World's first rapids ride roars open this spring with the coming of Thunder River

Eight years ago a man sat watching the televised coverage of the Munich Olympics. Like millions of Americans engaged in this activity, his interest was casual. That is until one event, the kayak races, sparked a special interest.

If they could make a man-made river to simulate rapids for the Olympic races, he reasoned, why couldn't the same concept be used to create a free wheeling theme park ride that would let anyone experience white water rapid shooting?

The man was Bill Crandall, and as general manager of Astroworld he was in the perfect position to see the idea through. The result is the opening this spring of the world's first and only simulated whitewater river ride, Thunder River.

"This is the first totally new, unique ride that I've ever been involved with," said Crandall. "Most rides are a takeoff on an old ride with a new twist or a new design."

"Of course this is a takeoff too," he said with a grin, "only on Mother Nature's ride."

A Public Relations release describes the ride as, "...ten acres of whirlpools, cliffs, waterfalls, and rapids that race nature for its realism. Free-floating boats shoot into the river channel and encounter swelling waves and the magnetism of whitewater. Each boat floats with the whim of the river - first snaking through canyons into a lagoon that drops, curves, then sends the boat flying through a bottleneck of canyons only to confront two more rippling lagoons, bulging boulders, more stairstep rapids that whirl the boat at an estimated 30 mph towards a majes-
tic waterfall, and finally into a calm, clear lake."

That very descriptive paragraph gives an idea of what is in store with the ride - a project that has taken years of planning and design.

It's a lot of hard work," says Crandall. "It just takes time and effort and belief in the people who are doing it for you."

The company chosen to undertake this massive project is Intamin, a Swiss engineering firm that also designed the Greezed Lightnin'. After several years of studies and planning, a feasible design was worked out.

"One of the requirements was that it had to be completely free flowing," said Crandall, a factor that complicated the design process quite a bit. With no cables or guides, each ride will be a little different, but with only high power underwater jets to control the boat's course, there was also the problem of boats getting stuck at the mouths of the rapids channels. Round boats and a system of rotating "bumpers" solved the problem.

The river's course runs in a 1200 foot oval, with five areas of rapids and four lakes. The channel and reservoir will contain over one million gallons of water with an average depth of two to three feet.

To simulate the natural flow of water in a river, the channel has a fourteen foot drop built in from start to finish. Two huge pumps at the head of the river will pick up and return about 144,000 gallons of water a minute to the beginning of the ride.

Ten boats, weighing two tons each, will navigate the river. Each boat is thirteen feet wide and designed to carry 12 passengers. The boats should travel at about 25 miles an hour for an average ride of five to seven minutes.

"I can hardly wait to ride this one."

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Bet you didn't know......trivia and fun facts

- the ten acre Thunder River site is larger in area than the Greezed Lightnin' and Texas Cyclone sites put together
- approximately 100 average size backyards would fit into the ride site
- with the amount of water circulated during each daily 10-hour operation (one million gallons), the entire city of Pasadena, Texas could take a bath every two hours every day
- the entire population of Houston would be provided with a glass of water - plus the combined populations of Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, Boston, Phoenix... and New York City
- an individual could drink 8 glasses of water every day for 5,480 years

Novice river runners have a challenging river ride on the Guadalupe River when it moves water at a rate of 800 cubic feet per second. Experienced river runners get a thrill on water moving at a rate of 1500 cubic feet per second. Thunder River's pumps will create whitewater that moves at a rate of 3200 cubic feet per second!
The ride in progress

Left: Huge concrete walls support the 350hp pumps that power the Thunder River rapids. The end of the pump fits into the hole this workman is preparing.

Below: It takes conveyor belts this big to move the two ton boats. Bottom: Director of Operations Manager Gene Weeks points out a detail on the Thunder River boat model to a host. The Thunder River model has been on display at the ride site with a host or hostess present to answer any questions for guests.
Special Events

There’s much more in store....

"Working at Astroworld is a whole lot more than working at any other job," said Steve LePore, personnel services supervisor. "At any other job you put in your eight hours, clock out, and go home. Here you put in your hours, clock out, and go to one of the great special events we have planned."

In charge of arranging all the special events planned for the Host and Hostess team, LePore is looking forward to this year’s line up.

"It’s going to be super," he said. "Because the Park is closed on Mondays this year, we’ve been able to schedule all kinds of things when everyone is off work."

Parties, bus trips, free movies, softball leagues -- it’s all just part of the "fringe benefits" you get as part of the Astroworld team.

To start off, there’s a great line up of recent feature films. None of the movies on this year’s schedule have ever been shown at the Park before. The movies are scheduled for Friday nights during the spring and fall, and Monday nights during the summer operating season.

On those nights the Showcase will be turned into a mini movie theater, complete with popcorn and soda. Several of the scheduled movies are date nights where each Host and Hostess can bring a date.

The movie season started out last Friday with a date night for the showing of "Superman." The next movie night will be held May 9. "Animal House," starring the irrepressible John Belushi, is on the bill.

Monday, June 2, Jim Henson’s internationally popular Muppets make an Astroworld debut in their first feature film. This movie is for kids of all ages. We follow Kermit the Frog and friends on their often rocky and always humorous road from the swamp to Hollywood stardom. The movie also has a "people" cast that is out of this world.

Another out of this world movie will be shown Monday, June 30. We will not be alone when "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" shows -- it’s another date night for all to bring their honeys along. Special effects in this movie make it as close as possible to a real close encounter with visitors from another planet. Richard Dreyfuss stars in this Steven Spielberg extravaganza.

It’s time for laughs when the Mel Brook’s classic "Blazing Saddles" rides in Monday, July 7. This spoof on the great American Western stars Mel Brooks, Clevon Little, and Gene Wilder in an outrageously, uproarious, burlesque style comedy.

Jane Fonda and Michael Douglas star Monday, July 21, in "The China Syndrome," a drama about an accident at a nuclear power plant. This movie was given special significance after the Three Mile Island Accident, and it promises to be a gripping and thrilling tale of the uses and abuses of power.

It’s romantic comedy Monday, August 4, as Jane Fonda stars opposite Robert Redford in "The Electric Horseman." He’s a washed up cowboy star and she’s a newscaster out to do a feature story on him. A love interest develops between the two replacing their original dislike.

There will be still more films in the fall, but they haven’t been scheduled as of yet.

Parties are another big part of special events. Coming up in May is what LePore termed "the social event of the season." Friday, May 23 will be the Western section party, and another chance to bring a date to Astroworld.

The party will be held in the Western section of the Park, with the Gunslinger and Greeted Lightnin’ running. To help give the event that Western flair, about one hundred cowboy hats will be given away.

According to LePore, a DJ from one of the country stations in town will be here. "They’ll spin tunes and teach us all how to do the "Cotton Eye Joe," he promised. A country style dance contest is also in the plans.

"It’s gonna be a biggie," assures LePore.

Another area party will be held in the newest section of the Park on June 9. It will give everyone a chance to try out the new Thunder River and to play the new putt-putt golf game. If you have to miss this one, there will be another
than "just" another job

Thunder River party held July 24.
The softball league game schedule hasn't been set yet, but the Opening Day Picnic will be held June 16 to kick the season off. LePore said there will probably be an exhibition game held between a team from management and the winners from last year. There will be lots of picnic activity -- horse shoes, volleyball, and plenty of picnic hot dogs and soda.

According to LePore the softball season will open in mid-June and run through the end of July. Everyone is welcome to play. Check in department offices for details on your teams.

The Texas Softball Tournament comes around July 9, preceded by the Beat Six Flags Over Texas spirit weekend and spirit poster contest. This will be the second year for the all star game between the two parks. Astroworld will be defending the title they took last year when the first game was played in Dallas.

As if there wasn't enough going on here in Houston, bus trips to our sister parks in St. Louis and Atlanta are also being offered. The trip to Six Flags Over Mid-America is scheduled for June 22-25, and the Six Flags Over Georgia trip for July 14-16.

"This is an excellent opportunity to see the sister parks," said LePore, "especially this year because being closed Mondays means you only need to find one replacement."

Sign ups for the trips will be held a few weeks in advance. The cost of the trip covers bus fare and free accommodations are available at the parks.

"The Watermelon Cut and Spit gives everyone a chance to make a fool of themselves and still get a slice of watermelon to cool down," said LePore. There will be free watermelon for everyone in the Canteen June 28. Those talented and daring enough can step outside and attempt to spit a watermelon seed farther than anyone else. Better practice though -- it's just one seed spit per person, and the winner has a prize coming.

Another event that takes some practicing is the AstrOlympics which will be held July 28. Typical events are egg tosses, wheelbarrow races, three legged relays, and egg and spoon races. LePore promises many "never before played" games at this year's games.

"This will be a big day because we can go all day for the first time and have department teams competing against one another instead of just shifts," said LePore.

Departmental teams accumulate a proportionate number of points for first, second, and third place wins. The department with the most points at the end of the day is declared the AstrOlympics winner.

AstrOlympic t-shirts will be sold again this year but will be different from last year's. "This year the shirts will be pull-over t-shirts that can be offered at a lower price so that everyone who wants one can have one," said LePore.

Yet another event is scheduled for anyone with stage fever in their blood. They'll be given the opportunity to show off their talent, or lack of talent, on August 11 when the No Talent Show is presented.

"It's billed No Talent and that's what we're looking for," said LePore. It's Gong Show style entertainment, with wild, crazy, and zany being the words for the evening.

One week later on Monday, Aug. 18, will be the last big party of the season aptly called the Big Bash.

"It's an end-of-the-year party held in a ballroom of a local hotel with a band, refreshments -- the whole works," said LePore.

The big event of the night is the announcement of the Bahama trip winners. Thirty-five lucky hosts and hostesses will be awarded with a merit award of round trip air fare and hotel accommodations on a Bahama beach.

There will be even more special events than the ones already mentioned -- fresh donut and ice cream give-aways, free meals in the canteen on special nights, possibly a volleyball and soccer season, and more events for the fall that haven't been scheduled yet.

A lot of these events were ideas offered by the kids last year," said LePore, "so it is really their program." He invites anyone who might have any suggestions or comments to let him know.

"It's never too late," he says.
Coney Island party

The Coney Island section of the Park came alive after hours on March 29 for the first big Special Events party of the year. About 700 hosts and hostesses came out to ride the Cyclone and Whirling Dervish, play games at a special half price rate, and consume free chili dogs and coke. Below: Director of General Services Jerry Oliver, like many other permanent employees, helped out running things, giving the host and hostess team a chance on the other side of the counter. Bottom: Chili dogs are Director of Food Service Russell Melton’s speciality, and he’s right there helping to serve them up. Right: This host is having a good time proving that those inch wide cigars really do smoke. Opposite Page Top: A combination of luck, skill, and a whole lot of game coupons has this group leaving with an armload of prizes. Opposite Page, Bottom Left: She wasn’t real sure that she even wanted to ride the Whirling Dervish, but she did anyway. Opposite Page, Bottom Right: It takes total concentration to hoop one of those animals.
Winter at Astroworld means improvements

Wintertime doesn’t mean vacation at Astroworld, even though the Park isn’t open to guests. Wintertime means time to repair, improve and get ready for next season.

Maintenance has been kept very busy this winter working on a whole list of improvements. Here are just a few of them:

- new administrative office building, including all new departmental offices and Company Store
- remodeling of all women’s restrooms with the addition of decorator tile and sink vanities (Below left)
- remote control vehicle attraction by VIP lounge which will include remote control boats, trains, tanks, and cars-themed with a rustic, modernistic touch with a cedar covered area
- landscaped rest area where the Astrowheel’s queue house was located
- “The Big Red Barn”, 11,880 square feet of picnic pavilion located adjacent to the Alpine Sleights; 180 picnic tables to start out (Opposite Page Bottom)
- later this summer a putt-putt golf course in the Thunder River section along with a Food Service stand
- by summer, a gas station on the corner of Fannin and the 610 feeder road
- new service roads that surround the Park
- greenhouse in full use with many new plants and hanging baskets (Right)
- chaser lights on the Cyclone, the Astroneedle, and Coney Island games section
- overhauled fountain in front of Chat ‘n Chew
- new coat of paint on Dexter and the Astroneedle
- new paint and face lift on many areas of the Park including Country Fair, Western, and parts of Americana Square
- new inlaid rock edging on Lagoon
- remodeling of International Bazaar with the addition of floor to ceiling windows, rock finishing on outside, and flower beds
AWARDS AND

ATTRACTIONS
HOST AND HOSTESS AWARDS
March 9
Hostess .......... Janice Alsandor
Host ............ Daniel Casteneda
March 16
Hostess .......... Dayn Terrell
Host ............ Danny Gardner
Crew .......... Fast Draw/ Day
March 23
Hostess .......... Hope Schlein
Host ............ Gary Alexander
Crew .......... Super Shifter/ Day
March 30
Hostess .......... Bonnie Aubry
Host .......... Nick Anderson
April 6
Hostess .......... Fances Villagomez
Host ............ Lawrence Dunleavy
Crew .......... Section III/ Day

PROMOTIONS
Gary Alexander, C.I. Skeeball Foreman
Janice Alsandor,
C. I. Super Shifter Foreman
Karen Alsandor, Shoot the Star Foreman
Nick Anderson, C. I. Pitch Foreman
Barbara Bonner, Section 4 Foreman
Christina Cavozes, Supervisor in Trng.
Matthew R. Dunleavy,
Shoot the Star Foreman
Charles Jones, C. F. Stock Foreman
Kay Keemer, C. I. Super Shifter Foreman
Yolanda Montes, Seasonal Office Clerk
Joe A. Pequeno, Section 3 Foreman
Keith Rankins, C. F. Warehouse Foreman
Margaret Sullivan, Supervisor
Kelly Thornton, C. I. Warehouse Foreman
Karen Von Goten, Supervisor
Caterina Wible, Section 1 Foreman

Vanessa Wiltz, Section 2 Foreman
Kathy Bland, Section 3 Foreman
Dana Czarowitz, Seasonal Office Clerk
Lawrence Dunleavy, Section 1 Foreman
Terrell Price, Water Balloon Foreman
Darrell Maignaud,
Water Balloon Foreman
Cheryl Crossman,
Marvel's Flyers Foreman
Lisa Hastings, Fast Draw Foreman

FOOD SERVICE
HOST AND HOSTESS AWARDS
March 9
Hostess .......... Mildred Whitely
Host ............. Jim Gant
Crew .......... Grubstake
March 16
Hostess .......... Karla Taylor
Host ............. Ben Schaeffer
Crew .......... Chicken Restaurant
March 23
Hostess .......... Pat Edwards
Host ............. John Alameda
Crew .......... La Hacienda
March 30
Hostess .......... Margarita Garrido-Cortes
Host ............. Daniel Flores
Crew .......... La Cantina
April 6
Hostess .......... Cheryl Whitmer
Host ............. Jon Kocen
Crew .......... Coney Dog Corner

PROMOTIONS
Pryor Wilson, Supervisor in Training
Karen Garney, Seasonal Office Clerk
Linda Lyle, Seasonal Office Clerk
William Holt,
Lead Manager Chicken Restaurant
Brad Riley, Lead Manager Chat-n-Chew
Bertha Macias,
Lead Manager La Hacienda
Robert Hernandez,
Lead Manager La Cantina
Robert Douzak, Manager Passage East
Susan Stouffer,
Lead Manager Papa Russo's
Melinda Hergesheimer,
Manager Carve & Cutlet
Andy Alexander,
Manager Coney Dog Corner
Keith Rowley, Manager Malt Shop
Angela Martin, Manager Meat Market
Mel Boone, Manager Passage East
Jim Gent, Manager Passage East
Cindy Koserek,
Manager Refreshment Corner
Mimi Villotreix,
Manager Refreshment Corner
Beth Allen, Manager Grubstake
John Lynn,
Kitchen Manager La Hacienda
Mildred Whitely,
Manager Marvel-Us Drinks
Sheree Hoffman,
Manager Sipper Operations
Lillia Eggins, Manager Soft Serve
Lisa Tully, Manager Coney Island
Edward Rosenmesser,
Manager Chicken Restaurant
James Alix, Manager Fish-n-Chips
Ben Schaeffer, Manager La Hacienda

MERCHANDISE
HOST AND HOSTESS AWARDS
March 9
Hostess .......... Connie Shaw
Host ............. Donald Eastopp
Crew .......... Workcrew

FRIENDS DAY CONTEST
$2,000 IN TOTAL PRIZE MONEY
COUPONS REDEEMABLE FOR $10 OFF SEASON PASS
OR
BUY A ONE DAY TICKET AT REGULAR PRICE –
GET ONE FREE
Coupons valid May 3 - 4 only
TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS?
WE CAN HELP!
COME BY THE PERSONNEL OFFICE FOR ASSISTANCE WITH YOUR CARPOOL NEEDS.
AS THE WORLD TURNS

As always, there’s been a lot of changes and improvements made at all the Six Flags parks. Here’s a quick look at major new attractions.

. . . Six Flags Over Texas has a new wooden roller coaster which they have named the Judge Roy Scream. The coaster goes around a lake near the entrance, taking up seven acres of land and extending the park boundaries.

. . . Six Flags Over Georgia has added a whole new section -- Jolly Roger's Island. The pirate themed section features a new rocking boat ride called the Flying Dutchman. Shaped like a giant pirate's boat, the ride swings guests on a 175 degree arc. The new section also features a new “Jamboree” type live show, a games section, restaurant, merchandising shop, and a Jolly Roger character.

. . . Six Flags Magic Mountain has also added a rocking boat ride this year; theirs is named the Buccaneer. They also have several new shows, - an aqua arena for Dolphin and aqua sport shows; the Magic Moment Marionettes Theater with a puppet show; and the Great Rock and Roll Time Machine which features a multi-media special effects show illustrating the history of rock and roll from the 50's through the present. They have also redesigned and reopened their roller coaster, the Colossus, which is the world's largest and tallest coaster.

. . . Six Flags Over Mid-America is another park that has added a rocking boat ride, also called the Buccaneer. Other improvements include making a permanent attraction out of the Haunted House that was a Halloween special last season, and opening a ride called the Rock n' Reel which combines film and movement to create a multi-sensory attraction.

. . . Six Flags Great Adventure has the third Buccaneer rocking boat ride in the Six Flags System. They have also broken ground for a new wardrobe building.

It was the Deltas against the rules... the rules lost!

The Astroworld Star is published by and for the personnel at Astroworld, a member of the Six Flags family located at 9001 Kirby, Houston, Texas 77064.

Editor: Sue Kettlenbrink

The beginning of the 80's is bringing an Astroworld newspaper with a new name and a new look. The former Marvelous Times has become the new Astroworld Star. From now on the paper will be printed in this smaller format and on this type of paper. You can look for an edition once a month during weekend operation and every two weeks during the summer operating months.

Our aim is to inform and entertain all Astroworld employees. Any questions, comments, or suggestions you might have are more than welcome.

If anyone is interested in working on the paper, please drop by the Personnel office and let me know. Experience is helpful, but it isn't as important as wanting to work.