

# LOST ATTRACTIONS OF FLORIDA

The Golf Industry Show arrives in Florida next month, and throughout the state's 170-plus-year history, it's been a popular vacation and tourism destination. Here are a few diversions you *won't* see on your upcoming trip to the Sunshine State, however, but that have retained a bit of their novelty as noteworthy notches in Florida's sizable archive of bygone attractions.

**Africa USA  
Boca Raton, Florida  
1953-1961**



Giraffes, zebras, camels and more roamed free on the 300-acre property, and the "zoo with no cages" concept was a precursor to Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando. Walt Disney himself was purportedly a frequent visitor to Africa USA, and even considered purchasing it. The park was chosen over Disneyland to appear on the cover of the Aug. 1, 1960 issue of *Life* magazine, but in the face of noise and traffic complaints from residents in nearby, newly developed housing, Africa USA's glory days would last just a little over a year after that.

This southern Florida amusement park featured a full-sized pirate ship ride, but didn't let its buccaneer motif pigeonhole it, also offering rides such as the "Grand National Steeplechase," along with arcade and carnival games and a petting zoo. Pirates World was a concert venue too, and brought in such big names as Led Zeppelin, David Bowie and The Doors. Though it was successful in its early years, the advent of Walt Disney World in 1971 would raid Pirates' patronage.



**Pirates World  
Dania Beach, Florida  
1967-1975**

**Circus World  
Haines City, Florida  
1974-1986**



Located about 30 miles southwest of Orlando, Circus World was originally a property of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The 847-acre park featured a carousel, Ferris wheel, wooden roller coaster, and 27,000-square-foot circus-tent-style building that housed an IMAX theater. Visitors could view performances that included live tiger, elephant, trapeze and acrobatic acts. After multiple changes of ownership, the final curtain closed on Circus World in 1986.



The 75-acre, \$100 billion theme park consisted of more than 60 miniature replicas of sites such as the Great Wall and the Temple of Confucius. Despite its opulence, the venture was plagued by controversy and protests (alleged to be a "propaganda park" owned by the Chinese government), and revenue never reached expectations. The park sat inactive but somewhat intact until 2013, when tear-down began to make way for a Margaritaville resort community, which will open this year. Splendid China's sister park of the same name in Shenzhen, China, is still in operation.

**Splendid China  
Kissimmee, Florida  
1993-2003**

celona, a 45-hole facility designed by Greg Norman that has hosted the Open de España on 10 occasions, most recently in 2015. My final and sole Italian destination was Golf della Montecchia in the mountains of northeastern Italy, where superintendent Brian O'Flaherty, 13-year association member, oversees the 27 holes of cool-season turfgrass.

Throughout my travels, I was struck by the synergy that seems to be right on the cusp of occurring in the European branch of our industry. I'm looking forward to seeing how GCSAA can help it forge ahead.



Small-group discussions and role-playing activities were key components of the 2017 Syngenta Business Institute in Winston-Salem, N.C., in December. Photo by Scott Hollister

## SBI takes superintendents outside the box

According to GCSAA's 2015 Compensation and Benefits Report, the average age of a head superintendent is 46.2 years old. By that measure, Wesley Curtis knows he already stands out in a crowd.

At just 27, Curtis is the head superintendent at Westwood Golf Club just outside Houston. On top of the regular challenges that superintendents face, Curtis is also learning on the job how to manage a team of employees who, in most cases, are older and more experienced than he is. His crew is largely Hispanic, too, so navigating the language and cultural barriers that come with that is also something that's relatively new to him.

But 27-year-olds don't make their way into positions such as the one at Westwood without some skill, determination and ambition. And that's why Curtis was so intrigued by the Syngenta Business Institute, why he applied, and why he was ultimately selected from more than 90 applicants to be among the 26 members of the class of 2016, who took part in the event in early December at the Graylyn International Conference Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"I see tons of advantages (for young superintendents) who get to attend something like this," the seven-year GCSAA member says. "The topics covered and the things I learn are going to give me a leg up early in my career. It's valuable no matter where you are in your career, but just getting started, I feel like being here is a big advantage."

Now in its eighth year, the event features advanced executive-level training presented by faculty members from Wake Forest University's School of Business.

Superintendents take deep dives into financial management, managing across cultures and generations, negotiating, and motivating and inspiring employees.

"All of the aspects of what we covered here have been great," Curtis says. "I've really learned from everything. And this was a great group of guys to meet and network with. It's been a great experience."

— Scott Hollister, *GCM* editor-in-chief



Kevin Holleran, president and CEO of Textron Specialized Vehicles and Jacobsen. Photo by Howard Richman

## A new home for Jacobsen

Fresh paint glistens inside this 80,000-square-foot manufacturing facility — and it's the first hint that a new day is on the horizon.

At a former home to Procter & Gamble in Augusta, Ga., where the odor of laundry detergent used to permeate the building, there are signs of change in the air. The second hint that wheels are in motion is the orange fairway mower, all by itself, in a space that will be bustling with activity by the end of this year.

Welcome to Jacobsen's new home.

"This place affords us opportunities," says Kevin Holleran, president and CEO of Textron Specialized Vehicles, who spearheaded a tour of the facility Dec. 6. "We have got an unrivaled offering to golf courses now."

In November, Textron Specialized Vehicles and Jacobsen, both Textron companies, announced they were integrating their operations at the company's Augusta location, resulting in the closure of Jacobsen's facilities in Charlotte, N.C. As of early December, at least 65 people who were employed in Charlotte had decided to relocate to Augusta, where more than 150 jobs will be added.

"We hope more of them come (from Charlotte)," Holleran said at that time. "The more of them, the better. They know the product and come with years of knowledge. It will make the transition easier."

Holleran, who now also oversees the Jacobsen brand and product lines following the announcement that previous president and CEO David Withers had left the company at the end of 2016, is thrilled by the possibilities of having a sprawling footprint at this new location, just down the street from the facility where Textron Specialized Vehicles builds E-Z-Go golf cars, Cushman commercial vehicles and other product lines.

"I'm very excited at the prospects. It's not going to

happen overnight, but we will be one face, one solution — a one-stop shop — for the golf course industry," he says.

Withers, who told *GCM* last month that he was planning to move to the United Kingdom with the goal of remaining in the industry, has high hopes for Jacobsen in its new location. "I think there will be opportunities to build on what we have achieved these last years, and also to leverage the two brands together to win more business," says Withers, who worked at Jacobsen for 24 years.

Jacobsen's operations in Augusta will feature three assembly lines instead of the nine it previously housed in Charlotte, with a mixed model concept, and there will also be an extensive fabrication shop. Phase one of the plan calls for fabrication to be relocated first, and to be in full swing by the end of the first quarter this year. Parts and services are planned to be the final phase later in 2017. "We want to guard against disruption, ensure everything else is up and running," says Holleran, noting that other Jacobsen locations are ready to fulfill customers' needs during the move.

Textron Specialized Vehicles, which, in addition to Jacobsen, E-Z-Go and Cushman, also includes brands such as Dixie Chopper and Bad Boy Off Road in its stable, is ready to unleash its offerings. Expect to see some of them at the Golf Industry Show next month in Orlando.

"These are brands we're committed to, and are absolutely part of our growth strategy going forward," Holleran says.

— H.R.

## Watson family donates materials to Michigan State

The Turfgrass Information Center of the Michigan State University Libraries has received a major donation of turfgrass industry materials from the family of the late James R. Watson, Ph.D.

Included are hundreds of monographs, including university extension publications and bulletins, as well as more than 2,000 issues of periodical titles and assorted handwritten notes, loose articles, project binders, corporate-related papers, advertisements, commercial items, business correspondence, and personal papers. The donation also included a few dozen boxes of slides and photographs, which could well be of significance to the history of the discipline.

Watson, who passed away in 2013, was known for a variety of turfgrass-related accomplishments, both nationally and internationally. He received his bachelor's degree in agronomy in 1947 from Texas A&M University, and in 1950 earned his doctorate from Penn State University. After graduating, he became an assistant professor at Texas A&M before joining The Toro Co. in 1952 as the director of agronomy. Watson received GCSAA's Old Tom Morris Award in 1995.

For a list of materials by or about Watson as currently indexed within the Turfgrass Information File (TGIF) database, see <http://goo.gl/NaD8ME>.

# in the NEWS

### Things are hopping on Australia course

At Anglesea Golf Club in Australia, kangaroos roam free, and golfers and tourists are certainly finding their appearance intriguing. *The Wall Street Journal* reports. <http://goo.gl/J7W7du>

### Residents rescue Alabama facility

Heatherwood Hills, a golf course in Birmingham, Ala., was abandoned in 2009, but a group of homeowners invested their own money to resurrect it, according to *Birmingham Business Journal*. <http://goo.gl/mny6An>

### No Trump wall for Irish links

President-elect Donald Trump has dropped a potential plan to build a wall to protect Trump International Golf Links in Doonbeg, Ireland, from being battered by the Atlantic Ocean, according to *Irish Independent*. <http://goo.gl/3SzQMb>

### Tennessee golfer goes the distance

A resident of Franklin, Tenn., completed his quest to play all 235 golf courses in Tennessee, *The Tennessean* reports. <http://goo.gl/BMRFpp>