

BACK YARD

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"They Named Me Leonard"-Hoxie Tucker

Leonard Basil Tucker passed away in Orlando Sept. 17. From a Hoxie Bros. Circus program, "Hoxie is a nickname that he came by from his father, Wm. B. of Somerset, KY, who was a wholesale grocer and a butcher by trade. He started calling Hoxie "Hox", meaning the ankles of a steer. Later, Mrs. Heffner of the Heffner Venson Stock Co., a traveling dramatic show, added "ie" to Hox, and the rest is history!

Hoxie was born Aug. 7, 1910. He ran away from home at 15 to join the Red Path Chautauqua show & worked as a prop boy for 1 season. The following year he joined the Heffners and stayed for 12 years, becoming their boss canvasman. Betty Noble joined the show when she was 15 and they were married 4 years later. After their marriage, Hoxie opened a Hawaiian show for 1 winter. The next spring, he became manager of the Gene Austin show. The next year, in Nashville, the Tuckers formed a country music tent show, with many from the Grand Ole Opry. "A friend once called & said he had another young singer for me. I said no thanks-I'd had enough of hillbillies. Turned out the singer's name was Elvis Presley!"

Nov. 17, 1943, the Hoxie Bros. Circus was born and opened in Greenville, FL. Hoxie played mountainous towns in the southern states-where other shows would not go. "We were so damn poor that after we got the damn thing out, we stayed out 72 weeks without closing. Couldn't afford to close it. Had too many people around there who had to eat all winter."

"They call this a Sunday-school circus. Nobody ever sees an x-rated show in my tent." "I guess I've made a few quarters in my time." "They named me Leonard and put me in long curls & dresses when I was 3. So I ran away. They had to tie me to a clothesline." "Everybody in show business, around this show especially, knows when I come on the lot, my hatbrim is turned up, they have no worries. If the brim is down, everybody moves



Hoxie Bros.
Circus

out of my way because they know I've got something on my mind and whoever I meet I'm likely to take it out on them." "I have had more fun than any human!"



Hoxie



THE USDA IS OKAY !!!

By Mike Cecere

I'm writing to respond to Don Wixom's recent attack on the USDA and their inspectors in the "Back Yard." I disagree totally with his portrayal of the USDA inspectors and am sad to know he finds cooperating with them such an inconvenience.

In nearly 30 years as a professional wild animal trainer and in the management of both circus and zoological animal collections I've found the USDA to be highly trained professionals more helpful than anything. And for a small force with awesome nationwide responsibilities, they do an outstanding job!

Not only do they oversee circus, zoo, petting zoo animals, etc. but they have to cover pet shops, breeding operations, biomedical facilities and numerous other industries. In addition they are charged with the safety of the food supply of this great country which is the safest in the world.

They do all this with limited funding while taking "flack" from outside groups who through their congressmen and senators put pressure on them to close us all down.

Through all of this they keep the facts straight and actually are bigger advocates for the professional use of wild animals (provided they are cared for properly) than many of the paid industry spokesmen.

In my long time experience dealing with the USDA, I've seen them go from having to carry the regulation books with them everywhere in 1972 to today when they get very specialized training from the top zoological professionals and they know what are the latest advances in animal husbandry.

I'm glad to work in cooperation with them as are most professional trainers. As we are a country born of revolution, there is always someone complaining about government regulation of any type. It's a free country and that's okay.

But there are some things that Need Regulation and the care of circus and zoological animals are part of that. That's a fact! As for Don Wixom, maybe he should hire a helper so he can catch up on his nap time and doesn't miss lunch. Thanks for a great job USDA!

"Remembering D.R." By Dion Young

No doubt, one of the most important moments of my life occurred on the lot of Carson & Barnes Circus in Wisconsin in 1976. But first I must go back to 1952, a small town in far northern Wisconsin. I was about to see my first circus-and what

a circus to see. Clyde Beatty himself.

I do not recall anything about that circus or performance other than Mr. Beatty himself, dancing, bobbing, weaving among the noisy group of cats. That sight stuck with me for years to come. Fast forward to 1976. The years between found me a frustrated "lion tamer" want-to-be. My attempts to find employment in this rarified profession had been discouraged by any and all circus folks that had the opportunity to help me get started in the activity that I most wanted to be involved in-lion taming (I had learned something by now, it's training not taming.)

Carson & Barnes lot, southern Wisconsin, 1976. I had a short talk with Okie Carr at the bull picket line (could you find Okie anywhere else?) and then proceeded to seek out the boss man himself, D.R. Miller.

As I related my desire to him to be involved in a circus cat act, his reply was, "Yah, you and 100 other young men every week." This proved to be a bit of an exaggeration but then this was the circus.

He agreed to hire me as cageboy for the last 3 months of the season and then would have me taught the act over the winter in Hugo. I was to be the official cat act presenter the following season, 1977. My dilemma was this-would I be cleaning cages for \$65 a week for the next many months and be disappointed that I was never to enter the arena with cats present or was this my big break into show business?

The season ended and we were deep into the damp, depressing winter of Southern Oklahoma. There was no sign that Okie was about to teach me the footwork, voice and whip commands needed to control the 7 cats that I knew so well by now but never faced without bars between. Then, on a warm day in late February, the order was given for the steel arena to be erected outdoors smack in the middle of winterquarters. I was summoned to the Miller house, where D.R. had me sign a waiver to free C&B Circus of any responsibility for any harm that might come to me in the performance of my duties.

And then he went to a closet and produced my first whip. A gift. Was this a decent trade? My services doing a dangerous job for the circus for a 10 foot length of leather.

On the second or third day of training, while in the cage with two cats, I heard a familiar but far off voice calling it seemed to me. It was D.R. and the words were slurred as per his custom and owing to a mouthful of tobacco. It was later translated to me by Okie Carr. The words? "Hey, Clyde!"

DUGGAN-MALEY TENT REPORTS

On 10/2, members will once again host a pizza party in ring 3 following the evening performance of Beatty-Cole, at the Atlanta Motor Speedway, Hampton, GA. If you would like to join them, call 404-872-8680, so they can order enough pizza!

The Big Apple Circus Stage Show, OOPS! is slated to hold its first performance in the Memorial Auditorium in Chattanooga 10/29. Norman Barrett will be the ringmaster.

Newest member of the Tent is Mary Jane Giberson, Woonsocket, RI. Hopefully, she will write for Back Yard about her favorite show, Clyde Beatty Circus.

Fox 72

THE FOX !!!

Dear, Dear Friends;

This is getting sadder and sadder, this time we lost three more of our dear ones.

D.R. Miller, I can not say to much about him, as every other show person has said it all ready. He was a great show man. He had one of the greatest circuses and was loved by many. I was told that he had just a checkup at the hospital and was told he was OK, he went home to his trailer and took a rest, got back up and passed away right then and there. God knows, the hospitals lots of time do not know what they are saying. I also was told that after he passed away they had respected his wish, they brought him in his casket in the center ring and held a memorial service. I think this was a great honor.

Next was the man who was very close to my heart, he was the greatest friend anyone could have, Eugen Nock. I just can not believe that he died, one day before we were together at the meeting of the Ring of Fame. After the meeting he decided to walk down the three flights of stairs. I called to him asking him why he does not go down the elevator with us, his answer was: walking down the stairs is healthy. Well this was not the case in his part. He passed away the following day. I decided I will never walk down these stairs again. His death really hit me hard. He looked and acted so very, very healthy and he was so happy and full of joy. This was one of the biggest funerals I ever attended and his children made it so memorable.

St. Martha Church was full, there was not one open place. His sons each spoke in memory of him and so did Alexandria his daughter in law and Sepely, his nephew. We all gave Eugen one more standing ovation and then Mike Ashton sang Eugens faforit song "Edelwise." Everyones eyes were wet. After that we all went to the Palms Cemetary to tell him for the last time good by. And than the children had arranged for a caterer to serve food at Showfolks of Sarasota Club House. I believe everyone who from showbusiness was in town showed up and quite a few flew in from out of town. Sister Elizabeth and husband Joe were there to suport Aurelia. You know, I very seldom saw a husband and wife like those two. I never heard Eugen say a nasty word to Aurelia or vise versa. They were one of the happiest cople in our midths. Eugen rest in peace, I know God needed you up



there and you are now back with all your friends and looking down at us. We all miss you and love you.

While I was getting ready to go to Eugens funeral I received a call to inform me that Hoxie Tucker also left us. What is this, does God need all the heads of circus business up there??? Three in a little over a week. You most wonder if you are next in line, as we are in that age groupe.

Now something different, I was invited by Mireille Arnosi to go see the ice show Greese Lightning. They had dress rehearsal before they are off and running.

Now again, do not forget Jan. Sunday the 9th Ringling Reunion. We will have Lun-Din at 3:00. We also will have the pleasure of watching some of the old Ringling movies. Please please let me know all of you from North and West and were ever you come from, if I can count on you. Please. It will be great and maybe the last time we all can reminisce. I think it is so great to go back in La La Land. Now times are so hard and rough and oh well you all know that your self.

I still have not heard from anyone willing to sponsor Alfred Court. Any takers??? Anyone know anyone who likes to do this. How about all the wild animal trainers getting together. That would be a great thing?? How about all of you out there???

Well, Tarzan backed out of putting the circus on, I ask Walker Brothers, they to said no. Royal American, there office told me no. Royal Palace so far no. The only one willing to help is Pedro Reis. But he has his tent working then. I am still looking, there must be one circus willing to take over the task. Please, I am getting to old to do this again. Why me???

Norbu send me a nice writeup from his daughter Nobi, she is now a stunt co ordinator, does commercials and acts in movies.

Eva Barton is selling her home and will go in to assist living with her new husband, who also will semi retire from his bussiness, he is a musician and worked all the big privat clubs.

Well my dear friends, this will be a short one, but my heart is just to heavy.

Love, Your Fox



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Duggan Bros.-Arnold Maley Tent Joins OABA

Their Tent is the first CFA Tent to get behind the efforts of Heidi Herriott by joining the OABA. Heidi was the Tent's guest speaker last year. "We encourage all CFA members and Tents to join in this effort. Let's show the performers we care and support this effort."

Nock Began Career on High Wire At Age 2

At the age of 2, Eugene Siegfried Nock, Sr. was a nerveless performer. At an age when most children learn to walk, he was crossing the high wire, tightly clinging to his father's back. From up in the air, he began his height-defying career in the circus.

The performer and owner of The Nerveless Nocks died Sept. 16. He was 65. Eugene was born April 14, 1934 in Bern, Switzerland and came to Sarasota 45 years ago from there. "He was loved by all of the circus community," said fellow circus performer, John Herriott. That sentiment was echoed by Jenny Wallenda, "He was a great performer. A very friendly, lovable person." In 1954, Nock was brought to the U.S. by John Ringling North to perform his spectacular sway-pole act. From 90 feet in the air, he and his family swayed on pine poles before switching poles for the act's finale. But it wasn't until 1961 that his act arrived at its name.

According to son John, it was during a performance at Haringay Arena that the Queen of England commented, "Those people are truly nerveless." And with that, the Nerveless Nocks began. Up until 11 years ago, Eugene performed with the Nerveless Nocks throughout the U.S. He swayed on poles on Ed Sullivan's "Hollywood Palace" 5 times and performed for every president after Kennedy. His later years were spent managing the act he began. The Nocks have grown to a circus-style theme park act performing numerous shows including Six Flags Batman Carnival of Chaos Stunt Show. His 4 sons continue with the family circus tradition.

Eugene's lifetime accomplishments in the circus have been honored by the state of Florida, the John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art and by St. Armands Circle Celebrity Circus Ring of Fame.

Survivors include his wife of 43 years, Aurelia Canestrelli; four sons, Eugene A. Jr., John R., Dimitrious B., and Michaelangelo A., all of Sarasota; two sisters, Lotty of Biel, Switzerland and Elizabeth Bauer of Sarasota and nine grandchildren. Services were at the St. Martha's Catholic Church. (Thanks to Jenny Wallenda for sending this article from the Sarasota Herald.)

At The Funeral of Eugene Nock, Sr.

By Rick Wallenda

I saw his widow today,
and his sons all in array.
His many friends came,
too many for me to name.

We happily remembered his life,
and honored his saddened wife.
From four sons the promise was made,
their love for her would never fade.

This was his last appearance here
so we sent him off with a cheer.
A final ovation for this showman we gave
before they laid him in his grave.

Later friends and family gathered
to spend time on what really mattered.
Men embraced in our midst
and sealed their manhood with a kiss.

We laughed and cried till late that night,
singing songs, what a joyous sight.
Making family of close friends,
comradery remains when party ends.

Let this be the legacy that will last,
love refined by a common past.
Children stand on ground made good
by our forefather's brotherhood.

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BOB BARKER BETTER By Mike Cecere

The well known game show host and Animal Welfare Advocate has had quite a week, last week. While on break from his highly popular "The Price Is Right," Barker had to be hospitalized and operated on for a blocked carotid artery.

Fortunately, the 75-year-old entertainer was in good physical shape and came through fine. He had a lot of his shows taped ahead so they will continue on. Barker, a well-known Animal Welfare Advocate often uses his free time to travel the country building Animal Awareness.

His celebrity status sure helps especially when he's in Washington, D.C. lobbying for Pro-Animal causes that he believes in. While my circus cousins are non-pulsed, he was lending his voice to the "Captive Elephant Protection Bill" by Congressman Farr. You have to give the guy credit for respectfully working for his cause. At least, he is out there doing something for animals.

You still are not happy? Well, there is probably a group somewhere opposed to slinky blond models posing in suggestive ways on TV game shows. (And, no, they all don't wear Hawaiian shirts!) GET WELL BOB!

THE GREAT SHOWMAN PASSES

By Mike Cecere

Yes, friends, we have lost yet another giant of our industry. The good Lord finally called Leonard Basil Tucker, known to most of us as Hoxie Tucker, home the other day. I have a connection to Hoxie as he was an early mentor of mine & gave me my "Big Break" in the circus biz & set me up on the fast track to success in wild animal training.

Hoxie was an individual with a capital "I" and there will never be another like him. He was a kind man who loved animals but was undoubtedly the king of his domain. His show business career was one of the most diverse, dating way back to the old tented rep show days to having one of the largest circuses in America. A hard working man, he tirelessly toiled to build a top show and always gave the public more than they expected for their money. He was an expert canvas man and had some of the most innovative tents, including a one pole, 3 ring format and a pioneer in the now popular one ring format. Hoxie also was way ahead of his time by having the first black man featured in the performance with his wild animal act. That man was the legendary Prince Bogino, known to his friends as Junior Ruffin. At one time almost the entire staff department heads were black men. Today, no one would notice but we're talking about touring the south in the late 60s and early 70s. Only Hoxie could have made it all a success. Fortunately for me, he believed in giving young, hard working people a chance & he had a saying, "If you're big enough to do it, you can be it." I was only 17 when I walked into his Miami winterquarters in Dec. 1975. He talked to me for a few minutes and said, "We open in 7 weeks and if you can get those untrained lions broke into an act, you can be the lion trainer!"

I did and true to his word, not only featured the lion act for 4 seasons but gave me year-round employment and full autonomy to operate the lion act as if it were my own. I could buy, sell, add, subtract cuts to the act but I had to arrange for the meat (show paid for) and look after all maintenance of the equipment which the mechanical and welding department gladly repaired.

That was the norm there; young, ambitious people all working hard under the guidance of veteran staff people. The idea was to cultivate independent thought and ideas among the personnel who would all work to make every season a success.

Also it made the show itself unstoppable by having so many positive people involved; it moved efficiently no matter if you would lose a few people. Most important, it moved without Hoxie himself being there every day so he could tend to the myriad of business interests he was involved in.

But no matter how many good people he had running the shows (like the master showman Jimmy Silverlake) there would always be several problems that people wanted to bring to him. And he didn't disappoint, settling them all quickly as King Solomon would have in biblical days.

As I often say, if you spend anytime around great men, like my father, Mario J. Cecere, Col. Arthur T. Brown, Joe Frisco, Sr.,

Bill Hill or Jungle Larry Tetzlaff, you carry part of them with you forever. And there isn't a day that I don't find myself using some phrase or method I've learned from one of them.

Hoxie lived life to the fullest and used to say he'd had more fun than one human should be allowed to have. He was a real showman, always paid his people and gave the public 100% circus. (How many shows live up to that today.) And when he turned his show over to the excellent care of Allan C. Hill and made sure the last of his elephants went to the George Carden family (where he knew they would get the best food and care for life) he retired from the public lime light, preferring to be among his family in a very private life. So to Hoxie Tucker, thank you and may you rest in peace with your beloved Betty.

REMEMBERING HOXIE TUCKER

BY BUNNI BARTOK

I first met Hoxie, Betty and Irene (Betty Irene) Tucker in the forties. Hoxie was a tent boss for a show that starred the Noble Sisters, a mother, 4 daughters and a granddaughter. We had a "Black" (Afro-American) Minstrel Medicine show called Bardex Minstrels. Dad was lucky enough to get Hoxie over as the tent boss on the show. Betty & Irene always spent part of the summers with us on the show as did our Office Manager, Lenny Simons (worked with Cy Ruebens & Ward Hall) and his family. It was a wonderful life. We usually ate our main meals together after the show and Hoxie and "Curly" (My Dad) would many times end up seeing who could eat the most Banana Splits. Hoxie usually won! Because of the Bartoks & Tuckers friendship, my family bought a home on Key Biscayne, near Miami, so they could spend more time together. We kept property in Sarasota and when we retired the show, we returned to Sarasota. Hoxie opened a circus. The following year, he contacted Dad and the two Bettys, Hoxie and Curly were on the road again with Hoxie-Bardex Circus.

They were together only 2 seasons ('61 and '62). In 1962, my brother David married Tina Cristiani and the following season, the Bartoks partnered up with Remo and Cosetta Cristiani with the United Nations Circus which lasted less than a season.

The bond between Hoxie and Curly "Doc" Bartok had many highs and lows but through it all the mutual respect and love remained. They loved tent show business and both touched the lives of thousands of people and helped the world to be a happier place. In Nov. 1971, Hoxie had his cats work a date for Tito Sanfield at Dinner Key Auditorium, when we had our elephants and bears working also. It was a 10 day date, to be paid daily. Tito was not paying! Hoxie came to me and said, "Sugar, just stick with me and you'll get every dime." Every day before the show started, he went to the box office, unbeknownst to anyone else, and said, "The cats, the ring curb, the bears and the elephants were leaving if the money isn't in my hand!" Needless to say, we were the only ones to be paid. He was tough, but of the old school. He was the last of an era. Heaven will never be the same! He and Curly are cutting up Jackpots and the two Bettys are Shopping!

Remembering Hoxie Tucker

By Heidi Herriott

In 1972, my family went on Hoxie Bros. My parents went from the largest, Ringling, to one of the smallest, Hoxie. All the trucks were purple and supposedly it was because his wife, Betty, loved purple. My dad and mom had all the elephants, horses and dogs. The show had a liberty act of 1 black and 3 white horses that we referred to as the "over the hill gang." Talk about long in the tooth! The show also owned a pony ride. As happens, throughout the season the grooms would blow and whoever had the time and inclination, took care of the ponies. Being all of ten years old, I decided my sister, Cindy, and I could take care of the ponies and make some extra money.

Bill Hill was the concession manager at the time and paid my sisters and I well when we "worked" for him. I figured it worked this way with all adults. I went to Mr. Tucker and proposed that my sister and I would take care of the ponies and we wanted \$5 a week. He agreed and we started our new job (after our other chores were done.)

It was work! We carried hay, fed and watered and groomed 9 ponies every day. The show moved every day as well. A week went by and I went to Mr. Tucker to get paid and he gave me \$5; \$2.50 each! I was too shy to tell him it was supposed to be \$5 each. That was my early education in how not to negotiate a business deal!

As it turned out, Hoxie was at a nursing home no more than 2 miles from my home these last few years. I learned about it from some neighbors who said they went to visit a relative and heard that there was some former circus owner who lived there. I went to see him a couple of times. Time had caught up with him, but he still remembered me. He was always a bigger than life character and it was hard to see him regressing. It did hearten me though, as I was leaving to hear the nurses say he would follow the attractive ones around in his wheel chair! Same Hoxie!

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Ben Trumble writes, "I am amazed and saddened that in the span of ten days, the two great kings of the mudshow, Mr. Miller and Mr. Tucker have passed. Hoxie's circus was an important part of my childhood every spring in Florida in the late 50s, 60s and even when I was in college in the early 70s."

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Dale Riker writes, "I saw Eugene Nock on my first trip to the Ringling show the last time RBBB under canvas played Flint, 1954. He was most friendly. At a seminar earlier this year, he told a story about his mother. She had chickens in Switzerland and they, for some reason, were not allowed to kill them. However, she showed up one day with several plucked chickens. When

asked what happened she stated, "I am an animal trainer and I was trying to teach them to do a somersault and they broke their necks. Poor Birds."

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THINK ABOUT YOUR CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

TAMMY TIGERS ON TOUR! By Mike Cecere

9/22/99: Tammy Wallenda, favorite daughter of living circus legend, Jenny Wallenda, is back in the scenic Seagoville, Texas winterquarters of the Don Johnson organization after a highly successful series of dates.

Tammy, a recent addition to the Johnson group, has quickly gained command of a veteran tiger act, added new cats and put it together with her unique brand of showmanship that has had Don's phone ringing off the hook with people eager to book the act. She also alternated awhile this past summer with Shane Johnson headlining with Mexico's Circo Vasquez now on U.S. tour of Spanish speaking areas.

Tammy is busy now adding spectacular new stunts and soon may add her 2 lightning fast lionesses which will give the Clyde Bros.-Johnson group both a tiger and lion/tiger act. She is also overseeing the care of the Johnson family elephant "Judy." Could a tiger-riding elephant be far off? One thing, no matter what, the Johnson group never fails to excite. One problem is the confusion of celebrity between circus producer/tiger act owner Don Johnson and TV star, Don Johnson of "Miami Vice" fame and now CBS' TV "Nash Bridges." Maybe the circus Don Johnson will guest star on there? Hey, if Stone Cold Steve Austin can, anybody can! This is America!

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Michael Haberland reports that members of the Clyde Beatty Tent of Canton, OH enjoyed a great gathering on the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. lot in Niles. They had 18 members & guests show up. Ringmaster Jimmy James invited Rich Deptula to ride the lead elephant during the Spec. The show was great, despite poor attendance. This was the first visit to Ohio by the show since the early 80s. "Hopefully, they will visit Ohio next year." (Mike has an autographed copy of Mabel Stark's book AND the tiger seat that she used at Jungleland. If anyone knows of other articles of Mabel's, please let him know-OR your editor!!

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Dick & Doris Menkel wrote the Ringling Circus Train, on 9/20, went from Indianapolis to Toledo to Plymouth, MI to Grand Rapids. The train consisted of: 2 Locomotives, 32 coaches, 17 flat cars, 4 stock cars & 2 containers. The train was 4960' long with 4055 trailing tons.

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Eric McConnell reports from the Big E that Hanneford is putting on a magic show as well as his circus which Wayne McCary produces. The magic show tent is dyed or painted purple. There was a birthday party for Tommy on the 19th. Circus World Museum was there with the RAS Grand Gaviloi Band Wagon and the Two Hemisphere Wagon, pulled by 16 horses, and the miniature White House was also there. Bob Commerford was there with his petting zoos and pony hitch. Bob also had a reindeer hitch pulling Santa's sleigh. Bob reported that "Dickie," the Ringling giraffe died.

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RINGLING RED: Salt Lake City-Delta Ctr: 9/29-10/3; Denver Coliseum-10/6-17; Cleveland-Gund Arena-10/22-31; Rosemont, IL-Allstate Arena-11/3-14; Chicago-United Ctr-11/16-28.

RINGLING BLUE : Buffalo-Midland Arena-9/30-10/3; Detroit-Joe Lewis Arena-10/7-10; Boston-FleetCtr-10/15-24; Pittsburgh-Civic Arena-10/27-31; St. Louis-Kiel Ctr-11/3-7.

CARSON & BARNES CIRCUS: Vacaville, CA-10/1; Cameron Park-10/2; Lodi-10/3; American Canyon-10/4; Dublin-10/5-6

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

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

Clyde Beatty Circus: Dalton, GA-9/29-10/1; Hampton-10/2-3 (Duggan Bros-Arnold Maley Tent Pizza Party!)

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

OOPS! (Big Apple Stage Production): Chattanooga-10/29

Calhoun Co. Fair--Anniston, AL: 9/24-10/3 with Dondi, Phil and Francine.

Tarzan Zerbini Circus--Chattanooga: 10/7-10/10.

Royal Hanneford Circus--Perry, GA: 10/8-10/17.

Big Orange/GE Circus--Montgomery AL (J. Bauer): 10/8-16

Zamperla Circus--Birmingham: 10/14-10/24.

Kaleidoscope: Austin, TX-Highland Mall-10/12-31; Tempe, AZ-Diablo Stad.-11/17-12/12; Houston-G. Brown Ctr-12/24-1/23; Dallas-2/4-3/5; Chicago-3/21-4/24.

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

BACK YARD

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THE GODFATHER OF THE CIRCUS

By Bobby Gibbs

The "Godfather" of the circus, D.R. Miller, is gone. The patriarch of the circus family has died. The End of an Era of a giant tent show with herds of elephants, rings of horses, five, count 'em five rings, move every day, show coast to coast, maintain a good, clean reputation and always give 'em more than they expect. The name D.R. Miller has been part of lore and legend for as long as I have been involved with the circus. I cherish all the time I spent in my lifetime around this circus giant, a man who went from nothing to the largest traveling circus going today. A man who loved good horses and most of all, elephants. When you think D.R. Miller, you picture a really large herd of elephants under a big top. D.R. has truly been the head of our large, extended circus family for a long time. He has been part of many, many shows out of Hugo. Acts from Carson & Barnes Circus are on circuses all over the world. His personal elephants are on various circuses throughout the U.S. He always was planning for bigger and better things, #1 being an Asian elephant breeding farm in Hugo to raise baby elephants. He also had plans for a Circus theme amusement park. Not only Rosa and myself will miss him, but an entire circus industry will mourn the loss of our grandfather, D.R. Miller, a grand man.

Circo Hermanos Vasquez By Bobby Gibbs

Dallas, 8/28: Shane Johnson, 6 tiger act; Jose, Clown; Web, Elana; Juggling, 2 Fernandez; Bicycle, Paul; 3 Girl Ballet; Clown; Buillermo Besmer, Balancing Traps; Double Space Wheel, Fernandez; 3 Girl Ballet Dance Number; Jose & Co.-Clowns; "Judy" with Shane Johnson and Tammy Wallenda; Los Gauchos; Finale.

From 8/24, Bobby writes, "I'm in Cherry Hill, NJ for 10 days at State Fair. We are set up on concrete, so it's double hot! I drive about 600 miles on Sun. & Mon. then stay 10 days in one spot. I have an 8x14 ft. double compartment in Bunk's house trailer, with shower, TV, etc. plus they feed me-wow! and good stuff. We open about 5 till 10:30 pm and I sit & watch the animals. Got over 100 Brahmas, Long Horns, horses, mules, ponies and other cattle like Zulu and Scotch Highland. From here, we go to Blytheville, Arkansas, then to Bunky's farm in Lowell, Arkansas."

Harrison Sayre writes, "I remember Hoxie and the time when he was in Annapolis and he handed me a large roll of bills and asked me to take it to my bank and send money orders to different places such as his wife, etc. At that time, I was able to but today, the banks won't handle such large amounts without all sorts of questions. Harry Hammond and I tried to deposit a shoe box of circus counted money once and none of the local banks would take it! I saw Bentley Bros. last Saturday and hope to see the Big Apple Circus this week."

Old Photos To Sell?? Write Cherie!

CHRISTMAS IS COMING

Christmas is coming and good (used) books are hard to find. Here are some that would make great Christmas gifts:

Cloutman, "Mr. Circus"-auto. of Chas. Hunt	\$3.50
Chipperfield, "My Wild Life"	12.50
Lewis, "Carnival"-It's about carnivals	5.95
Wallace, "The Fabulous Showman"-Barnum	12.50
Duncan, "Gus the Great"-fiction based on fact	13.95
Krementz, "A Very Young Flyer"-Farfans	7.50
Fenner, "Circus, Lure and Legend"	15.00
Ballantine, "Wild Tigers & Trained Fleas"	19.95
Bauman, "Tiger, Tiger"	37.50
Taylor, "Center Ring"-stories fr. the New Yorker	33.95
Plowden, "Those Amazing Ringlings"	33.95
North, "The Circus Kings"	33.95
Desmond, "Barnum Presents Tom Thumb"	29.95
Fox, "Ticket to the Circus"	32.95
Murray, "Circus, Rome to Ringling"	35.95
Bradna, "The Big Top" or 40 years with GSOE	37.50
Durant, "Pictorial History of American Circus"	39.95
Clements, "The Circus, Bigger & Better"	39.95

10% postage please-PA residents 6% sales tax.

Send \$1 coin or stamps for complete list.

Earl Schmid

485 Sleepy Hollow Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15228

HEIDI HIGHLIGHTS By Mike Cecere

Since the last issue of Back Yard, I've received several phone calls and e-mails concerning the OABA news column. Written by hard-working Heidi Herriott, your local OABA representative, it focused on the USDA inspection reports.

As one of the few people who actually has read The Animal Welfare Act book, I thought I'd clear up some people's confusion. When you are inspected by a USDA inspector, they always give you a copy of the inspection report. Since either the license holder or person in charge of the animals have to sign it, you should consider it a legal document.

Now I realize many show people, like many Americans, dislike paper work, but you need to organize yourselves and keep your documents straight. Buy a briefcase or box to put them all in, just as you would your truck permits and bank record.

I had a cage act on a major Shrine show once with a well known riding act who had a moderate command of the English language. They had little regard for paper work

and when they'd drive their horse truck into a scale, they would shrug their shoulders and do the "no speak the English act." That would work except where the states were strict about horse movements. Then they would hope one of us more organized people would come along and help them talk their way out of it. The moral of the story, keep your paper work, permits, health certificates and such straight.

And yes, through the Freedom of Information Act, all public records are open to overview. Just as the FBI investigations of radical groups, UFOs and a myriad of other taxpayer funded oversight. But I'd sure rather have it that way. Hey, you could be living in Serbia where they don't worry about paper work. They rule by the gun!

Anyway, there shouldn't be anything to worry about if animal people and shows are doing their jobs in animal care right rather than just talking about it. The USDA is our greatest asset in this country and one of the few parts of the government that excels at all times. God Bless America!

Circus Mania 2000-Uniontown, PA 9/22-23

The members of the Terrell M. Jacobs and Dennis M. Gilli Ring of the Circus Model Builders are planning a giant model circus display to welcome in the new millenium. The display called "Circus Mania 2000," will be held at the Uniontown Mall.

Members of the CMB as well as the Circus Fans of America, Circus Historical Society and the Carnival Model Builders are welcome to attend and display their models and memorabilia. The club has appeared twice before at the Mall with members from as far away as California, attending and displaying.

The Clubs purpose is the preservation and displays of models of the circus. Members display models in all scales from tiny N scale to full size wagons. The Uniontown Mall has been a very successful show in the past with its great cooperation and easy access location. Plans call for many displays, a Bull Room for members, containing circus videos, snacks and the ever present jackpot sessions.

A dinner and breakfast will be held as well as a guest speaker, yet to be determined. Plan to put this event on your calendar as it has always been an outstanding array of pure circus. For information on displaying, vending or visiting contact: Rege Armend, 794 Morgantown Rd, Uniontown, PA 15401; Bob Foster, 18 Lemon St, Uniontown, PA 15401; Bill Merchant, 716 Penn Ave., Brackenridge, PA 15014. Vendors: Jerry Schaub, 1722 Leolyn St., Pittsburgh, PA 15210. Or visit: www.circusmodelbuilders.org

Visiting Kelly-Miller Circus By Gary Thomson

The Ancaster Lot, 8/18/99. I arrived on the lot at about 7:15 am. It was a large lot but very rough. The 24-hour man was just finishing off the job of preparing for the show. Band members, Tom Tomashek and Allan Thompson, were on the site, having arrived the night before. Originally the site had been planned for a circus lot in front of the Ancaster WalMart but had to be moved at the last minute because of a survey that was being done in that area for a new Canadian Tire Store. As a result the circus lot was moved to the west side which was not as level.

The trucks began arriving at 7:25 am and soon the lot was bustling as the crew started to prepare for the tent raising. I met with Ringmaster, Barry DeChant, and we had a quick breakfast at the McDonald's Restaurant in the WalMart. He brought me up to date on their recent travels from Milton to Rockton and 3 stops in the Niagara Peninsula ending in Beamsville the night before. The sponsor was the Optimist Club of Ancaster. This was their first year but they had put on a good publicity campaign, which resulted in over 300 people attending the tent raising. The tent went up with much applause.

Once the lot was ready and things had settled down somewhat, I went to the ticket office to meet KM General Manager, Alan Jones. Jones, a Burlington, Ontario native, ran away to the circus at the age of 19 when he joined the Garden Bros. Circus to clean and groom horses. His parents, Sally and Greg Jones, drove to Milton on August 12 to visit their son and see the latest version of Kelly Miller. I talked with Alan for a few minutes and then let him continue with his preshow schedule.

The front lot included the elephant ride, pony ride, snake pit and the Starwalk Bounce as well as the souvenir joint. As the crowds came for the afternoon show they made good use of these attractions. The first show started at 4:30pm under cloudy skies. Ringmaster, Barry DeChant, welcomed the audience.

1. Aerial Artistry on the trapeze presented by the Flying Vargas which included a triple somersault by Miguel Vargas and the passing leap. PEANUT PITCH; 2. Captain Eddy Steeples and his Chimpanzee; 3. Aerial ladder with Miss Stephanie Darr; 4. Nina, the elephant, presented by Bill Morris; 5. Cheeko, the clown, with his trick bicycle act; 6. The Kelly Miller Family on Parade. 7. The Kelly Miller Liberty horses presented by Sasha Fry (Rawls); 8. the trampoline act presented by the Miguels [Vargas]. INTERMISSION with elephant rides and autographs by the KM clowns; 9. Cheeko, the clown, and his plate spin. This act really got the crowd going; 10. Two aerial acts featuring the cradle and hoop by two of the lovely KM ladies; 11. Miss Silvia & her dove act, including a Cockatoo; 12. Cheeko, the clown, with his bell act; 13. An Aerial Ballet performed by 4 Kelly Miller ladies, two who were very young; 14. The Kelly Miller elephants with Wolfgang Bruno assisted by Miss Stephanie; 15. R. Olivares with a fantastic juggling act using pins, large balls, hats and Ping-Pong balls from the mouth. The crowd loved it; 16. The Olivares Duo presenting the Wheel of Destiny. This was one of the best shows that I have seen Kelly Miller put on but it was totally different than

the program that was being sold. We stayed for the second show and then for the teardown which followed. This took only 1 hour. David Rawls was heavily involved in the physical part of the teardown. He told me that the crew was short of the usual 38 because 8 men had to be left at the border. The next day I stopped at the WalMart to pick up posters and I met with Ron Bulmer of the Optimist Club of Ancaster. He had a crew on the site for cleanup. To their surprise there was no cleanup necessary. He was very pleased with the professionalism in all dealings with Kelly Miller and looks forward to their return visit in 2 years.

More From Gary: Rockton, 8/13/99. Several days before the Ancaster Show, we went to Rockton, Ontario [north west of Hamilton] to see this years show for the first time. We went for the evening show which started at 7:30 pm. The show was squeezed into a lot at the back of the Rockton Fairgrounds with the parking between the show and the road at the front of the property. The first half of the show went smoothly but seemed to end sooner than we would have expected at a time of about 60 minutes. At the intermission I asked Ringmaster, Barry DeChant, about this and he said that they had increased the pace of the show because of reported bad weather. The second half started with Cheeko, the clown, and his plate spinning act followed by the dove act. At this point we realized that it was raining heavily outside with strong winds blowup the sides of the tent up. Wolfgang Bruno came on next with his elephant act [this should be third from the end]and half way through this act the ringmaster stepped forward and announced that the show was being stopped due to the very bad weather. The audience hesitated as if they didn't want to leave and the ringmaster repeated his request to leave the tent immediately. Everyone did so in a calm and orderly [almost leisurely] fashion until the tent was cleared.

When we exited the tent the front area had already been cleared and everything not tied down was blowing around the lot. The rain had saturated everything. People moved from the entrance & were soaked to the skin almost immediately. There was concern because tornadoes had touched down in nearby Burlington and Hamilton just 3 days before causing some damage.

When I talked to Barry DeChant later in Ancaster, he said that, even with the heavy rain, the circus managed to leave the Rockton lot with no difficulty. It was reported in the evening news that night that another circus had not done as well and had to be pulled off the lot by it's elephants.

Ringling Offers A Chance To Name Baby Elephant.

The baby male Asian elephant was born August 16 and they are asking elephant lovers everywhere to vote for their favorite name. 5 names are posted for you to choose from. There are also photos of the newborn and its mother. On October 3, the voting will close. Since August 16 was the day Elvis died, I was hoping that would be one of the names! But no such luck! I still think they should consider Elvis.

To vote visit: www.ringling.com/news.

Reflections on the Old Place

"Compound Broke-Part IV" By Roger Smith

Mabel Stark lived across the street from me in Old Town, there in Thousand Oaks, just two blocks down. I lived at 2883-A, in a complex of duplexes, on East Crescent Way. Mabel lived at 3076, in a neat, white frame house, with a driveway on the right that curved left around back into a big garage which housed that massive Buick of hers.

The Oaks retained its small-town atmosphere then and everyone knew everyone, and when locals saw Mabel's maroon-and-white behemoth being herded down the boulevard like a cattle drive, they patiently avoided confrontation. The Old Sister was on her way to her tigers.

When I was last in the Oaks, in 1989, my duplex had been bulldozed, but Mabel's home still stood. I realized it was occupied. I only sat down the street in the pickup and became lost in the memories of the two times she had invited me inside. Her home was immaculate. There was scarcely a mote of dust. Her floors gleamed. Her desk and tabletops were spotless. Her curtains looked fresh and starched. Mabel's was a prideful and well-ordered home, just as were the cages she kept for her tigers. As was her cageline, Mabel's home was so sharp, precise and squared-away, one may have sworn she had learned such discipline from the military. In her own words, she later told me she was forever a meticulous, driven, career-centered woman, initiated by the nursing profession and honed to perfectionism by husband and mentor, Louis Roth.

To the left of her easy chair stood an end table with several books I had long been familiar with, each with a lengthy acknowledgement of her career. Fred Bradna's The Big Top was there, inclusive of his recounting of a young, female reporter, who had asked Mabel if she could train the reporter's mother-in-law. When the humor failed, the woman asked what it does take to be a tiger trainer. Mabel, Bradna wrote, parted her robe to reveal ghastly injuries to her tiny, torn legs, and quietly said, "This."

Mabel's housekeeper was Siva Phillips, the widow of master-trainer Frank Phillips. Siva also worked at the Compound Snack Bar and doubling in brass at Mabel's, served her well. Siva was an immaculate woman of impressive dignity and I often talked to her about her late husband. A young trainer like me welcomed any insight into the profession and Siva told me many times of the ways Frank managed his cats.

Mabel's cook was Pauline LeGrand, the wife of retired trainer, Earl LeGrand. Dr. Joseph Brisbane prescribed the same diet for both Earl and Mabel, so Pauline cooked duplicate meals and brought Mabel her supper nightly. This is not the time for the story of Pauline's discovery of Mabel's death, nor of the necessity of my last entry into Mabel's home by request of the Ventura County Sheriff's deputies.

Directly catty-cornered from my duplex, Mike and Hazel Huber lived on Skyline Drive. When Jungleland old-time union hands were bitter over my entrance into film work, it was level-headed, stand-up Mike who got me a 30-day waver with Local

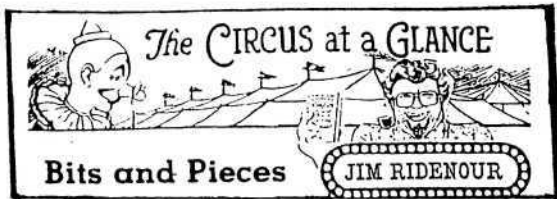
399 and thus my first 6 weeks work on Dr. Dolittle, Jungleland's last big-budget film. In Part I, I noted I thought Mabel's clothing seemed tailor-made. Hazel Huber was Mabel's tailor. As my friendship with the Hubers developed, it was Hazel who told me something of Mabel that made a lasting impression. But it came later, long after I'd begun early arrivals to maintain 51 cats.

The first morning I began work at 6 a.m., I kept an eye on the front gate. Within my sight, was the clock on the concession stand between Mabel's cageline and the back row of Big Stage Arena seats. Mabel and Uncle Ben went by that clock for his arrival time of 7 sharp. But Mabel strode through the Main Gate at 6:20. By then I'd shifted down to 4 empty cages, raked out the previous night's sawdust into the gutter, then entered the tunnel from the end, walked down and swept the last dust out with a warehouse broom. The rule here is: not one speck of sawdust or shavings may be left in the cages, lest it get on the meat. Sawdust cannot be digested and will bind up the animal's intestines, leading to severe blockage, even death.

Next, I came back around front, dusted off the cage fronts and cast an eye across the way. In came Mabel, full tilt toward her dressing room and knowing my voice would carry, I sent Numa and Congo into the lead cage. "Right, gentlemen, come over," I said. I was positioned so I could see Mabel and she whirled around in an indignant huff and stood drawn to her full height. Naturally, I never looked at her, but it was all I could do not to. I shifted Tarzan and Simba over, another pair of lions, and Hanzie and Emir tigers and I had another 4 empty cages to clean. I stole another glance at Mabel when I picked up the cage rake and it was nearly impossible not to laugh. She stood transfixed, glowering, as if I had committed the worst transgression. She turned on her heel and stalked of to her dressing room.

Once Uncle Ben arrived, half of Ventura County could hear her tell him about "that little wiseacre over there." But Unc quieted her saying, "Aw, naw, Mabel. He just has a lot of work to do." Feeling her pointed glances all that morning, I demonstrated cage skills and animal husbandry I wanted her to recognize, remembering nothing I could do would impress her.

"Roger, I don't know what you guys get out of working these cats," Hazel was saying later, "and I don't know how much you've seen. You'll never see Mabel like I have, when I'm measuring her and fitting her new clothes. She stands in nothing but a bra and panties, and you can't believe how torn up she is. Her legs have places where muscles were ripped out and she carries hideous scars everywhere." "I've only read about her injuries," I allowed, "but of course, I've seen how bad her right hand is." "It was nearly torn off. In those days, they put it back the only way they could. That's what I'm telling you. Mabel told me woman to woman how some of it went and some of it didn't go so well. But I wanted to tell you what I've seen. You can only decide for yourself if it's worth risking what all has happened to Mabel." Hazel dropped her eyes and became quiet. And so did I.



Greetings from Sunny Sarasota, Florida..The circus capitol of the world. Here's a thought provoking story "lifted" from the Ringling 1947 Press Book:

"What Makes It "The Greatest Show On Earth?"

By Hugo Zeiter

"The following is by a circus enthusiast in Danville, Illinois & we think it does a good job of answering the oft-repeated question: WHY is it The Greatest Show On Earth?..The Editors Circus Press & Radio Magazine.

There are several factors that make the Ringling Bros & Barnum and Bailey Circus the greatest show on earth. As a modern form of entertainment, it is unequalled. Its popularity is not only sustained because of its wide appeal and stupendous size in carrying the largest number of animals & the largest aggregation of human beings from all parts of the earth to make up the biggest program of its kind, but also because it offers the greatest real-life entertainment to the greatest number of spectators. All other popular forms of entertainment such as the theatre, movies, radio are based on illusions. When you go backstage, you lose the illusion which was created on the stage. Behind the proscenium is a world of scenery representing backgrounds for various plays enacted on the stage. This same illusion is lost when one goes behind the scenes in Hollywood or in a radio station.

There is however no deception or illusion in the world of the circus. Here is life & reality. Real live people & animals in the flesh-and-blood of reality from all parts of the globe are combined in one spectacular presentation. If you walk around the circus or go behind the scenes in the backyard of the show lot, you will still have the same illusion of being in a wonderland of marvels and fantasy, yet everything is just as real as life itself.

Here is an escape for the artist and poet, the musician and lover of nature, as well as the student of the muses & the people who toil from day to day to make this world in which we live. Here is a land of marvels & romance for the dreamer as well as a fairy land for the children. The performing artists really do the feats of skill and daring as announced in the program. The circus is not a humbug or illusion as advertised in the days of P. T. Barnum. It is more real & honest today than any other form of entertainment & that is what makes the Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey the greatest show on earth." Although Mr. Zeiter wrote this "right on the money" piece over 52 years ago, it holds true today. Note there was no mention of the evil boob tube as TV had not arrived. Mr. Zeiter is still a member of CFA. His address is: Hugo Zeiter, POB 377, Ridge Farm, IL 61870. For over 60 years, thru thick & thin, the boat sank, World War II, dozens of blowdowns, depressions, gas rationing, tax problems and hundreds of other minor and major inconveniences, the Miller family of Hugo, Oklahoma never

quit. Thru struggles and triumphs, the show went on..From a rag bag in the 30s to the world's largest wild animal circus today, the Millers were showmen. When you think of a "real traditional" circus, Carson and Barnes comes to mind. The Millers set the standard..And a high standard it is..May they rest in peace. I nominate Isla and Dorey Miller for the title "Showmen of the Century." They have certainly earned the title. "Winners never quit and quitters never win" was a way of life for the Millers. The Millers must have talked to Hugo Zeiter over 50 years ago as they fully realized that the circus was life and reality. Real live people and animals in the flesh & blood of reality from all parts of the globe combined in one spectacular presentation. My deepest heartfelt sympathy to the Byrd, Cavallini and Parra families..Thru them, "The show will go on."

On Saturday 18 Sept. at 2 PM, I attended the funeral of Eugene Nock. It was held at St. Martha's Church here in Sarasota. The Nock family requested that Father Jerry Hogan, the circus priest, hold the service. Eugene Nock was a great father, showman and human being. The church was straddled right up to the ring curb with Eugene's friends. It would take pages to list the famous and infamous circus folks that attended the service. Father Hogan's words were moving and inspiring. My heartfelt sympathy to the Nock family.

On Friday 17 Sept. I received a call that Hoxie, another circus great, had passed away. I knew Mr. Tucker rather well as I spent the 1982 season on the Hoxie Bros. Circus. I had the garbage stand. We had 2 blow downs during the season..I fell in love with Hoxie. He was my kind of guy..Hoxie had "Moxie." He tried the entire season to teach me how to tie a half hitch. I never learned, however, I did acquire the skill of selling "Tweetie Birds" and bundling large sums of cash in the back of my pick up nightly. I am sure this issue will be filled with facts about Mr. Tucker. He was "one of a kind."..My he rest in peace. I departed the Nock funeral & drove up to St. Petersburg to the Ruth Eckard Hall to attend the Royal Palace Circus. The matinee was sold out with an 80% house at night. "Hogie" Dubsky certainly has refined his marketing skills, that's why we call him the "boy wonder."

Well, I sent Irv Mohler my check for \$95 hoping to be the first to register for the CFA Convention. Now I need to sell some videos to pay for the 6 tables in the Bull Room. I will have over 300 selections available. I will be showing Ringling films all day at Jenny Wallenda's Ringling Convention. I have 28 Ringling tapes in my library. So, all you Ringling people, plan to attend. You will have a ball. I showed Ringling films at one of her past reunions and you could hear comments like, "There's my old boyfriend. There's my second wife. There's my dad." It was a fun day indeed.



FAMOUS CIRCUS QUOTES

"Most kids have a dream of that they would like to be or do when they grow up. Some, the lucky ones, eventually realize this dream..." Clark Gable (Continued on Page 14)

*Congratulations
To
Rex And Mary*

The Best of Luck to Both of You

**Always Remember And
Never Forget:
It Was Rex Williams
That Said,
"You've Gotta Live With
Them!" (Elephants!)**

KEN "TURTLE" BENSON

Remembering Eugene Nock By Mary Jane Foote

Eugene died of a massive heart attack. It was very sudden-what a shock for everybody! We sent a floral arrangement on behalf of The Nerveless Nocks Tent. Eugene was a loving, gentle man-with a great sense of humor. We will surely miss him. Condolences can be sent to the Nock family at 6958 El Camino Dr, Sarasota, FL 34240.

I last saw him this summer, at the Tommy Bartlett Thrill Show in Wisc. Dells. John Vick & I drove up there to give Michelangelo his copy of The White Tops, containing the article about him. We did not know that Eugene was there visiting-what a wonderful surprise. Eugene was the first member of the Nock family to read the article-even before Michelangelo. He was so proud of his son! He put on his glasses & took his time to thoroughly read the article. From time to time he would comment, "good article..very good article." Sometimes he would crack a smile and at time he had tears in his eyes. I even took a picture of him reading the article. What fond memories!

I am so very glad we got The Nerveless Nocks Tent off the ground while Eugene was still around to enjoy it. I will always remember his speech at Houlihan's after we presented him with the Nock Tent certificate at the Bartlett Show. He even stood up on a chair-so that everyone could hear (and see) him. And then, to our great delight, he yodeled for us! Our Nock Tent holiday

greeting in The White Tops this year will be a full page-dedicated to Eugene & including several photographs of him. Michelangelo told me that he is dedicating his new venture, Cirque Equinox, to his father. I can't help but think what a fitting tribute; you see, the theme of Cirque Equinox is time: happy times, sad times, mean times & even dying times-and then happy times again. Michelangelo emphasized that it must always start-and end-with happy times! (Michelangelo's article will appear in the next Back Yard. If anyone has any memories of Eugene you'd like to share with us, please write.)

**MARTIN J. DOWNS CMB RING #18, FRED LOGAN CFA
TENT #119 KELLY-MILLER HOSPITALITY DAY-
STRATHROY, ONTARIO 8/26, 1999**

On the morning of Thursday, August 26, the Kelly Miller Circus arrived at the Strathroy Fairgrounds under rainy skies to see a hospitality tent set up by the members of the Martin J. Downs Ring #18-Fred Logan Tent #119. The night before, Jerry and Shirley Nicholls had set up a small circus tent and also several welcome signs for the circus.

There was coffee and juice and several large boxes of donuts [Kelly Miller people love Tim Horton donuts] ready for the KM staff. As they arrived on the lot they came over to have coffee and say hello & also to look at several photo albums that had been placed on a table under the tent for their viewing. There were also 8 bags of day-old donuts provided for the elephants.

There were many familiar faces & some new ones who were very thankful for the coffee. Apparently, the cookhouse coffee maker had broken down just 2 days before and had not yet been repaired. 18 members were on site for the welcome: Jerry and Shirley Nicholls and grandson, Nathan, a junior member; Al and Doris Ward and granddaughter Felicia; Paul & Winnie Butler; Dale and Betty Cole [Dorothy Herbert Tent]; Jim Chapman; Gary Thomson; Phil & Joyce Krahn; Mary Banister; Michelle Fenn and Dale and Evelyn Riker.

At 11:30 am we all arrived in downtown Strathroy for lunch at a restaurant built into the old Post Office with special guests, Barry and Karen DeChant. We had a very enjoyable time, seeing Barry and Karen once again. Rain set in after lunch & carried on for most of the day. At 4:30 pm we all attended the early performance and had a great time. The performers seemed to be in top form. Perhaps the good start with coffee and Tim Horton donuts from their fans helped.

The club would like to thank members Jerry Nicholls & Al Ward for organizing this year's hospitality day for the Kelly Miller Circus. Special thanks to Jerry for putting together a super circus tent. Upcoming events: Sept. 30-Oct. 3, circus display at the Oxbury Mall in London, Ontario. Nov. 21, next meeting of Martin Downs-Fred Logan at the home of Jim and Lil Chapman in St. Thomas, Ontario. We will be holding our bi-annual election of officers at this meeting.

**Paul Horsman saw Bobby Reynolds at the State Fair in
Syracuse. Serge Coronas had a circus under a green canvas
tent.**



Got a lot of great comments on my Ringling Super Collection. I thank all of you for your continued support. Also received good words about my Mixed Bag Vol. I. Two of my loyal customers complained that the tape was only 1 hour & 24 minutes in length. Well, Mixed Bag Vol. II is ready to ship and is a full 2 hours. I took the best material from circus fan Frank Pouska and then added material from fans Harry Kingston, Kent Ghirard, Jimmy Eaton and Harold Ropp. So it's a full 2 hours of vintage circus. As always, the tape is only \$20 and I pay the postage. I ship quick..(See my ad for Mixed Bag Vol. II in this Back Yard.)

A couple of years ago, I released a 3 tape set on the history of the Hoxie Bros. Circus. The 3 tapes (360 minutes) covered the show from its first year in 1961 thru 1983. 23 seasons. Joseph Bradbury, noted circus authority, had this to say: "The producer, Jim Ridenour, who has put out a goodly number of videos in recent years, has come forth with his finest effort to date, in the opinion of this reviewer." My Hoxie retrospect was my personal tribute to Hoxie. In the early 90s, I drove down to Miami to Hoxie's home & interviewed him on video. He was over 80 years old at the time. The 3 tape set contains actual film footage of 14 of the 23 seasons to include film from the first year 1961. On camera I introduce each season, giving a brief history & review of it. Joe Bradbury stated, "It would take an entire issue of Circus Report to describe the video's contents." The video concludes with footage taken at Hoxie's 80th birthday party in Orlando. The party concludes with Hoxie's daughter, Irene, presenting Hoxie with a new Cadillac. A 20 page booklet, a viewer's guide, filled with rare photos, many in color, comes with the video. Running order of the three tapes is given. The 3 tape Hoxie retrospect along with the viewer's guide is \$60 and I pay the postage.

I am sending Cherie photos from the viewer's guide. I hope she runs the one of me and my buddy, Hoxie, together. See you down the road, Jim.

America's Circus Animal Training Dynasty

We are constantly reading about the "Horse Whisperer." Well, the Circus world has its own "Horse Whisperer" and his name is John Herriott. Starting in late November, the Herriotts purchased 2 camels and 2 llamas. John proceeded to train a complete act including a miniature horse, which opened with the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus on March 15. The act is presented by Laura Herriott, assisted by her son Jason and daughter Jennifer. The act appears in every performance along with going through Spec wearing blankets with the animals being

led by other personnel. In April, John spent 3 weeks finishing a 4 pony drill, which had 3 weeks previous training. They appeared at the Yonkers, NY fair for 17 days. In July, he went to California where he trained three Arabian horses for Cathy Hanneford (RBBB Circus) and 8 Welsh ponies for Gary Johnson. He spent FIVE WEEKS and trained a complete act. John is currently training 8 ponies for Tommy Hanneford. All within ONE YEAR. I doubt that anyone can match that record. He is definitely America's Master Trainer. How many "trainers" can guarantee results!

Three generations of the Herriott family are currently active in the Circus world. John is currently training, Laura is presenting the camel act; her oldest son John-John and his wife Christine present four of Cuneo's elephants; Jason has his own juggling act with CBCB Circus. He also presents elephants. Jennifer assists Jason and rides the elephants. Cindy and husband Roy Wells are currently with RBBB red unit. Cindy presents a liberty act and they work a ring of elephants. Heidi is a ringmistress for various producers and also has a trapeze act. Cristine (Wiener) and husband James Plunkett were featured at the Circus Hall of Fame this past season and are Circus producers. Mary Ruth Herriott is currently at the Lake Geneva Horse Park with her dog and pony act, pony drill and Einstein, the Wonder Horse and friend, Henry the Mule.

John and Mary Ruth are proud of the fact that all four daughters are trainers in their own right with many accomplishments to their credit. With the girls (fourth generation) and their children (fifth generation), it insures that the art of circus animal training will not be lost.

Bob Kitchen writes, "Tommy Hanneford's show at the Eastern States Expo is getting great reviews. Its 1 ring format in a very classy tent adds sparkle to the largest fair in the east. Tommy also has a new magic show on the midway, "Bedazzled." It also appears in purple & gold tent. In addition to the magic acts, Barry Lubin, "Grandma," goes over well with the audiences. The show carries 6 dancers, 4 females & 2 male, who make no less than 5 costume changes in the 45 minute show. Both shows play to straw houses at each performance. Jon Zweifel has his Two Hemisphere Bandwagon in the daily parade, pulled by a 16 horse hitch with Dick Sparrow at the reins. The Circus World Museum has the Royal American Bandorgan on the midway. Bob Commerford's petting zoo, with camel and elephant rides, rounds out the circus-type attractions at the fair."

MAY I HAVE YOUR ATTENTION



**JIM
RIDENOUR**



GOT A LOT OF GOOD COMMENTS ON MY MIXED BAG ONE. A COUPLE OF MY LOYAL CUSTOMERS ASK WHY IT RAN ONLY ONE HOUR AND 24 MINUTES. WELL, THIS ONE RUNS TWO HOURS AND TWO MINUTES..I TOOK THE BEST OF THE FRANK POUSKA MATERIAL AND ADDED FILMS FROM THE KENT GERHARD AND THE LATE GEORGE BINGAMAN COLLECTIONS....

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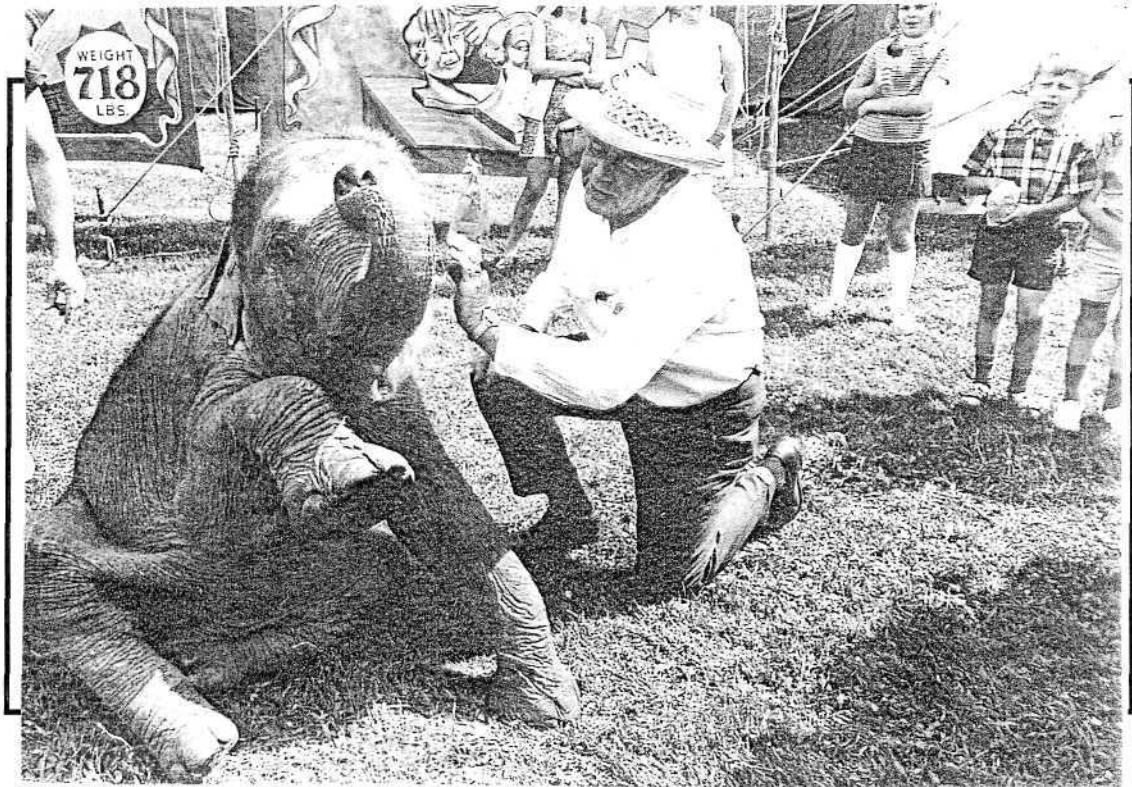
GREAT FOOTAGE OF THE BIG JOHN STRONG CIRCUS...GOOD SHOTS OF JOHN STRONG..KING BROTHERS 1970--SEE HAL HAVILAND--JOANNE JENNIER

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