



Rotary Notary

Week of July 31st

At Rotary Today:

Special Guests:

Randy Aronis

Member Birthdays:

Randy Summers - 7/31

Brant Westbrook - 8/7

Rotary Anniversaries:

Susan Addington - **13 yrs**

Mylene Atnip - **6 yrs**

Bobbi Hansen - **27yrs**

Wedding Anniversaries:

Matt and Julia List

August 1st - 28 yrs

Quote of the Year:

"Let's accomplish great things together"

-Anne Schneider

Did You Ever Wonder?

Our speaker this week gave us a glimpse into the life of Wichita in the early part of the 20th Century. Sara Harmon, creator of the documentary film "For Your Amusement: The Wonderland Park on Ackerman Island" was our speaker. Sara is a native of Indiana and came to Wichita in 2011. She was a budding film maker and chose to investigate Wichita's first amusement park – Wonderland.



After conceptualizing her vision, the Oral Roberts University graduate won a \$350.00 grant from ICT Soup for seed money to begin this project. Sara did all the filming, editing, interviewing and choosing the background music to make the film possible. To her credit, the film already has been seen at several film festivals and private screenings, including winning an award at the film festival in Winfield.

"Coney Island for Wichita" was one newspaper headline during the early days of development of this park. Wonderland was placed on an island in the middle of the Arkansas River, located about the current site of Exploration Place. Ackerman Island (owned by Joseph Ackerman) was man-made and sold to Wonderland Amusement Park for purpose of being the home of an outdoor amusement fun for the citizens of Wichita. Wonderland opened in 1905 with one of the nation's largest roller-coaster. Additionally, the park had other rides, games, food, a music hall, a green space for shade and even a baseball field in which college and professional games were played; all the amenities people of the early 20th century wanted. The first year, the Coney Island of Wichita – Wonderland hosted 200,000 people.

However, it wasn't long before trouble began for the owners of the park. Arrests and lawsuits arose from the then current "Blue Laws"; laws where stores were closed, and work was not allowed on Sundays. Add to that issue, the rise of cars in society, motion pictures in Wichita and World War I, all contributed to the ultimate demise of Wonderland in 1918.



On The Horizon: Our next Fireside meeting will be at Everygy (formerly Westar Energy) on August 21st. The sign up sheet is on Kim's table. You MUST sign up to attend. Ya know, so you have food.

NO MEETING SEPT. 4TH
Labor Day Week

August Mixer:
The next Rotary mixer will be on Tuesday, August 20th, at Deano's Grill and Tapworks on 21st and Webb. It's at 5:15pm or whenever you can get there!

Club Directory: The Club Directories are done! They are \$10 a piece. Contact Kim to get yours.

Next Week:
Rick Bumgardner from Roxy's Downtown

...The Rest of the Story

After the closing of Wonderland, the island was the home of the Interurban Car Company a streetcar manufacturing company. But by the early 1930's concern for flooding in downtown Wichita, the WPA removed all the dirt of the island, moving the dirt to the west bank of the river and thereby closing the west channel and widening the east, thus becoming the river we know today. The baseball stadium moved to the current site of the new stadium (formally Lawrence Dumont Stadium). No signs (and only a very few pictures) of Ackerman Island or Wonderland exists. However, Sara is on the search for historical artifacts and photos. She has been told that some of the amusements from Wonderland may have been moved to El Dorado's amusement park and is her focus of a follow-up documentary to be filmed and released next year during Wichita's sesquicentennial.

If you missed this program, you missed one of the best. Several people commented on how much they enjoyed learning more about Wichita and our city's history.

- by **Fred Heismeyer**

1906 - 1918
Wonderland Park

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to support the next phase:
The Wonderland Project