

CWM Audio 70-8

Lewis Glover, Lisa Glover, Marissa Hitchcock, and Julie Harter Interview by Nancy Davies July 21st, 2017

Part 2

Interview conducted by Nancy Davies

- Nancy Davies: All right, section two interview with Louis, Lisa, Julie, and Marissa. I'm gonna hold that question with you, Louis about the train because you've indicated to me that Marissa has quite a story to tell.
- Marissa: Oh, well, let's see, 1992, I was at a nightclub in my hometown. I was dancing at a dance group there so I danced everywhere. And this guy asked me to dance. And he apparently was a promoter for the show. He goes, "You're a good dancer. You should audition for the circus."
- [00:00:30] And I'm going, "There is no circus in town. This guy is a freak." I had no idea.
- So anyway, we exchanged numbers and when the show came to town, I called him. He set up an audition in Roanoke, Virginia, my hometown. I went, not knowing anything about the show and the life on the road. Went, I auditioned. Two days later they called me and asked me if I could join.
- And I said, "Well, my birthday's in two weeks and I've got plans. Can I wait?" So I joined the day after my 22nd birthday.
- [00:01:00] John [Deito 00:00:56] was the performance director and he's the one who pretty much hired me. Zeta [Wensel 00:00:59] was my dance captain. I've lost touch with her, which breaks my heart because she was amazing. And I remember watching the show after the audition and seeing these girls ride motorcycles.
- I'm going, "Oh, my gosh, I don't know how to ride a motorcycle." Didn't realize they were battery operated but of course, when the show started, I got the one that the battery always died on. So I was the one who was riding on the track. The battery would die. I would have to get off the bike and walk off the floor. Yay, new dancer.
- [00:01:30] So I came there thinking I was gonna be there for six months til the end of the tour. Eleven years later, fell in love with it and did a little bit of everything. My husband and a lot of my friends call me the Tada Girl because anytime an act person was sick or pregnant, they're like, "Marissa, you go do that. Go ride the ostrich. Go ride the camel. Do whatever."
- [00:02:00] And I'm like, "Okay." And I worked on animal crew and did all the cherry pie work, pulling rubber. The only thing I didn't do was focus. I didn't do up in the air for the lights. I'm not an aerial person. Give me animals or ground work. I don't care about getting dirty. I am a showgirl but I don't mind working a little muscle now and then.

Showing the boys how it's done, basically.

Nancy Davies: Excellent. And then when you would afterwards, you'd go back to the train. What would you go back to?

Marissa: To a room that now after living on the train, I can live anywhere. I can go to my friend's house and it's like, "You don't need to have a couch. As long as you have a closet, I'm fine. Give me an outlet and access to a bathroom."

[00:02:30] It's amazing how much in 11 years you can fit in a train room. Thankfully I ended up dating a guy who had a trailer so I had a little more space. But like the married couple over here, I did meet and fall in love with a clown and got married. Unfortunately, we are no longer married but we're still very good friends. And he lives in Las Vegas where I live now and we all work together, me, him, and my husband and my husband's ex-fiancee who's also a performer. We all work together.

[00:03:00] That's the one thing I think with the show is you have so much more respect for other entertainers and the people that you meet. The work ethic is amazing. All the circus people, it's like you can't get a work ethic like that from anybody else. Nowadays, it's like I see people and I'm like, "Really? You're tired because you raised your arm?" I said, "You don't know what tired is." You know, 15 shows a week.

Julie: Yeah, trying to do a six-pack or nine-pack on a weekend.

Marissa: And load in load out at the garden.

Julie: My feet would just be throbbing and I would just put a chair in the shower.

Marissa: They have massage therapists now on tour-

Julie: Not in '84.

[00:03:30] Marissa: And I'm like, "Are you kidding?" Where was that when we were there?

Julie: I'd sit there, just like, "Ah." God, I'd be exhausted.

Nancy Davies: Julie, [crosstalk 00:03:37] Oh, I'm sorry.

Marissa: Oh, I'm sorry, I just had a question for Julie.

Nancy Davies: Yeah, go ahead.

Marissa: How many dancers were on tour when you were ...

Julie: 16.

Marissa: Yeah, that's how many we had. I was talking to one of the other ladies and she said when she started, it was 30. I couldn't imagine having to deal, in charge of 30 girls. That's the hardest part on the train, too 'cause it was the girls' car. You know, girls are catty anyway but we work, sleep, eat, breath together and we live on the same small train car. You have 15 girls on the train car and you can't expect everybody to be friends all the time.

[00:04:00]

Nancy Davies: But it was great so that's what I'm saying. You learn a lot of patience. Now Julie, unfortunately has to leave us. So before she goes, I want to ask you, is there anything you want to share with people about your thoughts about Ringling? A story you want to tell? What do you want to leave people with?

Julie: Oh my gosh ... Put on the spot ...

[00:04:30]

Lewis: That's a tada moment, right there.

Julie: Oh, gosh ...

Nancy Davies: How did the circus change your life? Let me ask you that.

Julie: It opened me up because I was 24 when I went in the circus. Turned 25 in the circus. But I think I was a very naïve 24-year-old. From California, been in California my entire life. And now I'm on the show with people from other countries, other states, just opening up my life, my mind.

[00:05:00]

[00:05:30] My best friend, Ladonna, she was from Detroit and very first day, we get in and she's outside the train car. She's smoking a cigarette and she looks so tough and so mean. And I'm thinking she's scared me 'cause I'm this little naïve girl from California. Her boxes hadn't arrived and she was upset about that. But we just hit it off. When she showed up yesterday and just started crying because we have this bond that I don't have with anybody else.

[00:06:00] The circus, it just made me grow as a person. Made me learn more things and be more open to meeting different types of people. It was a experience of a lifetime. Experience of a lifetime.

Nancy Davies: Julie, thank you so much.

Julie: Thank you very much.

Marissa: Yay!

Lewis: Yay, Julie! ...

