

Roll of the Dice

Roll of the Dice #3 is produced by Peggy Burke for APA-V, August 3, 1994, at 6725 Bremerton Circle in Faaaabulous Lost Wages, Nevada, 89107. Member, fwa, afal.

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My first non-themed amusement park visit came when I was fresh out of college. I went to see a friend who lived in Mountain View, CA (about an hour south of San Francisco). During the visit, Tom took me and his other friend, Neal (who was also visiting at that time) to the boardwalk in San Jose (about an hour south of Mountain View). The Boardwalk there has the last (I believe) remaining wooden roller coaster in the country, the Giant Dipper. The Dipper doubled for the Coney Island Cyclone in movies made after the Cyclone was torn down. That was my first roller coaster ride, not counting Disneyland's roller coasters, and I loved it. No loops, no rolling upside down, just a good solid roller coaster ride. Of course I held my hands above my head in some sort of primitive display of courage (or stupidity). And next thing I know, Neal, sitting beside me, had grabbed on to my hand. Why? Could he have been scared and needed somebody to hold hands with? Or was he just looking for an excuse to hold hands with me? To this day, I have no idea, but the ride was incredible. So good, in fact, that later, after the rest of the (painful) events of that day, I said, "Let's go do the Dipper again." The ride wasn't as good second time around--for the simple reason that first time we were sitting in the rear of the car, second time we were sitting in the front of the car. Elementary roller coaster physics states that the further back you sit, the more gravity pull you get and the faster the descents.

I referred to painful events of that day.... In addition to going to the Boardwalk, we also drove down to Monterey Bay Aquarium (where I scandalized one of the workers by asking him how much that lobster was--I wanted it for dinner), and after touring the aquarium, went down to walk on Monterey beach.

Monterey beach is a rocky beach in parts, jagged, brown-black masses rising out of almost-pristine sands. The three of us, Tom, Neal and I, started down the rocks to the sandy part of the beach. Neal went first and leapt nimbly from one rock to another. I, a desert rat long accustomed to rocks and climbing/jumping on them, followed--but I had forgotten I was wearing slip-on shoes instead of sneakers. I lost my footing, my shoe went one way, my ankle another, and I fell flat. Neal was so apologetic: "I shouldn't have done that, I'm sorry."

I sat up, asking, "Is my camera okay?" I had landed on it when I fell. I found out later that the lens cap had come off and I actually snapped a picture of the rock I fell on. Tom said, "Never mind the camera, are you okay?" I was more or less fine. My right leg had been bruised very badly--from knee to toe, it turned the most interesting colors never before seen on woman's flesh--and my big toe on my right foot sprained. But the most interesting injury I got in that fall was when my sunglasses jammed into my cheek, cutting me just below my right eye and giving me a shiner that lasted two weeks. I remember going back to work after that vacation, and everyone staring at me, wondering what had happened. But I had my cover story down pat. "I went to see two black belt friends of mine," I told them. "They got into a fight over me, and I made the mistake of trying to stop them." They actually believed me. Some people will believe anything, I guess.

I haven't been back to San Jose or Monterey since that autumn. I've been to the Bay Area a number of times, including the WorldCon last year, but I never found the time to go back to the Boardwalk and see if the Giant Dipper is still running, and, if it is, if it's still as much fun as I remember it being. Though I do plan not to fall on Monterey beach again. That's a once-is-enough experience.