

***THE BRONX CLUB OF
VEGAS VALLEY
NEWSLETTER
MAY 2011***



FREEDOMLAND – June 1960 – September 1964

If you require any information concerning the Club, know of anyone interested in joining, or have ideas for upcoming events you would like to host, please contact me Leslie Schoenberg, 838-3560, ls1s1166@aol.com, or Sue Braun, suefromtustin@yahoo.com, cell 510-7788. In addition, I am also the Newsletter Editor. If you have, any articles about The Bronx that you would like to have put in the Newsletter, please forward them to me at the above email address.

Upcoming events

June 12, your hosts for the evening are Norm and Margie Karp. We have a guest speaker who will talk to us about identify theft. The event will be held at N.Y. Pizza and Pasta, 2400 S. Jones at the corner of Sahara, starting at 6:00 pm. New York Pizza & Pasta - Vegas | Pizza Delivery Las Vegas | Online Menu. A brief bio follows. Our guest speaker Mr. Jerry Housfeld grew up in Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin receiving dual degrees in Business Administration and Television Production. Mr. Housfeld moved to Michigan in 1984 and worked in the television sports industry for 17 years. He worked with the Detroit Pistons, Red Wings and Tigers as Operations Manager for a regional cable network. He has televised major national sports events including Super Bowls, World Series, and Stanley Cup hockey playoffs along with many major golf tournaments. Clients included CBS Sports, ABC Sports, ESPN, NBC Sports and Fox Sports.

Mr. Housfeld moved to Las Vegas in 1997 and obtained his Federal investment licenses in 2003. He has extensive knowledge about identity theft and will explain what we need to do to protect ourselves. Last day to respond to Norm or Margie(mnk25@msn.com) is June 8. Separate checks will be issued including gratuity. There will be \$1.00 collected at the door to pay for the speaker's expense.

July 17, this month's hosts are Ron and Sandy Scher. The event will be held at Mimi's Café, 1121 S. Fort Apache at Charleston, 6:00 PM 702-341-0365. Separate checks including gratuity will be issued. We will have as our guest speaker, Mr. Leon Goldstein, who was born in British occupied Palestine, which is now Israel. He was born in 1948, prior to Palestine becoming the Independent Nation of Israel. At the age of 17, he was a member of a group of Freedom Fighters known as the Hagganah. He will also be bringing his wife to share some of her experiences with us. He has many interesting stories to tell us. We will collect \$2.00 to cover The Goldstein's expense. The last day to respond to Ron and Sandy (rmscher@cox.net) 655-3019, is July 12.

August 20, please see separate email that went out announcing this event.

September 18, Leslie Schoenberg will host our event. Our guest speaker this month will be Michael Green, PhD., Professor of the History of Las Vegas at Community College of Southern NV. He is bringing his Father with him since his Dad grew up in The Bronx. The event will be at 6:00 pm and held at Cathay House, 876-3838 www.cathayhouselv.com, 5300 Spring Mountain Rd., #107.

October 16 –Allen and Susan Blonder, and Rob and Harriet Stein will host this month's event. Additional details to follow.

November 13 – Please note that this is the 2nd Sunday of the month not the 3rd as usual. This is because of Thanksgiving. Ken and Rochelle Goodman and Denise and Steve Needleman will host this month's event.

December 18 – We are hoping to have a holiday party similar to the one we had last year. As plans are worked out, I will forward additional information in future Newsletters.

FREEDOMLAND



Map of Freedomland

By - John B. Robinson

Conceived at a time when theme parks were still a new concept in the amusement park industry, Freedomland U.S.A. was New York City's first and only theme park. Dedicated to the portrayal of American history, this heavily themed extravaganza sought to tell America's story through seven major themed areas, each based upon a different city or region of the country. Located in the borough of The Bronx, Freedomland would unfortunately last for only five seasons.

When the park opened in June 1960, it boasted four dark ride attractions, an impressive number even back then when such rides were far more commonplace on the amusement scene. Built by the Arrow Development Co., each was themed to such a degree that they were unique from similar attractions found at other parks at the time.

The San Francisco Earthquake Ride was located in the Old San Francisco area. Since it was the intention of Freedomland to teach as well as entertain, while waiting on line people were given a recorded commentary about the great quake of 1906. A painted mural by the ride's loading area depicted the ruined skyline of the stricken city moments after the catastrophe struck.

Guests were transported in antique automobiles.



As soon as you got inside you found yourself "driving" on the streets of San Francisco the evening before the disaster.



People could be seen dancing the night away, oblivious to their fate. Next, you were in Chinatown and along the Barbary Coast, where an errant sailor was being tossed from a waterfront saloon near the path of your horseless carriage.

Suddenly, buildings began to shake and quiver in an alarming manner. A two-story house slid off its foundation toward the car you were riding in. Frightened human mannequins could be seen in the windows of the collapsing buildings. It was a thrill to be the "driver" during this adventure as you "steered" around buckling sidewalks and falling concrete columns. The effects were not confined to the visual, either. An alert rider could spot what appeared to be a rotating drum suspended above the street. Evidently, the drum was filled with all kinds of objects that added the sounds of breaking glass and falling masonry to the scene of horror unfolding before one's eyes. More painted murals illustrated the destruction in rather graphic detail. At the climax, viewed a fire scene was seen. Somewhat crude by today's standards, the scene none-the-less inspired a touch of fear in youngsters by the use of flickering orange lights and silhouettes of burned out buildings. Architecturally the houses and buildings depicted were faithful to those found in the City by the Golden Gate, sporting bay windows. Many were of the famous Victorian style.

Located in the Old Southwest section was The Mine Caverns. Surely motivated by the preponderance of mining and caverns in this region of America, The Mine Caverns were a junior speleologist's dream come true.

In outward appearance, The Mine Caverns resembled the Superstation Mountain attraction currently in operation at Indiana Beach. This was a ride on two levels, part of which was actually underground! It was also the only attraction out of the four that featured monsters and related creatures.

The opening scenes were of a family of cave dwellers engaging in Petrology. One cave man menaced intruders with a huge boulder, and dragons stuck their heads through crevices in the cave walls. Directly ahead the way appeared to be blocked by a pile of rocks, but these were pushed aside by the mine cart you would be riding in. Thus was revealed a vast subterranean cavern inhabited by giant insects and other weird critters, which defied description.



Stalactites and stalagmites were everywhere, illuminated by a variety of colored spotlights. The cart was climbing ever upward through all this, close to the stalactites which suddenly dropped as you passed underneath. Just before exiting another car containing two human figures would emerge from a siding and halt just in time to avert a collision. This last incident was very unexpected and quite effective, too.



The Old South was represented by the New Orleans Mardi Gras themed section, and was the locale of Freedomland's other two adventures in the dark. The Tornado Ride sought to recreate the experience of being caught up in a real twister and was quite enjoyable. Once again, riders were transported in antique autos. A strange whistling noise could be heard while boarding and signs warned to hold onto your hats. Entering the darkened chamber the car would execute a sharp u-turn, revealing a placid farm scene. Suddenly a gusty wind would hit riders in the face as the dreaded tornado was about to strike! Houses spun on end and you could see the terrified residents through the windows. All sorts of objects were flying by as you approached the spinning funnel dead ahead.

At the last, that moment the car veered off but soon was traveling through a rotating barrel as the wicked cyclone got you in its clutches! Next, the hapless riders found themselves inside a barn. The din here was earsplitting with cackling chickens, mooing cows, and horses whinnying up a storm of fright themselves. Helpless cows appeared to float overhead, and a huge bale of hay threatened to suffocate riders just before departing this scene of Mother Nature's wrath and chaos.

Just across the way, The Buccaneers adventure awaited everyone. This time the method of travel was in a boat-like vehicle adorned with a skull serving as a sort of hood ornament.





Traveling through the opening scenes in the pub lent one a feeling of the forbidden as the pirates here all had a threatening, dangerous look in their faces. An interesting aspect of many dark rides is the mysterious wooden doors, which often separate different chambers inside. Your vehicle slams into these doors and they part before you, adding another element of the unexpected to the experience. The Buccaneers Ride made good use of these contraptions. You both entered and exited the pub through such doors, and just when you thought, you were safely past the menacing Bucs you found yourself sailing between dueling pirate ships, complete with cannon fire and flashing lights.



More scenes were to follow depicting pirates sailing by lighted buoys, digging for treasure beneath palm trees, and various evening island scenes. The action exploded in rapid order as skeletons frolicked about and a hapless pirate was hung. In the last scene,

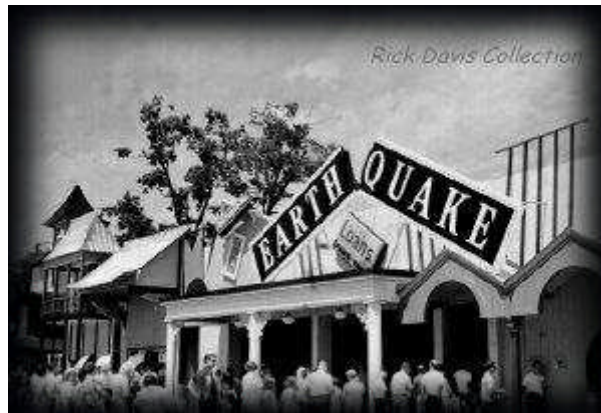


a sea serpent reared its ugly head while emitting a bone-chilling shriek. In later years, Disney would introduce the Pirates of the Caribbean adventure to its famous park, and it was to closely follow the gist of Freedomland's earlier version. Disney's ride was more technically advanced, and it is interesting for those who have experienced them both to compare the differing results that a few years of technical development could bring about.



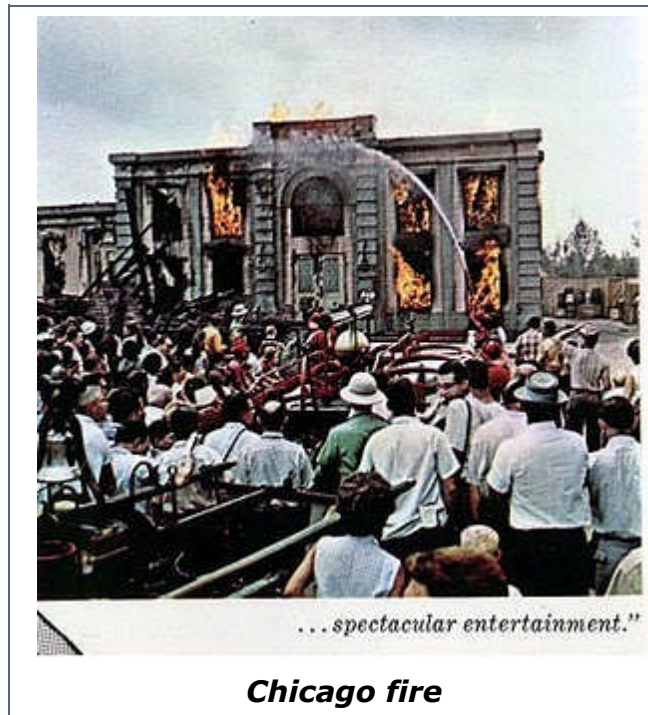
The Tornado at the Great Escape.

Freedomland's dark rides were immensely popular, and riders usually I had to endure a wait in order to enjoy them. Because of the theming involved, they were indeed one-of-a-kind. Perhaps it was fitting that three of these rides found a new lease on life after Freedomland closed following the 1964 season. The Tornado Ride made its way to Kennywood Park in Pennsylvania then to The Great Escape at Lake George in upstate New York. The Earthquake and Buccaneers were transported to Cedar Point in Ohio, where The Buccaneers was renamed The Pirate Ride. Lasting until very recently, even the mock-up ship facade, including the crow's nest, was reassembled outside the entrance of The Pirate Ride. The Earthquake Ride would succumb around 1983 or so, and I was fortunate in being able to travel to the Point to enjoy this ride shortly before it's second and final demise.



I dearly loved these rides as a child, and was overjoyed upon learning that they survived, albeit everywhere from their original location. I made the trip to Cedar Point just to experience these rides again! I was to travel more than once to avail myself, considering myself fortunate that this was still possible years after the closure of Freedomland. It sure was great, however, when they existed all in one place only ten minutes from my home in The Bronx!

Additional items from Freedomland:



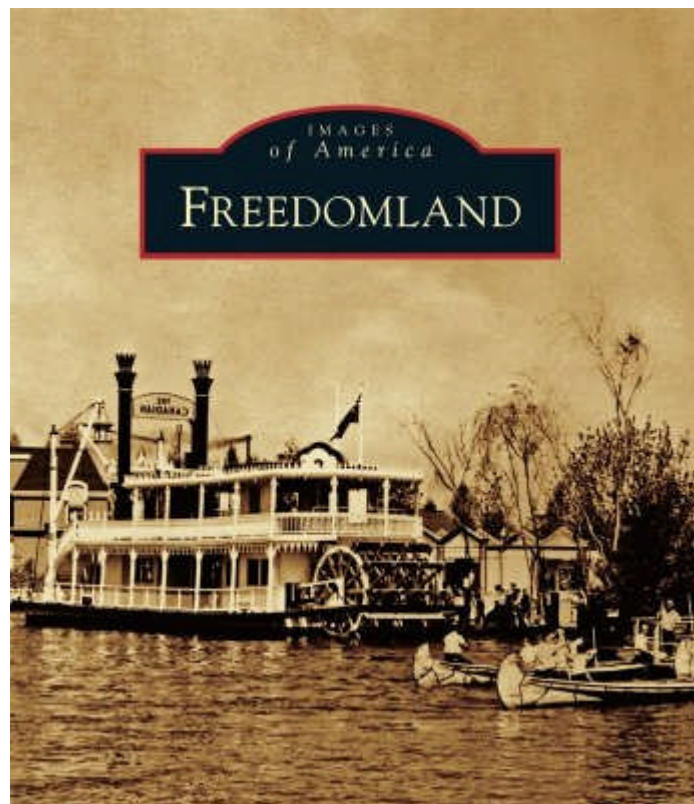
Chicago was famous for its fire. As the story goes, in 1871, Mrs. O'Leary's cow tipped over a lantern in her barn and thus began the fire that ravaged all of Chicago. There was a reenactment at the park, where every twenty minutes a controlled fire would burn down a building and volunteers would have to put it out before it burned down the city.





Remains of the Totsie in 1998

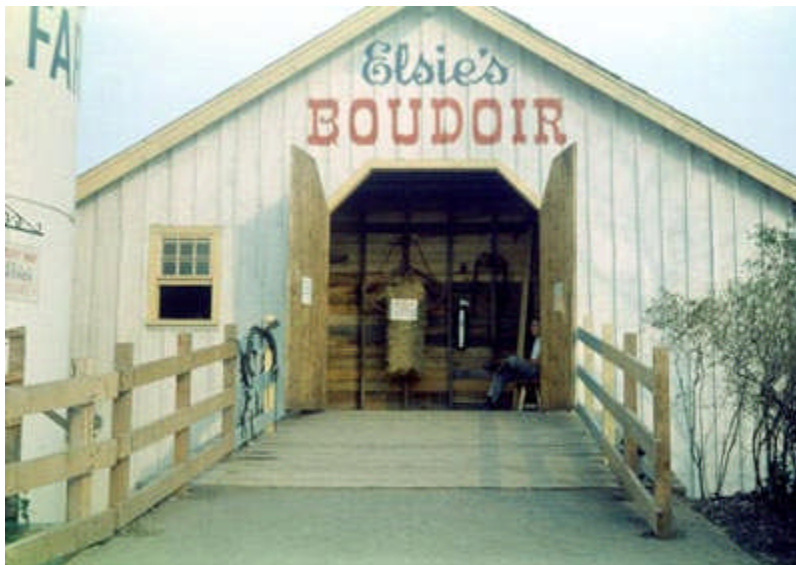
The above two pictures are the remains of Totsie, one of the two tugboats that existed in Freedomland.



Images of Freedomland.



Western Saloon and Opera House site of the daily gunfights.



Elsie's Boudoir

On September 15, 1964, Freedomland filed for bankruptcy. Between late 1964 and early 1965, Freedomland was torn down. Later that year, plans for a large apartment complex, Co-Op City, were drawn up to be built in its place.

The following members are celebrating birthdays in May.

Marvin Botwinik May 2

Sandy Scher May 21

Ed Ort May 24

Sharon Gottlieb May 25

The following couples are celebrating Anniversaries in May.

Rona and Larry Schwartz May 26, their 37th.

Idele and Harvey Kaplan May 27, their 33rd.

***Larry and Leslie Schoenberg celebrated the Bar Mitzvah of
their Grandson Robert on April 30.***

The Club held its April event at Gordon Birsch in Boca Park. The Bluth's and the Kaplan's hosted the event. Peggy Thompson who did a wonderful job entertained us. Following are some pictures of the evening.



Hosts David and Doris Bluth with Peggy Thompson.



Here are some of our members enjoying friends and good conversation. Gene and Doris Berns, Susan Blonder, Harriet Stein Allen Blonder and Rob Stein.



On the left is Ron Scher. On the right is Greg Abbott, Sandy Scher, David and Doris Bluth, Peggy Thompson.



Co-chair Leslie Schoenberg introducing Peggy Thompson.



Our attendees listening to Leslie giving a summary of upcoming events.



Peggy singing one of her favorites for us.