

## CWM Audio 4-7

### Derrick Rosaire Interview, April 18, 1973

#### INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

#### Part 1

Richard Flint I'm speaking with Derrick Rosaire in Amherst, Massachusetts on April 18th, 1973. Let me place this here [inaudible 00:00:09] quite well. To begin with, can you tell me how you got into the circus business? I gather you were born into it?

[00:00:30]

Derrick Rosaire: Yep, my father kind of set this in England. And it started as a one-man circus. You see, we're not real circus people. We're what's known in England as jossers or really call them [inaudible 00:00:43]. My father was from a mining family in Lancashire, my mother was from the Midlands. People had [inaudible 00:01:00] in the hotel business. And they got married and my father started a one-man show. And every time he had a child, when they were old enough to go into the ring, the show grew, naturally. Until he had eight children, he had four girls, and four boys. And we did the whole show. We did eighteen acts, the eight of us. And we did get, one time, that we had the biggest circus touring in England under canvas.

[00:01:00]

[00:01:30]

Richard Flint It was called?

Derrick Rosaire: Rosaire's British and Continental Circus.

Richard Flint Who was your father's name?

[00:02:00]

Derrick Rosaire: Ross. Fred Ross. He was a boxer from Oldham, Lancashire. That was his, he was a good all-around athlete, he could do anything. But he was a champion boxer. And like I say, he went and got his own circus going, and he used to walk the wire and acrobat and jump. He was the third best jumper in England. High jumper, I think, or long jumper, I don't know which. The champion was Joe Darby, and he was the champion of England, and the second best was Joe Hastings, also from a theatrical family. And the third was my father, Fred Ross.

[00:02:30]

Richard Flint How did he get the name Rosaire?

Derrick Rosaire: Well, Ross is too English, you know, and you have to be a foreigner in England. You know, if you're English you can't be good in show business. So it became Rosaire's British and Continental Circus.

[00:03:00]

Richard Flint Did he legally change his name to Rosaire?

Derrick Rosaire: Yeah.

Richard Flint Did he ever tell you why he started the circus?

Derrick Rosaire: Well, he was just a crazy kid and he wanted to go into circus. He ran away from home when he was 14, and joined the circus.

Richard Flint Which circus did he join?

Derrick Rosaire: Bostock's and Wombwell's.

[00:03:30]

Richard Flint The menagerie. Did he ever tell you any stories about-

Derrick Rosaire: Oh, yeah. But I can't remember them.

Richard Flint Oh, come on. Maybe as we go on ...

Derrick Rosaire: I can tell you the most interesting story, I think. When he first went into show business, he went and busked, what we call busk in the streets. In those days, people used to do that, they used to go and do an act in the streets and people used to give them money, you know.

Richard Flint A mountebank.

[00:04:00]

Derrick Rosaire: Well, mountebank, yeah. They still do that in France, you know. But it was quite the thing, it was no shame or disgrace, they went out there and there was a street artist. And I've heard my father mention names that he's busked with, and I've worked with some of those people, and they're big stars, or they were when I worked with them in England. Like, let me think, I'm bad at names ... Forsythe, Seamon and Farrell, I think was one of the names. And Joe Phillips was a very well-known busker.

[00:04:30]

Richard Flint How did the term get it's-

Derrick Rosaire: Busk? I don't know.

Richard Flint What is it, B-U-S-K?

[00:05:00]

Derrick Rosaire: Yeah. They used to call, I don't know. It's just busking and they used to go around nobbing, they call it. That was going around with a hat. My father was ashamed of it, he used to say, "I got all this lot." And he did have a big circus and he was rich when he died, my dad. And he used to be very proud, he'd say, "I started in the street," he said, "made this lot, I left home and I had no money." He said, "I left home several times and they took me back, but when I was old enough that they couldn't take me back," he said he had the wanderlust in him.

[00:05:30]

Richard Flint           About when did he, do you know when he was born, or when he started out?

Derrick Rosaire:       Not really, I don't know. He'd be in his 70s when he died.

Richard Flint           When did he die?

Derrick Rosaire:       15 years ago. But he still, where we were living in Billericay, in England, that's  
[00:06:00] Essex, by London, the people still talk about him as if he's there. They asked him to run for mayor and all that kind of stuff, you know, he was very popular. Very good man, really clean, never had to use dirty words, and he was very honest, straightforward. A lot of people didn't like him too much because he'd just tell them, boom, what he thought, you know, if you asked him. I'm a little bit like that. I won't volunteer, but if someone asks me a question, I'll answer it the way I think. And a lot of people get annoyed. I say, "Well, I'm sorry, you shouldn't ask me, I'll tell the truth."  
[00:06:30]

I'll tell you what my father did one time, this was when I was about seven or eight years old. He, at this time we had a very small show, and he used to go around and book the town in a pony and trap, you know. And then he'd come back and take it to the next town and do half the acts himself, heck of a worker he was. Well, we, he got this place, he couldn't find a site, and the man said, "Well, you can go in my field, but you have to go through the orchard." My father  
[00:07:00] thought the man was afraid of his fruit, you know. So he said, "Well, you don't need to worry about the orchard, no one will touch anything, because I'll give you my personal guarantee." He said, "Well, I don't mind that much, but I wouldn't want the trees to be damaged." What he meant the vehicles going in, you know. And my father said, "I'll give you my personal guarantee that there will no tress damaged, no fruit touched."  
[00:07:30]

And he put his trailer, which was called a wagon in those days, a horse-drawn wagon, by the gate in the orchard, and he could see right through. And the two front door wagons that pull together and the thing going ... They still do the same now, they're no more modern now than it was when I was a kid. If fact, in  
[00:08:00] America, I don't think they are as modern as they are, well I'm sure they're not, as most countries. For aiding your circus, they don't have this kind of fairground outside. In Europe, they don't believe in that, it doesn't mix, they won't have it.  
[00:08:30]

Anyway, my father saw this juggler that was on the show, Marcello, a very famous juggler at that time. He came out from the foot board, where we used to stand to drive the horses or sit, and he took an apple off the tree. And my father saw him, he said, "Marcello, put that back, or I'm going to throw you right out of this gate and you'll never work for me again." And Marcello knew my father, he would have done it. So he said, "Right," and he went and got a nail, a piece of cotton, stuck it in the apple and tied it back on the tree.  
[00:09:00]

Richard Flint           To get safely through the orchard.

- Derrick Rosaire: [00:09:30] Yeah. Funny part of that story, at the ending of that story was the man came up and he was so pleased that none of his trees was damaged, and everything my father said, no horses running loose, they was all in their horse tent and everything was ... The man was so happy, he came back and he said, "I've been watching you people all days, and I think you're a wonderful family, you get along so well together." He said, "Do you like fruit?" We said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, you can have that tree over there. You can take everything and that's one of the best eating apples in the orchard," he said, "You can have all those, just don't damage the tree. There's a ladder over there, go and get the ladder," he said. And we're all up the tree, and my, and this is behind the, see, where my father couldn't see. And we didn't think, we were so excited, you know, because when you see this fruit and you can't touch it, you wanted it. And we're all up there having the apples, and my father came around and he beat every one of us.
- [00:10:00]
- Richard Flint He didn't know.
- [00:10:30]
- Derrick Rosaire: He whooped us. We was running all directions. And we couldn't get a word in edgewise, he wouldn't let you. And one brother, the oldest one, he stayed, he was up the ladder up the tree. My father said, "Come down." And my brother, knowing my dad would go up the ladder, so he pushed the ladder over. He said, "You've got to wait til I explain." Now this is the eldest one, he wouldn't have got slapped, he would have got punched, you know, because they used to hit each other harder in the old days. And my father's down there telling him what he's going to do for him, and this man walked up and he said, "Mr. Rosaire, you ought to be ashamed of yourself," he says, "those kids have been so good, they was in here this morning and they worked all day." He said, "And I gave them that tree full of apples, and now you're gonna beat it [inaudible 00:11:31], so that's awful." Well, my father felt so bad, you know, he called us all together and we all got some money then.
- [00:11:00]
- [00:11:30]
- Richard Flint You come out double there.
- Derrick Rosaire: We all get a little money. He apologized. He's like that, he would apologize if he was wrong.
- Richard Flint What were your brothers' and sisters' names? Where are they now, and so on? Can you run through them?
- Derrick Rosaire: [00:12:00] Oh, yeah. The oldest one we lost during the war. He was Aubrey. He's known as Jimmy Green, the clown. He's got photographs in America over here and two or three, wherever they hang, paintings, I don't know. I know they're here because-
- Richard Flint Dame Laura Knight did it.
- Derrick Rosaire: ... Dame Laura Knight and Butch Reynolds.

Richard Flint Right, yeah.

Derrick Rosaire: They painted him. And I know they're over here, but I haven't really seen them. In fact, I've only seen one thing of Rosaire's since I've been over here. Because I don't go to these places.

[00:12:30]  
Richard Flint I'm just, we keep pretty busy, you know.

Derrick Rosaire: But I was very please one night, because, I don't know if you know Georgie Scott, the mule act. He's an Englishman and he's quiet a joker, you know, we have a lot of fun together. And we walked in this, some kind of a shrine party after the show, you know, and they have various bills sticking up around the place, and Georgie said, "I don't see any of your brochures up here or anything like that." And I said, "Come and try this other door." And the main entrance, right in front, there was Rosaire's Circus. I think it was Georgie Scott, or some English guy anyway.

[00:13:00]

[00:13:30] We always get at each other, the English. We've got a different sense of humor, and you know, we'll say things and you'd wonder why we was laughing, or you'd think we was insulting each other. And you'd get a great kick out of it.

Richard Flint So Aubrey was the oldest?

Derrick Rosaire: Aubrey, yes, he was the eldest, the Dennis. He used to do a, his main act was the wire act-

Richard Flint Wire, yeah.

Derrick Rosaire: ... yeah, he worked as Los Valent- in the old days he worked as Dol Valento, he always had a Spanish thing about him. You know he always wanted to be Spanish, he looked Spanish too. Then when he got married he changed the name to Los Valente. And I went and saw him work in Harringay Three Ring Circus. There aren't that many three ring circuses in England, they never used to go too good. But I saw him, it was him in one ring, Caliente was another Spanish-type of an English man on the wire, and then Con Colleano. And they all three were, in the write up said that Los Valente's was the, of course Con Colleano was old by that time, but they gave a very nice write up about Los Valente. I know, that's the first time I ever said anything nice to my brother, I went up and I said, "Well, boy you did all right there. Because you were the best."

[00:14:00]

[00:14:30]

Richard Flint Is he still working now?

[00:15:00]  
Derrick Rosaire: No, he retired about a year ago. Two years ago. He lives in Spain now, in Ayora. He goes back to England, and back and forth, you know. His son, Callus, my nephew, he's touring Europe, I think he's in Italy right now, he has crocodiles.

And you know, crocodiles are rare or nothing, because you see a lot of them and alligators, actually. But over there, top of the bill.

[00:15:30]

Richard Flint

Was he with Knie, in say, in '69 perhaps? Because I saw a croc act then.

Derrick Rosaire:

I really don't know. I was with Knie. I went, you know the Knie family lives, Eliane, that's the sister, used to be, I don't know how it is now ... Rolf and Fredy Knie.

[00:16:00]

Now Fredy Knie is the horse trainer, and I tell you, they've got wonderful horse acts. You know, they say everybody says Schumann, but I don't think Schumann have got anything on Knie's when it comes to trained horses. Beautiful. And Rolf came to Paris and saw my similar act to what I'm doing now, and he booked my horse act.

[00:16:30]

Richard Flint

That's a compliment.

Derrick Rosaire:

And he was laughing all the time, "Wait, while Fredy sees this." Of course, when we got there, as I say Fredy had groups of horses, it was about six horse acts in the show then. And I used to go in there with one horse and a little whip about 12 inches long, and cracking it myself in the nose, thought the horse apparently did what it liked. It was something different, it's a different little thing. You see, they've got one style over there, two along whipped and two guys behind, chasing them up, you know, and so forth. But mine is relaxed, and it went over.

[00:17:00]

And the Zurich newspapers wrote, "Fredy Knie must be a gentleman to engage a horse act that's superior to his own." Right in the n- and I took that to him and I said, "How about that, Fredy, look." We wasn't too friendly until that. I mean, we was always cool. But after that he said, "I like you, you bloody Englishman" he said. We got on great after that.

[00:17:30]

Richard Flint

How are their boys, there's Fredy Jr. and-

Derrick Rosaire:

They're, I haven't seem them, but I believe all the kids are very good, they've got some wonderful acts. Then, going back to my family there was ... yeah what is it? ... Then there was Iver, he was the elephant trainer. He's fairly well-known, Iver was, there in Europe and all over the place for elephant training.

[00:18:00]

Richard Flint

Where is he?

Derrick Rosaire:

I don't know, I haven't heard from him in a couple of years. I think he's in England. But a lot of people come up to me and tell me that he's, they say he's the best elephant trainer over there. He's got a different style, again, he doesn't chase them, they do, they sort of do it, and he stands in the middle there.

[00:18:30]

[00:19:00]

And then, then who else? There was Zena. She was a contortionist. She used to do contortionist work on the rings, trapeze and all that kind of stuff. She was a very good jumper, she used to go out and jump over a horse, you know a horse like 14 hands 2 off the ground, just boop over like a spring.

Richard Flint                   And where is she?

Derrick Rosaire:               Oh, she's too old for the business now, she lives in Billericay, she's never left the  
[00:19:30]                       farm since father died.

Richard Flint                   Did she marry a circus person?

Derrick Rosaire:               No. She married a guy from Norfolk, [inaudible 00:19:43]. He had a garage, and  
[00:20:00]                       he very talented man, he can do anything, cabinet-maker, and everybody says  
                                      he's a genius. He builds boats now, he makes televisions better than you can buy  
                                      them from the stores. He builds the whole cabinet and the whole works, it's  
                                      beautiful. He is a genius. He used to travel last on the show, he had an old  
                                      Daimler business, and he had the back prettied up like a workshop. And I've seen  
[00:20:30]                       him stop on the side of the road and make a main bearing, put in one of the  
                                      trucks. He had a lathe in there, he'd make it right on the roadside and never miss  
                                      the show.

Richard Flint                   Handy man to have.

Derrick Rosaire:               Oh, fabulous. Then there was Cicely was the next. She used to do trapeze, was  
                                      her specialty, she didn't do much else, when I come to think of it. She did only do  
                                      the trapeze, didn't she, Betty. [inaudible 00:20:49] and my other sister Vivienne,  
[00:21:00]                       they used to the Pauline Sisters. And then Ida was the last, no I was the next,  
                                      that's right, mustn't forget myself. I was the Boy Wonder. Yeah, they used to bill  
                                      me as young Derrick, the Boy Wonder, 100-pound challenge to all comers.

Richard Flint                   You were a wrestler?

Derrick Rosaire:               No, this is what used to get me in trouble. But as an all-around circus performer,  
[00:21:30]                       you know. Well, the kids used to come up and say, "I'll fight you." I never used to  
                                      figure it out, I was a bit stupid, I never used to figure out why they wanted to  
                                      fight me. Until I had a few fights, and then I found out, it was the billing.

[00:22:00]                       Then my next, the next one was Ida. She did trapeze work, and trick riding. She  
                                      was very fast, very good rider, not like a lady rider. Vivienne was the lady rider of  
                                      the family, she was tiny ... no, ballerina, beautiful. She used to have a little horse,  
                                      not very big, and she had ringlets like you see in there, you know. Little tiny  
                                      thing, and just pretty. And boys, they used to go crazy about her.

Richard Flint                   Was your mother from the circus?

[00:22:30]

Derrick Rosaire:               No, they had their family in hotel in Newcastle, in the Midlands. But she was a  
                                      musician too, she played the harp and piano and violin, what's the other one,  
                                      cello. My father played any wind instrument, anything that needed work. And he  
                                      taught her, you know, he taught the whole family to play. I can play any wind  
[00:23:00]                       instrument, or I could, I quit a long time ago, I thought too much like, well, I  
                                      wasn't that good, but for circus boomers we was okay.

[00:23:30] But you know, the show would open up, and we used to have about a five-piece band. Then there would be the eight of us, standing behind the band carriage. And they sat out and for the first half hour before the show. And I tell you, when the top was wet, we've had reports that they heard our band five and six miles away. Because you know in these small towns, people used to come in and they was amazed when they walked in and saw five guys up there, you know, that this band was so ... of course then the show would start and every time an act went in, the band would be weaker.

[00:24:00]  
Richard Flint Can you recall what the show was like? It must have been much the same year to year. Or did you try-

Derrick Rosaire: Well what we used to do, we used to, my father would engage about four acts, like two families preferable. It was a job to get acts that we didn't do ourselves.  
[00:24:30] In fact, there was times, if we got a family doing, what we called the big riding act, the whole family altogether. And I was the comedy one in that, you know. And one time we had family that did three acts, and we took our riding act to put theirs in. They get hurt if you cut them out, some people. There's often need for that, we'd take one of our acts out because of the other families [inaudible  
[00:25:00] 00:24:56]. But we'd change, we used to change because we were tired of doing the same thing.

[00:25:30] But I can tell you our program. We'd always open up with a, what we call a monkey derby, we had just ordinary rhesus monkeys sitting on ponies. They didn't do anything, they just used hang these, put them on the ponies and four guys in there with four little gates, and these ponies would run around and jump over them with monkey on their back. It was funny. They go around twice and out.

Then my sister used to do the vaultage act then, and then after that I used to come in and do a comedy, comedy bit. She went out, she'd leave the horse and I'd do a little comedy bit.

[00:26:00]  
Richard Flint Take time, don't worry though.

Derrick Rosaire: After the comedy, then it used to the liberty pony acts. I can't remember, I'm bad at these things. Then they use to have horizontal bar act, triple bars, but they used to build them on the side of the ring, and they'd put the trampoline on the other side, and they'd put the lion cage at the back, by the back entrance. It was so fast moving, you know, the show through that, because they didn't have to take any props out. And you know, we never use to carry a seat board, nothing out of that show until the show had finished. Nobody was allowed to do anything like that.  
[00:26:30]

Richard Flint Quite different than what you see here.



Derrick Rosaire: Makes it. But the show used to go on for an hour and forty-five, and hour and fifty minutes, that was all. And I tell you we never had less than eighteen acts, and boy, that used to move.

[00:27:00]

Richard Flint I was just going to ask, did you always have the same act that you'd close with?

Derrick Rosaire: We used to close mostly with the elephant act. Because that's another thing in England, you always get them ready to go out, when you know the last act is coming because it's not like here. They don't all have cars, they have to get on the business, or they used to. Horse and carts outside the show and all that.

[00:27:30]

Bicycles by the hundreds. And a soon as the elephants came on they sort of knew it was, in fact they used to say the last and concluding item, last but not least, the biggest, you know, the elephants.

Richard Flint Where, can I ask you when you were born, so I can begin to get an idea what the time sequence is with [inaudible 00:27:57]?

Derrick Rosaire: When I was born?

Richard Flint Yeah.

Derrick Rosaire: I can't remember that, I was very young at the time.

[00:28:00]

Richard Flint You know, I, when you were young, was the show totally horse-drawn, or were there motor vehicles in?

Derrick Rosaire: Oh, not just when I was young, not til I should say about '37 we still had on the show, didn't we? '37, '38. Horse-drawn vehicles, we had some motorized but we had horses. Because I know when I was, well my father wouldn't, he couldn't drive a car. He had three Rolls-Royce cars on the show at one time and he couldn't drive. We used to kid him about that. He never did drive. He got in a few times and tried, and he was too impatient. He nearly knocked the big top down one time, he didn't know how to stop it. Started it up and it was in gear, he knocked all the seats down. He got mad because we were all laughing.

[00:29:00]

Richard Flint What was the routine of moving from one town to the other, and so on?

Derrick Rosaire: Miserable. We used to have a 5:00 start in the morning. By the time we finished pulling down the big top, it would be 11:00, 11:30 and we always had a supper, a big supper before we went to bed. And then we'd be up at 5:30. 7:00 was a late morning, because we had to travel like, 20-30 miles, and when you drive horses 20-30 miles, [inaudible 00:29:35]. Whenever anybody couldn't get anyone to walk with the elephants, because they used to walk too. But boy, I know one of the elephants killed a guy one day, and the next morning there was nobody to

[00:30:00]

take the elephants. I was 15, I took them on the road. One of them chased me too, same one. And I dreamt about that for about 20 years.

Richard Flint I imagine you would.

Derrick Rosaire: At the least they had an elephant's face in them. Til I began talking about it, we used to talk about, you know, I used to feel a little ashamed. It's just stupid. But I began talking about it, and it left me.

Richard Flint So you'd have about a 5:00 start, would you serve tea before you leave?

Derrick Rosaire: Are you kidding? You couldn't get them going without tea. We used to have a cup of tea, and maybe a piece of toast. If you was late, you didn't, you just was lucky to get the tea, because everybody used to pick on everybody because one hanger on, one slow one, they all [inaudible 00:30:49] back.

[00:31:00] But when got in, we'd lay out stakes, and poles and set it out, then we'd start. But it would usually be around 10:00 by the time we had breakfast. And we was ready for it, believe me. Then we used to have a 4:00 show, start at 4:30, open again at 7:30, the doors open at 7:30, starting at 8:00. It would be a quarter to 10:00, the show would be over, and ... But most nights at 10:00, the whole thing

[00:31:30] was pulled down and back on the trucks in an hour. It used to take approximately 3 hours to put it up, an hour to take it down.

Richard Flint How big a top was this?

Derrick Rosaire: We had a, well, we had various sizes, it grew as we went on. But the last one I remember was a hundred and ... it was steel poles, you know, this is about a 120-foot, no, that was the one before, I don't know how big the last one was. Big, very big. But the one before that was a two-poler, the old-fashioned one, it was 120-foot round tarp, two 42-foot centers in it. No, that was a three-poler.

[00:32:00]

Richard Flint That's unusual.

Derrick Rosaire: Yeah, I didn't like that.

Richard Flint Would you have-

Derrick Rosaire: We used to ring around the middle pole, but it was good, like I say we put the cage on the outside, and ...

[00:32:30]

Richard Flint What, how many people would you have with the show besides the family?

Derrick Rosaire: Just two families of artists. Plus, we crept up to about eight in the band, you know, the last few years, we'd have no less than eight. And about ten guys working the tent. But everybody, I don't know, they work better in those days.

[00:33:00] You couldn't do the same thing now. In fact, when I last had anything to do with

it, we had 24 guys on the top, I mean it wasn't as big as ours, and took a day and a half to build it up, you know. We just weren't, lost interest. You gotta like what you're doing.

Richard Flint           Who laid out the lot, was that your dad, or one of the working men?

Derrick Rosaire:       No, my brother used to do that, he's being first and-

Richard Flint           Which one?

Derrick Rosaire:       Iver. He was tent master.

[00:33:30]

Richard Flint           How many vehicles did you have, including wagons?

Derrick Rosaire:       Last time I remember, about 22 vehicles. Trevor Bale, do you know Trevor Bale?

Richard Flint           Yeah.

Derrick Rosaire:       He was on our show for a long time. He used to be ring master, tent master, a few acts.

Richard Flint           When was the last time you were in a show with him?

[00:34:00]

Derrick Rosaire:       That would be ... they gave up after [inaudible 00:34:09] in that year, didn't they, Betty? See, when my father died, we, I left. I was one of the, one of the workers on the show. I'll say it myself, I used to be the one to get up in the morning, [00:34:30] "Let's go." You know. When we quit [inaudible 00:34:34], they went resident. They went in for a resident season. And they did that about three seasons, then they quit all together.

Richard Flint           In what town?

Derrick Rosaire:       That was in Bridlington, Yorkshire.

Richard Flint           Did the Rosaire show have a fairly regular route that it traveled every year, or did you go all over?

[00:35:00]

Derrick Rosaire:       When we was small, we would entirely go around to the same towns every year. They knew all the kids by name, this was success.

Richard Flint           What counties was that?

Derrick Rosaire:       Oh, that was Yorkshire, mostly. In the same towns, over and over again. They all knew us. And it was backwards, they knew what we was going to do. They still came. And I'll tell you what he did, when we got bigger, we used to do all over

[00:35:30] the place. We'd go down to Cornwall one year, then we'd go stop on the Midlands, change it over, go over to the Isle of Wight, the Isle of Man.

Richard Flint Were they mostly one day stands, or did you do any week?

Derrick Rosaire: [00:36:00] No, we started to do three days, week stands, when we found out that we did better. Because it was a good show, and one day, they don't realize, they think it's was one of these fly-by-nights. And they got a few shows around in England at that time in the last few years, and it wasn't too hard, you know.

Richard Flint What were some of the other shows that were in England, and your opinion of what you can remember about them?

[00:36:30]

Derrick Rosaire: Oh, the good shows were Sanger's, Kayes Brothers, that's my wife's family, Chipperfield's came up in the last decade, I suppose you'd say. They always had a small kind of show like we did, and all of a sudden they, after the war, they really came up. They had a fine show, a big show. They had a 20-pole tent, about 16 elephants, and a bunch of the lions and tigers. That was a thing to move around, they took the whole thing over to Africa, lion and everything. They just got back. I haven't seen the for years.

[00:37:00]

Richard Flint They were touring [inaudible 00:37:10] Totten's show--

Derrick Rosaire: Pardon?

Richard Flint Weren't hey touring one of the Tonys Italian circuitry?

Derrick Rosaire: [00:37:30] Yeah, that was Jimmy Chipperfield's daughter. I never saw that. Yeah, my wife's family they was all similar to us, they had about eight kids, didn't your mother and father have [inaudible 00:37:31]? They was mostly animal trainers, you know, wild stuff. Their brother was the well-known lion trainer, Tommy Kayes.

Richard Flint Oh yeah.

Derrick Rosaire: He was her brother. He had the fastest lion act I've ever seen in my life. Great act. And he wouldn't come to America. They wanted him for that Hellzapoppin show, would've been just the thing, you know, because crazy act. He wouldn't go. Plus he did good over there.

[00:38:00]

Richard Flint Bertram Mills was the-

Derrick Rosaire: It was the show, yeah. Oh, since I can remember it, they did it beautiful though.

Betty: My sister was their lion tamer-

Derrick Rosaire: Yeah, Scilla Kayes, she was their lion tamer at Mills for about three years.

Betty: Seven years.

Derrick Rosaire: Seven years?

Richard Flint Did you ever know a fellow named Ray Scott?

Derrick Rosaire: Yeah. He had a little circus. He's a josser, [inaudible 00:38:31].

[00:38:30]  
Richard Flint Yeah, yeah. He started by working press for Bertram Mills, he went in with, who was the magician or lion tamer, Carmo.

Betty: Carmo.

Derrick Rosaire: What was his name?

Betty: Carmo.

Richard Flint Carmo.

Derrick Rosaire: The Great Carmo.

Richard Flint Yeah.

Derrick Rosaire: He was good.

Betty: Bertram Mills got his circus wrong.

Richard Flint Yeah, that's right.

Betty: He was [crosstalk 00:38:55].

[00:39:00]  
Richard Flint Yeah, they went, it was without a doubt rain all season. That first year they were together.

Derrick Rosaire: Didn't he start that one in Blackpool, the three ring circus, Betty?

Betty: No, that was Sylvester.

Derrick Rosaire: Oh, that was Sylvester.

Richard Flint Any other name that you think of who, how they, seems like your wheels are turning. You're remembering.

Derrick Rosaire: Well, we've been away for such a long time. When I went back to England I fell out of place. See, we toured Europe several years before we came over here.  
[00:39:30]

Richard Flint            When did you come to this country?

Derrick Rosaire:        '59?

Betty:                    '61.

Derrick Rosaire:        '61?

Betty:                    February '61.

Derrick Rosaire:        What a memory.

Richard Flint            How did you happen to come over here?

[00:40:00]

Derrick Rosaire:        We was in Paris and Cirque Medrano. And Tom [inaudible 00:40:03] manager came over, what was his name?

Betty:                    Butson.

Derrick Rosaire:        Glen Butson, and he was looking for acts for the Moscow State circus in England, in Wembley. And they wanted a horse act, and I just fitted the job. And we went back to England, and while I was there, George Hammond came to see the show.  
[00:40:30]                And he got an interpreter to come and talk to me. Well, it was funny because I'd been working in France for two years, I could remember my act in English. I could remember the English, but I couldn't remember the routine. Well, it was different.

[00:41:00]                And so I said, see, when I work in Europe, I'd say it first in English for the horse, then I'd say it in whatever language it was for the people. For a time, til the horse, they soon get to know. But I did it the opposite in England, I would say it in French first, and then in English. And a lot of people said, "You're phony, going out there, trying to be a Frenchman." I wasn't, you know. Of course, George Hammond hear me speaking French, and he thought it was Russian, and he thought I spoke bad English. You know, you don't speak English like they do over here, especially in England, you say things that they, you wouldn't know what we was talking about. And he got an interpreter to talk to me anyway. And I said to him, "Why don't you speak English? I speak English." He says, "How come you speak such good English?" I said, "It's because I'm an Englishman." He said, "Oh dear."

[00:42:00]                He booked us for the season on the show. And we had a contract to go to Italy before this. Anyway we talked, that was circus Tony, and we made an agreement with him and it said in our contract that we stayed with Tony until we had to leave for America. No date. And they didn't let us leave til the last day. They kept saying, "No, you got time." And the last day they took us up to the boat and everything. We was very upset when we left, because they had a lot of young  
[00:42:30]

kids and they got along with our kids. You were right, still right sometimes, George.

Richard Flint            When you came to this country, did you have any intention of staying?

Derrick Rosaire:        No. I didn't like a bit.

Richard Flint            How did you happen to stay?

Derrick Rosaire:        Pooh. First thing they did, they put me in a car with the wheel on the wrong side, [00:43:00] and I had to drive on the wrong side of the road. I said, "How far is it? It's all..." "Four or five hours." Nine hours later I caught him up on the road, he says, "Four or five hours." It was a thousand ...

Betty:                    Muskegon.

Derrick Rosaire:        Muskegon. And when we got there, we'd just been, we'd done Circus Knie. From [00:43:30] Circus Knie, Cirque Merdano-

Richard Flint            All high-class shows.

Derrick Rosaire:        ... back to England for the Moscow State Circus. Beautiful, they had twelve [00:44:00] horses, buggies, 24 girls to introduce my act into the ring, you know. Then I came and I joined George Hammond. And I looked in the building and all I could see was sandbags, beer cans, the prop boys all with a beer can in their hand, and I thought, "Oh dear." And there was a pretty rough lot on that show, I tell you. After you've met this kind of people, now it wouldn't mean that much to us, but I thought well ... I don't want to mention names, I saw the lion trainer, I thought, [00:44:30] "My golly." And every time I looked at, it looked like a lot of bums. And I liked George Abbott, and I think if it hadn't of been for him we'd have never have stayed. I'm sure it wouldn't. Because he was very nice to us, a lot of people had different ideas about him, but I found that we stuck to his word and whatever he said you could rely on. To us he was a gentleman.

Richard Flint            Again, what made you stay?

[00:45:00]

Derrick Rosaire:        George Hammond. I told him, I won't be out, you'll be lucky if I'm here in three [00:45:30] weeks. He said, "Why?" I said, "It would take me too long to explain." But he was so good. He walked in the second day, he walked in and he picked up the microphone and he said, "There will be no candy butchers," or whatever they call them, "no vendors on the floor during this next act." And he introduced me, every time he was there. And Charlie Brazil, was a nice man too, good man, I liked him. Still like him. And they was very good to us, but that long trip, it was all unnecessary, you know what I mean. We'd had it so nice and easy, and then these trips.

Richard Flint            How long were you with Hammond?

[00:46:00]

Derrick Rosaire: Oh, we stayed with him that season, and then we stayed the next season. And we very nearly stayed the third season, but I told him then, I said, "Well, we're going back to England." He talked me out of it, he said, "You don't want to go back to England. People like you over here, they like your family. You should go into a business over here, other than show business," he said, "do the show, business but have a business," he said, "because you get along with people, you know. You'll do well with whatever you start over here. You think about it." And we talked it over, and here we are. We got a business too. We do all right.

[00:46:30]

Richard Flint Did you go to [inaudible 00:46:41] right then, or did you start your farm?

Derrick Rosaire: No, we couldn't make up our mind. We kept looking around, where we was going. [inaudible 00:46:51]. We went to [inaudible 00:46:52] with the circus, that's how we came to stay there. We liked it. And we get along with everybody there, that's the main thing. Oh, they're just great with us, we can walk into a store, we can buy anything, we don't even need money. This is what makes you feel good, isn't it?

[00:47:00]

Richard Flint Yeah, it is. It is. But again, why didn't you go back to England? That was your home and so on.

Derrick Rosaire: Well, I went back one time to visit, and I'm not in the [inaudible 00:47:28], it changed, see. It's what I call faith.

[00:47:30]

Richard Flint Hm?

Derrick Rosaire: That's what I call faith. Yeah. Why don't you talk to my wife, she's got a bit of [inaudible 00:47:44]. You know, like I said at the beginning, the reason my father called the circus Rosaire's Circus, it was a fact. If it was English, you couldn't be any good.

[00:48:00]

Richard Flint It's much like performing in this country.

Derrick Rosaire: Well, I tell you know, this is what I look at. This is what amuses me. And I've had circus proprietors say, "We've got no English talent over here." You know, people used to say, "Why do you bring all these foreign acts over, when there are so many English acts out of work?"

Richard Flint You mean American.

Derrick Rosaire: No, in England. You know, acts that was out of work. They'd go and say, "It's a good show, but why have you got so many foreign acts? Why couldn't you put some English acts in there?" And I've heard them say to the face of good performers, "Well, the English acts aren't good enough, that's why." You know, they never said it to me, because I'd have gone to jail, but ... even if it was true. Anyway, since I've been over here ... come in, Johnny ... since I've been over

[00:48:30]



[00:49:00] here, it makes me feel good, because every English act I've met it, not just made it, but made it. Victor Julian, you know. There's the best dog act, there's no two ways about it. You've got, I don't want to mention everybody's name, but you can't tell me one English act that's come over here and hasn't made it. This makes me feel good.

[00:49:30] In fact, I was going to, I will do it one day, I'm going to send a nice letter back to my sister, and I'm going to say, "I would like this letter to be published." And I'm going to finish up by, I'm really going to blow my own trumpet a bit, I'm going to say, I'll name all the different names, right? As it is, this act did so and so, and that, that, that. And I'm going to finish by saying, "I'm."