YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Canfield Fair History Project

Canfield Fair Concessionaire

O. H. 219

Arthur S. Frank

Interviewed

by

Carrie Stanton

on

November 3, 1983

ARTHUR S. FRANK

Arthur Frank was born in Youngstown, Ohio, the son of an insurance salesman. He attended Youngstown College for two years and got his degree from Kent State University. He taught in various public school systems for a few years and then took a full time job with the Isaly Company, in charge of the accounting department.

In 1969 Mr. Frank bought the Isaly stand at the Canfield Fair and he and his family have been running it since then. Prior to 1969, he worked at the concession for the Isaly Company. If he runs the stand at the fair in 1984, it will make his forty-ninth year.

Carrie Stanton

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INTERVIEWEE: ARTHUR FRANK

INTERVIEWER: Carrie Stanton

SUBJECT: Canfield Fair, Isaly Dairy Company, Concessionaire, Schools during the Depression, Teaching School

DATE: November 3, 1983

S: This is an interview with Arthur Frank for the Youngstown State University, Canfield Fair Project by Carrie Stanton at 135 Erskine Avenue, on November 3, 1983 at approximately 10:00 a.m.

First of all, let's just start with your background, your personal background, your education, your family.

F· Well, I was born in Youngstown, Ohio. My dad, his name was Jerome Frank, was an insurance salesman for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. My mother was Lillian. Her maiden name was Smith. She was born here, but her parents came over from England and her father had worked in the coal mines. She was a housewife--took care of the kids and raised a family. When my dad retired they moved to Florida, like so many people do. Then when my dad died, we had to bring my mother back here. She wasn't able to take care of herself. She lived in a little apartment by herself as long as she was able. After she had a few strokes my brother and I decided to put her in a nursing home. She lived there for eight to ten years in Mineral Ridge. My brother and I had a schedule, about every other day one or the other of us would visit. Finally, she had another stroke and passed away.

My brother went to Ohio University. We both started

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out at Youngstown College, then a struggling institution. He went there two years and transferred to Ohio University. I also went two years there. At that time it wasn't a very large school. Believe it or not I was only six feet tall and made the college basketball team as a center. That can give you some indication of how college athletics have changed.

I ran out of money and stayed out of school a year and worked for the Isaly Company. I had been working for them part-time while I was going to college at Youngstown. After that, I transferred to Kent State. Youngstown, basically, in that era, was a two-year institution.

S: Was it?

F: Basically. Most everybody went two years, then transferred elsewhere.

S: What kind of things did they teach?

F: Well, at that time they had a law school at night, and they had some engineering, but basically it was two-year--just general subjects. Then you went into your field after you went to the other school.

S: You mean nobody got a degree there?

F: Well, you could get a degree there, yes. But the majority of students transferred out after two years. The schedule was very limited for a third and fourth year. To put it bluntly, if you got a degree from Youngstown State back in those years, it didn't really mean much.

S: Did they have physical education?

F: Not as such. It was very very difficult to get a job back then even if you had a degree. That was right in the middle of the Depression. That was 1938, 1939, 1940. Most of us, including me, were undecided even as to what kind of a degree you would want to get because you didn't think you could get a job anyway.

S: Can I ask you what the tuition was?

F: Practically nothing. I mean, I got paid 25 cents an hour working and I was able to pay my tuition and buy books. So you know tuition was practically nothing. I couldn't give you a dollar and cents figure, but it

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was very, very nominal. We all carried our sack lunch and most of us walked to school.

S: Probably a lot of people couldn't afford even that.

F: No. In fact, Buchanan was the registrar there. He came over to the house and practically talked me into going to Youngstown College. I told him I didn't have any money but that I was working in the summertime. He said, "Well, get started and see how you make out."

S: How did you know Buchanan?

F: I didn't know him?

S: You mean they just came around to the house?

F: I would guess that he probably got ten dollars for every student that he got to enroll or something like that.

(Laughter)

I would assume that he got a list of the graduates from the high school and so on. At that time, if I say so myself, the high school, educationally, was tremendous. Of course, I'm prejudiced a little bit. Although, my daughter's got a very good education out here at Boardman. But we had a terrific faculty at South High.

I finished in the middle of the year in January. I took a few postgraduate courses at South until Fall term started at Youngstown College.

S: That was one of the problems with graduating in the middle of the year?

F: Yes. So I started at Youngstown College in the fall, in September. That was the fall of 1936. I'll tell you how desperate things were up at Youngstown College. The coach of the basketball team was Ray Sweeny. He was working part-time in the steel mill and he was coaching the basketball team.

S: Did they have a lot of professors like that?

F: Yes. A lot of them were part-time. Mr. Sweeny just finished up at Westminister College. He was in the

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accounting department at Youngstown Sheet and Tube part-time.

The basketball team travelled in cars, you know, big cars. The kids on the basketball team might be interested in this: We got a meal allowance of a dollar when we went out of town. And that was it! We went to the most economical hotels with about four of us in a room.

S: What kinds of places did you go to? What colleges?

F: Well, we played West Liberty, Westminister, Geneva, and we had one big trip through New England. We played Long Island University in New York City, Canisius, the University of Delaware, etc. We played schools basically around here. We had a couple trips.

S: A dollar a meal?

F: Yes. The faculty manager, Dr. Ford, drove one car and Ray Sweeny drove the other car. And there was an automobile dealer named Mr. Tombs, who sometimes took us.

This doesn't have to much to do with the Canfield Fair.

S: Oh, that's okay, we love it! Anything like this we just love.

F: But after I got out of Kent State, while I was a kid I worked at the Isaly store in Kent. I got a quarter an hour there and came home on weekends, usually. And I ran an Isaly store here in town on the weekends. That gave the manager Saturday off; the assistant manager Sunday off.

My wife to be, my brother, and I used our spare time, what we had, to travel all over Ohio trying to get jobs teaching school. It was different then; you had to go out and be interviewed by the school board members.

S: The whole board?

F: Yes, the whole board. You also talked to the superintendent; and if it was a rural school, you had to go see the county superintendent. It was a real experience.

I finally got a job--I think it was before school

started--in Medina county. I was what they called a "circuit rider". I taught at one school in the morning and one in the afternoon. They were 35 miles apart. I had an hour to get my lunch and get to the other school. Of course, I had to provide my own transportation, and each school paid me the tremendous salary of $650 a year. So I got $1,300 for teaching four classes in the morning and four in the afternoon and providing my own transportation.

S: How does that salary compare with other salaries then? Would that be low?

F: No, that was a high salary, but I had no transportation allowance. My wife was paid a thousand dollars, but she was in one school.

Everything was very expensive. I had to buy a car. I took the money that I had made working during the summer at Isalys.

S: What kind of car did you drive?

F: I bought a Dodge, believe it or not--a two-door Dodge. It cost me $750--beautiful car. I was the envy of every member on the faculty because I had a new car. But I had to have a reliable car to get back and forth between those two schools. In the winter time the fellows on the state highway used to watch for me in the morning and they would occasionally have to get some ashes and sand-gravel and get me off the berm before I could go anywhere. I was going with Olive Snyder. I met her up at Youngstown College.

Anyhow, after this first year we wanted to get married, but I figured I had to have a different kind of job so I applied everywhere. Again, another month before school started, I got a job in Fairfield school district out in Columbiana county. It was Fairfield Centralized School, now it is Crestview School. So, about the weekend before school started, I think it was on Saturday, we got married. I had to be at school on Tuesday and a teachers' meeting on Monday. We had a big honeymoon weekend at Niagara Falls. We got our first apartment for which we paid $35 a month. I taught school there for four years.

S: Were you in the science department or. . .

F: When we got married we had two hundred dollars between us. Our apartment was a little upstairs apartment. We shared a refrigerator with the people downstairs. The kitchen was built over the back porch. When it

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snowed in the winter time the snow came in the windows. (Laughter)

I got paid $1,300 there, but it was one school. I also coached the basketball team. I had eight classes a day. I had the school newspaper and I was a substitute schoolbus driver. And I got $1,300.

S· You were busy! Was your wife working then, too?

F: She was teaching when we got married. She was teaching up at Hartford. At that time, as soon as a woman got married she had to resign. So Olive had to resign.

S· Was that pretty standard all over?

F: All over Ohio. I don't know about the rest of the country. That was definitely before women's lib. Not that I have anything against women's lib, but I still think that women were better off when they were taking care of the kids. I'm not a woman, so. . .

Anyhow, we lived there for the first few years in this furnished apartment and we saved a few dollars. In the meantime, I was working in the summer for the Isaly Company. She and I both would go wherever they sent us and I would manage one of their stores in the summertime.

S. How did you first get to work for the company?

F: Well, one of the reasons I mentioned this Isaly's work is that Isaly's is what eventually tied me in with the Canfield Fair.

I started working for Isaly's when I was still in high school.

S Oh.

F: At that time Isaly's had a store on practically every corner here in Youngstown. It was very difficult to get any kind of job, but in the summertime Isaly's usually put on quite a number of kids. I needed a job because I wanted to go to college--my mother wanted me to go to college. So I just applied, and my brother applied, and we both got jobs with Isaly's. When we started we were getting 18 cents an hour. But we were glad for the job. There wasn't any income tax in those

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days and there wasn't any Social Security, so we got the full amount of the pay. You could go out on a date and if you had a dollar you were loaded! (Laughter) That's how I got started with Isaly's. I worked for them all through college and then when I started teaching school I worked for them every summer vacation. Usually, in the summertime, working for them, I made as much money in three months as I made teaching school nine months. So, that's how I got started with Isaly's. My brother worked for them too, but the mills started picking up a little bit and he got a job in the mill.

S: Girard?

F: McDonald Works. So he had a little bit more money when he transferred down to Ohio University than I had. But when he came out of Ohio University, he still couldn't get a job teaching school. He wound up at Kent State with me, working on his Master's. Then, in about March or April, this was probably 1941, they were starting to draft people into the service. My brother was still at Kent. And they drafted a math teacher in a little place in Medina County, Valley City or some such thing. Dr. Munzemeyer was the placement officer at Kent and he asked my brother if he would finish out the year. So he got a teaching job for a couple of months. Valley City--that was the name of it. He finished there and then the next year he got a job in Tallmadge just outside of Kent. He taught there just one year and then he went to the service. I was teaching out at Fairfield.

After two years we moved and got an apartment of our own up over the Isaly store in Columbiana. That was real handy. Whenever they got busy down in the Isaly store they would pound on the pipes there, and then I'd go down and give them a hand and make a few dollars. The rent there, in that apartment, was forty dollars, but it was unfurnished. It was nicer and quieter and I got five dollars a month knocked off for taking care of the stoker cone boiler downstairs. Any time anybody got cold in the building they came pounding on the door. (Laughter) Then the war was getting started.

I taught at Fairfield for four years. My number came up in the draft and the school board got me deferred until school was out. Then I went with the draftees from Columbiana County. I was out there for ten days and they sent me home on some kind of a technicality because I hadn't had a complete physical recently enough.

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The kids had had a party for me and everything and all that stuff. (Laughter) Anyhow, when I got home, I tried to enlist in the navy. They called it the Merchant Marines. In the meantime, the state of Ohio, in order to try to keep their teachers a little bit--they were all leaving to go into defense work and so on--passed an emergency thing that each teacher in the state was supposed to get. I think it was 150 dollars in supplements. So, we were in Columbiana County and I had a superintendent by the name of Roberts. After I left, I found out he got in trouble for taking kickbacks from the book companies. But anyhow, he said, "The county system needs this money worse than the teachers." So he said, "The teachers in Columbiana County weren't going to get it." We were the only county in Ohio that didn't get the 150 dollars. I know that doesn't sound like much money now. So, some of the teachers, especially the younger ones, said, "Okay, we'll just leave," because it was getting to the point where you could get a job. The superintendent would go down to West Virginia and bring up a whole new faculty. That was before tenure.

Larry Brown was the superintendent at Ravenna and he knew me. He had been out to the fair. Anyhow, I wound up with a contract at Ravenna. We moved to Ravenna. In the meantime, I was still working for Isaly's in the summertime, and they were asking me to come and work for them full time. They wanted me to work in the stores and I didn't want to work in the stores. When you get old that's no place to be.

I taught at Ravenna three years and things were getting better for teachers, but not that much better. I was getting paid $2,300 a year. We had one child and another one on the way. Isaly's was still after me.

The war was winding down, but nevertheless, as the war was over the factories were going full blast and the people were all leaving the education field. In the meantime, I was taking courses over at Kent, working on my master's, working on tax returns, and trying to supplement my income. One day the Kent State head of placement came over and was sitting in my class and I couldn't understand why. I don't know. He must have been making an evaluation I guess. About two weeks later Brown called me in the office and told me that he wanted me to take a job over at Kent State. That sounded tremendous, so I went over for the interview. In order to get the job, I would have to promise to

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finish my master's degree and start on my doctorate degree. I was making $2,300. So they offered me $2,700. Then they offered $2,800. It sounded like a lot of money. Isaly's came along and offered me double to go and work for them full time. They were really expanding like crazy. It was just after the war. They were opening a new store every month. I said, "Well, I don't want to work in the store." I was teaching accounting and typing and shorthand. Isaly's said, "You'll work in the store for six months. Our treasurer is retiring and his assistant is going to take that job. We want you to take his job." I knew this assistant treasureer, Hershel Richard. He came and talked to us and painted us a rosy picture, so my wife and I decided I would go to Isaly's.

In the meantime, getting back to the Canfield Fair, even when I was at Ravenna--even when I was out at Fairfield--each year at the time of the fair, wherever they'd sent me during the summer, I would wind up out at the Canfield Fair running the Isaly stand for them. My wife helped me. So that's why the ties with the Canfield Fair and the Isaly Company. Isaly's had a stand at the Canfield for years and years and years.

S: Where is it now?

F: Where is it now? Same spot. It's been there for over a half century.

S: Was it always a building?

F: No, it was a tent first of all. Before that, it was just a very, very temporary enclosure. When it rained, and when the wind blew, it was really very primitive.

S: You must have put a tarp over it, or. . .

F: When I started for them, it had corner posts with a tarp over the top. Then the carpenters from the company would come out and sort of enclose it. They would bring out whatever they had around the carpenter shop--counters from the stores--and make a three sided enclosure. The back was entirely open. There was no way that we could close it up or lock it up. At night somebody usually slept out there on a cot, including me. (Laughter)

S: In the early days, what did you sell out there? They wouldn't have ice cream, would they?

F We had ice. We had ice making equipment down at the

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plant. We had the brine tanks and we made ice down there, too. So we had ice. It was very difficult to operate. That's why we had no competition out there to speak of for the ice cream and dairy products because it was too complicated to refrigerate them.

S: Nobody else wanted to bother with it?

F· Nobody else wanted to bother with it. The Isaly Company did it primarily as an advertisement.

S: When would that be--in the early years?

F· Well, I started out there in--I was still in high school--1936. 1936 is when I started. Now, how long before that they were there, I don't know. But I'd say they were at least out there in the twenties.

S: Really?

F: Yes, because Fred Leudy, who was one of the old timers, was telling me about the chocolate milk. Everything was in glass, of course. That was before paper containers. You had to take out the chocolate milk in little half-pint bottles. Of course, back in those days the chocolate dispersed. He told me how many hundreds of bottles of chocolate milk. Even when I started out there in 1936, Isaly's was about the only dairy that serviced the fair. When I went to work full time at the dairy, I had charge of the retail operation of the fair. The Isaly Company wholesale serviced all the other concessionaires at the fairgrounds. We had trucks. They weren't trucks like you have today. They had ice on them to keep the products cold, and dry ice for the ice cream. We probably had thirty or forty wholesale accounts out there. Originally, almost all the churches had stands out there. Carl took care of the wholesale end of it. We had quite an operation. We would have as many as eight or ten trucks out there, always running, going back and forth to the plant on Mahoning Avenue.

You didn't have the problems back when we started out with the unions saying the drivers would only work eight hours and they wouldn't deliver on Sunday and they wouldn't deliver on Wednesday. All you had to do was pick up the phone and call down to Mahoning Avenue and whatever you needed would be out there within an hour or an hour and a half. It was entirely different than what it is today.

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It got to be quite an operation out there. As the fair grew, the concessionaires involved naturally grew with it and it kept getting bigger and bigger. The tent was no longer satisfactory and the fair board gave permission to the Isaly Company--I feel partially in return for what the Isaly Company had done for the fair over the years--to put up a building to fair board specifications, with the stipulation that it would be just a year to year basis. If the fair board wanted the building removed, it would have to be removed.

At that time, Isaly's had 125 company stores and about 200 franchise stores. Homer Schaeffer on the fair board and Grace Williams sort of worked together on fair publicity. They would bring down to the Isaly Company a truckload of circulars and fliers. We would make some bulletins and posters for our stores and distribute them out through the area on our trucks. Five hundred or a thousand fliers would go to each store depending on the size of the store, and then the store manager would put these fliers in the bags. . .

S· Advertisement?

F· Advertising the fair--we put the signs in the window and so on. The fair and the people down at Isaly's worked together. When they had the horse show out at the fairgrounds, why, Mr. Paul, who was the general manager, was involved with the Youngstown Saddle and Bridle Club. . .

S· Is that Walter Paul?

F: Walter Paul. He would send the carpenters out to help fix the stalls and some of us would go out. Again, the fair has come a long, long way. They were struggling; too, in the years when they didn't have any money to speak of. The fair grew, and the Isaly Company grew and so on. It was a very good relationship. We would send trucks out when they would have the races and so on to help them water down the track because we had tanker trucks down there. It was a good relationship.

Isaly's built the building, the Chalet, as we call it now, in 1952. At that time, we took what used to be the stand there and moved it down to another location and then we had two stands at the fair. But actually, we had three. Cliff Moore who was the franchise supervisor, got the permission of the fair and had a little stand built. It was a cement block structure. It was right out in front of what is now the horticulture

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building. I guess that's where the flowers are now. So, that stand was there, and over to the northwest side of Mr. B's stand now, we took the tent. It was down there from 1952 to 1958. Then we decided that the temporary stand was just too much. It was too difficult. The fair was really getting bigger and it didn't look too nice. It was just a temporary lean-to. So we dismantled it and went with the one stand.

Our biggest success at the fair was probably the year when we made skyscraper ice cream cones. It was a real back-breaking job. But, it was very very difficult to control because we would take a semi-trailer truck out there loaded with ice cream, and the ice cream on the semi, of course, was very very hard. You had to keep it hard--keep it refrigerated. You would take the ice cream off of the trailer and put it into the cabinets and it was too hard to make cones out of it. If you would set it out, then the ice cream was soft all around the edges and you had a mess. So, we had skyscrapers up until 1965. The cost of labor, the cost of ice cream, and the mess it created caused the end of skyscraper cones. When we were making skycraper cones, we'd never get out of there until three or four o'clock in the morning because we had to take all the racks out of the stands, clean up all the ice cream that had fallen, and hose it all down, and put it all back together to be ready to open up at ten o'clock the next morning. So we just finally discontinued the cones.

Cones are coming back into prominence. You're aware of that? You see them all around town. But, I don't think the skyscraper cones will ever come back.

S: Is there a special way that they do that?

F: Would you like to see one?

S· Yes!

F: Okay. I've given a skyscraper scoop to the Arms Museum. They have the one up there that's the famous skyscraper cone scooper, and it's also called the rainbow cone spoon. These were made in a little machine shop in Masury. He's now out of business. The successors of the Isaly Company have tried to revive it and go back to it. But it is not as simple as it seems.

S· Kind of difficult to. . .

F: It takes a little bit of training, and right here, if

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you make enough of these, you will soon get a very hard place right in that hand. The other thing about it is--remember, when we were making these, the clerks were getting paid about 25 cents an hour when they started--the price of ice cream, the cost was very, very low. If you dropped a cone on the floor, it really didn't matter that much. It just made a mess. To make skyscraper cones properly, the ice cream has to be fairly hard or it won't stand up. Today people seem to want their ice cream fairly soft. And with the price of labor you have to be able to scoop it quickly, and you can't do it with firm ice cream. And the other thing is that, there's no way that you can control the portions. A strong fellow will make bigger cones. A small girl will make smaller cones and the customers are unhappy they're not uniform.

S: They were good.

F: They were a nickel.

S: Is this patented?

F: It was patented, yes. These were developed not overnight. But, as I understand it, the Isaly family that started the company, were making cones and they weren't going fast enough with the dippers and they were breaking so somebody just grabbed a big serving spoon like they have in restaurants. That thing worked right, so they pounded it a little bit, this way and that, and it evolved from a kitchen serving spoon, really, and this is what they came up with. It does work and it makes a beautiful cone if the ice cream is right. And the other thing, when these were used, primarily the ice cream was in five gallon galvanized metal ice cream cans which are now outlawed.

S: Germs?

F: You could use stainless steel cans. Of course, the cost would be prohibitive, and also they'd have to be returned to the dairy later. So all the ice cream that comes out of the dairies today, comes out in the paper cans. If you go down the side of this with this pointed spoon, you just punch a hole in it.

S: What do you think they did with all their cans?

F: Well, there's some of them around. You go around to the flea markets, you'll find them.

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S: Really?

F: Oh yes. All the collectors are collecting old Isaly bottles and Isaly cans, Isaly memorabilia, Isaly this or that.

S: I'll bet you won't find this anywhere though.

F: No. These are quite a collector's item.

S· Who was Isaly's big competition then, McAllister's?

F: No, the truth is, there wasn't any. There wasn't any competition in ice cream cones. That's why they prospered and spread so rapidly. Basically, the reason there wasn't any competition was that it was very difficult to keep the ice cream under control. Ice cream cabinets were very expensive. Isaly's actually built their serving cabinets. They made them. They had a big carpenter shop and their own refrigeration department. It was the same way with the trucks.

Well, you know about the so-called chains--A&P and Century Foods? None of them had ice cream in their stores. None of them. They sold primarily staples . . . potatoes. They didn't have fresh meat either. You had the butcher shop. They sold the can goods, and the potatoes, and very little produce even. But you had a produce market and you had a butcher shop. You had a bakery shop and you had a dairy store--Isaly's.

S: Remember the Ohls Store?

F: Oh, sure.

S: Did they carry any ice cream?

F· No, they were primarily produce, canned goods, and baked goods--Ohls Market. They had meats, too. But ice cream cones--you had to go to Isaly's. Milkshakes --you had to go to Isaly's. And we were the only ones open at night and we were the only ones open on Sunday.

S: Yes, I remember that. What happened to the "big" Isaly Company?

F: That's a long, long story. There were many factors involved. There were many, many factors. I could write a book. But, it's a long, long story.

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S· The ones that are left around here are privately owned?

F· They are privately owned. Supposedly they have a franchise, but really they don't have a franchise. They just buy wholesale from Isaly suppliers.

S: Do they come out of Pittsburgh now?

F: Well, not even in Pittsburgh anymore. It's been shuffled and re-shuffled so many times. Custom Management is what's left of it. Right now, this month, Taylor Ice Cream Company is packaging the ice cream for them. Brookfield is packaging the milk and the bottled products. They distribute up here.

S: Who did you say was doing the ice cream?

F· Taylor, out of Uniontown, Pennsylvania.

S· They had the best ice cream in the world.

F: Well, it's a long story. Basically and primarily what happened is the same thing that happened to Sheet and Tube and to Century Foods--you remember Century Food--and a lot of other companies. It filtered down to the third generation. And the third generation, basically, thought they could--and maybe if I were in the third generation, I would have felt the same way--if they took their stock and invested it in IBM and Gulf Oil they could get a lot more return than what they could from Isaly's. They knew what their stock was worth and what they could get for it.

S: Yes, that happens so many times.

F: Well, so that's basically what they decided to do. And they did it. Like I said, there were many factors. Marketing in ice cream has all changed. Everybody's selling ice cream today--everybody. Supermarkets can kill you just like they've done to the bakery and just like they've done to the butchershop. So a lot of factors. . . And also the hours. . . everybody's open at night; some are open 24 hours. And the location--Isaly's had a lot of downtown locations. At one time we had three downtown stores.

S: That big building there on Mahoning, that was the main plant. How many floors are in there?

F· Five. Up on the top floor was a big auditorium where they used to hold banquets.

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S· Really? I didn't know that!

F: Oh yes. You remember Susy Side-Saddle? Marge Mariner? They used to have their programs up there.

S: Oh yes! I remember Susy Side-Saddle.

F: They used to have their programs up there in the auditorium.

F: We did a lot of tours: school field trips, scouts, and others, especially in the spring. They came to Isaly's and Ward's Bakery.

S: Ward's?

F: Well, it's not a bakery anymore. The building is still there. We were the only, you might say, complete dairy for miles around. We made cheese. We made butter. And we made ice cream.

S: All in the main plant?

F: Yes, all down there--everything, complete. So, in the spring, we had a tour system built up. We collaborated with the bakery. Wilbur Wright was the fellow over there. He and I sort of coordinated it. We would decide what days we would book the tours and whether he would take a morning or I'd take morning or afternoon and how the schedules worked. The kids would come in by the bus loads from miles around. We would take them through either the bakery in the morning or the dairy in the morning, and they would have lunch for which the bakery would provide cupcakes. I think we charged them a quarter. They would get a bowl of soup, a sandwich, a bottle of milk, a cupcake, and an ice cream cone, of course, for a quarter. They used to come from miles around to go through the tour. And of course, we would give them the spiel about how wonderful the ice cream was and the bakery would give the spiel about their bread. On some days we would have as many as seven, eight, or ten groups of children going through--just one right after the other, right through the plant.

S· Did you get your milk mostly from right around here?

F: Yes.

S: Then that really helped the farmers' economy that were

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farming right around here, too.

F: We had a farm of our own, too, out on Mahoning Avenue. We bought our own Isaly farm.

S: Yes, the Isaly Farm. But you bought milk from other. . .

F: Oh yes, that was just, more or less, an experimental farm. But it was out there. We owned New Wilmington Cheese over at New Wilmington. That was ours. Over at Sandusky, we had a cheese plant. In Marshalltown, Iowa, we had a butter plant. And there were actually five dairies. We had a dairy in Pittsburgh on the Boulevard of the Allies. It was the last one to go. There was a plant in Columbus and one in Marion and one in Mansfield. There were five plants because, originally, there were five brothers. Each one got a nice dairy plant from the old folks. (Laughter)

S· Who started it?

F: I'll give you a little book on the history of the Isaly Company. You can take it with you.

S: Okay.

F: Here's one of the letterheads from our glory days.

Well, getting back to the Canfield fair. In 1965, I said we quit making skyscraper cones for many reasons. About that time the Isaly Company started its phasing out and its decline--the reorganization and this, that, and the other thing. It's a long story that I won't go into. In 1969 we were closing out the Youngstown plant and I got a job phasing out the equipment and leasing the stores that they had around here that they couldn't sell. When they were doing this, they stumbled across the fact that they owned a building out at the Canfield fairgrounds. They were going to tear it down and level if off, but I said, "Wait a minute. Before you do that, let me go out to the fair board and see how they would feel about my buying it from you."

So I talked to the fair board and they had a meeting and said that as far as they could see, for the immediate future, I could go ahead and buy it and run it and they had no objection at that time. But, of course, the understanding was that, as always, if they decided that they wanted it removed, that they wanted something else there, why, it would have to go.

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I said, "Hey, I understand. That's your prerogative." I also explained to them that if they were unhappy with the way we were running it or the way the thing looked, to tell me and we would try to correct it. So we, myself and my wife, and the kids, have had the stand at the fair since 1970. We've operated it pretty much the way the Isaly Company ran it, except it's been run as a family operation. As far as I know, it has not met disapproval of the fair board and I've tried to cooperate with them. The members of the family who are residents of Mahoning County pay their membership dues and are members of the Agricultural Society. I was out yesterday and voted for the fair board members. We try to keep it looking respectable.

S: Business is pretty good?

F: Our business out there has not changed much. We've stayed away from the pizzas and elephant ears and all the exotic foods and we've stayed basically what we were. That's primarily an ice cream and cold drink stand. We have a few sandwiches--very few. If the weather is warm and dry, we do very well. If the weather is cold and rainy, we just have a good time talking to our friends and walking around under the umbrellas. Our business at the Canfield Fair depends entirely on the weather. We're at the mercy of God and the elements. But, one nice thing about it, I don't have a quota to make anymore. I don't have anybody complaining if we don't turn a profit. The kids who work for me all understand the situation. If we do well, they always get some extra money out of it. If we don't do well, they get their regular pay, but they don't get any bonus.

S: How many do you usually have?

F: Well, you can believe me or not, but we usually have a total of around forty or fifty people. Usually we don't have more than five new ones every year. So I feel the ones that work for us seem to like it. They like the atmosphere and evidently their pay satisfies them. They always come back. I have people now who were children of people who worked there before. My grandchildren are working there now. It's the third generation. If the weather is hot and dry, they do work fairly hard. We don't work them long hours. That's what creates a little bit of a problem in the matter of providing tickets for them and getting them in and out and so on. But I feel that they should have some time to enjoy the

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fair.

Usually they work a morning schedule that takes them in about ten and they're through about four. The evening shift starts about four and works until ten or eleven, depending on the weather. No matter how hard it rains, we don't send them home. I had enough of that when I was working for other people, and I don't believe in it. If the kids come out there, or the parents get them out there and spend the money for transportation, I keep them. I will ask if there's somebody who wants to go home. If they want to go home, they can.

We are always particular with the girls. Nobody ever leaves there at night unless they have a way to get home. I have had some parents call me up and want to know why their son or daughter didn't get home from the fair until three or four o'clock in the morning. I say, "No way. No way." The girls never stayed past eleven o'clock--never. They were always asked if they had a way to get home. It's a long story. I would say, "I hate to tattle on your son, but you ask him why he didn't get home. He wasn't working for me."

Basically the parents seem to be satisfied to let their children work there because they come back year after year. I always tell them--I put a little note in when they get their check after the fair is over--that if they're interested in working at the fair the following year they can call me in July. Now they call either me or my daughter since my wife isn't here anymore, and tell us if they want to work. We do not call them. If they want to work, they call us because long about August or September we just have dozens of kids calling, wanting to work. As soon as we get the quota filled up, why, that's it.

S· It fills up quickly then?

F: Yes. Since they have changed the school schedule--I say it's because of the computer ratings and football playoffs, but the coaches don't like it when I say that. But, it's true, they changed the school calendar. They start school earlier, and they start football earlier. So we've had a little bit of a problem getting boys. But, we've never had a problem with getting girls to work. The kids understand and so do we, if there's a majorette or somebody that toots the horn. My grandson toots in the Boardman band. They get a lot from their activities and all we ask them is that they tell us

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ahead of time, and we shuffle the schedule. It's like I told my wife. I said. "For five days we can be flexible and adjust the work around it for the kids." If any of them get a full time job that comes along during that time, I tell them, "Well, take it because this is only five days and it's over." We have opened the stand up for business prior to the fair for two or three reasons. One is, we have to be out there making sure the equipement is working, and finishing up painting, et cetera.

S: Do you leave your equipment out there always?

F: The major equipment stays out there: the ice cream cabinets, the milk coolers, and the beverage coolers. Again, this is for many reasons. I don't have any place to store them and you have to take the door off to get them out of there. They're that big. The small equipment, like the milkshake machines and the coffee urns and the . . . small equipment, we take out. Most of it is stored out in the garage or down in the cellar. Everybody asks me why I don't sell the house and get an apartment now that my wife is gone. What am I going to do with all the Canfield Fair equipment? What am I going to do with all my accounting equipment?

The other reason we open up ahead of time is to provide a convenience for the people that are working out there. They have someplace where they can go and grab a sandwich and a milkshake and they don't have to run into town. And then, again, our new people who are working for the first time, we usually schedule for at least one day before the fair opens. That's their training day. And again, the way the deliveries are anymore--you don't tell people when you want something to be delivered; you ask them when they will deliver it to you. You have to be there to get that delivery. It might be four days before the fair opens. Since you have to be there to get the pop or the syrup, or even the ice cream, you might as well be open.

So, usually we're open. Again, it depends on the weather and how much work we have to do. We're open for a few hours on that Saturday and Sunday before the fair even starts. Contrary to what people may think, it's not a five day operation. I'm working on the paper work probably a month to two months before the fair starts, figuring on how much of this we sold last year. You try to be fair with the suppliers. While some of them will take back what you have left, many of them will not. You can't blame them for that. As the number of the Isaly stores

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in the area decreases I have fewer places--fewer of my old friends--that I can go to and say, "Hey, how about taking these three cans of chocolate syrup or five cases of Coke or five cases of root beer?" So you have to be careful when you're ordering, and you have to start lighting candles and going to church extra times and praying for good weather. (Laughter)

S· Anything else you would like to add?

F: I don't know whether I've bored you or. . .

S· Oh, no!

F· I don't know whether I mentioned it or not, but my job when I did go down to Isaly's, I was in charge of their accounting department. My friends always knew I was busy during the Canfield Fair. Walter Paulo was always fair with me and gave me some extra money for going out there for them. I guess Isaly's did it primarily as an advertising medium. That was one reason that they wanted the skyscraper cones made. It was only when it became such a problem that they discontinued.

Up to the present we have still been able--though it hasn't been easy--to have the Isaly Klondike at the Canfield Fair. The other ice cream products that we have there are not Isaly products. It is not generally known to most people that the Isaly Klondike is actually the only ice cream item that is still, basically, made by the remnants of the Isaly Company. And, whether you know it or not, Klondikes are made in Clearwater, Florida. (Laughter) Can you believe that? H. William Isaly, he is a third generation Isaly, is in charge of the little Klondike plant at Clearwater, Florida. He still makes what they call the plain vanilla Klondike. And he makes the crispy Klondike, and they now make a chocolate Klondike with chocolate ice cream. They are distributing them nationwide. You can buy an Isaly Klondike out in California. My son-in-law has been up to the Cleveland Clinic for a kidney transplant and he could buy Klondikes there. I took my grandson to a minor league baseball game at Reading, Pennsylvania. The seventh inning I gave him some money and told him to go down to the refreshment stand and bring us a snack. He came back with five Klondikes. It's amazing.

Everything changes. Thankfully, the Canfield Fair has really not changed that much, except it has grown by leaps and bounds. Our location, while it is a prime location strictly in a dollars and cents point of view, is not the prime location it once was.

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The fair is moving south. Some of our best customers were the people who were in the cow barns up there where the milk parlor was. They've all moved south. The 4-H generation has gradually taken over that area, and the 4-H has a beautiful new concession and refreshment stand. More power to them! That money goes to help the 4-H projects and we don't begrudge it one bit, although, it's cut our volume considerably. But that's perfectly all right. Like I tell everybody anymore, fortunately, all you want to do is not go in the red. We don't have to make any money anymore. It's become sort of a tradition with the family. My kids come from Pennsylvania. They used to come for the whole week on Monday, but since my daughter, Nancy, had a part-time job at the community college, they come the Wednesday before the fair and stay. My son-in-law takes some days off from work and he stays and helps me clean up. She usually takes off because she has to teach. My grandchildren, Jeff and Nancy, have been out there since they were four years old emptying the trash buckets. My daughter, Phyllis and Nancy, took over for their mother in what we call the "pig pen". That's where you make the milkshakes. They ran the pig pen for years, and now they've outgrown it. It's a family tradition.

S: Anything else?

F: I think that's about it. If you have any questions just ask.

The fair board used to put these out for years. (Shows pamphlets) This was after the company went out of business. This just shows how many Isaly stores, even after the Isaly Company went out of business here, are still left around here. But they're all gone now except, well, Mathews Road is still there, South Avenue, and Poland. But they've been sold. Each of them have been sold about four times.

S: Okay, thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW