

in amusement rides of all types. In fact, amusement rides ranked 164th out of the total 175 categories of products reported by the CPSC that year in terms of the number of product-related injuries. Nearly as many, 5571, were sent to hospitals as a result of playing billiards!

This remarkable safety record reflects the high priority given to ride safety by the operators of amusement park and attraction rides. Operators work continuously to maintain and improve their already impressive safety record. The first responsibility for safety rests with the parks and attractions themselves.

Through programs of maintenance, operations, and personnel training, members of IAAPA are actively engaged in promoting ride safety within their own facilities. Parks divide their safety inspection programs into daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly activities. They follow detailed manufacturer guidelines for inspection and safety -- and many parks use outside specialty companies to periodically re-inspect rides.

Because safety is a principal concern of the industry, concentrated effort goes into the sharing of safety expertise and information. In addition to serving as a clearinghouse of safety information, IAAPA sponsors workshops in these areas at which the latest technological advances, standards, and safety programs are discussed. These efforts by IAAPA have been well-established by the ride safety professionals employed in the membership's facilities. These ride safety professionals meet regularly in IAAPA sponsored workshops and seminars. Ride manufacturers also conduct industry-wide workshops. Also, state and local officials in many areas assist park personnel in accident prevention programs. In addition, the association has produced a series of safety training videotapes,

For many years, IAAPA has been a leader in the development of amusement ride standards with the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) and has encouraged member participation in the activities of the ASTM F-24 Committee. These standards undergo constant review and revision and have been adopted by many governmental jurisdictions.

While not as expansive as other jurisdictions, California took a first step last year in passing some rider safety legislation, granting park operators greater enforcement protections. Much of the legislation, however, was not passed. The California amusement community is strong and active and would be supportive of well-directed efforts to proceed on strong rider safety legislation.

In every industry or form of commerce, safety is considered a high priority. When you think about it, when you go to the store, or to a restaurant, or ride in an airplane, or even buy a car, you are not expecting the "thrill of a lifetime." That is not the case for families all across America who center their most special vacations or family time around a visit to an amusement park. The amusement industry as a whole allows itself a very small margin of error because the standards they must meet to bring people year after year the "thrill of

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their **lives**" requires an absolute **dedication** to safety and to responsible and honest analysis.

Ride safety is of critical importance to the amusement industry. Not 'only do operators have an obligation to provide the public with safe recreation, but the very success of their business depends on **it**. The amusement park and attractions industry has been providing safe, quality, family entertainment for more than a century, and is dependent upon repeat business. **The** industry **recognizes** that **safety** is a primary component of business success. **The** industry is safe because it has good employee training **programs**, good maintenance and testing programs, and rigorous insurance examinations. **As** technologies continue to develop and improve, the already excellent record of the industry will get even better.

On **behalf** of the **International** Association of Amusement **Parks** and Attractions, I thank **you** for extending an invitation to present **our** views to this hearing and to address &he issues with which you grapple in the great State of California. I am sorry that I cannot actually attend your hearing due. to a prior commitment outside the **country**.

Very truly yours,


John Graff
Executive Director

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA

STATE CAPITOL

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95814

Exh # 8
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Assemblymember Tom Torlakson, Chair
Committee on Housing & Community Development

Assemblymember Valerie Brown, Chair
Committee on Governmental Organization

PUBLIC HEARING AGENDA

SAFETY & OVERSIGHT OF PERMANENT AMUSEMENT PARK RIDES

June 20, 1997 -- 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
Concord City Council Chambers

I. **Opening Remarks**

- Assemblymember Tom Torlakson
- Assemblymember Valerie Brown

II. **City of Concord**

- Mayor Bill McManigal

III. **California Research Bureau**

- Dennis O'Connor
 - ▶ Legislative history of California Amusement Rides Safety Law
- Jennifer Swenson
 - ▶ Accidents involving stationary amusement park rides
 - ▶ Survey of other states' laws requiring oversight of permanent amusement rides

IV. **Code & Inspection Officials**

- James L. Meyer, Principal Safety Engineer, Elevator, Amusement Ride and Tramway Unit, Cal-OSHA
- Ray Rieger, President, National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials
- Ken Larsen, California Building Officials Association Member, Director of Building & Housing, City of Chula Vista
- Albert Limberg, Ret. Investigator, U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission

V. **Industry Representatives**

- World Waterworks Association (written testimony)
- International Association of Amusement Parks & Attractions (written testimony)

VI. **Consumer Representative**

- Kathryn Dresslar, Children's Advocacy Institute/Center for Public Interest Law

VII. **Public Testimony**

- Individuals wishing to speak are invited to fill out speaker's cards



CENTRAL AND EAST COUNTY

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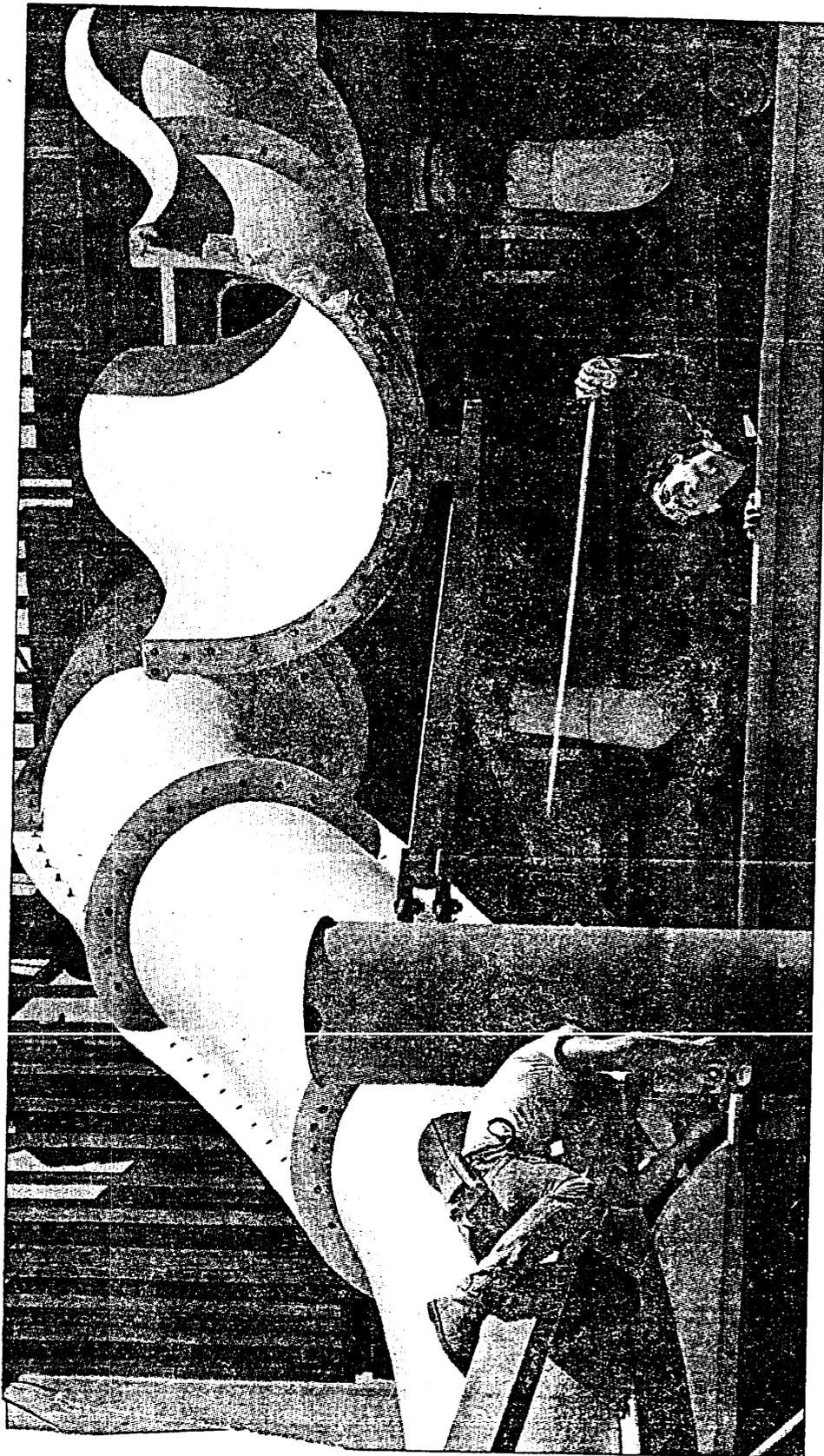
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Safety concerns raised earlier at Waterworld



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KARL MONDONT/TIMES

WORKERS MEASURE a portion of the Banzai water slide at Waterworld USA on Thursday. The slide broke Monday, killing a teen-ager.

City sought assurances from builder

By RENEE KOURY
and DAN REED

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

An engineer for the city of Concord had strong concerns two years ago about the stability of structures at Waterworld USA, where a slide collapsed Monday killing a teenager and injuring 32 classmates, but the city issued permits anyway, according to interviews and documents obtained by the Mercury News.

Then-city engineer Nick Theophanous raised concerns in at least two building department documents about the design of the towers in the maze of slides and pools at the 20-acre Concord attraction.

City officials said Thursday that Theophanous' concerns had nothing to do with the collapse, which happened when 33 youngsters piled onto the Banzai Pipeline together and the chute snapped, sending them hurtling to the pavement.

Meanwhile, two new investiga-



John Hunsucker

The slide expert estimated the Banzai could hold at least 10 people at once without problems.

tions were announced Thursday, joining at least six others already launched by the city of Concord, the amusement park and other agencies. The city has hired an independent consultant to evaluate Waterworld USA park operations following a fatal water slide collapse, city officials said. Also, Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch, said he and another lawmaker plan to hold a hearing in Concord sometime this month to examine the tragedy's cause and whether the state should regulate amusement park rides.

Also on Thursday, an industrial engineer hired by the park's parent company, Premier Parks, said his preliminary findings indicate the Banzai Pipeline twisted apart from excess weight.

The engineer John Hunsucker, a professor at the University of Houston, could not say how much weight the slide was designed to support, but estimated it could hold at least 10 people at once without problems.

The city of Concord is withholding the entire building department file on Waterworld from public view even though the documents are public records.

But part of the file obtained Thursday by the Mercury News includes a note from Theophanous written two months before the grand opening of Waterworld, in which he raised concerns about the integrity of the towers.

He was told by his superior, Community Development Director Bill

Reeds, to seek assurance from the slide developer, Whitewater West Industries Ltd. of Canada, that the city would not be held responsible, and then approve it, Theophanous wrote on a March 15, 1995 note.

Then, a month later, Theophanous recorded that he again had lodged his concerns about "potential failures" with Reeds but was again told to get a letter of indemnification.

"I discussed these details with B. Reeds," Theophanous wrote in the second notation, dated April 24, 1995. "I indicated that the connections to the fiberglass and to the trestle are potential failures, hinges which could cause instability. He instructed me to accept them provided WW (Whitewater) submits a letter of indemnification."

The notation was written next to a drawing of a joint known as a "flange." Water-world officials sus-

See SLIDE, Back Page

Slide

FROM PAGE A1

pect such a part may have been the point at which the slide snapped Monday.

Andrew Mowett, spokesman for Whitewater West Industries Ltd. in Canada said Thursday, "I can't really comment on whether we've issued (indemnification) letters or not. At this point, we're just trying to cooperate with the inquiry." Reeds said Thursday he also was uncertain whether an indemnification letter had ever been delivered to the city.

One week after Theophanous wrote the second note, the city of Concord terminated him. City spokeswoman Emily Hopkins said

Wednesday he was "let go" on April 30, 1995, though she declined to say why.

Reeds said Thursday that an engineering firm hired by the city to review the damaged slide has reported that the issues raised by Theophanous were irrelevant to the part of the slide that failed. Representatives of the outside firm, Degenkolb of San Francisco, could not be reached for comment.

Reeds, who is not an engineer, also said that Theophanous' concerns were related to the effect of wind on the towers, not on the load-bearing capacity of the flumes.

But Reeds was not able to explain why the former engineer's notes were attached to drawings of the joints, nor why Theophanous referred specifically to the "connection

to the fiberglass" and to the "hinges."

Theophanous was reluctant to talk when contacted at his Lafayette business, where he now works as a private structural engineer. He said he "stands by the comments" written two years ago in the file, though he cannot be certain why the slide failed since he has not examined it since the accident.

It was unclear whether the notations written by Theophanous pertained to the precise location where the slide snapped.

"The city will find out what happened," Theophanous said Thursday. "I hope that I am wrong."

Mercury News staff writers Frances Dinkelspiel and Sam Diaz, and Times staff writer Carolyn McMillan contributed to this story.

THE TIMES

A Knight-Ridder Newspaper

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Editorials

Tragedy at Waterworld

THE TRAGEDY MONDAY at Concord's Water-world is one of those events that leaves us dazed and numb, wondering how such a tragedy could happen to kids who were simply having good, clean fun celebrating something we've all celebrated ourselves — the end of school. Four bus loads of Napa High School students were celebrating the end of the school year with a senior class trip to the water park. What possibly could go wrong? Maybe a traffic accident. But a water slide collapse? A fun-filled day ended in disaster when too many kids tried to "clog it" down the Banzai flume. The slide broke and the students fell 30 to 40 feet below. One girl was killed and 32 injured, some seriously.

There is nothing we can say that could alleviate the grief of the family who lost their daughter, Quimby Ghilotti, 17, although we offer our sincerest condolences. The death of a child is tragic beyond words.

Napa High Principal Lars Christensen described Quimby as an individual one could always count on. That's quite a compliment, particularly for a teen-ager.

In addition we wish Godspeed healing to the injured teens who were transported to various Bay Area hospitals.

The police, emergency crews and hospitals deserve commendations for responding quickly and efficiently. Within minutes, 18 ambulances and four helicopters had responded and quickly transported the injured to hospitals for care.

We also praise those students who behaved heroically during this panic situation. Many unselfishly rose above their own fears to help their injured friends and calm frightened classmates. For example, there was Brett Brumley, who jumped off the slide to rush to the aid of his girlfriend who had fallen. There was Barry Franks, who leaped in to keep his wounded friends from falling asleep, something someone with a head injury should avoid.

Clearly these were good kids. Like Maureen Rogers, a tennis star at Napa High who plans to attend University of Notre Dame this fall. She suffered a dislocated pelvis, a broken arm and broken ribs.

The park is closed now and officials say it will remain so during a forthcoming investigation. That's as it should be. While this tragedy was in all likelihood simply the result of kids being kids, that certainly doesn't preclude the need for a thorough investigation.

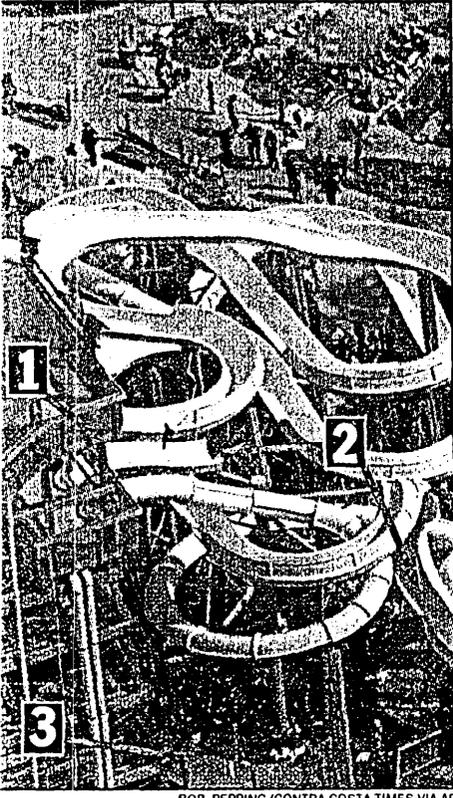
The park has been a boon for Concord since it opened in 1995. It's been a popular and financially successful venture. Certainly it will take some time for the investigation to sort out the circumstances of what happened and what if anything can be done to avoid another incident.

But that is the subject of future reports and studies and maybe editorials. The appropriate response now is to offer our prayers to Quimby's family and to the other students who were injured.

WATER PARK CATASTROPHE STUNS SCHOOL

Sorrow, shock in Napa

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BOB PEPPING/CONTRA COSTA TIMES VIA AP



EDDIE LEDESMA/CONTRA COSTA TIMES VIA AP

Anguished students, above, return to Napa High School after the accident at Concord's Waterworld USA.

HOW IT HAPPENED:

1. A portion of the slide, left, juts from a platform where Napa seniors rushed past a lifeguard to take a final ride during a class party.
2. The slide broke off and collapsed.
3. The students were thrown to the ground three stories below.

Waterworld monitors

ed Fire District said his department inspected the park only with respect to escape routes in the event of fire.

"The only involvement we have

\$300,000 in taxes a year.

"It was a very important project. The (Concord City) Council at that time and certainly now has a real emphasis on providing activi-



JOE GAROFOLI

Times columnist

Napa High students learn to comfort each other

IT'S DIFFERENT WHEN a teen-ager dies, Nicole says as she takes another adult-sized drag on a Marlboro Light. Legs folded on the sidewalk, she straightens her back against the Burger King brick wall and focuses her gaze.

"Because your friends are your whole world. When they die, it makes you feel like dying."

Nicole and her pal Valerie couldn't deal with school for too long Tuesday morning. The two Napa High sophomores cut out after one period and walked to the BK on Jefferson Street. In Nicole's English class they had been watching news reports, and in Valerie's, the class painted. "It was too depressing," Nicole says, curling back into an elbows-on-knees slouch. "Everywhere."

The school's quad is usually empty after classes begin. But Tuesday, it was full of students, mostly seniors. Clumped in groups, they hugged each other, some crying, as they mourned their dead classmate and worried about 32 others injured Monday in an accident at Concord's Water-world USA.

The two dozen grief counselors on campus Tuesday let students nurse each other. Nobody can understand a teen-ager like another teen — not family, not teachers, not counselors.

Said one student: "It seemed like there was one little group talking about every injured person."

It's their world

Sometimes adults forget that high schools are little communities unto themselves. The students live and breathe high school, from deciding what to wear in the morning to whom to spend hours with on the phone at night. Their world is a biosphere where emotions are more often than not in overdrive. Love. Hate. Anger. Pain.

That's why it hurts so much when one of their own dies. As Mike, a Napa High senior, says: "It's because we're a lot closer than what people think. These are the people we talk to every day."

Sure, adults at Napa High saw signs Tuesday that things weren't right. That students were "walking around the halls like zombies," as one junior said.

But it would be impossible for adults to turn back the clock and

AFTER BEING INJURED in Monday's Waterworld accident in Concord, Jason White, in the wheelchair, finds himself surrounded by students at Napa High while awaiting a ride home Tuesday. Jason was one of the 32 students hurt when a section of the overcrowded Banzai water slide collapsed.

with you. Those final days were heaven.

"You couldn't have picked a worse time for this to happen," said Christian Harris, a youth pastor at Napa's Grace Baptist Church, and one of the volunteer grief counselors on campus Tuesday. "But I don't think it's really sunk in yet. They're just dealing with the event itself. We may not see what happens until the end of the week."

Senior memories

You remember what those last few weeks of senior year were like. Weeks flew by like seconds. If you were going to college, your test scores and grades were filed, and you were locked on autopilot. If you had been partying for four years, then finally everybody was

opener about how fragile life is."

Not every teen is that reflective, especially with TV reporters camped outside the saffron walls of Napa High. "Get out of here," yelled a carload of girls as they sped by two cameramen. Out of the car shot a single finger in anger. In frustration. In hurt.

Something that everyone could understand — but only a teen-ager could feel.

Joe Garofoli's column runs Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. You can reach him at 943-8061 or joeg@cctimes.com.

THE VICTIMS AND THEIR MEDICAL STATUS

John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek

- ✓ ■ Jeff Gibbons, 19, fair condition with back and pelvic injuries
- ✓ ■ Emily Tselentis, 17, fair condition with injuries to the upper arm, elbow and pelvis
- ✓ ■ John Barker, treated and released Monday
- ✓ ■ Joe Hall, treated and released Monday
- ✓ ■ Aaron Sweeden, treated and released Monday

Doctor's Hospital, Pinole

- ✓ ■ Andrew Bosch, 18, good condition
- ✓ ■ Lindsey Klein, 17, serious but

stable condition with a concussion, punctured lung and broken ribs

- ✓ ■ Jamie Talbott, 17, serious but stable condition with a broken right ankle and fractured vertebrae
- ✓ ■ Danielle Ockenfels, treated and released Tuesday

San Ramon Regional Medical Center, San Ramon

- ✓ ■ Kathryn Doughty, 18, treated and released Tuesday
- ✓ ■ Charlotte Florent, good condition with pelvic injuries
- ✓ ■ Judy Wong, pelvic injuries, treated and released Tuesday
- ✓ ■ Lisa Redmond, treated and re-

leased Tuesday

Mt. Diablo Medical Center, Concord

- ✓ ■ Alynda Franco, 17, stable condition in the intensive care unit with a fractured vertebra
- ✓ ■ Camille Lucas, 17, stable condition with a Pelvic fracture
- ✓ ■ Natalie LeBlanc, 18, treated and released Monday

Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, Oakland

- ✓ ■ Mark Horvath, treated and released Monday
- ✓ ■ Jason White, treated and released Monday

Kaiser Permanente Medical Center, Walnut Creek

- Mark Thibaut, 19, good condition, transferred Tuesday to Kaiser's Vallejo hospital
- ✓ ■ David Johanson, 18, treated and released Monday
- ✓ ■ Steven Warner, 18, treated and released Monday
- ✓ ■ Adam Jobe, treated and released Monday
- ✓ ■ Chris Yarborough, treated and released Monday

Merrithew Memorial Hospital, Martinez

- ✓ ■ Marla Johnson, 18, stable condition in the intensive care unit with

bruised lungs, scrapes and bruises

- ✓ ■ Maureen Rodgers, 18, stable condition in the intensive care unit with broken arm, dislocated hip and broken ribs
- ✓ ■ Melissa Parker, 18, treated and released Monday
- ✓ ■ Gerard Stemke, 17, treated and released Monday

Eden Medical Center, Castro Valley

- ✓ ■ Mikal Johnson, 17, fair condition in the intensive care unit with a (punctured lung) broken ribs and abdominal injuries
- ✓ ■ Justin Timm, 18, good condi-

tion with a broken jaw and dislocated hip; he was scheduled to be transferred to Vallejo's Kaiser hospital

Stanford University Medical Center, Palo Alto

- ✓ ■ Kevin Miller, treated and released Monday

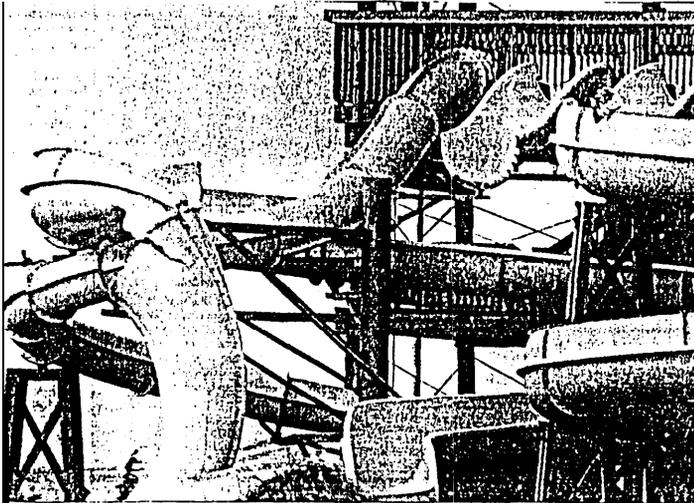
Brookside Hospital, San Pablo

- ✓ ■ Rachel Sijgers, 18, serious but stable condition in the intensive care unit
- ✓ ■ Manuela Tavarres, 18, a foreign exchange student, was released Tuesday.

WATER PARK CATASTROPHE STUNS SCHOOL

Sorrow, shock in Napa

A twisted, torn portion of the Banzai Pipeline water slide at Concord's Waterworld U.S.A. dangles after part of the slide collapsed Monday, injuring 32 students and killing one. Witnesses said the students ignored a guard's warning to go down one at a time and instead tried to go as a group, overloading



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tions were being raised about the safety of such amusement park attractions' but officials vigorously defended the industry's safety record.

"The whole industry is shocked by something like this," said Al Turner, president of the Kansas City, Kan.-based World Waterpark Association. He said there were only two drownings and no deaths by other means among the 58 million visitors to 103 major water parks in the United States last year.

Overloaded?

He said Monday's accident occurred because the partying students ignored safety regulations, and pleas from a lifeguard, and overloaded the slide.



Quimby Chilotti

the death of Ghilotti — whom he described as a wonderful young woman who was a good student and popular with classmates — said, "It looks like the rest will pull through. But she left us way too soon."

"She was just like the most darling person on the face of the earth," said Natalie Pettek, a 17-year-old junior who was sitting in her car with, classmate Sarah Courtney, 16, Tuesday morning, crying

INJURED STUDENTS

Napa High School officials released the names of the injured students Tuesday morning.

Treated at Brookside Hospital 'In San Pablo, were:
Rachel Sijgers and Manuela Tavarres.

At Mount Diablo Medical Center In Concord:
Alynda Franco, Natalie le Blanc, Camilla Lucas.

At Kaiser Permanente, Walnut Creek:
Adam Jobe, David Johanson, Mark Thibault, Steven Warner, Chris Yarborough. All with exception of Thibault were treated and released.

At John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek:
John Barker, Jeff Gibbons, Joe Hall, Aaron Sweeden, Emily Psentis. Barker, Hall and Sweeden were released.

At Doctors Hospital In Pinole:
Andrew Bosch, Lindsay Klein, Danielle Ockenfels, Jamie Talbott.

At Kaiser Permanente in Oakland:
Mark Howrath, Jason White. Both released.

At Eden Medical Center in Castro Valley:
Mikal Johnson, Justin Timm.

At San Aamon Regional Medical Center:
Kathryn Doughty, Charlotte Florent, Lisa Redmond, Judy Wong.

At Stanford Medical Center In Palo Alto:

Kevin Miller. Released.

At Contra Costa County Hospital in Martinez:
Marla Johnson, Melessa Parker, Maureen Rodgers, Gerard Stempk. Parker and Stempk released.

Officials said 204 of the 450 seniors graduating June 12 were at the park Monday. All those who

Teen dies, 32 hurt in Concord as senior party turns tragic

By **Ray Delgado** and **Larry D. Hatfield**
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

NAPA — Dazed Napa High

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arrived. Most of the injured teenagers had broken bones, cuts and heavy bruises.

Thirty-two students were taken to 10 Bay Area hospitals; five of them by helicopter.

McCurley said the incident was the first of its kind at Waterworld since it opened in 1995 and that the park would remain closed while an investigation was conducted.

The 2-year-old park is a sister to Sacramento's Waterworld at Cal Expo. Both are owned by Premier Parks, which is one of the world's largest theme park companies.

The park attracted 325,000 visitors last year.

In 1993, an 11-year-old Daly City boy died two days after being found unconscious at the bottom of a wading pool at the Sacramento Waterworld. The park was not then owned by Premier.

McCurley said the Concord slide was in good condition and praised the lifeguard for immediately alerting park staff when the students started going down the slide in a group.

However, he said park officials would be reviewing their safety procedures to try to prevent another accident.

Mike Brown, president of Oakwood Lake Resort, the home of the Manteca Waterslides, said groups of kids often tried to ride down the slides together.

"At the end of the day, they overwhelm the attendant, and they'll go down in a chain," he said. The guards may be doing their best to prevent that from happening... but unfortunately it's a fairly common occurrence."

The 17-year-old witness Monat said lifeguards at Waterworld had been pretty lenient on him after a few times that he went down water slides together with his buddies.

"They just give you a warning," Monat said. "I guess this might be a good example for bigger punishments."

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission last year estimated that 100 people died and 7,500 were injured on amusement park rides in 1995, the latest figures available.

Jim Herron Zamora and Erin McCormick of The Examiner staff, correspondents Sandra Ann Harris and Donna Horowitz and Examiner news services contributed to this story.

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Amusement parks face scrutiny

By **ETHAN RARICK**
TIMES CAPITAL BUREAU

SACRAMENTO — California's amusement park rides are not inspected by state officials partly because three decades ago the operator of the world's most storied park Disneyland, wanted in that way, according to an ex-legislator.

Former Fresno-area lawmaker George Zenovich said that in 1968, when he was pushing a bill to require state inspections of thrill rides, the

Walt Disney Co. successfully lobbied to restrict the measure only to movable rides, like those in carnivals and fairs.

"I remember they came up here and lobbied against the bill and said they had their own safety system and the state shouldn't oversee their operation," said Zenovich, now a Cap-

itol lobbyist himself. "They had the votes."

California's lack of statewide amusement-park regulation has been in the public eye recently because of the fatal accident earlier this month at Waterworld USA in Concord. This week, the issue will be re-emphasized when two legislative commit-

tees hold a joint hearing on the tragedy, and what can be done to prevent similar events in the future.

The Golden State's lack of mandated inspections is unusual, said John Graff, executive director of the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.

"The great majority of the parks in the country are in jurisdictions that have a state regulatory scheme," said Graff, whose Virginia-based organization represents about half the country's 800 permanent amusement parks.

The exact laws vary, but Graff said almost all states either inspect amusement park rides themselves or

require that the parks post some kind of certificate showing they have been inspected by a licensed engineering firm.

That's not the case in California. Although the state Occupational Safety and Health Administration inspects traveling carnival rides, no statewide government agency checks the attractions at the state's permanent parks, like Waterworld.

Had Zenovich had his way nearly 30 years ago, the situation would be different. Following an accident on a ride in the Assembly district he then represented, Zenovich introduced a measure to require state inspections both for traveling carnival attractions and their counterparts in permanent parks.

But the Walt Disney Co., which runs the nation's busiest amusement park, Disneyland, balked.

"Disney sent a guy up here," Zenovich remembered. "He was a retired admiral or something. (He was) very

The entertainment company pushed amendments eliminating permanent amusement parks from the bill, arguing its own inspections were rigorous enough.

It may not have hurt Disney's cause that the company held an annual "legislative day" at its Anaheim park, a chance for lawmakers and their families to see the Magic Kingdom for free. It was before restrictions on gifts to legislators.

Zenovich isn't sure if the state's other big amusement park at the time, Knott's Berry Farm, joined the effort, but the amendments were successful and permanent amusement parks escaped state oversight.

Tom Brocato, a spokesman for Disneyland, said he wasn't sure what happened 30 years ago, but he said the park still views its internal inspection program as being more than rigorous.

"We're really tough on ourselves," Brocato said. "We want to make sure that all of our guests, when they come in to Disneyland, have the safest experience possible?"

Brocato said the company has no formal position now as to whether the state should inspect amusement-park rides, but he said Disneyland's own inspections are tougher than the requirements in other states. He declined to reveal any details about the company's effort, such as the frequency of safety checks.

Graff, the head of the industry group, said his organization does not oppose "reasonable regulation," but he also said legislators should ask themselves how much any inspection program will reduce injuries.

"We really have done an outstanding job over the years in getting this thing to the point where it's an outstanding safety record," he said.

Amusement parks, fairs and carnivals attract more than 500 million visits per year, Graff said, yet only

about 100 injuries are severe enough to require hospitalization, and parks produce on about three or four fatalities per year. Those claims are supported by numbers from the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission.

By contrast, Graff cited government statistics showing that more people are injured every year by common, seemingly safe household items.

"Vacuum cleaners send more people to the hospital than our rides," he said. "We don't send inspectors around to look at people's television sets."

Graff also noted that insurance companies, which face the potential for huge losses after an accident, insist on inspecting the rides themselves.

"It's not that the rides go uninspected even in the few states where there are no (inspection laws)," he said.

Those kinds of arguments may soon face California lawmakers as they try to decide if the state, in light of the Waterworld tragedy, should step in and try to insure safety at

amusement parks — and members Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch, and Valerie Brown.

D-Sonoma, plan to hold a joint hearing Friday in Concord to explore whether the law needs to be changed.

They chair the two Assembly committees that have jurisdiction over building codes and amusement parks, and they also represent the two areas most affected by the Waterworld accident. The park is in Torlakson's district; the students involved were from Brown's.

Torlakson has said he is likely to introduce some kind of legislation after she hearing, but he does not yet know what the bill will do.

When he announced the hearing recently, Torlakson said he wanted to find answers as to what happened in Concord at Waterworld, what was the exact cause (and) what if anything can be done to prevent what happened."

As for the specifics of what, if anything, the state should do, "I'm really leaving that open to what we find out in the hearings," he said.

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DISNEYLAND celebrates its 40th anniversary. According to a former state lawmaker, action by the Walt Disney Co. restricted plans for state inspections of amusement park rides.

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Area Water Parks Cite Safety Precautions

Operations: Officials at Santa Clarita and San Dimas facilities say slide users are closely monitored and equipment is frequently inspected

By GREG SANDOVAL
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SANTA CLARITA — Executives of Southern California water parks say they have precautions in place to avoid accidents. We the one Monday in Concord in which a water slide broke, killing a 17-year-old girl and injuring 32 other teenagers.

Representatives of Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, just west of the Golden State Freeway in the Santa Clarita Valley, and Raging Waters near San Dimas said their parks prevent more than one rider at a time reaching the slides.

Although Monday's accident at Waterworld USA is still under investigation, it was allegedly caused by dozens of teens crowding atop the Banzai Pipeline slide in a group — over the objections of the park's lifeguards — so they could ride down together. When the slide gave way, the youths dropped 70 feet to the ground.

Water-slide riders climb towers to a landing where takeoff points are located and ride a blast of water pumped onto the slide.

At Hurricane Harbor, the only people allowed at the takeoff point are the rider and two lifeguards who control each slide, said spokeswoman Bonnie Rabjohn. Other riders are kept back by a combination of turnstiles, stairs and railings, she said, and there have been no significant injuries there since the park opened two years ago.

Lifeguards are under strict instructions to allow only one rider at a time, and if they are faced with a dangerous situation the lifeguards can push a button that

shuts off the water used to propel the riders down the slide, she said.

Kent Lemasters, vice president and general manager of Raging Waters, said that the San Dimas park uses many of the same safety precautions that Hurricane Harbor uses. "We believe that through our ride design, engineering and safety procedures, Raging Waters has taken every precaution to prevent this type of incident from occurring here," Lemasters said.

But he pointed out that Raging Waters — although it is the third largest water park in the country, with more than 25 slides — "does not have the same water slide attraction on which this incident occurred."

The Banzai Pipeline in Concord was built by Whitewater West Industries Ltd. of Richmond, British Columbia, the largest manufacturer of water slides in the world. Geoff Chutter, president and CEO of the Canadian company, said Tuesday

Please see WATER, A22

WATER: Operators Outline Safety Precautions

Continued from A3
that two of the company's engineers who inspected the broken area of the 2-year-old slide concluded that the students' weight, concentrated in one section, caused the accident. The slide was not designed to support the more than 30 people who were on it, he said.

It was the first such break in the 17 years the company has been making that model, Chutter said. "It is the bread and butter of the slides we build."

The slide that broke, like most others, was made of fiberglass and

was reinforced by a balsa core, Chutter said.

The only government inspection of water-park facilities occurs when they first open for business, Rabjohn said. Hurricane Harbor passed an inspection by the Los Angeles County Department of Building and Safety, she said, and since then all inspections have been carried out by the park itself.

Employees inspect the rides every day and an independent engineer examines them three times a year, she said. The last outside inspection was completed a week

ago, she said.

More awareness of water-park hazards is needed, said Mark Oostman, marketing director for Ellis and Associates, a company that instructs water-park lifeguards and conducts safety inspections.

"There have been about 180 drownings at water parks since 1983," Oostman said. "There needs to be more attention paid to them. I don't know if you can stop all accidents but I hope the public becomes aware there are dangers associated with them."

CENTRAL AND EAST COUNTY

CONTRA COSTA TIMES

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QUIMBY GHILOTTI, 18, died in a water slide accident Monday.

A GROUP of pits are in shock Tuesday over the death and injury of Napa High School students at Waterworld USA in Concord.

'Clogging' tradition turns deadly

By JOAN MORRIS and ROBERT BURNSON
T.L. STAFF WRITERS

They had a tradition to uphold. Each year for several years, the graduating class at Napa High School had spent its senior trip at the Manteca Waterslides. And there, the seniors devised a sort of new version on an old theme.

Instead of stuffing phone booths or packing Volkswagens with bodies, these kids "clogged" water slides, stacking as many kids as they could on the top of the slide, then letting go and flying down as a group.

Last year, high school legend has it, the 1996 seniors had managed 60 kids.

The class of 1997 was going for 70.

INSIDE

At Napa High an agony that only teens can feel. Page A16

At least one water park cracks down on "clogging," but teens say it's still fun to do. Page A16

The 18-year-old girl who died was described as a careful, cautious and responsible student. Page A16

or whatever they could manage, said David Johanson, 18, a senior at Napa and a varsity football player. No one had an exact goal.

They just wanted to beat the class of '96, he said.

They arrived at Waterworld USA

In Concord shortly after the park opened Monday morning. The students had chosen Waterworld over Manteca partly because the 3-year-old Concord park had some new thrill-a-second rides.

Throughout the day, the teens swooshed down one slide after another. They played volleyball and had a buffet lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers. And they talked of the great clog they wanted to pull off.

Clogging seemed like a harmless, fun thing to do. A few people would get on the slide, drop down a little way, then use their feet to brace themselves and keep from sliding down. Then more and more people would pile on until they could hold

no more, and then — whoosh — they would be gone.

At a few minutes after 3 p.m., a group of the students — many of them among the most popular in the class — congregated at the base of the big Banzai slide, one of four spaghetti-like slides that dropped riders 40 feet in a matter of seconds.

"We kinda figured that it would be time to go pretty soon," Johanson said.

When the announcement came over a loudspeaker that Waterworld would be closing in 45 minutes and that the Napa students should head to their buses, teens rushed up the long flight of stairs to the Banzai.

About 30 or 40 seniors quickly reached the top, said Johanson, who was near the end of the line.

It was "probably closer to running than walking," he said.

A lifeguard at the top of the ramp whistled for them to stop. But they ignored the order, jumping one by one into the chute and starting down it.

The students in front grabbed the edges of the slide and sloped themselves from going down, creating a logjam, he said. The rest of the students piled on behind them.

Barry Franks had been one of the first cloggers on the slide, but the pressure of the growing pile behind him cawed him to slip. He descended the slide with a few others who couldn't hang on. Above him, the dog had grown to perhaps 40

youths, with most preparing to get off.

Johanson estimated that 20 or more classmates jumped in before him. Then it was his turn.

"I just got on, bumped into someone, and someone bumped into me," he said. "It didn't seem like two seconds before the slide broke and we started calling."

An ear-ringing, splintering sound startled the crowd at the water park. Then the slide fell, tossing its occupants to the ground as it twisted and shattered.

They fell three to four stories, hitting wooden beams and trees before landing in the mud and on concrete and other bodies.

The water ran red with blood, and panic filled the air. One student was dead and 32 were injured.

Franks found himself on the ground, uninjured, watching his friends fall. He rushed to help the most seriously injured, earning hero status.

Johanson heard the crack, saw the bodies in front of him fall. But he doesn't remember hitting the ground. The next thing he knew, he was lying in the mud, listening to the sounds of helicopters and ambulances.

"It's no secret we had a goal to jam the slide," said Johanson, who was recovering at home from the concussion and multiple cuts and bruises he received. "It wasn't the most intelligent thing to do. But we were going to do it, and we did it, and we paid the price."

Staff writers John Simerman, Tony Mercado, Mike Hytha and Tom Lochner, and Associated Press, contributed to this story.

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Cope With Water Slide Tragedy

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE 6-5-97

Independent engineers to report on park tour today

By Erin Hallissy

Chronicle East Bay Bureau

The Concord water slide that ripped apart under the weight of more than two dozen teens Monday, killing one and injuring 32 others, was examined yesterday by engineers hired by Waterworld USA's owners and the city of Concord.

The park, which shut down immediately after the accident, remained closed, its pools still and walkways empty under the bright blue sky. Waterworld officials said they could not release any information until today.

"I think it's premature to speculate on what the findings will be," said Brent Gooden, a

spokesman for Premier Parks in Oklahoma City. "The investigation is ongoing. It is comprehensive. It is thorough."

Concord spokeswoman Emily Hopkins said she had not received any preliminary findings from a San Francisco firm, Degenkolb Engineers, hired by the city Tuesday night to determine what caused the fatal collapse. Degenkolb officials did not return phone calls yesterday.

Concord is Waterworld's landlord because it owns the 20-acre site. Mayor Bill McManigal has vowed that the park will remain shut until it is determined to be safe. Hopkins could not say how the decision would be made or who would make it.

Gooden repeated that the company stance on the accident involving graduating seniors from Napa High School: The slide was safe but the teens overloaded it in an activity they call "clogging."

Sixty to 70 students had rushed the slide, disobeying a lifeguard's orders to stop, in an attempt to set a school record for the most people on a water slide, according to several witnesses. Quimby Ghilotti, 18, died and other teenagers received injuries ranging from head trauma to cuts and bruises.

The slide, called the Banzai Pipeline, is a serpentine Fiber-

INSPECTION: Page A23 Col. 1

INSPECTION: Slide Report Expected Today

From Page A19

glas flume about 400 feet long and 40 feet high, the most common slide in the water park industry, said Al Turner, executive director of the World Waterwork Association in Kansas. He called it a reliable slide that has never failed at the 850 water parks in his association.

The president of the British Columbia company that manufactured the slide said yesterday that in 17 years of business, he has never heard of a collapse like the one on Monday.

"We've never had product failure in any location in the world, period," said Geoff Chutter, president of Whitewater West Industries Ltd., which has built over 1,200 projects and thousands of slides worldwide.

Only one person is supposed to go down the slide at a time, but it is designed to hold many more than that, said Chutter. He could not provide an exact maximum weight limit for the slide.

About 30 teens had stopped in a 20-foot section near the top of the slide when it ripped apart.

"That is a gross overloading in

any circumstance, and certainly way beyond the specifications" for the slide, said Wally James, an engineer from Iowa who inspects water slides throughout the world.

Besides the weight of humans, the slides also hold water that flows down at the rate of 1,000 gallons per minute. James said. When the teens clogged the slide, they caused water to back up, adding to the weight and stress on the structure.

Building codes usually require that a structure hold three to six times more weight than necessary, James said. He added that engineers would not have foreseen 30 people jammed together on the slide.

"The application is designed

for its intended use, plus a safety factor. I don't know of anything that is designed on a 30-to-1 safety factor," James said. "I don't want to indict the kids — they've gone through hell. But the overall misuse of the slide caused the accident."

Mike Brown, president of the Manteca Waterslides where former Napa High seniors apparently set the clogging records that Monday's group was trying to exceed, said his slides can withstand the practice. He said there are rules against clogging, but "kids will be kids."

"We've had clogging and we've never had a failure," Brown said. "I have never seen clogging of this magnitude, but it wouldn't surprise me if it had happened."

Victim's Mom, City of Concord

SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE 6-5-97

Quimby's mother tells of extraordinary bond

By Peter Fimrite
Chronicle North Bay Bureau

Victoria Nelson says she named her daughter Quimby, which means "life-giving" in Swedish, because the newborn baby gave her life purpose.

Nelson's mother had died of a stroke just after Nelson graduated from high school. Quimby's birth represented a reincarnation of a mother-daughter bond that had been tragically broken.

Tragedy struck again Monday when a water slide at a Concord amusement park collapsed, sending Quimby Rae Ghilotti plummeting to her death and injuring 32 other Napa High School students.

Through tears, Ghilotti's mother yesterday described the remarkably close relationship she had with her only child.

"We were so close to each other and our

days together were so precious," Nelson said. "I wanted to leave this world myself knowing that she was in it. I have collections of tea cups and photo albums from my mom that I planned someday to leave to her. All these things are so meaningless now because it was all for her."

Teachers and classmates at Napa High say Ghilotti was a peacemaker who helped others in need. Her mother said the nurturing started at home.

Nelson and Quimby's father, Larry Ghilotti of Sonoma, divorced when Quimby was 3. Nelson, 52, who owns a gift shop in Yountville, never remarried. She said Quimby was almost all she had. "I was the most overprotective mom," Nelson said. "I may have held her too close to me, but I probably relied on her as much as she re-

MOM: Page A23 Col.1



Quimby Ghilotti was known for her peacemaking abilities and her intensely feminine taste

MOM: Special Bond With Water Slide Victim

From Page A19

lied on me."

The bond was so tight that Ghilotti cried every day during a sixth-grade trip to Yosemite because she missed her mother. Nelson said her daughter called her at least nine times during a two-week trip to New Zealand when she was a freshman in the school choir.

Nelson said her daughter loved the color pink, frilly feminine clothes, shopping and her cat Mary, a fluffy white Himalayan. She was so feminine that her friends would call her "the little princess," Nelson said.

The two often rode horses together or lay on the beach. They went to the Nutcracker ballet together every year. They went horseback riding in Petaluma for Ghilotti's 18th birthday on April 19.

When Nelson organized a dinner for her daughter before the senior prom, Ghilotti wrote her a note saying, "Thanks Mom for all you did. You're one in a million."

The accident occurred while Nelson was on a boating trip around Washington's San Juan Islands. "I talked to her Sunday night on the phone and she was so happy," Nelson said. "She told me

the water slides are the next day and I said, 'Have fun. Be a good girl.'"

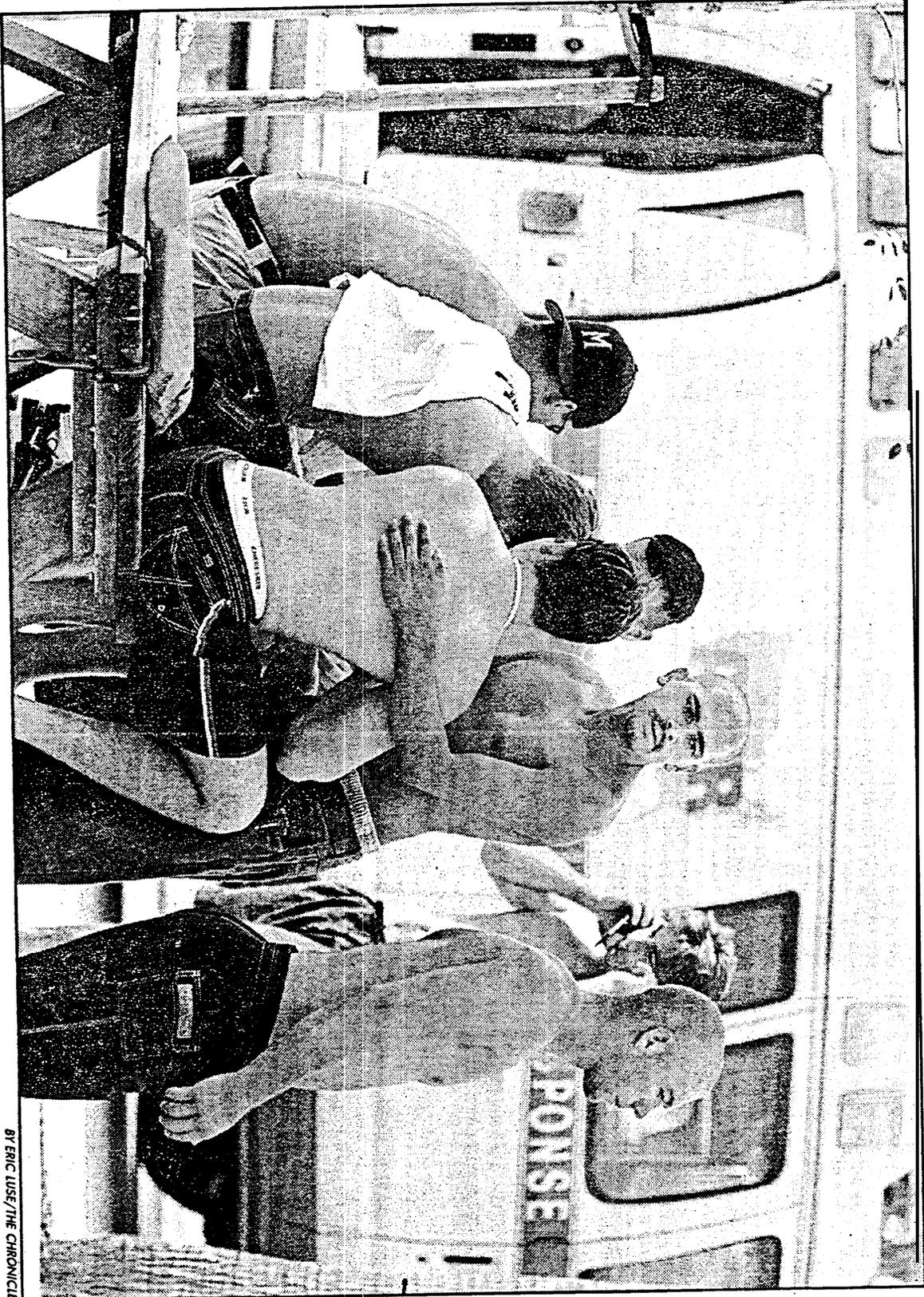
Nelson wants more than anything for people to remember her daughter as a selfless, caring person.

"When she was born, my life had purpose," Nelson said. "This is very hard, but we left nothing unsaid, held no grudges and lived each day as if it was our last. I hope Quimby's memory can bring on a new day for someone in need."

The funeral will be private. A public memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Napa High School gymnasium.

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CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE



Waterworld USA staff consoled each other after dozens of seniors from Napa High plunged 30 feet from a broken slide

BY ERIC LUSE/THE CHRONICLE

Design Expert at a Loss to Explain Slide Collapse

He says it should have carried weight

By David Dietz
Chronicle Staff Writer

A top designer of water slides said yesterday he could not explain the deadly collapse of a Concord ride, even though the flume had become jammed with revelers.

"The slide should still be strong enough," said Fred Langford, a New Jersey architect who has designed dozens of rides and once owned part of a Bay Area water slide park. "Even if people went in a long line, it should not be capable of collapsing the flume."

One teenager died and 32 others were injured yesterday when

a slide at Waterworld USA broke, spilling them 30 feet to the ground.

Concord police said last night that city officials have hired a private building inspector to look at the ride and help determine the cause.

Langford said there is no uniform building code for water slides but construction must meet stringent standards. In California, slide construction is approved by city or county building inspectors. Concord city officials handled inspections at Waterworld.

Reaching heights of up to nine stories, slides are typically fiberglass supported by steel and concrete piers.

Tens of millions of people are drawn each year to water parks,

and several giant ones are located in the Bay Area. Riders can reach speeds of 20 mph as they traverse flumes up to 600 feet long with names like "Cliffhanger" and the "Scream Machine."

The industry has a good safety record, despite the perils, promoters say. Recent statistics were unavailable, but the World Waterpark Association reported three deaths at water parks between 1980 and 1992.

In 1980, an accident similar to the one yesterday injured 11 youths at a Tennessee water slide park.

"For people falling out of flumes, I haven't heard of an accident in 10 or 12 years," Langford said. "This one (in Concord) is very unusual."

Steve Johnstone, operations

manager at the Raging Waters park in San Jose, the Bay Area's largest, described the industry as highly safety conscious.

He said most of Raging Waters' rides are restricted to one rider at a time. Controls are enforced by dispatchers, he said.

"If there is anything unusual, the dispatcher is told to contact security immediately," he said.

Signs at the bottom and tops of most rides admonish riders against horseplay, and audio warnings are played continuously for departing riders, Johnstone said.

Concord's Waterworld USA is run by Premier Parks, which owns another Waterworld slide park in Sacramento. The company recently bought Marine World in Vallejo.

Classmates reflect on girl killed at park

Students say senior was generous. always offered her help

By Donna Horowitz
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

NAPA — Quimby Ghilotti couldn't be there when her classmates needed her the most.

The 17-year-old Napa High School senior was the kind of person who would listen to their heartache, offer a consoling word, help guide them through their pain.

But dazed students at Napa High instead struggled Tuesday to cope with Quimby's death. The girl died of massive chest injuries Monday after plunging 40 feet to the ground when a Waterworld slide packed with boisterous classmates collapsed.

Principal Lars Christensen described the bright, gregarious teen as a very caring person who worked as a peer mediation counselor at the school to help settle disputes between students. She had made the honor roll four years running and had been accepted at Cal State Sacramento, where she hoped to earn a degree in psychology.

"It would be a dream come true for me to make a career of helping others," Ghilotti wrote on a scholarship application.

"She was an intelligent individual, probably one of the most caring individuals in the school," said John Sykes, a 16-year-old sophomore. "She never remarked negatively about anyone.

"She was always willing to give. She was a model of how someone would like to be. Of all people, it shouldn't have been her."

Ghilotti's classmates spent most of Tuesday at school discussing the horrifying accident that also injured 32 seniors on the class trip. They talked among themselves, and with teachers and 25 counselors. Flowers were sent to the school by eight Bay Area high schools.

For some, the tragedy brought a renewed closeness.

Karen Foglesong, a Napa mother and speech and language aide waiting to pick up her daughter after school, said she and her daughter had made a special effort to settle a minor tiff.

She said her daughter, Kerstin, a 16-year-old sophomore, asked her not to forget their customary parting — the sign language hand message for "I love you."

Christensen said he planned to honor Ghilotti in his speech for the June 12 graduation. And he said John Barker, the school valedictorian who sustained minor injuries in the accident, would most likely do the same.

Ghilotti's father was to receive counseling from his work to help him cope with the loss, according to Christensen. Her mother, who is separated from her father, finally learned of the tragedy mid-morning Tuesday when the Coast Guard reached the private vessel she was

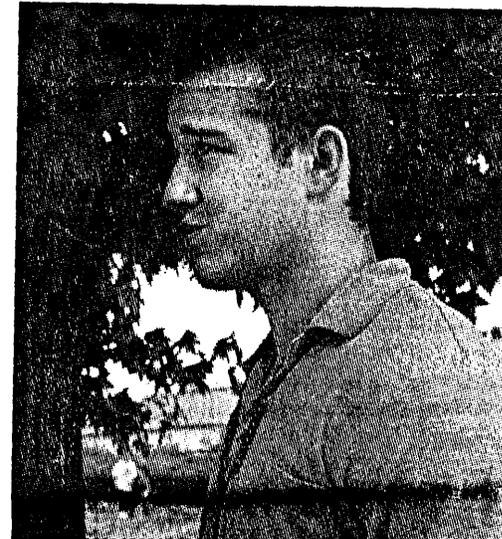
cruising on near the San Juan Islands of Washington state. She cut short her vacation to rush back to Napa, Christensen said.

In a sadly poignant note, Ghilotti's mother had taken out a half-page ad in the school yearbook to write her only child a special graduation message.

In the midst of 10 photos of her daughter as a baby and young child, she wrote: "Climb high. Climb far. Your goal. The sky. Your aim. The star.

"I love you always, mom."

Napa High School sophomore John Sykes was a friend of Quimbyk. He described the senior as one of the most caring people at the school. "She was always willing to give. Of all people it shouldn't have been her," he said.



EXAMINER/CHRISTINA KOCI HERNANDEZ

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SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

WATER SLIDE TRAGEDY

Quimby Ghilotti

Quimby Ghilotti

To My Daughter:

Climb high,

Climb far,

Your goal
the sky.

Your aim
the star.

I Love You Always,

Mom



Quimby Ghilotti's mother bought and created this half-page ad in her daughter's high school yearbook.

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BOB PEPPING/TIMES

A GROUP of girls are in shock Tuesday over the death and injury of Napa High School students at Waterworld USA in Concord.

Water Slide's Deadly Plunge

Concord ride rips apart — girl killed, 32 hurt

INSIDE

■ Napa area residents stunned by latest in a series of tragic incidents involving high school students.

● Collapse puzzles designer of water slides.

PAGE A 11

By *Erin Hallissy,*
Suzanne Espinosa Solis
and *Kevin Fagan*
Chronicle East Bay Bureau

A towering water slide packed with teenagers on a graduation outing collapsed at a Concord amusement park yesterday, killing one girl and injuring 32 other youths who plunged screaming to earth in front of horrified onlookers.

Witnesses and officials at the park, Waterworld USA, said dozens of teenagers jammed onto the slide against the orders of a lifeguard who desperately tried

to feed them onto the chute one at a time.

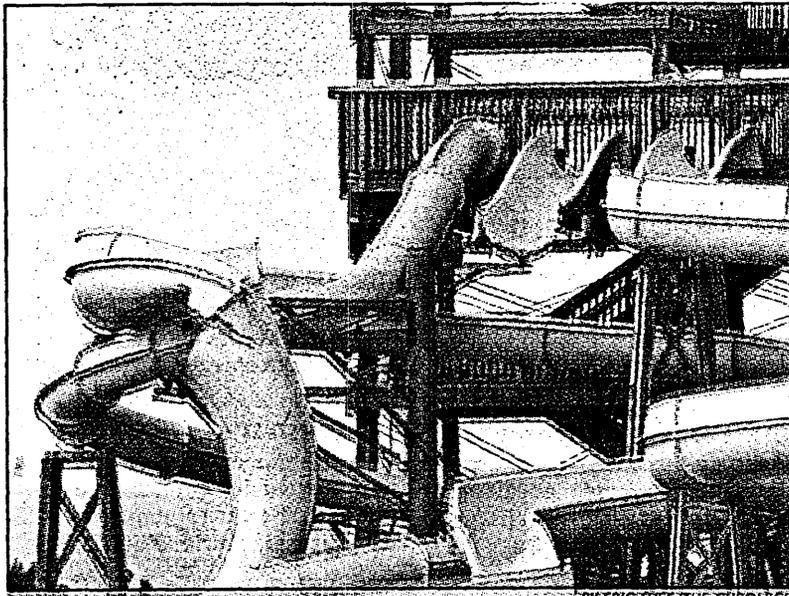
All those on the slide were said to be seniors from Napa High School on a "senior picnic" celebrating their impending graduation. Several students said the seniors had been trying to surpass a senior-class record of how many people could fit on a water slide at one time.

"I saw a line of kids on the slide, and then more kids piled on, and then more kids piled on," said Russ Tiberio of San Francisco. "The slide broke. It cracked, rolled and dropped. There were people hanging on as it was falling."

The lifeguard at the top of the slide blew her whistle and yelled at the youths to stop, park officials said. A clutch of security guards and other lifeguards ran to the slide, but before they got there the chute collapsed.

A spokesman for Premier Parks Inc., which owns Waterworld, expressed sympathy for the victims and their families, and said in a prepared statement that safety is the company's top priority. "Based upon what we know at this point, we believe this slide was safe. We are still

SLIDE: Page A11 Col. 1



BY ERIC TOUSE/THE CHRONICLE

One of three slides on the Banzai Pipeline pulled apart when celebrating high-school seniors piled up in a section of the tube

TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 1997

SLIDE

From Page 1

gathering the facts on precisely what happened," said spokesman Brent Gooden.

Witnesses said they heard a loud crash as the Banzai Pipeline Slide cracked at about 3:30 p.m. Then they heard crunching noises and yells of pain as youths were pitched from a height of about 30 feet to a strip of cement and dirt, bushes and flowers and the base of the slide.

As the chute snapped downward, one knot of youths clumped together fell first. They were followed one after the other by the rest, many banging against wooden support poles on the way down before smacking into the earth or other students.

The victims lay in a heap with debris until rescue crews arrived. Park workers and customers rushed from victim to victim to administer first-aid.

Witnesses said the spilled water from the collapsed slide turned red with the victims' blood.

"It was just horrible. All the kids were covered in mud and blood," said a sobbing Debbie Smith, who was at the park with her family and watched the slide collapse.

One 17-year-old girl from Napa High died of head and chest injuries at 4:15 p.m. at Mount Diablo Medical Center in Concord. Her name was not immediately released.

Smith said she believed the girl hit a wooden pole on her way down. After she fell, the girl lay bleeding profusely and not moving, she said.

Lars Christensen, principal of Napa High, said the dead girl's father was doing "remarkably well, considering all he's gone through." He said the girl's mother had not been notified yet.

"She was very vivacious, a wonderful lady," he said of the dead girl, adding that she was a member of the school's mock-trial club. "A strong student, very active. We will certainly honor her passing (with a memorial service)."

The principal added that Napa High's June 12 graduation ceremony will go on as planned.

Emergency crews evacuated the injured — several in serious condition, and at least three in critical condition — to nine area hospitals by helicopter and ambulance. Rescue workers said they were having a hard time identifying many of the victims because they checked their IDs at the gate when they got to the park.

An independent inspector and Concord officials will examine the slide today, said Concord police Lieutenant Jim Jennings. He said Waterworld has been "pretty much a trouble-free place" since opening in 1995, and that yesterday's tragedy was the first major accident he could remember at the park. Park officials said Waterworld will be closed indefinitely.

Several witnesses and park

managers said the trouble began when a group of youths shoved past the lifeguard on duty at the Banzai Pipeline so they could swoosh down together. Students said the group tried to get as many people on the slide as they could to surpass a record set by last year's senior class at a different waterpark.

An announcement had just gone out over park loudspeakers telling the 120 Napa High seniors to board school buses for their trip home. This caused a group to rush

toward the Banzai slide "to get in 'one last ride,'" said Rick McCurley, vice president of Premier Parks.

"We were doing this thing called clogging," said a tearful Katherine Jalaty, a Napa High student who was on the slide platform and waiting to go down the chute when it fell. "Clogging" is jamming the slide with several people so they can ride down together.

The Napa High students who weren't injured were packed onto the four school buses that had brought them, and most sat crying

until they were taken home at about 5 p.m.

"I'm still in shock," said Napa High history teacher Chuck Quinn, one of eight instructors chaperoning the group.

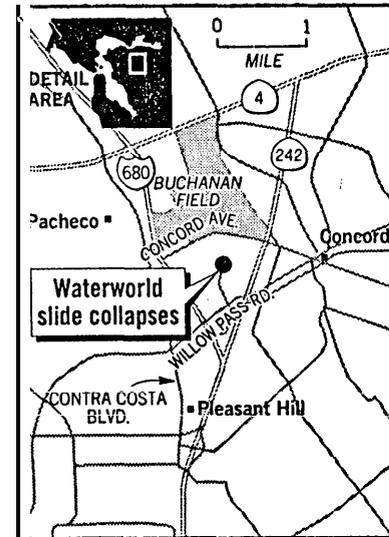
Justin Aaron, an English teacher at the school who was correcting papers near the base of the slide, said: "I looked up and saw bodies, flying through the air. They were landing in trees, on rocks and on the concrete. . . . It was like it was happening in slow motion."

Aaron, who also coaches the girls soccer team at Napa High, said the slide had been loaded with many of his English-class honor students and at least seven of the starters on the soccer squad.

The open-air Banzai Pipeline is one of six slides on a complex known as the Banzai Waterslides, the tallest structure among 10 water attractions in the park. Topped by jaunty pink and blue flags, the tower's slides normally give riders a twisting, 15-second ride from the top to a 3-foot-deep pool at the bottom. One lifeguard is posted at the top of the slides and another at the bottom, and riders are allowed on the chute only one at a time.

Most of the slide that broke yesterday crashed to the earth with the youths, but a portion stayed attached, dangling from the main structure.

Park officials gave no estimate for how many people were at Waterworld yesterday, saying only that the crowds were not heavy. But kids from all over the Bay Area were there, including about



three dozen from Cleveland Elementary School in San Francisco.

Many of the Cleveland students had just stepped off the Banzai slide and, hearts still racing from the thrill, turned to look back up at the top when it started collapsing.

Nancy Gonzalez, 10, heard the loud crack of the breaking chute and whipped around to see what happened. "I saw people injured. This woman had a bone sticking out," she said. "I ran to Ms. Eberhardt and I told her, 'The ride broke!' I was scared."

Waterworld's parent firm, Premier Parks of Oklahoma City, is a national amusement company that also owns a Waterworld slide park in Sacramento. Earlier this year, it took over management of the financially troubled Marine World Africa/USA for the city of Vallejo.

Chronicle staff writers Henry K. Lee, Glen Martin, Bill Wallace and Nanette Asimov contributed to this report.

Napa teens shoulder blame in tragedy

As officials dodge responsibility in slide collapse, kids speak up to admit mistake

By Ray Delgado, Annie Nakao
and Sandra Ann Harris
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

As Waterworld USA and officials from Concord launched investigations into the fatal collapse of a water slide that killed one teenager and injured 32 others, officials on all sides of the event frantically tried to shrug off blame for the accident.

The teenagers from Napa High School who rushed the slide for one last ride before leaving a graduation picnic Monday were the only ones who accepted responsibility



Quimby Ghilotti

for the prank that killed one of their classmates.

"It's a miracle I didn't break anything," said David Johanson, 18, of Napa.

"I'm very thankful. But I feel very bad about what happened. I'm just as responsible for what happened as anybody else."

Johanson was one of about 70 Napa High students who tried forming a chain down the Banzai water slide as part of a high school tradition to get the most people possible down a water slide at once. The prank quickly turned tragic as the slide collapsed near its top, sending 33 teenagers crashing 35 feet onto the cement and dirt below.

Killed in the accident was 17-year-old Quimby Ghilotti, who sustained a chest-crushing blow in the fall.

Park officials quickly shied the blame away from themselves, stating that the slide was not designed to hold the combined weight of the youths because they were supposed to go down one at a time.

"I don't want to get drawn into a discussion on why so many individuals got onto the ride," said Kieran Burke, chief executive officer of Premier Parks Inc., which owns

[See WATER, A-18]

Poor crowd control may have caused tragedy, experts say [A-18]

Owner of Waterworld has excellent safety record [B-1]

—+ WATER from A-1

Only Napa students accept any blame

Waterworld. "It's not the fault of the ride design or operation."

Crowd of teens

Accounts from at least two survivors, **Johanson** and Aaron **Sweeden**, 18, indicate that a crowd of teens did head for the slide.

"We saw a group of people assembling at the slide's base, and we knew we had to go over there to be part of it," said Johanson. "So you headed over there and got in whenever you could. The rest is history."

Sweeden said the practice of trying to crowd onto a slide was "sort of a tradition."

"We do this every year, not at this park," Sweeden said. "Last year, we did it at Manteca -- we had 78 people. We sort of clogged up the slide. We were trying to break the record this year."

During an afternoon press conference Tuesday, **Napa High School** officials refused to accept any blame for the accident and reacted defensively when questioned.

Principal Lars Christensen said he knew nothing about any record that seniors were trying to set at the park.

But **Robert Bimson**, the school's journalism teacher and a chaperon on the trip, said he had seen seniors pile on the slide in previous years, and didn't consider it unusual.

Concord city officials also took steps to avoid blame for lack of inspections since the park opened in 1995. The City Council decided Tuesday night to hire the San Francisco-based firm Degenkolb Engineers to carry out an independent investigation of the accident.



Robert Bimson

Independent investigation

"I want that done independent of the city and the park," said Mayor **Bill McManigal**. "I want a fresh set of eyes to look at it. I don't want anybody saying we're trying to cover up anything."

Waterworld USA and the city of Concord agree that the burden of inspection lies principally with the park.

The most recent thorough inspection occurred in March, according to Hue Eichelberger, executive vice president of Premier Parks. Daily inspections are carried out by park maintenance crews.

Gary Story, chief operating officer and president of Premier Parks, said Waterworld had hired a Cincinnati firm to conduct an investigation into the incident.

"This is a tragedy that we believe was unavoidable . . . a silly prank that went bad and unfortunately there were tragic consequences that the students paid," Story said.

Preliminary inspection of the

slide showed that a piece of metal, called a **flange** connection, failed under the tremendous weight of the students, causing the slide to break free and collapse, he said.

Attendants tried

Story defended the attendants who reportedly tried to stop the students from rushing the slide: "That attendant didn't do anything wrong. That attendant tried to the best of her ability (to get the students to stop)."

Johanson recalled the lifeguard's blowing her whistle furiously as he and others jumped onto the slide. "I just remember the whistle blowing repeatedly," he said.

Most of the injured sustained broken bones and cuts and bruises, but only one **17-year-old** was listed in critical condition late Tuesday night. Fifteen other **Napa High** students remained hospitalized Tuesday, some with gaping wounds and broken bones.

Heidi Barnes, a spokeswoman for Brookside Hospital in San Pablo and Doctors Hospital in Pinole, said parents of the injured students had asked doctors to allow friends to visit them in the intensive care unit — to help lift their spirits.

In the meantime, most of the students who took part in the prank have been reliving the nightmare, or what they remember of it.

'I remember falling'

"Right as I got on and slid into the next person, it went — buckled," Johanson said. "I remember falling. It was real quick, like bang-bang. It was pretty scary. It must have knocked me out because I don't remember hitting the ground. I woke up lying on the ground."

Sweeden heard a cracking noise. He too lost consciousness and woke up on the ground.

Both suffered minor injuries — Sweeden scrapes and a possible concussion and Johanson bruises.

Bimson, the journalism teacher, said he had seen about seven or eight faculty members and an equal number of students rush to the scene to administer first aid.

In one case, he saw a student holding a blood vessel closed with his fingers.

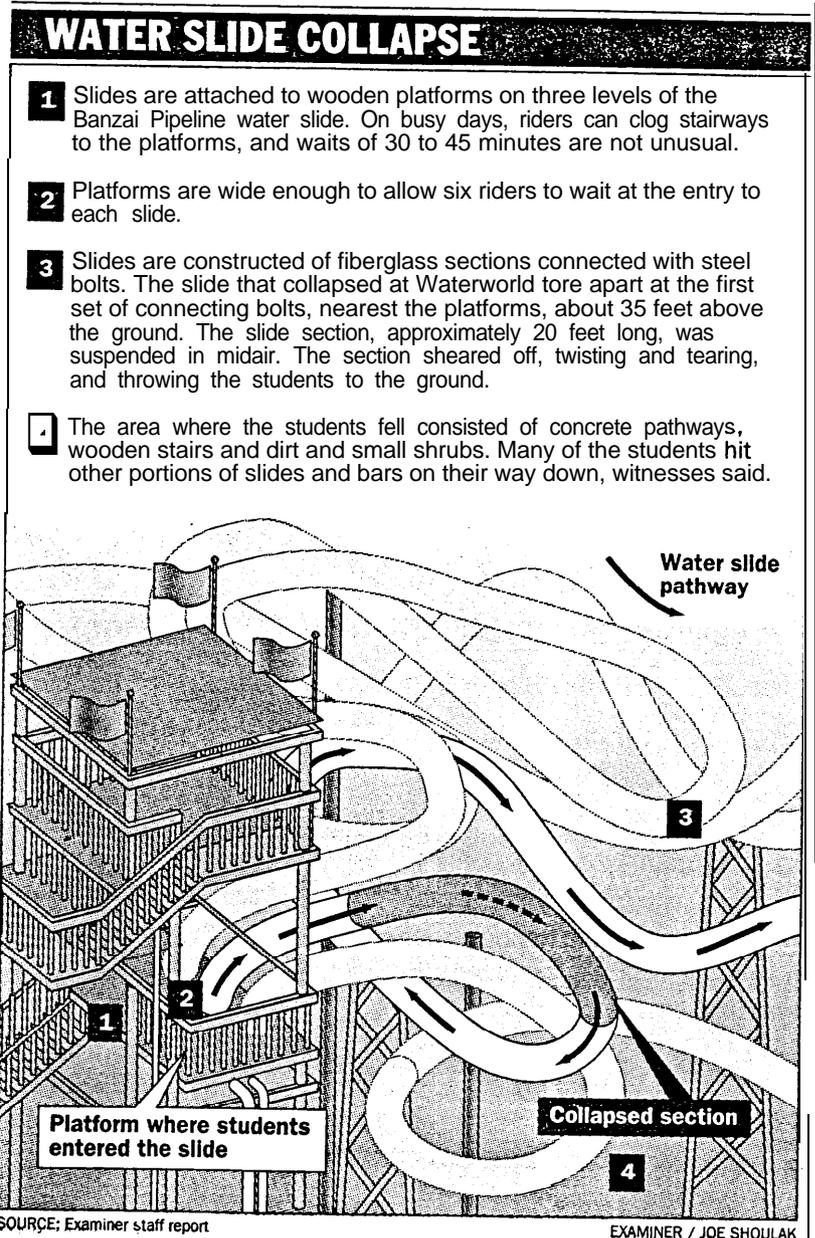
"To see the way everything came together in this tragedy has to be the bright spot," Bimson said.

Sweeden said he was uncertain about who was to blame.

"I couldn't tell you at this time; we may have been part of it — because we went up there and did that," he said. "But I don't know how those slides are made and what they're built to hold, or if the lifeguards should have stopped us.

"But there is that question that you went up there and somebody died"

Ray Delgado and Annie Nakao are *Examiner* reporters; Sandra Ann Harris is an *Examiner* correspondent. Kathleen Sullivan and Julie Chao of *The Examiner* staff and *Examiner* correspondent Eve Mitchell also contributed to this report.



Park officials doubt equipment failed

Poor crowd control may be to blame for slide collapse

By Scott Winokur
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

A lapse in crowd control by management and staff at Concord's Waterworld — allowing too many high-energy teens into too small a space at one time — may have led to Monday's fatal accident rather than a failure of the park's steel-and-fiberglass equipment, amusement-park industry sources said.

"All indications are the slide was safe," Geoff Chutter, president of the equipment manufacturer — Whitewater West of Richmond, B.C., said Tuesday.

"We've had two engineers fly out to investigate. They're not finished yet, but there doesn't appear to have been a failure with the slide and supports. We've never had a failure in 17 years."

Chutter acknowledged that engineers haven't yet determined "what the weights and numbers are" for the load-bearing points along the slide, which collapsed when an excited crowd of Napa High School seniors, celebrating graduation, stormed the slide Monday afternoon.

He said it was too soon to determine if the sudden intrusion of many bodies into a relatively small space caused the collapse.

But John Hunsucker of National Aquatics Safety, who inspects water slides for Paramount and Six Flags amusement parks in the United States and Canada, believes

the weight was clearly a key factor in the accident.

Concern about weight limits

"Water slides are like anything else," Hunsucker said. "They have an intended usage. Think about an elevator. Suppose you increased its capacity by a factor of 30. The best-designed elevator shouldn't be able to take that load."

"The only way I know of you could have prevented that accident is to not have that slide."

Other Bay Area water-park officials — concerned about the risk posed by too much weight on water slides — stressed the importance of crowd control.

"You allow one person at a time and space them 5 to 20 seconds apart, and you have an attendant at the top," said Mike Brown, president of Oakwood Lake Resort, home of the 250,000-visitor Manteca Water Slides.

"I don't think you can blame the material," Brown added. "What can happen when you have big groups of people is you get a bunch of kids who ignore what the guard tells them and ride down together. They overwhelm the attendant, who may be doing his best."

Cynthia Funnell, spokeswoman for the Bay Area's largest water park, Raging Waters, said safety procedures at the 23-acre Santa Clara site are stated clearly and followed closely.

Signs are posted and tape-recorded messages are continually played, she said, warning visitors that only one person may go down at a time.

"If guests are suspected of breaking the rules or attempting to break them," Funnell said, life-

guards obtain assistance from security guards. "We do not tolerate misconduct of any kind."

She said she knew of no instances in which Raging Waters visitors had gone down in groups. Maximum carrying capacity on the Raging Waters slide is 2,500 pounds per 20 linear feet, said Funnell, a weight likely surpassed by a crush of 30 teens,

'A silly prank'

The president of Waterworld's parent company — Premier Parks of Oklahoma City, Okla., which owns other large amusement and theme parks nationwide and runs Marine World-Africa USA in Vallejo — toured the damaged slide Tuesday.

Gary Story said the company had hired its own investigator, a firm in Cincinnati.

He claimed 60 to 70 students rushed the slide before the accident and said the proximate cause was the students' combined excessive weight breaking the fiberglass chute away from its steel supports. There are supports every 10 to 20 feet of fiberglass.

"This was not an engineering problem. This was an abuse of the ride," Story said, "If 50 people tried to kick in your front door, you would have a hard time doing anything about it."

According to Story, the slide was staffed by two guards at the top, two at the bottom and one supervisor.

"The guards' statement is that they (the students) were being told, 'Stop! Stop! One at a time!'" Story said.

He said guards called for security, but assistance arrived too late,

David Garrett, vice president of Haas-Wilkerson Insurance in Shawnee Mission, Kan., an insurer of similar amusement parks, said that, aside from analyzing the condition of the water park's structures, the configuration of its stairways and platforms and the slip-and-fall hazards of its four pools, post-accident analysis would likely focus on "management attitude, employee training and documentation of employee training."

"In a situation like this, it's easy to say after the fact that loss of control was what happened here," Garrett said. "You have to have enough people to handle the crowd."

In Sacramento, home to another Waterworld, business was brisk Tuesday, despite news of the deadly Bay Area accident the day before.

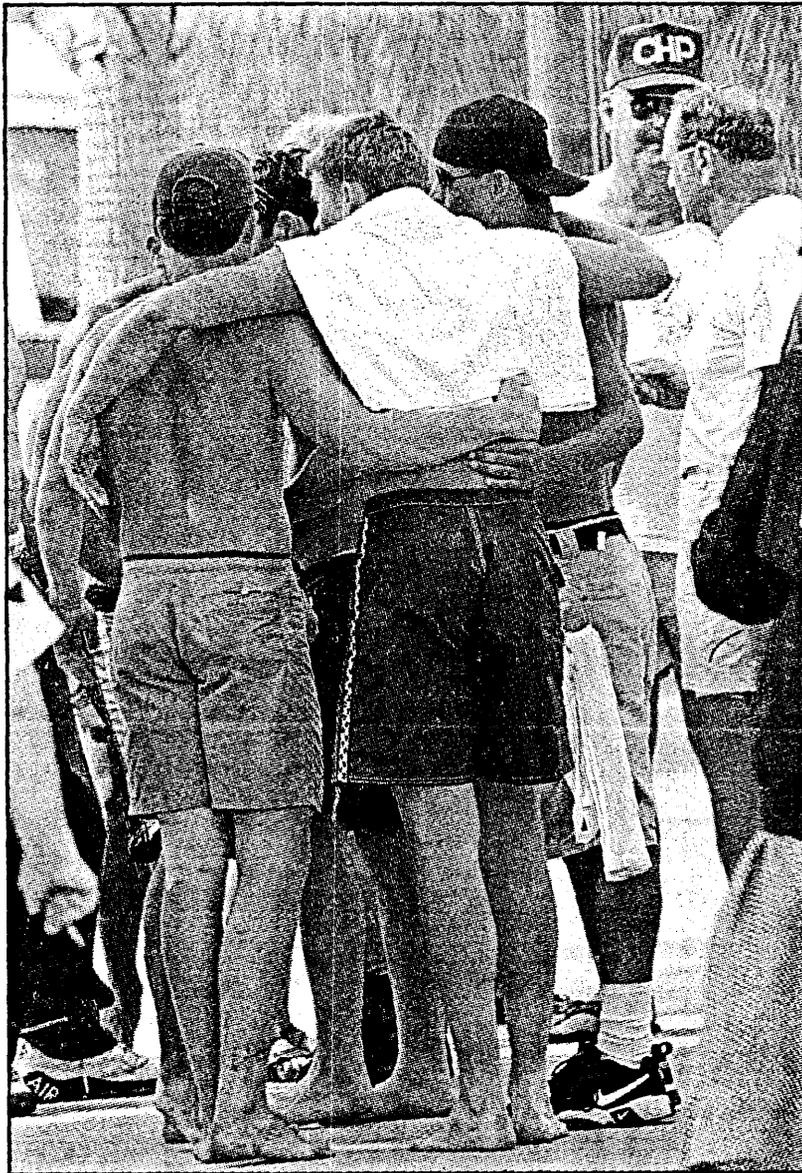
"Sure, it made us a little more concerned," said Sue Bancroft, a teacher at New Life Christian School supervising 120 sixth-graders. "But I think we only had one student who canceled."

Security was tight, but parents and teachers said it was no tighter than usual. The flow of riders at the Sacramento park was controlled both at the bottom of the long stairway leading to the upper concrete platform of the slide, and at the upper platform where the entrances to the slides are located.

The number of visitors allowed to start up the stairs was tightly controlled.

Steve Capps and Venise Wagner of The Examiner staff and Examiner correspondents Sandra Harris and Eve Mitchell contributed to this report.

STUNNED STUDENTS



OAKLAND TRIBUNE/RON RIESTERER VIA AP

Uninjured **Napa High School** students console each other *Monday afternoon* at **Waterworld USA** park in Concord after **Banzai Pipeline** water slide collapsed, killing one student and injuring 32.

'It looked like a battle scene'

Napa classmates saw their friends plummet 3 stories from water slide

By **Donna Horowitz**
SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

NAPA — Brett Brumley had one of the most dramatic stories to tell about the collapse of the slide at Waterworld in Concord. But he was too choked up to talk about it Monday night at Napa High School, where a friend put a comforting arm around his shoulders,

"He was at the top of the slide when it started to fall," said his mother, Lori Brumley, who had come to pick up her son.

She said her son had been able to jump off the slide from a height

of three stories when he realized it was giving way under the weight of all the other students, and escape virtually unscathed.

He watched in horror as his girlfriend crashed to the cement below with the rest of the students.

He rushed to her side immediately.

"He woke her up," his mother said, "She went into convulsions. He kept her awake and held her up. He was afraid she would die."

Brett Brumley, whose eyes were red from crying, couldn't even think of going to the hospital to check whether he had any injuries Monday, Lori Brumley said. Instead, she was driving him to Doctors Hospital in Pinole to visit his girlfriend, who she said had suffered a broken back and foot and other injuries in the accident.

Students and parents gathered at the school Monday to comfort

and support each other and wait for four bus loads of returning seniors — one of the buses now only partially occupied. Of the school's 450 seniors, 204 had gone to the senior-class activity at Waterworld.

"I watched it (the accident); it was just an idea to see how many could get on (the slide)," said Elizabeth Webb, a 17-year-old senior,

"One minute, everybody was having fun. The next minute, it broke . . ." she said. "They didn't mean for it to happen."

Christine Cronin, a 17-year-old junior, said she had heard the students were trying to form "a train" and break a record from the year before. In previous years, they had gone to the Manteca Waterslides, but they changed their destination this year because of storm damage to equipment at that park.

Justin Aaron, an English teach-

er and girls' soccer coach who accompanied the seniors on the class trip, said the injured students were "the best and brightest."

He said a group of seniors on the ground had rushed to help their fallen classmates. He also ran over to help, asking the injured students what they wanted for graduation presents to keep their minds off their pain,

Within minutes, he said, helicopters landed, and paramedics in eight ambulances drove up to the injured students.

"It looked like a battle scene," Aaron said.

Napa School District Superintendent David Brown said the mood at the school was "very somber" as the four bus loads of students arrived home. "There are a lot of tears flowing."

The school had 30 to 35 counselors and psychologists on hand to help the students and their parents Monday, he said.

Napa Plagued by Year of Misfortune

Incidents involve area students

By *George Snyder*
and *Peter Fimrite*
Chronicle Staff Writers

Despite its physical beauty and agricultural wealth, the Napa area has seen more than its share of misfortune during the past year, and the area's high school students have figured in several of the incidents.

The worst was yesterday's sudden collapse of a water slide filled with celebrating Napa High School seniors that killed one teenager and injured scores of others. The disaster in Concord — only 10 days before the students were to have graduated — left many Napa residents in stunned disbelief.

"This has been a horrible, horrible tragedy," said Napa High School District Superintendent David Brown as he watched tearful parents greet busloads of shaken students returning from what was to have been a celebration of their forthcoming graduation.

Parents whose teenagers were on yesterday's outing said they were frustrated by the confusion that attended the water slide accident — and dismayed at how difficult it was to obtain information about their sons and daughters.

"On the first report (about the collapse), nobody was supposed to have been hurt," said Scott Wright, whose 18-year-old daughter, Cheryl, went on the trip. "On

the second report, it was supposed to be six people. Then later they said 19 were injured."

Wright said he had heard nothing about the accident until somebody asked him if his daughter had been on the trip. "I asked why," he said, "and they told me the water slide had collapsed. I thought I was going to collapse."

When the students returned last night, a crowd of ashen-faced parents was waiting. Many of the reunions were tearful, and the teenagers were stricken by what they had seen.

Jaime Gallegos, 18, said the slide was crammed with kids who were trying to see how many students they could pile on the structure. "It wouldn't hold," Gallegos said. "There was an awful crack. It was an awful thing to see."

Veda McDonald, 17, said: "I almost feel guilty that I made it back OK."

Officials noted that the water slide accident was only the most recent in a series of depressing incidents that marred the past academic year. In September, Napa student Shane Schaben, 15, died when the car in which he was a

passenger ran a stop sign and crashed into another vehicle.

A month earlier, a student from nearby Vintage High School lost control of his vehicle and crashed into the car of Napa Mayor Ed Solomon, crushing Solomon's leg and sending him to the intensive care unit of a local hospital where he died a few days later.

Superintendent Brown said a number of teachers at the school had died during the past year, adding to the gloomy atmosphere. "It's just been very difficult," Brown said. "It has not been an average year."

Lars Christensen, the high school's principal, acknowledged that the community had seen its share of misfortune in the past year, and added, "We've never had anything the magnitude of this at this school."

Napa Teen in Park Mishap

A Napa teenager was involved in a mishap last night and became stranded, in Yosemite National Park near Curry Village, according to KGO-TV. A Yosemite spokesman confirmed that rescuers were attempting to reach the teenager late last night but could not provide further details.

FARLEY *Phil Frank*



Teen dies, 32 hurt as senior year finale turns tragic

By Ray Delgado
and Larry D. Hatfield
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

NAPA — Dazed Napa High School students, stunned by the death of one of their most popular classmates and the injury of 32 other seniors in an amusement park accident, tried to cope Tuesday with a school year that started in death and ended in death.

“We’re very concerned about the welfare of our students,” said school Principal Lars Christensen at a press conference as 25 grief counselors stood by to help students distraught from the collapse Monday afternoon of a Concord water slide that killed Quimby Ghilotti, a 17-year-old senior, and, injured, 32 of her classmates.

Christensen and others noted that the school year started with the deaths of two students in separate auto accidents.

And at 3:30 p.m. Monday, 10 days before graduation, it closed in

[See *WATER*, A-141

◆ WATER from A-f

Celebration turns into catastrophe

tragedy when the Banzai Pipeline slide at Waterworld USA broke under the weight of reveling students, dropping dozens of kids through the air to the ground.

"The mood is sorrow, one of shock," Christensen said of the **2,100-student** campus. But the June 12 graduation ceremonies will go ahead as scheduled, he said.

The U.S. Coast Guard was trying to locate the dead girl's mother, who apparently was on a boat in the San Juan Islands between Seattle and Victoria, B.C.

The dead girl's father, from whom the mother is separated, has been notified of her death.

In the wake of the tragedy, questions were being raised about the safety of such amusement park attractions but officials vigorously defended the industry's safety record.

"The whole industry is shocked by something like this," said Al Turner, president of the Kansas City, **Kan.-based** World Waterpark Association. He said there were only two drownings and no deaths by other means among the 58 million visitors to 103 major water parks in the United States last year.

whom he described as a wonderful young woman who was a good student and popular with classmates — said, "It looks like the rest will pull through. But she left us way too soon."

"She was just like the most darling person on the face of the earth," said Natalie Pettek, a 17-year-old junior who was sitting in her car with classmate Sarah Courtney, 16, Tuesday morning, crying.

Seventeen-year-old Ian Monat said he had been lounging in the pool next to the water slide tower when he saw the tragedy unfold.

'It just buckled'

"A bunch of kids wanted to go down together," Monat said. "The weight capacity was too much for the slide to hold, and it just buckled under pressure."

Napa High teacher and chaperon Justin Aaron was below the slide when he heard it start to give way.

"It was slow motion, hearing the echoing through the park and horrible splintering sound," said Aaron. "It was so loud. You're watching it, but it doesn't sink in."

Park officials said the slide had simply given way under the onslaught of students who'd ignored the lifeguard's order to go down the slide one at a time.

Overloaded?

He said Monday's accident occurred because the partying students ignored safety regulations, and pleas from a lifeguard, and overloaded the slide.

Christensen and Concord officials said alcohol played no role in the mishap.

An independent inspector and Concord officials were to examine the slide. The park was closed indefinitely.

Christensen said he did not know of any competition by succeeding senior classes to put more and more students onto a single slide, but said it was not a time for blame-laying anyway.

Asked at the press conference whose fault it was, he said, "I will say placing blame on anybody's part is unconscionable."

He added: "I would assume when we have students go to a theme park, it would be safe."

The tragedy occurred when the soon-to-be graduates were making one last trip down the Banzai Pipeline before boarding the bus home.

Everything came crashing down as the slide collapsed, sending the terrified youths tumbling 40 feet to the hard ground below.

At least 21 of the students remained hospitalized Tuesday morning. Eleven were treated and released. Christensen, while mourning the death of Ghilotti —

Rick McCurley, vice president of Oklahoma City-based Premier Parks, which owns Waterworld, said there had been an announcement over the park loudspeaker at 3:30 p.m. for the **Napa** students to return to their buses for the trip home.

"This incident apparently caused the student to rush for life guard on the Banzai Pipeline slide in an attempt to get one last ride in for the afternoon," he said. "The total weight of the 30-odd students on the slide caused the slide to break and the students to fall."

Officials said 204 of the 450 seniors graduating June 12 were at the park Monday. All those who were not injured were accounted for and went home where they were met by parents and grief counselors.

"When you attend a function like this — the last thing you think about when you go on a senior picnic is tragedy," the principal said outside Mount Diablo Medical Center Monday evening, where the most critically injured students were being treated.

'Absolute shock'

He described the mood of the students and parents as "shock, I think absolute shock."

Christensen described Ghilotti as "very vivacious, very spirited, an outstanding young lady who was very active in the leadership class,"



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Witnesses said many of the students had been holding hands as they went down the slide and then tried desperately to hold onto the slide as it ripped apart near the top of the landing. Most of the teenagers were injured as they fell onto the cement and dirt below, creating a pool of blood that turned the water red.

Park employees with medical training and patrons quickly assisted the youths until ambulances arrived. Most of the injured teenagers had broken bones, cuts and heavy bruises.

Thirty-two students were taken to 10 Bay Area hospitals; five of them by helicopter.

McCurley said the incident was the first of its kind at Waterworld since it opened in 1995 and that the park would remain closed while an investigation was conducted.

The 2-year-old park is a sister to Sacramento's Waterworld at Cal Expo. Both are owned by Premier Parks, which is one of the world's largest theme park companies.

The park attracted 325,000 visitors last year.

In 1993, an 11-year-old Daly City boy died two days after being found unconscious at the bottom of a wading pool at the Sacramento Waterworld.

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"At the end of the day, they overwhelm the attendant, and they all go down in a chain," he said. "The guards may be doing their best to prevent that from happening . . . but unfortunately it's a fairly common occurrence."

The 17-year-old witness Monat said lifeguards at Waterworld had been pretty lenient on him after the few times that he went down water slides together with his buddies.

"They just give you a warning," Monat said. "I guess this might be a good example for bigger punishments."

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission last year estimated that 100 people died and 7,500 were injured on amusement park rides in 1995, the latest figures available.

Jim Herron Zamora and Erin McCormick of The Examiner staff, correspondents Sandra Ann Harris and Donna Horowitz and Examiner news services contributed to this story

INJURED STUDENTS

Napa High School officials released the names of the injured students Tuesday morning.

Treated at Brookside Hospital in San Pablo, were:

Rachel Sijgers and Manuela Tavarres.

At Mount Diablo Medical Center in Concord:

Alynda Franco, Natalie le Blanc, Camilla Lucas.

At Kaiser Permanente, Walnut Creek:

Adam Jobe, David Johanson, Mark Thibault, Steven Warner, Chris Yarborough

At John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek:

John Barker, Jeff Gibbons, Joseph Hall, Aaron Sweeden, Emily Pslentis.

At Doctors Hospital in Pinole:

Andrew Bosch, Lindsay Klein, Danielle Ockenfels, Jamie Talbott.

At Kaiser Permanente in Oakland:

Mark Howrath, Jason White.

At Eden Medical Center in Castro Valley:

Mikal Johnson, Justin Timm.

At San Ramon Regional Medical Center:

Kathryn Doughty, Charlotte Florent, Lisa Redmond, Judy Wong.

At Stanford Medical Center In Palo Alto:

Kevin Miller.

At Contra Costa County Hospital in Martinez:

Marla Johnson, Melessa Parker, Maureen Rodgers, Gerad Stempk.

McCurley said the Concord slide was in good condition and praised the lifeguard for immediately alerting park staff 'when the students started going down the slide in a group.

However, he said park officials would be reviewing their safety procedures to try to prevent another accident.

Inspection policy

Water slides and other fixed amusement rides are not required to undergo regular state inspections, according to Mark Carleson, deputy chief of the state's Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

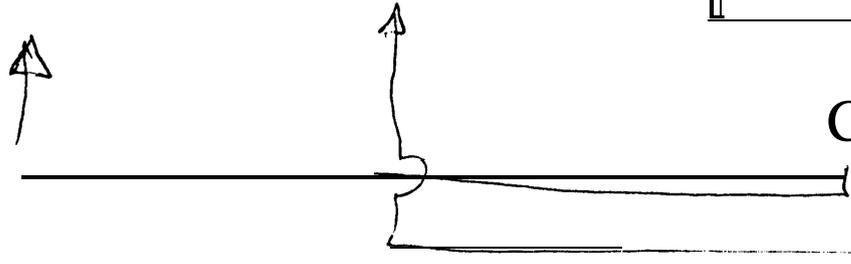
Carleson said a division of the state's elevator inspection unit monitors safety of portable carnival rides and ski lifts. That unit, however, does not inspect fixed amusement rides, such as the ones at Disneyland or Waterworld.

Waterpark association chief Turner said there were 103 water parks in the U.S. with attendance of 100,000 or more a year and 850 smaller parks.

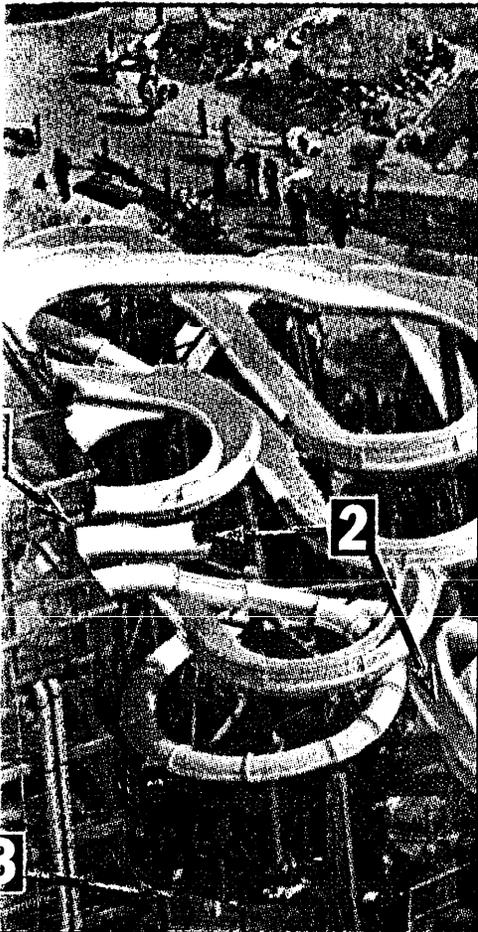
He said that besides local regulations, the trade group and its members have a rigid safety inspection program, tough lifeguard training and safe equipment.

"A number of states have enacted legislation which call for rider responsibility," he said. "In other words, the patron is charged with acting in a responsible manner and obeying the rules and regulations of the facility, which apparently didn't happen in this case."

Mike Brown, president of Oakwood Lake Resort, the home of the Manteca Waterslides, said groups of kids often tried to ride down the slides together.



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ROB PEPPING/CONTRA COSTA TIMES VIA AP



EDDIE LEDESMA/CONTRA COSTA TIMES VIA AP

Anguished students, above return to Napa High School after the accident at Concord's Waterworld USA.

- HOW IT HAPPENED:**
- 1.** A portion of the slide, left, juts from a platform where Napa seniors rushed past a lifeguard to take a final ride during a class party.
 - 2.** The slide broke off and collapsed.
 - 3.** The students were thrown to the ground three stories below.

Waterworld monitors itself, Concord says

City doesn't check safety on park's 'self-inspected' rides

By Scott Winokur and Larry D. Hatfield
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Waterworld USA assumed all responsibility for safety "self-inspection" after its Concord water slide was built, Concord city spokeswoman Emily Hopkins said Tuesday.

Hopkins said the city inspected the park while it was under construction in 1995, but then stopped monitoring it for safety.

Waterworld declined comment Tuesday morning, but a statement was expected later in the day. Re-

porters were restricted to the parking lot of the park, which shares land with the city's sewage plant.

The city's chief building inspector, Neil Reins, was interviewing private inspectors Tuesday to find a safety specialist qualified to inspect the site, Hopkins said.

Bill Reeds, who was instrumental in negotiating the park's lease as Concord director of community development, said he wasn't sure who was liable for the accident.

"I think that we're going to evaluate that over the next few weeks," Reeds said.

Sacramento lawyer **Irving Hallen**, who successfully sued Waterworld on behalf of the family of a Daly City boy who drowned in May 1993 at its Sacramento park.

[See SAFETY, A-14]

A-14 Tuesday, June 3, 1997 ★★

SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

◆ SAFETY from A-1

Waterworld USA 'self inspected'

said Tuesday that "they take safety very seriously."

Hallen said a confidentiality agreement with the park prevented him from extensive comment, but he would say that, "As events occurred they really beefed up security. They respond to perceived problems."

Asked if security was inadequate before the Daly City boy's drowning, **Hallen** said: "That's the part I can't talk about."

Assistant Fire Chief Ray **Miraglia** of the Contra Costa Consolidat-

ed Fire District said his department inspected the park only with respect to escape routes in the event of fire.

"The only involvement we have is egress and it's been fine there. We've had no problems, to my knowledge," **Miraglia** said.

Al Turner, president of the Kansas City, Kansas-based World Waterpark Association, said the parks generally have excellent safety records.

"Management in general is very concerned about safety in our industry. We do an excellent job policing ourselves," **Turner** said.

"Secondly, we have very high standards for lifeguard training. And, thirdly, our manufacturers

and suppliers are making very safe products."

Turner said building, fire and health codes pertaining to the parks vary in each state. There is no federal oversight, he said.

He said some states have passed laws imposing some measure of safety responsibility on park visitors. It was not immediately known if California had such a law,

"In other words," **Turner** said, "the patron is charged with acting in a responsible manner and obeying the rules and regulations — which apparently didn't happen in this case."

Spokesmen for the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Department of

Consumer Affairs did not immediately return calls Tuesday.

A receptionist at Cal-OSHA, headquartered in San Francisco, said a top official of the agency was at Waterworld inspecting the site Tuesday morning.

Reeds, the Concord community development director, said the water park was a financial boon for the city, generating \$200,000 to \$300,000 in taxes a year.

"It was a very important project. The (Concord city) council at that time and certainly now has a real emphasis on providing activities for youth," **Reeds** said.

"I think the main concern is why did this happen and how can we and Waterworld ensure that the park is safe for the public?"

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San Francisco Examiner

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Wednesday afternoon

JUNE 4, 1997

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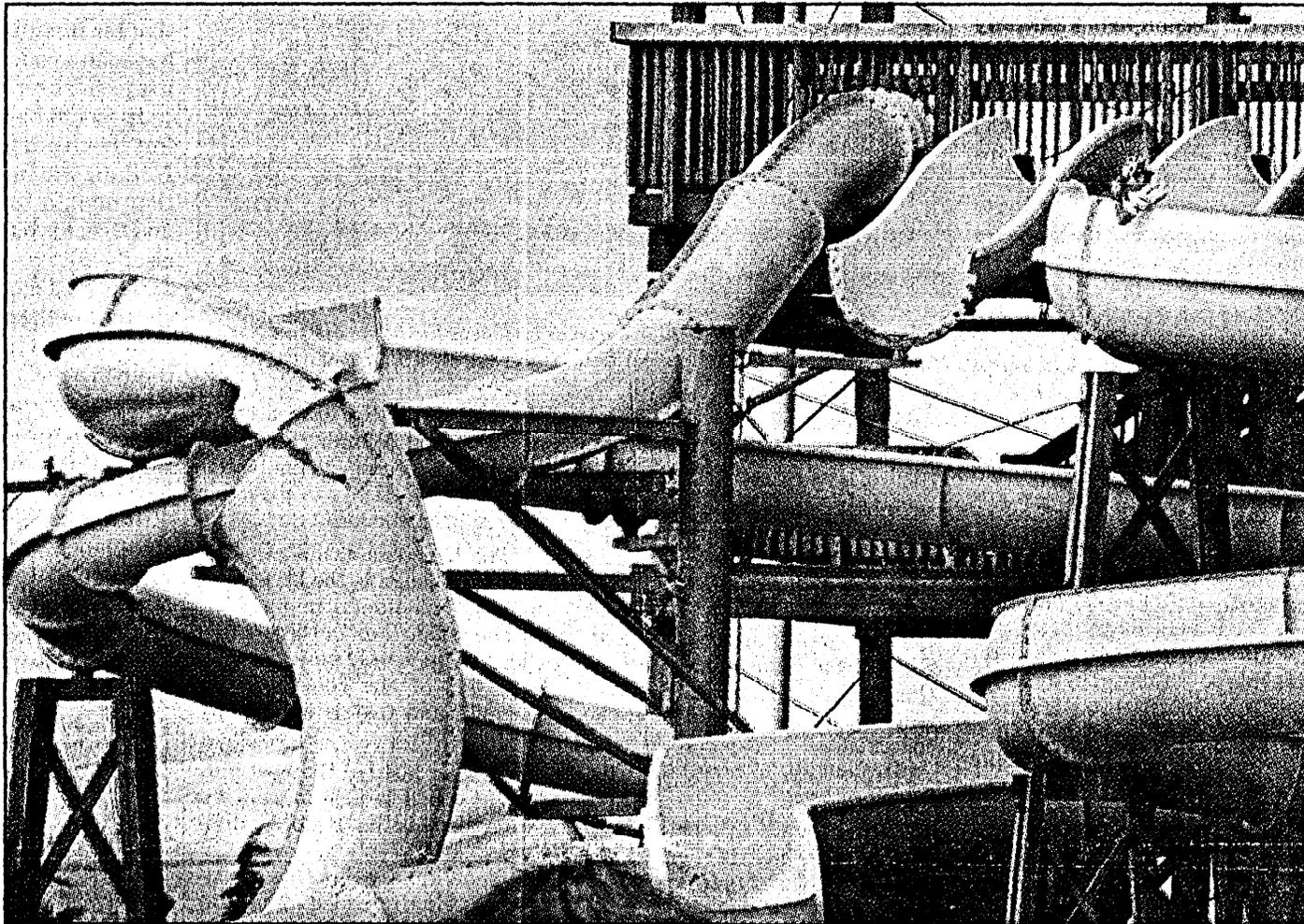
TWENTY-FIVE CENTS
NEWSSTAND PRICE

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WATER PARK CATASTROPHE STUNS SCHOOL

Sorrow, shock in Napa

A twisted, torn portion of the Banzai Pipeline water slide at Concord's Waterworld USA Amusement Park collapsed on Monday, injuring 32 students and killing one. Witnesses said the students ignored a guard's warning to go down one at a time and instead tried to go as a group, overloading the ride.



EXAMINER/PAUL CHINN

970603CWE5001

Water park firm stresses safety

Waterworld owner Premier Parks has 'outstanding track record,' analyst says

By Louis Trager
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

Premier Parks Inc., owner of Waterworld USA in Concord, has a reputation for aggressively buying up small theme parks around the country, but also a strong safety record, analysts said Tuesday.

"Nothing like this has ever occurred at one of their parks," said entertainment analyst Jill Krutick

of Smith Barney in New York, referring to the water slide accident Monday that killed one teenager and injured 32 others.

Safety is a paramount concern at Premier, observers said. "It's a maniacal focus of the company," said Barry Rothberg, retail and leisure analyst at Furman Selz in New York. "They've just had a tremendous and outstanding track record. They have safety procedures that are far in excess of any municipal guidelines and safety guidelines."

Premier's insurance covers the company for up to \$25 million in liability for an episode such as the Concord tragedy, with a \$50,000 deductible, Krutick said. She add-

ed that the policy should cover any payments the company might have to make because of the accident.

Publicity about the event should do little or no spillover damage to the company's parks other than Waterworld USA, analysts said, except possibly the sister park in Sacramento.

The variation in park names reduces any damage that publicity about Monday's accident might do at other Premier parks, Krutick said.

Whatever harm is done to the reputation and business of Waterworld USA itself should be short-term and limited by any de-termination that the park was not at fault in the tragedy, analysts

said.

Founded in 1971, Premier owns 11 regional attractions and runs a 12th, Marine World Africa USA in Vallejo, that brought in about 8.3 million people total last year. The company has purchased five of the parks since September, and Krutick expects the rapid pace of purchases to continue.

The company bought Waterworld USA in Concord and another in Sacramento for \$17.25 million last October. The parks had 600,000 in annual attendance and generated \$10 million in revenue in 1996, the company said.

When Premier took over Ma-

[See PREMIER, B-3]

◆ PREMIER from B-1

Waterworld owner emphasizes safety

rine World this year, it gave layoff notices to all Marine World employees. It ended up rehiring a large majority of the workers.

The company's strategies paid off in 1996 with revenues of \$93.4 million and a profit of \$1.8 million, the highest in years. The stock price has almost doubled from \$19 since the company went public in May 1996.

"They're very proactive, seeing an opportunity to gain (market) share in a very, very fragmented business," said Rothberg. "But they're also very passionate about the business."

Premier's size gives the company advantages over smaller competitors in everything from purchasing to sponsorships, analysts said. It gives Premier the financial clout to upgrade properties and draw more business, Rothberg noted.

Unlike other chains of regional parks, such as Six Flags, the company has left most of its attractions with different names.

Because Premier isn't constrained by a single, national brand or a larger corporate owner, the company has more flexibility than competitors in acquiring promising properties and tailoring them to their individual markets, Krutick said.

The company, based in Oklahoma City, is "taking advantage of a consolidating mom-and-pop business by capitalizing on their strong management, providing a face lift and expanding and upgrading parks," Krutick said.

Zachary Coile of The Examiner staff contributed to this report.

Deadly Stunt Planned, Claim Says

Victim's father accuses Napa High teachers, chaperones

By Charlie Goodyear
Chronicle East Bay Bureau

Teachers at Napa High School knew students were planning to "clog" a slide at a Concord water park last month and failed to prevent a deadly accident, according to a claim filed yesterday against the Napa school district.

The wrongful death claim for unspecified damages was filed by Larry Ghilotti, whose 18-year-old daughter, Quimby Ghilotti, was killed after the "Banzai Pipeline" collapsed June 2 at Waterworld USA during a senior class trip.

Ghilotti's attorney, Richard

Critchlow, accused Napa High teachers and chaperones of encouraging students to overcrowd the slide.

"The most damning information we have is that (Napa High assistant principal) Roger Ashlock stated to students on the bus that they should wait until the end of the day to 'clog' so 'you won't get kicked out of the park and you'll be able to walk across the stage at graduation,'" Critchlow said yesterday.

The collapse happened after 33 students crowded onto the slide and a section of it snapped, spilling the teens more than 30 feet to the ground below.

Students have acknowledged that senior classes at Napa High have traditionally tried to set records for the number of people crammed onto a slide at Bay Area

water parks.

David Brown, the superintendent of the Napa Valley Unified School District, declined to comment on Ghilotti's claim,

Napa High offices closed June 30 for the summer vacation and Ashlock could not be reached for comment.

The district will have 45 days to consider the claim. If school officials reject it, Ghilotti can then sue the district in court.

"He believes that whoever is responsible for the death of his daughter . . . will only come out through litigation," Critchlow said. "All parties involved must be held responsible' including the school. They bear a sizable portion of the responsibility."

Ghilotti also has filed a claim against the city of Concord, alleg-



Quimby Ghilotti, 18, was killed when a water slide collapsed

ing it failed to protect riders from a "defective, dangerous and broken water slide" at Waterworld.

Concord owns the land the water park is built on and is Waterworld's landlord.

Everyone wants to know why

Regulation lax
on water slides
at California
theme parks .

By JAMES BRUGGERS,
PSYCHE PASCUAL
and LARRY SPEARS
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Three separate investigations began Tuesday following the collapse of a Concord water park slide Monday that killed one teen-ager and injured 32 others.

City officials hired an independent engineering firm, Waterworld USA brought in its own safety consultant and Napa High School sought its own answers to how a chaperoned senior picnic had turned deadly.

Among the questions: Did the students' in art attempt to fill a slide with a record number of thrill-seekers' cause the collapse?

Was there some sort of design defect?

Was the collapse the result of a combination of factors?

"Be assured, we will get to the bottom of this," said Concord Mayor Bill McManigal. "Everything will be in the open."

Meanwhile, government and industry officials acknowledged water



DAN HONDA/TIMES

CROSS SECTION of broken Banzai slide shows how it separated Monday afternoon,

theme parks get very little independent scrutiny.

The city conducted thousands of inspections when Waterworld USA was under construction two years ago, but had not checked the rides since then, Concord officials said. Such inspections were left to the park itself, said Bill Reeds, community development director.

The city's consultant, Degenkolb Engineers of San Francisco, will at-



SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

QUIMBY GHILOTTI, 18, died in a water slide accident Monday.

See **WHY**, Back Page

Why

FROM PAGE A1

tempt to determine how the slide failed and whether the combined weight of the students exceeded that for which the slide was designed. Reedssaid.

Fussner Associates of Cincinnati, Ohio, hired by Waterworld, will look into safety issues raised by the accident, company officials said.

A day of wet fun under the sun for graduating Napa High School students ended when they brushed past a lifeguard at the top of the slide called the Banzai, police said.

A group numbering between 30 and 60, according to various accounts, was trying to go down the slippery chute in a chain, but the fiberglass slide broke apart, sending them crashing on mud, dirt and concrete 30 to 40 feet below.

Bolts rip through flange

The failure occurred at a joint between two sections of the U-shaped chute, said Gary Short, president of the firm that owns Waterworld, Premier Parks. Bolts ripped through a flange that was used to attach the two sections.

Short said the 20-foot section of slide was never intended to hold so many people. The tube was supposed to carry just one at a time.

Whitewater West Industries of British Columbia, the slide's manufacturer, declined to be interviewed on the Banzai's design and weight-bearing capacity.

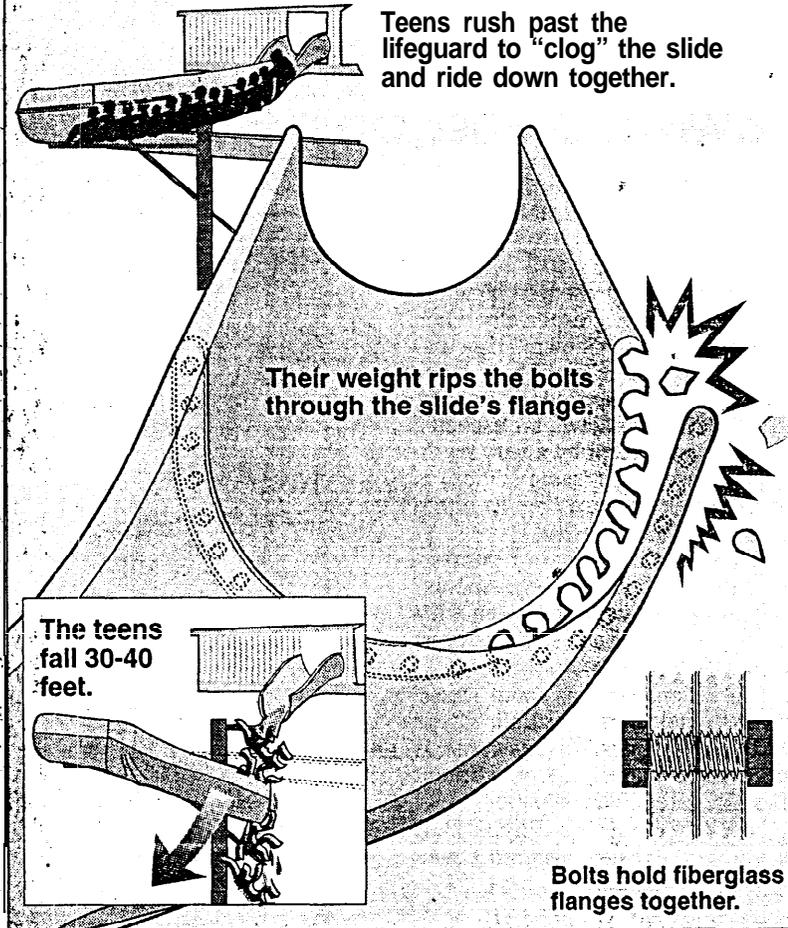
One water-slide expert said he never had heard of joints failing at their bolts.

Sections are typically held together with far more bolts than are necessary, said Fred Langford, a New Jersey architect who has designed hundreds of similar facilities around the world over the past 18 years, including Raging Waters in San Jose.

Water slides are normally built

Water slide accident

How the Banzai broke Monday, killing one and injuring 32.



LEE MCCORMACK/TIMES

strong enough to handle a chain of many people on them at once, even though the practice is normally discouraged, Langford said. In California, they are designed even stronger so they can ride out earthquakes, he added.

On Tuesday, Premier Parks reiterated its belief that the slide was safe and pledged continued cooperation with Concord officials.

Rides are inspected regularly by park maintenance workers, said

Hugh Eichleberger, vice president of the company. Its insurance carrier, American Specialty of Los Angeles, inspected the park rides for several days in March, he said.

Lifeguards are trained and certified, company officials said.

17 still in hospitals

Seventeen Napa High students remained hospitalized Tuesday with broken and dislocated bones, punctured lungs, cuts and bruises. Four

were listed in serious condition — two students who had been critical improved to serious Tuesday afternoon.

Killed was Quimby Ghilotti, an 18-year-old graduating senior who had planned to attend a state college next year and was celebrating at Waterworld with some 200 of her classmates.

Napa High School officials said students were trying to break an unofficial school record for the number of people to ride down the slide at one time. They said they were not sure how much teachers and chaperones knew about the stunt before it occurred, but said they would review the circumstances.

However, Principal Lars Christensen said it was the responsibility of Waterworld and not school chaperones to monitor the slides.

McManigal called for a new state law requiring that water parks be regularly inspected by government agents.

California called lax

California is considered by consumer advocates and industry experts to be one of the more lax states when it comes to theme park inspections and regulations.

Cal-OSHA only investigates accidents involving employees, and Waterworld has never had a complaint lodged against it, said Troy Swauger, a spokesman for the Department of Industrial Relations in San Francisco. The state does not investigate accidents involving visitors or inspect rides for safety.

"It's a private industry that regulates itself," Swauger said.

In the U.S., 25 states have some sort of inspection program, according to Wayne Pierce, a Maryland attorney who represents the theme park industry on legislative issues. Some states, such as Pennsylvania, require fixed amusement park rides to be inspected at least once a month. California has no such regulation.

Even if there were regulations in

"Consumers trust when they go to amusement parks that they're not taking their life in their hands when they go down a ride."

— Elisa Odabashian
policy analyst with Consumers Union, which publishes Consumer Reports

place, there is no way to regulate against patrons who misbehave, industry representatives said.

"Hey, you've got to follow the rules," said Dave Bruschi, executive director of the Kansas-based World Water-parks Association.

Of 58 million people who attended parks last year, only two drowned, he said.

Consumer advocates want more protections.

"Consumers trust when they go

to amusement parks that they're not taking their life in their hands when they go down a ride," said Elisa Odabashian, a policy analyst with Consumers Union, which publishes Consumer Reports.

"It seems like there's a big gap in ensuring safety to consumers. This accident underscores that fact."

Staff writers Michael Sears, Joan Morris and Draeger Martinez contributed to this story.

CALIFORNIA LOTTERY

Super Lotto

Saturday, May 31

1 4 15 31 48 51

	Winners	Prize (each)
6-of-6	1	\$14 million
5-of-6	157	\$1,834
4-of-6	8,997	\$83
3-of-6	179,203	\$5

■ 6-OF-6 TICKETS SOLD IN:
Indio

■ LAST 12 DRAWINGS:

May 28	4	14	10	21	29	46
May 24	2	8	10	16	22	50
May 21	6	12	23	25	29	49
May 17	2	12	14	17	30	51
May 14	15	23	27	43	46	49
May 10	8	25	26	32	40	46
May 7	9	32	46	48	51	
May 3	14	15	36	40	41	42
April 30	3	11	20	30	40	44
April 26	2	9	16	36	41	49
April 23	15	25	31	34	42	49
April 19	20	22	25	42	46	50

Fantasy

Tuesday, June 3

19 27 34

Category	Pool to be shared
5-of-5	24% of pool
4-of-5	28% of pool
3-of-5	36% of pool
2-of-5	Free ticket

Daily 3

Tuesday, June 3

3 4 8

Decco

Tuesday, June 3

7♥ 9♣ 2♦ 3♠

Lottery district office:
820 Dubuque Ave.
South San Francisco
Phone: 1-415-275-2200
Web site: <http://www.calottery.com>

Teens often ignore rules against jamming slides':

By ABBY COLLINS-SEARS
and DRAEGER MARTINEZ
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Napa High's seniors weren't the first to break the rules, blow past a lifeguard and dog-pile into a water slide.

Contra Costa teens said Tuesday they often consciously ignore the rules at water parks and form a human chain with friends on their descent through the spiraling chutes. They call it fun. They also call it clogging.

They never suspected it could have fatal consequences.

Some water park managers said Tuesday they've seen students try to jam the rides. But others said they had not heard of the practice.

Nevertheless, park managers and teens say if a mass of kids have it in their head to clog, they're going to do it.

"I've tried it. I've done it. People do it all the time," said Ryan Dom, 17, of Pleasant Hill. "I just never thought a slide could collapse. It's just common sense not to have that many people go down at once. It's being stupid, but sometimes things get crazy when you're having fun."

Students suggested parks hire more and bigger lifeguards to con-

trol unruly park users.

Park managers said they already post warnings on the rides, station trained lifeguards at the top and bottom of slides and toss out anyone who repeatedly disobeys.

None of four parks reached Tuesday said they plan to change any procedures in light of the Concord accident. All keep a fixed number of lifeguards on hand — from six to 150, depending on the park's size.

Manteca Water Slides Park hosts high school groups every year. Park president Mike Brown said clogging has happened often in the park's 23-year history.

"If you get a group that decides to do that, it can be difficult to control," Brown said. "It's not an uncommon problem, though it's been less of a problem in the last four to five years since we've taken preventative actions against it."

Brown said his contracts with student groups spell out that rule-breaking is not tolerated.

"There have been instances where we have banned a school from returning because their kids broke the rules and the teachers did not have them under control," he said.

'Clogging' tradition turns deadly

By JOAN MORRIS
and ROBERT BURNSON

TIMES STAFF WRITERS

They had a tradition to uphold. Each year for several years, the graduating class at Napa High School had spent its senior trip at the Manteca Waterslides. And there, the seniors devised a sort of new version on an old theme.

Instead of stuffing phone booths or packing Volkswagens with bodies, these kids "clogged" water slides, stacking as many kids as they could on the top of the slide, then letting go and flying down as a group.

Last year, high school legend has it, the 1996 seniors had managed 60 kids.

The class of 1997 was going for 70.

INSIDE

At Napa High, an agony" that only teens can feel. **Page A16**

At least one water park cracks down on "clogging," but teens say it's still fun to do. **Page A16**

The 18-year-old girl who died was described as a careful, cautious and responsible student. **Page A16**

Or whatever they could manage, said David Johanson, 18, a senior at Napa and a varsity football player. No one had an exact goal.

They just wanted to beat the class of '96, he said.

They arrived at Waterworld USA

in Concord shortly after the park opened Monday morning. The students had chosen Waterworld over Manteca partly because the 3-year-old Concord park had some new thrill-a-second rides.

Throughout the day, the teens swooshed down one slide after another. They played volleyball and had a buffet lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers. And they talked of the great clog they wanted to pull off.

Clogging seemed like a harmless, fun thing to do. A few people would get on the slide, drop down a little way, then use their feet to brace themselves and keep from sliding down. Then more and more people would pile on until they could hold

See CLOGGING, Page A15

youths, with many preparing to get on.

Johanson estimated that 20 or more classmates jumped in before him. Then it was his turn.

"I just got on, bumped into someone, and someone bumped into me," he said. "It didn't seem like two seconds before the slide broke and we started falling."

An ear-ringing, splintering sound startled the crowd at the water park. Then the slide fell, tossing its occupants to the ground as it twisted and shattered.

They fell three to four stories, hitting wooden beams and trees before landing in the mud and on concrete and other bodies.

The water ran red with blood, and panic filled the air. One student was dead and 32 were injured.

Franks found himself on the ground, uninjured, watching his friends fall. He rushed to help the most seriously injured, earning hero status.

Johanson heard the crack, saw the bodies in front of him fall. But he doesn't remember hitting the ground. The next thing he knew, he was lying in the mud, listening to the sounds of helicopters and ambulances.

"It's no secret we had a goal to jam the slide," said Johanson, who was recovering at home from the concussion and multiple cuts and bruises he received. "It wasn't the most intelligent thing to do. But we were going to do it, and we did it, and we paid the price."

Staff writers John Simerman, Tony Mercado, Mike Hytha and Tom Lochner, and Associated Press, contributed to this story.

Clogging

FROM PAGE A1

CLOGGING

no more, and then —whoosh — they would be gone.

At a few minutes after 3 p.m., a group of the students — many of them among the most popular in the class — congregated at the base of the big Banzai slide, one of four spaghetti-like slides that dropped riders 40 feet in a matter of seconds.

"We kinda figured that it would be time to go pretty soon," Johanson said.

When the announcement came over a loudspeaker that Waterworld would be closing in 45 minutes and that the Napa students should head to their buses, teens rushed up the long flights of stairs to the Banzai.

About 30 or 40 seniors quickly reached the top, said Johanson, who was near the end of the line.

It was "probably closer to running than walking," he said.

A lifeguard at the top of the ramp whistled for them to stop. But they ignored the order, jumping one by one into the chute and starting down it.

The students in front grabbed the edges of the slide and stopped themselves from going down, creating a logjam, he said. The rest of the students piled on behind them.

Barry Franks had been one of the first cloggers on the slide, but the pressure of the growing pile behind him caused him to slip. He descended the slide with a few others who couldn't hang on. Above him, the clog had grown to perhaps 40

Park-Hired Expert Blames Kids for Slide Collapse

Napa High principal calls statements 'shameful'

By Erin Hallissy

Chronicle East Bay Bureau

An engineer hired by Waterworld USA said yesterday that excessive weight caused a water slide loaded with teenagers to rip apart at a seam and collapse, while Napa High School's principal called the company's continuing efforts to blame partying seniors for Monday's deadly accident "shameful."

Owners of the Concord amusement park said they hope to reopen early next week, even though engineers, police and insurance company officials are still poring over the wreckage of the Fiberglas Banzai Pipeline slide.

Concord Mayor Bill McManigal said the city — the park's landlord — will decide when the park reopens, not Waterworld's owner, Premier Parks. Concord, which had already hired an engineering firm to examine the broken slide, brought in a second independent consultant yesterday to assess park management practices, maintenance and inspection records and to give a detailed physical review of Waterworld.

"It's not going to reopen until it's safe," McManigal said.

Two members of the state Assembly, Democrats Tom Torlakson of Martinez and Valerie Brown of Kenwood, will announce today a plan for hearings on whether the

state should oversee stationary amusement parks. Parks now are allowed to inspect themselves.

Emotions flared yesterday over the students' role in the collapse, which killed Napa High senior Quimby Ghilotti and injured 32 of her classmates who were trying to set a school "record" for most people on a water slide.

Kieran Burke, chief executive officer of Premier Parks, tried to soft-pedal the company's earlier statements that students pulling a "silly prank" caused the tragedy.

Burke said at a press conference that he "understood the incredible pain" of the students. But he did not apologize for the statements made Tuesday by company president Gary Story, who said the students' actions constituted "an abuse of the ride."

The industrial engineer hired by Waterworld to assess the slide, John Hunsucker of the University of Houston, backed earlier accounts by company officials that the weight of 30 seniors jammed into one section of the slide created "tension and torsion" that was too much for the Fiberglas.

Hunsucker said slides are designed to hold more than their stated capacity — one rider at a time for the Banzai Pipeline. But he said no engineer designs any structure,

SLIDE: Page A24 Col. 1

SLIDE: Engineer Blames Kids

From Page A21

whether it's a cruise ship, elevator or water slide, to hold more than 30 times its stated occupancy load.

"It was teenage behavior carried to the extreme," Hunsucker said. He said that from what park officials had told him, the lifeguard at the top of the slide would have had no chance to stop the charging students, and that if she had tried to stand in their way, she would have been thrown off the tower.

Napa High School Principal Lars Christensen reacted angrily to that statement and others made by Premier Parks officials this week.

"I feel their behavior is **unconscionable**," Christensen said. "I certainly don't expect a corporation to admit guilt. But they could have said it's inappropriate for us to comment until we know more.

"These comments are shameful and disgraceful," Christensen said.

Christensen said he believed the slide should have handled the students' weight.

"Of the 33 who were injured, more **than** half of them were females weighing under 120

pounds," Christensen said. "I didn't send a rugby team up that slide. If there was such a danger (of collapse), I should have been informed, and I never would have approved the trip."

Some students have said no one warned them not to go down the slide en masse. But Concord police Lieutenant Jim Jennings said witnesses, including some of the **students**, told officers after the **accident** that the lifeguard was trying to stop them.

"Overpowered — that was a phrase that was used (by witnesses)," Jennings said.

Napa High will hold Thursday's graduation ceremony as scheduled. Christensen said seniors



Quimby Ghilotti was due to graduate next Thursday

planned to carry pink balloons and release them when Ghilotti's name is called during the diploma hand-out.

Anyone wishing to make contributions in Ghilotti's name may send them to Child or Parent Emergency (COPE), P.O. Box 815, Napa, CA 94559. Donations may also be sent to the Quimby Rae Ghilotti Scholarship Fund, WestAmerica Bank, 8470 Washington St., Yountville, CA 94599.

WATERWORLD SLIDE COLLAPSE

Teen killed at park remembered

By MICHAEL SEARS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Honor roll student Quimby Ghilotti used to warn her mother and friends to be careful when they went into San Francisco for day trips.

"She'd scold us if we drove into the city with our doors unlocked," said Michele Drore, a close family friend who works with Ghilotti's mother.

"That's the kind of girl she was. She was very cautious. She not only looked out for herself, she looked out after the ones she loved. She was very careful, cautious and responsible."

Ghilotti, 18, died in a high-spirited prank Monday when about 60 Napa High School students attempted to descend a water slide in one large group at Concord's Water-world USA. The weight of the students caused the slide to buckle and snap, sending 33 students plummet-



SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

FRIENDS, fellow students and teachers said Quimby Ghilotti, shown in these pages from her yearbook, was "nice to everyone."

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as model student

ing 30 to 40 feet.

"It seems so out of character for her," Drove said, holding back tears as she reminisced about her friend at the teen's home in a quiet, tree-lined Napa neighborhood.

"We're still not sure what happened — why she was caught up in that. But it's so unusual that she'd be the one to die, when I can't even imagine her doing that."

Drove spent the day preparing for the return of Ghilotti's mother — cleaning the house, cooking, and comforting her father, Larry Ghilotti, who drove to Napa on Monday from his home in Sonoma. Ghilotti, an only child, lived in Napa with her mother, Victoria Nelson.

Nelson flew home to the Bay Area on Tuesday. She had been on a private boat near Seattle when she learned of her daughter's death.

"They were very close. She was

not the typical daughter. She was more at ease with her mother than many teen-agers are with their parents. She was very grown-up," Drove said.

When Ghilotti turned 18 in April, she spent the day with her mom. The two shared a quiet birthday, Drove said.

By all accounts, Ghilotti was a model student and daughter. She made the honor roll four years in a row and planned to attend Sonoma State in the fall, said Principal Lars Christensen of Napa High School.

Ghilotti excelled in English and planned to study psychology and get her teaching credential, Christensen said.

"She was a smart kid — intelligent, cooperative, good-looking — just a great kid," said her first-period teacher, Norm Kincaid.

But it was outside the classroom

that Quimby shone, her friends said.

"People are saying that she was very popular at school," said Aaron Dahlgren, 17, a junior. "I guess you would expect everyone to say that now. But she really was popular. And it was because she was so nice to everyone."

She enjoyed singing in the school choir. She also volunteered as a mentor for a program designed to help children deal with family problems. And she participated in the mock trial club.

"She had a very unique talent — she listened to people," Christensen said. "When she asked you, 'How are you doing?' she meant it."

On Tuesday, many of Ghilotti's friends missed her kind counseling skills.

"On the one day we could have used her most, she wasn't here with us," Christensen said.

San Jose, CA
(Santa Clara Co.)
Mercury News
(Cir. D. 282,000)
(Cir. S. 342,000)

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JUN 21 1997

Allen's P. C. B Est. 1888

'After Wad, -advocates seek park-ride rules

Group wants end
to self-policing by
fixed-site parks

From Mercury News Staff Wire Services

CONCORD — More than two weeks after a water slide collapsed and killed a high school student, legislators, parents of teens involved in the disaster and consumer advocates called for stepped-up state regulation to prevent a repeat tragedy.

"It's not OK with me that we're sending our kids into an environment that may or may not be safe," said Assemblywoman Valerie Brown, D-Kenwood.

Brown and Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch, convened the hearing following the Waterworld USA slide collapse earlier this month that killed a teenager and injured 32 others.

Park officials maintain the Napa high school students rushed past a lifeguard to try to get as many people as possible onto the slide, a practice known as clogging or chaining. An expert hired by Waterworld parent Premier Parks said the slide tore apart under the unusual strain.

But parents and others have questioned whether there were sufficient safeguards in place for an attraction that is wildly popular with teenagers.

"They had no idea they were riding a disaster," Mike Lucas, father of one of the injured students, told the legislators.

The state now inspects traveling amusement rides annually, but permanent installations such

exempt from such visits. News accounts from the time the inspection regulations were passed, in 1968, indicate big amusement parks lobbied for the exemption.

Torlakson and Brown are considering charging a state agency with regularly inspecting the parks.

Industry officials did not speak at the hearing, but they did submit written testimony saying their accident statistics are very low, with one to two fatalities a year on fixed-site amusement rides for the past 23 years, according to the Consumer Products Safety Commission.

However, Albert Limberg, a retired investigator for the U.S. Consumer Products Safety mission, urged the lawmakers to draft stiffer standards. He called allowing the industry to self-police, "somewhat like sending a fox to guard a henhouse."

Waterworld reopened last week under an agreement reached with the city of Concord, in which the city will make annual inspections and draft an ordinance making it a misdemeanor to disobey ride rules.

Meanwhile, the company that built the water slides in 1995 was fined \$20,600 by the state for not having a contractor's license.

The problem was that White water West Industries of British Columbia did not understand California licensing codes, said company president Geoffrey Chutter. Chutter said the company thought it could start the job while applying for a license.

After being fined, they found a

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(Cir. S. 92,289)

JUN 21 1997

Allen's P. C. B Est. 1888

Lawmakers question water park regulation

Michelle Locke
Associated Press

3569

CONCORD — Fallout from a fatal water slide accident continued Friday with a public hearing whether stepped up state regulation could prevent a repeat tragedy.

It's not OK with me that we're sending our kids into an environment that may or may not be safe," said Assemblywoman Valerie Brown, D-Kenwood.

Brown and Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, D-Antioch, convened the hearing following the Waterworld USA slide collapse earlier this month that killed a teenager and injured 32 others.

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But parents and others have questioned whether there were sufficient safeguards in place for an attraction that is wildly popular with teen-agers.

"They had no idea they were having a disaster," Mike Lucas,

father of one of the injured students, told the legislators.

The state now inspects traveling amusement rides annually, but permanent installations such as Waterworld in Concord are exempt from such visits. News accounts from the time that the inspection regulations were passed, 1968, indicate big amusement parks lobbied for the exemption. The parks are subject to building, electrical and health codes.

Torlakson and Brown are considering charging a state agency with regularly inspecting the parks.

Some at the hearing defended the industry.

Ray Rieger, president of the National Association of Amusement Ride Safety Officials, said amusement parks have a good record of policing themselves.

"This industry is an extremely safe industry," he said.

Industry officials did not speak at the hearing, but they did submit written testimony saying their accident statistics are very low, with one or two fatalities a year on fixed-site amusement rides for the past 23 years, ac-

ording to the Consumer Products Safety Commission. Amusement park attendance is nearly 300 million a year, according to industry data.

However, Albert Limberg, a retired investigator for the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, urged the lawmakers to draft stiffer standards.

He called allowing the industry to self-police, "somewhat like sending a fox to guard a henhouse."

One student injured in the accident attended the hearing in her wheelchair, but did not speak.

Waterworld reopened last week under an agreement reached with the city of Concord in which the city will make annual inspections and draft an ordinance making it a misdemeanor to disobey ride rules. Waterworld spokesman Jeff Jouett said the park is increasing security and will install queue lines with turnstiles to hamper ride-rushers.

The city leases the land the park is built on to Waterworld for 5 percent of its gross revenue.

Some have questioned the city's role in Waterworld's safety.

The father of the dead teen has filed a claim against Concord and says more legal action is planned.

The Contra Costa Times reported Friday that the company that built the water slides in 1995 was fined \$20,600 by the state for not having a contractor's license.

The problem was that White-water West Industries of British Columbia did not understand California licensing codes, said company President Geoffrey Chutter.

Chutter said the company thought it could start the job while applying for a license.

After being fined, they found a licensed subcontractor to finish the work.

Jouett noted that Premier did not buy Waterworld until 1996. He said at that time there was a "top-to-bottom" inspection that showed the park was safe. Inspections since the accident have shown the same thing, he said.

Brown and Torlakson concluded the hearing by saying they will keep investigating.

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JUN 14 1997

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Water 3569 park to reopen today

Engineers hired by victim's dad say slide flawed

By LARRY SPEARS
and DRAEGER MARTINEZ
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

CONCORD — Water-world USA will reopen this morning, twelve days after a Napa teen died and 32 others were injured in the collapse of the Banzai water slide.

A water park executive and Mayor Bill McManigal announced Friday afternoon that a half-dozen consultants had investigated the park and found it safe.

"We're probably the most inspected park in the industry," said Kieran Burke, chairman of Premier Parks, the national chain that owns Waterworld. "And now, therefore, we are one of the safest."

The Banzai broke apart as 30 or more teens crowded onto its upper section to set a record for "clogging" a slide. Degenkolb Engineers, hired by the city, concluded that the slide failed because it was overloaded with a weight of 6,000 pounds, nearly four times more than it was designed to hold.

The report says one of the bolts holding together two of the flume sections pulled through the fiberglass and the sections broke apart as other bolts gave way.

But Richard Critchlow, a lawyer for Larry Ghilotti, father of the dead teen, said earlier Friday that his investigators reported that the slide was "flimsily made, constructed and designed."

"Some kind of safety factor should have been ready for this foreseeable level of over-loading," said Tom Boster, lead engineer of the inspection.

Critchlow filed a claim against Concord in the death of 18-year-old Quimby Ghilotti this week and said he intended to start legal action as well against the park and slide manufacturers and designers.

But McManigal said "a lot could change" in the investigation by Ghilotti's team as it gathered more information. He and Burke said the city and park owners' reports came from the highest qualified consultants they could find, and that they had been at the park for several days over the last two weeks.

See PARK, Back Page

Park

FROM PAGE A1

The reports by the city and park did not address the role of a Banzai lifeguard in the accident.

"We're not here to assess blame," Burke said.

But Boster, the lead investigator for Ghilotti, said Friday that he found it "entirely inappropriate" that a single lifeguard was managing the four flumes atop the tower.

McManigal said the city and park had agreed to share costs of a yearly Waterworld inspection as thorough as the ones that followed the accident. The report will be public, he said.

City staff, he said, will draft an ordinance to bolster Waterworld rules and regulate horseplay at the

park.

Concord, which leases land to Waterworld for 5 percent of its gross revenue, considers the deal a "private-public partnership."

When the park opens today, the Banzai will be closed. Burke said Waterworld will ask the manufacturer to strengthen the slide when it is rebuilt, which could take weeks or months.

He said the park will take several other steps along the lines recommended by Con-Serv Associates, an Iowa safety consultant hired by the company. Waterworld will install turnstiles and rails to control lines at the rides and will add warning signs and contact visiting groups before they arrive to tell them about park rules, Burke said.

So far, there has been no independent report on the accident, but the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission has sent investigators.

Although the agency has no legal jurisdiction over permanent amusement parks, it sometimes investigates problems at them that could carry over to fairs and carnivals, which it does regulate, said spokesman Ken Giles.

In the days since the accident, questions have arisen about how carefully the city inspected Waterworld as it was constructed in late 1994 and the winter of 1995.

Building Department documents and interviews with public officials appear to show that Concord's review process in the Waterworld project differs from that of other cities — including San Jose, San Francisco and Vallejo, where the Marine World Africa USA park will soon be adding rides. Each of those cities requires the ride designs be approved by its engineers.

But at Waterworld, only engineering documents for bathrooms,

food court or other common buildings were stamped "approved" by city officials. The critical maze of trestles, supports and slides that whisk patrons down on a spray of water were **only** stamped "reviewed."

Jack Aiello, the city's building official when the project was built, said a "reviewed" stamp might be used if an inspector has concerns about a project and does not want to approve it, although the practice is rare.

Nick Theophanous, a former city structural engineer, wrote notes on the Waterworld plans he said raised concerns about the stability of some slides. He said Community Development Director Bill Reeds told him to have Waterworld agree to accept legal responsibility and then to approve the project. Reeds said this week he had no recollection of this.

Withholding approval and using a "reviewed" stamp, said Aiello, might have been the city's way of re-

solving the issue.

Degenkolb Engineers staff hired by the city said in a prepared statement last week that Theophanous' notes pertained to the overall stability of the slide and not to the fiberglass flume that broke apart June 2.

Reeds and Concord City Manager Ed James said Friday that neither knew anything about the practice of using "reviewed" and "approved" stamps.

"It sounds like some kind of code between inspectors and some of the staff," James said, suggesting that the "review" stamp might have had the blessing of Aiello himself.

Aiello said Thursday that in light of the legal actions, he would not comment. But James said Aiello was absent from the city much of the time during construction on trips to study building departments in other cities. City inspector supervisor Ken Baker, who acted as building official in

Aiello's absence, could not be reached Friday for comment on what he knew about the two-tiered approval process.

Reeds and James said they opposed the use of "reviewed" stamps and would ban the practice.

James denied a statement by Aiello that the city had applied political pressure to push the project through quickly so it could open in early summer 1995. Aiello, he said, left the city last year, unable to accept a new emphasis on helping residents and developers bring their projects up to code rather than simply citing them.

"This doesn't mean not enforcing the code," James said.

Aiello went to San Carlos as its building official.

Staff writer Ethan Rarich and San Jose Mercury News contributed to this story.

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Legal

FROM PAGE A1

tentially be found liable if it failed to properly oversee the park construction, Carroll said. The school district could also be found liable if its supervision of the students was negligent.

On the positive side, lawsuits could provide just compensation to victims, or force necessary changes in water-slide design or operation, legal experts said. On the other hand, if the park was not negligent, lawsuits may only send the wrong message to kids: You don't have to take responsibility for your behavior, an ethics scholar said.

Waterworld and its associates are the most logical targets for suits.

Even though the ride is recommended for one person at a time, the park must know that there will be times when more children will push their way onto it, attorneys said.

"Products are designed to be used by people, and a degree of foreseeable misuse has to be calculated," said John Diamond, who teaches tort law at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco.

Or, if the slide could not withstand the weight of so many students, better crowd control measures should have been taken, Diamond said.

Some of the teenagers said they

were trying to break a record for the number of kids riding simultaneously down the slide. Witnesses disagree about whether a lifeguard tried to stop the teens. The fiberglass slide broke, throwing riders 30 to 40 feet down to the concrete below.

An engineer hired by Premier Parks, which owns Waterworld, said Thursday he did not know how much weight the slide was designed to support, but estimated it could hold at least 10 people without problems.

But some observers question whether lawsuits by the victims against the amusement park operator or the water slide manufacturer could prevent the teens from learning valuable lessons about personal responsibility.

"From what I have seen, it would appear that the youngsters who got on the slide did so in violation of the rules and ignored the warning of the lifeguard," said Karen Lebacqz, professor of theological ethics at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley.

"I think the young people involved have a painful but important opportunity to learn that actions have consequences, and that we have to take responsibility for the consequences of our actions," Lebacqz said.

If the park was not negligent, "I would hope that the parents would not turn to litigation," she added. "I think to do that is to give the wrong message to the young people."

A state legislator's effort to make amusement park visitors more responsible for their actions was largely unsuccessful last year.

Working with Knott's Berry Farm in Orange County, Assemblyman Curt Pringle, R-Garden Grove, tried to pass a "Rider Safety Act."

The act was vastly narrowed down by the time Gov. Pete Wilson signed it, but initial versions of the bill would have drafted rules of conduct for amusement park patrons.

Trial attorneys accused Pringle and the bill's supporters of being interested only in limiting their liability.

But Tom Mehrmann, vice president of park operations for Knott's, said it was an effort to protect patrons. "We can only safeguard them so much against themselves, and then they have to take some responsibility," he said.

Federal statistics show that 102 people were killed on amusement park rides between 1973 and 1996, though those numbers did not include water parks.

A spokesman for Pringle quoted figures that showed riders were to blame in 75 percent of amusement park accidents that caused injuries.

But data provided by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission were not conclusive.

While the Waterworld accident is likely to prompt a flurry of lawsuits,

most of them are unlikely to go to trial, predicted law professor David I. Levine of Hastings. A park operator would not want to open itself to potentially damaging court discussions of safety procedures and equipment malfunctions, he said. It's much more likely that it will reach settlements with plaintiffs.

If any cases do go to trial, the jury could limit the plaintiffs' liability by deciding that a child was partly responsible.

For instance, if 50 percent of the blame was assigned to a victim of the accident, any award would be reduced by that much, legal authorities said.

Money is one thing. What may be more difficult to get from a suit is satisfaction, said George H. Stewart, a Berkeley psychiatrist who works with children.

"Often a lawsuit is a way of attempting to make up for some loss, some pain," Stewart said, "I don't know how effectively it does that. Certainly it does distract from the issue of the loss."

If Waterworld was not negligent, parents may be sending the wrong message to their children by suing, he said. But legal action may be difficult to resist.

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"If your kid is hurt, it's hard not to feel, 'I want a pound of flesh for this.'"

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Park Cds Slide Collapse 'Silly Prank'

Students say they weren't warned

**By Erin Hallissy
and Peter Fimrite**
Chronicle Staff Writers

The owner of a Concord amusement park blamed the fatal collapse of a water slide squarely on a group of boisterous high school seniors, but the students claimed no one had warned them they were doing anything wrong.

"It was a silly prank that went bad," Gary Story, chief executive officer and president of Premier Parks, said yesterday of the collapse of the Banzai Pipeline slide at Waterworld USA. An 1&-year-old woman was killed and 32 youths were injured.

"Unfortunately, there were tragic consequences that the students paid," Story said.

Waterworld officials said the slide became overloaded and collapsed Monday when at least 60 seniors on a graduation outing from

Napa High Mourns Loss of Caring Honors Student
SEE PAGE A13

Napa High School rushed onto it, ignoring a lifeguard's warnings to stop. Witnesses interviewed at the park gave a similar version of events.

"This was an abuse of the ride," Story said.

Students insisted they received no warning before piling onto the slide in an effort to top previous senior class "records" for students on a water slide.

"We didn't push the lady (lifeguard) out of the way or rush her," student body president Chris Snowden said at a press conference yesterday at the school. "She stood there, and we just walked up the stairs and onto the slide."

The slide's manufacturer, Whitewater West Industries Ltd., of Richmond, British Columbia,

SLIDE: Page A13 Col. 3

INSIDE

SPORTS

Shawn Estes hit a home run and earned his 8th win in the Giants' 9-1 victory over Florida. **Page B1**

BUSINESS

New technology was showcased at the telecom industry's largest annual trade show. **Page D1**

DATEBOOK

Patricia Holt reviews "The Bible Code," which says the Bible predicts the future. **Page E1**



**Food and Home
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is on Page D10**

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SLIDE

From Page 1

said its engineers had investigated and reached a preliminary conclusion that the slide was safe.

Concord officials said the park will be closed until independent experts can determine what caused the collapse, which sent the teenagers plunging 30 feet to the ground.

Quimby Ghilotti, 18, a senior bound for California State University at Sacramento next year, was killed. Fourteen students remained hospitalized yesterday.

The company said the park was in "impeccable condition" and that the slide that failed had been inspected by its manufacturer in May. But Concord regulators had not checked the slide since Waterworld opened in 1995 — which city officials said is normal for an amusement park.

Mayor Bill McManigal said he has asked Assemblyman Tom Torlakson, D-Martinez, to consider introducing legislation giving the state authority to make regular inspections of equipment at amusement parks.

McManigal said the city was hiring an outside structural firm to determine the cause of the accident.

Conflicting Accounts

Park officials said the lifeguard on the-Banzai Pipeline had blown her whistle in a futile attempt to keep the students from piling onto the slide. Other lifeguards and security guards came running but got there too late to stop the slide from collapsing, park officials said.

Story called the students' combined weight "far too much for a slide that was designed to hold a single rider at a time."

Snowden said the seniors had walked right past the lifeguard. The guard didn't blow a whistle or sound an alarm until, after the slide broke, he said.

Snowden and other students said it was school tradition for the senior class to pack as many students onto a water slide as possible. Last year, they said, at least as many climbed onto similar slides in Manteca without incident.

Napa High School Principal Lars Christensen said the school would investigate the accident, talking to the two administrators and eight teachers who acted as chaperones.

But, he added, "I stand by my students. I know they would do what they were told. We need to rely on the park to provide for their safety."

He said he had not heard of the tradition of packing water slides. "(But) we are not charged with monitoring the water slides," he said.

The open-air Fiberglas slide is similar to those at many of the 103 major water parks in the United States, said Al Turner, executive director of the World Waterworks Association of Lenexa, Kan.

"I've never heard of an incident in which anything like this happened," said Turner, who has been the industry group's executive director for 17 years.

Whitewater West President Geoff Chutter called the Banzai Pipeline "the bread-and-butter of the water slide industry. It goes back to the '70s."

Chutter said the slide, which Whitewater has been making for 17 years, is supposed to be used by one person at a time. He said he didn't know the slide's maximum load.

Chutter said the firm's engineers had examined the Concord slide, "and structurally there isn't anything that causes them to think it was anything but safe."

Premier's Story said 30 students had been jammed into a 20-foot section of the slide. Other students were lower on the pipeline at the time.

He said the slide was made up of sections fastened together with steel bolts. The accident occurred

when one Fiberglas piece sheared off at the seals between two sections, Story said.

Bill Reeds, community development director for Concord, was in charge of the Waterworld project when it was built in 1994 and 1995. He said city inspectors had performed thousands of inspections at the park while it was under construction and had issued 35 building permits, including one for the slide.

City inspectors have never taken a second look at the slide or at any of the park's other attractions. Such inspections are not required, Reeds said.

"The city does not inspect any buildings" on a continuing basis, Reeds said.

Self-Monitored Safety

Amusement parks such as Waterworld are responsible for their own safety, according to standard industry practice.

"It is common to self-inspect in the industry," said Hue Eichelberger, executive vice president of Premier Parks. He said employees, such as lifeguards, perform inspections as part of their duties.

Eichelberger said his company had purchased the park from FRE Inc. last year and had inspected it thoroughly before the deal, closed. "It was in impeccable condition," he said.

Eichelberger described employees of the park as "devastated." Some mourners left bouquets at the front gate yesterday.

At least 25 grief counselors, ministers and psychologists were available at Napa High School. Teachers and the principal also met with students to discuss the accident.

John Sykes, a 16-year-old junior at the school, said some students were expressing themselves by lighting fires in trash cans and spray-painting Ghilotti's name on walls.

"I think they should have called the day off," he said. "Kids aren't going to class."

Napa High Mourns Loss Of Caring Honors Student

By Peter Fimrite
Chronicle North Bay Bureau

More than ever, the grief-stricken students who knew **Quimby Ghilotti** need the kind of help she offered people every day.

The 1&year-old honors student, peer counselor and mentor at Napa High School was killed Monday when a water slide at a Concord amusement park collapsed, sending her and 32 others hurtling to the ground.

Her death devastated Ghilotti's classmates, friends and teachers. She was always there for people in times of stress, they said, and now is the worst time of all.

"It's tragic that on a day we need her the most, we're mourning her," said **Napa High** Principal Lars Christensen.

Ghilotti was a student assistant, peer mediator and student counselor who held down a 3.5 grade point average. She was on the honor roll all four years and planned to attend California State **University** at Sacramento in the fall to study psychology.

In her scholarship application, she wrote, "I love to help people. It would be a dream come true for me to make a career out of helping others."

Some of the students **who** rushed to Ghilotti's aid were overcome with emotion yesterday when they recounted the moments after the collapse.

Barry Franks, 18, was on the slide just past where it broke and was the first on the ground to help.

At a press conference yesterday, Franks trembled and tears streamed down his face as he recalled how he had tried to keep Ghilotti and another girl from los-



Quimby Ghilotti, who died in the collapse, was planning on attending Cal State Sacramento

ing consciousness.

"I just did what I did," Franks said. "Everything was going so fast."

Paramedics and teachers at the scene said Franks, a certified lifeguard, helped save the life of the other girl.

Jared Hosmer, 18, also was credited with saving lives. He was on top of the Banzai Pipeline platform when it broke. He rushed down the ladder and pulled an unconscious student's head out of a pool underneath the slide.

"I know that God really helped me to stay calm," Hosmer said. "I was in cruise control."

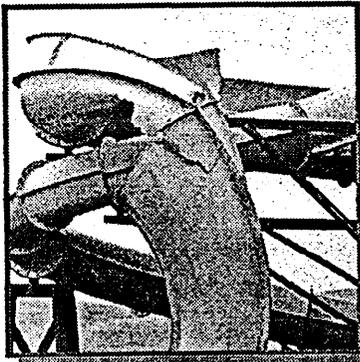
One of the most seriously injured was **Alynda Franco**, a top track athlete and volleyball player, who has been accepted to **UCLA** next fall on a track scholarship. She was in critical condition at **Mount Diablo Medical Center** in Concord with, a fractured vertebrae.

Flowers were sent to the school from all over the Bay Area in **Ghilotti's** memory.

"She never had a negative thing to say about anybody," said **John Sykes**, a 1&year-old junior who had been counseled by her. "She helped a lot of people and was always there to give advice. It shouldn't have been her. She contributed greatness to the school."

HOW THE WATER SLIDE FAILED

One girl was killed and 32 students were injured Monday in a water slide collapse during a Napa High School senior outing at Waterworld USA in Concord.

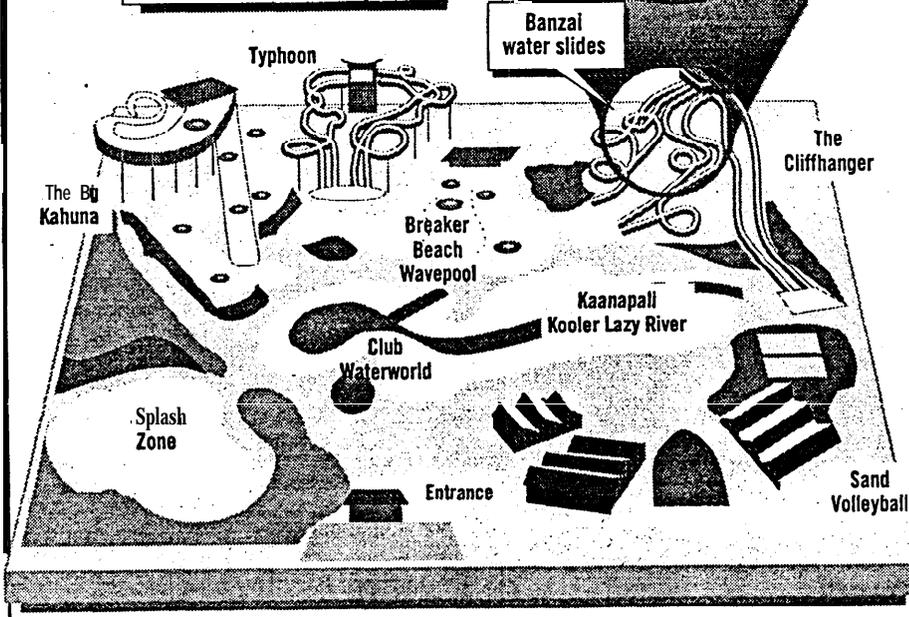


Park officials say the students' combined weight caused the slide to collapse. The city of Concord, which had not inspected the slide since the park opened in 1995, is hiring an independent structural firm to investigate.



At least 30 students pack a 20-foot section of the Banzai Pipeline slide

Slide snaps in two a few feet from the top, sending students plunging 30 feet to the ground



INJURED STUDENTS

- Andrew Bosch — Doctors Hospital, Pinole
 - Alynda Franco — critical condition with fractured vertebrae at Mount Diablo Medical Center, Concord
 - Jeff Gibbons — serious condition at John Muir Medical Center, Walnut Creek
 - Marla Johnson — stable condition at County Hospital, Martinez
 - Mikal Johnson — Eden Hospital, San Leandro
 - Lindsey Klein — serious condition at Doctors Hospital
 - Camille Lucas — stable condition after hip surgery at Mount Diablo Medical Center
 - Maureen Rodgers — County Hospital, Martinez
 - Rachel Sijgers — Brookside Hospital, Pinole
 - Jamie Talbott — Doctors Hospital
 - Manuela Tavarres — stable condition at Brookside Hospital
 - Mark Thibaut — stable condition at Kaiser Medical Center, Vallejo
 - Justin Timm — Kaiser Vallejo
 - Emily Tslentis — stable condition at John Muir Medical Center
- Treated and released:**
- John Barker
 - Kathryn Doughty
 - Charlotte Florent
 - Joe Hall
 - Mark Horvath
 - Adam Jobe
 - David Johanson
 - Natalie LeBlanc
 - Kevin Miller
 - Danielle Ockenfels
 - Melissa Parker
 - Lisa Redmond
 - Gerad Stemke
 - Aaron Sweeden
 - Steven Warner
 - Jason White
 - Judy Wong
 - Chris Yarborough

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Water Slide Accident Stuns Napa Campus

■ **Tragedy:** Students gather at school to mourn classmate killed in theme park incident and to pray for the 32 injured.



Quimby Ghilotti

By **MARY CURTIUS**
TIMES STAFF WRITER

NAPA, Calif. -Students at the high school here wept Tuesday. They hugged and they walked around as if in a daze, trying to make sense of what happened Monday when one classmate died and 32 others were injured after a water slide broke during what was supposed to be a day of fun at an amusement park.

At noon, dozens of students spontaneously gathered around Napa High School's flagpole, where flags lowered to half-mast drooped beneath a darkened sky. They joined hands there and prayed for the injured and for 17-year-old Quimby Ghilotti, the senior who was fatally injured when the serpentine Banzai slide at Waterworld USA broke, flinging the teenagers more than 30 feet to the concrete.

"The students just really wanted to be here today," said Frank Humpert, a former Napa High School principal who returned to campus Tuesday morning to help them deal with the tragedy.

Speaking at a morning news conference, student body President Chris Snowden said he doubted "anyone's doing very well. . . . No one can function."

Snowden and four others who had gone on the

Please see SLIDE, A28



Portion of Banzai Pipeline dangles at point where the tube broke, sending students to the concrete at Waterworld USA in Concord.

Los Angeles Times
June 4, 1997

970603 WES 5001

SLIDE: Accident Stuns Napa High School Campus

Continued from A3

senior class trip to the amusement park in Concord joined Principal Lars Christiansen to talk about what happened and how they were coping with it.

Choking back tears, Barry Franks recounted how he was almost at the bottom of the slide when it snapped. He ran to the end and saw "just a lot of people spread out, all mostly injured . . . it was pretty bad."

Christiansen said Franks was heroic in helping his injured classmates-praise that Franks brushed aside.

"I just did what I did," Franks said. "Everything was going so fast. . . . I was trying to help as many people as possible. People wanted to fall asleep. You can't do

that. People were seriously injured and . . . your primary goal is to find the worst hurt and take care of them."

Hilary Zunin, an English teacher and crisis coordinator, told reporters that the campus was simply "overloaded with grief."

Even so, officials said, June 12 graduation ceremonies for the school's 400 seniors will be held as scheduled.

About half the senior class went on the trip to the water park, supervised by eight Leachers. The outing is an annual affair, a last chance for seniors to get together and have fun before leaving school. This was the first year it was held at Waterworld.

Shortly before the park closed

for the day, at least 30 students apparently ignored a lifeguard's warnings and pushed onto the slide for one final ride before boarding buses for the 90-minute trip back to school, park officials said. Normally, only one rider at a time is allowed to swoosh down the rushing water in the twisting fiberglass slide.

"There doesn't appear to have been any problem with the ride itself, with its operation or the procedures," Kieran Burke, chief executive officer of Premier Parks, said Tuesday from New York. Waterworld is owned by Premier Parks.

On Tuesday, at least one 17-year-old girl remained in critical condition with a spinal injury at Mt.

Diablo Medical Center in Concord. Seventeen others remained in hospitals as well, with injuries ranging from a broken pelvis to a punctured lung. None of the injuries were thought to be life-threatening.

Meanwhile, Premier Parks announced that Waterworld will remain closed until park and city officials complete an investigation of the accident.

The city of Concord said it has hired an independent investigator to conduct what a spokesman termed a "technical codes investigation" at the amusement park. Concord police were also investigating.

Burke said Premier has maintained an "excellent safety record"

at its 11 amusement parks nationwide. The company also manages Marineworld USA in nearby Vallejo.

Premier bought Waterworld less than a year ago when the park was 2 years old, he said, adding that it is one of the company's most financially successful parks.

Burke said rides are regularly inspected by the company's engineers and that Whitewater West, the manufacturer of the slide, has an excellent safety record. Engineers from Premier and Whitewater are participating in the investigation, he said.

"We want to be sure that we understand every aspect of what happened," Burke said. "But we don't feel that this is the right time to be assessing blame. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the injured, and with our employees."

Grief counseling also is being made available to employees who saw the slide collapse, Burke said.

Standing with friends Tuesday outside the high school's front gate, freshman Lauren George, 15, fought back tears as she tried to describe the mood on campus.

"Everybody's been so sad all day," she said. "Everybody knows who everybody is here."

George said her brother, a senior, was on the Waterworld trip but was not injured.

"We heard about it. . . we were really worried," she said. "But he called . . . and said that he was watching from a bridge when it happened. When he got home, my mother just hugged him."

Associated Press contributed to this story.

Los Angeles Times
June 4, 1997

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California and the West



Photos by Associated Press

Napa High School teacher Hilaty Zunin, standing, says the campus was "overloaded with grief." With her at a news.

conference were students Lisa Pierce, left, Megan Montalbano and Barry Franks, who were at the water park.

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Area Water Parks Cite Safety Precautions

Operations: Officials at Santa Clarita and San Dimas facilities say slide users are closely monitored and equipment is frequently inspected.

By GREG SANDOVAL
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SANTA CLARITA-Executives of Southern California water parks say they have precautions in place to avoid accidents like the one Monday in Concord in which a water slide broke, killing a 17-year-old girl and injuring 32 other teenagers.

Representatives of Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, just west of the Golden State Freeway in the Santa Clarita Valley, and Raging Waters near San Dimas said their parks prevent more than one rider at a time reaching the slides.

Although Monday's accident at Waterworld USA is still under investigation, it was allegedly caused by dozens of teens crowding atop the Banzai Pipeline slide in a group, over the objections of the park's lifeguards-so they could slide down together. When the slide gave way, the youths dropped 70 feet to the ground.

Water-slide riders climb towers to a landing where takeoff points are located and ride a blast of water pumped onto the slide.

At Hurricane Harbor, the only people allowed at the takeoff point are the rider and two lifeguards who control each slide, said spokeswoman Bonnie Rabjohn. Other riders are kept back by a combination of turnstiles, stairs and railings, she said, and there have been no significant injuries there since the park opened two years ago.

Lifeguards are under strict instructions to allow only one rider at a time, and if they are faced with a dangerous situation the lifeguards can push a button that

shuts off the water used to propel the riders down the slide, she said.

Kent Lemasters, vice president and general manager of Raging Waters, said that the San Dimas park uses many of the same safety precautions that Hurricane Harbor uses. "We believe that through our ride design, engineering and safety procedures, Raging Waters has taken every precaution to prevent this type of incident from occurring here," Lemasters said.

But he pointed out that Raging Waters-although it is the third largest water park in the country, with more than 25 slides-"does not have the same water slide attraction on which this incident occurred."

The Banzai Pipeline in Concord was built by Whitewater West Industries Ltd. of Richmond, British Columbia, the largest manufacturer of water slides in the world. Geoff Chutter, president and CEO of the Canadian company, said Tuesday

Please see WATER, A22

WATER: Operators Outline Safety Precautions

Continued from A3

that two of the company's engineers who inspected the broken area of the P-year-old slide concluded that the students' weight, concentrated in one section, caused the accident. The slide was not designed to support the more than 30 people who were on it, he said.

It was the first such break in the 17 years the company has been making that model, Chutter said, "It is the bread and butter of the slides we build."

The slide that broke, like most others, was made of fiberglass and

was reinforced by a balsa core. Chutter said.

The only government inspection of water-park facilities occurs when they first open for business, Rabjohn said. Hurricane Harbor passed an inspection by the Los Angeles County Department of Building and Safety, she said, and since then all inspections have been carried out by the park itself.

Employees inspect the rides every day and an independent engineer examines them three times a year, she said. The last outside inspection was completed a week

ago, she said.

More awareness of water-park hazards is needed, said Mark Oostman, marketing director for Ellis and Associates, a company that instructs water-park lifeguards and conducts safety inspections.

"There have been about 180 drownings at water parks since 1983," Oostman said. "There needs to be more attention paid to them. I don't know if you can atop all accidents but I hope the public becomes aware there are dangers associated with them."

Rides are safe, operators insist

By Denise Levin
Associated Press

SAN DIMAS — With crowds of youngsters out of school and looking for places to stay cool, nervous water-slide operators sought to assure the public Tuesday that what happened in Concord couldn't happen at their parks.

After all, water slides that survive earthquakes can handle rowdy kids, said one operator, in the wake of Monday's collapse at Waterworld USA that left one teen dead and 16 others hospitalized.

Customers, meanwhile, tempered their thrills with some thought.

"Initially I was concerned, but after going on several rides, it seems very safe," said Jeff Lyon, a church group chaperone who brought 30 kids from Long Beach to Raging Waters in San Dimas, 30 miles east of Los Angeles.

"I think they are all basically safe rides, but it depends on people following the rules," said Julie Jordan of Victorville.

Witnesses and park officials in Concord said teens rushed past a lifeguard and crowded onto the slide together. When the slide broke, 33 youths dropped as much as 40 feet.

More summer customers will mean more queue control, pointed out Troy Mesa of Palm Springs Oasis Waterpark.

"A lifeguard can't hold back 30 people, but here you couldn't build up 30 people," he said. Rider lines snake through a zig-zag of barriers designed to keep people in single file, and the rule is one at a time.

Teens, teachers reeling from water-slide tragedy

By Richard Cole
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Stunned survivors of a water-slide collapse that turned a high school graduation party into a bloody tragedy huddled with grief counselors Tuesday as the finger-pointing began.

The curling Banzai Pipeline at Waterworld USA in Concord gave way Monday afternoon, sending 33 students plunging up to 40 feet to the concrete below, killing one Napa High School student.

Sixteen other Napa High students remained hospitalized Tuesday, some with gaping wounds and broken bones. Two

were listed in critical condition but were expected to survive.

Killed was Quimby Ghilotti, a 17-year-old graduating senior who had planned to attend Sacramento State University next year and was celebrating at the water park with some 200 of her classmates Monday.



GHILOTTI

Students and teachers at Napa High School gathered with a crisis intervention team as classes began Tuesday, said Principal Lars Christensen.

"Shock, disbelief, horror, sadness," he said, describing

students' reaction, but added they were doing "remarkably well. It's amazing how this little community can pull together in crisis."

The Banzai Pipeline — part of a spaghetti-like maze of tubes at the 2-year-old park — broke near the top of the tower deck that anchors it to three other slides. A section collapsed on top of a second slide.

As the slide broke and then twisted upside down, it sent the teens spilling to the ground, hitting buttresses, trees and other slides on the way down.

Waterworld USA officials blamed the students, who, said a park spokesman, ignored signs and rushed past a lifeguard.

"It's a very big deal," Mesa said. "We won't even let a parent and a child go together. We don't want the parent losing control of the child."

Oasis has a slide of the same type as the one in Concord. The difference, Mesa said, is that the Palm Springs slide is on a hillside, nowhere more than 8 feet off the ground.

California doesn't regulate amusement park rides, nor do many other states.

The state Occupational Safety and Health Administration is charged with looking out for employee safety, but not rider safety, said a spokesman.

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DAILY NEWS
LOS ANGELES
JUNE 4, 1997



Associated Press

This section of the Banzai Pipeline water slide collapsed Monday, killing a high school student.

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4 — SANTA CLARITA / WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 1997 / DAILY NEWS LOS & i & g -

Six Flags water park emphasizes safety record

Daily News Staff and Wire Services

VALENCIA -A fatal accident Monday at a Northern California water park where teens piled on a slide for a last-chance ride prompted a statement Tuesday from Six Flags Hurricane Harbor, citing an "impeccable" safety record.

Touting a state-of-the-art maintenance

program, the Six Flags statement noted daily structural and safety checks before opening as well as more extensive inspections weekly, monthly and quarterly on each ride at the 2-year-old water park.

At Waterworld USA in Concord, one girl was killed and 32 other teens injured when the three-story-tall Banzai Pipeline collapsed under the weight of too many bodies.

Many of the injured reportedly were holding hands to form a long chain, despite a lifeguard's repeated warnings that the slide was designed to hold only one rider at a time, a park official said.

Anywhere from 14 to 30 students brushed past the young lifeguard and leaped onto the slide.

The first few down braced themselves as others piled on — in an attempt to break

records set by previous senior classes, students said.

Concord city officials began an in-depth investigation of the scene Tuesday. They said they have never had safety problems at Wateworld, which opened in 1995. Pending the investigation, the park will be closed indefinitely.

Amusement parks including Hurricane Harbor are subject to local, not state, safety

inspections.

Water slides and other fixed amusement rides do not undergo regular state inspections, said Mark Carleson, deputy chief of the state's Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Carleson said a division of the state's elevator inspection unit monitors safety of portable carnival rides and ski lifts, but does not inspect fixed amusement rides.

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16 — NEWS / TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 1997 / DAILY NEWS

Los Angeles

Water slide breaks; 1 teen dead, 32 hurt

By Michelle Locke
Associated Press

CONCORD, Calif. — A three-story amusement park water slide collapsed Monday, killing one teen and injuring 32 others, when a group of teenagers on a graduation outing ignored a lifeguard's warning and tried to go down together, authorities said.

Six suffered life-threatening injuries when a section of the Banzai Pipeline at Waterworld USA broke off as a large group tried to get in one last ride before they had to leave for the day, according to Rick McCurley, vice president of Premier Parks, which owns Waterworld.

The injured, many of whom reportedly were holding hands on the slide, fell about 30 feet, he said.

McCurley said there was an announcement over the park loudspeaker at 3:30 p.m. for the students to return to their buses for the trip home to Napa.

"This incident apparently

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Water park visit turns to tragedy

SLIDE / From Page 1

caused the students to rush our lifeguard on the Banzai Pipeline slide in an attempt to get on the ride in for the afternoon," he said. "The total weight of the 30-odd students on the slide caused the slide to break and the students to fall."

"It just cracked and gave way," said witness Russ Tiberio of San Francisco. "Crack, snap, gone. That fast."

"I heard a crash of the slide breaking. There was blood in the water, quite a bit of blood," said Mark Fisher, a student at Castro Valley High School who was not part of the group on the damaged slide.

"People who were getting up were in shock. Parents everywhere were running over," he added. "A lot of tears there, people just really shaken up by the whole thing"

"When you attend a function like this - the last thing you think about when you go on a senior picnic is tragedy," he said outside Mt. Diablo Medical Center, where the most critically injured students were being treated.

He described the mood of the students and parents as "shock. I think absolute shock."

The injured were taken to nine

San Francisco radio station KCBS said several students who had returned to Napa told a reporter there were at least 60 students on the slide around the time of the accident trying to break an unofficial school record.

Witnesses said the teens ignored warnings to go down individually. The open slide snapped about 10 feet down, sending teens flying to landscaping, a paved walkway and wood steps.

The water in a holding pool at the bottom turned from blue to red, witnesses said.

The students were seniors from Napa High School visiting as part of graduation festivities. Principal Lars Christensen said a total of 200 seniors graduating June 12 were at the park. He said all those who were not injured were accounted for and have returned home.

area hospitals by helicopter and ambulance, said Pat Pava, a spokeswoman for the Contra Costa County Office of Emergency Services.

A 17-year-old female, admitted in extremely critical condition at Mt. Diablo with a crushed chest and heart problems, died, said Dave Dyer, a deputy with the Contra Costa County Coroner's Office.

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Daily News
Los Angeles
June 3, 1997



This is an aerial view of the three-story Bonzai Tower water slide in Torrance, Calif. "It just cracked and gave way," said witness Russario of San Francisco. "Crack, snap, gone. That fast."



Associated Press
Dobbie Smith, left, and an unidentified girl watch rescue efforts after the collapse of the three-story water slide at the Waterworld USA park.

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Los Angeles Times
June 3, 1997

SLIDE: Teen Killed, 32 Hurt as Water Ride Snaps

Teen Killed, 32 Hurt as Water Slide Snaps

By MARY CURTIUS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SAN FRANCISCO—A high school student was killed and 32 other teenagers were injured Monday—as many as 16 of them seriously—when a group of students on an amusement park outing allegedly ignored a lifeguard’s warning and crowded onto a water slide, which snapped and sent them crashing to the ground, emergency officials said.

Waterworld USA Gen-
Please see SLIDE, A14

Continued from A1

eral Manager Steve Mayer told reporters who quickly converged on the amusement park in the East Bay community of-concord that a group of at least 25 teenagers may have caused the slide to collapse by gathering in one spot. The teenagers, seniors from Napa High School, had made the 90-minute trip to the park to celebrate graduating.

“Our guard couldn’t control it,” Mayer said. Normally, he added, one rider at a time goes down the four-story-high slide, one of four Banzai Tower slides at the park.

“It just cracked and gave way,” said witness Russ Tiberto of San Francisco. “Crack, snap, gone. That fast.”

Rick McCurley, vice president of Premier Parks, which owns Waterworld, said the injured, many of whom were reportedly holding hands on the slide, fell about 30 feet.

But Patricia Pava, emergency planning specialist for Contra Costa County’s Office of Emergency Services, said the youngsters plunged as far as 75 feet to the ground.

The identity of the dead student, a 17-year-old girl, had not been released late Monday. Hospital officials said she suffered massive head and chest injuries.

Eyewitnesses described a horrific scene, recounting how the riders screamed as the slide broke with a loud cracking noise about eight feet from its highest point.

Water gushing down the slide quickly turned from blue to red.

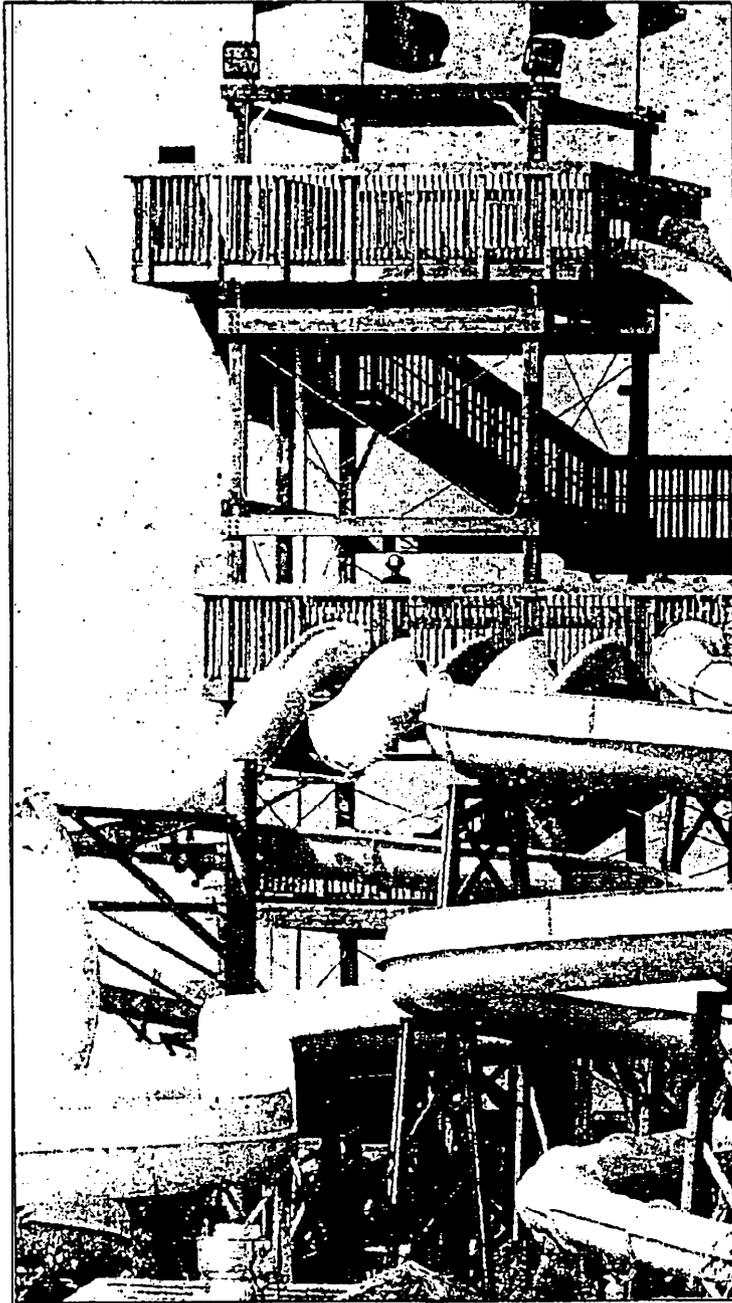
Some of the teenagers, flung from the slide into landscaped areas, were able to get up and brush themselves off, witnesses said. But many others lay still, apparently badly injured.

Witnesses said the teenagers may have ignored the lifeguard’s order to go one at a time because they wanted to hold hands as they made the trip down the slide.

McCurley said there was an announcement over the park loudspeaker at 3:30 p.m. for the Napa students to return to their buses for the trip home.

“This incident apparently caused the students to rush our lifeguard on the Banzai Pipeline slide in an attempt to get one last ride in for-

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Associated Press

Students plunged up to 75 feet, according to an emergency official.

the afternoon," he said. "The total weight of the 30-odd students on the slide caused the slide to break and the students to fall."

The park opened for the summer just over a week ago and the accident occurred just minutes before its scheduled closing time of 4 p.m.

Ambulances and medical helicopters converged on the scene, and the

injured were rushed to nine hospitals, Pava said. The park, she said, had no history of problems with the slide. Almost immediately after the accident, local television and radio stations began broadcasting telephone numbers for parents to call and inquiries from frantic parents flooding the switchboards of the Concord Police Department, hospitals and the park itself.

One mother, waiting at Napa High School for her son to arrive there about 6 p.m., told reporters that her son had called her to say he was all right. The accident, she said, was "traumatic for all the kids. . . . They were all shook up."

Students wept as they disembarked from their buses after the return trip to school. One described what happened at the park as "a textbook nightmare."

School administrators said they had summoned counselors and chaplains to the campus to deal with parents and students.

Three buses had taken the students and eight adult chaperons to Waterworld Monday morning, said administrator Noreen Hanna.

The senior class has selected the park for its senior picnic, Hanna said, and about 145 members of the 400-student graduating class made the trip.

Hanna said parents began congregating on campus within minutes of the accident.

Parents and staff alike, she said, were in a state of "shock and disbelief, because this happened so close to graduation, which is June 12."

Hanna said school officials were trying to help parents locate where their children were taken.

"I just found out that my daughter has a hip injury and is in Martinez Hospital," one parent told reporters. ". . . I'm very relieved."

Mt. Diablo Hospital in Concord said the 17-year-old girl who died had arrived in "very critical" condition and that another 17-year-old girl was in critical condition with a spinal injury. Most of the injuries ranged from broken bones to cuts and scrapes.

Kirsten Adams, spokeswoman for John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek, said the hospital was flooded with phone calls. Adams said five teenagers, all believed to be students from Napa High School, were brought to the hospital. Three were reported in serious condition and two in good condition.

Waterworld, a 111-acre site owned by Premier Parks, a national theme park chain, opened in 1995. More than 300,000 people visited the park that year.

Times staff writers Maura Dolan and Maria L. La Ganga, researcher Norma Kaufman and Times wire services contributed to this report.

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Los Angeles Times
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A14

TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 1997/F



Associated Press

Rescuers prepare victims for evacuation from Waterworld USA in Concord. A youth was killed and dozens hurt after crowding onto slide that broke.

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