

# BACK YARD

Volume III, Issue #56

November 30, 1998

## COURTSHIP OF A CLOWN

By Bill Ballantine

The true romance of a kid who wanted to be a clown & actually became one, a transcontinental love story of sawdust, spangles, elephants & midgets. (Holiday, July, 1950. From the Ill. State Univ. Circus Archives.)

Among the assorted devils that little boys are stuffed with is one in charge of a dept. called, "Running Away With the Circus." If you can believe all you hear, every small boy in America has one. With most boys it is a passing thing, like whooping cough or mumps, but some grow up still possessed by this wonderful imp.

I was one of the some, & a bit luckier than most. For, four springs back, I had the chance to become a clown with the world's biggest circus, Ringling Bros. & Barnum & Bailey—none of that clown-for-a-day hokum either, a real working clown with a weekly paycheck & 3 meals a day. I took it. I had been trailing the Circus the summer before, gathering material for a series of drawings on the American circus clown, & one of them told me that the only way I could learn all about clowns was to up & be one. I thought about it all winter, & when the characters in my dreams started appearing with red noses that lighted up, I wrote Pat Valdo, personnel director of the show, to see how about it. I didn't get an answer, so when the Circus came to Madison Square Garden I hustled over to see if all was lost. I found Valdo & feeling like a blushing schoolgirl, told him I wanted to be a clown. He listened incredulously, said, "Well, well," and that's about all.

Valdo spent the next month avoiding me. Finally, on the last day of the NY run, he let me pin him down. I was in, & had been all the time. He had just wanted to be sure I really wanted to join out. It was all most casual after that. I asked what I should do next & Valdo said, "Nothing. Just get on the train tomorrow night."



Walking alongside the track, walking their dogs, gossiping. Nights like that you feel it's your circus, and yours alone, a special life.

My first appearance as a clown was opening night in Boston, the next stand-very casual also. The younger clowns took me in tow, found me a spot to dress in, sent out for a bottle of wine to launch me, evolved a make-up for me.

(Continued on Page 5)



Bertha Matlock

Al G. Barnes 1938



Ringling Bros. 1955

Mr. & Mrs. Unus

Barbara Fairchild, Pauline Penny,  
Vonda Cristiani, Jane King Cristiani



1957

Mills Bros. Circus 1963



Thanks to Patti Brainard of Bradenton for sending  
in this Tarzan movie photo with Johnny Weissmueller  
signed to Clarence "Shorty" Sevenun. Great Chimp Costumes!!

## **\*\*THE RETURN OF THE JUNGLE PRINCESS By MIKE CECERE\*\***

The rumor had been circulating for years, along with sightings nationwide.

People would call from far flung outposts like Nitro, West Virginia; Las Vegas, Nevada; Walla Walla, Washington and even the UFO center of the U.S., Gulf Breeze, Florida.

All had the same tale, "We saw her!" "Her" meaning Tammy Wallenda Anderson, better known as "Jungle Princess" Tammy.

Tammy is the beautiful, favorite daughter of living circus legend, Jenny Wallenda & an heir to the Wallenda Circus legacy, spanning back many generations.

It would take too long to detail what all her brothers, sisters, cousins, in-laws and out-laws do. Let's just say they are All Circus, All the Time, as well as being a fine bunch of folks.

Tammy has always had a love affair with wild animals and spent many happy hours as a child observing the great trainers at work in dozens of circuses.

Her role models, early on, were the great women trainers, such as Ada Smieja, Eloise Berchtold and Lilliana Kristenson. She took a little style from each to form her own methods & got her big break to take over the cat act which her cousins, the Jordans, had adopted.

She found her place in life & had a meteoric rise thru the ranks of the cat acts. Combining outstanding showmanship & a natural ability with the great cats it seemed the sky was the limit. Offers poured in for commercials, film work & foreign travel in Japan & Europe.

But fate stepped in, in the form of a non-animal related accident with equipment. A long recovery followed & she returned to the circus as partner to her longtime personal friend, Ken "Turtle" Benson, well known elephant man & showman. Together they put on the "Wild Wild West" whip & rope western act, which was the sensation everywhere they went.

Once back in action, she returned to building a wild animal act. Now, backed by a major foreign circus producer, she is set to return to full-time cat training. Already there is talk of her appearing in some major circus productions, as well as a possible guest shot on the popular, Warner Bros. TV show, "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer!" Well, wherever she goes, luck be a lady, her name "Jungle Princess Tammy!"

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## **BEATTY CIRCUS WORKERS DIDN'T MISS THEIR THANKSGIVING DINNER**

(From the Valentine Archives, No year stated)

Naples, Florida: For all of the people who slaved over a hot oven or range at home on Thanksgiving Day: Be thankful you didn't have Kathy Rex's job.

While many were cooking dinner for family, she was also cooking turkey dinner with all the fixings for what might be called her family-about 90 circus workers with big appetites. Yet with most of this huge chore ahead of her Thursday morning, the 22-year-old said she had something to be thankful for. "I'm just happy we're closing. It's been a long season."

So even with the giant-sized turkey dinner which will take about 12 hours to prepare, Kathy said she could see the end of working over a hot stove in sight. Besides fixing the numerous turkey rolls, purchased earlier this week by her mother, Delores, she had her hands full just preparing the turkey dressing.

The dressing for the circus troops was made with 6 dozen eggs, 5 loaves of bread, 10 pounds of onions, 2 bottles of seasoning, 30 pounds of corn meal mix & 4 stalks of celery, she said. Then there's the fruit salad, made with 5 pounds of apples, 3, 3-gallon cans of fruit cocktail, 5 big bunches of bananas & 2 large packages of coconut mix.

There will be 22 cans of cranberry sauce, mountains of mashed potatoes & stacks of pumpkin pie to round out a traditional Thanksgiving Day dinner for the workers.

The workers too have something to be thankful for. One of them poked his head in the cook wagon in the morning to ask if there would be Thanksgiving dinner. "Oh, no, we're having leftover liver!", Kathy said. She explained that most of the workers, herself included, don't like liver, although she has to cook it from time to time. Well, at least there wasn't liver on this Thursday!

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**Richard King reports** he attended the premier of the film "The Worlds Greatest Showman" at the Al Ringling Theatre. The film was a joint effort of the Circus World Museum, Wisc. Public TV & the Wisc. Sesquicentennial Commission. The film deals mostly with the Mabies, Coup, Costello, Barnum & the Ringlings. Most of it was shot around Baraboo & most of us had parts. It will be shown on WPT in December & will be made available to public TV stations. In Wisc. it will be 77 minutes long but will be cut to 57 min. for national release. It can be ordered in the 77 min. version from CWM for \$19. By the way, it's good!

\*\*\*\*\*REUNIONS 1998\*\*\*\*\*

**OLD TIME CIRCUS REUNION AND  
CHRISTMAS PARTY**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10TH**

BARTOK - HOXIE - ALLAN HILL SHOW

**FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11TH**

RINGLING CIRCUS

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 14TH**

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ORIN DAVENPORT - POLACK BROS. -

EVENTS INTERNATIONAL - CLYDE BROS.

(HOWARD SUIZE) - BILL & DICK GARDEN

CIRCUS

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PRESENT CAN NOT COST MORE THEN \$1.00

**Please contact Jenny Wallenda at:**

**2708 DeSoto Road, Sarasota, FL 34234**

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**HARTFORD CIRCUS FIRE INFO WANTED**

I am writing a non-fiction book about the Hartford Circus Fire. Any and all information would be appreciated. Please write to: **Stewart O'Nan**, 35 Old Avon Village #1944, Avon, CT 06001.

For those on-line write: [pizzis@aol.com](mailto:pizzis@aol.com)

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**CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1999  
CONVENTION TO BE IN LOS ANGELES**

Well, Bloomington, IL lost out this next year to L.A., but perhaps we can host it in 2000!! The dates are May 19-22. The circus will be Feld's new tent. This is the first Ringling related traveling tent circus in the US in 43 years. Mark your calendars!!

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It has been reported that CFA member **Barry "Bonzo" DeChant** will clown with the **Kelly Miller Circus** for the 1999 season.

**\*ONLY IN AMERICA by Mike Cecere\***

For those of you who pay close attention to politics in this great country of ours, you just had to love the Elections on Nov. 3rd.

The most outstanding candidate was the Independent candidate for Governor of Minnesota. His name is Jesse Ventura, known to millions of his fans as Jesse "The Body" Ventura. He made his main fame in the world of Pro Wrestling both a flamboyant wrestler & as a commentator where he fine-tuned his winning speaking style. And before all that, he served his country valiantly in Vietnam with the Naval Special Forces. He shares this distinction with a well-known member of the circus biz, Mr. Ken "Turtle" Benson!

Not only did Ken also serve in Vietnam with the Naval Special Forces, he is also a Minnesotian, as is Gov. Ventura. It's amazing what these fellows have in common.

But I'd say what they have in common is They Tell It Like It Is! Ventura, made articulate from his many years as a TV commentator, knew how to speak directly into the camera in the "sound byte" style you need to get your message across on the 6 o'clock TV news.

And it worked! He came, he conquered & now he gets his chance to bring common sense to the governing of his beloved Minnesota.

By the same token, Ken "Turtle" Benson has been doing this same direct-to-the-public appeal to counteract the messages of the pro-vegan hate groups that plague the tours of his show, among others.

And he's doing a much better job than any other circus operation, including one that has a whole office staff, supposedly dedicated to such issues.

Hey folks, it's nice to have an office, but you need to get the message out! Maybe what's needed is more combat hardened American Patriots like Jesse Ventura & Ken "Turtle" Benson speaking their minds. After all, that's what they fought for so all of us can give our opinion.

You can't do that over in Red China or down in Cuba or out in California or any of the few Marxist states left in the world. It's only in America!

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**Rich King reports** he received one of Jim Russells new Bell wagon kits. Excellent detail, but not for the inexperienced modeler as the only parts in the kit are castings for the carvings & the frame seats undergear must all be scratch-built. Haul this out when someone says HO is all "shake the box!"

## COURTSHIP OF A CLOWN.....

All I did that night was walk a borrowed snake gag once around the track. A couple of stands later I was put into one of the big clown productions as a comedy cop. My job was to wrestle a handful of balloons from a midget, and, in returning them to the rightful owner, be tripped so as to fall on & explode them. Big laugh. I cracked a rib in this one before I learned to fall properly.

But by season's end I had sawdust in my shoes & come spring, I went out again. This time I was no longer a First-of-May. I had props of my own, which I'd built during the winter. One was a pink plush elephant which I carried with I real arm & one false, using the other arm to animate its sleeve-like trunk. The other prop was a slightly schizophrenic gag which, when strapped to my middle, made me look like a mermaid being carried by a sailor. My torso, with a pair of pearl-studded falsies added, became the mermaid's torso & my legs the sailor's. The mermaid's tail & the sailor's torso were dummies. It was this fool mermaid that did me in. It was she who changed my life. If it hadn't been for her-well, I kept a journal that second year & maybe you'd like to read about it in there.....

Mar. 30, NY City—Now it's really spring! The Circus left winter quarters in Sarasota yesterday, says a squib in the *Herald-Trib* this a.m. Time to turn me into a clown again. Will take them 4 days or so to get up here, allowing for waits on sidings & a couple of feed & water stops for the animals. Better get at my trunk.

Mar. 31, NYC—To O'Ma Shiltong's today to see how she's getting on with my props. Didn't start them any too soon. I'm lucky to find such a good seamstress as Madame Shiltong. I never could have managed all that sewing & fitting myself. Had trouble enough with wire twisting, soldering & papier-mache. The elephant is all covered with pink plush & Mme. has to do only a little stitching on his trunk. The mermaid's tail is partly covered & looks weird dangling from the ceiling among the fancy dresses for East Side ladies. The mermaid's custom-built pearl-studded brassiere came in the afternoon mail from Pittsburgh. It's the only thing for the new gags I didn't try to make myself.

Apr. 2, NYC—Spent the morning at Tony Parker's storage house on the West Side, hinging & hasping my new prop box. The old clowns will probably hop me for bringing out such a big box. I'm just a Johnny-come-lately & according to Circus tradition, too green yet to have props of my own. Finished packing my trunk &

brought the pink elephant home to the apartment, carrying it boldly up First Avenue.

Apr. 3, NYC—Rainy Sat. morning. Circus train came in with the drizzle sometime during the night. Always seems to rain for the Circus in NY. Found Bobby Kellogg, one of the younger clowns, having breakfast in Day's, a small bar near the Garden which many of the Circus people regard as their NY club. Over coffee he told me that Big Ruth, leader of the elephant herds, was not enthusiastic about going on tour & held up train departure by running back to her comfy stall in the barn. For a while we watched the wagons, all bright with Ringling red & silver, being trucked into the Garden. Then I chalked out my trunk space on the cement floor of what will be the clown's dressing room in the basement. Setting up has to wait for a hockey playoff tomorrow night, but the riggers were up in the catwalks all afternoon hanging the aerial rigging.

Apr. 4, NYC—We can't get in upstairs until the hockey game is over tonight. Workmen will be up all night spreading the dirt & changing the Garden floor from a frozen lake into a circus lot. It's to be a mixed aerial display this year & there is a real clutter of webs, trapeze, & swinging ladders hanging from the Garden's ceiling girders. Band pumped about in the balcony all afternoon, learning their couple hundred new music cues.

Chesty the Belgian, my favorite clown, told me I'm on wardrobe list & I better be at Brooks (the costume one) tomorrow by 11 for fittings. Still no rehearsal. And only 3 days to opening. Doesn't seem to be like much time. At Day's tonight I had a beer with Felix Adler, who started clowning the year I was born, & he floored me by flashing a letter I'd written him when I was 12, asking if I couldn't please come & be a clown. I'd forgotten all about it. He found it while cleaning out his trunk. It is dated 1922.

Apr. 5, NYC—Wardrobe call at Brooks & good to see everybody again. There's a new clown over from the Cole show, young guy name of Ernie Burch. The Alzanas are back, cocky as ever, after their fall in Miami end of season. Hilda still in a brace & won't make the opening, but promises to join the act under canvas. I'm to be a toy soldier in Spec & a dowager duchess in Finale. As I was being fitted into a bosomy green drag for the duchess, Mary, one of Brooks' fitters, scuttered by with a bloody nose. A new showgirl had clumsily bumped her with an elbow. No wonder John Murray Anderson, our producer, calls showgirls elephants. (See Page 9)

## **BENGAL TIGER KILLS SECOND TIME**

**Gainesville Sun, by K. Voyles & M. Saunders**

Alachua, FL: Six weeks after killing the trainer who raised it from a cub, a 400 pound white Bengal tiger killed one of its owners, on Nov. 13, a woman who had insisted that the tiger wasn't vicious. Doris Guay was leading Jupiter back to its pen Friday evening when the cat lunged unexpectedly & bit her in the neck. She probably died immediately. On Oct. 8, the same cat killed Chas. Lizza, 34, with a bite to the neck, in an incident authorities classified as a "freak accident."

On the 13th, about 5:45 pm, the couple were moving their big cats from outdoor day cages into a trailer also used as a night kennel. Five of the 6 cats had been put into their individual cages in the trailer; Jupiter was next. Doris began to hand-feed chicken necks to the tiger when, without warning, it lunged & bit her neck, according to the account given by Ron Guay. The attack was a total surprise, according to Ron, who immediately called 911. The Sheriff's Office said, "This was a completely unprovoked attack. It was an accident. These were isolated incidents. Isolated to this residence."

When paramedics & deputies arrived, the tiger was pacing between the back of the trailer & its day cage, preventing emergency workers from reaching Doris' body. It was then that Ron gave deputies permission to kill the animal, which after the first attack, was spared after pleas by some members of Lizza's family.

Funeral services will be held in Maine for Doris Guay, 58. Ron & Doris met at a ballet school in Biddeford, Maine when she was 7 and he was 11. Together they perfected adagio dancing. After nearly 20 years of performing internationally, the Guays began incorporating big cats into their routine, eventually making the animals the centerpiece of their performances.

## **ZOO ANIMAL BITES OFF KEEPER'S ARM 11/20—OKLAHOMA CITY ZOO**

A large, hoglike animal called a tapir pulled a zookeeper into its cage & bit her arm off as she tried to feed the animal Friday morning. Lisa Morehead, was in critical condition after surgery. The arm was too mangled & contaminated to be reattached. Zoo officials aren't certain why the Malayan tapir, named Melody, attacked Lisa, who was feeding the animal before the zoo opened. The tapir's 2-month-old baby was also in the cage. Zoo director Steve Wylie said Lisa, 34, was pushing food thru

a small door into a holding area when Melody grabbed her by the arm & jerked her thru the 2-foot-wide opening. The herbivore then mauled Lisa, severing her left arm at the middle of the bicep, injuring her neck & puncturing a lung.

"The baby was between Lisa & the mother. From what we can tell, it would be the usual scenario of mothers protecting their young," Wylie said. A tapir is piglike in appearance & about the size of a donkey. It will remain on display at the Zoo.

## **AILING ANIMAL? THESE DOCS MAKE ZOO CALLS! Orlando, FL Sentinel 11/8/98**

Sanford, FL: Dr. Darryl Heard is making a house call. It's unusual these days, but his patient has trouble getting to the office. "Mary has excessive tearing in the eye. She's a difficult female to work with, so she can be problematic," Heard said. Mary is a 53-year-old Asian elephant, weighing about 9000 pounds. A former circus animal, she now lives at the Central Florida Zoo Park in Sanford. Every 2 weeks, Heard & 3 of his almost 80 veterinary-medicine students go to Sanford to care for the Zoo's residents. Maude, a 24-year-old elephant, moves closer to see what is going on as Heard puts a stain in the offending eye to check for ulcers.

"She's always had a scar on the cornea, but there's some little reaction in the area..but we can treat her with an ointment," Heard said. "Most zoos don't pay big salaries. So it's very dedicated people who work with the animals. Many of them take pay cuts just to work at zoos," he said. Heard & his students are dealing more & more with geriatric diseases: severe arthritis, & heart & kidney disease. In Sept., Dr. Bennett, head of Zoo & Wildlife Services at Univ. of Florida, performed a leg joint implant on a Siberian crane with arthritis, using an artificial finger joint designed for humans.

Heard will be back in 2 weeks to check Mary's eye & make another house call!

## **BABY GORILLA BORN ON ELECTION DAY GETS ENDURING NAME-SAN DIEGO ZOO**

The Zoo got surprising results on election day with the birth of a western lowland gorilla baby. The infant, who arrived 9 days earlier than keepers expected, was born on exhibit to the delight of visitors & employees alike. Keepers named the little fellow Tatu, which means "three" in Swahili, because he is the 3rd baby born to his mother, Jessica, & he arrived on Nov. 3, election day.

## CIRCUS TRAINER CLAWED BY TIGER

11/23-Chicago: A Ringling Bros. Circus trainer, Geoffrey Pettigrew, 37, is in serious condition after a tiger attacked him while transferring the animal from the outdoor cages to the building cages Saturday night at the United Center.

Police say it is possible Geoffrey forgot to lock the cage door. He is in Cook County Hospital with injuries to his neck & side. News report says no charges will be filed against the Ringling Circus. They have been cleared of all wrongdoing. Sheelagh Jones reports Geoffrey has worked with animals for 16 years. These are the Chipperfield cats.

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**Don Wixom, of the Elephant Co.,** reports he went to see Royal Palace & they had a very good crowd! Hadji Dubsky told him they were make up dates which they couldn't play because of Hurricane George. They were headed to Clewiston, Ft. Myers & Miami. Don had a nice visit with Frank Galambo, Jr. Dieter Galambo, the Bannister family & Irving Hall. It was an excellent show with Kimball Keller as Ringmaster & a very good young clown, Larry.

Don also sent along an ad "First USA presents Holiday Circus. See the Ice Palace turn into a Gargantuan Big Top" Shows Dec. 4-6. Anyone that goes, please send in a report. Thanks Don. How are your articles coming????

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# "DOC, MY TIGER'S GOT AN ITCH"



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N. Charleston, SC-Coliseum-1/21-1/24  
Macon, GA-Centreplex-1/28-1/31  
Augusta, GA-Civic Center-2/2-2/3  
Columbia, SC-Carolina Coliseum-2/5-2/7  
Raleigh, NC-Dorton Arena-2/10-2/14  
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Birmingham, AL-Birm.-Jefferson CC-1/20-1/24  
Greenville, SC-Bi-Lo Center-1/27-1/31  
Knoxville, TN-Civic Coliseum-2/3-2/7  
Greensboro, NC-Coliseum-2/10-2/14  
Richmond, VA-Coliseum-2/17-2/21  
Norfolk, VA-Norfolk Scope-2/24-2/28  
Hampton, VA-Hampton Coliseum-3/2-3/7  
(All information is subject to change)  
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**BIG APPLE CIRCUS:** Damrosch Park, Lincoln Center thru January 10  
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**BACK YARD**

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**1998 GREAT YOUTH CIRCUS WOW!!!**

Maury Mead reports that was one of the audience reactions after seeing the Appleton, Wisc. Wilson Middle School Great Youth Circus in October. Others wondered how 6th, 7th & 8th grade kids could be taught circus arts & put on a very professional performance in just 3 weeks. But they did it—It took just 3 weeks of intensive training for circus director Tim Tegge along with instructors GiGi Tegge, Bob Good, Oleg Gapon & Gulnara Salakhova to teach the students all this: Juggling, rola bola, diabolo, trapeze, spanish web, lyre, rag doll, living statues, swinging & balancing ladder, trampoline, rope spinning, rope jumping, illusions (including Houdini's Metamorphosis), hula hoops & clown makeup. An unusual aspect in the school gym was opening the performance with a horse & rider bearing the U.S. flag during the national anthem. Following the anthem, a rag doll routine introduced the entire cast coming out of a chest at the back door. Innovations included the use of black light & fog in the living statues & spanish web displays. Unsung heroes behind each & every performance were parents doing roustabout & concessions work & students handling lights & sound. Tim Tegge was ringmaster for all performances, adding a professional touch. The effort was praised by school principal Wm. Harbron who said the circus raises the entire school's pride as well as increasing the individual performers sense of fulfillment & self-esteem. "It's like fielding a championship sports team—only this team accepts members with widely varying degrees of ability & physical characteristics. The entire school wins because the pride rubs off on everyone."

CFA members from around the state attended the Sat., Oct. 24 afternoon performance after a brunch with the circus staff & Principal Harbron. The CFAers commented quite favorably on how professionally the displays were presented. Enthusiastic audience reaction & comments indicated that this year's Wilson Middle School Great Youth Circus was a successful effort.  
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Dale Riker reports that the Sarasota paper (11/11) said Winona Lowe is making a planned gift of more than a million dollars to the endowment of the Museum of the Circus of the Ringling Museum. The gift is being made in the name of her sister & brother-in-law, Helen & Ed Armstrong; Ed was a lifelong member of CFA. The museum is focusing more on the circus now.

## COURTSHIP OF A CLOWN.....

This new one was the tallest girl I've ever seen, all zipped up in silver spangled tights from ankle to chin & wearing besides a feathered headdress that made her look at least 9 feet tall, though I'm sure she's only 7 or 8. First Garden rehearsals this afternoon. Everyone anxious to see what Johnny North dragged back from Europe. There was a new Italian midget underfoot. Supposed to be a trick rider, but he must be much too small for that. We're all waiting for the highly touted Unus to stand on one finger. New sideshow giant (8'8") from Iceland looks like he wishes he was back there. New pair of clowns from England-Albertino & Lulu, his wife. Now we'll have 2 lady clowns, for Rose Hanlon is back too. Usual First-of-May ballet broads, one pretty lush one called Dreamy Eyes & one who was brought roaring down 49th St. to the stagedoor astraddle a motorcycle. Saw that long showgirl again, too.

She doesn't seem to do anything but walk behind Big Ruth in Spec. Jerry Bangs wants me to work in a number. Lou Jacobs has a spot for me in one of his gags. Jerry has been very helpful to me in my new job as clown. He's an idea man, doesn't clown himself but produces those special numbers that fill the big top with clowns. His production this year is called *Westward Whoa*, with clowns as cowboys & Indians. With my own 2 walkarounds, Spec & Finale, I'll be doing 6 numbers, one less than last season.

Apr. 6, NYC—The Circus was being put through its paces all day at the Garden. John Murray Anderson at his booming best, expecting elephants to have the same mentality as ballet broads. Honestly don't see how it can open tomorrow night. Everything seems so ragged. But Jerry Bangs, who has been around the Circus 17 years, says it has always been this way & tomorrow night, sure enough, somehow all will be finished & smooth running. The complete run-through (including acts) dragged on into the night. That tall spangled girl rides on the payoff float, the last & most elaborate one, in Spec. She's supposed to be the Snow Queen. Spec is all about Christmas & features a singling letter to Santa.

Apr. 7, NYC—Opening night. Everyone saddened by the sudden death of the new clown, Albertino. Dropped over right at the mike doing a broadcast yesterday afternoon. Lulu, his wife, went on tonight just the same. Nearly everything went well, though my strip pants didn't come down in the Indian number & I almost didn't get my mermaid in. My performance as a waltz queen in Finale

was several cuts below Merry Widow standard. Had been through the routine only once with Chesty & he's so allergic to rhythm. Jerry's clown number laid an egg. No one was surprised or dismayed. One rehearsal is just not enough for a gag using 29 clowns, 2 ponies & a dozen mechanical props. Should be running good in a few days, when everybody gets the feel of it. It was all over by midnight & I thought our hardboiled opening-night audience liked up pretty well.

Apr. 8, NYC—Morning papers are raving. My legs are stiff & will be for a couple of weeks until I get used to running, rollovers & wearing big clown shoes. The midgets' annual complaint about the stair-climbing in the Garden has started already. Can't say that I blame them. 6 or 7 trips per show is murder on their short legs. All the midgets except Starke are back. He's at sea with the Merchant Marines. The old clowns tonight talked of how much better elephant leaps were in the old days & what a marvelous hand-balancer is Unus. Nobody seems to know that tall showgirl's name.

Apr. 9, NYC—Prince Paul, the midget, flew by me in Finale hanging to the tail of Modoc the elephant & shouted that the tall showgirl's name is "Whiskers." That can't be. Must have heard him wrong. How would he know anyhow? Must be hard for midgets to communicate with showgirls. I'll ask John Murray Anderson. Prop boss says must have my prop box painted. Visited the menagerie between shows. Cages are stunning, all different colors topped off with old-fashioned rococo. Everyone knows that motorcycle girl's name. It's Suzy.

Apr. 10, NYC—Wenzel, the clown, has started some sort of wire construction up on top of the dressing cubicles in the backstage corridor. Hear it's to be a snowman for Spec. This is apt to go on for months. Once he started a snail in the Garden which didn't get into the show until 7 months later in Richmond, VA.

Apr. 12, NYC—Lots of news over Sunday. Suzy, the mad one, was rolled for \$80 by 2 sailors in a Hell's Kitchen bar Sat. night. And someone broke into Jerry Bang's prop box & stole all the guns he uses in the number. Had to do the matinee with only one, borrowed from another clown. Gag fell pretty flat without the shooting. Jerry found some guns down in the Village at premium prices. Suzy appeared in her third new blouse—by my count—cerise with yellow pin stripe. John Anderson says the tall showgirl's name is Whiskers.

Apr. 13, NYC—Our dressing room is beginning to smell a bit despite the new air purifiers. Another 2 weeks it will be like a tannery! (To Be Continued)

## VALENTINE VAULTS-FROM 1944-THE GOLDEN YEARS OF THE BILLBOARD

Polack Circus plays Cincinnati for 9-Day Run. Acts include Zoppe Troupe of 5, on unsupported ladders; Phil & Bonnie, gymnasts; Chester Barnett, who has some clever dog entertainers; Aerialetta (Ethel Jennier) in a swell swinging trap number; Felix Morales in daring head slide on wire; Mel Hall on unicycles; Hubert Castle, whose feature is a backward somersault from & to the wire during which he passes his body thru a small hoop; Pallenberg bears, the feature being "Fu", riding a motorcycle; Georgette & Marcel, fast double trap turn; The Morales on trampoline; Zavatta Family of riders; Walter Jennier & Buddy, a remarkable seal; The Flying Valentinos with George doing the catching & 2 women flyers is an excellent closer. Clowns lineup is: Ed Raymond, Gene Randow, Albert White, Dennis Stevens, Chester & Dorothy Barnett...New trailer belonging to Herriott family was demolished by a tornado at Kelly-Miller quarters, Hugo, OK..Old Alice, elephant, which had been with the Mighty Haag Show & in the Haag family since 1904 died..From Cole Bros. Freddie Freeman reports: Bloomington, IL, the home of many flyers, was a big day. Visitors were Bert & Agnes Doss, the Harold Ramages, the Gene Enos', the Chuck Simpsons, Rose Fleming, the Les Thomas', the Walt Graybeal's, & Art Concello's parents. After the night show everyone went to the Eagles Club. Harold Ramage showed some of the grandest motion pictures of the Cole show, all in color..From Ringling, Dick Miller reports: One of the big hits in Spec is Charlie Bell & his dogs, dressed as midget elephants..Felix Adler & his pig, Sara de Sota & Emmett Kelly & his Victory Garden still rate the best laughs..Joanne Siegrist, after shaking hands with Frank Sinatra, made a vow never to wash her hand..Kitty Clark is out of the hospital & looking the picture of health, after losing 10 pounds..Eddie Allen, boss elephant man, out of the hospital, will return home for awhile. Curley Schaffer will take his place..The 8 Percheron horse liberty act, trained by Arturo Konyot & assisted by Dorita, is outstanding..Pat Cartier, of the Cartier Sisters, trap act, fell 35 feet, breaking both wrists, an ankle & her pelvis..Yank, the armed forces newspaper, picked Ernestine Clarke as their pin-up girl & had a full-page pix in May 26 issue..From Beatty-Russell, Dick Lewis reports: Fan Jim Chloupek hosted a dinner party with Martha & Jack Joyce, Grayce & Curtis Genders,

Jean & Mitzie Sleeter, Lou Ann Krause & Mars Bennett..Kay Burstem & Jeannie Sleeter are the baton-twirlers in Spec..Tuffy Genders left for his naval training station in North Dakota..Antoinette Concello had a narrow escape. At the finish of her flying number, she barely missed being pitched headlong into the ring when she struck the apron of the net.

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Nick Weber reports the folks who minister to showfolks (Chaplains & the Little Sisters of Jesus who have been serving the industry in the U.S. for over 20 years) will have their annual meeting in Sarasota Jan. 2-7. This is an official outreach of the Migrant Office of the Catholic Conference, & includes the chaplain to the Car Racing industry. Thanks, Nick.

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\*Rumor has it that Pepsico, bottlers of Pepsi, are major contributors to PETA, but who knows, as PETA's books aren't open to the public.

\*Tommy Hanneford will produce the Showfolks Circus on Dec. 12. Hope to hear reports on this.

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Harvey Esto, Mansfield, OH reports that Dow Nida is home & anxiously awaiting Thanksgiving with family. Dow reports that all of our prayers has helped so much, so lets keep praying for Dow & Jane Nida; also for the Joy Holiday family & Geoffrey Pettigrew, who was attacked by the tiger. Our Circus Friends Chat, on AOL, is Wed. at 9 pm EST, also on Sat. & Sunday at the same time.

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Bobby Gibbs reports he is still truck driving, 10 days on, 3 days off! He said it is hard to quit the circus life, but he does get to visit shows along the route as he drives. On the 11th, he was on his way to L.A. with 44,000 pounds of pork butts, headed for Japan!! Bobby & Rosa helped your editor at the novelty stand on Big Apple Circus. Since I never learned to yell, "Circus Souvenirs" very well (Harry & Mary Rawls can verify that!), Bobby really brought the people in to the stand. One time, Bobby took me to Burger King & I bought an Alf puppet. I put it on my hand & started gesturing to the lady in the next car. Bobby couldn't believe two grown women were doing that! Another time, Bobby took Rosa & I shopping and I bought this beautiful painting of Elvis, complete with a gold frame. I have it hanging on my wall. Bobby also took me to a phone so I could call Leonard Farley when he was in the hospital. Thanks, Bobby and welcome aboard!

### International Circus Festival-Netherlands

This 3rd Circus Festival will be held from Dec. 18-29 in Enschede. There will be 14 performances, between 2 1/2 & 3 hours each. The prize of a Circus Artist in gold, silver or bronze will be given. 25,000 visitors are expected. A video is available from last years performance. For more information contact: Circusfestival Enschede Holland, Europa-ring 24, 7641 DA Wierden Holland. Fax: ++31546574439, or e-mail: office@circusfestival.com

Their home page is www.circusfestival.com Lots of photos of the performers on their pages.

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### **\*\*Valentine Family Tent Christmas Party\*\***

**Charlie Simpson reports** the Party will be on Dec. 4 at the Swiss Inn in Houston, TX. Guest speaker will be Roger Smith, who recently moved to Houston. Your editor worked with Roger on the Beatty show from '80-'81 when he assisted Dave Hoover. Hopefully, Roger will be writing some articles for us about his experiences, especially with Mabel Stark & Mr. Beatty. As Jenny Wallenda knows, it is nice to find old friends again! Charlie also reports that next year the Houston Shrine Circus will be in Pasadena at the Stock/Rodeo Arena & will be a Hamid date.

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**Raul Gomez reports** that Circus Flora will be in Scottsdale, AZ from Nov. 26-Dec. 3. Next year they will be returning to Houston at Herman Park. They have many new dates booked for next year.

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**Gary Thomson, Ontario, Canada reports** the Martin Downs Ring & Fred Logan Tent had their Fall meeting Nov. 22. It started at 10 am & finished at 7 pm, with 2 meals! (Now that IS a meeting!) They have shows lined up for Nov. 28th weekend, Feb., May, July, Aug. & Oct. They will also have a hospitality day Aug. 25 for Kelly-Miller when they arrive in Strathroy, Ontario. Keep us informed Gary and thanks!

\*\*\*\*\*

**Denny Childers reports** that Emmett Kelly, Jr. Days were held in Tombstone, AZ Nov. 13-14. This was the 8th annual celebration & Emmett turned 74 years young on the 13th. Pat Kelly also attended & both were dressed as Weary Willie. Money earned goes to Tombstone H.S. Scholarships. In 1964, Emmett, Jr. began goodwill touring for Kodak; in 1972 he formed his own circus. They were the only circus to perform at the White House.



## **SHOWFOLKS OF SARASOTA FLEA MARKET**

**SHOWFOLKS CLUB  
IN SARASOTA**

**DECEMBER 13, 1998**

**9:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.**

**Vendors reserve your  
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**\$15. per space,  
in advance,  
Inside or Outside.  
(Tables not furnished  
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## **JANUARY AT THE SHOWFOLKS CLUB**

Alva Johnson wants you to know that there will be special events happening in Sarasota, even though there will not be a Festival this year.

The Showfolks Club will stay open extra hours during January for the people visiting Sarasota. There will also be visits to some Winter Quarters.

The circus school that Dolly Jacobs has opened will have classes starting Jan. 2nd. There will be performances on weekends until January. The new tent is now up on Fruitville Road, near the Interstate.

There will also be trips to Gibsonton. The Windjammers Convention will be at the end of January. Also in January, there will be the Sarasota Circus Celebrity festivities, with this year's celebrity, Dolly Jacobs. You won't want to miss the Ring of Fame Ceremonies too. You can contact Alva through the Showfolks of Sarasota Club.

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**Dave Knoderer, of Letterfly Art Studios, 11/18-Tampa, reports** "As part of the continuing commitment to motorhoming excellence, industry leader, Lazydays RV Supercenter, is proud to host Letterfly, America's foremost mural artist. In an unannounced ceremony on the beautiful 100 acre dealership, ground was broken for the next, in the ever increasing list, value added service available at the dealership. Officiating was sales consultant, Lee Perrella & George Rattee, supv. in charge of the construction project. The first shovel full of dirt was removed by Dave Knoderer, the artist himself. The site will be the exclusive domain of the guests of Lazydays who have arranged to have a Letterfly mural created on their RV. Part of the ongoing expansion program, the cement slab will have a carport type shelter for the comfort of the artist. The setting amongst the trees with numerous park benches will also be the site of the talks given by the artist as crowds gather to see a work in progress, also adding to the amenities offered."

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**Ken Holehouse, of Fond du Lac, WI reports** the Illinois fans gathered at the Pine Grove in Rosemont, IL, enjoyed lunch & fellowship & then went to the Ringling Blue's performance at the Horizon on Nov. 14th. Honored guests at the luncheon, which was hosted by IL State Chair Sheelagh Jones, were former CFA Prexy

CFA Prexy Rich Deptula & Fr. Jerry Hogan. Prayers were offered for Joy Holiday who, it was announced, had been attacked & killed by Jupiter, one of the tigers the Holidays had raised from birth. Fr. Jerry gave a brief talk on his work as circus chaplain. A priest of the diocese of Boston, Fr. Jerry said his inspiration to go into circus ministry was Fr. Sullivan, also a Boston priest & the first circus chaplain. Fr. Jerry spends 70 % of his time on the Ringling shows, where he acts as a sounding board for management & the people on the shows. He estimates that 80 % of his time is involved in counseling. He maintains strict confidentiality regarding all he hears. When he first arrives on a show, he makes sure everyone knows he's there by 'hanging around'. Appointments are made for counsel, baptisms, marriages, etc. Fr. Jerry said he deals with all faiths & faith traditions & must be as aware of the Muslim calendar, for example, as he is of the Christian calendar.

Ken reports that Ernie Miller just returned from Hugo, OK & DR is doing well & getting around with a walker. BUT Geary Byrd fell off a truck & broke his elbow. This has been quite a year for the Carson & Barnes family.

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**Jackie LeClaire reports** the annual Showfolks CFA Banquet at the Sahib Shrine Temple was excellent. Harold Barnes was the guest speaker. He really brought back memories of the "good 'ole days" talking about the 2 buckets of water in the dressing tent & the regulation 26" high trunks so they could be stacked in the wagon when loaded. He spoke of the gaspipe racks with the board on top that screwed onto the top with the hooks for holding your mirror & wardrobe.

Harold reminded us all of the folding chairs & the importance of tipping the working men for all services if we did not want our trunks to be "accidentally" dropped off the train during a run. I believe we used to call this "red lighting." He spoke of the preciousness of water being almost like gold. He talked of bathing, shaving, doing laundry, washing your makeup off & brushing your teeth, all with the same bucket of water, but as he said, "not necessarily in that order!" Jackie said after Harold's talk, "There isn't anything God loves more than the truth, and he really said it." Over 50 attended & Jim Ridenour, President, did a fine job of presiding over it. (Thanks Jackie. Hope to hear more from you.)

\*\*\*\*\*

**Wild West Circus, Mesquite, NV, Nov. 27-Dec.20.**  
More in next issue of Back Yard.

**\*\*\*RUBY STILL DRAWS CROWDS\*\*\***

**Record 42,991 Pack Zoo To Mourn Her**

**Phoenix Arizona Republic Paper by Bob Petrie:**

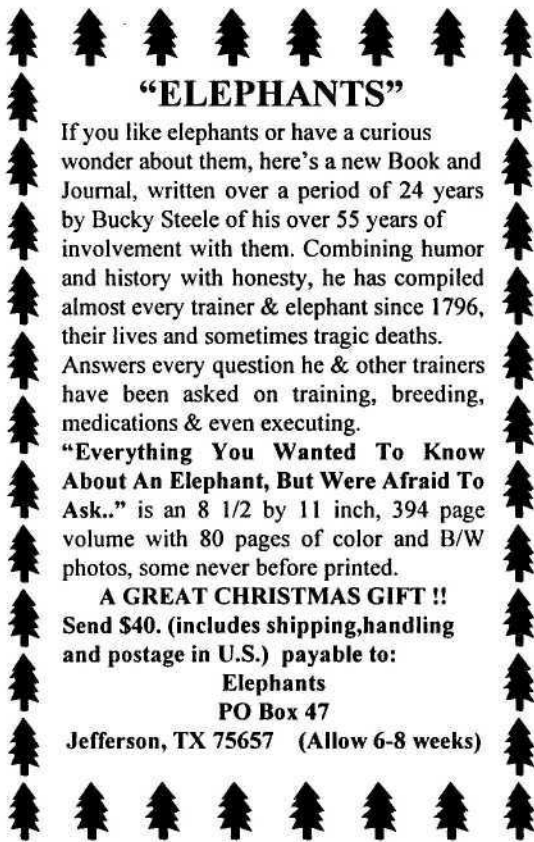
Nov. 12-They streamed in from everywhere-and parked where they could-to pay their respects to Ruby. A record Veterans Day crowd packed the Zoo to honor Ruby, the painting Asian elephant. More than 6000 people were waiting in line to enter when the gates opened at 9 am. By 11 am, when the Zoo held the first of its 2 silent tributes to Ruby, more than 9000 had pushed thru the turnstiles. Many parked a mile away at the Stadium & walked or rode the zoo-provided shuttle buses. A woman passed out fliers, urging people to write Ty, Inc., maker of Beanie Babies, to get them to create an elephant toy named Ruby.

The sadness extended to those who cared for Ruby over the years, including Bill Bonucci, a zookeeper who helped doctors during Ruby's failed Caesarian section. "We're all so upset. They're such incredible animals. It's such a great feeling when they let you into their world. It takes a great deal of time, a period of getting acquainted with each other," said Bill, who worked with Ruby for 3 years. Ruby's paintings brought nearly \$500,000 for the Zoo's conservation fund. Zoo patron Neil Miller said, "She painted, she supported herself. That's pretty rare. We lost an artist, not just an elephant."

**PHOENIX ZOO PRESS RELEASE 11/11/98**

The historic Stone House, resting on a hilltop, will become Ruby's House. It will feature children's art classes & Ruby memorabilia (to include Ruby's easel & paintbrushes). The Phoenix Zoo wants to perpetuate the magic that was Ruby for children of the Valley. In response to the many inquiries about Ruby's memorial contributions, the Zoo has established a "Ruby's House" fund, phone 914-4322.

Funds will be used to develop programming for Ruby's House. \*Question: "Why can't people visit the burial site of Ruby & her calf?" "Ruby & her calf are buried in an off-exhibit area that is secure & not maintained for visitors. \*Question: "When will results from the necropsies be released?" "The Zoo expects to receive an executive summary in as little as 2 weeks or as long as 6. Upon review, the Zoo will issue a statement to the media." \*Question: "Are there any Ruby paintings available?" "The Zoo has 4 original paintings by Ruby. The Zoo may sell some of the paintings in the future to support Ruby's House. The Zoo's gift store has a supply of Ruby lithos." \*Question: "How much did the medical



**"ELEPHANTS"**

If you like elephants or have a curious wonder about them, here's a new Book and Journal, written over a period of 24 years by Bucky Steele of his over 55 years of involvement with them. Combining humor and history with honesty, he has compiled almost every trainer & elephant since 1796, their lives and sometimes tragic deaths. Answers every question he & other trainers have been asked on training, breeding, medications & even executing. "Everything You Wanted To Know About An Elephant, But Were Afraid To Ask.." is an 8 1/2 by 11 inch, 394 page volume with 80 pages of color and B/W photos, some never before printed.

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procedures cost?" Zoo officials are in the process of tallying the costs. A significant number of reimbursable expenses are outstanding. Zoo officials anticipate a final analysis of medical & related costs late this month.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**Thomas Shaffer of Phoenix, AZ reports that on Oct. 28, Tino Wallenda walked across the Arizona State Fair midway on a 1-inch-thick wire. It was a wire which is part of the Fairground Cable Sky-Ride. This was the first time an outdoor 'tightrope' act has performed at the State Fair. The Fair attracts about 1 million people during its 2-week run & is held each October in central Phoenix, the capitol city of Arizona. Tino was quoted as saying the walk was one of the longest he has ever done. He also stopped & did head-stands during the walk. There was only 1 performance. Several of the Wallenda family, including Tino, will appear in Scottsdale in December with Circus Flora. (Hope you get to see Circus Flora Tom!**

## RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY

BY BRIAN NUNN

**\*SHOWBROADS:** The combination of strength, balance & grace, always drew my attention. They could stride thru Spec on a lot that was a plowed field & do it with style. They would work Spec (with at least two wardrobe changes); work their own act (juggling, wire, whatever). Plus ride and style the elephant act. Saturday and Sunday was three shows.

Once the show was off the West Coast, we'd have long jumps. These women always had a happy way to go; it seemed they liked their work.

We all know how hot it can get up in the big top and they all did a dance number; then went up the webs for aerial ballet. What's that? Three acts plus Spec, which by the way, was a MAJOR production on the Vargas show.

Compared to them, I had it easy as an elephant man, but I always got thick calluses somehow, so I must of been doing some work.

**\*ABOUT BILL JOHNSON:** There was a wonderful, big-hearted showbroad named Ann Pike. Some people called her Texas Annie. She didn't like the nickname much, but in this business, once you got it, it sticks with you.

Anyway, she loved elephants and got along with them pretty good, (she never got hurt) and did a good job with them. It's too bad she didn't learn to drive a semi. She could of done it all on her own.

She met Bill and became good friends. She was around Lou Regan & Bucky Steele, so you know she knew something about elephants. Over the years, I crossed paths with Bill and Ann. Neither one of them were mechanics.

I was, sort of. At least, I had some tools. I did a brake job on Ann's truck and helped put a head gasket on Bill's car while we were all quartered at Pam Rosaire's place.

The car was an AMC with a big, straight six. Bill, Cherie & I used a long board with chain to hold the head up so I could place the gasket and head right. The head weighed about a hundred pounds. It was a bitch.

Linda had some male llamas in the back pasture and the way to go to Kay's, "about a 1/4 mile," was thru some of this llama pasture. As you know, llamas can be nasty sometimes. So, Bill and I would get some sticks on our walk over to Kay's and teach the llamas a few manners.

Just for safety on the walk, you understand. I learned the value of self-awareness from Bill.

I had wrote once before about visiting the Fort Worth

Shrine show. And saw Bill. I got to make a little money helping with one of those white cat acts, but still got time to talk with Bill. We'd have a few beers in the evening. One time Walker stopped and asked Bill if he'd help with the elephant ride. When it's time for the ride, Bill walks in, takes one of the dreaded, tough elephants off the line; cleans her up, dresses her for the ride; takes the elephant out and works the ride. Like he did it everyday.

I kept my mouth shut, sitting on a bale, when he got back after intermission. I said something to Bill about it. He said, "Nothing to it. I worked her about ten years ago." He did this on his own, by the way. I told Rex about this a few years later. He said, "So...he's an elephant man. That's what they do."

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### RINGLING HOSTS CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS

Peggy Williams reports that Ringling Bros. Circus is hosting, for school kids in the Tampa Bay's Pinellas & Hillsborough counties, a special educational seminar based on circus careers & animals. The seminars will take place on Dec. 1 and 2nd. They already have about 1300 kids signed up for each one. These are great school field trips & are offered through RBBB's Educational Outreach Program. Teachers will bring back to the classroom a volume of handouts, curriculum materials, posters for the classroom and a video about the Center for Elephant Conservation. Peggy will write more about this after the events take place. Thanks, Peggy.

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**Sheelagh Jones reports** that Graham Chipperfield has gone on tour with two friends from Ringling Circus & it is called "Springing Willy". This Thrill Show appeared before the KISS concert in California. Also appearing was the Espanas' Wheel of Death.

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**Harvey Winckles of Monroe, MI reports** the Royal Hanneford Circus played the Toledo Sports Arena Nov. 12-15. A free Wild Animal Menagerie opened 1 hour before each show for all ticket holders in the Exhibit Hall. The show had performing big cats, Royal Hanneford elephants, the Jose Vital Troupe, the Mark Karoly horses & the Rodogells. They also had costume characters Ickis & Krumm for Nickelodeon. Thanks Harvey.

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What  
the best  
is you my letter  
Gummy



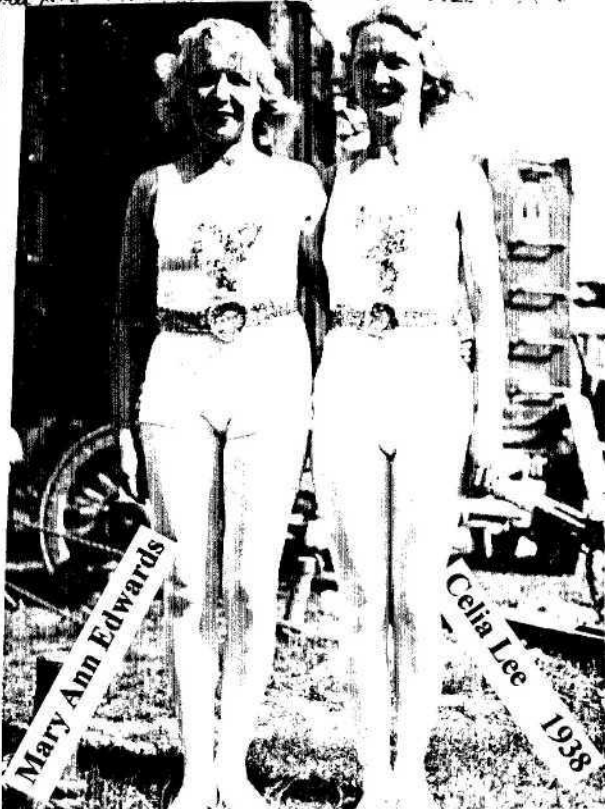
Clinton Garrison & family



Beatty Band 1969



Hagan Bros. Circus 1957



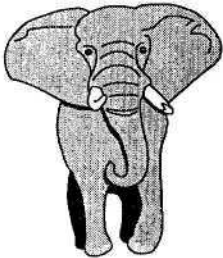
Mary Ann Edwards

Celia Lee 1938

Can you identify these performers???



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