

BACK YARD

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The Evolution of the Tent as Theatre

By Billie Henderson Schuller

(Peggy MacDonald's Sister)

Mid-America Theatre Conference-March 13, 1998

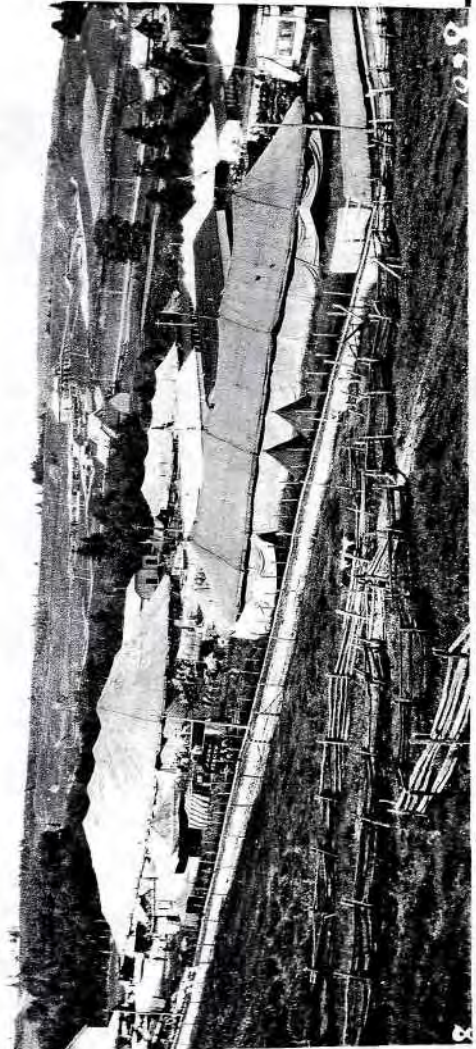
In the history of American theatre accomplishments there was an era when dramatic tent companies toured throughout the United States. Several studies have been published about legitimate theatre presented in a tent, one titled, *Theatre in a Tent*, by Wm. Slout. This will be a short study on the concepts and innovations by the entrepreneurs that adapted the canvas structure into a portable opera house and took legitimate theatre on the road into the countryside.

The use of the tent for theatrical, as opposed to circus performance, is difficult to trace. It was not a preconceived, organized endeavor, was not chronicled at the time by the originators, and was recognized by historians as worthy of being recorded long after it was possible to get first-hand information. With the advent of newspapers & periodicals on microfilm and the information available on computers a more detailed and accurate history of tent theatre is being compiled.

The circus in America dates back to 1793 and it was presented under canvas in 1825 when J. Purdy Brown, a NY showman, erected the first circus big top on record. 26 years after this momentous occasion another showman unable to find suitable accommodations for his theatrical presentations decided that he would use a tent.

It has long been accepted that Fayette Lodawick "Yankee" Robinson was the first showman to construct & use a canvas tent for a theatrical performance. An article from *The Quincy (IL) Herald*, 6/2/1851 verifies that Yankee was indeed playing under canvas (he had opened 5/29.) The article reads in part, "The Robinson Family: Conductors Of The Press Everywhere! Be Not Deceived! A company of strolling performers, under the above title, having traversed the state for a year past, to the great annoyance & disgust of all decent people, reached this city sometime since. When they arrived they soon found it utterly impossible to procure a room, suitable for the purpose, in which to give their unique exhibitions." And it goes on to say, "...proceeded to make & erect a canvas for their own special use." The show did receive favorable reviews during their engagement.

The *Davenport (IA) Democrat*, 9/1851, reported, "Their new



Water Proof Pavilion, erected on an entire new plan, 70' long by 40' wide, with elevated seats, covered with new dragget, will be found capable of accommodating over 1000 persons."

(Continued on Page 4)



Polly Morrissey
Ringling 1946



Hollywood
California
Sept. 23,
1957.
With Bert Wheeler
at the
Sawtooth



“Evolution of the Tent as Theatre”.....

“Water Proof” because “duck cloth” naturally repels water and “Pavilion” for “class” and a common accepted structure for local events. “Tent” implied an encampment.

Yankee Robinson claimed and would certainly have been capable of “sewing a tent with his own hands.” He was a cordwainer (shoemaker), having learned the trade in his father’s shop in Danville, NY (1832). He had been a performer for several years on Showboats, Minstrel Shows and circuses and would have been familiar with entertainment or specialty tents. He would have been able to purchase imported or domestically manufactured canvas & build or buy all related paraphernalia.

In the *Industrial Fabric Products Review*, 1996, “Sailing to New Worlds: A History of Canvas Products in America,” by Stephen Warner states, “Canvas and canvas products have accompanied every step of the growth of the U.S.” As early as 1645, the cultivation & spinning of hemp and flax were encouraged by the General Court of Mass. Bay “so that a local fiber-producing capability could become established.”

The importance of textile information is to recognize that all canvas, thereby all tents, were not created equal. It allows us to separate the balley-hoo & puffery from the truth in advertising in early engravings of tents and tent shows. We can say, for example, that a circus tent advertised to be made of Russian Duck in 1826 was constructed of the same material imported for the sails of the U.S.S. Constitution (Old Ironsides) in 1797.

The 1850s found other actors with a need for space. They were the “Turkey Actors,” actors in the NY productions who would find themselves at liberty from Thanksgiving through the Christmas holidays when decent folks did not attend the theatre.

The World’s Greatest Hit: Uncle Tom’s Cabin by Harry Birdoff (1947) tells of the “Turkey Tommers” from the Uncle Tom’s Cabin productions (1852) when, “Every holiday found them conspiring for a raid on the rural districts for one consecutive night.” Finding that the number of playgoers outnumbered any rooms available, “They carried the flimsiest, second-hand canvas.” Flimsy, easily shredded canvas contributed to the later term, “Rag Opery.”

It would certainly appear that the original concepts for canvas theatres arose from the need for space. Even when most small towns were boasting an opera house, the seating capacity was usually “sufficient to serve attendance by its small town audience.” (Quote from “A Small-Town Opera House,” by Leo Sullivan.) Once it was established that you could take a dependable space with you, consistent in stage & seating size and there was a large untapped audience hungry for “the spoken word”, the entrepreneurs were off and trouping.

Illustrations of circus tents were becoming common in newspaper ads by the 1850s, but few canvas manufacturers were advertised. The canvas and specialty tent manufacturers were advertising in entertainment periodicals by 1870. The Baker & Lockwood Mfg. Co., Kansas City, became one of the largest producers of dramatic, Revival and Chautauqua tents.

Established in Chicago in 1870, they were burned out in the

1871 Chicago Fire. After recovering what material and equipment they had saved by tossing it into the Chicago River, they relocated in Kansas City. Wm. Lushbaugh, Covington, KY, reportedly manufactured (1903) “The largest tent ever made” for the Barnum & Bailey Circus.

The U.S. Tent & Awning Co., Chicago, was featured on the cover of *Billboard*, Sept. 16, 1905. The 3 sole owners claimed 63 years of experience among them and, “We defy the world to be our equal in the making of tents.”

The first tents used for theatrical & variety performances were the white tents of the circus. The Chautauqua and dramatic companies later chose to use the died khaki canvas. The Chautauqua used khaki to avoid an entertainment connection and the dramatic companies, especially in the middle west, to distance themselves from the circus. The round entertainment tents ran as small as 40 ft. in diameter and as large as 200 feet. As the diameter increased rectangular centers or middles were added making the tents oval. The dramatic tents reached a convenient size of a 60 ft. round with two 30 foot centers and with a dramatic end averaged a length of 140 ft. A round tent has one center pole and each middle requires an additional pole. Center poles were 20 to 25 ft. high, and sidewall and poles were 9 ft. high. The layout of a round or an oval tent would not lend itself to the stage. A round tent would have one center pole and wherever the stage was placed the pole would be in front of it. An oval tent would have at least 2 center poles and some shows placed the stage between the poles against one side of the tent. If there were more than 2 center poles the stage would be placed at one end with a pole in front & the canvas slanting down over it toward the sidewall. These arrangements did not accommodate a proscenium or an acceptable stage setting. The ingenuity of the showmen again came to the forefront.

The square, also called the dramatic, end came into use. Several people claimed the idea was theirs to the point of going to court. Jere Mickel, *Footlights on the Prairie* (1974) cites that in a suit between a Mr. Knabenshue and the Baker-Lockwood Co. (1905) over the “idea of eliminating the center pole in front of the stage,” the court found that the “dramatic end” had been invented before 1900 invalidating both claims.

The concept of the dramatic end was to extend the canvas back from an end center pole, while keeping a constant height over the stage before the slant to the side poles began. This way the stage could be set back 20 ft. or more from the nearest center pole, the width for the entire stage was now consistent & a proscenium and front curtain were possible. The tent was becoming a theatre.

As the width of tents increased, the top had to be supported to maintain height; not just dip to the side poles. The quarter pole was added. It was placed halfway between the center & the side and the name stuck even when the width of larger tents would have required several rows of quarter poles. With the addition of hemp ropes & wooden stakes (with steel bands around the top to bear the blows of the sledge hammer) the tent is up, though not quite that easily. (To Be Continued)

****Nothing But Time-Part II****

(The Rest of the Story)

By Don Wixom, The Elephant Company

In Part One of NOTHING BUT TIME, I poked gentle fun on behalf of our beautiful Back Yard editor, Cherie Valentine, and, frequent contributor and wild animal man, Mike Cecere. Part One was a fantasy, but what about the real deal? What is it like to be in a park for the summer? Like us, there are a number of show folks out there who spend three-five months in one place. I can't speak for them, however, I am able to provide some details about what it's like for us!

First, I think it's important that you learn a little bit about our base of operation, York's Wild Kingdom. Located in York Beach, Maine, York's Wild Kingdom is a combination zoo and amusement park. The zoo and amusement park are separate entities with either separate or combination admission packages. York Beach, is a quaint resort community that relies heavily on summer tourism traffic in order to flourish.

The zoo and park is located on Highway 1A, and the front entrance is on the main road through town, it is about two blocks from the beach!

York's Wild Kingdom has been around for many years and has hosted a number of show folks over the years as independent contractors. At least one showman, Larry Allen Dean, spent his early years gaining animal experience at York's Wild Kingdom.

The amusement park has numerous, standard carnival rides, games and concessions. Patrons may walk through with no admission fee, but must purchase tokens or unlimited ride wristbands to ride the rides. At least one kiddie ride came to York's from Benson's Animal Park and still operates after nearly forty years of use!

The zoo section is quite nice with an east section and west section divided by a zoo lake. The lake has many ducks and geese (a lot of fly-ins), and, the paddle boat ride which is free with zoo admission. The zoo staff is very dedicated and hard working. They are led by their always on the go zoo director, Mika Nurmikko. Mika, a veteran of Bensons is a true genius. He and his staff not only design, build and decorate their exhibits, but, Mika has designed and built specialized "Foraging Units" to stimulate positive behavior.

The "Foraging Units" have been engineered for specific species, for instance, marmosets or macaques, cockateils or macaws. The units are now commercially available and have been purchased by some zoo industry heavy weights like Disney's Animal Kingdom!

Most zoo exhibits are built in-house, however, they are pleasing to look at, naturalized with great "furniture" (rocks, logs etc.). This zoo is one of the cleanest I've ever seen and their collection includes antelope, zebra, camel, serval cat, lions, tigers and some fine primates. Not often seen these days, a great family of DeBrazza Monkeys and Common Marmosets are but two of the more remarkable species. York's Wild Kingdom Zoo is well worth a visit!

As contractors, we provide the educational "Elephantastic Show" and elephant rides. We also provide the zoo's pony ride and the moon bounce for the amusement section. Now being in one spot for 3 months has great advantages! No break downs; a protected environment, establishment of solid, long-term friendships, a land based telephone and regular mail!

Working in a park setting is somewhat like travelling on a circus that shows daily in a new location-without the jumps! We work 7 days a week, 10:00 am-6:00 pm and perform 21 show per week. The only exception to this schedule are severe weather breaks. The northeasterners are a tough lot-they ride and attend shows in the rain and cold!

My day begins at 5:15 am, a few moments to snap open my peepers with some really strong coffee and it's out to take care of the stock. Cleaning and feeding the ponies and elephant, their yards and barns takes right at 2 hours. No, I am not slow, just thorough. Our ponies have barns and yards provided by the zoo and cared for by us. Lydia uses our semi as her night barn and surrounding is her large hot wire yard. She spends about 14 hours outdoors, in either her home, compound or at our ride compound with its adjoining show arena.

Following the morning chores, I gather the equipment & supplies needed for the day and set up the ride/arena props, while my partners Dave and Carmen run the daily errands and supply runs. There is enough time to shower, dress and fill out a daily care record before taking the block long stroll to work.

Typically, we sweep and bathe Lydia before we begin work. We conduct rides until just prior to our shows at noon, 2:00 and 4:00 pm. The show is educational and focuses on training and working animals. Following the formal show, we bring the elephant to the guard fence for the Elephant Encounter.

At this time, the zoo goers can touch and see up close-very close-a live elephant. They can see and feel she isn't abused, she isn't mistreated-it's an awesome turning point for some folks. We use this time to discuss the animal rights issues and to give our side of the story. The living, breathing elephant before them makes the animal rights abuse propaganda hard to believe! Many guests take this open moment to "trash talk" PETA and the others!

By 6:00 p.m. we are all weary and ready to head back to the compound. Especially, on those 200 ride; three show weekends! Follow up evening feeding, care and set up for the next day consumes another hour. Usually, if she doesn't go in on her own, Lydia is put up around 9:00 pm and gets her last watering and hay around 10:00-10:30 pm.

Naturally, this leaves lots of time to do those "leisure" activities including writing this article. Long hours, yes, a hard grind, sometimes, but, we wouldn't trade it for anything. We've made many good friends and our dear Lydia has made herself York's elephant. Lastly, thanks to Cherie and Mike for goading me a bit and to Dave & Carmen Tesch for urging me to write this 2 part story. If you're up in our neck of the woods between now and Labor Day, please stop by and see us!

(Thanks Don-How was that Mike????)

"FAST TIMES WITH DAVE HOOVER"

By Mike Cecere

I had the distinct pleasure of viewing the award winning documentary, "Fast, Cheap and Out of Control." It profiled 4 unique individuals, one of which was my old friend, Dave Hoover.

Dave was shown on the film with some classic footage from his many years as a wild animal trainer including a super color short of him working some of his huge male lions which I've mentioned in a previous article.

In addition, there was prime scenes of the legendary Clyde Beatty who named Dave Hoover his official successor. Interspersed throughout were scenes from the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus where Dave Hoover today is a senior executive responsible for the success of that popular tent show.

But more impressive yet was the fact they took time to just let Dave talk about his life and experiences. As a close friend of his, I know him to be an intelligent, articulate speaker, with a warmth that puts you at ease right away.

It was wonderful to know that Dave Hoover's life and words are immortalized on film for future generations to see what kind of people we were.

In today's world, where people seem to be content to follow every trend, there are far too few individuals. Seeing Dave and his beloved cats brought back memories of 20 summers ago when we both used to lock ourselves in cages with lions and tigers twice a day on two of the biggest tent circuses in America.

So here's to Dave Hoover, Movie STAR! If you haven't seen the film yet make an effort to do so. You'll be glad you did!

Beatty-Cole In Maine

By Don Wixom, The Elephant Company

On July 8th, I had the opportunity to visit the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus during their run in South Portland, Maine July 7-9. The lot, was on asphalt at the Maine Mall. A beautiful summer evening had a nice sized crowd milling about the midway-riding the elephant, having their faces painted, and, most importantly, forming a line at the ticket window! This was my first time seeing their wonderful new tent. I love it and I am about as big a traditionalist you can find. The show is very clean & so nicely painted, it takes me back to the 60s and 70s when Al. G. Kelly-Miller, Sells and Grey and King Bros. Circuses trouped the heartland. In November, 1995, I had my first opportunity to see Beatty-Cole on their home run back to DeLand. I was impressed then and I am more impressed today!

John and Brigitte Pugh have so much to be proud of! An exceptional cast and crew & a delightful setting in which to perform their colorful & well balanced show.

It was great to see Josip Marcan direct his tiger troupe through their paces. I had not seen Marcan perform since his run on Hamid-Morton many years ago. The excellent mixed animal act presented by Laura Herriott was a welcome presentation. A rarity in today's circus, the act was brought off like clockwork by Laura with support from her talented son and daughter

The impressive turn by Gloria Bale and her Arabian Liberty Horses was very well done. Her time & dedication to training is evident. Now, I must admit, as an animal person, I usually gravitate to the four footed actors, however, one cannot help but be wowed by the exceptional aerial acts!

The Russian Air Force & Chinese Bungee Troupe kept the Portland audience in awe with their daring & entertaining acrobatic feats. All the aerial displays had merit and are worthy of accolade, however, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the incredible Guerrero high wire act. Their outstanding performance reminded me to Circus Hall of Famers, The Alzanas. Werner & Aura Guerrero kept the audiences undivided and intense attention! An act well worth the price of admission alone.

Naturally, I was awaiting the appearance of Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. thundering herd of six performing elephants. Presented by Brad Jewell and assisted in ring 2 by Jason Walker (son of Laura Herriott & circus owner/elephant trainer John Walker Jr.) and in ring 3, a very capable handler whos name, unfortunately, I did not get. Well paced and well done as usual, it was capped off by the Beatty-Cole trademark, walking long mount. Although, I was only able to grab a moment of Brad Jewell's time, I did look over the girl's compound in the back yard. Their excellent care is apparent and their accomodations are top drawer.

I had a great visit with Laura Herriott and Jason Walker after the show. Recently, Laura and other Beatty-Cole staff have had some one on one televised debates with animal activists. I am sure they brought home our side of the story.

The following Saturday, July 10th, Elephant Company owners Dave and Carmen Tesch were able to see Beatty-Cole in Rye, New Hampshire. They too were pleased with a great show and Carmen renewed her friendships with Dave and Lois Hoover, Laura Herriott and John Pugh. Certainly, Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus is a "must see" if they play in your area-I assure you, I am glad I went!

TED BOWMAN PASSES JULY 30TH

Mary Rawls told me Ted was in his yard when he collapsed and a neighbor called for help. The funeral was 8/3, with burial in Showman's Rest in Hugo, OK. I had just spoke with Ted when Okie passed away. Mike Piccolo called me and said he had spoken to Ted the night before. The circus world has lost a good friend-Cherie.

Reflections On The Old Place

“Compound-Broke Part III” By Roger Smith

To describe my days in the Oaks, I borrow from Charles Dickens: It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. To be at the Compound then put me next to the best veteran trainers working in America, all drawing near the end of decades-long careers. For me, there was not a better place to be. If one recognized the knowledge accumulated by these seasoned masters, it was the only place to be. For the apprentice trainer, it was the best of times.

But it was the worst of times for the country. During the height of the raging Viet-Nam War, we witnessed violent anti-war demonstrations replete with counter-culture flower-children ripping draft cards and burning the Stars and Stripes. Among the most deadly race riots, like those erupting nation-wide, was the April, 1968 savagery embattling the Watts district in nearby Los Angeles, following the King assassination. Barely two months later, we were stunned by the shooting of Robert Kennedy, just down at the Ambassador Hotel. The next year, Thousand Oaks froze in horror over the August 9th and 10th Tate and LoBianca murders by the Manson family, not far away, down in the canyons. Hippie communes dotted the land surrounding the Conejo Valley, and lines at our two gun shops were blocks long, as citizens panicked to buy guns and ammo. Every night, I brought home my Webley .38 and loaded it with live rounds.

My long days were filled with work. Cage-boy George quit my first week there, and I at once took on his charges on the Long String. My primary string of 12 cages ran stage left from the Big Stage Arena toward Thousand Oaks Boulevard. The Long String ran stage right toward the Ventura Freeway, and consisted of fifteen open cages, plus two blind cages reserved for mothers rearing cubs. This string ended with an archway through which we passed to the slaughterhouse. The arch descended left onto the twelve-cage Leopard String, running roughly parallel to the Freeway. Ten cages were open, with another two blinded for birthing. Norman Pitchford had the Leopard String until he was re-assigned, and it also became mine, giving me a total of 36 cats to maintain these early mornings. (Not all the cages were continually occupied.) Ignorant speculation arose I'd quit for being overworked.

In truth, I couldn't get enough of it. I started at 6 a.m., and worked out a precise system, allowing me to finish before 11 a.m. Then, another cage-hand departed, bringing me to the fifteen lionesses in the 40-foot cage wagon Uncle Ben and Earl LeGrande built—seen in actor Richard Denning's 1950 film, Caged Fury, which was parked out behind the Long String. With the addition of “The Girls”, I had 51 cats in my care, and my wrap-up schedule extended to noon. I loved it. Under Uncle Ben, I was cleaning and providing for every one of these cats as individuals, and having the time of my life.

Another benefit came from all this work. Learning everything Uncle Ben wanted done, and doing it to the letter and spirit, I gained and held the attention of the Compound veterans,

grudgingly enough, including the Old Sister. It was the best of times in another sense. After one last rake-out and pick-up, and topping off the water buckets, I didn't face all-night overland jumps. I could go home to my nice, clean bed.

Or, more usually the case, I could drop by the Rice Paddy, the Jungleground roster's second home, which prospered off the Compound payroll. There, over a bottle of Coors and a shot of VO, I savored the Thousand Oaks of the time. Most of us lived in the Old Town section, and I warmly realized I had taken very fondly to life in Southern California. On the jukebox, Sinatra crooned “The Summer Wind”, and the Fifth Dimension heralded “The Age of Aquarius”. Two songs that embraced the era and best defined the last years of the Compound linger in vivid memory. Tony Bennett lamented good times gone forever with “Once Upon a Time”. But it was Mary Hopkins who best essayed the emotions of we who saw destiny played out to her plaintive “Those Were the Days.”

Scorned by Mabel, and busy as hell with increasing cage duties, my hours focused on the strings around the Big Stage, where one master trainer caught my eye from the first day.

When I gave it thought, it was reasonable that surely in this business there would exist another talent approaching the style and projection of Mr. Beatty. Certainly someone else, somewhere, would have what John Ringling defined as Beatty's fire, the sheer excitement of his performance. If there was never to be another Beatty, one man did exemplify the elements that elevated, even refined, the fighting act trainer. I was studying Dick McGraw.

In his prime then, Dick was about my size, short, stocky and blond, a Navy veteran and a natural for the steel arena. The Missourian learned at the Compound. Dick's leading mentor was Frank Phillips, but he also listened to Uncle Ben and Mel Koontz, and was a contemporary of Pat Anthony. Whatever he derived from his professors, there was one factor they could never provide him—his innate capacity to electrify an audience. This was his alone. Possessed of a near-balletic grace combined with commanding masculinity, Dick McGraw was the best wild animal performer in a Jungleground arena.

The cage work I fell into attracted Dick's attention. he invited me to work around his act, which was housed in my first string. This began a replication of my advancement with Mr. Beatty, and led to an extensive education, and camaraderie that was very rare in a Compound rife with jealousy and spite.

By now, I had earned acceptance, and hard-won tenure. I was in with everyone but Mabel. That was to change. But not for awhile.

The Byrd Family Tent will have dinner with the Byrds and **DR Miller**, if he is still traveling with the show, on Aug. 18 in Havana, IL at Waterworks Restaurant. Shows at 4:30 and 7:30. **Kelly Miller Circus** will be in Jacksonville, IL Oct. 4 with the **Byrd Family Tent** having coffee, juice & donuts for circus folks about 7:30 a.m. **Both shows will be in Central Ill. in the Spring of 2000!**

RINGLING RED: Oakland-Arena: 8/18-22; San Jose-Arena: 8/25-29; San Francisco-Cow Palace: 9/2-6; Sacramento-ARCO Arena: 9/9-12; Seattle-Key Arena: 9/16-19

RINGLING BLUE : Colorado Springs, CO-World Arena: 8/18-22; Wichita, KS-Coliseum: 8/26-29; Moline, IL-Mark of the Quad Cities: 9/2-5; Kansas City-Kemper Arena: 9/8-12; Indianapolis-Market Sq. Arena: 9/15-19

CARSON & BARNES CIRCUS: Watska, IL-8/16; Streator-8/17; Havana-8/18; Galesburg-8/19; Ft. Madison, IA-8/20; Burlington-8/21.

UniverSoul Circus: Birmingham-8/18-22; Cleveland-8/27-9/5; Detroit-9/8-15; Chicago-9/22-10/4; St. Louis-10/7-10; Kansas City-10/13-17; LA-10/22-11/3; Houston-11/9-14.

Wenatchee Youth Circus: Peshastin-8/22; Federal Way-8/27-29. All Washington State. Their 47th Season!

Lielbe Circus: Zanesville-8/16-21.

Garden Bros. Circus: Oshawa-8/13-15; Peterborough-8/17; Owen Sound-8/19; Barrie-8/21-22; Orillia-8/24-25; Kingston-8/28-29; Belleville-8/30-31; Orangeville-9/2.

BACK YARD

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NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS

***Carson & Barnes** had a "cook out" during their Sheboygan date. "The payload was put to an alternative use-a barbeque pit for grilling brats. They also had cole slaw, potato salad, baked beans, ice cream & cake. All the circus folks & fans had plenty to eat & enjoyed visiting and "jackpotting." **Kurt & Heidi Casady & Heidi's parents and Wayne & Donna Bolz** attended the afternoon show. **Rich Deptula** visited in Berlin & Sheboygan.

***Wayne Bolz** reports Carson & Barnes was sponsored by the Chamber of Sheboygan on 7/18 and they had two 2/3 houses. A continental breakfast was served on the grounds on the lake front served by the "Friends of the

Circus" group with **D R Miller** as speaker with a large gathering of circus personal, fans and public with several city officials and friends of D R in attendance. He is traveling with the circus for at least their current midwest dates and is enjoying each day and visits in each city. Wayne also sent along a beautiful brochure of the "American Calliope Center" in Spring Green, WI. It is owned and run by former circus owner **Bill Griffith** & has room for circus personal to park with trailers for a visit. "View the oldest intact 43 whistle calliope in the world. See the largest air calliope ever built-58 whistles!" If you are in the area, this looks like a great place to visit!

Kelly-Miller Circus: Caseville, MI-8/28; Bad Axe-8/29; Marlette-8/30; Ithaca-8/31; Stanton-9/1; Fremont-9/2; Coopersville-9/3; Bangor-9/4; Carrollton, IL-10/2; Carlinville-10/3; Staunton-10/5.

Sterling-Reid Circus: Port Huron, MI-8/16-17; Chesterfield Twp.-8/18-19; Lansing-8/20-22; Greenville-8/23; Big Rapids-8/24; Muskegon-8/25-26; Holland-8/27

Royal American Circus: Bay City, MI-8/15; Alma-8/16; Muskegon-8/18; Battle Creek-8/19; Charlotte-8/20; FLINT-8/21; Jackson-8/22

These routes are for information to the fans and should not be given to anyone other than fans without permission of the shows.

A Canadian Day With Kelly Miller-Added Attraction-Barry & Karen DeChant-Aug. 26-Strathroy, Ontario. Joint Meeting with Martin Downs Ring & Fred Logan Tent. Call Jerry Nicholls for details: 519-451-8616.

Call For Members of the Kenneth Feld Tent 150
Bud DeVere writes that letters have been sent to all former members of the Tent with a questionnaire asking "how everyone feels about breathing some life into the Tent and we are presently awaiting response from 80 folks." Anyone interested in helping, holding office or being a member can contact: **Bud DeVere**, 5437 Broadmoor St., Alexandria, VA 22315-4038. "Let's get our show on the road and raise our Tent again!"

Jimmy Piehl reports Bob MacDougall was discharged from the hospital on Aug. 6 and with medical transport was taken to his home in Englewood. He is in good spirits and with a lot of work and therapy he is expected to make a good recovery. Thanks, Jimmy.

“Elephants Make A Splash”-Dalton, MA (Sent in by Amos Bolieau-July 13)

The Berkshire Eagle by Renee Wheeler: Splashing, playing and rolling around in a pond at the American Legion field was a great way to cool off if you happened to be an elephant.

6 elephants certainly seemed to enjoy themselves, as they reveled in the water under the watchful eyes of their trainers. One gray lady almost completely submerged herself on her side, in no great hurry to get back up. Others waded, while some sat right down, making small splashes with their trunks.

Brad Jewell said that each elephant has its own personality. They may look alike to a bystander but it is easy for their trainers to tell them apart. “It’s the same way you can tell your kids apart. They are highly intelligent animals & I really enjoy my interaction with them. You just have to know your animals.”

Cheryl Haddad assists her husband, Dr. Jossip Marcan, a vet, raising & training their 10 Bengal tigers, 2 of which are 8-month-old cubs. “Tigers are absolutely fascinating. They are extremely intelligent, more so than some of the people I know,” she said with a smile. “We have no props except seats. The tigers are doing things they would do naturally, like standing up on their hind legs & reaching up, if they were in the wild. We teach them to do these things on command, but we don’t have them doing unreasonable or unnatural behaviors.”

Jason Walker, 19, is the 5th generation of his family to train animals. He helps his mother, Laura Herriott, take care of and train 2 camels, 2 llamas & a miniature horse. “Our animals, such as our camels, perform at liberty in the ring. If they were scared, they could easily exit the ring. But they don’t. And they come to my mother when they’re nervous, because they trust her. We don’t go to bed at night unless our animals have food & water and are taken care of. That’s what I’ve always been taught,” Jason said.

“I love the circus,” he added. “And I never want to do anything else.”

From the Union Leader, Manchester, NH July 8: An animal rights group says its rights have been violated. PETA opened an office in Manchester last week and promptly covered its windows with big posters criticizing Al Gore. The group says an animal testing program Gore supports is not necessary and is harmful to animals. The signs were taken down the next day because the group violated terms of its lease by putting them up in the first place. PETA said the person who removed the

display caused more than \$1000 in damage. It charged the Gore campaign was behind it. “We smell a rat & we are going to get to the bottom of this,” said spokeswoman, Tracy Reiman. The property manager said, “It was not far to the other tenants in the building. They aren’t allowed to have anything up on their windows.” PETA said it’s considering suing.

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Donn & Nancy Moyer’s Reptile Safari invites everyone to stop by at the following dates to visit them: Aug. 17-22-Clakamas Co. Fair, Canby, Oregon; 8/26-9/6-Evergreen State Fair-Monroe, WA; 9/15-18-Latah Co. Fair-Moscow, ID. Those of you that can get your courage up, “there’s always a cold pop or cup of coffee ready and waiting!” Please let me know if you stop by!
.....

“Display Reflects Years Of Collecting”

Decades worth of circus memorabilia collecting was on display at the Strathroy, Ontario Library. **Paul Butler’s** display, which contains items dating back to the 1920, is the culmination of a life-long fascination with circuses. “Ever since I was a youngster, my dad always took me to the circus,” said Paul, 84. They would go to Ringling Bros. shows whenever the circus was in the region. Later, while in his teens, he would help the Carson & Barnes Circus set up shop in town just to get a free ticket for the shows in the afternoon.

Even today, he & his wife, Winnie, attend 10 to 12 circuses which pass within a few hours of Strathroy. In recent years, the Butlers have also gone to Europe and Mexico to see a variety of shows & meet the owners of different circuses. “It’s just like somebody who’s interested in baseball or soccer,” Paul said of his life-long interest in the circus. “You get to know the people and the families involved.

On display are some of the Humpty Dumpty circus animal toys that Paul has been collecting from the age of 12. “And maybe even before that,” he says. There is also a large number of original posters, from various shows worldwide, 1/4 scale models of circus trains & collections of clowns, elephants and pennants. Paul plans to display his collection at Kenwick Mall to help promote the arrival of the Kelly-Miller Circus at the Fairgrounds August 26. The Butlers will be out to greet them when they hit town early that morning. “It’s quite a sight to see,” Paul said of all the trucks lined up on their way into town. The Butlers are members of the Martin Down Ring (CMB 18) & Fred Logan Tent (CFA 119) which meets every couple of months. Paul is one of the founders. Paul writes that the display consisted of: 50 Posters; 29 Clowns; 9 Humpty Dumpty Wagons; 1 Poster on Board worth \$100; 15 Schoenhut Toys worth \$1275; 10 Elephants; 4 Photo Albums; Scarf from Monoco; 10 Banners; 1 Tent Centerpiece; 3 Flat Bed Train Cars; 2 Stock Cars; 13 Wagons on Train. Jerry & Shirley Nicholls joined the Butlers with their HO animated, 3 ring tent, circus parade and Wild West Show and brought more posters!
(Thanks, Paul, for the newspaper article and photos!)

Cirque Du Soleil La Nouba

By Rick Wallenda

A fantasy world of surrealism that takes us away from reality for just long enough to give us some perspective, is exactly what Cirque Du Soleil does for us in their latest offering, La Nouba, now appearing at Disney, Orlando. For centuries the circus has been a means for troubled spectators to step into another world that their cares cannot follow. The traditional circus has lost its ability to transport weary travelers of reality to a dreamland far from the mundane that makes their lives. Cirque masterfully continues the legacy of what circus is about, but abandons the traditions of this genre.

Noticeably absent, even to the average spectator, is the traditional ringmaster. How brilliantly Cirque makes the transitions from one segment to the next without the aid of traditional distractions. Unnecessary are the stagehands roaming about the stage during the performance of traditional circus. Although there is more action than the traditional three rings produce, nary a stagehand can be seen. Absent, but not missed, are the traditional animals. Sorry animal lovers, but no one even requested a ride on an elephant. As a matter of fact, gone also from the Cirque stage set is the traditional circus ring for the horses to prance about.

Thrill seekers must look elsewhere for bloodlust. Danger would be a distraction for this animated performance, and has no place here. The traditional daredevil acts are present, but with safety devices that are as unobtrusive as the circus orchestra. The orchestra is not made up of traditional brass, but strings, guitars, and synthesizers can be heard in their place. Gone too are the marching band tunes of traditional circus windjammers, and replaced by original scores. Clowns still season the program, but not in the traditional manner. While the clowns are not hysterically funny, they are refreshingly original.

Unheralded saviors of Cirque are the technical crews. The stage hands, riggers, lighting, and sound crews are the unsung heroes of this journey to a Tolkein style fantasy. This circus building is the most high tech facility of its kind on earth topping even the previous Moscow Circus.

The talents brought together for this ninety minute escape from reality are not new to entertainment. The real talent of La Nouba is the Cirque Du Soleil staff. These people have shattered the walls of tradition, and created a delightfully imaginative alter-reality. Here is where credit must be given. The traditional artists can be seen within the dreamland of La Nouba, but in Cirque Du Soleil fashion. Hats off to such clever imagination. A door has now been opened that has elevated consciousness. Those who cling to tradition as if it were a life saver will be the first to sink. Their life saver is filled with lead. Others will follow Cirque through that door, but cannot carry this life saver along. The future of circus is, no doubt, being shaped by Cirque Du Soleil. They have done more to elevate circus from the depths of the mud to the equivalent of ballet, and theater than even the mighty Ringling Brothers. If you have the chance, La Nouba is a must see event. There need be no

rush. This show will be appearing at Disney Orlando for many long seasons, and well worth the price of the ticket. (Thanks, Rick. More articles would be appreciated!)

VeeKay, the Clown writes, 8/6 : "I have learned, just a few minutes ago, that the **Wolf People** have been let go by **Sterling and Reid Circus**. They are flying back to Loreto, Zacatecas, Mexico tomorrow morning at 4:00 AM. **Manuel, Lili, and Jesus** have toured with Sterling & Reid for almost a year. They always drew large crowds. I wish them well and hope they return to the USA. I also would like to thank **Cherie Valentine, Bob Kellogg and Kevin Ryan**, as well as those of you who took the time to visit them while they were in the U.S." (VeeKay also wrote: "**Manuel Aceves Diaz**, the Patriarch of the Wolf People, was in the hospital in Canton, Ohio July 28 for kidney stone surgery." I hope he will keep us informed on what they will be doing.")

Dick & Doris Menkel sent this report: "Kampala, Uganda, 8/7: A herd of 18 elephants terrorizing villagers near the Ugandan capital will be relocated to a game reserve in the north. Specialists from Zimbabwe will assist a team from the Uganda Wildlife Authority in shooting the animals with tranquilizer darts & loading them on trucks. During the past year, the elephants have wreaked havoc on farms & villages near Wakyato, 50 miles north of Kampala & have killed an 11-year-old child. The elephants will be taken to the Murchison Falls National Park and crews have been hacking out temporary roads thru the bush for the trucks to use. The animals are believed to have strayed during seasonal migration thru the corridor that links Queen Elizabeth National Park in the west on Lake Edward and the park at Murchison Falls, 220 miles north.

Cort Langdon sent along a full color ad for **Barnum's Kaleidoscope** that started Aug. 11 adjacent to the Mall of America. It features the clowns and Sylvia Zerbini and her trapeze and white horses. "The fun starts one hour before the show with live music and entertainment & gourmet food. You can also visit: www.BarnumsKaleidoscope.com. On the front page of the Minneapolis Star Tribune, 8/4, was a color photo of the tent, with Sergio Ramos walking the top beam as he worked on the tent. "Kaleidoscope features velvet seats and gourmet food. Tickets are \$22 to \$48. (Thanks, Cort!)

NEWS FROM THE ZOOS: San Diego Zoo: 7/28: Vila, a 42 year-old gorilla had been diagnosed with a uterine fibroid, a benign tumor in her uterus, which had been causing abnormal bleeding. The vets removed her ovaries & uterus. Had they not operated, Vila risked becoming anemic. She was reunited with the other gorillas at the Wild Animal Park July 23.

LA Zoo: Root canals were performed on **Toto**, 45, the patriarch chimp, after dentists determined that a fractured tooth was in better condition than initially thought. Toto is easily recognizable because of his freckled face!

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY

By Brian Nunn

*Early one morning I woke up-it was about spring time in southern Illinois, I think; me in my sleeping bag on the grass next to a hedge where I'd been watching fireflies play the night before.

Anyway, back to waking up. I felt something nosing at me like my dog would do. Except I was surrounded by three elephants, curiously checking me out. They had been in the truck I had been hired to deliver.

I, having been around some tough stock before-cowgirls, bad guys and a few stud colts, choose not to panic and just laid there getting fondled by these elephants. When (after what seemed too long a time) the elephant baby sitter, handler, bull man, stock hand, I didn't care much at that time, comes around the corner of the hedge with the water hose, which he had just finished using, and had just let the girls go home on their own.

That's when they discovered me, I suppose. So, he says, "Hey, Hi, Good Morning. It's a good thing they like you or else you'd be in Heaven now." (My introduction to "Pork Chop".)

Of course these elephants turned out to be Judy, Betty and Mary. I fell for them elephants right then and there. As I saw it, Judy was a seasoned trouper-seen it, heard it, been there; "you don't impress me, but I know the routine and I'll do it."

Judy was my first and favorite elephant. Then there was Betty-cute, round and sassy, seemed with an attitude, like, "Flinch, and I'll punch your lights out." No problem there, I'd been there too. So on to Mary (who I know I'll see in Heaven). She would kind of say, with a sigh, "Ya, ya, I know what to do, let me get it done as best I can, then try and make me comfortable."

Mary was the first elephant I slept with, close to, on top of a few times. She didn't seem to mind, as when she wanted to roll over, (we all know elephants don't roll over) or change her sleeping posture, she'd wake me, in order to get this done. (Hay is nice to sleep on and elephants are warm.) I was told she didn't lay down much when she slept. She was the best pillow I ever had. Now, please! Don't get me wrong. I'm not a Disney Sky Pilot; or anything close, life is real and it's now, ya got to deal with it.

The best parts are when the times come together, smooth, comfortable and (excuse me, only animal people know about this) things are warm and fuzzy and sometimes it is like life is too rich. That I suppose, is the other side of the

dues we pay, it's the dues we get. I've learned not to explain, they just don't understand.

Actually, I'm like Don Wixom-I got to tell you the truth. Me and them elephants (when they didn't have a show, parade or ride) would stay at Holiday Inn.

Betty kept stifling me on the tip 'cause she always made the biggest mess. Oh, well. Show broads-ya gotta love 'em. Life's good after all, even when you wake up with elephant snot on your face!

*Once, a long time ago, there was a man (still is) that would just point his finger (non-threatening) at an elephant. I've seen elephants go weak in the knees just with the notion that this man might be unhappy with them. Now, I know this man (I've been around for awhile) and I have known some older show men that know this man.

He does it with his courage, his knowledge, (and what my friend Scooter would call the "Kindergarten Con"). He knows these animals and how smart (or dumb, 'cause there's some in every walk of life) they are. They respect each other, so as a result, the animals take that man on as the boss, 'cause it's comfortable that way. No bricks, bats, implements of torture. Just this large man with an air of quiet confidence. Maybe that's why they call it a con job.

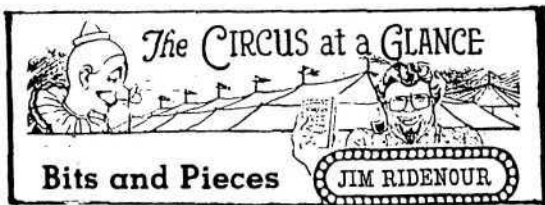
*It's not hard to recognize a competent animal person. For instance, in an arid environment, they will put a sprinkler head out by the water trough. That way, the horses hoofs will be moist and pliable when the shoer comes to work on their feet. Or, and in a bad moisture habitat, they'll arrange for the hides feet to be relatively dry so a proper job can be done with the shoes. (There's no excuse for thrush).

I'm glad I went a little out of my way to learn from the best teachers available. It's always renewed my faith that life's good after all.

*I don't know, but I've heard that the best mothers are the ones that have fed, cleaned changed and loved the babies every day. I ask myself, is the life of a performing critter all that different? The bad news is always the news that gets heard first. Don't ya know. So, if you consider what's going on while it's peaceful and quiet, (which is most of the time) things must be good? Or at least, going good enough to mind one's own business?

*I can remember every single animal and name I've ever worked, worked with or lived with. I can't say that about the people I've known.

(Continued on Page 14)



Here's a photo of my dog Rube (Page 15) snubbing her nose at the stud next door.

Well, nobody burned my house down, so here I go again...moving right along. This is my third column. I find it difficult not to get controversial..These days, try as you may, you can not sit on the fence. You must take a stand. A recent column about "Wino" working men left me cold. I don't think the writer meant any harm..He, no doubt, thought it an amusing story. I find nothing funny about the homeless, the addicted, & the "down trodden." The story was totally without merit. As Dennis Miller (a wise man, indeed) would say, "Of course, that's just my opinion." Let me set the groundwork for what I am trying to say by printing a poem from Bunni Bartok's book of poems. It goes like this:

The Forgotten One

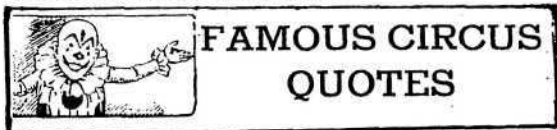
Where is he from?
 Why does he drink so much?
 Why did he come?
 He works so hard for so little pay. Fifty a week,
 a hard bunk in a truck in which to sleep.
 And if he's lucky, maybe three meals a day.
 He puts it up. He tears it down.
 He gets it over the road.
 From town to town. In the rain, the mud,
 and the cold.
 No one even knows if he's young or old.
 You give him a nickname like Shorty, Slim, Goober
 or Pop.
 He looks so tired you think he'll drop.
 But, rest easy, all of you big top stars,
 With your warm trailers, big trucks, and fancy cars.
 The working man you, yesterday, called a jerk,
 is out in the rain, putting up a tent, so you can work.

Let's talk about these jerks, these winos, these homeless men...I love the circus with every fiber in my body, but the fact remains, some circuses have exploited these "down trodden" for years. Some continue to do so today. Very little pay, long hours, inadequate sleeping and bathing facilities & cheap meals. Not all shows are guilty but a few are guilty as hell...Man's inhumanity to his fellow man never ceases to amaze me...And disgust me. What a crying shame. When I was manager of Great American, I really made an effort to try to get the working men to not blow their whole salary on beer & booze in the pie car. Every Monday morning I would take anyone who had money to Wal Mart or Sally's to buy shoes, clothes & needed toilet articles. My big top boss said I was crazy & wasting my time. I thought it was time well spent. The

guys respected me for my actions..If I got stuck in the mud, the whole gang would stop what they were doing & come push me out without me even asking. We had one person on the staff that told Allan C. Hill that if he did the buying for the cook house, he could feed each man for a buck a day. I told Allan if he even tried, I would take my butt back to Sarasota.

I would do most anything for the traditional circus. I have made many trips to the mission to get help. I was quite good at it. I never painted the picture too "rosy". You see, I am just realistic enough to accept the fact that the best of men end up "homeless" and on skid row. Intelligent, educated men end up being drunks. These are not animals. They are not to be used and abused..These are unfortunate human beings with feelings, emotions and desires. All mankind deserves respect. You may say "that could never happen to me..Well, you are wrong..Dead wrong..The missions of America and the "crummies" of shows everywhere are full of guys who said that can never happen to me.

I think I will close this piece with 4 words. "Remember the Golden Rule." Nuff said...Some showmen think the Golden Rule is "He who has the gold makes the rules." Then again, there are many shows with no Blue Rooms, no wine & beer, no rip offs..They certainly get my respect.



"The circus is the only entertainment in America that has never been censored." John Herriott



The film "The World's Greatest Circus Stars" was released in 1960 by Paramount Pictures at the request of the U.S. State Department pursuant to the cultural exchange agreement with the Soviet Union. It is in Color Cinemascope (my print is Letterboxed). This Russian film stars the world-famed clown Popov plus "The best of the best" Russian circus performers. Actual performances combined with "behind the scenes" footage and interviews make this one of the best circus documentaries ever. The Dural Railroad act combines everything from a duck to a hippo in one outstanding act. It is simply wonderful. No one gets excited about this video simply because they never heard of the film. Kent Ghirad saw it in the 60s & he is one of the few to know this film as one of the best. I recently received an order from Copenhagen for this film. The lady said she saw it on the Internet along with my name & phone number. You figure. This film is as good or better than "Rings Around The World" which I will review later. I have it available for only 20 buck postpaid (Plug). In my next column I will have a few choice words about those neurotic kooks-the animal rights activists.



I have some ideas on how to curtail these idiots. You can help with very little effort on your part.

In future columns, I will discuss the declining membership in the Circus Fans of America. Most importantly, I will present a master plan on how to attract new members. I have had this plan in the back of my mind for a few years. Now, I must put it on paper.

Well, I've got to go...The Rube and I are going for a Checkers burger. Her favorite.

Write if you have comments: Jim Ridenour, 3918 Freedom Ave, Sarasota, FL 34231 or call me at 941-927-1546.

NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS

George Steggerda writes in "News From The Lot": Circus fans who braved the beastly heat of the Holland Civic Center June 5 witnessed a quality show produced by **George Hubler**. This was pure circus. **Don Otto-Trampoline**; **Susan Shelly's Royal Afgans**; **Justino-Juggling**; **Brian Franzen** with 3 elephants; **David Zoppe's Rhus Monkey Revue**; **Royal Bengal Tigers**; **Balancing Trapeze Act** and the best part: **No concession pitching or sales to interfere with the natural pace of the performance.** (Thanks, George.)

Notes On A Popcorn Box-From Joel E. Warner Top: The 2000 CFA Convention will be in Sarasota area April 16-18. **Henry Bush** is the Convention Chair & the **Showfolks of Sarasota Tent** are the sponsors, so mark your calendar!!

Mike Piccolo reports he and **Silvius** visited **Sterling-Reid Circus** July 30-August 1 at a mall near Pittsburgh. They visited with **Dick Garden**, **Dutch Crawford**, **Italo Fornasari** (who was traveling with his son) and **Francisco Fornasari** who is the Ringmaster and a lot of other folks. Seen on the lot were **Jerry Schaub**, **Bill Watson** and **Dick Albright**. There was not that much free time as they had 2 shows on Friday, 4 shows on Saturday & 3 on Sunday!

From James Hamid: On July 23, **George A. Hamid, Jr., President of Circus Producers Assn.** and **James M. Hamid, Jr., VP of Hamid Circus Royale**, met with **Congressman Frank LoBiondo** of New Jersey's 2nd District to express their opposition to proposed legislation by **Congressman Sam Farr** of California which would ban elephants from traveling circuses.

The Hamids met at length with the Congressman explaining the unanimous dismay of Circus Producers at such a prospect. Congressman LoBiondo was receptive and quickly realized the misguided activist basis on which such action would be based. He asked that the

Hamid Family keep him informed of any developments in the Farr legislation. Hamid has contacted members of the CPA urging that they also meet with their representatives.

NEWS FROM HEIDI HERRIOTT

The fur industry apparently is taking on the activists by citing the RICO act (organized crime) in a class action lawsuit. They are suing the animal activist organizations in a nationwide suit. This was reported by Frank Robie. The Clyde Beatty Circus just did a segment for 48 Hours with Dan Rather. He came to the lot & taped a piece about their animals.

A Chamber of Commerce member in Newport, Rhode Island has filed a complaint with the NAACP which asked them to look into PETA's use of an analogy which compares the plight of animals in captivity to that of the African-American slavery in the U.S. He found this analogy very insulting. Patrick Kennedy also vocally opposed PETA's tactics. (The Chamber sponsored the Beatty Circus in June.)

The International Assn. of Amusement Parks America will hold a trade show in Atlanta in mid-November. Amusement Industry Expo will be in Cleveland Oct. 26-28. OABA members will gather in Las Vegas at the Mirage Dec. 1-5 concurrent with the International Assn. of Fairs & Expositions.

Elephant rides are once again allowed in New Jersey! Bob Commerford is currently working in the state and is successfully operating an elephant ride. Once again, even if you already have a NJ permit, you must re-apply. Please let anyone know who may be going into New Jersey. When provided with documented information & the backing of OABA, situations like this can be turned around. This is just the beginning.....

While visiting **Sterling-Reid Circus**, **Richard Albright** had a personally escorted tour of the lot by one of the show supervisors. The two Asian elephants on the show are owned by the **Johnson's (Have Trunk Will Travel)** of California. They and their handler travel in one of the most luxury equipped trailer for elephants & staff that will be found anyplace. Those at the 1998 CMB National had the chance to see the quarters to house & train the elephants as well as tour the quarters for the staff caring for the elephants. The quarters are superior to most private travel trailers.

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY.....

Once again, I'm not a Disney schmuck or a cartoon believer. I suppose I don't like people much, ya think?

*Texas Ann, Jimmy Joe and Romeo: Story about oiling the elephants down good on the first date of the season. Jimmy Joe was the announcer so he just stood back and laughed. Ann and I (with Wesson Oil, I think) slathered them cows to a done turn. The elephants seemed to like it, they squirming and squiggling around in the dirt like they did. I don't remember how many gallons it was, but it was a lot. It took some hours to get it done right. They could soak real good because the first show wasn't until the next night. Well, Jimmy Joe and Ann went to their room 'cause they knew I'd be there all night with the rubber cows.

Well, it being northern Texas, there came a thunderstorm about midnight (good thing, in a way, because we didn't have to wash so much oil off them the next morning). Anyway, I took 'em all off their leg chains and we all huddled close together (them old rubber cows didn't like thunder much and Betty was a sissy after all).

But when the lightening got bright, I jumped them in the truck. So, here we are, smackin' thick with oil and Betty with her trunk in my pants, looking for treats. I tell ya what, with the water and oil, it was kind of hard to stay upright. But, Judy darlin', held me up, with coaching, even kept me upright so I could get into the crummy door to get hay. Even though Betty was a sissy, I didn't want to be under her feet. (That Judy is the best animal I've ever known). The storm was over in an hour; we all got out of the wagon, played in the grass and dirt for a while, then went to sleep (I couldn't get into the building till business hours).

I swear if Heaven is close to anything like sleeping with my head on the folds of Mary's neck after a cool spring Texas shower-never mind-I've been there. Anyway, we were all properly scrubbed up and presentable by noon. So you see, even us gypsies can be civilized in the morning, considering I'd had a Mazola party with 3 girls all night.

*Rex, Gardner, Sue, Gyp and the Brat: Getting oiled up good, before opening day. And the guy that owned the property trying to talk Rex into selling Gardner (the guy said, "No sweat, I can handle him-10,000 pound running bull").

I don't know what a D-6 Cat is, but I've heard that a 21 year old male elephant is something like it. It would have been like giving a 1000 lb. bomb to a 10-year-old 4th of

Julyster. Anyway, so back to the fun. I'm not pointing any fingers, but this place was out in the hills, east of Atlanta, very nice, trees, grass, hay, water, yadda, yadda. We stayed a little over a week, took care of the equipment, stock, 4 elephants, 3 horses and a couple of dogs.

I'll tell ya spring in the south can be pleasant. So..oh ya, well, Gardner (and Gyp) are so thick skinned and healthy we have to kneed the oil into all the folds of the hide everywhere so it takes some days. Also, the Brat thinks this is all great fun (it was like a greased pig race with a 550 pound, 20 mph pig). But, a good time was had by all. Gardner was laughing, I saw him. Besides, he had his buddy, Mr. Dawg to play with.

The guy that owned the land watched all this. And since Rex mostly didn't have a stick of any kind on him all this time, he thought it looked pretty easy. He never noticed the care and attention I used when around Gardner and I always made sure Rex was between me and him.

I got along good with Gardner, I just know which side of the fence my play yard was. Ya, so anyway, when we opened (it was on the lot next to where the Atlanta Braves play), a Shrine date, Rex rehearsed the act for the nobles and their wives (courtesy, I guess). Well, Gardner still had all his parts and being the proud Papa that he was, when he did the hind leg walk around the front of the ring (ya have to understand that Gardner truly enjoyed working) he'd display his enjoyment by beating himself on the chest. I won't explain.

The Shriners' wives were quite alarmed and said, "this just will not do." So, Gardner and I were banished to the Department, while Rex, Sue, Gyp and the Brat paid the rent. We rocked 'em on the ride though.

John Bantock, formerly of Classic Books of Sarasota, is now in a rehabilitation center in Sarasota. John has sent circus books to fans and performers all over the world. Because of a diabetes problem, he had to have his right leg amputated at the knee. He is trying to get into the Pines of Sarasota as he is not happy with the center he is currently in. I know he would appreciate hearing from you. Please write him at his home address: 2531 East Milmar Dr., Sarasota, FL 34237. Jackie LeClaire has visited him as well as Al Dawley. John said he would like to thank all the folks he has done business with over the years. Al told him if he could get home he could sell his books over the Internet! Hmmm, seems like your editor has been telling John this for a year! If you are looking for a specific book or books, please let me know and I will contact John to see if he has it in his inventory. Get Well Soon, John! I'm still looking for Beatty books-Can't do it without you!



Rose Behee, Lee Wallenda



Dolly Jahn, Valerie Antalek Kent Ghirard Collection



Mills Bros. Circus 1963



"Rube Ridenour" and Friend



KEN BENSON 5619 ANTOINETTE ST.
SARASOTA, FLORIDA 34232
1-941-320-9775



Butch Krause, Kay Burslem, Jeannie Sleeter, Mars Bennett, Fannie McClosky

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1522 Clinton Blvd.
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