

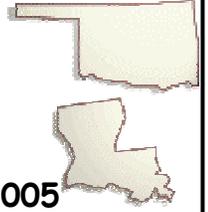


The Queue Line Chronicle



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

Regional Rep Soaked at Schlittercon III ... And Lives To Tell The Tale!

By David Lipnicky and Tim Baldwin
Photos by David Lipnicky unless noted



Through the little homes of the sleepy town of New Braunfels, lounging lazily on the banks of the Comal River lays the #1 waterpark in the world (with eight straight Golden Ticket awards backing up that title). Every other year, the meeting of the minds at

Schlitterbahn and the ACE South Central region put together a successful event. The tradition continued in 2005.

SchlitterCon III, hosted May 28, saw the expected wonders of the amazing park, but also numerous surprises. The first was the ominous forecast from the Weather Channel. The first ten minutes of ERT on the massive Master Blaster slide complex saw a heavy and chilly rain. As if in answer to the event gods, the skies cleared and a gorgeous sunny day prevailed through the evening as if to thumb its nose at the bleak forecasts.

Dodging the moniker of "Monsoon Fest", SchlitterCon III delivered an outstanding event for almost 60 attendees from six States ranging from as far away as Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The locals got a kick out of the next surprise. Regional Rep Curly (who does NOT get wet), already soaked by the rain, took a "no point trying to steer this runaway bus now" attitude, and for the first time in eight years – we are talking almost a decade here – tried a waterpark ride! Curly broke his "will not do water" policy and went on Master Blaster, and then Wolf Pack, and then Dragon Blaster, and then virtually every other attraction at the universe's greatest waterpark! Much to Curly's astonishment, SchlitterCon III participants took particular delight in seeing ACE's new wettest Regional Rep, so he just kept on enjoying the summery entertainment of Schlitterbahn's spectacular attractions even after the sun and Texas heat decided to join in on the fun.

If spectacular water rides and a soaking wet Regional Rep were not enough, Schlitterbahn's last surprise came as a one-two punch at lunch. While the Regional Rep Team debuted the new ACE South Central banner, Schlitterbahn surprised attendees with a very tasty BBQ lunch catered by Rudy's (a growing central Texas institution).



Lone Star Coasterthon 2005—A Woody Celebration

By Tim Baldwin (Photos by Jason Knutson unless noted)



While enthusiast events have been hosted at Six Flags Over Texas virtually every year since the *Texas Giant* has been built, the name Lone Star Coasterthon has been around since 1999. In that year, Coasterthon was a prelude to Coaster Con XXII in San Antonio during the month of June. The annual event has landed in September every year since.

A Six Flags Over Texas event is like no other. Of course, a lot of this is due to the mix of rides. But better yet is the personality that comes through by the host park. Great people have always been at the helm and a feeling of welcome has never been in question. This hospitality dates back even to the earlier days of events. And the tradition still lives today.

Truth to be told, Coasterthon is all about traditions. Back in the early days, complimentary soft drinks were available during the night ERTs. Those dark rides on *Giant* were a big hit, too. But if one steps back, more and more traditions have been added over the years. Unusual group shots, wacky auction items, the wrap-up session, event shirts, and great Q&As have become staples to the Arlington event. Some of these perks are sprinkled at other events, but none quite gel as well as they do in the Lone Star State. Bias? Maybe. But Six Flags Over Texas can never be accused of not rolling out the hospitality.

So what made this year's edition a little different? One big answer is Jane Houser. SFOT has always been blessed with great PR people. Jane worked under our beloved Melissa Pinkerton, who has sadly left us for more northern states, and it shows that Mel has taught her well. What enthusiasm! Your regional reps can be the first to testify that this gal is a jewel.



The Curly Seat

A view from the South Central Regional Rep seat

David Lipnicky—ACE South Central Regional Rep
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It is easy to get along and handle things when times are easy. While not an original concept, I am a true believer that how we handle ourselves when times are not so easy is what defines a person, an organization, or even an industry. As we have seen in the last couple of months, the South Central Region has faced some very trying times. While caused by factors outside our control, I think for the most part, the individuals and parks in our region have faced these very difficult times with compassion and dignity.

The devastation from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita affected various South Central ACEers (as well as ACEers from other regions). The impact ranged from a temporary abandonment of a home for some, to the loss of homes and jobs for others. I know many were deeply saddened to hear that some of our members from the greater New Orleans area (which includes parts of eastern Mississippi and is part of the South Central region) lost homes and jobs. Just being sad is one thing, but trying to do something to help is another. Without going into all the details, I am humbled to know that within hours of hearing word that some of our members were in big trouble, ACEers from not just Texas, but from Pennsylvania, Ohio, California, and other states went to work on lining up housing and job leads. Many were tapping friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers for assistance and leads. In many cases, this was in addition to their own personal donations of money, food, clothes, and/or other items to various relief efforts.

Our own Tim Baldwin had contacted the Regional Rep Team and Six Flags Over Texas about giving the proceeds from the Lone Star Coasterthon auctions and raffles, which Six Flags normally donates to the ACE Museum Fund, to Katrina Relief activities. As Lone Star is a park-sponsored event, not an ACE event, this was the park's call. Happily, the park was already exploring this possibility and was just about to propose this idea to ACE. At about the same time, ACE's Immediate Past President, Bill Linkenheimer, also impressed me. When hearing how some members' lives were literally uprooted, he encouraged the use of fund raising efforts to help our affected members. With support from Six Flags Over Texas and members of ACE Executive Committee a given, Steve Calloway, Sandra Daniels, Jane Houser,

and the rest of the Six Flags staff went to work. So did our members. Scott Connor, Shirley Mason, Madonna Horcher, Daniel Craig, Wanda Price, Sean McWhirter, and others made contributions of auction items and/or their time in making a difference. In addition, numerous members opened their wallets and pocketbooks in regards to their auction bids and raffle ticket purchases. While I will not go into all the details or all the support provided, I am very happy to report that everyone's efforts resulted in an amazing donation of \$2,018.89 to the Salvation Army Katrina Fund!

In just a few hours after Lone Star ended, I sent a quick e-mail to Steve, Sandra, and Jane saying, "I have never, never, never been more proud to say that Six Flags Over Texas is MY home park". Seeing how so many ACE members did what they could to make a difference, made me so incredibly thankful that I am a part of such a special organization. I have no doubt in my mind that this was certainly a moment that defines who we are.

I never thought for a second that our region would be rocked with horrible news in just 24 hours, and that the character of an integral member of the South Central family would be put to the test.

The very day following Lone Star Coasterthon came the shocking news that Six Flags Inc. was going to close down AstroWorld at the end of their season. Knowing the park's staff would be both devastated and very busy; the Regional Rep Team waited a few days and then provided a simple offer of assistance to the park. While thanking ACE for its offer, the park's management was very sad that a simple one-day event "Thank You" event the park wanted to give ACE would not come to fruition. Soon after the news of imminent closure, came the real threat of hurricane Rita. While Rita's eye hit to the east of Houston, the storm did cause problems across a wide area of the Gulf coast. While more than a few feared Rita would cause AstroWorld to close even earlier than September 30, the park re-opened, their Fright Fest resumed, and park promotions continued in earnest. This sums up what I have come to learn about AstroWorld's management over the three-plus years -- they do their best to make amusement park goers happy despite whatever situation they encounter.

I luckily had an opportunity to visit AstroWorld since the announcement of their closing. While my goal was to take pictures of the park and ride a few coasters, what struck me was how friendly and professional so many staff were that day. While a "who cares we're closing" attitude could have very easily set in, this was definitely not the case. I saw Ride Operations personnel wearing shirts that had the delightful slogan "If you can't take the heat, get out of Ops" on the back. While paying for a T-shirt, I found the young staff at the gift shop counter to be very efficient, yet extremely personable. As I was waiting for the 610 Limited Train, the young lady from Ride Ops and I started talking. She was so excited that she just passed her tests to run *Greezed Lightnin'* and she would get to operate the ride before the park closed. This had been one of the goals she wanted to accomplish at the park. One could tell she had more goals in mind beyond running Greezy. She thought she would be able to work at AstroWorld all the way through college. She added, "Now I will have to figure out another plan, but my time in school will not be anywhere as fun." Still, her face beamed when she told me that she could be running *Lightnin'* in less than a week. You could tell in her voice that she loved her job, loved her life, and she loved AstroWorld. While I am sure she will be successful as an adult, the loss of her job may make her path a little harder, and I think the amusement industry may have lost a very good (and quite potentially a career) employee. What I observed all throughout the day from the AstroWorld staff was their consistent ability to be professional, friendly, and find joy in a less than desirable situation.

Professionals in the employment industry say that losing a job is as traumatic as experiencing a death in one's family. I doubt anyone in this situation will argue with that assessment. An excellent editorial in the October 2005 edition of *Amusement Today* had the theme that AstroWorld deserved better. I think most in ACE will easily agree with that assessment. Still, AstroWorld's professional efforts from management and employees continue despite deserving much better. Given the environment, their actions can only be summed up in my mind as courage in the face of adversity, and this is how I see AstroWorld riding out its final definition to the industry. And that my friends is my view from The Curly Seat.

South Central ACEers Notch Nearly 100 Spins on SplashTown Tornado

Article and photos by Mike Robinson

Wednesday, April 27, 5:30 a.m., 55 degrees. It was a chilly morning that Sean Shaver, Cheryl Seuess, and I met at Six Flags SplashTown for a media event for their new attraction, Tornado. The Tornado is the funnel shaped slide by ProSlide that is sweeping the nation. This would be my first ride on one.

In the spirit of our Regional Rep, the bag I rolled across the freshly laid sod had everything. A robe, extra clothes, coffee and towels were at the ready.

Jonathan Walton's "Top of the Mornin to ya!" greeted us. We would be riding for a segment for Walton's World, an early morning segment for KHOU, the local Houston CBS affiliate.

When we arrived we saw a new form of tube. SplashTown is offering 2-man tubes for the Tornado. These will be available for rental only and seat the passenger facing each other in a kind of Ying/Yang position.

It was time for our first ride. Sean counted the steps as I carried the tube. "85 Steps" he proclaimed.

To our relief the water was warmer than the outside chilly air so it was nice to get in the tube for my first ride. It was still dark as we entered the tunnel. A quick left turn and WOW. What an INSANE drop into the funnel. This is the kind of drop we love. A drop that we would drive hundreds of miles to experience. This was just insane. After the drop we skyrocketed up the other side of the funnel, and back down again and up and down and up and down until we finally at last entered the splash pool.

Cheryl rode with us for our next ride. "Eighty three Steps" Sean yelled. I carried the tube. Again a wonderful ride in which Sean laughed at my terror as I was unable to ride with my hands up.

We rode this beast 10 more times. "Eighty one!" Sean would yell. "Seventy Nine!", "Ninety!" He wasn't being dumb; I was the one carrying the raft.

Later we came back for the Houston Chronicle. Once the sun was up, the day warmed up nicely and we enjoyed a few more rides. "Eighty-six!"

The ride is a lot of fun and evidently the crowds agree. The demand looks to be obvious with people lined up all day to ride. "Ninety Five!"



Dave's Top 10 Reasons to Love the State Fair of Texas (besides the coasters)

10. **Flat Rides:** What a collection! (Don't forget the 1914 Dentzel carousel)
9. **Fried Oreos:** These things ought to be outlawed.
8. **Dark Rides:** Need I say more?
7. **Food on a Stick:** Tacky, but tasty.
6. **Fun Houses:** A breed of amusement that is an endangered species in most U.S. parks.
5. **Big Tex:** A Texas legend that is true delight for young and old.
4. **Fried Peanut Butter Sandwiches:** New for 2005! (Insert Elvis joke here)
3. **The Texas Star:** 212 feet of sight seeing fun!
2. **Fried Twinkies:** Mmmmmmmmm Twinkies.
1. **The Texas State Fair Auto Show:** The largest in the Southwest and admission is free!



AstroWorld's Greezed Lightnin' Celebrates its 1 Millionth Launch!

Article and photos by Mike Robinson

On October 15, 2005 I was fortunate enough to get to ride on the 1,000,000 launch of *Greezed Lightnin'*. This milestone event just snuck up and I want to thank AstroWorld for inviting me to ride. Riding on the train were a collection of media, a ton of long time employees and a few others I didn't know.

Somehow, Zach and I ended up on the first seat of the train. (Thanks Chuck!)

The cameras rolled and off we went on a very special ride. As we took off, all I could think of was all those lap bars checked, all those "All Clears" spoken and the many times the dispatch button was pressed by so many employees.

We went through the loop and I watched the Astrodome rotate as we navigated the loop. Then we rolled to a stop and did it all again backwards. As we flew through the station backwards, cheering guest threw streamers and confetti. Then up the spike where my breath is always taken away and into the station for the final stop.

What a neat experience. It really made me realize how much history we have at the park. One Million launches...I am glad it happened at AstroWorld and nowhere else.

Thank You AstroWorld for one more unforgettable memory!

Lone Star Coasterthon 2005 (Continued from page 1)

With anniversaries for both *Judge* and *Giant* being 25th and 15th respectively, this year's event had a woodie celebration motif. The event shirt had both of our wooden treasures on the front. Birthday cake for both coasters was also on hand at the close of the first ERT session with images of the two coasters decorating the delicious desserts. In addition to being tasty, they looked quite cool. If you didn't see them before they were cut into servings, it was a job well done. Our group photo took place in a never-before location of being *inside* the *Judge*. A very cool photo op, and sadly, one that couldn't allow operation until we got out (imagine the new camera angles if they did!).

Lunch was plentiful and the return of chocolate dipped pink things even had some new-fangled twists with coconut, too. Well, there was an attempt with peanut butter morsels that didn't fare well in the heat, but give the park big marks for trying. In fact, Stan Mills excels at this job and SFOT should be grateful to have him in their Food division. Sandra Daniels spoke to us and kept us up to speed with the park, and Steve Calloway gave us his own welcome from the general manager perspective. It was good that Mr. Calloway joined us because ACE had something special for him. The regional rep team made a point to acknowledge Steve Calloway as the first recipient of the regional Industry Appreciation Award. A list of notable points was read, way too lengthy to list here, and the response of the crowd agreed, we are lucky to have Steve close to home. The lunch concluded with an outlandish auction. Items ranged from artwork from ACE member Shirley Mason to a pair of plane tickets and vacation accommodations to Magic Mountain to some really rare and wacky ride parts that had to be described by Maintenance enthusiast Sean Lynch. All said and done, we raised over \$2,000. This year, we placed the ACE museum on the backburner to let those funds go to people affected by Hurricane Katrina, an understandable move.

Another new twist this year was a back areas tour. Just when we think we've seen it all in terms of the park, two of Six Flags landscaping artists toured interested groups into the green houses and landscaping areas to show us how thousands of plants and flowers grace the park each year. Thanks go to Lowell McKenzie and Nancy Guessford for guiding the appreciative ACEers with their informative expertise.

And, oh yes, did we mention rides? With close to seven hours of ERT, it's hard to match this event for sheer ride time. Over the course of the three ride sessions, eleven different rides (nine of them coasters) were sampled and relished. ACEers rode to their heart's content, and wasn't it cool to have new-comer Flume 1 added to the *Giant/Titan* evening mix?

After an action-packed Saturday, Sunday still had a few last moments of its own. Once again, everyone received a group photo in the wrap-up session. On hand to field those insightful (and often insane) "enthusiast questions" was Operations big guy Steve Martindale. While Mr. Martindale likes to point out, he isn't used to speaking in front of groups, but you would never have known it. What a fine job of answering inquiries, and some dazzling footwork dancing around ones he didn't want to, as well. [Author's note here: Steve was the gazillionth person to field the Spelunker's question. They are *not* coming back, okay? It's time to retire the question, please! There, that's been said.] Our appreciation goes to Mr. Martindale for his time and efforts, and basically just for being a lot of fun.



Attendees gather inside the turnaround on *Judge Roy Scream* for this year's group photo. Photo by S. Madonna Horcher



The Robinson's enjoy some morning ERT on *Titan*.



Jane Houser, Sean Lynch and Tim Baldwin auction off a *Mr. Freeze* transfer table PLC.

Lone Star Coasterthon Quick Facts

- LSCT started out in the early 1990's as the "Texas Giant Celebration"
- LSCT 2005 attracted 190 attendees from 17 States
- LSCT 2005 raised \$2,018.89 for the Salvation Army Katrina Relief Fund

Two surprises ended the session. The ever-lovable Jane Houser handed out pieces of wood from the *Giant* that were actually branded with the event on it. Yes, indeed. Some crafty person at the park created a Lone Star Coasterthon 2005 brand and singed its black stamp into pieces of wood. Talk about fun collectables. The final surprise was unplanned – rain! After an extremely dry summer, who saw this fluke shower coming? While we needed the rain (ANY rain), it did make for a soggy lunch. But heck, we didn't mind. We had been blessed with an event with so much value and fun goodies that it was a really great weekend. But how could it be anything less? It's tradition.

The 2nd Annual Lone Star Coasterthon Pre-event Welcome Party Kicks Off and Exciting Weekend of Coasters, Food, and Fun by David Lipnicky

Breaking a record when it is only your second time out may not be impressive, but more than doubling the previous attempt has to mean something. When the Regional Rep Team wanted to add a little fun to the Lone Star Coasterthon weekend in 2004, we wondered if more than a dozen LSCT attendees would show up. What a silly concern, as three times that amount had a fun time at Humperdinks that year.

With a goal of reaching 50 for the 2005 LSCT Pre-event Welcome Party, the Regional Rep Team and event sponsor *Amusement Today* magazine went to work early – April to be exact. Pre-event response to Regional Rep Curly had our expected numbers to come in somewhere between 40 and 50, as the Regional Rep Team knew some “Partiers” would forget to e-mail. We would soon learn that wondering if we would break 50 attendees would also be a silly notion.

With *Amusement Today's* party platters and magazines, plus regional newsletters in place, the Regional Rep Team and *Amusement Today's* Gary Slade were ready to host a fun and relaxing evening of coaster talk, food, and fun. Within 20 minutes, last years mark of 36 was surpassed. Within 30 minutes, extra chairs and tables were brought in as we passed the 50 mark. A communications error between the Humperdinks General and Night Managers resulted in only one Waitress scheduled to take care of us hungry ACEers. Still, the majority took advantage of the time to catch up with old friends and make new ones.

Things got quite cozy as we hit 60 attendees by the 90-minute mark. While the rate of ACEers showing up slowed after the first hour, the flow did not stop! The much higher than expected numbers and the obvious longer than anticipated wait times for food resulted in the event running an hour longer than planned, not that this was too much of a problem for most as the majority of attendees took on a “the more the merrier” attitude. (The Regional Rep Team still says the event was shorter than the Winterfest 2004 “Coaster Jenga” game. Well, that's our story and we're sticking to it!) By night's end, the final count had 74, or 39% of the 190 Lone Star Coasterthon attendees showing up for the Pre-event Party.

Rapid growth often brings growing pains, but at least these growing pains were associated with enjoyable coaster talk and food. The Regional Rep Team thanks all that attended and we are especially grateful for everyone's patience. You can place your bets now that the Regional Rep Team will work hard to improve the experience for next LSCT Pre-Event Party.

NOTE: When Humperdinks learned they did not have enough staff to handle our much larger than expected group, they called in extra help for the kitchen and that sped up the service a bit later in the



Attendees enjoy some nighttime rides on *Shock Wave*.



Always a favorite, some nighttime *Mine Train* ERT. (Sorry about the bright flash, guys!)



Morning ERT on *Mr. Freeze*

evening. Humperdinks apologizes to ACE for the staffing miscommunication and wants our business back in 2006. They have mentioned the possibility of expanding our area to include the outdoor patio. The Regional Rep Team has not made any commitments at this time for the location of the 2006 LSCT Pre-event Welcome Party, but has already started discussions of our options with *Amusement Today* magazine.



Six Flags To Close AstroWorld Forever!

By David Lipnicky

"We had a great run with AstroWorld and have been proud to serve as a family entertainment venue in the community for so many years." Those words from Kieran Burke, chairman and CEO of Six Flags, Inc, marks the beginning of the end for a Texas entertainment icon, as the company announced it would permanently close its AstroWorld theme park in Houston at the end of the 2005 season.

In addition, the Oklahoma City-based owner and operator of regional theme parks announced it has engaged Cushman & Wakefield to market the 109-acre site to the real estate development community. While subject to the approval of the company's bank lenders, the company expects the sale to yield significant proceeds that would be used for debt reduction and other corporate purposes.

As many in the South Central Region know, AstroWorld is located near Reliant Park - Houston's major sports, entertainment, and exhibition center. However, many outside the greater Houston area may not know AstroWorld is also near the museum district, the sprawling Texas Medical Center, and is immediately adjacent to the new light rail system's Fannin South Station.

Six Flags Inc. (NYSE: PKS) says a disposition of the 37-year-old park compares very favorably with other alternatives for the venue, such as making significant additional investments in new rides, attractions, and upgraded facilities. While this may be true given AstroWorld's size and location within a renewed area of Houston that is adjacent to much of city's growing business, civic, and healthcare activity, the company acknowledged the continued uncertainty over offsite parking rights related to Reliant Stadium, the Texans football team, and the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo as a factor in the decision.

On August 25, 2005, the company's Board of Directors announced it was seeking proposals from third parties regarding a possible sale of the company. However, the announcement pertaining to AstroWorld has no impact on the Six Flags' ongoing plans to sell the company.

"We are always looking for opportunities to enhance shareholder value. In assessing the performance of this property relative to the significant increase in real estate values in the Houston market, we concluded that the best way to unlock this value for shareholders was to pursue a sale of the property," said Mr. Burke. "While we continually review our properties in order to determine the best allocation of resources, it is important to note that a unique set of circumstances applies to the AstroWorld property and this action should not be considered indicative of our intentions for any of our other parks." Mr. Burke added, "We are grateful to everyone who visited, worked and supported AstroWorld, and we look forward to serving Houstonians at Six Flags SplashTown and other nearby Six Flags parks. We are very encouraged by the prospect that the site has great potential for economic development and are hopeful this sale will ultimately result in significant job creation and economic activity for the city of Houston."

The company said the closure would result in the loss of 119 permanent jobs. However, jobs at other Six Flags properties are likely to be offered to a number of employees. While Six Flags said the 2005 seasonal staff would not be affected, the economic and

social impact certainly will be felt in 2006, as jobs for approximately 1,500 seasonal workers – primarily for older youth and young adults – will not come back to Houston. In addition, the loss of AstroWorld would be a crippling blow to the surrounding hotels and restaurants, whose only real draw during the summer months is from AstroWorld patrons and employees.

Six Flags said it retains a significant presence in the greater Houston area with its Six Flags SplashTown waterpark, located just north of the city in Spring, Texas. SplashTown will be enhanced with equipment from AstroWorld, primarily from AstroWorld's waterpark area. Six Flags will also continue to serve the Texas market with its San Antonio and Arlington parks.

However, a glimmer of light remains from an unlikely source in the mind of most Texans. The Red Zone investment management company, which is run by Washington Redskins owner Daniel Snyder and currently owns 11.7% of Six Flags Inc., said it opposes Six Flags Inc.'s plans close AstroWorld and sell the park before its stockholders could review Red Zone's proposals. The statement also indicated that Cedar Fair, who owns Cedar Point and other amusement parks, has expressed interested in AstroWorld.

Mr. Snyder announced in mid-August that he wanted to take control of Six Flags Inc. after expressing general disappointment for the theme-park operator over the past 12 months. In a Securities and Exchange (SEC) filing, Mr. Snyder stated his intent to raise his ownership in the park to 34.9% as well as a proposed ouster of three of Six Flags' seven board members including Kieran Burke, Six Flags Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. The week following Mr. Snyder's filing, was when Six Flags, Inc. announced its board had unanimously decided to put the entire company up for sale through an auction process as "the best way to deliver full and fair value". That announcement also invited Red Zone to participate as a bidder.

This case proves that the amusement business is not all fun and games. The future of AstroWorld is definitely bleak at this point. However, it is odd that the only hope for AstroWorld, a Texas institution that has been a part of the Six Flags chain for 30 years, may be with the owner of the Washington Redskins and/or one of Six Flags' biggest competitors.

Given the current situation has AstroWorld closing at the end of this season, the Regional Rep Team is planning to have an *informal* gathering to say Goodbye to AstroWorld on Sunday, October 30, the park's last day of operation. While the park is not in a position to host an event, if you want to join other ACE members in saying goodbye to a member of the South Central family, please contact Assistant Regional Rep Jason Knutson (jknutson@aceonline.org).

www.saveastroworld.com, which was the first source to identify closure of the park as a real possibility, contains regular updates on the AstroWorld's situation, plus information for industry and local contacts that have direct roles in the AstroWorld's fate. In addition, the October edition of Amusement Today has a brilliant editorial on the AstroWorld situation and even calls Six Flags pulling the plug on AstroWorld as the "second biggest mistake in theme park history".

Mr. Lipnicky used the following sources in writing this article: Amusement Today, KBTv4 on-line (Beaumont, Texas), Yahoo Business/Finance, www.saveastroworld.com, and Reuters.

Schlittercon III (Continued from page 1)

With a nice Q&A by General Manager Terri Adams and PR darling Sherrie Brammall, the park shared hot-off-the-press illustrations and announcements surrounding their third park under construction in Galveston. However, the knockout punch was a stunning surprise that took ACEers by storm as Schlitterbahn presented our organization with a \$500 check to the ACE Museum Fund! It is astonishing and heartwarming to see that one of the museum's biggest corporate donors continues to be a waterpark.



Photo By Mike Robinson

A certain wet Regional Rep may have had water on the brain by the time lunch ended; as it is rumored, he was seen at one of the park's "swim up bars" two hours before the time listed on the agenda. Again, that is only a rumor and Curly is sticking to his "no comment" stance. SchlitterCon is arguably the most unique event in all of ACE, and this one did not disappoint, as the staff and their rides delivered boatloads of fun for everyone. A wonderful ERT, good weather, a custom event T-shirt, many of the world's best water rides, a great lunch, and stellar hosts – all for the price lower than an admission ticket. Can it get any better than that? Did we mention Schlitterbahn's generous donation to the ACE Museum fund?



The South Central Region gives its deepest thanks to Sherrie Brammall, Terri Adams, and the entire Schlitterbahn staff for their support of ACE, our goals, and for the outstanding hospitality they show us at every fun-packed event they host.



The Region Attempts An Informal Park Take Over, But the Park Takes Over Our Senses And Hearts With Surprises!

By David Lipnicky with supplemental material by Tim Baldwin
Photos by Steven Castaneda

Traditionally, Fiesta Texas has shared the Memorial Day weekend spotlight with Schlitterbahn in odd numbered years, but for 2005, the park is sliding their popular Fiesta Fest event to October 15 and 16. Of the nearly 60 SchlitterCon III attendees, approximately 25 of the most intrepid ACEers responded to Regional Rep Curly's call to duty and participated in South Central's Informal Take Over (ITO) of Fiesta Texas on May 29 in San Antonio.

Many FT-ITO participants took immediate notice of how well Fiesta Texas' coasters were running as ALL were in tip-top form. Regional Rep Curly had his best ride on *The Rattler* in a dozen years! Each attendee who

stayed to the end was able to ride each coaster in the park at least once. The event's highlight was not even planned by the Regional Rep Team.

While this was to be an informal activity, when Entertainment Director David Blazer and General Manager Martin Bozer caught wind that few ACEers might informally visit their park, Martin and David wanted to share some of the park's genuine hospitality. They contacted the Regional Rep Team with a kind offer of a simple water & cookie station. We should have expected that Fiesta's amusement masters would not stay at simple. Within a week, this little offer quickly became an official "mystery" agenda item for our informal activity. At 1:30 p.m., the Fiesta Texas crew surprised FT-ITO participants with:

- + A very nice welcome from David & Martin
- + Sodas and bottled water
- + Tex-Mex "appetizer/dessert snacks" that easily qualified as a full/custom lunch
- + A video preview of their award-winning "Monster Mash Bash" show
- + A personal invite from David & Martin to Fiesta Fest 2005 (October 15-16)
- + And then ...

Fiesta Texas gave FT-ITO participants exclusive seating in the Zaragoza Theater for the technical rehearsal of their brand spankin' new "Xcelleration" show, which had not yet been shown to the public or even the media! (Fiesta Texas added Xcelleration this year to the park's impressive line-up of award-winning shows.) This extreme sports show is a unique extravaganza. "Flying Bodies; Racing Wheels!" is the only way your Regional Rep can describe this spectacle of kinetic frenzy, and Curly hopes it returns in 2006.



Our most sincere thanks go to Martin, David, and the rest of the Fiesta Texas Staff and entertainers for their gracious generosity and extra special central Texas hospitality.



Nuts & Bolts (Items in Brief)

TV Report On ACE and Fiesta Fest to Air In Austin - Fox 7 Austin filmed Fiesta Fest's Saturday morning ERT session and interviewed many ACEers for a human-interest story for their weekend show. The story is currently slated to air Sunday, Nov. 6 sometime between 9-10pm CST (most likely around 9:30pm). The Regional Rep Team asks any central Texas ACEers who can record the report to provide a copy to the Regional Rep Team (preferably in a DVD format).

Six Flags Over Texas to Have a Media Announcement on November 10th -

Before anyone calls or E-mails the Regional Rep Team for any "secret details", we will state now that we DO NOT know what the park plans to announce -- and even if we did we would not be able to tell -- so please do not ask us. With that said, Six Flags Over Texas has told the Regional Rep Team that their media announcement for the 2006 season is scheduled for November 10. The park is excited about the announcement, so the Regional Rep Team hopes our members will be pleased regardless if the news is about a new ride or not.

Winterfest 2006 at Six Flags Over Texas Date Selected - Mark your 2006 calendars! Winterfest 2006 will take place on Saturday, January 28, 2006 at Six Flags Over Texas. In addition, the Regional Rep Team has

verbal commitment on a block of rooms at a very good rate at a nearby hotel -- more details to follow.

The Window to Send in Your 2005 Regional Membership Survey Will Close - Do not let YOUR voice go silent and take an additional opportunity to have a role in how our region serves its members. Help the Regional Rep Team do a better job for YOU by letting us know what you like, dislike, how we are doing, as well as giving us ideas to explore. Please fill out the Membership Survey that accompanied the previous newsletter and mail it back to Scott Connor, P.O. Box 351, Texarkana, TX 75504-0351. You pay your memberships fees; we are YOUR Representatives -- so take this excellent opportunity to tell us what you think!

THE CROSSOVER—News From Neighboring Regions

Worlds of Fun Season Pass Discount - Save \$10 on a 2006 Worlds of Fun Season Pass by ordering by November 11. Full details are at www.worldsoffun.com/purchase_tickets/season_passport.html.

Six Flags over Georgia Season Passholder Day - November 5, 2005, from 10am to 6 pm is a private day of fun just for Six Flags season pass holders, their family, and friends. Bring one guest per season pass holder for \$10.00 + tax. The event includes free Parking, souvenirs and food - HALF PRICE, special buy one/get one free on all games, 2006 season passes on sale for

\$49.99 + tax (NOTE: SFOG season passes will not be discounted after January 1, 2006). ACE members will be treated to special VIP reception in the Drive-In Theater at Noon, so be sure to stop by while enjoying final rides on all the great coasters along with seeing the progress on 2006's *Goliath*, a giant of a coaster going up at the park.

Dollywood Coasterfest - November 19 will be a Coasterfest at Dollywood. Enjoy the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of the season with a pre-Thanksgiving event. Rather than a group meal, attendees will receive a \$10 voucher that can be used for

food anywhere in the park (and change will be provided in cash). End the day with ERT for an hour in the dark on *Thunderhead*, ranked the #1 wood coaster in this year's Amusement Today "Golden Ticket" awards. Price for ACE members is \$55, and is upgradeable to a Season Pass (price to be determined). The member rate with a valid Dollywood Season Pass is \$20 (voucher & ERT only) -- slightly higher for guests of ACE members. The event flyer is now online at www.acesoutheast.org/DW05.pdf.

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): Sherrie Brammall, Terri Adams, and the entire Schlitterbahn staff; Steve Calloway, Sandra Daniels, Jane Houser, Sean Lynch, Scott Price, Stan Mills, Lowell McKenzie, Nancy Guessford and Steve Martindale of Six Flags Over Texas; Chuck Hendrix, Lynda Baldwin, George Schilling, Kent Maulsby, Terry Overstreet, Ron McKenzie, Donna Marie Jendritza, Joyce Ballenger and the rest of Six Flags AstroWorld; Gary Slade of Amusement Today; Humpardinks Arlington; AmeriSuites Arlington; Martin Bozer, David Blazer, Steve Skains and Joy Crampton of Fiesta Texas; AmeriSuites San Antonio NW; Jay Wilson of Kemah Boardwalk; Tim Baldwin; Jeffrey Seifert; S. Madonna Horcher; Mike, Dawn, & Zach Robinson; Jason McMillon; Kari Lipnicky; Stacey Glaeser; Jill Nordstrom; Daniel Kraig; Shirley Mason; Wanda Price; Sean McWhirter; Charlotte Schroeder; Steven Castaneda; Sean Shaver; Jeremy Murphy; Robert Ulrich and Josh Herrington of ACE's Southeast region; Barry Maness and Kevin Knapp of ACE's Southwest region; Bill Linkenheimer; Brian Peters; Gonzo Moltz; and Carole Sanderson.

Regional Web Site Reminders

- Are you taking advantage of all the features found on the regional web site? If not, sign up today! Region members can request a username and password to download regional newsletters in full color as well as videos seen at Winterfest. If you've just recently joined the region or ACE, you can download all the previous newsletters dating back to Winter of 2003. To sign up for this feature visit the home page of the site and click on "Member Signup" link on the front page.
- Keep up to date with all the latest regional news by signing up for the free email update service (e-blasts). This service is available to all members in

the region with an e-mail address and sometimes is the only way to get information out about media days and other events in a timely manner. To sign up, click on the "Updates and News" link on the home page and then click on the signup link.

- Taken a photo related to a event, park or coaster that you are proud of? Share it on the web site by sending it in to be used as a possible photo of the month! E-mail all photos to webmaster@acesouthcentral.org

<http://www.acesouthcentral.org>