

The Power of Perseverance

Over the winter, my family visited Disney World. Among other sights, I took in one devoted to the history of Walt Disney and his famous company at Hollywood Studios. I became fascinated with and inspired by his legacy. Disney's influence continues to grow and extends far beyond the entertainment industry. His model of customer service has been adopted by a wide array of businesses, including ophthalmic medical practices. More impressive to me, however, is that, despite overwhelming obstacles, he maintained a positive attitude and the determination to pursue his dreams.

As a young man, Disney was fired from the *Kansas City Star* newspaper, because his boss thought Disney lacked creativity.¹ In 1921, he raised the money to form an animation company called Laugh-O-Gram Films, but he was forced to shut it down when his New York distributor went out of business. Hard-pressed to pay his rent, he resorted to eating dog food.² Disney spent his last few dollars on a train ticket to Hollywood. In 1926, he created a cartoon character named Oswald the Rabbit. When attempting to negotiate a better deal with the cartoon's distributor, however, he discovered that his employer had secretly patented the character. To add insult to injury, Disney was then replaced by his own artists and left jobless.²

Later, critics predicted that Mickey Mouse would fail, because the mouse would terrify women.² Saying

it needed more characters, distributors rejected *Three Little Pigs*.² Disney had to rewrite the entire storyline of *Pinocchio* when the project was shut down during production.² He had to pursue P. L. Travers, the author of the book *Mary Poppins*, for 20 years before she finally granted him permission to bring the story to the big screen.³

By no means have we been eating dog food, but for decades, we glaucomatologists have met with a lack of interest in or depressed discussion of our subspecialty by our ophthalmic colleagues—until now. The advent of microinvasive glaucoma surgery has inspired a sense of optimism that early intervention may substantially reduce poor visual outcomes due to glaucoma. At its annual symposium in San Francisco earlier this spring, the

new president of the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, Eric Donnenfeld, MD, went so far as to say that glaucoma is one of the most exciting areas in the field of ophthalmology. Who would have thought this was possible?

Although we still have much to accomplish in terms of effectively diagnosing and treating glaucoma, the future has never been brighter. For this, we can thank innovators such as George Baerveldt, MD; Reay Brown, MD; Eugene de Juan Jr, MD; Richard Hill, MD; and many others. Future success will depend on such creativity but also on our perseverance. ■



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1. 15 people who were fired before they became filthy rich. Business Insider. <http://www.businessinsider.com/15-people-who-were-fired-before-they-became-filthy-rich-2011-4?op=1>. Accessed May 6, 2013.

2. Schochet S. Walt Disney's failures could inspire entrepreneurs. <http://www.hollywoodstories.com/pages/disney/d3.html>. Accessed May 6, 2013.

3. Saving Mr. Banks begins production in Los Angeles. D23: The Official Disney Fan Club. <http://d23.disney.go.com/news/2012/09/saving-mr-banks-begins-production-in-los-angeles>. Accessed May 6, 2013.