

BACK YARD

Volume IV, Issue #62

February 28, 1999

SCHELL BROS. CIRCUS, 1929: "THE BIG TOP" By Carl DeVere, Sr.

I met Gee Gee, Georgetta, Zelmar Engesser in 1929. She was three, I was six. First cousins; her mom was my dad's sister. We became best friends when dad went to work for her dad-my Uncle George. As the years progressed, I learned more about the circus from Gee Gee than anyone else in show business. She was a born-trouper-performer. My earlier, repertory show-days-since birth, were a prelude to circus days. Gee Gee introduced me to the *Big Top* as we grew up together.

Schell Bros. Circus put on a street-parade, a mile long, every performance day. The parade consisted of horse and pony riders in cowboy & Indian outfits, performers in costume, three band wagons, one with a calliope, ornate animal wagons, camels, and, of course, elephants in the lead. Gee Gee and I rode in the parade; her as an Indian princess and I as a cowboy. Her oldest sister, Vates Lola, rode a beautiful white horse, dressed in the spangles of a movie star. She was billed as "Vates Lola-Hollywood movie sweetheart." Uncle George always referred to his wife, Vates, and his two daughters as, "My Beautiful Blondes."

In August, when Gee Gee and I celebrated our birthdays together, the actual dates were only 3 days apart, we were showered with gifts. Everyone on Uncle George's circus tried to outdo the other by giving us presents. Being one of the owner's daughter and a favorite nephew were valuable assets for accumulating loot!

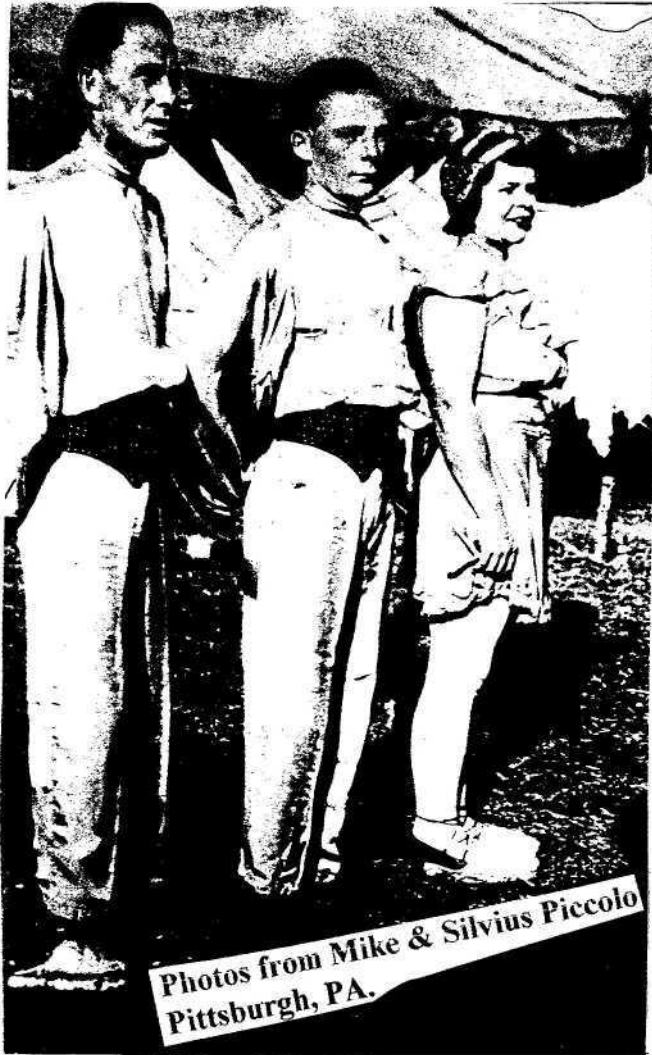
When Gee Gee's sister, Roxie Roto, was born, the birthday parties included her, and there was even more loot. Now, fifty-some years later, I haven't seen Roxie since our last circus birthday party together. How strange fate and life treats us. I can't help remembering that I wanted to marry Gee Gee when we were pre-schoolers, but Aunt Vates said first cousins were not allowed to marry. During the "Heyday Years," Jack Hoxie traveled



Baby Bolo with Gee Gee
Summer 1929

with Schell Bros. as an extra added attraction for the Wild West after-show. He was a western movie star of some renown. My Dad's father was the patriarch of show folks. Also the father of Gee Gee's mother, O.J. Swenson, "Otto" for short, ruled the roost when he visited the show.

(Continued on Page 4)



Photos from Mike & Silvius Piccolo
Pittsburgh, PA.

Connors Trio 1937
Al, Jimmy, Bertha

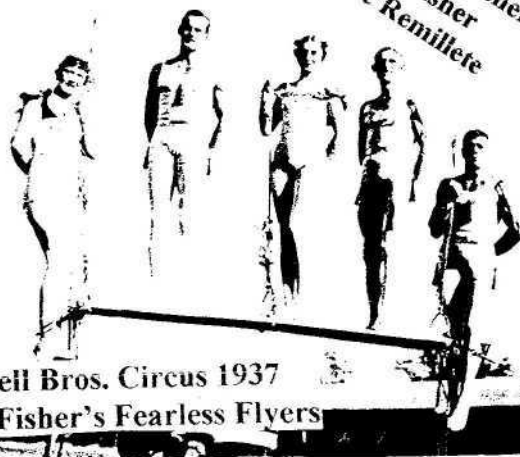


Russell Bros. Circus-1935
Irene Ledgett,
Sally Rand (visiting show)
Irene O'Hara

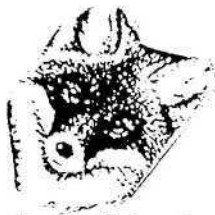
Frances Fisher (Mrs. Bob)
Eldon Day
Maxine Fisher
Bob Fisher
Joe Remillete



Mills Bros. Circus



Russell Bros. Circus 1937
Bob Fisher's Fearless Flyers



THE FOX !!

My Dear Friends;

Well here I go again. Do not know how much there is to say but as I am writing it always comes to me.

First of all, we lost two more dear friends out of our midst. Mario Zacchini closed his eyes for ever. He died at the St Joseph Hospital in Tampa of kidney failure. He was the last of the 7 brothers. I do not have to explain anything of the Zacchinis, as they were world famous for their canonball attractions. Most of them after they retired went in to the carnival business. Rest in peace dear friend.

We also lost Rita Block. She was of the Zerbini family and came over to the USA with her husband Gerhard Block who performed on the highwire with the Zerbini boys. Also the whole family did an acrobatic act. She was a very quiet sweet person and will be very much missed by her loved ones.

Richard Hemeon, husband of Brenda also past away. He was a very good man wonderful friend of circus people, former owner of the Grog Shop. He donated many things to the Showfolks Club. He will be missed by maney. Brenda, we all feel with you, life goes on and time will help you to heal your hurt and sorrow.

The father of Hans Winn also passed on to a better place. He was in his 90, and Hans had just been visiting him in Falifornia, when the message came that he just died, so Hans had to turn right around and go back for the last time to say good bye. Hans, he had a long good life and he needed to go on to the Higher Place.

I wanted to go back to the reunion and tell you the people who were there but I lost my list. I can tell you that Dorothy Yerkis was there from California and told me that both her sons are doing great. We also had a whole bunch of people from Gibsonton here like Billy Rogers, JoAnn Wilson and others. Alberto Zoppe; attended all the reunions as he had been in all the shows performing. One of the reunions where Allan Hill showed up the German Club had also its meeting there and Allan went in there believing this was the reunion. He went in the food line were he was told that he could not eat with out a ticket, so he offered to pay. They were not nice to him so as he did not know anyone he desided never to go to any other reunion. When I discovered him and saved him from his big disapointment he was OK. There were a few others who ended up in the German Club. but I fished

them all out and go them to our people.

I attended the last Club meeting and they decided to discontinue all the brunches. I know lots of people did not come no more as the price for them was to high, at the Shrine Club they could get it for \$3.00 and the Club was \$4.50. The Flea Market still will have the cookhouse.

The Club has in there kiddy \$11,000. But now the big bills are there \$8,000. for taxes and \$4,000. insurance so there goes all the profit.

The German Club moved out from the Club as the found a cheaper place. As I understand the contract had not been up, but that I am not sure of. Oh yes, the quorum for a meeting I was told is now 15 people. I do not know when it was changed. But this is what I was told.

Rietta Jordan Wallenda and daughter Lyric will be going this year working for the Nock in a park also will be Venecio Wasques and his daughter.

Ring of Fame, well it was beautiful. The weather as we were told would be stormy, but it turned out. the storm came late at night.

Master of Ceremonies was Stephen V. Smith, and he did a wonderful job. He started off with asking everyone to give a last big applaud to the two performers we just lost Giostino Repinski Loyal and Pio Nock. Then he went on to the introduction of the inducties with first telling everyone what it means to be a performer.

I really enjoyed seeing Albert Rix again after all these years. He was limping as he had fallen on the ice before he left. He did not wanted to come here because of his limp but daughter Jeanette said that he could not let all us people down, so he came and told us that one of his oldest bears limps worse then him from old age. Albert also told us that when he was a little boy he told his mother that he wanted to become an animal trainer so she gave him a snail and he kept telling the snail "Snail, snail please come out, out of your house." This was his first training experiament.

Mrs. Mroczkowski thanked everyone for the well deserved honor to her husband. Mrs. Captain Heyer was over joyed and thanked everyone and so did her children. The Palacios, there were just three of them there Raul was unable to attend, they also thanked everyone for the honor which was given them.

Kennett Feld was unable to attend, as he was at the Monti Carlos Festivals. After the envailing everyone was invided for a reception at the Club, which Jenny and Andy prepared.

(Continued on Page 5)

"SCHELL BROS. CIRCUS".....

George and Vates (Gee Gee's father & mother) managed to put him in their bed while they moved to another trailer, always made sure he had the best seat at ringside, and in the cookhouse. In general, they treated him like visiting royalty. All members of the circus catered to Otto, "Old Man Swenson," when he was aboard. I don't believe anyone was instructed to do so; they just knew it would please George and Vates. In those days, there was a lot more respect for one's elders. (Thanks, Bud. OK, Gee Gee and Roxy. How about some of your memories!)

"BAYWATCHED"

By Mike Cecere

On a sub zero, snowy day a fellow farmer called to tell me to turn on my TV as there was a very educational show on then. The show turned out to be the well known "Baywatch," second only to WCW Wrestling in popularity worldwide.

And you might ask, why would a bunch of farmers look on "Baywatch" as an educational show? That's easy to explain. You never know when you might be combining wheat or baling hay near the beach and have to rescue someone! So we view "Baywatch" as an educational program.

Anyway, this episode had a circus theme to it. Seems a circus/carnival had come to the beach and one of the attractions was a trained orangutan exhibited in "Hollywood circus style" (in chains, of course!)

Plus they had a height challenged "trainer" (small person) who in Hollywood circus style was an abusive drunk, threatening to withhold food and comfort from the great ape, which no doubt, added to the storyline but did little good for our general image.

As the plot thickened, one of the ultra white tooth bonded beach bunny lifeguards questioned the validity of keeping exotic animals in captivity and asked to see the show's permits.

No doubt she came up with that brainstorm while working on her tan. Innvendo aside, it's yet another example of Hollywood's warped portrayal of circus and animal people. It always seems to be negative or false in some fashion. And the American public which lives on television, takes it all in as truth.

Even good animal people who work in films get lured in to projects that realistically they have no control over. It's a paycheck just as working a Shrine circus production or park date would be. It's not their fault.

What we can only hope is that by the "Hollywood" types mixing with good animal people that it influences them in how they stage their TV shows and movies.

But it sure is irritating to see hard working, animal loving people be made fools of on screen. We must tho consider the source. Out there on the "Left Coast" they seem to champion the ugly side of society while they mock the good. That's okay tho, as they are in the last Marxist state besides Cuba and like the former USSR (California) they too shall pass from the scene. We've got time on our side!

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE FEB. 19, 1999

"Barnum's Kaleidoscope Extends Rehearsal Period—Ticket Sales Suspended And Refunds Offered" (Vienna, VA)

Feld Entertainment today announced a rehearsal extension for *Barnum's Kaleidoscope* at the Sarasota County Fairgrounds and a change of Preview Performance dates. Patrons who have purchased tickets will receive a full refund and will be first on the list for a limited number of previews, which will be rescheduled at a later date. "*Barnum's Kaleidoscope*" is unlike any entertainment experience ever produced anywhere," said Stuart Snyder, President and CEO of Feld Entertainment. "It is a long-term project, and we need a little more time to get it ready for public performance. We apologize for any inconvenience, but at Feld Entertainment, we never compromise on quality. We only strive for perfection. Everything must be exactly right before we open our doors to the public."

Beginning Monday, Feb. 22, patrons who purchased tickets at the Sarasota Square Box Office or a Ticketmaster outlet, may return their tickets to the place of purchase for a full refund. If tickets were purchased by phone through Ticketmaster, please call Ticketmaster to have your credit card credited. All patron names will be automatically added to a special preview guest list, and patrons will be notified when the rescheduled dates are confirmed. (I would like to thank Catherine Ort-Mabry, of the Ringling office, for sending this press release.)

Yern Mendonca** says the correct name **Circus Chimera** is using in the L.A. area is **El Circo Del Millonario "Huicho" Dominguez**. The first half of the show is fast paced; the 2nd half is celebrity funny stuff, all in Spanish. They open their regular season 3/20-21 in Imperial, CA and 3/22-24 in Chula Vista.

Not to many came as everyone was afraid of the storm warning.

Wayne Pills is doing better but will have to have a neck brace on for the next 4 month.

Bello Nock receive a great honor in Lausanne. They presented him with a gold medalion and \$15,000 dollars for best actor presenting the USA. He also was on the television special for seif 50 years aneversery.

There will be a new Ringling show under the bigtop opening right here in Sarasota. Right now they are rehersing and still hiring acts for the show at the Sarasota County Fairground. I was told to try to enter is harder then entering Fort Knox. The show is suposed to open in March at the Sarasota Square Mall. There are supposed to be no trailer taking on the road.

Was told that Delilah Wallenda went to do a sky walk. The trailer in which Tammy Wallenda was living with her children was totally wrecked. She did not drive it this trip as she was just to fired and also wanted to stay with her cats. Well now the poor thing is homeless. All the performers are helping to at least have the children sleeping. She is trying to find something livible, but with the constant travel it is very hard on all of them. Tennessee also was very hard to work as they require a net over the arena and the Fish and Game Ward will not let them use any props, so the cats thought it was play time. Also she is not to use her older cats. This is the USDA decision, so the poor cats cry there head off, as the like to go in. Anyone who has experiance and knowledge will tell you it would be good for the cats to enter the arena. But like I always say, the USDA should learn what is best and right for the cats and not just make their own decision. For instance, ask a doctor like Dr Martin, who at one time was the adviser for the USDA and also was the vet from the Ringling show and really has the knowledge of wild animals and special show animals. This goes for all show animals to. The activist, well I like to put them all in a cage with the wild animals, then they will learn best how to handle them. Why dont they start looking at the homeless people. I love my animals and I treat them like my children, heck they are my children. I even have a pet duck right now. She comes when I call her, she likes me to pet her, she likes me to pick her up and show her loving. I love watching her she is so sweet. She is a Mallard duck.

Well I will close with this before you all think I am nuts, because I am nuts, nuts about my animal family. Two

little horses, two Sisilian dunkeys, two birds and 4 pomeranians. Oh Yes and 5 fish that besides my duck.

Lots of Love

Always You Fox



(A letter from John G. Martin, D.V.M., Ashland, KY. to Jenny dated January 28, 1999.)

Dear "Fox",

In a recent telephone conversation with you, the subject of USDA control of performing animals and some of their ideas were mentioned. As a matter of interest, I saw an article in my wife's circus collection about some work we did in this respect some years ago. As I read this article, I had thoughts of doing a story for Cherie Valentine's Back Yard magazine and mention my experiences with this business. Since our phone conversation, I hope this letter will suffice.

In the mid-1970s the Animal Welfare Act was created. The USDA-APHIS knew nothing about "our type" of animals and established 4 geographic regions in the United States in which to hold meetings with the Federal Veterinarians to inform them of the proper requirements for housing, maintenance etc. of the exotic, performing animals. An expert in the field of what I call "circus medicine" was asked to address these veterinarians and describe proper housing and management procedures as well as to answer any questions relating to this type animal program.

In response to the request from the USDA, 4 seminars were held. On the East Coast, Dave Hoover addressed the group. In the central states I talked to them and at that time presented slide show demonstrating proper housing, feeding etc. Using the same slides, Dr. J.Y. Henderson, Ringling Veterinarian, spoke to the veterinarians in the mid-west. I believe Sid Kellner handled the chores on the West Coast. We 4 felt honored to be asked to speak and present our ideas.

The meeting I attended was held in Lexington, KY. When I finished my initial presentation, I invited questions from the doctors attending. One of the questions concerned the aging performing animal and what to do with that animal. It is a well known fact that performing animals, or rather all animals in proper captive environments such as the circus of zoos, live a much happier and longer life than those that live in the wilds subject to disease, poaching, starvation and their predator-man.

(Continued on Page 11)

"Some of this stuff probably shouldn't be in print. Especially some of the stuff about me." Bobby Gibbs

"Great book. Unfortunately, we told the guy too much." Pat Delaney

"Whoever this guy is, he did a fantastic job." Turtle Benson

The Toronto Star said: "If you're not a circus fan now, you will be after you read..."



The Circus at the Edge of the Earth:



Travels with the Great Wallenda Circus

By Charles Wilkins

This is the author's superb account of his 2500-mile journey into the outrageous and shadowy world of one of America's most beloved and fragile institutions, the travelling circus. By turns hilarious, moving, and shocking, Wilkins' book eloquently describes both the seductive freedoms and the intimidating risks of circus life. Meet Bobby Gibbs, a 370-pound elephant trainer with an unruly attitude and past and a penchant for wild storytelling... and his sweet old elephant, Judy, a veteran of 50 years in the center ring ("Bobby and Judy," wrote the Detroit Free Press, "are a marvellously memorable pair, undoubtedly the stars of the show. And Wilkins has done well to devote more than a hundred pages of this fascinating book to their exploits and pasts... and nearly fifty more to the astonishing perils of tiger training.") Meet circus owner Ricky Wallenda, and Ricky's arch-rival, Tarzan Zerbini, who goes "day and date" with the Wallenda Circus in the forests of the Canadian north. Meet Wilson Barnes, David Connors, The Flying Redpaths, the Nerveless Nocks, Joe Bauer, Donny Johnson, Rosa Gibbs, Pat Delaney, Jimmy Hall, Carla Wallenda... plus a host of circus legends from the past. They all come sparkingly to life in this eye-opening account of the Wallenda troupe's marathon northern adventure during the spring of 1997.

270 pages, with photos, hard-cover

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Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. P7A 5L4 (shipping included; 2-week delivery)

Carol Wright Remembers The Zacchinis

Hello from chilly Anchorage, Alaska. When Wayne and I met Mario, he was on the carnival with the amusement rides he had designed & built. This was sometime in 1971-72. At that time, he was a very creative engineer of children amusement rides, the fun house & the dark rides. He allowed Wayne, Shane, our son, & I to venture thru his dark house & it was delightful-scary & frightening but such a great experience. I felt like a kid again in his fun house! He was a wonderful man with a genuine loving sense of humor. I did not know him when he did the cannon act & I never met the "older" Hugo. (we knew young Hugo, Edmundo's son, very well.)

When they were cannonballs, it was in the late 20s, early 30s-a bit before our time in the cannon, but I remember all the Zacchini family spoke of Mario & Hugo's cannon years with great respect and pride!

Wayne & I did the cannon act with Emundo Zacchini from 1969-73. Wayne accomplished (if I remember right) about 1061 jumps & I came out of the cannon 847 times. Many times Emundo (Papa) was hired to do only a single cannonball act-therefore, Wayne did more jumps than I did. It was one of the most thrilling experiences in my life to be a human cannonball. But it was also one of the most frightening experiences in my life. The cannon is a mechanical engineered device & various things can go wrong with any mechanical device. So, we always had to be aware of everything for our safety. We had to check & re-check the net set up, the distance of setting the cannon behind the net & to make sure the cannon was lined up properly in front of the net, etc. There were many times when I would wake up in the middle of the night, frightened & realize...I was thinking about checking everything out...my subconscious really was in fine tune during my cannon years. I felt very aware of everything going on around me every moment of every day. It was interesting because after the cannon years, I was award I did not notice as much. Being in a daring sport, such as the cannon...people said we were a bit crazy...or daredevils. I respected & had great admiration for Edmundo Zacchini; he engineered his cannon & always kept his cannon in good working order & I intuitively felt confidence in him. He gave both of us this confidence when we did our first cannon jumps. Our safety was his main concern.

Wayne learned in Nashville & there were about 5 people who had previously done the cannon act there. I remember each one told him a different way to get your

body set in the cannon...to be ready for the thrust out through the barrel. Because there were so many different ideas, he tried them all out & it was a long & tedious process. Inside the cannon was a tube we crawled into & this tube (or piston) traveled through the barrel. (We were in reality, the bullet inside the cartridge.) When you learn to do the cannon, I believe you just have to trust in yourself & feel what is most comfortable for you. Then let the cannon thrust you into the air. Your acrobatic talents come into play...after you hit the trajectory point...you have to know when to sight the net & duck, or tuck to land safely on your back.

If everything goes right, you might get a rebound of a double, triple or a quad somersault out of the net.

I remember every time I hit the net in safety, I was excited. It was the most exhilarating feeling...it adrenalized me & I felt HIGH! When I learned to get shot out of the cannon, we were in Tampa in a field near Papa's home. The week I learned, there were 90 mph winds-everyday! Papa pointed the cannon toward one corner of the net...the far right corner...if you are standing on the barrel. The winds had so much force they blew me into the middle of the net. Now, this was very frightening. I remember being inside the cannon before each jump...and praying to God to keep the winds blowing continually until I came out of the cannon. A lot of prayer went with me into the cannon.

Wayne & I had many wonderful experiences being human cannonballs. I kept a daily journal of interesting tidbit adventures & experiences for the 5 years. I am planning to write a book about our circus adventures & include the cannon years in it. Let me leave you with one story. The cannon act was usually the last act in the show; then all the performers would enter the center ring afterwards for a final bow. People would leave the arena area...but often some would come up to us to talk about the cannon act & what it felt like to be a human cannonball. One day a little girl came up to me with her hand out, so I went towards her to shake her hand. As I did, she backed up into her mother. Her mother put her hands on the little girl's shoulders & said, "You wanted to shake the cannon lady's hand." The little girl hesitated, then asked, "If I shake your hand, will you explode?" I have so many wonderful memories of my cannonball days! It was a fabulous time in my life & I am glad I mustered up the courage to do it day after day. (I hope this is interesting to your readers.) What do you say readers?? I certainly want to hear more!! If any of you want to write Carol, please let me know.



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NEWS FROM TEXAS By Bobby Gibbs

"Scagoville Event": Don and Shane Johnson held their Super Bowl Event at the Scagoville W.Q. of Clyde Bros. Show folks from the Dallas area all showed up for some football fun, big cookout and drinks.

Toward the end of the game came quite a shock as 2 shots were fired in celebration. One was a known blank & we don't know about the other one yet, till the test comes back on D.N.A.

When the smoke cleared, Denver had won and we began to rehang all the pictures blown off the wall. What we will do to top this next year, we don't know!

*Tammy Wallenda is here at Clyde Bros. & will take out the 2nd tiger act, formerly worked by Wilson Barnes.

*"Breakfast Club On Tour": On Feb. 4th, the Texas chapter of the infamous Breakfast Club went on tour just like the old days in Baraboo at CWM. All that was missing was Buckles Woodcock. About noon, Jim Hall, Mike Clark & wife Missy picked me up at Clyde Bros.

Winterquarters & off we went to McKinney, TX to visit a circus, of course. After all the doctor told me to try to return to normal as much as possible, so away I went! I want all of you to know I stayed on my diet; only had one box of popcorn and a bottle of water.

The circus was held in the McKinney Youth Barn, about 5 miles out of town. Free kids tickets were everywhere and the circus had 2 full houses. Plenty concession stands and pony & elephant rides had lots of action. Visitors to the show, besides us, were Johnny Frazier & daughter who were with Judy Kaye Jacobs, over from Gainesville, TX. The building was too low for flying acts & space wheels, but we saw the following program:

Clown come-in; Cat act-5 tigers, 5 lions; Clowns with fight gag; big production number with 6 webs & 2 single traps; dog act with 6 large, black dogs; 3 ring display with hand balancing, Russian cube, rola bola; "Gomba", the almost Human Gorilla; 3 ring display with 10 ponies and center ring with high school horses (one of the best acts on show); Russian strap act; Clown whistle gag; Globe; 3 rings of sword balancing; 2 cradle acts & Aerial Lyres; Living doll act; Russian Cossack Riders; Cradle act with 3 people; 3 female Asian elephants (all big & a real nice act). The show played tapes, but had a drummer; good lights & wardrobe. Show had 17 horses, 4 elephants, 12 big acts, dogs & moves on about 25 units. All in all, we had a great Breakfast Club Meeting!

*Mike & Missy Clark, of big cat act fame, live in North Texas on a 25 acre W.Q. Jim Hall & I got a first-hand

look at this well run operation. Formerly working major circus dates, they are now offering their big cat show to fairs nation-wide; moving on 2 units (a 48' semi & pick up with 27' trailer.) They take their tigers & lions all over the U.S., educating the public. Their compound includes a large barn, 60x200, 2 stories high. Each cat has access to large compounds of up to 3 acres, complete with trees, water, large rocks, shade, dirt to dig in plus a full diet. I bet cats in Africa would love to be here. Both Mike & Missy live on the property & spend 12 or more hours a day caring for the animals & equipment. Try to hire a zoo guy to put in those kind of hours, 7 days a week, year round. If you see that Clark's Big Cats are at your fair, be sure and go view their handi-work.

**"Life's Clock"-author unknown: The clock of life is wound but once, And no man has the power, To tell just where the hands will stop, At late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed; To lose one's health is more; To lose one's soul is such a loss, As no man can restore. The present only is our own, Live, love, toil with a will-Place no faith in "tomorrow"-for The clock may then be still."

Your Friend, Bobby

*Sarah Chapman reports that in a previous issue of BY, the little girl with Pio Nock is Jeanette Williams' daughter, "Pinky."

*Jeannie Sleeter reports the picture in the last issue was not Gracie Hanneford, it was the lovely JoAnn Siegrist!

*Gordon Taylor reports a great photo opportunity on Circus Pages. One of the 2 Africans has these beautiful tusks, as long as an adult's arm, & at one point in the ballet, the elephant dips her head & the little girl reaches up & back-and the ride begins. The elephant lifts the girl on the tusks & spins her around & around. Another time, the second elephant grasps the bull hook in her trunk- quite far up the trunk, in fact. She bends the trunk back on her head. Again, the girl reaches up & back. The elephant lifts herself & therefore lifts the trusting girl as well. Both poses are so original & creative. The Pages have a real "signature piece" to their elephant number. What a photo opportunity! (Thanks, Gordon. OK folks. If you visit Circus Pages, please be sure & take a few photos for Back Yard and we all can enjoy them. I hope Circus Pages comes back to Bloomington this year. It's a very nice, fast paced show, with beautiful costumes. It would be very nice to have this show at a Convention sometime. I know the fans would be very impressed!)

"The Fox" Letter From Dr. John Martin....

In this excellent captive environment our animals naturally live much longer and do pose minor management problems. When questioned about the older animal I suggested that these animals be kept in the act as long as they are healthy and willing to work. It is a known fact that the idle animal does not do as well as an animal kept to its daily routines. Many other questions were asked about care and handling. Other questions regarded feeding, care etc. as is done on a daily basis in our business.

At the time I felt the 4 of us had done a great job and indeed we did enlighten the government people. However, since then the animal activist have pushed and pushed, declaring themselves the true experts in the field even though most of them know NOTHING about these animals. Consequently, many changes have been made. Some of the changes are good. Others are not. These uninformed people have apparently made their way into the government system with their ideas. Consequently, we have no choice but to comply with the APHIS in these matters.

I hope this is some help to you and who else would read this. As a final word about this, I don't think it does us a lot of good to discuss this so much among ourselves. I believe if everyone in the business would make some attempt to contact sympathetic politicians and media people, we can get the message over and help ourselves. I have done this. I have been on television, written articles and talked to many. The animal activist problem has been around for years and will never go away-but we can make a difference if each of us puts out just a little more effort.

Sincerely, John G. Martin, D.V.M.

BACK YARD

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Medinah Shrine Circus: Chicago-3/5-3/21

Clyde Beatty Circus: De Land, FL-3/15 (Opens)

128TH EDITION RINGLING BLUE UNIT:

Cincinnati, OH-The Crown-3/3-3/7

Baltimore, MD-Balt. Arena-3/10-3/21

Wash. DC-MCI Center-3/25-3/28

Wash. DC-DC Armory-3/30-4/13

ALL NEW 129th EDITION RED UNIT !!!!

Hampton, VA-Hampton Coliseum-3/2-3/7

E. Rutherford, NJ-Contl. Airlines Arena-3/9-3/14

Uniondale, NY-Nassau Coliseum-3/16-3/22

NYC-Madison Square Garden-3/26-4/11

Philadelphia, PA-1st Union Ctr-4/15-4/25

Garden Bros. Circus: Toronto-Skydome-3/11-14; Guelph-3/16-17; Brantford-3/20-21; Winnipeg-3/30 & 4/3; St. Paul, MN-4/8-11. More to follow.

UniverSoul Circus: Atlanta, GA-3/5-14; Miami-3/17-21; Jacksonville-3/24-28; Norfolk-4/9-4/18

Vidbel Circus Spring Shrine Temple Route:

Fayetteville, NC-3/9-11; Whiteville, NC-3/12-13;

New Bern, NC-3/15-16; Jacksonville, NC-3/17-18;

Williamston, NC-3/19-22; Elkhorn City, KY-3/25;

Salyersville, KY-3/26; Paintsville, KY-3/27;

Portsmouth, Ohio-3/28; Ironton, OH-3/29; Inez, KY-

3/30; Williamson, KY-3/31; Pikeville, KY-4/1;

Morehead, KY-4/2; Ashland, KY-4/3; Altoona, PA-

4/19-25. **The Vidbel Olde Tyme Circus 16th Annual**

May-October tour, under canvas, will commence

May 1, in a soon to be announced town. (Bob

Blackmar will work concessions on the tent tour, not

the indoor dates. Thanks to Ed Reich for these

announcements.)

Dave Orr reports the 60th Anniversary Edition of the

Jaffa Shrine Circus in Altoona will be April 19-25. The

Circus Fans Party will be after the 4/24 7:30 show. This

is a Performer Rap Party that the Fans will get an

invitation to. Fans will get special seating if they

purchase their tickets by 3/26. If they wait & pay at the

door, seating will be sold out. This is the 2nd year Vidbel

Circus has produced the circus. If you are staying over

during Circus Week, contact Wye Motor Lodge (814-

695-4407)-they have the best rates; Days Inn/Ramada

Inn are sold out! You will see: Kay Rosaire, Clown Mike

Snider, Carmen Hall, T.J. Howell, Garza Bros., Diablos,

Castle's Bears, Murray's elephants & Dick Kohlrieser's

"Wild West Doggies," & Greg & Karen DeSanto!!!

CUTTING THE FLAT LASH

"Lessons From The Old School"

By Roger Smith

The triple-layered, plaited flat lash is the underscored signature of the steel arena whip. Crafted by skilled hands to exacting standards, this supple, well-made extension of the trainer's arm responds to the Old Master's maxim, "A good lash is a friend for life."

The masters pioneered this work from animal husbandry to the secrets of the whip box, & had reasons for everything they distilled to perfection—like why a steel arena should be 12 feet tall—and why a flat lash is flat. We'll explore the dynamics of a true steel arena one of these issues, but for this sitting, let's cut a lash.

Why the flat lash? The answer comes directly from performing in a 40 foot cage under a Big Top. You want the boys & girls to hear the crack of the whip. It is the expected punctuation of the action. The twisted stock, correctly 3 feet long, properly swung & cut, propels the last above the arena floor some 6 to 8 feet, allowing the report of the popper to resound more effectively. The secret here is pure physics—the popper breaks the sound barrier at 1100 feet per second. The flat lash on a twisted stock rides the air higher for this purpose. A round lash tends to drop quickly & crack just above the ground level. You can certainly hear it, but the flat lash relatively ascends, rather than descends, for the optimum sound projection. This pointed fact proves the whip in a cat act a harmless theatrical prop, a noise-maker essentially anticipated by the audience. What a bore cat acts are in these pantywaist times, when the trainer comes on and won't even crack a whip for you—right?

In any spare time, I studied Mr. Beatty's lashes. He had come on the show that year with 2 new lashes he had cut at his home in Ventura, CA the previous winter. I appreciated the exquisite workmanship of a past-master, and I studied every cut and splice until I fashioned a loose model with my own leather to recall how the pieces segued into a tight, cured, well-stretched lash. Mr. Beatty learned his whip-making from such men as Pete Taylor & Chubby Guilfoyle, & all those Corp. Show guys, pure exponents of the Old School. This is what they taught him:

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES:

Three 6' yellow latigo saddle strings, 3/4" wide, 3/16" thick	Neatsfoot oil <u>compound</u>
Medium saucepan	Hammer; Stove
Oil Rag; Weight (30# or less)	Hanging hook or peg
	Any old wooden board

And a single-edge razor blade or specialized cutting tool. In cutting my first lash, I tried it dry. My cuts were difficult & my plaiting was plagued with hard pulls. I figured to hell with that! My second lash I pre-oiled and there was my answer. Soak your rag in neatsfoot oil & pull each of the 3 strands through until they are softened. Now you're cutting leather that will accept precision slitting. It isn't necessary to warm this oil for now, but it will be later, and we'll look at why.

Before our first cut, remember we fastened our keeper to the whipstock with the same material we'll use for the lash. I'm the proud recipient of a letter from so vaunted an authority as the legendary whip-and-Western act man, the late Frank Dean, in which he said this required sameness permits smooth fitting of the loop of the lash onto the stock's keeper. Later, I'll describe this joining of the lash.

Trying to cut with a single-edge razor blade obviously can lead to quick slipping & ruined work. I took a short screwdriver to the emory wheel & soon had a cutting edge of 3/8". Any more length to the edge, & you see daylight between splices, when your aim is small slits & tight tugs as you plait. Hard-bitten old trainers would check their apprentices' lash-cutting, & if they saw daylight, they'd cut the lash in half & start the hapless assistant all over again, after boxing his ears.

All cuts will be vertical, centered linearly the length of the strands. To find your first cut, lay 1 strand folded one-third to the middle of the opposite two-thirds. Lay your second strand some 5" below the top of the loop you have formed. With the razor blade, cut the end straight across. Lay the strand on the board & make a slit 3/8" below the end. Draw the short end through the cut, & twist it square so that both pieces lie flat, the second piece to the inside. Cut the long side of the loop & draw the second piece through. Keep all cuts very close up under the piece just drawn for tight plaiting. It is helpful while making these draws to cut the ends to a point. As you tap your cuts with hammer & chisel, tug & twist all draws for flat layering and to avoid unsightly curling of the entire lash. In this section you make 8 cuts, having left a length of smooth strand opposite the plaits. Leaving the smooth side open from your plaits, now involve the opposite smooth leather by cutting a slit close to the 8 plaits, & draw through the inside smooth side, & begin your next 8 tight plaits. Again, you have 8 splices & a smooth side opposite of some 2 1/2" length. Continue the alternating plaits until you come to the end of the short side of the earlier formed loop. (Continued on Page 14)

☆☆Carson & Barnes Circus☆☆

February 4, 1999

Dear Friends of the Circus:

It's sneaking up on us! Yes, the opening day for our 1999 season, March 20, is getting very close. So much to do; so little time.

Winter quarters is a busy place with all the shops hard at it. Vehicles & equipment are being inspected, cleaned, repaired & repainted. Driver training classes are being held. Wardrobe & spec items are being created. Federal, state, city & county forms are being dealt with. Everywhere there is activity!

Valentine's Day this year will be a special one for the show, for that's the wedding day of Kristin Byrd and Gustavo Parra. The ceremony is to be held in the romantic city of San Antonio. We look forward to having Kristin on the show full time now that she has graduated from Texas Christian University.

A German TV company will be visiting W.Q. this month to film a piece for a TV magazine program called "My America." They want to see what we do when not on the road & get a feel for Hugo as a circus town.

Our delightful elephant baby, Jennie, continues to thrive. She has completely bonded with her "coach" Elephant Boss, Tim Frisco, & is learning the basics of performing. Tim thinks that she is very intelligent, a good student & a bit of a show-off. They present a remarkable picture when going for walks-Tim in the lead with Jennie holding his hand with her little trunk & mother, Isa, bringing up the rear holding Jennie's tail with her trunk. She may be small (in elephant terms) but Jennie can really move! She loves to play tag with Tim & races about at great speed. Tim, Dr. Eudy & Dr. Schmidt are constantly monitoring our current elephant mother-to-be-Kelly. She is doing well & should be giving birth any day. A new troupe from Cuba will be joining us for the '99 season. They are extremely talented & perform a variety of acts including bounding rope, cube juggling, strap act & hanging perch, among others. They will add to an already very strong performance.

Little Sisters of Jesus, Jo & Priscilla, will be back with us this season, along with a new Sister from Germany. They recently had a very bad accident in Florida, which totaled their truck & trailer. Fortunately, they were not injured. After a great deal of searching, they have located replacement vehicles.

On Super Bowl night, C&B veteran, Ted Bowman, held his annual Showfolks Party at Kevin & Theresa

Murray's, "Murray's Mis Que Sports Grill & Pub." A great time was had by all with tasty food, drinks aplenty & vast quantities of good fellowship. We are all indebted to Ted for hosting this annual event. It isn't often that Hugo's show people get together.

Joining us this season from Robert Bros. Circus will be LeBronne Harris. He will be working in the C&B office & we are looking forward to his arrival. You may remember that he was a regular contributor to "The Circus Report" last season. The Cavallini family is working this week in Nashville for the Frank Currey's Ronald McDonald Circus. We understand that he has assembled a first-class ensemble of circus acts. When in the Hugo area, it would be worth your while to visit the new Circus Diner. The food is EXCELLENT & you will enjoy the many circus posters, pictures, programs & newspaper articles that date from the 1930s to the present. Many shows are represented & as we stated, the food is worth the trip to Hugo! Soon we will be back on the road-the place where a circus belongs. We hope to see you there.

Sincerely, D.R. Miller and family.

CFA ANIMAL AWARENESS COMMITTEE

(Revised and expanded January 1, 1999)

*Frank D. Robie-Chairman

185 Jackson Ave., Rutherford, NJ 07070

*Gordon Taylor-Eastern Division Agent: 1 Kenmore Ave, Woodlawn Estates, Schenectady, NY 12304-4802

*Amos Bolieau-Eastern Agent At Large: 517 Howe St, Manchester, NH 03103-5217; *Charles Meltzer-

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Coombe Hill Dr, Sun City, CA 92586; *Helen Billetti Warburton-Western Agent At Large: POB 82345,

Kenmore, WA 98028-0345; *Edward Limbach-Central Division Agent: 332 Inwood Trail, Aurora, OH 49202.

Articles of all kinds are needed; habitat, endangered species, circus, rodeo, fairs, PETA activities & particularly animal liberation front news clippings. All

articles must contain the name of newspaper, the state & date of clipping. All copy should be clear, clean & complete. On 5/6, following the entertainment, a block of

time has been reserved at the CFA Convention for a panel discussion & your presentation of Animal Awareness

Activity. **YOUR * HELP * IS * NEEDED!**

"LESSONS FROM THE OLD SCHOOL".....

Now we add your third strand. When the loop's short side ends, cut it square, & cut a slit that allows it to be tucked inside. With the 2 remaining strands, make 1 slit & pull one side through to make an X. You're fixing to add your third strand, 7 this is the weakest part of your lash-but with strong, well-oiled leather, I've never seen a lash fail at that junction. Cut the top of the third strand square & cut your slit 3/8" below. With its smooth side out, draw the rough side of a strand making the X through from the outside, involving your third strand to the inside. Allow the second strand to be the smooth side opposite the 8 plaits you'll make with the third strand. Doin' good, ain't we? On the arrows, that's us.

Make 8 plaits, switch smooth sides, 8 plaits & switch again, continuing until you are left with only 2 strands. You have then completed the belly of your lash, & now proceed to the fall. Here is where you check your length. With a 3-foot whipstock, you want a lash no longer than 6'

after stretching. The fall is when only 2 strands are plaited. This should be at least a foot. Then, we'll leave a single strand of some 14", called the cracker. Remember, later we'll set in a popper of some 14" to 16", and 10 feet is all you want on a whip. Even if you raise literal hell with your whip & wear the popper down fast, make 10 feet your limit. I'll cover why when we add the popper.

Leave the end of your cracker pointed, & some 3/4" back up the strand, cut a 1/2" slit for the popper. Go back now and knead the lash, re-twisting so it lays straight, avoiding that horrific curl that can happen. The mentors would box your ears for that, too.

Now warm your neatsfoot oil compound like you would for your girlfriend's romantic massage. Turn off the heat & let your lash soak in the oil a half-hour. The oils we use should never be allowed to become hot. They'll sizzle your lash & annoy the girlfriend.

On a wooden peg, or a wide hook, hang your lash by the loop. Do not use your popper slit to hang the weight. Tie the cracker around the weight with a clove hitch, & let it stretch at least 8 hours. Once the weight is on, check the lash from time to time against twisting. Re-soak your rag & re-oil the lash so that all possible stretched pores are treated. Stretching is a **one-time** per lash operation. You re-oil your lash once a **year**, but you never stretch again.

Take down your lash, lay the loop end to the butt of the whipstock, & the cracker end toward the stock's loop. Pull the cracker through the loop as you slip the lash loop over the butt. Slide the lash down until you are loop

through loop, drawing the two loops into a neat, even knot. Snug it down, & your lash is properly set in. Sit back now, and take a little pride in your practice of an art not yet lost.

Next issue: Beatty's Rolled & Tapered Poppers.

After that: Clyde Beatty's Whip Box-An Insider's Personal Tour.

And then: Gaffing Beatty's Chairs.

(Lisa Smith, 28, daughter of Roger Smith, underwent cancer surgery Jan. 26 in Idaho Falls, Idaho and faces prolonged treatment. Please keep Lisa and Roger in your prayers.)

Sterling & Reid Bros Circus-Utica, NY 2/15/99

By Paul Horsman

The Sterling & Reid Bros. Circus played the War Memorial, giving performances at 5:15 & 7:30 p.m. The circus came from a 2 day stand in Scranton, PA & headed for a one day stand in Durham, NH, followed by stands in Mass & RI. The show gives a strong performance, utilizing 3 rings & travels on a large fleet of vehicles.

Dutch Crawford is performance director & in charge of ring stock & Ross Rayburn is announcer & ringmaster. The performance is well balanced, featuring animal and aerial turns, an impressive aerial ballet, many 3 ring displays & clowns that work hard and garner laughs.

Displays were as follows: *Brian Franzen & 5 tigers open the show, featuring many clever tricks *Trapeze-The Espana Duo *Dutch Crawford with 8 Liberty horses in center ring *Clowns, with 3 rings of juggling *Perch acts in end rings, featuring many innovations *Cloud Swing by the accomplished Miss Amy *Ricardo Rodriguez-Bounding Rope-a turn seldom seen these days *Coco Kramer the Clown in trick bicycle & unicycle riding, followed by riding a tiny bike & a tinier one *Charivari-Tumbling & leaping with 12 people and leaps over Oka, the symetrical elephant *Appearance in the center ring of the Wolf People from Mexico-a sensation & hit with the audience, leading to intermission. *Activities during intermission included family photos with the Wolf People & photos with a python, elephant & pony rides, clown face painting & inflated kid bounce, funhouse & slide. *Second half opens with aerial ballet-7 young ladies on Spanish Webs, with Mexican theme *Coco Kramer & his Film Production Co. *Hand balancing-2 ladies and 1 man, in all 3 rings *Brian Franzen with Asian elephant, Oka & 2 Africans *Finale. It was good to see a large indoor circus in Central New York during the late winter.



Eloise Berchtold and Morgan Berry



Lillian Leitzel
(ISU Archives)

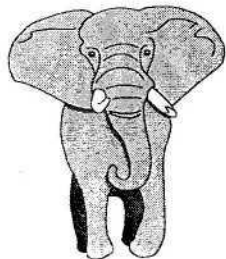


Jack Hoxie, Movie Star
With Gee Gee Engesser 1928

**"George's 3 Beautiful Blondes"
Gee Gee, Baby Vates, Vates Engesser**



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



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