

BANDWAGON

JULY-AUG.

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Questions and Comments

RINGLING SHIPS ANIMALS TO COLE BROS. — 1940 and COMMENTS ABOUT RINGLING- BARNUM CAGE NO. 78

I read Joe Bradbury's interesting account of the 1940 fire at Cole Bros.' Rochester winter quarters (Sept.-Oct., 1967 issue). I have located a news item from *Billboard* that shows how many animals were loaned to Cole by the Ringling show to replace the fire losses. According to the May 4, 1940 issue, at page 66, under the column, "Peru Pick-Ups," Ringling-Barnum dispatched two big highway trucks from Madison Square Garden, New York to the old American Circus Corp. winter quarters at Peru, Indiana where the remains of the Cole menagerie were sent after the fire. The shipment arrived in Peru in late April 1940. Loaded on the trucks were, in *Billboard's* own words, "... giant hippo, 'Chester'; llamas; hybrid zebra; two leopards; four zebras; two tigers; one ibex; two Abyssinian asses; and collection of rare birds and monkeys." The animals were only on loan, but except for the hippo "Chester," who went back to Sarasota in early 1944, I have no evidence that any of the other animals were ever returned to Ringling-Barnum.

The fact that the animals were shipped by truck to Peru from New York rather than from Sarasota also explains how Ringling-Barnum hippo cage No. 78 wound up as a prop wagon in 1940. Train lists and photographs taken on the Ringling circus by Gordon Potter later in 1940 show that hippo cage No. 78 was positioned in the backyard and was used to house the alligators and props for Tanit Ikao's "after show." I had wondered why this big cage was relegated to such a task when it had housed "Chester" in 1939. After reading the aforesaid *Billboard* reference, it dawned on me that "Chester" had been sent to New York in No. 78 when the season opened. Then, after the Norths loaned her ("Chester" was a female) to Cole, No. 78 no longer had any use in the menagerie and wound up as a backyard prop wagon.

A brief history of wagon No. 78 would be in order. Gordon Potter says it was built in 1924 to house the Indian rhino "Bill," his earlier cage having been destroyed in a fire at Bridgeport quarters around January 1924.

For the first three years of its use, when it transported "Bill," No. 78 had gold block style lettering on its sideboards which read "LARGEST LIVING ARMORED RHINOCEROS IN CAPTIVITY." As far as I know, this was the last time the Ringling show decorated its rhino cage to advertise the occupant, although the hippo cage No. 88 had the "Largest Living . . ." slogan on its sideboards at least through the 1939 season. From my present records, the chronology for cage No. 78 would appear as follows:

1924-26.	Carried the Great Indian "armored" rhino, "Bill."
1927	(?) Uncertain
c1928-1935	Used for one of the three African black rhinos which the show owned during this period.
1936-38	(?) Uncertain
1939	Used for the Nile hippo, "Chester." A water tank to be added.
1940	Carried "Chester" to New York. Later, it was put in backyard to house Tanit Ikao's props and alligators.
1941-42	Used for the pigmy hippo "Betty Lou."
1943-46	Stored in Sarasota
1947	(?) Uncertain. May have been the rhino cage.
1948	Carried African black rhino "Bobby," and was painted blue with silver trim.
After 1948	No further trace of No. 78, presumed destroyed at Sarasota.

A photo of No. 78 in the backyard during 1940 appears in the May-June 1966 issue of *Bandwagon*, at Page 17. — Richard J. Reynolds

MORE ON TWO SNYDERS SEPT.-OCT. 1967 ISSUE

Bob Taber writes as follows. I read with interest the article in Sept.-Oct. issue concerning the Sells Floto elephants stampeding in Riverside in April, 1908. I was there. Snyder didn't run thru the hotel courtyard, it was Floto.

There are probably elephant historians who would like real facts.

I was then in the 8th grade of school. Our room on the second floor overlooked the circus lot, where some of us had worked before 9 a.m.

About 2 p.m. our attention was called by a large cloud of black smoke covering the tents. The lot was adjoining the Southern Pacific tracks on which the show had arrived.

Across the track was a Standard Oil company plant. The driver of a horse drawn tank wagon while taking on a load of gasoline had an accident causing an explosion and fire. He died. This fire spread to one of the big tanks. A great amount of smoke drifted over the S-F tents. The big top was not open though the side show had started.



Snyder, the tusker elephant, is shown with his trainer Lucia Zora, on the Floto show in 1917.

The elephants frightened by the crackling fire and smoke stampeded. They made a run to the edge of town, overturning chicken houses and other small structures enroute. They were having a feast of oranges when Fred Alispaw and his elephant handlers arrived to round the animals up and return to the lot.

The day has gone down in Riverside's history. In 1958 on the 50th anniversary of the happenings the Riverside press for six Sunday editions ran a detailed story of just what happened.

It goes this way. All elephants, except Floto, quieted down. That animal broke loose the second time, heading