

BACK YARD

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CATCHERS and LEAPERS

BY BILL BALLANTINE*PART III*

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Sometimes the net is so much like the ground, the flier can't see it as he plunges down. Then another flier, already down, will "call him out" of his drop. I asked Dell how this is done. What is the magic word? "Duck," he said, & added after a pause, "damn good and loud."

Next to down by the tracks, the best trapeze sessions go on up at the circus lot right after the act in the men's dressing room, an earth-floored wedge of space between a pair of the gigantic 35-foot-long seat wagons which unfold to form the seats of the mammoth circus grandstand. The rehash (who did what wrong, where, when, & why) starts even before the exhausted fliers swing down out of the net & continues as they clomp on their clumsy slop shoes around the Big Top side wall. By the time the boys get to their trunks & start peeling off their sticky work clothes, most of the finer points of bollixing have been worked out, & as wrist tapes get unwound, you get a close-up of hands horny & calloused like a ditch digger's (& sometimes shredded & bloody as well). Glamorous tights are now drab things with patches & sweat smells. Resplendent jewel-studded belts show up ratty & frayed, the rubies & diamonds only glass.

But, next to his twice 10 minutes aloft, this is the best time of day to a flier. The flossy Daring-Young-Man greatest-of-ease nonsense has been left in the seats with the paying customers where it belongs. The smelly dressing-room air crackles with profane below-belt banter & the loving insults naked men sling at each other. Talk here, as it is wherever fliers gather, is mostly about flying. As the catchers & leapers slosh through bucket baths, it might slip onto guns & fishing, better ways to lay up a buck, or circus gossip, but inevitably the



favorite subject comes back, for a flier's mind truly swings on a trapeze. The only visitors to the dressing room are other fliers or ex-fliers. The first drop in from shows that are day-and-dating (playing the same town, same day), or those crossing trails en route, to swap shop talk & compare working conditions, each sticking up for his own branch of the trade-indoor flying vs. under canvas vs. outdoor parks & fairs. The ex-fliers are usually grizzled old characters poking in to cackle, "Is anyone here worked with the old Umphysumpin

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Jim Ridenour & Tiny Tim



BEATTY 1969



mills 1963



Michelle Ridenour & Tiny Tim



AUG 1960

HAGEN BROS.

TIPTOEING THRU THE MUD WITH TINY TIM**BY JIM RIDENOUR

Circuses over the years have featured many strange, or non-circus personalities as a draw. Cole Brothers featured Jack Dempsey, the fighter. At least a dozen cowboy film stars to include Lash LaRue, Tim McCoy & Tom Mix have been featured. Allan C. Hill, owner of the Great American Circus, topped them all when he hired Herbert Khaury.

Herbert, stage name-Tiny Tim, arrived by taxi at the lot in Ottawa, Illinois in September, 1984. He was carrying a Bloomingdale's shopping bag & two worn pieces of luggage. Allan assigned me the task of taking Tiny to the motel & picking him up each day. Tiny did his two 10 minute acts of tunes, like "When The Saints Go Marching in" & his famous "Tiptoe Thru The Tulips", which sold over a million copies. Tiny had come a long ways from \$50,000 a week gigs in Vegas & TV guest appearances. It had not been a pleasant trip. He later revealed his desire to make "The Big Time" one more time.

I loaded Tiny up to take him to his motel. He insisted on calling me Mister Ridenour. Tiny asked to stop at a pay phone so that he could call his mom & wife in New York. He told me not to worry as he had a timer & limited himself to 5 minutes for each call. I stopped at a Pizza Hut & told Tiny I would order pizza while he made the calls. His reply was, "I am broke till my first payday." I assured him that Mr. Hill would pick up the tab. He went to the phone & I ordered pizza. One hour & 15 minutes later, Tiny appeared & went into what was left of the pie. He ordered beer & drank it thru a straw. He was fascinated by the hostess who had paid him, the star, a lot of attention. He invited the gal to his room, which was next to the Pizza Hut. He repeatedly told me, "my intentions are strictly honorable." Before we departed, Tiny ordered a second pizza, complete with onions & peppers & anchovies. This was to be his breakfast. Someone once called Tiny a has-been. His reply was, "better to be a has-been than a never-been."

My job was to get Tiny to talk about the circus when making his appearances at newspapers, radio & television stations. This was not an easy task. The first question always asked was about his marriage to Miss Vickie, which took place on the Tonight Show on Dec. 17, 1969. He would burn up all the allotted time on this & a stupid, low budget horror movie he had just completed called, "Blood Harvest." I tried for a week to turn things around.

We were just not getting any publicity for the circus. I finally took a 14x22 window card & on the back I wrote in large letters the things he was to cover in every interview. The cue card read like this: Talk about the big tent; talk about the 4 elephants; talk about the clowns; talk about the pretty girls on the trapeze; always mention we are doing 2 shows today; the location; the sponsor, etc. Within a week or 10 days Tiny was a perfectionist. He loved to talk & he rambled on thanking Mr. Hill for giving him a break. Busy was great. Tiny's act was not so great.

This really did not matter. What mattered was getting "keisters" on them seats & Tiny certainly was doing that. Adults were drawn to him, if only for a look. Kid's had no idea who Tiny Tim was. They thought of him as part of a Christmas Story. We were rocking & socking 'em in every town & Tiny Tim was the reason why. Once, at a TV interview, Tiny was talking about how deeply religious he was when the interviewer asked why he divorced Miss Vickie. Tiny came back with, "That was Miss Vickie & the state of New Jersey." When the man asked why he remarried, Tiny shot back with, "It's better than fornication." The man shot back with, "We will cut now for a commercial."

Tiny's 2nd wife was a gold digger. She only showed up on Sundays to grab Tiny's paycheck & then departed at the first opportunity. I never liked her as it was obvious she really had no feelings for Tiny. Billy Martin told me a cute story. He was parked no more than 2 feet from Tiny the 2nd season when Tiny had a trailer. It was Sunday & Tiny's wife was there to grab the loot. Tiny was in a romantic mood & Billy said, "Tiny really hit some high notes that could be heard all over the lot."

Tiny never complained. We could be up to our knees in mud & Tiny never said a word. He was a trooper. His wife, the gold digger, was another story. Once she barged in the office, during one of her brief visits, with a list of demands. She rambled on for 5 minutes & I yelled, "Stop!" I had the performers payroll in my hands. I asked her name. She replied & I scanned the payroll & announced, "Your name is not on the payroll. You don't work here. Get the hell out of my office."

Tiny's shopping trips were a trip. He would buy 20 boxes of Cracker Jacks, 5 boxes of Oreos, 10 cans of sardines, 10 bags of chips, \$40. worth of pancake make-up, & 5 cans of Lysol. He sprayed the hotel rooms, toilets, etc. as he was afraid of catching some sort of virus.

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****TIPTOEING WITH TINY....****

Till the last day of the 2 seasons he insisted on calling me Mr. Ridenour. He was deeply religious & told me on more than one occasion that he was praying for me as "I had not been born again."

He also revealed to me that a big chunk of his \$3500 plus weekly salary went to the mob, as they owned his contract. This was in '84 & '85 and hard for me to believe. His big dream was to make the big time one more time. Tiny could sing thousands of songs. When we went to another state Tiny had a song for that state. Tiny Tim wore long hair before the Beatles. Tiny always said his job with The Great American Circus was another form of vaudeville. He put his heart & soul into every performance. He took his work seriously. I had a lot of respect for the man. After all, I'm a little weird myself.

Once, we were making a jump in the Carolina's. I came up on Tiny Tim & wife Jan. They were both down on their hands & knees searching for Ms. Jan's wedding band. Seems Tiny & the lady (?) had just finished a domestic brawl & she had thrown the ring out the window in a fit of madness. She had 2nd thoughts & they turned around to go back & try to find it. Their hunt was to no avail...just another Tiny story.

Once, inside a bookstore in Canton, Ohio, the owner asked me what I did for a living. I replied that I was the manager of the circus & Tiny Tim was our star. The bookstore owner went over to the shelves & brought back the Unauthorized Bio of Tiny Tim, put out by the Playboy Press. He said you will find this one interesting. I did. In fact, I found it fascinating..I read the whole thing & decided I would ask Tiny to autograph it for me. As I approached him, he spotted the book & said, "Mister Ridenour, for God sakes--Do not let anyone on the show read that book. Especially the part about me, the girls & the peanut butter & jelly."

I never told a single person. Tiny's secret was my secret. Tiny gave me a video of a film he made in Australia. It is called "Street of Dreams" & was never released in this country. It is a wild, weird, wonderful look at Tiny Tim. He is high as a kite & naked as a jay bird in bed with 2 naked ladies. What a sight. I have copies available. Write me.

Well, I got lots more Tiny Tim stories, but it is difficult to clean them up, so to speak. Tiny ended every show with "Tiptoe Thru The Tulips." Some found his performance pathetic, yet inspiring. One thing's for sure-Tiny had gumption. Once a TV crew were filming

patrons as they left the big top. One gentleman, when asked what he thought of Tiny Tim replied, "He should be in the circus." Tiny was a trooper and I am proud to call him my friend.

****BOBBY HAKES ANSWERS ????****

Question: Did you enjoy the cookhouse food on the shows you were on? Answer: When I did sway pole I never worked on a tent show, so I ate wherever I could. I was the free-act for many carnivals so I ate on the lots most of the time.

Question: What were the roads like, traveling back then? Answer: In those days, they were in pretty bad shape & a lot of the U.S. routes out west were dirt for hundreds of miles at a time. That is why the circuses & carnivals stayed with the trains as long as they did. The carnivals kept using the trains until the 70s because of the heavy loads they carried. The only exception was Texas; it had better roads than they do now.

Question: How did performers take care of laundry? Answer: On the tent shows, it was part of the 24-hour man's job to send laundry & dry cleaners to the lots. In most towns they would come in the morning & collect all the clothes & bring them back between shows in the evening. When I worked as head usher or on the side show tickets, or many other jobs, I would use 2-3 white shirts a day, depending on the lots; if they were dirt, grass or inbetween, & how hot it was. In real hot weather, we would tie a handkerchief around our necks so that the neck of the shirts wouldn't get as dirty. In those days, ushers, ticket sellers, novelty, joint men on concessions & all management wore white shirts & ties, no matter what the weather. The butchers in the seats wore white t-shirts that Coca Cola gave you & you would sometimes wear 2-3 a day. The laundry-men did very good on the circuses in those days. Most of the acts would wash their clothes in buckets & hang them on the guy lines to dry.

(Bobby said at a Tent meeting, they asked everyone to talk about what shows they had been on. "I got up & said I had been on the Al G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus"-& a voice behind me said, "So was I." Then I said, I was on the Jay Gould Million Dollar Circus. & a voice said, "So was I." Then I said Steven Bros., Ring Bros., Vonderheid Bros. And the voice said, "So was I." I turned around & it was Johnny Frazier. I remembered him, but he couldn't place me, yet we had been on many shows together. I guess I did my jobs right & blended into the scenery!

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****CATCHERS & LEAPERS....****

Troupe?" or expecting the boys to hark back to some turn-of-the-century caper, before any of them were born. The boys are always polite, but if the veteran is one who could, in his day, do some special acrobatic flip, like, for instance, a standing back somersault out of a large pickle barrel, he gets the choice salaams due a member in good standing of this select society of somersaulters.

Around the lot, this preoccupation with flying is never chalked up to snobbery. The inmates of the Barnum & Bailey world, where nearly everyone is built like a Greek statue & spangles are common as elephant flops, all recognize the fliers' right to a special razzle-dazzle of their own. Leapers, especially, carry a lot of respect all over the circus back yard & come closest to being tanbark royalty in this democratic gypsy camp, chiefly because even the scruffiest roughneck work-hand knows that a flying trick is just about the only thing in the whole circus (except maybe an adult male gorilla) that cannot be gimmicked—that is, fitted with some foolproof safety gadget, not apparent to the audience. The success of a flying trick depends strictly on muscles & skill. It's impossible to safe-guard a human body hurtling through space at that breakneck speed.

And the flying act is the only one that circus people themselves never tire of watching. The real sawdust test. For troupers, well-seasoned by years of exposure to all kinds of derring-do, are little interested in the 3-ring ground program of wonders. Performers, particularly, take scant notice of the show, unless there's some extra-low-crotch clown shenanigan or an act with a trick they can steal for their own. But when the trapezes are creaking, every kinker-or performer-on the lot tries to slip into the Big Top. Just for kicks. You see little knots of ballet broads & midgets, wire-walkers & jugglers, acrobats & unicyclists all around the hippodrome track. All eyes to the air. Kinkers never have any trouble following every trick of every leaper. If you want to do this, too, the key is the catcher. Nothing happens while he sits his trapeze. But when he hangs down, look sharp. A trick is about to happen.

Fliers don't like to say one trick is harder than another. What is trouble-some for one fellow is duck soup for the next (there is a leaper, for instance, who can't do a double somersault unless his head is in a sack.)

Audience-wise, I think the passing leap comes off best. It has the spectacular business of one leaper diving over another in mid-air (girl leaves catcher for fly bar at the

same time boy leaves fly bar for catcher.) Because it's so flashy, the passing leap is usually done as a finish trick to close the act. The triple, while generally acknowledged to be the most difficult flying trick, is not my favorite, nor is it a really good audience trick. It goes so fast that, unless it's announced beforehand, the public doesn't know whether it has seen 1, 2, 3 or 8 somersaults.

Codona's air speed in the triple was popularly reported to be 62 miles an hour (how it was measured is never explained.) Eddie Ward, the catcher who broke in more fliers than anyone else in the business, put flier speed at about 40 miles an hour, frankly admitting, however, that there is really no way to clock it. Fay thought Alfredo's speed in the triple was even less than that, because Codona worked so very high. Fliers firmly believe high-trick flying speed is slower than low-trick, possibly because a high trick has a greater drop distance to the catcher & allows time for shorter somersaults.

Some fliers have a weird notion concerning gravity, contending that leapers drop faster over downward-sloping ground, even when the rigging is perfectly level & conversely, experience a tough uphill push over upsloping ground. (Sir Isaac Newton, please write.) Others sensibly conclude that more tricks are missed from thinking about gravity than by any actual pull of it. In Pittsburgh (1948 season) the Big Top was pitched on a hill lot with a drop of 35 feet from front door to back yard. The fliers had a bad time of it that week, granted, but chances are their troubles were strictly illusional. One of the catchers told me, "I took a spirit level up & laid it on each crane bar, & on the long bars, & they was right on the button, but damn if, from the ground, the frame didn't look cockeyed as hell." Towners have a few screwy ideas about flying, too. The greatest is the business of timing. When a flier misses, you always hear some gilly say, "Just a split second off!" But this is wrong. Fliers think of misses in terms of space, not time—a hair off, an inch off, a foot off, a mile off. And there are no intentional misses to make a trick look hard. It's much too dangerous not to complete a trick.

There's always some talk, too, by outsiders, of acts being so telepathically bound together that losing one member will send the whole troupe packing to a home for indigent actors. Not so. Any good flier can step into any breach & with a little practice, the act swings on same as ever.

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****CATCHERS & LEAPERS....****

Better than extrasensory perception for holding an act together, say fliers, is the common substance, powdered rosin, which is kept handing from a pedestal-board upright in a small bag. "Without rosin," they all agree, "you couldn't have a flying act. It's the real gaff on the joint."

One day at the lot, Dell Graham, tidying up his trunk, came on an old magazine with an article about Codona, which he lent to me. Reading it, I found the flier-king had his own peculiar concept of the triple. He believed that a triple-somersaulting body whirls so fast that, for a split second, it goes out of control, with all knowledge of time, space, distance & surroundings lost; that the ability to gauge must then be regained in another split second, on the 3rd somersault, so that the brain is clear on the break-out. Soon as I could, I asked Fay about this.

Hell no, he said, he never blanked out like that. His trio of somersaults seemed just as simple as a double-no time at all until he let go his legs & came out, reaching for the catcher. And Dell said, "A'right, so you get sparks or spots in front of your eyes if your stomach is bad or something like that-but you got to know where you are in a trick, any trick. Once you lose *that*, you just don't get it back-split second or any other old time. You crash."

"Them write-ups is always a lot of guff," added Fay. "Height an' a good ketcher is all you need for the triple. Height to get all the somersaults in. An' you better have a damn good man waitin' in the ketch trap, 'cause that sonuvabitch comes in like a fast freight out West. Alfredo, he could go *damn* high. An' there wasn't a better ketcher made than his brother Lalo." Some of this fantastic Codona lift, Fay told me, came from Alfredo's own strong natural power; a lot of it came from his high take-off point. He swung out from what fliers call a "raise," a narrow board hooked over rungs spaced ladderlike, about a foot apart, up the vertical side supports of the pedestal. Codona used a 5th raise. That put him about 5 feet higher than normal pedestal-board level, a lot of his body well above the flying frame. Then, too, Codona's crane bar (the crosspiece from which the pedestal board hangs) was curved back, instead of running straight across, & he could put more force into his pump-up without the danger of crashing the bar with his back. Also, his frame was longer than average, allowing the catch trap to be lowered a bit.

All these factors gave Codona more room in which to do his somersaults. He got his first two in way above the

flying frame, & the third one high enough so he was well out of it & ready to grab the coming-in swing of the catcher. "That's the best time to ketch a trick-swingin' into it," Jimmy Crocker, the center-ring catcher, said. "The worst is at the end of the swing. An' if you ketch a trick goin' downhill, when you hit center it'll like to tear your arms out."

Crocker has caught the triple only a couple of times, while practicing with Fay at winter quarters. He's mighty game to try for more, though generally he takes a dim view of catching. "I'm just thankful I still got all my teeth left yet & no bones broken. I only got one busted nose once when Sleeter crashed me once at quarters, but I was able to stay in the ketch trap for 2 more tricks. But the blood sure ruined me a good pair of tights." I asked about getting knocked out. From Dell I had got the notion that a catcher recovers quickly because the blood rushes to his head. Jimmy, after noting impersonally what I was full of, said, "When you get conked out, brother, you drop outa the trap. Hell, they ain't nothin' else you *can* do."

Fay thinks maybe he could do better on the triple with a heavier catcher. He said, "Willie's gonna open up his chicken shack next year, an' he ain't comin' back, so maybe Concello will gimme center ring with Jimmy. He's gonna ketch me in Cuba this winter. With him in the trap, I think maybe we can make it stick."

Fay's greatest booster thinks so, too. Dell points out that his boy made the grade to principal leaper in only 2 years, half the time it usually takes, & that a tough acrobatic past has given Fay the guts needed to endure that monotonous aching-muscle period when every triple try is nothing but a miss by fingernails. Fay has always had the circus touch, has never wanted to or had to be anything but an acrobat. From ground tumbling as a kid he progressed through parallel bars, roman rings & trampoline to a job on a small tent show where he was broken in to the bruising punishments of risley, a form of foot-juggling which uses people instead of objects & where he did his 1st triples from a teeter-board. Fay's entire working life has been spent under canvas except for a couple of war years when the risley troupe, enlisted in the Navy as "musicians," did their act with Rudy Vallee's sailor band. Fay got into flying in 1948 while working a winter circus doing comedy diving into a net. Looks like Fay is a shoo-in for Codona's crown. With a coach like Dell in his corner, how can he lose?

****THE END****

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*******BACK YARD GOSSIP*******

Peter Bendall reports from Germany: 8/11-The radio headlines just reported that one of Gert Simoneit's tigers has attacked one of the keepers, "with severe damage to shoulder & face" during their visit to Eutin (in North Germany) & the man is in the hospital. He will let us know more about this as it becomes available. (Peter has a good line at the end of his e-mails: "Never try to teach a cow to sing. It wastes your time and annoys the cow!")

Tom Dunwoody reports from Peru, IN: After the Milwaukee Parade, King Tusk came for a visit for a few days, giving the Polkes a much needed vacation. Jimmy Silverlake was flying up to see to King Tusk's welfare.

ELEPHANT MISSING FOR 16 HOURS

An escaped circus elephant, that eluded searchers for 16 hours, was recaptured. Ginny, a 34-year-old Indian, broke free from her tether in Dunolly, Victoria, Australia, on Aug. 5th, after being scared by a passing train. After being tracked across scrubland by 30 police officers & circus staff, she was spotted in a forest by a press helicopter.

RINGLING REPORTS: In Wichita, KS, King Tusk made friends with the Riverkids Camp children & counselors. His human companions were Lynn & David Polke, who gave a seminar to educate Tusk's new friends about Asian elephants.

FELD ENTERTAINMENT DONATES \$10,000 TO TIGER RESCUE EFFORT: They announced a pledge of \$10,000 to the Texas Exotic Feline Foundation to assist in its rescue of 4 Bengal tigers that recently were confiscated by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Serv. after being abandoned by a bankrupt Spanish circus. The contribution will go toward the building costs for the tiger's living facility. "Tigers are a traditional feature of The Greatest Show On Earth," explained Stuart Snyder, Pres. of Feld Entertainment. "They hold a special place in the hearts of our audiences & our trainers who live & work with them every day. We took immediate action to help rescue these tigers & get them started in their new home." "The tigers, part of a circus that went out of business, were abandoned on a ship & brought ashore at Brownsville, TX. They are now at home in the non-profit sanctuary in Boyd, TX. It currently houses 65 large cats, including lions, tigers, cougars, bobcats, jaguars & leopards. The children of Southlake, TX have worked hard to collect funds to help these tigers and Ringling is

arranging an 'Evening at the Circus' for them."
RINGLING CLOWN, PEGGY WILLIAMS, IS INDUCTED INTO THE INTERNATIONAL CLOWN HALL OF FAME: Peggy was the first female graduate of the Ringling Clown College. The only other female clown to be inducted was European clown, Annie Fratellini. Kenneth Feld said, "Because of Peggy's contributions as a performer, performance director & director of our educational efforts, I've always felt she was a Hall of Fame member." Peggy was the 1st female Asst. Performance Director for Ringling in 1981. She is also a motivational speaker & creator of CIRCUSWORKS, an educational seminar designed to instruct elementary school teachers in the use of the circus as a teaching tool.

CIRCUS SIDAN-www.bardunen.com, reports: Between June 11-12, a red & yellow 4-masted 36x40 m. circus tent was stolen in Nurnberg, Germany. Information will be rewarded by the owner of the tent. Contact bardunen@algonet.se & we will forward you to the owners.

MARINE WORLD, VALLEJO, CA: 8/4-Jannell Waldo has injuries to her skull & spine after startling a 2-yr. old male tiger, Kuma. She was participating in a program that lets visitors pay \$250. to have their photos taken with wild animals. She received the photo package as a birthday present. She was posing with Kuma when she fell off a podium. Park spokesman, Jeff Jouett said, "The tiger was doing what a tiger does. Kuma was frightened & it sparked an instinctive reaction." Pictures taken with tigers have been permanently cancelled.

MINOT, N.D.: In another tiger attack, a 5 yr.-old boy visiting a State Fair exhibit where children could get their pictures taken with a tiger was clawed by one of the cats when it apparently became unnerved by the crowd. Trainer Brian Turner, of the Bridgeport, TX Nature Center, said the 4-month old Bengal was spooked by the number of people in the photo area or by a sudden movement. "It was too crowded in the area. I was trying to get people to move away." The Fair mgr. said the cat apparently put its paws on either side of the boy's face & then quickly let go when it realized Antony wasn't a threat. If there are more photo sessions, a smaller cat would be used.

Old circus custom: When a brother worker is in bad with the boss-nobody wants to be seen talking to him.

127th EDITION RINGLING RED UNIT:

Colorado Springs, CO-World Arena-Aug. 19-23
Wichita, KS-Kansas Coliseum-Aug. 28-30
Moline, IL-The Mark of Quad Cities-Sept. 4-6
Kansas City, MO-Kemper Arena-Sept. 9-13
Indianapolis, IN-Market Sq. Arena-Sept. 16-20
Grand Rapids, MI-Van Andel Arena-Sept. 23-27
Buffalo, NY-Marine Midland Arena-Sept. 30-Oct. 4
Detroit, MI-Joe Lewis Arena-Oct. 7-11
Boston, MA-FleetCenter-Oct. 14-25
Pittsburgh, PA-Civic Arena-Oct. 28-Nov. 1
St. Louis, MO-Kiel Center-Nov. 4-8

128TH EDITION RINGLING BLUE UNIT:

Oakland, CA-The Arena-August 19-23
San Jose, CA-San Jose Arena-August 25-30
San Francisco, CA-Cow Palace-Sept. 2-7
Sacramento, CA-ARCO Arena-Sept. 9-13
Seattle, WA-Key Arena-Sept. 17-20
Spokane, WA-Arena-Sept. 22-23
Portland, OR-Rose Garden-Sept. 25-27
Salt Lake City, UT-Delta Center-Sept. 30-Oct. 4
Denver, CO-Denver Coliseum-Oct. 7-18
Cleveland, OH-Gund Arena-Oct. 23-Nov. 1
Rosemont, IL-Rosemont Horizon-Nov. 4-15

CIRCUS SMIRKUS-Greensboro, VT-Aug. 18
WENATCHEE CIRCUS-Lake Wenatchee, WA-8/23-
Metaline Falls, WA-Sept. 5-6

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****TRASH TALK BY MIKE CECERE****

I would expect by now most readers will have heard of the latest major attack against our beloved circus industry.

Talk show host, Montel Williams, who, hear to for, had been one of the most respected articulate operators of a talk show format, declared war on the circus in America. Not just for having animals. He said on a recent show that he couldn't understand why circuses were still in business & that he felt that all circuses should be abolished by the year 2000!

Sure, he had a roomfull of animal welfare advocates, led by actress, Kim Basinger, with the predictable video display of bad moments with circus elephants that had all been seen before. The real shock was him calling for all circuses to shut down.

That's all the high wire acts; jugglers; clowns; trapeze artists & other associated personnel! They should be put out of work because he doesn't like circuses? And as an American & a Navy veteran, he sure is entitled to his opinion. Just as it would be any of our views, that the show he produces should be closed down.

When you look at just the amount of goodwill done by showpeople-their sponsors, such as the Shriners, Jaycees, etc. That would be compelling enough. I would suggest every circus fan, circus person active or retired & any other circus-loving person bombarded your local TV station that carries The Montel Williams show that you aren't happy with his calling for the end of the circus.

Circus producers need to wake the sleeping giant; the Shriners who owe us a favor & have them apply their considerable power to help out. I wonder how many hospitals for crippled or burned children Montel Williams pays for? How many children's hospital wards does he visit on weekends & has time off, like the Shrine clowns to bring a little joy into a sick child's life?

The first response by Mr. Williams will, no doubt, be that our objection to his opinions are motivated by the fact he's a black man, in an inter-racial marriage. I wonder if he knows he's calling for the end of the excellent UniverSoul Circus-a black owned enterprise? Time to speak up people, before we're talked out of business!

LORDS OF THE LIONS BY MIKE CECERE

Recently, I had an extremely pleasant visit by one of my oldest friends, Dave Hoover. Dave is one of the high level management-team members, along with another friend, John Frazier, responsible for the road tour of the famed Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. And as many circus

friends & historians are aware, Dave & I were once, lion trainers. Yes, seemingly a lifetime ago, both Dave & I used to tour the country on one stands, building shows, etc. Locking ourselves in a steel cage, full of lions, tigers & other meat-eating creatures.

Dave, the official successor to the legendary Clyde Beatty himself, was the last man to present the traditional "fighting cat" act on an American circus. He had a wide collection of impressive well-cared for big cats, including some of the biggest black-maned lions you'd ever want to see. I also presented a "fighting act" during my tenure with Hoxie Bros. Circus in the 1970s & emulated one of my boyhood heroes, Pat Anthony. In the winter we lived quite close & visited often.

One winter, my first at Hoxie Tucker's, Dave wintered at our place which was quite an adventure! At the time, the Acme Circus Corp. operated the Beatty show, King Bros. & Sells & Gray, which all had side shows with caged big cats. So, between the young lions I was breaking (I used the former Hoxie cage act equipment of Prince Bogino the 1st year, none of the cats, as they had been sold 2 years earlier.) Hoover's cat act & side show cats (our's too), there was a veritable jungle set up in that cow pasture. We each had our arenas up & training went on at all hours. He even lent me a set of cages!

That's one of those times that you wished you'd taken more photos of. Quite a time! Dave & I have kept in touch over the years, which have been busy ones. Just in the past year Dave appeared in an award-winning movie & headed up a real-life lion hunt to recapture an escaped zoo lioness in Central Florida.

I've kept busy as the general mgr. of a large, Agri-Business company & the only farmer, on our road anyway, with African elephants. An amusing, recent side-light, I was waiting in the local chain-saw shop to have some saws sharpened, when another local farmer asked if I wasn't the one up the road with the elephants. I replied I was & then he asked, "What did you do before you trained elephants?" And I politely replied, "Oh, I used to be a lion trainer!" Well, you could have knocked him over with a feather! How long was it, I thought to myself? Maybe it was only yesterday, when Dave & I were the *Lords of the Lions!*

TARZAN STAND-IN DIES AT AGE 75: Jack Yaeger died 8/7 in Tallahassee. He did the swinging from the vines & the high dives in the Tarzan movies. He doubled for Weismuller in "Tarzan's Secret Treasure" & "Tarzan's New York Adventure."

VALENTINE VAULTS-FROM 1945 -THE GOLDEN YEARS OF THE BILLBOARD

*From the Cole Bros. show-Freddie Freeman reports:

The entire show was shocked at the sudden passing of **Jimmie Reiffenach**. We have a good system on the trunk-loading deal. Each loads his wife's & his own & you should see them go aboard. It makes us wonder why we didn't think of it years ago.. **Justin Loyal, Jr.** has been made show mascot, as his smile lights up the whole top..The girls are getting hot water these cold nights from the 74 wagon.. **Con Colleano, Justino Loyal, Kurt Oranto, Harold Voise, Frances Reiner & Charles Forrest** had themselves a time fishing all week. Charles, former high-wire performer, was the only one to fall in the lake while walking across a 2-ft. wide rail. **Justino & Con** built a boat-it didn't prove seaworthy & sank in midstream..**DOWN MEMORY LANE:** When **Otto Griebing** was with the **M.L. Clark** show doing single traps as a girl; **Harold Voise, Eileen Larey, Art & Tony Concello, Mayme, Jessie & Mable Ward, Geo. Reed, Mickey King, Bee Starr, Paul & Nellie Sullivan, Ralph Duvall, Les Thomas, Jimmie Arbaugh, Bob Fisher,** to mention a few, were all members of the **Eddie Ward Troupe**; When they used to bring **Paul Nelson** in the ring in a suitcase; **Mrs. Zack Terrell** did umpteen flip-flaps on the table & so fast you couldn't count 'em; When **May Wirth** came to this country & was a sensation with her riding act...**From Austin Bros. show-Kay Burslem reports:** **Swede Johnson** got an oil bath from **Lucy, the elephant.** While giving her a bath, **Lucy** dipped into the bucket & got a trunk full. Not liking the taste, she promptly sprayed it over **Swede,** who said, "I never knew an elephant had a double-barreled trunk before..."The butchers have organized the "Bobby Sock Club." **Harry Hammond** is president..**Andy Anderson** is now running the grease stand..**Jap, the elephant,** paid a visit to a feed mill when ambling away from the circus lot on a foraging expedition. **Jap** didn't bother anyone & helped herself to some grain.. **From Dailey Bros.:** **Joe Rossi** plays boogie-woogie & **Ernie Burch** can't resist dancing while he sells programs..**Rex Williams,** now in the service, visited..**Hazel King,** so excited about daughter, **Pearl,** coming, ran out of the dressing room & started the menage act with a cigarette in her mouth..**Jean Allen,** recovering from ptomaine poisoning, was seen going to town for breakfast & she wants it understood that she got sick eating in town, not on the lot!....

Ben Davenport purchased a loud-speaker set for **Wild West** concert announcements & **Norma** uses it to whistle for her dog..**From Russell Bros.:** **Jeannie** is working the bull act again & doing a head-stand simultaneously with **Elsie,** is star elephant-a big applause getter..**From Ringling, Dick Miller reports:** **Tex Copeland,** recently discharged from the Army, is working front door..**Alva Johnson,** discharged by the Navy, is back selling tickets..**Harry Dann** is back after taking his Army exam-he didn't make it!..**Paul Jung** is making a new head for his **Elsie, the cow, gag.****Helen Wallenda** has her injured ankle in a cast..The friendly ribbing between **Merle Evans & Art Springer** is a daily event..**Lou Jacobs** loaned his prop cigar to **Pat O'Brien,** movie star, when **Pat** visited the show.. May 6th: **Victoria Torrence** fell 60 ft. to her death in the center ring at **Madison Sq. Garden.** The act, **Victoria & Torrence,** was spotted late in the show with the **Clarkonian & Royal** flying trapeze acts, but finished alone with all spotlights centered on them above center ring. They were starting their descent for the finale. There are several versions of what happened, but some say it was the sudden jerk, caused by the rope on which the pair were being slowly lowered to the ring being caught in the pulley block. This caused his foot to slip from her ankles & their balance upset...**Jimmie Troy** reports from **Banard Bros.** that **Bonnie Duane** was injured when a mule knocked down her trapeze rigging...**Cheerful Gardner** suffered a stroke on **Arthur Bros.** & had to leave the show..**Poodles Hanneford** has bought a 2-acre ranch in **San Fernando Valley.****Betty Acevedo** returned home to **L.A.** after being with **Arthur Bros.** "The season was long & tough." She lost 35 pounds but is gaining it back..**Dailey Bros.** personnel got the laugh of the season, reports **Golda Grady,** when a couple of natives purchased ducats to the show's **Wild West** concert, & when the announcer invited the purchasers to take grandstand seats, they went out the back door & sat in the fairgrounds grandstand for 2 hours waiting for the cowboys to do their stuff. **Golda** swears that it actually happened!..3 aerialists, **The Hollywood Aerial Artists,** of the **Clyde Beatty** show were injured when a cable snapped during the act & the girls fell 40 feet. One ring cable held & the other 3 girls continued with their part of the act while employees rushed the 3 injured to a hospital. The injured were **Gay Boeth,** fractured right ankle; **Pauline Penny,** broken left leg & **Jean Evans,** back injury.

*****NEWZ FROM THE ZOOS*****

FROM THE CINCINNATI ZOO: Ganesh, the baby elephant, born 3/15, now weighs 559 pounds.

FROM THE CLEVELAND ZOO: "A female Masai giraffe, Tyra, was born at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo on July 2, to 1st-time parents, Bridgit & Walker. This is the Zoo's first giraffe birth sine Bridgit, herself, arrived more than 5 years ago. Animal keepers spread a thick-layer of sand in an outdoor holding area in preparation of the birth. The sand softened the landing for Tyra, since giraffes are born with the mother standing & undergo a 6-ft. drop as an introduction to the world. At birth, giraffes are already 6 ft. tall & weigh more than 100 pounds.

You have until 9/30 to see the white alligators in The Rain Forest. (Those that went to the CFA Convention, have paid them a visit!) The young male alligators lack pigment cells that create color. The pink eyes are the result of blood showing through colorless irises. Cajun legend says that staring into a white gator's eyes brings good luck."

FROM THE TORONTO ZOO: "A rare Sumatran orangutan died Aug. 5th, despite the efforts of 3 vets, a respiratory therapist & critical care doctor from Sick Kid's hospital. 8 year-old Kartiko had been expected to recover after he fell into a moat surrounding his pen & was rescued from drowning by a zoo visitor on the 3rd. He was under water about 3 minutes before Nick Lezetc, a former lifeguard, who teaches special needs kids, jumped into the 2 1/2 meter deep moat & pulled out Kartiko. Nick's girlfriend, Stephanie, attempted artificial respiration to get Kartiko breathing again. Respiratory therapist, Lynn Crawford, went to the zoo with special equipment to help ventilate Kartiko. "We just did what you would do on an 8-year-old child. He responded at first." Kartiko had pneumonia 5 yrs. ago, which left his lungs weak. He fell into the water after 5 orangutans fought over cookies someone had thrown into the cage. "I'd like to think they didn't know what they were doing," zoo spokesman Patrick McCarthy said. "I'm bitter that the people responsible for the whole thing didn't stick around. Hopefully, people will read the signs & respect the animals."

FROM THE KIEV, UKRAINE ZOO 8/8: "Years of solitude are almost over for Ukraine's most famous elephant, whose future mate has arrived from Germany. Dirndl, a 30-year old female from Munich's Hellabrunn Zoo, sustained a 4-day trip to get to Boy, a 28-yr. old,

7-ton male who has spent about 10 yrs. alone at the Kiev Zoo. The Kiev Zoo long has sought a girl for Boy-said to be the largest elephant in European zoos-but was strapped for cash. Dirndl is in her prime mating age & Munich & Kiev zoos hope to share any offspring.

FROM THE COLUMBUS, OH ZOO: Two bouncing babies, Jontu, a 1-year old gorilla can often be seen riding on the back of his mother. Out in the new bonobo yard, 2-year old Tamia climbs the trees & swings from ropes with her older brother, Ricky. The African plains are also represented by the Zoo's baby boom with 4 lion cubs which can be observed next to the white tiger. The cubs, 3 females & 1 male, range in age from 6-11 months.

FROM THE BUENOS AIRES ZOO: July 3-Two newborn white Bengal tigers had their coming out recently. Their coats are believed to have special powers. They have been extinct in the wild since 1906 & there are only about 200 in captivity. The cubs were born to Betty, a white Bengal tiger that arrived at the zoo in 1997, with 3 other tigers. The carried the cubs for more than a year before giving birth on June 14.

FROM THE CALCUTTA ZOO: The world's oldest tigon, is dying a lonely death in Calcutta zoo. Her name is Rangini. There was a time when she was the showpiece of this famous zoo, built by the British in 1875 & the oldest in India. The zoo claims she is the last tigon on earth, though western experts believe that a couple may still be alive in private collections. (From London's Telegraph).

FROM THE CHANGCHUN, CHINA ZOO: Aug. 3-A Siberian tiger recently gave birth to 3 cubs, bringing to 9 the number of newly-born tigers at the zoo. This was the 9th birth of the 13-yr. old mother, Yan Chun. In June, the mother had a miscarriage & zookeepers at once adopted measures to prevent the premature delivery of the other cubs. The 3 cubs are now in good condition, playing with their mother.

FROM THE BANGLADESH, INDIA ZOO: In Dhaka, mother tiger, "Mamata" gave birth to 4 cubs on Aug. 4th, at Mirpur Zoo. The father, Arjun, is being kept from this "kids," as he has a bad temper. The new arrivals in the past 3 weeks include 3 leopards, 4 peacocks, 6 pythons, 1 baboon & 2 young deer, of different species. The number of Bengal tigers now stands at 20. The birth of the peacock was a first for the zoo.

Remember when 2-car circuses, that changed titles annually, played the same towns to good biz even tho the patrons knew the Shetland ponies by their names.

CLYDE BEATTY'S DAUGHTER, JOYCE FERGUSON, SPEAKS TO CFA FANS.**

One thing was kinda sad. You know his biggest dream was that zoo in Ft. Lauderdale. He just thought that was the greatest thing. He wanted to settle down & put on performances & everything. But, the city grew up around it & they just forced him out.

They just wouldn't let it be there any longer. He was kinda talking & negotiating with the Paul Kelly farm, outside of Peru. He took ill then & that was when he went to Chicago & had the first surgery & didn't get back. But I've often thought, wouldn't that have been fantastic if he would have had his zoo right there in Peru where everything started for him and started for us.

The city of Peru is still Circus City & we have a lot of people affiliated with famous circus people that are still there. Otto Griebing's daughter now lives in Peru. Tom & Betty Hodgini, trapeze & equestrian riders-their daughter Karen, is still in Peru. Pat Kelly is still there, Emmett's son. Emmett, Jr. was just there & called and said, "Can you come over & go out to dinner?" I said, "No, I'm packing to go to Cleveland!"

We all try to get together once in awhile & talk over old times & a lot of our children & grandchildren have performed in our circus. I am so proud of it. And I know my dad was. He used to say how is everything going? And I'd think for that length of time that we had done a fantastic job.

(Joyce had brought one of the last uniforms that Clyde wore & Jane sent her 2 of them. On display were his whip, the gun, the helmet, the white outfit & she has had it on display in the Circus Museum & the Circus Hall of Fame Museum.) We were going to bring his chair & it is standing on 3 legs & you can see teeth marks on it. It was a debate whether we brought my wheelchair or that one. (Guess which one won!) She also brought one of his white robes that, "just kinda calmed him down after he would get thru with his act. He would put on one of those white robes & just walk by the the cages & I think he was telling the cats what they did wrong or what they did right. It would kinda settle his nerves & then he'd come back & talk with everybody. He did work very hard & he accomplished a lot. You kinda get to the place where you are so busy. I used to have friends that would say, 'We went out to the show but your dad didn't talk to us very much.' I would say, well, he has a routine & you're putting on all those shows in one day. Then later on in life, they'd come up & say, 'Gee, we went out to the

show & your dad just talked & talked!' I think he relaxed more & he was more in command of what he had to do. He really enjoyed asking about all the people from home & how they were doing. That was a good time for me. People didn't pick on me that way."

Answers that her daughter gave to questions: I can remember being in the car when a tiger was loose & my dad told us to get into the car. I didn't want to get into the car, I wanted to go with Grandpa. But, he wouldn't let me go. I can remember when he would walk by & talk to the cats. There were certain ones that he had in his act for long periods of time, so he would talk with them. He would reach his hand into the cage with the one & had smacked it on the nose & was telling it certain things & so he turned around to Red Hartman to talk to him about a couple of things & so what did I do?? I stuck my hand in the cage!

And he turned around just as it swiped to take my hand. So, from then on Grandpa wouldn't let me go by myself. I wanted to hang by my hair, so they were in the trailer & I wasn't allowed to run the lot too freely, because I was only 6 or 7 years old. But people would come & I'd say, "Oh, can I go?" and he would say, "OK, you can take my granddaughter." Of course, I was Clyde's granddaughter-so I got to do anything that I wanted. So, the lady that hung by her hair was in practicing-she was a beautiful Oriental girl & I wanted to do it so bad. She had my hair all braided & all ready to go, ready to hoist up & in HE walked! So, I didn't get to that again. I think the only thing I did get by with was getting up on the elephants & that was OK. He thought that it was OK!

I can remember riding with him in the parade. I can remember him coming to our circus & the next year I started performing-my sisters & I were real fortunate. We learned from the old circus performers in Peru. W.W. Wilno, who was the human cannonball with Hagenbeck-Wallace, was my trainer. And I learned to do side-by-side trapeze under his toolage. We were in the tent in those days, so when Grandpa came, the circus was over so I had to do it in the back yard. We had a great big trapeze set in my back yard & I was the only kid in Parkview Heights that had their own little circus stuff. I was fortunate enough later on to do rolling globe & I learned that from Tom Hodgini. Carl Solts, of the Aerial Solts, also trained me. I was really fortunate to be in that time in our circus to get to learn from all those people, & they knew my Grandpa & the coolest thing for me was talking to all these people & they'd say, "I remember your grandfather & we're going to tell him."

I think it was really tragic for me & hard for me when he died & I was so young, because I wanted to go with him. I wanted to be with him & I would have loved to have traveled. If he could have lived a little bit longer, who knows, because I loved those animals, I'd have been right there, I think.

Joyce's other daughter, Tammy, tried out with Wilno & she'd say, "I didn't make the act, mom. I got cut!" I never like to argue with the trainers because they're the ones that know what your kids can accomplish, but finally I couldn't stand it any longer & I went up to Willie & said, "I don't understand. I see Tammy doing all the tricks on the trapeze. But she hasn't made it in about 2-3 years." He said, "No, everytime I raise the trapeze, Tammy don't come back!" I said, "What's the problem with you, Tammy?" She said, "I'm really afraid of heights, mom!" So, she went onto the globe too.

(A comment from Ralph in the audience: "When I was a kid, 5-6 years old-I lived in Tacoma, WA. & the Beatty show was a westcoast circus then. I can remember seeing Clyde with a Henry J. Kaiser, with lion mane on the floor & leopard seats.") Joyce commented that it was a Kaiser. (Joyce had talked to one fan about the time a lion got loose in the hotel & Clyde had to work it down the stairway & get it back into the cage.)

I do want to read what a NY drama critic, Robt. Coleman, said, "Clyde is the most exciting, the most dramatic wild animal act I've ever seen. I have come to this conclusion. Clyde Beatty is in a class by himself. There is no wild animal act that can be compared to him. He leaps into that steel arena & the impact on the wild beasts & the audience is terrific. From that instance on, danger, menace & savagery impale rising excitement. Yet, there are contrasts periods of quiet. But, overwhelming jungle power. The roll-over-tiger & such, that stand out in dramatic relief. The greatest possible tribute to Clyde Beatty's deep understanding & training genius-it is there for all to see. Clyde knows his jungle pupils, as he knows himself."

****NOTES FROM FANS****

Ned Kronberg reports: I used spent 14 days working on the Great Circus Parade in Milwaukee. We had fabulous weather for the duration of the Parade & crowds to go along with it. New features this year were a demonstration by King Tusk, 3 times a day, which went over very well.

Ringling had a participation display which was very well received, where you could try out several circus skills &

watch Seville demos. The Monday after the Parade, we had rain so most of the packing of the show was done on a mud lot, but everything came off in good order. The passenger cars on the train were supporting a new paint job. The end car is still blue & the dining car is still red & coach is still white. The fan-cars are now a bright orange & yellow. The America Calli looked superb. It was ear-piercing, listening to them tune it up during the week, with whistles sticking & a few other problems, but by Parade day, it was in all it's glory & with Herb Head at the keyboard, it thrilled all that were along it's route! Another new entry was the terrible clown band, headed by Gary Stitch. Don't know who had more fun; the band or the people that heard it! They really slaughtered some melodies, to the humor of all. The show was all packed & loaded by 3 pm on Tuesday, traveled back to Baraboo on Wed., & unloaded on Thurs. by 4 pm. We-all said our good-bys for another year. Our hats off to the crew at Baraboo that put together another great Parade!

Dale Riker reports: The train ride was spectacular & without a hitch, until it reached the yards in Milwaukee. Then, a balky bridge held up arrival at the grounds for about 45 min. There were few complaints. The America wagon, freshly renovated, may have caused minor concern, until they finally got the boiler going & the calliope tuned. It ended the Parade with the pipes being filled with circus music from the book of Herbie Head. The Governor of all Wisc. said that this is still the Greatest Parade because it is the only one where all the wagons are pulled by real, live animals! The "40" still brings shivers to all who enjoy horses & circuses. The Great Circus Parade is looking for ways to finance the Parade for 1999, so that it will continue for as long as there are "Children of All Ages!"

Maury Mead reports from Wisc.: The Meads & the Galberts motored to Iowa to see Culpepper & Merriweather & said it was well worth the trip! "This is a class show." He also sent this: "After a 1 yr. absence, the Wilson Middle School Great Youth Circus, that is located in Appleton, WI, will be coordinated by Tim & GiGi Tegge, who will be assisted by Oleg Gapon, Gulnara Salakhova & Robt. Good. About 100 students will train to be performers in the following acts: Spanish Web; Single Traps; Roman Rings; Tumbling; Unicycling; Balancing; Juggling; Roman Ladders; Fire Eating; Geometrics (Hula hoops, Batons, & Rope spinning); Roller Skating; Magic; & clowning. Auditions will be held in early Sept. Training will start the week of 9/28.

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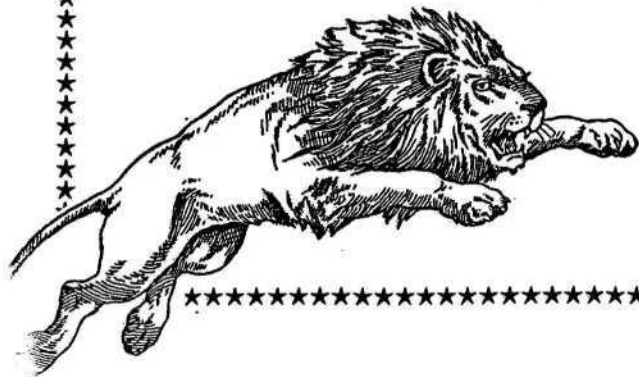
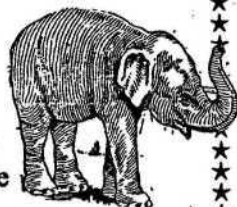
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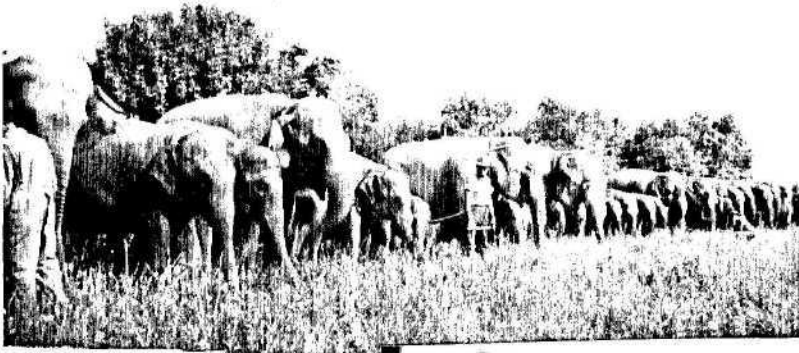
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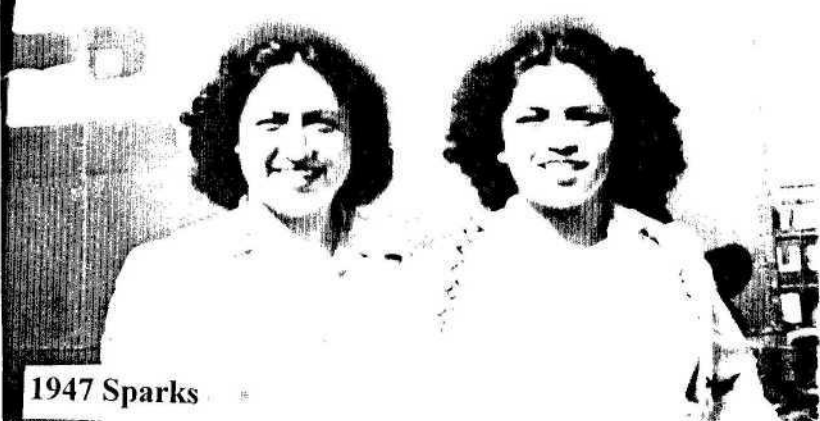


KING BROS 1960



KING BROS. 1966

CAUDILLO SISTERS



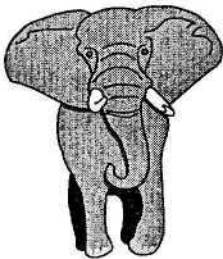
1947 Sparks

Sparks Circus 1927



**Back: Babe Feister, Flora Guice, ? , Rosina Nelson,
Laverne Hauser, Polly Watkins, Kula Yorke, Hilda Nelson**
**Front: Harriet Guilfoyle, ? , Etta Carreon, Della Bonhomme,
Ruby Hoyt, ? , Alice Foster, Eva Hill**

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