

Chapter 8

Kiddie Kingdom's Success

Because we were still running the carnivals, we didn't open the kiddie park until 3:00 in the afternoon, and it was closed on Monday because that day was devoted to moving the carnival rides from one location to another.

In spite of this, Kiddie Kingdom was an instant success. The reason it was an instant success was our marketing campaign. John Sr. had a price for the rides in mind from the time the first shovel was put into the ground.

As the commercials said, "Any ride a quarter, six for a dollar". What made the Kingdom unique was that when you bought six tickets, you got six rides. The competition was charging 2, 3 and even 4 tickets to ride the big rides. Here a ticket got you a ride on anything in the park.

Originally, there were only 12 rides and a food pavilion. What was unique was that the food pavilion was round with the service area in the center and tables under cover around its perimeter. The parents loved this. They could sit in the shade under the food pavilion, and move around the pavilion as the kids moved from ride to ride. Then they could all gather under the food pavilion for a snack before they went home.

But wait a minute, where are the games, shops and the large assortment of food to choose from?

The original zoning didn't allow any of these things. But now, with the new zoning, we were allowed to add all of these things.

In the food category, an Ice Cream Shoppe, Pizza Parlor, a Toy Shop and Candy Shop were added. The number of rides more than doubled, reaching 25 in all including a spook house that the kids rode through. To complete the package, games were added.

As in the carnival days, the food and games were run by Nick and John Jr.'s families. Sandy and Dolores ran the shops (ice cream, candy, pizza etc.), Nick's kids (Mary, Jane and Linda) ran a "prize every time" fish pond, remote control cars, Diggers (cranes) and remote control boats. John Jr.'s kids (John III, Randy and Bryce) ran SkeeBall, Tic Tac Toe Game, Coke Game, and a Ball Toss Game where you knock down the cats.

When the Kingdom opened at 3:00, the line extended from the Kingdom's Entrance past the Castle's entrance. As the carnival business was winding down, we gradually changed the opening time for the Kingdom. We tried 2:00, and there was still a line. We tried 1:00 and the line persisted. When opening time finally

reached noon, the line waiting at the door was reasonable. So that became the regular opening time.

The “Six rides for a dollar” campaign was tremendously successful, but we didn’t stop there. Next we introduced another marketing idea that was unique to Kiddie Kingdom. It was called “Kiddie Kingdom Klub”, and it was free. Once a month, the Klub members were sent a newsletter. Kids love to get mail, so the newsletter was mailed directly to them, not to Mom or Dad. They were addressed to the kids.

The newsletter consisted of games, puzzles, articles that interested kids, but most important of all, it contained coupons for either the Castle of Toys or Kiddie Kingdom. The Castle coupons gave club members discounts on the latest or most popular toys. The Kingdom coupons offered 10 rides for a dollar instead of six. There were even coupons for the Ice Cream Shoppe, Pizza Parlor, Toy Shop and Candy Shop.

Ultimately, the Kiddie Kingdom Klub had over 10,000 members, and the coupon redemption rate which is usually less than 1%, reached an amazing 10%.

The “club” idea was so well received that it was expended to the Castle. There we offered the “Royal Modeler’s Club” that catered to train, road racing and model building connoisseurs. There were meetings where they were introduced to the latest in trains, road racing, and other new and different hobby items. During each meeting the members were given special discounts and free refreshments.

Another club was the Royal Doll Club. Once each year we organized a doll show where doll dealers and collectors set up in the castle to display their goods. The club members were invited to attend at no charge and see what the collectors had to offer. They also received advance notice about upcoming sales.

The Royal Inventor’s Club was indeed unique. Members were invited to bring their ideas to the Castle and speak with a professional toy inventor about their idea. They would be given free advice about their idea, and how to market their idea.

Another marketing plan involved a “Birthday Party Plan”. This plan has been copied by every venue catering to kids. Other amusement parks, pizza places and even bowling alleys now have kids birthday parties, but ours was unique. For \$2.00 each child received a hot dog, drink, dessert, a Kiddie Kingdom Crown and 10 rides. No other operation could compete with that price.

Also, for two summers, we brought in a circus for a week. We promoted it in conjunction with the Kingdom, offering a Kingdom/Circus promotion. The Circus sold out all of its performances. The Ring Master said it was the best week they ever had.

Why was Kiddie Kingdom and the Castle of Toys such a tremendous success?

It was successful because the customer came first, and were offered many things that other stores or amusement parks wouldn't even consider.

The customers and employees alike were treated with respect. The Castle and Kiddie Kingdom were clean, neat and run never losing sight of the fact that the customers need and desires were important. The Dispensa family treated the customers like they were family too.

This philosophy served the family well for over 65 years.