

The Southern Railway belt line is still there; and the metal truss bridge is still standing. It was erected in 1892, carrying Highland Avenue over the railroad tracks, and many a spectator used it to watch circus trains being unloaded below. But, its days are numbered. Judged unsafe, the old bridge was closed forever to vehicular traffic in March 1981. The city plans to eventually replace it with a modern structure. When that happens the final chapter will indeed have been written in the farewell to the Highland Avenue showgrounds.
—cfa—

Bobby the Rhinoceros ends lengthy rhino-less run under RBBB tent

by Richard J. Reynolds, III

For nine seasons, 1936 through 1944, the menagerie of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus had been without a rhinoceros. This was the longest "rhino-less" stretch in the big show's under canvas history. That drought, if it may be called such, came to an end in 1945 with the acquisition of "Bobby" a male of the two-horned African black species *Diceros bicornis*.

As best I can determine, the combined Ringling-Barnum show exhibited only four (4) rhinos prior to 1945. They were:
"Bill" — A male great Indian rhinoceros. This species has only one horn, and its skin is arranged in distinctive folds so that it has an armored appearance. "Bill" was a veteran trouper when he came to the combined show in 1919. He went way back to about 1907 with the Baraboo brothers who had him on their Ringling show, their rejuvenated Forepaugh-Sells outfit of 1910 and 1911 and also Barnum & Bailey from whence he came to the combination. "Bill" died on the road with Ringling-Barnum at Ft. Worth, Texas on Sept. 28, 1926. He was the last Indian rhinoceros exhibited by an American circus and must rank as one of the most valuable circus animals of this century.
"Bill" (No. 2) — A male of the two-horned African black variety. He joined Ringling-Barnum at Madison Square Garden in April 1929 and was given the same name as his predecessor who had died three years earlier, the show having gone without a rhinoceros in 1927 and 1928. "Bill" (No. 2) toured every year until his death on the road at Knoxville, Tenn., on Oct. 25, 1935.
"Lil" — A female African black rhino who was on the show for several years as a mate for "Bill" (No. 2). I have not determined just when she first joined, but it must have been around 1930. She was there for sure in 1931, 1932, and 1933, but died at the end of '33 or early '34.
"Mary" — Another female African black, who had starred in M.G.M.'s movie *Tarzan and His Mate*. Sold to Ringling-Barnum as a replacement for the deceased "Lil", "Mary" was shipped to Sarasota quarters in October 1934. She started the '35 season, but died at Springfield, Mass., on July 5, 1935.

As noted above, Ringling-Barnum began its long rhino dearth when it lost both "Bill" (No. 2) and "Mary" in 1935. That same year, on June 21, the renowned German animal collector, Christoph Schulz, accompanied by his son Walter, arrived in Boston aboard the ship *S.S. City of Lyons*, with a huge shipment of animals, including eight giraffes and three African black rhinoceroses.

Two giraffes would be purchased by the Ringling-Barnum organization, one for the big show and the other for Hagenbeck-Wallace, both delivered to the respective circuses during the '35 season.

It is the trio of rhinos, however, which are important to this story. Two of them, a pair to become known as "Mary" and "Pharo" (or "Pharoah") were destined for the new Chicago Zoological Park that had opened at Brookfield, Ill., the previous year. There they would become famous as the parents of the first African rhinoceroses born in captivity in the world and the first rhinos of any kind born in the western hemisphere.

Their first offspring, a male named "Georgie-Joe" was born at the Brookfield Zoo on Oct. 7, 1941. He stayed there until November 1943 when he was sent to the Pittsburgh Zoo where he lived until his death

Take a Kid to a Circus!

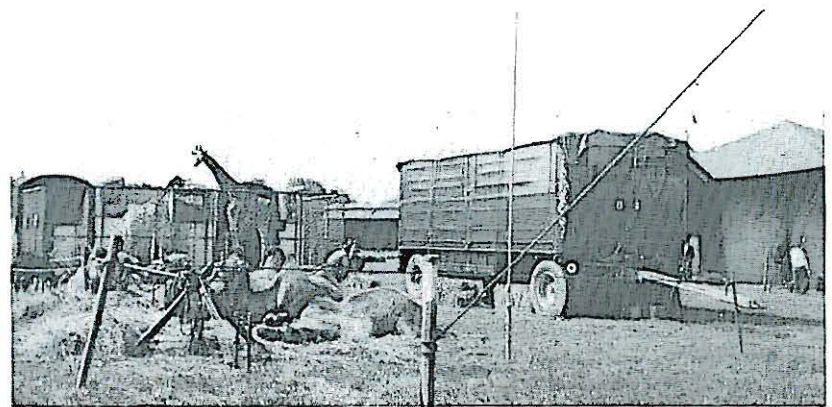


Photo No. 61—Ringling-Barnum sidewalled menagerie at Milwaukee, Wis., Aug. 17-19, 1945. Pictured are camels with giraffes in rear and at right cage No. 85 housing the rhino, Bobby. Photo by Wm. A. Uthmeier (Gordon Potter Collection).

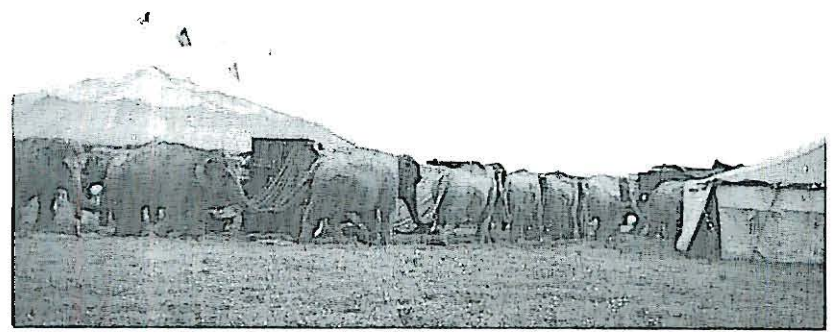


Photo No. 62—Elephants on Ringling-Barnum lot, Milwaukee, Wis., Aug. 17-19, 1945. Photo by Wm. A. Uthmeier (Gordon Potter Collection)

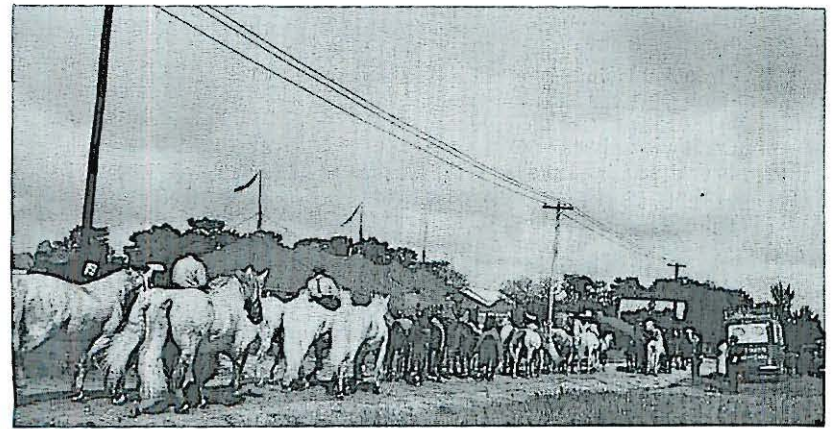


Photo No. 63—Ringling-Barnum ring stock enroute to lot at Tampa, Fla., Nov. 20-21, 1945. Photo by Eddie Jackson (Gordon Potter Collection)

in 1952. "Mary" and "Pharo's" next baby, the second rhino born in the western hemisphere, came into the world at the Brookfield Zoo on Sept. 19, 1944; and it was this youngster, also a male, that ended Ringling-Barnum's near 10-year rhino-drought.

Robert Ringling, then president of the circus, was a friend of Ed and Robert Bean, the father-son team who then directed the Brookfield Zoo. When the second rhino calf was born, the big show prexy must have demonstrated an interest, for the baby was named "Robert" — "Bobby" for short — in honor of Robert Ringling. George Speidel, Ed Bean's son-in-law, who was also working at Brookfield, was later director of the Milwaukee Zoo, and is currently in the zoo consulting business, recently told me that Bob Bean had the rhino named for Robert Ringling so that the circus would be encouraged to buy the youngster.

Plans were made for rhino "Bobby" to join Ringling-Barnum during its 1945 stand in Washington D.C., the first under-canvas date of the season. On June 4, Robert Bean sent a telegram to Robert Ringling advising that Mr. and Mrs. George Speidel would be bringing "Bobby" to Washington on Baltimore & Ohio train No. 10 leaving Chicago at 9:50 a.m. Tuesday morning, June 5, due to arrive in Washington at 6:25 a.m. on Wednesday. Bean asked that Ringling please have someone meet the train.

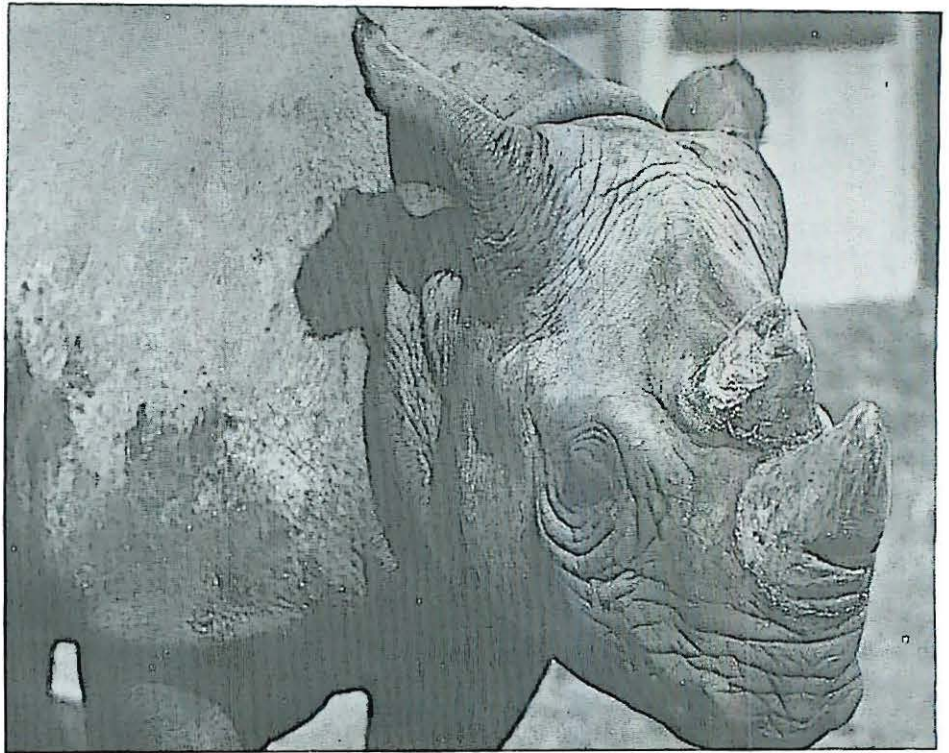
George Speidel told me about his trip with the little rhino. It was only nine months old and had never been separated from "Mary", its mother. The little fellow was loaded into a typical narrow, wooden animal shipping crate with an opening at the front through which the beast could be fed and watered. The rhino was put into the baggage car of the train, and Speidel rode with it all the way.

"Bobby" was very distressed by his strange surroundings and the separation from his mother. He was particularly disturbed by the change in altitude which occurred as the B&O train climbed the Allegheny Mountains en route to Washington. The youngster uttered plaintive noises, but by using a gentle and kindly approach, Speidel was able to soothe and calm him.

Except for the homesickness, "Bobby" was delivered safe and sound to the circus in Washington. At the showgrounds Speidel met Robert Ringling, his mother, Mrs. Charles Ringling, and press agent F. Beverly Kelley. He recalls that while all the show officials were pleased with the condition of the rhino, there was a general air of depression.

It seems that the very day Speidel arrived, a number of prominent circus officials had been sent to jail to commence serving the sentences imposed as a result of the terrible 1944 Hartford fire. The circus officials Speidel met were noticeably upset over this. Speidel also recalls that the day he arrived on the Washington lot, local fire officials conducted a test to determine the fire resistance of the new canvas. He recalls firemen using a blowtorch to test the fabric to see if it would ignite.

On June 12, 1945, Robert Ringling wrote to Robert Bean at the Brookfield Zoo advising that the little rhino had arrived safe but that there had not been much publicity for him in Washington. Ringling-Barnum's press department went to work on that situation, and by the time the publicity boys



"BOBBY," the young male two-horned African black rhinoceros acquired in 1945 by Ringling-Barnum from Chicago's Brookfield Zoo where he had been born in 1944. This photograph was taken at Sarasota during the winter of '45-'46. (Richard Reynolds collection)

got to Atlanta later that season, the youngster was receiving prominent press as "Bobby" — Baby Rhinoceros and second ever born in the Western Hemisphere". This was the most publicity for any menagerie attraction since gorilla "Toto" joined the show in 1941. I believe it was for the next season, 1946, that Ringling-Barnum started using a familiar, striking rhino litho drawn by artist Bill Bailey, and undoubtedly based on our subject.

Rhino "Bobby" was a fine animal and remained a feature of the Ringling-Barnum menagerie until his death in 1953. Details of that tragic event were told to me by the late C.R. Montgomery, the menagerie boss, and also by Dr. William Higgins, veterinarian with the show that year. According to Montgomery, the weather in New York and Boston in the spring of '53 was cold and damp, and "Bobby" contracted pneumonia. When the under canvas tour began in Washington on May 19, 1953, he was seriously ill. Dr. Higgins tried to treat him with penicillin. Reaching through the bars of the cage wagon, he injected the drug with a syringe stuck between the rhino's rear legs while it was standing. At the next engagement, Philadelphia, Higgins contacted the zoo and sought their advice. By now "Bobby" also had dysentery, and it was decided that he should be fed apples laced with streptomycin. Alas, he could not be saved. The show reached Baltimore on Sunday, May 31, and the rhino died that day.

Interestingly, "Bobby's" Brookfield parents outlived him by many years. The sire "Pharo" died in August 1967 after more than 32 years at the zoo, while the mother "Mary" went on to set the all-time longevity record for African black rhinoceroses in captivity. She died at Brookfield on March 18, 1980, establishing a record of 44 years, eight

months. That is the very best longevity record for any rhinoceros of any species with the possible exception of a female Great Indian rhinoceros which died in the Calcutta Zoo in May, 1880 after having supposedly lived for 47 years in captivity.

Before closing, it would be appropriate to briefly describe the cage wagons used by Ringling-Barnum to transport "Bobby". For his first two seasons, 1945 and 1946, he traveled in No. 85. This was a 20-foot, all steel wagon. It had been built in Sarasota in 1944 as a new hippo den. In order to house the rhino in '45 and '46 the interior water tank was planked over. Possibly in 1947 and for sure in 1948, "Bobby" rode in No. 78. This was an older wagon built back in 1924 specifically to house the Indian rhinoceros "Bill", his preceeding cage wagon having been destroyed in a February 1924 fire at Bridgeport winter quarters. No. 78 was retired after the '48 tour. For the next season, 1949, Ringling-Barnum built a new 20-foot long rhino cage wagon. This was No. 82, and it was transporting "Bobby" when he died at Baltimore in 1953.

—cfa—

JOSEPH ROWE TENT ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

Jerry Nawrocki has been elected president of the Joseph Andrew Rowe Tent #6 in Los Angeles.

Also elected were James DePiro as vice president and James Brown as secretary-treasurer.

The tent reports continued growth with 54 members listed on its rolls.

Plans for holding the 1985 convention in Southern California are currently in the preliminary stage, tent officials report.

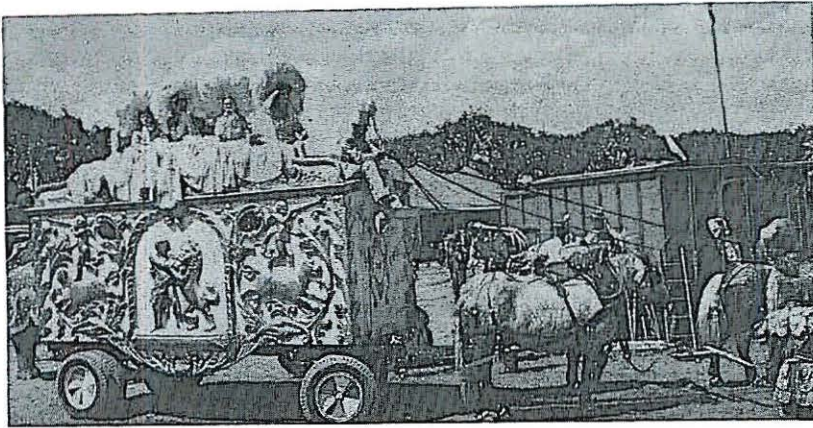


Photo No. 45—Elephants ready for Alice in Circus Wonderland Spec on Ringling-Barnum lot, Allentown, Pa., July 6-7, 1945. Photo by Robert D. Good (Gordon Potter Collection)

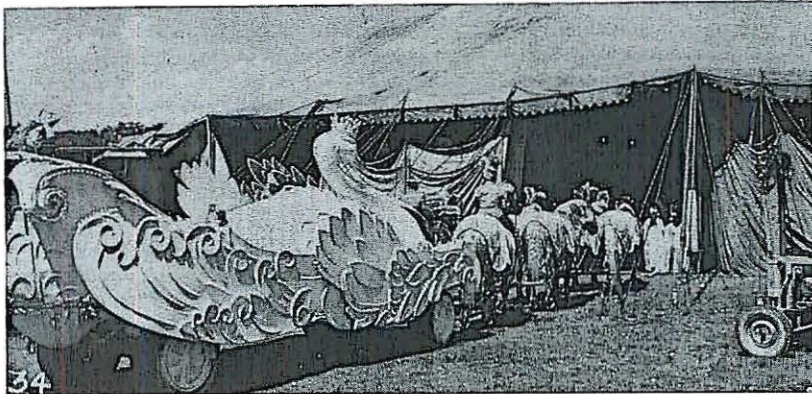


Photo No. 46—Swan float with six-horse hitch ready to enter big top for Alice in Circus Wonderland Spec, Ringling-Barnum lot, Allentown, Pa., July 6-7, 1945. Photo by Robert D. Good (Gordon Potter Collection)

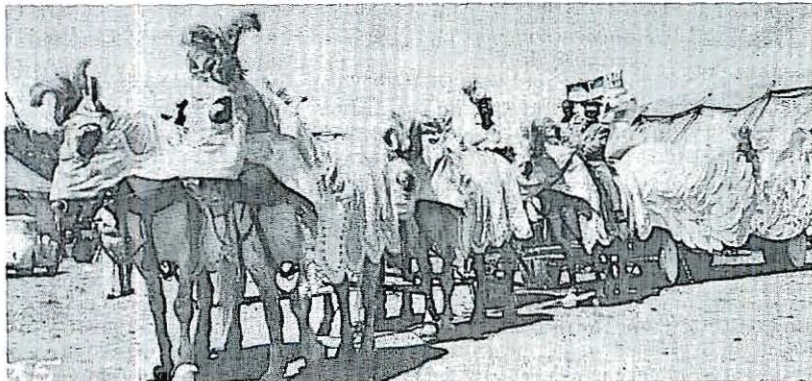


Photo No. 47—Swan bandwagon exiting big top after Alice in Circus Wonderland Spec, Allentown, Pa., July 6-7, 1945. Photo by Robert D. Good (Gordon Potter Collection)



Photo No. 48—Harp and Jesters air calliope with two-horse hitch ready for Alice in Circus Wonderland Spec, Allentown, Pa., July 6-7, 1945. Photo by Robert D. Good (Gordon Potter Collection)

Ringling Show To Be Feted

Mazomanie, Wis., the site of the first professional show of the Ringling Brothers, will celebrate the 100th anniversary of that event with several activities this year.

The Ringling Brothers took their "Ringling Brothers Classic and Comic Concert Company" on the road in November 1882.

The youthful showmen chose Mazomanie for their first appearance for they felt they would be wholly unknown in that little village.

Their first professional performance was held in Schmith's Hall, which still stands. The performance drew 59 people. It took in \$13 while the expenses totaled \$25.90.

The show offered plays and skits, song and dance and instrumental music.

Mazomanie officials have planned a year-long celebration of the anniversary, scheduling a circus and carnival in May conducted by the local school. A special day for Mazomanie residents will be held in June at the Circus World Museum in Baraboo.

The play "Ice Cream Seven Times A Day", covering the Ringlings' early days, will be performed in early November. On Nov. 27, a circus show will be held in the Mazomanie Community Building.

---cfa---

FRANZEN TENT ATTENDS SEVERAL AREA CIRCUSES

by Robert Schippers

The Wayne Franzen Tent #134 started its first circus season at the ZaGaZig Shrine Circus in Des Moines, Iowa on April 26. The first meeting of the year was held after the performance at the Ramada Inn.

A month later, the tent met in Cedar Rapids on May 31 to attend the El Kahir Shrine Circus with the George Hubler International Circus performing there. Many friends were made on the show when members of the Tent sponsored free coffee and donuts for all circus personnel.

Many circuses were in Iowa this year, but due to great distances to travel and week day dates, these shows were caught whenever possible by Tent members on an individual basis. The circuses included Carson and Barnes, TNT Royal Olympic, Holiday Hippodrome, Circus Vargas and Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Blue Unit.

The final get-together of the season was on the Franzen Brothers Circus lot in Sigourney, Iowa, on Sept. 26. The Tent served a buffet dinner with the Franzen Circus personnel as guests.

Wayne Franzen kindly let the tent use the big top for the festivities between shows. A special circus cake was made for the occasion. Later, a group photo was taken of the Tent members and circus personnel. Central Vice President Dale Riker and his wife Evelyn were there for the day.

Al Stencell of Canada's Martin and Downs Circus was also a guest. The movie "High Grass Show" which Al brought with him was shown for the fans and circus people between shows.

Dec. 1, 1981, marked the first anniversary of the Wayne Franzen Tent. The members are looking forward to their second circus season in the spring of 1982.

Blow Down!

A feared circus word brings all together

by M. T. Benton

I never got used to being awakened in the morning by hungry lions roaring and elephants trumpeting. My initial reaction would always be that I was in a jungle somewhere in the heart of deepest Africa. But that's the way it is when you work as a roustabout for the circus.

The wild odors from the menagerie tent mingling with the frying bacon in the cookhouse; the cotton candy, popcorn, peanuts, and sno-cone smells of the refreshment stands; and the aromatic bales of fresh hay outside our "sleeper" were invigorating incentives to roll out and get to work.

In the summer of 1979 I worked on the Big Top crew of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. My primary responsibility was helping put up and take down the canvas for the "World's Largest Circus Under the Big Top." I had handled tenting before, as a Boy Scout and as a family camper, but never anything near the magnitude of this operation.

The Big Top is a custom-made, enormous piece of material with two main sections pieced together stretching the size of a football field. At 150-feet-wide and 300-feet-long, it is large enough to accommodate 5,000 seats. As the circus program pointed out, "Eighty-two hundred yards of material, almost three miles of canvas, comprise the main ingredient. Piecing it all together encompasses use of more than 10 miles of thread, 18,000 feet of cable, and 14,000 feet of rope."

Costing between \$75,000 and \$100,000, the Big Top, barring a disaster, will last two to three seasons before having to be replaced. Starting about 5:30 a.m., it required about four hours of intense physical labor for my crew of 25 men to complete a set-up. By the time the flag was raised over the cookhouse tent, indicating breakfast was ready, we had always worked up a whopping appetite.

The entire circus entourage involved several hundred people, over 40 trucks, and nearly a hundred animals including elephants, lions, tigers, bears, apes, chimpanzees, and an assortment of others. For eight and a half months each year, following extensive preparations in the Florida winter quarters, this entourage becomes the circus version of "On The Road."

Besides my Big Top crew were the performers, side show team, prop crew, "butchers" (concession sellers), clowns, cookhouse gang, band members, and various maintenance personnel handling mechanical, electrical, and other operations of the show. Although there was excellent teamwork within each crew, there was very little mingling among them, especially as far as the performers were concerned.

There exists in the circus something of a caste system reminiscent of officers and enlisted personnel in the military. At first I thought it was just snobbish, but I later

discovered that while many of the labor crew members come and go, for the performers this is a full-time way of life. Most of them travel with their families in trailers, have their pets and other accouterment with them, and attempt to lead as normal a family life as possible under the very difficult circumstances of life on the road.

Performers' lives depend on their being in the very best of physical shape, precluding the socializing so prevalent among the laborers. They must go into the ring two and three times a day, often in acts which could mean severe injury or even death if their timing is off or they fail to follow precise routines.

All circus people live with certain daily apprehensions — elephants stampeding, a wreck on the road between show locations, fire, trapeze riggings snapping, and difficult weather conditions to name just a few. One of the most feared expressions in the circus vocabulary is "Blow Down!" There are numerous instances in the history of circus life when the Big Top has been completely leveled with the grim possibility of serious damage to personnel, animals, and equipment.

On Tuesday, July 24, 1979, I was on my second day of a three-day stint in Toms River, N.J., when all of the work crews were put on emergency alert. A foreboding weather forecast had just come in calling for possible high winds, electrical storms, and heavy rains — a combination which could quickly spell disaster.

An additional concern was the particular lot on which we were located. Many circuses are now set up on huge shopping center and mall parking lots where the iron stakes securing the ropes to the main tent are hydraulically hammered into the hardtop. Unfortunately, the Toms River location this year was in an open field where the ground holding the stakes might easily turn to mud if the heavy rains did come.

A light drizzle began falling around noon. I remained in the sleeper playing cards, keeping a close eye on the cloud formations, and praying it would pass us over. Though it was nothing out of the ordinary, the rains and winds picked up steadily throughout the afternoon, right up to the 4:30 show time. There were approximately 2,000 people inside the main tent when the show began.

Twenty minutes later my worst fears came true. The downpour burst upon us with a vengeance, accompanied by streaks of lightning, great booms of thunder, and gale force winds that whipped the canvas about alarmingly. I immediately ran to the Big Top entrance to see how everything was holding up. The torrential rains were coming in around the primary support poles and along the dozens of tent seams, dousing many of the patrons. The wind was blowing additional rain through the side-wall openings as overhead spotlights and other electrical equipment swung dangerously above the

three performance rings.

The general manager of the circus cancelled the show at once. Through the calm instructions of the Ringmaster (who assured them their ticket stubs were good for a later performance) everyone in attendance was methodically and safely directed to the parking area.

Still under the Big Top were many performers, band members, workers, animals, valuable props, and much equipment. The storm continued to get worse and several of the 10-foot wooden sidepoles splintered with resounding cracking noises. The loss of support from these poles allowed the enormous swaths of canvas to bellow up and down as the wind swept through the openings.

This was one occasion when absolutely no caste system existed. Under the general manager's directions, everyone — even office personnel and management — pulled together in an attempt to save the Big Top. There was an amazing amount of order within such chaotic and treacherous surroundings. Even though we could hardly hear each other over the pounding rain on the canvas and thunder outside, everyone labored feverishly yet smoothly.

While some of my crew worked on replacing the side poles shattered by the weight of water pockets formed on the top of the tent, I grabbed a spare pole and began pushing upwards against the seams of the canvas to clear those same precarious water pockets. I was astounded by the weight of the water. The only way I could move it was by holding the base of the pole with my hands cupped between my slightly-bent legs and lifting the pole straight up with all my strength. I could feel every muscle in my arms, legs, and shoulders being severely tested.

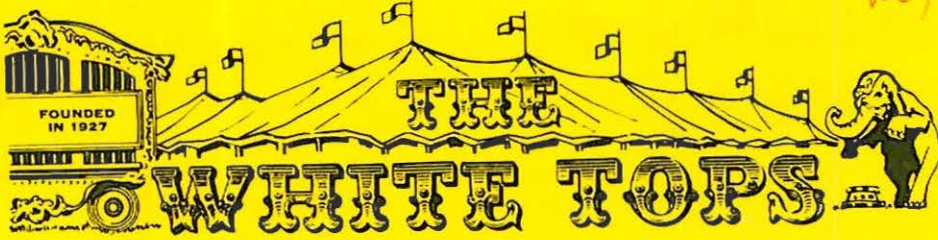
Most of the time, as I would lift, the water would roll to the edge of the tent and pour over the side onto the ground. But occasionally the pocket would either roll to one side into another pocket or divide into two separate ones. When the group completed replacing the broken poles and came over to assist me, we found the best combination for this frustrating task was to have eight or 10 people pulling on the ropes on the outside of the tent as two people inside simultaneously pushed up against the bulging seams. Most of the water was cleared in this fashion.

I then joined the outside crew as we rushed to "guy up" the hundreds of one-inch heavy ropes and cables all the way around the outside of the Big Top in an effort to stabilize the canvas. My hands were raw and bloodied as previous blisters were torn open from pulling on the wet ropes. Although I was totally drenched from the storm, my real dread was that lightning might strike near us as we stood ankle-deep in the muddy water struggling frantically to prevent a blow down.

No matter how hard we pulled on the

Reynolds

\$3.00



MARCH-APRIL 1982

Volume 55—Number 2

...CHILDREN OF ALLLLL AGES...



RAY DIRGO

Margaret Schroeder Named White Tops Ad Manager

Margaret Schroeder of Tucson, Ariz., has been named by President Jim Saunders as White Tops advertising manager. Margaret succeeds Immediate Past President Fred R. Reed who held the post on an interim basis.

Margaret might be called a circus fan from birth. She was born in Baraboo, Wis., and grew up in the Chicago area. She moved to Tucson 27 years ago.

A member of the Roland C. Butler and Charlie Smith tents, Margaret has been a member of CFA since 1971.

She operates an income tax and book-keeping service in Tucson, that is until the circus comes to town. When a circus is in the area, she attends every performance. She has served as a honorary ringmaster and honorary clown when Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus is in town.

Possessing a large collection of RBBB memorabilia and a large clown collection,

she serves as a resource speaker on the circus or clowning in the Tucson public schools and libraries.

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