

Press Release

London, UK – December 2nd 2011

Monday 5th December marks the 110th birthday of the late Walter Elias 'Walt' Disney, the American film producer, animator and co-founder of the Walt Disney Company. Web of Stories is proud to present a video recording of the life story of one of Walt Disney's most talented animators, Mr Jules Engel. Here, he talks about his time at Disney, co-founding the United Productions of America (UPA) studio, and Format Films where he produced *Mr Magoo* and the popular US series *The Alvin Show* and *The Lone Ranger*.

In 1938, Jules Engel was asked by Walt Disney to work with them on what became the much-loved Disney classic, *Fantasia*. He was appointed the task of storyboarding the final dance sequences of the Russian sprites and Chinese mushrooms to the music of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite. Engel's passion for dance and art made him the perfect candidate to choreograph the sequences. Although much controversy still surrounds the fact that Jules Engel was never credited for his work on these sequences, here he describes what it was like working for the Walt Disney Company and meeting Walt Disney himself.

"I remember first time I bumped into him and I said, 'Mr Disney, how do you...'. He said, 'No, it's Walt.' Well, that's nice, you know, 'Okay Walt.' But the point is that he lived, he ate, he drank, whatever else there is about animation, that was his gut. He was not even a real person, he was so involved with that world. Everything was a dream world, or his dream. And at the same time, he still was a nice person, he had his friends. But in as much as he was responsible of all those early, good films, still he never really took that big credit: 'Film by Walt Disney'. It was always a film of whatever but never 'by Walt Disney', it was something else".

After completing work on *Fantasia*, Jules Engel was asked to work on a sequence in *Bambi*, where he was able to show his ideas on abstraction. He also gave Bambi a whole new dimension by using colour that was against the norm for an animal at that time.

Aside from Jules Engel's early work with Disney, he co-founded the Universal Productions of America studio with a group of animator friends to create and produce *Mr Magoo*, *Madeline* and *Gerald McBoing Boing*. He then went on to launch Format Films producing US television series *The Alvin Show* and *The Lone Ranger*, and in 1970 he founded the CalArts Program in Experimental Animation, which to this day is recognised as one of the world's best schools for animation and arts. Before Engel's death in 2003, he set up the Jules Engel Endowed Scholarship Fund to help aspiring students to explore and push the boundaries within animation.

Press Release

www.webofstories.com

Web of Stories hosts a video archive of the life story of Jules Engel. We invite everyone to watch these stories, and share them with friends. Approximately six hours of video recording has been divided into individual stories which viewers can watch, listen to, comment on, and share with their friends and colleagues. The videos are also free for embedding into personal blogs and websites.

We also invite the public to record and share their own stories, not just about how Jules Engel's work may have influenced their lives and views on some of the topics raised, but on any other topic.

<http://www.webofstories.com/people/jules.engel>

###

NOTES TO EDITOR

About Web of Stories:

Everyone has a story to tell. Over time many stories become forgotten, but now Web of Stories offers everyone the chance to tell their stories for future generations to enjoy.

Web of Stories began as an archive of life stories told by some of the great scientists of our time. As the number of stories grew, it became obvious that some were on related topics and so a web was created of connected stories. After a while we also invited great people outside the field of science to tell their life stories.

Web of Stories is open to the public to record their stories for the world to view and share. The project is built on the belief that we all have wonderful stories to share, and have family and friends whose tales we would like to hear. The great thing about Web of Stories is that anyone can come and talk about virtually anything they like.

We hope to provide lasting, first-hand accounts of people's experiences – imagine that in a hundred years' time your grandchildren or great grandchildren will be able to watch you telling stories about your life today!

Contact:

For more information on Web of Stories or any other video interview with Web of Stories please contact the Press Desk on +44(0)20 7323 0323 or email press@webofstories.com

Science Navigation Group, Web of Stories, Middlesex House, 34-42 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4LB

 www.twitter.com/webofstories

 www.facebook.com/webofstories