

TRAVEL

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IRIS SANDERSON JONES

Making friends on a flight to Atlanta

It was an early morning flight, and I had missed breakfast, so I was glad to see the flight attendant with her early morning snack and her coffee pot. Especially her coffee pot.

We were on a Delta Air Lines flight to Atlanta, on a plane with two seats on each side and three seats in the middle. Flight attendants were serving from aisles on both sides of the middle section when I was seated.

I had that desperate look that caffeine addicts get when they haven't had their morning coffee, so I was given one cup from the serving cart next to my seat and a second cup from the cart in the opposite aisle.

It was passed to me by an understanding coffee drinker in the next seat. I reciprocated by passing her my little paper cup of cantaloupe chunks.

"There are only three things in the world that I can't eat, and one of them is cantaloupe," I said.

"I'll never be able to ask you to the melon festival," she said. "I live in Howell and we have a melon festival every year."

Strangers don't stay strangers long when sharing breakfast on a plane, so Jackie Rogers and I were soon swapping stories about hometowns and travel. Jackie was born in Nashville, Mich. Her husband Russ, presently buried under earphones, was born and raised in Charlotte. They still have family in the Charlotte and Vermontville area, which should have given me a clue.

Russ works seven days a week May through September at Rogers Asphalt in Howell. Jackie is an accountant, so she can't leave town before the tax season ends. The Rogers were flying to Atlanta to visit their daughter, Margene, who graduated from Howell High School and Eastern Michigan University and now lives with her husband in Marietta, Ga.

We talked about travel patterns; no two travelers ever have the same script. Russ loves to fish in Lake St. Helen, north of West Branch, and the far northern wilderness of Ontario at Chimio Bay, and to hunt deer in Michigan and caribou in the Colorado mountains.

Jackie hunts too . . . she shot her first caribou in Colorado last December . . . but her real love is bowling. She bowls in Howell, and once a year she goes to national bowling competitions.

About this time I remembered that my secretary's husband, Jess Babs, came from Nashville. One of the women Jackie has been bowling with since high school days is Jess' grandmother, Louise Babs, who still lives in Nashville.

"Once a year, four of us longtime women friends go to Las Vegas," Jackie said, and then we started swapping casino stories.

The plane landed in Atlanta. We left by different aisles.

"Call me sometime."

"I will. You too."

Maybe we will. She seems like the kind of person I would like to know better. But even if we don't, we know a lot about one another after our two hours aboard the plane. I will think of her whenever I pass the Vermontville exit of the expressway or when I find myself within striking distance of a bowling alley.



Photos compliments of Michigan Travel Bureau

Thousands are expected to crowd Alma on Saturday, May 25, for the Highland Festival & Games. Here the bagpipe brigade marches by in the Parade of Tartans.

The log toss is one of your more popular events at Alma's Highland Festival & Games, coming up May 25.



Dancers like these can be seen at the Alma Highland Festival & Games May 25.

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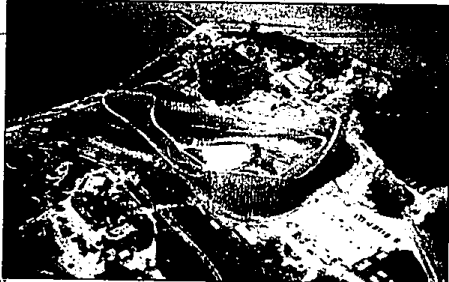
Cedar Point on a 'Mean Streak' with new coaster

By Doris Scharfenberg
special writer

Notice to persons who love to be stam-dunked through walls of negative gravity: Another stomach-defying gratification is cranked up and ready for your screams.

The world's highest wooden roller coaster will be launched Saturday, May 11, at Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio. The Mean Streak, a 47.5 million basket-weave of cross beams and buttressed pillars, containing 1.5 million board feet of Southern yellow pine, has been checked and rechecked for the big day.

Cedar Point's newest roller coaster, the Mean Streak, goes into operation Saturday as the park opens for the new season.



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Three 28-passenger trains have had their wheels, bolts and seat belts inspected. Passengers sit in steel-framed vehicles with wooden sides, L-shaped lay bars, seat belts, padded seat dividers and high-backed seats.

The cars will take coastermaniacs to the top of a 160-foot lift hill and drop them 155 feet at a 52-degree angle, reaching speeds of 65 miles per

hour when the track levels out five feet above ground. The coaster's mile-long track traces an oblong path three times while navigating 12 hills and valleys.

Why wood? Timber was used in the Mean Streak because a more pliable wooden structure gives riders an out-of-control feeling that can't be duplicated on steel coasters.

In 1990, fans took more than 14.3 million rides on Cedar Point's scream machines, which the Guinness Book of Records describes as the largest collection of its kind in the world. One classic, the Corkscrew flips riders upside down three times, sometimes directly above the midway.

Sending you downhill wet is the specialty of Soak City, an adjacent but separate Cedar Point attraction. There are 10 slithery water slides plus a splashy section for the tadpole set where kids slide through chutes and ladders, a training ground for the big stuff.

If riding the hills is not your cup of coffee, Cedar Point has other lures: Bengal vipers in circus acts, live stage shows, a Ferris wheel, jungle safari, roving musicians, dolphin and sea lion stunts, storybook characters and a 67-by-88-foot movie screen showing a film about transportation.

The history of Cedar Point as a playground goes back more than 100 years, with one of the original old hotels still on duty. The Breakers, built in 1905, has been designated a National Historic Landmark. Its Tiffany glass touches and five-sto-



The Mean Streak is the world's highest wooden roller coaster, complementing a plethora of similar contraptions at Cedar Point, a Sandusky, Ohio amusement park.

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