

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

IDORA PARK PROJECT

Personal Experience

O. H. 1472

LINDA & AL TOMBO

Interviewed

by

Scott Smith

on

November 26, 1991

AL AND LINDA TOMBO

Al Tombo was born in Struthers, Ohio where he spent all of his youth, until joining the United States Army in 1947, at the age of 17. He served two separate tours in the Army; the first from 1947 to 1949, and the second from 1950 to 1953. His second tour was spent in the free city of Trieste where he played both offense and defense on the Army league championship football team. Linda Ricci, later to become Linda Tombo, has been a lifetime resident of the city's Northside and has spent almost her whole life in her present house, 1427 Ohio Avenue. She attended the Rayen School on the city's Northside where she graduated from in 1945 and was ranked in the top five of her class. The two have lived in their Northside home 1427 Ohio Avenue since their marriage in 1956.

The two met at a dance held at Idora Park and were married several months after they met on February 11, 1956. Mr. Tombo's first job after the Army, where he retired from as a disabled veteran due to several football injuries, was at the Youngstown Foundry Company. From there, he went to work for Wean United Industries--also in Youngstown--in the machine shop where he was a tool and cutter grinder. Mr. Tombo worked there for 32 years until his retirement at the Wean United works. Linda Tombo has spent her life as a housewife and has played a major role in the raising of their children: Robert Tombo, who is married and has one child; also, their oldest son Bert, who is single and works for Bio-Medical Lab; and a daughter Lisa, who is a dental assistant for Dr. V. Dutko.

Both Al and Linda Tombo are members of the Saint Edward's Church, and both remain active by taking care of their house. The two also get a great deal of pleasure by meeting with friends and spending time with their granddaughter.

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Idora Park Project

INTERVIEWEE: LINDA & AL TOMBO  
INTERVIEWER: Scott Smith  
SUBJECT: Idora Park Project  
DATE: November 26, 1991

SS: This is an interview with Linda and Al Tombo for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. The subject of the tape is Idora Park. The interviewer is Scott Smith. The interview location is 1427 Ohio Avenue which is in Youngstown, Ohio. The time is presently 12:35 p.m. The date is November 26, 1991. (Interview in progress, but not audible.)

AT: . . . I was seventeen years old. Where'd I go? I went to Fort Bragg, then. I went down to White Sands where they used to shoot the rocket off, the B-2 rocket. Then, when I got out--I was out about six months, and I joined up again--and I went in the army. I went to Trieste. That was a free city at that time. Then, I got out in 1950. I played ball. I played football for the divisional team, and we won the championship. First year, I broke my back; second year, I broke my leg; and the third year, I separated my shoulder.

SS: Then, you retired from football.

AT: Then, I was sent home, yeah. I come home. And, I'm a disabled veteran. What else can I tell you? (to himself).

SS: What about your work?

AT: I worked at a machine shop--Wean up on Hendridge Road. I first started with the Youngstown Foundry. Then, they sold out, and I went to Wean. I was, at the beginning, a tool and cutter grinder. I went to school for that. I worked there for thirty-two years, tool and cutter grinder.

SS: What type of neighborhood did you grow up in in Struthers?

AT: Oh, the neighborhood was . . . good people, old and retired. They all worked in the mill.

SS: Was it basically an ethnic neighborhood?

AT: Yeah. All the way up the street.

SS: All Italian?

AT: Croatian, Slavish, Irish, English . . . .

SS: A strong mix of everything?

AT: Yeah, but they all helped each other. When somebody'd get sick, someone would come over and clean the house for them, or they'd make food for them. You know, any way to help somebody.

SS: Yes.

AT: At that time, they didn't have no dope stuff or, what the heck, shooting people or nothing. If someone didn't like someone they'd just go out and fight them, that's all. That's what they'd do.

SS: Yeah. Do you think people were a lot closer then?

AT: Oh yeah. Everybody knew everybody in the whole town who lived down in Struthers. Out by the high school or the other side of town. Okay, everybody knew everybody, almost, kind of related like.

SS: Yeah. You think a lot different than it is today?

AT: Oh, we used to go out to the lake all of the time, out to Lake Hamilton and the paths used to be all worn. You could go out there and walk up. We used walk all of the time. Down at Yellow Creek Park. Always down there. We'd go ice skating. For money a lot of times, we'd sell bottles and stuff like that to go to the show, go to the movies. Yes, we used to get along good.

SS: Did you play a lot of sports when you were young?

AT: When I went to the service, I played the most because I was too small in high school. I made the team, but I didn't get in much because I was too little; short rather, but not weight. Then when I went into the service the first time, I didn't play. Then, I went overseas when I was twenty. Then, I started gaining a little bit of weight, and I played for the divisional team over there. We won . . . we won everything over there. But, you don't know who you're playing against when they're drafting people, too. You'd play people against colleges or pros sometimes . . . with the third-teamers from the pros. You know them guys hit you.

SS: How long have you lived in Youngstown?

AT: Since 1956.

SS: Since 1956?

AT: Let's see, I was born in 1930. I went in the Army in 1947. I got out in 1953. In 1956, I got married.

SS: Okay, and where did you grow up at?

LT: I grew up in Oak Park.

SS: Which is . . . .

LT: The lower part of the Northside in the part that was like two rows of houses. They were almost all alike, but everybody fixed them different. We lived near my two aunts. One lived a couple doors up, and one of them next door to me. When they came over from Italy, they just settled all in the same place. My father was a foreman, and he hired everybody that he knew to work for him. They're all dead. When I was about ten, my dad bought the home up here and we moved up here. That's about fifty-five years now, and I've lived here ever since. Up here it was a little different, because it wasn't like in the park where everybody was mostly related. It was a nice neighborhood when we moved here.

SS: Ohio Avenue?

LT: It was really nice.

SS: My sister lived down the street. She was one of the Cosicks.

AT: Oh, I used to work with Paul.

SS: Yeah, she married Ed Cosick.

AT: They were born on the same street as I was.

SS: Really?

AT: They lived right up from my sister.

LT: Yeah.

AT: Ridgeway. I know the whole family.

LT: Does she still. . . .

SS: No. They live out in Cortland, now. They moved two or three years ago.

LT: Is she the one with the sick grandmother?

AT: Who is that . . . you say?

SS: Well, her name is Kim but she is married to Ed. I think Ed's the oldest of the boys.

AT: I know Ed and Paul. Heck, I used to work with Paul.

SS: They lived there for a few years . . . two or three kids, three kids.

AT: And, I know Amil, your Uncle Amil. They all lived on Ridgeway in Struthers.

SS: Yeah, because Ruth was there too. Ruth was Ed's mother.

AT: She was the older woman there. Is she still living?

SS: She's living with them in Cortland, now.

AT: In fact, your grandmother came down here one time, and she came in the house with no shoes on.

LT: She didn't have any coat on. She didn't know where she was going. It was cold.

AT: We picked her up.

SS: Oh, the grandmother was still living there?

LT: Yeah, the grandmother.

AT: We got a hold of her . . . she walked . . . she didn't. . . .

LT: I asked for her name, and she was trying to tell me; but then, she said something about Sobnoski.

SS: Okay . . . the Sobnoski's.

AT: Yeah.

LT: Then, I knew. I called Sobnoski, and I said, "You know, the lady," and boy they knew. So, they were going to call the Cosicks. They came and picked her up.

SS: You've lived up here, then that many years?

LT: Oh yeah.

SS: You've seen how the Northside changed a lot.

LT: Oh yeah. It was nice . . . it was beautiful.

AT: This used to be . . . this street used to be. . . .

LT: It was high class.

AT: [It was] number one over here, because all school teachers used to live over here; doctors used to live up here; the lawyers used to live here. That's all that used to live here. But, you know, as the years went on. . . .

LT: It changed.

AT: It changed, that's all. Hammerman used to live over here across the street.

LT: He used to sell tickets for games.

AT: The Browns games used to have that--what do you call that thing?--the train to Cleveland to watch games.

LT: Yes, he had excursions from here to Cleveland.

AT: We always had all the Ice Capade tickets.

SS: Why do you think this area has changed so much?

LT: Because of the colored people that are in here. I mean they're not the highest class. Some of them aren't. They kind of ruin things. When they come in it's nice, you know, they'll rent. Then, you know it, the house is not even presentable to be rented again.

SS: I used to live up on Fairgreen for a while.

AT: Did you?

SS: Yeah, so. . . .



LT: Up in that fraternity?

SS: Yeah, that's where I lived.

AT: That Glenn used to live up there. Do you know Tommy Glenn?

SS: No, I don't.

AT: You didn't know them? How old are you now?

SS: Twenty-eight. I lived up on North Heights. Okay, let's start . . . I'll go back to this side again. What are your earlier memories of the Idora Park?

AT: Earliest memories? The first time I ever went out there you're talking about? The people were jammed. The people used to be jammed going down there, you know.

LT: How about the picture you have when you went up with Aggie?

AT: Oh, I don't know. The french fries, the rides, the boat. I used to love the boat.

SS: A lot of people talk about the french fries.

LT: Oh yeah, we loved them.

AT: We used to sprinkle them with, oh what the heck, put vinegar on them. And they were . . . I'll tell you, you could smell them.

LT: You knew the difference.

SS: The secret was that they changed the grease about once every three years.

LT: Is that it?

AT: Yes.

SS: Somebody said they changed the grease about once. . . .

LT: It smelled good, though.

AT: That's the residue in there. Then, we got older you know. We got older and older. Then I got out of the service. Like I said, all of the guys my age, we used to go downtown Struthers and say, "Let's go dancing. Let's go dancing." So, we used to go dancing all the time, four or five times a week, here or at the Elms or somewhere we'd go dancing.

LT: They had a ballroom on Elm Street called The Elms.

AT: Yeah, that was a big one, too. So, I guess on Memorial Day, Memorial Day of 1954, they had a big dance out there; and we all went again.

SS: You and the guys from Struthers. . . .

LT: That's when you met me.

AT: I met my wife. I seen her talking to some girls and I said, "Would you like to dance and talk?" You know how you talk, and the next time, I asked her for another dance.

SS: Then what?

AT: Then a phone number, and I called her.

SS: You called her? When you were growing up, did you ever go there for, let's say, business days or ethnic days?

AT: Italian days. Yes. We used to go there, then. Well actually, I can't say that. We used to go there for any kind of days. Just so they had a good time; Croatian day, Slavish day or whatever.

SS: You'd just go down there and check out the. . . .

AT: We used to go down to the Heidelberg they used to have. Boy, they had good beer there. We used to sit at the table. . . .

LT: They had real good beer there.

AT: Ice cold beer. It'd be hot out there, walking around. We'd stop in and get a nice, big, cold beer.

SS: Do you remember any of the rides that you particularly liked?

AT: Well, I used to ride the boats mostly because I didn't like to go on that Wild Cat or that Jack Rabbit much. You know, coming down, my stomach is weak.

SS: That's how I was.

AT: That's why, when I went to the service, I went to Fort Bragg, and heck, they had the Eighty-second airborne. I'd liked to gone there, but my stomach wouldn't take that jump. So, I was in the infantry. Then, I got in the ordinance and went down to White Sands and shot the rocket down there. After the Second World War, you

know, that B-2. Where'd they shoot that from. Germany to England all of the time. They was blowing up England all over the place. Then, they had it down there.

SS: Then we hired him, and he became the head of N.A.S.A., the guy that built the bomb.

AT: That's right. Who had the most scientists? I seen them all down there. I seen that Brown, the scientist. I saw . . . Charles Lindburgh was down at. . . . He ate there. I saw him, but I didn't go up close. I just saw him walking through. They used to shoot that thing down there every Thursday.

SS: With the park . . . was that the social place?

AT: Oh yeah. That was something else.

LT: When we wanted to go someplace nice.

AT: Especially when we were kids, when we went up there, you really went somewhere. Then, we come down from there . . . oh, that was nice. We used to go down to that Isaly's at that main . . . that used to be down at Glenwood. That's where they used to have the ice cream factory. They'd give you big skyscrapers.

SS: Right on the corner, Mahoning and Glenwood?

AT: Good ice cream. We used to have a day up there.

SS: Then that's something that you looked forward to.

AT: Oh yeah.

LT: It was a day off.

AT: When we used to go up there, we'd stay all day. Because, we didn't go up there every day when we was kids. I remember my dad took me up there one time. I don't know. I must have been about seven or eight. He took me on the Struthers bus. We had to go downtown to change busses. It was so crowded, we couldn't breath. They had all the little kids and the old timers. When we went up there, that was a big day for us. It was an all day thing. We looked forward to that. So, everyday after that we'd keep asking, "When are we going to go back?"

SS: How did the park look when you went there with your father? Do you remember was the pool still there?

AT: The pool was there. The ball park . . . they played ball. They had some good ball players come up there.

SS: Do you remember any of the ball players who came up there and played?

AT: Oh, see it's been . . . I think Schuman and guys from around here played up there, too. They had some good teams around here. They had that McKelvy's team and all them old time teams. What else did they have? They had general fireproof. They had another good team. They had a lot of good players. The pitchers . . . namely Paul Dorkowitz. Everybody knows Paul Dorkowitz. He was something else. A lot of good ball players.

SS: They had more than just rides there, then. They had, like the dancing . . .

LT: Yeah.

SS: . . . the sports, some baseball going on there.

LT: They had everything.

AT: Everything was busy.

LT: They had this Heidelberg where you could go--I don't know if they served food in there, did they? At the Heidelberg.

AT: I don't know. We used to eat food at . . .

LT: It was at one end of the park. It was at the opposite end of the ballroom.

AT: I know the ballroom. We used to go there at seven or eight in the evening. Because it wasn't open in the afternoon.

LT: We used to go up to see the big bands . . . they'd advertise them ahead of time. You'd know what band was coming up for it next.

AT: They had a lot of big bands.

SS: What bands do you remember coming here?

LT: I saw Guy Lombardo. . . .

SS: How about the Dorsey's?

AT: Tommy Dorsey.

LT: I saw quite a few but I don't remember all of their names.

SS: Do you remember any singers coming in?

LT: They had singers, too. . . .

AT: I was going to say maybe like Perry Como. I think he might have been there or downtown.

SS: I know Frank Sinatra and the one Dorsey band broke up at Idora Park.

LT: Oh, did they?

SS: Yeah, that's where they broke up. They quit playing together. Frank Sinatra went on by himself.

AT: Ted Williams? I know they had some . . . well, before I went up there, they had real big bands. I didn't even dance. I was too young. They had a lot of good talent coming over here.

LT: I was a good entertainment city. We had quite a few places they'd come. They'd be at the Elms maybe one night and go to Idora the next night. They'd advertise.

SS: What are your earliest memories of the park?

LT: Oh, I was pretty young when I went up there with my second brother, not my oldest one. He was . . . we were out of school and he said, "Do you want to go out to the park?" I said, "Okay, we'll go." So, we packed a lunch, and we went up by bus. There was a first ride that we went on. It was right when you came in the park. It was the ride that was upside down and twirled you all around. Well, after I was on that ride, I was so sick. I couldn't even eat. I couldn't do anything, and that ruined my day. So, I knew better than to get on any ride that made me sick. I'd ask everybody, "How's the ride?" If they'd say, "Good," I'd know it wasn't too good. But the Jack Rabbit, it was a good ride. I went on the Wild Cat one time, and that was too much for me. But, the Jack Rabbit was fun.

SS: Do you remember any of the games, like the goldfish and all that?

LT: Oh, yeah. We'd go fishing.

SS: With the arcade and things.

LT: Yeah, penny arcade. [You would] put pennies in, and you could see movies.

SS: Or play with the big crane. Nowadays, if you had any of that Idora Park memorabilia, somebody'd give you a fortune for some of that stuff.

LT: Because they had that. . . .

AT: The penny arcade was there. We used to go in there.

LT: They have that train up on McKenzie Square. Yes, that's nice.

SS: They have that up there. Did you continue to go there when you were in school and everything?

LT: I didn't go as often as a lot of people did. I went, but I went more when I was older. That's when I used to go. We'd go for dances.

SS: Do you think that Idora Park played a really significant role as a social meeting place?

AT: Oh yeah. We all used to meet downtown and go in the car, and we'd all go out to the park, dancing.

LT: Or, anybody'd go out there and say, "You want to go to the park? Jump in." We'd go together.

AT: That was every week we used to go up from Struthers, us guys. The same guys hung around here.

LT: That was the place to go.

AT: One started going steady. There goes the other one. There goes the other one. Pretty soon. . . .

SS: When you were married, did you take your children to the park?

AT: Yeah.

SS: How were they in the park? Did they like it?

LT: You took them more than I did.

AT: I took them out a lot of times. I took them on the boats. We'd walk around. She'd dress them up all the time. I there were Jazz Boats, I'd take them out. I'd take them on the boat; and I'd sit right over here, put one on this side, the other . . . I'd have to hold them down. It was nice, though. They'd come home tired and half sleeping.

LT: They liked the boat.

SS: That's half the fun, taking them in there and then they're done for the rest of the night. Do you think Idora Park was really important to the Youngstown community?

LT: Very important.

AT: Yeah. Some guys like to go swimming. Some guys liked to watch the games. There's always something.

LT: There's something for everybody.

AT: They had the ballgames even in the evening with the lights on, everything. Some guys liked to dance--they'd go dance. Some guys liked the rides.

LT: If you wanted to see good fireworks, like on the Fourth of July, just go out to the park. Everybody wanted to go to the park.

AT: It was nice.

SS: Did everybody want to go to the park?

AT: They used to get some crowds up there.

SS: When you went there with your children, did the park seem to have changed, or did it seem like the place?

AT: [It changed] a little bit maybe, but they knew what they wanted to do. They used to sell . . . french fries. You could just go down there and they knew right where it was at. Right out in the middle. They knew where everything was. Otherwise for the painting, a little bit of painting, but no one paid any attention to that. they had the funhouse down there. We'd walk way down to the other end. That's where the busses used to come in. Then, we'd go watch the water--the guys coming down in the boats.

LT: There was a lot to do. It would keep you busy.

SS: Do you think that Youngstown offers anything like and Idora Park to kids growing up?

LT: They should have one.

SS: They should?

LT: Oh yeah.

AT: Yeah.

LT: They should, if it would be like the one we knew, because after a while it's changed a bit.

AT: That's the one thing I don't like about these comedians sometime. They'll say something about this town. They'll say, "Now, if you were here in Youngstown, what would you do?" There's all kind of guys downtown, like the mayors and them, got on them people because they're not so funny. People that stay here don't think that's funny anymore. Who was that one guy who said that for sure? I got his picture in my mind. He's a comedian or something, and he come back . . . who is that? Orson Beene or something? He come down to city hall one time, and the mayor--I forget who it was at the time--he told him, "That joke wasn't too funny you told about the town, because people live here."

SS: Do you think something like Idora Park could've stayed in business today?

LT: Oh yeah.

AT: No.

SS: Even with the kids as much a they've changed?

LT: Oh, I think so.

AT: See, that's something else there like you say. They'd have to put more security there or something. You'd have to do something. They'd take the park over. Yes, you heard right.

SS: I know in interviewing Lenny Cavalier, who is one of the owners, they were having a lot of problems staying in business because they weren't making money. And, I know they were having some racial problems . . . with the gangs.

AT: I heard about that.

SS: That neighborhood changed a lot around the park, like on Cascade and some of the other streets. Those neighborhoods changed a lot. I know that one of the interviews that I had, the person said, "Now, a kid can grow up in Youngstown and never ride a rollercoaster in their whole life."

AT: That's true. You have to go up to that Sea World up there, or whatever.

LT: You have to leave Youngstown to go on. . . .

AT: That's all you can do now.

SS: It's going to cost you a hundred bucks for you to go away.



AT: People don't want to put nothing in here. They keep moving out . . . heck, like General Fireproof. They shut that down. They shut down Sheet & Tube. How it is now? They say the president done this and done. . . . He ain't done nothing. These people don't have no jobs. They say over here on the news, "He's doing this over there." He better stay right here because that's why we put him in, and that's right. Heck, after that war, he was way up and everybody loved him. But now, you can't buy a car, a house, or nothing. Them kids . . . how are they going to buy a house? No job. He's got to do something here. And with that health stuff, people can't go to the hospital. Forget about over there for a while. Do something here.

SS: Don't give somebody else ten billion dollars. Give us ten billion dollars.

AT: After you get going with your health benefits, get something for some kind of job. Get these guys off Welfare. That Welfare ain't going to help them because they don't have nothing to think with.

LT: What's wrong in the city is nobody's working. A lot of people are off work.

SS: That's why I was thinking, like with Idora Park, [whether] they could stay in business today.

AT: Today?

SS: Yeah.

AT: It would be tough today. Well, you figure some people though, they'd kind of save some of their money to go there, even. Say well, [if] they went twice a month, they can go once a month or something. They can go maybe once a month.

SS: During the depression when you were growing up, did you go to the park at that time? Idora?

AT: Yeah, I went there. My father took me.

SS: Did you ever, sometimes on your own, just work or save up money or. . . .

LT: Yeah, we saved to go to the park.

AT: We used to always work. I'll tell you. When I was a kid, we used to work in bowling alleys. I used to want to go to the show. Like I said, all us kids from

Struthers used to sell bottles or anything. We'd find something to do. Clean windows downtown and go to the movie down at the Ritz Theater.

SS: When you were growing up, besides the park, what other things were going on? What other things did you do in this area growing up?

LT: That was about. . . .

AT: Well, see I was in the army all my day from seventeen up to twenty-three. That's why I can't. . . .

SS: How about up to seventeen? What would you do in Struthers?

AT: We'd go down to the park, Yellow Creek Park, or we'd go out to the lake, out to Hamilton Lake. We never got in no trouble, like now. They got that dope stuff, now. We never had no dope. We'd go look for jobs. We'd save our own money, and we'd go to the shows. Until that time during the depression, times were tough.

SS: What were the shows? Where would you go to see the shows at?

AT: Down Struthers. They had the Ritz, and they had that other older show. I forget what the name of that is. When I was about twelve, I worked for the guy . . . Bellotto was his name. He used to run the projectors upstairs. He showed me how to splice when the film broke . . . cameras. He taught me how, all that.

SS: All that?

AT: All about the cameras. I used to have . . . what's his name hired me the first time? Carl Bellotto hired me the first day. I was sweeping up and helping up. Then, they give me the job where I used to fill the candy machine. Then after a while, I went upstairs with the brother who was running the two projectors. He showed me how to do that. How to splice when it broke.

SS: Did you have a job when you were growing up?

LT: No.

SS: Do you think things were a lot slower at that time?

LT: Oh, yeah.

AT: Yeah.

SS: People were a lot different.

LT: More relaxed.

AT: People were a lot closer, like I said.

LT: People enjoyed each other more. Now, you can be in a neighborhood and not even know who your neighbor is. You went into a neighborhood. . . .

AT: Anybody'd go sit on someone's porch in the evening, and talk and leave the screen door open.

LT: Yeah. We all knew each other.

AT: The doors were never locked. Doors were never locked.

LT: Everybody. . . .

AT: Everybody knew everybody.

LT: It was a lot easier going there. Now, it's really rough. You've got to be . . . hurry up, do this and do. . . .

SS: There's a lot of pressure, it seems, on everything.

LT: It's a lot worse right now.

SS: How would you compare Youngstown, let's say, [from] when you were growing up to when you first met and got married, until today? If you were to compare it, as you;e seen Youngstown itself progress over the ages, how would you say Youngstown has changed?

AT: Well, for the worst. That's all I can say.

LT: First of all, there's no more steel mills.

AT: Before, you could go downtown and walk around and wouldn't have to worry about getting robbed.

LT: It was nice downtown. You could go all over.

AT: You could stop and see the movie and stop in after a while and have something to eat without worrying about nothing.

LT: They had nice . . . what was nice was down on Federal Street. They had all nice stores you could go in. There were a lot of stores.

SS: Yeah. I even remember going down when they had Strouss's down there and everything else when I was a kid.

LT: Right.

AT: Yeah. We used to catch the bus from here, from Struthers and come up here.

LT: I mean on East Federal. You wouldn't think of walking up there. For what?

AT: When we'd go to the show, we'd save all week sometimes for up here. We go in that Palace or something and our eyeballs would fall out.

LT: They would entertain us at the Palace Theater, too. That was on the corner of Wick, right at the bottom of the hill. We'd go to the theater there.

SS: Did you ever go to the other parks? I know there was a park out a Lake Milton. They had park out there.

AT: No. I never. . . .

SS: Never went out there?

AT: When I was a little bit older, we went out there with the boats, us guys from Struthers once in a while. This once fellow had a boat. . . .

LT: I can remember me coming up to Wick Park. They had swings and things. . . .

AT: It never got to be every weekend.

LT: . . . and swimming. Take all us kids up. We'd pack lunches and come up to Wick Park. I enjoyed that too. I was real nice. I wonder what happened.

SS: The people before--everybody was close. You know what I mean?

LT: It's a real nice neighborhood.

AT: Everybody knew everybody didn't lock no doors. If somebody got sick or somebody died, or if someone from he family died, the people from Struthers, I remember, would go down to the house [they'd] feed them, make soup or something for the family. Just good people, that's all you could say.

LT: I remember when I had my kids. They'd all know what I had, and they'd have a party, out on the porch or come in. He'd entertain them when I was in the hospital.

AT: We'd always have birthday parties.

LT: Parties galore.

SS: Did you ever notice--at the park--was it friendly at the park? Where the people at Idora Park friendly?

AT: They didn't bother nobody. Nobody bothered nobody. If somebody bumped into somebody, they'd say, "I'm sorry." There was never no fights there. I never saw them.

LT: Nobody'd fight.

SS: Did they do a lot of things at Idora to attract people there, like, having business and stuff?

AT: Oh, yes. They always had something going. Like, in the evening, they had all them bands. They'd draw a lot of people.

LT: They'd advertise them in the paper.

SS: Did they have business days or ethnic community days?

AT: Always.

LT: Italian days. We used to go up on Wean days.

SS: What were those days like? Was there a foreman, and he was still in charge, or was everybody. . . ?

AT: No. Everything was different then. Everybody was out to have a good time. They didn't care who you were. Everybody done a job when they was at the shop. . . .

LT: But, the rides were free. Most of the rides were free. They'd stamp your hand.

SS: What would you do on a company . . . on a business day? What would it be like? Did they have any special events?

AT: For the kids, they used to have horses at this other place we used to go. You know, the pony rides? They had food, races, and they'd have baseball games.

LT: They had food. They had all kinds of games. Everybody got involved.

AT: Yeah.

SS: Was that good for the company? Did that bring people in the company closer together?

AT: Sure. Sure, any kind of harmony you have always does. I don't care what they say. Let's say you go to work in a shop, and you've got a job to do. You won't get too many foremen to go hanging around no one that's

not going to work, because they have to tell you what to do, and you can't say, "How about. . . ?" You have to do your job. But when you're out there, maybe you can talk to him and have a beer together or something.

SS: Did they go up to the Heidelberg and would people sit and talk at those things?

AT: Oh, yeah. It used to be crowded there, too, on those hot days.

SS: The kids probably loved it.

LT: Yeah.

AT: The kids, you'd run around in there. They'd sell the pitchers in there, too, of beer.

LT: They had a good time.

SS: Did you worry if your kids went off by themselves? I mean, like, today if you went someplace. . . .

AT: No, they never strayed too far away from me. I didn't let them, because there were so many people.

LT: There were a lot of people.

AT: Because there was announcements from that tower that someone was lost, and I didn't like it. I used to watch my kid. I used to put him in a chair where I could see him. There were so many people out, that he might get--I don't know--stepped on or something.

SS: Did they go on, like. . . . Did they have, like, kiddie rides that you could take your kids on?

LT: Yeah.

AT: I used to go with them on the train, and I'd sit there myself. We used to go all around the park. I used to put them in the train, and I'd sit there myself. . . . Go all around the park. Something to make the kids happy. They'd sit down.

SS: Do you think, today, that the city should look into reopening Idora, even if they didn't have all the rides, just for a place for people to go? Take advantage--that ballroom's still there--to try to take advantage of that?

AT: It would be nice if they had the money. They don't have any money.

LT: Don't they open it once in a while?

SS: I'm not sure if the park. . .if they still use that ballroom.

AT: I don't really know. I don't see it advertised.

SS: They used to hold. . .they had sales there, like craft. . . .

AT: They had some car shows once in a while.

LT: They had sales there.

AT: Car show and that gardening thing.

SS: Did you ever go for the gardening shows or anything?

LT: No, I never went for the shows. Bobby, our youngest son, he went, and he'd buy different things.

SS: They used to have, like flea markets in there and everything. I know, a couple years ago, some of the people from the chamber of commerce talked about opening it up and having it for like, small children. A place for little kids, like, an educational center and for the city to run it. But, like a lot of other ideas in the city, that just don't pan out. Do you think that would be a good idea, though? If they were able to. . . .

AT: If they were able to . . . anything would be a good idea, because as it is now, you don't have nothing.

LT: Mostly, they don't have people.

AT: You don't have no diversion. For the kids, that would be nice for them to be. You'd have to get money though. You see, starting back to having jobs again. Going right back to them jobs.

LT: That's what ruined Youngstown, number one, because this was a booming city.

AT: See, when they shut the Sheet & Tube down. You figure that's. . . .

LT: When people came from overseas, it was no problem for anybody to get a job. Like if you were, your age now, you'd say, "What am I going to do?" They'd say, "Go put your name up at Sheet & Tube. . . ."

AT: You could quit Sheet & Tube one day, and start the other place tomorrow, Republic or something.

LT: We . . . had a rich place, "Go see this man or that man," and get a job right away.

SS: Everybody took care of each other.

LT: Everybody took care of everybody.

AT: All of the job openings. After the Second World War, Sheet & Tube, in Campbell, they had a sign going across the bridge in Campbell, "Thousands and Thousands and Thousands of Jobs Still Open." Then, every two months or something, they'd scratch it off, and there'd still be thousands of jobs open.

LT: There's no employment. . . .

AT: That sign stayed up there . . . you could call if you wanted to work the Struthers plant, the Campbell plant or Briar Hill plant, anywhere you wanted to work. They never said nothing.

SS: I know when talking with some other interviews, one person said that the two days that Youngstown died, was the day that the mills closed and the day the Wild Cat and all that stuff burnt down, because that park was closed. What do you think of those two days and how they affected Youngstown?

AT: They were bad.

LT: Very bad.

AT: Very bad, they hurt everybody.

SS: What did you think the mills closed?

LT: Oh, it was terrible.

AT: I didn't believe it. A guy told me that--it was about twelve o'clock in the afternoon. I was up in the shop working. A guy came out of the tool room and he said, "You know, Al, they shut down the Sheet & Tube." I started laughing. I said, "What, are you crazy?" You know I started laughing. That's impossible. Because the old timers used to tell all their sons that generations worked at Sheet & Tube. They'd tell their sons, "When you get out of school, you work Sheet & Tube. You'll have a job all your lives."

SS: What did you think when it finally set in, that that was it?

AT: Well, I was out of there. I worked in a coal strip myself. I went up to the machine shop when I got married, like I told you, because I couldn't stay there



all my life. It was all hot work there. It was rough work down there.

LT: But when his two brothers worked at the Sheet & Tube. They both were out. Well, they had enough time to get pensions, but they had to leave.

SS: Just like that, one day. How did that effect . . . how did the city react?

LT: It was terrible.

AT: They couldn't believe it. They said, "Well, that's one place. . . ." But, that's one big place.

LT: But then, one followed and then another and another.

AT: When we lose all that tax money for schools and stuff, it's one big, big thing.

LT: It was pretty bad.

AT: That's why, now you see people going on strike. Here they're going on strike. There they're going . . . . They don't have the money. They keep shutting places down. You won't see no more Sheet & Tube's around here. They got all small job shops. If you shut down this place, you shut down the whole Sheet & Tube. If you shut down that little place. . . .

SS: What do you think about the day that you found out the Wild Cat burned down?

LT: It was pretty bad. I thought that they would have fixed everything up and put it all back together.

AT: I thought maybe they'd tear it down. It never opened again.

LT: I didn't think they'd shut the whole park down.

SS: They lost the boat ride, though, and the Wild Cat and the Carousel.

LT: The main things.

SS: Three of the four biggies all at one time. Well, the carousel didn't get burned down, but it got closed down after that.

AT: They sold it, you said?

SS: Yeah. Do you think that also is a lot the same way, though, just a sad day in the history of Youngstown?

AT: Yeah. It's always on your mind. I guess for me, it was on my mind, and it had to be on somebody else's.

SS: Are you ever down at Mill Creek Park and you can see the outlines of the rides and stuff? You can almost imagine hearing it. . . ?

AT: There's something nice down there. There's something. . . .

LT: You can look at it and envision what it used to be.

AT: That park is something else.

LT: It was beautiful. They had beautiful flowers. . . .

AT: It still is now.

SS: It's the one bright spot left in the city.

AT: They got that . . . Odd Fellows [Fellows Rosegardens]. . . something, the garden. It's amazing.

SS: It's still one of the best things we've got.

AT: After that . . . what do we have after that?

SS: We've got good people.

AT: You've got to have that. If you don't have that, then you've lost everything.

SS: And, we have the University.

LT: The University is really something. . . .

SS: That's another good thing. There are still a lot of good things left in the city. It's just. . . .

AT: When you lose all them industries and everything like--my brother was telling me--like they keep going with the Fireproof move and moving trust companies out of here, Republic, a college town you're liable to have.

SS: I'll tell you, that's. . . .

AT: I'll tell you, the college employs more than anything else, now.

SS: I think Western Reserve Care System is number one. Then Youngstown State's number two.

AT: The hospital. That's the biggest employer now?

SS: If the city was smart, they would be helping the University out. Because, they could attract thousands of students and bring in businesses.

LT: It's coming up further and further. Did you see how many houses. . . .

AT: It's all improvements.

LT: It's all I see on Elm Street. You go down, "What are all of these cars doing here?"

AT: You know what you're going to have some day? A college town.

LT: You're not kidding.

SS: At least on this Northside, if they wanted to fix up downtown Youngstown, open that up to students, you'd find theaters and stores and a lot of things. A lot of people don't want to do that. A lot of businessmen and lawyers, and doctors don't want the students down there.

AT: They don't want them down there?

SS: Nope.

LT: Why not?

SS: They feel like they own downtown. Downtown's their area. . . .

AT: That's right, too, because for Ursuline--I sent all of my kids to Ursuline--when they went there, they had to stay on the grounds. There was no running downtown. That made you feel pretty good right there. I didn't say they didn't do something. It's just that it was there to do.

SS: Okay. Are there any last comments you'd like to make about the city, about Idora Park, what you think the park meant to the city, or even what you think the future is of Youngstown?

AT: If they could get some jobs in here, some people to build here, and start giving out some jobs so somebody could buy something--the younger people--not me. My day is gone. When they start that, they can build another Idora Park. Who knows what could happen later? But right now, everybody's in a bind. Like I said before, I feel sorry for the kids. I don't know what they're going to do. They get married, where are they

going to live? Some will stay with their parents, even. That's about all I got to say about it. You got to get jobs.

SS: How do you feel?

LT: Kind of sad.

SS: Yeah.

LT: The whole thing is a sad mess, I think. It just went down hill.

SS: Everything?

LT: Yeah.

SS: Okay. Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW