

Interviewee: Maley, Carla
Interviewer: Shannon Calloway
Date: March 13, 2008
Category: FSU; Circus
Status: Open
Tape location: Box #57

Calloway: Ms. Maley, is it okay that this is being recorded?

Maley: Yes.

Calloway: Okay, great. Just to start off, could you tell exactly what capacity you were involved with the Circus?

Maley: Certainly. I was involved actually in probably every capacity you could. I started out, my Dad was the cottage manager and I lived actually in the cottages at Callaway Gardens, and I grew up as a child--- I mean, from the time I was zero the Circus has been there. And I started at age 3 going for one to two weeks every summer as a kid in the camp. So I did that up until age 14, I would participate in the program as a camper. They would let employee's children do that for two weeks out of every summer. And then probably at about the age of 10 I started--- Dickie, I knew him very well and I used to always be around the Circus tent, and he let me learn how to run the music for the shows. So at about the age of 10 until I graduated from high school I used to run the music for all the Circus shows.

Calloway: Oh, wow!

Maley: And then at age 14, at that time you could start work when you were 14, so at the age of 14 I was an assistant counselor, and I worked with the recreation program as an assistant counselor. And then the next year they changed the law and I couldn't work, and then 16 up until I graduated from high school, so the next three summers, I guess, I worked as an assistant counselor, too, working with the Circus students and the recreation program. And I continued to run the music for the shows. And then I went on to FSU, and I was never in the Circus, but I would often visit there and whatnot. And most recently, two summers ago, I took my kids back and was a guest at Callaway Gardens, and saw the Circus from that point of view. Which was great.

Calloway: Yeah, I bet. How old are your kids now?

Maley: My kids are five, seven, and eight.

Calloway: Okay. And you keep taking them back every year?

Maley: Yes. My parents still live in Pine Mountain, so we go back many times every

summer. And they love it. Their favorite thing is to go to the Circus.

Calloway: Oh, great!

Maley: We go more than once when we're there, and in fact we were at home show last year, we took them to that.

Calloway: Oh, great! What years was this--- I mean, generally?

Maley: Well, I was born in 1966, and I graduated from high school in 1984. And then I was at Florida State from '84- '88.

Calloway: Okay, so just about the whole time the Circus was at Callaway, you were there.

Maley: In some capacity, yeah.

Calloway: When you said you lived in the cottages, were you in the cottages all year round or just in the summer?

Maley: Yes. No, all year round. My Dad was the manager, and our house was actually adjacent to--- at the time it was the office, it's no longer that. But do you know where the swimming pool is now?

Calloway: Yes.

Maley: Right across from there was our house. There was no swimming pool at the time that I lived there. But I lived -there up until about--- I think until I was 13, and then we moved to where my parents live now. But it was a house that was connected right to the cottage office.

Calloway: Oh, okay. I think it's the laundry room now.

Maley: Well, it's up from the laundry room. It's the building that's up in between that entrance and the laundry room.

Calloway: Oh, okay. Okay

Maley: I think they use it. I think they actually rent it out now.

Calloway: Oh, interesting.

Maley: Yes.

Calloway: Where did the circus performers live?

Maley: They lived in the cottages. There were two dorms, a boy's dorm and a girl's dorm. And they lived there.

Calloway: So the dorms were separate, and then the coaches had their own dorms?

Maley: Well there were two dorms, a boy's dorm and a girl's dorm. The boys dorm--- they were the same, basically. They had one massive living area and then one very long sleeping area where all 13 of them slept. There were, I think, 14 beds in this long hall, and then a big bathroom. And the same for the girls. And then the two coaches each had their own cottage.

Calloway: And do you know when the circus dorms got moved off of the property?

Maley: That happened--- I want to say I was in college. So probably, like, around '85, maybe. And I don't know if that's exactly correct, but---

Calloway: But fairly recently, then.

Maley: Yes.

Calloway: Okay. And were they like bunk bed style, or---?

Maley: They had--- I think that there were two bunk beds in each room, but most of them were just single beds. Literally it was like a long hall and there would be six beds on one side and six on the other.

Calloway: Oh, okay. So they didn't have separate---

Maley: But at the very end of each hall was a--- well, it was one long hall with all these beds, and at the end of the row were bunk beds. There was one set of bunk beds on each row.

Calloway: Okay. And did they each have their own kitchen?

Maley: Yes. Each dorm?

Calloway: Right.

Maley: Yes, off the little [tape halts -inaudible] [??]

Calloway: Okay. And what was the role of the circus performers in the summer recreation program as counselors? Did they---

Maley: What was their role as counselors?

Calloway: Yes

Maley: I mean, well, to facilitate the games and keep track of the children, and move them from one event to the next event.

Calloway: So has the program changed at all? Because I know today we'll play games with them all day, and then take them out waterskiing sometimes or take them to arts and crafts. Was there any point where the Circus performers were teaching them waterskiing or anything---

Maley: No. In fact, when I grew up there was also--- I mean, I know there are still water ski instructors now, but when I was growing up there was more of a water ski team, where they had a water ski show every day much like the circus show every day. And those performers, you know, did all the water ski lessons during the day. And that has changed over the years because there's no longer a water ski show. But, you know, pretty much the camp really isn't that much different. I mean, there are little tweaks here and there but for the most part--- you know when I was a counselor we would go to sports games in the morning and then outdoor rec. and take them on a bike ride. You know with one age group you would go on the bike trail. It's really, from what I've seen and from what I took my kids to two years ago, it really isn't that much different. Minor changes but nothing really. For the most part the roles are the same.

Calloway: Okay. And did they always have like, Sunday afternoon bike hike and bingo and stuff like that? Or is that kind of---

Maley: No, that's kind of evolved over the years.

Calloway: Right.

Maley: And things have changed. You know, they used to have movies at the beach. I don't know if they still do that, do they?

Calloway: They do not still do that.

Maley: There's that amphitheater that's down at the beach. And they used to have a group that performed like, singing shows at that amphitheater as well. And then they would show movies down there at night. There's always been some sort of nighttime activity, it's just kind of evolved over the years. Like, I think now they do family Olympics, which they didn't do when I was growing up.

Calloway: Oh, okay. So there's always been something, but like you said, it's just changed over the years.

Maley: Yeah. And I think as the years go on they're doing more family things. And they've gotten better.

Calloway: What do you think that the Circus specifically brings to the Callaway summer program to make it so different than any other resort?

Maley: Oh, well it makes it so unique first of all. Because, you know, where can you go number one to see a Circus? And number two where you can go to learn and feel like you're really learning it yourself. And I think just the unique part that they are your counselors and throughout the week you develop a relationship with those people that you see performing every day. I mean, I think it's a relationship like no other. And plus it's dealing with college students, which I -think are a great--- you know, they have so much energy and excitement, and are such great role models for young kids.

Calloway: I know that a lot of the families that come to Callaway, and like you said, you were bringing your kids, come year after year after year and then they bring their children and their grandchildren, and it's such a family tradition to come to Callaway every year. Do you think that--- because that's not at every resort, and do you think that because the Circus is there, that that has anything to do with it?

Maley: I think a large part, for sure. I have, in fact, my son--- after I graduated from college I lived in Orlando for a long time, and then Tampa. And we moved back here about five years ago. And my oldest son, who's eight and I second grade started two years ago at a catholic school here in Atlanta. And two of the families--- and this is a small school, there's only 48 students in kindergarten, so it's a school of like 500 kids probably. Anyway, two of the families in his grade are Callaway families that have been going since their parents were young. And the grandparents--- one of them has been going for 30 years, and the other one for probably about the same. And now they go, now Jack--- my son's name is Jack--- now his friends are going and so it's the third generation, because it started with their grandparents going, and they brought their kids, and now the grandparents are bringing the grandkids, and it's great. So it's been neat, you know, to hear those people talk about how many years they've gone. One of my friends, Kelly, her husband, she says, "My husband grew up going to Callaway, and now we bring our kids there", so--- And I think that's unique to Callaway.

Calloway: I think so, too.

Maley: I don't know of anywhere else where people go back for that many years. And I remember growing up as a kid at Callaway, and the families that--- you know I could name the families that always came July Fourth every year for 20 years, and the families that always came the last week in July every year. You know, it's neat.

Calloway: And the kids develop, I think as well--- they get so excited because they know that all their friends are gonna be back the same week every year, you know? It's such a tradition.

Maley: Right. It is. And I think, also, you know, I saw over the years is I developed relationships with the different Circus performers, but you see the families develop relationships with them, too. You know, when there's performers that come back two, three and four summers, I think that is unique as well.

Calloway: I think so too. I ran into a girl at the supermarket who recognized me from the circus at Callaway Gardens, and it was just the best thing that's ever happened to me. [laughs]

Maley: Oh, that's great. I am still really good friends, now, with a lot of people who were in the circus when I was in high school. Because that's probably when I worked with the circus the most. And I'm still really good friends with them, and it's neat. It's a great thing.

Calloway: Right. It is. What about the relationship between the Circus performers and the other employees? I know we talked about the water skiers earlier and the lifeguards and I know that for a while they hired waitresses at the Inn. Was there a sort of rivalry between them or was it friendly, or did you notice anything?

Maley: When I was there I would say that there was more of a friendship between the water skiers and the Circus people, and I think probably because they were both from the college age. You know, a lot of the water skiers came from Auburn or Georgia, and were on college ski teams there. And I think, I don't know if rivalry is the right word, but there wasn't as close of a friendship between, say, the lifeguards who tended to be more local, high school age people.

Calloway: Oh, okay. Did they hire out the water skiers? Like, go search for them?

Maley: Yes, they did. A lot of them came from college ski teams. Some of them were local people, but a lot of them, I know, were Auburn skiers, and Georgia.

Calloway: Because, like you were saying, it was more of a show?

Maley: Yes. It was a show that they put on like the Circus did, you know, once a day and on weekends twice. It was a full ski show. I don't know if you've ever seen the ski show at Cypress Gardens?

Calloway: Right

Maley: It was a lot like that.

Calloway: Okay, wow!

Maley: They did double tricks, and they did like a pyramid, a three high pyramid, and they did jumps off the ski jump and---

Calloway: Yeah.

Maley: My whole time growing up there was a ski show.

Calloway: When did they stop the ski show?

Maley: I wanna say that was probably--- maybe the early '90s?

Calloway: Okay, so again, fairly recently.

Maley: Yeah.

Calloway: And have they started hiring out more kind of high school age students now for the water skiers?

Maley: You know, I don't know. I mean, I know now they just hire people that are instructors, but I couldn't tell you that.

Calloway: Okay. How about--- since you were a local, how do you think the town reacted to these 25 to 30 college students coming in for 12 weeks over the summer and then blowing out of there?

Maley: I think--- and, I mean, I probably have a very biased view because I was very involved with them, but I would say in a very positive manner. I mean, my Dad might tell you a different story [laughter] because he was running the cottages and also trying to manage guests as well as manage 25 college students while they were there. But I know different local people that have owned restaurants or whatever in town that have gotten to know different Circus performers that had a positive experience.

Calloway: That's the impression I get from everyone I've asked that question to, so---

Maley: Yeah. I mean, I'm very biased of the Circus, so I would certainly say positive, but I would think, too, in general it would be a positive experience.

Calloway: Okay. Do you know anything about what the Circus kids did for recreation when they had any time off!

Maley: A little bit. Especially going back to the '80s when I was in high school. Sometimes they would go back to Tallahassee on their day off, go to Atlanta to Braves games. And every year when I was a part of it they would go on a white water rafting trip down the Chattooga. Things like that. You know, shopping in Atlanta, perhaps. I don't know, what do you guys do now?

Calloway: About the same. Minus the whitewater rafting. [laughter]

Maley: That was always a yearly trip, which was fun.

Calloway: Yeah, I know some people go down to the Little Grand Canyon, but I've never been, so I don't know.

Maley: People go to the Gorge; they would go to the Gorge like in North Georgia.

Calloway: Uh-huh. Yeah, I've heard that, too.

Maley: And every year I think a Braves game was always an outing.

Calloway: Yep. Hasn't changed much, then. [laughter]

Maley: And I think that's part of the great thing about it. It really hasn't changed that much, really. I mean, I think the different dorm living is probably--- I know a lot of people that I was friends with lived in the older dorms and hated it when they saw it go to the new dorms. Because they felt like they became so close to people living all--- you know, they basically all lived in the same room. But really, I don't think it's changed that much.

Calloway: No, I don't think so.

Maley: It has to be better, I can't imagine sleeping with 13 people for an entire summer.

Calloway: Yeah, I imagine you'd get few up with each other pretty fast. [laughs]

Maley: Yeah, exactly. I can't imagine it.

Calloway: I know that--- we have all separate rooms now--- and they were talking about remodeling it and we were all so upset and so appalled that they would change our dorm, so I imagine that moving it off the property was a big deal to the Circus kids.

Maley: Yeah, it was. I mean, they were very--- I remember certain people that were very upset about it and how different it was going to make the experience.

Calloway: Oh, sure, I bet.

Maley: But, you know, we always feel that way about change.

Calloway: You had said that you were a junior, or an assistant counselor--- Were there a lot of those? Were they hired by the Gardens?

Maley: They were hired by Callaway, and there weren't very many. There were probably--- let me see--- and some of them actually were LaGrange College students, because LaGrange College used to perform summer plays at Callaway. They used to have a summer theater at the cottages in, I guess they call it Laurel Hall. They used to perform plays there every summer. There would be, like, probably three different plays that would run during the summer. And so some of the LaGrange college students that were in the plays would work as assistant counselors, and maybe one or two other high school students. I think because Dickie knew me well and that sort of thing, he allowed me to do that maybe at a younger age.

Calloway: Oh yeah, I'm sure.

Maley: Perhaps, I don't know. [laughter] But there were probably, I would say 6-8 of us. And when the Circus people had their day off on Wednesday we would run the recreation program, just the eight of us.

Calloway: Oh! Okay.

Maley: And it was very scaled back on Wednesday, but we ran the program.

Calloway: So all the Circus kids had off!

Maley: They all had off on the same day.

Calloway: And they left all the responsibility to you guys.

Maley: All the responsibility to us. [laughter]

Calloway: But you kind of had known the kids and been working with them, so it wasn't---

Maley: Yeah, so we had been--- you know, you stayed with your age group. And the activities were much simpler on Wednesdays.

Calloway: Okay, I see.

Maley: You know, like we might have taken a bus to the Discovery center and then someone there would do a presentation or whatever. So it was a lot simpler. It wasn't like I was running kickball all by myself.

Calloway: That would just be impossible.

Maley: Yeah, it would be.

Calloway: How many kids on average were there in the groups?

Maley: Like, in a whole age group?

Calloway: Yes.

Maley: I would say--- and it just varies from week to week--- but anywhere from 60 to 100, I guess.

Calloway: Oh, gosh! Yeah, that sounds about right. And were they separated by age? Like, I know now there's 7-8's, 9-10's, 11-12's?

Maley: Yes, same way. And then we would, as counselors, get a small group. So you would have a group of like, eight to ten kids that you were in charge of in your big group.

Calloway: And how many counselors to a group were there?

Maley: Again, it would vary. Cause some weeks you would have a lot of 7-8's and not as many 9-10's. But you would, I guess, have five Circus people and then two assistant counselors.

Calloway: Okay. What about the show over time? Has it changed at all?

Maley: I would say that I've seen a lot of peaks and valleys. There've been times that you go and you think the show is unbelievable and you've never seen anything like it. And then times where you can tell that there's newer people. But I think ups and downs, you know, the last few years there've been new acts like that Chinese Pole thing that they never used to do before. But most of the acts, for the most part--- In the time I was there I saw someone do the triple at Callaway, I saw someone do the five high on teeterboard, I've seen the seven man pyramid on the high wire. You know, a lot of really neat things. The guy that did--- how many on a bike? Nine on a bike?

Calloway: I think nine.

Maley: Yeah.

Calloway: And did you ever, I mean, I know when you were in the rec. program you got to play around on the flying trapeze and everything?

Maley: Yeah. And I did, too, when I worked there. I have flown the bar and done Mexican. One time I even, when John Woody was in the Circus he always wanted me to be in a show, so I was his assistant on the Slack Wire. [laughter] So, you see, I've really done it all.

Calloway: Absolutely, yeah, you've been all over the place.

Maley: I'm the closest thing to being a Circus performer with never being one.

Calloway: Absolutely! [laughs] Well, I'm out of questions, but do you have anything about your personal experience, or anything else you'd like to add?

Maley: The only thing I can tell you is that it was an immensely positive part of my growing up. Coming from a small town like Pine Mountain, to have the influence of the Circus was just a great, positive experience. It's the reason I went to Florida State, and I can't say enough positive things about it. And like I told you, I went there to camp, I worked there. and now I've taken my own kids there. And they feel the same way about it.

Calloway: Well, that's great.

Maley: And Callaway, to me, is a very special place, too. Because it was my front yard for most of my life.

Calloway: Absolutely.

Maley: So nothing but positive things.

Calloway: Well, that's great. That makes me very happy! [laughter]

Maley: And if you think of anything else I'm happy to help. Just let me know.

Calloway: Well, thank you very much. Let me turn off the recorder, but stay on the line.

[Transcription Ends]