



Gravity Gazette

Western New York
Coaster Club

Special Edition

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In Memory of Nancy Ann Carrigan

When we ride our first rollercoaster, we trust that the ride operator knows what he is doing, we take our seat, build up our courage, and have the thrill of a lifetime before arriving safely back at the station. Some people ride only in the front seat, some people, in the back. But for my mom, any open seat was a good seat. It was the same way with her life.

My mom seized every opportunity she had to experience life to the fullest. She would drive halfway across the East Coast to spend a few hours with friends. She took a day off from work just to watch a butterfly emerge from its chrysalis; and her hot chocolate always had to have whipped cream.

Even card-making was an adventure to my mom. She poured her heart into each and every card she made, layering colors, adding details, depth, and love. Opening a card from my mother made you feel like you were the most special person in the world. It was in giving that she found her greatest joy.

My mom was a wonderful mother. She encouraged us to dream big and stand up for what we believed in. She was our greatest role model. She is the reason I stand before you today in a brightly-colored shirt of butterflies and sparkly sequins. Wearing black today would have done no justice to the memory of my mom.

With the birth of my first child, my mom shifted into a new role. She refused to be called Grandma, however; she thought 'Nonnie' was a much younger and more exciting name. Nonnie taught my son his colors before he could walk. She taught my one-year old daughter how to raise her arms for "air time" as if she were descending the big drop on a rollercoaster. Nonnie loved her grandchildren. They meant the world to her.

My parents just celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary. They have come a long way from the night my mom first hypnotized my dad with her gold dress. Building a house, raising two daughters, together they have lived life to the fullest. Their rollercoaster ride has been an enduring one.

In the last week, my mother told us she was ready to go. The only difference now was that God would be the operator on this final ride. Mom trusted that the ride would go smoothly, and that once the ride was over, her daughter and parents would be there to embrace her.

And as for the rest of us, we know she'll be in the seat next to us on every coaster ride we take.



Nancy Carrigan in her yellow raincoat, from Valerie Carrigan



Valerie Carrigan

Nancy was one of those rare and wonderful people who seemed to effortlessly make friends. I think it was because of her truly loving heart. I always enjoyed the coaster trips I took with her.

Jill Thomson

Left to Right, Jill Thomson and Nancy Carrigan at WNYCC meeting 2001 at the Carrigan Residence. Photo courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler



When did we meet Nancy? Seems so long ago...like we met her during our first coaster ride. Perhaps it was Coasterfest™ in 1999, I don't know.



Left to Right: Sammy Dick, Lisa & John Maxwell, Nancy Carrigan and Jill Thomson at Six Flags Mexico, July 2006 from the collection of Lisa & John Maxwell

One of my fondest memories of Nancy comes from 2004. Oc-Boulder-Fest was September 4th that year, and Nancy was there (of course - wasn't she everywhere?). A mutual friend from North Carolina was also there, Ricky Cooper. Ricky was finishing up a New England Coaster tour, and his last stop was the next day at Great Escape. End of the night, and there's Nancy rounding up people to join him at his last stop. This was during the night ERT, and we knew we'd be getting home late, so we said maybe, but not likely.

Well, morning comes and we're feeling fine, so we decide to go. We arrive in the early afternoon and meet Ricky - Nancy joins us later in the afternoon. The four of us end up back at the Comet for the last hour and a half the park was open. We rode over and over, and somehow it came to light that it was Nancy's birthday! She was not making a big deal of it, and was certainly not going to tell us her age, but in the clear twilight of that Sunday evening almost in New England, 23 other riders on that last train of the night sang Happy Birthday to Nancy as we climbed the lift. Had it been a coaster event, Nancy would have made 20 new friends that night. But we all know that would not have been unusual; Nancy seemed to always be making new friends. Her ready smile and warmth welcomed anyone new to our hobby. In that she was the perfect club liaison. Hell, she seemed to know *everybody!*

I'm sure everyone who knew her has a story or two like this - the birthday train is but one of our happy memories. The first night impromptu "party" on the 2003 Coaster Zombies Parks of the Ozarks Tour ("*To All My Frieeeeeeeeeeeeennnnds...*"). Traveling together during the Spring 2005 ACE conference. That fantastic Goliath ERT at La Ronde during Coasterfest™ 2006. Climbing the Pyramid of the Sun outside Mexico City later that year. Lightning Racer ERT during Coasterfest™ in 2007.... So many more moments we'll not forget...

Nancy was a friend we were always happy to see - one who always raised our spirits; smiling and ready for the next park or coaster; always ready to squeeze another person into the events she organized; riding at night holding a little blue light - a small but significant star tracing the course of the track.

Just like a star, on a summer's morning
First they appear, and then they're gone

All of our night rides this year will be with a little finger light held in the air. And on Saturday, September 5th this year, I for one will be at the Great Escape. I will be on the last Comet train of the night. And I will sing happy birthday Nancy.

Goodbye Nancy. We love you. We'll miss you.

Goodbye Nancy. We love you. We'll miss you.

John and Lisa Maxwell.



Left to Right, Nancy Carrigan in front seat with Lisa Maxwell during ERT at Coasterfest™ 2006. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien

Did you know Nancy Carrigan? You probably did. It seemed to me Nancy knew everyone. I was always amazed when Nancy *didn't* know who someone was at an event or in a photo. Usually she'd make a reference to someone's name and look at me incredulously when I'd ask, "Who is that?" Now granted, part of that was me and my less-than-stellar ability to remember names. I'm getting better at names, but Nancy always seemed a master of the craft.

I've known Nancy for around 17 years. At least that is how far back I found photos of Nancy and Jerry in our photo albums. At that point, I'd been in WNYCC for 6 years and had made the transition from newbie (the guy Yvonne Forsythe married) to active member of the Planning Committee. After 6 years, I think I had finally learned everyone's name on the Planning Committee (without asking my wife), except for that new woman from Buffalo. The one who just started attending the monthly meetings. The one with the friendly smile and cheerful personality.

It didn't take long to get to know Nancy. She could strike up a conversation with you in short order and carry on a conversation for a long time. She was an easy person to have as a friend. After saying hello to Yvonne and me and asking how we were, she always asked how our kitties were. She knew they were important to us, knew that if something was amiss with our cats, that we'd be concerned. She cared how we were and knew what to ask in order to find out how we were doing. Not just a general "How are you?" but something specific. As a bystander, I saw that when other people would come up to Nancy. "How is your Mother", "how is your son", "how is that adorable new baby", "how are you doing after losing your father." Always specific and always personal. It wasn't just names Nancy remembered, she remembered what was important about each person and seemed to genuinely care. Some people might do this in an attempt to just be more social or gain a kind of political capital. But that was never what I saw in Nancy. She genuinely, truly cared. While we called her a social butterfly (with great affection), she was one of the most empathic people I've met.

Nancy was also a gracious host. After we changed our meeting from monthly to a less-frequent basis, she often would volunteer her and Jerry's house for the Club meetings in Buffalo. We always arrived to a warm hug, cold beverages and a place waiting for you around her table. You were special to Nancy. While I've lost track of how many times Nancy had us at her home, I will treasure the memories of all the time we spent with her there.



Left to Right, Nancy Carrigan, Debbie Grudzien, Bob & Yvonne Wheeler at Great Escape during registration for Coasterfest™ 2006. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien

Chairing a meeting with Nancy participating was, how shall I say it, "interesting." I'd want to take everything in order, according to the agenda. Discuss it, make a decision, vote on it and move on to the next agenda item. If my approach was like an arrow towards a specific target, Nancy, on the other hand, was like a mist of many, many, many thoughts. She would go from one idea to another and maybe never quite get anything really decided (so it seemed to me). I'd try to pin Nancy down, get her to focus on one thing, but that was like trying to nail down Jello. But it was Nancy who came to the meeting with tons of ideas, not me. She knew what new coaster was being built where, what park or coaster was going to be having a "birthday" in the coming year, which clubs were having events at which parks. She was a member of almost every enthusiast club and seemed to know somebody in some capacity at every park. I'd try to run the meetings to be productive, just like at work, but it was Nancy who added the real value to the Club.

In the last 10 years, Nancy had her hand in many of the events the Club hosted. Not all, mind you, but a significant number. She would suggest the idea for an event, contact the parks, work on the flyer, promote the event with other clubs and in person at other club events. She would work the phones and reach out to people to personally invite them to go to an event. She was persistent in promoting an event and working with the host parks to make an event memorable. She would often come to a meeting and say something along the lines of "Park XYZ is going to donate XXX for free." We were always amazed at what she seemed to get when most other people would get the standard group rate. Nancy always seemed to get more with her charm and sweet way of casually suggesting to someone, "Hey, wouldn't it be great if we had XXX for this event." Of course it would be great! She never asked "could you donate XXX", she would just throw out the idea and the next thing you knew, you were either donating something or doing something for her. She was a charmer!

For several years Yvonne and I wrote to the parks to solicit door prizes for the Club's Christmas party. One year Nancy volunteered to coordinate the door prizes. No one else did the door prizes from that time forward. Nancy enjoyed writing to the parks and seeing what they would send. Mostly, though, I think she enjoyed watching people pick their door prize when their name was called and seeing the pleasure people had in the prize they picked. Knowing that she was in some part responsible for making that happen brought her a lot of satisfaction. That's why she kept volunteering to do the door prizes year after year. She cared about others.

As much as she cared about others and wanted to know how they were doing, or be there for them in their time of need, she was herself a private person. While many of us knew something was going on with Nancy early this year, she would just say "I don't want to talk about it", or "We are private people." We respected her privacy, but I'm not sure how I feel about that now. We did let her know we were concerned but had to leave it at that. In the end, I hope she knew how much she was cared about by many people. I'm sorry we didn't have a chance to let her know just how much. Maybe if we were more caring about people everyday, like Nancy was, we wouldn't think that an opportunity to show our feelings had passed us by.

Nancy will be greatly missed by her friends and family, that goes without saying. She'll also be missed by the many clubs she loved, and in which she was a member. Of course I am biased, but, of all those clubs, WNYCC will feel the loss the deepest.

Bob Wheeler



Above, left to right, Nancy Carrigan, Lisa Maxwell and Ruth Colson at LaRonde during Coasterfest™ 2006. Contributor unknown



Left is Nancy Carrigan at Great Escape during Coasterfest™ 2006. From the collection of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler

Right is Nancy giving cookies to Thad. Left to right, Steve Thompson, Richard Koppelman, Nancy Carrigan and front is Thad Lewandowski, August 2008 at Waldameer Park. Photo courtesy of Bruce Cassi



Left is Jill Thomson with Nancy Carrigan playing a watergun game in Mexico City at the moment Jill realizes she won. Photo courtesy of John Maxwell





Left is Nancy Carrigan and Debbie Grudzien at press day for Top Thrill Dragster, Cedar Point, May 2003. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien



Below is Nancy Carrigan in seat 2 giving the "hand slap" to the ride ops. Coasterfest™ 2006. Photo courtesy of Geff Ford



Below from front to back is Jill Thomson, Nancy Carrigan and Bob Wheeler on Blue Streak at Conneaut Lake Park during Streak Out, August 2003. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien



Bob Wheeler and Nancy Carrigan in deep thought during WNYCC Holiday Party. Photo courtesy of Geff Ford.





Nancy Carrigan ("not the skater") wasn't a casual member of WNYCC - she was the true definition of an active member. She was always thinking ahead - always had an idea. We'd barely be done with one year's Coasterfest™ before she was suggesting parks to go to for the next year's Coasterfest™. Nancy started setting up the event at Waldameer before the holiday party and had the contract ready by the Planning Committee in March. Another event she wanted to plan, but was unable to follow through with, was the tenth birthday of Martin's Fantasy Island's Silver Comet. It was Nancy's idea to have WNYCC pay for cookies during Boulder Dash ERT at Coasterfest™ - this was not included in the registration fee. Nancy thought the Club should do this as a special thank you to attendees because of the extra profit from the previous year's event.

From the beginning of her membership in WNYCC, Nancy was writing articles, assisting the at-the-time editor to get the Gravity Gazette™ published, taking minutes of Planning Committee and General Business meetings, and, finally, InterClub Director (but she preferred InterClub Liaison).



Left to Right, Nancy Carrigan, Yvonne Wheeler and Joanne Hartley during registration for Coasterfest™ 2006. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien



Nancy Carrigan making a wish at Dutch Wonderland during Coasterfest™ 2007. Photo courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler

Nancy always had a smile - well, always except for one of her "Oh my goodness" moments, she had a smile. Nancy knew everyone's name, not just their faces. If we had a photo and needed to know the names of who was in the photo, we'd start with Nancy. She could stand in any ERT line and talk to people as friends, not just acquaintances. If we saw Jerry at a park and asked where Nancy was, he might have chuckled and said something like, "You know Nancy, she's busy talking with someone."

Nancy was so active in WNYCC that her recent silence was very loud. Comments we heard during Coasterfest™ were with worry when Nancy wasn't replying to e-mails, she wasn't at an event, or she wasn't in constant contact about Coasterfest™, finalizing every little detail. Those were big clues something was wrong. When we got word of her illness, confirmation of what we feared, we never expected she'd be gone just a short time later.

I can't believe we're doing another memorial issue about an active WNYCC member we've lost and loved. Nancy will be greatly missed, especially, for me, at Planning Committee meetings. I've made a lot of friends through WNYCC, and I'm very fortunate that I can count among them Nancy (and Thad).

Yvonne Wheeler



Photo to the right is Cole Hartley in the front seat with Nancy Carrigan in the back on flume at Waldameer Park during Coasterfest™ 1992. Photo courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler

Nancy Carrigan was really one of the sweetest people I know. She was always happy. We were just getting to know her better over the last year or so. She was one of the reasons that we joined WNYCC. I will always remember a lot of little things about Nancy. Last year at Martin's Fantasy Island, I was looking at the door prizes and she got me to help her call out the names for the prizes. She didn't want to call out the names, but I didn't mind. At Dollywood last year (it was very cold), I sat next to her at a show and she looked at me and said what do you have on? She wanted to see the sweatshirt I was wearing. So we sat and talked about clothes. (especially park clothes)



Above is Nancy Carrigan and park rep from Darien Lake, September 2008. Photo courtesy of Mary Ann Jarem



Left to right, Nancy Carrigan, park rep from Dutch Wonderland and Cathy Schwab, Spring Fling 2007. Photo courtesy of Mary Ann Jarem

Nancy Carrigan

What a terrible loss for both WNYCC and enthusiasts everywhere. Nancy was truly a wonderful person and one of the real fun people to be with at any event. She even used to volunteer to find me parks that served cheese-on-a-stick! I miss her very much.

Marty Moltz



Above Nancy Carrigan and Sam Marks on Screaming Swing at Dorney Park, September 2005. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien

I met Nancy in 2004 during the Coaster Zombies Cotton States tour. She welcomed me as one of her friends. She had a positive attitude about everything. Every Christmas, we mail Christmas cards to each other. I will miss her terribly. Rest in peace, chickadee!!

Shanon Somerville



Left is Thad Lewandowski, Debbie Grudzien and Nancy Carrigan who is having a little trouble with her stomach at Conneaut Lake during Streak Out 2004. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien



I had the pleasure of knowing Nancy ever since I was President of the Great Ohio Coaster Club. I worked with Nancy on planning events and what a joy it was to work with her. I especially appreciated the fact that like me was an advent line dancer. I even tried to teach her some steps that I knew that she was not familiar with since she danced to country western and I to urban soul. Thank you Nancy for coming to the Great Ohio Coaster Club events that you attended and thank you so much for allowing me to come to the Western New York Coaster Club events. I have to say both clubs offered some good times and good memories! Luv ya! XOXOXOX

Michael Burkes, Immediate Past President
Great Ohio Coaster Club



Nancy at the top of Pyramid of the Sun, outside Mexico City, July 18, 2006. Photo courtesy of Nancy Carrigan.

Below is left to right Judy Marcin, Mike Thompson, Ann Feeley and Nancy Carrigan during Behemoth Blast, August 2008. Photo courtesy of Rus Ozana.



Photo above is Rus Ozana and Nancy Carrigan at the Lake Compounce wedding of Sue and Rich Yekel, June 10, 2006. Photo courtesy of Rus Ozana.

She is sorely missed!
Rus Ozana



The photo was taken at Hersheypark on June 28, 2008. It was two days after the ATRA Celebrates Pete's 50th Birthday event at Knoebels. We were all very touched that Nancy came to my party. Nancy was a member of ATRA and will be missed very much.

Pete Turrill

Nancy Carrigan, Pete Turrill, John Maxwell and Brian Watts waiting for Wildcat at Hershey Park. Photo from both Pete Turrill and John Maxwell.

You always knew the season when you called the Carrigan residence, Nancy always reminded you to have a wonderful, whichever season, day.



Above is Nancy Carrigan with Debbie Grudzien at WNYCC meeting in 2003. Photo courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler

That is just plain Nancy. Always up, always smiling, grasping life. It's sad we had just a few short years together. When I met Nancy, we found out we actually grew up on the same street. This started our friendship. We would talk about the neighborhood things and pleasant memories of our lives there.

Then there were the coasters. Nancy couldn't get enough of them. We didn't need an event (although they are nice), we would just take off because we needed a coaster fix. Then there was WNYCC. I can't tell you how many events she ran, she even helped to reach out to others when things may have gone astray. She gave a lot of her time to help WNYCC function smoothly and seamlessly. She constantly recruited people, for all kinds of things, she was a walking billboard for anything to do with WNYCC.

The love these people had shown, their concern, and how she was in their thoughts was remarkable. We all should be so fortunate. Perhaps, Nancy did not realize just how many people's lives she touched, guess she does now.

In any conversation, Nancy was more concerned about someone else and not herself. She wanted to know if someone was hurting, ill, or unhappy. Nancy would come up with something to try to help make someone smile to help weather the storm.

Nancy had a heart of gold and never a bad word would you hear from her. I never saw her angry or bitter. I only saw her hurting when she lost her loved ones.

The picture on the front cover has Nancy with her "coaster earrings." If you knew about those earrings and why she wore them, you knew Nancy.

Nancy will hold a special place in my heart; she was one of a kind. I know the next time I enjoy an ice cream sundae; my thoughts will be with Nancy. I will definitely miss Nancy. Whenever I see certain places, I know I will think of her.

Until we meet again, keep that perpetual coaster running. You are in great company.
Debbie Grudzien

Left to right, Geff Ford, Lisa & John Maxwell, Nancy Carrigan and Audrey Colson at CoasterCon 2007.



It is unfortunate that I only had the pleasure of knowing Nancy for a short time. I met Nancy just a few years ago when I joined WNYCC. The first time I met her she treated me like an old friend. Nancy was without question one of the nicest people I have ever known. Her love of life and true joy about riding roller coasters was infectious and made it hard not to have fun when you were with her. I was slightly jealous of her ability to attend what sometimes seemed to be every single event that took place. I kept waiting for her to figure out how to attend two different events at the same time. It often felt like Nancy knew everybody, and if she knew you, you were her friend. I will truly miss talking to her and especially riding coasters with her while shouting out "Oh my goodness!"

Geff Ford

In front of LeMonstre at LaRonde is left to right, Geff Ford, Debbie Grudzien, Phillippe from LaRonde, and Nancy Carrigan, May 2003. Photo courtesy of Debbie Grudzien.



Conneaut Lake Days

DAVE: Before I was ever a member of the WNYCC, but after I had laid eyes on and experienced the coolest most fun coaster park I know of (Knoebel's), Mark Oship suggested an event to me that I readily agreed upon. Mark and I have been friends for nearly 20 years now, and we both like to do things that are unusual and adventurous.

Mark was a fairly new member of WNYCC at the time, but had met a good number of the coaster enthusiasts in the club. He told me about an old amusement park in Pennsylvania that MACC was holding an event at which included ERT on their coaster, The Blue Streak, at night, and that WNYCC members could attend for the same price as MACC members. That was Conneaut Lake Park, and the event was Streak Out. Mark said it was only a few hours drive from Buffalo to the park and that the park had an old hotel right on the grounds, and asked if I'd like to go. Being one for adventure, I said lets book us a room and take a ride!

MARK: We arrived in mid-afternoon for the event, checked into our hotel room and then hit the park. It was a beautiful day. Just perfect for walking the grounds, and introducing Dave to the all the nostalgic rides and attractions.

DAVE: I totally agree. Conneaut Lake Park was, and still is to a large degree, like going back to the 50's! We hit several rides, including the fantastic Tumble Bug, and rode the Blue Streak at least five times! I loved the park immediately.

Mark introduced me to many coaster enthusiasts that weekend. One WNYCC member especially was very friendly towards me, and that was Nancy Carrigan. She made me feel right at home.

MARK: I told Nancy that Dave was a guest of mine, had been to Knoebel's a couple time with me for Phunfest, but was not a member of any coaster club. I told her that he was thinking about joining WNYCC.

DAVE: Nancy took the time to tell me all about WNYCC, the whole history of the club, how long she had been a member, how the WNYCC serves the coaster community, and all the benefits of being a member. She was so friendly that it was like I was talking to someone I'd known for years! Mark and I spent the rest of the day with Nancy, talking, riding the Blue Streak, the various other rides, and eating many of the local park foods from the vendors.

MARK: Unfortunately, as had been a number of events previous to this one, the ERT that night on the Blue Streak was cancelled. A portion of one of the ledgers had shattered. Actually, it was Dave, Nancy and myself that pointed this out to Don Schantz. We spotted it while riding the train and ran into Don as we were getting off. He told us that the wood must have been bad, because that ledger had been put in place just that spring. We were the first to find out that there would be no ERT that night, as Don told us he had the shut the ride down. I was a bit bummed out, but not Nancy. Not one little bit. She was still up, happy and ready for fun.

DAVE: As night was starting to fall everyone gathered on the porch of the hotel, swapping coaster and park stories. After about an hour, Nancy suggested to Mark and I that we walk over to the night club on the beach, listen to the local band that was playing, and have a few drinks. Nancy bought us a round and made a toast to me when I told her that I had decided to join the WNYCC. We stayed until the band packed up and the bar closed for the evening.

MARK: I vividly remember that night. Dave and I both took turns dancing with Nancy to the rhythms of the band that was playing, between rounds of drinks, and just talking about coasters, life and everything in between. By the time the club closed, the three of us were feeling no pain! I wouldn't say we were drunk, but we were all feeling pretty darn good!

DAVE: Leaving the club Nancy suggested we take a walk across the beach as we headed back to the hotel. We took off our shoes and walked across the beach, feeling the cool sand between our toes as we headed to the hotel and our rooms. Then Nancy came up with a spur of the moment idea. Wouldn't it be great, she asked, to sleep right on the beach? We could wake up early and be the first ones to watch the sun rise in the morning! Mark and I looked at each other and thought Nancy was kidding us. But she was serious! She was talking about going back to the hotel to get some beach towels for us to sleep on!

MARK: I remember how Dave told Nancy that it would look pretty strange for "early risers" to see 3 people, especially two guys and one lady, sleeping on the beach together, imitating beached whales. I put in my two cents, mentioning how the little "lake critters" might find us a nice late night snack and the seagulls flying by would be dropping a few "bombs" on us in the morning.

DAVE: We all laughed about what a sight we the three of us would be on the beach, and decided to go just go back to the hotel to sleep. That was my first time meeting Nancy, and one of my very fondest memories of a great lady I grew to know as a very good friend.



Streak Out 2006, Conneaut Lake Park, back seat is Richard Koppelman, in front is B. Derek Shaw riding with Nancy Carrigan. Photo courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler



In Memory of Nancy Carrigan

All photos on this page are of Nancy Carrigan along with her husband of 40 years Jerry Carrigan.

Picture to the left is at Kennywood during Coasterfest™ 2005. Photo is courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler

Picture below is Silver Streak opening at Martin's Fantasy Island, 1999. Photo is courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler



Photo to the left is Flying Turns at Knoebel's during the walking tour for Opening Day 2007.

Photo is courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler

Photo to the right is Coasterfest™ 2000 riding Boulder Dash at Lake Compounce

Photo courtesy of Bob & Yvonne Wheeler

