

CWM Audio 70-1

Cindy Harriet Wells and Roy Wells Interview July 21, 2017

Interview conducted by Nancy Davies

- Nancy Davies : Oral history interview Ringling Brothers with Roy Wells and Cindy Harriet Wells, interviewed by Nancy Davies on Friday, July 21st, 2017. I'm talking with Roy Wells and his wife, Cindy Harriet Wells. These are two people that as we're here at this Ringling reunion, I'm seeing a ton of people coming up to them, "Cindy! Roy!" They seem to know so much, so many people, and they have a great history. Cindy, I just want to start with you. If you could give us a sense of when you've been with Ringling, what units you were on, and such.
- [00:00:30]
- Cindy Wells: As a child in 1970 and '71, my parents were first with the Red Unit. I did not perform in the show, but we were kids there so of course we knew everything that was going on. We were on the Red Show first and then we went to the Blue Show or Blue Unit, and then we left there and we went with other circuses. Then in 1977, my father went back as the performance director, and I decided to, when school was out, to go and join him because my mother had gone on a small tenant circus and she was living in a little RV type unit. She had animals to take care of and the circus moved every day and my dad was on Ringling Brothers with half a railroad car. Things looked pretty good, so I said, "Sorry, mom. I'm going with dad."
- [00:01:00]
- [00:01:30]
- [00:02:00] I went there, I was 17 years old, and unfortunately somewhere along the way, one of the showgirls was in a car accident, so they needed to fill in the position, so I had to audition. My father was sliding down in the chair while I was dancing and auditioning, but I had an in because I could do web. I did have dance training when I was a kid, so it wasn't like I had two left feet. I was hired, and Ms. Anne [inaudible 00:02:04] was the aerial director, and so I had an in because I could do web. The web number over there was a serious web number. It wasn't just something you go up like we did on any little circus. You had to count to every beat of the song and the web sitters were trained and it was a very serious web number.
- [00:02:30] I was there for 1977 with my dad, and then in 1978 my entire family went to Circus World in Haines City, Florida, which was also ... At that time, the Felds and Mattel were partners in that, and we worked there and I was a dancer there and helped out with my parents with all their animal acts. My father was the entertainment director there, so he was in charge of all the live shows there. He was my boss and my mother had ... They had their performing animals. All of my sisters ended up ... We worked there also, we were dancers.
- [00:03:00] We had the times of our lives there. That's when I learned about overtime pay and time and a half, holiday pay. There was no such thing on a circus. In Circus World,

we were all hired by the hour. When they added four shows on the busy time in the summer, or well, actually it was in the wintertime, I said, "Yes, we're doing four shows, that means I'm going to get more money." Everybody else was looking at me like I'm crazy.

[00:03:30] We were there for one year and then ... Let's see, that was '78. Then when Roy and I, after we'd been together, married and everything, then we went back there in '90 and '91. I'm sorry, '99 and 2000. What am I saying? '99 and 2000 for the Living

[00:04:00] Carousel. I presented horses and then together we presented the elephants. I think that's all of the Ringling time for me, but it just seems like as a kid and through all the years, so you know a lot of the ... We would say the older people from Ringling and then the younger people of today that worked there. It was great to know all of those people.

[00:04:30] We live in Sarasota, Florida, so home of a lot of the old retired Ringling performers back in the '50s and they ... We see them in our local club that we have there, our circus club, so you know all of those people from The Greatest Show on Earth movie. A lot of those people were in that movie, and they're all friends of ours. Ringling Brothers is just ... It's there through your life. It's great.

Nancy Davies : And it's truly been a family affair for you.

Cindy Wells: Absolutely, yes. Everyone in my family at some point was with Ringling Brothers or some show affiliated with the Feld family or something, so yes. We know them well.
[00:05:00]

Nancy Davies : Well, Roy, how did you come to Ringling Brothers?

Roy Wells: Well, I was working with elephants over the years and working with other animals. My first experience I was working elephants for a man out of Chicago and had the elephants booked for the Disney Fantasyland Circus in 1988. Did just a couple months in the winter there at Disneyland. That was my first experience with Ringling and it was fantastic. It was wonderful. Then my second tour with Ringling was when they did the Gold Unit in Japan in '89.
[00:05:30]

Cindy Wells: Yes.

Roy Wells: Went over to Japan with the Gold Unit and we presented ... I was super [inaudible 00:05:45] in charge of all the elephants out there. We had three rings of elephants plus we had King Tusk in the herd with us, and did the tour of Osaka and Tokyo. Eight wonderful months of Japan and the sites and sounds and all that.

Nancy Davies : Cindy, you were also on the Gold Unit.

[00:06:00]

Cindy Wells: Yes, I was in 1988. My father-

Nancy Davies : It's hard to keep up with all that you've been on.

- Cindy Wells: I know. My dad and I were with the Gold Unit the first year it went to Japan, and it was just ... Of course, press from all over the world opening night. It was a huge thing for Ringling Brothers to go to Japan. The audience was just unbelievable. We were like movie stars. We were treated unbelievably there, fabulous.
- Nancy Davies : Now, was this the first time you met?
- Roy Wells: No. We had met over the years.
- Cindy Wells: We've known each other.
- [00:06:30]
Roy Wells: I originally worked for a lady that owned elephants and that lady, that was actually her dad's first cousin. I actually dated one of her sisters before I dated her.
- Cindy Wells: Yes.
- Nancy Davies : Now we're getting the real story.
- Roy Wells: I did a tour with them in Japan and was talking ... The man that owned the elephants that I was working with was in negotiations because Feld was talking about making the Gold Unit a permanent thing, but business in Japan, the second year when we were there, the Japanese sponsor thought they knew more than Feld did and they were going to do their own promotions and everything, and about the same time that the emperor had passed away, so the whole country was in mourning for months and business was not exactly stellar. Sometimes I think the performers and working people on the show, they had the crowd outnumbered.
- [00:07:00]
- Cindy Wells: A lot of people actually we heard believed that it would be the same show again. They were confused because they thought they could market it and it just was a big confusion with the public, with the show that they were going to see. It wasn't cheap. The tickets were ...
- [00:07:30]
- Roy Wells: The scalpers. First time I saw people scalping circus tickets outside on the lobby. Even when we weren't doing business there were still scalpers out there selling tickets.
- Cindy Wells: There was a lot as far as the promoters. When I was there, Feld had their promoters there along with the Japanese people, but it was mostly the Feld people's. It was huge. We did what we would call a nine packs on the weekends because it was needed. The business was there, so you don't mind ... You're working hard, but you don't mind it when you know that there are people wanting to see the show.
- [00:08:00]
- Roy Wells: When the seats are full.
- Cindy Wells: Absolutely. We did.

- Roy Wells: Makes it all worthwhile. When you do three shows and not enough there to fill it one time, then you don't get quite as excited about doing that third show.
- Cindy Wells: I think a lot of other internal issues that we didn't know.
- [00:08:30]
Roy Wells: There were some problems because [inaudible 00:08:29] the rumor was that the Japanese people thought that they were getting the Gunther Tour, Unit. They were getting King Tusk. They got King Tusk, but it wasn't Gunther, it wasn't anything. Granted, they had a good show. They had all the elephant acts, they had three great elephant acts, not because I was part of it, but it was just all put together.
- Cindy Wells: Wonderful performance, yes.
- Roy Wells: They had the beautiful mixed animal act, I mean cat act.
- Cindy Wells: Production like always. Everything.
- Roy Wells: They had all the production, just wasn't Gunther, and so the Japanese people were a little disgruntled. Plus like I said, they couldn't market it like the Ringling people did. They thought they knew more. It wasn't exactly as successful. Then I went back and worked for other units and then ended up in '99 went to the Red Show and did the Living Carousel tour in '99 and 2000.
- [00:09:00]
- Nancy Davies : I want to ask a quick question back to Japan. What was involved in shipping all the animals back and forth? That seems like a-
- Roy Wells: Well, that's another thing that was nice because of Ringling because they have all these people working in the office and everything, they took care of all these logistical nightmares that any Joe Blow trying to do it on his own ...
- [00:09:30]
- Cindy Wells: Independently you'd be ...
- Roy Wells: Independently, you sit down at an office or a computer nowadays even. Back then there wasn't all this computerized thing back in '89.
- Cindy Wells: It was faxing.
- Roy Wells: It was unbelievable. Lots of faxing back and forth. It was incredible because we didn't take our tractors over there. We had the trailers and they had special trailers for some, but they didn't have enough. We took one of our trailers and I think four of their ...
- Cindy Wells: Semi-trailers.
- [00:10:00]
Roy Wells: Semi-trailers for the elephants, but all this was in the ... I can't remember. The cats

flew over, the horses flew over. They had all this organized. They came with the tractors, it's a rental company, they came and brought their tractors to Chicago, picked us, the elephants up. Drove to California, they had a place figured out just outside of Oakland in a fairgrounds. It was all fixed up where we went and laid off there.

Cindy Wells: Rest.

Roy Wells: Rest, let the elephants out and rest up before we went on the ship. Then they had it all organized and everything. It just was unbelievable.

[00:10:30]

Cindy Wells: Now, with the horses we had to be in quarantine before we left and then a week when we arrived in Japan. We had to stay in quarantine for a week, the horses.

[00:11:00]

When I was there, we had the living unicorn, so all of those animals had to be quarantined, and the camels, llamas, all of that stuff. When we came back, which was very fortunate for us, we stopped in Anchorage, Alaska first with some of the animals, and then the other animals had to go to JFK in New York. That was where you first landed in the States. Well, our first stop was Anchorage, Alaska in the States at midnight or something. There was nobody. It was in and out so fast and to go through customs and everything was just a breeze. When you land in JFK and oh my gosh. It was just ...

[00:11:30]

Then we did fly into New York, but we were already cleared because we had already landed in Anchorage, so it was just a matter of unloading off the plane. We had to go to Newburgh, New York once again for quarantine for a week, and then the animals went to Florida. Thank goodness.

Roy Wells: Thank God they had the Ringling organization ...

Cindy Wells: Absolutely.

Roy Wells: ... that had all this stuff done.

Cindy Wells: The departments, the people.

[00:12:00]

Roy Wells: When you don't know anything, but you have these people that know who to call and where to call and what to look up, they have that all organized.

Cindy Wells: They had the research.

Roy Wells: They just give you, "Okay, you're going to be here at this time and they're going to pick you." It pretty much was set your watch to it. If they said they're going to be there at 1:00, it was there. Transporting from one place in Japan to the other, same thing. The guys, drivers are there, they pick the trucks up, and they've got to have special routes because there's smaller vehicles over there and you got to watch where you can go because of the overpasses and the wires and stuff, but they had

it all figured out and it's very detailed.

[00:12:30]

Cindy Wells: Well, the first year we had a couple glitches going from one city to the next with the animals with what I would call the horse department or the lead stock. You had the elephant department and then you had the lead stock, which would be anything other than the elephants basically unless they were privately owned animals. We loaded them up in the containers and then of course, like he said, they had the semi-tractors to take us.

[00:13:00]

Well, when you have your own animals or anyplace else, the boss of the department or someone with authority has to travel with the animals to make sure that the help waters them, checks on them. A lot of the help there are conscientious, but there are some that aren't. Then they're afraid to say anything like, "Hey, we need to stop for a water stop." These truck drivers don't know that. They're just hired to ... A couple ...

Roy Wells: Then there's a translator involved who ride along with you.

Cindy Wells: Right. You're in another country, so ...

Roy Wells: To translate from what the boss of the department says to the drivers.

[00:13:30]

Cindy Wells: Right. Our trucks, we had three trucks. Well, one took off right away and then here are the other two, and my dad is ... He was in charge and he's like, "Wait a minute here. Now where's the translator?" And, "We need to stay together. We travel together." They had a rest area kind of a thing. It was an interstate highway, but ... And then where do we eat? It was a very long day. It was a very long day that day.

Roy Wells: I mean it's organized, but like she said ...

Cindy Wells: Stuff happens.

[00:14:00]

Roy Wells: ... not that there wasn't glitches here and there, especially from loading on and off of the ship. All these container ships have special places where the big cranes, they got special hooks that just come down and twist in there and they pick them up and set them on the ship. These elephant trucks don't have that. Now they have to sling them. They put a big sling underneath the trailer and pick the whole trailer up.

Cindy Wells: Oh my gosh.

Roy Wells: And my house trailer went to Japan.

Cindy Wells: RV.

Roy Wells: It's like fragile little tin on the bottom. It doesn't have a sturdy semi frame, so they

- [00:14:30] got to put a piece of wood under there that goes out past and the sling has to be on that, pick it all up. Now, I'm sitting on the ship over there waiting for them to ... And it's like they're taking forever and Gary Thomas, my buddy, one of the other trainers there, he said, "Go ahead, Roy. Go get something to eat. I'll watch it." I come back and I look at. They got this winch or the slings underneath it and my trailer's all bent up and everything. I'm like ... He goes, "I'm sorry. I thought they knew." I was like, "Thanks."
- Cindy Wells: [00:15:00] You learn. Roy has probably done more ocean voyages with elephants than I think any elephant trainer ever. He really has. You know you don't ... It's hurry up and wait basically the situation and you don't leave. You just don't leave because something could change.
- Roy Wells: Yeah, something like that happens.
- Cindy Wells: Yes. You can't.
- Roy Wells: The first time you witness elephants being loaded with a crane like that and there's all this movement, it's scary.
- Cindy Wells: It's frightening.
- Roy Wells: [00:15:30] Because you see old pictures when elephants tipped the truck over and elephants back in the old days. Now it's great. They got the equipment and everything.
- Cindy Wells: Some good circus movie that is.
- Roy Wells: But now it's like ... You pick up and you see the elephants now. They're swaying back and forth in the truck and the crane's going like that. Then finally they put it down and then they got to place it right on a certain place so they can lock it down on the ship at the right place, but they ...
- Cindy Wells: They do.
- Roy Wells: [00:16:00] They had it all figured out where the trucks went in a certain place and then they put ... They had a flatbed type container that they use and they put those up in between our things so we could unload the elephants and exercise them.
- Nancy Davies : Oh wow.
- Cindy Wells: On the ship.
- Roy Wells: So we could take them out and feed them and water them, weather permitting, and exercise them so they didn't just sit in the truck the whole [inaudible 00:16:10] time.
- Cindy Wells: And you have to haul of course another truck just for hay and all the equipment that you need and everything, so it's a huge deal when you do something like that.

Nancy Davies : How long was the voyage?

Roy Wells: 10 days.

Nancy Davies : 10 long days?

[00:16:30]

Roy Wells: I enjoyed it because riding on the ships, I love it. The people, they take care of you.

Cindy Wells: You have to tell that story though. The storm.

Roy Wells: Well yeah, but that was a different time. Not for Ringling, that was another one, but for Ringling, over there and we got ... God, we had probably six, seven guys that were on the ship and plus a Japanese crew there. They cater ... They tried to make sure we had American food, so they're asking, "Do you want to try Japanese foods?" I've been there before and I was like, "Yeah, bring it on." So now since we're having Japanese food one night and told the guy coming done ahead of time to the galley to cook and everything and I told him I was like, "Hey, don't put any silverware. Just put the chopsticks out there," and all these American elephant guys get down there and it's like, "What the heck? Where's the ..." It's like ...

[00:17:00]

Cindy Wells: Where's the silverware?

Roy Wells: Got to eat with sticks tonight, guys.

Nancy Davies : Well, I want to hear the storm story even though it wasn't Ringling.

Roy Wells: Oh. The first time I went to Japan, it was just me and I had the cat act on the ship. We're over there crossing the seas and it's just me and one guy taking care of the elephants.

Cindy Wells: You only had five elephants.

[00:17:30]

Roy Wells: Yeah, only five elephants. We get out there and the first day out on the seas is beautiful. We're just from Oakland and ... But they make you sign a release on this time, the crossing in the Pacific Ocean in the wintertime can be rough, and you're going to sign a release that they're not responsible in case they sink or whatever. It was like I'll be darned. We get out there and we're just sailing right into this storm. It's getting rougher.

[00:18:00]

I woke up like 4:00 in the morning one day and the ship is ... Wake up in the morning and you go up on the bridge. They give us free run of the ship, and we go up on the bridge and there's the captain, the first mate, and the chief engineer, and all these muckety-mucks of the ship. They're all up there looking out this window. The window's like two-thirds of the way back on this 700 foot long ship. Four stories high. The waves are breaking over the bow and splashing on the windshield.

Nancy Davies : Oh my gosh.

Roy Wells: The ship is 30 degrees on the meter it said both ways at night. If it wouldn't have been rails on the bed, you would've fell out of bed and had rails around the table.
[00:18:30] You'd be sitting there eating and all of a sudden boom! There goes your food the other way. "Hey, you want to pass my ..." And then went back and forth. Oh, it was insane.

I'm up there and all these guys are up there and it's like, "Yeah, it's okay." They're looking, but they're trying to comfort me saying, "Don't worry. I mean yeah, we've got some rough weather, but we're still going to be in in time on 10 days because we have some dangerous cargo on board," and I said, "You mean the elephants?" "No. We have some bomb detonators in the front and some radioactive material in the back," and the elephants in the middle. Fantastic.

Cindy Wells: He made it obviously.

[00:19:00]

Roy Wells: And then the one time I went to Puerto Rico on another ship and the guys say, they come down, some of the Puerto Rican ships ship out of New York and go down to Puerto Rico, and they say, "Sometimes you get a little rough out there in the Atlantic." They said one time they had a hurricane or something came up and these cargo ... You know what a shipping container looks like. They're 53 feet long or whatever and they're latched down to the thing. The wind and waves would blow them off the ship and they're just down in the ocean forever never to be found again.

Cindy Wells: The animals are down in the hold, correct?

[00:19:30]

Roy Wells: On that ship, but no, on the Japanese? No, they're up on deck where there's nothing over the top of them.

Cindy Wells: Oh, they are. Oh okay.

Roy Wells: Because they have to with the crane. On the Puerto Rican ship it's a roll-on, what they call them, where they just drive you right on and park you. The first time I went to Puerto Rico, you drove your own tractor on. Or no, they had to spot. They had their own truck. They have to spot you with their little what they call a yard dog tractor because they can maneuver them and they raise the landing gear up and down.

Cindy Wells: They just hook up and boom.

[00:20:00]

Roy Wells: They don't have to get off and crank it up and down. They just like zip, zip, boom, bang, and it's tight turns in there and all that. They drive like they're at a racetrack

or something. Zoom, bang, boom. They could care less. It's not their money, so if they drag the back end off going up the ramp or whatever they don't care. They're down in a hole on the Puerto Rican, the roll-on ships. On the container ships, you're out there in the elements.

Nancy Davies : I'm surprised you ever got back on a ship.

Roy Wells: Oh, I enjoyed it.

[00:20:30]

Nancy Davies : How many voyages? My gosh.

Roy Wells: I've been to Puerto Rico twice. I've been to Caracas, Venezuela once. I've been to ...

Cindy Wells: Japan.

Roy Wells: ... Hawaii, I've been to Japan twice.

Nancy Davies : Wow.

Cindy Wells: I thought three times to Japan.

Roy Wells: Twice.

Cindy Wells: Twice with Paul Kay?

Roy Wells: No, once with Paul Kay.

Cindy Wells: Oh, just once.

Roy Wells: But they take care of these guys in the shipping ... The crew. They want for nothing. The galley's open, they always turn it loose, and it's like help yourself. The food's there, make yourself cold cuts or whatever in between meals, and the meals are like ... These guys are fed well. You go down, they get snacks, drinks, I mean coffee. One night we're on the crew and these Japanese guys, they're going to have a karaoke party. They look around, now the sake's flowing and the karaoke and we're all having a good time. We look and once again there's the chief mate and the ... Who the hell is driving this thing? Automatic pilot's great. Out in the middle of the ocean, what are you going to hit?

[00:21:00]

[00:21:30]

Nancy Davies : Well, we're talking about food and drink and all sorts of ... Let's get back to over on Ringling, I'm sure there were a lot of get togethers and barbecues and ...

Roy Wells: Oh, absolutely.

Nancy Davies : ... nights out after shows.

- Roy Wells: Lafayette. I decided because I would like Cajun food.
- Cindy Wells: They're in Cajun country.
- Roy Wells: We're in Cajun country and there's crawfish and things, so I get one of the big pots, going to cook up have a crawfish boil. Our trailer was parked right next to
[00:22:00] Gunther's bus, so we get this big ... What are you doing? We get this big party together and the whole show's over there and Gunther came and came out and said hello and I think he might've had a beer with us or something. He said, "What are you doing?" Eating crawfish out there and boiling them up.
- [00:22:30] And then we had a big party. We had a layover one time on Ringling, like a summer break a couple weeks and we were laid over in San Antonio at the fairgrounds there. It's so hot there in July and everybody had their little kiddie pools outside their trailer just to go flop in and cool off. We went out and the fairgrounds let us use a couple big smokers and we had barbecue and smoking food and drinks and everybody ...
- Cindy Wells: Oh, by the train.
- Roy Wells: ... splashing around in a pool. Oh yeah, and the train that one time the Fourth of July in Tucson.
- Cindy Wells: Well, when I was a kid we had our trailer the first year on the show and of course then my mother could cook. You're at the building, and we were all little kids, so my mother could always ... We could go home and eat and have dinner and everything. Well, the second year we lived on the train, and they gave my parents a
[00:23:00] half a railroad car. We had our own bedroom with bunk beds and everything. The only downside of that was when we were kids, now you go to the building for the shows, so you have to pack snacks, a lunch, whatever, because you're at the building, depending on the show schedule, you're at the building all day long. You basically live in your dressing room and you're in the building. Oh, and you have small kids.
- [00:23:30] We would leave, and of course everyone had to do finale. Now you do finale, you load up in your car, and now you're with the traffic going home to go to the train. My mother would go home and she bought a pressure cooker and she would try to cook and make a meal and we're all half-asleep. The train was not a good thing with the kids when we were kids.
- Well, then when I was there with my father in '77 he had half a railroad car. I was 17 and my father was a staff person. Life was good then. Who cares? I still cook dinner at home, but I don't know [inaudible 00:23:59] the building ...
- Roy Wells: You ate at 11:00 at night.
- [00:24:00] Cindy Wells: Who cared? Then when Roy and I were going to go there, and I always knew the

way he was with the animals, he always would like to be close by where he can keep tabs on everything. You just like to be there, but ...

Roy Wells: I could never rest comfortably when you're miles away. No matter how trustworthy your help is, I just felt better if you were right outside and you sleep with one eye open.

[00:24:30]

Cindy Wells: I said, "Living on the train, it's wonderful." The best part of the train, of course when you're living in half a railroad car. You have lights and water, I had a washer and dryer, like a fancy RV on rails, but the coolest thing about living on the train is you go to bed at night and they're still loading up the flatcars and whatever and hooking everything together, and all of a sudden it leaves and you wake up in that clickety clickety clickety. It's so relaxing. It's just wonderful. You can go out in the vestibule and you see some of the most beautiful country out West. Oh my gosh.

[00:25:00]

Roy Wells: [inaudible 00:25:06]

Cindy Wells: People pay a lot of money to ride on trains and see that scenery.

Roy Wells: That train ride up the Pacific coast ...

Cindy Wells: It's spectacular.

Roy Wells: ... or go around that horseshoe turn in Altoona. I missed all that.

Cindy Wells: And we're paid to be here. This is fantastic. But in our case, they didn't really offer us to live on the train and I said to Roy, "Trust me. I don't think you want to live on the train with our situation with you being in charge of the elephants and just everything involved," so we had our house trailer there, which it was still nice. 99% of the time we parked at whatever the venues were, and then the only time was when we were in New York and Washington, DC. We didn't park in the Garden, so we were parked out by the train in New York in Queens.

[00:25:30]

[00:26:00] Then that was kind of hard though, then you had to take the subway into Madison Square Garden. Sometimes morning shows, rush hour. Oh boy. It became interesting, but I don't know. It was nice having the choice where I could go home between shows or at intermission I didn't perform until later in the show, so I could go home and do my dishes or whatever, go back in the building and get ready for the rest of it. It was nice. I think for us it worked out better to have the trailer, and then in between cities we'd go to a campground and we could relax a little because the train usually nowadays with the way the tracks are at a lot of places, the train would have to go way around sometimes to go to the next city and we could be there that day sometimes, so we'd have days off and it was nice.

[00:26:30]

Roy Wells: Oh yeah, get to go ahead and get to stop at campgrounds and relax.

Cindy Wells: Just barbecue and swim and whatever.

Roy Wells: Barbecue and go jump in the pool. It was pretty almost like as if we were human.

Cindy Wells: Relaxing.

Nancy Davies : Did you have a city that was maybe more favorite than the others that you [inaudible 00:26:56]?

Roy Wells: Chicago.

Nancy Davies : Oh, of course.

[00:27:00]

Cindy Wells: Well, no. Part of being on the road with any circus is you get to meet up with your friends along the way. Circus fans, friends, great restaurants, so I don't know. To me, New York City we were so glad to get out of there just because it was so hectic being in the Garden, the animals, everything involved, going in and out to work. Certainly we made the most of it to see all the sites and with Ringling you have connections.

Roy Wells: We got to go see the Letterman Show on [inaudible 00:27:26].

[00:27:30]

Cindy Wells: People get tickets, but I'm glad it was only three weeks or whatever it was. Another thing in the Garden, you're working over the ice. They put down boards over the ice, so the animals get in there with that cold floor and everything and the boards and it's loud.

Roy Wells: You get a little bit of dew or whatever and it gets a little ...

Cindy Wells: They get a little crazy and it's just ... I don't know. It's wonderful to say we were with Ringling Brothers Circus in Madison Square Garden, but I was glad to get out of there, but I have to share real quick the tax lady. We were with a tent circus that was out of Hugo, Oklahoma. We were there for five years. Well, I would have my taxes done every year, nice little kind of a mom and pop type operation.

[00:28:00]

Roy Wells: Down home country lady.

Cindy Wells: In Hugo, Oklahoma, so now ...

Roy Wells: With a distinct Oklahoma drawl.

Cindy Wells: We go to Ringling Brothers Circus. Well, I just said, "Okay, will you still do my taxes if I send you all the information and everything?" She said, "Absolutely, Cindy." I sent everything, so now it's March or April, we're in the Garden. Well, that's the time for them to send me back my return where I need to sign it and mail it. That's they didn't have electronically filed then or they didn't. I called her in Hugo and she said, "Cindy, where should I send your stuff?" I said, "Okay, Rose. Write this down.

[00:28:30]

[00:29:00] Ringling Brothers Circus. Roy and Cindy Wells, care of Ringling Brothers Circus, Madison Square Garden," and whatever the street address was, "New York, New York." I hear her put the phone down and she says, "Jane, they're in New York City. We're sending their papers to New York City with Ringling Brothers Circus." And they did and we got them, but it was like ...

Roy Wells: We were the heroes of Hugo for a minute.

Cindy Wells: [00:29:30] Oh my gosh. This lady, I thought she dropped the phone. The secretary had to tell the tax preparer, "I don't believe it, Jane. They're in New York City." It's like that commercial for the salsa or what is it?

Roy Wells: Yeah.

Cindy Wells: New York City.

Nancy Davies : New York City.

Roy Wells: Old El Paso. New York City.

Cindy Wells: We were king and queen for a day in Hugo.

Roy Wells: Favorite cities, there's a lot of them. It's just nice to be able to see these cities and then plus ...

Cindy Wells: It probably depended more on our friends who were there or a cool restaurant.

Roy Wells: We got to be out West Coast. We hadn't been there in years and my sister lives out there, so we got to see family out in the West Coast.

[00:30:00]
Cindy Wells: Going to California, yeah. But to us, probably a favorite city would be when the building was great, the animals were good, everything parked, easy in, easy out, all of that. That's probably how we looked at it more than you'd say, "Wow. You mean you were in Anaheim or you were in ..." Being in Anaheim was kind of cool ...

Roy Wells: Yeah, that was nice.

Cindy Wells: ... because Disneyland was right down the street. We'd go outside and watch Tinker Bell do her slide for life at a certain time, I think it was at dusk.

[00:30:30]
Roy Wells: Yeah, we went across the street to a little sports bar for somebody's birthday party and Cindy sampled some of the guacamole. One of the guys on the show was like ... We got there a little bit later than everybody else and there was some of the appetizers already on the table and one of them was ...

Cindy Wells: Wasabi.

Roy Wells: Wasabi.

Nancy Davies : Oh.

Cindy Wells: It was green.

Roy Wells: And she's starving and some guy says to me, he says, "Hey Roy, here, have some of this guacamole," so I go to him, but she beats me to it. She gets her chip and digs in, digs a big old scoop. She can't stand spicy stuff and oh my god. Smoke was coming out of her ears. The guy got slugged.
[00:31:00]

Cindy Wells: But you know Ringling did a lot of ... Like they would do a trade with a restaurant for, I don't know, if someone did interviews or something and they got their restaurant. "Hey, we're at Bob's Bar and Grill interviewing Mark Gable." I don't know how it all worked. You would probably know more about that. They'd come around say, "Hey, we've got a couple free meals. You guys want to go to the Applebee's or whatever it was?" Yes, so that was nice. They'd treat us to a free dinner or something. Stuff like that. They had perks a lot. There were nice perks with the job, and of course benefits.
[00:31:30]

Roy Wells: I can't remember what they were right offhand, but there was a couple of the buildings you didn't care if you ever went back, not because of the town or anything, just because a couple of the buildings were just one of these that should've been leveled years ago. I can't remember which ones it was right offhand, but some of them were just like wait.
[00:32:00]

Cindy Wells: Another nice thing for me, Ringling supplied your wardrobe. That meant if it needed to be repaired or cleaned, you would just say, "Here you go," because ...

Roy Wells: At the end of every day, if it needed cleaned, you'd put it in one bag.

Cindy Wells: They had a bag with your name on it and you had your own wardrobe box.

Roy Wells: You [inaudible 00:32:24] and you pick it up and put it ...

Cindy Wells: Which carried all your stuff. When you arrived at the building, your dressing room was marked, your wardrobe box was in your room, you just unlocked it and you put your stuff out. Some of the dressing rooms were absolutely luxurious out of this world and sometimes we were in curtains, a portable dressing room, but it was awfully nice to be able to say, "Oh, I think my zipper, something wrong with my zipper." "Well, bring it to us and we'll fix it," because I grew up, in the circus business you make your own wardrobe, so that means you're responsible for everything about it, so that was a nice thing at Ringling.
[00:32:30]
[00:33:00]

Roy Wells: They also furnished all the wardrobe for the animal walks and the animal adventures and all that.

Cindy Wells: Clothes.

Roy Wells: And all the clothes for [inaudible 00:33:06].

Cindy Wells: They liked you to wear their logos.

Roy Wells: We were never in need of shirts or pants or anything like that for getting ready for the show or being behind the scenes or the animal walks. You always had stuff to wear and in the cold weather you had coats to wear with the logos and all that stuff.

Cindy Wells: It makes it look so much more uniformed and organized when everybody is wearing uniforms. We're people that like uniforms.

[00:33:30]
Roy Wells: There's no doubt who belongs or who doesn't.

Cindy Wells: It looks organized and absolutely, like you said, everybody knows they're in the department, and when the public sees you marching animals down the street and everybody's dressed properly ...

Roy Wells: You look more professional.

Cindy Wells: It looks more professional, yes. It does.

Nancy Davies : I want to talk a little bit, and I don't know how much this impacted you on Ringling, [00:34:00] but the animal activists. Yes, they'd be outside the building, but I don't know that it affected you so much in Ringling. I know more so in other shows where they're closer, but was there any ...

Roy Wells: It was a pain in the butt. I learned a long time ago in the first maybe year, back in the late '70s or something, up in Toronto where they were active there before they were in the States, and somebody I saw on the show was out there on the sidewalk arguing with them and I learned you're never going to win, so just walk away because they're going to sit there and scream and holler until they're blue in the face. But Ringling, you just kind of ignored them. They kept them away from you so you didn't have to deal with them.

[00:34:30]

[00:35:00] It's what they did overall, the big picture of what they did, harass you and all that that is frustrating, but it doesn't do any good to argue with them, but the one time in San Francisco, I actually won one of them over. I got her to come and see our side of the story a little bit for some reason. I don't know why because I usually don't engage these people because it's going to be, like I said, a pointless argument. I was out there and nobody liked her. This lady was known for her ... She had a reputation. She had a nickname and they called her Scarface. It was not very a kind nickname. She had a scar. But she was so nasty to the circus people they gave her a nasty nickname to go with her.

- Cindy Wells: She was a well-known activist.
- Roy Wells: She was very well-known in the area, really a pain in the butt, but she came out there one day and she started to say something to me, so I sat there and talked to her and I was like ... Just through conversation I said, "Look, we're here to take care of them. We're here to keep them content and happy and make sure that they're fed and they got veterinary care," and after about 45 minutes she said, "Wow, I never knew that." She said, "Well, I really appreciate you spending the time with me and talking to me." I guess if nothing else ... And who knows if she continued on that thought or not, but she ...
- [00:35:30]
- Cindy Wells: You had a card from her. I was just cleaning my computer room at my house not long ago because of other things. My parents passed away and I was trying to organize stuff from them, and I came across that card. She sent Roy a card ...
- [00:36:00]
- Roy Wells: Thanking me.
- Nancy Davies : Oh my.
- Cindy Wells: Yeah. She said thanking him for ... I know I'm on the other side of the fence, but for you to take the time and fill me in on things I wasn't aware of, I just want to let you know I appreciate it. She signed her name and I forgot what her name was.
- Roy Wells: And I can't ...
- Cindy Wells: But Barbara something I think.
- Roy Wells: I can't even imagine.
- Cindy Wells: But she did actually send him a little note down the road.
- [00:36:30]
- Roy Wells: I don't know what happened. She was so against us, I can't imagine why she would listen to me and I can't imagine why I was engaging in conversation with her, but it's just one of those things. I was not doing anything at the moment and it all turned out good.
- Cindy Wells: What I think is sad ... First of all, people don't even realize a lot of these protestors are paid to just stand out there and protest. They have no idea. They could care less. They move onto the next. "What's the next protest and who's going to pay me?"
- [00:37:00]
- Roy Wells: College kids in for a little bit of extra money, for beer money or whatever they [inaudible 00:37:02].
- Cindy Wells: And then what always irks me with these people, and I'll say really? Have you gone and seen these animals in the show? Have you taken the time to learn about ...

"We wouldn't buy a ticket to see that," and I said, "Well, then how can you stand here?"

Roy Wells: And judge.

Cindy Wells: That's all hearsay.

Roy Wells: You're just going by hearsay and misinformation.

Cindy Wells: [00:37:30] Secondhand information. I will, in regard to Cirque du Soleil, which to me Cirque du Soleil is not a circus. Absolutely not a circus in any form of the traditional American circus.

Roy Wells: It's entertaining to some.

Cindy Wells: It's not kid-friendly, there are no animals, so to me it is not a circus. They don't really recognize the real circus in their world, but in regard to that, I went to Cirque du Soleil and saw it, so when people say to me, "Oh, did you ..." I said, "Yes, I did."

Roy Wells: Tried to go with an open mind.

[00:38:00]

Cindy Wells: Absolutely. I said, "Well, I'm going to go, even though I don't want to pay for the tickets," which were quite a bit of money, I said, "Well, I'm going to go and see because maybe I'm being closed-minded." I did not care for it. There were some wonderful things, some wonderful performers in the show, but I don't care for the way.

Roy Wells: [inaudible 00:38:17] doze off.

Cindy Wells: [00:38:30] But I can say to people, "I did go see it. I don't care for their way," so how can these activists stand there on the street corner. Another thing that I don't like ... Now, we have twin girls. They're 12 years old. They go to public school, and just the propaganda that they'll put out there and poison kids' minds about just animals in general.

Roy Wells: [inaudible 00:38:42] passing out coloring books and all this other stuff with their agenda.

Cindy Wells: It's so wrong. Let kids grow up and experience animals not even in the circus, just in the farm or go to the zoo or whatever it is.

[00:39:00]

Roy Wells: They get to these little old ladies and stuff with a soft heart and they get to them and now all of a sudden now we're all ogres because we train animals. Nobody that I know has ever abused them or beat them or anything. We're out there to educate and it's good exercise for the animal and it entertains. Now, here's a good example. It won't be long people won't be able to see an elephant, only on TV or in the

movies unless you're rich enough to fly over to India and camp in an elephant camp or go to Africa.

Cindy Wells: Sure, they're rich.

[00:39:30]

Roy Wells: But these common Joes like we are, they're not going to be able to come ... We brought elephants to their town, to little towns across America where kids can go out and see one, ride one, pet them, and that's going to be a thing of the past. I never thought in my lifetime. I knew that elephants just because they don't breed that well in captivity and when they close down the importation of them, they don't do the CITES, the international treaties for endangered species, that I knew sooner or later that there probably wouldn't be performing elephants because they don't breed that well in captivity. They weren't, now they are. People are doing a lot more work little bit too late, but I knew that it wouldn't last forever, but I never thought I'd see the end of elephants in my lifetime and it's already happened with Ringling. I never thought that Ringling would close down in my lifetime.

[00:40:00]

Cindy Wells: They won.

Roy Wells: Two shocks in two years.

Cindy Wells: They won huge lawsuits.

Roy Wells: It's like holy crap.

Cindy Wells: [00:40:30] It's a hard thing, but for me here's my thoughts now. I think it's so sad that they pulled the elephants off the show because now, because my mother was in a nursing home towards the end of her life, so I've been to a nursing home. I can say I've been to a nursing home, I've witnessed things, and they're not bad, but it's just very sad to go to a nursing home and see elderly people and their whole day, their daily routine.

[00:41:00]

Seriously, to me the elephants now at the CEC, not putting anybody down in their care, but ... Okay, they turn them out. I don't know what their routine is daily, but they probably clean up around them. I don't know, they probably get a bath, but now they turn them out in the pens. Well, that takes about, what? An hour? Maybe two hours if we really stretch it in the morning for that. Then they go out in the pens and then they stand there. They have things to play with and that, but it's like, "Okay, Susie."

Roy Wells: They spend a lot of time and money on animal enrichment, behavior enrichment. [inaudible 00:41:24]

Cindy Wells: [00:41:30] But these are highly intelligent animals that are social animals. Here's the activists' words. We know better than they do, we lived with them, took care of them, bred them. If we don't know anything about elephant, about their socialized world and everything, who would? We've educated the activists and now they're coming back

[00:42:00] and throwing it in our face like we don't know what we're talking about, so I see it now as the elephants go out there in the pen and, "Okay, Mary, well ... Oh, we played with that log yesterday. Well, why don't we go over and try this ball and see what kind of fun that is? Okay, we've done that for an hour. Well, when's feeding time? What do you think?" "Well, it's starting to get a little cloudy. I don't know. What do you ... Do you think it's going to rain?"

[00:42:30] I mean seriously. This is elderly people at a nursing home. They go outside, they might have activities for them to do, but then it's like, "Well, when's lunch?" And then, "I hope somebody comes and visits, a new face." That's what these elephants are doing now that have traveled all over, performed, done everything you can think of, have an exciting life, and now there they are. They just stand there. If they just leave them stand there, basically and you don't do anything, you don't use your body like you should, they're very active, they get arthritic like we do, now they're depressed. Now I believe they're all going to die a lot sooner than they do, than they would if they were on the road performing. To me, I think now I'm the activist. It makes me angry.

[00:43:00]
Roy Wells: There's a professor with Texas A&M that did a study on traveling animals and showing animals years ago.

Cindy Wells: With different circuses.

Roy Wells: In different circuses. He spent time on Ringling, he spent ... He [inaudible 00:43:08] these big thermometer things, these meters that would register and take their internal temperature. We had to feed them.

Cindy Wells: Well, the elephants swallowed them.

Roy Wells: He got the elephant to ingest this and do all this stuff and he did blood work and tested stress and temperature body wise because they're complaining about the elephants being too hot in the stock cars.

Cindy Wells: When they traveled.

[00:43:30]
Roy Wells: He did one before we traveled. He gave them this pill with this thing in there to tell and test it. Then the guy's got to go through, comb through the manure and find the little thing.

Cindy Wells: They're very, very small. Very small.

Roy Wells: Then he had to record all this, but the thing is at the end of it he found out that they're not overheated in the stock cars, their body temperature did not raise, they're very well-ventilated and cared for, and the other thing, he did a study on one of the traveling tent circuses.

- Cindy Wells: The stress.
- Roy Wells:
[00:44:00] They purposely left some of the elephants out of the show so he could have a test and find out who was more stressed. The elephants that weren't in the show were more stressed than the elephants that were in the show. The elephants in the show weren't stressed at all. The ones that didn't get to go in the show, they were stressed because, "God, they left us behind."
- Cindy Wells:
[00:44:30] "Why can't we go? Why can't we ..." I've grown up, my family are animal trainers. My mother had performing dogs. We've had dogs from the pound, from ... You'd find a runaway or whatever. When they would announce my mom for her act, before she even got out there the dogs would be already on the seat in front of the curtain like, "Where are you? We're on." My dad would always say, "Look at that. They're ready to go. You see that?" Then when it was over, a lot of times the dog would still be sitting there like, "Well, I'm not done yet. I want to be out here. I like all this. I like taking all this in." It's just certainly in everything in life there's good and bad. We've always said that, but we can't control everybody in the world with animals that are bad. We try to keep in our industry, we try to keep on top of people.
[00:45:00]
- Roy Wells: They're unfortunate.
- Cindy Wells: There's the USDA out there investigating every ... They come and inspect, but unfortunately they'll send inspectors out that don't know as much as we do about the animals and then we have to correct him.
- Roy Wells: We've had inspectors come out that didn't know the difference between Asian and African elephants.
- Nancy Davies : Oh.
[00:45:30]
- Cindy Wells: Yes, yes. Roy had to say, "Excuse me, but that's an Asian elephant." The lady looked at her. They're telling you about the foot care or when were they wormed? Or how much are you feeding them? It's like really? And then when we're hauling them. We're transporting them. Do you think that we want to take elephants ... Travel with elephants if they're uncomfortable or it's too small? They're going to tear the place apart. They're going to cause problems for us. We're going to deal with more problems, so wouldn't we want to make it as good as we can for them to travel?
[00:46:00] And also that's your livelihood. I don't mean to say it ... That doesn't sound right because, "Oh, that's their moneymaker. We don't want to hurt that," but it's just they become your family, your life.
- Roy Wells: The really sad thing about this whole activist thing is that they're not going to be content when they get the elephants off the show or the elephants not performing anymore. They're not going to stop there. They're going to go after the cats and the horses.

Cindy Wells: Well, they don't want people to have pets.

[00:46:30]

Roy Wells: Animals. They won't be happy until nobody has a pet anymore. They're not going to stop. They don't believe that you should even have a guide dog for the blind people. They don't care. They want all animals to be free and live happily ever after. There's no freedom. There's no natural for these exotic animals to go back to or anything. That's the sad thing about it. They don't want you to enjoy your pet or anything. It's just such a crock.

[00:47:00]

Cindy Wells: Well, Kenneth Feld himself when he had his press conference about closing the show and everything admitted the sales dropped, hugely dropped when they pulled the elephants off the show. I have always said when we were on the show, hands down when the 15 elephants ran in and did what we call the long mount, where one mounts the other.

Roy Wells: Biggest hand in the show.

Cindy Wells: Cheering, people roaring. It was the biggest hand of the show. When you go see ...
[00:47:30] Now when we travel and we go to amusement parks or that and there'll be ... Or

[00:48:00]

even with Ringling when we did those animal training seminars, they bring school groups in in the morning and we would educate them about the animals and the care and everything and feeding and everything involved. They'd all sit there very nicely. The minute the elephant starts to do a trick, everybody cheers. It's boring. You sit there and listen to how much hay and grain and water. It's all interesting, but they're waiting for them to, "Oh boy, she sat up," or she laid down.

[00:48:30]

With any animal, as soon as they start performing, that's when everybody wakes up and lightens up. That's what they want to see. Nowadays certainly it's all natural movements that you've enhanced on with the animals and whatever you're doing, but I think pretty soon we all need to stop and say, "Wait a minute." Pretty soon we're going to wake up one day and say, "Boy, I really miss having a dog or a cat or going to the racetrack or going to a circus." "Well, what happened?" "Well, I guess the animals are all gone." "Well, why didn't anybody speak up and say, 'You know what? I'm going to the circus. I don't care what you people say. You need to go away because I enjoy this and I think it's right and my children deserve to see this. You going to pay for me to go on safari to Africa?'"

[00:49:00]

Roy Wells: Unfortunately it's been snowballing for years because they get to these soft-headed, softhearted liberals and the Hollywood people that got a lot of money.

Cindy Wells: These people want to speak up, have their speeches at the Academy Awards or this or that, these actors, and they're going to put everything down that they feel is wrong. I said, "Well, then why doesn't America speak up and say, 'Well, you know what? You're wrong. We want animals in our lives.'" Back in the day, animals were our transportation. Animals are our source of food. I'm sorry, I'm a meat-eater, but
[00:49:30]

- [00:50:00] my father was always proud to say he was never a hunter for sport. I think that's horrible to see even like Donald Trump's sons over there hunting and they're so proud to stand next to a giraffe they just shot for a trophy. If it means to eat to save your family, that's one thing, but to just go out and hunt for sport, I have never been a fan of that. I'm just not. I don't think that's a good thing, but to each his own.
- Nancy Davies : I hit a nerve.
- Roy Wells: Got to get Cindy to come off her soapbox now.
- Nancy Davies : But these are all important issues and it's great to hear from people who lived it, breathed it.
- Roy Wells: Passionate.
- Nancy Davies : And know it and passionate about it.
- Roy Wells: It's so sad this whole thing. We're going down that hill and there's no stopping it unfortunately.
- [00:50:30]
Cindy Wells: When my father was inducted into the circus ring of fame in Sarasota, Florida, which is a great honor, it's your achievement as a circus artist in the circus industry, whatever you've accomplished is a great ... You've been one of the greats, recognized for that. My father pretty much all working with animals and training animals and he said, "I do not want to stand up and be ashamed of what I did." I was raised in training animals to ... My father would say, "You get in their brain. You know that animal one-on-one. You know everything about him." Roy is the same way we are with animals. When you work with an animal, you just don't go and spend 10 minutes and say, "Well, okay, tomorrow we'll be back and you better be good." No, it's everything involved.
- [00:51:00]
Roy Wells: You have to handle them all as individuals.
- [00:51:30]
Cindy Wells: Their personality, what they eat.
- Roy Wells: They're all individual what they're capable of ...
- Cindy Wells: How they sleep.
- Roy Wells: ... Physically and mentally.
- Cindy Wells: What they do. Absolutely.
- Roy Wells: And you have to treat them all like that.

Cindy Wells: It's just like a teacher with a child in school. They know everything about that kid.

Roy Wells: The animals.

Cindy Wells: And what they're good at.

Roy Wells: None of them asked to be here, but if you treat them right and responsibly and take care of them and make their life good while you have them under their care, then they will perform and they're content and do the best job that they can and everybody's happy except the activists.

[00:52:00]

Cindy Wells: And don't we want to have a little fun in life?

Roy Wells: No.

Cindy Wells: Don't we want to be entertained?

Roy Wells: For what? [inaudible 00:52:04] nothing but nonsense.

Cindy Wells: I don't think I want my children to sit there and play video games with violence and all this profanity, all these things that you don't want your kids to see, but going to the circus is a bad thing when it's an American circus, a traditional circus with a ring and animals and acrobats and aerialists? For two hours you sit there and you're taken away from all the cares in the world.

[00:52:30]

[00:53:00]

I've said that the other day. When we have World Circus Day, they've had that now for what, four or five years I think we've celebrated World Circus Day, and we live in Sarasota, Florida, one of the circus capitals of the world, and we have our own personal show folks club where all anybody in the circus industry, show business, we belong to the club. Well, they celebrated World Circus Day. I took my little miniature horse there and did some shows there, and after I get all done, I said, "You know? I want to speak to all the grandparents here in the audience. Go tell your children and your grandchildren, go buy tickets for the circus when it comes to town. Tell them to put the electronics away for a couple hours, take them to a circus and sit there. I guarantee you they won't be bored."

[00:53:30]

Nancy Davies : I'm going to change gears here for a second. I'm going to go back to the woman in Hugo, Oklahoma who was so impressed that you were with Ringling and in New York. When you've had those kind of moments when someone outside of circus find out you've been with Ringling, how does that make you feel?

Cindy Wells: Oh, you feel like a celebrity, absolutely.

Roy Wells: Proud. Yeah, it was great.

Cindy Wells: Another thing with Ringling Brothers, like he said, they give you all the uniforms to

[00:54:00] wear pretty much. Well, on a setup day, they still have on a shirt with a logo or something, so you'd run off ...

Roy Wells: Especially when you're dressed ready for the animal walk. You always ... Why wear out your own clothes if they're furnishing you a uniform to work in? So you'd have the shirt with the logo on it even if it's only a t-shirt just to set up in.

Cindy Wells: But we'd go have lunch or something and you run in a restaurant. You don't even think what you have on, and the waitress will look at you and they say, "You're with Ringling Brothers? Can you get us tickets?" Seriously. Because of the activists, you'd always walk tenderly when you ... You didn't want to tell people you're with the circus.

[00:54:30]

Roy Wells: [inaudible 00:54:37] circus.

Cindy Wells: Isn't that sad that you feel ashamed to admit you work with the circus, especially animals? And then we found out with Ringling we'd go in these places and people ... It was like gold, the name. It was golden. I think it made me ... When they closed the show ... Well, first when they pulled the elephants off, of course everybody was devastated, but then when they closed the show and I said, "How can you close? You had the golden animal and the golden title. Why quit? Why try reinventing it? Leave it alone. It's Ringling Brothers Circus."

[00:55:00]

Roy Wells: The greatest show on earth.

Cindy Wells: Back in the days of your grandfathers on circus day was heard the cry. It's like apple pie and baseball. Ringling Brothers Circus.

[00:55:30]

Roy Wells: No, but it always made you feel proud just when they say, "Oh, you're with Ringling?"

Cindy Wells: It's the Academy Awards of the circus industry.

Roy Wells: It's always nice to say, "Well, where'd you go and what show? Were you on Ringling?" "Yes, I was. Absolutely."

Cindy Wells: Then you're somebody just because you can drop that to somebody in church or ...

Roy Wells: Looks great on a resume.

Cindy Wells: Yes, absolutely. The town world. We say the town world.

[00:56:00]

Roy Wells: [inaudible 00:56:00] they find out first. You don't want to go around telling everybody because you don't know who ... You got to dance around it. Who's an activist and who isn't anymore? It's like, "Do they abuse those animals over there?" But then finally you don't know who you can tell and it's like, "So you were with the circus?" "Yeah." "What did you do?" "Well, we had horses and elephants." "Were

you ever on Ringling?" "Yes, we were and we loved it."

Cindy Wells: Wow. Yes. That's sad too because when they closed, then people would come up to us and say, "I'm so sorry the circus is all done." I said, "No, it isn't. It's just Ringling Brothers. There's plenty of other circuses out there to go see."
[00:56:30]

Roy Wells: Circus isn't dead yet. It's changing, it's evolving, it's different every day. Unfortunately with these activists it's going to be evolving for a few years, but there's still ways to be entertained by a circus.

Cindy Wells: They're ruthless.

Roy Wells: The Shrine circuses are still a very functional viable circus out there. They're having struggles because like all the other civic organizations, the Shriners are dying off and not a lot of new younger Shriners are joining, so it's harder and harder to put these events together anymore, but it's still a pretty popular ticket in most towns. Well, at least once a year. There's a lot of a few of the tent circuses that are out there still doing it and a few other civic-minded organizations sponsor circuses here and there, the Lions Club or whatever here and around the country, but it's still a going thing.
[00:57:00]

Nancy Davies : Give me a word or phrase that sums up Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey.

[00:57:30]

Cindy Wells: The greatest show on earth.

Roy Wells: Oh, darn it. You stole my line. What did your dad say? It was a great place to be from.

Cindy Wells: It's the greatest place to be from because everybody can identify with it. When we were in Japan, the way the Japanese understood what we were is The Greatest Show on Earth movie. When I was in Japan, Denny McGuire, the ringmaster, would say, "She's the Betty Hutton of Ring Ring Circus." And, " Oh, Betty Hutton." They knew who those people were, The Great Sebastian. They knew all of that. That's how they identified with Ringling Brothers.
[00:58:00]

Nancy Davies : Oh, that's so interesting.

Roy Wells: You mention his name, you got to tell them about when you were in the restaurant.

Cindy Wells: Yes, I know. I have to ... When I see Denny, I have to tell him, "Remember when my dad asked you ..." In Japan when you get salad, they serve it after your meal. Well, Americans, we eat salad first. We're in this nice restaurant in the hotel and Denny, who had to announce everything in Japanese, and then Jim Ragona did it the next year, which was amazing, but God help him if something happened because they could not ad lib. It was like, "Ooh, I forgot my lines," but I mean fabulous.
[00:58:30]

- Roy Wells: [inaudible 00:58:47]
- Cindy Wells: Fabulous. I said, "Gosh, I wish I could get through to these people. I'd like to have my salad before my food." My dad said, "Get Denny to tell them in Japanese. He speaks Japanese," and Denny said, "John, would you like that salad in ring one, ring two, or ring three?" That's all he could say. My dad, we'd laugh. We'd laugh about that all the time. Oh gosh.
- [00:59:00]
- [00:59:30] But I always say ... I worked in the ballet, I've worked at the opera, I've worked Broadway shows, I'm a wardrobe dresser in the local stagehands union, and circus people are the hardest working art form there is. Not to say those people don't give 100%, but they have the physical therapists and they have the makeup people and the wardrobe people and they have their hair done and they have voice coaches and dance teachers. I mean every step of the way, if they have a problem they go back and that person is there refreshing them or whatever it is.
- [01:00:00] Circus people, you're on your own. Ringling Brothers absolutely they give you more, but yet when you go out in that ring in that costume that they put on you and that makeup and hair or whatever, you better do what your talent is because you got to come through and shine, and we do. We do. Circus people are tough people to beat down. That's why I think it's so sad that Ringling closed, because I don't think the Feld daughters, it's not in their heart and soul like a true circus person and they just gave up and moved on to other things.
- [01:00:30]
- Roy Wells: The other thing that's sad about this is we can say that we were from Ringling and we were part of a special fraternity that not everybody was. Might have been a family or whatever you want to call it, but we were there and we got to do it. There's a few people coming up in the circus, younger people like her nieces and nephews, they'll never know.
- Cindy Wells: They might have the fantastic talent and they'll never ever ...
- Roy Wells: No matter what they do or how great they are at what they're doing, they'll never be able to say they were on Ringling.
- Cindy Wells: There's no cream of the crop. There's no that Academy Award.
- [01:01:00]
- Roy Wells: There's so many people out there that are striving just to be on Ringling.
- Cindy Wells: It's a shame.
- Roy Wells: People out there, "I don't want to be on ... I want to work on Ringling." Back before I was ever there I would say, "Yes, but as long as you get paid, so what?" But now you've been there and you've done it and these other people never get that chance.
- Cindy Wells: You strive for that. That's the ultimate achievement, and like you said, we made it.

Roy Wells: It's no more.

Cindy Wells: It'll never be. I just think how can you ... Something that's been over a hundred years and now ...

Roy Wells: 156.

[01:01:30]
Cindy Wells: We're done with it. We're done with it. Well, is that what our country's becoming now? Well, we're just done with it.

Roy Wells: The other sad thing about it is I don't see the Felds ever turning loose of that title so anybody else would ... If they find some angel drop down and had enough millions to buy it and take it over, it's not going to happen because I don't see them ever turning it loose. I think they're going to hold onto that as long as they ... Forever. It's going to be remain in the shelf somewhere that we'll never know what ... Just that's the end. It's really too bad.

[01:02:00]
Nancy Davies : Is there anything I didn't ask that you'd like people to know? A funny story?

Cindy Wells: Go see a circus. They're still out there and they still have animals, including elephants. There's some wonderful circuses still out there. Don't give up on animals, just keep animals in our world. Don't give up on them.

Roy Wells: What she said.

Nancy Davies : Cindy and Roy Wells, thank you so much.