

'Florida was to America what America had always been to the rest of the world
— a fresh, free, unspoiled start.'

— SUSAN ORLEAN
FROM *THE ORCHID THIEF*

Moving scenes of a dream

'How did you do that?' I ask Lynn Tomlinson as I sit blinking at images of vintage Florida she has brought to life in ways I've never seen.



LYNN TOMLINSON:
The animator turns a discerning gaze to the past.

fresh pizzazz.

At her home-based studio not far

Some scenes are familiar to those of us who paw through the Sunshine State's past: postcards showing sandy beaches and palmetto-strewn paths, gals in aqua bathing suits and guys in plaid madras shorts.

But Tomlinson has given them

FLORIDA FLASHBACK

JOY WALLACE DICKINSON

from the University of Central Florida, we're watching a near-final edit of her video documentary about Central Florida tourism, *Wish You Were Here*.

In one image, based on old postcards, I see a vintage Nash Rambler swoop into the frame and drive up to a 1950s Central Florida motel; in another, a 1920s auto seems to putter up a rolling road, into the distance of a long-ago Florida landscape.

Tomlinson is an award-winning animator, documentarian and sculp-

tor who focuses on community arts, but right now, she seems to me more like a magician.

She has used animation techniques to add dimension and movement to vintage images, enhancing a viewer's appreciation of them and the humor and history they reveal.

In *Wish You Were Here*, funded by a grant from the Florida Humanities Council, Tomlinson explores "the history of tourism and its impact on the culture and landscape of the region," she says.

That's a big, important topic, but



Vintage brochures and postcards come to life in animator Lynn Tomlinson's hands.

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ROLLINS COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Documentaries look at life in 'Dream State'

FLASHBACK FROM J1

in her artist's hands, never ponderous.

How could it be, with the archival images — both still and moving — that she has collected?

From Santa to Spiro

We see costumed conquistadors and Southern belles walking hand in hand at Cypress Gardens in its mid-20th-century prime, under the master showman's hand of its owner Dick Pope (seen playing a water-skiing piano).

We see a pioneer woman standing on an immense alligator and an orange-juice-swigging Santa Claus perched on a Welcome to Florida sign.

There's former Vice President Spiro Agnew squinting through sunglasses at a space launch, pictures of old steamboats, new health-rejuvenating spas and tin-can tourists pulling their pooch in a tiny trailer behind their Florida home on wheels.

Tomlinson has shaped this rich content into four sections on the Sunshine State as a site for thrill-seeking, rejuvenation, diversity and the creation of ideal landscapes.

She has laced her images with insights from Central Florida academic experts including Ben Brotemarkle, Kristen Congdon, Rick Foglesong, Maurice O'Sullivan, Abraham Pizam and Elayne Zorn. Area poet and storyteller Valada S. Flewellyn narrates.

In 26 fast-moving minutes, it's a great reminder that — although times have changed and, yes, we're a "megastate" now, with all the weighty social problems that involves — Florida never has been and perhaps never will be like any other state, even its coastal counterpart, California.

This may be especially true in Orlando, where, in Tomlinson's words, "your city's day job is to serve as the



ROLLINS COLLEGE ARCHIVES

For her documentary 'Wish You Were Here,' Lynn Tomlinson used images including a view of the popular Sanlando Springs. The land is now private, part of a gated subdivision in Seminole County.

world's vacation spot."

Living in a dream

From early in our state's existence, we got wrapped up in Americans' dreams of vacation bliss or a better life, and so it's no accident that the word "dream" has appeared in the title of many recent books about Florida, including University of South Florida professor Gary Mormino's *Land of Sunshine: State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida*.

Tomlinson's *Wish You Were Here* is one of several video projects that the Florida Humanities Council funded to complement an hourlong documentary, *The Florida Dream*, inspired by Mormino's book. It will air this week on WMFE-Channel 24.

Teachers, you will especially want to check out the resources the Humanities Council has placed online to accompany *The Florida Dream* at floridadream.org.



ROLLINS COLLEGE ARCHIVES

Winter Park's now-gone Langford Hotel is the scene of poolside relaxation by tourists and locals in the 1960s, in a postcard scene used in 'Wish You Were Here,' funded by the Florida Humanities Council.

'THE FLORIDA DREAM: THE STORY OF MODERN FLORIDA AND HOW IT GREW'

What: A one-hour public television documentary premiering statewide Thursday at 9 p.m., locally on WMFE-Channel 24. Using archival film, vintage photographs and interviews, the documentary traces how migration, immigration, civil rights, tourism, retirement, technology and politics changed the face of Florida.

Who: Produced by the Florida Humanities Council and WEDU-TV in Tampa.

For more: See floridadream.org for audio interviews, historical photographs, bibliographies and school lesson plans created by Florida teachers and keyed to Sunshine State standards.

In the Cocoa area, WBCC plans to show *Dream* at 8 p.m. Friday, with Tomlinson's video at 9.

She will be setting up other screenings around Central Florida in the near future.

An artist's vision

Watching Tomlinson work is a great reminder that we often take artists for granted; her video swims along past the viewer's eyes, rich with amusement and insights. The hours of work by her and others behind it are invisible.

As she reviews the result of their labors and the moving images of old-time tourist heaven roll past us, she wears a pair of glasses I absolutely covet.

Topped with pearly aqua metal and trimmed with what look like tiny rhinestones at the corners, the frames would have been the envy of my mom's women friends in the 1950s.

They're real vintage too, Tomlinson tells me later, when I ask, from a shop that carries old frames.

Like the old Florida she is working to reveal, they are

funky and fun, a confection of sea-splash color that sparkles.

Let's hope that as long as the waves splash on the beaches that are not too far from anywhere in Florida, and the sunlight warms our hearts when times are chilly and our bodies aren't well, a sense of fun will continue to keep the old "Dream State" afloat.

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