

Lisa Frazza, Sessions 1 and 2, timed logs.

Interview with Lisa Frazza

SESSION 1 (7/12/2020)

[00:00:39]

Hears about virus from AM station 640 KFI. Paid attention to the news immediately due to husband's recent surgery.

The news at the time was reporting that the president was debating whether to limit travel from China.

[00:02:44]

Had been working at TVC Studios, recently purchased from CBS Television City, where she had been working for 27 years prior to the shutdown. Current union classification is lead journeyman scenic artist.

[00:03:42]

Had attended arts classes and art school starting at age 6. Began painting scenery for community theater at age 12.

[00:04:24]

TVC sent everyone home early on March 17, St. Patrick's Day. Had been working on a set for The Young and the Restless in the shop. Was told by boss at around 1 PM that everyone had to leave the studio right away. Said she would start to rinse and wash her brushes, but was told to just throw them in some water and leave. Assumed it had to do with the coronavirus, but was not explicitly told that.

[00:06:51]

Didn't know if she would be taking unemployment or taking sick leave or vacation days. Boss suggested that since CARES Act was going to be passed would be better off with unemployment. Union was helpful in providing information.

[00:07:28]

Spent approximately 40 hours altogether trying to get online to get certified for unemployment.

Was on employment from mid-March to June 17, when returned to work.

[00:09:14]

The producers of The Bold and the Beautiful were very good about keeping crew informed about what was happening. A few times she was told that production would be starting back up imminently, but those starts fell through. Ultimately, however, the show was the first LA scripted

production to go back to work. The show came back to production in accordance with the white paper, Industry-Wide Labor-Management Safety Committee Task Force.

[00:11:06]

Return to work protocols include answering a morning questionnaire about how she is feeling and having temperature taken. COVID-19 testing occurred twice a week at that time. Crew are provided with masks and hand sanitizer and given instructions on 6 feet social distancing rule. Crew need to be 10 feet away from actors, per the SAG-AFTRA contract. Actors are escorted on stage by a stage manager who polices the 10 feet perimeter.

[00:12:48]

A COVID-19 medical assistant needs to be present when hair and make-up people are working with actors, and actors are doing some of their own hair and makeup. If a makeup person is required on set to touch up a shiny nose, for example, they will stand back from the actor and work quickly. Actors wear masks on stage when not speaking or being photographed.

[00:14:05]

For intimate scenes, actors can bring in significant other from their household, if they have been tested for Covid, and use them as a stand in. Mannequins are also used. Digital work is also being done in post-production. During scenes actors are 10 feet from one another during scenes.

[00:15:19]

Previously, it had been part of Frazza's job to look at the set as it appeared on camera as a last step and make any corrections accordingly. Now she is not allowed on set once the actors are present and cannot make fixes to set. Frazza is "on call" in shop area.

[00:17:01]

Everyone involved in the production is interested in remaining healthy and keeping the show open, therefore cooperation with safety procedures is very high. The people working on the show had been like family prior to the pandemic.

[00:18:11]

The Young and the Restless is scheduled to start up within a few days. The show has two stages, which will make things more complicated.

[00:19:07]

The Bold and the Beautiful has been shut down about three times so far due to inferior testing, leading to a number of false positives, Frazza is told. The process now is to get tested twice a week, using a different company. Frazza has had every kind of test so far: cheek swabs, nasal swabs, saliva testing.

Finds the consistent negative results for self to be reassuring.

[00:21:15]

Wears masks on set, per regulation. Had been wearing gloves, but medical assistant discouraged it, saying that the latex tended to spread the virus around on surfaces. Still wears them when going to grocery store. Supplied with alcohol wipes, and cleaning supplies at work.

One prop person is in charge of cleaning door knobs continuously. Crew are not allowed to bring in food or drinks to refrigerator in lunch room. They are allowed to remove previously stocked bottles of water from the fridge.

[00:23:59]

Once the shutdown began went online to try to get supplies that were sold out in the stores. Was ordering supplies for elderly mother located in New Jersey. Husband would bring groceries to the back door area, where he would clean everything off and place them in a clean area, from which Frazza would retrieve them and put them away in the house. They continue this routine in the present. Has been making a practice of wiping down surfaces in the home and prompting husband to wash hands when he comes into the house, remove shoes.

[00:26:24]

While at home during the shutdown would go for an evening walk for exercise, having that as something to look forward to each day. Would try to build in walking related goals for mornings, such as mailing a letter.

[00:27:04]

Was always expecting to go back to work at any time, per E-mail communication she was receiving from the production company.

[00:28:12]

Attended a socially distanced graduation party in May 10, though was not completely comfortable with the idea. All attendees respectful of social distancing.

[00:30:49]

Each day Frazza and her mother would watch "together" online via Facebook Governor Cuomo's briefing on the situation in New York City. Has many friends and family living in New York and nearby. Fortunately, none became ill. Members of mother's church contracted the virus.

[00:34:20]

The isolation has been difficult for Frazza's mother. In Frazza's estimation, she is a "trooper."

[00:35:15]

A previous period of illness could be seen as a training ground for how to take the time to stay home and take extra precautions to avoid contracting illnesses.

[00:36:35]

Starts work at 6 AM on The Bold and the Beautiful and is in the habit of going to bed early.

[00:37:03]

Has been surprised to see that the country could not unify around what needed to be done to combat the virus.

[00:38:27]

Found herself working on relaxation techniques to combat the anxiety caused by the situation. The union presented a useful webinar on the topic.

[00:39:13]

The union was keeping members informed about what was happening at the state and federal level with regard to work and the virus. Tried to help with getting people in touch with unemployment resources. Have put forward many art classes online.

[00:40:50]

Mask wearing in her neighborhood is at about half, though more recently possibly more than half.

[00:42:13]

Neighborhood website announced a moments of silence event that would be held for George Floyd on a nearby corner. While not comfortable attending the Black Lives Matter protests for health reasons, did attend the event in her neighborhood, She and two others turned out to be sole participants.

In general has found that political views of neighborhood are not in sync with her own.

[00:46:10]

One night went out of the house at 7 PM to bang pots and pans, as they did in New York, but found herself alone in the effort.

[00:46:52]

Finds that the situation provides a lens for identifying who your friends are and who the good people are. Many neighbors would drop by the house with items such as paper towels or toilet paper. Neighbors would also stop by to say hello and see that they were doing alright.

Reminiscent of growing up near New York in a neighborhood where people were constantly stopping by the house.

[00:49:18]

Goes to a Farmer's Market in El Segundo and is reassured by how well it is set up for social distancing.

[00:50:07]

Was glad to go back to work, but had she elected to not return at that time for health reasons would have been fired. Was very nervous about going back and felt it was a risk. Now still feels that it is a risk, but has been somewhat reassured by the precautions being taken. The onsite Medical Assistant has been a good source of information.

[00:52:28]

While regular testing is reassuring, it only reflects a moment in time.

[00:53:08]

Holds out hope for a vaccine but isn't sure there will be one.

[00:53:55]

Educated herself about the virus and also learned about it from literature that was given out on the first day back to work.

[00:55:02]

Husband, a carpenter, has been working outside on projects. Frazza is working inside and worries about the air conditioned environment.

[00:56:09]

Masks have become fashion statements and Frazza has purchased several.

[00:56:29]

Feels very fortunate in that she and her community of friends, family and coworkers have all been well, and that the CARES Act was passed to provide unemployment benefits.

Interview with Lisa Frazza

SESSION 2 (8/9/2020)

[00:00:27]

Grows up in New Jersey with three brothers, attending Catholic school

[00:02:33]

Enrolled at age six at the Ridgewood School of Art. Began with drawing and pastels, moving on to oil painting at age 12.

[00:04:34]

While in high school started to play sports instead of doing artwork, at father's insistence, for exercise. Worked backstage doing scenic art and stage managing for high school theater productions.

[00:06:13]

Pursued the study of scenic art for theater as a career while in college, initially working with an experimental theater program at a community college. Works as a waitress throughout college.

[00:07:51]

Transfers to Montclair State University, earning a degree in technical theater.

[00:09:04]

Attends Polakov's New York Studio and Forum of Stage Design in the Village in New York City, run by Lester Polokov, who had been a Broadway designer in the fifties. Faculty at the school would bring students onto productions that they were doing on an as needed basis.

[00:11:17]

Parents were active in community theater; Frazza started working on large scale backdrops for these productions early on. Mother taught Frazza how to proportion out from a small drawing to a large scale backdrop at age 12.

[00:14:28]

Students at Polakov's studio school tended to have fine art backgrounds, typically in the expressionist style Frazza's roommate had a summer stock background. Was taught at the school by reproducing Old Master's paintings. Learned to become a copy artist there as well. Faculty productions involving students were off-Broadway or off-off Broadway.

[00:17:54]

Joined United Scenic Artists in New York, passing the entrance test on the sixth try. The admissions process was very subjective and competitive.

[00:19:29]

Joined the IATSE (International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees) union in Boston, later transferred to Local 816, Scenic, Title and Graphic Artists union in LA. Works a job in Boston on The Witches of Eastwick for 16 weeks.

[00:21:31]

Had done three years at the Philadelphia Opera Company, commuting between there and Boston and New York as work would come up. Became scenic shop head at Philadelphia Opera Company.

[00:22:23]

The Opera lost funding after the election of President Ronald Reagan. Began working on shows for Atlantic City casinos, but found the work extremely boring. Gets a gig working on a flagship Banana Republic store in New York doing fairly elaborate work for the store. Meets future husband on the job.

[00:24:19]

Comes out to LA in September of 1986.

[00:24:34]

Husband traveled all over the country for five years working on the construction of flagship themed stores in the period of the nineteen eighties.

[00:26:23]

Future husband was based in LA and Frazza was interested in investigating the work possibilities in film and TV and theater as they are done in Los Angeles. Did a lot of theme park work, as well as commercial work.

[00:27:43]

Joined LA IATSE when arrived in LA, transferring Boston card over to 816. Kept her New York card and went back a few times to work on some films there. Lets the New York card go once decides to settle in LA, rather than pay dues to two unions.

Being in the union upon arrival was helpful, but still had to network. Did a lot of commercials upon arrival because with the directors strike on there was no union work available. Kept asking 816 business agent Ted Rubin for work because wanted to work union.

[00:30:26]

Classification at the time was assistant scenic artist. Worked at Burbank Scenery, American Scenery, shops that no longer exist. Worked at Warner Bros. and Paramount Pictures. The scenic artists working at JC Backings were extremely accomplished.

[00:32:55]

Transitioned from theater to commercials to TV by learning on the job, Saw Wilbur and Warren Ferrell, who ran a well-equipped shop space at Paramount, as mentors.

[00:34:24]

Learned from John Moffitt at Warner's; saw Mike Denering as mentor while there, learning perspective from him.

[00:36:16]

One particular job at Warner's involving what was to appear as a continuous stretch of brick work required great focus, patience and persistence to complete.

[00:38:08]

Learned from one of the "old-timers" at the CBS scenic shop, Renton Kelso Chandler. Chandler called Frazza "Tiger." Also worked with Roger Lundblad, learning wood graining from him.

[00:39:37]

While scenic artists are still learning on the job, the level of interest in learning these techniques today is less than it was in the past.

At one time it was required that all work at the CBS shop be done in the prescribed "CBS way," which involved using certain brushes for certain techniques. Using one's own brushes and techniques was discouraged.

[00:42:29]

Tried to get into CBS for years in order to have stable employment, hours and benefits. In September of 1991 was called in for two days, and from that stint was able to stay on through the present. Earned a staff position, then became lead scenic artist for The Bold and the Beautiful.

[00:45:57]

At one point was on the night shift for The Young and the Restless for three years.

[00:47:01]

Told in one instance that a woman with children would be hired over her due to the other woman's greater need

[00:48:17]

Believes that the fact that there were a good number of gay men working in scenic opened up the space for women to be hired as well.

[00:49:09]



In one instance is boxed into a corner of a room by a shop owner and responds by threatening him with her paint-laden brush.

[00:50:36]

Heard about instances of sexual harassment that had occurred to female scenic artists prior to her joining IATSE Local 816. Not occurring while she was there.

[00:51:13]

Shop owner invited Frazza to lunch along with his wife after the paint brush incident, a lunch she attended because she was trying to break in to the business at the time.

[00:52:35]

Over the years has worked with Bridget Duffy and Catherine Koon. At CBS had worked with Rachel Gibson, and now works with Elizabeth Lake there. At the CBS shop would typically be the only women among a crew of forty to fifty, most of whom treated her "like their sister."

[00:54:35]

Was on the Board of Directors at Local 816 at the time of the merger, and is now on the scenic artist's council within Local the Art Directors Guild, Local 800, and has always served as an officer, recording secretary. Was not in favor of the merger in the beginning but came to appreciate the fact that their bargaining power in negotiations with producers would grow, since scenic artist numbers were dwindling.

[00:57:48]

While CGI has taken over a good proportion of scenic work under the classification of graphic artist, work by hand is still required

The subsection of the union that includes scenic and graphic artists also now includes "viz art," or art that supports motion capture and gaming applications.

[01:01:02]

The daily workflow when acting as a crew member at CBS includes a wide range of tasks such as wood graining or marbleizing or the like, including set painting, some small murals.

[01:02:43]

The Bold and Beautiful is done on a large stage with about six sets. Working relationships with the crew are very good. Work starts at 4 AM or 6 AM, typically for a 12 hour shift. Frazza is lead scenic artist on the show, with a wide range of responsibilities.

[01:08:00]

Hires for her crew from among those at CBS, a well-qualified and talented group.

[01:09:26]

Protocols have been established for the CBS facility to safeguard health of crew and actors during the pandemic.

[01:14:31]

Has not yet been cleared to work on what had been one of her shows prior to the pandemic, The Young and Restless.

[01:15:00]

A crew has been cleared to start work on The Late Late Show with James Corden. Bill Maher's show, Real Time, will also be starting production soon in the studio.

[01:16:43]

The shop has been busy, having just finished the set for The Late Late Show with James Corden. They have also been working on sets for The Price is Right, which may not shoot for quite awhile.

Will be starting work on a new gameshow which requires a new set, which has been under construction for last two weeks.

[01:18:09]

Would advise those who want to get into the business to be proficient with digital technologies. Would emphasize the importance of good people and networking skills. Working well with crews is crucial.

[01:20:35]

Enjoys organizing self and the crew to do the work, and the activity of getting sets mounted, as well as doing faux finishes.

[01:21:08]

After working with colors and designs all day prefers to come home to an uncluttered neutral pallet (walls and décor).

[01:22:41]

Considers self to have been fortunate in career, working hard in the beginning to secure her job at CBS and working hard once there to keep it.

[01:23:22]

Since the recent sale of CBS on January 1, 2020, misses the family atmosphere that had existed there. The company now running the studio space is not an entertainment company and has a different culture.

[01:26:05]

Many of those who had worked for CBS retired at the time of the sale.

[01:27:37]

The new company has not quite understood the way union contracts work.