

CWM Audio 4-2

Estelle DuVal Interview, January 11, 1973

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Richard Flint: I'm speaking with Mrs. Estelle DuVal in Gibsonton, Florida on the 11th of January 1973. Picks up the sound quite well. To begin with, can you tell me how you got into the circus business?

Estelle DuVal: Yes, I can. I was in Dayton, Ohio and a little girl friend of mine and I both was in the Lady Minstrel Show. Her father was Mr. Valandas, the advance man on the Buffalo Bill Show.
[00:00:30]

Richard Flint: Hmm.

Estelle DuVal: Her mother danced the whirling dervish in the side show. She was at home by herself most of the time. She and I did an act. I did colleys boy and she did the Spanish dancing. We were tired that in the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Show came to Dayton. I said well I was always on the farm. I rode horses all my life so I liked that. Let's go on the show. It went to Columbus the next day and I said that's where we go. We took the bus, or the traction car and went to Columbus and joined the show.
[00:01:00]

Well, we went to work right away. She didn't stay long. She come back home to her mother. I was on the show just three weeks and I was a featured lady rider in the show because I had been around horses all my life. From there I stayed on the show until '24.

[00:01:30]

Richard Flint: How did you get in that Minstrel show?

Estelle DuVal: Oh, we just both sang and danced. We just got into. I guess bull dumbness, I don't know. We had a little advance around there in Dayton that worked all the little small [inaudible 00:01:43] so that's how we did that. We worked in the school plays before that.

Richard Flint: When did you join the 101 Ranch Show?

Estelle DuVal: 1910.

Richard Flint: 1910?

Estelle DuVal: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint: Wow. Can you tell me a little bit about life on the Ranch Show and what you had to do and ...

[00:02:00]

Estelle DuVal: Well, it was perfectly lovely as far as I was concerned. I worked all through the show. Of course I used to help take care of the little Indian babies. We had a doctor and nurse on the show but they never paid much attention to the kids so I was always detailed to that because I was considered a kid myself. In fact, I was the youngest. Joe had to be my guardian on the show and sign up for me because I was too young to be on the show. From there, I just stayed with the show, went to the ranch in the wintertime and worked pictures.

[00:02:30]

The picture people from California came up there and made pictures in the wintertime. I worked in the picture with the **Life of the Miller Brothers** and **The Nick Time**, which was taken on the ranch. Again, in the summertime we'd go out with the show. I'd break in girls in the wintertime for riding. Then I helped Mrs. Zack, that's Zack Miller's wife Mable, break polo horses. Then we'd go to New York and show our polo horses off in the big sale barn where they would sell them and then back to the ranch for more horses.

[00:03:00]

Mr. Zack bought horses from Mexico and Mr. Joe run the circus and Mr. George was the oil man. He did the oil wells.

Richard Flint: When you're on the ranch show, traveling and so, what about the other performers and so on? How many were there? What did you do?

[00:03:30]

Estelle DuVal: I don't know how many there were. There was a whole string of cowboys and a bunch of Mexican boys and a couple tribes of Indians on the show. I don't know how many girls it was. Mr. and Mrs. Tappinger the chief of the cowgirls and cowboys on the show was in charge of the girls. She took charge of the, she was a [inaudible 00:03:45]. She was from Lawton, Oklahoma. She was a school teacher and Indian. He was in charge of the boys. They did boomerang and she did shooting too. The rosenball shooting. She did that. They were in charge of all the guests. He had the boys and she had the girls.

[00:04:00]

Richard Flint: You were telling me before I began the tape about Bill Picket from the [crosstalk 00:04:12]

Estelle DuVal: Oh, Bill Picket was the nigger on the ranch. He went out with the show every summer. Worked in the leather and making chaps and saddles and everything in winter, same as we did. I worked in that too. He worked all winter and then he went out on the show in the summertime. He bulldogged and rode drums, rode buck and steers. Regular cowboy work. He worked every winter on the ranch.
[00:04:30]

Richard Flint: You mentioned that he took the show to Mexico City?

Estelle DuVal: Yes, Mr. Joe took it to Mexico City.

Richard Flint: That must've been your first winter then.

Estelle DuVal: It was.

Richard Flint: What were the arrangements for going to Mexico? How did you hear about it?

[00:05:00]

Estelle DuVal: Oh well I don't know about that. That always arranged and we just followed.

Richard Flint: As far as you ...

Estelle DuVal: As far as I would know yes. That would be all the management part. That wouldn't be none of the performers.

Richard Flint: I mean how did you hear you were going to go to Mexico?

Estelle DuVal: Oh, Mr. Joe tell us to get ready and we had to have shots and so forth and all. We had a doctor on the show and a nurse so we had to be prepared with a certain kind of shots to go into the country.

Richard Flint: Did the show go back to Ponca City before it went to Mexico?

[00:05:30]

Estelle DuVal: It never went to Ponca City. It always went to Marland, Oklahoma at the ranch.

Richard Flint: Marland. I thought the ranch was in Ponca City.

Estelle DuVal: No it was out of Ponca City. About 25 miles in Marland.

Richard Flint: Did the show then go back to the ranch before it went to Mexico that year or was it just an end of the season tour?

Estelle DuVal: They went to Mexico and then they come back and took a bigger show on the road.

Richard Flint: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right.

[00:06:00]

Estelle DuVal: They couldn't take too much into Mexico. It was only specified so much.

Richard Flint: What can you remember of traveling in Mexico and the performing?

Estelle DuVal: Not too much. Not too much. We were so restricted. We never dare leave the coaches and the grounds without a chaperone. Never.

Richard Flint: Was that just Mexico or [crosstalk 00:06:15]

Estelle DuVal: All through Mexico. No, when we was away from there we always went with Mr. Joe. He always took the girls downtown. When we'd go to New York he'd go to Kid McCoy's place and all of a sudden take all of us girls and go to the boys and get the finest wardrobe. That was for advertisement however. We always went in the finest regalia we had and we always had to have fine clothes, and we did have. Every girl had to have beautiful satin clothes, skirts, shirts and everything. Just beautiful. The boys the same. We all had to have.

[00:06:30]

Of course that was an advertisement for the show.

Richard Flint: Right. What about you mentioned earlier, the chief of the girl, the person in charge of the women.

Estelle DuVal: Chief of the cowgirls and chief of the cowboys yes.

Richard Flint: What about the other groups in the show, the Indians and Mexicans?

[00:07:00]

Estelle DuVal: Well they had their man that took charge of them was a government man. He had to answer to Mr. Joe for everything for them, Mr. Miller. They had to, they were specified for certain care like doctors care and so forth and all. That was all government stuff you know.

Richard Flint: What about the Mexicans, did they have ...

Estelle DuVal: Well, they was doctored by the same doctor of course but they had a leader interpreter but then they all could speak the English language. They had the interpreter book there. I taught many of those boys to swear. A Spanish book and then it would say it in Spanish here. Then they would pronounce it. Then underneath it would be English and I would pronounce it in English. That's the way,

[00:07:30]

because you don't speak their Spanish language unless they speak it first because you don't know how to accent it. You don't speak it well. I would teach many of the boys like that and they would teach me.

[00:08:00]

Richard Flint: Were there ever any European riders on the show or Cossacks?

Estelle DuVal: We had a Cossacks. We had a few Cossacks, yes.

Richard Flint: Did they have a ...

Estelle DuVal: They had an interpreter.

Richard Flint: Did you have much contact with them? Much mixing at all?

Estelle DuVal: Oh yes, we didn't mix a whole lot. We weren't allowed to do that. We just sat around the pad room before it was time for the show to go on, dressed and have our horse saddles. The first bugle you saddle your horse and you sit [inaudible 00:08:23] and the second bugle you was ready to take off. We could sit and talk then but we would always have to be out with the group or out where you could be seen. They didn't allow no mixing at all. Very careful.

[00:08:30]

Richard Flint: Right. What about your accommodations on the train?

Estelle DuVal: Oh we all had our own birth. The girls had lower births and the girls, all the single girls and the married couples was all in one coach. Mrs. Tappinger is in charge of that coach. The boys was all in the other coach. That was Mr. Tappinger's. He was in charge of that?

[00:09:00]

Richard Flint: How many coaches were there?

Estelle DuVal: Oh we had three sleepers I know. Then they had a big dining car. Then Mr. Joe had a private car. I don't know how many coaches we did to tell you the truth.

Richard Flint: Were the working men on a separate coach?

Estelle DuVal: They had their own quarters. Oh yes.

Richard Flint: Where did they sleep? On the flats?

[00:09:30]

No sir. They slept in coaches in beds. Good clean beds. They were colored sheets

Estelle DuVal: but they were all clean. They were kept up. They were very careful. Mr. Joe used to always say if you feed a man good, and keep him in plenty of clothing, it isn't what you pay them, it's how you treat them.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Estelle DuVal: That made the man. He had something there because he got good men then. They liked the treatment. He seen that they had good clothing because they could go up to the white wagon and get a ticket to get clothing. That was taken out of their salary see, but they had good clothing. Then you had a laundry man on the lot every so often to pick up clothing when you'd be in a town long enough they could get it to the laundry and back and see they're all well cleaned up.

[00:10:00]

Richard Flint: How old were you when you were on the show? Can I ask what your birthday was?

Estelle DuVal: Yes, you can ask what my birthday was. I was just 14 when I went on the show.

Richard Flint: Your birthday would've been what, 1896?

[00:10:30]

Estelle DuVal: '99.

Richard Flint: '99 oh sorry. I thought you said you went on the show in 1910.

Estelle DuVal: That's five years, and no.

Richard Flint: Anyway, that was, well what I was going to ask was what was the life like for a young girl on the show?

Estelle DuVal: By being chaperoned it was beautiful. I didn't have any mother. My mother died when she was 35 years old and I didn't have a mother. I had a father and my sisters and brothers but I didn't have anybody. I lived with my aunt and she had four boys and she didn't think a girl amounted to a damn. I didn't think so either when I lived with her. That's how I left her. They run a big saloon in Dayton, Ohio. That's how I got away from there.

[00:11:00]

Richard Flint: Right. Well, what was life like for you on the show?

Estelle DuVal: Lovely. Perfectly lovely. If I could live it over it would be worth a million dollars.

Richard Flint: Well I know that many early shows used to have various regulations on ...

Estelle DuVal: We had strict regulations.

Richard Flint: Can you recall any of them?

[00:11:30]

Estelle DuVal: Well in what way?

Richard Flint: Oh well I can't think of a for instance. I can remember, oh Jenny Rooney told me of the fact that the men and the women couldn't speak to each other and so on.

Estelle DuVal: Oh we spoke to each other in the pad room. We didn't have no associations or any papers stuck off in one little corner or something. No segregation like that. None of that stuff at all. See, I was raised in Versailles, Ohio. That was close to Greenville was our county seat. Annie Oakley was born just ten miles from there. She's buried in Brock, Ohio. We went to Sunday school in Brock, Ohio. She's buried in Brock, Ohio. She was raised right there at North Star. She was on the Buffalo Bill for years.

[00:12:00]

Richard Flint: Oh yeah, of course on that show.

Starting again here. Going around. How long were you on the ranch show?

[00:12:30]

Estelle DuVal: Oh gosh. I went off the road before and then came, I went on to 24. I was there until 24. Then it went off the road and come back a year. Then it vanished. Then I joined Tim McCoy and he only opened up in Dayton and he never went any farther than Dayton.

Richard Flint: That was '38 wasn't it? Where were you between the 101 Ranch and Tim McCoy then?

Estelle DuVal: Gosh I don't remember.

Richard Flint: Must've been a few circuses. At some point you got ...

[00:13:00]

Estelle DuVal: Oh no. After I married Ralph we went on Hagenbeck and Wallace.

Richard Flint: When did you and your husband joined Mamie's act?

Estelle DuVal: Oh, I don't know what year it was.

Richard Flint: Well, how did that come about?

Estelle DuVal: After he and I got married, after we went to Osseo, Wisconsin to his aunt's up on the dairy farm. Then from there we went back to the winter quarters and

[00:13:30] Bloomington and started breaking. Of course he was catcher man. I broke in catching and I broke in iron jaw and then taught Claude to swing a ladder and all those. You have to work in all those things.

Richard Flint: Had he been catching before?

Estelle DuVal: Before, yes. With Eddie Ward, yes.

Richard Flint: Can you remember when you first went to Bloomington and breaking in as an aerial act? Because you'd been a rider primarily.

Estelle DuVal: Years. For years. 18 years a featured rider on the Bros. on the 101 Ranch Show.

Richard Flint: Isn't it a bit of a change?

[00:14:00] Estelle DuVal: Yeah. I worked in the Patton's pictures, Patton's out of California made those pictures at the ranch. I worked at picture called **Nick of Time** where you picked the child up from the ground [crosstalk 00:14:06] the cattle's coming, stampeding cattle. You pick them up while it's going at full speed, and I rode with the Cossacks.

Richard Flint: Ah. Oh, I come back to your riding a bit later here but since we have been talking about, mainly earlier, I'm just curious as to what you can remember of your first work for the Wards.

[00:14:30]

Estelle DuVal: I don't remember which year we went there.

Richard Flint: No, that's not important.

Estelle DuVal: Where the kids were small, went to the farm. Mother Ward was still alive. Elsie was there, his brother. We practiced in the barn and Antoinette was [inaudible 00:14:44] wife.

Richard Flint: Right.

Estelle DuVal: She had just came there to work and she used to have to practice all the time. She practiced to Ralph, my husband, in the wintertime. Then we made the winter shows, Minneapolis, Flint, Michigan. All those shows.

[00:15:00]

Richard Flint: Who else was there besides you and your husband, Antoinette Consello?

Estelle Duvall: Well Jess Arborne, her husband. That's in the picture right there. Jess and Jim was there, and Elise. Elise Darr. I don't know who was there because it changed so many times. Then Ms. Dorothy Davenport was in there later. She's in this picture here.

She was Horan's wife. She was a [Seandriss 00:15:31], Dorothy Seandriss.

[00:15:30]

Richard Flint: She lives over in St. Pete or Chicago?

Estelle DuVal: I think she lives in St. Pete.

Richard Flint: Yeah the two ...

Estelle DuVal: Because after she divorced him and married again, a very wealthy man over in St. Pete. I'm trying to think. It's hard.

Richard Flint: Yeah, so many, many people.

Estelle DuVal: They marry, just like doc said, you marry and you change.

[00:16:00]

Richard Flint: Yeah. Is that rather frequent that people get married two or three times?

Estelle DuVal: No, no, but losing a partner, something like that. Losing them, something like that. Now you see, Eddie Ward died. Of course Orrin Davenport and Dorothy separated. That was a known fact. Then are there pictures that, oh might be six pictures of the expensive [inaudible 00:16:26] now so [inaudible 00:16:28] and Walter, they had to leave riding [inaudible 00:16:31].

[00:16:30]

Richard Flint: Yeah, Walter does.

Estelle DuVal: She was Madame Bodini's daughter for our guys. Well, Walter Dyson later married Bess Hollis. Pinky Hollis's wife. Pinky died. They had a big riding careers in Toledo. Toledo was their home. Walter Dyson and Bess married. Seems to me like I remember somebody told me that he passed on. I don't know.

Richard Flint: Walter dies?

[00:17:00]

Estelle DuVal: Walter. It seems to me somebody told me that he passed on, but she lives right here in Tampa.

Richard Flint: Returning again to the Wards. I'm very curious of your change from doing an aerial act, or doing a riding act to an aerial act. What was the first thing you were taught

to do?

Estelle DuVal: Well of course if I had lived with my husband after marrying him, we drove six and eight horse teams you know. He drove those great big [inaudible 00:17:29] team a few years in Chicago. From then if I worked with him in the aerial work, I had to break in aerial work. Then I rode on the circus what little riding that you get. Grand entry, jumping horses and high school horses, dancing horses. Then I went down to Little Ranch and helped train high school horses with Doc Weber. He was our veterinary on the show. The he stayed down at the Little Ranch. Because he was down there, where he was a doctor of all the thoroughbred horses and cattle and pigs and everything, it took a real doctor for that so he lived down there.

[00:17:30]

[00:18:00]

All us young girls that worked up there was housed down there.

Richard Flint: Now where's down there, the little ranch?

Estelle DuVal: That was small ranch, yes. Right down the salt fork. Over the salt fork. That was just a little ways from the Indian reservation. The Millers took care of, they took care of the Indian reservation down there and I had to carry mail over there every day for the salt fork. Dive right in and the horse would jump the bank down sometimes and down underneath you'd all go, saddle and all. The horse would carry the mail over there. Well, anybody, and you went right through the bison ranch for that. Over the Santa Fe railroad.

[00:18:30]

The sandstone come up enough you had to have a horse you could lay down and cover your head over or you'd smother to death of sand. You had to do that. I was always doing crazy things. I was the crazy one. They said let "Du" do it. She'll do it.

[00:19:00]

Richard Flint: Can you remember the Miller brothers? Was there personality ...

Estelle DuVal: Oh Mr. Joe was the sweetest thing that ever lived. Mr. Zack was the devil but you loved every minute of him. He would tear buttons off his shirt and say here Blondie, sew them on. I got the buttons all off my shirt. Sew them on.

Richard Flint: Oh.

[00:19:30]

Estelle DuVal: Mr. George we never knew. He was the oil man. He was very stiff. He stayed at the ranch. He was big shot. Mr. Joe was very down to earth and Mr. Zack was the genuine devil. He could tell you dirty stories start til nine. You would [inaudible 00:19:41] and he'd still be telling them. Full of them, as sweet as he could be. He was a doll.

Richard Flint: What were each of the, I guess there were just two brothers that traveled?

Estelle DuVal: Three. There were two that did the show. Zack and George.

Richard Flint: What were their responsibilities or did they sort of share them or divide them?

[00:20:00]

Estelle DuVal: Well, each one had a different department. Mr. Zack bought the horses. Mr. Joe run the show. Mr. Zack in the wintertime would go to Mexico and buy a whole couple of, two or three train loads of those little burrows and other horses, little pintos and little ponies and everything. Indian ponies and bring them to the ranch. Then we'd break them out in the wintertime. The cowboys and so forth. I had to work in the sewing room making costumes. Then they had a beautiful big Western fare for the public as well to see. If they was short, a girl gets sick or something they'd run you in there and you'd help what you could. You always have to help wherever they put you.

[00:20:30]

[00:21:00] When you was like I was, Mr. Joe was my guardian. Well, I was more like I had to take orders from him. Of course I did that and I was young enough that I sort of submitted to that with no fighting back at all. Nothing. When you're younger and didn't have a home and didn't have a mother you blend in very easily. Mr. Joe was very good to me. Really good. I loved every minute of it.

[00:21:30] We worked on the ranch, and then we could go Saturday night with the cowboys to the dance. We was chaperoned. We never was left being, we always were chaperoned. Always. Mr. Joe always, just that, he'd let us go. He'd say now you get together we hayride. Oh, what a time we had. Boys and the girls and the boys were just like, they were chaperoned like we were and they loved it. They thought they had somebody guarding them. They couldn't get hurt. Nothing could happen to them. We'd go.

Richard Flint: Now that would be on the ranch in the winter right?

Estelle DuVal: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint: Doc Miller was mentioned in a couple of stories that you could tell me. Can you remember some of the things you started to mention?

[00:22:00]

Estelle DuVal: Yes. [inaudible 00:22:02] what he had in mind.

Richard Flint: He mentioned a couple things I didn't catch so I don't know. I can't remember what they were. I'm sort of after some of the flavor and the color, what life was like on shows. What was the atmosphere? I was wondering if anything comes to your mind of things that well, when you get together with other show people, what do you talk about?

Estelle DuVal: Oh ...

Richard Flint: Sort of difficult to pull a word out the top of your mind.

[00:22:30]

Estelle DuVal: Yes it is because you don't know what, you really don't know what the other fellow's asking for.

Richard Flint: Oh, I can't think of any for instance right now but as our conversation continues [crosstalk 00:22:44]

Estelle DuVal: Yes, I know what you mean. I know what you mean.

Richard Flint: After you left the ranch show you married your husband Ralph DuVal, your second husband.

Estelle DuVal: We had our own acts.

[00:23:00]

Richard Flint: Right. How did that get developed?

Estelle DuVal: We went to Denver and we got some Swiss mountain goats, babies. There was a big dairy out there that brought the goats in from Switzerland. They brought them in for milk goat produce. They used that milk for the TB hospital patients and the under nursed babies that couldn't take any other kind of milk and the aged people that couldn't eat or keep anything on their stomach but that. The goats milk done the trick. At that time they had 500 goats up in the mountains ready to kid later on. Then they had about that many at the farm that they were milking.

[00:23:30]

Whenever they would drop a male goat we could have that but we couldn't have the little females. We'd pay \$1 a head for them, but we had to pick them up just as soon as the goat was born and take it. That's were I got my Swiss mountain goats. I got the Togginbirds, the Newbians and the Swiss salmon. Then I had a big white Angora further, that I bought in Dallas to work in the act. Then we traded them as

[00:24:00]

we went along. What good fellows they were, but you had to doctor them and take care of them. They'd get broke and you'd just have to lay on the floor with them and work with them every night so they wouldn't burst.

[00:24:30] Then we worked them into an act. Then we got the double trap and then the iron draw. That's how we got our five acts. Then we worked fairs and parks. Celebrations after that. We went on from there.

Richard Flint: Returning to your days in the 101 Ranch, you mentioned you did trick riding. What kinds of riding and so?

[00:25:00]

Estelle DuVal: Well you know what trick riding is. Vault. Pick up a handkerchief and the horse is going full speed. You ride for roping. Boys would rope you know. All trick riding. Just any trick that you would do [crosstalk 00:25:26] trick riding. I don't know how to call them anymore. I know how to do them all.

[00:25:30]

Richard Flint: One of those things you can do but [crosstalk 00:25:31]

Estelle DuVal: Yeah, yeah.

Richard Flint: I know what you mean.

Estelle DuVal: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Flint: Yeah. I'm just a little bit of a loss right now.

Estelle DuVal: Yeah, me too. Me too. Yet I can see everything that we done and yes, it's past history but yet it's right there. It'll always be there.

[00:26:00]

Richard Flint: Well, you told me about on the train there. What were your accommodations? You mentioned you had [crosstalk 00:26:05]

Estelle DuVal: Oh, we all had group sleeping births. Each our own.

Richard Flint: What about such ordinary things that are taken care of, laundry? If you weren't in a town for two or three days ...

Estelle DuVal: Well when we were on the lot we washed a lot of our own things. Particularly on the Wild West stuff we all had satin shirts. They had to be washed by hand anyway. Then we had our little steam iron that we had that we used gasoline that you know, little gasoline iron. You could iron your own clothing and everything. We did all that ourselves. On Sundays we'd usually do that at the grounds we stayed. Went to

[00:26:30]

grounds on Sunday morning early. If it was a close church we'd go to Sunday morning church. If there wasn't a close one there we'd go Sunday night to a church. We'd most always have to get in our trunk to get a dress out to iron it.

[00:27:00] During the week now, we rode our horses to the ground in the morning. Got out of the birth and dressed and met our horse coming out of the horse car and be right there to get him and get on him, ride to the grounds. Then we rode our horse back there at night and put him in the car, handed him to the broom and then we went to our coaches, chaperone, our lady chaperone. We rode to and from on our horses. Then remember we were in Western clothes all the time. Boots and riding habit all the time. That's why we had to get to the grounds on Sunday morning and ride our horse to the grounds on Sunday morning. Then we'd get to our trunks and then we'd dress in civilian clothing. Otherwise we couldn't go to church like that.

[00:27:30] Most all the girls had a different church denomination. We'd try to get to their church but if we couldn't we'd go to the first church we come to. We'd go in street clothes so they didn't know who we were and [inaudible 00:27:57] if someone looked at you, but we did go.

[00:28:00]

Richard Flint: What about activities during the course of the season? I know on the Fourth of July there'd usually be a festive occasion.

Estelle DuVal: Well they most always worked a spot where there was some championship activities a lot of the times. The boys would enter and then we'd have contests, boys think they were just as clever as our boys and wanted to do a kind of a make them [inaudible 00:28:30] but that never happened because our boys were always too good for them. We always had activity like that. Then on special occasion Mr. Joe would take all of our best boys that would want to dress and clean up and look like something in good wardrobe you know, the Wild West habit, and the girls in the very best they had. He would take us all in a taxi cab, take us to Kid McCoy's place in New York City and the biggest, finest places there were he'd take us.

[00:28:30]

Richard Flint: Yeah.

[00:29:00]

Estelle DuVal: Well some of the boys would do a little [inaudible 00:29:01] you know. Some of the girls could do song numbers, what I always did the song numbers. We'd always have to do a little bit of entertainment there see, which was publicity for the show. Mr. Joe was so proud so we'd try to do a little something that we could do well. He would never try to make somebody get up there and make a monkey of their self because he was too clever of that. It wasn't like that. He was a marvelous man.

[00:29:30]

Richard Flint: What about Fourth of July dinners and so? I know I've seen some of those.

Estelle DuVal: Oh we all had special dinners like that. Mr. Tipton was our cook house man. I always called him Billy but he done well. Mr. Joe would see to that. We always had nice big dinners, special dinners for them. Everything like that. Never, and on the Miller brothers show they fed well. They fed well. They had good food. If you kept on that, maybe in your days before that it seems like you wouldn't have as good as you'd have there. Lots of the times I would pick a day and they say they haven't got this but they've never had it. That's what's a matter with it. Believe me it was always nice.

[00:30:00]

Richard Flint: Were those Fourth of July feeds accompanied by any games at all?

Estelle DuVal: Oh sometimes we'd put on little cruises, sack race or something like that ourselves in the back.

Richard Flint: Right, that's what I mean.

Estelle DuVal: Yeah in the back yard. We could do that you know. They'd get out one of the little dunkings or something and buck you off and everything and you could see which one was the champion. We did that amongst ourselves and acted a damn fool. That's what we were doing. Usually we'd get the worst end of it. We had a lot of fun. We had a lot of clowns in the show, good sports too like that.

[00:30:30]

Richard Flint: What sort of money did you make on that?

Estelle DuVal: Well, some girls made more. If we could do something, just straight riding on the show, I think the girls got \$25 a week just for riding grand entry and riding parade and really doing nothing you might say. It's good money for them. Yes, and feed. Yeah. They could buy their clothes all out of the commissary and just taking out so much out of their salary, maybe a quarter a week or something. It didn't hurt them. They got their food on the show and everything and they got their lodging with the train and they got all over the world event. Mr. Joe would take groups of us every Sunday some place. If there was a park nearby or anything, Mr. Joe would take us all and we could go swimming or whatever the activity was at the place he was going to take us, that was what we could do.

[00:31:00]

[00:31:30]

Those of us who didn't abuse the privilege and acted like ladies, well we always got the tops of those things. That was all there is too it. If you made an ass of yourself

...

Richard Flint: Sounds like you really enjoyed your days in the [crosstalk 00:31:53]

Estelle DuVal: I did. I did.

Richard Flint: How would you compare them with your later experiences on say Hagenbeck-Wallace or Sells Floto.

[00:32:00]

Estelle DuVal: Well, Hagenbeck-Wallace was an whole different show. It was all circus and on the ranch it was all Wild West.

Richard Flint: What would be the difference other than a cost of show? As far as your working conditions and so on.

Estelle DuVal: Well I think the working conditions was a whole lot the same. In fact it was really like you make it. You can make it hard for yourself or you can make it good for yourself because there are rules and regulations and everybody has to abide by those. Hagenbeck-Wallace was nice because it was all aerial and different things. Different kind of bareback riding. All the different equestrian riding is not Wild West you know. The only thing they had was a Wild West concert after that. They did have a Wild West concert.

[00:32:30]

Richard Flint: How would those concerts compare to the 101 Ranch Wild West show?

Estelle DuVal: Nothing at all. It would just be a small thing but it would take care, it wouldn't get a lot of [inaudible 00:32:53]. In fact, to tell you the truth, the concert didn't pay a lot of things for the show. Because they just took in enough money to take care of a lot of things. They would just keep part of the band there to play for them and so forth and all this. Some little, tap dance and every song can be a little tap dance. Someone would do something. They'd do a little Wild West. Some of them would do a little roping on the horse and that's about all. It didn't amount to anything.

[00:33:00]

Richard Flint: Did the people that worked in the Wild West concert have much contact with the circus performers? I imagine you would've known both because you were [crosstalk 00:33:30]

[00:33:30]

Estelle DuVal: You were working right with them all the time.

Richard Flint: What about say to what I mentioned earlier about the contact with the side show people?

Estelle DuVal: Never was allowed to contact the side show people.

Richard Flint: Why was that?

Estelle DuVal: I don't know. I think it was just because I think we were just in different category of work. We all were different. They just didn't get the [inaudible 00:33:52] around it during the show. You could become a nuisance you know. Then seeing back there. There was restrictions there.

[00:34:00]

Richard Flint: You mentioned you could go see them just on Friday?

Estelle DuVal: On a Friday. If the show sets up that day that was it. In the afternoon between the show and before supper time or something, after you was leaving the big top, then you could go there. They would be putting on their show like I said, a blow off, after the big top was over because people go behind the big top. Then they would, then you could see them.

Richard Flint: Was this a chance to visit or to watch their show?

Estelle DuVal: Visit and watch the show.

Richard Flint: A little bit of both.

Estelle DuVal: You didn't become a nuisance, you'd get out in a hurry. The side show manager. On the ranch show, the man and woman that run the side show there was George Conners and Anna Conners. They were out of Chillicothe, Ohio. He was very strict, very strict, but he run the show to make money.

[00:34:30]

Richard Flint: Right. That's what they're in business for.

Estelle DuVal: That's right.

Richard Flint: Pardon me if I keep checking the tape. What about any contacts with people in the band?

Estelle DuVal: That was not allowed?

Richard Flint: Why?

[00:35:00]

Estelle DuVal: It was a different department. Very contempt. You didn't [inaudible 00:35:03] chief [Robanka 00:35:05] had they band. They were all, I tell you, it was. We had to stay away from Indians, we had to stay away from Mexicans.

Richard Flint: Was this true when you were on circuses also?

Estelle DuVal: Not so much. No, on circus you were older and with your family as a rule. They had the jurisdiction of you.

Richard Flint: Right.

[00:35:30]

Estelle DuVal: When I was on the circus I was a married woman. It makes a difference.

Richard Flint: Right. Well what about any kind of, obviously probably had no contact with a working man would you?

Estelle DuVal: Oh God no.

Richard Flint: What sort of people were they like?

Estelle DuVal: Same as we were but there was a different department and they lived different than we did. Their activities was different than ours. They'd mess around a lot. Some girls would come and talk to them. They were with the show. That was out.

[00:36:00]

Richard Flint: Right.

Estelle DuVal: Our cowboys didn't dare sit out on [inaudible 00:36:04] and contact town girls and make smart cracks at them either. That would get them a big fine on the show. They'd lose their salaries

Richard Flint: What kind of fines were given out on the show and for what sort of things?

Estelle DuVal: Well, you were fined for being late for your numbers. If you were late for your numbers. If you were sick that's a different thing but if you were late for a number or you, we got fined for lots of different things. Not being as tidy and as neat in a parade like we ought to. We'd be clean and neat and parade. Oh there's fines for lots of things. For coming to the cook house late or something or doing, ticking about something in the cook house, popping off. Big mouth. big mouth. Mouthing off. You'd get it for that quicker than anything in the world. If you had anything to tell the boss you go up to the boss like a lady and tell him.

[00:36:30]

[00:37:00]

Richard Flint: Did you get fined ever?

Estelle DuVal: Oh I got fined all the time.

Richard Flint: I won't ask you for what.

Estelle DuVal: I got it for knocking the hell out of a Mexican. I sure trimmed him.

Richard Flint: Can you tell me about it?

Estelle DuVal: Yessirrie boy. He come between my pony and I one day. There was bronks right next to me. You didn't walk up along those bronks they'd kick your head off. My horse was right next to them. He come around the side me and he just decided he was going to feet around. I had a big loaded quirk. He had been smart with a girl on the show anyhow. She was a girl I called her, she didn't know the score on the show. I told her I said Inez you're going to get in trouble messing with him. She said I can take care of my own self. I said you go right ahead. He was going to get around behind my horse and go around over to where she was. His hands were on me and something. I said look Max Greaser, get your hands off of me. He said what'd you say and I said wham. I hit him across the face and knocked him between the horses and I just knocked him down and stomped the hell out of him. He didn't look like himself the next day I'll tell you.

[00:37:30]

Richard Flint: How much did you get fined?

Estelle DuVal: Well Mr. Joe give me a little extra money for that. Yes sir.

Richard Flint: Straightened somebody out.

Estelle DuVal: Yes sir. Later this girl had a baby by that guy. I knew there was something wrong there.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Estelle DuVal: She was out of Chicago. She'd never been on a show. She'd never been no place. She never knew. She wouldn't listen to nobody. She didn't know how to ride. She didn't know how to do nothing. That she knew how. Then she got in trouble. She was sent home to Chicago. Off the show onto Chicago. There was kind of fun at, they're not things that you like to hear about.

[00:38:30]

Richard Flint: No, no.

Estelle DuVal: They do happen.

Richard Flint: What about oh, making parade and so on?

Estelle DuVal: Oh you have to make parades.

Richard Flint: Oh the Wild West Show. You must've ...

[00:39:00]

Estelle DuVal: Long parades. We would just make parades in Chicago. We made a parade, I don't know how long it was. Some of the girls couldn't make it all the way and had to get off and get in the stage coach and get carried back. Mr. Joe had to get off and get in the stage coach and ride back to the grounds. [inaudible 00:39:12] how that day ended. The heat was too much and it's a long parade. He was riding a black Kentucky thoroughbred and she jiggled him and jiggled all the time. He had to stop and they put him in a coach and he rode back in a stage coach [inaudible 00:39:27]

[00:39:30]

Richard Flint: What did you have to ride in parade? Horse or a wagon?

Estelle DuVal: Oh a horse. It was always a horse, and carry a flag. We had some awful long parades, especially in Chicago.

Richard Flint: Yeah. What about opposition? Do you ever remember any shows on adjacent lots or the same town?

Estelle DuVal: Oh they'd never be in the same town. Not a big show [crosstalk 00:39:52] no show would ever come in town as big as Mr. Miller's show. It was too big of a show.

Richard Flint: What about any Hey Rube's?

[00:40:00]

Estelle DuVal: Oh we had that.

Richard Flint: Were they very frequent?

Estelle DuVal: No.

Richard Flint: Any ones, you must have some that stand out in your mind?

Estelle DuVal: Oh they would yes. They would. We had one, well I wasn't in it. I wasn't. It was in the Hagenbeck and Wallace show. Some guy had been cheated I guess. That's what he said. He said he'd been cheated up around the side show, somebody that he said short changed him. Now that was his saying. Nobody knows it was at all. He ducked into the side wall and Ralph, my husband, was a big man standing there. He was in his robe and his tights, all white, but his robe was dark. The guy run under the side wall and he done something to Ralph.

[00:40:30]

Anyway, some guy said get him, get him high. Called him high pockets. Get him high. He said who and the pointed to him. At that time Ralph let him have it. Knocked him right back through the walls. That was the funniest thing. He told the

cops, he said well man had a white suit on that hit me. He was looking all over for a man with a white suit on but he never did find him. Ralph said I never saw that man before in my life.

[00:41:00]

Again, a funny thing happened, and it does happen around the shows. Women could hear us, public could hear us in our dressing room. The dressing room was like, this side was the ladies and this would be a partition there. The men was dressing on that side. Well they could hear the men's voices here and they could hear our voices here. Well they just took it for granted that we was all like figs, dressing all together, which was far from the truth. Oh far from the truth. If there ever was decency in the homes as there were in the dressing rooms and on the train as there was on the circus, they could say they were ladies and gentlemen.

[00:41:30]

We had some old woman and she said something one day. She was going to see, [inaudible 00:41:51] said well lift up the side wall. She said no, they've got it pinned down. Well you know they do have them pinned down there. She said well I'll see. She took a razor blade or something and she cut the canvas. She was turning it like this and I could [inaudible 00:42:04] I had right side. I hit her right smack and mashed her nose flat. I really let her have it.

[00:42:00]

Richard Flint: Man people in town.

Estelle DuVal: I really let her have it. She fell back out of there. All the girls said this was a woman got hurt on the outside. I didn't know anything about it. The whole brick back there was bloody. I let her have it. I took it in the dirt and dug it. I fixed her for peeping.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

[00:42:30]

Estelle DuVal: Cutting the wall looking to see if we was all dressing together. What a slob. Those girls was strict. They was strict with the girls in the show. There was never none of that foolishness going on there at all. Once there was one girl that got into trouble, the girl from Chicago but she was on the, oh she was the one too that took off for a snipe hunting one night. God. We was at the ranch, down at the little ranch and Doc Weber said well you girls if you ain't got nothing to do tonight, his little wife was just a little bit of a thing, Mary said why don't you all go snipe hunting? I said well let's do. We had three or four greenies from Chicago out there. This was one of the girls.

[00:43:00]

She was always going to catch one of those little white velvet pigs you know. There were just little bits of fellows there but the pure bloods down there you know. Mr. Joe he prized them. My God he he did love them [inaudible 00:43:22]. Well you know you don't go around those little sows and pick up one of those little pigs. If you know anything about pigs you don't do that. Because she will get you. She is going to get you. I said to her, I said look Inez. Don't you ever go near that old sow. She's [inaudible 00:43:35]. I said try to pick up one of those pigs. If that little one lets out the first squeal she's got you. She said she ain't going to get me. I said well just don't do it that's all.

[00:43:30]

Hank Burnell and I, Hank Burnell was the fancy roper on the show and [Vister 00:43:52] Pig was a boy from Mexico. He said well we'll all go out slap hunting. Well, Hank was going to be smug. He was going to sneak off with this girl. He was going to tip her off and sneak off with her. He did. We took them all way out in the back of the field. There's a lot of big haystacks. We even got away from them all. He, [inaudible 00:44:09] he went to this girl. We caught him when he came out of the barn and strung him up by the feet in the haystack. We fixed him for sneaking off on us.

[00:44:00]

She grabbed one of these little pigs on her way out. Little babies. Oh it was a cute little thing. It let out a squeal. She ran. That was about, this big gate fence was about eight foot high but had so you could get through it. She just made it to that fence and that was about all. She dropped that pig and that old sow just about had her in the back end. Because they will really get you. They'll tear you up. She made it to the fence and got over it. It didn't get her but I'll tell you right now it's a wonder she didn't because they will really tear you to pieces.

[00:44:30]

My what wild times we had down there. You know the reason, you know how the Miller brothers got their title of 101?

[00:45:00]

Richard Flint: I think so.

Estelle DuVal: You do?

Richard Flint: The acres. 101,000 acres wasn't it?

Estelle DuVal: You see, they rode for stake. Grandpa Miller, Mr. Joe's father, rode for stake on the Kentucky thoroughbred horse. In riding so much distance, it takes in so much width, so much mileage. A head takes in so much. Well when he rode for stake, when he rode that horse dropped. When he rode for stake he had 101 acres. Stake.

That's where the title of 101 comes from.

[00:45:30]

Richard Flint: Right, right.

Estelle DuVal: Then he leased all of the White Eagle Indians reservation for, their old daddy did, for 100 years. That's how they farmed all that land out there. Then for the same thing they had to build the Indian school and they had to school those Indian children. That's how I had to carry the mail across the salt fork up to the Indian school.

[00:46:00]

Richard Flint: I mean I keep looking at this tape because I think it's toward the end here.

Estelle DuVal: That's why that was. That was the reason for the title of the 101 acres.

Richard Flint: 101 acres is what he originally staked out.

Estelle DuVal: Yes. He staked. There's so much of a dimension goes in the distance that you ride. I don't know how it is. I don't know about that but I do know that's the way he got that. Then the leasing the land. 101 years they leased it. Then they drilled for oil and everything and made those Indians [inaudible 00:46:36] will not work. He ain't worth a damn. He won't work. He will not work. They built a beautiful homes and they built, get them beautiful cars and everything and they live in a tepee out on the ground someplace. They would not live in those homes. They will not. They won't. They won't keep clean. They'll get lousy. They won't keep clean.

[00:46:30]

Richard Flint: Was this, did you have problems with them on the show that way?

[00:47:00]

Estelle DuVal: Yes. To keep clean yes. They had tepees and they'd make them clean up every Sunday. The doctor and the nurse would go over and make them clean up. Oh yes they would.

Richard Flint: Let me flip this over so I don't have to watch it all the time.