

# BACK YARD

Volume IV, Issue #60

January 31, 1999

## CIRCUS FLORA "WOWS" 'EM IN SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

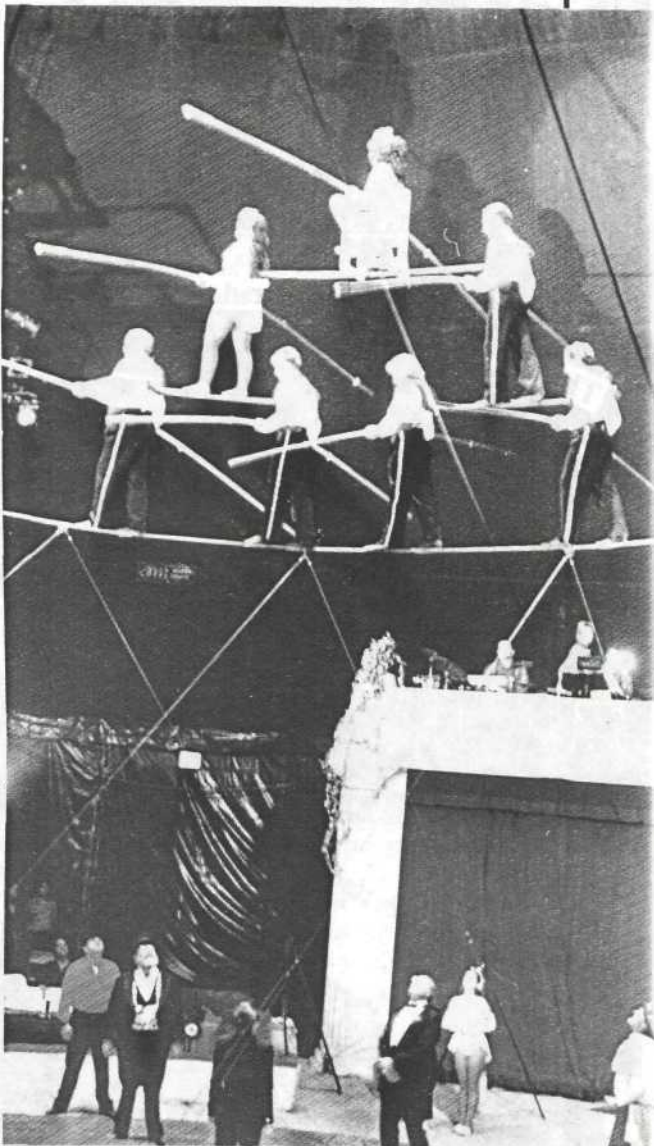
*By Denny Childers*

(I sent Denny on a "mission" to Circus Flora to tell all my friends hello. Little did I know that he would send back great reports on the show & send along fantastic photos!! The following are his observations from his many visits, with a little editing. Thanks, Denny, for delivering my messages! Cherie.)

Dec. 23: Flora was on the news tonight. They had given her a pedicure & painted her nails red for Christmas. Flora appears to be a bit "larger" than the photo you sent of her & you. I will get a photo of her for you. Think I can get her to autograph it for you?

Dec. 29: Went to the performance today. Raul was giving Flora a bath, so I & my granddaughter, Sandra, stood & watched. Flora liked the scrub brush & tried to "eat" it several times. Sandra thought it was great; Flora following Raul back to her area like a "puppy" carrying the bucket with her trunk. Later, we went around to the front to spend some of "grandpa's money." When we heard the ice grinding, we got in line for a snow cone & there was Raul cranking them out. He said they had 3 flavors: cherry, cherry & cherry! Sandra settled for cherry. When I take her to the circuses, she knows that I will get her popcorn, sodas, cotton candy, & a couple of toys. I figure its a double investment. First, it's a big source of income to the show, but more importantly, it builds the memories of a good time for the little ones.

Sandra saw her first circus last May in LaGrange, KY-Gopher's circus. She sat in amazement at the performance, mouth open! Then she went with me to Kelly-Miller in Cincinnati & Benson Bros. All those performances, and I haven't seen her sit in awe like she did today. She didn't fidget once! To me, that says a lot about the quality of a show. The pace was right; the band was great & the acts superb. (Continued on Page 4)



Back Yard Fun on Mills Bros.

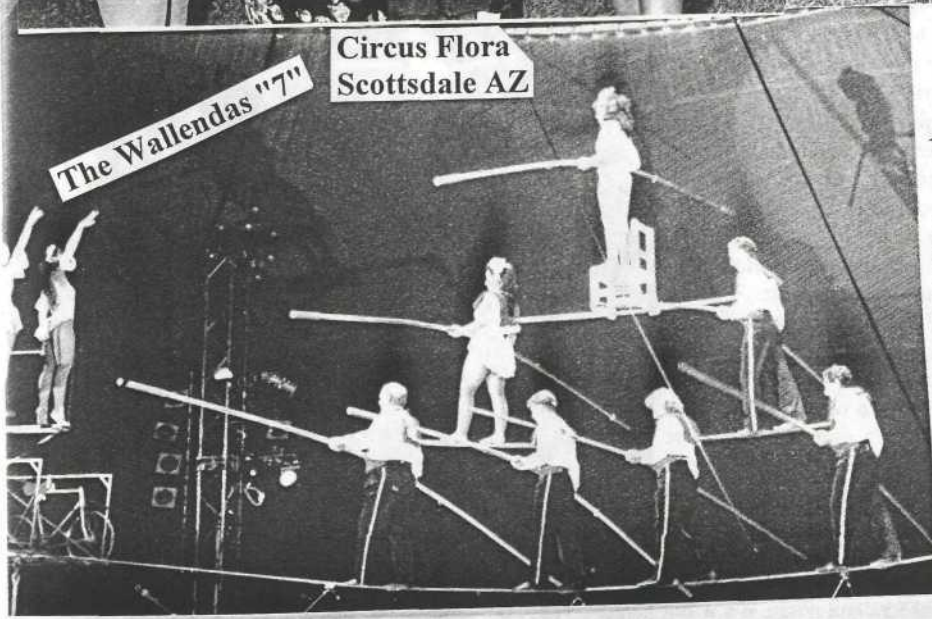


Oscarian Troupe  
Beatty Circus

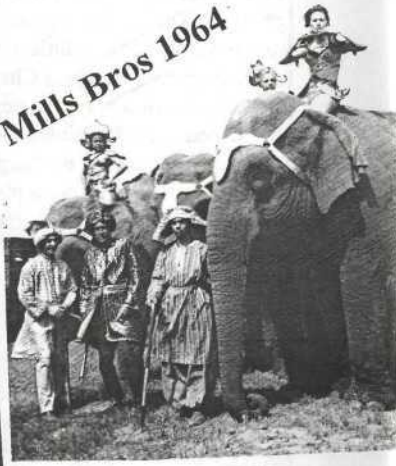


Circus Flora  
Scottsdale AZ

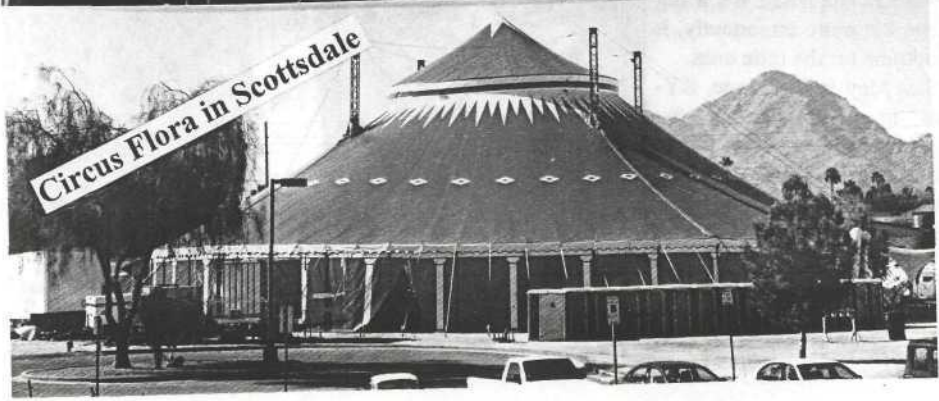
The Wallendas "7"



Mills Bros 1964



Circus Flora in Scottsdale



The Weber  
Beatty 1958





## THE FOX!!

My dear Friends;

Well here I go with my new wordprocessor & hope it will work alright. My other one a Ponasanic went on the blink and I brought it to Sears where I had bought it, well after a month I was informed that it can not be repaired as they do not make these parts any more. So I sit with about over 30 tapes & they can not be used at and other workprocessors.

All my addresses were on there. So, they are very nice and give me a beautiful Brothers to replace my old one. Greath, number one I can not use any of the old tapes and number two, I do not know how to use the new one. I finely figured out how to write a letter but not how to use spell right. Also after I finish with this letter how will I get it printed out and get it on the tape??? Also I have to hunt around of the Adresses. Oh boy, I will try my best. But this is the reason for not writing in such a long time. A few people told me they realize what I am trying to do, to keep people still in touch with each other and remember the good old times which will never come back, but we still have our memories. Just for instance, The years while I was still in the business & traveled around people really cared for one another. After the show every one sat around & had something to each maybe a barbeque and everyone brought something. We all sat around & had something to drink and we all had fun with each other in other words we really enjoyed each others company. There was a great Kamerady. Then slowly it changed. My last year in the bussines I really noticed it. Every body did there thing in the show & then rushed in to there trailer to each & watch the Television. I felt lone that year. I had been all year long working on Fair dates & was the free attraction. No one around to have fun with. Then there came my chance to be for the last 6 weeks on a Circus. Boy, this was going to be it, anyway so I thought. Wrong, life had changed & it was no more fun. It was my biggest disapointment.

Well people, I will change & write now on my Computer, as that will be easier for me.

Well, I forgot to tell you also, that Sears had sent me twice to the wrong Sears store to get my new wordprocessor. Finely the third time around I got a Brotheres wordprocessor, let me tell you it is great but I still can not handle it so here I go on my computer which

I also still lerning to operate.

You know what, it really is funny when you worked all these years & then you do not have to get up any more to go to work. Some people may like it, me it will take me for ever to get used to this. I guess I will look for an other job, this way I never know what day it is. Monday & Sundays are all the same.

I was pretty busy thoe with Tammy starting to work the cats again & I helped a lot with the children, now they are all on the road. Tino and his family & Delilah and her family are also gone on the road, so that leaves it pretty quiet around here. Lucky I still have my 2 donkeys, 2 little horses and 4 pomeranians, which give me all the loving in the world. Oh ye, I also have a duck now, which keeps me on my toes. My husband helps a lot & I think he is happy to have me for a while to him self.

It was sad to hear about Adolf Altoff passing away, I was sent a newspaper clipping which I will include in this letter. For those who can read German it will be good for all the rest of you, some one may translate to you. To many flowers arived so they stoped it & donated them for cripled children. Jeanette Williams was there & she told me that the casket was brought to the cemetary by a horse carage.

There was a memorial held for Angela Dubsy, which I really ment to attend, but was unable as I was babysitting my 2 little grand-children. I really really wanted to be there for her, she was a great friend.

Jeanette told me that she was going to Germany for Christmas to spend the holidays with her daughter. The horse act goes over really great in Europe.

Albertina Loyal past away also just a few weeks ago and today brother Gustino followed her to the last place. I believe he was the last one from the original Loyal Repinsky Bareback Riding Act. Rest in peace my dear friends, now the riding act is complete in haven. Oh boy Alfonso is still with us, sorry I missed that, just was told. John Walker & Katia were working this year again in Evansville & now getting ready to go out on there building show run.

The Royal American Circus left last week, they will open in Ohio again. Royal Palace Circus left to day, but I do not know were they will open tis year. Haji had a very bad automobile eccident this winter but as I was told is now well recovered.

Harry Dubsy is walking with a cane for already more then a year, I do not know what is wrong with him, but

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## "CIRCUS FLORA ADVENTURES..."

Any parent (or grandparent) would know that to hold a 5 year old's attention for 2 solid hours is testament to the quality of the performance. It was a stray house, both boxes & blues. The show was packed. Many kids, young ones, were there. You know, thinking back on it, I didn't hear any kids crying, running around, or any of the other things that bored ones would do. Does that give an indication of the performance?

I'm still in a bit of a daze. It's hard to pick a favorite act, everything blended together so well! To hear the name "Flying Wallendas" announced, actually gave chills. You know they are different people, but after 36 years, it was just something beyond description. I just can't put it into words. I was watching them form the 7 & I just kept flashing back to the article & photos in Reader's Digest; laying in the middle of the blue carpet, reading it over & over, at home in Dunedin, Florida. I was a sophomore in high school then. Here I was-watching the 7. You could have heard a pin drop in there today! When the last person was off the wire, all hell broke loose-a standing ovation!! I believe that the 2 people who carried the show were Giovanni Zoppe and Cecil, the ring mistress. She was fantastic! Without this pair, the show might have lost it's magic. Tomorrow, Dec. 30th, they are having 2 workshops, open to the public to participate "in the artistic/creative process." Think I will go.

Dec. 31: Cecil was "hostess" of last night's workshop. It was "an open rehearsal of new pieces plus an opportunity to discuss themes & goals for the annual season beginning in 2000. The year 2000 season is entitled, "Circus Flora Celebrates Cirque Calder." They are turning the Cirque Calder into a live circus performance. "Circus Flora will bring life to the themes; feel the magic of Calder's sculptures." Based on the information provided last night, Calder was an American with a degree in engineering. He saw his first circus, Ringling Bros., in 1926 & became "hooked" on the circus. According to Cecil, he used to carry a pair of pliers around in his pocket; he would pick up scraps of wire & twist them into miniature circus performers, animals, equipment, etc. Whatever he could find useful, such as corks, scraps of yarn & cloth, were used to help form these characters. These circus performers were animated & Calder used to provide "circus performances" with his miniature circus (A new Circus Model Builder is born!) around 1929. The Calder Circus is now on permanent display at the Whitney Museum in New York.

The above is the theme for the year 2000 performance. Last evening was a "concept" presentation, or as the program states, "Open rehearsal of new pieces plus an opportunity to discuss themes & goals." The first 30 minutes of the show revolve around a Paris street scene of the late 20s. This was the first time the performers tried any of this in the ring. The opening scene reminded me of the street scene in "Hello Dolly" or "My Fair Lady," where everyone is walking or doing their daily activities. Even without costumes & improvised props, I was impressed.

The next display was a recreation of Calder's Lion Act, complete with a 150 pound reproduction in bronze of the lion. The lion was animated with a man. Another concept was Japanese wrestling. This was also good. I will be curious to see how this all comes together next year. The concept they are trying is good. This is an ideal chance for the Circus Model Builders to tie into a circus, Calder's Miniature Circus!

There was a news broadcast on the 29th where the weatherman blew the whistle to start the performance. They said he had been there all morning & Tino Wallenda even took him on the wire!

Jan. 4 Workshop: It was very interesting to see how far they had progressed in less than a week on the Year 2000 show. Before the presentation began, they introduced the people working on the show. Gail is the choreographer & was with the Big Apple. Peggy is the theatrical designer & was Cecil's juggling partner in the 70s. Oliver is writing the dialogue (he's a play & screen writer.) Cecil plays the ringmaster part as Monsieur Royale. The ideas have been expanded from Wednesday & a couple new ones added. They were also experimenting with lighting & the band played music. 3 new ideas were presented, a singer with birds, a cowboy with rope & whip act AND a Flora shaving Raul. The cowboy act was very, very good. Vince jumped thru a lariat on a unicycle, thinly disguised as a horse. Flora cutting Raul's hair & giving him a shave brought the house down! She preferred "shaving" her own forehead to shaving Raul's face. You would have been proud of her!

Flora also pulled the lion cage in for the Lion trainer act. Both David Balding & Cecil said what you saw during these rehearsals you may not see or recognize in a year. From the program: a welcome message from Frank Jacobson, President of the Scottsdale Cultural Council—

"For the 6th season in a row, the Scottsdale Center for

(Continued on Page 6)

### \*\*\*COURTSHIP OF A CLOWN\*\*\*

#### *By Bill Ballantine Part V*

(From Holiday Magazine \* July, 1950)

**Aug. 26, Portland, OR**—My birthday & Whiskers gave me a handsome ostrich wallet that must have taken half her week's pay. Harve phoned from NY. He'll fly to San Francisco & bring the ring. Rest of the country is shimmering in heat, but out here it's fine and cool.

**Aug. 28, En Route**—Heading into California for first time since 1941. Quiet day. Everybody reading, tracing the route from r.r. timetables & maps, or pasting up scrapbooks. Had lot of time to talk with the old clowns. Chesty told me about the jokes clowns used to play on one another. They kept a soup bone on the show 7 years, hiding it in each other's trunks. During that time it went twice to Europe & back. Learning, too, that there is no such thing as a new clown gag. Even something as modern as that pun on the Atomic Age, the Adam Smasher, had a low-comedy antecedent called the Reducing Machine. To see Whiskers tonight & she thinks we ought to leave the train tomorrow afternoon at Berkeley & go see her grandmother.

**Aug. 30, San Francisco**—Roberta's grandmother is charming. Confided to me that Roberta is a secret Phi Beta Kappa. Roberta stayed with her last night. I came into San Francisco & rode cable cars up & down the town. The Cow Palace where we play is a pretty wonderful place, way out on the county line (\$2.50 in a cab from downtown Market St.) Mammoth place like a covered stadium & no pillars to be sat behind. Everything is under one roof except sideshow & cookhouse, & this is by far the best place the Circus has ever had for stock. There are real stalls for the horses & genuine tanbark on the arena floor.

Elephants have not fared so well, however. They're lined up in a drafty corridor. But they're gradually getting even by ripping up all the phone books in reach & they've torn down several fire extinguishers.

**Sept. 1, SF**—This morning shopping at I. Magnin with Whiskers for her wedding dress, contrary to all bridegroom tradition. She asked first for a red one which buoyed me up considerably. But she's so tall, there were no red ones to fit & she settled on a golden silk beauty that had just then come in. Fixed up a room at the Palace for my best man. Then for a walk in Chinatown with Whiskers & to supper in a place with Chinese records on the juke box. Then to wait with the mop buckets in a dreary hotel lobby for Harve, who arrived finally at 3

a.m. with the ring. The little golden hairpin cheered Whiskers considerably and she cried.

**Sept. 2, SF**—There was news that a circus ship had gone down in the Caribbean—45 drowned & missing, 12 survivors. Vargas, who had the chimp act with us last year was on board. Wenzel has been stitching the cloth on his snowman & it looks like a snowman. Between shows for cocktails with Whiskers & Harve to the Top of the Mark. I remember only that I saw Alcatraz. Cooksie, the mailman, had to get 2 midgets to help him distribute our reception invitations which arrived on the show this afternoon.

**Sept. 4, Los Angeles**—Press Dept. says that for daily take the Cow Palace engagement was the most profitable every played during any circus road tour in the history of the world. Whiskers thought I should meet her family at least a few days before the wedding so we came overland to L.A. last night from Santa Barbara, where we showed night only, starting at 10 p.m. Took a public bus right out again at 5 a.m. for San Bernardino. We were received with family flurry & by 11, we'd had bacon & eggs, a blood test & an application for a license to be one. Family calls her Berta. Her father is 6 foot 5, little brother is six three (age 15), little sister is a mere 6 foot. Mother & I met on a commoner level, 5 foot 7. Little brother Tommy drove us (still without sleep) back to the Circus in the family Cadillac. Tried to get it on the lot so everyone could see us get out of it, but no go. Too many restrictions because of the movie-star benefit tonight. We found our Circus swallowed up by Hollywood glamour. Movie stars like chiggers all over the lot. Looked into the Big Top rehearsal once & saw Cucciola, the Italian midget, being thrown about the end ring like a bundle of old laundry from one movie star to another.

**Sept. 5, LA**—Slept all morning. Circus is its usual modest self again. Circus-fan friend from back East gave us our first wedding present, 2 hankies, each wrapped around 5 silver dollars. Pat has given us 2 days off, presumably one for the honeymoon. He told me back in the old days if you got married on the show, you'd likely be fired. He tried to keep his secret a long time. Press Dept. has suggested we get married in a lion's cage. Lulu has finished the figures for the cake.

**Sept. 6, LA**—Met Granddaddy & Grandmother Drummond, the parents of Whiskers Blake, the wrestler. Called also on Maria Ouspenskaya, Roberta's onetime dramatics teacher. Back at the lot everyone told me our

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## “CIRCUS FLORA ADVENTURES...”

the Arts is proud to present Circus Flora. We welcome the return of Scottsdale's biggest “snowbird” - -Flora! We are especially grateful for our partnership with Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community, which makes Circus Flora's winter residency including a circus school in which youths from the After School program join with youths from the Indian community to learn the circus arts: horseback riding, trapeze, animal training, low-wire, juggling, clowning & tumbling-while also building understanding, communication & friendship between our communities.”

**Jan. 7:** Now back to this year's performance. The big top has a posted seating capacity of 1521 & on Dec. 29, it was a straw house! 10 minutes prior to show time, Nino (Giovanni Zoppe) made the first of many appearances. His antics & interaction with the audience had Sandra's undivided attention. He was a good indicator of the outstanding performance that was about to unfold. The show is fast moving & well paced due in part to Cecil MacKinnon, Ringmistress & Giovanni Zoppe. Just as Nino's buffoonery was the fabric that made the show work, Cecil's narration interwove individual circus acts into a 2 hour performance, providing the thread that held it all together. She did this so well that the audience could not tell the difference between what was supposed to happen & what actually happened. Only by comparing 2 performances, would a person realize that something was not really planned as part of the act.

Circus Flora provides a quality performance in each act. This 1999 show has to rate in the top 2 or 3 performances that I have seen over the years. Acts that may have bored Sandra on another show, kept her eyes glued to the performance! For fear of falsely giving the impression that one act was superior to another, I will not provide a description or comments about the individual acts. There was, however, one unique incident that bears repeating, since it is indicative of how well the show pulls the viewer, regardless of age, into its magic web.

Prior to the Flying Wallendas performing the 7-person pyramid, the audience is asked to be very quiet & to hold all applause until the last person is safely off the wire. All eyes, child & adult, are focused high above the ring as the pyramid forms & slowly moves along the wire, pausing in the center for the upper most Wallenda to rise & stand on the chair. The audience seems afraid to breathe as the entire big top seems eerily silent. The only sounds seem to be the spoken commands high above us. Finally,

the daring Wallenda has climbed off her precarious perch and is “safely” seated on the chair. The pyramid ever so slowly begins its journey to the safety of the far platform. As the first person steps off the wire, someone begins to applaud on the other side of the arena. From Sandra & 1520 other people, the top of the tent appears to inflate like a balloon from the audience's collective “shhhhhhhhh.” As the last of the Flying Wallendas reaches safety of the platform, there is a fraction of a second delay, before Sandra & everyone else, as if on cue, stand and erupt in a thunderous applause.

As the Wallendas descend to the safety of the earth below, the rest of the cast & crew enter the ring to a well-deserved ovation for a job well done. Rather than exit through the back door, cast & crew proudly march out the main entrance to greet & thank each patron for coming to the show. How successful was Circus Flora? Throughout the entire 2 hours, Sandra sat there with her mouth open, did not fidget, did not want to leave, & was disappointed only when the show ended. A veteran of many circus performances, she can be more critical of an act than the most seasoned trooper. Yet, she did not say anything other than “can we go again?” Later, when I asked her what she remembered most about the show, it was that Nino hugged her & grandpa as they left the show. Nino gave a little girl a lasting memory and that is CIRCUS. (Thanks, Denny.)

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### \*\*\*\*SEARS SPONSORSHIP OF RINGLING\*\*\*\*

Catherine Ort-Maby, Corporate Communications Director of Ringling has sent along the following message about a recent article by animal rights people saying they made Sears drop Ringling from their sponsorship. “We appreciate the opportunity to tell you the truth about the situation. There are several documents floating around that are untrue. The successful, 4-year partnership between Ringling Bros. & Sears came to an end at the conclusion of the 1998 tours. We began our sponsorship arrangement with Sears in 1995, with a 2-year contract, & the contract was renewed for 1 additional 2-year term. This gave us an exciting, 4-year sponsorship arrangement that brought value to Ringling Bros., Sears & our millions of customers. The activists' efforts to take credit for the end of the sponsorship are untrue & misleading. No external organization or the actions of any individual influenced the decision. By their nature, contracts come to an end, & this is part of the natural cycle of business.” (Thanks to Peggy Williams for helping contact Ringling.)

**\*GIBBS SAYS, "THANKS!"\***

Bobby Gibbs, who suffered a heart attack Dec. 20, wants to let anyone who even gives a darn know, "I am now out of the hospital & on the mend. I will be going thru about 30 days of physical rehab as my heart learns its new role & as I learn to eat healthy & exercise more. Since many of you read of my health problem in Back Yard, I wanted to write & express my most sincere thanks for all the calls & letters I received, plus most important, prayers for my recovery. I was so busy enjoying my life in and around circus & circus people, I let the years slip by & one day, here I am 60 and in poor health.

I never stopped to think about all the lives that have shared my life, both good & bad. Circus people seem to ignore the fact that time marches on-that one day we will on on to a better show, provided by God and where our past heroes await our arrival. Two things come to my mind during my illness. #1: The poem by Ringling about the circus as a jealous wench who kills her brightest stars & allows no private life to those who serve her. And #2: John Herriott's Showman's Heaven. God has seen fit to give me a second chance and I intend to follow doctor's orders. Eat right, exercise and most of all, cherish real friends and family. So, again from the very bottom of my heart, thank you for our memories. A very wise man said, "A friend is a gift you give yourself."

See you at the circus. Your Friend, Bobby Gibbs  
(Thanks Bobby. Everyone wishes you a speedy recovery.)

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**\*SOME TEXAS NEWS FROM BOBBY\***

\*Shane Johnson just returned from Florida where he purchased the Comedy Car act from Fay Alexander. Shane will have some real big shoes to fill.

\*Ari & Laura Steeples have purchased a permanent winter quarters in the Mabank, TX area, close to the Plunkett's Circus W.Q. Recent visitor to Clyde Bros. W.Q. was Tahar, of alligator fame.

\*Bob & Lou Stoddard came over & good news is Lou is doing well & Bob has hopes that they will soon be able to go see some shows & he'd better hurry because Circus Gatti opens in Ft. Worth, the end of Jan.

\*James Plunkett will manage & produce the Dallas Shrine this spring for Tommy Hanneford.

\*Don Johnson, of Clyde Bros.-Johnson, has purchased the balance of the Eddie Zacchini Circus equipment from Hugo Zacchini.

\*The book by Charles Wilkins, "Circus at the Edge of the

Earth: Travels with the Great Wallenda Circus" is getting very, very good reviews all over Canada & this book features many well-known circus people from Texas. (Lot's of Gibbs stories!)

\*Grumpy Kimes family held a well-attended party of home-cooked hot wings for circus folks in our area. They had a short time at home & are now back out on the road.

\*James Hall is busy building new elect. towers for the spring Vidbel indoor show.

\*Joe Lempke, former chimp trainer, now in a Mesquite rest home. Keeps up with all the latest circus news from circus publications & visits from Jim, Tepa & Elain Hall, his close friend, Myna Moon & Bobby Gibbs.

\*Mel Hall & companion, Elenor, still volunteer clowning-face painting & variety shows to area rest homes, schools & churches.

\*Gary Henry, well-known from Hoxie show & others like Lewis Bros., has just gone thru a serious health scare in Gainesville, TX. Gary & wife Zoe, roman-rider, live right next door to Judy Kaye Jacobs & also David Connors is a neighbor.

\*June Plunkett didn't go with son Jeffrey to Hawaii with the John Davenport Circus, performing there now.

\*Turtle Benson now has "Boo" & friend "Lisa" has gone to get pregnant.

What a large family we have! Feel free to call anytime. Now that I'm home, I get bored. (972-287-4992)

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**"For Our Eyes Only"-\*Schell Bros. Circus\***

*By Carl M. De Vere, Sr.*

(Excerpted from Bud's family book he published.)

**Hard Times Circus—1929:** In 1929, Dad's brother-in-law, Uncle George, owned the largest motorized circus in America. The name of it was Shell Brothers Circus. My parents went to work for Uncle George as 24-hour advance agents instead of going on the road with their own show. They traveled 1 day ahead of the circus all that season. When it arrived the next day, Dad & Uncle George talked business for a few hours, then we drove to the next town. I traveled with them that summer. They pulled a small living trailer behind their 1928 Chevy sedan.

The circus had another pair of advance agents. Their team of 2 men traveled 10 days ahead. The job they had was more involved. 10-day agents found a sponsor, such as a civic group, or fraternal organization. The backer received a percentage of the gross take.

(Continued on Page 11)

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**128TH EDITION RINGLING BLUE UNIT:**

Augusta, GA-Civic Center-2/2-2/3

Columbia, SC-Carolina Coliseum-2/5-2/7

Raleigh, NC-Dorton Arena-2/10-2/15

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**ALL NEW 129th EDITION RED UNIT !!!!**

Knoxville, TN-Civic Coliseum-2/3-2/7

Greensboro, NC-Coliseum-2/10-2/14

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**\*\*\*THE GOOD DOCTOR\*\*\***

**By Frank Thompson**

Everybody likes animals. Well, most people do. If you work with animals, you're sure to meet a lot of these people, including some that you aren't so sure about. I was hired as Director of a midwestern zoo some years ago and learned, shortly after my arrival in that city, that a member of the Board of Directors of the Zoological Society-the group that had a lot of influence over the zoo and the Director-was a local Doctor. To be specific, this man was a Psychiatrist, which of course means that he first went to medical school and got his M.D., then went on to study Psychiatry. In other words, he was a shrink. For purposes of this tale, lets call him Dr. Jones. His real name was something else, but I don't want to embarrass anyone, even though this tale is the absolute truth.

Dr. Jones was a believer in unusual hobbies, to say the least. He took his family annually to Canada for their vacations. They didn't go during the vacation time of year however, they went during December or January! Furthermore, they went camping and hiking in Canada during those months, using a Llama-which they owned long before Llamas became popular-as a pack animal. In one instance a ranger caught up with them in their evening camp to inform them that "A bull Moose has been following you people for miles. From his tracks in the snow he's a big one and you'd better get out of here!"

They didn't endear themselves to the ranger by laughing and showing him the Llama that had made the tracks.

Dr. Jones also had, in addition to his Llamas, a series of other oddball pets. He bred baboons at home and, after a visit there with another zoo employee, we discussed the arrangements as we drove home. "My God, did you see where those animals were?" the employee asked me. They were kept in well constructed cages but the employee had a point. The exhaust fan blew from the "baboon room" into the Doctor's bedroom! If you have ever been close around a group of baboons, you'll understand what I'm talking about.

Anyway, Dr. Jones appeared at the zoo office one day with a new pet, a young Hyena. The best description of a Hyena's temperament is to mention older circus descriptions offered by trainers who found that they were wise to wear metal stovepipe around their legs when trying to train these beasts! Hyenas make bears seem friendly, and I can assure you they are not! They Hyena pup was duly collar and chain trained and grew rapidly into a husky animal. Dr. Jones brought him to the zoo on his visits, bringing the animal into the zoo office. To be completely honest, I was among the zoo staff that finally reached the point of standing on anything available when the animal entered the office. It only takes one nip in the calf of your leg to make you forget pride and seek to preserve you legs!

It was about the time my secretary started standing on her desk when Dr. Jones and pet arrived, that the good Dr. told me he had started to carry a loaded pistol when he took the animal for it's daily walks along a dirt road near his country home. The Hyena had threatened him seriously enough that he felt this was necessary, though he wouldn't admit "defeat" as he saw things, and leave the animal in a cage. He did admit to embarrassment about the need to walk along with the chain leash in one hand and a sizable pistol in the other, when his neighbors saw him from their windows as he passed.

It wasn't long after this that he visited one day without the Hyena. He came in all smiles, however, and announced that he had finally figured a way to take the animal for a walk without the need for the pistol. Dr. Jones proudly unwrapped a long package and showed me his "cure" for the pistol's need. He had just purchased a beautiful, shiny samurai sword, to carry when walking his pet Hyena!

You can understand why Dr. Jones was known around the zoo by another name, which we never used to his face. The name was, "It Takes One To Know One" Jones.

## “COURTSHIP OF A CLOWN.....”

banns were published by Winchell Sunday night. I missed it. Hilda Alzana is back on the high wire. The girls threw a bridal shower for Whiskers between shows. **Sept. 7, LA**—The lot here is 12 miles from downtown & our cars are in a shabby spot. But at least we have plenty of police about at night, for nearby is a district loading point for paddy wagons. Be glad when we're married & I can get Roberta into a nice safe hotel room. She went shopping for shoes this a.m. & spent our first wedding present. Got the wrong size, of course, & just made it back to the shop before it closed, in a wild dash between shows.

They have high heels & I think we may look like Mutt & Jeff tomorrow. Roberta's mother came over tonight & after the show we loaded the shower gifts by lantern light & set off for San Bernardino & the wedding-65 miles and 16 1/2 hours away.

**Sept. 15, Santa Ana**—Benedict a week today & alone in my upper with my neglected journal. Roberta is asleep at the other end of the train, still in 62, the spinsters' car. Getting married on the Circus doesn't mean you can move in together. You don't eat together in Cookhouse either. Space is so tight, living arrangements can seldom change once the show hits the road. We slept together on the beach t Capistrano last night & were exposed, as Chesty would say, to the ailments. Bused right up after the show from San Diego to her mother's new beach house & the beds aren't there yet. I was late for my wedding. Forgot about bride's flowers. Harve & I dashed for a florist where luckily we found small Peruvian lilies just the right earthy golden color. When we got back to the house, minister was waiting in a bedroom, stiff in starchy lace vestments, hung with clerical stole. The Rev. Drake regretted that I hadn't given him time to counsel me spiritually. Then I dressed to Chopin on the piano. Then they said they were ready for me & Harve shot me a stiff slug of bourbon. The family house is small, & to get to the improvised altar in the living room, I was led from bedroom, skirting the plumbing in a connecting bathroom, past Chopin (now changed to Lohengrin) & to the chopping block. This arrangement made it possible for the guests, to whom I was an utter unknown, to see nothing but the back of my neck & the soles of my shoes until the ceremony was over.

The words were more beautiful than I thought they could be & shook me to pieces. But I hung tight onto Roberta. She all but lost her big floppy hat when I kissed her. Then

I got my first look at Uncle Ron, the legendary Whiskers Blake. He towered 6 ft. 6 and, sure enough, there just below the timber line was the bushy red beard. One of our guests was 8 months gone & I guess that's very good luck at a wedding. We cut a small family wedding cake & had coffee. When the guests left, I cooked my first meal as a husband-an omelet to calm everybody down. We were lost going back to Hollywood for the reception & came late to find towners arriving & our circus friends eying the buffet.

There was a straw house, full to overflowing. Most of them shuttled over in 2 bus loads & the rest came in taxis, with one special late one waiting at the sideshow for the midget Doll Family & the Giant Fischers. My best man disappeared with the bottle of spirits on which I expected to lean heavily, & I had to face the mob courageless. I'm proud our marriage could bring together so many conflicting groups. There were towners mixed with Circus, star-spangled chauvinists & hooligans, & several people who plain don't like each other. The music was earsplitting but festive. Hans Goetschi, the unicyclist, brought his fiddle, the clowns, Jacob & Jerome, had accordion & sax, Jimmy Armstrong, the midget, his horn & mouth organ & Jerry Bangs played the piano. The spirit was there, but they'd never played together before. The Danish juggler sent flowers with a sentimental message in French, which I stuck in my pocket for translation. He came around later to kiss the bride on both cheeks. The clowns surprised us with a handsome set of silverware. They got a kick out of seeing each other dressed up in real coat-and-pants suits. Some said it was their first time this season. Eddie Buresh started a rash of 2-high bride kissing among the midgets, standing on one another's shoulders. Lulu, the lady clown, brought a scarf painted by herself showing Roberta in Manege. It was wrapped in the crummiest paper & rattiest rope she could find on the lot. And there was a little card that quietly wished us all the happiness that had been hers. We never did get to the food, just managed some hasty mouthfuls of cake. It was in the family tradition, tall as cakes so-3 foot 6. I told Rose to put a piece under her pillow to dream of her husband-to-be. She & Paulette took 5 pieces back to the lot so their Chinese aunts could dream of husbands too. One of the midgets told me it was the best circus party he'd ever been to. “No fights.”

Stopped our first night in the Hollywood-Roosevelt so we could have the luxury of breakfast in bed. Stayed indoors next day until nightfall & to dinner at the Dells, then

(Continued on Page 11)



## "COURTSHIP OF A CLOWN....."

Turnabout Theater & much amused by Lotte Goslar's carny come-on dances & the deaf rat gnawing the tight rope in the puppet show. After our one-day stand at the Roosevelt, we set up honeymoon down the street at the more romantic old Hollywood, stopping place of flicker queens in silent days. & there on its ancient roof, in what passes for a penthouse, we began to be wed. **THE END.**

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## GIUSTINO 'PAPA' LOYAL DIES, 89; \*A FOUNDER OF SAILOR CIRCUS\*

(Sarasota Herald by Tricia Hopkins)

Sarasota's Sailor Circus co-founder, Giustino "Papa" Loyal, played an integral part in the history & future of equestrian circus acts. A 6th generation equestrian performer & a Sarasota resident for 67 years, died Jan. 17. "The circus was all he ever thought about & all he ever did," said his son, Giustino Jr. of Sarasota. "What Michael Jordan was to basketball, he was to circus and bareback riding."

Born Aug. 2, 1909, in Torino, Italy, Guistino began performing at the age of 6. He was a member of the bareback troupe & the Loyal-Repensky equestrian act & performed before some of the most powerful people of the time, including the Queen of England, Hitler & Mussolini.

But it was their 1931 performance for John Ringling in Belgium that changed their lives. By 1932, they were featured in the center ring of Ringling Bros. Circus.

"It used to be something great," Guistino told the Herald in 1979. "Ringling was the biggest circus in the world." During the 1930s The Greatest Show on Earth traveled with 1700 people & used 700 horses to bring in the wagons. Loyal performed in the center ring for 27 years & was known for a somersault that started from one galloping horse, went over the heads of 5 horses & landed on the 6th horse.

He spoke 7 languages & owned his own circus in South & Central America, Cuba & Puerto Rico, called the Grand Circo Loyal Americano. He retired in the 1950s, but remained active in the circus community. He was one of the founders of the Sailor Circus, where he coached up until two years ago.

"He knew so much," said former teeterboard student, Tim Carlson. "He could tumble, do comedy, horses & acrobatics. Just 5 years ago, he was still doing round-off back handsprings."

Loyal was inducted into the Circus Hall of Fame in 1978

and the Ring of Fame on St. Armands Circle in 1990. He was a member of St. Martha's Catholic Church.

In addition to his son, Giustino Jr., survivors include a daughter, Gloria of Sarasota; 3 sons, Remo of Georgia, Daniel of Chapel Hill, NC, and Timi of Germany-where he performs as a 7th generation bareback rider; a brother, Alfonso of Hugo, OK; 5 grandsons & 4 granddaughters; and six great-grandchildren. (Our prayers are with his family. Cherie. Thanks to Roland Gibbs for sending this.)

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## "Hard Times Circus-1929-Schell Bros. Circus"

10-day agents bought licenses, & found a circus lot to rent. They contacted authorities to find out restrictions concerning noise and animal security. If they ran into "Knockers" (people on the city council who knocked the show to prevent a license from being issued), they plastered the town with "soft ones" (free tickets) to "grease the skids"-as they said. Those agents also posted advertising billboards, paper lithograph sheets, & tack cards. Ads covered every empty window, telephone pole, & large billboard in town.

Several times each season, the agents billed us into towns already covered with paper from a rival show. When that happened our agents tore down the rival paper & posted ours. If agents from the other show found out about it, fights broke out. Many skinned knuckles & bloody noses were the result.

Because of their lead time, the 10-day men were the first to know the route the show would take. It was their responsibility to print & issue a weekly "route card." On the blank side of penny postcards, dates & towns were listed. Each member of the circus received a route card, which was important for receiving & forwarding personal mail. My parents, traveling only 1 day in advance, made arrangements for groceries, gas & oil. They also located sources for the show's water supply. When weather, floods or other mishaps hindered the show from playing a scheduled town, Dad had authority to re-route the circus to another town. Unannounced & with no advance billing, some of the Wildcat Towns, as they were nicknamed, brought in more money than regular towns.

Mom & dad sold advertising banners to merchants. Ads painted on oil cloth hung on rope lines around the hippodrome track. Painted the following morning, they were ready for the matinee. For a little more money, a merchant could buy a banner that (Continued on Pg. 13)

## \*\*THE FINISHED WHIPSTOCK\*\*

### "Lessons From The Old School"

By Roger Smith

Previously, we cured the twisted willow whipstock. This issue, we finish the stock making it ready for show.

Finishing a stock is aesthetic in the end, but the procedure carries a crucial stage, too. This is the art of retaining the retainer-the keeper loop into which the lash will be knotted-so that it doesn't loosen & allow the lash to fly across the ring. You'll feel dreadfully conspicuous if that happens. The Old School master trainers prevented it. Here's how:

#### Tools & Supplies:

Cured twisted whipstock	Yellow latigo saddle string
Neatsfoot oil <u>compound</u>	(3/4" wide x 3/16" thick, 16" long)
Rosined beeswax	
Cup hook	Barbour's No. 10 shoe flax
Medium saucepan	Stove
Friction tape	Colored tape of your choice

Your 16" latigo saddle string will give you roughly 4" alongside the stock, & allows a 4" length of keeper loop. Before tying the loop, I exercise the option of binding on a very short length of latigo over the end of the stock, just to cover the gathered splines. It's a personal, burnishing touch I like, but I can't claim it's necessary.

Warm your neatsfoot oil compound, not plain neatsfoot oil, in a saucepan like you did with the olive oil for the whipstock, until you can keep your finger in it 4 seconds. Remove from heat & allow your leather to soak until the compound cools. Drain excess oil on your shop towel. In the meantime, draw 30' of doubled Barbour's flax from your cup hook. Cut & tie the loose ends and thoroughly strop with rosined beeswax. Press excess oil from your keeper on the towel.

Create a tapered end by positioning your leather on the stock so that one end is 3/4" longer than the other. Begin your tie from the end backwards, by allowing a length to run down the stock to run underneath your wrapping for tying off later.

You're now coming from the splines end back down the stock toward the handle. You've tied on tightly. Begin your hard wraps neatly, would very tight without breaking the flax, seating each wrap next under the other, involving both sides of the leather a 1/2" down. With this as your start, we arrive at the secret of the binding-keeping the keeper.

(An inside: I shave the ends to a fine taper with my razor

blade for finer tying of the ends, from the rough side to reduce hard-to-tie cornered ends to feathered edge.)

Now, lift one side of the leather. Continue your tight wraps binding just one side, tugging it hard onto the twisted splines for 3/4 of an inch. Then, bring down the other side, & lift the side just bound. Bind the new side also directly to the stock tying hard underneath the lifted strand. Take these wraps another 3/4 of an inch. Bring the lifted side down & wrap it with the opposite side lifted. Alternate the binding until you come down the stock with part of the short side still available. Tie the 2 sides then at the same time, continuing a final sleeve of lashing another 3/4 of an inch. Take the loose end you allowed & tie off hard in 2 surgeon's knots. Snip the leftover end. Carefully draw the rosined beeswax over the lashing in a circular motion around the just-tied flax to set it in right. When done, I usually have 3 sections of exposed leather on one side, & 2 on the other. This intermittent sectioning, properly fastened, is the trick to keeping the keeper on the whipstock. Now for the cosmetic finish. For an underlying layer, tear off 4 strips of friction tape. Press them in X-shaped layers to cover the butt. Always start at the handle end for wrapping tape. If you start at the keeper end, the loose end will arrive at the handle & will unwind with usage. Wrap first with black friction tape, from the butt out. Me, I like two layers of friction tape. Never pull the tape, or it will want to retract at the end. Keep it taut and lay it naturally around the stock with the edge half-way onto the previous turn. Top things off with the color tape of your choice. Mr. Beatty always used slick black tape. I cover mine with white. Being Irish, I may switch to green. To each his own. But now you can enjoy knowing you've moved beyond common mud-show mentality & you've worked correctly like the masters of old. And there in your hand is your finished whipstock.

Next issue: Cutting the Flat Lash  
After that: Beatty's Rolled & Tapered Poppers  
And then: Clyde Beatty's Whipbox-  
An Insider's Personal Tour

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Sheelagh Jones reports** the last Shrine Circus at the Medinah Temple in Chicago will have no elephants, lions or tigers. They will have Grumpy's Pork Chop Revue; Rosaire-Zoppe chimps; Tahar's alligators; Johnny Peers' Mutts; Parrots of Pennzance; Giovanni Zoppe; Bob Lang; Flying Cortez; Manuel Gonclaves; Miss Daniella, hula hoops & Tim Tegge, ringmaster, from March 5-21.

**\*A LOOK INTO AN ELEPHANT MAN'S HEART! \*\*By Bobby Gibbs\*\***

On my visit to Gary & Kari Johnson's beautiful Elephant Farm in California, I noticed a poem on a shelf with no name on it. This poem tells a lot about both the writer and the plight of the elephant in today's world.

I asked Kari where she got such a great poem and what a surprise to find out it was written by her late brother, Ken Jones himself, a first class elephant man. Today's news would lead one to believe that elephant men are all bad & with the morals of a slave driver.

How wrong and how little good coverage is given to the people who dedicate their lives to the care of these great beasts. Read this and know the heart of Ken Jones.

**CREATURE CREATURE**

Gentle giant so they say  
With gun in hand, for pride you're slain  
You walk along a narrow path  
Ivory treasure for you, your wrath  
Gentle giant of the land  
Your enemy is gaining the upper hand  
He points his gun with deadly aim  
You're the victim of his fruitless gain  
Too great to die by his lesser hand  
Creature Creature understand  
The way of nature, your mother's plan  
That your energy for you she stores  
In forests and valleys that once were yours  
Too great to live in a world with man  
Too great to die by his lesser hand  
Creature Creature understand  
Creature Creature the way of man  
That when he's through, his world no more  
You can come back to what once was yours.

*Ken Jones.*

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**Hard Times Circus-Schell Bros. Circus....**

would ride on the side of a horse, camel or elephant in the mid-morning parade. The price of the banners varied with size & color. Before each performance, the ringmaster loudly called attention to the signs.

Mr. Cadeaux, the sign painter, taught me the fine art of sign painting. I used that knowledge in 1937 when I became a banner painter, but in 1929, I was only 6 years old & not quite ready yet.

Mom had a budge for placing ads with newspapers & radio stations. She also tried for as much free publicity as she could get by asking for public interest air time &

news stories. Dad explained to sponsors how volunteers would be used: "They carry water to the elephants, spread hay for the horses, & help clean the lot after tear-down." In those days, phone companies had special announcement systems for party line subscribers. A coded ring signaled for public announcements & advertisements. If subscribers wished to hear it, they picked up the receiver & listened. I guess that was the granddaddy of present-day commercials.

Mom would pay a phone company for a 60-second spot, then read the ad to all who would listen. One time, after she paid for the spot, she sat at a table to read it. She smiled when the operator gave the cue to start. Suddenly, she realized her mistake. The notebook with the rehearsed 1-minute spiel was not there. She had some other notebook-the wrong one. As the phone switched on, she blurted, "Well, I'll be a son of a gun!" After an embarrassing moment, she continued, "I don't have the right message to read, so I'll have to ad-lib for 1 minute." The operators turned from the switchboard to watch her improvise. A manager stepped from his office to listen. Several people on the party line giggled. In 1928, ladies seldom used such candid comments. The next day at the circus, many farmers told how the spunky girl on the phone made them want to see the spectacle she had described!

**(To Be Continued)**

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\*Mike Cecere reports that the picture of Smokey Jones was taken in 1968 on Hamid Morton in Cumberland, MD. From L-R are: Sherma, Bombay, Siam, Delhi & Joyce. \*Ringling Bros. reports that David Larible won 8 awards at the Monte Carlo Circus Festival, including the Golden Clown Award. Kenneth Feld discovered David in 1988. \*UniverSoul Circus will be featured on HBO on 2/6. Tour starts 3/5 in Atlanta. New this year are Jacksonville, FL, Charlotte, Norfolk, Boston, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati & Nashville. More in the next issue.

\*Bob Blackmar reports no exotic rides in NJ this year. Bob will have the cookhouse on Vidbel. Check out his cooking, folks! He'll have concessions on indoor dates. Bill Phillips will be arrow/lot-man & have "Whale Bounce." Vidbel: 3/9-11-Fayetteville, NC; 3/12-13-Whiteville; 3/15-16-Jacksonville; 3/18-19-New Bern; 3/21-22-Williamston. Rumor is a new circus, Circus Hope, will open the 1st part of April in WV, NC & western VA, with lots of animals. Let us know!

\*John Frazier to Vasquez Circus?? Larible bought house in St. Pete??? Fred Logan to Osarios????

# RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY

By *Brian Nunn*

\*Seagoville W.Q.'s, 1983: Christmas time. It was a darn, cold winter; elephants & tigers all nice and warm in the barns. Next door to Donnie's place was an old defunked rodeo grounds. They ("the people that owned the rodeo property, which at one time had been the black cowboy's arena of experts") were in the process of rebuilding barns and corrals. Anyway, there was a single woman living in the announcer's tower. I had gone over to check her out. She turned out to be a real cowgirl & had in her possession an ax for firewood; a nice, warm room; a ball bat for people she didn't want to talk to and a .44 pistol, plus a 12 ga. shotgun for backup-her words, not mine. So, it was Christmas and all & Donnie said to tell her she was welcome over to the place. (Donnie said no one should be alone on Christmas.) Gibbs was there and I'm sure he remembers her. She cleaned up real good & spent the holidays with us circus folk.

\*I just talked to Bobby Gibbs on the phone. He's in the hospital in Dallas. He sounded pretty sparky, like usual, so I know he will get better. I always like Bobby. He's got a ocean of information and most of it's useful. Anyway, he said that James, the guy that has the old rodeo grounds is still at it & his son is working on the place. I hope it comes together. Black people had a lot to do with saddle bronc riding.

\*Roger Smith wrote an article for Back Yard. I've observed the process of making up twisted stock & lash work. He covers it with good authority. It's even more involved. I never learned how to make good whip stock or lashes. I did ropes & canvas pretty good. I learned the baseball stitch, patch, back splice, middle splice & loops. I enjoyed doing this, as long as the work was taken care of. It would last forever, like most things. If you're in the environment for access to these materials & some inside knowledge, it's a lot of work and time. This is a lost art. Beware of any twisted stock material that comes cheap.

\*I was asked "Just what is a trainer?" In my opinion, it's someone who takes the time to learn generations of methods that have proven to be safe, healthy & effective for the human & animal to be able to perform for the satisfaction of all. I don't believe anyone can leave a civil service job; a fireman's job; a sewer worker's job, (although this would be a good head start) or a teacher's job & do the animal, and all things connected, justice. It takes study & application under the lead of proven trainers. God does bless fools, but there's no such thing

as, "I can handle it," without paying your dues! I've known a lot of people that are capable of doing it all, but chose to stay behind the scenes, so to speak. I've found I get more satisfaction that way. True, it's only 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, but "Hey," who says life's only chore is to produce something worthwhile for the future? Not me. Somebody else said that.

\*The Day the Wind Ruled: The only good thing about it was the wind blew all hay away so we didn't have to rake it up. It was the kind of persistent wind that stays the whole date. The flapping sidewall would try real hard to knock you down while you're walking behind the elephants. (You can't weave it in and out of the side poles 'cuz you want to be able to lift it easily.) Fortunately, it waited until teardown night to get real bad. We had loaded all the lead stock before we went in with the elephants for the last act, Rex's idea. Good thing or we would have lost some stock because when we were coming out of the big top, after the act, we all got to see the wind help us some more, as it flattened the menagerie top, (it was 60'x120').

The vinyl kind of rolled itself up in the wind so we loaded it. It took Mark and I 3 hours to patch it up good enough to raise it on the next lot.

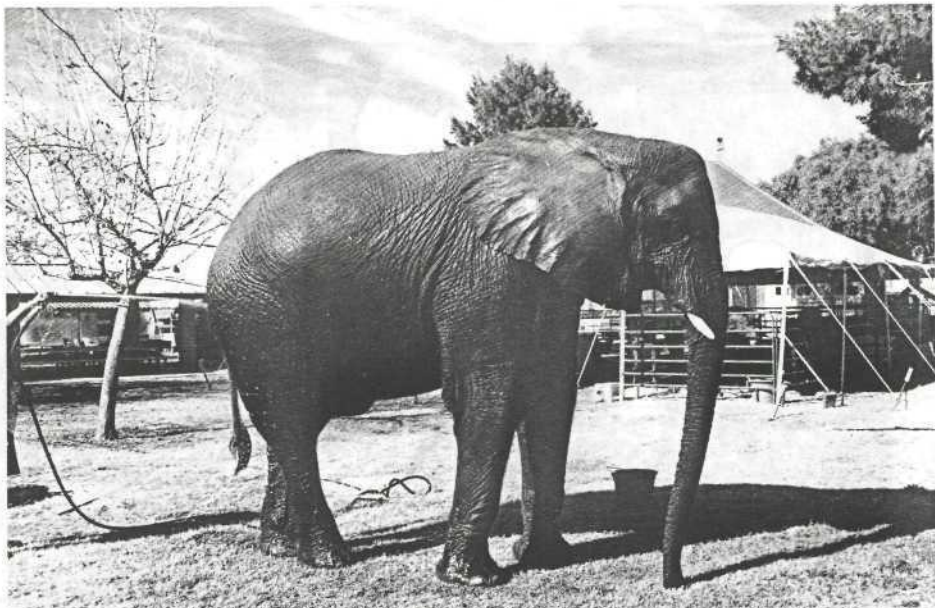
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\*Smiley Brewer, Harold Barnes Tent member, has purchased a home in FL??

\*Gary Thomson says visit [www.gardenbrothers.com](http://www.gardenbrothers.com) what a great site! Route in next BY. Great pictures!  
\*Nicole Wright says Raphael (of the Daltons), doing roman rings in Indianapolis, slipped out of both knees & fell about 25'. She landed in the almost deflated moon bounce. She broke her 4th vertebra. She was very lucky! More program in the next Back Yard.

\*Brian Franzen is on Sterling-Reid, with the elephants.  
\*Cirque du Soleil opened "La Nouba" at Disney World.  
\*Dave Orr says a large group of circus owners, circus fans & performers attended St. Martin's Church on 1/3. A lot of high seating was done. Then, there was standing room only! He & Harold (Alzana) Davis visited with John Herriott. He is breaking the new camel, llamas & pony act for Beatty. Act looks great. Harold doing great after a by-pass surgery. Still walks the low-wire outside his home. Dave says Kenneth Feld has "returned to what Ringling is known for. Animals!" The Living Carousel is the most fantastic thing Feld has done since his father's great shows of the 70s. A CD soon? "Circus fans, don't miss the new edition when it plays your town!" More from Dave in the next issue! Thanks, Dave.

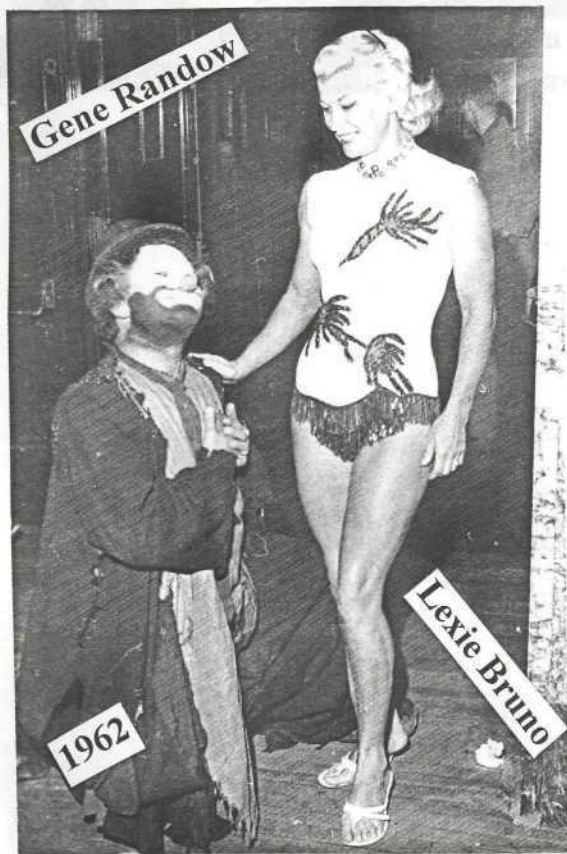


Kenny Dodd  
Beatty show



Flora in sunny Arizona

Photos by Denny Childers



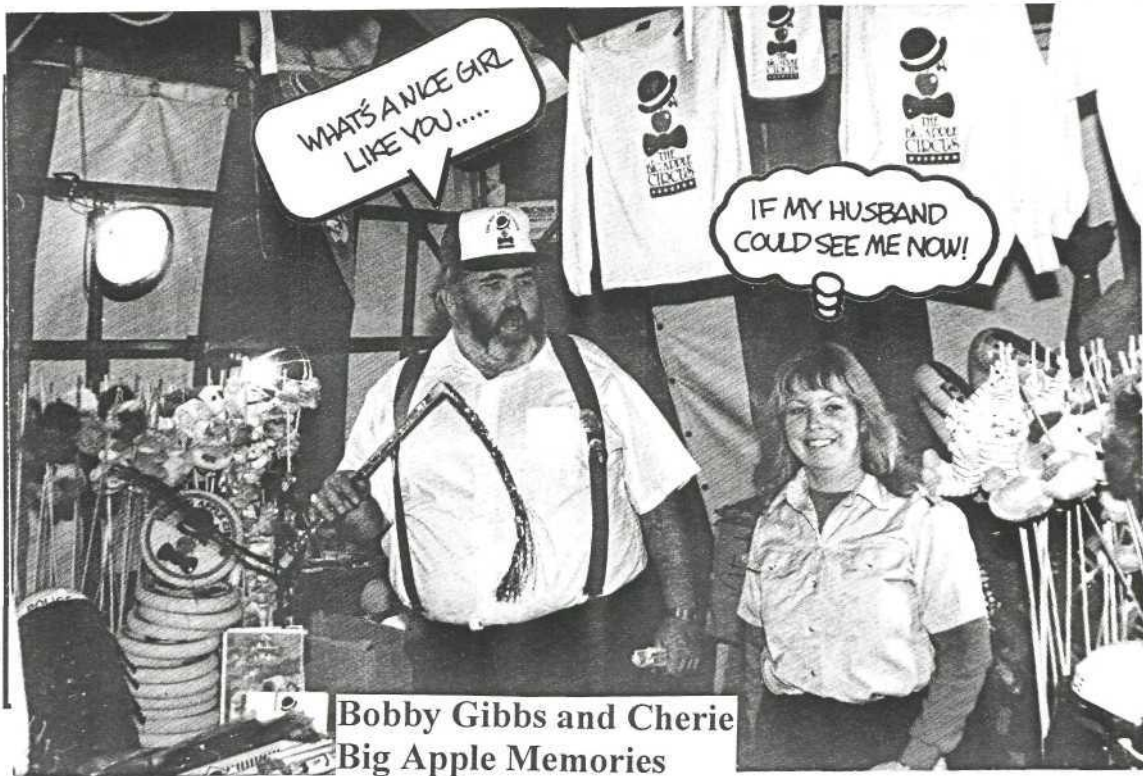
Gene Radow

Lexie Bruno

1962

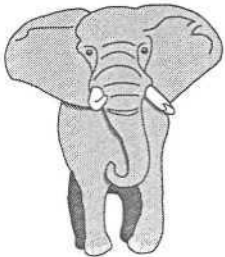


Albert White



**Bobby Gibbs and Cherie  
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