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Theresa McClean Interview, July 22, 2017

Interview conducted by Nancy Davies

Nancy Davies: July 22nd, 2017. Ringling oral interview with Theresa McClean, interviewed by Nancy Davies. Theresa McClean, how are you?

Theresa McClean: Great. Thank you.

Nancy Davies: So glad that you could sit here and give us some of your memories. Give us a brief overview of when you were with the show, which shows you were with, and what you did?

[00:00:30]

Theresa McClean: Great. Thank you. Well, I was with the Blue show for 136th, about 2006 to 2008, and then I was with the Gold show, Gold three and Gold four, which was about 2008 to 2012. I get a little mixed up on the years. I just pretty much go by the show numbers. I was first the head seamstress on the Blue show, so I was second in

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command, and I was in charge of basically the primary people's costumes and of course any slack that needed to be picked up from lady's or men's, but I did a lot of ringmaster, ring mistress work. If there was a main clown, that sort of thing, but anything fabric on the show I had pretty much touched.

Nancy Davies: Now, how did you become a part of Ringling Brothers?

Theresa McClean: Great question.

Nancy Davies: Why, thank you.

Theresa McClean: Yes. I had graduated college, and I decided I am going to take a break and never touch a book again. I did that for a little while, and then I thought, "I need to do something else with my life." I looked on a website for backstage jobs because I love teaching but I also love sewing and I like that community, so I found a job with Feld Entertainment. Well, actually it said Disney on Ice, and I thought, "Oh, ice skating princesses. I can do that. That sounds pretty tame," and it came with housing, which was my goal to not have to pick up and try to find housing and then find out I didn't like something. I just on a whim submitted my resume. A while later they called and they said, "Oh, we have a job on the circus," and I thought, "Uh." First of all, I didn't even know that Ringling Brothers and Disney on Ice were both owned by Feld. It was all learning, and I thought, "Oh, my gosh."

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I ended up talking to who became my boss, and I was like, "How do you do laundry? Is it safe? What do you do? Is it safe?" Because in my mind I had never really seen a circus, and you get these carney ideas of people and like, "Oh, my

gosh." I thought about it, and I thought, "Well, everything else will always be there, but this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Even if I hate it, I can stick it out a year, and it'll be a great experience." They said, "All right, we want to offer you the job," and I said, "All right, I'll take it." So, off I went with a couple of suitcases and no idea what I was getting myself into.

Nancy Davies: Clearly, you liked it, and the-

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Theresa McClean: Clearly, yes.

Nancy Davies: -carney idea clearly faded away, too.

Theresa McClean: Yes, it did, and I've learned that you don't call a circus person a carney.

Nancy Davies: No, you do not. Bet you learned a lot of things on the show.

Theresa McClean: Oh, yes. It was quite the steep learning curve for both costumes, because I had never worked with spandex or rhinestones, and poof, my first job was making a mesh pair of gloves with rhinestones, so, yeah, it was lots and lots of new things.
[00:03:30] Lots of new cultures, lots of new people. It was a bit overwhelming at first.

Nancy Davies: Where were you living at the time? Where are you from?

Theresa McClean: I'm from Yakima, Washington. Yeah, dropped from there to Anaheim, California, and off I went to learn how to live on a train. Somebody just basically brought me and put my suitcases in a room. I didn't know train number. I didn't know how to find my room, and the train was in two cuts or more, and so the next city I expected to be the same and it wasn't, so then you have to learn, wait, where's my room today? It's not a normal kind of thing you have to think about.
[00:04:00]

Nancy Davies: How big was your room?

Theresa McClean: My room, I never exactly measured it, but it was probably like eight by eight. It was one of the bigger rooms, but it still had the bathroom and shower down the hallway.

Nancy Davies: Did you ever get used to that?

[00:04:30]

Theresa McClean: Yeah, you get used to anything you have to.

Nancy Davies: Like a dorm.

Theresa McClean: Exactly, and my room was set up in a really great configuration, and if I had had a bathroom in there I would have lost a lot of space, so it was worth the travel down the hallway.

- Nancy Davies: Did you like living on the train?
- Theresa McClean: I loved it. It was my favorite part really. It was so cool to think that you were living on a train, and the train runs were amazing. Just the rocking of the train and off you went to see a bunch of countryside that you wouldn't ordinarily get to see.
- [00:05:00]
- Nancy Davies: Did you have a favorite part of the run?
- Theresa McClean: Not really, although a friend of mine she was the train master's wife, and she used to cook food, and so after load out I would go down to her house, and he was off busy getting the train ready so it'd be just the two of us girls laughing and talking and eating. Then when he came on to get the train going, I would know that was time for me to go back and sleep. Then I would make the very long journey back through all of the train cars back to my room.
- [00:05:30]
- Nancy Davies: Now, let's talk about load in and wardrobe. What is that like?
- Theresa McClean: Load in, well, there's the Blue and the Gold load in, but essentially they're the same. You get your boxes, and so all of the costumes and supplies are stored in what we call boxes, and they're big, gray, metal and wood containers on wheels. They have garment wracks in them so all the costumes can hang up, or they have shelves depending on the needs. On the Blue shell ours came in what are called wagons, and we had five wagons full of boxes. I think there were 60 boxes. We would have to get our wagons, but they were intermixed with everybody else's stuff, so sometimes we'd get there at call time and we'd have to wait two or three hours before we got any wagons.
- [00:06:00]
- [00:06:30] We would have to unload them with either a ramp or a forklift, and then we would push them to their designated spots, and then we would set up the wardrobe and that entailed putting the boxes either to make walls or push them into a room. Then you have to open all of the boxes, and we used to have rugs so that people didn't stand on the hard floor. So, put out the rugs, put out mirrors, do laundry. Lots of laundry. We would collect laundry the previous city, and then we would do it on load in day.
- [00:07:00]
- Nancy Davies: And probably repairs too I would think at the end of the, you wouldn't be able to do [crosstalk 00:07:02]-
- Theresa McClean: We would do some repairs. Repairs were more of an ongoing thing rather than a collective thing, but if there were anything, or shoe painting we would often touch up shoe paint on load in so it would have a good amount of time to dry. That was pretty much load in. Now, the Gold show was similar, but we would actually have local people help us to push the boxes, whereas on the Blue it was just the crew.
- [00:07:30] Our boxes were in a trailer, or not trailer, sorry, semi truck with everybody else's stuff, so again it would come down, but a lot quicker because the show was a lot smaller.

- Nancy Davies: Let's reverse the process. Anything unusual about loading out?
- Theresa McClean: Loading out was kind of the same thing. We'd have to wait A, to get our wagon, then to fill our wagon, and then to get rid of it and get another wagon. It would take some time, and then some of the buildings had very narrow places where we could get things out or a high traffic area, so we would bring a lot of snacks and sit around and chat.
- [00:08:00]
- Nancy Davies: Did you have a building that you really didn't like? Like, "Ah, there's just no room," or [crosstalk 00:08:13].
- Theresa McClean: Yeah. Well, there were a few of those, but there was one in Cincinnati. It was like literally a refrigerator freezer. I don't think I took my coat off the entire week, and the poor clowns had to dress by the open door area that was, but it didn't really matter. It was cold everywhere. That was terrible. That was a Blue show city. Gold show we often played rodeo arenas where there may or may not have been dirt on the floor that we had to put everything on top of. It was kind of, a lot of flies. I got good at fly trapping.
- [00:08:30]
- Nancy Davies: Lovely.
- Theresa McClean: Yes, yes. It's not exactly glamorous at all times.
- [00:09:00]
- Nancy Davies: Give us a typical day on a show day.
- Theresa McClean: On a show day, depending on how many repairs. If there was something extreme, we would go in early, but typically we'd go in about two hours before showtime and get set up, take out the sewing machines, and iron, do any of that kind of thing. Usually, the first show day we would iron the clothes that had been laundered and disperse them to the proper places that they would go. Then showtime we would pretty much be on call essentially. If there were any repair needs that came up, we would fix them for later in that show or for the next day. Sometimes we would have cues on the floor. We'd have to go collect a costume, something like that. When I was on the Blue, I'd have to get all dressed up in black and Jennifer would take off her big circus skirt-
- [00:09:30]
- Nancy Davies: Jennifer?
- [00:10:00]
- Theresa McClean: Fuentes, and she would take off the circus skirt and throw it down to a clown, and he would run off to the side and throw it to me, and then I would walk off and take that back. Sometimes we had cues like that on the floor.
- Nancy Davies: Did you have a costume that just would give you fits because something on it was always tearing, breaking?
- Theresa McClean: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, the same circus skirt, I love it but it was sequined. It

- [00:10:30] had circus spelled out in sequins, and if you pulled one little thing a whole huge patch of sequins would come off, and so I spent many hours replacing sequins on that skirt.
- Nancy Davies: So, you never want to see another sequin.
- Theresa McClean: Not really, but I did love that skirt so much that it kind of made up for it.
- Nancy Davies: Now, who was your boss, or who did you report to?
- Theresa McClean: I worked with a few people. My first boss was Jeanine [Vanderhoof 00:10:57], and [00:11:00] then I worked with [Clotey 00:11:01] Gutierrez on the Blue show, and then when I went to the Gold I was the head of the wardrobe, so then I had an assistant, [Bor Slavaveneva 00:11:10]. I essentially reported to the general manager ultimately.
- Nancy Davies: From your time from when you started to when you left, what do you feel like you learned the most by working in wardrobe with Ringling?
- [00:11:30]
- Theresa McClean: Well, I used to start a project or with knowing A, B, and C, my steps, but I learned that sometimes you can just jump in and figure out a project as you go because there's no time to figure it all out. You just, okay, this costume has a huge whole, and you just have to fix it somehow. You can't always think of the best option and then you just kind of make it work. Also, I think just perseverance. You can do anything no matter what. I used to hate the rain. I still don't love it, but I've done load out in rain because you have to. You just learn to go with the punches.
- [00:12:00]
- Nancy Davies: So, you've really learned some life lessons then.
- Theresa McClean: I really did, yes.
- Nancy Davies: Anything else that you learned just in general?
- Theresa McClean: Just for myself, I was much, it's still pretty much of a homebody, which is why I still loved the circus because it was another home, but I really learned to be myself and go out there, because I didn't have anybody to fall back on but myself. So, you have like, "Okay, you're going to meet new people." If I wanted to go to a museum, I just would go. If I wanted to go see a movie, I would go. Sometimes people would come with me, but I also just learned do whatever you want. Get out there. Rent a car. Go see something.
- [00:12:30]
- Nancy Davies: Did you have a favorite city?
- [00:13:00]
- Theresa McClean: I really loved Savannah, Georgia. It was so nice. Of course, we weren't there in the middle of summer, but the place where we were staying. It was great walking area. You could walk to the river. You could walk around town, and the trees, it was so pretty, but I also loved when we stayed at Coney Island because we were there two

summers in a row for three months each, so we had lots of time off. I would hop on the subway, go to town, watch Broadway shows, go shopping. I really loved that.

[00:13:30]

Nancy Davies: Now, before we started recording you told me something interesting that I didn't know. Go ahead and let's share that.

Theresa McClean: Okay. Yeah. Well, I was saying that I don't really remember the years per se or the cities necessarily because we quoted it in show numbers or things that happened. Once we were told by HR, "You guys really need to start paying attention to which cities you're in instead of by event." When, say, [Vicenta 00:14:00] got hurt or so and so died or such and such, because she's like, "HR doesn't know what that means," but we all did. That was a fun little tidbit.

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Nancy Davies: What other things did you learn like that? Can you remember anything?

Theresa McClean: I mean, there's just a lingo that you pick up. I was talking about which train car I lived on, and I lived on 173 the low end, which means I lived closer to 172 than I lived to 174. Just funny things like that that I can think of lingo wise.

[00:14:30]

Nancy Davies: Well, who did you hang out a lot with?

Theresa McClean: On the Blue show, I hung out with my friend the train master's wife, and some of the wardrobe people, although we didn't have a lot of downtime on the Blue show. We were working a lot more, and then train runs I usually just hid out and slept and checked out. On the Gold show though, it was a lot smaller, and so we hung out with a lot more or more of a mixture I guess of people. I actually hung out with my assistant, but she's essentially my best friend, all the time. Even when we weren't working together, we would go shopping together and do a lot of things together. On the Gold show, I really hung out with everybody. If there was a barbecue, anybody could stop by, and everybody was welcome. On the Gold show, I think I hung out with pretty much everyone.

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On the Blue show, it's a little more segregated. Concessions usually hangs out with concessions because of their timeframe. Animal people usually hang out with animal people because of the schedule as well. You're a little more clique-ish almost just by your job description. The Gold show we had more of a similar schedule, and we used to live on the lot behind the arena, so it was a lot easier to congregate.

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Nancy Davies: Were you living in trailers?

Theresa McClean: Yes. When I was on the Gold show, we lived in trailers. I lived in one of the crew trailers, so we had eight marathons and they were divided into four rooms, and so I had one of the rooms on there.

Nancy Davies: How big was that room?

Theresa McClean: That was actually almost a little bit bigger.

Nancy Davies: Really?

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Theresa McClean: Because I was staff, I had a fifth-wheel room. I had the whole upper part, and then a little entryway, so I thought I was in luxury because from my bed I couldn't see the door. That was big, and the refrigerator was bigger, too, which was nice, but we had to travel on buses between cities unless it was a long journey, in which case we took a flight.

Nancy Davies: Now, on the Gold, did you have a Pie Car Junior or anything like-

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Theresa McClean: Kind of. We had one lady who had a snack stand. We called it, well, her name was Mary so you get your stuff from Mary. The box said Pie Car, but it was just whatever she was cooking or bringing, and then she ran it independently of the show.

Nancy Davies: Oh, okay. Now, which of the shows overall costume wise did you just love, you thought the costumes were just to die for? If any. Maybe I should say that.
[00:17:30]

Theresa McClean: Yeah, I was going to say. There were certain pieces that I loved, but I think that the 136 was the most spectacular to me. It was the bigger, showier version of costumes, and they were designed by Colleen Atwood, who is an Oscar-winning designer.

Nancy Davies: What was the theme of that show?

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Theresa McClean: That was called Circus of Dreams, so the theme was the kid wanted to be a ringmaster so they took him through the different parts of the circus. I don't know if there was a theme other than finding your own.

Nancy Davies: Your dream.

Theresa McClean: Yeah, finding your dream. Yeah. It's kind of not really a theme.

Nancy Davies: Who did you enjoy working with most in terms of performers? Did you have a favorite?

Theresa McClean: Well, you always get along better with some people than others or click with them better than others. There were some people who are not terribly respectful of wardrobe, and those are the people I didn't care to work with, but for the most part they really were helpful, and I enjoyed working with pretty much everybody. Although in the Blue I didn't work with ... A lot of the men's I didn't even work with.
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Nancy Davies: Now, in terms of wardrobe, are you also handling things that maybe are wardrobe pieces for animals like an elephant blanket?

Theresa McClean: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nancy Davies: So, you're doing those as well.

Theresa McClean: Yes. Yeah, if it was fabric, people brought it to us. Oh, I've got a good one in a sec. Yeah, so we did do, we would fix the elephant blanket, and that was a really big pain, but, I mean, how many people can say they fixed an elephant blanket? We would often have to replace the shiny medallions on it or any other issues.

[00:19:30] But my funny story. When we were in Italy, we were touring around, and I had noticed this random piece of fabric backstage, and I thought, "[Goll 00:19:41], it looks kind of like the curtain." Then not too long later, and I had premonition to go into work early that day, which was odd, and the director who came over with us was like, "Oh, my gosh. The curtain has been ripped." Somebody had ripped off the entire bottom of one half of the curtain. We think a forklift or something went through and caught it with the wheel and took it. She's like, "What kind of fabric do we have?"

[00:20:00] Now, this was a painted curtain, so it's not like you could match anything. I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. I don't have that much fabric." Nothing looked good, and I said, "There's this weird piece of fabric I saw backstage. It looked kind of like the curtain. Maybe that's it." Sure enough somebody magically found the bottom part of the curtain that we then frantically sewed on before opening night in Rome. So, yeah. It was a little bit shorter, but it was on there. That was quite the panic. A little, "[Huahua 00:20:43]," experience.

Nancy Davies: Did you have any other emergency moments like that?

Theresa McClean: Not like that, although I have been known to sew a few people into costumes with broken zippers before. We always had some thread set aside with emergency zipper sewing, so more than once. Yeah, we had these Chinese acrobats on the Blue show, the 136th, and they were constantly growing, and so their costumes weren't always fitting. Then they would break the zipper, and then we'd have to sew them in.

Nancy Davies: It sounds like you got quite a few stories.

Theresa McClean: Yes.

Nancy Davies: Tell me more. What else comes to mind?

Theresa McClean: Oh, my goodness. What else?

Nancy Davies: Did you have anything that was just really funny that ...

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Theresa McClean: I'm sure. Let's see. Nothing is jumping to mind right now about-

Nancy Davies: That's okay.

Theresa McClean: -something funny.

Nancy Davies: Something scary?

Theresa McClean: Well, yeah. We had a few scary episodes with injuries. Somebody got her face between a wall and one of the [transpo 00:21:51] cages of the tigers, so that was a broken jaw.

Nancy Davies: Oh, my.

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Theresa McClean: But she was okay. I guess it wasn't terrible. Another one the same girl, Jennifer Fuentes, fell through ... She was supposed to be lowered by a lift down into the float, and it broke, and she went down. She was okay. I have seen a few injuries with the motorcycles in the Globe of Steel. Nothing catastrophic, but a few. One of the Russian low wire guys, big chunk of metal came flying and hit him in the head.

[00:22:30]

Nancy Davies: Oh, my gosh.

Theresa McClean: Yeah. Oh, I got stuck in an elevator once. That was kind of an interesting story. Same city that this one happened in. In Knoxville, Tennessee, well, they have this old service elevator, and my assistant and I we were going down the stairs and it got stuck, or to the next level. We could just see a tiny bit out, and we're like, "Oh, my gosh." Nothing would work. Fortunately, we had our phone with us and we were able to call the general manager. We're like, "We're stuck in the elevator," and they came and got us out. That was crazy.

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[00:23:30] One other story, also Knoxville, Tennessee. Water, it was really raining and it's a pretty old building, and it's partially below ground. It was raining, and the water was shooting out of the wall like a fountain because of the cracks in the wall. Come to look at it, they actually had a gutter on the inside of the wall, but somehow it was missing that because there was so much rain. The entire wardrobe area was flooded-

Nancy Davies: Oh, my gosh.

Theresa McClean: -and water is still shooting out of the wall. I'm like, "What am I going to do?" Another one of those days where I happened to go in early for whatever reason. We put gaff tape, which is the end-all tape of the circus, it fixes everything, over the water, which stopped it. Then still had this flood, so we had to pour saw dust everywhere and sop up all of the water for this flood, but every year after I had ended up going back to Knoxville and that gaff tape was still on the wall.

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Nancy Davies: Oh, really?

Theresa McClean: So, to my knowledge it may still be there 10 years later.

Nancy Davies: That's good tape.

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Theresa McClean: It is good tape. Everybody should get gaff tape.

Nancy Davies: Let's talk about your very first day.

Theresa McClean: Oh, my. Yes, okay. My very first day. My very first day, I flew into LAX airport, and they said, "Take a taxi to the arena in Anaheim." I had my suitcases, took a taxi, and they're like, "We'll reimburse you for the money," which they of course did, but that was a \$100 taxi ride, so good thing I had brought some cash. Then I showed up, but it was between shows, so there's always a bit of a break, and I happened to get there between shows, and I was just standing there thinking, "What am I supposed to do? Where am I supposed to go?" I think I called the person, the general manager, and he said that the person would be there in a minute.

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I'm not exactly sure. I was still a little bit in shock, and then up comes roller blading the paymaster, and she's like, "Okay, come with me." She took me into a trailer and took my picture to give me an ID, had me watch a video, sign some papers. I don't even know. I think I left my suitcases there, not positive. She put me out to the wardrobe where I would end up meeting my boss. Then I met my boss and she kind of took me around a little bit and would tell me things that I don't have any idea what she said because I was so in shock that I was there. Everything was new. Backstage was new. I'd work in theater a little bit, but it's entirely different having elephants come in and horses. We had a big troupe of horses. She would say, "Oh, this is such and such," and I'm like, "Okay. I don't know." Yeah, it was very overwhelming to see everybody and get to know everyone.

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Nancy Davies: How long do you feel it took for you to feel comfortable?

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Theresa McClean: That's a great question, too. Well, within a few weeks I felt pretty comfortable knowing people and we'd repeated the process a few times, but it probably took me a few months to really feel like it was my show and know how it would work and how everybody got together, so maybe six months to really get a good solid feeling for it.

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Nancy Davies: Did you have one person that really stood out in your mind on any of the shows you worked on as someone who just really respected wardrobe?

Theresa McClean: Well, my first boss, Jeanine, she was amazing. She really appreciated and respected wardrobe and knew how important it was. She was an amazing boss. Yeah, she really appreciated the wardrobe. Yeah. I don't know.

[00:27:30]

- Nancy Davies: That's okay. That's a good person. Now, let's talk about your last day. First of all, why did you decide to leave?
- Theresa McClean: Because the new general manager had a wife who did wardrobe and there wasn't room for both of us, so I got a good-bye.
- Nancy Davies: Oh, no. So, you didn't really want to go it sounds like.
- [00:28:00]
- Theresa McClean: Yeah. I might have gone at some point. It wasn't my plan to leave at that point, but that was the choice.
- Nancy Davies: Let's talk about that final day. Did you just take every moment in?
- Theresa McClean: Well, I sort of transitioned out. They told me that at winter quarters, so winter quarters is where we get the show ready for the next season. It was between Gold four and Gold five. I was getting things ready, and then I said, "Okay, well I guess I'll leave," and they said, "Oh, well, if you don't mind staying for a week to kind of help her get accustomed, and then we'll buy your plane ticket and ship your stuff home." I was like, "Okay, sure." Mostly I just wanted a plane ticket home, and so I didn't really do all that much. I gave away a lot of stuff, so I'd bring things into the building and ship things home, but, yeah, it was pretty brutal. Pretty much anybody that I saw I was crying because it's family. It's more than just people that you work with. It's people that you see every day all day long and they're family.
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- [00:29:00]
- Nancy Davies: Yeah. It's bittersweet it sounded like.
- Theresa McClean: Bittersweet, although my last day was a morning. I mean, I just left from the trailer, but it was rough.
- Nancy Davies: Do you still stay in touch with people?
- [00:29:30]
- Theresa McClean: I do. Thank you, Facebook. That's how I primarily stay in touch with people. With my friend, we talk on the phone sometimes, but any time I'm close to anybody I make a point to try and travel and see them, or if any circus comes through town, but mostly Facebook.
- Nancy Davies: If someone comes up to you and they find out that you were on Ringling, and I'm guessing that's probably a, "Wow, you were with the circus," moment, what do you say?
- [00:30:00]
- Theresa McClean: I say, "Yep, and it was pretty fascinating," or, "Yeah. I loved it." Something like that.
- Nancy Davies: How would you describe Ringling, your experience with them?
- Theresa McClean: Well, I loved the show. I loved the atmosphere. I loved the circus culture. Everybody is together. If you need lighting or you need electrical help, somebody is
- [00:30:30]

willing to help you. If you need something sewn, I was happy to do it. We all really just covered each other at all times no matter what. I loved that, and I loved the spectacle of it all.

Nancy Davies: What have you taken with you in your life that you kind of still fall back on or teach other people?

[00:31:00]

Theresa McClean: Well, I love to tell people that everyone is, they're just people. There's so much prejudice in the world where you just have this misconception that because they're not you, they're different, but it's not true. Everybody is the same. All of us, well, probably just the girls, we've all seen each other crying. We've all had the same things with families and people talk about kids and this and that. Everybody is the same. Everybody is ... There's some people from any culture that you may not care for, get along with, but some you just love, and it's just the same across everyone.

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And I've also learned, one, to eat a lot of foods that I would not have ordinarily been brave enough to try, and some I liked, some I didn't, but I gave it a shot. I'm just so grateful for the multicultural friendships that I have. If I pick almost any country in the world, I know somebody there that I can go see. But on the other hand, almost any tragedy that has been happening in the recent times I know somebody there also, so that's kind of ... but I wouldn't trade it anyway.

Nancy Davies: All right, let's dish a little dirt. You don't have to give names, but I know you know stuff. Was there some big romance that went on and then it broke up, or was there ... Give me some dirt.

[00:32:30]

Theresa McClean: Oh, my goodness. I am not a usual dirt giver. Let's see if I can think of anything. Well, there were always some romance on or off, but I don't know. Somehow I mostly stayed out of that gossip, probably because I was just too goody two-shoes and not involved.

Nancy Davies: May I ask you, did you date anyone on the show?

[00:33:00]

Theresa McClean: I did date someone on the show for a short period of time, but, yeah.

Nancy Davies: How is that? Because there's no getting around you work and you live together in this big, you can't avoid seeing them.

Theresa McClean: It was definitely difficult. We broke up on pretty decent terms, but it still was very, very painful, and working every day and seeing every day and then he got a new girlfriend, and that was really rough, but, I mean, I knew going into it that that was a possibility.

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Nancy Davies: And you got through it.

Theresa McClean: I got through it.

Nancy Davies: And stronger for it.

Theresa McClean: Yes, exactly. Not much can phase me then in the dating world if I've survived that.

Nancy Davies: Do you have any stories that come to mind that we haven't talked about that you'd like to share?

[00:34:00]

Theresa McClean: Gosh.

Nancy Davies: I know, when you get asked suddenly it's-

Theresa McClean: I know, I know.

Nancy Davies: You'll think of them all when we're done.

Theresa McClean: I'll think of it. Yeah, definitely.

Nancy Davies: Well, if something comes to mind, that's fine. Just let it ruminate in there.

Theresa McClean: Yeah.

Nancy Davies: Let's talk about the one thing that I hate to have to talk about. What did you think when you heard Ringling Brothers was ending?

Theresa McClean: I was just devastated. I felt like a family member had died because it was my life for that period of time, and it was so important to me that I was just ... The wind was taken out of me. I just couldn't believe it.

[00:34:30]

Nancy Davies: How does it make you feel knowing now that it's ended, there will be no other people who get to say that they worked with this show, were a part of the show. How does that make you feel to be a part of this history?

Theresa McClean: Well, it makes me so grateful that I did take that leap of faith and join, because I think that we just all assumed that because it had been around for so long that it would continue to be around. It was just taken for granted in many cases, and I'm so glad that I had the opportunity when I did to experience it, because there's nothing like it. I've visited other shows and they're wonderful, but they don't have the grandeur and the quantity of people to really give that impression of, how can 100 people be a family? How can 300 people be a family? But you can.

[00:35:00]

[00:35:30]

Nancy Davies: When you told your family and friends that you were going to join the circus, what did they say?

Theresa McClean: My mom said, "Oh, no." Then other ones were like, "You?" Because they knew that I was not the one to be all that adventurous or do crazy things on the spur of the

[00:36:00] moment, but I just felt that it was the right thing to do. I felt peace about it, and said, "I'm going to go try it."

Nancy Davies: Did they all turn around [crosstalk 00:36:07]?

Theresa McClean: Oh, yeah, they did. I mean, they were happy. I mean not happy, but they loved to kind of vicariously live through me and come out and visit the show. My mom trusted-

Nancy Davies: Hear the stories.

Theresa McClean: Oh, yes. I used to send out emails periodically with some adventure updates and-

Nancy Davies: See, that's what we need. We need to get ahold of those emails.

[00:36:30]

Theresa McClean: Yeah, I've got them somewhere saved.

Nancy Davies: Is there anything else that I haven't asked that you want people to know?

Theresa McClean: I just want people to know that the circus is so special and to keep on going to see circuses, the ones that are left, and supporting the people who really make it their life's goal to make you happy by performing. That it's a dying art, but it's still, it's art. That's what I want people to know.

[00:37:00]

Nancy Davies: Theresa, thank you so much.

Theresa McClean: You're very welcome. Thank you so much.