

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

YSU Idora Park Project

Work Experience

O. H. 834

DIANE FITZGERALD

Interviewed

by

Rob Toti

on

December 20, 1986

DIANE FITZGERALD

Diane Westrem was born on November 7, 1945, the daughter of Steven and Edna Zabko, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. After her father died and her mother remarried, they moved to Youngstown. She attended school through the tenth grade and in 1963 Diane began working at Idora Park at the refreshment stand underneath the rocko-planes. On August 31, 1963, she was married to Charles Fitzgerald.

Diane continued to work at the same refreshment stand for the next twenty years. In 1971, she took a leave of absence to give birth to her daughter Peggy. Since the park closed in 1985, Mrs. Fitzgerald has remained at home with her family. She attends St. Mark's Lutheran Church. Also, Mrs. Fitzgerald enjoys doing crafts such as crochet and plastic canvas.

Rob Toti

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INTERVIEWEE: DIANE FITZGERALD

INTERVIEWER: Rob Toti

SUBJECT: work experience, other employees, rides,  
special days

DATE: December 20, 1986

T: This is an interview with Diane Fitzgerald for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, on Idora Park, by Rob Toti, at 4452 Fitzgerald Avenue, on December 20, 1986, at 7:00 p.m.

First of all, could you tell me something about your childhood?

F: I was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota. My father deceased in 1949 and my mother remarried in 1952 and I moved to Youngstown, Ohio. My father worked for Tucson Steel for years and then he got laid off. He was laid off for a couple of years. He went to go back to Tucson Steel and he failed the test because of his high blood pressure. He would sit in a lot of bars here and there drinking and stuff like that. He met one of the bosses at Idora Park in a bar. A couple of them, they would sit and they got to talking and they said, "Well, come out to Idora Park and we will get you a job."

Well, he went out to Idora Park and he got a job. He ran the merry-go-round and he painted the signs all over the park. He made a lot of the signs for the dances and stuff like that. He was there eleven years before he got sick and passed away. He died in 1973. He worked there about three years or so, and he came home and he said to me and my sister, "Hey, you girls want a job? They need help out at Idora Park." So, my sister and I went out to Idora Park and we got a job

working for refreshments under Mickey Rindin. I worked at the upper end of the park underneath the rockets. My sister worked down below. She never lasted the whole summer and I just hung around for twenty years and had a great time.

T: So what was your first encounter with Idora Park, the day you were hired?

F: Yes, we had to put on these old, starched uniforms. The stand I worked in there was no doorway, you had to jump over the counter to get into the stand and then you would work. The first few days were rough because I never really worked a job that much before in my life. We would start at 1:00, we would open the shutters and there would be people there waiting to buy hot dogs and we didn't even have them on the spits yet. We would get bombarded around 1:00 or 1:30. At 6:00 the picnic was over. It was like a vacuum, just sucked all of the people off the Midway because all of a sudden they were gone. Your counters were so packed that you could never see anything during the picnics. We were busy, we worked good and everything.

At night it was a lot slower unless there was a picnic in. Basically, you know, you weren't too bad. You just got bombarded with the picnics. There were a lot of picnics.

T: How old were you when you started working?

F: Eighteen.

T: Would you say that was approximately the average age of the employees?

F: Some were younger. A lot of them were like sixteen. There were a lot of old ones at the time when I first started. Kind of upper age and everything. I was eighteen, I was married and everything, didn't have any children.

T: Why did you decide to become an Idora Park employee?

F: I thought it was a way to make extra money and keep busy. There was just my husband and I, He was out a lot and he worked. I figured, Well, I will go to work and make some money too and help out. Every summer for twenty years. Well, I took a couple summers off here and there. I took a summer off when I had my daughter, I got pregnant and I was due in August. We had went to the one girl that worked with me at a stand, her wedding was in April of 1970. I was pregnant at the time and we were at the wedding reception, my husband and I, and one of the bosses, Pat Duffy said, "Are you coming

back next summer?" I said, "I don't hardly think so." He said, "Why?" I said, "Well, in my condition I don't think I can jump any counters." The doorway went in the stand for me so that I had doorway to go in and out. I didn't have to jump any counters anymore. That is one thing that Idora Park did for me, I got a doorway.

I went back and I worked that summer until the end of June. I started at the beginning of May. We always started at the beginning of May and we worked through until, pretty much, September. I worked until the end of June because the baby was due in August. My baby was never born until September so I had two or three months of the summer off. It was good because my husband and I got to spend a lot of time together with the pregnancy and everything.

The following year I had went back part time. I just worked on Saturdays only because the baby was young yet. Then the following year I went back, it was still part time but I did a lot of ballroom work then. I worked in the ballroom a lot, I wasn't up the Midway. As a matter of fact, my oldest nephew was working up in my stand where I was, as boss. I would work the ballroom and then I would go up above. I worked the ballroom off and on during the winter and stuff. I worked a couple New Years's Eves. It was really different. The music and everything was fabulous, I liked it. I got used to the polka music and those polka people, they partied. They would start drinking at 12:00 and never quit until 12:00 when we threw them out of there to go home ourselves.

T: What was a typical day like for you at the park? What time did you start, how much money did you make?

F: Peanuts! We made peanuts. When I first started working at Idora Park I made \$175 a month. We were on a salary basis and we would work anywhere from sixty to seventy hours a week. We were supposed to have Mondays off and sometimes we didn't get Mondays off, but on a salary basis it was, You are here, that is it. We are open and you are here. Every now and then we would take nights off for different things and stuff but it was different. Every year you went back you got a \$25 raise and you would get a \$25 bonus every year you were there. At the end of the year you would get a \$25 bonus and every year you went back and stayed the whole summer you got another raise \$25. So, every year you went back you started at \$175 and one time you were here and next time . . . It advanced and finally it got to be something worth while to take home, but then the last four or five years we went on straight salary. I made minimum wage and it wasn't too bad because later

on in the years as the picnics dwindled out, the mills dwindled out, and it wasn't a lot of work. You just worked so many hours.

I would go and work on a Tuesday and Thursday. I would work afternoon, I would start at 1:00 and quit at 5:30, another girl would come in from 5:30 to 10:00 and close. When we first started out there, we were there until midnight. We could get called out at 9:00 in the morning and be there until midnight. It used to be a lot of long hours but they slowed way down, then they cut it down, finally, to like four days a week. It was basically fun.

T: Who was your first stand manager?

F: Annie Popescu, she came from Rumania and she was . . . . At first I had a hard time understanding her because she spoke broken English. It took me a while to catch on to a lot of things she was saying and I caught on quick. A lot of times if I didn't do something she would like, she would tease me about it and she would take a stack of cups and bat me upside the head with it. She would say, "You dummy, Sloppy Joe," that is what she used to call me and I said, "Oh, my God." We used to have a good time. She was my first boss. I was there a year and a half and the lady from the other stand down below had passed away and Annie moved down there and then I took over where I was.

T: What types of things did you sell?

F: We sold hot dogs, sloppy joes, pop, potato chips, ice cream, candy, gum, and the big Idora Park suckers.

T: What were the prices like? Do you remember?

F: The hot dogs were \$.30, the pop was \$.15, \$.30, and \$.45, the big Idora Park suckers used to sell for \$.35, I think. The candy, gum was \$.05, candy bars were \$.10, chips, I think, were \$.25, they were kind of a big bag. We had Cracker Jack's, ice cream was \$.15.

T: Which items were the favorites?

F: Well, we worked a lot of the picnics and a lot of people came hungry, so we just sold a lot of hot dogs and pop. A lot of picnics used to have refreshment tickets. They would come with refreshment tickets and buy up all of our candy and gum and stuff like that that they could take home with them. They used to come with \$10 worth. We used to sell boxes of candy and boxes of gum, the whole pack would go out unopened and everything because they were refreshment tickets.

T: Could you explain that?

F: The refreshment tickets were a little ticket, each ticket was worth \$.05. They had to spend the tickets on refreshments. They were going back to their home, most of the picnics were in from Pennsylvania. They had to catch their buses and their cars and whatever, most of them came on buses. So, they would try to spread out the tickets anyway they could and take stuff home with them. They took home candy bars and potato chips. What was the sense of taking a ticket home and throwing it away? I mean, how could you carry home like ten hot dogs? What are you going to do with them when you get there? They bought a lot of candy and gum and suckers and potato chips and Cracker Jack's. We just took all of their tickets in.

T: Was the ticket part of the company day?

F: It was part of the company day. The company set up the refreshment tickets. They set it up with Idora Park that way, yes.

T: How often did the prices increase out at the park?

F: Every summer there was a change somewhere along the line. The hot dogs may have went up or the sloppy joes may have went up or the candy may have went up. Not all of them went up every year, just certain items here and there went up in price a year. Every summer, the beginning of the summer they changed the prices. They changed them right then and there.

T: Were there ever any complaints?

F: Sometimes, not too often. I used to tell them the complaint department is at the office. I would tell them to take all of their complaints and go to the office because I didn't want to hear them. I wasn't there to take complaints, I was there to sell hot dogs, I told them.

T: Why was your stand the busiest?

F: During the picnics. During the picnics we had Bycoff and Wilcoff, Bliss, and Aliquippa, that was a party that time.

T: Tell me about Aliquippa day.

F: Aliquippa day was basically supposed to be a black church group in from Aliquippa, Pa. In the early 1960's, like 1965 or 1966 or somewhere around in there, they never really locked the gates at that time and it was open to the public, all you had to do was walk in.

Well, the Youngstown crowd would get in there and then the trouble would start. They would be messing with all of the Pennsylvania women and they would fight and everything. One year James Brown was in the ballroom, some dummy took a gun and shot it up through ceiling. You never in your life saw so many people run and hide wherever they could get into. The men were in the women's bathroom, they were all over the place hiding like crazy because of a gunshot. The next day the clean up . . . I walked up on the hill picnic area, the clothes and the food and everything that they had left behind was unreal.

T: Did they ever find out who shot the gun or why?

F: No, no. Just some clown being goofy shot it up in the ceiling and away they all ran everywhere. I mean, people would go back home and leave picnic baskets full of food up on the hill. Suitcases of clothes, they always brought clothes to change. I don't know why they were changing all the time, but they would bring suitcases full of clothes and they would change clothes throughout the day for different things. It was just like a picnic. Then they had the James Brown thing down in the ballroom. They would all get changed for that, I guess. They would leave clothes behind up on the hill and everything. What a mess.

T: Was this just for Aliquippa day or for any of the group days?

F: I don't understand what you mean.

T: When clothes were left behind.

F: We would always get a lot of things left behind, but not as bad as we did on Aliquippa day.

T: What other items were left behind that you can remember?

F: Basically, that it about all that I can think of. I remember walking up and seeing everything lying all over.

T: What did you do when business was slow?

F: I sat in my corner and I crocheted and I did my crafts. I like to do crafts. Basically, that is what I did, I sat in the corner and did my thing, had a good time.

T: Was that allowed?

F: Yes, it was better than me not being there at all.



T: What did the other ladies do?

F: The kids would bring cards and they would sit in the corner and play cards. I would tell them to keep it down in case somebody would come to the counter to buy something or they would play . . . They brought cross-word puzzle books. A lot of kids brought schoolbooks. Some kids went to college and they would bring their books from college and they would sit and do that. They would keep it down under so nobody could really see. We had boxes of cups down underneath our counter where nobody could really see and stuff. We were allowed radios but they had to be kept down to a minimum.

T: What did you do when it rained?

F: We waited for them to tell us to go home, mainly. A lot of the ride operators and stuff wouldn't stand out in the rain. They would come over to the counter and stand around and talk and tell jokes and just have a good time.

T: Did you get sent home very often?

F: Yes, quite often. I can remember sitting out there in the snow, it was snowing in May. I said, "Oh, well." We were freezing.

T: Did it ever seem as though your whole stand was moving because of the vibrations of the ride?

F: No.

T: Was there any way to feel as though . . .

F: We could hear the motor running from the airplanes because it was right beyond our back room where we kept all of our stock, but I don't think I ever felt the place move or anything, no. You could hear them as they jumped off the airplanes; thump, thump, thump. Some of them, we thought, were coming down to visit us through the roof, but none of them ever quite made it.

T: Did you ever get any promotions while you were out at the park?

F: I don't think there were any promotions. I think you were just there and that was it. There were really no promotions or anything, you know, I don't think.

T: Weren't you, more or less, the supervisor?

F: Yes, I had the one promotion when . . . I had worked under some lady when I started and then when she moved

to the big stand down below, across from the park office, I took over. I was like a manager there. I had Mickey, my boss over me, but I was here, more or less, to supervise two or three other girls that I had working with me. It all depends on how busy the day was and stuff. Basically, I was manager.

T: Was your job still, more or less, the same?

F: Yes.

T: Could you compare the park in the 1960's, the 1970's and the 1980's?

F: Well, in the 1960's there were a lot of older people working there. It wasn't so much younger kids like fifteen or sixteen, and the fifteen ones lied. We won't tell anybody. In the 1970's it started to get a more younger crowd and the older crowd started dwindling out.

We used to have a party. Once a year we would have a big picnic for the adults over twenty-one up in the Kiddie Land pavilion. We would get up there and there was beer and food and we would all get together and sit around and gab and drink and have a good time. Some people were playing cards and stuff. We would bring our husbands and the others would bring wives or whatever. We all got together and just had a great time, partied half the night away, that was the only way to do it.

T: Could you compare the crowds of the 1960's, 1970's, and the 1980's?

F: Well, I will tell you, sitting at Idora Park was one of the best things because it is the best place to watch people because you have got all types of people out there. When I was younger I used to go to record hops out there. I never heard about drugs and all this and then as it changed, you heard more and more about drugs and you saw it and smelled it. I used to go to record hops when I was fifteen or sixteen. Well, I was a teenager before I married my husband. He never danced. He used to sit there and watch and I said, "You are just an old party pooper."

I never really worked a record hop but, I was up above when a lot of the younger kids came out and they were pretty much about the same. The clothes and the styles all changed because when I started working there we used to have to wear white, starched, uniforms. I mean, you had to punch your way to get into these things, they were unreal. They were a mile too long, you had to take them home and hem them. If you sent them back

to get cleaned again, then they would come back again and you would have to rehem them. So, we just did our own laundry after that. Finally, it got down to where you didn't have to wear uniforms, which was a blessing. The clothes all changed all up the line and everything.

The difference in the kids was . . . You learned a lot and you watched a lot.

T: What do you remember about the record hops that you went to when you were younger?

F: Boots Bell. I will never forget Boots Bell and he is still kicking. Years ago, I used to listen to WHOT when I was a teenager and Boots Bell was the thing. Now, I turned and I listen to country-western and Boots Bell in on country-western, WNIO. I remember, I think we used to get in for \$.50. Fifty cents we used to get into the record hops and just have a great time. You would just dance, they would be up there playing records and you just got up and danced and had a good time.

T: How did you get there?

F: We used to walk. I lived on the east side and I would come over and spend a weekend with a girl friend of mine that lived on the south side. She lived on Kenmore Avenue and we used to walk from Kenmore and Oak Hill all the way to Idora Park, get out there and dance for four or five hours, and turn around and walk back home.

T: What time did the dance start and end?

F: I think it started at 8:00 and it ended about 11:00 or 11:30.

T: They just played 45's all night?

F: Yes, I don't think there was a band or anything. We used to walk. I mean, we used to walk through some bad parts of town that I wouldn't drive through today, and we walked them then as a kid. It was no problem.

T: How did everyone dress?

F: That is a good question. I can't remember what I used to wear. I don't even remember what I wore, it has been so long ago. That was before I got married and I have been married twenty-three years now. I don't really remember. I think we used to wear a lot of skirts. I really and truly don't know.

T: Could you tell me about the time you spent at the

ballroom on New Year's Eve?

F: Basically, all we did was the ballroom. They did not sell whiskey, they sold the mix and the ice and we sold beer and we had chips and pretzels and stuff like that. We would get people in and they would want to buy bottles and they would want to buy this. We said to them that we weren't licensed to do this, all we can do is this and that. So, they would leave the ballroom, go out somewhere and, luckily, find a bottle or they would do without if they didn't know to bring their own. There were a lot of big bands in the ballroom and they would dance. I would watch them dance when I wasn't too busy at the bar. I would watch them dance and have a good time. I would be out of there about 12:30, we would leave. The ballroom didn't close until 1:00, but the bar closed down at 12:30 and then I would go home. Now and then you would get tips, not too many though. I knew a lot of the workers and we always had a good time, the workers.

T: What time did you end up getting out of there usually?

F: Working the ballroom? It would be mostly 12:30 when we closed the bar and the ballroom closed at 1:00. The band quit at 1:00 too. They would quit about ten minutes until 1:00 and then everyone would start leaving, but the bar always closed down earlier like 12:30.

T: Were there any peculiar things that happened out there?

F: There were always peculiar things happening out there. I used to like to sit and watch the people dance. I worked a lot of the polkas and everything. I worked a few of the over twenty-nine club. Over twenty-nine, I think these people stretched it. There were guys like sixty and seventy years old out there. They kept right in time and just had a great time. I did a lot of people watching, basically.

T: Could you tell me a little more about your father's job with the park?

F: My father painted a lot of signs for the ballroom dances and stuff. If any signs had to be changed around the park, he would go and change them. He worked the merry-go-round when he wasn't painting signs. A lot of signs that he painted, he would go in two or three hours earlier to the merry-go-round starting, and he would go around stand to stand with the bosses and he would change them. A lot of the dance hall signs he painted at home on his own time and just turned the time into the park. Then, when the park would close in September, he would stay on afterwards. Him and a lot of the men would stay on and paint. They

would repaint the Wildcat and they would repaint a lot of rides and stuff like that. He would work until almost Christmastime and then he would be off until about March. Then he would go back and paint more. He collected unemployment for the couple months he was off, but he was only off maybe two or three months out of the whole year.

One year he redid the whole merry-go-round. He used to come home and draw sketches out and he had this paper all over the dining room table. He would be asking the kids at home, "What do you think of this design? What do you think of this? What do we do with this horse?" He would ask us kids a lot. I wasn't home. A lot of us were married and gone by that time. With me working with him still, he would ask me a lot of questions. I rode back and forth to work with him all of the time. He would ask me questions and I would try to answer them. I would say, "No, I don't like red there, maybe blue or yellow or green." I tried to help him. He painted the clouds up inside the merry-go-round, beautiful. The merry-go-round had been all redone since his death.

T: So, there was no specific color scheme that they stuck with?

F: No. He would have the park's approval. My father would make a lot of the plans out on paper and take them and he would talk them over with his boss, too. He pretty much had the boss's approval on everything to paint and what to paint it and stuff. They liked his designs, he did a lot of painting. He painted for a lot of places. A lot of bars up and down Market Street years ago, too. He painted for Sparkle Market that was on Market. It is still there. He liked his painting. He liked running the horses and that.

The hardest part for me was, after he got so sick and wasn't at the job and we knew he had cancer and was dying . . . It took me the longest time before I could even go down by the merry-go-round again. Then a couple of years later I finally did go back down by there. A couple times I did ride it. Every time I would ride it I would see him pacing, because he would start his ride and he would walk around the circle so many times. After so many times he walked around the circle, that was time to shut the ride off and he knew it. I would say, "He is going to be there," but he wasn't. It was just my mind, I guess.

Now, if you want to talk about peculiar things; there was a guy who used to come out there every Sunday afternoon. He would go down to the merry-go-round, they had that organ music playing, and he would go

inside the merry-go-round and he would pace back and forth in front of the music, listening to it, for like four or five hours. You have heard this story?

T: I have heard about this guy.

F: He would just love it. He would leave in time to go catch his bus and go back home. He would come out there for years and years. He would pace so many hours and then he would go get a hot dog or something and then he would come back. My father used to say, "That man is driving me crazy. I wish he would go home. I want to shut that music off on him." I said, "No, let him go, he is having fun."

T: Your dad not only painted the ride, but he also operated it?

F: He operated the merry-go-round for eleven years, right. Then he did all the painting before the park opened and extra time.

T: How long did it take to do the major work?

F: The painting of the merry-go-round, months.

T: When was this done?

F: Before I had my daughter, I think. It had to have been in the late 1960's or early 1970's that he redid it all.

T: Did they do it before the park opened or was it closed off?

F: No, he started like . . . He went back to work sometime in March, I think he would go back. Between March and May he had it all done. He would spend most of his day up there painting.

T: For three months or so?

F: Yes.

T: Did any other relatives work at the park?

F: My younger brother worked there for a while. He worked a couple years. He worked down on the merry-go-round with my father.

T: You mentioned your sister.

F: Yes, she didn't even last the summer.

T: That's it?

F: No, my nephew . . . I started in 1965. I had young nieces and nephews, eventually the oldest nephew started working out in the park in 1970. I think it was 1970 or 1971 that my nephew started working at the park in refreshments and different stands and stuff. One year when I had taken off, he was the manager of the stand. I guess he did a lousy job, from what I hear. I had another younger nephew work at Snowcone years later. I had a niece that worked in Kiddie Land. I had another, he wasn't actually a nephew but it was my sister's husband's brother's son, which didn't make him a relative to me at all. He always called me Aunt Dee and I called him my nephew Chucky. He worked out there for years with me too. He worked for the games. My daughter did manage to work one summer, 1984 she worked out there. She operated a ride in Kiddie Land. She was only fourteen but we lied on that too. She had a great time.

T: What do you remember about the owners?

F: Max Rindin was totally unreal. One time there was a girl- my stand was right down from the ferris wheel- who went on the ferris wheel and she had real long hair. Her hair was flying and it got caught in one of the things on the side of the car that rocked as it went around. Her hair got caught in there and each time the seat would rock as it went around, her hair would get more and more entangled in. Well, she is down like this and she is screaming. When they finally realized what was happening and stopped the ride, she got stuck pretty far up on the top. One gentleman, David Russell who was in maintenance, went and got a ladder. He had the maintenance crew up there, getting them up there and getting tools and stuff to try to get her hair out. They actually had to cut her hair to get it out. Max Rindin got up on the ladder, crawled up on the ladder, and told her, "Don't you worry, we will get you out and you will be safe. Just don't move anywhere, we are not going to move the ride or anything." They finally did get up there with scissors and cut her hair and got her out of there. Her head would have went God knows where. There were a lot of accidents and a lot of trouble, but all the bosses were always there. They would always run up anytime anything major happened, they always checked on everybody if any kid got hurt on a ride or anything. They would go to the nurse's station and check them to make sure everything was alright.

T: How high up in the air were they on the ferris wheel?

F: She was, I think, the second car coming down. I don't know how high you would say that was, but it was pretty

high up. About seventy feet, it could have been. The ferris wheel was pretty big.

T: What other types of problems were there with the rides? You said there were some injuries.

F: Yes, everybody has injuries. A lot of times on the Wildcat and Jack Rabbit, they tell you not to stand up, some people now and then did stand up and some people fell out. There were a couple here and there that I can remember. A lot of the injuries were like . . . They corrected the problem with the ferris wheel, that was just a freak accident that happened. There were a lot of things that happened that people had caused themselves. The bosses were always there, they always cared and they always were concerned.

T: What else do you remember about Max Rindin?

F: He used to call me Miss Zabko. I was known out there as Miss Zabko because they always thought my name was Diane Fitzgerald, for which it is. One day I had to take some signs down to the office for my stepfather, and I was supposed to ask for Lenny Cavalier. I went in and I said, "Is Lenny Cavalier here, please?" He said, "Yes." He came out and I said, "Here are some signs for you." He said, "What are you doing with my signs?" I said, "Well, my father told me to bring them down to you." He said, "What do you mean your father?" I said, "My stepfather, Steve, he runs the merry-go-round and he is a sign painter too." He said, "Oh, you are a Zabko?" I said, "No, I was a Westrem and now I am a Fitzgerald, but I was never a Zabko." He said, "Okay," but from then on I was known as Zabko for years. Most of the bosses called me Zabko and I was never a Zabko.

T: What do you remember about Charles Duffy?

F: I didn't know him very well. I remember seeing him a good bit on the Midway. He did a lot of walking, basically, up and down the Midway, he stayed down at the lower end. Basically, I didn't know him at all. I think I was only there a year or two when he fell sick and passed away too, I believe. I know I wasn't there too long.

T: How about Pat?

F: Pat wasn't really my boss, Mickey Rindin was my boss. To me, I always thought Mickey was my boss. I ate with Pat Duffy. We used to go down to the Heidelberg for breakfast, a lot of the managers and stuff. We would go get the stands open and we would all go down to the Heidelberg for breakfast because we got a fantastic



deal on breakfast for employees or suppers. We used to wind up together down there having coffee and gabbing and stuff like that. He used to tease me about . . . He smoked Lucky Strike cigarettes, same as my husband does, and he used to say, "You know, one these times these dumb things are going to get me." I said, "Yes. If you would just switch to a filter it would help." He said, "No, they don't taste the same. I have got to have these dumb things." I said, "Well, one day we will all quit and give these nasty things up." He said, "Yes." A few times there were parties and stuff and he was there. We all drank together and had a great time. Duffy and I always got along pretty well.

T: What do you remember about Tony Cavalier?

F: Tony Cavalier, I didn't know him too much. I know one day, I had only been working the park a couple of weeks and this guy came up early in the afternoon and he had on his carpenter clothes and he ordered a hot dog and a root beer. I got it for him and I told him that it would be \$.45. He said, "I don't have my money on me right now. I will pay you later." I said, "Well, I don't think I am allowed to do that." He said, "Do you know who you are talking to?" I said, "No, I am sorry I don't, but I don't think I am allowed to do that anyway." He said, "Look, I don't have money on me. I have got my working clothes on and I will be back later to pay you." The woman that I was working under at the time came out of the back to see who I was fussing with out there. She said, "Diane, don't worry about it. That is Tony Cavalier, he will be back later to pay." I said, "Well, who the hell is Tony Cavalier?" She said, "He owns the park." I said, "Well, I don't know, nobody tells me anything." It was funny because I tried to get money off of him and he didn't have it on him, he had his work clothes on. That was funny.

Lenny, I remember Lenny. I used to tease him every year back in the early 1960's or early 1970's. I used to tease him every summer when we would be opening, I would say, "Well, Lenny, where did you go on vacation this year and make that other baby?" It seemed like every time him and his wife went on vacation in the wintertime, they would come back in the summer and she would be pregnant. They would say, "Was this one made in Canada or was this one made in Florida or wherever?" I think he had like five or six children. It was funny, we used to laugh about that.

T: What was it like working for Mickey Rindin?

F: You couldn't ask for a better boss in your life. He was there when you needed him and when you didn't need him, he wasn't there. I asked for anything, I got it.

If I told him something broke down, he came and fixed it. If I needed supplies, we had a telephone in the back room and we could call just throughout the park. Between him and the stock boy, I would have it right away. The last couple of years, 1982 or 1983, his second wife was real sick. He used to come up and sit in the corner and I would talk to him for hours. He would ask me the dumbest questions and I would try to answer them the best I could. I thought I helped him along. Then it got to the last couple of years, he loved my stuffed cabbage. I used to make him stuffed cabbage and take it out to him. I would make him kielbasa and sauerkraut. He would come and say, "Alright, I am here for lunch." We would take out the old stuffed cabbage and go over next door and pop it in the microwave and he would sit and he would eat. A lot of times he liked hamburgers. The last couple of years we had hamburgers because we had a different grill to cook them on. He would say he wanted it rare, a little bit on this side and a little bit on the other side. I would say, "Well, what are you going to have on it today, Mick?" Basically, I never could have asked for a better boss. There wasn't anything I asked for that I didn't get. If I wanted time off, I had it. He was a good boss.

T: You mentioned a stock boy, how did you go about getting your supplies to the stand?

F: They would come in like every Thursday and take a basic of what we had on stock and what we needed. My boss would know what was coming up the next week and he knew how to plan it and what to stock here and there. Friday was stock day. That is basically what you did, you put all of your stock away where it belonged. The stock would be there when you got in and what you did was put it all away. You stocked up for Saturdays and Sundays, which were the busiest days of the week. That is when your big picnics were. You got stock in. If you ran out of something, you called the office and you would say, Have Mickey or the stock boy call number five, which was my stand number. They would call and I would say that I needed hot dogs or I needed this or that.

There was a joke going on for years about Clark candy bars. This one girl, the first year they had put the phones in, she had candy bars delivered. By Saturday night she was out of candy bars of one kind, she ran out of Clark bars. She called down there and she said, "Mick, it is an emergency. I just sold the last Clark bar." So, it was a big joke between us for years about that lousy Clark bar that was last sold. She had about five or six other candy bars on the counter, but there were no Clark bars. Which was no big deal, right?

T: Right.

F: She made a big hoop-to-do about . . . We teased and they joked about that Clark candy bar for years.

T: Did you work with Artie Conway?

F: I worked a lot of ballroom with Artie Conway. I didn't work too much at her stand, I worked mostly with her in the ballroom.

T: Did you become friends with her?

F: Oh, yes. I was always friends with everybody. I was just that type of person. Well, this one didn't want to work with this one because they didn't like each other. My boss said to me, "You know, I could put you with this person and there is no problem. I could put you with this one and there is no problems." I said, "I am not that type of person. I can be friendly whether I like them or not. I can stay friendly with anybody as long as I am there to do my job and I don't care what anybody else does. I do my job and I go home. Whether I like them or not, I never let them know." I would just pretend like I liked them and went on with my job and my life and that was it. I could work with anybody I had to whether I wanted to or not.

T: As you got older what was it like working with the youngsters?

F: It was different. There were so many people that I worked with that worked with me for years. Some, I didn't like at all. One girl was stealing from the cash register and I could not handle that. I told my boss about it and I said, "Watch her! Watch her!" He watched her and sure enough. He said, "Well, we got a week to go. Let her go, she is only taking a couple nickels and a couple dimes here and there." I couldn't handle it. It bothered me so bad. So, I went back to work and I harassed the girl so bad, I made her so mad she quit. If he wasn't going to fire her because he didn't have the heart to for the lousy week, I couldn't handle the mistrust and everything. It just drove me crazy. I treated her kind of mean and nasty but I got rid of her. She had come back to the park years later and talked to me like nothing ever happened. She never knew what I did or why I did it. I mean, I caught her with refreshment tickets in her pocket. I said, "Are you putting all the tickets in the box like your supposed to?" She said, "Yes." I said, "Well, what do you have in your pocket over there?" She had a white uniform on and you could see the tickets. She said, "Oh, I meant to put them in the box." I said, "Well, get them in there." I kind of

embarrassed her but I just felt guilty about it. It drove me crazy, I didn't like that.

T: Were most of the employees easy to work with?

F: Oh, yes. I let them know, the first day I would take them around and show them, basically, everything. Years ago we had these old fashioned cash registers. If your sale was \$2.40, you just hit the two and the forty and you just pushed them all at one time. Then the computers came in and you did this and you did that. You pushed ten buttons and you have to wait five minutes for it to tell you what you had to collect. I said that I could have had it figured in my head, collected the money, and they would have been gone out of there. One time one of my girls was giving a customer a large cherry pop. She spilled the cherry pop all down the cash register and that cash register never worked from then on. What a mess we had. We had a lot of good times.

T: What was your relationship with the other park employees? Do you have any special memories about them?

F: I remember the nurse, Myrt Zubal. I worked out there a couple of months during my pregnancy. Everyday I would go down and talk to her after picnics and stuff and relax and sit down with her. She would say, "Is the baby coming yet? Are we going to deliver this baby today or what?" I would say, "No, the baby isn't coming. I will be long out of here before this baby comes."

Labor Day seemed to be the day for the refreshment managers. Annie Popescu and a couple of her older women that worked down there under her would take off and leave the stand to the kids. Starting out it was kind of quiet at first. She would stop up at Hot Dog on a Stick and get that manager and maybe another girl out of there. They would come over and get me and we would go around and ride the rides. We would stop here and have a beer and stop there and have a beer and we would ride the rides. We had Artie Conway on some rides one time and I thought she was going to get sick on us, but she didn't. We took her on those rockets up above and I thought she was going to faint out of those things. After that we went and had a beer and settled down and went back to work a couple of hours later, had a great time.

T: Did you get a chance to ride the rides very often?

F: Yes, we used to get books years back. We used to get books and when we were off work we could ride the rides and stuff. They never took tickets out of our books.

I would wind up with so many books at the end of the year. They sent employees books. My husband and a couple of his buddies used to come out, I would give him my employee book, and they would go ride and have a good time. Our families were entitled to use it. We knew most of the ride operators and they never took our tickets anyway.

T: If you could have, what would you have done to make your job more enjoyable?

F: I don't think there was anything I could have done to make it more enjoyable because I just enjoyed my job and I had a great time. I used to sit and gab with everybody. The cops used to come around and talk and gab and stuff.

T: Are there any humorous events that stand out in your mind when you think of the days that you spent at the park?

F: It was the year the park closed. There was something going on in the Heidelberg after that park had closed that night. We had that real bad storm and a lot of the maintenance men stuck around to find out what transformers were out and stuff like that. We went down to the Heidelberg because it was raining so bad and I was afraid to go home. I only had a couple of blocks to drive home. We went down there and had a couple beers, we were done working and we could drink.

We were down there drinking and this one fellow was tending bar back there, Dave Shipoli. Him and I never got along together. I never liked him and he never liked me. We never had two decent words to say to each other to begin with. I went up and I said, "Can I have a beer?" Dave said, "I don't think I will give you a beer." Pat Duffy was standing there and I said, "Pat, he doesn't want to give me a beer." He said, "Why?" I said, "I don't know. Probably because he is being a pain in the ass as always." He had said that Dave Shipoli is this, and he is that. I said, "He is still a goddamn pain in the ass and if he doesn't give me a beer, I am going to smack him." Pat said, "Would you give the girl a beer or what."

We had partied down there until like 2:30 in the morning. It was 2:30 in the morning when I went home. What time Pat Duffy ever left the park is beyond me. I have no idea. We weren't feeling any pain.

Humorous events, there were so many things from years back. Years ago I used to love to ride the ferris wheel on quiet, dead nights. I would sneak up and somebody would be watching the stand and I would take

my little ride on the ferris wheel. One time, I started on the ferris wheel. They backed it up about two or three cars and then he stopped it. I said, "What are you stopping it for?" The ride operator left the ride there and I said, "Where are you going, Bob? Don't leave me here." All of a sudden I hear, splash! I was soaked with water. They jacked me up a couple of cars and soaked me with water and everybody took off and left me on the ferris wheel. I said, "If you guys do not get me off of here." I was soaked. We used to have water fights and dumb things like that, but we always had a great time. We just enjoyed it and had a good time.

T: What do you remember about the fire that took place in 1984?

F: At the time I was working at Cleveland Elementary School during the winter. I was working lunch detail and I had seen all the smoke. Well, by the time lunch was over with and everything else, a lot of the teachers had come back and they said that they had heard on their car radios that Idora Park was on fire. That just about broke my heart because I had been there for so long. I loved it, it was my summer job, I worked my four or five months and I was done. I bought a lot of things for the house and I helped pay bills and stuff like that. I went home because I was only a couple blocks from the school, I was a couple blocks from Idora Park where I had lived. I lived on Indianola Avenue. I was in the middle of both jobs so I could walk back and forth. All my neighbors came and said, "Oh, Diane, you ought to see how bad it is. This is burnt, that is burnt. Come on and go down." I said, "No, I don't want to go down." I just didn't have the heart to go down that day. Then I went down the following day and it broke my heart to see that much of it burnt down. I saw my boss right away and I said, "Well, Mick, what are we going to do now?" He said, "Hey, we are going to open." I said, "We are going to what?" He said, "We are opening the fifth. Be here." Which was only a couple of weeks away. Sure enough, we opened. I worked and had a good time. I always had a good time working. There was no sense doing any job if you didn't enjoy it and have a good time. I made my job fun.

T: What was the last year like? Did you sense that things had changed?

F: Yes, we all sensed that it was coming to an end and we didn't want it. We tried to talk to Pat and stuff. That is we had talked to him that one night about. We had been in the Heidelberg and we were asking him all kinds of questions. He said, "I don't know what is

happening." He just kept saying that he didn't know, but all along he knew, he just never told us. Then finally they did come and inform us all.

There was an old Pepsi clock that hung in my stand, it hung there the whole twenty years that I worked there, and I told my boss that when I leave, that Pepsi clock is going with me. He said, "What do you want the dumb thing for? It is going to quit working for you like it does every year and I have to come up and solder the dumb thing back together with a paper clip and make it work again." I said, "I don't care if it ever quits or not. I have got it and I want it." So, I took it. When the auction came around and they came around and checked everything that was in the stand . . . They had things that everybody took their memoirs and stuff. I okayed mine with the park. I took that and we used to have a Pepsi chalkboard hanging in the back where my boss used to write the schedules up on. I would write him notes and he would write me dumb notes back. We would just carry on. I have that still with the last schedule still written on it, hanging out in the garage. The last schedule is still written there from two years ago. My Pepsi clock is hanging down in the cellar and it did quit working on me.

T: Did you work during the auction?

F: Yes, I worked the auction.

T: What was that like?

F: Sad. It didn't bother me too bad as long as they weren't around me and I could sing. The first day they told me, "They are at the merry-go-round now. They are auctioning off the merry-go-round." The merry-go-round, to me, was a very special thing because of my stepfather being there for eleven years. I just didn't have the heart to go down there. I started down there and people came up and said that this one bought this horse, this one bought that horse. Then, finally, it ended where the whole thing was sold as one piece. I felt really relieved and thrilled about it so I went up and had a beer and rejoiced. I cried, I think there were a lot of tears shed. It finally came down to the nitty gritty when they came into my stand to sell it. I was cooking hamburgers at the time. Well, I finished cooking the hamburgers, piled them up over in the corner, and they auctioned off the grill and I stood right there. My boss said, "No," and I said, "Yes." I got out of there and I went right next door, got me a beer, and I started crying like hell. It hurt but you get over it. You just think of the memories. I tried to go with my grill but when I saw who bought it I said, "No, that is alright. I ain't

going with that guy, he is ugly." I didn't like Pennsylvania anyway, I wasn't going with him.

T: Do you think that this was the best method to try and salvage what was left of Idora?

F: It is hard to say. I think if it came down to it, and if that is the way that they had to do it, it was the best. But if there were some way that they could have kept the park going, I think it would have been a lot better. I mean, you heard all of the people talk and everything after the park was down and after the auction, how everybody remembered this and remembered that. Well, where were they? They were up at Cedar Point and Geauga Lake and everything else, which didn't help Idora Park one bit. Where else could you send a kid to ride as many rides as he wants for \$7 a day? They could have rode fifty or sixty rides before they got out of there. The park was not all that busy the last couple of years. It was normally pretty quiet.

T: Do you believe that the park would have closed anyway, or do you feel that the park was still a profit maker?

F: I think it could have been, I don't know how or anything else. I think if people thought more of things close to home than so far away and wasting \$15 or whatever to get into these other parks and wait so long in line for rides and everything, but who is to say. You can't tell people to come if they don't want to come. They were there when it was over though, weren't they? Where were they before it closed? That is one question I would like to ask, or have answered. What can you do about it now right, it was two years ago.

T: Is there anything else that is important to add that we haven't discussed yet?

F: Basically, about the only thing that I say is that you had to have been there. You had to have been a worker there at least one summer to enjoy and really understand the closeness and everything else. I didn't go back so much . . . I enjoyed the paychecks, the hours at the end were nice because they weren't quite as long, and I enjoyed the people. That was the best part of the whole thing, I believe. It was really great. You had to have been there and enjoy it too. We had all kinds of people. I had a lot of good times out at that park. I had a lot of people I knew work out there.

I had a girl friend that worked there one summer, she had a stroke years back and she is handicapped. Her left side is paralyzed. She worked in the stand with me and she teased Mick. Mick said, "Well, you find



anything you can't do, let me know and we will see what we can do to correct it." A couple of days later she finally said to Mick, "Well, Mick, the only thing I have found out I could not do was put potato chips on the rack." He said, "That is minor. We will let someone else do it." She said, "I thought I could lay it down on the floor and step on the hickey and shove the potato chips in." He said, "Please don't do that. Just let somebody else do it, please." We had a great time, I had a lot of good kids work with me. I had a lot of good adults work with me. I worked with a lot of different people. I worked all of the refreshment stands out there, I served a lot of beer, I drank a lot of beer, and I just had a great time. It was wonderful. I think if I had to relive that twenty years all over again, I would go for it. I really would, it was great.

T: I want to thank you for spending some time with me. I appreciate it.

F: Anytime.

END OF INTERVIEW