

A Day at the Magic Kingdom

by [Armando Simón](#) (May 2023)



Le Château de la Belle au Bois Dormant, Walt Disney Imagineering Collection

Even for Florida, that day was certainly a scorcher, the kind of summer day that you squint behind sunglasses and your brow starts sweating ten seconds after going outside. So, it was only natural that the “cast”—that is, the people working at the Magic Kingdom—even the hot dog vendor was referred to as a “cast member” —was reluctant to emerge out of the air conditioned underground tunnels that crisscross the Disney property. And whenever they did, they quickly ducked into one of the many shops, exhibits, or restaurants. The vendors of ice cream and cold sodas were doing a brisk business, at ridiculously escalated prices. Veteran “guests” —that is, customers who had been there before—came with shoulder bags full of frozen cans and bottles of water or soda, thereby saving a bundle of money while being cooled.

Mickey Mouse was in a shaded spot greeting children with mute gestures. The shade had the advantage of cooling down to 109 from 112 degrees. With the smile permanently pasted on and forbidden to talk, Mickey was going through the whole repertoire of hand gestures for the adoring children and for the adults' cameras: waving, open arms, hand over eyes, hand on mouth, hugging kids. All the while, Louis, at some distance apart, looked on, supervising the performance. One would never know, from looking at Mickey smiling, that the short man inside was being baked alive. Louis was on hand to assure that the performance went smoothly, that the character did not overstay his appearance, or pass out from the heat, or, horror of horrors, that the person inside the costume, in sheer desperation, yanked off the oversized confining head, which was grounds for instant dismissal.

Smiling Mickey waved goodbye at the guests as he wandered off to one of the hidden entrances of the underground complex, but even so, he was stopped several times by guests wanting to take pictures. Mickey complied. He had to comply. By so doing, his twenty-minute stay spilled into an agonizing thirty-five minutes. Two minutes in an oven can seem a century. Mickey's vision blurred. Eventually, he wobbled off and escaped the guests.

The second he stepped in, Casey wrenched off his mouse head and the cool air hit him. His hair was matted with sweat, his face wet. He removed the rest of the costume, being hurriedly helped by Louis and others. Casey was thoroughly drenched in sweat, so were his clothes, so was the inside of his smelly costume, as his body had automatically switched on the innate physiological mechanisms to desperately cool down the body to a life-sustaining level. He felt clammy. He felt weak. One of the helpers handed him a large bottle of ice water, which he gulped down in seconds.

Louis now handed him a towel and Casey wiped off the sweat in his face and legs, took off his T-shirt and dried off his

torso. The shock of the cool air felt good and his vision was no longer blurred. Nonetheless, he still felt weak.

"The heat just drains your strength," Casey said.

"Uh-huh," Louis agreed. He remembered his own past experiences. "You all right, now?"

"Yeah, I'll just go get something to drink." Casey wandered off and so did the others. For no particular reason, he joined two others at a table who were on a break, eating snacks and drinking sodas. He plopped down next to them, still weak, and drained his bottle again, which he had refilled, in one large gulp. He then put ice in his mouth.

"Hot, eh?" Leslie stupidly asked him and Casey just nodded.

Leslie was a fat, redheaded homosexual working in Creative Costuming; without a shirt on, it looked as if he had a woman's set of breasts, a really repulsive sight. His companion Casey recognized as Fiona, an attractive girl who was what used to be called a fag hag. Several of the straight guys had tried to go out on a date with her, but she was only comfortable with gays around. And it was surprising how infested the Magic Kingdom was with homosexuals; Casey vaguely wondered if the guests above had any ideas. Yet, except for Leslie, he had no objection to the gays.

For some reason, Leslie started talking about the time when a group of children from a foreign country had come to the Magic Kingdom and spotted Mickey Mouse. American kids will politely cluster around. These kids mobbed him, squealing with delight, hugging and kissing him. The fellow inside was in danger of losing his balance and falling and his prompter was not helping out, just picking his nose off in a corner. The poor fellow inside the costume was being pushed this way and that, and, being forbidden to talk under any circumstances, he waved them back. Unfortunately, however, in doing so, some of his fingers were either pointing the wrong direction or were

curled—it was never determined which—and by one of those strange, tragic coincidences in life was in an insulting, obscene gesture of that particular country. The upshot was that the adoring group of children instantly turned into a hateful, violent mob. They swarmed over Mickey like maddened ants, punching, kicking, biting, ripping, pushing. Mickey went down and they continued to pummel him. His face was broken, his groin kicked, his stomach punched in. Such an attack was unprecedented in the whole history of Disneyworld and the cast member was extricated by other coworkers with difficulty.

Casey was aware of the story. It constituted part of the secret folklore of the insiders in the Magic Kingdom. So, his attention was not altogether with them. Besides, he still felt weak. Eventually, Leslie and Fiona got up and left him behind.

Alone with his thoughts, he pondered upon his fate. He had graduated from college with a theater major and with visions of starring in great roles for the theater in works like *Macbeth*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, maybe even land a role in films. Instead, he had ended up waiting tables in a restaurant, like thousands of other wannabe actors and actresses, waiting for the mythological Big Break. At least he had not gone into prostitution. And, he had been fortunate in having landed a coveted role for a commercial as a singing roll of toilet paper.

Casey had then moved to Orlando, Florida, which for some time had been touted as the next Hollywood. He had been hired for the multicomplex Disney corporation to be cast as a Disney character in one of its theme parks. At minimum wage. He had made more money waiting tables, what with tips and all. Still, it was Entertainment, it was Theater. Of a sorts. He had convinced himself of this. And he occasionally landed a role in one of the many tiny community theaters. He could even legitimately put down in his professional resume his experience as a Disney character, thereby padding it for his

anticipated Big Break—not that anybody ever paid attention to resumes, of course.

Nevertheless, at this point of time he felt low. The heat always had this effect on his state of mind, apart from the debilitating effects on his body. He continued to sit there, recovering, without having to work in other places, just yet. Because of the excessive heat, he had been granted a generous extra twenty-five minutes in which to get his strength back.

He looked up and saw Miguel approach him.

“Casey, can you do me a favor?”

“What?”

“Fill in for me at the parade.”

“You gotta be kidding!”

“No, man, I ain’t feeling so good.”

“I’m sorry, Miguel, I just came off and I almost had a heat stroke. I can imagine what it’s gonna be like later, with the afternoon sun. I doubt that you’ll get anybody to substitute with you.”

“I know. I’ve tried.”

“Sorry,” Casey shook his head. “No way.”

He liked Miguel, a fellow thespian, but not *that* much. Miguel was not sore, though. He nodded, understanding, and walked off in search of someone who would switch with him. For his part, Casey returned to work.

Later that afternoon, Casey was helping out with the floats just prior to the parade starting and he spotted Miguel pleading with Louis. He was holding up a plastic bag.

“Come on, Louis! Just let me put this inside my costume.

Nobody'll notice the bulge with me way up there and it'll help me cool down. You know how hot it gets."

"No can do. The bulge it makes is noticeable. All of a sudden Mickey's got a hunchback? Come on, Miguel, you know better than that!"

Getting closer, Casey saw that the plastic bag contained a big chunk of ice. Apparently, Miguel had filled it up full of water and put it in a freezer.

"It'll keep the costume cool. It'll help me stay cooler for a few minutes more. That might make all the difference."

"Probably. But you're forgetting something: after about fifteen minutes into the parade the ice'll have completely melted and the water will run out. That's gonna look good, all right, Mickey on top of the float, down Main Avenue, all eyes on him, and he's wetting his pants. Ho, ho, yeah!" He made a face for emphasis.

Miguel was brought up short on this. It was obvious that he had not thought things through and had forgotten this obvious side effect and he gave up all further attempts at avoiding his fate in a sudden fit of fatalism. He climbed the float to the very top, next to a girl in the Minnie Mouse costume.

Because when one has the fake head on, a person's visibility is reduced by 95% (the available vision is the mask's tiny darkened mouth). In order to prevent an active character from falling off a moving float, a recent innovation had been implemented, a rod was lifted up a character's pant leg, then firmly secured from beneath. His movements were, thereby, safely circumscribed and it was impossible for the character to fall off. It simply would not do for either Mickey or Minnie to fall off the float and break their necks. On top of that, there was a colorfully adorned supporting structure behind them, which further reduced the possibility of losing their balance and served as a tactile reference point in their

blindness. The colorful embellishments masked its true purpose.

At the very last, the heads were put in place and secured. The band struck up the music and the parade began. Characters began to march out, smiling, dancing, waving and ruffling children's hair.

The tourists, rather, the "guests," were already neatly lined up along the sidewalk, thanks to Crowd Control. They had been waiting a while, blinded and sunburned and sweating, and were half glad at seeing the parade start and half glad that it would be finally over soon so they could escape into one of the rides or shops, where it was cool.

Goofy, Chip & Dale, Captain Hook, Brer' Bear, Roger Rabbit, Dumbo, they all marched out dancing, interspaced by the floats and musicians and other costumed dancers.

Almost immediately, Miguel, inside his Mickey costume, was having problems. He was waving and dancing and pointing just like Minnie besides him, going through the whole repertoire of gestures, and each movement made it that much hotter inside. He became dizzy. Miguel was thankful for both the rod inside his pant leg and the support behind him. He stopped dancing and just waved and occasionally pointed at someone in the crowd. His vision blurred. And the parade was just starting!

The float crawled slowly, so slowly, down Main Street, very, very slowly, so the guests could take a good look at it and could also snap pictures.

For Miguel, it was pure torture. He kept on waving feebly. Minnie sensed that something was wrong with him, so she became more animated in order to distract attention from him.

Now, Miguel's dizziness and blurriness gave way to feeling alarmed, as he realized that he was going to be sick. He fought it down, but the different liquids that he had drunk

prior to going onstage, in order to cool him off, now erupted.

He vomited.

Explosively.

Projectile vomit shot out of Mickey Mouse's black mouth onto the crowd. There was vomit smeared inside the mask as well. This nauseated him further and another spasm of vomit flew out of the mouth and landed on the heads and shoulders of the guests, while Mickey grinned down at them. Again, it happened, the projectile vomiting flew out. The cast continued to wave and dance, keeping up the illusion, as if nothing untoward was happening, while Mickey, leering, strafed the crowd with another machine gun-like burst of vomit.

By now, Miguel was delirious. His stomach, now empty, was convulsing with the dry heaves. He propped up one arm behind him for support and tried to wave some more. No use. His vision was quickly worsening and he vaguely realized that he was about to pass out. To prevent himself from collapsing, with his last strength ebbing away, he feebly lifted his other arm, stretching it out behind him for support, so that both arms and his secured leg would hold him up. He was able to do so. Then, he blacked out.

Towards the end of the route, near Cinderella's castle, the guests who had not been privy to the earlier debacle were treated to a strange sight. In one of the floats was Minnie Mouse cheerfully dancing to the music and waving and pointing and clapping. Next to her stood Mickey Mouse, knees buckled, arms outstretched, head hanging down, motionless, looking crucified.

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