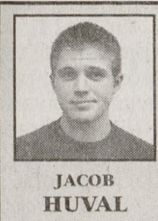


Making 'Whee!'

Rollercoasters an exciting pastime, but their limitations must be understood

People love to have fun. Ask any renowned psychoanalyst and he will say, "The human being as a natural need for recreational activity to relieve compounded stress, to formulate social bonds and to function in cooperative social structures." Ask anybody else and they will say, "Well duh!"



JACOB HUVAL

People are on a constant search for fun, whether it be playing checkers, flying kites or drinking shot glass after shot glass of flaming fuzzy navel. When one is not having fun, however, one earns all the more to have that source of fun near oneself. And as it just so happens, the things most fun are the things farthest away — namely rollercoasters.

Rollercoasters are a gem of man's achievement, ranking just behind world peace and taco meat. But few people know the history of rollercoasters, their long-forgotten past and dazzling heritage of thrilling eats. Rollercoasters evolved from prehistory, when an amusement park ride was merely a giant palm leaf laid down the side of a mountain. Of course this was very dangerous and merited a PG-13 rating for cave-men. Several thousand years later the rollercoaster was revolutionized with the advent of the wheel, man's boon to locomotion. Instead of simply tumbling down the jagged sides of mountains only to lie in pain at the bottom of a ravine, primordial thrill-seekers had the new luxury of tumbling down the jagged sides of mountains again, only this time they had wheels to sit and rest on once the bottom was reached.

Many thousands of years (and concussions) later, the rollercoaster developed into the progenitor of today's model. Using the railroad technology that propelled American prospectors into the Golden Age, early technicians in West Texas designed the first commercial rollercoaster, lovingly named "The Wackiest Railroad This Side of the Pecos." The name was soon shortened to "rollercoaster" because of its simplicity and because residents of Ohio could not care less about this Pecos character and his many mules. But because the technicians of frontier America did not pay their lab fees, they had no instruments to ensure the ride's safety. Some problems the early rollercoaster faced were the shocking death rate of the horses that pulled the cars around the tracks, the gumming-up of tracks due to excessive chewing tobacco and the way Clint Eastwood characters would always shoot their way to the front of the line.

Fortunately, today's rollercoaster riders can enjoy a thrilling experience without worry about many complications: Thanks to the blessings of better

safety requirements, higher quality construction materials and cheaper foreign manufacturing, modern rollercoasters can feature a variety of exciting twists, turns, loops and coils.

Yet despite modern man's technological advantage over the past, problems still persist in the world of rollercoasters. Rollercoasters still occasionally get stuck on the track. This usually occurs when news programs are running low on tragic stories to cover and decides to hire Vinny to stir up some "news." If one is on a rollercoaster when such a malady occurs, the best thing to do is to calmly assess the situation, determine the cart's location on the track, and then passionately thrust one's tongue into a neighbor's mouth as if it is the last moment one will ever live.

Another ailment modern rollercoasters must endure is the likelihood of derailment. Derailment occurs when the car's wheels become unaligned with the track and jump off of its predetermined course. This is most often caused by foreign substances obscuring the track, such as coins, candy or Fabio's hormone-laden Uberblood. If one is on a rollercoaster that derails, follow the same procedures prescribed for stuck rides, only this time aim for the ear. If one is merely in line for the ride and is able to help others in danger, make sure to get a good shot of the mishap on the camcorder and cash in later. Derailment can be averted by keeping tracks clean and maintained by simply mounting brooms to the nose of the front car and janitors to the rear of the back car.

The most crucial problem facing modern rollercoasters is the one hardest to see. The structures of rollercoasters are held together by countless screws, nails, nuts, bolts and other euphemisms for sex. With each cycle of the ride, the coaster's structure is violently shaken, eventually causing the conjoining media to loosen. If left unabated, this problem can bring down the entire foundation of the rollercoaster, causing a tremendous crash, a billow of airborne dust and a flood of screams from terrorized thrill-seekers (all of which will most likely prompt passersby to take notice and form a line outside the rubble).

If one takes a moment to think deep, to consider the fundamental truth of things, one will realize that the ailments so common among rollercoasters are quite similar to those found in people as well.

Considering this, the worse problem among rollercoasters is the worse problem among people: Despite all their bells and whistles, they inevitably get boring. This happens among coasters and citizens when they lose their originality; when their most outstanding features become as uniform and placid as a merry-go-round.



GABRIEL RUENES/THE BATTALION

And, yet, as there is hope for improvement among rollercoasters, there is hope for people. Given that the nature and cause of coaster problems are similar to those of people, it only makes sense that the solution to the problems be similar as well. If one feels stuck on the inclined track of life, simply send an envelope full of money to the local news program; they will treat you right. If one is nearing the edge of their coaster-nerve and is likely to derail, tie a broom to the front of one's pants and a janitor to the back. Its a whole new perspective! And if one's conjoining media are loosening, get Viagra.

Viewed in the proper light, people can be as unique, complex and thrilling as rollercoasters. No

two individual models are the same; each has its own bag of tricks, its faithful fanfare, and its unexplainable magnetism to others. But take heart in knowing that people and rollercoasters do afford some essential differences. One cannot effectively seek out fun from a madhouse after being committed for trying to have a conversation with The Ultra-twister. And likewise, one cannot expect to go unrebuked after trying to board another person. That is, unless one has purchased a season pass.

Jacob Huval is a sophomore English major.

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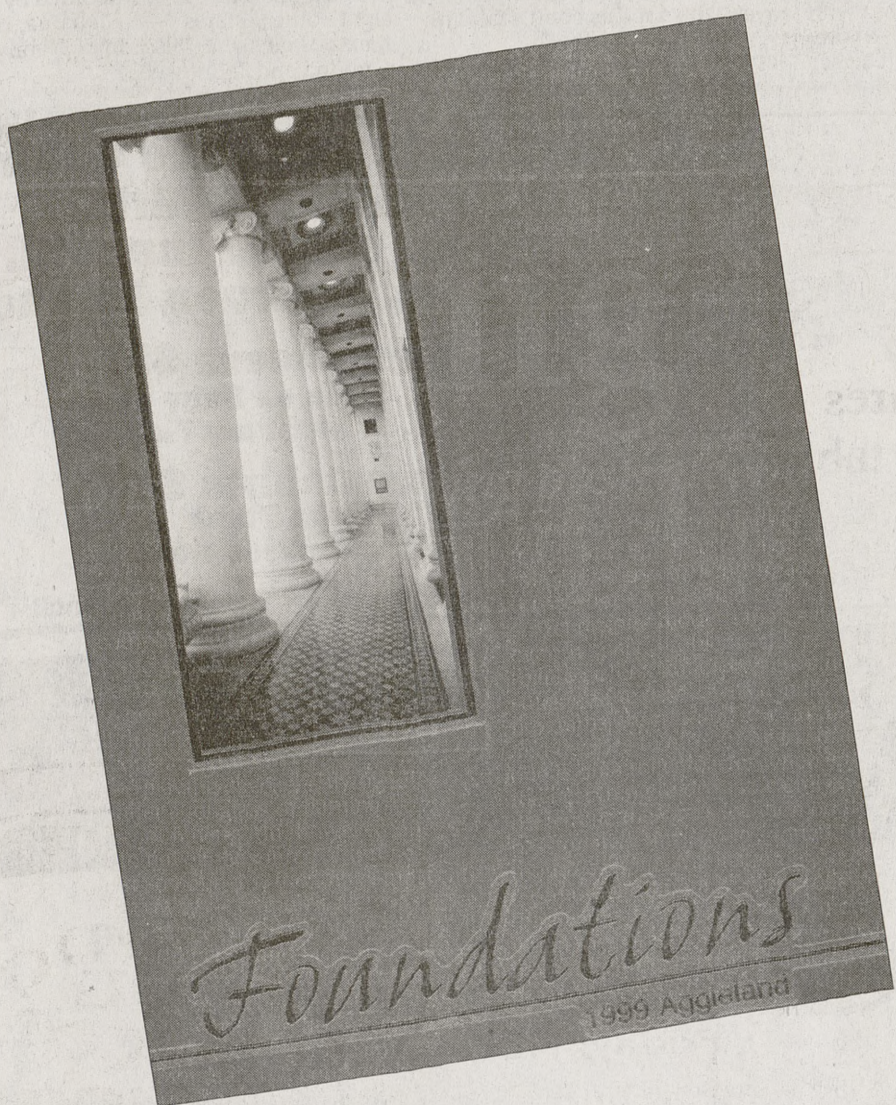
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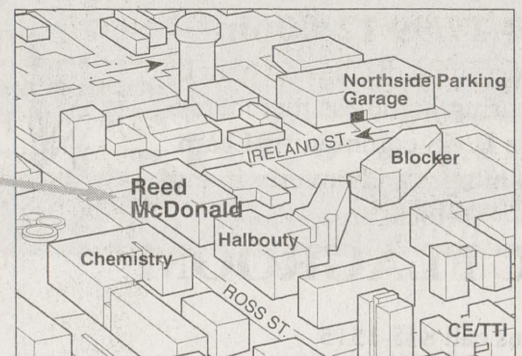
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