

CWM Audio 4-4

Lucio Cristiani Interview, March 6, 1972

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Part 2

Richard Flint: When you first came to this country with a two year contract did you have any idea of staying?

Lucio Cristiani: Well, no. We would like to have stayed the two years, but after we got a little taste of it, it's so much different, you know, of the life in Europe, and we weren't used to it. We didn't like it really. In fact, I didn't like to stay here until the end of the season. It just penetrated me the way of life of the United States. It was so different. There was so much independence, and you could talk back to your boss, and I had the feeling that it was an exchange of good, although some idealized that nobody was going to be anything, that it was something that I could do and they'd pay me.

[00:00:30]

[00:01:00] And when I was in Europe I always had the idea that the boss had to be respected whether you liked it or not. He was the boss and that's it. But when I came over here you had the privilege of liking or disliking the boss to a certain extent, and especially in my business there is so much independence more than there is in private [inaudible
[00:01:30] 00:01:29], because my business, although it's not the easiest business in the world, but it's the only business that you are independent, because you sell your ability to the public direct, not to a string or to a political channel.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio Cristiani: You're right in the middle of the ring and the public pay to see you, and if you are good, that's it. If you are bad, nobody is going to help you.

Richard Flint: Okay.

[00:02:00]

Lucio Cristiani: So that's where the independence of the performers is. There is no connection, no knowing the boss's daughter, or anything like that. You go in there the ring and you're facing the public and if you are good you are an independent performer then people want to see you and of course would like to have.

Richard Flint: Right, right. Was there any change in the act or development other than the addition of your brothers [crosstalk 00:02:28]?

[00:02:30]

Lucio Cristiani: Well, yeah, the development early. The big change was when they put comedy in it. [inaudible 00:02:33] and I think the first interview we discussed that.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio That was the big change was that we put comedy into it.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Right, right. By this time in your early 40s were all the brothers in the act of the whole family?

Lucio Yeah, everybody was in the act, except Pete, but other than the youngest of the boys.

Cristiani: He then developed a taste for the performance, right? He went into the concessions business.

[00:03:00]

Richard Flint: Right. Yeah.

Lucio That's how he became more Americanized than we were. Where the money. Well, we just didn't care a lot about the money. We wanted to be performers. We wanted to accomplish something that somebody else didn't do, and that's what people read with us. But then the kids that the [inaudible 00:03:34] came to this country they seemed to develop a different idea and a different outlook in life, money, and I believe that's part of the philosophy of the Americans. If you've got money, it doesn't matter how you got it. In fact, I think there is quite a bit, and this is not in the United States or anything, but the general idea I believe, but that's my point, is that if you are a millionaire, no matter how you got it, you're smart.

[00:03:30]

[00:04:00]

Richard Flint: Yeah. Huh. (laughs).

Lucio Yeah.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: After the [inaudible 00:04:16] show where were you?

Lucio Well, we were after the [inaudible 00:04:22] we connected with [inaudible 00:04:23], and he had bought the Russell Brothers, and we were in Los Angeles after the [inaudible 00:04:39] closed. He approached us because we were dealing with another show there by the name of a fellow by the name of Kroenig. He put out the show called the Kroenig [inaudible 00:04:54] Circus.

[00:04:30]

Richard Flint: Is this the same fellow that managed the [inaudible 00:04:59]?

[00:05:00]

Lucio That's right. And he wanted to get us in as partners. And there was a lot over there in Los Angeles that it was called Washington Hill, and it was the spot for the circus to be just before Easter, and you're in Easter, see, you could get a bankroll right there, and they lost that because [inaudible 00:05:27] he was the other partner by the name of Jack [inaudible 00:05:31], and they lost the lot to this Kroenig, and they knew we were there, so they figured that they could take us away from him they had the battle almost won, see. So they approached me and they said if we wanted to come as partners. Well, they made me a nice offer. They said, "We'll give you 1,000 per week and 25% of the profits." Well, I liked the idea because I wanted to gamble anyways. Then we made a deal with [inaudible 00:06:06] and we were with them for the season. I think it was 1935

[00:05:30]

[00:06:00]

no, 1945.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio
Cristiani: But the season was a success for [inaudible 00:06:18] and not even for us because the only thing we got was 1,000 a week.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani: And then his partner walked away with the money, walked away with 45,000 dollars.

[00:06:30]

Richard Flint: Oh.

Lucio
Cristiani: And [inaudible 00:06:33] was left holding the bag.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Huh.

Lucio
Cristiani: But he was smart enough to get out of it and he went to Canada, and he made a barrel of money that together with [inaudible 00:06:45].

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani: And then I don't know the rumor got that he owed taxes to the government of Canada, and he sold the circus to [inaudible 00:06:55], and he went through Canada under the name of [inaudible 00:06:59], and the taxes were never paid, and when [inaudible 00:07:00] 00:07:06] got over there they grabbed [inaudible 00:07:11].

Richard Flint: (laughs).

Lucio
Cristiani: Not [inaudible 00:07:12], not [inaudible 00:07:13], because his name wasn't there.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Right, right.

Lucio
Cristiani: But then I understand [inaudible 00:07:18] he got out, he fixed it.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani: They understood that he was taken in or something. I really don't know the real story.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: (laughs).

[00:07:30]

Lucio
Cristiani: But I think I got out of the tape, did I?

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: No. We probably picked it up.

Lucio
Cristiani: No. So that's it, see. And then from there we joined the Cole Bros. Circus.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: This would be '46?

Lucio 1946, and we stayed with them three years until 1948, and in '48 they closed. He sold.
Cristiani: But in the meantime there was a show called King Brothers, they were broke in Texas,
[00:08:00] and one fellow came over and suggested to me, he said, "You want to go in partnership
with somebody," he says, "King is over there and he's broke," and I knew his reputation
as an agent. Okay.

Richard Flint: Right, right.

Lucio So I went over there and made a deal with him, and I was supposed to put up the
Cristiani: money to enter the show and put it up, but not over 35,000 dollars. So I had about
[00:08:30] 30,000 dollars in my pocket, not in my pocket, but in my possession.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio And I told him I said I would put 30,000 dollars. I had a few thousand more, but I didn't
Cristiani: want to go for it. "Oh," he said, "That's plenty." So we went in there and I put up the
money and put the show on, and we took the show to Western Canada. That was my
[00:09:00] idea because the circus fans only there. If you could take a circus over there, they
haven't seen a circus for 25 years. [inaudible 00:09:10]. [inaudible 00:09:11].

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio Yeah. He was broke out the money, see. And we went up to Canada and I said that
Cristiani: that's where the circus fans [inaudible 00:09:29].

[00:09:30]

Richard Flint: Who was it that told you?

Lucio I don't remember the name of the fellow, but I know him very well. I can't think of his
Cristiani: name. But we were talking about it. He knew that I had in mind we had the circus in
[inaudible 00:09:45], and then the family got too big, and they got too big, and I had lost
so much money that it was almost impossible to pay it, and so I was too concerned that
they need to split the family to open our own show. So when I saw the opportunity I
[00:10:00] didn't know the country too well, and I knew you needed an agency, and so, okay,
where that I've got to go with.

Richard Flint: Who put you in touch with him?

Lucio Oh, a fellow by the name of Bill Moore. He's dead now. He was what they call in show
Cristiani: business legal adjuster. And he wanted a job, and he approached about the [inaudible
[00:10:30] 00:10:31] I was there. He came over and he said, "Why don't you go and see this Floyd
King who's down in Rosenberg, Texas near Houston. So I went over there. So, anyway,
there's circus fans. He said and I was too requesting Canada. Those people, they're so
circus hungry, and there hasn't been a circus I was [inaudible 00:10:57]. So I asked him
[00:11:00] how the highways were. Well, he said. "The highways are all right if it's not raining, but I

went through with rain and it's gravel," because there's some dirt roads and they can't go through when it's raining, but you can go most of the time on gravel roads. Then I met a fellow by the name of Rosenheim, but he's the agent for the ...

Richard Flint: [inaudible 00:11:26].

[00:11:30]

Lucio [inaudible 00:11:26]. Yeah. And he told me there were a lot of there with the wildlife
Cristiani: playing the fairs, he said that he made a good truck and it's possible to go through with it. So I told him, I said I'd like to take the circus. Well, he said you're going to need a caravan. So I mentioned it to Floyd King, and Floyd Kind right away he was, he said that's a good idea, and he started working on it. I knew when I was there we got well there. We paid everything off and everything that Floyd Kind owed, and I took back my money
[00:12:00] and we came out of there, we had quite a bit of money in the pockets. And then from then on we were gone.

Richard Flint: That first year was it all the Cristiani family or was it ...?

[00:12:30]

Lucio Well, no, we some acts. We had somebody, Gregory and his wife, and then we had, oh,
Cristiani: there's Freddy [inaudible 00:12:33] juggling act. You see, in those days a family [inaudible 00:12:38]. And so, but, anyway, I had ... Oh, I can't think of his name. He had wild west stuff. So it was a good show and we had enough people over there, but it was predominant by the family, you see. So, anyway, we were having good business over
[00:13:00] there, and it was really a pleasure because these people that they hadn't seen the circus in a long time. In fact, when we played [inaudible 00:13:12], we were late for the matinee, and there was an old man, and he says, "I'm old and I haven't seen an elephant.

[00:13:30] So [inaudible 00:13:22] show me the elephant before I go because I can't stay for the after performance. I came 100 miles." Yeah. So I [inaudible 00:13:32] and he was very happy and enchanted. So he left. Just to tell you how the people were. See, over there's an element of fondness in Canada, and they're Polish and Russian mostly, Russian immigrants, and the development of the country was really tremendous, farming and so
[00:14:00] on, great country, and they were just discovering oil there way down there at the other side of Edmonton, and the following year we took the circus in the Peace River country all the way to Dawson Creek, and we did tremendous business there, but we didn't do too good in the repeating, because the people they saw the show, and we went back in the same territory and we didn't do as good. It was too soon to go back.

[00:14:30]

Richard Flint: This was the second ...?

Lucio Huh?

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: This was the second year?

Lucio Second year, yeah. We went up to Peace River country and we made a tour. We left

Cristiani: Macon, Georgia. We went all the way to Western Canada up to the Dawson Creek. Then we turned back and went to British Columbia, all the way to Vancouver, and then when we came out of Vancouver we went to Washington State. We played through
 [00:15:00] Washington, Oregon, California, then we went on to Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Alabama, yeah, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, all through there, and we went back to Macon.

Richard Flint: That's quite a hike.

Lucio: Yeah. But it was not a good season the second year.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Did you lose money or just break even?

Lucio: I think we blew money because we owed to ourselves about 60,000 dollars that didn't
 Cristiani: get paid. Floyd King, we owed Floyd King the show, Floyd gained about 55,000 dollars,
 [00:15:30] but it was our own bet. The former year we went out under sponsorship, but the first year we went out and business was good, very good. That was the first year that Floyd King had a taste of sponsors.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio: Before that he didn't know anything about sponsorship. But I'd been following the Mills
 Cristiani: Brothers, and they knew all about sponsorship, and I like that. So we went out on
 [00:16:00] sponsorship and we did good everywhere. Then the following year we put out the parade. And that was tremendous. The business was [inaudible 00:16:14].

Richard Flint: That was '51?

Lucio: I think it was '51, yeah, and we started the parade. Yeah. I think it was '51. And we had
 Cristiani: the parade '51, '52, and '53.

Richard Flint: Whose idea was the parade?

[00:16:30]

Lucio: It was Floyd King's idea. Yeah. He's the one that told me. He said, "You're going to make
 Cristiani: a million dollars if you've got a parade." But it was my heart wasn't in the parade because I remember the parade a year before and that was nothing, see.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio: Yeah. So I didn't even want to be connected with it, see.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio: So he used to say to me, "Why don't you send that parade?" and I was ashamed to send
 Cristiani: the parade. But then one year I had colleague who had a bandwagon and so and it looks
 [00:17:00] something like a parade. So that year I went up in Milwaukee. We gave a parade and there must've been 200,000 people there watching the parade. Yeah. We got [inaudible]

00:17:19]. Business was tremendous. But, boy, they blasted on the newspaper about overcrowding and all of that.

[00:17:30]

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio
Cristiani: So that was the thing that really did more damage than anything else. But then after that we split up, Floyd King and myself, and that was the downfall of Cristiani and King. King went on his own with Mary.

Richard Flint: Yes.

Lucio
Cristiani: And they really made a mess of it. And we lasted quite a bit because we kept the show going, but they were smacking Floyd King, smacking the agents. I always contended that
[00:18:00] I wasn't an agency. I could run the show [inaudible 00:18:11]. And then of course the family started deteriorating and so on.

Richard Flint: Was there any reason that you and Floyd King split up?

Lucio
Cristiani: Yeah. There was a reason. See, he was always an owner himself, and the deal he had
[00:18:30] with me, I owned 50% and I was the manager, and under that contract he couldn't say nothing. He was a general agent. He could take the circus where he wanted and so on. But as far as running the circus, he had nothing to do with it, and that he didn't like it, see, and he had in his mind that he wasn't getting the right count, which he did as far as
[00:19:00] I was concerned, and as far as taking money was concerned, any circus [inaudible 00:19:06] they get salary paid through the year and there.

[00:19:30] But they stole him blind when he had the circus. But he did better with me than he ever did before. In fact, he admitted it himself after he split with me and he went broke, and his argument with the other fellow, he said, "When I was with Cristiani, I always had 14,000, 15,000 dollar in my pocket. Since we're together with you I'm broke." See. So he realized that he should've stayed with me, and I realized that I should've stayed with him, but the split up wasn't me, it was him, and he wanted to split up, I didn't. Of
[00:20:00] course, I couldn't stop it. And they paid me, me, us, 67,000 dollars for the 50%. [inaudible 00:20:02]. And ...

Richard Flint: Were you more or less the manager for the family or ...?

Lucio
Cristiani: Oh, yeah. I was always the manager since I came to this country, and Oscar was the oldest of the boys, but he didn't know nothing to do with math. He was difficult to manage, and kind of they're all independent, but they listened to be pretty well.

[00:20:30]

Richard Flint: Cool. Well, what was the year that you went to Alaska?

Lucio
Cristiani: That was '54.

Richard Flint: '54.

Lucio
Cristiani: I split up with, not I, I'm not saying I, we split up with Floyd King, and they took the whole circus, and I always love a long-shot, and I always had a mind of taking the circus to the Orient. I never got to it, but I wanted to take it to Alaska, and I met a fellow by the name of Bob Stevens that used to have the Bailey Brothers.

[00:21:00]

Richard Flint: Was that [inaudible 00:21:08]?

Lucio
Cristiani: Yeah, [inaudible 00:21:09]. And he says to me, "My wife, my ex-wife is in Alaska, and she told me that you'd get rich if you come over there." So he didn't have any money [inaudible 00:21:21] because he had ventured. So I listened to him and we started an outdoor service, grandstand, and so on, and indoor, and we went to Texas, and from

[00:21:30] Texas we went to New Mexico and Wyoming and so on, and then we went all the way to [inaudible 00:21:42] in Wyoming, and we went to a town by the name of Sweetwater, Montana. I think it's Montana. The border there. And we embarked, we went to Alaska.

[00:22:00] Now, I railroaded the animals all the way to Dawson Creek, and then we trucked them from there. We had nine elephants. We loaded the cannon on a flat and drove the cannon all the way over there, and it was really the first big show to Alaska with the Alcan Highway. We had about 14 trucks. It was a long way. It's a long way to go over

[00:22:30] there.

So we went over there and we did business, but it was disappointing, because I expected to gross about 300,000 dollars. I figured with their population and so on and prices. But I found that Alaska isn't that remote away. The people are coming and going.

[00:23:00] So the people over there, they weren't too new to our service. They had already seen circuses in the States. So most of the business we did it for the Army. When they saw the shows, see, because Alaska was permanent by fly by night, you know, going over the head and they thought they were going to see something and didn't see nothing. So when we came over there they were skeptic. They thought they were going to see the same thing, and we brought a big show, and after the first week other people started coming.

[00:23:30]

Well, anyway, we grossed somewhere in Anchorage about 92,000 dollars, and about 65,000 dollars in Burbank. We came out all right. But I expected to gross 300,000 dollars. So I was disappointed because I didn't gross that much on it. And they wanted me to go back. But I told the committee over there that I wanted a guarantee of 50,000 dollars because the risk was all mine. I was out about 42,000 dollars before I opened the door. And I said, "If I get rain or something like that, I might get bogged over there and probably blow quite a bit of money." So I said, "If you give me a 50,000 dollar guarantee and then We split," but they didn't want to go for it. So I said, "I'm not going back."

[00:24:00]

[00:24:30] Everybody says I was a fool. Well, I didn't go back, and another show went back, but the cost value was flat.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani: [inaudible 00:24:34]. They went over there and they lost their mind. He had to sell the elephants. He sold all the horses he found there. Oh, he went broke. He really went broke. They had bad weather and that's exactly what I predicted. And the people, they talked about the Cristiani circus. They said, "Well, those were good, and you had a

[00:25:00] success." And when you have a success with something, they compare it, and they didn't like the show and so on. So, anyway, the guy went broke.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio: Yeah. They never did go back.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: That was '56 that the ...?

Lucio: He went back in '55, in '55.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: '55?

[00:25:30]

Lucio: Yeah, '55. See, I was in '54. And then we came back and I went out another year

Cristiani: outdoor, that was '55.

Richard Flint: Did you have a tent in Alaska, though?

Lucio: No.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: No.

Lucio: It was outdoor. It was an outdoor park.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio: He had a tent. But, anyway, but we went out again outdoor, but the family didn't like the outdoor business. So after the '55 season we came back to Saratoga and we put the tent show.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

[00:26:00]

Lucio: We organized the tent show.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Was there much organization other than getting the tent and the trucks?

Lucio: No, no. I was lucky. Well, we were lucky. We found a tent already made that was made for [inaudible 00:26:12], but they never could get it out, so they finally sold it to me, and that was easy, and we had some poles already, so we used those poles, and we built the seats or some chairs. So then I was lucky. I found chairs even there, seats, and whatever else, and so on, and I found a spool, a fellow that had a spool for the canvas, to pull the canvas, and so everything was fine and dandy and we had a good season, 1956.

[00:26:30]

Richard Flint: Did you have any problem when the Ringling show closed and all that publicity about [inaudible 00:26:54]?

[00:27:00]

Lucio
Cristiani: No, no. We had good publicity because they interviewed my father and they asked him and he said that the circus is finished. So my father made that famous statement. He said, "Well, like ice cream," he says .. What did he say? He said it was like saying that ice cream was finished, and he said, no, he says, [inaudible 00:27:19] to build a circus tent, and he was right.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio
Cristiani: Yeah.

Richard Flint: Did you notice an upturn in business [crosstalk 00:27:28]?

[00:27:30]

Lucio
Cristiani: Well, I never paid much attention to that because circus business was always like that. It was ups and downs. It was circus is going in 1910, in 1905, and circus isn't making money.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio
Cristiani: The same thing. [inaudible 00:27:48] was making money and the NFL was getting broke. So there was no difference in circus business than as there is today.

Richard Flint: Right.

[00:28:00]

Lucio
Cristiani: There's good season and bad season, and the circus, like any other theatrical business, is seasonal.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani: You pick a good territory and then it's fresh territory. And, of course, the difficult part about today's circus business is, you see, the sponsorship, there was a bonanza for a while, but not it's a menace to the good show because any fly-by-night promoter can find himself a sponsor, operate some telephone sales, and bring in a circus that was never a circus man before, and we have today quite a few of those promoters that became circus owners, and they never knew a thing about circus, they just could promote it, that's all.

[00:28:30]

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani: I can mention a few but I don't want to.

Richard Flint: No. (laughs).

Lucio
Cristiani: Yeah.

Richard Flint: Well, the late 50s the Cristiani Brothers Circus grew quite rapidly.

[00:29:00]

Lucio Oh, yeah. We grew too fast I'd say, and in 1959 I believe it was the largest tent circus in the United States. We had 18 elephants, we had a menagerie, [inaudible 00:29:12], and
Cristiani: rhinoceros, giraffe, and so on. It was really a big show, especially when we played Chicago.

Richard Flint: Why did you expand so rapidly?

Lucio Well, that was a mistake, see. It was one of the mistakes that we should've ... But, you
Cristiani: see, my brother Paul, he was kind of progressive, but he didn't think, or I would say that
[00:29:30] he didn't think about the circus business as a fun business, and he would have no credit whatsoever with the circus collateral. You can't borrow money. You can't go to a bank and say, "I have a circus invested 200,000 dollars. I want to buy 5,000. I want to borrow
[00:30:00] 5,000." They wouldn't give you a nickel. Therefore, you have to work on your own strength, build a bankroll, and then gamble, because if you lose, you've got something to lean on, but that's what we didn't do, because we went ahead and we expanded without a bankroll to back it up in case of a mistake. That's where the deterioration came. When it was time that you needed money we couldn't find it. And here we have
[00:30:30] 300,000, 400,000 dollars worth of investment. You couldn't borrow a nickel in the bank unless you file [inaudible 00:30:43] and being a loaner.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio And those are pretty sharp. So, yeah.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: How did you get connected up with Tony [inaudible 00:30:53]?

Lucio Well, Tony [inaudible 00:30:55], he was the animal man. I was the [inaudible 00:30:58].
Cristiani: He loved animals. And we were friends before that, but I used to be with the [inaudible
[00:31:00] 00:31:06] Brother, and he was too busy, and he's a contractor. He's done contracting business in Canton, Ohio, and he always loved animals. So one year I told him why doesn't he bring some animals, and I said put them in the menagerie, and he started with the giraffe, and I put him in the front as a pit show and charge a quarter, and the
[00:31:30] first year he paid for the giraffe. He didn't want the money really. He loved to do that. And he was happy. So after he says, "I'm going to bring some animals. I'm going to Africa." He went to Nairobi and he met this [inaudible 00:31:47], the guy that furnished the animals for the picture Mogambo, Mogambo, Mogambo.

Richard Flint: Mogambo.

Lucio With Ava Gardner and Clark Gable.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Yeah.

[00:32:00]

Lucio And he bought a rhino that was in the movie. Yeah. He paid 6,000 dollars for it.
Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Oh, The Snows of Kilimanjaro?

Lucio Yeah.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Yeah, yeah.

Lucio But The Snows of Kilimanjaro, there was two movies.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Two movies. Oh, okay.

Lucio Mogambo and The Snows of Kilimanjaro.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio But then he bought one, I think he bought a hippo that plays in The Snows of
Cristiani: Kilimanjaro, and he bought the rhino that was in Mogambo. There's a rhino that
[00:32:30] attacked everybody. He didn't attack anybody. But apparently he attacked that person
and that's why they charged him 6,000 because he was a movie star.

Richard Flint: (laughs). A rhino.

Lucio Yeah. He worked for us. But, anyway, that's how I got connected with him. He bought
Cristiani: these animals and put them in the menagerie, see, because I couldn't afford to buy all
those animals at once, but he did, and that's how we grew together with Diana and we
furnished the animals, and it became a big show. But when it was wrong the show was, I
[00:33:00] don't know, [inaudible 00:33:05]. I think it was my fault, see., I didn't realize how big
was the show, see. I should have run it in a more business-like way instead of a family
way, see. But I didn't do that. I think that was part of the downfall for it.

Richard Flint: What years did you make money and what year did you begin to lose money?

[00:33:30]

Lucio Oh, we made money all that time. The only thing is that in building up a bankroll we
Cristiani: would put it back into the show, like my brother spent 14,000 dollars for those chairs,
opening chairs, and then he spent another 16,000 dollars put up front, which it was a
flop.

Richard Flint: The panel lining?

Lucio No. It just was too tough to put it up and take it down, and [inaudible 00:33:59] in the
Cristiani: meantime, this fellow [inaudible 00:34:02], he took some cages and built them and
[00:34:00] made the side show for no money at all, see. He had obviously more head than we did.
And then we had two nice [inaudible 00:34:17]. The guy came over from Memphis and
he spent 35,000 dollars for two [inaudible 00:34:25] that he was good. It was just
spending money because you had it. Yeah. But my brother was ambitious. He wanted
[00:34:30] good equipment and so on. But he didn't realize that the best seasons were made out of
[inaudible 00:34:40]. I can tell you more circuses that made more money on a [inaudible
00:34:46] and then when they had no equipment they went broke.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio: So that's it. We just when to save money and spend money. That's it.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: And then it was coming back from California that ...?

[00:35:00]

Lucio:

Cristiani:

Well, that was the downfall really that coming back from over there we started losing money and we had 108,000 dollars in the back of the cars, and when I got back to Houston I had about 1,600 dollars left. I should've closed right there in Phoenix, but old-timer advised me, he said, "Go through Texas. You're going to get well." So I should've listened to myself. But I didn't think I was the smartest man in the world and I took advice. I would've taught myself [inaudible 00:35:38]. I still had about 40,000, 50,000 dollars, and I could have [inaudible 00:35:45] there, and I guess he wanted to sponsor us going to Phoenix, Arizona, and they told me they could sell 40,000 dollars worth of tickets right there. I should've gone to try there but I didn't.

[00:36:00]

Richard Flint: Well, how was the decision made not to come out [inaudible 00:36:03]?

Lucio:

Cristiani:

Well, we were there and Ringling made us an offer to go with Stanley in South America [inaudible 00:36:12], and it looked good, see. It looked that we might get well, come out of there with a couple of hundred thousand dollars. It didn't turn out that way. We did all right over there. But, Ringling, they ran out of money anyway. They spent too much money, see. And that's it, see. We didn't make the money that we expected to make.

[00:36:30]

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio:

Cristiani:

So that's it, see. And my brother, he took out the [inaudible 00:36:40] under the name of Cristiani [inaudible 00:36:42].

Richard Flint: Yeah.

Lucio:

Cristiani:

[00:37:00]

And he did all right the first year. And then the second year I went out with him. And before that I had all those trucks that I bought on time, and we turned them in, and he went out with his trucks and so on, and they're still now the seats and the cars are still Tampa over there in a place, and that's what's left of the Cristiani Show.

Richard Flint: Any ideas of taking on another show?

Lucio:

Cristiani:

[00:37:30]

Well, I wouldn't take it out without the family, and the family is spread out so much. It would take a big effort, somebody that would bring the family together and say let's try it again. I don't if it will ever materialize. I'd like to. But I've got a different idea that I think if I go out I go out with a European [inaudible 00:37:47] show.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani:
[00:38:00] And I had the right idea and probably I'd get the money together, but you'd probably need about 50,000 dollars to start, and I'm going to make a model after this season to show it to some money people [inaudible 00:38:05] unless Ozzie wants to do it. Ozzie likes the idea and he's involved with this.

Richard Flint: Right.

Lucio
Cristiani:
Richard Flint: Yeah.
Do you got to feed the horses now?

Lucio
Cristiani:
Richard Flint: What time is it?
Quarter, 20 to 6:00.

Lucio
Cristiani:
[00:38:30] Well, at six o'clock I'll do it.

Richard Flint: Six o'clock. Can you tell me a bit about the riding act and how you learned and then in some of the tricks involved and just an introduction to riding, so to speak, and start with the ...?

Lucio
Cristiani: Well, [inaudible 00:38:38], and, first of all, you have to like it. You have to go out and like the idea of ... You see, let's go back a little bit about circus business. See, originally the circus was introduced as a circus as we know today by the English fellow, I can't think of his name right, Ashley, Ashley.

Richard Flint: Yeah.

[00:39:00]
Lucio
Cristiani: Yeah, and it was horses, and then they put some acting between while they prepared for the other horse act, but circus was some animals with horses, and the acrobat was just introduced in there as in between, a clown act later on, and so on, but the heart of the circus was horsemanship, bareback riding, riding horses, jumping horses, and Roman riding. See, he invented the circle. But before that you used to have a track, and all his horsemanship that he lived in London in an open hippodrome, he did this hippodrome trick riding and Roman riding, jumping the banners and so on, and it was all done in a hippodrome. But then I believe, I don't know whether he did or not, he discovered the centrifugal force, whether he did it scientifically or not, but he found out that going around the circle it was easier to put it indoor, and he started working on this ring, see.

[00:39:30]

[00:40:00]

[00:40:30] And he must have thought of some centrifugal force because there is two different forces between a size of a ring and another size, and 42 feet ring was the standard size internationally known among the circuses in Europe, and I found that as perfect pull on a 42-foot ring, in other words, the centrifugal force was just right to keep the balance.

[00:41:00] Now, if you go in a smaller ring there is more force and you have to change your way of riding, and if you make it too big, you lose that centrifugal force that keeps you together

[00:41:30] with the horse, see. So I must believe, I must think that Ashley thought of that, because the perfect ring is 42 feet. So what I'm driving at is this, that a rider, a bareback rider, he was the salt of the earth of the circus. Do you understand?

Richard Flint: Yes.

Lucio
Cristiani: So you felt as a bareback rider that you were it, you were the circus. Acrobats and all that were secondary. The star of the circus was the bareback rider. Then later on it changed. So you have to be something that's like that circus, like the bareback rider, and if you don't, the disappointments are enough to throw you out. So I believe that a bareback rider has to be obsessed to take all these jumps, disappointments, falls, probably a sprained ankle and so on, and go back for more. So, and that's how you know because to be a good bareback rider you have to be a good acrobat, you have to know ballet, your timing has to be perfect because you have to time yourself with the horse, and your reflexes have to be good because you're going to get hurt and badly unless you have those elements that are good, are perfect, perfect timing and so on, which is not developed. You can develop it if you have it. If you don't have it you might as well forget about it because you won't learn it. You've got to have perfect timing. You have to have these reflexes. And above all, you have to like it. That's what I'd say. Now, I don't know about going into it. You have to have all this stuff in order to become a bareback rider, and then after that you have to practice it, you practice, and so on.

[00:43:30]

Richard Flint: What about the horse? We were talking earlier before the taping about the horse that's left [crosstalk 00:43:33].

Lucio
Cristiani: Well, the horse, see, you plan a horse, that they have a nice canter, a reunion is good, and you find some of them that they're clumsy and their canter is slow and kind of sloppy, all that I wouldn't call that the best of horses, but you find that the majority of the horses you can probably teach them to reunion they call it, and they do a canter that is not too long, not too short, and that is the heart that [inaudible 00:44:07], and with that you combine that with your acrobatic skill, and you can do somersaults on the horses.

[00:44:00]

Richard Flint: What about the size of the horse?

Lucio
Cristiani: Well, that goes on depends who likes it and who doesn't. I like a medium size. But then if you so somersaults and so on you have to have a pretty heavy horse that he can stand the jolt of a somersault and so on, otherwise, you throw him out of balance, and if he's got the way he takes it and so on. Yeah.

[00:44:30]

Richard Flint: What about color and so on?

Lucio
Cristiani: Well, I like color. I think that it's more effective when you have a white horse, like palomino, I like palomino, but like an appaloosa, it's circus life. The white horse is connected with circus I think, bareback riding, especially a girl when she comes out on a white horse. So I'd rather have a white horse.

[00:45:00]

Richard Flint: Well, we've covered the horse and the essentials of an individual need. What's your first encounter with a horse? What do you first do?

Lucio You mean to know the horse?

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Yeah.

[00:45:30]

Lucio Well, we look at the eyes, and the eyes, they've got a lot to do, they slant high, then
Cristiani: they [inaudible 00:45:31], but, yeah, they've got kind of a round look about it I guess [inaudible 00:45:36] that you know they would be kind and nice. But then you discover sometimes that even so that they're ticklish behind the back, [inaudible 00:45:47], is that it take a long time and sometimes they don't make it at all. And then there is the mare. The mare you'll find most of them that when they're in season, heating season, [00:46:00] they start bucking. So regardless of what you know about a horse, it goes by luck. Sometimes you buy a horse and you've got that risk.

Richard Flint: Yeah. How much can you tell before you buy the horses to what ...?

Lucio Well, some people claim they can tell you about 60%, 70%. I don't think so, I think that
Cristiani: [inaudible 00:46:29], and the rest are just lucky.

[00:46:30]

Richard Flint: How old is the horse when you purchase it?

Lucio I like them around eight years. Yeah.

Cristiani:

Richard Flint: Eight years.

Lucio In fact, there's ten. I would buy a horse ten years old. A younger horse has got a longer
Cristiani: span of life, but they're harder to break, although I was lucky. I bought a horse two and a half and broke right away, but that I believe is once in a lifetime.

Richard Flint: How long will a horse be able to work?

[00:47:00]

Lucio Well, my horses, they lasted ... I had one 32 years old before it died, and it died from
Cristiani: colic, not from sickness. It had a colic cluster in [inaudible 00:47:09]. If I would've watched him better I probably would've told you it lived to be 37, 38. And I had another one, the one that did somersaults, it was 28, and he died from a broken heart because I put him in a farm because I thought he would live longer away from the other horses who would just lie down and die.

[00:47:30]

Richard Flint: Oh.

Lucio I believe it. I didn't believe it before, but I believe it now. The horse really died because it
Cristiani: missed the other horses. I had another horse that did the same thing. He broke his leg and I left him [inaudible 00:47:45] two years ago in Colorado and he died from a broken heart. He just missed the other horses, lie down and die. They don't believe in that, but I

do now.

[00:48:00]

Richard Flint: How do you train the horse in the ring?

Lucio
Cristiani: Well, you put them in the ring and you hold the [inaudible 00:48:05] they call it. It's the rope in the middle and you make him walk and then run a little bit faster.

Richard Flint: Does he ...?

Lucio
Cristiani: It's a different method. Some people beat them until they canter them and they stop and they say okay. But I believe in walking them and then trot them and then when they get used to the curve you make them canter, and then you keep cantering them, and you stop and give them a piece of [inaudible 00:48:32] or something, and then when they know that they have to canter they do canter.

[00:48:30]

Richard Flint: How do they know that they're supposed to stay close to the [inaudible 00:48:40]?

Lucio
Cristiani: Well, I think it's natural, see. First of all, some of them they come in, but the way I do it I try to keep them outside ...