

HAPPY

BACK YARD

2000

HAPPY NEW YEAR

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HOW THEY LOUSED UP THE CIRCUS

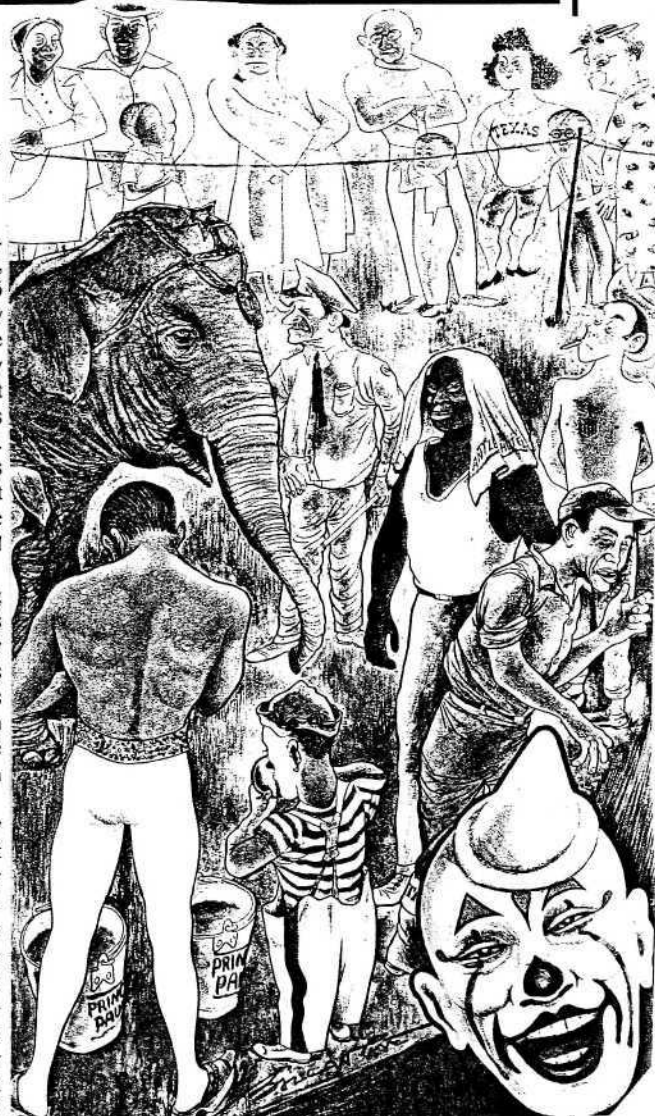
BY BILL BALLANTINE
(SAGA-May, 1962)

Dedicated to Roberta and Family

An ex-crown himself, SAGA's Big Top observer puts the blame on big shots for the demise of "The Greatest Show On Earth!"

At Madison Square Garden in NY City, the Ringling Bros. Circus, known far and wide as The Greatest Show On Earth, was scrambling through the hectic opening night of its 1956 season. During the previous year the mammoth tented show had experienced a tremendous organizational upheaval. Wise and experienced head had been lopped, and a good many greenhorns had been put in positions of importance. That night was the debut of the new regime. Circus followers were curious to see what kind of a show the new bosses would come up with. The production's most dazzling number, called "Spec", was lumbering around the hippodrome track. From a vantage point alongside the performers' main entrance to the center ring, the circus director, a cocky ex-vaudevillian named Richard Barstow, proudly watched the lavish procession. Barstow had stood in that very same spot at every Ringling opening since 1949, the season he first joined the circus as choreographer, under its head man, the celebrated John Murray Anderson. That was the year John Ringling North regained his power over the big circus after having been tossed out on his ear a couple of seasons earlier. It was also the year North began to transform the Ringling circus into a girlie-girlie extravaganza, with acts and effects that would not have been out of place in a Parisian night club.

At that time Barstow was merely a minor element in the new style circus. But on that 1956 opening night Barstow stood next to John Ringling North. A cluster of circus officials anxiously fluttered around that vainglorious nabob, paying him court. There was Max Weldy, the show's fussy designer, Henry Ringling North, John's younger brother and one of the circus VP's; and a tall husky young fellow named Michael Bailey Burke, who was the show's brand-new exec. director, hand-picked by Johnny North. Burke was a man of absolutely no circus experience; his middle name had been newly added for its tanbark flavor. Self-consciously handsome, he looked like a male model for pipe tobacco ads. "Congratulations, Richard," Henry North said warmly to Barstow. "You've done a



marvelous job." (Continued on Page 4)



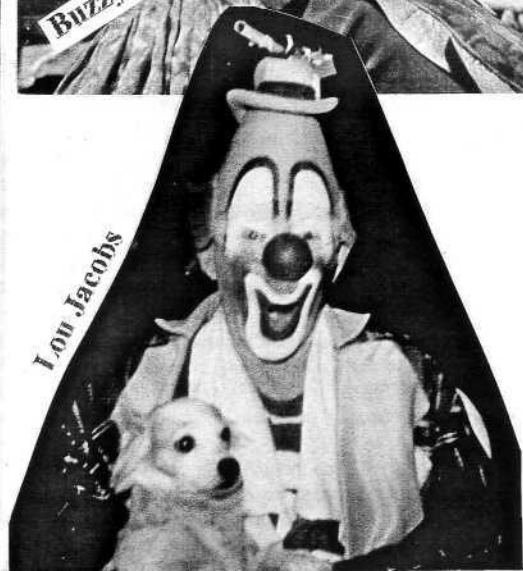
John Herriott

Clyde Beatty Circus

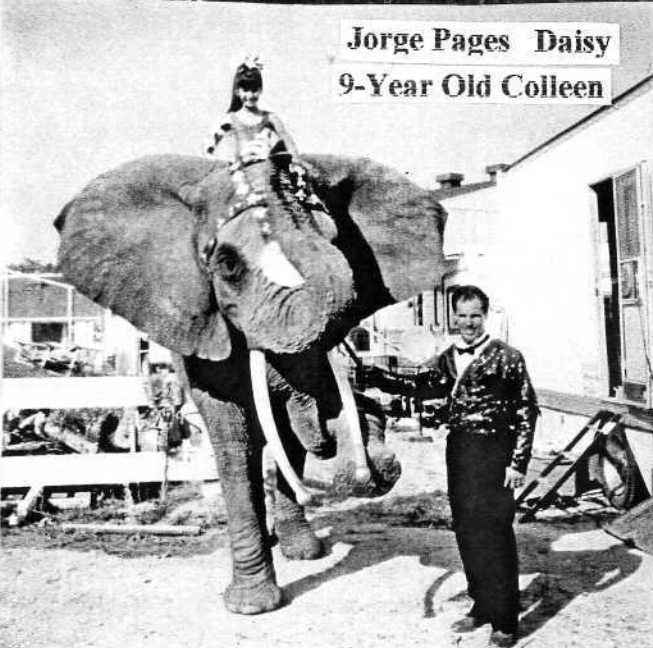


Ringling Bros.

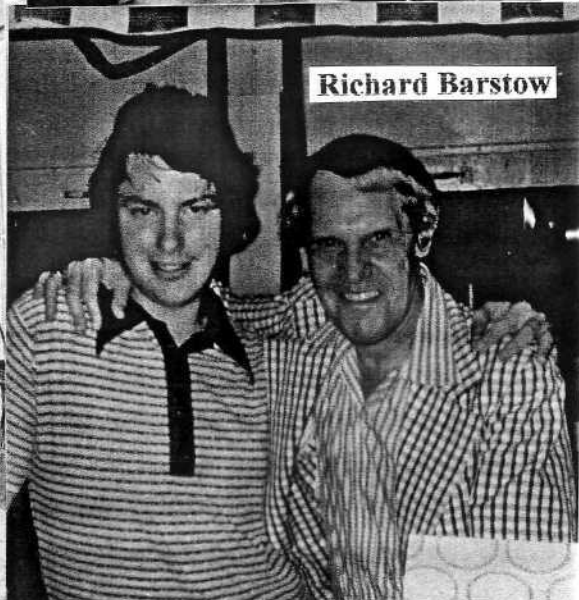
Buzzy Potts



Lou Jacobs



Jorge Pages Daisy
9-Year Old Colleen



Richard Barstow

FOX 75

THE FOX !!!

Dear Fox Friends;

Well I am still alive and every thing went like clock work. I had the best people in the world with me and that made it so great. The show was great all the people were wonderful. No complainer no body was mad at anyone, it just was great. The show was a little long but everyone seemed to enjoy it and I had a few calls and letters from people in town telling me how much they enjoyed the show. And believe it or not, not one animal activist showed up tho I advertized that I had 8 animal act in the show. Isn't it marvelous, I am so overjoyed I can not stop talking about it. But now to the show.

I put a line up of the acts and that way it went no one complained about anything. We started off with a Grand Parade which included the Honor Guards from different organization. Police Dept. Fire Dept. VFW, Lions, the Rangers from the Tabernacle, the Faith Christian School. Sorry to say the other ones did not show up. The Shriners had some parade going on in Englewood, so they could not spare us even one outfit with all the units they have. But we did great with what we had.

After they all were in we had Schlarbaum and his volunteer play the National Anthem then Pastor Nevell Gritt gave a short blessing. All left and we had 8 dancing girls from Penny Wilsons daughter making poses like the Harold Tribune has and did some acrobatic. Then Gisela did her contortion. This was all announced by Kimbell Keller who did a great job and then announced John Herriott and turned the Ringmaster ship over to him and Heidie Herriott. Who then did not forget to announce one by one of the dignities. Next followed Kay Rosaire with her educational cat act, honoring not only herself but also Clyde Beatty, Alfred Court and Mabel Stark.

Then honoring the Wallendas, hanging perch Rietta and Lyric Wallenda and on the other side Alida Wallenda and husband Robinson Cortez on the cradle act. The cage went down like lightning. Following that act was Giovanni Zoppe with his comedy loop to loop. Then Ellian Rosair with her Comedy Horse, following her was Almas with his jumping handbalancing act honoring the Yong Bros. Laura Herriott with the camel act honoring her dad, Jason Walker juggler, honoring Truzzi, Franz and Lotti Brunn. The bear act by Kim riding bareback horses honoring Albert Rix, Michael Ashton and his children honoring the Nelson Family, Pam & Roger



Zoppe/Rosaire chimps they are in The Ring of Fame. Giovanni Zoppe Comedy Act, the Bare Back Riding Loyal Family send by Tommy Hanneford, honoring Hanneford, Cristianis, Loyal Repinskys. Every bobby went in this act, Clayton Rosaire did the stooage in the act and Giovanni also clowned around. All the Loyals were in the act even the little tiny girl. Then Intermission with chimp picture taking and elephant ride. (Sorry folks, I do like that better then the snakes, as I am deadly afraid of snakes.

Second halve opened up with Alams & Norbol Perch act, Gabriella Guzman trapez and one arm swings, honoring Lilian Litzel-Elly Ardelyt & La Norma. Adrian Poemas one finger stand, also send by Tommy Hanneford, he is his son-in-law Nellies husband. He honored Unus. Ring of Fame entry Ellian with a comedy cowboy horse act. Aurelia Wallenda & Sasha Pavlata Doble Cloudswing, honoring the Wallendas. Then Brian Franzen and his elephants honoring Buckles Woodcock ending with Finale of entire cast, Old Lang Sign was played and then all the performers went in to the ordiance to say good by to the end of this century and welcome the New Millenium. This was the show but there were the people with out this could not happen.

Dick Garden who gave the back drop, ring mat, ring curb, lighting, sound system and all his crew to set it up. Duke was the back bone of it all, he also acted as prop boss. Niles Garden handled the soundsystem and did a fantastic job of it. Roy Huston took care of all the drumming in the show when ever needed. Dutch Crawford helped. On the prop department was Joe Guzman who helped when ever needed, Mario Zerbini, Samson Zerbini, Dieter Galombo. From the stars of the Ring of Fame present ware Daviso Cristiani, La Norma, Paul Nelson, Harold Alsana, John Yong, Derick Rosaire, Fay Alexander, Sylvanna Zacchini Meluzzi, Tito & Chella Gaona, Dolly Jacobs.

There were lots and lots of circus owners, ex performers and agents watching the show, but I really was to busy to see who they all were. The only once I really noticed was Jeanette Williams and Charly Bauman as they were sitting close to were I was. I think it was a great show and I like to thank everyone with all my heart for comming to my aid. Now I need to apologize to Jackie Le Clair, as he was going to be so nice and come to honor Blinky, but when I looked over all the acts I had I called him. As he was not home I left it on his answering machine to tell him that I just over booked the show and hope he will understand. (Continued On Page 5)

"Loused Up The Circus".....

Turning to Weldy, the v.p. continued bestowing kudos. "Max," he murmured reverently, "it's gorgeous, just gorgeous." To Burke, Henry said, "Mike, you've done a marvelous job-marvelous, simply marvelous." In marked contrast to these stylishly dressed sawdust-important, and slightly detached from them, stood a dignified Irish Catholic priest. He was Father Ed Sullivan, known to everyone under canvas-centering star to simplest workhand-as the Circus Priest. Michael Bailey Burke turned to Father Sullivan, and inquired pleasantly, "How do you like our circus this year, Father? Absolutely wonderful, isn't it?" The priest gave the new executive director a sharp searching look. "When does it start?" he asked coldly. Burke beckoned Barstow over. "Dick," he said, "Father Sullivan doesn't seem to care much for our new circus." The circus director smiled ingenuously. "But, Father," he protested jokingly, "they only gave me 7 days and 7 and a half dollars to do it with." The priest, a steadfast champion of the simple charm of the robust old-fashioned circus, has long been an outspoken critic of John Ringling North's frilly juiced-up modern show. "Bartow," he said, mispronouncing the director's name, "you put this show together on the train on your way up from Florida."

Barstow didn't bat an eye, but inwardly he cursed the new executive director. Had Michael Bailey Burke more of the circus about him than a phony middle name he'd have known better than to fish for compliments from Father Sullivan-especially that night, for the show was much gaudier, more fey and more blatantly sexy than usual.

To carry out the Spec's theme, "Say It With Flowers," trapeze flyers were ridiculously (& reluctantly) costumed as tulips, morning glories and petunias; other bulging-muscled circus athletes were disguised as humming birds, bees and butterflies. The whole affair was embarrassing. Jeep-powered floats, clumsily constructed of iron, plexiglass and plywood, awkwardly depicted fanciful gardens of lilies, roses and other exotic blooms, as well as The Four Seasons. Autumn was particularly repulsive; it looked somewhat like a hillock of stale horse manure.

Father Ed viewed these passing artistic miscarriages with disgust. "The only thing I've seen so far that's absolutely just right is that wheelbarrow full of pansies that just went by." Jauntily he returned the salute of a passing clown, who was costumed as what appeared to be a wilting hollyhock. "I give this glorious production just 6 weeks on the road; then everybody had better look out." Michael Bailey Burke edged away nervously; Barstow continued to smile politely, but his eyes had turned steely cold. "And I wasn't so far off at that," the Circus Priest said jovially to me recently during lunch while on a brief visit to NY City. "As we all know, that summer in July, at Pittsburgh, Ringling Bros. folded its Big Top-forever, according to Johnny North." Of course, even the most rabid opponents of circus humbug concede that Messrs. Vertes & Barstow's floral Spec, as boring as it was, actually had little to

do with the Ringling closing, beyond indicating the show's strong leaning toward a Broadway vulgarization of the circus and a steady drift away from the lusty sawdust traditions of the Big Top. In the Ringling demise more critical factors were involved: a run of unusually foul weather; stubborn labor difficulties; increasingly high cost of rail transportation; a growing scarcity of adequate showgrounds. But mostly there had been questionable judgment at policy level.

On that dark day in circus history when Ringling Bros. finally collapsed, John Ringling North made a flying visit to his circus and issued, from the sanctuary of a private suite on the show train, a terse statement to the press, saying that the circus as he knew it was a thing of the past. Circus buffs coast-to-coast breathed easier. Maybe North was getting some sense in his stubborn Dutch head. Maybe now the dancing girls and ballet boys would be run off the lot and people could see elephants and horses again. The clowns might get time enough in which to make people laugh again. Maybe the circus would get rid of those gargly-wavy-haired baritones singing theme songs. Maybe even Barstow would get the gate.

But no such luck. The following year, when the Ringling circus returned to the road for its 87th season, everything was pretty much the same. The show, however, now reorganized as an indoor presentation, was greatly reduced in size. Its 80-car train had been replaced by a fleet of about a dozen specially designed trailer-truck vans. The menagerie and sideshows had been dropped. Personnel were drastically reduced and forced to travel by private autos and house trailers. Performers were doubling and tripling in acts. Production numbers were stretched thinner than ever to cover the scarcity of expensive top-grade acts. Barstow was still in there, pitching the new flashy floss, driving more well-muscled ballet broads & acrobats than ever through simple 1-2-3-kick routines. The tenacious director had somehow managed to escape the squeeze. His Spec creation for 1957 was a ponderous fairy tale dubbed "The Coronation of Mother Goose." To save money, its costuming was largely a rehash from previous circus productions; hep show folk took delight in identifying various pieces by vintage year. After he had sweated out that season's penny-pinching production, Barstow, still smiling, left Ringling Bros. to its own devices.

In 1958 the man responsible for what direction there was of Ringling's new tab-show circus was Tony Valona, a lyric writer who sometimes helped John North with his song composing, which he does on a saxophone. The Spec then, a wan attempt to bring back some old-time circus flavor, was an uninspired bit of Arabian mish-mash entitled, "A Thousand and One Nights." It resembled a Halloween parade in Shamokin, Pennsylvania. Barstow was still absent from Ringling in 1959. That year's indoor jamboree a la North was directed by a young dancer, Chet Tolliver, who had appeared in Barstow's 1956 production as the rear-end of a silken-maned, mincing prop horse. At this point, John Ringling North set up a howl for the return of the experienced hand of Barstow.

(Continued on Page 7)

"THE FOX".....



He took it wrong and was hurt. I am very sorry about that I did not wanted to hurt anyone. When send in the schedule I naturally did not put Jackies name in as, he would not appear in the show. Please someone tell Jackie that I did not want to hurt his feeling. I know he is a great clown. And I hope he will forgive me. Jackie please we were friends for to long.

Yes, I do have to report that Thea Borza died Dec. 12th, she was 89 years old. There are not to many around any more who remember her when she was a great performer. She was Charlie Borzas wife and after they left showbusiness they owned the Main Bar, where showfolks had quite a few meetings before they bought the land on Lockwood Ridge Rd.

By the way, when I told you about all of us old girls were willing to performe at the Showfolks Circus, I mentioned Carla Wallenda. Hey folks, she is still out there doing her highwire and highpole act and could do still all the acts, she will not retire from show business for quite a few years. I do not know how she does it, but she is still a great performer carrying on in the Wallenda tradition.

One more thing, in the last letter I made a type mistake, the Ringling Reunion will be the ninth of January not the 19th, the ninth. Please let me know if you like to come. The meal will be knockwurst, potato salad, baked beans, macaronny and cheese souer craut and cheese cake. The price will be \$12.00. So let me know who is willing to come and send your money in advance.

I think this will be all the news for to day. Now I wish you all a very Mary Christmas Und Einen Guten Rutsch Ins Neue Jahr. Felic Novida - Bon Natale.

Love Always,

Your Fox



THE ELEPHANT RANGERS

By Mike Cecere

Back in the days of the old wild west, many legendary figures were born. One of the most famous were the Texas Rangers. They would ride into some of the toughest, most backward towns alone and within a short period, restore order. A noteworthy incident was in a dusty west Texas cowtown where a riot lasting several days ensued.

Telegraphing for help, the townspeople expected a company or more of troops to come galloping in. Instead, a lone Ranger came, his backup on his hip.

The town's Mayor rushed up to him and asked, "They only sent one Ranger?" To which replied the Ranger, "You've only got one riot don't you?"

In Austin, Texas, there is a statue commemorating this with the motto, "One Riot, One Ranger." This scenario has been reenacted in just the past few days when famed Elephant Trainer and Director of The Elephant Sanctuary, Carol Buckley was called on to travel to one of the legendary towns of the west, El Paso, Texas, to settle a modern day riot over "Sissy" the Elephant.

This highly skilled professional was able to settle a Jumbo-Sized problem that satisfied both Elephants and concerned citizens alike in just ONE day!

Meanwhile, "Back at the Ranch," Scott Blais, Carol's partner and a person intrigal to the founding and highly successful, operation of the Sanctuary, was seeing to the endless needs of their growing herd of Packyderms.

It's a "24-7 Job" seeing to the myriad of veterinary needs and general welfare of the great beasts and Scott, as well as Carol, do it gladly. Any REAL Animal person knows what I'm talking about. Lots of People Talk about what should be done for Elephants; here are People with the Courage to actually Do Something for some Problem Elephants. Finally people with a Solution! Good Job Carol And Scott! That's Doing It The American Way!

Vince Pagliano writes "I am currently on "Super Cirque" in Montreal. Tino Wallenda is on the show and they will be doing the seven. Also here is Giovanni Zoppe, Johnny Peers, the Olmedas, the Pages, David Smith, Jr., Renee and Cuneo's cats, along with Gary Thomas and 12 elephants.

Ganesh, the baby male elephant at the Cincy Zoo now weighs 1,820 pounds! Check out their web site!!

**CIRCUS FANS AND FRIENDS,
 BEST WISHES
 THROUGH THE HOLIDAY
 SEASONS!!**

**GENE MASCIOLI
 CIRCUS FANS PAST PRESIDENT
 1998-1999**

REX ROCKS RICHMOND!

By Mike Cecere

I was opening my Christmas cards the other day and found I'd received one from Rex & Mary Williams. I've got to tell you even as the years pass, it's still a Big Thrill to be remembered by the Dean of American Elephant Trainers, Rex Williams!

Rex, as many people know, is the Supt. of the outstanding Hawthorn Corp. Facility in scenic Richmond, IL and sage advisor to Mr. John Cuneo's brain trust of top people. Having him there is the Elephant equivalent of having Harvard University (if they taught about Elephants) at your fingertips.

I can still vividly recall him galloping down the track on the old Beatty show on his trusted horse leading 11 huge Jumbos through an exhibition which has never been (or likely to ever be) equaled! And on a muddy lot to see 11 Big Elephants working in harness, most by voice command, was a once of a lifetime experience that would make your hair stand up on end!

His record of Training Elephants, both Asian and African, is unmatched as well as his commanding presence as Supt. of a number of large complex herds of Elephants. His students number a legion of top people in the field that have either directly worked and learned from him, plus people such as myself, that admire his work and take inspiration from the success of a man who has always put the Elephants First.

So, here's to Rex Williams, A Real Elephant Man. God Bless America!

A VISIT TO CARSON & BARNES

By Denny Childers (Nov. 3)

We left the house about 7:30 p.m. for Apache Jct. We found the lot about 9:30. Since it was out in the middle of the desert, we decided not to spend the night there but went back into town & spotted the RV in a grocery store parking lot where we promptly crashed for the night. Seven a.m. arrived and we were all up; the generator wouldn't start and I forgot the starter fluid at home. Fortunately, there was a Burger King there, so Katie & I were able to have our morning coffee (on the road back to the lot.) We arrived at the Rodeo Grounds about 7:45 and there were already quite a few people parked along the road, waiting for the show to arrive. Seems one of the radio stations (one of the sponsors) had been saying arrive early so you can see the Big Top go up. I pulled the RV to the side of the road and set my video camera and tripod up on the roof so I could get some shots of the show's arrival. I also posted a banner on the front of the coach saying, "Jennie, Happy 1st Birthday" and leaned the 20 pounds of Animal Crackers against the windshield. I had

on one of my Circus World Museum t-shirts with an elephant on the front, my "circus" vest with all the show patches and CMB hat. Sandra, my granddaughter, had her "circus" vest on also. I knew the show wouldn't be arriving early since they had a 190 mile jump. However, based on the radio broadcasts, the other towners didn't. Pretty soon, they started wandering up to where we were waiting, wanting to know what time the show would be there, etc.

I must have explained a dozen times that I was not a member of C&B, but only a circus fan. 8:45 arrived and so did Tim, delivering Jennie & Isa. A few minutes later, the spool truck arrived and gradually the pace picked up. Last vehicles on the lot were the mechanical dept. at 10:45. Once the show began to arrive, I still had people in cars driving by asking questions such as, "I went to all the places that the radio said was selling tickets, but they were picked up this morning. Where can I get tickets to the show?" (I pointed to the "red wagon" in the distance and told them, that's the ticket office, it just arrived, but it will be open real soon, once it's spotted on the lot. You can get your tickets there.) I decided it best to move the van off the road, so Sandra, Katie & I took a walking tour around the outskirts of the lot. Actually, Katie & Sandra were well ahead of me-beeline to Jennie's trailer which Tim and crew were in the process of setting up. Of course, we got the box seats.

There were only 2 front seats available for center ring, so they added a seat so we could all have front row views. The lady asked if I was the one on the motor home video taping when they arrived. I said yes, and she said she was the one who waved as they went by. I told them that I had another banner that I would like to hang on the side of the RV and asked if it was OK. Told them it said, "Keep Elephants in the Circus; Help Defeat HR 2929." The response was, "Sure, don't see why we would object to that." Since I was parked on the back side of the lot, had to move the RV around to the front of the show which was the back side of the Rodeo Grounds. I parked right next to the front door and taped the banner the full length of the RV. You could not enter the show without seeing "Happy Birthday To Jennie" or the HR2929 banner. Katie wanted to watch the Big Top go up and enjoyed it, but it was not high on Sandra's list! She was more interested in Jennie and the other animals.

As we were walking away, I saw one of the bull men and asked him where to find Tim Frisco so I could deliver the Animal Crackers. He told me to bring them to the back of Jennie's trailer, but by the time I got back, they had closed the door, so we put all 20 lbs on an elephant tub. It was close to the back of the trailer, right? Mistake! I received a first hand demonstration of how effective a "smeller" and "hand" that trunk becomes! As we walked back to the front of the display, both mother and daughter were trying to reach those crackers. They were sealed in the original plastic bags!

When they got down on their front legs & shoved those trunks under the wire, I figured I'd better find somebody fast. I could see the headline, "Circus Fan Incites Stampede."

(Continued on Page 9)

"LOUSED UP THE CIRCUS".....

Richard rejoined for the season of 1960 (for less money than before) & produced a dashy-flashy Spec that was right up North's alley. Barstow did the Ringling show again last season and as spring of 1962 rolls around, he's entrenched stronger than ever as Mr. North's creative factotum, but his show still exasperates lovers of plain, unadulterated circus. And, while these bitter, dissenting voices *are* heard by the circus hierarchy, nobody seems to give a good goddam. For the money is rolling in again. The Ringling ledger has never had it so good.

John Ringling North dismisses the idea that his circus has become a girlie show that has alienated the kids. "Nuts," he is reported to have told a NY *Daily News* reporter, "there have always been plenty of girls in the circus. Everybody likes to see pretty girls. I do. Don't you?"

Barstow thinks it is unfair for circus buffs to call him the man who ruined the old-time circus, protesting that he wasn't the originator of its present-day Broadway style that fans find so objectionable. According to Barstow, his predecessor, the late John Murray Anderson, really was the man who started the new trend. Maybe so, but the one Andersonism which Barstow has been unable to assimilate is his predecessor's innate style and sharp sense of show-business timing. Barstow tries to include in his numbers everything but the kitchen sink and invariably they are interminable.

Murray, as Anderson was affectionately known to show-folk, got his show-business training under the wing of that all-time master of gossamer and glitter, Florenz Ziegfeld. It was Murray who induced North to hire the famous choreographer, George Balanchine, to create a ballet for the circus which featured Vera Zorina as a center-ring toe dancer. And it was during Anderson's early reign as circus director-in the late 1930s and early 40s-that the Ringling circus had its first delusions of sophistication. North got Igor Stravinsky to compose a musical score for the 3-ring shebang. (It scared the hell out of the elephants but that didn't bother Johnny; he thought it sounded goddam classy.)

One of Broadway's most flamboyant designers, Norman Bel Geddes, also got a crack at the circus during that period. His wild imaginings turned out to be too heavy to move efficiently under canvas. One Bel Geddes nightmare was a 10-foot-high platform on which giraffes were exhibited; another was a monkeys' island surrounded by a water-filled moat. The blase *New Yorker Magazine* cartoonist, Peter Arno, a drinking companion of North,

even had a hand in the revamped circus. Oh, those were great days, all right. North had a ball while tried-and-true circus old-timers went out behind the Big Top and threw up. Richard Barstow came to the circus in 1949 after battling his way up through the honky-tonk drudgery of vaudeville circuits and supper-club dates. He started as a toe-dancing wizard before he had enough fuzz to shave. His dancing specialties then were on-toes Highland fling and the kozatka, that Slavic sitting-down dance, which he did also entirely on his toes. Another feat was a leap from the top of an upright piano to the floor on his toe tips.

When he was offered the job as circus dance director, Barstow had never seen a single circus performance. He was 44 years old. At the time, John Murray Anderson described him as a "...wise, very dear, extraordinary, unique, unbelievable, nit-witted darling..." The Big Top and its roughneck denizens didn't faze Barstow for a moment. But at first they found him a little hard to take. He dressed peculiarly to their eyes, arriving at rehearsals in such items as tight mustard yellow slacks that laced up the sides, black polo shirts and red sneakers. On windy days often he wore a thin, wrap-around gabardine coat that made him look like a Rolls-Royce mechanic; on rainy days he'd appear in Japanese sandals, Mexican huaraches or floppy, unfastened galoshes.

Barstow's language was more polished than that to which circus people are accustomed. The Big Top troupers' mother tongue is a kind of bastard esperanto made up largely of ancient jargon and animal grunts plus an imaginative use of every unprintable four-letter word. Barstow's soft-spoken, painfully polite manner made him a new kind of freak around the circus. Slight of build and moving with the reedy grace of an experienced dancer, he contrasted sharply with tough, tanbark types-a fawn in a herd of rhinos. Barstow was delighted with the circus people, an outspoken lot not to be trifled with. He liked being part of this oddball world without hypocrisy, in which differences were speedily settled-sometimes by an exchange of fists or feet, or by a close-range duel with iron tent stakes. Then, too, the new choreographer gained a new respect for womanhood from circus females, who are terrific sluggers, fine scratchers, hairpullers, shin & groin kickers; their traditional weapon against enemies is a shoe with high spiked heel. But the thing Barstow liked best about the circus was its Brobdingnagian set-up. Here he could work on the really grand scale for which he had yearned all his life. Here he could bark orders, not at just a chorus line of a dozen or so, but at *hundreds* of people.

(To Be Continued)

RINGLING RED: N. Fort Myers, FL-TECO Arena-12/30-1/2. Coming soon to Sunrise, Miami and Jacksonville, FL.

RINGLING BLUE: Tampa, FL-Ice Palace-1/6-9; St. Pete-Bayfront Arena-1/12-16.

BIG APPLE CIRCUS: Lincoln Ctr-NYC-thru 1/9.

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

Barnum's Kaleidoscope: Houston-Brown Convention Ctr-12/28-1/23; Dallas-Valley View Mall-2/5-3/12.

BACK YARD

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Phone: 309-828-0737. FAX (at work): 309-438-5378.

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Visit www.inficad.com/~circus/backyard.

OABA Presents "Circus Conference 2000"

Monday, Jan. 3: 2-4 p.m.-Circus Executive Committee (committee only); 7 p.m.-Circus Owners/Producers Reception (invitation only).

Tuesday, Jan. 4: 9:30-12:30-Circus Owners/Producers meeting (includes lunch). Standard Operating Procedures; Crisis Mgt; Communication during traveling season; Affiliation/Accreditation.

12:30-4:30: Animal Owners/Presenters (USDA exhibitor # or act name required). Dr. DeHaven of the USDA-APHIS; Legislative/regulatory updates; Industry standards; Panel of Veterinarians; Atty. Joseph Morris, Circus Rights fund. 6:30-8:30: General Circus Industry Meeting. Media-guidelines on effectively dealing with: education program; membership/fundraising; industry standards; insurance/liability.

Wed. Jan 5, 9:00-1:00: Elephant Owners Meeting (includes lunch). HR2929; conservation; standard operating procedures. 1:00-4:00: Elephant owners, trainers, handlers. Qualifications for trainers/handlers; Elephant Manager's Assn.; industry standards. 8:00: Showfolks Club open. The Conference is free to all

OABA members. A \$10 daily registration fee will be charged for non-members. OABA membership applications will be available. All meetings held at Showfolks of Sarasota Club. General circus meeting Jan. 4 at 6:30 is open to all industry-related persons. Other meetings are specific topics for those directly involved. For more information call Heidi Herriott 407-656-4340.

The Annual Erna & Rudy Rudynoff Tent 127 Holiday Party will be Jan. 9 at the home of Harrison & Jane Sayre in Annapolis, MD at 1 p.m. Please contact Harrison at 410-263-3516 for more information.

Growth Spurt Packs On Pounds On Panda

A nutritionist and veterinarian at the World-Famous San Diego Zoo gave a nod of approval Dec. 15 following a routine exam on Hua Mei (HWA May), the rare giant panda cub born at the San Diego Zoo on August 21.

According to Mark Edwards, an animal nutritionist responsible for overseeing the cub's dietary intake, the little bear's body mass and weight are in line with expectations and indicates she may be experiencing a growth spurt, which has packed on a whopping pound-and-a-half since last week's exam.

Hua Mei's diet still consists of only her mother's milk. Today, she tipped the scales at nearly 14 pounds and has stretched to 27.3 inches, nose to tail.

Hua Mei is the only giant panda cub to survive in captivity in the United States and is one of only 5 giant pandas in the United States at the time.

She and her parents, mother Bai Yun and father Shi Shi, are on loan from China and live at the Zoo's Pacific Bell Foundation Giant Panda Research Station.

The San Diego Zoo is operated by the not-for-profit Zoological Society of San Diego. The Zoological Society, dedicated to the conservation of endangered species and their habitats, also manages the 1,800 acre San Diego Wild Animal Park (more than half of which has been set aside as protected native species habitat) and the Center for Reproduction of Endangered Species (CRES).

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM BACK YARD !!!

"VISITING CARSON & BARNES".....

I swallowed my pride, found a handler who rather than go for the animal crackers, went back to what I later discovered was Tim's trailer. Lisa came out and I told her I was the guilty party. Basically, she said "Thanks, we were almost out and I wondered where we were going to get more and don't worry about it, nothing would have happened." After my heart slowed down, we began to talk and she took a few of the crackers over to Jennie.

Lisa said Jennie always goes back to mama for her milk after eating them and sure enough, she did. Lisa went into the trailer and brought out pictures of when Jennie was born! She was like a proud parent showing off her family album.

Sandra & I spent a lot of time on the midway, looking at the animals. I went through 20 quarters so she could feed the donkey & llamas. Tried to get her to take a nap, but no way, she just had to sit with the animals and we both had sunburns to prove it. Tried to get her to eat, but would have nothing to do with that either! During one stroll down the midway, she asked if she could take some pictures, so I handed her the camera.

First, was Jennie, then her mother. Pictures of the Africans, then the Asians. Pictures of horses and ponies. Then she asked what else she could take a picture of and I told her whatever she wanted. "But, Grandpa, there's nothing else left to take a picture of!" I guess we know what circus is to Sandra now! Finally, 3:45 arrives and the rides open up. First she has to ride the ponies (this is the kid that has a horse!) Next, the moon jump and the elephant kiddie ride. Then, a beeline to the REAL elephant ride-somehow, she managed to go solo when all these other kids are in line. Don't know how she swung that, as I was buying more ride tickets and by the time I got down there, she was already on her way.

Then came the camel ride, another solo flight. Since it was close to show time, we stopped by the concession stand and she had a box of popcorn and snowcone, then on to our seats. The performance was about 20 minutes late starting and by that time, Sandra had finished the popcorn and was starting on cotton candy! She suckered me into the candy pitch and bought peanuts. No wonder she didn't want to eat supper, she was saving room for the good stuff. I have bruises on my side from her telling me to take a picture of this and that. Actually, I began tensing up to fend off the pending blows anytime horses, ponies or elephants appeared inside the big top. We thoroughly enjoyed the show and agreed it was better

than last years. Better and more colorful costumes, much better Spec and the music was better too. Every time Lisa went by, she would look down and her smile would get wider. Sandra and I took 3 1/2 rolls of film! When the show was over, it was feed the donkey, back to the pony ride, some pennants and the hour & a half drive home.

(Thanks, Denny-how about your Kaleidoscope visit?)

News From Our Circus Friends

***Dave Orr** writes he is working on a Petition Drive, involving HR 2929. "A lot of people in the business don't realize how serious this is. So far, have hit my first goal of 1000 signatures with the help of 17 Petition workers in IL, FL, Mich, Ohio, MD, NY, VA, NJ, PA and myself. I plan on taking my signed petitions to the Hill myself." Anyone wanting to help Dave with getting Petitions signed, please write him at 629 Brentwood Dr, Duncansville, PA 16635.

***Gary Thomson** writes "At our Nov. 21 meeting, I announced that we had finally received notice from CMB Secretary, Lonnie Sewell, that the official Ring Wagon for the **Martin Downs Ring #18** had been changed to the **Great Britain Bandwagon #100**. This is a little more colorful than the Sells-Floto Wagon previously used. Our next show will be held April 15 in Dundas, Ontario. It's a circus model display which will be part of the Dundas Hobbyfest. It's only a one-day show, but the first time in many years that the club has shown in this area. The April 30 meeting will be at the home of Harold (Buster the Clown) and Pauline Black in Scarborough, Ontario. Al Ward will be presenting a major display of his 1 1/2" scale circus, including his 30' bannerline, at the Windsor Wood Show, held the last weekend in February.

***Sisters Jo, Priscilla & Monika, of Carson & Barnes** wrote in their Christmas card Priscilla's mother died quite suddenly, but peacefully, Sept. 30 in Switzerland. Priscilla joined all her family there but had to return after 10 days for a doctor's appt. She will go back to visit in Dec. On Nov. 8th, Priscilla had her interview for naturalization in Dallas and on the 10th was sworn in as a U.S. citizen! The annual **Circus Mass at St. Martha's Catholic Church** in Sarasota will be held on Sunday, Jan. 9th at 10:30 a.m. **Fr. Fausto**, pastor of St. Martha's, will preside...and seats will be reserved up front for all of us. "We end the century in awe at and somewhat chilled by the fragility of life but mostly warmed and drawn on by the care and concern of so many friends."

Circus Life Family Oriented, Says Mother of 3

11/12 By Liliane Parbot-Johnson

Charlotte Sun Herald

How many children would dream of starting school at noon and ending it at 3 p.m.? In addition to that, when the teacher is "really cool," she cooks breakfast for her students before they hit the books.

You say it would never happen? Don't bet on it. Just ask Jennifer Herriott. That's what she experienced while growing up around circuses. She also spent time in regular schools, so she is able to compare the two lifestyles. "I liked it better than waking up early every day. My high school teacher was very cool. She used to cook breakfast for us, so we really liked her. It was pretty nice," Jennifer said of her circus lifestyle as a kid. School was not limited to 5 days per week, however. It was held every day, even summer, except when they traveled. Now with a high school diploma to her credit, Jennifer's days on the circus are not interrupted by studies. She works with elephants on the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus and also helps her brother, Jason, in his juggling act. "But I don't juggle," she specified, "He does."

For several decades, most younger children traveling with circuses have been taught with the Calvert School correspondence course. At the high school level, American School is used. Both Jason & Jennifer have been taught by teachers or tutors while they traveled. In the winter time, they attended regular schools, according to their mother, Laura Herriott.

Laura is a 4th-generation animal trainer. Her father, John Herriott, is renowned for his ability in training animals of all kinds. Laura presents 2 camels, 2 llamas and a miniature stallion who answers to the name of "Shiro." Her oldest son, 23-year-old John, trains elephants and is working with another circus. "They really enjoy it," she said of her 3 children's professions.

When she compares her life to that of her sister, who lives in a town and has her children in day care, Laura appreciates the benefits of circus life, where she works and lives with the same people. She said all mothers look after each other's children. "I raised my 3 children in the circus business and I never had to put them in day care or get a baby sitter. My job is here. I did not have to leave home to go to work. I just go in the circus tent. It is a wonderful way to raise a family. I can have a stew cooking on the stove in the trailer, I go do my act and I come back and eat dinner. We have no generation gap in the circus. It is very family oriented."

Asked if drug problems exist, as found in some schools or communities, she said, "Not among our teen-age children, because they all perform. They have certain responsibilities. There is no time for that." Laura also had her schooling take place on the road, but at the time, teachers or tutors were not always available. "When I was a little-little girl, my father used to teach me school. When I was older, I went to live with my grandmother in Ohio for awhile. I was very unhappy. I didn't want to be sent away from the circus. It splits the family. It's not good. I finished high school ahead of time on the Ringling Circus because I skipped 10th grade." Laura said she was always a good student because "it was like a responsibility I had to do. It was always a sad time to be sent away to school. I didn't want my own children to go away, so I tried to stay home for a while."

That experience was short-lived. She had become a single mother and she couldn't make a good enough living. Besides, her children had to be in day care. She soon was back training animals. The family goes on the road with 2 rigs. One truck pulls a trailer with the animals. The other pulls the house trailer that is home on the road. Life is pretty busy between traveling, taking care of the animals and housework. When there is time, the sewing machine comes out. "My mom taught me how to sew," Jennifer said. "We make our own costumes." Jason did not learn to sew, but no matter. "My mother and I, we do his."

CIRCUS SARASOTA

By Liliane Parbot-Johnson, Charlotte Sun Herald

During the off-season of most circuses, performers with homes in Sarasota perform with Circus Sarasota, but George Cahill will be coming from his New Port Ritchey home north of Tampa to be the Master of Ceremonies. No, he is not a twin of Mr. Greenjeans of Capt. Kangaroo fame. He is Mr. Greenjeans himself. Instead of the farm clothing he has worn for the past 3 seasons, he will sport the red coat, black top hat and boots of the traditional circus announcer—a job he has done with 2 other circuses. "I have worked for Dolly & Pedro for several years at Busch Gardens. I emceed and I have done other jobs to help them out." When he is not Mr. Greenjeans or a circus emcee, he has a magic act, "Invisible Inc." with his wife, Darlene, and son George IV. At one time, he was with Marvelous Magical Burger King. Cahill is looking forward to his Circus Sarasota engagement. "Lots of the acts I have worked with before. They have a really good line-up. I am very excited to be working with them again. It will be like a big family reunion." (Reporter Liliane is a former acrobat and aerialist and says she worked with the Jacobs, Hannefords and Theron families "cons ago.")

Largest Gift Ever To Ringling Museum Museum News For Release 12/7/99

Sarasota, FL: Howard Tibbals, creator of the world's most detailed model of the American circus and one of the foremost collectors of circus posters and photographs, has offered the Ringling Museum what may be the largest challenge gift ever made to a Sarasota cultural institution. The gift includes the equivalent of more than \$6 million in cash, his circus model and approximately 30, early 20th century multi-sheet circus posters. To meet the challenge, according to the terms of Mr. Tibbals' gift, the Museum must raise \$6.5 million with the next two years. The Trustees and Directors of the Ringling Museum and Foundation accepted the challenge in an agreement with Mr. Tibbals approved at their Board meeting on Tuesday, December 7.

According to the agreement, Howard Tibbals will provide \$1.5 million to build a new, 30,000 square foot addition to the Ringling Museum of the Circus. This includes an initial \$200,000 to hire an architect to prepare the designs. Mr. Tibbals will provide \$2.5 million to endow the operation of the new wing and an additional \$175,000 a year for the next 30 years to provide staff support, the equivalent of another \$2.5 million endowment.

Mr. Tibbals will also give the Museum a 3000 square foot, 3/4 inch scale circus model that he created over many years. The vastness of this complete model serves to demonstrate the vast size of the show and the unbelievable human effort involved in moving this production from town to town throughout the year. Based on the Ringling Bros. Circus between 1920 and 1935, it includes 8 tents, 54 railroad cars, 130 wagons, and thousands of human figures and animals. It was featured at the Knoxville World's Fair and National Geographic Building in Washington DC, as well as at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, and the Ford Museum/Greenfield Village in Michigan. "We look forward to giving the extraordinary model a permanent home where it can delight visitors of all ages and lay out the full panorama of the great American tented circus," said David Ebitz, Director.

The new addition to the Circus museum is part of the facilities master plan approved by the Ringling Board at their meeting on Oct. 25. It will cost approximately \$7.5 million to build, another \$1.5 million to install the exhibits and be named for Mr. Tibbals. The Tibbals Wing will become the new entrance to the Museum of the Circus. It will exhibit Mr. Tibbals' circus miniature and posters and other collections of the Circus Museum in dynamic and interactive installations through multiple galleries as well as provide an orientation theater and space for educational programs, performances and other special events. In making his challenge gift to the Museum, Mr. Tibbals remarked, "The circus was the most exciting form of entertainment in America during the 1880s to 1930s. The Ringling show was the premiere show of the era. Sarasota is in great part the wonderful place it is today because John and Mabel Ringling chose Sarasota as their home and John brought the winter quarters of the Ringling Bros. Circus here. It gives me great satisfaction to know that my circus model will be based in Sarasota as part of the Ringling Museum."

NEWS FROM THE ZOOS

*The St. Louis Zoo has been named among America's best zoos by Travel & Leisure Magazine. In its family edition for summer 1999, it featured America's top 10 zoos, "the most animal-friendly wildlife parks, sure to free the beast with." Other Zoos included in the list are the Zoological Society of San Diego, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson, Minnesota Zoological Gardens, Brookfield Zoo in Chicago, Audubon Zoo in New Orleans, Miami MetroZoo, National Zoo in Washington D.C., Bronx Zoo and Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence, Rhode Island.

*The Phoenix Zoo celebrated the holidays early, with the arrival of Reba, their new Asian elephant, donated from Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation, on Dec. 17. For about a year, the Zoo has searched for a companion for Indu, the Zoo's other female Asian, as part of a long-term strategic elephant collection plan. Obtaining a companion for Indu was challenging, due to the increase in the demand for captive Asian elephants needed to assemble social herds in zoological organizations.

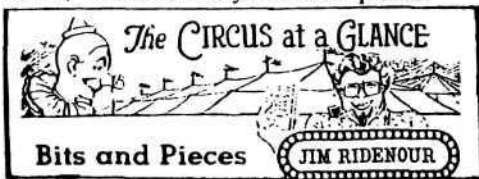
THE GRAND LADY PASSES

By Mike Cecere

I would like to take a few moments to salute a Great Performer, "Bertha" The Elephant. She headlined at the famed Nugget Casino in Sparks, Nevada for far longer than any human performer and until her passing, was a major "must-see" for visitors from around the world when they visited Sparks.

A Top facility was built for her and her companion Elephants that even today is among the best, with comfortable quarters for both Elephants and Elephant people. The Nugget's management made sure she always got the best food, vet care and engaged the top people in the field to run their program.

Notable Elephant Men who ran the program were (to name just a couple) Slivers Madison, David Hall, Gary Jacobson and the longtime and current Elephant Director, Don Bloomer, who was her closest human companion. Don continues the program with "Bertha's" successor, "Angel" who under his expert Training will fill her considerable footprints. As any true Animal person will tell you, in a lifetime there are always special creatures such as "Bertha" who make doing what we do worth it. And my heart goes out to Don and his people, as any of us who have been at this a while, have been where they are. But as the wise men said, "Life is for the Living," and one must continue on. So, Farewell To "Bertha," The Grand Lady Of The Elephants!



Well, we start a new year this week. Boy, this one flew by in a hurry. It is the holiday season and we all have so much to be thankful for. I am thankful for folks like D.R. Miller and Hoxie Tucker who never gave up, thru thick & thin, thru many trials & tribulations, hung in there. These showmen and others made such a contribution to the traditional American circus. They should not be taken for granted. I am thankful that I live in the greatest country in the world. With all its shortcomings, America still beats all the rest.

I am thankful that I live on Freedom Ave. What a name for a street. We should never take freedom for granted. There are many countries where I would not have the opportunity to express myself freely. Freedom of speech

is not enjoyed by everyone. Freedom of speech has its drawbacks. It is for everyone. No matter how misguided they are. The Animal Rights "Kooks" have the same freedom as the rest of us. That is the American Way.

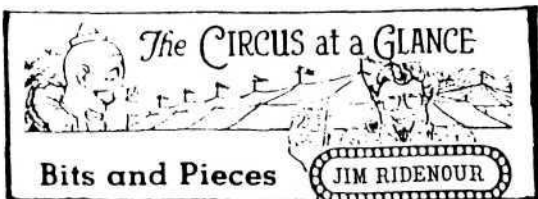
I am thankful that the OABA, who has done so much for the carnival industry over the years, is now working night and day to help the circus industry. I am thankful for folks like Heidi Herriott, who is fighting the "Kooks" with the best weapon we have. That is the facts. The real story. I am convinced that Heidi and the OABA will continue to fight for the American Circus. It will not be a battle that is won overnight. It is not an easy battle. But thanks to the efforts of the OABA, Gordon Turner, Frank Robie and fans everywhere, who are spreading the word, we are making some progress. For this, I am indeed thankful.

I am thankful for people like Dorothy Herbert, "Shrimp" Johnson and Howard Tibbals, who have made significant financial contributions to the American Circus, the circus fans and the circus museums. I am thankful that thru their examples, others will follow the leaders.

I am thankful to the Circus Fans of America. This fine group has brought so much joy into my life. I am thankful that the Circus Folks of Sarasota have accepted me as one of their own. I do not come from a famous circus family. I never worked in the center ring. One thing is for sure, I love the traditional circus. I guess it shows. I have been accepted by the circus community and for this, I am most thankful.

I am thankful for my health. If you got your health, you've got everything. I'm still breathing and for this I am most thankful. I am thankful for the many circus fans who contribute to my video releases. Without them, there would be no circus videos. A lot of people think I am getting rich selling videos. My close friends know otherwise. I enjoy putting the videos together. Anyone in his right mind would have quit years ago. I gives me a lot of pleasure to receive an order or a letter and some fan actually thanks me for my efforts.

I am thankful that in America, we have freedom of choice. We can choose to go to a traditional circus; we can choose to visit a "new wave" phony-circus or we can choose both. Of course, I would hope your financial support would go to the old fashioned, wild animal show. The fact remains, this is America & freedom is what it is all about. For this I am thankful. I am thankful for my family. My mom, who is 84 and in a nursing home made the statement, "I have come to realize that Jim (me) is gonna chase circuses as long as he is alive."



I am thankful for my daughter, Michele, and my son, Mike. Mike finally settled down, got married, has 2 sons and a great little wife, Tina. I recently remarked to a friend, "Mike finally grew up." My friend came back with, "Jim-you never did."

I could write 10 pages of things I am thankful for. You get the idea. I must mention my dog, Rube. She is really a great companion. When I say, "Let's go by-by," her tail starts to wag. Rube brings me a lot of joy. I almost lost her (literally) a couple of years ago. I am indeed thankful that fate did not let that happen.

So, during this holiday season, we all must take the time to reflect on the many things in life that we should be thankful for.....

About New Year's Resolutions: I have broken more than my share of them. But, here goes a few New Year's Resolutions:

I hope to give the CFA as much time & support as I can. I hope to try to introduce more people to this wonderful organization.

I hope to try to help spread the real "facts" about circus animals and their owners.

I hope that my continuous plugs for the OABA will help the OABA to get more members, both individual fans and CFA Tents.

I hope I can continue to forgive & forget. Life is much too short to carry around a list of folks you are "mad at." We all have our own thoughts and ideas. We all mean well. Most of us have the same goals regarding the circus and it's future. This country is a melting pot of different people with different ideas. Carrying a grudge is childish. I hope to do better in the coming year.

I hope I can keep my weight down. It is not easy. I am now at a 10-year low. But, I have lost 50 pounds, 3 times now and gained it back. I hope that doesn't happen again. These are a few of my goals for the new year. I am sure you have your own mental list.



FAMOUS CIRCUS QUOTES

From the Nov.-Dec. White Tops (Food For Thought):
 "It's so sad in this great country of ours a very small minority can dictate what the vast majority can and can't do regarding their diet, amusements, sports, fashions and

pets."-Robert Goldsack (CFA 5308) responding to a PETA letter to the Nashua (N.H.) Telegraph. I got a word for Bob. The majority does not rule. Money and loudness rules. Most politicians are bought and paid for. Most hate to concede to this fact. Loudness rules. He who makes the most noise rules. A couple of years ago, I read the following on a sugar pack. "He who has a thing to sell and goes and whispers in a well, is not as apt to get the dollars, as he who climbs a tree & hollers." So, climb a tree and yell for the circus, the CFA, the OABA, animals in the circus, etc. Write letters to the editor. Spread the facts. You can make a difference. There is strength thru unity. United we stand and divided we fall. Here's wishing you and yours peace and good will in the coming year, Jim.

*Ed Pert writes "Brent 'Cheeko' Dewitt will be back on Roberts Bros. Circus in 2000, after a one year absence. *Harold Barnes created a beautiful Christmas card for Dave & Lois Hoover-off his computer! Gorgeous color and the front is an old poster with a lion & tiger and Dave with whip and chair. Definately a collector's dream!

Job Opportunity In Florida

We need someone with office
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Also, a groundskeeper and
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If you have your own trailer,
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"THE LIVING TRADITION"

By Mike Cecere

One thing you learn darn quick around a tent circus is the staggering amount of equipment that has been around for some time, even longer than its current owners.

Even more than Elephants certain key pieces of equipment like spool trucks, go on for decades. Any longtime showman can tell you about trucks built from parts of one and other parts from another, sort of that old Johnny Cash song, "One Piece At A Time."

Now, let's visit the Winter Quarters of Roberts Bros. Circus, headed by Capt. Ken "Turtle" Benson. Capt. Benson as regular Back Yard readers know, is a well known Elephant man who tours small-town America with Big "Boo" and "Martin, the Wonder Dog."

Well, after having thousands of feet tramp on the Elephant ride platform, it was time for the Capt. to use his experience gleamed from his Naval Special Forces training in Viet Nam and construct a new one. While discussing ideas with his good friend, second-generation Elephant man, Brian Franzen, Brian offered his old platform which his Dad, the late, Legendary Wayne Franzen, personally constructed years before.

Capt. Ken immediately said Yes and treasured the chance to gain that piece of history. Upon getting it to WQ, he set on prepping it for the upcoming season. I can picture Wayne and his beloved "Oka" standing beside it and when you visit Capt. Benson, you can share in the nostalgia of that time. So, here's to Capt. Benson, Keeping The Living Tradition. God Bless America!

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY

By Brian Nunn

A Visit To Hawthorns: The walk we take in life, we see who we work with and we see who we work for. The "for" being the elephants; sometimes they're easy to work with, sometimes they're not.

It doesn't matter 'cause you have to make it as comfortable for them as you can, it's your job. The rewards are plentiful (just ask Mark). Stay with it and those elephants will let you know how good (or bad) you are. I visited a barn up north last week. It's got a bunch of pachyderms in it.

There was a pop-eyed punk, a large stoic cow and a long line of individual adult hay-burners, some very powerful, some easy and some that demand your attention enough to tax your patience. While standing there I recognized a half dozen elephants I'd known and worked before. The

time I spent hearing and telling stories, I found that the bulls I'd known before were still up to their old tricks.

It's a nice barn, warm, comfortable, lots of good feed and enough exercise area to satisfy a race horse. One of my favorites was still acting like a floozy, batting her eyelashes; snooting and blowing for your attention. Did my heart good. Gyp is a sweet animal that will drive you nuts (a short trip in my case) but she's loveable and creative and captures your imagination.

I've seen and worked animals that strolled thru their paces on their own, made you look good and some that demand that extra bit of attention to complete the job; race horses, rodeo stock, the neighbor's goat, you name it. Of course, the neighbor's goat never got out of my tree when I told it to, but that's another story.

Long live animal smarts, good, bad or indifferent.

"The Greatest Show On Earth"

Charlotte Sun Herald 12/24/99

The acts presented simultaneously in 3 rings leave the spectators wishing they had 3 pairs of eyes. The acts never cease to amaze. The "Cloud-Walking Carrillos" are among them. Juan, along with his wife Tatiana and partner "Capi" Acevedo, defy both gravity & the law of the jungle. The trio dance, jump rope, play leapfrog, do somersaults-all without a net. Instead, Bengal tigers are ready to catch them, watching their moves from pedestals in the steel arena below the wire. At another time, the wild animals perform under the gentle commands of Mark Olive Gebel. Jean Pierre "JP" Theron is billed as "The Human Comet." He is a 5th generation performer; "The Cycling Therons" came from France in the late 40s to perform with Ringling and other American circuses.

Catherine Hanneford represents a 7th circus generation. Her earliest circus relative toured rural England with a mixed menagerie in 1621. Catherine began performing at 5 as a ballerina on horseback in the act of her parents, George, Jr. & Victoria. At 12, she was training horses and elephants, 2 acts she presents in the Ringling show. "I grew up with horses & a baby elephant, like my brother, George III. I think I am designed for the life of show business." She lives on the train in a spacious stateroom. It is 32' long by 8' wide. It has plenty of closets, living room with TV/VCR & surround sound, washer/dryer, bathroom, kitchen with all the appliances. On the wall, she hangs pictures of her family. "The train is the best thing with this circus," she said.

HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM BACKYARD!!!

China Durbin Billy Ward Dorothy Durbin

