

BACK YARD

Volume IV, Issue #70

June 30, 1999

Clown Alley-Barney Bros. Circus-1937

By Bud De Vere

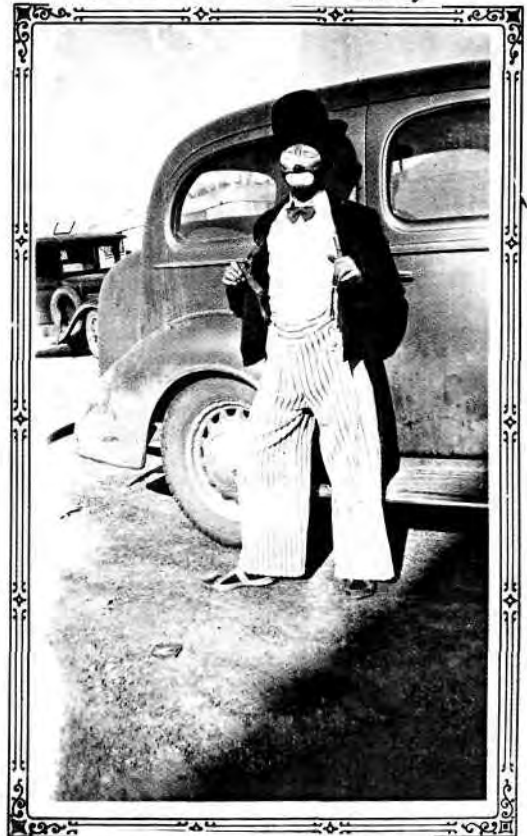
Rinaldo, The Human Scale, was hard to understand because of his accent. As a teenager, I thought I knew it all when it came to accents. That one puzzled me. It was out of the question to mimic him.

My mother decided he was a Spanish Hungarian. When asked what his nationality was, he explained, "I belong Cuba father, Neapolitan madre!" Well, with that cleared, let me relate how he earned the title, "The Human Scale." Rinaldo had an uncanny sense of balance. He did a handstand with either one or two hands or a footstand with one or two feet while perched atop a 25-foot pole. In that position, he swayed back & forth in a ten-foot arch.

My personal nickname for him was Rin Tin Tin. his daring was the reason my father hired him. He was almost a one-man show. He signed a contract to do 3 balancing acts as fill-ins between major acts. His salary for those death-defying feats was \$30 per week plus \$10 HO (hold out.) (Employees got a regular salary plus HO. The escrow sum became theirs at the end of the season or when they left the show. The HO practice helped many circus troupers survive winters because some had spent their regular salary on liquor.)

Rin Tin Tin traveled alone, erected his own rigging, and didn't ask for help. When he first joined the show I watched him practice every day. The rig he used was a one-inch rope strung between 2 heavy metal poles in an upright position. The slack rope formed a shallow vee as he stood in the center. He performed 12 or 15 stunts on the rope while bouncing up & down; thus, the title for his act was "Bounding Rope." In his last trick of each show, he flew 6 feet in the air with a double somersault. One afternoon he worked on his "Bounding Rope" act. The stunts were similar to those performed on a trampoline. He used no poles or umbrellas for balance. I had seen "Bounding Rope" acts before, but none using

Bud De Vere - Clown Alley



Barney Bros. Circus 1937

just hands and arms for balance. He asked me a strange-sounding question, "Bud, want play on web?" When we communicated easier with hand signals, I guessed he asked if I would like to try his act. My response was, why not? So, for practice, the rope only hung one foot above the ground. (Continued on Page 4)



THE GRIMALDIS



Bertha Matlock

An illustration of a man in a hat and a striped shirt holding a cane, with a thought bubble containing dollar signs above his head. To his right is an elephant with three children sitting on its back. The entire illustration is enclosed in a decorative border of stars.

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Clyde Beatty

"In The Slow Lane"-By Mike Cecere

One thing that is quite enjoyable in the elephant business is the verbal discourse with fellow elephant trainers and the huge legion of interested parties among circus fans and other people enthralled with the huge beasts.

Since I was a young man, I always enjoyed hearing about the old herds & tales of the old master trainers. And working out of one location for many years as I have and not traveling around, it's a way of catching up on current events and my friends on tour with their elephants.

One comment that sometimes irks me tho is, "I saw so and so work & the elephant (s) worked so slow!" Mind you, I've never heard this from a professional elephant or animal person, only from circus fans and friends. Well, in all fairness and respect to those folks I'll kindly explain why this happens. You see, elephants, just as humans, are a product of their up bringing.

They need proper food, health care and exercise to properly get into shape. And the more athletic you expect the elephants to be, it's all that more important to look to their care. You can't just take an animal that has to stand around in one area all day and expect them to run through their act.

Of course, we know much more about elephants now than we did in the old days and you see these days the fastest moving acts are worked by those trainers who understand them and their unique needs.

It's sort of a throw back to the days of over coming or conquering the creatures, this desire to see them move at a very fast speed. The real trainers that have fast moving elephants stand back, away from them and have the elephants do the act with little or no guidance.

And remember also, quite a few elephants in the country are getting up into their middle age. I'm sure we all don't move as fast as we used to when we were youngsters. Elephants are big, magnificent creatures that are best shown at their own pace!

News of Our Circus Friends

Don Marcks is recovering from a leg amputation operation and is looking very good. Don is so used to working, his brother, Howard, is looking for things for Don to do while recuperating! There will be no Circus Report for about 4 weeks. Don's address is: Alta Bates Medical Center, Herrick Campus-Room 5105, 2001 Dwight Way, Berkeley, CA 94704. Ph.: 510-204-5857, until July 1. After that, please send your greetings to: 808 Kensington Rd., El Cerrito, CA 94530, phone: 510-525-9071 or to his office at 525 Oak St., El Cerrito, CA 94530. He would appreciate your cards and phone calls.

Robert "Curley" McCormick, who was on Great American with me, is in a medical center and would like to hear from you. Please write him c/o: Beneva Park Club, Room 226, 743 S. Beneva Rd, Sarasota, FL 34232. **Bunni (Bartok)** and **Jan Perz** are taking care of his dogs while he is in the center.

Jimmy Ridenour says he is temporarily slowed down a bit with a bad knee and is on a walking cane. He is seeing a doctor to correct the problem. Those of you that were at the CFA Cleveland Convention, will remember the "hit" of the Bull Room, "**Rube**," Jim's dog. I'm sure Jim would love to hear from you. You can write him at: 3918 Freedom Ave., Sarasota, FL 34231.

"Vet, Pilot, Author Dr. John Martin Dies"

(Thanks to **Mary Helen** for sending this newspaper story in.)

Dr. John Geer Martin, a retired veterinarian, pilot & author died June 8 in King's Daughter's Medical Center. He was 75. Dr. Martin honed his flying skills in WW II, ferrying supplies from India to China over "The Hump," the Himalayan route. After the war, he went to veterinary school at the Ohio State Univ., graduating in 1950. Before settling down full-time to his practice in Ashland, KY, Martin Veterinary Clinic, he treated circus animals & gained a reputation as a pioneer in exotic animal medicine in the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

Michael Polakovs, *Coco the Clown*, first met Dr. Martin in 1958. "He was a circus fan," Michael said. "I was with a circus when I first came over (from Europe). I was on my way to Florida to winter quarters & he said to stop by and spend a weekend. I ended up spending 6 months." Polakovs also met his wife during that visit & attributes to the visit his settling down later in Boyd County. "As far as circus people were concerned, he was our number one man. Local people loved him too. He was the veterinarian of veterinarians," said Michael.

Dr. Martin continued his flying in civilian life and became well known in regional aviation circles. He was vice chairman of the board of the Ashland Regional airport. "He was an excellent pilot and an excellent instructor," said Bill Martin of Ashland, no relation. "He was still giving instrument instructions until recently." Dr. Martin wrote books about his vocation and his avocation. "Doc, My Tiger's Got An Itch" & "Never a Ho-Hum Day" evolved from his veterinary career. "Through Hell's Gate to Shanghai" & "It Began At Imphal" retold his experiences as a war-time pilot. Dr. Martin was born 1/3/24 in Portsmouth, a son of the late Henry Kautz & Clara Page Martin. Surviving are his wife, Mary Helen Feyler Martin; a daughter, Teresa Lynn Klaiber of Rush; and 3 grandchildren. Contributions may be made to the Warner Robins Museum of Aviation, POB 2469, Warner Robins, GA 41099 or First United Meth. Church, 1811 Carter Ave, Ashland, KY 41101.

Fr. Dick Notter visited **Walker Bros.** Circus in Maumee, OH 6/20. He also visited with the **Ramos** family that were working on the **Hanneford** Circus that came to visit their family on the **Walker** Circus! He was planning a Mass for them in Adrian on June 23.

"Clown Alley-Barney Bros. Circus".....

(In his costumed act he was 20 feet in the air without a net.) I climbed onto the rope & he handed me a 10-foot balancing pole. Then he made motions for me to take off my shoes and walk across. Actually, it wasn't hard to do with a pole. Try as I may, I was unable to balance on the loose rope without the pole. Our communication got better with the use of funny faces & our own special sign language. We also used a few code words. Sometimes we drew rough sketches on paper to get an idea across. A few weeks after we began the workouts, he asked my parents if I could help in his regular acts. My parents agreed to the request as long as I received no money from him. His salary was small, anyway. He told Dad that I had been useful in handing him props when I worked with him during practice. It sped up his act. As a result, he added more tricks to his regular time. Other performers noticed that I was working with Rinaldo during the show. The Rolling Sheelers suggested I become a white-faced clown & join their act. They were a family of four: mother, father and 2 daughters. I learned how to walk on their canvas-covered, 24-inch "rolling globe." Because of their patient teaching I was able to join their act and perform several clown stunts.

My mid season, Mom had sewn 3 clown outfits for me under the guidance of Eddie, the Chief of Clown Alley. He taught me how to prepare white grease paint from zinc oxide & lard and how to apply it to my face in a most professional manner. I made up 4 different face designs. To the delight of Eddie, I changed my face every day the way he did. My new role pleased both of us.

Poor Eddie was the butt of several misguided laughs as the result of World War I. His fighting unit in France had gone through a mustard gas attack. The gas had damaged his lungs for life because he couldn't get his gas mask on in time. In later years, without warning, his throat would close & stop his breathing. He reacted violently with loud wheezing. As he grasped his chest, agony changed his face to a mask of terror. Everyone on the show was aware of his seizures. However, audiences thought it was part of the clown act and so they responded with laughter and applause. The other clowns tried to intensify the mirth by carrying Eddie from the tent in a comical manner. That was the way Eddie wanted it.

After the Rolling Sheelers accepted me in their act, with no salary, "business" picked up for me. Invitations started rolling in to perform with other individuals and groups as a clown. My parents saw what was going on, liked it and gave me \$5 a week for my new clown role.

Eddie offered to give me a part in all acts performed by Clown Alley as well. That was an honor, because, from that time on, troupers accepted me as an official clown. Clown Alley was rather large for such a small circus. In addition to me, there were 5 white-faced clowns and two tramp clowns. We featured in four major scenes, which were performed when all 3 rings were empty and ours was the main action. While we did our act, rigging handlers had the opportunity to strike gear and put up

equipment for the next acts. I learned the simple scenes very quickly; but the secrets of Clown Alley were not as clear to me. My father warned, "Buddy, all 7 of those clowns are funny boys." I never knew what he meant, but it turns out they were all gay. One of the clowns, named Bosco, was extremely jealous because Eddie had inducted me into Clown Alley. Bosco considered himself Eddie's "soul mate"-the way he put it. He proved his dislike for me through his cutting remarks. Sarcasically, he vacantly asked no one in particular, "Well, are we going to show the bosses_son our bag of tricks?" He continued in a girlish-sounding way, "I hope the little boy isn't a namby-pamby and tells his mommy if he gets his pretty suit dirty." He followed his remarks by waving a limp wrist. I gave Bosco a wide berth every time I saw him. I tried to avoid talking to him.

The clowns ate together in the cook tent. They separated themselves from the rest of the diners by a fence they put up each day. Meals were available only when the chef displayed a white flag on top of the cook tent. The first person to see the flag announced meal time by saying, "The flag is up." The clowns giggled during every meal and always stayed as long as the flag was up. On the show, one of the main clown acts, with me involved, could be described as follows: the group ran into the center ring. While running we hollered, waved our arms, stumbled, did cartwheels and clowned around in general. Bosco carried a red, foot-long tube which resembled a stick of dynamite. He screamed, "Stand back, I'm gonna light it!" The rest of the clowns acted terrified, wrung their hands and begged him not to. Then in a teasing way, he yelled, "I'm gonna blow up this whole tent!!" He struck a giant match and walked up to the free-standing firecracker. Several clowns ran up to him and blew out the match. After 2 more blow outs, Bosco commanded that we stand back. Then, he walked to the tube, bent over & tried to light the fuse. At the climax of the scene I was supposed to sneak up behind him and pin a string of lady finger firecrackers to the seat of his pants. I lit them while the other clowns urged me on. As the small explosions popped away, Bosco ran off the hippodrome track like he was being chased by the tiny firecrackers. He screamed at the top of his lungs for effect while the rest of the clowns rolled on the ground laughing. We hoped the audience would laugh, too. The act always received cheers from little children. We watched them in the stands holding their ears. They were imitating us. Eddie picked me to pin the firecrackers on Bosco because he thought the gag would be more interesting for the smallest clown to do the dirty work. Bosco hated the idea of my having a lead part. He had expressed that many times. Bosco usually ended his whining with, "I suppose we HAVE to use him because he IS the BOSSES SON!" Then another one of those limp wrist waves. He gave me a warning before each performance, "I'll tell your mother if you ever stick me with the pin or tear my clown suit." Eddie and the others shrugged it off; it started to get to me, though.

(Continued on Page 6)

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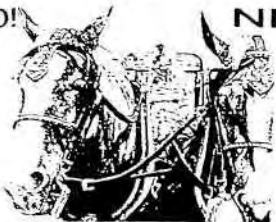
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"Clown Alley-Barney Bros. Circus".....

On the 4th of July, I bought a lot of fireworks with my big salary. As I lit the big 2-inchers, a great idea struck me. I tested it. I wove the fuse of a 2-incher dead center in a string of lady fingers-and lit it. The string started with a "Pop", "Pop", "Pop," then a king-sized "BANG" as the two-incher went off. I decided to give the audience a special 4th of July treat, and get back at Bosco for his constant harassment. It was sort of like blowing up 2 birds with one firecracker. I didn't tell anyone about this plan, but the scene couldn't have worked better. At the matinee, we had a straw house, a sell-out.

Customers sat on spread-out straw on the ground. Bosco ran off the hippodrome track and jumped over a guy wire just as the two-incher exploded. One of the clowns convulsively roared, "It looked for all the world like the explosion lifted him 3 feet in the air." Even though my fellow clowns were unaware of the two-inch firecracker, they laughed harder than the audience.

Later, as Bosco charged to my parent's trailer, I hid behind the closet door. Dad suspected something was wrong; he couldn't guess what. Bosco's clown suit had a large black hole in the rear. His bare bottom appeared through the hole displaying a purple-red mark the size of a silver dollar. He was crazy with anger.

Dad forced me to apologize and pay for another pair of clown trousers. It was worth it-Bosco stopped harassing me. After that, he gave ME a wide berth every time he saw ME coming! The rest of the season I enjoyed respect and approval from most members of the circus. As muffled smiles and cheery greetings met me each day, I experienced a wonderful feeling of satisfaction.

"News From Our Circus Friends"

Dale Riker reports he visited the Big Apple Circus June 19 and it was a good show. He conveyed my good wishes to Cheryl Jones and the Woodcocks. Anne Copeland sent along the following about Bob MacDougall. Bob was having problems when on Kaleidoscope and when he returned home, his wife, Pauline, insisted he go to the hospital. He has picked up a rare disease that fills the lungs & bronchial system and attacks the nerves and muscles at the joints. Bob has been in Memorial Hospital for the past 5 weeks. Our prayers are with Bob and his family. You can write them at: 570 Pinto Trail, Englewood, FL 34223.

Richard Albright reports he had his 1/2 size circus wagon on Robert Bros. Circus at Kittanning, PA June 15 and at Bolivar, PA June 16. He displays it in the front yard and use a tape of the Steam Calliope America for the calliope music. The week before, he visited Kelly-Miller Circus at California, PA. The wagon was also on Roberts Bros. at Mt. Pleasant and Washington, PA two

weeks earlier. Richard would like any information on any shows that may be in Southwestern Pennsylvania later this summer. Please write him at: 261 Monola St., Lecchburg, PA 15656 or richard@kiski.net. (Thanks, Richard.)

Bob Kitchen reports Beatty-Cole moved into New England last week & will stay there until mid-July. Animal Rights Activists tried to block the show in Portsmouth, Rhode Island by claiming the show mistreated its animals, especially the elephants. They showed up at a town council meeting to make their case, but no one voted in their favor. The local paper had a nice editorial saying that they were besieged by animal rights propaganda, but they were not convinced. They went on to say that circuses always brought fun to town and that it should be no different this time. They welcomed the show! (Great!)

Bill Prickett reports the Alain Zerbini Circus will perform at the Yogi Bear Jellystone RV Park, Goodfield, IL July 24 at 2 and 7 P.M.

Gee Gee Engesser says Dr. John Martin used to work on her huskies when she had that act. She would go visit him quite often & Dr. Martin would go visit her on the circuses. Gee Gee says she worked with the Grimaldis many times & on Circus Gagini. She left the 16th for an Alaska trip with her son and family. She will let us know about the trip when she returns.

Carson & Barnes Circus reports they have been seeing beautiful country in Colorado & Wyoming. They even ran into snow in Vail, Co. on June 6! Okie Carr's youngest daughter, Delrita, who is selling tickets in the office, is assembling a book of photos & stories about her Dad, which will be given to the Circus Museum in Hugo, OK. If you have any photos of Okie or an intersting story about him, please write Delrita at: POB J, Hugo, OK 74743. Coming soon will be information on the 1999 Route Book. (I know we are all looking forward to that!)

Al Dawley writes about the "Grimaldis" accident: There was another pick up involved. Ken was making a U-turn and the pick up hit them broad side on the driver's side. There were quite a few people from the Trailer Park Air Stream & many, many circus friends at the service. They put out albums of their travels along with pictures of them. Somehow their dog survived the wreck and will be going to the family across from the Austins at the park where they lived.

“Lessons From The Old School”

****Dynamics of the Steel Arena-Part II ****

By Roger Smith

Correction: In Part I, the line reading, “Stretch irons hang on the seat, with the front feet on the iron to show their beauteous length,” should have read, “Stretch irons hang above and away from the seat, so the cats have their back feet on the seat, with the front feet on the iron to show their beauteous length.”

Bill Johnston told me he designed Pat Anthony’s cage and it was turned out by Eddie Billetti. Pat’s cage was 13’ high and 35’ in diameter. The extra foot in height accommodated a lioness Pat had who ran the bars of the arena like a cycle in a motordrome. This arena had tight clamps at the joints which were then guyed out by bridles. Every place the sections came together, in other words, was well connected, and the bridle, or sling, went from every other section, forming a V from which a pulley block pulled the cage down hard. Pat’s bridle rigging eliminated half the blocks used on Beatty’s cage and still made for a safe arena. Bill had a special rod he used to reach up and disengage the hooking devices. Pat’s cage had to be guyed, as he never used wall seats with legs, only hanging seats, and some quite high. Again, to each his own as long as you stay safe. Anthony’s cage worked, but Pat was a true professional, who followed Beatty’s advice and broke in at the Compound as the first to learn lion training under the GI Bill.

When Eloise Berchtold and I worked a Castle date in Indianapolis, in ‘73, I was interested in an extra step she took. Once the boys had her cage up, she circled the sections with a length of 3/8” cable she then made flat by ratchet. That arena was never coming apart. Eloise, God rest her, with whom I became friends, was another master professional observed by all with great respect. Be it with animals or equipment, Eloise did it right.

In my series on Thousand Oaks, I’ll detail our layout there and describe Mabel Stark’s Tiger Arena, and our Big Stage Arena, as an extension to this article, but they are a story for another time.

When I arrived at Castle’s Winter Quarters, in dreary little Seagoville, Texas, he had bought Beatty’s last arena from Dave Hoover. This arena had been built new in 1960, an exact duplicate of the 2 arenas made of aluminum covered in Part I. Beatty show master welder Charlie Harris built the sections at the Olson shop in DeLand, Florida, assisted by Alfred Timlin & engineer Red Fisher. The framing was 1 1/2”x2” rectangular tubing, 12 gauge. The spreaders were 1/2”x2” aircraft aluminum flats, and the bars were of 1/2” aluminum tubing. 1/4”x2” aluminum angle iron braces were fitted under each end of the spreaders onto the frame and each section was supported by a steel rod running up the center and bolted on the top. Beatty’s sections weighed 100 pounds apiece, but when you got your balance right, one man could walk a piece into place alone. Pablo Martinez, the powerful perch-pole understander, could balance a section on either shoulder, get his grip & carry 2

pieces as he hummed a tune and waltzed in circles across the ring with them. No one else could do that! Now somewhere along the line, some goofus told Castle it was hard to see in Beatty’s cage. Castle bought it and re-built the arena in his shop. He removed the framing and flats became the sides. Enough was changed that it really took a second look to know what parts had been Beatty’s. The bars were his, and thankfully, Hubert didn’t alter the man-door Beatty entered. For every show I was aware with gratitude whose cage I was in and I always felt something of his presence there.

Being a cranky Texas-Irishman, I opinionated the arena should have been restored, not changed, since nobody had any trouble seeing Beatty in that cage for the previous 30 years. I spoke as a conservative and a sentimentalist, but I was too late and I also lost the argument we should treat the cage with etching compound & paint it, since the bare aluminum bars reflected the spotlights and caused a glare that drew many complaints. “Too much work, Roger,” Castle steamed. “Too much time, and too much money. Besides, did you ever try to paint one of these things?” “You bet. We painted this very arena twice in ‘64. Once in Philly and again in Green Bay. “What do you say?” Hubert gave his mustache an agitated stroke and declared, “Well, you’re not painting it in Seagoville.” And I never did. Sometimes the boss is the boss. In later years, the cage underwent further alteration by another owner. So there you have it.

The Castle version of the Beatty cage was bound by double hooks on steel rods, clamping from above and below the spreaders, brought tight by a chain binder in the middle. This system worked all right if I kept an eye on the pieces. Sometimes a weld would break here and there, and a clamp would drop. I took them all into the shop and went back over every weld, re-building some to better fit the spreaders which had gotten out of place in the re-fitting of the sections. I’ve seen many arenas use various clamps like these. They usually tangle badly in handling and take time in unsorting, but if they’re strong, they can make a tight joint. One cage I worked around had hooks on a square tube, both facing down, with no binding device, and a grommet for the block. We had to guy this cage by degrees, for if one side was hauled down too tightly, the hooks would jump up and the cage would start a complete collapse.

Then we had to start over, get the guys around, and try again for an even guy-out. This demonstrates a connecting concept not well thought out. Slick Valentine built the net for the Castle arena and I was apprehensive that it was a scant 2 feet of net and the rest was spider to the block. Slick said, “Fine. You get more money out of Hubert and I’ll make a net plumb to the light tub.” Well, you can figure how that went. But I had a fine light tub. We’ll further examine steel arenas as I reflect on my days with beloved Benny Bennett, Jungelend’s revered Uncle Ben. He built five of them! It’s tough when you’re young, to reconcile the passing of your heroes. Tough at any time, but I wasn’t prepared for the death of Clyde Beatty. He had hired me himself, by letter and phone calls.

(Continued on Page 9)

RINGLING RED : Phoenix, AZ-America West Arena: 6/23-7/4; Bakersfield, CA-Centennial Gardens: 7/8-11; Fresno, CA-Convention Ctr.: 7/13-14; Long Beach-Arena: 7/16-18; LA-Sports Arena: 7/21-25; Anaheim-Arrowhead Pond: 7/27-8/3; Inglewood-Great Western Forum: 8/5-8; San Diego-Sports Arena: 8/11-15; Oakland-Arena: 8/18-22

RINGLING BLUE : Houston, TX-Compaq Ctr.: 7/16-25; Dallas, TX-Reunion Arena: 7/28-8/8; Fort Worth-Convention Ctr: 8/11-15; Colorado Springs, CO-World Arena: 8/18-22; Indianapolis-Market Sq. Arena: 9/15-19.

BIG APPLE CIRCUS: Charlestown, RI-7/5-11; Hanover, NH-7/14-18; Shelburne, VT-7/22-26

CARSON & BARNES CIRCUS: Mandan, ND-7/1; Dickinson-7/2; Williston-7/3-4; Beulah-7/5; Carrington-7/6; Devils Lake-7/7; Thief River Falls, MN-7/8; Wadena-7/9; Little Falls-7/10; Litchfield-7/11; Forest Lake-7/12; Hudson, WI-7/13; Red Wing, MN-7/14; Winona-7/15; Marshfield, WI-7/16; Berlin-7/17; Mackinaw City, MI-7/24; Traverse City-7/25; Ludington-7/26; Mt. Pleasant-7/27; Diamondale-7/28; Owosso-7/29; Pontiac-7/30-31.

UniverSoul Circus: Washington, DC-6/25-7/11; Baltimore-7/14-18; Pittsburgh-21-25; Nashville-8/4-8.

Reithoffer Shows: Levittown, PA-6/28-7/10; Buffalo, NY-6/30-7/4; Brockton, MA-7/1-11.

CMB National Gathering: Alpine Helen, GA-7/14-18

Wenatchee Youth Circus: Leavenworth-6/19-20; Tekoa-6/26; Wenatchee-7/3-4; Odessa-7/10; Edmonds-7/13-14; Roche Harbor-7/16-18; Sequim-7/24-25; Renton-7/28; Lake Samamish-7/31-8-1; Clark County Fair-8/6-15; Peshastin-8/22; Federal Way-8/27-29.

All Washington State. Their 47th Season!

Kelly-Miller Circus: Luna Pier, MI-7/3; Brooklyn-7/4; Dexter-7/5; Stockbridge-7/6; Fowlerville-7/7; Farmington Hills-7/8; Brighton-7/9; Plymouth-7/10; Holly-7/11; Romeo-7/12; Capac-7/13.

Lielbe Family Circus: Lansing, MI-area-7/4-17.

Clyde Beatty Circus: Warwick, RI-6/30-7/2; Natick, MA-7/3-4; Nashua, NH-7/5-6; Portland, ME-7/7-9; Rye-7/10-11

BACK YARD

is published twice monthly-(15th & 30th) by Cherie Valentine, 1522 Clinton Blvd., Bloomington, IL 61701.

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

From the Terrell Jacobs Ring: Roberts Bros. Circus was at Mt. Pleasant 5/28 and seen on the lot were **Regis Amend, Bob Foster, Emery Boor, Wylie Irwin, Howard Taylor. Richard Albright** had his calliope wagon in the front to greet those coming to the show. At the Washington Mall, 5/29 were **Jerry Schaub & Richard Albright** with the calliope wagon. Check out these Internet sites: www.circusmodelbuilders.org-CMB Home Page; www.frontpage.inficad.com/~circus, **Denny Childers Home Page**; www.sna.com/hallson, **David Halls Home Page**; www.cbe-circus.com, **Jake Conover's Home Page**.

A hip replacement operation will be made on Pasha, a snow leopard at the Kansas City Zoo. Both hips are degenerated. The operation is common with humans and dogs but not with big cats. It is believed that only about 7000 snow leopards still exist in the wild, mostly in the upper mountains of Russia and Asia.

Bill Watson donated a number of window cards to auction off at the meeting. Money received from the auction went into the Ring treasury. Bill also brought a section of "Blues" from his HO show to show including jacks, etc. **Jerry Schaub** is redoing his Circus Room. (Thanks & hope to hear more!)

Richard J. Reynolds, Lebanon, NH writes on 7/14,2 circuses come to the upper valley of New Hampshire only 15 miles apart. **Big Apple** opens in Hanover & **Roberts Bros.** plays Enfield. (Thanks, Richard. Tell **Turtle** and "**Boo**" hello!)

Reflections On The Old Place

****Compound-Broke-Part I By Roger Smith****

Brought me over there and been good to me. Taught me & showed me my first insights around a wild animal act. Then the cancer set in. The doctors in Philly missed it. It hadn't advanced enough to be detected. The surgery later. His return to Ventura. His valiant effort to begin the '65 season. Then his quick demise and final curtain. He was only 62. Too young. I was bereft, angry and disconsolate. Your heroes shouldn't die. He had been mine since I was 4. And he was gone.

Back in Texas, I'd first started with cats, very much underage, uninsurable and unpaid. I won't claim any animal training, but I went into zoo cages and with a stick and chair, moved the animals around, getting the feel of them, finding out about myself...and loving it. After Mr. Beatty's death, wondering where I'd advance my career, I married a girl whose folks had a zoo in Waco. I'd had a letter from Louis Goebel stating he had all the trainers and apprentice trainers he could place, but he wished me luck. Then, in Amusement Business, there was coverage of new owners in Thousand Oaks, Thurston M. "Tex" Scarborough, teamed with Roy and Marie Kabat. Another letter and a phone call & I soon packed up and the wife and I were bound for California, for all world reminiscent of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

We stayed our first night in the old Conejo Lodge along Thousand Oaks Boulevard, just North of the Compound. For many years known as World Jungle Compound, as it was in Pat Anthony's day, it had been re-titled Jungleland. When we first drove past it, I thought of the history of the place I'd read, and probably because I was still dealing with Mr. Beatty's loss, I sensed heavy feelings that I was getting in on the last of something. As I tried to sleep that night, I determined to make the most of every moment there. I wanted some reflection time before meeting people, so I drove onto the huge parking lot facing the Boulevard at the crack of dawn, and sat with my coffee.

The lions were roaring to my right and somewhere in front of me, the tigers began to call. I was studying the sounds when something caught my eye to the left. Down the lot came this massive maroon and white '54 Buick, which wheeled a fast left and braked hard at the fence under the trees. Out came a head of tight, blonde curls and piercing blue eyes shot me a glance of pointed unwelcome. It was nobody else but Mabel Stark! I'd seen her once before at the compound, in '63, but had no chance to meet her, so I was less than prepared when I did. She wore a tan, checked light jacket over a white blouse clasped at the breast with a heavy brooch. Her trousers seemed tailor made, and with quick, certain steps, she hoisted her tooled-leather purse on her shoulder and disappeared through the giant front gate. I noted the time was 6:20 sharp. It was my introduction to Mabel's routine.

An hour went by, and others began to arrive. A white Carry-All parked by the office and out heaved a fat man with receding gray hair. I followed him toward the office & introduced myself

to Mary Austin, his secretary. Mary much later became my mother-in-law, but I'm getting ahead of my story.

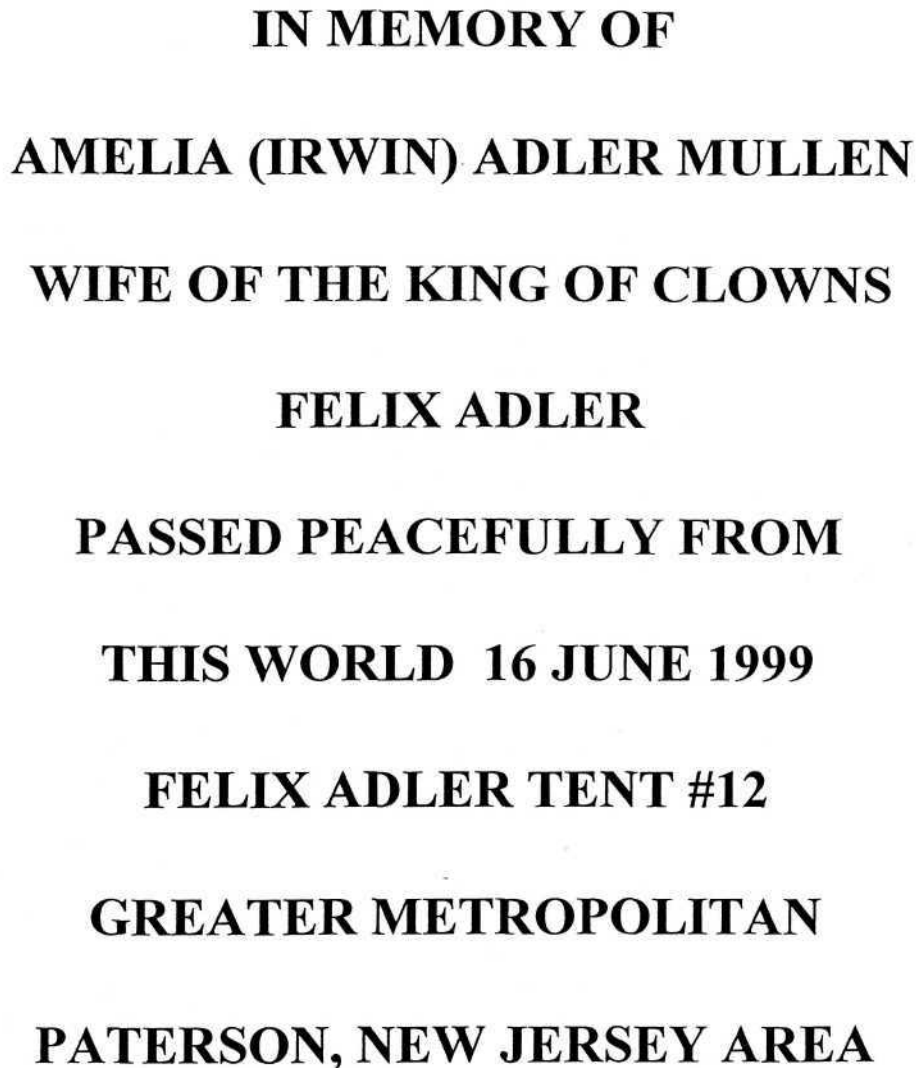
My meeting with Kabat, the fat man on the parking lot, was brief. I'd have a string of cats to take care of for several weeks until an act could be figured out for me to work. Besides, the old trainers needed time to look me over and decide what to do with me. And that was the greeting.

I was told to report to Doc Hayden, the foreman. Doc was also a studious circus fan, who knew I'd been with Beatty, so he became a sympathetic friend from the beginning. I'd already decided what I learned to do on the Beatty show-keep my eyes and ears open & my mouth shut-it's the only way to break in around old-timers. Any braggadocio or cockiness, and they'll shroud you for good. But it was Doc who gave me the best advice of all. "Benny Bennett is the backbone of this place. He built a good part of it, and he was with Louis Roth for a dozen years. He's the true animal man on cats & he's bailed out every trainer who got in trouble in the cage. He's your Guardian Angel," Doc confided. "Get on his good side and stay there. Without him, you're sunk around here." Doc took me over to the string which would be my primary string for the duration. It ran 12 cages, heading East from the Big Stage Arena toward the Boulevard. Doc showed me which cats could shift together & left me to begin. I gathered the cage rake, wheelbarrow, gutter scoop, broom and hose and feeling half the eyes of the compound on the back of my neck, I shifted and cleaned, back-shifted and cleaned, and with scrubbed floors under the cats, reported to the slaughter-house for my 12 feeds. And here I shook hands with the man for whom I later named my son, the best grown man I expect to know, Charles A. Bennett. Uncle Ben.

I'd wheeled the wheelbarrow up the road behind the slaughterhouse, dumped it, and scrubbed it under Unc's watchful eye. He pointed to my group of cuts on the clean surface of the floor & with a meat hook put each one in telling me what cat they went for, as I listened intently & got my first long look at the only man in Jungleland respected by everyone. Benny Bennett was 58 at the time, a lean, raw-boned man only about 5' 9", but sinewy & tough, wiry and ready. He had a thick shock of graying hair under his worn fedora, and his strong face and firm jaw belied a penetrating sense of humor that twinkled in the kind blue eyes behind the heavy glasses he wore. I was sort of in a hurry to get the cats fed, but Unc was slower and more deliberate in his ways. I can still see him now, casually leaning against the slaughterhouse frame, relaxing from the morning's meatcutting, one foot drawn up against the jamb, paring his thick-as-nickles fingernails with a skinning knife. Benny Bennett was much of a man.

Unc looked up in mock surprise, and said, "Say! I've been telling you what feeds each one gets, and you don't even know these guys yet. I'll get 'em fed with you this time. Then you'll know." Shades of Mr. Beatty. See it once, do it without error from then on.

(Continued on Page 11)



IN MEMORY OF

AMELIA (IRWIN) ADLER MULLEN

WIFE OF THE KING OF CLOWNS

FELIX ADLER

PASSED PEACEFULLY FROM

THIS WORLD 16 JUNE 1999

FELIX ADLER TENT #12

GREATER METROPOLITAN

PATERSON, NEW JERSEY AREA

“Compound Broke-Part I”.....

I welcomed his presence. We fed out, then had an hour over coffee to discuss the cats' differences. Ben observed me listening and absorbing. I'd had a good start with him that first day. We would work closely from then on, forming a bond that guaranteed my education at the compound. Doc told me part of all our duties was to double as prop boys for the shows. All trainers assisted one another.

So it was that later that day, I met someone else. Now, nobody really knew I'd worked cats at a zoo, so I wasn't really zoo-broke, or trained in townie zoo-keeper ways. But everybody knew I was Beatty-broke, and figured I'd arrive as a young know-it-all, fresh off an early, intense apprenticeship, feeling ready to train the Big Act. I never figured to be welcomed with warm handshakes and invitations to dinner.

My apprehensions were underscored when I dutifully showed up on time at Mabel's arena. Well, that meeting didn't go so hot!

Next issue: Compound-Broke: Part II.

NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS

Paul Butler writes on May 21, they traveled 50 or so miles to Goderich, Ontario. When they arrived, the side of the area was lined with mobile homes and a very large semi with well painted circus display and “George Carden Circus.” As we parked, another similar semi titled “George Carden Presents The Russian Circus International.” Tickets were \$12, adult and \$8 children. The ringcurb, etc. were in red, white & blue. The show opened with a light show (Paul still likes the Spec!). Due to the fact that there was no program & the usual bad P.A. system, “I can only recall the acts from memory. The opening act was a bear act, one 6' and 2 small ones. The large bear kept kissing the presenter. He also worked the 3 large elephants. Two were used for rides. There was a very good bike act, they also did a good aerial turn & juggling. Clown did 2 numbers; single plate spinning & false legs. Trampoline with diving board (he doubled in the only 2 ring juggling.) Excellent dog act, 4 large poodles, 1 mutt, 5 terriers; Hiertls Cross Bow Act. Ringmaster did a magic act. (If anyone knows the acts' names, please let me know. Cherie.)

Circus News From Bobby Gibbs

Are there any nicer people than **Eugene and Aurelia Nock Family**? Well, I don't think so. What a good time we always have when we visit these fine circus people. During this summer, the Nock family are producing 3 circus stunt shows at 3 different 6 Flags Parks in the U.S. Rosa & I paid them a visit on June 15 at Arlington, TX. They do 4 shows a day in a special outdoor amphitheatre. Show ran: Circus music overture; Intro Ringmaster & Spec, “Joker”; Sway Poles (2); Giant Wheel; Motorcycle in Globe (2); Batmobile; Stunt Show with Motorcycles; Finale-all cast members. The staff & crew are all young folks and very professional. Eugene and Aurelia Nock-Producers. Performers: Batman, Dave Peltier; Joker, Byron Waldrip; Ringmaster, Craig Lee; Lyric, Rietta, Arenda Vasquez, aerialists; Venecio Vasquez, Wheel; Motorcycle Mark, Jimmy Egress Costano, Globe and Stunts; Clinton Randal, Sway Poles & Stunts. This was a great show and great people. Go see them if you're by a Six Flags Park.

Bob Swaney writes he just finished “Night After Night” by Diana Starr Cooper. It combines vivid word pictures (you can smell the animals) with touches of philosophy to chronicle a performance of Big Apple. Interaction between people and animals on the show is woven throughout. At the end, her discussion of the misguided efforts of the animal rights community is compelling without being hysterical. This is a delightful read.

John Cuneo writes, “in the May 31st issue, **Roger Smith** made several mis-statements. He mentions that the arena where Vivienne Scott was hurt was a hanging net arena. It was not. It was a stainless steel frame section cage with woven netting. There is absolutely no stretch to this cable. This has been proved in court. The opening were 3x3” and the tigers can only get someone if they are leaning against the arena. The barred cage allows them the full length of the opening which often can be as much as 3 feet. We do use hanging net cages but people must be kept away from those cages. All of our arenas and Ringling's are 12' or more high. (Thank you, Mr. Cuneo.)

"Barnum's Kaleidoscope" And the CHS Convention

By Richard Reynolds

Everyone seemed to have a fine time and I have gotten congratulatory feed back. So, it was worth the effort. We had one of the all time great lineups of past & present show owners and or show officials: Kenny Feld and Tim Holst, Dorey Miller and Ted Bowman, Luke Anderson, Gopher Davenport, the Great Pfred himself, Al Stencell, Hovey Burgess (Circus Flora), and Eduardo Murillo who for years produced the Monte Carlo circus festival for Prince Rainier as well as the only circus ever staged in the Vatican (for His Holiness, Pope John Paul II), plus other circus festivals in Germany, Russia, et. al.

Re Barnum's Kaleidoscope. They have a reception tent where patrons gather for an hour before the actual show itself. It is very large, supported by two huge masts (poles). However, you don't notice them. Disguising each is what looks like a large 8 or 9 foot vase from which ceramic flowers reach way up overhead topped off by a stained glass chandelier. Around the base of each is a plush red sofa-very Victorian looking-a gay-90s flavor. Oh yes, one does not get any mud between his/her toes, for all areas underfoot are of portable hardwood flooring. Talk about a heavy show to move!

Around the sides of the reception tent are food service and concession booths, including some replicas of old style circus wagons. A live band plays turn of the century tunes throughout the hour. Performers mix and mingle including the top brass: Feld, Host and Stuart Snyder. The latter is President and Chief Operating Officer of Feld Entertainment and is next to Feld in the chain of command. I made a point of introducing myself because he joined Feld from the Turner organization here in Atlanta. We (Troutman Sanders) handled their work.

Throughout the reception hour (which is akin to the pre-show hour we once spent in the menagerie) performers do various acrobatic turns on mats and stages. One notable feature is the beautiful elephant-telescoping tableau they built for the 1987 King Tusk spec. Its top is flat and performers do turns up there. Kenneth Feld gave a most candid and lengthy talk to lead off our papers (almost an hour). He said the idea behind the reception tent was to allow folks to get prepared and in the mood for the show. Given our hectic pace of life, too many folks are rushed and up tight when they arrive. If all they do is go straight into the performance, it detracts from the effect because the actors have to work simply to get the audience focused on the show. I've never enjoyed such sophisticated circus food as is served in K-scape's reception tent. I noted caramel corn, exotic salads, soup, fresh made smoked turkey and roast beef sandwiches-big ones piled high on fresh loaves of bread (which I enjoyed), pizza, plus beer and wine, though we were there on an "off night" re alcoholic beverages. The bartender said they could only serve it on alternate nights. I figure they'll have a tough time making alcohol a regular "under canvas" offering because of the widely varying laws and

restrictions from one jurisdiction to the next. Feld was pleased as Punch at how successful the Los Angeles run had been. They even extended a week until June 6th. Word had also passed among the Hollywood glitterati. Tom Hanks had been there earlier and really enjoyed it from one of the ringside red plush sofas. He's a wonderful actor in my book, just about the best of today's crop with Oscars for "Philadelphia" & "Forrest Gump" and nomination for "Saving Private Ryan" (should have won one for that too-a powerful performance). Anyway, Hanks told John Travolta how good the show was, & Travolta was there the night of our visit. The night after, actress Melanie Griffith was a patron and after that Nicholas Cage.

One of the features is the rest rooms of all things. Facing the main entrance, they were located out the left side of the reception tent. That for the ladies has fresh flowers every day. The men's room has replicas of Barnum show posters all around. They even have an elevator to lift a wheel chair up into a disabled person's lavatory. When I was in Sarasota they had two of these "donniker" trailers, but I believe there was only one in Century City-men on the right, women on the left, with the elevator in between. I believe they said this trailer was a third one. Can you imagine the expenditure for all this? One goes into the big top via the Kaleidoscope, an illuminated tube. Big top has those plush ringside sofas with potted plants all around. The proscenium, wherein the band is located, is highly carved, very baroque. All regular seats are plush and each can be shifted a few inches sideways so as to improve the view around a tall person in front - and lots of legroom between each row.

I was really impressed with the show itself-simply beautiful. The music, though different, is very good, and it's an original score. The biggest name, of course, is clown David Larible whose routines are much better suited to the one ring format. Sylvia Zerbini is simply a knockout with her trapeze, which segues into her liberty act. Also quite good were a statue act and a perch act performed on a slanted wire. A novelty is the trained geese that are led into the ring by absolutely the smallest man I have ever seen, a Russian dwarf named Istvan Toth. I am not exaggerating when I say he is no taller than the geese he leads.

It was really something to see those four historic ticket wagons all lined up. The Ringling red, yellow Springfield, and Sells Floto were along the fence at the entrance to the lot. Kenneth Feld was using the red as his office. The white Springfield was over in front of the main entrance & actually had the Kaleidoscope title painted on it. It was really something to see those four historic ticket wagons all lined up. Feld hinted at additional such shows in the future. Someone asked him why no elephants on K-scape. He responded that it wasn't because of anything to do with elephants or elephant protesters-simply that they did not fit with the theme of this particular show and that K-scape might well have them in the future. Tim Holst also gave a good talk at our banquet.

(Continued on Page 14)

Rumblings From The Crummy

By Brian Nunn

*There was a big, bad elephant that had to spend his p.m. hours inside the barn. He entertained himself by snatching rats off of the rafters. Darn near every morning we would find flat, brown, furry spots on the floor. After awhile, he found a buddy. A 40 pound black dog that liked to play.

The dog would ignore him-so the elephant would reach out and lay down and try to get the dog. The dog would run up his trunk and jump off of his head. Then, they would go into their-"kill the dog-kill the elephant routine. This would go on for hours. There were times when the dog would get tired. The elephant would be muscled up and ready to swing. The dog would sit down and scratch a flea. Automatic time out: elephant holding threatening pose! Soon as dog was done, the battle resumed.

*A hard-learned lesson for me was trying to ride a big show horse with a saddle and bridle. I got airborne and came down on his neck-right behind his head. He threw his head up and I did a nice full layout (so I was told), and landed on my back. The big horse looked down at me, then he took off at a full gallup around the meadow for a minute or so. He came back, picked me up (let me on!) and took me back to the department. At any other time, I got along good with the big horse; bareback with halter and lead rope-we would go to the Blue Room or out visiting! He could also kick a double mark on the side of a semi six feet off of the ground. It was wise not to walk behind him!

* I got to work a Joe Frisco-broke baby African, for awhile. She was quiet, volunteering, and cool. I took as good a care of her as I could. Wherever she is now, someone has got a good elephant! She almost taught herself (with a little help from me) to deal cards (left to right-four players); and the elephant always won; pick and choose; and fetch and deliver with some cues! It was fun, but worthless.

She was good with people; elementary schools,

inside malls, meeting the mayor in front of a city hall. She took the proclamation and a carrot and we boogied back to the truck-it was very cold!!!

*This story took place at the Sarasota Parade. I forgot what year it was, but there was Dumbo, Misty, Ronnie, Siam, Tyke, Ben and me. We were behind the Hemisphere wagon with a live band and Gunther was waving to the crowd on top of the wagon. (It was a great parade). But, (and I don't want to get in trouble here), the man that was driving the 8 up hitch could not drive! He'd either have to have the big old horses stopped, or just let 'em go off at will. (Well, anyway, no one got hurt!) But, Ben would have to bring the bulls in line and wait; or go ahead fast to keep up.

Plus, Dumbo had this thing about grease spots and man-hole covers. She had to zig-zag around them! It was funny; the rest of the elephants followed her trail! Holy Smokes! What a comedy. Ben and I are sweating bullets. We get all the way to the end! Yeah, thank God. We bring the elephants in line; next to the elephant truck. Then, a balloon comes bouncing by. Just then, Tyke reaches out to see it and pops it with her hairy beak. Her head comes up; ears go out. And Ben says real cool, " Load her first!" We got back to winter quarters with no problems.

Late at night, Tusko would go to beating up on the "girls" (the females), so Joe would go up over the top of Lottie, and give Tusko a good poke, and that would slow him down for awhile. Sometimes, Lottie would duck to give Joe a clearer shot.

Kay Rosaire writes that she visited the **UniverSoul Circus** in Philadelphia on June 9th. She has her cat act on the show. On June 8th, there was a power failure, the generator went down during the show and the **Ayak Brothers** were in the air at the time. No one was hurt. While Kay was there, **Struppi** and **Tommy Hanneford** visited, as their circus was playing near by. (Thanks, Kay.)

If anyone has any old circus performer photos for sale please contact your editor.

"Barnum's Kaleidoscope".....

He told me one of the big features of the new 2000 Blue would be a center ring of Friesian horses flanked on either side by rings of performing zebras. He's bought a large group, something like 11, to go with the 4 that have been on the Red for several years. If all troop together, that would give them 15 zebras, more than at any time since 1933. He was asked to characterize the new Blue and responded "women." For example, to train and present the zebras, he has brought over a female member of the Houcke family, famed in Europe as animal trainers. (Thanks, Richard.)

Betty Bartholomew, Seattle, writes when **Gatti Circus** played Salem, Oregon earlier this year, they had an "Animal Activists Encounter." Somehow, members of the group were able to make their way onto the arena floor. Once there, they sat down in center ring and chained themselves to a long pipe they had been carrying. The local police were called. They made the audience leave the building. Then, with the help of Gatti employees, they rolled the protestors up in the ring tarp and dragged them outside and left them to cool off in the rain. The circus-going-public was so upset with them that they began to throw things at the activists who continued to chant their anti-circus slogans. So, they were dragged away from the front of the building and set down behind a dumpster! The show then began for the cheering audience. Betty and **Helen Billetti** plan on attending the CFA Convention next year in Sarasota. (Thanks, Betty.)

"Under The Big Top"-Circus posters and banners from around the world, miniature **Canfield Family Circus**, circus memorabilia: Now through July 25 at Brea Civic Center, Brea, California. Children workshops July 14 and July 24. On the 24th, learn about the whimsical mobiles created by artist Alexander Calder and create your own circus-themed mobile. Posters and banners curated by Blair-Murrah Exhibits. (Thanks, Fred.)

Peggy MacDonald has sent along a paper her sister, **Billie Henderson Schuller** wrote for the Mid-America Theatre Conference, "The Evolution

of the Tent as Theatre." This is a fascinating account of how the tent was developed not just for circuses. I hope to print most of this in the next issue. **Peggy** is still trying to find the newspaper article about **Mac** getting arrested for having Opal on the side walk outside a New York theatre, waiting to go on the **Ed Sullivan Show!**

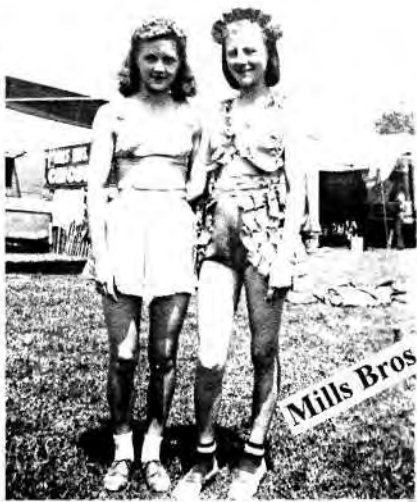
Mike Cecere called to tell me to turn on CBS Sunday Morning show. What a surprise when I did. Here is a report of the show from the CBS home page. "**Sam Keen** by definition is a senior citizen. He's a 67 year-old author and philosopher with a doctorate of divinity from Harvard. Sam flies in the face of tradition-literally. Five years ago he discovered the flying trapeze. He is so obsessed with the trapeze that he's set up a practice bar in his living room and another one in his backyard. Alison Steward, CBS correspondent, visited Sam at his home in Sonoma, CA and watched as Sam and a group of his friends who call themselves the **Sonoma Trapeze Troupe** practiced flying, catching each other & learning new tricks.

The group meets twice a week. It's made up of a juvenile judge, a woman in her 60s, several men and women in their 20s and a special category of people that have become Sam Keen's pet project. Sam reasoned that learning to fly gave him confidence and it could do the same for others, so he began a program called Upward Bound.

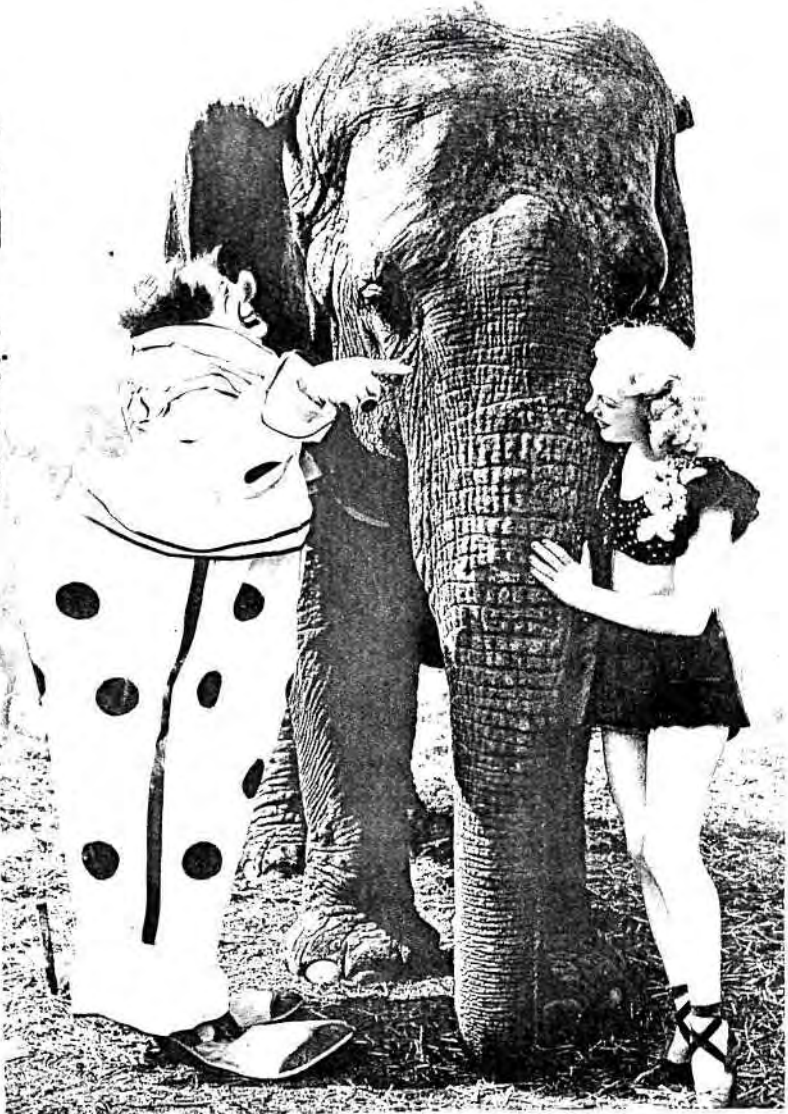
He recruits troubled teens and single mothers with drug problems and teaches them to summon their courage and self-discipline, step off the ledge and learn just how much they can accomplish. For more information about the program write: Sonoma Trapeze Troupe, 16331 Norrborn Rd, Sonoma, CA 95476. Also visit: www.damnhot.com/trapeze for trapeze schools and riggings.

News from the Ringling Museum: Circus Sarasota will perform at the Museum through August 7th, daily at 1:30, except Sundays.

HAVE A NICE FOURTH OF JULY !!!!!



Mills Bros.

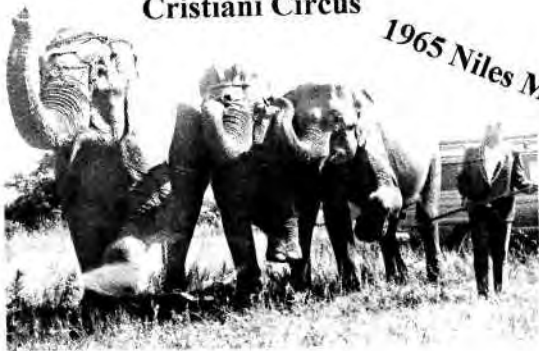


Beatty



Cristiani Circus

1965 Niles Mich.





Gee Gee Engesser riding a 16 horse hitch - Cole Bros. Circus

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