

The Little Red Wagon: A True Disney Story

Tom and Nancy Snyder were a young couple when, in the 1990s, they took their children, John and Teri, to Walt Disney World for their very first family vacation. Their home was in an urban area near Philadelphia, and they walked all the time. The children would usually ride along in an old Radio Flyer little red wagon. Dad provided the pull power. It was only natural, therefore, to bring that wagon with them when they drove down to vacation at Disney World.

As they checked in to a local, non-Disney hotel, they told the front desk clerk that they were in town to visit Disney World. The clerk suggested they rent a stroller for the children. When they replied that they had brought their wagon with them, the clerk responded that using a wagon was a clever idea.

Early the next morning the family headed toward EPCOT and an unforeseen major issue. The host at the turnstile took one look at the wagon and walked them directly to Guest Relations. A cast member there told them that they could not use their red wagon in the park. The wagon had no brakes to prevent it from rolling and it was so low to the ground that other guests were likely to trip over it. Tom objected. “We brought this all the way from Pennsylvania. Our hotel desk clerk told us it was a good idea. The kids love it,” he shouted. The kids, sensing the tension and fearing the loss of their red wagon, cried. And Nancy, disgusted, wanted to leave and drive home. They all thought their vacation was ruined.

Guest Relations did what they could to help the family. They gave the family complimentary tickets for the day and the loan of two strollers. The wagon was stored for them. A Guest Relations host walked them to the exit area of the Spaceship Earth ride where they boarded without waiting in line.

Somewhat placated, but still frustrated, the family went about their day. They visited as many attractions as the children’s attention span could take and headed back to Guest Relations to retrieve their stroller. That’s when the true magic happened.

As a Guest Relations cast member brought out their wagon, the family noticed that several helium Mickey Mouse balloons were tied to it. Riding in the wagon were very large Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse plush toys covered in what appeared to be pixie dust. Mickey was holding a card. The card said, “Thank you, John and Teri, for letting us play in your wagon today. We had fun.” It was signed, “Your pal, Mickey Mouse,” and “Hugs and kisses, Minnie Mouse.”

Wow. Magic! The family went wild. The children beamed. Mom cried. Dad felt like the hero. It was an amazing end to a terrible start. It was also an amazing start to the best vacation experience of their life; one they still brag about. The red wagon never returned to a Disney park, but the family has and will continue to do as long as the Snyder clan exists. The story is now a part of their family lore and Disney is now their family vacation tradition. And they still have the wagon. It’s special. Mickey and Minnie rode in it!