



# The Fun Times

The FUNOFFICIAL Newsletter of ACE Western Pennsylvania

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Photo by Ken Riling

## ACE makes some Holiday Magic

By Bill Linkenheimer III

They say that the third time is the charm. By all accounts, the first annual ACE Holiday Magic, held during the first-ever night of regular operation for Kennywood Holiday Lights, was a success. The event in December 2011 attracted over 50 members who were dazzled by Kennywood's wintertime beauty and the spectacle of lights. It included several ITOTs (Informal Takeover Times) and a most memorable group photo with Santa. A similar event was planned for 2012, and discounted tickets were offered to ACEers. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled as the park chose not to open as a result of a major snowstorm the day before.

This year, the third attempt at ACE Holiday Lights

would be the first held on Thanksgiving weekend and would prove to be a charm. It was the first event under the coordination of Assistant Regional Rep Tim Michalak. Tim took the informal event concept, added a couple elements of a formal event and created a hybrid event of sorts. Perks included an on-site discount, early park entry, behind-the-scenes tour of Ghostwood Estate in its holiday mode and a cup of hot chocolate for the attendees, the total number of which topped out at an impressive 84. About the only thing that Tim can't take credit for was the event-perfect weather. The cold air under clear skies and no wind served as the crisp icing on this event's festive cake.



Hello and welcome to the winter issue of *The Fun Times*. As we try diligently to thaw out from the deep winter freeze that is affecting the northeast US, we also look forward to another great season of roller coaster riding. While there are no new rollercoasters in our region, there are some exciting new ones in our neighboring regions for the 2014 season.

Another thing for us to look forward to in 2014 is that two of our own beloved regional events, CoasterBash! and KennyKon, are celebrating significant "25th" milestones. Our regional rep team is working feverishly to put together remarkable events to celebrate these milestones. There may be some surprises in store for the attendees at both events, but only time will tell!

See you in the queues!

*Matt*

## Nominations sought for The Golden Kenny

Nominations are now being accepted for the recipient of The Golden Kenny, an annual award presented to celebrate the ENTHUSIASM of an ACE member within ACE Western Pennsylvania. If you know of someone deserving of this award, please write a summary explaining why and forward it to Jeff Filicko at Kennywood either via email at [JFilicko@Kennywood.com](mailto:JFilicko@Kennywood.com) or by conventional mail to: Attn: Jeff Filicko, Kennywood 4800 Kennywood Blvd. West Mifflin, PA 15122

The deadline for nominations is February 28, 2014. The award will be presented at CoasterBash! XXIV on March 8, 2014.



Photos by Dave Hahner

David Hahner III celebrated his 16th birthday during a surprise party at Kennywood held on the evening of ACE Western Pennsylvania's ACE Holiday Magic event. His birthday fell just a few days prior and this fulfilled a lifelong wish to have a birthday party at Kennywood, which hasn't typically been a practical option with a November birthday. Lots of ACE friends, his parents and his grand parents were in attendance to help celebrate . . .

Have some Chatter for us? Did you or an ACE member you know retire, get a promotion, lose a pet, hit the lottery, take the trip of a lifetime, appear on television, or get arrested for running across the field during a Steelers game? SHARE IT WITH US! Email us at [Chatter@ACEwesternPA.org](mailto:Chatter@ACEwesternPA.org)

# John Matuska

1947 - 2013

By Bill Linkenheimer III

John Matuska may have been from Ohio, but his devotion to the parks of Western Pennsylvania was second to none.

In July 2011, I arrived at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Helsinki, Finland, where ACE's Scandinavian Sojourn would kick off. With over 100 ACEers attending, I knew who a handful of them would be, but the others would be a surprise. The first one I saw outside of my traveling partners would turn out to be a most pleasant surprise.

On that memorable sunny day outside the downtown hotel appeared John Matuska. Dressed in jeans and smoking a cigarette, John offered a low key and welcoming greeting exactly as he would have on seeing me at Conneaut Lake Park, where I most frequently saw him – except for the fact that he was wheeling a modest-sized suitcase and was some 4,300 miles from the northwestern Pennsylvania park.

I was surprised that John made the trip, but he responded nonchalantly, making it clear that he wouldn't have

missed this particular international event for anything. There were parks to discover – and more important, wood coasters to ride, including some scenic railways, that were high on his bucket list. Prior to 2011, I knew of John's passion for western Pennsylvania's wooden coasters, but in Scandinavia I learned of his passion for all wood coasters, everywhere.

John was from Hinckley, Ohio, but his support of western Pennsylvania parks and coasters was unwavering, in particular for Conneaut Lake Park, where he was a founding member of the *Blue Streak Boys*, a devoted group that works tirelessly to help the park and preserve the coaster. In May 2011 he drove all the way to Pittsburgh to participate in a Mad Mex benefit dinner whose proceeds all went to the park. After the original was lost, he also created a new, giant "light board" of Blue Streak's layout and donated it to the park to use in the coaster's station.

In 2013, John became seriously ill,

though no one knew it. And clearly John didn't want anyone to know, as he continued to live his life with the same passion for roller coasters, but with an accelerated agenda, to the tune of 34 parks. He was along for ACE's overseas trip, which took him to Hungary, Austria, Germany and The Netherlands. He attended Coaster Con in New England, attended a regional ACE event at Silver Dollar City, and went to California, completing the Coaster Con XXXVII schedule a year ahead of time.

On Labor Day weekend, Playland Park (Rye, New York), granted John's wish to ride the park's *Kiddy Coaster*, thus fulfilling his quest to ride every wooden coaster in North America. John passed away just a few weeks later, on September 21.

ACEers often become friends, but all too often we don't know much about one another outside of parks and roller coasters. It was only after John passed away that I learned from his friend and frequent travel partner, Josh Brown, that he was an accomplished bass player, performed as a member of The Grasshoppers (a Cleveland band whose members later formed The Cars) and was a licensed chemical dependency counselor and artist. John is survived by his mother, a brother, three children, and four grandchildren.

Any ACE member who knew John will no doubt, remember him for his laidback and pleasant demeanor while visiting parks and riding coasters – always enjoying and never complaining – and always happy to see you.



John Matuska with Jeffrey Seiffert on *Mammut* at Erlebnispark Tripdrill in Germany during the ACE Central Europe event last summer. Photo by Tim Baldwin

# ACEers head north to Fly High with a *Blue Streak*

By Bill Linkenheimer III and Lee Ann Draud

Sunshine greeted the 90 enthusiasts at noontime on Saturday, August 10, 2013, when Flying High with a *Blue Streak* kicked off at Conneaut Lake Park – a two-day event that was the result of a partnership between ACE Western Pennsylvania and Western New York Coaster Club (WNYCC), and would have us visiting Waldameer in Erie the next day.

Registration wasn't 100% ready to go at high noon as planned, thanks to a delay in getting the ride-all-day wristbands from Conneaut Lake Park, but in such a relaxing traditional park, no one minded the wait and used the time to socialize and catch up with old friends. Besides, the rides didn't open until 1 p.m. anyway!

Once everyone checked in and received their nametags and registration materials, many went on to participate in the ITOTs (informal takeover times) on the Carousel, Bumper Cars and Flying Scooters. Those who participated in the ITOT on the park's miniature golf course received their first surprise of the day – free miniature golf! This bonus was an unexpected yet very gracious gesture from Lenny Adams Jr., owner of Adams Amusements, the operator of the rides and midway concessions/games at the lakeside park.

The picnic dinner was held in the *Blue Streak* pavilions, near the coaster's turnaround. It's significant to note that the Flying High attendees were the first guests to use those pavilions in some two decades. The pavilions and tables had been fixed up and painted, and the grass in the area had been cut and maintained. Adams Amusements hopes that this is the first of many groups to utilize the finely situated picnic area and catering operation.

The second surprise of the day wasn't the unique picnic menu consisting of spaghetti, garlic bread, salad and cookies, which had been announced in advance. Instead the surprise was how darn good everything tasted! Not that anyone doubted that Stacey Adams (Lenny's wife) could cook, but this turned out to be one of the finer group meals of the summer, and the fruit salad one of the freshest.

During the late afternoon meal, Lisa Rawson from the park's board of trustees was on hand selling park souvenirs, including 75th anniversary *Blue Streak* T-shirts, and author Mike Costello was visiting from Florida and selling and signing his *Conneaut Lake Park* (in the Images of America series) books. Jack Moyers, chairman of the trustees, addressed our group, followed by Lenny Adams. It was apropos that one of Lenny's daughters stood peacefully in front of her father, his hand wrapped around her as he spoke of his ambitions

to keep Conneaut Lake Park a place for families. He and his family have moved to Conneaut Lake and now live there year round.

There was one last surprise at the pavilions, as the park added a second dessert – cake! And the cake featured a computer-perfect image of the event's gorgeous Mike Matscherz-created logo, made of tasty icing. The event logo also appeared on a T-shirt worn by Adams throughout the day.



Photo by Sarah Windisch

In addition to the park's ACE Roller Coaster Landmark *Blue Streak*, one of only two remaining Vettel coasters in the world, nighttime ERT also included the Bug, one of only two such operating Traver rides in the world. The ride, which requires custom-made parts, experienced quite a bit of downtime during the summer, but Adams made a point of having it up and running for ACE. One other attraction included in ERT was Devil's Den, which received some new art on its façade during the filming of a Travel Channel amusement park makeover show earlier in the summer. Before ERT, there was one last ITOT at Haunted Hostel, an entirely new walkthrough on the midway that was created from scratch by the Travel Channel's makeover team.

The weather cooperated with another sunny day for the Waldameer portion of the event on Sunday. First stop after check-in was the ACE Coaster Classic *Comet* for a group photo and walkback behind the station and under the tracks. The coaster wasn't running, but being able to wander through the track structure offered an entirely different perspective on this 1951 Herb Schmeck woodie. An hour of ERT on *Comet* followed the walkback.

Attendees had an exclusive hour on Waldameer's other woodie, *Ravine Flyer II*, after *Comet* ERT. Voted sixth best wood



Photo by Sarah Windisch

Lenny Adams



Photo by Sarah Windisch

# ACEers head north

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coaster in the 2013 Golden Ticket awards, *Ravine Flyer II* seems to have lost nothing of its speed, smoothness, excitement and re-rideability since its opening in 2008.

As attendees entered Lakeview Grove picnic shelter for the catered lunch of barbecued chicken, hamburgers, hotdogs and all the sides, plus ice cream and unlimited coffee and pop, they saw park president Steve Gorman, WNYCC events director Geff Ford and ACE Western Pennsylvania regional rep Bill Linkenheimer III organizing Comet-related auction items. Included was a huge skid brake handle that is no longer necessary now that the skid brakes have been replaced by magnetic and friction brakes. The \$290 raised by the auction benefited Give Kids the World, the nonprofit that provides free Florida vacations to children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. In addition to the auction items, Waldameer also donated another skid brake handle to ACE's Archives.

Photo by Sarah Windisch



Waldameer's Steve Gorman looks on as Paul Nelson holds a Comet brake handle that was auctioned.

During lunch, Gorman welcomed everyone to Waldameer and discussed park news. In addition to the lunch items already mentioned, Waldameer provided a sheet cake topped by a "frosting coaster" and the names of the two sponsoring coaster clubs. Jim Futrell, whose book *Waldameer Park* (in the Images of America series) was recently published, spoke briefly about the park and his research for the book. Paul Nelson, park owner, also told some stories of his career at Waldameer, which began when he was barely a teenager.

The rest of the afternoon was all about ITOTs, with the first one being on the L. Ruth Express train, which provides a nice survey of the park and Water World plus some welcome shade. The always popular Bill Tracy attractions were next: first the dark ride Whacky Shack with its ominous recorded pre-ride warnings ("Never throw things at me, or I'll see that you lose your wristband. Maybe with your arm still attached!") and afterward the walkthrough Pirate's Cove, whose mirror and barrel mazes and tilted room never get old. It being a warm day, most attendees didn't pass up the ITOT on Waldameer's log flume ride, Thunder Run. Last on the schedule was the always popular spinning mouse, *Steel Dragon*, which prompted the usual arguments about the ideal number of passengers to get the car really spinning.

Although the ITOTs ended in late afternoon, attendees were free to stay at the park till closing. Waldameer is especially beautiful at night, when most of the rides are outlined in neon or colorful twinkling lights. Where did the time go? Event endings are always a little sad, especially when they've been as much fun as Flying High with a Blue Streak.

*Special thanks to Geff Ford, events director for Western New York Coaster Club, who was responsible for most of the planning for this amazing event!*

## REP RAP

By Mike Matscherz

*Editor's note: Assistant regional rep Mike Matscherz resigned in October 2013, the result of a move outside of our region. This message is his "farewell" of sorts, though we're delighted that Mike has agreed to continue to share his talents with ACE Western Pennsylvania by helping with event logos and event fliers.*

I'd like to start off much as I did back in the September 2011 issue of *The Fun Times*, by saying thank you for allowing me to step into the role of assistant regional rep of ACE Western Pennsylvania. It is with a deep sadness that I resigned from my official title as a rep for the western Pennsylvania region. While two years is a short amount of time in relation to the grand scale of ACE's 35-year history, I feel as though my two years was much more than that. However, this is not the end of my involvement with ACE. Not by any means.

My home has always been Pittsburgh, and in a way it always will be. Home is where I've found my friends. Like many of you, I've found some of my closest friends in ACE. These are friends I will never forget, but now I've got a new home and a new region. Much as when I joined ACE in western Pennsylvania, ACE activities in my new region will bring new friends and lifelong memories. That new region is the newly formed ACE Eastern

Pennsylvania, which includes... Philadelphia. I'll give you a moment to finish rolling your eyes on my decision to move to Philly.

Many Pittsburghers have asked why I chose to move to Philly. I heard quite a few times, "Why would you move to Filthadelphia?" Everyone always seems to understand when I tell them the answer. I did it for love. 2011 was the year that started the biggest change of my life. During that summer at Coaster Con XXXIV in Texas, I met a beautiful girl who is now my fiancée. She was the one who made me realize that I would literally have to go the distance to find "the one." 308 miles to be exact. Janine and I are looking forward to many fun-filled coaster rides together for years to come.

I'm excited about the new opportunities that lie ahead of me. The newly formed eastern Pennsylvania region, led by Brian Watts, is looking to grow ACE's reputation in new directions. I feel honored to be a part of my new region. Of course, I will continue to be there in the background creating the images and publications that end up being the face of ACE. I will never forget where I came from and the friends I've gained over the years. This is not the end. For me, it's a whole new beginning.

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**CALENDAR OF  
REGIONAL EVENTS**

Visit [ACEwesternPA.org](http://ACEwesternPA.org) for updated information on all regional events.

**Saturday, March 8, 2014**

**CoasterBash! XXV**

Salvatore's

South Hills of Pittsburgh

**Sunday, July 27, 2014**

**KennyKon XXV**

Kennywood

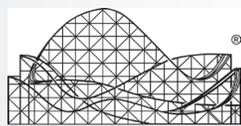
West Mifflin, PA

Another exciting ACE Western Pennsylvania regional event will be held on Saturday, July 26, 2014, the day prior to KennyKon

Make sure that you're on the ACE Western Pennsylvania email list and/or like us on Facebook to be the first to know the details of ACE Fall Fantasy, coming this August. Send an email to [eblast@ACEwesternPA.org](mailto:eblast@ACEwesternPA.org) to get on the email list and find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/ACEwesternPA](http://Facebook.com/ACEwesternPA).



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



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