



## PLAYLAND CELEBRATES THE 50<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY OF THE 'KING OF THE MIDWAY'

### PUBLIC EVENT PLANNED FOR BELOVED WOODEN COASTER

For Immediate Release (May 26, 2008)

Vancouver, British Columbia: Since 1958 thrill seekers from across British Columbia, Canada and around the globe have made the pilgrimage to pay homage to one of the greatest amusement rides ever constructed, the Playland Wooden Coaster.

There is no doubt, the world's amusement park industry has had several legendary rides during its iconic, and often storied, history - rides that are held in special esteem and looked upon with fond memories or special reverence. The Cyclone at Coney Island, the Loch Ness Monster at Busch Gardens, and Cedar Points' Millennium Force are some of the most famous, but few roller coasters have achieved the legendary status among true aficionados that the classic Playland Wooden Roller Coaster has.

An old world, all-time classic, the Playland Coaster has a gritty ambience and rough and tumble exterior. Hobbyists' and fans who've braved the Coaster are familiar with the dramatic and unsuspected jerk of motion as the sixteen passenger train is locked into position on the uptake chain at the base of the first hill. The clicking sound that follows is as universally known by Coaster fans as the stomach-churning first hill plunge and the camel-hop drops that are as signature to the ride as the picture of its iconic, skeletal frame set against the Vancouver skyline.

Through good times and bad the Playland Wooden Coaster has weathered the storm and is still around to thrill a new generation of coaster enthusiasts that flock to its base.

The story behind one of the world's most famous coaster's is nothing short of awe-inspiring and serves as a constant reminder that, for many generations of ride enthusiasts, the Playland Wooden Coaster truly is Mecca.

### PUBLIC INVITED TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTHDAY OF A CLASSIC

On Tuesday, June 17<sup>th</sup> the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) is proud to invite all of British Columbia to join with them in celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Playland Wooden Coaster. **The event, which will begin at 6:00am will include FREE rides on the Coaster from 6:00am – 10:00am.** At 10:00am Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan will be making a special presentation to PNE President and CEO Michael McDaniel, designating the Playland Wooden Coaster as a site of special significance to the city.

The PNE will also be making a presentation to members of the American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE).

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## PLAYLAND'S WOODEN COASTERS' STORIED HISTORY

Fifty years ago, as the legend goes, a group of engineers from the Province of British Columbia came out to inspect the nearly complete Playland Wooden Coaster. According to the story, the "experts" laughingly told the men who designed and built the Coaster that their \$200,000 project was a fool's game.

The engineers were unanimous - there is no way that a roller coaster train would be able to make it around their frighteningly dense collection of snakey dips, bends and curves powered only by gravity after the first hill.

They were so sure, they took builder Walker LeRoy's \$100 bet (a lofty sum in 1958). Leroy then strapped a plank to the wheels of an unfinished train and cranked up the 1923 Westinghouse motor. Holding only a piece of rope, with nothing but his grip to keep him from getting whipped up and off the wood into the wild blue yonder, Leroy set off to prove them wrong. Ninety seconds later, Leroy's train, with him miraculously still on it, had shown the engineers what the Coaster was all about. He collected his hundred bucks, and the legacy of the Playland Wooden Coaster had begun.

The legendary coaster has shaken nerves, rattled brains and caused the odd tear ever since.

### COASTER FAST FACTS

- The Playland Wooden Coaster was built throughout 1957 and early 1958
- The Coaster officially Opened in 1958
- The Coaster was designed by Carl Phare
- Head of construction was Walker LeRoy
- Each train is made up of eight two-person cars (total capacity per train: 16)
- Maximum speed of trains - 45 mph
- Maximum track height - 75 feet at highest point (1st hill)
- Track length is 5/8th of a mile
- Ride time is 90 seconds
- Coaster rides an average of 1/2 million guests annually
- Number of trains – 3
- The Coaster is powered by a 75 hp electric motor which lifts the 16 passenger specially designed train up the first hill. Once each train passes over the first hill it is driven through a series of climbs, dips, banks, horseshoe turns and a classic reverse curve only by the laws of gravity.
- Original cost of construction: \$200,000
- Built from Douglas fir
- Listed as an American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE) – "Coaster Classic"

#### Unique Features:

- Entire ride is momentum driven after first hill
- Lap bar safety system (no overhead seat restraints)
- Considered to be a "living" (wooden) Coaster (rather than steel)

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