

'Hurricane' debut set for June 22

By GREG BEEBE
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SANTA CRUZ — A Hurricane is headed for the Boardwalk.

This year, the beachfront amusement park is offering the "Hurricane," a compact, \$2-million bundle of nerves and g-forces that debuts June 22, just in time for the Boardwalk's 85th anniversary.

"Hurricane" replaces the the "Jet Star," a similar ride that was put out to pasture — sold to another park, actually — last year. And Paul Ruben, a New York-based expert on roller coasters, said Monday that thrill-seekers won't be disappointed with the second-story twister, which overlooks the ocean and the Carousel from its perch atop the bumper cars.

"The Hurricane is at the cutting edge of moderate-sized steel roller coaster technology," said Ruben, visiting the Boardwalk as part of a two-week fact-finding and hand-shaking mission for Park World, a theme park trade magazine.

Ruben is currently touring parks — and riding coasters for free — from San Francisco to San Diego. He likes what he sees in the '90s breed of smooth, fleet, thrill rides.

"Today's coasters are being built to go faster and wilder than ever before," said Ruben, who recently rode the an identical Hurricane at Adventureland in East Farmingdale, Long Island.

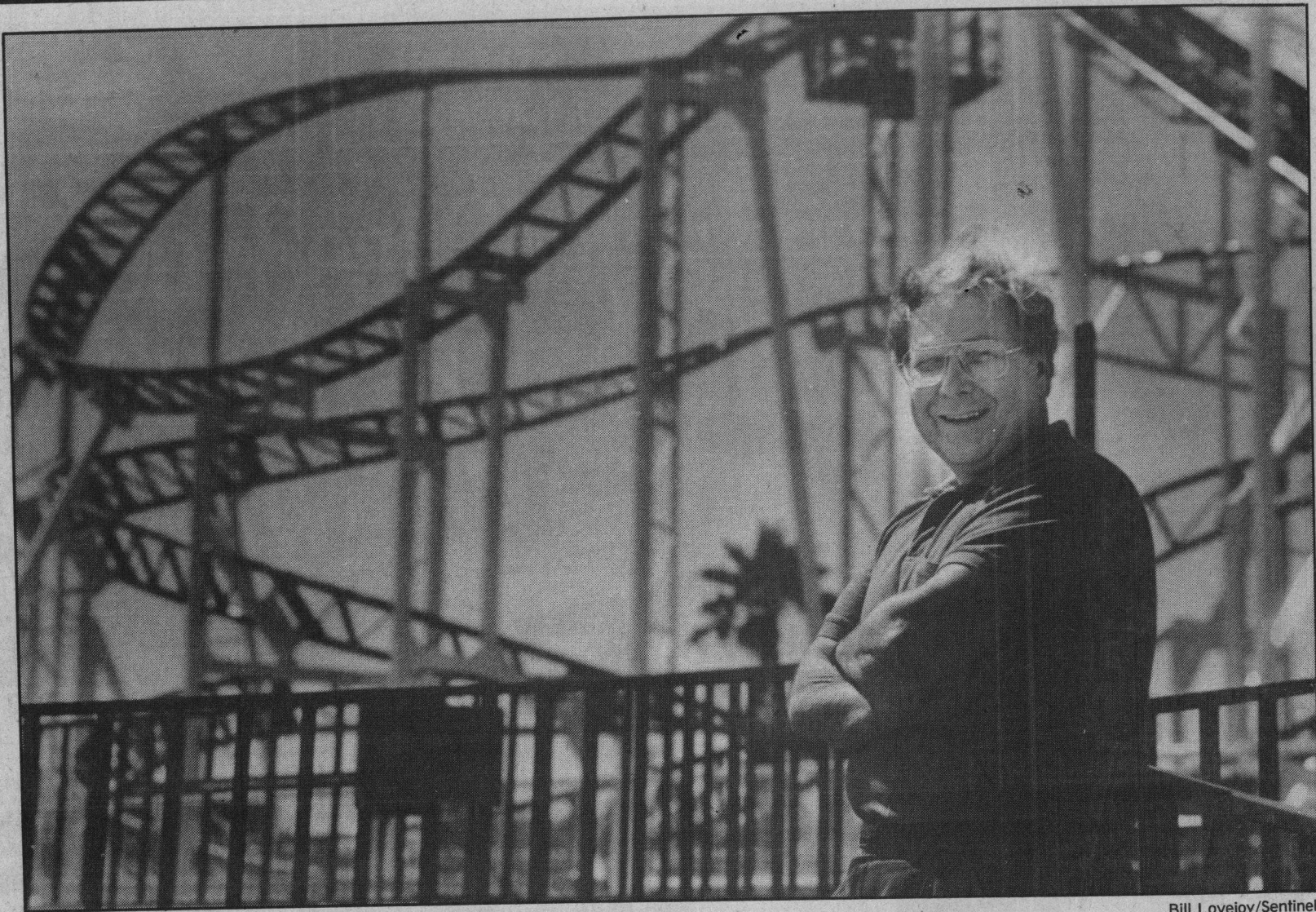
"It's very smooth and very fast. It just throws you head over heels. It's got non-stop action and non-stop thrills," said Ruben, who estimates that he's ridden more than 2,700 miles of roller coaster track since age 5, "before the days of liability insurance."

Like all good coasters, said Ruben, "Hurricane" offers "no opportunities for riders to regain their composure."

But the ride is also as safe as they come, he said. "Everyone likes to to test the edge, everybody enjoys the imagined danger, but the best-kept secret in the industry is how safe roller coasters are."

Restraint systems in today's coasters are a far cry from the old days, when "you just hung on," said Ruben.

The new Boardwalk coaster brings California into a tie with Ohio for most roller coasters in the country, at 22. In North America, there are 226 coasters, including 19 new, moved or renovated since the golden era of amusement parks in the '20s.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Paul Ruben, who travels the world riding amusement park rides, checked the new 'Hurricane' at the Boardwalk Monday.