

SEASONS

BACK YARD

GREETINGS

Volume IV, Issue #81

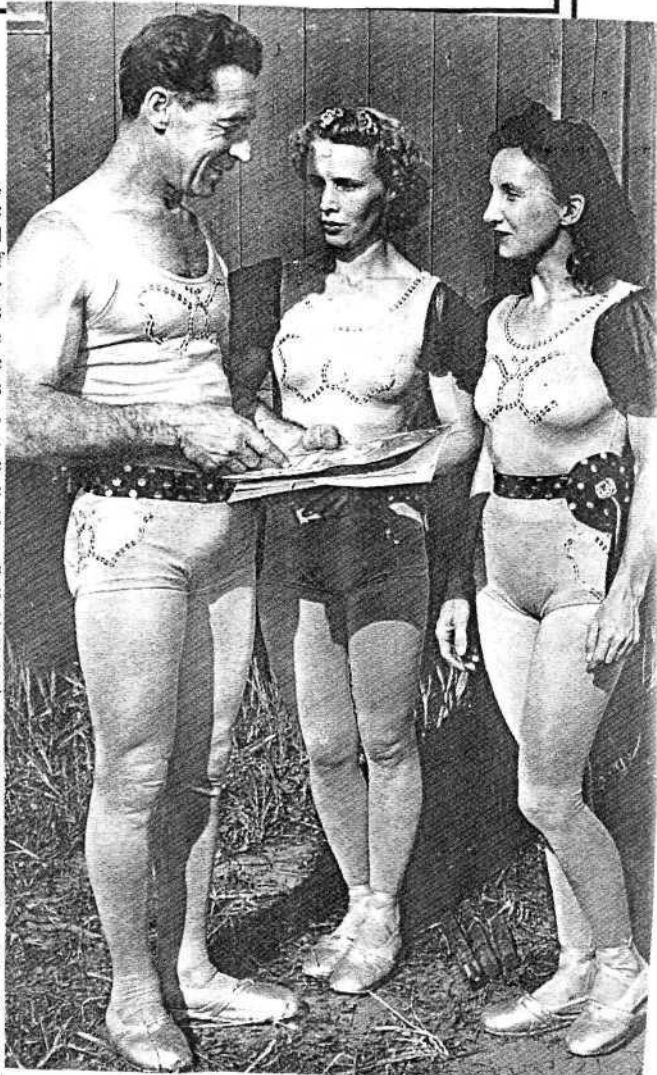
December 15, 1999

*"The Flying Valentinos:
Circuses and Fairs They Played
Along Route 66, 1935 to 1959"*

By Cherie Valentine

George Dewey Valentine was born in 1898 in Normal, Illinois, a town with the "Mother Road" running through it. By 1928, he was listed in the city directory as an "aerial-artist." George used to go to the YMCA in downtown Bloomington, not far off Route 66, to watch the circus performers practice. It was Harry LaMar who broke him into the business. George then taught his three brothers, Bill, Fred and Roy the art of the flying trapeze and soon they all had their own flying acts, traveling across the country. Art Concello chose George to be his catcher in Art's new act, the Flying Concellos, and along with Art's wife, Antoinette, they went to work in 1930 with the Robbins Bros. Circus. In 1931, George was with Lester Thomas with the Flying Clarkonians on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus. The next season, George was again asked by Art to join his flying act and they performed on Ringling Bros. Circus.

Lorraine Mather went with her dad to the YMCA to watch him play chess, but would also sneak off to watch the aerialists practice in another part of the building. It was there she met George and he taught her how to fly. In 1933, George, Tuffy and Grayci Genders toured on Seils-Sterling and Lorraine only performed a single trapeze act and a web routine as this was her first year out and she was still learning how to fly. They traveled in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana from March to October. A *Billboard* article states that "the Flying Valentinos have been contracted by the show for the fairs and several new trucks will be added to the circus to carry extra equipment." In June of 1933, the Seils-Sterling Circus wrote George a letter to offer work for the following year: "We want to do business with you and if you come over with us for the fairs we will try to make everything just as pleasant for you as we possibly can and if you can build your rigging to fit into our tent, we will place you for the season of 1934. The best that I can possibly offer you is \$75 a week starting in Sept. and running into Dec. We will also furnish you your gas and oil for your car and you can eat in our cookhouse. We feed 3 meals a day on this show and pay day is on EVERY Sunday." Things must not have worked out, as Lorraine's first year to perform on the flying

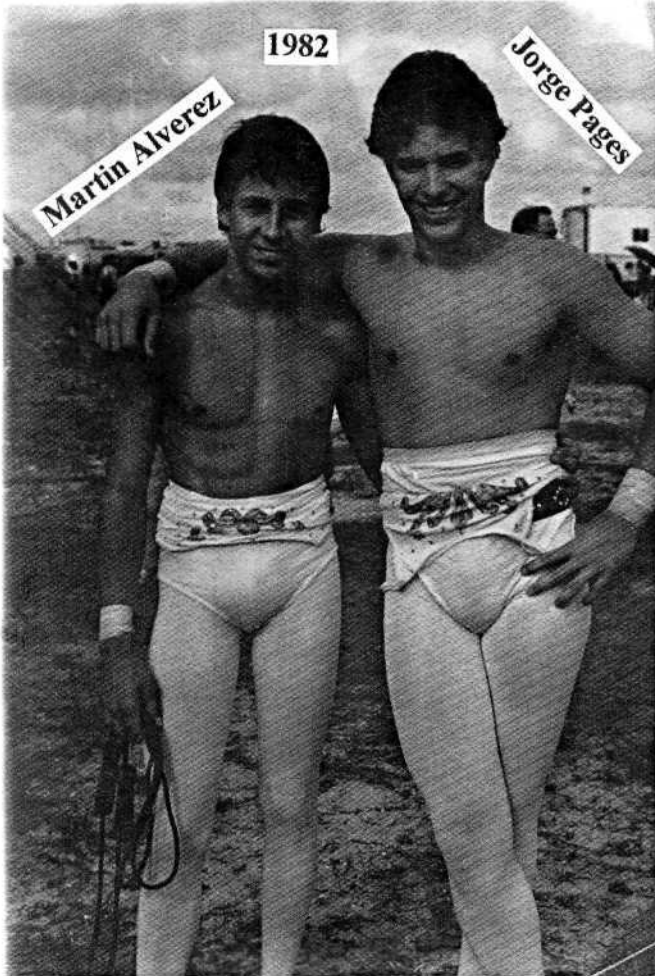


trapeze was 1934, at the St. Louis Police Circus. They would travel down Route 66, from Bloomington to the Coliseum in St. Louis. (Continued on Page 4)

1982

Martin Alvarez

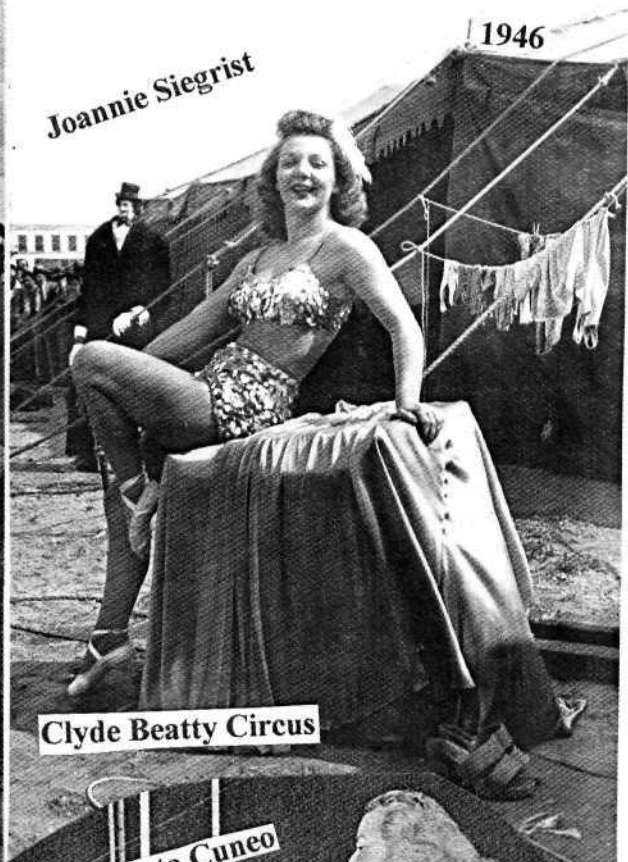
Jorge Pages



Clyde Beatty Circus

1946

Joannie Siegrist



Clyde Beatty Circus

Herta Cuneo



Goldilocks & Her Bear



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



The Flying Valentinos.....

In 1934, they also played the South Texas Expo in Houston with the Hennies Bros. Shows as the "free act." An ad for the show boasted, "In person-the Mothers of Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. See these heart broken mothers-hear the life story of their children." Sure wish I had asked my mother about that! A *Billboard* article also states that "the Flying Valentinos purchased a new Ford truck, as business had been the best since 1929. In 1935, they performed in Texas, Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas. They were in Bloomington in September and George and Lorraine decided to get married. They played a successful fair season with the Barnes-Carruthers Agency and also the Greater United Shows.

The earliest journal that Lorraine kept was from 1935. It is just a pad of paper, divided into small sections with the date and town; meals and groceries; gas; telegrams and stamps; truck and car expenses; rigging and wardrobe expenses; salary and help expense; clothing, doctor and entertainment expenses. In it she recorded every penny spent and all the income they made. It is from these journals that the routes they played can be reconstructed as to the towns and dates.

Some items from the early journal are: shaving cream-25 cents; pop-20 cents; toothpaste-50 cents; haircut-35 cents; trousers-\$1.98; gas for 8 days-\$2.98; razor blades-10 cents; truck fan belt-87 cents; blanket-75 cents; pillow case-25 cents.

A 1936 newspaper article from Dayton, Ohio said, "The Flying Valentinos have been years ahead of the present motoring vogue of living in house trailers. They have a completely equipped domicile, built upon a truck chassis and have used this as their home the year around while traveling from one show to another and while on the lot. They have used this motor home for the last 6 years with the exception of 1932, when George traveled with Ringling Bros." From the journal, it is clear they had a truck to carry the flying act equipment. It also had a small room where their partner, Sue Pelto, lived, and also a new "V-8 car" and a travel trailer. George drove the truck and Lorraine drove the car and trailer. They played the St. Louis Police Circus again in 1936 for 2 weeks and traveled from Des Moines to play the date.

Income for the 2 weeks was a total of \$275. In Red Oak, Iowa, a week's pay was only \$125. One expense that shows up in every town in the journal is for ice. They purchased butane for the cooking stove but needed the ice to keep food cold when not plugged into electricity. The ice cost about 50-80 cents and butane cost 81 cents. There was a lot of telegram expense in each town as perhaps this was cheaper than the telephone.

Oscar Jordan was also working in the flying act this season and received about \$30 a week whereas Sue received \$5 a week. She ate in the trailer with George and Lorraine and I imagine Oscar had to buy his food elsewhere. The car license cost \$10 and the truck license was \$12. The gas for the car from Bloomington to Des Moines cost \$4.70 and gas to St. Louis from Des Moines was \$3.14. The truck must have been in San Antonio, traveling to Des Moines, as the journal says it took

106 gallons and the trip was 1144 miles, gas costing \$17.41. Their car payment was \$38.95 a month and it cost \$1.50 to grease the car. The acts performing in the St. Louis Police Circus must have paid for electricity for the trailers as Lorraine's journal reports an expense for lights of \$2.80 per week. There are also toll expenses every month. In August, they paid the car off with a final payment of \$198.50. The truck needed a fan belt in Norton, KS, which cost 86 cents! In 1936, wardrobe didn't cost much to make. Thread was 10 cents; spangles, \$1.10; dye, 30 cents; muslin, 50 cents; but tights were the most expensive item, \$17. Groceries for May were \$30 and meals were \$2.15, showing they ate most of their meals in the trailer. George paid between 25 & 40 cents for haircuts; shampoo was 25 cents & toothpaste was 29 cents.

In 1937, the Flying Valentinos played circuses and fairs in Ohio, W. Virginia, Penn., Ky., Wisc., Minn., Mich., Iowa, Alabama and Arkansas. For 6 days in DePere, WI they received \$250 but 2 days in Jasper, AL only netted \$62.50. Their 1938 itinerary included Tenn., IL (West Bros. Shows), IA, S. Dakota, Texas and Minn. In June, George purchased an "Eric Diggers" machine, which was a coin operated, hand-cranked prize game. This took up a lot of room in the truck and was very heavy and someone had to run the game at every stand when they played carnivals. "That was one of George's big ideas. It didn't last long," Lorraine said in an interview with Steve Gossard in 1986. Route 66 must have been buzzing around Bloomington in 1938, as this article appeared in the *Billboard*: "Big Top performers who winter in Bloomington gathered for the last time March 28 before opening the season. the occasion was a dinner given in their honor at the Hotel Tilden-Hall (1 block from Route 66). The list of famous circus folks attending included: Art & Antoinette Concello, Eddie Ward, Harold Voise, Bob Porter, Wayne Larey, Willie Krause, Tuffy Genders, Carl Durbin, Ullaine Malloy, Helen Billetti, Clayton Behee, just to mention a few." From the 4/16 *Billboard* from the Zimdars Show in Paducah, it stated the Flying Valentinos left the show. The next week an article from the West Bros. Show in West Frankfort, IL said, "the Flying Valentinos joined Monday as a 'featured free act.' The act proved crowd pleasers, holding public and getting good hands."

In 1939, the Flying Valentinos won the *Billboard* popularity poll in the Flying Act Division. In June they had 421 votes and by closing votes in December, they were on top with 16,007 votes! Their income for the year was \$3834, with \$148.50 being earned at the St. Louis Police Circus. They again played St. Louis in April, 1940. Also on the bill were the Wallendas, Hannefords, Rudinoffs and 2 other flying acts, the Behees and 4 Comets. In the fall, George, Lorraine and partner Sue Pelto were with the Gold Medal Shows in the South. They also performed in NY, NJ, Penn, Alabama and Canada. In 1941, they played the Shrine Circus in Omaha for Rink Wright. They were paid \$300 for 6 days and it was stated in their contract that "The Flying Valentinos would consist of 2 ladies & 1 gent, accomplishing double twisters, passing leap, two and a half catch to feet in sack." (TO BE CONTINUED)

MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION!



A BIG THANK YOU!!

THE RESPONSE TO RINGLING SUPER, MIXED BAG ONE AND MIXED BAG TWO WAS SIMPLY GREAT...I AM INDEED SO SORRY THAT IT TOOK 9 DAYS TO FILL A FEW OF THE ORDERS. I NORMALLY SHIP WITHIN 3 DAYS...

VIDEOTAPES AREN'T THE SAME

MIXED BAG THREE

MIXED BAG VOLUMES THREE AND FOUR ARE READY

MIXED BAG THREE IS FROM THE FRANK POUSKA & HAROLD RUPP COLLECTIONS. IT RUNS 94 MINUTES YOU WILL SEE COLE BROS 40'S-ARTHUR BROS 45 RINGLING 66-WALLACE BROS 61-MILLS BROS ON OPENING DAY, JEFFERSON, OHIO-SEE LOTS OF FANS-SELLS-GRAY 60'S-CRISTIANI-WALLACE 63-RINGLING 63-MORE MILLS BROS-KING BROS 63-UNITED NATIONS 63- KING BROS 64-RINGLING 50'S(GREAT TRAIN SHOTS-UNLOADING, LOT, ETC.) MILLS BROS (54 OR 59) RARE IN COLOR SEE

COLE BROTHERS WINTER QUARTERS WITH OLD WAGONS-A NICE LOOK AT THE WINTER QUARTERS IN COLOR-CLYDE BEATTY 50'S-KING BROS 59-A GOOD SHOT OF MY HERO-FLOYD KING-VON BROS-SEE NORMA CRISTIANI- WOW SEE THE JAMES M COLE TRUCK SHOW- A BIG SHOPPING CENTER NO TENT CIRCUS (?) -MORE KING BROS-HAGEN BROS-MORE MILLS BROS-AND HAMID-MORTON..

THAT'S RIGHT

VIDEOTAPES AREN'T THE SAME

VALUE

You said a MOUTHFUL BABY

MIXED BAG VOLUME FOUR IS FROM THE HARRY KINGSTON & GEORGE BINGAMAN COLLECTIONS... IT RUNS A FULL TWO HOURS...YOU WILL SEE COLE BROS 46-DAILEY BROS 45 IN COLOR-CLYDE BEATTY 61-FISHER BROS 74-KING BROS 73-76-SEE HARRY HAMMOND & WHITEY BLACK)- COLE 49 (SEE CON COLLENO & ZACHINNI CANNON) SUPER HARD TO FIND MATERIAL -GEORGE MATTHEWS

GREAT LONDON CIRCUS 76-SEE HERBIE WEBER & SID-KELNER- SEE PARLEY BARR'S MID AMERICA CIRCUS 75-PARLEY WORKS THE PONY DRILL & ANNOUNCES-STEBBINS EUROPEAN CIRCUS 76-AND KING-COLE CIRCUS /THE CAMPA FAMILY IMPORTANT MOST OF THESE WERE FILMED BY HARRY LEE KINGSTON IN 16MM COLOR AND ARE DETAILED LOOKS OF THESE SHOWS.....QUALITY STUFF AT WALMART PRICES-ANOTHER BLAST FROM THE PAST FROM,WHO ELSE,JIM RIDENOUR-YOU KEEP BUYING EM AND I'LL KEEP FINDING EM....

MIXED BAG FOUR

TAPES ARE TWENTY DOLLARS EACH..

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: FLORIDA MUST SEND 7%TAX
JIM RIDENOUR 3918 FREEDOM AVE SARASOTA, FLA34231

BY VOICE COMMAND ALONE !!

By Mike Cecere

Going to circuses in my youth, before I became professionally involved with animals, many trainers and productions had an influence on me. One that stands out is in 1970, I saw the RBBB Red Unit, then under the guidance of both Irvin & Kenneth Feld and the entire production had the earmarks of that Master Showman, Mr. Irvin Feld. There was a man who knew what the public wanted to see.

At the time, he was lending his considerable empressarial acumen to the promotion of the newly arrived Gunther Gebel-Williams, a talented trainer from Germany, an effort so highly successful Gunther achieved rock-star status. Essential to it all was the staging of Gunther's highly trained animals, used to working in the intimate one-ring European format to adapt to the needs of the huge U.S. arenas.

One highly effective presentation was the large elephant act, spread out over the entire arena floor, a first at the time. Gunther raced from one end of the floor to the other putting the Jumbos through their paces. All at once, he stopped and called for "Congo" his huge African elephant who came on the run, from the other side of the floor. Then, to top it all off, the Ringmaster would announce that "By Voice Command Alone," GGW would direct the entire herd of some 18 elephants. AND he would bellow a direction in German and all the elephants would do it! Real showmanship!

And over the years, gaining experience as a trainer, I've learned the really well trained elephants respond to voice command, if the person giving the direction was competent. Personally I would rather see animals working to voice command in performance rather than being pushed or goaded into behaviors.

Recently, in the age of the cellular phone, many of my fellow trainers and animal people often speak to me via phone, right by their animals. One of these friends is Capt. Ken Turtle Benson, well known Elephant Supt. at Roberts Bros. Circus, who calls often right from small-town America on tour. His travelling companions big "Boo" and "Martin, the Wonder Dog" often can be heard chirping in or barking in the background. In fact, "Boo" gets jealous of Capt. Ken's attentions being off her and on to whom he is speaking to. You can hear her in the background and "Martin" often chiming in. To which the Capt. gives the order for them to "settle down," by Voice Command Alone. The tradition continues! (Then again,

it could be "Boo's" attempt to get Capt. Benson to order her a Pizza!) God Bless America!

Sheelagh Jones visited the Evansville Shrine Circus and said it was great to see so many circus families. "It was a great circus and crowds were good at every performance." Sheelagh was in Heaven most of the time-visiting with the "girls" and "Nicky" in the Hawthorn elephant department!

She sent along the program: Paul Kaye, Exec. Producer; Sir Tommy Baker, Ringmaster-Equestrian Director; Clem Toca, Musical Director; Bill Bannister, Rigging Supt.; Joanne Wilson, Wardrobe Mistress. Aerial display: Alecia, April, Gladys, Irene, Jasmin, Johana, Kimberly, Tracey; Trudy Strong (her last performance) with the Hawthorn Golden Royal Bengal & Siberian tigers; Aerial display with the Vallas Duo & the De Giros Duo; Juggling with Shane & Co., Antonio Twins & 4 Dazzling Diablos; Hurricane Hoofbeats with Denise & Matador & Luiz and Torero; Jorge's Jalopy; JoAnne's Broadway Poodles and Bannister's Barkers and Taib Bakkar's Alligators; Aerial Ballet with Najean & Suzette & Princess Tavana; Slide for Life, Teina; Cycling Bertinis & Cycling Hall Sisters; Olmedas family horses; Wheel of Death-Juan & Daniel Rodriguez; the Flying Michaels; Castle's Gypsy Bears, Derrick's Dancing Bears, Rosaire-Zoppe Chimps; the Great Guerreros, wire; 3 Rings of the Hawthorn Elephants (15); The Anastas Duo, a space ship voyage to the galaxies.

Mike Sorrill sent this from the Evansville paper: "When you meet Trudy Strong it is difficult to picture the petite, red-haired woman issuing commands to some of the most dangerous animals on earth. But she has shared the spotlight for 11 years with her tigers. Trudy is retiring after 50 years of performing in the center ring. "It was my decision. I don't think I'm sad. I'm happy that I have been in the circus all my life. It's time to get away from the spotlight." Her biggest applause came as she sat atop one of the tigers and others jumped through a flaming hoop above her. "When you hear the applause, it's all worth it. I'm only a little woman and to be able to perform with them without threatening them is incredible. When I'm in there, it's like we are one. I respect them and they respect me. None of the problems of the world are in there with me." Trudy has done so many roles for the circus, from animal trainer to contortionist to aerial artist, that she can't get completely out of the business now. "I'll be in the background, doing costumes. I want to raise dogs with my sister." Trudy's son David is a filmmaker who is making a documentary of the circus and his mother's retirement. He said his mother will miss the circus life.



Three Ring Members

Richard Albright
 Regis Amend
 Jim Babcock
 Jim Bashline
 Emery Boor
 Frank Cook
 John Corson
 Chuck Dietrich
 Linda Dietrich
 Robert Foster
 Kirk Foster
 John Froehlich
 Dennis Gilli

Ed Grimminger
 Helene Gundel
 Charles Hostler
 Andrew Hrebenar
 Wylie Irwin
 Don Leech
 Joseph Marshall
 Clair McCurdy
 Richard McGivney
 Nancy McIntire
 Bill Merchant
 Pat Merchant
 Amos Noll

Jim Parker
 Mike Piccolo
 Silvius Piccolo
 John Sapita
 Robert Sapita
 Gary Schmalz
 Jerome Schaub
 Earl Schmid
 Craig Stratton
 Howard Taylor
 Russell Tully
 William Watson
 Patrick Wentzel

*See you at Circus Mania 2000 in Uniontown,
 Pennsylvania!!!*

RINGLING RED: N. Fort Myers, FL-TECO Arena-12/30-1/2. Coming soon to Sunrise, Miami and Jacksonville, FL.

RINGLING BLUE: Tampa, FL-Ice Palace-1/6-9; St. Pete-Bayfront Arena-1/12-16.

BIG APPLE CIRCUS: Lincoln Ctr-NYC-10/31-1/9.

BIG APPLE'S OOPS!: Peoria, IL-Civic Center-12/28.

Circus Sarasota: Sarasota-Van Wezel-12/26-1/23.

Barnum's Kaleidoscope: Houston, TX-Brown Convention Ctr-12/28-1/23; Dallas, TX-Valley View Mall-2/5-3/12.

BACK YARD

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E-mail: cdvalen@ilstu.edu. Subscription rates are \$25.00 per year, for 24 issues, within the USA. Advertising rates, payable in advance, with your copy, are: Full page \$30; Half page \$15; Quarter Page \$10; 1/8 page \$5. "The Fox," is written by Jenny Wallenda. Other material is written by Cherie Valentine, unless otherwise identified as to author. Comments by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher. Back Yard is a pro-circus, pro-animal publication, which supports the use of animals which are legally held and properly cared for, in the American circus.

Visit www.inficad.com/~circus/backyard.

*The Sept. issue of *Little Circus Wagon*, magazine of the *Circus Model Builders*, has a photo on the cover of *Buckles Woodcock* and *Gordon Carver* at an event at The Meadowlands. Gordon has been a member of the *Sparks Ring* for 50 years. There is also a great article on how to carve a giraffe for your model circus. Fantastic pictures and detailed instructions!

*From the *Emmett Kelly Tent*: "The Emmett Kelly Tent was able to provide coffee, juice & donuts to 2 of circuses traveling through Hagerstown, MD during the season thanks to the activities of President Ed Meals. With a little help from his friends, Ed met the trucks and travel trailers of the Kelly-Miller Circus as they pulled into the "Hagerstown Showgrounds" in June.

JOEL WARNER TOP

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Flint, Michigan

JORDAN WORLD CIRCUS

For Information Contact:

Pat Pagel

6027 Brophy Rd.

Howell, Michigan 48843

At the Annual Banquet in Oct., the speaker was Ernest Albrecht. Member Dave Orr covered a table with tickets, press releases & other items from circuses that he has been associated with over the years. All of these were free to anyone who could offer them a good home. There was an excellent after-banquet party provided by members of the Lou Jacobs Tent on the 4th floor of the hotel! Earl Anderson past away the last week of Oct. He was a circus model builder as well as a circus fan. A new member, Paul Horsman, is contributing articles to "The Carnival Midway" which is the official publication of the Carnival Historical & Model Builders Society of America.

*Glen Perye writes, "With a sad heart I inform you Merlin Allen, past President of CFA and long time President of the Joel Warner Top passed away Nov. 28 of a massive brain hemorrhage. After suffering a heart attack the 26th, at the Parade of Lights in Howell, MI. He was there with the Ringling Cinderella Pumpkin Coach from the Circus Hall of Fame.



BEST WISHES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

from

CIRCUS REPORT

RINGLING NEWS

What sort of animal performances can we expect in the 130th Edition of Ringling Bros. Circus??

Director, Phil McKinley, says, "There will be an exciting new tiger act featuring Sara Houcke and a beautiful variety of Bengal tigers, standard, snow white, white with stripes and golden tabby. A wonderful new elephant presentation will feature 5 of our young elephants along with 10 adult elephants. Hans Suppemeir has created a dazzling new liberty display with 5 black Fresians, 5 white Arabians, 4 zebras, a Palomino and a miniature Palomino. And the show will feature a brilliant Cossack act in the style of the American Rough Riders, male and female.

Sara makes her debut in the Great Cage with these rare and beautiful tigers. Michu will return to create another first for us: He will help shoot a Ringling clown out of the human cannon into the new Millennium! Jon Weiss will become the first human "Clown-on-ball" in the history of The Greatest Show On Earth! The famous high-wire performing Quiros will be featured in an all-new double-highwire display. And the show will also include a beautiful aerial display featuring a hair-suspension act by Michelle Ayala and a gravity-defying strap act by Anton Beliakov, making his Ringling debut. This year's musical score takes its roots from all forms of American music, from Dixieland to new age, from gospel to Broadway.

Showfolks Circus Honors Past Performers

By Dorothy Stockbridge-Pratt 12/9

When Chuck Schlarbaum strikes up the circus music for the opening parade Saturday, memories of such legendary

names as Wallenda, Rosaire, La Norma and Unus will be evoked. Jenny Wallenda, who once walked the high wire with her famous father, Karl, has booked the acts for the 32nd annual benefit circus by Showfolks of Sarasota, which her father founded. "I wanted to pay tribute to all the performers in the Circus Ring of Fame on St. Armands. The show will be filled with the heirs of many of the stars of the past," she said. John Herriott, who will be inducted into the Ring of Fame next month, will share the ringmaster duties with daughter Heidi and Kimbel Keller, while daughter Laura will present a liberty act with camels.

Ring-of-Fame members of the Rosaire family will present several acts. Kay Rosaire and her son, Clayton,

will put lions and tigers through their paces in an act honoring animal trainers Mabel Stark, Clyde Beatty and Alfred Court. Court, Blinko the clown (Ernie Burch) and Massimiliano Truzzi will be inducted into the Ring of Fame posthumously. Pam Rosaire, Kay's sister, will do a chimp act with Roger Zoppe. Another Rosaire sister, Elian, will take after their father, Derrick, by doing a comedy-horse act and a high school horse act, also honoring Capt. Wm. Heyer. Derrick, Jr. will show trained bears in a tribute to Albert Rix.

Karl Wallenda's granddaughter, Rietta, and her daughter, Lyric, will do a hanging perch act, while Jenny Wallenda's granddaughter, Alida, will do a cradle act with husband, Robinson Cortez. Granddaughter Aurelia Wallenda and Sasha Pavlata will be a double cloud swing.

Giovanni Zoppe will clown around to honor famous funnymen Felix Adler, Emmett Kelly, Otto Griebing and Dan Rice. Hand balancing by Almas will honor the Yong brothers, as will a perch act by Almas & Norbal. Juggling by Jason Walker will honor Franz & Lottie Braun and Truzzi. Michael Ashton will honor the Nelson family with the Risley act. A comedy bareback riding act will honor the Hannefords. Lou Jacobs will be remembered with a comedy aerial act by Zoppe.

Gabriella Guzman will perform on the trapeze, honoring La Norma, Lillian Leitzel and Eli Ardely. Adrian Poemas will do the one finger stand, just as Unus did. Brian Franzen's elephant act will honor Buckles Woodcock. All the performers are donating their talents to the show. (Jenny Wallenda has been very busy with the Showfolks' program and working very hard to put the circus together and her column will not be in this issue. Jenny called to say that Sylvia Zerbini was hurt on Barnum's Kaleidoscope in Tempe when her horse fell during the performance and she was injured with a broken wrist. I know we all can't wait to see her letter about the Showfolks' Circus.)

Amos Bolieau's newsletter from New England says "The International Independent Showmen's Assn. Circus will be Feb. 16 at the Showmen's Club in Gibsonton, FL. Bob Commerford has been very busy this Christmas season with 3 reindeer hitches working in a number of parades. Amos lists the following for Big Apple Circus dates: Lincoln Center thru 1/9; Atlanta, GA-Lakewood Fairgrounds-2/23-3/5; New Jersey Colonial Park, Franklin Township-3/11-3/26.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year To All

CIRCUS WAGON

DICK MCGIVNEY



*** Member of the OABA**

News From Our Circus Friends

***Bud DeVere** has started the Kenneth Feld Tent 150 Newsletter. They now have 52 members and if you'd like to join them, send \$5 to Estelle DeVere, 5437 Broadmoor St., Alexandria, VA 22315. **Clark & Kathy Beurlen** have written a book, "Hoofers: Dancing on a Sawdust Stage. "It is a find account of the **Rudynoff** Family written in a form that is easy to read. Their name is now permanently ensconced in the Circus Hall of Fame. The book is extremely well researched and documented; the book is a limited numbered edition with over 40 photos. All books are signed by the authors and Beverly & Rudy Rudynoff. The book is available for \$20 plus \$3.50 s/h from: Circus Day Productions, 5162 Orchard Green, Columbia, MD 21045. (Tell them you read about it in Back Yard!)

***Winter Events in the Sarasota Area:** Ringling-Tampa, Jan. 7-9; Showfolks Tent Meeting at Showfolks Club, 1/5. The Dubskeys will be the speakers; Ringling-St. Pete, Jan. 13-16; Hanneford Circus at the Fair in West Palm Beach, Jan. 13-23; Celebrity Night at Ringling Museum, Jan. 14; Ring of Fame Inductions at St. Armands Circle-Jan. 15; Circus Seminar at Ringling Museum-Jan. 19, 11:30 with John Herriott speaker; Windjammers Convention, Sarasota Holiday Inn-Jan. 25-28; Showfolks Tent Banquet-Jan. 29; Feb. 8-13, Gibtown Trade Show; State Fair of Florida, Tampa Feb. 10-21 with Hanneford Circus.

Norton Auction of show materials at Tampa Showman's Club, Feb. 12; OABA Circus Member Meeting, Tampa, Feb. 12; Circus Seminar, Ringling Museum-Feb. 16 with Margie Geiger, speaker; Hanneford Circus, Dade County Fair, Miami-March 16-April 2; Circus Seminar, Ringling Museum, March 15-Steve Smith, speaker. (That should keep you all busy! Be sure to write and tell us about these events when you go.)

***John Beard** has suffered a massive heart attack and would appreciate hearing from you. Please write him at: 1755 Atrium Dr, Sun City Center, FL 33573.

***Al Conover** writes he has visited 24 shows this season. In August he suffered a stroke while at the hospital for tests. He is staying with his brother Jake while he recovers. Their address is: 467 W. Krepps Rd, Xenia, OH 45385. They will be in Sarasota for the Showfolks Circus.

***Steve Gossard** reports the Gamma Phi Circus students, at Illinois State Univ., voted unanimously to sponsor the Carson & Barnes Circus when it plays Bloomington, IL for the Circus Historical Society Convention Sept. 7. There are still a few details to be worked out, but hopefully we will have a Circus sponsoring a Circus! The students are excited about meeting some real circus professionals and seeing all the animals. (Gamma Phi does not have animal acts. The CHS Convention will be from Sept. 6-10. Come early or stay later and do some research at the enormous circus collections at Milner Library.)

***From the Sarasota Herald 11/13:** "They spit, can be cantankerous and even downright dangerous, but to fourth generation circus trainer, Laura Herriott, camels and llamas are fabulous animals to love and show under the big top. "My father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all animal trainers. It's something I've grown up with. Llamas in particular are very timid, flighty animals, but mine are very sweet. You can't put any pressure on them and you have to be very gentle. We use a reward system & give them plenty of affection. Animal training is not something you can just pick up and do. It takes years of experience, special licenses and a whole lot of patience and love. Our family has trained elephants, zebras, dogs, camels, but we're not into the carnivores. We leave that to people like Josip Marcan, who does a beautiful job with his tigers. My animals came from a North Carolina farm and they have been on tour for more than a year now. There's nothing like the circus. I'm very proud to be a part of that tradition."



Season's Greetings

from

**Amos Bolieau, District I director,
CFA Tent No. 165 Commodore Nutt
and All Circus Fans from New Hampshire**



“City Council Orders Sissy the Elephant to be Sent to Tennessee Sanctuary”-El Paso Times

12/8/99: Soon Sissy the elephant will be roaming some of the Elephant Sanctuary’s 800 acres in Tennessee. Animal lovers throughout the nation and even from other countries have been calling for Sissy’s removal from the El Paso Zoo since last month’s release of a November 1998 videotape of the elephant’s disciplinary beating with wooden bats by zoo employees.

A federal investigation into whether the conduct violated animal welfare laws governing zoos should be completed by the end of the year, Mayor Carlos Ramirez said. The police department also is investigating whether state cruelty to animal laws were broken and city administration is trying to determine whether any actions should be taken against the zoo personnel involved, Ramirez said. Eastridge city Rep. Luis Sarinana said, “I grew up in a domestic-violence family. What I saw on that tape was totally brutal.”

12/10: “Sissy to Begin Trek to New Home Jan. 12”

Sissy’s “travel agent” came to town Thursday to explain the pachyderm’s packing plans. Sissy is to hit the road to her new home, the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee on Jan. 12 in an 18-wheeler that has been customized to transport elephants, Carol Buckley, the sanctuary’s executive director said. She met with El Paso Zoo officials Thursday morning to discuss the logistics of moving the 6000 pound animal. She praised them for the cooperation and for providing her with Sissy’s records so quickly.

Carol said she took the opportunity to look Sissy over in the sunlight and “saw no scars that would appear to be from wounds inflicted by humans. Sissy does however exhibit the classic scarring that most elephants in captivity have-the sores on the hips, sides and feet that come from living on concrete and hard surfaces.”

Sissy also “is 600 to 1000 pounds” underweight, Carol added. But, she predicted, Sissy’s condition will turn around dramatically at the sanctuary. There, Sissy will join a herd of five other Asian elephants able to roam a couple of hundred acres and live in an environment as close to her natural habitat as possible, she said.

Socorro Sargent, of El Paso, said, “I wish we could send Mona and Savannah (El Paso’s other elephants) there too. Even if we couldn’t ever see them again, it would be for their well-being. That’s what’s most important, not our viewing pleasure.

Mayor Ramirez said he was encouraged by Buckley’s

praise of the indoor portion of El Paso Zoo’s elephant exhibit. “It is top of the line and it should be relatively easily transitioned over to protected contact,” Buckley said. The mayor and the Zoo administration have said the city is committed to converting the elephant exhibit to protected contact. That type of arrangement provides for a protective barrier to exist always between the animal and its keepers. Because the protection is always there, there is no need to dominate an elephant by beating it, Carol said.

(“Sissy has been passed around like a foster child. Now, she is coming home for good,” Carol wrote me.)

“Performers Take to the Rails”-Sarasota Herald 11/28:

Ringling Bros is known for breathtaking stunts and feats of daring. But one of the circus’ most remarkable feats remains unseen by the public. Workers must refurbish, stock, staff and maintain nearly 60 train cars that become home to almost 300 circus performers and support staff. The 110 workers at the rail operation, including 50 tradesmen are always busy.

Tim Holst lived on the rail for 17 years. He said the train becomes home and provides a different view of America. “In fact, I went home every night. My home just happened to move from week to week. I decorated it the way I wanted it, so it was different than living in a hotel room. It’s a continuous guided tour through middle America from coast to coast.”

The interiors of the cars coming off the road after a tour are gutted and new furnishings are installed. It costs about \$500,000 to refurbish each car. The Blue Unit will travel with 56 cars-4 stock cars, 33 living coaches, 2 container cars that carry souvenirs and 17 equipment cars that carry things like miles of electrical cable, props, riggings, floats and wardrobe. The train also carries a bus used to transport performers to the mall and other places on their days off. The train also includes a dining car.

The interior of the performers’ coaches are furnished differently, but many are fitted with beds, a small table and sink. Some larger suites occupy half a car and have showers in them. Star performers are usually assigned to the larger suites. The performers then add their own touches to make the cars home. They are paid weekly in cash-Ringling Bros. has accounts with local banks in just about every city where the circus performs, Holst said. Food is delivered to the train at each stop. One person acts as the postmaster for the tour, mail is delivered to the train twice a week from Feld Entertainment headquarters in Virginia.

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THE MAN ON THE FLYING ELEPHANT

By Mike Cecere

This is a story about a fellow who went from being "the daring young man on the flying trapeze" to flying around the circus ring with two huge African elephants. His name is Jorge Pages and in recent years, he and his talented family have been making a big impression on circus patrons with the Circus Pages. They have a clean, well run show that gives a good account of itself with both the care of their animals and sharp, well painted equipment. Jorge, a well known flyer, met his wife Frieda Logan, daughter of the famous Cap Logan, while on the Beatty show several years ago. Soon after, along with his family, they started Circus Pages. Around that time, RBBB was making some changes with Gunther Gebel-Williams, turning over the Red Unit animals to others. And they decided to switch to using all Asian elephants so they sent big "Congo" to their Williston, Fla. facility as a reward for her many years of service. But Gunther felt the 2 younger Africans would be bored just sitting around playing shuffle-board with the other retired Feld-RBBB Jumbos, so he started looking for someone suitable to "adopt" his beloved packys.

He chose hard working Jorge Pages, though new to the elephant biz as someone who would put the necessary effort into their wellbeing. African elephants are the more intelligent of the 2 species and do not suffer fools gladly. In fact, many a presenter of Asian elephants do not do well with Africans. They are really a Trainer's elephant and often do well with open-minded people who are willing to learn their ways.

Anyway, at first it all was new to everyone, but steadily, Jorge and his Jumbos bonded and now they are one of the top acts in the country. A tribute to hard work and people putting their animals first. Then Jorge decided to obtain a wild animal act for his growing circus. Since there are so few trainers left, he decided to try and do it himself!

With generous advice from his father-in-law, Cap Fred Logan, Jorge obtained some young lions and tigers, using the same drive that put him at the top of the elephant acts and circus production, with predictable results. But, that's the American Way, hard work and dedication pays off. This is a man and his family flying to the top of the Circus business. Watch him go! God Bless America.

Bobby Gibbs writes, "Well-known chimp trainer, Joe Lemke, went to his rest on Nov. 17. Rosa and I got back

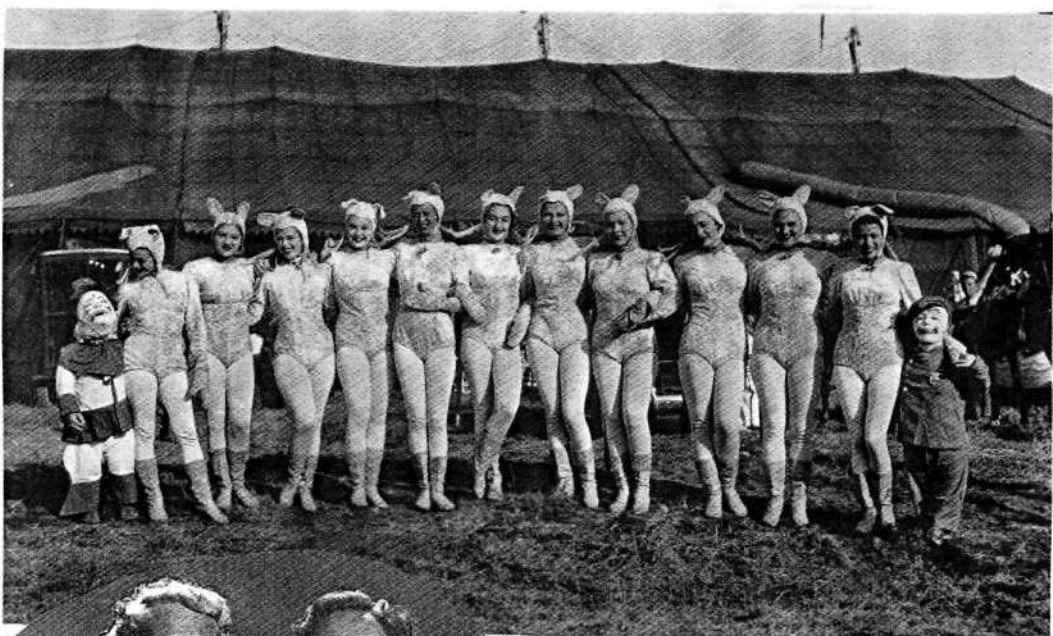
from D.R. Miller's funeral to the news of his passing. Joe had been ill and at a nursing home here in Mesquite. Myna Moon, Bob Stoddard, Lalo Murrillo, Jim & Carmen Hall family, Mel Hall and myself were frequent visitors to Joe in the rest home. He had been there 4 1/2 years, after suffering a series of strokes. His heart failed and he has now gone on to the big lot. I hope Joe rests in peace and I can say he was a fine friend and I do hope to see him down the road." (Bobby's letter arrived in a plastic wrapper and a large section was missing-thanks to the post office! Hope I got most of this right.)

Bobby also writes, "Former circus owner John Reid, of Reid Bros. Circus, passed away after a brief illness. John and wife Betty, started out as an indoor show in West and Mid-west states. Later they got into the tent show business, toured Reid Bros. big top circus and then they sold out to Dick Garden & retired. The Gardens of Florida tour Reid Bros. route plus much more under the title of Sterling-Reid Circus. Betty survives and is retired in Calif. Many acts worked for John & Betty over the years and there is a CFA Tent #160 named after them and Bobby and Rosa Gibbs. John was a former law officer who got into the circus through promotions.

For about 10 days in Nov. two circuses day & dated in San Antonio. The Hnos Vasquez of Mexico had their traditional one ring big top set up (all new, blue & yellow vinyl) and across town, Jim Judkins of Hugo, OK presented his new-wave Circus Chimera. The Mexican circus featured Shane Johnson, tiger cage act, elephant act and also had a boxing kangaroo and horse act, while Chimera featured top of the line human acts. Both shows drew from the Spanish population.

12/4: My Puerto Rico deal fell thru-Boger not going now. So, I'm helping Shane Johnson on Circo Hnos. Vasquez in San Antonio, then we sail out of Miami Dec.12 for Jamaica and return to U.S. end of January. Rosa is going with me. I did not get to Vegas, I had to work. My brother Casey and the Biggerstaffs had a party for the showfolks. Rosa and I are well and we hope you and yours have great holidays."

Dale Riker sends this: "Largest Gift Ever to the Ringling Museum". Howard Tibbals, creator of the world's most detailed model of the American circus and one of the foremost collectors of circus posters & photographs, has offered what may be the largest challenge gift ever made to a Sarasota cultural institution. The gift includes the equivalent of \$6 million in cash, his circus model and approximately 30 early 20th century multi-sheet circus posters. To meet the challenge acceding to Mr. Tibbals' gift the Museum must raise 6.5 million within the next 2 years. The Trustees & Directors of the museum accepted the challenge in an agreement with Mr. Tibbals, approved at their Board meeting December 7.



Sue Pelto

Valentino Sisters

Lorraine Valentine



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