

SIX FLAGS OVER TEXAS

**50 YEARS
OF
ENTERTAINMENT**

SECOND EDITION

CLINT SKINNER

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PART ONE

BEGINNINGS

CHAPTER ONE
THE FOUNDER

Angus Gilchrist Wynne, Jr. was born on January 9, 1914, the son of a prominent attorney. Wynne graduated from Highland Park High School in 1931. Two years later, he studied law at Washington and Lee University from 1934 to 1935. He then transferred to the University of Texas at Austin, where he graduated with a law degree in 1938. However, Angus didn't follow in his father's footsteps. Instead of continuing his education, he spent the next three years working on oil rigs.

Wynne volunteered for the U. S. Navy Reserve in August 1940. Because he had attended college, the Navy offered him the chance to take a midshipman training course. However, there was a catch. He had to pass a test in the form of a cruise along the East Coast. It started on August 19th and lasted for an entire month. After passing the trial, the Navy sent him to Northwestern University to take the course. When Angus graduated, he was placed on reserve. He returned home in December before Christmas.

The following year, he met a young woman named Joanne Ebeling. Originally from Beaumont, Texas, she moved to Dallas in 1924. She attended Southern Methodist University, then transferred to Wellesley College in Massachusetts. She graduated with a degree in education and moved back to Dallas. When she met Angus Wynne, the two fell in love with each other. The couple married on February 25, 1941.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, the Navy placed Wynne on active duty aboard the U. S. S. Nicholson. He served the entire war, engaging the enemy in seven major battles. On the Western front, his superiors made him an executive officer. Later in the war on the Eastern front, they promoted him to Lieutenant Commander aboard the U. S. S. Grayson. When World War II ended, Angus returned home without a scratch. He had received two theater ribbons, eight battle stars, and the Distinguished Unit Citation Badge.

Angus Wynne returned to his home in 1945. Badly needing employment, he turned to his uncle Toddie Lee. The two relatives pooled their money with B. Hick Majors. In December, the trio bought the American Home Reality Company. Toddie Lee and Hick Majors decided to make Wynne its president. When Angus and his partners purchased AHR, they inherited an impressive contact. Thou-

sands of military personnel had returned, looking for a new start in life. Dallas served as a magnet for these homesteaders. Unfortunately, it lacked the necessary housing facilities. To meet this demand, the suburbs and districts issued large contracts with housing development firms. AHR was one of them.

The Oak Cliff district provided the American Home Realty Company 820 acres for construction. The contract would lead to the largest housing development project in the nation. Angus called the project Wynnewood.

In this expansive area, Wynne planned to build 2,200 houses and 592 apartments. Estimations projected it would take five years to complete the project at a cost 33 million dollars. Angus completed the first 150 Wynnewood homes in December 1946. AHR sold them at prices ranging from \$8,000 to \$25,000. At the end of the month, every house had been sold. Wynnewood construction continued at a slow but steady pace.

After construction started on 108 apartments, Wynne announced that AHR would build 700 more before the year ended. It would become Dallas' largest rental housing project at the cost of \$2,500,000.

Located along Zang Boulevard, Angus named the future complex Wynnewood Gardens. It officially opened on April 19, 1948. Afterward, Wynne planned to complete 348 apartments by the end of December. However, new zoning regulations killed the project.

Undeterred, Angus turned his attention toward expanding Wynnewood, starting with a shopping center called Wynnewood Village. Located near the heart of the neighborhood, it covered 27 acres at the intersection of Illinois Avenue and Zang Boulevard. It would have three shopping outlets, four drive-in restaurants, one gas station, a movie theater, and an office building. Construction began in February 1949. Wynnewood Village opened on December 1st of that same year.

In 1953, Angus Wynne became Chairman of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee. He soon found himself in the middle of a volatile situation. For several years, American Airlines en-

joyed a monopoly of the West Coast and Northeastern routes. The company accomplished this by taking advantage of a small clause in the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938. The other airlines grew tired of the monopoly and planned to take action. Meanwhile, Carter Field Airport in Fort Worth was crushing Dallas' Love Field with its monopoly of flights. All this came to a head in 1954 after five years of hard lobbying.

In May 1954, six airlines filed an application with the Civil Aeronautics Board. They wanted new routes from the Southwest to the West Coast and Northeast. American Airlines immediately opposed the application but failed to stop it. The Civil Aeronautics Board scheduled a hearing for September 8, 1954. At the hearing, Fort Worth proclaimed that if American Airlines was going to have competition, all the rivals should provide exclusive service to Carter Field. Dallas argued that Love Field was needed to provide adequate service for future population increases.

Meanwhile, the Dallas Chamber of Commerce got involved with two related cases. Wynne's aviation department led the charge in the recently reopened Central Airlines Fayetteville Case. The Civil Aeronautics Board would determine if the airline could have extra routes to Fayetteville, Arkansas; Fort Smith, Arkansas; Muskogee, Oklahoma; and Paris, Texas. It would also decide if these flights served Carter Field or Love Field.

The CAB sided with Central Airlines, providing Wynne with a significant victory. Just as important, Dallas won the Louisville Case. The victory allowed American Airlines, Eastern Airlines, and Trans World to provide non-stop flights from Dallas to Louisville, Kentucky.

In the midst of these two victories, Fort Worth offered Dallas four million dollars for the right to use half of Carter Field. Dallas also could share its name with the airport. The Chamber of Commerce immediately rejected the offer, calling it a blatant attempt to eliminate its budget deficits.

The hearing finally ended in September 1955, nearly a year after it had started. The presiding examiner sent his recommendations to

the Civil Aeronautics Board. On December 16th, the CAB made its final decision. It would allow competition with American Airlines on routes to New York City and Washington, D. C. Furthermore, Dallas could provide service to Chattanooga and Pittsburgh.

This decision provided a major victory for Love Field and its future. It also put an end to the oppressive monopoly held by American Airlines. The battle may have been difficult, but it paled in comparison for what laid ahead.

CHAPTER TWO

TRANSITION

In late 1955, Angus Wynne wanted to create the ultimate industrial park. His search for land and financial backing led him to Canadian businessman Milton L. Stern.

Stern had met earlier with real estate tycoon William Z. Zeckendorf. He claimed to have 2,000 acres in Grand Prairie under contract, but only had them under option. He also said that he could get 4,000 additional acres. Under the commercial development deal, Zeckendorf would get \$35,000 and one-third of the profits. William declined the offer when a disagreement over the contract couldn't be resolved.

Milton next set his sights on Angus Wynne, who was looking for a site for his industrial district. The two men met on November 15, 1955. As he had done with Zeckendorf, Stern offered 2,000 acres with the possibility of 4,000 more. Angus lost interest when he investigated Stern's unsavory background. This interaction caused Angus to focus on the Arlington-Grand Prairie area.

Looking for a financial backer, Wynne met with William Zeckendorf. The result was a fifty-fifty partnership between the two men. They purchased the estate of Paul Waggoner, located north of Milton Stern's property. On January 11, 1956, the duo signed a contract for the 2,387 acres of Waggoner's estate. With this six-million-dollar agreement, they officially announced plans for an industrial park.

Milton Stern, however, sought a temporary order against the park's development. Afterwards, he filed a lawsuit against Wynne and Zeckendorf for \$300,000,000. Milton proclaimed that the defendants stole his idea of developing an industrial district. Furthermore, he asserted that the purchased land had already been acquired by a fruit-cake company. Under Stern's management, the company changed its name and venue. After hearing both sides, the district judge rejected every claim made by Milton Stern.

Not satisfied with the verdict, Stern planned to appeal the decision. However, he changed his mind and moved back to Canada. Before he left, he sold his 258 acres south of Highway 80 to Angus Wynne. Angus then bought 1,342 acres in the same general region. He

also purchased 2,400 acres north of Highway 180. Altogether, the industrial district's land totaled 5,000 acres at the cost of \$7,000,000.

Angus Wynne next formed the Great Southwest Corporation to oversee the project. He named himself as its president and his friend Wesley Goyer as its vice-president.

The GSC took possession of the land on July 1, 1956. Construction commenced almost immediately. The first building erected was a distribution warehouse, which covered an area of one million square feet. Located on the Waggoner Ranch, it had the capacity to handle 640 trucks.

Meanwhile, the Great Southwest Corporation received permission to build and operate its own railroad line. It would cost a total of \$1,200,000. It would connect with the Texas & Pacific to the south and the Rock Island to the north. The track would provide direct, efficient transportation for the district's residents. Construction ended on the sixteen-mile railroad on May 28, 1959.

During this first phase of development, the industrial district failed to produce the anticipated number of tenants and revenue. Needing an extra source of income, Wynne decided to build a sports center. It would cover 275 acres and cost \$3,000,000. The Great Southwest Sports Center included a bowling alley, a sporting goods store, an amusement park, and an area for testing products. It would be located on Arlington Downs Road near the intersection of the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike and the Great Southwest Expressway. However, Wynne abandoned the plan in favor of a larger, greater project. It would overshadow all his previous achievements.

CHAPTER THREE

BUILDING THE PARK

As the Great Southwest Corporation entered into the final planning stage, Angus Wynne took his family on a vacation to Disneyland. He became enamored with the theme park and wanted one like it in Texas. He would not, however, try to persuade Walt to build another Disneyland. Instead, he decided to create his own theme park and make it completely different.

He wanted a safe, clean family park. It would educate visitors about the state's heritage while entertaining them. This would be accomplished by adopting the theme of Texas Under Six Flags, a common teaching method used at local schools. The park would be divided into six separate parts – Spain, France, Mexico, Texas, the Confederacy, and Modern America. The park covered 75 acres, 35 of them set aside for a parking lot. When Angus decided to call it Texas Under Six Flags, his wife proclaimed that Texas wasn't under anything. He then changed the name Six Flags Over Texas.

Construction would ultimately cost \$3,400,000. However, in the beginning, the projected expense was seven million. This figure later changed to ten million. The price tag created great concern for Wynne because the heritage theme could reduce its appeal. Nevertheless, he presented his dream before the members of the Great Southwest Corporation. Many members were opposed to the idea because they felt it was too risky. Renting more industrial space would provide a safer, better alternative to raise money. After several meetings, Angus Wynne convinced most members to support his plan. With backing secured, he hired C. V. Wood, Randall Duell, and Luther Clarke to develop the park.

Cornelius Vanderbilt Wood trained as an industrial engineer at the University of Oklahoma. He then became Director of Industrial Engineering for an aircraft manufacturer. Later, he traveled to California and worked for the Stanford Research Institute. While working there, Walt Disney hired Wood to help find the location for Disneyland. He also assigned him the task of designing and creating the theme park. Walt grew very close to Cornelius during this time and appointed him to be the park's vice-president.

Disney fired Wood in 1956, the year after Disneyland opened to the public. Using the knowledge he had acquired working for Dis-

ney, Wood founded Marco Engineering. During the Spring of 1959, the company entered its first contract.

Pleasure Island would be built on the outskirts of Wakefield, Massachusetts, fourteen miles north of Boston. It featured a nineteenth-century fishing village and a replica of Moby Dick. The construction costs reached \$4,000,000. The park opened in late 1959 with high expectations. However, Pleasure Island failed to impress the locals. After the lackluster opening, the theme park struggled for ten years before closing in 1969.

Marco Engineering's second project began in May 1959. William Zeckendorf publicly announced the construction of a new theme park called Freedomland. The 85-acre attraction would be built in the Bronx of New York City. It contained eight miles of waterways and lakes, ten thousand plants and trees, and eighteen restaurants and food stands. For the theme of Freedomland, Cornelius Wood chose American history. He divided the park into seven sections – the Great Plains, the Old Southwest, 1871 Chicago, 1906 San Francisco, Old New York, New Orleans, and Satellite City. Freedomland opened on June 18, 1960. Although it received high praise, the park faced a series of misfortunes which sent it to an early grave.

With three theme parks on his résumé, C. V. Wood seemed the perfect candidate to help create Six Flags Over Texas. Angus Wynne hired Wood and gave him the task of conceptually designing the park.

Randall Duell started his career as an architect in California. A few years later, MGM chose him to be a set designer for the movie *Romeo and Juliet*. When the film proved a success, it hired Duell full-time as an art director. He worked for MGM throughout the 1940s and 1950s, set designing over fifty movie classics. He continued working for MGM until 1958, when he joined Marco Engineering. Because of his experience in set design and art direction, Duell was placed in charge of Six Flags' physical design.

Luther Clarke attended the North Texas Agricultural College for two years. While working for the WPA, he taught himself engineering. After supervising several projects, Clarke served as an engineer and estimator for a military contractor. He then joined an engi-

neer regiment at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana.

After World War II, Clarke joined the United Construction Company as a project supervisor. The UCC became responsible for the construction of Wynnewood's apartment complex. Luther Clark worked closely with Angus Wynne on the project for two years. Following its completion, Angus asked him to join his company and oversee the construction of Wynnewood Village. Clarke accepted the offer, and the two men became lifelong friends. Unsurprisingly, he was immediately picked to supervise the construction of Six Flags Over Texas.

Wynne collaborated with C. V. Wood and Randall Duell during the early phases of predevelopment. Wood and his crew then moved to Dallas, where they met with Luther Clarke for the final preparations.

Construction of Six Flags Over Texas began on September 7, 1960. Using an old farmhouse across the street as headquarters, Luther Clarke faced the daunting task of building the theme park by August 1961. He worked around the clock at a furious pace, bouncing back and forth throughout the park while conferring over the ever-changing plans. It continued to be a hectic, bumpy ride until the very end.

The Groves Lumber Company, the oldest lumberyard in Dallas, provided the majority of wood used in building the park. Rough timber logs for the France section came from Texas. The Pacific Northwest supplied unfinished cedar lumber. Roof shingles came from Canada. California sent redwood and fir timber for the construction of barges, docks, and bridges. Arkansas sent yellow pine for the building interiors. In all, Groves Lumber Company delivered more than 25,000 boards for the forts, bridges, buildings, and posts. It provided large oak timbers to create twenty-foot-high dikes to separate the park sections. To help visitors feel they had left harsh reality, the builders placed a high fence around the park's border.

Lambert Landscaping Company acquired the contract for providing the natural scenery. To lead this endeavor, the company chose Lee J. Enright. The project required over 38,000 plants, shrubs, and

flowers, involving more than 400 varieties. Everything planted had to match the era being represented.

Enright formed a landscaping group of one hundred men, most of them college students. Together, they planted everything from tall trees to individual flowers. They moved at a maddening pace in the blazing heat.

Angus Wynne chose John Watson to supervise the lighting installation. Watson approached the project with a philosophy he called "landscape lighting". According to Watson, lighting would be secondary to the immediate area. It would have a natural feel and enhance the scene instead of overbearing the senses. It would be different for each section and for every ride. Lighting also had to be relevant to the time period, so what would be good for one area would not be good for another.

Watson worked on the lighting design months in advance. The plans continued evolving as the construction crews built the park. When all the trades finished their jobs, John Watson and his group had to determine the amount of electricity needed for the hundreds of areas. Once this was accomplished, they worked eighteen hours a day, every day, until they finished the project.

After a park visit, Wynne decided it should have indoor and outdoor protection from the weather. For the job, he selected Irving I. Brock, who had become well-known for his work on the Texas Centennial Building. Brock worked at a fast pace, installing electric fans and air-conditioning equipment.

All this construction started in September 1960. In December, the crews had finished the earthwork, foundations, and some of the buildings. By mid-June of the following year, eighty percent of the park was complete. The projected opening in August seemed a realistic possibility. The work, however, never slowed down and actually quickened. It became an insane frenzy with carpenters, painters, and electricians toiling around the clock.

Serving as the personnel director, Bob Stephens faced the hard task of hiring four hundred workers. College students composed the

vast majority of applicants. They came in droves for the part-time positions, filling the office with ordered chaos. After the dust settled, Stephens had acquired more than the required amount.

On orientation day, the employees took a park tour. Afterward, they headed to the Crazy Horse Saloon, chosen because it had the most air-conditioned space. The Six Flags staff stressed the importance of park cleanliness. All employees were required to do their part picking up trash, regardless of the circumstances. They were taught that the park didn't have customers, only guests. Workers didn't exist, only hosts and hostesses. Everyone was expected to smile, be courteous, and handle complaints.

After the programming session ended, employees were sent to the wardrobe department. The standard dress code for men was white pants, white tennis shoes, a white belt, a straw skimmer hat, and a striped shirt. Women wore a white skirt and blouse, a striped apron, a big, striped bow, and white tennis shoes. All costumes had to be exactly in place at all times. At the end of the day, employees dropped off their costumes. They picked up new ones when starting the next work day.

Although Bob Stephens chose the workers, he did not pick the live show entertainers. That job went to the entertainment chief, Stan McIlvaine. Stan was working as the manager of the Dallas Rangers baseball team when he received the offer. He saw the position as a good business opportunity and resigned. His first challenge was auditioning over a thousand contestants, then choosing 75 from the group. The tryouts were held in Dallas and Fort Worth. Minstrels, jugglers, wranglers, actors, singers, puppeteers, and other acts appeared on the scene. After two long evenings, McIlvaine made his final decisions.

Angus Wynne wasted no time in advertising Six Flags during its construction. In December 1960, Wynne and Cornelius Wood invited forty reporters to an inspection tour of the park. They provided a running commentary as the group treaded through mud and rain. On April 27, 1961, Arlington held its annual community fair. Lasting for three days, it included a stock show, commercial exhibits, and free entertainment. Wynne took advantage by having the official Six Flags Stagecoach lead a parade through the downtown area. On June 22nd,

Wynne promoted Six Flags at the Texas Press Association Convention. After an evening party and morning meeting, Wynne and Wood provided a tour and press discussion.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE AFTERMATH

As construction neared completion, Six Flags opened its doors for a week of testing and dress rehearsals. During this time, Wynne privately invited employees from Line Temeo Electronics, Texas Instruments, Convair, and the Chance Vought Corporation. Approximately, 100,000 visitors arrived to test the park's functionality. Everything ran smoothly, and Angus Wynne felt confident Six Flags was ready for business.

Wynne wanted to control crowds on opening day to avoid the chaos that Disneyland had suffered when it opened. For this purpose, he chose the Junior League of Dallas to sell 15,000 tickets. Four hundred volunteers sold them at twelve stands throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The ticket prices were \$2.75 for adults and \$2.25 children. The drive lasted from August 2nd to August 4th.

Six Flags Over Texas officially opened on August 5, 1961. Visitors, politicians, and news stations arrived at the entrance. The opening ceremony took place at the Star Mall. A benediction by William Dickinson started the event. Wynne and other members of the Great Southwest Corporation made short speeches. They were followed by the mayors of Dallas, Fort Worth, Arlington, Grand Prairie, and Irving. Afterward, employees dressed as cowboys, explorers, pirates, and railroad workers sang "The Six Flags March". As the music played, five of the park's flags were raised. The Marine Corps then marched into position, played "The Star-Spangled Banner", and raised the American flag. The gates opened five minutes later. Teresa Poole, a five-year-old girl from Arlington, became the park's first visitor. The entire day ran smoothly without incident. Six Flags receiving glowing reviews from the press, and the crowds continued coming. It appeared that the park would have a bright future.

Only nine days after opening, Six Flags hosted its first special event. Grand Prairie Days lasted for two days, commemorating Six Flags and what it would provide for the community. City residents could acquire discounted tickets at various outlets. To build anticipation, the city held a special parade.

On September 3rd, the park faced its first controversy. The Fort Worth Musicians Union placed Six Flags on its "Unfair List" that Saturday. It claimed the park paid its entertainers below wage standards

set by the Fort Worth Professional Musicians Association. The union distributed 50,000 circulars, suggesting locals should only attend shows that paid its musicians fairly. In addition, it mailed 300 letters, hoping to get Six Flags blacklisted by local entertainment companies. The letter and brochure campaigns failed miserably and accomplished nothing. Likewise, the “Unfair List” faded into obscurity.

In an effort to get into the hospitality industry, Wynne intended to build a hotel close to the theme park. He launched the construction project on September 8th. Located near Watson School Road, Wynne called it the Inn of the Six Flags. It had a projected opening date of May 1962.

After Six Flags Over Texas proved itself a success, the Grand Prairie Chamber of Commerce wasted no time taking advantage of the park. The Chamber first created a welcoming committee. All members were on 24-hour call duty, ready to answer Six Flags questions or make convention arrangements with the park. The Chamber also assisted with the distribution of brochures and pamphlets to tourist offices and business corporations. It held seminars to educate gas station attendants, restaurant employees, hotel staff, and the general public on how to greet tourists, provide Six Flags advice, and give directions to the park. Local businesses received similar sessions.

The civil government started a massive advertising campaign. It erected signs and billboards with its new city slogan, “Gateway to Six Flags”. It also distributed thousands of bumper stickers and buttons with the slogan emblazoned on them. On top of this, the government mailed over 5,000 pamphlets throughout the nation, urging people to visit Grand Prairie – the only Gateway to Six Flags.

These actions rekindled the old rivalry between Arlington and Grand Prairie. Arlington accused its opponent of riding on the coattails of Six Flags, pointing to the fact that the park wasn’t even located in Grand Prairie. The city of Arlington, however, had little room to complain. It also took advantage of Six Flags. The government mailed thousands of brochures and bumper stickers with the slogan “Arlington – Home of Six Flags”. It erected signs and produced special postage meter impressions. At trade shows and conventions, the Chamber of Commerce held color slide shows highlighting the park. In addition

to its marketing campaign, the Chamber handled daily information requests. It worked closely with the park in making special arrangements for civic and business groups. While Grand Prairie and Arlington fought each other in the tourist business, Six Flags officials enjoyed the publicity.

The two cities had good reason to clash over Six Flags. More than 232,000 people visited the park in the month of August alone. Total attendance for the year was estimated at 564,000. While the majority were Texans, eleven percent arrived out of state. Gross revenue for Six Flags totaled \$1,180,000, approximately \$300,000 more than forecast. As a result, the Great Southwest Corporation escaped a loss of \$1,600,000. The future of Six Flags Over Texas was assured.

PART TWO

THE PARK OF 1961

CHAPTER ONE

THE FRONT

The original Six Flags parking lot covered 35 acres, providing enough room for 5,000 vehicles. To assist those in the far reaches, the park used a special tram for transporting visitors to the front. Each tram used a tractor-like engine. A red cab pulled three white cars at a speed of fifteen miles per hour. Each car had a white canopy with red stripes. Two red benches, one facing left and the other right, provided sitting room for six people. In addition to driving the trams, parking lot employees gathered litter and collected parking fees. While visitors enjoyed themselves in the park, the workers placed bumper stickers on the vehicles' windshields.

Six Flags offered helicopter rides in the parking area outside the main entrance. The idea came from a man named Utah Rogers, who had worked for the Great Southwest Railroad. Thanks to his wife working in the park's wardrobe department, he was able to keep in touch with Angus Wynne. Rogers told him that a helicopter ride around Six Flags would make a wonderful attraction. Wynne loved the idea and purchased two helicopters. On August 31, 1961, the ride opened at a recently approved heliport near the entrance.

Six Flags used the Ranger Bell 47G and 47J helicopter models for the ride. Each of them had a long, thin tail and a bubble-shaped glass front. They were very small and could only carry three passengers. For three dollars, the choppers took visitors 500 feet above the ground. They flew for five minutes in a figure-eight pattern before safely landing.

To the parking lot's right lay the main entrance. Wearing the standard striped uniform, the cashiers had to stay inside the ticket booths at all times. Management provided a panic button under each register for the employees. Pressing the button would start a lockdown until the police officers and security patrols arrived.

The cashiers dealt with a pricing system unique to the amusement world. For decades, parks charged patrons using two systems. One involved paying cash to board each ride, while the other required buying multiple tickets. Even Disneyland adhered to these standards.

Wynne, however, decided to break the rules. A single ticket provided instant access to all rides and shows. Adults paid \$2.75 and

children under twelve spent \$2.25. When Six Flags first opened, visitors could walk around the park for free but not ride anything. This quickly changed to a discounted fare. As a result, there were two admission prices - one including rides and one excluding rides. Wynne adopted this two-level system so parents could enter at a cheaper rate to oversee their children.

To prevent abuse, the park used an invisible hand stamp. After a visitor entered, the ticket booth employee applied a mechanical stamp that released sticky, yellow ink. Guests had to reveal their stamps underneath a fluorescent light before boarding the rides. In addition to preventing the stamp's removal while cleaning hands, people faced the problem of ink smears during the hot summer days. Six Flags eliminated the hand stamp and two levels of admission when the Log Ride opened.

Beyond the park entrance lay the Star Mall. Surrounded by evergreens and shrubs, it was fronted by flower gardens and greens lawns. A star within a circle served as the main feature of the landscaping design. An octagonal pool in the star's center spewed water through three fountains. White periwinkles filled the triangles that composed the star's five points, and manicured grass covered the space between them. A footpath ran around the perimeter.

A long pool lay at the Star Mall's uppermost region. Known as the Dancing Waters, twelve fountains shot forth water in various patterns at different heights. Colored lights positioned along the pool's bottom illuminated the Dancing Waters at night. The six flags that flew over Texas stood proudly behind the fountains.

CHAPTER TWO

MEXICO

The entrance to the Mexico section stood on the Star Mall's left side. A red-bricked walkway was bordered by flourishing trees and freshly-cut lawns. Farther down, triangular canopies leaned above the path. Tautly stretched and fastened to the ground, they were joined together in the center by tall, metal poles. Native flowers surrounded these colored canopies and the benches underneath. At the end of the path, a Mexican street market awaited visitors.

The Mexican Marketplace provided plenty of shopping opportunities. Small stands littered the main thoroughfare. They sold baskets, pottery, blankets, rugs, carved glassware, and wood carvings. Shops resembling adobe haciendas sold imports, flowers, and souvenirs. Bouquet baskets and painted lanterns were hung everywhere.

Throughout the day, entertainers provided impromptu performances. Mariachi bands played their guitars, trumpets, and violins. Ladies appeared in full costume and danced with their partners. Some entertainers performed acts and skits, while others answered questions about Mexico and its history.

Three Hispanic families earned strong reputations performing in the Mexico section. During weekdays, the Rios family played traditional songs with guitars. They strolled along the pathways singing for visitors. Ava Alonzo and her three sons performed on weekends. During performances, the children played modern and traditional music while occasionally singing with their mother. When the Rios family had the day off, the De Leon family performed songs with a Latin beat. They played these tunes using marimbas, claves, maracas, and bongo drums.

Inside some of the Mexican restaurants, guitar players serenaded patrons while waitresses in traditional attire served Hispanic dishes. Colorful tapestries covered the walls, and Mexican designs dominated the furniture. For a lower price, people could enjoy cuisine at El Chico. The Mexican Sidewalk Café and La Taraza Refreshment Stand provided junk food near the center of the main thoroughfare. The Ferrocarril Fiesta Train lay to their left and Las Cochese Cabras Goat Cart Ride lay to their right.

The Ferrocarril Fiesta Train promised a humorous look at

Mexico and its lifestyle. While waiting in line, guests walked through a maze of wooden planks under a yellow, red-striped canvas. Employees working at the attraction donned a straw sombrero, a white short or blouse, baggy pants, a sash belt, and leather sandals or white tennis shoes. They counted off visitors at the end of the queue and led them toward the train cars.

The ride used two trains, which were named El Cho Cho and El Cha Cha. The engine, painted white with red trimmings, resembled a caboose. In the front, iron bars protected a section filled with flowers and plants. Each side of the car displayed a flower-bordered sign which read "Xochilmilco Gardens". Rug trestles hung underneath the roof around the entire car.

A diesel-powered, narrow gauge engine pulled eight memorable cars. Each sporting a different color and floral design, the cars all had an oversized sombrero for the roof. Every hat was unique, displaying a different color, brim, and band. Because of the sombrero, the attraction became known as The Hat Ride.

The Fiesta Train started on a straight track. On the right side, woven baskets lay scattered along the ground. Farther down, the track made a right turn. The train then traveled through the attractive Xochimilco Gardens. After going by a deserted marketplace, it turned left and passed five dancing hot tamales. A maraca band with three musicians awaited at the next turn. This was followed by a scene with three men rocking back and forth on tiny donkeys. After another left curve, passengers viewed two Mexicans enjoying a siesta. One slept on the ground while the other drank from a beer keg. The train next made a right turn past two guitarists and a singer. It then approached a small lake. Boats with floral designs floated on the waters. Those on board engaged in various leisure activities. After another turn, the train reached the final scene. A matador held a red cape for the upcoming bull fight. Five spectators watched the matador as a big, black bull approached. Once past the grand finale, the Ferrocarril Fiesta Train returned to its station.

Las Coches Cabras Goat Cart Ride presented itself as a kids' attraction. A large, white goat pulled a cart along a narrow path, surrounded on both sides by a wooden fence. Capable of holding three

children, the cart itself was actually the seat of a stagecoach attached to a firm base. The attraction allowed a maximum of six carts at any time.

The Indian Village stood at Mexico's northernmost region. Although it officially belonged to Mexico, its uniqueness provided some autonomy from the region. Built to recognize the part Indians played in Texas history, the village emphasized life before white settlement. The village had five authentic tepees that formed a semi-circle around a square stage. This stage had a large bird symbol etched in the middle, and several smaller symbols engraved along the perimeter.

On the platform, several Indian braves performed a show, which always followed the same structure. The Indian chief told the back story behind a particular tribal dance. Once the braves started chanting, the chief played the war drum. The braves then performed the dance previously described by their leader. This process repeated itself until all the dances were covered. The main highlights were the Hoop Dance, Shield Dance, and Plains Indian War Dance. When the entertainment ended, the chief and his braves remained on stage. They socialized with the public and answered questions about Native American culture until the next act.

Resembling a log cabin with a built-in barn, the Indian Village Trading Post stood next to the tepees. Rugs and skins decorated its front entrance. The store sold authentic artifacts, intricate jewelry, and artwork. From the Indian Village, visitors had the choice to visit Texas to the east or Spain to the north.

CHAPTER THREE

SPAIN

With only two attractions, Spain was the smallest section in the park. A replica of San Francisco de los Tejas stood at the main entrance. The original was built in 1690 by Catholic priests. They named the building after Saint Francis and the Indian word for “friend”. Six Flags designers carefully studied the original ruins and built a nine-foot-high stone replica. An employee dressed in dark robes stood near the replica’s entrance, explaining the role of Spanish missions.

Past the entrance on the right side, visitors could embark on the Conquistador Mule Pack Coronado Trek. Called the Burro Ride by the guests, the attraction represented the age of Spanish exploration. It ran on the premise that conquistadors were planning an excursion through the Palo Duro Canyon. However, before starting their quest to find the Seven Cities of Cibola, the Conquistadors needed to recruit more volunteers.

Overseeing the attraction, the supervisor wore red and black pants, long black boots, a metal helmet, and a red coat with white frills. The mule pack leaders wore a steel helmet, red vest, long-sleeved shirt, purple shorts, pink long-handle underwear, and black boots. They led a maximum of six visitors along a beaten dirt path. The leader rode a mule while the others rode burros. Throughout the journey, there was no spiel, music, animations, or special landscaping.

Leaving the Burro Ride, visitors approached an intersection. The Confederacy stood straight ahead and Texas lay to the left and right.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEXAS

The Texas section was represented by a frontier settlement named after the Johnson Creek River. The river separated this area of the park into two parts. The northern half contained shops and two rides, while the southern half featured a recreation of the Wild West.

To reach the northern half, visitors crossed a bridge over Johnson Creek. The bridge was composed of heavy, thick planks tightly fastened on a basic frame. Timber logs connected to fake wood posts helped form the handrails.

Four major stores awaited on the other side. On the left, Fancies for Women and Girls stood next to Fancies for Men and Boys. Pom-Pom Hats sold headwear across the street. Next door, Jean's Western Wear sold boots, saddles, guns, clothing, and accessories.

Standing between a clothing store and a railroad station, the Depot Café served an assortment of fast food. The place looked like an old, battered, two-story house. Benches flanked either side of the entrance. To the left of the building, picnic tables stood underneath a wooden roof. A covered wagon on the side lawn was converted into a lunch counter.

Across the street, the Texas Astrolift Station modeled itself after a lumber mill. Inside, wood fences and posts formed a maze-like design for the queue. A nearby blacksmith produced a variety of products, using only the those tools available during the pioneer days. In addition to making and selling his wares, the blacksmith also provided lectures and demonstrations.

The Watermelon Patch was situated farther down the street, almost facing the railroad station. A long, wooden fence surrounded a large, circular area. Two wooden poles at the entrance supported a banner that displayed the area's name. Inside the enclosure, picnic tables littered the ground with big shade trees towering above. The main highlight was a stand that sold ice-cold watermelons. Every weekend, someone drove a truck to an East Texas farm. A group of workers then loaded the melons and brought them back to Six Flags, providing guests with fresh, off-the-vine fruit.

Located at the park's northernmost point, the Great Southwest

Station allowed visitors to board the Six Flags Railroad. The station's name later changed to Johnson Creek Station. Regardless of what the park named the building, everyone else called it the Texas Depot.

The station resembled an old house. Gas lanterns hung on both sides of the main entrance. Above the wooden double-doors, a white sign read "Passenger Station - Six Flags Railroad".

The interior looked like an old-fashioned train station. To the left, several wood benches with metal arms sat in front of each other. On the right, schedules and notices were posted on the wall next to the office window. A mannequin dressed as the station manager sat inside the office, sending a message in Morse code. On his desk was a half-eaten sandwich, a large slice of chocolate cake, and a train schedule. The door leading to the boarding area lay straight ahead. After going through a turnstile, visitors gathered under a long roof.

When Six Flags officials started their search for train engines, they received several phone calls. One of the calls told them about a Louisiana plantation owner who possessed four engines.

After moving to America, Isadore Patout founded Enterprise Plantation. He stopped raising grapes when he discovered that sugar cane grew more easily. The plantation thrived during its early years. The only threat to its survival came from Union troops marching through the area during the Civil War. Patout bought three trains from the Porter Company in 1897. Four years later, he bought an engine from the American Locomotive Company. The trains were used for hauling sugar cane to Iberia Parish, Louisiana. They also provided transportation for local trips and social events. Isadore's daughter Betsy inherited the engines upon his death.

Betsy made an agreement with Six Flags representatives to rent the Mary Ann and Lydia on a yearly basis. After the deal was completed, the new owners renamed them. The Mary Anne became the General Sam Houston and the Lydia became the Mirabeau B. Lamar. However, the employees came up with their own names - the Green Train for the General Sam Houston and the Red Train for the Mirabeau B. Lamar.

It soon became evident that the train engines needed remodeling. Both used wood burners that had to be converted to burn diesel fuel. On the Red Train, workers placed a covering for the engineer and added more windows. For the Green Train, they modified the front smokestack. Unfortunately, when Six Flags opened its gates, the Red Train had not been completed. This meant that the General Sam Houston would have to ride the rails alone.

The Green Train had a maximum speed of ten miles per hour. Traveling an average of 60 to 70 miles each day, the engine pulled four cars carrying over 300 passengers. Each open-aired car was painted green and had no door. The seats resembled L-shaped benches underneath a beam-supported roof. These features made the cars look like oversized trolleys.

As the train started its journey, it passed a water tower before crossing a bridge over Johnson Creek. Beyond the bridge, the train passed longhorns and bison. After going through a tunnel and past Mexico, passengers entered Indian hunting grounds. Outlaws occasionally stopped the train, demanding money and poking fun at the passengers. The outlaws were eventually thwarted, and the ride continued. The train crossed another bridge over Johnson Creek before arriving back at the Great Southwest Station. Throughout the journey, a railroad worker delivered a spiel through a CB microphone.

The southern half of Texas had a cemetery, hotel, courthouse, post office, saloon, tobacco shop, jailhouse, bank, barbershop, and schoolhouse. Next to the Johnson Creek bridge, a small cemetery lay behind a wooden rail. Tombstones of all shapes and sizes covered the ground. A large, tall building housed a tobacco shop across from the cemetery. On top of the oak porch, a wooden Indian statue stood next to the front door. Inside, customers encountered a vast array of tobacco products.

A white jailhouse sat next door. It had a small porch, a sign above the door, and a cell window with metal bars. The window allowed people to take a peek. Inside, a mannequin posed as an old man who was taking a nap. An audio track provided the character with a loud, continuous snore. To complete the effect, a pump allowed the chest to rise and fall as the mouth opened and closed.

The Texas Courthouse stood next to the jail. It had a wooden porch with a roof supported by white pillars. A park bench sat in the corner next to a green door. On the other side, a large, oak door provided entry into the courthouse, though it always remained locked. Along the left side, a small stand sold freshly-squeezed lemonade for only fifty cents.

A post office, butcher shop, and bank lay on the other side of the street. The post office was designed to have an antique look. Visitors could enter the building and purchase postcards, stamps, envelopes, and other stationary items. In addition, people could send mail because the office was fully credited.

Inside the butcher shop, a retired salesman demonstrated various meat cuts and answered questions about the trade. However, no meat was ever sold. In addition to the demonstrations, people could enjoy the displays of old-fashioned tools of the trade, including meat grinders and sausage makers. The Overton Bank, located next to the butcher shop, remained locked.

The Texas Gunfight took place in this area of town. The performance originally required six people - one to portray Judge Roy Bean, one to play the sheriff, two for the outlaws, and two extras. Each show promised to be different because the performers had three different plots to choose from - a bank robbery, a jail break, and a horse theft case. Unlike later show performances, the story was treated with a certain amount of gravitas. After the crime was committed, the sheriff always confronted the bad guys. The outlaws then retreated toward the Johnson Creek Bridge. Judge Roy Bean rounded up a posse, pursued the outlaws, and engaged them in a heated, final gunfight. The show ended with Roy Bean's victory over the bad guys.

The actors didn't always follow the script. The Texas Courthouse became the favorite spot for ending the show because it was near the opening scene's location. The outlaws would also deliberately try to defeat the good guys. On one occasion, an outlaw tried to outdraw the sheriff before he finished his line. The lawman saw the intention and fired first, scaring the outlaw so badly that his gun accidentally went off. To prevent such incidents, the actors were supposed to wear loaded guns only if they were scripted to fire a shot. They also

had to use careful aiming to ensure no one got injured from the blanks. After the gunfight, the actors signed autographs and posed for pictures. On the courthouse porch, they socialized with guests until the next performance. The Texas Gunfight proved an enormous success and became one of the most popular shows at Six Flags.

Farther down the street, a horse buggy was parked next to the Dogie Hotel and Boarding House. The white building had an angular, shingled roof. Above the door, a sign advertised the low price of one quarter a bed. Inside, visitors saw what hotels were like in the Old West.

A birdcage near the doorway housed a large parrot. It talked to people as they walked by, teasing and flirting with the gals while kidding and insulting the guys. In actuality, a man hiding behind a two-way mirror provided the parrot's voice. The parrot act became a popular mini-attraction for a long time.

A red schoolhouse stood at the end of the street. A sign hanging near the entrance read "Skool closed, gone cotton pickin'". The school, however, was never closed. It served as a place for lost children. They played with toys, read books, wrote on the blackboard, and worked on projects. The children remained there under the supervision of Linda Gullino and her two assistants.

Next door, the L-shaped Crazy Horse Saloon provided musical entertainment. Painted brown with a yellow border, the long section of the building ran parallel to a walkway. It had a large, stable-like awning over the main entrance. The short, light blue section extended to the main pathway. It resembled a small store and sported two posters. Nearby, an old, bare tree with only one limb held the saloon's main sign. The central feature of the sign was a smiling cartoon horse.

Customers could enter the saloon at any time. Once inside, they could order soft drinks and sandwiches from the small, circular tables. When no empty tables existed, standing room was permitted. The saloon provided an almost continuous live show. The wait staff was dressed in white and red uniforms. They performed every thirty minutes, singing and dancing a wide variety of songs. The repertoire ranged from traditional and country to Broadway and jazz. Once they

finished, the group returned to cleaning tables, taking orders, and performing skits between shows. When the pianos started again, it signaled the beginning of the next performance. The staff had to stop what it was doing and get on stage. This cycle repeated itself throughout the day.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE CONFEDERACY

Located east of the of the Texas schoolhouse, four Roman pillars marked the entrance to the Confederacy section. At a two-story Southern home, portrait artists offered their services. The painters hung examples of their work on the inside walls and displayed them along the front yard. The Old Fashioned Coffee House next door served coffee, tea, pastries, and prepared sandwiches.

Across the street, Mrs. Goff's Old Fashioned Ice Cream Parlor offered a wide variety of flavors. Painted white, the U-shaped building used window panes instead of walls. Large, red-and-white striped canvases formed awnings over the tables and chairs. This parlor became one of the most popular places to stop and eat.

Near the ice cream parlor, the Six Flags Gazette sold its newspaper for ten cents. Each issue carried articles on the shows and attractions. Advertisements displayed shops and restaurants available to patrons. Lasting for six years, the newspaper released editions for the spring, summer, and fall.

On the street's right side, a tall, blue building was home to Leonard's General Store. A red emporium with a barn-like structure sold goods next door. Farther down, a candy store and print shop sold their respective products to customers.

Visitors had three directions to follow at the end of the street. To the left, patrons dined at Naler's Plantation House. It was operated by Willis Naler, who owned several poultry joints in Oak Cliff. It mainly served fried chicken, pies, soft drinks, and coffee. The restaurant resided inside a two-story home. In front of the long, wide porch, tables and benches provided seating among cypress trees. Naler's Plantation House was the largest and most popular restaurant in the park.

Farther down on the right side lay the entrance to the Butterfield Overland Stagecoach. Passengers boarded to go on a mail run to the town of Butterfield, facing dangers along the way. Each of the six Concord stagecoaches held a maximum of fifteen people - three on top facing backward, three on top facing forward, six sitting inside, two sitting shotgun, and the driver. Only adults were allowed to sit on the roof. All the others had to ride in the coach. One lucky kid had the

privilege of sitting with the driver. Four palominos pulled the stagecoach along a natural dirt trail.

During the first segment, the stagecoach traveled across prairie land. Suddenly, a gang of outlaws belonging to Sam Bass stopped the coach. Passengers had to get out as the gang poked fun at them and fired their guns. The outlaws then started debating who they would rob first. The driver interrupted their argument and frightened them away. Once the bad guys were gone, everyone got back inside.

At the midpoint of the half-mile track, the coach passed a tiny herd of four bison. Father down, it splashed across a water inlet and passed the remnants of a covered wagon. The rest of the trip remained uneventful until the coach arrived back at its base.

To the right of the main thoroughfare lay the performing stage for the Six Flags Confederate Drill Team. The idea came from Sam Nesmith, who wanted to display his Civil War artifact collection. Although park officials turned down the offer, they adopted his suggestion to form a Confederate troop. It originally consisted of seven privates and a general. The soldiers wore gray uniforms, a small gray caps, and leather boots. Their leader donned a gray uniform, a sword-carrying sash, knee-high leather boots, and a hat with an upturned side.

Together, the men marched down the main street and halted at a designated spot. They then performed a series of routines and maneuvers. Near the end of the show, a strolling minstrel began acting like a nuisance. When the drill team finished, the leader exposed the minstrel as a Yankee spy. The soldiers marched the spy toward the Confederate camp, where they tied him to a tree and shot him dead.

The camp contained four tents, a seating area, two large cannons, and a rifle depository. Tall poles hoisted illustrated banners with messages like "Enlist Texas Calvary" and "Join The Texas Brigade". In this area, enlistment rallies were held. After performances of the Six Flags Marching Band and Confederate Drill Team, the general made a speech. He encouraged people to volunteer for the armed forces to protect family and property. The children then stood in line for recruitment. The boys joined the Confederate Army while the girls

entered the Nurse Corps. Once everyone had been sworn in, the boys practiced drill maneuvers and the girls learned first aid.

Heading right, visitors encountered the Lil' Dixie Carousel. Unlike modern carousels, it relied upon the strength of a mule. Because people referred to female mules as jennies, the ride was nicknamed "The Flying Jenny". The ride had a large, central pole with several smaller ones extending from it. Bars suspended benches from these poles. The mule, which everyone called Pepper, was attached to a central column. As a result, whenever the animal moved, the benches moved as well.

Next to the Lil' Dixie Carousel, the Six Flags Amphitheater provided live entertainment. Its construction began on July 13, 1961. For the location, officials chose a farm's water hole situated on the slant of a hill. This would make construction easier and cheaper. The amphitheater's stage was a concrete slab of concrete with two wings on each side. Rows of long, concrete benches seated 900 guests. Other features included outdoor air conditioning, a large speaker system, and the absence of a roof.

Unlike the other entertainment venues, the Six Flags Amphitheater had to cancel shows whenever foul weather descended upon the park. It only held performances during the evening, despite the fact that it had no lighting system. The only source of illumination came from the lights shining from the surrounding trees. When Six Flags held special events, it rented a spotlight.

The amphitheater presented the Six Flags Revue during its first season. It was performed three times every evening. The show started with the Six Flags Marching Band playing the park's theme song. When it ended, Javonne and Vicki Braga performed song and dance routines. Jack Hines then displayed his puppetry talents. After an accordionist played a few tunes, a Dixieland band took modern songs and adapted them to its genre. For the grand finale, everyone appeared on stage as the band played the park's theme once more.

The Six Flags Marching Band performed throughout the entire park, playing music relevant to the current section. At any time, it could appear in the unlikeliest of places. The band often served as a

crowd control tool. Whenever traffic thickened, it arrived on the scene and led guests into less populated areas.

The band consisted of fourteen musicians. Each one wore white pants, white dress shoes, a red shirt, and a long-sleeved blue jacket. To complete the attire, they wore a red cap with a white visor. The members worked under the directorship of Harry Barton. Under his guidance, the band became a popular fixture at Six Flags.

CHAPTER SIX SKULL ISLAND

Although it was part of the Confederacy section, visitors considered Skull Island as a separate area. The island's port lay straight ahead from the Confederacy's main thoroughfare. A wooden queue house with a straw roof marked the entrance to the loading docks. The Skull Rafts provided the only way to and from the island. Powered by hidden gas engines, the hand-railed transports looked like a bunch of logs tied together. The rafts carried visitors along the western shore and down the other side to the island's entrance.

Originally called Outlaw Island, the attraction promoted itself as a playground for everyone. The theme behind Skull Island surrounded Jean Lafitte and other Gulf Coast pirates. According to the back story, Lafitte buried a vast fortune on Skull Island, which also served as one of his hideouts. Workers had to dress in pirate costumes. Each outfit included white, baggy pants, a red-striped shirt, a bandanna, and tennis shoes.

A black pirate flag displaying a cartoon skull awaited visitors at the island's entrance. Employees greeted visitors, spinning tales about the place and its fictional past. Nature trails ran throughout the forested island. At one juncture, a wooden bridge crossed over a river inlet. On the other side, guests could take a ride down the Tree Slide. The fiberglass tree towered at forty feet high. People had to climb a steel, spiral staircase to enjoy the attraction. Once at the top, they received a burlap sack with no handles. The riders had to grab the sack by the edges. Inside the hollow tree, flickering lights gave the sensation that the riders were descending at a faster rate. At the bottom, they flew out the tree, often landing backwards or upside down.

Skull Rock served as the central attraction of the island. Located on the southern-most tip, it stood on a hill two stories high. At night, a pale-blue light illuminated the skull. Little lights twinkled in the trees surrounding it. Skull Rock had two enormous holes for eyes and a long indentation for a nose. A long, rectangular gap became the mouth. Uneven, broken teeth filled the bottom right section. Only two teeth remained on the top's left side. After climbing a wooden staircase, visitors could enter the skull's back and peer through the eye sockets. On the left, they could zigzag to the hill's bottom using the Skull Slide.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FRANCE

The France section lay directly east of the Six Flags Amphitheater. Representing the age of French exploration and colonization, a replica of Fort St. Louis marked the entrance. Sieur de la Salle established the original fort in 1685. Named after the ruling king, it was located along the Lavaca River near Matagorda Bay. Frequent Indian raids forced settlers to abandon it four years later.

The replica was built using seven truckloads of rough timber. It stood fifteen feet high. Three long poles formed a door-like frame at the gate entrance. Inside the fort, a lookout post stood across from a cannon. A stairway inside the post allowed kids to view the river below. The entrance road brought visitors to a small gift shop called Pierre's Treasures. France's star attraction stood on the other side.

La Salle's Riverboat Adventure followed the premise that passengers would travel down the Lavaca River to meet with La Salle for one of his expeditions. The ten-minute-ride boat ride disembarked from a large, concrete dock. After making a turn down the river, the boat passed a gray wolf on an outstretched log. It passed an abandoned campsite destroyed by Indians, then approached a Spanish fort. The fort had three cannons extending from its windows. A conquistador rose from the fort wall and waved his sword. Immediately, the cannons fired, each one blasting three times.

After escaping from the Spanish fort, visitors saw two French scouts hanging from a tree. The captain stopped farther down the river to seek advice from a fur trader. When the voyage continued, the passengers soon found themselves in the middle of a gun battle. On one side, the Indians shot their rifles. On the other, the French hid behind leaking barrels, occasionally rising to fire a quick shot.

The vessel continued down the river and passed an angry alligator. It laid on the shore and opened its mouth threateningly. The boat then arrived at an Indian village. A medicine man danced around a fire in front of the main dwelling. Nearby, maidens spent their time washing clothes in the river. After an encounter with a cougar, passengers viewed live flamingos and alligators. A beaver colony disrupted this peaceful scene by collapsing a tree near the boat.

The ride came to halt when the riverboat reached a dead end at

a waterfall. As the captain stopped the boat, the water parted and a rock wall opened. Once the vessel entered the cave, the wall resealed itself and trapped the passengers. After a short period of complete darkness, lights illuminated the cave. They exposed a treasure trove filled with gold and treasure. A human skeleton presided over the great riches. In exchange for not attempting to steal the treasure, another wall opened on the other end. Upon escaping from the cave, the visitors found themselves heading back to the dock.

La Salle's Riverboat Adventure experienced several changes over the years. One of the first was the removal of the live flamingos and alligators. The birds started disappearing without a trace while others tried to leave the area. Officials discovered that the gators had found an escape route from their cage and were eating the birds. Management decided to get rid of the alligators and transfer the flamingos to another section.

The hanging scene lasted for a long time until growing public sentiment led to its dismissal. It was replaced by a trading post. At the campsite, the park added a captain hunched over a treasure chest. An entire pack joined a lone gray wolf near a pile of bones. Past the wolf pack, an incomplete mission stood in the background as Indians carried logs for its construction. Meanwhile, a friar read a scroll and gave an occasional nod.

Passengers encountered an assortment of other additions. Past the animated alligator, an Indian war canoe appeared then moved behind some bushes. A wild boar on the left side gazed at the river, and a growling bear on the right side rose from its hiding spot. Next to an Indian burial ground, a bear leading its cubs was stealing some honey. After the cougar scene, a bear swung its paws to fight off five timber wolves. Visitors next witnessed a hand reaching out of a whirlpool, grasping a tree limb. Farther down, Indian warriors gathered on both sides of the river near the waterfall.

During the boat ride, passengers listened to the captain deliver a running commentary. At first, the spiels were filled with historical facts. Employees had to follow them exactly with no deviations. However, as time went by, the captains were allowed to improvise as long as it was clean.

The employees took heart in the spiel, changing and adjusting it to suit their sense of humor. They held contests on who could endure the most performances without a break. They also competed for who could deliver the best spiel. Each crew member wore a striped pull-over shirt, a straw skimmer hat, white pants, and white tennis shoes. The foreman donned a dark-blue admiral coat, a black Hornblower hat, white pants, and white tennis shoes.

The opening duties included placing the boats onto the main track and making sure all the animations worked. All problems were reported to the maintenance crew. During these few hours, new workers underwent training for their first two days. They learned how to drive the boat, received a copy of the spiel, and were taught how to perform it.

The closing duties involved storing the boats. All the vessels were placed at a dry dock. It was located behind a gate next to the Spanish fort. Moving the riverboats to the dock required two people - one to drive and the other to switch the track. Afterward, the boat entered reverse and floated into the storage area. The workers secured the boat and plugged it into a battery charger. The maintenance crew had the responsibility of turning off the animations.

The boats moved past these animations down an artificial river made of concrete. The water level only reached three feet. In the off-season, employees completely drained the river to remove debris and muck.

During construction, workers built a channel inside the river bottom. Every boat had two rods attached to its hull. A car tire was mounted on the end of each rod. It would roll against the sides of the channel as the riverboat moved forward. Even with this design, many vessels occasionally jumped off the track, or they got jammed at the bottom of the river bed.

Six Flags had two solutions for this problem. First, the captain could blow an emergency whistle until the ride foreman came. After explaining the situation to the foreman, the other employees pushed the boat back into the channel. Second, the captain could put the riverboat into reverse. This placed the front wheel back into the channel

because the back wheel would act as a guide for the other one.

La Salle's Riverboat Adventure had a fleet of six boats. They were named Elizabeth, Marguerite, Annabelle, Nadine, Suzanne, and Belle. Rules required the operation of two boats at all times. As the crowds increased, more were added from the dry dock. If management anticipated a busy day, workers added extra vessels before the park opened.

Each boat was 25 feet long and carried a maximum of thirty guests. A PA system hung from the ceiling. At the front, a control box allowed the captain to control speed and direction. Pushing the lever up propelled the boat forward. Pulling it down reversed the boat and decreased the speed.

The New York Boat Company designed the original cypress riverboats. The vessels were powered by inboard diesel engines positioned in the middle of the boat. The park later installed outboard gasoline engines and placed them near the front of the boat. On the roof, a little trip wire extended outward like an antenna. It set off the various animations as the boat approached. The captain could prevent all the animations from starting by bending the antenna down. This practice became useful when driving the boats to the dry dock.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MODERN AMERICA

The passageway through France led to the Modern America section. Borrowing from Disneyland, the theme featured elements of the future and present day. Straight ahead from the entrance lay the Astrolift station. The park painted the metal structure red and white.

The Astrolift provided a grand view of the park and a way to travel between Texas and Modern America. The ride was based upon the gondola transportation system used in Europe. The Swiss company Von Roll, Ltd. constructed the ride at a cost of \$300,000. In July 1961, it finished producing the towers, cars, and cables. Seven hundred semi-trucks unloaded the imported contents. A massive workforce built fifty-foot-high towers and installed 2,100 feet of cables. The cables were secured by a twenty-ton counterweight located at the Texas station.

Workers painted the gondola cars a variety of colors and added numbers for identification and maintenance. The Astrolift had a total of 25 cars. Weighing 550 pounds, each car could carry five passengers at a speed of six miles per hour.

Every morning, the supervisors carefully inspected the ride. Any problems or discrepancies were immediately reported to maintenance. After a confirmation everything was working, the foreman told the workers to turn on the ride. The employees started it by turning a large crank in the motor room. Once this was done, the supervisor ordered someone to retrieve the daily ice water.

The Astrolift group consisted of four positions - the catcher, the swinger, the loader, and the tripper. The catcher caught the incoming car. After slowing it down, the catcher opened the door for the passengers. While the guests left the gondola, he held the car steady by grabbing the back bumper. He also made sure no cars entered the station while the present one was unloading.

The swinger had a much easier job. He caught the door as it opened and assisted people out of the cars. After grabbing the door and the front bumper, he swung the gondola to the loading zone. The swinger also pursued the car to slow it down and open the door for the loader.

The loader designated the guests so each car was full. After inserting a handle, the loader made certain the car was against the inner railing. Once this was done, he pulled the car forward, closed the door, and removed the handle. He then caught up with the gondola to slow it down and prevent it from bumping into the car ahead.

The tripper double-checked the gondola's door. He positioned the car into a mechanism which allowed it to ride the cable. The car remained there until the trip button was pushed. If the car got stuck, the employee pulled a large handle to release it. The tripper also had the responsibility to space the cars and prevent bottlenecks. To accomplish this, he observed the previous car's ascent toward the first tower. He also communicated with the other station to discover if everything was alright. When the cable or one of the stations had too many gondolas, an empty one would be released to clear the jam. The tripper temporarily shut down the ride if a gondola derailed, a guest was in danger, or workers failed to keep up with the flow of incoming cars.

The closing process started thirty minutes before the Astrolift shut down. The Modern America station always started first. It asked the Texas crew to widen the intervals between the gondolas. This allowed the employees to place the gondolas into a holding area. After the last one made its final journey, the ride was completely shut down.

During this time, and on slow nights, the crew occasionally pulled pranks on one another. A favorite involved hiding inside a car, then jumping out to scare hapless victims. Another was filling a car with ice water and sending it to the other station. In addition to the pranks, the two teams often boasted about who worked the hardest and held contests to prove it.

Between seasons, the maintenance crew cleaned and repainted the cars. They then greased the wheels that rolled along the cable. The workers traveled to the towers in a wire maintenance cart. They got onto the towers, greased and oiled the wheels, and checked the other mechanisms. When they finished, the Astrolift was ready for a new season.

Sponsored by Humble Oil, the Happy Motoring Freeway was located across the street from the Astrolift. The attraction was built by

Arrow Development. Founded by World War II veterans Ed Morgan and Karl Bacon, the company began as a machine shop. The duo slowly built their business around making standard rides for parks. The company got Walt Disney's attention in 1953 when it designed a carousel for San Jose, California. Walt hired Arrow Development that same year to help design and build several Disneyland rides. It created Dumbo's Flying Elephants, Snow White's Adventures, and Mr. Toad's Wild Ride.

The front of Happy Motoring Freeway's queue house looked like a gas station. On top of it, a large, red sign read "Happy Motoring!". When Humble Oil changed its name to Exxon, the park added a smiling tiger above the sign. Employees dressed as service station attendants greeted visitors and divided them into pairs.

The vehicles were supposed to be futuristic sports cars traveling down a turnpike. In reality, they looked like ordinary automobiles going down a small street. Surrounded by towering trees and overflowing bushes, the track had a metal strip to prevent the cars from leaving the road.

The attraction had 23 vehicles. Each one was painted red, white, or blue. A 12-horsepower engine enabled them to travel four to five miles per hour. For safety, mechanics added special bumpers to cushion the impact from collisions. They also installed a mechanism that protected the wheels whenever they hit the metal strip.

Designed as a wild mouse roller coaster, the Sidewynder stood near the Happy Motoring Freeway entrance. The first wild mouse coaster was created by a German designer named Franz Mac. Six Flags originally wanted the Sidewynder to have a wooden structure like those made in Europe. However, park officials turned to the Allan Herschell Company, which favored a steel design. Allan Herschell established his business during 1915 in North Tonawanda, New York. It specialized in making carnival rides and mass producing carousels. The company soon gained a strong international reputation for quality.

The Sidewynder's track began with a gradual incline. It then moved back and forth, steadily descending to the ground. It made one tight turn after another with an occasional dip along the straight sec-

tions. The cars only held two passengers and were barely wider than the track. In addition, the two front wheels were underneath the car's middle. These features helped create the illusion that the passengers would fall off the track at any moment.

To the Sidewynder's left, a jet fighter stood on display. A flight of stairs allowed patrons to climb inside the cockpit and examine the equipment. It had been loaned from a military base called Hensley Field. The Grumman TF9F-8 Cougar model remained at Six Flags for twelve months.

Northwest of the jet fighter, a series of stores comprised the Modern Exhibits Building. The Pom-Pom Hat Shop earned a strong reputation for selling flamboyant headgear. Sun-and-fun hats became the most popular because each one had a large plume feather. Miss Abigail's Gift Shop sported an old spinning wheel in the display window. It specialized in antiques and homemade candy treats. The biggest store in the area was the Highlands Historical Press Bookshop. Guarded by members of his family, Ted Mayborn displayed a rare collection of state literature. He also had old Texas books, prints, and documents available for sale.

Along a small path to the left of the Modern Exhibits Building, the Missile Chaser awaited visitors. It was a scrambler ride, first built in 1955 by the Eli Bridge Company. Scramblers became popular with park owners because they attracted patrons, required little maintenance, and operated at a low cost. Other manufacturers saw the ride's success and created their own versions.

The Missile Chaser had three long arms. Four cars were attached to each arm by a mechanism called a cluster. When the ride started, the arms and clusters rotated. The outermost part moved slowly while the innermost part moved quickly. The difference in speed created the illusion that one car would collide with another. Eventually, all the cars slowed down as the ride came to an end.

CHAPTER NINE

ANIMAL KINGDOM

The extremely popular Animal Kingdom was a section unto itself. Sponsored by Southwestern Life, it lay south of the Modern Exhibits Building. A large, white structure with colored spires marked the entrance. To the right, a green fence surrounded a pool filled with seals. A ceiling provided shade for the marine animals. After each show, the park allowed children to pet the seals and feed them fish.

To the left, a large canopy stood over the center of a petting zoo. The attraction became so popular, people referred to the whole area as the Petting Zoo. It had goats, ducks, pigs, rabbits, donkeys, llamas, monkeys, kangaroos, wallabies, and deer. Visitors could pet them for free, but had to pay for the animal food. The choices were limited to crackers, cornmeal, seeds, and milk. Between seasons, the animals stayed on a nearby farm.

The main attraction of the Animal Kingdom was located in a special pen just outside the petting zoo. The occupant was an elephant named Sis Flagg. Angus Wynne had bought the baby elephant for \$2,000. The price led to a common joke explaining why her last name had two Gs. The elephant's name was really chosen because it sounded feminine and allowed management to promote the park. When Sis Flagg finally arrived in Arlington, she was six months old and forty inches high. Not only could the children feed and pet the elephant, they could also ride her.

PART THREE

THE FORMATIVE YEARS

1962 - 1963

CHAPTER ONE
THE MORNING AFTER

The year of 1962 started optimistically for the Great Southwest Corporation. Its industrial district attracted fifty new leases and sales. It added 1.4 million square feet of building space and put 2,200 undeveloped acres on the market. Officials also intended to open a helicopter division nearby.

Wanting a foothold in the tourism business, the GSC had started construction on a hotel close to the theme park. Costing a total of \$1,125,000, The Inn of the Six Flags adopted a Southwestern theme. It boasted a hundred rooms, three pools, a restaurant, a private club, a banquet room, and business meeting facilities. When the hotel opened in May, Donald Atwood served as the innkeeper. L. Ray Dietrich replaced him in August. The Inn of the Six Flags proved to be successful, evidenced by the high level of private government meetings held there.

The Great Southwest Corporation expressed optimism for Six Flags, predicting at least 1.5 million visitors. The 1962 season would open on April 20th and close on Thanksgiving Day. In April, the park would only operate on the weekends from nine in the morning until ten at night. For the month of May, it would open one hour later and close one hour earlier. Six Flags would be open seven days a week, starting in June. This practice would end in early September. From then until Thanksgiving, it would follow the weekend-only schedule.

As opening day neared, Six Flags began the grueling process of hiring the 915 workers needed to staff the park. High school seniors and college students flooded the personnel department by the thousands. In addition to hiring the regular workers, park officials had to contend with the first annual Campus Revue.

The Campus Revue took its inspiration from concerts performed by college students at the Hotel Adolphus. Angus Wynne chose Charles Meeker, Jr. to produce and direct the show in the form of a Broadway musical. Meeker had plenty of experience working for the Dallas State Fair Park Musicals.

To assist him, Meeker hired David T. Blackburn to serve as his right-hand man. Blackburn started his career working for the Municipal Auditorium and Coliseum in Lubbock, Texas. From 1951 to 1966,

David was the assistant manager of the Dallas State Fair Park Musicals. Afterward, he became the director of public relations for Six Flags.

Stanley McIlvaine lent a helping hand in the hiring and auditioning process. When he got together with Meeker and Blackburn, they picked Eugene Patrick to compose the original music. For choreography, the trio chose Johnny and Aubrey Simmons. Talent scouts traveled to colleges and universities throughout the Southwest. Meanwhile, Meeker, Blackburn, and McIlvaine held tryouts in Fort Worth and Dallas. Over 800 attended the auditions. From this group, 26 made the final cut for the Campus Revue.

Six Flags Over Texas opened for its second season on April 20, 1962. Less than a month later, L. V. King became the first employee casualty on May 18th. He entered the bison pen located along the Butterfield Stagecoach trail. When he tried to rope the bison, it charged him, knocked him to the ground, and gored him in the stomach. A few days later, King's condition at a local hospital was upgraded to fair. He eventually recovered from his injuries.

Patty Cipriano became the one millionth guest on July 13, 1962. The teenager from Hurst, Texas received a golden pass, a free weekend stay at the Inn of the Six Flags, a helicopter ride over the park, and the traditional red carpet treatment.

In preparation for the 1962 season, the park spent over \$500,000 remodeling old attractions and adding new ones. This included the acquisition of a double-decker bus. Originally bought to transport guests staying at the Inn of the Six Flags, it ended up servicing the Six Flags parking lot.

Park officials wanted an old-fashioned New York City bus like those used in the 1920s. The one they found had once operated on the route between New York's Riverside Drive and Grant's Tomb. After decommission, it was used as a prop in a Hollywood movie. When the film's production ended, the bus collected dust in a Houston warehouse. Getting the bus to the park became an adventure. When the crew removed the vehicle from the blocks it rested upon, they discovered it needed new tires. On the way to a nearby garage, the brakes

went out. After the brake problem was fixed, the engine malfunctioned three times during the four-hour drive to Conroe, Texas. It started raining immediately after they left the town. When the windshield wipers were turned on, they disintegrated. The driver turned on the headlights as evening approached. Unfortunately, this caused every fuse on the bus to burn out. The crew eventually got the bus to Dallas and repaired it. The final test run took place on June 1, 1962. It passed the test and spent its remaining years transporting guests from the outer reaches of the parking lot.

Mexico received a small tropical garden. It contained plants, flowers, a Chinese elm, an American elm, and a live oak. The Second District of Texas Garden Clubs, Inc. donated it to commemorate the first annual Garden Club Day.

Park officials wanted to add an extra track to the Happy Motoring Freeway because it was popular. To make room for this expansion, the park removed the Sydewinder and placed it next to Mexico's canopy walkway. Officials renamed the attraction La Cucaracha. The designers repainted the coaster white, and completely remodeled the front area. A tan wall advertised the ride's name in painted letters. In front of it, desert plants sprung from the ground. The queue house resembled an adobe home with a straw roof. Despite the changes, the ride itself remained the same.

Spain acquired La Casa Magnetica, known to visitors as the Crooked House. It was a home where water flowed upward, items defied gravity, leaning objects refused to fall, and everything seemed slanted. Unlike other attractions, La Casa Magnetica had no queue house. People simply stood under a porch in front of a wooden gate. An employee opened the door and led them to the dwelling. The host guided them through the house, explaining its history and demonstrating its anti-gravity effects. Each host wore a black hat with a green plume, a yellow shirt, a red skirt, green tights, and black boots.

The effects viewed by the audience relied upon a comparative illusion. Builders constructed the house at an extreme angle. All the furniture, windows, and other items were positioned at the same angle. However, guests stood on a flat surface. This created the impression everything was leaning one way when it actually leaned the other.

Texas celebrated the addition of the Mirabeau B. Lamar. Attended by the engine's original owner, the christening ceremony took place on July 6, 1962.

Texas also enjoyed the addition of the Chaparral Car Ride. While the guests called it the Old-Timey Cars, the employees referred to it as the Chaps. Workers at the attraction wore a white duster coat with red stripes, a matching cap, white pants, and tennis shoes.

Arrow Development modeled the cars after those manufactured by Reverend Harry Luck. He was the preacher of First Christian Church in Cleburne, Texas. He began working on the car in 1904. Luck built the wooden frame of a buggy, then installed a break lever on the driver's side. Two small levers controlling the gas flow soon followed. Other features included a glass windshield, a convertible top, a chain drive, a rubber horn, a generator, headlights, shoe breaks, and leather seats.

The first car made a successful test run in 1905. Reverend Luck named it the Chaparral, after the Texas name for a roadrunner. With the help of some businessmen, he founded the Cleburne Motorcar Manufacturing Company. He immediately had trouble selling his cars to the local public, then the Ford company put him out of business.

The Chaparral Car Ride had twelve vehicles. Each one was a three-quarter scale replica of the 1911 originals. They came in blue, black, and red. The cars had room for two people in the front and two in the back. A roof supported by two metal bars protected passengers from the elements.

Like the Happy Motoring Freeway, the track had a metal rim to prevent drivers from going off the road. The track was long and surrounded by trees. Lanterns along the path provided soft lighting at night. After enjoying a peaceful drive, passengers crossed a bridge over Johnson Creek River before arriving at the queue house. Across from the building, there was a gas pump for the cars and a garage for fixing and storing them.

The park expanded Skull Island with a new section to the

northeast. A wooden bridge next to the Skull Raft docks crossed the river to the other side. A dirt path leading from the bridge passed a miniature pirate ship floating in a tiny lagoon. The ship was a place where children could play out their sea captain fantasies.

A small plank allowed visitors to board the pirate ship. Three poles on the lower deck held yellow and red sails. The first one hoisted the Jolly Roger flag, the middle sported the crow's nest, and the last held an extra sail. On the lower deck in the back, visitors used water cannons attached to the rail. On the upper deck near the front, guests spun a large steering wheel.

After passing the ship, people continued down the dirt path toward a cave. A sign near the entrance identified it as The Cave of the Mad Organist. A few feet inside, four long branches separated guests from the mad organist. The pirate was actually a mannequin dressed in a black-vested white shirt, black shoes, white pants, and a black cap. It sat cross-legged on a stool in front of a real organ. Once past the scene, people traveled through the cave, which was actually a series of tunnels through a hill. Emerging from the other side, visitors followed a pathway leading back to the pirate ship.

The park built an entire lake for the Caddo War Canoe Ride. Located across from Skull Island's pirate ship, the lake contained two islands. The one on the left was called Indian Island because of its teepees. The one on the right remained empty. A short pathway along the left side of the Six Flags Amphitheater led to the ride's entrance. Instead of standing under a queue house, people waited on one of the piers.

The park used long, narrow canoes capable of holding twenty passengers. The canoes came in colors of blue, tan, yellow, and green. Each one had an Indian symbol painted on the front. At both ends, employees dressed as Indians provided guidance. The costume included moccasins, fake leather breeches, and a headband with feathers. During the summer, they were allowed to be shirtless, but they had to don a fake leather shirt in the fall.

New employees attended training sessions before being allowed to guide one of the canoes. During this time, rules only allowed

them to use a smaller version of the actual paddles. They were so tiny, people jokingly referred to them as “spoons”. This term soon became a nickname for anyone working at the park for the first time.

The canoe ride took people around the lake and along its two islands. The guests paddled the canoe while the employees steered. However, the braves often found themselves doing all the work.

Employees also had to deal with children, who had an incredible knack for jumping off the dock. They had to constantly jump into the lake and retrieve the kids. During their free time, the workers often went on fishing expeditions along the lake. They used their badge pins for hooks and crickets for bait.

The Confederacy hosted the first annual Campus Revue at the Six Flags Amphitheater. The park built six wings and two borders between the curtain and the orchestra. It also installed four hundred more seats. With the purchase of two spot troupers, the park used lighting equipment for the first time. The Campus Revue easily eclipsed the other shows in attendance and popularity.

The winners of the late spring auditions went to evening rehearsals for two weeks. Practice started at six and ended late at night, sometimes lasting until three in the morning. Once summer arrived, the cast practiced seven days a week, every week, with no exceptions or holidays.

The musical premiered on June 20th and received critical acclaim from all the local newspapers. The show contained solos, duets, and dance numbers sewn together by a very loose plot. A visiting professor planned to provide a graduation speech at Gilchrist University. Along the way, he fell in love with the president’s daughter. The cast performed the Campus Revue from June 21st to September 3rd.

Modern America gained the Kodak Building. It was located north of the Animal Kingdom. In addition to selling products, employees provided tips and advice on taking better photographs.

Moving the Sidewynder to Mexico made a second track possible for the Happy Motoring Freeway. The new road came with its own queue house. The track varied slightly from the first one and ran al-

most parallel to the railroad.

The Animal Kingdom made a minor adjustment and presented a new feature. At the petting zoo, some of the animals had trouble walking because they were being overfed. To fight this development, the park introduced a stricter diet of rye crisps.

The park wanted a show that featured its baby elephant performing some tricks. However, Sis Flagg failed to learn them, thanks to her close relationship with a donkey. To fix this problem, officials hired Robert Jones. When the Fort Worth elephant trainer arrived on the scene, he immediately removed the donkey and went to work. The end result was a special show. Sis Flagg waddled like a duck, performed handstands, played a mouth harp, and waved a flag for the finale.

Near the end of the second season, park officials discovered they would have to get rid of Sis Flagg because she was getting too big. They sold her to a zoo and searched for another baby elephant. When they found one, they kept the same name for the new resident. The park also got rid of the helicopter ride because the insurance was more than what Angus Wynne wanted to pay.

At the end of the year, the GSC’s optimism paid off. Six Flags once again rescued the corporation from the red ink of debt, earning it a net profit of \$565,246.

CHAPTER TWO
THE CALM
BEFORE THE STORM

The year of 1963 started with great pomp and circumstance. The Fort Worth Advertising Club gave Six Flags the Dateline Award. The honor was given for the park's role in publicizing the D-FW area. At the grand ceremony, Angus Wynne accepted a wooden plaque on behalf of his park.

Officials planned to open Six Flags on April 20, 1963. Six Flags would break tradition by operating past Thanksgiving Day. It would close for the winter on December 1st, allowing guests to enjoy one last weekend.

Hiring began in early spring. The park acquired 1,250 workers from nine thousand applicants. Two hundred of them belonged to the permanent staff. Everyone was given the responsibility of gathering property that guests had left behind. They discovered umbrellas, strollers, shoes, transistor radios, false teeth, and sunglasses. They tagged each item and placed it in the security office.

The security staff, in addition to maintaining order, spent hours searching for lost belongings. They also provided park information, looked for missing children, hunted down dangerous animals and reptiles, dealt with emergency situations, and removed road kill from ride tracks.

Owned by supervisor Bill Ellworth, the living quarters for the petting zoo animals burned to the ground on March 26th. Caretaker Fred Alvord inspected the property that evening, but the animal barn caught fire ten minutes later. Bill's wife was the first to notice and alerted her husband immediately. He rushed to the blazing barn, hoping to save the trapped animals. The fire rapidly engulfed a house trailer and two sheds in the meantime. When morning came, the casualties were staggering. The first known victims included ten macaws, five seals, four alligators, three trumpeter birds, a parrot, a prairie dog, a coati mundi, and a baby elephant. Six flamingos and a wallaby were the only survivors.

With the entire Animal Kingdom almost wiped out, Bill Ellworth had 22 days to replenish the population. He scrambled with the rest of his crew trying to obtain new animals before opening day. The most challenging part was securing another elephant to be the next Sis

Flagg. Ellsworth barely managed to get one from Bombay, India. Originally named Baby, she weighed 325 pounds and stood 38 inches tall. All the other animals were easy to buy, but difficult to deliver in a timely manner. As a result, the crew barely accomplished its goal before the new season began.

When Six Flags opened on April 20th, ticket prices increased for the first time. Adults spent \$3.50 and children under twelve paid \$2.50. Cost efficiency and the new water ride caused the park to eliminate the hand stamp. This made Six Flags Over Texas the first park to sell all-inclusive tickets for everyone.

People visiting Six Flags discovered a new service at the front gate. The park had a kennel for those traveling with a canine companion. The building resembled a gigantic, red doghouse. The sign above the entrance was shaped like a bone. Inside, employees followed all instructions regarding the pets' diet, exercise, and toys.

Once through the gates, visitors enjoyed two new acts of entertainment. Shorty Lynch entertained audiences as the traditional tall man. Wearing clown makeup, he spent most of the time greeting kids, riding a unicycle, and walking around the park.

The Six Flags Crazy Band consisted of four saxophones, two trumpets, two trombones, one tuba, and a drum. Corky Barton led the band for a year. He was then replaced by Leon Voyles, a university music student. Without a dress code, the members marched through the park. They periodically stopped to perform, especially where patrons waited in line. They cooled off during the hot, summer days by giving concerts at the Dancing Waters, Caddo Lake, and a new water ride.

For the 1963 season, Six Flags officials spent one million dollars to expand the park. Part of this expansion included a replacement for the Conquistador Mule Pack Coronado Trek. Built by Arrow Development at a cost of \$300,000, it would become the first flume ride in the world. Officials named it El Aserradero, the Spanish word for sawmill. Everyone else called it the Log Ride.

The lumber industry once used water troughs at various eleva-

tions to float trees toward their destination. At the end of the day, lumberjacks sometimes rode the last log for fast transportation. Arrow Development used this history as the basis for the ride's theme.

The attraction's design was based upon Shoot-the Chutes, a popular amusement ride in the early 1900s. Patrons climbed to the top and descended a ramp using a boat. After everyone disembarked, the boat was pulled up the ramp by a large cable. Arrow Development updated the ride by adding a long, narrow flume and using a conveyor belt for the big plunge. Angus Wynne officially tested the ride with news reporters on June 15th. The ride opened to an eager crowd a few days later.

A stone archway marked El Aserradero's entrance. After navigating a long maze. Visitors crossed a small bridge and descended a flight of stairs. At the bottom, there was a loading platform with two water channels. The employees filled the fiberglass cars on both sides and took turns releasing them onto the main track. Carrying a maximum of four people, each eight-foot vessel was designed to look like a log. They had guide wheels and bumpers to help prevent serious injuries. With a fast loading rate, it was easy to exceed the number of boats allowed on the track. This created big traffic jams below the two lifts, which always presented a problem for the employees.

The boat slowly floated to the base of the first lift, which looked like a two-story sawmill. A conveyor belt carried passengers to the top past a small workshop. The log then dropped a short distance into the main section of the ride. A water pump under the lift propelled the log forward at a speed of ten feet per second. Passengers traveled down a gradually declining track that moved back and forth through the woods. Along the way, passengers floated by woodsmen engaged in work activities. The log went up another conveyor belt at the base of the second lift. After reaching the top, it plummeted down the water chute to the bottom. The impact created a massive splash that soaked everyone on board.

Log Ride employees dreaded the end of the park's season. The ride had no water drainage system and the water never recycled. As a result, the flume collected all kinds unattractive junk. This meant that the crew had to drain the entire attraction. Afterward, the workers

took hoses and power-blasted the gunk into pits. They then shoveled it into large garbage bags.

At the end of the season, Mexico experienced a major change. While El Aserradero was being cleaned, other workers focused on dismantling Las Cochese Cabras Goat Cart Ride. It would be replaced by more shops.

The Texas section underwent three alterations. Park officials moved the blacksmith shop from the northern half to the southern half. They also changed the central location for the Texas Gunfight Show. Originally taking place at the Texas Courthouse, the show now took place at the Jersey Lilly. The original Jersey Lilly was the place where Judge Roy Bean conducted most of his duties. The one at Six Flags served as a close replica. It had two rocking chairs and three stationary ones on its porch. Three signs were nailed to the slanted roof. The Jersey Lilly remained the center of the action until it was transformed into a concession spot. The red schoolhouse no longer took care of lost children. That responsibility shifted to the Lost Parents Caboose in the Modern America section. Located west of the Animal Kingdom near the Star Mall, the red caboose was designed with a circus motif.

Skull Island gained two extra features. The park built a large tree house. This provided a second route to the pirate ship and cave. A wood suspension bridge led to the top, where a gazebo with large glass windows awaited. A short platform led to a much larger building. At the farthest point, a long slide delivered its riders to the other shore. Those not wanting to leave the ground walked across the new barrel bridges. Wooden planks lay on top of overturned wine barrels, which were held together by perpendicular boards. Poles at various points held the safety ropes. The end result was a fun, wobbly way to get to the other side.

In the Confederacy, the park built a square-shaped cafeteria across from the Lil' Dixie Carousel. This new addition eliminated seventy percent of the area used for the enlistment rally. An octagonal gazebo with a steeple on top provided a permanent place for the Six Flags Marching Band to perform.

Workers gave the Six Flags Amphitheater a metal roof. They also increased its seating capacity to 1,250. Charles Meeker once again took upon the challenge of producing the Campus Revue. To find new performers, he and a group of talent scouts did a thirteen-city tour of colleges and universities. After the long trip, Meeker faced the daunting task of choosing the final cast.

The Campus Revue's title was *Gilchrist Glitters*. The plot focused on the students of Gilchrist University preparing a special show for the campus. The first scene dealt with the dress rehearsal and the second covered the show itself. The cast included a singing trio, a kettle drum player, a flamenco dancer, a magician, a pianist, a tap dancer, and ventriloquists.

Six Flags Over Texas built its first new section since the park first opened. Boomtown modeled itself after a Texas town during the state's oil boom. The period lasted from the late 1890s to the early 1900s.

A small bridge linked Modern America to Boomtown. Later, the park transformed it into a vine-covered walkway. The partly-shaded tunnel had fans, light bulbs, and ferns hanging from its ceiling. This area became a favorite spot to escape from the Texas sun.

Upon entering Boomtown, visitors found themselves surrounded by buildings with nineteenth-century architecture. Those venturing to the far right caught sight of a new train station. Smaller than the one in Texas, Boomtown Depot was painted brown. A long ramp and short stairway led to the front porch. After going through the back door, visitors found themselves on the loading platform. A rustic water tank stood on the other side.

Boomtown Depot represented a change in the Six Flags Railroad. Previously, the trains only made non-stop trips in one direction. The new station provided a stopping place for visitors and allowed transportation to the park's other side. It also meant the trains would be able to travel in both directions.

Six Flags erected an antique carousel next to Boomtown Depot. The earliest carousels appeared around 500 A.D. as sword train-

ing devices for the Byzantine Calvary. When Europeans returned from the Crusades, they borrowed the concept. During the 1600s, the French modified the device by suspending rings from bars that were attached to a central pole. Knights tried to remove the rings using their lances or spears. Around 1680, wooden horses replaced the rings. Mules and manpower moved the bars holding the horses around in a circle. Craft guilds took control of carousel construction by the 1800s. They sold the carousels for various fairs and gatherings throughout Europe. The mid-nineteenth century brought many changes. Artisans added chariots and new animals to accompany the horses. They suspended the floor and powered the carousel with steam. The Industrial Revolution provided the gears and cranks necessary to move the wooden figures up and down.

During this time of innovation, the Dentzel family entered the carousel business. Around 1850, Michael Dentzel sent his children to the United States, where they settled in Philadelphia. Gustav, the eldest of the four, started his new life as a cabinet maker. In 1867, he opened a workshop selling carousels. Three years later, he sold his first carousel to an amusement park called Smith's Isle. It proved so successful in drawing crowds, Gustav took it on a nationwide tour. This ignited the country's love affair with carousels.

William Dentzel took over the family business in 1909 and expanded it. He still had the old shop, but most of the work took place in a large warehouse. In 1927, William Dentzel died at the height of success. The ownership went to his brother, who sold the business to a ride construction company called Philadelphia Toboggan.

Around 1926, William built one of his last carousels. He then allowed a friend to operate it at Rockaway's Playground in New York City. When William died, the park bought it. Rockaway's Playground continued using the ride until 1937, when it was placed into storage. The carousel continued to collect dust until Six Flags bought it for \$25,000.

When the carousel arrived at Six Flags, park officials called it the Merry-Go-Round. It had two chariots and sixty-six horses. Made from wood, they were individually carved and painted. This allowed each figure to be unique. The ride was one of the few early carousels

still operating in the United States.

Near the Merry-Go-Round, a wagon hosted a Punch and Judy puppet show. It was performed by a man named John Hardman. He started doing puppet shows as a kid, then later expanded into magic. After graduating from Midwestern State University, he joined the Marine Corps. He returned three years later and performed at cabarets in Uptown Dallas.

Six Flags officials contacted Hardman, asking him to audition for a Punch and Judy show. They hired him to do 22 performances a day. To prevent boredom, he introduced Argyle the Snake. Hardman used the character to interact with the audience between shows. One day, Angus Wynne approached Hardman and told him to replace Punch and Judy with Argyle. The new show became an instant hit.

When developing the concept of Boomtown, park officials decided it needed an oil derrick. They found one near Breckinridge, Texas. Unfortunately, after Six Flags bought it, an ownership dispute erupted. To settle the matter, the park had to pay for the derrick again. Making matters worse, they discovered the derrick was too rotted to use.

Six Flags then hired Charlie Fox, an oil rig architect, to make a new one. He took measurements of the old structure and built a 68-foot-high replica next to the carousel. Before erecting the derrick, officials played with the idea of making it spew fake oil. They dropped the concept because too much time and money had already been spent. As a result, the new oil derrick stood quietly when the park opened.

The Sky Hook stood in the very back of Boomtown as the tallest structure at Six Flags. For this reason, Angus Wynne made it the equivalent of Disneyland's Cinderella Castle. The Y-shaped structure was built in 1910. It debuted during the 1958 World's Fair. Wynne remembered the ride during his visit there and wanted it for his park. After he bought it, the remodeling began.

Workers repainted the Sky Hook red and positioned it vertically. It weighed a hundred tons and stood 155 feet high. Resembling

a steel ball, a cage hung from each of the ride's arms by a thick cable. Each cage seated a maximum of 28 people. After one of the employees locked the door, the steel ball rose into the sky. The upper half of the structure turned 180 degrees when the ball reached the very top. As the cage was lowered, the other one was raised.

An employee operated the ride from a small box sixty feet off the ground, accessible only by a ladder. After entering the box, the worker faced two problems. The Sky Hook had no brakes to stop the upper half, and all the controls had to be used manually. This required shutting off the power in advance once the ride was in motion. It had to be timed perfectly so the friction would stop the ride at the appropriate spot. Not doing so created the risk of dropping the steel cage into the queue area. Adding more stress to the job, the cage's descent had to be stopped at the right moment or it would smash into the ground. To help prevent this from happening, the worker at the queue line wildly waved at the operator when it reached the bottom.

A maintenance crew member visited the Sky Hook three times a week. After climbing to the point where the arms joined, he attached a safety line. He then scaled to the edge of each arm and lubricated the pulleys with a grease gun.

Six Flags Over Texas celebrated its second anniversary on August 5, 1963. It was a grand occasion marred by tragedy. Carl Wynne Jones, a Grand Prairie high school graduate, stepped between a truck and its trailer. He lost his balance and fell onto the pavement. Before he could get back up, he was run over. Carl Jones became the first fatality at the park.

As 1963 came to close, Angus Wynne and the Great Southwest Corporation had much to celebrate. Net income and earnings for the fiscal year almost tripled. The future ahead looked very bright.

PART FOUR

A CHANGE IN THE GUARD

1964

CHAPTER ONE

THE PARK

The construction and design crews entered a race against time to complete the additions and renovations for the 1964 season. As April 19th approached, park officials worried about the prediction of heavy rain. Six Flags prepared for the worst, but the morning only brought a short period of light rain. Despite the forecast and wet conditions, 4,100 visitors gathered for the opening ceremony.

The 1964 season introduced one of the most popular rides ever constructed for the park. Officially named The Cave, visitors preferred to call it the Spee-lunker Cave. The new ride was inspired by Angus Wynne and designed by Randall Duell. Jean Patrick provided the sounds, scenery, props, and music. The Spee-lunker characters came from the imagination of Walter McKeegan, who served as the art director of Green Acres, M*A*S*H, and the Beverly Hillbillies.

Six Flags built the attraction for \$300,000. Scheduled to open in late May, the ride's building covered 13,300 square feet. Its track had a length of 600 feet. To keep guests cool, forty tons of air-conditioning equipment were used.

The Cave accommodated 28 Spee-lunkers. Each beige creature stood at four feet. They had triangular faces, long, pointy ears, enormous eyes, a long snout, and a tiny mouth. According to the original premise, the Spee-lunkers were aliens from outer space who crash-landed on Earth. They intermingling with human society for a while, but decided to live in the dark recesses of a cave. Two kinds of Spee-lunkers lived in the cave. Single-jointed figures with a moving part used air cylinders for their actions. Safety concerns later led to the use of pneumatic motors. The other inhabitants made simple rotations or repeated movements.

Designers painted most of the props, figures, and backgrounds with fluorescent paint. They then illuminated the ride with a variety of black lights, making the objects glow in the dark.

The Spee-lunker Cave served as a revolutionary benchmark in the use of sound in dark rides. It used at least twenty mono and stereo channels, something which had never been done before. The tapes ran for thirty minutes on one side, then auto-reversed to the next. This allowed the sound loops to play in the background all day.

Passengers floated through the ride in fiberglass tubs. The original ones were small and round. Because they had a bumper, the tubs slowly spun around when they pressed against the track's edge. They could only seat a maximum of three adults, so the park replaced them with a new model. The oval-shaped tub could seat four adults or six children. All guests straddled a padded board in the middle. Each corner had a rubber wheel attached to it, preventing the vessel from overturning and keeping it on course. Posts were later added to help people get in and out. They also allowed employees to handle the tubs when necessary.

At the end of the season, employees drained the troughs. Afterward, they hosed all the slime and gunk into the base, where it was picked up and thrown away. The unpleasant work was made worse because it had to be done in a dark environment.

In the beginning, the ride's sign was located to right of the cave-like entrance. Resembling a black sail, the sign was hoisted on the mast of a pirate ship. Park officials later removed the sail and added stone letters on top of the entrance. After going through the large hole, guests navigated a maze of rails, crossed a long bridge, and descended a flight stairs. The platform below had two channels that merged into one.

The Cave had no real storyline. Instead, it presented scenes of the Spee-lunkers doing various activities in their own way.

The ride began with the tub going through a cave opening. As the darkness gradually increased, passengers heard echoes of dripping water. On the left side, a Spee-lunker sat in the corner chiseling a stone tablet. Farther down on the right side, an adult played a pipe organ alongside a child. The next scene involved three kids riding turtles in a circle. Visitors then viewed a Spee-lunker fishing in a pond inhabited by a shark. Two kids, each one standing on a cliff, tossed a gigantic boulder back and forth. Guests next encountered a flock of bats and a huge idol carved into the wall.

In the next scene, a Spee-lunker held a bullwhip, trying to control three-foot-long lobsters. A conductor and four harp players stood on a group of mushroom nearby. Afterward, four dancers performed

the Twist on a stage. A hair arm descended to grab the passengers as the tub exited the scene. The next scenario involved an encounter with a giant spider in its web.

The tub then entered complete darkness and traveled up a high ramp. At the top, two Spee-lunkers inside a barrel wore snorkeling gear. The tub fell downward and rushed around the corner before slowing down. A Spee-lunker near the corner engaged in mortal combat with a swordfish. Meanwhile, a peg-legged pirate opened a treasure chest.

The vessel left the cave and entered a storm. On the right side, lightning bolts flashed and sounds of thunder filled the air. Along the shore, a Spee-lunker posing as Benjamin Franklin flew a kite. A wrecked ship lay on the left side. The tub turned toward the ship, entered its hull, and traveled through the brig. The tenants included a prisoner sawing through the bars, another playing the accordion, and two more involved in a card game.

After exiting the ship, the tub entered a tunnel. The wooden frames moved back and forth as though the ceiling would collapse at any moment. The tub then went through a rotating barrel. Mist and cold air assaulted the passengers as they entered a room lit with blue and white lights. When the tub exited the cave, the guests received more mist and cold air.

Designers changed the final room twice. First, they created a scene of the North Pole, where the inhabitants enjoyed winter activities. This scenario was replaced by a miniaturized version of the Alamo. Spee-lunkers dressed as different nationalities stood around it, shaking hands with the other representatives.

The Spee-lunker Cave became an instant classic. Children grew attached to the creatures, air conditioning provided sanctuary from the heat, and the darkness made it an ideal place for romance.

To make room for the attraction, management shortened the stagecoach trail and moved the entrance next to Nalor's Plantation House. They also added a haunted saloon along the trail. It was inhabited by the skeletons of two bar patrons, two dancers, a piano player,

and a horse.

Other additions and changes to Six Flags were revealed when the park opened for the new season. The Confederacy enjoyed the return of the Campus Revue. Produced and directed again by Charles Meeker, the auditions started in early February and lasted for two months. Talent scouts visited 129 colleges and universities in Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Illinois, and Louisiana. Over 800 students auditioned, but only 94 made it to the final round. Out of this number, 27 were chosen. Meeker then hosted the Six Flags Teenage Talent Contest. Chosen by applause, the winner got \$300 and a spot in the third annual Campus Revue.

Called *The Singing Six Flags*, it followed the variety show format. The plot centered around a father and his two sons taking a musical tour of the theme park. The cast included eight singers, ten dancers, two bullwhip artists, three pianists, a harp player, and an accordionist.

In the Skull Island section, three interconnected swamp slides were added to Indian Island. Each one had a small hut on top. Visitors accessed them using a twenty-foot-high suspension bridge made of rope. Once at the top, guests dropped down a spiraling slide in complete darkness. A small bridge brought the riders back to the main isle after their descent.

In Texas, the park expanded the Crazy Horse Saloon to accommodate 25 more people. Stan McIlvaine decided to hire the cast members through the Campus Revue auditions. He and Charles Meeker picked six performers that they had rejected because of the show's budget.

Mexico acquired a bazaar which sold all kinds of native curiosities. At the end of the year, the park removed La Cucaracha to make way for new shops, rides, and attractions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRAP

During the early part of 1964, the Great Southwest Corporation looked forward to a wonderful, bright future. In addition to owning a successful theme park and industrial district, it had a warehousing, distribution, and helicopter center. It also operated an important railroad line. The corporation planned to build a shopping center, later to be called Six Flags Mall.

In this atmosphere of positive growth, Angus Wynne entertained the possibility of placing the GSC on the American Stock Exchange. However, a series of events removed such notions from his mind.

A group of New York businessmen wanted to create an economic boost for their city. Remembering their experiences at the World's Fair of 1939, they felt it would be a great idea to have another one. They chose Robert Moses to finance and run the fair because he was an expert in raising money for large projects. Moses transformed the neglected Flushing Meadows into a clean, reputable site. Knowing that bond sales and private financing wouldn't cover the costs, Moses and other organizers decided to hold the fair for two years. They also chose to charge site rentals for all pavilions. Most important of all, they needed the blessing of the Bureau of International Expositions. This would ensure the cooperation and participation of the 40 countries belonging to the organization.

Unfortunately, Moses and his comrades broke many of the rules. A fair could only last six months. It was also illegal to charge fees for exhibits. Furthermore, there could only be one fair in one country within a ten-year period. All this seemed immaterial, however, since Montréal had already entered a request to be the next site. New York City had to wait in line for consideration. Moses refused to go down without a fight and made his appeal in Paris. This resulted in the organization publicly demanding a boycott from all of its member countries.

Undeterred, Moses and his crew continued their quest to make the best World's Fair ever. Because of the boycott, Moses relied upon trade and tourist organizations. Smaller nations constructed exhibits, hoping to increase tourism and foreign trade. States also represented themselves in the extravaganza. Texas was one of them.

President Lyndon Johnson and Texas Governor John Connally asked Angus Wynne to build a pavilion for the fair. Wynne formed a corporation to handle the project and helmed it himself. Designed by Randal Duell, the Texas Pavilion had seven sections, each representing a different aspect of the state's history and culture. The pavilion covered the impact of Spain and Mexico, the years of Texas independence, the heritage of the Confederacy, the influence of ranching and the oil industry, the Wild West, the Gulf Coast region, and the space program. The main slogan was "Friendship at the Fair".

In the front, a tented area provided information on tourist spots with a strong emphasis on Six Flags. The Gulf Coast pavilion hosted a waterfront restaurant and shrimp bar. To celebrate Houston's link to the space program, NASA loaned a full-scale replica of the Gemini capsule. The oil industry was represented by a display of antique and modern drilling tools. Wynne symbolized cattle ranching in a unique way. Workers built a fully-furnished bedroom, then placed a live bull in the center.

The Texas Pavilion represented the Wild West through the Frontier Palace. The outside looked like a large home in the prairie, but the inside resembled a saloon. The restaurant provided a wide variety of steaks and live entertainment. Periodically, waiters got into an argument, which always escalated into a gunfight.

The main attraction was the opulent Music Hall. It held 2,400 seats with a series of private boxes. It also had an executive bar and a lounging area. The theater hosted a musical called *To Broadway With Love*. It was written and composed by the creators of *Fiddler on the Roof* and *The Music Man*.

The New York World's Fair opened on April 22, 1964. Unfortunately, attendance was lackluster at best. Wynne kept waiting for the flood of visitors which never came. The Broadway extravaganza, despite critical acclaim, only entertained small groups of people. After just seventeen performances, it was shut down to cut costs. Wynne took loans from the World's Fair Corporation to keep the pavilion running until the end of the year.

While the Texas Pavilion continued its poor performance, An-

gus Wynne faced a terrible reality. He had squandered his entire personal fortune on the project, thinking he would get it back through the profits. Financially ruined, he couldn't pay the loans he made and filed for bankruptcy. This resulted in the complete loss of his ownership of the Great Southwest Corporation.

Meanwhile, Toddie Lee Wynne sold the GSC to the Pennsylvania Company. It was a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Like other Northeastern railroads, Pennsylvania relied upon short-haul services. The airways and highways created fierce competition that placed the company in a no-win situation. Regulations and labor unions prevented the railroad from raising its prices or cutting its costs. The only way out of this mess seemed to be a merger. New York Central, facing a similar situation, offered one. Stuart Saunders conducted negotiations until an informal agreement was reached.

In addition to the merger, Saunders started purchasing companies unaffiliated with the railroad industry. He eventually set his eyes upon the Great Southwest Corporation. After two months of intermittent discussions, Toddie Lee agreed to sell all his holdings. The shares represented 36 percent of the company's stock, which provided a majority ownership of the GSC.

Saunders made the public announcement in August, promising no major changes. Angus Wynne was still president, but he could be overruled or terminated at a moment's notice. The bankruptcy forever prevented him from taking control. This change in ownership would eventually lead to catastrophe.

PART FIVE

YEARS OF EXPANSION

1965 - 1968

CHAPTER ONE
THE NEW REGIME

In 1965, the Interstate Commerce Commission accepted the merger of New York Central and the Pennsylvania Railroad. The new company called itself Penn Central.

The Great Southwest Corporation experienced growth during its first year as a sub-subsidiary. Thirty-four new companies moved into its industrial district, raising the number of residents to 175. The Park Cities Airport was bought for one million dollars and transformed into an industrial park. Angus Wynne announced the creation of the Great Southwest Pacific Corporation. Headquartered in Los Angeles, the new venture would concentrate on real estate and land development.

Wynne intended to create an industrial park seven miles from Atlanta, Georgia. To do so, he spent \$5,000,000 on 3,000 acres. He predicted that the first stage of the Great Southwest Atlanta project would cost \$13,000,000. The final cost projection was \$400,000,000. It included the construction of a theme park almost the size of Six Flags.

Six Flags Over Texas started its new season on April 16, 1965. On May 15th, Yon Robinson from Biloxi, Mississippi became the park's five millionth guest. After a big ceremony, Wynne gave Yon and his family a golden season pass, a weekend stay at the Inn of the Six Flags, and a stash of souvenirs.

The park expanded its grounds for the 1965 season at a cost of \$600,000. Workers completely changed the landscape to provide harmony with the surrounding areas. They also revised the lighting schemes for different dramatic affects. The most obvious example of these renovations was the Star Mall. Sixty ten-foot-poles shaped like candy canes were placed along the perimeter. Each held a hanging basket filled with ivy leaf geraniums. The Dancing Waters remained a feature of the Star Mall, but the Texas star disappeared from the landscape. Six circular garden plots took its place, each one sporting myrtle shrubs and at least one tree.

Behind the Star Mall, workers constructed a clock tower after the courthouse in Weatherford, Texas. Six Flags built its version for \$11,000. Only the top half was reproduced because park officials

wanted to use the rest of it as an ice house. The clock tower not only told the time, but it also produced over 1,250 tons of ice.

Six Flags borrowed an exact copy of the Liberty Bell from Whitechapel Bell Foundries. The London-based company made it using the original mold. The result was a copper bell that weighed over a ton. Six Flags got to keep the replica for a year.

The Mexico section got a brand-new attraction called El Sombrero. It was nicknamed the Hat Ride by guests. Chance Industries, currently known as Chance Morgan, built the ride and classified it as a Trabant. The main section of El Sombrero resembled a blue Mexican hat with a white band. Passengers sat in pairs along the hat's rim. The ride started by slowly spinning around on an axis. The sombrero then moved up and down as an arm raised it to a 45-degree angle. It eventually lowered to the ground and slowed down to a complete stop.

The Animal Kingdom acquired a large aviary. It had over a hundred birds representing eighty species from around the world. In addition, visitors enjoyed the rare opportunity to see two newborn bison.

Near the entrance to the Texas section, a map of the Lone Star State was painted on an animal hide. The bank had pictures depicting the Old West from legendary photographer Erwin Smith. The blacksmith shop showed a collection of branding irons from the legendary cattle ranches of the Southwest.

Six Flags also added an arena to its list of attractions. Located across the railroad tracks near the Log Ride, the Texas Arena looked like a horse racetrack. The stands surrounding the track were capable of seating 2,500 people. During its first season, the arena hosted a three-ring circus.

In the Confederacy, the execution skit made two substantial changes. Instead of picking college students for the Confederate Drill Team, Stan McIlvaine chose members of the Arlington State College Jody Drill Team. Park officials then changed the skit's plot. It would now focus on the execution of an army deserter rather than a Yankee spy.

The Amphitheater hosted its fourth Campus Revue. It was called *Thank You Mr. President: A New Play With Old Music*. Marking a return to the Broadway format, the plot centered around Gilchrist University preparing a show for Lyndon Johnson. Once again, Charles Meeker produced and directed the show.

When Six Flags closed its gates in November, park officials removed Skull Island's cave and pirate ship. They also eliminated the Indian Village. As the year ended,

As the year ended, Six Flags announced it had broken the previous year's attendance for the fourth time in a row. The number of visitors was 1,625,743.

CHAPTER TWO
BUSINESS AS USUAL

Six Flags received exciting news in February 1966. The Texas Tourist Development Agency declared it the most popular place in Texas. The employees also had much to celebrate because Angus Wynne introduced a scholarship program. The ten winners, chosen for outstanding performance, would receive a credit of \$500. Those not currently in school would have their funds held until they enrolled.

Officials decided to open the gates on April 15th and close them on November 27th. Unlike other seasons, it opened on a rainy day with little fanfare.

Stan McIlvaine announced his departure as Director of Entertainment on June 17th. He would leave the post and become Vice-President of the Houston Sports Association. Upon his exit, David Blackburn would replace him.

Two months later, Six Flags held its fifth anniversary celebration on August 5th. Angus Wynne started the event by introducing Teresa Poole as the park's very first visitor. After he gave a short speech, the Inn of the Six Flags delivered a five-tiered birthday cake for the grand finale.

The majority of park changes occurred in the live entertainment department. The Crazy Horse Saloon shows were shortened so they could be performed every hour throughout the day. Along with this change, the six-member crew donned new costumes. The ladies wore white dresses with red polka dots. The men sported red-striped shirts, black vests, and white trousers. Standing on a small stage in front of a painted backdrop, they performed traditional, jazz, and ragtime music.

The Campus Revue's latest show was called *Let's Do It: Let's Find A Cause*. The plot once again took place at Gilchrist University. Since other campuses were mounting protest demonstrations, the students wanted to do their own. At the request of a puppet named J. J. J. Charace, they chose women's issues to be the cause. The show featured singing, dancing, tumbling, acrobatic stunts, a ballet dance number, and a beauty contest.

In contrast to the glitzy musical, Skull Island hosted a dolphin

show. Named Skipper, the main star came all the way from Marathon, Florida. Once he arrived at Six Flags, eight workers lowered the dolphin into a 25,000-gallon tank. Skipper's trainer was Diane Langer, who originally worked as a ballerina before getting involved with animals. She taught him how to jump hurdles, smoke a pipe, pull a life saver, and retrieve rocks and money. The dolphin show opened on June 4th and continued through the season.

The Texas Arena replaced its three-ring circus with a Wild West show. It featured wagon races, rope tricks, sharp shooting, horse-riding stunts, knife-throwing demonstrations, and bullwhip tricks.

Boomtown gained two additions. The Dentzel carousel received a marker from the Texas Historical Commission. This honor, however, paled in comparison to the grand opening of the Runaway Mine Train.

Angus Wynne had asked Arrow Dynamics, formerly known as Arrow Development, to construct the ride. It accepted Wynne's offer and built the first mine train roller coaster in the world. Costing one million dollars, it was themed after the gold rushes of the nineteenth century.

Although it wasn't fully finished, the Runaway Mine Train officially opened on July 24, 1966. However, a steel plate between the second and third lifts broke around noon that day. An automatic device detected the flaw and froze all the trains. This shut-down occurred after only three carloads. The crew spent the entire afternoon removing passengers and finding the fault. Despite this setback, the Runaway Mine Train reopened the following day.

Construction continued on the roller coaster during the off-season. It mainly consisted of thematic additions, the most notable ones being a waterfall and a rock crusher. Designers also planned a burning bridge, but the idea proved impractical.

Workers built a red, wooden queue house that resembled an old mining facility. A pathway led to the front porch on the far right side. People climbed up a flight of stairs and back down the other side before walking through the entrance. Once inside, they navigated a

maze to the loading dock.

The ride had five trains, though only four were used at one time. Every train had five cars with three rows each. This allowed a maximum capacity of thirty passengers. Resembling mine cars, they were painted red and yellow. Nylon wheels helped the cars move faster and smoother. For safety purposes, bumpers extended three feet from the front of each train.

Passengers slowly started the three-minute journey by going through a small, house-like structure. They then arrived at the first and highest lift. Afterward, the train made a series of dips, twists, and turns before making its way to the second lift. Moving upward, passengers traveled through a building that had a fully-functioning rock crusher. The train then traveled past a scene that featured two prospectors next to a lake. After going behind a waterfall, it descended rapidly through a tunnel to the final lift.

A hotel stood at the top. Originally nameless, it was later called the Ace Hotel in honor of a ride foreman. On the right side, a bartender stood at an empty counter while two men played cards. A madame leaned against the wall as a piano player performed a tune. On the left side, hotel guests warming themselves next to a furnace enjoyed the entertainment. A hallway with closed doors came into view as the train approached the final drop. It plummeted into a 150-foot tunnel beneath Caddo Lake. A small, wooden shed covered its exit.

During the first season, the park attached a video camera on the shed. People waiting in line could see the reactions of passengers as they emerged from the tunnel. The camera disappeared when the park closed, and the cover soon followed.

As the year came to an end, Six Flags experienced another record-breaking season. For the sixth time in a row, the park exceeded the previous year's attendance. The vast number of guests provided a gross record income of \$8,200,000 dollars. This created a positive outlook for the upcoming year.

CHAPTER THREE

GROWTH

The 1967 season started on April 29th. The new admission cost was \$3.95 for adults and \$2.95 for children under twelve.

Six Flags Over Texas had its first serious ride accident on May 27th. That evening, Robert Tucker was driving the Butterfield Overland Stagecoach when the right front wheel suddenly broke off. The driver tried to calm the horses, hoping to lessen the severity of the inevitable injuries. As the stagecoach overturned, its thirteen passengers fell off. Three people escaped unscathed and nine suffered minor injuries. A four-year-old girl named Brenda Patterson had her feet trapped underneath the stage cab. After she underwent extensive surgery, her family sued the park. Six Flags permanently closed the ride and placed the Ghost Town Saloon along the railroad track.

Work on Six Flags Over Georgia had begun two years earlier. Wynne chose six of the fifteen flags that had flown above Georgia - America, France, Spain, Georgia, Great Britain, and the Confederacy. The twelve-million-dollar project had a total of 75 attractions, all themed in the same way as Six Flags Over Texas. It also had many of the same rides with small variations and different names. Expecting 1,500,000 visitors for the first year, Wynne hired 1,200 employees. Opening day arrived on June 7, 1967.

When Six Flags Over Georgia opened its gates for the season, the Great Southwest Corporation became the first company to operate two theme parks. Credit for inventing the chain park concept went to Angus Wynne.

On August 21st, Six Flags Over Texas celebrated the arrival of its ten millionth guest. The recipient of the red carpet treatment was Mary Lou Cost from Metairie, Louisiana. She received a golden pass, a paid trip to its sister park, five shares of GSC stock, and a week at the Greenhouse Beauty Spa.

Six Flags began its long-running relationship with the Muscular Dystrophy Association on November 5th. That day, the park invited patients for a free visit as part of Muscular Dystrophy Awareness Month.

Expansion plans for the 1967 season included two new rides.

Chance Industries built the Spindletop west of Skull Island's swamp trees. The circular gray structure had a ramp on the right which spiraled to the top. In the beginning, the upper part of an oil drill extended from a roof above the ride. However, the park later removed it as part of a remodeling effort.

Classified a rotor ride, the Spindletop traced its origins to 1949. German engineer Ernst Hoffmeister first introduced it at the annual Oktoberfest. In the Six Flags version, riders entered a big drum and stood against the circular wall. The operator pressed a button to start the barrel spinning. When the speed the floor dropped, the riders found themselves stuck on the wall. The barrel eventually slowed down and the floor lifted to its original level. The visitors exited through a door and walked down the ramp on the Spindletop's left side.

In Modern America, the park added the Jet Set. Designed by a Swiss company called INTAMIN, the attraction had twelve bottle-shaped planes colored red, white, or blue. Each one had a T-shaped tail, a big engine booster, and two small thrusters. A fifteen-foot steel girder ran through the jet's middle section behind the passenger seat. Riders used a hydraulic control stick to climb, bank, and dive. When time ran out, the plane descended to the ground. The Jet Set was the first ride of its kind in the United States.

The Animal Kingdom received three baby tapirs from South America. It also obtained two sea lions, three horned sheep, and a miniature goat. As always, the park bought another baby elephant to serve as the next Sis Flagg.

The Crazy Horse Saloon completely changed the format of its shows. During the day, the cast performed a standard routine every thirty minutes. The night shows featured members of a sorority dressed in white skirts, blue sneakers, and patch quilt shirts. Overall, the night performances resembled a Campus Revue musical.

The sixth Campus Revue was produced by David Blackburn and directed by Charles Meeker. Titled *The Numbers Game*, the plot centered around a match-making computer being used by the guys of Gilchrist University and the gals of Aloha University. The two deans

eventually fell in love and destroyed the computer.

The 1967 season came to a close on November 26th. Once again, attendance was higher than the previous year. For the first time, Six Flags surpassed the two million mark.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SURPRISE

After Penn Central received official recognition in 1968, Six Flags experienced its first major crime. On the afternoon of February 16th, a routine check of The Cave revealed the abduction of two Speelunkers. Officials valued them at \$500 each. The park notified the police, but the culprits were never found. This unwelcome news evaporated when the Texas Tourist Agency ranked the park as the state's most popular attraction.

Six Flags planned its longest season yet. It would start on April 13th and end on December 1st. The park also increased its admission. Visitors now paid \$4.50 for adults and \$3.50 for children under twelve.

The park experienced its first related death on August 8th. John Raymond Nelson, a high school senior from Fort Worth, was operating El Sombrero that night. Approaching the ride before it stopped, he lost his balance and fell into the pit beneath it. An ambulance took him to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Six Flags invested \$2,000,000 for expansion and remodeling. Workers installed bridges, walkways, a new lighting system, and 350 tons of air-conditioning equipment. After constructing a music hall and puppet theater, they remodeled one ride and enlarged another. Through this process, Six Flags experienced an invasion of sorts.

Born in 1929, Sid Krofft performed puppetry for the Ringling Bros. Circus. Afterward, he toured around the nation performing a one-man show. Sid later employed his brother Marty to handle the finances. They started a permanent show at a California restaurant in 1960.

Their big break came two years later at the Seattle World's Fair. The brothers presented an adults-only puppet show featuring topless showgirls and famous celebrities. Its economic success led to another production at the 1964 World's Fair. After watching the show, Angus Wynne asked them if they would be interested in establishing a theater at Six Flags. Four years later, the two brothers held their first production inside a theater designed by Sid Krofft. It was located southeast of the Happy Motoring Freeway.

The theater's exterior represented various nations and time periods. Inside, an air-conditioned auditorium seated 1,200 people. The first puppet show was called *The Circus*. Divided into six acts, the program featured an all-star cast that included Philip Sousa, Lucille Ball, Liberace, Jackie Gleason, Mae West, Tarzan, Batman, Superman, and King Kong. They were accompanied by can-can girls, troublesome animals, aerial acrobats, circus performers, dancing fountains, and fireworks. This show inspired executives to allow the Krofft brothers to enter the world of television.

In addition to their puppet show, the Kroffts remodeled the Ferrocarril Fiesta Train. The process took three months to complete. Workers painted all the train cars the same color, then replaced the large sombreros with wavy, plastic covers. After adding engines that resembled Mayan dragons, the park replaced all the animations with new ones. Some of the old features were installed along the Six Flags Railroad.

Across from the ride's boarding station, children danced to its theme song. Once the passengers boarded, the train took them past a runaway bus driving in a circle. The train took a sharp right turn and entered a volcano that periodically erupted. Inside the volcano, passengers encountered singing lava rocks. The train exited the other side and traveled through the ruins of a Mayan temple. Farther down, the lake was filled with new boats and figures. The passengers then went through a town plaza in the middle of a gun battle. For the grand finale, a circus troupe performed a variety of acts.

In Spain, the Log Ride opened a second flume in response to the ride's popularity. The new track covered the same distance but ran along a thinly forested area. The other noticeable difference was a brown tunnel at the end of the final lift. Both Log Ride tracks featured new characters created by the Krofft brothers. At the original flume's first lift, a villain in black sawed a log that threatened to fall upon the riders. The first lift of the new flume had a lumberjack who swung his axe above the passengers.

In the Confederacy, the Southern Palace replaced the Six Flags Amphitheater. The \$200,000 building held a maximum of 12,000 people. Those in attendance had to sit on concrete benches. Six Roman

columns supported a veranda over the wide porch. Between the two sets of double doors, a sign provided information about the current show.

The Southern Palace hosted the final season of the Campus Revue. David Blackburn worked with Michael Jenkins and Jack Kaplan to produce two shows under the Campus Revue logo. Performed four times a day, the first show was called *TV-BC*. It followed the premise that television existed in Ancient Rome. The second show played five times every evening under the title *Red, White, and Blue*. Instead of a storyline, it presented one musical number after another.

Meanwhile, the park removed Skull Island's suspension bridge and swamp trees. This was done to make room for an upcoming attraction. It also transferred the Sky Hook to Six Flags Over Georgia.

Six Flags tallied the attendance figures for 1968 once the park closed its gates. Despite the changes, the number of visitors dropped. Approximately, 1,700,000 people had entered the park, 300,000 less than the previous year. This ended the amazing six-year streak of beating the previous season's attendance.

The disappointing figures did not ruin Angus Wynne's optimism for his latest project. On July 16th, he had announced plans for a theme park in Eureka, Missouri. Wynne chose the location because of its influence on the Midwest. Called Six Flags Over Mid-America, its themed areas would be Spain, France, Great Britain, America, Missouri, and Illinois. The Great Southwest Corporation planned to open the \$22,000,000 park in early 1971.

PART SIX

END OF AN ERA

1969 - 1970

CHAPTER ONE
SEEDS OF DOOM

The year of 1969 started badly. On February 15th, in the middle of remodeling, all 56 carpenters refused to renew their contracts. Park management presented a new offer which was immediately rejected. Six Flags sent all the carpenters home after two days of fruitless negotiations. When the delay started taking its toll, the executives formed an acceptable contract on the last day of February.

That same month, Penn Central forced the Great Southwest Corporation into a merger with Macco Corp. The California-based company increased the GSC's net worth past \$100,000,000. However, this new wealth brought with it a management shakedown. Penn Central kicked Angus Wynne out of his presidency and appointed him to be the chief executive chairman. Wynne's only consolation was that he still had some power over Six Flags.

In April, Wynne created two limited partnerships. They would own the properties of the current theme parks. Jack Knox, the president of Summit Energy and Western Oil Fields, would run the partnership responsible for Six Flags Over Texas. After this was settled, Angus formed Six Flags Inc. to operate the parks. The new company would be owned by the Great Southwest Corporation.

On April 12th, Angus Wynne presided over the opening ceremony in the midst of stormy weather. A month later, Doris Conrady filed a lawsuit seeking \$55,000 after a Log Ride accident the previous June. According to Conrady, a collision between two logs caused her to fall as she was disembarking.

The Six Flags Jamboree became the park's first major discount promotion. During the last two weeks of September, anyone spending at least ten dollars at an Affiliated Food Store could purchase a ticket for only \$2.99. The ticket could be used during the rest of the season.

Expansion costs for the year reached \$1,400,000. The largest feature of this project was the Oil Derrick. The park wanted it ready for opening day, but a slide and two elevators failed to arrive on time. As a result, the tallest land-based oil derrick in the world didn't open until May 23rd.

INTAMIN built the steel structure using a lattice design made

popular by the Eiffel Tower. The Oil Derrick stood 300 feet high and had three observation decks. The first deck lay at the 50-foot mark, the second at 255 feet, and the last at 267 feet. Two elevators took guests to the platforms, where they could view distant landscapes with pay telescopes. In addition, they could ride down a twelve-lane slide from the tower's lowest level. Riders had to use a fiberglass pad for the trip.

A new, permanent bridge linked Skull Island to the Oil Derrick's left side. On the tower's right side, Six Flags introduced a new dolphin show featuring four dolphins instead of one. Concrete bleachers seated 1,000 people. Arriving from North Carolina, they were separated into two pairs. The members of each pair were named Dolly and Skipper. The dolphins performed the same stunts from the original show, except on a bigger scale.

Across from The Cave, Chevrolet built the Cinesphere, an early version of the IMAX theater. The company displayed its latest car models below a canopy next to the theater. Because of its sponsor, the Cinesphere was called the Chevy Show. It presented a twenty-minute film projected onto a 180-degree screen. The film featured first-person footage of a roller coaster ride, a trip down a ski slope, a flight through a canyon, a ride down a raging river, a frantic ride down a mountain road, and a mad dash through city streets. The show ended with a closeup of a license plate after nearly colliding into another car.

In response to public demand for a roller coaster designed for kids, Six Flags hired Arrow Dynamics to build the Mini Mine Train. The new coaster opened on the August 1st next to its bigger brother. Although it had only one train, the ride still loaded quickly because the trip lasted ninety seconds. Despite the low thrill factor, the Mini Mine Train instant became an hit with grown-ups and children alike.

CHAPTER TWO

COLLAPSE

For its 1970 season, Six Flags made few changes. The park built a tourist information center in Boomtown. The building displayed photos of the state's landscapes on its inside walls. An employee standing at a booth provided pamphlets, maps, and advice. The main feature of the attraction was a scale model of the park.

Cost Systems Engineers, Inc. constructed the miniature set for \$20,000. Taking 14 months to complete the project, the workers used photos, measurements, and blueprints for references. The model included every attraction and building, each one operating like its life-sized counterpart. Although the information center received publicity when it opened, it got very little attention from visitors.

The park remodeled the Texas Arena and renamed it the Texas Pavilion. It then replaced the Wild West Show with a performance called Los Voladores. The show centered around an ancient ceremony performed in Central America. Four Indians dressed in bird costumes climbed a 150-foot pole. The chief followed them when they reached a small platform at the top. The Indians tied their ankles to ropes as they waited for the chief to start playing the flute and drum. When the music started, the four men jumped off the platform and spiraled to the ground. This spectacular feat was performed five times a day.

Meanwhile, Penn Central was facing a crisis. The trouble had started after New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroad failed to fully integrate. This was caused by incompatible computer systems, disagreement on a common business culture, and different labor contracts with the unions. Penn Central also faced constant shipping delays caused by the poor condition of its railroad tracks. This resulted in the increase of operational costs and the decrease of its customer base.

Penn Central ignored the problems and acquired companies outside the railroad industry to recover its losses. However, the vast majority of the companies failed miserably, driving the company into further debt. In addition, the company practiced a destructive reliance on large bank loans. Corporate officials made things worse by draining the accounts of the subsidiaries. While this was going on, management deceived its investors into thinking that the company was still successful.

Eventually, the economic strain proved too strong. Penn Central filed for bankruptcy on June 21, 1970. This placed the Great Southwest Corporation in mortal danger. Losing most of its liquidity, the GSC started selling its properties. First on the table was the Waggoner 3-D Ranch, followed by 451 acres of the Great Southwest Industrial District. The local press caught wind of the proceedings and hounded the GSC about the future of Six Flags. Luckily, the park was owned by a limited partnership and not the corporation.

Wanting to end the GSC's financial crisis, Penn Central appointed Victor Palmieri to be the new president. Palmieri was a California lawyer, real estate financier, and corporate reorganization specialist. He immediately formed a recovery program that included borrowing \$11,000,000. He secured a loan from a New York bank on the condition that he fire the entire GSC management. Because Angus Wynne was the original founder, Palmieri offered him a chairman position after removing him from power. Wynne refused the offer and announced that he would leave the Great Southwest Corporation forever.

PART SEVEN

THE PENNSYLVANIA ERA

1971 - 1980

CHAPTER ONE
RECOVERY

Penn Central survived its bankruptcy, thanks to a government bailout. During this time, Penn Central acquired Six Flags, Inc. This allowed the corporation to control the two existing parks.

On April 3rd, Six Flags Over Texas opened its gates. Guests visiting the park encountered another price change. Adults now paid \$5.75 while children under twelve spent \$4.00. Kids under the age of three entered for free.

Sid and Marty Krofft created a puppet show called *Kaleidoscope* for the HemisFair '68. Luther, the main star, became the symbol of the fair. The character's popularity prompted the Krofft brothers to change his name to H. R. Pufnstuf. Afterward, they made a TV series about him that focused on his efforts to help a boy escape from a magical island. The NBC production proved so successful, the Kroffts created a new puppet show for Six Flags, basing it on the series. Presented at the Krofft Puppet Theater, the thirty-minute program featured 86 characters, including the entire cast of the TV show.

The biggest change to the park was the addition of a roller coaster. Named in honor of Big Bend National Park, the ride was classified as a Speedracer by its designer Anton Schwarzkopf. Anton began his career working for his German father, who made caravans and circus trailers. In 1954, Schwarzkopf Industries changed its focus to performing amusement ride alterations. Anton took over his father's business in 1960. Four years later, he built his first steel coaster. He continued making rides, quickly developing a strong reputation for building innovative attractions.

Schwarzkopf built Big Bend in the Modern America section at a cost of \$500,000. The most prominent features of the ride were the two spiral lifts. In order to climb them, each car had an electric motor installed.

Six Flags Over Mid-America opened for its first season on June 5th. It became the third theme park of the Six Flags chain. It would be the last one built by the company.

On August 5th, Six Flags Over Texas celebrated its tenth anniversary. The climax of the celebration came with the cake ceremony.

The park was presented ten cakes, each one representing a year of its existence. The honor of cutting the cakes went to five married couples who had met while working at Six Flags during the first season.

The park hosted a concert fest at the Texas Pavilion from November 25th to November 28th. The Raiders performed on Thursday, followed by Helen Reddy and Dawn on Friday. Two other bands played during the Thanksgiving weekend. This was the first time that Six Flags booked well-known entertainers for an event.

In preparation for the 1972 season, Six Flags placed Ted Friesen in charge of remodeling the park. Workers resurfaced the streets, repainted the buildings, and added more greenery. Talking trashcans and water fountains replaced the ordinary ones.

The largest aesthetic change occurred in the Star Mall. At a cost of \$25,000, the park placed a ball-shaped fountain in the central pool. A computer-controlled lighting system was used to periodically change the fountain's color.

The only new attraction awaiting visitors was the Rugged Buggies. Located in the Animal Kingdom, the ride only catered to small children.

With the success of the previous year's Thanksgiving event, Six Flags decided to book famous entertainers to perform weekend concerts. The Texas Pavilion hosted performances by Johnny Rivers, Mac Davis, Jerry Reed, Charlie Pride, Jody Miller, and the Doobie Brothers.

Six Flags began its season on March 25th, the earliest the park had ever opened. Mrs. Don Schoch from El Paso became the park's 20 millionth visitor on November 18th. When park closed, Six Flags removed Boomtown Depot as part of an expansion project.

In 1973, Six Flags Over Texas opened on March 24th. Ticket prices rose to \$5.95 for adults and \$4.95 for children. People visiting the park encountered a brand-new section.

Representing a small town at the turn of the century, Good Times Square covered five acres and contained several attractions.

The Good Times Square Depot replaced the old Boomtown station. Doc Snooker's Magnificent Main Street consisted of sixteen carnival games. To increase that number, the park expanded the area over time.

Doc Snooker's Infernal Bumping Machines had 50 vehicles. Every car had a round bumper to decrease the force of collisions. A pole in the car's back led to the ceiling's wire grid, which carried electricity to be converted into kinetic energy.

In 1921, Max and Harold Stoehrer created the first bumper car model. Called the Dodgem Car, its engine was placed underneath the seat. Drivers found the vehicle difficult to maneuver because it relied upon rear steering. Joseph and Robert Lusse started experimenting with the design seven years later. This resulted in the development of a new model called the Lusse Auto-Skooter. In addition to an engine in the front, it was built so passengers could steer in any direction. After World War II, the cars were upgraded with headlights, air-filled bumpers, and safety harnesses.

Crazy Legs was an octopus ride designed by Lee Eyerly. During the Great Depression, he had devised a pilot training machine that he called the Orientator. Eyerly tried to sell it to the military but failed miserably. He then introduced it to fairs and amusement parks with great success. An instant hit during the 1950s, the Orientator became one of the most common rides in amusement parks. After its success, Eyerly made other rides, including the octopus model. Crazy Legs had six black arms and a central column which looked like a one-eyed monster. The cars spun around as the column rotated and moved the arms. Later on, the park removed the monster facade.

In addition to the rides, Six Flags displayed a miniature circus populated by 6,000 tiny figures. It was built by P. K. Schmitter, a technical illustrator from Irving.

A small theater was constructed next to the Krofft puppet show. It hosted a program centered upon an animatronic of Will Rogers. Unfortunately, the show received little publicity and never became popular. The Texas Pavilion continued its role of hosting weekend concerts. With a few exceptions, the entertainers performed country music.

Six Flags held its first recycling promotion in May. For bringing an empty Dr. Pepper six-pack, visitors would get a discount. Children would get two dollars off admission and adults would get three dollars off. However, the discount would only be valid during the evenings of May 4th and May 5th.

The park suffered its first robbery on June 9th. An armed man approached a cashier carrying money from the ticket booth area. The robber placed his gun in the cashier's face and ordered him to hand over the bag. The culprit was never found.

On Labor Day, Six Flags held its first local telethon for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Hosted at the Southern Palace, it became an annual tradition.

Six Flags staged its first Halloween celebration on October 22nd. The Southern Palace showed a movie called *The Mummy's Ghost* throughout the day. At the same time, the Chevy Show Theater played *The Illustrated History of Horror Films*. In addition, visitors enjoyed a 30-minute parade of monsters in the evening.

CHAPTER TWO

A STEADY COURSE

Seven Seas was the brainchild of Arlington mayor Tommy Joe Vandergriff. He originally envisioned a large oceanarium, but the concept was changed to a marine park. The Great Southwest Corporation agreed to build, lease, and operate Seven Seas. However, Penn Central's sudden bankruptcy unraveled the agreement. The Arlington City Council then created a non-profit organization to finish construction and operate the park.

Seven Seas finally opened on March 18, 1972. Guests entered the theme park through a cave with a seafood restaurant. The park was divided into seven sections - Arctic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea, Caribbean Sea, Indian Ocean, Sea of Cortez, Sea of Japan, and South Sea. It had a total of 26 attractions, including a pirate ship, a dolphin show, a killer whale show, a flume ride, an underwater theater, a pearl diving team, and a donut-shaped aquarium.

Despite all Seven Seas had to offer, the park didn't perform well during the first two years. Vandergriff hoped to change this by placing Seven Seas into the hands of someone familiar with the amusement park industry.

On January 29, 1974, the Arlington City Council approved a lease agreement with Six Flags, Inc. The contract allowed the company to operate Seven Seas for four years. It would receive \$350,000 or 35 percent of the net profits. The city of Arlington would get \$700,000 or 65 percent of the net profits. As a result of the agreement, Seven Seas became an unofficial park of the Six Flags chain.

Six Flags Over Texas started the 1974 season on March 23rd. Opening on May 31st, the Music Mill replaced the Texas Pavilion as the site for special concerts. The first one was performed by Kris Kristofferson. Other entertainers who made appearances included Chuck Berry, Waylon Jennings, Rich Little, and Hank Williams, Jr. When the park closed, the Lil' Dixie Carousel was removed.

On June 7th, Six Flags received a phone call claiming there was a bomb in the Confederacy section. The person made another call to suggest there was another in Modern America. Employees evacuated 4,200 guests from the park, then the search began. After the unarmed bombs were found, the mysterious caller contacted the park a

third time. He revealed that there was another bomb in the park and demanded \$350,000 for information on its location. However, he failed to set up a meeting for the payoff. Law enforcement officials spent the entire evening looking for the bomb, but they never found it.

The extortionist called again on June 27th. He told maintenance supervisor Ray Grable to bring him \$350,000 or he would detonate a bomb. Six Flags officials notified the police and the FBI. Grable then went on a wild goose chase from one location to the next. Police arrested the extortionist as he was directing Grable to a Fort Worth dump. The culprit ended up being a former Dallas cop named Raymond Kossa.

On October 1st, the Arlington City Council voted to close the gates of Seven Seas forever. The park had been a large money, creating a debt of \$34,000,000. After the council nullified its contract with Six Flags, Inc., it offered to lease the land to the park for expansion purposes. This offer was flatly refused.

In 1975, Six Flags opened its gates on March 15th. The park raised ticket prices to \$7.00 for adults and \$6.00 for children.

Dallas magician Paul Osborne created the character of Cyrus Cosmo for the park. According to the backstory, Cosmo was an inventor whose research and experiments at Six Flags led to the park's new attractions. The costumed character became the first original mascot. At the Music Mill, he performed illusions that supposedly resulted from his inventions. Cyrus Cosmo also had his own nighttime electric parade. It featured floats covered with bulbs and people wearing lit-up suits.

In Good Times Square, Six Flags added a new attraction called the Rotoriculous. Built by Wisdom Rides, it was a Himalaya model based on the Caterpillar ride. The Rotoriculous had 22 cars which moved forwards and backwards on a multi-sloped track.

The park housed the ride inside an octagonal building. While waiting in line, guests listened to silly announcements and off-tempo ballet music. At the beginning, when the cars rolled slowly forward, Cyrus Cosmo talked about the invention and what it did. When he fin-

ished his speech, the invention malfunctioned. The lights turned off and the cars started moving backward, going faster and faster as time progressed. Colorful, weird images were projected all around the room, accompanied by flashing lights bouncing off a disco ball. To complete the experience, loud music and sound effects filled the building. Later renamed Roto Disco after the dance craze, the ride became an instant hit.

The Cyrus Cosmo Flying Machines took the place of the Confederacy's Lil' Dixie Carousel. Designed after Lee Eyerly's Orientator, it featured small, antique biplanes. For this reason, visitors called it the Red Baron Ride.

The Fun Guns of Dry Gulch replaced the Will Rogers Show. It was a one-man comedy act about a gun collection. Each pistol had a special feature to carry out an objective. The host displayed each gun and told its humorous backstory.

At the end of the season, park officials removed the Fun Guns of Dry Gulch. They then eliminated the puppet show produced by the Kroffts. Instead of tearing down the theater, they remodeled the building and renamed it Good Times Square Theater.

On May 20th, Six Flags, Inc. bought Astroworld through a twenty-year lease. Former Houston mayor Roy Hofheinz conceived the idea of Astroworld as a complement to the Astrodome. Designed by Randal Duell, the park consisted of eight themed areas - Americana Square, Alpine Valley, Children's World, European Village, Modville, Plaza de Fiesta, Oriental Corner, and Western Junction. The Astrodomain Corporation had owned the park since its opening day on June 1, 1968. Seven years later, financial difficulties forced the company to lease the park to Six Flags, Inc.

Six Flags Over Texas opened for its new season on March 20th. For the first time, it introduced season passes. Those who wanted one had to pay \$25.

The park also introduced the Texas Chute-Out. It was based upon a ride designed and built by Naval officer James H. Strong. Wanting to build a safer practice tower for parachuting, he began

working on a design. In 1936, Strong obtained a patent, then spent the next two years testing it at his home. The prototype had eight wires around the parachute and a harness for the rider. It also allowed free fall time before the parachute opened. After selling these new models to the American and Romanian military, James Strong designed a new model for amusement parks. The changes included a seat for two, a larger parachute for a slower drop, a metal ring to keep the parachute open, and springs for a softer landing. Its success at a local park inspired him to build a model for the 1939 World's Fair. Sponsored by Life Savers, the ride had eleven parachutes attached to a 250-foot tower. After the fair ended, the ride was sold to a park on Coney Island.

INTAMIN modeled the Texas Chute Out on Strong's design. Opening at Good Times Square, the Chute-Out was 200-feet high and had twelve parachutes. The parachutes rose 175 feet, free-fell for 35 feet, then floated down to the ground. For maintenance purposes, an elevator stood inside the central tower.

On August 5th, Six Flags celebrated its 15th anniversary. When the park closed, officials removed the Oil Derrick's Tower Slide because the attraction was causing too many injuries. They also eliminated the Skull Island Rafts.

For the 1977 season, Six Flags added two attractions. The first one was a ride called the Spinnaker. Anton Schwatzkopf designed the attraction and classified it as an Enterprise ride. Up to two people sat in each of its sixteen gondolas. The ride moved clockwise as an arm rose and tilted the frame. The centrifugal force kept passengers in their seats and eliminated the need for safety restraints.

The second new attraction was a puppet show located at Skull Island. John Hardman, the man behind Argyle the Snake, produced the show. It was called Captain LaFeet's Flagship Follies. Entirely pre-recorded, Flagship Follies took place aboard a ship located north of Skull Rock. It started with an announcement that the crew needed to get ready for the captain's arrival. The crew members consisted of three mops, two skeletons, two pirates, four crows, three mice, and a cow. In the next sequence, Captain LaFeet arrived at the ship. He wore an over-sized hat and sported a big nose, a black beard, and two

enormous feet. After a song-and-dance routine, he instructed his crew to prepare for battle. Chaos ensued during the fight until a white flag was raised from the deck. The show ended with the four puppeteers waving to the audience.

On July 1st, Katie Pittman from Rowlett, Texas became the park's 30 millionth visitor. This happy event was marred by a robbery during the late afternoon. A man with a pistol approached the front gate booth and ordered the cashier to bag all the money. Once again, the criminal was never caught.

More bad news arrived on October 22nd. A ten-year-old girl fell off the Missile Chaser as the cars began to revolve. The operator immediately stopped the ride, and the girl was taken to a hospital for head injuries. As a result of the accident, the park removed the Missile Chaser.

CHAPTER THREE
THE FINAL YEARS

In 1978, Six Flags Over Texas raised its adult ticket price to \$8.50. Visitors who entered the park on April 22nd encountered a new roller coaster called the Shockwave. Designed by Anton Schwarzkopf, it was the first coaster to feature consecutive loops. Although officials proclaimed it to be the tallest coaster in the world, the Shockwave lost the title to the Loch Ness Monster at Busch Gardens. When the Shockwave first opened, it was colored white. Over the years, workers repainted it dark blue, light blue, silver, and green.

The wild success of the Shockwave overshadowed the installation of an attraction east of the Dolphin Show. Called Rock Island Disco, the outdoor dance floor allowed the park to take advantage of the Disco craze. Surrounded by wooden fencing, the concrete floor was illuminated by colored wash lights on poles. A semi-enclosed sound booth for the DJ stood in a far corner. The Rock Island Disco opened at dusk and closed late at night.

At the end of the year, Six Flags removed the Fiesta Train, leaving a large, empty area in the Mexico section. Park officials also removed Skull Rock and its slide from Skull Island. All that remained was a barrel bridge and puppet show. The once great attraction had become an empty shell.

The Magic Mountain theme park was built in Valencia, California to attract settlers and businesses to the new town. The Newhall Land and Farming Company financed the park's construction. Magic Mountain opened on May 29, 1971. Because it made little profit over the years, the owner decided to sell it. On May 1, 1979, Six Flags, Inc. bought Magic Mountain for \$51,000,000.

For its 1979 season, Six Flags added two attractions and remodeled another. The park built the Sensational Sense Machine in the area once occupied by the Missile Chaser. A precursor to the simulator ride, the Sense Machine was a metal box on hydraulic stilts. A structure in front acted as a facade to conceal the exterior. In the back, a little shed housed the computers and a projection room.

The Sense Machine projected a film of various park rides, starting with the Screamin' Eagle roller coaster. As the film played, the metal box moved accordingly to simulate what was on the screen.

Unfortunately, the ride had a habit of breaking down. The situation got so bad, the workers finally gave up and removed the hydraulics. This effectively killed the ride's purpose.

In Mexico, Six Flags provided a new show called The People Mover Machine. Taking place in a tiny theater, the program featured a combination of music, magic, and audience participation. Its excessive air-conditioning provided relief from the hot Texas sun.

Near the People Mover Machine, park officials remodeled Casa Magnetica and renamed it The Lost Temple of the Chisos. They closed the original entrance, then opened a new one next to the exit of the Log Ride's second flume. After walking through a stone head, visitors walked past stone walls and Mayan ruins. The courtyard of Casa Magnetica had a sarcophagus containing a mummy. When the host pressed a poorly-concealed button, the sarcophagus opened and the mummy rose. Because the mechanical arm pushing the mummy could be seen, employees added a Dracula cape.

Casa Magnetica was designed to look like a temple. Inside it, guests saw many of the same illusions, which were given new names or a new look. A counter became an altar, and a dinner table was called an ancient pinball machine. The temple also had two extra features. In the first room, a jug that was suspended from the ceiling had the ability to endlessly pour water. Unfortunately, the water poured at an angle instead of straight down, which ruined the illusion for many. A large Aztec statue named El Bobo stood in a corner of the second room. Whenever the host placed a florescent tube near the statue's navel, the tube began to glow. Most of the time, however, the mechanism in the navel didn't work. The job of explaining the temple and its illusions didn't go to the host. Instead, a prerecorded spiel played through speakers.

The Lost Temple of the Chisos provoked a severe backlash. The negativity got so bad, park officials decided to restore Casa Magnetica at the end of the season.

As a result of continued mechanical problems and several minor injuries, the park removed Big Bend. Also receiving the axe was Rock Island Disco.

The 1980 season brought the introduction of Judge Roy Scream, the park's first wooden roller coaster. Named after the notorious justice of the peace, the ride was located outside the park. Visitors could only access it by walking through a long tunnel, then hiking up a concrete path.

The roller coaster was designed by William Cobb. His original career involved structural designing. He then shifted his attention to the amusement park industry. After assisting in the construction of the Great American Scream Machine, Cobb started designing coasters. His achievements included the Tornado, the Texas Cyclone, the Screaming Eagle, and Rolling Thunder.

Thanks to the removal of Rock Island Disco and its surroundings, Six Flags had enough room to host its first-ever fireworks show. The grand spectacle lasted for two years.

At the end of the season, Six Flags got rid of the Happy Motorway's original track, Good Times Square's miniature circus, and the Crazy Legs ride. The park's biggest loss, however, was the Astrolift.

The decision to eliminate the Astrolift began two years earlier. A gondola accident in California resulted in four deaths. Another accident occurred three months later at Six Flags Over Mid-America. One of the support arms of the ride snapped, resulting in three deaths and one injury. In October 1979, high winds at the State Fair of Texas slammed four gondolas into each other. Two of them fell to the ground, killing one person and injuring sixteen others. This sequence of events led to the removal of the Astrolift.

PART EIGHT

THE BALLY ERA

1981 - 1986

CHAPTER ONE
THE INVASION

In 1981, Six Flags added El Conquistador to the Mexico section. It was classified as a pirate ship ride. Charles Albert Marshall invented the first one and called it the Ocean Wave. He introduced the ride at the Marshall Bros Circus in 1897. The pirate ship eventually became one of the most common amusement park rides in America.

Raymond Moloney founded the Bally Manufacturing Corporation as a subsidiary of Lion Manufacturing. It was established to manufacture pinball games. The company got its name from the first game it made, which was called Ballyhoo. Based in Chicago, it quickly became one of the best pinball makers.

Bally started making slot machines and other gambling devices during the 1930s. After producing ammunition and plane parts during World War II, it designed and manufactured vending machines. Bally became the world's largest slot machine maker by the late 1960s. In 1969, it acquired an arcade game company called Midway Manufacturing. A boom in the video game industry during the 1970s allowed Midway to become the main source of income. Wanting to expand into other areas, Bally started purchasing other companies.

Because Penn Central had suffered financial losses from competition with the trucking industry, it decided to sell Six Flags, Inc. Bally Manufacturing bought it for \$140,000,000 on September 28, 1981. After the acquisition, Six Flags, Inc. had its name changed to Six Flags Corp. As a result of this takeover, the Arlington theme park had a new master.

When Six Flags opened its gates for the 1982 season, it had a new attraction in Boomtown. Designed by INTAMIN, the L-shaped Texas Cliffhanger became the world's first free-fall ride. Each car seated a maximum of four passengers. The carrier latched onto an elevator shaft, ascended 90 feet, moved forward, then plummeted 86 feet. When the car reached the bottom, passengers found themselves laying on their back. The carrier then uprighted itself and moved backwards toward the loading platform.

After 21 years of service, La Salle's Riverboat Adventure launched its final voyage on August 15th. With the ride gone, Fort St.

Louis was the only attraction keeping the France section alive. The park took away the last remnants of Skull Island then demolished the Petting Zoo. With the zoo's absence, the Animal Kingdom ceased to exist. In addition to the carnage, workers moved the Spindletop to replace the Texas Astrolift Station.

The 1983 season was a busy one for Six Flags Over Texas. The Roaring Rapids took the spot of Skull Island and La Salle's Riverboat Adventure. The ride was conceived by Bill Crandall, the manager of AstroWorld. His inspiration came from a man-made river used for a kayak competition. To make his dream a reality, Crandall enlisted the services of INTAMIN. Thunder Mountain opened at AstroWorld in 1980 as the first water rafting ride. It became so successful, INTAMIN was hired to build another one for Six Flags Over Texas.

The Roaring Rapids featured three lakes and four stretches of river. The white rafts, later painted yellow, each held a maximum of twelve people. As the rafts floated down the river, metal braces, water sprays, and currents forced them to rotate or move forward.

Pac-Man Land took the place of the Petting Zoo. It was a children's area themed after the arcade game. Pac-Man was first released in Japan on May 22, 1980. Namco developed the game and gave the American distribution license to Midway. After Midway introduced it to the public, the game quickly became a pop culture phenomenon.

Six Flags provided Pac-Man Land with a Red Baron ride, a small ferris wheel, and costumed characters from the video game. The main attraction, however, was a playground innovation called a playport. Designed by Jack Pentecost, it was made out of safe materials like foam and vinyl. The main features included rope netting, lightweight punching bags, a bouncing pad, and a sea of plastic balls.

Taking further advantage of the video game's popularity, Six Flags replaced the People Mover Machine with a Pac-Man show. It featured a combination of magic and puppetry.

In Good Times Square, the Texas Tornado took the place of Crazy Legs. Classified as a Yo-Yo model, it was a variation of the the Chair-O-Plane. The first Chair-O-Plane appeared at amusement parks

around 1908. It featured suspended swings attached to a rotating carousel top. As the speed increased, centrifugal force caused them to move outwards. Designed by Chance Morgan, the Texas Tornado didn't have its swings placed underneath a ceiling. Instead, they were attached to metal arms and arranged in a complete circle.

When the park closed its gates, the Dolphin Show and the Cad-do War Canoes came to an end.

CHAPTER TWO
ADAPTION

The 1984 season brought with it two new attractions. The U. S. High Diving Show acted as replacement for the Dolphin Show. It featured comedy sketches, trick dives, clown acts, and a series of amazing high dives. The Great Air Racer stood to the building's right. Designed and built by INTAMIN, it carried sixty passengers in twelve airplanes. The ride operated on the same principal as the Texas Tornado.

In March, Six Flags held a week-long event called Spring Breakout. It offered outdoor attractions, events, games, and concert performances. The success of Spring Breakout turned it into an annual tradition.

Located in Gurnee, Illinois, Marriott's Great America first opened on May 29, 1976. It originally consisted of six areas - Carousel Plaza, Hometown Square, County Fair, Yankee Harbor, Yukon Territory, and Orleans Place. Its owner decided to sell the park because it failed to meet financial expectations. On April 26, 1984, Bally Manufacturing purchased it for \$144,000,000. When the corporation took over, the park's name was changed to Six Flags Great America.

As the year came to a close, Bally removed Pac-Man Land because the arcade craze had ended. To fill the void of Pac-Man, Bally Manufacturing embraced another popular franchise.

When Six Flags opened for the 1985 season, it raised the price of admission. Adults paid \$14.95 and children spent \$7.95.

Those who entered the park could explore a new section called Looney Tunes Land. Thanks to a licensing contract with Time Warner, Mel Blanc's characters took the place of the video game icon. Children could now meet and interact with Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, and the rest of the Looney Tunes gang. In addition to re-themed attractions, kids could enjoy new rides such as the Daffy Duck Boats.

In addition to Looney Tunes Land, visitors witnessed the return of the Six Flags Marching Band. It consisted of trumpets, trombones, a saxophone, a tuba, and a big drum. The members wore a different costume than the previous band. The players donned long-

sleeved blue coats, black pants, black shoes, and a black cap. By contrast, the conductor wore a long-sleeved white coat, white pants, white shoes, and a white cap. Throughout the day, they performed concerts throughout the park.

John Tower from Tyler, Texas became the park's 50 millionth visitor. At the end of the regular season, the Merry-Go-Round carousel was transferred to a building for restoration.

Six Flags re-opened for its first Christmas festival on November 29th. Lasting until December 31st, Holiday in the Park would cost \$4.50 per person.

For Holiday in the Park, workers decorated Six Flags with two miles of garland, 600 Christmas trees, and more than 350,000 lights. Electricians placed a shining star on the Oil Derrick and transformed the Texas Chute Out into a Christmas Tree. Carolers, strolling bands, horse-drawn carriages, and nightly parades provided entertainment along the pathways. Live shows included *A Jolly Holiday* at the Southern Palace, *Country Christmas* at the Crazy Horse Saloon, and *The Bugs Bunny Merrie Holiday Revue* in Looney Tunes Land. Restaurants sold such treats as apple dumplings, roasted chestnuts, pumpkin, turkey, and pie. For thrills, visitors could ride sleds down an artificial snow hill.

With over 100,000 guests, Holiday in the Park was a tremendous success. This led to the decision to make the festival an annual tradition.

In 1986, the Mexico section had a new attraction. Designed by INTAMIN, the bobsled ride first operated at Magic Mountain. Originally called the Sarajevo Bobsleds, it was sent to the Arlington park through the newly-created Ride Rotation Program. Six Flags installed the attraction and called it the Avalanche Bobsled Ride. Later, workers repainted it to resemble a snake. The park then renamed it La Vibora.

The Music Mill underwent construction to expand its seating capacity to 10,000. Meanwhile, the Dolphin Show made a reappearance

Throughout the 1986 season, Six Flags celebrated its 25th anniversary through a series of discounts, promotions, and prize giveaways. During the big anniversary party on August 5th, management announced that the park had entertained an estimated 52 million guests. The Happy Motoring Freeway was permanently closed later that year.

PART NINE

**THE TURBULENT ERA
1987 - 1996**

CHAPTER ONE
WESRAY CAPITAL

Bally Manufacturing bought theme parks and health clubs in case the video game industry declined. The decision saved the corporation from ruin when the arcade craze crashed. Afterward, Bally wanted to fully enter the gambling business. It already owned the Park Place Hotel in Atlantic City and desired more. In 1986, it bought the MGM Grand hotels in Las Vegas and Reno for \$575,000,000. This acquisition gained the attention of Donald Trump, who wanted to expand his casino holdings.

Trump tried to stage a hostile takeover by purchasing a majority of its stock. Bally countered the attempt, relying on a New Jersey statute. According to the law, businesses couldn't own more than three casinos within the state. Trump already owned two in Atlantic City, so the acquisition of Bally would violate the law if the corporation could buy another casino. Winning the race against the clock, Bally purchased the Golden Nugget in Atlantic City for \$440,000,000. The hostile takeover was avoided. Donald Trump acknowledged defeat and sold his stock for \$69,000,000.

Although Bally won the battle, it came at a heavy cost. Obtaining the MGM Grand hotels put the corporation deeply in debt. With the purchase of the Golden Nugget Casino, the debt became unbearable. Bally decided to restructure itself and sell the theme park holdings.

On April 21, 1987, Six Flags Corp. was sold to the Wesray Capital for \$600,000,000. Based in Morristown, New Jersey, it was a private equity firm that specialized in leveraged buyouts. The strategy involved borrowing money to purchase a company, then using that company's assets to pay off the debt.

Under the new management of Wesray Capital, Six Flags opened its gates on March 14, 1987. Those who entered got to enjoy a new ride in the Modern America section.

Designed by INTAMIN, Splashwater Falls was a Shoot-the-Chutes ride. The earliest designs had a large boat sliding down a ramp into a lagoon. Once at the bottom, the boat was pulled back to the top by a cable. J. P. Newberg built the first Shoot-the Chutes in 1884. He introduced it at Watchtower Park in Rock Island, Illinois.

Splashwater Falls used boats capable of holding twenty passengers. After climbing five stories, they plummeted into the lake below. The impact created a wall of water that soaked both passengers and spectators.

For the 1988 season, admission prices rose again. Adults paid \$17.95 while Children spent \$11.95.

After a three year absence, the Merry-Go-Round carousel finally emerged when workers finished its restoration. Renamed the Silver Star Carousel, it was placed underneath a protective roof at the Star Mall. Six Flags replaced the Dolphin Show with another program. This time, a Western stunt show took center stage.

From October 28th to October 31st, the park hosted the precursor to its current Halloween festival. Called Fright Nights, the festival featured two haunted houses. Freddy Krueger escorted adults through a haunted hotel while cartoon characters guided children through the Scary Tales Haunted House. For musical entertainment, the Crazy Horse Saloon featured Hollywood monsters singing and dancing. A 70-foot replica of King Kong dangled from the Oil Derrick during the entire event. When Six Flags closed for the year, it removed the Roto Disco.

The 1989 season began on March 4th. Admission was \$20.50 for adults and \$14.00 for children. Those who entered the park encountered a remodeled section.

Good Times Square no longer resembled a small town around the turn of the century. Instead, it reflected the rock-n-roll era. The centerpiece of this change was a new ride called the Flashback. Vekoma Rides Manufacturing designed the ride and classified it as a boomerang coaster. The company was founded in 1926 by Hendrik op het Veld. It originally manufactured agricultural machinery and mining equipment. In 1967, it started building amusement park rides .

The Flashback carried 28 passengers in a seven-car train. It sent the passengers backward up a 125-foot hill. The train then sent them through three loops both forward and backward.

Six Flags moved the Texas Tornado to the previous spot of the

Silver Star Carousel. A second run of the Dolphin Show replaced the previous year's stunt spectacular. At the end of the year, the park tore down the Spindletop.

In 1990, Six Flags reduced its admission in an effort to increase revenue. Visitors paid \$19.95 for adults and \$9.95 for children. The park also introduced a two-day ticket, costing adults \$25.95 and children \$19.95.

Its visitors enjoyed a new wooden roller coaster called the Texas Giant. It was designed by Curtis Summers and built by the Dinn Corporation. Park officials claimed it was the tallest wooden coaster in the world. However, Dorney Park disagreed. It asserted that Hercules was the tallest. The park sued Six Flags for \$50,000 in damages in addition to an ad campaign to correct the false assertions. The presiding judge sided with Six Flags. Although Hercules had the biggest drop, the Texas Giant had the highest lift.

In April, Six Flags Corp. faced the possibility of filing for bankruptcy. The situation emerged from the inability to pay off debt created by the leveraged buyout. The company decided to sell 19.5 percent of its stock to Time Warner. There would also be an option for Warner to purchase up to 30.5 percent more stock.

The month of October brought the park's first Halloween festival using the Fright Fest name. The decorations, haunted houses, and entertainment were provided by a Dallas-based company called Vorta. The long-running Chevy Show closed at the end of the season.

Despite record attendance at its theme parks, Six Flags Corp. still couldn't generate enough revenue to pay off the loans. Facing the prospect of bankruptcy once again, officials decided to restructure their debt with the primary lender. The bank agreed to a deference of eighteen months in return for a higher interest rate, an accelerated repayment schedule, and a fee of one million dollars. This was an empty victory because the company still had to pay \$228,000,00 by the following summer.

In 1991, Six Flags expanded Looney Tunes Land with the addition of a miniature train, miniature trucks, a swing ride, and a large,

inflatable house. For the parents, the park provided a nursing and diapering facility. Looney Tunes Land also had an ice-skating show to celebrate Bugs Bunny's 50th birthday. The park celebrated its own birthday on August 5th, marking its 30th year of operation.

Two weeks later, Wesray Capital sold Six Flags Corp. because it couldn't handle the mounting debt. Three companies jointly paid \$700,000,000 for the corporation. A venture capital firm called the Blackstone Group acquired 35 percent of the ownership. Investment firm Wertheim Schroder & Company controlled 15 percent. The remaining 50 belonged to Time Warner. After taking possession, they renamed the company Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc.

CHAPTER TWO

WARNER TAKES CONTROL

Time Warner saw the Six Flags theme parks as an opportunity to merchandise characters and advertise movies. For Six Flags Over Texas, it increased the number of Looney Tunes characters and placed them throughout the park. It also used video monitors in ride queues to publicize film productions. As part of this promotional effort, Six Flags introduced two attractions for the 1992 season.

When Warner Brothers released *Batman* in 1989, the film became a blockbuster hit. Its success led to the making of a sequel called *Batman Returns*. In an effort to promote the upcoming movie, Time Warner established the Batman Stunt Show.

For the new attraction, the park demolished the Dolphin Show arena and built an amphitheater in its place. At a cost of \$3,000,000, the production became the biggest show in the park's history. It was produced by Peter Alexander, the designer of the Back to the Future ride at Universal Studios. Robert Keith of Live Action Productions directed the performances and coordinated the stunts.

Because the sequel hadn't been released, the program centered around the Joker and his henchmen. Gotham City Hall, Wayne Manor, and the Axis Chemical Company served as the three main sets. The highlight was an exact replica of the Batmobile. It was built in California by Chenoweth Racing Productions.

The Spee-Lunkers had entertained guests at The Cave for over 25 years. Unfortunately, Time Warner closed the ride and evicted its inhabitants. Officials explained that it was outdated and needed to be replaced with something more modern. Their answer was Yosemite Sam's Gold River Adventure.

Built by Arrow Dynamics for \$5,000,000, the attraction focused on the exploits of Bugs Bunny. Two boats attached to each other carried eight passengers along the water track. The ride started with Yosemite Sam robbing a gold vault guarded by Porky Pig. Afterward, Porky enlisted the help of the Texas Rangers led by Bugs Bunny. The remaining 22 scenes followed the pursuit to retrieve the stolen gold.

During the season, Time Warner launched Six Flags' first na-

tional advertising campaign. It made a deal with McDonald's to print ads on carry-out bags. In addition to the campaign, Warner allowed season pass holders to have access to all park locations.

For the first time, the Fright Fest celebration followed a common theme. It centered around the tale of a black-widow bride and her thirteen dead husbands. Three haunted houses covered different aspects of the tale. Ariana's 13 Rooms of Doom featured the accidental deaths of her husbands. Ariana's Graveyard of the Living Dead displayed the husbands' graves and other surprises. Hosted by the March of Dimes, Ariana Goes To London dealt with a trip she had made to London. In addition to the haunted houses, Fright Fest hosted a musical called *Ariana's Web* and a stunt show named *Ariana's Final Death Tests*.

The park made no changes for the 1993 season, but changes did occur behind the scenes. On September 17th, Time Warner struck a deal with the Blackstone Group and Wertheim Schroder & Company. It would pay them \$70,000,000 for the remaining stock of Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc. This agreement gave Warner complete control over the parks.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PARTNERSHIP

Admission for the 1994 season rose to \$26.95 for adults and \$20.95 for children. Instead of opening a new ride, the park provided five stage productions.

Good Times Square hosted the Hollywood Animal Action Show. Directed by Joel Slaven, it demonstrated how animals were trained for movies and television.

Musical entertainment was provided by the Southern Palace, the Crazy Horse Saloon, and the Music Mill. The Southern Palace staged a show called *Pure Country*. It used movie clips, music videos, and special lighting to mimic a live concert atmosphere. The Crazy Horse Saloon offered an old-fashioned saloon show called *Miss Lillie's Red Garter Revue*. Performed continuously throughout the day, it featured a variety of acts which were interrupted by outlaws and other colorful characters. The Music Mill presented the Warner Music Rock Revue. It featured popular songs, music videos, glitzy costumes, and a high-tech light show.

In the Texas section, Benros Worldwide Entertainment produced a stunt show to promote the movie *Wyatt Earp*. Called Gunfight After the O. K. Corral, it centered around a rooftop shootout between Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and the Clanton Gang.

For the 1995 season, Six Flags Over Texas placed a simulator ride between Splashwater Falls and the Texas Cliffhanger. Based on the Warner Bros. movie, *The Right Stuff* Mach One Adventure followed Chuck Yeagar's 1947 flight. It combined high-tech film with a computerized motion system.

The Right Stuff was housed in a six-story replica of a hangar. Visitors passed jeeps, fuel trucks, and a jet fighter plane while waiting in line. After going through the queue, they were strapped inside one of fifty available cockpits. Once they were filled, the four-minute simulation began.

Astronauts from the Mercury 7 attended the ride's grand opening ceremony. Afterward, they tested the ride themselves and gave a public assessment.

In Good Times Square, Six Flags installed its first up-charge

attraction. The Chameleon was a virtual reality ride created by Veda International. Veda got its start by manufacturing flight simulators for NASA and the U. S. Navy. However, the limited market and declining defense budget forced Veda to widen its scope.

The Chameleon functioned like an octopus ride. Its six arms each held a pod capable of moving in any direction. Inside the pod, two passengers worked together to play a virtual reality game on a large screen in the front. One person operated the vehicle while the other fired the gun. To keep the ride fresh, different games could be added throughout the season. The original one was a space adventure called Labyrinth Rangers. The players had to maneuver through tunnels, shooting down monsters, and collecting crystals. To board the two-minute ride, guests had to pay five dollars.

To promote Warner's second Batman sequel, Six Flags introduced the Batman Forever Laser and Fireworks Show. Taking place at the Oil Derrick, it was a twelve-minute program that featured laser beams, pyrotechnic effects, fireworks, and music. The plot focused on Batman and Robin trying to prevent the Riddler and Two-Face from destroying a power plant. Near the end of the season, the Spinnaker was removed.

While guests enjoyed themselves at the park, Six Flags underwent another management change. Time Warner wanted to eliminate part of its debt. One of the steps involved selling over half its Six Flags stock.

On April 13th, the corporation struck a deal with Boston Ventures, an investment firm founded by bankers with Hollywood connections. Its major investments included River City Broadcasting, Continental Cablevision, MCA, and the National Enquirer. According to the deal, Boston Ventures would own 51 percent of Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc. It would have to pay \$800,000,000 for the stock and \$200,000,000 for equity. This agreement allowed Time Warner to remove one billion dollars from its debt while still having some influence over the Six Flags parks.

Fiesta Texas was a San Antonio park owned by USSA Real Estate and Gaylord Entertainment. USSA came up with the idea when

the real estate market soured. The company wanted Fiesta Texas to be a park like Opryland USA. It believed that the focus on Southwestern music and culture would distinguish it from the competition. Lackluster revenue forced its owners to search for an investor. On January 10, 1996, Time Warner obtained management and operation rights..

Six Flags Over Texas created controversy when it opened for the 1996 season. The parking lot attendants handed visitors a flier informing them that all weapons were prohibited. In case the fliers were ignored, Six Flags posted signs throughout the parking lot. At the entrance, guests had to go through metal detectors. If one of them went off, the person had to empty all the pockets. This last measure started a large public uproar. When Six Flags started prohibiting police officers from carrying guns inside the park, a statewide boycott followed. Park officials eventually rescinded the ban, but the metal detectors remained.

The park added two attractions in 1996. Built inside a 65-foot-tall building, Runaway Mountain was classified as a windstorm roller coaster. Werner Stengel designed the coaster and Premiere Rides constructed it. The ride's storyline revolved around a mysterious mountain forced out of the ground by nature. According to legend, a pirate named Jean LaFitte had buried his treasure deep within its chambers. As people walked down the path to the mountain, they saw deserted riverboats, snapping alligators, abandoned camps, and a large waterfall. Once inside the mountain, the path became a mineshaft. Those waiting in line listened to background information delivered by a character called Gator McGee. After guests boarded the cars, the ride took them on a 90-second journey in complete darkness.

To enhance Runaway Mountain's theming, Six Flags remodeled Naler's Plantation House and renamed it Gator McGee's Mountain Grill. The park also changed the Runaway Mine Train's name to Mine Train. This was done to help prevent confusion between the two rides.

Six Flags opened Dive Bomber Alley near the Great Air Racer. Classified as a skycoaster, the ride handled up to three people at a time. They were strapped to a cable, raised 153 feet in the air, and dropped toward the earth. After the plummet, the passengers swung

back and forth until the cable came to a rest. Dive Bomber Alley served as an up-charge attraction, requiring a payment of twenty dollars per person. Those who wanted to ride solo had to spend an extra five dollars.

The skycoaster was invented by Bill Kitchen. After his first skydive in 1990, he wanted other people to enjoy the same experience without having to jump from a plane. His first skycoaster appeared in 1993. It was followed by the installation of a permanent one a year later at Kennywood Park.

Amid these changes, Six Flags celebrated its 35th anniversary on August 5th. When the park closed for the season, it demolished Good Times Square Depot and changed the Confederacy's name to the Old South.

PART TEN

THE MODERN ERA

1997 - 2011

CHAPTER ONE

THE WAR

For the 1997 season, Six Flags Over Texas raised admission prices. Children and senior citizens paid \$28.00 while adults spent \$34.45. The park added a new railroad station called Boomtown Depot. It also tried to open a roller coaster based on the Batman villain Mr. Freeze. Designed and built by Premiere Rides, the coaster required a new type of technology that was being studied by NASA. Instead of using chains and cables to move the trains, it relied on linear induction motors that lined the track. An electrical current helped the motors push the train using magnetic force. This force took hold of a fin underneath the train. It then propelled passengers from zero to seventy miles an hour in less than four seconds. At 23 stories high, Mr. Freeze would be the fastest, tallest roller coaster in Texas.

Unfortunately, the ride ran into several problems. Several rainstorms caused construction delays. During testing, a train was damaged when its fin slammed into the motors. Engineers had to remove the motors and reinforce the structures protecting them. Workers then discovered that the motors inside it were overheating, so more air-conditioning had to be installed. All hopes for a summer launch was ended.

Meanwhile, a war was being fought over control of Six Flags Over Texas. The Tierco Group began as a real estate company in Oklahoma. Although it purchased Frontier City in 1982, it had no intention of entering the amusement park industry. It considered Frontier City's renovation as a lost cause. Tierco planned to demolish it, divide the land, and build a shopping center. However, the economic climate in 1984 changed Tierco's mind. The company decided to invest \$39,000,00 into the theme park. It hired Gary Story to be the park's general manager. Under his leadership, Frontier City quadrupled its attendance and revenues.

In 1989, Keiran Burke became Tierco's new president. He immediately shifted the company's focus from real estate to amusement parks. Burke sold most of Tierco's properties and invested that money into Frontier City. He then adopted the practice of buying parks and expanding them, believing that it was the key to success. In addition, he wanted Tierco to become the world's largest theme park operator.

Burke began the process with the purchase of White Water in

1991. Tierco acquired Wild World the following year and renamed it Adventure World. In 1994, the company changed its name to Premier Parks to reflect the new direction it was taking. Over the next three years, Premier acquired Geauga Lake, Marine World, Elitch Gardens, Wyandot Lake, Water World USA, Splashwater Kingdom, Great Escape, Darien Lake, and Riverside Park. Next on its list was Six Flags Over Texas.

Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc. had trouble renewing its contract to operate the Arlington theme park. Negotiations with the limited partnership had dragged on for months with little success, thanks to the objections of president Jack Knox. He felt that Time Warner and Boston Ventures were taking Six Flags in the wrong direction, replacing the state heritage theme with cartoon characters and comic book heroes. He also echoed the sentiment that Time Warner wasn't spending enough money for improvements. Listing these grievances, Knox decided to sever ties with Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc. After the announcement, the limited partnership signed a contract with Premier Parks. Premier would manage and operate Six Flags Over Texas for thirty years. Once that period ended, the company could purchase it for \$315,000,000. In return, Premier promised to invest \$30,000,000 into the park over the next two years.

When the agreement was announced, Premier officials declared their intention to eliminate the Time Warner themes and return the park back to its roots. Batman and Bugs Bunny would be evicted from the park. As a result, all attractions tied to Warner Brothers would experience name changes.

However, Time Warner and Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc. refused to go away without a fight. Threatening legal action, they asserted that the Premier contract violated the current agreement with the limited partnership. In response, Jack Knox filed a lawsuit to confirm the Premier contract so there could be an orderly transition.

Six Flags Theme Parks then introduced a 1969 agreement between the partnership and the management company. According to the document, Six Flags Over Texas couldn't operate as an amusement park after June 30, 2009. A 1971 amended agreement stated that the park could continue past the date, but only if the two parties agreed.

From these documents, the company asserted that the park had always been under its control. In response, Knox argued that the deal between the partnership and Six Flags Theme Parks voided the 1971 agreement. Time Warner then decided to stop the legal battle and attempt to outbid Premier. It succeeded in its endeavor by offering \$350,000,000 and a promise to invest \$50,000,000 into the park, .

Meanwhile, engineers were still having problems with the Mr. Freeze roller coaster. The structures housing the motors couldn't withstand the amount of electricity to launch the trains. In addition, the motors kept moving out of position, causing the train's fin to catch as it glided through. Park officials announced that these problems would be solved by an upgrade.

In early 1998, Time Warner attempted to obtain full ownership of Six Flags Over Texas. One by one, members of the limited partnership were asked to sell their stock. A few agreed to the terms, but the vast majority refused to part from their holdings. After this defeat, Time Warner chose to focus on its media and entertainment outlets. This decision led to an agreement with Boston Ventures to sell Six Flags Theme Parks, Inc.

On February 9th, Premier Parks bought the company for 1.9 billion dollars. The amount covered ownership, securities, and the existing debt. As part of the transaction, it signed an agreement that gave exclusive rights to the Looney Tunes and DC Comics characters. The deal made Premier Parks the world's largest regional theme park operator.

Once Premier gained control, it started applying the Six Flags name to the parks it owned. The first to receive the changes were Adventure World, Kentucky Kingdom, Elitch Gardens, Marine World, and Darien Lake. Continuing its practice of acquiring parks and expanding them, Premier bought Fiesta Texas and six European theme parks. It also planned to spend \$200,000,000 in park improvements.

Premiere completely changed the marketing strategy of Six Flags in an effort to stand out from the other theme parks. Instead of a place for family fun, Six Flags was advertised as a thrill ride park. Premier hoped the new approach would attract more teenagers and single

adults. They did this because executives believed the two groups had more purchasing power than families.

As part of a reorganization project, Premier Parks cut promotions, special offers, and the media budget of Six Flags. It also made deep cuts in the workforce and operational expenses. The company believed these measures would maximize a return on its investment.

In an effort to increase attendance for the 1998 season, admission was slightly lowered. Adults now paid \$32.95 while children and senior citizens spent \$26.91.

The Mr. Freeze roller coaster finally opened on March 28th. Those who wanted to ride the new attraction walked through a building disguised as an ice cream factory. Mr. Freeze supervised the two loading systems inside the main room. As one train moved laterally onto the launch area, the other unloaded its passengers. Once everything was ready, the train exited through a tunnel. It then traveled backwards and forwards along the track.

Despite reduced admission prices and the addition of a new coaster, the park suffered a large drop in attendance. Premier Parks blamed the poor performance on the marketing campaign and the Texas heat.

When Six Flags opened in 1999, it had a brand new section called Gotham City. Gotham's main attraction was Batman the Ride, an inverted roller coaster designed by B&M. Walter Bolliger and Claude Mabillard founded the company after working for a ride manufacturer. Based in Monthey, Switzerland, B&M built over seventy attractions around the world. It installed the first inverted roller coaster at Six Flags Great America in 1992. An industry favorite, it featured a train that ran under the track. For Batman the Ride, guests walked through a landscaped park before arriving at the queue house. After going through some tunnels, they entered the Bat Cave and boarded the ride.

Park officials replaced The Right Stuff with Escape From Dino Island. Both attractions were made by Iwerks Entertainment. Former Disney executives Stan Kinsey and Don Iwerks founded the company

in 1985. It mainly focused on large format film projection.

Iwerks later combined its technology with ride simulations and 360-degree video. This led to the creation of the Cinetropolis entertainment center. It consisted of highly-themed attractions, restaurants, and stores. The first Cinetropolis was built at Foxwoods Casinos in Connecticut. Its success allowed Iwerks to become the world's leader in ride-simulation attractions.

The plot of Escape From Dino Island centered around a team trying to rescue a T-Rex from an island ready to explode. While visitors viewed the film through 3-D glasses, their seats moved in concert with the action on the screen.

The park installed the Six Flags Speedway Go-Karts near the Shockwave. The vehicles for the up-charge attraction came from J & J Amusements, a company based in Salem, Oregon. Race car builder Art Ingels invented the first go-karts in 1956. Two years later, Go-Kart Manufacturing became the first mass producer. The original vehicles used modified chainsaw engines. During the 1960s, manufacturers switched to motorcycle engines. As time passed, they developed models made specifically for go-karts.

The Six Flags Speedway had forty vehicles - 16 for pairs and 24 for individuals. The go-karts traveled along an 800-foot-long track bordered by tires and a metal rim. Guests paid five dollars to drive for six minutes. Those riding as passengers gave two dollars. The Great Air Racer closed at the end of the season, despite the fact that the park had no plans for a replacement.

On March 21, 1999, Six Flags Over Texas experienced its first guest fatality. That evening at the Roaring Rapids, a boat flipped over while going up an incline near the end of the ride. Five of the inner tube's twelve chambers had deflated. This caused the boat to move lower in the water and travel through the rapids at a tilt. After passing through the final segment, the boat struck an underwater pipe and became lodged. The water pressure broke the ropes that kept the rubber base attached. When the boat overturned, the ride operator pressed the emergency stop button and notified on-site paramedics. Despite warnings from the staff, three guests entered the water to help. The emer-

gency team arrived two minutes later.

Ten of the passengers went to Arlington Memorial Hospital for treatment. One person escaped from injury, but his quick departure led officials to believe he was missing. The twelfth rider was less fortunate. Veronica Cartwright from Arkansas died from drowning because she couldn't unbuckle her safety belt. Six Flags officials closed half the park after the accident. Instead of announcing what had happened, they told guests that maintenance work was being done. The Roaring Rapids stayed closed as the park launched an internal investigation.

To prevent further deflations, the inner tubes underwent a new method of rigorous testing. Management also installed metal ramps to allow the the rafts to glide over the underwater pipes. As a result of the accident, Congress passed a law providing stronger regulations for amusement ride operation.

Park attendance took another large dip. Most officials continued the practice of blaming the weather. Others complained about the tough competition coming from other venues. The low attendance didn't sit well with Premier Parks, which equated expansion with success. This philosophy had put the company into a debt exceeding a billion dollars. The stock holders became concerned and stock prices declined significantly. Premier calmed its investors by claiming that future park revenue would pay off the debt.

Premier also had to deal with the wrath of the general public. Over the past few years, it had made deep reductions in park staff. This prevented the park from having the necessary manpower to operate it effectively. Visitors and the media loudly complained about poor customer service, excessive litter, and general filthiness. In response to the attacks, Premier claimed that the teenage workforce was very small.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DESCENT

As Six Flags prepared for the 2000 season, the park announced it would start focusing on cleanliness. Officials formed a special crew to deal with the trash and litter. Lacking funds for a new thrill ride, the park installed the Missile Chaser at the location of the Great Air Racer.

In July, Premier Parks renamed itself Six Flags, Inc. to capitalize on brand name recognition. As part of its makeover, those parks in the United States without the Six Flags label would be renamed.

In February 2001, Six Flags, Inc. resumed its strategy of purchasing and expanding parks. It combined Sea World of Ohio with Six Flags of Ohio, resulting in a new park called Six Flags Worlds of Adventure. It also bought the Canadian theme park La Ronde.

For the 2001 season, workers built a new entry plaza and repainted some of the main attractions. Looney Tunes Land received six new rides, four refurbished rides, and a production stage. Admission prices rose to \$40.99 for adults and 20.49 for children and senior citizens.

Attempting to boost the park's appeal to teenagers and thrill seekers, Six Flags installed yet another roller coaster. Built at a cost of \$25,000,000, the Titan was designed by German engineer Werner Stengel. Werner started his career by working on amusement rides with Anton Schwarzkopf. After Anton retired, Stengel continued the tradition of making roller coaster innovations.

At the length of a mile, the Titan became the longest coaster built at a Six Flags park. Its height of 245 feet made it the tallest coaster in the Southwest. Over the years, the Titan earned a reputation for causing blackouts resulting from its high g-forces.

On August 5th, Six Flags Over Texas celebrated its 40th anniversary. Anyone who was also 40-years-old received free admission. The day started with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at the front entrance. Throughout the day, the park hosted sixteen different shows performed by local musicians. For the grand finale, the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders provided a night performance, followed by a fireworks show. When the year ended, figures showed that the park had experi-

enced a ten percent decline in attendance.

At the beginning of 2002, Six Flags signed a five-year contract with Lo-Q Incorporated. The agreement allowed for the installation of a virtual queuing system. For ten dollars, a visitor received a small device called a Q-Bot. Up to six other people could use it at an additional cost of five dollars each. When a guest plugged the Q-Bot into a kiosk at a busy ride, it calculated the wait assigned a return time. Later, the bot reminded its holder that the designated time was approaching. The person could then board the ride without waiting in line.

When the park opened, it replaced Escape From Dino Island with Space Shuttle America. Made by DreamQuest Images, the film's plot centered around a shuttle crew investigating a mysterious meteor. The highlights included a dash through an asteroid belt, a flight inside the meteor's canyon, a race against time in the meteor's cave, and a crash landing. At the end of the season, the park removed the Missile Chaser in preparation for an upcoming attraction.

From June 8th to August 11th, Six Flags held its first Best of Texas Festival. It served as a tribute to the state's history and culture. The main features included a giant concrete armadillo, a 150-pound fruitcake, a statue of a giant killer bee, an eight-foot-tall fiberglass jackrabbit, a collection of wild animals, and a reproduction of the Alamo's facade. Entertainment was provided by the Light Crust Doughboys Band, the Apache Belles Dance Team, and the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders. The Big Texan Steak Ranch, Eddie Dean's East Texas Barbecue, and Sweet Georgia Brown served regional cuisine during the event.

Six Flags, Inc. faced more financial woes at the end of the year. It had to take a loss of \$61,000,000 related to its purchase of Movie World Germany. In addition, the company reported a net loss of \$128,000,000. This was caused by lackluster attendance at its four main theme parks. Overall, Six Flags, Inc. now had a long-term debt of 2.3 billion dollars. Despite this gloomy news, the company decided to acquire Jazzland in New Orleans.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REVOLT

The 2003 season saw the return of The Right Stuff to the 3-D theater. Visitors also enjoyed the arrival of the Superman Tower of Power. At a height of 325 feet, it was the park's tallest structure and the world's highest tower ride. Located at the site of the Missile Chaser, the attraction was designed by S & S Power. Stan Checketts started the company as a maker of bungee jumping and trampoline equipment. In 1994, the company changed its product line. It then gained a strong reputation for its pneumatically-powered rides.

The Superman ride was a Combo Tower model. It used the features of both the space shot ride and the turbo drop ride. The space shot used compressed air to rush passengers to the top, then gently lower them to the ground. In contrast, the turbo drop raised the car slowly and dropped it to the bottom. Compressed air then pushed the car back to the mid-point before lowering it to the ground. The beginning of the Superman ride mimicked the space shot's ascent. The ending followed the pattern of the turbo drop.

Behind the scenes, Six Flags, Inc. continued its downward spiral. Park attendance decreased by four percent, resulting in a loss of \$465,000,000. Predictions of a further revenue decrease caused stock prices to fall by 18 percent. By the end of the year, a single share of stock was only five dollars.

Despite claims it would never get rid of any properties, Six Flags, Inc. sold all its European theme parks. The only exception was Movie World. In the United States, it gave Six Flags Worlds of Adventure to the owner of Knott's Berry Farm. These transactions brought in a revenue of \$345,000,000. The company decided to use the money to expand the remaining parks and pay off some of its debt.

In an effort to increase attendance, Six Flags started a new advertising campaign. It centered around a dancing bald-headed man named Mr. Six. The first original mascot since Cyrus Cosmo, he was invented by Doner Advertising of Southfield, Michigan. The old man became popular through a series of television commercials. Six Flags refused to reveal the actor's identity despite pressure from the media.

For the 2005 season, the park replaced The Right Stuff with a show called SpongeBob SquarePants 4-D. Items such as bubble blow-

ers, water sprinklers, and seat buzzers provided sensations in addition to the 3-D effects. The film followed SpongeBob as he tried to recover a stolen pickle, foiling an evil plot in the process.

Six Flags also introduced three live acts. Kathy Burks' World of Puppets presented *Sara Jane Armadillo Superstar*. It told the story of an armadillo who moved to Hollywood to become a movie star. At the Southern Palace, the Amazing Acrobats of China performed various balancing acts. A production company headquartered in London performed *Spirit of the Dance*. Created and produced by David King, it used a mixture of folk dance, tap dance, and ballet.

Daniel Snyder was the owner of the Washington Redskins football team. He also had a nine percent interest in Six Flags, Inc. through a company called Red Zone, LLC. Snyder expressed his displeasure with Six Flags, believing it should focus more on marketing and sponsorship. In addition, he advocated park closings and the possibility of a merger. The management team snubbed Snyder because its members felt their experience trumped his business knowledge.

On August 17, 2005, Snyder filed paperwork with the Securities and Exchange Commission to take control of the company. In the filing, he proposed the removal of three board members. He suggested himself as the new chairman, Mark Shapiro as chief executive, and Dwight Schar as a director. Snyder criticized the current management for blaming its losses on the weather, wasting billions of dollars in shareholder value, overspending money on thrill rides with no family appeal, and making deals with old, dated brands.

After attacking management, he provided specific ideas for improving Six Flags, Inc. The company had to attract a more balanced audience. It also needed to outsource concessions, accept credit card payments, and increase the cost of season passes and premium parking. Rides and attractions would have to be branded with more popular characters and themes.

Snyder also presented a new marketing campaign. He called for the immediate removal of Mr. Six from all advertising. "Clean, Safe, Fun" would be the new slogan. Instead of expensive television ads, he wanted to use direct mail promotions. Lastly, he wanted to fo-

cus on attracting families back to the park.

A week after the SEC filing, Six Flags, Inc. announced that it was putting itself up for auction. It invited Snyder to participate, even though it opposed his attempt to take control. The company also told shareholders to reject his proposals because he lacked the credentials and experience.

In the midst of this turmoil, Six Flags, Inc. announced it would close Astroworld at the end of the year. Management based its decision on low attendance figures and a disagreement over shared parking with Reliant Stadium. All proceeds would be used to help pay off the debt. For most of the investors, this was the final straw. In December, two months after Astroworld closed, 57 percent of the stockholders voted to remove the current management. They then held another vote and placed Daniel Snyder in charge.

CHAPTER FOUR
A SECOND CHANCE

When the 2006 season began, adults paid \$45 and children spent \$25. For an additional fifteen, a guest could eat lunch with the Looney Tunes characters. The park also introduced the Texas Star VIP Tour. The \$249 package included park admission, front-of-the-line ride privileges, reserved seating at restaurants and shows, unlimited snacks, a souvenir photo, a private autograph session, and a private guided tour.

Every morning, a staff member selected a First Family for the day. In a flurry of confetti and balloons, a member flipped a switch that symbolically turned on the park's power. The gates then opened for the awaiting guests.

When night approached, the First Family served as the Grand Marshall of a twenty-minute parade. The event celebrated the park's 45th anniversary. Six Flags also erected a historical exhibit in the France section. Commemorating the park's past, it consisted of posters, pictures, and cardboard cutouts.

Six Flags Over Texas installed twelve attractions, hoping to widen its appeal to families. INTAMIN built the Acme Rock-n-Rocket in Modern America. The looping starship model was a swinging ship capable of making an entire loop.

In Good Times Square, Zamperla Rides designed and built a balloon tower model called the Cloud Bouncer. Founded by Antonio Zamperla, the Italian company was known worldwide for its family-friendly attractions. HUSS Manufacturing constructed Crazy Legs nearby. Originally a producer of boat engine parts, the German company started creating amusement rides in 1969. Crazy Legs, classified as a troika ride, had three arms attached to a central column. At the end of each arm, a wheel-like contraption held seven cars. The central column moved clockwise while the wheels moved counter-clockwise. The arms then raised to a forty-degree angle. The Good Times Square Theater reopened as the Majestic Theater after extensive remodeling.

Gotham City had two rides added. The Batwing operated just like the Red Baron ride. The Gotham City Sprayground featured a series of sprinklers, fountains, and spouts. Gotham also introduced members of the Justice League. Visitors could now interact with Batman,

Aquaman, Green Lantern, Wonder Woman, and the Flash.

In the Texas section, HUSS built a breakdance ride called Rodeo. It had four hubs with four cars each. The hubs were attached to a twelve-sided platform. As the platform moved one way, the hubs moved the other. At the same time this was going on, the cars rocked back and forth while rotating.

Texas also acquired three other rides. Boot Scootin' was a turtle parade model. It rotated the cars in a circle while slightly moving them up and down. Placed next to the Titan, the Sidewinder was a scrambler ride like the Missile Chaser. The Texas Tornado underwent a complete make-over. Repainted and rethemed, the ride's new name was The Gunslinger.

The Caddo Lake Barge was located near the Oil Derrick. Classified as a rocking tug, the ride's gondola moved back and forth along a track while rotating around its center. In the Mexico section, the park added a tea cup ride to the site of El Sombrero. Instead of getting removed, it was placed near the front gate.

The month of October brought an announcement regarding a new set of rules for the following year. They were designed to make Six Flags more appealing to families. In addition to requiring visitors to wear shoes and shirts, they prohibited profanity, rude gestures, offensive behavior, and line jumping. Violators faced ejection from the park without a refund.

Six Flags, Inc. continued to struggle during 2006. In June, it reported a severe drop in revenue and attendance. As its stock value fell even further, the company considered closing six more parks. Six Flags, Inc. received more bad news near the end of the year. Reports revealed a net loss of \$306,000,000. Snyder defended himself, explaining that it would take time to clean up the mess left by his predecessors.

In response to the news, the company sold Darien Lake, Elich Gardens, Frontier City, Splash Town, Enchanted Village, White Water Bay, and Waterworld USA. Parc 7F Operations Corp. bought them for \$312,000,000. Parc later sold its acquisitions to CNL Income Properties, which leased them back.

For 2007, Six Flags re-themed Splashwater Falls and named it

Aquaman Splashdown. The park also hosted Cirque Dreams Coobri-la at the Music Mill Theater. It was performed by Cirque Productions, a company stationed in Pompano Beach, Florida. The company based its performances on the famous Cirque du Soleil.

Based in Montreal, Canada, Cirque du Soleil billed itself as a mixture of circus art and street entertainment. In 1980, Guy Laliberté and Daniel Gauthier started a performing troupe that toured Quebec. After three years of financial failure, they received a government grant. They used the money to perform a show for the anniversary of Jacques Cartier's discovery of Canada. Their success gave them the necessary funds to hire a circus member to recreate the show. Designed to attract a wider audience, it featured a variety of circus styles.

Near the end of the season, the park removed three popular attractions. The Bumper Cars disappeared quietly and the Texas Cliffhanger went out with a bang. Casa Magnetica closed its doors after 45 years of service.

In July, Six Flags reported more bad news. Third-quarter income declined 46 percent and attendance experienced a nine percent drop. Its stock closed at \$2.25 per share. The company blamed the weather and promised a better year.

On December 18th, Six Flags, Inc. applied to the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission for a beer license. Management saw this as a way to boost revenue and honor visitor requests. However, during the 60-day waiting period, more than 500 residents complained to the TABC. Some Arlington officials protested the application, arguing that alcohol sales could become a public safety hazard. Even the mayor showed concern. To address these issues, the TABC called for a town hall meeting.

Held on January 3, 2008, the meeting was supposed to focus on how to make a formal protest. Instead, it turned into an outlet for complaints. Many were worried about teenagers obtaining alcohol. Others feared that children would be exposed to drunkards. The only person at the meeting who supported the application was a Six Flags executive.

When the 60-day waiting period ended, Six Flags, Inc. withdrew its application to revise it. However, more controversy awaited.

Six Flags began to forbid guests from carrying anything while waiting in line for popular rides. Workers were stationed at the entrance

ces to confiscate loose items. When a visitor refused to hand over an item, the person was told to rent a locker for one dollar or leave the line. If the belongings stayed in the locker for over two hours, visitors risked the possibility of having them taken by park security.

Opening in 2008, Tony Hawk's Big Spin resulted from a marketing agreement with the famous skateboarder. Designed by Hubert Gerstlauer, the spinning coaster took the place of the Texas Cliffhanger. Gerstlauer began his career by working for Anton Schwarzkopf. In 1982, he started his own company to design and manufacture coaster equipment. He started building rides when Schwarzkopf declared bankruptcy.

Billed as the total Tony Hawk experience, the ride was designed with the look and feel of a giant skate park. Television monitors along the queue line showed a brief history of action sports. Riders seated themselves face to face in the car. As it traveled along the track, the car spun the passengers around. People could purchase a video of their experience at the ride's exit.

In November, Six Flags, Inc. announced a sixty percent increase in its third-quarter profit. The earnings failed to please the investors, who felt the company was headed toward bankruptcy. As a result, the stock plummeted to an all-time low of 28 cents per share.

On January 10, 2009, a judge recommended approval of an alcohol license for Six Flags Over Texas. The TABC issued a permit a month later, just in time for Spring Break.

February 2nd marked the return of Mr. Six as the park mascot. During his previous commercials, he had always been mute. This time, however, the scripts required him to talk.

For the new season, Six Flags presented the Glow in the Park Parade from June 12th to August 16th. The parade featured nine floats, nine puppets, and 65 performers. They were illuminated by lights and fiber optics. The parade started in Gotham City and moved around the park toward the front gate.

On June 12th, Six Flags Inc. filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Many people feared this would result in the permanent closure of Six Flags Over Texas. However, this concern was unfounded because the company didn't own the park.

When Six Flags, Inc. emerged from bankruptcy in April 2010, it changed its name to the Six Flags Entertainment Corporation. After

the company restructured its debt, the stockholders gave \$725,000,000 in new equity. It also acquired \$120,000,000 from its revolving credit facility and received one billion dollars from secured credit facilities.

The bankruptcy brought an end to Daniel Snyder's reign. The Six Flags Entertainment Corporation looked for a replacement and picked Jim Reid-Anderson, the recent CEO of Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics.

The 2011 season began on March 5th. This marked the beginning of the park's celebration of its 50th anniversary. The Texas Giant, which had closed for refurbishment the previous June, reopened on April 22nd. Renamed the New Texas Giant, the coaster was now a wood-steel hybrid. Standing ten feet taller than the original version, its main features included a 79-degree drop and a 95-degree bank. Even more impressive was the smoothness of the ride. The front car of each train resembled a Cadillac with steer horns on the hood. Those who changed their minds about riding the coaster could take refuge in a section called the Chicken Coop.

From June 18th to August 7th, Six Flags offered a different discount each day. This was done through a program called Fifty Days of Fun. During this time, the park reopened Casa Magnetica. Six Flags celebrated its anniversary on August 5, 2011, commemorating 50 years of entertainment.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

The problem with footnotes and endnotes is that they distract the reader and break the flow of the narrative. Furthermore, nobody reads them except for researchers, college students, and professors who grade term papers. However, I do feel the need to give credit where credit is due.

My main source of information was the Dallas Morning News archives. I poured through thousands of articles, pulling out as much information as possible. If I had followed tradition, this book would have been at least fifty pages thicker. The next valuable resource I used was a forum located at sfot.net. It contained a wealth of valuable information regarding the park's operation and past. Particularly useful was a timeline at parktimes.com. It helped me create a basic outline and kept me on course when I got lost in the narrative. Although not a completely reliable source, Wikipedia provided me with many names, places, and key words to research.

The spiels in the appendices were provided by Davis McCown. The song materials came from sfot.net. Produced by the All-Thom Corporation, the postcard pictures have fallen into public domain.

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APPENDICES

**THE
SIX FLAGS MARCH
(1961)**

Six Flags Over Texas,
Just see them proudly wave
Where heroes used to stand.

Six Flags Over Texas,
Each one a symbol of a new
Adventure land.

Six Flags Over Texas,
Fiesta days amaze you when
The fun's unfurled.
Where history's delighting,
Romantic and exciting,
Great Southwest's welcome to
the world.

**THE
FIESTA TRAIN
THEME SONG**

Throw your hats into the air.
If you lose them, you don't care.
There's another one somewhere.
Fiesta!

It's just like a holiday
Where there are no bills to pay.
'Cause we threw them all away.
Fiesta!

Tra la la la la Fiesta!
Tra la la la la Fiesta!
Tra la la la la
La la la la
(music)
Fiesta!

1961 RAILROAD SPIEL

While Train is unloading just before Bullpen Gates are open

Now loadin', boardin' and, filling up. This here Express Train is going to Buffalo Gulch, Scalpers Corners, Johnson's Creek, New Town, Rim Rock, Mexican Junction, Will's Point, and this here Great Southwest Station. All Aboard!

As Train is loading.

Well Howdy there you Folks, this here is yore Con-ductor (Brakeman) speakin' at you from back here on the backend of this bran new Express Train. We's just tickeled to death, to have y'all on here with us. But now before we git started they is a few rules you got to go by, a fore we can git started.

First is, there ain't suppose to be no stannin' up on this Train, cause when it starts off you might git knocked down, and hurt yoreself and besides the folks behind you couldn't see and they'll libel to git mad at ya! Also now, don't be sticking yore Arms, Legs, Feet, Heads, ner yore Younguns out of the Train cause they might git bumped or knocked off.

Then, don't be a throwin' no Sassparilly cups, Ice Cream Sticks, Lunch Baskets, Wives, Younguns, ner Mother n Laws off this Train neither, cause it messes up the Tracks, and we just might stop and make you git off and up pickum up.

Also, you gotta put out all yore Ciggeretts, Stogies, Charoots, and Seegars cause there ain't no Smokin' allowed on this Train. And for them of ya that might be a Chewin, be sure and don't SPIT cause yore libel ta git it all over you and the folks behind ya, and nobody would appreciate that.

Then finally, in case of an Indian Attack, I want all you Women and Childurn to git down underneath the Seats, and all you Men folk with yore Shootin Irons, and Six Guns ta git'im out and see if you can pick off a few of them critters.

Now we is just about ready to go, as soon as the Station Master down there gives the Signal, and the Engineer toots the Whistle.

Train usually will make a slight lurch forward, when this happens say.

Boy, did you feel that Power?

As the front half of the Train clears the Water Tower start this.

The next Station is Buffalo Gulch. If you folks will look down there to your right you can see the Folks riding on the Butterfield Stage. Ya'all need to wave at them cause it's hot n dusty down there, and it'll take them 3 Days to get where there goin'. We're all most to the Station and if you will all look out under them Trees, you can see our Happy Family of Buffalo. There is the Momma, Poppa, a Baby, and the Big Ugly one over there is the Mother Law.

When the Engine starts across the 2nd Bridge.

We're coming to Scalper's Corners. As I said, while ago. You fellas keep yore eyes peeled for any Injuns a hiding behind the Bushes here, and see if you can get a shot at one of them.

When back of Train clears the Scalper's Corners Station sign.

Next Station, Johnson's Creek. Now folks when we start across this here next Bridge at Johnson Creek. I don't want to see nobody lean out too far and fall in, cause there is a couple a three, great big Snapping Turtles, and a bunch of Water Moxkins down in there, and we don't allow ya'll to feed them.

As Engine clears the far end of Johnson Creek Bridge

Folks we'll be coming in to "New Town" Station in a minuet . Now I want you all to look up here on you right at the folks riding these new fangled contraptions. Me and the other fellas working on this Train, was a looking at them the other Day and, we figured it wasn't too smart of them to be riding on them things. Cause as you can see, as far down in them things as they are, and as fast as they are a going, if the bottom was to fall out of it. They'ed wear the Seat of their Britches out before they could get it stopped!

Now if you think that was funny looking, I want you to look at this thing down her next to the "New Town" Station. See there, they got these boxes with wheels on them running around on that little biddy track. Now who in the world would want to be on something like that when it's a jerking and banging you around like that. They got some pretty funny looking stuff over here in this part of the Country.

As Engine crosses RR Crossing just past "New Town" station.

"Rim Rock" station is right down here, and we'er fixing to go thru the Tunnel. So I want all you Women and Childurn to git out yore Hankies and kiver up yore Faces, so you don't choke on the Coal Smoke.

When Train gets about 2 way up the grade past the Tunnel, Call next station!

"Mexican Junction" Now folks ifun you'll look right out there to your right, in a minuet you can probably see the Little Mexican Train that you can connect with if you wuz to get off this Train here. But you can't git off, cause we ain't stopping, cause nobody told me you wanted off.

Next Station is "Will's Point". Now when we git down here, I want you to look down thar among them Trees and you can probably see them Folks riding on then Mules with one of them Concestidoor fellas a looking for one of them Cities of Gold.

After Engine passes "Will's Point" Station Sign, Station Master at Great Southwest Station will Signal a STOP with the White Flag. Engineer will answer with the Train Whistle, say.

Now Folks we're fixing to come in to "Great Southwest" Station and we'll be a stopping cause the Station Master there has Signaled us to stop. Now I don't want see nobody to start to git up and git off til the Train comes to a complete stop, and I tell you it's alright to git off. Cause Ifun you wuz to git off to quick, you might fall down and Skin yore knees, Scuff yore Boots, Rip the Seat of yore Britches, or Dent up the Platform, or no tellin what, and we can't have that, so just keep yore Seat. Now just hold it, wait a minuet, Hold it.

Train stops with slight jerk. Then say.

Ok, Now you can git off, and Ya'll have a great day at Six Flags Over Texas.

1974 RAILROAD SPIEL

Great Southwest Texas Depot

We-e-e-ll, howdy there folks. This here is yore corn-ductor speakin' at cha'll frum th' very tail end of this here brand spankin', spiffy new, luxurious, stre-e-e-m lined, an' air corn-ditioned 1897 (*for General Sam Houston*) 1901 (*for Maribeau B. Lamar*) narry-gauge railroad train.

Yessiree, you folks is in fer th' time of yore life. But just so as it won't be th' last time, there are a few important company policies you to be abidin' by. First off, don't you go to a standin' up, jumpin' up and down, playin' tag, flyin' kites out the winders, runnin' up an' down th' runnin' boards, er a playing musical chairs. Second of all, I don't want to see none of y'all throwin' off you paper cups, ice cream sticks, brothers, sisters, or mother-in-laws, causin' ifin' you don't want them, well neither do we. And I don't want to see no smoking of any sort aboard this here train, cause the engine up front will be doing enough for the all of us, I ga-a-a-ranteee.

Now in just a second that corn-ductor down there on the platform is goin' to be givin' the signal an' we're going be pullin' outa here. Y'all see that there corn-ductor? Well, she's mighty fine at givin' that there signal. Yessireee, she went to school for three week learnin' ta signal thata way. Ain't that somethin'? Well, don't you be too impressed, 'cause it was only a two day course.

Well there was the signal, and here we go, (*engine usually makes one big pull before*) and there we went (*and then comes to a near stop*).

(*While the train is barely moving*). Why if you don't believe that were a really movin', just look behind us. See?, we are a leavin' tracks.

(*Train leaves the station heading south, towards the flume*) As we pull out of the station, I want you to look to your immediate left. There you will see the Six Flags Watermelon patch. If you ever go get a whole in your watermelon, that's were you can take it to get a patch.

Also off to yore left is the original, genuine, first in the country, Six Flags Over Texas Log Flume Ride. Yessiree, those folks have the time of their life floating around in that there giant horse trough. An' if you think that Horse trough is big, wait'll you see the size of the horse that a drinks out of it.

(Flume ride to the left in the trees.) Yessiree, I hear that is one might fine ride, 'cept at the end. They tell me it's a real let down. Off to yore left is a long green building. That's our En-jun house. That is where we put our engines to bed at night. But don't ch'all corn-fuse the Engine House with a teepee or a wigwam, ya hear?

Next stop is Me-e-e-x-i-i-can Junction! Here's where ya'll can join in the singin' and the dancin' an' th' wild Bull-fightin'. If ya'll cast yore peppers up there to yer left an way up in th' sky ya'll see a real live volcano. An' I bet if we was ta stay here long enough we'd get ta see a mighty molten mass move down th' mountain hotter than the sun!

The weather forecast for this here junction is "chilly today" and "hot tomalle". *(On the right and left are dancing tamales, and Mexican men riding very small horses. All left over animations from the Mexican hat train)*

These here are our Dogwood trees. Do ya know why we calls 'em Dogwoods? 'cause of their bark. All you ladies best look off to th' right, 'cause on yore left my friend Zeke is goin' be out takin' his monthly showery bath. I'm shore he'd be a might embarrassed if you was to watch 'im. Well for shame for shame own you, lady! *(Hillbilly in a shower barrel taking his shower)*

Every year we get hundreds of thousan's of letters complimenting us on our beautiful landscaping. You may be a wondering whats we call these beautiful plants a growing to your left and your right. We calls 'em weeds.

An' now look up there ta your right. To the sky, to your right, Do ya see it? Do ya see it? Of course ya don't see it. There's nuthin' up there to see. *(Nothing to see in the sky)*

Cover up ya noses now, 'cause shoe-oe-oe-oe-weeeee we're coming to a tunnel. Don't that smell sweet as fried bacon on a Sunday mornin" at th' farm. That smell so sweet, we wus thinkin' of bottlin' it up an' selling' it as a fancy perfume. We wus gonna call it "Tun-nel" number five.

Now everyone, look to your left and to your right, you see that there thing swerving around that track, that's there is the big bend roller coaster. Yes sireee, those there trains go around that there a swevin' a curvin' track faster than Ewell Gibbons chasin' after a wild hickory nut! *(If the Big Ben is broken down)* Do ya see them trains runnin' up and down the' swervin' an' curvin' track? Do ya see 'em? Of course ya don't, 'cause them trains move so fast they can't be seen! *(Big Bend cue house to the left of the train. Track to the left and around the train)*

Now looky off to yore left, seem them things sputterin' around th' road bed? Them called automobiles. But don't you go and learn that fuelish word, cause those thangs won't never replace the horse an' buggy. Why, there built so fast and so low to th' ground, you'd burn th' seat of your britches off if ya ever did tried to stop one. *(Happy Motoring off to the left)*

Off to the right is a Great Big Ol' Yella Buildin'. Do ya know what we call that there Great big ol' yella Buildin'. That's right - we calls it the Great Big Ol' Yella Buildin'! Actually, that there's the Sid an' Marty Krofft Puppet Show. And we have a real fine show there, no strings attached. *(Puppet show off to the right)*

In just a minute we'll pull into the Good Time Square Station an' all of ya'll that wants to get off kin get off when we get ta a complete stop an' after I tell you to. You folks that wanta stay on are more than welcome to do that to.

Like I said, now, wait a minute, just a second! Hold it now... just a cotton pickin', finger lickin', ever lovin' ever lastin'. I say "1", *(pause)* I say "2" ... I say "2", I say "2". Well I done said to three times now, so Get Off.

Good Times Square Station

Howdy folks. *(pause)* I sed "Howdy" *(pause)* Howdy! *(pause)* I gives ya'll a great big Texas Howdy and all I get back is a little ole Rhode Island "hi". I sed "Howdy". Well, ain't ya'll a trainful of Minnie Pearlz.

Th' Six Flags Over Texas Narry Gage Railroad Company is proud ta announce th' imminite departure of th' General Sam Houston/Mirabeau B. Lamar on track #1, which is th' only track we got, non-stop for the Great Southwest Texas Depot.

Soasta we kin get from here ta yonder just like we got frum

yonder ta here, I'm gonna give y'all a few important compuny policies. First off, don't ya be standin' up, er jumpin' up an' down, er be actin' wild, wolley, weird, wicker er way-out. An' don't nobody be smokin' nuthin', 'cause the engine up front just might get excited, an' just might get ignited. Don't ya be a throwin off your ice ream sticks, an' paper cups. An' last of all, don't ya be danglin' yer arms and legs off the train, 'cause if ya stick out off fer a little too long, you may bring 'em back in a little too short.

Of course, th' most important rule is that nobody is ta be turnin' around an looking at yer handsome, good-lookin', swave, debonair, personable, modest, intelligent, resourceful, charmin' cornuductor at th' very tail end of this train. *(pause)* What's th' matter Lady, ain't you never seen a corn-ductor before?

Well, now just as soon as that there corn-ductor down on th' platform gives th' engineers th' signal, we'll be pullin' outa here.

(Signal) Well there's th' signal. Here we go, an' there we went. Did you feel that blinding burst of speed? Yessireee, why, we're a moving faster than a whole heard of man-eating mud turtles, a slipping and a sliding down to the creek on a salty Saturday in September.

As we leave, I want you to be sure and waive good-bye to that there conductor on the platform, cause if you don't waive goodbye, he won't a know that were a leavin'.

Lookee of there ta your left an' y'all see th' Six Flags over Texas Carousel Ride. That's a fancy name for a merry-go-round. There's one identical to this one at th' Smithsonian Institute. *(Passing the Merry-go-Round on the left.)*

That there track yore a seeing now is th' Six Flags Mini-mine train. We built it 'specially fer all ya little folks an' all you big chick-en's whats to scare to be a ridin' on th' Six Flags Over Texas Runaway Mine Train. It's guaranteed ta jar, jive, jump an' jolt you socks off with its mighty trestle, mighty track, and might mine trains.

To your right is th' Ghost Town Saloon. Y'all can see my friends are still playing' the poker game they started last Thursday. You may be a thinkin' that they is on a crash diet. That's not it at all, its just that the bartender has been forgettin' ta put the olives in there drinks.

Iffin' everyone will lookee ta yer left, y'all see th' Caddo Indians in their canoes. Little is it known that them canoes are faster than th' U.S.

Mail. That's cause not only do they have an injun in th' front, they had an injun in the rear. By th' way I'll bet cha'll don't know why th' Indians were th' first folks on th' American Continent? It's cause they had reservations!

Iffin y'all will cast yer peepers to yore right, you'll see th' scar-iest ride at Six Flags Over Texas. We call it th' Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike. *(Now we call it I-30).*

Now if you'll look there ta yer left, you'll see a cement pond where we corral our dolphins. Yessirree, we was gonna have George C. Scott teach us a dolphin how to talk, but Larry Zonka couldn't make it.

That great big ol' orange thang next to th' dolphin pool is th' worlds tallest land-based oil derrick. Yessireee, we got elevators there that'll take ya 300 feet into the sky, an' bring ya back down 320. Course, if ya don't want to go all the way to th' top, ya kin walk up them steps an' slide down on one of th' longest slides in this part of th' country.

Inside that funny locking building there to yer left is where ya kin see the Chevy Show. The Chevy Show is a real fine show. You had better see it before you leave the park tonight, 'cause it's awfully hard ta see it after ya leave. Off to your right is our Music Meal Theater.

To your left is the horseless carriages produced by the Chaparral Motor Car Company of Cleburne, Texas. In 1911 them thangs was selling better than buttered biscuits at th' State Fair, but Henry Ford came along and put 'em out of business, cause Ford had "a better idea".

In just another minute were gonna pull into th' Great Southwest Texas Depot an' when we do you folks that want ta get off can get off, and you people that want to stay on can stay on. But ya can't do both, an' ya can't do neither either, so you best make up your mind. It'll be just another second, just another minute, hold it, wait, wait till I give you the word. Hey there Mister, will you pleas pull your big, fat, hairy leg back into th' train? Oh! Sorry about that Lady!

Now hold it, wait... Let me give you th' word, hold it, wait... Word. I sed, "WORD". "WORD" Well, I done said the word three times, what are you a waitin' fer? Get off. This here train don't go no slower.

1977
**CASA MAGNETICA
SPIEL**

Downstairs

Buenos Dias (*Good Morning*) - Buenos Tarez (*good afternoon*) - Buenos Nochez (*good evening*) amigos, and welcome to *Casa Magnetica*. You are about to see the strangest house ever built by a man.

Don Juan of Madrid, an inventor of sorts, decided that his home was just like everyone else's and he wanted this place to be a little different. I think you'll agree he succeeded once you see the magnetic house. Up seems down and down seems up ...even mother nature seems to be a little confused about this place. So, be careful to watch your step and just follow this pathway.... (*open gate*)

First Room

You are now leaning in the first, and smaller, room of Don Juan's Casa Magnetica. Don Juan built his house with convenience in mind, and he believed too much of life is spent in the trivial matters of day-to-day existence, such as house cleaning. To help solve this problem, Don Juan invented this unique broom. Each day he would sweep out his house, and then simply let go of the broom. As you can see, it will stand wherever you leave it, a timesaving device indeed.

Having included many such devices in his house, Don Juan suddenly found himself with a large amount of free time on his hands.

Refusing to be idle, he took up the art of painting. Don Juan was a great inventor, but unfortunately not a great painter. In fact, he paint so slow, that the fresh fruit he often used as art subjects spoiled before he finished his paintings. In such cases, he would place the spoiled fruit on this table, and as you can see, it rolled up the table, out the window, down the mountain, never to bother Dan Juan again. (*Walk to chain and shake it*) And now, if you will kindly stagger into the next room, there is much more for you to see.

Second Room

Case Magnetica has been well preserved by Six Flags. You are now standing in Don Juan's dining room, just as it was many hundreds of years ago when he lived here himself. Continuing his policy of building a house of ease, Don Juan felt it necessary to have a simple way to get breakfast. Thus, he created this unique system, whereby the simple touch a lever, fruit is delivered right to your hand. (*Start the oranges rolling up the trough when you say "Continuing his policy..."*)

For all his greatness, Don Juan had one fault, he was eccentric. Living in the wilderness made food both scarce and hard to get. Because of this, Don Juan disliked dinner guests who were always stopping by. Applying all his inventive talents to the problem, he came up with an answer, this table. Should a guest happened by at meal time, and ask for, say, an orange, Don Juan would sit them on the far side of the table, and then roll one down. As you can see, the guest seldom got what he ask for, but soon got the idea, and never returned, for fear of starvation.

Now *mi amigos*, it is time to say "*adios*". We hope you are enjoying your visit at Six Flags and we hope that you come to visit Casa Magnetica again.

Hasta la vista.

LA SALLE'S RIVERBOAT ADVENTURE SPIEL

Leaving the Dock

Good day my friends, I would like to welcome you aboard our little French Riverboat the (Nadine, Elizabeth, Juliet, Annabelle, Henrietta, Suzanne, Marguerite, Maria, Isabelle, Paulette, Georgette). I am your captain and as we pull away from the dock, I would like to remind you to keep your arms and legs inside the boat at all times, for if you leave them out for just a 'little too long',they may come back a 'little too short'.

For we will be traveling down the dangerous Lavaca river which in 1861, our leader, Cavalier De LaSalle sailed looking for an alternate route to the Mississippi River. But he has was never been heard from since.

So that we don't meet up with his same fate, I have sent ahead a French Riverboat captain and two river scouts, Jacques and Pierre, there camp should be just around this bend, but wait? (excited voice).... oh no! it looks as though the Indians have attacked the camp.

Campsite

There is our river boat captain, lying on his chest. That's him in the arrow shirt. It looks as though he got the point of the Indian message. But I don't see our river scouts, Jacques or Pierre, anywhere about, perhaps they escaped with their lives and we can find them as we continue our journey down the river. I certainly hope so, because we will be lost without them.

Timber wolves

Over to my left is a pack of hungry timber wolfs and it looks like they had someone over for dinner. I don't think that they will be bothering us.

Spanish Mission

Over to my right is a more friendly scene. Some friendly Tejas Indians

are helping the Friar build the Mission San Francisco de los Tejas. You know, though, they have been building that Mission for 17 years and they still aren't through. Maybe they should just rename it....'Mission Impossible.'

Spanish Fort

But wait, (quietly) up ahead is a Spanish Fort. And as you all know, Spain and France have been at war for ten long years over this little piece of land known as Texas. Perhaps if we are very quiet, we can sneak by. But wait, they have spotted us. (As the cannons fire) Oh no. A near miss to the front and another to the side. We will have to abandon ship, Women and Children first, after the captain of course.. But wait, they have stopped. It appears as though the Spanish can't even hit the broad side of a little French River boat and we can continue on our journey in safety.

Jacques and Pierre

But don't look to my right. There's Jacques and Pierre, our two French River Scouts, hanging from that tree.

Oh well:

It looks like they are at the 'ends of their ropes'.

Oh Jacque and Pierre, they always were the 'swingers of the swamps'.

There they are, just 'hanging around'.

It seems that they found the last 'stretch of the river.'

Fur Trapper

I guess we will just have to travel on without them, but wait, look up in that tree, it is the Famous French Fur Trapper, Francis. I'll just ask him if it is safe to go on. (Yell out of the boat) Francis, is it safe to go on? Look, as you can clearly see, he is shaking his head back and forth, which in French means ? 'no.' We could turn around, but I don't think we would get past that Spanish Fort again, so we will have to continue onward. Wait, did you hear something ahead?

Cross Fire

Oh no, we are caught in a cross fire between these Indians on this side and our own Frenchman on the other. Everyone down to the bottom of the boat, for it would be quite a shame to be shot by one of our own country men.

I think that we made it safely by.

But look what the Indians have done to those barrels of wine. Once

King Louie finds out what is happening to the wine that he is shipping to Texas, he will start sending Milk instead.

Alligator

We have now entered the most dangerous part of the river, the 'uncharted territories'. As you can see, everywhere are dangerous alligators, just waiting to make a meal of us. Why I have been told that there was once an English Teacher that stuck her hand outside of the boat right here, (pointing to alligators open mouth) and now, she is teaching 'shorthand.'

War Canoe

Oh no, everyone down, that's a Caddo war party and those arrows are poisoned tipped, one scratch would mean instance death. That was very close, luckily they have decided not to fire.

Pop-Up Bear

Don't worry, that just a bear fishing for his dinner in the river.

Burial Pier

Over here is a Caddo Indian burial pier, the Indians buried their dead six feet above the ground in the hopes that that would give them a head start to the happy hunting grounds above.

Mother Bear

Here a momma bear and her cubs are stealing some honey from those bees. And boy are those bees mad. Then again, I bet you would be pretty mad if you came home one night and found out that some animals was trying to steal 'your honey.'

Indian Village

Over here is an Indian village and the Medicine man is trying to ward off the evil spirits. But wait, (excited) if you look carefully, you will see that all of the warriors are gone from the village. And when all of the Indian warriors are gone from an Indian village, it can only mean one thing, 'they are somewhere else.' Lets hope that we don't find out where.

The Cougar

Wait, everyone quite, there's a cougar looking for his dinner, one wrong move and we will be it. Quite everyone,.Careful, Careful, (Very loud scream) Oh no, look out. (calmer) I thought he had that little fat man at the back of the boat.

Bear fighting timber wolves

Here to my right a bear is fight off a pack of hungry timber wolfs. And

as you can clearly see, he is fighting them... 'bear handed'. I bet that he will... 'barely' escape from that situation. I just can't 'bear' to watch. Look though, there are only five wolves in that pack. If there had been one more, that poor bear would have been up against 'a six-pack'.

The Whirlpool

Oh no, everyone to the side of the boat, as you can see on my right, there's a river whirlpool dragging that poor soul to a watery grave. There is one thing that I can say about him however, he sure knows his way 'around' this swamp?

Beavers

Over here is a more friendly scene, a group of beavers are hard at work building a dam. But wait a minute, look out, (excited/) that tree is going to fall, T I M - B E R. Why, I do believe if that tree had been just a little bit longer, this boat would have been ...just a little 'bit shorter'. 'Leave it to Beaver' to pull a stunt like that. It seems that one have come to a fork in the river and I don't know which way to go. I guess we should try this way.

War Party

But look out, everyone down. We are surrounded by Caddo Warriors. I guess we should have gone the other way. Everyone smile and perhaps they will think we are friendly. It looked like it worked, they are letting us pass,

The Waterfall

but, oh no, here is why. We are heading for a waterfall and a solid rock wall behind it. The river is much too narrow to turn around here and we can't go back past those warriors. I guess this is the end of our journey. (The captain stops the boat) But wait, the wall is opening. (Boat starts back up) We must have discovered a secret Indian treasure cave, for the Indians were known to hide their treasure in caves such as this.

The Cave

Look out, (skeleton swings out from the dark) It looks like that poor sucker has been on 'a crash diet'. There is the treasure, it looks like many that have tried to take it have paid with their lives.

Oh no, the walls behind us are closing, we are trapped inside. (boat moving very slowly) But wait, the walls in front are opening, the Indians are repaying us with our lives for not disturbing their treasure. And look, there is the flag of France, viva La France, we have made it

back to Fort St. Louis and safety.

Back to Dock

As the boat approaches the dock, I would like to remind you to keep your arms and legs inside the boat and please remain seated until the boat comes to a complete stop. I hope you enjoy your day here at fun filled Six Flags Over Texas.

**POSTCARDS
FROM
THE PAST**

























