

Big Top Oral History Project
Interview Log

LOC Filename: afc2012003_00269_ms02
Interviewee: Robert Rawls
Interview Date: July 2, 2011

Minute Mark Topics presented in order of discussion on recording

00:00:00	Introduction
00:00:28	Place of birth
00:00:30	Ayres and Kathryn Davies Circus
00:01:05	Performing at age five
00:01:16	Rolling globe
00:01:45	Trampoline
00:01:57	Tight wire walker
00:02:04	Mother as teacher
00:02:56	Schooling
00:03:34	Fairyland Circus
00:04:01	Serving in Vietnam, survival key because of circus
00:04:50	Circus accident at age eight
00:05:50	Three years in hospital
00:06:10	Dangers in the circus
00:06:50	Circus as a tight knit group
00:07:02	Circus in Canada
00:07:22	Boss canvasman
00:07:44	Clyde Beatty-Cole Brothers
00:08:11	Three hours putting up tent
00:08:35	Royal Brothers Circus
00:09:10	Electrocution during tent setup in Canada
00:10:09	Dangerous occupation
00:10:16	Eight kids in family
00:10:36	Bit by bear at age three
00:11:24	Age 35, body worn out
00:11:36	Transition to management
00:11:43	Developing interest in art, due to accident
00:12:05	Circus painter
00:12:24	Opened sign shop
00:12:37	Wife worked on circus as secretary to owner
00:12:55	Clowns checking on children
00:13:31	Children raised on circus
00:13:47	Son became elephant handler with Kelly Miller Circus
00:14:46	Became Fire Chief of West Bryan County to give back to community
00:15:37	Children well versed
00:16:18	Paraffin wax on canvas tent circuses, waterproofing
00:16:37	Connecticut fire on Ringling Show
00:17:27	Performers, doing job
00:17:47	Inspectors on lot
00:18:36	Getting trucks on lot

00:18:56 Enjoyed job of manager
00:19:06 Television shows, commercials filming circus
00:21:16 Driving trucks
00:22:39 Elephant truck driving in Quebec
00:23:48 Elephants as dangerous animals
00:25:58 Circus as a place for elephants
00:26:17 Mistreatment of animals in early days
00:26:58 Truck numbering, designation and position on lot
00:27:45 Numbering origins
00:28:14 Process of painting a circus truck
00:31:27 Circuses Rawls has painted for
00:32:42 Working from sketches
00:33:24 Fitting artwork to individual trucks
00:34:53 Show teardown
00:35:25 Circus departments
00:35:39 Playing Camp Lejeune
00:36:05 Washington, DC riots
00:37:13 Kent State
00:38:07 Poster art
00:38:24 Trained in army as a printer
00:38:47 Attended Southeastern State University
00:39:52 Grandfathers painted
00:41:00 Making a living as a sign man
00:42:04 Hugo Elementary School mural
00:42:58 Heritage of Hugo mural
00:43:34 Ringling, Oklahoma
00:44:20 Circuses wintering in Hugo, OK
00:45:18 Being called a "gypsy" in school
00:45:47 Father as radio announcer in winter time
00:46:32 Mom maintaining house on \$25.00 a week
00:47:01 Lived most of life in poverty
00:47:13 Bath time
00:47:57 Becoming a clown
00:48:21 Antar Wazzan
00:48:28 How to act as a clown
00:49:15 Clown, as fill in act
00:50:29 Brother as D.R. Miller's protégé
00:50:51 Status of family in circus
00:52:49 Comfortable as manager
00:53:38 Lack of privacy
00:54:26 Circus for the Great Milwaukee Circus Parade
00:54:58 Twin cannon shots over big top
00:56:08 Elephants on Wall Street
00:57:28 Stories when showmen get together
00:58:35 Circus as dying art
00:58:41 Realistic paintings of work around circus
00:59:43 Sign making as boring
01:00:28 Politically related art

01:01:27 Showing art
01:02:39 Schmoozing as artist
01:03:36 Understanding logistics of circus
01:04:20 Front end of circus
01:04:40 Operating expenses per day
01:04:48 "Making the nut"
01:05:39 Two, two and three setups
01:07:27 Today's circus expensive for patrons
01:08:03 Circus under canvas tent, feel
01:08:21 Blue law in Canada
01:08:46 No such thing as a day off
01:09:09 Slower in old days
01:09:49 Every day as new adventure when younger
01:10:21 Best behavior around town people when younger
01:10:54 Tendency for visitors to open up trailer doors
01:11:54 Memories of Modern Trailer Park in Hugo, OK
01:12:42 Fond memories of Hugo, OK
01:13:26 Feeling of celebrity in Hugo, OK
01:13:37 Art in Hugo Public Library
01:14:02 Art in Angie's Circus City Diner
01:14:37 Showmen's Rest
01:15:28 Mother's heart problem
01:16:50 Memories of Mother performing
01:17:03 Training tactics for children
01:17:21 Balking
01:18:01 Responsibilities starting at age five for performing
01:18:36 Behavior in restaurants as family
01:19:24 Working hurt, sick
01:20:12 Stress on body
01:21:37 Trailer, sleeping accommodations growing up
01:22:37 Last day of season as big day
01:23:43 Last spec of the season
01:24:04 End of season on Kelly Miller Circus, Halloween party
01:24:28 Marriage failure on Kelly Miller Circus
01:26:16 Worked every job on circus
01:26:47 Contracts, handshakes
01:27:56 In hospital as a youth, dark part of life
01:28:33 "Run away from the circus and join a home," saying
01:29:04 End of interview