

Oral History Interview

with

Donna Moos

Interview Conducted by
Tanya Finchum and Juliana Nykolaiszyn
August 11, 2011

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

Oklahoma Oral History Research Program
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The “Big Top” Show Goes On

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

Interview History

Interviewers: Tanya Finchum, Juliana Nykolaiszyn

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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.

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Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Donna Moos is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on August 11, 2011.

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About Donna Moos...

Donna Moos, born in Louisiana in 1965, became a member of the circus community in 1975 when her father “joined” the Carson and Barnes Circus to run the cookhouse. At the time her father went to work for the circus, the family was living in Paris, Texas where he worked for the health department. When she was ten Donna started working in the show, participating in the spec, performing the web, and riding elephants. She was a showgirl until she was twenty-four years old. In 1990 while trouping with the Great American Circus, she performed her first solo trapeze act and the following year she performed the cloud swing. After meeting Rob, her long term boyfriend, she left the circus and lived in North Carolina where she became a hairdresser and later went into banking.

In 2008 Donna and Rob relocated to Hugo, Oklahoma where Donna now is the office assistant for the Culpepper and Merriweather Circus. Having been in the circus, Donna understands “the show must go on” and continues to enjoy life in the Hugo circus community.

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Donna Moos

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Tanya Finchum
& Juliana Nykolaiszyn
August 11, 2011
Hugo, Oklahoma



*Rob Callender & Donna Moos
Great American Circus - 1993*

Finchum *Today is August 11, 2011. My name is Tanya Finchum, along with Juliana Nykolaiszyn. We’re with the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at the OSU Library, and today we’re in Hugo, Oklahoma, to discuss the circus community with Donna Moos. Thank you for having us in your home.*

Moos You’re welcome. Thanks for coming.

Finchum *Let’s start by having you tell us a little bit about yourself, where you were born, a little bit about your youth, and then we’ll work our way forward.*

Moos All right. I was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, and when I was like two, our family moved to Longview, Texas. Then from Longview we moved to Nacogdoches, and then we ended up in Paris, Texas, which is about thirty minutes from Hugo. My dad was working at the health department in Paris. My sisters and I were in grade school, and my mother was working at a truck stop. My dad, when I was nine years old, he came home one day and said we were joining the circus. And I said, “Are you crazy? Do you know what those people are like?” So we joined the circus from there, and the people are great. It was the best place to be raised. I spent, with my family, six seasons on Carson and Barnes. We started in 1975 and I had, I couldn’t tell you how many mothers. If anybody saw me doing anything, I would get in trouble. They would tell my mother. I would get in trouble again so it was just the best place to grow up.

Finchum *I’m assuming you graduated from high school in Paris.*

Moos No, long story. My uncle had been a prisoner of war (POW) in World War II, and when he was in the POW camp in Germany, he read

Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*. I believe Thomas Wolfe had gone to the University of North Carolina so my uncle eventually moved to North Carolina. We wanted to spend our winters close to them so we bought a place in North Carolina, just some land. In 1980—1980 was our last season with the circus—homeschooling wasn't recognized back then. A few weeks before graduation, they told my older sister that she couldn't graduate because she didn't have enough hours. We ended up living with friends and family so she could at least finish school, but she had to get her GED. Then my parents were going to get off the road until my younger sister graduated. My mother passed away two weeks before my sister graduated so my dad never made it back on the road.

I did graduate from high school in North Carolina and then went back with different shows for a few months here, a few months there. I kept going back to North Carolina, back to different circuses. Then in 1993, I was on Great American Circus, and I met Rob, and we ended up in North Carolina. We were going to take a year off, but he started doing construction and it was booming so that year turned into fifteen years. We stayed in North Carolina, and I went to beauty school, was a hairdresser, and then I got into banking. I was doing that until 2008 when I got a call. Carson and Barnes needed some help in their office in Hugo so we ended up in Hugo. Rob's originally from Texas so he's a lot closer to his family than he was. He loves Oklahoma. He won't admit it out loud, because he's a Texan. That's it in a nutshell.

Finchum *So what high school in North Carolina?*

Moos It was Northwood High School in Pittsboro, North Carolina, about twenty miles from Chapel Hill and about thirty miles from Raleigh, small town like Hugo.

Finchum *Do you know what prompted your father to want to join the circus?*

Moos Sort of, kind of. When he was a kid, Ringling Brothers would come through Shreveport or close by, and this is when they were under a tent. I don't know if he was one of the boys that helped set up, because back then they would let town boys help set up in certain ways, but he certainly would go watch them set up and watch the show. My mother was from Connecticut, and she went down to New Orleans for Mardi Gras and never went back home. I don't know how she ended up in Shreveport, but she was involved in little theater, some in the performing arts. I guess they had seen a magazine, this was when we were living in Paris, about Clyde Beatty-Cole Brothers Circus and thought that was interesting.

The story goes that my dad had seen ads over the years that Carson and

Barnes was looking for a cook, and he had owned his own restaurant in Longview, and he's a great cook. He was working at the health department in Paris, would see the ads, and he would come up right after he got off work and talk to D.R. Miller. D.R. would see him in a tie and a suit and, "This guy isn't going to make it. This guy won't—he can't do it," because it is physical, hard labor. Plus, my dad was in his forties, no circus background. So finally, after a few years, D.R. relented and my dad got the job as the cook. He actually ran the cookhouse and the pie car with my mother. He managed both, and like I said, they did it from '75 through '80, and they loved it.

Finchum *So you traveled with them. Did you have an act in the show or what were you doing?*

Moos No. Originally, I was nine, and I was just a pest. I got in everybody's way, but nine years old, you're watching these girls that look like Miss America, and they're twirling and spinning and the costumes are beautiful. So I wanted to do that, and we would—me and the other kids, and there were a lot of kids on Carson and Barnes—we would kind of play around. Now, some of them were from circus families so they took practice seriously, and they were practicing from the time they were three so I got a late start at nine.

I was thinking about it a few months ago, eventually, my last turn with one of the circuses I had my own trapeze act. I had another act called the cloud swing, an aerial act, and I never would have had those if Lucy [Loyal] hadn't let us play on her trapeze. She didn't stand there and teach us, she would just lower it down so we wouldn't kill ourselves. It was play, but we were learning when we played. Then when I was ten I actually started working in the show. I had to wear a Marilyn Monroe wig so I wouldn't look ten, because I was working with the other show girls that were in their late teens, early twenties. I did spec and did web and rode the elephants.

Finchum *Describe some of your costumes.*

Moos Oh, my gosh! The ones that Carson and Barnes made—I don't know if you've heard the stories. Carson and Barnes, D.R. and Isla [Miller] and Barbara and Geary [Byrd] and the kids—this was back in 1975, the late '70s—they all lived in the Big House. It's still in Hugo on Kirk Road, and the whole basement was used for nothing but sewing. When the circus was closed for the winter, they would start the costumes for the next season. They would make costumes for eighteen or twenty web girls. They had two elephant acts, one with five girls, another with about seven or ten girls, the jackets for the elephant handlers, the blankets for the elephants. They had thirty elephants at the time, and they would do

this during the winter, and they made the most beautiful costumes in that basement. Barbara Byrd would design them. Barbara Fulton, her cousin, would design them as well and help sew on them. Everybody would help sew. I was nine and ten. I was sewing. My mom said, “If you’re here, you have to work.” I learned a good work ethic at the same time I learned how to sew.

Then when I got my own act, I had to make costumes for myself. Well, I had never sewn two pieces of material together. All I had ever done was decorate the way they told me to decorate something. So I figured out how to sew my own costumes and I loved it! In fact, when we were in North Carolina, I said, “Wow, I really miss making the costumes with rhinestones and sequins so I had Rob take me to a gentleman’s club. I thought, “I could make some costumes for the girls that work there.” But everything they had, they didn’t have one sequin, no rhinestones, anything. They didn’t care to have anything decorated, so I didn’t get to decorate any costumes. (Laughter) But, yes, I missed it.

Finchum *If you started working that early, did you get paid, or an allowance or something, for your effort?*

Moos Yes, I mean, I got paid. And for a kid at nine or ten or whatever, it was probably a lot of money. It was fourteen dollars a week. When I lived with my parents and I had my chores in Paris, I got twenty-five cents a week so I thought I was rich. Looking back, I worked just as hard as the adults did, and I’m sure they were making more, but everything is relative.

Finchum *Did your mother do an act or was she primarily cooking?*

Moos She did the cookhouse and the pie car. She ran the pie car while Daddy was getting lunch ready. She would go do the shopping for the cookhouse and pie car. She would go to the post office every day and get all the mail for the show, and then she would help my dad serve dinner in the cookhouse. Daddy was the first one up and the last one to bed every day. He got up and made coffee for the guys before they moved to the next town—or for the whole show before they traveled to the next town—and he would give them coffee and rolls or donuts that they could eat on the road, and he cooked two meals. The pie car was snacks, sandwiches, burgers, and it stayed open from the time it got on the lot until the tent was torn down and the last person had what they wanted in the pie car. Then he would shut down the pie car generator and go to bed. And he would take a nap during the day. He had good assistants, and I’ve heard so many people just comment on how good the cookhouse and pie car were. So I’m real proud of that, and he is too.

Finchum *Was it all he expected it to be?*

Moos It's funny because my dad is a very quiet man. He's got a sense of humor, but he's real quiet. He just sits back and watches and appreciates everybody else. He has always been one that whatever it takes to get a job done, he's never called in sick. I think it was more than he thought, but he really enjoyed it. He would probably sit there and listen to stories people didn't know he was listening to, but he enjoyed it or he wouldn't have done it for six years. The only reason they got off the road is because it was costing too much to send us back and forth to school every year. They had every intention of going back out on the road, and I guess it was they were going to go back—I don't know—when my sister graduated, whenever that was, and that just didn't work out.

Finchum *Describe your living quarters while you were on the road.*

Moos Well, they varied. When I lived with my family, there were five of us in a twenty-five foot travel trailer. And you have to understand, my dad is practical to a fault, and I am too. Five of us in a travel trailer, I had a bed in the back, my older sister had a bed in the back, the couch in the front folded out to make a double bed, so my mom and my little sister slept there. Since storage was at a premium, there was a bed that would fold down, but we needed that space for storage. So my dad had a little mattress that he would just put on the floor, since he was the last one in bed and the first one up every morning, he'd just put it on the floor in the hallway in the trailer and sleep there. My grandmother joined us when she was seventy-seven in 1977 so that added one more person. I would just sleep in the back of the station wagon at night, which was great because it was like having my own room. I could listen to the radio. I didn't have to get up at five to go out to the car. All I had to do was just pull my feet up so they could fold the back seat up, and then I'd just go right back to sleep so it was great. It was great.

Every now and then, I think his biggest peeve was we'd run out of water. The water truck would fill the trailers up once a day. And I was a pre-teen at that time and didn't want to just use my five gallons of water. I think the water heater was four gallons so I would end up using not only all the hot water, but all the water, period, and that was a bone of contention. Then when I was seventeen, I came out on Carson and Barnes by myself, in the summers without my family. So at that point, I lived in one of the sleepers that they have for the single people. And it's basically a bed, a single bed, a place about this wide (motions) to hang your clothes, that tall, just as deep, and two shelves underneath, and that was pretty much it. They were called sweat boxes. They looked like sweat boxes, but it was home to me.

The summers weren't too bad because we were usually up north, and I guess as a kid, you can adapt to anything, too. I couldn't do it now. There's no way, but it was great in the summers. I would go to the water truck and fill up my five gallon bucket of water. When it came time to take a shower, I'd put on my bathing suit and stand out by my bucket and take my shower with five gallons of water. My dad would be proud. (Laughs) But again, it's just what you're used to, and it was an adventure, and I was with people I knew, and I just had a great time. I did that for two summers.

Finchum *What was your act for those two summers?*

Moos I was still a show girl. I was a show girl until I was twenty-four. I got my first act of my own when I was on Great American, which was 1990.

Finchum *And what was that?*

Moos That was the trapeze, and then the next year I did the cloud swing.

Finchum *And who taught you how to do those? I know you watched—or you taught yourself?*

Moos Pretty much, yes. Like I said, Lucy [Loyal] would let us play on her trapeze and just watching her and seeing what she did. I don't know how I learned the cloud swing, because I had never seen it.

Finchum *I'm not entirely sure what that is. Can you describe it?*

Moos It's just a rope that's shaped like a U, and it's got two loops. They have ones with loops and without. I did the ones with loops, two loops hanging down. You swing back and forth, and you do tricks in and out of these loops with your hands in the loops or your feet in the loops or one hand and one foot or whatever. I had never seen it. I don't know how I did it. I know that because I was self-taught, some of my timing was off and later on, people would try to get me to correct my timing. I had learned it wrong to begin with so I could never learn it the right way, but it worked for me.

Finchum *Was there a safety net under?*

Moos No. I felt safe because I was in the loops. The only way you're going anywhere is if the whole thing comes down—which has happened, but not ever when I was on it.

Finchum *Did you have any injuries while you were doing any of your performances?*

- Moos** No. I can't walk on level ground, but I can do anything in the air.
- Finchum** *Would you do the same routine every night or did you just kind of improvise?*
- Moos** It was the same routine every night. In fact, I don't know if you watch *America's Got Talent*, but these trapeze people that come on or the people that do circus-type acts, and Howie Mandel says, "Oh, well, show me something more." And my trapeze act was the exact same routine for two years. (Laughs) There's only so much you can do, your body can do so much, and, "Set your body on fire. It'll be exciting. It's not exciting that you're flipping around, no net." So anyway...
- Finchum** *Did you get to choose your own music to perform by?*
- Moos** When I was on Great American, I did. As a show girl, I was a show girl on Carson and Barnes and on Kelly Miller and on Roberts Brothers. There was a great guy who did the music for Great American, and it was computerized music but it sounded really high quality. I told him what I wanted, and he put it together for me, for the trapezes, *Phantom of the Opera*. For the cloud swing, I think it was *Arthur*, the theme from *Arthur*. But anyways, it sounded good. It worked.
- Finchum** *So after twenty-one, I'm getting a little confused with the time.*
- Moos** Because I went back and forth, town life, circus life, town life, circus life, and yes.
- Nykolaiszyn** *Well, at what point did you make the transition from working in the show to working more behind the scenes?*
- Moos** After I had been off the road for fifteen years, and I had put on seventy pounds. I had been in banking for twelve years, and I found I really like working at a desk. Now, I have the best of both worlds because the show must go on. Well, it's still that for me. Even though I work in the office, the show must go on. My part goes from eight in the morning until five o'clock Monday through Friday. I do everything I can to make sure the show goes on, during those time frames. If you're traveling with the show, it's twenty-four/seven. Our first year on Carson and Barnes, the tent blew down, and everybody was out there sewing on it, kids that were four and five years old, sewing on the tent. I was sewing on the tent. Lucy's father was in his seventies. Well, he sewed on the tent every day anyway. No matter what, he just patched it, repaired it, but everybody just did whatever. If the tent was late getting up, the kids would help set up the seats. Women, children, everybody would pitch in

and do whatever was needed so the show could start on time.

Finchum *Take us through a typical day on what you're doing now.*

Moos On my work now? It's probably like your typical day. It's a typical office day, just the calls are different. I get to work at eight something or other. (Laughs) I get coffee for the girl I work with and myself so as long as I'm at McDonald's at eight o'clock, I'm on time. Our big job is to get the sponsors what they need so they can promote the circus. Culpepper and Merriweather relies heavily on local sponsors, such as the Lion's Club, the Kiwanis Club, whomever. And a lot of them—and I'm so proud to be part of Culpepper and Merriweather—a lot of these sponsors call Trey [Key] and say, "When are you coming back? We're ready to have the circus again." A lot of them have done it year after year.

This was my first year working with Culpepper, and I know the basics about circus, but each circus is run differently. You can't assume just because this one does it this way that this one does it this way. I wanted to make sure I was doing things the way Trey wanted so the sponsors talked me through a lot of stuff. "Yes, we've done this for five years now," or however many years.

For the new ones, we make sure they have a booklet that tells them step-by-step what they need to do. We make sure they get their tickets that they can sell in advance. We make sure they get their posters, their newspaper advertising, and help them with anything that we can. Sometimes they'll have problems with permits, and we'll help answer questions about information they need for their permits. But this is just—knock on wood or God bless Trey—but this has just been great. This is the first time in fifteen years I have had a job that is stress free. Okay?

Finchum *Hence, we smile. (Laughs)*

Moos I love my job.

Finchum *What was your favorite part of performing?*

Moos I liked it all. It didn't feel like work. Even when I had my own acts, even more so, then, I did have to go set up my own rigging every day. They had prop guys that would do the hard, heavy physical stuff, but I had to make sure that everything was tied off the way it was supposed to be, everything was as level as could be. So I was there setting up in the morning. That was hard work in the literal sense, but I loved it. I wasn't keen on the driving, getting up at five o'clock and driving every day.

That's what I disliked most, but then putting on my makeup—I don't wear a stitch of makeup now, but I loved getting glammed up, false eyelashes, making my costumes. Making them didn't feel like work. It was fun, it was creative. If there were three people in the audience or three thousand, I loved performing. I just loved doing my act. It was exercise, but it didn't feel like exercise. I think that's why I've gained so much weight now, because I've never learned how to exercise for the sake of exercise. I always just got so much exercise doing what needed to be done.

Finchum *Speaking of the audience, would you make eye contact with them?*

Moos Yes, it's kind of hard not to. They're sitting there staring at you, and you notice certain features about certain people. On Carson and Barnes it was harder because the audience was so much bigger, but on the smaller shows you would see somebody, "Wow, she's really pretty," or, "He's really handsome," or, "Oh, he's Quasimodo." But people—even in a crowd, somebody sticks out.

Finchum *Do you remember smells and that type of thing?*

Moos Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact, you forget the smells while you're there, but when you're away for a long time, the first thing that comes back is the smells. One of my favorite smells, I love the smell of horses, but elephant manure. It's pungent. Most people think it stinks, but it's what I grew up with, and so it's got a comforting feeling to me.

Finchum *Well, as you traveled from A to B, how would you do your laundry and simple things like that?*

Moos And again, like I said, everybody worked, even the kids. When I was with my family, my mother didn't have time for that because she had to do all the stuff for the show. My little sister was literally too young to do anything. My mother would drop me off at the Laundromat with all the laundry for the family, and I would do that while she was doing the buying for the cookhouse and pie car. And then she would come and pick me up and bring me back home. My older sister would help set up the cookhouse tent and all the tables and bleachers, or seats, for the employees to sit on so she couldn't go do the laundry. It was up to me. I was the only one that could do it. I guess for people who don't grow up that way, they see it as, "Oh, that's a horrible life for a kid," but I loved it, and it has made me such a better adult because of it. I never felt abused. I felt like I was contributing. We had fun, too. We would—oh, my goodness—play next to parks and fairs, and so we had time for fun, too, but we learned how to balance the two.

Nykolaiszyn *Were there rules as a young kid on the lot?*

Moos Yes. That's not to say I always followed them. I was pretty much a Goody Two-shoes, but the biggest one was the kids were supposed to stay off the midway, which was the entrance going into the tent. You're supposed to stay off the midway and out of the tent unless you're working on the midway or in the tent. Of course, I was bored. I wasn't working yet so I wanted to go watch the sideshow or I wanted to go ride the elephant or wanted to run through the tent. We did. Kids are kids. And I'd get yelled at about it, and, "Oh, okay, sorry," and then I'd do it again the next day, like kids do.

Finchum *When your mother was setting up the cookhouse tables and stuff, did certain people have to sit certain places? Were there any rules for that situation?*

Moos Not because of a caste system, but, for instance, on Carson and Barnes especially, cookhouse was between shows, and on Saturdays we had matinees back to back. So some of the performers would have to come in their wardrobe. Some of the elephant men would come in their elephant clothes. You didn't want the performers sitting where the elephant men had just sat so it was for that reason. Now, if a performer wanted to go sit with the elephant guys or with the big top guys, they could, but the elephant guys or the animal guys or the big top guys couldn't go sit where the performers sat.

Nykolaiszyn *As an adult now on the show, are there certain rules and are you getting fined for anything or no? Not so much.*

Moos Well, no, I don't... When I was a kid, my sister was the head usher. The show girls would usher before the show or sold coloring books or novelties or something. I ushered. My sister was the head usher. She would fine my pay every week just because she could.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, that's nice of her. (Laughs)*

Finchum *Did she stay in show business?*

Moos No, she's a police officer now.

Nykolaiszyn *Wow!*

Moos She's the one that they would not let graduate from high school so she took her GED, and then she went to the University of Greensboro and got a degree in English and then joined the police force right after that, and she's been doing that. She was in the National Guard for a while.

- Finchum** *She's still doing fines, then.*
- Moos** Yes! (Laughter) I'll have to tell her you said that. Yes! I have told Rob, because we would have to drive through Greensboro to get from point A to point B sometimes, and I would tell him, I said, "You drive, because if she sees me, she'll pull me over and give me a ticket just because she can."
- Finchum** *Let's talk a little bit about the work environment for the whole circus itself. When you were, as a family and then when you were single, working, too, was it much different?*
- Moos** It is, and every show is different, too, the dynamics of every show. If you talk to anybody today that was on Carson and Barnes back between '75 and '80 or back when I was on the show, it was the best. It was so much fun. Yes, we worked hard. We had muddy days, we had hot days, but everybody got along, for the most part. There were some people that irritated you no end, just like family, but it was great to work for. I liked working for Kelly Miller. I started with Kelly Miller when I was eighteen so I was more of an adult and expected to be more of an adult. I helped in the office a little bit on Kelly Miller. And then on Roberts Brothers, it was a very small show so it was very quiet compared to Carson and Barnes. Carson and Barnes was big, had a lot of employees. There was always something going on, parties or people just visiting or a lot of practicing on the flying trapeze.
- Great American was a medium-sized show, but everybody got along. For the most part, for a show that size, it was very quiet and easy going. You might have a confrontation with one of your neighbors. I mean, who's not going to in nine months? But for the most part, everybody helps everybody out. And I liken it to *MASH*, if you watch *MASH*, people get on your nerves like Hot Lips and Frank, but when you have to, everybody pulls together. The environment's real similar. You live every day with these people. It's not like you go and see them for eight hours. What I find really funny now is my friend Robin, who I met on Carson and Barnes, we've known each other since we were fourteen, I guess. She's on Culpepper now, and she loves to Facebook. She'll Facebook to people that are parked right next to her. She's going to see them in five minutes, and she'll send them a Facebook message. That just kills me, but it's fun. (Laughs)
- Finchum** *So back in the early days you worked with D.R. Miller, or worked for him?*
- Moos** I did. I guess I worked mostly for Barbara [Miller Byrd]. She was in

charge of the show girls. My dad and mother worked for D.R., and he was a shrewd businessman. He had a temper, but you really had to mess up for him to show his temper. He was very generous, too, very generous. I think that's one reason people liked—he ran the show differently than Barbara and Geary do. I think he was a little stricter, but people liked that. Barbara and Geary tend to be a little more complacent, and I guess people don't really know what to do or who's the boss. It's not as structured as it was then. We had a lot of fun, but it was still structured, and you had to work and earn your place.

Finchum *Was the Great American based in Hugo, too—out of Hugo—or winter quartered here?*

Moos No. Great American winter quartered in Florida. Roberts Brothers winter quartered in Florida.

Finchum *How would you learn about these in order to work for them? How would you find the job?*

Moos All through boyfriends. (Laughs) The summer I went out on Carson and Barnes by myself, I met a guy, and we became boyfriend and girlfriend. He worked for David Rawls in the concession stand on Carson and Barnes. The following year when they took out Kelly Miller, the new Kelly Miller, David was the road manager, and a partner, and his wife Carol at the time. My boyfriend, at the time, went to work for David to be his boss canvasman. When I finished school that summer, I went out on Kelly Miller for the summer to be with him. Then things didn't work out, and I ended up at home for a while.

This was while my mother was sick and dying so God has a way of looking out for us, because I was where I needed to be when I needed to be there. My dad couldn't take time off work to take her to appointments so I was home. I could do it. It worked out, and she passed away in May. Then I got a call from my friend, Robin, a few weeks later. She was on Roberts Brothers with her husband. She was pregnant, and she was getting too big to do the cradle act with him, 'Could I come out and finish the season with them?' So I did, and I met the ringmaster at the time, and so we moved in. Then the next year he went to Great American so I went with him to Great American. Then I met Rob on Great American, and that's where we were going to take the year off in North Carolina, and it turned into fifteen or so.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, when you started going out as a young adult, was there somebody on the lot that looked after the women, the single women?*

Moos Yes, pretty much. Not to be cocky or prudish, but there were some

women that just didn't want to be looked after, if you know what I mean. And there was me, I'm not a Goody Two-shoes, I'm not perfect, but they did kind of keep me under their wing, kind of watch out for me, kind of chaperone. And then when I got into my early twenties, it was, "Okay, you're old enough to make your own decisions now," but it, too, was a different group of people. People on Carson and Barnes had known me since I was a kid and probably still saw me as a kid.

Nykolaiszyn

As you're developing your acts and moving on in your career in the circus, did you have any circus mentors?

Moos

Lucy [Loyal] would be my biggest one. When I was finally doing my trapeze act—I cannot remember who sold me my trapeze rigging. I can't remember. I think I got it from Chris Schreiber, and then Ramon España, who I had met for the first time on Roberts Brothers. He was on Great American with us as well, and he's the one who tried to help me with my timing. The funny thing is, he never did trapeze but his brothers and sisters did, and he knew just from watching them what the timing should be. I could re-learn a few things, but for the most part, I had just taught myself wrong and it worked for me. Plus, too, I'm so long. Some of the tricks I do, I just look like... (gestures). But I would have to say Lucy and Ramon were the biggest help, and then learning how to decorate the costumes on Carson and Barnes with Barbara Byrd and Barbara Fulton and Isla [Miller]. I had an appreciation for nice costumes. I have seen some people that maybe have one sequin and they're done. I don't like Cirque de Soleil because they don't use sequins or rhinestones. I'm paying forty dollars for the worst seat in the house, and you can't afford sequins and rhinestones?

Finchum

When was the last time you went to a circus?

Moos

Culpepper and Merriweather. They opened at Bokchito on March 20, I think, and that was the last circus I saw.

Finchum

So you try to go to one or two a season?

Moos

Yes, just if they're close enough. It's really funny, and I tell the sponsors this for Culpepper, too—you see so many circuses, and you know somebody on every show, you tend to get jaded, burned out, you've seen it before. And when I went to see Culpepper, even though I knew a lot of the people there, their show was so strong I sat and watched the show. And I'm not just saying that because I work for them now. It really was. Usually, I'll go to a circus to visit my friends, not really to see the show. The last circus I paid for was Ringling Brothers about five or six years ago, and it was horrible. I thought, "I'm saying that because I'm from a circus background," but my friend who had never worked for a circus

said the same thing. She was very disappointed.

Nykolaiszyn *Can you recall your first circus memory, your earliest circus memory?*

Moos Actually, my first circus memory isn't in a circus I worked with. A few years before we joined Carson and Barnes, two or three, not many, my dad took us to see a Shrine circus somewhere, and I remember it was outdoors in a stadium. They didn't have any cover. We went to the evening show so it wasn't too bright or sunny. There was a fire truck that they would let kids ride on, and I busted my head on the bar that goes across the back of the fire truck. I remember being impressed with the show. I don't remember the acts and to this day, I wonder if those are people that I knew down the road, if I was seeing them and didn't even imagine that I would someday work with them.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, you've probably seen a lot of the country. You've been many different places. We know kind of why you came back to Oklahoma, but you could have settled anywhere. Why do you feel comfortable in the Hugo area?*

Moos We lived in Raleigh, North Carolina, and it grew exponentially, overnight. It went from a little town to a big town. A lot of New Yorkers moved into the area, and it was changing. It's not the south anymore, and it's not a small town. So we came here and I said, "Oh, my God, we've moved to Mayberry." It doesn't bother me one iota that the nearest Target is ninety miles away. If they don't have it at Wal-Mart, I don't need it. We used to drive—my daily commute to work was about from here to Paris, which was almost thirty miles, each way. When we first came to Hugo, we lived right across the street. We lived on Carson and Barnes winter quarters, and I would, literally, my morning commute was a walk across the street to the office. I could leave my house at eight twenty-five and be at work at eight thirty. That was if there was traffic on Kirk Road.

One thing we love about Oklahoma is it is still old-fashioned. People tend to just let their neighbors be, as long as you're not breaking the law. North Carolina was so over-run with covenants and taxes and just, "Why can't you stay open twenty-four/seven?" All these businesses were doing that, and people moved to North Carolina because they wanted to get away from the fast pace and big city, and it was turning into that. We have no traffic out here where we are now, and we just love it. We've met more people in the two years we've been in Hugo than we met in fifteen years in North Carolina.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, what's your most favorite thing about the circus today? When you think about the circus or are attending a circus, what just really excites*

you the most?

Moos That it still exists. I just finished reading a book about Ringling Brothers in their heyday in the late—well, when they started, the late 1800s and early 1900s, into their heyday. Things have not changed. The process is still the same, and that blows my mind. I thought for sure things have been modernized. Now, I don't care for Ringling Brothers now. I don't care for Cirque de Soleil, but I still like the traditional tent circus. Everything's manual. The costumes are still sparkly and spangly. The acts aren't trying to be—oh, what's the word I'm looking for—so unique. When you play Bokchito, Oklahoma, whatever act you do is unique enough for them. I have a friend who says, "You don't get paid extra for killing yourself." And you go to Cirque de Soleil and you see just really daring things, and they're impressive, but they're not presented circus-y. It's more theatrical. And I like the theater, but if I want to go to the theater, I'll go to the theater. If I want to go to the circus, I'll go to the circus. You shouldn't serve wine at a circus. You should get popcorn, peanuts, and a coke, cotton candy.

Finchum *Of all the places that you've performed or traveled, do you have a favorite venue, a favorite spot?*

Moos Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Carson and Barnes would play there, right on the edge of Lake Michigan, almost every summer. It was right before back-to-school so it was a good finish to the season. They had a big drum and bugle corps that would come and play during the show. Some circus fans or circus family, I can't remember, they would have a bratwurst cookout for all the circus people, with brats and ice cream. That was always a special place to play. There are good things and bad things about every part of the country. I miss the delis in New England and New Jersey, New York, but then I don't miss the traffic. You don't have the delis here, but you don't have the traffic. Everything has its good and its bad.

Finchum *Were most of your friends circus related?*

Moos Yes, growing up, they were. And it's funny, I always had a hard time kind of making friends at home. I would always have one or two good friends in town, but I just was never in a clique or real popular. I was very shy. I used to be so shy. Gosh, painfully shy. Even when I was in high school, I wouldn't go to the pep rallies. I'd get a pass to go to the library. I was just so shy. Even when I was working in town, I had some friends that I worked with, but we didn't really socialize after work very much. It was so funny, when we were in North Carolina, we would tell all our friends these old circus stories and ridiculous things people said or did or whatnot, and now, I talk about, "Oh, so-and-so at the bank,"

and, “When I was in North Carolina, this.” It’s just, it’s funny.

Finchum *Well, if you were so shy, how did you work past that in order to get in front of three thousand people?*

Moos Well, I never had a problem with the performing. I didn’t have to talk. I had a problem with—like Michael Jackson. He and I are just alike. He could do his performing, but once he was off the stage, he was very shy and quiet. Performing, I didn’t have to open my mouth. I was fine. It’s kind of like what actors say when they take on a new character. You do take on a different character. I would be in the back door, eating a Snickers bar with the worst posture in the world and the minute they started announcing me, I was Lovely LaDonna, Queen of the Air, perfect posture, graceful. I’d be in there in the morning swinging a fourteen pound sledgehammer over my head, driving stakes, but then being up on the trapeze, looking like a ballerina.

Finchum *Best of both worlds.*

Moos Yes, it really was.

Finchum *How did you come up with the name?*

Moos Back in the old days, they would say, “Miss Donna,” “Miss Holly,” “Miss so-and-so,” and I didn’t like that. Donna is just bland. I don’t know, I just, LaDonna, Lovely LaDonna, Queen of the Air. Actually, Brian LaPalme stole the Queen of the Air part off the *Greatest Show on Earth*. It was Lovely Miss Holly, Queen of the Air, *Greatest Show on Earth*. So we stole that.

Nykolaiszyn *If you had your choice today, would you continue working in the front office, or if you could go back on the road tomorrow, would you?*

Moos If I could go on the road and have a driver, I would do it. I just am not a morning person. I don’t know how I got up at five o’clock in the morning and drove. It’s all I can do to get to work by eight o’clock now, and it’s only twenty minutes away. But there are things I miss about it. I really enjoy having my nights off, my weekends off, I can sleep in, I can do something. I do miss my friends on the circus, but at least here in Hugo, we have friends. Rob’s just getting to know them, but we have friends that I’ve known since I was little. Lucy [Loyal] and Moira [Loter Curiel] and Alfredo [Curiel] and the Rawls and—oh, I can’t think of all the people in Hugo. I think that’s pretty much it, but we’ll get together from time to time and visit.

Lucy’s been out here. In fact, she gave us two of those horses. We

socialize more here than we ever did in Raleigh. Since circus people are here, it does get in your blood. It does. Rob didn't do it long enough. He did it for two years, and he never really did it long enough. It didn't get in his blood. When the circus would come to North Carolina, I'd end up going by myself or with a friend. He's just not a big circus fan, and he and Alfredo get along good, and they work together sometimes. He and Lucy help each other out with stuff. But he would just like them on a personal basis, not just because they're circus.

Finchum

He's had to learn the circus lingo?

Moos

Yes, he's a real quick learner. The first word you learn is "donniker." I'm sure you've heard that one.

Finchum

Well, we've heard people say it before.

Nykolaiszyn

I believe it's the toilet.

Moos

Yes, it is. There is a lot of circus lingo. A lot of it isn't used anymore, like, "cutting up jackpots," would be telling old stories. You don't really hear that one anymore, but everybody still calls the donniker the donniker and you've got the front yard and the back yard, and elephants are called bulls whether they're female or male. Basically, the performing apparatus, you've got web, which is just a rope with a loop on it. What are some of the other ones that people wouldn't know? A liberty act compared to a dressage or a menage act. They're all horse acts, they're just different kinds.

Finchum

And the rolling globe?

Moos

That's the big globes that people walk on, and most of the time, they'll end by going up a really steep and high ramp. I know I'm boring.

Nykolaiszyn

Oh, no. So what happens when somebody falls in love between the front and back yard? Is that a no-no?

Moos

Not anymore. It used to be, I mean, way back in the day. Like I said, my first boyfriend, he was a candy butcher, worked in the concession stand. He also helped set up the tent, and I was a performer but that was not a big deal. My second boyfriend on the circus was the ringmaster, the evil ringmaster. I'm going to leave this one on the record. He was just a horrible mean person. I had learned the cloud swing and was saving my pennies, getting the extra money, saving my pennies. I planned on leaving him at the end of the season, and I wanted to buy my own truck and trailer and be on my own, and Rob had already been on the circus. He worked with the elephants, and so evil ringmaster couldn't believe I

was leaving him for a shit shoveler, but nobody cared. I was a performer, he was a shit shoveler, and he was a nice shit shoveler. We've been together eighteen years.

Finchum *You were prepared to buy your own rig?*

Moos Yes, I was going to leave him and go on my own anyway, at the end of the season, and we just kind of moved it up a little bit.

Finchum *Is that kind of unusual, if you had followed through, for a single woman to have her own rig, to be traveling?*

Moos No, it's not unusual. It's unusual if she stays single the whole season. Usually, there's a romance that buds up somehow. You are so close to those people. And it may not be a romance, it may be a really close friendship, but the guy will usually move in with her, or if he's single and she's living in a sleeper and he's got a trailer, she'll move in with him. It goes either way. And some of the romances only last for the season, if that long. Some of them go on for years.

Finchum *During those two hundred or so days, if you were to get sick would you still have to perform?*

Moos It depends on how sick you were. I usually missed one day a season. I would have just a horrible stomach virus and there was no way you could leave the trailer, literally, no way. Again, the show must go on, and they'd just rearrange the acts or put in an extra clown gag where your act was or something. Some people have never missed a day. I mean, it's very rare, but the show will always go on. You may miss an act or two. More common is that they would break down and not be able to make it to the lot, and then they miss one show. They may miss a few days. It depends. But that was more common than getting sick.

Nykolaiszyn *Would you ever get lost on your way to the next lot?*

Moos Yes. It's called blowing the arrows, and I think all of the tented shows here, they do have a guy that goes the day before and puts up arrows that show you where to turn or whatnot, and everybody's blown the arrows. Sometimes the police in the town or wherever you are, they'll take the arrows down not realizing what they are, or maybe realizing what they are. I don't know. Sometimes you just space out and you blow them. So Rob, in fact, he took the elephants thirty miles south when he was supposed to go north. He didn't realize it for thirty miles. Had to turn around and come back north thirty miles. (Laughs) He went a total of sixty miles out of his way. But everybody's done it, even the circus owners.

Finchum *You'd have to be a pretty good driver to pull these rigs into tight spots.*

Moos Oh, yes. For me, for most of my circus life, I didn't drive. When I was planning on leaving, and we just moved it up a little bit, was the first time I bought my truck and trailer and actually had to drive. We just happened to be playing New York, and oh, I was so scared on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. Usually I drive like a granny, and I was driving so fast because I just wanted to hurry up and get off of there. Sparks were coming out from under the trailer. I was just hitting every pot hole—just, ching! Ching! Ching! I don't even know how fast I was going. I just wanted to get off that thing, because you can drive on little, windy country roads, you can be in the middle of New York or New Jersey, or you can just be on a really nice interstate. One of the things that Clyde Beatty-Cole Brothers does is they open in Florida and they go up. They play all along the East Coast, and they usually follow, I think it's I-95, and so most of their route is on the interstate. They'll go off for a few miles, but they've got that worked out pretty good.

Finchum *I think it's interesting how they hit different spots. They probably crisscross some...*

Moos Some do. Some shows have their designated route, and some shows don't respect other shows' routes and some do. Some don't want to take the hassle of the East Coast. The permits are harder, more toll roads, the IFTA, the truck requirements are so much stricter. Some don't want to do the mountains in California so it just depends.

Now, this is hearsay—but a father and son both own shows, and I hear that the son—no, the father took down all the son's posters and played the town a week before his son was going to be there. So there's still some of that, but for the most part, I think they try to respect each other's territory these days. It's gotten more legit than in the old [days]. I don't even know how it was in the '40s and '50s and '60s. You hear stories about how they're trying to sneak on a lot or whatever, and they all get their permits now, and everything has to be inspected. It's just a legitimate business.

Finchum *You're with Culpepper and Merriweather now. How many performers do they have, and what is their target towns that they like to get?*

Moos It's a very small show. The Dykes family does most of the acts. Simone does the trapeze. Paulina does the web. Lana does the birds. Their aunt, Natalie Cainan, does the dog act, and she's also ring mistress for half the show. Simone is ring mistress for half the show, and then they have another family who, the girl does hula hoops, and the boy does juggling,

and they do a Russian swing into this net. I've seen very few of them. And B.K. Silverlake's son, Mel Ray, he and his wife—or if she's home with the kids, somebody else assists him in a whip act, which you don't see many of those anymore. I thought that was really entertaining. That's most of the performers. [And of course Trey opens the show with his cat act.]

Nykolaiszyn *How big of a lot is the optimal size?*

Moos Three hundred by three hundred feet. I do have to tell the sponsors that. Well, the ones that don't know. So about ninety thousand square feet, which is small. It's a small circus. It's a one-ring tent, and they do have the cats so they need some room for the cats. They have to put a canopy out for shade and so they need room for that. But if it's a small lot, the performers could have just enough room to open the doors and squeeze out if they have to, and that's on any show. Everybody has the slide outs on their trailers now and some lots, you can't open those.

Finchum *So the towns that Culpepper tries to hit are two or three thousand people?*

Moos Yes, about that. That's going to be about the average, I think, the average size. And the people love it because a lot of them are kind of like here in Hugo. Now, Hugo is different because so many circuses winter here, but a lot of those small towns are far away from the big city, and so they have that to do. And they may drive to the state fair when it comes, but there's not a lot to do. Still, Culpepper plays the small agricultural towns. Everybody knows everybody. It's great, and I don't know that they've ever gone east of the Mississippi. They do mostly the West and the Midwest.

Finchum *You said you came back [to Hugo] in 2008. How did they find you to even invite you to come back for the job or how did that work?*

Moos There was a girl that—she and her family—her mother was from a circus family, and they were considered towners. We considered them towners, but in the summer, she and her family would come and visit Carson and Barnes for a few months every year. I think her father had some exotic animals that he would take to school assemblies during the school year. He would have his summers off, and they would travel with us. Somehow, she got my e-mail address or found me somehow and sent me an e-mail, and it was really odd. Rob and I were in North Carolina at the time, and we were driving down to Texas to visit his family. We were going through some state, I can't remember where, and we saw a Carson and Barnes tent as we were driving by the interstate. He asked if we wanted to stop. I said, "No, I really want to get to Texas. Let's just

keep going.” And I thought, “Well, I won’t see them for a while,” because they rarely go to North Carolina. When we were in Texas, we looked at some places in Texas that we might like to move to. We were just getting a little dissatisfied with Raleigh, and then we got the call and ended up here. And like I said, he won’t admit it, but he loves it here.

Finchum *It’s that connection. It seems like once you’re in the circus, you’re almost always in the circus in some way.*

Moos Well, he just likes Oklahoma. Like I said, he won’t admit it. You see the Texas shrine here, but he loves Oklahoma.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, as we start winding down, this is something that has popped up in several of our interviews. Do you have any thoughts about the differences between circus folk and carnival folk?*

Moos Only the stereotypes that I’ve heard of. We used to go to the state fair in Raleigh every year and I would look at the—now, granted, I would look at the people and get an idea about them. That being said, there’s an author, G.D. Gearino, if I’m pronouncing his name correctly, he wrote, *What the Deaf Mute Heard*. They did a movie about it with Matthew Modine in it. Well, he’s a writer for the *Raleigh News and Observer*, and he went out to Roberts Brothers Circus one year. This was when I was living in Raleigh, and Roberts Brothers was in Fuquay-Varina [North Carolina]. So he went out there and came back and wrote an article about how filthy circus people were, it’s just dirty and whatnot. I read the article. I was a teller at the bank at the time so I was under my teller window, on the phone, “Did you talk to anybody? Did you know they were in mud up to their axles the day before? You worked heavy equipment in the summers, did you wear a suit and tie when you were working heavy equipment? No, you probably had on dirty jeans and no shirt.” And I read him the riot act.

So he went out the next year with me, met the people. There’s a guy that used to manage a funeral parlor, a former IBM-er. A lot of people that are smart and clean—they may not have an education, a formal education, but they are smart. And he met these people and wrote the nicest article about the circus after that. I try not to stereotype. You look out here, and there’s no grass, and anybody driving by would think, “Those horses are neglected. There’s no grass.” We’ve got hay there. We just had the pasture—this was all trees back here. We had five acres of trees. We just had those cut down so we can get a pasture for them, but if somebody drove by right now, they would see something that would be not attractive. So no, I just try not to stereotype anybody. But carnies do smell like cabbage, I hear. Have you seen Austin Powers?

Nykolaiszyn *Yes (Laughter).*

Moos I was going to say, when you were talking about, “Well, tell us about your life,” “Oh, the details of my life are quite inconsequential. Summers in Rangoon, luge lessons.” Yes. (Laughter)

Finchum *Would you do it all over again?*

Moos I don’t regret a minute—well, I do regret a few minutes, but each step brought me here. So if I had missed that step, I would have missed this, maybe. So no, I don’t regret any of it. There were some that weren’t as fun as others and some that were more fun than others, but all is said and done. I’m here. I love it.

Finchum *Do you miss any of the foods that your father cooked in the cookhouse?*

Moos Yes, I do. Yes, I do. He had a cook and a cook’s helper. He had a lady that would make the most delicious desserts from scratch. She would make these wonderful cobblers or—oh, my gosh! Yes. And I say, “Well, I was used to his cooking.” He was on a strict budget. He had to feed a lot of people for little money so lunches were usually some kind of a casserole or a goulash or something. Dinners would be maybe a pork chop or a chicken quarter or something. They could have as many vegetables as they wanted. They could only get one serving of meat, and that was anybody, and one serving of dessert. But everybody said everything was tasty, they were full. D.R. [Miller] did say beans had to be served at every meal, some kind of bean.

Finchum *Green beans or pintos or limas or what?*

Moos Pintos or limas or kidney beans or great northern beans, but I still love beans. I think it was the best place to be raised. I don’t regret it. I’m glad my parents did it. I think they are, too. Not to just toot our own horn—and this may have happened even if we hadn’t joined the circus, but my dad has three kids, none of us have ever been in any trouble. The worst thing we did is I would tell my parents, “I’m going to point A,” and I would start out at point A and end up at point B. If I was grounded, I never snuck out of my room or never tried to sneak out, because I knew somebody would see me and squeal on me. And just all the things that I’ve brought into my adult life, I think part just because I had good parents and part from being on the circus.

When I was at the bank, we had a last minute bond closing. I ended up in the corporate trust department, and we had a bond closing that had to be done by eleven o’clock the next day. We were having trouble with attorneys and cooperating with other banks and getting everything we

needed. The guy I worked for, his mother had just passed away, so he had to take off. So I stayed until seven o'clock that night trying to get all the information I could. The next morning I told the manager that he was going to have to approve a forty million dollar wire, and his quote to me is, "Well, I'll be in a meeting, and I can't be disturbed." I'm like, "We're bringing in forty million dollars of business. Can't you excuse yourself from the meeting for one second? I'm sure they'll understand." Here I was busting my hump to do everything to make sure this transaction went through, and he was blowing it off. But the show must go on, still.

Finchum

Where do you see the show going in the next ten to twenty years?

Moos

It's hard to say because it has been legitimized so much. A lot of towns make it really difficult for circuses, even if the circuses want to go on. That's one thing that happened to Ringling Brothers. They couldn't find places big enough for them to set up their outfit or people would just throw the book at them, "You need this permit, you need this permit, you need this permit," and they would make up permits. When I was working for Carson and Barnes, I had a folder this thick (gestures) of permits for Denver, Colorado. They were saying that we need the architect of the tent to send us their scale drawings, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I mean, just ridiculous stuff, and the actual tent was made in one country. The poles were made in another country. The wires were made in another country. I think we eventually played Denver, but it was talking to the fire department. I spent weeks on one permit for one town. So that's going to hurt the circus.

As long as people are smart enough and just say, "It's a tent. It goes up and down every day. They've been doing this for how many years? They know how to do it." Yes, a tornado may come through, but look at buildings that have been destroyed by tornados. People just want to give the circus a hard time sometimes. That'll be the downfall of it. Friends I know that have kids that are in it, the kids are still learning the acts and wanting to follow in their parents' footsteps. They do schooling so they do both, but a lot of them like to travel and work and perform.

Finchum

What do you miss most?

Moos

I miss seeing the different countryside. I don't miss the driving. I just miss the people, but like I said, there are some good circus people that are retired here so that helps. Honestly, I've turned into an old fuddy-duddy. I couldn't keep up with the pace on the road now.

Finchum

Or sleep in the sweat house? Is that what you called it?

Moos

Sweat box is what it was called. (Laughter) That's what they called it.

Everything has a nickname, but it wasn't that hot.

Finchum

Single bed?

Moos

Yes, a single bed, and the way it worked was it was, the box was the width of a semi-trailer, but there was one living quarters on one side and one on the other. So if you had a lower bunk here, you had a shelf up here, and that was the bunk from the other side coming over your head. If you lived on that side, you had an upper bunk. If you lived on this side, you had a lower bunk. That's another thing about the circus is you would learn how to make the maximum amount of use out of the minimum amount of space.

Our water froze up out here. This is a fixer-upper. The water froze up last winter when we had the horrible ice storm. I went to a place where you can buy gallons of water, and I knew how to heat water on the stove, and I could stand in the shower and take a full shower with five gallons of water.

Another thing on the circus is, most of them, the generator goes off around eleven o'clock at night and doesn't come on until nine the next morning. So you learn to do without electricity for a few hours every night. Now, I think most everybody has their own personal generator so they don't miss their TV shows. They all have satellites now. They have these cell phones that do everything. It blows my mind.

Nykolaiszyn

Times have changed.

Moos

They have.

Finchum

Well, they're probably missing out on something, too, because they have those things.

Moos

Maybe. They still have the camaraderie. My friend Robin, I always use her as an example because I see her more than anybody. Everybody will pile into her trailer to watch *American Idol* or watch the, she calls them the "Beat 'Em Ups," whatever the fights that they do. They all pile into her trailer, and the kids—that's another thing I love about this place. It blew my mind. I went to the library a week or two ago. There were two bicycles out on the bicycle rack. Children actually rode to the library, on their own. They didn't have Mom drive them and weren't forced to go. You would not see that in North Carolina, and the kids on the circus are outside playing all the time. I see kids outside all the time, here. I never saw that in North Carolina, beautiful parks and never a kid in them. Yes. Like I said, it's like living in Mayberry here.

Finchum *A good way to end, then, isn't it?*

Moos Yes.

Finchum *Thank you much.*

Moos Well, thank you.

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