

BACK YARD

Volume V, Issue #91

May 15, 2000

AN INTIMATE CHAT WITH SUE LENZ SARASOTA CFA CONVENTION

By Cherie Valentine

(Reprinted with permission)

I was late to the Ladies Luncheon, having gone for a visit to the Rosaires! Luckily, Sheelagh Jones and Mary Jane Foote, my roomies, had saved me a place at their table. The food was fantastic and I hurriedly ate mine and got out my tape recorder for the talk by our speaker, Sue Lenz. It has taken me over 9 hours to transcribe all of this and well worth it, to bring you her thoughts and memories of chimp training over many years.

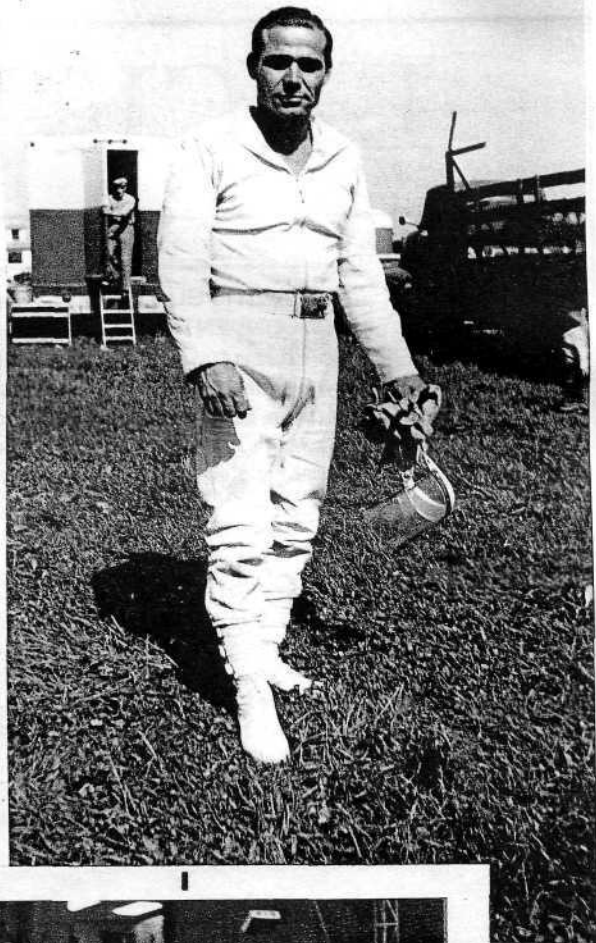
"I was born into the circus in England. My mother had a cat act which seems to be now all the rage and I guess Mother was before her time because I have got all the photos, over 50 years ago and she married into a circus family. I was left behind for schooling with my Grandmother. I was always interested in the circus-I've always been fond of animals and have always worked with them.

The very first thing I ever did in England was the old fashioned Johnny pony. In England-sometimes the Ringmaster used to do it with a clown-to get the pony to jump over a hurdle-3 times and the clown would make a bet that he could do it and I couldn't. I'd get the pony and he'd jump twice and refuse for the third time and then the clown could do it and, of course, the pony would jump and that was my introduction into the circus. That was something all circuses had in the 50s.

I knew then that the circus was going to be my life. The first thing that I did with my Mother and Father-and my Father was a bareback rider-was a cowboy-western act and rough-riding, so I worked there. And then, I worked a dog act and you know when you're young and growing up in England, there is so many opportunities with a family circus-and you get to ride the elephants, which was wonderful. I never wanted to go into the air. So I worked in the maypole horse act, which was with 6 girls, with a ribbon from the plume of the horse."

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**HAPPY BIRTHDAY
TO BOBBY GIBBS**

**You've been my friend
for over 25 years.**

**I've enjoyed your
friendship and I have learned
many things from you.**

**You've been there for me,
through the good times and bad.**

**I am proud to call you
my very best friend.**

KEN "TURTLE" BENSON

Chatting With Sue Lenz.....

And then, I had a pigeon act and we went with the Bertram Mills Circus in England and it was there that I met my present husband, Rudi. I was married before-we were childhood sweethearts and unfortunately, that doesn't make a good marriage because you are like brother and sister and when you marry, the relationship really doesn't change. But we are still friends today. It was only through him that we went to a circus where I had a pigeon act and was riding and presenting horses.

It was quite difficult, having being brought up on a family circus where there were a lot of people my own age and then, when we went to, sort of, the big time, there was class distinction and I was very lonely. And I think I missed the family-type atmosphere. We finally both went our own ways.

I was booked with the pigeon act-the Hippodrome in England-and Rudi had been with Bertram Mills for a long time. He had worked originally with his brother with the chimps and then his brother left the circus and went into Holland to start a factory with his sister and Bertram Mills asked Rudi if they bought him all new chimps would he train a new chimp act for them-which he would jump to the opportunity because he had always been in sort of his brother's shadow-and there he had the opportunity of doing it, which he did, very successfully, for twelve years.

While we were there, we decided that we would start our own chimp act-the winter of 1963.

We went to the bosses and told them what we were going to do and they said they would like Rudi to continue for another year on the show-that would be 1964. And in that time, they gave us permission to buy our own chimpanzees and to train them on the show, which was a wonderful opportunity because we were starting out and we had an income and plus it was very, very good because we had a place to train. The very first one we every bought-Rudi was booked in Belgium in the winter of '63-'64-and while we were there, we started to scout for chimps of our own and we went to this

place in Brussels where Rudi thought most of the chimps were Bertram's and they only had one chimp there and it was a female and Rudi didn't want a female because he had had one or two that had not been good. We found out afterwards, it doesn't make any difference whether they are male or female, but the initial period when you have one, and it's a female and not good, then you kind of generalize and say, "I don't want one."

I fell in love with this chimp and I have a ring which was left to me by my Aunt and Sally fell in love with this ring. I kept going up to the cage and all she wanted to do was play with this ring and Rudi said, "No, I'm not buying her-it's a female and I don't want any females." So we didn't buy her and so the next day I said to him, "You know, she's so nice." And I said, you know, "Why not?" He said, "Well, we'll go back and have a look." So we go back and she sees us and she screams bloody murder and that was it! We were taken and we bought her. So, she was the very first chimp that we ever bought for ourselves.

We had her flown over to England and that was in January of 1964. She turned out to be the most wonderful chimp we had ever had. Of all the ones we've had, she was our mainstay. When we had new ones that were a little awkward, you know, when they were very young, they need discipline from another source and she was the one there. She was always watching, cultivating them to be performers. She was what we used to call our second trainer because she was wonderful. She always kept them in line-she was always the boss.

We've had a lot of chimps over a period of time. We came to America in 1968 and were with Ringling Bros. for 12 years. When we think back-you know, in the 1969 season-the amount of animals that were on the show then-when you think of what there are today-unfortunately, when these animal activists make it so difficult... At that time we had 6 chimps and the ring on our left was Jack Rodine, he had 5 and Mickey Antelek was on the other side, he had 3.

(Continued on Page 7)

American Animal Trainer Magazine

By Mike Cecere

Greetings my friends, I am here to give my review of the new journal, American Animal Trainer Magazine. In one word, EXCELLENT!

This is a Must Have and Must Read for anyone interested in the trained animals. A unique approach to the interaction between humans and animals rarely seen in print before, with real trainers sharing their experiences with a wide variety of wild and domestic animals.

More importantly, to many readers of the Back Yard, there is ample room given to Circus and Zoo/Park trainers familiar to many animal act enthusiasts. In its premiere issue in January, (still available) featured was living circus legend, John Herriott, patriarch of the Herriott family with a great story interview not seen before and several glorious photos both in black & white and COLOR!

As well as big easy to read print. Also featured was Tiger trainer, Brunon Blaszek, Equestrian Ellian Rosaire and definitive Elephant Experience by the legendary Elephant Trainer/Zoo Director, Frank Thompson.

And that was just the first issue!!

Each issue covers some forty pages on slick stock, with nice glossy photos that really does credit to the profession of people who dedicated their lives to the benefit of animals.

This especially would be of interest to fans as well as professionals as it gives a great POSITIVE image of the Animal Training profession. Published by a well-known Animal Trainer, Catherine Crawmer and her talented staff in scenic West Sand Lake, New York, in a quarterly format, it is, in my opinion, an incredible value for the mere \$28 yearly subscription rate!

I know there are a lot of you out there who have said, "I was wondering about that magazine." Well, wonder No Longer, Send For It! See their address at the right of this page. Write Today! God Bless America! Mike. (Thanks, Mike. Mozart loves it!)

Memories of Mayme Ward: Jim Royal writes, "Back in the mid-60s, I used to drive Jack La Pearl from his home in Wheaton, Illinois to Baraboo in the winter to visit Mayme. At that time, she lived in a house behind the Museum, across the river and was working on wardrobe for the parade. It was a delight for a young guy just getting into the business to hear those two cut up jackpots. She was a very sweet lady." The grave marker fund for Mayme is coming along very well. I would like to thank all of you that have sent in donations. No matter what you might want to give, it is very appreciated!



American Animal Trainer Magazine

Quarterly publication
for professionals

\$28 for 4 issues

All Species ** Color Photos

www.animaltrainermagazine.com

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West Sand Lake, NY 12196

Phone: (518) 479-3018

Passing Of Our Circus Friends

***Louise Theron**, 79, died April 23 in Sarasota, Florida. The Therons had a comedy bicycle act, with comedy, and were on Ringling in 1946. Her husband of 57 years is **Guy**. He has been associated with Ringling in recent years. Their daughter, **Germaine Knie**, is married to the owner of the **Knies Circus** in Austria. Thanks to **Jackie LeClaire** for letting me know.

***Frances T. Bradbury**, 78, died April 26 in Naples, Florida. She is survived by her husband of almost 52 years, **Joseph T. Bradbury**, formerly of Athens, Ga.; daughters, **Betty Bradbury & Kitty Glickman**; son-in-law, **Daniel Glickman**; grandchildren, **Josh and Jake Glickman**. Mrs. Bradbury was born in Carrollton, Ga. and attended public schools there and was a graduate of West Georgia College in Carrollton. She was employed during WW II and the immediate post-war years by the Atlanta Army Depot, Forest Park, Ga. (now Ft. Gillem).

Pallbearers were **Richard J. Reynolds III, Richard J. Reynolds IV, Michael Reynolds, Timothy Reynolds** (Richard's 3 sons), **Tom Bradbury and Andy Bradbury** (Joe's nephews).

Circus fans in attendance were: **Ray Gronso, Frank Mims, Richard Reynolds, Gordon Taylor and Marlin Weaver and Fred Pfening III**. (Thanks to **Richard** for sending this in.)

***Martin Berthold**, 91, died March 13 in Sarasota. He performed on Ringling as **Bert Hold**. Many of you may have past his **Holt Motel** on Route 41 in Sarasota. He was born February 5, 1909, in Freiburg, Germany. He is survived by daughter, **Chris**, who also performed on Ringling as an aerialist and son, **Martin**, and a grandson. **Bert** would hang by his teeth and juggle at the same time.

NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS
Maury Mead writes "The Gollmar-Moeller-Ringling Tent 100's Opening Day banquet was a delicious success! It was again nice to meet the Big

Top performers as well as jackpot with circus fan friends. The featured speaker, **Dolly Jacobs**, delivered an excellent talk about herself and the Circus school she is involved in. The GMR Tent nearly every year has relevant and unusual table centerpieces. This year, the pieces were miniature trapezes with a cut-out of **Dolly** on the rings.

The Circus World Museum Big Top show is strong, with returning clowns, **Greg & Karen DeSanto**. Their lemonade gag is a scream. The trapeze performance by the **Marinoffs** is nearly an unbelievable demonstration of strength and grace.

The returning **Rosaire** dog act is a study of energy on the part of **David Rosaire**-it's funny, too! **Sasha** is very good on the rola bola and slack wire. His slack wire tea cup act is reminiscent of **Dieter Tasso**. The **Barreda** elephants, with **Jorge and Lou Ann Jacobs-Barreda** (and the kids) are just as spectacular as ever.

Spanish web opened with a new, colorful routine by **Julie and Emily Parkinson**. Singing Ringmaster, **David SaLoutos**, is at his inimitable best. The **Razzle-Dazzle** vaudeville-type show in the Hippodrome is also very good, with clowning, illusions, circus music and **T.J. Howell's** juggling and unicycling. There is also a kid's miniature train on the grounds-this ought to be a hit with the younger set. (Thanks, **Maury**-please write if anyone else visits Circus World Museum this summer).

NEWS FROM CARSON & BARNES CIRCUS

Their new Big Top went up in the air for the first time May 10! Fans will be anxious to see it. Kansas has had good business and the weather has been fairly kind, although **Chanute** had mud for the visiting circus! The elephants, payloader and a big, hired-tractor were busy getting vehicles on the lot and in position. **Jaime Garcia** and the Big Top crew went to work right away when the new tent arrived.

Everyone will be anxious to see **Little Jennie** perform in center ring with her best friend, **Tim Frisco** and in **Chanute**, she had a small "hill" in her front yard and was having a grand time playing on it! (Thanks to **Jim Royal** for writing.)

CHATting WITH SUE LENZ....

So, you would have 14 chimps in one display. You will never see that again! Those days, unfortunately, are over. And when you think-we had 3 cage acts then, 3 dog acts-so many animals-and now it's just dwindling down. Unfortunately, it just seems that the activists now, they are winning, but I guess there just is nothing that we can do much anymore about it. Getting back to chimps.

As I say, as they matured, we retired them to a lot of different places, we have a lot in West Palm Beach. In 1964, we retired ourselves and 4 of our chimps went to a wonderful place just outside of Austin, 3 females and a male, which they have since had 3 babies and the people are wonderful there. They phone me up and tell me I'm a Grandmother again! And I've got another due-so they have wonderful places. They have 2 cages which are approximately 60 feet square, 20 feet high and they've got trees in there and swings in it. And they tunnel them down like the old-fashioned tunnels into a big feeding place at night which is air-conditioned and heated. It's just outside Austin, so they have good weather down there. We were so delighted-we looked for 18 months to find somewhere when we decided we were going to retire. We've been to so many places, we've worked so many wonderful circuses. We just felt that things were getting harder-the expenses were getting higher with all the equipment you had to keep purchasing, and the price of chimps.

When we came over here it was \$600 and now they are \$25,000! So, you know, the actual expenses-you can't make that money back anymore, it's just ridiculous. You can see why that there are no new ones coming in. As I say, we were very happy with the place where they are, they retired beautifully, so we didn't want to part with Sally because..we estimate she was born in 1960 and she was quite small for her age and being she was the only one which was born in the jungle-which they are usually smaller than those born in captivity-so we always gave her a birthday every January the first-that was her birthday.

All the others did have birth certificates. We have a

big ape house built behind out house. It's about 30x20, with one partition down the center so when we had the smaller ones we could separate them. But, of course, with just her, it was just not fair-so we kept another one just for a companion for her. It was our intention that if anything happened to her that we would send him to Texas.

We noticed last year that..she was always a big, huge chimp, very muscular and the boss and her weight was 160 to 167..so she was a big girl..and we noticed that she was losing weight and she had tumors come up, one on her arm and one on her elbow. They didn't seem to bother her-it was obviously something that shouldn't be there. And what can you do?

It's a very difficult thing-it was our child-and we could see she started to lose weight and we could see like all the muscle part, which they have around the neck and their palms, was all going. We said we couldn't believe where Sally was so big and there is this little old lady sitting there now.

Unfortunately, she lost 33 pounds, so we knew something drastic was going on and unfortunately in February, we found her dead, which totally devastated Rudi. He is just starting to come back to normal now, if that's the right word. We hardly spoke to each other for 3 days. It was just..what do you do? We have a wonderful vet who was very, very nice to us and made all the arrangements for her cremation and everything. Then when this was all over, what do we do with Roger?

That was the male. Because you can't keep just one, that isn't fair. So we called the people in Texas and they said they really didn't want him now because they've got 9 chimps and to bring another male-just putting him in isn't that easy-and they said if you can't find any place else, we'll take him. So we thought we'd see what other options we had. And fortunately, my cousin, Barrie Sloan-I think you're all familiar with him-he's with Clyde Beatty Circus-he was for many years-he had connections with a small zoo outside Orlando.

(Continued on Page 10)

RINGLING RED: Columbus-5/17-21; Peoria, IL-5/24-28; Toledo-5/31-6/4; Memphis-6/9-11; Little Rock-6/14-18; Lafayette, LA-6/22-25; San Antonio-6/28-7/2; Houston-7/14-23; Colorado Springs-8/16-20; Wichita-8/24-27; Kansas City-9/6-10.

RINGLING BLUE: Hersey, PA-5/17-21; Springfield, MA-5/24-25; Albany, NY-5/27-29; Wilkes-Barre, PA-5/31-6/4; Lexington, KY-6/8-11; Austin, TX-6/15-18; Phoenix-6/22-7/2; Las Vegas-7/5-9; Oakland, CA-8/16-20; San Jose-8/23-27; San Francisco-8/30-9/4; Sacramento-9/6-10.

BIG APPLE CIRCUS: Queens, NY-Cunningham Park: 5/11-5/21; Brookville, NY-Long Island Univ.: 5/26-6/4; Chicago-Arlington Intl: 6/10-25; Charlestown, RI-7/2-10; Hanover, NH-7/13-18

Barnum's Kaleidoscope: Cleveland-Nautica Complex-5/13-6/11.

Carson & Barnes: 5/18-Harrison, MO; 5/19-Warrensburg; Sadalia-5/20; 5/21-Marshall; 5/22-Boonville; 5/23-Jefferson City; 5/24-Sullivan; 5/25-St. Peters; 5/26-27-Alton, IL; 5/28-Litchfield.

Sterling-Reid Circus: 5/16-17-Rapid City, SD; 5/18-Pierre, SD; 5/20-21-Yankton

UniverSoul Circus: North Randall: 5/24-28; Columbus: 5/31-6/4; Cincinnati: 6/7-11; Indianapolis: 6/12-16

Tarzan Zerbini Circus-Wilmington, MA: 5/15-21
Hubler Circus: Berea, OH-6/17

Roberts Bros Circus: Morgantown, WV-5/29; West Newton-5/30; Waynesburg-5/31; East Liverpool, OH-6/1; St. Clairsville-6/2; Dover-6/3; Zanesville-6/4.

Circus City Festival Opens-Peru, IN-7/15; Circus Parade-7/22

Wenatchee Youth Circus: Lake Sammamish, WA-6/3-4; Fairfield-6/10; Marysville-6/17-18; Union Gap-6/24; Liberty Lake-7/1; Wenatchee-7/3-4; Orcas Island-7/8-9; Edmonds-7/11-12; Roche Harbor-7/14-16; Sequim-7/22-23; Renton-7/26; Moses Lake-7/29; Vancouver-8/4-13; Shoreline-8/20; Federal Way-8/26-27; Metaline Falls-9/2-3; Chelan County Fair-9/6-7

CHS Convention-Bloomington, IL Sept. 6-9

BACK YARD

is published twice monthly-(15th & 30th) by Cherie Valentine, 1522 Clinton Blvd., Bloomington, IL 61701. Phone: 309-828-0737. FAX: 309-438-5607.

E-mail: cdvalen@ilstu.edu. Subscription rates are \$30.00 per year, for 24 issues, within the USA. Advertising rates, payable in advance, with your copy, are: Full page \$30; Half page \$15; Quarter Page \$10; 1/8 page \$5. "The Fox," is written by Jenny Wallenda. Other material is written by Cherie Valentine, unless otherwise identified as to author. Comments by writers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher. Back Yard is a pro-circus, pro-animal publication, which supports the use of animals which are legally held and properly cared for, in the American circus.

News From Carson & Barnes Circus

Herb Ueckert stopped by for a 2 day visit on his return trip from the CFA Convention in Sarasota. He reported a good time was had by all and everyone especially enjoyed the excellent Hanneford produced circus. Herb was immediately pressed into service selling tickets and working on the front door, due to overflow business. Brother Dolphin also visited on his way back from Massachusetts.

New Ford trucks are popping up all over the lot. Even though Randy Fulton and John Moss tried to persuade Traci and Julio into following their lead, the Cavallinis held out for a Dodge. Baby Jennie is receiving great reviews everywhere we go. We look forward to her new poster that will be the center attraction of our new program. Look for the new program to be available in the near future.

You can send for a list of the items they have for sale, which includes shirts, videos, caps, buttons, key chains, license plates, pennants, route cards and the 1999 Route Book, for only \$15. Please write: PO Box 10, Hugo, OK 74743.

*From Heidi Herriott: "Kim Basinger, trumpeting her new movie, "I Dreamed of Africa" on the Today show also spoke out on one of her pet causes, the abuse of animals. Circus people point out that the film clip that she used on the show featured a circus elephant. In fact, several of the elephants and the lions used in the movie, which was shot in South Africa, reportedly came from a local circus. Kim plays real-life wildlife conservationist Kuki Gallmann.

News From Our Circus Friends

New CFA President **Harmen Lyzenga** and District Director **Vern Mendonca** spent two days on **Ringling Red** May 4 & 5 in Fayetteville, North Carolina. They also visited with CFAer **Billy Barrett**, the only fan in Fayetteville. "Billy showed us his great Southern Hospitality and showed us the area, you could not ask for a nicer fan. While there, we met Ringling Purchasing Agent, **David Baertschiger**, who I taught while in high school. I had no idea David was with the circus and had not seen him since 1988, what a small world.

Yesterday, May 8, Harmen and I spent the day on **Circus Gatti** in Anderson, California. We were able to reinstate the Gatti Family Tent and reinstate six members to the CFA."

Vern also writes, "I have asked **Denny Childers** if he would be willing to help out with our new CFA Web Site. And he very graciously accepted. So Denny will be the WebMaster for our new site. Visit at: www.circusfans.org. He has put a lot of work into it. After the Convention, the Web Committee, myself, **JoAnn Foster**, **Tom Dunwoody** and **Niles Calhoun** really got on the ball and started working." (And it looks great! Nice work, Denny)

Vincent "Vappo" Pagliano writes "I was on the Virginia State Fair date many years ago for **George Hanneford**. The **Lenz's** were on the show. As a clown, I always cleared the area when the chimps were out. Rudi would peek around the corner and give me the all clear sign so I could roam the back yard again.

One night, as the tented circus show was at the final point with young **George** in the ring with the elephants, I noticed a cloud around one of the trailer trucks. I quietly asked Rudi if that truck should be smoking. Rudi suddenly screamed... "FIRE!" All hell broke loose with horses tied to the truck and more smoke beginning to billow out the windows and doors.

Young **George** was on his way out of the tent and

jumped into action. He grabbed a huge water trough, used to water the horses and ran into the truck. **Billy Martin** was unaware of the calamity outside and went into the final announcements. The performers fell in line and hit their spots as they were announced. I hit the spot and heard Billy announce, "George Hanneford, Jr." Suddenly, as if he were Superman, George flew over my body to take back his spot.

Rudi Lenz was the human fire alarm that evening and George Hanneford, Jr. became the entire fire department. Me? I was there to record this for you to read! All the performers made the finale as if nothing was out of the ordinary. Once again, the show went on as it faced disaster square in the face and beat the odds for one more day.

Paul Holley sent in 2 reports: An April 22 article said **Barbara** and **Connie**, the 2 African elephants from **Culpepper & Merriweather Circus**, were sent to their winterquarters in Queen Creek, AZ to work with their trainer. Customers were disappointed that the elephants were not traveling with the circus. One lady said, "We came to see the elephants. The circus is not really that much without the elephants."

From Sante Fe 4/27: About 600 circus patrons were removed from the overcrowded big top of **Sterling & Reid** because the show was over sold. **Dordy Fornasari** said the circus refunded about \$2000-3000.

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From Al House 4/6: This morning in Freehold, NJ, Municipal Court, the charges brought by Dr. Stuart Goldberg, were dismissed against **Clyde Beatty Circus**. Goldberg, the Monmouth Co. SPCA officer, went to the circus to "investigate" that **Helen** was being overworked by pulling tiger cages from the tent to their trailer compound as well as giving rides. No direct evidence of creditable testimony or eye witnesses to the alleged acts were offered by the prosecution. The judge dismissed the case. Frank Carpentier, who defended the show, along with Renee Storey and Tim Orris from the circus, were elated over the judge's decision. It's a shame this whole thing had to be brought to court with such unreliable evidence.

CHATTING WITH SUE LENZ....

Barrie made a couple of phone calls for me and the owner came down and saw Roger and saw the situation and he said, yes, he would love to take him. And he is now in this very nice animal park. They have a very large cage with one orangutan and he wanted to put him in with the orangutan and we said, "You can't do that, even if it were another chimp, you just can't put them together."

You have to have a period of them getting to know each other, so they put a partition down the center and they phoned us after and we went up and saw the place and we told him how it could be done with the partition because chimps can be together with orangutans but not immediately. So, we told the man what to do and he said fine. So we thought we'd hear about that in another couple of months. Well, it wasn't even a week and he phoned up and he said, "I'm ready. Bring 'em over." So we said, "Well not so quick. We're coming up and have a look-see what you've done." So we went up and checked and they had everything.

So we took him up there and we put him in and it was the interesting part because we never had orangutans and know nothing about them, and with this large cage, they wanted to put Roger on the far side so the orangutan could be at the end with this partition at the center-which is all chain-linked-so they could see each other and touch each other but they just couldn't get together. And what was most surprising to us-because when a chimp sees another chimp, they all start screaming and hollering and making a heck of a noise-and there was absolutely nothing. Roger was scared a little bit and Rudi & I went to the far end and we called him so they could close the partition off between them. With us being there, it was a little strange for him, but it was fine. The owner said, "May I let the orang out now?" So, it was going to happen sometime, so he may as well do it-so he let the orang out and we enjoyed it so much. As I said, for having no knowledge of orangutans what so ever, to see how different they are and I think Roger just thought it was a rather

big chimp because he finally just went up and looked at him. But there was no screaming, which, for us, was very interesting because that's not normal and they were looking at each other, just putting their fingers slightly together, not through, because they both knew, "I can grab you and you can grab me!" So they didn't do that. Roger went right up close and the orang spat him right in the face. It was so funny to see all the keepers laughing and poor Roger-he backed up and came to me and cried. I said, "Tell him off, you know." He is now getting along beautifully-they're hoping to put them together at any time now. They'd like to put them together but they're not really bothered because they're both so active because of the partition between them-they're each showing off to each other. The orang used to belong to Joe Radcliff-he passed away-he had a chimp and orang act years ago-so this orang has known chimps. But it was so interesting to see the different species-how now there is such a big competition going on. We went up last Saturday to see them. And he made a fuss when he saw us coming. But then, he was showing off to us-his new life and he is a performer and the other one has been there about 3 years-he's resigned to being just in a cage-and he was on his own, which was lonely, but now he has a companion and now they're trying to out-do each other. It was so rewarding that when we left there we really felt good about it because that was a big transition too for him because being a performer all his life, now he's got people coming into the zoo, he's just having a ball in there. They said when they get a lot of people, he's throwing somersaults and now the orangutan is getting mad because he's not getting the attention. They said the orang is now much more active than previously-before he just sat there. We feel very good about it-it was something very sad and very dear to us which has taken a big toll on us, but it's a couple of months now and it's like everything-time heals, for Rudi it was worse because he's never been without chimps since he's had them, which is over 45 years.

(To Be Continued)

Vidbel's Old Tyme Circus, 2000

By Al House

Vidbel's Old Tyme Circus opened it's season on May 3, in Norwood, NJ, to large crowds. The weather co-operated with blue skies and moderate temperatures. The show sports a new laminated 80x120 feet tent and new sidewall and marquee. The tent is red and white striped on the outside and solid blue with stars at the quarter poles on the inside. The sidewall is red with white stars on it.

The red & blue marquee, a narrow tunnel-like affair, the width of one set of side poles, is not a free-standing tent, but hangs from the big top. The performance, as recorded in Congers, NY, 5 days later, is as follows:

1. Opening with music "Come Join The Circus", with clowns Billy Vaughn & Mike Snyder, warming up the audience by clapping. 2. Announcer/Ringmaster Dan McCallum welcomes all to the show. 3. Parrots of Penzance, with Susan Vidbel. Enters on a golf cart modified to look like a pirate ship. 4. Solo single trapeze act by Oleg Ryzkhov. His stylized act wins approval for his unique tricks. An electric motor raises and lowers the bar to assist in adding appeal to his act. 5. Clown chase. Mike Snyder "losses" his pants & chases them around the ring. 6. Sponsor thanked for bringing in the show by McCallum. 7. Barnyard review of dogs & goats in a Bavarian setting presented by Scott O'Donnell and his wife Jennifer Vidbel. Finale is a back jumping dog. 8. Perch act by the Meiranova Duo, a father and son combination. A shoulder perch allows son to go high up in the tent and with a headstand as the final trick, the son almost touches the top of the tent. The upside down slide to get out of the trick also garners much reaction. 9. Juggling by Robbie Lang. He does the traditional act with hoops, rings, clubs and finishes with fire. Lang projects a winning personality at the end of each trick. 10. Trained House Cats by Sadie Berk. Using 5 common house cats this young lady has put together a very short and pleasing act. With so

many cat lovers in the general public, this act is a sentimental favorite from the beginning, and the audience reaction to the act is quite positive. Miss Berk is the half sister of Susan and Jennifer Vidbel. This is her second year of performing. 11. Clown Boxing Match with Billy Vaughn and Mike Snyder as the "bad guy." Scott O'Donnell is the referee. The gag ends with a long shirt pull off. 12. Altier Archers of Nino Murillo and Peggy Mills. A bow and arrow presentation with interesting props and costumes. Finale trick is Mills shooting an apple off the head of her partner. Always dangerous and awesome, especially for children who know the story of William Tell. INTERMISSION 13. Hand Balancing by Almas Meiranov on a high pedestal. Act is well flashed and does a headstand as a finale. 14. Plate Spinning by the Ryzkov Duo. This is a highly stylized act, with a male chef and a female French maid who serves up the plates. This is no ordinary act that relies on the audience reaction to a falling plate, but a subtle acknowledgement of the skill and time management designed to keep the plates spinning. Taped music is used, so the act moves rapidly and allows very little room for mishaps. 15. Arabian Fantasy of Jennifer Vidbel dressed in blue costume on a black horse. This sets the tone of dressage which then in turn develops into the 4 miniature horse drill. Then the remaining 4 miniature horses appear to complete the equine turn. This act delights young and old alike. 16. Thanks to the two live musicians Oleg Rudnitsky on keyboards and Wynn Murrh on drums. 17. Clown gag of "The Cook and The Diner." Billy Vaughn as the cook and Mike Snyder as the diner pull off many antics with Snyder doing a headstand in an inverted pot as one of the gags in the presentation. The finale is throwing popcorn into the crowd. These clowns are always crowd pleasers! 18. Cloud Swing by Susan Vidbel is the last act on the show. The presentation by this young performer build to a breath taking finale trick which brings the show to a fitting close. 19. Farewell announcement by McCallum.

(Continued on Page 13)

Circus World Museum Opened!

New to their daily schedule will be a circus-theme variety show, *Razzle Dazzle Review*. The 30-minute program will include a lively mix of juggling, comedy, unicycles, magical illusions, live band music and antique novelty instruments.

David SaLoutos, Ringmaster and artistic director of the Big Top Circus, has assembled stellar acts for this year's show, including the aerial artistry of Gheorge and Luisa Marinof, the Jacob-Barreda African Elephants, the Rosaire Family's Perky Pokes, husband and wife clowning team, Greg and Karen DeSanto and from Switzerland, Sascha Gasser's rola-bola and slack-wire acrobatics. A live circus band lends excitement to each show.

Also, visitors can experience the Elephant Encounter where audiences learn about the jumbo animals, touch them and even feed them. As weather permits, the pachyderms also take a welcome splash in the Baraboo River that runs thru the Museum's grounds. They are open thru Labor Day from 9 to 6 daily, except July 21 thru August 21, when hours expand to 9 p.m. You can visit their web site: www.circusworldmuseum.com

Bob Foster sent along a great packet of things that will be happening at **Circus Mania 2000** and **Lot 2 Gathering** at the Uniontown Mall (PA) Sept. 21-23. Activities also include Evening Get Together and Bull Session, a Ladies Luncheon and Sunday Brunch. This is being presented by the Terrell Jacobs Ring #7, the Dennis Gilli Ring #112 and the Terrell Jacobs Tent #17. Circus Model Builders, Circus Fans, Circus Historians, Carousel Builders, Carnival Builders and Circus Folks are all invited to attend and display. There is a map available of the area and different places to visit and also motels and campgrounds in the area too. For more information, please contact Bob Foster, 18 Lemon St., Uniontown, PA 15401; Rege Amend, 794 Morgantown Rd, Uniontown. Vendors please contact Jerry Schaub, 1722 Leolyn St., Pittsburgh, PA 15210. Also, please visit the Circus Model Builders web site: www.circusmodelbuilders.org.

Circus Flora Is Back In St. Louis!

And would I love to be there this weekend! **Flora's** keeper, **Raul Gomez** and **Pam Allen** will be married in the ring May 14 after the show! Flora and the other animals will all be part of the ceremony. Our best wishes to them both. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch had a great photo of Flora and **David Balding** on their web site. Flora sure has grown up since I last saw her in 1994!

Sacha Pavlata and **Aurelia Wallenda** are once again pleasing the crowds with their aerial number. Also, **Michael & Miles Ashton**, human trampolines, as the reporter put it and the great **Wallenda** family. "They stage a daring pyramid on the wire that includes balancing one person in a chair. **Johnny Peers** is there with his Muttsville Revue and also Russian Cossack riders.

Also delighting the crowd is the very talented group of young people, the **St. Louis Arches**. **Sacha** performs the beautiful trapeze act with **Mariel Reynolds**. They are retiring Flora this season and the reporter says, "For those of you wondering, Circus Flora is planning to continue after Flora is gone." They are in St. Louis through May 21. (Thanks to **Mike Sorrill** for telling me about the article. Hopefully, he will send us an upclose report.

The Carson & Barnes Circus will play the Interstate Center in Bloomington, IL on Sept. 7 for the **Circus Historical Society Convention**. The sponsor is the **Gamma Phi Circus**, the Illinois State University's student circus. The students are really excited about this and can't wait to meet the performers! Wait till they see little **Jennie**! Show times are 4:30 and 7:30. Hard to believe, the sponsor and the circus agent were having trouble finding a lot in the area! The Interstate Center wanted \$1500, which included a percentage for them for parking, concessions and per ticket. Well, that's a little much for a non-profit organization like Gamma Phi, so I contacted Bloomington's Mayor, **Judy Markowitz**, and asked her if she could help. And help she did! She contributed \$500 so the circus would have the lot and the Convention could have their circus! What a great lady! Wouldn't it be nice if all Mayors were like her???

The Libyans Invade Iowa!

By Mike Cecere

The past couple weeks, with the presidential primaries in far away places like Iowa, it brought back some memories, so here we go.

Back on the Rodeo unit of that large, indoor circus, we were touring the scenic by-ways of Iowa and had stopped to fuel the trucks and water the beasts.

As per usual, the Elephant Supt., Jr., and I would engage in witty conversation with the curious local luminaries. We made a lot of good friends that way.

At the same truck stop were many members of the troupe and we could see the cannon truck coming down the road. Now the cannon was an old 1960s classic, mounted on an old trailer, painted in old cold-war style missile colors.

The brothers who did the act and others with their families were from Spain and real nice folks. Very professional. And being Spanish, spoke with a pronounced accent which stood out in rural Iowa. Here's where the fun begins....

About this time, the United States was having trouble with the country of Libya and their wacky leader. Being a student of history and keeping up on current affairs, I was aware of the townspeople's grasp of the world.

As the cannon pulled in, much to the chagrin of Jr., I said to our new friends, "Hey, that must be some of those Libyans here to shoot missiles at the (nearby) Air Force Base." As if on cue, out jump 2 of the brothers attired in heavy European-style clothes and big, furry Russian-style hats, asking to use the restrooms and phone in heavy accented English. As they walked away, I said, "See, they even have the commie hats from their pals, the Ruskies."

While Jr. covered his eyes with his hands, the locals ran for their pickups and, in short order, there was a sizeable armed posse of second amendment believers, the sheriff car pulled in and I expected the 82nd Airborne at any moment!

You had to be there to see the expression on their faces when the boys came out of the cafe carrying

take-out coffee to be met by the local militia and after a check of I.D.s, everyone had a good hearty laugh, except the mildly confused brothers. They later asked me what it was all about, to which I replied, "Well, the locals knew you suave, Spanish guys were coming and they didn't want you stealing their girlfriends." They broke out in big smiles and said, in Desi Arnaz-style, "Yea, that happens all the time!" Little did they know they had "Invaded Iowa"!! God Bless America.

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VIDBELS OLD TYME CIRCUS, 2000.....

The show is well received so far this season and will embark on a tour until October. The show moves on 4 vehicles; two semitrailers and two vans pulling separate smaller trailers. About 12 recreational vehicles belonging to show personnel make up the backyard. The show is lit by a 65 kw generator mounted on the pole trailer, 4 light standards are around the ring, each with 3 sodium lights on each standard for brilliant lighting. About 4 feet up on each of the light standards are placed 4 spotlights to focus on the ring or in the air. They are moved according to their usage.

A new red ring carpet is used. With the leaving of the Cossack riders, the former high and large 42 foot ring curb is now replaced by one of standard height. Most of the show moves immediately after tear down, but a few remain on the lot overnight. The show uses only 2 CDL drivers.

The show's headquarters are in Windham, NY., and the business office is at 13104 Fruitville Road, Sarasota, Florida 34240. The staff includes Scott O'Donnell, manager; Susan Vidbel, concessions; Jennifer Vidbel O'Donnell, pony ride; Sadie Berk, Moon Bounce; Giancarlo Genovese, tent and prop boss with 5 helpers; Wynn Murrah, front door and percussionist; Dan McCallum, announcer/ringmaster; Nino Murillo, electrician; Peggy Mills, ticket seller. Robbie Lang, inside novelties and Mike Snyder with programs/coloring books.

(Thanks, Al. Those that visit the show, please tell Mike Snyder Cherie said hello. Mike was on the Beatty Circus with me.)

A PAWS FROM MOZART

By Mozart Valentine

MEOW everyone, welcome back to my column. My friend in Indiana, **Larson E. Whipsnade**, sent an update on the **Indianapolis Zoo's** new baby elephant, **Amali**. Her keepers have weaned themselves from the 24-hour baby watch they'd kept since her birth March 6. On March 31, she weighed 242 pounds and was 3' tall at the shoulder. The others living with her are **Ivory**, 18, who is the youngest adult and has short, even tusks. **Tombi**, 23, has a square, narrow head with 2 even tusks that curve in. **Cita**, 31, is famous! She has been in several movies, including *Pee Wee's Big Adventure*. She has one tusk that points straight down and the other one points up. **Sophi**, 32, is the biggest, but not the tallest. **Kubwa**, 24, Amali's mother, has a brass cap on her left tusk where it was broken.

Also at the Zoo, **Saaba**, their 17-year-old Grant's zebra, gave birth to a 72 pound filly, **Zuri**, on April 9 in the Plains Barn. **Savannah**, their other mare, is expecting any day now!

And an update on **Sissy**, from **The Elephant Sanctuary** in Tennessee. She is making friends with **Barbara** and becoming healthier every day. Sissy loves oranges and prefers to eat 2 at a time! You can read just how she does this by visiting their web site at www.elephants.com. One day, Sissy followed the 4-wheeler driven by **Scott** and **Carol** and played with **Sammie**, the boarder Collie. Sissy stopped at the creek bank and was afraid to cross. Well, her new friend **Barbara** came and crossed the creek by Sissy and Sissy crossed the creek! Way to go Sissy! **Jenny's** favorite food is potatoes; **Tarra** loves watermelon; **Barbara's** new favorite food is peanut butter; **Shirley** loves carrots and **Bunny** loves oranges!

Mom got a sad note from The Memphis Zoo. **Firecracker**, the only male African lion on exhibit at the Zoo in 2 decades, turned 21 April 2, just 3 days prior to his peaceful death. He had developed systemic cancerous growths throughout his body

over the past few months. **Firecracker** was the son of **Joshua**, a male lion from Knoxville and was the grandson of **Dynamite** and **Kenya**. The **Memphis Zoo** has established the **Firecracker Memorial Fund** to continue the tremendous legacy of the Zoo's most recognized and beloved animal. Contributions will go toward the care, feeding and behavioral training of the more than 3000 animal residents at the Zoo. Please send contributions to: **Firecracker Memorial Fund**, Memphis Zoo, Attn: **Felicia Thompson**, 2000 Galloway, Memphis, TN 38112. The Zoo also welcomes the fond memories you may have of **Firecracker**. You can e-mail them at: info@memphiszoo.org. What a great cat name!

The Houston Zoo has new Indochinese Tiger Cubs! Maybe my friend, **Charlie Simpson**, will visit them and report back! The new tiger pavilion was made possible by **Exxon Mobil**, a longstanding supporter of the Zoo. Also, **Luna Bela**, their 26-month-old baby orangutan is now on exhibit!

Great news from **The Cincinnati Zoo**. The new **Vanishing Giants** exhibit is 4.3-acre home of elephants **Schottzie**, **My-Thai** and **Ganesh**, plus 3 giraffes and 4 okapi. Named in honor of longtime Zoo patron **Marge Schott**, the \$6 million renovation of the 1906 elephant house and yard is the second largest project in Zoo history. The mosque-like elephant house, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has been restored to its original colors-deep red-brown and shades of beige. The elephants have a new 2-tier yard, complete with a waterfall and 60,000 gallon pool!

Both the visitor's side and the animal's side are full of plantings native to Africa, Asia and India. On April 17, the elephants moved to their new quarters and the Zoo public relations rep, **Chad Yelton** was being interviewed on a nearby bench. The elephants decided to let everyone know what they thought of their new home and began trumpeting so loudly and so often, **Chad** had to move his interview! Alright, **Ganesh**! Wish our **Miller Park Zoo**, here in **Bloomington**, could have elephants! Mom would like that! Let me hear about **Animal News** in your area. **MEOW for now, Mozart.**

