

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AMUSEMENT PARKS AND ATTRACTIONS

FUNWORLD

AUGUST 1999 • \$4.00

Jungleland

Generations

Front Gates

**Six Flags
California**

Making A BIG Entrance

Parrot Jungle brings a HUD grant to Miami,
 Superland brings a jungle to Israel,
 and Paramount brings a Forrest to Kings Dominion.
 A contest whirls Wonderland Sydney to fame,
 Six Flags goes market-a-market with Disney and Knott's,
 Midway Park says 'Why not?' 2K,
 And, we welcome (officially) Islands of Adventure to The Loop.



Franchise is as franchise does

The restaurant's arrival was about as low-key as the character after whom it is named. But that character has a way of leaving a happy, lasting impression.

True to form, Forrest Gump, wearing his white suit and carrying an old yellow suitcase and box of chocolates, left lasting smiles on the smattering of invited media guests and park staff at the grand opening of the Bubba Gump Shrimp Shack in Paramount's Kings Dominion. The eatery itself, likewise, seemed to be a hit with the first public customers.

Meanwhile, Paramount Parks hopes its first foray into brand-name franchising at its Doswell, Va., property is *not* like a box of chocolates: They think they know exactly what they're getting.

Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. opened its first themed restaurant based on the "Forrest Gump" movie in Monterey, Calif., in 1996. Seven more opened in California, Hawaii, Colorado, Chicago, New Orleans, and Miami.

The Bubba Gump Shrimp Shack at Kings Dominion is the restaurant's first quick-serve edition, offering a scaled-down version of its fish and shrimp menu. It's also the first located in a theme park.

For the park, which operates its own Baskin-Robbins ice cream stand, Bubba Gump represents the first time it enlisted a branded franchiser. Notably, while the park acknowledges that a primary benefit of using a

brand name is familiarity, it chose Bubba Gump because the restaurant had no presence in the mid-Atlantic states.

Still, the eatery is a natural fit. "Forrest Gump" is a Paramount property, and the restaurant uses themed artifacts and photos in an entertaining atmosphere that maintains the park's fantasy fun ambiance as patrons wait to

order or chow down at tables or booths. Without warning, the behind-the-counter staff breaks into a call-and-response

constant flow-through. And shrimp, as Forrest himself said, "is the fruit of the sea." While he went on to list the movie's famous litany of shrimp preparations—"I have the ability to remember 20 different varieties of shrimp," he said in that humble voice—the Shack only offers it fried or in cocktail.

Then there is that intangible element of Forrest Gump himself, the simple man whose sweet innocence inevitably leads him to success. Steven James Weber, after years of hearing how much he resembled the Tom Hanks film character, dressed the part and showed up at the first Bubba Gump Shrimp Co.'s opening in Monterey and was hired on the spot. He has since made his impersonation a full-time job, traveling to restaurant openings and special events.

"The beauty of playing a fictitious character is that everybody knows it's a fantasy," Weber said. "And the park setting is perfect."

Does Forrest Gump himself feel at home? "I'll ride roller coasters if I hold Jenny's hand," Weber's Gump said. "And Little Forrest likes them. But I didn't realize there were volcanoes in Virginia. Mama never explained that to me."



Forrest Gump explains life and shrimp at Paramount's Kings Dominion.

Do you have a tip for The LOOP? News or stories at your park, zoo, aquarium, or museum to share? Call Eric Minton toll free at 888/902-LOOP (in North America) or 912/971-4404. Send material to Eric Minton at 118 Huntington Chase Circle, Warner Robins, Ga. 31088, USA
 E-mail: ericminton@worldnet.att.net