

BACK YARD

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"The Flying Valentinos: Circuses & Fairs They Played Along Route 66, 1935 to 1959"

By Cherie Valentine

By 1941, Lorraine Valentine was now doing a very hard trick in the flying act, a two-and-a-half, blindfolded with a burlap sack over her head. (I still have the sack.) In Omaha she suffered neck injuries when she could not hear George call for her to leave the pedestal board, as the band was playing a little too loud, and she fell into the net. In Flint, Michigan, she fell from the ladder leading up to the pedestal board, cutting her knee open, requiring 22 stitches. In August, they were playing one of their favorite fairs in Russell Springs, KY and she broke a couple of George's ribs when she kicked him in the chest, while performing the two-and-a-half trick.

Their income tax form for the year shows that they owned a 1 1/2 ton 1940 Ford truck, purchased in 1940 at a cost of \$1061. They also owned a 1938 Cadillac Sedan, purchased in March of 1941, for \$600.

In March of 1942, the Valentinos opened the fair season in the South at Hinesville, GA for the Mighty Monarch Shows. They traveled in South & North Carolina, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia and ended the season in Texas. The tax return showed that they had a net income of \$1549. Lorraine's journal showed that they paid a Federal car tax of \$13.34. George, Lorraine & Sue all had sugar ration cards & Lorraine listed their numbers. In Sept. they received \$175 for four dates they played in Texas. They were now making more money per week. They contributed to the Army & Navy Relief funds and were investing in bonds. In March, the truck's mileage was 12,526 and the car had 11,980.

In 1943, they were at the end of Route 66-opening in Long Beach, CA with the Russell Bros. Circus. It had been a long time since they worked exclusively on a circus. In an interview, Sue Peltó, their partner, said that they liked performing their act at fairs & Shrine circuses.



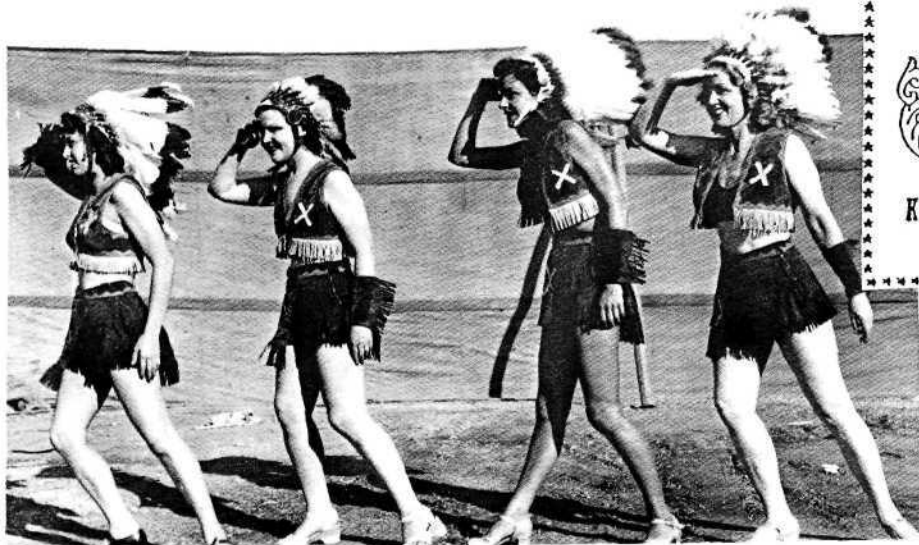
(Continued On Page 4)



COLE 1942



Lovely Herta Klausner is the "Goldilocks" of the Klausner bear act. Muzzled nuzzler is one of her baby bruins, Ida.



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Photos For Sale???
 CONTACT CHERIE

STEEL CAGE MATCH

By Mike Cecere

Over the many years I spent as a Wild Animal Trainer, I had a number of accidents. Usually, getting nailed by a big cat if your fault, except for those unexplicable times when Wild Animals remember (usually when you forgot) they ARE wild animals!

In the mid-80s I was training a number of animals both Wild & Exotic for a large, long since bankrupt, tent circus. They had an old group of lionesses, to which I added two young cats to and was assembling a new act of mixed lions, tigers to which I was going to add a black leopard, when a veteran Trainer, who I had a lot of respect for, offered us a large, highly trained male lion. Man, he was an impressive specimen, with a big, black mane (and around 500 lbs.), just a great-looking lion. While alarm bells should have gone off in my head, I had successfully taken raw, untrained big cats and trained them before and since this animal had a large number of behaviors in him, I thought about the shortcut to a better act that he would be!

We were on tour at the time, so I used to practice the act right after set-up every day. Everything was going great until a cool day in a windswept West Texas town when my overconfidence bubble got burst. He came out of the tunnel in a grumpy mood and after one try, I rested him and said, "let him out again." This time he came right out and crushed my chair & grabbed me by the arm, dragging me around.

I'll save the readers the gory details, but I had a large number of stitches and was returned to the lot later that afternoon. It's one of those life experiences that make you think about going on the pro-golf tour rather than locking yourself in a cage full of lions and tigers!

After a pep-talk by the concession manager who was the widow (not a good omen!) of a famed Wild Animal Trainer, I was determined to go and do the show that night. A giant problem was that my left arm was severely damaged and my right hand also had stitches, from punching the lion in the teeth to let me loose, so I couldn't move the props well.

The solution I came up with was to have someone come in and move the props. But, who would volunteer for that suicide train? Then it came to me. My good friend Capt. Ken "Turtle" Benson was doing double-double duty, working Elephants, helping with Harry Locker's Giant Black Bear act, juggling, rope-spinning and leading the band playing drums that could have got him hired by

Guns And Roses, the way he used to beat those skins. I was also aware of Capt. Ken's war record of highly decorated service in the Naval Special Forces, so he was the perfect candidate. On cue from me, Ken would leave the drums, enter the arena, holding only a drumstick for protection, move the pyramid bridge in; leave; the cats would do the trick; he'd re-enter and remove it and return to the drums to give the live band that "jungle-beat."

We got so good at it that I would cue a huge lioness that would bark out a loud growl that would send chills up into the audience, but meant little to a brave guy like Capt. Ken. He was and is now all showbiz. We did things that way for a number of weeks until the strength returned to my arms, then I went back to the "Macho-Man" lion act. In reflection, I should have left the act the way it was as it was a better show and the audience loved it! SO, that's the story of the Steel Cage Match! God Bless America!

SMART SHOWFOLK'S CAT !!

Frank Thompson, former Back Yard owner, reports "there is, apparently, now a 'Showfolks cat,' a big tom cat that lives at the Showfolks Clubhouse, in Sarasota.

About mid-day on Tuesday, Jan. 4th, we were notified that PETA planned to "protest" the OABA meetings that were going on this week. They showed up; a couple of adults and three or four high school age kids, dressed in outlandish costumes-an angel, a devil, etc. They all had signs and paced up and down in the Club parking lot, not well seen by passing motorists but clearly visible to the TV cameras who had been notified by a FAX from them, in advance.

They were protesting, the cameras were filming, almost no one from the meetings saw them, BUT the cat did. He calmly marched up to them, lifted his tail and peed all over at least one! Needless to say, their spirits were somewhat "dampened." (They are wondering who trained the cat!)

CIRCUS MANIA 2000 AND LOT 2 GATHERING

This will be held Sept. 21-23 at the Uniontown, PA Mall. Circus Model Builders, Circus Fans, Circus Historical Society, Carnival Historical and Model Builders-are all welcome! For more info contact: Bill Merchant, 716 Penn Ave., Brackenridge, PA 15014.

"The Flying Valentinos".....

The Valentinos "didn't like to perform with shows that moved every day because this did not allow any free time to relax," Sue said. They preferred performing with shows that lasted for a longer length of time in one place. Art Concello, of Bloomington, was the owner of Russell Bros. Circus. Their contract was for \$200 a week and they wouldn't have to travel very far between towns. In August, they left Russell Bros. after a disagreement with management, and went, once more, out on their own, playing Shrine circuses. They played in Texas, Colorado, Arkansas, Iowa, Peoria, Illinois and another Route 66 town, Tulsa. For the 7 days there, they received a \$350 salary. Lorraine said that since George had served in World War I, and they had an all-girl flying act, they were getting booked more and could get whatever salary they wanted, as the men from the other flying acts were getting drafted into the war.

By 1944, they were opening earlier in the season. That year they opened in January in Flint with Polack Bros. Circus. At the end of February, they were at the beginning of Route 66, playing at the Medinah Temple in Chicago for the Shrine Circus. They played Chicago for 12 days and received \$525 for the date. The journal shows they paid \$150 to have the car painted in March. For 9 days in April, the Valentinos returned to the St. Louis Police Circus, this time, according to the program, "The first time in circus history of the joint appearance of all 3 flying acts of the famous Valentine family; Roy, Fred and George. George was paid \$900 for the 2 weeks in St. Louis. (Lorraine later commented that the brothers did not work well together at all, as they were always trying to upstage one another.)

The car was greased that month, with mileage of 33,619 and cost \$7, a big increase from 1936, when it cost \$1.50. They also bought seat covers for \$8, but a windshield wiper was only 87 cents. From May 5 to May 10, they performed in Springfield, Missouri, another Route 66 town. They received \$350 for the week's work. Something major must have gone wrong with their car, as the journal states they spent \$166 on repairs. By July 2, they were back in St. Louis, performing for the Moolah Temple Shrine Circus at the Stadium and also working with brother, Fred. They were paid \$450 for the week. One of the major truck repairs there was for a bearing, \$18.55. Lorraine bought her niece a dress for a birthday present, costing \$4. They also went to a shoe repair shop in St. Louis, spending \$2.30!

Their income for the year was \$7978. Their tax return showed that they now owned 4 houses and had rent as an income. They owned 3 in Houston and one in Bloomington, all were frame dwellings. They bought houses in Houston in 1938, 1942 and in 1944, the one in Bloomington. The return also showed they owned the 1938 Cadillac, the 1940 truck and a housetrailer purchased in 1941 for \$1940. They now had a net profit on the return of \$4122.

They also donated money to a lot of charities, including: Churches, \$150; Red Cross, \$15; War Chest, \$50; Salvation Army, \$20 and Infantile Paralysis Fund, \$5. That year they performed in Missouri, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Ohio, Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Tennessee, Penn., Virginia, Georgia and South Carolina. Galveston was the opening spot in 1945, with Ray Bros. Circus, sponsored by the Rotary. By April, they were at the Chicago Stadium for Barnes Bros. Circus for 2 weeks for which they received \$3600. Total income for the year was \$9820. Things were looking up for them.

On July 1, they were back in St. Louis, performing in the show along with brother Fred's act. The first 2 weeks in October, they spent here in Bloomington, taking a much needed rest but probably spending the time to fix up their rental house, as their expenses listed items for fixing up houses.

In 1946, the St. Louis Police Circus was written up in Billboard. The article said it was "the oldest of the fraternal presentations of this type, also being a 15 day event. The Ward-Bell and the Flying Valentino troupes got together on their timing to offer an excellent aerial number; the flyers timing their moves so that each feat could be followed with a minimum of neck-twisting and they finished with an over-and-under together. Their salary for the date was \$1080.

Their tax return showed that gas, oil & upkeep on the car, truck and trailer cost \$2875. It also showed they purchased a new housetrailer for \$1850. They still owned all the houses and their income was \$9895 for the year.

They had a cold opening of the 1947 season in Cincinnati at the Music Hall Arena in January. Lowell Sherer, of Bloomington, recalls witnessing an unusual spectacle at the Shrine Circus in Chicago while he caught for Fred's act. There was in attendance a large group of deaf children seated in the balcony at about the same level as the flying trapeze act.

(Continued On Page 9)

4

HOW THEY LOUSED UP THE CIRCUS

BY BILL BALLANTINE

(SAGA-May, 1962)

Dedicated to Roberta and Family

At the circus, Richard Barstow could even order elephants and horses around and could work close to such exotic monsters as snakes, hippos, giraffes, lions, tigers and gorillas. He loved the godlike authority.

His family had been miserably poor. His struggle upward was shaped by hard knocks and humiliation. Richard's father was killed in a train wreck when Richard was 2. The youngest of 7, Richard had been born with a club foot. His widowed mother was unable to finance an operation on it until he was 5. After that, Richard, at 6, was learning to dance. One of the Chicago clubs Barstow and his 2 sisters danced in was the swanky Midnight Frolic, whose owner was Al Capone. For several years, Richard innocently knew Al only as "Mr. Brown." The famous gangster enjoyed pillow fights with the boy in the Barstows' hotel suite and took him picnicking and joy riding along the lakefront in a bullet-proof limo. (Once when they were shot at, young Richard trustingly accepted Mr. Brown's suave explanation that someone was rabbit hunting in the park.) One of Richard's proudest possessions was a modest platinum ring given him as a boy by Al Capone.

Its setting was a black sapphire framed by four small diamonds. "It's the sentiment," Richard said, in justification of the delicate ornament. "I picked it out of a big tray full that Al brought into my sisters' dressing room one night at the Frolic. I guess he boosted them somewhere. It was like he was offering me chocolates out of a candy box. 'Go ahead, kid, take two-they're small,' he said. Barstow's early friendship with Capone has helped greatly around the circus. It gained him immediate acceptance with the big show's roustabouts. These toughies-men with murky pasts and unreliable fingerprints-are usually unfriendly to strangers from beyond the stakeline and can make it tough for intruders. But they looked on Barstow as a glamorous figure of the outlaw underworld and accepted his rehearsal scoldings and insults with high good humor, meekly obeying his imperious orders and impossible demands. Over the years, as he advanced from choreographer to full-fledged director, the showhands have continued to treat him as a curiosity. He gets from them the grudging protection and consideration usually reserved for lame dogs, nuns and the blind. Sometimes, after nagging these fellows at

rehearsal, Barstow feels contrite. Once, regretting a dressing-down he had given the driver of an elaborate Spec float, Richard afterward went around to the stables and presented the errant workhand with a potted delphinium. The grizzled hostler stared unbelievably at this gift, then managed to croak in a husky whisky baritone, "Je-eez-zus *Kee-rist!*" Despite this the fellow has been fiercely loyal to Barstow ever since, although he probably would have preferred a pint of rot-gut as a peace offering.

Very early in his association with the circus, Barstow made certain also that his distinguished past as an on-toes phenomenon was brought to the attention of the Big Top's more athletic inhabitants. It helped he considerably to get the word around that once he'd held the title of World's Championship Long Distance Toe-Walker, a distinction earned by walking 4 and one-half miles on his toes. As "The Iron-Toed Boy (He Walked 35,000 Miles On His Toes)," Richard appeared 4 times in Ripley's popular newspaper feature, "Believe It Or Not." Barstow is still proud of that distinction.

The circus director is not one to let a newspaper notice pass unclipped. Apparently, he's never thrown one away. His collection of press clipping books fills about 40 great fat volumes, newspaper-page size. He keeps this chronicle of his past in his NY City apartment. I've been through as much of it as I could stand and it's fascinating reading. From this vast storehouse of memories he draws his production ideas for the circus. He hasn't forgotten a single comball vaudeville or nightclub routine since the first day he walked behind footlights.

And each one is a rich source of material for the kind of glamour circus that Johnny North wants. Some of the ideas that Barstow's boss foists on him are too majestic for execution by the cast which the circus provides.

North once suggested a finale of rainbow-colored fountains in which sea lions would disport, wearing sunglasses, blonde wigs and falsies in impersonation of a bevy of glamour girls headed by a sea lion Marilyn Monroe. During his days on the circus Richard has learned to sideslip North's more violent brainstorms. He has learned that sea lions will not tolerate sunglasses, but elephants will. They'll also accept beards, earrings the size of bicycle tires & spats-but not stockings or grass skirts (they simply eat those). Barstow has learned that camel spit stinks something awful; that boa constrictors are attracted by pomade on float-drivers' hair;

(Continued on Page 11)

THE ELEPHANT CHRISTMAS

BY MIKE CECERE

While Americans were doing their last minute shopping for the Holidays, a big event was about to happen for some of God's Biggest creatures. On December 23, 1999, the last of the "Tuli" Elephants were released back into the wild. Many of you may have seen the videos of these young Elephants in South Africa on the major networks evening news.

The short version of the story is that a group of young Elephants were allowed to be captured by an international animal dealer, who held them in conditions that, according to professional Elephant authorities, were deplorable. In addition, the dealer brought in mahouts from Asian countries that only had experience with Asian Elephants to train them which only worsened the situation.

Granted, in countries less civilized and prosperous than our own, the lives of animals do not get the same high reverence that we place on them. But that doesn't mean we should just shrug our shoulders and say, "What can we do?" And through the modern medium of satellite television and the Internet concerned people worldwide spoke up and assisted Animal Welfare people there in South Africa in halting their further abuse and sales overseas. You have to realize the significance of the fact that South Africans themselves undertook to straighten out this problem.

The majority of people there consider wild animals the same way we consider whitetail deer here in the United States. In addition, they have the monumental task of changing decades of Apartheid government and improving the lifestyle of hundreds of thousands of people who do not even have running water! But yet, they had the compassion to take action to help these Elephants, which to people like me, is an inspiration of how deeply the lives of our animal friends affect modern society, even in Africa. Now, as some of my fellow Elephant people read this, they will say, "Hey, Cecere was the guy who trained and marketed those Nautilus-Jumbolair Baby Elephants!"

Sure, it's true, I along with W.C. Chuck Walters, made it possible for the huge Arthur Jones-Nautilus Corp. herd to be dispersed. But those Elephants were here, there was no way of sending them back, nor could they have stayed where they were. But we did things the American Way, not as the Asian Mahouts did and I still have one of those magnificent creatures with me today, twelve years later.

And there are a small number of Elephant people today that have been in the position of handling raw Elephants, that had never been chained, trained, trucked or even been real close to humans. Those people will understand why I consider those Tuli Elephants To Be Having A Real Elephant Christmas! God Bless America.

130th Edition of the Ringling Blue Unit

A visit to the Ringling home page: www.ringling.com is well worth your time, if you haven't visited the site in a while. They now have pictures of the 130th highlights, which include "Spectacular Sara"- "Making her American debut, Sara presents rare white tigers, Royal Bengals, Golden tigers and the most extraordinary of all, the snow tiger!" Another photo is of Ringmaster Michael James McGowen, welcoming you to the circus. One entitled, "Delightfully Daffy Diner!" is of Todd Zimmerman, clown, and he has a rather large customer-an elephant! Another colorful photo is of Spec and one of "Bicycle Bedazzlement!"

"A Plethora of Pachyderms!" shows the elephant long mount-a great close-up! The last one is Jon Weiss, "The Human Clown-On-Ball!", the first clown ever to be shot through space, proving once again that "Anything Is Possible!" This is a great home page and has many things to look at for children and adults alike. You will enjoy yourself. I have fun putting different pictures on my desktop, as wallpaper, and when people walk by my computer at work, they are amazed at all the different photos. You can do this by right clicking your mouse on a picture and choosing "Set As Wallpaper." It's a great conversational piece at work and gets folks interested in the circus and they stop to talk about the pictures.)

Passing Of Our Friends

George Carl, 83, a comedian known for his slapstick routines and vaudeville performances passed away January 1 in Las Vegas. George died from complications of cancer his son, Tony, said. "He started his career in the circus as a teen-ager, doing acrobatics and clowning, using pantomime and miming techniques. His work mirrored that of Charlie Chaplin and the comic antics of Laurel & Hardy," Tony remarked. He performed for Queen Elizabeth and was honored at the Circus of Monte Carlo with a prestigious clowning award, presented by Princess Grace & Prince Rainier of Monaco. (When Lorraine Valentine had a talent agency, I remember her booking George for several dates. He will be missed.)

'LONE RANGER', CLAYTON MOORE DIES

Clayton Moore, 85, died Dec. 28, after being taken to the emergency room at West Hills Hospital, 20 miles northwest of downtown L.A. Clayton said, "Once I got the Lone Ranger role, I didn't want any other. I like playing the good guy."

In a 1986 AP interview, Moore said, "The Lone Ranger is a great character, a great American. Playing him made me a better person. I never want to take off this white hat. When I take off to that big ranch in the sky, I still want to have it on my head. When I go, I want them to say, 'Who was that masked man?'"

Paul Dunn, a former broadcaster in Bloomington, Illinois, remembered Clayton for his love of children and his connections to Central Illinois. In the 70s, Moore came to Decatur where he met "tens of thousands of his fans" at the Civic Center, visited schools and met with underprivileged children, Dunn said.

Moore also had "a genuine fondness for Central Illinois," Dunn said. The actor began his career as a trapeze artist and used to visit Bloomington to train at the former Old Red Barn, where the Grand Hotel now stands on Emerson Street. The Old Red Barn (the Flying Wards home) gave many of the period's great trapeze artists their start. "Every time I interviewed him, he always used to talk about Bloomington and his early days and all the famous trapeze artists he'd met," said Dunn. Dunn's own impression of Clayton Moore: "He was a tremendous human being." (Does anyone remember Clayton as an aerialist?)

NEWS FROM OUR CIRCUS FRIENDS

On a recent auction on E-Bay on the Internet, there were many old circus photos listed for sale. What caught my eye was the addition of a correspondence from Rustie Rock that the seller had added. One of the photos was of her mother. "Hi, I wanted you to know that in the center of the very last picture, are my parents, Jeanie & Al Tomaini. Going by the "tux" that my Dad is wearing, it would have been in 1936; that was the year they married in Ripley, NY. He was known as the "Playboy Giant" which was changed to the "American Giant" when mother came on the scene. The small creature with him is my mother, all 2'6" of her. She was the world's only living half-girl, born without legs. She was featured in the Learning Channel's 2-hour special, "Sideshow, Alive on the Inside." She was also on the cover of James Taylor's Shocked and Amazed Vol. 2. She and my Dad were billed as the World's Strangest Married Couple and

she continued to work until her death, at our trailer park, The Giant's Camp, in Gibsonton, Florida. She died on August 10th and with her, one of the greatest freaks of all time, left this earth. R.I.P.

NEWS FROM THE SAN DIEGO ZOO

Jan. 5: During her first health exam, Hua Mei, the giant panda cub, gave veterinarians and keepers a demonstration of how active and mobile she has become. Throughout the past week she has gone on several excursions outside the birthing den with her mom as well as on her own. Bai Yun has taken her cub from the den into the bedroom and garden room in the early morning hours for up to 30 minutes. The youngster has not yet explored the exhibit area. During this week's check-up, Hua Mei weighed in at a whopping 17.45 pounds and is nearly 30" in length. Vets took her temperature and gave her an eye exam.

You can check her progress at the Zoo's web site: www.sandiegozoo.org. You can see videos of Hua Mei and her mom; read the latest news from the Birthing Den; read about her birth; check out the Giant Panda fact sheet; visit the Panda Video Den and visit the Giant Panda Research Station on-line.

From Zoo Atlanta: If you go to visit the new pandas, you may have trouble telling one from the other. "They're both black & white and from a distance may appear identical, but female Lun Lun and male Yang Yang do look different. The panda keepers say Lun Lun has a rounder face and Yang Yang has a ridge across his nose. And if you look at Yang Yang's left hind foot, you'll see that the tips of the toes are white!

From The St. Louis Zoo: Raja has taken the plunge and moved into his new home at River's Edge. A young Asian elephant with a playful personality. Raja has attracted a faithful fan club ever since his birth in 1992. "We welcome you to our winter preview of River's Edge, Phase One. And we hope you'll return for our Grand Opening later this spring, when you'll find lush plantings, animal sounds and sights. Already Raja has made himself at home, diving and swimming in a deep channel of the river, examining an uprooted tree, sliding in mud, tossing grass. Nearby 4 adult female elephants explore their pool and waterfall. Also there are cheetahs, dwarf mongoose and 3 spotted hyenas. When the final phase opens in 2001, you'll discover underwater viewing of hippos, black rhinos, bushdogs, capybaras, warthogs, giant anteaters and colorful carmine bee-eater birds."

RINGLING RED: Miami-Arena: 1/11-17; Jacksonville-Vets. Coliseum: 1/19-23; N.Charleston, SC-Coliseum: 1/25-26; Columbia, SC-Coliseum: 1/28-30; Charlotte, NC-Coliseum: 2/2-6; Raleigh, NC-Arena: 2/10-14; Atlanta, GA-Philips Arena: 2/17-27.

RINGLING BLUE: Orlando, FL-Arena: 1/20-23; Birmingham, AL-BJCC Arena: 1/26-30; Greensboro, NC-Coliseum: 2/2-6; Hampton, VA-Coliseum: 2/9-13; Norfolk, VA-SCOPE: 2/15-20; Richmond, VA-Coliseum: 2/23-27. Coming Soon To E. Rutherford, NJ!

BIG APPLE CIRCUS: Atlanta, GA-Lakewood Fairgrounds: 2/23-3/5; Somerset County, NJ-Patriots Park: 3/11-26; Boston-Fan Pier: 4/1-5/7; Queens, NY-Cunningham Park: 5/11-5/21; Brookville, NY-Long Island Univ.: 5/26-6/4; Chicago-Arlington Intl: 6/10-25.

Big Apple OOPS!: Bloomington, IN-Ind. Univ. Audit.: 1/18-19; Akron-Thomas Performing Arts Hall-1/23; Cincinnati-Music Hall: 1/25-30; Minneapolis-Orpheum Theatre: 2/1-6; Green Bay-Weidner Ctr: 2/8-9; Columbia, MO-Univ. of Mo.: 2/12; Chicago-Auditorium Theatre: 2/15-20; Erie, PA: 2/22-23; Providence, RI-2/25-27.

Jordan World Circus: Flint, MI-IMA Sports Arena: 1/14-23; Saginaw-Civic Ctr: 1/26-30; Bloomington, IL-Interstate Center: 2/29; Muskegon-Walker Arena: 3/3-5; Grand Rapids-DuRex Ctr: 3/15-17

Great European Circus: Bloomington, Illinois-Interstate Center: 2/15

Circus Sarasota: Sarasota-Van Wezel-Thru 1/23.

Barnum's Kaleidoscope: Houston-Brown Convention Ctr-Thru 1/23; Dallas-Valley View Mall-2/5-3/12.

Royal Hanneford: E. Lansing MI-Breslin Ctr: 3/17-19

*Nick Weber reports he will be trying to find new owners for two 30' Wells Cargo trailers that are parked near Ocala. One is a nice housetrailer, which he had pro customizer to his specs after the factory built the frame and box. The other is "where we hauled livestock and equipment & it has a tiny office space. Also a self standing trapeze rig. Contact Nick at 914-358-3522 or cell 914-282-7880 or c/o Dr. Mark Wilson 352-895-6437. "The 2000 meeting of Pastoral Ministers with People on the Move was held in Sarasota Jan. 7-9.

Discussions will include ministry to carnival folks and the race car industry.

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JAMAICA BOBBY RETURNS BY MIKE CECERE

Over the past few weeks, a number of curious people have asked me, "Where in the Hell is Bobby Gibbs?" Well, hold onto your Rasta-Records, Bobby and Rosa are in Jamaica! That's right, while many of us are putting on our parkas AND shoveling a snowy path to our Elephant Barns, The Gibbses are sunning themselves on the white sand beaches of that Caribbean Island resort.

Bobby was sent on an important mission as tour manager of the Shane Johnson Live Tiger act. And it's reported among all the gear sent by Don Johnson, Shane's Dad, was a 55-gallon drum of sun-screen for Bobby.

I am reminded of an encounter with Bill Golden, who years ago had worked tigers for Carden-Johnson Circus. He commented that during his years with the tigers he had visited such landmarks as Rice Lake, Wisc., Bismark, N.D., Billings, Mont. and about every Rodeo Grounds of the West!

Since he left, between Gibbs and Hollywood Doug Terranova, they had been to Japan, Hawaii, Trinidad, Jamaica and other vacation paradises! So who knows where Bobby and Rosa Gibbs will be going next?

To his many friends, start those cards and letters going to the Gibbses, Box 626, Seagoville, Texas 75159. Even better, fans and friends of Bobby and Rosa, after you send them mail, jot down your favorite Bobby Gibbs Story (and photos) and send them to Back Yard Editor, Cherie Valentine! God Bless America.

"The Flying Valentinos".....

Each time the announcer introduced the tricks, the flying acts would perform (a rare occasion for the two to work together) they received a healthy round of applause. From the catch bar and from the pedestal board, George and Fred announced the trick again, hand-signing, to yet another, even louder, round of applause from their special audience. While working with Billy Ward's troupe the following year in Omaha, Jimmy Olson also witnessed George "signing" to a special audience of deaf children. George Washington Valentine and Lillian Richards Valentine, George & Fred's parents, could not speak nor hear, and the children grew up learning sign language. Their parents met at the School for the Deaf, in Jacksonville, Illinois.

The *Billboard* reported that the George Valentino Flying Act performed in Cincinnati, for the Eagles sponsor, opening to a packed house. Night ticket prices were from \$2.20 to 65 cents and the matinees' top price was \$1.60. An article from the next week's *Billboard* said a blizzard delayed the performers in arriving in Toledo from Cincinnati and the "George Valentino Flying Act did not perform here because of space limitations." (This meant the building was not high enough to put up the rigging.) In May, the *Billboard* printed the whole line-up from the Barnes Bros. Circus in Chicago. Display No. 13 said, "The Flying Valentines (Fred) and the Flying Zacchinis. (George Valentine, aerialist, injured early in the engagement while pulling on a rope, returned to action this week, giving the program its full complement.

In 1947, George's brother, Bill, had his flying act, the Flying LaVals, performing on the Mighty Hoosier State Shows, as the "free attraction" and in June they were in Ohio. Brother Roy had his Flying Romas on the Roy Rogers Thrill Circus and an article in the *Billboard* stated, "while playing at Yankee Stadium, Roy Valentine presented his wife, Mary (now Mrs. Lee Stath), with a new 3-room aluminum trailer on their 9th wedding anniversary." Another article in November said Roy took delivery on a new Chevy two-ton truck and a 1947 Buick Roadmaster Sedan, while visiting in Chicago. Roy's boss, Roy Rogers, announced in Chicago, Nov. 19, that he would marry his leading lady, Dale Evans, on New Year's Eve. (Does anyone remember seeing this??)

In December, 1947, not only did the Bloomington *Pantagraph* carry a story on George Valentine, but the *Billboard* had the same article. "George Valentine, whose flying return trapeze act is known from coast to coast,

announced that he has purchased the Happy Acres stables and 8 acres of ground in Normal on Grove St." George wanted to have a place where circus performers could stop over and rest or practice when they came through Normal. The neighbors would come over to see the different animals that would be parked in the driveway; such as Jennier's seals; Rudy Docky's dogs, and Dick Clemen's lions & tigers. Acts would put up their outdoor aerial riggings on the front lawn and practice, much to the delight of the children and adults of the area. George renamed the site, Circus Haven. Route 66 would once again have a town that had a place for circus performers to practice in, as the YMCA, in downtown Bloomington, no longer allowed aerial acts to practice there.

The Flying Valentinos earned \$11,560 in 1947, getting about \$550 tops, for a week's work. Lorraine's journal shows they sold the New Moon trailer for \$1400 in April that they bought in 1946 for \$1850. They purchased a Peorian trailer in April for \$4225. In 1942, they had bought a 1938 Cadillac for \$650 and sold it in April, 1947 for \$750 and purchased a 1939 Cadillac for \$1050. In 1948, they traveled to Hartford to play a Shrine date in February for the Frank Wirth Circus. They also played Memphis, Omaha, Wash. D.C., their favorite spot, the St. Louis Police Circus and a very famous Route 66 town, Springfield, Illinois.

So, by 1948, George & Lorraine had a new car, truck, housetrailer & a new home in Normal, IL. Soon, they would have a new addition to their family and a new little aerial performer to train. Lorraine stated that "she worked into her 7th month of pregnancy when, while performing in Rutland, IL, she heard a young boy shout from the ground below, 'Hey! I know somebody's in a family way.' George called in Mickey King to fill in for Lorraine for the rest of the season. Lorraine developed the closest of friendships with her childhood heroine, Mickey."

For the 6-day Omaha Shrine date, they were paid \$600 and a stipulation in their contract said, "to furnish own transportation." They performed at the Uline Arena in Wash. D.C. for 1 week for \$750. In Memphis, they played for the Disabled American Vets for 3 days, 2 shows a day, for \$600. It is no wonder acts wanted to perform in St. Louis, as the circus ran for 15 days-they received \$1100. This meant no travel expenses and they had time to rest and visit with their fellow performers!

(To Be Continued)

VALENTINE VAULTS

A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

60 Years Ago-From The 1940 Billboard

***Goebel's Lion Farm** at Thousand Oaks has grown to very large proportions. Louis Goebel stated he had 110 cats, 16 camels, 19 elephants, 17 of these being the property of Ringling; 8 zebras, numerous species of deer, monkeys, African wild boars; 9 seals, these being the Winston seals. Mabel Stark has left for the Benson Wild Animal Farm at Nashua, NH. The cat acts are worked by Louis Roth, Eddie Trees and assistants; the elephants by George Emerson, Cheerful Gardner and Joe Hurley. Practically all the Hagenbeck-Wallace wagons have been bought by Goebel.

***Ruffin, N.C.:** **Barton's Society Circus** is the first circus here in 46 years-the last was Teets Bros. in 1894. Program is under the direction of George Barton. Mlle. Margurette does a very good single trap and web, also principal bareback riding number. Mrs. Reno McCrea, contortion, also swinging ladder; Billy Barton, 13, nephew of George, does a cloudswing that stops the show.

***Hamid-Morton** Opens in Montreal with Clyde Beatty. Acts included: Florenz Trio, Kinko, 5 Harlequins; Mr. Clyde Beatty, riding tiger; George Hanneford, Jr and Doris Hanneford, bareback riding; Jean Evans & Esma Wilson, muscle grinds & web; Young Orton, chair balance; Ernie Wiswell's Funny Ford; 4 Queens & an Ace; Torelli's Dog & Pony act; Billy Pape & Co., perch; Joe Hodgini & Co, comedy bareback riding; Capt. Tiebor's Seals; Aerial Ortons, Conchita, Orton Sisters, iron jaw and Ginger Queens, slide-for-life; Chas. Young, clown camel & unridable mule; Demnati Troupe, tumblers; Flying Comets and Flying Valentinos. Bob Morton directed show; Joe Basile, conductor.

***An ad:** "Elephants For Sale, 6 elephants, including the Coca-Cola Act, including all props & 2 elephant trucks. A.W. Kennard, Houston, Texas.

***Flying Valentinos**, with all-girl flyers, who were at the St. Louis Police Circus, will play parks & fairs this summer.

***Rudy Rudynoff**, following an engagement at the St. Louis Police Circus, is back at the Lone Pine Riding Stables in Detroit.

***Freddie Freeman, Cole Bros., reports**, "As I look around the dressing room, I see many new faces this year on the men's side-the Escalantes, Gasca Brothers, Savoy and Florence troupes (both Repenskis) and the Brock

Troupe. Miss America walkaround is going over with a bang-Oscar Lowande, please note."

***Wallace Bros. Circus** program: Solo elephants in all 3 rings worked by Norma Rodgers, Babe Woodcock and Ursaline McIntosh; special announcement for Stella, an elephant doing a "hand" stand on 2 pedestals; clown band with Ed Raymond; Liberty horses, Ted Lewis; Enos Troupe, perch; Aerialetta, traps, finishing strong with a somersault from trapeze to web; Ray Goody, tight wire; Menage with Ursaline McIntosh, Jean Allen, Babe Woodcock, Midge Dever, Norma Rodgers, Flo McIntosh; Walter Jennier with Buddy, trained seal. The outstanding feature-Buddy does a repertoire of tricks that wins continued applause, closing with balancing on one flipper on a platform; 4 elephants in center ring, Jean Allen; Flying Hartzells; Bill Woodcock, boss elephant man; Clowns: Ed Raymond, Charles & Iza La Bird, Albert White, Toby Tyler, Ray & Walter Brownlee, Dennis Stevens and Buddy Addis.

***London, 11/23:** **Rosaires** having called a halt on Oct. 26, Tom Fossett's has the distinction of being the last circus out tenting in Britain this season. Only thru the presence of mind of the youngest son, Derrick, did Rosaire's Circus escape disaster on the way home to quarters. Resuming the journey after an overnight pull-in, the leading lorry backfired and set its load alight. Young Derrick, acting with promptitude, freed the gas tank of the burning lorry. As luck would have it, a train of lorries laden with sand came along at that moment and the drivers quickly smothered the blaze. The proprietors of this show, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Rosaire, express satisfaction at the business done during the tour.

*A fire at **Thousand Oaks** July 9 destroyed 7 tigers, 3 camels and the famous Whitbeck elephants.

***Bird Millman O'Day** died at her Canon City, CO. home Aug. 5.

***Tom Mix**, 60, was killed near Florence, AZ Oct. 12, when his car overturned on a highway detour.

***Courtney Riley Cooper** died in his Park Central Hotel room, New York City.

***John Ringling North** & Germaine Aussey, French film star, married in Philadelphia May 11.

***Doushka**, Alfred Court's prized snow leopard, died during a rehearsal at Madison Sq. Garden following an attack by an Indian leopard, prior to RB's opening.

***Jack Joyce** bought all the King Midas equipment at the California Zoo to frame a 1-ring circus for 1940.

"LOUSED UP THE CIRCUS"....

and that giraffes can kick powerfully in 4 directions. (Barstow was bashed in the chest by one while trying to place a tall chef's hat on its head.)

Richard also discovered that circus acrobats & aerialists do not have the aptitude or the built-in-rhythm of professional dancers and that clowns are seldom very funny off-stage and not at all cooperative regarding dancing. They are deliberately poor learners.

Elephants have been especially irksome to Barstow. He's never been able to tell one from another and this annoys him. Besides, he feels that they are sneaky creatures, unpredictable and vindictive. His worst problem-performer to date was an elephant who refused to cooperate in an industrial show demonstrating the power of tractor vs. beast. The animal insisted on besting the machine every time in moving a 10-ton rock. Barstow is certain that this stubborn elephant was a sister of one he had treated harshly in the circus.

Barstow is kind and good-natured except when drilling circus performers. At these times he affects an air of pained & testy impatience. He cuts deep with sarcasm and becomes outraged in a rather waspish way. He is terribly long-winded and gives directions with the precise enunciation of a headmaster addressing a class of dolts. He is fond of flinging humiliating barbs at cast members; he bombards his captive audience with outrageous puns and limp witticisms.

Horses have given him his worst circus fits. He regards them as his arch enemies. Horses have kicked sawdust in his face, drooled on him, bitten him and stepped on his feet. He considers them knuckleheaded idiots and has told them so many times-to their stupid faces.

Barstow's worst fiasco resulted from a mounted finale foisted upon him by the upper echelon of the Big Top. Mr. North thought it might be fun to fit 48 horses with butterfly wings of multi-colored ostrich plumes that could be unfolded on cue to form a dazzling feathered rainbow completely around the arena. It sounded fine on paper. Oddly, no horsemen were consulted. At the creative conference the fact was never mentioned that horses shy easily at feathers and are deathly afraid of anything that suddenly increases in size. (You can give a horse the fright of its life merely by opening an umbrella in its face.)

The number went well until dress rehearsal. Then, when sweaty ringstock men, draped in gold lame costumes, yanked the release cords and the gaudy wings flopped

open, all hell broke loose. Wild-eyed and whinnying, 48-count 'em!-48 horses panicked. They reared, kicked, snorted and took off in all directions. Riders were thrown; they sprawled in the dust. Many were stepped on in the mad scramble. Masterful obscenities and crushed plumes flew in the wind. Horses suddenly were all over the lot. Barstow simply closed his eyes, put away his silver whistle and canceled the rehearsal.

It was quite dark when the last terrified Pegasus tore lickety-split down Sarasota's Main Street and flashed past the window of the restaurant where Barstow was dining. But such catastrophes don't upset the director of The Greatest Show On Earth. He expects artistic disaster as routine in his association with John Ringling North. Over the years Barstow has learned that when Mr. North says to his underlings, "Jump," the correct answer is not, "Why?" but "How high?" Richard Barstow has been a good jumper all his life. And there's not much reason to change now. So, as long as John Ringling North is paying the pipers, his circus will continue to be a gilly-girlie dancing festival. And to those who yearn for the true earthy circus, a nice, round, early Anglo-Saxon, four-letter word. End. (If any of you have any memories to share concerning this time period, please write!)

Two Elephant Poachers Are Killed In Kenya

Wildlife officials fought with poachers in northeastern Kenya, killing two men in a violent gun battle, a government official said January 7. Park rangers began pursuing 8 poachers on the 6th after hearing that an elephant had been killed in Isiolo. 6 poachers fled with 2 ivory tusks after exchanging gunfire with the rangers.

"Last month, Save The Elephant Trust Fund reported that poachers had killed 5 elephants in the area in Nov. and December. Since then, Kenyan wildlife officials have stepped up patrols," said Joseph Cherop, a Wildlife Service official. Five suspected poachers were shot dead last week, he said. The officials have blamed the increased poaching on the relaxation of a 10-year-old international ban on all trade in ivory and other elephant goods.

Circus Model Builders National Convention will be held June 23-25 in Boise, Idaho, sponsored by Lot 9. Clinics will be held June 22 and set up is June 21 at the Boise Center on the Grove. For additional information, please contact Lot 9, CMB, at: 678 Gore Rd., Kalama, WA 98625-9710.

Blanchard's World Of Magic

'Roll along, covered wagon, roll along..' For me this was a popular song as a young boy and, with Lee Henneberry, it still is. Over 100 years ago, the founders of the Henneberry family presented a magic show in a wagon as part of a wagon train rolling across the plains of the Midwest. Lee's grandchildren, who work in the act today, are the 5th generation and the young ones are now very much grown with talents in spheres other than showbusiness. There is father Lee and wife, Rita. Then there's Margy who's now a college administrator; Mary Zita, a graphic arts university instructor and Mick is an attorney; Maria has a video production company which is thriving and Mark runs a design & advertising studio and Michelle has a bachelors degree in business. In 1973, Lee & Rita and family were invited to perform at The White House, which was a great honor for all of them. The White House apparently saw the family as an example of what an American dream family should look like.

Lee & Rita set out on the road in 1957 as *The Versatile Moderns*, which was a classy act in topper, tails and white ties, performing every type of magic including fire effects. They met in high school and were married while Lee was at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. The whole family grew up in a showbusiness atmosphere and became skilled in the various branches of it. They rode unicycles, did magic, juggled, played a variety of instruments and were so versatile that they had the reputation of being the best travelling band around. Over many years, they have traveled nearly 2 million miles, which gave them the nickname 'The Family On Wheels,' a far cry from the days of the covered wagons. In their prime, they moved around in comparative luxury via a motor home and trailer loaded with all the trappings of a modern travelling vaudeville show. Their big family of artistes demanded many changes of costumes and Rita dealt with this mammoth task, designing and making them all for the family. And with the family's measurements changing as they grew up,

the task was daunting, but Rita delivered the goods on demand in addition to doing her stuff in the act. At the time they appeared at the White House, the children were amazed at the large number of VIPs they were introduced to, but their mouths opened widest when President Nixon ordered a police escort to take them all the way from Baltimore to Washington, D.C. It's undeniable that Lee & Rita Henneberry have a big story to tell and it is all listed and documented with pictures in their family theatrical archive albums, for future generations of the Henneberry family to ponder over.

As host at the Magic Circle in London, I always find it to be a great joy to see the smiling faces of Lee & Rita come through the door. They were over here for the Llandudno Convention and at The Magic Circle, the following Monday night, they met up with old friends before flying off to another appointment. It is difficult to keep track of them as they believe in living life to the full. When it comes to publicity, the Henneberrys always feel it pays to have the best in the business provide it-nothing cheap, nothing nasty.

In fact, there is nothing cheap, nasty or risqué about the shows that the Henneberrys produce and you will always get good, 'safe' entertainment. Their motto is "Give 'em good entertainment and keep it clean." In 1999, the entire family may not be performing together on a regular basis due to business commitments, but you can bet your boots that, if Bill Clinton summoned the whole family to the White House to perform again there would be no hesitation in doing so.

They will go anywhere at any time to any place if the venue is good and the price is right. We, at World's Fair, wish the Henneberry family continued success as one of the most talented showbusiness families in the world. We'd also like to congratulate Lee for recently being made a member of the Inner Magic Circle, Gold Star."(After performing many years with this family when I was a little girl, I was reunited with Lee and Rita at D.R.'s funeral in Hugo. Friendships last a lifetime!)

CIRCUS MEMORIES ARE OUT THERE!

There are a lot of old circus items up for auction on the Internet! And my favorites are old Shrine programs. I am always hoping to find my parents, The Flying Valentinos, or my uncles, The Flying Romas, The Flying LaVals or the Flying Valentines listed in the program. I have not been able to find programs from the Omaha Shrine Circus, produced by Rink Wright. I know my parents and I performed there many times. If any of you have any duplicates of Omaha or any others you might want to sell, please contact me. Here are a few programs I'd like to share with you!

***Barnes Bros. Circus-Chicago Stadium, 1948:** Terrell Jacobs; The 3 Barretts; Capt. Wm. Heyer with "Starless Night;" Johnson & Owen, Three D's, The Heerdinks, bar acts; Aerial Ballet featuring Elly Ardelty with Bebe Seigrist, Ethel D'Arcy, Sunny Miller; Acrobatics with The Brannocks, Ervins and the Lang Troupe; Liberty Horses by Wm. Buschbom; Aida, Lady in the Moon; the Flying Valentines, the Flying Zacchins, the Flying Romas; Essence of Balance with the Great Regina Alphonse & Co, Chee Hein Troupe, Wong Troupe; Loyal Repensky Family; Wire Wizardry with Arturo & Heddy; Human Projectiles with Victoria & Duina Zacchini. Leo Hamilton, Arena Director. Great photos of the acts!

***Polack Bros. Circus-Louisville, 1953:** Spec conceived and directed by Barbettes; Sonny Moore and his dogs; Lola Dobritch, tight wire; Barbettes's Human Butterflies; Albert Ostermaier's horses; Schaller Bros., trampoline; Three Girls From Hollywood with Pinky & June Madison; Seven Ashtons, Risley; Triska Family, high wire; Klauser's Bears with Herta as Goldilocks (I'm sure this time!); Jim Wong Troupe, contortion; Lovely LaNorma; Alberto Zoppe Troupe with Cucciola, bareback-riding; Carnival in Spangleland by Barbettes with Chester Sherman, Marilyn Hightower & John Siems; the Nine Ward-Bell Flyers; Clowns: Chester & Joe Sherman, Ed Raymond, Harry Dann (on cover), Larry Cross, John Siems, Red Carter and Dennis Stevens; costumes for "Carnival" by Mayme Ward. Bessie Polack & Louis Stern, Managing Directors.

***Polack Bros. Circus-Louisville, 1955:** Polack Clowns: Lou Jacobs, Rudy Ducky, Charley Cheer, Chester & Joe Sherman; Ernie Wiswell, Muddled Motorist; Fedi-Fedi, Dancing Doll Duo; Dagenham Girl Pipers; the Chaludis, Cycling Sensations; Rolando, Finger Walking; Harold Barnes, tight wire; Melitta & Wicons, perch pole; Freya Josse, trapeze; the Sikorskas, iron jaw; the Pallamedes,

trapeze; Besalou Baby Elephants presented by Peggy and Mac MacDonald, featuring Baby Opal (that right, Peggy?); Keller's Jungle Killers; Roland Tiebor's Seals; Klauser's Bears with pretty blonde Herta playing Goldilocks to her family's wonderfully versatile troupe of ursine actors; Poly Orea's Spitz Dogs; Ostermaier's Goats; Cilly Feindt with her Lippizaner, Pasha.

***1949 Damascus Shrine Circus-Rochester:** Joe Walsh, 13 lions & tigers; Aerial Synders; Rodola & Co, ladder; the Daviso Duo, high perch; Otto Griebling; Capt. John Tiebor's Seals; Rink Wright Duo, Novelty Balancing; La Louisa, trapeze; Albert Fleet's Chimps; Woolford's Dachshunds; Hubert Castle, wire; LaLage; Cristiani Family, bareback riding; Hunt Bros. Elephants; Flying DuWards.

***Grotto Shrine-Columbus, 1947:** Terrell Jacobs, featuring Sheba; the Jacksons & the Heerdink Duo, aerial bars; Pint sized ponies with Milt Herriott & Capt. John Smith; Mid-Aerial Marvels with Teresa Morales, Frankie Woods & Erick, the Great; Gymnastics with the Noble Trio, Morris Troupe, the 3 Jays; Rodeo with Al Jones; Helen Billetti Troupe, high wire; the Rudynoffs, high-school horses; Acrobatics with the Great Gastini, Pape and Renee, the Rollos; George Lerch, slack wire; Brothers George & Freddie Valentine with The Flying Valentinos!

***Grotto Circus-Cleveland, 1966-Al Dobritch, Producer:** Blinko & Maran, Balloon Barrage; Acrobatics, the Medinas & Boginos; Robt. Baudy's Tigers; The Pharohs; Clowns with Alfredo Landon, producer; Dos Santos, The Braytons, Miss Margot, tight wire & teeterboards; The 5 Sorelettis, clowns; Galla Shawn, aerial ballet; Burger's Animal Revue; Georgian Trio, aerialists; Ma-Ho-Pin, Slide for Life; Van Donwen Seals; Janet's Chimps; George Hanneford Jr.'s Equestrians; The Flying Artons & The Flying Gibsons; Clyde Beatty Elephants featuring in center ring, Rex Williams; The Great Karl Wallenda, featuring Karl & Carla and Company; The Great Norbu; Wilson Strong Duo, Aerial Display.

***1966 Syria Temple Circus-Pittsburgh, 1966:** The Freddies, comedy acrobatics, The Wilson Sisters, The Volvos, Jadders, The 4 Mills, trampoline; Pat Anthony, cats; The Ivanovs, Aerial Ladder; Bob Johnson, balancing; Marco Polo, sword balancing; The Sils Duo, revolving turntable; Vidbel's ponies; Levine's chimps; Conners ponies; The Vazquez Bros., bar act; John Cuneo, Horse Fantasy, horse & pony presentation; Mlle. Claudette, Birdland Revue; Mr. Andre, tight wire; Emanuel, slack wire; Senora Aurora, bounding rope; The Hillarys, flying trapeze; The Grimaldis, musical comedy; Great Jondis & Co, juggling; Esqueda Troupe, Cycling; Ivans, roly-boly; Dogs with The Connellys, Cimse's and Brickle; The Young Troupe, teeterboard; Al Vidbel's Elephants!

CIRCUS PIZZA PARLOR

BY MIKE CECERE

Several weeks ago, a regular Back Yard Contributor, I'll call him "Tom Traditional," made comments about a CFA Tent in Atlanta, GA (that was kind enough to send him their newsletter) who were about to dig into their own pockets to sponsor a Pizza Party for a large tent circus that was to play their area.

Not just for the "circus stars," these fine folk show their Southern Hospitality to all personnel, working men included. He felt they should take that money and donate it to a showbiz-related lobby group that "Tom" favored to help fight anti-circus groups.

If "Tom" had read their flyer carefully, he would have seen that they were members and financial supporters of the lobby group. Further, I will identify the tent as the Duggan Bros.-Arnold Maley CFA Tent, which has a long, long distinguished record of assisting all kinds of showpeople who are in need, particularly in their area. To list all they have done for showpeople would take several issues of Back Yard, but let us look at one instance.

Several years ago a show came here from the former U.S.S.R. called "Circus Bin Bom." They had a short building tour and were abruptly abandoned without funds by the promoters of the tour. Lost in a strange country, speaking little English, the situation looked bleak.

Springing to action, Tent leaders Ray Gronso, Gordon Taylor, Lucille Lane, Richard Reynolds III, among others, got the stranded people lodging, food, clothes, medical help and a myriad of other needs they had. Not just one day, every day for weeks!

They dug deep in their pockets, used their credit, influence and connections to get local, state and federal help for these folks-that they didn't even know. Just the fact that they were showpeople was enough for them!

And this is just one of many kind acts they have done for showfolks. So, to "Tom," I would encourage you to consider what charitable acts folks already have done before you worry how many Pizzas they are going to buy! God Bless America!

News From Our Circus Friends

Charlie Simpson, President of the Valentine Family Tent in Houston, called to say John Beard is back in the hospital and had a pacemaker put in today, the 10th. I am sure John would love to hear

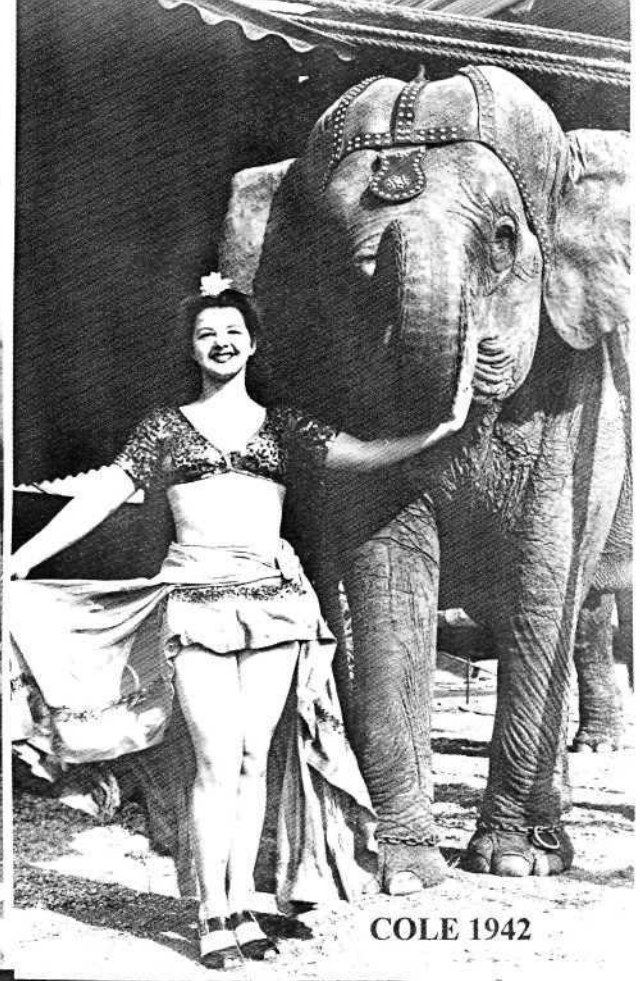
from you. Please write him: 1755 Atrium Dr., Sun City Center, Florida, 33573. Get Well Soon, John! Charlie also says that Kaleidoscope is doing a bang-up job in Houston. There are almost NO tickets available! Folks are telling their friends about the show and more and more people are going. The circus has done a benefit show for the Children's Museum. Charlie can't stop praising the show! Let's have a review of the show, Charlie!

New Back Yard subscriber, Dave "Letterfly" Knoderer has a fantastic home page. Please visit him at: www.letterfly.com. If you have a large RV or even want a mural painted in your home, please see the great art work he has done. Anything you could ever imagine, he will do, even gold leaf. I have seen some beautiful buses and RV's go by on the highways and wonder who did the art work. Well, now you can have your dreams come true on the side of your vehicle! Contact Dave at: 4111 El Shaddai Square, Plant City, FL 33565 or phone 813-752-8063. His brochure has the Top Ten Reasons To Own A Motor Home Mural: "Friendly waves from 4-wheelers now involve more than one finger; state troopers stare at your mural and not their speedometer; Wal-Mart gives you a percentage from the concessions they sell to the crowd gathered in the parking lot, admiring your motor home; your children no longer look at you as old fogey's but dream of the day when they will inherit your motor home; you don't worry about losing weight for your high school reunion..You just show up in your motor home and the number one reason to own a motor home mural: You may be invited to appear on David Letterman!"

Helen Billetti writes "I had known Isla & Dory since 1936, 2 years after they got married. I know Dory went into the service and the boys in the Billetti act went into the armed forces & Eddie joined the Navy Seabees. I worked in an Ordinance Plant in Chicago then went to Calif. and worked for an airplane company. Then after the war, all our Billetti boys came back and then met up with Isla and Dory again. (What great memories we all have to share!)"



BEATTY 1949

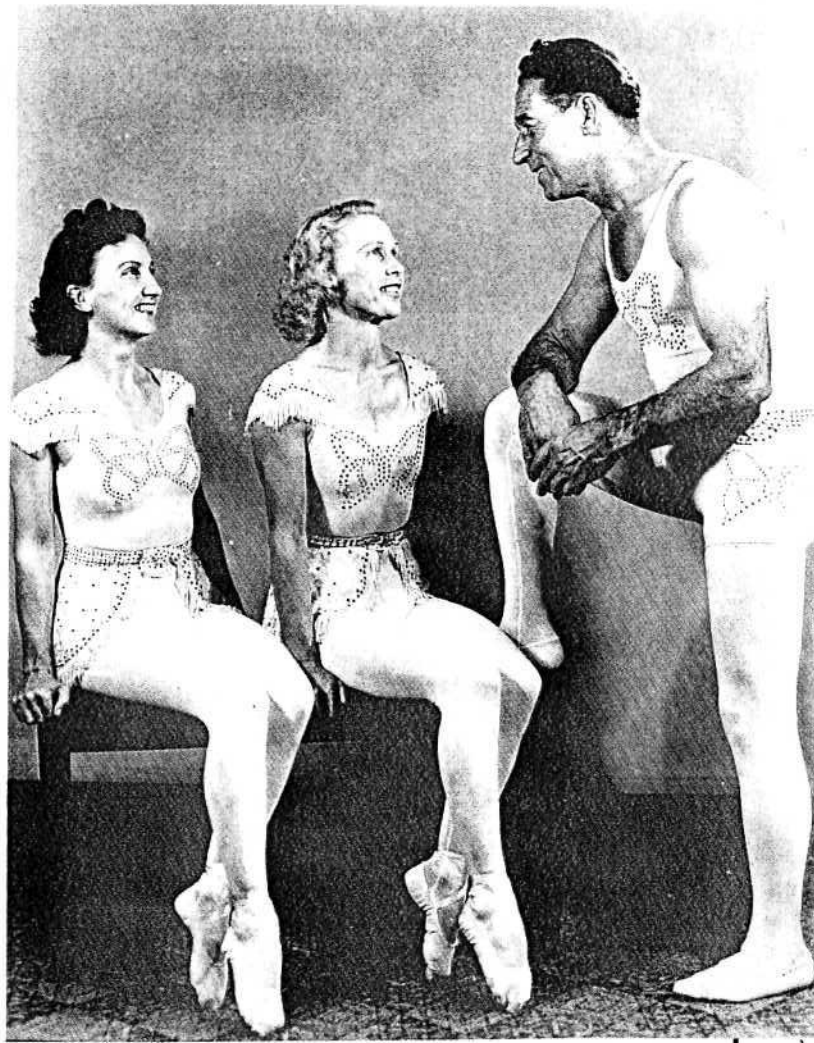


COLE 1942



The Wallabies

Cole 1942



Lorraine
Sue
George
The Valentinos