

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Idora Park

Personal Experience

O. H. 1397

FRANK NOVELLO

Interviewed

by

Scott Smith

on

November 29, 1990

FRANK NOVELLO

Mr. Frank Novello was born in Youngstown, Ohio on March 15, 1919. He is the son of Donato and Pasquellina Novello and is one of 10 children. Because his parents were Italian immigrants, they moved to the Brier Hill section of Youngstown, a section of the town dominated by people of Italian heritage. Mr. Novello attended Brier Hill School and the Rayen High School, where he graduated from in 1938. Mr. Novello credits the Rayen High School with giving him an excellent education that would aid him for the rest of his life. Mr. Novello also cites the Brier Hill section of Youngstown with greatly influencing his life. He feels that this area with its close knit friendships would influence him for his while life. It was here that Frank Novello met his wife, Concelia Giannini Novello.

From 1939 until 1940, Frank Novello worked for the Pennsylvania Gas Company. When he quit this job in 1940, he would then work various jobs in the Youngstown area. In 1941, he was hired to work at a defense plant located in Warren, Ohio. At this plant, he worked on landing crafts. Because of his experience in mechanical drawings (gained at Rayen) he became an inspector at the plant. He would supervise blueprint revisions and explain all changes to shop employees. Because of this job, he was granted three separate deferments by the Navy. On the forth call to be drafted, it was found that Frank had a hernia so he was placed back at his job as an inspector.

The plant closed in 1949 and Mr. Novello began to look for a new job. Frank worked several jobs until he was hired at Benada Aluminum in 1950, a job at which he worked as a foreman until

1956. In 1956, he was hired by McKay Machine. He was promoted by McKay several times, and finished up as a fabrication fitter. McKay Co. in 1970 was bought out by Wean United. Frank Novello would work for Wean United in the same capacity for 13 more years until his retirement in 1983.

Today, Mr. and Mrs. Novello still live in the Youngstown area. They have three children, Daniel Joseph Novello, Doris Jean Novello, and Patricia Lyn Novello. Mr. Novello enjoys working in his yard and attending his garden in his free time. He is a member of Saint Anthony's Church, where he is very active.

-Scott Smith

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INTERVIEWEE: FRANK NOVELLO

INTERVIEWER: Scott Smith

SUBJECT: McKay Machine, french fries, Brier Hill

DATE: November 29, 1990

S: This is an interview with Frank Novello, for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Idora Park, by Scott Smith, at Mr. Novello's home, 3801 Northlawn Drive, Youngstown, Ohio, on November 29, 1990, at 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Novello, before we start the interview, I would like to ask you some questions about yourself and where you grew up and everything such as that.

N: I grew up in Youngstown, Ohio, in the Brier Hill section. Our home address was 135 Pershing Street, Youngstown, Ohio. I went to Brier Hill School for five years, I went to Jefferson one year, on to Hayes for three years, then on to Rayen. I graduated Rayen in 1938.

S: How many people were in your family?

N: Ten children, with my mother and father, we were twelve.

S: Did your father work in the mills?

N: Yes. My father worked at U. S. Steel. At that time it was Carnegie.

S: Was that basically just an Italian area at that time?

N: All Italian.

S: Was it really close?

N: We were a very close-knit neighborhood.

S: What type of things did you do in Brier Hill? What kinds of things do you remember about growing up?

N: Well, everybody had their own garden and they raised their own vegetables and things like that. When we were children, there were no swimming pools, no playgrounds, we would just play ball down on the corner. Our summer recreation was showering ourselves by opening up the waterplugs, playing baseball and football, kick the can, hockey on the streets. That was our recreation at that time. We had no bicycles. We had nothing, not even sleds. In the wintertime, we would put water on the hill to make it freeze and we would skate with our shoes down the hill. Then we made a bobsled out of wood and come down the hill. That was our recreation in the wintertime.

S: Did you work while you were young?

N: No. My junior year in high school, I was fortunate enough to get a part time job at a gas station in the evenings and I had to go three hours a night and all day Saturday and all day Sunday for \$5 a week. That was at City Service Gas Station. That's what helped me buy my books and pay for some of my clothing in high school.

S: What did you do upon graduating high school?

N: There were no jobs to be had. The majority of the working class went to CCC camp. I still worked at the gas station at that time. He raised my pay to \$8 a week.

S: What was CCC camp?

N: CCC camp was Civilian Conservation Corps that Roosevelt had initiated to plant trees and take care of parks and things like that. The boys from our class that couldn't find a job joined CC camp for six months.

S: How long did you work at the gas station?

N: Well, from that gas station, I went to Pennsylvania gas and oil from up until 1940. Then I got a job in the steel mill. I was a laborer. In those days you didn't have a chance. If you didn't know anybody in the mill, you were just a common laborer. When the war started,

1941, that's when I got a job in the mill. We got married in May of 1941. I felt that I'd never get anywhere working in the mill. I was trying to get an apprenticeship, they wouldn't even speak to me at that time.

Then I had a chance to get an apprenticeship up in Warren. There was a defense plant. They were making Leningrad the LV23. I was pretty fortunate that I had such an education in drawing at the Rayen school, the Navy inspector got me three deferments. I was in charge of drawings when they would come out of engineering, any revisions, I would be the first to install and show the group leaders and foreman how to assemble these. Then in 1944, my deferment was up and I had to go for an examination. When I did go to Cleveland, they found out that I had a hernia and they sent me back home. They figured my job was more important than going to war.

After the war, I kept working there until 1949 when they closed that plant. In 1949, I was unemployed again. I didn't go on compensation. A week later, I had a job on the railroad. On the railroad, it was maintenance always and we did practically everything there, such as repairing coverts, pouring concrete. I didn't like that. Four months later, I got a job at Prescott Steel. I worked at Prescott, one month, and they went on strike. I had a family to support. This was 1949. They went on strike, I never went back. I got a job at Benada Aluminum. About a year and a half, to two years after I worked there, they started what they called a storm door line and they needed a foreman. From 1951 until 1956 I was a foreman at Benada Aluminum.

Then I decided that I wanted to go back to the old type of work that I did in Warren. I was hired at McKay Machine and I went to work in January 1956. McKay Machine really was a very nice place to work. We had cost sharing bonus, we had no union. We didn't need one. They treated us like gentlemen. As the time went on, they recognized my ability and they had me working in detailing which was breaking down drawings and drawing them on full scale as they would come out of engineering and making our drawing for the machines. After a while I decided the money wasn't enough and I wanted to go back out to the shop. They transferred me to Hendrix Road. From 1964 until 1983 when I retired from McKay Machine, Wean United took it over. It was a very nice place to work.

S: They treated you really well there, then.

N: Very well. They treated me like a gentleman there.

S: You didn't really need a union or anything like that.

N: We never needed a union when it was McKay Machine. Then when Wean United took it over, they took away our cost sharing savings bonus and the men decided are we going to have a pension or not. We didn't form a union until 1970. Then from 1970 to 1983, I worked out of the union. Still Wean United was a very good place too.

S: Now that you're retired, what do you like to do with your free time?

N: Mostly what I do is just take care of the yard, the garden, painting and I do most of the shopping for my wife.

S: Do you have a nice size garden?

N: Not a big one. Not quite as big as Brier Hill. I have a little vegetable garden with a few tomatoes and peppers and garlic. Mostly taking care of the house and everything.

S: When you were young, did you go to Idora Park?

N: When I was young, during the Depression in the summertime, they were having specials which they called Kiddie's days. They had these for the Sanitary Milk Company and Pepsi Cola. There were certain days they would designate for these companies to have for \$.03 a ride. They would give us free samples of either ice cream or pop. We looked forward to that. I would go to them either once or twice a summer. That was about all because we used to depend on somebody to take us there.

S: Did you have to catch a ride there? Did you catch the trolley? Did you walk?

N: No, we caught a streetcar. In fact, two streetcars. From Brier Hill to downtown, then to Idora Park.

S: What were the streetcars like?

N: They were regular, electrical trolley cars and I think they went by every fifteen minutes at the time. Streetcars were very cheap then, too. The rides were free, but the parents paid.

S: What did they do? Did they get to the park and they had a turn around or something?

N: They had a turn around there and from there they'd head

back into town. Then you always had to transfer to get your other bus to come back to Brier Hill.

S: At the time, was that area around Idora Park fairly well developed as it is now?

N: Really, Idora Park at that time was what they called the "outskirts of town". When we went to Idora Park, it was an all day public affair. We looked forward to it.

S: What do you remember about going to the park? What were the big things that you liked to do?

N: Well, riding the airplanes.

S: The ones with the big cables and they spun around.

N: The Jackrabbit. After a few years they built the Wildcat. That Wildcat was a rough ride. They had these cars that you bumped one another. The merry go round, and then the boats. You would go into a tunnel and then you'd go down into the water.

S: The Lost River. Did you like that ride?

N: Oh, I loved it. The fun house was another thing.

S: What did they have in the fun house?

N: Different pictures of ghosts and odd shapes and they'd have these mirrors where you'd look odd. Also, they had doors that would close in on you, just things like that.

S: That was a lot of fun?

N: Oh, it was very nice.

S: Did you go on the Wildcat?

N: Yes I did.

S: What did you think of it?

N: Oh, what a ride. It was the highest...When you came down, believe me, everybody would screech and holler. It seemed as if it took your breath away.

S: I remember the first time I rode it.

N: It was really something.

S: So you were around when it first opened up.

N: Yes.

S: Was it a big deal in Youngstown?

N: Very big attraction. They had a special at that time of whoever would have the best name for it. I don't remember who won that contest.

S: It was a contest to name the park?

N: They had a contest to name the ride. They called it the Wildcat.

S: They named it well. Did you like the Jackrabbit too?

N: I loved the Jackrabbit. The Jackrabbit was more calm. I liked the Jackrabbit.

S: Did you use to go on that and raise your arms and things like that?

N: Yes.

S: Do you remember a lot of the games that you liked in the park?

N: Yes. They had these little game machines...

S: The penny arcade area?

N: Yes. The penny arcade. You took your chances and you might have won a little prize or things like that. They also had a swimming pool. I never went swimming because I didn't know how. All we had when we were children was we went down to the river. It was a wonder we didn't drown. I never did learn how to swim.

S: Did a lot of people use the pool though?

N: Yes they did. A lot of people would get in that pool.

S: At that time, was the park basically just wide open and the people could just walk in and out? Were there any fences up or ...

N: No, there was a fence. There was always a fence. First of all the streetcar would take us in. I remember that fence definitely was always there.

S: So this family outing...You guys would get there in the early morning?

N: We would get there at least by 10:30, or 11:00. Then, I think it would be 6:00 that the rides were over. Then our ride back home again.

S: I bet on the ride back home, you were still pretty excited.

N: Yes. Considering, it was a long distance from home.

S: Yes. That was a big outing to go to the park.

N: We looked forward to it.

S: As you got older, as you got into high school, did you go to the park then?

N: No.

S: Why not?

N: Well, I felt at that time...They were having these big name bands. I was not much of a dancer. If I remember correctly, Guy Lombardo played up there. When I was dating, I think once or twice we went to listen to the bands and walk around the park.

S: Did you ever get french fries?

N: Always.

S: They had the best french fries in the world.

N: French fries and that sugar cone that they had. Those were the days.

S: When you went there with your wife, was it more like a social type activity, just to go walk around and look at the park and listen to the band?

N: Yes. Well, we met a lot of our old friends and make conversation.

S: Do you think at that time, Idora Park was very important to Youngstown?

N: Yes it was. It was a big thing.

S: Why do you say that?

N: It was really our main attraction here and recreation. Like I said, when we were children, there was nothing here, outside of the theaters in town. As far as any outdoor amusements, that was it.

S: When that park opened up in the Spring, everybody just started going to that park?

N: Oh, and I think the park would open around Memorial

Day, before school let out. I don't recall what time of the year they would close. I think after school started, even later than that.

S: When you would go there, did you ever go up on the hill and picnic?

N: Yes we did. Mom would pack a basket. We'd go up in the picnic area and that was where they would serve us the refreshments. Sometimes free pop and the ice cream.

S: They just gave it out for free?

N: Those were most on Kiddies Day. Other times you would have to buy it.

S: What did they do, just have promotions for those companies and they gave out samples?

N: Promotions for companies.

S: Do you remember the monkey cages in the park?

N: Yes I do.

S: What was that like?

N: Well, I was not familiar with the zoos. You would see the monkeys playing and there were few birds in there and you would just watch them and feed them peanuts.

S: Did the monkeys do any tricks or anything, or did they just sit around?

N: One monkey would chase another and then they would be hanging by their tail and swinging on their little swings.

S: Was that pretty neat seeing those monkeys up there?

N: It was a thrill for us children.

S: What kind of birds did they have?

N: They had some owls and colored peacocks.

S: Did you ever see any sporting events out at Idora Park?

N: Baseball games. I went to a couple baseball games.

S: What type of team played out there?

N: Your local teams, no big names. In Youngstown at that time, they used to have different teams that were

sponsored by people but I was too young to remember who sponsored them, no name brands, no big names.

S: Were they pretty big games? Pretty competitive?

N: I would think so watching those games.

S: Did you ever hear of them having any boxing matches out there?

N: They did have it but I never attended them.

S: I know they had boxing and pro wrestling out there. When you were young, they didn't have the Kiddie Land, they had the pool at that time. Did they have the Heidelberg Gardens at that time?

N: They did have the Heidleburg Gardens.

S: All the guys would go up there and drink beer?

N: Yes.

S: When you had kids, did you take your kids to the park?

N: Yes. When our company sponsored a picnic there, and the rides were free for all employees and their children, yes I did. I took all three of them there.

S: When you took your kids there, was it different? Did it feel the same as when you were young being there?

N: I enjoyed it to watch the children. In fact, I rode the rides because our company paid for all the rides.

S: Did you ride the Wildcat?

N: I rode the Wildcat. My wife and I would ride the bumper cars. We enjoyed that more than the Wildcat.

S: Wherever I go, if I go to Cedar Point, I go hit the bumper cars. I could spend all day at the bumper cars. I like those a lot.

When you took your kids there, did it turn into a picnic all day affair?

N: Yes it did. We would have our own little basket of food and it was an all day affair.

S: With the rides, what was the Wildcat like when you were a kid riding it, and as an adult? Was it a big difference?

N: Well, when I was a kid I enjoyed it. When I grew up, I

didn't like it. It jarred you too much.

S: It was a scary ride.

N: It was quite a ride. I was more afraid of it when I got older.

S: Did you go on the Jackrabbit then too?

N: Yes.

S: What were your children's reactions to the park?

N: My kids looked forward to it and they had a ball. The company would pay for all of our rides and they really enjoyed it. Then, when I was on our company picnic, all our friends and families would get together and just talk. It was a social thing.

S: Were the company days really popular at Idora Park? Did they have a lot of those?

N: Yes. They were very popular. All different companies would have special days.

S: With the company days, was it organized? Would everybody go up and picnic at the same time, or would people just do their own thing?

N: No, you would do your own thing. They had the picnic area. If you wanted to go up to picnic or if you wanted to go to the hot dog stand. Some people would just buy hot dogs and have their pop down at the lower end.

S: Did your company ever have displays set up or things that they were doing at that time?

N: Yes. Our company would have some pictures of machinery in a small display (a new type of machine that they would have). We were in the metalworking business. We made machinery for steel mills and we made all the stamping for General Motors out there. We made all of their presses. They had small displays up.

S: Was it really useful to your company, to your business practice to have an all day Idora Park day?

N: It kept our relations with the company very close. We looked forward to it because our company and the employees, your top notch men, were just like family.

S: So the managers and people in the offices came there?

N: They were all there. You were just one family. It was terrific.

S: I think a lot of companies lose that today.

N: I remember when it was McKay Machine, Mr. Wardle, when he would come through the plant, he would almost know everybody by their first name.

S: That is hard to find today, I think.

N: He carried that relationship between employee and management. The man would walk through the plant in the morning, say hello to you, shake hands with you, "How are you doing?" We felt when we went to work, having this relationship, we worked hard for him. Then as time went on, when Wean took over, we felt that they were getting away from us. We didn't have that closeness anymore.

S: Did Wean still sponsor Idora Park days?

N: No. They cut everything out.

S: They were more a big company who took over a smaller company that didn't even care about...

N: They formed a conglomerate...They took over McKay Machine, they took over Youngstown Foundry, and they also took over United, downtown.

S: Those days where your company sponsored events were really special days then.

N: When McKay sponsored those events, yes. McKay also had that profit sharing bonus. When we went to work, no matter what we did, we would help one another. I liked the company at that time. When things got slow, they never sent you home. You went to work for eight hours, you'd give them an eight hour work day. If your job didn't have much to do, and they would tell you to wash the windows, you'd wash the windows. Or to go mow the lawn, you'd go mow the lawn, etc. Because we felt they were good to us not sending us home.

S: What kind of rides did your daughters go on?

N: They rode all the children's rides.

S: That is when they had that kiddie area then.

N: They rode the train and the small wildcat, rides like that. The children looked forward to it at that time.

S: Did you notice a big difference when you went back there with your children, from when you went there as a kid yourself, as far as how the park looked, things like that?

N: Well, not really. When I was a child, for me, that was a great thing. But then as I grew up, I started going to other places like Geauga Lake, then this was just a small town amusement park.

S: How would you compare Idora Park to Geauga Lake or someplace like that, as far as the quality of the rides?

N: We really had some very good rides there.

S: Do you think the other parks were better because they were a lot bigger?

N: No.

S: Do you think Idora held their own in comparison to those parks?

N: I think so, because we seemed to really enjoy when we went there.

S: At the time you went there, it was probably a lot harder to go to Geauga Lake or some place like that.

N: During the Depression years, there was no means of transportation to get to Idora Park. There was the trolley.

S: Do you think that is how Idora Park really grew in popularity?

N: Yes. Because it was local.

S: People were dependent on the park. Do you think that as time advanced, let's say into the late 1970's and early 1980's, when Youngstown was going through the recession and the steel mills were closing, do you think Idora Park could have stayed open with that period? Do you think the financial situation in Youngstown affected the park?

N: Yes it did. It affected it quite a bit because the closing down of the steel mills affected this whole area. The younger people would get an education and move. There was nothing here anymore.

S: Do you think also that people just didn't have the money to go to the park?

N: I think that meant a lot because as the steel mills closed, the rides were more expensive, the means amusement; they couldn't go there.

S: Do you think also that the type of people changed? Like people just really weren't the same when more and more amusements developed in the area, like the malls or Cedar Point, or played video games.

N: Times change. When we were growing up, we were all neighborly. As time went on, you didn't even know your neighbor anymore. See, I grew up in an ethic where my neighbors and the neighborhood all around us were one family. If they had something, they would offer it to you, like hospitality. I can remember when I was growing up, there was nothing there and all the Italian families in Brier Hill, they had the outside ovens. Especially in the summertime, when school was out, we would be playing ball out in the street and I would stay out five days a week, three or four days out of the week, somebody would be baking bread and they would all call the boys over and offer us fresh pizza or fresh bread. People were different in those days. There was no problems like today. You never had to lock your door. Anytime in an emergency, they would come over and everybody pitched in.

S: Now, you don't see that?

N: No, you don't have this closeness.

S: It's kind of a shame in other interviews when I talked to people they said that they were like different people.

N: Yes.

S: How did you feel when the Wildcat burned down and you found out that the park was going to close?

N: Well, it didn't bother me too much because the last few years, I wasn't going there anymore. As far as when I was a child, I enjoyed every bit of it, when I got older the novelty wore off.

S: What did you think when the Wildcat burned down? Some of the people I've talked to were in awe. When the Wildcat burned down, it was like a piece of Youngstown burned down.

N: Yes it was. Part of our history is gone. It still was a very good park, for the younger people, whoever stayed here, to look forward to, for amusement.

S: Do you think if they would have maybe changed some things about the park, say, if they would have changed the atmosphere of the park, maybe making it more unique as far as...They were talking about turning it into an old fashioned park again, making look like an old fashioned park. Do you think that would have been a good idea?

N: I think it would have.

S: Just to try to make it unique again?

N: It would have been very nice had they done that.

S: Looking back now on Idora Park, when you grew up, how important was Idora Park?

N: As I became an adult, I didn't look forward to Idora Park as a place of amusement anymore because I had my own transportation and I would go to Lake Erie or Geauga or Aurora. As I got older, I felt I could afford to go to these further amusement parks and I left the local one.

S: So it was a lot different from when you were a child when you just thought that was the greatest place.

N: When we were children, that was our main attraction.

S: Did you look forward to those summers?

N: Oh, we always looked forward to them. My mother would say it was Kiddies' Day. That was a big day for us.

S: Do you think Idora Park closing really hurt the Youngstown area?

N: No. The Youngstown area was hurt when the steel mills closed.

S: Do you think it was just part of a domino effect then?

N: It is the domino effect and it is the changing of times from which Youngstown has never recuperated.

S: They still have empty steel mills sitting in Youngstown and they have this empty Idora Park just sitting there. Do you think it's all part of the same idea that people think they're going to come back and open up?

N: As far as Idora Park opening again, I doubt it. Our big steel mills (the steel mills had a lot of their picnics up there) would sponsor them. Really now, with Idora Park coming back with all industries gone, you'll never have an Idora Park.

S: Do you think Idora Park was hurt because of the Cedar Points and the Geauga Lakes?

N: No. We had our local here and mostly I think it was the steel mills going down and industry moving away. Also, years ago, when I was just a small child, I had a brother who was much older than I and he worked at Ohio Leather. Ohio Leather had their picnics there. All the local companies would have a picnic there.

S: So they were really dependent on that business.

N: Yes. It was a big thing for Idora Park with our local companies. In fact, the companies (which was nice too) they didn't have to travel.

S: Do you think that as the business' management changed, even with the company you worked at, as management changed, that hurt the park business also, because they didn't feel that it was important to take care of the employees, that it was more important to make money.

N: Very much so. Because when I look back, even years ago when I worked at McKay Machine, we looked for the management when they had these parties for us, even an ordinary banquet. They respected us and we respected them. As a result, we worked harder for them.

S: Did you have softball games or anything like that at Idora Park?

N: They had games going on all the time.

S: Did they ever have any bands come in?

N: Not that I remember.

S: So do you think the major importance of Idora Park was the social importance it played or the historical, or a combination of both?

N: See, it was a social thing for us. Now it is really historical because as we look back, it was a great thing to remember the park with Youngstown. As far as Idora Park coming back again, I doubt it.

S: Yes. They probably couldn't afford to come back.

N: Well, industry will never come back to Youngstown.

S: It has been rumor that they have thought about opening up a park at Lake Milton. Do you think that could be a successful place to have a park like an Idora Park?

N: Years ago, they did have a Craig's Beach, they had an amusement park there.

S: Did you ever go there?

N: I did.

S: What was that park like?

N: It was much smaller than Idora Park. They had the rides, some of which were similar to the Wildcat. But it couldn't compare to Idora Park. The only thing I liked there was the motor boat ride where you'd go out on the lake. Craig's Beach was nice but Idora was much better.

S: Did they have the games and the concessions and things like that?

N: They had little concession stands and the fun house and different games in the penny arcade.

S: It just wasn't the same size.

N: It wasn't the same as Idora Park.

S: It probably didn't have the same atmosphere.

N: No.

S: Do you think though, if someone now looked to open up a park that would be a good place in Mahoning County?

N: I think so, especially with Lake Milton there. They had the fishing and swimming and boat rides. I think it would be very nice there.

S: In closing the interview, what do you think was the most important thing that Idora Park did for Youngstown?

N: Well, Idora Park brought in a lot of main attractions to Youngstown especially the big bands. Now I never did attend any of the boxing matches or wrestling matches because I couldn't afford it, but that was a very big thing in Youngstown. Bringing those events into town.

S: Would they draw big crowds?

N: They would draw very big crowds. Especially the big bands. I talked to the older people at that time, they all looked forward to going to the big events and sometimes, couldn't even get tickets for them.

S: They would just sell out?

N: Yes.

S: Now days, you don't see a whole lot of that in Youngstown either.

N: I doubt if Youngstown will ever come back.

S: Do you think those dances drew really big crowds too?

N: Yes it did. In those days there was a lot of dancing. The people looked for the big bands and they did a lot of dancing at that time, which they don't today.

S: It's weird dancing today, I think. When they had these events, were they really widely publicized?

N: They would publicize it in the Vindicator and on the radio and the crowds would go.

S: Now you don't see events like that in Youngstown at all. The last time we had a big fight or a big sports event was when Ray Mancini fought in Youngstown which was in 1982.

Are there anymore stories or comments you would like to make, that comes to mind on Youngstown and/or Idora Park?

N: Not too much. It seems as though that was our main attraction here for years and as time went on, like I said before, we've lost all those jobs so we've lost Idora Park too.

S: Is there anything else you'd like to say even about the Brier Hill area that would be of importance to our interview?

N: They still have the Brier Hill reunions. Once a year they have a reunion. I know my wife still goes to some of them. I got a little too old to go to the dinner dance but quite a few people get together and they go.

S: They exchange stories?

N: They exchange stories of their years in the 1930's.

S: Do they have get togethers for the 1930's and the 1940's?

N: No. Just Brier Hill does. They call it Brier Hill reunion.

S: Anybody from any time could come back down to Brier Hill and visit.

N: Anybody that was born and raised in Brier Hill comes down there. Everybody looks forward to that. You meet all your friends from many, many years ago.

S: I bet there is a lot of good food there, too.

N: Yes there is.

S: I can imagine.

N: We were very close. It seemed as though when we were growing up the Italian families felt like we were all related. They were just ordinary people who were born and raised in Brier Hill. Our closeness was there.

S: Was there that same attitude for other ethnic groups in Youngstown though?

N: Yes. Though, there were not too many Polish and Slovaks here.

S: How about the Irish?

N: Yes. They had their own church, St. Anne's and they were close people.

S: Do you think that closeness and those types of people made Youngstown the place that it was at that time?

N: Very much so. The closeness of the ethnic groups kept Youngstown really together.

S: Do you feel that the closeness of the ethnic groups made Idora Park what it was back then?

N: Yes. They would have ethnic days there. Everybody had their own day for their own special ethnic group.

S: Today, you don't see that. I guess it was a different time, too. Different morals, different values...

N: When they had the Italian day there, they would get the Italian singers...My parents would look forward to those days because my parents were from Europe.

S: Did they have dancing and singing and...

N: They had their own ethnic dancing and singing and like that.

S: So it seems that Idora Park was sorely missed, not having that central social meeting place.

N: That closeness. We were a very close people.

S: Was there any problems between the ethnic groups?

N: I don't remember any. We never had any problems as far as fighting or anything like that.

S: You respected each other.

N: In fact, when we were kids, we played ball with a few Irish like they were one of us. There were a couple German boys in our area too. They were all nice kids.

S: I know that Mr. Cavalier said that they never locked Idora Park up at night.

N: Like I said, when we were children, we never locked our door at night. Never. I'm talking 1931, 1932 in the heart of the Depression. I can remember the Depression when they had the soup kitchens. Really, with everybody being unemployed in those days, when they went down to the soup kitchens, people socialized. Really, they were all in the same class. The little bit that they did give you, people enjoyed themselves.

S: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

N: I hope that this area turns around for our children, because what I see, what is happening, whoever is in charge, they certainly have to do something to revive this area again. It has been this way since 1970. At the turn of the century, at the rate their going now, it will still be the same. Somebody better get busy and make some drastic changes in Youngstown.

S: What do you think somebody could do? Bring in some new business or..

N: They have to bring in some kind of business. We need help, not only from Youngstown but from the state of Ohio and the Federal Government has to come in here to revive the area. We are a neglected area.

S: That is the truth.

N: I just hope and pray that within the next ten to fifteen years they make a big turn around here because right now, everything looks so dark out there...You hear the different stories about GM. That is all we need. If we lose them, we've lost everything.

S: Okay, thank you very much.

N: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW