

HAPPY

BACK YARD

THANKSGIVING

Volume III, Issue #55

November 15, 1998

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE CAT KIND: INTERVIEWS WITH DAVE HOOVER !!!

(From the Valentine Archives: 1979-1984)

As a boy, Dave Hoover always wanted to be a vet. After training with a vet at the Cincinnati Zoo, however, he decided he was "too squeamish" for the job. "I couldn't stand the sight of blood-the animals or my own," he recalled. His stint at the Zoo turned him away from veterinary medicine, but it turned his love of animals in a different direction-a fascination with the "big cats," the lions & tigers who instill terror in the hearts of man & beast alike.

As wild animal trainer for the Clyde Beatty Circus, the once-squeamish Hoover thrills audiences each night by entering a cage filled with lions & tigers, none of whom are restrained & all of whom would like nothing better than to tear him apart.

With whip, chair & blank pistol, he puts the cats thru the paces in a "fighting style" performance that has all but disappeared from the modern circus scene. The amiable, outgoing Hoover was a protege of the late Clyde Beatty, considered by some to be the greatest wild animal trainer who ever lived. Upon Beatty's death, he agreed to fulfill the last 3 years of the trainer's contract. That was 15 years ago. He considers his act the last of the vanishing style of circus performances.

"I am the last American trainer-all the wild animal trainers but me are European-style trainers, using an entirely different method," he explained. In the European style, he said, training starts at a very early age so the animal's natural ferocious spirit is broken-by force or by fear.

In contrast, Hoover doesn't start working with a lion or tiger until it is almost 18 months old, which is equivalent to a teenager in human terms. And he trains by repetition, not force. "When I give a lion a command, he



knows what he has to do, but because he is naturally independent & lazy, he doesn't want to do it, so we have to fight about it.

In European-style training, the animal obeys right away. He's not a wild animal anymore-he's a robot," Hoover said. Because no man can physically subdue a lion, Hoover concentrates on out-smarting them.

"Mental bluff is the key," he emphasized. "They don't know why I'm not afraid of them. Of course, I really am afraid of them, but they don't know that. The animal doesn't realize how strong he is & he doesn't know how weak the trainer is."

(Continued on Page 5)



1958

Lou Jacobs



Mills Bros. 1964



Mills Bros. 1965



HAPPY
THANKSGIVING



Beatty Circus

Clyde Beatty 1974



Fred Logan

ELEPHANT WALK By Mike Cecere

Well, I heard some good news today. That RBBB has stopped highlighting their walking of the animals from the train to the building and back.

That is a step in the right direction if you're a professional animal trainer or just plain like big beasts like elephants. I realize the more senior circus fans who are still waiting for Sells-Floto to return to the road decry it. I say hooray! (Yes, the rumor is true about my not being a parade-lover.)

To a true animal person a parade is a throwback to the worst of times, back when the Roman legions used to parade captured armies & creatures in chains through the streets of Rome to be slaughtered in the earliest circuses. And while I'm sure in the days pre-TV, the sight of colorful parade wagons was the "in-thing" for the populace, it was no treat for the animals.

It's hard enough in my experience to load, unload, clean, feed, train & otherwise properly look after animals like elephants on a tour without having to walk them down strange roads in unfamiliar surroundings with all kinds of people yelling at you, dogs barking & even small children (and dogs) running right up to elephants & other animals you are trying to lead.

Then what about a hot day when the pavement it hot? Blacktop is an unnatural surface anyway for elephants, horses & leadstock, not to mention their handlers & trainers! And these days, with all the people in the larger cities with contrary views-why not let the animal people do their job in peace?

While I know the fine folks at FELD ENTERTAINMENT have no control over the dwindling places to park the show train in various cities, I think it's a step in the right direction by not publicizing the "Animal Walks."

Hopefully, their new tent circus venture will prove successful enough so they can steer away from all the arenas built for basketball & return to the way circus is meant to be, under a big top.

And the elephants will only have to walk to the ring to greet the throngs of happy patrons & shuffle around eating grass the rest of the time. So thanks to whoever at Feld Ent. came up with the start of a really good idea!

THE PRIDE of the NEW MILLENNIUM

From the Cincinnati Zoo: To become prosperous is to gain wealth. It may come in the form of fortune, but it is more significant when it comes in the form of wisdom &

growth. On August 13, the Zoo grew a little richer with the addition of "Prosperity." She is the 10-month-old white lioness cub on loan from master illusionists, Siegfried & Roy. She joins Sunshine & Future, the 12-month-old male white lion cubs that were presented by the magicians in February. At the present time, there are no known white lions remaining in the wild. There are 3 in Cincinnati, 12 are at Siegfried & Roy's Las Vegas compound, 4 remain in South Africa, 2 are in Germany & 4 others are found in zoos around the world. The first caracal birth in the western hemisphere, the first sand cat & pampas cat birth in captivity & the first birth of the rusty spotted cat in North America all have occurred at the Cincinnati Zoo. The Zoo has 24 of the 37 known cat species in its collection. 15 of those 24 are on the endangered species list.

With the addition of Prosperity, the Zoo has become the only zoo in the U.S. to have a pride of Timbavati lions. The hope is that they form a new bloodline ensuring their existence well into the next century. It is for this reason that the lions have been termed "The Pride of the New Millennium." Prosperity has captured the heart of everyone she has met, including U.S. Senator Harry Reid of Nevada, who saw fit to name her (on Valentine's Day) the official mascot of the U.S. Senate! (You can see the 3 beautiful young lions on the Cincinnati Zoo's Internet site at www.cincyzoo.org-Editor)

FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO ZOO: On Sept. 23, the Zoo welcomed a new addition to its western lowland gorilla troop: a healthy baby born to 18-year-old Bawang & her mate, 23-year-old Mkubwa (nicknamed Kubi). She gave birth during the night among the other members of the group. The Zoo decided on a different approach with this birth, which was to keep the group intact, said Eve Lyon, Assoc. Curator. It has been documented by the gorilla Species Survival Plan that maternal care increases when females stay with group members during the birthing process. The Zoo's group lives together 24 hours a day.

Bawang apparently had a smooth delivery. When keeper Mary Kerr entered the gorilla night quarters the following morning, she noted that all of the group members were very quiet & calm. There are now 7 members of the group, which includes Kubi, the silverback, & Bawang; their offspring 10-year-old Shango & 5-year-old Barney; and 2 other females, 40-year-old Pogo & 17-year-old Zura. This birth marks Bawang's third live offspring at the Zoo.

*****REUNIONS 1998*****

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*****BACK YARD GOSSIP*****

*Rumor has it that **John Frazier** is leaving Beatty-Cole at the end of the season, to be front-end man for a Mexican Circus, which is coming to the U.S.

*Rumor has it that the **Commerfords** are cutting down from 3 units to 2 and are planning to stop elephant rides.

***Helen Billetti-Warburton** has resigned as the CFA District Director in her area. **Colleen Stewart** has been assigned to this position. Thank you Helen for all that you have done. Maybe now, you will have more time to write an article or two for Back Yard!!

***Betty Bartholomew** reported that an animal activist was on a local radio show. Betty said she will correspond with the D.J., requesting equal time with a different point of view. Betty, please let us know how things are going!

***Beatty-Cole** closes Nov. 22 in Naples, Florida

***Brian Liddicoat**, former mgr. of the Big Apple Circus, is the mgr. for the new Ringling Tenter. **Sylvia Zerbini** is reported to be one of the stars of the new show.

Famous German Circus Director Dies

Adolf Althoff, a member of the legendary circus family, once honored for saving a Jewish couple from the Nazis, died Oct. 14th. He was 85. He had been admitted to a hospital for treatment of a fracture 2 weeks before in Stolberg, near the city of Aachen, where he lived & died of heart failure. Born into a traditional circus family, Adolf formed his own circus along with a sister at the age of 21. A performer himself, he led the circus to international fame after WW II, traveling throughout Europe & even to the U.S. During the Nazi era, he concealed the identity of 2 performers who were Jewish, Irene & Peter Bento, to save them from persecution. Irene worked as a trick rider & Peter, as a clown. In 1995, Adolf & his wife, Maria, were honored by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Israel, for saving the couple. (Thanks to Frank Thompson's daughter Anne for this article.)

**CHIMP FARM HOPES TO RAISE BAR ON
CARE-ST. PETERSBURG TIMES 10/25/98**

The Chimp Farm is home to more than 60 animals: 26 chimps, 3 orangutans, 2 gorillas, 2 turtles, 1 alligator, a retired dancing bear, a hedgehog & a plethora of monkeys, goats & snakes. The employees say they are providing quality care for animals no one else wants. They say they are trying to raise money to replace outdated cages with more natural habitats.

Some Chimp Farm facilities date back to 1954, when Mae & Bob Noell bought the property as a winter home for their traveling ape show. The couple retired there in 1971 & developed a reputation for taking in abandoned, old or sick animals, mostly apes & monkeys. They are now cared for by Noell's granddaughter, Debbie Fletcher & her husband, Bert & about 20 volunteers. Bob Noell died 7 years ago & Mae, 85, is in poor health. Robert Noell recently bought 10 acres east of Chimp Farm for \$300,000. Supporters hope to raise another \$7 million to turn that land into a natural habitat. Bert Fletcher says rather than blame the Chimp Farm for bad conditions, animal rights people should try to help them. "If they are concerned about the animals, why don't they take their multiple millions of dollars, come here & build a big, beautiful facility for the animals?" Ike, the monkey, kicked a Valium habit he developed in a research lab & Gori, a 400 pound gorilla, now kisses his caretakers. His previous owner castrated him, pulled his upper teeth & hit him so hard, Gori's skull was partially crushed.

HOOVER'S CAT ENCOUNTERS.....

A basic understanding of the rules of the jungle helps Hoover keep control of the cats. "In the wild, one male lion is the boss over a group of females, & his territorial instincts are very strong. The trainer, in effect, has to replace the head animal, he has to replace the head animal, he has to become the leader of the pack," he explained. Jealousies on the part of the male lions increase the tension. To further complicate matters, Hoover mixes tigers & lions in the same cage, the only trainer still doing so. Even the animals' mating habits & sexual tensions come into play.

"The tigers are monogamous—they choose one mate for life. But the male lions mate with different female lions & will even mate with female tigers, so they are very jealous of each other. And since there's always at least one female in season ('in heat'), it gets extremely tense in that cage," Hoover observed.

A cardinal rule of training, he said, is to never let the animal know that he has hurt you. He pointed to a long scar on his left forearm that looked a little fresher than the numerous scars lining his hands and arms. "I was clawed by a lion 2 1/2 weeks ago during a performance. He hit a major vein & I was bleeding all over the place, but I hurried the act along, finished it & left the cage. Then I collapsed, but that animal never knew that it hurt me." In his 15 years with the circus, Hoover has been attacked many times by his cats. He has been hospitalized 13 times, for periods ranging from 4 days to 3 months. His grin fades as he recalls his most serious injury, when a lion attacked him during a training session at Lubbock, TX several years back. The lion got a claw caught in Hoover's watchband & pulled the trainer in, mauling him. Dave escaped, but his cuts were so extensive he required 152 stitches & 3 months of hospital care. "I did 3 stupid things there—I was wearing the watch, I had on a wool jacket which attracted the lion & I was in there by myself—and I almost got myself killed," he said. Like many circus acts, Hoover's performances are a family affair. Lois, his wife of 20 years, is the person who opens the "cat cages" at the start of the performance & 13-year-old son, George, mans the "escape door" of the steel arena. During the off season, the family make their home in DeLand, FL, where Hoover trains new cats for the act. He is with the animals 7 days a week, 365 days a year. "This is not the kind of job you can take a vacation from. If you're training an animal, he has to be trained everyday, including

Christmas. If you're on the road, you can't ask for the 4th of July off for a family picnic. I have very good cage attendants, but if one of these animals gets sick or gets loose, I'm the only one that can do anything about it."

"They're mean, they're stubborn like mules & they're always looking for trouble."

"I chose animal training simply because I love animals. I started college to be a vet & the Korean War got pretty thick & I joined the Air Force. When I came out I became circulation mgr. for a Cincinnati newspaper. I had picked up 3 young yearling lions when I was in the Air Force & I was keeping them as a hobby. With all the hassles at the newspaper, I just went into this as the course of least resistance. You have to love animals to be in this business & I'm probably a success at this simply because I'm doing what I like to do."

When he formed an act 23 years ago, he wore a steel collar; cats, it seems, instinctively go for the throat. "But it was too hot & uncomfortable. I learned to stay light on my feet instead. One tiger got 3 men in one day. Lions are the worst. They're lazy & nasty. They spend all day looking for trouble, waiting for somebody to get near enough to grab." He walks by a lioness' cage & she snarls, swatting the bars with claws that appear like stilettos.

He buys & trades young cats for training until they reach the age of 4. "Then they stop responding. They start to get mean. What they've learned at that point, they've learned." The cats aren't asked to perform tricks like walking on their hind legs because Hoover says they weren't built for that. "My animals have free will. They don't respond in a split-second; they think about it, growl a while, they do it—usually."

Once in Philadelphia JFK Stadium, Hoover stumbled in the middle of his cat act. He landed on his back, his pistol beneath him. A lion caught him squarely in the chest. "Luckily, my stick caught him in the mouth & deflected his jaws. But all my people could see was my legs sticking out from beneath this cat. They thought I was a goner. Another lion seized the opportunity. He figured he'd get the other male & me at the same time. That was as close to dead as I care to come. The guys got them apart & off me." To Hoover's amusement, the city's papers wrote up the incident as a case of feline heroics. "It looked to the audience like the second lion was trying to save me." He tries never to forget that the big cats are not circus props. "When they snarl, they mean it. And so do I when I'm trying to get out of their way!"

THE WORLD'S FRIENDLIEST HORSE

****As Told By: John Fugate****

The smartly-painted horse trailer arrived as the early summer sun neared the horizon. It backed into position & had pulled to a stop. The tall driver immediately attended to the precious cargo within. The unloading ramp was let down & the back doors were opened exposing the back of the horse. Standing there, I watched as he was coaxed to step forward & away from the tail bar so that it could be unhooked to allow the horse to unload. At first the animal seemed apprehensive, but as he began to back out & his steel clad feet met the abrasive-coated ramp, a raw crunching sound provided an accurate introduction to the presence of this horse. When he had backed out sufficiently to swing around & look, I could see his eyes flashing magnificently. His ears were back & after only a moment, the nostrils flared & he let out a distinctive equine yell. The piercing decibel level & the undulating rhythm accented his presence & only retreated when he ran out of breath. Now the message was clear; I stepped back to give him plenty of room. This could be the message, "I don't want to be here." I stood there thinking, I had a 10-week engagement in front of me in which this horse had to participate. Was this terrifying display a sample of things to come? I stood there with mixed emotions as I admired this animal's magnificent stature & questioned my judgement for hiring this act.

The director of entertainment at the Circus Hall of Fame in Peru, Indiana, is a grueling job of completing a seemingly endless trail of tasks. Among them, a completely different lineup of acts is prepared for each summer season. A myriad of details comes with arranging for the needs of acts. Lions & tigers, unicyclists, elephants, aerialist, clowns, jugglers & horses all have unique & special needs. It is my job to see that not only are they all met, but they are all enmeshed into a seamless clockwork, an organized program that entertains our guests twice daily. Even though I stood there experiencing doubt, I recalled only 6 years ago witnessing the performance that secured the gold medal at the annual International Circus Festival & Talent Competition in Sarasota, Florida. The horse filled the tent with his presence & his movements were as elegant as poetry. This was classic "High School", and it had not been seen in the circus venue for many years. This was an American Saddlebred horse named, "Souveran." He was 16.2 hands & a chestnut with just a flash on his face.

I had never before met a horse with such brilliant eyes & remarkable conformation. Schooled in dressage with the focus being Haute Ecole or High School, the routine included developed gaits & a display of the intricate riding skills needed to perform in a 42-foot circle.

"Souveran" came in at a canter & broke into a trot as he proceeded around the ring. Delicate circles suggested the degree of skill achieved by horse & rider. A full pass sideways across the ring established this level of ability. A canter depart from a halt & tight changes of lead in this round area was no minor accomplishment for a horse of this size. It was the 3-step & march that made me sit up & take notice. There was no discouragement of forward motion & the legs were well animated & coming up very high. The music selected was as classic as the rest of the scene & the horse found the rhythm and dwelled in it.

I witnessed a double backwards three step that is only the result of a finessful rider. It preceded the horse stopping, finding a comfortable stance & with almost invisible coaxing, the entire body of the horse moves backwards & down over the feet, firmly planted in the sawdust.

The horse stretches continually down until his chest is mere inches from the ground & as he holds it, the rider coordinates his first stylized bow & captures the applause from the onlookers dazed at this accomplishment.

Next, a light & peppy, brassy song interrupts the response from the audience & the horse moves forward & up into the most beautiful and elegant trot ever seen. Known as the Passage, the degree of hesitation is only the result of hours of attention. Next, the horse & rider come to the center of the ring & come to a stop. With a beaming sense of joy coming from within, you are invited by the rider to acknowledge his love for this horse, as he, too, pauses for a moment to pat the neck of this wonderful animal. An announcement is next, "You are witnessing the lost art of High School Horsemanship, please clap along with both the music & the movement of the dancing horse." The song is immediately recognized; "The Mexican Hat Dance." The horse moves sideways & at precisely the right moment & in time with the music, he strikes twice with a front leg & everyone claps along with him. The movement is repeated & it proves to be popular with the audience that gets to participate. And the result is additional applause.

From this, the horse again trots forward & at one point, at the back of the ring, the rider sits back & the horse continues with the trot movement, yet he remains in one place.

(Continued on Page 9)

****ELEPHANT ATTACKS INDIANA
ZOOKEEPER 11/9/98****

Indianapolis Zoo: A zookeeper suffered broken ribs when an elephant battered her several times with its trunk. Leslie Mackie, 28, was in fair condition Monday. She was bathing 4 elephants Sunday afternoon when she noticed Cita, a 29-year-old female with a history of aggression towards other elephants, raising her head in a threatening manner toward another in the herd as they gathered around a pond. "Leslie told her 'no.' She obeyed the command-that wasn't the problem. Leslie told her 'no' again & Cita just sort of turned around & came toward her," zoo spokeswoman, Judith Gagen said. Leslie lost consciousness briefly, and when she came to, she called for help to other keepers inside a holding building. Cita, who has been at the zoo for 10 years, was back with the rest of its elephant population Monday. "She's the grumpiest of them. But she's done nothing like this. She's never gone toward any human that we know of. This was a shock," said Gagen. Zoo officials believe that Cita might have felt emboldened because the herd's leader was in another area, being bathed. At age 30, Sophi is the matriarch, despite the fact that Cita, 1 year younger, is brash & has 2 years' seniority in the herd. "Sophi's the one who keeps things level. And when she's not there, Cita will occasionally go, 'Here's my chance,'" said Gagen. It was the first animal attack on a keeper at the zoo since a rutting deer gored a keeper in 1971 or 1972, Gagen said. The keeper recovered. (Thanks to Frank Thompson for sending this.)

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George Carden Circus: Ft. Worth, TX-Nov. 9-21; Ada,
OK-Nov. 22 (Thanks to Bill Loter of Hugo, OK for
sending these in.)

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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.

FRED LOGAN TENT/MARTIN DOWNS RING

Your editor just joined this great group of people and let
me tell you, their Fall, 1998 newsletter is fantastic! There
are 34 pages, packed full of information, stories and great
pictures! For information on joining Fred's Tent, please
write to: Gary Thomson, P.O. Box 220, Lynden, Ontario,
LOR 1T0 Canada. E-mail: gandolf_gt@yahoo.com
AND the Back Yard has a full page write-up in this
issue!! Jim Chapman visited with Garden Bros. Circus at
the Western Fair in London, Ontario 9/12-13. Gary
Thomas presented 4 Asians from the Hawthorne Corp.
Gaylord Maynard had his horse act. A free attraction,
presented by Othmar Vohringer, of 15 white Siberian &
Bengal tigers was presented more like a demonstration,
rather than a performance. Othmar described each trick
as it was performed & could also be heard talking to the
tigers. He said the tigers alone were worth the admission.

THE LONG GOODBYE By Mike Cecere

I had a very sad phone call the other day. It was a friend
of mine, a well known elephant trainer, one of the best of
our generation, calling to tell me he was dispersing his
herd. He's a fine fellow with a family that has worked
very hard for several years to do a first class job, a real
credit to our industry.

But several factors, one of which I covered in a previous
article, where he had an incident in a Midwest building
too small for elephants & inadequate security by the
producer. Well, that started a train of events that made it
unfeasible to have & tour an elephant act and still feed
his family. So now the circus producer, and others, as
well, have one less elephant act to call on when they have
a show. And it's a steadily shrinking pool of acts
available for circus work, which is one of the lower
paying venues these days for elephant owners.

As for my friend, he's already deluged by offers from the
top facilities nationwide, as he's a well known &
respected elephant man. Something to think about, eh?

Bob Kitchen, Fall River, MA reports that the Father Ed
Sullivan Tent held its Fall Meeting on Oct. 25th and
some 56 fans were in attendance!

Cort Langdon, Bemidji, MN reports from the turn of
the century, Bemidji was a popular destination for
circuses. Barnum & Bailey skipped us, & RBB&B
played here in 1938-40-49. In '49, Cecil B. DeMille was
with them, & Ringling played only 2 cities in MN-
Duluth & Bemidji. We were at both performances &
could not help see DeMille, as he was observing the
performance, most of the time, from inside the
hippodrome track-or between the rings. Cort's father was
10 years old when he saw Ringling in Alden, MN, June
19, 1886!! The first year (1884) Ringling was on the
road, they played Alden on July 23rd. Today, Alden has
a population of 623. The book, "The Circus Kings"
describes Ringling in 1886. "Ringling Bros. Great
Double Shows & Congress of Wild and Trained
Animals," with a 90 foot round top & 18 wagons, as well
as "2 cages, Ticket & Bandwagon. The menagerie
included Hyena, Bear, Monkeys & Eagle." Cort has
always been interested in Modoc, the famous elephant
because "she made a lasting impression on me when I
met her 'face-to-face' & saw her name on the band on her
forehead." He also remembers seeing her solo dance
performance. Hopefully, Cort will write some more.

****THE FRIENDLIEST HORSE.....****

During the "Piaffe", the rider makes eye contact with his appreciators & beams with satisfaction. Then it is forward once again. Into a canter, around once to get ready & then he is prompted to go almost sideways across the front of the ring. A tight turn to the inside & he is headed straight for the center seats. A quick halt & an equally quick prompt for a bow & the thrill is complete. "Ladies and Gentlemen, Souveran, the American Saddlebred horse, is trained and presented by Dave Knoderer."

I reminisced. Not only was it refreshing to see an elegant animal coordinate dance steps to the music but the fact that this being the result of years of dedication & love, yanked at my heart. I turned & walked away—the decision had been made, and it all started in the next few days. Off in the distance, the strained harmony of the calliope provided a strange staccato accompaniment as I pondered these thoughts.

I had met Dave Knoderer at the Sarasota Circus Festival 6 years ago. Curiosity aroused, I learned that this man had come up through the ranks as a horse trainer & performer from his days traveling with tented circuses over 2 decades ago with his first act, a group of 6 Palomino ponies that worked at Liberty to do a routine of what we all referred to as military maneuvers. Even though he no longer earns his livelihood as a traveling entertainer, his passion for training the horse to do the extraordinary movements seen at one time in circus performances remains.

Now, as a highly accomplished artist, based in Sarasota, he has the means to pursue his passion & he has a pretty impressive list of horse training mentors from in & out of show business. Among them, Violet Hopkins, originator of the USDF Dressage instructor's clinic; Chuck Grant, the father of America Dressage, & John Herriott, the most well known of all the circus horse trainers, were all very influential to all of the previous mentors.

Dorita Konyot was born into a traveling horse exhibiting family in Europe. As a young girl, she had decided she would find a manner in which to teach both the horse & rider with gentleness rather than use the gruff manner of her famous father. Under the tutelage of Dorita, David became lighter & lighter as a rider, something men are not usually noted for. I came to learn from David that he was, perhaps, the most impressed with her grace. The highly developed set of values, combined with her poise & determination was perhaps the most influential of all

the examples set before. Dorita passed away a year ago and Dave since expressed to me, an unending gratitude for knowing such a wonderful & gentle woman.

David had contacted me at the Circus Hall of Fame during the previous winter. He wanted to take a break from creating hand-painted works of art & return for just a brief time, to the world of living with his animals & performing daily with the circus. The Circus Hall of Fame had what he wanted; 2 performances a day in a large, sawdust ring in a permanent location. These items are not readily available in this world with situations for performing animals dwindling fast.

He also has a very pretty jet black mule that does an act. Dressed up like an old prospector, he does a themed routine that showcases his skills as a liberty trainer & he combines a little comedy with the help of the announcer. "Gold Dust and the Old Cuss" proved to be the favorite of the children. And the manner of this precious animal in her stall with her admirers reaching to find a place to pet her established her as sweet too. "Betty" is her name & if she sees a child coming down the aisle, she stretches her head over the stall door to meet the children she obviously loves. Now, it is dark outside. My heart had quit pounding, but I was still uneasy about that animated display I had witnessed during the unloading process. I was curious as to how the horse had settled in. As I made my way into the large structure that had housed a myriad of performing animals over the past century, I discovered that in a relatively short time, the situation in the barn had become quite serene. The horse was eating his evening meal while ignoring 2 camels & 2 large African elephants across the walkway from him.

He hardly raised his head when 2 six-month-old bear cubs came bouncing into the barn to be put into their display cages. This 14-year-old horse had taken to the world of circus in a casual way.

The season is now over, as I pause to reflect on my original misgiving. As ringmaster, I had had the privilege of watching this kind, dedicated man put his extraordinary animals through their series of intricate paces each day. As I stood there, the audience showed, each day, their pleasure of seeing such outstanding animals. Between shows, the children would be allowed to come to the barn to view the animals. Even though warnings existed to create distance between the other animals, David welcomed the opportunity to improve relations between his animals & their fans. He encouraged & invited the children to pet his horse & mule. (Continued on Page 12)

****PHOENIX ZOO MOURNS LOSS OF RUBY* FRIDAY, NOV. 6, 1998****

I have relinquished my Billboard column for the following news which I think is very important.

Your editor has been following Ruby's life recently, from her paintings to her pregnancy. It is with much regret that I have to report the following. Those of you with Internet access can read the articles in the Arizona paper about Ruby at: www.azcentral.com/news.

The following is a statement, dated 11/6, by the Phoenix Zoo. The medical team began surgery on Ruby at approximately 11:45 am. At 12:50 pm, Ruby was euthanized, due to excessive infection & uterine damage, discovered by the medical team during the Caesarean section. The medical experts concluded there was no potential for Ruby to survive.

Upon gaining access to her internal cavity, they immediately discovered that a near full-term fetus had punctured the uterine wall & was in the abdominal cavity.

The 320-pound fetus was removed from Ruby. The vets spent an hour evaluating Ruby's condition; they determined that the uterus was severely damaged & couldn't be recovered. Infection & peritonitis were significant & after evaluating all alternatives, it was unanimously concluded that it would not be possible for Ruby to recover from her internal trauma.

The decision was made at approximately 12:50 pm to remove Ruby from the life support that was sustaining her during the operative procedure. The Zoo staff regrets the loss of this animal that has meant so much to the Zoo & the community, & is extremely appreciative of the quality of medical attention that was available to assist them in trying to assure Ruby's well-being.

The Phoenix Zoo staff is terribly saddened by this loss, & asks that their privacy be respected this weekend. The Zoo doesn't expect to have the results of the autopsies for at least 1 week. "We will share all appropriate information when it's available," said Jeff Williamson, executive director.

Mark Shaffer reports: The Phoenix Zoo will never see another one like her. In fact, say zoo experts around the country, there may not be an elephant like Ruby in North American zoos in 50 years. Ruby's death sent shock waves thru workers at the Seattle Zoo. That's because one of its 4 elephants, Chai, was sent to Springfield, MO zoo in Sept. for breeding after 6 years of unsuccessful attempts at artificial insemination.

"Ruby's death really hit home because we have 2 elephants who paint up here also," said Gigi Ogilvie, Seattle Zoo's spokeswoman. "But Ruby was the pioneer in that regard. What happened to her was a tragedy & it's something we fear with our elephants."

(Your editor would like to share a story that Jonathan Sidener, of the Arizona Republic, published on 11/7/98.)

"I met Ruby, the elephant, once 9 years ago. Dick George, of the Phoenix Zoo, called the newspaper. He said he had a story. He said he had an elephant who liked to paint.

Ruby spotted me before I saw her. I was inside the elephant keeper's office & she was outside. She pressed her big, inquisitive eye against a high window & stared & blinked & trumpeted. She wanted to play. She had the flirtatious look of a puppy doing the "I'm cute, don't you want to come play?" routine.

Ruby painted for about an hour. It was a fascinating story. Her keepers suspected that she could discern colors. One thing was certain, Ruby enjoyed painting. As I interviewed her keepers, Ruby took great interest in my voice. She was done painting when I realized that she had been trying to make eye contact. To protect against the midday sun, I was wearing mirrored sunglasses. I took them off & looked her in the eye. Her face lit up. She raised her trunk in the air & trumpeted.

The next thing I knew, I was staring down the double barrel of an elephant trunk. She exhaled a blast of warm elephant breath in my face. Dick George gave me quick, urgent directions. "Do what I say & ask me about it later. Blow in her trunk." I did as told. And Ruby was delighted.

That was an elephant greeting, George explained. She was sharing the scent of her breath & expected me to return the favor. Had I ignored her, she would have become more insistent, she would have blown harder, he said. And the 2nd effort would not have been as dry!

To cement this newfound friendship, George suggested I give Ruby a peppermint candy. She watched as I unwrapped the offering. When I held it out, a tongue the size of a bedroom pillow engulfed my hand & wrist & extracted the candy. I patted her trunk. I wondered if she would remember me if we were introduced again, if she would remember the scent of my breath. With Ruby's death Friday, I'll never know that answer. But, I do know that an elephant that breaths in your face and licks your hand is one you'll never forget.

(My thoughts and prayers go out to the folks in Phoenix and especially, to the children that loved Ruby. Cherie)

****ELEPHANT LAWS****

Elephant fans are aware of several states that have passed laws or regulations concerning the use of elephants for rides in those particular states. In each state, there are 2 broad reasons why this has happened:

A. Two states, Mississippi & Georgia, have passed laws which restrict elephants by saying that elephants shall not be in direct contact with human visitors/viewers. This was done at the urging of "rights" people.

B. The State of Florida has re-written its regulations regarding the handling of ride elephants & control of such rides. This is an instance both of reasonable change as well as, to a limited degree, a response to the "animal rights" people who wanted elephant rides eliminated.

The 2 states which have said that there can be no direct contact between human visitors & elephant, did so at the instigation of, apparently, one rabid "rights" person who has some legislative clout. This law was obviously written this way so as to prevent rides, without actually saying that is it's reason. In a discussion with one elephant owner in recent months, he told of being prohibited from giving rides on the basis of this new law in Mississippi. He also said that Georgia has the exact same law. I couldn't help raising the question, "What if you just increase the size of the blanket on the elephant so that riders could not touch the animal's skin?" That would certainly prevent direct skin to skin contact! I don't know the answer to this question, but if I still owned a ride elephant, I'd ask.

Florida's revised regulations appear to be a reasonable re-write of existing ride regulations. The new provisions are:

1. Elephant rides now require a new, special, state license to give those rides in Florida. The special license must be in the hands of the owner/operator. The application for this license must include photos or diagrams of the actual ride setup, including fencing and/or other methods of protecting the public.

2. The elephant ride application must list every elephant which will be used in Florida for rides, complete with each animal's history of accidents. It cannot be used for rides if it has been involved in an injury to any human within the past five years.

3. Persons actually leading the elephant must have at least 6 months verifiable experience working ride elephants, and this experience must be on the application.

4. A "tranquilizer gun" must be on hand, including the

necessary drugs, darts & other equipment, & at least one person shall be familiar with the techniques of using this gun.

To me - and I emphasize that this is only my opinion - in view of the current society we live in, with it's tendency to sue at the slightest thing, these are not necessarily bad rules. I do think that the "tranquilizer gun" is unnecessary. Several years ago, when these changes were first proposed, I told one official, in writing, that the thought of anyone using a notoriously inaccurate gun, to shoot an elephant-sized dose of drugs at an animal possibly carrying persons on it's back, was a terrifying thought, particularly in view of the fact that the drugs used work well only on an animal that is calm, and then only after a 20-30 minute time span! The reply led me to believe that this one change was to mollify the "rights" people and, since a ride operator would only be out the cost of such equipment & would not be required to use it, it didn't seem worth fighting about.

One thing is certain: Florida will insist on these regulations being followed. Those who do not, risk a serious violation charge.

Frank Thompson.

Harry Gordon, Bangor, ME reports "The Administration Council of French Assn. "Pour le Cirque de Demain" has decided to put back the dates for the XXIIInd World Circus Festival of Tomorrow, which should have taken place Jan. 21-25, 1999, at the Winter Circus Bouglione in Paris. The Council has fixed a new date for the Festival." Harry has found activities to keep his tour group busy between the Monte Carlo & Lausanne Festivals. Following a 6 day stand in Monaco & 5 shows of the Monte Carlo Festival, Circus Express will move on to Paris. There they will see Circus Joseph Bouglione, Circus Alexis Gruss & Circus Maximum. They then will go to Munich for a night at Circus Krone & a few day to explore this wonderful city. From Munich, they will board a train for a twisting ride through the mountains as they head for Lausanne & the Premier of the International Festival du Cirque de Lausanne. Another fan writes that the Paris Festival will be held in November at Paris' Palais des Sports. The larger venue will allow the participation of large animal acts, which was not possible at the Cirque d'Hiver. It is reported that the Moscow Circus will coincide with this, on their visit to Paris. (This should be a great trip, visiting all these great circuses. Please see Harry's trip information elsewhere in Back Yard.)

*****THE FRIENDLIEST HORSE.....*****

Their favorite stall was always "Souveran's", where he would stand for hours & never move a muscle as each child gently petted him.

Now the summer is over & the animals are gone. We still get lots of letters here at the Hall of Fame from children of all ages. And in letter after letter, the evidence is always the same. Their favorite part of visiting the Circus Hall of Fame was a horse named "Souveran." I now pause & ponder the source of my original terror, an animated display coming from a talented horse. I have now come to know and love, quite possibly, the world's friendliest horse.

(Thanks to Dave for sending this great article in! Way to go John. I know I would like to have John write again.)

***NOT FREE, BUT NOT EXTINCT 9/27**

By Bill Duryea. St. Petersburg Times*

The future of the endangered Asian elephant looks bleak, unless of course you happen to be driving around US 27 in Polk County & discover a captive breeding program run by Ringling Bros. Here, elephant babies & controversy are born.

The Ringling Elephant Conservation Center opened 3 years ago on 200 acres, bordering the Green Swamp in Polk County. The compound, which houses 25 elephants, is fewer than 20 miles from the heart of Disney World, but it is unmarked & not open to tourists. It is virtually unknown to the public, but among elephant conservationists, it is acclaimed for having produced 3 baby elephants in 3 years, a notable achievement given the difficulty Asian elephants have conceiving.

The first elephant was brought to North America in 1796, but the first recorded birth didn't come until nearly a century later in 1880, according to Mike Keele, asst. director of the Oregon Zoo in Portland. Mike maintains the Asian elephant studbook, tracing the genealogy of all Asian elephants in captivity in North America.

Since 1880, 116 elephants have been born in captivity, but only 9 of those births occurred before 1962, Mike said. Most of the elephants have been born in the past 10 to 12 years, Keele said, whose zoo has been the site of 28 births.

In the matriarchal herds, only 1 male elephant is permitted to breed with the females. All other sexually mature males are expelled until they are strong enough to fight their way back into a herd. These challenges can be extremely violent, said Jim Williams, mgr. of the center.

"They will fight to the death. They will use those tusks to disembowel each other." "People have started building facilities that could handle the full range of behavior from bulls," including restrictive areas that prevent elephants from lashing out violently, Keele said.

Keele's zoo, which is often cited as one of the most successful breeding programs of any zoo in the world, has 3 males & 3 females. Ringling has 4 males & 21 females, nearly all of reproductive age. Combined with the 40 elephants that tour with the circus' 2 traveling shows, Ringling Bros. claims to have "the largest, most diverse gene pool of Asian elephants outside S. E. Asia." There is no sign to tell a visitor he has found the driveway of Ringling's elephant center. Roll down the car window at the electric gate, tho, & there's no mistake. The odor of a particularly high-grade fertilizer produced by the ton every day caresses the nostrils.

"The elephants are made for this," said Williams, speaking of the rain & dampness that a hurricane in the Gulf had dumped on the state. Williams, 44, is square-jawed with slightly mussed blond hair. These are features that go well with the khaki uniform he wears every day.

Williams started working with elephants 20 years ago at a now defunct theme park, Circus World, on US 27. Since then, he said he has "done everything you can possibly do with an elephant in this country." He has "put on the sparkly clothes & performed in front of crowds." He has given elephant rides, too. The 25 elephants on site-ranging in age from 14 months to 31 years-do not perform for anyone. At least, not yet.

What Williams emphasizes is the architectural sophistication of the \$5-million compound, the way that 37 gates & walkways connect the 5 main paddocks with the barns where the elephants sleep, feed, get cleaned & receive medical treatment.

Williams knows the circus is a lightning rod for criticism by animal rights groups. He offers numbers as proof that the facility is as well-designed for its purpose as it could be. 500,000 pounds of steel were used to construct the compound. Every day, the animals eat 1 ton of hay, a high-protein variety that is brought by the truckload from Colorado. They eat 700-800 pounds of fruits, vegetables & grains. Their diet even includes an elephant chow made by Purina. The buildings, covering a total of 28,000 sq. ft., are airy with high ceilings & concrete floors that are easily washed. The elephants spend most of their time outdoors in large sandy paddocks, the largest of which is the size of a small city block. The paddocks have shade-giving awnings that look like self-

service gas stations. The bars are wide enough apart for a man to walk thru without turning sideways.

Each male elephant has his own pen, which, depending on his temperament, he shares with up to 4 females at a time. The males can see each other thru the bars of their pens, but they can't reach other to fight. "They look thru the pipes at each other & pace back & forth. They puff out their chests. They psychologically defeat each other," Williams said, & he believes each walks away convinced of his own superiority.

The handlers test the females weekly to find out when they are ovulating. Decisions are made then as to what male they should be placed with. It could be Casey, a 27-year-old male, who generally lives alone because he is cantankerous & can be rough with some of the females. Or it could be Charlie, 25, who is better behaved & is allowed to live with various females. It probably wouldn't be 35-year-old Vance, despite his legendary fertility-he has his own permanent harem of 4 females which have borne him 26 children.

Mothers & children live together in the same paddock until the calves are weaned. The calves play with other calves as well as the other female elephants, who serve as "aunts" in the highly matriarchal society. The elephants approach the fences to sniff at the visitors with their trunks. They spray themselves with dirt & hay. Then you walk inside the main barn & you see them tethered by chains, swaying back & forth as if they were in a state of restless agitation. Williams can see the expression change on the visitors' faces. Before the first question can be asked, he tells them, "You didn't even notice them swaying outside in the pens. Nobody even notices until they see the chains." Williams rejects the notion that elephants that rampage are rebelling against people. "By that logic, you'd have to believe that a dog bites because it doesn't want to be friends with man."

Keele said, "Within 40 years, we'll have fewer than 23 Asian elephants & all of them will be past reproductive age." Artificial insemination, which was performed successfully for the first time this year, may reverse that trend by expanding the gene pool quickly. "Moving fluids is easier to do than moving a large elephants," said Jane Ballentine, of the American Zoo & Aquarium Assn. Feld Entertainment was instrumental in getting Congress to pass the Asian Elephant Conservation Act of 1997.

The law allows for up to \$5-million of funding a year for conservation programs in Asia; the center in Polk County will never see a dime of that. "It's the right thing to do. You're not getting any economic benefit, but you're on

the right side of the angels," said Roy Jones, a Washington lawyer who lobbied for Feld.

*****ROYAL VISIT By Mike Cecere*****

Every day is a busy day around the Double M Ranch, but we always find time for visitors.

We recently had Paul & Lois Horsman, who always are very welcome anywhere I work. They are 2 of my oldest friends, a friendship that dates back to before I was a professional part of the circus/animal industry. And they, over the years, helped me build my extensive collection of wild animal/elephant books, photos & other memorabilia.

I am even one of the privileged ones to have made the pilgrimage to their Circus Memories Museum in West Fryeburg, Maine, while on a family vacation in 1971.

At that time, Paul was postmaster up there; part of a long career where he held several important managerial positions for the U.S. Postal Service before retiring to scenic Auburn, NY, with his lovely wife Lois.

They now are able to devote full time to their memorabilia business (which is the top one in the United States) & a number of charitable causes.

At present, Paul is the President of the Circus Model Builders, working hard for that group & they both are active members of both the Circus Historical Society & Circus Fans of America. Regarding the latter, they are the leaders of the well-known Billy Martin Tent, CFA, named after the famous ringmaster/circus owner, Billy Martin. But Paul & Lois are just people with an interest in circus. They are among the favored few who are a part of our industry, not just visitors.

As for myself, their visit brought back many fond memories of years gone by; on dozens of circus lots with lions, tigers, elephants & more. You know, no matter how successful you are, or how much money you make, it's good to be with people who knew you back at the beginning of it all. And as usual, I added to my collection by buying a copy of the excellent book about Benson's Wild Animal Farm & well done Shrine Circus book, which is a must-read for show people, as well as fans.

So, thanks for the friendship over the years; looking forward to many more!

Patrick Kine, Olympia, WA reports Ray & Mary Richards, Lonnie Sewell & Mike Morgan, of the Bobby Kaye Ring had great displays at the Lakewood Mall show. The public really enjoyed them!

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY

BY BRIAN NUNN

*I was taught to make a habit of checking the hind leg chains as I walked down the front of the picket line, and checking the front leg chains while mucking out in back. I'd tell the guys this, & most of them would pay no attention. They'd all seen these elephants move fast, & were told safety first. I was tempted a lot, to stay quiet and let them get wacked so they would learn to be careful. But the boss would get hot, and if they couldn't handle it, they'd leave, and I'd have to do their work. The new guys didn't understand that the department had to pay for new handles & wheelbarrows. I'd charge a six-pack or so to put new handles in the hammers. These guys would miss the stake so bad, the handle would shred; it was like a hinge on the hammer head.

We had two 20s and four 16s. It seemed like that the guys that got good at driving stakes were the ones that got around the elephants the fastest.

I'd rang up about baleing wire & twine, "Don't leave it laying on the ground, cus word, cus word." As usual, they didn't listen, except one time one of them was running away from a kicking horse or something, and he got tangled up in some twine & landed on his face and busted his nose. He picked up twine after that.

*I'm reading Bucky's book; I just started it. He shoots from the hip and spins a good yarn. He puts it straight up about what happened to elephants turned loose in the wild. They didn't make it for various reasons. And about some animals paying their rent by doing some light work. It doesn't hurt them unless they're sick. That's where real professional animal people come in. They can see this happening.

*The transition from Asian elephants to African elephants is (in my opinion) like going from an Oldsmobile to one of those fast, little motorcycles. You can go from the bike to the car, but it is sort of hard to go from the car to the bike.

I came up around Rex & he taught me to figure out a way to go with hot stock. "It was to keep them cool, at the same time, be ready yourself for something unexpected."

*One time, when I wanted to make a show in Seattle, I hopped a freight in Sacramento. My timing was a little off. I caught a local train & it side-tracked. I had jumped on a flat car and it being kind of cold, I made my way on top of a box car, full of gravel, with like-portholes on top. I'd gotten into one of these doors & was out of the weather when it happened. We were side-tracked. I went

outside and was sitting on top. When the oilman walked down the line and saw me, he said, "Come on down & come up to the engine for some coffee. This was the best offer I'd had all day, so I walked with him for the rest of his tour. We then went to the engine. The train went to Reno; then I caught a ride to Seattle. That's some beautiful country.

Going up and down the grade they use four engines in front; four in the middle and four in the back. I've forgotten how many cars there were, but there was a lot.

HAROLD BARNES/LUCKY LARABEE TENT

Guest speaker at the Tent's meeting on Oct. 24th was Sonja (Kohler) Reed, formerly of Germany. She & her family of 8 made up The Alfredos Troupe, who appeared on many German circuses prior to & during WW II, including Krone, Hagenbeck, Sarasanti, Busch & Knie (Swiss)-all railroad shows. The act included an aerial bar & a teeterboard. Sonja was the topmouter since she was the smallest person in the act. She also worked with elephants. Her show business career ended in 1948 when she met her husband, a GI stationed in Germany. She brought along her personal photo album, showing her & her family's act. The Tent made her an Honorary Member, and hopefully, we'll be hearing more about her experiences in the future. (Thanks to Al Conover for this report.)

Alan Hollander reports that he purchased an attractive poster with "Lewis Bros. Circus" on it. There is a "No. 70-FP" printed on the lower left side of the poster. Hand written on the back is "circa 1940s." If anyone has any information on this Lewis Bros. Circus, please contact your editor and I will pass the information on to Alan.

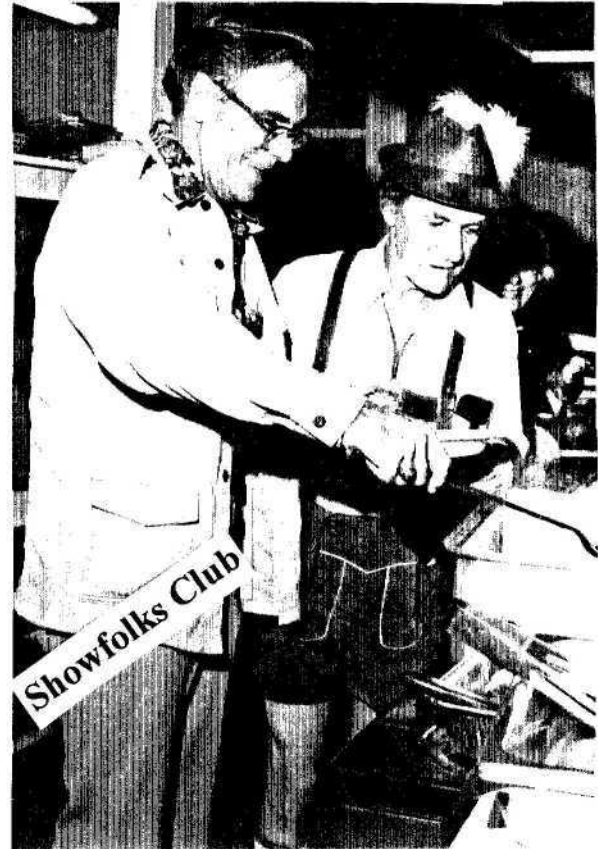
Richard Tuck, El Cerrito, CA reports that D.R. Miller, is up and around, using a walker. That is great news. D.R. fell while visiting Carson & Barnes Oct. 24. But the bad news is Geary Byrd fell & broke his arm!

Ken Holehouse, Fond du Lac, WI reports he saw Tim Tegge's Circus of the Kids in Appleton & it was great! The kids styled, performed & acted like seasoned pros after only 4 weeks of rehearsal & work. This was a star-studded show of 6th, 7th & 8th graders.

Eddie Motta, New Bedford, MA reports Mark Oliver Gebel will have the cat act on Ringling & Kathy Hanneford will have her own liberty act.



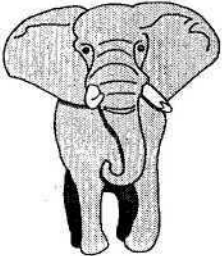
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