



Chief Phillip Martin

THE OWNERS

Not long ago the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians was among the poorest people in one of the poorest states in the nation. As recently as 1965 the average life span of tribal members was just 45 years. Infant mortality was alarmingly high and unemployment was stuck at above 75 percent. But that all began to change when the Choctaw Tribe, led by Chief Phillip Martin, began to pursue an ambitious strategy of economic development that had never been done in Indian country. In just one generation, the Mississippi Choctaws have made the following accomplishments:

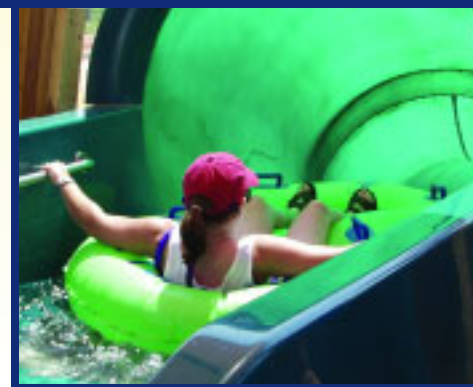
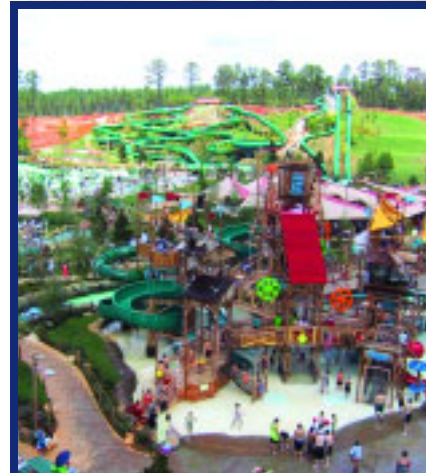
- The Tribe is sole owner of 12 enterprises and majority owner of three joint ventures.
- These companies directly employ 8,000 Mississippians who earn approximately \$150 million in wages annually, making the Tribe one of the top-five private employers in the state.
- Recent economic activities had a \$1.2 billion economic impact on the State of Mississippi, according to a major university study.
- The Tribe's operations and construction projects created almost \$40 million in Mississippi tax revenues.
- Tribal industries are involved in commercial printing, construction, remote sensing, plastic molding, forestry, electronic assembly and an advertising agency.
- Current customers include Ford, McDonald's, Pepsi-Co, General Motors, and Caterpillar, among others.
- The Tribe has multi-national manufacturing facilities with eight industrial parks located in Mississippi, Texas, Illinois and Mexico.
- The percentage of income derived from welfare among tribal members has dropped 67 percent since 1981.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is a sovereign government that uses these company revenues to provide traditional services to tribal members. The Tribe operates its own school system, health care, judicial system, social service, police, fire protection and other services. In 1994, the Tribe established a fully paid college tuition program available to all tribal members. In 1982, 31 tribal members had some college education; in Fall 2002, 452 tribal members were enrolled in college through the scholarship program.

The dream of a major resort destination took hold in 1994 when Chief Martin and the Choctaw people oversaw the opening of the hugely successful 100-room Silver Star Hotel and Casino. That one property has since evolved into the Pearl River Resort. The resort complex now includes the 36-hole Dancing Rabbit Championship Golf Course (designed by Tom Fazio and Jerry Pate), the \$300 million Golden Moon Hotel and Casino plus a 280-acre recreational lake. The vision of the Chief, the Tribal Council and Jay Dorris, the Pearl River Resort CEO, is to continue to develop Pearl River Resort into the destination of choice for those within a 250-mile radius. Geyser Falls Water Theme Park represents the initial stage of the Resort's Lake Project, a primary element of becoming a destination.



DISCOVERING THE MAGIC OF GEYSER FALLS WATER THEME PARK



Indian legend holds that the new Geyser Falls Water Theme Park in Choctaw, Mississippi, is built on a spot where magical waters once bubbled to the surface in strange and wonderful ways.

While many legends tend to be all wet, the waters of Geyser Falls may indeed have magical qualities. After all, in just a few short years the region has been magically transformed from an economically depressed Indian reservation to a booming resort destination that serves millions of guests each year.



THE WATERPARK

The Geysers Falls Water Theme Park opened July 9 and is the latest jewel in the Choctaw Empire. While \$20 million and a lot of pedigreed professionals went a long way in making the park a success, there was a little Geysers Falls magic at work as well.

Guests to Mississippi's newest waterpark are quickly immersed in the enchanted waters. The front entrance of the 15-acre park, which features steamy springs with bubble pots, dancing water and wildlife sound effects, cost a cool \$1 million alone. This grand entrance illuminates the park's back-story. Based on Choctaw legend, the story line holds that Afo, a Choctaw elder, was plunged into Geysers Falls after he hurled himself and his yellow car over Good Golly Gully. After discovering the healing powers of the waters he invited the community and even the wildlife to join him in the fun.



THE DESIGNERS AND BUILDERS

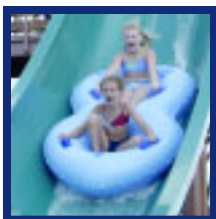
The Tribe continues its successful strategy of developing new enterprises by hiring top-flight industry professionals to help design, build and eventually train the established tribal and resort management to take over.

The original planning for Geysers Falls Water Theme Park began in November 2001 with a team of experts. Michael Lee of Michael Lee Design headed the design team, which included Pat Scanlon of PRS Associates, Greg Cloward, EDSA Cloward, and Herb Ramsaier, the park's landscape architect. Michael has a number of projects to his credit including Universal Studios, Lucas Attraction, Children Television Workshop, and concept themeing for Atlantis Resort. Pat and Herb are both former executives of Walt Disney Imagineering and have extensive backgrounds with numerous resort and amusement projects such as Epcot and Typhoon Lagoon.

The park general contractor was Western Water Features. Owned by Dan Parkes, WWF's projects include Waterworld USA, Hawaiian Waters Adventure Park and Raging Waters, San Dimas, CA.

The civil, electrical, mechanical and water feature engineer was Greg Cloward of EDSA Cloward. Greg has engineered many water features, including Universal Studio's Islands of Adventure, Jurassic Park the Ride, Atlantis Resort and Lost City at Sun City. The slides and many of the water attractions at Geysers Falls were manufactured and installed by Whitewater West Industries.

In choosing attractions for the park, Chief Martin wanted features that were going to be cutting edge and exciting. Whitewater West responded with their latest invention, the Boomerango, which was christened the Backsplash! Geysers Falls represents the first installation of this ride in the U.S.



The park also installed Whitewater's Superbowl, which the park calls Cyclone. Geysers Falls also features the Roundabout River—a 1,200-foot long continuous river.

The park's wave pool is called Thunder Lake and features sound effects and a geyser that shoots 60-feet high before every wave cycle. Three double tube slides are on the appropriately named Pipe's Peak. Mt. Everwet is home to three speed slides sistered with lava, waterfalls and a rushing river theme.

For kids, Whitewater installed their Rainforest aquaplay structure, here called the Leaky Creaky Water Factory. Michael Lee and EDSA Cloward also designed a one-of-its-kind children's activity area called Lil' Squirt's Hollow, a zero-depth play area with padded floor, small slides, and numerous unique water features.

THE START-UP MANAGEMENT

Steve Mayer came aboard in January of 2002 when his company, Cross Country Parks, Inc., was contracted for three years as the general management, marketing and operational start-up company for Geysers Falls.

Steve is quick to point out that an important part of his team is Kim Beranek, who he brought from Concord, California's Waterworld USA, where she had been Park Director.

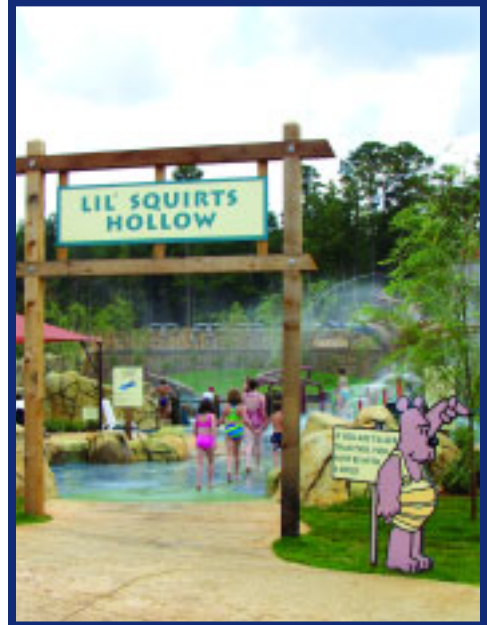
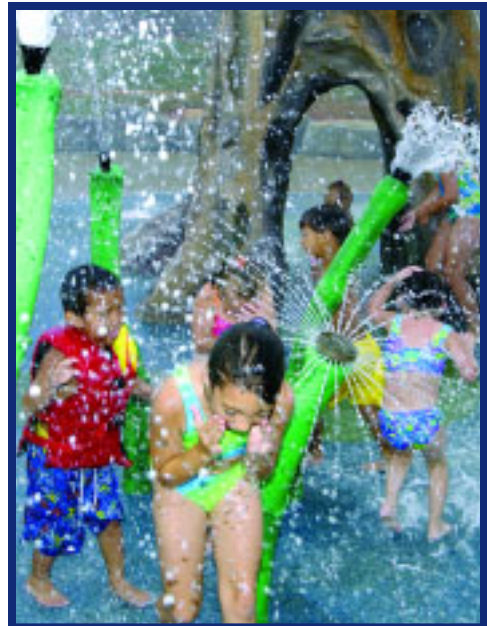
"Kim and I have been working together since 1995, and we're an effective team," says Steve. "Kim manages the day-to-day operations for the park while I handle our out-of-park activities. She has been in aquatics for 10 years, so she really knows the operational aspects of the business. She especially distinguishes herself through her ability to control costs while maximizing our revenue opportunities. This allows me to focus on the advertising, promotions and group sales."

"Our main objective is to train the management staff to run the park independently of outside assistance." He said, "We are working hard to train the staff so that the operation can be run totally in-house. We enjoy the reward of training new managers in the waterpark business, to see them develop into professionals, then take over the business."

He said Cross Country's objective is to set up the marketing and operational systems, hire and train the local management team, and then integrate the park's systems with the resort. Having been involved in waterpark start-ups on six occasions since 1988, Steve says there are three stages on the road to park self-sufficiency:

- Year I: Get open, be safe, control costs and hold on tight. If one compares start-up successes and failures over the last 10 years, the most significant reason a park fails has been not opening on time and missing the up-front cash flow. Also, marketing and group sales are sometimes neglected in year one. "We've been successful selling groups and pre-selling tickets as early as six to eight months before park opening," says Steve.
- Year II: Focus on management development and tuning the systems.
- Year III: Coach the team and implement the succession plan. "In the case of Geysers Falls, we also must integrate the waterpark systems with the resort," says Steve. "Then the new team is on their own and we're hopefully onto the next project."

He said, "We always find it rewarding to look back at the original site and construction pictures and now see a beautiful park. And it's even more rewarding to see managers new to waterparks grow and take over the operation of the park."



Geysers Falls Water Theme Park Choctaw, Mississippi

WWW.GEYSERFALLS.COM

Owners: Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

Admission Prices: Over 48"—\$21.99
Under 48"—\$15.99

Size/Acres: 15 acres

Capacity: 4,000 to 6,000

Number of Employees: Year Round—9
Seasonal—300

Clientel: 94 percent local; 6 percent tourist

Future Expansion Plans: 9 acre white sand beach and beach club





THE OPERATION

With Geysers Falls opening July 9 and Mississippi schools going back in early August, the first season was only 52 days long. Despite the short season, park attendance hit projections, and the project achieved the Tribe's goals of being a wholesome, family attraction for the tribal members and local community, as well as helping further establish the Pearl River Resort as a destination.

If not for the success of the Tribe, a high-quality attraction like Geysers Falls would otherwise be rare in a smaller market like eastern Mississippi, where the population base is 240,000 within 40 miles. The closest community to the park is Philadelphia, Mississippi, a rural town of only 6,000 residents.

One of the unexpected by-products of Geysers Falls' big splash in the Mississippi market is that it helped to raise other boats as well. The park's closest competition is Rapids in Jackson, Mississippi, about 75 miles to the west. Steve says, "At first we thought Geysers Falls could negatively impact our nearest competition, The Rapids in Jackson, but fortunately it seems Geysers Falls may have had the opposite effect. Rather than taking business, we expanded the segment. Gary Bennet (Rapids owner) tells us his attendance was actually up about 15 percent. Our heavy advertising and hype in the Jackson market drove us business, but I assume it also increased waterpark awareness."

One of the greatest challenges faced by the park was the local school schedule. Schools are dismissed the second and third weeks of May, and some schools started back as early as August 7. With local students returning to school in the heat of the summer, Geysers Falls operated with an after-school schedule. Weekends continued to prove very successful along with strong September picnic buyouts. Both fortunately and unfortunately, there were even a few Saturdays the park was sold out.




THE FUTURE

Chief Martin and the Tribe are by no means finished. Future resort developments include a \$40 million Health & Wellness Center (currently under construction), a 6-acre white sand beach and Beach Club (opening Summer 2003), the 280-acre Lake Pushmataha with camp grounds and RV spaces, a 300-room hotel, championship stick ball and baseball fields, a 10,000 seat amphitheater, fairgrounds and a retail promenade.

For 2003, Pearl River Resort will open a new white sand beach. The facility is connected to Geysers Falls and will be operated by the current management team. The \$12 million expansion will be billed as the best beach in Mississippi with white sand, fresh water, a snorkel trail and even palm trees imported from Japan.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians is betting that they've only skimmed the surface of Geysers Falls' magic. And who can blame them? They're on an eight-year winning streak, after all.

As another Southern son used to say, when you're hot, you're hot. 





Front row—left to right: Kenny Love, Reagan Collins, Sallie Witt, Lori Knight
 Back row—left to right: Greg Mullen, Tonka Wallace, Chad Cannon, Kim Beranek, Renee Thedford

Steve Mayer, President, Cross Country Parks, Inc. is the start-up, general management and marketing consultant for Geysers Falls Water Theme Park. Steve has 16 years experience in the waterpark and family amusement business. He previously has served as General Manager of the 25-acre Hawaiian Waters Adventure Park on Oahu, Hawaii, and was also a waterpark start-up consultant for Horizon Amusement Group. Before the 1998 Hawaii project he had served as General Manager for Premier Parks' Waterworld USA waterpark in Northern California. Steve has now been on the start-up team of six waterparks, with a two-to three-year stint at each. He was also the former assistant general manager of the Phoenix Firebirds Triple-A baseball organization prior to major league expansion in Arizona. Steve resides in Reno, Nevada, with his wife Christine and two children.

You can reach Steve by calling: +775-329-9283 or by e-mailing: Steve@YouGotMayer.com



Steve Mayer ▶



Kim Beranek is the General Manager of Geysers Falls Water Theme Park, and COO of the Lake Project at Pearl River Resort. Kim has more than 12 years experience in the recreation and waterpark industry. She has a degree from California State University-Chico in Recreation Management and has worked in the non-profit, municipal and private sectors. She has experience in all aspects of waterpark management including park start-up for two properties, operations, revenue, maintenance, group sales and general management. Prior to her current position at Pearl River Resort, Kim was the Park Director for Waterworld USA, a Six Flags Waterpark. Kim is also a Certified Ellis Lifeguard Instructor, American Heart Association BLS CPR Instructor, Certified Pool Operator, Certified Food Safety Manager and a previously licensed Emergency Medical Technician. Kim currently resides in Philadelphia, Mississippi, with her husband Richard and two dogs. They are expecting their first child in early March of 2003.



Kim Beranek ▶

