

BACK YARD

Volume IV, Issue #75

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The End of An Era

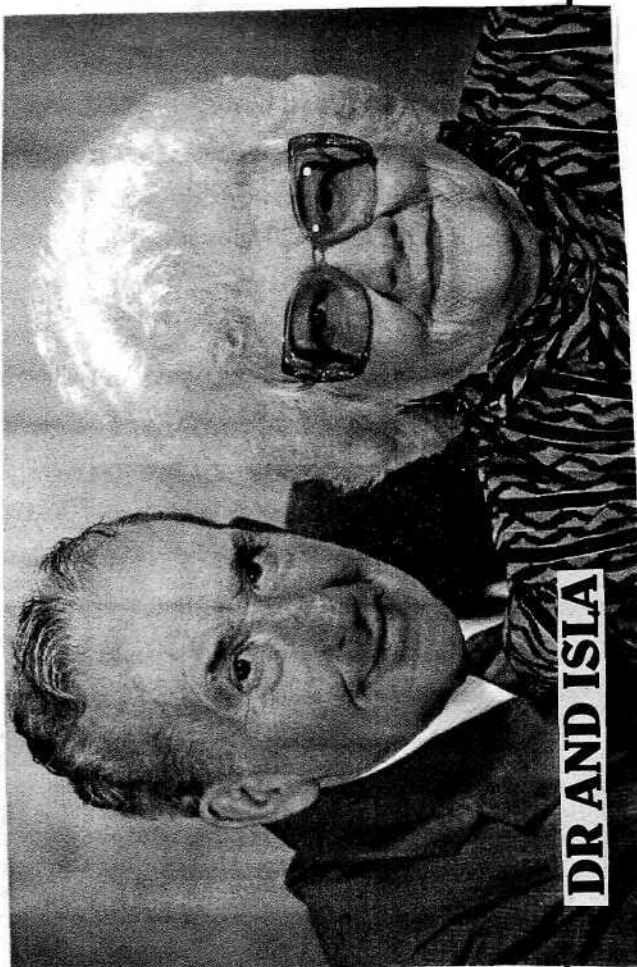
By Cherie Valentine

Dores Richard Miller, born August 27, 1916, passed away September 8 in McCook, Nebraska, while traveling with his show, the Carson and Barnes Circus. His daughter, Barbara Byrd, said DR told them on the way home from the hospital that McCook was the first place he ever saw a circus. In the early 1920s (DR thought 1922-the family will check with Ted Bowman's route card collection to get the exact date) DR traveled with his father, mother and brother from Smith County Kansas to McCook to see the John Robinson Circus.

DR had recently joined the show to celebrate the first birthday of Jennie, born Sept. 6, 1998, and named after DR's mother, the first elephant born in the breeding compound. As a result of DR's interest and involvement in the preservation of the Asian elephant species, the Endangered Ark Foundation was established.

From the *Hugo News*, Bill Roller writes, "On the 7th, DR had a series of tests, including an EKG, but no problem was detected so he was released to go back to rest in his motor home on the circus lot. It was there he collapsed and died about 5 PM. The body will be kept in storage until the circus closes its season and returns to Hugo in November. He will be laid to rest in Showman's Rest, that special portion of Mt. Olivet Cemetery where the remains of circus people of many talents and importance in the business are buried.

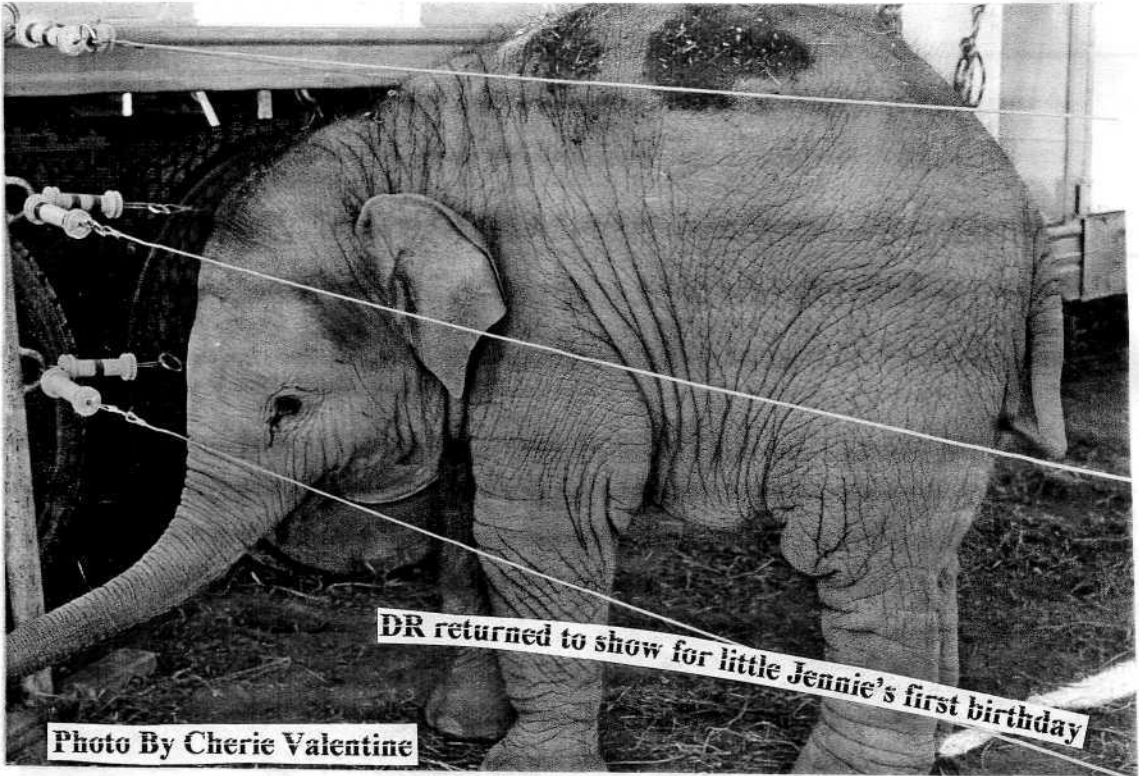
He will then rejoin his beloved Isla, his wife of 64 years who preceded him in death Oct. 2, 1998. They were married in 1934, he was 17, she was a charming 16-year-old Kansas farm girl. Their wedding night was spent in the tent that was their home on the road. They were paid 25 cents a week by the dog & pony show owned by his father, Obert. With that, he would buy a cigar and she would buy a Power House candy bar. They did a tight wire and trapeze act. They later became part owners of the show. DR moved the show to Hugo in 1941 from



DR AND ISLA

Mena, Ark. This was where Isla stayed while he was serving 36 months in the Army, 14 months with the 273rd artillery in Europe during WW II."

(Continued on Pg. 4)



DR returned to show for little Jennie's first birthday

Photo By Cherie Valentine



GRETHA FRISK



Jerry Hente



St. Leon Troupe

Fox 71

THE FOX !!!

My Dear Friends;

I have to start out in this letter with Steven Wallenda, as in the last letter I got the news to late, the letter had been already finished. Steven Wallenda was Gunther Wallenda's first born. When he was just 2 weeks old his mother Legay left with him and brought him to her mother, so the Wallenda family did not get to know him until he was 12. At that time Gunther was married to Margarita Coudillio, and the Wallenda family were performing with Circo Atayde. After that engagement Steven went back to his grandmother as he did not like it with the Wallenda family. In between time Leon Ford, Legays brother and also a former member of the Wallenda troupe taught Steven the highwire. So when Steven was 14 he came here to Sarasota to join his father and then new stepmom Sheela. This was the time the Wallendas were just about to recreate the 7 man pyramid for the date in Fortworth Tex. In one of the first rehearsals the wire gave and all of them fell, Gunther was the worst hurt. He lost all his teeth and well, he decided then that this was all for him. He quit. When Steven found out he was on the next plane back to California. He said the only reason he came to Florida was to learn to perform with the family and now that his father quit he had no interest in staying. Well this was his childhood years that I know of.

Next I was told he was drafted. What happened there I really do not know. I know he was several times married. From first marriage he had 3 kids and the first born was named Steven. I met his wife and children while I was in Okland, Calif. Then years passed, he came to Florida for a short stay. Then he went on again and he married a girl named Angel, who became very ill with cancer and they had to amputate one of her legs. She performed with Steven and after her operation went back on the wire with a false leg. They had one son which also was called Steven. For some reason Angel fell out of love with Steven and married an Arabian fellow. Shortly after she died. Steven tried and tried to get his son, but the courts would not give him to Steven. Steven went on and last I heard he married a girl named Charin and moved to Mexico, Tijuana to be exact.

In Dec. he had a heart attack and was trying to recover from this but then his heart just gave out. His fight with life ended there and he was put to rest in Mexico as his wish was. He was not a happy person, fought for years to get back on his feet to perform on the wire again. Now he was won his battle and will rest in peace. Through the years he had done mostly solo skywalks over bridges but was more a lone wolf. He daughter went to his funeral and as I was to understand the Padillo Family Circus helped out with getting his last resting place. (I hope I got the right name of the circus.)

Well, this will be a very sad letter as we lost a few more friends from our midst. Clyde St. Leon, he used to own the St. Leon teeterboard act to gether with his brother Norman. He had just

a few month ago moved back to Bradenton to be closer to his children as wife Lila (former Hoffman) had a stroke and it was better to be close to the children if they needed help. Clyde had spend a few weeks here in the convalescent center and was just getting better when Lilah received a call in the morning letting her know that he just passed away. Lila's sister Sonja and husband Norman and all the children and grandchildren came to give Lila suport. The only outsiders from the circus world came was Dante Morotto and yours truly, but there was a reason for that, because Greta Frisk Frielany had her funeral at the same time. I could make just one but I was told that Jacky LeClaire, Kenny Dodd and La Norma, Lothar and wife, Evie & Jimmy Fossett, Dollie Nock, Eva Barton and a few others attended the service. I feel bad that I was unable to attend both.

Lila St. Leon, 327 30th St. West, Bradenton, FL 34205.

Then we lost our ex county commissioner Jerry Hente, he also was for a few years the President of the Circus Festival. He will be greatly missed in our circus community as he was a great friend of the circus people.

I better hurry up with this letter before I get more bad news. I really get very depressed writing about all of my friends leaving us.

Tino Wallenda is expected to be back in Florida for a few weeks with his family. I guess to practise the 7 man pyramid as they have to perform it again in the near future.

Jeanette Williams had a pleasant surprise when her daughter Caroline and Timmy Loyal came home for a 5 week visit. But now they are back in Europe performing.

As I understand Vicky Unus had been visiting this spring the Ringling Circus while they were in New York. Also that she had been in the hospital, I do not know for sure what was wrong with her.

Derick Rosaire Sr went to New Orleans to visit with his daughter Pamela who is traveling with the black show. He celebrated his birthday there and told me that this was the greatest birthday he ever had. Naturally he went with his favorite lady Liza there. He called me as soon as he got back.

Nina Unus is as I predicted back at work, then off and then they call her back again. They just can not get along with out her. She must be a heck of a nurse that the doctor just can not handle it with out her.

OK, now to Showfolks. Tarzan Zerbini has graciously comitted himself to do the Showfolks Circus on Dec 11th. It will not be in the Robarts Arena, but underneath his brand new tent. At the last boardmeeting it had been decided that they will have an 11:00 am press show were also all the circus owners will receive a special invitation to. And the shows will be 2:00 & 7:30. So this is great news.

The other great news is that we need just one more sponsor for the Ring of Fame and I am trying to ask all you wild animal trainer maybe to get together and sponsor him Alfred Court. Blinco will be sponsored by Paul Kay, thank you Paul, I love you. John Herriott had a sponsor right off the bat. Please Mary Ruth or Johnny send me his name and address again.

(Continued on Page 6)

"END OF AN ERA"

"DR liked to see that big top unrolled and erected, all 395 feet of it. His biggest pride was probably his elephants. He owned 36 of them, more than anyone else. He had owned as many as 57 and some of his pachyderms are playing in many shows across the country today. Some have been used in movies since the early Tarzan days. Stories abound about DR. He could attest to many of them.

He was a licensed pilot and flew until a few years ago. He laughed when he told about having his plane serviced and the oil drain plug was left out and the engine froze and twisted out of its mount after he was airborne. He crash landed it in Little Rock and all walked away unhurt. "I was amazed that it flew for 20 minutes without oil," he recalled recently.

He was a fighter by necessity, he often said. "When your name is Dores, you have to defend your manhood quite often," he explained. Always looking for something new or a new angle to the business, DR once took his Circus aboard a ship he had purchased to play the Caribbean islands. After the tour he watched as the good ship Fairyland burned and sank at the dock in Nova Scotia. The animals had been safely removed.

DR liked motorcycles and bore the scars from one accident. He decided he had been a guinea pig for the Army once in Europe. He was detailed to ride his bike around an area purportedly to find a trail for heavy equipment. "They actually wanted to find out where land mines had been planted. They knew that one man was more dispensable than several."

One of DR's associates tells the story of how they removed \$50,000 in cash from their show in Canada. "DR was confident nothing would go wrong," he said. "So, we stuffed money in our shoes and in the lining of our coats and other places." At the border, the person ahead of DR was searched as was the person 2 places back of his associate. DR was right. Nothing went wrong.

DR is gone, but the stories will live forever." (*Hugo News*)
From the March, 1986 *White Tops*-D.R. Miller-A Circus Legend by Joe Cooper: "There are sharp images of the depression days of the 30s when empty drawers in the ticket wagons precluded the performers being paid. "In those days we felt lucky to have a job that provided room & board," recalls DR, "and when Isla and I married in Gaylord, Kansas, I paid the preacher \$3. He gave \$2. back to Isla as a wedding present. The next morning, Isla had the chicken pot but we took off on a 3 day trip to join the Fowler Bros. Circus in Indiana. I don't guess the thought of being something other than show folks ever crossed her mind. I could have never done it without Isla. During World War II, she and Dale (Kelly Miller's wife) kept the show on the road while Kelly and I were in the service."

In 1938, DR bought his first elephant, Hattie. "Some of my elephants have been movie stars in jungle movies, some have come to the show as babies and have been with the show ever since and others, after being trained, have gone to zoos and circuses all over the world. We remember them all, by name, as a part of our family. They are the biggest, the kindest, the most

understanding and the smartest animals that live on the earth.' When DR was asked to serve as an advisor to the Board of Directors of the Circus World Museum, Irvin Feld as also. At their first meeting with the board, Feld said, 'Ah, Mr. Miller, you're the fellow with all those elephants.' DR's response was quick, 'That's right, Mr. Feld,' as he took a chew on his Red Man, 'and I've got a circus to go with them too.'

Jim Judkins wrote in the 1985 Route Book, 'Isla can make you feel good just by laughing. Dorey can see more sitting in the tent with his eyes closed appearing to nap than most can see with binoculars. Just knowing he is in the tent causes everyone to do their best. One of his scowls could sober up even the drunkest soul or at least make him head for his sleeper. He would say 'good morning' to a Big Topper that everyone else forgot, compliment the cookhouse people when others might complain, check on a new baby, smile when he parked you in the morning, tell a joke that wasn't funny or straighten out the camels. Years ago, Dorey wasn't the "Old Man." Obert was. It took DR nearly 50 years to become the "Old Man."

Dorey has said, "I want to leave a life-long impression on each child who comes to visit my circus. The warm memories of the day spent with mom & dad watching the mammoth tent being pulled up by the elephants; the excitement he feels when watching the lion trainer work with the big cats; the kaleidoscope of unique smells, sounds and images of the tent circus that greets each youngster when he visits the showgrounds. When a young person comes to the circus he is greeted by so much activity and excitement that he will never forget the experience. I remember the special wonder and joy I felt when I saw my first circus as a child and I want to be the man who brings the circus to town. It's like playing Santa Claus every day of the year and I will keep bringing that special joy to the kids until the day the good Lord decides that it's time for me to stop." (Reprinted with permission of the *White Tops*, magazine of the Circus Fans Assn. of America).

From Jeff Brown's article, "The Monarch of the Circus," here are several Dorey Miller quotes: "Show business is all about pleasing the crowds. There was never a Carson or Barnes. We chose the names because they sound good together."

"When my wife, my brother and I started our circus in 1937, we had 4 dogs, 4 ponies, 2 monkeys, a Model A pickup and 68 cents between us. Tickets were 15 cents for kids and two bits for adults. We ate a lot of beans and a lot of baloney. I've stood in line for 2 hours to buy a 2 cent loaf of bread."

"Circus life is very different than other lifestyles. That's why so many circus people marry other circus people. Not just anybody can adapt to living like we do. But if you can handle it, you learn to love it. No matter what you might think, a circus is a great place to raise a family.

We have 4 soccer teams that play different teams as we travel, and we carry a school teacher with us everywhere we go. There's always so much for a kid to do it's hard for them to get into trouble."

(Continued on Page 6)

IN MEMORY OF D.R. MILLER

“D.R. WAS THE FIRST GUY I EVER WORKED FOR. HE GAVE ME MY START IN THE CIRCUS BUSINESS. HE WAS ALWAYS GOOD TO ME. HE WAS MY HERO, MY IDOL.”

THE EARL FAMILY HAS ALWAYS LEASED THEIR ELEPHANTS FROM D.R. - FOR ABOUT 25 YEARS AND HAVE ENJOYED HIS FRIENDSHIP.

THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER PERSON LIKE HIM.

**KEN “TURTLE” BENSON
AND
THE ENTIRE EARL FAMILY
AND STAFF OF
THE ROBERTS BROTHERS CIRCUS**

"THE FOX"

I do not want to spell his name wrong. And for Truzzi Rita Adler will sponsor him. I naturel ask his son first but he told me he really does not see any point in it. Circus Circus for Blinco explained that they have too many obligation. Well anyway I am so glad and happy that some one always comes thru. Thank you so much.

June Mills ask me to come back on the Board just till the end of her term, as she is 4 short. One resigned, one never showed up and 2 did not renew there membership also never bothered to come to the meetings. Well I agreed as it is just for a few months.

Mary Ruth had to leave town for two month. I do not know what show she is with, but lots of luck out there.

Gilbert is still waiting for a new kidney and he is not doing to well at this time, always very tired.

Cha Cha Meluzzi Zacchini is working very hard and telling me that she has to sent more and more free tickets out so she works works works.


Mireille she is back in town and back at work in the wardrobe dept. for Ringling.

Received a letter from Dolly Green Lauber. She is still working very hard with concession with husband Fritz. I guess they also will just keep on working and working.

Oh ya, Norman and Sonja St. Leon retired from the race horse bussiness and just enjoying life. They went to visit Italy and all of Europe and they both look great. One of there sons was a jockey and he told me that he knows the one who trained the horse called Wallenda and that it was a great horse.

Kathie Scott had to go back in to the hospital and is not in very good shape. After the big fire at there house she really toke it hard. Send George and Cathy a card. I know they will really enjoy it. George told me the house will be build back up. Adress: 2848 53rd St, Sarasota, FL 34234.

Now one more thing. Please mark the date on your calendar Jan. 9th 2000 Ringling Reunion and try to make it and make your reservations. Let me know as soon as possible. I hope many of you will come down from up north, west or central. If we have enough I can try to get a nice motel on discount. Look, we are getting less and less, lets make it one more time. Those who do not get my notice, I hope the rest of you will let them know.

All my love, Your Fox 

A beautiful big big young dog made himself for a few days at home at my place, but we found the owner and we gave him back, but he was such a lover.

At the Osolo Theatre were I worked for a few month they had a real nice rules of conduct sign, it said: Respect each person-share responcibility-criticize only ideas not people-keep an open mind-question and participate-attend all meetings-listen constructively. I thought these are good rules!?

"END OF AN ERA"

"The circus gets in your blood. I've seen successful

businessmen leave good jobs to come to work for the circus. Shoot, I mean they come to work feeding elephants. It really doesn't seem to make much sense until you're in it. Then it all comes clear for you. The key to my success has been a great wife and family. But I've lead something of a charmed life. I've been in 6 car wrecks; 3 truck wrecks, one of them head-on and 3 motorcycle wrecks and one of them was head-on. Oh, yes. I've had a great life."

From the Carson & Barnes Route Book: In 1923, DR Miller, 7 years old, rides his pony from town to town, passing out advertising for his father's circus and performs in the show. In 1927, Obert Miller opens his third short lived circus-Miller Society Circus. In 1937, the Miller family start the tiny, one-ring Miller Bros. Circus. In 1938, they rename their show the Al. G. Kelly & Miller Bros. Circus-the show expands to 2 rings. In 1938, the Millers bought Hattie, their first elephant, for \$800. She had a paralyzed trunk & needed extra attention. They took special care of Hattie & lived in the same trailer as Hattie. In 1942, the show expanded to 3 rings. In 1943, DR served in the Army. The show had 7 women truck drivers & had to deal with the hardships of rationing & experienced great business! In 1945, the circus featured 5 rings of action. In 1957, the Miller family had interest in 5 different tent circuses. One of the larger shows, the Tex Carson Circus is renamed Carson & Barnes Circus. In 1961, the Millers celebrated their 25th continuous year of circus ownership. In 1995, DR & Isla are inducted into the Circus Ring of Fame, Sarasota, FL.

.....
A poem by Patricia White appeared in the 1983 program, along with a beautiful colorful sketch of the circus and Dorey.

The Whistle Blows
the brass begins an overture by King
performers tug at wardrobe, then glide into their rings
But glancing toward the bandstand, each one becomes aware
of the presence of a legend
chewing Red Man, in his chair.
The challenges that he must face to open each spring
are handled with experience, a decade for each ring
Through broken bones and hearts and dreams
rewards that seem unfair, he glows with satisfaction
chewing Red Man, in his chair.
He holds the weight
of everything connected with his show
the trucks, the top, the cats and clowns
the wind that's apt to blow
An elephant that's off her feed
a black eye here and there, he contemplates each problem
chewing Red Man, in his chair.
The great respect this man deserves
he's earned through fifty years of dedication, sacrifice
each season's sweat and tears
Is a mud show really worth it
grief and joy beyond compare
YOU BET—ask D.R. Miller
chewing Red Man, in his chair.

The Evolution of the Tent as Theatre

By Billie Henderson Schuller

(Mid America Theatre Conference 3/13/98)

There were & are 2 styles of tents; the push pole and the bail ring. With both styles the lot is laid out and the stakes pounded in place. Some shows carried 2 sets of stakes so they could be in place in the next town when the show arrived. For a push pole tent, the center and quarter poles are positioned on the ground. For a bail ring tent, the center poles with rings and pulleys are raised & guyed out with 3 lines each. The canvas top is laid out, the sections laced together (attached to bail rings) and side poles temporarily set in place. The canvas crew aided by local men and boys work their way under the canvas and raise the top. Bail rings with block & tackle are hoisted, push poles are placed through the pole holes and up they go.

If you really want to know more about how the tent goes up, Bill Claus, a former trouper, presented an in depth paper at the Theatre Museum of Repertoire Americana, Mt. Pleasant, Iowa and there is a video.

Every effort was made to give the front entrance the appearance of a theatre lobby. Lights, marquee and lobby boards with lobby stills (also referred to as photo boards and stills) were strategically placed. The lobby stills would be photographed scenes of the play being presented or the publicity pictures of the members of the cast. The pictures of the scenes would come with the plays leased from the play agents & each member of the cast would have their own publicity stills. The ticket was purchased at the ticket box and the patron entered the tent theatre. Inside we find the seating. The bleacher seats (blues) of the circus were common early on, but the attempt to take on a legitimate theatre appearance required appropriate seating. Folding benches were used for a while, but eventually the chairs, still in use by The Schaffner Players were adopted. They are reasonably comfortable and are constructed to fold flat and load easily. On some shows all of the chairs were considered reserved and required an additional ticket, but others included a goodly number of outer rows of chairs in the general price of admission. Bleachers were still used in the very back and far sides.

Lighting was very important & advanced with the technology. The St. Louis Calcium Light Co., established in 1872, advertised oxygen and hydrogen furnished in tanks for all lighting needs. In 1905 the Chicago House Wrecking Co. advertised in *Billboard* 150,000 used incandescent lamps from the St. Louis Expo of 1903. Later, lights would be sold by the tent suppliers as well as light companies.

Once the electric light was available it became common to use electricity supplied by the local electric company. Elaborate light panels were used on some shows. Footlights and overhead lighting were installed as professionally as possible and houselights could be dimmed. The focal point and whole reason for the tent theatre was the stage and much attention was given to appearance. The size of the stage depended on the size of the tent. The typical dramatic stage in the mid-west averaged 40'

wide by 20' deep which allowed for a 30 by 15 foot stage setting. It was approximately 4' high, constructed of planks on hinged wooden jacks for leveling and sometimes covered with 4x8 plywood panels for a solid floor.

The front curtain would be a rolled drop or a draw. Either could be of the popular blue velour or a drop curtain could be canvas. A matching skirt for the proscenium completed the front.

Scenery consisted of flats & drops and except for special pieces, the furniture was borrowed from local stores in exchange for advertising. Local opera houses were often criticized for their limited amount of scenery when each play took place in the same living room. The tent companies strived to prevent such criticism and they were aided by a group of artistic scenery designers and painters. These scenery and show painters became regular advertisers in *Billboard*.

One of the most remarkable of the scenery designers was Jesse Cox from Estherville, Iowa. Most of his work consisted of curtains and drops for opera houses, but in the early 1900s his secret "Diamond Dye Process" provided painted drops which could be folded up, packed in trunks and easily transported without the paint cracking or flaking off. He also painted flats and wings for the tent theatres.

Tent repertoire had its greatest appeal in the middle west, many shows originated there and many canvas and tent manufacturers were located there. New markets for the canvas industry had become established in the early 1820s supplying the pioneers heading west.

This centralization of the canvas and tent industry may have contributed to a giant merger of tent manufacturing plants in the east. *Variety*, July 9, 1910, reported that The Hamilton Tent Works of Lowell, Mass. and the tent works of the Merrimac Mills Co. (1821), also of Lowell would be transferred to Lawrence.

The design and structure of the tent had reached its peak by 1920. A sturdy canvas manufactured from hemp could last for years. It naturally contracted when wet increasing its water shedding capabilities. The tight weave of the fabric enhanced the acoustics. Later improvements to the tent theatre companies consisted of sound systems, motorization, Model-T Ford axles for metal stakes and mechanized stake drivers.

Actor's Equity was organized in 1913 and joined the AF of L in 1917. The establishment of a Tent Rep. designation in the Actor's Equity Assn. (1925-26) signified that tent theatre was recognized as legitimate theatre. The mid-western states passed child labor laws to protect performing children. Many show people felt that tent repertoire was show business at its best.

By 1927 business was booming and the *NY Times* printed an article, Oct. 6, 1927 in the Sunday Supplement, "The Vast Tent Drama Industry: Facts and Figures About the Little Known Canvas Playhouses, Which Constitute a Business Bigger Than Broadway." *Variety*, June 6, 1928, reported, "Tent Shows' Best Season for 5 Years, Owners Cleaning Up; Everybody Happy." It looked as if there was nowhere to go but up. Then the stock market crashed in 1929; there was nowhere to go but down.

(Continued on Page 12)

RINGLING RED: Seattle-Key Arena: 9/16-19; Portland-Rose Garden Arena: 9/22-26; Salt Lake City-Delta Ctr: 9/29-10/3; Denver Coliseum-10/6-17.

RINGLING BLUE : Indianapolis-Market Sq. Arena: 9/15-19; Grand Rapids-Van Andel Arena-9/22-26; Buffalo-Midland Arena-9/30-10/3; Detroit-Joe Lewis Arena-10/7-10; Boston-FleetCtr-10/15-24; Pittsburgh-Civic Arena-10/27-31.

CARSON & BARNES CIRCUS: Green River, WY-9/16; Evanston-9/17; Ogden, UT-9/18; Wendover-9/19; Elko, NV-9/20; Winnemucca-9/21; Fallon-9/22; Carson City-9/23; Susanville, CA-9/24; Anderson, CA-9/25; Mt. Shasta-9/26; Coming-9/27; Oroville-9/28; Clearlake-9/29; Colusa-9/30; Vacaville-10/1; Cameron Park-10/2.

UniverSoul Circus: Chicago-9/22-10/4; St. Louis-10/7-10; Kansas City-10/13-17; LA-10/22-11/3; Houston-11/9-14.

Kelly-Miller Circus: Carrollton, IL-10/2; Carlinville-10/3; Staunton-10/5.

Clyde Beatty Circus: Dayton, OH-9/17-19; Springfield-9/20-21; Clarksville, TN-9/22-23.

Big Apple Circus: Reston, VA-Lake Fairfax Park-9/23-10/11; Lincoln Center NYC-10/21-1/9; Atlanta, GA-2/23-3/5; Somerset County, NJ-3/11-26; Boston-4/1-5/7.

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

BACK YARD

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IT IS WITH SAD HEARTS
WE MOURN THE LOSS OF
ROXY,
OUR AFRICAN ELEPHANT

AFTER AN EXTENDED
ILLNESS, SHE WAS LAID
TO REST ON AUGUST 31, 1999

WE MISS YOU, ROXY

ROBERT & PAT ENGESSER
MICHEAL ANDRES
DON & ROXY LUCE

WE WANT TO EXTEND A SPECIAL THANKS TO
GEE GEE ENGESSER, BUCKY STEELE,
JOHN CUNEO AND DR. THOMAS SCHOTMAN
FOR ALL THEIR HELP.

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY "TOOLS OF THE TRADE"

By Bucky Steele

We've all read how to do this or that, make implements and etc. pertaining to training of animals. I know that most of this knowledge was acquired by hanging around in the way. And writing about "how" in later years this trick to make the reader believe we actually put it all to practical use. But there is several of us still around who were there also and see this in a much different light. Especially on who we knew and where, to gain this secret knowledge.

Since I am totally retired and still use certain implements and tools, I would like to talk about a tool that is overlooked very often, but is an essential part of animal training if you wish to call it that. I speak as an authority on its use of many years. Its use, as well as it is right now being used for to haul all sorts of—I've even hauled written articles in it, by esteemed "authors" who write how it was all made or done. This tool that I'm talking about, its inventor pre-dates me, but I have learned and adapted to its function. It is called the wheelbarrow. In learning how to manipulate this wonderful lifesaver, it requires 2 hands and a sense of balance.

It can be used at high or low speed, depending on the operator's expertise, strength and dexterity. I have in my lifetime seen individuals that had not quite mastered the art, raising the handles too high or make a run for a ramp to dump, stub the bar across the front tire into the ground or ramp causing immediate stop, sending the propulsion expert flying over and into the contents, or skin the lower abdominal region severely. So, it's not foolproof or trustworthy in the hands of a novice, the same as whips, chairs and elephant hooks.

Here's how I found out the hard way of its proper use and of course, setting on bale of hay, reading the instructions in safety tips. No helmet, ear plugs, glasses or protective gear need be used and it does not come with a back up bell. Simply set it in position desired, preferably on level ground. Manipulate the shovel or fork in a fashion we professionals call the "Southern Roll." Picking up and rotating it upside down into this marvelous contraption, over and over till it's full to the point you can handle it. Advance more cautiously to where the contents are to be disposed of. This you can do over and over too. Till the object is reached, which of course is a clean area. Remember all the time, keep an equal pressure on each handle, this is called balance. The reason I am mentioning this is because most only have one tire in front.

The marvelous thing about this great machine is you don't need to worry about gas, never check the oil, only a little grease now & then in its axle and air pressure in the single tire must be maintained to the point where the load dictates the air pounds at sea level. If you follow these guidelines, you'll learn to love & cherish what it does for you. It's like any appliance, makes our lives easier.

When you have mastered all the techniques it offers, then you can sit down & watch the boss make whips, hooks, etc.

You are ready to progress to bigger things. So, when you write or open a training school, you must first have the proper equipment and the animal you're writing or teaching about. These tools of the trade, as the saying goes. I figure that learning anything you start at the bottom or behind and work up. If you have trouble or malfunction in this most important, basic convenience. I'm sure Sears, Wal-Mart or your local feed dealer can help you re-program it or send off for parts, warranty or maybe you'd just like a newer model. But before going for a '99 model, wait till 2000. I hear their coming out on the new model with a hand brake for down hill operation, like on a bicycle. And the new flashy colors will impress the watching crowd in your endeavors to be the best in the business. As the Army says, "Be all you can be."

I still have my first; it has an all steel wheel, wooden sides. I treasure it as a most prized possession. I know what it has done for me.

Author Bucky Steele, I have a B.S. Degree in Scientific Research on Proper Care and Use of Job Related Tools. I am certified and still practice what I write about.

"Rumblings" From Brian Nunn

Animals make good money, just ask any Hollywood trainer whose critters work in the movies. But.....

Let's say that animals on exhibition and in entertainment are banned. Who's going to help pay the huge insurance ('cuz that wouldn't stop), housing, feed and medical attention. Not to mention the night watchman's pay. Who's going to take care of the animals while the owners are away making money to support all of this? For me, this is a situation I would try to help. All I really need is feed and shelter, just like the animals. But what are we going to do for entertainment? It might be against the law to exercise or ride these animals. I'm sorry but I think these things should be considered by both sides of the fence.

*They might just get a great big foot in the door, (The N.Y. Times) just like Nixon did. There was a bunch of regret from all points after that Nixon bad judgement call (embargo act). By the way for those of you that think it's easy or cheap to have animals, go buy a horse, shelter it, insure it, feed, pay the vet, the shoer, pasture and exercise it for good health (it's necessary). It's just a fraction of what one elephant needs.

I have seen and heard the call, "Better off dead." If the government allows itself to get pushed that far, I fear for my sanity and the sanity of people in general. I also have to say if this much attention and money was directed toward welfare, crime, drugs in lower and middle schools, something might happen.

*On the lot in Du Quoin, Illinois: Horse Race Track—very nice rolling hills, hedges and a big pond in the middle of the race track. The clown on the show told P.C. that Bucky had had his elephants swimming in the pond the year before. So, P.C. took the elephants down to the pond.

(Continued on Page 12)



READ EVERY WORD..... BOY...IT'S SO NICE TO HAVE FRIENDS.... TODAY I GOT A PACKAGE IN THE MAIL FROM MY GOOD FRIEND RICHARD LISY OF PARMA,OHIO. WE HAVE TRADED VIDEO'S FOR ABOUT 12 YEARS..... RICHARDS LETTER READS: ENCLOSED ARE 3 TAPES OF FRANK POUSKA'S (FRANK WAS A FAN WHO TOOK LOT'S OF 8MM .BEFORE HE PASSED AWAY HE GAVE HIS FILM COLLECTION TO RICHARD LISY) ...BOY...AM I LUCKY... THESE THREE TAPES ARE SIMPLY GREAT..YOU ARE LUCKY ALSO BECAUSE I AM SHARING THEM WITH EVERYONE. IT

IS SO NICE TO HAVE FRIENDS LIKE RICHARD...RICHARD SHARES THE "GOODIES". I AM OFFERING THE FIRST TAPE IN THIS AD... I CALL IT MIXED BAG VOLUME ONE..... IT CONTAINS 12 ITEMS.. IT STARTS OFF WITH THE CLYDE BEATTY RAILROAD SHOW IN 52.GOOD SHOTS OF TRAIN & ALSO CLYDE BEATTY. THERES ALSO CLYDE BEATTY 57 & 58. NEXT UP IS KING BROTHERS 1954 WITH THE YELLOW TRUCKS. YOU SEE THE PARADE WITH THE STEAM CALLOPE-BACK YARD SCENES--IT'S A GREAT LOOK AT KING BROS. NEXT UP IS HAGEN BROS 1954--SEE THE BACKYARD,SPEC, THE BEAR ACT & WAYNE NEWMANS HORSES. NEXT UP IS GREAT FOOTAGE OF RINGLING 1954 (MIKE MARTIN USED SOME OF THIS ON ONE OF HIS TAPES) NEXT UP IS THE RINGLING WINTER QTRS 1954.. THERES A SHORT SHOT OF THE CIRCUS HALL OF FAME..NEXT UP WE SEE RINGLINGS ADVANCE ELEPHANT UNIT VISIT FRANKS HOUSE. NEXT IS RINGLING JULY 14,1956 AT CANTON,OHIO...RINGLING 1957 AT THE COLUMBUS FAIRGROUNDS... NEXT UP IS EXTREMELY RARE FILM OF TOM PACKS CIRCUS..AT THE CLEVELAND STADIUM...NOW WE VISIT THE KING BROS LOT IN 1956 & THE HAGAN BROS LOT IN 1956. THIS IS SOME OF THE BEST FOOTAGE I HAVE VIEWED IN YEARS....THERE ARE NO FANCY TITLES. IT'S JUST THE WAY IT CAME TO ME. I DID NOT WANT TO LOSE A GENERATION...IT IS ONE HOUR & 24 MINUTES OF GREAT VINTAGE CIRCUS. AS ALWAYS, THE TAPE IS ONLY TWENTY BUCKS & I PAY THE POSTAGE. I WILL BE OFFERING VOLUMES 2 & 3 LATER. YOU WILL SEE CRISTIANI BROTHERS 58,59,60 PLUS RARE BEERS & BARNES 1965,RARE ROBBINS BROS FROM 38 THAT HAS NOT BEEN OFFERED BEFORE. THERS SO MUCH GOOD MATERIAL HERE...BOY AM I LUCKY....THANKS TO MY GOOD FRIEND RICHARD LISY.YOU SHOULD THAN: HIM ALSO.

MIXED-BAG-1-

Help Stamp Out
"NOBODY ASKED ME"

TAKE A KID TO A CIRCUS!

IT'S
ONLY \$20

ANNOUNCING

WHEN I'M GONE ALL MY VIDEO'S(I GOT A BUNCH) WILL GO TO THE CIRCUS WORLD MUSEUM TO MR FRED DALLINGER....



Fla. residents add
7 % Sales tax

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO:

Mr. Jim Ridenour
3918 Freedom Ave.
Sarasota FL 34231-4506

"RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY".....

Judy being the lead elephant, went first. She waded in about half way up to her legs, then took another step and disappeared (Ker-splouh!). After what seemed a long time; a trunk tip comes up out of the water like a periscope. I've been told by some of the best elephant men in the country that this had happened to them and the first time they saw it, they were startled. Anyway, Judy had walked in the water, then laid abruptly down on her side. Scared me pretty good. Well, Judy and Betty romped around and played submarine-Mary splashed around in the shallows and had a good time.

"The Evolution of the Tent as Theatre".....

All dramatic tent shows did not immediately close when the Great Depression hit. Some maintained business as usual into the late 1930s, but even as the economy improved, the times were changing. It was an era. "A period of time in which a new order of things prevails." It had a beginning and an end. There is a general consensus that the era had ended by 1940 but there were some who carried on the tradition. The Schaffner Players, owned by Neil and Caroline Schaffner, had an established territory and following in Iowa, and they trouped on. *Variety*, May 16, 1962, reported, "Folding of Last Toby Troupes Ends Another Show Biz Tradition." But it didn't!

Jimmie Davis had performed with and learned from the Schaffners. He bought the tent, the show & the name and trouped on. In a strange turn of fate, the *Quincy (IL) Herald*, that reported the beginning of tent theatre in 1851, reported Feb. 23, 1998. "An American tradition more than 145 years old may have ended Feb. 20 with the death of James V. Davis." We will hope that it didn't.

Passing Of Our Animal Friends

Almost 2 weeks after "Pete" died at the Beatty winterquarters, "Conti" passed away on September 3rd at about 8 AM. She, like Pete, had put up a good fight to live. I would like to thank Fred Logan and his family for all they had done to help both Pete and Conti. I know this is hard on all of them, losing two old friends within two weeks of each other. Fred's daughter, Omi, had worked with both elephants on the Beatty show. I would also like to thank Dave Hoover, who put in a good word for the Logans to come to winterquarters to take care of Pete and Conti.

*Bob Kitchen says, "My recollections of Pete and Conti are part of what developed my love for elephants. I can remember feeding Pete part of our ice cream cones as we stood and talked to Fred Logan. Many years ago when Beatty was in town, some tough guys decided to start something. Little Bobby Cline attached some chains to Pete's work collar, got on her neck and ran her thru the midway. The toughs scattered and that was the end of the fight. I remember Conti as a quiet and patient elephant that gave rides on the midway. When I saw her in June, they were treating one of her feet for infections between the toes."

NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS

Paul Holley writes, "I saw Sterling-Reid 9/4 in Grayslake, IL. Dutch Crawford said a new big top is coming soon. It's going to have a red exterior, red & white sidewalls and purple and gold interior. It will be 14' wider and 7' longer. This year's marquee is new. The show does 4 shows on Saturdays and 3 on Sundays. The 3:30 show I saw had a good three quarters house and there were big lines on the midway and at the red wagon for the 5:30 show! It was a very entertaining show, the 3 rings of Arabian Liberty horses and a 7-girl Mexican-themed aerial ballet were especially good. Joe Frisco has the 2 Gary Johnson elephants in a fast-paced turn. Very well groomed and healthy. This was a stronger show than 1998."

*Bob Kitchen writes, "The Wayne McCary Tent will have a luncheon on Sept. 17 at the Big E in Springfield, MA. Vidbel Circus did a 3-day stand in Andover, MA for the Lions Club. They averaged over 1000 per show and the Lions made a nice profit. Everyone was happy."

REMEMBERING D.R. MILLER BY HIS FRIENDS

David Tetrault, Ringling Chaplain, writes, "I sat next to DR last time the big show played Williamsburg, VA. Stories started to pour out. The performance became background for the man himself. Tobacco juice all over my left arm. Vivid memories. Hospitality."

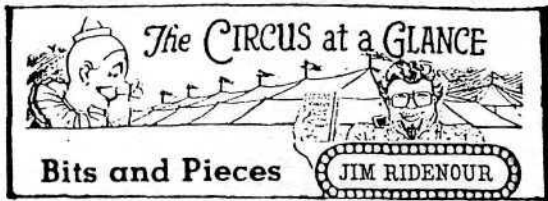
*Ben Trumble writes, "Along with Hoxie Tucker, DR was one of the great ones and the shows he leaves behind are the legacy of a man who never quit."

*Paul Holley says, "D.R.'s passing sadly marks the end of an era in outdoor show business. A few weeks ago, my dad, John Holley, called the office in Hugo to get a Carson & Barnes date for northeast Iowa. The guy on the other end of the phone found the date for him. Dad then asked if D.R. was traveling with the show. The guy said, "I'm D.R." Dad replied, "You don't know my name but you know me by sight because I've been hanging around your shows for 40 years." They had a nice, long chat. D.R. was kind of lonely having lost Isla and most recently, Ted Bowman. Dad had planned to write D.R. a letter reminiscing about the old days."

*Harvey Winckles writes, "On August 1, I went to Adrian, MI to attend the Carson & Barnes Circus. As I was walking near the box seats, I asked where the circus fans were seated and D.R. was seated near the box seats and said, "I am D.R. Miller, owner of the circus." He saw that I had a program and said he would sign it. He signed the program DR & Isla Miller to Harvey. After the show he was sitting by the baby elephant. We talked about the Ringling male elephant that had died."

Rumor has it that Dorey was on Schell Bros. Circus and when he was about 10 or 11, Gee Gee's mother put a wig on him and he performed on the swinging ladder! Anyone remember this?

Jim Piehl reports Bob MacDougall is "home and doing just great. He has a therapist come 3 times a week and can walk a little more each time. It's just great."



As I write this, it is Sunday, 15 Aug. I have been home from the Kronkenhouse one week. I still go for out patient (torture) therapy 3 times a week.

I wish to thank you all from the bottom of my heart for the many cards & phone calls. You will never know how much they meant to me. My daughter Michele could not believe the volume of well wishes. My friend, Amos Bolieau, said he wasn't worried about me. He was concerned about Rube. My buddy, Rube, is fine. She missed me for sure but things are back to normal and the magic word is "Let's go by-by." She leaps over the coffee table when she hears that.

Went by the nursing home yesterday to visit Robert McCormick. Curly is doing fine.

The phone rang and it was Heidi Herriott. We were on Circus USA together back in the 80s. She's just as beautiful as ever. So bright, sharp as a whip. I wish I had her energy. She is putting her intelligence & energy to good use as the circus rep for the Outdoor Amusement Business Assn. In the short time she has been on the job, she has produced many "positive" results that will benefit the circus for years to come...If at all possible, join this organization. It will be money well spent.

This column is called "Circus Bits & Pieces" for a reason. I discover Bits & Pieces here and there and want to share them with you. Here's a cute bit from the Ringling 1947 Press and Radio Magazine.

The day after the circus came to town, my wife, a teacher of the first grade, received this excuse for the absence of one of her pupils. I have been out of the US for 28 months and this document seems to me peculiarly American: "Dear Teacher: Education, you know is a lot of things. It is reading & writing and ciphering. It is yes, please & no, thank you. It is the washing of hands & the use of forks. It is pencils & scissors and paste and erasers and chalk dust. It is the smell of a schoolroom early Monday morning. It is the excitement of vacations. It is autumn bonfires and sleds and puddle wadding.

Yes, education is a lot of things. It is a brass band blaring and a calliope tooting. Education is a woman shot from a gun, a man on a tightrope, a seal playing a tune with his nose. It is side show barkers, clowns, lions, cotton candy, cowboys and spangles. Education is the wonderment of new things & new sensations. It is, in short, a circus! That's why Ginger wasn't in your classroom yesterday. Excuse it, please.

Lt. James Sherman. Readers Digest

Here's a fictional obituary I wrote back in 1995. It could, sometime in the future, prove to be true. Anyway, it is "food for thought."

Recent Deaths-The Traditional Circus

A resident of the good old USA since 1775, the traditional

circus was born in Philadelphia, PA. The traditional circus was well known throughout the land and loved by children of all ages. She was considered an American tradition along with hot dogs, baseball and apple pie. For over 200 years she brought joy to millions. Her specialty was the entertainment of families. She was one of the few entertainments that was never, not once, censored. She had more friends than Santa Claus. She personified good, clean moral family entertainment. Her death has left most of the nation with a sense of sadness.

The traditional circus was murdered. It was a brutal death. Her death did not come swiftly. It was a long, agonizing, drawn out affair. The traditional circus could have been saved from the brutal torture and murder. The entire world knew for years who the killers were. They did not react in time. They ignored the many warnings. Enough stories of the traditional circuses glory, popularity & power have suffered to fill several warehouses. The traditional circus received many awards in her lifetime. Her greatest joy was the smiles she brought to children's faces.

A graveside service was held with a very small group attending. It is believed that most mourned in silence at home as they were ashamed to show up at the services. They had a guilt complex as most knew in their hearts that they could have helped prevent this unnecessary murder. The traditional circus will be missed by her many friends as she was one of a kind.



FAMOUS CIRCUS QUOTES

Here's my favorite Circus Quote:

"To be good, mankind must be happy. To wreath the face of humanity in smiles for a time, to loosen the chains that hold man captive to his duties and return him to them better fitted for his obligations, is the mission of amusement and the one great desire of moralist is, and ought to be, that it be pure and wholesome. This is the mission of amusement and the circus, with its innocent sights of joy for the children and its power to make all men and women, children again for at least one day, comes the nearest of any form of amusement to fulfilling this mission

Aft T. Ringling, 1899

Got a note from Cam Criddlebaugh of High Point, NC. Reflection on my Hoxie-GAC Days. Said he likes my column. So far, no constructive criticism.



I have been busy all week putting together my Ringling super collection. Those of you who bought my Cole Bros. Super Collection (over 150 of you) will find this one will surpass the Cole tape. With 15 years of collecting Ringling material, I took and picked out 2 full hours of the cleanest, the most unusual, the best. It's a super collection taken from (Continued on Page 14)



the private collections of Herman Brandmiller, Kent Ghirard, Sarah Chapman, the late Dorothy Konyot, the late Bill Hill, the late Bill Gilliam, Jimmy Eaton, Barrie Sloan and other unknown sources. Starting in the 30s, my Ringling Super Collection is sure to thrill and delight all. It's only 20 bucks & I pay the postage.

P.S. Talked to Henry Bush last night. The 2000 Convention is shaping up. It promises to be 4 days of non-stop circus fun. Plan now to attend. Sarasota has more stars than the heavens and you will get to meet and greet many of them in person. Till next time, "Take a kid to a circus." Jim

*****Remembering D.R. Miller****

Brother J. Francis Dolphin writes, "The Carson & Barnes Circus goes on. With tears in their eyes, the performers put on a great show, probably one of the best in lasting tribute to D.R. Miller. I saw the show in Ft. Morgan with Fr. Paul Sykora, a Maryknoll priest. We visited with the Little Sisters of Jesus, Joel, Monica and Priscilla. They are all doing fine.

We will be remembering D.R. Miller in our prayers and especially at Mass. A great man, an excellent host. I first saw the show here in Colorado a little more than 2 years ago. I had just arrived from Chile where I have been for 25 years. My home being in Massachusetts, I saw a lot of circuses but I was deeply impressed in seeing this one. It reminded me of Ringling back in the 50s under the "Big Top."

I was introduced to D.R., he took me by the hand and told me about his circus, the animals, performers, etc. He made sure that I sat in the best seat in the house to see this great show. His deepest love and more so, he was there at every performance to enjoy the show but more so to applaud the performers of the show, his show, the Carson & Barnes Circus.

A great man, D.R. Miller, and it is our prayer that now he is in the "Great Backyard" with his Risen Lord for all eternity and with his wife and family watching over the Carson & Barnes Circus from above. May his soul and all the souls of the faithfully departed rest in peace."

I asked Al Dawley how the little dog of Ken and Vesta Austin (The Grimaldis) was doing since the accident that took the lives of his owners. "He is doing great and the lady across the street from Ken & Vesta has him and she took him with her when she went north for the summer."

The 18th Annual Clownfest will be held Sept. 16-19 in Seaside Heights, NJ. Visit their site at: <http://members.aol.com/clownfest/1999>.

*Don West writes, "On August 28, members of the Orrin B. Davenport/Jake Mills Tent of Cleveland, attended the afternoon performance of UniverSoul Circus. In addition to a

spectacular show and performance, we were treated cordially by the show's management, staff & performers. Judy Fraire flew in from Atlanta, arriving at 3 AM, just to speak to our group about the show. She brought everyone in attendance a "goodie bag" containing a t-shirt, pennant and press kit. Upon arriving at the lot, she introduced us to Cedric Walker, founder and owner of UniverSoul, who made us feel extremely welcome as fans. The show graciously seated us in front of their regular box seats, practically on the ring curb, to view the show which everyone enjoyed. Just prior to the conclusion of the show, Cedric escorted us to the back door to greet and meet the performers as they existed the tent, followed by a tour of the backyard. We were all grateful for the genuine interest they had in us as members of the CFA and both Judy and Cedric expressed interest in joining the CFA too. They certainly make Fans feel welcome on the show!

From the Ringling Home Page-9/1: Ringling has presented the USDA with the findings of a comprehensive internal review of the events surrounding the 7/26 death of Benjamin, a young Asian elephant. The voluntary report included background information about Benjamin, detailed documentation of the day's events, the final necropsy reports and analyses of the findings by independent experts. The final necropsy report from Texas A&M Univ. confirmed the initial findings that the elephant drowned. Experts from the Elephant Resource Group of Oregon & the Ohio State Univ. Veterinary Hospital suggest that a cardiac arrhythmia (an irregularity in the rhythm with which the heart beats) may have caused the elephant to lose consciousness in the water, resulting in drowning. An EKG is the only means to diagnose such a condition while the animal is alive. Because the elephant's history & medical records showed that he appeared to be a normal, healthy young elephant, EKGs were not part of the elephant's regular veterinary checkups. "No one will ever know with absolute certainty what caused Benjamin's sad and unexpected death. The loss is keenly felt not only because he was such an important part of the Ringling family, but also because of the company's longstanding & unique commitment to the welfare and survival of the Asian elephant species," said Dr. Wm. Lindsay, Ringling Bros. Director of Veterinary Care. Please their visit site: www.ringling.com

Also from Ringling 9/2: On August 16, at 9:57 PM, a baby male Asian was born to Emma and Charlie at the Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation. He weighed 250 lbs., 39" high and 43" long. It was Emma's first birth. She is an older mother (30) and the calf is small, but he is nursing and bonding with her. Circus fans and animal lovers everywhere will be invited to help choose a name for him in the near future.

News From Heidi Herriott: Regarding the Freedom of Information Act-The USDA Animal Care division notes in their Animal Welfare Report for 1997 that "they have launched a project that will eventually make most program information available via the World Wide Web. Under the project, AC has already made the names and locations of all licensees and registrants available. It is also making the most recent inspection reports for these individuals available and will continue to add additional information in the future." It is important that all animal exhibitors realize that everyone has access to your inspection reports. There is absolutely nothing you can hide! You should ask Animal Care, in writing, for a copy of your report and check it. If you disagree, respond back, in writing, with factual information to be made part of your permanent record. FOIA can be useful to our industry as well & OABA will look into those possibilities.



This photo of D.R., Isla and little Barbara taken on the lot about 1949. (Isla Miller collection)



This photo taken in 1941 depicting the lovely Isla and D.R. That is not a costume D.R. is wearing, it is a U.S. Army uniform

CAN YOU NAME THEM???

Mary Jane Miller, 3rd From Left



**Thanks to Mary Jane
For The Photo**

CUBA, EARLY 50s

**Back Yard
1522 Clinton Blvd.
Bloomington, IL 61701**