

# THE CIRCUS REPORT

AMERICA'S  
FAVORITE CIRCUS WEEKLY  
Our 10th Year

Number 47

November 23, 1981



RON WHITFIELD

# Book Review

by GEORGE C. BINGAMAN

"Story of the Campbell Bros. Circus" by Ed Bardy - Published by Ed Bardy, 13828 Peninsula Drive, Traverse City, Mich. 49684

Published in 1981 - Price: \$15.00

There are a lot of gems in Ed Bardy's "Story of the Campbell Bros. Circus" treasure chest published this year. Let me wet your whistle with a few anecdotal gems which should be adequate come-in to the magic of this circus volume.

"Pop Brown drove the calliope and gave the player suggestions for tunes as the parade passed by. On passing a saloon, the customers would be out front, and Pop called for 'How Dry I Am'."

"When Pop died he left an envelope to his widow. When opened she found a lovely eulogy-poem containing among other lines:

The Circus is bowed in sorrow  
For the Angel of Death has passed.  
The heavenly hosts in white  
March gloriously forth to welcome  
The man that comes home tonight.  
He hasn't a crown or a sceptre  
He hasn't a great big name.  
He'll sit at the Master's table  
And sup with the King of Kings  
And the Lord of Creation will welcome  
Our Pop of the sawdust rings."

Then there's that delightful letter from Titus Scott, Campbell Bros. Indian.

"Then there's Homesly, the baby elephant who in snatching sugar snatched mustard and cried loudly when it burned his tongue."

Then there were the dancing squaws in the after-show war dance who would snatch unway show people and drag "him" off to the dance with the Sioux. One might as well dance as he would. People would just scream

and laugh when this happened."

Then there were two Bill Campbell's . . . One was called 'High Grass Bill'; the other 'Love Grass Bill'. Why? One liked towns whose lawns were neatly mowed; the other showed more in the country where they hadn't time for that."

Then there was the marvelous old Blackie an eight-horse driver. No one knew his real name. He was the toughest of the tough, and there follows an amazing chronicle of tough-guy episodes. But the blow-off at the end has a terrific punch line from the tale's narrator:

"I met Blackie many years later. Instead of the fire-eater I expected he was a small, mild grey-haired man."

That is enough for the advance. Buy a ticket and a book. Come to real circus as it was in them thar days.

If you want a circus book easy to read, you will find yourself immediately faced with a parade of pages consisting of rare and magnificent photographs, reproductions of posters, programs, ads, route cards. This small volume is attractively presented with a red-inked "camel-dominated front door sketch" on beige cloth cover. The lack of page numbers proves no liability because of the domination of the illustrations and photographs.

The substance of the short text is so appetizing that you find yourself asking for more of this concrete, objective prose.

There is nostalgic magic in the story of this old hump show whose "Canvas Covered the Plains" Campbell Bros. Circus travelled first on five wagons in 1898 and grew to nearly forty railroad cars in 1912. They struck out from Fairbury, Nebraska, and covered America's Hinterland, our Great Plains States in the golden era of American circuses.

**SHOW DATES**

Brickle's Wonderland Circus

Nov 16 Manning, SC

17- 18 Kingtree

19 Bishopville

20 Sumter/St. George

23 Mt. Pleasant

24 Neeses

25 Banberg

Circus Arts Troupe

Nov 27-29 Phoenix, Arz

Ringling-Barnum - Red

to Nov 29

E. Rutherford, NJ

Royal Lichtenstein Circus

Nov 23 Canyon, Texas

24-29 Albuquerque, NM

Texas Shrine Circus

to Nov 25 Dallas, Texas

--- MAGIC ---

Blackstone

Nov 23 Youngstown, Oh.

24 Erie, Pa.

25 Ann Arbor, Mich

27 Columbus, Ohio

28 Ft. Wayne, Ind.

29 Davenport, Iowa

Pf. Miller-Magic Time USA

Nov 23 Ofalin, Ill.

25 Aledo

28 Galesburg

29 Peoria

Tom Ogden

Nov 25 New Hope, Pa

--- OTHER DATES ---

Ice Capades

Nov 24-29 Oakland, Ca.

Royal Scots Dragoons

Nov 24 Detroit, Mich.

25 Port Huron

26 Kitchener, Ont.

27 Toronto

28 Ottawa

Joe Schmitt, Jr. Clown

Nov 28-29 Ft. Worth, Tx.



## He's a Clown

*(By Carol A. Block - from the Hills & Plains Free Press, Bottineau, S. D. - Oct. 27, 1981)*

Tom Torkildson, KBTO news director, is about to make a career change. After being involved at the radio station for about a year, Tim will be leaving soon, not to pursue his radio career, but rather to become involved, once again, in a career that he has learned to love. Torkildson will be joining Ringling Brothers Circus to enjoy his first love - being a clown.

"A lot of kids have an idea of what they want to be," said Torkildson. "I always wanted to be a clown and have kids laugh at me."

He always enjoyed the Laurel and Hardy movies as well as Charlie Chaplin when he grew up. His only memory of kindergarten came when he was a clown for a PTA function.

The problem when he was growing up was finding out how to go about becoming a clown. When a senior in high school, his parents assumed he would go to the university. Then he read of the Ringling Brothers Clown College. He applied for the clown college without his parents' knowledge and received word on his 18th birthday that he had been accepted.

For two months he studied at the college and was one of the fortunate students to be accepted into the circus. He spent three years as a professional clown with one year devoted to the study of pantomime.

He also took two years out to be a Mormon missionary in Thailand. His talents did not rest during that time as he performed for functions of the Red Cross.

Tim left the circus life to study broadcasting at a vocational school and eventually worked at Williston for a year and a half and then at the Bottineau station.

Tim said that something inside of him told him he would not find true satisfaction in

anything else except in being a clown.

"There is not that much room in radio where I could be off-beat," said Tim. "The longer I was away from the circus I made up my mind that I would like to get back someday."

"Radio is too serious," he commented. "You find yourself covering bad news. You study tragedy. I prefer to study comedy. I found as a broadcaster that when I would try to be funny, people did not always expect it. As a clown, you are expected to do the off-beat kinds of things. If you want to tickle a lady or sit in a man's lap, you can because it is expected from you."

Tim stresses that the move from being a broadcaster to a clown is not one for money. It is simply a career move for him.

"We have grown to like this community," he said. "We have made many friends here. By moving to Florida, it represents a sacrifice. It was one of those decisions that would have been difficult to make. When you are married I believe you cannot make a decision by yourself." Tim's decision to go back to the circus as a clown has been supported by his wife, Amy.

For Amy, a native North Dakotan, the move may be hard with leaving her family and home now in Bottineau. It is something, she said, she does not think about a lot since she knows that part would be sad. She feels she should stress supporting Tim in doing what he wants. She also likes children and seeing them grow and develop which she is able to do with the couple's only child, Madeline. As Amy said of the move, "Two out of three ain't bad."

Tim's decision to go back to the clown work probably likens a movie that is shown at the clown school. In that movie, a writer who had written comedies left the movie industry to tour the world and see what the real world was like in an effort to make serious movies.

(Continued on Page 8)

## Girl doing ok

The 2 year old girl who was recently mauled by a tiger in Oklahoma City is beginning to recover after under-going delicate skin surgery to repair severe facial injuries that could have left lasting scars.

A 250 lb. tiger, taken out of a truck cage for some afternoon promotional photographs in downtown Oklahoma City, wrapped its paws around Shawna Hill and apparently bit her when she screamed in fright, witnesses said. The girl was traveling with the publicity company.

The child's mother apparently did not hear a warning to place the girl in a company truck before the tiger was released.

Hospital officials said the youngster underwent 6 hours of surgery to have skin pieces put back together and thus reduce as much scarring as possible. Her condition was reported as being stable, but officials said she would probably have some scarring despite the operation.

The tiger, owned by Fotocat of Choctaw, Okla., a publicity firm, was impounded for observation.

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## PEOPLE

**FRANK and ANDY** from Bunn and Roberts Enterprises visited with **SUE AND AL DAWLEY** over Halloween and on the 31st all children of Tybee, Ga., were treated with a free bag of cotton candy.

**JOEY JORDAN**, juggler, recently completed a six month engagement at the Playboy Casino in Atlantic City, and he has been signed to return again next year.

**PETE MUSTARD**, clown artist, continues his fight against cancer. He has more than 300 clown drawings in his collection. He would enjoy letters and cards which can be sent to him at: 1914 South Broadway, Santa Ana, Calif. 92707.

### HE'S A CLOWN (Continued)

While traveling he was jailed for a period of time. When a prisoner, the writer had a chance to view a movie the writer had once made. In looking at the other prisoners, he saw how happy he had made them.

When the writer was released from jail, he went back to the producers saying he wanted to make comedies again.

That is probably the way Tim feels. "The longer I stayed away from clowning," he said, "the more serious I got. There were not enough outlets to do my clowning."

Tim will begin his duties with the circus in November. The family will be moving to the Orlando, Fla., area.

## In Memoriam

DALE BUGGINS (20) a record holding stunt motorcyclist, who nearly broke Evel Knieval's mark of jumping over 13 cars, was found shot to death in a motel room in Melbourne, Australia, late last month.

Police said they had taken possession of a rifle and a note, the contents of which were not released.

Buggins won fame for jumping motorcycles over rows of buses and cars and had just returned to Australia after signing a contract in the United States with the William Morris Agency.

## PEOPLE

BIG JOHN STRONG plans to expand his circus into a full three ring operation and program for the 1982 tour. The show will open its tour, as usual, in Yucaipa, Calif.

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**Show Acts**

Several novelty acts have been booked by Simone Finner Enterprises, Hollywood-based theatrical agency specializing in variety acts for revue shows, including:

The Jabczynski Troupe, teeterboard acrobatics; Nino Frediani, juggler and Ron and Joy Holiday, illusionists featuring wild exotic animals, all appearing in "City Lights" at the Flamingo Hilton Hotel, Las Vegas.

Ioni, the amazing French automaton, in "Lido Revue" at the Stardust Hotel, Las Vegas.

Michael Chirrick, juggler, in "Best of Burlesque" at the Sahara Hotel, Reno.

Richiardi & Co., illusionist and Los Magicos de Brasil, black art, in "It's Magic"

at Variety Arts Theatre, Los Angeles.

Senor Wences, internationally acclaimed ventriloquist in "C'est Paris" at the Condado Holiday Inn, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Johnny Lonn, Sweden's Clown Prince of Magic, Crazy Horse Saloon, Paris.

Kit Summers, comedy juggler and Los Diablos Gauchos, Argentinian folklorists, at "Outrageous II" at Baly's Park Place, Atlantic City.

## Magic Show

BY ROBERT ALBRIGHT

The Ken Griffin Magic Show played Salyersville, Ky. late last month, sponsored by the local Rescue Squad.

I liked the show and some of the best of the program were: Making 5 members of the Rescue Squad disappear from the stage and then reappear in the balcony dressed with wigs, as girls.

A levitation, where the 255 lb Chief of Police drove his Harley Davidson straight off the stage and about 10 feet in the air above us. He then chased Roberta, Ken's pretty wife, into a jail cell, where she turns into a gorilla and then carried the chief off to the Mayor's Cadillac, just outside the lobby.

## PEOPLE

BILL KARLTON is putting the finishing touches to "Fantasy On Ice" which will play East Coast dates during the holiday season.

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# Florida Date

by 'CIRCUS JOE' VALENCIANO

Here is a report on the first show to enter the Tampa Bay area for this fall/winter season of 1981-82.

The circus with the convoy of purple and white semis, set up their tents of Hoxie Br. at the town of Tarpon Springs, where they presented two shows at 6 and 8 p.m. on Nov. 3rd.

The front end looked good with the big fancy painted office semi, which was well lighted. They had colorful flags on everything, even every quarter pole on the side show had a flag. It was a nice touch which adds color to sometimes dull looking set-ups. The Midway had an office, pit show, pony sweep, elephant ride, side show and concessions.

The big top was a two pole, bale ring top. It was still a good ol' white canvas top with red and blue trim, and stars at the top of the quarter poles, like big tops used to be. I much prefer this type of top, than those new candy strip carny colored tents. But in the daylight the tent was like the sky filled with stars (holes), in the dark when the performances were givem, the public couldn't see them.

The show was 1½ hours, including a 10 minute intermission. Performers were: Illusions by Holveck & Co. They presented the Girl in the Crystal Box, Doves and a Temple of Swords. Later in the show they did the sub-trunk. Holveck also serves as the show's ringmaster.

Other performers were: The Bruski Trio, a unique unicycle act and later a balancing turn; Mike Rice had his chimp, dog, single elephant and pony acts. He also presented the Hoxie herd of five elephants.

Marina Boyd did web and a hair hang.

The Alley of three clowns did numbers between acts. Music was provided by an organ and drums, plus trumpet.

Rolling stock included nine semis, a straight bed job and a spool truck.

## WANT

Copies of the White Tops magazine for: 1980 - Sept/Oct and Nov/Dec. - Write with information about condition and price to:

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## PEOPLE

**CORKY** (Grant Dozier), clown and magician, has teamed up with **THE AMAZING MR. ART** (Art Weeks) and the two are doing shows for schools, fairs and malls in Florida for the winter. Their show is called "The Magic Circus."

**SUSAN** and **DAVIDE ZOPPE** will be touring with their **Afghan Dog Act**, **Unsupported Ladder** and **Rhesus Monkey Revue** with **GEORGE HUBLER** in New York, after which they will go on to their Christmas shows and next year they will tour with the **Hamid-Morton Circus**.

**ROY ROGERS** and **DALE EVANS** will be the **Grand Marshalls** for this year's **Hollywood Christmas Parade**, which will be seen later this month over many TV stations.

**ATHENA FRANK** has been selected to appear on the TV show "It's Elementary", a kid's quiz program taped in Jacksonville, Fla. She and several other students will be representing their school district against students from South Florida and North

## Tiger Stolen

A 40 lb. Bengal tiger cub was stolen from its cage at a shopping center in New Orleans last month, during a visit of the **Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus** at the **Lake Forest Shopping Center**.

Officials said the cub was taken from its cage and that its sister cub was in a state of shock over the disappearance. "The other cub is going crazy," he said.

In the meantime a pet dog has been substituted for the missing cub in an effort to keep the remaining cub calm.

---

Georgia.

**PERCY TURNER**, retired showman, is recovering from his recent stroke and doing quite well at home. You can send cards and letters to him at: 1510 Grand Ave., San Diego, Calif. - 92109.

**JO JO the Magic Clown** worked the opening night of the **Allegan County Fair**, and a **Halloween Party** on Oct. 30th at **Holland, Michigan**.

## Busy Summer

### SUFFOLK DOWNS ENDLESS SUMMER FESTIVAL

Between all the spot dates Jimmie & Millie Perry performed at Suffolk Downs Endless Summer Festival, doing 4 fifteen minute shows per day in between races, Iron Jaw comedy balancing and juggling act, also a choice of menu at the club house was given as compliments of the track.

This festival was a joint effort between two agents - Bob Riley Enterprises of Boston and Jerry Fields Promotions of Boston.

The following acts performed there from May 23rd through Sept. 7, 1981.

The Amazing Fields, magic and illusion act; Jerry Coyle, musical novelty act; Cheezo the Clown, clown act; The Incredible Walt Donohue, fire eater; Joe Carota, magic act; Mr. Slim and L. J. Newton, juggling team; Norman Bigelow, great escape artist; The Great Cresini, magic act; Cavert Michaels, clown act; Valerie Kaan & Alexander, ventriloquist; Marvello, magic act and Peter O'Malley, magic act and banjo act.

## Fire eater hurt

On Tuesday, Nov. 3rd, the Union-Leader of Manchester, N.H., reported that a fire eater, performing for a Boys Club Halloween Party in Lawrence, Mass., was hospitalized when he accidentally set himself on fire during a performance.

Fire eater William Gagne - who has been performing the act for 20 years - was reported in good condition at Lawrence General Hospital. He was suffering from burns to his face and neck.

The children sat entranced as Gagne, who calls himself Winston Fire, sent flames of fire dancing across his arm and chewed on a flaming apple, a spokesman said.

He swallowed a clear mixture of fluid and sent flames spitting into the air. The looks of delight turned to horror when the fire eater's face and neck caught on fire.

Gagne's son rushed to put out the fire with an extinguisher, but it was jammed.

## Elephant T-shirts

Gerry II, the elephant who survived the flood at Gainesville, Texas, by clinging to treetops and using her trunk as a snorkel, has been immortalized on a T-shirt that will help to restore her ruined zoo.

Half the animals in the Frank Buck Zoo died when the raging waters from storms that ravaged the northern Texas area ripped through the park, causing extensive damage. The Indian elephant was given up for dead until police spotted her wedged into a clump of trees in water 15 feet high.

Two days after the flood ended, an ad hoc committee of Gainesville residents decided to sell T-shirts of Gerry II to raise money to restore the zoo.

The shirts feature a drawing of Gerry clinging to a tree in the middle of a flooded creek. "Gerry and I survived the '81 flood," is printed in black letters on the shirt.

So far 1,500 shirts, at \$8.00 each, have been ordered.

"We've got phone calls from Alaska and Hawaii and then we've got some orders from Korea and Japan," Connie Robinson who is directing the shirt sales, said. "A lady who was visiting from Columbus, got flooded in. She came by and picked up two T-shirts as souvenirs."

Ms. Robinson said the zoo, named for the well-known animal hunter Frank Buck, was perhaps the hardest hit of any Gainesville facility.

"The zoo is just a total wreck," she said. "It was the last thing to drain in Cooke County. I think. It's a muddy hole right now."



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## Miscellaneous

The Nov. 3, 1981 issue of "The Enquirer" (Page 47) carried a feature titled "Incredible Feats by Super-Strong People."

Mentioned were strong man Sandow who could chin himself with just his thumb. It is said that people would pay as much as \$250 a ticket to see Sandow accomplish his amazing feats.

Also mentioned is Lillian Leitzel who was gifted with incredible strength and at the age of 36 she performed 27 chin-ups using only her right arm.

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 P-31 Animals Zoo; P-12 Gargantua; P-27 Tiger.  
 P-4 B&B Tiger, G. Williams Spec Bi-Centennial  
 Litho G. Williams with leopard; P-30 Clowns,  
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## New Officers

The Seils Sterling Circus Tent No. 79 held its annual election of officers on Nov. 4th in conjunction with a dinner meeting and the newly elected officers for 1981-82 are:

- President - Wayne Bolz  
 Vice President - Norman Wilbert  
 Secretary - Fred Wendland  
 Treasurer - Richard Hellhake  
 Directors - Robert Kroos, Richard Maas

and Wayne Kadow.

Wayne Bolz succeeds Robert Kroos as President, who held the office the past two years. Bolz and Wilbert were the two original members who brought the tent to Sheboygan, Wisc., several years ago and reactivated it. The tent was founded many years ago around the local Lindemann Circus family.

## Do You Remember?

VANDEBURG BROS. CIRCUS - 1937

by TED La VELDE

The show wintered in Whitewater, Wisc., which was the home of Zella Hall, who managed and owned the show. Lew Christiansen was the assistant manager; Clarence Auskings was agent; Bill Owens, billposter.

Steve Fanning worked the ring stock which included ponies and razor back hogs; Bonnie Hall presented the dog act. Other acts were:

Richard Barnsdale, slack wire. He worked in a Russian Cossack costume and was billed as "The Man From Moscow."

The Aerial Christiansens, Lew and Elsie, double traps and upside down loop walking; Tom Moss, novelty chair balancing and juggling; Freda LaVelda and Vera 'Fanning' Orton, swinging ladders and web; Ted La Velda, contortion and hand balancing, plus two clown gags.

I forgot the name of the boss canvasman at the opening date, but prior to that I remem-

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ber him from the 20's on Seils Sterling Circus.

A man by the name of Shankland played the calliope, his nickname was "Few Clothes" Shankland. He left the show after a few weeks. Elsie Christensen replaced him for the balance of the season.

People came and went during the season. The boss canvasman left early in the season, and he was replaced by "Tropical Slim" Mitchell, next was "Fat" Byers and finally "Dutch" LaBlair.

Later I started doing the big show announcing and acting as equestrian director. All this and selling banners downtown, kept me pretty busy.

George Hopp was side show manager. In addition to making the openings he did magic and mind reading inside. Mr. Hopp left in the middle of the season and was replaced by Harry Leonard, he and his wife Mary, ran the side show in which knife throwing was featured.

Texas Joe Clark and wife joined to take over the concert, featuring whip manipulating. After they left, Tom King joined and for the concert he talked on the "Old Wild West."

# From the past

from ART "DOC" MILLER

I understand the Hagenbeck-Wallace Show had an attachment slapped on it for the canvas at Riverside, Calif., once. I have no other details, except that the next stand was to be Whittier. As I understand it, all of the big top canvas had been removed from the lot and was held in a warehouse. How about some California fans coming forth with more details on this?

Then in 1921, at Ithaca, NY, the show sat on the tracks for several hours on show morning, when rumors had it the workingmen had struck. Further rumors claimed the workingmen's salary (canvasesmen, polers, chalkers, etc) was advanced to \$2.00 a week and then the show was unloaded and a tardy parade and matine were given.

I caught the night show, either the preceding or following day. I did not know about the Ithaca incident 'til years later, but did note there was a strange 'air' around the outfit.

As I recall it, all of the canvas was not up and there was a mysterious feeling as one walked on the lot. Perhaps this was when the men were all set to strike the next morning. Perhaps the Ithaca newspaper carried an account of this incident?

I again experienced that weird uncanny feeling, one night in '32 when the Johnny J.

Jones Shows folded in Wilkes-Barre, Pa. It was the final day of the appearance there and the previous night, the large Athletic Show top and front just up and vanished.

Everyone was talking about the beautiful ferris wheel being sold for \$500 to help move the show out of town. The ferris wheel was the only one I ever saw with carved wooden scrolls and mirrors on the seats.

When it became certain there was not enough money to move the train, a 'stick' no less, from one of the flat stores, was sent over to nearby Nanty Glo to bill the town with an armful of window cards.

I recall there was about 50 cards all told and the man was back on the lot in two hours. The wagons were hauled overland to Nanty Glo and the show started to set up.

Perhaps no permits were secured for suddenly the city fathers forbid the show to open.

That's when the greatest midway ever known, stranded!