

BBC RADIO ULSTER

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Monday 5th December 2011

Today is the birthday of a man who's influenced all our lives.

He created Mickey and Minnie. He introduced us to a flying elephant in 'Dumbo' and a flying nanny in 'Mary Poppins'.

Yes, 110 years ago today, Walt Disney was born.

I remember sitting in front of our black and white TV, waiting for the Bank Holiday Disney Specials. I watched Seven Dwarves whistle while they work and laughed at Bambi sliding across that frozen lake.

Fast forward thirty years and I'm sitting in a boat at Disneyland with my own children singing along with 'It's a Small, Small World' for the hundredth time! A few years later, I search every toyshop in Northern Ireland so that Santa Claus can bring a Pocohontas Barbie down the chimney.

Yes, Walt Disney has a lot to answer for!

However, it's bit too early in the morning for a rant about the multi national commercialisation of childhood.

More than 50 years after his death, Disney is bigger than ever. Walt once said 'Disneyland will continue to grow as long as there is imagination left in the world.'

He was passionate about the power of imagination. They even employ what they call 'Imagineers' to continue to develop Walt's dream.

There's something very powerful about people with dreams and imagination.

Einsten said 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.'

Once upon a time someone had a dream that people could fly. Someone had the imagination that a man could land on the moon.

Martin Luther King 'had a dream' and today we have the first black American President.

Closer to home, someone had the dream that the MTV European Music Awards could come to Belfast. Someone imagined that Derry/Londonderry could be the City of Culture in 2013.

It just proves that what may seem like impossible dreams, can become a reality. And it all begins with our imagination.

So what's your dream? I don't mean to be rich or famous. I mean what's the better future that you can imagine? Because once we share the dream we start to make it happen.

I can imagine a future Northern Ireland where children of all faiths and none, live together, learn together and play together. I can imagine a future Northern Ireland without peace walls.

Now, you may think all this dreaming is a bit 'Mickey Mouse'

But as George Bernard Shaw put it:

'You see things; and you say, 'Why?'

But I dream things that never were; and I say, 'Why not?''

If we use our imagination, like Walt Disney, the possibilities are limitless.

So Zipadeedoodah! And Happy Birthday Walt!