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Walt Disney Recognition Day, 1986

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

December 5, 1986, marks the eighty-fifth anniversary of the birth of Walt Disney. "Uncle Walt," as he was affectionately known to his moviemaking colleagues in Hollywood, was just that to several generations of American families: a warm, generous uncle who sat us on his knee and told and retold us stories of comedy, imagination, and adventure. He was a superb animator, a technical wizard, an astute manager and businessman, but above all he was a man who never lost touch with his child's heart and sense of wonder.

Walt Disney's work and the countless characters he created or brought to the screen—Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and so many others—are known the world over. But if he is both legend and folk hero today, it wasn't always clear that he was destined to achieve so much. Walter Elias Disney was born in Chicago in 1901. His family soon moved to Missouri, and he worked at a variety of jobs. He returned to Chicago in 1917 and studied photography and art, but he never graduated from high school. After serving in World War I as a Red Cross ambulance driver, he joined an advertising firm in Kansas City as an apprentice cartoonist.

The real harbingers of his future success in this period, however, were the cartoons he produced in a makeshift studio he built for himself above his father's garage. In 1923 he went to Hollywood with \$40 in savings and, with his brother Roy, converted another small garage into a studio and set to work. He put together two silent movies with a new cartoon character named Mickey Mouse, but he was unable to get them released commercially. With *Steamboat Willie* in 1928—a sound film with Disney's artwork and his own voice for the diminutive hero's—Mickey Mouse and Walt Disney had an instant hit, the first of many.

Achievements and awards followed in droves. Disney won 30 Academy Awards. He produced the first full-length animated film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, in 1937; launched numerous technical innovations in sound and color; produced the first television series in color in 1961; found new and effective ways of combining live actors with cartoon characters in films like *Song of the South* and *Mary Poppins*; and everywhere, in classic movies from *Fantasia* to *The Jungle Book*, he celebrated the power of delight through music.

The standards of excellence Walt Disney upheld in animation extended to his later productions, from nature films to movie versions of ancient fables, tales of American heroes, and stories of youthful adventure. His love for technology and the future, his desire to entertain and educate, and his sense of childlike wonder led him to establish two popular amusement parks, Disneyland and Disney World, which today draw visitors from around the globe.

Walt Disney's true drawing table was the imagination, his themes were virtues like courage and hope, and his audience was composed of young people—in years or at heart—who, through the creations of this American genius, found new ways to laugh, to cry, and to just plain appreciate the "simple bare necessities of life."

The Congress, by Public Law 99-391, has designated December 5, 1986, as "Walt Disney Recognition Day" and authorized and requested the President to issue a proclamation in observance of this event.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RONALD REAGAN, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 5, 1986, as Walt Disney Recognition Day. I call upon all Americans to recognize this very special day in the spirit in which Walt Disney entertained young and older Americans.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 5th day of December, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and eighty-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eleventh.

Ronald Reagan