TRANSCRIPT-CHRISTINA BUTLER

Interviewee: CHRISTINA BUTLER

Interviewer: DAVID STRINGER

Date of the interview: December 8, 2021

Place of the interview: Charleston

Length of the interview: 00:54:18

DAVID STRINGER: Alright. So, it looks like it started. So, my name is David Stringer and I am interviewing Ms. Christina Butler. We're talking on the topic of just working in stables, mostly with, you said mules and draft horses?

CHRISTINA BUTLER: Yes.

DS: And today is the 8th of December 2021. So, we'll start from here. Thank you again for agreeing to interview with me.

CB: Yeah, thanks for asking me. It's a great topic.

DS: Yes ma'am. So, I'll just start off with something we learned in class. Do you remember your first interaction working with mules and draft horses?

CB: Yeah. So I started working with drafts when I was, I guess, nineteen when I became a tour guide here in Charleston, and I grew up with horses, you know, rode English and Western, and worked as a stable hand from the point of thirteen until graduating high school, just, you know, cleaning stalls, grooming, tacking, that kind of stuff to pay for my board, so I'd loved horses since I can remember, you know, earliest

memories are playing with my little ponies and I just couldn't wait to get a horse. Never really thought I'd turn it into part of my career. But when I moved to Charleston, I realized that, oh, I can combine my interest in history, which is what my grad work is in, and equines by being a tour guide. And so, I passed-- at the time you had to take an exam, written and oral to be able to be a tour guide--And amazingly you didn't need any equine experience. They would teach you. But conveniently driving is not too dissimilar, voice commands wise, to riding. So, it was kind of a perfect job for me and I just kept on doing it. (laugh)

DS: Yes, ma'am. That's, I don't even know what to say, but that's awesome. I love horses as well. I used to have horses when I was younger. Then I later on worked as a stable hand. I just shoveled out the stalls--

CB: Yeah. (Laugh).

DS: I was really young, but I sort of do know it sort of what you did. I don't really get to tack or groom the horses, but yes, ma'am.

CB: That's the fun part. I mean, I like cleaning stalls and I feel like any occupation you're in, you have to do the dirty work and not just do the easy stuff in order to really say you can do the job and understand animal welfare. You have to kind of see both ends, but harnessing and tacking and riding and driving of course is more fun. (Laugh) and cleaning stalls on a day like this when it's pouring, especially.

DS: Yes, Ma'am. Well, my first question for you is, immediately my first thought was, is there any difference between dealing with drafts and mules from like a normal horse or is it generally the same--

CB: Yeah, that's a great question. There's definitely, there's differences. So, I grew up in Northeast Ohio close to, kind of equidistance between Cleveland and Erie in Amish country. So, it was common for almost everybody to take lessons at some point, not as much draft except the Amish. I mean, they used draft animals, but riding, we didn't, I had quarter horses and there were some Arabians and stuff at the barn, but I love working with drafts. It's mostly Percherons and Belgian and American Spotted drafts that I work with now. And, you know, disposition wise, they're like regular horses. They're a little bit skittish, but, they're, I think it's kind of hard to explain, you have horses, you know, they'll be alarmed at something, but they don't have as much of a bolting reaction as like a quarter horse when you'd show and a balloon would blow by and he'd go ballistic. You know, make a scene in the show ring. The drafts they're, they're kind of more collected. I'd say, um, the ones I work with are really good about voice commands and I guess a better way to put it is they know my voice and they know me because I feed them and take care of them. So, if they're -- when I train new tour guides, they always wanna be up in the driving lines, because they're nervous and they don't know what they're doing. And you know, they always, you're supposed to hold a whip just so you can steer if something goes awry, but they wanna just strong arm the animal. I mean, no, he knows your voice. Talk to him, and time and again, (laugh, knocks on table) usually talking to them, gets them through a stressful situation. I think more than a regular riding horse. Mules, mules I love them. You either love or hate them because they, as you

probably know, they get a really bad reputation for being stubborn and people think they're stupid, but really it's just that they have a strong self-preservation instinct. They're very—you can talk a horse into doing almost anything if he trusts you. A mule, he knows better than to do certain things. And so, I like working with them just because they're really good at self- preservation. If they're tired, they're just not gonna do it. And it's not because they're difficult. They just know it's like, okay, I'm done. They're also much less reactionary, hardly ever, because I've been driving now for gosh, this is depressing, seventeen, eighteen years and have very few instances where I had mules bolt. I've had draft horses do it not super often, but both of them, the Percherons, the Belgians. The mules, they're really ideal for city work because they're chill compared to a little hot-blooded Thoroughbred or something.

DS: Yes ma'am. Well, you talked about, you mentioned you growing up in Ohio. Do you wanna talk about that a little bit more? Like what did you do growing up? What, what led you to, I know you talked about the, my little ponies.

CB: Yeah. (Laugh).

DS: But what led you to really wanting horses?

CB: I just, I always loved animals. I still do. I don't know, know what it is. I just have more in common with animals, I guess, than humans. Not that humans are a problem, but if I'm in a bad mood or stressed, the minute I'm around a horse, I'm just happy and calm. So, I think, I think a lot of it is just, I like the relationship that you can have with animals. They don't, you know, they don't judge you, you can build a really

special bond with them. So as I mentioned, I didn't think I'd ever work with them. You know, I wanted to work construction, which I still do part-time but I went to trade school for carpentry and construction and then decided actually I like learning. I'm gonna go to college and I kept going. And so now my main job is teaching. I'm a college professor. I teach historic preservation at a trade college. So, my students are timber framers, blacksmiths, stone carvers, plasterers. So, I teach historic preservation and architectural history to people who are gonna work on buildings, but because I love horses so much, I just, I can't ever completely get away from that. And so now on my days off, I work still part-time in the carriages because I just love being around the animals. And I love training new people to work with animals, teaching them how to drive and it's fun because I'm also teaching them how to do public history. You know, how to be a tour guide, how to be accurate and engaging whilst driving, you know, three tons of animal. Well, not quite, two tons of animal (laugh) teams, you know, try to do that and talk. So, circling back around, I don't know what it is. I just have always loved old buildings and horses and I just can't get away from either of them, ever.

DS: I know, Charleston, I've always, like I said, I've always loved horses. I had horses for a while when I was growing up and I had donkeys or a singular donkey for a while. Oh nice. I loved both those animals. I had all sorts of different farm animals, but uh, Charleston definitely was very enticing, uh, with all the old, the history department here and at the Citadel and just the fact that the city itself is so historical. It's very, very enticing to me.

CB: Yeah. You go to a great college. I mean, it's a fascinating city and it's a really important institution with complicated, but cool history. So, I mean, that's what attracted me to Charleston too. And luckily, I can work with the carriages because horses, as you know, well, you might not have had to look at this, but it's very expensive to board in the Lowcountry, like mortgage expensive to board. So, I'm fortunate because I get paid to do something I would pay to do.

DS: Yes. Ma'am. I know, my mentee, actually sitting over there, he said he's a legacy. So, his dad came here.

CB: Ah,

DS: he said his dad, used to do horse PT here. Like they would ride horses in Hampton Park and I wish we had that now--

CB: I wish we did--

DS: --so cool. Cause they've got stables over there--

CB: Yeah--

DS: --and they're all run down, but they're still there.

CB: Well, you'll be happy to know. We're about to bring the mounted police back. We got rid of it. I guess it would've been 2011 or 2012 in the Great Recession. And so the city got rid of the mounted police and just a couple months ago they decided they're probably gonna bring them back.

DS: Wow.

CB: It used to be loads of fun because you'd see people practicing polo on their polo horses and you'd see the, uh, mounted police. So, it's coming back, which is--

DS: Yes Ma'am

CB: Nice.

DS: I've heard some, at least seen around on social media, that some people protest the concept of mounted police inside of a city.

CB: Yeah.

DS: What are your thoughts on that?

CB: In our industry, we get a lot of pushback where people think, you know, "it's horse abuse animals shouldn't be working". And my counter reaction would be having worked with drafts a good half of my life. At this point, they're like us, they get really bored when they're not busy. Some animals are bred to work. It would be like getting a border collie and putting it in an apartment like, it wants to pull, they want, they don't wanna be exhausted and exploited of course, but they wanna be busy just like humans. It's like a tiger in a cage at the zoo, pacing back and forth. They need stimuli. Also, as somebody who, part of my job over the years now, I mostly train humans to work with horses, but I used to train the drafts to work in the city. So, we get Amish animals from where I'm originally from, and they come here to the city to work and it's a much easier job pulling a carriage with rubber wheels on a flat paved city than the work they did for

sure. But there's a lot of stimuli in a city there's cars and kids on skateboards and just, you know, noise all the time. And so, it takes a minute to acclimate an animal to that. So, my argument to people who say, oh, you shouldn't have mounted police. You shouldn't have animals in cities would be that you can, we've had horses in cities, as long as there has been urbanity. It's not a new thing. Secondly, those animals are trained for this. Just like people in the military are trained for certain stressful atmospheres. Not that the city is a combat zone by any stretch. But we go through a lot of really careful training to make sure those animals can work in the city. And to be honest, sometimes this is, I have friends who work with mounted police. In Cleveland, sometimes you get a horse. He's awesome. He's great. But he's just not the right personality to work in the city. And so, we're smart. We don't wanna hurt humans or ourselves or an animal. I mean, most of us who do this for a living like you're gonna be doing with your own farm, you do it because you love the animals. And so, I, I can't speak for everyone because there's plenty of bad horse owners in the world, but my motivation is to work with them and have a bond with them, not to exploit or put them in harm's way. So, if I felt like it was an unfair situation for the animal, I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't be in the industry. I think a lot of it too is folks who don't work with animals. They don't understand what an animal is comfortable with and they're not. So, for example, one of the things that really bothers me with the (laugh) animal activists is that some of them ride horses and show horses in the heat and ride polo and they're hunter jumpers. And I'm like, you're okay with running a horse's temperature up to 106 in an August horse show, but you're mad somebody else is making a living with animals? So, I think there's a lot of double standards and I think a lot of it, I'm getting on a soapbox, but I'm going to say a lot of it is a class thing. It's definitely a

class thing. Because most of us who work with animals, you know, pig farmers aren't rich, carriage drivers aren't rich, um, steer farmers, they're not rich. And so I think it's very easy for those wealthier folks with very expensive horses that just show, to look and say, oh, well, you know, that's exploitative. Well, it's just a different type of riding than what you do. It's a different type of animal use. And I think the other big part of it is, most humans, they don't work with animals anymore and that's kind of sad in a lot of ways and. And I'm not gonna lie, animals have been exploited a lot by humans over time. You know, and there's some communities in other parts of the world that are still pretty atrocious, but I think it's very easy to judge something you don't understand. And I think so many humans today in the 21st century in the US, they've never touched a horse. And so, they don't always understand, you know. For example, small children, you maybe did this as a kid, you run up to the horse, you couldn't wait to touch it. Adults do stuff like that. They'll like walk right up to the front of your horse while you're driving in the street. And it's not that they're trying to be disrespectful, or stupid, they just have no frame of reference because equines are alien to most suburbanites. So short story long, I think a lot of the, um, anti-mounted police, anti-carriage crowd, it just comes from misunderstanding.

DS: Yes ma’am.

CB: Yeah.

DS: I can probably make a good guess that the same people that are saying don't use horses in the, uh, don't use horses inside of the city to pull carriages are the same

people that get a German shepherd or a, an Australian shepherd or an Australian cattle dog, and then keeps it in a C of C [College of Charleston] dorm.

CB: Exactly. Yeah. It's really, it's frustrating. But I think a lot of it is just, you know, education, people can't understand what they don't know and some people are willing to learn and some aren't. I'm actually working on a book right now, just under contract with University of South Carolina Press, looking at working equines in Charleston, like the history of horses in this city. And there's a lot of good books on basically the fact that equines built the United States. And most of that work looks at Northern cities, because those cities are bigger, but I think Charleston's a great place to look at the history of horses because we still have them. And so, there's kind of a continuity with working animals. They've always been in the city. And we have a lot of surviving stables and carriage houses and stuff that have been converted into dorms and condos. So, I think it's a fun city in general to study history, but you can see a lot more of our equine legacy here than you could in most places that don't have such a big historic district. And so, you know, working on that has been a lot of fun and just seeing how pervasive horses were in cities. I mean the city of Charleston fire department owned about forty horses. They did all the work, they were your only delivery animal. And so, I think it's cool for visitors to still see horses in a city because that's the way it was until really recently. I think it's also really important to have regulations, to make sure that they're taken care of. United States cities are pretty good about regulations for carriage horses, other communities aren't. So, can horses still work in a city, mounted police, carriages? I think, yes. I see it happen successfully every day.

DS: Yes ma'am. It's the way you pointed out the, with Charleston, it's a horse city, you can look at the roads.

CB: Yeah. (Laughs)

DS: They're tiny roads. So, the, you just know it, there's no two-lane driving. You're not blinkering over in front of a carriage--

CB: Right

DS: Back in the day, the way you can look over and see the, the city was built for horses, cuz it—was it fifteen hundreds, sixteen hundreds, when this, this whole city was made? But it makes me think of all big cities, not even big cities, but just cities in Texas in general, everything has one ways cuz it's all cattle towns.

CB: Yeah.

DS: My hometown of Waco, Texas has roads that go like, people don't know how to come from and driving them when they come from the north. And that was a big thing cuz side story, my Magnolia fixer upper. I don't know if you know it. They came in and moved into this spot right next to my high school. And then I almost got hit by cars all the time. Because they didn't know how to drive on the one ways. Cuz it's cattle roads.

CB: Yeah (laughs)

DS: Cause you can't drive cattle two ways. Yeah, I almost got hit by cars several times, but uh, now, you know, they're um, before I get distracted, I'm interviewing you.

CB: (laugh).

DS: But my next topic I was gonna talk about, you said you've talked, worked in stables, right?

CB: Yeah.

DS: What is the worst and the best parts of working in stables? Like what's the best jobs and the worst. I mean you kind of touched on shoveling and tacking.

CB: You know, I like shoveling horse crap. I don't know what it is. Just the smell of animals. You walk into the barn and you smell the hay, you smell the manure. I just love it. It's like an organic homey kind of smell to me. So, it's not, it's not the dirty aspect. I'd say the worst is just, and you know this as somebody who works in farming with steers, you gotta get up and feed those animals. It doesn't matter if it's, you know, where I'm from, negative ten, doesn't happen often, but it does. And you're like, well I have to drive. I've gotta break all those water buckets. I've gotta make sure everybody's taken care of, you can't take days off. I'm really lucky cuz I'm a part-time or I teach and I do the carriages, mostly for fun, write about horses for fun. But when it's your full-time job, I think the worst part is you can't, you can't take off. As someone who hates the cold, which is why I live here now, that was the worst part, just being freezing (laugh) at six in the morning. And because I don't mind the heat, you know, I like working in the summer. I'd say the best part is just the bond you form with animals, you know, being around them and seeing them be happy to see you. Not, not just because you're the lady who feeds them, but you know, seeing them be happy to see you, in the middle of the day, they're

off for the day and you go in their stall and they come over and put their head down and they just wanna snuggle. I mean, that's the best part. That, and I think the other best part for my industry for the carriages is getting to share that love, share something so special with other people who, you know, nothing's better than seeing a little kid reach out and touch a horse for the first time. And the drafts are so gentle. Mules are pretty tolerant, but drafts are really gentle. They just, they seem to instinctively know that this human is small or that this human is afraid. Riding horses a lot of times will take advantage of that and screw with you and the drafts, not to romanticize them, but they seem to just be really kind of patient. And so, it's fun seeing people get to share that love that I have for all the horses. That's the best part. For sure.

DS: I have not personally spent a lot of time around drafts, but from what I've heard is that they're gentle giants.

CB: Yeah. They really are.

DS: They're really cool horses. The horses I had were all quarter horses.

CB: Yeah.

DS: I don't have 'em anymore, but I loved them. But I remember the first time I, as a little kid, when I got put up on that little attaching baby saddle that goes on the back of the normal saddle and I was like, oh, this is cool--

CB: This is the best thing ever!

DS: I'm a cowboy! But uh, yeah, I remember that.

CB: It's funny cuz some people like us, they just gravitate towards animals. The first time they see them, they just want more, and other people just never want to, they're just afraid. And they're like, no, I'm okay to stay fifteen feet away from that. And that's something I can never understand cuz I just wanna be close to them all the time. But you know, everybody's different. I loved my quarter horses. They were great, but the drafts are definitely generally easier to deal with.

DS: They all, I mean, all horses are pretty, but draft horses are gorgeous.

CB: Yeah.

DS: I know I talked to you a little bit before the interview started about, uh, the L.E.A.R.N. Horse Rescue. Do you work with them at all?

CB: I don't, you know, and I donate to them on occasion and I've always wanted to do more work with them, but they're not downtown. And I know this is a stupid first world kind of thing to say, but I live downtown and I bike mostly. And so, I just don't get in the car to go to where L.E.A.R.N. is very often, but they do great work. Yeah. And they're a pretty realistic rescue. There are some rescues, not in Charleston so much, but there's a lot of equine rescues that are anti-working animal. Again, they're fine with riding, even though it's kind of the same thing, but anti-working animal, which I think is really idealistic and maybe not fair, but L.E.A.R.N, they're very practical people, you know, they're farmers, they're regular people. And so, I think they're a great, they're a great rescue and they take on other animals too on occasion.

DS: I didn't know that.

CB: Yeah. I think they've got a couple of, they've got some hogs or at least they used to. They're mostly horses, but occasionally they'll get some rando in a rescue and they'll keep it. And so yeah. Good folks.

DS: Yes. Ma'am I was looking at their website yesterday and they have a lot of quarter horses that are like bureau of land management.

CB: Yeah.

DS: The stuff gathered from like, some of 'em like from Wyoming that just got somehow ended up in Charleston.

CB: Yeah.

DS: And so, they have all sorts of stuff. I was looking through some of their bios, they've got stuff from super skittish were really abused horses to this horse just didn't have a home that needed to go somewhere. And they try to, I don't know if they'd really train 'em up. Like they they'd train 'em to like ride or lead or stuff like that. But they don't do like dressage or anything.

CB: Right. (Laughs) they train 'em to make sure they're safe before they rehome--

DS:Yes Ma'am

CB: You know, and then it's up to the next owner to be like, I'm gonna try and make a dressage mule out of this part. Which apparently is a thing these days.

DS: Really?

CB: Yeah. Mules are getting really expensive draft mules because the dressage folks they're now like the new niche thing, everybody wants a draft mule for riding, which is cool because you know, historically they've gotten a bad rap and they've always been kind of viewed as the working-class animal. And so, it's pretty cool to see them in a dressage ring (laughs).

DS: A dressage mule sounds --

CB: That's funny.

DS: To me like a King Ranch four by four F150. (Butler laughs) it's supposed to be a work truck, and then you made it fancy.

CB: Right, right. It has leather seats and that's not the point of a work truck, but you know, mules are very surefooted.

DS: Yes. Ma'am.

CB: And so, you could see how, if you could coerce one into doing dressage or jumping, they'd be good at it because they, you know, they can high step when they want to. (laugh)

DS: Yes Ma'am. I've seen on social media, this one page I follow, it's like South Texas, and there's just, I think it's called Broncs and Donks. And most of all their videos are just going up and down hills and donkeys are like it's nature's four by four.

CB: They are. (laughs)

DS: But I know my dad, my dad has always told me if I ever get a horse again, that I should get mules, cuz they're just really strong.

CB: They are.

DS: I don't know. What is it about mules—cuz it's donkey and horse —

CB: Mm-hmm

DS: what is it about it makes it so strong?

CB: So, you know, donkeys pound for pound, they're small, but pound for pound they're, they're pretty strong. They have pretty sturdy spines. It's not very often that you'll see kind of a sway backed one. Also, donkeys are bred for work. They're not bred for show. So, you don't get like Arabians they're pretty, but that almost deformed nose from overbreeding like you don't get those weird confirmation flaws very much in donkeys because they're bred for work, not beauty and pointless activities. I shouldn't say pointless—other activities, and mules, because they're hybrids, you get sort of the best of both worlds. And so, if you use a like Belgian draft horse mother, you're gonna get a big draft mule. And the donkey aspect also makes them pretty tolerant to the heat because they're hot weather animals. And so, mules were not very common in the north. I mean the Amish use them, but like mules in New York City's sanitation department, not so much a thing. Very popular in the south because they do really well in the heat. So, they would've been used a lot on plantations. And the City of Charleston had a couple dozen that were the garbage mules, like they pulled the trash carts and stuff. So, um, we take the animals' temperatures year-round after every tour. Main reasons, make sure nobody's

getting too hot, especially if it's a hot day, um, make sure nobody's ill because weather fluctuates and somebody might colic and we just wanna know right away. And then thirdly, with teams, animals are smart. There's always a lazy one. And so, we'll take the temps and make sure that everybody's pulling evenly and doing their, their fair share. And that's like regulated by the city and there's temperature cutoffs. You know, if this animal is this warm, they're done for the day, that kind of stuff. And that hardly ever happens. But mules, I mean Charleston summer, they come back, their body temperature. Horses are about a degree and a half warmer than ours, so like 99.5 to 101 would be normal for them. Mules, they can be out there like all day working and come back and they're like 99.2 cuz they're, you know, this is their climate.

DS: Yes ma'am.

CB: Yeah.

DS: That's something I never really would've thought because I my donkey super fuzzy donkey and pictures of mules--

CB: --Yeah (laughs)

DS: --I've seen they're super fuzzy. Horses. Like sleek, you'd think they'd be good in the summer, but

CB: We do clip 'em, you know, cuz it's — you don't need that coat here, but much like a German shepherd, the coat can actually kind of help keep the sun off of their skin. So, there's benefits to the donkeys being wooly, I guess (laugh).

DS: Yes ma'am. I'm trying to, trying to think. Um, what is your favorite? So, you, do you lead or lead? You have lead, um, like tours around Charleston. What is like your favorite part about it? Um, is it, do you like hitching up the donk, or the donkeys and horses or mules and horses? Or do you just like talking about Charleston or--

CB: I mean a little bit of both. I used to get stressed as a tour guide, you know, I was younger. I was like nineteen, twenty, twenty-one, when I was doing that full time. So, I went to CofC full time, and worked full time, and that was loads of fun and it was fun. And I got done on time and everything was great, but I used to stress because there's different routes and they spread us out throughout the city so that we're not causing traffic problems and I would stress, cuz you don't know what route you're gonna get, and they're all good, but I would overthink it. Oh, well I know everyone's gonna wanna see this thing. Oh, what if we get a different route? And I got over that over time because the whole city's beautiful and they don't know the difference, who wouldn't be happy riding around Charleston, but the animal part is my favorite part. Especially because I teach for a living, like I talk all day and share information. So, I like just tacking, you know, coming in at 5:30, feeding everybody, harnessing everybody. And then the rest of the day, take their temperatures when they come back, empty diapers because in Charleston we're required to have diapers to catch the manure on everybody. Grooming, clipping, that's, that's my favorite part of it. And I do like training new tour guides too. [phone buzzes] that that's you and not me. So, I think my favorite aspects are the animal aspects for sure. And teaching the next kind of generation to do this thing that I think is so fun, you know, to be able to share the animal aspect and the history of the city with tourists, it's public history. And I think yeah, you can hop on a tour bus and that's fine. But the

experience you get on a carriage is different. I mean, you're traveling through the city at the pace, like you said, with one way is for steers, you're moving through the city at the pace the city was intended to be experienced. Like that's what it was built for was a human and equine pace of travel. And I think you lose a lot of that when you're in an air-conditioned bus, there's something to be said for like being on a carriage outside, even if it's warm out that day and just kind of seeing the city and hearing the traces and hearing the horses the way everybody always would have in every city. And I think it's easy to take for granted those of us who are around animals, but for a lot of people that's alien and exciting and new and that's like their only chance to really see the city that way.

DS: Yes ma'am. Um, the next thing is there a, any kind of like lingo within the carriage business? Like how you talk to your coworkers or within like the stable, when you were working stables, (Butler Laughs) I know there's like the stereotypical cowboy talk where you go eat “chuck outta the chuck wagon.” I don't know if you really use that here in Charleston.

CB: You know, I can't, I can't think of much besides we tend to be a rough bunch. I mean, we swear a lot. You kind of have to, I've had a lot of new tour guides laugh and they say you're so tiny and you're so nice. And then like, he'll turn around and be like, you know, you stop that cuz sometimes you gotta holler at an animal, like when they're in their stalls and they're fighting with each other and you just gotta yell at em you know, knock it off! And people think that's funny that most of the women who work, especially with drafts, we're tiny and we love the animals, but you kind of have to be loud and tough. (laugh) especially if you're driving a team and they're being stupid and you're

using your voice and you're trying to be like, come on, y'all get up! And they'll go. And people laugh because they don't expect to hear that out of, you know, a small lady. So, lingo wise, not really, there's gotta be, there's gotta be stuff that I'm just taking for granted. I think one of the fun things is how many daily phrases that people use all the time are either carpentry related or equine related, like, you know, “chomping at the bit”, “rearing to go”, you know, “hemmin' and hawin'”, which is, you know, basically weaving left and right. You know, you're hemming and hawing, you can't make up your mind. And I'm sure it's mostly grandparents who say that now, but you know, you'll hear chomping at the bit. Um, “slacker,” that's a classic one. So, there's a lot of different theories. But when an animal isn't pulling hard there's slack in the traces. So, for the purposes of the recording, you know, the traces are the connecting pieces. So, an animal's wearing a collar so he can push into it to pull the carriage and the traces connect to the carriage. And when there's slack in those, or slack in your driving lines, it's cuz the animal stopped and he slowed down. So, it's being lazy or slacker. Everybody uses it every day. It's a horse term.

DS: And I can imagine that if it was in a team, you've got all the ones pulling and you got the one slacker and you can literally see the slacker. (Butler laughs).

CB: Yes. A hundred percent. You can literally see the slacker. And so, your job as a driver is to, you know, holler at that animal, and they know their name. So, they retired, but we had a team called Assault and Battery and I loved them. They were white Percheron mules and they always pulled evenly. They just worked. They were a dream team. We have another team, Uber and Lyft. Uber, he's a delight, he's the sweetest mule

you've ever seen. He just retired too cuz he was about twenty, but laziest animal, laziest animal. And like you could shout at him, you could tap him with the driving lines, nothing. He just was not gonna go. He was the epitome of a slacker. And so, Lyft is like this fit mule and Uber's, he's a boy, but he's shaped like an eggplant. Like you would think he was pregnant cuz he just waddles along and he doesn't do any work. They're so funny. All of 'em with their personalities. Oh, this is funny too., speaking of slackers, we have these two beautiful horses that sometimes they'll pull alone with the small carriage, the little white ones for four people. And when they pull a big carriage, they work as a team because could they pull it? Sure. But they're kind of smaller. So, we put them as a team and Dynamite is plump, beautiful, American spotted draft. She's so smart. She'll try like she she'll high step, like she's trotting. So, it looks like she's doing work. And then you look at her and she's like kind of doing it in place and there's still slack in the traces. So, she's legit trying to fake, “I'm pulling it. I'm doing stuff.” She's too smart. (laughs)

DS: That's funny. That's fun. And then going back, that's I did not even realize that slacker was an equine term.

CB: Yeah. I mean so many things are, and speaking of lingo in the states, we use step gee for right and step haw for left, you know, whoa, conventional things that cowboy folks like you are used to hearing. And as I've been working on this equine book, I'm like, you know, gee and haw, the Amish use it, regular Yanks use it. I said, I wonder if Europeans use it? Cuz I have a lot of friends in Ireland who are carriage drivers, horse trainers and stuff. So, I asked my buddy Lionel if he'd ever heard those terms. And he said, no, so apparently that's just an American thing. So, if you were to get on a, you

know, team of draft horses in Limerick and said, step gee, they'd be like, what are you talking about? (laugh) So our animals know those voice commands, but apparently, you know, there's different, different lingo even in the English language, different lingo in different, you know, parts of the world, which is fun.

DS: Yes Ma'am. I know, uh, you just go over the, or like even normal. It, it is funny that the, that specifically horsemanship, the lingo's different, cause you'd think that it being an older thing would kind of transfer between those, but like modern day stuff. Like we say, we're watching TV, they say they're watching the tube.

CB: Right. (laugh).

DS: and then they're --

CB: The telly.

DS: Watching the telly and they're gonna take the tube to work, we're like I'll have to hop on the subway and go to work.

CB: (laugh) right.

DS: But, it is weird to me that, the lingo between horsemanship is different.

CB: Yeah.

DS: Cause there's what is, there's like English riding. And then obviously we have the Western riding and all the Western saddles--

CB: Yeah

DS: And all that, the cowboy style stuff, but then English riding is they've got their English saddles. You think they have the same terms.

CB: You would think. So, you know, we invented Western riding and they, they have that discipline in, you know, all over Europe now, but it's, you know, uniquely an American thing and they have that kind of preconceived notion of us like, oh, well everyone who's American is either a New York city person or a cowboy (laugh). So well, those are just two small groups of the many diverse things you could be in the US. Another difference is on a carriage bridle we have blinders, which project off the side of the bridle, because A) you don't want an animal to see something that's gonna scare them, but more so, the shape of horse's eyeball is different. So, they'll see something outta the corner of their eye that they can't focus on, even if it's not scary, and they'll get startled. So, we call those blinders, the Irish call 'em blinkers. (Stringer laughs) And so when my buddy was saying blinkers, I thought like he meant an actual turn signal blinkers. And he's looking at me and I'm looking at him and I'm like, "oh blinders!" So yeah. (laugh)

DS: That's funny.

CB: Different terms.

DS: That is funny cause I hear blinders all the time and here at The Citadel, we'll bend our covers on the little brims of our hat and say we're putting on blinders. And I had one, my knobby cover knob year, I had a bend where I could basically just see a tiny little

tunnel. Couldn't see anything, but really was blind wearing that thing. (Butler laughs) Yeah. It's, it is funny that they don't use that term over there. Call 'em blinkers.

CB: Yeah

DS: What do they call the turn signals?

CB: I don't know. I'll have to ask next time I'm over there. Because, you know, carriages don't have turn signals per se. So next time I'm driving with one of them, I'll be like, what do you call this indicator- indicator—that's what they call it—

DS: That is what they call it indicator.

CB: I knew it would come to me. Yeah

DS: That is funny.

CB: The indicator

DS: That is funny. But you kind of talk, kind of mentioned it, but I can't really remember what you said. How did you get into the carriage business?

CB: So, I had been on a tour once as a visitor and thought it was a lot of fun and went to New Orleans and did one. And then somebody, somebody in the history department at CofC, one of my professors, I think mentioned that they were hiring and I thought, oh, well, you know what a perfect job. And back then, as I mentioned, you had to pass a tour guide exam and they wouldn't really start training you until you had it because they didn't wanna waste their time. So, I got the tour guide manual and some

notes from another tour guide who worked for a company I was hoping to work for. And I just crammed for three weeks in January, thank God it was the beginning of the semester before finals, or I wouldn't have been able to cram for all of it, and passed. And they hired me like the next day, as soon as I had my license. So just by, you know, word of mouth and it turned out to be really a perfect job in a lot of ways. And as I mentioned, I basically, I'm very lucky because all of my jobs, I get paid to do stuff I love enough that I would pay to do it. I mean, I love teaching. I love doing architectural carpentry. I love riding. I love being around horses and I get to do all of that. So, I think I'll probably, when I get too old to harness because, I'm 5'1, and not as small as I used to be, but still small. And the draft horses are like eighteen hands. So, for people who aren't familiar with that, the withers of the horse's shoulder high point is a good foot above me. That harness is heavy to like deadlift over your head, and I can do it, but I'm only thirty-seven. Like there'll come a time when I can't. And when that time comes, I'll probably switch back to being a tour guide, cuz it's physically easier to drive than harness and clean stalls. So as long as the industry exists, I'm gonna keep on keeping on with it part time. Cuz it's just so much fun.

DS: Yes ma'am um, well I don't really have any questions left, but is there anything that I didn't touch on that you wanted to talk about with your time working around horses? Could be about the carriage industry or just working in stables or just something about draft horses and mules that we haven't talked about yet.

CB: Hmm. I mean, I could bore you for days about the history, cuz the book I'm working on, what types of breeds were popular at different times and, you know, early

speed limits for horses. It's fun how literally everything was just done on horse time essentially. But one of the other things I really love about working with horses in the US where we don't eat them is, you know, that animal, you know it most of its life. I raised market pigs 4-H, so for people who are not from the north, 4-H is like the FFA, Future Farmers of America, 4-H is kind of the same thing. And so, there's all these different clubs for different animals. And I was in a bunch of different horse clubs, junior saddle, horse committee and all that, junior fair board. And then I thought, oh well it would be fun to raise, you know, market ducks and market pigs. And I did that one year. My pig, Marvin, he was a smart, not super friendly pig. So, I wasn't heartbroken when he went to slaughter, but I could never do that again. My two ducks, I ended up, I just couldn't part with them. And my parents were like, yay and now we're keeping these ducks (laugh) because I just couldn't bring myself. And there's, you know, I'm a vegetarian now and that's weird for people who work with animals. They usually look at vegetarians like fruit cakes. And so, when people get on my ass about — sorry, when people give me a hard time about animal abuse, I'm like if you eat burgers, shut your hole, giving me a hard time about working with draft animals. But anyway, I don't judge people who, you know, wanna raise steers. It's a great industry. As long as the animals are taken care of, you know, dispatched ethically, but I couldn't do it. And that's the fun thing about horses. You know, they don't age out, you keep 'em as long as hopefully their whole life. In our industry, we retire them. So that's worth touching on, where we get them from. They're either logging animals, Tennessee and stuff, or they're from up north. Amish. The Amish train the animals with harsher means than most people would think are okay today, not to paint all the Amish by the same brush, but I worked construction with them. They can be

a rough bunch of people. They'll train them and they'll work with those animals till they're about eight to ten years old and just like a car depreciates or you're like, “oh a hundred thousand miles, dump it, get a new fleet vehicle.” That's what the Amish do, you know, work the animal hard for five years. He's only ten. He's gonna live to be thirty hopefully, but he he's considered to be a little too old, a little too slow. So, there's not many homes for those animals and a lot of 'em end up going to slaughter or luck out and become some kid's pet or become carriage animals. And so, when we get them between like eight and twelve, we'll work with them, if they're an animal that fits our needs and works for the city, we'll keep them until they retire. And then we will basically (46:02) them and they go to homes where they're gonna be pets. So, could we sell 'em? Yeah. At twenty somebody would buy that animal and keep working it. But at twenty they put in their good years, they're, you know, the human equivalent of, I don't know, maybe sixty-five or something, time to retire. So, we have a few farms that love our guys and take them all over the Southeast. But we sent a few to Texas actually, but we require that person's gonna maybe plow with them a little bit or ride them, but not work them. Cuz for us, they work usually five days a week and they'll be off some days and then they go to the farm and we rotate them so that they get about four months of pasture time a year minimum. We wanna make sure they're not gonna go to somebody who's not gonna do what we do. Animals, who we get, who don't work for this city, you know, they get sold and they usually end up working in the carriage industry in a different city. Because Charleston it's, it's getting dense. I mean, you know this, you know, it's a hard city to drive in. So occasionally you have an animal who's just like, “I've seen the Battery. I've never seen that much water. This is not my jam.” It's — they're like humans, some like

coastal cities, some don't. So, point of all that is horses, they live as you know, around thirty years. And because we don't slaughter them, you might have, you know, we have a horse, he just retired. He was three when we got him, which typically you don't get animals quite that young working in the city. But Millhouse was just a super chill, happy go lucky French Percheron. And he just retired this year. And I realized like, I always think of him as a baby because he started working for that company the same year I did. And then I looked at him and Percherons will go from grey to white pretty quickly. And I looked at Millhouse and I realized, oh my gosh, Millhouse, you're twenty-one. You've been here seventeen years like me. Oh my gosh, this is crazy. And so, he has retired, we kept him, he lives at our farm. He just roams around John's Island, getting fatter and being happy. But you know that, that's, that's what I mean. It, it's a long relationship, which is cool.

DS: Yes ma'am

CB: Yeah.

DS: You touched on there's something I did not know about the carriage industries that y'all, y'all rotate around with city to a farm. Is it John's Island that y'all have?

CB: Yeah, ours is on John's Island. All of the companies have farms. I don't know where Carolina Polos is. I think they're all on John's Island. One might be on Edisto. So, there's currently four companies in the city. And there are city requirements that I should know the exact terminology of that I'm forgetting about how many hours a day they can

work and how many days in a row they can work. And so, the city requires them to get time off. We give them more time off because we can, you know, we have the space, we have enough animals. So, typically our guys get four to five months off a year. And I'll tell you, speaking of, when you asked about working animals and people who think you shouldn't have mounted police or something, when we had COVID and the whole country shut for six weeks, I was going outta my mind because I'm anxious. And I like to be busy. I'm like, well, when can I go back to work? And I was just really stressed. The horses, mules, we took them all to the farm and like ourselves, like the first two days of a snow day, you're like "woohoo off of work. This is awesome." And after about a week and a half, they were all like getting bitey with each other and getting bored cuz they're like, "okay, farm time is nice," but everybody's out here. You know, usually it's just maybe ten of them are out there. Well, they were all out, out there and they were getting bored and it was funny. We have this horse, his name was De Blasio. I love him. He's a big, giant black Percheron and he's named after the anti-carriage mayor of New York mayor De Blasio. So, De Blasio is just, he's a sweet boy. He's seventeen or eighteen around there and he's kind of high strung. He snorts a lot. So, in the morning when he has a lot of energy, like he'll snort or he'll see something and he'll snort just kind of a nervous horse. And when he came back from COVID, he was like a different horse. I haven't heard him snort since, he's just always in a good mood. It was like, he couldn't wait to be doing something again. It was weird. He came back and he was just like, "all right, all right, I'm ready to go." Which is funny.

DS: I remember I was super excited to come back to school. Like even I was even excited to come back to this prison. (Butler laughs) so.

CB: It's funny how, like, it seems like it's gonna be this fun thing and it is for a minute. And then you're like, “man, I missed grading papers, boy, I missed the dorms,” and you never would've thought you'd say that.

DS: Yes ma'am and you've, you've touched on it. Horses are incredible from my experience. Horses are incredibly intelligent.

CB: Yeah.

CB: So, they're, they act like people, it's like a really smart dog, like an Australian shepherd. Just, it acts like a person.

CB: They really do, so mules, same thing. People who say, “oh, like stubborn and dumb as a mule.” Again, mules are really freaking smart. Maybe sometimes too much for their own good on occasion, but they’re, equines are a lot like humans. They like routines and they can tell (laugh) just like a kid and us who are all discombobulated when daylight savings hits, dogs are like, where's my dinner? Horses are the same thing. They're like, well, “where's my, you're an hour late. What's going on?” because they're used to their routines. And speaking of smart, there's five different routes in the city. And there's a lot of variation within those routes where the guide can kind of decide how they wanna weave through Harleston Village or wherever they happen to be. Every animal, after a couple weeks in the city, they know the turning point to come back and they're not barn sour like the horses I used to ride in Ohio, but they're like us. It's like, “okay, winding down second half of the day.” And so, one of the things I always tell the new tour guides, don't spend half hour up and half hour back, cuz you're gonna have a much harder time

getting that horse to stand on the way back cuz he knows he is going back to the barn and everyone's gonna pet him and maybe he'll get a snack. So, I always say spend about 40 minutes, stop more on the way and plan on going quicker back. They also, to what degree they see color, I'm not really sure cuz I'm not a veterinarian, but they can tell the placement of stoplights. And if I'm not paying attention and I'm talking and it switches red to green, most of them will start going and they'll wait and they see it switch and they're like “time to go.” And we have this one genius mule and I, you know how you can see the lights facing you, but there's the light facing the other direction. So, you're at Church and Broad Street. He can see the light change on Broad before his light changes and he'll start going because he knows, he is like, “okay, that one changed. That means in two seconds, this one's gonna change it. I'm gonna start going.”

DS: That's funny.

CB: They're geniuses, these animals.

DS: Yes Ma'am. I love horses. I haven't, I haven't been able to work with them in ages, but uh, I do love them.

CB: You gotta hit up L.E.A.R.N. Rescue.

DS: Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am.

CB: With all your free time.

DS: Yes Ma'am. Well, that's all the questions I have so once again, I want to thank you for the interview and already introduced to you. So, thank you so much.

DS: Thank you. It was a lot of fun.

MLL 8/8/2022

RS 8/29/2022