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For Skerbeck Entertainment



ON THE COVER:

Ottaway Amusement Company at the 2018 Sundown Salute, Junction City, Kansas.
Photo by Luke Townsend.

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MIDWAY MOMENT



Sharon Barlow

The definition of midway is halfway through a distance. I find this somewhat odd that a word that is synonymous with halfway would be the same word for a place that is always full of the most thrilling and beautiful rides, the most tempting and tastiest food creations, as well as the most challenging of games. In another word, fun. Because in my experience the travel amusement industry NEVER does anything halfway. In the words of Danny Ottaway of Ottaway Amusement Company, we all "Go Big or Go Home!" It is with that premise in mind that we are thrilled to introduce you to MIDWAY Magazine. Every month we will endeavor to bring you the full story of events, shows, concessionaires, and manufacturers that keep this industry moving.

In this inaugural issue, we will introduce those of you who don't already know him to Danny Ottaway. For decades, Ottaway Amusement Company has entertained people throughout Kansas and northern Oklahoma. Danny's unique style and penchant for doing things in a somewhat unconventional manner inspired the title of this article. Regardless, I hope you enjoy reading the article even half as much as I enjoyed working with Danny on it.

Jeff Swartz, owner of Hitch-Hiker Manufacturing, also enjoyed helping Danny create something spectacular for his midway as he built not one, not two, but three new concession trailers for Ottaway Amusement Company. Jeff shares the thought and the process behind the creation and engineering of a trailer package he describes as "Spectacular."

Covering this amazing industry for more than a decade, Kevin Freese is a professional writer who is passionate about sharing your stories. This month, he brings us the latest on the Skerbeck Entertainment Group, a carnival deeply rooted in show business with a history that reaches back more than 150 years to Bohemia. I can assure you their most recent news is truly a rhapsody.

We also have the privilege of sharing with you a story of Sean Magill. Most everyone who has a game is familiar with Caravan Softys and the beautiful plush they provide to midways throughout North America. As passionate as he is about this business, Sean is perhaps even more passionate about helping the homeless and abused in his local community. In true industry fashion, he has found a fun way to do it. Please read his story, and if you feel moved, please donate to his cause.

As the summer heats up and fair season kicks in, you will want to read Bucky Elkins', Carnival Safety Training, tips for keeping your employees trained and your midway safe.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who have encouraged me to dedicate this magazine to the greatest industry this country has ever seen. My promise to you is that I will never do this halfway.

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DANNY OTTAWAY

By Sharon Barlow

DOES IT "MY WAY"

Frank Sinatra skyrocketed to fame in the early 1940's becoming a star both on the stage and the big screen. Renowned for his dynamic stage presence and bright blue eyes, Frank was often referred to as Ol' Blue Eyes even that, however, was overshadowed by his vibrant personal life and alleged ties to organized crime. Frank's penchant for disregarding convention became the inspiration for songwriter, Paul Anka, who penned the hit, *My Way*, with Frank Sinatra in mind. Frank Sinatra released the song in early 1969, and the song quickly became a hit both in the United States and Europe. While *My Way* was often considered to be Frank's signature song, it was

also recorded by another star known for his looks, stage presence, and blatant disregard for convention, Elvis Presley. Likewise, the travel amusement industry was created by men who left conventional careers behind, traveling each and every highway to bring their unique brand of entertainment to midways throughout the country. Few, however, quite capture the essence of the Frank Sinatra song, as Danny Ottaway, who freely rejects the conventional and continues to do things "*My Way*."

OTTAWA WAY

AMUSEMENT

COMPANY



Photo by Luke Townsend



Photo by Catwalk Studios

As Frank Sinatra was launching his solo career and becoming the idol of bobby soxers across the country, Danny Ottaway's great grandfather and great uncle were starting Ottaway Amusement Company in Wichita, Kansas where they built miniature steam trains. In 1946, they were joined by another well-known name in the amusement industry, Harold Chance. Danny laughs, "I had to call Dick Chance to make sure I had all of my history correct, but when Harold Chance came back from World War II, he started working as a shop foreman for my great grandfather. That is actually how Harold Chance first became involved in the industry. They built 93 of these trains between 1946 and 1954."

By 1949, the Ottaway family began to diversify and opened Joyland Amusement Park in Wichita, Kansas. "Harold laid all the tracks for the train at this amusement park," Danny shares. "According to Dick, my family offered his dad the opportunity to run this train and take all the revenue it generated. After a few years, it appeared as if maybe Harold was making too much money from the train, so my great grandfather offered him the train shop in exchange for the train operation at the park. Of course, Ottaway Amusement Company became the basis for Chance Manufacturing."

While Danny's father, Bob Ottaway, grew up working at Joyland Amusement Park, by the time he was a young man, he recognized that there was already a great deal of family involved, and if he wanted to make any real money, he needed to look another direction. "He liked the traveling end of it," Danny admits. "So, in the early 60's, he partnered with a man named Walt Foster out of Dodge City. At the time, my dad had games and two or three kiddie rides. Walt Foster had a majority of the rides. They called it Foster & Ottaway Shows."

As Frank Sinatra's hit was topping the charts, Bob

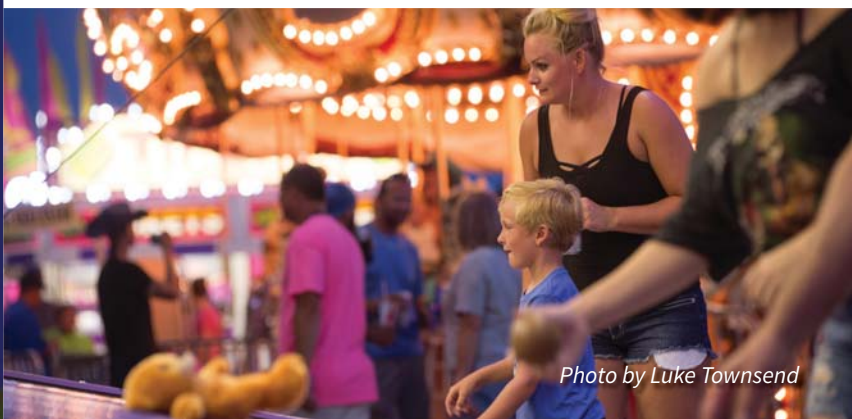


Photo by Luke Townsend



Photo by Catwalk Studios

Ottaway decided to do things his way. Splitting from his partner, he gave new birth to the Ottaway Amusement Company as a traveling carnival. When Bob passed away in 1988, Danny and his sisters, Sandra Ottaway and Vicki Flattery, were already an integral part of the show. “At that point,” Danny recalls, “I had some of my own equipment, and I was partners with him on some equipment. He willed the corporation to my sisters and me. Then when my brother-in-law, Chris Flattery, joined us, the four of us became partners.”

“I’ll never forget when that happened,” Danny chuckles. “Chris was an attorney, and by 1988, he had already been practicing law for five years while Vicki traveled with the show and ran our popcorn wagon. Since they had two children at the time, he would stay home, work, and raise the kids. Once my dad died, Chris decided to quit his law practice. He bought a brand new Otterbacher food trailer and got in the food business. Really the biggest reason

he did it was he wanted his family to be together.”

According to Danny, he bought his sister, Sandra’s, share of the corporation 15 years ago, but Vicki and Chris continued to travel with Ottaway Amusement Company until the end of the 2017 season. “Vicki and Chris were an intricate part of the operation,” Danny confesses. “They were my partners! Their children, Laney, Tim, and Carley were also an important part of the show. When they retired, I lost a big part of my staff.”

Additionally, Danny was faced with the decision of how to handle the food on the show. “They had three food trailers,” he says, “a popper, a funnel cake trailer, and a fry trailer. My wife and I were faced with the decision, do we book in this food? Or, do we buy our own trailers and get in the food business?”

Danny goes on, “All my friends in the industry told me I would be a fool to

book in the food. The food is huge. I needed to be in the food business.”

Although Danny had the option of buying his sister’s trailers, he knew they no longer fit in with the look he wanted for his show or his philosophy of “go big or go home.” When he asked for advice on what trailers to buy, he was directed to New Middletown, Ohio, home of Hitch-Hiker Manufacturing. “I have always been a loyal Otterbacher client,” Danny admits. “I have bought more than 40 trailers from Gary Otterbacher over the years. Since he no longer manufactured food concession trailers, Danny Brown, owner of Brown’s Amusements, directed me to Jeff and Holly Swartz. Then, I met so many great people who owned Hitch-Hiker trailers through them. Kerry and Christina Benner from Penn Valley Shows, the Powers & Thomas clan, and the Houghton’s have all been a tremendous help to us. Any questions we have had, they have been right there with answers. They all said whatever my sister and brother-in-law were grossing



with their business, I should plan on a 30 to 50 percent increase.”

Danny is sure many in the industry thought he was biting off more than he could chew, but still, he did things his way and invested close to a million dollars in three new Hitch-Hiker trailers. “So, the food trailers are big,” Danny raves, “but they are beautiful! What an asset to the show!”

The Ottaway Amusement Company’s route keeps the show primarily in Kansas and northern Oklahoma, so Danny feels like the show’s size perfectly matches the route. However, he works diligently to ensure his rides are as beautiful as his new concession trailers. “While I may say go big, we definitely don’t need more rides,” he laughs. “The show is really as big as it needs to be. We carry 18 rides now, but I am taking delivery of a new Kolmax Flying Dumbo ride this fall. So, I will most likely retire one of my older kiddie rides. The Flying Dumbo is a gorgeous ride, and although I call it a kiddie ride, it’s really a ride for all ages. For an 18 ride show, it’s really going to stand out.”

Other rides on Ottaway Amusement Company’s midway include a Tilt-a-whirl, a Battech Downdraft, an Eyerly Spider and Rock-O-Plane, and a Wisdom Sizzler and Viper. “We just retrofitted our Ferris wheel with an E-Works Pro LED lighting system,” Danny shares. “We also added an E-Works lighting



Photo by Catwalk Studios



Photo by Luke Townsend



package to our ARM Rock Star, but the ride I’m most excited about, even though I’ve had it for two years is my KMG Freak Out. I just love that ride! I love looking at it, and I love riding it. It’s fun. All last season, I tried to ride it at least once every evening.”

While he has beautiful rides and three of the finest food trailers money can buy, Danny feels like his greatest asset is his people. “One of our biggest competitive advantages is our cleanliness,” he says, “but we pride ourselves first and foremost on our personnel. Let’s face it, one of the first things a guest will look at is the people, and they notice if a worker is clean, has a clean shirt on, and is well groomed. My guys don’t always like it, but they know when their hair reaches a certain length, it’s time for a haircut. I’ll allow a mustache, but I don’t have any beards.”

Danny continues, “We often get compliments, and they are usually about our staff’s cleanliness and friendliness. You know one thing that sticks in my mind is for 23 years, I would provide five or six rides to the State Fair of Texas. So, I attended the safety meetings in Dallas with Red Wood. I remember Red Wood telling his employees, ‘Gentlemen, I am not paying your wages. Our customers are paying your wages. They come out here to have a good time. Why not give them a smile and treat them with respect?’ I have never forgotten that, and I tell my guys the same thing.”

A majority of Danny Ottaway’s personnel are H-2B laborers

■ ■ So, the food trailers are big,”
Danny raves,
“but they are
beautiful! What
an asset to the
show! ■ ■





Photo by Luke Townsend



Photo by Luke Townsend

he recruits from South Africa through New Horizons, a company he has worked with for 15 years. “I get a total of 25 people,” he shares. “This year I am so lucky that 19 of them are returning from last year. To my knowledge, I am one of the few show owners who trains these gentlemen to drive. They get a commercial driver’s license through me, so when they return it’s just a matter of visiting the Department of Motor Vehicles and renewing their licenses. Then I have 19 CDL drivers.”

“I personally teach these guys to drive tractor trailers,” Danny goes on. “It’s a huge investment of time and money, but when you get 19 of them returning, it’s worth it.”

While Danny’s propensity to invest his time and resources in people has proven beneficial to his midway, it has proven even more valuable in his personal life as he met his wife Galina in a most unconventional manner. “I tell the story of how we met a lot,” Danny jokes. “When I do, I will come home and tell Galina, ‘Honey, I told our story today.’ She will laugh, ‘Oh my, who did you bore today?’”

“Anyway,” he continues, “since I had already failed at marriage twice, I thought I might should take a little different approach. After doing some research, I learned that due to all the wars in Eastern Europe there are approximately 83 women per every 100 men there. Thinking I should look for a place where I might be in more demand, I searched the internet and found a Phoenix-based company that had been organizing singles tours in the Ukraine and Russia for 15 years.”

After signing up for one of these trips in December 2009, Danny boarded a plane for the Ukraine with 24 other single American men. “Our first stop was in Odessa,” he recalls. “There were three major cities on our itinerary, and we were scheduled to stay in each city for three days. The company had planned for sightseeing, but more importantly, they arranged for these social events that would be attended by anywhere from 150 to 200 single women. Ideally, the goal was to meet a special woman from a totally different culture.”

Danny laughs, “I really had no idea how different these



women would prove to be. These women were beautiful, but very few of them could speak enough English to carry on a conversation. Marriage is difficult enough for me, let alone to have someone I can't even talk to! Fortunately, the tour company had hired 25 local women who did speak fluent English to act as translators."

Danny attended two of these events before he walked into a third one where he spotted a young lady across the room who spurred his interest. "She was stunningly beautiful with big blue eyes. I thought to myself, I better get to this one before someone else does. I marched up to her and introduced myself, and she replied in perfect English, 'Hello, my name is Galina.' As the conversation flowed, I found myself becoming more and more smitten with this woman. It was several minutes before I looked at her name tag and noticed the word 'Interpreter' beneath her name."

Danny's interpreter, however, quickly let him know she was not interested in a relationship. "Like me, she had been married twice, and she had recently broken up with a boyfriend. She warned me about some of the women in the room who were only involved in the program for the prospect of fine dining and shopping. After we parted, I mingled with some of the other girls, but I really couldn't take my eyes off Galina. Then, she introduced me to this very attractive, petite blond named Natasha."

"Of course, she didn't speak any English," Danny goes on. "So, I hired Galina to act as my interpreter. I couldn't tell her at the time, but the only reason I wanted to spend time with Natasha was so I could spend more time with Galina."

Danny spent the next few days touring the Ukraine with the young blonde and his interpreter, whom he became



Photo by Luke Townsend



Photo by Luke Townsend

increasingly interested in. When he left the Ukraine, he began a long-distance relationship with Galina, and by December 2010, he had convinced her to bring her five-year-old daughter, Yuval, and come to the United States. “We just celebrated our seventh anniversary,” Danny shares. “It’s been fabulous and the best thing that has ever happened to me. I can’t tell you how happy I am with this woman.”

Today, Galina, her now 13-year-old daughter, and her mother manage the food for Ottaway Amusement Company. “When Galina first arrived in the United States, she wanted something she could do on the midway without cutting into anyone else’s business,” Danny says. “She tried face painting, but she, my daughter, and my mother-in-law are doing a fantastic job managing our food operation.”

With so much time and money as well as himself and his family now invested in Ottaway Amusement Company, Danny has turned to a somewhat unconventional method to attract the people to his midway. He explains, “I had a lady from Cox Media contact me recently to discuss geo-targeted display advertising. I don’t know much about computers,

but I introduced this lady to Melissa Fontaine who works for me. She’s done a fabulous job for me, and she knew exactly what this lady was talking about. So, we are in the process of launching this new advertising campaign.”

“I feel like this is really something that can translate into profits for the carnival industry,” Melissa adds. “We are working with a technical team from Cox Media who will research a specific demographic like 18 to 24-year old’s who’ve shown an interest in outdoor recreation within a 30-mile radius of a city where we will be playing. We will start campaigning ads in that town at least two weeks prior to our arrival in that town. When someone in our demographic goes on line within that time period, our ad will pop up. If the person clicks on the ad, they are redirected to a landing page on our website where we can offer them a coupon to visit the event. When they present the coupon at the ticket box, we can translate our advertising into real world profits.”

Melissa continues, “You have to be creative with your ad placement. This goes specifically to where we want it. Plus, we get analytics from our website, so we know how much our page visits have increased. It’s one hundred percent trackable.”

As Ottaway Amusement Company continues to travel each and every highway throughout Kansas and Northern Oklahoma, Danny Ottaway continues to chart his own course. Some may feel he is biting off more than he can chew, but undoubtedly he still stands tall in an industry where men reject the conventional and embrace the unique. While Frank Sinatra released his song almost 50 years ago, Danny Ottaway continues to manage his life and show “my way.”



"MY WAY"

And now, the end is near
And so, I face the final curtain
My friend, I'll say it clear
I'll state my case, of which I'm certain
I've lived a life that's full
I've traveled each and every highway
But more, much more than this
I did it my way
Regrets, I've had a few
But then again, too few to mention
I did what I had to do
And saw it through without exemption
I planned each charted course
Each careful step along the byway
And more, much more than this
I did it my way
Yes, there were times, I'm sure you knew
When I bit off more than I could chew
But through it all, when there was doubt
I ate it up and spit it out
I faced it all and I stood tall
And did it my way
I've loved, I've laughed and cried
I've had my fill my share of losing
And now, as tears subside
I find it all so amusing
To think I did all that
And may I say - not in a shy way
Oh no, oh no, not me
I did it my way
For what is a man, what has he got
If not himself, then he has naught
To say the things, he truly feels
And not the words of one who kneels
The record shows I took the blows
And did it my way
Yes, it was my way

By Paul Anka

Photo by Luke Townsend



CARAVAN SOFTOYS

DO SOMETHING

I woke up this morning
Saw a world full of trouble now, thought
How'd we ever get so far down, and
How's it ever gonna turn around
So I turned my eyes to Heaven
I thought, "God, why don't
You do something?"
Well, I just couldn't bear the thought of
People living in poverty
Children sold into slavery
The thought disgusted me
So, I shook my fist at Heaven
Said, "God, why don't You do
something?"
He said, "I did, yeah, I created you"
(now listen)

If not us, then who
If not me and you
Right now, it's time for us to
do something, yeah
If not now, then when
Will we see an end
To all this pain
Oh, it's not enough to do nothing
It's time for us to do something
-Matthew West

DOES SOMETHING

A cold rain slaps the windshield as a truckdriver pulls his load off the lot, long hours in his future as he heads to the next spot. The rain and the dark converge to create a veil so dense that he almost misses the man standing on the corner with a handwritten sign in his hand, "Hungry, homeless, please help." He considers the hours he spent in tear down and the drive ahead of him, but he knows he's the last one off the lot. While he doesn't have much in his pocket, he knows it's more than the homeless man has in his. Throughout North America, scenarios like this are becoming all too common as economy and circumstances conspire to render men, women, and children destitute and on the streets. In Montreal, a recent survey revealed that more than 3,000 people were currently

homeless and that does not account for the thousands who were a part of the hidden homeless, those who sleep on friends' couches or floors. While there are various organizations that want to help, assistance such as this requires more than just recognizing that there is an issue. It requires people to do something. Sean Magill, president of the toy manufacturer, Softoys, is committing his talents and his resources to Hockey Helps the Homeless, an organization dedicated to eradicating this growing concern.

According to Hockey Helps the Homeless more than a quarter of a million Canadians access homeless emergency services or sleep outside in any given year and more than 30,000 people are homeless on any given night. Initially unaware of the



statistics, Sean was excited to become a part of the growing program three years ago. “A friend of mine who had been involved for several years asked me to play for his team,” Sean shares. “I think even one person being homeless is serious, so when he asked me to play, I thought it was a great cause, but what impressed me the most was the transparency of the organization. They tell you exactly where the money goes.”

While Hockey Helps the Homeless hosts tournaments in communities throughout Canada, the money raised stays in the respective community. Sean explains, “There will be a tournament in Montreal. There will

be one in Toronto, and there will be one in Vancouver. The money raised here in Montreal goes to the charities in Montreal. For example, there is an organization here called Dans La Rue. It was started 30 years ago by a man they call Pops who borrowed \$10,000 to buy a used motorhome which he used to give street kids a safe place to eat and warm up. Hockey Helps the Homeless helps fund that, plus women’s shelters and homeless shelters where they have helped buy stoves and counter space. One organization can now serve 10,000 meals a year.”

“This year,” he continues, “money went to a women’s shelter that was in dire need of a new vehicle. They

often pick up women and children who are being abused and take them to a safe place. Each year, people who have been helped will come out to say thank you and let us know where our money is going and the impact it is having.”

While Sean Magill is known throughout the mobile amusement industry as a purveyor of soft toys, he once aspired to be a hockey player. “I love hockey,” he exclaims. “In Canada, it’s a really big thing. As a kid, I started at the age of three or four. I was lucky enough that I played with a good group of friends, and we played together most of our lives. I was always on a winning team. I won scoring championships. I played Bantam AAA, Midget AA and then Junior AA. When I was 23, a coach from Toronto went to England to help start a professional league there. I would have liked to have possibly played there, but I would have had to get a dual citizenship. It just took too long, so I never went to play hockey. I still play two or three times a week, though. I play in tournaments like the one put on by Hockey Helps the Homeless as well as competitive tournaments. Last year, my team played in a tournament in Las Vegas, and we won. I love the sport.”

The first year Sean hit the ice for Hockey Helps the Homeless, he was a part of another team, but for the past two years, he has put together his own dream team of 15 players who are

“MY FIRST YEAR, I RAISED \$6,900. THIS YEAR I WAS ABLE TO RAISE OVER \$12,000 MYSELF. ONE OF MY TEAMMATES RAISED \$3,500. OUR TEAM HAD A TOTAL OF \$24,000.”



equally committed to the cause.

“Every player who plays must raise a minimum of \$500,” Sean shares. “My first year, I raised \$6,900. This year I was able to raise over \$12,000 myself. One of my teammates raised \$3,500. Our team had a total of \$24,000.”

To further increase the excitement and participation, Hockey Helps the Homeless also involves the National Hockey League, and every team is allotted two ex-professional players to play on their team. “We get to draft the NHL players,” Sean laughs. “The draft is between the captains of every team, and whichever team raises the most money gets to pick first. The team that picked first this year raised \$32,000. We picked fourth, so I got to pick who I wanted. We had Shaun Van Allen and Ramzi Abid play with us. So, it was really, really good!”



While Sean was elated with the level of talent his team possessed, he was slightly overwhelmed with the level of support he received from his suppliers, his clients, and even his competitors. “The people who helped were fantastic,” Sean enthuses. “North American Midway Entertainment and Tony Diaz helped out a great deal. While I was at the trade show in Gibtown, customers would come up to me and ask about the email I had sent out. I explained that it was for the homeless, and they would donate. I asked everybody to help. Even Sid Karmia from the Toy Factory helped. I was very, very lucky.”



Sean’s luck held out, and on April 6, after a long day and three games, the Caravan Softoys team took home the championship trophy. Despite the excitement of winning and dramatically surpassing the goal of \$350,000 and raising \$500,000, a pall hung over the day as the close-knit hockey community in Canada was devastated by the news of a bus accident and a junior hockey team on its way to a play-off game lost 15 boys between the ages of 16 and 21. “It was a huge, huge tragedy,” Sean says. “It was a Junior team traveling to the playoffs on a bus, something I’ve done since I was 10. Fortunately, we are able to donate some of the money we raised to their GoFundMe page.”

Sean Magill’s commitment to helping the homeless and the hurting in his community has far surpassed simply raising money and playing hockey. According to

Michael Coughlin, the volunteer chairman of the Montreal Hockey Helps the Homeless, “Sean is very active in terms of his involvement. Certainly, he brings in a group of 15 players who all in turn personally fundraise for the event, but aside from that, he uses his suppliers to help us. We give each participant a gift that will typically cost anywhere from \$10 to \$15. Sean was able to get things donated through his suppliers in China which was a massive savings for us. As much as raising money, Sean has helped us cut our costs. Hockey Helps the Homeless has the lowest cost per head of all our tournaments in Canada. In a lot of ways, that is because of Sean.”

Michael continues, “Perhaps as important as the financial benefit is the opportunity to educate people about a serious problem that is really overlooked. When confronted with it, people may turn their heads or say get a job. It’s really misunderstood. Hockey is the catch, but it gives us a captive audience for the day when guys like Sean can learn more about the seriousness of the situation. When they leave at the end of the day, they are ambassadors for the cause. I believe that is what happened to Sean.”

Sean admits that he can no longer not see the problem he may not have been quite as aware of before. “When I hear about these people living in the street every day, I feel it in my gut. In Montreal in the winter, the temperature may be minus 40 degrees, and people are living outside. They are literally freezing to death, and half the time, it never even makes the papers.”

“God forbid there is ever a child caught in the street,” Sean goes on. “You know every little bit counts. Caravan Softoys is dedicated and will always be dedicated to trying to help these people however we can and through Hockey Helps the Homeless.”

When it comes to helping the homeless, the hungry, the sick, or the abused, Sean Magill does not ask who or what or when. He certainly does not do nothing. Hockey Helps the Homeless, Caravan Softoys, and Sean Magill commit every day to do something.



If you would like to donate to Hockey Helps the Homeless, please visit CARAVAN SOFTOYS TEAM page at hhh.caravan.ca or www.hockeyhelpsthehomeless.com

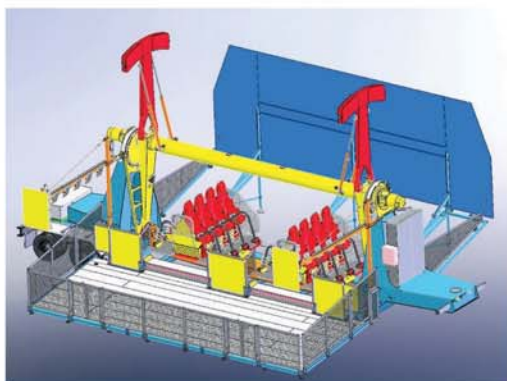


CATCH A RIDE ON THE NEW KMG SURF RIDE

by Sharon Barlow

THE BEACH BOYS SANG ABOUT IT. HOLLYWOOD GLAMORIZED IT.

But nothing screams fun louder than catching a wave and riding to shore. Now the ride manufacturer renowned for their spectacular rides with ease of portability is riding the surf as KMG introduces their new Surf Ride to the American midway.



Since it was first introduced in May 2017, the Surf Ride has sparked interest throughout the world. Catching its first wave in Germany, the Surf Ride will make its first test rides under the supervision of the German TÜV inspectors in July 2018 before being delivered and commissioned to its owner, showman Mike Klinge. A super ride by all accounts, the first Surf Ride will sport a super hero theme and will be called X-Force.

The second Surf Ride is charging for Australia and the midway of Broderick Pavier. Appropriately named Wipe Out, this amped up ride will make its debut at the Winter Wonderland Fair in Hyde Park, London before coasting Down Under where it will join an awesome line up that includes a KMG Speed, Inversion, Discover, and Freak Out.

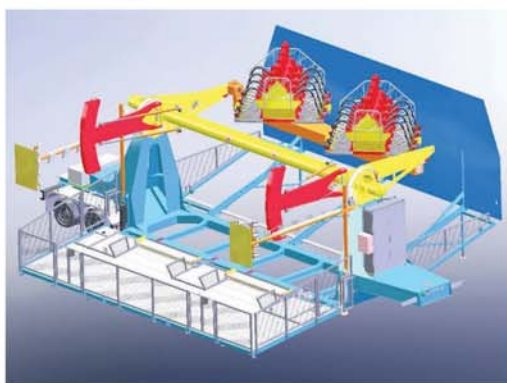
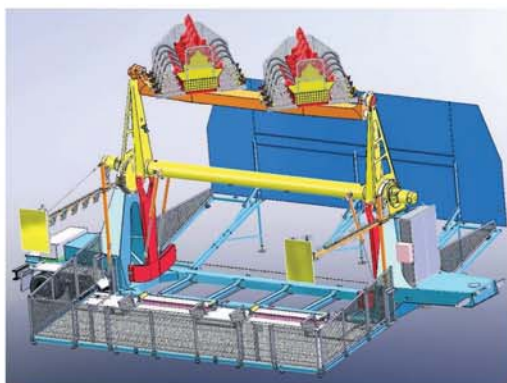
This all new family ride promises a clean wave to ride to kids 51 inches or taller as well as parents and even grandparents. Controlled by a preprogrammed automatic system, the ride makes no loopings, so riders will enjoy an awesome ride while secured with a friendly lap bar system.

The Surf Ride is constructed on one semi-trailer and can be set up in approximately 30 minutes by two people. Once the platform is lowered the counterweights can be lifted, and the ride is ready to be used. Between the two rotating sweeps the main center platform holds two gondolas of eight persons each, which can spin clockwise and counterclockwise while the platform is in motion. The gondolas always stay up right. Once the sweeps start rotating a pleasant swinging motion will occur. When the gondolas start to spin slowly, while the sweeps are rotating, riders will feel their stomach drop. When experienced riders want a more active and spinning action, the operator can speed up each motion separately. KMG can provide 3 different pre-programmed ride cycles according to the buyer's preferences.

Available with scenery or an exit platform at the back of the ride, the Surf Ride will be a terrific addition to any midway, carnival or family park, and it's priced less than comparable rides with a similar capacity. The next available delivery slot is mid-2019, buyers should jump in the lineup to hang ten on this new ride before they get left in the soup.

Catch a wave and you'll be sitting on top of the world or jump on the new KMG Surf Ride and have a sick time!

To experience the first Surf Ride at the KMG factory, contact Peter Theunisz, telephone +31-655-795-792 or email p.theunisz@kmg.nl



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“SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS ARE LIKE KEYS IN LOCKS; THEY DON’T WORK IF THEY DON’T FIT. AND IF SOLUTIONS AREN’T THE RIGHT ONES, THE PROBLEM DOESN’T GET SOLVED.”

– ROBERT F. MAGER.



I THINK I HAVE A TRAINING PROBLEM.

Many reasons exist why people don’t do things or do them incorrectly. On a midway, just because an employee does not perform as expected, do NOT automatically think they need training. Training might be the solution to a performance problem. Other solutions could be the remedy. The first thing that must be done is to identify the real problem. Only then can the effective solution be identified. Let’s look at some questions to evaluate before planning a training session.

How do I figure out if training is needed? The first thing to ask ‘what exactly are they NOT doing?’ In other words, what is the discrepancy between actual performance and desired performance? Statements such as ‘workers are not safety conscious’, ‘they are not motivated’, or ‘they don’t have the right attitude’ are only indications of a discrepancy. In order to identify the actual discrepancy, you need to ask ‘why is that?’

As an example, ‘why are these workers not safety conscious?’. The answer might be ‘because they don’t wear their personal protective equipment (PPE) as required’. In this example, safety conscious is not the discrepancy. The discrepancy is not

wearing PPE as required. Now you have something to work with.

I identified the discrepancy, now what? Once you identify the actual discrepancy, you can determine the cause. This is the pivotal point at which you determine if you are faced with a skill deficiency or an attitude issue. Ask ‘could the person do it if really required to do it?’. The answer will point you to a path of possible solutions. Using the PPE example, ask, ‘could the person select and use the appropriate PPE when required?’. If the answer is yes, then training is NOT a solution. The person knows the requirements and how to use PPE. Training would be a waste of time and money. In this case, you are facing a motivation or attitude issue.

Let’s ask the question again but with a different answer, if the question ‘could they?’ returns the answer ‘probably not’ or ‘maybe not’, then you have stumbled upon a skill deficiency. Training may be a solution. You need to dig further to determine the proper solution.

It looks like we have a skill deficiency, should I schedule training? Not necessarily. Now that you have identified a skill deficiency, you can close in on

whether formal training is the solution. Dig deeper into the problem. Here's how:

1. Determine if the person has ever been trained on the skill. If not, formal training is the solution.

PPE example: If the person has never attended formal training, then formal training is definitely needed. In this specific scenario, safety is at risk; schedule formal training ASAP. During formal training, when and how to use PPE will be covered. If the person has already received formal training, dig deeper.

NOTE: Regulatory requirements for personal and ride safety dictate formal training. If this is the case, the choice of formal training becomes moot. Schedule the training!

2. Determine if the skill once existed.

- A. Did the person once know how to perform as desired?
- B. Has the person forgotten how to do what you want done?
- C. If the skill once existed, then determine whether the lost or deteriorated skill is used frequently or infrequently.
 - i. If used frequently but has deteriorated despite regular use, provide periodic feedback.
 - ii. If used infrequently, provide a regular schedule of practice.

PPE example: Let's say the person was formally trained on PPE a few years ago. You know they previously used PPE as required. If they have not performed work in a while, maybe they have forgotten the requirements. If this is the case, a simple reminder would be a good start, but also monitor them in the future. If they perform the work frequently, then make plans to provide feedback whenever that job is performed. Either way, monitor this person and give good feedback.

3. Determine if a simple solution could be implemented.

- A. Can a written job aid, instructions, or checklist help maintain the desired level of performance?

PPE example: If a procedure or checklist exists for the work being performed, adding a simple note or caution could be the key to solving the performance problem. Some organizations have created job aids in the form of cards or small booklets on

safety and human performance. These job aids include basic requirements for PPE (and many other key reminders).

4. Determine whether the person has the potential to perform as desired.

- A. Could the person learn the job?
- B. Are they trainable?
- C. Do they have the physical and mental potential to perform as desired?
- D. Is this person overqualified for the job?

PPE example: If (1) formal training has been conducted, (2) practice and feedback have been given, and (3) job aids implemented, and yet the person still does not wear PPE as required, maybe the person is not a good fit for the job. Maybe the person is just unable to interpret when PPE is required. Maybe they overanalyze or overthink the work and determine that PPE is not needed.

In closing...We started with the statement 'workers are not safety conscious'. We evaluated this performance problem and determined that there was a skill deficiency. We then looked at the possible solutions. Even though a skill deficiency exists, formal training is not necessarily the solution. Take a look at recent or current performance problems on your midway. Evaluate each one using the steps above. Record the results... due diligence!

Our PPE example answers hint at motivation or attitude issues. We will take a deeper look at those in the next article when we look at when skill is not a deficiency but performance problems still exist.

Bucky Elkins operates Carnival Safety Training providing safety meetings and an online training system.

Check out his safety blog at <http://carnivaltraining.com>. Interact with him on social media. Instagram @carnivalsafety Facebook /CarnivalSafetyTraining Twitter @safemidways GET TRAINED. SAVE LIVES.



Photo by Scott Dalzell





HITCH-HIKER

MANUFACTURING

NOTHING SHORT OF

Spectacular

by Sharon Barlow

SIGNATURE

noun sig-na-ture \
sig-nə-ˈchūr, -chər, -tyūr, -tūr\

something
(such as a tune,
style, or logo) that
serves to set apart
or identify; also:
a characteristic
mark



Artists, designers, and musicians work diligently towards developing their signature piece, that masterpiece that defines them and by which they are always known. Others may acquire a signature piece, something so unusual and unique to the individual that it becomes an identifying mark. In the travel amusement industry, carnival owners strive to differentiate their shows with a signature piece, a ride so spectacular or so unusual that it becomes an integral part of the show's brand. When Danny Ottaway, owner of Ottaway Amusement Company, decided to make a statement, he did not look for the newest ride. Instead, he set his sights on something equally spectacular, a trio of custom-designed and built Hitch-Hiker concession trailers.

When at the end of the 2017 season, Danny Ottaway found himself in the predicament of deciding how to manage the food concessions on

his show. His sister and brother-in-law, longtime business partners, were giving up their concessions and retiring. "My wife, Galina, and I were faced with ok now what do we do?" Danny shares. "They had three food trailers, a funnel cake trailer, a popper, and a fry trailer. We were trying to decide if we should book on this food. Or do we buy our own food trailers and get in the food business?"

He continues, "My friend, Danny Brown, assured me it was not rocket science, and most everyone told me I would be a fool to book on the food. Food was huge!"

With the decision made and staying true to his mantra, Go big or go home, Danny sought out the designer and manufacturer known throughout the travel amusement industry for building spectacular signature pieces for carnivals and concessionaires throughout North America, Jeff Swartz and Hitch-Hiker

Manufacturing.

"Danny first called me to get information," Jeff recalls. "Then we met at one of the trade shows. He compared us to other manufacturers, and he just liked what we had to offer and how we presented it. He really did his homework. He contacted several of our past customers and asked how we are to work with? How we are on support? What did they think of our products?"

"I talked to Kerry and Christina Benner with Penn Valley Shows," Danny adds. "I also became acquainted with the Powers & Thomas clan and the Houghton's. They were all a really big help to us. Any questions we had, they were right there."

Fortunately, Jeff is extremely comfortable with intense scrutiny. "I welcome it," he says. "Once I can show a potential customer what sets us apart from other manufacturers,



the ordering and building process becomes very easy. Everything from that point on flows almost effortlessly. We recently ran an ad campaign whereby we invited potential clients considering a purchase of this magnitude to visit our production facility and meet with other owners. Although we love to share what we have done for others in the past, we understand everyone's needs are different. We will spend a tremendous amount of time developing an overview and a game plan for each customer."

"Hitch-Hiker Manufacturing is approaching their 50th year anniversary," Jeff adds. "I'm second generation, and I've been at the helm for close to 30 years. I've seen many customers who operate night and day differently from other customers. So, we immediately start with analyzing their specific needs. We ask about the size of the show and the size of the route. Where are

you located? What are your biggest fairs? What's your goal for your food operation?"

Once all the homework was complete, Jeff was not surprised Danny decided on Hitch-Hiker. "Danny was looking at his carnival," Jeff shares. "He knew his rides, and he had seen the food operation as it had been. He had talked to other carnivals, and he knew that the food side of the carnival was hugely viable. He was familiar with spending a million dollars on a ride. As he visited other shows he commented, 'Wow! Your food corral really becomes a representation of your show.'"

Jeff continues, "We put together a plan where everything works together to become a focal point. Their image is now on their frontline."

While Jeff appreciated Danny's

"GO BIG OR GO HOME."

philosophy of "Go big or go home," he also recognized that Ottaway Amusement Company perhaps did not need the biggest trailer he had to offer. "Danny made it easy," he admits, "because he was well-established. They were not taking on a new food operation. They were simply bringing it in-house. He had an established route, so we were not building a trailer for an independent hoping to use a larger trailer to get new bookings or bigger fairs. We knew exactly the level of what we were building. Truthfully, he wanted the best, and I did my best to encourage him to keep his menu simple. He didn't need to get creative with coming up with a new fad food item. He has a

**“QUALITY IS WHAT HOLDS
VALUE FOR MANY YEARS.”**



well-established carnival to run. He simply needed to streamline his food operation.”

Jeff laughs, “The concessionaires selling fried oreos in the middle of an ice cream dipped banana on a stick are trying to get accepted into a fair. Danny has the fair. He needed the staples, a grill trailer, a popcorn trailer with an office in it, and a funnel cake/ice cream trailer.”

While Danny may not have bought the biggest trailers, he very well may have the brightest. “We put nearly 5,400 LED lights on the three trailers,” Jeff tells. “Obviously, we couldn’t do just one. While it may have been something he didn’t need, it makes a heck of an impact.”

He goes on, “Since we are Hitch-Hiker and focused on the best we can offer, we are not importing the cheapest light we can find. I’m supplying a quality product to my end customer. We buy our lights from CMD. When we install them, we rarely have one bad bulb. These lights are representative of the quality of the trailers. Every day I’m looking to increase our quality in some place. We may be a few percent more expensive than other manufacturers, but when someone visits our facility, they can see the level of quality they are buying. Quality is what holds value for many

years.”

Jeff Swartz may have been involved in his business in some aspect for most of his 50 years, yet he still loves the excitement of working with a new client. “It was fun working with Danny because he took some of the restraints off,” he admits. “We have produced thousands of trailers and numerous different scenarios. I will always suggest to a customer what I believe is correct. Occasionally, I will have a customer who will say no, we want it this way. Of course, the customer is always right, but I will ask why they want it a certain way. I will respectfully ask if I can show them another avenue to consider, but at the end of the day, they’re going to make the call.”

“Danny, however, would give us input, and he would ask for a change. We would show him the change, and then he would come back and say, ‘Well, there’s a reason you’re the designer,’” Jeff adds. “Or, we would present him something. He would consider it and then ask, ‘What do you think?’ Once I shared with him our rationale, he would come back and say, ‘Yep, I agree with you.’ It’s truly the best feeling when you get over the hurdle of your customer not understanding and then they realize what it is you’re suggesting and then understanding that it is better for them.”

Perhaps even Danny Ottaway did not fully comprehend the level of thought and quality that goes into every Hitch-Hiker trailer. “We set up all three trailers here at our facility,” Jeff recalls. “Danny comes in with a few of his guys to pick them up. It’s just Wow! We all just stood back and looked at them for what seemed like a couple of hours. A few weeks later, I had a call from Danny with questions regarding the fire suppression system because an inspector from the fire department was coming to inspect them. I told him to simply relax. We have looked at all 50 states and know that Texas is the most strict about what they are looking for in the fire suppression system. Therefore, we build all Hitch-Hiker trailers to meet their criteria which makes it a cakewalk for our customers in every other state. So, when the inspector came to check these new trailers, he goes to the breaker panel to shut off the fuel source to the fryer. He says, ‘Oh my gosh! I hardly ever see this in a restaurant, and I’ve never seen it in a mobile trailer!’ He was amazed at the level of quality. He not only passed the trailers, he reaffirmed to Danny that he had made the right choice.”

Certainly, Jeff is enthused about every trailer he designs and builds, but he is particularly proud of this



Photo by Luke Townsend

“IT’S JUST WOW!”





“...DANNY PUT TOGETHER A ‘SPECTACULAR’ PACKAGE.”

project. “We were able to develop and deliver a complete package,” he declares. “We created these trailers to look like a family. When we did our initial pencil sketches and plans, we didn’t plan a grill trailer like the last one we did or a popcorn trailer like one we did last year. Each trailer is unique and has a color scheme that is supportive of the menu it’s selling, but at the same time they go together. There are minor things that are continued as a pattern from one trailer to the next that ties them all together without getting in the way of what we’re trying to sell. They look like siblings, and yet every trailer has a piece of equipment in it that I’ve never put in a trailer before because of a request or an idea that from Danny and Galina. That is exciting!”

Ultimately, the success of a concession trailer is measured by the revenue it generates. Danny Ottaway certainly expects a great return on his investment. “Everyone told us that whatever my sister and brother-in-law were making in their food business, I should plan on an increase of 30 to 50 percent,” Danny shares. “I knew based on my sister’s numbers that we could pay for these trailers and still be profitable. If we can gross more, then that’s a bonus.”

Jeff adds, “If his numbers in most locations are not doubled, I’ll feel that it’s not a success. In working with designs and layouts, Danny shared with me what the previous operation had and what they were using for equipment. In some cases, I realized they were not equipped for their current volume. In some cases, they were having to prep product in their RV’s ahead of time because there was not enough room in the trailer. We took that completely out of the equation. We gave them the equipment and the tools to have the product produced and ready to sell at capacity at the window.”

According to Jeff Swartz, the travel amusement industry has created a name and a category for the biggest and most exciting rides, that word is “spectacular.” “We are right there with them in the food industry,” he proclaims. “Our equipment is making an impact on our customers and in turn their customers as they walk the midway. We have built some “wow” trailers in the past, but Danny put together a “spectacular” package. We’re just over the moon excited to have been able to showcase what our levels are.”

Ottaway Amusements has certainly acquired not one signature piece but three signature pieces. Three Hitch-Hiker concession trailers on the midway are truly nothing short of “Spectacular.”

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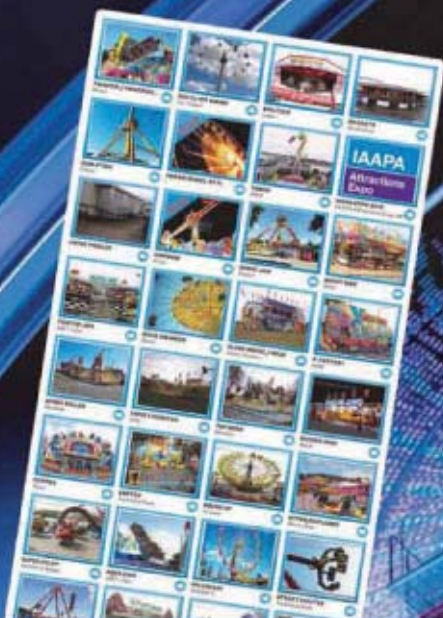
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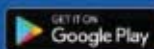
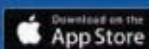
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TIME TO SHINE FOR

SKERBECK

ENTERTAINMENT

THE BEST OF THE BEST

By Kevin Freese



Ask Jamie Skerbeck about any stop along his carnival's route and he is likely to tell you what makes that event special. Whether talking about the hard work of Allegan County Fair's Executive Director Saree Miller, or the successful efforts of Vickie Micheau at the Upper Peninsula State Fair, or the excitement surrounding the Battle Creek Michigan Field of Flight Air Show & Balloon Festival—Jamie and his family have a passion for the events that they partner with.

Over the last several years, that passion has driven Skerbeck Entertainment Group to make the midway experience better than ever before at their existing events while also seeking to bring rides to new venues. Catapulting off of a near record year in 2017 in terms of attendance as well as gross, and with new major events added for 2018, passion is producing results for Skerbeck Entertainment.



The show has added two state fairs to their route this year, first traveling to the independent midway of the Wisconsin State Fair, August 2 – 12, and later to Minnesota State Fair and its independent midway, August 23 – September 3. Jamie looks forward to working with other ride providers along these well-known independent midways. He is also eager to present Skerbeck Entertainment's attractions at additional state fair-level events. "In the last six to eight years we've made considerable purchases including several state fair-quality pieces, so it makes tremendous sense to bring them to some of the major state fairs," says the show owner.

The latest attraction on the midway of Skerbeck Entertainment Group will take customers to new heights this season. Arriving in early July from the Netherlands is a new KMG Speed, a piece known for its sleek one-trailer design and impressive vertical reach. It is the physical presence of the Speed that first appealed to Jamie Skerbeck who is already the proud owner of another KMG piece. The show acquired

a KMG Inversion, themed Supernova 360, in 2015—they have been very pleased with its performance. "The Inversion is a very well manufactured ride," raves Jamie. The show owner appreciates the fact that KMG staffs a technician in the United States and that they have such a thorough preventative maintenance program.

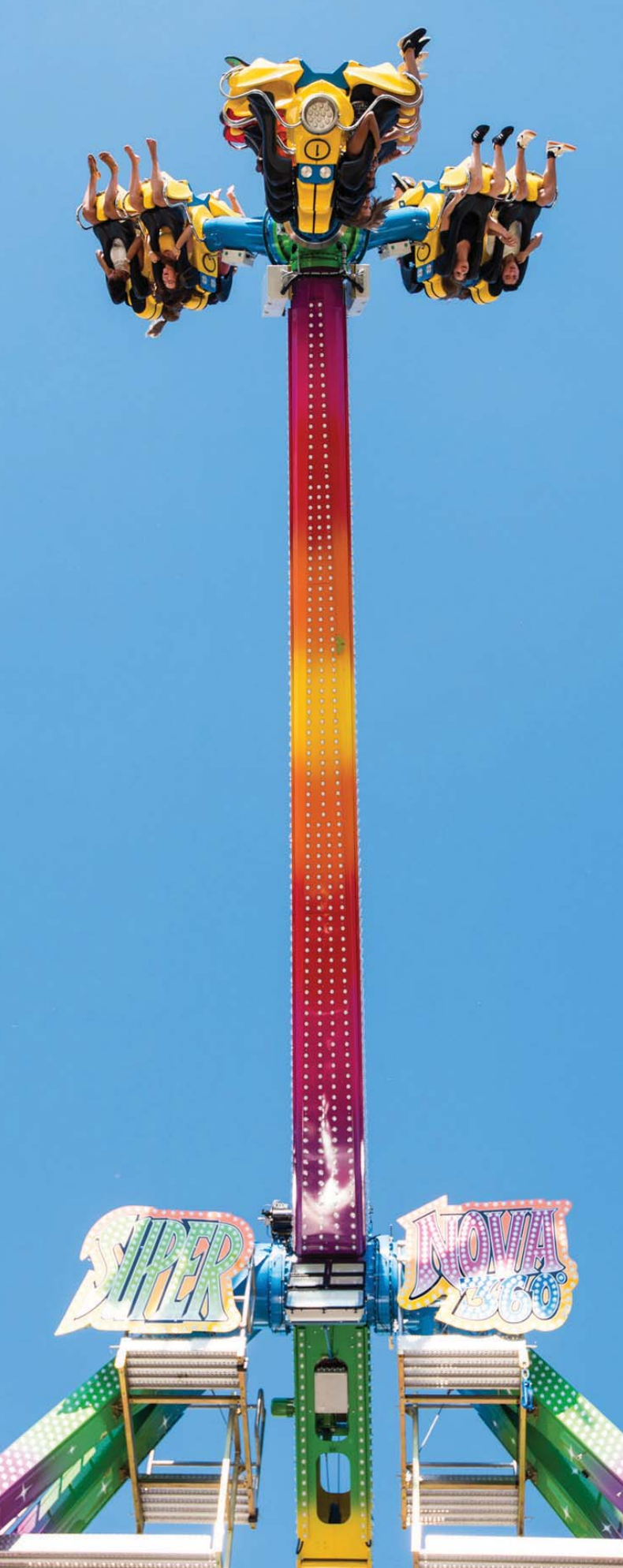
Jamie is equally enthusiastic about the show's other recent purchase, an Owen Trailers' Wacky Shack Fun House, and the level of customer service offered by the American manufacturer. "It's a beautiful piece with a wonderful LED light package," describes Jamie. "Ross Owen personally delivered it and helped the show set it up for the first time."

The two new attractions added this year join an ever-expanding lineup of rides that features a Chance Alpine Bobs, Chance Zipper, Moser Twin Flip, 80-foot Mulligan wheel, Mulligan Sea Ray, and much more.

Many of the show's rides have been customized and include upgraded scenery packages. The two-trailer Twin Flip, which requires a small crane to construct, is decorated with a back scenery package. The Mulligan wheel lights up the night sky







with a powerful LED light package purchased through Denny's Electronics. Completing the ride's appearance, Skerbeck Entertainment added LED backlit signage on the towers that exclaims "Giant Wheel" in bright light. "We had a company do some stainless steel metalwork on the towers in order to add the signage," explains Jamie. "I believe it's the only Mulligan with that style of customization."

Like the show's spectacular rides, all of Skerbeck Entertainment's pieces are presented with care and flare. The family-friendly Flying Elephant ride manufactured by Luna Park has a back scenery package adorned with LED lighting. Most recently, Skerbeck Entertainment added new LED lighting and fresh paint to their Zipper during the off season. They also refurbished a Hi-Lite Spinner and Sellner Tilt-A-Whirl, adding Chameleon LED lighting to the classic rides.

Skerbeck Entertainment will provide the Twin Flip as well as a Zipper at the Wisconsin State Fair. The Twin Flip will also appear at the Minnesota State Fair along with a Kolmax Tea Cup ride and Luna Park children's combination carousel. Both state fairs fit well into Skerbeck Entertainment's route. The Minnesota State Fair is only 300 miles due west of the Upper Peninsula State Fair in Escanaba, Michigan where the show will be finishing up just prior to the Great Minnesota Get-Together. "From a routing standpoint it works perfectly," says Jamie.

The latest developments at Skerbeck Entertainment are the most recent chapter in a story that extends back to the beginnings of the carnival industry in the United States. In fact, the Skerbeck family's show business roots began in Bohemia in the 1850s. "My family started as circus performers in what is modern-day Germany," explains Jamie. The Skerbeck family immigrated to the United States during the late 1880s and 1890s. "They had a circus operation that primarily performed in Wisconsin," Jamie continues. Ringling Bros. Circus was also operating in Wisconsin at that time and the two families would sometimes cross paths.

The carnival bug first caught the Skerbeck family when they were at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and witnessed the original Ferris wheel in operation. "That was the moment they started thinking about mechanical rides," says Jamie. Within a decade they had purchased their first piece, a merry-go-round.

Over the next several decades, the Skerbecks slowly transitioned from a business model focused on the circus to one focused on the carnival. The show's routing continued to revolve around locations in Wisconsin as well as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. They branched farther into Michigan during the 1950s, an era before bridging connected the Straits of Mackinac to the rest of the state. At the time, they had to use ferry boats to move their rides into the lower part of Michigan. As the years progressed, the Skerbeck operation transitioned to a route that consisted primarily of events in Michigan and northern Indiana.

Today, Skerbeck Entertainment Group continues to base its operations in Michigan. The responsibilities of show ownership are shared between Jamie and his wife Sonja as well as Jamie's sisters—Tory Burrows along with husband John and Niki Skerbeck. Being a proud brother, Jamie points out that Niki is currently serving on the board of Outdoor Amusement Business Association.

The siblings purchased the show from their parents, Joe and Debbie, at the end of 2014. "They still travel with the show," says Jamie. "My mom helps with payroll and does

work in the office, and my dad is our safety coordinator.

In addition to Skerbeck Entertainment Group, Jamie's uncle Bill and his family operate Skerbeck Family Carnival, also based in Michigan. While the two companies are completely separate they have the opportunity to play a handful of events together during the season, including at the Upper Peninsula State Fair.

The U.P. State Fair is a special event according to Jamie. As explained by the organization: "In 2010, the state ceased funding for the fair and the downstate Michigan State Fair due to budget problems. Control of fair operations has been passed onto the U.P. State Fair Authority which includes representatives from each county in the U.P. and the Hannahville Indian Community." The event remains a state fair today although it does not receive funding from the State of Michigan. Fair manager Vickie Micheau is also in charge of the Delta County Chamber of Commerce and is exceptionally good at generating sponsorship funds. "I think it'll be another great year in Escanaba," says Jamie.

Skerbeck Entertainment faced challenges in the early part





of this season due to weather. The show opened the year in Kalamazoo in the midst of near-blizzard conditions. They were forced to tear down a day early because of the weather. Overall, Jamie feels as though it will be a good year for the show—not only because of the added events, but also because it seems like customer spending will be up as the weather normalizes.

Along with the northern route, Skerbeck Entertainment will continue to book in with Pat Crabtree's Crabtree Amusements at the Louisiana State Fair in Shreveport. They also teamed up with the show at Rodeo Austin earlier this year. Skerbeck Entertainment has been working with Crabtree Amusements for the past couple seasons. "The first time was when we'd purchased the KMG Inversion," says Jamie. "It arrived in Shreveport around the time of the state fair and I booked it in with the show. Pat Crabtree asked if I'd be interested in bringing some more rides the following year and so we did." Last year Skerbeck Entertainment brought down about eight rides and they're scheduled to do so again this year.

Beyond new rides and new events, Skerbeck Entertainment is investing in other initiatives that continue to strengthen their presence. The show replaced all of their canvas last year, developing a unique color scheme with the help of Waterloo Tent & Tarp. Jamie believes they may be the only show with this exact scheme, which matches the color of their logo. Along with the new canvas, Skerbeck Entertainment is constantly finding ways to enhance the look of the midway with topnotch amenities such as misting fans, comfortable seating areas, roomy food courts, and phone charging stations for customers.

This will be the second season that Skerbeck Entertainment is using an e-ticketing system developed by Virtual Ticket Solutions (VTS). The system uses an optical scanner that operates with android devices. When first introduced on the Skerbeck midway, VTS was primarily for armband sales. They have now started using it for all ride ticket sales and plan to incorporate concession sales in the near future. The show staffs two employees whose main job is to get the system up and running at each event. These staff members work in guest services during an event, ready to offer support on the system to any customers that have questions.

Skerbeck Entertainment is also happy to welcome aboard a number of new staff members on the midway as part of their first year using the H-2B visa program.



The show hired about thirty Mexican employees through Practical Employee Solutions based in Texas. Several of the new workers have midway experience and the program is working out great so far for Skerbeck. The show purchased a school bus in order to transport their H-2B staff.

As the new season begins for Skerbeck Entertainment, Jamie looks forward to forming new relationships within

the industry and at the events it serves while continuing to develop the strong partnerships the show has already developed. Building upon a rich family history while taking advantage of the latest in industry technology, this season certainly is a time for Skerbeck Entertainment to shine on.



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