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Orlando's 100th birthday present

Hampton Dunn
ORLANDO'S 100th BIRTHDAY PRESENT

By HAMPTON DUNN

ORLANDO --- Orlandoans, who are enterprising, civic-minded people, wanted to do something spectacular to celebrate the 100th birthday anniversary of "The City Beautiful" in 1957 --- so they did!

On the big day, Oct. 5, that year, the gorgeous Orlando Centennial Fountain sprung into action. The fabulous fount with its ever-changing lights at night and its dancing waters by day offers a breathtaking sight to visitors passing Lake Eola near downtown.

The waters spew skyward from an elaborate rig that cost $160,000. It uses 6,200 gallons of water per minute while in operation (the water is pumped out of the lake and back into it) and it concludes its color cycle within 10 minutes. Sixty-four red, blue and amber flood lights are located underwater beneath the fountain structure. Florescent lights are located underneath the plexiglass dome in the center of the fountain.

Orlando’s birthday gift was the realization of an idea that originated when four local businessmen attended a convention in Washington, D.C., saw the Sheraton Plaza’s 50-foot illuminated sprouts of water, and came back home wondering if this city couldn’t have something as beautiful. The Chamber of Commerce men were George Sipple, Stuart Johnson, Earl Brown and Bill Davis. They got the ball rolling and the fountain was ready to go on Centennial Day.

Waters from the fountains of five nations were poured into the Orlando fountain at the opening ceremony, recognizing the nations that have ruled Florida---Spain, England, France, the Confederacy and the U.S.