

Roller Coaster . . . So It Goes

by Jason_Love

Roller coasters have always struck me as a preventable trauma. I mean, if life ain't hard enough. And while in our youth we jump off buildings just to see, we come to feel secure on the ground and view thrill rides as far-off things like outer space or pterodactyls.

I actually blacked out on my last coaster, so who else would be chosen to ride Magic Mountain's newest addition, Tatsu: Flying at the Speed of Fear. I thought Godzilla had killed Tatsu back in the fifties, but here he was the tallest, fastest, longest flying coaster in history. Take that, Russia.

The others were raring to be first on board, but newness is not something I look for in a ride. I'm more into prestige and track record. What they needed was a big mirror reading, "You must be this crazy to get on Tatsu."

Then I met 10-year-old Josh Malone, who had, in three days, ridden the coaster 165 times! He was a Tatsu Master.

"My favorite part is the pretzel roll," said Josh. "It feels great on my whole body."

If Josh isn't careful, he'll end up an adrenaline junkie, loitering outside Magic Mountain with an expired pass, saying, "Come on, man! just one more ride."

I inched under the pagoda to the sound of Japanese chimes, the kind of thing you might hear, say, WHEN YOU DIE. There was no line, so I didn't have time to reconsider. They strapped us into the calf harnesses and flipped us over to ride "Superman style," hands outstretched.

It might have been a bad trip had I not been riding alongside Paul Ruben, 16-year editor of Park World and foremost authority on thrill rides. Counting Tatsu, Paul has tested 696 of the world's fifteen-hundred coasters. Tatsu, he said, was the best flying coaster yet.

"It has great pacing," he said. "Never a dull moment."

I warned Paul that I might get sick.

"You should have eaten a banana," he said.

"Really? Does that help?"

"No, but it tastes good coming back up."

So it goes.

If you do have a weak stomach, Dramamine does the trick. Paul said so as we climbed the record-breaking peak and had a pretty good view of America. It was too late for Dramamine; I had to take a Screwitall.

Sixteen-year-old Kirsten Filonccuk encouraged me to "let go" into the loop. Before I could say, "What loop?" we charged 62 miles-an-hour into the pretzel roll, which lasted several lifetimes. All I could do was close my eyes and visualize world peace. Paul was actually counting the revolutions out loud.

"This part coming up is a little rough on the stomach," he said. Not something you want to hear from a man who has ridden 696 roller coasters.

We then plunged into a loop that maxes out at 4 g-forces (compare to 6 g-forces, at which point astronauts BLACK OUT). As my lips peeled back over my forehead, I remembered Kirsten's words and let go into the Geeeeeeeez!

Everything after the loop went dark, but I'm sure it was fun for the people who stayed conscious. Paul clocked the ride at 52 seconds, and 53 would have been too many. There they left us to dangle in a prone position, just hoping we'd toss our bananas.

Josh's mother Jodie Malone is writing a book, *Screaming Orgasms*, which reveals how roller coasters are a form of mental sex, especially for eccentric women.

"Tatsu was foreplay up to the loop," said Jodie, "But that was definitely a nice climax."

Jodie belongs to the Coaster Divas, a club that visits amusement parks, holds meetings, even coordinates "black teddy rides" where everyone wears sexy lingerie under their clothing. God purposely keeps them away from the Trekkies.

And while it is at times frightening how much Jodie and Paul know about roller coasters, when you see their faces you realize that they are just doing what they love, children in search of the ultimate rideâ€”The Holy Rail.

At home I lay down so that my organs could return to their original positions. My head would stop spinning sometime after dinner. The following day. If you want to train for Tatsu in advance, just go through the spin cycle in your washing machine.

Jodie says that most roller coaster records last only a few months, so if you want to be part of history, youâ€™d better run down before Tatsu is conquered by some bigger, faster, uglier beast. Godzilla perhaps.

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