



South-Central Dispatch

Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana
Spring 2004 Edition

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ACE Spring Conference 2004 Travels Through West Texas and New Mexico

Spring Con 2004, for the third year in a row, was hosted by parks in the South Central Region. This year's conference got off to a start at Joyland Amusement park in Lubbock, TX. As attendees from 27 states arrived at Joyland, they were greeted with some very nice North Texas weather which consisted of blue skies with puffy white clouds and temperatures in the mid 60s. What perfect event weather. Registration volunteers Gus Bilderback, Krista Keyes, Jason Knutson, and Jeremy Murphy handed out registration packets to arriving event attendees while those that had already registered had time to catch up with friends and pick up South Central Region t-shirts they had previously ordered from Assistant Regional Rep Scott Connor while waiting for the first ERT session of the 3-day event to begin.

Registration ended promptly at 6:30 and everyone made their way into the park for ERT on the park's three very well-cared-for roller coasters, *Galaxi* (relocated from White Swan Park in Pennsylvania), *Mad Mouse* (relocated from Bell's in Tulsa, OK) and *Little Dipper* as well as the Mack Musik Express which had special music added just for the event! At 7:00 the gates to the park opened and ERT was over...for now. Before dinner most attendees got to check out many of Joyland's other rides on which they'd later learn the history behind when Joyland's owners, David and Kristi Dean, addressed the crowd after dinner. Not too long after the park opened, the blue sky had started to turn a very dark shade of grey off to the west...and it seemed to be getting closer. It wasn't much longer before lightning was lighting up the sky, rain was pouring down, the wind was blowing, the temperature dropping, and everyone in the park was running for cover. Event attendees eventually made their way over to the picnic shelters where they tried to stay warm and dry while waiting for dinner to be served.

After some final preparations by the catering company and some drying of tables by Joyland staff, attendees were treated to a wide variety of food provided by River Smith's Chicken & Catfish. Choices included fried chicken, fried catfish, barbecue and all the fixin's to go with it. It was also noticed that several of the attendees had their first experience with hushpuppies as many of them were heard by South Central region members asking what they were. There was more than enough food for seconds and even thirds and no one should have gone away hungry. After the meal everyone squeezed under one picnic shelter to listen to the night's speakers which included a welcome from ACE events director Gary Baker and *Amusement Today* publisher Gary Slade. David and Kristi Dean, owners of Joyland, spoke about how they got into the amusement business and how much they enjoyed it. They gave attendees a background of Joyland and where many of the parks rides have come from as well as gave everyone a chance to ask questions. Fred Miler of Miler Coasters was the night's special guest speaker. Fred spoke of his father, Carl, and how he got started in the business of coasters and gave some background information on various coasters his dad built, one of which is Joyland's *Little Dipper*.

(Continued on Page 3)



Joyland welcomes ACE.



Attendees mingle during registration.



South Central Regional Rep David Lipnicky and past ACE President Bill Linkenheimer III take a spin on Joyland's *Galaxi*.

Photo By Melanie Pigg



The Curly Seat

A view from the South Central Regional Rep seat

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Regional Rep Curly shows off his *unique* golf style on his way to the *worst* score at the ACE Spring Con Mini-Golf Tournament!

*“Friends help each other
Any way they can
When you're up at bat
They'll be your biggest fan
If you're in a pit
they'll pull you out of it
It ain't wrong to write a song
For all your friends to sing along.”
(From The Aquabats song “Lobster Bucket”)*

That pretty much sums things up for me right now. My plan was to write this extraordinary article about how great and special Joyland, Wonderland, and Cliffs made ACE feel during our amazing Spring Con. However, in the South Central Region, our busiest time is between September and May. Work for Winterfest starts rapidly each September and the workload steadily increases to ridiculous proportions until our surprise gifts are handed out at the close of each fantastically fabulous Fiesta Fest. I will not go into the details, but this spring threw me a number of curveballs between work (at my paying job), ACE work, and family. Just between work on Spring Con, Shark Bash, Fiesta Fest, and trying to get a jump on Lone Star Coasterthon and Winterfest 2005, let me just say that my Assistant Regional Reps and I

saw that I was getting real close to being a candidate for the ACE mental hospital for Regional Reps gone loony.

Besides my Assistant Regional Reps (Scott “Mr. T” Connor and Jason “Big J” Knutson), regional members Tim Baldwin, Jeffery Seifert, and Madonna Horcher – all exceptional volunteers – were my sounding boards for numerous ideas, problems, and solutions. Tim played more of a critical role in the success we have enjoyed so far in 2004 than most will ever know. Outside this region, Dave Altman (ACE’s Treasurer), Maggie Altman (from ACE’s Southwestern Pennsylvania region), Gary Baker (ACE’s Events Director), Bill Linkenheimer (ACE’s Immediate Past President), and Carole Sanderson (ACE’s President) provided monumental support in helping me hit some of those tricky curveballs. Their guidance and assistance is greatly appreciated by yours truly and the entire Regional Rep Team.

However, that is not all. Scott and Jason stepped in and pulled me out of that pit by suggesting they be in charge of this very newsletter. To be honest, my mind was so full with details for ACE events and personal matters it took me almost an hour just to focus on this gracious offer. Of course, once my mind could wrap itself around their idea,

and I said “Absolutely”. Besides helping me out, this will give them great experience of running the show whenever I decide to step down from being your Regional Rep. What you now have in your hands is *their* effort in every aspect. That includes layout, photo selection and layout, writing, proofreading, printing, purchasing of supplies, envelope preparation, envelope stuffing, and mailing. (I bet you probably never thought about all the work that goes into one of these little puppies.)

Outside of this slacker’s edition of “The Curly Seat” and “Dave’s Top 10 List”, what you see here is essentially all Scott and Jason’s effort in front AND behind the scenes. If you like what you see in this edition, please thank Scott and Jason the next time you see them.

So thank you my friends in and outside the region for pulling me out of the pit ... and that my friends is my view from The Curly Seat!

P.S. I would like to say “You’re welcome!” to everyone who has thanked the Regional Rep Team for our efforts with Winterfest, Spring Con, Shark Bash, and Fiesta Fest this year. It makes the literally hundreds of hours we have put in (just on events) so far in 2004

Casa Magnetica Reopens at Six Flags Over Texas!

A Six Flags Original...Reborn!

When Casa Magnetica closed in the late 1990s, a Six Flags tradition died. We all waited. One year passed, then two. It seemed unlikely that this Texas star would ever reopen. However, in late 2003 the rumors of Casa Magnetica’s return for 2004 started flying. At long last, in May of 2004, Casa Magnetica finally reopened. The unique family attraction is true to its original form and is equally if not better themed than it was in its 1962 season. Casa sports very similar themed costumes to the original ones used that year. The costumes consist of an orange shirt with white lace around the collar and the sleeves, green tights, black leather boots, and of course, a hat complete with a feather. The color palate used closely resembles the original and all of the other elements of the house have been restored

or reproduced skillfully by Six Flags Over Texas. Kids and adults alike have been reintroduced to the wonderful attraction and now even more childhood memories can be made in Casa Magnetica. A great decision was made to undertake the task of reopening this classic attraction and step back to the roots of the Six Flags chain, lets hope for the return of more great classic Six Flags originals in the future. The great Casa Magnetica is now safe for another generation to enjoy!

—Xander Lee

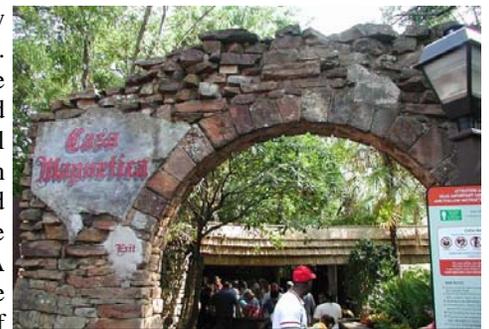


Photo By Jeremy Murphy

Spring Con 2004 (continued from page 1)

Attendees also got a rare opportunity for some Joyland merchandise since Joyland doesn't have a gift shop. Available were t-shirts and various trinkets that will certainly be collectors items since you can't buy any of them at the park. Various items were also auctioned off including the usual roller coaster parts and a couple very unique items provided by Wonderland in Amarillo and Gary Slade. Two lucky auction winners would get photo tours on the *Texas Tornado* Saturday afternoon while the ride was running. Both of the winners ended up being the South Central Region's Assistant Regional Reps, Jason Knutson and Scott Connor!

After dinner and the speakers it was once again time for ERT. The rain had ended and the stars were out making for a rather chilly ERT session. While ERT was only scheduled on the coasters and a few flat rides, thanks to the wonderful hospitality of Joyland's owners, nearly every ride in the park could have been ridden by the time ERT was over. Even with the not so nice weather, Spring Con 2004 was off to a great start.

A huge thanks to David and Kristi Dean for all their hospitality and ensuring everyone had a great time despite the weather and to Gary Slade who played a huge part in helping to arrange the event.

Waking up Saturday morning saw it overcast with temperatures in the 40's and wind chill in the 20's! The first item on today's agenda was a stop at Larson Manufacturing in Plainview, the manufacturer of the widely known Ring of Fire / Super Loop carnival ride. Arriving at Larson, attendees were treated to what ended up being an all you can eat breakfast of breakfast burritos, coffee and soft drinks. Groups of 10-20 were taken on tours of the Larson facility where they were shown the various steps in creating the rides as well as the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had. On the tour ACEers were able to see the 99th Super Loop ride in production as well as the new style trains for the ride. After the tours were finished, attendees were able to ride a Satori Technojump that Larson received in a ride trade as well as one of Larson's Ring of Fire rides. Although the weather was quite chilly and some enthusiasts were wearing shorts and t-shirts, many took advantage of the open rides and took several spins on both. As 11am rolled around it was time to wrap things up, stuff a couple burritos in the pockets and hit the road for the next driving segment and head up to Wonderland in Amarillo. Thanks to the staff at Larson for providing breakfast and allowing ACE to tour their facility and test out a couple of rides.

After the short drive from Plainview, the Spring Conference continued at the delightfully charming Wonderland Park in Amarillo. Hosts Paul and Paula Borchardt and Alethea Rhodes made everyone in attendance feel welcome with a handstamp good for all rides all day long. This was unusual in that the *Texas Tornado* and *Fantastic Journey* are not included in the all-day handstamp but were included at no extra charge for the ACE members in attendance for the conference.

A brief welcome ceremony was held that included dedication of a new plaque honoring Wonderland Park for preserving two unique roller coasters for the enjoyment of guests and families. Following the ceremony, ERT was offered up on the *Texas Tornado*, which managed to captivate all newcomers, as well as reminding old hands just how much of a blast it is to ride. Several conference participants commented on how comfortable the steel PTC train is, and how great it would be to see that version of train on certain wood coasters.

Following the ERT session, attendees set about the park to enjoy its many delights, including the built-in-house *Fantastic Journey* dark ride. ACEers were seen enjoying the coasters and all the rides that are packed into Wonderland.



A Ring of Fire was available to ride at Larson.



Super Loop #99 being built.



A chilly Tim Baldwin waits for a spin on the Technojump.



Texas Tornado at Wonderland.

A certain unnamed Assistant Regional Rep was sending first time visitors in the direction of the Riptide water slide ride, which has been described by our former regional rep. as 'Oblivion on a cookie sheet' and is as apt of a description as could be given.

At 3pm, members wishing to do so assembled at the Wonderland miniature golf course for a tournament to raise money for the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives. The Tournament was coordinated by Events Director Gary Baker, and to the uninitiated, they quickly learned that the course at Wonderland has a reputation for being one of the most challenging, if not downright unforgiving, courses in the country.

After a slight delay for the start of dinner service, the line moved at a relatively brisk pace, with attendees being given tickets for the door prize drawings, as well as complimentary copies of *Amusement Today*. Entertainment while waiting in the chow line was provided by a certain unnamed Assistant Regional Rep, who also managed to sneak in a couple of rides on the *Cyclone* before jumping in line to grab the last bit of food. The food was good and fresh, but the stale jokes and puns were provided by Chicago's very own Marty Moltz.

Following dinner, several speakers were in the lineup, including Fred Miler, who spoke of his fathers' masterfully created wild mouse that graces Wonderland, and by Jerry Pendleton, formerly of the O.D. Hopkins Company. Mr. Pendleton worked for the Hopkins Company during the design & construction phases of the *Texas Tornado*, as well as several other O.D. Hopkins rides in Wonderland. Tom Rebbie of PTC was another guest speaker, and during the auction portion of the evening he literally gave the shirt off his back to raise even more money for the NRCMA.

Following the auction and door prizes, attendees were treated to ERT on all three of Wonderlands' terrific roller coasters for one solid hour. Double and triple dispatches were had on the *Texas Tornado* toward the end of the session. With rides, dinner, goodies and hospitality, everyone left Wonderland completely satisfied.

Our utmost thanks and appreciation to Paul & Paula, Mrs. Rhodes and Gary Slade for all the very hard work put into arranging our visit to Wonderland Park, a panhandle gem if ever there was one.

After great fun at two wonderful traditional parks, Day 3 of Spring Conference brought a new pair of elements to the event – great weather and great wood.

Arriving at Cliff's Amusement Park in Albuquerque, ACEers reveled in what was a new woodie for most people to add to their list. *The New Mexico Rattler* delivered a non-stop, exhilarating ride of drops, speed, and doses of negative-g's and directional changes. Each ride was more delicious than the last. Opened in 2002 after months of setbacks (all of which would be illustrated at lunch), this wooden marvel will always have the infamous footnote of being CCI's last coaster. Bankruptcy or no, it had a marvelous end result.

Not to be overlooked was the park's *Galaxi*. Cliff's can probably boast the best ending to any *Galaxi* in the U.S. with a zippy run to the very finish. Both coasters were included in the ERT session.

Once the park was open, attendees had a short time to enjoy other rides, attractions, and details around the park before lunch. Now that our special privilege of taking cameras on board during ERT had ended, photography of the park was in order for most people. Full, warm sunshine made it easy to capture the charming aesthetics and well-maintained grounds. Along with an assortment of traditional rides, the bumper cars gained particular favor due to their indoor location, music, and disco lighting. They became a must for all attendees.



Jerry Willard and Mike Thompson enjoying Wonderland.



Wonderland's Miler Mouse, *Cyclone*.



Spring Con 2004 was full of special guests.



One of *New Mexico Rattler's* many air time filled hills.

Lunch brought once again a plethora of industry folk, auctions, and souvenir shopping. Employee wares were available for purchase along with the popular t-shirts and whatnot. This meal saw the appearance once again of Tom Rebbie, joined now by Larry Bill and all the men of the Gravity Group, as well as John Robinson of the PR firm William H. Robinson, Inc.

All of these industry guests shared their part of the tale and exhausting task of getting *The New Mexico Rattler* up, running, and advertised. It was a piece of coaster history that event attendees will always remember.

More importantly on hand were Gary and Linda Hays who owned and operated Cliff's. Enthusiasts truly felt welcome by this family, but if they didn't feel so beforehand, the brand new ACE benefit of 2-for-1 admission made it unquestionable. Specific items from *The Rattler's* origins and layout were made available for auction. So was one more photo opportunity, this time in the oddly-chosen final helix of the woodie. South Central's own Jason Knutson and Madonna Horcher were two of three top bidders, as was past president Bill Linkenheimer III.

All in all, it was a jam-packed event of all sorts of weather, fun, guests, fundraising (over \$3,000 for the weekend!) and western Route 66 scenery. Industry guest Fred Miller shared ACE's company for the entire event. After three days of spending time with us, he asked event organizer Gary Slade to send him an application. I suppose that says it all.

—Jason Knutson, Scott Connor and Tim Baldwin
All photos by Jason Knutson



ERT on *New Mexico Rattler*



New Mexico Rattler's first drop.

A HUGE thanks to all these people who helped make Spring Con 2004 a success:

- Gary Slade – organization
- Local ACEers Jason Knutson, Krista Keyes, Gus Bilderback and Jeremy Murphy for helping with Registration
- Paul Borchardt for paying for the creation of ACE's event flag
- Sue Nichols for sharing her artistic talents
- John Hunt for the *Cyclone* model (as well as the two others on display)
- Randy Duffer for arrangement of tournaments and trophies
- Golden Track recipient Randy Duffer for auctioning part of his collection for the museum
- Gary Slade, Tim Baldwin, Paul Borchardt, and Randy Duffer for their work on the mini-museum
- The Dean family, Borchardt family, and Hays family for their true hospitality
- The staff of Larson Manufacturing for providing breakfast, a tour, and rides on a chill May morning.



**Nuts & Bolts
(Items in Brief)**

Star Coasterthon at Six Flags Over Texas will take place on September 25th and 26th. More details to come.

Preservation Conference Lodging Information—The hotel listed for the Memphis portion of the event has ceased operation. ACE has worked out deals with two other hotels for this portion of the event. If you are planning on attending this event and need to make hotel reservations, please visit <http://www.aceonline.org/EventNews/> for the information about the new hotels.

Kemah Boardwalk Expansion Complete—All of the attractions at Kemah Boardwalk as discussed in the last newsletter are now open. Also open but not mentioned previously is a Manta Ray petting tank. If you are in the Houston area make sure to check out this great attraction. There is also live music every Thursday night through the summer. <http://www.kemahboardwalk.com>

Lone Star Coasterthon Dates—As announced on the regional web site, Lone

Thank You!

The David, Scott, & Jason Regional Rep Team would like to thank the following members for their help and contributions to the region and this newsletter:

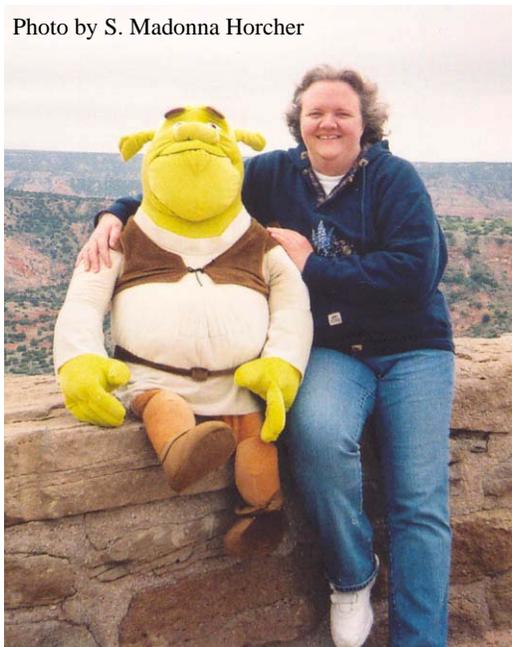
Tim Baldwin, Lore Barnes, Xander Lee, Madonna Horcher, Melanie Pigg, and Jeremy Murphy.

In The Next Issue:

- **Shark Bash II and Fiesta Fest 2004 Coverage**
- **Coaster Con XXVII Coverage**
- **Upcoming Regional Event Updates**

...and much much more!

Photo by S. Madonna Horcher



Feature Member: Lore Barnes

You're a relatively new member of the club, but already you've been seen volunteering at various events. Tell us how you discovered ACE.

I first heard about ACE when I went to SFOT Gold Pass Party in April 2002. I was with a friend and met Scott Connor & some other people. As we were walking to the *Texas Giant*, Scott was asking about how much I liked rollercoasters and I told him I loved riding them and he told me about American Coaster Enthusiasts and invited me to go to Lone Star Coasterthon that September. I went to Lone Star Coasterthon and was hooked. I joined ACE in October 2002 & have enjoyed every event that I have been able to attend since then.

You recently attended your first national event. Give us your perspective of it.

I was able to attend Spring Con 2004 & had a wonderful time; LOTS of ride time and little sleep. I appreciate being able to meet the owners of each of the parks and appreciate all of the little things that were done to make sure everyone had a great time. Everyone coordinating the event did such a wonderful job to make it run so smoothly. I want to personally thank each one for doing such a great job. I am looking forward to attending more events at different parks.

What is your favorite regional event, and why?

My favorite regional event would have to be Lone Star Coasterthon, because it was my first ACE event, of which made me want to join ACE & it is at my home park; however Fiesta Fest would come in a close second, as I just got home from that event and had SUCH a great time at Six Flags Fiesta Texas, I can't wait to go back to Fiesta Texas again in the near future.

Tell us about your track record. Also, what park(s) and roller coaster(s) would you most like to visit/ride?

My track record is at 38 so far, but I plan on adding quite a few

more before the end of the year & then add quite a lot next year.

The parks that I would most like to visit right now, are Six Flags Magic Mountain, Disneyland, Disneyworld and Universal Studios, Cedar Point and Las Vegas. I am hoping to get to Libertyland and Magic Springs this summer & Six Flags Astroworld in the Fall.

The rides that I would most like to ride are *X*, *Top Thrill Dragster*, *Gemini*, the *Incredible Hulk Coaster*, *Texas Cyclone*, *Blue Streak*, just to name a few.

What kind of park or ride souvenirs do you collect?

I collect park or ride magnets, t-shirts, keychains, and patches (when I can find them).

What hobbies or interests do you have besides roller coasters?

My hobbies or interests are cross-stitching, scrapbooking, watching movies, reading books, and surfing the internet.

Now for the tough question... wood or steel?

My pick is steel coasters. *Titan*, *Batman* and *Poltergeist* are my favorites.

Free question... say anything!

I want to thank everyone who works so hard to make sure that ACE is a success, especially in the South Central Region. I have had so much fun in ACE for the last couple of years and look forward to all of the events that I will be able to attend in the future, as I know they will be a blast.

Dave's Top 10 Reasons Why ACE Spring Con was a Hoot-and-a-Half!

Joyland staff, the gracious staff at Larson, and Paul Borchardt and the Wonderland staff.

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| <p>10. The marvelous mix of presenters.</p> <p>9. The Joyland "Galaxi" for keeping true to its nickname <i>Lil' Titan</i>.</p> <p>8. Not 1, but 2 great Miler coasters (Joyland & Wonderland).</p> <p>7. The breakfast, factory tour, and ride time at Larson.</p> <p>6. Wonderland's wonderfully funky O.D. Hopkins "Texas Tornado" now sporting a dreamy PTC steel coaster train.</p> <p>5. Texas Hospitality ... specifically The Deans & the</p> | <p>4. All of the fantastic comments about how clean the Hays family and the Cliff's crew keep their park.</p> <p>3. The Wonderland Coaster Museum.</p> <p>2. The New Mexico Rattler (and how many attendees said it instantly made their "Top 10" list).</p> <p>1. All of the ACE Volunteers, but especially our own Gary Slade who put in hundreds and hundreds of hours in making ACE Spring Con 2004 not just a reality, but truly special.</p> |
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