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# Medusa

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the ride a day before it opens to the public for the first time as part of Media Preview Day, an ingenious PR stunt by the park that nearly guarantees mass coverage of the \$15 million ride's debut.

And it worked. Bay Area broadcasters, journalists, deejays, writers and enthusiasts abandoned decorum and swarmed to take advantage of what will most likely be the only chance to ride the roller coaster without a two-hour wait.

The verdict was not disappointing.

"I think this is the best ride in Northern California," said Silvas. "The speed and intensity and all the different elements combined makes it just absolutely amazing."

Steven Urbanowicz, author of "The Roller Coaster Lover's Companion," is willing to top that.

Urbanowicz, who said he has ridden more than 550 roller coasters, calls Vallejo's Medusa the best steel roller coaster in the world. "From the time you leave the station to the time you stop it's just one complete, amazing package," he said.

The rash of roller coaster accidents last summer that killed several people, and stranded dozens of riders upside down for hours on a Marine World ride, hasn't hurt the public's enthusiasm for the thrill of roller coasters, he said.

"For the amount of people that do this, compared to the amount of problems, it's so minor," said Urbanowicz. "It's actually one of the safest things to do."

Ironically, Silvas himself was once, as he puts it, "deathly terrified" of roller coasters. In the sixth grade, he was finally persuaded to try one at Great America.

"But then I got there, and saw this big thing, and said no-o-o," he recalled. "But my family

## MARINE WORLD'S MEDUSA

Height: 150 feet  
Speed: 65 mph  
Length: 3,937 feet  
Riders per hour: 1,600  
360-degree inversions: 7  
Tallest vertical loop: 128 feet

## GREAT AMERICA'S STEALTH

Height: 115 feet  
Speed: 51 mph  
Length: 2,766  
Riders per hour: 1,000  
360-degree inversions: 3  
Tallest vertical loop: 66 feet

dragged me on anyway, and ever since then you can't get me off."

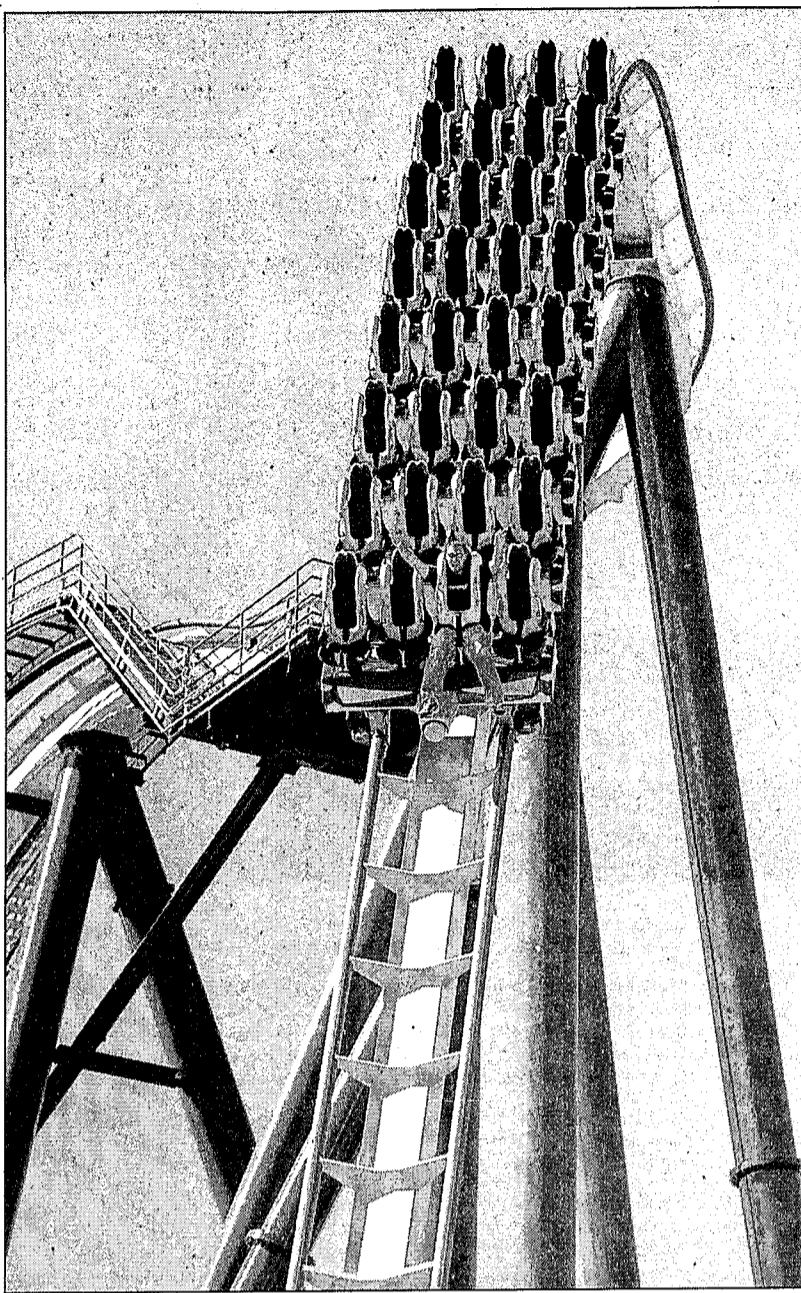
Silvas' fascination with roller coasters has turned into more than just a pleasant pastime. The Web site and a half-hour documentary that he is producing in interactive CD-ROM form are part of his senior project, which all students at New Tech High are required to complete before graduation.

"When I initially gave them the idea, they were going, 'My God, not again,'" said Silvas, who admits this is not the first project to feature roller coasters that he has submitted.

But with more than 300 photographs, documentary footage, behind-the-scenes interviews, and the nation-wide attention that he has garnered, Silvas said his teachers and parents are now "kind of impressed."

He will continue to update the site with pictures and reviews, and plans to expand it with photos of other roller coasters. The web address for Silvas' site, which is called "Airtime Online," is [www.airtime82.com](http://www.airtime82.com).

Medusa is open to the general public beginning today at Six Flags Marine World in Vallejo. General admission is \$34, children 48" and under are \$17.



Steve Silvas, Napa, on his private preview ride on Medusa.

SEAN GALVIN/REGISTER

# China

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munist forces captured the mainland in 1949. When polls opened at 8 a.m. local time Saturday, the retiring Lee was among the first of Taiwan's 15 million eligible voters to cast his ballot. People began lining up early for the election, which was expected to attract a large turnout.

With hoarse voices, the top candidates campaigned close to midnight Friday.

"This is the most important time for the democratic movement and isn't it the most beautiful time indeed?" said Chen Shui-bian, the candidate from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party, which ruffles Beijing by advocating independence for the island.

"Taiwan will choose a new future," Chen told about 400,000 supporters, closing his campaign with a speech that attacked the Nationalists for what he called their "black gold" brand of corrupt politics. Chen promised to "protect peace in the Taiwan Strait and protect sovereignty," even to deliver higher stock prices.

Chen has had to back off from his party's independence stance to stand a chance at the polls, saying he would declare independence only if China attacks. But in remarks clearly aimed at Chen, Beijing has loudly warned any such step would lead to war.

Chen saw his potential opening when the Nationalists split, kicking out party star James Soong after he mounted an independent candidacy instead of supporting Lee's chosen successor, Vice President Lien Chan.

The three top candidates were in a statistical dead heat last week when a government ban on releasing poll results went into effect. But as the race wound down, Chen built momentum and picked up key endorsements.

Chen took pains to show he, too, will try to deal with China rather than lead Taiwan and China into a war that analysts say neither side can really afford as their economies become more closely intertwined.

Bi-khim Hsiao, a Chen spokeswoman, said that Chinese individuals, whom she would not identify, had been meeting with party officials recently, preparing for a possible Chen victory. Some seemed genuinely interested in the party's views, while others simply delivered anti-independence lectures, Hsiao said.

The winner of Taiwan's second direct presidential election will replace Lee, who during 12 years in office has often been an irritant to Beijing but became more so last summer on his insistence the two sides deal with one another on a "state-to-state" basis.

China views Taiwan as a renegade province that must someday reunify with the mainland, by force if necessary.

# Examiner

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usual" for the next four months, Examiner Publisher and CEO Tim White told a crowd of reporters and editors in the paper's newsroom.

The more than 600 reporters and editors at the Chronicle and Examiner, as well as employees of the San Francisco Newspaper Agency, which oversees the joint operating agreement, will continue working for the Hearst Corp. under the deal. No employees will be required to work for the new owners.

The sale does not include the Examiner's building or printing presses. Fang said he will secure new offices in downtown San Francisco, and will either print the paper on the presses used by his San Francisco Independent or secure more capacity elsewhere.

The deal also includes the Examiner's library, computer system, delivery trucks and newsracks, as well as [www.examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com), the Sunday Examiner magazine and sponsorship of "Bay to Breakers," a footrace that draws tens of thou-

sands of runners each May.

But finding staffers able to compete against Hearst could be a problem for Fang, whose independent newspaper has been attacking the Hearst Corp. for months, even running cartoons lampooning Examiner Executive Editor Phil Bronstein and his wife, actress Sharon Stone.

Bronstein said it was too early to tell how many current Examiner newsroom employees would work for the Fang-owned Examiner. "I have no idea," Bronstein said. "Not a clue."

Fang said he would pay well for top talent.

"We plan to commence an aggressive search locally and nationwide to put together a new staff for the new Examiner," he said. "We're looking for people who want to make history in this industry."

Fang said his father, John T.C. Fang, fled Communist China and arrived in San Francisco with \$200 in his pocket in the 1950s. Along with his brothers James and Douglas, Ted Fang will now run the nation's largest minority-owned daily newspaper.

It was the second major newspaper deal announced this week. On Monday, the Tribune Co.,

At one point, one employee shouted out "I'd like to see a show of hands of anyone who wants to work at the new paper." No hands were raised.

publisher of the Chicago Tribune, announced it was acquiring the Times Mirror Co. and its flagship Los Angeles Times in a \$6.46 billion deal. The move would end 118 years of control of the Times by the Chandler family.

Hearst had been seeking a buyer for the Examiner since Aug. 6, when it abruptly announced its

purchase of the Chronicle, preempting any potential bidders for its morning rival as well as the production equipment the papers shared.

Hearst, responding to antitrust concerns from local, state and federal officials, in January sweetened the deal for potential buyers, abandoning efforts to sell only the

newspaper's name and subscriber list.

"The deal will preserve both of San Francisco's two daily newspapers, and allow the city to continue its long tradition of diversity of editorial voices," said the statement from ExIn LLC, a new company affiliated with the Fang family.

Hearst said the investment banker he hired to sell the Examiner, Veronis Suhler & Associates of New York, had been in contact with more than 90 prospective buyers.

The decision to sell to the Fang family came after intense negotiations with the Justice Department over anti-trust concerns. Hearst ultimately decided that selling the Examiner was the only way to get approval for its purchase of the Chronicle.

The Chronicle, with a daily circulation of more than 456,000, is the largest newspaper in Northern California and the second largest on the West Coast. It was founded in 1865 by Charles and Michael de Young and has been owned and operated over the succeeding 134 years by their heirs.

William Randolph Hearst founded what is today The Hearst Corp. in 1887 when he assumed control of the Examiner. It has a daily circulation of 107,000, according to recent figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation.

ExIn is owned by the Fang family, publishers of the Independent and Asian Week newspapers. The Independent Newspaper Group of San Francisco and San Mateo counties is the largest non-daily newspaper group in California, with a circulation of 379,000.

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