

Oral History Interview

with

**Faye Marie Loter, William Loter,
Terry Loter Parkinson,
Moira Loter Curiel & Alfredo Curiel**

Interview Conducted by
Juliana Nykolaiszyn and Tanya Finchum
June 14, 2011

The “Big Top” Show Goes On:
An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent

Oklahoma Oral History Research Program
Edmon Low Library • Oklahoma State University
© 2011

The “Big Top” Show Goes On

An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent

Interview History

Interviewers: Juliana Nykolaiszyn, Tanya Finchum

Transcriber: Ashley Sarchet

Editors: Miranda Mackey, Tanya Finchum

The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Project Detail

The “Big Top” Show Goes On: An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent aims to preserve the voices and experiences of those involved with the work culture associated with Hugo, Oklahoma’s tent circus tradition.

Funding for this project was made possible by the Library of Congress American Folklife Center as part of a 2011 Archie Green Fellowship awarded to researchers Tanya Finchum and Juliana Nykolaiszyn with the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at the OSU Library.

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on May 6, 2011.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Faye Marie Loter, William Loter, Terry Loter-Parkinson, Alfredo Curiel, and Moira Curiel is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on June 14, 2011.

The “Big Top” Show Goes On

An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent

About Faye Marie Loter...

Faye Marie Loter was born in San Antonio, Texas in 1941 to circus performers George and Francis Loter. Francis was a snake charmer, cook, as well as other things, and George was a roper, knife thrower, and jack-of-all-trades. From an early age, Faye also worked in the circus. An early memory is assisting her father with this knife throwing act. At the age of eight she stood on the stage and advertised sideshow attractions, did cartooning, and helped her grandmother with an act.

Faye has worked with various circuses such as the Stevens Brothers Circus, the Tex Carson Show, and the Carson and Barnes Circus. She also had the privilege of working for D.R. Miller, long time owner of the Carson and Barnes Circus. She was a parts buyer, a ‘fixer’, a purchasing agent, and even helped with recovering some runaway elephants.

Faye and her husband, Gus, are retired and call Hugo, Oklahoma home.

About William Loter...

William “Billy” Earl Loter was born in Hugo, Oklahoma in 1957 to circus performers George and Francis Loter. Francis was a snake charmer, cook, as well as other things, and George was a roper, knife thrower, and jack-of-all-trades. From an early age, Billy also worked in the circus. He started out clowning and added unicycle, trampoline acts, fire-eating, juggling, and wire walking. He has also worked concessions and for a while ran Benevolent Bill’s Bargain Bonus Basement Bonanza.

The Loter family started on the Tex Carson show which later became the Carson and Barnes Circus. Billy has also worked for the Kelly Miller Circus and according to him, “about every other show in the world.” Additionally, he worked at the Texas State Fair for twenty-nine years and at many carnivals around the United States.

Billy continues to call Hugo, Oklahoma home.

The “Big Top” Show Goes On

An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent

About Terry Loter Parkinson...

Terry Loter Parkinson was born in Poteau, Oklahoma in 1955 to circus performers George and Francis Loter. Francis was a snake charmer, cook, as well as other things, and George was a roper, knife thrower, and jack-of-all-trades. One of Terry's first roles in the circus was to ride on her father's shoulders as he performed the unicycle and the rolling globe acts. She also learned a plate spinning act and later worked with dogs, ponies and monkeys.

The Loter family started on the Tex Carson show which later became the Carson and Barnes Circus. From about the age of nine until the age of fourteen, Terry recalls working on a small, one-ring, family-owned mud show. As Terry grew older she decided the circus life was not the life or career she wanted. She married and left the circus, transferring her skills to raising and selling exotic animals.

For a time, Terry lived in Texas but after re-marrying, she returned to Hugo, Oklahoma.

About Moira Loter Curiel...

Moira Loter Curiel was born in Sand Springs, Oklahoma in 1959 and is the daughter of Faye Marie Loter and the granddaughter of Francis and George Loter. She is the eighth generation of circus performers in her family and spent many years working in the circus. She has performed on the trapeze doing such things as the swinging ladder and aerial ballets. Also, Moira has performed with elephants, horses, and assisted in knife throwing acts.

Moira worked on the Carson and Barnes Circus for fourteen years. She has worked for the Shrine Circus as well as others. She and Alfredo Curiel have three children, and she calls Hugo, Oklahoma home.

About Alfredo Curiel...

Alfredo Curiel was born in Mexico in 1949 to a circus family. His grandfather was a clown, and his grandmother wanted him to become a musical clown. His parents and siblings performed trapeze and high wire acts. In 1958 or 1959 he and his siblings took out their first show and until about 1981 had one of the largest circuses in Mexico.

Alfredo learned various aspects of circus work from animal trainer to tent master to whatever needed to be done. For a short period he owned and managed his own circus, but Hurricane Katrina put an end to it. After twenty years on the trapeze he retired and now teaches the next generation of circus performers. He and Moira Loter Curiel have three children and he resides in Hugo, Oklahoma.

The “Big Top” Show Goes On

An Oral History of Occupations Inside and Outside the Canvas Circus Tent

**Faye Marie Loter, William Loter
Terry Loter Parkinson, Moira Loter Curiel
& Alfredo Curiel**

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn
& Tanya Finchum
June 14, 2011
Hugo, Oklahoma

Nykolaiszyn *My name is Juliana Nykolaszyn. Also with me is Tanya Finchum, and we're with the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at the OSU Library. Today is Tuesday, June 14, 2011, and we're in Hugo, Oklahoma interviewing several people about the circus. We have Faye Marie Loter with us, Terry Loter, Moira Curiel, did I pronounce that right?*

M. Curiel Curiel.

Nykolaiszyn *Curiel. And Billy Loter. And are you joining us, sir? [Speaking to Alfredo Curiel]*

A. Curiel Well, yes. (Laughter)

M. Curiel You'd better get a chair.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, you're welcome to join us. We're going to go around the room and find out where everybody was born. We're going to have you tell us your name and where you're from, originally.*

M. Curiel Where we were born or where we're from?

Nykolaiszyn *Both, because I'm sure it's two different places.*

F. Loter Right.

Nykolaiszyn *We're going to begin with you, Faye.*

F. Loter I was born in San Antonio in 1941.

Nykolaiszyn *And who were your parents?*

F. Loter My parents were Francis Loter and George Dixon Loter. They were in winter quarters in San Antonio when I was born. I was born right straight across the street from the Alamo. All our kids, mostly, were born in the wintertime, because we're going out on the road in the summer. So when the show went out again, well, you went out with the show as a baby, and that's the way we lived. The kids just drug along and did whatever.

Nykolaiszyn *And what did your parents do in the circus?*

F. Loter They were performers, and they did a little bit of everything, really. My mother was a snake charmer and a cook, and my dad was...

M. Curiel He did roping.

F. Loter My dad was a jack-of-all-trades, master of none. (Laughs) We liked to tease him about that, but he did everything, too.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay.*

F. Loter And my grandparents, on his side of the family, did a lot in the circus. My grandfather was crippled. He had a hunchback, and my grandmother learned to play the organ in case something happened to him and she could continue supporting herself, which she did.

Finchum *And what were their names?*

F. Loter Happy, which was really William Earl Loter I, which my brother's name is William Earl Loter II, and my grandmother was Mabel Marie—Mabel what, Palmer? Mabel Palmer Loter. She always used Marie because she hated Mabel.

Parkinson That's news to me. I always considered her Grandma Marie. (Laughs)

F. Loter Well, she hated the name Mabel and she wouldn't use it.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, you were born in Texas, but did you grow up in Texas or everywhere?*

F. Loter No, everywhere.

Nykolaiszyn *Everywhere.*

- F. Loter** Wherever they landed for the winter. The reason we were in San Antonio is because it was warmer. Then I don't know where all we did winter after that, California one year. I can remember that.
- Finchum** *Brothers and sisters? How many?*
- F. Loter** Seven of us, five girls and two boys.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, I bet you have some fun traveling stories.*
- F. Loter** Yes, a lot of them. This brings back a lot of memories, too. My first grade in school, I was in El Monte, California. My sister—I started in first grade and she went to kindergarten. Then I was in second grade and she was in first grade. In California, you only go a half a day of school. She would get lost on the school bus, never made it home. We lived in a trailer park, and they're kind of funny in California about kids in trailers and all that. Momma told us, "Don't touch the fruit on the trees. Don't mess with the fruit. Don't touch those oranges." When we left there to go back to work, the lady says, "I don't know why you haven't picked those oranges there. That's what they're there for." And all of us kids just had a fit! (Laughs)
- Parkinson** It was funny.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, we're going to move on to Moira so we can learn a little bit more about her.*
- M. Curiel** My name is Moira Loter Curiel, married name is Curiel. I was born in Sand Springs, Oklahoma. It was wintertime as well, November 16, 1959. I think all the family was living in Hugo at the time when I was born. I'm the oldest granddaughter of Faye Marie—no, not Faye Marie—I'm the oldest daughter to Faye Marie. Francis was my grandmother, and I'm the eighth generation of circus people. I grew up in Texas, going to school in the summer, out on the road in the winter, or vice versa.
- Let's see. I ended up back here because my mother lived here. I used to threaten my children if they didn't behave, that I was going to send them to a public school! (Laughter) Well, I finally had to send them to a public school. I homeschooled them all the time. They started doing very well, and so we got stuck here. (Laughs) That's why I'm in Hugo right now. But, my kids are, I've got one in the third year of college and one about to be eighteen next week, and he's ready to go to college. He wants to be some kind of scientist, and my daughter wants to be in the medical field.
- Nykolaiszyn** *And what did you do in the circus?*

- M. Curiel** I did trapeze, rode elephants, rode horses, flying trapeze and single trapeze—there’s a difference—aerial ballet, swinging ladder. I assisted in knife throwing acts. Whatever they needed, I was there.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Sounds dangerous.*
- M. Curiel** Well, the dangerous part I didn’t do. I didn’t train lions and tigers. I didn’t juggle. I juggled once, I think. I was very limited in what I didn’t do. I was young. It was fun.
- Finchum** *How did you learn to do all those things?*
- M. Curiel** When we’re kids, we hang off of everything, because to us that is normal, and so when they say, “Oh, you’re going to learn trapeze,” we’d say, “Cool!” So in a couple days’ time, we’d start getting blisters on our hands. We’re okay with that, and we just continue on and learn trapeze, and the next year they say, “You’re going in the show.” “Okay. That’s fine.” And the worst part was making the wardrobe. It wasn’t the practice. It wasn’t anything like that, it was just normal to us to be in the circus.
- Finchum** *And you had to make your own wardrobe?*
- M. Curiel** Not everybody’s that talented. We were young. It was grandmothers or aunts or friends. The circus that I joined made a lot of wardrobe.
- F. Loter** Well, I made your wardrobe, too, when you were young.
- M. Curiel** I don’t remember you making my wardrobe. I remember the wardrobe when I first started working. Carson and Barnes made it for everyone. I worked on Carson and Barnes, and I spent off and on for fourteen years there. I went to the Shrine Circus. I went to various circuses, just whichever paid the most and, like I say, I ended up back in Hugo because my mom was here, and the kids. We would come in the wintertime, visit Mom and my brother, and we just ended up staying, because they ended up in school and doing so well. I got off the road, which, you still have it in your blood, but you can’t go anywhere. You’re grounded.
- Nykolaiszyn** *All right. We’re going to move on to Terry. Tell me about you, Terry.*
- Parkinson** I’m Terry Loter Parkinson, and I was born in Poteau, Oklahoma, and the first show I was ever on was Tex Carson, which was Carson and Barnes before Carson and Barnes, which was pretty neat. I have a little more background on the family, the history of our family.

M. Curiel This is our historian.

Parkinson Our great-great grandfather decided he was tired of being a farmer in Brown County, Texas, which is Comanche. Him and his brother got together with his brother's four children and took out the first wagon show, which was Clark Brothers Circus. That's how we started, our family. My mother's side of the family started in show business, and they went town to town by wagon, and my great-great grandmother was the first wagon show owner.

M. Curiel What was her name?

Parkinson Well, it was Rhoda Johnson Clark, and she was also President Andrew Johnson's aunt.

Nykolaiszyn *That's interesting, especially for a woman at that time.*

Parkinson Very dedicated to show business. To this day, in circus history, it's the most talked about, the most well-known wagon show. They started that in 1876.

F. Loter And the name of the show?

Parkinson The Clark Brothers show. On my father's side, his uncles bought and sold ponies for Pawnee Bill, traded and bought and sold. That's how we started in show business on my father's side. My parents were also Francis and George. I can't think of anything else to say. (Laughs)

M. Curiel How did they meet?

F. Loter Mom and Dad?

M. Curiel Grandma and Grandpa.

F. Loter Oh, well, they grew up together. They grew up together as children.

Parkinson But also, on my grandma—

F. Loter I have a picture of Mom and Daddy in a wash tub.

Parkinson My paternal [grand]mother, she started on show business when she was fourteen, and she was in vaudeville with her father. This is the one (gestures to a photograph), Marie Loter.

F. Loter But I can't remember how old she was when she played the piano for

silent movies, either.

Parkinson She was fourteen when they did that.

F. Loter She was littler than that when she played, because they put telephone books on the chair so she could play.

Parkinson I don't know exactly, I just know what I know.

F. Loter I can't remember how old she was.

Parkinson Anyway, my grandmother Marie, they did vaudeville and they both played mandolin. She played mandolin, he played banjo and bass. I do have photos of them online, but none handy right now.

Finchum *And what did you do in the...*

Parkinson Oh, what did I do in the circus? Well, I think the first thing I ever did when I was two or three years old was with Daddy on the unicycle. I rode on my dad's shoulders on the unicycle, and rolling globe. I learned a plate spinning act. Later on, I worked the dogs and ponies and monkeys, but I did quit show business when I was about fifteen. I'm still involved in show business, but personally, I wasn't on the road, black sheep. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *Were you also born in the winter?*

Parkinson Yes, December 17, 1955.

Nykolaiszyn *All right, Billy.*

B. Loter All right, my name is William Earl Loter. I was born here in Hugo.

F. Loter When?

B. Loter 1957.

F. Loter When? What month?

M. Curiel Were you a winter baby?

B. Loter In the winter, January. (Laughter) I've worked, of course, in Carson and Barnes, Kelly Miller, about every other show in the world, and they've told most all of it.

Nykolaiszyn *What would you do?*

B. Loter What did I do in the circus?

Nykolaiszyn *Yes.*

B. Loter I started out clowning, and then I did concessions and just about everything.

F. Loter Fire-eater.

Parkinson Unicycle, trampoline.

B. Loter Unicycle, trampoline, juggler, fire-eater. I walked wire. What else? It's been so long. (Laughs)

F. Loter You also worked in Dallas. Every one of us can put up a tent.

B. Loter And take it down.

F. Loter We know how to put it up, take it down, and load it. We fold that canvas, sew it.

B. Loter It's like Moira said, we played on the trapeze, played on it with our friends.

Finchum *The fire-eating, how did you learn that?*

M. Curiel Well, he still does that.

B. Loter I still fire-eat.

F. Loter He just did it last winter.

B. Loter It was on a show that the fire-eater got fired, and I took over the job for twenty-five dollars a week. (Laughter)

Finchum *How did you learn to do it the first time, though, just trial and error?*

B. Loter It's on that tape. That movie is my first time when I was like eighteen or something.

F. Loter And our brother was in that too, somewhere.

B. Loter It was like '76.

F. Loter We have another brother, and his name is Richard Barnum Loter.

Parkinson Oh, yes.

F. Loter He was born in October.

M. Curiel 1959.

F. Loter '59.

Parkinson '59.

M. Curiel He and I are a month apart.

F. Loter Right.

M. Curiel My uncle is a month older than me.

F. Loter I was pregnant and so was my mother, at the same time. We liked to have burnt up in Hugo. She'd lie on the couch, and I'd lie on the floor. We had a little old oscillating fan and we put twenty-five pounds of ice in front of it. Lived in a trailer and laid there. It was hot.

Parkinson We also have a September sister and a February sister.

F. Loter Right. And May is the latest one.

M. Curiel Linda.

Parkinson Oh, yes.

M. Curiel Yes, Linda's in May. That's like my kids.

F. Loter But they lived in Dallas. They weren't on the road.

M. Curiel I had four kids. My winter starts out, October is one daughter. I'm in November. My other daughter's in December and my other daughter's in January. Then my son slid in, in June. (Laughter) Well, we won't talk about that. Girls won't leave him alone on that one.

F. Loter Even my great-granddaughter's born in November.

M. Curiel Yes, but by then they were off the road.

Parkinson Yes.

F. Loter My daughter still lives with her.

Parkinson But I mean, it's just a winter thing for the show people.

M. Curiel We knew if we did it right we could either have birth in January, February, or March and still be in shape.

F. Loter Able to work.

M. Curiel Still be ready for March or April. (Laughs)

Parkinson It's true.

M. Curiel I mean, it's true.

Nykolaiszyn *I want to kind of go around the room, and you're going to have to think on this one for me. I want to know your earliest circus memory.*

B. Loter Oh, I've done so much I can't think.

F. Loter Me too. Working with my dad...

B. Loter I guess...

M. Curiel The Lynn and Richter Show.

B. Loter Yes, that's probably it.

F. Loter I stood for knives while he [George Loter] threw knives. I worked on what you call a balley platform, which is the stage in front of the sideshow, and advertised what's going on in the sideshow. That was when, oh, I was eight years old. And I helped my grandmother with Punch and Judy and I did cartooning in the sideshow at eight years old.

Finchum *Punch and ...?*

F. Loter Punch and Judy.

M. Curiel They're puppets.

F. Loter They're puppets, hand puppets, and they do a kind of a little scene.

M. Curiel You don't know what Punch and Judy is?

Finchum *No.*

M. Curiel Oh, look that up online, lady. Oh my, gosh! Everybody knew what

Punch and Judy was.

- F. Loter** That was way back then and it was called Stevens Brothers Circus. I liked the man that owned it so well that I named my son after him, Robert Stevens.
- Parkinson** I think my first memory is, when I was about four, watching my dad put on his clown make-up before the circus started. If I was allowed, I would go watch, but I can remember that.
- F. Loter** Show kids were kind of banned from the big top during the performance. They weren't allowed to go running around doing all that. You just knew that you weren't allowed in the big top during the show time, unless you had permission. Of course, on a circus like that, you better have permission because somebody's going to tell. That's your whole family. They're all watching you and it might be some other act that might whack you on the butt for being in there. (Laughter) But everybody accepts it. I mean, it's the safest place you want to be and raise kids because everybody's got their eyes on them. If anything bad happens, they're the, for sure, ones that will act just like they're your parents.
- M. Curiel** I'm trying to remember when my first memory is. I'm thinking...
- F. Loter** Stevie, he was five when we first put him in clown make-up so that's pretty early.
- M. Curiel** I'm talking about me. (Laughs)
- F. Loter** I know. I'm trying to think. You were on Linda's and Boots.
- M. Curiel** No, Me! I remember when we were on the road when Stevie was born.
- F. Loter** Right.
- M. Curiel** My mom went into labor, drives up to the hospital, she said, "Okay, I'm going in." Back then, it wasn't like it is now. I mean, you didn't have to worry. I slept in the car, and all I can remember is my mom came back the next morning, said, "Look, you have a brother!" (Laughter)
- F. Loter** I wasn't in there but overnight.
- M. Curiel** Yes. And we were on a circus then, right?
- F. Loter** Well, yes.

M. Curiel There you go. That was my earliest memory.

F. Loter I was cooking in winter quarters.

M. Curiel I must have been two and a half, three?

Parkinson I don't know.

F. Loter Cooking in winter quarters.

M. Curiel You don't believe that?

F. Loter And she slept in a cardboard box under the concession stand. I put her in a cardboard box, and she just...

M. Curiel Things were different. We could all get in trouble for child abuse. (Laughter) I used to tie my daughter up to the doorstep, because she had the habit of coming out of the compartment when I was riding elephants and the elephants used to run! I mean, they didn't stop. I was afraid she was going to come out and get smashed. I'd tie her up by the waist so she could go in and out and play, but she couldn't get out. Everybody used to say, "Oh, my God!" I said, "Would it be worse her being tied up, or worse if she was smashed?" She didn't have a problem with it. I didn't have a problem with it. But boy, I could tell you what would happen nowadays! (Laughs)

F. Loter I forgot what show I was on, but I was on one show and Moira was little. I was working and I came back to the trailer and this lady that I knew, she was an Italian lady, she says, "You know what Moira did?" I said, "What?" She said, "She shaved her dog." She shaved that little dog, and they've never let me forget it. (Laughter)

M. Curiel That's the Halls' mom, right?

F. Loter Yes.

M. Curiel What's Jimmy's mom's name?

F. Loter Aurelia?

M. Curiel Aurelia.

F. Loter But every time I'd pass her trailer, she would try to feed me. I never will forget that. She was a terrific cook. I'm still friends with her son now. He stops and sees us. It was funny, they'd never let me forget Moira shaving that dog. (Laughs)

M. Curiel I know. They don't let me forget it either, to this day. (Laughter)

F. Loter Then, when Moira was twelve years old, we liked to have gotten fired off of Carson and Barnes.

M. Curiel I wasn't on Carson and Barnes at twelve. I was in school.

Parkinson Yes.

F. Loter No, you weren't. You beat up the trapeze performer.

M. Curiel Now, Mom, I was thirteen and a half. I wasn't thirteen. (Laughter)

F. Loter Thirteen and a half. Anyway, they called me to the office and told me, "You're going to have to stop her from beating up the trapeze girl." She was the star of the show.

M. Curiel Well, I had a crush on a guy. Supposedly we were boyfriend and girlfriend, young kids. Every time I'd go back there, he was talking to her. So I'd go back there and punch her. Come to find out, she was going out with his brother.

F. Loter I said, "Moira..."

M. Curiel But I didn't know that until years later.

F. Loter But I called her and I said, "Let me see your hands." All her knuckles were messed up where she'd been beating on that girl.

Nykolaiszyn *How old was that girl?*

M. Curiel Like nineteen, twenty?

F. Loter Nineteen or twenty. She was big, and it was hard to correct Moira.

M. Curiel She did trapeze. I was just in the concession. I wasn't worried.

Nykolaiszyn *Billy, do you have an early circus memory?*

Parkinson You ought to remember, Moira...

B. Loter Yes, Toby Show....

M. Curiel Oh, yes. (Laughter)

B. Loter ...with Boots and Linda...

Parkinson Our sister, Linda...

B. Loter ...which is our sister.

Parkinson ...and her ex-husband.

B. Loter Terry did concessions, I did everything else. What did Barney do?
(Laughs)

Parkinson Barney wasn't there.

B. Loter He wasn't there much, but that's way back. I lived with an elephant and twenty-six dogs and six ponies in the back of a semi, but it was fun.

F. Loter You were older, though.

B. Loter That was the first one, probably.

Parkinson What do you mean the first one?

B. Loter Well, we were kids and went on the Toby Show. That's my first show, I guess.

Parkinson No, you were on Carson and Barnes and Kelly Miller and Fairyland.

B. Loter Well, in a shoebox.

F. Loter Where it all started. (Laughter)

B. Loter In a shoebox on Carson and Barnes.

M. Loter He was a preemie. He slept in a shoebox.

F. Loter We all started on Tex Carson.

B. Loter Yes, well, I remember when it changed over to Carson and Barnes.

F. Loter And I'm thinking it was about '57?

Parkinson I was born '55...

F. Loter Well, that's about right, '57.

Parkinson ...and went on Tex Carson that year—not like I don't remember this,

but...

F. Loter Right. But it was five trucks, then.

Parkinson And that was Carson and Barnes before Carson and Barnes grew into what it is today.

Nykolaiszyn *And so it was five trucks then. How many approximately now?*

Parkinson Probably thirty.

B. Loter Thirty.

F. Loter Thirty.

M. Curiel But it was a lot bigger. But with the economy and everything that's happening, they've reduced the...

F. Loter They've run it down.

M. Curiel But it used to be the biggest big top show in the country.

Parkinson Five rings.

M. Curiel Five rings.

B. Loter Forty-six elephants.

M. Curiel No, there were fifty-something when all the baby elephants came in.

Parkinson I think their tent was as big as a football field.

F. Loter Dory [D.R. Miller] had fifty elephants and I worked for him. I was a parts buyer and just a go-getter. I did a lot of stuff. Then my husband, when I married him, he was a mechanic and we kept that show going a lot of times when it was broke down and everybody was sick.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, I want to know how you met your husband.*

F. Loter Here in Hugo. He was one of those guys that everybody wanted, and I decided I was going to get him. (Laughter) I've been married several times, and we've [current husband] been married now thirty-eight, thirty-nine years. But he had a little bit of show business in him and we traveled. Here in Hugo it's hard to make a living, and the easiest place to go is back out on the show.

Nykolaiszyn *Now, he was a mechanic?*

F. Loter Yes.

Nykolaiszyn *And you're a performer.*

F. Loter No. I wasn't a performer.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, you were working concession?*

F. Loter I was a purchasing agent and then go-getter, parts buyer, runner.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, I want to know, in the circus world, is it kind of segmented on a lot? Do the performers kind of stay to themselves?*

F. Loter Oh, yes, yes.

Parkinson The front yard and back yard.

F. Loter They call them "kinkers."

Parkinson No, Mom. She's talking about front yard and back yard.

F. Loter Well, yes, but the kinkers all had...

Parkinson Performers were back yard...

M. Curiel The kinkers were called performers.

F. Loter Right.

Parkinson ...the concessioners...

F. Loter I just threw that in.

Parkinson The midway stuff was front yard.

F. Loter If you worked...

Parkinson Like, us kids couldn't go to the front yard without begging.

B. Loter Without getting a five dollar fine or something. (Laughs)

F. Loter Well, I had to live in the front yard because of what I did. I worked close with D.R. [Miller] and I lived in the front yard.

Nykolaiszyn *So what happens when you fall in love with somebody in the back yard?*

Parkinson It's a big one. (Laughter) There you go, right there! There you go!

A. Curiel Problem is...

M. Curiel This is Alfredo—your name, and all that good stuff, mister.

A. Curiel I have to say that?

B. Loter Yes.

Nykolaiszyn *Yes.*

A. Curiel Okay. (Laughter) My name is Alfredo Curiel from Mexico, and I was born under the big top in 1949. I was a circus performer.

M. Curiel What month?

F. Loter What year?

M. Curiel What month?

A. Curiel What month? December. (Laughter) December 7.

M. Curiel Yes, D-Day. Wahoo!

A. Curiel Yes, D-Day, 1949. Like I said, I was born under the big top. I'm proud to say that. All my family comes from the circus, too, anyway. But if we talk about the back [yard] and in the front [yard], see, when I came to United States, I didn't know these new rules. In Mexico, they treat you the same, especially when you're a circus owner. I was a circus owner when I came to the United States. Anyways, if you fell in love with somebody in the front yard, you've got problems.

F. Loter Until after the show. (Laughter)

A. Curiel Yes, definitely. They had to pause, I think, three weeks, or something like that. I don't know what the strange rule was.

M. Curiel Alfredo, that was a joke! By the way, this is my ex-husband.

A. Curiel Anyway...

M. Curiel That was a joke. We paired up for two weeks, who got the best looking guys or the best looking girls. We gave them two weeks. (Laughs)

A. Curiel Yes, but the front yard is the staff. The back yard is, was for all the performers.

F. Loter Like all the executives lived in the front yard.

A. Curiel Exactly.

M. Curiel And we had a cookhouse.

A. Curiel Exactly.

M. Curiel What they call a cookhouse is, say, the restaurant for everybody, but they fed us—what do they call it? The cafeteria for you guys. And we used to all eat in the same place.

F. Loter But...

A. Curiel But at different tables.

M. Curiel But at different tables. There was one year they decided to paint the tables like, I don't know, the blue table with the red stripe goes to the elephant guys. The red table with the yellow stripe was for performers. They did all this because a lot of people came in and ate real fast or a lot of people have a lot of kids, and then you have the boss's table. They don't want to come and sit where all these kids have been eating so they had to segregate the tables.

Parkinson It was very segregated on that.

M. Curiel For a while.

A. Curiel Well...

F. Loter Yes.

M. Curiel Because it didn't work.

A. Curiel Yes.

M. Curiel It didn't work.

Parkinson That's something my mother also did when she retired from performing. She was the cook in the cookhouse for a lot of years, a lot of people.

B. Loter Because she had seven kids.

M. Curiel Yes. (Laughter)

F. Loter She did that in order to feed us, because she got free groceries for us.

Nykolaiszyn *A question—because it came up in another interview—could kids eat in the cookhouse?*

M. Curiel Yes.

F. Loter Yes.

B. Loter Yes.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay.*

Parkinson Yes.

F. Loter Yes, that's part of the deal.

B. Loter That's part of your contract.

Nykolaiszyn *Mary was talking the other day, Mary Rawls, how they had to kind of fight to get kids allowed to eat in the cookhouse back in the old days.*

F. Loter Yes, that's the reason my mother cooked, a lot of times. Or she did something extra in order to let us eat in the cookhouse. If she cooked, she might as well feed us in there.

Nykolaiszyn *Is it still segregated today?*

A. Curiel No, no.

F. Loter No, not today.

M. Curiel No, it's now more grouped because the animal department does work together, the performers, they all know each other.

F. Loter It's more clique-y than...

M. Curiel Yes, it's just wherever you want to sit.

A. Curiel I don't think it was segregation. I think it was just to put everybody in all, include people, this is what they said.

F. Loter Well, they didn't want the mechanics, greasy mechanics, to sit next to

this costume and somebody in wardrobe...

M. Curiel Yes, when we're in wardrobe or something.

F. Loter ...because maybe they'll get them dirty, and the show was right after you eat.

M. Curiel Yes, they were pretty much back to back. If you couldn't eat, which some of us got lucky, because if we had to do what they call doors, we would be the ones to stand around and tell the people which way to go.

F. Loter And take tickets.

M. Curiel Or sell tickets for reserves or take tickets or whatever, which these were the people that had to be there early. We could take our plates to our compartments, or trailers or whatever they were, and we could eat later. But for the most part we had to hurry up and eat and sit there. Like I say, you'd have to grab the kids or...

F. Loter You'd have to be there during serving time, because they only served an "X" amount of time, and that would be it. If you're not there, you don't get anything. So you've got to go in and get it early.

M. Curiel And by the way, that's called, "Flag's up," is when they're serving food. A little flag goes up or they ring a bell.

F. Loter And then they have what you call a...

B. Loter Wait for it... (Laughter)

F. Loter They have what you call a pie car, which is where they carry the cigarettes and sandwiches and candy bars and chips.

M. Curiel That's our little convenience store.

F. Loter Also, they have—what do they call them?

M. Curiel Mickies.

F. Loter Mickies?

Parkinson I didn't know. I heard they were called...

F. Loter They had mickies and they were like...

M. Curiel Yes, we don't know that.

F. Loter ...cough syrup bottle-type that you get from pharmacies, the clear ones, and they'd fill it up with whiskey and you could buy it, and it was illegal. It was illegal, but they all did it—and beer.

B. Loter That would keep us all under lock. We didn't have to go anywhere. (Laughs)

F. Loter They would only serve the circus people.

B. Loter Yes.

F. Loter No outsiders.

M. Curiel I guess that would be called a private club, wouldn't it? I'm trying to get this legal. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *What about rules? Did you have rules?*

Parkinson Always, everybody.

F. Loter Yes, always.

Nykolaiszyn *What kind of rules? Billy, tell me some rules.*

M. Curiel Woo, Billy!

B. Loter Oh, you can't hang on the guy lines. (Laughter)

M. Curiel No making swings in the canvas.

B. Loter Yes. (Laughter)

F. Loter Don't hang any laundry up.

B. Loter Everything had a fine to it.

Nykolaiszyn *Really?*

B. Loter Yes.

F. Loter We used to hang diapers on Tex Carson. We'd tie rope to a rope and Momma had a little old washing machine about this big a square. (Gestures) You get up and do that laundry, and then we'd hang all the baby diapers. They'd get so mad at us for all those diapers being around the tent. That was when he was little.

Nykolaiszyn *Would you break any rules?*

B. Loter I broke all the rules. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *Would you have a paycheck?*

M. Curiel Not a big one.

B. Loter Not a big one.

Parkinson Sometimes, sometimes.

B. Loter It was five dollars every time I turned around.

F. Loter There were a lot of rules.

A. Curiel There are so many rules in the circus. There are many.

F. Loter Well, it's a business.

A. Curiel Don't walk when the people start to come inside the tent. You're not allowed to walk in the front.

B. Loter To go up front.

M. Curiel Back to the front yard-back yard thing.

A. Curiel You're not allowed to cross at anytime, even if there are no people in the big top, you're not supposed to walk in the rings.

M. Curiel Oh, yes. Those are old, old rules.

A. Curiel This is something terrible.

F. Loter Superstitious.

Parkinson And don't touch the props of other people.

M. Curiel Don't play the harmonica, don't wear yellow...

Parkinson These are superstitions, circus superstitions.

M. Curiel These are old superstitions.

A. Curiel No, but it's inside the rules. You talk about rules. There are rules that—

don't walk in the front midway when the people are ready to come inside the tent. Don't hang in the guy lines of the tent when some performers are working their aerial act. The kids are not supposed to be running and close to the trucks. I mean, don't look the people straight face to face if it's not necessary. You know what I mean?

M. Curiel

I haven't heard that one.

A. Curiel

They come in many times.

F. Loter

No, I hadn't either.

Parkinson

That might be a Mexico one.

M. Curiel

"Don't hang out with that girl. Don't!"

F. Loter

If I was in the big top, I was always a ticket seller or taker, and I had to look at the people.

A. Curiel

Well, yes, because you work over there, but they said for me, at that time, when I was young and beautiful and just looking around, they would say, "Hey!" and they put just more fines, you know what I mean? A five dollar fine. Thank God they never fined me. Honestly, in my seventeen years in Carson and Barnes they never fined me. But there are many, many, many rules. And later on, you know everything, so you don't do it. You don't do what is bad.

Nykolaiszyn

Are they like a mix of safety rules and don't want the public to see some of the back operation rules?

M. Curiel

No, I'll tell you what it is.

F. Loter

They don't...

Parkinson

No, actually, there's nothing we do that anybody couldn't see.

Nykolaiszyn

Okay.

M. Curiel

We weren't supposed to be in the front door when the people came in is because can you imagine when you're walking into a store and everybody's hanging there watching you? You feel uncomfortable. It's just not the correct thing to do. That's basically it.

Parkinson

And the performers weren't allowed in the big top in wardrobe unless they were ready to do their act. They couldn't run around in their costume.

M. Curiel I'm trying to think of all the other rules. They are common sense rules, is what it is.

B. Loter Yes.

M. Curiel It's better for the business. You have to wear clean clothes because would you go into a—these are examples—would you go into a restaurant with a guy with a bunch of filthy clothes on, or would you go in the restaurant with the guy who has got a nice shirt and pants on? Those are all common sense things.

F. Loter They talk about the nasty show people, the town people. I don't know how to say it nicely.

Nykolaiszyn *You can say it. It's okay.*

F. Loter The town people look down on circus people because they confuse them with carnival people.

M. Curiel For many, many, many years.

B. Loter Right.

F. Loter And carnival people were shysters and thieves and everything else. Well, circus people are completely different.

Parkinson We entertain.

B. Loter We are entertainers and they're thieves. (Laughter)

Parkinson Or that's the way it used to be.

M. Curiel He's been both, by the way. (Laughs)

B. Loter I've been both.

Parkinson That's the way it used to be. Now it's pretty much even.

M. Curiel Yes, now the people see it differently, but back then, you didn't really say you were circus people.

B. Loter We had wars.

F. Loter Right. You didn't want to talk about it. I wouldn't talk about it for years.

Parkinson Like when you started a new school somewhere else, you didn't say, "I'm from the circus."

F. Loter And I went to school here.

Parkinson If you didn't have a life, you made one up. "Oh, I live over there on the corner. I've lived there all my life," because the kids, they look at you very funny.

M. Curiel They'd go, "Oh, you're nasty circus people!" or, "You live in a trailer!" They don't know my last trailer cost more than half these houses here in Hugo and it was better. It moved, too! (Laughs)

F. Loter But I wouldn't talk about it for years, and I went to school here and sometimes I just felt like they looked down on me. Well, one thing, they knew we were show people, because we're here only in the time that we didn't have to work. If the show went out in March, we left in March. When we came back, it was October and we done missed a month of school, that's too bad. We went back, you go back to school. So I went to the eleventh grade and then quit school because of that. But I went back thirty-two years later and got my GED.

Finchum *Well, good for you.*

F. Loter I'm proud of that.

Finchum *Sure, it's something to be proud of.*

F. Loter But anyway, there's a lot of stuff that went on. That's one reason why David Rawls was mayor. I was president of the VFW one time, for the Ladies Auxiliary. We just did things to make sure they'd know that we could do it. That's all that mattered.

M. Curiel And really and truly, anybody that was in the circus or had been in the circus, whatever, grew up in the old families in the circus, most of the kids, they get jobs. They get promotions right away...

F. Loter They know how to talk to people.

M. Curiel ...because we know how to deal with money, we know how to deal with people, and we know how to do the job. You don't procrastinate on anything, because it just doesn't work with our lifestyle.

Parkinson Most circus people don't meet a stranger. I mean, they'll just talk to you and tell you whatever you want to know.

F. Loter Now, I talk about it more than I ever did.

B. Loter When I was in the carnival, we didn't talk about circus. I mean, it was a putdown. (Laughs)

F. Loter There was a dividing line.

B. Loter The reason circus and carnival, they get it mixed up, if you watch TV today it's bad. They say more bad about us, thinking we're carnival people. It's because we were competition in the old days.

M. Curiel Right.

B. Loter We sort of were the first. The reason is the sideshow took off with the carnival for the week, because they stayed in one town a week. We traveled every day, and they made more money but they left it "The Circus Sideshow," and that's how they sort of got it confused. I think Hollywood downgrades us, because in the beginning we were competition to the silent pictures.

F. Loter Well, we still...

B. Loter And [they] still are competition, because we're live entertainment.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, you worked in both. What do you prefer?*

B. Loter Circus. I always claimed circus.

F. Loter Well, I've been on carnivals, too.

B. Loter I couldn't be a thief. I had to do the games that were fifty-fifty chance, family games.

F. Loter Well, that was...

B. Loter I didn't have the arson in me to take your house and your car.

Parkinson How long did you work at the Texas State Fair?

B. Loter Twenty-nine years at the Texas State Fair and almost all the carnivals in the United States, except the smaller ones. I mean, I did all the big shows, but I'm a good concessioner. I ran Benevolent Bill's Bargain Bonus Basement Bonanza. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *Well, that's a name. Did you come up with that name?*

M. Curiel No.

B. Loter Well, it was sort of part of the pitch.

M. Curiel Say the pitch, Bill! Say the pitch!

B. Loter I ran the birthday game, “You put your fifty cents on the colors, you match the colors, and you win your choice. It’s Benevolent Bill’s Bargain Bonus Basement Bonanza. Come on over! Birthday game, number one on the midway! Have you ever done it on your birthday? Well, come here, I’ll show you how! I’ve done it on May, and May was fun!” (Laughs) You know, and on and on.

F. Loter Did you do a cigarette game?

M. Curiel What’s the one...?

B. Loter Yes, I did the cigarette game. Almost every game on the midway I can do, except the arson.

Parkinson Tip sheets at Hot Springs for the races.

B. Loter I worked at Hot Spring. I’ve never seen a horse race in my life, and there I was selling tip sheets, giving y’all guys tips for the horses. (Laughter) But I can make change.

Nykolaiszyn *That sounds like a racket.*

F. Loter All of us learned how to do that early.

B. Loter Yes, that’s the first thing you get is an apron.

F. Loter I think Moira was about six when I taught her. Or five, wasn’t it?

M. Curiel What’s that?

F. Loter To make change.

M. Curiel Oh, yes. I sold peanuts.

Parkinson Cotton candy, twenty-five cents.

M. Curiel No, I sold peanuts.

F. Loter You know why? Because I didn’t have anybody to help me so I put her in there while I could go to the bathroom. (Laughs) So I had to teach her

how to make change.

Parkinson It makes me mad when you see a movie and it says, “The Ferris Wheel down at the circus.” Oh, I get so mad!

B. Loter I do too, I do too.

F. Loter Well, that, or calling something somebody has done a circus. It has nothing to do with the circus.

M. Curiel And wait a minute, I’m trying to think. There have been movies recently and I’m trying to think of which one that...

F. Loter Some new movie.

M. Curiel Oh, what was it? Just recently, and they said something about, “Yeah, like the circus people,” and I’m like—and every circus people will do the same thing.

Parkinson They’ll sit up and wonder, “What are they talking about?”

M. Curiel What does this mean?

B. Loter I think it’s one of their writers. It’s a special line in there because they use that line all the time.

M. Curiel Yes, like we’re some kind of freaks. Do we all look like freaks? We’re a little strange, but we’re not freaks.

F. Loter They just said that with Obama this morning.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, everybody’s a little strange.*

M. Curiel We don’t have arms growing out of our heads and things like, I mean...

F. Loter We always say that what’s left of the circus when we leave is, “Nothing’s left but peanut sacks and wagon tracks.”

M. Curiel Yes, that’s an old saying. Yes, when the movies make comments, we catch every one of them. All show people do.

B. Loter Not just movies. Everything does it, everything.

M. Curiel Yes, songs.

F. Loter When they refer to a circus when they have a fight.

B. Loter But that's their not being educated in the difference.

F. Loter Oh, it was Casey Anthony.

A. Curiel If you want to know which one is the movie to this...

Parkinson Always saying, "What a circus!"

F. Loter Oh, did they convict her today?

M. Curiel No.

A. Curiel ...really close to the circus life is *Trapeze*. That's the name of the movie, *Trapeze*.

B. Loter Yes. It had...

A. Curiel With Burt Lancaster and Tony Curtis.

B. Loter Yes.

A. Curiel And Gina Lollobrigida. How do you pronounce it?

M. Curiel Gina Lollobrigida.

A. Curiel It's Italian. It's Italian. Gina Lollobrigida. Anyway, it's the best movie you can find that's very close to the circus.

F. Loter Burt Lancaster was catcher in a flying act on a circus before he did that.

Parkinson And he was also in "real" show business at one point.

B. Loter Before he became a movie star.

M. Curiel Oh yes, yes. What other actors have been in the "real" show business?

A. Curiel Because in the movie...

F. Loter One of the Nelsons.

A. Curiel I was trapeze flyer all my life...

F. Loter David Nelson.

A. Curiel ...and when I saw the movie and I saw Burt Lancaster teach the kid to

do the triple somersault, he tells him exactly what it is—exactly the timing, exactly how he needed to break the—when they jump from one to the other one, he tells him exactly what it is in the real life, in the circus. In the other movies, I’ve never seen in my life people dressed in costumes twenty-four hours a day, but they do in the movies. (Laughter) The clowns, they never take the makeup off. It’s just is not true. So sometimes they have to make something really, really like the circus. But I don’t think they’re going to find a circus, I mean the trouble with the circus...

B. Loter Even the new movie out now, *Water for Elephants* is just a love story...

F. Loter Yes, but I didn’t see it. Did you?

M. Curiel That movie was done by a friend—well, not by a friend of mine. The equipment in that movie is a friend of mine’s equipment and a lot of the people that are in that movie are a lot of my friends. That movie almost didn’t take place because they wanted to portray, like in the book, where the elephant trainer was an abuser and the elephant trainer that they got, he refused to...

F. Loter Who was the elephant trainer they got?

M. Curiel Gary Thomas.

F. Loter Oh my, gosh! You know who Gary Thomas is?

M. Curiel Yes, Mother. I had a crush on him at thirteen. Not thirteen and a half! (Laughs)

F. Loter He’s the one that turned the elephants loose here in town.

M. Curiel Yes, that’s the one.

B. Loter I thought that was you! (Laughs)

F. Loter No, it wasn’t. I was driving the truck.

B. Loter Oh, you were driving the truck.

Nykolaiszyn *Tell me about the elephants getting loose in town.*

F. Loter Dory Miller called me. I wasn’t doing anything. I was drawing unemployment here in town. He called me and asked me to come to Minnesota and drive these elephants back down to Laredo. There were three of them. We get to Hugo and we had some poles to unload before

we went any further. Well, I went in the house to change clothes, this Gary Thomas opened the doors and I told him, “Don’t take those elephants out except one at a time.” And Dory told him the same thing. Well, I went in the house to change clothes and while I was in the house, he takes them all out and they run. They’d been in that dark truck and they wanted to get out. They were, oh, I guess they were about five foot tall, not very big. They took off, jumped the fence, and it was a month later before we got them all back. That’s the story.

- B. Loter** Didn’t they find them on an island in Hugo or something or the lake?
- F. Loter** No, it was down on the lake, Corps of Engineers’ property, one elephant. But the other ones I got right away. But this one, I had to tranquilize him to get him loaded and the whole bit. But this Gary Thomas, it was too hot for him.
- M. Curiel** He was in his twenties. He probably stayed in and had the air.
- F. Loter** Stayed in the air conditioner with his girlfriend.
- Parkinson** I was married and living in Tyler, Texas, which is Southwest of Fort Worth—no, I lived in Weatherford, I’m sorry. My husband said, “I think you need to wake up. Your sister’s chasing elephants on the news.” He was just real laid back. “Oh, okay.” (Laughter)
- F. Loter** I had everything, but it all burned up here, last year. Was it last year or year before? Last year in our well house—we have a well house, we live in the country—and the motor caught on fire and burned a lot of my stuff up. I was really upset about that. I had all the clippings and even had all the war clippings from the other war—what was it? Before Afghanistan. I had all that. I had a lot of stuff, and it all went down the drain. It made me sick. But anyway, that’s the story of the elephants.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, I want to know about life on the road. I want you to tell me about your living quarters.*
- M. Curiel** You’re trying to get some bad stuff out of us, aren’t you? You’re just bound and determined! (Laughter)
- F. Loter** When I first started, when I got older—well, not older, either.
- M. Curiel** When you were little you all lived in a bus, and you got soot in your nose. That’s all I can remember. (Laughter)
- F. Loter** No, that was...

Parkinson That's when I was a baby.

M. Curiel There you go. That's the story I remember.

F. Loter We had a kerosene heater, and that sucker gets to smoking...

Parkinson What do you think it did to the baby? (Laughter)

B. Loter Me! Me! (Laughs)

F. Loter You get up and wash it off. But that happened about six and a half times a week.

Parkinson It was an old school bus my daddy built bunk beds in and stuff. I had seen it years later, right down the road.

F. Loter That thing was so cold. We'd wake up and there'd be ice on the windows about that tall and about that thick, but we lived in that for quite awhile. Then, when Moira was born, I lived in a trailer that used to belong to my grandfather that he left Mother when he died. It was a long—wasn't it like Schultz or something?

M. Curiel Like I'm going to remember.

F. Loter Well, I was trying to think.

Parkinson It had round windows.

F. Loter It was an old trailer.

M. Curiel It had wheels. (Laughs)

F. Loter We lived in there quite awhile.

Parkinson It had round windows on it.

F. Loter When Moira was born and she lived in there, and Barney was born and we lived in there with those two babies. Momma would put Barney in the playpen and you got the bed.

M. Curiel Well, I was in the playpen, right?

F. Loter Oh, okay.

Parkinson Yes, when you and Dixie and Darlene were young.

F. Loter And when Barney, my brother, would crawl by, she'd [Moira] grab his diaper and hold it and he'd start screaming and carrying on.

M. Curiel Yes, I finally got him!

F. Loter Anyway, when he got to walking, he turned the stove on one day and I had a date. I was going to keep this date because I really liked that guy, and...

Parkinson Were you thirteen?

F. Loter No. I was eighteen.

Parkinson Okay.

F. Loter Anyway, I went to get a cup of coffee and the stove exploded. Burned my eyebrows off, my eyelashes, and I kept the date anyway because I liked this guy. (Laughter)

Parkinson Didn't you and Darlene and Linda stay in a different trailer when we were young?

B. Loter You want the routine of the circus life?

Nykolaiszyn *Sure.*

B. Loter You wake up in the morning, like four o'clock in the morning. You get a donut and a cup of coffee, and you drive to the next town. Each truck comes in, it's like the poles first and then the tent...

F. Loter Usually it was cookhouse first.

B. Loter Cookhouse first and pole truck, then the tents and then when the tent's in the air, you got to eat breakfast.

F. Loter About eleven.

B. Loter About eleven o'clock, and then you don't get any time off, maybe an hour off before the show starts. Then you do a show, and then you go to the cookhouse when the flag went up. You got to eat your...

F. Loter If it was a two o'clock show, it'd be around four o'clock, 4:30, when you ate.

B. Loter You'd get to eat. Then you'd do another show after that when you've got a full belly. (Laughs)

F. Loter And then you get to go to the pie car and spend your money.

B. Loter You got to tear down, you got to bed maybe two, three o'clock in the morning, then you get up at four again, and do it every single day.

F. Loter That's the run. That was twenty-four—well, when Gus and I were working, I was parts buyer and him mechanic, we were on call twenty-four/seven. We were liable to be out for two days, not get back to the show.

Nykolaiszyn *And how would you know where you were going next?*

B. Loter You got a little slip of paper each morning...

F. Loter What they call a route card.

B. Loter ...called a route card and it said how to get there. You had arrows on the telephone poles and they led you there, and you just follow the rest of them.

Parkinson They put your route slip on your windshield most of the time and it says, "You go on 70. Then you go 271 to so and so," and you figured it out. When we were real little, we learned how to look for arrows going into a town, which were about this tall (gestures about twelve inches) and they had a language all of their own.

F. Loter One of the funniest stories...

Parkinson And that was my job was to look for the arrows. And I learned how to read arrows when I was...

F. Loter ...and a map.

Parkinson No, I still can't read a map. (Laughter) But it's a rich life, and we can say we've probably been in every state in the United States at least once.

M. Curiel I have been.

B. Loter Yes, me too, at least twice.

F. Loter And Alaska.

Nykolaiszyn *And I'm guessing the living quarters got better as the years went on.*

B. Loter Well, yes.

Parkinson Depends on how much money you made. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *Compared to your time?*

Parkinson Well, when we were on the road, my time, we had ice for refrigeration. If you didn't empty the pan under the refrigerator, you had a wet floor. Then you go to her [Moirá's] time, where she had a luxurious fifth wheel, much nicer than a lot of people's homes.

F. Loter And we never had air condition or nothing like that when I was young.

B. Loter No.

M. Curiel I had central heat and air. (Laughs)

B. Loter Me, I had a truck cab.

Parkinson No, we didn't have running water. We had electricity, but we'd have to carry our water to the trailer.

F. Loter One bucket of water at a time.

M. Curiel I had a big tank. (Laughs) And to go to the bathroom, I had my own little bathroom.

Parkinson That is another good memory.

F. Loter It wasn't easy.

Parkinson You'd have the water truck coming. It'd go fill up somewhere in town then come back, and if you wanted to wash your hair you literally stood under the little spout.

F. Loter If there was plenty of water.

Parkinson If there was plenty of water.

B. Loter If there was plenty of water.

Parkinson But I can remember many times, my older sister, there was us last four at home.

F. Loter Darlene.

Parkinson The other ones were up. I have a sister a little bit older than me and my

two brothers, and she would start out with the bathwater and it went down from there, the same bathwater, because there wasn't a lot of water. She wasn't going to carry anymore for us.

M. Curiel And I'm only joking. I only did the trailer thing the last few years. I also lived in what they called a compartment and you share a compartment. They're bunk beds, like a dormitory in school. Bunk beds, little bit of space, and you might get a closet, if you got lucky and got that big compartment.

Parkinson Except for my younger years, from the time I was nine until the time I was fourteen, I was on a very small mud show, what they call a mud show, and it was a one-ring family owned and we did everything ourselves. We didn't have outside help and in a way, I was raised quite—circus business was different for me.

M. Curiel Come here [talking to daughter who just entered the room]. Let me introduce you to these women.

Parkinson No ugly words. (Laughs)

M. Curiel These women are the ones that are doing the history of the circus. This is my daughter, Claudette. She's the second of my family. When's your birthday?

C. Curiel October 18, '82.

M. Curiel Winter baby.

F. Loter We're talking about everybody being winter babies.

C. Curiel It's true.

M. Curiel Now, she works at a department store and raising her kids and is going to school.

C. Curiel In fact, my first one was a winter baby for that reason, too.

M. Curiel There you go, see?

Parkinson She works at Stage [department store], but she was also a performer.

F. Loter Yes, she was. We have pictures of her everywhere.

Parkinson They've been trying to get her to be a manager at Stage.

Finchum *And what did you do in the circus?*

C. Curiel When I was a performer I did the silks, the chiffon, and the roman rings.

F. Loter That's what I did.

Parkinson Are you up there?

F. Loter And one aerial act with her older sister.

C. Curiel Yes, where are all the real pictures?

M. Curiel I've only got a few of them.

Parkinson That's her sister right there with the blue costume on.

F. Loter Well, her older sister will be here over the Fourth of July.

C. Curiel And that's me in the orange headband.

Parkinson And when you think about it, get your dad to say Gina Lollobrigida.

C. Loter Gina Lollobrigida?

Parkinson Only she doesn't say...

M. Curiel Gina Lollobrigida.

C. Curiel I said it the same way. What are you talking about? How am I supposed to say it? I'm pronouncing all the—I annunciate.

F. Loter And Moira works at Simple Simons now and she's assistant manager.

Finchum *Good organizational skills and time management.*

B. Loter After circus, everything's easy. (Laughs)

M. Curiel Know why? A lot of it is, we count the money, we're honest, we get the job done, and nobody has to constantly tell us what to do.

F. Loter Well, we have the incentive to do it. If nobody else is going to do it, we just go ahead and do it.

B. Loter Yes, without being told.

Parkinson Has anyone mentioned our new circus group up here in Hugo? [referring

to the Circus City Showmen’s Club]

F. Loter Yes, they were there.

Parkinson I wasn’t there.

Nykolaiszyn *Do you miss being on the road?*

F. Loter It took me a long time to settle in Hugo. I would go to Ada and go shopping, just to be going.

B. Loter When you get sawdust in your blood, you’ve got to go. (Laughs)

Parkinson I hate to admit it, but when they leave town here in the spring, I go out on the highway and watch. You have a certain...

F. Loter Well, I still go to see David when it’s over.

Parkinson ...you have a certain—Momma used to call it “itchy house shoes,” because she wanted to go, but she got too old to go. She had the itchy house shoes.

M. Curiel We all have to go and see our friends off and say goodbye if we can, which is opening day. All circus people go and they all say goodbye to everybody. Then when they come back in the fall, we try to always go to the last show and just, “Oh, yes! You have the season and everything was great.” That’s what we retired people do. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *Well, tell me some lingo. We heard about “flag’s up” and “flag’s down.”*

M. Curiel The “eagle has landed,” payday.

Parkinson “Cherry Pie.”

M. Curiel “Cherry Pie,” “Hey, Rube.”

F. Loter “Hey, Rube.”

M. Curiel Cherry pie—but explain what they are.

F. Loter “Cherry pie” is just general labor.

M. Curiel Like, say, I get the privilege of selling coloring books. In order to keep that privilege, I have to go put up a marquee, or the entrance, or just...

F. Loter That's your cherry pie.

Parkinson That's called cherry pie. You have, it's to keep that privilege, basically. "Hey, Rube" is there's getting ready to be a fight, a head's up.

F. Loter If there has been, if it's real loud, it's really important.

M. Curiel Kinkers are performers. What is it?

Parkinson How come circus people talk carnie talk?

M. Curiel The bull. (Laughter)

Parkinson They do.

M. Curiel Out of self defense.

Parkinson Maybe.

Nykolaiszyn *I was going to say, those are fighting words.*

F. Loter Actually, we do.

Parkinson Actually, we still speak carnie.

B. Loter Mizzy spizzizzle spizzy izzle izzon izzie.

F. Loter Yes, there you go. It's not Pig Latin. We don't talk Pig Latin. We talk carnie talk.

Parkinson I spoke it so much in front of my ex-husband, he finally learned it. She and I would do it, and he finally picked up on that, but we still use that language.

B. Loter Yes, they use it so the public can't tell what you're doing.

F. Loter Now we do it to keep the kids from knowing what we're talking about.

B. Loter Yes, now it's for the kids.

Parkinson What else is there, guys?

M. Curiel There's "bulls," which are elephants. We call them bulls.

B. Loter "Rigging."

M. Curiel “Rigging” is all the props that we use.

Parkinson Props is equipment for the act.

M. Curiel Oh, yes. Sorry. Property. “Spec” is spectacular.

Parkinson Which is the...

M. Curiel The walk around that we do when all...

Parkinson ...the parade at the beginning of the show.

F. Loter “Blow off” is the end of the show.

M. Curiel “Come in” is the beginning of the show.

Parkinson Where you’re not allowed to go out and stand in the middle of it.

B. Loter A “dukie” is a little coupon that you get that you can spend at the pie car.

M. Curiel Yes, it’s like a—it used to be a credit card.

B. Loter Like a tip. Yes, it used to be like a credit card. (Laughter)

F. Loter They used to use a punch.

Finchum *A dukie?*

B. Loter A dukie.

M. Curiel A pre-paid credit card. You get a five dollar dukie, then you could spend it how you wanted to, and all you had to do is to punch out the holes. I forgot about those.

F. Loter They would have a dollar and fifty cents and all that.

M. Curiel What else?

F. Loter And you had to buy them, though.

B. Loter Yes.

M. Curiel Towners.

F. Loter You guys are towners. Oh, you knew that one, huh?

Nykolaiszyn *Oh, yes.*

M. Curiel Let's see, what else?

F. Loter Well, we've got the pie car and the cookhouse.

B. Loter If I was on the show, I could tell you all of them.

M. Curiel I know. It's all normal stuff to us so we have to think about it. Winter quarters, of course, is our place of stay in the winters.

Finchum *Well, when you pulled onto the lot did you have to go to the same place every time, or how did you know?*

F. Loter You usually have what you call a superintendent on a lot that lays it out.

M. Curiel That's the twenty-four hour man.

Parkinson It's called a layout. You've got your layout. There you are.

F. Loter Your twenty-four hour man and superintendent tell you where to park. They may change it up for a reason, if there's not enough room.

M. Curiel But normally...

B. Loter We never got to go to the front end.

M. Curiel Normally, the animals would be close to the back door because they have their cages and things.

Parkinson Back door is performance.

M. Curiel Performers and then you had the ones that had the most props, or the biggest props, and then you had the ones that just did a trapeze act or something. I could run. I had no problem.

A. Curiel In the United States, they never live in the little tents. We just always lived in trailers or trucks.

B. Loter Or under the truck, or in the cab.

F. Loter I've slept in possum bellies. [compartment under a semi-trailer]

A. Curiel No, no, see, I remember. Like I said, I was born in the circus and we lived in small tents around the circus in my country. We don't know

anything about travel trailers or motor homes or anything. I remember when I started to work, I was seven. My grandfather was a clown and my grandmother wanted me to be a clown, a musical clown, and they gave me a teacher to teach me music and to play all different kinds of instruments when I was a kid. But I was very good in the circus so I do almost everything.

B. Loter The men got to do everything.

A. Curiel And we lived in the small tents. I remember when the rain came, we had to make a big ditch around the tent to keep the water out of the tent. Sometimes big storms, they would tear down our tents. We would have to go to the nearest house over there to keep out of the rain because we didn't have a tent. That was 1954, '55, and 1957, me and my brothers and sisters, we worked in the streets, collecting money, because we want to make our own show. It was 1957. We made our first stand in 1958, '59, and in 1959 we bought our first truck. From 1959 to 1981, we got one of the biggest circuses in my country. So what the funny thing is, we were too little, but our parents put us in charge of everything. Everything about the—be owner, be—think about it. Keep making orders to the big guys. You know what I mean? But we had to do it, because there were thirteen in the family and we had to do it.

Of course, like I said, to eighty-something, '81, '83, we got a big show. We got a big show in 1974 when somebody come and said, "Come to United States. It's nice over there," and in that time we got good odds of the family, and we wanted to see United States so we came to the United States. The sons, in 1974, we worked '74, '75, and on and on and on and on and on, and one good day, I was married already with my ex-wife and the American Consulate in Monterrey just told me—she was my friend. She gave me a Visa all the time when I wanted one—she said, "Alfredo, you have to decide where are you going to live, United States or Mexico, now, because your kids have got to go to school." So I decide to come to United States. In that time, I started to know what travel trailers were. (Laughs) I was learning what it was like to live in a travel trailer because I didn't know anything. Even the big shows in Mexico in the '60s, they still got out nice tents. Small tents for your bed, your big trunk box for your costumes and everything.

Nykolaiszyn *Did you speak much English when you came over?*

F. Loter He still doesn't speak much English. (Laughter)

A. Curiel I still don't speak English. I'm still, no. The funny thing, when they tell me, "We are going to go to United States," I immediately start studying in the records. Remember the records? I started to study a little bit of

English, a little bit, because I didn't have much time to learn. But, of course, over here, I decided all my friends have to be Americans, to learn. If I'm stuck with the Mexicans, I won't learn anything. So then my friends were only American friends. At that time, Carson and Barnes, everybody is American over there. Now, it's different, but in that time, the big top was American. The candy butchers were Americans. The mechanics and everybody were American. So I was the guy to be close to them to learn what they said and what I said. I've still got broken English, but now I understand. If somebody tells me something bad, I know. But at that time, it was different. But later, like I said, you have the opportunities in the United States and then you start to be better and better and better, but I still miss my country. In my time in Mexico, we got a big tent. Behind the big top there's a tent and it's the wardrobe tent. They divide it by a piece of canvas so one side was for the men's costumes and everything, and the other side was for women's. So it was funny, and I mean, was a funny thing over there. (Laughs)

B. Loter I think we did it here, too.

A. Curiel Yes?

Nykolaiszyn *Were you a performer?*

B. Loter Yes. Yes, trapeze.

M. Curiel He was.

A. Curiel Since I remember, I was a performer. Yes. My mom was a performer, too. She would do one act that—what do you call it now?

B. Loter Iron jaw.

A. Curiel Yes. They pick it up by...

B. Loter The teeth. And they're in the air.

A. Curiel They told me one day she fell, she was hit, she fell, and she didn't die immediately, but she died for that reason. Something was going bad and she died. I was three years old. But I still remember the thing. In the circus, all the kids, like everybody says here, it's different because you travel too much. Your mind, your brains work in different ways.

B. Loter Yes, there are some things that I've done that I don't even believe I've done. You know what I mean? But when my friends bring it up, oh, yes. (Laughs)

- A. Curiel** You are smart because you travel too much, you learn everything, many things, and you are different from town people, I guess.
- B. Loter** Yes, it took me like two years to pick up the telephone and answer it when I got off the road because I didn't deal with the telephone. I didn't know what to say on the other end. (Laughs) It was like two years later before I'd answer the phone.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, what happened if you got injured?*
- F. Loter** You're on your own.
- A. Curiel** You're on your own, which, for this reason, you practiced a lot.
- F. Loter** They do have something for performers, what is it?
- A. Curiel** Well, nowadays you have to buy your own insurance.
- F. Loter** Yes.
- A. Curiel** If you work for somebody, they pay half and you pay another half, but only—if here I go to work at any circus for two weeks, three weeks, we call them spot dates. Well, they pay you good money, but you've got to pay your own insurance. But normally, in my time when I was performer, I fell many times, no, you don't. It's sad to say, but in the contract it's...
- F. Loter** It hasn't been that long that they've made you buy your own insurance.
- A. Curiel** They say probably ten? Ten years, ten, fifteen years? But before, no.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Would you ever do another job?*
- A. Curiel** Honestly, no. This is my first time. This is my first time and it's hard. It's hard to stay in one place. Especially—you know what you miss the most? What I remember—because I'm an old guy in the circus. All my life was in the circus. Twenty years on the trapeze plus I don't know how many years a high wire walker, animal trainer. You name it. But you miss the most sometimes at night. This is true. I'm not making it up. This is true. Sometimes at night, I wake up and I feel—when you go inside the big top and you smell the sawdust, when you hear the roar of the lions at night, it's something.
- Parkinson** Let's face it. The elephant poop smell also has something to do with it.

- A. Curiel** You smell it. You feel it. It's something in you. Especially, sometimes I'm dreaming and I'm dreaming when, before I go to work, before I go all the way up in the trapeze, I dream I put my arm bands on and I'm prepared, and when I do any trick in the air, I do in the air. I do in the dream. I do it. Before I do, everything is, I hear the [imitates drum roll] of the drummer, and when I do the somersault in the air or something, I hear what I hear when I really did it, when I was young. You just, you hear the air, like a [imitates wind] but silence, and immediately, when you catch, you hear the people, the exclamation of the people. "Wow!" And then you come back to your trapeze and then you jump and you platform and oh my God! It's so beautiful! And I miss it. I missed that for many years.
- B. Loter** And we're too old to do it anymore, though.
- A. Curiel** And believe me, this is true. Probably, it's because I really love the circus. I really love the circus.
- B. Loter** The closest I...
- A. Curiel** Sometimes, I cry, yes, sometimes. I feel like, I say, "Why me? Why did I leave the circus?" But I recognize later on, "I don't leave the circus, the circus leaves me," because here comes the age when you can't move fast, you understand me? Sometimes it's hard to accept it and still, I practice with the kids right here in the backyard. Sometimes I have to tell them and show them how to do the pirouette, and I do. I'm still the one at sixty-two. I'm still doing it. But the next day, I can't move. (Laughs)
- F. Loter** My husband's seventy-five.
- A. Curiel** And...
- F. Loter** And he still works on our car and pickups...
- A. Curiel** ...I don't want to be old. I don't want to be old. I don't. I don't. I want to do something all before, I hope. I pray to my God, if I die, have to be in the circus. Have to be. I got my trapeze bar and I've got my arm bands and I already tell my kids, "That is the last thing you're going to put in with me."
- M. Curiel** I might need that trapeze bar. (Laughter)
- B. Loter** Since I've become a townner, the closest thing I've got to circus is I was doing logos on the water towers around Texas and stuff.

- A. Curiel** Was it closest?
- B. Loter** Yes, because I was up in the air and it was just freedom, and I would run around on the rope around the tower. (Laughter) It was great. I mean, it's the closest I've come to like performing in a circus.
- M. Curiel** That's what I was saying earlier that somehow, we always end up with something, like my daughter. My daughter works at Stage. She deals with people every day. She's not really a people-person, but after work, she's looking for parades to go do, sell cotton candy in the parades, and she's selling handbags that she orders and stuff. My other daughter, she makes leotards and she's selling them on eBay. Well, my daughter's in college, but she comes home, she is a tutor-mentor at school, but she works the winter parades. I mean, we always are still in it somehow.
- A. Curiel** Some reason, we have to be...
- M. Curiel** And she told me that she almost got a job, she goes to Amherst College. They were looking for someone to work in the cafeteria. The thing that impressed the guy that was interviewing, he says, "I've got a lot of people above you, but I wanted to meet you because you're the only one that wrote down you could count back change." (Laughs) So that's what drew their attention. And she said, "Well, my mom taught me when I was a little kid. You count back change." Okay, fifty, one dollar, two dollar, three, and you count it back. And they love it without all the computers.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, how old is too old? Like, what is retirement age?*
- A. Curiel** Look at me.
- M. Curiel** There used to not be a retirement age.
- A. Curiel** Look at me! This is it right here!
- B. Loter** Your body gives up on your act.
- A. Curiel** Yes.
- F. Loter** Yes.
- A. Curiel** Here comes the moment, this is it, though. I tell you what I live through, because I was, like I said, I was a performer all my life! All my life, okay? I do, I swear, so many acts I don't even remember how many because I was a circus person. We call them circus people in my country, probably in United States, too, but I don't know. I talk about

my country, when you say, “I’m a circus person,” it’s because you know tumbling in the ground, you know how to go and make a swing and do tricks on the trapeze, or do anything else. Important thing you have to know how to do is tumbling on the mat, on the ground. I mean, like acrobats. This is what makes you a circus person.

B. Loter But it makes you sore in your old age. (Laughter)

A. Curiel Then I started flying in the trapeze with my brother. My brother has got kids. My nephews were starting to fly. My brother’s retired, and I was in the trapeze. My nephews are retired and I’m still on the trapeze, because in my mind was, “I’m so good and I can do it. I still can do it and I look great!” Okay? But here comes the moment when something happens, and you say, “I missed it. I missed it. Oh, I got a mistake! I made a mistake!” No, you didn’t make a mistake. You did the correct thing, but it was your body that didn’t respond like it did before. Everything is in your mind.

B. Loter Yes.

M. Curiel A long time ago, there was no age to retirement. There weren’t as many circus people, either. Now, our generation had kids and we taught our children. The correct thing to do is to back out and let—that’s what happened to me. I quit when I was five months pregnant with my son. (Laughs)

A. Curiel Yes.

M. Curiel I flew in the flying trapeze act until I was five months pregnant.

A. Curiel It’s true.

M. Curiel But I had a daughter that was eighteen and I had another daughter that was ten, at the time. I had all these other kids that could do it and so when I had to back out, they started doing other things to compensate the salary, basically, and I ended up being the manager. I ended up doing all this other stuff, which we’re still in it, but not the performing thing. Then I had to raise my son, of course, and my son’s going to be eighteen. So that’s how long I’ve been out of it.

F. Loter Our other brother that isn’t here, he could tell you some good stories. Barney.

M. Curiel Oh, that’s what we were talking about earlier. My grandfather had this bright idea, since we were circus people and my mom had just had me and my uncle was born right at the same time, his name is Richard

Barnum Loter and I am Moira Bailey Loter so we'd have a Barnum and Bailey. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn

I was wondering if there was a connection.

M. Curiel

Yes. I meant to say that earlier, and I had forgotten, but yes, Barnum and Bailey.

Parkinson

When they got old enough, one day they had a piece of canvas out there in the yard and they put it over their heads and called it Barnum and Bailey.

M. Curiel

We said, "Oh, now we've finally got our circus." We were like forties. It was a little late, but...

A. Curiel

But yes, the circus is beautiful. The circus life is beautiful. It's the most incredible life. I don't know the rest about the—if I got a chance to be born again, that's what I would do. Here comes the moment when, now, my kids are in college, they are starting something. I push them to do it. My son says, "Dad, you don't want to me be like you?" I said, "No, you have to be better than me because I don't want you to fight against the winds. I don't want you to fight in the storms." Take down the tent because the tornado came, and they give you ten minutes to tear down all your stuff and run away. I don't know how many times we had to do that? Hundreds.

F. Loter

And if you don't show up for that tear down, you're...

A. Curiel

You're in trouble. But I tell him, "Later on, you'll recognize that there are things make your life with flavor, make your life different. Those are small things so then your things make you different." Me, I never think, "Here comes the day when I have to say, 'that's it.'" One day, when I do the trapeze act and I see my brother, my younger brother, he flies so incredibly easy, and I had problems to do my tricks. I said, "I think it's time to quit." It was hard for me, very hard. I cried my last day. I said bye and that was it. Like a month later, we were working in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, big people, big show, lot of circus people come to the circus. The circus was packed, and here comes my older brother.

He said, "Alfredo, put your clothes, put your ties, put your arm bands on. You're going to fly today." I said, "No," he said, "Yes!" "No, no, no," I said, "Look, it's a lot of people, circus people here. Put in the young people. They look beautiful." He said, "No, no, no, no. I want you right there." I said, "Why you want me?" He said, "Alfredo, you were great in the trapeze and this is what the people love, to see you, some crazy guy, right there and you're going to do it." And I did it and I did

my tricks. Everything was okay and my nephew thanks me he said, “Thank you, Uncle, because without you we couldn’t do anything like that.”

You know me right now, but when I was over there, I was—Mr. D.R. Miller, the owner of Carson and Barnes, he told me, he said, “I like to see you in the trapeze all the time because you do something different every night. You’re a crazy guy in the air.” I took a lot of risk, in other words. I do many dangerous things and blah, blah, blah. But you never think in the circus, one day it’s going to be over. This is my point. It doesn’t matter how good you are, one day you are going to—if you’ve got your career, like my kids and how they prepare for their life, one is going to be doctor, the other one is going to be in the ocean. I don’t know what he wants to do over there.

- M. Curiel** He’s thinking marine biologist.
- B. Loter** I even thought that...
- M. Curiel** Big words.
- A. Curiel** Big word for me.
- B. Loter** ...circus was going to be forever for me. I even thought circus was going to go on.
- A. Curiel** Yes, There are beautiful parts but there are sad parts. The sad part is you travel to the most incredibly beautiful and big cities in the world and now, I’m stuck in Hugo, Oklahoma.
- M. Curiel** You’re not stuck. You can go. (Laughter)
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, how did you two meet?*
- M. Curiel** In the circus.
- A. Curiel** In the circus. Well, yes. It was in the circus.
- M. Curiel** He came from Mexico, I was already on the circus and that two week period I was talking about, yes, we hooked up in that two week period and...
- A. Curiel** But the funny thing is, at that time, like I told you, I don’t speak good, I still don’t speak good English. But she speaks Spanish so I wanted to be her friend to catch in other girls because that was my point.

M. Curiel I'm glad I know this now...

A. Curiel We married in Laredo, Texas. After that, after we married, we lived together for almost twenty-five years, twenty-six years.

M. Curiel More like thirty. I was counting. (Laughter)

A. Curiel And one good day, probably we tire and we separated and now, we're okay. The kids are here, my kids are here, they love me, and they love her.

M. Curiel He lives in my son's room. We divorced, but he's still living in the house. (Laughs)

A. Curiel I'm still paying the rent, lights, everything, so...

M. Curiel Not everything! Shut up.

A. Curiel And buy a car.

B. Loter Yes, but most of our family, brother-in-laws or...

M. Curiel Yes, it seems like they never leave.

B. Loter They're still family.

M. Curiel Yes.

B. Loter They aren't just like, "Get out of here," and you're gone. You're still—we know you.

A. Curiel Yes, like I'm...

F. Loter My neighbor's husband still comes back and they're divorced.

M. Curiel That's my oldest daughter.

A. Curiel My daughter, she...

F. Loter Claudette's husband, off and on.

A. Curiel ...divorced and her ex-husband is my best—is like my son.

B. Loter Darlene and Nick.

F. Loter How many, now?

M. Curiel Terry and Scott.

B. Loter Terry and Scott.

A. Curiel They make us...

Nykolaiszyn *They're still family.*

B. Loter Yes, they're still family.

Nykolaiszyn *They're still family.*

M. Curiel And when she divorced my uncle, I said, "Well, that's great and all, but I want you to know, Scott's my uncle."

A. Curiel No, no, it's, we've got something, I think, in our life...

F. Loter We go down and we visit him.

A. Curiel ...in our life and the circus makes you a little bit—we got our roots from Americans, from Italians, from Gypsies, from different kind of traditions and roots. If anything, even if you don't know you're adopted, like him, for me, is my uncle. He's Uncle Billy. He's my family. His problems are my problems. You understand me? That is the beauty of the circus, probably, because in the...

Nykolaiszyn *I'm going to switch gears for a second on you.*

B. Loter Sure.

A. Curiel Go ahead.

Nykolaiszyn *So when the circus comes back and you all are in winter quarters, what are you doing?*

M. Curiel I love you honey, but the season's over. (Laughter)

F. Loter That's about what it is, too.

A. Curiel That's true. That's true.

Nykolaiszyn *Are you working any, are you just taking it easy, or are you trying to do stuff for next season?*

F. Loter A lot of times they go out and get jobs.

B. Loter Go out and get a real job.

F. Loter When I come off the road, the last time, I was with the VFW and everything, but I did a tent sale one time. I put up a big top and sold spaces for a flea market, just to do something.

Parkinson You didn't put the big top up. Your husband and I did. (Laughter)

M. Curiel No, wintertime is...

F. Loter But I put out flyers and stuff and it went all around. I did real good with it.

M. Curiel Wintertime is our relax time, but in the same time, we practice. We practice a new act if we have something on our minds. We work with animals. We practice the horses all winter.

Parkinson Make wardrobe.

M. Curiel Make wardrobe for the next year.

F. Loter And we do visit each other.

M. Curiel Yes. We're big on Thanksgivings and Christmases, because that is our "everybody-together" time.

Parkinson And we started a Showmen's Club so we could draw other people in. They didn't have anybody to visit with.

M. Curiel And we had a great big Christmas party for the Showmen's Club and invited everybody, even if they weren't members, just to open the arms of—and everybody got to see each other that they hadn't seen all year or whatever.

F. Loter And eat.

Parkinson And eat.

M. Curiel Well, of course, and eat.

B. Loter Yes, I still own a cotton candy machine.

M. Curiel Yes, we all own one of those. I own three snow cone machines. (Laughs)

B. Loter We just...

M. Curiel And we work the winter parades, if we want. We do other things in the winter.

F. Loter Teach the smaller kids. And Moira homeschooled her kids. They only went to public school how long?

M. Curiel Well, my son started in fourth grade and my daughter, that's now in her third year of college, she started in the eighth grade—public school.

F. Loter Public school. They were all homeschooled.

B. Loter I made it to the seventh.

M. Curiel I did too. My daughter went into the eighth grade because I couldn't find the books to teach her that year. They only went to a certain level, the books that I was teaching her out of. I couldn't find the books for eighth grade so I put her in the public school. They tested her and she tested post high school. But she didn't want to go up any further because she was afraid, she's small. She's short. She didn't want to be in a big kid's class and somebody not her age, so she went right into the eighth grade, and just went through it.

F. Loter Jumped from what? She went to McAlester first.

B. Loter Alfredo.

A. Curiel You can only question about hard questions.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, before you leave us, you mentioned that you're stuck in Hugo.*

A. Curiel No, no, well it was what I said.

Nykolaiszyn *I know, but you've been everywhere, you've seen all over the country.*

A. Curiel Many things.

Nykolaiszyn *Many different places. I know your family's here, but why did you come back to Hugo? Why do you continue to stay in Hugo?*

A. Curiel Okay. One important thing—after we divorced, my ex and I, we made agreement. I said, “You don't have to work,” because she looking for work and I said, “Don't worry about it, I can go and work in any circus,” and believe me, the funny thing is I make more money in the circus now than when I was performing, my knowledge. I said, “You stay there and

whatever you need, I will take care of.” Well, I took care of everything for more than seven years—six years, seven years—and I was in the circus. One day, I came back here and my son, he told me, he said, “Dad, I see you two weeks a year. Only two weeks in a year. Why don’t you look at something in the city and work there?” You know what? I said, “Okay.” He said, “I play soccer, I do this, and I want to you go with me because you’re a good player. You play soccer very well and I want to work with you.” He didn’t tell me exactly, but he wanted to be close to me. I’m addicted to my kids. I love them with all my heart. I love my kids with all my heart, and I said, “Okay, I’m going to try to see what’s going on.”

The first year was easy. I got money in my pockets, a lot of money from past years. I got it, and I spent it and I spent it and spent it and I spent. I said, “I’m going to find some job,” but in Hugo, you don’t find anything good. So finally, the good thing is, if they need a welder to weld something, I’ve got a lot of friends and they know me, they’ll call me. If they need a driver, I’ve got a CDL, commercial [driver’s license]. I can drive big semis. I can do this, handyman. What do you need? Paint the house? I’ll do it. So this is what I do to survive in this time. But it was for one thing only, my kids. Now, my kids now, they’re grown up. Some are already married, they go out. My daughter is in college in Massachusetts. My son is going to go out so Hugo, bye-bye.

See, I come from different roots, guys. A lot of people say, “You are very crazy, stupid Alfredo, because you still”—this is the truth, they say, “You still help your ex. You still help your kids. Your kids are grown up. You still give and take care of them. You’re still paying lights, that, that, and that. Well. Wait a minute. That woman lived with me for thirty years. She’s the mother of my kids and I love my kids. I remember my grandmother told me, she said, “Never marry by the church because if you marry by the church you’re going to be married for the rest of your life, even if you separate.” Unfortunately, I was married by church. So I’m a good Catholic. I can’t kill her, but I can divorce her. I live under the law of United States and that is why I’m here. But let me tell you something, I got just two years over here. This is my second year. Tell me, which city of the United States you want to know and I can tell you. What you want, what is the best place to eat, what is best place to sleep.

Finchum *What’s your favorite one, then?*

A. Curiel Honestly? My favorite?

Finchum *Yes.*

A. Curiel You don’t even know. Chicago.

Finchum *Chicago?*

B. Loter Mine's Dallas.

A. Curiel Chicago, to me, it's Chicago and Baltimore. Baltimore is clean.

B. Loter In the summer, right?

A. Curiel So nice.

Nykolaiszyn *Yes.*

A. Curiel Well, yes, unfortunately. I work with Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey for two years and we traveled in big cities, beautiful cities. Also, for many years we traveled in the United States. Practically, forty years in United States so I know every city and here and Alaska, Hawaii, what else? Every state in the mainland and every city.

B. Loter Yes, but you want to be around your own kind, which is Hugo, California, or Florida. (Laughs) That's it.

A. Curiel Well, here is a lot of friends—and Las Vegas.

B. Loter Yes, Las Vegas, too.

A. Curiel Now, Las Vegas is like, everybody wants to live in Vegas

Nykolaiszyn *And why do you want to be around your own kind?*

B. Loter Because some people don't know how, we talk to them, they don't understand us. They don't believe us because we've lived a different life. You know what I mean?

A. Curiel The place I worked, in the place I worked, I worked with like twenty people...

B. Loter Like, it took me two years to answer a phone. I mean, that's not normal.

A. Curiel ...and you know how many friends I got over there? None. Everybody goes outside to smoke a cigarette, I go straight to my job, go out to lunch, sleep a little bit in my truck, eat something, go back, and come back. But if these people were circus people, I could talk to them about trapeze or something.

B. Loter I understand because I know what it is. But some of the things I've told

my friends, they don't believe you because it's sort of unbelievable—like fire-eating. I'm a fire-eater. Well, "Yeah, sure." But whatever I say, I can back it up. You know what I mean?

A. Curiel But this is the truth.

B. Loter It's hard to talk to regular people in the first place.

A. Curiel And now if you see my friends on Facebook, it's the circus people, just the circus people. We talk for hours, do nothing.

Nykolaiszyn *Do you think the towners in Hugo are open to you all?*

B. Loter Not really.

A. Curiel Not really.

B. Loter They don't understand us.

A. Curiel Not really. I came to Hugo because when I was married, my ex-mother-in-law, she was sick and we lived in San Antonio, Texas. My ex-wife said, "I've got to go see my mom because..." and so we came over here and we parked in her place. That's it, right there. Then, we worked and we came back, we went out, and we made our own circus. The name of my circus was Circus Del and we worked for three years until Katrina, the hurricane, put me out of business. They caught me close to Jackson, Mississippi, and I was right there. I spent money and I don't know, probably because I was a good person, because, see, we don't work for weeks because we can't go out. There's no gasoline to put in the trucks. We had to go to someplace to the National Guard Armory and they gave us water, ice, or something. I had to pay my workers, my performers, even if you hadn't worked. One day, my daughter, she was my treasurer, she said, "Dad, we don't have any more money. Think of what you're going to do." I said, "Go back to Hugo." That's what I did. I gave one guy \$200, the other one another \$300. I had to give them something, because we, in the circus, you're my family.

B. Loter Yes.

A. Curiel I had to give them something for that, at least to drive 200 miles. The good Lord helped me, and we came back to Hugo. We tried to reopen again, but one of my daughters said, "No, Dad, I don't want to go in the circus because I want to be a mom." My other daughter, Claudette, she was here. She was my promotion head of the circus, her and her husband, and they wanted to divorce. They couldn't do the job good because of that. So I got everything against me. My divorce, my family,

my circus, the Lord probably, the bad weather, and I said, “I think that’s it.” I closed the circus for good. I still have my little winter quarters somewhere. Once in a while, I go to see the garbage that’s the trailer. I decided and then I go to Ringling, Barnum and Bailey. For years, and later on, somebody else called me and said “I need a tent master,” I said, “I’m ready. I know how to set up every tent in the world: Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Americans.”

Nykolaiszyn *How did you learn how to be a tent master?*

A. Curiel How you do it, when you’re kids...

B. Loter You had to do it.

Nykolaiszyn *It’s just hard work?*

A. Curiel When you’re a kid, and your father said...

B. Loter Drive the stake.

A. Curiel ...“Drive your stake and pull this guy line all the way to there because over there, there is going to be one stake. It has to be exactly what it is.” But I don’t know, count, steps. “This is the long, this is the right. This is what da, da, da...”

B. Loter I think the men of the circus got the worst because we had to do everything.

A. Curiel That’s what I learn. I tell you...

B. Loter And the girls got to perform and the easier jobs.

A. Curiel But I think, I started to be a circus owner when I was eleven years old because my father was not a circus person, my mom, yes, but not my father. My father, after my mom died, had two kids, me and my sister. She lives in Las Vegas, lives with my grandmother, my mom’s mother and is in the circus. I didn’t meet my father until I was thirty, thirty-three, years old. Because my father was like a politician in Mexico, in my mind, I wanted to be like my father. Smart. I didn’t want for, one day, my father to see me and think I’m stupid. So I started to learn every book I got, bibles—any kind of bibles—Buddha, anyone. I learned it, I learned it, I learned it. Then when my family, my brothers, they knew how I got so much knowledge, they put me in charge of the problems in the circus. In Mexico, with money, you can buy anything.

Then I bought a little carnet, we call them. I’m part of one of the biggest

parties, like in the United States, democrats and you know what I mean? But it wasn't in the power at that moment, and also, I said, "I'm a lawyer," because the name of the circus was Circus Beckman. Then, if you got a problem I would call and say, "Excuse me, it's me, Mr. Alfredo Beckman, the lawyer. Alfredo Beckman. I'm the owner of the circus. What's happening? What problem is over there?" Well, they tell me the problem, and I say, "Okay. Tomorrow, I'm going to fly from Mexico City to there." I was lying because I was in the same city. "Okay," I said, "Tomorrow I'm going to be there. I'm going to fly tonight and I'm going to meet you guys." Let me tell you something, you know how many times I took the circus out of the problems, people out of the jail? Because I know the law in my country and I don't let the lawyers and I don't let the judge talk, because I want to be like my father. The last time when I see my father, my daughter Claudette was ready to be born in 1982. He's dead.

- M. Curiel** Claudette will be proud you remembered that. (Laughs)
- A. Curiel** See, here, still here probably, I'm nobody. In Mexico, probably, I can still be Mr. Alfredo Beckman. (Laughs) People remember me. But all the stuff, I give thanks to the circus for. The circus makes you—if you got in an accident and somebody dies in the accident, you had to go and talk with the press, with the policemen, with the law, and then put everybody out. With talk and money, then everything is done. I sometimes, I said, "I miss all the stuff." What's in Hugo? There isn't—my kids and her. Probably, we'll live for many years and *costumbre* [habit], probably. I give you the word *costumbre* so you can...
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, we asked Billy and Alfredo about how they felt about people in Hugo, the towners. Do you feel like they're accepting of you all?*
- F. Loter** Now they are. I went to school here and I still run across people that I went to school with. They treat us a lot different.
- M. Curiel** Most of the children in school are good friends with at least one circus kid. It's a small town and from way back when, they've known the circus kids. Now they're grown-ups and now they're all...
- F. Loter** Billy was born here and we lived at the fairgrounds in wintertime. My mother was there, my dad was out on another circus that he took out, and that was...
- Parkinson** Don E. Kerr.
- F. Loter** Don E. Kerr Brothers.

Parkinson Well, there's another word.

F. Loter Donniker.

M. Curiel Slang.

F. Loter For the toilets.

M. Curiel We called them donnikers.

F. Loter So my dad...

Parkinson But the name of the circus was D-O-N, E., as in an initial—K-E-R-R. It was like an inside joke.

F. Loter Yes, they called it Don E. Kerr and my dad said he called it that because it was a bunch of shit. (Laughter) And that's a true story.

Parkinson They opened in Broken Bow.

F. Loter The guy that they had selling tickets and everything, he decided he was tired of it and he somehow stole the money and took it with him and left them some tuna fish or something for Thanksgiving dinner. (Laughs) That was Happy Hanks.

M. Curiel I don't know Happy Hanks.

Parkinson That was...

F. Loter That was before your time.

M. Curiel There you go.

Parkinson He was off of Tex Carson. He did a long time ago, but there are a lot of funny things that went on.

F. Loter But they were trying to make a buck to feed the family in the wintertime. My dad had a bad habit, there was a grocery store here called Kay's Grocery. They'd run a tab and then go out in the summertime and work and pay it off. Well, we all had to go work and help pay this off. Then we were broke for about two or three months because we were paying off the grocery bill. And I hated it.

Parkinson Butter was a dime, bread was a dime.

F. Loter What?

- Parkinson** Butter was a dime, bread was a dime. Something else was a dime. Actually, the circus trailer park was right down the road here, about three blocks.
- F. Loter** Where that salvage yard is.
- Parkinson** Momma would send one of us, usually me, because I was shy and always stayed at home, “Go get some butter, Terry Lee.”
- M. Curiel** What?
- Parkinson** “Go get some butter,” and I’d have two dimes, one for bread, one for butter. But somehow I always lost one dime, but I always brought back the butter. I don’t know how I did that.
- M. Curiel** It’s that ten cents worth of candy you used to eat.
- Parkinson** Probably.
- F. Loter** Well, when we were in Dallas in the wintertime, we lived in the bus, a big bus, at that time. Momma would always send me to the store for milk and at that time, there were no cardboard cartons. I would bring this milk back and just when I got to the trailer, I’d drop that milk and break it, and I had to make the second trip to go get it again.
- Parkinson** Thinking of the family and how the town treats us, I divorced and moved back in 2006. I met a man and we started dating, and he said, “You said you used to be in the circus,” and I said, “Yes,” and he said, “Did you know the girl they used to call Tippy Toes?” Well, come to find out, he knew all my circus friends in the winter, where I knew them in the summer, ten or fifteen people. He knew every one of them and that just helps our relationship because he can talk circus. He was around it. It’s very interesting to me.
- F. Loter** Are you talking about Schuler?
- Parkinson** Yes. But he named off every one of them, “Oh yes, I know what happened to her, where she’s at...” and it was pretty neat.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Favorite circus owner to work for?*
- F. Loter** Dory Miller and he’ll always be my favorite. I said if I ever got on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, I was going to use him for a lifeline because he knew everything and never forgot anything. He has always been a great man for me. Who was yours?

M. Curiel I'm trying to think.

F. Loter I'm about the only one that fought with him.

M. Curiel I'm trying to figure out which one paid me the most. (Laughs)

F. Loter Well, it wasn't the Ringling Show.

M. Curiel No, I didn't go—well, I went on concession on Ringling.

F. Loter Ringling Brothers Circus paid the worst salaries in show business because you had the, "On the Ringling Show."

Parkinson Ted Carter, I never got paid, so... (Laughter) I couldn't say that. I worked for family.

F. Loter I've hauled elephants for Dory. I've made trips for Dory. I've done a lot of stuff for Dory.

M. Curiel She's asking me. I know she was! (Laughter)

F. Loter But you can't think of an answer.

M. Curiel Oh, I can think of all kinds of show owners that I worked for. Every one of them was good in their own way, I guess. I didn't ever not get along with any of them.

Parkinson Thinking about the insurance deal, who paid for when your face got crushed by the elephants?

F. Loter Gee Gee.

M. Curiel Gee Gee.

Parkinson I was thinking that outside.

F. Loter You didn't know that?

M. Curiel I wouldn't have thought about that.

F. Loter Gee Gee Engesser.

Finchum *So your face got crushed by an elephant?*

M. Curiel Oh, she exaggerates.

F. Loter Not really.

M. Curiel No, actually, I got...

F. Loter Beat up. (Laughs)

M. Curiel Beat up is what I was going to say, actually. Beat up. I was working and we were in a park in Canada, and she always told me to stay away from this one elephant because she would swing her trunk. Well, I stayed away from it. It was the other elephant that I should have worried about. (Laughs) She would raise—because we used to do mounts where they raise their leg and you get on the back of the elephant or you stand on their leg, depending on what trick you were going to do. The elephant was real fast about raising its leg and I was used to it, but I guess I let my guard down one day and she raised it, knocked my feet out from under me—because I was holding the head piece—knocked my feet out from under me, and I fell back. They used great big railroad ties as the ring curb so when I did that, it knocked me out cold. This elephant proceeded to take her trunk, pushing me against this railroad tie while I was unconscious. Well, next thing I knew I was in an ambulance going to the States, Burlington, Vermont, and I had four breaks and fractures around my eye and I broke here. (Gestures)

Parkinson Knocked your teeth out.

M. Curiel Got my ear cut in the back. I mean, it was all minor stuff, but that's what she was talking about. I hadn't thought of that in years. It's something that's just in the past, I guess. But yes, that was my accident, per se. But it wasn't the elephant's fault, either. It was something that happened, but yes, they paid all the medical bills.

F. Loter Well, I worked elephants. I had worked elephants, pulling tent and stuff like that on George Matthews Circus and Sells and Gray, when I was young. I wasn't afraid of the elephants. I respected them, and you know what to do and what not to do. They weren't bad elephants, then. But I've been on shows with bad elephants. One year, over on Gopher Davenport's show, I took approximately fifteen guys to the hospital that this one elephant had—he would pick them up and slam them down on the ground on their butt and then rake them. Oh, my lands, that was terrible!

Parkinson Was that Boo?

F. Loter No, it was Tommy.

Parkinson Oh, Tommy was...

F. Loter He was awful.

Parkinson He was a bad seed.

F. Loter He put my...

Nykolaiszyn *Who are they?*

Finchum *They're elephants, I think.*

M. Curiel The elephants are...

Parkinson Elephants are our friends.

M. Curiel Elephants are like saying...

Parkinson We're raised with them.

M. Curiel ...Dixie. They're only so many of them out there. If they're in the business, you go, "Oh, Dixie was so and so." The elephants are the same way. They're registered with a name and that name stays with them.

F. Loter Dory always had his elephant named Dixie.

Parkinson And we all know them from, I had a...

M. Curiel I used to work Mary, Kay, Susan, what was that other big one? Mary, Kay...

F. Loter Dorothy?

Parkinson No.

M. Curiel ...Susan, and then I worked...

Parkinson On Carson and Barnes?

M. Curiel Yes, there were the three big elephants.

Parkinson Barbara?

M. Curiel Barbara was the other big one.

Parkinson My friend, Barbara.

F. Loter Well, it was Barbara and...

M. Curiel See, we knew these elephants, you knew that Kay was a good elephant, Barbara was a good elephant, and you knew all these.

Parkinson They had reputations like people.

F. Loter But weren't Barbara and the others, aren't they the runners?

M. Curiel Yes, they'd take off, but I was never on there when they took off.

F. Loter No, but if they took off, you better just get out of the way.

M. Curiel Yes, they were the kind that—and they ran together. Most of the time it was my friend, Lucy [Loyal], right? You met Lucy. We talked about this the other day, where she would grab on the wire going out the back door because it was the back entrance. They'd take off out the back and she'd just grab one of the guy lines on the way out and they'd keep on going and she'd just slide down the rope and go on.

Parkinson And one of the kids, they'd run between the trailers, and you could feel your trailer doing this (gestures swaying motion), "Oh, there's an elephant loose." I mean, you just, you knew, even when you were little, you knew.

F. Loter I remember the time that I was getting laundry out and going in the trailer with it, and somebody hollered about the elephants running. I threw the laundry and jumped in the trailer! The laundry went everywhere. (Laughs)

M. Curiel Yes, but the elephants do have their own names and their own personalities and their own reputations.

Finchum *All girls?*

F. Loter Yes, you'll learn all that.

M. Curiel No.

Finchum *No? Well, the ones you named off were female names.*

M. Curiel Well, Tommy was the boy. He was an African elephant and he was a bad seed.

F. Loter Right, but African elephants do not have a brain like the Indian

elephants. African elephants, you can teach them something one day, you better re-teach them tomorrow before the show, because they forget. They've got a smaller brain. Then you've got swamp elephants and you've got over the land, like desert elephants. They are the ones that go in the swamp and are long-legged. The desert elephants are short legged.

- M. Curiel** Didn't know that, did you?
- Finchum** *No.*
- M. Curiel** Yes, I rode an elephant. The ones I was telling you about were Gee Gee, Roxie, and Michelle, were the three elephants' names up there.
- F. Loter** And in real life, in people life, Gee Gee and Roxie were sisters.
- M. Curiel** Yes. The owners of these elephants, one lady was Gee Gee, her sister was Roxie, and I think they have a...
- Parkinson** And I live in Mugsy's, the other sister's house. (Laughs)
- Nykolaiszyn** *Did you all have show names? Stage names?*
- F. Loter** No.
- Parkinson** No. It's just her.
- Nykolaiszyn** *You just go by your names?*
- F. Loter** That's like my great-grandson. His name is Balian Valentine. Well, he's lived here and he is Balian Curiel, now.
- Parkinson** In his own little head. Don't tell him any different.
- F. Loter** He'll tell everybody, and he'll fight with you over that.
- M. Curiel** And he made the teacher.
- Parkinson** No, we were introduced mostly by...
- F. Loter** His name...
- Parkinson** Well, Vicky and my sister and Moira had an act. They were Rebecca and La Moira, just because they probably did four or five other acts in the show, trying to stretch it out.
- F. Loter** Terry can't find Balian on there.

M. Curiel Balian told me, “Look at the back part here.”

F. Loter I told you, he’s the only blonde on there.

M. Curiel Five-year-old grandson.

F. Loter What did he tell you?

M. Curiel I said, “Well, where are you?” He was in a float last week and I go, “Where are you?” I said, “I can’t...” there was a bunch of little kids, “Which one are you?” He says, “Look at this part right here. That’s me right here. See this part?” (Laughter)

F. Loter He had on a white shirt and all the rest of the kids are Indian or whatever, they’re all dark. So he’s the only blonde on there.

M. Curiel He was the cowboy.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, if you didn’t work for the circus and you could be anything in the world you wanted to be, what would you be?*

M. Curiel I always wanted to be a nurse or a stewardess, an airline stewardess when I was young.

F. Loter Well, I had, one time...

M. Curiel That was my thing. I wanted, I thought, “Oh, that would be cool, because I can still travel everywhere!” Or a nurse, I don’t know why I ever thought of a nurse.

F. Loter Well, I, this one time, had an opportunity to be a buyer for exotic animals, but I had to give up my child to do it, let them stay with Mother or something, put them in their custody, because I’d be flying everywhere. So I didn’t do that. I’ve done public relations. I’m a booking agent.

M. Curiel That’s not what she was asking. What would you like to be?

F. Loter Well, I’m trying to decide. I don’t have any...

Parkinson It’s a little late, now. You’re seventy. (Laughter)

F. Loter I wanted to write a book at one time and I probably still could, about the elephants that escaped here and everything, and let me tell my story.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, what was your favorite position in the circus? What did you like most?*

F. Loter I liked public relations and meeting the big wigs of the cities and talking to them, and I was able to talk to them. I was what you call a fixer. I did weight scales for D.R., but I could talk to people, and I liked doing it. It was a challenge. I need something with a challenge.

Nykolaiszyn *What are weight scales?*

F. Loter Where the trucks go through. I fixed them to where the trucks wouldn't have to stop and you do that by sliding a little envelope across the counter and they go by. That's just the way they did it. If they do get stopped, if the cops stop somebody, you keep them from going to jail. I've gone to court for guys that they were going to put in jail for no driver's license or suspended license. Talked them out of it. And I was good at it.

Nykolaiszyn *The fixer.*

Parkinson What I wanted to do, I wanted to run away from the circus and join a home, which I eventually did. I got married and raised exotic animals most of my married life.

Nykolaiszyn *Wow.*

F. Loter In the broad range.

Parkinson And sold to pet stores, zoos, African hunts.

Finchum *What kind of animals?*

F. Loter Well in a broad range.

Parkinson Emu, ostrich, red kangaroos, wallabies, pot-bellied pigs, miniature cows, miniature horses, monkeys. Any kind of bird you can think of, from a cage bird to swans and peacocks.

Finchum *Here in Hugo, or somewhere else?*

Parkinson No, I lived outside of Fort Worth.

F. Loter But in a general thing, we've all done something, kind of distant related to what we did.

M. Curiel They would know everybody.

F. Loter Who's that?

M. Curiel Circus fans, in general.

Nykolaiszyn *What do you think about the circus fans?*

F. Loter Some of them are okay, but some of them are really phonies. There are some that you like and some that you don't. There are some that look at you like they don't believe what you're saying.

Parkinson I think my opinion is, circus fans, we couldn't do without them because they do keep people's minds busy with the circus. They promote it.

M. Curiel On the townier side?

Parkinson If it wasn't for circus fans, I think show business wouldn't be the same, now.

F. Loter There's a *Circus Report* that used to come out of California.

M. Curiel Oh, that was another thing on that paper, on one side it says, "CircuSpace." Have you been there?

Nykolaiszyn *Yes, I have actually. It's like a MySpace for the circus world.*

M. Curiel Yes and they have a kid's page and everything set up. Yes. Okay.

F. Loter Okay, but the *Circus Report* comes from where?

Parkinson Hollywood.

M. Curiel Hollywood, California.

Parkinson And then we've got the *White Tops*.

Nykolaiszyn *What are some of your, just, real favorite circus memories? When you think back to your time...*

F. Loter Oh, there are so many.

Nykolaiszyn *When you get together with family are there those stories that you always tell?*

F. Loter Well, we tell stories...

M. Curiel When we were all kids, mostly.

F. Loter We'd tell stories on each other then laugh. That's about it, "Do you remember so and so..."

Parkinson Like we did out here last weekend with my niece.

F. Loter My brother that lives in Granbury, he's pretty funny. He tells a lot of stories. He had trained horses and dogs and his wife did foot juggling. Our grandfather, great-grandfather did foot juggling. He was ninety-something years old, foot juggling in front of...Safeway?

Parkinson A dime store, some dime store in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

F. Loter Then my Grandma Marie, when she got off the road, she did demonstrations back in stores, like for vegetable deals and she'd show them off and sell that stuff. I've got a picture of them doing that.

Parkinson That's an old one too.

F. Loter But it's just a lot of stuff.

Parkinson Want to hear a funny story about polygamy?

Finchum *Why not?*

Parkinson My father's mother, Grandma Marie, we were raised believing that she was adopted out of Sun Valley, Idaho. Well, after I started doing research, I found out her mother was one of three sisters and there were forty-eight children amongst them. She never knew that. I mean, I was shocked, totally shocked.

F. Loter If she did, she never told anybody.

Parkinson No, she didn't know it. My dad died in Bagley, Iowa, and after he passed, I found out his family founded that town. He didn't know this. It's just a weird way where you go back where you come from, I think. It's very strange. I wish he did know. It's very strange about the polygamist.

F. Loter Well, Grandma Marie always said that she was part of the Dalton family.

Parkinson Well, I have pictures that say Dalton on them.

F. Loter My father looked exactly like Emmitt Dalton.

Parkinson So did my dad, isn't that funny? (Laughter)

F. Loter Anyway...

Parkinson That was good, wasn't it?

Nykolaiszyn *That was good.*

F. Loter When the Daltons robbed the drugstore in Coffeerville, Kansas, my grandfather was up on the roof of the drugstore roofing it when they robbed that bank. Right after that's when he got Grandma Marie and tried to marry her everywhere. And she was young.

Parkinson We're supposed to be related to the James Gang on my mother's side, the Dalton Gang on my father's side.

F. Loter Well, Grandma Faye was married like thirteen times.

Parkinson That's not documented.

F. Loter Well, she was.

Parkinson She may have been married but I don't think she ever got divorced.

F. Loter Anyway, she's...

Parkinson I really don't. I think she just kept getting married and married and married.

F. Loter No, she was married to that lion trainer, Stokes. He married my grandmother and she was pregnant with my mother, but my mother's father's named Blondie Ward.

Parkinson And he was an all-around cowboy from 1950-something.

F. Loter And she went in behind the seats. My brother looks just like him. Barney looks just like him.

Parkinson Bill looks like my dad and my brother Barney looks like my mother's father, exactly to the T.

F. Loter I mean, you couldn't tell the difference if you looked at a picture. What else is there in the background? Harry James is our half-great uncle. He was the world's greatest band leader and trumpet player. He had his own band.

Parkinson He was in the circus business.

F. Loter He had a dance band, but he never would admit being in the circus until he got later in years.

Parkinson Way older. Then stigma, maybe, but you can type his name in anywhere and it'll tell his circus background.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, you all are living here in Hugo. You could live anywhere. Why do you live here?*

F. Loter I don't know, I met my husband and he was from Hugo. I went to school here. It's just a convenient place to live. It always was cheaper than the other places to live, but now it's not. The weather was good.

Parkinson I moved back here, I was married—oh, I don't know how long I was married—thirty-something years, longer than you [to Moira], a little bit longer than you.

F. Loter I'm still working on mine.

Parkinson Because this is where family lived and my retired friends. I can still go anywhere in the United States or wherever I want to go, but this is where I choose to live. I have friends that I've known all my life, like Lucy and the Rawls. We were raised with the Rawls.

F. Loter We've got a sister in Michigan and she says when something happens to her husband, she's moving back here to be next to us. And the sister in Florida, they'll all move back. My mother moved here and died here.

Parkinson That would be a scary thing. All of us back in the same...

F. Loter We'd sit around and laugh all the time. (Laughter) We can't get together without having a laugh party. You ought to have seen them the other night out here, acting like...

Parkinson At one o'clock in the morning, Moira and her daughter, Claudette, my niece, her momma's in Florida, which is also circus people. We sat out there until one o'clock and laughed so hard, and I haven't done that in years.

F. Loter Well, besides that...

Parkinson Just telling old stories.

F. Loter ...they had water fights and...

Parkinson Oh, yes. No, Moira had the water fights. We were running. (Laughter)

F. Loter Acting like a kid.

Finchum *What was your favorite city that you traveled through?*

Parkinson I like Granite, Oklahoma.

F. Loter That is a pretty place. Well, I'd like to live in Langston.

Parkinson It sticks out. The first time I was there, when I was maybe ten years old, the show I grew up on was very small, played very small towns, smaller than Hugo. My brother-in-law would always educate me on that area, and I went there on vacation after I was married because I wanted to go back and see. It's still my favorite city or town. You ever been there?

Finchum *No.*

Parkinson It's awesome.

F. Loter They've got a big high-security prison there.

Parkinson Yes, they do now. The town is flat, but right at the end of the town on the main street is this huge mountain, Granite Mountain. It's just uplifting. It's just real neat.

F. Loter I liked it in Alaska because I always said being up there, you're as close to God as you're going to get without being dead. It was beautiful country, open spaces. It was really something. But it would just take your breath away. Unsettled, drive around the corner, you might see a deer, or—I mean, a moose or a bear. In fact, I did meet a grizzly bear on the road. I stopped and just watched him because he was so big. But I'd like to live there. My favorite, another favorite place is I like the Ozarks. I always wanted to be in the Ozarks.

Finchum *Did someone ever tell us about making the nut?*

Nykolaiszyn *No.*

F. Loter Oh, you want me to tell you about making the nut?

Nykolaiszyn *Please, yes.*

F. Loter Well, when the circus, back then, years ago, would come to a town, they

wouldn't have a lot of money. They were in wagons and the elephants walked. They'd get to a town that they were going to set up in, they would take the wagon nuts off the hubs of the wheels, and they would take them to town to the mercantile store and put them up there where they could get their merchandise—more or less pawn them. They would get all the merchandise and feed and everything that they needed. Then, the store people would keep the nuts because you knew they wouldn't go anywhere without these. They'd go back to the lot, work their shows or trade horses, mostly, is what they were doing. They would make the nut and they'd go back to the store, pay the guy off, and redeem the nuts and put them on the wagons and go to the next spot. They did this all the time. But the show was more or less a front for trading horses, to draw the people in. They'd make their money off of trading horses.

- Finchum** *Well, in today's time, how do they do that from town to town? Like animal feed and stuff? Do they have to...?*
- F. Loter** Well, no, it's cash money.
- Finchum** *As you go?*
- F. Loter** They would give a buyer, a purchasing agent, "X" amount of dollars, like, "Here's \$200, go get feed," and you'd go back and check in your bills. If you needed more money, he'd give you some more. You'd go spend that and bring back the bills. It's just a continuous thing because you're feeding a lot of people and your animals.
- Parkinson** And there's a lot more money in it now than there was back then.
- F. Loter** They don't trade horses, now. They give them a show.
- Finchum** *Well, in the cookhouse, would the menu vary very much?*
- F. Loter** Well, it depends on the length of the move, to whether they had time to do certain things or if you had a day off, you might get something better that cooks longer.
- Parkinson** Sunday was chicken, mostly, fried chicken.
- F. Loter** A lot of times it was just bologna and sandwiches, bologna, cheese, and JELL-O or something like that.
- Parkinson** My momma's the best cook and everybody will tell you my momma's the best cook—for cooking real meals. She sure did.
- F. Loter** But it's all an experience. I mean, it takes special types of people to do

this because you don't know what's going to happen. You've got to be ready for anything.

Finchum *And you're moving constantly.*

F. Loter Yes, just like Billy was saying. You don't get very much sleep and if their truck was broke down, we'd have to go after it and still do whatever we did during the day, but you had to do it on the spot. If it was midnight, two o'clock in the morning, or six o'clock that evening, you had to be ready to roll.

Finchum *Would you do it all over again?*

F. Loter Yes. Yes, I have no regrets. There are some things I would've done maybe a little different, but I don't regret any part of my life.

Finchum *Well, living in such small quarters most of the year, you'd have to be very organized?*

F. Loter You have to get along.

Finchum *You can't collect much?*

Parkinson No, we never had much.

F. Loter Well, no, you don't collect much and you also learned if you take it out, put it back. Because all the clutter, there's a place for everything and everything in its place.

Parkinson And if you left it out and had a mom like ours, it was gone. She would find a new home for it.

F. Loter Well, you had to do the dishes, keep them done up. When we started out, you didn't have a lot of places to haul water so you had to do it accordingly. There are a lot of times that we would put a tub of water outside and let it warm to wash up in or wash dishes in.

Parkinson My mom only—my mom, not yours [joking to her sister Faye] only had, everybody had their plate. She didn't have extra. We didn't have extra cups or glasses to get dirty. I mean, she had that many, and I don't even remember having glasses. We had a cup.

F. Loter Well, plastic. Well, plastic wasn't out then. Not as bad. But I think Melmac, when it came out. We never used paper cups or paper plates. They cost too much. No paper towels.

Parkinson They weren't even any paper towels.

F. Loter Well, that's what I say. We had toilet paper.

Finchum *Where would you do your laundry from town to town?*

F. Loter Well, you go to the Laundromat.

Parkinson Or by hand.

F. Loter Where this Highland store is, down here, that used to be a laundry all along there, a big laundry. You'd take your number three washtubs full of clothes. When I was pregnant with Moira, I was slinging them in and out of that station wagon for Momma so she wouldn't lift them because she was more pregnant than I was. See, my brother was born in October and Moira was born in November.

Parkinson Bunch of hillbilly circus people. (Laughter)

F. Loter But now I know how to make lye soap. I can make wine. I'm a good cook. I bake for the club and fix stuff. So really you just fall into it. You've got to do what you've got to do. And I sew, I crochet, I embroidery. What else?

Parkinson My grandmother Faye used to crochet tights and sell them for three dollars a pair. Can you imagine crocheting a pair of tights?

F. Loter When my husband was in the hospital, I made macramé baskets, crocheted them for plants, all kinds of stuff. I've done everything, worked in Dan River Cotton Mill.

Parkinson Been a waitress.

F. Loter Let's see, I was a waitress in Shawnee.

Parkinson A&W Root Beer.

F. Loter And down in Alabama. And that's where I worked in the cotton mill and I learned, see, that's where my challenge comes in. I've got to have a challenge. Well, you had to learn to do so many looms, to get up there high. Well, when I learned to keep all of the looms rolling, we made sheets, I quit my job and went to work somewhere else because I did it. That's all I wanted to do.

Nykolaiszyn *You like that challenge.*

- F. Loter** Yes, and I guess that's the reason I messed around working elephants and stuff. The challenge was there. I just wanted to see if I could do it. I went back and got my GED. I wanted to do it. Not for any reason, just for me.
- Nykolaiszyn** *That self-satisfaction.*
- F. Loter** Yes. But I enjoyed it all. Like I say, I've done a lot of stuff, too. Only thing I regretted is my son dying as young as he was. He wasn't but thirty-seven. Then I married Gus, he's got a boy that's, Stevie's birthday was on the twenty-fourth and Billy's birthday was February second so they were that far apart. Well my son, when they were in school, I had to take Gus's son and put him in after-school tutoring because he was having trouble in school. My son would get mad because he couldn't go. He didn't need to go. He was pretty smart in show business, too. Well-liked, but he didn't make it. I still miss him today, and he died in 2000.
- Finchum** *And you will.*
- F. Loter** You saw my mother's tombstone out there [Showmen's Rest Cemetery], didn't you?
- Nykolaiszyn** *Sure did.*
- F. Loter** Well, my niece and my son are buried in the grave with her because she always wanted to take my son—she always said if she ever went to Hawaii, she wanted my son to go with her because he liked to do all that running around. Tasha was the same way, wasn't she? She liked to go with Tasha. How old was Tasha when she died?
- Parkinson** Twenty-seven.
- F. Loter** Twenty-seven. Anyway, we put them together so I guess they're having a good time. I even miss D.R., because he was a great guy. He taught me a lot of things, and I've got to get off this subject.
- Finchum** *Well, when did you retire from the business?*
- F. Loter** Well, I got sick on the road, '88, and I had everything wrong. I was having a lot of trouble just staying with it. We came home and were tearing down houses, old houses, and I got to where I couldn't even hold my head up. I had to sleep all the time. Well, I was a diabetic and that put the hiatus on a lot of stuff, and then I've got high blood pressure and no Thyroid, and what else?
- Parkinson** I don't know, ditto here, diabetic, high blood pressure, eating cookies.

F. Loter High cholesterol.

Parkinson Pretty soon I'll be like a new ride at Six Flags. (Laughs)

F. Loter Heart trouble, now. I've got heart trouble now. You're a diabetic, too, and you're eating all the cookies.

Parkinson I know. But they're thin. (Laughter)

F. Loter But it's just getting old. Somebody's got to do it, I guess. But I've enjoyed my life and when I married Gus, I never thought it would be that way, but I finally met the right guy. Him and I've been together ever since. He drove a truck for a long time, an over-the-road truck, and I hated every minute of it because we'd worked together so much in the past years. He said he didn't know how to leave the house if he didn't go to work. (Laughs) But he's been a truck driver for thirty years. I made him give up his CDL so he wouldn't go no more.

Parkinson He's sitting over there doing the recliner jockey thing now. [imitates snoring]

Finchum *Well, is there anyone in this next generation, the youngest generation, that's going to go into the circus or has it stopped?*

F. Loter I don't know. Really and truly, it is a dying art.

Parkinson We do have family that has children and grandchildren.

F. Loter Well, see, that niece and nephew of ours is going to be on *America's Got Talent*, which their name is Flores, so...

Finchum *What's their talent? What are they going to do?*

F. Loter You know the globe of death?

Parkinson They ride the motorcycle, the globe of death with a motorcycle.

F. Loter She's twelve and he's eight.

Parkinson My son is not interested. He used to go with my family, in the summer for vacations and he decided he didn't like show business. He liked show business, but he didn't want to live the life.

F. Loter Well, Gus's kids wouldn't either.

Parkinson He drives a tow truck and rentals and restores classic cars and doing what he wants to do. And I've never pushed it on him.

Nykolaiszyn *Family's important.*

F. Loter Yes.

Parkinson Yes.

F. Loter Anyway, let's see, what else I was going to tell you. I don't know, but our family is Irish gypsies on one side, Danish and Swedish on the other side. That's quite a combination—the partying kind and the tight kind. (Laughter) Now, they've left me to talk and I don't have anything to say. (Laughter)

Finchum *Are your parents buried at the Showmen's Rest?*

F. Loter No, just my mother. My dad's up in Bagley, Iowa. He had another wife and he was up there in Iowa. He died up there and he had that fast-spreading cancer. He got sick and two weeks later he was gone. He called me and told me that—he always called me his number one daughter. He said, “Well,” he said, “I've decided I don't like that chemotherapy and I'm not fighting it anymore,” and he was calling me to tell me bye. In no time, he was gone. But my mother, she lived here on my property in a small trailer, and she went down to watch her soap opera. I always cooked and she'd come up to the house to eat. I fed her all the time. I told Gus, I said, “Go down and get Mom,” I said, “Supper's ready and she's not coming up here.”

So he goes down there, he's going to pretend that it was real cold outside and he bundled up and he goes down to the trailer and he comes back and told me, he says, “She's gone.” I said, “What do you mean, she's gone? Where'd she go?” “No, she's gone.” She died sitting there watching that soap opera. My son died watching that same soap opera, *All My Children*. I said, “Don't put that thing on. I don't want to die!” (Laughs) I never would watch soap operas, anyway. But she died very fast and sudden and didn't suffer. She was sitting there like she was asleep.

Finchum *Doing what she wanted to do.*

F. Loter She was talking to a friend of hers when she died—I mean, she died right after that. But she was talking to Hazel and that was it. She was talking to Hazel a little after four and Gus went down there at five. So she hadn't been dead very long. Dr. Irwin said it was a massive heart attack. She wasn't sick that day or anything. Her and I had been

shopping and having a good time. She didn't plan on it because we got groceries that day.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, you've seen lots of changes in the circus business.*

F. Loter Oh, a lot of things changed.

Nykolaiszyn *Where do you think it's going to go into the future? Do you think people are still going to go to circuses?*

F. Loter Well, they're going to try to keep it going, but D.R.'s daughter, Dory Miller's daughter [Barbara Miller Byrd], is running Carson and Barnes now. Her daughters are into show business. I've seen Geary [Byrd] and he's retired and got a bunch of grandkids. Barbara Jane is just a typical grandma, but they try to keep it going. It's not like it used to be. It's a lot stricter now.

Finchum *A lot of regulations.*

F. Loter I imagine that the one they call Kristin, she'll probably keep it going. They've got elephants out there, endangered species [arc]. They've made Hugo. I mean, the town gets well when the show comes in because everybody's got money for the winter. And that's a lot of it. I imagine Mary [Rawls] had some stories, didn't she?

Nykolaiszyn *She did. She was great.*

Finchum *Do you have any interesting or favorite stories of when you were traveling, like from point A to point B?*

F. Loter Oh, there are so many things that happened. My husband is a jokester and we'd come up on a truck that was broken down, and the guy would come out there. And the guy always broke down in front of a liquor store. Anyway, this guy walks back to where we were and he says, "My truck's over heated." So Gus gets out and casually walks up there, takes the gas tank top off, he said "It's full of fuel," just dead serious. It makes this guy so mad!

One time, I don't know where it was at. We had a driver that stopped on the side of a hill in a truck that had lousy brakes, put a rock under it, to run back down the hill to pick up some sandwiches that a motorcyclist lost. He was mad because they weren't anything but peanut butter and jelly. I laughed over that, and then, let's see. That same guy, one day, broke down, that same truck, and the cops were there. The first thing he does is tell the cop—I was walking back. I heard it. Gus was driving the truck and I had our truck and trailer. I was walking back to see what was

the matter with this guy, why the cops had him. Just as I got up there where I could hear, he tells the cops he put a rock under his wheels because he didn't have any brakes. I turned around and told Gus, "Go on. I think I'm going to have a problem." That stuff happened all the time, a lot of funny stuff. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn

Would you ever do shows outside of the U.S.?

F. Loter

Oh, just in Canada. We did that because we were going to Alaska. But my daughter's been to Hawaii and the little one...

Parkinson

Singapore.

F. Loter

Well, the one that does hula-hoops has been to Singapore, where else, Columbia? I can't think of all the places she has been, but—Tokyo. Name the places off that Noella has been.

M. Curiel

Where Noella has been?

F. Loter

Yes.

M. Curiel

Japan, Singapore, Chile, Hawaii. We went to Singapore and...

F. Loter

Out of the country.

M. Curiel

Yes, I'm trying to think. We went to Hong Kong.

F. Loter

Well, didn't you go to Japan?

M. Curiel

Yes, we said that first.

F. Loter

But the food. Noella hated the food, didn't she?

M. Curiel

Oh, yes. They gave us per diem so we always had to choose where Noella wanted to eat. We don't eat fish. None of my kids were really fish eaters. I like shrimp, that's about it. So we would have to have—they [Japan] do have Kentucky Fried Chicken, they have Kenny Rogers Roasters Chicken, McDonald's, but the thing is, instead of potatoes, they always gave you rice so we'd have to do that. In Singapore, everything was shipped in from Australia, like the milk and the butter and all that stuff because it was kangaroo milk. So we didn't have a lot of milk there, but they made adjustments. We had a big party in Japan. They knew we didn't eat fish so they brought her a bag of potato chips. (Laughter)

F. Loter

She said everything smelled like fish.

M. Curiel Yes, just all fishy and we weren't... They liked her so much over there they would give her free milkshakes. She worked in a mall. They had a big spectacular thing going on and they'd give her all these free milkshakes, but she didn't like them because they were made with the milk and it tasted terrible.

Parkinson How many hula-hoops did she do at her age?

M. Curiel Fifty-two.

F. Loter Fifty-two hula-hoops.

Parkinson Did you ever look at the picture where he's got his hands? It always makes you...right here. (Laughter)

F. Loter Noella did fifty-two hula-hoops at the same time at that age. How old was she then?

Parkinson Anyway, that's funny!

F. Loter How old was your daughter?

M. Curiel She was six, I think, when we were in Japan.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, as we get ready to wind this one down, what's the one thing we should know about the circus and the circus life?*

F. Loter It is a hard life, and if you're prepared to work hard, you also play hard and fast.

M. Curiel It's not for everybody.

F. Loter No, it's not. You've got a certain amount of time to do what you've got to do, and in that twenty-four hour period, you better get some sleep because you're going to do it all again tomorrow.

Parkinson That wasn't in one word.

Nykolaiszyn *It doesn't have to be one word.*

M. Curiel No, it's not for everybody. The reason we have all survived it is because it was in our blood from the very beginning, and we grew up with it as a norm for us. And that's why we...

F. Loter Both sides of the family.

M. Curiel ...we have had...

Parkinson There's no business like show business. That's what I've got to say.

F. Loter Ethel Merman knows it all. That song really fits it.

Parkinson "There are no people like show people." Think of the words to that.

F. Loter "Like no people we know and everything about it is appealing..."

Parkinson You guys will need therapy when you're done with us. (Laughter)

F. Loter Well, yes, probably our family, especially. But there are a lot of stories that we could tell. A lot of things happened.

M. Curiel Yes, I would basically say just that. It's not for everyone and it's a hard life. You had to have not only one hundred percent, you'd better put two hundred percent into it because you're going to need every ounce.

F. Loter You can't go on there and fight with everybody. You've got to get along. It's one big family and you can't really make enemies because if you do, there might be fifteen more.

M. Curiel The saying is, "Be careful who you step on, on the way up because you're going to meet them coming down."

Nykolaiszyn *I take it it's a pretty tight community, even though there are different circuses.*

F. Loter That's what I say. The circus takes care of your kids because everybody knows what everybody's doing.

Parkinson [Sings] "There are no people..."

F. Loter That'll be in my head all night. (Laughter)

Parkinson I used to have it on the website.

F. Loter But that's a true song, if you stop and think about it.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, thank you for your time tonight. We appreciate it.*

----- *End of interview* -----