

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Idora Park

Personal Experience

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TOM MARTINDALE

Interviewed

by

Scott Smith

on

November 21, 1991

## TOM MARTINDALE

Tom Martindale grew up in the area of Youngstown known as Fosterville, on Cascade Avenue, which is right next to Idora Park. Martindale said he grew up with the noises of Idora Park in his backyard. Tom was an only child and his parents were Howard Johnson Martindale and Anna Maria (Gustafson) Martindale, both of Youngstown. He attended Cleveland schools for first grade, and Bancroft School up until eleventh grade, when his family moved to Boardman. Tom would attend the Boardman School system until his graduation. He did not play any sports in high school, but he always had a job and helped to support himself while in school. His last two years at Boardman he worked at Ohio Edison and learned bookkeeping, a talent which payed off when he got to college.

Tom attended Youngstown College from 1955 to 1960 when he graduated with a B S in Business Administration. He was still working at Ohio Edison at this time, and it was a job that helped him to grow up very quickly. He eventually quit his job because it was greatly affecting his college studies at the time. He then began attending classes full time and joined the Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity. He also then got a job on campus in the Business Office.

Tom joined the army in 1961 and was discharged in 1964. He met his wife to be, Carolyn, while in the army, and they were married in 1964. He then sold insurance, and then worked in a hotel, but found both boring, so he decided to get a teaching certificate. Upon reapplying for school, he was rehired at his old campus job in the business office, a job he would stay at until today, where he is now the Bursar of the university. Tom has two children: Tom Jr., age 24, and Holly, age 20. He is a member

of the Zion Lutheran Church and is still enjoying the sights and sounds of Youngstown State University

S This is an interview with Tom Martindale for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Idora Park, by Scott Smith, on November 21, 1991, at his office on the second floor of Jones Hall, at 11.45 a m

Before we begin to discuss Idora Park, I would like to discuss your own personal life, where you grew up, what you did growing up, where you went to school, and things like that

M I grew up until I was seven, I think, about three or four blocks from Idora Park, on Cascade Drive And all my life, I remember hearing it, I could hear it I could hear the Jack Rabbit and the Wild Cat and the Merry-go-round We moved in the city a couple of times We ended up in Boardman Of course, I am an only child, my sisters are dead They were you when they died I graduated from Boardman High School

S Do you remember your early years? Let us say first grade

M Yes First grade, I went to Cleveland School in Youngstown

S Is that still open?

M Gee, I do not know It is in Fosterville I love all those little names I forgot what Cascade was in, but we were in something, also Yes, I went there to school That is the first place I ever saw a black person

S It was in that school?

M Is that not funny? Not an adult, a child

S. Yes, a child

M I had seen black adults, but never seen a black child. I was just fascinated with this little girl Someone said that they had to keep away from her Okay, that was a very white, classy neighborhood, though Idora Park was not We moved to Boardman My first year in Boardman I went to a one room school, which was the St James Parish House Gee, I had forgotten all this stuff That was the St James Parish House on Market Street When I went to Boardman, there was a school Then sometime during that time, Market Street Elementary was built I had Mrs Culp And I went to this one room school, and we sat at tables We sat six at a table Are you writing this down?

S Yes, this is interesting This is what we want This is history It is important

M Okay, it was boy, girl. There was myself, or a girl and a boy. There was a girl across from me, and a boy, and a girl. We sat at tables. They had their backs to the teacher, the people on the other side. They were the good students. Everybody that sat with their backs to the teacher, they were good students. I sat across from this girl. There by Christmas, I had no skin on my shins because there was this darling little girl sitting next to me. It was Sandy, who's brother is the fire chief in Boardman now. She had big, long curls; blonde curls. And they just hung out there. They were just too tempting. I used to yank that, and she would scream. The girl that sat across from kicked me in the shin. I am going to get way off on this.

S Just talk about whatever you want to talk about.

M Okay. Anyway, I had -- I think because of my sisters, I guess -- I was really sheltered a lot. Anyway, I better finish about this fifth grade, one room school. It was not a one room school, but it is just a fifth grade class. If they go out of the room, there was nothing behind this. Today, the Southern Park Mall is there. There were woods. It was a real different unstructured recess. We used to go off to the wood, that kind of thing. You know, you get mice and snakes.

S Boardman is totally different today.

M Oh, yes. St. James Church -- that is in the park -- was on Market Street there.

S Yes. Then it was moved.

M. And then this little house -- well, little one-room school house -- was like Sunday school rooms, I think. Social hall in the basement, we did not have the basement. Anyway, there was this woods back there. It was woods all the way through to the Case Barn, which used to be on the corner of South Avenue and 224. And there was nothing there. But the girls in the class -- they put all the vicious girls over in the fifth grade over there -- I think there were two other girls. Anyway, they had the skunk patrol. Go next door and ask Bill Collin. They would take every boy -- at least eight vicious girls -- and they would drag them into the woods and beat them up. Sounds like your mother, heh?

S That was my mother.

M: Well, anyway. The rest of that, after that school, was boring. I was never involved in any sports, I was not allowed to be. So I worked. And I had a paper route. I do not even know how old I was. I used to take it to -- what is it called -- Beeghley Park, out in Boardman. They took this old house and they turned it into a speech and hearing clinic. And when they built, there was an Alzheimer's Clinic. Okay, that house was in the center between Market and Southern, on the rise of the hill going down. Leon Beeghley and his wife lived there. I was the paper boy. It was fascinating. I just loved it. It was the whole thing about the

back door, you know, they had a house keeper and a maid and a cook, and then the two houses in the back. The Beeghley's got two papers, and each of the houses in the back each got a paper. And I had to ride my bike up this long thing. It was a big deal. Well, anyway, that is just a little history.

S Then you went to Boardman High School?

M Yes

S How was Boardman High School? How would you describe that at that time?

M Well, let us see. Real snobbish. Do you know what Forest Glenn is in Boardman? Forest Glenn in Boardman was the place to live. If you did not live on Sampson road with Isley's and the Strauss', one of those in that area, you lived in Forest Glenn. Everybody who had money lived there. So, a lot of kids -- Boardman was not very big then -- had a lot of money. It was very class oriented. There were people that did not have money, there were the people who made a pretense that they did, then there were the one's that really did. And they were the richer people, the real rich people were the real nice ones. It was the majority group in the middle who always tried to prove that they had money, and they wore cashmere sweaters. I always had money, but only because I worked.

I was never involved in any school activities. I was in the choir but that, of course, I could do that during the day. I worked, I had a paper route, and I worked for a grocery store. And I had about twelve lawns I did. From my paper route I got all these places where you, all the windows, I would wash the windows, that kind of stuff. Then, when I was fifteen, sixteen, I got a job at the Ohio Edison. And I worked 1:00 to 6:00 every day. So, I left school early. I broke the sex barrier in the business department. I was the first male to take bookkeeping in Boardman. It was unheard of.

S It is a good move, though.

M Well, it was for me because I wanted to be, that is what I wanted to do. I was good at it, I could do that. And it really helped when I got to college. I was much better prepared than everybody in the whole class. Most of them never had it because they took Latin and all that stuff we had to take. I came here, but I came here just in the morning because I had a full-time job at Ohio Edison. I went full-time when I was sixteen, someplace around there.

S Then this would be Youngstown State?

M This was Youngstown University. I think it was just Youngstown University. So I came here, and then they moved the office, the business office, out of Youngstown. It went to Akron, the Ohio Edison. I was the mail boy. I started in the mail room. There were 82 women in this office, and six guys. No comment.

Anyway, it was -- trust me -- I grew up in a big hurry, okay. And I learned a lot. A learned a lot about women. I learned how to get along with them. I mean, we did not have a whole lot of choice. And I was younger than everybody. Then I started, so they moved the business office, and I moved to the meter reading area. I was really having trouble finishing school and doing that, so I quit. But I worked summers for them all the time. I came up here and I had a wonderful time. I joined a fraternity.

S What kind did you join?

M Sig Ep's

S Sig Ep's? Oh, Sigma Phi Epsilon

M And spent every dime I ever had in my life and just had a terrific deal. The next year I was, after I had saved a lot of money, I had a 1954 Mercury convertible. And the night life was good.

S How was the fraternity life like? Was it very active here at YSU?

M Well, right after I joined, I guess they bought a house. They bought the old Jewish Community Center on Bryson Street. There was Buechner Hall, which is there today, and next to that was the Chaplain's house, and empty lot, and then the Jewish Community Center. And the Sig Ep's bought that. With not being with a member of my family, it was my first experience of being away. I lived there. My parents moved, and I did not want to go, so I stayed there. Then, it was terrific. I mean, we did everything. We had a pruning committee for Christmas tress. We had awful stuff.

S That is nice to know things did not change, because we did the same things when I was in my fraternity. The smartest one was chopping down the guy next door's Christmas tree, though.

M. Well, then I got a job. Oh, by November of next year I had squandered all of my money that I had made all summer. I had no money. My parents, because of my stealing, would not pay me anymore. So to keep me in room and board, I cooked at the fraternity house. And I got a job. I could pay my tuition by working in the Bursar's office at YSU. And that is how I kind of finished up.

I had a good time in college. I encourage everybody who is in here to go and have a good time. Study, get your grades, but do not take it so seriously. What you do when you are done is get up every day, and you go to work, and you sit at your desk. And, if you are lucky, you change jobs three or four times during your career. And trust me, you have to be real lucky to be able to do that. This is it folks, this is your life. Before then, you did everything, nothing that you would ever do again. I have to tell you a story. We all slept on the third floor together, and it was chaos. We did not sleep, but that is okay. We had all night

bridge games and we had the marathon monopoly games, you know. All that kind of thing was going on. And, you know, the Elms Gardens was there.

S What was the name of that game?

M Oh, the Mickey Mouse Club with the Tri Sig's. We used to go over there and we did the Mickey Mouse Club. And we did various things because we were the only two groups on campus, the Tri Sig's and us. We wore blue blazers. Everybody else wore red and white, or green. Ours were blue. So we had the Mickey Mouse club very faithfully. I had a wonderful time. I do not remember what I started. Oh, yes. Tiny was 6'3", had to go 300 pounds. He was, I cannot remember. He was one of these real quiet people. When he got mad, look out. It was just like a bull in a china shop. He was a chemistry major. He was real smart -- straight A's and all kinds of scholarships, things like that. He made it a place to live immediately. He was always doing stuff. He was so subtle, it was unreal. He would do things like mix up some chemicals all over the floor on the third floor. It did burn your feet, dammit. It did. You would walk over it. It would set off a spark and you would burn your feet. And so here were these guys who are clomp, clomp, clomp up the stairs, going across the floor to find their bed. All these things are going on.

He always was doing something. You know that smell of rotten eggs, he would burn that. Sulfur, I guess it was. He put it in that thing in the sink where the drain is, you know? He would stuff that stuff where the overspill was. He would stuff that stuff down in there. You get up in the morning and you are gagging and in the bathroom, you know. Anyway, I still cannot believe this happened. Next to coming toward campus from my house -- although it was the only reason I joined them. It was the closest to the university.

He started making little rockets at the park. And we also did it at the university in the fraternity house. And on the third floor there were little doors, three doors, and two little balconies up there. They used it for dances and recreation. And they had these little balconies you could go out and stand on. So Tiny is out on the balcony, and I said, "What are you doing?" Oh, I forgot to mention that he was totally inebriated every time that he did one of these. He stole unbelievable amounts of stuff out of the chemistry lab -- or was it the gallery? Anyway, in front of the house was this empty lot, and there was Reverend London's house. That was a big thing then. We had a Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic chaplain on campus. They had an office on campus, and they had group things and everybody was involved in those. Most people were involved.

Anyway, there was Reverend London's house. Then they had a rail that went up like this, then on the side of the house was a dining room and a bedroom that had these windows that came out. When Tiny set off a rocket, he was trying to hit his girlfriend's window, the floor window in Buechner Hall, which was on the other side of Reverend London's. Well, the projectile got up in the air, it was going fine, then it just took a nose dive. It went right into -- this was like 3:00 in the morning -- right into Reverend London's bedroom and exploded.

Jack, who just came down, we decided this would be easier -- I said we were just going to go down. So here we all are in the dean's office. And the poor man lost it. It was the end. Even London thought it was. I mean, they were terrified when it happened, but when they found out what it was, you know, people had a better sense of humor then, I think. I mean, we were on probation for, I do not know, six years. It was a dumb, stupid thing to do, but it could not have landed. It landed right at the foot of the bed.

Okay, I graduated. I went to New York. Do I need to go through all of that?

S. How did you end up coming to the university?

M. Okay, I had a couple of jobs, and I thought I would work in a hotel. That did not work. I decided that what I wanted to do was teach, because I had found something that I wanted to do during the summer. I thought this was the ideal thing to have, working in the summer and doing something in a summer resort. The ideal thing to do here was to have a job that you could do that. So I called where my parents were -- now my parents were back here then. I called them and I said, "Would you mind having a boarder for a year while I get my certificate to teach?" They said, "No, go ahead, do that." I came in here and reapplied for school, and the fellow who I had worked for in the business office said, "Oh, am I glad to see you. Could you bring your registration tomorrow?" And I said, "Well, yeah." I have been here for, whatever year. And he said, "Oh, good." And here I am.

S. And that is it?

M. I went from fifty cents an hour at the Bursar's office in thirty years. And that is it.

S. That is that.

M. Well, it was not, really. I was drafted, I was in the service. I was in Vietnam. I came home, got married in New York City -- I was living in Georgia at the time. They had no intentions of leaving New York but my wife's father who, of all things, had gotten transferred here, he became very sick. My wife, she had a little run in with a man and a knife one night, and a whole series of things just brought us back here. Plus, it just came at a time where I thought, what am I going to do? I do not have a job. But I still could get this job, then, because I had been drafted out of here. So I came back and got this job. She came. We had met because she had been in her internship at the Vindicator, and she got back in there real fast and made twice as much money as I did. I used to say I would laugh all the way to the bank. Anyway, we had it nice because she was in Vietnam, and so she was the field editor. We really had a great five years.

And then we had children. That was great too, but in a very different way. After our son was born, they needed somebody to teach journalism part time. So she said, "Oh, I can do that." You know, so we had a sitter, and for her, she



came up and taught one or two classes a quarter. And Bob Hare was the advisor of the Jambar and head of the journalism at that time. And Margaret Fowl was chairman of the English Department, which journalism was under. They both died within three months of each other. They said, "Could you please come full time?" I said, "Well, you are not doing that." And she said, "Yes, I am. I already signed the contract." And that was kind of the cement which sealed us in. My parents were gone. Her dad was still living, her parents were still here, but it was that now the two of us had to go, and she really liked teaching.

S Did she have her Ph D then?

M No, she just had her bachelor's degree, but she had been editor for her own publication in New York. She bought back into the Vindicator and I said, "Well, good luck today on the interview." And she said, "I am trying to talk to myself, 'Carolyn, you are going to take a cut in pay, you are going to do this'" and they almost matched what she made in New York City, which was unreal and unheard of. She worked for the United Church Syndicate, she was a reporter for them. Her beat was the Caribbean and the South during the civil rights thing. She was in Haiti during the coup d'etat. She had a lot of lucky things of being at the right place. She had credentials longer than both her arms, and she gave it up. I was so surprised. I never thought she would do that. Teaching works better when you have children, and our children were one and four or something like that when she started here full time. And she had been doing some free-lancing for the Vindicator. Journalism, newspapers pay, writing is well-paid for. Technical writing is the big thing now. So we are here. I came here, I started work in 1961. I have been here thirty years.

S How many more days have you got left?

M Now I am exhausted. I have to have thirty years or be fifty-five. I am not fifty-five yet. Where was I? I came here, and there was the business manager and the assistant business manager, and the first two men were hired. Shoney was the office manager of the Business Office. All the people in there worked for her, and she had a secretary. Shoney is the office manager now in Financial Aids. She is an accounting supervisor. She was pregnant and leaving and she would have been my boss when I worked here before. She was leaving, and they kind of just assumed that I was staying. I thought, well, it is going to take me longer to get my teaching certificate, but at least I would not have to pay for it. So that worked out.

S So you grew up with Idora Park in your back yard?

M Yes.

S Did you go to Idora Park at these times?

M The big day of my life -- it was during the week, like on a Monday or Tuesday -- the Ohio Edison Company closed everything. My father worked for Ohio Edison. Everybody in the company went to Idora Park and they bought it for the day. It is, you know, a kid in toy land. I think they started in October or something to get me ready for June. You could ride on everything free as many times as you wanted. Fish, I remember they had little fish with the little thing at the end.

S The little fish pond.

M No, no.

S Fish, you mean?

M There is this trough of water.

S Yes, and you would reel down into it.

M Yes, you would put your hook down in there and you would try. This was the easiest one to do.

S I am trying to think of what that was called.

M. It is some fish.

S See, we called it the gold fish pond, or something like that.

M But it was not. It was just a little trough of water that came out.

S It was a little stream that went around.

M. I was always fascinated by that because there were all these different colored fish in there. I asked my mother the other day, "When did we first go?" And she said, "We went every year." And they did, this was the traditional thing. Everybody went, and this was a very 1920's kind of thing. This was in the 1940's. Oh, yes, it would be the late 1930's or early 1940's. And it was one of those undoing kind of things. There were no bosses, and there were no bosses wives, and there were no cleaning people. You know what I mean? There was nothing classed about that day. I just loved it. I can remember, I was just little, and they had the Kiddy Park. The pool was still there then, I think. I am trying to think where the hell Kiddy Land was. I would just run off one, get off the airplanes and run across and get on the train.

S And this was just a giant family day for everyone?

M Every employee and their family.

S: There were no foremen?

M: No bosses, no nothing. Everybody just had a good time.

S: Did people get together and play softball or something like that, and just picnic and have food?

M: Sang songs.

S: Oh, really?

M: Oh, yes. They always had contests in the ball park -- you know, in the back. I know, when you said they played softball, I think they did. As I got older, you know, of course I advanced into the fun house. I could get into that thing.

S: All this information is important, even the information about your own history. It is important to the history department.

M: Oh, I can remember -- I cannot remember whether we could see it or not -- the Wildcat. I cannot remember if we could see the Wildcat from our house. Somebody's house over there, we could. I do not remember where it was. I do not remember where, and they would start it at night. I can remember crying, "Please, can we go to Idora Park?" I was too little to ride the Wildcat. But it was the idea that that was the sound I always heard in the summer. I was born pre-air conditioning. In the summers, you know, I would lay in my bedroom and they would have to keep the doors open and the windows open. I had a lot of uncles and I know they took me. But I would do anything, it did not matter. That was the most important thing to do.

S: What were the rides that you liked best?

M: When I was little?

S: Yes.

M: There were little fire trucks, I remember those. That was very important. They were big on fire trucks, and little airplanes, and a train. The train that they have now, that they had later was not that train. This train went around the pool. Gee, I cannot remember. This was all over on the front and we always came in the back because we lived closer that way. I had an aunt that lived on Woodford. I would give anything to go stay at her house. Just to run up the street, and all the kids that lived there would run up the street and just stand there at the fence and watch.

S: Just watch the park?

H Just watch the park, yes And you really could not see much, but you could watch Well, back where she lived, the Jack Rabbit came around It was the screamer

S Yes

M The hill on the Jack Rabbit, you probably know this already, the hill on the Jack Rabbit was higher than anything in the Wildcat The Wildcat was just banked more, and after you got down the first hill on the Jack Rabbit, it was not a whole lot We would just stand there and watch that for hours, not play, not do anything That is an exaggeration, but I can remember standing at the fence, and that was all we could see You could see the Jack Rabbit in the background and the Wildcat But it was not called the Tunnel of Love, I do not think

S Jungle Ride, or Lost River?

M Who knows Oh, my goodness are you young I do not know what it was The boats I always called it The Boats

S It had like three or four different names

M I could not go on by myself I would do anything to get somebody to take me on it And, I would beg and plead to sit in the front I had one Aunt, she is about ten, nine years older than I am She would sit in the front with me And I would give anything if Donna Jean would take me to the park My, all of my mother's family is from Youngstown, and Aunt Lynn that lived on Woodford was very popular, because you could park your car at her house And you could walk in and, I remember being there a lot because my uncles would ask, "Well, where do you want to go?" I want to go to Idora Park. My grandmother lived on the South Side My great-grandmother lived right in Fosterville, close to the park Somebody else lived out there, too They had all settled and they were big families My mother was the oldest of fourteen and her mother was the oldest of eleven I cannot remember going any place else.

We went on vacation with my grandmother that lived in New York Pennsylvania is where my dad was born, and we went to vacation. We went to their place and we always went to the Allegheny Forest So we never did a vacation when I was little, and that was my whole summer I could hardly wait If I did real good in school I could go to Idora Park It was a major threat in my life to excel, I guess Is that no funny, and I never thought of it that way I can remember all kinds of, "Keep your clean if you want to go to Idora Park "

S When you moved out to Boardman, did you still go to the park very much?

M We moved over by WKBN when I was seven, because that is when I went to Bancroft I still had all these Uncles, all my mother's brothers There are only three girls and there were eleven guys When kids get to a certain age, you

know, they are real interesting to single adults. Not when they are little, God forbid if they are a teenager, but I am talking about there is someplace in there, seven to twelve or something like that, who single adults are interest in. See, my mother's youngest sister is just nine years older than me. So, in her, my mother has three uncles, one is her age, and two are younger than my mother. So there were all these guys in there who would take me and my buddy. Where did we want to go? That is where we wanted to go. Is that not funny how you remember the smells?

The one thing I did not like until I was an adult, I never liked the Merry-go-round. Is that not funny? And that was probably the most treasured piece that was there. One year -- this has to be maybe ten years ago -- a real good buddy of mine and his family, we all vacation at least one week every year. And we would go to Canada, and we digged a hole, it did not matter. He and I fish. But we always had family vacations, and something was going on and they could not go, so they just came up and stayed with us. They came up on a Sunday, and we decided that we were going to Idora Park on Monday or Tuesday. Sometimes it was closed on Monday. I think it was just quiet then. You could buy an all-day pass and go all day. Well, we went on Monday, and the kids raised such a stink that we went back on Thursday and spent the whole day.

I can remember when I was little, they were just enthralled with it. They had never seen anything like it. They were from the South. They had never realized anything like that and wanted to desperately to do it again. The penny arcade was something, and those dumb old things with the fingers on them. You know, it was like a running crane. My pal, he loved that. He loved all those things that came down and you had to maneuver it a certain place and let it down and try to pick this thing up. He would spend, you know, you only had fifty cents for the whole day, to do this kind of thing with. And you spend a quarter of it trying to get this stupid ring out of this stuff with the marbles in it, okay. The interesting part, he would go in there and sometimes they would say, "I do not want to do this anymore." He would say, "I do not care. I have got six cents left, I am doing this." They were all pennies, by the way. What he does now is sell that kind of equipment. Is that not interesting? It was just, he was just fascinated by that.

S When you got older, like into high school, did Idora Park become more of a social gathering place for dancing and bands and things?

M It was a wonderful place. They had that huge parking lot in the back that was a wonderful place to neck. I think that the girls kind of knew that you were taking them to Idora Park and you were going to walk up the midway from the dance hall, walk back, and spend the rest of the evening the car. It was really a safe place, you know. Nobody seemed to bother you there, nobody cared, I guess. They sold beer, so there were a lot of people that were sloshed. I think between Stambaugh Auditorium, the old Strauss Auditorium in Jones Hall, that if you really had a big dance, you were going to do it. It was at Idora Park. My parents were there for years. I mean, it was just like the second and fourth Saturdays. I

do not even know what it was, okay, but they would go dancing. And it was just a thing that you did. When Ohio Edison had their day, at the end of the day they would then give us "X" many tickets for the evening because the park then opened to the general public. The park did real on this

S Yes

M they had to do well

S They did it with all the businesses everywhere

M Everybody went, and I guess that is why everybody loved it. Everybody looked forward to it. I remember our picnic. Behind the shooting galleries and the fish and things, there was a hill up in there with a picnic pavilion up on the top. And you would go up there and then, in the evening, we went into the ball park. They had, you know, three legged races and sack races and all that stuff. When I was older I thought, "I am going to do that." And I went out and rode the rides. You know, I would hit my mom and dad for five dollars. When I was in high school and college, my goodness, it was just, it was Coney Island. It did not have a beach. It did have a pool at that time. You could go swimming, too, during the day. I do not know when they did it. I never thought about that. Somewhere in time, they cemented it all in and made it into Kiddy Land. The bus turned around there. I can remember standing there watching. Right by there there were auto cars. Is that what they call that -- with the wire thing on top?

S Yes

M Bumper cars. And next to the Bumper cars was the Tunnel of Love, which was the dumbest ride they ever had. First of all, it was too jerky and bouncy. The parking lot was much better. Well, it was just this little car. The idea was you were supposed to kiss somebody while you were in there. But the car jumped and jerked and twisted around, and you came back out. It was the worst ride in the whole park. The Fun House, I started telling you about that. I could have lived in there. One of the main things about Ohio Edison Day was the fact that we could go in and out of there all that we wanted, because the best ride was the last ride out. You know, when you came down the big slide, you were outside.

S Okay, yes

M Okay? But you could go. I can remember running up the narrow wooden steps and take your rug. You would pick up this old, crappy rug. You would run up to the top of this thing and get on. That was wonderful. It was like skiing except sitting down. Tobogganing. There were some other things in there that I did. But the best slide to go down was the one that would have put you out, okay?

S Yes

M And my pal and I, we would go in there and we would see his father "Get out here" "We do not want to go out" "Get out here now" So we reluctantly climbed up the big steps to the last slide and come out They did not mind leaving us there, I never knew this for years They did not mind leaving us in the Fun House because right next door was the -- what do they call that?

S Hidleberg Gardens

M Thank you So they came in there and they could sit there and we were in the Fun House to do that I hated the Bumper cars because you had to wait in line too long

S When you were in college, did you still go back to the park? How about when you came back to Youngstown?

M Absolutely We did not have television, okay? I did not grow up with television We listened to the radio Very vivid imaginations, I think, much more so than anything else And to go to the park and see, you know, they had people in clown uniforms walking around, and hecklers You know, all these things, it was just alive And, of course, it was never alive as it was at night I will never forget that The first time I went at night.

S The lights were on and everything else

M I was the oldest grandchild There were only three of us born before the second World War They were all born after the second World War, and I was the oldest I was this wonderful toy that these guys got, especially after the war I cannot remember, the park must have been open during the war Was it?

S Yes It was open at reduced hours, just for all the conservation and taking care of things

M Not at night Somebody took me, and I just thought it was absolutely the most magical place And I keep going back to the Canfield Fair because it was also that way In the beginning, the Canfield, when we went you had to sit in all these cars, all these tractors, all this farm equipment It was there for sale Then you saw all these animals and all the races and all this stuff There were not as many I never remembered riding on rides at the Canfield Fair, ever, until I was like 16, 18, something like that What is wrong with the Fair is that it lost the magic They could not have that same magic that Idora Park had because Idora Park, you came up here and there were all rides You had to walk and walk The Wildcat was all by itself There were the boats and there was the Jack Rabbit, and between those were all the venders It was not like that There was a ride here and then you get french fries You cannot find the food you want because they are spread out all over the place

S And there is just tons of food everywhere

M Right. I like the food. I go for the sausage sandwiches and the hot dogs on a stick and that kind of stuff. You know, these are important things to do every year. I guess I remember food, and when I was young they did not have those things. Churches had tents. Vendors sold hot dogs, you know, in stands. And you went there and you went for the whole week, but it was not Idora Park. Our kids do not miss that. They have friends who come home for that weekend. I mean, they come home to see their parents because they cannot miss the fair. It is the same thing about the park.

S How important do you think Idora Park was in the history of Youngstown, Ohio?

M I, God, it has got to be in the top three. I do not even know what the other two are.

S Well, I would think with the steel mills and Mill Creek Park.

M Mill Creek Park is number one, I think. The park had more to do to set the tone of the city than anything else. When you build a city, find some natural wonder that is around where people can go and relax. You know, the kids do not have Idora Park to go to now. If there was nothing going on, we could always go to the park, and there was a lot going on. You would see everybody. Well, you would not see everybody but, you know. You got to see people, and people that I did not know any other way. You know, somebody might say, "How do you know them?" "Well, I do not know, I must have met them there." You know, they went to North and I went to South.

I took the kids there right about the time it was going to go down. They would not get off the three rides. Jack Rabbit, the boats, and the Wildcat. There used to be airplanes, by the way. Oh, you already knew that.

S Yes.

M That was big stuff. It was important. The rockets were big stuff, but somehow the airplane was better. It was the first time I flew, I guess, the first time ever. You know, everybody says a lot of things about this town, its problem children and all that. But I think that the parks, there is something about having this beautiful, natural thing there with the sound of fun going on. When I went to Boardman, somebody came to Youngstown to visit us. I thought -- and I still think -- is this not terrific, because my parents always made the fatal mistake. They would take them to Mill Creek Park, which you have to show somebody. You have to see the old mill and the lily pond and all that stuff. They would hear it and go, "What is that?" And we would get to go.

Even if there were three, four guys cooking around and we had no dates, we could go there. We could do our macho thing, shoot the guns, hit the milk tree. I always wanted one of those milk bottles because I was fascinated with



those I was usually by myself and two or three big uncles, okay? They could do all those things. They could knock the milk bottles off the first time. They could knock the little duck down. So I spent a lot of time with my chin on the counter being marveled about how wonderful all this was, the ducks went this way and the birds went that way, and the bunnies were there and all that stuff. I can damn well see most of them. They spent a lot of time knocking them off. Every time when they were done I got to go fish because you were guaranteed a prize.

S You always won

M Always won. It was dumb and stupid. It did not matter, but the whole thing was you always came home with something.

S You spent 25 cents to buy something that cost two cents. But it was you won something.

M It was two cents.

S Was it? Well, I thought it was 25 cents.

M You are also quite a few years younger than me.

S You always won something, though. In conclusion, what would you like to say about the park?

M I am real sorry. I am real sorry for you. I am real sorry for the kids in high school now that it is not there.

S Think about it, a kid in Youngstown never having a chance to ride a roller coaster. It sounds kind of strange. That is what the first interview I had said. There are people in Youngstown now who will grow up and never ride a roller coaster in their life.

M There certainly was not anybody on the South Side of Youngstown who did not enjoy that and go every year.

S. Yes.

M I was used to riding the little planes around the little thing, so when I came to big planes, it was not any big deal. I was used to it. Do you know what I am saying?

S Yes.

M They had a miniature of what they had big, like the little train. And there was a little roller coaster there. My kids did ride on that. That was still there when my kids went. I remember putting them on there. I do not ride rides anymore, but

that is a physical reason. When the park closed that week our son brought our friends through here, and we were going to go to Cedar Point. "We do not want to go to Cedar Point. We want to go back to that." It is the 1920's nostalgia. Is that right? It was 1890.

S 1890, yes

M Turn of the century, and that was part of the fascination for me. When I got older, I loved to walk behind Belle Vista, all painted in green.

S Brian Cavalier told me that when they were deciding to close it, their final attempt before the Wildcat burned down was to take all the facades off that had been built up from year to year. Underneath they had everything how the original Idora Park looked. He said some of those things had ten or fifteen facades built on top. They would have built on it and gone back to the original design and turned everything back, and painted everything the original colors and turned it into an old-fashioned, turn of the century park.

M Is it bulldozed out now?

S Rabbit is almost all rotted away. The wood is rotted. The Wildcat is done, the Jungle Ride, the Lost River -- whatever it is -- are burned. The Carousel is gone. The only really strong structure that is still there, I guess the ball room is still in good shape.

M. Woody Herman was a Sig Ep, and you know Spike Jones, Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, all those people were here. It was a beautiful ball room to dance in; it really was. They just needed better chairs. I cannot think of very few dances, big dances at this university, that were not there. It was very 1940's, it was very 1940's in the 1950's. The second World War still hung on until the early 1960's out there. A lot of dances you could just go and dance. You did not have to have a partner. Of course, we used to dance. We do not do that either, now. Are there still dances out there?

S. I do not know if anything goes on out there. I think they might do flower shows out there sometimes.

M what happened to the Hidleberg?

S the Hidleberg ended up getting burnt down a couple years later. Somebody torched the Hidleberg, which was one of the only existing structures. Dr. Shale said that that was like one of the very original structures. That had been a restaurant and it had three or four different names. The Hidleberg was the one that most everybody remembers. When it was closing, it was the Crazy Horse Saloon. Well, thank you very much.

M That was fun

End of Interview