

Roller coaster buff gives two thumbs up for nation's tallest, fastest steel coaster

Nearly everyone's life has its highs and lows, but probably no more than Robert Cartmell recently experienced.

After a slow but steady climb, Cartmell reached unprecedented heights. But his lofty position took a sudden nose dive.

There followed several turns for the worse, and Cartmell was knocked off and he was finally able to get both feet on the ground.

All this happened in a little over two minutes. And Cartmell said he enjoyed it so much he's ready to do it again — take a ride on the Great American Scream Machine, a roller coaster that premiered this spring at Six Flags Great Adventure Theme Park in Jackson, N.J.

Cartmell, a roller coaster enthusiast and historian, was invited on the maiden voyage.

"It was spectacular," he said. Cartmell, who has been riding roller coasters since childhood, said the Scream Machine was his 350th coaster — and the most technically advanced.

According to Great Adventure, the new ride is the world's tallest and fastest looping steel coaster. It lofts riders 173 feet — about the height of a 17-story building — before it starts its descent into loops, corkscrews and pretzel turns. On its journey, the Scream Machine reaches about 70 mph.

Also on hand for the ride's debut were 150 members of the ACE — American Coaster Enthusiasts. The club, which began in 1978 with 23 members, including Cartmell, now has a membership of more than 2,000. Cartmell is ACE's historian and its first honorary lifetime member.

Besides sharing the pleasure of riding roller coasters, ACE members work to preserve them. "They've saved some and had others moved to other parks," Cartmell said.

Cartmell first rode a coaster as a 6-year-old in Santa Monica, Calif. But he didn't get seriously involved until 1974, when he wrote an article on coasters for the New York Times.

The story drew letters and calls from thou-

sands of coaster enthusiasts, Carmell said, "most of whom said the same thing: 'I thought I was the only one.' It made me realize that there are a lot more coaster 'nuts' out there."

Cartmell, an art professor at the State University of New York at Albany, is also author of "The Incredible Scream Machine: A History of the Roller Coaster."

Besides riding coasters and writing about them, Cartmell collects coaster-related artifacts. His collection currently includes 25,000 photographs and 10,000 blueprints and original drawings, as well as operating models and towels, toys, floor tiles and dishes with the coaster motif.

He says his two grown children share his enthusiasm for riding coasters, but not his wife.

"She thinks coasters are visually beautiful," Cartmell said. "But she doesn't go on them."

What are Cartmell's immediate plans? More roller coaster rides.

Isolated Marines combat boredom with mailclasses

Penn State University is offering an associate-degree program to the 1,450 Marines guarding 141 U.S. embassies and consulates around the world.

Taking classes by mail will help relieve the boredom in such hardship posts as the embassy in Ouagadougou, the capital of the west African nation of Burkina-Faso, Marine Capt. David Vindich says.

"There's absolutely nothing there," says Vindich, education officer of the Marine Security Guard Battalion.

At other embassies and consulates such as Beirut, Moscow, and Leningrad, Marines are limited in off-duty activities. Fighting keeps embassy personnel in the compound in Beirut, while a non-fraternization policy restricts Marines in Moscow and Leningrad.

"A lot of these places are really isolated," Vindich said from Quantico, Va. "We're providing an educational opportunity, and we're also giving them something to do."

Vindich says more than 400 Marines in embassies and consulates already take courses, but their efforts toward degrees have been largely unstructured.

"They were out there spinning

their wheels," he said. "You talk college credits and semester hours and that kind of thing, it boggles the mind of a 19-year-old kid just out of high school, 10,000 miles from home."

Under the agreement, Penn State will offer liberal arts degrees in letters, arts, and sciences. The university has planned course concentrations for the Marines including

business, security and justice, political analysis and foreign policy and language and culture.

A degree will cost about \$5,000 according to Peter Forster, coordinator of special programs at Penn State's Department of Independent Learning. Vindich said the Marine Corp pays 75 percent of tuition costs.

Students can apply for MSC Jordan Fellows

UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE

Texas A&M University's Jordan Institute for International Awareness Committee has announced that it is now accepting applications for the MSC Jordan Fellows Program.

The Jordan Fellows Program's purpose is to interest Texas A&M students in internationally-oriented careers and help them prepare for such careers through

special programs, films, exhibits and funded independent international travel.

The committee, a part of the Memorial Student Center, is looking for students in good academic standing with a minimum grade point average of 3.0 for undergraduates and 3.5 for graduate students. Interested freshmen with an 85 or above high school average who have not received any university grading are also eligible.

Psychologist's research yields interesting results

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Memory, it's been said, is the thing you forget with.

A University of Rochester psychologist who has studied the way people recall their experiences agrees that indeed, when people think about their past, their memories are anything but reliable.

"What we might call autobiographical memories are different from the mind's data storage capacity for things like phone numbers, state capitals, or the Pledge of Allegiance," said Craig Barclay.

Many people think of memory as a file cabinet which stores facts ready for retrieval, or as a videocassette recorder with instant replay.

But Barclay contends that when we try to recall things past, our memory behaves more like a historian writing a biography: Just as the author sifts through the subject's past, highlighting some events and downplaying others, so do individuals freely edit personal memories.

Thus, the old man who was a benchwarmer for his high school football team may now vividly recall his glories on the gridiron.

In one of his first studies about memory, Barclay asked six adults to keep a diary of three events daily for four months then turn over the diary to him. Over the next 2 1/2 years, Barclay tested them on what they had written in the diary. Each test included some of the subject's original records of events, some "foils", original records that Barclay altered, and a few totally fictitious events.

"Generally, they were able to identify their original records with precision over the course of the study," Barclay says. "And they also rejected false memories at first. But after five months,

while they continued to identify correctly their own records, they began to accept false memories as their own.

More recently, Barclay looked at how accuracies and inaccuracies in autobiographical memories may be tied to people's attitudes and beliefs about themselves. A study to be published later this year compared women with Premenstrual Syndrome to a control group not subject to PMS.

The research supported the claim that mood does interact with our attitudes and beliefs about ourselves to affect our memories. For example, when tested, PMS subjects were found to be more error-prone than the control group in distinguishing between original records and altered ones. (Barclay theorized that PMS subjects were distracted by mood swings and thus stored less specific information.)

However, the control group, people who in psychological tests showed that they had a more positive view of themselves, had trouble remembering negative events in their past. In other words, thinking positively about oneself isn't just a self-fulfilling prophecy, it can be a self-fulfilling "history" as well.

Even "flashbulb" memories, those pictures we carry around in our heads of what happened on an important day, are subject to distortion, Barclay says.

"People have shown that, even though these memories seem extremely vivid after many years, they can be quite inaccurate," Barclay says. The study of memory as it occurs in real life, and how it may be linked to what sort of person we believe ourselves to be, is a relatively unexplored field for psychologists, Barclay says.

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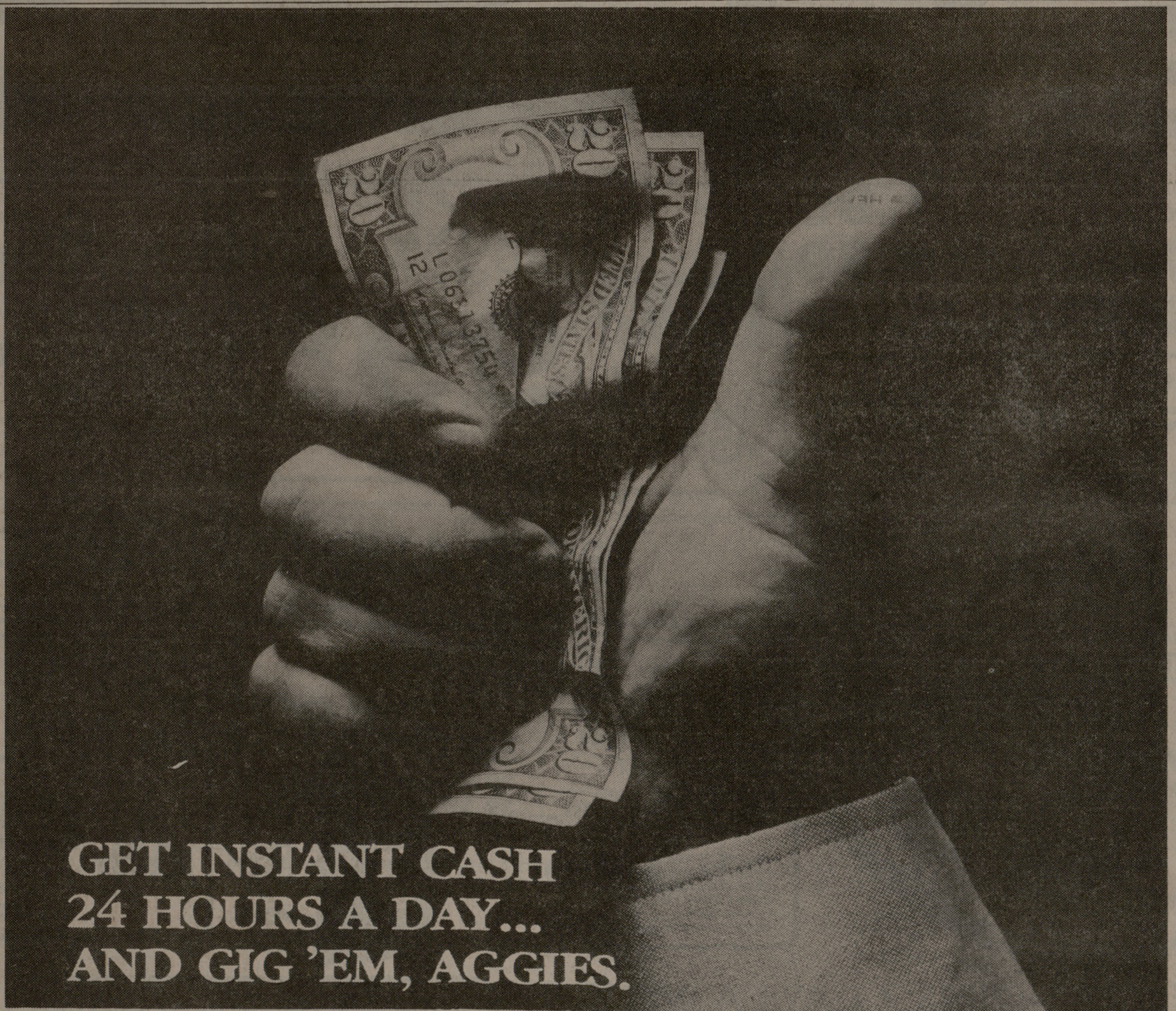


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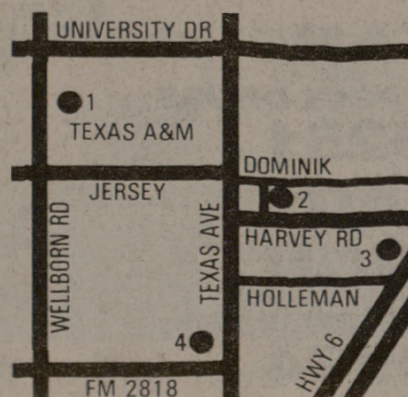
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