

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Idora Park Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 516

RICHARD PLATT

Interviewed

by

Donna DeBlasio and Richard Shale

on

July 3, 1984

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: RICHARD PLATT

INTERVIEWERS: Donna DeBlasio and Richard Shale

SUBJECT: Managing Idora, types of rides, descriptions  
of park, maintenance, security

DATE: July 3, 1984

DD: This is an interview with Dick Platt for the Youngstown State University Oral History Project on Idora Park. The interview is being conducted in Mr. Platt's home on Skywae Drive in Youngstown, Ohio on July 3, 1984. The interview is being conducted by Donna DeBlasio and Rick Shale.

Okay Mr. Platt, I'll just start by asking you a little bit about yourself, your background, where and when you were born.

RP: I'm a Youngstown native. I was born in 1914. I went away to college and graduated from UCLA. I came back later on and went to work for the Vindicator. I also had a year at what was then Youngstown College before I went to UCLA. That was way back in 1932. I went through the rungs of the ladder at the Vindicator. I was police reporter, city hall reporter, and assistant state editor, and finally copy editor.

DD: Are you married?

RP: I married Miss Eugenia Baker. We were married in 1938.

DD: Do you have any children?

RP: We have two, a son and a daughter. Our son John is president of the Community Development Planners of Massillon. He is very active in four states: Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and West Virginia. Our daughter, Mrs. Charmion Marie Har-rigan lives in Greenford. We have four grandsons.

RS: Your daughter lives here in town?

RP: They spent a year in Chicago; they went into business out there, in the water conditioning business, and they didn't like the Chicago area too well. They lived about thirty miles out of the city and they decided to come back. They just came back about a month ago.

DD: Your father was manager of Idora Park?

RP: Yes, he was manager, as near as I can figure, starting around 1910. It may have been a little earlier than that. He was manager up until 1926. He also owned several of the rides and concessions. For example, he had the merry-go-round, the old Firefly roller coaster which preceded the Wildcat, the ballroom, the theater, and the popcorn and other concessions. He owned those and he managed the park itself for the Idora Amusement Company, which was originally set up by the old Penn-Ohio Power Company, a predecessor of Ohio Edison.

RS: I've got a family tree here to help me figure out the various corporate names from Ohio Edison in the present all the way back to Youngstown Park & Falls Street Railway Company.

DD: Did your father ever tell you what it was like to be the manager? What did he have to do as manager of the park?

RP: I was there for quite a bit of it when I was a kid. It was kind of a tough proposition at the time. It wasn't so much a lack of a trade of customers; the park was very popular. In fact, it was much more popular in the 1920's than it is now. There were times when they had as many as 50,000 people out there in one night. There were unbelievable crowds. The tough part of it was really policing the whole thing, the matter of keeping track of everything that was going on. He hired a number of Youngstown police off duty. Policing a place like that where there were all those huge crowds was a problem. He was very good at it. He was a very alert and firm character. He kept his eye on the whole thing to see that everything was working properly. That's a big thing. Your insurance would skyrocket if you had any trouble, accidents and so on. There was an awful lot of machinery over there. It uses a huge amount of electricity. They almost have a substation of their own. Those were the things that I can recall as a kid.

He brought in the summer theater in the park; he was very proud of that. It started out with the old Colonel Horn Stock Company. Later Lillian Desmonde Players came. He

had it enlarged and rebuilt and refurbished and everything. The summer stock proved to be extremely popular. They had all the popular melodramas of the day.

RS: Can you clarify one thing for me on the theaters? As far as I can tell from my research, at the very earliest days of the park they had the casino and that seems to be where they put on vaudeville. Later they built the theater, which would have been down closer to where the Firefly is.

RP: Yes. The theater, as a matter of fact, was right across the midway of the office for the park.

RS: I have a picture of people sitting on that hillside under trees. My mother played in that theater in 1932. She has no recollection of the audience being outdoors at all. Was there a time when a part of the audience was out under the trees and later that was covered?

RP: Yes, I think that is true. Most of the theater seating was covered, but there was a section up in the back of the hill that was not and had been added to. They had such crowds they had to have it. I don't know just when that was done, but it might have been in the late 1920's.

The ballroom was one of the biggest things in the park, one of the biggest features and one of the biggest draws. They had name bands in those days.

DD: I understand Lillian Desmonde had a close relationship with a doctor?

RP: She married this Dr. Ranz and she lived out on Raccoon and Shields.

DD: What was Lillian Desmonde like?

RP: She was an actress from A to Z. She was a very interesting person. She knew how to conduct herself and make an impression and all. Her acting was very good. She had something to do with the movies in California. She was actually instructing aspiring movie actors.

DD: What types of plays did she do at Idora?

RP: The popular things of the day. It's hard to remember all of them. They had mysteries, melodramas.

RS: In other words, she didn't do the classical theater like Shakespeare and things like that?

RP: No. In those days they called it summer stock and it was just the things that people wanted to see and were popular.

DD: I take it she was extremely popular?

RP: She was the big name, the star. Later on she came back to Youngstown and did a whole radio program.

She was married to Jack Hammond at the time the players were playing at the park. He died then after retiring in 1928.

After that the emphasis at the park changed; everything was ballroom then. They had a skating rink, roller skating. Also they had an old fun house out there. They had airplane swings and a ferris wheel and a swimming pool.

RS: Was the swimming pool ever saltwater?

RP: I couldn't say.

RS: I've run across several references to that. Today, in the Historical Society, I ran across a postcard of Idora that actually has a picture of the pool and labels it saltwater pool.

RP: That could be.

RS: My parents swam out there and they have no recollection whatsoever of any salt.

RP: I don't either.

RS: I've even read accounts where it said the water was pure enough to drink. That certainly doesn't sound like saltwater.

DD: What did your father do to change the summer theater that made it so special? What did he do?

RP: He actually brought in the summer theater. That was one of his projects. It started with the old Colonel Horn Stock Players. I think they were from the east somewhere. His big thing was the Lillian Desmonde Players; they made such a tremendous hit locally that it drew thousands of people to the park literally. She was very, very popular. The whole park is an anachronism today; it's an old-fashioned amusement park and there are not very many left in the cities. Today the parks are way outside the cities. In those days the crowds drew from hundreds of miles away.

Also, my dad's name is Royal E. Platt. Anyway, of the big things that he introduced there was a very expensive and elaborate fireworks display. In those days maybe he spent \$10,000 on a fireworks display. That's the equivalent of about \$50,000 today. It was colossal. The thing would start at about 10:00 at night and go on until almost midnight.

DD: When did he introduce the fireworks?

RP: I suppose in the early 1920's.

DD: How often did he irritate the neighbors with shooting them off?

RP: Well, of course, the big thing was the Fourth, but then also there would be something on Labor Day and other minor occasions. They used almost one whole end of the ball park, which the Jack Rabbit goes around.

RS: That must have continued . . . I remember sitting in the ball park and watching. They were not just the kind that were shot up, but the kind that were mounted on a scaffolding. It would spell out something or was some design.

DD: The American flag.

RP: He made a point of spending some money on that stuff. There were certain things like that he insisted was necessary. He made a lot of money in the park, I'll say that; he did very well.

He started out working for the old Penn-Ohio, actually for the interurban electric line between Sharon and Youngstown, which was owned by the Penn-Ohio Power. He started out there and then got into the office and finally the Youngstown office. The park started to develop after the old Market Street Bridge was finished in about 1899. Shortly thereafter they laid out the Park & Falls streetcar line. That's what opened up the entire south side of the city to development. Then they ran this Park & Falls over to this territory next to Mill Creek Park, which became Idora. That made the whole thing accessible to people. That was around 1900.

They say that the oldest building is the merry-go-round; it was built in 1899. I think it was ready for operation a few years earlier. Then everything began to spring up; they built things here and there.

The Firefly, as I recall, was built around 1917 or 1918, right after World War I. That was the first very popular roller coaster. It was a good one. It wasn't as wild as the Wildcat, but it was very popular.

Later on they got the Jack Rabbit. Dad didn't build that; there was another man that came in.

RS: Do you remember what his name was?

RP: I do not.

RS: Was he a partner with Deibel and Rex Billings?

RP: I think so. Billings was the manager right after dad retired.

RS: I have Rex Billings' obituary here and it indicates in there that he became manager of the park in 1921 and had purchased the park three years later.

RP: No. I can remember that period very well and I'm afraid that's off. It's more like 1929 when he took over as manager.

RS: Then your dad worked both before Billings and Deibel and those people bought the park. They bought it from the power company so he worked well before that and then on managing it after.

RP: Yes. I would say from 1910 he managed it up until 1926. That would be my idea. Billings made his name in the park mainly in the 1920's. Dad really developed it.

Pat Duffy Sr., the father of the present manager, my father hired him as an employee in the early 1920's. Later on he had a couple of concessions of his own and became more or less a partner.

DD: I'm interested in the whole thing of your dad actually owning some of the things and managing the park. How did that work?

RP: He just bought the property. The park plant itself was owned originally by the Penn-Ohio Power. Then you could buy parcels; it was parceled out. For instance, take the Firefly, he bought that land that the Firefly stood on and built the Firefly and owned it. Later on he sold to a Greek gentleman named Gus Stravos who was a concessionaire. That's the way the thing went; if somebody had title to it, you could buy it.

RS: The Wildcat was supposedly built at the end of the 1920's. They would have obviously taken down the Firefly.

RP: Gus only had it about three or four years.

RS: Would he then have gotten the concession of the Wildcat? That would have been a different parcel of land.

- RP: I think he did stay in there for a while if I recall.
- RS: In other words, the names like Deibel and Billings and others would own the park itself and the name Idora and they would essentially be landlord to people that owned individual concessions?
- RP: Not exactly. If you owned a concession you were pretty independent. The only thing you had to do was comply with the park ticket rules. That was an agreement that they signed when they bought the concession.
- RS: So it was a group of individuals who all bought into the same place and were in the amusement business?
- RP: More or less.
- RS: Since your dad was manager . . .
- RP: He was responsible for the whole thing. When he came in he only actually had one or two partners for a long time.
- RS: I had a question or two about the ballroom. It used to be open in the early days. I guess from inside where the dance floor was you could look right out through the porch and it was open-air.
- RP: Yes.
- RS: Do you have any idea when they enclosed it?
- RP: I don't know. My impression was that it was enclosed by the 1940's. I think they did it in the 1930's.
- RS: You don't happen to recall if the dance hall had a red roof do you? I have two postcards, and of course they're hand-colored, identical views, and one has got a green roof on it and one has got a red roof on it.
- RP: I remember the green.
- RS: I'm particularly interested in both roller coasters and merry-go-rounds. I belong to an organization that's interested in roller coasters. Was there a coaster before the Firefly?
- RP: I don't think so, but I couldn't tell you for sure. There was something where the Jack Rabbit is now. I don't know what that was.
- RS: Do you think it was built sometime around World War I?



RP: The Firefly?

RS: Yes.

RP: Shortly after the war.

RS: I have a Vindicator citation from 1901 saying that they were going to construct a roller coaster.

RP: I think that's the one they had before the Jack Rabbit. It's too bad the park records are gone.

RS: Some of the postcards that I've run across, it clearly has to be where the Firefly was because the trolley line came around. I thought those postcards were prior to 1910.

RP: I don't recall the year.

RS: The Jack Rabbit is also a mystery because I have a date of 1910 on that that it was constructed by the T. M. Hartman Company out of Pittsburgh. I've heard that it was restored into its present state around 1930. I haven't found a way to verify it.

RP: That could be; it sounds logical from what I recall.

RS: Do you remember at all the original carrousel?

RP: Yes.

RS: The one that is there now, the building is still the same, but as I understand it the one there now was made by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company.

RP: As you said on the phone, it was more of a menagerie of animals. There were other animals in there and little carts. That was a feature of the original. You say that was from the Philadelphia Toboggan Company?

RS: The present one is. The earlier one I was told was a Dentzel Carrousel.

RP: Yes. That name rang a bell right away. I knew Carl Dentzel in high school. He was a friend of mine. His dad was the head of that company and built those carrousel.

RS: Was this high school around here?

RP: This high school was Beverly Hills High School. There was a piece in the Parade recently, a little item that said, "The rich get richer. Beverly Hills High School

is sitting on top of one hundred million dollars of oil." They're pumping it; they have a well. The school gets one million and two hundred thousand dollars a year out of it. That's where I graduated. Actually, they were pumping oil when I was there. Carl and I met by accident. His family apparently moved to California and the reminiscences that we had of those merry-go-rounds . . .

DD: The building that the carrousel is in isn't the original?

RP: Yes, I think it is. It has been restored.

DD: The building itself dates from about 1899?

RP: Yes. You could tell by the architecture of that period. They changed the whole thing, the music, controls, the whole thing.

RS: The present one apparently dates from 1922. That is the date that is on the plaque.

RP: In 1920 I would be six years old and I could remember that old one just vaguely.

RS: I wish I had seen it.

RP: It wasn't as elaborate.

RS: Those hand-carved, wooden carrousel animals are collector's items today.

Did your father retire to California that you met Carl Dentzel?

RP: We went to California in 1929. I graduated from Beverly Hills High in 1931. Then we came back for a while. I went for one year to what was Youngstown College at the time; the reason for that was that I lacked some credits in science when I graduated from high school to get into UCLA. California universities were very strict. I made up some science credits and even went to summer school at the college and got into UCLA.

RS: So you came out here in 1932 but your family was still there?

RP: No, they all came back. They lived on Rogers Road.

RS: You told me that you had a house underneath the Firefly?

RP: During the summer season dad had to be there almost twenty-four hours a day. He had this little two-room shack that was painted real nice there. Inside the area there was

an open space in the Firefly just like there are on most roller coasters; that's where that was placed. We would live there during the summer.

DD: That must have been noisy.

RP: It was until you got used to it. By the time that we would go to bed it was pretty late and things were dying down. You would have a quiet night, but you would have to get up early in the morning. You got used to it.

RS: I have a list from the Vindicator that lists the names of the managers of Idora, I presume in order. I wondered if any of the other names that we've mentioned already . . . it starts out saying that Ed Kames was the first manager. I presume that was around 1899.

RP: That doesn't even ring a bell.

RS: Bob Cunningham, George Rose, Perry Bart, then your father, then Rex Billings, and Charlie Deibel.

RP: I've never even heard some of the names before. I remember some faintly, but I don't know anything about them.

RS: I also have a reference here that the outdoor theater was constructed by Edward M. Stanley. It identifies him as a well-known showman.

Do you by any chance know the names of any of the architects that built some of these buildings?

RP: No. I wasn't interested in that as a kid.

RS: I don't suppose you know the names of any of the manufacturers of the rides? I know the Philadelphia Toboggan Company built the Wildcat as well as the present merry-go-round.

DD: And the Lost River.

RS: Did I ask you about the theory that they may have used part of the original structure of the Firefly to construct that hill to go up behind the old mill and then circle around in a boat and swoop down in front where you all get splashed. You don't know for sure?

RP: No. It sounds like something they would do because they didn't waste anything.

DD: How large were the cars of the train? How many people could they seat on one train?

RP: Only about four I'd say.

DD: Do you recall any accidents that happened during your father's time?

RP: Yes, there were a couple of minor accidents really. One of the things that he was busy on was security all the time. In fact, there were a lot of rules out there that a lot of the younger kids didn't like at all. He knew how dangerous a lot of those things were. For instance the old Whip, it was really essentially a dangerous ride. So was the Caterpillar.

DD: There were a lot of picnics at the park. What companies came there on a regular basis?

RP: Republic Steel, Sheet & Tube, all the local steel outfits. Then there would be picnics from places like Aliquippa, Pennsylvania and all those industries up and down the Ohio River Valley between Pittsburgh and Beaver. Every week there was a big picnic. The park was open seven days a week.

DD: How were those picnics scheduled? Did they interfere with the walk-in business?

RP: No, unless they were too big. If somebody wanted to schedule a picnic where there would be 15,000 people then they had to make special arrangements and they had to dampen down the public part of it. It was not always successful because people just flocked to the park. There were picnics with as many as 15,000 or 20,000 people.

RS: Do you remember your dad ever mentioning a roller coaster called a Three-way Figure Eight Toboggan?

RP: No.

RS: I have three pictures of that.

RP: That would have to be the earliest one. Dad was never very good at sitting down and explaining to me the history of the park either.

DD: What is your earliest recollection of the park?

RP: The merry-go-round and the rides and everything. It wasn't really a whole lot different than it is now. The midway was about the same composition.

RS: Do you remember when the Penny Arcade was built?

RP: No.

- RS: I know that Kiddyland is where the swimming pool used to be, but what was there before that?
- RP: That was undeveloped, I guess.
- DD: Was the train there?
- RP: No, they didn't have a scenic train.
- RS: I was talking to a gentleman named Howard Rempis and he had in his mind a ride that he described to me. He said you would go through in the dark and there were scenes from the "Wizard of Oz". Does this ring a bell with you?
- RP: Yes, there was something like that.
- RS: The old casino is what became Heidelberg Gardens.
- RP: Yes. The name casino doesn't ring a bell with me at all, but I assume that is what it was.
- RS: Did they serve alcoholic beverages? I assumed you could buy beer.
- RP: Yes. Dad had a strict rule in the ballroom that anybody found with liquor was out.
- DD: Were there any dress regulations?
- RP: In those days you must remember that people didn't go much on their own on dress; it was more or less conventional. There was very little unconventional dressing. Once in a while a man would come in with just a sweater on instead of a jacket; right away he would be called off the floor to get a jacket.
- RS: Was the baseball field there when you were . . .
- RP: That was one of dad's loves. He had been a baseball player when he was younger. He was crazy about baseball. At one time there was a small league team here. They had prize fights. They had some really vicious prize fights.
- RS: Where did they hold those?
- RP: In the ball park.
- DD: What kinds of things had to be done in the off-season?

RP: Repairs were unbelievable. It was just a continuous schedule of repairs going on. There was nothing done in the dead of winter. There was a whole crew of painters, and then mechanics and electricians and plumbers. Dad kept everything in shipshape. It helped with the insurance too.

DD: What kind of people worked in the park over the years? Were they people that came back all of the time?

RP: Yes. They were mostly local people that came back year after year. Dad had a fellow that was superintendent of grounds; all he did was watch the general facilities. His name was Sam Buncila. He lived in back of the swimming pool. Duffy came in originally as a repairman on the carpentry repairs.

After the park closed on Labor Day we would go to Florida. We had a home in Florida for a while. We had another home in Cleveland Heights that my family built and we lived there for many years.

RS: So you never lived in the park year-round?

RP: No. When my father retired as manager he still retained ownership of some of the concessions that he had.

DD: How were the maintenance men hired? Were they actually your father's employees or were they employees of the company, of Penn-Ohio Power and Light?

RP: I couldn't say.

RS: Do you have any idea of how many people worked at the park during the summer?

RP: I would guess around 400.

RS: That would include all the concession people?

RP: Yes. Ticket people, concessionaires, repair people, ground crew, and everything you could think of. The best year that my father had up there he netted over \$100,000 himself. In those days guess what the federal income tax on \$100,000 was?

DD: Not much.

RP: About \$4,000. That was his best year.

RS: What year was that?

- RP: I think 1926. It was a lucrative business all right, - the amusement park business. I think you had to have a certain mentality, which I never had. My dad had it.
- RS: Did you work as a young kid doing different jobs?
- RP: Yes. The things that I remember mostly, I worked at the big, main popcorn stand which was across from the theater on the midway. Do you know what that stand netted one year? \$30,000.
- DD: How much did a popcorn ball cost?
- RP: I think they were a dime.
- DD: Was it their own recipe for them?
- RP: Yes.
- DD: I understand that the french fries were very well-known?
- RP: They didn't have french fries then. Hot dogs were big then too. I'll bet there were four hot dog stands in the park when I was there.
- RS: Was your mother involved at all in the park business?
- RP: Not really.
- DD: Were colas the most popular variety drink?
- RP: That and Orange Crush and cherry drink. Orange Crush was big in those days.
- DD: Did the park have any special drink that they concocted?
- RP: Not that I can recall.
- DD: How was admission decided? You just walked in the park and paid to go on the rides?
- RP: Sure.
- DD: Did each individual ride owner decide on their own price?
- RP: That would involve a meeting with my dad I suppose. If a guy owned a ride or concession he was more or less independent.
- RS: Do you remember what he charged for the Firefly or merry-go-round?

- RP: Most of those things were a dime. Later on in the 1920's it may have gone up to fifteen cents.
- DD: When people were hired for maintenance, for example, did they have to have special qualifications?
- RP: Yes, I suppose so. He would have two or three key people that knew where they could hire them, competent help. Dad, himself, knew a lot of people. There was never any problem getting people over there.
- DD: What kinds of relations did the park have with neighbors?
- RP: The park tried to keep people out of the neighborhoods. He had a security force. On a big day it would be maybe ten policemen. They would be in uniform and they had guns on their hips right in view. They would patrol the whole area around the park. There were threats sometimes from the neighbors after the fireworks, but we never had any lawsuits.
- Incidentally, there was a fellow at the Vindicator that was city editor years and years ago. His name was Bill Rook. When dad was manager of the park Bill wrote drama reviews and movie reviews. He covered the park and wrote an awful lot.
- DD: Where was the parking for anyone that drove their car?
- RP: There wasn't that big parking lot that they have now. There was a small area in there and then there was a main area off of Parkview. The rest of them would either walk, drive, or come on out-of-town busses.
- DD: What was out there where the current parking lot is?
- RP: That was just undeveloped.
- DD: All of that area was owned by the park?
- RP: I'm not sure if it was at the time. It was purchased later in the 1930's. It was just an open field as I recall. The demand for parking didn't come until the 1930's.
- RS: There really wasn't much south of the dance pavilion?
- RP: No, not really.
- DD: As far as insurance, did each ride have to be separately insured?



RP: There was a master policy as I recall on the entire park. I'll give you a rather interesting sidelight. Dad had an insurance which he called business insurance. He was insured by Lloyd's of London directly. This business insurance was as such: The Fourth of July was always the biggest day in the park's season. You could expect close to 50,000 or 60,000 people. If the Fourth of July was just one storm after another and the attendance was cut down to 10,000 he would be insured with Lloyd's of London for \$200,000 against inclement weather for the Fourth of July. He would have a number of days insured, including Labor Day. I remember he was saying over a period of ten years or so that he maybe collected \$50,000 out of the whole thing. It was worthwhile even though the premiums were high.

DD: That insured the whole park?

RP: The whole business, yes. As far as each concession, they had also their own separate insurance, for instance public liability insurance on a ride concession. That was not in the general policy at all. The general policy was for fire, windstorm, destruction, vandalism, whatnot. The other ones were public liability on certain things.

RS: Do you have any recollection of what the most popular ride in the park was?

RP: As far as the number of people concerned that used it, one of the rides definitely was the Firefly. I remember dad saying that the first year the Firefly was in business he made something like \$18,000 over and above the mortgage payments. Over the long run the merry-go-round probably would have been. On big days the rides which would have exceeded were the Firefly and Jack Rabbit. All of them did well. If there was anything in the park, a ride or anything, that didn't pull its weight through one season it was changed.

One of the interesting things that dad would take charge of, although he had a couple of policemen with him, several times during the day they would go through the park with big, leather bags to collect the money. It looked like a small army walking through the park. They would go to each one of these concession stands. It was mostly coins in those days. This would all be stuffed into these big, heavy, leather bags and then taken down to the park office and taken back and put into the safe. Later on at night, after the park was closed around midnight, the money was taken out and counted. That went on for an hour or so. Imagine counting thousands of coins and packing them in little wrappers. That is a different system than they use now of course.

RS: Did your dad have to stay up each night to do this counting?

RP: He would be up until 12:30 or 1:00 every night. He supervised it and marked it down and put it in the ledger. There was a tremendous amount of work there to be done.

RS: I wish we still had copies of those ledgers.

Tell me again where the park office was located?

RP: It was located directly across the midway from the theater.

DD: Can you describe that office, what it looked like on the inside?

RP: You walked in and there was a waiting or reception room. Dad had a private office in the back. Toward the left there was a big room where there was a big table; it was kind of a meeting room. Then there were bathrooms and so on. There was also a safe built in. I think there was a small porch out front too.

RS: Was the building that burned down the original?

RP: I think it was. Maybe it was renovated a little bit.

RS: I know there was a contest to name Idora supposedly back in 1899. No one seems to be able to verify where the name Idora came from. Somebody said it was a version of "I adore". I don't know who dreamed that up. I was told there was a contest to name the Wildcat. Was this after your family left the park?

RP: It must have been. I don't recall that at all.

RS: Who named the coaster the Firefly?

RP: That I couldn't say.

RS: Your dad didn't name it?

RP: I don't think so.

RS: Was there interplay between the various amusement parks?

RP: Yes. Dad was always going to Coney Island talking to them.

RS: Did he ever go down to Kennywood in Pittsburgh?

RP: Yes. There was almost an association of park managements.

- DD: What are the differences between something like Idora - and something like Six Flags?
- RP: The difference is actually cosmetic. It isn't too important. These theme parks feel they have to have something that grabs the imaginations. Actually what they have to offer is almost the same as any other old-fashioned amusement park in the country; there are a number of them. To have one inside a city like Youngstown is very unusual.
- DD: Why do you think that Idora was able to hang in there?
- RP: It was just the Youngstown tradition, that's all. The kids grew up going to Idora.
- RS: Did they have animals out at the park when you were there?
- RP: Not on a regular basis. Here's the sort of thing that dad would bring in really wild, for instance he had a Navajo Indian outfit in there one time. It drew. Anyway, they had snakes and things like that. That was just for special occasions.
- RS: I saw accounts, I guess it was in the late 1940's, where they kept monkeys out there.
- RP: Dad would no more have a monkey in the park than . . .
- RS: Apparently in the earlier days they had some caged bears.
- RP: I'll bet dad got rid of them fast. He wasn't too much for anything like that. He had a very practical view: That sort of thing, was it cost efficient? Did it cost more than it was worth, that was the whole thing.
- DD: The airplanes, did they have biplanes in there?
- RP: Not really biplanes, they were just single wing.
- RS: Were the dodgem cars there in the 1920's?
- RP: Yes, they were brand new just before dad retired.
- DD: What about the ferris wheel?
- RP: I don't have much recollection of that really. It wasn't a big one.
- DD: What about the Turtles?
- RP: That's new.

- RS: Did a lot of black people come to the park or was it regarded as segregated?
- RP: No. That's another thing dad insisted on, he insisted on an open door policy. There was only one thing that he did insist on, and that was decorum. I think they knew that; that was well known.
- DD: In the last fifty years it has not changed that much.
- RP: One thing, when dad was manager of the park the ball park was used every day; there was something there, either a ball game, a prize fight, or something going on. That was something he liked. He wanted athletic events going on all the time in the ball park.
- DD: I understand that the park was a favorite of the Ku Klux Klan?
- RP: It's true that they did gather once in a while at the park. What actually ended the Klan in Youngstown was the Vindicator.
- DD: Printing the names.
- RP: That's right; that's what did it.
- DD: I understand that they held their picnics at Idora. Do you remember ever seeing them there?
- RP: I'm sure that they did.
- RS: In uniform?
- RP: That's something I can't remember, them wearing their sheets.
- RS: They didn't burn any crosses at the park?
- RP: They certainly didn't, especially since my father was a Mason and a Shriner.
- DD: I understand the Klan proposed holding a baseball game at Idora with the Knights of Columbus with a black umpire and a Jewish ticket taker? It was in the Telegram. It was about 1924. I take it this never happened. That would have been hysterical.
- Advertising, how was the park advertised?
- RP: I think they did advertise to some extent in the newspapers too along with the streetcar advertisements. There wasn't a great deal of advertising.
- DD: How were people you might describe as riffraff kept out of the park?

- RP: Dad had that security out there and I think that drunks- and people like that would come out there and the minute they would see a couple of cops with guns on their hips they would get the idea pretty fast. For instance, pick-pockets, every now and then they would catch somebody. Places developed a reputation. When dad was manager Idora had a reputation of being pretty strict. That discouraged some of the nonsense. He wanted it to be a family place.
- DD: When did the park open?
- RP: It would normally open on Decoration Day, May 30. There may have been some special picnics before that, but not normally.
- RS: Did you close after Labor Day?
- RP: Yes, it would go on until a few days after Labor Day. They had a thing called Harvest Moon Dancing when dad was manager. That was dancing all through September in the ballroom. There were big name bands and everything, but the park itself wasn't open.
- RS: They did not have dancing activities out there in the winter time in the ballroom?
- RP: Not that I recall. I think that started in the Depression.
- DD: Is there anything you would like to add?
- RP: I think we've covered everything pretty well.
- DD: I'd like to thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

END OF INTERVIEW