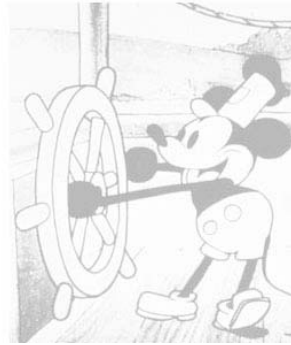




CLUB 71



EXPLORING THE WORLD OF DISNEY COLLECTIBLES

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2007

For Dad...



Timmy Lee Crochet ~ 9/23/1955 – 1/23/2004

Today's post is going to be a little different, as today is the birthday of the man who got me started collecting Disney license plates. My father, Timmy Crochet, first started collecting Disney license plates because, as he liked to put it, "they take up a lot less room than coffee mugs." He had been collecting Disney coffee mugs for many years and they were starting to overtake all of the available shelf space in my parents' house. He saw the license plates as a much more feasible option. For a long time he only bought what he could find in the parks during the course of his trips. When I moved back home after the end of my enlistment in the Navy in 2001, things really started to get interesting. I got my dad to upgrade his internet connection and my brother introduced him to eBay. When he saw what was available in the auctions he never looked back, and before we knew it there were license plates arriving virtually every day. It was during this time that I

joined him in the collecting craze, my brother having already established a large collection of his own. For the next couple of years it was bidding wars and nearly hourly checks of eBay for new license plates.

This all came to a crashing halt in July of 2003. My dad started suffering from severe headaches, and a MRI revealed that he had brain cancer. The outlook was grim, as the doctors basically told us that we should start saying our goodbyes. On November 23, 2003, my dad made his last trip to Walt Disney World, a trip that no one in my family will soon forget. It was on that trip that my dad found out that he was going to be a grandfather for the first time, and it was also the last time he walked, making a heavily assisted stroll over a bridge outside of Innoventions. On January 23, 2004 my father died, succumbing at last to the brain cancer. After the funeral we needed to decide what the fate of his license plate collection would be. At that time his collection was well over 300 license plates and they were all on display. It was decided that we would number each one and that my brother, sister, and I would draw numbers in turn, each taking the license plate that matched the number drawn. It was in this way that we divided up the collection evenly between my siblings and me.

My brother and I have continued our collections, and now our total combined collection is somewhere around 450-550 license plates. It wouldn't have happened, though, if it weren't for our dad. He was the biggest Disney Nut we knew. Dad loved everything about Disney and what it stands for. I really believe that more than most people "he got it." I was so happy and proud to be able to see my dad make that last trip to WDW, as were my mother, brother, and sister. Mom and I took a trip to WDW in June of 2004, in part as a memorial to my dad. We cried watching Wishes from O'hana, we remembered all of his favorite places, and I bought more license plates. In the 28 years I had with my dad he instilled many values and taught me so many lessons about life. What he also gave me was a love of Disney, not just the license plates but what Disney stands for. Disney is an ideal, a belief that there is a Great Big Beautiful Tomorrow, Just a Dream Away. Disney is about family and about bringing families together in a magical place, whether that place is one of their parks or your own living room. I believe that my dad, on many different levels, embodied what is best about the Disney Spirit, and what he gave us will live on through me, my brother, my sister, and all of their children.

Below is an excerpt from an article that ran in our local newspaper in November of 2003. The article was written to spotlight some of the biggest Disney fans in our area in celebration of Mickey Mouse's birthday. After the article I have put a picture of the license plate that to me is the single most special license plate in my entire collection. Read the article and I'm sure you will be able to figure out which license plate it is.

November 16, 2003

Mickey Mania

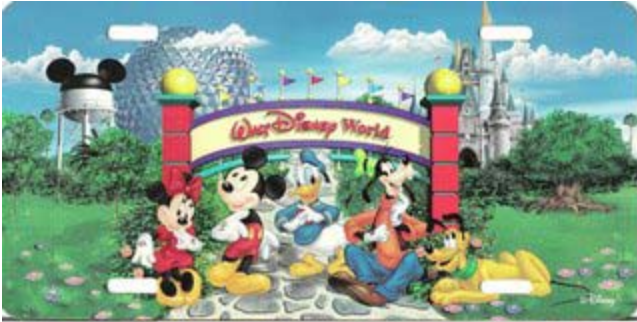
by JAIME LUGIBIHL DISHMAN
The Courier

When he debuted on Nov. 18, 1928, he was just a little mouse. His sketchy, black and white image jerked across the screen in "Steamboat Willie." Now, 75 years later and after thousands of animations, Mickey Mouse is the icon of animation and imagination -the little mouse who started it all. His 75th birthday is Tuesday, and some local Mickey Mouse fanatics have already started to celebrate.



Tim Crochet, 48, has bought two of the 75th anniversary license plates celebrating Mickey's birthday. "One of them is on the truck, and one is on the wall," Tim said. When Tim talks about his wall, he is referring to the inside of his garage, where every bit of available space is covered with more than 300 license plates. Some celebrate Mickey, other commemorate different Disney events. Tim and his wife, April, have been Mickey fans since 1979, when they went on their first trip to Disney World. Since then, they have been on 43 trips to Disney World and have spent about 390 days inside the park. "What made me enjoy it was to see the joy that he (Mickey Mouse) brought to all of the kids," Tim said. "I just fell in love with him and that is how it all got started." Tim and April's Houma house is covered in Mickey memorabilia. Not a single room has escaped the fanaticism. In the kitchen, pictures of Disney World are proudly displayed. The living room is covered with paraphernalia, and Tim and April agree they like it that way. "When he started to fall in love with Mickey, I was fine with it," April said. "He can put his decorations wherever he wants." Tim and April plan to take a seven-day trip to Disney World during Thanksgiving week. But this trip has special significance for the couple. It marks their 44th trip to the Florida park, and since Tim recently had surgery to remove a cancerous brain tumor in July, it really means a lot to both of them to be able to go. "The doctors told me they didn't recommend it, but I don't care. I am going," Tim said. Friends helped the couple pay for the trip, since Tim had to quit his pharmacist job after being diagnosed with cancer. Although Tim will not be able to ride many of the rides, he said he is looking forward to just enjoying the serenity and memories the park brings to him. "This is really going to mean a lot for us," April said. Tim uses Mickey Mouse as a

source of strength. A license plate decorates the back of his wheelchair, and he said he thought of Mickey Mouse and Disney World when he was going through radiation treatments. "People say, 'Boy, if only you had all of the money you spent at Disney,' " April said." But we say no. We have a treasure chest of memories and you can't trade that. It has been a place of great joy."



In case you didn't catch it in the article, this is the license plate that was on the back of my dad's wheelchair throughout his battle with cancer. It is by far the most special plate that I own, and one that I will treasure for the rest of my life.



This is a picture of me, my younger brother, and my dad (in that order) on Main Street U.S.A. in June of 2001. I really wish the Three Amigos could take just one more picture together.

Happy Birthday Dad. We Miss You and We Love You.

POSTED BY RYAN CROCHET AT 8:55 AM 0 COMMENTS

LABELS: DAD, LICENSE PLATES