

New Jersey & You

Alums say you're perfect together

By Tim Zatzariny Jr. '94

Tim Zatzariny Jr. '94 is assistant editor of At The Shore, the weekend guide of the Press of Atlantic City.

Anyone who has gotten off the turnpike in New Jersey knows there's a lot more to the state than oil refineries and toxic waste dumps. From Victorian Cape May to the Delaware Water Gap to the backwoods of the Pinelands, New Jersey has plenty to offer, and Rowan graduates working in the state's tourism industry are broadcasting the news.

According to the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, visitors to the state spent more than \$22 billion in 1994. "I've seen studies that say tourism is the fastest-growing sector of the economy in all the big cities," says Charles Stansfield, professor of geography at Rowan since 1966. Stansfield has written about New Jersey tourism for numerous magazines and academic journals and is the author of two books on the state, *New Jersey: A Geography* and *New Jersey: Yesterday and Today*. In his urban geography class, Stansfield emphasizes the rapid growth of service-sector jobs in the U.S., and uses New Jersey as a model of a state that makes the most of its resources. "New Jersey's main asset has always been location," Stansfield says. "We have access to almost 20 percent of the country's population within a day's drive."

With tourism such big business in New Jersey, it's not surprising to find Rowan graduates employed in the field. Their job titles vary from director of advertising, like Nancy Irion Leiser '70 of Avalon Real Estate Agency, to president and vice president, like Joe DeLuca '75 and Bill Chestnut '67 of Bridgeton/Cumherland Tourist Associates and Daniel Montagna, a vice president at Trop World in Atlantic City. A tour of the state finds other Rowan alumni promoting diverse attractions, each in their own way.

Lisa Beach '88

Great Adventure

For Lisa Beach '88, promoting rides with names Rolling Thunder and Viper has been a truly eye-opening experience. "It's not a typical nine-to-five job," Beach says of her position as public relations assistant manager at Six Flags Great Adventure in Jackson.

Beach earned a master's degree in public relations from the College in 1988. After working as a director of public relations, Beach began her slightly more adventurous job in 1993. She is responsible for promoting Six Flags' theme park and its drive-thru safari park home to a variety of wild animals. She also handles special events at the park and community relations.

Each year, Great Adventure introduces one or two new death-deferring rides at its theme park, which would be enough to draw even the most demanding daredevils. But keeping people interested in returning each year does require some planning, Beach says. "As soon as the park closes in October, we are already planning for the next year," she says. Beach, who lives in Mt. Laurel, admits to trying out the park's rides occasionally, but won't say which is her favorite.

Working with tourism groups and local chambers of commerce has provided Beach with an education as well. "There's a lot of things that I didn't know existed in the 10 years I've lived here," she says. "There are a lot of neat things to do in New Jersey."

Al Britton '80

Claridge Casino

I think it's an exciting time for the casino industry in Atlantic City," says Claridge Casino President and Chief Operating

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Officer Al Britton '80. Britton, who was named to his new post in January, calls himself the "hands-on manager" of the Claridge empire.

From his plans to become a mason to his position at the front office, Britton has come a long way. After working his way up through the accounting office of the Claridge, he joined the operations department in 1992. He oversees many of the Claridge's departments on a daily basis, watching over everything from gaming to food and beverage.

When Britton began working in the Claridge organization, the booming Atlantic City casino industry was a mere three years old. Today, the city's reputation as a gambling mecca is well established, often overshadowing its other attractions such as beaches and boardwalks. Britton, who lives in Winslow Twp., is upbeat about the city's future. "We are on the verge of Atlantic City becoming a destination resort," he says.

Pat Martinelli '78

Wheaton Village

Just about an hour's drive south of Glassboro, Pat Martinelli '78 sits in a cramped office, surrounded by mannequins dressed in period costumes. The walls of her office are jammed with reference books, which Martinelli has gotten to know quite well in her six years as curatorial assistant at Wheaton Village.

Located in Millville, Wheaton Village houses a working replica of the glass factory founded by T.C. Wheaton in 1888, and the Museum of American Glass, which contains one of the largest collections of American glass in the country. Immortalized by Carl Sandburg in a 1904 essay, "In Reckless Ecstasy," Wheaton Village drew 65,000 visitors to its grounds last year.

Martinelli's longtime love of history has served her well. It is her job to catalogue and research the thousands of bottles, jars, paperweights and glass sculptures, many from the early part of this century, on display inside the museum.

After graduating from Rowan with a degree in history, Martinelli worked as a

writer and copy editor for several local papers and magazines. But when she found out about the job at Wheaton Village in 1989, she jumped at the chance to combine her love of history and writing.

Martinelli lives in Vineland and is currently pursuing a graduate degree in public history (the equivalent of museum administration). "The history of southern New Jersey has always been important to me," she says. "In my own small way, I like to think I'm making a contribution to preserve that."

Lenora D. Kruk '85

Atlantic City

Long ago, Atlantic City earned the nickname "America's Playground," and Lenora D. Kruk '85 would like to see the seaside town return to its heyday as a family resort. Since staffing her job as media relations manager for the Atlantic City Convention and Visitors Authority in December 1994, it has been Kruk's job to let people know that there's an Atlantic City that exists outside of the casinos.

Kruk's duties include researching and writing press releases about upcoming events in Atlantic City and about trade shows, conventions and sporting events held inside the convention center. She also writes a quarterly newsletter geared toward attracting convention groups from around the country to Atlantic City.

Kruk earned a bachelor's degree in communications at the College. The job at the Convention and Visitors Authority offers Kruk, who lives in Manahawkin, the chance to use her journalism skills on a daily basis.

With 37 million visitors annually, Atlantic City is the hub of tourism in southern New Jersey. Though the city is hoping a new convention center under construction will attract even more visitors, it already has world-class

beaches, a museum, annual festivals, and fine dining. History buffs might also be attracted to the city's claim to firsts, Kruk adds, gesturing to the vintage pho-

tos of Atlantic City that line the walls of a reception area inside the

convention center. "We had the first boardwalk, the first rolling chairs and the first Ferris wheel," she says. Places like Atlantic City, according to Professor Stansfield, will continue to grow and entice visitors each year. But the resort city does not define tourism in the state. With beaches as far north as Sandy Hook and skiing at Vernon Valley and Great Gorge in the winter, tourism is not limited to the lower half of New Jersey. "It's really an industry that's spread across the whole state," he says. "I see it as an expanding field of employment for graduates."

Doug Kirby '79 & Ken Smith '80

Roadside Attractions

Tourism may mean sandy beaches and historic sites to most people, but for Doug Kirby '79 and Ken Smith '80, it's anything offbeat. Kirby and Smith have traveled 250,000 miles since beginning their quest more than a decade ago to find the wackiest tourist attractions in America. Like the world's largest peanut in Pearsall, Texas. With writer Mike Wilkins, they first published *Roadside America* in 1986. "It's our own take on tourism," Smith says. "We concentrate on the weird, bizarre, fun stuff."

The New *Roadside America* lists a 11 attractions in New Jersey. They include the remains of a concrete ship built by the Navy during World War I, which sunk off Cape May Point, and a full-sized Mercedes Benz gravestone in Linden.

Kirby and Smith have been friends since college, where they met while working for *Venue*, Rowan's student satire magazine. Smith is a freelance lives in Middletown works for AT&T as creative director of electronic media. Will they adding to their already awe-inspiring list of tongue-in-cheek tourist attractions soon? "We're getting too old to do this," Smith laments. But, Kirby adds, "We can still do a 14-hour drive and not feel too bad." ■