

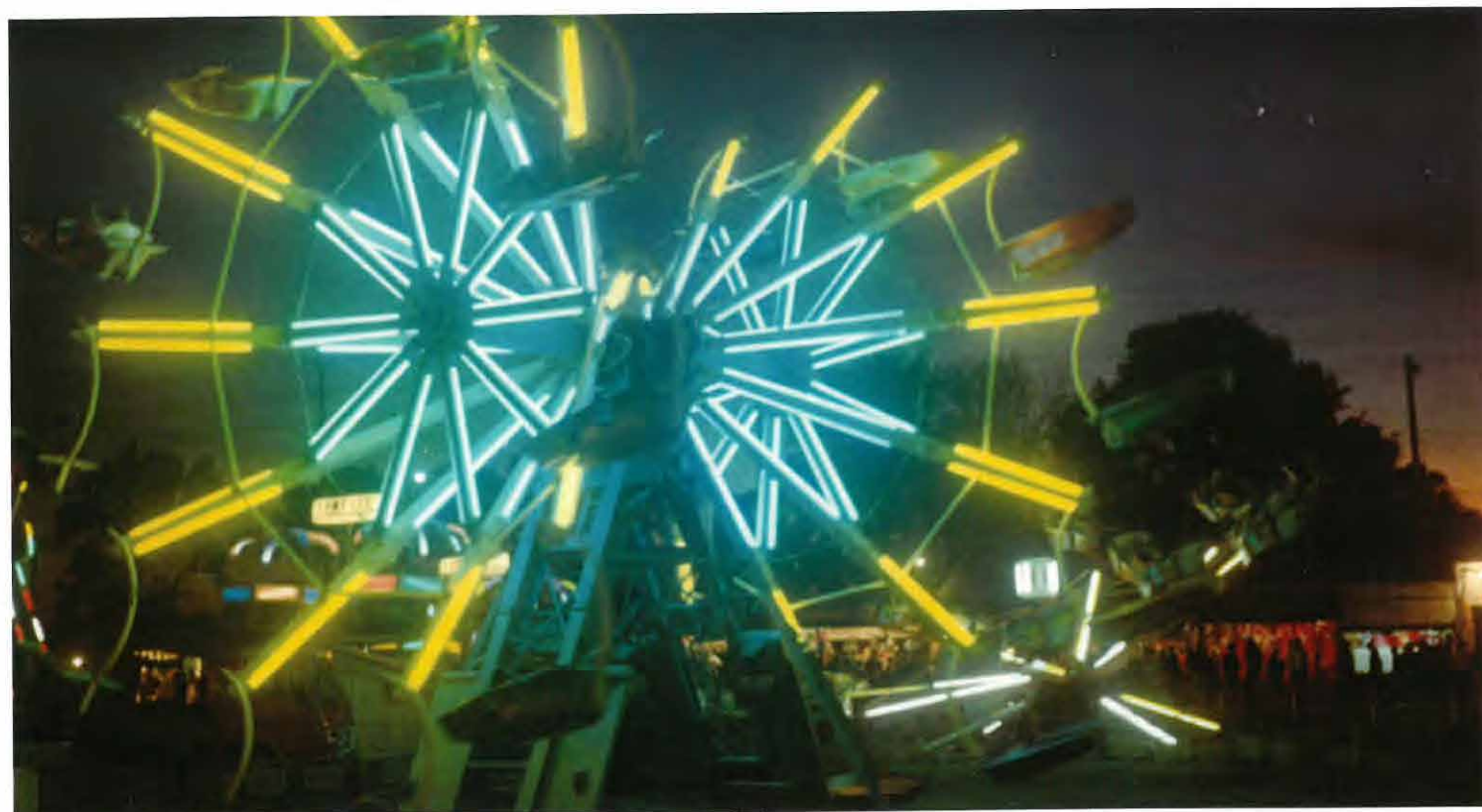
# ENJOY THE RIDE

## SUPER TURBO

By Sharon Barlow  
with Rob Connelly and David Burton

Special Thanks to Jerry Barber,  
Rick Reithoffer, Ben Pickett and Chance Rides





**While the Turbo's very name brings to mind speed and power, Jerry's inspiration for the ride came from a much less thrilling source.**

Jerry Barber is a man recognized internationally for his creativity and originality. He currently has 50 patents in the United States alone. While he began his career in education, he is respected throughout the amusement industry as the inventor and manufacturer of some of the most popular rides in the world. One such ride garnered such attention that it now has its own fan club with more than 1,000 followers on social media. Ironically, this popular ride is no longer manufactured, and only one operating model is known to exist. This ride is the Turbo.

While the Turbo's very name brings to mind speed and power, Jerry's inspiration for the ride came from a much less thrilling source. "I was in some fast food restaurant," he recalls. "It had a little sign with neon lights on it, and it turned like that. I thought it would

be good if you could put seats on the end of the bars. It kind of went from there."

The very first one Jerry built was called the Caravel, taking its name from a small, highly maneuverable sailing ship built by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. Maneuverability was certainly at the top of Jerry's mind as he fine-tuned his design. "I got the patent on the Turbo first," he shares. "When I got ready to build it, I wanted to keep it on one semitrailer. I designed the semitrailer to fold up in the middle so that the trailer became the center tower for the ride. It became true of all of the Turbos in that the semitrailer has hydraulic cylinders that would fold up to form a big teepee which the ride sits on as it operates."

Jerry licensed Chance Rides to manufacture the Turbo in 1969 when he went to work with them to help

produce the first of the 23 Turbo rides they manufactured before production ceased in 1976. "I physically built every piece of the Turbo," Jerry says. "So, I knew what it was before it ever got to the midway."

Selling at approximately \$75,000 when it premiered, the Turbo, described as a monster, debuted on midways across the country including Reithoffer Shows, where show owner, Rick Reithoffer remembers working on it. "It was just unique in the way that it was trailer-mounted, and the trailer actually had two gigantic hydraulic rams. The front of the trailer would lower right to the ground while the back of the trailer would roll up. The whole thing would make a giant A-frame. Then the spokes of each side of the ride would be sticking straight out as you did all of that. You would hook up two hydraulic lines to those spokes, and they would spread

out and open up."

Rick continues, "You would turn the ride around putting spreader bars in it and then eventually hook tubs to each one of those arms. The tubs looked like a big round saucer. They hooked onto the sweep off center so that it swiveled back and forth as it went around depending upon the weight of the car and who was in it. It would also turn on the sweep. It was a pretty thrilling ride for its time."

Rob Connelly of North American Midway Entertainment and a recognized ride aficionado describes the action of the ride. "The Turbo is truly something to watch and even better to ride. It consists of two giant wheels resembling web structures. On each of these wheels are 10 circular cages attached at a slight angle. Each cage holds two adults or three children. Each wheel turns while both rotate around the base of the ride in the opposite direction. The result of these combined movements is a thrill seeker's dream. The cages randomly spin at varied angles, flipping upside down, sideways, or swooping riders face down inches away from the ground. The movement is smooth, random, and very fast."

Scooter Korek also of North American Midway Entertainment recalls his first experience with the Turbo at the Canadian National Exhibition. "It was booked on with Conklin Shows in the late 70's and early 80's. I have to tell you people talk to me about rides all the time. Whenever they ask what I think is the scariest ride of all time, I always reply the Turbo. It was the hairiest ride I have ever been on in my entire life. It distorted your perception of where you were. You couldn't tell which way was up and which way was down throughout the entire cycle of the ride."

"Another thing about the ride," Scooter adds. "It was kind of a goliath among amusement rides. It really had a presence on any midway that it played on. It also had a pretty nice light package back in the day. All around as a thrill ride, it was the quintessential thrill ride."

One must wonder why this "quintessential thrill ride" is now mostly enjoyed through pictures and video on social media. According to Rick Reithoffer, "It was a ride that we felt was almost before its time, but it was also one of those pieces that caused a lot of maintenance issues."

Rick goes on, "The biggest problem that we had with the ride was that the brake controlling the sweeps and the tubs on the end of the sweeps was controlled by a master cylinder that was out of a 1956 or '57 Ford pickup truck. That master cylinder was not made for that type of use. As you pushed the Go button, the master cylinder would release. When you released the button, the brake would come on automatically. So, you would be adjusting those seats around to get to the right spot to unload them, and you would be hitting that thing on and off all day long. It just wasn't made for that kind of use. You ended up wearing out the master cylinder. You had to go up on top of the ride and replace the master cylinder



**To thrill lovers delight, however, one Turbo does still exist in Australia, and this particular ride still has very close ties to the United States.**

constantly, and you had two of them, one on one side and one on the other.”

While the ride could be set up in approximately six hours with two people, Rick feels like the ease of setting up and tearing down could also have been a detriment. “The set up on it,” he says, “the way it lowered the front end down and the other end would go up, and the wheels kind of pulled up could cause the ride to almost tip over if you weren’t careful. Many people had a problem with it turning over on set up or tear down. We had close calls with it. On a wet and muddy lot, it could be a disaster.”

Scooter Korek has his own opinion about the ride. “I have to think that it was too scary,” he shares. “People would ride it once and say okay, I’ve had enough of that. It was a hairy, hairy

ride. I only rode it twice, maybe. It was crazy.”

To thrill lovers delight, however, one Turbo does still exist in Australia, and this particular ride still has very close ties to the United States. According to Chance Rides, the Turbo with serial number 71-2309 was first purchased by Chas Holliday then sold to Bob Cooper, then Springlake Amusements, and then Funtastic Shows before finally being purchased by Tas Pickett of TPA Shows in Australia who also happens to be the brother of Ben Pickett of Ray Cammack Shows. “It was actually my father who owned the Turbo,” Ben explains. “About 23 years ago, it was on a train from Perth to Melbourne. The freight company had loaded it wrong, so it was stacked too high on the rail car. It hit a bridge and damaged the sign on one

trailer and six or eight of the tubs. My dad collected the insurance, and we just put it into storage. A couple of years ago, my brother decided to refurbish it. He had a young engineer take on and manage the project.”

Independent ride operator, David Burton of Australia, was excited to share his observations of the refurbishment. “Josh Darker pretty much single-handedly undertook the whole restoration project. An electrician by trade, Josh has owned and operated a number of rides and has completed a number of ride refurbishments. Josh’s biggest difficulty was converting the complex 1970’s hydraulic systems of the turret and wheels to modern VSD drives with new motors and gearboxes.”

In October 2014, David travelled to the United States to visit a friend.

While there, David was asked by Josh to inspect what he believed to be the best full set of Turbo cars still in existence which belonged to Steve Swika of S&S Amusements in Pennsylvania. “As soon as I saw the cars, I knew they were the ones,” David says. “They were from a Turbo that Steve Swika acquired from the defunct Conneaut Lake Park.”

With the restoration complete, David was with Josh Darker for the first test-run. “I had not seen or ridden an operating Turbo in over 22 years,” David admits. “I was afraid my childhood memories would likely disappoint me as rides always seem bigger when you are a kid. In all honesty, I was blown away by this mesmerizing ride when I saw it with the tubs on. It’s a huge ride both in width and height and looks every bit as big as I remembered.”

“As for the ride experience,” David continues, “I witnessed how the forces and motions on the tubs are optimized to ‘hit the sweet spot’ when the turret and wheel are both turning at the right speed in the same direction. Josh had his RPM speed settings pretty much dead-on from the moment the ride cycled up. You plunge face down to the ground while sweeping 360 degrees across it. The next second you are upside-down at the highest apex wondering which way is up. In my opinion, the Turbo ride was 45 years ahead of itself when Jerry Barber and Harold Chance created it.”

The Turbo ride may truly have been ahead of its time. Regardless, it still holds its place of honor on Facebook, in the two-foot high working model still owned by Jerry Barber, and in the memories of the thousands who dared to ride the Turbo. For the lucky few, the Turbo can still be experienced on the midway of TPA Shows in Australia but nowhere else. 🎡



**CHANCE**  
 MANUFACTURING COMPANY, INC.  
AMERICA'S LARGEST, MOST COMPLETE LINE OF OUTDOOR AMUSEMENT RIDES

**TURBO**

A real Midway attraction, that's the Turbo. It's quite impressive with the two big wheels of each spinning in one direction, while the center section rotates both wheels around and around. The turret is all well lighted and the sign revolves with the center section making it suitable for a variety of locations.

Furnished trailer mounted on 40 foot, semi-trailer 9'00" x 20' Tires, Air brakes, 12 volt clearance lights and equipped for Hydraulic erection. Complete with all electricals, 220-440 volt, 60 cycle, 3 phase, aluminum and sign, lighting, etc.

**SEATING:** 70 seats  
 3 adult passengers each

**LOADING:** 2 seats simultaneously

**CAPACITY:** 720 per hour

**DRIVE:** Hydraulic (Electrically Driven)

**SPEED:** Turret Speed - 8 R.P.M.  
 Wheel Speed - 10 R.P.M. each

**LIGHTING:** Incandescent and Fluorescent

**CONSTRUCTION:** All steel, aluminum, and fiberglass

**TOTAL POWER:** 40 KW

**SET UP TIME:** 2 min - 4 hours

**SPECIFICATIONS**

C.P. Huntington Miniature Rail Trains • Spinning Treadless Train • Old 99 Electric Train • Merry-Go-Rounds • Helicopter • Star Jet • Sky Fighter • Roller Coaster • Kiddie Auto-Ride • Kiddie Boat Ride • Flying Boat • Zipper • Twister • Rotor • Trabant • Toboggan • Sky Diver • Sky Wheel • Dodgem Car • Monster Mouse • Turbo • Yo-Yo • Ticker Boxes • Stereo Music Systems • Parts - Service and Accessories for all listed rides and rides formerly manufactured by Alton Herschell Co. - Since 1980

Factory and General Office: 4218 Irving, Box 2387, Wichita, Kansas 67201 Area Code (316) 942-7411  
 Sales Office: 1103 Ross Ave., Dallas, Texas 75207 Area Code (214) 742-3902 Cable - Duke Dallas - Texas 73-0300