

PERFORMING RHINOS - 1990

[Except as otherwise noted, data is from Flavio Togni of Italy's Circus Americana, now (1990) appearing with Ringling Bros. and Barnum + Bailey Circus - Blue Unit.]

sim (1) Female white rhino "Ceyla", or "Zeila", Circus Knie Switzerland, ^{trained and} presented by Fredy Knie, Jr.

Chris Krenger, Knie press dept., advised RJR (in litt, 1968-73) that "Ceyla" and a male "Bully" were acquired by Knie in Aug. 1966 and were the first white rhinos ever obtained by a circus anywhere. The male seems to have always been kept at Knie's winter quarters/zoo at Rapperswil.

"Ceyla" toured with Knie in 1967 as a menagerie attraction and in 1968 was featured in the performance, the first trained white rhino ever. She was still appearing in the ring in the 1980s. At other times she seems to be carried as a menagerie feature only.

sim (2) Male white rhino "Tsavo", Circus Barum, West Germany. Trained by Charles Knie, presented by Sascha Houcke, Jr.

(3) Male white rhino (name ?), Circus Caesar Togni, Italy. Trained and presented by Elvio Togni.

(4) Female white rhino "Jumba," Circus Moira Orfei, Italy. Trained by Charles Knie, presented by Stephano Nones.

(5) Male white rhino (name ?), Circus Darix Togni, Italy. Presented by Davio Togni.

(6) Male white rhino, young animal (name ?), Circus Medrano, Italy. Presented by Heros Casertellia.

(7) Male white rhino (name ?), Circus Mbel Riva, Italy. Presented by Roberto Bellucci.

(8) Female white rhino (name ?), Circus Lidia Togni, Italy. Trained and presented by Vinicio Canestrelli.

(9) Male white rhino (name ?), Circus Alberto Althoff, Holland.

x (10) Male white rhino "Bothan," Circus Williams-Althoff, West Germany. Presented by Ady Enders.

(11) Male white rhino "Thor", Circus Americana, Italy, Trained and presented by Flavio Togni. "Thor" was born in September, 1987 at Chipperfield's Longleat Safari Park, Wiltshire England and acquired by Circus Americana in November, 1988. He appeared in their performance in 1989 during a tour of Germany. Shipped to Florida in November, 1989, he performs with the 1990 Blue Unit of the Ringling-Barnum Circus.

NOTE: According to Flavio Togni all the above white rhinos, except Knie's "Zeila", were obtained by the respective circuses within "the last two or three years, most from Germany where they were born in zoos" [Data from F. Togni obtained during conferences with him on Feb 5+8, 1990 in Atlanta]

PREVIOUS PERFORMING RHINOS IN AMERICA

INDIAN RHINOS

(1) "Old Put", presumably a male Indian, Dan Rice Circus, 1855-1861. In The One Horse Show Kunzog says the rhino was obtained by Rice from Avery Smith in early 1855, Clipper (per S. Thayer) says

"Old Put" was trained by Frank Rosston in 1856. Rice presented him in the ring.

The routine involved climbing atop steps and a stool, ringing a bell, and picking a handkerchief from Rice's pocket (Kunzog).

The rhino drowned in Aug. 1861. His cage was knocked into the Mississippi River when the barge transporting the circus was struck by a steamboat.

(2) Rhino (name?) presumably Indian, Maginley & Co's, Circus and Menagerie, 1874-75.

John O'Brien was one of ^{the} proprietors of this circus and he obtained rhinos in 1870 and 1871, the latter described as an Indian. One or the other of these was trained and appeared in the ring with the Maginley show in 1874. A man rode its back and it was controlled with a long pole inserted into a ring in its nose. Thayer says it was O'Brien's performing rhino that died at Bradford, PA on 5 July, 1875.

NOTE: Either this rhino or Rice's 1855-61 "Old Put" is the subject of that famous photo showing the costumed man standing alongside an Indian

rhino and holding a rope leading to a ring in the animal's nose. Thayer believes the picture shows the 1874 Maginley animal and not the earlier Rice rhino. The opportunity to be photographed would appear greater for the Maginley animal.

AFRICAN BLACK RHINOS

(1) Female "Mary," Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Motion Pictures, 1933-1934. Purchased by M.G.M. from Hagenbeck in 1933, arrived Boston April or May '33. At Benson's summer 1933. Shipped to Hollywood fall 1933. Used in filming "Tarzan and His Mate" during winter '33-'34. Trained to lie down, roll over, and to be ridden. Trained by Volney Phifer and George Emerson. From April to October, 1934 "Mary" was taken on a promotional tour ahead of the Tarzan movie by Volney and Eloise Phifer. "Mary" was sold to Ringling-Barnum in October 1934 and died on tour with the circus at Springfield, Mass. on 5 July 1935. Ringling does not appear to have had any intention of using "Mary" in the performance. She appeared only as a menagerie animal.

(2) Female "Kenya", animal trainer Roman Schmitt, 1974 - 1984. Acquired by Schmitt in Oct, 1974. Trained by Roman's father Hugo Schmitt to work with female Asian elephant "Birka". Presented by Roman Schmitt, debuting in 1976. The act was booked with various indoor circuses and never toured with a specific show. Rhino was ridden by Schmitt in the ring and also jumped over a low barricade. Schmitt quit presenting the rhino in 1979. It was with him at Circus World, Haines City, FL. in early 1980's but did not perform. In 1985 Schmitt sent "Kenya" to Columbus, Ohio zoo on breeding loan and subsequently sold her to the Dallas zoo. [data from Roman Schmitt and Bill Johnston]

AFRICAN WHITE RHINOS

(1) Male "Thor," animal trainer Rex Williams, 1973-1975.

"Thor" was born at Wild Animal Safari, Kings Mills, Ohio in late 1973. Williams acquired the rhino ^{in Oct. '74} through dealer Frank Thompson. Trained by Rex Williams and Bill Johnston at Lion Country, Florida during winter of 1974-75 in an act routine with a horse. Act debuted

Kings Mills had no white rh. pr 1974.

with Shrine Circus at Miami in spring of 1975 and was presented through that summer at other locations. Circus producers did not show much interest in the act and Williams sold the rhino to Mexican circus owner Raoul Suarez, delivering him at Laredo, Texas in Oct. 1975. "Thor" died in Mexico in 1976 from injuries inflicted by an African elephant. [Data from Bill Johnston and Roman Schmitt]

(2) Male "Tank" or "Mkhombe", Ringling Bros. and Barnum + Bailey Circus, Blue Unit, 1988. Six month old calf delivered by Dave Hale of 5-H Ranch, Cape Girardeau, Mo. to Ringling Blue Unit at St. Petersburg, FL in Jan. 1988. "Tank" was to be trained by Mickey Bohannon for appearances in the performance when it reached New York in the spring. In Atlanta at the end of January '88 he was practicing walking "Tank" around the ring with his small son riding. He was also trying to teach "Tank" to climb onto a pedestal. During the New York engagement, "Tank" walked around the arena in the spec but that was only appearance he ever made. Later in the season, Bohannon was accidentally,

but seriously injured by "Tank" when, while Bohannon was leaning over, the rhino tossed his head upwards hitting Bohannon in the face with his horn. Bohannon left the circus and in Dec. 1988 "Tank" was sent to David Meeks Little Mountain Zoo (now called Hollywild Animal Park), Inman, South Carolina. RJR saw him there on May 11, 1989, and, presumably, he is still there.

Richard Reynolds
March, 1990

Richard Reynolds
1186 Warrenhall Lane, N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia 30319

April 25, 1991

Mr. Bill Johnston
Post Office Box 108
Ellenton, Florida 34222

Dear Bill:

John Polacsek has sent me some clippings covering Adam Forepaugh's stand at Chicago on May 25-30, 1874. A reporter wrote a detailed review of both the parade and the menagerie, part of which I quote as follows:

". . . 'Baby Annie', an infant [elephant] about 8 feet high . . . stood opposite [the cage of the California grizzly in the animal tent] . . . Next to 'Annie' the performing elephant 'Jenny' was quietly reposing. A full-grown specimen of the black Indian rhinoceros, a hideous beast, with eyes half way down his nose, and so small and fiery that they looked like a candle shining through a knot-hole in a dead wall; with splay feet two sizes too small for him and his skin three sizes too large. It is the color of an asphalt pavement, feels like the side of a barn, and hangs in wrinkles and folds all over him. You can take one of these folds and rub it together so as to feel the thickness of the hide, and it doesn't seem to mind it; if anything he rather likes it. . . ."

"Now for the value of these specimens of natural history . . . Elephants cost from \$5,000 to \$40,000, according to species, African elephants being the cheapest. No African elephants have been imported for several years; the last cargo that came to these shores was from Calcutta; 12 Indian elephants started, but one or two died on the way. They were consigned to James E. Kelley, of New York, who sold them to different showmen throughout the country. The celebrated Romeo formerly attached to Forepaugh's menagerie, was the largest elephant ever seen in this country. He was

Kees - I thought you would find this interesting

11 feet 10 inches high and weighed five tons. He died in Chicago, in June 1872, at the age, say the doctors, of nearly 100 years. He was valued at \$50,000. . . Two giraffes, now on the way from Egypt, cost \$36,000. These are the fourth and fifth giraffes imported by Mr. Forepaugh, all the former ones having died before they had been in the country a month . . ."


I don't know whether this is what the reporter actually saw and learned on the lot or whether all this detail was in a boiler plate press release which Forepaugh handed out to newspapers in every city he visited. Whatever, it is certainly full of interesting detail.

The way the story reads, there appear to have been only two elephants on the Forepaugh Show in 1874. The review of the parade also mentions but two, "Baby Annie" and a big one adorned with beautiful blanket, etc.

The shipment consigned to James E. Kelley was the one in 1871 that brought the elephants from Ceylon that went to Howes Great London. I thought you would find interesting the statement about no African elephants have been imported for several years.

The description of the rhino certainly sounds like a great Indian. However, other 1874 advertisements for Forepaugh's aggregation claimed, "a monster two-horned hairy rhinoceros . . .", suggesting that it was a Sumatran. A rhino, presumably the 1874 animal, died with Forepaugh in October 1875 after its cage fell through a bridge enroute between Amsterdam and Schenectady, New York.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed text "Best regards,".