

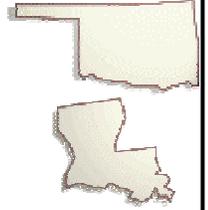


The Queue Line Chronicle



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ACE South Central Region—Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana—Fall 2005



"It's Alive!" Fright Fest Casts a Spell on the South Central Region

By Jason McMillon, Jason Knutson and David Lipnicky
Photos By Jason Knutson unless noted

With its beginnings in 2001, Fiesta Fest at Six Flags Fiesta Texas has been the Memorial Day weekend's core coaster event for the South Central region. However, Fiesta Texas and ACE decided to stir the coaster cauldron a bit and move this popular event to October 15-16 during Fright Fest. For an event that consistently attracts 100 to 110 ACEers from about a half dozen states, a move away from a three-day holiday weekend was a risk in regards to attendance. Still, the benefits of cooler weather, smaller crowds during park hours, and the ability for staff to spend more time to devote to taking care of ACE were attractive enough to take the risk. In addition, the park would be able to trick up the event package, by treating ACE to its custom Fright Fest-based shows and attractions that are obviously never available during May.



Registration staff hard at work.

Would the obvious risk fester into a thing that the park and ACE would never try again, or would interest in something different lurch the attendance numbers upwards? Mua-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! Did anyone ever need to ask? While Fiesta Texas and the Regional Rep Team would have been happy with 75 attendees given that many Houstonians were planning to stay home to spend as much time as possible with their soon-to-be-closed home park, attendees from 16 states (over four times past out-of-the-region participation) propelled attendance to 126 - a record! And it was a hooooowling great time to boot.



With the later opening times parks generally have in the fall, attendees got a treat with being able to sleep in late since registration didn't begin until the late hour of 9 am. But apparently a lot of people didn't take advantage of this since many members were seen at the park as early as 8 am waiting to register! Fiesta Texas staff handled the registration table leaving the Regional Rep Team to wander around and mingle with the arriving attendees. As the event starting time approached, attendees were led into the park and towards the location of the first scheduled ERT for the event. *Poltergeist* and *Scream*.

All roller coasters have that certain sound, you know the one... think of any rollercoaster and you can imagine its very own distinctive sound. *Poltergeist* is no different, the roaring whoosh of the train as it traverses the track. Enthusiasts began wondering if it was going to be on the ERT schedule as we stood around for registration, the distinctive sound emanating from the park was oddly absent. Much to our delight, it was indeed on the schedule. This year Fiesta Texas debuted a new type of road wheel on the ride, originally prototyped at Six Flags America. Not only was the ride eerily quiet, but much smoother.



ACEers enjoying a new, quieter *Poltergeist*

Between rides on *Scream* and *Poltergeist* ACEers were asked to stop by in front of *Scream* and have their photo taken with some of the park's monsters. While many people wondered why, they still stopped for photos and would find out at the end of the evening the reason for the photos. As the end of the scheduled ERT on *Poltergeist* and *Scream* approached, ACEers were allowed to head on over to *Scooby Doo Ghost Blasters* to try to get the highest score to win a prize. Much to the surprise of everyone, it was also discovered that all of the other "Scare Away Boardwalk" rides were open as well! This was something that was not announced or on the schedule. A perfect example of Fiesta Texas always going above and beyond to make sure everyone has a great time.

(Continued on page 4)



The Curly Seat

A point of view on coasters, parks, and ACE from your Regional Rep

David Lipnicky—ACE South Central Regional Rep
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Reflections of My All Too Brief Relationship with AstroWorld – Part I

This view from The Curly Seat is the toughest one I have ever written, and I hope it will stay that way as long as I am lucky enough to continue to be your Regional Rep. While others have been tough to write due to writer's block, too many demands on my time, or too many topics I want to speak out about, it is the unpleasant topics that have been the hardest for me to put on paper. While ACE has actually faced worse times, for the South Central Region and for me the closing of AstroWorld hits at a deep personal level.

Uncharacteristically for me, I happened to go home early from work on Monday, September 12. I suddenly started feeling ill earlier in the afternoon, which is very rare for me. [The only other time that had happened in the last 20 years, was when a tornado hit downtown Fort Worth - my home city at the time.] As soon as I made it in the door - and all ready to drop my things and go right to bed - I received a call from Bill Linkenheimer, ACE's Immediate Past President asking if the rumor about AstroWorld was true. I told him that I had heard from various sources that the odds were good that they would be getting something BIG for 2006, and I hoped that it would be the non-looping B&M Hypercoaster as many had been expecting. Bill said, "No, that Six Flags (Inc) is closing AstroWorld" and planned to sell the land to pay down its debt. I said that while that was a possibility, it was so absurd, that I would be shocked if it were true -- how could Six Flags walk away from the fourth largest city in the nation? I told Bill I would find out. Ten minutes later, I was calling Bill back, as my phone was already ringing off the hook and my e-mail's inbox was filling up with news reports of the stunning announcement. Outside of having some chicken soup that night, I spent the next nine hours finding out exactly what was going on, why the particular course of action was chosen, and what (if anything) ACE could do to stop this very questionable decision.

Before I went to bed at 2:00am, I (and many other ACEers who love AstroWorld) had come to the sad conclusion that the reasons and players behind the decision were big. We were

talking BIG money entities and a facility (land and assets) worth tens (if not hundreds) of millions of dollars. The sick feeling set in that I, AstroWorld, and even all of ACE and its assets could not stop Six Flags' decision.

Staying home ill the next two days gave me time to think about what could be done to save as much of AstroWorld as possible. Going through AstroWorld's coaster inventory, I was somewhat comforted that some of the park's remaining steel coasters could probably be transplanted to other parks. However, that fact that our beloved *Excalibur* still had not shown up at another Six Flags park since its removal from AstroWorld after the 1998 season still tells me nothing is ever for certain when it comes to coaster preservation. The bad news was the fate of the mighty *Texas Cyclone* did not (and does not) look good.

I wrote other parks that did not have a signature woodie (or any woodie for that matter) to see if they might possibly be interested in exploring the possibility of moving the region's best woodie to their park. (Unfortunately, I have not received any positive responses so far.) I know many ACEers - including Mike Robinson (owner of SaveAstroWorld.com) have contacted Judge Ekles and other county officials, but it looks like they will not be able to stop what has already been set in motion. I know other ACE members - including Jason McMillon (owner of SixFlagsHouston.com) have written Cedar Fair about buying AstroWorld. While the park has expressed interest in AstroWorld and purchasing Six Flags, Inc., the prospect of either event happening is significantly less than 50%. Even younger ACEers have tried to stop the inevitable. Blake Finch, who is only 13-years old, took it upon himself to write Donald Trump to save Blake's home park. While an assistant to Mr. Trump sent a nice letter back to Blake saying Mr. Trump was not planning to go into the amusement park business, knowing that a *real* youngster - in addition to us 20 to 60-something year old kids - cared so much for his home park really hit me hard.

To be continued ...

NOTE: Look for Part II of this special edition of The Curly Seat in the Winter 2006 Edition of The Queue Line Chronicle.

Dave's Top 10 Things to Do When You Cannot Find the Fiesta Fest 2005 Top 10 List You Wrote in the Lunch Room a Month Ago & Put in a Special Place so You Would Not Lose It

10. Decide to write a longer version of The Curly Seat, end up making it so long that it will not fit in the newsletter, so you break it up into two parts, which means you still have Top 10-sized hole still to fill in the newsletter, which your assistants keep reminding you about.

9. Go to Holiday in the Park - tell your self Six Flags Over Texas will give you inspiration (yes, that's the ticket).

8. Send Christmas cards to Assistant Regional Reps - tell them you are working on the Top 10 List.

7. Go to bookstore with daughter - get depressed seeing so many *finished* works, decide to look for "Writing Last Minute Top 10 Lists for Dummies".

6. Go to Holiday in the Park - It's a fact, Pink Things are brain food! (Madonna told me)

5. Put up Christmas Tree - blinky lights are more soothing than a blank computer screen.

4. Eat chocolate (Hershey's of course - with Almonds and Peanut Butter Cups).

3. Realize you went overboard with #4; quickly change all Christmas Wish Lists to nothing but Peanut Butter Cups and Hershey's with Almonds.

2. Go to Holiday in the Park - oh, who are you kidding!

1. Come up with this lame Top 10 list.



The Final Days of AstroWorld

Article and photos by Mike Robinson

It was like being punched in the stomach when I got the word that AstroWorld would be closing forever. Even through its problems I always thought in my heart that AstroWorld would be eternal, a place I could always count on to spend some time with friends and family and do one of my favorite things, ride roller coasters. I had grown up with AstroWorld, I had worked for the park, and I thought what we had would be here forever.

Once the announcement was made, all my weekend plans changed. I wanted to spend every possible moment at the park I loved so much. This meant missing a regional ACE event elsewhere in the state and canceling plans with family, but I was determined to make the most out of it. This turned out to be a blessing as Zach and I ended up in the front seat of *Greased Lightnin's* one-millionth launch.

Those last weekends were bittersweet. The park was filled to capacity while the employee ranks had shrunk on the news of the closing. The employees who stayed were terrific. There were long lines for everything, the rides, food, even the bathrooms! Traffic was backed up for blocks with cars trying to get into the parking lot. It seemed that everyone in Houston wanted to say good-bye to AstroWorld.

The last weekend finally arrived with news that there would be no tickets sold at the park. Despite that measure, both Saturday and Sunday were as crowded as the park had ever been. The operations department did a wonderful job keeping the rides open with a depleted staff. Even Thunder River and the Astroway were open on Saturday after being closed for all of October.



The employees were terrific despite knowing that they would be out of work in a matter of hours. One employee told of passing her drivers test for *Greased Lightnin'* so she could dispatch the ride at least once before leaving. Another employee, James Parker, hired in for the last

day. It did not matter to him that it had been 20 years since he had worked at the park. He was happy to spend the last day sweeping the grounds. I talked him into letting my son Zach take over for awhile. I had always hoped that Zach would work at the park some day. Since this would not happen, I am glad Zach got a broom and dust pan and swept in front of *Greased Lightnin'*, as I did my first day of work in 1981.

The guests were seen taking pictures of everything. It looked like the biggest ACE convention ever held. Parents were bringing their kids to the park one last time. Old employees from every decade of AstroWorld's 38-year history were evident. Gangs of supervisors roamed the park telling stories and remembering the park where they had worked. Everywhere you looked, you could see how much AstroWorld meant to everyone.

Ghosts from the pasts were everywhere. The Mountain from the Alpine Sleighs still loomed over the park despite the ride being gone

for 20 years. It was fitting that the landmark of the park for so long would last the life of the park. The old queue house for River of No Return, still stood, now empty as Tidal Wave lay dormant. That queue house was magnificent, able to keep hundreds of guests cool in the hottest of days with its huge air coolers. Remnants of the River of No Return ride could easily be seen from *XLR8*. The waterwheel in front of the *Gunslinger* still spun as did on opening day. Even part of the *Excalibur's* theming stood in front of the Sword and Crown restaurant.

ACE made its presence known also with several informal take over sessions of various rides. All the coasters were ridden at some point. Groups formed and split apart just to rejoin later. Kevin Lipnicky, the long lost son of our Regional Rep, even made an appearance throughout the day.

The last weekend the park was open was an emotional roller coaster. The *Texas Cyclone*, showing its contempt of the situation valleyed, leaving only one train operation. We all just wanted to remember every sight, every smell and every sound the park offered. So we all took pictures, ate funnel cake and rode every ride we could. We savored everything knowing it would be the last time. I spent the last two days with all sorts of people including my sister Carol, who had worked in the park and had inspired me to work there, to Larry Harvey, my *Excalibur* foreman from 1982, and his family.



On Sunday, the time went by all too quickly. The day started with ACE members being invited inside the front gate to help with "The Dance", an opening day ritual started by AstroWorld. The informal take-over sessions were over and the park was closing. Graciously, AstroWorld management had arranged for ACE to take the last public rides on the *Texas Cyclone*. As the park closed, the line was cut off and we entered through that great big mouth for the queue of the *Cyclone* one last time. This was one time I wanted the line to move slowly but all too fast, we were at the station. While in line, brand new graffiti was there, but it all said farewell to AstroWorld and not the usual junk.

That last ride on the *Texas Cyclone* was all too short. We were laughing and crying and we hit those great drops and experienced those laterals for which the *Cyclone* is famous. As we hit the post turn, I lost it. I had been riding the *Texas Cyclone* since I was 11 years old. I had ridden it with my father, and I had ridden it with my son. I had so many rides that I knew the ride by heart and my heart was breaking as we finished the ride and cruised into the station. There were more rides for ACE and finally the employees who deserved that last ride but I had my last ride. I found my son crying in front of the huge fountain in Coney Island and I joined him for a few minutes. Then Dawn, Zach, and I walked out of the park together, just the three of us. I couldn't believe how good the park looked. There was no trash anywhere, quite an accomplishment after a crowded day. We saw James still happily sweeping, enjoying is one day of work for this season to the fullest. Main Street was empty with just a few stragglers and employees taking it all in. We reached the gate, Zach rang the bell one last time that signifies a Great Day, I turned around and took one last picture and we walked out of the park together for the last time.



Fiesta Fest (continued from page 1)

As it approached noon and time for the park to open, it was time to head to the VIP room for lunch. When was the last time you had a real gourmet meal, especially at a theme park? Top notch cuisine was on the menu created by Fiesta Texas' own in-park chefs. The lunch menu included Caesar salad, fettuccini pasta with grilled chicken breast, green beans, carrots, rolls, and amaretto almond cheesecake.

After lunch, attendees were free to enjoy the park until the next scheduled activity at 5 pm. But who could pass up the chance for some special EST (Exclusive Scare Time!) in Fiesta Texas' spooktacular Haunted Houses? A real crowd favorite was the zombie who must forever spend eternity on the toilet. Who can think of a worse fate?

Arguably, the most impressive ingredients to the new Fright Fest potion were the two seasonal shows. After all this was Fiesta Texas, winner of *Amusement Today's* award for Best Theme Park Shows for seven straight years. At 5 pm attendees were given priority seating to view one of Fiesta Texas' award winning shows. Many of the members in attendance and especially those from out of state had never been to Fright Fest at Fiesta Texas before so these shows would be a special treat.

The first show on the agenda was "Last Chance Legends" held in the huge, 2,000 seat, state-of-the-art Zaragoza theater (which quickly filled to capacity). Attendees were treated to singers of the past coming to life to sing just one more song. As always, the show was filled with top-notch performers that it seems only Fiesta Texas can find. Our own Regional Rep was seen nearly falling out of his seat laughing when Sonny Bono took the stage.

After the show it was time for dinner, once again in the VIP room. For dinner ACEers were treated to pork cutlet, garlic mashed potatoes, steamed broccoli, wheat rolls, and a warm walnut brownie topped with vanilla ice cream. And yes, it really was as good as it sounds.

After dinner ACEers had a little time to recover before the recommended time to arrive for the next activity. ACE was allowed priority seating for "Mayor Slayer's Monster Mash Bash", Fiesta Texas' closing show during Fright Fest. ACEers watched in amazement when upwards of 5,000 park guests descended upon the hill at Lone Star Lil's, each staking out their spot. As the lights dimmed and the show began, the energetic crowd was treated to twenty-two singers performing hits featuring "Kids in America", "1985", "Bohemian Rhapsody", "Mr. Brightside", and "Since You've Been Gone", a little something from the 70's on upwards complete with lighting, smoke and pyro. Had you not walked under a sign that said "Six Flags" on it to get to this show, you would have thought you were at a real rock concert. Sitting through this performance it's abundantly clear to see why Fiesta Texas wins the Golden Ticket awards for their shows year after year after year.

After the "rock concert" was over, ACEers remained in Lone Star Lil's with park staff and performers while security cleared the park. Once the okay was given, a quick walk through a back area brought everyone to the location of the nights ERT scheduled for *Rattler* and *Road Runner Express*. Both coasters were running in top form and the cooler fall weather resulted in very enjoyable rides on both. As always seems to happen, the end of the ERT session arrived quickly and it was time to head back home or to the hotel to get a good night's rest. But wait! On the way out of the park there was a table set up by the front gate staffed by David Blazer and other park employees.



David Blazer with some of his monsters. Photo By: Steven Schroeder



Superman Krypton Coaster ERT



Tony Holcomb from Atlanta, GA rides in the front row of Superman with the Regional Rep Team. Photo By: Roxanne Rochelle



Remember those photos with the monsters that were taken in the morning? Each person that had their photo taken was given the photo in a very nice Fright Fest frame before leaving the park as this years special gift.

Sunday morning saw quite possibly one of the latest starts for an ERT session at any event... 10:30 am! I think most everyone will agree that the later starting time was nice as there was more time to sleep and get some breakfast before heading out to the park, one of the benefits of holding an event so late in the operating season. As attendees arrived they were taken back to *Superman Krypton Coaster* for the morning ERT session. At the same time, ACEers could opt to take a ride in a van up to the cliff-top for the always popular cliff-top tour. Also open during ERT (once again not announced or scheduled) were *Der Twister* and *Die Fledermaus* (wave swinger). All too quickly ERT came to an end and with that, the event for 2005 was officially over. Many attendees hung around for a while and chatted while others went off into the park for some more Fiesta Texas fun. Still others quickly hit the road to head to Houston to make one last trip to AstroWorld before it closed forever.

All together, with over 5 hours of ERT, 2 gourmet meals, priority seating at the shows and all the other surprises, is it any wonder that year after year more and more people attend Fiesta Fest? If you haven't made it to this fantastic event, make plans to visit the Lone Star state next October. The zombies will still be waiting, and they'll still be so hungry. A huge thanks to Martin Bozer, David Blazer, Steve Skains, Joy Crampton, and the rest of the staff of Fiesta Texas for thinking "inside the coffin" and hosting yet another amazing Fiesta Fest.



ERT on *Rattler*



ERT on *Road Runner Express*

For Fiesta Fest 2005 photos be sure to visit the photo gallery at <http://www.acesouthcentral.org/PhotoGallery/>



Fiesta Fest 2005 group photo by S. Madonna Horcher

One Final Kickin' Party at AstroWorld

Article and photos by Mike Robinson

When word of AstroWorld's closing got out, management knew they needed to end things with a splash. So the "Last Bash" was created to bring back all the old employees for final party. The park also invited ACE members showing that they thought ACE was part of the family. So after the park closed on that last Saturday, ACE members, employees present and past filed into the Big Red Barn to party. AND what a party with food, drink, music, and drink. (I know, I know). Add in a chocolate fountain, and it was perfection!

Present were employees from every year of the parks 38 years in operation. It was like the best High School Reunion ever held. Seeing friends from 20 years ago was great. Bill Crandell, The GM who had brought the *Texas Cyclone*, *Greezed Lightnin'* and Thunder River to the park was there. Lamar Parker, another GM from years past was present. There were even a couple of old Marvel McFeys! Most important to me were some of my heroes from my younger days were present. Roy Turner and Pix, both employees from the early days came into town for the party. These two men



Bill Crandell

were the start of the Golden Era and were involved in the First Fantasy of Fire shows, River of No Return Spiels, and other great memories that the park holds for me. This set the mood for the entire night with old employees catching up with each other. Seeing people meet each other for the first time in decades was magic, and that magic carried on through out the night. Old grudges vanished and friendships were renewed. This party was especially for those long time employees who had worked at the park for so many years. The mechanics and electricians, the sign painters and fiberglass people, many who had worked for the park for over 30 years.

Even though it was a sad event brining everyone together, everyone had a great time. Dancing and talking, it did not seem like anyone was sad, even though out hearts were heavy. Lots of great stories were re-hashed. Bill Crandell was even heard saying, "I remember *firing* you! Come over here and say hello!" It was that kind of night. Lots of old friends catching up and saying hello. I could not think of a better way to say good-bye to AstroWorld.



Lynda Baldwin and Mike Robinson

ACE South Central Last Activity for 2005: Saying Goodbye to a Family Member

By David Lipnicky

Over 60 ACEers from as far away as California, Illinois, Indiana, Virginia, and Massachusetts, plus the founder of the European Coaster Club, visited AstroWorld for its closing weekend. The park has always been very kind to ACE and they kept true to tradition. Most of the 60+ ACEers took the park up on its generous invite to their Final Employee Party after park hours on Saturday, October 29. Food, music, beverages, dancing, gifts, plus time for friends and family to catch up on old times were in abundance.

Although the parking situation with Reliant Stadium created chaos before the park even opened on the 30th, ACE enjoyed its Informal Goodbye Gathering activities on Sunday. Most were able to get multiple rides on *Viper*, and some were able to squeeze in rides on *Serpent* and *XLR8* before the Sunday crowds filled the park. Five to six dozen ACEers met at 1pm to get their last ride on *Greezed Lightnin'*, arguably the best Schwarzkopf shuttle-looper ever built. The once frequent AstroWorld patron, Kevin Lipnicky, took a break from his Civil

Engineering studies at Texas A&M to meet his father and friends. While it took 90-minutes for Kevin and Curly to get their final ride on *UltraTwister*, part of the plan was to give father and some time to catch up and plan future family activities.

Most attendees met back at the *Texas Cyclone* entrance at 4pm, but many decided to first chat over food and drinks before getting in line. That decision was fortunate. First, Mike Robinson and Scott Connor did TV interviews for the local WB affiliate. Later, 24 ACEers who won a seat on the final general public ride on the best woodie in the South Central region got in line, while other ACEers were guided to the front of the park for cake, music, dancing, and fun with park staff. While in line for the last public ride on the *Texas Cyclone*, the local CBS affiliate interviewed Mark Brown (AKA Mike Robinson – how did they get Mark Brown from Mike Robinson?) and Dawn Robinson. Dawn perfectly captured what AstroWorld means to so many with her awesome, yet bittersweet interview full of laughs and tears. The last time in the

Cyclone queue was often tough to endure as many – if not most – of the 24 ACEers and park staff shed more than a tear or two. Luckily, friends and family gave reassuring words and hugs.

Finally, it was time for the last public ride. With TV rolling and cameras snapping, the train left the station with hoots and hollers. The ride was vintage *Cyclone* ... fast, furious, and fun. However, it all ended too soon and the train roared into the brake run and station with applause and tears. [Pardon my lack of diplomacy here, but to let this legendary ride fade into memory is simply a crime against the nature of amusements.] After the park was closed to the public, all ACE members at the front of the park were guided back to the *Texas Cyclone* to meet with the rest of the ACEers and park employees for some final ERT rides! After the rides were finished, ACE members were escorted to the front gates. In a magnanimous gesture, Assistant Regional Rep Scott Connor ensured that Jason McMillon – one of AstroWorld's most ardent fans - was the final patron to leave his beloved park.

LOST COASTERS OF THE SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

The Comet

By Jeremy Murphy

With Six Flags AstroWorld closing and many other small amusement parks biting the dust in 2005 and 2006, one tends to overlook the loss of the classic “fairground coasters” that populated the United States from the 1920s to the late 1980s.

The State Fair of Texas is the largest and most attended State Fair and Annual Exposition in the United States and rivaled only by the Oktoberfest fairs in Germany. Over the last 120 years, the State Fair of Texas has seen several hundred rides and a collection of a few truly unique roller coasters. From the *Giant Racer* in 1886 to the John Miller *Lightning*, the fair never had a shortage of thrills. In 1935, the *Lightning* was torn down for a new Miller creation, the odd *Triple Racer*. The *Triple Racer* featured a 3,000ft long course which three tracks raced side-by-side. The *Triple Racer* was sadly demolished in 1946, but the *Comet* was built using wood and steel members from the *Triple Racer*.



Photographer Unknown

The *Comet* opened to the public for the first time in the summer of 1947. Designed by Charles Paige and was built by N.A.D. who also supplied the rolling stock. The *Comet* featured a 70ft. tall lift hill with a 65ft. first drop in a double out and back layout. The ride was a huge success and continued to be operated by Samuel Bert until 1976 when the State Fair of Texas purchased the ride and the *Comet Jr.*

The *Comet* was given a complete overhaul in 1976 and the *Comet Jr.*, also by Paige was destroyed. Sadly, The *Comet* was approaching the end of its very short life.

In 1981, Coaster Con was held in Texas and the *Comet* was featured as a stop for the ACE members attending the conference. The year earlier, Bill Cobb became the overseeing engineer for the ride.

After the 1979 Swiss Sky Ride incident where one person was killed and 3 were seriously injured, insurance prices skyrocketed for the State Fair. In 1982, another death occurred when an Enterprise car came loose and slid into the Midway. After the 1985 fair, the State Fair announced that the *Comet* would be silenced for 1986 until a new insurance

carrier could be found. Years passed and the *Comet* slowly rotted away. In 1989, the City of Dallas who now owned Fair Park, decided along with the State Fair of Texas to demolish the aging structure as it was deemed as a hazard. On February 9, 1989, a wrecking ball started bringing down the *Comet*. Thankfully, the State Fair saved the classic loading station and the classic N.A.D. rolling stock. The old station was turned into a museum featuring old photos of rides and coasters from past fairs.

In 2002, the State Fair was prepping for their newest rollercoaster, a PAX Design Cobra-1, which was never installed. Sadly the classic *Comet* station was torn down along with a 1948 Pretzel Dark Ride for Midway expansion. Local ACE Member and publisher of *Amusement Today* Gary Slade purchased the remaining train and moved it to Wonderland Park in Amarillo until the ACE Coaster Museum can be established. Rusty Fitzgerald, the Operations manager also managed to save the remaining station track from the wrecking ball and preserve it for the new museum that the State Fair of Texas is currently developing. The *Comet* was many Dallas resident’s first wooden coaster ride and a great one at that; we should never forget the white and red paint of a true Texas icon.

THE CROSSOVER—News From Neighboring Regions

ACE’S SOUTHEAST REGION

(www.acesoutheast.org):

- GOLIATH MEDIA DAY (SFOG) – ACE Southeast Regional Rep, Robert Ulrich, has confirmed that ACE will be invited to the Goliath Media Day at SFOG this Spring
- SPRING FLING (SFOG) – April 22, the event flyer is on-line at www.acesoutheast.org/SFOG2006.pdf.

- GHOST TOWN IN THE SKY UPDATE – ACE News Now (www.aceonline.org/ACENewsNOW/) has an update on the new efforts to save this beautiful and unique mountaintop park.

ACE’S HEART OF AMERICA REGION (www.ace18.org)

WILD WEST WORLD WEBSITE NOW ON-LINE: While newest amusement park

in the U.S. will not debut until May 2007, the park’s website is now on-line at www.wildwestworld.org.

ACE’S SOUTHWEST REGION

ACE DAY AT CLIFFS’ UPDATE: To clarify the information in most recent ACE News, ACE Day at Cliff’s Amusement Park is currently schedule for Sunday, May 28 in Albuquerque. This event is a companion to our Wild West Coaster Round-up (May 26-27).



Nuts & Bolts (Items in Brief)

Washington Redskins Owner Takes Control of Six Flags, Inc.—Six Flags Inc. announced on November 29 that shareholders accepted Red Zone's takeover proposal, and the results were verified. For more details, go to the Regional Rep Team's article in the "Regional News" section of the www.ACESouthcentral.org homepage.

Can The Texas Cyclone Be Saved? - An unexpected tidbit of information dispersed at the IAAPA show concerns the imminently endangered *Texas Cyclone*, of Houston's recently closed AstroWorld (1968-2005). Six Flags officials have stated that the coaster is for sale. It is presumed, however, that any such interested party would need to act quickly, as the site of the park is being cleared of all AstroWorld structures at this time, in preparation for sale and redevelopment. It was also noted that the two Schwarzkopf steel coasters in the park, the launch loop *Greezed Lightnin'* (1978) and Looping Star model *Viper* (o.c. 1981, at AstroWorld since 1989) are offered for sale. Many other AstroWorld rides, including some of the six other roller coasters, are headed for other Six Flags parks. Separately, the Regional Rep Team has heard that some larger items not going to other parks like the antique tractor, carousel, larger signs from the rides, and many other big items will probably be sold to the general public at an onsite auction the first weekend in January of 2006. We have also heard that a company is currently onsite doing inventory and setting up for the 2006 on-site Auction.

Winterfest 2006 (January 28, 2006 @ Six Flags Over Texas) - A block of rooms are now available at the AmeriSuites Arlington with a very special "American Coaster Enthusiasts" rate of \$59 per night, while Six Flags Over Texas will offer a *VERY* special

ACE discount on 2006 Six Flags Over Texas Season Passes that will **ONLY** be available during Winterfest 2006. Full details are in the event flyer should be in the same mailing with this newsletter you have in your hands right now.

IAAPA 2005 Awards Make Notice of South Central Parks—We know we have some special parks in our Region, but this time the amusement industry took special notice at the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Attractions Expo 2005 (Annual Conference and Trade Show) held last month in Atlanta Georgia. Recognized by the industry were:

Six Flags Fiesta Texas:

- "Xcelleration" – "Big-E" award winner for "Best Sports Show"
- Runner-up for Souvenir of the Year in the "Hard Goods at Facility with Annual Attendance Over One Million" category
- Honorable Mention for Souvenir of the Year in the "Merchandise Display" category

AstroWorld:

- Runner Up for the Spirit of Excellent award in the "Best Guest Services Training Program" category

Six Flags New Orleans

- Honorable Mention for the "Big-E" award in the "Best Overall (Show) Production: Under \$25,000" category for "Pure Country"

Sea World San Antonio

- Honorable Mention for the "Big-E" award in the "Best Atmosphere Show Performance" category for "The Lagoonatics"

Congratulations to all four great parks for their outstanding and creative efforts in 2005.

2005 ACE South Central Member Survey About To Close—The window to send in your 2005 Regional Membership Survey will

close before 2006 starts. Please help the Regional Rep Team do a better job for YOU by filling out the Membership Survey that accompanied the Summer 2005 newsletter and mail it back to:

Scott Connor
P.O. Box 351
Texarkana, TX 75504-0351

Schlitterbahn's Newest Addition Is King!

- While not a new water ride or park, Schlitterbahn's newest addition must be making Ohio ACEers quite sad while giving the Texas ACEers reason to rejoice. Jeffrey Siebert, undoubtedly one of the most dynamic and supportive park representatives ever known to ACE, has left his position as the Director of Marketing Communications for Paramount's Kings Island to take a new position with Schlitterbahn in New Braunfels. Yes, this is the same Jeffrey Siebert who many credit as the key ingredient that made the 2003 Coaster Con the greatest ever – and the co-star of the hilarious Brady Bunch coaster video shown at Winterfest 2005. With the stellar Sherrie Brammall already spoiling us South Central ACEers silly for so many years, Curly is ready to jump right out of his skin over this news.

Scheduled Dates For Wild West Coaster Round-Up

—The most recent edition of ACE News had some slightly incongruent information regarding our Wild West Coaster Round-up. The planned dates are May 26-27, with Joyland on Friday evening, Larson International on Saturday morning, and Wonderland on Saturday afternoon & evening.

Six Flags Over Texas' Holiday In The Park

—Holiday in the Park (HIP) at Six Flags Over Texas is scheduled to run most days through January 1. Expect to see your Regional Rep at HIP many days – especially between December 26 and January 1.

Thank You!

The Regional Rep Team would like to thank the following people for help with this newsletter, events, and assistance in general (in no particular order): Steve Calloway, Sandra Daniels, and Jane Houser of Six Flags Over Texas; Chuck Hendrix, Lynda Baldwin, George Schilling, Kent Maulsby, Terry Overstreet, Ron McKenzie, Donna Marie Jendritzka, Joyce Ballenger and the rest of Six Flags AstroWorld; Martin Bozer, David Blazer, Steve Skains, and Joy Crampton of Fiesta Texas; AmeriSuites San Antonio NW; Gary Slade of Amusement Today; Toni at Amerisuites Arlington; Schlitterbahn; Paul Borchardt of Wonderland Park; Tim Baldwin; Jeffrey Seifert; S. Madonna Horcher; Mike, Dawn, & Zach Robinson; Jason McMillon; Charlotte Schroeder; Steven Schroeder; Jeremy Murphy; Roxanne Rochelle; Mark Davidson; Robert Reagan; Barry Maness and Kevin Knapp of ACE's Southwest region; Robert Ulrich of ACE's Southeast region; and Steve Berto of ACE's Southern California region.

In the Fiesta Fest article there is one sentence with three subtle Addams Family references. The first person to email Regional Rep Curly with the three references at regrep@acesouthcentral.org will win a special door prize at Winterfest. (If winner cannot attend Winterfest 2006 they will receive a Frontier City disposable camera.)