

CWM Audio 4-5

Bobbi Todd Interview, August 22, 1972

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Richard Flint It's going around. Okay.

Bobbi Todd: Oh, is it going?

Richard Flint It's Bobbi Todd, right? I'm speaking with Bobbi Todd in Baraboo, Wisconsin on August 22, 1972. Don't worry, the sound will pick up quite fine. Can we begin by you telling me how you got into show business?

[00:00:30]

Bobbi Todd: Well, I passed Clyde winter quarters on Washington Boulevard in Palms, California. I was in a car with two or three other people and somebody said, "Why don't you join the circus?" I said, "Well, maybe I will." I went in and saw Charlie Cook. I said, "You need any ... for work?" He says, "Can you ride?" I says, "Yes." "Can you dance?" I said, "Yes." He says, "Go see Burt Dennis." I went and saw Burt Dennis and that's how I ...

[00:01:00]

Richard Flint And that was the Barnes Show?

Bobbi Todd: The Barnes Show, 1924.

Richard Flint Right. What did you do on the Barnes Show that year then?

Bobbi Todd: That year, I just rode mostly. High school, high jumps. I worked elephant.

Richard Flint Can you recall any of the activity in the quarter before the show went out? What did you do? The rehearsals?

Bobbi Todd: Well, we rehearsed before the show first went out. Then it went out and stayed out for about a month and had to come back. The hoof-

Richard Flint The hoof and mouth.

Bobbi Todd: The hoof and mouth disease and we were in for nearly a month. And then we had to keep all the camels and all the split foot animals in. They made a tandem act. We all rehearsed on that tandem act and we could go. Then we left and jumped to Gillsburg, Indiana.

[00:02:00]

Richard Flint Right. Can you recollect much from the season that year? What went on? Any events?

Bobbi Todd: Well, one big event was the latter part of the season when 36 horses got burned up in the car. That was terrible.

Richard Flint Those were the liberty horses?

[00:02:30]

Bobbi Todd: Liberty horses. 23 of them. Some [inaudible 00:02:25] and some extra horses. It was 36 all together.

Richard Flint Right. You mentioned about one liberty horse getting away from the fire.

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Marvel. His name was Marvel. He was a stallion. He kicked himself out of that car, so they put him in another car. He's the only one in the creams that was saved.

Richard Flint What happened to the people that rode the horses when you lose all your horses?

[00:03:00]

Bobbi Todd: Oh, we had to go into baggage stock, get them from the baggage stock and a few extra new horses that they were kind of breaking, that wasn't really broke. We just really had to go to work on them to make a tandem act. And they could manage that.

Richard Flint Can you recall some of the people on the show that year?

Bobbi Todd: Oh yeah, John Backman. He was question director. Lewis Roth was animal man and trainer.

[00:03:30]

Richard Flint Who did you work with in your acts and so on? Can you recall a routine of any of the acts?

Bobbi Todd: Well, no. On the [inaudible 00:03:41] act and specs and all, we all worked together. That first year I didn't really work with hardly anyone. Outside with the elephants.

[00:04:00] There were three of us. I just don't recall which the other two girls were. There was three in each ring. But Goli Backman, Ruth Wolf. Ruth Wolf was the Pocahontas in the spec.

Richard Flint Did you go back to the quarters, then, in California with the show?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah.

Richard Flint What did you do that winter then?

Bobbi Todd: I stayed. I worked down in Venice. Venice was open and the pier. And then come back
[00:04:30] and worked in wardrobe for Rex Russell later on before the show went out in '25.

Richard Flint What sort of a man was he in producing specs and so on?

Bobbi Todd: He was very good. Rex was really good. He was a nice fella to work for. He had charge of all the wardrobe and everything on the road.

Richard Flint Did he travel on the show?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah.

Richard Flint He did. What did he do on the show then?

[00:05:00]

Bobbi Todd: He had charge of the ... The main-

Richard Flint Wardrobe?

Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative). The main wardrobe.

Richard Flint Were you on Barnes again in '25?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah.

Richard Flint What did you do then?

Bobbi Todd: I'd done the same thing as I had done in '24. They didn't have too many specialties at that time. Well you made yourself generally useful. That's how your contract call. If they need you for camels or elephants or anything that they need you for. I did work for one riding act with a riding monkey and goat.

[00:05:30]

Richard Flint To return to the '24 season in Denver in mid season was the last parade for the Barn Show, can you remember making parade and so on?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. I made parade in that. I was driving a 10 pony tandem for another girl. She was sick. We were going along and here comes a fire engine coming down. I had to stop. And the ponies just got all tangled around. There was nobody to hold the lead ponies even. They wanted to go. They're just used to following the wagon ahead of them. Finally somebody got me straightened out. Two or three come off the road. The parade marshal he was all up ahead. Finally got them straightened out and caught up with the rest of the parade.

[00:06:00]

Richard Flint Now, that was just in the last parade.

Bobbi Todd: That was the last parade. Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint You rode in the parade normally?

Bobbi Todd: Normally I rode with the-

Richard Flint The mounted ladies?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, mounted ladies.

[00:06:30]

Richard Flint: What was the reason for the cancellation of the parade? Do you know?

Bobbi Todd: Traffic.

Richard Flint: Traffic. Yeah.

Bobbi Todd: Too much traffic.

Richard Flint: Were many of the show people disappointed?

Bobbi Todd: No.

Richard Flint: No.

Bobbi Todd: Get up too early in the morning to make parade.

Richard Flint: Was it quite a relief, then, for the rest of the season not having to make parade?

Bobbi Todd: Well, it was. Yeah, because you had to get up early to make a 10 o'clock parade or something. Be there. Wardrobe and get out and hot and dusty and dirty.

[00:07:00]

Richard Flint: How long were you with the Barnes?

Bobbi Todd: I was with the Barnes's '24, '25, '29, and '30.

Richard Flint: Where did you go in '26?

Bobbi Todd: I went to the Lee Brother Show owned by Christy.

Richard Flint: Had you started training animals when you were first on Barnes?

Bobbi Todd: No, not on Barnes at first. An the Lee Show, Terrell Jacobs was over there. He broke me in at two leopards. That was my first animals acts then.

[00:07:30]

Richard Flint: Can you recollect going over the Lee Show and how you got hired over?

Bobbi Todd: Oh, yeah.

Richard Flint: Why did you switch?

Bobbi Todd: Burt Dennis was the question director on the Barn Show. He left and went over to and asked me if I'd go because I was riding for training on the horses. He'd asked if I would go over with him and his wife and two children. And I said yes because I like Burt and

- [00:08:00] working for him and all. And he was teaching me a lot about riding. I went on over to Christy with him. I stayed there '26 the Lee Show. Then I went '27, '28 on the Christy Show because they pulled the Lee Show in.
- Richard Flint Right. What acts did you do besides the leopard act on Lee?
- Bobbi Todd: Oh, I was generally useful. I had done the elephant act. We only had two elephants.
[00:08:30] [inaudible 00:08:30] elephants. Riding goats and monks. Little pony act. I just about in and out on that Lee Show. I was in and out all the time.
- Richard Flint Was it much the same on Christy?
- Bobbi Todd: Well, just about on Christy, but not quite as bad as on that Lee Show.
- Richard Flint What was the difference between the Christy and the Barnes Show or the Christy, Lee and Barnes? Were they much the same?
- [00:09:00]
Bobbi Todd: Well, when I first joined Barnes in 1924 it was all animals. There was no aerial, no nothing. Then in '25 they broke all of us riders into swinging ladders, which was nice. But Lee and Christy, they had both ... Lee was a smaller show. They had 15 car shows.
[00:09:30] Christy had a spec that was very fantastic, I thought. It was the ark, Noah and the ark. And they had a big ark in the back. You almost had to tip your head to see the ark in the opening number. And then he had the lamb, the lion and the lamb laying down. He had a girl on the cross, on the top standing on the cross. And then all the animals coming in two by two. It was odd. It was different, so much different. And Lee we just had plain spec.
[00:10:00]
- Richard Flint Were you doing anything besides animal acts on the Lee and Christy?
- Bobbi Todd: Just riding and fill in acts. I call the elephants.
- Richard Flint How did you happen to go back to Barnes then?
- [00:10:30]
Bobbi Todd: Well, Burt went back to Barnes. Dennis went back to Barnes and I went back to Barnes. That's when Backman ... Was Cook still there then? Anyhow, whoever it was they talked me into a male lion act. It was a little difficult for me because Lily was left handed. And he carried everything a little bit different. In the left hand and the stick in this hand, where I would put the stick in my ... So I had to switch over to it. But it wasn't too bad.
[00:11:00]
- Richard Flint How did you like training a wild animal?
- Bobbi Todd: I liked the animals all right. And then Louie's wife got hurt. She was working the wrestling tiger. It was never trained to wrestle. But it would play. She was big. I worked her to the end of the season.

[00:11:30]

Richard Flint What was the reason you started working the animals?

Bobbi Todd: She got the wrestling tiger. She got hurt. She was riding the horse and got thrown on the ring curve and hurt her arm, so she couldn't work. They broke me into the tiger.

Richard Flint Right. You were on a show in Al G. Barnes himself. Did you ever see much of Barnes?

Bobbi Todd: Oh, yes.

Richard Flint What sort of a man was he?

Bobbi Todd: He was a man. He was there all the time, Al G. was. [inaudible 00:11:57] hat on him.
[00:12:00] He was right in that performance. He sat in the seats right in front or he was behind in the hunt chasing the dogs. He was a man that was very interested in the show.

Richard Flint Yeah. He was always there.

Bobbi Todd: He was always there. A very nice man. He always talked to you. And this bridle less horse that I rode in '24 when it got burned up. It was his. He wanted me to ride it, so I
[00:12:30] rode it. Bridle less. I was riding the horse anyway, but he wanted me to ride it bridle less.

Richard Flint What did the performers call him? Was it Al G.?

Bobbi Todd: Just Al G..

Richard Flint He traveled always on the show?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah.

Richard Flint And he had a private car?

Bobbi Todd: Right.

Richard Flint Was his family along usually?

Bobbi Todd: Well, his wife was with him.

Richard Flint He had several.

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Jane was his last one.

Richard Flint She's still living, isn't she?

[00:13:00]

Bobbi Todd: She was the last I heard. She was up around Thousand Oaks when I was up there.

Richard Flint Was he on the show in '29 or had it been sold then?

Bobbi Todd: It was sold in '29. Barnes wasn't on it.

Richard Flint He wasn't.

Bobbi Todd: No. It's when Buster Conan come over.

Richard Flint Right. What sort of a manager was he?

Bobbi Todd: Buster Conan?

Richard Flint Right.

Bobbi Todd: Well, he was all right. He was pretty good guy. Always treated me all right.

Richard Flint You were on Barnes '29, '30?

Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint And then what did you do?

[00:13:30]

Bobbi Todd: Then I left and went back over to Christy.

Richard Flint Right. On Christy. That was the year Christy closed.

Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint What happened on Christy then? Can you recollect much?

Bobbi Todd: Well, we were going along. Snowed in Cheyenne, Wyoming. [inaudible 00:13:44] was nothing. A little bit of the entrance fell down with snow on it. There was no business. We had no business at all. Some place we played the fourth of July sometime. I forget exactly where it was. But we closed the sixth. But this was a July date. It was supposed to be a big date, have a big picnic or big doings out some place and nobody showed up to the circus.

[00:14:00]

Richard Flint Oh, so it was just bad business.

Bobbi Todd: We had quite a time.

Richard Flint Well, when did they go back to quarters? Was it early?

Bobbi Todd: No. They closed the sixth of July. We went back to quarters.

Richard Flint How did you get the notice that the show was closing?

Bobbi Todd: They just come and told us it was closed, that was all.

Richard Flint What did you do?

[00:14:30]

Bobbi Todd: A lot of people left the show. Everybody didn't get paid also. We got some.

Richard Flint You were talking earlier about some of the [inaudible 00:14:40] that was on the shows and Christy and so on. Well, was there much that you saw that you can talk about?

Bobbi Todd: Nothing.

Richard Flint Okay.

Bobbi Todd: Because everybody knows that there was ... [inaudible 00:14:59] some of the shows.
[00:15:00] It wasn't as bad as it was painted sometimes.

Richard Flint Were you on circuses after Christy closed then? You were on Ringling later.

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, I was on Ringling later.

Richard Flint Were you on any other circuses between then?

Bobbi Todd: Oh, a couple of little ones. I can't even remember what their name is. Somebody took one out of Venice there and it folded. A fella took one out. It folded. Then I was married. I just didn't go out for a while. Then I went out on Ringling. [crosstalk 00:15:34] with the baby gorillas.

Richard Flint How did you happen to go back with Ringling?

Bobbi Todd: Well, I heard that they wanted someone to take care of the gorillas. I wrote and Mr. Concello said to see Montgomery. Good old Montgomery. I got [inaudible 00:15:50] in Sarasota then. I had come down from ... I'd gone up north. I saw where Terrell Jacobs was on the trade show. And I didn't want to stay up in that cold country. I wrote to Terrell and says, "You got anything I can do on streets? I don't want to stay up here." I have my car and my trailer. He says, "Come on down. We'll find something for you to do." That's how I happened to be with the streets. I went to D-land. I was going out the next day. I was breaking some goat and stuff. I got ill and had to go in for a major operation, so I didn't go back the next year with Terrell. Louie, because Louie Reed, the elephant man was on with Terrell Jacobs. And he went to Ringling to break in the baby puas. I went down. I drove down one time to see him. After I come out of the hospital. Oh, I worked at the nursing home for a while. And then I drove on down there and that's when I found out they needed someone. I got down tight with Montgomery and I moved my trailer down there and I was back on the Ringling.

Richard Flint That was one season.

Bobbi Todd: That was in '52. Then I was '53, '54. Well, I was there til '60 I was with Ringling.

Richard Flint You were with Ringling. Doing what on Ringling?

Bobbi Todd: Well, the baby gorillas. And then after the gorillas I worked in winter quarters. I helped take care of the menagerie stock and stuff when they went out. [Tulmas 00:17:23], he took the baby gorilla. There were two baby gorillas and they took them all in the same place.

[00:17:30]

Richard Flint I noticed Ringling has some gorillas again. You going to go back to take care of them?

Bobbi Todd: I'm a little bit too old now.

Richard Flint Of all the things you've done on circuses, what have you found you've enjoyed the most or remembered?

Bobbi Todd: All of it.

Richard Flint All of it?

[00:18:00]

Bobbi Todd: That's the truth. I really did. I liked to learn thing. I enjoyed doing it. I enjoyed working. The only thing I disliked was aerial work. And swinging ladders, [inaudible 00:18:07]. I'd get up there and hang upside down. I'd have to come down pretty soon because I could never swing when I was a swing. I did that. I'd [inaudible 00:18:20] and they'd say, "What did you come down here?" I said, "Well, you don't want to have a law suit or something. I better come down."

[00:18:30]

Richard Flint Did you ever have any problem with any of the animals at all?

Bobbi Todd: No. We had one lion smiler. He'd chase Louie Roth. He chased Burt Nelson out of the ring. This was before. He was a really mean lion. In fact, a chair, stick or nothing. Louie

[00:19:00] Roth said he'd fix old smiler. He had him molared. The year I worked him in '29, he was as docile as any other lion. But he looked like a big female. He lost all his mane. Like an old smiler would, I kept looking at him. I had another one, George, that was an

[00:19:30] aerial lion. Little Mary Kinko, she did the aerial lion. She went up with old George on the aerial lion. Had him and he'd stand up on a couple of pedals. I was too short legged. I couldn't mount him. But that's what Louie used to do, that's what everybody used to do is longer legged. I couldn't mount him. I just had to stand on the two pedals. And he was a good old lion. But this smiler, I didn't have no more trouble with him.

Richard Flint What about some of the animal trainers that were on Barnes that you worked with
[00:20:00] Burt Nelson, Lou Roth, Mabel Stark and so on? Can you recall ...

Bobbi Todd: I just said the one that broke me in.

Richard Flint Terrell Jacobs.

Bobbi Todd: Terrell Jacobs.

Richard Flint Was he on Barnes?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, he was on Barnes too.

Richard Flint He was on Barnes.

Bobbi Todd: He was on Barnes. That's where he married us. He met Dolly Jacobs and married her.

Richard Flint Did any of those fellas and the ladies too have preference to the type of animals they'd like to work with or tricks that they would always teach a cat?
[00:20:30]

Bobbi Todd: Well, I don't really know that. [inaudible 00:20:34]. Like I say they just do it or if you were looking at that, they might ask you to do it or wanted to learn. They were always able to teach them to learn like with elephants or anything like that.

Richard Flint Were they all mostly fighting acts on the show? Or fighting type of acts with the gun and the whip?

[00:21:00]

Bobbi Todd: Well, yeah, at that time. Those trainers trained them that way. But Court, and some of that, later on they had the different type.

Richard Flint Can you single out anyone that you would regard as one of the best of the trainers?

Bobbi Todd: Well, I still think Lou Roth was a really, really good trainer. He was in the Old Yankee Patterson Show. Terrell Jacobs ... I mean Clyde Beady was his cage boy at the time over there. He was very good. I think, at that time with the train, Beady was young then, but Beady was good after years. Cheerful Gilfoy, with the one arm, he ...
[00:21:30]

Richard Flint Chubby Gilfoy.

Bobbi Todd: Or Chubby Gilfoy was cheerful. He taught Beatty a lot. He was out there in Sarasota when he was breaking in one of his lion acts. He was a good trainer. But I never worked out. I seen what I see. Lou Roth ... the only ones that I know of.
[00:22:00]

Richard Flint Right. That's what ... What about an elephant man?

Bobbi Todd: Well, I think Cheerful Gun was one of the best. Hipockus was good.

Richard Flint [Hipock 00:22:26].

Bobbi Todd: I can't think of his last name.

[00:22:30]

Richard Flint How big were some of the acts? Like the cat acts, how many cats would they have?

Bobbi Todd: Oh, Louie had quite a lot of tigers. Had a female act. They had a female act of lions too. The males was only eight then. Terrell had a big act. I don't recall just how many of them, but it was really big.

Richard Flint Even later one, it was bigger then?

[00:23:00]

Bobbi Todd: Yeah.

Richard Flint Was there more money if you had more cats in the act?

Bobbi Todd: No. You just got a show. Not no shows.

Richard Flint What sort of money did you make back in those days? Like a lot?

Bobbi Todd: Oh, \$40, \$50 a week. You was getting big money, and you was getting big money.

Richard Flint What sort of accommodations ...

Bobbi Todd: We had berths.

[00:23:30]

Richard Flint Were they wooden cars?

Bobbi Todd: Most of them were. Most of them were wooden cars. The Barnes Show was. Christy Show was.

Richard Flint Ever any wrecks or anything you were involved in?

Bobbi Todd: I was never involved in any other than ...

Richard Flint The Barnes.

Bobbi Todd: They had one the next year. After I left in '30, they had one in Camden or some place way on the east coast somewhere.

Richard Flint What parts of the country did you play? Mostly the west and Midwest?

[00:24:00]

Bobbi Todd: We played with a bunch most of the west. And then of course in 1924 we had one in Vancouver, Canada all the way across the Winnipeg.

Richard Flint Did you have a favorite part of the country you liked to play?

Bobbi Todd: No, not really. I liked the mountains. You didn't get to see too much. Of course you got to see some of it, but not too much. They had beautiful country around those mountains. You go around the mountains with that train, look down and see the train way down there. But, seemed to me just like it is now. No favorite part.

[00:24:30]

Richard Flint Do you have any favorite stories you like to tell or incidents to recall? What have we been talking about tonight? Any stories, the people ... Of all the acts that you've seen on the shows, what one would you say you've enjoyed the most? Any type of act?

[00:25:00]

Bobbi Todd: Well, I do enjoy flying acts. I always have. I don't like aerials, but I do admire them. And they work hard.

Richard Flint Right. Was there a reason why the Barnes Show had only animals that you were aware of?

Bobbi Todd: You mean only animals at first?

Richard Flint Right.

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. He had a wild animal show and it was a wild animal show.

Richard Flint That's what he wanted.

[00:25:30]

Bobbi Todd: He had a few cats and rabbits. All the animals on that show.

Richard Flint Did he ever train any himself while you were on the show?

Bobbi Todd: No.

Richard Flint Not that time. What did he do in winter quarters? Just go to his office?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, he had a big home there. He stayed there. I mean, he was there. They had a nice winter quarters in Palms they had built. They had midgets, clean cut midgets. They had a little midget town built there and a little store where they sold little novelties and stuff. Yeah, nice winter quarters. He stayed there in his house. Didn't see too much of him.

[00:26:00]

Richard Flint The winter quarters were open to the public too?

Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint Right.

Bobbi Todd: That's what I say. They sold things.

Richard Flint Of course, they were in different winter quarters the second time you were-

Bobbi Todd: Yes, in Baldwin Park.

Richard Flint Baldwin Park.

Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint Were those better quarters would you say?

[00:26:30]

Bobbi Todd: I don't think so because I think the one on Washington Boulevard there because you had more traffic there and everything. Baldwin Park you're way out in no place. But there in Washington Boulevard was all the traffic going to the beaches, Venice, Ocean Park, Santa Monica. You get a lot of traffic there.

Richard Flint Is there anything left of the quarters now that Barnes were in?

Bobbi Todd: In Baldwin Park? I believe there is, but I'm not sure because I haven't been there for quite a while.

Richard Flint But Palms is-

[00:27:00]

Bobbi Todd: No, there's nothing left in Palms. His house was still there, but I don't know if it is now or not. I've been away since '49.

Richard Flint How many people from the old Barnes Show are still around? You're mentioning Swede Johnson.

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, there's Swede Johnson is around.

Richard Flint Any other trainers?

[00:27:30]

Bobbi Todd: A girls name, but I mentioned her. She's in there.

Richard Flint Where's that magazine? It might be in it. Can we borrow the magazine for a moment? Maybe if you go through the program you'll recollect some more.

Bobbi Todd: Jules Jackson. She was on the Barnes Show. She's down in Venice. She's down in ...

Richard Flint Here's the program. Maybe if you go through some of this, you'll recollect.

[00:28:00]

Bobbi Todd: Margaret Graham, I don't know where she is. Lewis ...

Speaker 3: She died. Margaret Mill?

Bobbi Todd: Margaret Mill. Margaret Graham I think did and Agnes Lawson. Agnes Lawson was her sister.

Richard Flint Can you recall one of the acts? Anything that jogs your memory just speak up there.

Bobbi Todd: Well, Kinko, he was a clown and his wife. Little Mary, she's the one that done their lion.

[00:28:30]

Richard Flint The aerial one?

Bobbi Todd: The aerial lion, the one that I said on the Barnes Show was old George lion. He was an aerial lion. He was on the platform and they'd take him up on top.

Richard Flint Oh, right.

[00:29:00]

Bobbi Todd: Backman. [inaudible 00:28:52], Backman. I had the leaping dogs on the Christy and Lee Show. Leaping greyhounds, leap over an elephant. Agnes Lawson, she's dead too. Dorothy's alive. Dorothy and ...

[00:29:30]

Richard Flint I imagine this brings back a few memories to you, doesn't it?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, it does. They kind of ... Roman Standing.

Richard Flint Roman Standing. His picture was in there, wasn't it?

[00:30:00]

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Him. They're still living in Lewiston Park.

Richard Flint Not the fella, that Yankee Doodle team was ...

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, yeah.

Richard Flint Was he the fella that drove the Yankee Doodle team?

Bobbi Todd: What in the world is his name?

Richard Flint There's a picture of that.

Bobbi Todd: [crosstalk 00:30:23]. Yeah.

Richard Flint The picture's down in the lower corner of him. Here it is.

[00:30:30]

Bobbi Todd: Macavee. Jack Macavee.

Richard Flint Where is he now?

Bobbi Todd: They live in Ocean Park.

Richard Flint Ocean Park.

Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Just off of Washington Boulevard.

Richard Flint Is he retired?

Bobbi Todd: Well, he wasn't. He was conning around the last I heard. He married Irene. Her mother was living there. I don't know if her mother is still alive or not.

Richard Flint Seeing that hippo reminds me about Lotus. She was on ...

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. That is Lotus. She was on there.

[00:31:00]

Richard Flint What was her act like when they brought her around?

Bobbi Todd: Well, all she done is walk around. They had a wagon to put on her back. They just take her. Made her a little switch to guide, walk around. The hippo drone track.

Richard Flint Was she pretty slow?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, kind of slow. She didn't go too fast. She [inaudible 00:31:25].

Richard Flint People liked it?

[00:31:30]

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, they did like it. Anyhow, he had some pretty nice gals riding.

Richard Flint How big a menagerie did Barnes have?

Bobbi Todd: He had a large menagerie.

Richard Flint What sort of a-

Bobbi Todd: He had a very large with his animals and all his ... Ringling did in the first years because they cut out their menagerie now. But when I was with them, because he had quite a few elephants. And he had all the working lions and tigers.

[00:32:00]

Richard Flint Did he have any nonworking animals in the menagerie or were they all-

Bobbi Todd: Oh yeah. He had a lot that they didn't work. You get a mean lion or somebody. Like I said, he took smiler out and had him as a cage one. But something like that. Hyenas and all different kinds like that that they didn't. I said they worked most everything

[00:32:30]

they had, but not a hyena or something like that. They had 11 hyenas. Boy, would they wake you up.

Richard Flint Were there ever any superstitions on the show at all?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah.

Richard Flint What were some of them?

Bobbi Todd: Humpback trunks and eating peanuts or whistling in the dressing room.

Richard Flint Eating peanuts in the dressing room?

Bobbi Todd: Eating peanuts in the dressing room or whistling in the dressing room.

Richard Flint But all of that would bring you bad luck?

Bobbi Todd: That's supposed to have been. That was [inaudible 00:32:59] was whistling in the dressing room.

[00:33:00]

Richard Flint Any other superstitions at all? No?

Bobbi Todd: Not that I know of.

Richard Flint Did all the people observe these superstitions?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Some girl come in on the Christy show one time. I don't know where she come from. With a humpback trunk and they drug the trunk out of the dressing room. And that night, they talk about the superstition. I'm not superstitious, but that evening, the wagon ... We were kind of parked on a hill, and a wagon kind of come down the hill and gone right through the dressing room and knocked her trunk down and hit her on the lady's hand. That same evening when they made her pull that trunk out.

[00:33:30]

Richard Flint Did that make you superstitious at all or make you think twice?

[00:34:00]

Bobbi Todd: It'd make you think twice. Another time made me [inaudible 00:33:59] superstitions, it was three of us there was standing out on the platform. It's before we heard about this fire. The training stopped. And then some railroad man come by and he wanted a match. He wanted to light a cigarette. He gave us a match. He gave us a match and all three of us light off that cigarette. We couldn't have got three off a match. Bad luck. That night, the fire.

[00:34:30]

Richard Flint How did you get the news of the fire? Did it happen while a train was moving?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, the train was moving and there was some lady. We heard afterward. Now I don't know how true that is, but some lady had followed the train in a car. And she

[00:35:00] kept honking her horn, honking trying to get them to stop, their attention. She saw it start. It was all a little fire in there. Nobody seems to know how it ... lanterns is supposed to have started it because they had lanterns in there. How or why, but anyway it did. She couldn't get them to stop. Finally they got stopped and the thing was just blazing so you couldn't do nothing. And the elephant car was right in back, and it was going to start to burn. That would have been real bad because the train

[00:35:30] going and it was right back and the blaze going this way. And it got pretty hot. As soon as they stopped, they unhooked it. And then unhooked it until they got the fire out and took it and pulled it on up and put it on the side track. That's when we passed it.

Richard Flint Did they then hook up the train and just keep going?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Later on, yeah, they hooked the train up. We had to make the next town. It was going into Willows.

Richard Flint Did you see the fire when the train was still moving at all?

Bobbi Todd: No. I didn't see it in back. We didn't see it in back. No.

Richard Flint There was no panic?

[00:36:00]

Bobbi Todd: No. Not until we stopped and we found out. Somebody was saying it was a stock car. We was all hoping it wasn't our horses, but it was. You hate to see anything. But horses, you get to riding them. You get to ...

Richard Flint [inaudible 00:36:13].

Bobbi Todd: Well, you think they're yours.

Richard Flint Yeah. What sort of night was it? A hot night? Can you remember?

[00:36:30]

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, because we were out on the platform. It was in the late summer.

Richard Flint Would you ride the platforms at night?

Bobbi Todd: We could go out there. We didn't have closed platforms. We had the old, old cars. We did out there sometime. They just sit on the step or something because they were all [inaudible 00:36:45]. Double up on the bottom berth and then you get the single up top.

Richard Flint How did you arrange to get a single rather than a double?

[00:37:00]

Bobbi Todd: Well, if you want a single, you'd ask. I mean, I generally almost always got a single because at that time. And I got on the Christy Show, I got a double with Faye James.

[00:37:30] That's Harry James's half sister. [inaudible 00:37:22] and his wife. Harry was on the Lee Show when I went over there. He was just probably about nine years old.

Richard Flint He was born on the Christy Show, wasn't he?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah, he was born. A Mighty Hag I think it was.

Richard Flint A Mighty Hag. Did you ever have much contact with some of the other shows? You weren't on Mighty Hag or ...

Bobbi Todd: No. But this one, I didn't have, but I knew the pig. I knew they were on the show and Walter Elmay.

Richard Flint [00:38:00] What sort of reputation among performers did those shows have? Any one that you would have liked to work for that paid well, more than the others?

Bobbi Todd: Most of them wasn't going at that time it seemed. They all had pretty good because when Christy closed a lot of them jumped over to the people that are in the trailer park now that I'm living with, his father had the Barnett Show. Wallace Show.

[00:38:30]
Richard Flint Not the Webs? The Webs? No, they had Russell. Excuse me.

Bobbi Todd: The Webs. No, this is Wallace Show. His name was Rogers. I believe he was-

Richard Flint Ray Rogers?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Well, his son's Walter, they run the trailer for the Polacio's. That was a real nice. Quite a few of the people went over there at that show.

[00:39:00]
Richard Flint Can you remember those shows that you were on in the thirties? Some of the little circuses that you said weren't out too long?

Bobbi Todd: I can't think.

Richard Flint Who had the shows?

Bobbi Todd: Some fellow by the name of Henry. He took one out of town there. A whole bunch of us went out on it.

Richard Flint Out of what time?

Bobbi Todd: Out of LA, around LA. I was in LA all the time. We folded up up the coast.

[00:39:30]
Richard Flint Little trucks show?

- Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That was the last one. Another one we took ... The last one was ... with Mayor Boon and his wife and all of us, we went up. The one man's name was Warner. But I can't think of the other one. They were driving us the wrong way.
- [00:40:00] We didn't do anything. We got up in Roseburg, Oregon and the carnival was up there. Pretty big one. I can't recall the name right now either. Anyway, he hired myself. I was kind of with Blues, jotting along with him. And Mike Jalen. He hired the clown and he
- [00:40:30] hired the Blues. They had four riding ponies and a goat and a dog and a monkey. So he hired them for a free act. And me, I went over there to sell tickets. That was my first carnival experience.
- Richard Flint Since you're on Royal America now, how would you contrast carnival versus circus life at all?
- Bobbi Todd: Well, it's a lot different. There is a whole lot of difference. I still prefer circus, but the
- [00:41:00] carnival is all right. It's big. It's one of the best ones. And it's run ... Some carnivals ...
- Richard Flint Run poorly, others are run well.
- Bobbi Todd: Well, yeah, and they are. And this one was run pretty well. The officials are all nice.
- Richard Flint What about accommodations on the Royal Train versus the old circus train?
- Bobbi Todd: It was much different. [inaudible 00:41:22] was there. They don't have those wooden cars anymore. They have good coaches.
- [00:41:30]
- Richard Flint In the old days, did most of the workmen ride on the flats? Or would they have a car?
- Bobbi Todd: Yeah, they would get three, four high. But most of them rode the flats. They had four high.
- Richard Flint Would they prefer to ride the flats versus the four high?
- Bobbi Todd: Yeah.
- Richard Flint Why?
- Bobbi Todd: Well, they get more air or something. They'd crawl in the canvas and they'd be
- [00:42:00] soaking wet. You'd think they'd die of pneumonia. Then they'd dry out. They said if they could change their clothes or took their clothes off, they wouldn't get cold. But they just wrap up, like a real rain, they just be soaking. They'd wrap up in the canvas and get warm. Their clothes would dry out. They never seemed to catch pneumonia.
- Richard Flint Was there a pie car on the show?
- Bobbi Todd: Yeah, we had a small pie car.
- Richard Flint Was it a half coach, half pie car?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Half, gambling on the end.

Richard Flint How were the coaches divided? Would you have single women and single men?

[00:42:30]

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Single women. Married couples and single women and married couples and single men.

Richard Flint What were there about five coaches on a show then?

Bobbi Todd: I believe we had more than that. We didn't have many more than that.

Richard Flint Could you visit back and forth across?

Bobbi Todd: Oh, yeah, you'd go from coach ... I mean, they were open coaches. You could go right through.

Richard Flint Were there any restrictions then on seeing-

Bobbi Todd: Yes, there were a lot of restrictions on that Barnes Show.

Richard Flint What were some of them?

[00:43:00]

Bobbi Todd: You couldn't walk on and off the lot with a man. I'm talking about single girls. You had to be in the coaches at such a time. Lights had to be out at such a time.

Richard Flint What time was that usually?

Bobbi Todd: Well at least 12 o'clock the lights would go out because after night shows it would be 10, 10:30 before you got home anyway. Lights would be out. The head porter saw

[00:43:30] that she was in ... I mean, you know. If you went over land with somebody, you'd have to tell him, "I rode with somebody." I rode over land one time with somebody

[00:44:00] into Seattle, a circus fan. He and his wife and a couple of us, but I had to tell him I wouldn't be on the train and where I was going and how I was going. But they was very strict on that. It's surprising as lax as some of them are now.

Richard Flint Yeah.

Bobbi Todd: They were.

Richard Flint What about on Christy?

Bobbi Todd: Well, Christy was pretty much the same way. It was a little bit more lax. Clyde isn't as bad as Barnes. You couldn't chase around or anything. You could get fined. They'd fine you for this. Fine you for that.

Richard Flint Were you fined very often at all for anything?

Bobbi Todd: I was fined a couple times.

Richard Flint For what sort of things?

[00:44:30]

Bobbi Todd: Well, I had a fight with one of the girls one time.

Richard Flint Were the fines stiff at all?

Bobbi Todd: \$10 or something. It was a little stiff then. \$10 was a little stiff on the salaries then.

Richard Flint Yeah. It make you think twice. What was all the cookhouse like on the Barnes and Christy Show?

Bobbi Todd: They were good. They were very good. Everybody complains a little bit. I know one of
[00:45:00] my first experiences was making a parade and coming in in a sandstorm. It blew up. You couldn't see anything. When you got to the lot, you couldn't see anything at all. When we got that, I know we had cabbage. I'll never forget that. Ham and cabbage. And you got into the table and sit down, the butter was all covered with ... They
[00:45:30] couldn't help it ... with sand. You get it, this cabbage, and grit, grit, grit in your teeth. That was really a sandstorm.

Richard Flint How did you stay clean on the show? It must have been ...

Bobbi Todd: Wash in a bucket.

Richard Flint Bucket bath?

Bobbi Todd: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint How many buckets of water would you get?

Bobbi Todd: A couple of ... one hot water. Bribe somebody. You pay them a quarter and get some hot water. Get a bucket of cold water.

Richard Flint Would you take a bucket bath everyday then?

Bobbi Todd: Yeah. Sometimes twice.

Richard Flint After the shows?

Bobbi Todd: Between shows. Didn't have too much time at night.

Richard Flint What did you do between shows mostly?

[00:46:00]

Bobbi Todd: Oh, we just toed around, washed a few clothes if you had clothes to wash. Of course hang them.

Richard Flint Always enough to keep you-

Bobbi Todd: Always something to be doing something. Yeah. Sometimes rehearsing with a horse. If the horse you were riding didn't work out or something, you'd go in and rehearse. A lot of time a lot of rehearses.

Richard Flint What were some of the lots like then? Especially with animals, you'd have to have a good lot, I would think.

Bobbi Todd: Oh yeah. But they wasn't all good. They was rough and muddy. Especially mud, you'd go in in boots and what have you.

[00:46:30]

Richard Flint Well, our tapes just about out, is there anything else you can think of that hasn't-

Bobbi Todd: That's about all I can really think of.

Richard Flint Well, that's good. Hm?

Bobbi Todd: I said, that's just about it.

Richard Flint Okay.