take some money out of the business to buy a new suit.



By golly, I could use one too. You know Edna is moving out here, and we are going to get married!

At last Walt felt well enough dressed to call on Lillian at her home.



Their friendship grew. They even made plans to buy a car together. So when Walt found himself in need of a roommate after Roy and Edna were married ...



Well, Lilly, what do you think we should buy first: the car or the ring?

They were married in July 1925.

Walt would not take the contract. He was heartbroken that his employees would be disloyal to him.



From now on Lilly, I'll make sure that everything we create belongs to us.

Before boarding the train for Los Angeles, Walt sent a telegram to Roy.

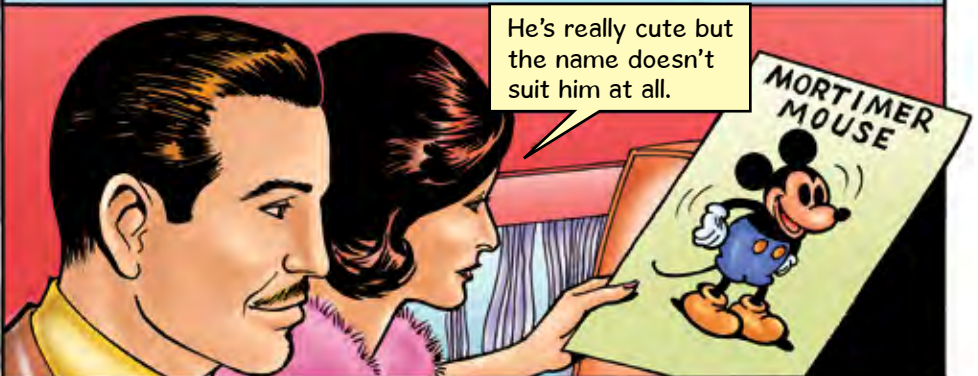


How can you say that when you know it's not true?

I'll make it true!



By the time they reached the Midwest, Walt was feeling cheerful again. He was working on a new character instead of Oswald.



He's really cute but the name doesn't suit him at all.

Lillian had her way and the mouse was renamed "Mickey."

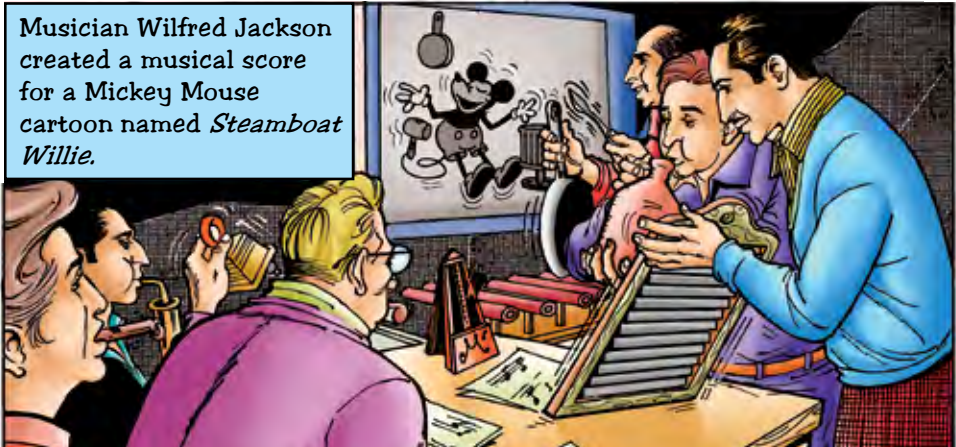
When Walt got back to the studio, work began right away on the new Mickey Mouse cartoons.



Soon afterwards, Warner Brothers released an important new movie called *The Jazz Singer*. It was the first talking picture that was a success.



Musician Wilfred Jackson created a musical score for a Mickey Mouse cartoon named *Steamboat Willie*.



The film ran at a rate of twenty-four frames per second using a metronome* to tick off two beats per second. The music was recorded after the animation was filmed. They were able to make the live action and music seem like a dance.

*an instrumental device which marks exact time by a ticking sound