

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Mill Creek Park History

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O.H. 844

WILLIAM WHITEHOUSE

Interviewed

by

Raymond Novotny

on

October 18, 1988

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INTERVIEWEE: William Whitehouse
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SUBJECT: Old Mill Museum, Ernest Vickers, Lindley Vickers, forestry crew, Ed Galaida, nature walks, Ford Nature Center, trails, wildlife
DATE: October 18, 1988

N: This is an interview with William Whitehouse for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Mill Creek Park History, by Raymond Novotny, on October 18, 1988.

Bill, can you tell me a little bit about your family from your early life?

W: I think probably of the two, my mother and father, who had the greater influence on me in nature was probably my dad. When I was a little boy my dad would catch garter snakes in the nearby field next to the house, and bring them home. I would put them in a little cage and keep them for a few days. Then he would let them go when I wasn't around. Then he would tell me that the snakes just escaped on their own. I knew he was the one releasing them. I had a hard time sometimes convincing my mother to let me keep the snakes usually. In the cages in the house. I had to do some pretty fancy talking in convincing her that there was no possible way that they could get out of the cage and into the house.

Over all I would say that I was encouraged in my interest in nature by my parents. Never discouraged at all. They always went along with anything I wanted to do in the way of nature activities. And even keeping live animals in the house my mother would always give in finally. Let me keep whatever I wanted.

N: Remember what age this started at?

W: Around four, five years old. Interested in snakes in particular. They fascinated me. That I think is where my interest in nature really began is with the snakes. Of course it branched out from there as time went on.

N: You had two brothers, one brother?

W: I have one brother, and one of my brothers died back in 1957. So I have one brother now.

N: You were the oldest?

W: I was the oldest. I am the oldest yes.

N: This interest didn't spill over with at all?

W: No, it didn't. My younger brother went into electronics, and he is more mechanically, electrically inclined than I am. The youngest of us three boys, who died in 1957, I just have a feeling ... Then of course I have no way of knowing. Had he lived ... He was eleven when he died. Had he lived he may have had an interest in the outdoors, and in nature. I remember in his last year or two he did spend quite a bit of time in Mill Creek Park riding his bike. Used to go down to the old mill museum a lot. There may have been a ... There is no way of knowing now of course. My younger brother who is living today, he went into an intirely different field than I did.

N: Do you remember anything about the early visits to the old mill?

W: Yes, my dad used to take me to the old mill museum when I was a little boy. Used to want to go there all the time. I think the thing that fascinated me there at the old mill museum were the so called pickled snakes. The snakes that were preserved in formaldehyde in large jars. This just fascinated me. I don't know why but I always wanted to go see the snakes in the jars. Quite a few times my dad would take me there. My mother never would, she wouldn't go there usually. She wasn't interested in that. My dad always would. I spent a lot of time there.

Then when I got older, got into high school, and I was working on a butterfly, moth collection I used to spend a lot of time at the old mill museum talking to Mr. Vickers, Lindley Vickers, about specimans that I had caught. Identifying specimans, and also getting advise from him where would be the best place to get certain butterflies, and moths. Where would I be likely to find them. I spent a long time there then

when I was in high school.

N: Now you lived fairly close?

W: Yes, we lived just a few blocks off from the Old Mill. Probably about less than half a mile from the Old Mill. So I spent a lot of time there ... A great deal of time. I had a biology teacher in high school who took us on field trips to Mill Creek Park quite frequently. In fact every Thursday evening she would encourage us, almost insist, that we would go on Mr. Vicker's Thursday evening biology walks in Mill Creek Park. Most of those start from the Old Mill Museum, so we spent a lot of time at the Old Mill Museum.

N: Can you tell me anything about the Vickers'? Ernest was working ... Did you know him very well?

W: Yes I knew Ernest. When we were kids we used to walk ... See the Old Mill was roughly mid way between the elementary school, that I went to, and our home.

N: Cleveland?

W: Cleveland Elementary School in Youngstown here. We didn't ride the bus. We walked, friends and I ... We walked to and from school a good deal of the time at least ... At least during warm weather. On our way home from school in the afternoon we would usually stop off at the Old Mill Museum. At that time there was Ernest Vickers, the first Mill Creek Park naturalist, the father, and also his son Lindley Vickers, the assistant park naturalist. They both worked at the Old Mill Museum. We just referred to them as the old Mr. Vickers and the young Mr. Vickers. So we used to go down to the Old Mill on our way home from school and talk to them, look around. One of the Mr. Vickers would usually take a snake out of the cage and let us hold a turtle or something. The Vickers' got to know us kids pretty well. Even then as an elementary school student I spent a lot of time in the Old Mill Museum, usually on the way home from school. Even on Saturdays and Sundays we would sometimes walk down there to see the live things in the museum.

Ernest Vickers, that is the father, the first park nationalist, was for the most part he was a self taught naturalist. He didn't have a very extensive education. He was a good ... He was a poet. He wrote a lot of nature poetry and he did a lot of writing, nature prose writing. Knew the scientific names for just about every plant and animal in Mill Creek Park. His specialty was ... Well I don't even know if he had a specialty or not. He was especially interested in the ferns, I know. He was considered an expert on ferns.

Lindley Vickers, the son, was much more ... Formal education was much more extensive. He had a Masters degree plus some. Almost a doctorate but not quite. I used to hear people back then compare, certainly after Ernest Vickers died, compare the two. As to their ability, competence as a naturalist. So many people would say that old man Vickers, that is Ernest Vickers, was the better of the two. He was a self made naturalist but he sure knew a lot more about nature than Lindley does. I suppose that is natural. I don't know if that was really true or not. The old people felt that Ernest Vickers was more ...

N: Well he had more time to learn.

W: Yes he did. I guess Ernest Vickers started his employment with Mill Creek Park as a laborer, and as a worker on one of the crews. Then he ... When they ... I don't know how that came about but in the early 1930s when they converted that one room in the old mill into a museum Ernest Vickers was put in charge of it.

N: Maybe that was at his request?

W: Possibly.

N: His idea?

W: I don't know. But then he no longer worked as a laborer of the park but he was made park naturalist.

N: Actually you came to be employed by the park. Could you tell me how that happened?

W: Well, I was working ... It was the summer of 1952 and I was working in Idora Park as a ... Well, I was working in one of the concessions, one of the stands in Idora Park. Then later in the dance hall over there. I was down at the Old Mill Museum one day. A friend of mine was working as the attendant at the Old Mill Museum. He was working under Lindley Vickers. Ernest Vickers had retired several years before that. He asked me, he said, "Bill," he said, "Do you want a job?" I said, "Well, what do you mean? I am working at Idora Park now." He said, "Well, I have to leave Mill Creek Park here to go to Camp Fitch this summer. I am a counselor up there. So this attendant's position, here at the Old Mill Museum, is going to be open. If your interested go up to the park office and fill out an application and talk to the superintendent." So I said, "Yes." It paid a \$1 an hour. Idora Park was paying \$.75 an hour. So I thought, "Well, you know, that is pretty good. That will be a step upward." So I filled out an application and later found out that Lindley

Vickers put in a good word for me, and requested me. So I was hired. My first day on the job was a Wednesday, July 9, 1952 as the museum attendant. That is how I was employed by Mill Creek Park.

N: What did that job entail?

W: That job was mostly one of house keeping. Keeping the museum clean, sweeping the floors, dusting the cases, taking care of any of the live animals we had there at that time, cleaning cages, feeding ... Just day to day upkeep, and maintenance of the museum.

Then one day that first summer Lindley Vickers, park naturalist, had scheduled a nature walk. Was a cub scout den from up around the Hubbard area. Something else came up and he couldn't take them so he said, "Bill, why don't you take them on a nature walk." I was very reluctant about doing this because I had never done that before. He said, "Oh, you will do fine. Don't worry about it you will do fine." So I took them on a walk and it was my first nature walk. I don't know if I taught them very much, but we had a good time. I will never forget it because it was a very nice group. The lady, the den mother, incharge of the groups was very sympathetic. She realized that I wasn't used to leading the group on a nature walk ... Understood that. For the most part went fine, but as I say I don't know how much they learned from me that particular day. That is how I got into nature walks.

N: Want to get into that a little bit more later, but can you describe what a typical day at the mill, or a week at the mill, or how the season went? You spent so much time there.

W: In fact I live there, almost live there. A typical day, for example, would be ... Well, we changed our hours from year to year so they were never the same. I get there in the morning, I would sometimes try to get there before I opened up. Get chance to maybe do a little dusting, and clean out any snake cages that had been soiled during the night. So by the time I was ready to open the museum things would be looking fairly well. There for awhile, for several years during the winter months the museum went on a reduced schedule. On the weekdays, when the museum was closed, I worked on one of the crews, the forestry crew, in Mill Creek Park. Then I was at the Old Mill on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Friday all day was a clean up day for me. I would spend the whole day, eight hours, just cleaning up the building getting it ready. Then Saturday and Sunday would be open from usually 10:00 to 6:00. Then the rest of the ... Took off Monday and Tuesday and then the crew Wednesday and Thursday. There for a

while I was working six days a week, I remember. When I was still getting payed by the hour I was only getting one day a week off, Monday. I worked on a crew Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Then the Old Mill went Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Later on they changed that and said I couldn't work six days any more. Nobody could work over five days. So I went on a five day schedule.

The Old Mill ... Everybody knew the Old Mill. That was one of the most popular places in Youngstown. Everybody knew where it was. You always had somebody down there. Always somebody around. Even on the worst days, when it was raining, or cold, snowy. Even on days when the weather was the worst. You could always find somebody down around that Old Mill. Days when you would never expect to see a living soul come into the museum somebody would come. Somedays more than I thought would ever come in a day like that.

N: Any idea why everybody in Youngstown knew about it?

W: I don't know. It had been there a long time of course. The Old Mill, long before it was a museum, was there. Everybody just knew it. It had been there long enough that everybody knew about it. The Old Mill Museum, the museum itself, had an atmosphere. Had a certain charm about it that you couldn't find anywhere else. Kind of a musty, poorly lit, cluttered little room there, with all these specimens all over. In its early days I should say. There was no other place to find anything like that. As time went on it was modernized, and better lighting was put in. Probably lost something from this.

N: Do you remember when that change was?

W: Yes. It was somewhere around 1953, or 1954. Somewhere in there when they put all new fluorescent lighting in. There for the longest time we had one old type wall phone. The old kind where you ... I don't know how to describe it. You didn't crank it, it wasn't that old. But it was one like the crank kind without the crank. You talked into the mouthpiece on the wall, on the phone, and you had the earpiece separate. It wasn't until quite late that they gave us a new type modern wall phone. There was a ... When they changed the phone even, that took something away from the Old Mill. At least I felt it did. It was progress I guess.

N: Did you get a lot of phone calls?

W: We had a lot of phone calls. Everybody called the Old Mill Museum with any animal problem. Any problem that dealt with wild life of any kind. Everybody called the

Old Mill. Everybody thought that if they had an injured or young animal that needed care that, "Mr. Vickers will take care of it." He usually took them in, he usually did accept them. The Old Mill was a busy place, the phone rang quite a bit, and there were always people in there.

N: Do you remember anything about ... I recall reading about the parking lot going in there. Do you remember when that was, or how it was set up before that parking lot went in?

W: Before that the Old Mill Drive, that is the road that runs from the Old Mill to the city street Kiwatha Drive. It was a one way street, as it is now, and you used to park along the ... It was one way ... Let us see. It was one way going the other direction.

N: Oh.

W: You used to park along the right side of the road there. Then there was a set of steps coming down from the road, down to the path below the mill. Roughly where the covered bridge was there were steps coming down. So that is how you used to get there. Then, and I don't know what year this was ... I remember when they did it. I'm not sure just when it was. They opened that drive up two ways, put a traffic signal up there, and they built the parking lot for the Old Mill on the other side of the bridge. With the underpass coming ... Path, rather, coming from the parking lot, through an underpass, underneath the bridge, down to the Mill. I don't remember when ... It was in the 1950s sometime. Mid 1950s I would say, but I don't remember the exact time. But that is the way it used to be. People used to park right up behind Old Mill Drive right above the mill.

N: Does anything really stand out during your attendant years as a special event?

W: Well, first of all I guess ... Actually I wasn't an attendant very long. I was an attendant for about two years. Then they gave me the title of assistant park naturalist, but I was still at the Old Mill. One thing that stands out in my mind when I was an assistant naturalist then. Although I still had attendance work, still did a lot ... We did hire an attendant then, that is right, but I still did a lot of the same things that I did when I was an attendant. Anyway, one thing that stands out in my mind is the Old Timers exhibit we had. I forget the year we had that, it was in the 1950s again too, mid 1950s.

We had a lot of these old tools and artifacts that were

relics of a by gone era. Old photographs of the park, and people associated with the park, Valney Rogers, and so forth. I thing it was Mr. Davies, the park superintendent who told me to try get an old timers exhibit together, and "we'll display all these old tools and everything." So I did. It took me several weeks to get this all set. We devoted the whole museum, the whole room, to the Old Timers Exhibit. I had it all, I thought, all finished and Mr. Davies and the assistant superintendent came down and saw what I had done. They weren't too ... Didn't think it was that good. They gave me some suggestions, and they said, "Why don't you do this and do that and see what you come up with." So I did. Then they were satisfied. I don't remember all the details, but I know the first exhibit I came up with they didn't really like that much. So when they were satisfied that this exhibit was ready to be viewed by the public there was an announcement put in the Vindicator. We had a photographer from the Vindicator come down. Maybe it was Ed Shuba, I'm not sure. Came down and took photographs of the exhibit and it was in the ... I don't remember if it was in the front page ... Oh no, I'm not sure. I think it was just a front page story in the Vindicator with pictures showing the Old Timers Exhibit. It brought a lot of people down.

We had it for one weekend, and maybe longer than that now I'm not sure. I know we had this Old Timers Exhibit set up for one weekend for sure, maybe more. But we had a tremendous crowd to see that. The attendance that weekend was just phenomenal. Which makes me think now that maybe we held it over for another weekend ... I'm not sure, I don't remember. But that drew in a lot of visitors. A lot of old timers came, and we had one tool that we didn't know what it was at that time. It was put on display with a sign, "Do you know what this tool is? And if so let the naturalist know." Many people gave us suggestions to what they thought it was. Finally we found out what it was. Most of those who made suggestions were right. That sticks out in my mind very clearly for several reasons ... Two reasons basically. One is the tremendous amount of work that went into it, and I had to do it all myself. I was really the only one there. Mr. Vickers wasn't at the museum anymore, his office was up at the main office. So this was all mine. A tremendous amount of work, and the number of hours I had to put in on this. And then afterwards remembering it was all worth while. We just had phenomenal attendance that weekend to see that Old Timers Exhibit.

N: So, you finally pleased Mr. Davies?

W: Yes, finally pleased him. He was very pleased about it. He was right, it wasn't the best I could do first time. It was my first attempt at putting an exhibit like this, with no help from anybody ... Very little help. It wasn't the best, and he made some suggestions, "Bill why don't you do this here, or do that there? Change this, and so forth." So I made these changes, maybe a few more changes beyond that. Finally he said, "Now that is more like it. I think we are ready to open this up to the public." He was right. I'm glad that we didn't open up the way that I had it set up originally.

N: Mr. Davies was superintendent?

W: He was park superintendent.

N: Would you say that he was supportive of the Mill, or was it kind of a low priority? Do you remember?

W: I think he put the Old Mill rather high in the priorities. I think the Old Mill meant a lot to him, mostly as a historical structure. I think that any repairs that had to be done ... Like one year we had a new roof put on it, one year it was painted I remember, and a new porch was put on. Anything that had to be done there usually was done. No, I think Mr. Davies thought a lot of the Old Mill. I think he valued that Old Mill very highly. So, as I said, anytime I felt that something should be done at the Old Mill, a repair here or something to be fixed, I would tell him about it. He always had it taken care of right away. At that time though the park really didn't have a lot of money to work with. Nowhere in the park was there a lot of money to work with. We did have to watch what we spent. We didn't have money to work with then, we couldn't just buy anything we wanted by a long shot. I turned in very few requisitions for anything, for the purchase of any equipment or materials. Made do with what we had. The money just wasn't there to buy things.

N: Did you report directly to Mr. Davies?

W: At first I was directly responsible to Lindley Vickers, and then shortly there after to Walter Scholl. At that time Walter Scholl was the recreation director, and also he was in charge of the Mill Creek Park police department. So Walter Scholl was my boss. There were many times when I would talk to Mr. Davies, mainly because he was the only person who could make a decision on something. I would just go directly to him. Walter, I'm sure, was glad that I did, because he couldn't make a decision on it. I was directly responsible to Walter Scholl.

N: Can you tell me anything about Mr. Scholl. He is quite a character, quite a legend.

W: Yes. Walter probably made more friends for the park than any park employee ever in the history of the park. They called him Farmer Scholl. Everybody knew Farmer Scholl, he was a friend to everybody. Especially the kids, he loved the kids. As it has been said a number of times, by a number of people, he is probably the best public relations man this park ever had. He did nothing but make friends for Mill Creek Park. He was a great athlete in his day. He was a well built, strong man. Kept in good health all his life. Always looked good, looked fantastic, because he was very conscientious about taking care of himself; diet, exercise. He always took good care of himself.

N: I think you told me once that there were people who lived near by that came down to the Mill all the time, and got to be regulars. Do you remember any of them?

W: Always had friends down there. Many of them were neighborhood children. Children who lived near the Old Mill, or at least within easy walking distance of the Old Mill. They were down there all the time, and usually would help me with things. Help me clean cages, or ... We had some live ducks down there for awhile in cages, and I would let the kids take the ducks down to the creek. Let them swim around. Ducks would come back, they would come right to you. Soon as you started walking away from the creek the ducks were right there right at your heels. So I got to know some of the kids very well, and they ... Like I said they would help me out whenever I needed help.

The Old Mill was a very popular gathering place, very popular meeting place. I don't want to say hangout, because it wasn't a hangout by any means. It was just a place to spend some time and visit. All the neighborhood kids, who, of course, now are all adults, used to come down there and just talk. We just talked. Anyway there was an old timer or two who used to come down there too and talk. We learned a lot from these old timers like Harold Hewetson, and a few others. I met a lot of people at the Old Mill Museum, a lot of people. Probably most of them now are gone because they were old then, but I really enjoyed talking to them. I wish those old people were here now. I wish I could talk to them now. I have a lot more questions to ask them now, then I did back then.

N: I heard you speak about Harold Hewetson before. Did he spend a lot of time in the park?

W: Yes. Well, he lived right near the park. His backyard bordered Mill Creek park near the Old Mill. He lived on Rogers Road. Harold came to Youngstown sometime around 1906 I think he told me. He knew Volney Rogers, he took a walk or two with Volney Rogers in the park. Harold's house was right next to where German Lanterman lived. German Lanterman's house was right next to Harold's house there. Part of the foundation I believe was still there at that time. Harold knew a lot about the history of Mill Creek Park. Had a tremendous amount of information, and knowledge of park history. He lived to be ninety-three. Just walked to the park almost everyday. Just a wonderful person. Was a regular on Ernest Vicker's nature walks, and later Lindey Vicker's nature walks. He used to go down to the Old Mill and just sit and we would just talk.

One thing that sticks out in my mind about Harold is ... I will never forget it. A beautiful summer day, and he was sitting on the front porch of the Old Mill, on the bench. I went out there to see him. Here were a man and woman ... Had him practically cornered there on the bench there and they were citing bible scriptures to him. They were just giving him an awful time. I don't know what religious sect they were. I would assume they would be Jehovah's Witnesses. I don't know. They were out there preaching to him on the porch and people had to walk through and around them to get into the Old Mill. I thought, "I can't let this go on. They are making a scene out there." So I called Mrs. Hewetson on the phone, and I told her the situation. She said, "Oh, old Harold, he won't tell those people to get lost as I do. He'll sit and listen to them." So I said, "Well I'm going to go out and tell him that you want him on the phone. How's that? Then maybe they will leave." So I did. I went out and said, "Harold your wife is on the phone. She would like to talk to you right away." He came in and the man and woman left. It was a situation that I couldn't let go on, because they were tying up the whole porch you see. And people ... Visitors had to walk ... Some how get through them to get into the museum.

N: I have heard stories that people accidentally went over the falls, Lanterman Falls. Did any of that happen when you were there?

W: Yes, one fellow went over while I was there in the building. I was standing in the exhibit room with my back to the window that overlooked the falls. I didn't realize all this was transpiring right behind my back, but there was a young fellow out on the ledge above the falls. I had my back to the window and I was talking to one of the policemen. Of course I wasn't looking

out the window. While we were talking some fellow came ... I saw him running past the other window at the far end of the room. I saw him running past the window. He came in the mill, ran over to us, and he said, "There is a fellow down in the pool below the falls. Can't get out." So we went down there, and sure enough there was a guy down in the water. He was holding on to a big rock, trying to climb out. He couldn't. He had fallen in while I was standing by the window with my back to the window talking to the policeman. I found this all out as we found out more of what had happened. Well they finally got him out of ... He lived, he survived. He was injured, but not seriously.

N: Was there a fence there at the time?

W: Yes.

N: There was a fence there?

W: Yes, he was were he shouldn't have been. He went around the fence. There was a fence there and a sign on the fence saying, "Danger, keep away from falls," or "Stay away from falls." He went around the fence and was out there, I think, getting a picture, or something. I don't know, I have forgotten. He went right over the edge. The bad part about it was if you went over that ledge ... Not in the falls itself, but over the ledge. When you would land there was a chance of not hitting water, but hitting rocks below. Even if you went over the water, too though, chances are you would hit that rock below and not the water. How this kid ever escaped not being hurt badly, if not killed, is beyond me. He must have hit just right because that is a twenty-three foot drop. He was lucky, just lucky. Then when he told me ... This guy came in and told me, "Is somebody in the water down below?" I look out the window, and I saw him down there. Was holding on to this boulder. He had just gone over. I felt kind of bad, because if I had seen him, and the policeman right there. We would have gotten him there hopefully before this happened but it was too late.

N: Was this during your attendant time, or assistant naturalist time, or can you pinpoint?

W: This was during assistant naturalist time. That was one of my problems there. One of the headaches of the job, I guess I could say, was keeping people off that ledge. I had to make sure people didn't go out on that ledge. Because there had been some tragedies before. Before I worked for the park there were a number of kids who died, who were killed, went over the falls. The fact that if they were living they would probably be my age today, about my age. So there were some

tragedies, and the park officials said, "We don't want this to happen again." So part of my job was to make sure people didn't go out on that ledge. Some people will give you a hard time, they want to be over there. Usually, almost always, they would leave if you told them they weren't allowed out there. If they didn't then I had to call the police. They had to get them off of there. They were very fussy about that. They wanted to avoid a tragedy at any expense. I can understand that, I don't blame them.

N: One of my high lights was sneaking down and getting under neath the falls one time when I was about thirteen years old. Do many people do that?

W: Yes, lots of people do. There for awhile they didn't mind it, it was allowed. Nobody cared. You could actually go underneath the waterfalls. Then as time went on the park officials became more concerned about safety, and they didn't want people down there anymore. Lot of kids used to climb in the bottom window of the Old Mill. Used to pile rocks up against the foundation of the Mill. Just enough to get them up to the level where they could grab on to that bottom window, that bottom opening, and climb in. There were no bars on that opening then, so they could just go right into the building itself below. Park officials were always afraid that somebody would get hurt down there. Really fall and get knocked unconscious pretty badly and we would never find them until it was too late. So they later put a screen on that window so the kids couldn't get in there. But I had to watch the people ... Kids didn't climb in there too.

N: Back to the Vickers. Their house was named and everything. It is kind of a special place.

W: They called it Birdacre. Actually Birdacre was in Berlin Center right along Route 224, near the railroad tracks. Birdacre belonged to Ernest Vickers, that was his place. Lindley, and his wife, and the family moved in with Ernest Vickers. Then, as time went on, Lindley, and his family took over the house. There was a little shed outside there for ... That was Ernest Vickers'. That is where he lived, in the shed.

N: In the shed, really?

W: Yes. I don't know if that was by choice. I assume it was, but I don't know. That was his shed, and he had all his books out there, and everything.

N: No heat?

W: I'm not sure. There must have been some kind of heat.

I don't know. He called it Birdacre. Maybe birds ... I said Ernest Vickers one of his real loves was ferns. And they were, but birds were too. He was considered an authority on birds also. He loved birds. At that time, back in those days, that was all pretty wild out there. It wasn't developed as it is today. It was way out in the country. All rural ... Berlin Center, Ellsworth, and probably most of Canfield at that time were all rural. So he was right where he wanted to be, nature all around him, birds all around him. But that is why he called the place Birdacre. He loved Birds.

N: In his early years he did a lot of collecting. A lot of that ended up in the Mill?

W: Yes. The birds especially. The collection of bird skins in the Old Mill Museum was property of E.W. Vickers. He started collecting birds back in the late 1800's. He got permission. He got a permit from what ever governmental agency you had to get a permit from back then to shoot the birds with a special kind of bird shot. It would kill them but it wouldn't tear them to pieces. Then he stuffed the skins and they were mainly for study purposes. When he opened up the Old Mill Museum he just displayed his own personal collection of study skins there. The dates on them went way back to the late 1800's, and very early 1900's.

I always considered it a kind of paradox that here was a naturalist who loved birds, and yet could go out and kill them just for a collection. I guess he considered the thinking in that day. The emphasis was on collecting then. Not as much on conservation, I don't think, as it is today. There weren't laws protecting a lot of birds then. What laws there were I have no idea. Lindley told me he got a permit to shoot the birds just for his collection. I'm sure Ernest Vickers or E.W. Vickers ... We used to call him E.W., Ernest Waters Vickers. E.W. Vickers wouldn't shoot anything unnecessarily. I mean he wouldn't go out for the fun of shooting and get just what he wanted. Even that always suprised me. I couldn't think of doing that today. Killing a bird just to mount it for a collection. That was the approach back then, collecting everything. Today, I think, at least I hope we are getting away from this collecting just for the sake of collecting. I don't even collect butterflies and moths anymore because I don't want to kill them just for a collection. He was a collector.

N: One thing I remember from the Mill Museum is all these displays donated by so-and-so, on loan from so-and-so. When you were there, were there many of those donations

coming in or loans?

W: Yes, there was always something coming in. I remember that. People coming in quite frequently wanting to donate this or that to the Old Mill Museum. I am sure that in many cases, with both the kids and adults, one reason that they wanted to donate something was just to get their name up on the label. Wanted to have their name in the Old Mill Museum. Having your name in the Old Mill Museum was kind of a status symbol to people. It really was. Especially to kids but even some adults. I even had some adults say, "Now you will put my name on that, won't you?" I would say, "Sure."

At the Old Mill Museum we used to take almost everything. No matter what it was we would take it. Whether it was in the plant kingdom, animal kingdom, mineral kingdom. Whether it was a man made object, an old tool, an artifact. Whether it related to indian history in the park. Almost whatever it was. An oddity, one of natures oddities, a freak of nature. Like a two headed kitten, the albino garter snake, and the two kittens that were born joined together. Things like that. Everything went on display. So, as time went on you can see why this Old Mill Museum came to be a very cluttered place. Everything just crammed into this small space, this one room. Yes, getting your name on a label in the Old Museum as a donor of a particular object, or exhibit, took on the status of a status symbol.

N: Did you have a particular display that was your favorite or anything like that?

W: I liked the insect collections. There was a whole row of cases with insects in them, and each case would contain the insects that were found in a particular order of insects. For example one case was the Orthoptera, another was the Coleoptera, then the Lepidoptera, and so forth. These were very well done. These were rather large collections. Cases just full of insects, all labeled. This was very impressive. What happened was that this little beetle, one of the dermestid beetles, carpet beetle, got into the cases and one by one just destroyed them. We put moth balls in the cases. But when I started there there weren't any moth balls in the cases. I started putting moth crystals in there because I saw what was happening. It was too late. The beetles had already gotten in there. All that was left of many of the insects were just hollow shells. Those finally just collapsed into powder. So they wiped out the whole collection in time. I'm sure I wasn't as diligent in making sure that the moth balls were replaced continuously. As they dissolved sometimes I would forget to put them in. The secret was to

keep the whole inside of the cage just saturated with the moth ball scent. Once they got in there was not much you could do. That was my favorite. That row of insects all categorized by order was ... That was my favorite.

N: Any problems with vandilism, or people stealing things, or anything like that?

W: We had things stolen. The two faced kitten ... We had several freaks that were donated to us. A kitten with two faces. That is two noses, three eyes actually, the middle eye hadn't quite split, two mouths. Another case where two kittens were grown together. One was growing out of the abdomen of the other. One of those, I can't think which one, was stolen. We found it down on the trail, down going toward the sulfur spring.

They asked if we had things stolen from the Old Mill. We had a number of things stolen. I don't remember all what they were, but I can remember one time somebody did steal an exhibit. I think it was a mounted bird of some kind, but they later returned it and hid it in a place that we didn't find it until later. As time went on it got to be kind of a problem. I had to really watch for this, especially when kids came in the Old Mill Museum and would just hang around in the exhibit room for a long time and keep watching you. See if you are watching them. I often had to get up and just kind of walk around and be near watch them closely. I hated to do it but I had to because there for awhile we were losing too many things.

N: Okay, Bill, back to the Old Mill. I was wondering if we could talk about the overall layout of the mill. Floor by floor, room by room, and then maybe go into the most important room, the exhibit room itself and how it was set up.

W: The Old Mill had four man-made floors and a subfloor, a basement. That was the area between the bottom most floor and the bedrock. I guess we should start at the bottom and go up. Just below the ground level floor there was the floor, that you walked into when you entered the building, the floor below that was the floor that was reached by a sliding door on the southwest side of the building. Steps went down to the overlook of the falls and the sliding doors were right along that wall. That floor was the old bathhouse floor. It was a floor with spaces between the boards. I know when I started working there there were still remains of a few of the old lockers from the bathhouse and the bathhouse rules and regulations were still posted on that southwest wall of the building on that floor. You could still read them. Rules and regula-

tions governing use and behavior in the bathhouse. There was a while there that we had in one corner of that floor a big cage for ducks. Ducks that people would bring in that were found injured or somehow that required care. Mallards usually, we would keep in that big cage downstairs until we released them.

N: Where did you release them?

W: Usually in one of our lakes in the park, or a creek somewhere. Then that northeast corner of that particular floor that we are still on was, I remember there toward the end the building was remodeled and the Mill was restored. That one corner was caving in. I was always afraid to go over there because it didn't look very strong. It was starting to go downward. Then to get from that floor down to the bedrock, you had to open up one of two trapdoors and lower a ladder. That would let you down to one of the ledges below, but that was very dangerous because if you would fall you could end up way down at the bottom. Right down at the creek level. It is all rock down there. That was rather treacherous.

N: The mill was built right into the hillside, right?

W: Right on the hillside, right on the side of the hill.

N: So one side is . . .

W: One side is . . . The bedrock on the outcropping there. So that is the floor below the ground level. Then there is the ground level floor, but we will come to the ground level floor last because it is the main exhibit floor.

Then the second floor, that is the one right above the ground level floor, was reached by a set of wooden steps in the southwest corner of the building. There was a trapdoor there too. When you walked up the steps you had to push the trapdoor upward. It was on hinges. Push it up and back against the wall and then you could go up on to the second floor. There was a floor that was divided into three rooms. An assembly or lecture room where we used to show slide programs to groups and later we were told by the fire department that we couldn't do that anymore because it was a fire hazard. Mainly because there was no easy way to escape from that floor if a fire would break out down below or anywhere because of the trapdoor that opened upward.

Then there was the old laboratory, Ernest Vickers' laboratory. That would have been in the northeast corner. This is where Ernest Vickers would do his taxidermy work, he had his books there, preserved

specimens of all kinds. He even slept there on occasion because if the weather was bad in the winter, the drive home ... He lived in Berlin Center. The drive home was treacherous, because of bad roads, he would just sleep on a cot there. He would sleep there all night. Some of the policemen used to tell me that when they knew he was sleeping up there at night, they were on the night shift and when they were walking down the steps to the Old Mill to "punch" the time clock in the middle of the night they would throw snowballs at the window of the laboratory to wake him up. Both the laboratory and the assembly room were heated, by today's standards, old fashioned gas heaters that you had to turn off and on by hand and adjust the flame by hand.

The third room was simply the other whole half of that floor. It was just all open. This is where, when I first started working there, and was rather active in working out on weights, we used to keep our barbells up there. Bob Landahl and a few of the other policemen and I would go up there and toss the weights around a little bit. Working out. There would be a little bit of competition amongst us.

Then the third floor, the last floor, the uppermost floor, was simply most of the time that I was there was empty. Nothing up there. When I first started working at the park they used to store the canoes there. Privately owned canoes that the park would store for the winter for the people.

N: Did they have to carry canoes up these steps?

W: Yes, they had to carry them up the steps. Once they got the canoes down to the second floor, I would imagine- I don't know, I never saw them do this- they take them out those doors that open up above the entrance to the nature center and lower them down there. I would imagine, rather than take them down another set of steps. I almost would bet that is what they did. Lowered it right down to the porch. I was only there one or two years when they stopped storing canoes there. I think they began then storing canoes at the. . . Well, we used to call it the general foreman's house along West Glacier Drive.

N: By Lake Glacier?

W: By Lake Glacier, yes.

N: You started at the middle of 1952?

W: July 9, 1952 was my first day. Getting back now to the ground floor, that is the floor you entered when you

entered the building from the porch. This was the floor where the museum itself was located. So when you went in that entrance door immediately on your left was the men's restroom. If you kept on going farther down around to your left was the ladies restroom. This room was for the most part just wide open. Once in a while we had a live animal out there, some exhibit. But it was poorly lit, we didn't have any fluorescent lighting out there so we didn't have much in the way of exhibits. We did have some live ducks in a pen out there for a long time.

Then the exhibit room . . . Again if you are entering the building, we said on the left was the men's restroom. On the right was the door that was the entrance to the exhibit room. Half of the first floor, the right half as you entered the building, was all exhibit room, the left half was open and there was nothing. So you entered the exhibit room from the right, the first door on the right, and that whole half of the building was devoted to the displays.

Originally, I was told that the original museum was roughly half of that exhibit room. It was that northwest half. When Lindley Vickers' dad first opened up the museum it was half of that exhibit room. They later knocked out the wall and expanded clear to the end of the building. That was as far as they got. I know when I was there they talked about opening up that whole first floor to the exhibit room for the museum because we had outgrown that already. So we talked about the whole first floor being exhibit space. That would have required some remodeling and better lighting and getting those restrooms out of there. It would be a big task.

There was a very, very poor set up in having those restrooms inside the building with very poor ventilation and those tanks just sat there and would be pumped out every so often. Not very often. I don't think they were pumped out more than once every four or five years. I don't remember exactly of course the figures at which they pumped them out, but it wasn't very often. It wasn't once a year, I know that.

N: So these restrooms were less than modern?

W: They were rather primitive, yes. They were just like holes with toilet seats on the board. Right down below were the big tanks that collected everything.

N: Now a personal thing, in all my years of going into the Old Mill Museum, I never once used their restroom.

W: I'll tell you even though it was my job to take care of

those restrooms and clean them, I didn't use them very often. They provided me with a disinfectant. It was a dark, brown-colored, thick liquid and you diluted it with water. You added mostly water, but when you added that to water it turned the water white, just like milk. You poured one or two buckets down each hole. This would then mix with all that waste material down there and was supposed to remove the odor, but most people, in fact I would say everybody, agreed that the smell of that disinfectant was worse than the waste material itself. It was pretty strong stuff. It was just a poor setup. The restrooms should have been outside. They should have been in a separate building even though they wouldn't be . . . Well, they weren't heated anyway. We never heated that room. That room was not heated. So it would have been cold anyway, it wouldn't matter. But anyway, that is one reason why we didn't expand into that room because of the restrooms. They would have to be removed. Either that or modernized with real good plumbing, flush toilets and all of that.

Anyway, the exhibit room itself as you entered the entrance door was . . . The first on your left was a row of cases against the wall. There was a shelf about head high along that wall with mostly birds of prey. Mostly birds of prey along that wall.

N: Those were collected locally?

W: Those were mostly local, yes. Most of those birds of prey, those hawks and owls, were from George L. For-
dyce's collection of birds.

N: Who was he?

W: He was a local merchant. He had a store up on Phelps Street or somewhere up on the north side in the university area. I forget what he sold. It was a drygoods store or . . . I am not sure, but he was a very well-known, local merchant. He donated a lot of these mounted birds to the park.

As you entered that door again, there was that row of cases along the wall, then there was a row of cases down on the floor. These cases contained the stuffed bird skins of Ernest Vickers, the park naturalist at that time who established the Old Mill Museum and developed it. That was his private collection. He just put them on display there. The birds were shot. These were mostly songbirds and they were shot with a special kind of birdshot that wouldn't damage the birds too much. I don't know what kind it was. Lindley told me that he had a permit from the federal government to shoot this first collection. I don't think he

could do that today. But back in those days naturalists were very much oriented toward collecting specimens. E.W. Vickers was one of them. I think birds were probably his first love, followed secondly by ferns. He was an all around naturalist. Of course he loved all of nature, but I think he had a special fondness for birds. I often wonder how he could kill them if he liked them so much for his collection. But as I understand it, that is how he got his interest in nature was to watch birds. As a young man working for the railroad, inspecting track out there in Ellsworth, he would forget the track. If he saw a bird he wanted to pursue, he would follow the bird to where it was nesting and forget about checking the track.

N: Do you know what railroad that would be?

W: No, I don't. It is one that goes through Ellsworth. I don't know what the name of it is. That was his private collection.

Then right down the middle of the exhibit room was ... Actually there were two rows of exhibits back to back. But one row was the insect collection. The insect collection was divided into a whole row of cases. Each case devoted to a particular group or order of the insects.

N: For the uninitiated, how could we describe an order?

W: Well, for example the order coleoptera is the beetles. The order lepidoptera is the butterflies and moths. The order diptera is the flies and so forth. The odonata is the dragonflies and damsel flies. There was a whole row of insects, just a beautiful collection. They were finally destroyed by this little beetle, the dermestid beetle, that gets into insect collections and just destroys them, eats them. Eats the insides of the insect bodies. So we lost it all very slowly, very slowly. Even though I started putting moth balls in there it was too late.

N: Were these collected by the Vickers too?

W: Well, some were I guess and some were donated by individuals. But the butterfly and moth collection was especially spectacular. We had a beautiful butterfly and moth collection here. Those were one of the first insects to go from the beetle infestation. It disintegrated them first.

Well then there was another row back to back to the insect cases. I don't remember what all was there. We had so many things and changed things around so much. We had some Indian artifacts. I know we had an exten-

sive collection of Indian artifacts; arrowheads, stone tools, and things of that nature.

Then there was of course another row of cases along that north wall of the exhibit room. Along that north wall just to the left of that big window, the northeast corner of the room, is where all the specimens that were preserved in formaldehyde were situated. These were the snakes, the frogs, and the freak animals that were preserved in this formaldehyde-water solution. This little corner there seemed to attract a great deal of attention among people, especially kids. They were fascinated by these snakes curled up in the jars of formaldehyde. I know that is what used to fascinate me when I was a kid, the "pickled" specimens as we called them. I don't know why. Now I don't even like to look at them because I would rather see a live snake, the live animal and not something pickled in formaldehyde. It was a way of preserving dead ones.

N: Was there ever any problem with breakage in all those bottles?

W: Once in a great while, not very often, someone would knock one off the shelf and it would smash on the floor. That was a real mess because some of these specimens were very old and when they broke, the stench, the smell from that formaldehyde and these dead animals was just overpowering. Of course it was my job to clean it up. It was quite a mess.

We had things along both the east wall and the west wall of that room. In one corner, the southeast corner, I remember we had a lot of old tools and old relics from the park. Old ice saws from Lake Glacier, the old wood saws from the mill at the Lanterman Falls there, and the wolverine from New Middletown. He was killed in Middletown. We had that on display at the east end of the room. We had a big case that was near that large window on the northeast corner of the building, north facing side of the building. Because that wolverine was in that window for so long, it all faded out. The sunlight just washed out the deep brown color. It is almost a tan color now.

I remember the wooden floor of that exhibit room. It was just a plain wooden floor. We had to every so often, usually twice a year, I would put a coat of what we called a floor seal on it. You applied this with a mop. You would pour these cans of floor seal, it was like a varnish or stain, into a big bucket and then with a mop, mop this on the floor. Usually I did this in the evening and it would be dry by the next morning. It made the floor look just beautiful. It didn't stay beautiful long. This wasn't a varnish or a stain, even

though it looked like it. This was just to seal the wood, fill in the pores. It made it more resistant to water and other dirt brought in from the people walking in there. It just toughened up the floor. It looked beautiful after I did it.

When I first started there the only lighting in that room was a series of electrical wires hanging down through the ceiling. At the end of each one was a socket with a light bulb screwed in. That was the only lighting there was. There were two rows in the room of these suspended lights. I hadn't been there too long and they took those lights out and put fluorescent lighting in. In a way it was too bad, they thought they were modernizing the museum and lighting it up a little bit- and they were- but there were a lot of complaints about it. Most people said, "Well, you destroyed the whole atmosphere. This dark, poorly lit, little museum. The atmosphere is gone now." Some of them were rather upset about that. At the time it didn't bother me so much, but looking back on it now I can see where there was a legitimate complaint. Because the Old Mill had a certain atmosphere that wasn't duplicated anywhere around here.

N: Wasn't there a unique setup with the insects and the light?

W: Yes, the wire running the whole length of this row of cases, just above the row of cases, there was a light bulb with a shield or a reflector I guess you would call it. A metal reflector, it was painted green on top. But you could slide this light bulb with the reflector over it up and down this wire to put it over any of these cases you wanted to light up at the time. That was different. Lindley was very clever at improvising out of materials at hand. Back then we didn't have much money to spend because in November of 1947 the half mill operating levy that was on the ballot in Youngstown, and was defeated.

N: That was a new levy, additional?

W: That was an additional levy, yes. With the money that would have come in from the passing of that levy, plans were being made to expand the Old Mill Museum. But the levy failed in November of 1947 and; therefore, I came into the picture just shortly thereafter. We just had nothing to work with. I was getting paid \$1 an hour, which for me was good then. Lindley and I just didn't . . . We could buy very little. If we bought pencils we thought it was a big deal, a few pencils or a new ruler. We thought we were getting something. No long distance calls on the phone. You wouldn't dare do that. They were very austere times for the park.

Later on as the park got more money because of the passage of levies, it was very hard for me to adjust to this spending. I wasn't used to it. I am not a spender by nature anyway. I remember one time Lindley got a requisition approved for a new ruler with a metal edge so he could draw straight lines when he was doing his drawings. We would leave it on the table overnight and some of those policemen who used to come in there at night would sit there with that ruler and they would whack it on the desk. Lindley even saw them a few times. In the daytime they would just sit there, didn't realize what they were doing, but they were just hitting it on the desk. That is how they ruined his ruler before, the metal edge. He used to get so mad at them. He would tell them to keep their cotton picking hands off his ruler. So then he decided to lock it up at night so that they couldn't do this.

As I said, the atmosphere of this Old Mill Museum was unique. We have lost that, there is nothing like that around anymore. It is too bad that there isn't some way we could recreate that room. We have got enough pictures of it as it looked and to do it somewhere. It would be nice to reproduce it somewhere just as a great historical display. It is of great historical interest.

N: Now did you have a desk you operated from or an area?

W: Yes, the northwest corner of the room was kind of our little office. It wasn't separated from the rest of the room at all, but in that corner we had bookshelves on the wall. We had a long table, it was a park picnic table, with a solid top. The old type picnic tables they used to use in the park, that was our desk. That was our corner there. We had a heater there, a telephone on the wall, an old fashioned telephone, shelves, and drawers in that corner. So that is where we hung our hat and did our work.

N: Could you get any work done being open and people coming in and out?

W: It was very difficult. Unless it was a rainy day, a day when the weather was just no good, and there was nobody around; otherwise, no, you really couldn't get much done in the way of work that required any degree of mental concentration. Even on rainy days, even on days when I thought, "I'm not going to see a living soul today visit the museum." We did. There were people who visited the museum. It was a very popular place. You almost always saw somebody around. If it was only a lone hiker walking the Gorge Trail, he would have to pass the Old Mill and often he would stop in. If not for another reason, then to use the restroom.

At first we had a pump there. You would be able to get water there. That was our drinking water, was a pump outside the Old Mill. That was the water we drank, that was the water that we used for everything in the mill. Later on the water proved to be contaminated and the city board of health closed it down. So that was the end of our water supply.

The mill was a very popular place. It was a popular gathering place, it was a popular meeting place. Some of my regular neighborhood kids who would come down and help clean out snake cages, or do whatever else had to be done, or just talk. Over a period of years I got to know a lot of the neighborhood kids that would come down there. As I said the Old Mill, maybe it was because of its location in the gorge, next to Lanterman Falls. Even though it was a way from the parking lot, you had to walk to get to it, it seemed like it still had. . . Visitor attendance was always very high there. We had some phenomenal attendance figures on certain days, especially on a beautiful Sunday in May for example. That place would just be full of people.

N: Back to the displays for a minute, you mentioned all the preserved type displays. Did you have live things, a snake cage?

W: Yes, we had live snakes and turtles. We didn't have all of these things at all one time, but through the years we had them. We had many kinds of snakes at one time or another, turtles. We had even mammals, birds on occasion. We often would take in injured animals or baby animals that needed care. Although I never felt we did really an adequate job with them. Later on as I became in charge of the Old Mill I just didn't accept much in the way of animals that needed rehabilitation of any kind. I wasn't equipped to do that kind of work. We had live exhibits.

I think one of the unique features of the Old Mill Museum was that practically anything that was brought in there was accepted by us, no matter what it was. Whether it related to Mill Creek Park, whether it was a natural history item, whether it had to do with human history or it had to do with geology, whatever. We would accept just about everything and put a label on it with the person's name who donated it. I think it was almost a status symbol, at least among the children and even some of the adults, to have their name as a donor on some particular exhibit in the Old Mill Museum. That was one of the first questions the kids would ask, and even some of the adults, when they brought something in, asked, "Could we put our name on it?" So as I said there was no place like it. Of course through the years since we accepted almost anything and

everything, it got to be a very cluttered museum without any systematic order or format to the arrangement of exhibits. Wherever there was a little square inch of space, we would stick something new there that somebody brought in. It was quite a place.

N: Were records kept of the items that came in?

W: Originally they were. There was a museum acquisition record and the Vickers' did keep records, but as time went on it was abandoned I guess. I know when I got there we didn't keep any records. We should have, no doubt about it. If we would have kept one, we should have that record today. It would have been of historical value.

N: So it is not in existence?

W: Just the acquisition record that Ernest and Lindley kept. I still have that. It was in a book that Lindley gave me years ago. It was just his personal record, it wasn't an official park record. The park kept no record. He just did this in his little record book that he kept for himself. So I had that, but that only goes up to the early 1940's I believe. Late 1930's or early 1940's and that is it.

Now I know that Lindley kept a record of everything in his personal diary for each year. So in his diaries, which I assume his family has, would be a record of I would say everything that was ever brought into that Old Mill Museum. He was very meticulous in keeping records in his own diaries.

N: Back to snakes, you know we both have a big interest in snakes. I read that in the old days bananas would come in, and spiders, and snakes would end up coming. Did that ever happen?

W: Yes. We used to get tarantulas from South America, and we would get boa constrictors. We got a poisonous snake once, an eyelash or palm viper from one of the South American countries or Central America. It came up in some bananas I think. It was alive. But that was not unusual at all for a while there. Then they must have improved their . . . Well, I don't know what they did actually, I have no idea. But they must have some way or other made some improvements in how they inspect their produce that was being brought into this country. Then it got to be more unusual for anything to be brought up with bananas or whatever fruit it was. Finally there was nothing. At one time it was quite common, and it was usually tarantulas. It wasn't unusual to have a tarantula come up in a bunch of bananas from South or Central America, but that hasn't

happened for a long time, as far as I know anyway.

N: Do any of the exhibits really stand out in your mind as popular? We said all the bottles for the kids.

W: Well, there was one that was very popular. I know it made an impression on me when I was a little boy, my dad would take me to the Old Mill Museum. That was the young bald eagle with its wings outspread. The one that we still have here at the Fort Nature Education Center on exhibit. This is the one that was shot in Omaha, Nebraska back in 1938 I think it was. It was a two year old bald eagle that didn't as of yet have its white head and tail feathers. It was an immature bald eagle. Lindley and his dad had that bald eagle right on top of one of those very large, high exhibit cases just as you came in the entrance there of the exhibit room. So when you walked in that door and you looked up, here was this bald eagle right over you with his wings spread out like this. That really impressed me as a kid. So that sticks out in my mind.

I think what I really remember the most perhaps is the insect collection, especially the butterflies and moths. I spent a lot of time in the Old Mill Museum in my early teenage years because I was very active in putting together a butterfly and moth collection of my own. I used to go down there all of the time to look at the museum's collection to help me identify my specimens. I would be down there talking to Lindley Vickers a lot about butterflies and moths. So those stand out in my mind.

The wolverine that was shot down in New Middletown stands out in my mind because when I started working there it was still fresh in the minds of many people, the wolverine incident. People still came in and asked about it and wanted to see it. So I got to know a little bit about the story behind the wolverine. That kind of stands out in my mind. As I say that one exhibit room was just jammed full of so many things. You could spend days in that one room and not see everything. Things were hidden away in corners, behind things. It was probably, from a museum curator's point of view, an absolute disgrace as to how it was laid out and how things were just so cluttered with no order to anything. But yet it was different and it attracted people. People wanted to see that. It met no professional standards whatsoever, but again it was unique. I would sure like to see that room somewhere in this park in some building, a room like that, duplicated. It would be difficult to get specimens like that again, but I think there is still the material all around here to put something together like that.

N: Do you think the Vickers operated in isolation or would they be the type of people to go look at another museum and see how things were set up? Do you think they just pretty much worked on their own?

W: I don't know. I don't think Ernest did much traveling to see how other parks were doing things because he lived back in the 1920's and 1930's. I don't think he did, no. But now Lindley did a little more than his dad did. I know later on when we both belonged to the Association of Interpretive Naturalists, Lindley and I would travel every year to the annual conventions and spend a week or so there. We did get to see what other parks and other nature centers were doing. Lindley got a lot of ideas. By that time, you see, Lindley was not associated with the Old Mill Museum anymore. He was at the main office by that time. I got some ideas. Times have changed since then, that was a different world then.

They just put this together. The Old Mill Museum just kind of eventually assumed a personality of its own. It just grew year by year until finally it evolved into this unique entity with the atmosphere that it had there, especially before they put in the new lighting. That ruined the whole atmosphere of the place.

N: These pictures we are looking at we see Lindley here in a coat and tie. Was that typical or was that maybe posed for?

W: I think that was posed for. Unless he had just come from or was just going to give a talk. Lindley never wore a coat or tie to work. He just wore work clothes. Now if he were going out to a dinner or to show slides, he would have a suit on. But other than that, no.

N: Tell me what you remember about Lindley's scientific training.

W: Yes, Lindley had a very good education, formal education. If I remember correctly he got his bachelor's degree from Dennison University. Then he got his masters at Ohio State. All he told me was after he got his master's degree in botany, he was working on his PhD and . . . He never liked foreign languages and he had an awful time with foreign languages. There was a language requirement to satisfy for his doctorate. He said that he had most of the other work done. He kept putting it off because of the language requirement that he had to satisfy and fulfill, and then he got married and just dropped the whole thing. I remember he said his dad was really upset with him that he didn't go on and get his PhD. He had a very good formal education.

Now his father, Ernest Vickers, didn't have that kind of an education I don't know that he graduated from high school. I could be wrong. I just don't know how extensive his formal education was. If I remember correctly, he may not have graduated from high school. Again I am not quite sure. But Ernest Vickers was, as everybody said, a self-taught naturalist. All the old timers who knew him and who used to attend the public nature walks regularly back in those days regarded Ernest Vickers as a superb naturalist, just fantastic. He was a poet. He wrote a lot of poetry. He knew the scientific names for practically everything that lived around here at least.

I remember we used to compare the two, Lindley and Ernest, as to their competence as naturalists. I remember more than one person said, "Oh, Ernest was the better of the two. In spite of Lindley's extensive formal education he never could live up to his dad." That was just opinions of course. They were both fantastic as far as I am concerned.

N: Something simple, the museum. Heat-wise was it cold in the winter?

W: Oh boy, it was something else in the winter. Unless you were bundled up and had a coat, hat, and even gloves on- I mean on the coldest of winter days- you just couldn't sit at that table in the corner very long before you would just get too cold. There were two heaters. We had one in each end of the room. They were floor type heaters and they were hooked up with fans.

As I said there was a heater at each end of the room. Gas heaters with fans on the back of them. They were floor heaters. Stood about three feet high. They were the newer ones. When I first started there there were gas heaters there but they had no thermostat on them. You had to turn them on by hand and you had to adjust the height of the flame and so forth. Then they came in, I forget what year it was, and put the new heaters in. These had a thermostat on them so that we could set the thermostat where we wanted.

You have to remember that the Old Mill was not insulated. No wall in that whole building anywhere was insulated. There were no storm windows. Just a single pane of glass windows. Heat loss out of that room was just out of sight probably. We only heated the exhibit room. We kept the doors closed in the winter, and tried to keep as much heat in as we could. The heat loss was just fantastic. So those little heaters were going all the time in the winter. The floor was cold, because remember that wooden floor ... There was a

wooden floor, just one layer of wood. One thickness rather of wood I think. Right below was the cold air from the basement. There is all rock down there so it was very cold. If you sat on the heater, as many of us did, and dangled your feet down in front, or put your chair right up in front of the heater and leaned against the heater, then of course you would get warm. Too hot.

Then one of the carpenters... Bill Powell was a carpenter for many, many years. Old Bill Powell he was a cabinet maker. People often wondered what he was doing down here at Mill Creek Park doing this rough kind of carpentry work for the park when he could be out making real money as a cabinet maker. So anyway, old Bill, Welshman, he was a funny guy. He was funny.

Anyway, Lindley used to complain about his feet being cold in the winter. While sitting at his desk he would have his feet on the floor. Then they would get cold. So Bill made Lindley a little wooden foot rest that raised his feet up above the floor. I don't know where that is today, it might still be around somewhere. Just a simple affair. I remember one thing about Bill is that he could never find his tools. He would be working somewhere and he would always say, "Where is my bloody hammer?" He said, "Where is my bloody this or that." He could never find anything when he wanted it.

Heating that place was a problem in the winter time. In the summer, of course, it wasn't so bad because we could open windows. You get a nice cool breeze through the air because you have the waterfalls right out the window. We were down there practically in the gorge. So it was cool in the summer, but in the winter you just couldn't get that room warmed up.

N: On a couple sides at least, surrounded by the park, was there much wildlife activity back in the old days?

W: Yes, there was. There was a lot of life in the creek. Then we noticed that we started to lose aquatic life in Mill Creek by the falls there, and all through the park, after they built the sewage treatment plant in Boardman ... The Boardman Waste Water Treatment Plant out there on Parkside Drive. From that point on it was downhill for the aquatic life in Mill Creek Park because they emptied their effluent into Mill Creek at the south end. South of 224, of course. Eventually that came down Mill Creek past Lanterman's falls.

One of the first forms of life that I noticed disappearing was the hellbenders. It was very common to look down from the window of the exhibit room at the falls, in the summer, and see the hellbenders basking

in these little shallow pools with a rock down there below the falls in the sunlight. Very, very common. Kids would catch hellbenders on their fishing lines and bring them into us. They were scared to death of them. As time went on we didn't have any more brought in. I doubt there are any hellbenders left in Mill Creek today because they are very sensitive to water pollution. Most of it began with the construction of the sewage treatment plant by the county in Boardman Township along Mill Creek.

N: Remember the year on that?

W: It was somewhere around 1962. Somewhere in the early 1960's. 1962 sticks in my mind. That was the beginning of the end of water quality in Mill Creek Park. That and then some septic tanks too in the Boardman area that should have never been installed in the first place. Because they weren't functioning right. I guess that is mostly a clay soil out there, and their filter beds just couldn't handle that sewage and it ran off into Mill Creek. Too much development, too much civilization out there in the Boardman area around Mill Creek that caused the death of a creek. Of course now, with the expansion of that treatment plant in Boardman, we should over the next few years notice an improvement in the water quality of Mill Creek.

There was an unusual kind besides hellbenders, queen snakes. Queen snakes were very common below the falls and in the creek, very common. No trouble finding queen snakes. I don't know if you could find one today.

N: I have never seen one.

W: Very common. Black snake found just across from the Old Mill on the west side of the creek one year. There were a lot of these animals that were fairly common then. Wasn't unusual for someone to bring one into the Old Mill Museum. Civilization began to take its toll on the park. Degradation of the water quality by the Boardman area there, and also abuse of the park by people. Just too many people were using the park, and not using it properly. Eventually you lose your wildlife.

N: Okay Bill, for awhile you had kind of a double job at the Old Mill and then with the work crew.

W: I guess the powers that be here at the park thought I was not earning my pay maybe, I don't know. Back around 1957 we went on a schedule at the Old Mill Museum of just keeping it open on weekends, closing it during the week. Mainly because it was felt that there

weren't enough people coming in during the week.

N: Is that all year like that, or just cold months?

W: During the cold months I should say, yes. Not all year. From say October through March, something like that. It didn't pay to keep the Old Mill Museum open on weekdays. So they had me close it down on weekdays and just open it on Saturdays and Sundays during this time of the year. Since I was a full time employee they had to find something for me to do during the week. So they gave me some real work to do. Physical work to do on the forestry crew.

For a long time I worked six days a week. I was off Monday. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday on the crew. Friday all day at the Old Mill cleaning it up. It was closed and I was inside cleaning up for the weekend. Then Saturday and Sunday open 10:00 to 6:00. Then as time went on they decided that I shouldn't be putting in a six day week. Everybody should be only putting in a five day week. Especially since I got paid by the hour. So they cut me down to five days, off Monday and Tuesday. So that just gave me then Wednesday and Thursday on the crew.

It was a nice schedule. It was a very nice schedule. I learned a lot about tree work on the crew. Got to be in pretty good shape. Did a lot of heavy work, more so than they do now. It wasn't like it is today at all. We rode on the back of an open truck to the work site. We didn't come in for lunch any where. We had to eat out in the field. To keep warm we had a fire in a big barrel. I learned to dress for the weather of the day. In the morning I made sure when I left the house that I was dressed for being out eight hours. I just froze. So I learned very quickly. I did two things. Yes, I worked at the Old Mill Museum, even though I was officially the assistant to the park naturalist then, I worked at the Old Mill Museum on weekends and on the crew during the week.

N: Do you remember the principle people you worked with on the crew?

W: Yes. The first foreman of the crew was a fellow named Albert Mina. Albert I think was from Czechoslovakia. He had been a forester over there and he came to this country. He didn't speak English very well. He knew his trees. I worked for him for awhile.

Then Albert left and Dick Bates was given the job. I worked with Dick the rest of the time. I enjoyed working with Dick, he was ... A lot of people didn't like him here in the park. I enjoyed working for him.

He was behind us men. Backed us up all the way, he wasn't afraid to tell anybody no matter who that person was, any of the bosses in the park, he wasn't afraid to tell them just what he thought. He would defend us anytime he had to. He was very outspoken. He didn't hesitate to talk to the superintendent when he felt that he should talk. In fact that was one reason he was kind of the bad boy around here. He was a good foreman, and I enjoyed working for him very much.

N: There is a regular crew whose full time job was to work on the trees, or whatever.

W: Yes. The crew was a full time, year round crew. I was just an extra person two or three days a week. That was all. When I wasn't there, of course, they did without me. They did with one fewer person. The crew part was just part time for me. The Old Mill was part time, but I was a full time employee with a title; assistant park naturalist.

N: Being that you were a naturalist going to college at night ...

W: Yes.

N: Most of the other people weren't doing anything like that. Was there any problem with acceptance on a few?

W: No, I don't remember any. I would go to school at night. I would get home from work about 4:30, get cleaned up, have supper, and be up at the University for classes. When I started it was Youngstown College then it became the Youngstown University. It wasn't a state institution yet. I headed up to the university, or college, whatever, for 7:00 class. I would be there until 10:00. So I crammed in the school just about every night, and in the summer months I went even in the morning 8:00 to 9:30. Then would be to work here by 10:00, work till 6:00. Then in the summer be up at the university again for 7:00 to 10:00 classes. I don't think there was any problem there because I certainly did my share of the work.

In fact Dick used to tell me sometimes to, "Slow down," or, "Don't do that, take it easy." Here I was it doing because I wanted to. Like loading logs onto a truck. I wanted the exercise. I wanted the physical exercise of doing it myself. He would always say, "Hey, let somebody help you with that it is too heavy," or, "Slow down take a break." I pulled my own weight. We got along very well. We had no problems.

N: Remember any funny incidents or anything?

W: At lunch time in the park, say in the winter, it would be cold and snowy. Dick Bates would usually get a fire going first thing in the morning in this big barrel. We cut up small dead branches ... Most of the work I was on for so long was on dead elms. We were cutting down and removing the dead elm trees in the park. At that time the only formal program, if it was a formal program, of combating Dutch elm disease was just one of sanitation. Cleaning up, burning up the dead elm trees. Much of the work I was involved in was that. So Dick would, first thing in the morning after we would arrive at the work site, cut up some dead branches off of an elm and put it in the barrel and get a good fire going. So by lunch time we had a real bed of hot coals in there and we could toast our sandwiches over the fire. We would find a forked stick and lay our sandwiches on that forked stick and put it over the fire. It wasn't unusual to drop your whole sandwich into the fire.

Dick used to bring game meat that he had shot himself to work. For example squirrel, rabbit, groundhog, he would always pass it around. Dick was a hunter. He was an outdoors man, hunter. Avid, avid hunter. He lived for hunting and trapping. Although I didn't agree with that sort of a pursuit that was his business. It was probably the only time I ever ate any of this wild game. I have never eaten any since and I hadn't eaten any before. So he did bring us some wild game to eat.

I remember once and awhile, when there was nobody around the fire, he would throw ... We would find an aerosol can somewhere in the park. He would throw it in there and that thing usually would go off like a hand grenade. He would always make sure nobody was standing around. If a policeman walked by, Ray Carroll once was walking his beat ... That is when many of the policemen had long walking beats everyday. Ray Carroll was one of these old policemen and he may walk by and see us there. He would come up to the fire and then if it was lunch time we would give him something to eat. He would eat with us and be on his way. It was a good time. We complained a lot, of course, about having to ride in an open truck in some freezing temperatures. Now they would never think of having to do that. Didn't hurt anybody.

N: Back to going to college again. You had a different major than most naturalists probably.

W: What I was planning to do while I was in school ... My major was mathematics. I first started out with a minor in education and my plans were to leave the park when I graduated. I wanted to be a teacher and I

thought I would teach mathematics, say on the high school level. Finally I had most of my requirements out of the way and then to finish my minor in education, as I recall, I would have had to do my student observing and then student teaching. That would have meant that I couldn't work at the park. I had to be at a school all day. So I had to make a decision. Do I want to leave my job at the park now, or change my minor? Well, I decided that I didn't want to give up my job at the park. So I changed my minor from education to biology. Then I went and picked up the biology courses. In fact Dike Beede was teaching a preforestry course and I took that. By the time I graduated I had a major in mathematics, actually I had way more than a major. I took a lot of math. When I needed an elective for hours I took another math course. I had a major in math, a minor in biology. And gave up the idea of teaching in school.

N: You were at the park for thirty-three years I guess and a naturalist for maybe twenty-five of that. I don't know.

W: Pardon me?

N: Or in a naturalist role.

W: A naturalist for thirty-one years. From 1952 to 1954 I was an Old Mill Museum attendant. In 1954 they made me assistant naturalist. So, it would have been about thirty-one years as a naturalist.

N: Did you see the role of the naturalist change? Even comparing the Vickers and their situation to which you moved into. Did you see it change over the years very much?

W: Yes. I think when I first got into the field the emphasis was naming and identifying things. Once you gave a name to something; a wildflower, a bird, a mammal, a reptile. You, in essence, said everything there was to know about that particular thing. You give it a name, hey that is it, that is the end of the matter. As time went on it seemed that the emphasis changed. A naturalist leading a nature walk, for one example of a nature activity, wouldn't concern himself so much with knowing everything that he sees, and naming everything. But more in describing relationships. More in trying to relate nature to our own lives. Also, I know in my case, I became less and less concerned with identifying objects, living or nonliving, as I did with trying to help the people understand their relationship to nature. Also how important it was that we do everything we can to save our natural environment. My approach, and I think the

general approach of naturalists, changed from one of being just a descriptive approach to one of actual interpretation, and more ecological in nature.

An approach that showed relationships of all living things to each other and how we, the human species, are just as much a part of the system as is the garter snake, and the raccoon, and the possum. We are part of it just as much as they are, no more, no less. So, I tried to stress these relationships and make people aware of how we were destroying these natural systems. How we had to change the way we live, or we are going to destroy everything. I know my approach changed drastically. I think the approach of many naturalist did. It wasn't sufficient any more just to name something, that wasn't important. Although in the course of discussing relationships and looking at the broader ecological picture you had to give names to things. You had to know what these things were. It wasn't the end in itself as it was originally.

N: I think I saw on the obituary of Lindley Vickers that there wasn't a plant, animal in the park that he could not name. I'm sure that would have been maybe even truer with Ernest. Naturalists today probably wouldn't fit into that.

W: No, I don't know. I think, for example, when Ernest was at his peak here, and even Lindley for awhile in his earlier years, the need for preserving nature, although was always evident and they were aware of it, it wasn't as important as it is today. It hadn't assumed the urgency that it has assumed today. So they concentrated more on just knowing what everything was. It was just a ... Well, for example, if somebody found anything, any natural object, you would say, "Take in to Mr. Vickers at the Old Mill. He will know what it is. He will give a name to it." He usually did. Very seldom did he not. If he didn't know what something was he would never ... That is Lindley Vickers I am talking about. Lindley would never hesitate to say, "I don't know." That didn't happen too often. He would come up with something.

N: The park has always offered hikes or walks to the public, and there was a time there when they ceased?

W: Yes. Ernest Vickers started the nature walks. We are talking about the public nature walks. They were open to the public usually on Sunday afternoon, sometimes on Sunday morning, Saturday morning, whatever. Then, of course, Lindley being the assistant naturalist he took them over and when he became park naturalist. As the years went by fewer and fewer people came out for the public nature walks. There for awhile, I know because

I used to go on them ... I wasn't a park employee then I was just a high school student or younger. I used to come on the nature walks and I noticed it was the same people every Sunday. Even at my young age I was aware of the fact that these people were forming almost, or becoming almost, what you could describe as a clique. An exclusive group and any newcomer would almost feel unwanted. Although that wasn't intentional, it just seemed to be that was the way it was. So, in 1954 the public walks were discontinued because of lack of interest. Lack of public participation. I was part of the picture then.

Then through the years people, every so often, somebody would come in the Old Mill and we would be talking. They would say, "How come you don't have those Sunday afternoon walks anymore?" and I would tell them why. As time went on more and more people were coming in wondering why the park had discontinued the public nature walks. So, I went in to talk to the superintendent one day, Mr. Davies. I told him that we were getting a lot of requests for public walks again. I said, "Can we start them up again." He said, "Yes, let's try it." Now this was twelve years later. They were discontinued in 1954, this was September of 1966. He said, "Let's try them again." But he said, "I'll tell you Bill. I want you to keep one thing in mind. We don't want what happened to the earlier walks to happen to these. We don't want people to feel that they don't belong. That they are not welcome. These are for the public." He said he wanted to make sure everybody feels like they are welcome, "Don't let it get to be finely just a few of your friends coming along." On Lindley Vickers last few walks the only person there was his son David. The two of them would go. Mr. Davies said, "Now we don't want that to happen."

We started them up again in September of 1966, with just phenomenal attendances. Several hundred people would come out on some of these walks.

N: Several hundred?

W: Several hundred. We had well over two hundred once. In fact, it was either first or second year I don't remember now but we were having so many people we had to have two walks. We had one at, I think, 1:30. Then the other one at ... Let's see 1:30 to 3:00 and then 3:30 to 5:00. Hoping that the people that wanted to attend the Sunday afternoon walk would be equally distributed between those two. It worked out pretty good. My fear was that we would have everybody come for the first one and nobody for the second one, or vice versa. It didn't happen that way. It was pretty

well split up very fairly between the two walks. It worked out very well. They proved very, very successful. As you know since September 1966 they are still going on to this day. It was an experiment to see again if these would go with the public. They did, but I made every effort to make sure that I didn't ignore newcomers, and spend all my time giving attention to my friends and the regulars. I made sure I didn't do that. I agree with Mr. Davies that would probably have been the beginning of the end for these walks, if that happened over a period of years. I know I felt that way with Lindley Vickers walks there for awhile. I felt that I just didn't belong here. I didn't know any of these people and there was always a handful, a half dozen or so. They kind of kept to themselves pretty much. It wasn't intentional, it is just the way it evolved. Just the way it happened. So we had to make a conscious effort to resist that when we reinstated the walks.

N: Then, during the twelve year gap without walks, was the park offering any programs?

W: Not public. Nothing ... Well, I wasn't in our department, nature education department. If I can call it that. We didn't offer anything for the public. We had school. I was doing a lot of work in school classes. A lot of field trips to school classes. But no public walks.

N: So, there was no drop off in the school attendance then. That was steady.

W: Yes.

N: There aren't many naturalists around but I guess there was an organization for them late in the 1960s. AIN?

W: Oh yes. It started out ... I'm not a member any more. It started out, before it was the Association of Interpretive Naturalists, as a work shop for interpretive programs. I believe it started in 1955. I think, now I don't swear to this, but I think the first one was in 1955 in Bradford Woods, Indiana. The second one was the following year. Then the third one, I know was the third one in 1957 that Lindley Vickers and I attended, third annual workshop on interpretive programs. This was really, really a delightful get together because they only had about fifty to sixty of us total. Everybody lived for the three or four days that we were together. We lived in rather close quarters at this lodge out in the woods there.

N: In Indiana?

W: In Bradford Woods, Indiana. Lindley and I made the drive over there in his car and that was in 1957. Then I know what year it was, early 1960's was it. I'm not sure. Out of these workshops was established the Association of Interpreted Naturalists; AIN. So, at one of those meetings they must have decided to organize and make it an official organization which they did. It started out as the workshop on interpretive programs. Looking back on it I guess I really enjoyed those small gatherings. Because they were small. We used to go out on field trips, and each person would take ... The experienced naturalists there would take turns in leading nature walks and you would learn a lot from them. A good many of those people are gone now because they were middle aged, elderly then. They are not living any more.

Those are the kinds of workshops I think they should have; small, regional. Of course I think this was national. I don't know. I guess there were people from all over. This part of the country anyway. Even though there were only fifty or sixty of us. That was one reason I dropped out of the AIN. Starting to be a monster organization. Although the regional groups are probably pretty good. Growth changed the organization. I don't quite know what it was. Of course now maybe it is more effective, I don't know. I'm not a member anymore.

N: Was Lindley one of the people leading the walks?

W: Yes. Lindley at that ... The first one we went to in 1957 at Bradford Woods Lindley gave a slide show on Mill Creek Park. Then we had the old fashioned projector where you had to advance your slides manually. No carousels or anything like that. He did the slide show for those people that they never forgot.

N: Really!

W: He had scenes of rain and lightning and he pushed the slide in real quick and pulled it back. Back and forth. He would make noises like thunder. All that manually see. It was pretty clever for those days and people never forgot that. We were reminded of that at subsequent meetings. Lindley Vickers slide show and the lightning. Very good. Lindley was a real showman. He was a showman and he could entertain. He did with that simple demonstration of lighting on the screen just using slides and sliding the slide in real quick and back out. In again out again. Making noise like thunder. I forget how he made it, the thunder noise. It was with his voice or maybe he went (makes noise) on a table or something. I don't know. Make a thunder clap. It really impressed everybody.

N: Good. But he didn't lead any of the outside walks with you at all?

W: I don't remember. He may have.

N: Now wasn't there another club started here in Youngstown, a hiking club? Or reinstated during those years?

W: Yes. Our park Sunday afternoon walks, the one we had just started up in September of 1966, were doing so well. I got the idea one day of perhaps starting a local private hiking club, no association with the park. I forget exactly. I think it was in the fall of 1966 shortly after we started these up. We met in the parking lot of Stitt Pavilion. I said, "I'm going to put out a request here today and see what happens." So, as we were gathered in Stitt Pavilion parking lot, I made the statement, "If any of you folks are interested in organizing a hiking club..." I don't know if I said Youngstown Hiking Club, I don't even remember. "But a local hiking club here in Youngstown, a private group. No association with the park. None what so ever. Let me know what we can do." There was a lady who attended that Sunday afternoon public walk here in the park by the name of Ann Ceranic from Campbell. Anne said, "I will write to Esther Hamilton and see if she could put a little notice in her column that we are trying to get a hiking club going." Well, she did and Ann got quite a bit of a response. I remember we had our first meeting of those interested at Janice Bell's home in Canfield. Kind of organized ... John Holzbach was there and we kind of got it going.

From then on they continued to schedule hikes. So now it is down to, I understand, just a handful of people. The same people all the time. The Youngstown Hiking Club that is how it began. In a sense it was an outgrowth of our park hikes. No connection with them at all. We call them in the park here, we call them walks rather than hikes. Unless we scheduled a long hike. I always, I was very arbitrary in this, but I always said that anything under two miles is a walk. Two miles and over is a hike. Would schedule ... It was either that or anything up through two miles was a walk and over two a hike. Whatever, two miles was the break off point. I used to schedule a few longer hikes and most of them we just called walks. Hike, we kind of thought at the very beginning, might scare some people off. They might think, "Oh a hike, I can't. I'm no hiker. I don't have the endurance for a long hike." So we called them nature walks. Thinking that maybe it would bring more people.

- N: Were you able to participate with the hiking club since you were leading all the park walks?
- W: I did a few but then they started scheduling their hikes on Sundays, Sunday afternoons. So I couldn't go. I wasn't their regular participant.
- N: I wanted to talk a little bit about an important man in park history maybe, Mr. Galaida. You knew him and can you tell me who he was and what he did?
- W: Well, I could write a book on Ed Galaida I guess, because we were very close friends. When we first met I wasn't married. Ed had never married. He was bachelor till the day he died. Ed was an interesting man. I can honestly say that Ed Galaida had a great deal of influence on my thinking. Not just as regards nature because he wasn't a naturalist. He was a writer. But as regards my view of life, and religion, and philosophy. We used to have long discussions on this. Ed was a free thinker, as I am. He was anti-religious to a great extent. He believed in ethics. He was a good man, but he didn't believe in any conventional religion. I wonder why. I can say he had a great influence on my thinking. We spent a lot of time at the Old Mill Sunday afternoon just talking about these things. We used to cook our suppers out in the park on Sunday evenings. At that time I was still a meat eater. We always had ... He would buy the steaks and we would make our own coffee, and everything, over the fire and the steaks. I never know where to start with Ed, because he was such an interesting person.
- N: He was really well educated wasn't he?
- W: Yes, he was a graduate of Harvard. I always used to tell him, "Ed, you know you can always tell a Harvard man but you can't tell him much." He was very opinionated. As I say he was a writer really by training, by profession. He was a writer. The jobs he held down were all rather prosaic jobs. For example he was an interviewer at the Ohio Bureau of Employment Compensation when he retired. He just had a job which paid minimum wage and he interviewed people. Trying to get them a job. He hated the job with a passion because of the caliber of people that he had to deal with. In his own mind now I am saying, because I don't know what kind of people he dealt with. That is what he told me. But it was a job. He gave up writing rather early because he said, "I realize I had to eat too, and there just wasn't enough money in writing."
- N: Did he write fiction?
- W: He wrote one science fiction story and he wrote for the

Vindicator briefly. He had a disagreement with them and then he left. I'll never forget what he told me what it was. He said, "In ..." He wrote an article on a car accident and he used the word veer, V-E-E-R, the car veered. Then he was told, by whoever was his supervisor, that he shouldn't use that word because the average reader wouldn't know what the word veer meant. It sounds unbelievable doesn't it. That just blew his mind so he quit. He just left. He said, "Well, I have to write like I'm writing for a bunch of first grader." He said, "This isn't work for me." So he got out of that. This book on Mill Creek Park was a writers project under the WPA. He worked for the WPA as a writer of local history. Since he was a native Youngstown-er he decided to write it on Mill Creek Park. That was his contribution to the WPA. So that is how he wrote the book on the park. But there is so much to tell you behind the book. I don't even know where to begin.

It is a good book, it is a real good book. I was his salesman for quite a few years. See, we weren't allowed to sell these books at the Old Mill because Ed and the park officials had gotten into a little ... Well, it was a controversy really. They really got into a disagreement as to how this book would be published. So, he finally ended up printing it himself in Cleveland. Paying for the printing all by himself. I take that back, he had a friend of his loan him some money to pay half of it for him. We weren't then allowed ... I wasn't supposed to be selling these books at the Old Mill. But I was, you know, under the table. They were selling them for a \$1 a piece. Ed got ... Oh I forget now. I got less than a quarter. I forget what percentage I got know. It came out ... I don't know how they ever worked out this percentage. Lindley was selling them too under the table. That was how I met Ed, he was bringing down some more books to Lindley at the Old Mill to sell. And I met him. It was in 1952, my first summer there.

Finally as time went on I said to Ed, "Hey can we raise the price of these books to \$1.25 and I'll just keep the \$.25 then." He said, "Sure, I don't care what you sell them for. All I want is a dollar for each book." So I sold them for \$1.25, and I finally sold them all for him. He had 2,000 copies printed in 1941. I ended up selling them all for him. Except I bought a number of them for myself and I gave them away eventually as gifts. That book is a collectors item now. It is a good book, it is a very good book. Well written because, as I say, he was a good writer. Especially the chapter on the geology of Mill Creek Park and Mahoning County. It is very good, very good. Probably the best geology written of this county and Mill Creek Park

I should say. Maybe the only one, I don't know. Only good one.

N: So he was employed by the WPA as a writer. Was this his one project? Were there other projects?

W: As far as I know this is his only project.

N: So, this would have commenced in the 1930's sometime?

W: He started in ... I'm not sure what year. 1940's maybe, I'm not sure. Then he had finished the book ... Let me see if I can remember how this was. He had finished the book and he had already been in the army for a short time as an enlisted man. They let him go because of his age. He was already over thirty-five. So, he came home and then finished the book, he wrote the book, published it, and then he got his draft notice again. Because Pearl Harbor had been attacked. He didn't have time to start selling the books. As it happened a man named John Chase, a geologist. He taught geology at Youngstown College, and I think he as the recreation director for the city parks. John Chase and Ed were good friends. John Chase gave Ed half the money ...

As I was saying, as it turned out John Chase was on one of the Mahoning County Draft Boards. So Ed got his notice and went to the draft board. Ed told me all this. John Chase said, "Ed, you are over thirty-five. I can get you out of this. You don't have to go." Ed said, "No, I want to go. I am not married, I have no ties here. I am getting a little tired of my life here in Youngstown. I want to go, I want to do my part." He said, "John Chase tried to talk me out of it. He said I didn't have to go." So he went. He wrapped all of the books up. Each one of those books was wrapped up in brown wrapping paper and scotch taped. Every single one of them.

N: Individually?

W: Individually. He put them in boxes and stored them in the family home. It was on the north side, I forget the name of the street now, his mother and dad's home. He put them up in the attic and left them there while he went away to the service. This time he went to Officers' Candidate School and he came out as a first lieutenant when the war was over. Then he came home and he began to sell the books. Well after he sold so many, he was trying to pay John Chase off, the money he gave him. Then John Chase died and Ed said, "I finally had enough money to pay him all off. So I went over and I wanted to give the money to his widow, and she wouldn't take it." She said, "Don't worry about it.

Whatever you get now is yours." So he said that was pretty nice. Then eventually he took the books to different places to try to sell them. I know he took them to Strouss's. When he would go at the end of each month to collect his money, he found that these people there at Strouss's in their book department couldn't find half the books and didn't have his money. So he just took all the books out of there. That was the end of that. Then he went to an auction once. Inside the door of the entrance to the auction they had the books on the table for people to take free. He couldn't figure how they got them. Then down at the Youngstown Auto Club, he took some down there for them to sell. He went down there to get his money and here they had the books on the counter for people to take free. They weren't charging people for them. He was fit to be tied over these things. So then finally, I think Lindley Vickers was the only one selling them for him. Then later I was selling them for him even though we weren't supposed to do this on our job. So I was a salesman and we finally sold all of the books. The way he brought the books down to me for sale was just the way he wrapped them in papers and stored them away in the attic when he went away to the Army. They were still wrapped in that brown paper.

This book, I know when I started, Lindley told me, "You know if you are going to work in the park, you ought to read this book. This should be required reading for every park employee." I know we kept a copy at the Old Mill there and the policemen would come in and they would sit down and every so often read it. Ed was an interesting man. As I say, he never got married. He was a very intellectual person. He loved the life of a scholar. He did a lot of reading. I knew him during the formative years of my life. I was about sixteen when I met him. I know when I was about eighteen, that is when I really began to think seriously about things, and question things, and reject tradition and religion and all that stuff. That is when he and I got to be good friends. I was very vulnerable then and he really shaped my thinking because he made sense. Now since then I know I have changed a lot of my thinking. I am not as iconoclastic as I was then, although to a certain extent, but not quite as I was then. I am not anti as many things as I was then. He was a very opinionated person. He had his own ideas, but he was a good person. He would do anything for anybody. He never loaned money to anybody, he would give them the money. If it was a friend I mean. If someone said, "Hey, can you loan me a couple of bucks?" he would say, "Listen, the lending of money has been responsible for breaking up more friendships. I don't want that to ever happen to us. Here is the money, it's yours. I don't ever want it back, don't ever mention it to me

again." He would rather do it that way than break up his friendship with somebody over a loan of money. I liked Ed a lot. Then when I got married though we went separate ways. He never married but he had his women friends, but he would never commit himself to marriage. He was an interesting person.

N: Do you recall when he died?

W: I am trying to think of the year. I remember when he died but I can't think of the year. I just can't remember. He was around sixty-nine or seventy when it happened. I think he was born in 1906 or 1907, so it was in the late 1970's when he died. After he retired he got very lonely and he used to come over to the Ford Center. We would talk and sometimes I was too busy. I didn't have the time to talk to him that I wish I had, but he had nothing else to do. He told me, "Bill, don't retire until you really have to because when you do you lose contact with people, you don't make any new friends, and eventually you lose your old friends." Even though he hated that place, that employment office, with a passion . . . He hated it because of the people he had to deal with. In spite of that he said, "We need to be making new friends. We have to maintain our contact with people and I am losing that now." So he was very lonely. He used to come down around here at the Ford Center to talk. As I found out later he was out shoveling snow and he had a bad heart. That is why he used to come down to the park and walk quite regularly for his heart. He was out shoveling snow. He would go out and shovel a little bit, then he would come in and lie down on the couch and rest. Then go back out again and come back in. He did it very sensibly, but he was found I guess by neighbors lying on the couch dead. He must have come in to lie down. He had his coat and everything on, and he died. He had one sister. His brother Lou had died while we were friends. And one, older sister in California, a widow, and her kids and so forth. That was all he had. Ed was very frugal, I'll say stingy. He didn't spend money unless it was absolutely necessary. I guess I am kind of like that too, so I'm not criticizing him at all. I'm just saying that was the way he was.

N: It is truly interesting to me that a book chronicling the history of Mill Creek Park was not supported by park officials.

W: Yes, the board then . . . Of course these men are all gone now. The board then, as I understand it, as Ed explained it to me, were resentful of the fact that an outsider, someone not associated with the park had come in and written a book on their park. They said, "We didn't authorize you to write this book." Well, that

got Ed mad. See Ed offered this book to the park. He wanted to sell it to the park. The park would print the book up then and make some money, but they wouldn't have anything to do with it. Then he said, "Okay I will give you the book. You can have it, just leave my name in it. That is all I want." At that time he still had aspirations of being a writer and this was a way of getting his name out in the public. They said no. He got mad and he said, "Well I'll sell the damn book myself then. The hell with you people." I guess he told them off. Mr. Wick was the board member who gave him such a hard time. So Ed had no use for park officials at that time. He called them, his exact words, "Those little men."

They just didn't like an outsider coming in and writing a book on what they thought was their park. Of course it wasn't. So they gave him no help. Ed said that when he went around to interview people like Harvey T. O'Connor and other old timers. Somebody from the park had gotten to some of these old people and told them, "Don't cooperate with this Galaida fellow. We didn't authorize him to write this book." That is why Ed was so mad. That is why the book was banned in Mill Creek Park. As years went by and they got new board members and so forth, the book was accepted. Mr. Davies even used to say, "Hey, no problem. That is a good book." As I understand it, the person who gave Ed the most trouble was Mr. Wick.

N: Who was somewhat of a historian wasn't he?

W: He was a historian, yes. He was with the Mahoning Valley Historical Society. In fact wasn't he one of the founders of it?

N: I think so.

W: Yes, Mr. Wick was a very domineering sort of a person. He used to come down to the Old Mill and we would talk. He wanted everyone to know who he was. He died. . . He lived to be a ripe old age, near ninety when he died. He was an artist. But he was Mr. Wick. He was always nice to me. I was just aware of who he was. I was just a young kid you know. I had nothing to argue with him about at all, I am lucky I had a job. So I was nice to him and as a result, he was nice to me. He used to come down to the Old Mill every once in a while.

N: I wanted to ask you about a controversial subject, the children's zoo which was planned to go in at one point some years ago.

W: Yes. Back in the early 1960's, I don't remember the

exact year now, but the Junior League of Youngstown and the Jaycees approached Mill Creek Park and wanted to sponsor the construction of a children's zoo in the Bear's Den area of Mill Creek Park. Originally it was the Junior League's idea and the Jaycees later got in on it. The Junior League wanted to do something for the community and Mill Creek Park that would benefit the children. They proposed this children's petting zoo. The area of the park chosen for the children's zoo was the part of the upper Bear's Den area that is bounded by Old Furnace Road and Bear's Den Road. That corner there would be north of Old Furnace Road and Bear's Den Road running along the west side. That whole area in there was to be the children's zoo.

This proposal kind of polarized the people of the area. On one side you had the opponents of the children's zoo and on the other side you had the proponents of the children's zoo. It got to be a rather nasty issue. The people who were the nastiest were those who opposed it, those people who lived on Old Furnace and Bear's Den Roads. In fact they were so persistent in their efforts to close it that they went so far as to organize what was known as the Mill Creek Park Citizens' Committee or the Friends of Mill Creek Park as they called themselves. This group officially organized and the reason they organized again was to oppose the children's zoo and defeat it. They also said that they wanted to help Mill Creek Park too. As it turned out this was a very negative group. They did very little in the way of anything positive. I wouldn't say nothing but they did very little. There were some nasty exchanges of words over this issue. The people who opposed it were afraid of a number of things. First of all smell in their neighborhoods, increased traffic, vandalism. There were some groups also who opposed it, Animal Charity I know was one of them. They were afraid of the treatment of the animals. That the animals might be abused or not cared for properly. There were some people around who were afraid that the sewage waste wouldn't be handled properly, and this would produce a smell. There was a lot of opposition to it. As I said some people in this so-called Friends of Mill Creek Park group became rather belligerent and obnoxious. Got kind of nasty with some of the park people over it.

As it turned out the Junior League realizing that Mill Creek Park was getting a lot of criticism and was kind of caught in the middle of the whole thing, they felt that rather than fight on that they would just drop the whole issue. That would take the burden off of Mill Creek Park. So that is what they did. The Junior League and the Jaycees just decided to forget about it, so they did. That was the end of the issue. They

still wanted to do something for the children of the area, that is the Junior League did. Some educational project that would benefit the children. I think one of the biggest reasons that this was so controversial was that the people who opposed it really didn't know what a children's zoo was. They were ignorant of what a children's zoo really was. They envisioned a zoo, a full-scale zoo, and this wasn't going to be that. A plan was even drawn up. In fact a scale model of this proposed children's zoo was even prepared and it was on display at the Stambaugh Auditorium in the entrance. I don't know who the architects were now, but a lot of research went into this before it was even proposed. The proponents of the children's zoo tried to allay the fears of the people who were afraid that this was going to be a bad thing for the area but nothing worked. I think one of the biggest problems was that the people who opposed it just didn't know what a children's zoo really was. They envisioned something much grander, on a much larger-scale than it was going to be. They had a misunderstanding. Of course knowing those people, I would say that even if they knew it was a children's zoo they would be a little bit against it. They finally won out though.

N: A children's zoo has different animals or just is smaller in scale?

W: These were like farm animals. These were to be animals that would roam freely. Roam freely in caged areas and penned areas I mean. The children could pet some of them. They would come in face to face encounters with these animals. Some of the concerns may have been legitimate, I don't know. You can't tell what would have happened because it didn't happen, so it's fairly a moot issue. Maybe there would have been some mistreatment of animals, who knows. The park assured people that every, every effort would have been made to make sure there was no smell, that the animals were treated properly. Other children's zoos that were visited prior to this proposal assured us that if the children's zoo is constructed properly, is designed properly, and is operated properly that there is going to be very little smell, if any, and no abuse of animals. But anyway they finally dropped it and that was the end of the issue.

N: So the park board though was behind it?

W: Yes, the park was for it. They didn't come up with the idea, but they were receptive to the idea and they were going ahead for it.

N: The park was going to offer the funds to build it, or the junior league was? Or wasn't that settled?

- W: I don't remember how that was going to be. It seems to me there was going to be some money coming in from the junior league. Well, no. The junior league was going to donate money for it. I don't know how much, I have no idea. And the Jaycees I suppose were . . . The junior league had some money that they wanted to donate to put into the community for educational purposes that would benefit children. This is what they came up with. If I remember correctly the junior league did have some money, at least to get it going. How much, I have no idea. From there on I guess it would have been of course the park's job to maintain it and operate it. I was kind of looking forward to it in a way because at that time I was the assistant park naturalist and I probably would have had a role in the day to day operation of the children's zoo.
- N: Do you remember how long of a time span the controversy raged?
- W: Oh, I would say a year or two maybe. I just don't remember. I know it was in the early 1960's. I would say like 1962 or 1963, maybe even 1964. Somewhere in that period. I could find out easy enough because I wrote a letter to the editor in the Vindicator supporting the children's zoo and giving some of my arguments for it. I think I still have a copy of that letter, it would be dated of course.
- N: Another situation that maybe wasn't as controversial but really has an impact on us, the sewage treatment plant. Can you tell me what you remember about it?
- W: Well, I think they had it built in 1962, that they opened it up at least. That is the Boardman Wastewater Treatment Plant. That treatment plant was built on land that was sold to the county by Mr. and Mrs. Sam Henry who live on Tippecanoe Road. They sold that corner, the northeast corner of their property to Mahoning County for the sewage treatment plant. Sam Gould was county engineer then and he tried to sell the Henry's on the idea of selling their property to the county. For how much I have no idea. Mrs. Henry is still living out there and she would remember I am sure. But their concern over the effluent that would be pumped out of the treatment plant into Mill Creek, their concern that this would be pretty smelly and would contain all kinds of contaminants. Mr. Henry, when he was still living, told me once that the county engineer, Sam Gould, told him that he would drink that water that came out of that treatment plant. That is how clean it is going to be. Now we laugh at that today that anybody could even make such an idiotic statement, but Sam Henry told me that that is what he told him and his wife. "I'll drink that water." I

guarantee him that he wouldn't drink that water a few years ago. But that wasn't in Mill Creek. It borders Mill Creek Park. The treatment plant is bounded on three sides now. Four sides I guess, almost. It is not in the park, but the county property on which the treatment plant sits is contiguous with Mill Creek Park.

N: Was there any concern from the park board or you, you know that . . .

W: I don't remember. My mind is a blank on that. I don't know. It may have been I just don't remember much talk about it. Maybe I wasn't aware of it.

N: You know today the water isn't as good as it used to be. Did you notice that happening quickly or slowly?

W: Yes, it was a gradual decline in the quality of the water of Mill Creek as it flowed northward from the treatment plant. Aquatic life was disappearing, hell-benders, the giant salamander so called, were dying out. They are very sensitive to water pollution. Today I doubt there is one anywhere in Mill Creek waters, as far as I know. They used to be quite common and rather abundant, but much of the aquatic life was gone. Water snakes began to disappear. You didn't see many water snakes as time went on. At one time queen snakes and the northern water snakes were fairly common, especially the queen snakes. In the Gorge Creek there, they were very common. As time went on and the Boardman area filled up so fast, the treatment plant became just overburdened. As more and more sewage came into the treatment plant, because there are more and more people out there, more and more buildings, more and more houses, why the effluent became worse and worse. Finally it was just terrible. You wouldn't believe it. If a person saw it at one time, you would not believe anything would be allowed to empty into Mill Creek.

N: I always wondered about that.

W: Yes, it was unbelievable. Of course now they have hopefully rectified the situation with the expansion of that treatment facility. It had a dreadful, devastating effect on the life in Mill Creek in the lakes. They should have never allowed that in the first place to be built there.

N: I wonder if today whether that could happen.

W: I would doubt it. How they could build a sewage treatment plant along Mill Creek, whose effluent would empty into that creek and then carry it into a park is

beyond anybody's comprehension. I don't know how they ever got a permit to build out there. Since Mill Creek is the namesake of this park and since it is the main stream that goes through this public park, and then to have this treatment empty into it, it boggles the mind. It really does. I don't think today, I don't know what the laws are, but I doubt today if they could get away with that. They shouldn't have gotten away with it back then even.

N: At least without a big uproar.

W: I would think so. I don't think the people would ever sit still for that today. They shouldn't anyway.

N: Okay, let's talk a little bit about a place dear to our hearts, the Ford Nature Education Center. Way back to the beginning. Do you remember when the park got it, how the park got it?

W: Yes. Well, first of all Judge Ford died on January 16 of 1968, and his will, of course, left everything to his children. His wife had died four years earlier. The four children, there were two brothers and two sisters, were discussing after their father's funeral what to do with the property, with the estate. Ed Ford, the youngest son, said, "It just seemed like as if we got the idea all at the same time. We said, well why not give it to Mill Creek Park. There was never any discussion or disagreement." This is the way Ed described it to me, he said, "We just decided right then and there, let's offer it to the park because it is right near the park." They knew that their mother, especially their mother, was extremely fond of Mill Creek Park. That is why they bought this house in the first place, because Mrs. Ford wanted to be next to the park. So they made the offer to the board and it was accepted. There were two conditions that went along with it. First of all that the property be developed into a nature center. Secondly that it be named after their parents. Then I think they expressed a, this wasn't a formal request I don't believe, but I think they expressed a feeling that the character, the atmosphere, the ambiance of the house and its setting not be altered too much. They wanted to retain the character that it had when their parents lived here.

As I said, the board accepted the gift. On February 4th, I remember it was on a Sunday in 1968, the Vindicator ran the story and the announcement that the park was the recipient of Judge Ford's estate. As I say, it was a Sunday and at that time we were showing, on alternate Sundays, in lieu of a nature walk, movies down at Pioneer Pavilion. That Sunday I was heading down to Pioneer in the morning. I got there about

10:00 to get a fire in the fireplace, and get the chairs set up, and get it all ready for the afternoon movies. I thought, "Well on my way down to Pioneer, maybe I'll stop at the Ford house and just take a look at it." So I came over here to the Ford house and I knocked on the door or rang the doorbell and a lady answered. It was the housekeeper. She was allowed to live here for a week or two, whatever, until she got all of her things together and could move out. She let me come in and showed me around the house. I saw it just as it looked when Judge Ford was still living there. So that was in February of 1968.

It was that spring when they began to make some changes here. They came in and they cleared the woods to the west of the house, put a parking lot in. I remember that day I was . . . By that time I was living here at the Ford . . . Moved into the Ford apartment, that is the apartment above the garage, in May of 1968. That was to be the naturalist's residence. One morning I heard chainsaws going and I came out and there they were cutting down trees for the parking lot. Jimmy Cucaro was one of the workers on the tree crew cutting with the chainsaw. In fact I have got pictures of him cutting the trees down. I've got slides of him. So they got the parking lot in. We had a break-in in the house while it was still empty, nothing had been done to it. It was just sitting here and we had a break-in. Some damage was done I remember. I don't know if anything was stolen there or not, there wasn't much in here to steal because the Ford children had taken everything out. They had cleaned the house out. They took virtually everything and just left a hollow house here.

As time went on all of the . . . Then later on remodeling was done. Rooms were changed. Where there was one room maybe they would make two out of it, or where there was two rooms they would knock a wall out and make one big room. They would put a door here and take a door away there, and so forth. In other words they remodeled the interior of the house to make it appropriate for being a public building. New lighting was put in and new plumbing. In other words the physical plant was pretty well finished. That is where it sat at the end of . . . toward the middle of 1971. There was no more money to spend on it. The park just didn't have the money to put on it. Oh, a couple thousand dollars, but not enough to do really anything. So there we sat, parking lot in, the physical plant finished you might say, no exhibits though, no displays, and very little money to work with.

Well, the Junior League remembering the defeat of the children's zoo still wanted to do something for the

community that would benefit the children, would be educational. So they came here to the Ford Center. I gave them a tour. I remember I gave them a slide . . . No, I guess I just talked to them. They had a meeting here in one of our rooms. I gave a talk and told them how we needed the money. They had \$5,000 they wanted to donate to the park to get the nature center open. So we explained to them what we needed to do yet before we could get it open. That was in November, I think, of 1971 that we had the meeting here and I explained to them our plight. Well they were going to have a meeting in January and they would vote on whether or not to give the money to the park. Well they voted in January and the members decided yes, to donate \$5,000 to the park to get the doors open to this building. Get it open to the public. So that plus a little bit of money that the park had was enough to do it. That was in January of 1972. From January 1972 to June 30th of that year, we here had to work like fools to get this place ready. Because June 30th was finally set as the date of the official opening and dedication, the ribbon cutting. June 30th of 1972. We literally towards the tail end there, the last few days, worked around the clock. We were here all night.

N: Really?

W: Chuck Wedekind the park superintendent, Barbara Perry from the office, Chuck's daughters were working here. I forget who else now. We were here working until 5:00 in the morning. We worked literally around the clock, till morning. Because the deadline was set, the invitations had been sent out for the dedication for the ribbon cutting ceremony, there was supposed to be some dignitaries here, and we had no choice. So the biggest problem was coming up with ideas for the exhibits. We had the money to buy the materials to build them, but to put these displays together, all of the labeling, signs and everything; this was a horrendous task. It was terrible. I would never want to go through that again. The park carpenter was kept busy building things. Well anyway, we finally got it ready. We got out of here about 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning on June 30th. The last thing we did was sweep up the floor. Chuck said, "Well, you better go home and get a shower, get cleaned up a little bit, get something to eat, and be back here at 10:00 for the dedication."

N: You were up all night?

W: We were up all night. So I did and came back for the dedication. We had a few little things to do yet before 10:00, but not much. We had the dedication. It was a cloudy day I remember and we gathered right here at the entrance to the Ford Center on the lawn back

here, between the building and the hedge. We had chairs all set up there. Chuck was there making some introductory remarks and while he was talking, all of a sudden the clouds just opened up and the sun came out. The mayor was supposed to have been there. I think it was Mayor Hunter at the time. He couldn't be there, one of his assistants or aides came. After the dedication opening. . . Oh there was a ribbon cutting, they had a ribbon to cut. Judge Ford's sister cut the ribbon. We had refreshments for everybody. We had a good crowd here, a good crowd of people. But I remember Judge Ford's sister, as we were going in the . . . I was right behind them. I forget her name now. Anyway, she cut the ribbon and we were going in the door and Ed Ford was there and I forget who else. I remember she said to Ed, "This is not what I wanted. This is not what I expected." She was very disappointed that this house was being made into a nature center.

After it was all over, the crowd had left, everybody had gone, just Chuck and I were here. Chuck was telling me about how I am going to have to start thinking now, change my thinking from just being a naturalist to being a nature center director now. Now this was June 30th, he said, "Listen, do you have anything scheduled between now and the 5th of July?" See we had a holiday coming up, the Fourth of July. I said, "No, I don't have anything." He said, "I'll tell you what, I want you to go home, don't even step foot in Mill Creek Park until July 5th. Come back July 5th, open up at 10:00, and we'll be in business. I'm not even going to be around here either. Let's just get out of this place." We were both sick of the place. So I did. I went home and . . . He said, "We won't even count it as vacation time, we won't count it as anything. We're gone." So I did, I took off. July 5th then I came in and opened up at 10:00. So in other words, the Ford Center opened officially its doors to the public at 10:00 a.m. July 5, 1972, and it has been open ever since.

N: I don't know if I told you that I was there that first day. I don't know what time it was. I came in the first day.

W: Oh, is that right?

N: Yes. It was kind of a rainy or cloudy day. It wasn't a real nice day I remember.

W: I don't remember. We hired a young fellow who worked as an attendant here for a while, Bill Gorsky. He graduated from YSU with a degree in geology. I think he had done some work for his Master's degree in geology somewhere. I forget where now. He was with us for a while. But at first there was just the two of us.

As time went on, of course, we had to increase to a larger staff to do what had to be done here at the nature center. Those early days were something else.

In the first days we were open, people just weren't coming around. They didn't know we were here. So on the sign out at the road, I said, "Well why don't we put on there, open to the public." Because one day a car pulled into the parking lot and I just happened to be out there. They said, "Can we come in? Are we allowed to come in or what is this?" I told them I said, "Why don't you come in?" They said, "Oh, we didn't know we were allowed to. We thought it was a private school," Ford Nature Education Center you see was the sign out there. He thought it was a private school. I said, "No, it is open to the public. Come on in." So we later put it out on the sign there, "Open to the public", and then the hours so that people would know that they could come in. But those first days were kind of lonesome here. Nobody was coming in. But that is how it all started anyway.

N: Some questions. I jotted down some notes as we talked. We had the Old Mill Museum before this and the children offered this to the park as a nature center. Do you have any idea why it was called a nature center instead of a museum?

W: Well, at that time there was a big difference in the definitions, or at least in the connotations, of a nature center and a museum. A museum was generally considered to be simply a repository of items, of exhibits that you come in, you look at, and that is it. Whereas a nature center was more interpretation oriented. Our philosophy was not to have a building just jammed full of exhibits, but to have fewer exhibits, have them well spaced and well located in the building, but have good exhibits. Quality, professional exhibits, but not a whole lot. More in keeping with the definition, or at least at that time the definition of a nature center. Museum had more of a formal, stuffy connotation about it. This wasn't going to be that kind of a facility. This was to be an interpretive tool for the public.

N: The Ford children, on their own, came up with the nature center idea, or was that in talking with . . .

W: I have a feeling. . . I wasn't in on the meeting, but I have a feeling that the superintendent and the board decided to call it the Ford Nature Education Center. They put that word education in there, which I think was important. In a way it was. That word implies that the emphasis is on education here. We are not, for example, a wildlife rehabilitation center. In

other words people who bring injured or baby animals in here, our job is not to rehabilitate these animals. We are here as an education center, nature education center. I know I used that many times when people would bring an injured or young animal here, just didn't know what to do because these animals need help. Somebody should take care of them, but we didn't have the facilities. We just couldn't do it. I would tell the people that is why we call it . . . I may have been stretching the point there, but I said, "That is why the word education was put in there, you see. It is a nature education center. We are going to educate people and not to take care of animals." Although I realized the importance of having a facility that would rehabilitate wildlife. I would love to have something like that. I always did. We just weren't in that business. We didn't have the people here, we didn't have the money, we didn't have the facility, we didn't have anything to do it.

The person who really carried most of the load of getting this nature . . . Even before it was developed into a nature center and did most of the planning, if not all of the planning, . . . The person who really did most of the work and carried the biggest load here was Chuck Wedekind, the park superintendent. This was his baby. He made all the final decisions. He is the one who had to deal with the junior league over this. All credit should be given to him for this nature center. What we had here, just about every bit of it, was a result of his planning. The board probably had little, if anything, to do with it. They didn't even know what was going on here, probably, at that time. Didn't know what we were doing here. Chuck is the one who deserves the credit for this nature center.

N: Maybe I should talk to him too. I was going to ask you about the planning, whether you had looked at other facilities, or had consulted with other . . . I know the Audubon society, the National Audubon was sort of a nature center planning division at one time. I don't know whether . . .

W: We consulted them. Well, all they did was send you a packet of books to help you. I think that was the extent of their help. They did send us some books on how to design a nature center, whatever. So that was somewhat helpful. I remember I went on two trips, if I remember correctly, with Chuck. Ivan Sherburn was the assistant superintendent then I believe. Chuck, Ivan, and I went to the Rocky River Interpretive Center in Cleveland, and then the Seiberling Nature Center in the Akron metropolitan park district, to get ideas. Chuck went a few other place. As I said he did most of the work here. He went down to the Aullwood Audobon Cen-

ter. I remember Chuck told me once, he said ... We were still trying to get our thoughts together on, "What kind of displays are we going to have here? How are we going to set up exhibits?" He said, "I don't really know yet what I want, but I know what I don't want." And one of the things he did not want was exhibits laid out on plywood. When he went to the Aullwood Center he says, "I know that is what I don't want."

N: Plywood?

W: Plywood and some other ... Plywood and something. I don't remember now what it was but he said, "I don't want those kind of exhibits." That is what they had at the Audubon center at Aullwood rather. He said, "I really don't know what I want yet but I know that is what I don't want." I don't know, when we finally got this open, I'm not sure how satisfied he was with the finished product. I don't really know.

We were working under a great deal of pressure because we had this time limit on us. The date had been set for the dedication ceremony. So we had to get this place ready, and had to set up exhibits. In his own mind I don't know how satisfied he really was with what we had done, I really don't know. All I know is he put in a lot of work here, and a lot of worrying. We did, as I say, visit a few other nature centers to try and get some ideas. He said he wanted exhibits that were professional, that looked like they were done in a professional manner. In good taste. Not something which was thrown together with cheap materials. As he said plywood and something, I can't remember what that word is. What the other material is that he was referring to.

N: But then the displays they were created by park employees under Chuck's design, or your design? You didn't get a professional to come in?

W: No, no we didn't. Most of it was ... We got our heads together, I guess. Chuck was the guiding light there. He is the one who set the direction that he wanted to go. It was just a lot of work. Here we had a house that we had to convert into a public building and then convert into a nature center. The rooms weren't just right. We had to work with in the framework of what we had. This was built for a house, a home, not a nature center. Not something to be open to the public. It just wasn't made for a nature center. For example, in the main exhibit room downstairs, very little wall space. It is all windows. That was a problem. So, the physical part of getting the ... Remodeling the inside, putting in new lighting, and restrooms, that

was easy. Nothing hard about that. You can figure out how to do that pretty much. The really hard part was the exhibits, the displays. Good professional, quality displays, that was the hard part.

N: Were you happy with it?

W: I was satisfied but I felt we could have done it a little differently. Then I don't know how, I don't know what, it is just that ... I felt under the conditions that we had to work, and having this time limit imposed upon us, we did a doggone good job. If we would have had more money to work with ... Now granted the \$5,000 the Junior League gave us, that got this place open. That was the important thing because here the Ford Family had given the park this house and property; five and a half acres. It just sat here for four years. So, the \$5,000 gift from the Junior League of Youngstown got it open and got people coming here and got this place being used for what it was intended to be used for. That was fine. If we had had more time and more money yet to spend. We could have had real professional consultants come in. People who really know something about designing a nature center and setting up exhibits. We could have done a much better job of it of course. Money is always the limiting factor it seems. In this case time was too.

N: Who set the original opening date? Was that the park board?

W: No, that was Chuck Wedekind and the Junior League. I don't know if Chuck would mind me saying this or not it was twenty years ago. He kept trying to buy time from the Junior League. They had already given us the money in January of 1972, and he kept trying to put them off just to give us more time. A little more time, a little more time. He had his one meeting with them and after that was over he told me they wouldn't hear of it. He said, "Bill, they just shut me up just like that. They want to get this place open. They are tired of waiting." So the date was set between Chuck and the Junior League, June 30th.

As it turned out, the following November, the park passed a levy. So then we had some money to work with. We didn't have any money up until that time. That is why the Junior Leagues \$5,000 gift was a real blessing, but then there was no money. Then the park put a levy on the ballot in that November, and it passed. I forget the millage now.

N: There was a time when you were working these nights and everything. You were at the Mill at the time right?

- W: No, I was up at the main office, well at the annex. The Evans house, the park annex. Where the police office is now, the Mill Creek Park Police Department. That was my office.
- N: Were you relieved of you duties, your normal duties, to work on the Ford Center, or were you just burning midnight oil on doing your other job?
- W: No, no I didn't schedule ... We had an attendant at the Old Mill, I don't remember who it was now. I was at the Old Mill too. I don't remember too clearly but I know I must have divided my time between the Old Mill and the Ford Center. In the spring, that spring of 1972, when we were frantically trying to get this place ready to open I know I had school classes, field trips, that I had to take care of. Work with them out of the Old Mill. I don't remember who our attendant was then. So, having our attendant there at the Old Mill freed my time up a lot. I didn't worry about the Old Mill too much. Whoever he was, why he took care of it. I just don't remember who it was now. Some name popped up in my mind but I don't remember if it was during that period or not.
- N: Lyle Miller one time told me about some birds that were stolen from the Ford Center. Do you think that was in that break in you talked about?
- W: I thought it was. Yes, I think it was. They were down in the basement, they were stored in the room down there by the boiler. Okay that was what was taken then. Those birds were taken. The place was smashed.
- N: Sometime in the 1970s the Mill ... So you were working with an assistant, Bill Gorsky.
- W: For awhile.
- N: Then passed a levy and then there was only one natural-ist, you. But then?
- W: The levy was passed November of 1972. The next year, I think it was March of 1973, I think ... I know it was 1973, I think it was March. We hired Tony Belfast to be the assistant park naturalist. His duties were to be mostly confined to the nature center itself, to the building. As Chuck told him, when he hired him, "You are going to be pretty much married to this building." That is why he lived here at the naturalist apartment. Tony's job was to design exhibits, build exhibits. Only if I got to busy with school class field trips and other programs then Tony could relieve me. Other wise he was to develop exhibits and worry about the interior of the building itself. Tony built some very, very

professional exhibits. He did a beautiful job. He worked slowly, methodically, carefully. When he was done he had put something together that was very, very, very effective. He was a carpenter, he was an electrician, plumbing, anything he could do, and he did it well. Tony was a geology major. Tony graduated from Youngstown State University with a degree in geology. So he was a geologist. He did do some nature walks too as time went on. He did do some of of the interpretive work. He was very much, I would say, complementary to me. Because my field is more, or less, the biological sciences, and his was geology. So we worked together fairly well that way, from my point of view. Tony did, as I say, some very nice exhibits. He had some very good ideas. He did one or two very effective audio-visual exhibits. He did a fine job. Tony was here from I think it was March of 1973 until 1979. That was about six years.

N: Were you looking for somebody, a handyman kind of person, or did the job assume that because of his talents?

W: We were looking for somebody who was kind of multi-talented. We wanted somebody, in addition to that, who wouldn't mind being tied down to the Center. Wouldn't feel confined. Now Bill Gorsky, our first attendant, we felt that he would go out of his mind if he had to stay in the center here. Bill was a free spirit, he was a mountain climber, rock climber, backpacker. He had to get out doing things like that. He would have climbed the walls in this house if he would have had that job. So we had to find somebody who we felt would be happy here. As it turned out Tony seemed to be very much, although Tony liked to get out too. We felt that his personality was just the right one for the job. As it turned out it was. We were looking for somebody who could do a lot of things. Tony sure could. You name it! If it had to do with plumbing, carpentry, electrical work, whatever. He knew what he was doing. Tony worked slowly. We sometimes ... Chuck Wedekind used to say that, "I wish we could get more done on exhibits. Get them done faster." But then he said, "Well, that is okay though. Tony takes his time, but when he is done, when he has done that finished product there, it is a good one. And I'm really happy with it so let him work at his own pace." Speed, what has that got to do with anything? It is the end result, you know, because eventually it is going to get done and it is going to be a fine job.

N: Bill can you tell me about how you ran the field trips when the school kids came down to the Old Mill, and everything was stationed there? What you did exactly?

W: Yes, we would meet the class in the Old Mill parking

lot. I would walk them down to the Mill. I would always gather them on the front porch of the Mill, and talk to them before we went into the building. I would tell them about the history of the Old Mill, and about the two mills that were on that sight before this one. Then I would tell them about the museum, and what to look for in the museum. Tell them to try not to touch some of the things, especially the mounted animals. For a long time I would always tell the classes that, "Someday, perhaps when your children come to Mill Creek Park on their class field trip, hopefully they will see this old mill operating as a grist mill again, grinding grain. Not as a nature museum." And I said, "Our hope is someday to get the museum out of the Old Mill and into a larger building, more accessible structure. One that would accommodate more people, and more parking, and so forth." Invariably I would tell the class that after I told the history of the mills, how grain was ground there, how the mill operated, and why they built the mill along the creek, by the waterfalls. I would tell them how our hope is to someday see this an operating grist mill again, of course today it is.

Then I would take them on a tour of the museum. Actually I pretty much let them go in there on their own and look around. Then we would get together, and talk, and I would answer some questions. Then we would take our walk. Our walk was always, almost always at least, down through the gorge heading north toward the flats. We would cross over on the suspension bridge and come back on the west side. We would almost always do that loop. It was nice long walk and there was, of course, one of the most scenic places in the whole park, if not the most scenic. There was no end to what you could talk about with the class in the gorge; geology, nature, human history. Just so much there to talk about. It was an ideal place to take the kids on a walk. We would stop at the sulfur spring and they would get to taste the sulfur water, rotten egg water. And flats, talk about Indian history there. Cross the suspension bridge, as I mentioned before, and talk about the old bridge, all its names, and when it was built. Get back on the west side and pass the skunk cabbage patch, gorge shelter rock over on the west side. Had a very nice trip with the kids.

Once in awhile with some of the classes, one in particular ... Mrs. E. J. Wulf's class from Goshen Center School. We would walk from the Old Mill in, through the gorge, up to the Kirkmere recreation area, get there for lunch, and have our lunches there. Then after lunch we would take another walk, maybe down through cascade ravine. The standard routine for most of the classes was to visit the Old Mill Nature Museum, and then a gorge walk.

N: Can you recall about how long a field trip like that would be?

W: Well back then we were spending ... By "we" I mean Lindley Vickers and I were spending more time with each class than we do today. I usually, in fact often, at that time would spend the whole school day with the class, have lunch with them. Then after lunch we would have another short walk. So, in other words, I would schedule for the most part one class a day. Kind of got away from that later on. Limited the time with each class to roughly an hour and a half so we could accommodate more classes each day. There is something to be said for both ways. At that time I was able to, if I remember correctly, I think I was able to accommodate every teacher who called for field trips. I could justify spending a whole day with each class. It wasn't that I was turning a lot of people away because I was spending so much time with each class. Those were enjoyable times when we did it that way. Today I don't know if you could do it that way. So many classes wanting to come to the park. Remember that we didn't have the Ford nature education center either. Just the Old Mill Museum. As I said I would have lunch with them somewhere.

Also, another thing too, for a long time we would take classes of any size and as many classes as could come. I remember there were times when I had maybe over a hundred kids at once. It wasn't a very good situation though when you had large groups like that. Obviously you can't really do a whole lot except walk with them, then stop a few times, wait until everybody finally catches up, and then try to talk so they can all hear you.

N: Use a bull horn?

W: I didn't have one then. The park didn't have any. They soon got them though.

N: There are a couple of old trails I recall you telling me about; the lime kiln, the bird trail, and the wild flower trail. Where were those?

W: The lime kiln trail ran along the east side of Mill Creek, from the flowing well by Shields Road, to the fording, golf course fording. That was the lime kiln trail. So named from the lime stone outcroppings they used to have. They used to mine that lime stone. They had lime kilns, or ovens, where they would heat it to tremendous temperatures and crumble it up into powder.

The bird trail was also on the east side of Mill Creek,

from the fording to 224. In other words it was almost a continuation of the lime kiln trail to 224.

The wildflower trail was on the west side of the Creek, and you picked it up at Stitt Pavilion and took it to the pump house meadow. There was a little bridge in there, in fact a wooden bridge, across that creek that comes in from the golf course from the west there into Mill Creek. There was a wooden bridge over there. Used to be a bridle trail, used to ride horses over there too. I don't know whether that bridge is still there or not. It has been a long time since I was out there, it must have been some time ago.

N: Were these well used?

W: Well, Lindley Vickers and his father used them a lot. The only problem with those trails out there was that in the summer months the mosquitoes were terrible. Hardly go out there on warm summer evenings. Also, the poison ivy was quite bad. So, the person who was exceptionally sensitive to poison ivy wanted to avoid it. Those trails weren't the best trails to walk. Winter was a good time because poison ivy wasn't a real problem, and, of course, mosquitoes weren't either. Lindley and I, just the two of us, used to work on those trails. Open them up and use them. They were such that if you didn't maintain them regularly, and work on them every year, they soon became overgrown.

I suppose of the three the best one is the lime kiln trail today. There were some little wooden bridges put in there. In the bird trail we put a bridge in, or two. If they weren't kept open, and trimmed, and so forth, they soon became obliterated. You would be walking a trail and all of a sudden it would just disappear. You wouldn't know which way to go. It was all over grown. I never used them too much. Although after Lindley and I did some work on them I did use them on our Sunday afternoon walks for awhile. Especially in the winter. I almost always scheduled winter walks out there. As time went on I didn't do that because of the parking. The parking was always a big headache here in the park for Sunday afternoon walks in that part of the park. It is a beautiful area. I wanted to take groups out there but the parking just created too many problems.

N: I recall something about a tree out there, a bird feeding tree, out that ways.

W: Yes. That was on the east side of the creek, along the east golf drive. Just north of where Golf View comes into it. It was a big white oak, it is still there, it is a big white oak ... Back in the early 1960s there

was a program on WKBN radio called the bird watchers program. It was WKBN, yes it was WKBN. I don't remember. I thought it was WKBN. They called it the bird watchers program. Larry Conti was the host. People would call in and discuss the bird feeding, suggestions for feeding birds, and identification tips. It was kind of a forum over the air for people interested in bird feeding and bird watching. It was fairly popular there for awhile. Then later on Larry Conti left and somebody else took over. I don't remember his name now. The host, whoever he was, had guests on now and then, and people calling in to talk to him and ask questions. It was during that period when this program was at its height that this white oak tree became a popular place for people to feed the birds. Many people came down, parked their car along the road, and would feed the birds. Some people hung up little bird feeders on the branches of this white oak tree. Some people just threw scattered bird seed on the ground. It got to be kind of a gathering place for people to feed birds and watch birds.

We had a lady at that time who was a real fanatic about birds. Her name was Therese Pringle. She used to call the show and sometimes she really got way out of line. Just got carried away. She was a woman who once she started talking just no stopping her. She was a nice lady, she meant well. But she created a lot of enemies. She was very critical of what some of the people were doing at the white oak bird feeding station. For example, people were parking on the grass. She said, "They are tearing that place all up." She used to call the park office to complain. She was just always complaining about something. The park was going to put in posts there so people couldn't park on the grass. They had to park along the road. I don't think they ever did that. That got to be, as you say, a popular place. Some people, like Mr. James Buchanan ...

N: Not the President?

W: No, same name though. Same first name too, James Buchanan. We are not going to go back that far. Got the chickadees and the titmice to eat out of his hand. Also, he would put birdseed ... He wore a cap, something like the ones we wear as part of our uniforms, the campaign type hat. The brim was turned up a little bit. He put birdseed around in the brim of his hat and the chickadees would come and eat out of the brim of his hat. We have got pictures of that. He is not living anymore. He died a number of years ago. He was an engineer, a retired engineer.

As time went on more and more people were getting the birds to ... Mostly the black capped chickadees. To

eat birdseed out of their hands. So that was the white oak feeder. It is still there. As far as I know it is a good, healthy, old, old, white oak tree.

N: In our south end we have one trail there. You know that nine hundred acres there is one trail. Was that built by Vickers?

W: Originally, as I understand it, it was the Youngstown Nature Club. Some of the Youngstown Nature Club members built the trail. In fact Frank Ferris, who is not living anymore either, put in, I think, the first trail out there. He got in a little trouble because he wasn't authorized by the park to do that. They called it the Red Fox trail back then. Because while he was working out there he saw a red fox. So he called the trail the Red Fox trail.

Then as time went on Lindley did a lot of work on it. The Youngstown Nature Club used to when they took their spring wildflower walk. Used to use that trail a lot. Then Lindley worked on it. Then later he and I would do it. Then finally when he left I would be pretty much the only one that maintained that trail. Just did it on my own just so I could use the trail. If a big tree had fallen across the trail I would either turn in a requisition to have somebody go out there ... Have the tree crew go out and cut it up. Or, I would just reroute the trail around the fallen tree and just create a new trail. I did that quite a few times. I used to put a lot of time on that trail working on it. Keeping it open for us, because I wanted to use it a lot. Again, the winter, spring, and fall were the best times. Summer and even early fall were when the mosquitoes were out yet. It just wasn't any fun back there. The mosquitoes and the little deer flies. Oh my, they were just terrible back then.

I remember one time I got that trail, I thought, in fine shape, and I brought up ... What I did was instead of ... See, you used to pick up the trail there at Hitchcock Road and the gas line and then take the trail west, clear out to the sewer right of way there, the lane. Then you would have to walk back in the lane, the gas line, to get back to the cars. Well, I wanted to make loop out of it so you would do the whole walk in the woods on the trail. Not have to walk back on the gas line, unless you wanted to. So, I brought the trail around. Made a loop right back to where the cars were parked. I put the trail end in ... I mean I opened it up, I think it was in the winter time. I had some help with a boy scout or two. In fact I think one boy did his eagle project. Looked fine. We had a nice trail in. Then I took a Sunday afternoon public walk on the trail that following

spring. Where the trail was high and dry in the winter, in the spring when the snow and ice were melting, and we were having a lot of rain, part of it was under water. I will never forget ... We did. I had people on that walk that didn't come prepared with proper footwear. They were just ... We were up to our ankles in water, because the trail was under water. It was a low place. In the winter time it looked like it was going to be okay but it wasn't. So we had some mad people that day with really, really wet feet. I'm sure that is all overgrown now.

N: Didn't you tell me once about a report of a bobcat, or a cougar, or something ... a wolf out there, or something?

W: There was a cougar report back in the 1960s. I don't remember the exact year. A lady who lived on Hitchcock Road said ... She and her daughter both reported this large cat in their back yard. Bill Thomas was the game protector. Chuck Wedekind was the superintendent and he called me and asked me. I told him about it. He said, "Now we don't want word to get out to anybody about these, because if people think there is a cougar back in our woods," he said, "it could cause a panic and we could have a lot of these yahoos with guns out there trying to kill the thing. So," he said, "we just better keep it quiet."

All I did was call the game protector, Bill Thomas, and I told him about it. We went out and interviewed the lady and talked to her and the girl. We showed her pictures of the cats and when she saw the picture of the cougar she said, "That is it." Her daughter corroborated her story. Then they took us out and showed us the scratching on the garage, or the shed, I don't remember. The scratching on the door where the animal was scratching were pretty deep grooves. So Bill Thomas I think, in his own mind, he was convinced that we were going to find a cougar. Because he even called me several times to ask me if I had heard anything on it. I said, "No, not a thing." We told the lady if they see it again call either Bill or call me. If she called me I would get a hold of Bill right away. Well, never called, never called again. What we were dealing with I don't know. We thought, at that time, that there was a cougar back in there. How it would get there who would know. It was never seen or reported again.

N: A tamer animal, the beavers, were in and out of the park a couple of times. Can you tell me about that?

W: Well, I guess years ago there were beavers in the park and then they returned in the early 1950s. They came

all the way up to Lake Glacier. In fact I think we had one beaver that was hit by a car down at Lake Glacier.

N: Really.

W: One of the stuffed ones here at the nature center.

N: So, they moved from south?

W: South end, south of 224 and they came up through Lake Newport area. Beaver Island was named after ... Lindley Vickers, I believe, named Beaver Island after the beavers who came up in the early 1950s. "For the first time in many years," he said, "in the park." They started to build a lodge there in the channel right by the island. But they come from Lake Newport, and I remember they were cutting trees down like crazy at Lake Cohasset. We thought that we weren't going to have any trees left around the lake. Then they just left on their own accord, as far as I know. I remember once though they were having a problem with the beavers out at the golf course. The beavers kept building dams across a little stream there. It was flooding a section of the golf course. The workers there would knock it down and they would build it up again. Having an awful time. I don't know how they finally resolved. Mr. Davies was superintendent, and I believe Clarence Bailey was the greens keeper then. We were all kind of laughing, it was kind of funny. The beavers were giving Clarence such a hard time out there. Just didn't know what to do. They would tear the dam down the beavers would build again. I don't know how that resolved itself. I don't know what they did. I guess the beavers just finally left, I would imagine. Then, oh I don't know, fifteen years ago, maybe ten, something like that, there were reports of beavers in the park south of 224. I don't know. I don't know if that was true.

N: You didn't see them?

W: I didn't see them no. There was beaver work out there but how old it was I don't know. There was an area there were there ... In fact there was what was left of an old beaver lodge, and the trees they had cut down. How old that was I don't know, a couple year that went back.

N: We talked a little bit about Ed Galaida's book on the park. There is a newer book on the park which you helped out on, The Green Cathedral. Do you remember how you were involved with that?

W: Dr. Melnick, Dr. John Melnick, the author of the book used to come into the Ford Nature Education Center

quite a bit. We would talk about the park and he would either record our conversations on a tape recorder, or he would take notes. Usually he would record it. He gathered a lot of information from a lot of us. Lindley Vickers helped him out a lot. He talked to a lot of people. Interviewed people where ever he could who knew anything about the park. Especially old timers who ... Or descendants of people who had a role in the early days of the park's history. Dr. Melnick did spend a lot of time here at the Nature Center talking with me. I know for a long time he was having trouble trying to come up with a title for the book. He wanted to get it printed for Christmas of 1976. So people could buy it for Christmas presents. He didn't know what he was going to call the book. Then one day, I'll never forget, he came into the Nature Center, into my office, and he said, "Bill, I've got a name for my book. I'm going to call it The Green Cathedral." When I first heard the name I didn't say anything of course, but I don't know it is kind of corny wouldn't you say. I don't know. As time went on and I became more familiar with that title, with that name, it sounded better. Today I think it is a pretty good name.

N: What else could it be?

W: What else could it be? You know first impressions aren't always the best maybe. Because I didn't like the title at ... It was none of my business of course, his book. To myself I thought, "I wouldn't have named my book that." Now, looking back on it, I think he picked a good name. Sounds pretty good to me.

N: Where would we be with out this book? I mean, Galaida's book is not available at all. You said he printed 2,000, did you say?

W: 2,000 copies yes. Of course they are long gone. Every once in a while one might turn up somewhere at book sale. One of the things that used to get Ed so mad was that he went to a ... For example, he went to an auction once, a public auction, and there were his books being handed out to people who came into the auction. Free! He doesn't know how they ever got a hold of it. Things like that used to really get him mad. The Youngstown Auto Club was handing them out free too down there at their counter. They were supposed to be selling them for him, not give them out free. He had an awful time. He had a hard time with Strouss's too. Collecting his money from them for the books that they sold. He said they didn't keep a record of what they sold. He said, "I know I lost money there. They sold books I never got paid for." That is why then he didn't take the books anywhere. He said, "I'll sell them myself." That is how Lindley

Vickers and I got into it. We helped him a little bit. He had a rough time with that book, selling it. I sold them all. I was his last salesman, if I can call myself that. I sold them all for him.

N: You told me one time you had a job offer and you almost left the park. Do you want to talk about leaving the park and what happened there?

W: They were looking for a superintendent for Boardman Township Park. Ivor Jenkins had left. I got a letter from Phil Prosser, who was president of the board of commissioners of Boardman Township Park, asking if I would be interested in the superintendent's position.

N: Do you remember what year this is?

W: It was, I think, in the early 1970s. Early 1970s sometime. I gave him a call and I said, "Well, I could talk to you about it Phil anyway." So he came out to the house, it was on Southern Boulevard then. I moved there in 1969. So sometime shortly there after, very early 1970s I would say. Anyway, we talked about it and he told me what would be expected of me. When we were all done I said, "Oh by the way Phil, what does the job pay?" He said, "Well, you tell the board what you want and they will say yes or no." So I told him, "Well it is going to have to be a certain figure I won't ever consider it." He said, "Oh, that is fine. You can ask for that then."

N: You were giving yourself a raise?

W: Yes, a little bit of one. I said, "I almost have to ask for more than I'm making now to make that change." Anyway I said, "Give me a chance to think about it." So, I thought about it, and I finally decided no. My roots had grown too deep in Mill Creek Park and I just didn't feel like I wanted to leave the park. Even though Boardman Park I could walk to work every day from where I was living. Right in my back yard practically, or front yard I should say. I said, "Let me think about it and I'll give you a call." So, a week or so later, I called him and I said, "Phil" I thanked him for the offer but I said, "I just don't think I'm going to be able to take it. I'm going to stay with Mill Creek Park." And Bill said, "Well, okay. If you know anybody who is interested, or might be interested, who you think is qualified why let us know." So I just hung up the phone, I was here at the Nature ... In my office in the Nature Center and John Holzbach walked in. John at that time had left his teaching position in the Howland School system. He was the director of the outdoor education department there. So he was unemployed and I said, "Hey John do you want

a job?"

N: This is the same day?

W: Same day, I just hung up the phone from talking to Phil Prosser. I had just hung up the phone when John came in the door. Jokingly I said, "Hey, do you want a job?" He said, "What is it?" I said, "They want a superintendent at Boardman Park." I said, "Hey, why don't you call Phil. Here is the phone." He called him up, they made a date for an appointment, and, you know the story now, he got the job. He has been superintendent ever since. He is still superintendent now. After that the only thing I had to do with it was one evening Phil Prosser called me at home. He said, "Bill I just want to ask you one question. Would you personally give your recommendation for John Holzbach for the job?" I said, "Yes, I would. I would personally recommend him." That is all he wanted to know. So, they hired him and now we know that John has done a fantastic job out there. He was the man for the job. He did a beautiful job, is doing a beautiful job. I felt that I didn't want to get into administration. Also, I want to be a naturalist. I felt that once I got into that job as time went on it would be more of an administrative job than it was at the beginning. It would only confine me more, and more, and more to the office. I said, "This is not what I want." I just told him, "I don't think I am the person for the job really." I asked Phil Prosser, "Why did you ask me first?" I couldn't understand why they would ask me. He said, "Well, the board members had been reading your articles in the paper (Meaning at that time it was the Mill Creek Park Bulletin, which appeared every month) and they thought that you would be the person for the job." Of course I knew in my own mind that writing a nature column was no relationship whatever to being superintendent of a park. I have wondered what would have happened if I would have taken that job. If I would have still been there, whether I would have lasted at the job. Of course, as it turned out, I am glad I didn't now. I almost had it, I could have had it I guess.

N: Didn't you almost leave once before for the steel mill, or something?

W: Yes, for the Youngstown Sheet and Tube, Sheet and Tube and then Truscon. Both times after I applied at these places I decided not to go there, and to stay here. I did get a call back from the Sheet and Tube one time wanting to know if I was still looking for a job. By that time why I said, "No, I have decided to stay with Mill Creek Park." Those were the only two times that I really made any effort to leave. Well, with the Board-

man Park I didn't make any effort to leave. I shouldn't say that, but I really didn't. The time I was going to go with the . . . I applied at Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company and then Truscon, I was really planning on leaving the park.

The only motivation really was I wanted a job with more pay. As time went on pay became less and less important to me. I was glad I didn't change jobs just to make more money because I would have thought that would have been . . . It is not my nature to go after money. It is a shallow way to live, just money and money alone. So, I didn't. . . I'm glad I didn't get that job at those other places. The pay would have been fantastic but I would probably have detested the work in time. Here I was happy with the work, even though the pay wasn't so great. I had steady work. I knew I could stay here. There was no such thing as a strike in the park at that time, later on there was. There was no union here. As long as you did your job, and didn't get in any trouble, why you knew you had a job. You were secure. There were no layoffs or anything. As it turned out I was glad I stayed here. Of course, Sheet and Tube later. . . You know what happened to that. I'm glad I didn't decide to go to one of these place just to chase that almighty dollar, which is not worth it.

N: Both of us like snakes and have a couple of good snake stories about finding a bunch of snakes. On one occasion at least.

W: Yes, I got a call once from a gentleman on the east side, the near east side. Probably. . . I forget the name of the street now. It was a street near Truesdale Avenue. Anyway he called me and said he has snakes all over his yard. This was like Wednesday or Thursday. I had gotten calls like this before and I didn't take it too seriously. I said, "Oh yes, okay." I said, "I can't come this week I'm kind of busy." I just didn't want to go because I knew when I got there I wouldn't find a single snake. It happened to me so many times. Somebody gives me a call, they say, "Oh, I have got all kinds of snakes here." I go out there and I don't see a one. "Maybe early next week I can get free and I will come over." He said, "That is okay, they will be here. Don't worry, anytime you want to come." So I went over the following week and I didn't even come prepared. I didn't bring any snake sacks, or bags, or anything. To make a long story short. . . First of all, this was in an old east side residential area; houses ten feet apart, little tiny yards. I would say as the crow flies, not more than a half a mile from downtown Youngstown. To make a long story short, after an hour or so, or many more, of collecting I had well

over 200 snakes. Well, well over 100. The man, I guess, gave me a bag to put them in. I went back the next day and I got more. I think the total. . . They were almost ninety-nine percent of them were garter snakes. I think there was one or two northern brown snakes in there. I think then, after collecting the next day, I must have had over 200.

N: Different sizes, or same size?

W: None of them were big. I would say they would average about a foot. Many were less though. A few maybe a little bigger, but not much. They were under the grass, they were along the foundation of the garage. They were just literally all over the place. The man he didn't want to kill them, he wasn't afraid of them himself, but the neighbors didn't like them.

N: Only in his yard, not the neighbors?

W: As far as I know. Why they were there I have no. . . Nobody knows. I don't know. What they were doing there in that one yard, what attracted them, I have no way of knowing. I couldn't see anything. There was nothing there that would. . . They eat mostly earthworms, frogs, toads, and salamanders. Things like that, but no frogs, or toads, or salamanders. . . Well, there weren't any toads because there was a place high and dry. Where would the toads breed? I don't know, I never saw anything like it before in my life. Whether it was a place for them to hibernate, they were going to hibernate there for the winter, or they had just come out. . . What time of year was that? I don't remember what time of year this was. Must have been in the spring though, they had just come out of hibernation probably. You would take a step on the grass and then you would look behind you there would be snakes come up from right where you stepped. They were underneath the matting, the grass was matted. They were underneath that. I may not have even gotten half of what was there. I don't know, but I brought them to the park. I called Janie Jenkins and Ed Shuba at the Vindicator. I thought they might like to get a picture. Well, I think when they got the picture they only had 100 and some. I don't remember. I have got it at home in my files, that picture. I was able to hold those snakes, all one big mass. It was a mass about the size of a basketball.

N: Like a Medusa head?

W: Like a Medusa head. I turned them all loose behind the nature center, down on the trail here behind the nature center. Before I did Ed Shuba got a picture of me holding this mass of snakes. All intertwined together,

holding on to each other. The exact number was there when they took the picture because I counted them when I put them in the bag. I think it was 106 maybe. I think of two days of collecting I think my total that I had altogether was over 200. I must have turned the others loose, I don't remember. I thought, "Somebody ought to get a picture of this." So that is why I called the Vindicator. Then I just put them back on the trail here in back of the woods. Within a matter of seconds they scattered in all directions. You wouldn't even know there was a snake around. For a few years later after that Jimmy Cucaro, who was our groundskeeper, would see snakes in the grass when he would go to mow back there. He would always, of course, try to avoid them. So he wouldn't hit them. He would often see them back along the edge of the lawn, the edge of the woods. Then, as time went on, we never saw anymore. Hopefully there are still some back there. Maybe not those but descendants of those. This was back somewhere in the 1970's, I don't remember the exact year.

N: This just happened once? The man never called you up again?

W: Never called me back. I never expected that when I went out there. I thought I would go out there and I wouldn't find a single snake. That has happened so many times. I made a trip to Rogers, Ohio once. Somebody told me, "You will be able to get all the copperheads you want." Never saw any kind of a snake, not a one. The guy said, "Well, they were here the other day." So after a number of those kinds of incidents I never took these calls too seriously. I didn't go out on many of them after that, unless I thought it was really worth it. Too many of them are like that. This is one that fooled me. Boy, I tell you, I never saw anything like it before in my life.

N: You mentioned the copperheads that didn't appear in Rogers. Did one appear in Mill Creek Park?

W: Yes, one was caught in the park. I believe it was Doug Pezzutto's crew. I don't know if he was foreman yet, or not. The crew Doug Pezzutto was on, Mill Creek Park crew ... I don't know if it was forestry crew, or what it was. I don't think it was, I think it was one of the other crews. Anyway, they were driving into the amphitheater, on the dirt road that used to do a loop around the amphitheater, and the snake was crossing the road. They got out, and they were going to try to catch it. I think it was Doug, said, "Oh boy, that doesn't look like any snake I have ever seen around here." They maneuvered it into a can, or bottle, or something, and brought it up to the nature center. I

was off that day, it must have been a Monday or a Tuesday. I was off and Tony Belfast was the naturalist on duty that day. Of course he knew right away what it was. He must have called the Vindicator because they came down and got a picture of it. I kept the snake for about two or three months, but I couldn't get it to eat. It just wouldn't eat for me. I finally released it down in Columbiana County in an area where there were some copperheads. A remote area, I don't know if anybody ever goes there, but I knew it was a copperhead country because we had had some from there before. That was the only one that we found in the park. So our conclusion was that somebody had put it there. Either they turned it loose intentionally or, I don't know, got carried in unintentionally. I have no way of knowing. There was only one. None were ever seen since then. We figured that somebody had to bring it in. So we didn't worry too much about there being a viable population of copperheads there. It was in an area, the amphitheater and the flats, that at that time were being used quite heavily by the young people of the area. It was a gathering place for the so-called hippies of that time. The flats and the amphitheater area was probably the first place in the park where these kids would pick to gather mostly on the weekends.

N: This was on a Monday or Tuesday?

W: It was after. . . I was off I remember. I was off Mondays and Tuesdays so it must have been one of those two days. We think that somebody just turned it loose there. It was a sick joke, hoping that one of these so-called hippies- these kids that were hanging around with the long hair, smoking pot and all that crazy stuff- that it would bite one of them. I don't know, we don't know, nobody knows. It is only logical that the snake was brought in by someone.

N: Well didn't Ernest Vickers talk about the last copperhead in Mill Creek Park or something?

W: He always said that the last copperhead in Mill Creek Park was one killed near the Idora Steel Bridge near the Umbrella Rock area. 1906 I think he said. If that is reliable, I don't know. I have no way of knowing.

N: There is a cave along Lake Cohasset called Big Mouth Cave. Weren't you involved in the naming of that?

W: Yes, I had a girls' 4-H Club from North Jackson on a nature walk one winter day after school. We were walking along the West Cohasset trail, and there was a cave there along the trail that was broad but very low. Maybe two to three feet from the ground to the top of the cave, but you could look way back in there. We

were coming by there with the girls and they asked me what this cave was called. I said, "Well, it doesn't have a name. It is just an old coal mine entrance. It has been mostly filled in and this is all that is left of it, but it was an old coal mine." So we looked in the cave and I showed them where there was still coal in there, but they were disappointed that it didn't have a name. So I said, "I'll tell you what, why don't you girls name it? So think up a name." They started throwing around different names. None of them sounded too good. They were just all silly or corny names. Finally one girl said, "Big Mouth Cave." The reason she said that was that the cave looked like a big mouth, and the . . . That is the opening did. It was winter, there were icicles hanging down from the top, the stalactites, and then building up from the ground, where the icicle tips were dripping water, were the stalagmites. So it looked like a big, grinning mouth with teeth. The name Big Mouth Cave, that seemed to be better than anything that had been suggested up to that point anyway. I said, "Does everybody agree?" They all said, "Yes, sounds good!" "So," I said, "okay. We will officially name this cave Big Mouth Cave." I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I will tell Mr. Vickers all about it." He was still writing the nature diary for the Vindicator, and I thought maybe he could write this up in his nature diary. That would give it some authenticity. So he did, he wrote it up in the nature diary. I got all the girl's names, the leader's name, it is all in my diary. Then when Dr. Melnick was writing his book I told him that . . . He asked me about that and I said, "That is Big Mouth Cave." Now it is in Dr. Melnick's book The Green Cathedral, he may even have a picture in there. I'm not sure. That seems to be its official name now. Since that day. . . I forget the date, it must have been in the 1960's. I have run into the leader, the lady who was the leader of that group. She said, "Of course the girls are all grown now, and some of them have their own children now, but they remember it." Once in a while she will run into one of the girls and she said, "They remember that old Big Mouth Cave." I forget the lady's name, the leader's name, but she was on one of our Sunday walks a few years ago. She mentioned that to me, she said, "Oh I run into one or two of the girls now and then. They are married, and have their own families well under way." That is how Big Mouth Cave got its name.

N: Mention Lindley Vickers and his nature diary. Any idea how he accomplished that? Didn't he write in that five times, six times, seven times a week?

W: Initially it was a seven-day-a-week column. How he ever did it I will never know. I asked him once,

because he was writing this for seven days a week, he wrote the Mill Creek Park Bulletin, besides all the school classes he took, and the slide shows he gave, other things and took care of the Old Mill Museum. I asked him once. I said, "Lindley, how did you ever do it?" This was years later when he was only writing it three days a week. He said, "I have no idea how I did it. I have trouble writing three columns a week now." But Lindley was the kind who didn't write, and rewrite, and rewrite. He wrote it, and that was the way it went in. I would watch him writing at the Old Mill when I was the attendant. He was writing seven days a week there. He would write with pencil, never with ink at that time, always a pencil. He wrote it on this real cheap paper. It was. . . I don't know what you would call that kind of paper. Had a kind of almost like a brownish, tan color to it. It wasn't white.

N: Like that one?

W: No, it wasn't that. It wasn't glossy, it was just a dull paper. Anyway, he would write it on there. I would watch him write it. Then he would sign his name, fold it, put it in the envelope, and run up to the mailbox at Rogers Road and Lanterman Avenue. I don't remember him rereading it. Unless as he was writing he was continually going back and rereading. I know when I was writing those columns for the short time I did, or anything, I would reread it. I would change this, I would recast, and then I would rewrite it until it was just the way I wanted it. The way it appeared in the Vindicator, as far as I know, most of the time, if not all of the time, was just the way he wrote it when he wrote it down the first time. Later on I know he went to ballpoint pen, wrote it in pen and ink. Whether or not he reread then and rewrote any of them later on, I don't think he did. He really wouldn't have the time to do that. At least when he was writing seven days a week he didn't have time. He had to get those things written off, and get them in. Of course he was like maybe a week ahead. He had them sent in a week ahead of time or so. It wasn't that he could just write it today for tomorrow's Vindicator.

N: Did you tell me he irritated the editors?

W: Sometimes he used to drag out a story for a long time. Like maybe he would take a trip somewhere and he would write his diaries on that trip. Like Beaver Creek State Park for example. Sometimes he would write week after week after week his columns would deal with that trip. He would just draw the thing out. He would get as much mileage as he could out of any kind of trip that he took. George Kelley, who was his boss, he was head of the editorial department, had to tell him,

write him a note, say, "Lindley, let us drop this and get us something else." I know when Lindley died and I took over the column. . . I only did it for two months. Why I was told not to do that. I was told not to make them too long. Before I mailed mine in, I think it was the third writing that I finally mailed in. The first one was a rough draft, the second one was a rewrite of that rough draft, and the third one was the final typing. All three of those stages there were changes made. I could have kept rewriting from then until doomsday, because there are always changes. . . Write it differently, you are never satisfied. I remember George Kelley when he talked to me about writing it, about taking over the column. I know I told him, I said, "I'll type these." He said, "Oh thank heavens!" Because Lindley used to write his longhand and he told me he sometimes had trouble reading what he wrote. I said, "No, mine will all be type written."

N: Was Lindley being paid by the Vindicator for these?

W: Yes, not very much. I wrote three columns a week, and I got \$20 a week for three columns. That was . . .

N: \$6 each, \$6 something each.

W: Yes, I don't know what it pays now. Of course, they don't have the column now. When I resigned, why, they never got anybody to take it over. I didn't do it for the money obviously. Well it was nice to get that extra \$20 but that wasn't my purpose to writing this. I didn't need that money. I did it just because I wanted to write it that is all. Then I found out I just didn't have the time, working full time and that. I just didn't want to give it that much time. Lindley could have done it though because he wrote them so fast. As I said he didn't do any rewriting, just wrote them once and mailed them in. That was it. I just couldn't do it that way.

N: Didn't Lindley write more of his observations where as you were trying to take context?

W: Yes. I wrote a few . . . I took a trip to Beaver Creek and I wrote that. Our nature walks in the park I wrote up. Then there were times when I tried to write about an idea. Like the one time I wrote on Indian Summer, to the ones, I think, on the woolly-bear caterpillar. If I remember correctly. The two of us had different approaches to it. Lindley called it simply "A Nature Diary," and I said, when I was asked if I wanted to take it over, I said, "I will, but I would like to change the name from "A Nature Diary," to "A Naturalists Diary." Of course Ann Przelomski, the managing editor said, "Yes, that is okay." I wish I could have

continued it though. But I didn't really like working under those deadlines. Because they had to be in on certain dates. If I were going to go away anywhere I was told, "Well, mail them in early before you leave." Living under deadlines is not my way to live. I realize this was only three a week, but even that I just didn't ... Oh, when I told them I was going to have to quit doing it I was asked, "Will you do it just once a week, on a Sunday?" I said, "No, I'm going to have to call it quits all together." It would take me as long to write that one for Sunday as it did all three. Knowing that I only had that one I would want to make sure that was a gem. So I would take just as much time. That is a fault in me, it shouldn't take me that long. It should take me a third as long as it would take to write three. If I had a week to write one column it would take me that long to write it. If I have a week to write three columns I could do it. In other words if I have the time it will take me that long to write, whether it is one or three. It won't make any difference. I figured it was best just not to do it at all.

N: Did Lindley ever talk about how that began? Ernest didn't do that did he?

W: I don't think so. I don't know how it began. I don't know. He may have mentioned it to me but I ... It seems to me he did discuss that; when he got started. I don't remember though, because I think that goes back to the late 1930s. It seems to me he did tell me one time who got him into that, but I don't recall.

Witch's Cave really isn't a cave. It is a fissure that was produced when a big piece of the bedrock broke loose from the parent rock and separated from it creating this big gap in there. So it is really not a true cave. When we were kids it was called Witch's Cave. Somebody had even carved the name Witch's Cave on the stone there right as you entered. You used to be able to. . . If you stand up in it you could walk in it so far and then you would have to get down on all fours and crawl. Then you finally had to get down on your belly. The story went that if you were small enough and you could squeeze through that narrow hole when you were down on your belly. If you could wiggle your way through there, get through that narrow constriction, then you would all of a sudden find yourself into a big room. That is where the witch lived back in that room back there.

There really is no room back there. It is just a place where this big peice of rock just fell loose from the bedrock, the parent rock, and created this fissure in there. That was the legend, and of course when we were

little kids we didn't know any better. It did scare us of course. So we were afraid to go back in there.

We knew that that opening behind this Witch's Cave entrance was. . . We called it the exit to Witch's Cave, because if you would build a fire, as somebody once did in Witch's Cave, the smoke would pour out, with the proper draft, that hole behind the cave underneath that leaning rock.

One day a little girl got stuck in there. She must have tried to get all the way through it and she got wedged in there. They got her out okay, but the decision was made by the park officials to close off Witch's Cave. A stone wall was built right at the entrance sealing up that whole entrance. I notice now that that stone wall is beginning to deteriorate and the mortar is beginning to crack. There is an opening already at the bottom. So, in time, I think mother nature will reopen Witch's Cave for the kids again. It is too bad really it had to be closed off.

N: Or is the witch just trying to get out again?

W: It makes an interesting story for kids now. You could really scare them and say that the witch was entombed in this cave when that stone wall was built. And she's still in there. If she ever gets out, look out. It would be like opening up Pandora's Box. As I tell the groups I take there now, whenever I do take one there, I say, "Mother nature is very slowly opening up the cave again because the stone wall is going to crumble someday. It is already beginning to."

N: That area though, Witch's Cave is just that fissure?

W: Yes.

N: The area at large is called?

W: We just called it the suspension bridge cave or suspension bridge rocks as far as I know. Dr. Melnick, I think, had another name for it; stairway to the Gods. I'm not sure. He had a more elaborate name for it. We just called it the suspension bridge rocks for lack of a better name for it.

N: Some other questions then, our area called Bear's Den, did Lindley or anyone ever get more exact about bears in there?

W: Not that I know of. It was just that it was generally accepted that the bears would live there and den there. There are at least two that we have always called bears' caves because they would probably have been

ideal for a bear to hibernate or sleep in. Nobody could prove that the bears actually lived there. I would think that it would be very logical that they would back in those days when this was all wilderness. Before the settlers arrived I am sure the bears used to make use of those sheltered places down there.

N: Just up from there was an old area called the Wheel-Wash Drive?

W: Yes.

N: Tell me about that.

W: The Wheel-Wash Drive was just a dirt road that went through the lower Bear's Den meadow area there. As you drove through this dirt road you would have to drive through Bear Creek, where it was very shallow, and as you drove your car through the creek you got the wheels of the car washed. So they called it the Wheel-Wash Drive. During real high water time you couldn't drive through. Normally, when the water was fairly low, you could just drive through the creek and get your wheels washed. Of course that has been changed a lot today. It is where the new ... What do you call it?

N: Handicapped.

W: Lower Bear's Den picnic area where the handicapped playground is, it is in that area. Yes, it was called the Wheel-Wash. There used to be a lot of names for a lot of places in the park that you don't hear today like you used to. The Wheel-Wash for one, the Blue-Cut for another. . .

N: The Blue-Cut is where the wall garden?

W: Yes, the Blue-Cut was the road that cuts through by the Rock Wall garden, right below. That was the Blue Cut. Before the Rock Wall was built that hillside was an outcropping of blue shale, or at least partly blue shale; bluish colored shale. Everytime it rained heavy, or maybe in the spring when ice was melting, that hillside would be loosened up and washed out. It would wash all down on to the road below. They would have to clean it all up. It was just a dirt road then. Since this road cut through this outcropping of this blue shale they named it the Blue-Cut.

Then in 1925 they built the Rock Wall Garden. They built that stone wall rather and later planted plants. They built that Rock Wall Garden to help hold that hillside back, to prevent erosion. To keep it from eroding down on to the road below. So that was, in a sense, the end of the Blue-Cut although that name

persisted for a long time. All the old timers in the park, all the policemen referred to that road there as the Blue-Cut.

N: Any other old names come to mind? Wasn't there a potato field?

W: Oh, the potato patch! The potato patch is where the current Lake Newport Boating Center is. It was all farm at one time. Where the Lake Newport Boating Center is today used to be called the potato patch.

N: Was there a Wintergreen hill?

W: Yes, that is the hillside on the west side of Lake Newport, just south of where the skating area is today. Where the skating area is today used to be the Lake Newport Boat House, just above the dam. Now, after they opened up the present Lake Newport Boating Center ... I think it was 1954. Then they used the former site of the boat house as a skating area. Just south of that where those restrooms are, on the west side of Lake Newport, that hillside that goes down to the lake there is called Wintergreen hill. Or used to be called Wintergreen hill because it was covered with the wildflower teaberry, or wintergreen. It is a low growing plant, a ground cover. It grew on that hillside.

N: That is gone now, isn't it?

W: I don't know. There might be some there. That was wintergreen or teaberry, a very attractive low growing evergreen plant.

N: Into the Wick area was it Rocky Ridge or Rock Ridge?

W: Rocky Ridge.

N: Does that come from that quarried area there?

W: No, actually I think when they were grading that to build a recreation area, it was just full of rocks. They must have dumped rocks there for many years. When they were leveling it with a bulldozer it was just full of rocks. They called it Rocky Ridge. Then when they opened up the playground they called it Rocky Ridge Recreation Area, and later named it after James L. Wick Jr. the former. . . I think he was still on the board then; Mill Creek Park commissioner. To many people it has always been Rocky Ridge, and I guess it always will be. I think it was because of the rocks that were in that ground there, that they ran into with the bulldozer. An awful time with it.

N: Well I think that finishes up our interview. We can stop there.

END OF INTERVIEW