

HAPPY

# BACK YARD

THANKSGIVING

Volume IV, Issue #79

November 15, 1999

## THE LADY AND THE TIGERS

By May Okon (NY Daily News 2/26/50)

Have you ever had a nightmare in which you were suddenly face to face with a wild animal—a tiger, maybe? Did you wake up and say “Thank God it was only a dream!”? Then you’ll never understand Mabel Stark. Because Mabel, in her own words “the only woman in the world crazy enough to fool around with tigers,” has nightmares about *not* being able to stand face to face with the big cats, with only a whip between them.

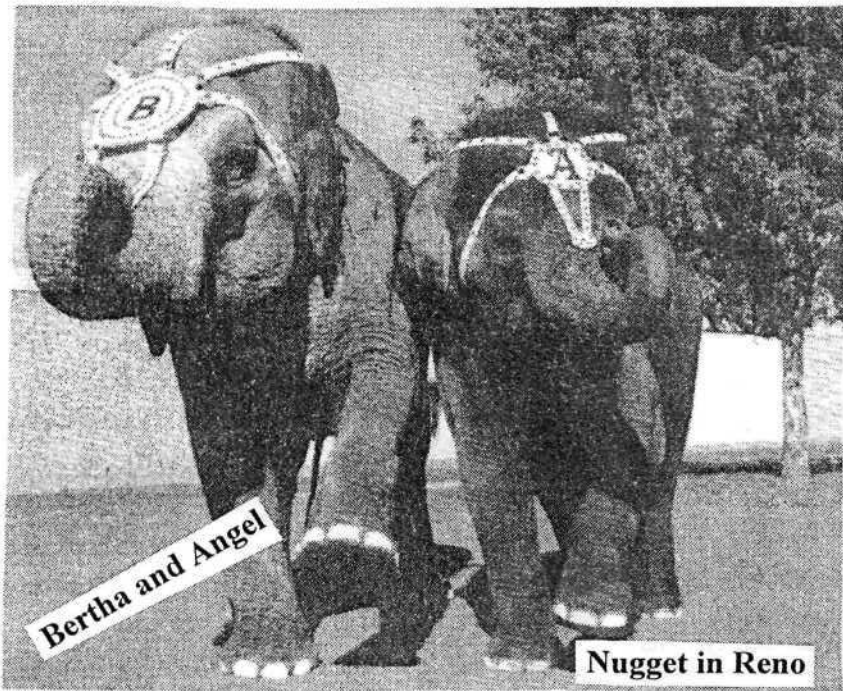
Last month, for the third time in her hazardous career as an animal trainer, this slender woman with ice-blue eyes was savagely attacked by a tiger. Her right arm was so severely mangled, it took 175 stitches to save it. It’s healing now, but not fast enough for Mabel, who wants to get on with her business of training tigers. Way back at the turn of the century, in the days when most little girls dreamed of growing up to be wives & mothers, 10-year old Mabel Stark had a strange ambition. She wanted to be a wild animal trainer.

When Mabel was 11, her mother & father died within a month of each other. Mabel went to live with an aunt and uncle. She soon discovered they didn’t particularly relish having her in their house. While on an errand one day, she met the family doctor. Seeing how forlorn she looked, he asked, “Are you sick?” “No,” she said. “I’m just lonesome. Nobody wants me around. I’m going to run away.” The doctor began to talk to her about a nursing career. As soon as she was old enough, Mabel entered St. Mary’s Hospital in Louisville to start her training.

“On my afternoons off, I always went to the zoo while the other girls had dates. I loved to watch the lions and tigers pace up and down the cage.” After graduation in 1911, she went to California for a rest and “to get the smell of the operating room out of my nose.” Her first night in LA she met Al Sands, manager of Barnes’ Circus. “He asked me how I liked Los Angeles. I told him I hadn’t seen the city but the zoo was great. He was surprised to learn I liked animals. One of my friends spoke up and told Al my ambition was to become an animal trainer. He was interested and asked me if I’d like a job in the circus.” “That night in my hotel room, I opened my suitcase and took out my nice white starched nurse’s uniform and cape I had worked so hard to earn. I put it on and looked at myself in the mirror. Then I took it off and wrapped it carefully. I knew I would never wear it again.” The next morning she reported for



work at the Barnes Circus quarters in Venice, Calif. But she suffered a disappointment. (Continued on Page 4)



Bertha and Angel

Nugget in Reno

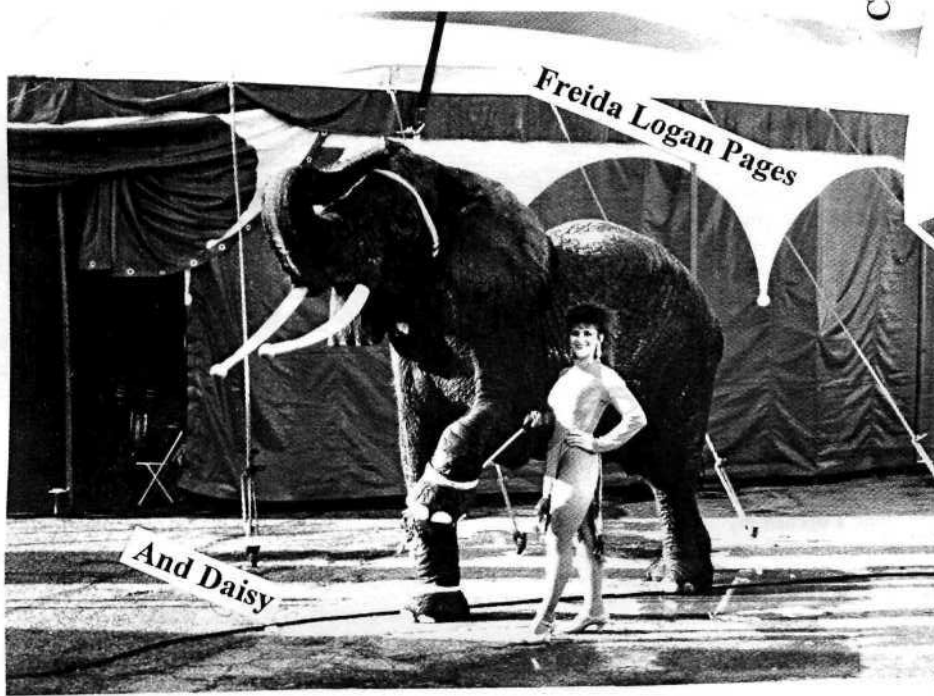
CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONVENTION 2000  
SEPT. 6-10 BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL, ILLINOIS

FEATURING

THE CARSON & BARNES CIRCUS

MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND NOW!

LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!!



Freida Logan Pages

And Daisy



Floyd King



### \*\*\*Circus Bartok Was Tops!\*\*\*

By Mike Cecere

In the rush to "re-invent the circus" by various producers in the industry the past several years, we often forget that it was all done before by someone and not that long ago. Especially the one ring "European" format that several shows claim to be the first to bring to the United States. I have to smile and turn back the historical page to my youth, back to 1970. This was just prior to my becoming involved professionally in the industry that would become my life.

The famous "Circus Bartok" was playing nearby my hometown of Plainville, Connecticut in the scenic village of Newington. I had seen the show in my hometown in 1967 when it was on its first highly successful tour and was very keen to see it again.

Produced by one of America's top show families, the Bartoks, they had been joined by Jan Perz who had married Bunny Bartok after his notable tour with RBBB, featuring his bear act. They had a talented staff with many artists finding their first jobs in the west after fleeing the Iron Curtain. The Bartoks gave excellent employment to freedom-loving circus folk who were brave enough to throw off the yolk of Communism.

At the time, the format was revolutionary as every other show was a three-ring affair. You walked in and they had a huge ring with box seats around the ring. On the elevated bandstand was master musician Charlie Moyer and a very live band. They had all top acts and sitting anywhere in the tent you could see and appreciate their talent.

Most important to me, they had seven elephants! That's right. Seven elephants! Under the supervision of veteran elephant supt. Tommy Armstrong, they had the famous Hunt Bros. act of "Chandra," "Dino," "Sita" and "Muna" and another act with a huge Asian and two baby Asian elephants. All in top shape and one heck of a good show. That's why I have to say that "Circus Bartok" was tops!

\*\*\*\*\*

#### PASSING OF OUR FRIENDS

June Plunkett, wife of the late Corky Plunkett, passed away Nov. 4. Her children Jan, Judy, James and Jeffrey were all with her at the time. The memorial service was Nov. 10 at the Eubanks Funeral Home in Mabank, Texas.

\*\*\*\*\*

SEND IN YOUR HOLIDAY GREETINGS NOW!!!



Fox 73

### THE FOX !!!

My Dear Friends,

Well first I guess I'll start with that every circus here in Sarasota gave me the same story that it is too much work and too unthankful job, also most of them are going out in January and there for will be very busy, so guess what, you guess it right, it was put right back in my hands.

Well now I have to grab the bull by the horn and do it. I know I can not do it on my own, but I will be calling on my old friends and I am sure that with the help of thier children they will come to my rescue.

Funny thing when I ask Carla Wallenda, she said sure, you and me will do the clowdswing and the highwire. Boy, that would be really something, sorry but I am to old. La Norma offered to do the trapez, ChaCha Zacchini Meluzzi do the cannon, Mireille Theron Arnosi do the bicycle act, and on and on, but these lovely ladies had done thier time and just can not do it any more. Many many thanks tho anyway. But there are some with children and I hope they can convince thier children to do it.

Yes I did ask all the circuses. Serge Coronas will be in Cancun Mexico for his anniversay. All the rest of them just have to many preparation to do for the coming season. Alain Zerbini told me he would help me as much as he can but could just not take responsibility. I guess no one feels sorry for me, I feel like old iron horse. I promise you all I will do it even if it kills me. I also will state that this is my last time I will do anything this strenuous. I am 72 years old and believe me that is old. You can feel it that moving around gets slower and you get little pain here and there.

Great news, I got this great idea to make it a honor to all the people in the Ring of Fame. And guess what all my lovely friends came through. Derick Rosaire Sr got all his family to perform. Dolly Jacobs will also perform, she also will see if she could get someone to perform for her Dad. John Herriott will perform for himself and also daughter Heidie. La Norma will have Gabie Guzman perform as her protege. Gabie also will be there to honor Elly Ardelyt and Lilian Litzel. Fay Alexander may have Chane Johnson do his comedy car, Tito Gaona together with Fay will find a suitable flying act to represent them and also the Codonas, Palacios, Clark family & Antoinette Concello. Tommy Hanneford will get together with his brother and send an act to represent the Hannefords, the Cristianis will see who from them will have someone to present them. Mike Ashton will be honoring the Nelson family. You see the Ring of Fame entries have thier choice to get an act to honor them. Lotti Brunn will also find out if her son will be available for that time if so she will come down here with him so he could perform in her honor. Now to something else. I went to the Octoberfest at Showfolks and it was great, the food was super and it was lovely to see so many old timers there. And to top it off, it was prepared by June Mills and she is an English person.

(Continued on Page 5)

## The Lady And The Tigers.....

She had expected to start her new career with the big cats; instead she was assigned to riding a horse. She complained bitterly to Sands, but he and her new circus friends just laughed at her good-humoredly. After she finished her first season and the circus folded for the winter, she stayed in Venice because she had no other place to go. "I didn't have a home and no one to visit," explains Mabel. So she stuck around to watch the trainers put the animals through their paces.

Al G. Barnes asked her if she wanted to sign up for another season. Mabel said she would if he would give her an animal act. Inexperienced though she was, there was a kind of intense sincerity about this young girl who wanted to work with the cats and Barnes agreed. He turned her over to animal trainer Louis Roth, who was to teach her to handle the lions and tigers. For almost 40 years Mabel has trained and worked the treacherous jungle beasts in circuses, before the movie cameras and at animal farms. She has been mauled by tigers in all about 15 times, she thinks, three times severely.

Her first accident was in Bangor, Maine in 1928. She slipped and fell as she entered the arena to perform with 7 tigers. One rushed toward her, but she got to her feet and out of the cage before the Bengal reached her. When she went back in to chastise the unruly cat, another tiger crept up from behind and knocked her down with one sweep of his paw. Then both animals jumped her and clawed her about the shoulders, arms and breast.

A lion tamer and an attendant entered the cage and drove the beasts off. Her wound record read: 378 stitches, a muscle removed from her back, 2 from her thigh, left hip ripped, right leg stripped of flesh from knee to ankle and partial scalping. She found a doctor in Chicago who treated her scars with radium. After 2 months the scars were gone and she was back in the game she loved. In 1930, when Ringling bought out Al G. Barnes Circus she was offered a job as head trainer in the new organization. She grabbed it. She felt she was on top now.

5 years later, in Phoenix, Mabel was putting 18 tigers thru their paces. One of them pounced on her and bit through her left arm and shoulder as thousands watched in horror. With her arm hanging limp, she subdued the animal and finished the act. Nellie, the attacking tiger, had ripped open her back, abdomen and arm and crushed her elbow. Later, Mabel's comment was "Nellie is so beautiful!"

In 1937 Mabel decided to "retire forever" from circus life but by April, 1938, she had already tired of "retirement" and went back into the cage with 21 lions and tigers. In the cage, she uses only a whip and a stick and sometimes a gun with blanks. The life of a working tiger is 15 to 16 years, their 20 being the equivalent of a human's 60. Mabel works now with 7 tigers, all about 7 or 8 years old. She usually works half an hour at a time, 3 or 4 times a day, putting the tigers thru their routine. She has never given up on any animal she's started to train.

You can take Mabel's word for it, "There's no such thing as a tamed wild animal, especially a member of the cat family. They

all are as quick as lightning and will spring at any time without warning." Mabel has the simple theory about her success with animals: "They can be subdued, but never conquered except by love. Tigers are like people-no two alike. Each has his own peculiarities of temperament and disposition, which the trainer must study and understand. Some must be coaxed and spanked. Others can be flattered into obeying with a word of praise. Like all of us they want praise. That word of approval is worth a dozen beatings. Trainers who try to beat animals into submission always get into trouble. The animal hates a cruel master and bides its time." Sometimes things beyond a trainer's control cause an animal to attack-a run of oppressive hot weather, or a hate for humans instilled by beatings by a former trainer.

Mabel understands when one of her tigers get out of hand. During WW II, she left her cats long enough to work at Lockheed Aircraft, doing her bit. Last year, she toured with Polack Circus, making personal appearances in NY City theatres and giving shows all over the country. She returned to Thousand Oaks, the scene of her latest accident in December. Mabel had worked with Pasha, the tigress who mangled her right arm, for 4 years. Pasha was considered "very tame" and no one knows why she suddenly attacked her trainer when Mabel reached in to take one of the cubs from the cage, something she had been doing almost every day. Her arm in a sling, Mabel showed up at the Jungle Compound's March of Dimes benefit 2 weeks after her accident.

After addressing the crowd, she made her way through the throng "to see Pasha again." Before the awestruck audience she patted the huge tigress' nose and leaned forward to kiss the furry head. She did this through the bars of the cage because her insurance company forbids her entering the enclosure with this particular tiger. "We're not in this business for money," says Ed Trees, her husband of 25 years, who takes care of Mabel's tigers. "It's love-love for the excitement, the thrill of taking care of the sleek animals. It's Mabel's whole life."

The circus is in Ed's blood too. He ran away from his Pittsburgh home to join the circus when he was 14. He and Mabel first met in 1918 at the Barnes winter quarters in Venice. He was the animal caretaker and she was on her way up as a-trainer. Mabel and Ed don't talk of retiring any more, although they have enough money to do so. "I've given the circus everything I had and the circus, in turn, has given me what I sought-success in my chosen line," Mabel says. "A tiger," says this tenacious little woman who won't admit to more than 55 years, "can whip anything but a gun. And me."

\*\*\*\*\*



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

\*\*\*\*\*

H

## THE FOX.....



Great job June Mills. Katherin Kramer was visiting from New York and it was great seeing her. There were also the Gibsonton bunch there, that's the table I was assigned to. We had lots to talk about. But I was aproched by Eva Barton, I really laid an egg in the last Fox letter. I wrote she moves to asisting living. No No No, she will live with her husband in a retirement community. Boy I hope I got this right now. Also her house is solt, so by the time you recieve this letter she will be in her new beautiful apartment. No more yard work and less cleaning to do.

By the way, I just was told that Carmen Slaton lives now at the Pines Nursing Home. She had a stroke ore something and need to have help. When Dieter Tasso worked his act for the Pines he saw her there. Dieter will be leaving for Germany in a few days. But as he said this time just for a month. He also told me that Germany still is a good place to perform. I know Franz Brunn is still performing there a lot also Lotti Brunn's son will be returning beginning of November from performing over there.

Oh Ye, I like to mention that Wanda Joanides brother was here for a short visit, Sergio Chiesa. I went over to visit with him by Wanda and catch always up with news from Italy. But could not find out to much, as he does not get much together with the old timers but this is what I heard from him. Aurelio and Emmori Bogino are still well, Bruno Bogino past away not long ago. Afer Bogino is still well. Bruno Medini also past away. Wife Nila is OK. The only one still is a pussel to me, Benito Bogino. Here everyone tells me he is dead. Venicio and Sergio say they did not hear about his passing. So what is the truth?? Will someone please bring me the truth.

Also was told that Jorge Attayde is not doing to well. Mawicha Attayde is now totally bed ridden I also was told. Poor girl she suffered for many years.

I knew it, I can not get away from it. Mocadore Cristiani also left us for the other place. He was a great performer and will be missed a lot. He spent the last years in Las Vegas.

Also just got a call that Edith Wallenda lost her battle with cancer. She called me a few month ago to let me know that she will stay with her daughter Rosemarie up north. No one knew about her illness. While by Rosemarie she went to the doctor and found out that she was already very sick and they gave her just weeks to live. She did make it a couple of months but then her life just faded away. It is very sad, but when some one suffers I always say it is a blessing. Good by and rest in peace dear Aunt Edith. The funeral was here in Sarasota at the Toale Bros Funeral Home Oct 29th.

At the last Board meeting some of the old timers tried to convince me to run for President of Showfolks but as I stated before, I am just getting to old for all this. To much of a responsibility. You all know, when I take a job on, I am doing it all the way the best I can. I put my whole heart and sole in it and I know I could not do this any more. I am tired, all my friends are also tired and alone I could not do it. The good old days are over and there are to few who really care. And these

are the ones who could do a good job. The young ones are not interested. I will help and be an adviser if they need me. How do I know if I am still going to be around, one by one are leaving us. I miss them all terrible. I am not sad for them but sad for myself not having them any more close to me and to talk to. They all are much better off, they are in a wonderful place in peace and with no more pain.

Oh yes, before I forget, it has been announced at the last meeting that there will be no free tickets given out to any one not even the producers and show owners. So I hope you still will come see the show and help Showfolks, as this is a benefit for the Club. Now please forgive me if for a while I can not write often. I will try when ever I get a minute. But with the ads, circus tickets, advertizement and puttint the show together there is not much free time.

I do like to mention, that Jan 9th will be the Ringling Reunion, the 14th of Jan the Musuem will have there big day to honor some of our performers and 15th will be the big day for the Ring of Fame on St Armands Circle. Remember it also will be John Herriott birthday. Also please do not forget the Fleamarked the day after the Showfolks Circus. The Circus is Dec 11th.

I do love you all very much,

Always, Your Fox

\*\*\*\*\*

### \*\*NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS\*\*

\***Hovey Burgess** will be inducted into The People's Hall of Fame on Nov. 18 in New York City. Hovey will receive this honor "for his mastery as a juggler and for mentoring a new generation of circus artists in New York and across the U.S." Hovey has spent many years with Circus Flora.

\***Fred Logan** writes that he, Omi and Connie visited Sterling-Reid in Orange City. The show had to cancel the first day there because of Hurricane Irene. The midway had elephant, pony and camel rides, moon bounce, giant slide, king-size novelty stand, a Carnival concession trailer and another concession trailer with hot dogs, sausage sandwiches and drinks. They had arm bands for \$10 to ride all the rides. **Gary Johnson's** elephants, worked by **Joe Frisco, Jr.**, were well cared for and the semi and tractor were first class. **Dutch Crawford** presented **Ian Garden's** Liberty horses. The Logans also caught **Walker Bros. Circus** in Zephyrhills. **John John Walker** presented 4 Cuneo elephants. They also had elephant and pony rides, moon bounce and concession trailer on the midway.

\***Jackie LeClaire** writes **Fred Landrum**, former owner of the Gondolier Motel in Venice, FL passed away Oct. 27. He & his wife, **Laura**, were well known to the Clown College group as so many stayed at their motel. They were both ardent circus fans and their home is a veritable museum of circus memorabilia. They were always there to help the students and regular clowns when needed with all the hospitality possible. You can write Laura at: 1063 Roberta St., Venice, FL 34292.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **\*\*BUNNY HOPS TO HOHENWALD\*\***

**By Mike Cecere**

Well, "Bunny" a 47-year old, young Asian female elephant made a move from the excellent zoo in Evansville, IN to scenic Hohenwald, Tenn. That's right after being a top favorite of generations of zoo-goers, "Bunny" packed her trunk and moved to Tennessee.

She recently became the newest resident of The Elephant Sanctuary, one of the largest facilities of its kind in America. Headed by well-known elephant trainer, Carol Buckley, "Bunny" is the fifth elephant to join the herd there and she has happily settled in. She joins celebrity elephants, such as Carol's "Tarra," "Barbara," "Shirley" and "Jenny."

"Shirley herself is a recent arrival coming in from the Louisiana Purchase Gardens & Zoo. She joined her old pal "Jenny" who like "Shirley" had at one time toured with the giant Carson & Barnes Circus. It's said their reunion was "as noisy as a Tarzan movie."

The Elephant Sanctuary was started by Carol as a not-for-profit foundation to provide a home to needy Asian elephants and has had tremendous public support. They are in a huge expansion phase with generous animal loving people chipping in either money or resources to help provide for these magnificent creatures.

The elephants are free to roam the expansive acreage and just be elephants. But it's not all fun and games there at the Sanctuary.

Carol and her staff have a myriad of veterinary problems to deal with as both "Jenny" and "Shirley" have leg problems and various other things that go along with aging pachyderms. They get top flight care and the best of food, along with state of the art veterinary science. Carol is a long-time professional member of the Elephant Managers Association and networks through their vast body of knowledge for constantly evolving methods, along with providing an educational program on-line for schools.

She has also been featured in People Magazine (among others) and been seen on such TV shows as CBS "Public Eye", Paramount's "Wild Things" and NBC "Dateline" in their recent special on circus elephants.

Carol speaks from wide experience as she trained "Tarra" from the ground up, which is a shrinking club these days, of people who have actually trained elephants. And yes, she does speak up on the elephant's side of issues which some more circus-centric folk may not agree with. But this is America and everyone is entitled to their say.

Good for "Bunny" and all the other elephants taken care of in sanctuaries by dedicated people such as Carol Buckley and others!

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Circus Vazquez By Charlie Simpson**

Circus Vazquez (from Mexico City) came back to Texas this summer and fall after a 2 year absence. The show opened in Brownsville and moved to the Dallas area for several weeks, and then on to Houston. This circus plays Latin-American venues usually on supermarket parking lots. The show has a new big top and concession tent with an impressive front.

All equipment is in great shape and well painted. Lighting is excellent and taped music fitting well with all acts. Circus music is played before and during intermissions.

All acts are top notch and during most of the run, Shane Johnson had his tigers and elephant, "Judy," assisted by Tammy Wallenda on the show. During 4 weeks of the Houston run, Jorge and Frieda Pages had their lions and tigers and elephants, "Daisy" and "Bombi" on the show. A high light of the show is the clowning of Jesus Vazquez and his side kick. This fellow is very funny and is a delight to watch. I was fortunate to be able to visit with the Pages during their Houston stay. My thanks to them for their hospitality and I was very impressed with the great care these folks give to their animals. The show has now moved south to San Antonio and Austin before moving on to the border. My thanks go to my friends in the Vazquez family for giving me an enjoyable visit.

\*\*\*\*\*

### **News From The Barnum Museum-Bridgeport, Ct.**

From Rich Deptula: A children's coloring calendar for the year 2000, featuring the artwork of Bridgeport's renown cartoonist and circus artist, Ray Dirgo, is on sale in the Gift Shop of the Barnum Museum, 820 Main St., Bridgeport, CT 06604. Ray, creator of The Flintstones, Yogi Bear, The Jetsons and other popular cartoon characters, provided all illustrations for Circus Coloring Calendar 2000. Each monthly page includes a circus picture by Ray and a Barnum quotation or historic fact. The calendar was introduced at the recent opening of the museum's new special exhibition, "That's All, Folk! Bugs Bunny and Friends of Warner Bros. Cartoon." Ray was on hand to autograph and illustrate the calendars for more than 200 children. The calendar is \$2.50 plus tax. Quantities of 5 are \$10 or 10 for \$20. Call 203-331-1104 for more information!

\*\*\*\*\*

## GIANT PANDAS HAVE LANDED

By Richard Reynolds

ATLANTA-FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 5-A huge cheer went up as the huge UPS B767-300 cargo jet touched down and flashed along the Hartsfield-International runway, the huge giant panda decals on its sides glistening in the sun. The "Panda Express" from Beijing to Atlanta was here, having on board female giant panda Lun Lun and male Yang Yang. It was just a few minutes past the scheduled 9:30AM (EST) arrival time.

Delia and I were right there, along with hundreds of other guests, media & TV cameramen, politicians, et al. Helicopters hovered overhead. It was a beautiful Atlanta fall day. Temperature was about 40 in the morning warming to 70 in the afternoon with clear sky and beautiful sunshine. The party had assembled in the UPS hangar at 8:30AM for continental breakfast & a formal program. Leading off was a troupe of local Chinese girls doing a panda folk dance (we have a huge and burgeoning Chinese population here). Then came the parade of speakers, which is to be expected at such affairs: Evern Cooper - Director, UPS Foundation; Lea Soupata-UPS, Sr. Vice President Human Resources; Terry Maple-President and CEO, Zoo Atlanta; Wu Zurong-Consul General, People's Republic of China; James Zhou-Chairman Chinese Heritage Foundation; D. Gary Thompson-Chairman of Zoo Atlanta's Board of Directors; Sydney Butler-Exec. Director of Amer. Zoo & Aquarium Assn. (Washington); Bill Campbell-Atlanta Mayor. Messages of congratulation were read from US Senator Max Cleland, Georgia; Governor Roy Barnes & Georgia Lt. Governor Mark Taylor (the last named a big zoo booster).

When all that was done, it was about time for the "Panda Express" & everyone adjourned outside to the airplane apron. The pandas had started their journey early yesterday in Chengdu in China's Sichuan (Szechuan) Province where they had been living at the Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding, Sichuan being home to a large part of the wild giant panda population. The animals were flown by Chinese carrier from Chengdu to Beijing where much time passed. Security was not very tight at the Beijing airport and scores of Chinese gathered around the pandas' travel crates. Animal attendants were concerned about stress. Around 5:30PM (EST) on Thursday (November 4th) they went aboard the UPS "Panda Express" and were ready to leave on the long flight to Atlanta.

The flight went first to Anchorage, Alaska where the animals went through the required customs. Then it was on to Atlanta. As the "Panda Express" taxied to the arrival apron, two airport water gun trucks shot long streams over it, reminding of what we used to see in newsreels of water boats (tugs) spouting streams into the air alongside a celebrity ship when it arrived in New York harbor. A rolling stairway was pushed up to the passenger/crew door-way up high, for the "Panda Express" is a monster airplane. First came the UPS brown-uniformed pilot and copilot with broad grins signaling a hearty thumbs up to the cheering applauding throngs below. The pilot for the leg from Anchorage to Atlanta was Bob Peterson, a veteran flyer of political

celebrities from his days as an Air Force Colonel based in Washington. Next came the 3 animal caretakers in white medical jackets, all of them grinning from ear to ear and signaling thumbs up to more applause. They were Dr. Rita McManamon, Zoo Atlanta's senior veterinarian, Dr. Zhong Shunlong, curator of the animal hospital at the Chengdu Zoo, and Mr. Yang Zhi, curator of animal management at the Chengdu Research Base for Giant Panda Breeding.

First the pilots & then the animal caretakers came down the stairs to a flood of media questions & clicking cameras from behind the press ropes. Each local channel, including CNN, had a staff of reporters and camera people. They were all in a line & first pilots and then the animal folks went from one to the other in turn for interviews. That took considerable time.

Now it was time to unload the pandas. UPS crewmen had gone up the stairs & into the jet to make things ready. An UPS operator positioned a huge pneumatic rolling platform at the cargo door in the side of the plane forward the port-side wing. The forward part of the platform ran up to the side of the plane and a rear part was raised on pneumatic "X" braces to the same level. Then here came the first panda crate, moving easily on rollers. It was the little female Lun Lun. It was painted white with wire mesh on both ends and sides. Signs on both sides bore colorful "Panda Express" lettering, including the animal's name. One could clearly see the wiggling telltale black ears on a white head. And, black circled eyes could be seen peering out through the mesh at the strange goings on below. The crate was pushed onto the rear part of the platform. It was then lowered to the ground on the "X" members. Then, a fork lift pulled up. Metal pieces were connected between the fork & eyebolts at each of the four corners at the top of the crate. The lift then swung the crate out and drove it to the rear door of one of the 4 brown UPS vans. Lun Lun was swiftly put inside. All the while one could get a fair look at Lun Lun's head as she moved around curiously looking out at her strange surroundings.

Next it was Yang Yang's turn and the same procedure was followed. He went into a second waiting brown UPS truck. Again, he could be seen moving around and peering out with curiosity. All 4 of the trucks had a big "Panda Express" sign on the side. Each of the trucks was driven by a veteran UPS driver, each chosen for his long time exemplary safety record. Each driver had been introduced during the "pre-game" festivities.

We hung around for a short time to give Rita McManamon hearty congratulations for bringing the precious cargo through in such good shape. She is certainly a fine, friendly person and a wonderful vet. Delia and I then left to get ahead of the panda motorcade. We drove to the zoo to be there when it arrived. The motorcade was accompanied by a squadron of uniformed Fulton County Sheriff's deputies on motorcycles. It included the four UPS vans, several stretch limos carrying the dignitaries & assorted other vehicles. The motorcycles blocked traffic on the freeway from the airport & at intersections en route. Several helicopters flew overhead pacing the procession. Delia and I were able to get a good parking space on the drive leading into the zoo's back door along Atlanta Ave. (Continued on Page 11)

**RINGLING RED:** Chicago-United Ctr-11/16-28; New Orleans-Superdome-12/2-5.

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

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

**Clyde Beatty:** Port Charlotte, FL-11/15-16; Ft. Myers-11/17-19; Cape Coral-11/20-21.

### BACK YARD

is published twice monthly-(15th & 30th) by Cherie Valentine, 1522 Clinton Blvd., Bloomington, IL 61701. Ph. 309-828-0737. FAX at work: 309-438-5378. 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](http://www.inficad.com/~circus/backyard).

\*Michael Haberland writes that he had a terrific 3 day adventure with Roberts Bros Circus and Turtle Benson this past spring. "The show played Lisbon, Canfield and Hartville, Ohio this past June and under the watchful and very patient eye of Turtle, I was able to work Boo for the rides. This was the most thrilling experience I have ever been allowed. I have had animal jobs when I was younger and it was terrific to be able to at least feel as if I was back (even though I didn't drive, unload, feed, water, clean or the other hundreds of things needed to care for the animals.) The best part was being able to see how the children & even the adults were fascinated with the direct contact they had with a living elephant. I was to extend a big THANK YOU publicly to Turtle for his kindness, help and patience. On a serious note, we need to stand together as Circus fans, performers & owners and fight HR 2929. Please write your Congressmen and let them know how we feel about having our LEGAL rights robbed from us by a small misguided group of radical terrorists. Don't sit around and think someone else will take care of this or that your letter won't matter. The animal rights groups have successfully banned exotic animals from Woodstock, IL and Redmond, WA and countless other cities. We now have to watch for Seattle, San Francisco & Estes Park, CO. It has been shown that when we stand together & truthfully fight these groups we CAN win. Bans on circuses & elephant rides have been over turned. Hard working people such as Heidi Herriott, Steve Kendall and many others need our help. If not financially, then help by writing letters to the editor, local Congressmen, local councils. You can even call your local paper or TV station and if it is a slow news day, they will do a story on your collection or interest in the circus. We can & must be pro active NOT reactive. Let's get up and knock the antis on their rear ends and keep stomping them into the ground!

### HAWTHORN TO THE RESCUE!

By Mike Cecere

Well, recently in scenic Sarasota, Florida, the circus industry had a prime example of showpeople adapting to changing circumstances. The award winning Sterling-Reid Circus arrived for a three-day stand Oct. 29-31 with a very strong show. One of the top attractions for the tour has been famed elephant man, Joe Frisco, Jr. with a unit from Have Trunk Will Travel, the gold standard of the elephant industry. Owned by Gary and Kari Johnson, they are the top in-demand elephants for films, commercials, TV and prestige dates nationwide. Well that's just what happened. They highly popular tent tour of Sterling-Reid was extended and ran right smack into a call from Hollywood. Well, what to do? Luckily, the Hawthorn elephants, managed by John Walker III, just off the tour of his dad's Walker Bros. Circus, were able to fill in. John, son of well known circus owner/elephant trainer, Johnny Walker Jr. and Laura Herriott, is the youngest member of Mr. John Cuneo's Hawthorn team that numbers the best and brightest in its ranks. SO, while Joe Jr. was on his way to Hollywood to be in Beverly Hills Elephant-1, John Walker was rocking the Hometown crowd! And if that isn't real circus, I don't know what is! God Bless America!

### \*\*NEWS FROM RINGLING\*\*

\*On Nov. 9, David Larible, of Barnum's Kaleidoscope, made history as the first recipient of the prestigious "Golden Lion" award for Outstanding International Artistic Achievement at the 7th Wuqai International Acrobatics Festival in Shijiazhuang, China! Larible received the historic award in a ceremony from the Hebei Acrobatic School, the world's oldest circus school, after performing as a guest of honor at the festival Nov. 8. "We applaud David's recognition by this important circus arts institution," said Kenneth Feld. "David captured 8 awards earlier this year at the 1999 International Circus Festival of Monte Carlo, as well as their top prize, the Golden Cloud Award. This honor reinforces David is one of the premiere circus performers in the world. We are delighted for him and consider ourselves fortunate he is a member of our performing family."

\* "Johnathan Lee Iverson was the first African-American ringmaster for this famous circus." The question of course: "What is Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey?" If this sounds like a Jeopardy question, you're right! The ringmaster was one of the answers in the Nov. 3 broadcast of the \$25,000 Jeopardy Teen Tournament. Yes, the contestant got the answer right! Johnathan appeared on the CBS News Saturday morning Nov. 6. He was interviewed during the circus and you could see clips of him performing. Very nice spot.

## News From Our Circus Friends

\***Paul Holley** writes "a circus enthusiast group was prominently featured in the weekly Sheboygan Falls (Wis.) News. The front page story described the 40-member Friends of the Circus as 'a diverse group of people drawn together in a common goal-to preserve circus history and have fun, enjoy and promote today's circuses and those of the future.' Most members are from Sheboygan County but members are from as far away as South Bend, Ind.

Among the members quoted were John Fleck, Jim and Cindy Roberts and Dick & Betty DeYoung. The Roberts and Betty DeYoung were in a photo that accompanied the story. According to the story, Friends of the Circus has taken several outings, including visits to Barnum's Kaleidoscope, Circus World Museum, the Great Circus Parade, Carson & Barnes, Royal Palace, Piccadilly, Royal American and Liebel Family circuses. (Thanks, Paul.)

\***Richard Albright** has been asked to have the Circus Wagon in the Baldwin Boro. 50th Anniversary Parade on June 10, 2000. This is probably a result of being in the Greensburg Bi-Centennial Parade. This will help keep the CIRCUS before the public and hopefully will deter the animal rights groups.

\***The Terrell Jacobs Ring No. 7** had a display at the Great American Train Show at Greengate Oct 16-17. Members were present to talk with the public and promote The Circus Model Builders. Applications for National and Ring Membership were given to any interested folks. They ran out of applications and names were collected. The newsletter from this great bunch of people states "several hundred of our members are on the Internet."

\***The Great Circus Parade** presented by Circus World Museum will take place in downtown Milwaukee on Sunday, July 16, 2000. "The celebrated circus history event will move into the new century with plans for many new attractions by rail, at the showgrounds and in the parade. 'We have many surprises in store for next year's Great Circus Parade festivities,' said CWM Executive Director Greg Parkinson. 'We will partner with Strong Funds and participating railroads to add new excitement to next year's Great Circus Train journey. In Milwaukee, Great Circus Parade Showgrounds programming will be expanded to include two major, new shows. The Great Circus Parade itself will feature, after a 15-month restoration, the mammoth Ringling Bros. Lion Tableau

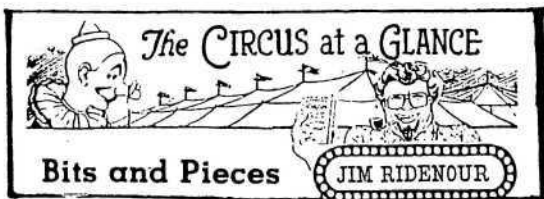
and Grand International Section expanded to represent 50 countries. We look forward to announcing more details about these new features in coming months.'

The Great Circus Parade is the largest history-based special event to be staged anywhere in North America. 'The Great Circus Parade is on strong financial footing, thanks to our sponsors and supporters,' said Daniel "Jack" McKeithan, co-chairman of the Great Circus Parade Board of Trustees. 'As we approach a new millennium, we naturally cast our eyes backward at the circus's glorious past. But we also look ahead to find even more ways to present this colorful extravaganza to eager new audiences. Next year's Great Circus Parade will be our best ever.'

The 2000 Parade will mark the 26th such event staged in Milwaukee by Circus World Museum. The circus parade tradition began in 1963 and continued for 11 years, under the sponsorship of the Joseph Schlitz Brewing Co. Revived in 1985 with multiple sponsors, The Great Circus Parade has been presented in Milwaukee every year since. For more information about the Parade, visit their web site at [www.circusparade.com](http://www.circusparade.com) or call Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin at 608-356-8341.

\***From Las Vegas Review-Journal Nov. 7:** "PETA has struck again, this time forcing Circus Circus act Gregory Popovich to quit using his trained house cats in his act. 'We had several complaints about his 'Pet Theater' show and how his house cats were forced to walk on a high wire, actually a pipe, without a safety net,' said PETA publicist Lisa Lange. Circus Circus officials noted that Gregory had rescued his furry stars from shelters, but PETA was unimpressed. Rather than mess with the picketing-prone group that has kept Bobby Berosini and his orangutans from working, Circus Circus officials told Gregory to bag the cats. However, he continues to perform at the hotel." (My oldest cat, Stuffie, 14 1/2 years old, loves to walk the pipe bar I have in the kitchen door way-like a chin-up bar. He jumps from the floor to the top of the refrigerator, then walks across the bar, somehow turns himself around and goes back. He is having fun! This is something he learned himself and he thinks it is great fun-AND he has no safety net below!)

\***Zoo Atlanta:** The Giant Panda Habitat features both indoor and outdoor facilities. The animal area of the Giant Panda building measures 1674 sq. ft and consists of off-exhibit holding as well as 2 indoor exhibits or "dayrooms." The outdoor exhibit consists of 3 habitats. 2 have naturalistic landscaping, rocks, pools, climbing structures and shade. The third is a 5820 sq. ft. area and is for use when the pandas are off exhibit.



By the time you read this, I will have just got back from the Entertainment Industry Expo in Cleveland, Ohio. I will have also visited my mom in Owensboro, Kentucky and my daughter in Columbus, Ohio. Also some friends along the way. The Expo is like the Giltown Extravaganza but is indoors. The OABA is behind it. I will be working in the Carnival News booth. My friend Dave Holden puts it out once a month. His address is PO Box 7297, Corpus Christi, TX 78467. The next 6 big issues cost \$18 and you get a free vintage carnival video free with the subscription.

I fly out to Vegas on the 27th of November for the Fair Convention. This is my first time. I hope I get invited to the Gibb's party. I will be in the Carnival News booth with lots of new circus & carnival videos. I get back in sunny Sarasota on Dec 4 and will start putting "The Millers of Hugo" retrospect together the following Monday. There is no rest for the wicked. One circus giant I always wanted to meet was Floyd King. I saw him at a distance in Knoxville, Tenn on the lot back in the 50s. Floyd King was all circus and a promotional genius. Sure, Mr. King had his ups and downs, but like D.R. Miller, he never gave up. He was a showman. The last real daily circus parade was staged by Floyd King and a fine parade it was.

Here's a story lifted from the 1960 King Bros program. You will note that, like all press people with the circus, Floyd King twisted and changed a few facts. Here's the story: Life Under "White Tops" Is Strange, Glamorous" By Floyd King

The King Bros. Circus does not run its season, dissolve and disperse. During the winter months the entire organization is maintained. Only the performers & workmen are dropped & with the former this is generally a temporary suspension of service, for contracts are often made for several years.

Owners, managers, contracting agents, advertising agents, press agents, treasurer, bookkeeper and others, find no spare moments. Trailers, cars and wagons suffering from the strenuous effects of a season's campaign, need painter and carpenter & new acts and novelties must be secured to keep abreast of the times. The new route must be laid out and considered and to do this the management must know the population and character of every town; have information of the condition of business, vicissitudes of the year and the prospects for the coming season. He must know the national, state, city and county law and the character of licenses, and the price of food for man and beast.

Track is kept of floods, droughts, or disasters to crops or people. He is conversant with the periods of plowing & harvesting and knows what railroads run in and out of town, their grades and condition, & the relative positions of railroad yards and the show lot. The question of transportation is the most careful one involved and upon its cost and facilities the

route of the circus is in a great measure determined. For instance, in agricultural Kansas is the little town of Concordia. It boasts a newspaper, a public school & a national & a savings bank. Its population does not exceed a few thousand; yet the big circuses make annual pilgrimages thither because it is a local trade center. Its selection for exhibition purposes is a good illustration of the important part transportation facilities play in arranging routes. Concordia itself would not turn out patrons enough to pay for the menagerie's food but the throngs transported there by train and auto always fill the tents. All over the country, barring the large cities, the same conditions exist. It is not so much the character and size of the city picked for exhibition purposes as its topographical position and drawing powers.

During the winter months a corps of women are busy on new uniforms and trappings for man, woman and beast. There are expensive plush and gold bullion aplenty in this workshop. Spangles that will glitter in the ring are being sewed in place, the elephants are getting new blankets of red and gold and the camels and other led stock are being fitted out for the parade. These gorgeous fittings are expensive, but the circus management calculates that they must be renewed every year.

Circus day, to the men who have hundreds of thousands of dollars invested, it will be seen, means the end of extended, careful and systematic preparation. To get ready for the day has been the work of weeks and months and has employed the talents and attention of men wonderfully expert in their particular fields. The advance staff of the King Bros. Circus consists of a general agent, three local contractors; car No. 1, carrying billposters, advertising cars No. 2 and No. 3, bearing other agents.

The traffic manager is the first man out. He is familiar with highways-its mileage, road conditions, and bridges. He arranges for the movement of the circus. The contracting agent follows: He makes contracts for feed, lot, accommodations for advance men and billboards. The contracts of these two men involve many thousands of dollars every week and must pass the rigid scrutiny of the experienced general agent. No detail of the business is unfamiliar to him.

The opposition brigade is frequently called into service to fight opposition. As soon as a rival circus puts in an appearance on the route the general agent is promptly notified. There is at once a formidable concentration of forces at the threatened point. Nothing is left unturned to gain an advantage; and the circus man is resourceful of schemes and plots. Billboards, barns, fences, windows & all other available space is bought up with apparently reckless expenditures. Banners, printed on muslin, are tacked on high walls. Sometimes more money than will be taken in on show day is expended in this fight for publicity, but the circus regrets not a cent of it if the opposition has been taught a lesson and will not venture again to cross the path.

About two weeks ahead of the show, comes car No. 1. The contracting press agent arrives with his advertising cuts, mats & advertising matter. The men post bills and hang lithographs for miles around.

Written permission is always secured from the owner or lessee of the location selected. In return for the privilege an order is given on the circus for tickets, which is promptly if the contract has been fulfilled. The men on 2 other cars see to it that the work of their predecessors is protected. They replace posters torn down or mutilated and try to find new points of advantage. They check up and report every discrepancy of the other advance men, too, and send a detailed report to the general agent. The last man before the arrival of the circus is the "24-hour man. He inspects the lot, fixes the route of the procession and performs a variety of other final duties.

The public often measures the value of an enterprise largely by the size and character of its posters. The development of poster printing and especially bill posting was due largely to the circus. The requirements of the circus built the boards and the results obtained forced the business to become a permanent and recognized factor in active commercial life. Our circus uses in a season 120 styles of posters, varying in size from one-half to 20 sheets, and distributes to the public 4 publications, from a quarter sheet to a 24 page 4-colored Roto magazine, the circulation of the latter being a million copies.

The elevated standard of morality among circus men and women is a revelation to one who lives with them from day to day and is their close companion. The atmosphere and environment seem charged with health and happiness, virtue and vigor. Drunkenness is not tolerated in any form. Immediate discharge, no matter who or what the rank of the offender, is its penalty, and except in isolated instances among the canvassmen there is seldom provocation for punishment. Of other vices which are prevalent in many walks of life there is no evidence. The exacting nature of the business, with its claims on brain and body, forbids it. For those who indulge in them are looked upon with coldness by their associates and made to feel themselves delinquents. Fines are imposed upon the employee who is heard using profane or vulgar language. The women of the circus are not permitted even to engage in conversation with anyone not directly connected with the show.

\*\*You will note that Mr. King states "Drunkenness is not tolerated. Well, it is a sad fact but when I was manager of the Great American Circus, if I had not tolerated drinking in excess, I would have had to put the tent up all by myself.



## FAMOUS CIRCUS QUOTES

"Pilgrims with no abiding city, pursuing a profession of multiplied activity and varied fortunes, amid scenes of din and turmoil, hurry and agitation." Floyd King



I watched the 4-hour special "Barnum" on A&E and it left me cold. It had its moments, but, by & large, moved rather slow. As

Mr. Barnum is one of my favorites, I can't say I didn't enjoy it but I really liked the 1930s' "The Mighty Barnum" with Wallace Berry much more. This way the egress. There's one born every minute....

\*\*\*\*\*

## GIANT PANDAS HAVE LANDED!!.....

We had been there only a short time when we saw the helicopters in the distance and heard the sirens of the motorcycles. The motorcade rolled right through the back gate. I noted one of the Chinese vets riding "shotgun" in a "panda van." I thought to myself as I stood there watching it go by that I was attending the most anticipated celebrity parade in Atlanta since December 14, 1939 when my mother held my 5-year old hand at Peachtree and Ponce de Leon (in front of the Ponce de Leon Apts.) while we watched Clark Gable, Vivian Leigh and other stars roll by in the motorcade prior to the world premier (the next night-15th) of the movie "Gone With The Wind." Actually all I can recall about that was seeing the rear ends of people in front of me and an occasional hand waving from a passing car. I didn't really know who Clark Gable was or why I was there to see him. However, one woman did faint and was hauled off by Boy Scouts. I think she must have glimpsed Clark Gable and was overwhelmed. Then as now I'd much rather have seen giant pandas.

But back to now--The 2 vans with the pandas were then positioned, in turn, on the driveway at the back door of the new \$7 million dollar panda habitat. Again, a fork lift was enlisted to lift the crates from the vans and stick them into the back door of the habitat, a reverse of the airport procedure. As at the airplane, female Lun Lun was first out. Keepers, vets, etc rolled her crate down a short hallway to the cage door of her indoor enclosure.

Uh oh-she wouldn't leave the crate. Treats & cajoling couldn't get her to go into that strange place. The wait went on for 30 minutes or so. So, they decided to go ahead and unload Yang Yang. The same procedure was followed. When his crate was taken out of the truck, the UPS driver presented Zoo Director Maple with the UPS delivery receipt for signature. After Yang Yang's crate was pushed down the hallway the staff closed the back doors and proceedings were closed.

Delia and I got a good look at the heads of both animals as they peeked out of their crates during the unloading. In closing I will say that I have been at Atlanta's zoo for the arrival of African black rhino, giraffe, and a celebrated Vietnamese tiger, a gift of a green beret outfit. But this event topped everything in terms of media hype and attention. (John P. Roth, former director of the Zoo, helped to bring in the black rhino and Vietnamese tiger.)

I would liken my experience to being with Barnum & his attaches on April 9, 1882 when they were ferried out to the "Assyrian Monarch" off Castle Garden to see the just arrived and mighty Jumbo. That's it from Pandamonium in Atlanta.

\*\*\*\*\*

Don't forget to send in your Holiday Greetings soon!

## **“Bertha, The Amazing Elephant Retires”**

**Richard Reynolds, of Lebanon, New Hampshire** recently visited Reno, Nevada and sent along this article:

Bertha, “The Amazing Elephant,” well-known entertainer at John Ascuaga’s Nugget, is ready to give up the spotlight. At 49, Bertha’s been performing on stage at the Nugget for 37 years and now she feels it’s time for some rest and relaxation. Bertha suffers from some arthritis in her feet and it’s become increasingly more difficult for her to perform many of her special tricks. That’s one of the reasons Bertha will be leaving the nightly stage performance in the Nugget Showroom.

Nugget staff members and many of her friends and fans wished her well at a retirement party Sept. 26. Bertha celebrated with her favorite treat, a whole watermelon, while well-wishers waved balloons and applauded her long career. Bertha came to Reno in May, 1962 when she was only 11 years old.

The Nugget purchased her from a circus museum in Wisconsin. Bertha was a quick learner and by June she was performing on the stage at the Nugget in “International Follies.” Audiences came to love her and she’s been a star ever since. She also appeared on many Hollywood TV shows, including *The Steve Allen Show*, *Hollywood Palace*, *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *the John Davidson Show*. She’s also done many special performances, including one for Ronald Reagan when he was President.

Asian elephants like Bertha and her roommate, Angel, often live to be 60 or 70 years of age. Michael Martindale, Nugget spokesperson says, “The Nugget continues its commitment to preserve the decline of the world’s elephant population and the endangered Asian elephants. Every year, more and more of the natural foraging grounds of the wild Asian elephants are cultivated. Many experts fear that without improved protection, elephants will be extinct in the wild in less than 15 years.”

Bertha and Angel help make people aware of the Asian elephants’ plight. Seeing these giant animals up close can really make you aware of their

awesome size and power. The two are well-known around the Truckee Meadows, they make many public appearances every year. Bertha plans to continue these special appearances even after she retires. People can also visit the Elephant Palace in back of the Nugget Hotel every day, as long as the weather is good.

Bertha is extremely gentle, especially with children. Her trainer, Don Bloomer says, “I have worked with about four dozen elephants in my career, and she’s got the best personality of them all. With most elephants I’ve worked with, I couldn’t allow people to get as close as I can with Bertha. That’s a special treat for the public—most people don’t realize how lucky they are to feel her skin and come up and talk to her.”

Retirement won’t find Bertha sitting around the Elephant Palace with nothing to do. She plans to keep busy after she gives up performing. She will catch up on her reading with some of her new-found time. That’s right—Bertha got her own Washoe County Library Card! She’s also a lifetime member of the Reno Musicians Union and the Nevada Artists Assn. Bertha’s been an artist since 1992 and plans to continue her artistic career, too.

Nugget owner, John Ascuaga vows to turn the Elephant Palace into a small park so Bertha “can enjoy her retirement.” He’s taken out-of-the-ordinary care of “his special pal” for a long time. Back in the 60s, he began growing unique hay on one of his Jack’s Valley ranches just for the elephant. He often hauled and delivered the 1200 pound bales himself in the back of a pick up truck. Bertha will continue to live in the Elephant Palace, along with Angel, her performing partner since 1990. The Palace includes a swimming pool and outdoor exercise area. Angel will continue the tradition and perform nightly on the Nugget Showroom stage.

Bertha is truly an “Amazing Elephant.” A well-loved Reno treasure, she’s worked hard and deserves her new career of enjoying herself and her hobbies. May her retirement last as long as her illustrious career!

## BALLY AND BALOONEY

By Chuck Meltzer

After reading Jim Ridenour's provocative column of July 31, I felt a need to express some other ideas, after all, it is a free country. I must agree wholeheartedly with Jim's idea that Soleil is not a circus & has my total agreement on that. However, that does not provide this commentator with any reason not to see this or any other great show. I personally like all kinds of shows. I patronize ice shows, Broadway musicals, movies, opera, ballet, etc. I like to think my tastes are eclectic. A trait not relegated to the elite.

Many circus type showfolks not only share this openmindedness, but even find employment in the other theatrical arts from time to time. The circus, as a name, after all, comes from the circle or ring in which an equestrian exhibition was presented. Soleil has no horse, nor a ring curbed circle. So to me, it is not a circus!

Let's look at what it does have. It has some of the finest circus acro-gymnastic and aerial acts around. There alone make it worth attending. Incidentally, the best acts came from Eastern European Circus schools and the Chinese acrobatic schools. Now, if this is an affront, then should the CFA boycott Ringling, Beatty-Cole, Vargas, Carson & Barnes, Big Apple, Tarzan, etc? They all employ acts from these sources.

I personally have not talked with a single circus enthusiast who has seen Soleil who was not impressed with the superb quality of the acts! Music, costumes, etc. are not always an asset to many; this commentator included. How many of us have seen a perfect show of any kind? There is always something we would add, subtract or change in some manner.

At various CFA conventions, we have had many events that had far less to do with circus than the Soleil show; such as brewery tours, naval ships, historic battlefields, etc. These were not circus related in any way. Like it or not, Soleil has circus components. As to the "reinventing" of the circus by Soleil, this should read an "invention" of a new theatrical art form. Note this circus lover never calls Soleil a cirque much less a circus. This "circus simple soul" has to believe that the circus, to survive, has got to be in a state of constant reinvention. The flying return act, the cage act were not part of the show for the first 100 or so years. The performing elephant came long after the deaths of Astley and Rickets. Al G. Barnes didn't call his wild animal show a circus during most of its life under his ownership as it lacked many of the traditional circus acts.

On another note, the operatic-balletic pantomimes going back to the days of Franconi, Lagal, etc. in Europe were reinvented in the long-winded opening specs that were used on such "traditional shows" as 4-Paw, Barnum, Ringling, Barnes, Christy, etc. The circus is in part a theatrical art form. The denial of this makes no sense. Lighting, costumes, props, etc. are all shared elements. Circus and theatre have borrowed from each other since English riding masters first exhibition in that field outside of London.

I don't believe that Soleil, Ingenieux, Chimera, etc. hurt the

traditional circus in any appreciable way. Real quality competition only builds public interest and approval. A dirty rundown grab the money and run, misrepresenting grifter hurts everyone! A "Santa's Christmas Circus" or some other generic show that is usually heavy on magic, clowning and hopefully a talented family doing some decent circus acts is not a traditional circus either. This misrepresentation doesn't help the image of the name circus either. Neither Soleil nor Disney has said anything in the Orlando media that is negative in any way to the traditional circus. Both offer steady good pay checks to circus people, even some high-grassers.

\*\*\*\*\*

### "A Funeral Fit For America's Top Showman!"

By Bill Roller-Hugo, OK newspaper

D.R. Miller was a showman. D.R. was "Mr. Circus." He will be the star of his own funeral services here on Nov. 17 & will ride at the head of the parade in the red and gold casket he ordered himself. The procession will begin at a circus tent, where services will be conducted, and proceed to the Showman's Rest area of Mt. Olivet Cemetery. His casket will be carried in a restored 1872 Quebec model hearse, drawn by black Percheron horses as he had also requested. Following that hearse, in an ornate open circus wagon, also drawn by horses, will be a live circus band. The wagon was built in 1903 for the Sig Sautelle Dog & Pony Show by the Sullivan & Eagle Wagon Works in Peru, Indiana. Carvings were done by German craftsmen brought to the U.S. to work on fine furniture & horse drawn wagons. The wagon is being provided by the International Circus Hall of Fame in Peru. The band is being assembled by a long time circus musician. There will likely be some animals from Miller's Carson & Barnes Circus in the march, also.

Funeral services will be held in a Kelly-Miller circus tent at the Agriplex on North Fifth Street at 10 a.m. The tent will seat approximately 1,500 and is expected to be filled for this long time Hugo citizen & lifetime circus man. David Rawls is attempting to plan arrangements for this final performance of D. R. just as he had requested. Circus people and circus buffs, as well as news media, from all over the United States are expected for this final performance of D. R. Hugo public schools will be dismissed on this day and a number of businesses have indicated they will be closed in memory of this great Hugo citizen. The funeral procession will proceed from the Agriplex grounds south on Fifth Street to Trice, then turn east to Mt. Olivet cemetery. Bill Rogers, acting city manager, is arranging for bus transportation for those wishing to go to the cemetery so that the town is not cut in two for the long procession to the cemetery, one and one-half miles away. This will also alleviate parking limitations around the cemetery where only family cars & funeral vehicles will be admitted inside. Funeral service details will be announced at a later date. Mr. Miller died at McCook, Nebraska Sept. 8, & his body has been held in Denver until his final rites could be held in his home town of Hugo.

## WILD ANIMAL SAFARI PARK

By Brian Nunn

\*Winston, Oregon (Sept.): It's a big, beautiful place with lions, tigers and bears. And I mean BIG BEARS (brown type). The bus I was on just cruised the area, everything was open to drive through, except the big area the big, brown bears were in and the cheetah area and the tiger area. Don't get me wrong, I got the definite impression that it wasn't safe at the time to have suckers driving through there with their kids in the car.

We went through the lion compound with big instructions to keep the windows up. The lions were on a hillside, dozing and watching like they do. You go in a big, covered gate. There's an employee in a range-rover with a 12' re-inforced bumper on the inside. The critters seemed to be aware of the safety, 'cuz they didn't get excited when the gate opened. Then, as we made our tour of the compound, the cats didn't even bother lookin' at us.

I was impressed with the safety measures they took. I believe there was a real good reason for some of the compounds being closed to drive through. You could still see all of the animals outside of their places. When the bears stood up (I ain't kiddin') they looked 10 feet tall-there were eight of them.

I suppose in the summer when they're sleepy and slow, they let cars in (every compound) which have their own range-rover, with a competent attendant at the wheel. They bring the elephants out for a tailed-up stroll so all the customers get to see them. The business was slow (but just like Rex Williams, if there's one customer out there, you gotta' take the elephant out).

But like I say, business was slow, so they didn't have the pony ride or elephant ride working. There was a pretty girl out with a strawberry-roune pony, walking around the exhibit and petting area; a couple of happy monkeys on an island. It's a fun place!

They must do good business during the season; they didn't make the nut the day I was there in late September. Everything is in good repair, painted and cared for. The large hay-burners get exercise and the crew keeps their heads up.

\*This is a quiet story about an elephant man; he lives and works in one of those southern states. He's got an old beat-up pickup truck that starts when he turns the key. He works for one of the best bull men in the business. One of the elephants is a large bull (we'll call Dr. Korvocian). It's a 24-7 job. I've seen this guy do his fair

and square job for years, with no thought of glory or paper honors. He's not even aware that the most respected animal guys in the business (zoo or performance) know his talent. In my opinion, if he was aware of all this recognition, he would still stay with what he's got. He's what you call an elephant man. I'd like to include myself with this guy. But, I can't. He's a better man than me. He works a damn good slide guitar too.

(Side bar): The man gets to take care of elephants in an out of the way "private" place. No political interference. Your basic Elephant Man's Heaven.

\*\*\*\*\*

### *News From Our Circus Friends*

\*Ken Holehouse writes "The bad things about autumn are the earlier sunsets, later sunrises, unpredictable weather and the lack of tented circuses visiting Wisconsin. But I shattered the fall doldrums for myself by seeing the Great Youth Circus at Wilson Middle School in Appleton this past weekend. What a treat! What a show! You'd think these scores of young people had been training for a lifetime. The performance they give is inspiring, professional, wholly entertaining. One forgets these are not road-seasoned pros.

Producer Tim Tegge and his cadre of circus pros take about eighty 12 to 14-year olds, work with them four hours a night for three weeks and produce a circus performance of breathtaking professionalism.

From the single traps to the aerial cradles 10 of these ten middle schoolers look like they've performed in the air all their lives. Houdini's Metamorphosis and another big illusion are capably executed by a trio of young magicians.

A variety of acrobatic and juggling displays ranging from rolling ball, to hand juggling and foot juggling to chari vari fill the arena with youthful energy. A setting of human pyramids, featuring 10 performers in a variety of balance, ends the show and 12 aerialists on swinging ladders open the performance after a beginning dream sequence with a sleeping clown who wakens to a march of circus performers on parade. Plate spinning, perch pole and clown hijinks round out the hour and a half show. Tim Tegge, Producer and Director, is capably assisted by helpful parents who do everything from spotting to spotlights and a cadre of circus pros including his wife, Gigi, assistant Producer, Heidi Casady, aerial choreography, Kurt Casady, rigging, Robert Good, production coordinator, Rosemary Mead, wardrobe and Maurice Mead, staff photographer. If this much talent is available for a youth circus in one middle school in middle America, think of what's available in the schools where you live. Circus could contribute to bringing young people together in worthwhile, positive endeavors all across the land. Tim offers students the chance to build a real circus performance in their own school, to the delight & standing ovations of parents and fellow students alike. Tim can be contacted at The Great Youth Circus, PO Box 661, Baraboo, WI 53913.



**The Nunez Family**

**David, Anahi, Helda, Carlos**

**Photo by Rich Deptula**



**Bunny and Jenny are becoming great buddies.**

MABEL STARK

JUNGLELAND

Mike Haberland Collection

Back Yard  
1522 Clinton  
Bloomington, IL 61701

