

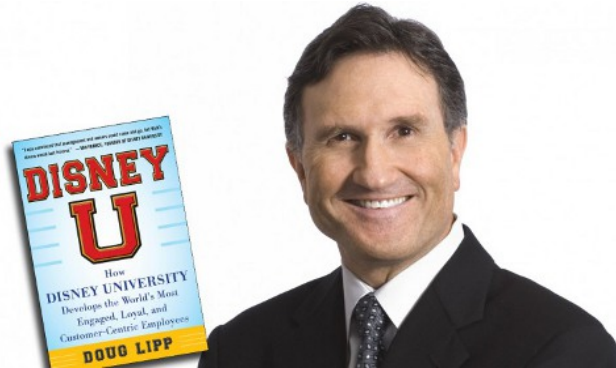
# The Disney Project

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Friday, December 20, 2013

## Disney University Program Recap

On Saturday, November 16, I attended a presentation at The Walt Disney Family Museum titled: *Disney University: Walt's Vision for the Happiest Employees on Earth*. Former head of training at Disney's corporate headquarters Doug Lipp was joined by Jim Cora, Disney retired chairman of Disneyland International (and a Disney Legend) to talk about the history of Disney University.



Doug Lipp

Just four months before the opening of Disneyland, Walt Disney hired a gentleman named Van Arsdale France to train the entire staff, and instill the values that the Disney name was known for. France founded the University of Disneyland training center, which was later renamed The Disney University.

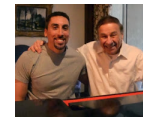
Art Agnos, the 39th mayor of San Francisco (1988-1992), reached out to the Disney University in an effort to improve the conditions of the homeless population in San Francisco. Doug Lipp actually shared a video interview with the former mayor, and in it he reiterated his admiration for the way Disney trained its employees.

Throughout the presentation, Doug shared a few interesting quotes from Van France. In a 1962 memo to Disney, proposing the creation of University of Disneyland training center, Van France warned against the dangers of apathy: "The trouble with people is that we get hardening of the mental arteries, cirrhosis of the enthusiasm, and arthritis of the imagination." Doug also shared a quote from his co-presenter, Jim Cora: "Marketing is the time and money you spend to get people in the door. Training is the investment you make to get guests to come back and cast members to stay; it creates loyalty."

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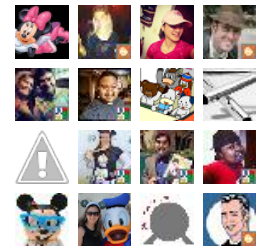
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Van Arsdale France  
Photo courtesy of D23.com

Van France actually hated the word “training”. He preferred to say that “they had to develop people”.

Jim then shared a fun story with us. It was actually thanks to Walt Disney that he met Van France. Jim bumped into Walt near the Matterhorn one day, and after a brief discussion, Walt directed him to go see Van France. “Tell him Walt sent you.”



Jim Cora hangin' out in Tokyo Disney Sea  
Photo courtesy of D23.com

A few years later when the Tiki Room was opening, it was originally a part of Retlaw (Walt’s privately owned company), which Jim worked for. Walt would occasionally show up to watch the rehearsals. When he asked Jim what he thought of the Tiki Room’s floor, Jim joked, “It’s awfully shiny for having a room full of birds.” Imagineers later installed little white spots throughout the floor.

In 1971, Jim assisted in the opening of Walt Disney World’s Magic Kingdom, and implemented the “Disney Way of Leadership” program. By 1979, Jim had become managing director of Operations for the soon-to-be-opened Tokyo Disneyland, and was in charge of operational planning and management training. In 1985, Jim was assigned to work on Euro Disney, and was promoted to executive vice president and chief operating officer for Euro Disneyland Corporation two years later. Because of his outstanding global performance, he is one of the few Disney Legends to have a window on Main Street in multiple Disney Parks, and the only American besides Walt to have one in Tokyo Disneyland.

## This Happy Place Blog

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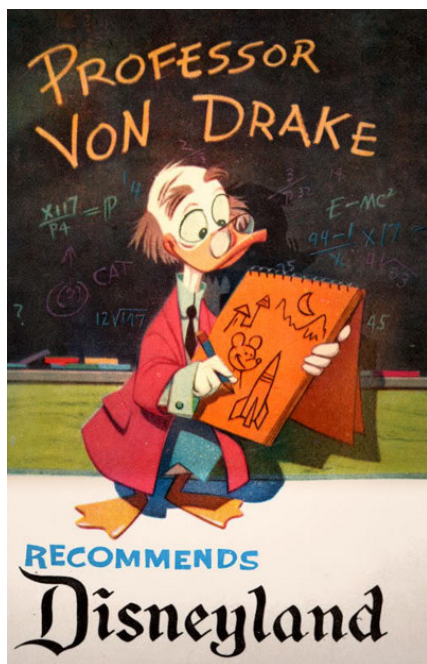


Jim's window in Tokyo Disneyland  
Photo courtesy of [Disney Parks Blog](#)

Jim went on to tell more stories from his impressive 43-year Disney career. He recalled when Walt started and led "Good Show/Bad Show" tours, and would point out specific things that fell under both categories. The two presenters even shared a wonderful photo of Walt picking up trash in Disneyland. He certainly wasn't afraid to get his hands dirty and set the example. Jim also mused about the time that the workers in Tokyo were a little too clean for their own good. At one point when maintenance saw the "aged" paint in Frontierland, they gave it a fresh coat. And when they saw the dust and cobwebs inside the Haunted Mansion, they cleaned them up! All of the aging work had to be re-done.

Van France's lessons included "Four Circumstances", which were to: innovate, support, educate and entertain.

Towards the end of the program, Doug and Jim joked that the character Ludwig Von Drake could have been patterned after Van France, since Van France also had an affinity for chalkboards! The audience had a good chuckle.



Doug shared one last Walt quote with us, which actually derives from some of his early drawings.  
"Develop your sense of humor and eventually it will develop you."



In 1943, the personnel department for Walt Disney Productions distributed an employee handbook titled *The Ropes at Disney's*. Some of the topics it covered ranged from workplace accidents to tardiness. It's a fun little booklet complete with drawings from Disney animators. Doug shared a few photos from the handbook with us.



What is that guy on the right looking at?  
Photo courtesy of [brainpickings.org](http://brainpickings.org)

The last quote Doug shared with the audience came from Van France, and may seem particularly helpful to us right-brainers: "Budgets might be tight... creativity is free."

After the program Jim and Doug took time out to sign autographs and pose for a few pictures. Doug had his book [Disney U](#) on hand as well. I haven't read it yet, but I hear it's very good. And as usual, I bugged the presenters for a photo.



Jim, Keith, Doug

Thank you Doug and Jim for a fun and informative presentation!

To learn more about Doug and the terrific work he does, please visit [doughlipp.com](http://doughlipp.com).

Posted by [Keith](#) at 9:41 AM No comments: 

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Monday, December 2, 2013

## 2013 Wine and Dine Half Marathon Race Recap

The 2013 Wine and Dine Half Marathon took place in Walt Disney World on Saturday, November 9. I was eager to run this race again, since I missed it in 2012 due to runDisney changing the race to