

OH 2085

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Mill Creek Park Project

Personal Experiences

O.H. 2085

Ken Filicky

Interviewed By

Kate Gigliotti

On

April 23, 2003

Interviewee: Ken Filicky

Interviewer: Kate Gigliotti

Subject: Mill Creek Park Project

Date: April 23, 2003

This is an interview with Ken Filicky for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Mill Creek Park Project, by Kate Gigliotti, on April 23, 2003, at the Boardman County Public Library.

G: Please tell me where and when you were born.

F: I was born 3-11-1958 in Youngstown, Ohio.

G: Tell me a little bit about your family.

F: I have a wife. I've been married for twenty years. I have an eleven-year-old son.

G: Great. What's his name?

F: Kyle.

G: What was it like growing up in your community?

F: I was born and raised in Boardman, Ohio. I went through Catholic schools, Saint Luke's Catholic Elementary and then Cardinal Mooney High School here in Youngstown. It was a great time. I love living in Youngstown. I've only lived in Youngstown.

G: How far from Mill Creek Park did you grow up?

F: About five miles.

G: Did you go there often?

F: On the weekends most of the time. My mom and dad on Sunday mornings would drive through the park system, and that's where I began to get my love for the park and working in the outdoors.

G: That's great. What did your parents do?

F: My dad was a superintendent in an aluminum manufacturing company here in Youngstown, and my mom was a housewife.

G: Can you tell me a little bit about your educational background?

F: I was a junior at YSU when I discontinued going.

G: What was your major? What were you studying?

F: My major was going to be law enforcement administration. At the time I wanted to be a park ranger or a wildlife officer, and they directed me into that area or field.

G: What was your first memory of Mill Creek Park?

F: First memory? That probably would be going down to Lake Glacier along the park district with my dad. I had four brothers and one sister.

G: What were your work experiences prior to Mill Creek Park?

F: It would just be maintenance, janitorial work at the Catholic schools.

G: Why did you want to get a job at the park?

F: I wanted to eventually become a National Park Service Ranger or work through the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in some capacity, and I just loved being in the outdoors. That just seemed like the next natural step.

G: How and when did you get your job?

F: I started as a volunteer probably in 1975, working with Bill Whitehouse, then park naturalist. I was a just a volunteer at the Ford Nature Education Center there, and in June of 1976 someone resigned. I was able to become the curator, the attendant of the Old Mill Museum at the time, and I took that position in 1976.

G: What kind of training was necessary for the job?

F: The training when they hired me as the more janitor-curator of the museum was more of a maintenance security type to just make sure no one would walk off with the place or whatever. We'd keep it clean and safe. That's all.

G: Did you change positions during your time at the park?

F: Yes. In 1978, 1979 I became the assistant park naturalist at the time, and I was then forwarded to the Ford Nature Center where I worked right alongside with Bill Whitehouse.

G: Can you describe a typical day for me as the assistant park naturalist?

F: The center opened at ten o'clock. We got there about 9:30. First thing in the morning, depending on the season, usually springtime and early fall was when the school classes would come in from all the local elementary schools. We'd give them about a forty-five minute talk in the nature center, pointing out the different types of animals and basic plant life depending on the school age of the students. Then we would take a short nature hike back around the nature center itself. A year or two after I got in doing the program, I extended the hike for about four and a half miles, and we took in some of the bigger sites of the park, the Suicide Rock as it's called and Lake Glacier. Then we would go up over the hill to the sled riding hills and stuff that we had in the park there and then past the goldfish pond and back down through the gorge to the Pioneer Pavilion, back up the hill back to the nature center. That was one of the things that I did as the assistant naturalist. The afternoon usually took in some work around the nature center, things that had to have maintenance and stuff like that to be done, and then special projects that I might be doing or Bill Whitehouse might be doing. Once in a while we did have an afternoon class come through, but that was very unusual because the school classes had to be back by two o'clock. It was a little late to do a program then. I started hatching Ringneck Pheasants as a project to release in the park district in some areas that would be able to maintain the habitat for Ringneck Pheasants. We began to take a census on Lake Newport and Lake Glacier at the time to see what the fisherman were catching, to see what fish would be stocked, what would work best for our lake. One of our problems was rainbow trout. The fishermen and the citizens thought it was just great to have rainbow trout stocked, but they wouldn't reproduce. They would die probably by the next fall, early spring, but they would never make the winter because the water would freeze up. It would get too cold for them, and then there wouldn't be enough oxygen in the creeks. They would normally go upstream during the wintertime to find a deep pool to winter in, and our creeks just weren't compatible to them like in the mountains, like if you would go over to Pennsylvania. Those mountains have deep pools where they all congregate in the winter for protection and to stave off the winter cold and everything, and we just didn't have any of that. None of our creeks were deep enough for that, so we were looking forward to putting maybe large mouth bass or white cropppy, black cropppy, and small mouth bass, stocking those because they could naturally reproduce in our lakes. The program did get off of the ground, but the budgetary situation at the time would not permit us to do anything but to stock the rainbow trout. That's of course what the fishermen wanted to catch. They were the easiest because all you had to bring down was a can of corn, put corn on the hook, and throw it in because that's basically what they got fed at the hatcheries. As soon as they heard that hit the water, boom they were right there.

G: Sounds like my type of fishing. [Laughter]. You mentioned “suicide rock,” why is it called “suicide rock?”

F: Because a little boy apparently jumped off of there, and it was a favored swimming rock for many years for people to dive off of. They would fall off the rock and slip in. He apparently hit his head as he tried to dive off the rock backwards. He hit his head or something, and they found him later. It kind of got that nickname of Suicide Rock, and then from that point on and because of the water conditions they didn't want anyone swimming in the park. We mentioned that as a park legend to the kids and would tell them not to be in the water. The water's not that clean. You do not want to be in the water. We discourage that as much as possible so that's why we always, as I went down around there always brought that up to them. The rock, if you're ever at the backwaters where Slippery Rock Pavilion is and where Lake Glacier ends, you can see it. There's a bit notched out of the rock like somebody took a knife and cut straight down and straight over. That's the rock that's there, and it's still there today. It's looks like maybe if it was painted a different color it would look like a boat upside down actually floating in the water.

G: Tell me again what years you worked at the park?

F: I worked from June of 1976 to February of 1983.

G: Did you notice any changes in the park while you worked there?

F: Yes. There's plenty of changes. As we were there we turned around and began to see more of Mill Creek Park trying to stay on their own budget, we were going out to try to get state money because the budget was getting so tight there at the end while I was still there that we just couldn't afford to spend money on anything. It got to the point where anything that you wanted to buy had to have req-order for it. You had to take the req-order down to the office, and the superintendent, Charles Wedekind, would personally have to sign off on that. Some of the things like paper or pads of paper, it just got to the point where we had to, and it just really slowed things down because if he wasn't in the office you weren't going to get the req-order signed. Then of course it was always the phone call back, “Do you really need that? Maybe you can come up here, and I'll give you this. I'll take the budget.” I know the roads weren't paved for a while there. I mean they weren't paving roads. They did receive a couple of state grants for road reconditioning or something, but that's how tight the budget was getting at this point. I know more of the budget was being given to law enforcement at that time and other things, and the park naturalists or interpretive services was getting lower and lower in the budget financial ring.

G: Have you noticed any changes in the park since you stopped working there?

F: Oh, yes. Since it became a Metro Park District, they turned around, made many improvements. I think once we got the money and we started using it, the taxpayers and the public. I think the superintendent at the time, Mr. Scholard, he was trying to be all

things to all people at the time and trying to put as many recreational things into the park as possible. They really went on a buying spree or whatever out there and really made some improvements. He made some excellent improvements in some areas, but sometimes I wonder. The idea of Mill Creek Park was to turn around and be a recreational nature for a natural environment for a walk through the park or whatever, and we bought the farm out there in Canfield, which was one of those situations where we buy it now or developers are going to get it. So we might have been forced to do that then, but a lot of the other areas that they moved into recreational things were just trying to be everything to everybody. We're a natural park, and that was one of the nice things about Mill Creek Park was that it was all natural, from 1891 when it was initiated and everything. They turned around and kept it as natural as possible. A lot of the work too in the park district was WPA work, and that's still standing today. A lot of the bridges, a lot of the trail work, the riprap creek, the trails itself. The retainment walls that were built were built by WPA personal, and those are still standing today. A lot of the maintenance was just maintaining. We didn't have to spend a lot of capital improvement money on a lot of these areas too. One of the areas that bothers me is they're not acquiring new land. They're not moving out south along the Western Reserve Road and the Ohio Turnpike Corridor right now and buying more property there to expand the park district. That's still in Mahoning County so it would be great to start because the building has gone on around the park, and they're going to close it off pretty soon. We won't be able to buy any more land going south there. So, like I said, they did make improvements, but I think we're moving in too many different directions trying to be a Jack-of-all-trades, every recreational need that society has. That wasn't what Mill Creek was supposed to be about.

G: What's your favorite part of the park and why?

F: My favorite part of the part is probably the gorge between the Old Mill and the Flats in the Mill Creek Park, the Silver Suspension Bridge. The reason for that is, of course, I got started at the Old Mill so that was the first place I put steps in, but it's the deepest part of the park district, the big rocks, the water when the water's real high, running high. It's just the best part of the park. You have some of the oldest Hemlock trees in the park over two hundred years old in that area and some of the largest sandstone outcroppings in the Youngstown tri-county areas in that part of the park. It's a very unique part of the park, different types of plant life. It's only not even a tenth of a mile wide at that point because the gorge is there and everything else. It's squeezed out, but there's so much to see in that little area there. It's a very unique part of the park.

G: Can you describe a meaningful experience at the park either work-related or personal?

F: A meaningful experience was my wife was a schoolteacher in the city of Struthers. She brought her school class down. That's how we met, and three years later we were married.

G: That's a good one. That's great.

F: It can't get any better than that.

G: What do you feel is the most important part of the park?

F: The most important part of the park is the natural beauty of the park, the natural history of the park. You step right from the city. You could be right in the heart of downtown Youngstown and within four or five minutes step into the environment, a natural environment where you're out of the city. Because the park is a gorge and it's down low, you get away from all the sounds from the city. The park itself, that's one of the best things I think Youngstown has going for it.

G: How important do you think the park programs are, the social programs?

F: I think the programs are great. I think they should be expanded in some areas. Especially interpretive programs are great and some of the recreational programs—the baseball fields, the diamonds, the football fields that they've put in there. They've been there for years and some of the water sprinkler systems that they've put in at the recreational facilities to keep the kids cool in the summer, which are great.

G: What impact does the park have on Youngstown?

F: I think it has a great impact right from the very north end, Fellows Riverside Gardens because of the natural gardens and the formal gardens they have there, to the golf course at the very south end, the thirty-six hole golf course, and everything in between—the creek, the natural areas for hiking, biking.

G: What effect do you think suburban sprawl has on the park?

F: The suburban sprawl is having a dire effect on the park. It's going to enclose on the park. When I was a naturalist one of my duties was to go out to the south end or south of State Route 224. They unfortunately have a sewage plant dumping right into the district, into the creek itself. Because it wasn't a third stage sewage plant at the time, we had to turn around and kind of monitor it, keep an eye on what was going on out there. They're bringing tanker trucks of chlorine out there because they had to kill anything that they dumped, but that had adverse effects because there was no aquatic life for the first half-mile in the creek. It was a necessary evil because you couldn't be dumping the raw sewage in, so they chlorinated it to death. It was okay to dump into the creek, but like I said, there was no life in the first part. The creek would never freeze from where the discharge pipe was for half a mile down. Because of the chemical reaction the water was warm enough that it wouldn't freeze over. The rest of the creek would freeze south of that point. We would watch that, and then of course unfortunately there was a few times when there was what we call a bypass. The bypass was when the sewage plant would be overtaken by too much rainwater, whatever. It's supposed to be two different lines taking storm water and the sanitary lines. Sometimes it had been intermingled throughout the years before zoning laws and things, and lots of times there was an emergency bypass. They had no choice, but something got bypassed. They tried to bypass only storm sewer

water, but lots of times sewage got in there. We would go out and see papers and things hanging in the trees that you know they were coming from toilets, this debris that was lying in the trees and hanging off tree branches. That was one of the problems with urban sprawl, and then just the construction. We had a lot of siltation problems that was because we're building so fast out there around the park district, and all that water has to drain into something. It was draining into the Mill Creek watershed, and as this kept going on, as it covered up more of that ground, it was just pushing more and more water into the creek, places where the large Sycamore trees were growing. The Sycamore is known because of its massive root system. It's one of the things the National Park Service tells people to plant along creek beds because it will retain the creek bed, the bank intact. It won't wash out with Sycamore tree roots. Well, one of the problems was we had so much water washing in around the tree that some of the trees were actually falling over. I mean the water was getting up behind it actually. There was so much water and so much flood conditions coming down. That's one of the other problems that we had, and then just more and more people you try to squeeze into the park at a certain Saturday or Sunday, especially now in April and May with the first nice weekend. When I worked there traffic was backed up for a quarter mile at every stop sign. There was just that many people. Then you got people, and you preach and preach to stay on the trails. Don't go down the hillsides any place because once you start doing that, you get erosion started. Then you have problems with the hillsides collapsing down on you and stuff. It was just that we were being overrun on some nice weekends in the park. So that was another problem that we had, just too many people in the park coming to visit.

G: Aside from the sewage, what environmental concerns were there for the park? Was that the main one?

F: That would be the number one because of the sewage plant out at the south end because that was discharging right into almost the end of our boundary. Anything that was discharged from the sewage plant would have to flow all the way through Mill Creek Park out to the Mahoning River. We'd start right at the Mahoning River and work our way back up. Of course, that was in Boardman Township, and apparently that was the best place to build the sewage plant because it was at the lowest point in Boardman for the drainage. Everything drains down to the sewage plant. That made sense. Of course, it's on Mill Creek, and all sewage plants are built along a creek or whatever so it can discharge into the creek. Now that's a third stage plant, and the water is supposedly clean enough to drink as it comes out of the discharge pipe.

G: I wouldn't want to do it.

F: Me neither, but this is what we'd been told back in those days. Once it became a third stage plant, it would be good enough to drink. No one's ever taken us up on that. [Laughter].

G: What difficulties were there in maintaining the park?



F: Basically it was the budget. If we'd had a budget we could have maintained the park pretty good. We would have had the materials. Just at the nature center, we wanted to put a coloring book together on Mill Creek. We had one put together. It was called *Gusta Goose from Mill Creek*, our little mascot so to speak. We were going to move on that, but there was never any budget to do that. Our volunteer naturalists, we were trying to put a program together with them. We didn't have enough money to even put patches on their shoulders or anything for a volunteer program. Only myself and Bill Whitehouse were uniformed. Everybody else was non-uniformed. It's just one of those situations where because of the budget restraints . . . The superintendent at the time was very meager and very cautious of the budget, and he did a fine job. I mean he worked with what he had. He was always afraid to go back to the taxpayers because school levies weren't passing. Other city taxes weren't passing, and he always felt that, "If I have to deal with something, I need the police and fire department, but I don't need the park. If I have to cut, I'm going to cut." At that time, like I said, it was just a financial budget, and we worked with what we had. We could have gone out and done so much more, but we just didn't have the money. Just maintaining the roads, we were patching on top of patches on some of the streets.

G: Do you know why it was necessary to drain Lake Newport?

F: Oh, yes. Yes. I was there at the time when it first started coming about. They didn't do it until I was already gone. It was already a Metro Park District, but at the time the lake was filling in with siltation in the back and south end of the lake. What was happening there was they turned around and blamed, most of it was the construction in Boardman because they would open up. At that time there was no federal laws to say that if you're building along a stream bank, or whatever. Now as you see they put up these stakes with black plastic to hold back all the siltation so it doesn't get into the watershed. At that time it was a free for all. The water, it silted over and silted over. "Who cares where it's going to run? It's going to run down the stream. It's out of our hair. It's really not our problem." What happened was Lake Newport took a big hit there, and I noticed while we were stocking fish, it was getting so bad there that we were actually being forced to stock channel cat and some types of carp. That's not what the fishermen like to catch, but that was the only thing that was surviving. Because we did throw some rainbow trout in at the Lake Newport Boat Dock, the old boat dock, not the one that's there presently, and we noticed within a couple of days that a lot of them were dying on us. It was the siltation, so much siltation. Lake Newport was the first place, open water where the water would slow down enough that we'd dump the load of siltation. Lake Newport was the first, and then was Lake Cohasset and Lake Glacier. So Lake Newport caught everything first, and most of it got dumped in Lake Newport. I know the recreation director. At the time he had sailboat classes there. He would put down the rudder or whatever it was, and they were hitting the bottom. They would have to go half way down the lake before they would drop that thing that would steer the boat because they were having so much trouble. I know one time one of the sailboats flipped over. The guy's there, and they said, "Wait." They ran the police boats out right away because he doesn't have his life jacket on. The guy was standing there. They couldn't believe he was half way down the lake, and he's standing up. He's standing on the

bottom of the lake. That's how shallow it became. At that time they wanted to drain the lake and take all the sedimentation out, but the problem was the transportation of the sedimentation. We'd have to use county roads, and a lot of it would be coming out wet, or you'd have to build what they call a retaining pond or a retaining area, dump all this sludge up there. Because of all the organics and all the things from the Boardman Sewage Plant, it wouldn't be a very nice thing to smell. They got to the point where the cost was outrunning the dredging itself, and at the time I remember talking with Bill Whitehouse and some other people. They kind of laughed at us, but we said to make it a waterfowl refuge. Let ducks and geese nest out there. What are you going to do? If you can't dredge it, and you can't do . . . You're going to have to move the boat dock down, and they're just, "We're never going to do that." Eventually that's what happened to it. It became a water foul marsh because that was the next best alternative. It helped out for the natural area of the park because that was just another area where it was becoming congested because that was where the boat dock was. They had a big area mowed there for people to play Frisbee, picnic tables and things like this. That was during the summer. At the height of summertime that place was packed. You couldn't find a parking spot. I mean it was just getting that packed in that area.

G: How did the closing of Idora Park influence Mill Creek Park? Was there an impact on it?

F: As far as I was concerned, I don't think there was really any impact on Mill Creek Park anyway. I mean that area was overrun during the summertime. People would come down out of Idora Park down into the park, over into the gorge all the time, that area there. We'd get more people in the park just because of Idora Park, but once it closed it really didn't effect us that much.

G: Do you know why the park didn't buy Idora property? They just couldn't afford it?

F: I think at the time it was too expensive. At that time I believe Charles Wedekind was still superintendent, and he couldn't see a purpose. We're trying to maintain a natural park district. Although it would be a nice historical thing for the park maybe, that's not where we wanted to be. Then there was the cost. It was just too much money. And then how much money would you need to try to get it back to working even if it was a historical amusement park?

G: What can you tell me about the newer features of the park like Yellow Creek, the wetlands, the farm?

F: I said earlier, the farm, it's nice. I think the park district was forced. Either we buy it now or developers are going to get it because Ohio State University was backing out. The Ohio Department of Agriculture was saying, "We don't need it. It's costing us too much. We don't have a budget for that." So they were going to sell it. Eventually it probably would have ran into developers. That whole area is now becoming a big suburbia out there right now, across from the fair grounds. So that was probably a nice move for the park, and it did help us with bike trail out there, that new bike trail they built

along the old railroad access there. It's right up next to that, and they have a base there. They did move the park offices out there, all the administrative offices there. They have a big room now, meeting room, conference room, or whatever that they needed out there to do programs and special presentations out there. That helped out a lot. They added that on. That farm was, I guess, not too bad. It's good for the inner city kids to go out to a farm because we have nothing in the area that's maintained by a government entity to bring city kids out to see how a farm actually operates and what's all entailed in farming and producing food for you to eat and stuff. The wetlands, I'm all for that. I think that's the best thing Mill Creek Park could have done with the back end of Newport, and they use it as a marine tool. They did put a boardwalk out with signs along it. Speaking of waterfowl, the Canadian Geese moved right in and started nesting right there where people could see them nesting. That helped out quite a bit. The other recreational things, some of the things—just this winter they started the snow machine up there at the Wick Recreation Area, and I'm just shaking my head. I don't think we should. If it was a natural . . . I could see if it was a toboggan slide or something. If people were paying to use this or whatever, fine. I mean it's like at some of our state parks we have a toboggan run and stuff, and they maintain it. I say, "all right." The skating rink, it's been there forever, and I guess it had met its time. It was going to cost millions to put that back together. I think some of the newer recreational things that they're doing, I don't see some of the purpose, some of it is because it just doesn't really fit into the park district. Keep it natural. That's what it was all about in the very beginning with the founding father.

G: So how do you feel about the golf course, the thirty-six-hole golf course?

F: The golf course was there way before I got there, but here again there's plenty of golf courses in town. Go golfing. That's a natural area. The golf course is really pulling a lot of funding from the park because of the maintenance of that, because of all the flooding problem we had out there. If you go out along the West Golf Drive that comes off of 224, you'll see for the first half-mile, three quarters of a mile, a mound of dirt. I remember them putting that in while I was working there because the water would back up over the road and flood the golf course all the time because of all the construction in Boardman, more and more water every year. So they put that dyke in, and, "We're going to stop it. We dyked it." Well, what happens is when the water rained down from Canfield it filled the golf course up. Now the dyke's there and won't let it flow into the creek either now. They can't run a pipe underneath because once they do that all the water from the creek when it backed up would back up on the golf course anyway. Now we're talking pumping stations, and they just stopped. They said, "No. This is not a good idea." I think we could have done without a golf course, but it was there before I got there. It's still there.

G: You know Volney Rogers was the founder of the park?

F: Right.

G: If he were alive today, what do you think he would like to accomplish in Mill Creek Park?

F: I think he would probably want to see the park grow, follow the watercourses. I would think he would want to see the other outlying park districts be as natural as possible, which Yellow Creek is. They kept that pretty natural there. Expand the park district to keep it natural, to just enjoy nature, get away from the city, get away from the urban sprawl, suburban sprawl, and get out and just take a walk through nature, and interpret nature, see the different trees, the plant life, animal life that's there, and explore and just be at peace, take a walk, and not doing a lot of the things that everybody's doing, the hectic life that we have and stuff. That's how he decided. He bought most of the beginning parts of Mill Creek Park out of his own money. He would ride horses all the way up from down town.

G: What do you think is the future of Mill Creek Park?

F: I hope it maintains its natural beauty. The superintendents now and board members will maintain the natural beauty of the park. I think the most important thing now is to buy land to continue the park south. Right now would be a perfect opportunity to buy land along the Mahoning River. It's all brown area now. They're trying to get industrial sites to move in there, but it's just laying vacant now. This would be a perfect time to move down the Mahoning River towards downtown Youngstown. They're trying to make a park like atmosphere there anyway, so both entities could work together and help themselves out by moving Youngstown into Mill Creek that way I think. Hopefully we won't recreation it to death with all kind of jogging trails and other trails. I know at one time when we were there working, they decided to close a couple park roads in the wintertime for just a couple months because of the maintenance of salt and slag, the time it was going to take to plow those roads. There was such a large public outcry, and we thought people would think this was great. You could walk down the road on your own in the winter. You won't have traffic to deal with. A lot of the senior citizens and older people, people handicapped, they enjoyed just driving through. That was their recreation, just to get out of the city and drive through the park. Then we closed a couple of park roads, and of course us young fellows that we were thought this was great. But for the seniors and for the people that it was inaccessible to them, they couldn't drive through the park anymore. They were very extremely upset about it, and that's one of the things that happens, I guess. You try to please someone, and then somebody else gets a little upset about it. But basically acquire land and keep it to what it originally was, I think is the best thing because I think in the long run—get away, get to the woods. If you enjoyed being in nature that's what you want to do. The ball fields are all right, football, some football fields, snow hills somewhere, but when you begin to try to overrecreate your facilities I think that's when you start to get into the areas that you really shouldn't. Let the private sector handle some of that. Let them build hockey rinks and whatever else and stuff like that, and leave the park the way it is, the natural beauty of the park. As a naturalist, I've seen people that do not understand or can't identify trees, can't identify the simple things, wildlife, waterfowl in the park district. They really don't understand about the animals and things because here just a few years ago they started a hunt in the

south end of Mill Creek Park for deer because we were overpopulated with the deer. They just got to be a problem where as they built more and more the deer got squeezed into a smaller area. They were actually eating some wildflowers out there that are native to Ohio that only grow in a few areas. In the south end of our park district we had a couple of those wildflowers still growing there, and we had a varied expanse of them. They were afraid the deer were going to eat those, pull them up because deer are deer. "I'm hungry. I'm going to eat whatever if it's green." Especially the spring wildflowers, they have to come up first thing. They would eat those. Back when I was a naturalist we turned around, and we planted Canadian hemlock. We tried to plant different types of native species in the park district in different areas to keep it natural, to keep it where you can't see, if you're down on the trail and you look up you don't see houses on the top or whatever. It looks all natural. We tried to keep the native species going in the district.

G: You seem to have a great love for the nature of the park, and you mentioned you want to be a park ranger. Why were you unable to pursue that?

F: I was putting applications in with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Service, with the State of Ohio Parks Department. What happened was I became a park naturalist. This is what I really want to do. I love doing this type of work though because of the park budget I was only part time. Through the generosity of Mr. Wedekind, I was a part time employee, but he would give me forty hours a week. This was great being single, still living at home with mom and dad, which is the best thing in the world. [Laughter]. I could afford to live and go to YSU, get my four-year college degree in law enforcement, and become a national park service ranger. Then in the early 1980's I turned around and Ronald Reagan got into office at the time. They froze all hiring. I'm in the interpretive naturalist education program or law enforcement, and that was one of the jobs National Park Service froze hiring on and weren't hiring on. They were hiring from within, but they wouldn't take anyone from outside that they hadn't hired before, had worked with them seasonal or on a part time basis. At the same time I lucked into a job with the United Parcel Service as a part time employee working at night for them and then going to school during the day. Marriage came along. I got married. I needed a full time job then. UPS said, "Here's a full time job," so I stayed with UPS. Even at the time the state of Ohio wasn't even hiring wildlife officers. Once every two or three years they'd have a school. Now they have one every six or seven months. They're having schools because they can't keep people now. The rate of pay isn't what it used to be, but back when I was at Mill Creek Park we'd get applications from people who had master's degrees in environmental education and things like that. Here I'm only in my second or third year at YSU, and then these people want to take my job as a part time naturalist, an assistant naturalist. They have five or six more years of education than I have, and they experience working here, working there. It just got to the point where I'd talked to a couple of National Park Service Rangers, and they said, "Well, if you get about ten or fifteen years here, you'll become a naturalist. You'll get your goal, but it's going to take . . ." I have a wife now. She has a full time job. She's a schoolteacher. She's working towards retirement, and I'd have to move from national park to national park as a seasonal part time ranger or whatever. That just wasn't going to work out too well for me, and with UPS everything just fell into place. There was one disappointment,

but then this other job came along. I started working there. I started advancing there. Today though I still drive through Mill Creek Park, my son and I all the time. We take hikes, and we see all the state parks, national parks and stuff like that. My son and I are always out somewhere doing something in the woods.

G: That's great. It's great that you kept up with it.

F: Yes.

G: Is there anything else that you wanted to add?

F: No, not really. That's just about it. I think I covered everything. I hope anyway. Going home in the car I'll think of something. [Laughter].

G: Of course. Well, thank you very much for your time, and we really appreciate it.

F: Thank you.