

KENT BINGHAM'S HISTORY WITH DISNEY

This history was started when a friend asked me a question regarding “An Abandoned Disney Park”:

THE QUESTION

From: pinpointnews [<mailto:pinpointnews@aol.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2016 3:07 AM

To: Kent Bingham

Subject: Photographer Infiltrates Abandoned Disney Park - Coast to Coast AM

<http://www.coasttocoastam.com/pages/photographer-infiltrates-abandoned-disney-park>

Could the abandoned island become an OASIS PREVIEW CENTER???

NOTE

I and several of my friends have wanted to complete the EPCOT vision as a city where people could live and work. We have been looking for opportunities to do this for the last 35 years, ever since we completed EPCOT at Disney World on October 1, 1983. We intend to do this in a small farming community patterned after the life that Walt and Roy experienced in Marceline, Missouri, where they lived from 1906-1910. They so loved their life in Marceline that it became the inspiration for Main Street in Disneyland. We will call our town an OASIS VILLAGE. It will become a showcase and a preview center for all of our OASIS TECHNOLOGIES.

We are on the verge of doing this, but first we had to invent the OASIS MACHINE. You can learn all about it by looking at our website at www.oasis-system.com. There you will learn that the OM provides water and energy (at minimum cost) that will allow people to grow their own food. This machine is a real drought buster, and will be in demand all over the world. This will provide enough income for us to build our OV's in many locations.

A Disney park would be an ideal place to build an OASIS VILLAGE, but first we need to prove the concept before that will be possible, so we will begin in another location in a desert where we will turn the desert green.

ANSWER #1

From: Kent Bingham <kent@entenginc.com>

Date: 03/22/2016 9:18 AM (GMT-10:00)

To: 'pinpointnews' <pinpointnews@aol.com>

Subject: RE: Photographer Infiltrates Abandoned Disney Park - Coast to Coast AM

L,

The Disney “magic” has remarkable staying power. River Country lasted from 1976 to 2001, not at all bad for a high risk, high maintenance venue. Disney has a full time team of lawyers and claims adjusters to deal with accident settlements. Also a much larger team of maintenance people to repair and replace as needed. A waterpark has a large budget in both categories.

When I joined WED in 1977, the chief spec writer, Cliff Clark and I did a tour with the maintenance groups at Disneyland and WDW. In Florida, termites and fungus were problems with wood, and corrosion of steel was an issue. Paint and roofing kept evolving, with many different opinions from many different groups. So Cliff and I did our best to guide EPCOT into the best possible new park within what we could at that time accomplish within our information base at that time.

In 1977, Disney was expanding rapidly. WED had 2 major projects ongoing at the same time: EPCOT (opened October 1, 1982) and TDL (opened on April 15, 1983). Euro Disneyland (EDL) did not open till 1992 (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disneyland_Paris). However, before I left WED in October of 1983, we had already put together a show and ride systems package for EDL that was based on combining all of the best features from the 3 earlier parks (DL, WDW, AND TDL).

Those early days (July 17, 1955; opening of DL; Dec 15, 1966; Walt Died; October 1, 1971; WDW opened) saw a lot of growth and planning, but all under one management group lead by Roy Disney (Roy Oliver Disney (June 24, 1893 – December 20, 1971), Card Walker, Carl Bongirno, Dick Nunis, and several others who kept the Disney dream alive.

Management changed radically in 1984 when Michael Dammann Eisner took over. The Disney dream, though unquenchable, took a back seat to big profits. I was out of Disney in 1984, but continued to work with other Disney “grads” on projects for Universal and Las Vegas. We watched with great interest and talked about the new direction for Disney under the new management.

So, to wrap this up. The huge worldwide expansion of Disney parks and resorts has created an environment where these older features in some parks (the Wedway People Mover in Tomorrowland at Disneyland, and River Country at WDW) are simply closed to the public. The new crop of MBAs and “managers” can’t put together a creative team to repair or refurbish these older attractions. Nor do they want to face the possible criticism that they would draw upon themselves if they simply tore them down. So they leave them in place. Us “old guys” understand the nostalgia as the public watches and wonders. We’re really happy to know that our work is still so well appreciated. We also know that this void will inspire younger Imagineers to find a solution, and bring these older attractions back to life, or reborn into something better.

Cheers,
K

ANSWER #2

Good question. Very thought provoking. And I’m enjoying this trip down memory lane as we wait for the universe to open the doors to our magic kingdom, so let’s continue.

This calls to mind the situation that Walt faced when he decided to build Disneyland. The following is taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walt_Disney_Imagineering

WED Enterprises

Walt Disney Inc. (WDI) was formed by [Walt Disney](#) in 1953 with the [Disneyland](#) designing engineering division. In light of objections from Roy as well as those of potential stockholders, WDI was renamed WED Enterprises based on Walt's initials.

Disney Production subsidiary

WED Enterprises theme park design and architectural group became so integral to the Disney studio's operations that the Disney Productions bought it on February 5, 1965 along with the WED Enterprises name

As with all older organizations, even when the founder is present, powerful individuals and groups emerge that want to take control, or move the organization in a different direction. At Walt Disney Studios, the animators formed a union that never did work compatibly with Walt. Then there was the threat of a hostile take-over that was prevented with the help of the Bass Brothers. This is the background that Walt had to deal with when Disneyland was just a dream.

Walt used to take weekends off to spend more time with his family. He enjoyed taking his daughters to Griffith Park so they could enjoy the miniature steam train and riding on the carousel. During these quiet times as he sat on a park bench envisioning a place where families could be together with something enjoyable for the entire family, for people of all ages. This of course evolved into Disneyland. But Walt knew he would not be free to create it, even at his own Studio. So he formed WDI.

From https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Walt_Disney_Company

In 1954, Walt Disney used his Disneyland series to unveil what would become Disneyland, an idea conceived out of a desire for a place where parents and children could both have fun at the same time. On July 18, 1955, Walt Disney opened Disneyland to the general public.

Well, Walt found a way to get it done. Today, we are in a similar situation. Looking for a way to create a better future for all. In answer to your question:

Could the abandoned island become an OASIS PREVIEW CENTER???

The answer is no. If Walt had to go outside the Disney Studio to have the freedom to build Disneyland, we need to look in the same direction. We need to find a place of freedom, a place where we can gather a team of talented, like minded souls.

EPCOT TEAM

To give you an example, when I arrived at WED on October 31, 1977, bright eyed and bushy tailed and eager to go, I found myself in the company of all of the Imagineers that had worked with Walt and Roy and Don Tatum. The only ones missing from the Disneyland team were Walt and Roy. John Hench was in charge of creative. His team of art directors included Herbie Ryman, X Atencio, Tony Baxter, Claude Coates, Bob Clatworthy, George Terpatsi (American Adventure), George McGinnis (Horizons), Harper Goff (World Showcase), Walt Peregoy, Doug Cayne and John Lim (Spaceship Earth), John De Cuir Jr. (Communicore), Claudio Mazzoli, Dumont Grants (China), Eddie Martinez (Mexico), Ahmad Jafari, Tom Reidenbach, Frank Armitage, Karen Connolly, and a few others. The sculptors were all there, Blaine Gibson and Peter Comode. Marty Sklar, Walt's writer and spokesperson was there. Bob Gurr had created Autopia, the submarine ride, and the Monorail. Rolly Crump had created Small World, Tiki Room, Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean, and Mr. Lincoln, and the Land Pavilion at EPCOT when he returned to WED in 1976.

THE ARCHITECTURAL DEPARTMENT was headed up by George Rester, and his second in command Gordon Hoopes. Their function was to pull together all of the various components of facility, show, and ride systems into a finished building system. These guys were part art director, part architect, and all

Imagineer. Some of those I remember best are Rich Fernands, Duncan MacKeracher, John Kasperowicz, Bob Kurzweil, Al Dalllas, Lenzy Hendrix, Abe Quibin

When Walt announced his project in Florida on Sunday evening television, the paintings that he displayed had been done by George Rester, his chief architect at WED. You will find interesting details on this at <http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/news/a35104/walt-disney-epcot-history-city-of-tomorrow/> .

THE EPCOT SUPPORT TEAM

You can imagine that this incredible group of art directors and architects needed a lot of behind the scenes support. I can't remember all of them, but some of those that I remember include the following. Please forgive me if I place some folks in the wrong department.

VICE PRESIDENTS

- Frank Stanek
- Pat Scanlon
- Wing Chow
- Orlando Ferrante

PROJECT MANAGERS and PROJECT BUSINESS ADMINISTRATORS

- Kym Murphy and Allen Moyer, Seas Pavilion
- Doug Stapp, Spaceship earth
- Kathy Knudsen McHugh
- Bill Dennis, Odyssey Restaurant
- Bruce Dunford
- Bob Mansfield, World Showcase
- Mike McCullough
- David Todd
- Juliann Juras Blam
- Tony Cruz
- Craig Russell
- Ron Carman
- John Diefenbach
- Glenn Durlinger

PURCHASING – Jim Helinski and Joe McHugh

LIBRARY – Jody Guba

COMPUTER SYSTEMS – Dave Snyder

LANDSCAPING AND ROCKWORK – Fred Jerger, Herb Ramsaier, John Stone, and John Olson

INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS – Bob Gurr, Bill Casey, Bill Bohn, George McGinnis

GRAPHIC DESIGN – John Drury

MODEL SHOP – Maggie Elliot, Doug Nelson

PROJECTORS AND FILM – Don Iwerks

SPECIAL EFFECTS – Mark Fuller, Bill Novey

ENGINEERING

All engineering at WED was under the direction of John Zovich, VP. John's administrative assistant was Marilyn Chiefo. John was over both MAPO and a separate facilities group headed up by Bud Stacy. Bud's administrative assistant was Kit Gordon.

FACILITIES ENGINEERING consisted of several departments:

Civil – Ken Klug and Jim Cashin

Structural – Kent Bingham, Bob Steckel, Tony Gaorian, Tapash Ghosh, Ericka Mutschenbacher, Prakash Des Desai, Bruce Dunford, and several others

Mechanical – Art Garbers, Charlie Lockhart, and Bill Loy

Electrical – Louie Tonarelli, Art Henderson

Specifications – Cliff Clark, Steve Izuhara

Cost Estimating – Dave Holtz, Carl Jablonski, Craig Heller

MAPO (short for Mary Poppins)

The Mapo team was headed up by Bill Watkins. Some of his team included Ed Feurer, Don Hilsen, Roger Broggie, Dave Schweninger, Frank Weigand, and many others.

The mechanical show and ride systems guys had built the Omnimover ride system in

- The Haunted Mansion
- The Transportation Pavilion
- Spaceship Earth
- Horizons Pavilion

The animatronic figures at:

- Enchanted Tiki Room
- The Pirates of the Caribbean
- Moments with Mr. Lincoln
- Transportation Pavilion
- GE Carousel of Progress
- Horizons Pavilion

They built the boat rides at:

- Small World
- The Land Pavilion.
- Splash Mountain

They built Gurr's Autopia and Monorail. In Fantasy Land, they built:

- The Dumbo ride
- Tea Cups
- Peter Pan pirate ships

In Tomorrow Land they built:

- Rocket to Mars
- America Sings
- The elevated Wedway people mover
- The submarine ride

They built roller coasters:

- Matterhorn
- Space Mountain
- Big Thunder Mountain

A very impressive list don't you think. Well, they were all there when I arrived at WED. We were all eager to get started. There was only one problem. No one could find the starter button.

LOOKING FOR DIRECTION

The decision had been made at the highest levels. EPCOT was a go. All of this talent was gathered together at WED, and since 1971 with the completion of WDW, WED had no major projects to design and build. The Disney studio was making movies, Disneyland and WDW were visited by thousands of guests every day, and WED was just sitting there, with only minor projects at the theme parks to design. As a very high overhead group, there was some concern that without a major project, the bean counters would start to dismantle WED. EPCOT to the rescue.

So there I was, expecting to go to meetings for briefings on what we were going to build, but there were no such briefings, because many of the pavilions had nothing to show. So I was given orientation trips to the theme parks, to all of the design groups at WED and MAPO, and found out that everyone involved were in groping mode.

Walt would launch design teams when he decided to start a new project. Sometimes he would launch 3 separate teams, not letting the teams know that the other teams existed, or what they were doing. Also, whenever anyone had an idea for a new project, Walt would ask to see their research. No research brought quick rejection until the research was well underway. So, you would not be surprised to know that WED had a very large research Library under the direction Jodi Guba. For my first year at WED, I saw many variations being studied for the elements of EPCOT.

The American Adventure Pavilion designed by George Terpatzi in its earliest forms looked like a giant angel food cake pan turned upside down and placed on stilts. World Showcase looked like a giant airport terminal, all under glass, with each nation occupying a space as if they were an airline company at any typical airport. The genius of Harper Goff removed the glass roof, and brought each nation's pavilion out into a beautiful expression of the best traditions of each nation as expressed in themed architecture.

FINAL DESIGN OF EPCOT

By 1980, after more than 2 years of design development, we were finally ready to launch. George Rester told Marty Sklar that we were out of time. If we didn't start immediately, we would not be able to meet the targeted opening on October 1, 1982. So Marty authorized Rester to bring it into the design phase. George collected for each pavilion in Future World and in World Showcase all of the research and design studies that had been done up to that time. Every pavilion had facility and show element, and many also had ride systems. George integrated facility, show, and ride systems for each and every pavilion, and tied them together into a buildable package that put them all into a grand design with all of the area development infrastructure complete.

I finally got what I needed to do the structural design that I had been hired to accomplish. George would gather all of the several art director's work for one pavilion at a time, and take it home for the weekend, free of the distractions at WED. On Monday morning, he would call me into his office and display a felt tip drawing of the pavilion, hand drawn, to scale, integrating all of the elements of facility, show, ride, and themed architecture. I would take this back to my structural design team and we would put structure into the pavilions. By this time we were rolling in high gear.

Tishman had been engaged as project managers under the direction of Jim Nagy, who would let out all of the construction contracts for every pavilion and for the area development and infrastructure work needed to complete the project. Dames and Moore, directed by Hank Klehn and Tom Swantko, were our Geotechnical consultants who found the construction site on the Disneyworld property and did the necessary field surveys and soil testing for foundation design and avoidance of sink holes.

Architectural and Engineering (A&E) teams were selected by the Tishman team for the preparation of construction documents. We saved a lot of time by negotiating for the construction contracts, and thereby avoided the need for preparing bid documents. At WED, between Rester's integration freehand drawings, and my structural drawings, we were able to get the A&E teams started for their final design packages that Tishman negotiated construction contracts to selected contractors.

With more than 22 major buildings to produce, we wanted to have some semblance of a uniform construction standard. Disney had built Disneyland and WDW under the direction of Wheeler and Gray, Structural Engineers in Glendale (Bill Wheeler, Rene Fournier, Ben Korman, Bob Jensen, and Paul Weikert). They were not in control of EPCOT. Instead, Tishman selected an A&E team for every pavilion. For the earlier projects, Ken Chan headed up "The Reedy Creek Improvement District", which was the Disney equivalent of a building and safety department. It lacked a well-defined building code, so we adopted "The Uniform Building Code".

For uniformity of construction, my structural group produced a set of WED Standards by asking each structural consulting team to provide their "Typical Details", which was always a part of the set of structural drawings for a particular building. Each office in the country used this format, but there were minor differences between every office. So, we collected over 20 sets of typical details, edited them, and produced one uniform set of details that was used for every building in EPCOT.

CREDITS

When I arrived at WED, I was interviewed by John Zovich. I had been contacted by a recruiter who described a company of hard working guys that had a big project, and they were looking for a structural engineer. At the time, I had a great job with Brandow and Johnson, Structural Engineers in LA, and had just finished a lot of work on the USC campus, which included the new student union by Ladd and Kelsy Architects, the new engineering building (Vivian Hall), and remodel of the old student union and bookstore.

Just prior to this, I had worked at VTN in Irvine, CA as chief structural engineer. We were a full service Civil Engineering and Land Planning and development company. We had been engaged by Rolly Crump, who was working with Ringling Brothers to create a Circus World in Orlando, Florida, adjacent to Disney World. Rolly had assembled a great team that included Rick Campbell, Fred Brooks, Rich Battaglia, and Doris Young. This great project produced some of the greatest Circus art that I had ever seen, but got stopped cold by lack of funding.

So, the ever resourceful Mr. Crump, was hired by Marion Knott Anderson to transform Knott's Berry Farm into an iron-ride park. These were two fantastic years working as part of this Crump team. Getting back to the recruiter. I told him that if his project was EPCOT, and the company was Disney, I would be interested. If not, I would stay with Brandow and Johnston. Well, I blew him away. An interview at WED was arranged, and armed with a letter of introduction by Rolly Crump, I got the Job.

CONCLUSION

Why you may ask am I going into such great detail regarding EPCOT. For several reasons:

1. We are getting ready to begin the design of our first OASIS VILLAGES.
2. We want to take advantage of the experience we gained on designing and building Disney projects.
3. The OV will be a smaller version of Main Street Disneyland, but will be a place where people will live and work, while at the same time be similar to a theme park.
4. I haven't seen a similar detailed summary of how EPCOT was built, so I'm happy to have this opportunity to tell the tale.

Therefore, even though it would be an interesting project to build an OV in a part of WDW, we would be unduly under the control of the Disney organization. For the same reasons that Walt needed to form a separate group to design Disneyland, we need the same freedom to design our OV.

So again, thanks for asking.

----- Original message -----

From: pinpointnews [<mailto:pinpointnews@aol.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2016 2:05 PM
To: Kent Bingham
Subject: RE: Photographer Infiltrates Abandoned Disney Park - Coast to Coast AM

What a beautiful response! Eloquent, historical and informative.
Thank-you! Could the abandoned island become an Oasis PREVIEW CENTER???
L.

For more information on EPCOT, see
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epcot>

Also see
<https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/destinations/epcot/>

The Epcot logo features the word "Epcot" in a stylized font. The 'E' is purple, 'p' is red, 'c' is orange, 'o' is a green globe with white grid lines, and 't' is yellow. A registered trademark symbol (®) is to the right.

SpaceShip Earth, the icon of Epcot

Location	Walt Disney World Resort, Bay Lake, Florida, U.S.
Coordinates	 28°22′16″N 81°33′00″W﻿ / ﻿28.37111°N 81.55000°W﻿ / 28.37111; -81.55000
Theme	Technological innovation and international culture
Owner	The Walt Disney Company
Operated by	Walt Disney Parks and Resorts
Opened	October 1, 1982; 34 years ago ^[1]
Previous names	EPCOT Center (1982–1993) Epcot '94 (1994) Epcot '95 (1995)
Operating season	Year-round
Website	disneyworld.disney.go.com/parks/epcot 