

CWM Audio 4-10

Harold and Eileen Voise Interview, January 8, 1973

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Part 1

- Richard Flint: I'm speaking with Mr. And Mrs. Harold Voise, former Ilene Sullivan in Sarasota, Florida on the 8th of January, 1973. To begin with, and I don't know whether, who can go first here. Can you tell me how you got into show business? Start with ladies first, or?
- Harold Voise: Yeah, you can start...
- Eileen Voise: Well, yes, we... My sister and I both joined Edward and Amy Ward in Bloomington, Illinois in 1925.
- Richard Flint: Well you had had show business circus experience...
- Eileen Voise: My mother and father were in show business.
- Richard Flint: Okay, tell me a little bit about how they got into the business and so on.
- Eileen Voise: Well, really I don't know how they got into the business, but my dad was an acrobat and my mother was a bareback rider.
- Richard Flint: Did they start as children, or?
- Eileen Voise: Well, they started real young. No, they weren't children. They were married. And my dad went in first and then my mother did.
- Richard Flint: Were you raised on a show then?
- Eileen Voise: No.
- Richard Flint: How did you go to the Wards then?
- Eileen Voise: Because my mother and father's troop was Amy and Edward. They were very dear friends.
- Richard Flint: And so they wanted you to be raised in the business, or?
- Eileen Voise: Well, when they played Holyoke one year they asked my mother and dad if Rose and I could join them, and learn to be flyers, and so we joined them in Bloomington in 1925.

- Harold Voise: So, I started in Saginaw, Michigan. I lived next door to some show people called the Nalzoras, The Flying Nalzoras. And I kind of grew up with their kids; they were training them, so they took me right along with 'em. That was in about 1921 I guess. And then we played, too, we played parks and fairs in the summertime and went back to school. And then I joined the flying Wards in 1924 in Bloomington.
- Richard Flint: How did you happen to join the Wards?
- Harold Voise: Well, we were playing in the Albany, New York and the [inaudible 00:02:21] where Eddy Ward and Coop was, was playing there right next to the park where we were playing. And they came over there and saw the act or something, I just forget, and they got my address or something and dropped me a line and got permission from my dad and mother, and they let me go. I was 15 I guess, yeah about 15.
- Richard Flint: Can you recollect, the both of you, your first experiences with the Wards?
- Eileen Voise: Well-
- Harold Voise: We can- only, when I, while I was there, let's see I was there a year before my wife. I was there in 1924 and they had nine-people flying acts then; they had three catchers and three and -
- Eileen Voise: Six leapers.
- Harold Voise: Six leapers, yeah six leapers and triple-wide rails. And the two girls on each side catching, and the main catcher was Eddie Ward one act, and they had another catcher somewhere. They had two acts at that time. No, I think they had three. I think he had one with Haganbeck-Wallace.
- Eileen Voise: Yeah, they had one with him.
- Harold Voise: And we opened one year in the Coliseum there in Chicago. And he had three nine-people flying acts, which you never see today. They never even heard of it. 27 people; in fact we have some of the pictures, I don't even know where they are. Mickey King was in the act then and another girl that was married to the, one of- the sheriff. What was her name? Lily Arbuckle- Lily.
- Eileen Voise: Lily Myers I think now.
- Harold Voise: Lily Myers.
- Eileen Voise: Yeah, for sure.
- Harold Voise: She was a catcher. Les Thomas, that was with the Greenman show.

Eileen Voise: He's gone, he's dead.

Harold Voise: Yep. Yeah Les Thomas.

Eileen Voise: And High Pockets.

Harold Voise: Yeah, High Pockets.

Eileen Voise: Yeah, he's dead.

Harold Voise: Yeah he just died a couple years ago. He was over, Gib, Gibcock-

Eileen Voise: Gibson.

Harold Voise: Yeah, Gibson.

Richard Flint: What was his real name?

Harold Voise: Ralph Duvalier.

Eileen Voise: Duvalier, yeah.

Harold Voise: Yep.

Richard Flint: Oh, isn't his wife-

Eileen Voise: Yeah, Estelle.

Richard Flint: -Estelle?

Harold Voise: Yeah, Estella.

Eileen Voise: Estelle, yeah.

Harold Voise: Yeah, he was one of my first catchers.

Richard Flint: Good.

Harold Voise: And, I was there a year. We had the old barn there, the training barn. And that's where he took us down there running while we were down there a couple of months or a year ahead of time practice. But you had a chance to fill in before you become impressive leaper, you had a chance to break in doing small, simple tricks on the side. And so that way you had a chance to get good enough to get so you was a leaper. Today you don't have much opportunity there. You either gotta be good or you can't go.

Richard Flint: How were you worked in to the act, since you had had experience as a flyer?

- Harold Voise: Well I came along pretty good because I had a couple years there as a kid. Let's see, yeah I think it was, it was only a couple years I guess I was a principle leaper. I was doing the ... in those days the principle leaper had to do the three doubles and the foldover passing. They'd, you know the passing, and you'd fold over and triple for that and then they figured you was a leaper, first class leaper.
- Richard Flint: Can you remember how you were taught flying? I guess you had no flying experience.
- Eileen Voise: No, no flying experience. No, my first year I did, I was a catcher. I caught in the cradle. I caught alongside of High Pockets. Lowell was on one side and I was on the other. And then, of course I was flying, too, he was teaching me to fly, but, I don't know, somebody, one of the girls got hurt or something on the Hagenbeck show and they had to send somebody over there so they put me in the cradle. That's the one first year, [inaudible 00:06:59] you could fly.
- Harold Voise: Along with all the other acts.
- Richard Flint: So, how did you work into flying? With practice -
- Eileen Voise: Oh, yes. Oh, no. We went there in the winter time, practiced every day. And it was fun.
- Harold Voise: When they come off the road with it in November, they would start in sometimes right after, take a vacation maybe for two, three weeks, then come right back and start training til spring, til April. So it was every day. So you had a pretty good chance to ... And then you had a lot of competition, you had somebody to egg you on, you know.
- Eileen Voise: A lot of your own -
- Harold Voise: Yeah, you had the same people your age, and all in the same boat, currently. We had to learn so that, that helps more than anything.
- Richard Flint: How many people would be gathered at the barn during the winter?
- Harold Voise: Oh, we had as high as, what? 26 [inaudible 00:08:07]
- Eileen Voise: Yeah. We had 300-people acts, and then plus you had extras. They always had ...
- Harold Voise: Yeah, we had -
- Eileen Voise: Extra kids that would go in and swing the ladder, web or, iron jaw, something like that.
- Harold Voise: We always had what we called spares. In case someone got sick or something.
- Eileen Voise: In general loose form, til they could learn.

Harold Voise: Took a lot of people to keep both acts going.

Richard Flint: How many sets of rein could be set up in a barn with -

Eileen Voise: [crosstalk 00:08:46] Just one.

Harold Voise: One triple ring was up.

Richard Flint: One triple ring.

Harold Voise: Yeah.

Eileen Voise: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint: Now, with a triple ring, two of the acts are facing the same direction, one -

Harold Voise: All of them.

Richard Flint: All of them face?

Harold Voise: All of them the same here. Because that was only just a barn. Just a little, regular little -

Eileen Voise: In Bloomington, IL.

Harold Voise: Company barn.

Richard Flint: Now were these riggings attached or separate? I know -

Harold Voise: It was just on one frame.

Eileen Voise: One frame.

Harold Voise: Just one frame. It was like single, the double and the triple.

Richard Flint: Right.

Harold Voise: Just on, just one big frame. Something like what they got down there with Ringling Bros. [inaudible 00:09:23] They just got pipes like that, but it would be the same principle.

Richard Flint: I've never seen those, just -

Harold Voise: No, you haven't seen -

Eileen Voise: No.

- Harold Voise: You haven't seen them because they haven't been but, I guess since, probably, what? 1930, probably. Probably '30, '31 -
- Eileen Voise: '32.
- Harold Voise: '32. 1932.
- Richard Flint: So, you were with the Wards, then, until '32?
- Harold Voise: I was, no, I left in 1928. Another leaper was there, Bert Dawson and myself, we thought we was good enough to go out on our own, so we went out to California and milked in a catcher, and started our own flying act out in California. And I came back and played [inaudible 00:10:15], I think, yeah, 1920 ... '28, and then we went ... '28. I think the following year, the circus milked us back, so we were opening the Coliseum side by side with them.
- Richard Flint: This is [inaudible 00:10:35] -
- Harold Voise: No, south Florida, that was.
- Richard Flint: South Florida.
- Harold Voise: South Florida.
- Richard Flint: So you were playing next to the Wards, then?
- Harold Voise: Yeah, we were with the -
- Eileen Voise: I was with the Wards. In fact I was -
- Harold Voise: She stayed with them.
- Eileen Voise: I was on the show when Edward died. That was in 1929, I was on Robertson's [inaudible 00:10:52].
- Richard Flint: Can you remember them?
- Eileen Voise: Sure. Yeah.
- Richard Flint: What was the situation with the flying act for those [inaudible 00:11:04]?
- Eileen Voise: Well, then Mayme [Ward] went up and caught in the middle. And then one of the other girls went up and caught in the cradle, Antoinette [Concello]. Well, then they got Agnes, so Agnes was there.
- Richard Flint: And Art Concello.

Eileen Voise: Yeah, Art Concello, and Antoinette. They were in the act. Around the John Robison [inaudible 00:11:30]. And then Mayme cut down to one act, and then she quit. I stayed with her until she quit in 1932, and then she went out the coast.

Richard Flint: Did she close up the barn, then?

Eileen Voise: Well, they hit trouble. I guess they lost the -

Harold Voise: Art Concello bought the barn.

Richard Flint: What, when you went, did you go to the coast with Mayme?

Eileen Voise: No, Mayme went to the coast first. She quit. It was depressing then. When we were on, in '32 we were on L.G. Barnes, and the show wasn't doing any business and ... Oh, it was the best act of the show and we did more than the one act. That's when the Ringling Show bought the ...

Harold Voise: Corporation.

Eileen Voise: Bought the corporation, and anyhow, they left us go in July. And so Mayme come back to Bloomington, and then we worked a few fairs, very few, and she couldn't cut it with all those people. So she quit and went out to California. Went out to San Francisco.

Richard Flint: How many -

Eileen Voise: Three kids and Nettie Heinz, her aunt.

Richard Flint: How many people were in the act when it closed?

Eileen Voise: Nine.

Richard Flint: So it's nine.

Eileen Voise: Uh huh.

Richard Flint: That was the last of it?

Eileen Voise: Yeah. Sophie Genders was in the act. Eldon Day. And -

Harold Voise: [crosstalk 00:13:03]

Eileen Voise: There was nine people, but, like I said, it was depression, and she just couldn't, there just wasn't enough work to ...

Harold Voise: To keep going ...

Eileen Voise: To keep going. Especially with a big act like that.

Richard Flint: Where did you go afterward?

Eileen Voise: Where did I go? Then I joined ...

Richard Flint: Your husband?

Eileen Voise: Joined the Ringling show. Where Harold, the act was there all along.

Richard Flint: Was this The Flying Harolds that you-

Harold Voise: Yes.

Eileen Voise: Yeah.

Richard Flint: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Harold Voise: Well, that was, let's see we had Roy Dysler. And you and I.

Eileen Voise: Yeah, it was-

Harold Voise: That's when Cobello was in the center. And the Concellos, Antoinette and Art. And-

Eileen Voise: Ed White.

Harold Voise: Ed White. He was a catcher. And we had three three-people acts then.

Richard Flint: The Cobellos and the Concellos?

Harold Voise: Yeah. That was 1932, '33. '34.

Richard Flint: Alfredo was still flying then?

Harold Voise: Yeah, he was flying up to '33. That's when he pulled his shoulder, and that was the end of him, and then the O'Terrys were flying the next year. The Criss Cross Flying Act was in the center, Con cello was on one end and I was on the other. And that was, oh, about '33 and '34, I think.

Eileen Voise: No that was '34 the O'Terrys were on there.

Harold Voise: '34.

Eileen Voise: Alfredo was still flying in '33, and then when he got hurt, Burt Doss, your partner, came and worked with him the rest of the season-

Harold Voise: Oh, that's right.

Eileen Voise: With Milo and Vera.

Harold Voise: '34, O'Terrys started. And then Zack Carol started the Cold Show, and he asked us if we wanted to come back home and we said, "Yeah. We'll come back with you." So we joined them again in the old Coliseum. Then there was Burt Doss.

Eileen Voise: Yes, he was on the other-

Harold Voise: He was doing a flying act. And ourselves. And then the following year, I did both acts. '36, was it? Yeah, '36. Then '37 we had Mayme [Ward] with us. I booked Mayme and Mayme was catching again. She was catching in the cra- Was she catching in- Yeah, she was catching in the cradle. My brother was catching. My young brother was leaping, Eileen and I. We had a double flying act then.

Eileen Voise: We brought Mayme back again, then she went with her son or something. And then we brought her back in 1941.

Harold Voise: Yeah, we brought her back again in '41. For the Cold Show.

Eileen Voise: We wouldn't let her quit.

Harold Voise: She was catching. That's right. 1941.

Richard Flint: How long did you keep an act together?

Harold Voise: Until, let's see, 1958.

Eileen Voise: 1958.

Harold Voise: 1958. We were with the Poley Show.

Richard Flint: Did you stay with the Poley Show throughout the '40's, then?

Harold Voise: We stayed with the Cold Show til '48.

Richard Flint: '48.

Harold Voise: Yeah, that's when he, Carol sold it to A. B. Callen. And then we went, 1950, we went out with Clyde Beatty. We spent a year, 1950, with Clyde Beatty. And that was, was, yeah, '50.

Eileen Voise: We were with Clyde in '50 and '52.

Harold Voise: Yeah. '51.

Eileen Voise: Was it '51?

Well, we were on the Beatty Show when we were making the picture out there. We were out there making the picture and we would be at the studios and then go and do the show, and back to-

Harold Voise: Yeah, we worked the first, we worked six weeks around LA. We had two flying acts there, with Eileen's sister, Rose, and my brother and another boy catching. And our act. And we went about six weeks in and out of Los Angeles. We had to go back to the studio every morning to report.

Richard Flint: What movie were you making?

Harold Voise: The Story of Three Loves we made, with Kirk Douglas. We were into it. And we were there for, for almost three years. I was there from October until-

Eileen Voise: It was the following August.

Harold Voise: It was about the following August.

Eileen Voise: When we finished the picture.

Harold Voise: We finished the picture, then we went back to this-

Eileen Voise: Then we went back to the Beatty Show.

Harold Voise: Went back in Vancouver. We joined the show. And that was our last, last time with the circus.

Eileen Voise: Yeah. Under canvas.

Harold Voise: Under canvas. And then we joined the Poley Show.

Eileen Voise: No.

Harold Voise: Sure, in '53.

Eileen Voise: Yeah.

Richard Flint: Stayed with them until they-

Eileen Voise: Yeah.

Harold Voise: In '53, we [inaudible 00:18:32] with Poley. So '53, '54, '55, '56, '57, then they took the unit off the road. They put, the second unit we were with, they took it off, so we was out of a job again. And that's when I started my show. And we played quite a few spots, with some of the dates that we picked up from the Poley Show, that, we were the second unit.

Richard Flint: Were you then producing your show?

Harold Voise: Yup. Produced the show then, in '58. And I'd already produced in Lansing, and ...

Eileen Voise: We were down to one date, though. Lansing.

Harold Voise: Just Lansing, all I had. Lexington and Chattanooga, we had quite a few spots. Went down to just Lansing, and then we retired. And we'd just go up there for five, six weeks and produce that one show and go back home.

Richard Flint: Since you were both in a position to see some of the flying acts that have been regarded as the most outstanding, both in sales and in their predominance, and flying in, of course, the Wards, and quite a number of other flying acts. Since you're a flyer, how would you estimate these other acts? What-

Eileen Voise: We've got some good flyers now.

Richard Flint: What, well, do you still go out and see shows?

Harold Voise: Oh, yeah.

Richard Flint: [crosstalk 00:20:01] Could you sort of give a ...

Harold Voise: We have flying act, book a flying act every year. We had [inaudible 00:20:08] last year. We did the triple every year, every show.

Eileen Voise: Every show. And they announced it, and he did it. He didn't just go up and if he caught it they'd announce, "Well, you've just seen a triple." They announced it and he went up and did it. In fact, he only missed one in all the time he's ...

Richard Flint: Well, since you've had a chance to see quite a number of flying acts-

Harold Voise: We saw 'em all.

Richard Flint: You're both flyers, can you sort of evaluate all of the acts that you consider top notch?

Eileen Voise: Oh, sure.

Richard Flint: And why you think they're good.

Eileen Voise: Well, I think Reggie is the great ... And The [Onas 00:20:44] are terrific as a flying act, but I mean, Reggie [crosstalk 00:20:48] I think he's the best.

Harold Voise: I mean, consistent-

Eileen Voise: I mean, when he goes up, he's consistent. And he knows where he is every minute. And when he ... they announce the triple for him. And Gay Onas.

Harold Voise: Yeah, Onas.

Eileen Voise: And the Polagios are out of the Circus Circus.

Harold Voise: We've had them the last, we've had all the best.

Eileen Voise: But, Reggie is the best flyer right now. For my money.

Richard Flint: How would you compare him with Alfredo Codona? Or [crosstalk 00:21:21]

Harold Voise: There will be no more like Codona.

Eileen Voise: No one like Alfredo Codona. It wasn't what he did, it was the way he did it. He had that style and finesse. Well, it's just like, the Palagios, what' his? The one that committed suicide over there in France. I mean, he had the form, too.

Harold Voise: Yeah.

Eileen Voise: He had the showmanship. He didn't do the big tricks-

Harold Voise: Yes, he did-

Eileen Voise: Like some, but he did ... Yeah, but no, he didn't do the triple or anything like that, but I mean, he was [crosstalk 00:21:51] he had that [crosstalk 00:21:52]

Harold Voise: He did all the big tricks. He did the triple, the two and a half off the hocks, two and half curl back, the double fold over. You name it, he did it. I mean, he not only did it, he did it with such form and class, unbelievable.

Eileen Voise: Class, and that form he had was ...

Harold Voise: You can't believe it.

Eileen Voise: Yeah. And he did it every day. Day in and day out. Day in and day out for all those years. He just didn't go up and attempt it like a lot of them.

Harold Voise: He actually did it.

Eileen Voise: He did it.

Harold Voise: Yes. He was something.

Richard Flint: Over the years, had anyone ever approached him in form?

Harold Voise: Well, it's, for tricks, yeah, they all did the tricks, but I think anybody ever did as many of the big tricks as he did.

Eileen Voise: No.

- Harold Voise: He did them all. He did practically everything.
- Eileen Voise: He did everything. Right.
- Harold Voise: And then so-
- Eileen Voise: Two and a half off the hot.
- Harold Voise: He did it so well. Well, I guess one comes along in a lifetime, and he was it. We know because we saw him, we were right along the side of him there, all them years. We saw him perform every day and, boy, he could really go. There's no doubt about it.
- Richard Flint: I guess you sort of hinted at it earlier, but what is it you really look for in a flying act that would separate it from an ordinary act?
- Eileen Voise: Well, there's style and there's showmanship.
- Harold Voise: Just like a diver, like you'd see someone do a dive and you'd say-
- Eileen Voise: See someone doing a dive with their legs all flying apart-
- Harold Voise: Well, they get so many points, and you'd say, "Yeah, I thought it was pretty good, but the judges say that it wasn't so good. It was tilted a little bit or bad form." It's the same thing with a flying act. It was the position, and how you did the trick. If you just barely caught it or you, your head was down, or you just grabbed it, flopping up all over the place, when you come back to the bar if your arm's all over the bar instead of a little curl, just reaching up like you should. It looks easy. But it's the finesse. The flying act, people see the flying act, they say, "It looks so easy. The greatest of ease." Which is wasn't, but that's what it's supposed to be, so. It takes years and years to make it look the greatest of ease, because it ain't with ease, that's for sure.
- Richard Flint: Where is it you ache the most at?
- Harold Voise: Huh?
- Richard Flint: Where is it that you ache the most? If it's not with the greatest of ease, where is the strain from?
- Harold Voise: Well, you're just highly trained, that's all. You have to have the power, and know when to relax and when to harden up, and [inaudible 00:24:52] when you caught the bar. Otherwise you just had to be relaxed, see. If you're too rigid, see, you're bucking the swing too much, you have to go with the swing. Well, the sore isn't hardening up and relaxing. So that's the secret. Some never get that tempo, see. You don't get that tempo, you'll never become great, you just ... Soon as we see anyone swing on the bar we know whether they got the right tempo, or timing,

you can almost tell whether a guy can leap as soon as he swings on the bar. You can tell, he's got timing, he's going to make it. It's the same thing with any kind of a skill. Of course, the average person, all they know is what they see, and they just see them whirl around in the air, whether you go around once, twice, or whatever you [inaudible 00:25:49] The judges are the key, for form mostly. [inaudible 00:25:55].

Kinda like the divers today. The people are getting more conscious of the art and skills.

Eileen Voise: Yeah, they can't announce a triple nowadays and then have somebody go up and do a double.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Harold Voise: No.

Eileen Voise: They can't fool the public anymore. They used to do that.

Richard Flint: How frequently, would you say?

Eileen Voise: One more?

Richard Flint: How frequently would-

Eileen Voise: Oh, a lot of time. A lot of times. But not anymore.

Harold Voise: No.

Eileen Voise: Not anymore. Not since television, they see all this diving, and they see you, and they know when somebody's doing a double or a triple.

Richard Flint: Oh, yeah.

Harold Voise: Yeah, I picked out a good act. We had Reggie up there and, the audience appreciated it. We had a lot of good acts. We had flying shows up there.

Eileen Voise: Yeah.

Harold Voise: We had some of Bob Yerkin's acts, that's very good. We've had most of the good flying acts. But, they seem to know.

Richard Flint: And, when you first got started, to do the triple somersault, I guess, or the [inaudible 00:27:00]-

Harold Voise: Yeah, that was the [crosstalk 00:27:02]. That was questioned. These other tricks are difficult, too. You can do a double fold or a two and half [pillit 00:27:09] back to the bar, or a double forward over. A two and a half off the hocks, a double

cut-away half, backwards over half, but all those tricks are very difficult, too. But the triple is still a hell of a lot of trick.

Richard Flint: But today, there's so many people attempt the triple and they-

Harold Voise: Yeah, there ain't very many of them that really do it.

Eileen Voise: No, really, do it.

Harold Voise: It's only-

Eileen Voise: Or they'll do it once or twice and-

Harold Voise: [Guy Elmo 00:27:42], he does it consistent, and Reggie is the only, about the only two I've ever seen that really say they're going to do it and they do it. Catch one once in a blue moon, I mean, hell, the guy that works the shows says, "Hell, I oughta just do a double. It'll suit me. You can't be in the net." All the people know is that you missed. It's not like another act, you can cover it up. [inaudible 00:28:09] acting. For all that, grab them and pick them up and go again. Once you fall, the first thing they'll say is, "Did they stay in the air?" No, they fell in the net. They don't know what you fell the net ...

Eileen Voise: Trying to do.

Harold Voise: Trying to do, it's just that you fell in the net.

Richard Flint: You were with the [inaudible 00:28:25] so many years with Lauren Davenport there in the winter time.

Harold Voise: Yeah. One year, he come up to me and says, "You're better than those that were last year. They fell." It was us. Because we'd been in that same spot so we knew it was us. So it shows you that, [Ed Nuarn 00:28:45] used to say, "If you can't do a double do a somerset. If you can't do a somerset, do a planche. Stay up there because that's all they know, if you hit that net." And that's true. It's just like the divers, which is not fair, they do some difficult tricks, but if they fall over just a little bit, or ice skating, they don't get the points. Some of them just get a little early, small little dings, and beat them, because they ... It's the same thing. They should give them more points for what they attempt.

Eileen Voise: For the more difficult tricks, but they don't.

Harold Voise: But they don't. Like the Olympics and all, it's the same. You'll see someone [inaudible 00:29:29], who like that three and a half, three and a half [inaudible 00:29:33], judge will say, "That wasn't very good."

Eileen Voise: About a quarter of an inch.

Harold Voise: So they'd be better off if they didn't do such a difficult one.

Richard Flint: Were you ever involved in attempting the triple? Were you a catcher or a-

Harold Voise: No, I was a leaper.

Richard Flint: A leaper. Did you do the triple?

Harold Voise: Yeah, I did it, but I didn't do it consistent. I-

Richard Flint: For how many years did you attempt to do it?

Harold Voise: Oh, I was, what, five, six, seven years or so. But really, with the shows that I did the aerial bar acts for, I would have two-bar acts, and the flying acts in the show, so I had in my hand my hands full. I didn't really, wasn't too-

Eileen Voise: We were walking all the time, where we didn't have really time to practice as much as some of these young kids coming up now. They get laid off a little more than [crosstalk 00:30:33]. Well that was the last few years, but I mean, when they were learning they had more practice, and had more time to perfect the-

Harold Voise: Yeah, we were all through the depression. We couldn't afford that.

Richard Flint: Then, when you were doing the triples, in the late '40's, I gather? With [Leon Poley 00:30:52] or?

Harold Voise: I was with the Pola Show, yeah. Yeah, well I did the double fold and two and a half [pillit 00:31:07] back. Double fold-

Richard Flint: I should think some of the, the ones with the pirouettes and so on would be more difficult to-

Harold Voise: Well, a two and a half pirouette is probably as difficult as the triple.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Harold Voise: [00:31:28] But most people did the two and a half pirouette back. Really, really difficult move. You didn't have anybody to help you. And , it's a tough trick. You'll see, there've not been very many consistent two and a half pirouette, is there?

Eileen Voise: No.

[00:31:43]

Richard Flint: The only person I think I ever heard was, didn't do it?

Harold Voise: I don't know of any other- [crosstalk 00:31:45]

Eileen Voise: Yes. [crosstalk 00:31:48] He just started doing the two and a half pirouette.

- Harold Voise: Yeah, he just started it. I haven't seen it.
- Eileen Voise: When we started, you know just starting out ... Well, when they first came with the Cold Show, they were terrific on the trampoline. And then they did the small flying act, you know the stage flying act. And the first year that they went after the big flying act, they were horrible, weren't they?
- Harold Voise: Awful.
- Eileen Voise: The poor kids. They couldn't mount the board or anything. Well, for the one thing, the father [crosstalk 00:32:20]. But they learned fast.
- Harold Voise: Well, he had control of being on the trampoline, and that was a big asset. And that's what's helped Reggie.
- Eileen Voise: Yeah, Reggie's very good on the trampoline, too. Have you ever seen Reggie, [Armed 00:32:36]?
- Richard Flint: I'm not sure. I don't think so.
- Eileen Voise: No, I don't ... No, you're probably right.
- Harold Voise: Yeah, he's good on the trampoline, too, and I think that's a good background because they're flying, and they know where they're at. If they can finally get the time on that bar. That's what, Guy only took me that time, but once he got that from me, he had it made.
- Richard Flint: Now, do you think somebody like the [Ganoas 00:33:02] could still have a way to go? That they could perfect the act even further? Or do you think that-
- Harold Voise: No, I don't think so.
- Richard Flint: They've reached their level?
- Harold Voise: Oh, you got it. There's a limit.
- Richard Flint: I mean, as far as the finesse and the ...
- Harold Voise: No, you either got that or you haven't. After so many years, you either got it or you haven't got it, so. It's like anything else. Ballet dancer, anything. You either got that class or you haven't got it. They can't beat it in you. And after you go for awhile, when it's a habit, see. It's a built habit, so you never ... It's pretty hard to change it.
- Eileen Voise: Some flyers that were good flyers but they had no style or no showmanship.
- Harold Voise: You take a leaper who's used to leaping a certain way ... I've taught a lot of people, they start going and we have an awful time to change it. You have to

kind of help them along the way they go because if you try to change them, you throw them all off, you just can't ...

Richard Flint: Its' not them.

Harold Voise: It's not them, but if they haven't got any form you can holler at them, and they haven't got it, see. It's just a more of a natural thing, see.

Richard Flint: To get a little more on the business side of the shows, since you were manager of your own flying act, how did you get bookings and so on? What's [crosstalk 00:34:28] what sort of salary scales?

Harold Voise: Well, in those days, flying acts, with tree-people flying acts, you got about \$275.00 or \$300.00. [inaudible 00:34:45] was getting. I guess he was getting \$350.00, and I guess he jumped up to about \$500.00, which was unheard of [inaudible 00:34:56] in Europe, you could go over there and get \$500.00. But he was a big star, and so was Kyle Brolin. But the average salary around \$350.00 to \$500.00. At least for some of us. In those days, that salary was a lot of money.

Richard Flint: You're right.

Harold Voise: There was no [crosstalk 00:35:19] When we started with the Wards, it was \$25.00, \$30.00, \$35.00, plus you get your board and room. First when you're starting in a profession, the money doesn't matter, it seems. You're not interested in money. It's the, you gotta have enough money to make it, but you're more interested in learning, [inaudible 00:35:43] trying to make any money, you knew you wasn't gonna have any money.

Richard Flint: Now, with the Wards training so many people, they must have sort of half expected that that means that few of their students would go out and perform their own acts. How many other people did this? You did it. Who else?

Harold Voise: Well, let's see, Art Co cello.

Richard Flint: Antoinette. Art. They left.

Harold Voise: And Lovitt, they had an act.

Eileen Voise: Yeah. And Marva. And, of course Marva went out on her own. She didn't do a flying act. She went on one-on swings. And then Mabel.

Harold Voise: Yeah, and Mickey King.

Eileen Voise: Yeah, Mickey left [inaudible 00:36:34]

Richard Flint: What sort of, what was said when you made the decision to go out on your own? Since you were going to end up competing with the people that taught you.

- Harold Voise: That's a little bit funny, naturally, but I guess it's like anything else. You find that you've gone as far as you can go. You're couldn't get any more money, because they can't afford to pay you. You had to make a break for it sooner or later. You just say he'll learn, like everybody. You've go to.
- Richard Flint: Where did you get your rigging?
- Harold Voise: We went out in California and we built it. In those days you had to build your own rigging and you had to build your net, you build your ... You had to do everything. Of course, you would've thought that someone knew how to do it. We didn't know how to do it, so, we just went ahead and built everything we knew how to build it.
- Richard Flint: How did you get your first booking?
- Harold Voise: Well, we were in ... There was an agent out there that knew us from a show. And of course when he found out who we was and what we want and who we were, why, he booked us right away. So we got a good fair booking and we got good money. I think we got around \$750.00 a week [inaudible 00:38:08]
- Richard Flint: \$750.00 a week?
- Harold Voise: Yeah. Yeah, a week.
- Richard Flint: That's a good start.
- Harold Voise: Yeah. We camped out, had a little tent, and got a truck and when we threw all the stuff on there it didn't crush the thing, so we ended up-
- Richard Flint: Rolling with it.
- Harold Voise: With money. Which when-
- Eileen Voise: Then he sold Christmas trees and ...
- Harold Voise: Yeah. So, we got going. We played a little Vaudeville, and Vaudeville went down the drain. That was in 1931, we had a small flying act. With a little cast a cradle, something like that. I almost did. And, of course Vaudeville went out and, but we only did that in the winter. To keep us going between all these inbound circuses in those days you had to play Vaudeville. And that was a tough group. Four shows a day. You had to be young and tough because you worked over little nets, a [inaudible 00:39:14] net was only about two foot high. And you used to bounce out of that thing. It was really dangerous, so I was kind of glad when we got away from that, and got back to the big net.
- So then we started going with the circus. Just lined it up. I finally piled up one day. I was 25 years with the Sumner Circus, with the [Henchfields 00:39:38]. Plus playing parks and fairs through the years. All in all, I was about 37 years doing a

flying act, I think it was. From the time I was 13 til I was 50. I think that's pretty good record, I guess. 37 years, that's quite a long time.

Richard Flint: Why did you decide to quit flying?

Harold Voise: I wanted to quit when I was ahead. Then it's, I was able, didn't have any broken bones, and I figured I didn't have no future, so I-

Eileen Voise: Well, one of these football players, or quarterbacks they call it, the blam that just does the kicking, you know, the ... They call him an old man and he's 38 years old, and there are good quarterbacks, and they figure they're ready to fall over when they're 38 years old.

Harold Voise: So if you go to 50, and I did. I could've probably went another 10 years, I know I could. Because I'm 64 now, I could ... But you still have no future. And your timing, your eyesight fails you, and your reactions are slower, and you could get hurt. So I figured I might as well quit while I was ahead.

Richard Flint: Now, since you flied circuses for 25 years, why did you prefer the circus rather than fairs and so on?

Harold Voise: Well, because the circus is like the world's tallest night. I could go to bed. You had the crane and you had the cookouts. They feed you and you have the same gang all year. And it was really a happy time, and a healthy life. You was outside most of the time.

Eileen Voise: Yeah, he used to cry when the show would close. Now [crosstalk 00:41:37] It was really, everybody got along better together on the shows. There wasn't the jealousy that there is now.

Richard Flint: Why do you think that was so? Why was it?

Eileen Voise: I don't know.

Harold Voise: Well, they had a lot of circus families, and they would look after you, when we were kids. It was just like a family, in that way that, I guess there's some families now, but, it's pretty tough in show business with a lot of people and you can't support them. Unless it's your own family, you couldn't support these big troupes. Can't afford to pay them. And that's why you see in these shows, the Ringling Show, of course they can get them behind the iron curtain. I don't know what kind of a deal that is, but you take an act with six or seven people, then that's at least a couple hundred dollars a week to live. You have to get 25 hundred or something. The guy booking the show don't want to pay that much money. Because he's like, I've got to buy the rest of the show, so it's tough. We were in it, but I'll give you \$50.00 a week. Work for 50 years, and you was doing good, too. So today it'll cost you a couple hundred so you can live.

Richard Flint: I'm going to check the tape because we have two sides of the tape, so I'm not sure.

Since you were talking about the family life on the show, can you tell me what it was like being with the Wards. Did it seem part of a family there, or?

Eileen Voise: Yeah, it was all like we're-\

Harold Voise: Yeah.

Eileen Voise: We all got along good.

Harold Voise: Yeah, that's right.

Eileen Voise: When we'd go home and then come back to start training again, why, we'd give each other nickels and dimes and everything to go to the movies, so if you wanted to go to the movies they'd all pitch in and help, give them the money to go to the movies, and then they'd walk to town.

Harold Voise: Yeah, we was poor but happy.

Eileen Voise: Right.

Richard Flint: Where did you live in [inaudible 00:43:47]

Eileen Voise: At the house.

Harold Voise: At the house. We didn't have any money, but they fed you.

Richard Flint: So, Mayme and Eddie were sort of like mother and father?

Eileen Voise: Yeah.

Harold Voise: They'd look after you. And they'd really look after you. They took me in. You didn't do no drinking and no nothing. We lived a good, clean life. You had to. And that's-

Eileen Voise: No drinking or smoking or anything.

Harold Voise: Nope. Everything was for your health. Which was a good thing.

Eileen Voise: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint: Can you recall any incidents at all? Involving Mayme or Eddie Ward, or other people there that stand out in your mind or?

Eileen Voise: No, it was just a lot of fun. And then of course when we were practicing, that was serious. But we had a lot of fun.

- Harold Voise: Yeah, we had good times.
- Eileen Voise: Big gang and happy times.
- Richard Flint: Do you miss those days or?
- Harold Voise: Well, part of life. It's like reading a book. When you get done reading it, I guess that's the end of the chapter. Same thing in life. You go through stages.
- Eileen Voise: I never will forget, you talk about remembering things, I never will forget when the [inaudible 00:45:08] played Holyoke, they used to pray. And Mayme and Edward and a couple of other people come out the house. And I thought Mayme was the most beautiful woman I ever saw in my life. She dressed stunning and she was beautiful. But she had that natural blonde hair and she had it all piled up here, not like they wear it now, it was in curls and everything. And she really beautiful. Her hair, it was real long, but she used to do it up. And she was really beautiful. And she dressed beautiful.
- Harold Voise: Yeah, I remember she was a good all around performer, too. She'd catch you flying.
- Eileen Voise: She did acrobats and everything before she went into the flying act.
- Harold Voise: Walked the wire.
- Eileen Voise: Before she and Edward got married she was an acrobat. She was a good performer.
- Harold Voise: It's a shame to see her the way she is now.
- Eileen Voise: She was the first woman to do a double somersault and she did it blindfolded and with a gunny sack on her.
- Harold Voise: She did it every day, too.
- Eileen Voise: Yup. She did it every day.
- Richard Flint: it may be time to flip to this tape and, its' still going around a few more minutes.
- I'm just trying to think of other things to cover here.
- We've talked quite a bit about flying, but what about your general life on the show? The other acts you saw and so on. I've always heard that flyers are supposed to be the aristocrats of the performers. Those pinnacles of performing is really to be a flyer.

Eileen Voise: Well, I don't know, there's just something about a flying act that all other performers, when they're on a show, they'll go up and watch the flying act every show. You know what I mean? It's just an act that everybody with the show, regardless of what kind of an act they do, they love to watch the flying act.

Richard Flint: Do you think it's one of that requires the most skills of the performer or?

Eileen Voise: Well, I would think so.

Richard Flint: Of course, you might be prejudiced.

Eileen Voise: Yeah. And of course I like to watch acrobats and, you know, different ... But what I mean is even the acrobats and all of the other acts, and it still goes on, they'll always run up to watch the flying act.

Richard Flint: Let me flip this tape, it's about run over here.