My First KennyKon: KennyKon XXVI

By Karsen Cervi

With 25 KennyKons behind us, we thought it would be neat to experience 2015's event through the eyes of a new ACE member attending for his first time — and one so youthful that he was born only a few months before KennyKon XI.

Last year, everyone was asking, “What’s a Kennywood Fanatic?” I certainly learned that I wasn’t the only one who loved amusement parks and always wanted to know how they work. By attending KennyKon XXVI in July, I got to meet other true roller coaster enthusiasts and Kennywood Fanatics! I first arrived with a few family members at the park gates around 8 a.m. to get the information for the day and enjoyed Ice Cream for Breakfast to benefit Give Kids The World!

Kennywood personnel were walking around nicely welcoming us to the park by handing out Kennywood Fanatic pins. Once we entered the park a couple hours before the public, they jumped right in with “ERT,” my first taste of Exclusive Ride Time, which, in my opinion was the best part of the event! Basically, members can ride designated rides with almost no wait time and ride as much as they desire!

The park’s newest coaster Sky Rocket and the park's oldest coaster, Jack Rabbit, were the two coasters available that morning. The other was Kennywood's wettest and wildest “water coaster,” Log Jammer! These attractions were rides that achieved milestones this year. 2015 is the 95th season for Jack Rabbit which opened back in 1921! All three are always great rides! My riding buddy and I rode Sky Rocket in the front row twice in a row without leaving the seat!

After a couple rides on the super smooth Sky Rocket, we were allowed to enter under the coaster’s structure and take unique and up-close photos within the ride’s structure!

After ERT, we noticed rides like Racer, Kangaroo and Garfield’s Nightmare starting their morning routines as the rest of the park was starting to wake up. A traditional group photo continued on page 3
Hello and welcome to the winter issue of The Fun Times. I would like to start off by apologizing for the lack of a fall issue. Due to unforeseen circumstances (my computer died just before beginning to compile the issue), and in consideration of the fact that there was no event requiring advance registration for which an event flier needed to be mailed, we decided not to publish that issue. I am happy to report that we are back up and operational as you can see. 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 Nick Paradise at Kennywood either via email at nick.paradise@Kennywood.com or by conventional mail to: Attn: Nick Paradise, Kennywood, 4800 Kennywood Blvd. West Mifflin, PA 15122. The deadline for nominations is February 12, 2016. The award will be presented at CoasterBash! XXVI on March 5, 2016.

Corrections

We regret that the bottom two photos on the cover of the last issue of The Fun Times [June 2015] were not properly credited to Sarah Windisch. The online version of the newsletter was promptly updated once the error was discovered.

Our apologies to Mike Matscherz for his name being spelled incorrectly in the CoasterBash! XXVI article in the last issue of The Fun Times [June 2015].
During KennyKon XXVI, ACE Immediate Past President and ACE Western Pennsylvania Assistant Regional Rep Dave Altman (right) presented ACE Honorary Member Brian Peters with a commendation plaque acknowledging his many years of service on ACE’s Executive Committee, which concluded in 2014. Peters served on the committee for 24 years, longer than anyone in the organization’s history. Originally the membership director, the position was later known as information services director, and after a reorganization of the committee positions, he continues to serve as ACE’s information technology manager.

During KennyKon XXVI, Andy Quinn of Kennywood (right), presented legendary Vic Kleman with a lifetime pass to the park, as a token of the park’s thanks for all that he’s done to promote the park, including but not limited to some significant marathons on Jack Rabbit that garnered media attention throughout the world.

After riding a few rides it was time to regroup for ITOTs on Noah’s Ark and Turtle! As the sun set and the neon and night lights turned on all around the park, it was almost time for the laser show and Italian Day Fireworks! Of course, a few rides on Jack Rabbit didn’t hurt! After fireworks it was time for possibly the best part of the night – ERT on Phantom’s Revenge after the park closed! Over and over and over again, 11 times in a row, not even waiting in line! If no one was waiting in the same row as you, you stayed on and rode again! 45 Minutes of nothing but Phantom’s Revenge! A true privilege! ERT ended around 11 p.m. long after the rest of the guests left the park!

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of all ACE members took place behind the park’s Penny Arcade with Jack Rabbit’s famous double dip as a back drop! Shortly after the park opened at 11 a.m., attendees headed over to Racer for an ITOT (Informal Takeover Time), when ACEers gather together to enjoy a ride that is already open to the public. As the day continued, ITOTs took place on Thunderbolt, Olde Kennywood Railroad, and The Exterminator.

Once dinnertime came around, attendees headed to a pavilion behind Log Jammer and enjoyed free drinks for about an hour before food! It wasn’t just an all-you-can-eat dinner, it was an all-you-can-eat Stratwood catered dinner! Kennywood picnic catering company Stratwood has fantastic food! Pasta, fruit, fried chicken, boneless wings, potato salad – all fantastic food! Not to mention it was also Italian Day at the park as well! For lunch, between ITOTs, we enjoyed pepperoni rolls and and spicy Italian sausage which was great as well, making for an awesome food for both lunch and dinner! Kennywood’s Andy Quinn presented Vic Kleman with a lifetime pass to the park as a token of the park’s appreciation for all of the goodwill that came about as a result of Vic’s 5,000 rides on Jack Rabbit, including several day-long marathons that yielded widespread media attention. After dinner, ACE Western Pennsylvania Regional Representative Bill Linkenheimer III made some announcements including upcoming events, handed out door prizes, and filled us in on what was to come later in the evening.

And that was KennyKon XXVI! I look forward to future ACE events like CoasterBash XXVII, and KennyKon XXVII, meeting new people (including fellow fanatics), riding my favorite rides plenty of times with zero lines; entering and enjoying the park before the public, great entertainment and fantastic food! An overall great day at America’s Finest Traditional Amusement Park!
On the weekend of August 29-30, enthusiasts from the tri-state area and beyond converged on Northwestern Pennsylvania for ACE Western Pennsylvania’s and Western New York Coaster Club’s annual Flying High with a Blue Streak event. Saturday was spent at Conneaut Lake Park and it’s legendary Blue Streak roller coaster. Attendees were pleased to see that more rides were operating than during previous years, including the miniature train which opened after a few false starts. In addition, improvements made to the park over the course of the previous year were quickly noticed, including fresh paint, new concessions, and enhancements to the park’s classic Devil’s Den dark ride.

A catering company provided the evening’s meal, a buffet of Italian favorites that featured pasta, chicken, salads, and desserts. After dinner, a number of members took to the challenging miniature golf course, while others lined up at the Tumble Bug, a perennial favorite. While an evening shower sent many attendees heading towards Erie, a hearty few stayed for the night’s ERT on Blue Streak. Those who waited out the rain were treated to blisteringly fast rides through the pitch black woods, an experience that cannot be reproduced at many other amusement parks.

On Sunday, attendees arrived at Waldameer Park bright and early (by Waldameer standards!) to get their wristbands and wake up with doughnuts and coffee. The previous night’s rain had long passed, leaving a beautiful blue sky and warm temperatures for the day’s events. At 10 a.m., riders started easy with an hour of ERT on Comet, the park’s 37-foot tall junior wooden roller coaster. Despite its diminutive size, the ride is always a delight, as evidenced by train after train of grinning riders returning to the station. The second hour of ERT was held on Steel Dragon, a spinning coaster.

Perfect weather (brief showers not withstanding) and small crowds allowed attendees to enjoy two fabulous days at two of the area’s unique amusement parks. With summer ending and members returning to their jobs and schools the next day, what a treat it was to spend a weekend with great company and great roller coasters.

Photo by Bill Linkenheimer III

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