

BACK YARD

Volume V, Issue #98

August 31, 2000

Traveling Down Memory Lane With The Polack Bros. Circus

Now, more about the private lives of the performers on the 1954 show. As a young girl from Worcester, MA Jacqueline Hurley got her big break when she performed at a banquet in Washington, DC, given for a general named Eisenhower. John Murray Anderson saw her and sold Billy Rose on booking her for the latter's Diamond Horseshoe in NY. She remained there 64 solid weeks. This is her first circus trouping. (I think she looked like Sky King's TV niece, Penny!) Al Antonucci spent 12 years in Hollywood as "dramatic coach" to chimpanzees, not only for films of the "Tarzan" series but also for such others

as "Monkey Business," Bela Lugosi's "Brooklyn Gorilla," the popular "Bonzo" series and "One Piece Bathing Suit," with Esther Williams. His wife Jeri hails from Omaha.

Bob Nelson's pigs are a tribute to his ability as an animal trainer. His mother is Adele Nelson whose famous Nelson's Elephants toured America and Europe for 17 years. Born in Mt. Clemens, Michigan, Bob now calls Chatham, NY home.

New Jersey is the home state of Janet Chuckle, as it is of other famous dog trainers. She is of Lithuanian descent and her husband, Frank Burger, is from Capetown, South Africa. Rudy Docky comes from the Tyrolean Alps of Austria.

(Continued on Page 4)



The Flying Steeles





Paul

Rosie

Tony

Teddy



THE FOX!!!

Dear Fox People:

Well there is so little to write from here, as all the performers are out and I do not run much around.

Tammy Wallenda got her divorce, but that is not what I wanted to tell you just something very funny happened to me their. She was at the courthouse in front of the judge and I got a phone call. "Sorry to disturb you, but this is the courthouse and Tammy needs a witness to swear to that she is living here for at least 6 month." Well, I told them that she is my daughter and that this always was her home.. Well they ask, Are you willing to swear to that. I told them, Naturally. So they said, Well, we put you on the loutspeaker if that is OK with you. I said sure. Next a voice came on asking me to raise my right hand and that I will say the truth and nothing but the trush so help me God, I said yes and so it went. After that I had to laugh at my self.

Here I was on the phone and actual stood up and raced my hand, no one could see me. But that was it. I never heard of something like that to do over the phone. Did you? What the heck, all kinds of funny things always happen to me. Like the time, it was in the 50ties, I went to town and was looking for Pennys Department store. Dick (Richard Faughnan) was with me. I could not find Pennys and Dick said, Honey, there is non here. I told him there has to be one as there is one in every town.

So I stoped the next man who walked by and ask, Pardon me sir, but do you Penneys here. The man reached in his pocket and pulled a few pennies out. Lucky Dick was with me and came to my aid and explained to the man that I was from Europe and was asking for Penney Department Store. Boy, was I embarrest.

Showfolks had its Social and as I was told it was like allways a big sucess. Lots of people and lots of food. The Club served turkey and dressing and gravie. Norma Cristiani prepaired it I was told, but it was a pot luck, so there was lots of goodies there. Well we got nice rain here in Florida. We needed it and we all praid for it and it helped. Now our grass

is green again and the grass cutting is on again. The gas prices going down very slowly. If this keeps up I guess I will get myself a bycicle again, as this is much cheeper to get around. And now I see they are going up already again, this was a short time to feel better.

Rose Alexander is doing as well as to be expected. She is trying to get all her things back in order. Naturely, she misses Fay so very much, as he took care always of all the imported things. Gee Gee's son is a great help to her. Rosie is like his aunt, as Gee Gee and Rosie always were the best of friend since their rodeo time. The vane Rosie had with Fay was just a little to big for her to handle and she went out and exchanged it for a 2000 but a little smaller. Rosie is very bussy moving and sorting all the stuff out in her home. She also has their motor home for sale, but she is really doing a great job. I am very prout of her.

Now back to Mario Wallenda. He is determent to do the Sky Walk on the wire with his wheel chair and I am trying very hard to help him. This is his dream and I like to have him be able to do it.

I was told they are doing some kind of circus movie here in town and Allan Hill and Tito Gaona were ask to be the advisers for this movie.

Just got a call from Derick Rosaire and he told me that at his birthday party, all his children were present. Derick and wife Liza are at the present time with daughter Pamela in a park up north. Derick told me it was just great, just daughter Ellian was unable to come as she has her riding school here in Sarasota. Oh yes, his birthday was in August and he told me that he is over 39. He enjoyes very much working with Tony the Wonder Horse.

Anna Delmonti gave me a call to day and told me that she had a terrible experiance. The night before she heart a very loud knock on her door. Her dogs went wild, so she got up to find out what was going on. There was that knock again. She ask, Who is there and a mans voise answered, This is the police, open up. She said I will not and went quick to the pone and called the police (Continued on Page 5)

Memories of Polack Bros. Circus....

Charley Cheer, born in pre-revolutionary Russia, came to this country as young boy. Like Lou Jacobs and Ducky, he combines musical ability with his clowning. Harry Dann designs his own colorful costumes and is the son of a St. Louis banker.

Ginny Lowry, songstress, made her debut at age 8. Her home is in Joliet, Illinois. Bee Carsey, musical director, lives in San Antonio. "Acts come and go with our circus, but Barnie (Soldier) Longsdorf, our superintendent, stays on, year after year. He ran away from his home in Illinois in his early teens, some 35 years ago, and has been handling circus props and rigging ever since.

The 1955 program I have is from Seattle and ran August 17-21 at the Civic Ice Arena. Great drawings of all the acts on the cover in color. The clowns were Lou Jacobs, Rudy Ducky, Charley Cheer and Chester & Joe Sherman. Running order was: Keller's Jungle Killers; the Pallamedes, trapeze; Barbette's Whirlgirls; Poly Orea's Spitz Dogs; the Merkys, horizontal bars; the Sikorskas, aerial; Harold Barnes, tight wire; Cilly Feindt, with her Lippizaner, Pasha; Ernie Wiswell, tin lizzie; Fedi-Fedi, dancing doll duo; Spangleland; Besalou Baby Elephants with Mac & Peggy MacDonald and Baby Opal; Ostermaier's Goats; Rolando, balancing; Roland Tiebor's Seals; the Chaludis, head balancing; Freya Josse, trapeze; Barbette's Aerialovelies; Melitta & Wicons, perch pole; Klausner's Bears with Goldilocks, Herta; Dagenham Girl Pipers and Barbette's Scotch & Circus.

The Ringmaster was Ross Paul. The baby elephants were Mary, Jean, Milly, Betty, Kathy and Opal. When John Tiebor took up the training of seals 60-odd years ago, he started a trend that made Tonawanda, NY, the sea lion capital of the show world. Roland, one of 4 sons who joined him, has followed in the family tradition. Penny is the star of the troupe, performing the "muscle grind."

There is a photo of Chester & Joe Sherman with their dog, Lucky, 12, and he has been a trouper since early puppyhood! His father was a

somersaulter and his mother a wire-walker with Haag's Canines. He was adopted by the Shermans at age 3 weeks. Chester was a tight-wire performer before he took up clowning 35 years ago. Chester wrote "On Being A Clown." "Clown! No one but a clown knows what that word really means; He plays the part of sacrifice through life's fast-changing scenes, He makes laughter out of sorrow in this world of care and strife and gains it by giving up the dearest things in life.

Even a clown must serve his country as off to war he goes, Leaving behind his mask of white and ending where God only knows. A clown gives his best, his all, he bravely plays his part, Yet all he earns in life's returns is often a broken heart.

But it makes no difference, as you and I both know, When he hears his Master's voice cry out, On with the show!" He leaves his cares behind, and his voice will loudly sing, For he knows that happiness awaits him within the sawdust ring."

The 1957 program is from Oakland, California, running May 18-26. The clowns were Gene Randow, Larry Benner, Al Ackerman, Harold Simmons, Jimmy Douglass & Art Gallagher. Line up was: Hawthorn Animal Fantasy, with leopards and white wolves, with Candy, the zebra, presented by Patricia Jamison; Cloud Swing Girls; the Five Fredonias, risley; the Four Kelroys, trampoline; Original Gutis, man-made monkeyshines; Barbette's Balancerinas, hand balancing, contortion; Bertram Mill's Chimps, fisticuffs by Billy the Champ vs. Peppy the Pug, trained by William Lenz; Josephine Berosini, high wire; the 3 Lorandos, tight wire; Besalou Baby Elephants, featuring Baby Opal and Kip, the poodle; Rose Gold Trio, aerial; the Lacy Troupe, rolling globes; Paramount Bears, with Zero, animal kingdom's only motorcycle-riding polar bear; Barbette's Extravaganza Espanol and the Flying Palacios. The Hawthorn mixed animal act was featured on the colorful cover. The Four Kelroys consisted of Ernie Kelroy, Ivy, son Ronnie and Ivy's sister, Joan Willoughby. The Three Lorandos were

(Continued on Page 7)

THE FOX.....



and Manias daughter and told her what was going on. Jorlanda told her just to stay put and she will be right over with the two Bulgarian boys who living in her house. In minutes, they arrived there and also other police. Then she opened. The police man yelled at her because she did not open the door right away and told her that he had complains from the neighbors that her dogs are constantly barking. She told them That were not my dogs. Then the police man found out that he had gone to the wrong corner house. It was not on Fruitville, it was on Ringling Blvd. I thing this is just terrible, do'nt you agree?

Good news from Eda Smina. Her husband came to the tumor operation through great. They removed the tumor and it was not cancerous. She needed desperately someone to drive her semi to the next town and Jimmy Fossett came to there aid. Good that there are still some old timers around who are able to help.

Nina Unus is retiring again, for how many days I do not know but she always gets called back from the doctor and like I said before, she never learned the word NO.

Sad Notices: We lost another great person, Rudy Bundy. He spent the last few years in a nursing home. There was a memorial at a funeral home and then every one showed up a Showfolks for hors d'oeuvres and to speak with the family. Rudy was at one time a band leader here at the Lido Casino and was for many years an official on the Ringling Circus. Rudy was a very generous person and loved by many. I will miss him.

The other dear person we lost was Ernestine Clark Bear. She suffered for quite a few years on Altsimers and then she slowly went down hill. Poor Parly had to go in to intensive care at the hospital. Those two were about the most loving couple I ever saw. They just lived for each other and there children. Last I heard Parly is getting a little better, but the few strokes he had left him in a wheelchair and he is unable to talk. Ernestine was known in our

business as a great bareback rider on the Ringling show and also her whole family were great performers, they are here in the Ring of Fame. Parley was a great actor you could see him for a while almost on all the shows on TV. He was performing until he had his first stroke.

Just as I was finished telling you that Hansini was on the sick list, I got the sad news that he did not make it. Hans real name was Hans Klose. He came from Berlin, Germany and was at one time working for the Frielanis bicycle act.

Hans came home to see his doctor but time has past. It was too late for him. He died of lung cancer. It had already gone in to his brain, so there was nothing more to do for him. Hans was a very nice quiet person. For quite some years now he worked with his kids, young Hansi. We hope the family will find peace in knowing that there are many who share their sadness. May God give them peace.

As I was told Gunther Gable William is doing OK. He had some treatments after the surgery and is up and around. I know we all wish him a speedy recovery.

I believe you all know that Stenka, sister of Mania Kaiser past away a few months ago and shortly after that Mania also lost her brother, so she just took off and went for six weeks to her former home in Chekoslovakia and is back home now.

Cha Cha Meluzzi is suffering with bronchitis and hopefully will be back up and around soon.

Andy Anderson is hobbling around as his one knee got real bad and his foot on the other side is very swollen from a possible brake 2 months ago.

Cathie Scott is not doing well. She is back in her house with husband George, but I was told she hardly can make it out of bed.

Warner Guerera is doing remarkably well. I saw him the other day and he told me that he slowly is getting feelings back in his legs.

This is it for this time.

Lots of Love and May God Bless You All.

Your Fox



Passing Of Our Circus Friends

Albert "Shorty" Sharp spent more than 50 of his 82 years caring for circus elephants. Albert died May 12 of heart failure while traveling with the circus in Wisconsin. His body was frozen so his friends could attend his funeral when the circus took a break from the road. He had no living relatives.

"For over 50 years, Albert Sharp dedicated his life to getting up early in the morning, taking care of the elephants and getting his cup of coffee," said circus owner, George Carden, who delivered the eulogy for his longtime employee. The 4' 7" Albert came to work as an elephant handler for Carden's father about 25 years ago and stayed on as caretaker at the circus WQ in Springfield, Mo. About 200 people attended the memorial service on August 12.

FAY ALEXANDER

By John W. Beard

A number of years ago, during a visit to the Ringling Circus, I observed a young flyer. Frank J. Walter, front door and benefactor of the Clyde Beatty Circus, said that he was on their show. He noted that he was lefty. This was Fay Alexander.

Fay played a major role in performing dangerous tricks in "The Greatest Show On Earth." Other flyers of note were Willie Krause and Eddie Kohl. They appear briefly in the movie.

Fay's triple was a feature of later editions of the Polack Western Unit of the Circus. I always made it a point to visit Fay during CFA meetings. He was one of the great flyers of our time. Today, sadly, he will be sorely missed.

Priceless Memories Of A Friend

By Bobby Gibbs

Hans Klose, a wonderful father, friend and long time circus performer, has gone on to the big lot leaving a very talented circus family to carry on his name, son Hans, Jr., daughters Jamie Loter and Gretchen, plus the beautiful Adele.

I was one of those lucky enough to be counted as a close friend for over 25 years. We shared the ups

and downs of the road; he helped me care for my wife, Rosa, during her illness; I watched his kids grow up (family.) How do you say good-bye to a friend and family member-you don't-because he will always live in my memory and when I think of him, which will be often, I will smile and have a warm place in my heart, first for having known him. So, Hans is on the road to the lot where we are all headed; he got there first, ahead of us. I know each of you knew and respected him. See ya down the road, Good Friend, Bobby Gibbs.

Circus Historical Society Convention

For those of you that are driving to Bloomington, you may want to leave a little early and stop off to see **Kelly-Miller Circus** in Indiana. They will be in Warsaw Sept. 3 at the Fairgrounds, 2 & 4:30; Winnamac Town Park Sept. 4, 2 & 4:30; and they will be at the Pine View Golf Course in Monticello Sept. 5, 4:30 & 7:30.

Circus Lithograph Mail Auction

A few weeks ago, I had the good fortune of purchasing a collection of original circus lithographs, mostly from the early to mid-1930's. Show titles included are RBBB, Cole Bros., Al. G. Barnes, Bud Anderson and a few others. I already had a good amount of these pieces in my own collection, so I currently have several duplicates. I am offering these duplicate lithos for sale or trade on a mail auction basis, to help recuperate my initial investment. To receive a full color illustrated list of available items, please send \$2.00 to:

TIMOTHY NOEL TEGGE
P.O. BOX 661 - BARABOO, WI 53913

All bids must be received by September 15

Memories of Polack Bros. Circus..

Herbert Nielbock, Ludwig Fritsche and Bernhard Schwark, from Germany. Herbert has been performing for more than 50 years, starting in 1930. Ludwig, who previously did a balancing act with his sister, has been a partner since 1945 and Bernhard was a high wire artist before joining the act in 1953.

The Original Gutis are Erich Gutsche, daughter-in-law Elvira, her husband, Karlheinz (Charley), Walter Kitschke, Gunther Ludwig and Erich's wife, Margarethe. A future partner is Heidemarie, 11 year-old daughter of Charley and Elvira.

The Fredonias do a Risley act, which means it has foot juggling as its basis. Alfred Fullgrapp, boss of the troupe, is known as the "kicker." He was 14 when he joined a 9-people Risley troupe in Germany 21 years ago. After the war broke up that act, Alfred started doing a juggling act alone in 1942 and when he married, he & his wife Elli became a team. They joined out Dieter Havemann when they began their Risley act 12 years ago and then Bernd (Bubbles) Gohlke, Alfred's cousin, and Bernie Hartenstein joined. Daughter Ilona appears also with latest addition Hans Klose. (See **Jenny's Column**) "John F. Cuneo Jr., desiring something entirely new in wild animal acts, began a project that was two years in the planning and took more than a year to train. Cheerfully undaunted by the consuming hatred of leopards for anything canine, young Cuneo assembled 8 leopards, then introduced into the arena 8 half-breed wolves, a cross between the tundra wolf from Siberia and the German Shepherd. He further flaunted advice by adding a rare black panther to this fiendish array of fang and claw. To make the act completely unbelievable, he put a zebra in the act. But the crowning touch of glory was the addition of the lovely and fearless Patricia Jamison, born in Leicester, England." If you haven't seen a photo of this group, please try to find one. You won't believe it. Now, about the Rose Gould Trio. Rose, trained from childhood for the ballet, left the opera in Vienna to become an aerialist. At the circus she met

Andre Pahin, a trapeze performer interned in Vienna. Their 13-year-old son, Andre Jr., currently is not interested in a circus career. Blinded by the flash from the camera of a thoughtless photographer, Rose fell in May 1956 in San Francisco. A broken pelvis, 11 breaks in her left arm and a smashed right elbow convinced her husband and her doctors that she would never work again. She didn't give up. Just weeks before her return to the circus, they learned their partner was returning to Paris. They found Hungarian-born Bela Ezias to replace him. Among Barquette's Aerialovelies were Evelyn Kent, Kae Johnson, Joyce Breidenbach and Brenda Jones, Brenda Brysch, Dollye Lombardi, Diane Johnson, Sharon McFarland. Gorgeous costumes! The Flying Palacios were brothers Jose, Raul and Lalo and sister Irma. Raul's German-born wife, Maria, appears in the production numbers.

The Lacy Troupe consists of Laszlo Toth and wife Lucia, Barbara Storr, Doris Williams, Maureen Lloyd and Sheila Bush, the only act to have 6 globes on the incline. Though Laszlo & Lucia were married in Budapest, daughters Susan, 9, and Diana, 7, were born in England. Gene Randow was born in NY City soon after his parents arrived from Hungary. He served in the army in WW II and he is married to former aerial star, Vivian Nelson. Jimmy Douglass, also served in the army, and is from Saranac Lake, NY. His partner is Indiana-born Art Gallagher, who had been a rodeo clown. They have 6 dogs in their troupe. Harold Simmons weighed 69 pounds when, at 16, he became a circus acrobat in Australia; 21 years later, he weighs 79 pounds. He took up clowning 9 years ago. Larry Benner has been a musician, side show entertainer and clown for 37 years. Al Ackerman joined an Arab tumbling act 61 years ago, at age 14, continued as an acrobat until 1952 and has since been a clown. Total time in show business for the two: 98 years! They are both natives of Ohio. (To be continued. Next time, the 1960 program with the Flying Alexanders and Gee Gee Engesser's Siberian Huskies and Alaskan Malemites!)

RINGLING RED: Moline, IL-8/31-9/3; Kansas City-9/6-10; Des Moines-9/13-17; Grand Rapids-9/21-24; Indianapolis-9/27-10/1; Detroit-10/5-9; Boston-10/13-21; Huntington, WV-10/26-29; Pittsburgh-11/1-5

RINGLING BLUE: San Francisco-8/30-9/4; Sacramento-9/6-10; Seattle-9/14-17; Portland-9/21-24; Salt Lake City-9/27-10/1; Denver-10/4-9; Cleveland-10/20-29

"Kaleidoscope": Atlanta, GA-9/6-10/29

Sterling & Reid: Randall's Island-NYC-8/30-9/4; Staten Island-9/5-7; Neptune, NJ-9/8-10

Clyde Beatty Circus: Mays Landing, NJ-8/30-9/1; Centreville, VA-9/2-4; Ashburn-9/5-7; Dover, DE-9/8-10; Johnstown, PA-9/11-12; Hermitage-9/13-14; Youngstown, OH-9/15-17.

Carson & Barnes: Harrisburg, IL-8/31; Paducah, KY-9/1-2; Mt. Vernon, IL-9/3; Vandalia-9/4; Taylorville-9/5; Mt. Zion-9/6; **Bloomington-9/7;** Steger-9/8-9; Rock Falls-9/10; Chillicothe-9/11-12; Macomb-9/13; Galesburg-9/14; Keokuk, IA-9/15; Quincy, IL-9/16

Circus Historical Society Convention-Bloomington/Normal, Illinois-9/6-9

Wenatchee Youth Circus: Metaline Falls-9/2-3; Chelan County Fair-9/6-7

Donn Moyer's Reptile Safari: Monroe, WA-8/24-9/4; Colfax-9/8-10

BACK YARD

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Ernestine Clarke Baer By Bobby Gibbs

News you don't like to get came today from Helen

Billetti Warburton of the passing of our circus family sweetheart, Ernestine Clarke Baer. So beautiful, so talented, so kind a performer of no equal, who will always be a major part of our circus family's history. How we will miss this wonderful person, how we will miss her smile and tender loving friendship. She will always live in my memories and prayers. Our circus family has taken some serious blows lately as we lose one and then another of our great ones and good ones.

Parley & Ernie made my life richer by their friendship and multiplying kindness to others. Ernie rest awhile and then get ready for the whistle for the greatest show in Heaven. See ya, Grand Lady, somewhere on the big lot. Love, your family, Bobby and Rosa Gibbs. (Ernestine & Parley's life was a love story, a movie script, fate and also a romantic tale. God works in many ways. Rest in peace, our dear friend.)

From the Ringling Web Site-ringling.com

Kaleidoscope will be in Bryant Park in New York City during the Thanksgiving-to-New Year holiday season. And **Osgood** celebrated his first birthday on August 16! He is **Ringling's** Asian elephant born last year at the Center for Elephant Conservation and named by the public on their site. He was 250 pounds at birth and now weighs 1,337! "Ozzie" was 39" tall and 43" long at birth. Today, he's 57" tall and 66" long! Happy Birthday, Ozzie! And Happy Birthday to **Mark Oliver Gebel** too! He celebrated August 17. The 129th Edition will close their season in St. Louis Nov. 8-12 and be heading home. The 131st Edition will open Dec. 29 in Lakeland! **Johnathan Lee Iverson**, Ringmaster of the 129th Edition, will bring his commanding presence to the all-new 131st Edition! For more news, check out Ringling's great web site! Fun for the whole family.

***Smokey Jones**, former elephant trainer, has moved to a 24-hour care facility and I am sure he would like to hear from you. Please write him c/o Charlyn Fisk, 330 The Ledges, North Augusta, SC 29841.

MEMORIES OF "SHORTY"

By Bobby Gibbs

Our circus family is made up of stars, grand old performers and all but first, like a regular family, there are many, many others that make us a family. Not every great one was a performer, thousands served & loved the circus and worked at their job to see the show got down the road. And like they say, behind every successful man is a successful woman, the same can be said for performers in the ring. The dedicated people that travel, put it up & down, clean it, paint it and get it over the road, day after day, outside the ring. My friend, and he was a friend, Albert "Shorty" Sharp has gone to the big lot to help up there for awhile. Shorty's service was held August 12 in Willard, at the Carden WQ, his home for the last few years. He was as well known to circus people as any trainer. He worked for Roy Bush, John Cline, Bobby Gibbs, George Carden and many more. Shorty was a true circus man, thru and thru and will be missed by our whole circus family. He was a friend and family member to me. Rest in peace and take care of those elephants up in Heaven till we see you again. Bobby and Rosa

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NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS

*Regis & Barb Amend celebrated their 39th Anniversary July 22. Congratulations!

*Denny Childers was in Pittsburgh on business and brought a flag that flew on top of the last Ringling tent in Pittsburgh in 1956 and loaned the flag to the committee for **Circus Mania 2000!** To register for this event, contact **Bill Merchant**, 716 Penn St. Brackenridge, PA 15014. Butchers contact **Jerry Schaub**, 1722 Leolyn St, Pittsburgh, PA 15210

***John & Beverly Beard** write "We saw on TV **Jay Cochrane** walk 900 ft, from the Ice Palace to the top of the Marriott Waterside Hotel on a high wire to promote the Back to School Circus (Tommy Hanneford) taking place Aug. 25-27 in Tampa at the IcePalace. Ben and Darlene Williams' 2 daughters, Stormy & Skye, made the Tampa Tribune as the "Areas' hardest hitting sisters." They play Jr. Varsity Football for the East Bay Bucs football team, Gibsonton. They are 15 & 11!"



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Elephant Shorty's Last Ride

By Mike Cecere

Greetings friends, today we are going to take a few moments to remember an Elephant Man, Albert "Shorty" Sharp, better known to his legion of friends as "Shorty" or "Elephant Shorty." He passed on May 12, 2000 but had sort of been in "cold storage" until his circus family with the Carden organization could gather with other friends locally near the circus home base in Springfield, Mo. to give him a fine send off, in fact, probably as I'm writing this Saturday afternoon, August 12.

For those folks that didn't have the pleasure of knowing Shorty, I can tell you he was a hell of an Elephant Man. No, he never trained Elephants, went to the wild and captured Elephants, wasn't a scientist, researcher, was never on the Jack Hanna Show, but you always knew where to find him, with the Elephants.

He wasn't a Veterinarian, but sure would tell you if there was something wrong with an Elephant that needed attention. He was very observant and with all his many years with Elephants, 7 days a week he would be able to spot problems that many younger men would miss, even trainers.

He wasn't the guy who got all dressed up in rhinestone suits and received the audiences' cheers, he was the guy who cleaned up after the Elephants, made sure they got feed, water, a comfortable place to sleep and did the best he could to see to it. If you left Shorty in charge of Elephants, you knew darn well that when you came back, he'd be right there. And he was a worker, for a wiry little guy just four foot seven inches tall, he would work men six foot tall and half his age into the ground. He worked with some of the best and brightest in our business. Despite my historical records, I can't give you a year by year rundown, but here are some highlights.

He was assistant to the irrepresable Capt. Roy Bush and the Hunt Bros. Circus Elephants, I believe from around the time Legendary Trainer Louie Reed broke the younger set of Hunt Elephants, in the 50s. I know he was with Capt.

Roy on Hunt and went along when the Bartok's bought the show and Elephants. Capt. Roy was one of those old timers who dressed military style with Garrison cap and all and he made sure Shorty got a uniform too. They were snappy dressers around there. I know he also worked for the famous trainer Johnny Cline who had his own Elephant and liberty acts doing Shrine dates until the mid-70s when Cline dissolved the act. Around that time (tho I probably will be corrected by someone with more historical facts) he joined the Carden family to whom he gave decades of dedicated service to.

Even as his age began to creep up on him, the Cardens created the less physically demanding position for him as Winterquarter's Supt. and saw to his every need out of respect and appreciation for his many years of service. Circuses are a lot like families and Shorty was an important part of it.

They could go on tour safe in the knowledge that they had someone who cared about their animals and equipment as if it were his own. You can't put a price on dedication like that. My own experiences around Shorty came in the mid 80s, a few weeks when I toured with a mixed lion and tiger act that I was training for someone while on tour with George Carden Circus.

Shorty was assistant to my good friend, Master Elephant Trainer, Joe Frisco, Jr. They kept those Elephants spotless! The next year I was training some exotic hoofstock for the show in Springfield WQ and Shorty was very helpful helping move animals around and helping me train a green crew of grooms. An experienced Animal Man like Shorty was a real blessing as he had done and seen so much and coming from the old school, you do your best to teach the new guys so they too can do their best. That way, both the animals and people benefit and the show rolls smoother.

And Shorty had an endless supply of entertaining stories about Elephants and trainers, some were informative and others just fall down funny! I was one of the priveledged few to have been sent an invitation to his farewell services to which I'd like to thank the Carden Family & their Staff.

And I'd like to thank them for giving Elephant Shorty a memorable last ride, for Shorty may have been a small man in stature, but he had a heart as big as an Elephant! Farewell Elephant Shorty, Sleep Well! God Bless America!

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Head Bros. Circus By Gary Thomson

On June 24th, at 9 AM, Ted Ram and I left London, Ontario for the 3 hour drive to Troy, Michigan and the home of Ken & Lisa Head who are, once again, hosting the annual presentation of Herb Head's Head Bros. Circus, a 1" scale masterpiece of circus modeling. Set up starts about 6:30 AM with 2 shows presented before tear down in late evening under the light standards on the flat car sidings. This year 1½ hours of rain in the early morning slowed the set up down but things were just about complete on the 60'x75' lot by noon.

The day turned out to be fairly sunny with occasional threats by passing storm clouds. The second show, usually held at 8 PM, was moved up to 6 PM so that an early tear down could be attempted before we reached the border. Hopefully, the Heads were able to complete the tear down before the bad weather set in.

When we arrived at the Head's home in the beautiful suburbs of Troy, we easily spotted the house with its 4'x16' red & blue on white banner announcing that the Head Bros. Circus was on display. There was a large contingent of family members putting the final touches on the show. We were greeted by Lisa Head, Herb's daughter-in-law, who gave me (a first timer) the complete tour of the show while Ted (9 times) was brought up to date on the newest additions by Herb.

There are approximately 50 wagons on the show; 14 cage wagons, including a hippo den and a giraffe wagon, 8 tab wagons, including 4 which have been gold-leafed over the past 3 years, 2 Mack "Bulldog" trucks and the balance in work wagons of every description. The Show's tents included the Big Top, which is 140' with 3-50' middles (approx. 24' in length), the menagerie tent, the side show tent, 2 horse tops (one for ring stock

& the other for draft horses), a dressing top, a cookhouse and a dining top. All were fully accessorized. On one side of the lot there were 4 siding tracks with a full complement of circus rail equipment. There were 12 flatcars, 7 coaches and 5 stock cars (3 for draft horses, 1 for ring stock and 1 for elephants). The coaches and stock cars had hinged roofs to allow for storage of the circus equipment. The flatcars were all loaded as the real ones with the wagons being pulled into position and choked in place. The loaded flats, along with the coaches and stock cars are all moved back to Herb's house in a Chevy Suburban.

Almost everything on the show is animated, very detailed and imaginative. All the people & animals are hand carved and painted by Herb. Each is unique from the lady bending over a tub of water washing her hair to the seal in the Big Top, balancing a ball. Every time you walk around the lot you see something different. Ted's been doing it for 9 years and still sees new things. The beauty is in the small details; the scenes of everyday life on the circus that make it all seem real. It's very hard to describe everything that we saw on the show. We can only encourage everyone to attend Herb's next presentation of this annual extravaganza. It is held on the same weekend in June of each year, rain or shine. It is indescribable. You have to see it to experience this 'circus in miniature.'

For more information on Head Bros. Circus, see Ted Ram's article in the Sept.-Oct., 1991 issue of the Little Circus Wagon. After writing this, Herb wrote, "As for our tear down, we had the show about half torn down before the rain resumed (the crew inside the Big Top stayed dry until the top was dropped). Had to repair a tear in the Big Top canvas and also repair 1 flatcar that dropped one wheel truck. But it is all moved back and stored here in quarters." Herb was preparing to head for Baraboo and the Milwaukee Circus Parade that he participates in every year. (Thanks, Gary.)

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Don't forget to bring any old photos you might want to sell to Back Yard to the CHS Convention! Thanks.

TO CIRCUS FRIENDS, EVERYWHERE

Speaking from experience, I've found that circus people aren't always the best correspondents. Show schedules, constant travel, set-up and practice demand a lot of time. In addition, personal obligations that we all deal with on a daily basis, such as grocery shopping or doing laundry, repairing props and wardrobe or servicing vehicles must take priority. Unfortunately, writing letters to family, friends and peers more than likely tops the list when it comes to good intentions that fall by the wayside. Days turn into weeks, weeks turn into months and before you know it, months become another year. Once in a while, something wakes you up to the fact that time needs to be taken for this sort of thing.

The past few issues of Back Yard and Circus Report have helped open my eyes to how time gets away from us. Far too much time had passed between writing letters to a number of friends. After a fair amount of procrastination throughout the summer, I finally made it a point to catch up with some correspondence. When I posted the first few letters, I picked up my weekly CR from the P.O. Box. I was dumbfounded to read the obituary for one of the people that I had just sent a letter to, only minutes before. Needless to say, I wish I hadn't taken me so long to write! It certainly didn't seem to have been *that long* since we last touched bases.

In our many years on the road with countless shows, we've met a lot of people and made a lot of acquaintances. Many of these acquaintances have developed into strong friendships as time progressed. And, although we don't have an opportunity to see many of these friends with any certain regularity, when we do it feels as if we were just with them last week. When we move on, for all we know, years may pass before we have the pleasure of their company again.

Several years ago in the men's dressing room, while playing a Shrine date in Minot, North Dakota, I remember buffalo man Bunky Boger saying (to no one in particular) that "a good day is measured by what you have at the time...a blue sky, a nice lot, a hot shower and decent electricity..what else can you ask for?" I believe he nailed it right on the head! I haven't seen Bunky in years now, (*nor have I written to him, for that matter!*) but I still think about him every now and then. This business isn't just about money, recognition or our time in the spotlight, although we all need and want all of these things. When it all comes down to it, this business is about the people along the way.

To all of our friends, fellow performers and circus fans who have lent a hand, passed along priceless experience, shared a spare bedroom, provided a home cooked meal and so many other things over the years, thank you! It's often easy to take friendships for granted, but you are *never* forgotten. To the families of absent friends, now on the big lot, rest assured...your loved ones are fondly remembered. Tim and GiGi Tege

News From Our Circus Friends

***Wayne Bolz** reports that his daughter, **Heidi Casady**, has done very well with the petting zoo and pony ride operation. Visit her at: Sheboygan, WI-Sept 9; Manitowac-Sept. 10 and Elkhart Lake, October 7 & 8th.

***Bro. J. Francis Dolphin** writes "I just want to let you know that I saw once again Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at the Oakland Coliseum. Just short BART transit ride from downtown San Francisco. I had the opportunity to visit the boss clown David Soloye and other clowns at the circus. I took a few days off to escape the heat of Denver with more than 50 days with temperatures in the mid and upper 90s. San Francisco was a delightful 60 degrees or a little more. Certainly the Air Conditioned city. I will be seeing the Ringling circus again when it comes to Denver in early October. Believe it or not the circus will be playing at the new Pepsi Center for a few days and then take a day off and move up the track to the old coliseum that was built in the 40s, a distance perhaps no more than 5 miles. In fact, I wouldn't be surprise if the trains will be parked by the old Coliseum and the animals and equipment be brought to the Pepsi Center. I saw the Carson and Barnes Circus at the Braintree High School in Braintree Mass in early July. What a beautiful setting with lush green grass all around in a park like setting. I had a nice chat with Sister Jo and also with the other sisters and also with the clowns from Peru. Fr. Jerry Hogan was also around visiting the show and he told me about other circuses in New England but I didn't have the time to see them. I also saw Clyde Beatty Circus as well in Massachusetts. Jimmy James, the ringmaster and I have been friends since the 1960s as well as John Pugh and many others through the years. At Encuentro 2000 in Los Angeles, I saw Sister Charlotte Hobelman. She also has spent some time visiting Carson and Barnes and other circuses on the East Coast.

THE FLETCH FILES

By Mike Cecere

Okay folks, in this issue we'll take on the holy of holies in circus movies, "The Greatest Show On Earth." This masterpiece of huge scale was a brainchild of movie master Cecil B. DeMille, which preserved for all time the incredible scope and size of the RBBB show in the early 50s when it moved a virtual tent city by rails on a daily basis.

Many great circus acts, then in their prime, appeared in the movie along with top Hollywood stars, chief among them Charlton Heston as the circus manager, "Brad." The movie remains a classic despite being filmed decades ago and is often shown on cable television today.

As an animal trainer, of course, the animal acts are the main interest in my viewing. The astounding Alberto Zoppe riding act, highly trained liberty horses, Albert Rix, master trainer, with his huge bear act fresh from the Hagenbeck Zoo in Germany, working in one of the early net arenas. That great man is still highly active in the training of bears of all types with his wonderful family.

And lets not forget the Elephants. The large RBBB herd, which is several times bigger overall today with two permanent facilities for the breeding and retirement of the jolly jumbos. The latter made possible by the current owners, the Feld Ent. group, who following the dreams of the great showman, Irvin Feld, provide for the Elephants who have worked so hard for the show.

Elephants, both working on the lot and a very dramatic scene in the show, are the standout attractions in the film. Great cameo appearances by Elephant Supt. Arky Scott and his loyal crew!

Tho the movie was the vision of Mr. DeMille, the day to day filming in both Sarasota WQ and on the road tour was made possible by the hard work of circus General Manager, Art Concello and his top aides, Willis Lawson and Frank McClosky, with their highly trained crews. They made that huge circus move! This film is a must-see for anyone who loves the circus and wants to see the biggest

and best there was on the road. Another movie that was made in the late 50s, with a similar plot, starring the great actor Victor Mature was "The Big Circus." This film, a total Hollywood production, featured some of the best performers of the day and tho a somewhat fictional plot, is well worth seeing for the circus stars alone. A very enjoyable film.

Now though, "The Greatest Show on Earth" is commercially available in places, I would urge you to check with Circus Video King, Mr. Jim Ridenour, as I'm sure he has fine copies of it readily available at a more reasonable price than commerial outlets and is the main source for harder to find classics, such as "The Big Circus." Tell Jim, that you saw it here! God Bless America.
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NEWS FROM HAWAII By Richard Via

The other day I was talking with friends about circus and show business friends and I was reminded of a nice story. One Easter, Kurt Kazner, who was playing Uncle Max in "The Sound of Music," which I was stage managing, invited me to Easter brunch. I explained that I would like to come, but that I had invited Gerald Soules and his parents to my apartment for brunch. Kurt insisted that I bring them too. After Mass we went to the East side to Kurt's place. When we walked in Kurt greeted us most graciously and ushered us into the living room. The Soules nearly fell over for Ethel Merman, Arlene Francis and Martin Gable were sitting there. Merman was a super star on Broadway and had a slight reputation of being very difficult at times. Before Jerry or his parents could express their surprise and delight in meeting her, as well as the others, Miss Merman began with, "How did you ever learn to do your act?" And to his mother, "How can you stand to watch your son do such a dangerous act? Oh, I don't think that I could watch a son of mine risk his life like that." Miss Francis and Mr. Gable joined in turning the focus from them to the Soules family. I don't think that the conversation ever got to the Broadway and TV stars. It was beautiful. So, no one can ever knock Ethel Merman if I am around. (Thanks, Dick)



A PAWS FROM MOZART

By Mozart Valentine



MEOW everyone, welcome back to my column. I have a lot of great news this time! The **Prospect Park Wildlife Center** in Brooklyn has a new **Hamadryas baboon**, a male born June 1 to mother **Matara** and father **Simen**. Matara was found in Chicago tied to a porch. Officials believe she had been kept as a pet & abandoned. After 3 years, she is an accepted member of the troop and an excellent first-time mother.

Panda baby, **Hua Mei**, at the **San Diego Zoo**, celebrated her 1st birthday August 21 with a cake! It consisted of crystal clear distilled water and bamboo fronds, frozen into a 2-layer sculpted ice cake-a cool treat in the middle of summer! The giant pandas love ice. The first 5000 guests at the Zoo signed a giant birthday card for Hua Mei and it will be sent to staff at the Wolong Giant Panda Preserve in China, where her parents once lived. You can see more at www.sandiegozoo.com.

The **Cincinnati Zoo** has announced the names of the two new polar bears, recently acquired from the Denver Zoo. **Imaq** and **Sedna**, the 19-month-old brother & sister respectively, were chosen among more than 16,000 entries that flooded the Zoo from all over the country. The two joined the Zoo's two other polar bears, **Danny & Rizzo**, last month at the new Kroger Lords of the Arctic exhibit. Imaq means water and Sedna is an Inuit figure who is the mother and ruler of all sea creatures.

More news from the **San Diego Zoo**: On July 5, **Tembo**, a 29-year-old African elephant, and her keepers demonstrated to Zoo guests the benefits of team work. They engaged in a routine training and enrichment session where Tembo was asked, then rewarded, for engaging in behaviors such as presenting her feet, mouth & trunk for inspection and retrieving sticks. Following the session, Tembo and her exhibit mates, **Devi**, a 23-year-old Asian and **Sumithi**, a 33-year-old Asian, were treated to the opportunity to forage for apples in the pool. Sounds like a lot of fun to me! And for the visitors.

A great headline about the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. "How do you baby-proof for a 200-pound toddler?" **Chai** is due to give birth to a female calf in November. The 5 keepers have an 8-page list of suggestions to baby proof the elephant compound, including closing off all the "nooks & crannies" that could trap a curious 200-pound baby. Some zoos have limited or "protected" contact, meaning bars and barriers come between keepers and the animals. But Woodland Park's keepers trade the risk of being in with their elephants for the mutual reward of free contact. Chai's exercise program has paid off. She'd lost 88 pounds at her last weighing. She had gained 1,500 pounds in all since she came home pregnant 19 months ago. Keepers worried that it meant the calf was getting too big for a safe birth. ***Penny**, an African elephant, left the **Vilas Park Zoo** in Madison, Wisc. August 15 for her temporary home at the **Columbus Zoo**. Her new home will be at the **Riverbanks Zoo** in Columbia, South Carolina, where they are working on a new area. The USDA and the National Zoo Assn. found Vilas' facilities inadequate and the USDA ordered the elephants moved if the conditions weren't improved. Zoo spokeswoman Patty Peters said, "She's doing well. They just needed someone to hold her-and we have plenty of room." Penny will join **Belinda** and **Belle**, at the Zoo's 41,000 sq. ft. elephant building, billed as the largest indoor elephant area in the country. **Winkie**, 34, the Asian elephant at the Vilas Zoo, will leave for **The Elephant Sanctuary** in Hohenwald, Tenn. between Sept. 9 and 20 and will have six new friends waiting for her! You go girls! *Some sad news from the **National Zoo** in Washington, DC. Zoo officials euthanized **Nancy**, a 46-year-old African, August 22 after her health suddenly deteriorated and began refusing medication that was keeping her stable. She arrived at the Zoo in 1956 from East Africa. She was the matriarch of the herd. **Shanthi**, **Ambika** and **Toni** were outside in their yard frolicking as usual-tossing hay, rolling in the dirt and carrying tires in their trunks. Shanthi is pregnant & due next year. Zoo officials don't plan to replace Nancy but will focus on Asian elephant reproduction. That's all for this time. **Meow for now, Mozart!**

Kent Ghisard Collection

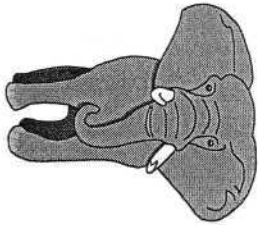


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