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## Dick Pope: The Father of Florida Tourism, Exhibit Brochure

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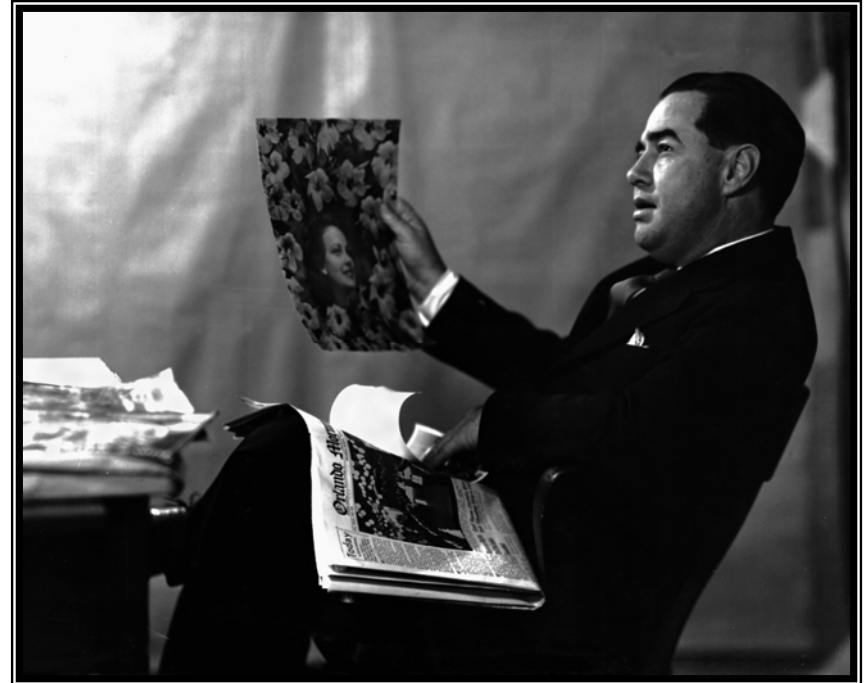


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*The Universal Orlando  
Foundation Library  
Presents...*



**DICK POPE:**  
FATHER OF FLORIDA TOURISM

**Rosen College of Hospitality Management**

**August 20th - December 14th, 2007**

With Material Loaned from:  
Cypress Gardens Adventure Park



## WHO IS DICK POPE?

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Dick Pope and his wife Julie opened the very first theme park in Florida on January 2, 1936—over seventy years ago. The self-described ‘Salesman of Sunny Florida’ carved a lakeside garden out of a swamp during the great depression. By 1938, the gardens had over 8,000 varieties of tropical and subtropical plants from all over the world and electric boats that toured the carefully landscaped park on the shores of Lake Eloise.

Pope’s publicity talents helped to build Central Florida into the tourism mecca it is today. Pope utilized the new technologies of photography, and later, film, to capture the beautiful scenery of his park which he sent to newspapers across the nation. Pope called his marketing formula, OPM<sup>2</sup>— ‘Our pictures plus other people’s money squared.’



Dick Pope at Cypress Gardens Circa 1970’s.

## THE GENESIS OF ‘AQUABATICS’

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Dick Pope’s talents didn’t just lie in publicity. He was also a daredevil boat driver and an early water skiing talent, being credited as the first person to jump over a ramp in 1925. But Dick was in the Army Signal Corps when his wife Julie arranged for an impromptu family ski show for visiting airmen in 1943. The show was a hit, and Cypress Gardens became the site of many skiing championships and record breaking feats he called “Aquabatics.” Dick’s son, Dick Jr., was credited as the first to ski barefoot in 1947. Dick diversified into skiing merchandise and authored a book on waterskiing.

Left: A postcard of an ‘Aquamaid’s pyramid circa 1950’s



## WHEN DICK POPE MET DISNEY...

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Walt Disney began looking at Central Florida in 1963 as a possible location for his ‘Eastern Disneyland.’ Pope invited him to Cypress Gardens. Disney reportedly stood outside the gates and counted the day’s visitors. After Walt died, Roy Disney visited too, and the two became friends. Roy rewarded Dick for his hospitality and friendship with the first lifetime pass to Walt Disney World when it opened in 1971.



Dick Pope (left) with Roy Disney, (right) late 1960’s.

## THE DICK POPE INSTITUTE

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In 1979, The Dick Pope Institute for Tourism Studies was established at UCF. Its mission is to improve the tourism industry in Central Florida through research, public awareness, and education. Dr. Abraham Pizam, who is the Dean of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, serves as the Institute’s Director.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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**Ros Gen Coll GV 1853.3 .F62 C97 2006**

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