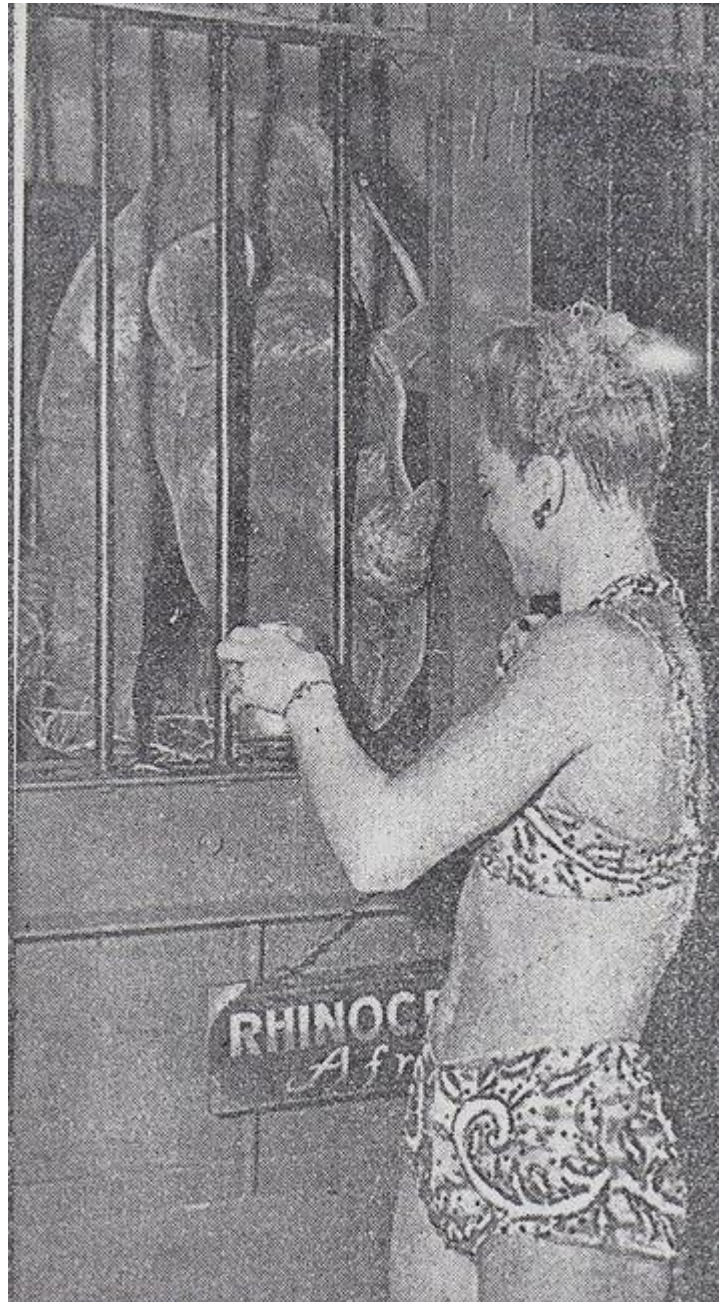


BOBBY OF BROOKFIELD

Reminiscences by RICHARD J. REYNOLDS

Unpublished but emailed to friends and family on 7 November 2015

-- I saw my first living rhino. The place was Atlanta; the location was the Highland Ave. show grounds. The occasion was the Monday night performance of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The rhino in question was a 13-month old male African black rhino, named "Bobby," that had been born on September 19, 1944 at Chicago's Brookfield zoo. Here he is on the circus in 1945 --



A circus performer offers the little rhino a drink.

The dam was "Mary" and sire "Pharaoh." They were captured in Tanzania (then Tanganyika, the former German East Africa) by the renowned German animal trapper and catcher, Christoph Schulz. Accompanied by his son Walter, he brought them to the USA as part of a huge animal shipment aboard the S.S. City of Lyon, landing at the port of Boston on June 21, 1935.

The details of the landing are recorded in the diary of the late Dan Harkins, Director of Boston's Franklin Park Zoo. The ship was met by Edward Bean, Director of the Brookfield zoo. Harkins also told us that the rhinos and other animals were shipped by Railway Express Agency (REA) to Chicago departing Boston on June 25. They arrived at the Brookfield zoo on either June 26 or 27, 1935 having been accompanied on the trip by Director Bean. [Note: the shipping of live animals at this time was usually handled by REA. It ran express cars at the head end of passenger trains assuring swift transportation. REA had tariff provisions allowing persons to travel with and care for the animals in the express cars.]

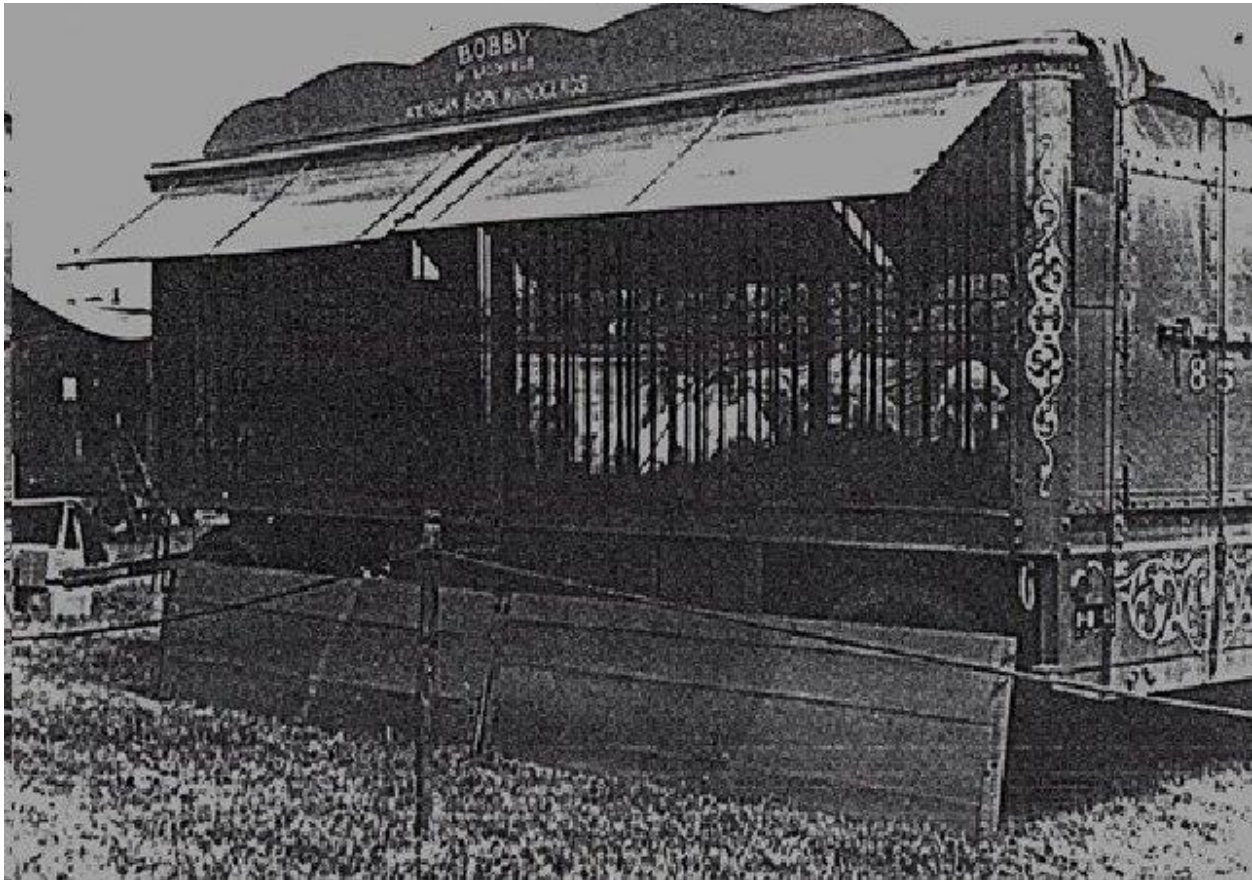
In 1941 Mary and Pharaoh had produced an earlier male calf, "Georgie Joe." He was the very first rhino bred and born anywhere in America or Europe.

"Bobby," the 1944 calf, was the pair's second offspring and only the second rhino ever bred and born in the western world. This calf was immediately named "Robert Rhino" after Robert Ringling, president of the circus. The two Brookfield Beans, Director Ed and his Assist. Director and son, Robert, had already decided to name the new baby rhino after the circus man. Why? - -to encourage him to buy the animal. This was a time when zoo and circus folks were close - -what a contrast with today!

Robert Ringling did indeed agree to buy "Robert Rhino." The deal was made in 1945 and plans were made to ship the calf to the circus during its first date under canvas in Washington, D.C. Per its usual practice the Ringling circus had opened its 1945 tour in New York's Madison Square Garden (April 4-May 20) and followed that with another indoor engagement in Boston Garden (May 22-June 2). The rhino was thought to be too young for these early dates, needing that additional time with his mother at Brookfield. Beside the weather would be much warmer in June, making for better travel conditions.

George Speidel, Ed Bean's son-in-law and also a member of the Brookfield zoo's staff, was assigned the job of taking the little rhino to join the circus. [Speidel would later become Director of the Milwaukee Zoo.]. By then the calf was being called "Bobby." They left Chicago aboard Baltimore & Ohio's passenger train no. 10, the "Chicago-Pittsburgh-Washington Express," departing 9:50 AM on June 5 with arrival in Washington scheduled for 6:25 am the next day. Speidel told me about the trip. He rode in the express car with Bobby who was in one of the usual animal shipping crates. Speidel duly delivered his charge to the circus grounds where they were met by President Robert Ringling, his mother, Mrs. Charles Ringling (widow of one of the five founding brothers), and circus press agent F. Beverly Kelley.

The circus had prepared a large 20-foot long cage wagon (beast wagon) for Bobby and in which he would be exhibited in the menagerie. It bore no. 85 and its skyboard had the slogan "**BOBBY OF BROOKFIELD, AMERICAN BORN RHINOCEROS**, like so - -



The advertisements in all the subsequent newspapers read, "*Bobby - -Baby Rhinoceros and Second Ever Born in the Western World.*" This 11-year old could hardly wait. I had never before seen a living rhino.

Though I had seen the Ringling circus in 7 earlier years, it had no rhino in any of them. It's last previous one, a male black rhino named "Bill," had died in 1935 when I was only a year old.

Our Atlanta zoo was a very pedestrian affair back then and had never had a rhino. Such an animal attraction was quite out of the question for our place. But we were not alone.

Imagine a rough parallelogram drawn from Milwaukee south to St Louis, then east through Cincinnati to Washington, then north through New York City to Nashua, New Hampshire (Benson's place) and then back west to Milwaukee via Detroit.

As of 1945 no zoo outside of that parallelogram had ever had a rhino of any kind. That situation would not change until 1952 when the San Diego zoo finally got an African black rhino. To see a rhino before that date most Americans had to visit a zoo within the aforesaid parameters or wait for the circus to bring one to them. And, up to 1945 only Ringling and its Barnum and Forepaugh counterparts had shown rhinos in the twentieth century. [There is reference to one on Fred Buchanan's Yankee Robinson show of 1915. It was said to have been acquired from Ruhe, but that needs further verification.]

The above-described “parallelogram” is roughly the same as what the economic geographers call the old “Industrial Parallelogram” wherein America’s industrial might was concentrated. It speaks to the Midwestern and Northeastern domination of American industry and cultural offerings through the first half of the last century. The rust belt ruled! Not anymore as the Sunbelt states have come on strong in everything, including zoos with rhinos, among them our Atlanta zoo.

I hope you enjoy this.

Richard Reynolds