



# ACE *New York* MetroLINE

Serving the ACE New York City Region

Spring 2008



Cyclone Opening Day - Palm Sunday - March 16, 2008 - Coney Island, NY



# Hibernation:

## What do our favorite parks do during the winter?



The **Dragon Coaster**, Rye (NY) Playland

The momentary thaw, before the freeze returns in mid-February, bodes well for some – that small ray of hope that Spring will be early and that opening day may also be. The park is quiet and resting, for it knows full well that soon warmer days will return, trees will flower, the rides will be operating once again, the crowds will be back screaming, the lights at dusk will be turned on and the park will be back in action. Summer, regardless of when it begins or ends, will soon be here. And that means that at Rye Playland, the **Dragon** will have awakened.

While humans hibernate, the park is not entirely quiet. The gates are locked but the sounds of saws and hammers, concrete chippers and heavy machinery say that off-season work is well underway. The repair shop is rebuilding, repairing and repainting cars and other ride parts. The electric shop has removed all or part of the large motors that propel our favorite rides, pump water on the wet rides or otherwise provide a steady heartbeat to all the action of our

park. The carpentry shop is keeping on schedule to rebuild those custom-made wood frame and finished wood details. And before you know, winter will be over, and the re-assembly of all these parts begins again. Warm weather reappears, the painters can start the primer coats, the landscapers can begin their tasks, and the Maintenance Supervisor breathes a little easier knowing that the entire park staff, working together, will make opening day. Or else!

If your park is fortunate enough to include a 'capital improvement' such as a new or replacement ride, all the better. It means that management is willing to invest in something new in the hopes of attracting increased attendance. So support you favorite park(s) by attending. Westchester County, owners of Rye (NY) Playland, continues to work annually on park improvements. Here is the removal of The Hurricane as it is replaced by Super Flight (2005 photos):





Pre-assembly staging of Super Flight super structure

After the last of the snow is gone and the forecast is for continuous temperatures above 50 degrees, painting and decorating will be finished, flowers and shrubs planted, the rides will be reassembled, coaster cars returned to the

track, water will flow in wet rides. And finally: **opening day**. Just as sure as the days will lengthen and the sun will warm and bring on spring, the long-anticipated call "let's ride" will be soon be heard across our region. **Let's ride.**

See you on opening day -- in the last car.

*Charlie Deierlein, Cortlandt Manor, NY*



While some old 'iron' gets ready to move to another locale..... The Hurricane



# **A Letter from Dennis D. Vourderis**

**co-owner of Deno's Wonder Wheel Park**

February 13, 2008

I think that what the city is talking about doing with Coney Island is wonderful.

Opening Day is March 16th ... a month from now, and the Wonder Wheel turns 88 this summer, and we hope to see you all at the Park this year and for many years to come.

The City now sees the dream and potential of Coney Island, Congratulations.... Welcome Aboard. It's about time. There is a lot of magic, enough for everyone, in the sand of Coney Island. We have been working hard for many years to keep that dream alive. The city shares the same values as my family in terms of building a bigger, brighter future for Coney Island.

But the question my family has, which we share with you all tonight is this:

Why does the current plan need to designate our property parkland?

The CITY wants an amusement park and we already operate one.

The City wants to preserve the history of Coney Island, and I respect that.

We have been preserving it since 1983, when my family bought the Wheel from the Garms family. We have been working at preserving and improving Coney Island since 1966, when my dad sold his first hot dog at the Anchor Bar on West 10th street.....

42 years later, when the future of Coney Island looks it's brightest, and the moment we have been waiting for finally comes.....the only way it can happen is if our land, which our forefathers worked so hard for...is designated parkland? Meanwhile, the property directly across from us on the Bowery gets to be developed and improved while maintaining private ownership.

Why would one private owner be given development opportunities but not our family? Have we done something wrong that no one is talking about?

We want to support a plan that allows for growth and improvement in Coney Island.

If you designate our property parkland, you limit our ability to further develop our land into more year round uses, and it will not be our land anymore.

By restricting us to open air amusements only, while other properties are given increases in their FAR, you place unfair limits on private business development – our private development that we have focused for over 25 years on serving the community.

This is our home, this is our business. This is our property. We are proud of it, proud to be part of the community, and want to have the right to pass those virtues along the next generation of Vourderis' just as they were passed to my brother and me by my father.





The Vourderis family, owners of Deno's Wonder Wheel Park in historic Coney Island, New York, prepare their rides for another operating season



Cartoon by Dennis McNulty

# EDITORIAL REVIEW: EASTCOASTER FROM THE PODIUM: A DIARY

What a surreal experience! In all these years of attending Eastcoaster as one of the hungry masses, I never dreamed I would ever have the opportunity to present, let alone as an Assistant Regional Rep for this great city of ours.

First some background: One day, while on the subway to work, I noticed in MetroNY an article blurb about an information session from the Coney Island Development Corp. for that evening at Lincoln High School. Naturally, I attended and listened to the plans for Coney Island. I even took the microphone to comment on the history of grief amusement parks get from people living too close plus the need to preserve sight lines from the Parachute Drop. The session ended with a reminder that it was to be repeated later that week.

Between the sessions, it dawned on me that the presentation would be ideal for Eastcoaster, if not a write-up in an ACE publication. Thus, I attended the repeat, this time with a micro cassette recorder and an mp3 recorder, neither of which worked out. After the session, I approached the presenters and brought up the possibility of having someone go to Allentown and address ACE being careful not to extend an official invitation which would have been out of bounds. The response was positive. I also introduced myself to Dennis Vourderis of Deno's Wonderwheel Park and his sons. Dennis handed over a copy of the statement he had just read.

Afterwards, I contacted Cliff, Derek and Joel. They contacted the city agency officials in question but couldn't finalize any arrangements. On learning of this, a crazy idea hit. Before contacting the Eastcoaster organizers, I checked the CIDC webpage and guess what was there:

The entire slide show from their presentation, savable and portable into PowerPoint, was right for the taking. With a slideshow on disk and Dennis' letter in hand, I proposed to Cliff, Derek and Joel that I just do the presentation myself. They liked the idea and the crazy notion was came into play.

How many times can a person look at a slideshow and go over what he plans to say for each image? The answer is never enough. Believe me, after having done this so many times for lectures to medical students and residents, it never gets any easier or nerve racking, just more familiar. It was just odd to be covering Coney Island and amusement parks rather than Parkinson's or Tourette's! Who says one can't use one's vocational skills on one's avocations?

Then came the great day of Eastcoaster! I entered

early, holding my head high as I was a presenter. Hey, rank has its privileges! Anyway, I had to enter early to hand my materials over and make sure they were loadable into the computer and worked. This was something Chuck Hutchison of Dorney may have forgot, but more about that later.

During the warm up act of Cliff and Derek giving the welcome with a tribute to rodent themed coasters, I am calm with eager anticipation for my pending time. Same held for Mark Cole's welcome and his honoring of ACE's volunteers.

Then came the first presenter: the before named Chuck Hutchison of Dorney Park. Poor guy! A brand new, green Public Relations Director was thrown to the wolves as his PowerPoint wouldn't work. My reaction? "Oh Crap!" "If it happens to me, I'm dead in the water. I need my slides for this!" Anxiety went right through the roof. Chuck managed to relay the important info for all of Cedar Fair. We learned when the parks will open and when various park enthusiast events would be held.<sup>(1)</sup> The Beast Walk continues and Behemoth's sinking is a rumor. All this was with impaired graphics!

Then we learned about Hersheypark. Park opens 5/2 and Fahrenheit 5/24. \$12.1 million buys a 97 degree drop plus everything else. That's almost \$125 thousand a degree. PowerPoint presentations were now working. I could calm down.

I was calm for the first break, as I am for the SFGAdv presentation. OK, hopefully there will be rides on Dark Knight at the park event on 5/31. The girls from Six Flags do a song and dance. I'm doing mine straight and dry. Am I in trouble?

The first auction: I was too distracted by my notes to bid on the Chiller Rendering I was eying. OK, it's starting to get to me.

Delgrosso's: the only thing I recall is that there will still be no mandatory trip to Tipton this year for a new credit. Maybe 2009 for the Revolution.

Amazingly, I could eat lunch. However, it was a little disappointing. I believe there used to be meatloaf and/or roast beef with the chicken and pork chops. This year it would just be chicken as I don't eat pork. They also weren't so forthcoming with the seconds. Oh well!

Then came Morey's. I can't wait to try the new seats on the Great Nor'Easter. I can't wait for Coastin by the Ocean '08 on 7/12 and 7/13. I certainly can't wait for the new wood planned for 2010, especially after the input provided at Coastin by the Ocean '07. I can't wait for my



presentation to be over.

By this point, the nerves were showing and I'm rechecking my notes again and again. I almost forgot to listen to Steve Gorman of Waldameer and his presentation on Ravine Flyer II, something I really wanted to hear. I couldn't tell you what was in Janet Witherow's video or what Chris Gray of GCI discussed. I do recall that the guest from Dollywood was sidelined with bronchitis and absent. His DVD was in attendance however.

Uh Oh! Last break then I'm up. I had wanted to make a last minute purchase at the ACE store before it closed. Instead I was reduced to pacing before the stage. Even Cliff commented on this. Also up were the photos of presenters with some attached confusion. Let's see: I'm neither an organizer nor a park PR person. The call came for just the park people so I stood aside. People called up to ask what I was even doing on the stage while various photographers urged me to get closer. With my presentation looming, the distraction wasn't needed.

SHOW TIME: Cliff introduces me, I take the podium and start to speak. Guess what? All the stress and anxiety magically disappears as soon as I begin. My slides work. My aim is true with the laser pointer. I hear appropriate murmurs of agreement with my editorial asides and some chuckling at my jokes. Where I'm used to a crowd sitting in a lecture hall, through the glare of the podium light and a darkened banquet hall, I can make out the tables full of people. I can't make out anybody in particular, which is, in fact, helpful. Instead I just look out into the crowd at regular intervals so as not to keep my face in my notes. My practiced techniques work. It's been years since I was on a faculty as a professor. I still have it! It is still fun.

Only thing, despite my rehearsing an hours worth of material into the allotted twenty minutes, I ended up going about forty. Oh well! There was just so much to impart. I just wish I was able to play the music of Amos Wengler as planned and end on the lyrics of "Save Coney Island"

As is typical with performance anxiety, it sure came back after I stopped talking and left the stage. It lasted until the first ego inflating accolades came from Lee Ann Draud and Yvonne Janik. Thanks ladies! However, the self recriminations over everything I forgot to say certainly did start.

Then the show continued: Mark Cole discussed the all important Spring Con, Coaster Con, and Preservation Con. I won't make it to the May event and pray that the cost of gas doesn't keep me away from Georgia this summer. I've been looking forward to this all year. The Preservation Con is in New York City's backyard this year. That would be Connecticut with Lake Compounce

and Quassy. This region should have a good showing. (Hint, Hint!)

Another auction: I would have bid for Steel venom seats, but not when they were going for \$270 and \$300. I was still coming back down to Earth. The video of Extreme Bumper Cars was amusing and helped.

Hey, look at this! I wasn't the only person to arise from the masses of the membership this year to be elevated to Eastcoaster presenter! Coaster Steve brought us up to date on the Flying Turns at Knoebel's. He had video. I didn't. Whose presentation was better? I'll leave that to the membership to decide.

After a memorial moment for Wayne Gruber, who I don't recall if I ever met, the last door prizes came and, rarity of rarities, I won: a luggage tag. Hoorah!

Then Tom Rebbie took the stage and started his humorous rambling (with quasi-subliminal book advertisements in his slides) I do have to say this: Oh Tom, thanks for the shout out and I agree that the neighborhood around Coney Island can be rough. However, I'd rather not go down in ACE History as "The Coney Island Guy." After all this time, and my professional concern over your arm, etc., learn my name! ;-)

Every coaster event seems to have at least one person go over the top with their enthusiasm. This year was a madcap sight of two teenagers going at each other at auction, bidding over a Chiller sign that would ultimately be a \$485 Chiller sign. The entertainment was only limited by the mother of our region's very own Dainin Rafferty when she put her foot down and ended the bidding.

Eastcoaster ended with a Kemah Boardwalk video and the sad photos of the fire at Conneaut Lake making that park's future even less certain.

Eastcoaster ended with much of it being a blur of anticipation for my very own presentation with some tidbits of everything else. I stepped up and volunteered. I reused skills that were rusty. I imparted information of great interest to coaster and park enthusiasts in the absence of those who should have come and spoke. I had the most interesting experience at an Eastcoaster yet. I don't think next year's will top this! Am I glad I did this? Definitely yes! Would I do it again? Maybe if somebody could come up with a topic.

Afterward: After extensive internet search for reviews of my presentation, I have found one matter of fact statement that it was the longest of the day and one "yaddah yaddah!" Overall, not bad!

**David Finkelstein**

<sup>(1)</sup>By now, CGA, KD and WoF should be open. KI should open 5/2, Dorney 5/3, CW 5/4, CP 5/10 and MA 5/24. Dorney's enthusiast event should be 5/30, CP's 6/6 and KI's in the Fall.

## **Local park information**

### **Adventureland**

2245 Route 110, Farmingdale, NY 11735

Phone: (631) 694-6868

Open for the season!

### **Astroland**

1000 Surf Ave (At W 10th St), Brooklyn, NY 11224

Phone: (718) 372-0275

Open for the season!

### **Boomers! Family Fun Center**

655 Long Island Ave, Medford, NY 11763

Phone: (631) 475-1771

Open for the season!

### **Deno's Wonder Wheel Park**

3059 Denos Vourderis Place (Formerly W 12th St),  
Brooklyn, NY 11224

Phone: 718-372-2592

Open for the season!

### **Krazy City**

Palisades Center, West Nyack, NY

Phone: (845) 353-5700

Open for the season!

### **Playland Park**

Playland Parkway, Rye, NY 10580

Phone: (914) 813-7010

Opens May 3!

### **Victorian Gardens**

Wollman Rink, Central Park, Manhattan, NY

Phone: (212) 982-2229

Opens May 24!

### **Splish Splash Waterpark**

2549 Splish Splash Drive, Calverton, NY 11933

Phone: (631) 727-3600

Opens May 24!



### **Regional Website:**

[www.ACEonlineNY.org](http://www.ACEonlineNY.org)

### **National Website:**

[www.ACEonline.org](http://www.ACEonline.org)

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