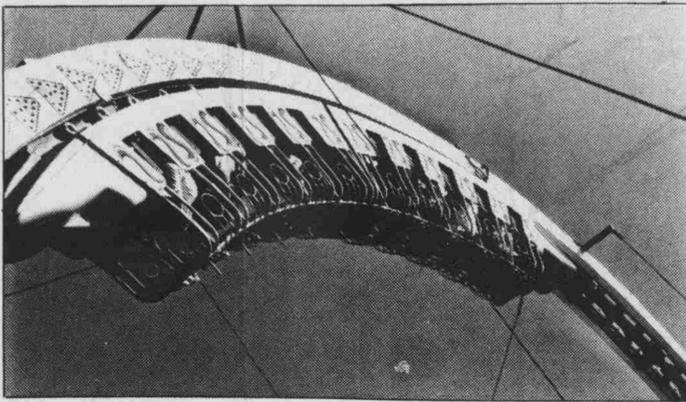


# Reality, fantasy kaleidoscope at fair



Photos by Grant Parsons

## Sensory overload: state's 10-day affair

By GRANT PARSONS  
University Editor

*GETTADIME, GETTADIME, gettadime to play, gettadime to win. Tossadime in the red circles, winnyer choice.*

*Banana, banana, banana; anyone can win a banana.*

*You get 10 points each time you clobber the little guy. Get 150 points and win a bear.*

*Booetybooetybooety, who wants to go FASTER?*

*... But I'm sure you will agree that it's educational. Have you ever seen an animal with two heads? Now, I don't mean a chick with an extra lump of flesh hanging off its head. I mean two real heads.*

**RALEIGH** — The sticky-sweet, cotton-candy smell, the press of people on the midway, the swish of the rides swirling against the sky — that's the stuff of the 119th North Carolina State Fair on opening day Friday.

On the midway, you hear buzzers, bells, thumping rock music and mechanical clicks that make a ringing cacophony out of a simple walk.

In one breath, you smell roasting barbecue, frying dough, candied apples, popcorn, corndogs.

Neon-bright colors, flashing lights and the careening blur of the rides demand your attention, overloading your senses.

"It's almost too much," says Mayco Bigelow, a Burlington Parks and Recreation worker with a huge stuffed bear under one arm and a bigger stuffed lion under the other. "I love the fair. I come every year."

For him, the biggest attraction is the midway games, and he's having a lucky day. "I've won five of these things," Bigelow says, pointing with his chin to the lion under his arm. "I don't know how I'm going to get them home. They won't fit in my car."

He says he won them tossing dimes into red circles painted on a plywood sheet. The secret? "You just thump it into the air and let it spin. You either bump your dime or someone else's. I've just been lucky."

A few steps down the midway, Margreat Hatley doesn't look her age. The weight guesser says 70.

That's way off, she tells the man. "Don't be fooled by the cane; I broke my leg last year."

She studies the weight guesser's shelves, packed with novelty mirrors, glasses and stuffed gimgaws, as if unsure. Hatley chooses a stuffed skunk and crams it in a plastic garbage bag brimming with stuffed stuff.

She tells the weight guesser that if he can't get her age, there's no way he could get her weight.

He can't. Hatley trades the skunk for two stuffed football players, black and red, and shoves them into her bag. Hatley and her friend, Eve Bare, both from Siler City, say they love the fair.

"We've been here all day, and we'll probably come next week too, if Maggie don't clean the place out," Bare says.

Others see the fair as more of an educational experience. The N.C. State Fair means agriculture, and fair-goers can test the newest herbicide, buy the latest tractor and sell their best goat at the exhibits off the midway.

In the livestock arena, Larry Seal of Mebane is having an easier time with his children's show goats than with his children. He holds the five goats by short yellow ropes; one daughter stands near him, another has gone to the bathroom, and he wonders where his eight-year-old son is. "He's supposed to be around here somewhere," Seal says.

The care and feeding that comes with showing a goat teaches his children a sense of responsibility, he says. "It also teaches them a little bit about competition."

Behind Seal, youngsters between the ages of 7 and 14 walk their goats, female breeding stock, into the arena. The judge, Calvin Alford, an extension livestock officer from the University of Georgia, watches sternly and points directions to the children. He frowns when a goat misbehaves.

"My kids enjoy it, and I enjoy it, too," Seal says. "It's something I did when I was 10 or 11 years old. I got excited then doing it, and I get excited now watching them."

Against the fence in the arena, 7-year-old Dana Turnage, of Trenton, watches the goings-on. She brought a goat last year, but this time around it's her brother who will have to impress the judge. But when his goat is judged, it'll be sold.

"I'm glad I didn't bring a goat because I get sad when he's gone," she says. Losing Daisy, her brother's goat, will be bad enough, she says.

Back out on the midway, hawkers compete with each other for your attention and money. For just four tickets (\$2), claims the man in front of the animal freak show, you can see a sheep with four horns, assorted two-headed animals and other oddities.

"You've read about it, you've heard about it, now see the devil's child," the voice bellows from the loudspeaker. Inside the yellow- and red-striped tent, animals graze lazily at the hay lining their pens.

There's a goat born without ears next to a "zonkey" — half-zebra, half-donkey. The midget cows lounge in their pen, not giving the half-dozen viewers in the tent a second glance, while the Chinese hairless dog with elephant skin paces.

Floating in jars inside a display case are preserved pigs with human hands and feet, a pig with an elephant trunk snout, and what the sign calls "Twin cats born alive! One head, two bodies, two tails, four ears and eight legs!"

Other mutations abound, and for

## Chainsaw mania cuts family lines

By JO FLEISCHER  
Assistant University Editor

Scott Stevens' whole family is in show business, and has been for four generations.

Now that his grandparents and his parents have retired from the fair circuit, Stevens travels with his uncle's Ghost Train, an 11-year-old spookhouse. They set up and operate the ride, and Stevens tries to scare its customers to death as Jason, the maniacal killer of "Friday the 13th."

Those that brave the Ghost Train travel through the dark interior passages of the 48-foot trailer, confronted at every turn by mechanical ghosts and gremlins popping out from the shadows. The car reaches the end of this onslaught of horror, banging back the double doors into daylight and the relative safety of the midway.

Just as the riders breathe a sigh of relief, Stevens — in full Jason regalia complete with hockey mask — jumps down onto their car from the roof behind them, pulling his three-quarter horsepower McCollough chainsaw, sans chain, to life. Passengers cower in their seats as he draws the blade across the back of their heads and necks with the motor racing at full throttle.

It's enough to scare a person half to death, but responses vary, Stevens said.

"I get hit a few times but it's nothing major," he said. "Some guys with their girlfriends get mad and try to scare you back."

His best scare happened in Miami, he said. "A lady started screaming in Spanish, 'Oh Jesus! It's taking my baby,' then these two guys come up and start trying to jump on me," he said.

Sometimes it gets a little dangerous. "I got maced in Winston-Salem by these two teenage girls,"

he said. Stevens was performing in a werewolf mask when he surprised the girls, and they surprised him back — with mace. "The mask just sorta melted on my face," he recalled.

Although he said he enjoys people's reactions to his performances, he enjoys the money more, he said. Stevens hopes to save enough from his seven-month tours of the eastern United States with his uncle's ride to buy a ride of his own. "One with holograms; that way I won't have to sweat to death all day with a chainsaw," he said.

Stevens' uncle, Mike Scott, enjoys people's reactions to Stevens' chainsaw act, too. Business picks up 50 percent when Jason fires up the saw, he said.

Stevens' whole family has been in "show business," and if he starts up his own ride it would be a fourth generation added to the tradition that stretches back to when Stevens' great-grandparents operated a ride similar to the Ghost Train. Back then, the trains were pulled by mules, Scott said.

Today, Stevens, his uncle and his brother travel up and down the East Coast seven to eight months a year. They travel with Scott's wife, Rosie, their 18-month-old baby and Stevens' fiancée. An 18-wheeler that tows the Ghost Train, and a 40-foot Country Air house trailer are home, along with a smaller trailer for Scott's two daughters.

Scott has been traveling the same circuit for 11 years, he said. "There's a lot of things that you have to put up with that folks that live in town don't have to — like getting parts for the ride, and just hooking up water and electricity for the trailers," he said. "But really it's like a town that moves. I know most everybody that travels with Strates, and have for



Scott Stevens bedevils fair-goers

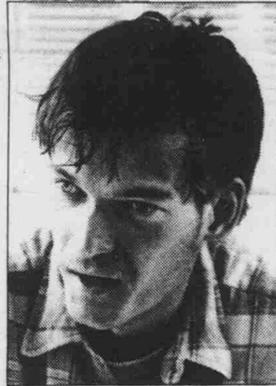
years, and I know some people in every town we stop in, so it's not that different," he said.

Stevens said he likes the road, too. "The drag is staying at home all the time," he said. "It's like a neighborhood here, except you take everything you have at home with you," he said.

It's not for everybody, he admits, so when he met his wife in high school, he didn't marry her until she "came out on the road so she could see what it was like before got into it."

Stevens' fiancée is currently undergoing her initiation into the show-business life, and is holding up fairly well, he said.

And another sequel is being added to the four-generation story of "Jason's" family.



Scott Stevens



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