

BACK YARD

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CATCHERS and LEAPERS

BY BILL BALLANTINE

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**"Fay Alexander would rather do a triple somersault
than anything else in the world."**

The triple somersault from a flying trapeze is the most difficult, most exciting trick under the Big Top-and the most legendary. It is supposed, among other things, to have killed more performers than all other circus acts combined. It is what they call, in the business, a "lot of trick." An aerialist, going about 40 miles an hour, catapults off a swinging trapeze, doubles up into 3 dizzying mid-air spins (fast like a pinwheel), and snaps out smack into the arms of an upside-down, bulging-biceps buddy, rushing toward him on another trapeze.

Many fliers have managed to do this dazzler, but not one mastered it like a young Mexican, Alfredo Codona, the greatest aerialist of all time. He seldom missed, & he always performed the trick with consummate ease, superb style & really great showmanship. I saw him perform many times before he ripped his shoulder muscles beyond repair while attempting the triple during the spring opening of the circus at Madison Square Garden, New York, in 1933. Four years later, grounded & brokenhearted, he killed himself. No one yet has come along to replace him. I think now, however, someone is on the way-a muscular stripling with a name like a kilted leprechaun, Fay Alexander. I met this remarkable wingless bird when I was touring with the Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey Circus last summer as a sort of visiting artist & writer & circus fan.

Lucky for me, my bunk on the circus train turned up in 65 car, where most of the fliers were bedded down. If I'd been stuck off in some other part of the performer sleepers, I might conceivably have learned how to force-



feed reluctant boa constrictors, hang by my back teeth, swallow lighted neon tubes, or juggle cigar boxes, but I never would have found out anything about the flying trapeze or the triple. For that, you have to know fliers. And unless you live among them, these circus clam-ups are a tough bunch to get chummy with-just about the most unapproachable tribe of the whole closed-mouthed 3-ring shebang. Worse than clowns, even. Around the show, fliers are called catchers & leapers (leapers do the tricks, catchers snatch them out of the air), and their act, known officially as a flying return act, is simply the "flyin' act."

(Continued on Page 4)

BACK YARD

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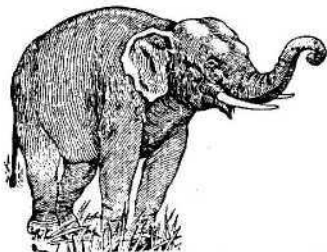
The column, "The Fox," is written by Jenny Wallenda. Other material is written by Cherie Valentine, unless otherwise identified as to author. Reprints from other published material are identified as to source. Comments by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher. Back Yard is a pro-circus, pro-animal publication, which supports the use of animals which are legally held and properly cared for, in the American circus.

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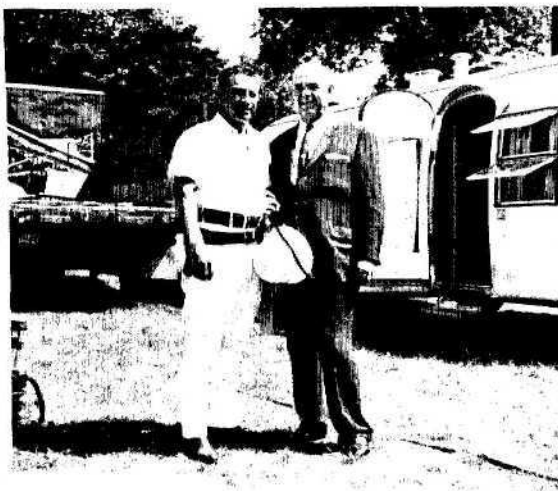
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SELLS-FLO To 1928 ↑



BOBBY HAKES ANSWERS QUESTIONS ????

Question: Why can't circuses just make an enormous PUP tent that can be assembled in 5 minutes, or better, an inflatable tent?

Answer: The American circus tent is just a big pup tent than can be erected in a very short time. The Carson & Barnes Circus tent is 130 round end with 5 rings & can seat, with their seat wagons, 4000 people, and they set it up in about 4 hours. It is still a push pole because it plays in tornado country & can be dropped to the ground in about 20 minutes or faster, if one should appear. With bale rings, the wind gets under it & you can not get it down in a hurry.

Question: Do circuses still use their elephants as beasts of burden, or do they use tractors?

Answer: Nothing works better to raise a big top than elephants. I have had to use horses on circuses that didn't have bulls & they get scared under the canvas as it is raised & it takes a lot of effort to control them. Nothing beats the bulls for spotting wagons & things on wheels on a circus lot; a motor is useless if you get stuck. The bulls pull everything on the lot including the performer's trailers & off a real muddy lot. I have been on shows that bulls did not do an act & were there just to get it up & down. I have seen wagons down to their axles in mud & a Cat couldn't move it. You hook on a bull or 2 & they walk away eating grass on the way. Bulls have been working for over 100 years in different parts of the world. I have been on shows for over 50 years & during that time I have seen very few bulls that were trouble, mostly male bulls, which you are stupid to use for work to start with because they go into musth every couple of years & are hard to handle in a herd.

Ask any farmer about his work-horse & you will find more problems than any circus has with their working bulls. I used to drive a bull truck now & then for Dolly Jacobs on several shows & would stop at the dairies up north to water them on a jump & sometimes would get stuck in all the water that turned to mud & I couldn't pull out of their driveways. I would unload Modoc & take her to the rear of the truck & tell her, "Head down", return to the cab, put one foot on the gas pedal & the other on the running board & shout, "Move it up," and she would push until the truck could move on its own.

I would go to the back of the trailer & load her up & go on my way. Most bulls are that easy to handle. I know of no other animals that you can put in a work position, walk 45 feet away-out of it's sight, give a command & tell it to stop, then wait for you to load her back in a

trailer. I know humans you can not do this with. I am not a bull man & these bulls only saw me when I would drive their truck now & then, but bulls are like good Marines. If you give the right commands, in the right tone of voice, they will do what you tell them to do. Most problems with bulls are town people teasing them & casual help showing off to the town people that they are bull men. Remember, no person can make 5 tons do what it does not want to do.

Question: What did you think of the movie, "Operation Dumbo Drop"?

Answer: Most of the shots of the elephant were mechanical ones & was used for all the difficult work out of the plane & such. The Learning Channel has run a program called The Secret World of Circuses & Side Shows. It shows the Carson & Barnes Circus setting up & tearing down with some good shots of the bulls pulling the quarter & center poles inside the big top. It shows what I have been writing about. As they say, "A picture is worth a thousand words."

Questions: Do circus tents leak? How do you provide enough toilets? How do you dispose of animal wastes?

Answers: If taken care of properly, a tent doesn't have to leak. All circuses carry "doniker wagons" which means a rest-room. Most performers have trailers now so a lot of people don't use the donikers anymore. They are mainly for the public to use. Today, they bring big dumpsters to the lot for the animal manure. You never stop trying to keep up with the regulations about what you can do in one town that you can not do in another. What one town says you can't do, another town says you must do that. As I keep saying, Circus is a way of life or you wouldn't put up with all the troubles.

Questions: What is a round-end top? Why don't Big Apple & Cirque use them? The Big Apple is selling the European one-ring circus.

Answers: A 90 round end is the size of the top. It measures 90 ft. across the tent; that would be about 45 ft. from the edge to the center pole. American 3-ring circuses have 4 center poles in a line. A circus ring, to work a riding act, must be 42 ft. across so most circuses use 50 ft. center sections. You would have a round end, then 3 sections of center pieces, then another round end rigged on 4 center poles. A straw house is when you fill all the seats, then put straw on the ground for the people to sit on in front of the seats. In 1953, on the King-Cristiani Circus in Halifax, N.S. We put over 32000

(Continued on Page 7)

CATCHERS AND LEAPERS.....

Aside from the muscles involved, the equipment for this magnificent display of aerial gymnastics is extremely simple. A long pipe rectangle 40 feet by 4 or so wide, called the flying frame, hangs widthways across the Big Top, exactly level, 40 feet above the ground. From one end hangs a narrow plank platform called the pedestal board-the leaper's home base, starting & return point of all tricks.

From a crossbar of the frame, 14 feet out from the pedestal board, a trapeze dangles down 12 feet. It's the leaper's fly bar. Another trapeze for the catcher swings from the other end of the frame. It's called the catch trap, is 26 feet from the fly bar, & hangs about 2 feet lower.

The entire rig is guyed out to the ground (the fliers themselves, coveralls hiding their tights, do the final adjusting just before each set-to) & a net stretches underneath about 10 feet off the ground. Its ends, called aprons, extend beyond the frame & are pulled up at an angle to keep overshooting fliers from landing in the audience.

Last season, the Ringling flying troupe was a robust baker's dozen-ten leapers & 3 catchers. There were 8 men, 5 girls. The girls, all of them leapers, don't usually do so many tricks or such difficult ones as the men. All but one of these performers-a lady leaper-were married, 5 of them to other fliers. 3 leapers & 2 of the 3 catchers had performer-wives who rode rosin-back & manege horses, worked topside of elephants, posed pretty on "spec" floats (the elaborate vehicles in the grand-procession spectacle), flung around in the all-girl aerial ballet & did sundry other spangly chores, but did not fly. One ladybird's husband bossed the circus train porters. One leaper's wife was not in show business at all. There are ordinary leapers & first-stringer ones called principal leapers. A good ordinary leaper can do at least a dozen varieties of aerial leap & somersault. The names of some of these are puzzling: loopus, angel, twister, fliffis, pike-forward; others almost give away their action: shoot-over dive, seat jump, passing leap, cutaway-to-stick. A principal leaper is expected to do all the simpler tricks plus the more difficult doubles (double full-twister, double to the hocks, double cutaway) & the two-and-a-half. The Ringling circus carries 3 of these superbirdmen, one for each ring. In the 6 months I hung around the show, I got to know them fairly well.

Fay Alexander, the comer I have mentioned, was principal leaper in No. 3 ring. He had a 2-bunk section in

my car, as did the principal leaper of the other end ring, & Center Ring lived just across the platform in the next car. From these authorities-on-high I learned to know a fliffis from a loopus, that a crab & a bird's-nest are the same thing, a twister is a mid-air pirouette, the bends behind your knees are called hocks, & solutions to other trapeze enigmas.

My lower in 65 was at the very end of the car, across from a Swedish clown couple & underneath an agile young lady acrobat called Rosebud.

Dell Graham, the principal leaper of No. 1 ring, had a choice spot in the middle of the car, which he occupied with his wife & flying partner, Babs, 4 rifles, one shotgun, an assortment of salt-water fishing rods, & about 40 dog-eared mystery & adventure paperbacks. Dell is an easy-going little guy with big gentle eyes (from his Spanish mama) & the hunch shoulders a guy gets from flying an awful long time. He once ran a string of tattoo shops in L.A.: he prettied up a large segment of the Pacific fleet & sports a fairly resplendent peep show on his own hide ("Tattooed everything I could reach," Dell says). Use to be a boxer. (No. 4 U.S. featherweight 1928), still packs a mean punch & loves to dust off backlot wise guys, who usually find his gnomelike size misleading.

Fay Alexander's section was a little further down the aisle. I don't know what he kept in it, besides his blonde wife Rose, because the heavy ceiling-to-floor berth curtains were always pulled tight shut. Fay is high-strung & young (hovering around 26), new to the game (flying about 4 years) & has all the dare-devil dash you expect in a flier. He has a hard, flat stomach, sleek muscles & a gamin face, with a careful wisp of mustache under a crooked, busted nose. His only tattoo is an ordinary rose-encrusted "Mother"-inscribed heart on one shoulder. Fay has a mild passion for old-fashioned rock candy (I've seen him send Rose clear across town for some), pizza pies, & certain kinds of music (like jazz on a harp). He smokes about as much as anybody, is not what I'd call a heavy drinker, doesn't cat around. I've never heard him covet a home, a car (fancy or otherwise), a business, a dog, a jug of whiskey, a camera, another man's girl or even a harp. And if he ever thinks about making a baby, he keeps it mighty quiet. But he sure likes to fly.

Rose doesn't exactly share his trapeze zeal. Sometimes, like on days when a red sock gets mixed up with the white tights in her wash bucket & they all come out pink, Rose wishes Fay would come off this silly business & study up to be something with a real future-like a barber.

The third principal leaper, Willie Kraus, the one who lived in the next car, seemed almost too sedate to be a flying-trapezer. With his clothes on, he could easily pass for a door-to-door encyclopedia salesman. A premature balding spot in front makes him look slightly older than he is (comfortably between Fay & Dell), & while he's not overly sensitive about this, during the act he wears a Hollywood-built hairpiece—a damn good one which hasn't lost yet to a double somersault. Willie was raised around circuses, & has no sawdust illusions. He goes through his daily routine with the serenity of a bank teller taking a deposit, blowing (missing) about 2 tricks every season out of a possible 1200 plus. Never spectacular, but plenty good enough to hold center-ring position. A nice situation, for with it goes a stateroom. The one Willie had wasn't elegant, but there was enough room to turn around in, some thin-wall kind of privacy, & a spot for a hot plate. If it was raining out, we did our flying talk there, or on the edge of Fay or Dell's bunk (if Rose or Babs hadn't cold-creamed up & turned in), & sometimes in the car's tiny jerry-built kitchen—but Smiley, the porter, didn't go for much hanging around there. Rustling sandwiches & stew in this dinky grill room for his snack trade was difficult enough without a lot of trained muscles clattering up the joint.

Best place for an after-show pow-wow was on the tracks alongside the sleeper cars. One nice nights nearly everyone is there, sitting around waiting for the train to pull out to tomorrow's circus town. Some on folding chairs, some with flattened grocery cartons between their rumps & the grimy railroad ties, others just hunkered down on the steel rails. Everybody unwinds from the day's grind. Italian acrobats anxiously poke into steaming pots of Neapolitan mulligan; clowns in mufti help their trick dogs sniff out a last good-night watering spot; lovers scout high grass & dark shadows. If it's chilly, several blazes flicker along the line of red-and-silver cars. On clear nights there are stars, & very often a moon is provided by a generous heaven. Someone light-fingers a concertina or picks a guitar. A Bavarian midget puffs at an ocarina: an Oklahoma dwarf tears into a mouth organ. After the spangled hoop-la of the circus lot, it's homey & quiet & kind of wonderful.

The fliers usually had their own huddle, & I could always count on finding Fay & Dell, & sometimes Willie, in its middle, talking triple or Codona. Fay never got to see his idol in the flesh (his life's greatest regret) but he has watched enough movies of the act to know Alfredo's

wonderful technique by heart. Dell once flew with Codona, for 6 months in 1929, & he's sure that Fay will one day be just as important a man in the trapeze world, thinks he has the big-time touch.

Willie, who was planning to give up flying for a chicken-in-basket joint in Florida, had little interest in the triple, certainly didn't regard it the holy-of-holles as Fay did. But Willie knew some of its history & told it to me. Even elephants, who are slow learners, had been doing tricks a score of years before man managed to do 3 aerial somersaults from a trapeze. The first triple attempt, in 1835, ended fatally, & for the next 63 years, only one man successfully completed the trick (chap named Armor in 1860), & it gave *him* such a jolt he never tried it again. There were 5 more fatal tries in that time—4 men & one female with the engaging name of Olga Posposchill. In 1898, an English flier name Ernie Clarke performed the stunt with ease, kept on doing it for 35 years & managed to die in bed instead of in a net. Codona did his first triple in 1920 when he was 27, his last when he was pushing 40. Clarke, incidentally, is said to have gone beyond the triple into a quadruple, but not in public, only at practice. There is some sniffing at this. An old clown, who remembers back when fliers wore handle-bar mustaches & long sleeves, told me, "Well, once with my own eyes, I seen Clayton Behee go for a three-an'-a-half, an' it was right there, too—but the ketcher was a-scared to grab it. But a quad, now-well, that would be a *considerable* lot of trick." Fliers say about 30 present-day leapers have accomplished the triple, but, when I tried to pin down these latter-day whirlers, the best I could get was 10. Willie thought 16 would be more nearly right.

Fay would admire to join this distinguished company on a basis of dependable performance, but he's in no way cocky about it, doesn't believe he can ever equal the fabulous Alfredo, & realizes there is one hell of a lot more to emulating the master than merely conquering the triple. Like Dell, I believe Fay could be the world's greatest leaper, for he has the kind of fire that made Codona brilliant. Even the fliers, stingy with compliments say, "Damn, he looks *good* up there." He has class, a winning boyish manner that hits the heart of an audience, plus a fantastic lifting power almost as strong as Codona's. He has class, a winning boyish manner that hits the heart of an audience, plus a fantastic lifting power almost as strong as Codona's.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

FANTASTIC FLYER By Mike Cecere

Last week, an outstanding flyer crossed my perennially cluttered desk. It's the new Circus Fans of America membership flyer! A lot of work sure went into it; you can tell right off. It's bright, attractive & gets the message across in a fun & intelligent manner.

Staged by master showprinter, Bill Biggerstaff, & financed through the generosity of circus friend Kent Ghirard of Hawaii. This material will, no doubt, have a strong impact not only on the membership of the CFA, but the image of the circus industry itself. Every move made to get the circus out of the shadows & into the light is a plus.

The public needs to learn we're a fine, hard working, tax-paying group of Americans with many military veterans among us. Time to park the gypsy wagon, hang up the tambourines & let the dancing bear join Yellowstone Park & enter the legitimate world. Think about it.

ELEPHANTS UP!

Well, here in the last years of the Millennium, when so many things seem to be down-graded in expectations, & doomsdayers are on every street corner. One business is on it's way up & that's the elephant business.

Never before in the thousands year of relationship between man & these magnificent beasts have their lives been better! And they are showing it by breeding in captivity at a high rate, & living long lives. Recently, 2 major American zoos have exported bull Asian elephants born at their facilities to zoos in Europe! That's a long time dream come true. Even in the circus-side of the ledger, the Ringling Bros., Hawthorn, Carson & Barnes & George Carden organizations are all committing tens of thousands of dollars toward the same purpose. They also, I might ad, searched for the best personnel possible & have all taken steps for good people to make a decent living in exchange for their hard work. And that's a long needed thing in the circus biz to help bring in new people. So while the pessimists preach down, you'll know the elephants are going up!

WHERE THE BUFFALO ROAMED

Some weeks ago a writer in Back Yard expounded the opinion that humans were being unreasonably attacked by wild animals in North America. I would have to dispute the learned author's opinion. In reality, it's the animals defending themselves in what little space they have left to live in. Like their dwindling numbers of their cousins in Asia & Africa, native wild animals in the U.S. are under constant assault by humans who feel a need to

build on previous underdeveloped land & recreate where they never went before. It's astounding in a country the size of the United States that people feel a need to bypass good, cleared land that just needs a little work to go destroy wild places. That's the pulse of America today. A house or condo on the middle of an open 40-acre lot with the lawn mowed golf course, short all around. No birds, trees or anything for wildlife to eat. It's time, I think, for the Congress not to repeal the Endangered Species Act, but to double it! Keep what little wild places we have left wild & green! Something to think about.

A LOT OF BULL

Many people in our business used to use some very colorful slang terms describing the everyday process & equipment of a traveling circus. Eventually, most terms have died out as rapid help change-overs & short-term employees have become the norm. Now, only circus fans call them "bulls." One word that always kind of irritated me was referring to elephants, male or female, as "bulls." While I deeply respect those who have gone before me with elephants & their right to refer to those magnificent creatures. I still don't like it. They are thinking, feeling, family-type animals capable of great intelligence, affection & loyalty. Sometimes, much more than those hired to handle them. And we learn more about their abilities all the time. They are not a "thing", like a truck & deserving of a top quality of life. We need to stop telling these wild stories about how some isolated, bad move by "Black Diamond's" groom, back in the old days or some long ago stampede & start telling positive tales. With bad press haunting our business & insurance rates climbing, this would make sense wouldn't it?

FRANK BUCK DIED FOR OUR SINS

Like every other wild animal trainer with many years of experience, I owe recognition to those who got the public interested in paying money to see man chance fate in close contact with wild animals. Yes, deep in the public image of our profession, is a man in a pith helmet & trendy Banana Republic-type clothing, catching wild animals & "bringing them back alive." That's the way it was done once & the public still thinks nothing has changed. The truth is we breed everything including elephants right here in North America. And we know so much more these days about their nutrition, veterinary care & behavior, we can give them a good quality of life. Now it's time to get the message across to the public. We have to stop being used as a doormat by the press & pro-vegan hate groups. Fight back!

BOBBY HAKES ANSWERS ??????.....

people in 5 shows on the straw with just the center ring open to work every act in that one ring. We set up that morning, worked 5 shows, tore down & moved 250 miles & set up & gave 3 shows the next day. In fact, we gave 3,4, & 5 shows every day in Canada that year & put on a street parade in the downtowns of every town. That is why I don't understand why some shows take so long to set up. The size of that top was 120 round end with 3-50 ft. centers. The Big Apple is selling the one-ring European circus, not made to move every day. That is one of the reasons American circus owners do not use them. The other reason is the American public like more, not less, & think they are not getting their moneys worth with a one-ring circus. A ring-circus is fine in large cities, but not out in the country.

The inflatable tent works like a moonwalk. A company here in Sarasota makes them for trade shows & Ice shows. The stake problem is that if the motor blowing the air to keep it up fails, then it must come down & the stakes will make holes in it. The Big Apple uses bale-rings to tie the canvas to & with pulleys, raises the top to the top of the king poles. Then they place the queen poles to hold up the canvas between the king poles & the side poles. On a push-pole tent, you raise it like you would a small tent. First the side poles; then the quarter poles; then the center pole, then guy it out. The advantage of push-poles is in bad weather if you pull the center pole & quarter poles, it has to fall to the ground on a bale ring. The wind can get under the canvas & it will float no matter how much you pull on it.

Question: Copperfield travels with 11 trucks, but the FSU Flying High Circus uses only one.

Comment: One year, Al Dobrich, a very good circus producer, had some of the biggest Shrine dates in the country & didn't have 1 truck. He hired riding acts, elephant acts & told them to bring their ring curbs. High acts came with their lights that they used on fairs & he hired Disney for the Detroit Shrine date. They came with the spec Fantasia from Disneyland. They were beautiful shows. Al Dobrich later had Hollywood Palace on TV for all the years that it ran. The amount of equipment has nothing to do with how big or good a show is. What is important is who is in it and who put it on.

STARR BROS. CIRCUS: There IS a circus by this name and someone sent me 6 photos of the tent, trucks, etc. The article with it said that the show travels with a

2-ring big top, one standard size & one smaller ring. Animals on the show included 4 trained ponies, 2 horses, a zebra, mule, trained dog act, 5 ponies for the pony ride & a camel. The big top seats about 1000 people & they had a straw house on Mother's Day. The show's equipment is all 5th wheel & included a generator, spool, & office wagon, prop truck & a combined pole, stringer & seat-plank wagon.

ALTOONA RAILROADERS MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Ever hear of the famous Walter L. Main Circus? His circus train derailed on May 30, 1893 in Tyrone, PA., just 20 min. north of the museum. They have many images of the wreck & others on display. They also have 2 terrific circus train books for sale: *The Great Circus Train Wreck of 1893*, by Fred Long & *The Circus Moves By Rail* by Tom Parkinson & Charles P. Fox. While in Altoona, visit the Horseshoe Curve, opened to rail traffic in 1854. More than 50 trains traverse The Curve each day. Be sure to visit the train wreck exhibits in both museum buildings. Thanks to my good, old friend, David Orr for sending this information. It was great to see David and his daughter at the CFA Convention in Cleveland, after all these years. I know they had as much fun there as I did! And I would like to thank David for selling me the beautiful, gold-framed, 11x14 autographed-picture of Lillian Leitzel!! It is hanging on my wall next to my computer-right next to a photo of my dad, George Valentine, Alfredo Codona & Art Concello. David, please send me your thoughts about the Milwaukee Parade & Baraboo. Thanks a million.

CARSON & BARNES CIRCUS ROUTE

July 16-Dalton, Mass.; July 17-Chatham, NY; July 18-Whitehall, NY; July 19-Lake George, NY; July 20-Greenwich, NY; July 21-Johnstown, NY; July 22-Frankfort, NY; July 23-Owego, NY; July 24-Hammondsport, NY; July 25-Dansville, NY

VIDBEL'S OLDE TYME CIRCUS ROUTE

July 16-Silver Bay, NY; July 18-Clifton Park, NY; July 19-Paxton, MA; July 20-Brimfield, MA; July 22-Coventry, RI; July 23,24-Foxboro, MA; July 25-Lynn, MA; July 26-Topsfield, MA; July 27-Ipswich, MA; July 28-Scituate, MA; July 29, 30-Barrington, RI; July 31-Holliston, MA; Aug. 1,2-Little Compton, RI; Aug. 3-5-Orleans, MA; Aug. 6,7-Mattatpoisett, MA; Aug. 8,9-Rockport, MA

**CIRCUS PAGES: BLOOMINGTON, IL-JULY 23
STERLING-REID: DECATUR, IL-JULY 18**

127th EDITION RINGLING RED UNIT:

Houston, TX-Compaq Ctr-July 17-26
Dallas, TX-Reunion Arena-July 29-Aug. 9
Fort Worth, TX-Tarrant Cty/Coliseum-Aug. 12-16
Colorado Springs, CO-World Arena-Aug. 20-23
Wichita, KS-Kansas Coliseum-Aug. 28-30
Moline, IL-The Mark of Quad Cities-Sept. 4-6
Kansas City, MO-Kemper Arena-Sept. 9-13
Indianapolis, IN-Market Sq. Arena-Sept. 16-20
Grand Rapids, MI-Van Andel Arena-Sept. 23-27
Buffalo, NY-Marine Midland Arena-Sept. 30-Oct. 4
Detroit, MI-Joe Lewis Arena-Oct. 7-11

128TH EDITION RINGLING BLUE UNIT:

Long Beach, CA-Long Beach Arena-July 15-19
Los Angeles, CA-LA Sports Arena-July 22-26
Anaheim, CA-Arrowhead Pond-July 28 to Aug. 4
Inglewood, CA-Great Western Forum-Aug. 6-9
San Diego, CA-Sports Arena-Aug. 12-16
Oakland, CA-The Arena-August 19-23
San Jose, CA-San Jose Arena-August 26-30
San Francisco, CA-Cow Palace-Sept. 3-7
Sacramento, CA-ARCO Arena-Sept. 10-13
Seattle, WA-Key Arena-Sept. 17-20
Spokane, WA-Arena-Sept. 22-23
Portland, OR-Rose Garden-Sept. 25-27
Salt Lake City, UT-Delta Center-Sept. 30-Oct. 4
Denver, CO-Denver Coliseum-Oct. 7

THE PASSING OF OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS JOHANNA EARLIN-"CELESTE"

Known as "Celeste-The Star in the Moon", Johanna A. Earlin, 84, of Sarasota, died June 28, 1998. She was born Sept. 17, 1913 in Beuel-Bonn, Germany & came to Sarasota 52 years ago. An aerialist, she worked with many circuses, including the Shrine Circuses & performed the finale for the Hamid-Morton Circus. Survivors include a nephew, Johann Lexum, of Tusin, Calif.

JEAN PIERRE ZERBINI

Jean Pierre Zerbin, 84, of Sarasota, died July 2, 1998. He was born Dec. 21, 1913 in Philippeville, Algeria & came to Sarasota 30 years ago from France. Survivors include his wife, Anna Marie; 2 sons, Robert & Mario; a sister, Rita Block; a brother, Louis; 3 grandchildren & a great-grandchild.

FROM THE LONDON TELEGRAPH: JEWELL NEW-TAMER WHO SHARED A MOTOR-BIKE WITH HIS FAVOURITE LION, KENNETH

From July 4th issue: Jewell New, who has died aged 52, excelled in persuading lions to ride motor-cycles. New took 6 months coaxing his favourite lion, Kenneth, to join him on his bike. "At first, the cat wouldn't go near the bike," he said. "Then he wouldn't get off."

Kenneth was a mature 4 1/2 year old specimen when he began to learn riding pillion. New was just beginning his career & didn't have enough money to buy a suitably flashy motor-cycle. He had to trade in his .22 rifle & a spare tyre in part exchange. Kenneth showed a natural sense of balance as New roared around the ring, but his master sometimes complained of back strain after supporting the 30 st. beast's head & paws on his shoulders. New would spend the winter months at Venice, FL, training 15 male lions to go through their paces for a 10-minute act that he presented during the summer season for The Greatest Show on Earth, the showcase of Ringling Bros. New always denied exploiting lions. "I take all the risks they do," he said. This came home to him at a ticklish moment with another lion, Buddy. Although Buddy had been bottle-fed by New from the age of 2 days, he proved less tractable than Kenneth. He turned awkward at the climax of the act, when New put his head inside his jaws.

"He just kept it there," New recalled. "He didn't bite me, he just held me in place with his teeth. When he decided at last to let me go, my groom just asked me why I'd kept my head in there for such a long time." New decided in the future to use a different lion for that particular trick.

Jewell was born in Alamo, Tenn., on Oct. 27, 1945. As a boy he picked cotton on his family's farm & became fond of animals. While a freshman at the Univ. of Tenn. he hitch-hiked to Dallas to take a job as a keeper at the city zoo. This experience enabled him to find employment at various jungle-theme parks in Texas. New learned lion-taming by experiment, after joining Ringling's Circus World at Haines City, FL. "The first day I asked the groom to let them in the cage with me," he remembered, "and we got acquainted. I soon figured out what I'd have to look out for. New was able to pull off stunts that would have made orthodox lion-tamers think twice. "No one told me what couldn't be done, so I just went ahead."

He was soon being compared to the great animal trainer, Clyde Beatty. The tall, fair-haired, bearded Jewell would

don gariah spotted outfits for his lion-taming act. He gave the lions their orders with a distinctive Southern drawl. The lions would happily sit up quietly in a line, or jump over their trainer's head, or even give him a seemingly affectionate hug. In 1978, he took to the road for the first time with Ringling Bros. in the 108th annual tour. He said that he felt more nervous in front of a circus audience than in a cage with a dozen Nubian lions. But his first triumph on the road seemed to him the high point of his life. Jewell died after retiring from the ring. He is survived by his wife Bonnie and their 4 sons & 2 daughters.

FROM THE LONDON TELEGRAPH:

WHILMA WILKIE, 91

From June 27: Whilma Wilkie was a lifelong showman & the director of Africa's biggest touring show. He was running an amusement arcade in New Brighton, England, when in 1949 his eye was caught by an ad in the showman's trades paper. It offered for sale a circus tent & seating for 1500 pounds. He jumped at the chance & that year, W.H. Wilkie's Mammoth Circus & Zoo opened at the New Palace Grounds. For 5 years, he put on top-class acts at New Brighton, such as The 4 Dresslers, highwire; The Zucchini, Italian musical clowns; Bailey Fossett's animal acts; The Fratellini clowns from Paris; Karah Khavak & his man-eating crocodiles; Tagora, the Human Volcano; the Gridneffs; The Flying Renolds; The Flying Cromwells; & Siebold's Troupe of Endearing Lilliputians.

In 1953, his circus hit the headlines when a woman trainer was mauled by one of her lions at the first show of the season. 3 circus hands rushed into the cage to drag her to safety & at the door, Wilkie stood ready with a revolver. Luckily, the rescue was made without shooting the animal.

In 1954, Wilkie took his entire circus to Africa. In Africa, he featured some of the world's best acts: the all-girl Flying Cutanos; Alan the British escapologist; Gilbert Houcke & his tigers; David Rosaire & his dogs; Phyllis Allan & her poodles; Gina, the Girl in the Moon; Streicher's chimps.

In early 1991, he arranged a tour of Africa for the Moscow Circus. It proved a financial disaster. The circus was hit by a tornado in Kimberley, which destroyed the big top & killed a child. Wilkie lost half a million dollars. He was born in 1907, & from the age of 14, worked in the amusement arcades run by his father. In 1938, Wilkie's New Palace Amusement Centre was opened on the site of

his old arcade, which had burned down. Builders found below the old arcade a honeycomb of brick tunnels. He used them during the war as a munitions factory, with 400 workers. The War Office made a film about him, "Wilkie At War." In July, 1963, he bought the Boswell Bros. Circus, the largest & oldest circus in Africa & sold a 50% interest in the combine to African Consolidated Theatres.

LILLIE LAFORM, OF THE FLYING LAFORMS

Lillie M. LaForm, 93, of Tampa, passed away May 2. She was a native of Skiatook, OK. She moved to Tampa in 1952 from Calif. She performed with her family in the flying act, The Flying LaForms. She is survived by her daughter, Mitzie, of Tampa, 3 grandchildren & 4 great-grandchildren. (This lovely lady will be missed by all that knew her. Such a caring person. I am lucky enough to have corresponded with this family for years. I treasure the beautiful 8x10 photos I have of this great flying act.-Cherie)

FROM THE TAMPA TRIBUNE BY STEVE OTTO DON PHILIPS PASSED AWAY JUNE 20

When your time comes & you get your paragraph in the paper, what are they going to put next to your name? For Don Philips, it will probably say "juggler." And that will be more than a fair assessment. Don could juggle like nobody else. He would juggle while riding a unicycle..on top of a table..& jumping rope. He was once billed as the "World's Finest Juggler," so it must be so. Don was the ultimate circus man. It didn't matter if it was a 30,000 seat arena or a tent in a South American jungle. Don Philips was always on. Many of the old friends from those days gathered on the 24th for a memorial service in Gibsonton to pay their respects. Don's dad was a tumbler & his mom had a horseback riding act. By the time he was 13, he had his own unicycle-juggling act. After he married Carol, he soon left the road & worked for the Army, organizing entertainment at Ft. Bliss in Texas. After their daughter, Diana Dawn, was born, he decided to go back on the circuit. "I think it was because he considered the road his home. Daddy wanted us to be able to experience the road for ourselves so that we would understand why it was so important," Diana said. She & her sister, Athena, teamed up as the "Greek Goddesses on Wheels" doing their own cycle act. Carol had her own act, "Princess Moon Spirit & her Wolves." Today, Diana does a lot of animal handling for movies & TV. As a family they appeared on Ed Sullivan & Milton Berle Shows & worked 3 years with Bob Hale's Racing Pigs.

VALENTINE VAULTS-FROM 1950-THE GOLDEN YEARS OF THE BILLBOARD

From March: Polack Western: Slivers Madison heard about his mother's death on his birthday; his wife, Jo, was in the hospital in Louisville & now somebody has stole Toby, his dog that has been with the elephants the past 5 years..Mrs. Emil Pallenberg, Sr. flew in from Honolulu to visit Emil, Jr..From Wirth's Circus: Bob Behee went deep-sea fishing in New Zealand..The Wirths financed tours to the fishing spots for all their working hands..Phil Escalante is out with an injured shoulder..Ray Humphreys is filling in amply..Martha & Jack Joyce are returning to the US in a week..From Dailey Bros.:Eddie Murillo & partner, Victor Gaona, are getting laughs with their casting act..Rex Williams, menagerie supt., presents 2 riding tigers on an elephant..Jinx Adams is recovering from an injured ankle as the result of a collision with a quarter-pole during the 16-horse hitch..Lucille Nash was hit by a truck as she stepped into a street to enter a circus vehicle. She escaped with bruises..The management has added an elephant ride under the supervision of Rex Williams. Rex is learning circus business from training wild animals to poling wagons over the flats..From Mills Bros.: All English performers now are used to American meals with their T-bone, steaks & multitudes of side dishes, but they still complain about the American way of making tea.. Mayme Ward takes time out from her wardrobe work to help 11-year-old Jackie Tolliver with web practice..From Ringling: Mary Jane Miller reports-Peoria, IL was a big visitors day with many friends & relatives of showfolks from Bloomington on the lot. Visitors included: Roy Deisler, Grayci Gender's relatives, Cap Curtiss, Mitzie Fein, Ed Raycraft, Sam Stern, the Clyde Nobles, Gene Enos, Art Concello, Harold Ramage, Bones Brown's family, Les Thomas' family, Tuffy Genders's family, Dorothy Durbin's family & Jeannie Sleeter's relatives..Martha Hunter is happy over the new toy wagon Sam Stern of Bloomington gave her for the baby gorillas..Walter Guice, 61, always draws a crowd doing his fly-over routine on the bars outside the big top. Makes the younger generation take notice..Frankie Saluto was made a chief of an Indian tribe in Devils Lake, ND..Archie Blood is making French pastry during free moments..Argyle socks & sweater knitting is current pastime among the girls..From Cole Bros.: Dorita Konyot & her father went to Tampa to receive their

final citizenship papers. Dorita has a new baby brother..Rose Behee, Arthur & Rietta Wallenda gave a barbecue outside of their trailers in Pittsburgh. Don & Phillip Wallenda dug the pit..A miniature restaurant has been opened in the wardrobe room, compliments of Mrs. Lucky & Lili Konyot..Karl Wallenda threw a party when his sister, Gertrude, arrived from Germany..Sylvania Zacchini was hospitalized when the net broke during the cannon act..Dolores Mummery & Lou Childers are working the end ring elephant acts..Tom Packs Circus acts include: George Keller, wild animals; 5 Aerial Eltons; Bo Bo Barnett & his midget car; Sonny Moore's dogs; Torrence, The Sky King; La Tosca, bounding rope; the Arturos, high wire; The Lone Ranger; Clauson's bears; Guerres' seals; Bill Valentine flying act; William Heyer's horses; the Maschinos, the Boginos & Madsens, acros; Mack MacDonald & the Pack's elephants, assisted by Peggy Henderson; Aida, the Girl in the Moon; Jackie LeClaire, Jo Jo Lewis, Hop Green, Jimmy Davison, Jeff Murphree, clowns..Acts on the Orrin Davenport, Kansas City date were: Terrell Jacobs, Wallendas, Hannefords, Haag's dog & ponies, Flying Siegrists & Eldonas, La Blonde Troupe, Mlle. Rietta, Corrine Dearo, Rose Behee, Madeline Kreis, Kinko, Orantos. Clown alley headed by Earl Shipley, Jackie LeClaire, Joe Lewis, Smoky Rouse, Oscar Lowande, Percy Rademaker. Web girls were Eva May Lewis, Kay Frances Hanneford, Arden Larey, Peggy MacDonald, Helen, Yette, & Edith Wallenda, & Joanne Day. Karl Wallenda purchased a new White tractor to pull his pole wagon..Jackie LeClaire has a new Chevy panel truck. New truck also for the Clausen's bears. The finish tandem somersault trick of the Yacopis is a humdinger..From Kelly-Miller, Eddie Dullum reports: A stray town dog disrupted the canine display & caused Babe Woodcock considerable consternation as she watched her act disappear under the sidewall..This is what happened to Miss Helaine in 1 day: She fell down the steps in the wardrobe wagon. While practicing with Eddie Hendricks in the riding act, the horse became confused & ran out the back door, throwing Helaine to the ground. While setting her rigging, a pulley block fell & missed her by inches. While getting into her sleeper, she made a misstep & fell out of the wagon..The elephant dept. includes Bill Woodcock, Fred Logan, Geo. Williams, Harold Streeter, Mickey Kelly, & Roy Pinkerton.

CLYDE BEATTY'S DAUGHTER, JOYCE FERGUSON, SPEAKS TO FANS AT THE CFA CLEVELAND CONVENTION

(I taped Joyce's speech as I thought you would like to hear exactly what she had to say. Hope you enjoy it.-Cherie)

We're very proud of the program we started in Peru & this is our 39th year & still very successful & I think that says a lot. I am still on the board, & have been for 30 years. My husband & I started the museum there to get the whole family involved. And I'm busy with the Circus Hall of Fame & we are real proud of our heritage there in Peru & continue to carry it on.

The right pronunciation of our name is BAATY. I think that everybody probably here knew about Clyde Beatty & the very hard work that he did to become such a successful person. He traveled with many circuses; he worked very hard; he wrote several books; was in movies & he had radio programs. Emmett Kelly, Jr. just sent me a tape of one of his radio shows with Harriett. I was real pleased & we kind of trade things back & forth.

My dad was born in Bainbridge, OH on June 10, 1903. He had 3 sisters; Ruth Mann & she will be 98 years old in July, Lucille Duckti & Mable Nolen, who is the only one deceased.(The names may not be spelled right, as I typed from listening to the tape.-Ed.) My dad's father died when he was young & my grandmother married James Tome & they had 3 children, Genivieve Corsett, Madeline Tome, who still lives in Bainbridge, & Gail Tome, a brother. And they were a pretty close family. I can remember that after I was married we would go there & everybody would try to get together.

I tried to remember some personal things & I can remember that Grandmother said that Dad was always an entertainer. The neighborhood kids would get all their pets together & put on parades & of course, they would always have a circus theme. He just loved the circus. Grandmother said he did complete high school & joined the Howe's Great London Circus & went out on the road. He was a cage boy & he was a water boy & she said that in those days it was more exciting to say that he ran away from home, but he really didn't. He started out walking in spec. They said that he trained a hippo to follow him around in spec. The next thing was that he went to brown bears, then polar bears. He literally started in right away with working & getting things together. While looking through some things, I found an old program & in 1926 I didn't realize that he had 2 acts on the Hagenbeck-

Wallace Circus. The first act was one that had leopards, pumas, lions, tigers, hyenas & black panthers. The next one was later in the show & he performed with 19 lions & tigers. Of course, eventually that grew up to be about 40 & I can remember people saying that if you had any more cats in there, you couldn't find him!

My mother was Ernestine Penn Jones & she and my dad were married Jan. 27, 1926. My mother had a 5 year-old son & my dad took him every place, even into the cage & they had a really enjoyable time together. I was born a year later on Jan. 5th. I don't know why, but mother always said that Dad had something about always wanting me dressed in white. My daughter is holding one of the pictures-the little angora hat & the little white angora coat. I think I was still in high school & he was still sending me white fur coats! And I was known in Peru as the little girl with the black, curly hair & the white fur coat. Dad always was really good about sending things & doing things for us. Of course, in those days dad didn't have a silver trailer or a beautiful equipped railroad car, & my mother not being a performer & having 2 little children, that kind of put, you know, strains on their marriage. And they finally did go ahead & separate and Walter Winchell, one of the famous writers of the times said it was "interesting that Clyde Beatty could train wild animals, but he couldn't train his little wife."

It was probably in the early 30s, I think, that they separated, but it really didn't cause too much trouble because he was always at the house eating. He loved my grandmother's apple pie. He was always taking Harold & I out & buying us all kinds of toys. I think that I was probably one of the first kids that had an aluminum bicycle in Peru. He was always doing things like that.

He later married Harriett Evans, an aerialist & horse-back rider in the circus & he asked her to not be an aerialist because he was afraid she would fall. Later on, he fixed up this act for her with an elephant, a lion & a tiger. I thought that was kind of dangerous too. I must say that she was a different person; I would say probably a possessive person. She didn't like too many people to be around dad & when I would go to stay with them in Rochester, if we wanted to talk about the family at home, we always had to go outside. She was really very nice with me. I can remember being there & having a throat problem & her fixing me up with a real hot bath & fixing me lemonade.

(To Be Continued)



#57

THE FOX!



My Dear Friends:

The weather is just terrible hot, you feel like doing nothing so my letters have to wait. As my brain is just not functioning right. But I will try too.

First of all Tex Copeland, we lost him. Let me tell you just a little about him. When I first came back to the good old USA, I arrived by train in Tampa and as Tex and Dolly were real close friends of my mom and dad, they came with them to meet me. I remember the little dog they had, I fall in love with it right away. Well any way that is beside the point. I got to know them real well, as they were every day visiting my mom and step dad. Then when we went on the road with Ringling they both were their also working. I was 5 years with the show and so saw them every day and we also became very good friends and stayed friends until Dolly passed away Tex after a few years married Ann and he became happy again as the loss of Dolly had hit him hard. Tex was a good man, a very hard worker and a very active person of the club. Rest in peace my dear friend.

Now to happier things. Thier was a big party at Andre and Hilda Prince house. I had the pleasure to be there, Joachim and Betty Krause had been visiting from Las Vegas and actually they were giving the party. It was so wonderful to see them after all these years again. I like to tell you who was all there. Derick and Lisa Rosair, daughter Ellian with husband and there two children, all the Rodos (Hans, Rosie Hella, Inge, Marlene and Elke) (For thoes who do not know, Betty and Joachim were once members of the Rodos.) Herald and Minni Alsana, Tony and Irene Fosseth, Evie and Jimmy Fosseth, Lucie Lacie, also visiting Andre and Hilda there nephew and niece, La Norma, Boy I hope I did not forget anyone. Every one had a great time. At one time Hilda said, Oh my gosh someone fell in the pool, but it was fouds alarm, Elliains children just went in the pool. Boy the food spread they prepared was just out of this world. Everyone had a great time. I have to say this was a complete German English party, The only one who was not German or English was Lucie and her man friend, his name I am sorry I do not know. The home of Andre and Hilda is just like a beautiful castle. Andre and Hilda really know how to build and decorate.

Penny Wilson had a very good time when she went out

to dinner with sister Joann and Joanns daughter Kim and some other relations. Penny had to go in the hospital for tests, she was lucky no blood clods, now they have to figure out what is giving her the hard time breathing. So more tests will come up.

I saw on television that there was a blow down of a circus tent, but they did not say who's it was, the only clue you got was that Bryan LaPale was speaking for the show. So it was for a while a guessing game, then Derick Rosair called me and informed me that Duke Rosair was on the show and that it was Reed Brothers, which now belongs to the Gardens. Quote: It all happened so very fast, the cat act just had finished working and was out of the tent when the blow came and the tent went down. The people were still in thier. Duke and other members of the show went under the tent and helped the people to get out from under thier. I do not know if there were any injuries. I also was told that one man had a heart attack.

Jody Jordan bought the house from Andre and Hilda Prince, so now he is mother Patsys neighbor. The Jorans had two units out for the last 6 weeks. Jody was in Canada and Patsy with the other unit in Oregon Utah and all over there and it is ferocious cold, windy and lots of rain.

Ray Mac Mahon and wife will be visiting Italy this winter and will go on a cruise thier. Patsy Jordan will join them.

Which reminds me that Mia Arnosi Ottos husband was here for a visit and while here they went on a cruise and had a wonderful time.

Lotti Brunn went for 4 weeks to Las Vegas on a vacation and told me that she will try to come for a visit to Sarasota, as she could not make it for the time when she had been honered at The Ring of Fame Someone of her family had been here and seen it at St Armands Circle and told her how beautiful it was. Also she told me that brother Franzel will be going soon back to Europe to perform there.

The other day I called a good friend of mine to come to the club for the meeting, but was told he had made previous comittments to play cards. For some reason the club is not a desirable place any more. Why, I do not know, as it has been so beautified in the last two years and I know that June really a tearing her heart out for it. She is really trying hard to make it go. Maybe because lots of people do not drink and drive any more, I also was told that the prices are way to high. If they go to the Grog Shop they get it for much less. Also lots of us are much older and just like to stay home.

I also heard through the grape vine that their is an other splitville for two people and both have other partners.

Pinky Fritz was in his glory the other day, he had his daughter for one day with him. I think this was the first time in about three years.

Attus Zamperla went to his exwife and came back with his daughter and you should see him glow with happiness and pride.

The Royal American Circus will take a well deserved rest for 4th of July. Just a few days but it will help them to relax a little.

Deanna Stoll will be flying so see her daughter and the new grandchild. The baby had so far a tuff time but now it will be on the way for full recovery.

Someone called and told me that there was some trouble at the Ricky Wallenda Show (Management and Performers)

Rumers are that a son desided not to talk to his mother any more. If he would sit down and think back a little, where would he be now if it was not for his mother. She made him what he is now. Think Think Think, every one has just one mother and must to soon you can loose her. And then it is to late. You can not dig her back up. Life is just short and sometime there is no time left to go back.

Just got the news that The Wallendas are going to do the 7 Men Pyramid again this fall in Dallas Tex. .

Ermis Zamperla dislocated his shoulder and also had his Harley Davidson fall off the truck. So he was unable to make the date.

The International Circus Festival will not take place this year I was told by Diane Brown, they never even could get a quorem together to vote on who will be president ore vice president and so on. So it is no go.

Well, there is no more news for this time.

My love and thoughts are allways with all of you my dear dear Fox friends.



Your Fox



CIRCUS SMIRKUS CIRCUS ROUTE

July 18-Amherst, MA; July 21,22-Newburyport, MA; July 24,25-Concord, MA; July 26,27-Killington, VT; July 29,30-Manchester, VT; Aug. 1,2-Essex, VT; Aug. 3,4-St. Albans, VT; Aug. 6-Groveton, NH; Aug. 8-Conway,NH.

Circus Smirkus-Tim Holst CFA Tent Meeting-July 26th.

BIG APPLE CIRCUS ROUTE: Great Barrington, MA-July 15-19; Hanover, NH-July 22-26; Shelburne, VT next.

TOMMY BARTLETT'S THRILL SHOW-WISC. DELLS: Thru Sept. 7-See these great circus acts: The Nerveless Nocks; The Boehmer Family; Dieter Tasso & the sound effects of Wes Harrison. Those of you that visit, please ask Dieter & Wes if they remember Lorraine Valentine. My mom was a booking agent after retiring from performing.-Cherie

CIRCUS CHIMERA CIRCUS ROUTE: July 15-19-Napa Valley Expo-Napa, CA; July 20-22-Grape Festival Fairgrounds-Lodi, CA; July 23-26-Placer County Fairgrounds-Roseville, CA.

GREAT CIRCUS PARADE WEEK: July 25-26: Watch 75 antique circus wagons loaded, Baraboo, WI. July 27-28: Train travels from Baraboo to Milwaukee's lake front. July 29-Aug. 1: Milwaukee-Royal Hanneford Circus; Aug. 2-Great Circus Parade 2 PM-Milwaukee, WI. Those of you that go, please send me a note about your memories of this great event. Please tell Struppi & Tommy hello for me.

WENATCHEE YOUTH CIRCUS ROUTE: July 17-19-Roche Harbor, WA; July 25-Lacey, WA; July 29-Renton, WA; Aug. 4-5-Maupin, OR; Aug. 7-16-Ridgefield, WA; Aug. 23-Lake Wenatchee, WA.

KELLY-MILLER CIRCUS: July 15-Holt, MI; July 16-South Lyon; July 17-Brighton; July 18-Farmington Hills; July 19-Lapeer.

CIRCUS CITY FESTIVAL-PERU, IN: Thru July 18. Parade & CHF Banquet on July 18.

Thanks to Dale Riker & the News From The Lot of the Joel Warner Top for the above & the following: Eric McConnell is now the Asst. Exec. Director of the Outdoor Amusement Business Assn. Eric is writing a column for the monthly newsletter entitled, NOTES ON A POPCORN BOX. (Your editor was very happy to see Eric at the Convention. He was my concession boss on the Big Apple Circus. What changes we saw in the concession dept. on the Big Apple. Paul Binder used to call me the "vinyl queen" back then, as we had to have hundreds of toys blown up by show time. There is no vinyl now. Just shirts, cd's, posters, etc. What a let down. In my opinion, they need Eric & our team back!

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY

By Brian Nunn

*Point of story from the last issue: Big John Walker & Alice would be in the concession wagon, fairly amused with me battling the bees in the outside joint. Walker said, "Don't let them bees get in the bag." I could see me trying to talk my way out of a stung tongue.

*My father said, "Never look down the barrel of a gun to see if it's loaded. If you're out gunned & out manned, smile, & be friendly." These are pretty simple rules, but it seems that with the jackpots I've been in (most I'd like to forget) that I didn't follow these simple rules, but I'm still kicken' & older & wiser. Ah, if I had it to do all over again, I would have never lost my sense of humor. I think I remember that tough stock were a little unbalanced when I went in laughin'. That's why Rex called me Romy-Ho-Ho, I suppose.

*The names I have been known by are Ferlin, Romeo, Brian, and Gainer Johnson called me Tonto; Hog Jaw called me Norton. Like Buckles says, "We're all getting a little older." Hey, I don't mind, it took me a long time to get this old & I'm gonna try & get good at it.

*At Winter Quarters, out by Karin Cristiani's place, the boss bull-man had gotten into a beef with the owner over money. So, the owner hired another man to care for the elephants. Rex & I would go over there a couple of times a day (Rex was concerned.) The 2nd day, Rex asked the man how it was goin' & he said, "She's hit me twice, knocked me down once, but it's OK. I've got it."

On the way out Rex said, "I'm afraid we'll have to come back soon. He got on the phone to Buckles & Army, who was visiting Buckles at the time & told them what was goin' on. They said, "Let us know." Well, before the sun went down, Janet convinced the man to leave (smart move on his part). But, the gazonnie that was there stayed. Janet was off the picket line before the man left. And the goof let Janet see him & of course, she went after him. He had no place to hide. He tried the shack, she flattened that. He got away, then tried to hide in the semi-tractor. She caved in the cab all the way to the top of the engine block. Apparently, she took a break, cuz' the guy got out & ran away. The first thing in the morning, after the muck-out, Rex, Cochise & me, Buckles, Chico, Benny & Army went in 2 trucks, armed to the teeth (I had a big top stake.) Hugo, Kelly & Irene are on the picket line. Janet's off a little ways in the Palmettos. She saw us all comin' & basically said, "OK, I got my hands up. Don't shoot." We collected all the elephants & the

chains & stakes, loaded 'em in the truck, got rid of smashed tractor with Gardner. We hooked Buckles' tractor up & he took 'em to Ruskin.

*Tim Friese says, "One and one is two; two & two is four." Meaning, I think, there was no reason to be confused or hesitant about work. It's the same thing, the same way every day. I used to call it the "stand-around & look at it stall." * Bob Dylan played for the Pope, command performance, so it seems like almost anything can happen.

*The elephant & Romeo cleaned up after last night's party in the big top. While we were rummaging around, finding pieces of sandwich, melon, apple & such, we found a keg of beer. So neither of us, not wanting anything to go to waste, we drained it & went around the lot visiting; me & my little buddy. Sometime later that day, the boss came by & said, with his usual way of expressing himself, "We'll have no more of that." The elephant & I were properly apologetic, & did behave ourselves. Except for thinning out the foliage, some now & then. But the people in charge of the property said, "It needed to be done." Ahh-it's nice to provide a service.

*Playing a date in DuQuoin, IL., P.C. had the Johnson elephants. After the set up we had the whole day to play with. The lot was a race track & it had a nice body of water in the middle. Hap (the tramp clown) had said Bucky had his bulls down in the water last year. So, P.C. takes Judy, Betty & Mary down to the pond. Judy, being the lead bull, goes in first. She wades in about chest deep; takes another step & disappears. Ker 'sploosh', bubbles & all. But no elephant. (Mary could care less.) Well, after what seemed to be a long time, a trunk comes up like a periscope for some air. The bank was a few feet deep for a few feet & then dropped off to about 8 feet. Well, Judy had just waded in & laid down submerged like she'd done it before. P.C. let Betty go in & play & Mary splashed around in the shallows.

*I drove a truck they called, the Pete. It was an old Texas gravel hauler. The governor only let it go 62 miles an hour; but it went 62 up the hill & 62 down the hill. I had Lottie, Hattie, Minnie, Kate & Joy. I made a lot of real long jumps with that truck. And I was usually one of the first ones on the lot, because I never stopped. I liked that old truck. It fit me real good. I blew a fuel pump in those hills going into Medford. That was the only time it broke down. It had donut wheels on the trailer & Minnie stood in the back; she could rock it & steer the back of the trailer like a skateboard. It was always all over the road.



The Flying LaForms 1949

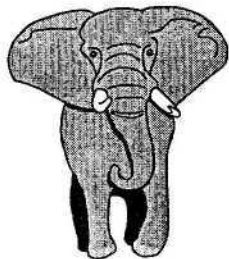
The Cristiani Troupe - 1937 - Al. H. Barnes



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