

C. H. S.

BANDWAGON

Vol. 6, No. 9—CHRISTMAS ISSUE

15c



— The Circusiana Magazine —

C. H. S.

Bandwagon

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Vol. 6 No. 9

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The Editor Says

One of my "pet peeves" is people who do not vote. They are usually the ones who do the most griping about taxes, officials, graft, etc. I think this is not only true in National, State, County and City elections, but also in organization elections. So when you get your C.H.S. ballot in the next few days, vote. Statistics show that the citizens of the United States are more lax in exercising their right to vote than in many other countries. This is your time to express yourself on the policies and officers of the Circus Historical Society.

I hope that you will all have a very prosperous New Year and that the circus will come to your town often.

AGNES W. KING

Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year

May 1952 be your best
circus season yet

Johny Vogelsang,
No. 285

A Memory of '23

By Joe Siegrist—Sent in by Bette Leonard

It really was the Greatest Show On Earth. The 1923 edition of the Ringling Brothers & Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows had everything it takes to make a real circus and plenty of it. It was the fifth season since the two shows had combined. Just long enough to iron out all the difficulties of personell and equipment that the merging of these two great circuses entailed.

And now it was functioning as one grand and glorious fast-moving show. With a performance that will never again be duplicated in size or content and a mobility that was amazing in view of the amount of equipment transported. With the exception of a very few large cities, the entire season was spent in one day stands. Many times we would make more than two hundred miles overnight and have everything up and ready to show by ten o'clock in the morning. We had several baseball teams on the shows and there would be games nearly every morning before doors opened for the matinee. I do not remember any late days that season.

We covered a lot of territory that year. We were up through the Northwest and down the entire West Coast. We traveled well over fifteen thousand miles. The train was in four sections, about a hundred and twenty cars. The first section, known as the "Flying Squadron" usually was on its way out of town by seven P.M. It carried the cookhouse, horse tents, and some of the horse pulling teams or baggage stock as they were called.

We performers in the flying-return trapeze acts that closed the show had to hurry to make the cookhouse for supper. It seems like we just made it every day. All the other tables except our two would be out of the top and loaded. The sidewall would be down and if we lingered too long over our meals the waiters would take it all away and drop the top on our heads. And sometimes, on an exceptionally long jump or a long haul, the unforgettable Mr. Bradna, our equestrian director, would roar into the dressing room "Kvick cho. Go eat vile de chos on!" And that meant that we had to work on a full stomach or do without our supper.

I guess business conditions were pretty good that year because we had a long season. We opened in the old Madison Square Garden—the one down at Madison Square in New York City. I believe we opened a little early that year because we showed there in the Garden for seven and a half weeks, and that is probably the longest stand the show ever made in New York. In those days there were no Sunday shows until we were west of Pittsburgh and I enjoyed those Sundays off getting acquainted with the city of New York. It was then that I got to see so many of the big shows and the big stars on Broadway, the Ziegfield Follies with Gallager & Shean and Will Rogers and Al Jolson's current big production. And the lesser vaudeville stars, many of whom are big names in radio, movies and television today.

But we had our own stars. And the top-most stars of the circus world they were, too. Lillian Lietzel, May Wirth, Jennie Rooney and many other glamorous performers in the land of sawdust and spangles.

As I recall, everything went along just fine that season of 1923, until we got to Omaha, Nebraska. I do not remember the exact dates but it must have been along about the first of October, because we were on our way back from the West Coast. The lot in Omaha was small. So small that there was no room for the dressing room top. There was a little brick African Methodist Church on one corner of the lot and that was used for the Ladies dressing room. All of the men, and the cowboys in the concert, were jammed into the regular cowboy's top which was known as the "Hooligan."

It was hot and still all through the matinee performance. After supper I went into the big-top and practiced tumbling with the other boys for about an hour as was our usual custom. It was nearly seven o'clock, time to open the doors for the night show when we saw a black, funnel-shaped cloud a long distance away but traveling fast in our direction. We heard the whistles of the big-top bosses and the rat-tat-tat of the extra stakes being driven and felt the cool air mass moving in. It looked to all of us like we were in for a big wind and possibly a blow-down and I did not understand why Jimmy Whalen, our boss canvasman did not give orders to drop the top. But "The Whale," as he was affectionately known, knew his job and was a good man at figuring out the weather. He didn't see anything but rain in that cloud but the way it turned out there was more water than anyone thought possible.

It kept getting darker and darker but it was not until about eight o'clock that the rain began to fall. But it wasn't raindrops, it was more like sheets of water. Like gigantic ocean waves breaking over the lot, one on top of another. In a few minutes the lot was completely under water and anything unsinkable was floating around. At eight fifteen they decided to go ahead and try to give the show. The opening tournament was called off so we began with the little aerial number. I assisted two girls who did an iron-jaw act in this number. I stood in the ring with a nice uniform on and helped them up and down. But on this night I put on my bathing suit, raincoat and uniform cap. In the middle of the act Mr. Bradna walks over to the ring-curb and screams at me to take off the raincoat. I knew I would be in worse trouble if he discovered I had no uniform on so I had to pretend that I could not hear him. He yelled until he was red in the face and as soon as the act was over I ran through the water to the other end of the big-top.

By this time the rain was coming down in such torrents that huge water-bellies were forming between the center poles and the weight of them threatened to break the main falls and bring down the whole top. I saw Mickey Graves, our boss property man coming down the hippodrome track holding a police lieutenant by the arm and pointing up to the big bags of water. The policeman pulled out his revolver and fired into the center of one of the bags. There was a ripping, tearing sound and the bag split lengthwise the top and unloaded tons of water onto the track. By the time the big pools of water were all blown open, the big-top was in ribbons and the water was waist-high all over the inside.

I think there was some law to the effect that three acts constituted a performance and you didn't have to give the money back or something like that because we did two more numbers. I forget what the

second one was but the third and final act that night was the bear acts. We had four stages and Emil Pallenberg—senior that is, had an act on each stage. As it happened Pallenberg was giving me ten dollars a week to help with one of his acts on the end stage. My principal job was to bring in the little bear and then take him back to the bear wagon after the act. We got the bears in the big-top alright and went through the act. Then I started out the back door with the little bear and I saw that the water in the backyard was up to my chin. I knew I had to get that bear to the wagon somehow. I could see Pallenberg standing on top of the wagon. He was shouting for me to come on. The water was up to the big number 88 on the front of the wagon—nearly up to the cages. I took a firm grip on the bear's chain and plunged into the water. At first the bear fought like a wildcat under the water, then he was still and I had to drag him the rest of the way. I still do not know whether bears can swim or not but this one didn't try. When I got him to the wagon I handed the end of the chain up to Pallenberg and pushed the bear up to him. The bear was half drowned but he came out of it later alright. But Pallenberg was very angry with me and he fired me from that job. But to this day I do not know what he expected me to do with that animal.

All this time it is pouring water from the sky in quantities that I had never seen before or since, and the whole lot is becoming a vast lake.

The show was promptly called off after the bear act so I went in our little dressing top which, fortunately, was on high ground. I stood on my trunk and dressed myself completely in dry clothing to go to town, then stepped out the back of the tent and down into the water up to my shoulders. So I went to the coaches like that.

Everyone came to the cars soaking wet that night and much alcoholic beverage was consumed—against the rules—to keep from getting pneumonia. So we ended up with a series of parties and we all forgot about the weather.

The next morning when I woke up we were standing in the depot in St. Joseph, Missouri, and the water was up to the car steps. Everybody was hungry because we had no privilege car on the show in those days. So I was elected to wade through the water and find a store and buy something for all of us, which I did.

We did not even unload in St. Joe. We went on to Kansas City and got the whole show up on the lot about noon the next day. It had cleared up by then but the lot in K.C. was muddy. At one o'clock we were all ready to let the people in and a very light drizzle commenced. John Ringling walked through the back yard. "Take it down," he said. And we did, right then and there.

We passed up a few more towns in the next few days and our next stop was in Lafayette, Louisiana, but the lot was under water so we didn't unload there.

I think we went on into Mississippi before we got going again but I remember that we had lost a whole week just riding around, but after that we were on dry lots again and we closed some place in North Carolina in November.

"Dad" White

By Agnes King

I know that many of you are wondering about "Dad" since his accident when he was in Cincinnati at the Convention. When we checked out of the Hotel Monday morning we learned that "Dad" had left quite a bit earlier, so we were pleased to hear from him and know what happened. Following are some quotes from his letters:

August 30—"That fall I got must have gone all over the U.S.A." for cards and letters have been pouring in ever since I got home, from people I never heard of before. I went down in the lobby that Sunday night to send a night letter, when the clerk told me there was a call for me, it was from a daughter in Galesburg, Ill., telling me her husband had died. Funeral would be Tuesday, so early Monday morning the bell hop called a taxi, and he told the station to have a wheel chair to meet the taxi and he put me on a Pennsy train for Chicago. At Chicago a wheel chair transferred me to the Burlington, and they wired Galesburg to meet me with a wheel chair. Later, returned to Fredonia. They put me in the hospital right away and took an x-ray. I stayed 3 days and took 2 more x-rays and all 3 showed a crack in the hip bone, and the Doctor told me it would take from one to two months to heal. I went home but something else set in so I had to come back for a few days."

From September 11 letter—"Well, Bob, the old Scout is still on the shelf and it looks like I will be for some time yet as the Doctor says he will take another x-ray of my hip in a week or two, but it don't inconvenience me any. Last Sunday my photographer came up to my room and caught a picture of the old timer laying on the hospital bed. I wish you could see the stack of cards and letters I got in the Hospital and Home. I got over 150 cards, 25 letters and two telegrams. I got a great many from CHS members, most of them had a letter or note in to be answered."

From October 10 letter—"Well I got out of "Jail." Last Sunday was the first I had gone down to my meals and yesterday I went to the Postoffice with my son-in-law. The Doctor don't want me to make any more long trips without taking someone with me as he says I am not steady enough on my feet. I might get a fall any time, and I might not be so lucky, so guess my trips will have to be by correspondence, but I am going to Kansas City, Missouri, to the Veteran's reunion, but my daughter will go along to keep me from falling.

Holiday Greetings

from the oldest C. H. S.
member

C. H. "Dad" White,
No. 101

From the Youngest
Member

HI! EVERYBODY

Merry Christmas

Ann King, No. 406

Circusiana

Sent in by Geo. L. Chindahl, No. 313

The following circusiana are at the New-York Historical Society, New York City:

8-page courier of Cooper, Bailey & Co., Paterson, Friday, April 30 (1880). Mentions Linda Jeal, Queen of the Flaming Zone, and electric light plant.

Herald of Raymond & Waring Menagerie, exhibiting at Niblo's Garden, New York City. "The celebrated Shetland pony will also be introduced and be mounted by a popular taught monkey, who will go through a variety of Tricks and Gambols, which have proved extremely diverting to the young, while persons of mature age cannot suppress a hearty laugh." (No date).

Herald of Van Nest Big Society Circus and Hippodrome. States that the parade will include the "Nursery Chariot, the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe." (No date).

Herald of Nathans & Co., Randolph, Monday, June 26.

Herald of McLearn's Great National Hippotheonron advertised a parade, a side show and waterproof tents. (No date).

Herald of Howe's Circus, Saturday, January 31, advertised "comic song" by Dan Rice.

Herald of Circus, Astor Place. W. F. Wallett's 6th appearance. (No date).

Herald of Welch's National Circus. (No date).

Lithograph of Nathans & Co.'s American and English Circus. "Grand Procession of the Steam Calliope drawn by a team of six elephants in the City of New York." The calliope is on a wagon drawn by the elephants and followed by a traction engine furnishing steam to the calliope. (No date).

Lithograph showing the interior of Howes & Cushing's Great United States Circus. 28" by 38". (No date).

Lithograph of North American Circus, showing "C. J. Rogers, the Celebrated

American Dramatic Equestrian." 21" by 29". (No date).

Album containing twenty-six photographs of trained animal acts presented at Carl Hagenbeck's exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair, 1893. (These photographs were copyrighted in 1893 by Napoleon Sarony, 37 Union Square, and are probably copies of pictures taken at Stellingen, Germany, for sale at the Chicago World's Fair).

The following circusiana are at the Chicago Historical Society, Chicago.

Program of Frank Hall's Royal English Circus and German Water Carnival, dated February 12, 1895. This circus exhibited in the Panorama Building, a round structure that stood on Wabash Avenue at the corner of Hubbard Court. R. H. Dockrill was equestrian director. Among the performers were the following equestrians: Charles W. Fish, William Marks, John Cleveland (an Indian) and Rose Dockrill.

Program of W. C. Coup's Circus, Chicago, week ending June 25, 1881, advertising "Coup's Equines, Melville's Circus, Nathan's Circus and Farini's Paris Hippodrome; Katie Stokes, rider; Lulu, etc.

Courier of W. C. Coup's New United Monster Shows, Chicago, beginning Monday, May 10, to continue six days, together with Colvin's Zoological Marvels.

Courier of P. T. Barnum's show, 1877, featuring Charles W. Fish and Marthino Lowande, riders, and Capt. Georges Constantenous, tattooed "Greek Nobleman."

Courier of P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth and Great London Circus (Barnum, Bailey & Hutchinson, owners), Chicago, one week beginning Monday, August 29, featuring Chang, giant; Tom Thumb and wife; Madame Dockrill, Adelaide Cordona, Frank Melville and Emma Lake, riders; the Orchest-Melochor and "twenty-one electric light
(Continued on page 11)

GREETINGS FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA,

TO ALL MEMBERS OF C. H. S.

May 1952 Bring Health and Prosperity to All

G. E. "LEO" LEOPOLD, No. 447

Vancouver 5, B. C., Canada

Bette Leonard was in Chicago recently to attend S. L. A. Convention. While there she talked to Jack Mills, Edna Curtis, Nat green, Tom Parkinson and many other show folks. Bette really attended in order to take care of a business venture, more of which she will tell about later.

Clyde Wixom of Detroit has retired as Captain of the Detroit Fire Department after many years service. Clyde is building a callope this winter and says he may be connected with a well known circus next year.

There still seems to be a question as to whether Jack Mills of Mills Bros. Circus will purchase the equipment of the now defunct Cole Bros. Circus. Negotiations have been under way for quite some time but nothing too definite has come of it as yet. Jack still wants those thirteen bulls.

Be sure to send a Christmas Greeting to the servicemen who are members of C.H.S. You can find the address of three of them in recent issues of the Bandwagon.

Larry Turnbull, our Member from the Mills Olympic Circus, London, England, writes of meeting the smallest man in the world. He is Henry Bchren of Brazil, he is two feet five inches in height, 56 years old, weighs 32 pounds, he rides in a small coach drawn by a black cat.

Walter Pietschmann, treasurer of C. H. S., was awarded one of the coveted Associateships to Photographic Society of America, there now being 77 members thusly honored out of a membership of over nine thousand.

Dr. E. L. Cooper, well known Circus fan, who has been confined to the hospital for the past month is recovering rapidly at his suburban home at Sha-Don acres, Wichita, Kansas.



Merry Christmas
EVERYONE
Clarence Shank, No. 336



Merry Christmas
TO YOU ALL
May its message still ring, in the hearts of all of us,
Who believe in "Peace on Earth" Good Will to men.
Your President
BETTE LEONARD, No. 5

Announcement Extraordinary . . .

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They are close up parade shots showing wagons and horses, riders and a few lot scenes. Taken when the parade and fine carved wagons were in their prime.

I am pleased to make these selected photographs available to collectors and model builders and many friends who have obtained photos from my collection.

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J. W. BEGGS

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TO ALL MY FRIENDS IN SHOW BUSINESS,
MEMBERS OF THE "CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY"
IN AMERICA

LET ME WISH YOU ALL, A

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

LARRY TURNBULL, No. 459
Horden, County Durham, England

THE EDITOR SAYS:
THE SAME OLD WISH
GOES

Merry Christmas

—
Agnes W. King, No. 340

Christmas Greetings

AND

Happy New Year

from

Charles B. Kistler,
No. 128

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CHAMBERS COLLECTION TO FLORIDA

The Circusianna Collection of the late C. Spencer Chambers, has been purchased by the State of Florida, and will be put on display at the Museum of the Circus in Sarasota. The material will be well catalogued, and it is possible that at a later date some of the duplicates may be offered for sale, and become available to C. H. S. members.

Mr. Chambers, a well known collector of, and dealer in Circusianna, was a member of CHS.



3 RING

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CIRCUSIANA (Cont'd)

chandeliers" lighting the various tents. Daily Program of P. T. Barnum's Circus. (No date).

Daily Program of Ringling Brothers' Circus, Chicago, April 10, 1897.

Booklet written by Walter Scholl entitled, "Some Early Chicago Circus History."

Program of P. T. Barnum's Great Roman Hippodrome, New York, week ending February 20, 1875.

Courier of P. T. Barnum's Greatest Show on Earth Combined with the Great London Circus, Ethnological Congress of Savage Tribes, Sanger's Royal British Menagerie and Grand International Allied Shows, Newport, Thursday, June 18, featuring Jumbo and Young Taloung, sacred white elephant.

Four-page "rat sheet." "Wait for Barnum & London Shows." "Beware of Adam Forepaugh's Painted Cheat."

Large sheet advertising Capt. Costentenus.

Courier of P. T. Barnum's Great Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Hippodrome, Combined with International Zoological Garden, Polytechnic Institute and Dan Castello's Mammoth Circus, Six separate tents. W. C. Coup, manager; Dan Castello, manager of Circus, S. H. Hurd, treasurer and superintendent. (No date).

Courier of "The Book of Jumbo." Sixteen pages. Chicago, ten days, coming Monday, June 4.

Courier of Sells Bros.' Millionaire Confederation of Stupendous Railroad Shows, Chicago, one week, coming Monday, May 16.

Program of Barnum & Bailey, Coliseum, Chicago, October 19-24, 1896.

Program of Forepaugh circus. (No date).

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and especially to
Clarence Shank

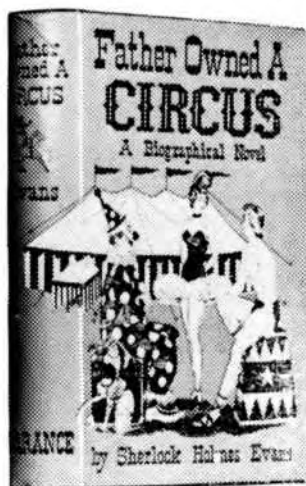
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says, Tom Parkinson in *The Billboard*, June 23, 1951, of



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Knows his circus and its people. He weaves a story of the circus with real and fictional characters, and some anecdotes, putting them in the right places. He also packs dramatic stories into the tale. The story of the tattooed lady holds real drama and would make a terrific picture. In fact, the book itself would make a fine circus pic. Real, small-time circus. When you finish it, your clothes are dampened by the steam from the callope. That's how close this circus stuff is to you. **"FATHER OWNED A CIRCUS"** is good reading. I wish my old man had owned one.

says: Joe Laurie Jr., reviewing for *VARIETY*, Issue of May 2, 1951.

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