



Ned Hickson

Impress your kids by freaking out on a carnival ride

I have a basic rule of thumb when it comes to carnival rides: If the person running a ride, such as the Squirrel Cages, keeps a garden hose available for spraying out the seats, I stay away.

That's because this person's sole ambition is to make me — and others like me — vomit. I realize this person may be a trained professional who, on a daily basis, makes countless split-second decisions on whether to push the red or green button to stop the ride.

And, yes, I realize this individual has nothing but the safety of his passengers in mind when he secures a safety latch by removing his boot

and whacking it until his arms get tired, at which point, being a trained professional, he bolsters the confidence of his nervous riders by hacking up a cheekful of phlegm and shrugging his shoulders before walking off.

Yet somehow, in spite of these assurances, I'm still terrified of carnival rides. I think it's because, when I was 10, my "friends" talked me into riding "The Drop Out," which wasn't actually a ride as much as it was a barf-a-torium with an observation deck.

Basically, 30 people entered a circular room and found a spot along the wall. Gradually, the walls would begin to rotate faster and faster, creating enough centrifugal force to suck the cotton candy from the mouth of anyone standing within 100 feet.

Once the ride reached optimum centrifuge, occupants would be stuck to the wall as the floor dropped out, leaving them suspended 20 feet above a pit of (presumably fake) spikes.

All of this was visible through a series of windows surrounding the ride so that, while waiting in line, people such as myself could prepare for the experience by, very slowly, having a bowel movement.

I still don't know how I got talked into this ride. All I know is I ended up next to someone whose stomach contents went on display the instant the floor dropped out.

Due to the force of gravity, I couldn't move my head without blacking out, which meant watching the sum total of this person's food consumption (which was consid-

erable) reconfigure itself on the wall next to me.

This was, without question, the longest ride of my life. To this day, I can still see the apologetic look on that person's face as the ride came to an end and the three of us — him, his vomit and I — gradually slid down the wall together.

Since that fateful encounter I've had no interest in being strapped down, cinched up or buckled into something specifically designed to do things I wouldn't normally do without a flight suit and full medical coverage.

My daughter gets frustrated by this because she's one of those people who is exhilarated by having her stomach in her mouth. The one time she talked me into riding with her was on the Squirrel Cages.

Everything was fine until

that part in the ride where — and you know the part I mean — it starts to actually *move*.

Admittedly, I'm not a professional carnival ride operator. But I think I could recognize the subtle signs exhibited of a rider who is in distress.

For example: Someone who is pressed so hard against the cage that his lips are actually outside the door while screaming "LET-ME-OFF-LET-ME-OFF-LET-ME-OFF!" would be a red flag to me.

Particularly if the rider in question began doing this after traveling less than two feet.

Yet some how these signs were somehow missed by our ride operator. I'm not saying he purposely ignored my pleas.

Who knows? He may have been busy looking for a gar-

den hose?

What I do know is that as a father trying to maintain a firm grip on three teenagers, it's hard enough without having the term "squirrel cages" thrown up in my face.

Figuratively speaking, of course.

I realize at some point I will need to regain my parental dignity and face that ride again, without the screaming, to reclaim my "Dad-ness" in the eyes of my teenagers.

Then again, I could always even the score and utter those two words guaranteed to induce their own horrified screaming:

"No Wi-Fi."

Ned is a syndicated columnist with News Media Corporation. His book, "Humor at the Speed of Life," is available online at Port Hole Publications, Amazon Books and Barnes & Noble.

Three Rivers hosts motorcycle show, poker run

The 109th Rhododendron Festival is a fun-filled weekend for local Florence residents and travelers alike. People come from all over the Northwest to enjoy the festivities and see some of the most spectacular displays of rhododendrons that thrives along the Oregon coast.

"Three Rivers is proud to be a part of the 109th Rhododendron Festival," said Three Rivers COO Mike Rose. "We always look forward to this exciting weekend here in Florence, and helping great charities while having fun makes it even more worthwhile."

In addition to the family-oriented parade, carnival, street vendor fair and 5K run, the fourth annual "Let It Ride" motorcycle show is another highlight of the weekend. This event is hosted by Three Rivers Casino Resort on Saturday, May 21, and showcases the lat-

est in custom motorcycles.

An award ceremony will feature 50/50 raffles and awards for best stock, best custom, best-in-show, and best street custom motorcycles.

Competitors can register for this contest on Friday, May 20, from 7 to 9 p.m., or Saturday, May 21, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., in the casino's event center.

Proceeds from the motorcycle show will benefit St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Donations give St. Jude the ability to help children suffering from cancer or other catastrophic illnesses across the globe, regardless of their ability to pay for treatment.

Three Rivers Casino Resort will be the start and finishing line for the Rebel Rally poker run. The event includes a bike trip and poker competition. The bike trip is a fun-filled tour around Florence.

Riders will make stops at the

area's top destinations, including Beachcomber Tavern, Jerry's Place and Pop's Smokehouse. The rider with the high hand in poker will receive \$1,000 in cash and the low hand receives \$500.

Proceeds from the poker run will benefit U.S. military veter-

ans and their families.

Three Rivers will also feature live entertainment from "The Sounds of The Supremes and The Drifters" on Friday, May 20, and Saturday, May 21.

For a full list of weekend entertainment, visit www.ThreeRiversCasino.com.

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