

CWM Audio 13

Ann Stephenson Interview, July 24, 2014

Peter Shrake: It is the July 24th, 2014. We're at the Robert L. Parkinson Library and Research Center at Circus World Museum. This is an oral history interview with Ann Stephenson and her time with the circus and interviewing her is Peter Shrake, archivist of the museum and Scott O'Donnell, the executive director of the museum.

[00:00:30]

Scott: I'll start. Ann, what's your earliest memory of your time on the circus and where was it?
O'Donnell: Where was your family or give us a little context on your family first, what generation you are and ...

Ann: I'm fifth generation. My parents, Swede Johnson and my mother, Mabel Johnson, and they were both in the circus business. My father was from Denmark. My mother was from Northern Florida. My father came to this country and started clowning first and he rodeoed and he clowned. He was a barrel clown. Of course, in those days, you did whatever anybody needed you to do, so he moved into animals and he trained horses and elephants and lions and tigers and the occasional duck. In between, he clowned, met my mother, got married, had a couple of kids.

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I had a brother in the business but he did some very, very interesting things. He told me about ... This was of course before my mother was in the picture. He didn't have any money and he had a friend and they decided they would go to Mexico. They went to Mexico and they started this comedy bullfighting act. They made a lot of money and went all around Mexico because there were a lot of bullfights in those days and they were the comedy of it. They went all over Mexico and raked in a lot of money and thought, "Well, you know what, we'll just take this back to the states and we'll make a mint."

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They came back to the states and they decided to get it together and do it. My father told me, he said, "You know, I found out that Mexican bulls, when they charge at you, they shut their eyes but the American bulls, when they charge at you, they don't." He said, "That was the end of that act in the states." I went back to tigers. He said I was not going to fool with that anymore but they used to tell me great stories about them on the road and my dad and his elephants and how he had an elephant that hated my mother and things like that, and about the trips that they did where my mother would chalk ... They called it chalking the trailer up a mountain because I guess the brakes weren't so great in those days and my mother said, "Your father has ran over my hand so many times."

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Then, they did ... My mom and my dad and my brother did the concert after the show, which in case a lot of people don't know, the concert was a Wild West show that you paid for after the main performance. You could pay like a quarter or a dime or a nickel, whatever and stay and see the concert. He did rope spinning, whip cracking, trick riding,

Roman riding, all of that.

[00:04:00] Then, I guess time marched on and he continued in the business. I came along very late in their life. In fact, a lot of people didn't even know I existed. There was 20 years between my brother and I. I came along and the first thing I remember when memories start clicking into your head was our elephant and her name was Pinky. I just thought the world rose and set in her. My father had, let's see, two, four, six lions and then, he

[00:04:30] had a big male that would finish the act. He had six females and then, the big male and we also had the elephant.

[00:05:00] I loved this elephant more than anything in the world. There used to be a television show called Corky, the Circus Boy and I believe it was Micky Dolenz that did ... It was Corky, the Circus Boy. I believe it was him. He had an elephant in the show, the TV show and I just thought ... I wrote him letters all the time thinking, "Oh, we should get together." I was like six. We should get together because we both have an elephant. I just thought that would be perfect.

[00:05:30] I love this elephant and she hated this side of me. She absolutely hated me. We had a truck, her truck, and in the front of it, we had a compartment where it was a dressing room or we could stay in there if we wanted to but you had to walk out past her which that was fine when my father was there or our groom or my mother but if I ever tried to come out between there, I could see her watching me and she would try and squeeze me against the wall. I'd have to scream for somebody to help me get out of the trailer.

[00:06:00] One day, I happened to be standing on the ... We would push the elephant to the side of the trailer for her to go in. It was raining, so my father had put her in out of the rain. I was like an idiot standing at the door, looking out and she was behind me. Boy, she hauled off and she hit me so hard, I fell out on the elephant tub. Then, she wasn't satisfied with that. She stuck her foot out the door and kicked me under the truck. I'm sure if she could have knocked me in the truck, she would have killed me. I would have never gotten out. She would have mashed me. Luckily, I fell out the door.

[00:06:30] Then, my father announces to me, "You're going to work Pinky in the ring." I thought, "Oh my God, here it goes now. She's going to do that to me out in the middle of the ring in front of everybody," but she never did. She was very good in the ring but boy, she would get me at that truck.

Peter Shrake: Do you remember what show that was, what circus?

Ann: That circus was Hagen-Wallace. That's the one that we saw the article today with my father. That was that show.

Scott O'Donnell: Is that the first thing, first performance you did with an elephant?

Ann: Yes.

Scott O'Donnell: Okay.

[00:07:00]

Ann: It was with an elephant. After that, I stayed taking Pinky. My mother wanted me to attend school because you know, back when I was young, there weren't very good correspondence courses. Now, you could go online and all of that. My mother wanted me to be sure that I got an education. We would go half the year on the road with my dad. Then, she would bring me home and put me back in school. I thought, you know, I was just like everybody else. We lived in a small town. We were the only circus people there. Everybody in town knew us. When my dad would come in off the road, he would just park the truck anywhere in town. It didn't matter. People would call and say, "We hear lions roaring." They'd say, "Yes. Swede Johnson's back in town." When he would practice-

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Scott O'Donnell: Was that in Florida?

Ann: Yes. Punta Gorda, Florida.

Scott O'Donnell: Okay.

[00:08:00]

Ann: When he would practice in the winter time, people would park all down the roads because we lived in the town. Then, we had another piece of property out of town where he parked the animals. People would want to know when's he going to practice, when's he going to practice. They'd be parked all up and down the highways, watching him practice the lions. I never thought we were any different from anybody else. I would go and be part of this life and then I'd come back and I'd be part of that life. I was in Girl Scouts and a cheerleader and a majorette and all this stuff. I thought I was just like everybody else.

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[00:09:00] Then, my dad first sold the elephant. That was heart-breaking to me but he said she's getting too big for the truck. He sold the elephant, continued out. He did Shrine shows. After Hagen-Wallace, he did Shrine shows, Tom Packs. He did ... I forgot what other shows it was. I can't remember but a lot of independent dates. He decided he would sell the act. He sold it to Hoxie Tucker on Hoxie Show. He went down and helped out with him to get their trainer to be able to work the act and he was going to retire. That's what he told my mother. "I'm going to retire. It's too expensive to feed the cats all through the winter and to buy trucks and permits and all that. It's just too much. Just too much."

[00:09:30]

[00:10:00] My mother said, "That's fine. You just come home and retire and we'll be fine here in our ..." We had a house and everything. He came back from Hoxie Tucker Show. The next day, he went over to Venice, Florida which was 22 miles from us to visit his friend, Pat Valdo. That afternoon, he came back home and he told my mother, he said, "Well, I've decided not to retire. I will go on the Ringling Show and clown again." My mother said, "Well, all right. I guess whatever you want to do."

[00:10:30]

[00:10:30] He did. He asked me one day, did I want to come over and see rehearsal. I said, "Oh, yeah. Hey, no school that day. You let me stay home. Hey, I'm there." He took me with him to rehearsals and I was sitting in the seats. It was very interesting. I had never seen

a show where you rehearse like that. I had only seen just, you did your act and that was it. Antoinette Concello came over and asked me, she said, "Are you looking for a job?"

[00:11:00] I was 16 at that time and I said, "Well, I don't know." She said, "Well, just let me know if you are." On the way home that evening, I told my father. He said, "Well, you know, if you want to go, you could go." I said, "Yeah, but I'm in school, daddy." He said, "Well, you talk to your mother." When I got home and I talked to my mother, it wasn't no but it was, you know, no. Oh man, she was upset.

[00:11:30] I said, "Look, suppose I talked to the guidance counselor and I get it to where I can send all my work home and do it that way." She said, "Well, if you can work all that out, then you can go." I did. I worked it all out with the guidance counselor. They gave me my books, told me to send all my work through to them and everything would be great. I loaded all the books and all my stuff, moved on to the train, went to work on Ringling, never picked up another one those books again. Never. However, when I came home, my mother made me go down to take a test, so I got my diploma. I stayed with Ringling and I met a very nice man.

Scott What was that first year? Do you remember?

O'Donnell:

Ann: '69.

Scott '69?

O'Donnell:

Ann: The first year of the Blue Unit.

Scott Very nice.

O'Donnell:

Ann: First year they split. I met him in '69 when I was on the show but we didn't start dating until 1970. I met a very ... the man I thought was the most handsome man I'd ever seen in my life and that was Frank Stephenson from the Stephenson family. We went together on and off and then finally went together all the time and then, we finally got married. They left the show and went to Las Vegas to Circus Circus and he called Mr. Feld and got me ... I stayed on the show with my mom and dad. We were engaged but I stayed on the show with my mom and dad. He called Mr. Feld and got me released from my contract, so that I could join him in Las Vegas and we got married.

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[00:13:30] I joined their dog act and replaced one of his sisters who had gotten married and went on and stayed with the dog act. We went, worked in Vegas then we went and did a couple of dates in Mexico and we went back to the Ringling Show. When we went back to the Ringling Show, Mr. Feld said he needed a chimp act and would we do a chimp act. We said, "Well, we've never done that before but we'll tackle it. We'll try." We did. We bought chimps and we got this chimp act going and went back on the Ringling Show.

[00:14:00] In the meantime, I had had my first child which was Georgia Stephenson. My parents had retired off of the show. The first year we went back on Ringling was when my father passed away. We worked two years on Ringling. Then, they sent us to Circus World down in Haines City, Florida. We went there and we stayed there for, I think, four or five

[00:14:30] years. We enjoyed that very much. It was very nice place there. I was sorry to see it go. It was one of those unique places where you work that everything is there for you. The band was fabulous. The lighting was fabulous. The ring was fabulous. Everything was really great.

Scott O'Donnell: Did you get to work with Chappie Fox at [inaudible 00:14:48]?

[00:15:00]

Ann: No. Chappie was not there. We worked the show with Johnny Zoppe. Mary Ruth Herriot had just left when we came in. Axel Gautier was there with the elephants. Micky Ashton's family came in while we were working there and the Bakers, Billy Baker, Tommy Baker. They were there. We just had a great time working there because it was like we were on the road but we weren't on the road. We lived somewhere. It was one of those just fluky places that was so great to work, so great to work. They had it set up so your trailers were right there and we could ride our bicycles down to work every day. You are finished at 5:00 every day and you got days off. It was a wonderful, wonderful time.

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[00:16:00] Then, when we left Circus World, we went back to Vegas. Oh no, I'll interject that. We bought a restaurant. That's how we ended up in Lake County. We bought a restaurant thinking this will be our retirement. The family, we're all going to go into this. Well, trust me, restaurant is not the business to go into, or at least not for us, it wasn't. Back on the road, we go again, Las Vegas.

Scott O'Donnell: Dogs and chimps there?

[00:16:30]

Ann: Dogs and chimps in Las Vegas. Then, we decided, "Well, the act is set in Vegas. Why don't we build a second act and go on the road so that there's more money coming in for everybody?" That's my husband and I went on the road. We left his sister with the one dog act and her son and her partner in Vegas and Frank and I went on the road with Georgia. By now, we had Liam, our son. We went on the road with them. We worked for Patti Gatti, the Hanneford Show, George Carden. Then, we would go back in the summertime, back to Circus World. We'd work Circus World through the summer which we thoroughly enjoyed. We went to Japan and worked in a theme park in Japan that was a really nice ... That was a good time for us. We really enjoyed that.

[00:17:00]

Peter Shrake: What years were these?

[00:17:30]

Ann: We went to the theme park in '80 ... Let's see, '83 or '84, one of those years. I can't remember exactly which year but it was called Mitsui Greenland. We worked for three months over there just with the chimps, not the dogs. We left it. They just wanted an American chimpanzee act so we did that. We would leave our daughter with my mother and Frank's family to go to school. It just killed us every time we had to drive. We would send for her as soon as school was out but every time we had to drive away, it just broke our heart.

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[00:18:30] Frank, my husband, he said, "You know, when Liam gets to be school-aged, that's it. We're quitting." Liam became school-aged and we did. We called all of our agents and we said, "Please don't call us anymore and give us any kind of dates or anything," because we knew, if they called up with a good contract, we were going to say, "Okay, yeah, we'll take it. We'll take it." We told them, "Just don't call us."

[00:19:00] We settled in the same county where we had the restaurant which had been sold by then. My husband and his two brothers started a tent company, tent rental, commercial tent rental company, which is still running to this day in another town. It was moved and well, it was split and we sold our tent company. My brother-in-law still has his down in Bradenton. That's Bill Stephenson, Frank's youngest brother. He's the last surviving brother.

[00:19:30] That was pretty much my history. We had a lot of ups and a lot of downs and over a lot of mountains that I never want to see with a truck and trailer ever again in my life. Thank God, my husband was a brilliant driver because I had children dressed with their shoes on and the windows rolled down. I told them, "Look, if I tell you to jump, you jump," because I was terrified of those mountains.

[00:20:00] It was a very interesting, interesting life. I wouldn't trade it for the world. The stories my parents told me made me laugh all the time, the two of them. Fabulous stories. I wish my father had been on tape telling them. Unfortunately, I don't have that many funny stories like they did. It seemed like mine were all getting over mountains, I guess.

Peter Shrake: If you go back to 1969 again and maybe talk a little bit about your experiences in those early years in the Ringling Show, what you did, the different acts you performed. I'm imagining you lived off of the train.

Ann: Yes.

Peter Shrake: What was life like on the train?

[00:20:30] Ann: I lived on a train. The first year I was there, I had a roommate in my state room and she ended up marrying the general manager which was Lloyd Morgan, Jr. I was just a kid. I had to lie about my age because Antoinette Concello told me, "Don't tell anybody you're 16. You tell them you're 17, going to turn 18."

Scott O'Donnell: Do you think your father asked Antoinette to come over and talk to you that day?

Ann: Nope.

Scott O'Donnell: No?

Ann: No.

Scott O'Donnell: It was all [crosstalk 00:20:51].

Ann: I think she must ... It must have just been the stars were aligned right to shorter girls.

Scott Sure. What was the act? Web Girl?

O'Donnell:

[00:21:00]

Ann: Yeah. I did web. I did the elephant act. I danced and I attempted to dance. We'll put it that way. According to Mr. Barstow who was the director in those days, I was the stupidest girl in the whole group. He was very adamant about that over the microphone. Of course, being 16, I was absolutely crushed but I carried on and every year, it was the same thing, this stupid girl with her dancing but when it came to elephants, I was your girl. I was your girl. Hugo used to use me to practice a lot of things that he was doing.

[00:21:30]

Scott This is Hugo Schmitt.

O'Donnell:

Ann:

Hugo Schmitt who was head of the elephants. I remember one year, we did a thing ... The managed was Gypsy Fandango. We had big gold hoops that the three elephants would carry a girl and on the golden hoop. Before they got hoops into the elephants, Hugo had a mixed stack and he always had a little basket thing that the elephant held with a dog in it. That's how we practiced that. I had to crawl into the basket and let the elephant walk around with me crawled into the basket. Then, they brought out the hoops later on after we practiced that way.

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[00:22:30] I was a guinea pig for a lot of things but he seemed to like me and I think it was because I was from the business. My dad was there. I guess they talked elephant a lot. That gave me a lot of credentials. Otherwise, I would have been thought of as some stupid kid but the fact that I came from a circus family, my father was there and then, the next year, my mother was there, I think that's the only way I managed to be with Frank, my husband, because his mother was very stern with their choice in the people that they dated or whatever. I think it was because I was a circus family and that gave me that extra little edge.

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[00:23:30] A lot of the older women on the show kind of took me under their wing. I learned a lot from the girls' dressing room. In 1969, I saw and heard things I had never seen or heard before, learned how to drink, learned how to play poker, learned all of that in the girls' dressing room aside from a few other things they educated me on. I got more than that last year of high school education that one year in the dressing room. It was really, really enlightening.

[00:23:30]

[00:24:00] I lived on a train and in those days, packed up night, train trips. Oh my goodness, it was quite the place to be. I was there. That's all I can tell you about that. We won't go any further because my children will probably hear this at some point in their lives but it was fun. I'll have to say it was fun. New York City was fun when we played in the Garden. We have played in the new Garden, not the old Garden, the new Garden. It was fun. We partied all night and worked all day and slept in between shows in the dressing room and partied again.

[00:24:30]

Scott How long was the show at the Gardens at that time?

O'Donnell:

Ann:

13 weeks the first year we were there. Then, also, in 1969, we played in Houston at the

- [00:25:00] Astro ... We were in the Astro Hall. We were there for three months and that was an exciting time too. Everybody had a good time in those three months. Trust me. I can't deny that I had a lot of fun on that show. I sure did. I look back on it with the happiest memories and the great people that were over there, just wonderful people, Chris Hudson, Elvin Bale, Franzi and Evy Althoff, the Stephenson family, Chico Guzman and Monique. I mean just, just great, great people, Dougie, just a lot of fun, a lot of fun.
- [00:25:30]
- Scott O'Donnell: Tell us a little bit more about the Stephenson family if you can and where they came from and the acts that they did.
- Ann: [00:26:00] The Stephenson family are from Ireland. They came over in 1959. John Ringling brought them over. They had performing dogs and bareback riding. They were one of the few bareback riding acts that really were bareback. They were very proud of that and they had ... Their dog act was just astounding. I can say that because I married into the Stephensons. I am not one of them. They had the finest dog act I've ever seen in my life.
- Scott O'Donnell: [00:26:30] Yeah. I was going to say that.
- Ann: Many people have tried to copy it.
- Scott O'Donnell: It's the bar that everybody is trying to reach.
- Ann: [00:27:00] Absolutely. You cannot ... I would find it hard to see anything that would beat them. They were the top of the line. Their riding act was excellent. They learned the correct way of doing things, I mean the correct way to take your bow. They learned the correct way of everything. I had a little bit of an eye-opening when I went into the family. One of the greatest compliments I ever got from my husband's mother, Lucy Stephenson, was there was a picture of us in the program and I was in the middle and she said, "Look at Ann's hands. Aren't they beautiful?"
- [00:27:30] That meant so much to me. It really did but they were a very close family, very close. They came over. When they came over, they had their uncle with them, their father's brother. Their father had passed away just before they came over here. In fact, it was so close, the family didn't know if they were going to come or not but their mother said yes. "That's what he would have wanted us to do and we're going." They came to this on a two-year contract and they're still in this country. They're still here. They stayed a long time on Ringling, a long time.
- [00:28:00] Scott O'Donnell: Absolutely. Did they have their own car on the train?
- Ann: No. They always had their own trailers.
- Scott O'Donnell: They did?
- Ann: Their dogs always went overland and most of the time, the ponies went overland in their pony truck but the bareback horses went on the train. They had their own grooms,

[00:28:30] [Rapinsky Redd 00:28:19]. I don't know if you've ever heard of him but [Rapinsky Redd 00:28:24] was with them at one time. Like I say, they were a very, very close, still are a close family, very close. The remaining ones, they speak to each other every day. They're in constant communication. Their mother raised them all right.

Scott O'Donnell: [00:29:00] You've worked a lot of shows. You've worked with and seen a lot of performers. Who's the standout? Who's the act that you saw that you went, "Wow, that's something. That's circus"?

Ann: Wow. Who is a standout to me? To be honest with you, I don't go around many shows anymore. It sort of makes me uncomfortable because I do miss it but I would ... Let's see.

Scott O'Donnell: [00:29:30] Even acts you worked with. I know earlier, we were looking at photo albums and you pointed out Rogana or Johnny Zoppe or Mr. Guzman. There were a lot of greats that you've worked with.

Ann: [00:30:00] I thought Joe Guzman and his wife, Monique. I thought Monique was beautiful in the air. I really thought she was very classy. Another person that I thought was ... I guess my being five foot two, I thought Evy Althoff was absolutely stunning, just stunning. I mean everything about her, she was tall and voluptuous and just beautiful and all the hair and ... A woman in there with a tiger and a horse, I mean that's gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. I don't think Evy really got the recognition she should have. I thought that was a brilliant act.

[00:30:30] I would have liked to have done something like that but I could have never looked like Evy. I mean she just had a presence that even when she was in a pair of jeans, she looked like a movie star. She was just absolutely stunning. I thought that act was probably one of the most impressive acts I've seen. Of course, Gunther was brilliant. Everything he did was brilliant. He was just such a character. I thought he was terrific. I guess you'd have to say those two and of course, my own father. I thought he was brilliant.

Scott O'Donnell: Who maybe you could tell the recording the honor he was bestowed last night.

Ann: [00:31:00] Yes. That's why I'm here in Baraboo. He was inducted into the International Clowns Hall of Fame last night and I was here to accept the award for him which was absolutely outstanding. Everybody was so nice and such nice things said about him. I was just overwhelmed, overwhelmed. I was so grateful for that. He was quite a little character,

[00:31:30] quite a little character. It was just naturally funny. I got so overcome with whatever last night in accepting for him. I didn't get to tell them what he once told me about clowns. If you think about it, it is so true. He never really spoke much about giving advice or anything but he told me one time, he said, "You know what, there is such a fine line between being funny and being silly and you never want to cross that line."

[00:32:00]

If you watch clowns, that's what ... Some clowns will make you kind of your palms sweat because they're so bad and others are so clever and so funny. I've always, since then, I watched clowns with that in the back of my mind and he was right. He was absolutely

[00:32:30] right. It's the same with comedians. It's either you're funny or you're silly.

Scott O'Donnell: Yeah. That's a sound advice, very well stated actually. Fifth generation performer, your dad, fourth generation ... What did his family do before him? What was the lineage of the [crosstalk 00:32:43]?

Ann: My father was from Denmark and he had family in the business tracing back
[00:33:00] grandmothers, aunts. He was raised by a grandmother because his mother was on the road. His past is kind of sketchy because like I said, I came along so late in his life. He died when I was in my 20s and early 20s. Somehow, you think somebody's going to be there forever and when you're a teenager and you're whatever, you don't go into all the
[00:33:30] lineage and the history and all that. You're living day-to-day and you think that person's going to be there forever. One day, you realize, "Geez, I didn't know this. I didn't know that. I didn't know the other." I don't know particular people, places and things. I just know generality of ... I know that he was from Denmark and his family had been in the
[00:34:00] business and had small circus touring around Denmark. He came to this country. I don't know how he started, to be honest with you, how he got into it. I'm just not sure. I don't know.

Scott O'Donnell: Your father-

Ann: I know he was a young man when he ... because he was born in 1903 and so I think he started over here in the business when he was like 16.

[00:34:30]

Scott O'Donnell: Your father, like many of the great clowns, worked till a pretty advanced age as a clown and a performer.

Ann: Yes, he did. He did. He was in his 70s but his last years, as I say on Ringling Brothers, that was basically his retirement. He thought that was brilliant over there because you can't work for a better circus than Ringling. There isn't any. It's just top of the line. Everything
[00:35:00] is there that you need. You can get things made. It's just so, so easy compared to slogging through the mud and you know how it is when you're on a mud show or traveling show of any sort or you're making dates even.

[00:35:30] It's hard but Ringling is so ... You never worry about your paycheck. It's always there on Friday and you've got a nice place to live. You can't do any better. He just thought that was so good. He loved it. That was his retirement over there because he had worked so hard all of his life. I mean really hard. My dad was in his late 60s still putting up an arena
[00:36:00] driving stakes and everything. It was tough. It was tough loading up all the time and the cages and all of that. Going into work the cats was a piece of cake but it was all the getting ready for that. It was a really nice rest for him. He enjoyed it.

[00:36:30] He enjoyed clown alley, those kids in there. I call them kids. Most of them were. There weren't many of the old-timers. They used to just keep him in stitches all the time. They entertained him constantly. He was always talking about this one or that one or the other one and his pet name he had for him which was Pinhead but he said it lovingly. He was just a nice little man. It didn't bother anybody. He always had a cup of coffee and a

cigarette, always.

[00:37:00] If you see pictures ever of my father, you're going to see his nose goes in two or three different directions. That comes from riding bucking horses and being a clown in a barrel and fighting the bulls and all that. His nose had been broken so many times, so many times. It grows in like three or four different directions. In those days, nobody got anything done about your nose. You got it broken, you just went on and work the next show. He had a great time. Then, when my mother came on the show and the two of them were there, oh, they were just living high on the hog. They just loved in, loved it, loved it.

[00:37:30]

Scott O'Donnell: What did your mother do?

Ann: My mother started out as an aerialist. When she was with my father, she married my father, of course, she had to do whatever he was doing at the time. If it was the elephant act or whatever, she was in the elephant act or if it was the horses, she was out lining up the liberty act for him or she would do pony drill or ... Whatever he had going, she was part of that. She was always the woman behind the man. I'm telling you. You didn't see ... hardly ever saw one without the other. They were married 45 years and they never really thought, except over dates, they could never remember what year they were on what show and it was constant argument about what year they were on what show.

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[00:38:30] They had a lot of friends in the business and a lot of the old-timers, Buckles' mother and Babe and ... I'm trying to think of people in the business that are left. Karl Wallenda was a friend of my dad's and La Norma. All that group, they all knew each other in those days. Everybody ended up working with each other somewhere somehow, Hannefords, all of them. He never worked a Ringling show until the end there and boy, he was spoiled, spoiled, spoiled and at least he got to get there. I'm very grateful for that. If he hadn't been there, I would have never met my husband. I'm doubly grateful for that.

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Scott O'Donnell: Very good.

Peter Shrake: I think that's a good note to end it on.

Ann: Thank you.

Scott O'Donnell: Great note. Thank you, Ann.

Peter Shrake: Thank you.

Ann: Good luck to the museum. If there's anything I can do for it, and I'll tell you, if anybody listens to this conversation ever, this is someplace you have to come to. You will be blown away. I've been in this business my whole life and I cannot believe the things that are here that ... It's just incredible. Incredible. You must come here. I say this to anybody, even that's in the business that has never been here. You have to come here before ... It got to be on your bucket list. It has to be. If you have any thoughts about the circus or anybody that you know, tell them to come here because you will find out more

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than you've ever thought you could.

Peter Shrake: That is a perfect thing to end on.

Scott
O'Donnell: Yeah. It's our new slogan. We got to be on your bucket list.