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George Millay: Waterpark Pioneer, Exhibit Brochure

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About the Library



The Universal Orlando Foundation Library at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management is devoted to the study of the hospitality and tourism industries.

The Library is located at 9907 Universal Blvd., near International Drive and the heart of central Florida's tourism area. For more information, visit the Universal Orlando Foundation Library's homepage at <http://library.ucf.edu/rosen> or call 407-903-8100.

Special Thanks To

- ◆ **Exhibit Design:** UCF Libraries, Universal Orlando Foundation Library:
 - TJ Ormseth, LTA Supervisor
 - Tim Bottorff, Reference Librarian
 - Deb Ebster, Head Librarian

- ◆ **Contributors of Artifacts:**
 - Wet'n Wild Orlando



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Universal Orlando
Foundation Library
At Rosen College



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At the Rosen College of Hospitality Management

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Who Is George Millay?

George Millay's fusion of water and marine life entertainment has earned him the title "Father of the Waterpark Industry." As the creative mind behind the founding of Sea World in 1964 and Wet'n Wild in 1977, Millay figured out how "to turn water into gold."



Millay's "love affair with the ocean" began as a small child learning to swim off the California coast in the cold waters of San Francisco Bay and the warm beaches of San Diego. At 18, he followed in his father's footsteps and joined the Navy before studying meteorology at UCLA. By 1958, after a few years as an account executive, George launched the first test of his creative and business skills when he opened the Reef Restaurant. The restaurant helped George lay the foundation for his future theme park venture.

Today, at 76 years old, George Millay continues to develop new ideas for family entertainment despite an ongoing battle with cancer. In 2004, Millay was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Themed Entertainment Association. While George Millay's name might not be as recognizable as Walt Disney's, his contribution to the theme park industry will forever be distinguished and appreciated.

A Wet'n Wild Idea

After leaving his position at Sea World, George Millay had an idea for another attraction that combined water and amusement. The idea of a water attraction came to him while living in the Florida heat. The desire to cool off coupled with a visit to a "water playground" in Canada helped Millay form the idea of a waterpark. While a few places nationwide offered either wave pools or waterslides to the public, there was nothing that housed a variety of water activities in a theme park setting. Thus, in 1977, George Millay gave birth to the waterpark industry when he opened Wet'n Wild in Orlando, the world's first waterpark. Since the opening, other developers have tried to copy Millay's success, but Wet'n Wild remains the waterpark industry leader in originality and innovation.

Look At the Waterpark Industry Now!

- ◆ There are over 1500 waterparks around the world.
- ◆ 70-72 million people visit waterparks every year.
- ◆ 1,250,000 people visit Wet'n Wild Orlando annually.
- ◆ Wet'n Wild waterparks can be found all over the world, including Mexico and Brazil.
- ◆ Wet'n Wild parks are always expanding and adding to their signature thrill rides and special events, including Blue Niagra, a six-story slide that takes riders through 300 feet of intertwined looping tubes.



For More Information

O'Brien, Tim. *The Wave Maker: The Story of Theme Park Pioneer George Millay and the Creation of Sea World, Magic Mountain, and Wet'n Wild*. Nashville: Ripley Pub., 2005.
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