

# Mister Peanut, Lucy the Elephant and me

## A native's guide to Atlantic City

By SUSAN SUBTLE

**A**TLANTIC CITY was my hometown. I grew up there. Those of us who thrived on faded elegance, honky tonk, amusement rides and decaying piers thought we were in heaven. We assumed every town had similar magic: trolley cars, beauty pageants, elephant-shaped buildings, Mr. Peanut, diving horses and wicker rolling chairs pushed by people.

Atlantic City locals knew about junk food long before the term was even invented: mile-long hot dogs, cotton candy, salt water taffy, corn on the cob dripping with butter.

The old fashioned hotels and amusement piers are gone, but the old flavor lingers. Here are some of my favorite things.

### ON THE BOARDWALK

**Bike riding** — In the morning (from 6 to 10 a.m. only), rent a bike from one of the numerous rental places and slowly ride along the boardwalk. You'll recognize all the names of Atlantic City's streets — they all appear on the Monopoly Board.

Stop at Park Place and see the

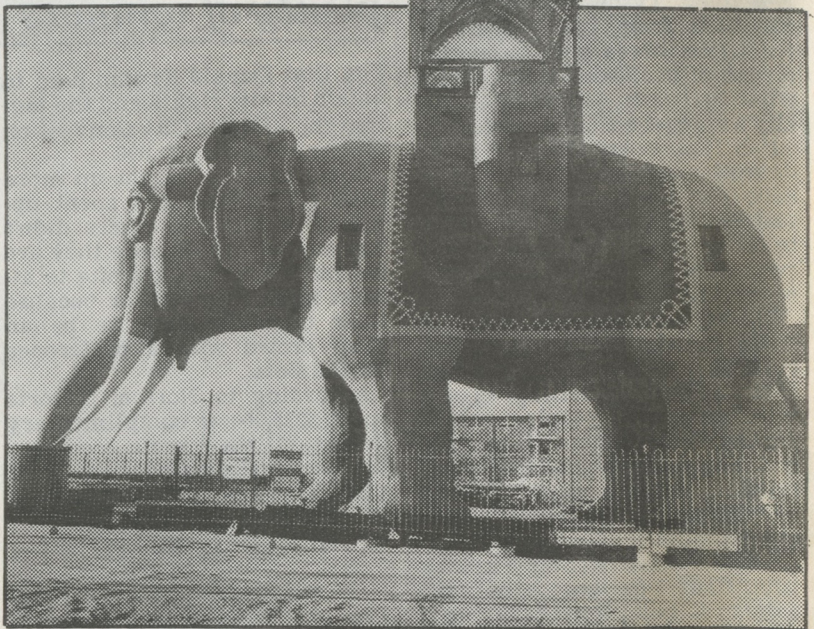


Photo courtesy the Save Lucy Committee.

**WHITE ELEPHANT:** She's been a hotel, a tavern and a rental cottage. Lucy, 107 years old, is now a museum.

plaque honoring Charles Darwin, who invented Monopoly in 1930.

**Rolling chairs** — If you prefer decadence to exercise, let someone else do the work: rent an old fashioned wicker rolling chair. They used to be pushed manually — and they still are, if you've got \$5 for a seven-block ride.

### WHERE TO EAT

**The White House Sub Shop** — The subs are so good here that Frank Sinatra has them flown to him when he's not in town.

Since 1946, they've sold more than 12 million subs. The walls are lined with photos of all the stars who have sampled the fare, from Humphrey Bogart to Whitney Houston.

I like the steak and cheese sub (\$7 for a whole one; \$3.55 for a half) and the regular sub, (\$3.23 for a half, tax included.)

**White House Sub Shop, 2301 Artie Av. (at Mississippi). Open Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m. to midnight; Sundays 11 to midnight.**

### MY FAVORITE THINGS

**Mr. Peanut** — When I was a kid, I'd go to the Mr. Peanut shop to watch the two midgets dish up roasted peanuts, while a man dressed as Mr. Peanut walked the boards.

Today, the shop and the midgets and the costumed man are

gone (the costume resides in the A.C. Museum), but there are still lots of Mr. Peanut souvenirs. I found my favorite, a peanut butter maker shaped like a peanut man that actually makes squiggles of peanut butter, \$4.95.

**The Peanut Shop, Boardwalk and Morris Av. (between Tropicana and The Bally Grand).**

**Lucy the Elephant** — I used to live in Margate, a couple of miles from Atlantic City, in a house with a view of Lucy, a mammoth elephant-shaped structure.

Designed by James V. Lafferty in 1881 as a land-sales promotion, Lucy measures 65 feet from toe to howdah (the perch); her body is 38 feet long and she weighs 90 tons. She's had many lives: as a tavern, a hotel, a summer rental "cottage." Now, she's a museum.

**Lucy lives at Benson and the beach in Margate. Open daily, 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Admission: \$1.50 for adults; \$1 for those 6 to 12; under 6 for free. In summer, there are free outdoor concerts Thurs. nights.**

**Salt water taffy** — No visitor should go home without a box of Atlantic City's most famous offerings. James Salt Water Taffy will send the sweet, gooey stuff anywhere in the U.S. Order by phone with a Visa or Master-



Photo: Bud Lee

**NUTS ABOUT YOU:** Susan Subtle and her pal.



**BEATLE GRUB:** John and George with a White House sub.

# My favorite things

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card. The taffy costs \$3.49 a pound plus postage and handling,

*James Salt Water Taffy, 1519 Boardwalk (between New York and Kentucky Aves.), A.C., N.J. 08406, 609-344-1519. Toll free, 1-800-441-1404.*

**Miss America Pageant Parade**  
This is still my favorite annual event, an experience that can be yours if you go to Atlantic City in early September. This year's boardwalk parade of the Miss America contestants is scheduled for Tuesday, September 6, before the pageant activities begin. The crowning comes on Sept. 10.

*Reserved seats cost \$6.50;*

*grandstand seats, \$3.50. Call 609-344-5278. Or see the parade of contestants, marching bands and floats from a rolling chair. Call 609-347-7148 to reserve.*

**Atlantic City Historical Museum** — Co-founded by Vicki Levi, a former Junior Miss Hydrangea Queen of A.C., the museum is a repository of souvenirs from the late 1800s to the present. You can see little purses made of clam shells, lobster salt and pepper shakers, early Miss America trophies, postcards and photographs of old A.C.

*The museum is at New Jersey and the Boardwalk. Open daily 9 to 4. Admission is free.*

*Susan Subtle is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle.*