

Lobby Collection Another Memory Maker At Disney's Pop Century Resort

Pop culture on display

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — From mood rings to 8-track tapes, surfboards to pet rocks, Superman to saddle shoes, so much nostalgia pours from Disney's Pop Century Resort that a lobby hobby for guests could be "Walkin' the Wall."

The Wall, in this case, is a memory lane of wall-mounted "shadow boxes" brimming with the fads, fashions, music, toys and trinkets from the 1950s, '60s, '70s, '80s and '90s. It's across from the check-in desk for Disney's newest value-priced resort, a whimsical layout of lodge buildings marked by iconic monuments to yesteryear, including a Big Wheel, Rubik's Cube, Play-Doh can and jukebox.

Jayne Alcorn, show production designer with Walt Disney Imagineering, led Disney's treasure hunt. To help set the nostalgic tone of the resort, she and her team spent six months combing every flea market, antiques shop, yard sale and vintage clothing store they could find as far north as Massachusetts and as far west as California.

"We struck out after what America was playing with, what it was wearing, eating, what the popular TV shows and movies were, what inventions came out and what families did for vacation," she says.

Fifty years surrendered amazing finds. Alcorn and her team amassed around 750 items for the timeline collection. And when their punch list lacked that special nugget to make a decade complete, there was always the online auction world of eBay.

When Disney's Pop Century Resort guests go "Walkin' the Wall," the way-back memories will gush faster than you can say "Leave It To Beaver."

From the 1950s: a Betty Crocker cookbook, Lionel train set, hula-hoop, Silly Putty. Disneyland opened. Television gave us "Mickey Mouse Club," "77 Sunset Strip" and "The Honeymooners." Cootie and Pick Up Stix were the games America played. Home canning was the rage and be-boppers at the corner diner "turned the page" of their tableside push-button music selectors to hear their favorite Elvis or Frankie Avalon 45.

Superman and Roy Rogers were the "action heroes" of the era, transistor radios were as ever-present as today's cellular phones and a small country could fit inside a woman's "beehive" hair-do.

Of course the '50s — and the collection — wouldn't be complete without saddle shoes, a poodle skirt and letter sweater. Movies and restaurants were drive-ins — and that'll be 25 cents for the ham and eggs, please.

America hit the road in the 1960s; our motoring passion gave rise to chain motels and fueled a “golden era” of postcards and tacky souvenirs. Ever groovy, we laced up our suede boots, flashed peace symbols and worshipped Peter Max. Play-Doh, surfing, the Twist and Man on the Moon! helped stamp the '60s. TV rode our space craze with “My Favorite Martian” and the “Jetsons.”

Remember pet rocks, lava lamps, 8-track tapes and disco? Then you remember the 1970s. In our hip-hugging jeans and double-knit leisure suits we caught “Saturday Night Fever,” boogied to Donna Summer, and YMCA'd to The Village People. Who wasn't riveted to “Star Wars”? Or Bond, James Bond? That bright yellow “Happy Face” had a smile as wide as '70s bell-bottoms, remember? And the “Rocky Horror Picture Show” boasts legions of fans to this day.

Greatest hits of the 1980s? Microwave cooking hit the big time. So did fitness — from Deal-A-Meal diets to countless aerobics videos and books. America went gaga over Cabbage Patch Dolls and Trivial Pursuit.

America in the 1990s moved. On skateboards, snowboards or inline skates. Technology gave us cellular phones and portable computers. “Save the Earth” gave us something to rally around. TV gave us Salad Shooter commercials. And if you knew sushi, you knew the '90s.

Whether they linger at Maxwell Smart, or the soda fountain scenes stir up three-scoop memories, Alcorn thinks time travelers of all ages will gravitate to the giant collection.

“We think guests will just come in and reminisce on their own,” she says. “Who could not be moved by all these memories?”