

CWM Audio 70-10

Interview with Sister Bernard Overkamp (Sister Bernard) and Sister Dorothy Fabritze (Sister Dorothy)

July 20, 2017

Part 3

Interview conducted by LaVahn Hoh

LaVahn Hoh: What is something you'll remember the rest of your life as being part of the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus?

Sister Dorothy: People.

LaVahn Hoh: Yeah. You've talked about it.

Sister Dorothy: People.

LaVahn Hoh: Yes, the people.

Sister Dorothy: Yeah, people.

Sister Bernard: Family entertainment.

Sister Dorothy: Family.

Sister Bernard: Family oriented. Family oriented.

Sister Dorothy: Family entertainment, yeah. That I have to give Ringling.

Sister Bernard: Yes. Yes.

[00:00:30]

Sister Dorothy: They tried to keep it clean. They really did. It was family entertainment. Yeah. What was the question again?

LaVahn Hoh: Something that you'll remember the rest of your life as part of Ringling?

Sister Dorothy: I'm remembering that it was fun. It was adventuresome. And this kind of fun and this kind of adventure, I didn't get in religious life over the years.

LaVahn Hoh: Now, that's interesting.

[00:01:00]

Sister Dorothy: No, really. I mean seeing animals. I love animals. Seeing animals. I want to remember that. How they took care of the animals. That was wonderful. How they cleaned up after

those animals. When we'd leave the place, the place was clean. To me that's wonderful stuff. The other thing the practice, practice, practice impresses me. And I don't want to forget that.

Sister The dedication.

Bernard:

[00:01:30]

Sister The dedication. I mean they put on a show and then they practiced. They practiced
Dorothy: during the day. They put on a show. They practiced after. Constantly doing exercises and weightlifting to maintain this beauty of their talent.

LaVahn Hoh: [inaudible 00:01:46] to do a six pack on the weekend.

Sister Yes. I don't want to forget that. That's dedication. You know? There's so many good
Dorothy: things about ... I had also heard this. Somebody told me they like to hire former circus
[00:02:00] performers or people because you give them a job, it's going to get done. That's what they liked. And I must say, yeah, you give these people a job and it's get done. You know? If my ... especially on the smaller shows now ... vehicle ... If you're having trouble with your vehicle, the circus people will help you. If they can't fix it, they'll say you have to go here and there and then get this part of whatever. So that helpfulness, that
[00:02:30] working together.

Sister Caring for each other.

Bernard:

Sister Yeah. Caring for their children. I mean we were told if you see a child that belongs to the
Dorothy: show and it's not where it's suppose to be, you have the right to take it and put it where it belongs. So you care for each other. You protect each other. I like that story. Tell him the story about coming out in Everett, Washington with the protesters. Love it. This just came to my head.
[00:03:00]

Sister I had just come back from Germany, right? I had no idea what was going on with the
Bernard: show with the animals. So we were done with the show and I was trying ... She was already home. I was trying to cross the road but I was blocked by PETA people. And this woman comes in back of me and she says to me, "What happened to Clyde? What happened to Clyde?" I said, "I don't know what you're talking about?" Clyde was the young lion who had died.
[00:03:30]

Sister On the train ride.

Dorothy:

Sister But I didn't know. I didn't know. I said, "I don't know what happened to Clyde?" And at
Bernard: the same time, somebody was whispering in my ear from PETA people, "She is to not ... and you shouldn't even be on the show. You should be ashamed of yourself." I said, "Why should I be ashamed of myself?" And they were saying, "Because you're working with the show. They're mistreating the animals."

[00:04:00] All of a sudden a woman, she was way over 70 and she was saying something to me in French. And I was giving it back to her in German. I was giving it back to her.

[00:04:30] Then one of our guys who was driving the [inaudible 00:04:19], he saw the people coming close to me and he came with the [inaudible 00:04:25]. And then he said ... One of the women said to me, "Tell the police. Tell the police that they were trying to kill you. Running you over with that thing. Trying to, trying." And I said, "Why? There's nothing. There's nothing."

[00:05:00] And every time and every time over ... It was only because Clyde the little lion died on the train run and I should verify that to the police and all this kind of stuff. I said, "There's nothing." All of a sudden one of the security guys comes and says, "Ma'am, do you need help to get across the street?" I said, "Yes, I do." And he helped me along.

The funniest thing was the Ringling Brothers was standing at the side of and all the people were in there. And they were saying, "What are they doing with sister? What are they doing with sister?" That story they never forget. They never forget the story. The people that ... protecting sister. What are they doing to her? And it was only ... And we were taught never ever talk to PETA people.

LaVahn Hoh: Yes.

[00:05:30]

Sister Never. But I had to because-

Bernard:

Sister Couldn't get out.

Dorothy:

Sister I couldn't get out. Because ...

Bernard:

Sister We were waiting for you.

Dorothy:

Sister Yeah, you were waiting for me.

Bernard:

Sister I was trying to get her home in a car back to the trailer. And they couldn't get her out.

Dorothy:

Sister And it was ... but they ... The circus people didn't forget that. There was what are they doing? And I think if they would have attacked or whatever done, they would have come. They would have come.

Bernard:

Sister They would have.

Dorothy:

LaVahn Hoh: Yeah. Well, do you have any other stories? Or ...

Sister Let me try to tell you this.

Dorothy:

LaVahn Hoh: Okay.

[00:06:00]

Sister Shauna was a purchasing agent. I went into the office for something and then she said to me, "Sister, I'd like you to know that the people in the show really appreciate you." I said, "Thank you, Shauna." And I wanted to go on with my work with the general

Dorothy:

- [00:06:30] manager, whoever else was in the office. And she said, "No, sister. You really have to understand that the people appreciate what you do and they like that you're on the show." And I said, "Thank you." And I wanted to proceed on. "No, sister. You really have to understand that even if the people don't come and talk to you, even if the people don't come for classes, they really like that you're here on the show. You really have to understand that." I kept saying, "Thank you." I mean what do you respond. But anyway, it just showed me that they wanted us on the show. What we did was something separate. They came to appreciate just that they ... Their show had the sisters.
- [00:07:00]
- [00:07:30] That's what ... Part of that was what drew us to get to three months, three months, three months visiting the shows because Father Jerry was hearing from different circuses, "Why are the sisters only on the Ringling Blue Unit?" Some of it came from the Red Unit, "Why doesn't the sister come to the Red Unit?" Or some of the other shows too were asking Father Jerry if this is just come to our shows. So we decided to shorten the time and then visit four circuses every year. Then try to get this lay leadership started.
- [00:08:00]
- Sister Bernard: I like that one story with Mike when he went to the big meetings with all the different managers.
- Sister Dorothy: Oh, yeah. Let me tell you that one. Okay, this is a [inaudible 00:08:16], Mike Stuart, when he was ... He had been general manager on the Blue with us. Then he was made Vice President of some-
- Speaker 4: May I ask you to pause just a minute.