

Knoebels in the 1930's-1940's

Knoebels in the 1930's-1940's as told to Patchwork by Mary Isabel Phillips

Interviewed by Nathan Lee and Peter Sheehe in spring of 2003

Mary Isabel Phillips was born on September 24, 1914 in Montour County. She is now eighty-eight years old and a retired hairdresser living in Danville. Her first marriage was to Fred Teishlin who passed away in 1982. After his demise, she was widowed for eight years until she remarried to Edward Phillips in 1990. From both of these marriages she has five children

Mrs. Phillips knows about Knoebels in the 1930's to the 1940's because she visited the amusement park numerous times as a child and adult.

PHILLIPS: I grew up on a farm near a little town by the name of Jersey Town. Our Sunday school class drove over, I think there were two cars of us, to Knoebels in 1930 and at that time they had the swimming pool there and they charged twenty-five cents to swim, but I didn't, I never learned to swim. But I did ride the carousel, we called it the merry-go-round, they call it the carousel now and that was there at that time and, of course, the swimming pool was too. They had the brass rings. We would ride around; you could reach up and if you could grab a brass ring then you'd get a free ride. I wasn't lucky, I didn't get a free ride but some of them did, from my Sunday school class. So then in 1934, I was there again and the roller-skating rink was there. I had never been roller-skating, but there were two guys on each side of me that would help me up when I had the roller-skates on and we enjoyed that. The restaurant was built in 1926 but at that time there were also concession stands there. They sold hotdogs, hamburgers, and ice cream. You could get a hotdog for fifteen cents, a hamburger for fifteen cents, and ice cream for ten cents. In the mid forties I was there and rode the bumper cars and that was fun. On June 29, 1948, I attended the Magee Carpet Company picnic there. Somehow Magee had a deal with the park where he would pay for food for his employees and families. They did that back in 1948. And in the book that I read, it said that they sponsored about three thousand children with free rides and souvenirs and also that they supplied them with free food. We also rode the nickel plate train, it was called, in 1947. It was started then but we took a ride on the train

PATCHWORK: What was your favorite part of Knoebels back in the 1930s-1940s?

PHILLIPS: The merry-go-round.

PATCHWORK: What would you usually do when you went to Knoebels back in the 1930s-1940s?

PHILLIPS: Well, we would have a picnic there and we would ride on those bumper scooters and rollerskate.

PATCHWORK: About how many rides were there back in the 1930s1940s?

PHILLIPS: Well I think there were only three or four at the most.

PATCHWORK: Did you like Knoebels; did you think it was fun and worthwhile going there when you went?

PHILLIPS: Oh, yes.

PATCHWORK: How big of a deal was it going to Knoebels? Was it a big deal to go there or was it just an every day park?

PHILLIPS: Well, it was a special treat to be able to go to Knoebels.

PATCHWORK: Typically, what were the visitors like at Knoebels, what people usually went there?

PHILLIPS: Mostly middle class people, I would say. Anyone could go there if they wanted to.

PATCHWORK: How expensive was a trip to Knoebels back in the 1930s-1940s?

PHILLIPS: There was no admission price and there still isn't. And like I said hotdogs were fifteen cents, you could get an ice-cream cone for ten and it wasn't very expensive of course, but then, you young people don't remember that. People didn't have the money that they have now. They didn't earn that much money.

PATCHWORK: Was Knobel's usually crowded when you were there?

PHILLIPS: Not like it is now.

PATCHWORK: If you had to guess, how many people were there at your picnic, how many people do you think would be there?

PHILLIPS: You mean in the whole park, see then the picnic tables were down in, they didn't have them scattered around like they do now, they didn't have coverings for them either. They were just a few picnic tables and then I grew up in the Great Depression. People couldn't afford to go anywhere much. I remember we never went to a restaurant to eat, we just ate at home. We didn't go out to eat, and another thing was World War II. There was a rationing on gasoline and then of course they couldn't go to parks but that park hung in there and a lot of the other parks disbanded. They just couldn't afford to stay open but Knoebels did.

PATCHWORK: When you went to Knoebels typically, would you go with a date or with your family?

PHILLIPS: Usually I went with a date or a group of young people. My family didn't. I don't remember going there with my family.

PATCHWORK: Besides Knoebels what other things did kids do back then in the 30's and 40's? Besides Knoebels what would you do for fun or for recreation?

Phillips: Our recreation was, they had baseball games usually on a Saturday afternoon or sometimes on a Sunday afternoon. The kids who could swim did go swimming; I never learned to swim so that was out for me. Our recreation was usually centered around the church. We had what you call now a youth group. We met once a month at the various homes and had our meetings and we sang hymns and did things like that.