Ub Iwerks notes

* First man to draw mickey mouse
* Without Ub there wouldn’t be mickey
* Dawn of 20th century, industrial revolution
  + Kansas becomes industrial center
  + March 24 1901 Ub was born an only child in Kansas City
* Ubs father was an inventor of phonograph systems and recording devices most likely made a large impression on Ub
* Winsor Mckay brought drawings to motion when Ub was 14 and throughout his idolecense his biggest obsession was bringing his still drawings to life
* Ubs father abandoned his family and he becomes the sole provider
* Ub found odd jobs to provide for him and his mother and to escape from the tedium of these jobs he drew
* Ub enrolled in the fine arts institute of Kansas City and learned that he needs to enjoy the process of maintaining an income
* First job at the pezman ruban commercial art studio
* One month after he joined the job Walt Disney also joined the studio
* They were drawn together by their similar backgrounds and love of drawing and soon opened up a small office for advertisement but soon realized that they needed a steady income and their business wasn’t going to do that for them
* They both got jobs at the Kansas city slide company and got a behind the scenes look at motion picture production
* Drawings in motion are what captured Ub and Walt
* During 1920s New York was considered the capital of animation and felix the cat was the star
* Cartoons were shown but not necessarily enjoyed
* Walt tried their hand at animated commercials and then was commission to create Laugh O Grams – cartoon fairytales reinvented for the jazz age
* Swinging style of Ub Iwerks (syncopation, extending rhythmic lines) made his animation style different from others of that time
* Live action films would lay the ground work for their animated films
* Walt soon learned that they had fallen into bankruptcy but convinced Ub, Roy and his other friends to invest in Laugh o Grams
* From coco the clown they gained the idea for their cartoons of Alice
* Walt still ended up bankrupt and Ub got his job back at the advertisement company while Walt went to Hollywood
* Walt sold Winkler on the idea of the Alice series and convinced his brother to come start a business with him but realized they didn’t have the draftsmanship of the previous cartoons.
* Ub had become head of the art department at the advertisement company and was just getting all his money back from the investment in Laugh O Grams when Walt gave him a letter to come down to Hollywood. He didn’t argue at all and went straight to Hollywood with his mother
* Ub immediately became the top animator and Walt no longer animated. Ub began to use the straight ahead process. Walt would take Ubs thoughts and turn them into gags
* Ub was able to out produce the other animators
* Everyone did everything in Walts company
* When Winkler turned her company over to her husband, her husband decided that the gags were getting tiresome and wanted a new character he could sell to universal so he enlisted Walt and Ub to create that character producing Oswald the lucky rabbit
* Without restrictions they took Oswald to the next stage, getting out of the slapstick gag and into personality gags.
* Ub’s sense of anarchy began to come out and Oswald cartoons were getting into a darker world than the Alice series ever could.
* Ub was finally able to enjoy a social life and met his wife on a blind date
* Oswald and all the crew except Ub and Roy were stolen from Walt
* Walt decided that he will always own whatever he created
* They decided on a mouse as their new character because there hadn’t been any mouse cartoon characters
* Ub created the first Mickey mouse cartoon all by himself in two weeks (Plane Crazy)
* Ub was transforming his characters in character actors, not cartoon characters creating Disney’s style of personality animation
* Walt wrote the story lines, Ub drew the layouts and their wives helped ink the final cartoon
* Mickey was based on Doug Fairbanks (a heroic swashbuckling character)
* Cartoons were losing audiences interests so Walt decided to add sound to his cartoon.
* Steam Boat Willy – the world’s first synchronized sound cartoon – and created a leap forward for all cartoons cause now cartoons could do something no other film could do
* Mickey Mouse became one of the biggest stars in the entertainment world, with all the live action actors and would often get the top bill, above the feature films
* A lot of gags came from barnyard humor, most likely due to their raising in Kansas
* Carl Staleen came up with the idea of the Silly Symphony. A cartoon to contain a full symphony
* The oddness of Ubs names makes people look twice when they see it
* Walt Disney voiced Mickey Mouse
* By late 1929, it seemed nothing could stand in the way of Disney Studios success, but Walt began to control the art direction of the company in ways Ub didn’t expect.
* Walt began to limit the independence of Ub and began changing timing on his exposure sheets
* Ub was approached by a Pat Powers representative to create his own studio and it tempted Ub highly.
* There was a lot of tension between Walt and Ub.
* Ub decided to resign from his job with Walt and start up his own studio, but they still had their personal respect for each other
* Ub could make anything move.
* Ub’s studio had over 50 employees during the Great Depression
* Ub’s animation was almost like a dance and had rhythmic animation with a bounce
* Ub’s ComiColor series was a catalyst for his own technical convention. He started to work on his own 3D camera system. Built to prototype for Disney’s multiplane camera. Built it by himself without any high tech machinery
* Comicolor series was to create enchanting stories in the style of silly symphonies but would always go into the darker side.
* Society soon began to crack down on films and cartoons, creating a code that the filmmakers needed to follow such as respect for the law, every religion, and every nation. Entertainment needs to be wholesome and made for kids
* ComiColor cartoons didn’t provide an escape from reality, instead they just made satires of life. MGM didn’t want these cartoons, they wanted something that would appeal to audiences
* The sharp satires were accepted in the early 30’s but by the mid 30’s audiences wanted something that provided hope and reassurance. They didn’t want a stark representation of humanity
* Ub’s biggest adversary was Mickey Mouse
* Ub’s films were produced independently so they weren’t making as much money and eventually closed his studio
* Ub began pursing new directions in technology and eventually Ub joined Walt again.
* Ub began to design special effects and optics to help out the war effort
* Ub was head of the photographic events lab
* Ub continually refined his devices to solve technical problems with animations
* Ub found a way to Xerox drawings directly onto the cells to get the exact lines the animators drew to the screen.
* Ub took peoples suspension of believe to another level and make it so the audience forgets that they are looking at drawings
* Mary Poppins won 5 Oscars and Ub won an award for his sodium traveling mat cinematography
* He was commissioned by Alfred Hitchcock to solve problems with his films (such as the thousands of birds in Birds)
* Ub devised an anamorphic lenses for widescreen format, noted point perspective camera, and a seamless split screen technique, First three camera electronic editing systems, illuminated scratches on film, had a hand on all the attractions and developed the 1st 360 degree motion picture screen. Photo electric control system for animatronics.
* Dec 15 1956 – Walt Disney dies at age 65\
* Ub continued to push industry to new levels, July 1971 Ub dies of a heart attack at 70

Ub Iwerks was an exceptionally talented man and he used his talents to create changes within the animation industry. Ub grew up in Kansas, loving art and having the desire to make his drawings come to life just as Winsor Mckay did with Gerty. Eventually he got a job at the Pezman Ruban Commercial Agency where his great draftsmanship was recognized. A month later, Walt Disney joined the company and Ub and Walt, coming from similar backgrounds and both fascinated by pictures in motion, became really close friends. One day Walt and Ub decided to open up their own advertisement company, but soon discovered that they both needed a steady income to survive and their company wasn’t providing that for them, so they both joined the Kansas City Slide Company where they got a behind the scenes look at motion picture production. At this company, Walt and Ub were able to try their hands at a animated commercial and it was such a success that they created a new company, the Laugh O’ Grams, were they produced a series of fairytales reinvented to fit into the Jazz Age. Ub’s straight ahead drafting process and swinging style helped to differentiate Walt and Ub’s cartoons from the others of that era. Even with Ub’s skills, and money, the company still ended up bankrupt, but not before Walt and Ub had produced the Alice series, a real life girl living in a cartoon world. However, Walt was unable to pay for the prints and therefore could not make any money off of it, yet. Walt soon left off to Hollywood, leaving Ub to look for a job to earn back his lost investment. Ub ended up getting a job back at the Pezman Ruban Advertising Company and soon worked his way up to the Head of the Art Department, then Walt sent a letter, asking Ub to move him and his mother to Hollywood, to join his newly formed company, since he didn’t have the draftsmanship which Ub had. Walt being the friend and influencer he is, convinced Ub to quit his job and join his company and soon it was obvious that Ub was essential for the company, for he was able to outwork all the other animators 2 or 3 to 1. Working alongside Winkler, they produced a full series of Alice cartoons, but once Winkler got married she turned the company over to her husband Mintz. Mintz saw an opportunity in this. He decided to commission Walt and Ub to create a new character which he could sell to Universal Studios. With this Walt and Ub created Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Without the constraint of real people, Ub was able to get out of the slapstick gags and into personality gags, creating a much darker cartoon than the Alice cartoons were ever able to become. Due to the success of their company, Walt and Ub were finally able to enjoy some social life and they both met their wives who joined the company and helped ink the finals. However, Walt didn’t officially own Oswald so as the contract came to a close, Mintz offered Walt the opportunity to work for him, continuing in the animation business with a steady income, but Walt refused and was determined never to not own his creations. Walt, Ub and Walt’s brother Roy now had no contract and no character, but that wasn’t going to stop them. Walt, on his way back from his meeting with Mintz, had already begun his process of creating a new character. This character was to become the biggest success and the most famous “actor” of the late 1920’s and early 1930’s, Mickey Mouse. Mickey Mouse’s first cartoon, “Plane Crazy” was created by Ub, and only Ub, in two weeks and was a huge success. Mickey was also the star in the first cartoon with sound, “Steamboat Willy” and he soon became an icon for the United States during World War II. However, the freedom which Ub experienced in the company, soon diminished as the company began to hire more and more employees and had to produce more cartoons at a quicker rate. Ub, disliked this and began to distance himself from Walt and eventually was confronted by an employee from Pat Power’s agency offering to start up a studio for Ub, and Ub agreed. At his own company, Ub was able to create cartoons as well as technologies which helped to change the way animations were produced, such as the 3D camera system which eventually led to the multiplane camera used at Disney. Ub may have been a successful animator, and his company was successful for a while, but soon people began to look for a release from society which Ub’s cartoons couldn’t provide. With the decrease in audience, the smaller profit from being an independent company and the rivalry against Mickey Mouse, Ub ended up closing his company and joining Walt’s company again, not to animate, but to help with creating technology for special effects. Ub was able to create technology which took audiences suspension of belief even farther and winning several awards for Disney. Ub was able to take his abilities as an artist and draftman and create a character which will last forever and technology which ultimately changed the way animation and special effects were created.