

"The Moment of Discovery" diorama depicts a circa 1903 African safari stumbling across an anachronistic Jurassic world.

**BELOW:** Dinosaurs have a roaring good time as a safari stumbles into their domain.

# African Safari's Jurassic Surprise



And now for something completely different and eons away from the usual history-themed dioramas created by Toy Soldier Museum proprietor James H. Hillestad

Text and Photos: James H. Hillestad

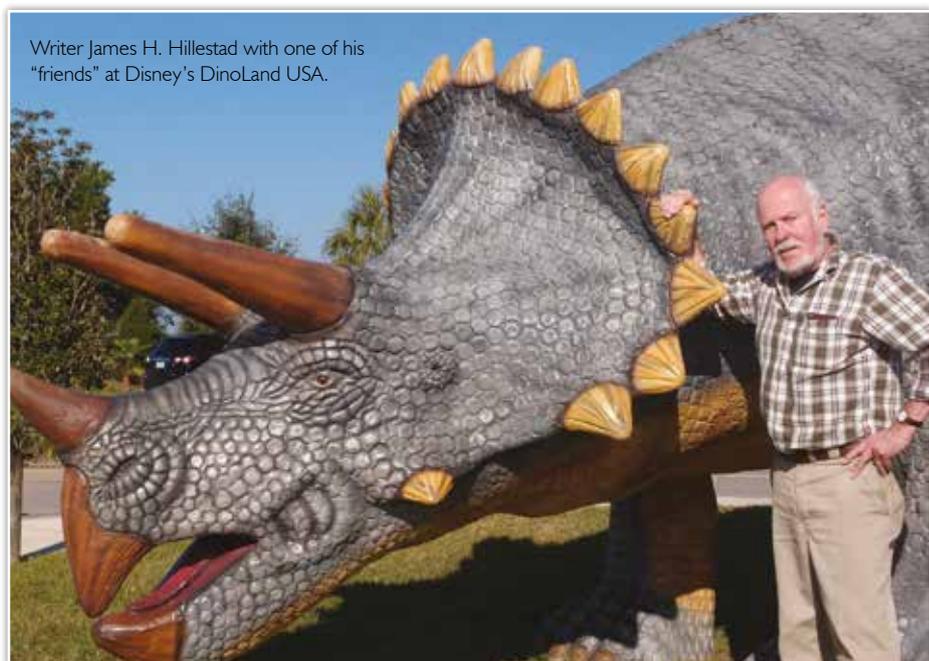
More than 10 years ago, my wife Carol and I went with the family to the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. The visit inspired my Walley World diorama, based on the iconic 1983 movie "National Lampoon's Vacation." It was highlighted in TS&MF issue 87.

Well in February 2015 we returned to Orlando and took in, among other sights, DinoLand USA in Disney's Animal Kingdom Theme Park.

Thoughts of another popular movie, 1993's "Jurassic Park," lingered in my head. I became inspired to create a miniature version of the Jurassic Park Preserve in a diorama titled "The Moment of Discovery."

## DINOSAUR DOOM

The scene focuses on a safari trekking through the African grasslands in 1903. Led by Capt. Cecil Goodheart of the British Army's Dorchester Regiment, the column suddenly encounters a surreal world of



Writer James H. Hillestad with one of his "friends" at Disney's DinoLand USA.



gigantic, prehistoric reptiles thought to have become extinct around 66 million years ago.

Brushing off bullets and spears is like child's play for the massive beasts ambushing the humans. Seeing one of the native bearers crushed under a dinosaur's foot, the rest of the men abandon their loads and try to run for their lives.

High on a rocky prominence lurks an early pterosaur, ready to swoop down on its prey. Meanwhile, a wounded albertosaurus enters the fray.

The painted metal 54-mm figures in the safari were made by the very creative Harold Pestana of Soldiers of the Queen, whom I profiled in TS&MF issue 135.

**ABOVE:** A pterosaur with bat-like wings awaits its turn to attack the puny human interlopers.

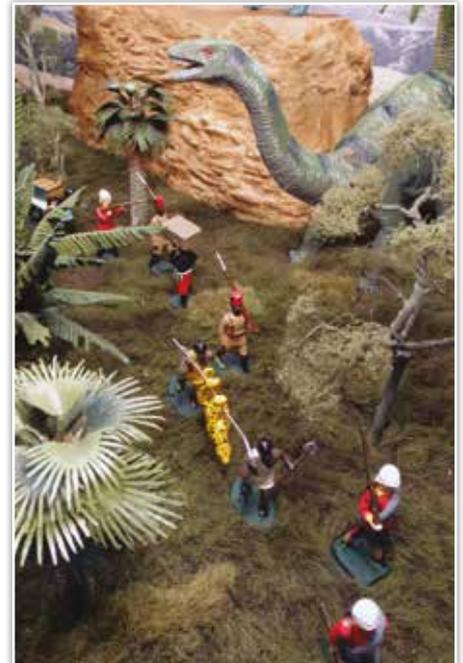
**ABOVE RIGHT:** An unfortunate safari bearer becomes a steppingstone for a massive dinosaur.

**RIGHT:** The column comes under attack by prehistoric beasts.

I found the impressive plastic dinosaurs at DinoLand USA.

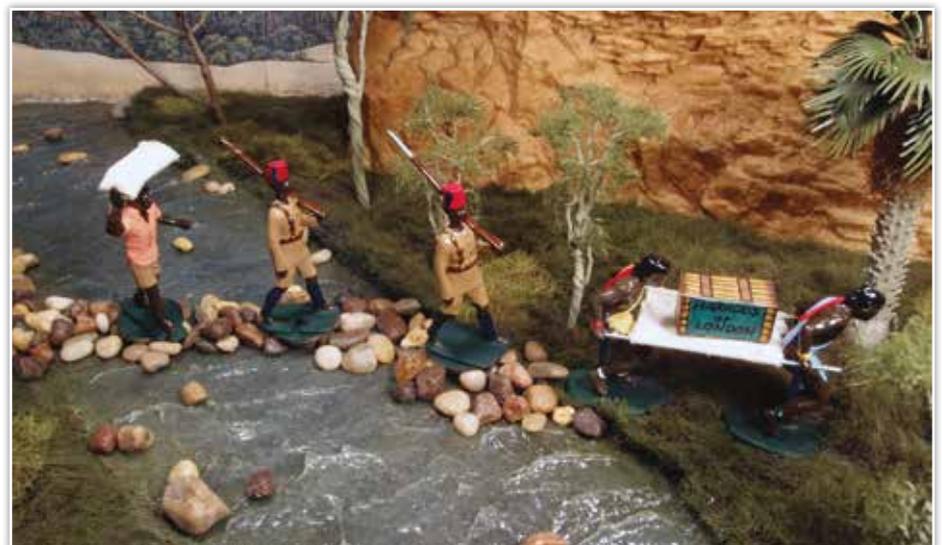
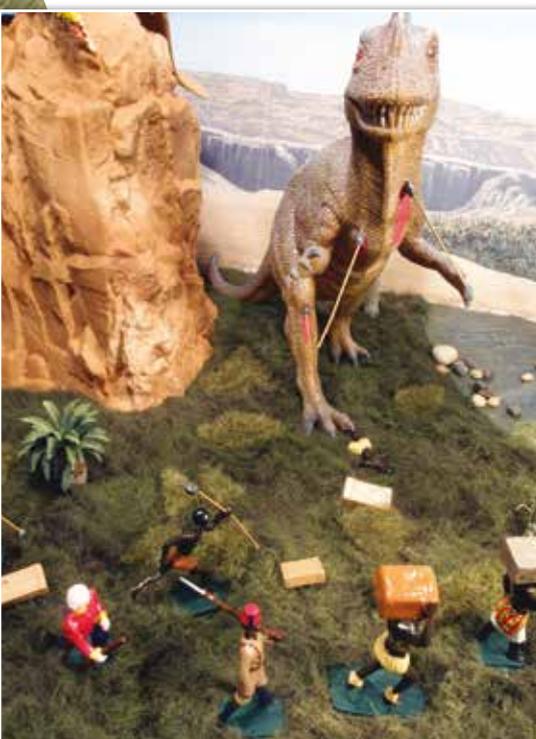
"The Moment of Discovery" diorama is currently on display at the Barrett Paradise Friendly Library in Cresco, Pa. According to feedback from the library staff, it's a huge hit with children entranced by the dinosaurs.

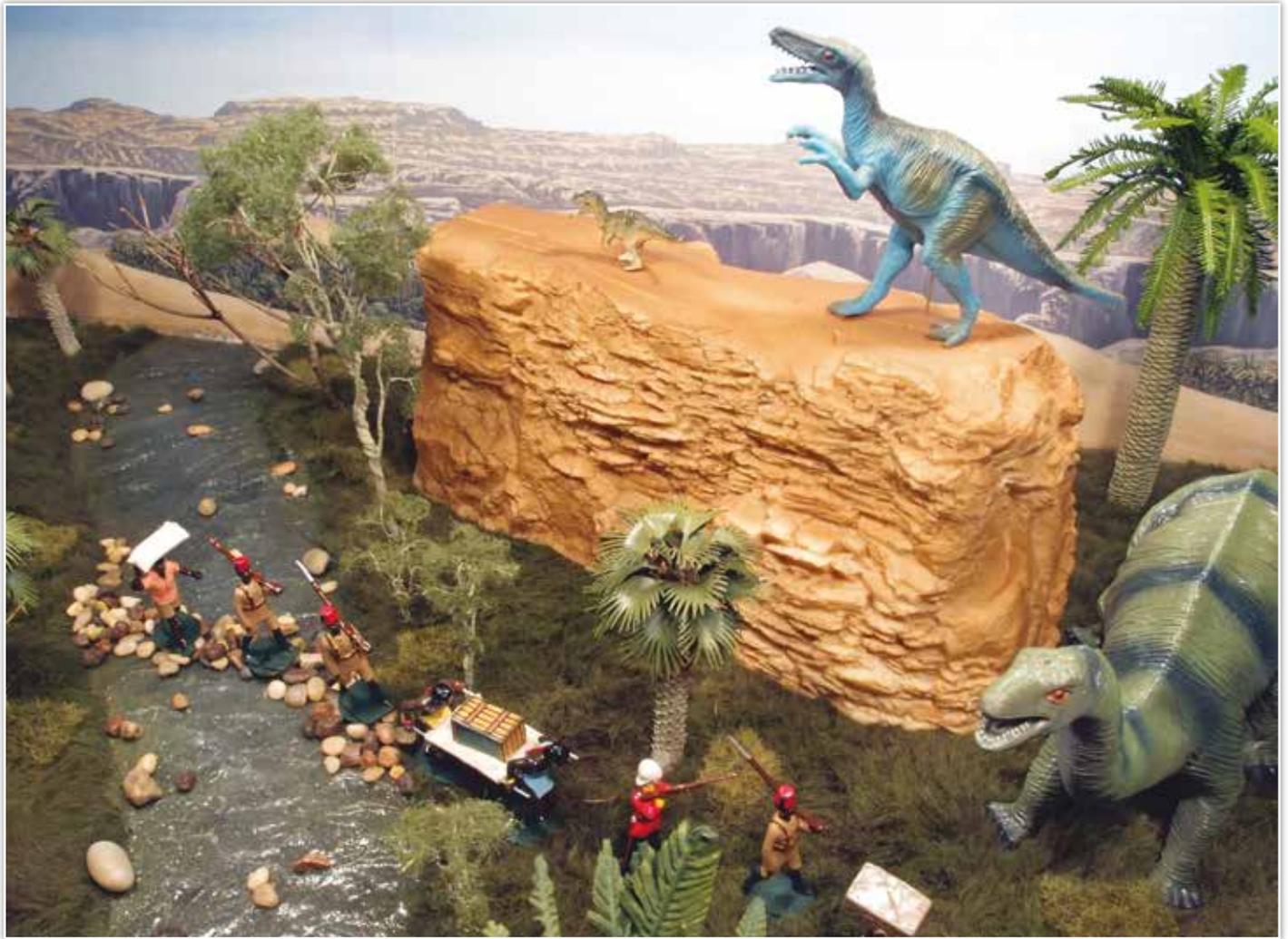
To paraphrase Walt Disney himself, "You can never stand still. You must explore and experiment" -- even if it's terrifying! ■



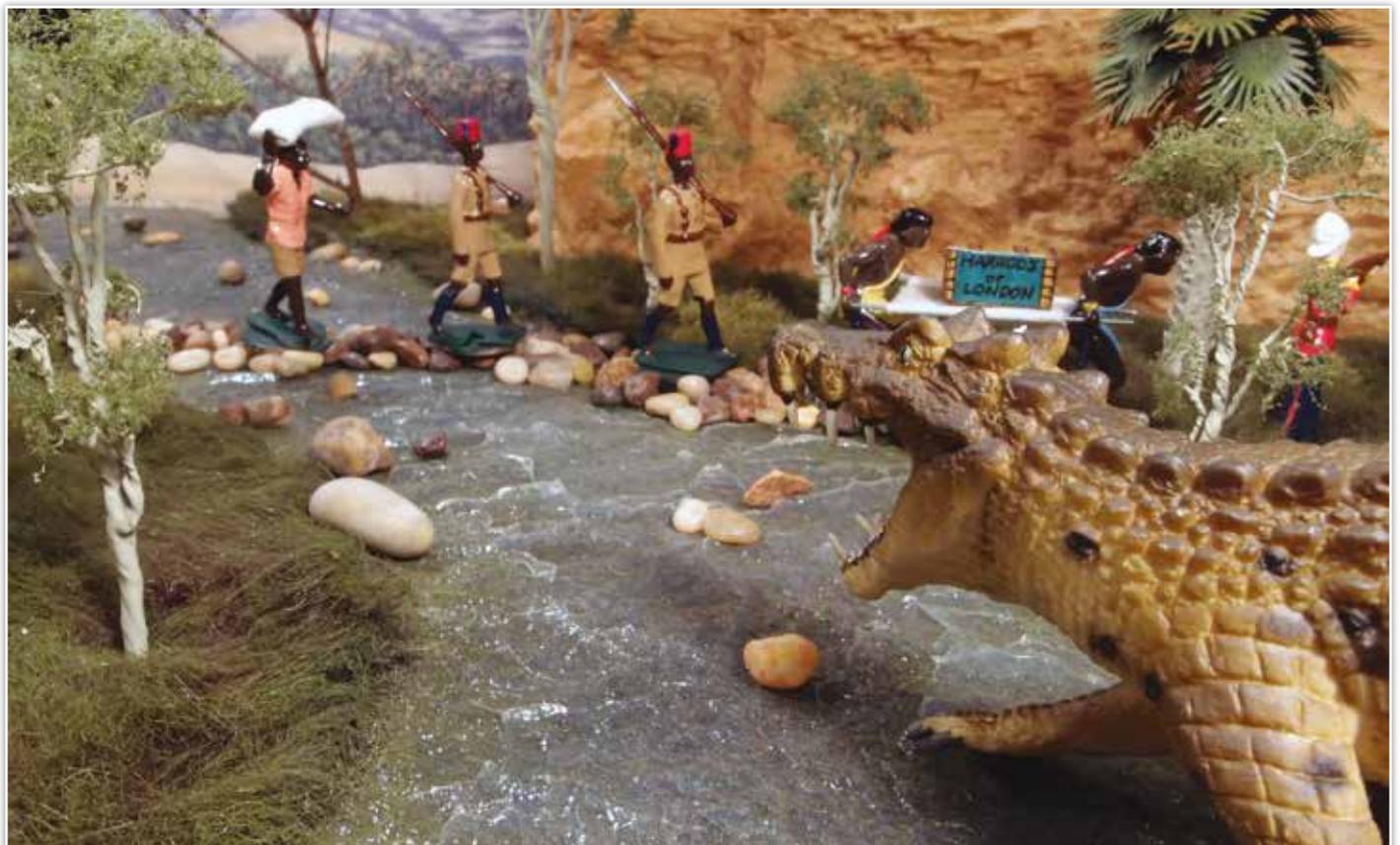
**LEFT:** Every man for himself!

**BELOW:** Litter bearers cross a creek carrying Capt. Goodheart's vital supply of fine wine just before all hell breaks loose.





**ABOVE:** Dinosaurs suddenly appear everywhere the doomed Capt. Goodheart and his men look. **BELOW:** A ravenous dinosaur charges his next meal.



## Revisiting Walley World Theme Park in Miniature

Now that summer is here, pack up your family like the Griswolds and make a road trip to Walley World -- at The Toy Soldier Museum in Cresco, Pa., USA.

Owner James H. Hillestad was inspired to create a 54-mm diorama depicting Walley World after a 2004 trip to Florida's Walt Disney World Resort with his grandchildren.

"National Lampoon's Vacation" has long been one of Jim's favorite movies. The 1983 comedy stars Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo as Clark and Ellen Griswold, with Anthony Michael Hall and Dana Barron as their children, Rusty and Audrey.

Filled with high spirits, the Chicago family loads into their pea green Ford station wagon for a two-week road trip to California. Their ultimate destination is Walley World. The fictional, moose-themed park is reminiscent of Disneyland in Anaheim.

They encounter screwball mishaps every step of the way.

### MOTION & MUSIC

Jim's 60 by 30-inch diorama portrays the movie moment when the Griswolds have finally arrived in the Walley World parking lot only to be informed by a security guard named Lasky (portrayed by John Candy) that the theme park is closed for maintenance.

The diorama incorporates a motorized turntable on which a colorful group of fanciful animals revolves. Palm trees and pink flamingos add to the setting, as does a photo backdrop of an amusement park.

Hidden behind the walls are two stereo speakers that play "Holiday Road," the film's theme song.

The figures don't look just like the actors. Jim has simply created a fun and fanciful tribute to one of his favorite films with his tongue firmly in his cheek.

Walley World and Jim's other displays make it worth a trip to the Pennsylvania museum. Hopefully, your journey will be mishap-free, unlike the Griswolds.

--Stuart A. Hessney

*Editor's Note: This original version of this article appeared back in TSC&MF issue 87. But please rest assured that the Walley World diorama remains open for viewing by anyone who makes the pilgrimage to The Toy Soldier Museum.*

### about the writer

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum in Cresco, Pa., USA.



The Griswolds arrive at Walley World after their crazed road trip from Chicago to the West Coast.



Security guard Lasky delivers the crushing news that the theme park is closed.



Closeup of the Griswold family's pea green station wagon packed with gear.