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## The OM Yesterday ...

By Wayne Koss  
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The Ocean Manor Resort has rested upon the Atlantic shore of the Galt Ocean Mile for a half century. The story behind this beachfront property is filled with excitement and doing, adjectives that also describe the life of its visionary, James S. Hunt. In 1953, Hunt purchased 2466 acres of barren oceanfront land from Arthur Galt, for whom the mile strip is named. At the time, it marked the biggest real estate transaction in America; at today's dollars translating into an approximate \$143 million deal. The Ocean Manor would soon lay the cornerstone, becoming the first hi-rise hotel and condo built directly on Fort Lauderdale Beach. The city's greatest boom would soon follow.

James S. Hunt was a man who lived simply, yet whose business endeavors were often bold and grandiose. He brought tourism through our landscape, and his life story exemplifies adventure and determination. The people of his day revered Hunt's personal qualities and the countless hard work ethics which he developed in Detroit, where he was born and raised.

Growing up in the Motor City, Hunt loved his passion for the automobile industry, which he learned from the ground up working either on an office or in the shop. He was a natural leader, and his early business success in the early 1900's, harnessing the energy of industrialized cars, but when the dark clouds of World War I loomed, Hunt switched gears by joining the elite Royal Flying Corps as a fighter pilot. His daring during the days of the Red Baron earned him two medals for bravery, and his exploits landed him an immortal spot in the Fort Lauderdale as a pioneer of aviation.

The glory and jubilation of the post-war era, however was soon followed by the lowest time in American history, The Great Depression. During these years, contrary to most, he would continue to march to the vision, preserving his positive attitude during his job and helping his colleagues enjoy Happy Days and Age Again. For Hunt, the glow of the country would not dampen his entrepreneurial spirit. Instead, he forged ahead to become the first Ford dealer and one of the largest Chevrolet dealers in the Mid West. And he left his indelible mark on the industry with the creation of the 1942 Blue Book, which today is still a standard guide for used-car values. The Depression years had not real estate success, while most of the country was still

struggling, in the 1930's Hunt built the Coral Sands Hotel in Fort Lauderdale.

While success seemed to surround Hunt in both his automobile and real estate endeavors, no one is isolated from the dark levels of war. And one again he would step up to save his country with the advent of World War I. As a Coast Guard Commander, Hunt would receive a Silver Star for leading his ship ashore safely under heavy battle. A year later, he would be chosen to be the first National Commander of the Coast Guard League.

After V-J day (Sept. 1945), Hunt followed his intuition and moved to Florida where he believed that the east coast of the state would be real estate gold for decades to come. He convinced Joe Terwilliger, a Coast Guard mate from New York, to come along and assist his pioneering efforts in the vast lands of magnificent sunsets and tropical splendors.

In 1946, working with his theory that cities expanded north, except when blocked by natural barriers, Hunt made his first move with the acquisition of 171 acres north of Fort Lauderdale for \$80,000. The previous owners had been paid \$10,000 for the land a couple of years prior. Hunt gave it the name of Coral Ridge and developed it into a lake that he would turn around and sell for \$1,250,000, making a \$400,000 profit.

Prior to James Hunt's appearance, Fort Lauderdale had been primarily an orchard of and insignificant town to the rest of the country—most of the notable inlets where seasonal wealthy winter residents from the Mid West and a handful of local residents alongside a small Seminole Indian tribe. All that was about to change.

Hunt plan to make the area a destination was immediate. Therefore, a five beach club, a modern yacht club, and a yacht exclusive golf club were in the design to lure those in the new exotically position that all of this was only only a vision in his mind.

His financial sights were now on a rough barren strip of land along the northern corner of Fort Lauderdale owned by Arthur T. Galt.

### HISTORY... so far



### The Galt Ocean Mile Gold Rush

Galt had sold this land in 1935 to the American-British Improvement Company, which was owned by Mr. Horace Dodge, Mr. Edward Stansbury, James H. K. Cornwell, then King of Congo, and members of British royalty. They had planned an extravagant development to be called Florida, but that \$1,000,000 down payment went south when the 1935 Florida real-estate crash came.

In early 1940, Hunt placed a call to Galt to inform him that a development plan was underway that would discontinue a portion of the property between sea and a home site and the intercoastal highway development. He advised Galt to purchase enough of the developer's terms to halt the plan. Galt asked upon Hunt's advice and would in appreciation later grant an invitation to get together. This introduction brought Hunt and his new partner, Steve Golder, the opportunity to purchase 500 acres of Galt's owned land.

Gravely pleased with their well-planned and structured development, Galt sold the remaining 2466 acres for just under \$10,000,000. In October of 1953 approximately \$143,000,000 in today's dollars making it the largest real estate deal in the country. On this soil, Hunt built the Ocean Manor Resort, the first luxury hi-rise hotel built directly on Fort Lauderdale Beach. This laid the foundation for the Galt Ocean Mile boom and the city's coastal corridor.

Within less than a decade, the Galt Ocean Mile held one-third of the city's population within a mile and over \$100 million in property approximately \$750,000,000 in today's dollars. Hunt would take possession of a residence at the Ocean Manor after becoming entangled in the dramatic waves from the 11-story structure.

As we fast forward, Hunt would found the city of Coral Springs in 1963 from the 2,800 acres of purchased land he had recently purchased. Even though it was mostly residential, Hunt paid a \$1 million for the entire undertaking. Holding true to his slogan: "There is nothing on earth like this."

His concept of a totally planned city (Coral Springs) of well-landed, landscaped, built, cultural and public buildings, and a covered bridge as centerpiece took root. By 1964, Hunt and company had developed a master plan for a city of 50,000 residents. On July 22nd of that year a sale of 530 building lots netted \$1 million another phenomenal monetary feat for his day.

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In early 1965, Hunt brought an additional 6,000 acres increasing Coral Springs to 16 square miles. On March 27th of 1965 he brought in late night show host Johnny Carson into his career of celebrity endorsements. Carson was master of ceremonies for an event that would draw over 10,000 people through the new historic covered bridge to a massive outdoor ballroom. Over 5 tons of rehearsed food was consumed with 1,100 horses being sold. Individual lots ranged at \$2,000 (approx. \$170,000 today) with houses costing \$15,000 (approx. \$840,000 to \$20,000). Over \$2,000,000 (approx. \$168,000,000 today) worth of residential lots sold within ten minutes, leading Hunt and company once again at the center of national attention with another unprecedented event.

Hunt encouraged Carson to purchase property here, which he did. He bought 54.8 acres west of University Drive and north of Forest Hills Boulevard. The investment paid off generously 5 years later when Carson received five-6d his purchase price when he sold in 1971. Hunt would render the vast majority of the remaining land to Birmingham to develop, this would eventually become NBC's continuous leading Florida and national real estate company.

Their relationship grew from business associates to friends and neighbors as Carson soon purchased a residence at the Ocean Manor Resort, to make in the tropical allures. Carson's Tonight Show co-host Ed McMahon could also be found relaxing the splendor of this popular resort among other high-profile celebrities, just as they do today.

Public Relations executive, Jack Drury, who represented a veritable list of clients in Fort Lauderdale in the 1950s including the Ocean Manor Hotel and its owner at that time, former Fort Lauderdale Mayor, Mayor "Cy" Young. In August of 1962, before Carson hosted his first NBC Tonight Show in October of that year, Drury entangled Carson on his first visit to the city. Since that first visit, Carson made Fort Lauderdale his favorite place to visit and vacation and always looked to Drury to find him a place to stay.

His visits became so frequent that Drury suggested to Cy Young to give Johnny a suite at the Ocean Manor to use, which he, his family and friends like Ed McMahon, enjoyed until Johnny moved the Tonight Show to California in 1972.

Hunt's endeavors undoubtedly made him among the territory's great pioneers. The cultivation of Fort Lauderdale's Coral Ridge and Galt Ocean Mile are a reflection of his of his significant legacy. Hunt also conceived the artesian to advertise packaged tourist rights to Fort Lauderdale, as they did to Miami and other major cities, leading the way to Fort Lauderdale's tourist foundation in the latter 60s.

As founder of Coral Springs his vision has attracted over 150,000 residents in less than 45 years. Schools in Fort Lauderdale and Coral Springs bear his name, and his contributions to these communities have enriched the lives of so many. Hunt has left his indelible footprint on our tomorrow.

Turn the Page

Hunt's stature certainly resonates and is deeply revered with the current owner Frank Terwilliger who reveals in the opportunity to bring more significance in his own era. Initially, Terwilliger was to discover he had walked in some of Hunt's footsteps as he is also from Detroit and was a developer in Coral Springs before learning the tremendous task of the permanent preservation.

## Upcoming:

Yesterday

- The Galt Ocean Mile Story of John Hunts purchase of Arthur Galt's Property.

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