

BACK YARD

Volume III, Issue #41

April 15, 1998

BRUTES OF THE BIG TOP

Circus elephants may seem amiable enough, but to their trainers they're always potential killers—long on trunk and short on fuse.

By **BILL BALLANTINE**

A TRUE MAGAZINE DOUBLE-LENGTH
FEATURE—MAY, 1960

Reprinted with permission from the Ballantines

PART II

Close-up, Smokey Jones was even more impressive than he'd been in the saddle. A large bullet-head with short-cropped dark brown hair was rammed onto a bull-like neck. His shoulders were massive. His face was a rugged cross between a Polish steel-worker and an Indian brave. He told me he'd come out of Texas. He looked to be in his early twenties. In almost new jeans, an almost-spotless white shirt & natty peaked baseball cap, the bull-boss contrasted strongly with the underlings beginning to clutter the canopy.

Smokey Jones, contrary to circus custom, called his animal charges "elephants" rather than "bulls." In Smokey's regime thus far there'd been no serious elephant trouble. I asked how he'd managed to control them, especially with so many greenhorns swelling the established group.

"When I took over I talked to each elephant separate an' they all promised me, cross their hearts, not to fight this year. What I mean is, seriously, I got to know each of these here fifty-one elephants *personally* before I took them on the road." How? Did someone tip him off to their idiosyncrasies?



"Their *who*? Smokey asked screwing up his broad face. I deciphered. "Oh, hell no. If you're what I mean a *good* elephant man you don't have to ask nobody. My way is, I jest takes them into the ring-barn, one by one—jest me & the elephant all alone behind closed doors—and before we comes back out I find out exactly what each elephant is like." What's the secret? "Ain't no secret," he said. "I jest let them each one know who is gonna be boss-me. The way I does it is first I ask an elephant nice-like, then I command."

An elephant trainer who faces for the first time, as Smokey did, the unknown quantity of strange, already trained elephants meets them realistically. He accepts the fact that he's dealing with potential killers of great power and intelligence. The first step of the man is to impose his will on the animal.

(Continued on page 6)

BACK YARD

is published twice monthly-(15th & 30th) by Cherie Valentine, 1522 Clinton Blvd., Bloomington, IL 61701. Phone 309-828-0737 (no collect calls, please) E-mail: cdvalen@acadcomp.cmp.ilstu.edu
Subscription rates are \$25.00 per year, for 24 issues, within the USA.

Closing dates for ads are 10th and 25th of the month (five days before publication date). Advertising rates, payable in advance, with your copy, are:

Full page	\$50.
Half page	\$30.
Quarter page	\$15.
Eighth page (two inches)	\$10.
Minimum ad (one inch)	\$ 5.

The column, "The Fox," is written by Jenny Walenda. Other material is written by Cherie Valentine, unless otherwise identified as to author. Reprints from other published material are identified as to source.

Comments by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher.

Back Yard is a pro-circus, pro-animal publication, which supports the use of animals which are legally held and properly cared for, in the American circus.

CLASSIC BOOKS

YOUR HEADQUARTERS FOR:

CIRCUS, CARNIVAL, SIDESHOW &

ALLIED ARTS*ZOOLOGY*

ELEPHANTS*BIG CATS*PRIMATES

BOOKS*NEW*USED*RARE*OUT-OF-

PRINT*ZOOLOGY*ROUTE-

BOOKS*POSTERS*SCRAPBOOKS

PHOTOGRAPHS*AUTOGRAPHS*

DOCUMENTS*EPHEMERA

LET US KNOW YC UR WANTS. WE ALSO BUY

A ID TRADE

For Catalog Contact: John Bantock

2531 E. Milmar Dr.

Sarasota, FL 34237

Ph./Fax: 941-365-7052

SELLS-FLOT0-BUFFALO BILL SHOWS ANNUAL FAREWELL DINNER FT. WORTH, TX.-OCT. 14, 1914

Menu: Oyster Cocktail; Deep Sea Turtle; Baked Red Snapper, Maitre D'Hotel; Olives, Sweet Pickles, Celery; Braised Veal Sweet Breads, Mushroom Sauce, Oyster Patties, Comport of Fruit; Prime Ribs, Au Jus; Young Turkey, Oyster Dressing, Cranberry Sauce, Suckling Pig, Candied Sweet Potatoes; Claret Punch; Asparagus, Green Lima Beans, Mashed Potatoes; Peach Sundae with Nuts; Assorted Cake; Tea, Cocoa, Coffee, Milk.

The Season is over, To our homes we must go. We have had a good time, With the Sells-Floto Show, And now through the tents, This sad cry does ring, Goodby brother trooper, I'll see you in the spring.

(F.B. Hutchinson, Mgr.; Dixie Engle, Steward)

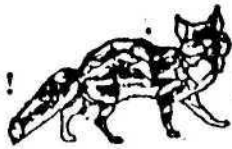
CLYDE BEATTY CIRCUS JULY 4, 1948;

VIRGINIA, MINNESOTA-(JULY 5, 1948)

(Due to the predicated late arrival, this dinner was postponed until today. As we celebrate Independence Day, beer is allowed at the table. At no other time will intoxicating liquors be allowed in this Cook House. Not the Largest CIRCUS COOK HOUSE-But One of the Best! "Serving Good Wholesome Meals to a Swell Bunch of Show Folks." By The Staleys.)

Menu: Queen Olives, Ripe Olives, Stuffed Olives; Rosetti Radishes, Green Onions, Stuffed Celery; Grape or Pineapple Juice; Pickled Pacific Prawns, Shrimp Cocktail; Cream of Fresh Mushroom Soup; Waldorf Salad Supreme, Werner Salad DeLuxe; Tenderloin Steak-King Style; Spring Chicken Lyonnaise; Corned Beef Brisket Hawaiian; Pork Tenderloin-Regal; Baked Ham Isle of Spice; Corn on Cob, Galette Potatoes; Candied Yams, Brussel Sprouts; String Beans, Tourangelle; Cantaloupe Alamode, Green Apple Pie; Circus Lemonade, Beer; Goldenrod Ice Tea Demitasse; Salted Nuts, After Dinner Mints; Leiderkrandtz or Roquefort Cheese; Bent Water Crackers; Cigars for the Men-Chocolates for Ladies and Children. John Staley, Steward (How much would these meals cost today? Does anyone have other menus to share?)

THE FOX!



#53

My Dear Friends;

Happy Easter, hope you will get a lot of chocolate Easter eggs and have a real nice day.

Now I like to get the sad news over with. It really hurt me to hear that Stu Miller also left us. He had called me, it must have been just before he had to go back to the hospital. He was so very cheerful telling me that he was finished with all the Kimo and Radiation treatments and was now ready to go back on the road. I ask him if he had an operation. He told me that this was not possible as the cancer had been too close to a blood vessel. Well when he hung up I was real happy and glad to hear him say this so it came to a big shock to me when Yuka called me and told me that Stu was dead. I just could not believe it. I feel also so very bad for his wife, she hung so much on him. May God give her strength to go on.

Called the other day Ralph Schappacher and found out that Phyllis and Ralph are doing well and are traveling all over. They were on their way to Canada to attend Ralph's daughters wedding and then they were planning to visit her relations.

Ricky Wallenda is doing his Shows and having sister Rietta and daughter Lyric with him. I know Rietta and Lyric are doing a lot in his shows.

Bobby Wainmann went back to work for Walkers, right now he is with the indoor show then after they will go back out with the Tent show with the whole Walker Family.

Oh ya, my girlfriend Cha Cha is very busy doing the advance tickets for the Walkers.

Talked to Derick Rosair the other day and he told me that he had a big scare the other day. He was looking for his dog, which is by the way an very intelligent dog, he is just like Tony the wonder horse. Derick just has to talk to him and he does all his tricks beautifully. Well he called and called and not dog in sight. The Liza and him went all around the neighborhood, there was no sight of the dog, so they returned home and Derick said, I guess he is gone for good. Then he heard a noise in the front

porch. Liza went to investigate and sure enough, there was the wonder dog. So now all is well again.

We had a memorial for Mitsy Joyce Trippled, every one came to pay their last respect and Son Timmy said just wonderful words about his mom.

All the Shows are on the road, they all went sooner this year and they all had to deal with El Ninio.

This is a crazy year, Florida had rain rain and more rain, I wonder how the rainy season will be this year.

Heard from Doc Martin, he has finished another book and will be writing some short stories next.

Herald Alsana had bypasses, I guess this is the thing now days to do. Last I heard he was still in the Hospital.

Pinkey Del Monti also had to spend a few days at the Hospital. I was told it was a bleeding ulcer.

Mia Arnsi Otto came back home with her children, I guess the other country did not agree with her. She came home sick and is now under medication.

Tino Wallenda and the whole Jenny Wallenda clan are all back in town. Tino is in and out of town again. He will be going to Miami and then the whole clan will go to St Louis to do the 7 Men Pyramid again. I for one love it, when my children are together. Tino and Lila were at one time the closest. They can not practice the 7 right now, as Tony Hernandez went to Chicago to work with his sister.

Tony Bartock is doing well, he has a lot of bookings, which is really great.

Lynn Hernandez is working all the time, she is doing more than one job. She is a mail person and also waitress. I was told she will be going this summer to Italy for a few weeks. Tammy Wallenda with her 4 children is baby sitting the children from Lynn.

Well, this is all for today

The Fox loves you

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY

By Brian Nunn

*Because of a break-down, en route to an outdoor date, the big acts were late (the elephants & cats). We pulled on the lot during come-in. Everyone, performers & all, jumped in, unloaded, and rigged the whole thing! So we showed on time, and there was great applause & encouragement from the people. One of the show girls said later that it was a shame because it ruined the romance of the circus. I thought that it was real magic!

*Show-down At The Almost OK Corral! All of a sudden, there she was-a belligerent & defiant elephant. Being as how it was part of the job, I walked in and asked her what she thought she was doing. This either confused her or gave her something else to think about. At any rate, she came around & volunteered a foot-although it was still with a chain. I walked briskly by her & put the hind leg chain on. After I got to get away with that, I gave her an apple.

*Another story about playing outdoor dates. There was the Pop elephant, Mom and Baby male and an Aunt. The two females would bury the baby in hay when he went to sleep, to hide him, I guess. The big male would take his sleep during the day 'cuz he didn't worry about much. At night, both the females could lay down to sleep with the baby between them-you couldn't even see the baby. The big male would keep watch all night; the females must have felt safe, besides having a baby to take care of. I never saw elephants sleep all night on the outdoor dates!

They would sleep for 3 or 4 hours, or so, at a time.

One time after the ride was over, I forgot to put the leg chain on the Aunt elephant. She was a good elephant and didn't go anywhere. Apparently, she had thought that going for a stroll would be a lot of fun! At about 5 a.m. she comes trottin' back to her department, wakes me up, then goes over & stands at her place on the picket line. I got up and gave her some hay. I slept on hay bales in front of the picket line. It was a good life! A little while later, a show guy comes by and tells me that I owe him money for the cigarettes and candy that the elephant took out of his truck! He said that it scared the hell out of him when she reached in with her trunk, woke him up and grabbed the candy. He had made a noise which must have scared her too, but not enough so that she didn't eat the candy on the way back to the department!

*I want to thank Rex Williams for being a straight-up elephant boss. He treated me good, considering that I wasn't very good. He seemed to be able to keep my

attention and interest, therefore making me a fairly good elephant man. Rex said one day, "All I get is misfits, rejects & outlaws. AND I'm not just talking about the elephants!" All of us hands got kind of quiet and shuffled off to do the chores! But don't get me wrong. Rex has a number of guys that are solid & stayed with him through the years, no matter what. *While I was horseshoeing, I learned something that the cowboys call "flagging out." It seemed to work with all animals, except alligators and such! I'd get around the animal until it got comfortable with the "do something rude or unexpected, loud voice, clap of the hands, honking horns and so on. When they would stand still for all that, I felt I could safely expose them to the public cuz' they'd stay with me. I heard a showman say once that you either put your quarter in, or put it on the table-either way you get to play!

*At one time, I worked on a show that had an emu in the menagerie. There was no small difficulty in moving the buzzard from place to place. I found that when I would spend a couple of minutes with her, till she got used to me, I'd pet her head-I found the bird would relax, so I'd keep petting her (I guess that's why they call it a petting zoo, ha ha!) Her eyes would close, then she'd start to droop, well I'd hold (gently) onto her head, while petting she would then relax her legs, an be all the way on the ground. (Emus are built like osterichs, long strong legs.) Well, when she was all the way down, I'd pick her up, feet all tucked up nice. And carry her to her pen in the menagerie truck. I just figured since birds don't have big heads, maybe their brains were small too. (I can sympathize!) It was better to treat them somehow, rather than try to herd them like cattle. It seems almost everything has got a different way to go. So we all should make it easier for them and us, by making a few adjustments. To tell you the truth, I don't think that this would work with an alligator-so I would try to be careful with what I try to control.

*A remembrance about Rex picking out Big Horse at the shipyard stockyard: the stock was on their way to France for meat. Rex, being the good judge of horse flesh and anything else for that matter, saw this big, roaned-out appaloosa and bought him for the poundage weight. It was at a Santa Barbara lot close to the stockyard. Rex took one of his top hands with him to pick the horse up. When they brought the horse out, Rex told his guy to ride him back to the lot and he'd better not fall off. Well, Beaner's about as good a rider as Rex, so the horse got to the lot. Believe me I know, when you got on Big Horse, you'd better know what you're doing! This horse could do a flying lead change going straight ahead.

BACK YARD GOSSIP

*Elephant trainer, Tom Thompson, was working a show in Albany, NY recently, when the PETA people picketed. The animal rights group was very subdued by the "Albany Gang" from the Felix Morales Tent of the CFA, who picketed the picketers, but, after the show, they came into the back yard. Nickolas, the baby elephant, travels in a big semi; one half of which is Nick's "bedroom." Nick was in an electric fenced corral, alongside the semi. They started taking photos of Nick, who was at the moment choosing his post-show meal between grain, chopped apples & carrots. As they took their pictures, Tom walked up & asked, "Would you like me to chain him up & beat him a little so you can get the kind of photos you really came for?" The group silently left! The Tent was also out in force at Troy, NY, successful as usual, in discouraging the animal rights group. When overflow circus crowds refused to listen to their tales, they left. The usual lies were proved wrong by the obvious good care given to Bannister's dogs, Irvin Hall's baboons, and the Thompson elephant. More CFA Tents should organize this sort of anti-protestor activities since this one was highly successful!

**"Working wife" may be described as one who can work in spec, do swinging ladder, ride menage, cow-girl the concert & double in cherry pie at night!

*Good boss canvas-man builds up respect from his help thru as few fractures as possible!

*Looking at an aerial ballet girl with bad light strains the eyes more so than does reading under the same conditions.

Shrine Circus: April 27: Columbus, Ohio-Coliseum

Tangier Shrine Circus: April 16-19-Omaha, NE.

Shrine Circus: April 24-26-Dayton, OH.

Gamma Phi Circus: April 17-18-ISU, Normal, IL.

***** CLYDE BEATTY-COLE BROS CIRCUS

Winchester, VA-Apple Blossom Mall-May 1-3

Gaithersburg, MD-Fairgrounds-May 4-5

Woodbridge, VA-Woodbridge High-May 6-7

Springfield, VA-Springfield Mall-May 8-10

Annapolis, MD-Navy-Marine Corps Stad.-5/13-14

127th EDITION RINGLING RED UNIT:

Washington D.C.- Armory-April 7-19

Charleston, WV- Civic Center-April 23-26

Huntington, WV- Civic Center-April 28-29

Roanoke, VA- Civic Center-May 2-3

Mex. City, Mex.-Palacio de los Deportes5/13-6/7

Shreveport, LA-Hirsch Mem. Coliseum-June 13-14

Memphis, TN- The Pyramid-June 18-21

Little Rock, AR-Barton Coliseum-June 25-28

San Antonio, TX-Freeman Coliseum-July 1-5

Austin, TX-Erwin Spec. Events Ctr-July 9-12

128TH EDITION RINGLING BLUE UNIT:

Philadelphia, PA- CoreStates Spectrum-April 16-26

Providence, RI-Civic Center-April 29-May 3

Springfield, MA-Civic Center-May 5-6

Worcester, MA-Centrum Centre-May 8-10

New Haven, CT-New Haven Coliseum-5/12-13

Hartford, CT-Civic Center-May 15-17

Hershey, PA-Hersheypark Arena-May 21-25

Albany, NY-Pepsi Arena-May 28-31

Syracuse, NY-OnCenter-June 2-3

Rochester, NY-Rochester War Memorial-June 5-7

Lexington, KY-Rupp Arena-June 11-14

Lubbock, TX-Municipal Coliseum-June 18-21

Las Vegas, NV-Thomas & Mack Center-June 26-28

Phoenix, AZ-America West Arena-July 1-5

BOBBY GIBBS IS BACK !!!!

It's spring & Bobby got itchy feet! He said, "I quit my truck driving job-I just can't stay away from the circus!" He was on the road 3 weeks a month. He was laying over in Dallas and Donnie Johnson asked him to come back. He is back in charge of his elephant friends, Betty & Judy, to their delight, I am sure!

He played the Waco Shrine April 6-7 and will play Nashville, April 14-19; Grand Forks, ND Shrine April 23-26. He will then go to Canada with the Cirque Leonardo from April 30-June 3-all with dates in Canada.

Rosa will stay in Winter Quarters to take care of the animals there. So, please go out to see Bobby if he plays near you, and welcome him back! I know this makes him very happy to be back with his elephant friends and YOU!!

An acrobat said on closing night: "One moves into a berth with a suitcase in the spring & needs a truck to move out."

BRUTES OF THE BIG TOP....

(Continued from Page 1)

"An' you don't haf'ta pick on them," explained Smokey. No man in his right mind beats an elephant just for beating's sake. Smokey would have no part of ruthless brutality. "Jest by usin' force alone," he told me, "you can't get even *temporary* control. A beatin'll get you nowhere, except crippled maybe for life or killed. Sooner or later that elephant is gonna lower the boom on you."

On occasion, a berserk elephant can be dominated by a good yelling-down. One of the best yellers I know is a moon-faced Teuton named Hugo Schmidt, a longtime Ringling elephant handler, who has been around bulls for over 30 years. I once saw Hugo dominate an enormous maddened elephant with nothing but his shouting voice. Hugo decries the beating of elephants. "The thing you must teach is respect, not fear."

Alongside respect in the elephant's curriculum, elephant educators place trust, however, but a one-way affair of animal belief in man. Bullmen never feel safe around even the most gentle of the great creatures. As an example of elephant faith in man, Smokey cited the Ringling menagerie fire in Cleveland during World War II. Four elephants perished in that inferno; many others got fried ears and seared carcasses. "When the fire broke out them elephants," Smokey said, "they didn' panic or stampede or nothin'-didn't even trumpet. Burned or not, they wouldn' budge from the flamin' tent until the head bull-man got there an' shouted an order at them. Then each one reached down an' pulled up its front stake with its trunk. (The back ones was already pulled by bullhands reachin' in from outside the sidewall.) Them scorched elephants staggered out in perfect formation, grabbin' one another's burnt tails with their singed trunks. Man! That's trust!" Circus and zoo elephants come to this country, somewhat domesticated, from dealer compounds or elephant auctions, seldom directly from wild jungle herds. The elephant most adaptable to circus life-either as a performer or worker-is the Asiatic (around circuses, called Indian, whether of

that variety or of the other 3: Ceylonese, Sumatran or Malayan). The Asiatic is not, as generally believed, more docile than the African, but it is more receptive to training because of its longer association with man during centuries of discriminating breeding for the royal stables of the Orient. Too, the African's great size, which makes transportation difficult, is against its tanbark employment. The African plains elephant is the world's heaviest land mammal. Bones & muscle alone of a gigantic specimen can weigh as much as the average Indian elephant. Male Africans often reach 12 feet at shoulder (add one foot & a half to top of head); the Indian rarely exceeds eight.

Elephant kindergarten begins with the job of getting a chain onto one leg. Elephants are great kickers, able to strike out each leg with tremendous force, backward & forward. They also kick to the side, though not so powerfully nor so accurately. Safest place around an elephant is where a bullhand always walks, alongside the left front leg. After a green elephant has gotten used to its leg-chain, the next step is trunk-taming, usually done by teaching the bull to tail-up (join truck to tail) with more domesticated elephants, or to carry a stick in its trunk-this in itself quite risky. Elephants are one of the four animals most responsive to man's will (the others: cow, camel and horse). No other animal or adult age can be as quickly trained or as thoroughly domesticated. Elephant trainers prefer pupils aged 5 or 6, when the animal is at intellectual & physical peak. Elephants will not all accept the same tricks. "You watches for the character of the individual," explained Smokey. "In three, four weeks you know pretty much what to expect. Some elephants takes a year to learn what others picks up in 2-3 days."

Most difficult trick to teach is the one-front-foot-stand because it requires a thorough understanding & application by both man & animal of balance and weight distribution. The hind-leg-stand and walk, another formidable trick, usually requires 3 months of arduous training before perfection, as compared to the mere 3 days needed to teach a *front-leg stand*.

(Continued on page 9)

VALENTINE'S VAULT*MEMORIES FROM 1949 BILLBOARDS

*From Polack Eastern, **Billy Barton** reports that **Irene Lafferty** is exhibiting her new wardrobe in the elephant act slightly on the scant side & very attractive...It is sensational the way **Mabel Stark** can jitterbug...Don't tell **Rose Oesterich** that Southern hospitality is dead. Walking down the street, she stooped to tie her shoelace, & a young Virginia gentleman tied it for her, tipped his hat & walked away...Returning from a swim, **Ray & Shirley Charlton** found their trailer flooded with 6" of water. **Dime Wilson & Betty Brasno** aided in their distress.*From Clyde Bros.-At opening in Evansville, **Del Graham**, pulled the catcher from the bar & both hit the net. It collapsed, landing them on the wood floor. Both were back to work the next day. **Tommy Bentley** fell from his foot-slide the next day, but saved himself by grabbing the rope. That night, **Laraine Marvel**, in doing her double forward in the teeterboard act, missed & landed on the floor. She suffered severe bruises...**Gracie Hanneford** is assisting **Tommy Bentley** in his wire act. *In March, **Cheerful Gardner**, of Polack Eastern, marked his 43rd year as an elephant trainer...**Mac McDonald** is en route from Sarasota to Columbus, OH, with 4 baby elephants he trained for Tom Packs...**Marilyn Wendt**, of the Wirery Wendts, high wire, sustained a fractured pelvis when she fell in rehearsal in Wis. **Clayton**, her brother-in-law, fell with her, but had only minor bruises. **Helen Billetti** has been secured as a replacement...From Hamid-Morton: **Jeep** is a big hit in the Flying Romas act. One night, **Mary Valentine** did a beautiful double, but she could not hold the hands of the catcher. She landed in the apron of the net & got severe burns on her arm, but kept working...From Dailey Bros: **Mitzi Fein** is instructress in charge of the aerial ballet & ladders. We hope **Gee Gee Powell** makes that change from menage to wild horse racing one of these days. We also hope that she doesn't forget again to put on her complete spec costume. A spangled bra & shorts don't look well on a horse!..When the dressing room dogs & ladder girls answer a rush call, it always ends with everyone in a heap at the door...**Roxy Engesser** suffered a broken ankle in a fall from a horse. *From Ringling, **Mary Jane Miller** reports: **Art & Antoinette Concello**, **Tuffy Genders** & members of the flying acts were written up in a 2-installment article in *New Yorker* magazine...It's a tie between **Rose Alexander & Fannie McCloskey** as

to who keeps the girls laughing longest & hardest with their jokes...**Jeannie Sleeter** was out for a few days with a knee injury...**Ernie Burch** pulling the prize boner of the season at the Elks party when he closed his speech with, "Thank you, Eagles." **Skee Matausch** doing a swell job with the passing leap in the flying act...**Jackie Gerlick** almost missing a clown number when **Paul Jung & Bobby Nelson** tied him to a guy line...**Dorita & Ronna**, daughters of **China** and **Dorothy Durbin**, joined for a few weeks vacation. While the girls are at home, **Dorothy** is always making something cute to send them...**Irma Pushnik** giving up trying to send home all her cactus plants. *From Polack Western, **Freddie Freeman** reports:**Betty Bell & Josephine Berosini** have come up with some new wardrobe creations. **Mamie Ward**, mother of **Harold & Eddie**, makes sports coats for the gang...**Eddie** says he has the best Cadillac that **Ed Raycraft** ever sold...**Bobo Barnett** is on the sick list, suffering from a skunk bite-from his pet!..Trailer-dwellers had a rough time in San Jose, CA, when they had to park several miles from the building. The **Berosinis & the Hellers** fooled 'em, however, by sneaking into somebody's back yard...The **Ward-Bell Troupe** came out recently wearing blue tights, except for **Harold Ward**, who was wearing green. Wonder if the pinochle game had anything to do with it...Laugh of the week: Some of the trailer gang went to a Press Club party. Returning in the wee hours, they decided to wake the rest of the trailerites. **Mr Berosini**, thinking the knocking on his door was the fishing party, got up, dressed & collected his gear. He went fishing anyway...*From Biller Bros., **Janie Statz** reports: **Frank Thompson** and **Conchita Morales** applied for a marriage license August 30 in Henderson, NC...**Cosetta Cristiani** draws plenty of attention as the only blonde in the web number...**Swede Johnson** deserves credit for pulling one of the baby elephants thru a serious illness...**Felix Morales** & all the showfolks are proud of the two **Morales** kids, **Sonny** and **Snooky**, whose trampoline act has been added to the show...**Betty Stahlman** did a great job on the new web costumes...**Iva Morales**, **Lil Bell**, **Mabel Johnston & Teresa Morales** & her mother served the food buffet-style for a picnic on a free Sunday...The girls wore small American flags, donated by **Teresa Morales**, in the web number July 4. **Teresa** looked good in her new red, white & blue wardrobe.*From Hunt Bros.: Thanks to **Louie Reed**, nobody needs an alarm clock.The baby bulls are doing a fast single routine. The delivery of 2 more babies is due in Sept.

CFA CLEVELAND CONVENTION!

JUNE 17-21, 1998

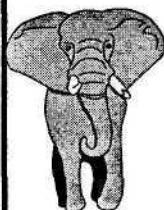
**PRESENTING THE BIG APPLE CIRCUS
AND THE KELLY MILLER CIRCUS !!!**

REGISTRATION FOR ADULTS: \$125 CHILDREN 17 & UNDER: \$110. LADIES LUNCHEON: \$12-KELLY MILLER CIRCUS: CIRCUS, TRANSPORTATION, BARBECUE: \$26. REGISTRATION COVERS CONVENTION EXPENSES, INCLUDING YOUR TICKET TO THE BIG APPLE CIRCUS. IT DOES NOT COVER YOUR ROOM, MEALS & BEVERAGES. MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO CIRCUS FANS ASSN. OF AMERICA AND MAIL TO: CHERYL DEPTULA, 2704 MARSHALL AVE. LORAIN, OH. 44052.

JOHN RINGLING TOWERS COMING DOWN

***From the Sarasota Herald-Tribune*by Laura Higgins**
In a last minute bid to halt demolition of the Ringling Towers, a local historic group asked a judge Thursday to issue an injunction forbidding the city from tearing down the Sarasota building. Circuit Judge Harry Rapkin, however, was not persuaded by the arguments of the Sarasota Alliance for Historic Preservation. He denied the group's request. Workers have already begun the 60-day process of dismantling the once grand 1926 hotel, which has been vacant & dilapidated for two decades. Last month, city officials declared the building a public nuisance and issued a demolition permit to the owner of the 11-acre property, Kansas developer C. Robt. Buford. The alliance filed a lawsuit earlier this week, asking a judge to stop the demolition process. The nonprofit group, which formed in 1986 to educate residents about preservation, once raised \$10,000 for the John Ringling Centre Foundation, and failed in its efforts to restore the Towers. At a hearing Thursday afternoon, the alliance's atty., Arthur Tepper, asked a judge to stay the demolition process for 45 days. This is normally required under city rules. The judge concluded that there was no violation of the Sunshine Law, which regulates public access to gov't meetings & documents. After Rapkin's ruling, Tepper said the group will not appeal. Whit Rylee, a member of the alliance's board of directors, said a 45-day wait would have allowed time to prove the towers was no more a public nuisance today than a decade ago.

******CIRCUS PAGES******



**AMERICA'S FASTEST
GROWING CIRCUS
SOMETHING NEW &
DIFFERENT EVERY
YEAR!!**

**JORGE PAGES
BOX 303
MYAKKA CITY, FL 34251
PH. 941-322-9501**

JOHN HERRIOTT POETRY

**HEAR JOHN RECITE :
THE CIRCUS
GAZOOONIE**

MERRY CHRISTMAS CIRCUS HOLIDAY

**A CIRCUS ELEPHANT
HORSES, HORSES**

**THE OLD SHOWMAN'S HEAVEN
WITH A WHOLE LOT MORE...**

**Written & narrated by John Herriott
Send check or money order for \$19 to:**

**John Herriott-Tapes
7000 Prospect Rd.
Sarasota, FL 34243**

BOB BLACKMAR CATALOG

I am interested in purchasing for my own collection, anything related to Side Shows or the exhibiting of anything or any one odd or unusual. Let me know what you have and what you want for it in cash or trade. Send 55¢ for Circus & Side Show items catalog to: Bob Blackmar, POB 283, Carrboro, NC 27510 Ph. 919-929-2753

BRUTES OF THE BIG TOP...

(Continued from Page 6)

"It was Louis Reed," Smokey said, "the man what broke me into the business, who wished all these elephants on me. I'm only doin' it fer him an' fer my reputation. Louie, he's pushin' 80, an' only last winter he stopped a stampede!"

Smokey was interrupted by a swarthy mustachioed fellow dressed in uniform pants, shirt & peaked cap, all blue. "Meet Big John," said my host, the man who never introduces nobody to anybody. "Big John's my first assistant. I got 4 of them, an' I wisht I had 8 or 9 like Big John." The big fellow shuffled & blushed. "I was tellin' him," Smokey said, nodding at me, "about ole Louie."

The first assistant warmed up immediately. "I learned how to handle a shovel an' broom from ole Louie," he said to me. "If you didn' do it jest right his way, he'd come swingin' at you with his bullhook. Mighty good man to break in with."

"The best," said Smokey. "We named the new African elephant after Louie. An' you know I got 4 letters from the front tellin' me to name him John for Johnny North." (Every circus owner wants to have an elephant named for him, but the honor is rarely bestowed since there are so few male elephants in captivity.) Smokey's polygot collection of bullhands had come from southern small towns mainly, with a few from northern industrial cities. The reason each had signed on was hidden deep within himself. Some get into the elephant trade simply because they are overpoweringly fascinated by the huge animals in the way certain men are attracted to horses. However, I've found that mill-run bullhands mostly are either hiding from society or trying to get even with it for some fancied slight or actual low roundhouse blow. Pushing elephants around gives these twisted guys great satisfaction.

The pay attracts very few potential bullhands. Wages of an All-American mahout are nothing to write home about. Even on the largest circuses they are incredibly low-less than \$17 a week maximum for the ordinary bullhand, along with board & berth

(sleeping double, sometimes triple). Elephant-Assistants' pay during my own circus thralldom was only \$40 a week, plus the same extras (however, with single occupancy berth). At that time the elephant big-boss (with stateroom) found only \$85 in his pay envelope every Thursday.

"Elephants," said Smokey, "they know if you're a real elephant man or not. You go from one show to another, they can smell you soon's you hit the Midway. You got elephant smell all through you-especially on your shoes." But how about knowing the elephants, I asked, aren't they hard to tell one from another? During my own performing days, while the bulls didn't all look alike to me, I'd never been able to identify any one for certain.

"Hell," said Smokey, "ain't nothin' to it when you works around them every day. Each 'un has somethin' different."

Smokey knew the names of all his elephants. Hardly using his fingers, he recited them for me-adding a phrase or a word to each, pointing out the animal's peculiarities, shortcomings or identifying features.

(To Be Continued)

USDA TO REQUIRE TB TESTING FOR CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS

March 31: The USDA will now require that elephants in captivity be tested for tuberculosis. "We've listened to the concerns of the public & the industry," said Michael Dunn, asst. sec'y of Agriculture for marketing. "And, as a result, we are establishing an industry standard for TB testing & treatment protocol for elephants."

Testing elephants for TB will now be required of all APHIS license holders who own elephants. The testing guidelines will become policy under the Animal Welfare Act's vet. care section. Under the new policy, if an elephant tests positive for TB, there are 2 options for the owner. The 1st option is to treat the animal following APHIS' new treatment protocol & restrict its travel for a short period of time. The other option, if the owner decides not to treat the elephant, is to isolate it from other animals susceptible to TB.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL ROUTE:
THRU JUNE 14-BATTERY PARK CITY, NEW YORK

1998 Circus Historical Society Convention

By Steve Gossard

"If you want something done," the old cliché goes, "ask a busy man to do it." Richard Reynolds is a busy man, but don't ask him to host another national convention. He hosted the CFA Convention in 1996, and the CHS Convention this year, and, according to Richard, that is enough for one lifetime! Be that as it may, if Richard ever wanted to pursue another career (Richard is a retired corporate lawyer) he could make a killing organizing conventions. He is certainly very good at it.

This year's CHS Convention was held in Richard's hometown of Atlanta, Georgia between March 7 and the 10th. The convention featured two of the finest circuses in America today, and the diverse cross-section of guest speakers ranged from the academic intelligencia to the veteran showman. The topics of discussion ran from technical, to anecdotal, to philosophical.

The show opened on the evening of the 7th with a reception hosted by the CFA Duggan Bros. Tent, presided over by Rev. George G. Hogan. In Attendance were none other than the legendary elephant man, William "Buckles" Woodcock (currently with The Big Apple Circus) and his lovely wife, the equally legendary, Barbara. Unfortunately, this was the only appearance the Woodcocks were able to make during the convention, as heavy rains and high water kept them confined to the show lot for the rest of the week.

Sunday, March 8th, a caravan of autos brought the convention to The Big Apple Circus for the afternoon performance (more about the Big Apple later) and back to the motel for the annual auction that evening. Among other highlights at this year's auction were 2 rare original Barnum & Bailey posters, which brought over \$500 apiece. One lucky bidder was heard to say that she & her husband will gladly live on macaroni & cheese for some months to come for the pleasure of owning an original B&B poster.

The entire day on Monday was given over to historical presentations which required the assis-

tance of special equipment-slide & VCR equipment, which as the assemblage was reminded repeatedly, were procured at enormous expense, for their enjoyment. Richard Flint led off the list of learned presenters with a slide presentation of rare photos, posters & pamphlets describing Barnum's wide variety of side show curiosities. He was followed by Fred Dahlinger who detailed the invention & development of one of the circus' earliest & most efficient labor-saving machines, the stake driver. The morning session was concluded with the latest installment in Margaret Shannon's evolving philosophy of the significance of the circus in our modern culture. In this intriguing episode we find that Margaret has finally discarded the decadence of post-modernism to explore the question of whether the written text has defined the circus, or vice-versa. Her audience plays mental short-stop, trying to field her fascinating ideas as they came flying in every direction.

Cedrick Walker, the creator & director of Atlanta's own Universoul Big Top Circus, led off the afternoon session with a discussion of how America's only all African-American Circus was conceived & organized. As Walker warmed to his audience everyone was impressed by his candid articulation as an orator, and by his competent persistence as an administrator & promoter. It is easy to see why the Universoul Big Top has become one of the finest circuses in America today.

Yours truly followed with a discourse on one of my favorite topics-the history of the YMCA Circus of Bloomington, Illinois-accompanied by some rare film footage from the late 1930s and 40s. This brought fond memories from the older fans in the audience, and a general feeling that "everything old is new again." Fred Dahlinger took the podium once again to present rare & beautiful photos and a chronological history of a number of parade wagons which were built for the Pawnee Bill Wild West Show at the turn of the century.

That evening the annual CHS banquet featured guest speaker, Paul Binder, creator & director of New York's gem, The Big Apple Circus. Paul talked casually & nostalgically about his early experiences as a mime artist on the streets of San Francisco, his

world travels, and the influences in his illustrious career which led him to form such a far-sighted conception of American showmanship.

Unfortunately, Stuart Thayer could not be present to lead off the last day of the convention as originally planned. Stuart is, without doubt, the foremost circus historian in America today, and everyone regretted his absence. John Polacsek addressed the group with a fascinating story line which he delivered in a novel fashion. He detailed the break-up of the Yankee Robinson Circus in 1875 by reading a series of personal letters between Robinson and his cronies. In the fullness of time-to the consternation of some & the entertainment of all- it was realized that the facts were true, but the letters were transcribed by John Polacsek himself, and not Yankee Robinson. Chuck Meltzer's memories of the "Jungle Rat" sideshow features of the 1960s and 70s was a perfect introduction for Ward Hall's fascinating talk about side show pitchmen of bygone days. In Ward's own words, "A sideshow talker is, in fact, a professional liar." While this was not news to most of the audience, it was the first time some of us had heard it stated directly from the "horses' mouth."

The afternoon session saw some surprises as well. Dave Friedman began by relating the details of his aborted attempt to run away with the Tom Mix Circus in the 1930s and how this experience inspired him to become a circus press agent. When he announced his career intentions to his father (a newspaper man, himself) he was given this advice: "When you study English in school, forget everything but the adjectives!" Bill Slout followed with a graphic description of Dan Rice's fantastic Paris Pavillion Circus, and proceeded to chronicle how it came to eventually be consigned to the scrap heap. Frank Robie then took the podium to dispell a number of false stories about the career of the legendary wire walker, Bird Millman. Ward Hall again took the floor at this point to introduce, in classic sideshow fashion, a special appearance by Tim Crigland, known professionally as "Zamora, the Torture King." I can now say that I have ridden The Big Shot ride in Las Vegas, and watched someone withdraw a string through a hole in his stomach-two experiences which not everyone would care to share! In the one case, my heart seemed to want to exit through my throat, in the other my stomach seemed to want to do the opposite. Tim also ran a long needle through his right bicep. If these were illusions...well, all I can say is that they were extremely convincing. More than one seasoned showman had to

turn away from this spectacle.

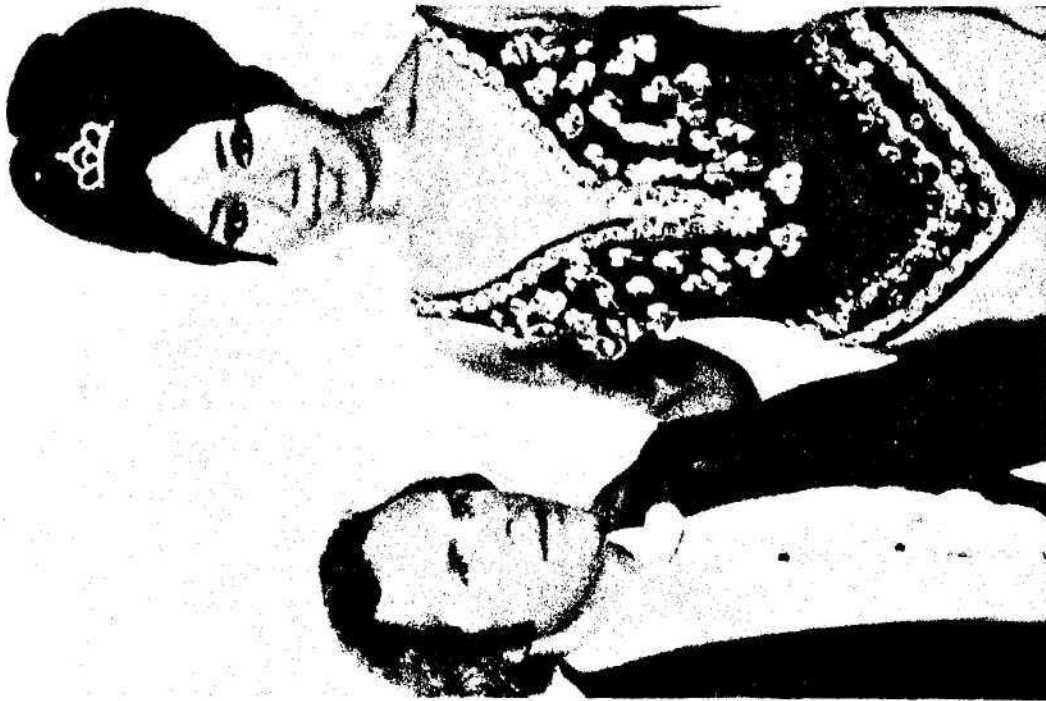
Whenever I give a presentation for the CHS, I make one request: "Please do not schedule me to follow Al Stencell." I assume other people must have the same concern, because for the last 2 conventions Al has been slotted last on the program. Al's topic this year speaks for itself: "Grifters, Trailers, Butchers, Peelers; Showfolks the Fans Didn't Photograph."

The climax of the convention was the performance of the Universoul Big Top Circus on the evening of the 10th, about which I hope to elaborate on in the next issue. It is only worth repeating here that this is certainly one of the finest shows in the country today, and it was well worth braving the unseasonably cold, wet Atlanta weather to see it.

The convention this year was a huge success. Our thanks to Richard Reynolds III and the Duggan Bros. Tent of Atlanta.

DEATH AT DISNEY'S NEW ANIMAL KINGDOM

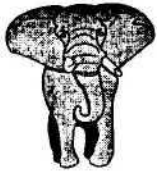
With the new park's opening 2 weeks away, changes are being made. Two exotic West African crowned cranes were run over by safari vehicles. Four cheetah cubs died from kidney failure after necropsies showed toxic antifreeze in their systems. Disney officials said the cubs came from another zoo within 2 weeks of their deaths, and could have ingested it there. They found no toxins near their pens at Disney. On Feb. 12, a female hippo died of blood poisoning from infections on her back & feet. The Disney animal-care people treated it after it arrived from a zoo in Europe. A white rhino died on March 24 after being anesthetized for a routine medical exam, after arriving from an undisclosed facility. A black rhino died last year after swallowing an 18" stick. After the crane deaths, Disney moved the remaining cranes away from the path of the safari vehicles. And they put more mirrors on the vehicles so the drivers can see the wildlife. Disney has hired some of the best zoo talent in the nation, they said. "They are basically the top end of the profession. If I were these people, I'd be looking at these things and shaking my head saying, 'What the hell's going on here?'" Two Asian small-clawed otters also died in the past 2 weeks after eating seeds from a loquat tree. Disney has removed the tree and the other otters are alright. The deaths have mobilized the animal-rights groups, which have long opposed the Animal Kingdom because it forces animals to live in captivity. The Animal Rights Foundation of Florida plans to hold a protest on the new park's opening day, April 22.



STU MILLER PASSED AWAY 4/4/98

YOU WILL BE MISSED MY FRIEND

**Back Yard
1522 Clinton Blvd.
Bloomington, IL 61701**



FIRST CLASS MAIL !