

**Oral History Interview**  
**with**  
**Mike Fulton**

Interview Conducted by  
Juliana Nykolaiszyn and Tanya Finchum  
August 12, 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*

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## **Interview History**

Interviewers: Juliana Nykolaiszyn, Tanya Finchum

Transcriber: Miranda Mackey

Editors: Ashley Sarchet, 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 Mike Fulton is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on August 12, 2011.

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## **About Mike Fulton...**

Mike Fulton was born in 1957 in Olathe, Kansas. His entry into circus work and life came through his mother, Barbara. Barbara was the niece of Isla Miller, the wife of D.R. Miller who was the owner of Carson and Barnes Circus. As Carson and Barnes Circus grew, Barbara began helping in various areas of the business and Mike soon followed. As a child Mike worked for the Al G. Kelly and Miller Brothers Circus, prior to working for D.R. Miller.

Mike graduated from high school in 1975 in Spring Hill, Kansas and it was about that time that the family moved to Hugo, Oklahoma permanently. He held various jobs within the circus from driving the spool truck to managing concessions to working with the elephants. His favorite elephant was named Barbara, for his mother. After ‘retiring’ from the circus in 1988, he owned a railroad business for six years and is now an electrician. He continues to call Hugo, Oklahoma home remains active with the Circus City Showmen’s Club, serving as president in 2011.

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## **Mike Fulton**

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn  
& Tanya Finchum  
August 12, 2011  
Hugo, Oklahoma



**Nykolaiszyn** *My name is Juliana Nykolaiszyn and with me is Tanya Finchum. We’re with the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at the OSU Library. Today is Friday, August 12, 2011, and we’re in Hugo, Oklahoma, interviewing Mike Fulton. Thank you for joining us today.*

**Fulton** Thank you.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, we’re going to begin by learning a little more about you. Could you tell us the year you were born and where you were born?*

**Fulton** I was born in 1957, April 9, 1957, in Olathe, Kansas. As a farm boy, out in the country we had small farms, and we had animals and everything. I kind of grew up around animals and a lot of work all the time. So the circus kind of blended into what I was when I was a child.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And were your parents farmers?*

**Fulton** Well, off and on they were. My father, he bought cattle for another guy, another cattle company, and they sold it to Wilson Meat there in Kansas City. So he was kind of into the buying and selling of cattle, with another man, and had hogs, too, had pigs. I think that’s probably how he fed us, by raising them. (Laughs) We had a barn next to us where we had sows that were giving pigs every night, one of those kinds of processes. So we always had animals and horses. I had a horse. Favorite horse, his name was Scratch. He was a big Appaloosa. He was a huge horse, but I could just hop on him. He’d see me getting off the school bus, and he’d be panting up and down the pasture for me to get ready to let him out of the pen and me take a ride, because we used to do it every day. But that was kind of how I grew up.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, tell me a little bit about your parents, their names.*

**Fulton**

My mother's name is Barbara June Fulton. She was born in 1931, in Smith Center, Kansas. She was a country girl. As a farmer, a wheat farmer, all her family were wheat farmers. Her grandfather, my great-grandfather, was a farmer. All her uncles, who is Aunt Isla's brothers and sisters, who is D.R. Miller's wife, are people that they lived with out there. They had thousands of acres of wheat every year. She would take us out there sometimes during wheat season, and I'd ride a truck right next to the combine. I only did it a couple of times just to be able to say I did it.

She joined the circus in the 1940s. I think it was '44, right after they [D.R. and Isla Miller] came to Hugo. I think it was two or three years after they made Hugo their home. She was a young girl and she did horses and elephants. She did whatever they needed. I'm sure she filled in with what they needed back then when she was young. She had five children and she was a mother, too, plus a show person. In the circus you have wardrobes. You have to make your own wardrobe, and you have to have a theme. She would work every year in wardrobe, sewing, after she came back. This was in 1974, when we came and lived and moved to Hugo, permanently. She started that up, and she had made elephant blankets. She was a good momma, and she did good.

My father, he grew up kind of poor. He was an orphan at Goodland, out here south of town. At thirteen years old, he decided he wanted to leave, but they wouldn't let kids have shoes back then because when they had shoes they'd run off. So he got him a pair of shoes and he hopped a train and went to Kansas City. By chance, the circus was there and that's how he got with the circus. So he hopped a train and went to the circus, and joined it right there. That's how my mom and dad met. He was there probably six or eight years before she knew him, she was back and forth, and then finally they met. They were married—I can't remember the year—but they were married in Minnesota, on the circus.

**Nykolaiszyn**

*Well, what made your family get into the circus business?*

**Fulton**

Well, we kind of inherited it. Our Aunt Isla, D.R. Miller's wife, she is my great-aunt, and she's my gammy, too. She's kind of like my grandma. She's my grandmother's sister and I love her to death. She is the one that got this started for us. We can blame her for all of this. She met D.R. Miller, and I don't know how exactly they met, but I know their wedding date is my birthday, which is April 9. Their anniversary is on my birthday, and I always remember that. I'm sure it was by chance. But Aunt Isla, she married D.R., and as a young boy D.R. saw a circus, as a child, and this was in McCook, Nebraska. His daddy took him and he saw a small dog and pony show. So that's what they decided. That's

kind of how it all got started. His daddy took him to a circus and he loved it. He said he had suspenders on, the overalls and everything. You know how it was back then, but he loved it. Somehow they got started, had a dog and a horse. Aunt Isla was always there right along with him. Whatever he did, she was right there with him.

I know my mom and Aunt Isla, they talked and eventually, my mom said, “Yes, I’ll come.” She needed a job. It was a summer job. She went to high school in Kansas, in Shawnee Mission, Kansas. That’s where she graduated at. Right after that, she came down here in the summertime and traveled with the circus and went back up there in the winter. I think she had—I can’t remember how many years on the road, but it was like thirty-five or forty, just a lot. But her and Aunt Isla, when the guys had to go off to war in the ’40s, Mom, Aunt Isla and a lot of women took the show over, and they carried it through while the guys went to war, and they did that. Aunt Isla, she was known as being a pearl necklace, but she’s not the pearl. It’s the string underneath that holds it together. That’s what she was known for being. That’s what we called her. You never saw her out walking around as a big showman, as D.R. did. She was always behind, in the background, making it work, and that’s who Aunt Isla was.

**Finchum** *What did your father do in the circus?*

**Fulton** Well, anything that needed to be done. When he was young, his first job was taking care of a giraffe, the giraffes and the animals, and that was in the ’40s. He eventually, as you’ll probably learn, when somebody—it’s called “blow the show.” When somebody leaves and that place there is vacant, they need somebody to fill it, and sometimes that’s what you’ve got, three, four, or five jobs. When they ask, “Can you do this until somebody else can?” “Yes, we’ll do it.” Try to do the best you can, try to make the right decisions. What was your question again?

**Finchum** *What he did in the circus. What your father did in the circus.*

**Fulton** What my father did?

**Finchum** *Yes.*

**Fulton** Okay, he started out as an animal person, but he was a diesel mechanic, too. He helped with the herd of animals, the elephants. He always was close to the elephants. He trained horses, too. He was kind of like the person that made—I -don’t know. I think of this place as the institution because it’s got its own thing. Back in the 1880s, I know they had Wild West shows and everything, but they made their own institution. That’s what they did, and my dad was just part of it. He loved it. When it gets

in your blood, you can't get it out. I tried. (Laughs) I didn't try too hard, but it's just something that my dad loved.

He worked as a mechanic, and he had to be a referee once in a while, because when they've got 200 people together it's not all going to be hunky dory. You have to draw the line sometimes, and he was a part of that. He was trying to straighten people out, talk to them. He could go talk to them and they would just quit. He did a lot of that, mediating. (Laughs) And just anything he needed [to do, he did]. If the elephants needed a load of water, he'd jump in there and go get a load somewhere. That was part of my job, too. At one time, I was making sure everything had water. That was part of my job, putting the big top up, and driving the trucks inside the big top and stuff. He was there helping me. He was right there. He taught me how to drive a truck.

**Finchum** *Who taught him?*

**Fulton** He taught me. He taught himself, I'm sure.

**Finchum** *Even to train the animals, too?*

**Fulton** Well, when you get a lot of people together, a lot of trainers and a lot of minds, there is a lot of different ways you can do things, and he just had one part of it. There were a lot of people there. It takes a village to run a circus, not just one or two people.

**Finchum** *Lots to learn from.*

**Fulton** Yes. And that's the only way you learn, is by watching, by watching. And then when you get to that bridge, you know how to cross it, and it works. It works.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, going back to your youth, can you recall your earliest circus memories?*

**Fulton** My earliest circus memory that I can remember is, of course, traveling with the circus. One of my earliest—I can't remember if it was before the boat show that I was on or after—was a trip we took with D.R., in an airplane. I was a child and I remember the trip. We flew to Tennessee from Hugo. I don't know who was the pilot. I don't know. I was just a child, but I remember the flight. That was one of my earliest memories. When we landed—which we landed, I think, right next to the circus in a field. He didn't call, he didn't have a radio. He was one of them kind. (Laughs) I think, eventually, he did, but back then he didn't.

We landed and the next time I remember something is my dad—it was

in Tennessee, I think. One of our elephants had run off. It got scared and it ran into a cornfield. I remember the old coupe cars, the old '50 model. I was sitting on the trunk, and I seen him and a few guys go into that cornfield after that elephant. Then just a few seconds later—well, it seemed like seconds—here he come riding the elephant out, on its head. He was just telling her to jump right in the truck, and that's what she did. As a child, that's one of my first memories of the circus.

The second memory is being on the boat show, which was the Fleuris. I don't know if anybody really knew a lot about it, but D.R. somehow purchased a merchant marine ship. I don't even know how big it was, but he got some idea about putting a circus on a ship and then pulling up to the ports and having a circus, with the rings on the ship. I don't see how he could remove them. I think, maybe, he unloaded right there on the port and had the circus right there. I'm not real sure what they did. I'm sure they had something on the ship itself so it wouldn't have to be unloaded every day and reloaded. They probably just had a minimum amount they put out there and everything else was loaded on the ship.

We lived in Jacksonville, Florida. Well, my mother didn't like the idea a whole lot, but she went along with it with my dad, because I know the way my mother is. She wouldn't like to be on a ship out there if a hurricane come through or something, and she's down in the middle of it. And this was in the '60s. We lived on the ship. I remember the outside of the ship. We'd walk down the plank, and outside they had the trapeze set up, in the port. I know we were restricted about going on the boat because they didn't want a bunch of kids playing. So they put us over and we had a trapeze with a trapeze net. We played on that. I remember playing on that. Just every day, it was just like, "I want to go out and do that." We'd swing and fall. It was just like a ball. I don't know if we were there two days or two years—well, I know we weren't there two years. I think we were there about a month and a half or so.

**Nykolaiszyn**

*And animals were on the ship, too?*

**Fulton**

Yes. Yes, they had animals and all kinds of exotic animals. It was just a floating circus. That's what it was. I don't know of any other ship or whether there ever was ever a circus ship, ever. I don't know about the history of it or if there has ever been one, but that was the one that we had. My mother, she took us kids, I remember, we'd have to eat up at the cookhouse. We'd go up there. One day somebody locked the engine room, and there was only one way to get in and that was to just knock the door down or slide through a small porthole. So they stuck me through the porthole, and I opened the door to the engine room so they didn't have to knock the door down. They had to get in there fast. It wasn't like they could wait until the next day so, so I got in there. I can



remember the engines running. It was real loud in there. I was kind of scared, but it was just like right around the corner. It wasn't real bad, but I did that. And I remember walking down the deck plank to the land. I could see fishing lines going down off the side of the boat. People were fishing off the boat. It was real rusty looking, I think. That's what I remember. It was kind of a rust bucket, but it was our ship, I guess.

**Finchum** *From Jacksonville did it go up the coast?*

**Fulton** It went up the East Coast, and it got to a town in Nova Scotia. The engine room caught on fire, and it sank in port there. I don't know the year. My dad was on there. There's pictures of him carrying animals out from the ship. They're all wet, and I know Okie Carr has a leopard in his arms. I don't know if you know this, but there is a movie called *Circus World* that kind of takes that theme of what happened there. There's a movie that's the same way, a circus ship goes down. When the ship went down, I guess all the money went down with it. So they had to get a diver to go down, get the money, get the safe, all the valuables, and then they raised it, took it out, and sunk it out near the bay. Some of the animals were rescued. We lost a few. The zebras, stuff like that, we rescued.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Were you on the ship when it sank?*

**Fulton** No, I wasn't. We were back in Hugo. My mother wouldn't have gone. As soon as they untied that rope she would've been on land. She wouldn't have—and with her kids, too, she couldn't see it.

**Finchum** *But they had actually performed at a couple of spots before it sank?*

**Fulton** Yes. Yes, yes. I don't know where it was, but I'm sure there's a list somewhere that's got it. But that's some of my first rememberings as a child. After the boat, the boat circus, I worked as a little clown when D.R. bought Carson and Barnes. This was Al G. Kelly that was on the boat show. They let us kids walk around in uniforms and had heads on, waving and stuff. As a child, I did that and did a lot of just stuff that kids could do. I rode a float and stuff like that. They like to see little kids. I worked concessions for a few years. I had my own concession stand, probably about four years, on the midway in the circus, me and my brother Jack did.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you have any special calls or barks that you used in the crowds?*

**Fulton** Oh, yes. We'd let the people line up, get in the ticket line, and then we'd open it up. As soon as we opened it up the popcorn would be popping. As soon as they saw that, they'd come flooding. There's a little

technique, I guess, you use. It's called smell-aroma—and it works!  
(Laughs) Guaranteed. We use it every day.

**Finchum** *How had you learned how to do the concessions? Had you been an apprentice or something?*

**Fulton** Well, really, I watched a lot. My mom had concessions. She was in charge of concession for years, there, on Carson and Barnes. She had a semi-trailer that she had her office in. We'd go in and they made Cokes there, but everywhere else there were stands that they did individually. That's how I got going in it. I sold about everything you can sell, even novelties, little toys or whatever. My mom sold those for years, too. She had her little stand out front. It was easier than having to worry about all the concessions and stuff. It gave her an easier job. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *So you were drawn to more concession-type jobs than performing jobs?*

**Fulton** I worked in the show a little bit, but I was the person behind the scenes, driving the truck, making sure the animals were taken care of. I'd work in the show and help train the elephants and just work with them. When D.R. bought all the elephants that he got, he bought fifty of them one time, I uncrated them. We trained them, and the ones that didn't have any sense, we got rid of them. I mean, that's what you've got to do.

**Finchum** *How did they arrive? You said you uncrated them. How did they get to Hugo?*

**Fulton** I don't really know.

**Finchum** *By train or...?*

**Fulton** I was probably seventeen years old, sixteen or seventeen when they come. I just pulled the boards off, and said hello, little bitty babies. (Laughs) They were, I think, I don't know what year it was, but they were stopping. They weren't going to let them import them so D.R. got an idea to get some and take care of them. He loved them. He just loved elephants. That was his life.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Where would you keep that many elephants in Hugo?*

**Fulton** Well, we kept them down in the barn, elephant barn, but they were small. They were just lined up. Eventually, we kept twenty-five or twenty-eight of them. We had Barbara, Kay, Susie, and the other ones, but then here come the second generation. They were all named after my great-aunts, too, after Aunt Isla's sisters, Margaret, all of them. There were eleven children in her family and we named them all, the girls. I've

been named by a horse. That's all I've been named. (Laughter) But anyway, that's how they got their names. They're all names of my great-aunts and relation. When they were uncrated we named them.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, when your family moved to Hugo, permanently, where were you all living in town?*

**Fulton** Well, when we came from Spring Hill, Kansas, we moved to winter quarters out there. We had a big seventy-by-fourteen foot trailer. That's where we moved to when we lived there and worked there, at the same place. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *You didn't have to go far to go to work.*

**Fulton** No, just walk out the door, go back there. A lot of times what I did in winter quarters was paint, making sure everything was painted, make sure it looked great, because you've got a lot of people looking at it, circus fans and stuff. Then you've got police and all that, you've got to make them pass inspection, and it's rough sometimes. You've just got to do everything you can. Just make a list and go. (Laughter) Of course, being a circus owner all the years, he knew what the list was. He just handed it to you, because he'd been there and done that. I mean, it was kind of easy.

As I grew older and a little bit bigger, I started working on the big top. I worked on the big top for about eight years. It was hard work. We'd put it up every day, take it down every day, except when we'd stay in, like, a three-day stand. We'd put it up and leave it like two or three days. When we'd do that it was just like a breath of fresh air, having a night off and not have to tear the tent down, because about ten o'clock, you have to go and tear it down, and it takes you about two or three hours. If the weather's real bad, you'd be surprised at how fast the tent [comes—down]. We put Carson and Barnes' five-ring circus tent down in forty-five minutes before. We didn't load the seats. We knocked them down on the ground and got the tent down before the storm come. We were in a hurry. I mean, we've done stuff like that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Can you walk me through the process of setting up a tent?*

**Fulton** Well, let me go back to how it's rolled up and unrolled. It's called a spool truck, which I drove for about six years. I packed the tent up, rolling the tent up. Unrolling it every morning and then at night I'd roll it back up. I'd load it up. I did that for six years. It was a spool truck. It had two big sections to it and it was chain driven by PTO [power turn over], and there were two big spools. We'd just back up and the tent would roll up in there, just make a big ball. It'd be cut in two sections,

right in the middle. Eventually, we got an idea where we extended the back of the truck out with a roller, and when the truck backed up, the tent could go back up under the truck a little ways so we could roll it faster, was the whole thing. Because when you roll it up and it tightens up, you can't pull it. So this way, we could back up further and it'd come out, up underneath this roller, see. It'd go back up underneath and like this. (Gestures)

I don't know whose idea that was. I think it was Jamie Garcia's. That's my brother-in-law. He came up with that, and you could roll it faster and more at one time. Instead of stopping every time, you could back up until that back wheel got up to the tent, and then you could roll it. It'd just roll about three times more than what we did before. It was like trial and error. I backed the truck up every night, whenever it was rolled up. Working with an animal, an elephant, all the time, Barbara, I worked with her—Barbara the elephant—at least two hours a day with her, putting the tent up, and then we used her to set our seats with. She'd pick them up and set them down by my control. I'd tell her to back up or—of course, she had somebody helping her, but I'd tell them when to back up, set the seat down. We'd unload all our reserve seats by elephant power. We use the elephant every way we can, and they love to do it. It's just something they love to do. I backed that truck up.

Of course, I did the water. I made sure every trailer house had water so they could have a bath. We called it the twenty-four hour man, and I'd find out where's the water. It could be a water faucet right there next to the elephants. I'd say, "Just start filling it up," or there could be a spigot uptown or a water faucet or a hydrant somewhere they'd let us tap into. I'd go get the water trucks, which they were a stake driver, too. We kind of used them two different ways, which drive the stakes into the ground. I'd go get water, make sure everything had water, the cookhouse, the pie car, all the tanks were topped off every day, just a guy to do that. I had a few people there that would do that for me.

**Finchum** *And how long would that take, normally?*

**Fulton** It would take all day.

**Finchum** *To do the water?*

**Fulton** Yes. I mean, when you've got twenty-some elephants—it took 5,000 gallons a day, is what it took. That's what it took, close to 5,000. And a lot of that is the elephants drinking it. They drank like four times, four times a day.

**Finchum** *So each trailer house got a certain amount?*

**Fulton** Filled up. We just had a guy with a water hose. The water truck had a small pump on it, and we'd just go over there with a hose and fill everybody up. A guy did that. And the cookhouse, pie car, make sure the concessions, they're all full. Then we'd just start thinking, I mean, it's just a full-time job, especially if it takes a long time to get it. People would be sitting there with their buckets, "C'mon!" because they'd come get bucket loads of it to take a bath with or wash up with.

**Finchum** *You would do that after you set the tent up?*

**Fulton** I'd be doing it after the stakes were driven. See, that's where the water trucks were, too. They were kind of like a tandem thing there. They would drive the stakes and then the second that last stake was driven—or the other one would pull off, and we had two of them that would drive around. One of them would pull off and by then I knew where to get the water. I'd say, "Head that way," go right over there. We had a big tank by the elephants. I'd just tell them, "Go get a load, unload it in there. Just start unloading as fast as you can." We had another truck and he would do the trailers and stuff, and helped with the animals. The animals would get water first before the people would. That's the way I worked that. I'm sorry if you've not got water in your trailer and you need to take a bath. You should've waited or should've filled up on the way or whatever, but the hippo's going to get his tank full before you get your bath, sorry. And that's just the way it is. The animals came first, always. That's just the way it was.

**Finchum** *So there was actually a hippo?*

**Fulton** Yes. Yes, we had a hippo. Oh, I've seen, probably, five or six of them in my time.

**Finchum** *Well, how would you transport those? They typically have to have water to sit in, don't they?*

**Fulton** Yes. We had a tank that we built, that they could dip into, just a water tank, just a big tub. We'd fill it up every day, and every night we had a valve, we'd run it out. We had a little bucket pay loader. We'd run everything out and put it in the dumpster. There was a lot of waste that we always had to get rid of. (Laughs) Going on to what I did, I took care of a lot of that, sometimes, too. We had a big pay loader, and I drove that truck sometimes. So my last job was to run that loader and load up all the manure.

You wouldn't believe the people that come and bring their trucks and want that elephant manure or horse manure. Oh, it's valuable. You wait

just a couple years and you can grow anything. It's great fertilizer. They come. They want us to separate it. They never wanted our trash and our manure together. They say, "Here's this dumpster for manure, and this is for the trash." Picking up trash was another thing. In the morning after all the trucks were gone, I'd drive around the pay loader, and we'd make sure every stick and every piece of trash was picked up. So it was just like, except for where the elephants were, you could see where they had dug the ground up. The rings, you could see the rings, where they were. It's kind of neat to see where it was just gone. Nobody really ever thinks about looking at that, after the circus and the tent is gone and the rings [impressions] are all still there, and the elephants, where they were, the horses.

**Finchum** *The impression that's left...*

**Fulton** Yes, the impression that's left. It's neat.

**Finchum** *You mentioned the tent was in two parts.*

**Fulton** Oh, we'd roll them in two sections. It was called a spool truck and you could just say it was on a spool. We'd just roll it up, the two sections, roll them up in two, two different, and then we'd just...

**Finchum** *Was the tent split long-ways or crossways, when you say two parts?*

**Fulton** Not long-ways, short-ways.

**Finchum** *Short-ways, okay.*

**Fulton** Yes, across from...yes. But it was a football field. It's the size of a football field.

**Finchum** *And as you rolled it up would you be checking for tears or that type of thing, too?*

**Fulton** We were real careful, and Jamie Garcia, he's my brother-in-law, he has done this so much that he knows how everything goes, or back whenever I was doing it. Today, they've got a different kind of big top. But back then, he knew how to fold the tent up, how to fold it together, how to make sure the bale rings were flat. If you don't know what a bale ring is, it's a big piece of metal with a bunch of clevises around it. Now, that there would, when you fold it and roll it up, it would start tearing if you didn't get that bale ring in a certain place when you folded it up. Through processes of elimination you figure out how to do it so it wouldn't be torn too bad. The bale rings would get the tent more, if it was folded wrong, it would get it more than anything when we were

rolling it up.

Anytime you've got weather, say it has been raining all night long, here's Barbara and Kay [elephants] hooked up to the back of my spool truck. I can't back up. I just say, "Back up." I mean, it's just like, boom! And I just let them drive me. So sometimes at night when you've got a big semi out in the middle of a mud, how are you going to get it back? Them girls there. We try it, we couldn't do it. We say, "Go get them!" We have to sit there and wait. They come and they just pull me back. They loved it.

**Nykolaiszyn**

*Good elephants.*

**Fulton**

Oh, yes. Oh, yes, they loved it.

**Finchum**

*Do you miss a particular part the most?*

**Fulton**

Really, no. You could probably ask me the opposite of that...

**Finchum**

*What you don't miss.*

**Fulton**

I could probably tell you a couple of things, and the rest of it's good, for me.

**Finchum**

*Then what don't you miss?*

**Fulton**

Working on the circus makes everything, to me, look pretty easy. I don't know. When you get up at 5:30, 6:00, and then you go to bed about 12:00, and try to get a nap between, that seems pretty hard. Then when you come over here and you've got an eight hour job and you get up, you go home, you don't have to worry about anything, it's simple, to me. So circus made my other life, my town life, simple. The work, I don't know, I'm an electrician right now. It's not real hard. I don't know why. I owned my own railroad business for about six years so that was kind of making everything easy, too. When I worked for my railroad business—well, I went from the circus, and when I started my railroad business, there were so many similarities to it. It just kind of scared me. I said, "Wow, this is something!" But that's how I kind of attacked that. They'd call me out in the middle of the night to re-rail a train, put an engine back on. It's just like somebody waking you up on the show, honking the horn, saying, "Get up and go!"

**Finchum**

*But you couldn't call Barbara [the elephant]. (Laughter)*

**Fulton**

Yes, I couldn't call Barbara. I sure wished to. I needed her a lot. (Laughs) She was a good girl, even if she just stood by me and said,

“Hey, Mike.” A lot of times when we’d put the big top up, she’d be the one that put the tent up. I’d see her every day and I mean, you’ve got to understand, an elephant is so intelligent that it’s just unimaginable how smart they are. She knew who everybody was and what they did. I’d come up to her, talk to her. In the elephant barn they’d have a tub of oats right there. I’d go in there, and I’d sneak in. The first thing, I’d walk in, she’d be the first elephant in the elephant barn. She’d trumpet up, open her mouth. I’d go over there hands full of oats and throw it in there. I could walk around them and everything, it wasn’t any big deal. They were sweet to me. I loved every one of them.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did you only work for Carson and Barnes or did you work for other circuses?*

**Fulton** Well, like as a child I worked for [Al G.] Kelly and Miller Brothers. Of course, that’s really not saying you worked. But Carson and Barnes, and I helped Circus Royal one time and Circus Genoa. They went up to Canada one time, and they asked me one time if I could hop in the truck, with a trailer that they got loaded with a new big top in it, and I said, “Yes, I can do that.” So I ran up there, went up to Vancouver Island, drove up there. I had my van behind me. My brothers were driving my van so whenever I decided I wanted to come home, I thought I might. (Laughs) So, anyway, I went up there and worked for them for about two or three weeks, up in Canada and Alaska and up in that area. Then I got a good job offer down here so I came back.

**Nykolaiszyn** *How long were you working for the circus?*

**Fulton** My total years?

**Nykolaiszyn** *Yes.*

**Fulton** Well, as a child to 1988. That was when I kind of retired.

**Nykolaiszyn** *And what made you decide to retire?*

**Fulton** Well, it’s just traveling. I wanted to just settle down and just, I don’t know, a change, I guess. Everybody gets kind of tired of what they do sometimes, and they want to change, but that’s probably what it was, mainly. I just wanted to change and try something different. Everybody kind of retires from the circus. If you notice, there are a lot of people that could probably do circus work, but it’s a hard life. I mean, sometimes, if you get exhausted you don’t have any time to get caught up. It’s kind of like an everyday thing. You’ve just got to take your time and do the best job you can.



**Finchum** *So over the course of that twenty-five years or so, were there a couple of things that changed within circus work?*

**Fulton** Oh, it changed dramatically. See, just like whenever I first learned how to drive a truck, we were driving some gas rig Internationals and my dad says, “Well, we’re semis and we’ve got forty of them or fifty of them. We need to change this,” because they were blowing up engines. He was a mechanic then, and they were blowing engines up all the time, on these International trucks. He’d have to change a motor on the side of the road. Of course, he had like three or four motors in the back of the semi. They had a mechanic truck, where they had motors. If it blew, you’d just take the other one out and throw the other one in, just like that. That’s how they did their mechanic work. But eventually, we got to thinking, “Hey, we need to turn to diesel,” because these were gas rigs, and that’s what my dad did. He kind of turned the table there, kind of got a few diesels from these International gas rigs. Everybody could drive them, that was just it. Everybody could drive those Internationals. That’s why they liked them. But semis are a little different. That’s what I saw a change in, was from gas rig to the diesel truck.

A couple years, my brother and I, we even painted our trucks. We had our own fleet, and we’d try to make one a week in winter quarters, is what we went to. Try to paint, do the bodywork, we had our own paint shop down there. That’s what I did in winter, is do a lot of truck painting, paint semis. One year, we did a truck—well, let me go back. I was called over to D.R.’s office and he asked me, “Can you fly to Missouri”—well, he didn’t ask me to, he told me to. (Laughter) “I want you to go to Missouri and get this truck. I’ve got a semi-load of paint up there.” I said, “All right.” So the first thing I know, I was in a twin-engine plane going 200 miles an hour over the mountains over there, heading toward Springfield, Missouri. I even flew the plane a little bit. (Laughter) He let me fly. It was something. Anyway, I got in that truck and drove back.

He bought that paint, and he wanted us to paint these trucks. It was a blue-metallic. It has always been a red, white, and blue. It was a different colored paint and he says, “I want you to paint one truck, and I want to look at it.” So we painted it, put a bunch of pin stripes on it and stuff, made it look real nice, a top job. He says, “Paint them all.” So we painted them and got that going. Eventually the trucks break down, they buy new ones. That’s just the way it is.

**Finchum** *That would keep you busy during the winter. When you were in the circus as a youth, how did your living quarters change?*

**Fulton** Well, my mom and dad, we had a camper and trailer. I lived in the

camper with my two brothers. We had a small camper and, I think, the things folded out. It'd sleep four or five. So that's how we lived, and everybody else lived in the trailer, the younger kids, the younger siblings. They lived there and they let us older ones live over there. So that's how we lived, mainly. And then as we grew up we got our own trailers and everything. Growing up we all lived in a camper and a trailer.

**Finchum** *Then when you would come back to winter quarters you'd stay in the same unit?*

**Fulton** Well, we'd rent a house.

**Finchum** *Rent a house.*

**Fulton** Yes, we had a house that we'd rent.

**Finchum** *Did you ever live in the Modern Trailer Park?*

**Fulton** Yes, down here?

**Finchum** *Yes.*

**Fulton** Yes.

**Finchum** *Any memories of that?*

**Fulton** I remember my cousins—well, we call each other cousins. Fred Logan, he was a lion trainer for Kelly Miller back in the days, early '60s. He had a bunch of kids our age and everything. That trailer park, it went a whole block there. They lived on one side of the block, where the road was, and we lived over on that other side. I remember the Beatles were famous then, and we'd get out there and play Beatles' songs, mimic them, us and Chuck Logan and Walter. See, he had four or five boys exactly our age. Somehow, they told us we were all related, and we all got real close and everything. Being in that trailer park, there was a lot of show people there. Mainly that's who it was, just show people.

**Finchum** *During the winter, usually?*

**Fulton** Yes, during the winter. Yes, some of them have a mobile home there they'd leave, and then come back. Wintertime, they're scattered everywhere. Everybody's scattered around.

**Finchum** *Well, how was your schooling, then, with elementary grade school, high school? Where did that occur?*

**Fulton** I went to Kansas. Kansas City, Spring Hill, Kansas. I went to elementary school and graduated high school there in 1975. I was a Bronco.

**Finchum** *You did that while you were on...*

**Fulton** Summertime. As soon as that day [came], I was ready to go. Because I always liked to have a little bit of money, and I liked to buy my own clothes and stuff. We'd go and have a little job here and there with the circus. That would be kind of like our little fun getaway. Mom and Dad would be going so we'd just be going along with them.

**Finchum** *So you didn't have to miss school to go work on the circus?*

**Fulton** No, I never did, but now they do a lot. Back then, no, we didn't get spring break or nothing like that. We got snow days, where we got snowed in, didn't get to go.

**Finchum** *But when your parents would head out on the road, you wouldn't go with them until school was out?*

**Fulton** Yes.

**Finchum** *Right?*

**Fulton** Yes. We had a grandmother that took care of us, our grandmother in Kansas. Opal, Aunt Isla's sister, she lived there. She was our second home there. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Well, during those twenty-five years while you were on the circus, did you marry and have children of your own during that time period?*

**Fulton** Never did, never did. Well, let me take that. I didn't get married. I had two children. Josie, she's now on the circus right now, Josie Fulton, and Cory Fulton. He's twenty-two and she's thirty-six.

**Finchum** *You really didn't have to juggle having a family in a camper there while you were working then, as an adult.*

**Fulton** No, no. Didn't have that problem. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Did you have a favorite venue, a favorite town you liked to play in?*

**Fulton** Well, I really don't know. That's a hard question because I've been [everywhere]. There are so many of them. I've got so many memories and so many people that live, that I know. But really, one that really

stands out—well, two or three that stand out really, more than anything. Every year we'd go to Wisconsin, and this guy had a forty-foot fishing boat. Every year we'd play Sheboygan, which there were a lot of circus fans there, and they'd throw us a big bratwurst dinner. We got this tradition, every year we'd play that, I mean, we didn't even have to say we were going to take the day off. They knew we were going to take the day off, and we don't have days off, I'm telling you. There is no day off. You hardly ever take a day off, "I'm going to go do this."

That time, we knew we were going to take off and get in that fishing boat. There were always four, five or six of us—Geary Byrd would be one of them, me and my brothers, we'd all get in this one boat and go fishing. We'd catch some big salmon, King Salmon, lake trout, we'd go out. We went out twelve miles off the bank in 120 feet of water and were catching twenty-five pound King Salmon and lake trout. I mean, you catch so many that you get tired. It was fun, how we were fishing. It was like it was a television set. It was a graph, a big television set, and we sat at the table. They had a maid there and everybody, they put the lines out. You just sat there and had a Heineken, that's what we did. Pretty soon you'd watch that and they'd tell you where the fish, you could see that fish on the graph, and they'd lower those ground riggers down to that depth. Pretty soon you'd see a rod go like that. (Gestures) That guy would grab it and say, "Here you go!" I caught like six or eight of them, twenty-pounders. We'd feed the whole cookhouse that next day with those fish. That's what we did. We couldn't eat them all.

**Finchum**

*So they didn't mind you taking the day off. (Laughs)*

**Fulton**

No, no. We had fish after that. We'd smoke the salmon and stuff like that. Great! But really, it's hard to say favorite places, because you'd pull into a town and you wouldn't know that this was in there, that town, but it would be. So it'd be like a big surprise, "Hey, this happened here. So let's go look and see these historical events that happened here." I've been to Manassas and all the Civil War stuff, because I like that kind of stuff. If I see one, I go and check it out. I've seen where Stonewall Jackson died and where all that big battle there happened.

But my favorite state has to be Wisconsin because it's the "Land of Lakes." I love water and it seemed like every town had a big lake there next to it. It's kind of like a little tourist thing. I mean, you see downtown, there's a lake, and I love that. You'd see different things. Like, we'd be there on a Friday, and they'd be having a festival downtown. We'd have the circus, and then we go downtown and join their festival. On Sundays, we always get off early, because we'd have two and four o'clock shows. By about six o'clock we were off work and going, "Wow, what do we do?" So there would be buses going. We'd

find the movies. We'd have our own personal buses. We say, "Hey, this bus is leaving so and so for this movie." We'd have transportation to take people places, to the store, to the laundry. We paid people to do laundry all the time, just drop them off, say, "I'll be back in about an hour and a half to pick you up," and stuff like that.

**Finchum** *So you noticed some differences between the towns. They didn't all look alike to you.*

**Fulton** Oh, yes, yes. In the east part of the country it seems like everybody's crammed together, and you don't really get out of a town, you just drive into another one. But when you get out west you think, "Hey, that's great," and then you get down in west Texas where the dirt—I mean, you have to set up a circus on some dirt, and when you get fifteen elephants going around in a circle, it kicks up a lot, a lot of dirt. So we'd have to have a water truck, see, or the fire people, they'd come over and water the tent [area] down. I even bought me a two-inch hose, and I'd go down there and water it down real good about an hour before the show. But it wouldn't work that good in some places. One time, D.R. said, "Get out there and water it down," during the show. (Laughs) I tried that, and nobody else in the show liked that because I made it muddy for them. We tried to work that out, but it was hard.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Is mud one of the bigger challenges to work around?*

**Fulton** We were really labeled as a mud circus because we were working in a field. When you're outside, which is all right with me, but working outside in the open and being in a different place every day, it's just something you've got to really experience to understand, being in the circus business. One day you're here and then the next day you're underneath a big nice, shady pine tree with beautiful green grass that you could eat off of. Then one day there'll be a lot that is so bad that you just, you work your head off to try to keep everything down, and the dirt down, because when you even get a bunch of people walking and walking around, it kicks it up. So that was a problem. We watered it down. That was one of the changes that I noted. Just every day there was a change. You kind of have to think about it through a process of elimination.

There are so many underlying things that you don't see, in the circus business. After awhile, you've got to figure out your own way because you're doing it. There were a lot of things that changed between the time my mom and D.R. started until now. The music, they used to have a band, six or eight piece band, music. That was when I was back there, then. The band members, they were quite a bunch of people that you could hang around and just meet. I've seen professors, you all, and

teachers. I've met quite a few famous people, like Pee-wee Herman. He'd come to the circus, and if you'd ever watch his credits on the end of *Pee-wee's Big Top*, you'll see "Carson and Barnes and Kelly Miller," on there. You ever see that?

**Finchum**

*No.*

**Fulton**

Whenever you see that, the credits—because he'd come to the circus for four days and got ideas and everything, on Kelly Miller, too. But he thanked us, and it was a good show.

**Nykolaiszyn**

*Well, what happens when you get sick on the road?*

**Fulton**

Usually, you get some antibiotics. (Laughs) Well, you've just got to take it just like any other, but you've just got to travel every day. I remember being sick a couple times and not having to work. One of them was pneumonia. I got pneumonia one time on the road and I couldn't get out of bed one day and said, "Oh, boy, I need to go to the doctor," and I had pneumonia. So I got over that. I think I was off a couple of days. Being sick, you just bear with it sometimes and a lot of times, when you perform and got a contract, you have to work sick. Sometimes that's how it goes. (Laughs)

**Finchum**

*If you weren't a performer, would you have a contract? Like, doing the water and the truck...*

**Fulton**

No, no. Oh! At the first of the year, yes, you make a contract with Geary [Byrd]. Yes, you tell him your pay scale and everything.

**Finchum**

*Not just performers, then, all the employees?*

**Fulton**

Yes. Yes, you decide on your pay and what you've got to do. Of course, being a family member, I don't mind doing a little extra or whatever we've got to do to get the show on the road, because that's just what you've got to do. If it was a muddy lot they'd tell me to go get the trucks and hit about fifth gear about the time you hit the dirt. I mean, they tell you. D.R. would be going like this, "Go around!" and you know exactly how you want to do it because we do it every day. I'd probably be going about forty miles an hour, but I'd be getting that truck wherever it needed to go to be parked, because every day, trucks went, basically, the same way. The midway and everything was parked the same way. So we had an idea how he wanted it and everything. It's pretty easy, but the trucks, I mean, the way I learned the truck is my daddy, I rode with him one day. I watched him. He told me to watch him. Then one day, somebody blew the show and they were one truck driver [short]. Sometimes, they'd have to double back, see. They'd go to the road and

they'd have to come back and get a truck and go back, see, because they didn't have enough people to drive a truck. They told me to get in the seat of the truck and drive it. And I did. I learned how to drive.

**Finchum** *Did you blow any arrows? (Laughs)*

**Fulton** Oh, yes. Actually, the first time I got in a truck, I blew the arrows. We were going from here to Austin, Texas, and I made it all the way to Austin, but when we got into this side of Austin I missed the turn arrows and I went through downtown, and then I broke down. A police officer came by and said, "What's the matter?" I said, "Well, I broke down. I'm with the circus." "Where you going?" I said, "Sir, I don't even know. I know the circus is around here somewhere. I blew the arrows." I had to explain what arrows were. It was the arrows we follow. So he eventually called in and found out where. He said, "You're way back on the other side of town." So he took me back there, a mechanic come and got me, and towed me back. That's my first experience of blowing the arrows.

Then there are certain trucks that are very valuable. One of the most valuable trucks is the spool truck and the pole truck, which has got all the poles for the tent, and I somehow got in the pole truck. I don't know why I got in the pole truck. They told me to drive it that morning, and they shouldn't have because I blew the arrows. If you know Georgia, Florida, and Alabama, how they're all right there close together, I went through three states before I figured out I blew the arrows. I had to come back, go through the weigh scale. I was all legal and everything, but I was about 150 miles from where I was supposed to be. And I had all the poles to the tent. Nobody could put the tent up or anything. (Laughter)

**Finchum** *What happened when you showed up with them?*

**Fulton** Well, they were happy, but unhappy. (Laughter) But I just explained, "Hey, I just blew it."

**Finchum** *Did you get to drive the pole truck again?*

**Fulton** Yes, they put me in there. People do it all the time. If you're human, you're going to blow the arrows. In the morning they give you a little route slip. That's the one thing you've got to get because that tells you where you're going, the route of the roads and everything, the turns. It's called a route slip. The guy that when you drive off the block, he'll hand you one, making sure you have one so you know where you're going, because you're going to a different town every day. I knew a lady that blew the arrows and she got lost, and she didn't know where she was going or where she'd been. (Laughs) She finally found the circus, but the police officer was laughing, because she didn't know where she was

going or where she'd been. She was looking for these "aerials."  
(Laughs) She couldn't speak good English, but anyway, that's another story. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *And before cell phones.*

**Fulton** Yes, that was way—oh, yes, before cell phones and everything.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Before GPS [global positioning system] ...*

**Fulton** Yes, before everything. Yes, that was not even known back then.

**Finchum** *Well, you learn a lot of geography.*

**Fulton** Yes. Oh, yes. You travel a lot. About twenty, twenty-five states a year, about 20,000 miles a year, average, is what we traveled back in my day. You may have a 200 mile jump and then you may have a 100 mile jump, and then a five mile jump and a ten mile, then another 100. It's just wherever they book it, book the show.

**Finchum** *Did you ever have to set up in snow or take down because of snow?*

**Fulton** Twice. One time in Anaconda, Wyoming [Montana] on the Fourth of July.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Wow.*

**Fulton** Yes. Yes, that's weird isn't it? Up in the hills. We noticed the storm coming in. It was really mountainous there and when that cloud went over, that mountain up there was white. We said, "Dang, that's snow!" We looked up there and then just, probably, ten minutes later, here comes some snow. But there was a big snowstorm and I'm trying to think of where it was. I think it was in Broken Bow [Oklahoma] where we had a bunch of snow on there. The tent had so much snow on it, we had to take the tent and completely roll it all the way over so the snow—take one end and just fold it over, and get this other end out so the snow would get off of it. Yes, that was early, I think, an early spring snow.

**Nykolaiszyn** *As a kid, did you ever have to repair the tent?*

**Fulton** Yes. Oh, yes. See, I can't remember what year we turned to vinyl, but we had canvas tents. I sewed a lot of baseball stitches, miles of them. Every day we'd spread the tent out the night before, or something. If we had a tear, it wasn't like it was just going to stay there. That thing would just keep going. We knew that morning we'd have to get that tent out, unload it, and start sewing it up before we could put it up. And we had a



guy, Alfonso Loyal, he could just sew like you wouldn't believe. He was the one that taught me how to do it. I baseball stitched and stitched two or three different ways. I'd be stitching from here to there, and I'd try to get it done in an hour using this big needle and one of these things in your hand that you've got to shove through. (Gestures) See, because you've got to shove it through canvas and rope and everything, bring it out, and go right back through it. It may not look pretty sometimes. I eventually got so it'd look real good and I'd say, "Yes, I did that up there." (Laughter) "It's holding. It's holding up."

**Finchum** *And you would usually do that when you were setting up rather than taking down?*

**Fulton** Well, in the mornings we'd get that tent, unroll it, and get it spread out. Then we'd inspect it and make sure there weren't any bad places in it. And this is when we had canvas. Now, vinyl is a whole different deal. We'd still have tears, but we'd seal it up with a blow-dryer and pieces of vinyl. You wouldn't have to sew it. It was kind of glued together by heat. If you had a tear you'd just get a patch, and it was like a small hair dryer, but heat, and you'd just get that and mold it right in there.

**Nykolaiszyn** *A lot easier.*

**Fulton** A lot easier, yes.

**Finchum** *About when did that change? Do you know when it went from canvas to vinyl?*

**Fulton** I'm trying to think. It had to be late '70s, early '80s. Probably late '70s is when they changed over.

**Finchum** *Did that change the spool truck, too?*

**Fulton** It stayed the same except it got easier because when a canvas gets wet, it gets heavy. Vinyl, it doesn't soak in so it wasn't a big difference. I could tell a difference whenever I was rolling it up, how tough it was and everything. But this stuff here, it's slick and slides. You know how vinyl is. It's real nice and smooth. Our tents were made, I think, in Italy back then. Every three or four years we'd get us a new big top. That's about what they lasted.

**Finchum** *Does the vinyl last longer?*

**Fulton** Yes. And it's a lot, I think, it's a lot more fire retardant, insurance and all that. Canvas, I don't think it's very good. I think you can spray something on canvas and make it retardant, but nothing like vinyl. We

even had a piece that we had—and that was another part of my job. I had to deal with the health inspector and the fire marshals. That was part of my job, too. I had to make them happy. They want to see the tent and they want you to demonstrate heating it up or putting a flame underneath it, with a fire, and I'd do that.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Every town?*

**Fulton** Almost every town. Some of them, they'd okay it and give us a permit. There were some towns where they were pretty rough. One that I remember, in Greeley, Colorado, this inspector didn't like something and he shut us down, the concessions down. We found out why they did that. It was because they had a concession stand of their own they wanted to put up. So D.R. says, "Well, I'll tell you what. I'll just pack my circus up and leave." So about an hour later, we got our concessions out. (Laughs) That's how he was. He wasn't going to let somebody bombard him with something like that. "Hey, this is my circus and this is a good thing so don't..." but he'd tell them the way it is.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Were you on the road when D.R. died?*

**Fulton** No, I was here in winter quarters. I talked to him before he left because, actually, he wanted me to drive him to Chicago, because he couldn't drive, and I couldn't do it. He called me and asked me, "Will you take me up there?" and I said, "No, I'm too busy right now. I just can't do it." He says, "Oh, okay." He wanted me to drive him up there. He died, I guess, in the town that he saw his first circus, in McCook, Nebraska. We miss him.

**Finchum** *You said you've got four brothers and sisters? There were five?*

**Fulton** Yes, there were five of us. I've got three brothers and a sister.

**Finchum** *Did the rest of them stay involved with the circus?*

**Fulton** Right now, my sister, she travels with the circus. I've got a brother in Monterey, California. I've got two brothers here in Hugo.

**Finchum** *Did their careers follow similar paths?*

**Fulton** Just like mine, yes, similar to mine. My brother Randy, he caught in the trapeze. He was a mechanic. He worked elephants, caught tigers when they got loose just like me, or any animal that got loose. (Laughs) Elephants got loose, we'd go catch them. Dana, he was a superintendent for Carson and Barnes for a while. Jack, my older brother, him and I had concessions for four or five years. We just do it, just anything and

everything, what they needed. And Lisa, she's right now traveling with us. She's the only one that's currently with Carson and Barnes. She does a lot of office work and stuff like that, helps with wardrobe, goes in and helps choreograph the show with Barbara, getting the girls ready for doors and the people coming in. She's in it up to her neck. (Laughs) She loves it, too. Myself, I'm an electrician right now. And that's what we do right now.

**Finchum** *Did you learn some of that on the show?*

**Fulton** Yes, I learned a lot of it. I wasn't an electrician on the show.

**Finchum** *They do have one, typically, don't they?*

**Fulton** Oh, yes. They have four or five. They have four or five electricians—or did have whenever I was there, because they have generators. They're all self-contained. The city doesn't give them power or anything. They've got their own generators, big generators. If you remember, in Wichita Falls, whenever that tornado went there years and years and years ago, we took our generator down there to run the hospital. They called us. Yes. That's my family.

**Finchum** *Would you do it all over again?*

**Fulton** I'll do it again, yes. I wish I could go back sometimes. I don't know. It's just something that gets in your blood. It's fun and rewarding, and it's a good thing. Really, when you think of a circus you think about animals, but I think about the children, the smiles. I look around and see all these people smiling when they see somebody doing that act, and their eyes are glazed, "Wow! Wow! Wow!" Of course, I was like that too, but when you first see something like a circus, you don't expect a lot of stuff. You've got to be amazed. I think circus business is great, but you've got to think about the number one thing you're doing is entertaining, and you're entertaining children.

But there are a lot of adults that are entertained, too, and that's the children in them. I can go to the circus and I'll say, "Wow! I didn't know they could do that." That's something I've just never seen. It's something that you learn. It's a learning experience. It really is. You really can't explain it. I don't know. When you get up in the morning and you're ready to go to the next town, and you don't know where you're going and you don't know who you're going to meet, and then when you get there you're happily surprised, or you're not. You just don't know. Of course, there are a lot of towns that you play every year and I know what was going to be there. So it's like, wow! When we go to this town, and I get a route card, I say, "I'm going to go to this place

and this place, and do this.” I even saw the Eagles in Denver one time, for fifty dollars. I couldn’t pass that up! They were playing right there that day. I had to do it. A guy gave me two tickets that sponsored the show. What can you do? So I saw the Eagles. I mean, you just travel around. It’s just like a wonderland, really. It really is.

**Finchum**

*A little bit of a mystery each day?*

**Fulton**

Yes, yes. You’ve got a lot of work to do, but if you’re in that town you get rewarded by it, I thought.

**Finchum**

*It sounds like you have to be able to multitask as well as manage your time and stay very organized and on point.*

**Fulton**

Yes, well, you have to make time to take you a nap, to rest, at least three hours anyway, three or four. Well, actually, what I’d probably do, I’d go to sleep about six o’clock because I’d have to get up about ten and go back to work. I’d try to eat my dinner and then go take me a little nap so I can get up at ten to work until about twelve or one, then get up at five, five-thirty. So eight hours, if you get lucky. Then on Sunday, like I told you, you get off early. A lot of people just said, “I’m going to go lay down. I’m tired.” (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn**

*What day was payday?*

**Fulton**

Sunday, see, short day, payday. It was all there. (Laughs)

**Finchum**

*They paid you in cash?*

**Fulton**

Yes, yes. You sign and they pay you cash.

**Nykolaiszyn**

*Was it easy to save for the winter or no?*

**Fulton**

I saved a little bit. You couldn’t save it all. Of course, to tell you the truth, you didn’t have a whole lot of time to spend a bunch of money. I mean, it’s just like you’ve got to be dedicated because if you’re not, you’ll be miserable. Yes, you didn’t have much time to...

**Finchum**

*You worked in winter quarters, too, though, painting, so you might not have had to save as much during the season.*

**Fulton**

Yes, yes. Well, I’d have a few thousand dollars saved up.

**Nykolaiszyn**

*Could you talk a little bit about the relationship between the circus and the Hugo community?*

**Fulton**

Yes. There's a lot of people here that are show people. Right now, I'm the president of the Circus City Showmen's Club, and we're just a group of show people that want to preserve the circus history in Hugo. For any kind of entertainment, music, just any kind of entertainment, we're going to support that. The circus, of course, has history, and some of it I don't know about. There's a lot of stuff about Hugo and the circus that I don't know about, but it was kind of like a match made in heaven, I think. They call this area Southwest Sarasota. That's what Hugo's nickname is. It's a place where everybody comes every winter. When all three circuses come in, they all want to get together and see what happened all year long. We try to have a dinner in the community. We all try to get—find out new stories during the year. We can find out what they're doing or who's joined or who's left.

We're trying right now to build us a museum to more or less document what circus has meant to Hugo, and what Hugo has meant to the circus. It was a good decision by D.R. and Aunt Isla to say, "Hey, this is a good place." Of course, all the Chamber of Commerce and all those clubs and people, masons, they're all for the circuses. They support us any way they can. And of course, Hugo is Circus City, USA. I'm trying to think if there's another one besides Sarasota. I don't think there is. It's very unique. It's a unique thing that happened here in Hugo. They don't even know it, really. They've got the [second] largest herd of elephants in North America sitting right out here. They've got a lost ark [Endangered Ark]. D.R. dedicated his whole life to elephants, and he was going to say, "Okay. You took care of me. I'm going to take care of you. I love you." That's how he was. I could see a sparkle in his eye. (Laughs) The way he felt about it.

Hugo supports the circuses, and I don't even know of one merchant that I've went to and said, "Hey"—we have a Circus Day every year, and I go around as a clown and give cotton candy. Every merchant that I go in and give the circus deal, "It's Circus Day, nationwide, and we're giving away free cotton candy." "Oh, yeah!" And that's their little kid in them, see, saying, "Oh, yes. I want a cotton candy." Several of them will say, "Oh, no," and then by the time I get to the door they'll say, "Oh, wait a minute! Yes, I'll take it." So it's well taken in this town, and there are a lot of people that don't even know they have family or have been in the circus or have family that's with the circus or have traveled with them. There's just a treasure trove of them. We have, of course, Showmen's Rest, and that's the final spot. The community really helps out on that, and I think we help the community out. I mean, it works two ways and it really works good.

**Finchum**

*When was the last time you went to a circus?*

**Fulton** It was...let's see...whenever the circus went out this year.

**Finchum** *This year, okay.*

**Fulton** Oh, yes, this year. I always go the opening day. And then when Kelly Miller came out here, I went to that one. So I try to make every one, at least one show when they are starting off and not too far away. Now, Dallas, they may be getting too far away. I'll see them whenever they get back, because I like to see the show after it has been on the road about a month, because they are polished up real good. When you first start out everybody's a little...you know. You need to...

**Nykolaiszyn** *Work out the kinks.*

**Fulton** Yes, work out the kinks and sometimes you've got to tell them, "Work this kink out," (Laughter) if they don't know to do it themselves. So that's part of circus men. You've got to be straightforward, because you're there really representing the circus. I mean, you're performing representing this and we want you to be the best you can. There's a certain protocol you've got to go to, to do it right. You've got to smile, and you can't ever have a frown on your face. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, as a spectator, now that you can enjoy the circus, what's your favorite part?*

**Fulton** The elephants, the elephants. It always has been and always will be. I just had a special—I was lucky, whenever I was putting the big top up and setting reserve seats, I was working with an elephant. I don't know. You think about what you do and you think, "Wow! I've worked with an elephant and put seats up and put a big top up with her." Well, I'm talking about Barbara the elephant. She just passed away a couple of years ago, but she was my favorite, my favorite out of all of them. She was just like talking to another human being.

**Finchum** *You mentioned smell-aroma when we first started, with popcorn and such.*

**Fulton** Yes.

**Finchum** *Do you miss any particular smells?*

**Fulton** No. I can drive by the stockyard down there and I can smell the same old smell, but no. Yes, there's a smell that I can say I do miss. Whenever I worked for the circus there were a lot of little Mexican families. I don't know if I ought to tell everybody this, but I used to go over there and say, "Hey, what have you got for breakfast?" because it smelled so good

and, "I'll pay you a dollar or two for some tacos." (Laughs) I would walk around and I could smell whatever was cooking and I said, "Man! That smells good! I don't want to go to the pie car or anything. I'll just go over here and get me a couple of tacos," just while I'm walking by and, "Hey, I'll bring you some water real fast, too." (Laughs) That smell-o-vision, of course, you've got the bad, too. You've got the elephants and the horses and everybody. But no, the popcorn smell and all that, all that other stuff, it's good.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Looking at old route books, I noticed that some of the families, some of the circuses, would have soccer teams.*

**Fulton** Oh, yes, yes.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Can you talk a little bit about that?*

**Fulton** On Sunday, everybody would be off early. I even played. If we had a small jump, like, had time, we'd be set up by ten or eleven o'clock. I mean, if we could get off at five, have a five mile jump [then] we could be all set up by ten or eleven, the whole thing, this tent. Then we go back and a lot of times we knew where we were going to play, and we knew there was a soccer field close by. We always played soccer. I mean, it was like we had to do it. (Laughs) I don't know. I really don't know. That's where I learned to play soccer. But we'd play at least two or three times a week, I know.

Sometimes we'd even have our own teams, Americans against Mexico, in softball. We'd have a softball tournament. We'd go over there and play softball, get everybody together. It was kind of like getting everybody, community, and getting everybody on...you know, because when you travel with 200 people, sometimes it gets a little bit hairy. That was one way of letting out some steam, I think, was playing soccer. We'd play some rough games. From Mexico, there are some good [players]. My brother-in-law, Jamie, he can kick the ball. He can drill [it]. I mean, he's good. They could be professionals, some of them, two or three of them I've seen. We'd play softball. We'd even play football. We'd have a football game. Basketball, we played all the sports. Oh, I played all sports in high school. I played five sports in high school, is what I did. I lettered all four years in five sports. That's twenty times. I was a wrestler, I was a state baseball champion, I was a basketball [player]. I'd score forty-eight points in a basketball game. I was a state champion wrestler in Kansas and Missouri in seventh and eighth grade.

**Nykolaiszyn** *You're a ringer. (Laughs)*

**Fulton** They call me Jim Thorpe. (Laughter) That was the joke back then. To

tell you the truth, a lot of that stands from the circus, really. Competition is what it's about, and I loved competition when I was a kid. I played baseball. I mean, sports was everything to me.

**Finchum** *Some of that played over to setting up the tent in a certain amount of time and getting the water delivered in a certain amount of time...*

**Fulton** Right, yes.

**Finchum** *...urge to get it done.*

**Fulton** Yes, the same way.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, it's good that you work hard, but you also make time to play a little bit, too.*

**Fulton** Oh, yes. Yes. Of course, you are in a different town every day. So you may be tired and not want to do it, but you go do it, make yourself do it. I know in Pittsburgh, we played the railroad station there. They had a ship on the river there so we all decided that night we were going to go on [it]. It was like a sightseeing ship—we all got on there. We had a ball. It was just us, but we had a ball! That was one fun memory of my mom, Aunt Isla, and D.R., going down there, being on that ship. I told D.R., I said, "I wonder if this one's going to sink." (Laughter) He laughed.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, as we come to a close, do you remember D.R.'s funeral in town?*

**Fulton** Yes, I remember it quite well. It was probably the biggest funeral Hugo had ever had. There were people on the side of the road. He was carried in a horse-drawn carriage that John Ringling, himself, was carried in. If you knew, he died in, I think, September. I think September, and they kept him in Colorado until all the circuses come in so they could celebrate his life. He had it in the Kelly Miller tent at the Agriplex. We all met out at the house, in the Big House, and drove up here. He had limos and stuff. It was quite something to see, to experience. You'll never forget it because that's the only, really, horse-drawn carriage I've seen. A funeral like that, I've never experienced one. But he wanted the best. He was a showman all the way. He had an elephant behind him in the truck. It was all pretty good. He inspired a lot of people, but you can't even imagine how many people. Millions—I want to say billions of times—billions of times he's put a smile on a child's face because that was his, what he did when he saw his first circus. He could say, "Hey, I could do this!" He enjoyed it a lot. He's quite a guy. We hated to see him go.

**Finchum** *And he actually started with a dog and pony show.*



**Fulton** Yes.

**Finchum** *An actual dog...*

**Fulton** And then he got a monkey and then he got an elephant. I think that's how it worked.

**Finchum** *Well, you hear that phrase. I hadn't thought of it as an actual dog and pony.*

**Fulton** Yes, yes. He built it to be America's largest wild animal circus. That's where he started at.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Did your mom ever retire or did she just continue?*

**Fulton** She retired, yes. She retired in, I think, '95 or '96.

**Nykolaiszyn** *That's a long time.*

**Fulton** Yes, yes. She was there thirty-some, forty years. Always there if they needed her. Of course, she didn't travel all the time.

**Finchum** *Made a lot of costumes.*

**Fulton** Oh, yes. She made a lot of elephant blankets. That's what she's known for—and a lot of costumes. I don't know how she did it, really, to tell you the truth, because she was just talented, and she grew up making her own clothes and stuff for everybody. Aunt Isla did. Her and Aunt Isla, they just get this thing in their head, "I'm going to do it like this. If anybody does it any different, don't let me see you because I want it done like this, that, and another." I mean, they had their ways, how they wanted it, and you had to be that way.

**Finchum** *Were you allowed in the basement when they were doing all of this?*

**Fulton** Well, they did it in the basement for a while and then they moved it to the stable. I loved the basement. It's a neat place. I grew up down in there, playing as a little kid. They used to have a big train set in the back room, back in there where he had all his trains, circus trains. We loved to go in there and look. I was just fascinated, all the little intricate things. He had a big table full of trains going everywhere. Of course, he had a pool table down there, and the juke box and the silver dollar bar, which is famous. It's made out of silver dollars, old silver dollars, spelled out "silver dollar bar." Back in the '60s, I think, somebody broke into the house and stole them all. They retrieved almost all of them, I think, back

though. They found out who did it and the guy came back down and redone it all. It has been that way ever since. There was a full two kitchens down in there, and a bedroom and a shower, and a shooting gallery where you can shoot a .22, down there, at rabbits. They've got a shooting gallery down in there.

**Finchum** *No wonder it's called the Big House then.*

**Fulton** Yes, yes.

**Finchum** *The circus people would come back and have social events or whatever in the Big House?*

**Fulton** Yes, we'd have a few there. There was a few Las Vegas style parties they had there, but D.R. and Aunt Isla didn't have a whole lot of parties or nothing. We'd go over there and eat during the holidays and stuff. Of course, as a kid, they have a goldfish pond out in front. It was our swimming hole, too. (Laughter) Until they told us to get our butt out of there! (Laughter) But we used to jump in it, swim, and get out real fast. We'd be all green. (Laughs) We were kids, though. We tried to catch them goldfish in there. They had one goldfish [pond] in the back. We wouldn't play with it because they could see back there, but in the front of the house they couldn't see us down in there. We went swimming in it trying to catch some goldfish. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *A little mischief, too.*

**Fulton** Yes, yes, yes. Oh, yes. When you've got children, four of them, you've got a lot of mischief. Of course, they had a pond, a lake right next door. We fished there. It was a lot of fun.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, why today do you continue to call Hugo home?*

**Fulton** Well, several reasons. I've lived here more than I've lived anywhere else, basically. I like the climate, except for right now. It's hot, 100 degrees every day. But I lived in Kansas and dealt with the snow and all that. When I came down here it was just like, "Wow!" You don't even get hardly any snow. I like the climate. I just stay here because my family is here, and I've got a lot of friends. It's just home to me. Of course, Kansas City is my home, too, my second home. Of course, I didn't live there as long as I've lived in Hugo, but I call that home, too. But Hugo is my home, Showmen's Rest, my family's buried here and I'm just kind of connected.

I don't like the city anymore, the rat race. (Laughs) That's another thing. I've been there, done that. In the days on the railroad whenever I had an

engine on the ground or something on the ground, I dreamed about the days I didn't have an engine on the ground and I was sitting in my house. I'm doing it right now. (Laughs) It'd take me two days to do it, but that's the way it worked.

**Finchum** *It has been a good life.*

**Fulton** Oh, yes. It has been fun. I haven't even really started to tell you half of it. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Well, get to it then! (Laughs)*

**Fulton** Well, we'll have to do it again or we'll do it again. I'd really like to do a story about all these adventures, hunting animals. Let's see, I've got a little list here. When a tiger got loose we had to capture it. When elephants got loose, Barbara got loose in Wisconsin. Eight babies, elephants run off in Winslow, Arizona, how we caught them and...

**Nykolaiszyn** *How does one capture eight baby elephants?*

**Fulton** Well, by luck. To tell you the story, I was driving an elephant truck, and my truck had been not running real well. So they took and unhooked my truck from the trailer. That morning whenever everything was leaving, they fixed my truck that day, hooked it back up, but they didn't put the lock back in it. So when I pulled up the trailer fell off, and I had a load of elephants in there. You can't crank the trailer up with a load of elephants in there so what do we do? I get the elephant guy that's there and say, "Hey, man. What do we do?" He says, "Well, we're going to have to unload them to get that trailer up." So we unload them and being around elephants, when you unload something, they've got a routine they go by, an elephant does. When you unload them they're going to go, and you're going to go hook them up—put them in the pen over there. Well, when they got out they looked around, "Oh, this is different," and they took off, eight of them did. We had a six foot fence around the fairgrounds and we kept all but two inside the fairgrounds, and we caught them.

Ted Bowman, which was our—I can't remember his job, but he was a front doorman. He had a car and trailer. He was one of the last ones to leave and I told him, I said, "Ted, you see that elephant running along down that track? Go along the road there and try to keep up with him." Then we had another one run down in a ravine right next to the place. So eventually we got all but two of them in there, and that one up there was over there attacking Ted's car. He was going back and forth along the highway. Finally, we caught it, but the one down in the ravine we couldn't hardly catch it because it would just go down in one end and

it'd just go back and forth. So finally, we had a ravine and then another ravine that come into that. We backed a semi down there. It was like this, too. (Gestures) I did it. I backed it down in there, and there was a door in front. When that elephant came by, that door was right there, the trailer would be sticking down there. He wouldn't go in there so eventually we had to get a cable, run it through and hook that elephant up in there, and put it in there like that. That was one of the ways to catch it. It simmered down and it jumped right in the trailer after we just simmered it down. But that's how we caught it. That was the only way.

That was in Winslow, Arizona. Then another one was in Wisconsin. This was with Barbara the elephant. She was putting the big top up and a car went by and backfired—boom! Well, that spooked her. She was putting the tent up so she took off and went underneath the sidewall and started going down the road. She had a pole hooked onto her and it came unhooked. There was a Chevy lug pickup with a camper on it and somehow that harness got over that ball of the back, hooked that trailer, and started pulling that thing backwards, flipped it over, and was dragging it three or four blocks on its back, just dragging it. It ran off into a cornfield, but before that, she went to a nursing home, which had some big plate glass windows. She came running by there, she looked over and she saw herself in this window. So she went right through that window. Went right through double doors, right down a big, long hallway in the nursing home. She was inside the nursing home, in the hallway. Those people are over there eating in the cafeteria and here comes an elephant down the hallway. She gets down to the end of the hallway, in the double doors, she just stomps them, knocks it down, goes right through there and runs out in a corn patch.

Then we get out there and my dad and me and John Carroll, we get out there and we've got chains. We're going to try to get her to settle down. Well, when an elephant tromps through a cornfield, it's like three rows that's tromped, just a big path, just a big ole' path through there. So we just follow this path. We don't know where she's at. So all of a sudden, we came around and there's her tail going like this. (Gestures swishing) She turns, comes at me, and knocks me down, knocks my dad down—kind of pushes him down and knocks ole' John Carroll down. Then she just kind of stops because she knew, "Hey, whoa! Wait, these are good people." We settled her down, hobbled her up in this...we took a semi over there and she just jumped right in there and says, "Hey!" But that backfire, it just scared her a little bit, and she just kind of took off.

**Finchum**

*Well, how did the fixer take care of the nursing home damage?*

**Fulton**

The insurance, I'm sure. (Laughter)

**Finchum** *But that wasn't your concern at that point.*

**Fulton** No, just getting her safe and simmered down a little bit, because sometimes you don't know what they're thinking. You've just got to love on them a little bit. That's what it takes

**Finchum** *And then the tiger one you mentioned?*

**Fulton** Oh, the tiger? Well, there have been two tiger hunts. I was in York, Pennsylvania one time and we were there setting up. Somebody came hollering that a tiger got loose, because they were shifting cages. When they put the cages up together, somehow it got in between there and got out. So the first thing on my mind was my kids. I go, "Where are my kids? There's a tiger loose!" I don't know where it's even loose at. It's just somebody says, "There's a tiger loose." So that day we were lined up where the trailers were and I went over to my house, and I seen all my kids, so I grabbed all four of them and threw them in that trailer. I know not long after I threw them in the trailer I looked back and there went that tiger, right behind my trailer. I didn't jump in. I seen that thing. It was running pretty fast so, I looked down. There were about three or four trailers there and then the horse trailer was right there.

That tiger was going down and we had a bunch of Shetland ponies, it was going down and biting each one of them. They were just sitting there eating. They didn't know what was going on behind them. He just—(Growls). Then Alfonso Loyal, he had a Belgium horse there. Alfonso, I seen him as he jumped in front of that tiger, before he got to his horse, because he was right there, see. He just jumped in front of that tiger, spooked it off. He went right down and there was a park right there, and he went down there and laid down. We got some canvas tent, went and made a circle, circled it in. We were just holding it real high, a bunch of us. We kind of got around it, got a cage, wheeled it down in there, just started funneling it in slow, and got him in that cage. That's how we caught him.

**Nykolaiszyn** *I guess you have to be ready for everything on the road.*

**Fulton** Yes, yes. It's kind of funny because I've seen the elephants running a little bit. One time we were right next to a railroad track. This is funny because Barbara was pulling stakes, pulling stakes out of the ground and a train came by and spooked her. We were all lined up in a row, folding the tent because we were folding it up that night. She came running down through there, that train scared her. She came running down—the elephants were on the other side so she was running toward them. But she went down, all these guys she didn't know until she came to me. Then she just went right across, just kind of pushed me away and went

right across there. But she didn't want to cross that line. She knew. All these other people, she didn't know their face. She went down, probably, I don't know, twenty yards probably. She came down that line, and then when she came to me, she just came over and went right across and ran over to the...I got out of her way. She just came running across there. She knew my face. She just, "Oh, there's a face I know. I'm going to go..." (Laughs)

Anyway, that was a few things that I've done. Of course, my brother, he captured the tiger here in Hugo. He was loose and I don't know if you all know this, but at the lake, they spotted it over at the lake. It got loose here in winter quarters. Finally, we couldn't really find it after they spotted it so D.R. called the governor and got an Apache helicopter down here with a heat sensor. They started combing this land and they finally located it. He said the only thing they could tell—there were deer and all kinds of stuff, but they saw that long tail. They said, "That's it, right there." So they went down and that was it. Then my brothers and everybody got in the truck. They found out where it went. We all got in the truck and went out to the lake. We had to stop a bunch of media there because they were just going to come flooding in. I said, "One person and that's it." So one person got to film it all. They darted it. It's right there where the marina is, the Hugo marina. They darted it, we came and threw her in the back of the truck and took her home, safe and sound. But that Apache was up there with the light on it telling us which way to go.

**Finchum** *And D.R. called the governor to request that.*

**Fulton** Yes, he called and said, "We need some kind of equipment to get this tiger caught, because he keeps just getting away." My brother trailed it for a long time. It was over there and then it was probably about two miles, it came up to this guy's front door, and he went outside. He was going to feed it cat food. (Laughter) That thing roared at him so he jumped back in the house.

**Nykolaiszyn** *That was probably smart. (Laughter)*

**Fulton** Yes, it was funny how he said it. "Yes, it roared and I jumped right back in the house!" (Laughs) But that's when we found out where the location of it was, and then after that it went across the highway and got into Hugo City Treatment plant there, on this side of Hugo, got inside the fence somehow. Then when they spotted it, it crawled the fence and went back toward the lake. So finally a couple days later, they spotted it and got it. That's another adventure. (Laughs)

**Finchum** *Do the town people panic when something like that happens?*

**Fulton** Well, yes, in a way. You didn't want to go to the lake.

**Finchum** *No. (Laughs)*

**Fulton** Of course, the elephants that got loose here, five days, they were here. There were two elephants at the lake for five days. They got loose. That reminds me of another story. In Sallisaw, Oklahoma—this is when we lost one of our elephants. It was Obert Number 1. We had played Sallisaw and they'd set the circus up on an old landfill. It rained like cats and dogs all night long, and we couldn't get any of our trucks off the lot. So we came up with this idea, "Let's unload the elephants out of the trucks, get them over there, and then load them up on the deal." That didn't work. When we unloaded them they took off just like they did that other time. But this one, this is what happened was, I think three of them took off and there was a big quarry right behind where they went. Three of them fell off and then one of them fell on over. It killed it. It killed her. Finally, we got those other two. We got a call that said, "My little girl says, 'Daddy, there's an elephant out here!' in my yard." He kept saying, "Oh, please! No, there's not an elephant out there, honey." He goes back out there and their clothesline is torn down, there are elephant prints everywhere and he goes, "Well, I think there's an elephant out here." (Laughter) So we find it and we dart it. It was late that night, my brother, Dana, he spent the night with her out there. But anyway, we got her fixed up, but we lost Obert on that deal. That was a bad deal.

**Finchum** *So you keep darts with you just for that purpose?*

**Fulton** Yes. Yes, you've got to keep something there. You're dealing with wild animals. You've got to always have something there. And this reminds me of another thing. I used to go to some zoos and pick up animals. I went to Kansas City one time. Since I was familiar I said, "Oh, yes. I'll go." So there were two tigers up there. We go up and I go to Swope Park Zoo there and pick them up. I've got an aunt that lives there, and she's got a little girl in kindergarten. So that night it was real snowy and cold so I backed those tigers in the garage so they'd be out of the weather. Well, the next day my little niece, she goes to school, to kindergarten saying, "Oh, you won't believe there's tigers in my garage!" The teacher calls Brenda and says, "Your daughter won't quit talking about this." She says, "I think she's saying there are tigers in your garage!" (Laughter) And Brenda goes, "Well, you wouldn't believe it, but there are." (Laughter)

**Nykolaiszyn** *She's not telling stories.*

**Fulton** She's not telling stories. So Sabrina, there's one 'good for her' because she wouldn't let that one down. (Laughs)

**Nykolaiszyn** *Good memories.*

**Fulton** Yes, good memories.

**Finchum** *Goes back to children, too.*

**Fulton** Yes, goes back to them.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Well, is there anything else you'd like to share before we close out today?*

**Fulton** Right now, that's probably all I need to tell you, but I probably could come up with some more. We'll postpone that until a later date. We'll get some more of my family members here and we'll do a family thing.

**Nykolaiszyn** *Sounds great. Well, we really appreciate your time this morning, talking to us about...*

**Fulton** It's my honor. It's my honor.

**Nykolaiszyn** *...your family and the circus here in Hugo.*

**Fulton** I appreciate you, too...

**Nykolaiszyn** *Thank you.*

**Fulton** ...very much. I do. (Laughs)

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