

ORIGINAL

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RE: ASPCA v. FELD

Transcription of DVD/Audio Recording of a
Videotaped Statement of TOM RIDER, taken March
25, 2000.

Present:

Sharon Simms, Esq.

Mark Douglas Bradford,
Videographer and Notary Public



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1 married and my wife was working at Disney
2 World part of the time and I wasn't working.

3 Then 1996 I started with elephants
4 in the Clyde-Beatty Cole Brothers Circus. It
5 would have been Easter Sunday, 1996. No, I
6 take that back, '97. 1997 Easter Sunday. I
7 only worked there for -- it was 42 towns
8 before I went on to Ringling Brothers, joining
9 Ringling Brothers June 3, 1997.

10 And that pretty well brings me up
11 to now. There is a few little places in my
12 past that it would take a while to think about
13 what I was doing.

14 Q. That's fine. Thank you for going
15 over all that.

16 Let's start with, since you
17 mentioned Ringling Brothers, June 3, 1999,
18 what were the first responsibilities that you
19 had when you started --

20 A. It would have been '97, not '99.

21 Q. I am sorry, '97.

22 A. My responsibility -- when I first

1 of things did you see?

2 A. I will say, just starting at the
3 beginning -- actually, you know, I would say
4 in Austin, my first week there, you know, I
5 was so new, I really wasn't catching a lot of
6 it. I saw -- the thing that bothered me, the
7 first thing I noticed of (unintelligible) was
8 when they do the walk, warming
9 (unintelligible) before they go into the show.
10 They would hit him on the back of the -- their
11 back heels to make them move faster. And it
12 would sometimes be one, and sometimes they
13 would double up like a baseball bat and hit
14 them on the back of the heels when they are
15 trying to move them. This I've seen right
16 from the beginning. I saw that. That sticks
17 in my mind.

18 Q. Would you consider that a regular
19 practice?

20 A. Yes. On a daily basis.

21 Q. And it was by everyone -- would
22 you ever see a supervisor do that?

1 A. Graham -- (unintelligible) --
2 Graham Thomas Chipperfield was the one that
3 was doing the act. Usually those three were
4 in the dressing room, wouldn't come out, would
5 already be exercising them. At that time
6 there was really no one in the tent that was
7 of any kind of authority other than a Sonny
8 which is Robert Ridley. Last name. I am sure
9 it is Robert Ridley. We call him Sonny. He
10 would have been the one. He has been there
11 for 30 some years.

12 In that period of time there
13 wasn't anybody really in charge until Graham
14 and them came back to the tent. There was
15 Daniel Roffo, Alex Vargas and Graham Thomas
16 Chipperfield. But when they are in the
17 dressing room they will come in in the last
18 few minutes. At that point I was already
19 doing something else, infants in Austin. We
20 will start with the first town. I would be
21 doing something else. That's what caught my
22 eye from the get-go, was hitting them on the

1 heels, because I thought it would have to
2 hurt. It would hurt a human if you did it.
3 Break you to ground. And you would see the
4 girls kind of miss a step when they do it,
5 too. They hit them, they kind of jerked a
6 little. So --

7 Q. Excuse me. What were they hitting
8 them with?

9 A. The bull hooks.

10 Q. Which part of the bull hook?

11 A. The handle part, but, you know,
12 there was times, you know, sometimes they
13 wouldn't bother to turn it over so they could
14 actually hit them with the hook park. They
15 try not to. It could break the hook. They
16 tried to hit them with the handle part.

17 Q. And you said that this is -- you
18 would -- I just want to make sure I
19 understand. You consider this a regular
20 practice? You saw this on a daily basis?

21 A. I saw that every time there was a
22 performance.

1 Richard Chipperfield happened and Randy
2 Peterson came along. At that time, yes, I
3 believe, when we counted, there were 69 people
4 in two years. I was number 69.

5 We were running a score card on
6 me.

7 Q. Was it your impression, then, that
8 nearly everybody or a vast majority or a large
9 number of the 69 people did engage in that
10 behavior? Or was it only a few people?

11 A. It was a majority of the 69 but I
12 would have to sit down with a list of the 69
13 to figure out who was handling, because we had
14 some that basically were there for maybe one
15 or two days, three days, or a week. All they
16 did was help me in the barn at the time. It
17 is usually you are there five, six, seven days
18 and Randy would be saying do the hook.

19 One thing that I pride myself on,
20 from day one when I got my job from Graham, I
21 said, "Graham," I said, "Do I need a hook?"
22 He said, "Do you think you need one?" I said,

1 "No." I, from that point, never had a hook at
2 Ringling Brothers. I was the only one. And I
3 was very well noted for not having a hook.
4 And being very outspoken about it, too. I did
5 yell at them quite a bit.

6 I would say that at one point, I
7 don't know, in my two and-a-half year tenure
8 there, they came up and they were saying
9 something about they wanted -- Randy wanted to
10 get rid of me. It was in Greensboro,
11 North Carolina. And Randy said, "I'm going to
12 get you out of the circus completely." And I
13 said, "Well, I would be careful because I got
14 16 rolls of film of abuse." So I was kind of
15 noted -- I never had the 16 rolls of film but
16 it was nice. It put a little bit of scare in
17 at the time. They thought, maybe he does.
18 And for some reason I was never bothered
19 again.

20 I was asked the day before I left
21 to go to Europe, did I have that film, by one
22 of the girls, Jamie, that works on the --

1 January. I was in Europe at the time and
2 Andrea, well Daniel Roffo's wife, Andrea, said
3 her sister is still on the unit. Said Pat and
4 his wife quit. Pat went up to, he said,
5 Lexington with Frito-Lay. I just talked to my
6 daughter today. She is going to check that
7 for me.

8 But he quit over it because Gary
9 Jacobson and Randy were treating him like you
10 know what. And he was -- he got upset and
11 quit, walked off the show because of the way
12 he was getting treated.

13 I think the only -- my feeling,
14 strictly my feeling on it, from what I could
15 see when I was there, when Pat came back in
16 Boston it was very tense because Gary Jacobson
17 was constantly there with his wife. They had
18 the four baby elephants, Romeo, Juliette and
19 Shirley, and two that I still can't remember.
20 And you could see it was pretty tense right
21 then from the get-go. Pat wasn't the same
22 person that left. He came back and he was

1 hooking. If I started naming names, I can do
2 that. But all your, quote, handlers were the
3 ones, they were constantly hooking. From day
4 one, you had Jeff Pettigrew and Randy Peterson
5 when he came. You had Daniel Roffo hook 'em.
6 You had Alex Vargas hook 'em. You had Graham
7 hooking them.

8 And this started from day one. On
9 a daily basis when they were walking them,
10 hitting them on the back of the heels or
11 hooking them to make them go faster. It would
12 be like if they were going to say, "Move up,"
13 it would be, "Move up" as they were hooking
14 and be giving the command. Instead of give
15 them the command, wait for the elephant to
16 respond, they would, "Move up, move up,"
17 hooking as they are saying it. The elephant
18 is going, "Ow," had no time to think. They
19 really weren't giving the elephant. That was
20 on a daily basis.

21 (Unintelligible) every other day.
22 But every town, there is not a town on here

1 all the time. When they are walking, usually
2 once they get on the walk, and you get up a
3 pace, there is not too much hooking unless one
4 of them slows down and he gets on the back of
5 the ankle. Most of your hooking is when you
6 first take off on the walk, like, come on, go,
7 you know. Especially with Daniel Roffo, he
8 would hook them very hard. He was always
9 walking -- Mini was always in the front. I
10 know that you can go up to any one of those
11 elephants on a daily basis right now and feel
12 the scars and scabs behind them from where
13 they had been hooked so much.

14 Nicole is no longer -- she is at
15 the farm, quote. She was the one that Randy
16 used to (unintelligible) get into and hook
17 her. I know she was developing arthritis from
18 it. Her leg was getting awful bad, have
19 infected and swelled up. They said, well,
20 they took her to the farm. I don't know what
21 happened to her after that. I would like to
22 know because that is Kenneth Feld's daughter's

1 miniature horses because of the pavement.
2 They can break a leg if they hit the wrong
3 step. We got onto him about that there and we
4 started walking a little slower.

5 Other than that, the daily stuff,
6 for the menu that year, we were just
7 constantly seeing more and more figuring out
8 who, at that point, it came to me, who was
9 hook happier than the other person. Who was
10 doing a lot of -- the beating at that time, it
11 was Jeff Pettigrew, some of your older guys
12 there, Sonny and (unintelligible) quote, acts,
13 the presenters. (unintelligible), Alex. Alex
14 wasn't too bad. He would have his days. He
15 was probably one of the very few supervisor
16 types that I seen. He is still with -- he is
17 with the tent show now. He is one of the very
18 few that I have seen that didn't really like
19 using the hook too much. He would get kind of
20 upset at Roffo and a few others when they
21 overused the hook. That became quite a big --
22 that was a very big thing on an everyday basis

1 Because when it comes up, like my
2 instance, when many of the elephants wouldn't
3 come out of the containers on the trip, they
4 tied the one, that is when they first told me
5 about -- I said, "Why do you do that?" He
6 says, "Well, you got to do that to train them
7 to lay down, or train them to do anything.
8 You have got to tie a rope on them to do it."
9 And I said, "So that's how they are trained."
10 He says, "Yeah, that's how they do it at the
11 farm." And that's one of the reasons the farm
12 is not open to the general public. Because
13 they can just block and tackle them. They can
14 do anything they want. If they want to make
15 them stand up, they can tie them and hoist
16 them up in block and tackle and make them
17 stand up.

18 That's a pretty well known fact in
19 the circus community. The general public
20 doesn't know it. That's their training.

21 Q. It is your understanding that's
22 the method that is used by Jacobson, by Pat,

1 by --

2 A. It is used by Gary Jacobson, Pat,
3 by Randy. It would be used by any circus that
4 is training their animals. It is even used in
5 Europe. It is like this is how you train an
6 elephant. You tie them up and you make them
7 do it until they do it. If they don't get it
8 the first time, you hit them.

9 Q. You have mentioned that the baby
10 elephants you are talking about -- I just
11 wanted to have you sort of give me a general
12 description, kind of summarize how it was that
13 you saw them, their experience of their being
14 kept, as opposed to the adult elephants.

15 A. Well, the only difference between
16 the way the babies were kept and the adults is
17 that their chains were smaller. They are on a
18 picket line. The chains weren't quite as big.
19 I rarely ever saw Benjamin off the chain.
20 Shirley was but he always would keep Benjamin
21 chained up because Benjamin was -- he would
22 get a little frisky with Shirley. He would

1 hated Graham. So as soon as Graham was gone,
2 it was I get to pick on the English. That's
3 one of the reasons I -- when I left, I went to
4 take care of, you know, with all the abuse I
5 seen at Ringling, when I went over to Europe;
6 I was hoping, hey, I've got my three girls
7 away from them. You know. Mini has got cuts
8 behind her ear that are 3 inches deep from
9 what Ringling did to her. And I think
10 Mr. Feld ought to see that. I've got pictures
11 coming of those.

12 MS. SIMMS: Well, I think we are
13 about wrapped it up for this session. Thank
14 you very much.

15 THE WITNESS: This session.
16 You are welcome.

17 MS. SIMMS: Thank you very much
18 for the statement.

19 (Proceedings concluded.)

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