

BACK YARD

Volume V, Issue #92

May 31, 2000

CIRCUS FLORA WEDDING

By Lane Talbert

What do you get when you cross a lawyer with an elephant trainer? At Circus Flora, the correct answer is Mr. and Mrs. Raul Gomez, a pair of newlyweds. Gomez is the long-time trainer of Flora, an 18-year-old African elephant who is the namesake of the not-for-profit community circus. Mrs. Gomez, the former Pamela Kay Allen, practices family law in Casa Grande, Arizona. The two exchanged vows on Sunday evening, May 14, following the second circus performance on Mother's Day. With the circus band providing appropriate music and with three ministers

officiating, the trainer and the "townner" tied the knot under the bright red and white European tent in downtown St. Louis. Looking on were Circus Flora cast members in costume, the bride's family, friends and circus-goers. It was not your every-day ceremony. Ms. Allen did not walk down the aisle. She rode in on a Percheron horse and dismounted at the makeshift altar at the inside edge of the ring. Then came her husband-to-be, astride Flora, through the backdoor. After Tino Wallenda-Zoppe, of the Flying Wallenda's high-wire troupe pronounced his blessing on the union, Presbyterian and Unitarian ministers officiated over the nuptials.

(Continued on Page 4)

Photo By Lane Talbert



Photo By Dick McGivney



Top Row:

Alberto Zoppe-Norbu-

Karlie Peterson-

Jacky Bostock-

Lou Jacobs

Bottom Row:

Nico Joanides-

Afer Bogino-

Giustino Loyal-

Roberto Meluzzi-

Ugo Bogino-

Charlie Guties-

Armando Meluzzi

Ringling 1948-1949

Jenny Wallenda Collection



FOX 78

THE FOX !!!

My Dear Friends,



Long time I've not written, but I really did think of all of you a lot but I really felt to sick, I hope I finely got rid of it. It still seems to linger on.

Sorry but first I have to write about all the sad things which really got me down.

Lois Theron, Guy Therons wife left us. She was hanging on for quite a while at the hospital, all the relatives came from Europe, California and all over to say good by to her. She was for 6 weeks just hanging on and did not let go. I guess she just did not feel that it was her time, but then it came anyway. Rest in peace and I hope all her children and relitves find peace in knowing there were so many who felt with them.

The other very sad news was Penny Wilsons Grand Daughter, 13 years old. She went out with a boyfriend at night with the car and had a terrible accident. The boy just suffered a broken leg but from her they had to remove one forth of her brain. Penny flew up there to comfort her daughter. For a while it looked like she was going to make it, but then with one forth of brain missing what kind of life would this have been. After Penny got back here she got the sad news of her Granddaughter passing over to the other place. And Penny, I am sure your Mom and Dad were already waiting for her and took her in there arms and helped her.

Now to the person who was the closest to me, for so many years. We were close friends, worked on many shows together and partied and had so much fun together, Harry Dubsky. Oh Harry, why. You had so much to live for. You built so beautiful boats, it was your pride and joy and then the last years enjoyed the antic cars. Boy when ever I saw you driving by me you looked so proud. Oh Harry, I called you the day you got in the hospital and you told me you are OK. The doctors just have to find out why you gained so much weight. Then the next morning I marched myself to the hospital to visit you. You assured me that you were feeling OK and

you made me promise you to come back to see you. I told you I would, but rather would come see you at your home as this was a nicer place. Harry, you did not give me a chance to come back to see you. Harry, I miss you. I hope you can know this. I know were you are now it is wonderful. But Harry, please remember we are always friends, until the day comes that we will see each other again. Auf Wiedersehen. P.S. There was no funeral and I really do not know what thier plans are. I know he had been creamated.

On the sick list is Anna Del Monti. She broke her hip and is in recovery. Hope she will be soon back up and around.

Fritz Lauber (Consessioneer) had to spend some time in the hospital. He had a tripple bypass and I hope every thing is well now.

Napoleon Zamperla is also in the hospital. He had an other stroke and as I was told does not know any one any more.

Gilbert Fox was again in the hospital and at this time is home but not doing to well. La Norma really has a cross to carry. Attus Zamperla is at this time home I understand.

Thank God, this is all the sad news I have to report for this news letter.

Nina Unus is off again to her daughter. She is expecting a new baby. By now the baby is probably already born, well better report late then never. Oh yes, Nina had been working at the doctors office again. They just cant manage with out her and she does not know how to say no.

The circus fans had there big get to gether here in Sarasota and as I understand it went over just great. I was to come to the dinner, but as I was sick, could not make it but I did go to there meal at Showfolks and said hy to so many friends. (I should not had gone, as the next day I was right back in bed.) Funny how most of the fans know me as the Fox. I was really surprised.

Oh boy, all the tent shows are back on the road. The Walkers toke Robert Meluzzi back with them as CDL licence driver.

(Continued on Page 5)

CIRCUS FLORA WEDDING.....

Only a day earlier, Wallenda had narrowly avoided serious injury while performing above the vinyl-covered asphalt pavement. When a wheel on his bicycle unexpectedly slipped off, Wallenda managed to grab the wire and spring back to his feet. There was no net to break a fall.

But that potentially fatal incident and the fact that the circus cast was exhausted after performing five two-hour shows before large audiences during the past two days were forgotten on this happy occasion.

Though she will tag along with her husband and Flora, the new Mrs. Gomez has no intentions of becoming a part of the act. She recognizes the strong bond between the veteran trainer and the 6,000 pound elephant—and that Flora is jealous of the competition.

"She's very attached to Raul," the bride pointed out. "I have made it a point to give them time and space together. And if I couldn't have recognized that, then this (the marriage) would have never worked out." The couple plans to honeymoon, somewhat belatedly, in Botswana, Africa, when Gomez and the circus producer Igor David Balding return Flora to her native homeland—probably next spring if paperwork can be completed.

For both Balding, who has owned Flora since she was brought to the United States as an orphan, and Gomez, her trainer off and on for nine years, the separation from their animal will be emotionally charged. But the show's producer said Circus Flora would continue touring in the future and that it will retain the name.

It was Balding who made the decision to return Flora to Africa. He acknowledged that it was probably a mistake to have raised the female essentially as an only child, since elephants are highly social animals, which like to be in the company of others of their species. He also wants to have Flora bred. In addition, Balding said he is concerned that Flora could become troublesome as she enters adulthood.

Gomez, who said his charge has been "my mate," said he and his wife probably will stay behind at the conservation camp in Botswana as much as six months to a year to help ease Flora's transition into the herd. After all, he pointed out, Flora is very spoiled and is not used to sharing the spotlight with any other elephant.

But it was Mr. and Mrs. Gomez's turn to be the center of attention last Sunday night—well, almost, any way. Balding stood nearby playing babysitter to the energetic, mischievous elephant. During the ceremony, Flora kept reaching up to her headpiece with her trunk to tear at the floral arrangement.

As if on cue, while one of the ministers was reciting prose about elephants, Flora heeded the call of nature. The audience responded to her overpowering disruption with unrestrained laughter. And when the bride tossed the traditional bouquet to the bridesmaid—who else but Flora?—the elephant promptly devoured it whole. All this confirmed Gomez's contention that Flora is a "shameless ham" in the ring.

The newlyweds met four years ago at a museum in Flagstaff, Arizona. Pam was attending a legal conference there and Raul was camping out nearby with a fellow elephant trainer whom he had accompanied from Alaska with another elephant, Moxie. As they stood in front of a stuffed moose at the museum, Gomez invited lawyer Allen to share some reindeer meat and to see the elephant at his place—an unusual pick-up line, to say the least.

But the attorney accepted and the two began a courtship. On their first date, she recalls, they went to a zoo. Gomez did not return to Alaska as intended. Instead, he decided to accept Ms. Allen's challenge to get used to her lifestyle—staying put in one place and not heeding the nomadic call of a circus—for the next six months. Gomez said he actually enjoyed the experience as both built a relationship based on their shared love of animals—he having worked with tigers and elephants and she having been raised around horses on her family's farm in the Nebraska panhandle.

(Continued on Page 6)

CIRCUS FLORA WEDDING.....

It was while Gomez was discovering the joys of domestic bliss that Circus Flora and the other love in his life, the elephant that had lent the show its name, returned to Scottsdale.

Producer Balding asked the trainer to resume caretaking responsibility for Flora and it became Ms. Allen's turn to follow Gomez on the road whenever her legal practice would permit.

Circus Flora, now in its 14th season as a not-for-profit show, completed a 20-performance run in St. Louis—its home base—on May 21. In recognition of her departure, the theme of the show was "Passport For Flora." Additional dates are planned this year in Houston and Scottsdale before her return.

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News From Ringling Bros. Circus

"There is legislation currently pending in the House of Representatives that would eliminate your right to enjoy the traditional American circus by banning elephants from traveling shows and elephant rides. We need your help. Please visit the Ringling home page at www.ringling.com/bandwagon. At that address, you'll find accurate, authoritative information about this legislation—and tools that will enable you to e-mail members of Congress today. A hearing on this legislation is tentatively scheduled for June 13—so we encourage you to use these tools right now. Don't let a misinformed vocal minority influence your right to enjoy a treasured part of the American circus experience. Speak out—today! Thank you."

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*Peggy Williams writes "The first ever educational performance of the 130th edition (Blue Unit) of the **Greatest Show on Earth** was debuted in New Haven, Ct. on May 5 to a near capacity house of over 7000 school kids. The performance includes a 40 minute educational pre-show celebrating various circus careers and the unsung heroes (working crews) of the show, as well as science and physics demonstrations by Clown Alley, a workout/warm up demo by the dancers and animal care and training tips from the elephant and hoof-

stock departments. The audience was introduced to some of our special circus language and special educational moments were laced throughout the actual performance of the show. Reviews were very positive. The kids loved it...so did the teachers and the cast.

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Earl Krauzer of New Hampshire writes "I just came back from visiting the **Dubsky** show, **The Royal Palace Circus**. It was a good show and a full house, with kids sitting on the floor all around the ring curb. **John & Mary Ruth Herriott** had a nice animal act that everyone really enjoyed. So much for the animal activists! There were free tickets for the kids, pony rides, face painting, souvenirs and pop corn was \$2 small and \$3 large and the show appeared to be doing very well." **Stephanie Dubsky** got a surprise when Earl brought her a pint of New Hampshire maple syrup! Earl will, I hope, be attending the **Circus Historical Convention** here in Bloomington. And yes, folks, we do have an airport here!

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***Dave "Letterfly" Knoderer** writes "**The Magic Night of the Horse** is coming soon at Canterbury, Florida's Equestrian Showplace, near Gainesville, June 23 & 24 at 7 p.m. both nights. The 2 1/2 hour show will have all breeds represented and special choreographed routines by some horse clubs. Professional horsemen participate too. In the past, personalities like **Gaylord Maynard**, **Pat Crampton** and I have added to the festivities with our unique offerings. **Tom Reed**, with the **Medieval Times Andalusians**, is a regular feature. To get to the showgrounds, get off of I-75 at Hwy 26 and go west 10 miles toward Newberry or call 352-472-6758." You can visit Dave's home page and see some of the beautiful motorcoach murals he does at: www.Letterfly.com. (Thanks, Dave)

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While talking to **Peggy MacDonald** the other day, she told me she remembers baby sitting for me at the New Orleans Shrine date—a few years ago! She also still has the cook book my mother, **Lorraine Valentine**, gave her! What a nice lady.

AN INTIMATE CHAT WITH SUE LENZ

Part II Sarasota CFA Convention

By Cherie Valentine

It is so strange when we go out now-we don't have to be back at 12 o'clock for feeding; we don't have to be back for 4 o'clock in the afternoon; we don't have to be back at 6 o'clock for their tea, which was very difficult for us in the beginning. When you've done it for-well, we've been married for 36 years-it's an awfully long time to suddenly...not only retiring...where this is six years now, but now our whole life has changed so we have decided, God willing, to have our honeymoon this year.

When you're traveling, there's so many places that you see on the signposts that you just don't get time to see. I've always wanted to see Mt. Rushmore and Rudi is a cowboy-freak, so we'll probably go to Branson.

We fell good because our "kids" are all gone now and we did our best for them and they did their best for us. We have no regrets anywhere. We've had a wonderful life because we not only did what we wanted, we got paid for it as well.

When we came over here in 1968, we both fell in love with Venice & in 1978, we built our house. We were in the "boonies" when we built and now we've got Super Wal-Mart, 1 mile; Home Depot, a 6-lane highway, 1 block-so we have seen it grow but even so, we just love it and we wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Question: "There is a Puppy Chow, is there a monkey chow?"

Answer: Yes, but we never used it. Rudi always would say, "Well, they can't get that in the jungle." Well, they also can't get tea made the English way, with sugar and milk. We always used to feed, like in the morning, it was our time, when we used to wake them up. It was apples for breakfast and 12 o'clock was banana time; 3 to 3:30, depending on the circus performance time, it would be oranges & grapefruit and then we used to have another time which they never knew what it was going to be. It could be whatever was in season-it could be grapes,

peaches, plums, nectarines-that was always the surprise and then at night, they each used to have a head of lettuce each, half a loaf of wheat bread and mixed salad-it would be like tomatoes, spring onions, green peppers, red peppers, cucumbers, corn on the cob-that was every night.

They knew that when they had their tea, that was the end of the day and it always used to be-and whether we were doing 2 shows, 3 shows, or whatever, whenever the tea time, they knew that was the last performance. Then half an hour after their supptime, lights were out. So that was the end of a perfect day for them. When we retired, we basically didn't change and I think that's why we're finding such a big difference now. We've got nothing anymore now that demands our attention. And you kind of feel you're not wanted anymore.

Question: "Would they go to bed at night and sleep all night?"

Answer: Yes, they didn't all sleep all together. When we were on the road, we had a big trailer for them where we had 4 cages which was against the wall permanent and we had 2 that were portable that they only used to go into when we were actually in transient. One used to go into each cage and the two portable ones would go in the play area for the props. As soon as we got to a new town, the props would come out and the portable cages would come out and all the chimps were loose together, so they were never kept in cages.

They all used to make beds. We'd give them sawdust & newspaper. And they used to make their messes on the newspaper. And that's what we found when we retired, it was exactly the same and when we used to put the lights out, that would be it until we would go in the morning-wouldn't matter if it was either 8, 9, or 10-they didn't wake up until we used to wake them up.

Question: "Do you still have all your equipment for the act?"

Answer: No, we sold everything. We had been with Ringling for 12 years and in 1978, we built our house and it was ready in 1979 and we were on the road.

(Continued on Page 9)

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

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

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

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

Carson & Barnes: Linton, IN-5/31; Nashville-6/1; Franklin-6/2; Portland-6/3; Celina, OH-6/4; Fostoria-6/5; Bucyrus-6/6; Wooster-6/7; Rittman-6/8; Champion-6/9; Ashtabula-6/10

Sterling-Reid Circus: Beaver Dam, WI-6/1; Milwaukee-6/2-4; Rockford, IL-6/5-6; St. Charles-6/7-8; Waukegon-6/9-11; Lafayette, IN-6/12; Indianapolis-6/13-14

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

Hubler Circus: Berea, OH-6/17

Roberts Bros Circus: East Liverpool, OH-6/1; St. Clairsville-6/2; Dover-6/3; Zanesville-6/4; Mt. Vernon-6/5; Bellefontaine-6/7; Tiffin-6/8; Norwalk-6/9; LaGrange-6/10; Burton-6/11; Canfield-6/12

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

Carden Circus: Baraboo, WI-Fairgrounds-June 14

Liebel Circus: DePere, WI-6/2-4; Sheboygan-6/8; Watertown, WI-6/12 (Thanks to Mary Jane Foote for all the Wisconsin updates!)

BACK YARD

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News From Our Circus Friends

***Al House** writes "author Ed Hoagland, writer of a rather earthy circus novel, is featured in the May 22 issue of *New Yorker* magazine. His life is profiled."

***Vince Pagliano** writes "Hey, gang! I'm off to Singapore with the first "Magicfest." I will not be a performer but act as the producer/manager for the show this time. We did the first "International Clownfest" last year and this year, I'm bringing in the magic for 2000. I will M.C. the shows. I have 9 great acts with me. There are 18 of us in all on the show. The folks on the show are: Clive & Tracy Allen, PA; Robert Baxt, CA; Bob Gibbons, NY; Marty & Brenda Hahne, FL; Duane & Mary Laflin, MT; Charles and Bobbi Peters, CA; Rocco, NJ; Joseph & Sharon Holiday, NJ; Peter & Hayley Gossamer, NJ; Stephen Elve, Canada and myself. Rocco will lecture there to the local IBM there. We will also do some TV and radio shows as well as 6 different venues daily. The acts will split up and move around as much as 2 shows a day. It is a logistical nightmare!

We return June 8 and then I'm off to the big Meadowlands Fair at Giant's Stadium in Secaucus, NJ for all 18 days. We open June 22 thru July 9. This is my 6th year as the "Ambassador of FUN!" at this unique event. Please drop by and say hello if you're ever in the area. (Thanks, Vince-let us know who else will be at the Meadowlands Fair)

CHATTING WITH SUE LENZ.....

The first year, I think we were in the house for six days and the following winter, it was 6 weeks. We wanted a change, so we did spot dates so we could have more time at home.

After a couple of years, we were in Great Adventure in New Jersey for one summer and we did spot dates and then Hamid-Morton & Hannefords and we did 2 years with Vargas. It was on Vargas that we decided we were going to make one more year and then retire. And that's when Mr. Holst came and said that Mr. Kenneth Feld would like a meeting with us.

We went to see him and he wanted us to come back for 2 years. We had planned on 1 year and he said come back for 2 years, so we did. It was one year longer than we thought we were going to do, but it was wonderful.

We started in America with Ringling Bros. and we finished with Ringling Bros. We had a marvelous career. It's a shame there is not that many of the younger generation going into it now & I think it is only because of the animal activists where they've got ahead. You just can't do it anymore-there's no opportunity anymore. It's very sad.

Question: "I was always impressed with your props and the costumes. You always kept up your wardrobe so very nice for twelve years."

Answer: Rudi used to make all the props & paint all the props. I say he's going to die with a paintbrush in his hands. I used to make all the chimps' costumes. They used to go through the trousers very fast. I used to make just all the trousers and put the straps on later because then you could adjust the length. To get the bright colors-because when we had the train, we had the bright colors-it was really paper thin, so it didn't wear very well, so I was constantly making trousers because you didn't want them going in looking tacky. Our costumes were always professionally made.

Question: When the chimps were performing, did they wear under garments?

Answer: Yes, the very small ones we used to have in diapers, I made them all out of terry-toweling, like a romper with plastic pants on the top. It was very seldom-the older they got, the cleaner they got. It was only really the babies that would wet in their pants or if there was ever an incident where they would be scared or something like that, then you would get it-if there was a big bang or something during the act or something out of the ordinary would give them a fright, then you got wet pants.

Question: Do you have a lot of videos?

Answer: Not as many as we wish we would have had. But we have a lot of pictures and things but memories you can never forget.

Question: Did they bite?

Answer: Not really, to us. That is if you get a bite, it's usually in a fight where you get yourself involved when you shouldn't, that's usually the time. They will go for other people but it's their form of defense. See, when you think, they're in the jungle-they're on the defense all the time and Rudi and I are Mom and Dad so whoever else there is, you're the enemy. That's why we never used to let anybody touch them-not that they would bite-but we didn't want to take that chance. The smaller they are, usually no. You get a little one, and if they do, usually it's out of jealousy. But most people don't realize how jealous they are. They're very, very jealous of each other and of Rudi and myself. We could never be affectionate to each other in front of them-we would never do that. Some are Mom's and some are Dad's, you could always see. Now Sally was always my girl and she would listen to me. If she ever did anything wrong and you shouted at her, she would sit on it because we always used tone of voice. We used to have a bench where we used to dress them before all the performances and to undress them and she'd be sitting there and if I got angry at her for something or shouted at her, she wouldn't talk and she'd just sit on the bench. And then we would give them their tea and she wouldn't take her tea.

(Continued on Page 12)

CIRCUS IN OHIO

By Rich Deptula

It's either feast or famine and right now, it's a wonderful feast here in Northern Ohio. First of all, it was Sterling-Reid which played Cleveland, Ohio in February at the Cleveland State University. Then, in March, on the 23rd, Royal American played my city of Lorain in the National Guard Armory and gave three performances, two performances were to be given and the line never went down until they had to tell them that it was SRO for the third show and could not allow any more bodies in for that performance.

This was the first time the Armory was used for a circus. One month later, the Royal Palace Circus rolled in the same building on April 26th. Royal Palace also has a wonderful show like the Royal American Circus. I am not going to do a run-down of the shows since this has been done before in Back Yard. I had a nice visit with Hashi Dubsy. I had the pleasure of entertaining David Nunez and Alex Gomez from Royal Palace Circus in my circus room after the show, and then drove down to North Canton, Ohio to visit once again with my friends on the Royal Palace Circus.

Then comes the Barnum's Kaleidoscope and opens May 13 till June 11 in Cleveland, Ohio in the Flats. This is a beautiful show from start to finish and should not be missed. Mr. Feld was in town for the opening and I had the pleasure of talking to him about his tented extravaganza. On the 24th of May, UniverSoul Circus opened for a 4-day run in the Cleveland area. Kelly-Miller will also be in the area.

On Saturday, May 20, Cheryl and I hosted the Harold Barnes-Col. Lucky Larabee Tent #110 from Springfield, Ohio at our home for a dinner, meeting and viewing of our collection. (Thanks, Rich)

THREE CIRCUSES IN ONE WEEK

April 29-May 7, 2000

Bro. J. Francis Dolphin saw the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus 130 edition at the Providence Civic Center on April 29th at Saturday noon. His sister,

Maureen Thayer of Attleboro, Mass. was with him. They visited clowns David and Cherie Gregg who are from near by Foxboro, Mass. Cherie told Maureen that she use to teach Ballet in Attleboro. They also visited with David Solove who is the boss clown and is presently writing a circus diary which is on the Ringling web site www.ringling.com. David and Cherie Gregg mentioned that a lot of family and friends came in from Foxboro to see them.

After the circus, Bro. Francis and his sister Maureen attended a First Anniversary Mass of Death for their dear Mother Mary Anne Jackson Dolphin at St. Mark's church in Attleboro Falls, Mass. The following day, Mass was celebrated again at the Mother's home parish of Sacred Heart in North Quincy, Mass. Family and grandchildren were present. Bro. Francis had prayers for his parents at the grave sight in the cemetery in the Blue Hills following Mass at Sacred Heart.

Bro. Francis returned to Denver on May 1 and on Wednesday, traveled to Great Bend, Kansas. A good 350 mile drive on I-70 from Denver to see the Carson & Barnes Circus. He was present for the set up of the Big Tent and saw the afternoon show on May 4. He visited with Barbara Miller Byrd, Errol Maguire and his staff, John Moss, the Little Sisters of Jesus, the Calvallini family and the clowns from Peru. The attendance at the Circus was excellent for both shows. He returned that evening a good 6 hour drive from Great Bend to Denver. On Sunday, May 7, Bro. Francis visited the Sterling and Reid Circus in Golden, Colorado. The circus had a weekend engagement from Friday to Sunday. There were 9 performances over the weekend and the show did excellent business. This is the same site used when Carson & Barnes comes into Golden.

He had a nice talk with "Dutch" Crawford, who is manager and performance Director of the show. This was the first time that Bro. Francis saw this three ring circus that comes out of Sarasota, Florida.

Fr. Paul Sykora was with Bro. Francis in seeing the Carson & Barnes and the Sterling-Reid Circuses. It was an excellent week.

It was in May of 1934 when his parents, J. Francis Dolphin and Mary Anne Jackson got engaged while watching the Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus under the Big Top in Worcester, Massachusetts. The tradition continues which I am proud of and "Long Live The Circus." By Bro. J. Francis Dolphin, M.M. (Thank you-maybe you could write about your memories of the circus back in Boston when you were young.)

CAROLINA ELEPHANT MEMORIES

By Mike Cecere

Well folks, here is another chapter in the continuing chronicles of Capt. Ken "Turtle" Benson. As regular Back Yard readers know, Capt. Ken is Elephant Supt. on America's small town favorite circus, Roberts Bros. He travels the country with the gentle giant, "Boo," a delightful female Asian Elephant, entrusted in his care by the late showman, D.R. Miller and the Byrd family. And let us not forget "Martin, the Wonder Dog," their sidekick in touring America. Our story begins when the circus entered scenic North Carolina, one of the gems of our fifty states and home to quite a few friends of the circus such as Cam Cridelbaugh, Jr. and many others.

Capt. Ken was out on his post on the midway doing rides when a grizzled old man in bib overalls came up to the safety rail. As is his custom, Capt. Ken always is happy to answer questions about the great beasts and reacquaint himself with the locals, many of whom return year after year to see the clean, family show. The old man said to Capt. Ken, "Son, I took care of an elephant once," and in between rides, the old man stood and admired the great beast, letting children come up to the rail to get a close-up look.

Well the show went on and there was the old guy right up front, taking in the whole thing, as wide-eyed as the children. So the Ringmaster called out, "Capt. Ken Benson & Boo." The old fellow sat mesmerized! After the show, the old fellow came back with his grown children, who had come with him along with their kids and the old guy was crying.

He composed himself to tell Capt. Ken that when he was a young man, the small family-type show that had owned Boo then had come through the area and had a truck problem and this man's father had let them keep Boo at their farm while the repairs were made, for several days. The farmers gladly provided ample feed for Boo, thrilled to have an elephant staying with them.

And the old man had been allowed to look after Boo, both of them young then and Boo, gentle then, as now. Well, of course Capt. Ken invited the man to come greet his old friend and old Boo seemed to recall the old fellow. Capt. Ken made sure they got to take plenty of photos of the old fellow and Boo. Surely a day that old fellow and those folks around those parts won't soon forget. And made one old man very, very happy. But that's what it takes to be an Elephant Supt., a job Capt. Ken does real well. So, as the sun sets on another day, we close this chapter in the continuing chronicle of Capt. Ken "Turtle" Benson, big "Boo" and "Martin," the Wonder Dog! God Bless America!



Animal News

On May 20, a Siberian tiger tore the right arm off a volunteer at the **Prairie Wind Wild Animal Refuge**, 55 miles east of Denver. The 28-year-old woman reached her hand into the tiger's cage to pet it and the tiger nibbled at her hand. She panicked and jerked her hand back and the tiger tore her arm off near the shoulder. The victim wants **Boris**, the tiger, to live and she knows it was her action that provoked the attack. A hospital spokeswoman said the volunteer was worried about Boris' future and that she has very strong feelings toward this animal and about protecting him.

***Performing Cats Steal the Show:** At the Santa Clara County Fair in California, **Gregory Popovich** had house cats performing to the delight of the crowds-some audience members came back 2 or 3 times to see the show! If you get a chance to see his show, tell his performers **Mozart** said hello!!!

CHATting WITH SUE LENZ.....

And then Rudi would say, "For goodness sake, make up with her!" And I'd say, "Are you sorry-you're a good girl." And then she'd laugh and laugh and laugh and drink her tea. It's like having a big family really with a lot of children. Like I say, all our children have grown up and left home now.

Question: "How many did you have at one time?"

Answer: The most we ever had at one time was 8 and we worked 7. But we usually worked 6. We usually had a young one, like an understudy, ready. When they reach maturity, it's when they get harder to handle. That's when we usually would put them into a Safari Park, if possible. We never wanted to have problems because you can't go against nature. One male we had was only 7 and he became the meanest little thing. We got rid of him for the simple reason he would go up to our big male and pick an argument with him. He wasn't mean to us-he was mean to the other chimps. And Rudi said one day, the male is going to suddenly say, "Hey, buster!" So when you've got one that is going to cause trouble amongst the others, it's better to put them into a zoo or somewhere. You don't want to have problems. And when you're working a lot like that, they've all got to be compatible, because if they're not compatible, it's like having 6 kids and 2 hate each other. It doesn't work. They've got to like each other.

Question from Sheelagh Jones: "Did you ever do any Typhoo Tea commercials in England?"

Answer: We did 6 commercials in England and I have all the story-boards and Sally was in every one of them. Some of them she was the housewife, some of them she was the policeman, she was the one bringing in the brushes to clean the chimney. So I have all those memories. We have a lot of wonderful memories. Rudi & I have never been away together and that's what we're looking forward to, but that was our decision-it was because of the animals-that you dedicate your life to them. We made our living at it, yes, but that's not the reward that you're getting. You're getting the

reward from the affection you get back and you do get so much affection that it's unbelievable. I lost my mother last year and in the last four years I went back 11 times to see her and if we'd been working, I couldn't have done that. I have no one left in England now. I'd go for 10 days and when I would come back, the greeting that I got from the chimps far outweighed Rudi's. I'd bring them back candy rock from Blackpool and things like that, so they knew when Mom came back home, I always brought them something. They're like kids.

Question: "Where is Roger now?"

Answer: At Jungle Land Zoo, in Kissimmee, Fla.

Question: "Were you ever bitten by one of them?"

Answer: No, but I've had some nicks which was my own stupid fault, which is always when there is an argument and instinctively you try to stop it. We had one born with us, but the others we got very young, 3-5 months old. We had them in the house trailer with us for a good year, so in that time they get to know you and you get to know them and you know their little idiosyncrasies-and all of them you'll find that they have a trait-even when they're playing, especially when they're small. You will evaluate what they are. When you're playing and that, you'll see they start grabbing your hands a little bit-which you stop, but you've got to have in the back of your mind, that one will come for your hands if he wants to. Sometimes they'll want to go for the feet or faces. You'll see some chimp trainers will have fingers missing-they can bite-they have all their canines, yes they do. The secret is when they become adults-it's just the aggression-that is the time to retire them, because you can't go against nature. **Remark:** "Except Sally!"

Answer: Sally was a career girl! She never gave us any problems. She was never aggressive, she never had PMS! She was exceptional. Because Sally was captured in the jungle, looking at her we think there was a big of a gorilla in her somewhere, because her head was a different shape than the regular chimp. Her hand were different. Chimps have very long fingers, very thin, and hers were not.

(To Be Continued)

RUMBLINGS FROM THE CRUMMY!

By Brian Nunn

On the road about 15 years ago, I was hauling the horse wagon up I-5 when south of Medford I found at the bottom of a steep down grade, a tight curve to the left just before another steep grade up. The elephant wagon had blown the fuel pump. It was about 30 miles to the lot (300 mile jump) and the guy driving the bull wagon was a front-end guy, a good driver but no elephant man so I had him take the horses on into the lot so I could stay with the elephants. There was NO turn off.

Mountain pass, high cliff on the left, straight drop to the river on the right. I spent a lot of time inside the wagon. It was Lottie, Hattie, Minnie and Kate. I loved Kate a lot and liked to have her comfortable (I buried them in hay.)

The truck takes up the right lane, of course, so I wait for a trooper and a wrecker. The point of this story is the wrecker was a 20-year-old Pete with a new 400 Caterpillar with a 24-speed and a 3-speed Jake brake (nice truck)-it had 3 gear shift handles.

The driver told me the bull wagon and Pete weighed the same as a loaded log truck, except logs didn't move around so much-the back of the wagon was all over the road. There was a great celebration at the lot. I made sure the wrecker driver and family got free elephant rides and floss. Vargas sprung for the tickets. Those of you that know how difficult it is to pick up and tow an elephant wagon will understand. 400 h.p., 24 speeds and the Jake helped.

I was the usual driver of the Peterbilt elephant wagon. I really liked that truck. It was a retired Texas gravel hauler, a 350 Cummins with a working 10-speed. All the years I drove that peach, all that happened was a clogged fuel filter and a blown brake valve, but it was in Arizona, so no big deal. My proud claim to fame was that, even when I wasn't on the show, the Pete was called Romeo's truck. But, alas, the Pete was retired and hauled off the lot on that Medford date. By the same wrecker driver who was happy to have it. It's probably still

hauling logs today.

Also, Mark Pierson was my navigator on all jumps so I kept it between the lines (if I would have killed Mark, Rex would have hurt me real bad). I stayed awake. I did anyway, Mark was good company.

My other favorite truck was the Kenworth spool wagon on the Hill show. It had some slack in the combustion chambers but if you needed it, it would serve up. Playing Johnstown, Pa., (big flood history) it was raining and a mud lot, of course. The lot was downhill to spool out the canvas (one half the tent on each spool). On the second run, the rain had soaked in real good. So, me being far downhill, knowing it's going to rain more, with no hesitation, as soon as the canvas boss gave me the go-ahead, kept moving, grabbed a couple of gears and climbed that hill up to the high ground. What with the low compression, (I think) it helped me out of that jackpot 'cuz with tight horsepower, I might of spun those drivers right down to the axles.

I think my most-best was Rex Williams' '78 GMC Astro cab, 3 1/4 Cat with 13-speed, 2-speed jake. That truck whistled down the road. The tricked-up shift was fun to play with and kept me alert (everyone needs a Lert!)

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News From Our Circus Friends

Casady's Critters of Pleasant Valley Farms are on the move with the 2000 season under way with their all new petting zoo and pony rides. All the employees working with the animals have matching shirts and uniforms. They have many more weekends set, with picnics and celebrations, coming up is June 3 & 4, Belgium, Wi.; June 10 & 11, Sheboygan; June 17, Sheboygan and June 18, Waldo. **Wayne Bolz** attended the opening performance at Baraboo and sent along the beautiful new brochure from **Circus World Museum**.

***Bob Kitchen** reports there is a law being introduced in Rhode Island to prohibit the exhibition of elephants, tigers, lions and bears. **Eva Amidon**, of Worcester, Ma., a long time circus fan, passed away three weeks ago. (Thanks, Bob.)

A PAWS FROM MOZART

By Mozart Valentine

MEOW everyone, welcome back to my column. I, like **Jenny Wallenda**, hate to start off with the passing of friends, but a very special feline passed away May 21 in Baraboo. **Spooky** lived with **Eric and Nancie McConnell** and encountered a bee while relaxing in the window of the porch. They rushed him to the vet and they gave him a shot to combat the reaction to the string and oxygen too. Within a half an hour, **Spooky** passed away. I know this is hard on **Eric & Nancie** and hope they will someday get another feline friend. Don't tell Mom, but we are far superior to dogs! My Uncle **Stuffie** was found by Mom on the **Big Apple Circus** back in 1985 and **Eric** was Mom's concession boss there. A famous movie bear, **Bart**, 23, died May 10, from cancer. He was a 1,500 pound, 9 1/2' grizzly bear who appeared in more than a dozen films, including "The Edge," with **Anthony Hopkins**. **Bart** was born in the **Baltimore Zoo** and adopted by **Doug & Lynne Seus** and taken to their wildlife ranch near **Heber City**, 30 miles from **Salt Lake City**. **Bart** was diagnosed with cancer in Oct., 1998 and underwent surgery to remove tumors from his right paw. The cancer resurfaced and **Bart** refused to take his pain medicine and had to be euthanized. Our prayers go out to the **McConnells** and the **Seus'**. Rest in peace **Spooky** and **Bart**!

The **Cleveland Zoo** reports the male zebra born April 13 is now roaming the exhibit with his mother, **Fran**. One of the Zoo curators is in **Malaysia** trying to bring back sun bears for several zoos.

The **Kansas City Zoo** reports on May 1, a new baby mysteriously was born to chimp matriarch, **Crazy**, even though she had a contraceptive implant in her back. Keepers think troupe leader, **Jimmie**, is the father and he has a heart condition aggravated by the tauntings of young males, **Joshua**, 11 and **Bondo**, 10. They are trying to become the leader! The keepers would like to see **Josh** take over, as he is a much nicer chimp.

Speaking of chimps, Mom talked to **Tammy Wallenda** and she presents an informative show with **Roger**, the former **Lenz** chimp, and **Radcliff**, the orangutan. When **Tammy** told Mom she gave **Roger** tea in the mornings, Mom said, no-**Roger** always had it at the end of his day, Mom knowing this after typing the article about **Sue Lenz**. **Tammy** said these two primates are very smart! **Tammy** is at the **Jungle Land Zoo** in **Kissimmee, Fl**. Keepers at the **Woodland Park Zoo** in **Seattle** learned that **Chai's** baby that she is expecting is going to be a "little" girl! The Zoo already has 4 female elephants. Some of the keepers wanted a boy to expand breeding. **Chai**, 21, became pregnant 15 months ago in **Dickerson Park Zoo** in **Springfield, Mo** by **Onyx** and is expecting this fall. The **Melbourne Zoo** to proud to announce the birth of their 5th baby gorilla, April 26. The mother is **Julia**, an 18-year-old and she was in labor for 5 hours. The keepers spent the night with her to observe the birth, but **Julia** didn't need any assistance. **Julia** arrived at the Zoo in 1997 from the **Durrell Wildlife Preservation Trust** on **Jersey**, in the **Channel Islands**, along with **G-Ann**, who is now also pregnant for the first time and is due to give birth soon. The Zoo is working with 105 other zoos in a worldwide breeding program to maintain the maximum genetic diversity of **Western Lowland Gorillas** within the member zoos, with a total population of 715 at the end of 1999. The **San Francisco Zoo** reports a 26-year-old giraffe was found dead in her indoor stall of unknown causes May 22, making her the second giraffe to die at the Zoo this year. **Amy**, a 15' tall reticulated giraffe who was born at the Zoo, was found dead by stunned keepers who said she appeared to be acting normal the day before. **Farrah**, 23, died 3 months before, her death attributed to anesthetic complications secondary to a significant renal disease. **Amy** was born at the Zoo in 1974 and was reared & bottle-fed by keepers after her mother died 2 days after her birth. Let me hear about animal news in your area!

MEOW for now, Mozart.

Photo By Dick McGivney

TO
SHOWFOLK'S
OF *Sar*



Jorge Pages & Fred Logan

The Piersons 1935

Al G. Barnes



David Balding & Flora

Photo By Lane Talbert

