

# CIRCUS REPORT

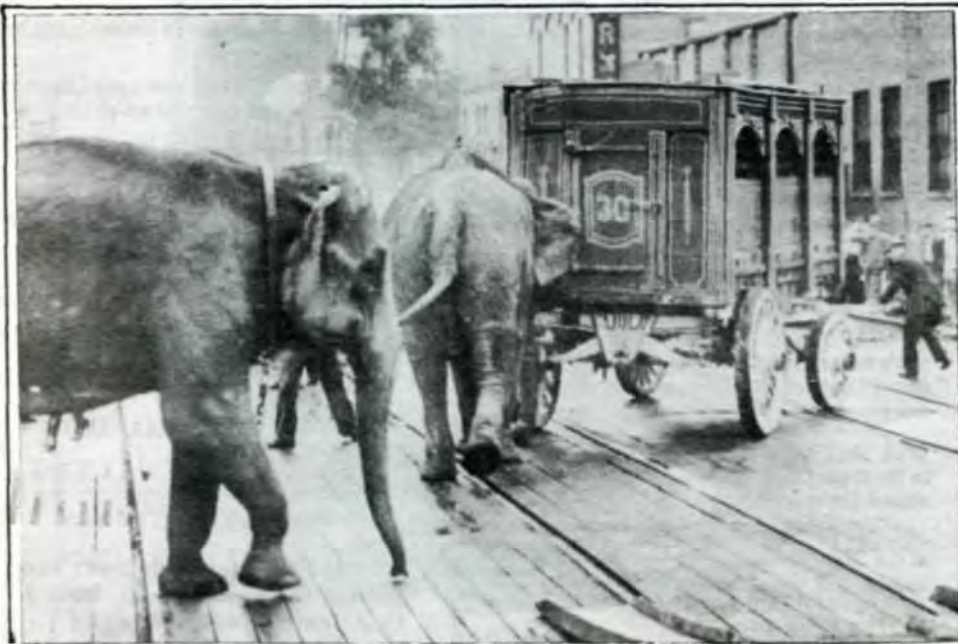
"AMERICA'S FAVORITE CIRCUS WEEKLY"

The logo for 'Circus Report' is a vibrant, stylized graphic. The title 'CIRCUS REPORT' is written in large, red, bubbly letters with a blue outline, set against a blue background. The word 'CIRCUS' is on the top line and 'REPORT' is on the bottom line. In the center, between the two lines of text, is a white clown's face with a wide, joyful expression. To the left of the clown is a blue elephant's head with its trunk curled. To the right is a blue lion's head with its mouth open in a roar. The entire logo is framed by a red and white striped banner at the bottom.

9th Year

February 25, 1980

Number 8



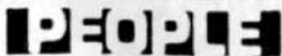
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De MILLE, wire artist, will be touring with the Showtime Follies this summer.

"KOTO" and "CURLY" clowns in Spokane, Wash., report they keep busy working dates for "Project Joy" a senior citizen program. Their local Clown Club has added new members and many of the group plan to attend the April 16-20 convention in Denver.

NICOLE VERLAINE, trainer of horses, ponies and exotic animals, also does a globe act on a show in England. She hopes to tour in the U.S. this next year.

Dr. and Mrs. DAVID REID, of Oregon, are making plans to visit Florida next month.

EUGENE A. NOCK, Jr. won 1st place and First Prize (a white 1980 Trans-Am car) at a European Health Spa body building contest on Feb. 4th.

BERNARD BALE, ringmaster with some of Britain's major circuses is currently touring with Circus Hoffman. He is also an accomplished animal trainer.

BILL SMITH (Dr. Strange) is working show dates in Southern California and while in Montclair he visited Circus Vargas.

JOEY JORDAN, juggler, has his "Fantasy Follies" at the Orpheum Theatre in New York City. Also appearing in that show are ventriloquist JERRY GOODSPEED with Sylvester and Mime-Illusionist JEFF McBRIDE.

THE CIRCUS REPORT is compiled and edited by Don Marcks, 525 Oak St., El Cerrito, Calif. 94530 — Phone: 415 - 525 - 3332.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: \$15.00 per year. The overseas rate via surface mail is \$20.00 a year.

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## CIRCUS QUIPS. . . .

. . . by KARL J. BISCHOFF

ALL CIRCUS PEOPLE using dog acts should be alerted of the proposed health program for dogs, it's called MEDICUR.

DID YOU KNOW that circus history is not being written by quitters?

REMEMBER the circus season passed by quickly. It's only the days that are so long.

SOME PEOPLE THIRST for fame, some for money, some for love, but everyone thirsts after eating the SHOW'S POPCORN.

IT'S LIFE - a country music singer is a person who gets rich by singing about how great it is to be poor.

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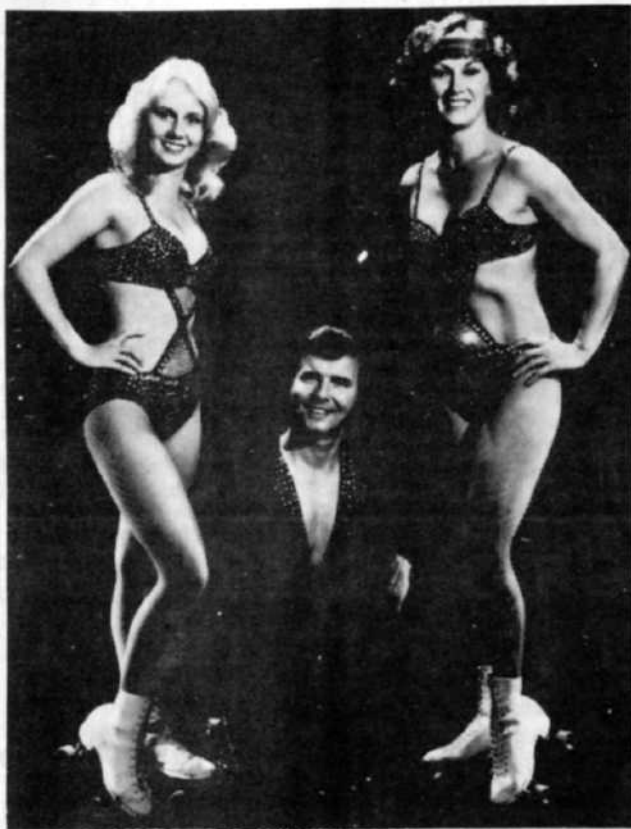
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Jan, 19-27 - Washington, DC Sport Show  
Shilling Agency  
Feb. 13-18 - Boston, Mass. Sport Show  
Shilling Agency  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Lexington, Ky. Sport Show  
Amandis Agency  
March 4-9 - Oklahoma City, Okla. Sport  
Show - Shilling Agency  
March 16-23 - Dallas, Texas Sport Show  
Shilling Agency  
April 18-19 - Lewiston, Maine Shrine Circus  
Wayne Mc Cary

April 21-23 - Portland, Maine Shrine Circus  
Wayne Mc Cary  
April 25-27 - Bangor, Maine Shrine Circus  
Wayne Mc Cary  
May 2-3 - Augusta, Maine Shrine Circus  
Wayne Mc Cary  
May 8-11 - Presque Island, Maine Shrine  
Circus - Wayne Mc Cary  
May 23-26 - Wilmington, Dela. Shrine  
Circus - Bauer-Hall

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## Show Dates

Carden-Johnson Circus  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Odessa, Texas

Circus Vargas  
Feb. 21-25 Carson, Calif.  
26-28 Buena Park  
29-Mar. 3 Orange

Cole All Star TV Circus  
Feb. 25 Wayland, NY  
26 Victor  
27 Rushville  
28 Marion  
29 Clifton Springs  
Mar. 1 Penn Yan  
2 Waterloo

Garden Bros. Circus  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Reading, Pa.

Hamid-Morton Circus  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Topeka, Kans.

Hubler Int'l Circus  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Buffalo, NY

Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus  
Mar. 2 Grand Junction, Colo.

Ringling-Barnum - Blue Unit  
Feb. 27-Mar. 2 Norfolk, Va.

Ringling-Barnum - Red Unit  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Columbia, SC

Royal Hanneford Circus  
Feb. 23-24 Myrtle Beach, SC  
Mar. 1-2 Charleston

Royal Lichtenstein Circus  
Feb. 25 Seattle, Wash.  
26 Tacoma  
27 Cheney  
28 Spokane  
Mar. 1 Desmet, Idaho

---- MAGIC ----

The Amazing Conklins  
Feb. 25 Cando, N.D.  
26 Maddock  
27 Hamey  
28 Sawyer  
29 Minot

Blackstone Magic Show  
Feb. 26-Mar. 2 Columbus, Ohio

Andre Kole's World of Illusions  
Feb. 26 San Jose, Calif.  
27 Fort Ord  
28-29 Fresno  
Mar. 1 Bakersfield

Felix Snipes - Magic/ESP  
Feb. 22-23 Sarasota, Fla.

---- OTHER DATES ----

Flying V Rodeo  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Long Beach, Calif.

Liberace  
Feb. 26-Mar. 1 Phoenix, Ariz.

The Rolling Diamonds  
Feb. 29-Mar. 2 Lexington, Ky.

The Sikorskys  
Mar. 1 Lebanon, Pa.

White House in Miniature  
Feb. 23-Mar. 2 Phoenix, Ariz.



WITH THE LATE FALL doldrums behind us, and another Christmas season packed up with the ornaments and Christmas tree lights, my phone has begun ringing off the hook, reminding me once again that a columnist's life is sure fraught with interesting interruptions.

From Calif., came a call from perennial wire walking star **HERBIE WEBER** revealing that he will come East for the season when he opens Feb. 1st for a three day engagement in resurrecting vaudeville by Washington's prestigious Smithsonian Institute. The show features only those entertainers who actually performed in vaudeville in, say, the 1930s. That date has already come and gone and since then Herbie called to say it was an interesting experience.

Among the old time vaude names on the bill were comedian **LOU HOLT** and magician **JAY LAWRENCE**. Enroute to the DC date Herbie stopped in Roanoke (Va) to catch the Hanneford opening. Right after he finished the Dr. Pepper Circus in Dallas **HERBIE** and **MARCEL LA** flew to Central America for a quickie tour with the Globetrotters.

On the heels of Herbie's call came one from **VENO VENITO**, spending the winter in Montreal with his gorgeous fiance, a modern jazz and ballet dancer. The couple has been going together for several months. Veno says his parting from Elizabeth Rodriguez was amicable and there were no hard feelings on either side.

THE GRASS is not always greener (sometimes it is non-existent). **HERTA CUNEO** reports that her vacation to Hawaii was an absolute bust, that after keying herself up for twelve years for the island visit she encountered only three days of sunshine, was sick on the way over and languished abed after she got there with John scurrying about the city looking for a physician in the wee hours of the ayem, and that after they flew to Maui, John fell ill with a kidney stone problem was hospitalized during that awful, headlined storm in an absolutely antediluvian facility. Herta waited for a hospital report in a hotel without electricity (owing to the storm) and sat through the night with only the light of a single candle. When word at last filtered through that they could leave she made it to the airport (situated next to the hospital) just AFTER the entire coast road (and most of the beach) had disappeared into the ocean! Immediately upon

landing at O'Hare, John was rushed to another hospital where it was discovered that somewhere between Maui and the Windy City, John had passed the torturous kidney stone! Herta says she can laugh about it NOW but it was indeed no laughing matter THEN! She'd have been better off to stay home, don a grass skirt and listen to Don Ho records, not to mention being thousands of dollars richer - which hasn't improved either HER or her husband's disposition. John, incidentally, is touring now with his animal attractions on Hamid-Morton.

**THE UNDERGROUND GRAPEVINE:** Birds with big mouths tell me the **PLUNKETTS** were not too thrilled with their journey to Monte Carlo. Sources reveal the troupe found expenses ridiculously out of line and June, Corky, James, et al were only TOO happy to come home! Harken to this: Cup of coffee - \$1.50; hamburger - \$5; hamburger steak dinner - \$15; room with NO TV - \$150 per! Well, kids, just wait, it will soon be like that right here!

IT LOOKS like a lollipalooza show for the **Tommy Hanneford** produced **Medinah Temple** with the following acts skedded: Somersaulting wire walker **Christopher James**, the comedy antics of the **Plunketts**, aerial stylishness of **Frank and Estreleta**, the super-classy **Miss Loni**, and the incomparable **Jorge Barreda** with his lions. Plus many more whose names I have not been given. Unquestionably, with those swell acts, it HAS to be a GOOD program.

**BUSY BEES:** Terrific entertainers **BONNIE & CLYDE** buzzing through the winter with beaucoup work. Did the Xmas date in Wilmington (Dela) for **TOMMY BENTLEY/CHUCK CLANCY**/produced by the new **COOKE & ROSE** combo, also starring the Burger's animal acts, **Dorian Blake** and **Billy Earl's** vent act. (Chuck celebrated his birthday on that date and so **HENRIETTA** the **CHICKEN** serenaded him with the old standby. They couldn't, though they tried, entice **MISS PIGGY** to fly in). They then did two **New Years Eve shows - one in Venice (Fla)** the other 25 miles away for **BILL KAY** at the **Sarasota Shrine Club**. **GUNNER AMANDIS** had them open the first show, close the second and at the early date the entire cast helped them pack. They made the later one with exactly 3 minutes to spare! They did the Int'l All Star

(Continued on Page 20)

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## PEOPLE

RALPH EMERSON, of Newington, Conn., received the Paul Harris award, highest honor bestowed by the International Rotary Club for civic service, on Feb. 8th at a special ceremony in Hartford's Sphinx Temple Shrine Club. Presentation was made by leaders of the Connecticut capitol community. Emerson is well-known as a patron of theatrical and circus arts. He once owned one of the nation's largest privately owned zoos.



## M & M CIRCUS INTERNATIONALE

The following program of the M & M Circus Internationale was provided by that circus and is for the Feb. 13-17 date at Rochester, NY.

Overture with Musical Director William Brown-ing; Spening Spectacle produced by Circus Creations - The Good Old Days; Harry Thomas, tigers; Frank & Estreleta, hanging perch; the Super-Locos, knockabout; Display with Miss Loni and Miss Barbara, Don Phillips & Co., centered; Miss Roberta, slide; the Lenz Chimps; Display with Freddie, Carlos Duo, Miss Martha centered; Victor Julian's Little Stars presented by Leo Coffey; The Winn Brothers, criss-cross inclined wire walk.

The Flying Valencias opened the second half, followed by clowns; Enrico Suarez Riders; Display of bikes with Diana, Van Noys and Kursawes centered; Aerial Ballet starring single trapeze artist Lorelei; Tony Diano's Elephants, presented by Lee and Jeanette Keener; The Winn Troupe (3) with their aerial motorcycle.

Staff included: Al Dawley, ringmaster; James Douglass, equestrian director; Jack Albert, props; Vern Woerner, producing clown; Miss Carol, aerial director; Miss Pamela, wardrobe and the M & M Circus is produced by Grace McIntosh and Charles Marine.

The Dorey Miller elephants will appear at the Omaha and Lincoln Shrine dates in April with tentative arrangements with Johnny Herriott to present them - this according to the M & M Circus office.

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— Photo Upon Request —

# **SHRINE CIRCUSES 1980**

Madison, Wisc. Feb. 16-17 — Albany, N.Y. Mar. 8-9 — Syracuse, N.Y. Apr. 11-13

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Miss Diane — Single Trapeze  
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Cook's Comedy Car  
Edca Schmitt's Royal Bengal Tigers  
The Gutis Family — Jungle Comedy  
Susan's Afghan Champions  
Roman Schmitt's Elephants  
Irene and Tongo — Comedy Gorilla  
Gina's Royal Palace Leopards  
Johnny Luxem — Wheel of Destiny  
Cristina's Chimps  
The Jordana's Aerial Upside Down Unicycle  
The Navarro Troupe — Bicycle  
Miss De Lisa — Single Trapeze  
The Dolly Sisters — Aerial Cradle  
The Albanis — Platform Motorcycle Aerial  
Hugo Zacchini — Cannon

ALL ACTS BOOKED THROUGH:

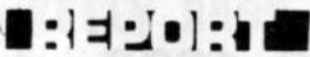
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OUR THANKS TO BILL AND PAT KAY



## STEBBING'S CIRCUS

The Stebbing's Royal European Circus played the ten day South Florida Fair at West Palm Beach Jan. 25 thru Feb. 3rd.

Acts appearing in the show program were: The Sisters DuBois, juggling; Doug Ashton, comedy; Stebbing's chimps; Sally Ashton, trapeze; Rigollettos (Campas), comedy music; Loyal Riding Act; Stebbing's elephants; followed by the elephant "Baby Mike" and Holly Stebbing.

## HOLIDAY HIPPODROME

.... by JOHN Mc GINN

We had the pleasure of watching Holiday Hippodrome when it came to Prescott, Ariz., Jan. 30. It was sponsored by CIVITAN which helps handicapped children.

The show was spectacular with young performers and beautiful wardrobe. It was a fast moving program and everyone presented themselves very well. Brad was a great hit with the audience, his Hippity-hop, rabbit exchange brought down the house and he looked elegant in his grey suit.

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The program featured: Rande Lynne, foot juggling; Burke's Barking Buffoons; Marios Mad Hatters; Brad and balloon sculpturing; Intermission; Sharon's Chimps; Brad with magic; Miss Christina, trapeze; Danny Carey, hand balancing; The Drougetts, juggling.

Music was provided by Brad at the organ, plus a drummer and some taped music.

## EMMETT KELLY, Jr. CIRCUS

Acts appearing with the Emmett Kelly, Jr. Circus at Queens College in Flushing, N. Y., on Feb. 1st were:

Cimse's dogs; Emmett and Want More; The Rolling Diamonds, roller skaters; Cowboy Joe Phillips, gun twirling; Zippy the Chimp; Emmett and rope; Joe Phillips and dogs (featuring Mr. Mutley); Emmett, standing on hands; Scalzo & Co., magic; Ken Sherburne, juggling/unicycle; Cowboy Joe Phillips and horse "Golden Mist"; Miss Diana, foot juggling; Nancy thanks the show band; Emmett and the finger trick; Satani Demon, specialty act.

Music was provided by Jules Epstein, while Nancy Kelley handled the announcements.

+ Rib Splitting Comedy  
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... by LLOYD E. JONES

The period from 1880 to 1930 has been called the great days of the circus poster. When the big show came to town thousands of them would be plastered up on every available space and today, these are treasured possessions.

In AMERICAN CIRCUS POSTERS IN FULL COLOR some 48 posters have been placed in a book 10½ x 14 in. and they were selected and edited by Charles Philip Fox.

Many of these have not been in book form before and even in this reduced size they will still dazzle the eye. There are notes on 44 of the posters and a brief historical introduction.

The one fault about the book is that the posters are printed back-to-back. So, if one wished to frame them then he'd have to buy two books.

A desirable book and priced at \$6.95. Postage is 81c (insurance, if desired, 50c) and Californians are subject to a 6% sales tax (42c). The book was published in 1978, and copies are still available.

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## HOTLINE

During the Hubert Castle Circus engagement at Grand Rapids, Mich., Tarzan Zerbini was injured twice by lions.

The first incident occurred when one of the lions jumped off his perch and slashed him across the back. He carried a bandage for the rest of the engagement.

Then later when Zerbini does his illusion act, wherein a girl is changed into a lion, the young animal got his teeth into Zerbini's head and the back of his neck.

Despite the attacks in both cases he shook it off and gave a full performance.

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# The Flint

# Journal

Flint, Michigan

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## Review

## ADAMS

## CHIMPS

AND

## DOGS

OPEN ONLY

June 9 to August 30 (1980)

THE ANIMAL acts at the first performance of the circus were. far and away audience favorites. Laughter was loudest for the Eric Adams Canines, a motley group of comedy dogs.

A white poodle chauffeured two smaller dogs in the side car of the motorcycle he drove, and another poodle undressed to display a glittering bikini. The children in the audience especially liked it.

The Adams Chimpanzees were also a success. Their act was also aided by a motorcycle ride, and their silly antics were the cause of innumerable giggles from the youngsters.

Permanent Address: ERIK ADAMS

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## WRG ENTERPRISES

Bill Garden's WRG Enterprises, Inc., based in Sarasota, Fla., for 15 years, has opened 1980 by diversifying in to the Concert field.

WRG Enterprises has become the largest of the phone promoted circus producers with its stage productions appearing in over 400 cities in 1979. WRG productions include Holiday Hippodrome, Showtime Follies, Children's World of Circus, and International Police Showtime. In addition to the in house productions WRG also is promoting several Country and Pop Artists such as Del Reeves, Big Al Downing, the Shaun Nielsen Show the Amazing Kreskin, Red Sovine and Bobby Rydell.

The recently formed Concert Division is headed by Lee Donoghue, former contracting agent, who has been associated with the company since 1969. The new division's first concert promotions have opened to spectacular success with record breaking sell outs of international singing star Roger Whittaker's premiere concert tour in Florida. The Whittaker date in Orlando's Tupperware convention Center was sold out over two months in advance of its upcoming March 17th showdate.

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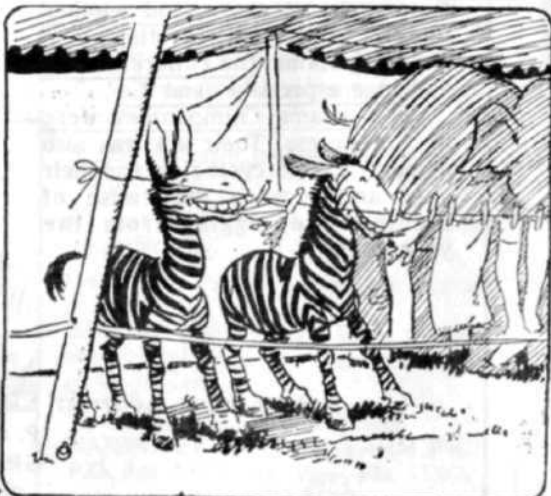
Whittaker's date at the St. Petersburg Bayfront Center sold out six weeks in advance and the Fort Lauderdale and Miami appearances by the singer of the "Last Farewell" are expected to be sell outs, also in record time.

Upcoming concert dates include four shows with Country Artist Gene Watson in February. Watson and his group Farewell Party have had six consecutive hits in the Country Field and his current release "Nothing Sure Looked Good On You" is currently in the top 10 nationally.

In the planning stage are Concert dates with such artists as Harry Chapin, Tom T. Hall, Lacy J. Dalton, who was nominated for best new artist of 1979 by the Country Music Association, and Dr. Hook.

Having been a leader in presenting shows suitable for family entertainment, WRG Enterprises intends to continue promoting artists that have appeal to the entire family.

## WASHINGTON TUBBS II



# REPORT

## WILLIAM KAY CIRCUSES

Acts for three William Kay produced Shrine Circuses were recently announced by William Kay. The show dates are: Feb. 16-17, Zor Temple at Madison, Wisc., Dane County Coliseum; March 8-9, Cyprus Temple at Albany, N.Y., New Scotland Ave. Armory, and April 11-13, Tigris Temple at Syracuse, N.Y., War Memorial bldg.

Acts as announced are: Hugo Zacchini, cannon; Edca Schmitt, tigers; Lisa Jordan, aerial; Vidbel elephants; The Jordanas, upside down unicycle; Randy & Sylvia, perch; The Hernandez Troupe, teeterboard; Mister Rolla Bolla; Roman Schmitt elephants; Tongo, Almost Human Gorilla; The Gutis Family, Jungle comedy; Christina's chimps; The Flying Lanes; Harry James, balancing; Zoppe's Rhesus Monkeys; Cook's Comedy Car; Navarro's cyclists; The Dolly Sisters, aerial; The Wainwrights, trampoline; Miss Diane, aerial; The Albanis, motorcycles; Johnny Luxem, big wheel; Sharon's Afghans.

Clown Alley will feature: Joe Sherman, Maxo, John MacKay, Freddy Shrebets, "Bubba" Hastings, Mike Naughton,

The band will be directed at Madison by John Malett, while Bill Pruyn will direct the band at

## On The Cover

This week's cover photo is reportedly one that was taken on the old Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus during its unloading operations in a mid-western town. The date of the photo is not known.

both Albany and Syracuse.

William Kay handled the promotion at Madison and will also work at Syracuse. Kris Kenkel did the promotion at Albany.

Hugo Zacchini will not make the Albany date because of the building limitations. All acts will be presented one act at a time which makes it possible to see the entire show without fillers or end ring distractions.

## PEOPLE

JOHN OWEN, circus man and concessionaire, suffered a heart attack on Feb. 5th and was hospitalized at the Manatee Memorial Hospital in Bradenton, Fla. He is improving daily and would enjoy letters and cards. Write him at his home address: 3720 - 14th St., West, Lot 58, Bradenton, Fla. - 33505.

## By Crane



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**JOHN HURDLE**, who has been curator of the Ringling Museum of the Circus, at Sarasota, Fla., since Sept. 1979, has announced his retirement. Until a new curator is named, **JOHN DANIELS**, who has handled administrative duties at the Museum, has been appointed to handle administrative and operational duties at the museum.

**HAPPY BUSTER**, the Clown, worked a recent circus date at a mall in Galveston, Texas.

**DANNY DANIELS**, Comic, Organist, Juggler, is in his 23rd consecutive week at "Sicilian Village" in Mt. Clemens, Mich., and has just signed contracts for an additional 16 weeks there. Occasionally he adds an act now and then to his shows.

**GUNTHER GEBEL-WILLIAMS** won raves as the star of the Ringling Red Unit in a review in the Sarasota (Fla) paper on Jan. 26th.



**JOHN LEWIS** and **GENE RYAN**, former publishers of "Midway" weekly will be touring with Hoxie Bros. Circus this season.

**HOLVECK & CO.**, magic/illusionists, worked at the Marina Hotel in Las Vegas before jumping to Jacksonville, Fla., to open with Showtime Follies for the current season.

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## MAILBAG

... from Jon Friday

Kindly retract the false statement made by Billy Barton in the May 28, 1979, No. 22 Circus Report - "The Carden-Johnson Circus . . have added still more for 1980, including Grand Rapids in January . . ."

The 1980 Saladin Shrine Circus in Grand Rapids, Mich., was entirely produced by Hubert Castle International Three-Ring Circus, Inc., as it has been for many years.

C-J did produce a small show at Kalamazoo, Mich., June 4-10, 1979.



### SPECIAL SHOW

Oler Productions, of Sarasota, Fla., produced the entertainment program for the 1980 Holiday Rambler Caravan held in Sarasota at the end of January.

Acts appearing on the show were: Paulette Braun with baton twirling; Bobbo & Bobbino, clowns; The Van Noys, comedy bikes; The Goodwin's chimps; Don Phillips & Co., unicycle/juggling; Bonnie & Earl, vent and music. Florine Oler provided the organ music for the show.

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**IMMEDIATELY** — A copy of **KING POLE** June (Summer) 1979 issue.

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## Notice

Not long ago I had an inquiry about some King Bros. Circus material. Because of some problems here at home the letter has become lost, and as a result I do not know who to contact. If the person can contact me again I have the circus forms that he wanted.

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## REPORT

### HOXIE QUARTERS

The Hoxie Bros. Circus is busy these days, preparing for the coming season, with workmen using paint brushes and generally refurbishing the entire show. The new season opens the latter part of March, in Florida.

James "Dutch" Crawford is training new ponies and adding new tricks to his elephant routines.

Thomas "Stash" Quinn is in charge of the working crew, giving all of the trucks a new facelift. They are painted white with a light purple stripe.

Jose Diaz is in charge of the canvas crew, and this year the show will be using the traditional two pole round big top, 140 foot round.

No cat act will be carried on the show this season. However, a strong program has already been lined up for the tour.

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## ATTENTION

The former Big John Strong Circus will operate under the title "Fiesta de Circo" this year. Big John still owns the show but has leased it to the Hedwig Equipment Co., who will tour the show in the western states.

Officers of the Hedwig Equipment Co., are: Ed Russell, president, Bill Schreiber, vice president, Enoch Brafford, superintendent and Chris Kennington, secretary/treasurer.

The show will hold rehearsals at its Yucaipa, Ca. winterquarters on March 8-9, with the CFA being invited on the second day. The full year's tour will start March 13th at Corona, Calif.

All people and department heads scheduled for the tent show are requested to call Ed Russell at: 213 - 833 - 2551.

All those scheduled for Big John's indoor show operation should call him at: 714 - 797 - 0232.

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# REPORT

## THE CLOWNS ... by Bill Smith (Dr. Strange)

While in Montclair, Calif., (Feb. 6th) I visited the Circus Vargas show lot and almost immediately was introduced to Boss Clowns Phil Shear and Paul Niebauer (Philippe and Paulo). They in turn introduced me to Dale Longmire who joined Circus Vargas after five years with RBBB's Red Unit, Mike Brevig, Blossom Sharp, Bob Hiscox and Danny Mason.

The first impression I got was of pure respect. The costumes were fabulous with personalities to match. Using bright velvets and jewels in their wardrobe told me immediately that these men were professionals of the highest caliber.

I attended the afternoon and evening show. The first skit featured Phil Shear as an animal trainer, in the center ring. The animals were four clown operated giraffes. They were put through their paces in a graceful but funny manner. The climax came when Phil laid down on the ground and the giraffes walked over his body, with the last one sitting upon Phil.

Just before intermission all three rings were fill-

ed clowns and magic, which is my favorite part since that's the way I earn my livelihood. In ring one Mike, Blossom and Bob perform a chair suspension that is not only good magic but it was executed well and received much applause. In the center ring Dale performed the color changing plumes and Danny presented the mutilated parasol. In ring three Paul and Phil did a fast and beautiful Square Circle production, performing in Chinese costumes, again showing their ability to look the part they were portraying for the audience.

The final clown spot in the show featured a plant growing contest. In ring one a potted plant was watered and it grew about a foot each time it was watered. In ring three an identical plant prospered from the same attention. The jealousy between the plant growers eventually causes a fight which ends with a 100 ft. shirt being pulled off Phil and it stretches the entire length of the preferred seating section.

I enjoyed the entire Circus Vargas performance very much, but being in magic I had to write about the clowns and their excellent work.

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# Notice

MICHAEL CHARLES ROBINSON, the son of SHIELAGH and CHUCK ROBINSON, whose parents toured on the Mills Bros. Circus and other shows, his mother was a Digger Pugh girl in Spain, will be getting married on April 5th, at 1 p.m., St. Thomas' Church, Douglas, Isle of Man.

They are anxious to contact Chuck Robinson and would appreciate any information that can let them locate him prior to the wedding.

Send any information to: Pat Cooper, P. O. Box 64020, Vancouver, BC, Canada U5K 4W3.



RON URBAN will reportedly have his ice show at the Storytown Park in Lake George, N.Y. for the summer season.

SMOKEY JONES' baby elephant "Tika" was sold to the Gatti Productions and will be presented in the American Continental Circus performance by GARY JOHNSON.

# MAILBAG

... from Mabel Robertson

As a reader of your Circus Report, and a fan of the Bale Family, I think it only fair that the magazine give credit when it is due.

I read in Mr. Barton's column that Elvin Bale is a Double Silver Clown Winner (Not so). I was in Monte Carlo in 1977 when Elvin Bale was presented with a Gold Clown, the Prince himself presented Elvin with this award.

I was also in Monte Carlo this winter to see Elvin presented with the coveted Silver Clown, we should be proud that such talent represents the United States.

Elvin Bale has built a beautiful new home in Venice, Fla., and both the Gold and Silver Clown can be seen at his home.

I would also like to report that the Franconi Duo (now with Circus Vargas) did not win a Silver Clown, but did come home with a consolation prize.

So, lets be truthful about who won what! I am a great believer in fair play!

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Mar. 7 - 9, Greenville, SC - Memorial Auditorium

# SPECIAL

## ACTRESS MEETS TRAPEZE ARTIST AND FLIPS HEAD OVER HEELS

... by Al and Joanne Martinez

*(The following article appeared in the Feb. 16, 1980 issue of TV Guide, along with two color pictures of Lee Meriwether, plus a front cover illustration).*

Lee Meriwether was riding an elephant, and Tito Gaona was flipping around in the air 30 feet off the ground when she looked up and he looked down. It was what is known in television as a moment, a time of violin music and close-up shots, and what in real life is known as love. Their gazes met, however fleetingly, and now Lee wants to run away with the circus. Well, more specifically, with Tito. It could happen to anyone.

The occasion was a 1978 charity performance of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, for which Tito performs as an aerialist. ("The best in the world," says Lee proudly). She was on the elephant as her contribution to the charity effort, a kind of elephant mahout. As someone would remark later, it was evident from the start that mahout belonged to Tito.

Whether or not they met precisely that way (some pragmatists contend they merely met over coffee backstage among the zebras and the dancing bears), the result was significant for the former Miss America.

In order to marry Tito (they've announced their engagement) and travel with the circus, Meriwether is thinking of leaving the long-running CBS series *Barnaby Jones*, a drowsily low-key detective show in which she plays Barnaby's (Buddy Ebsen's) daughter-in-law, and assistant, Betty Jones.

She wants to devote time to her new production company, Four Reels, plus occasional movies and a permanent Tito. Episodic television gets in the way of all that. "Leaving *Barnaby* would not be an easy decision to make," she says, taking a break from silming on a sound stage at Hollywood's Samuel Goldwyn Studios. Moments earlier she had been playfully roughhousing with a member of the crew, and before that she had been showing family pictures to Ebsen.

"I've been with the show since the beginning, eight years, and we're a lovely family. But now there are other things in my life. There is a time to stay and a time to move on."

"Lee is above all things loyal," Mark Levin her agent since 1960, observes. "If you doubt that, figure this: how many people in this business keep the same agent for 20 years?"

She's known around Barnaby as "our Cheerleader," partly because she led the cheers (and bought the team shirts) for a studio softball game, but mostly because of her upbeat attitude on the set. She bounces from dressing room to set, gives a grip a playful punch in the stomach and hugs costar Mark Shera before taking her place in front of the cameras.

She is dressed in jeans, a loose blouse and sneakers, which do not for an instant detract from her patrician good looks. The years have been good to Lee Meriwether.

Executive producer Philip Saltzman praises her for never having thrown a tantrum and never having missed a filming date in the eight years of *Barnaby*. "That's nothing," says Levin. "When she was doing a series in the 60's, she was so pregnant she couldn't even sit down. We had to prop her up to rest. But she still didn't miss a show."

Lee is hoping that with her own production company she'll get a chance at playing comedy. "Surprised?" she asks over her shoulder, bouncing off to the set. "So are a lot of people until they see me do it. Then they say, 'Hey, you're really funny!'"

"It's a question of preconceived notions. Back at the beginning, everyone had me figured as an empty-headed beauty queen who couldn't walk and talk at the same time, much less act." A director once wanted to deny her a role for just that reason, but agreed, at length, to let her read for the part. He ended up hiring her. "I've been a beauty-queen biggot!" he shouted. "She's perfect."

Lee's desire to do comedy (she's done some spots on other shows) may not come to fruition but if determination has anything to do with it, a writer has observed, "She'll end up being both Laverne and Shirley."

Los Angeles-born and Phoenix-raised, Lee was only 10 when she announced to her mother that she wanted to be an actress.

"I said that was just fine," Ethel Meriwether, now a good-humored 76, recalls. "But you can't always take those things too seriously, you know. At one time she said she wanted to be an Episcopalian nun."

Never in those earlier years, however, did she ever indicate a desire to run away with the cir-

(Continued on Page 21)

**BILLY BARTON (Continued)**

"Sneak Preview" at Roberts Arena Jan. 12, followed that with the Holiday Rambler Show in the same building Jan. 23rd and of course rejoined All Star when it reopened its season Jan. 26th at Thomaston, Ga.

**CORRECTION:** A typographical error in my Jan. 14th column in my "Book Section" created a misspelling of the title I so highly recommended. It is **THE SAVIOR . . . NOT "The Saviour"!** Get it! It's Great!

**SNAPSHOTS:** The Beatty-Cole Circus with a greatly enhanced program reopens its season in early March at Deland, Fla. . . Producer **DAVID SMART** had a meeting with **JOE BAUER** in Florida the week of Jan. 21st, winging in from Merrie Aulde England. . . **DENNIS STEVENS** writes the *Sarasota Trailer Park* in which he has been living since first coming to that area for Ringling years and years ago, is due to disappear in the name of progress - the new Interstate apparently is coming through . . . **MY-IMMBA'S**

**BABOONS** will play Benson's Animal Park in New Hampshire from May 26th thru Sept. 1st, booked through **BETTER BOOKING** - the girls say they look to have a "Banner Year". . . **HARRY BLACKSTONE, Jr.** with an opulently produced *Magic Extravaganza*, did boffo bix in Chicago recently and is crossing into the East for a Broadway run soon . . . It's a really **TOP NOTCH** show. . . Actor-singer **JOHN DAVID-SON** is replacing **MIKE DOUGLAS**. . . **FELD's** into TV hot and heavy with three vid-specs this month: Highlights of **RBBB, SIEGRID & ROY** special and Highlights of Holiday and Ice Follies . . . **JIMMY** and **AURELIA HALL** recent visitors to Sarasota. . . **LARRY JOYNER** sold his cat act to the *Jungle Wonders Circus*. . . Rumorhazzit **BUCKLES** will put smaller bulls with the talented **ANNA MAY** elephant and play spot dates this year. . . Other rumors: that **MELODY BRUNO** got married and is reportedly on Vargas. . . **MURILLO** balancing act worked the Anaheim

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**Miscellaneous**

The Wenatchee Youth Circus will tour in Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington this year. It will be the show's 28th consecutive season on the road.

Sports Show. . . **ROLLING DIAMONDS** skated through the one in D.C.

**WONDERING . . .** what happened to that TV movie featuring Circus Vargas which was scheduled to be televised last year and has yet to be seen on the tube? . . . Why something isn't done with that old **ZACCHINI CANNON** sitting in California's recent rain and mud out near San Bernardino just rotting and rusting away . . . Jim Swafford thinks it should be in a museum and I agree.

SEE you down the road, luvs.



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**LEE MERIWETHER (Continued)**

cus. That came later, thanks to Tito, a charity performance, and, in some measure, an annual special called "Circus of the Stars."

After meeting Tito at the charity performance, Lee came back with her daughter Lesley to see him again. And as they watched him gambol on the trapeze, it became obvious that Tito was happy about that. Lesley poked her mother in the ribs and whispered "He's looking at you, Mom."

Romance bloomed to such a degree that now Lee even works out with Tito's aerialist team. "I'm not good enough to be in the act as a regular," she says, "except maybe on a Saturday afternoon when everything is kind of laid-back. Never go to a circus on a Saturday afternoon."

Somewhat coincidental to her meeting Tito (destiny, if you prefer), "Circus of the Stars" asked Lee to perform. "Sure!" she replied brightly, not even certain what the program was. She thought they wanted her to do drama. It wasn't until later that she discovered they wanted her to walk the high wire.

It was before Tito's influence in her life and no one had ever told her what it took to do a high

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wire act.

"The first time I was on the wire, I took a step and slipped," Lee says, remembering with a wince. "I hit the net feet-first and couldn't move for three days."

Miss Cheerleader, however, is not without grit. Still determined to be a part of the show, she switched to an act with actor Peter Fonda, who rode a motorcycle from the ground up a cable 30 feet up.

Lee's job was to swing back and forth under the moving motorcycle on a trap bar. In theory it worked fine, but halfway up, a safety harness unsnapped.

"I held on as hard as I could and kept trying to look graceful. All I could think of was what

(Continued on Next Page)

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**LEE MERIWETHER (Continued)**

they'd told me in training: 'Pretty hands, pretty hands, point your toes . . .'

Anyone else might have let the whole thing go at that. But not Lee. Asked twice more to appear on "Circus of the Stars", she not only did a high wire act, but also was a "flyer" on the trapeze - one of those people who are flipped back and forth between strong men.

'I didn't fall those times,' she adds unnecessarily. "Of course, by then I had the best help in the world, Tito."

Now she is content to let Tito do the circus performing for the most part, although content might not be the right word. "I get so nervous watching him," she says, "my hands are slippery with perspiration when I applaud. Maybe that's why I spend a lot of time backstage just sewing up tights and things."

Lee's two daughters from a previous marriage - Lesley, 16, and Kyle, 19 - are both following in Mom's footsteps. Lesley is training with the circus and appeared in "Circus of the Stars" with Lee, and Kyle is studying acting and appeared in a Barnaby episode.

(Continued on Next Page)

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## In Memoriam

MARVIN HULICK (79), a former circus man and a member of the Fred Robinson Tent CFA, died at Sioux Falls, S.D., early this month. He traveled with carnivals and the old Dailey Bros. Circus, working as a clown, training dogs and with the elephants. Since coming off the road he amassed an extensive collection of circus programs, photos, etc.

JUNIOR, formerly of the New York City S.P. C.A., died in New York on Sept. 14, 1979. He was a friend to many circus performers.

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## LEE MERIWETHER (Continued)

Lee has always seen herself in the mother-role says makeup man and longtime friend Scott Hamilton. "She's very close to her girls."

Her brief and very physical circus career was in some ways not unusual. Lee jogs and works out on bars at home. "She's no hothouse flower," Buddy Ebsen draws, remembering the time Lee rode horseback with her two daughters over the hills on his California ranch.

She likes to hear that. "It takes years," a friend has said, "to shake a Miss America stigma - that you're a pretty face with an empty head and a fragile behind."

Satisfied that she has shaken the stigma, Lee Would like to get on with other things now, the most immediate of which is traveling with Tito to Japan and Australia.

Then she'll have to decide what to do about her role as Betty on Barnaby Jones, if it continues. And after that, there's her own production company and, of course, married life with Tito.

Few who know her fear that Lee's life will ever turn dull. "My folks used to tell me that if you want to get anywhere in this world you have to work for it," she says.

"I guess the message took, because if I don't have a goal, I get lazy. I hate being lazy."



(The following information is from the *Grand Rapids, Mich., Press*, of Feb. 10, 1980).

This year's Saladin Shrine Circus at Grand Rapids, Mich. (Jan. 18-27) was the show's 50th anniversary and raised more than \$90,000 with most of that helping to support hospitals for crippled and burn victims.

Ed DeYoung, manager of the circus, said the show drew more than 74,000 people for its 22 performances, the longest date the Shrine has ever held.

DeYoung said the crowd totaled about 13,000 more than the highest attendance figure of previous years.

The Circus Daddies also had more handicapped persons as their guests this year, with some 6,522 in attendance.

The crowds liked the show and the refreshments Young reported. Some 15,750 boxes of popcorn were sold, along with 14,500 cotton candy cones and 13,600 soft drinks. All items sold for 50c each.

DeYoung said the Shrine paid the city more than \$20,000 for rental and extra services

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