Thunderbolt Turns 50
by Brett Weissbart

2018 is a special year for Kennywood for many reasons: the park is celebrating its 120th anniversary, Thomas Town marks one of the largest investments in decades and perhaps most notable for coaster enthusiasts, Thunderbolt is celebrating its 50th anniversary! Originally designed by John Miller and opened in 1924 as Pippin, the ride reopened in 1968 after receiving a major overhaul by the park’s own Andy Vettel. The longer, faster and wilder ride received many accolades, including being named “the king of coasters” by The New York Times and one of the top ten coasters in the country by the Smithsonian. Kennywood is celebrating the anniversary with special pricing, ride marathons and other events throughout the season.

CoasterBash! XXIX
by Sarah Windisch

ACE members in western Pennsylvania and surrounding states converged again in early March at Salvatore’s in the South Hills of Pittsburgh for CoasterBash!, the region’s off-season event with plenty of food, fun, prizes and even some dancing (you never know what to expect!). With some return presenters and several fresh faces, CoasterBash! XXIX was plenty of fun.

After two hours of social time and shopping, the event kicked off with some videos. First was “Log Jammer Memories” by Garrett Sauers, which was touching yet a wonderful way to preserve memories of a beloved ride. Next was “Summer Flashback” by Joel Brewton, which showcased the various events of the previous season, and watch out, you just might be somewhere in there! “New Coasters of 2017” by Ken Simmons was fun to watch, and to gauge everybody’s reaction to all of the new coasters, especially if you didn’t get to ride all of them yet.

After a welcome by Bill Linkenheimer III, ACE Western Pennsylvania’s regional rep, he introduced directors, committee members and those on the rep team, and announced that while some ACE events will no longer allow videotaping, it was welcomed at CoasterBash! We had a new benefit fundraiser this year: the Heinz History Center is trying to raise money for a Fred Ingersoll/Luna Park historical marker, which costs around $2,000, so organizers added this to some of the fundraisers being held during the evening. Additionally, it was announced that ACE Western Pennsylvania was looking for a Twitter coordinator.

The first presenter was Brian Butko, who authored the Kennywood Behind the Screams; Pocket Edition and is working on the Kennywood “ride all day” edition for next year. His Luna: Pittsburgh’s Original Lost Kennywood book was also published in 2017. Brian works at the Heinz History Center, has written other books and is a tremendous resource for history of the Lincoln Highway, diners, etc. The title of his CoasterBash! presentation was “Kennywood 2.5 Drowning in Candy” and if this was any indication, his upcoming book will be awesome!

Attendees were treated to a video from Tom Robbie of Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc. (PTCI): the dinosaur edition. As usual, Tom was up to his usual hysterical antics. Let’s just say that Tom’s staff has worked for him a very long time!

Next was our neighbor to the snowy north, Waldameer. Steve Gorman and Andrew Felice presented some photos from “snowpocalypse 2017” when the park had 60 inches of snow. For 2018 there continued on page 3
Thanks to **Linda Spar** who created ACE Western Pennsylvania’s Twitter account over eight years ago and continued to manage it until retiring from the position in March . . . congratulations and thanks to **Nicki Jones** for stepping up to serve as ACE Western Pennsylvania’s new Twitter coordinator . . . thanks to the **Daves** (Dave Altman, Dave Hahner and David Hahner) who, on behalf of ACE Western Pennsylvania, put a great deal of effort into a presentation on roller coasters given to 450 students during a Science Olympiad at the East Union Intermediate Center in Deer Lakes School District . . . Chase Fiore has sold his house in Altoona and is headed to grad school at the Savannah College of Art and Design, where he’ll pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree in themed entertainment design . . . congratulations to Kennywood Director of Public Relations and Social Media **Nick Paradise**, who was honored by The Incline among those under 40 helping to shape tourism in the area (and we couldn’t agree more!) . . . continued wishes for a speedy recovery to **Tony Colega**, who had foot surgery in March but has been hobbling around parks all spring . . . congratulations to **Karsen Cervi** who graduated from Greensburg Central Catholic and will be attending Pittsburgh Technical College to study film and multimedia technologies . . . several ACE members including Dave Altman, John Brocato, Lee Ann Draud, Bill Linkenheimer III, Roseanne Nyczaj, Jason Paulick, Garret Sauers, Arlene Thompson and Mar-Jean Zamperini recently seized the opportunity to volunteer to work in Kennywood’s food and beverage department on some spring work days and raise money for the ACE Preservation Fund . . . thanks to **Josh Brown**, **Erik Frankenstein** and **Sarah Windsch** who helped at a Conneaut Lake Park clean-up day. . .we are saddened to report on the death of **Kevin Thompson** and offer our condolences to his mother, Arlene Thompson and brother, Glenn Thompson . . .

**Calendar of Regional Events**

Visit ACEwesternPA.org for updated information on all regional events.

**Fun Fore All Fiesta**
Friday, July 20, 2018
Fun Fore All

**KennyKon XXIX**
Saturday, July 21, 2018
Kennywood

**ACE Fall Fantasy**
Sunday, August 12, 2018
Kennywood

**Flying High with a Blue Streak**
Saturday & Sunday, August 25-26, 2018
Conneaut Lake Park (Sat.)
Waldameer & Water World (Sun.)
is work on Ravine Flyer II, the painting of Ali Baba, a new sign for Wacky Shack, painting of the cars on Wacky Shack, painting of the two older water slides, and a new Zamperla balloon race which will include ADA accessible cars. In the waterpark, new for this year is the Cannon Bowl, a ProSlide CannonBOWL 30 which was tested in November by staff who wore wetsuits due to the cold temperatures. The video was quite entertaining! For 2019 it was announced that a Zamperla Chaos frisbee ride, capable of going 360 degrees will be installed by the train. It will be the park’s first ride that takes guests upside down.

Up next was ACE Vice President Dave Lipnicky with a national ACE update, including a 40th anniversary logo, information about upcoming events such as Spring Conference, Coaster Con 41, Preservation Conference, the East Meets ACE trip to Japan, and the 2018 ACE elections.

New to CoasterBash! was Fun Fore All’s Chris Camp, who gave us some history of this family entertainment center in Cranberry Township, as well as some plans for future expansion. Phase one was completed with the 4,000 square foot addition to house an indoor “party room” and XD dark ride/video ride, which some ACE members enjoyed during the 2017 Fun Fore All Fiesta. Phase two is a three- to four-year timeframe, adding family rides, indoor/outdoor electric go-karts, bowling, an indoor ropes course and more. Each attendee was given a $20 Fun Fore All gift card, which was a wonderful surprise and greatly appreciated!

Another new speaker, Jennifer Sopko, is the author of Idlewild: History and Memories of Pennsylvania’s Oldest Amusement Park. Since 2018 is the park’s 140th anniversary, this wonderful book full of history, photos, and information about Idlewild has perfect timing. The release date was scheduled for April 2, 2018 and the 300-page book will be available for purchase in the park and online.

Of course, no CoasterBash! is complete without food and Salvatore’s does not disappoint! Served at this year’s event was tossed salad, antipasto salad, chicken Romano with lemon cream sauce, baked ham with pineapple cherry glaze, parsley red skin potatoes, chateau blend vegetables, farfalle with marinara sauce and for dessert, raspberry cake. It was all wonderful.

Kennywood’s Nick Paradise talked about the new Thomas Town and the Zamperla rides being installed in the themed area. Kennywood donated some old panel scenes from around the Bayern Kurve to ACE, which were auctioned. In-house artists created new ones. Thunderbolt is celebrating 50 years this year and is getting some new wood on the inner turn. Racer is also getting new wood and trackwork, Jack Rabbit trains got rebuilt and the cars on Volcano were painted. Various Kennywood events for the year, including KennyKon which is July 21, were reviewed. Kenny Kangaroo joined Nick to present this The Golden Kenny, the park’s annual enthusiast award, to David Altman. Congratulations, Dave!

Up Next was Conneaut Lake Park’s Lenny Adams and Economic Progress Alliance of Crawford County’s Jim Becker. So far, five of six property parcels that the park listed for sale have been sold, and all $1.5 million has been paid to creditors (none goes to operating park). The park has been trying their best to attract visitors with events such as Park after Dark, bands, birthday packages in Kiddieland, Ghost Lake, etc. A grant was used to replace conventional light bulbs with LEDs on the carousel. Work continues on Devil’s Den, where six cars are operating, gags have been updated and about half of the steel track has been replaced. Musik Express maintenance issues were corrected by slowing it down. Witch’s Stew will be painted, and electrical work will be done, thanks to some red squirrels damaging the wires. Camperland is to be expanded with more sites, updated restrooms and Wi-Fi. Pricing continues at $10 for an all-day ride pass, and the park opens at noon Thursday through Sunday starting Memorial Day weekend.

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The annual CoasterBash! photo contest was held, and the winners were Jamie Miller in third place, Noelle Tewell in second place and Ken Riling in first place. The 50th anniversary Thunderbolt division winner, as continued on page 4.
judged by Kennywood officials, was Jaime Miller. Congratulations to the winners! Thanks to everybody who entered and also to Jason Ballard for organizing the contest.

Another new CoasterBash! presenter, Dalton Fischer, came all the way from Silver Dollar City in Branson, Missouri, to show us the new Time Traveler coaster, which was to open just two weeks after the event. This spinning Mack coaster with LSM launches has an interesting back story, unbelievable theming and trains that look super cool! Hopefully a lot of ACE members enjoyed it at Spring Conference.

Since nobody EVER wants to follow him, the last presenter was Jeff Croushore from Idlewild and SoakZone. Trying to keep things “low key” to start with, Jeff showed some Loyalhanna Creek flood photos from two weeks prior. Some flooding is normal, but this resulted in damage to the train tracks that will need to be reset. Upcoming events at the park were reviewed, including the 50th anniversary of Mister Rogers Neighborhood. Auntie Anne’s pretzels will be new as well as a pirate-themed, kid friendly escape room. Jeff also expressed some positive changes by the owners, with a longer vision and investments. The Wild Mouse cars will have new vinyl wraps, resulting in each car having its own “personality,” as well as repainting of the ride structure. Rollo Coaster had some work done by GCII on ledgers, supports and general structure; a new PTCI train will be used, with the first car having two rows of seats and the remaining cars having one row. Jeff went out with a dance party allowing attendees to “shout” what they were excited about!

Bill Linkenheimer wrapped up the night by announcing the winners of the various raffles, auctions, etc. The grand total raised (for the ACE Archives Fund, ACE Preservation Fund, NRCMA and the Heinz History Center historical marker project) was $2,245.25. WOW! Thanks to everybody in attendance for their generosity and supporting the different funds! Bill also had the “symphony of volunteers” to thank everyone involved for making CoasterBash! work. Stay tuned for CoasterBash! XXX, which is March 2, 2019.

This year’s winner of The Golden Kenny isn’t one who just joins an organization, but rather one who gets thoroughly involved, on an ongoing basis, to better the organization. Shortly after Dave Altman joined ACE and started going to regional events, he approached the regional rep team about volunteering and helping out. What started as helping at event registration tables quickly snowballed into more -- lots more -- he went on to ascend to all kinds of positions in ACE including assistant regional rep, regional rep, treasurer, vice president and even president. Dave is also a longtime supporter of all of the region’s parks, has a passion for history and preservation and worked diligently to fundraise for, and bring awareness to, Leap the Dips before its eventual 1999 restoration. And it was a two-for-one volunteer deal, as his wife, Maggie was also always involved as well.

I can’t thank you enough for inviting me! You guys put on a great event! It is always great to meet and talk with others in the industry that share a passion. I appreciate the opportunity to share about Fun Fore All as well.

-Chris Camp  President, Fun Fore All

What a wonderful event you held. Like I said during my presentation, I felt like I was in the Ozarks with all of the hospitality that was shown to me! It was truly a memorable experience.

-Dalton Fischer  Publicist, Silver Dollar City

CoasterBash! is the best opportunity of the year for talking to and hearing from some of our most ardent fans. We at Kennywood really value it, and enjoy spending the evening with ACE!

-Nick Paradise  Director of Public Relations, Kennywood

It is always fun to attend CoasterBash! where I can see my ACE friends, enjoy the presentations and learn about coasters around the world.

-Steve Gorman  President, Waldameer & Water World
CoasterBash Attendees Tour Waldameer and Water World

All photos by Bill Linkenheimer III except as noted

During CoasterBash! XXIX, Waldameer President Steve Gorman invited those in attendance to an exclusive off-season tour of the park. On April 14, despite unseasonably cold temperatures, over 60 people made the trek to Erie to see Waldameer in its off-season form. Park owner Paul Nelson traded a bullhorn with Steve and other park staff as they took attendees on a truly all-access tour that encompassed the park’s grounds, maintenance facilities, staff areas and even dark rides. ACE members and their guests were delighted upon seeing the park’s rides in various states of disassembly and the efforts that the park takes every year to get ready for the new season. Proving once again that Waldameer’s hospitality towards ACE is unmatched, the park provided a catered lunch for everyone who attended. Members will have the opportunity to visit the park again — this time in operating form — on Sunday, August 25 as part of the two-day Flying High with a Blue Streak event.
Saturday July 21, 2018
Kennywood

You’ll find EVERYTHING you need to know about KennyKon XXIX at www.ACEwesternPA.org/kennykon including the schedule, pricing menu, and links to online registration, the mail-in registration form and the Facebook event page.

Celebrating Kennywood’s 120th anniversary and Thunderbolt’s 50th anniversary with ACE Western Pennsylvania! 90 minutes of morning ERT will be held on Thunderbolt and Turtle. A picnic dinner will be served featuring smoked beef brisket, pierogis and lots more! After closing, enjoy a 45 minute ERT session on Phantom’s Revenge. As always, informal takeovers and other surprises will be happening throughout the day!

ACE members are invited to join NAPHA July 22-23 for their Keystone Adventure at Idlewild & SoakZone (Sunday) and Delgrosso’s (Monday). Visit the KennyKon event flier or Facebook event page for links to more information.

Printed registration must be postmarked by July 11. Online registration will remain open until July 14. On-site registration will be available for an additional fee.

A full-color version of The Fun Times is available online for download on the region’s website.