

Chapter 9

So, What Happened?

It's easy to say, "All good things come to an end". But why, there must be a reason.

By this time two of the original three brothers (Joe and Paul) retired. That left John Sr., Nick, John Jr., their wives Sandy and Dolores, and their six kids Mary, John III, Jane, Randy, Bryce and Linda. That's quite a crew, and surely enough to operate the business, even if it were to continue expanding.

So, what happened? Actually, it's very simple. The business was located on a prime piece of property. When it was purchased in 1951 it was farmland. There were two gas stations, Custard Castle (Dairy Queen) and the Sky-High Drive-In in the area. Everything else was farmland.

Ultimately Oakbrook Center and other stores too numerous to mention opened in the area. Drury Lane Theatre, The Oak Brook Club condominiums and many many office buildings followed. As a result the property became very valuable.

So, the property that was purchased for \$1,000 per acre over thirty years earlier was suddenly worth a lot of money.

It soon became apparent that the property was worth more than the business that was on it, and when good businessmen hear opportunity knocking, they answer the door. The decision to close had to be made.

As this is being written, another area landmark, Kiddyland is in the process of closing. They likewise knew how to market their attraction, and began talking about the closing of Kiddyland early in the final season. This brought out hoards of people that probably hadn't been to the park for years, just to get one last ride before it closed.

People often ask why we didn't do the same thing, it likewise would have resulted in additional revenue from the nostalgia crowd.

The closing of Kiddie Kingdom was kept secret till the very last minute because we had a warehouse bulging with toys for the Christmas season. We were concerned that if we made a big thing of Kiddie Kingdom's closing, people would assume that the Castle was closing as well, and we would be stuck with a warehouse full of toys.

After Kiddie Kingdom closed at the end of the season, the rides and games were sold at auction bringing top dollar because of their excellent condition. After Christmas, the unsold toys were sold to our regular customers at tremendous discounts, and everything else was sold to local businesses that needed shelving,

office equipment, and electrical fixtures. Nothing went to waste.

Fortunately, the fourth generation Dispensa's, Nick and John Jr.'s kids, were young enough so that they could each set out on careers of their own. Nick continues to do public service work, paying the community back for their loyal support over the past 65 years. Sadly, John Jr. succumbed to cancer in 1986 shortly after the business was sold.