



**WINDJAMMERS UNLIMITED, INC.**  
Est. 1971

# CIRCUS FANFARE

VOL. 51 NO. 3      MAY/JUN 2021      ISSN 1056-1463



This elegant vehicle may have been used as early as 1859 in England. A remarkable feature of this wagon is the six-foot diameter rear wheels. It was sold to Bostock & Wombwell by Mander's Menagerie in 1875. This "band carriage" is now on display at Circus World Museum in Baraboo, WI.

*Photo by Jim Morrill; Copyright © George Wombwell Collection.*

*WJU...Celebrating 50 Years*

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2018	Connie Thomas* (WJU #1128) Past president; host of six summer meets
2020	Ron Keller* (WJU #492) Past-president; host of three meets; long-time conductor



# UNLIMITED, INC.

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**The key to happiness in  
life is to make the music  
louder than the chaos.**

## VIRTUAL SPECIAL EVENT HELD MARCH 25, 2021

with PETER SHRAKE. Archivist, Circus World Museum



Continuing the ongoing educational series initiated with the 2021 Virtual Convention, Peter Shrake joined us via ZOOM to share with us some of the circus music-related artifacts held by the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, WI. Peter has been in the archivist role at CWM since 2011. The library contains a huge collection of rare photographs, posters, manuscripts, and other circus-related memorabilia, including the Merle Evans library of music from his fifty years with Ringling-Barnum.

Peter's outstanding presentation was followed by Andy Rawls' videos from our 2016 Summer Meet in Baraboo plus two additional virtual band videos by Windjammers members. For those who wanted to socialize, ZOOM breakout "rooms" were created for that purpose. The special event was well-attended and participating members enjoyed the presentation and event.

Your Board of Directors and the Georgia Summer Meet planning committee decided at its February Board Meeting to defer the Gainesville, Georgia Summer Meet until 2023. Current plans are to hold the July 2022 Summer Meet in Springfield, Missouri with Marvin Manring (WJU #3688) as our host. Alternative "virtual" plans are being considered for Summer 2021.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Don Covington, WJU #119



When we first started planning Windjammers' 50th Anniversary celebration several years ago, we wanted to make the anniversary year something special, but we had no idea that fate would step in and deal us a hand that no one anticipated. The global pandemic upended all of our lives, changed priorities and reminded us just how fragile our existence is.

Despite all of the uncertainties, Windjammers Unlimited continues to deliver joy and excitement. The 50th Anniversary Committee planned and delivered an outstanding virtual convention in January with features that would have been impossible in any other environment. In March, we gathered virtually to hear Circus World archivist Pete Shrake describe the wonders of the circus music collection in the Robert L Parkinson Library and Research Center at Circus World Museum. The 50th Anniversary Committee is planning another virtual event in July that promises to include additional unique features. You won't want to miss it.

As this issue of *Circus Fanfare* goes to press, there are positive signs that progress is being made to control the pandemic. With that in mind, we are cautiously preparing for gathering in person again in 2022. Mark your calendars to hold the dates January 11- 16, 2022 for a Windjammers convention in Florida. Later that year, we plan to hold a summer meet in Springfield, Missouri in July 2022. Watch the WJU website for additional details.

It is my pleasure to announce that **Becky Guth** has been appointed the new Windjammers music resource coordinator replacing retiring librarian Norman Woodrick. Becky will head a team responsible for cataloging, distributing and maintaining our extensive music collection. If you are interested in helping in that effort, contact Becky at [beckyguth@yahoo.com](mailto:beckyguth@yahoo.com).



There are plenty of other opportunities to provide services to Windjammers. We are looking for volunteers to serve on the Florida convention committee, to help with the summer meet and as part of the Windjammers marketing effort. Contact me if you can assist us in any of these critical areas.

Be safe, be well,  
Don

**MAY ALL YOUR DAYS BE  
CIRCUS MUSIC DAYS !!**

### **BOARD MEETINGS**

Your Board of Trustees Meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 4 p.m. ET via ZOOM. Contact the Secretary if you wish to attend.

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## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

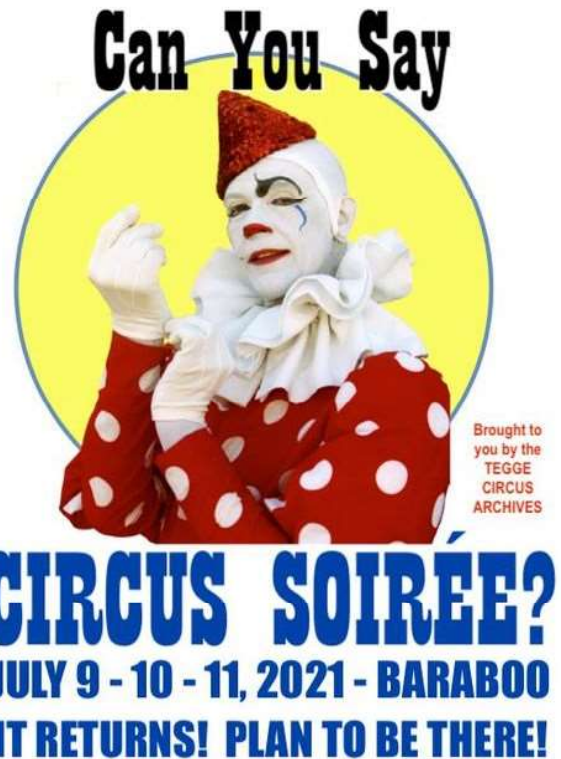
By Teresa Cosenza, WJU #3692

The Education Committee is working to develop ways to bring the genre of circus music to students and musicians of all ages.

Some ideas being considered include:

- A performance at a school in the Bradenton, Florida area by a Windjammers group the Monday or Tuesday before the January convention.
- Developing an informational workshop-type presentation of the circus music genre and how it could be used in a classroom to be presented at a Music Educator's State Conference.
- A Composition Competition for College level music students. Whether it would be an original composition in a circus music style or an arrangement of an existing piece of circus music has not been determined.
- A workshop for WJU members attending either a summer meet or the January convention. The session(s) might include instrument master classes or lectures on circus topics.

The Education Committee members are Teresa Cosenza, Bill Yoh, and Dianasue Walton. We would love to have more members if there are any Windjammers that have an interest and would like to join us in this endeavor. Please contact me.



Stay tuned, Windjammers. Timothy Tegge (WJU #2937) is again hosting his annual **Circus Soirée** and we are looking for ways to virtually connect to some of his events. In addition, he is hoping to again have a live circus band concert, so if you could be in Baraboo then, let Timothy know at [timothytegge@yahoo.com](mailto:timothytegge@yahoo.com). We will be keeping you informed as plans develop.

## MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

By April R. Zink, WJU #1253

**WE NEED YOUR HELP!** I think it is safe to say that, historically, well over 90% of our new members join as a result of encouragement by one or more of our existing members. We had good additions motivated by participation in the Virtual Convention in January, but our membership levels are still essentially flat in 2021 compared to 2020. We have invested in the new website and all the content being added there, hoping to appeal to a broader audience. Each of us needs to be asking our friends -- musicians and non-players alike ... to join Windjammers Unlimited in support of our mission of preservation, education, and performance relative to traditional circus music. We have a lot to offer even to non-musicians and those unable to attend Conventions or Meets. Traditional circus music is an American legacy we don't want to lose.

If you have suggestions on how to increase our membership or you would like to participate in this effort directly via the Committee, we certainly would welcome that. Current members are April Zink, Vicki Pinson, and Bill Yoh.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**WJU Annual Convention #50 - January 11-16, 2022 at Marriott Courtyard, Bradenton, Florida**

**NOTE:** *Because of continuing COVID-19 concerns, the onsite July 2021 Summer Meet in Gainesville, GA has been postponed. However, watch for virtual alternatives during the year.*

**The July 2022 Summer Meet is planned for Springfield, MO with Marvin Manring as host.**



# 19th CENTURY CIRCUS IN THE BRITISH ISLES

By Gavin Holman, WJU #3943 - [www.ibew.co.uk](http://www.ibew.co.uk)

Gavin Holman is a research consultant located in Arkendale, North Yorkshire, United Kingdom. He specializes in musical and historical research. He joined Windjammers Unlimited in 2020 hoping it would be useful in a significant work he completed during the year and published at year's end: *"Brass Bands & Cornet Bands of the U.S.A. - A Historical Directory."* Gavin is the author of many articles dealing with brass bands. This article deals with Victorian-era circus and menagerie bands. His company is named IBEW which stands for "Internet Bandsman's Everything Within".

Travelling zoological exhibitions (menageries), acrobats and trick animal acts were common forms of entertainment in the eighteenth century and earlier. Philip Astley was perhaps the first of the showmen to combine such acts in a show in a circular structure. The performance at "Astley's Amphitheatre" in London in 1768 featured trick horseback riding and live music. His later rival, Charles Dibdin, opened "The Royal Circus" in London in 1772, from which the term circus is said to have been popularised.



**Astley's Royal Amphitheatre**

By the 1850's travelling circuses and menageries had become widespread in the British Isles, ranging from small, tented affairs to large operations housed in semi-permanent buildings. Originally the circus was mainly performed in wooden buildings rather than in tents, and proprietors such as Frederick "Charles" Hengler constructed purpose-built buildings known as hippodromes, circuses, and amphitheatres in various locations throughout the country. Eventually some permanent sites were established for a few circuses.

Tents to house circuses were imported as a concept from America in the 1840's. The touring shows largely switched over to canvas which was cheaper to maintain and considerably quicker to erect and pull down in each location than the earlier wooden structures.

Each show, be it circus, menagerie or travelling theatre/ vaudeville, had its collection of wagons, which were gaily or even gaudily painted, housing the performers, the animals, the equipment, and the tents. Many of the larger enterprises included musical bands, to provide enthusiastic music during

or before the individual acts, and to entertain the audiences before the shows and during the parades which often announced the arrival of a show to each town.

The make-up of the bands varied considerably – some were only a few players, usually brass (greatest volume), others reached numbers of up to twenty. The larger and more established bands were of sufficient quality and ability to deliver complex operatic and classical pieces as well as the "traditional" show music of marches, polkas, and waltzes that were associated with such bands. Sadly, at the lower end of the quality spectrum, circus bands tended to get a bad name due to the poor quality of the music of some of them.



**Bostock & Wombwell's Bandwagon, c. 1910**

The menagerie and circus bands were not limited to performing in their shows, they would often be engaged or offer their services for local events in the towns they visited, either augmenting a local band or providing the music on their own.

Circuses and menageries usually arrived in a town with a processional flourish. An example is Sanger's Circus in the 1880's with its main carriage drawn by four horses in 'royal state harness' as part of the grand procession. All the carved woodwork on the carriage was gilded. Sanger's wife, Mademoiselle Pauline de Vere, sometimes dressed as Britannia and rode on top of a carriage holding a Union Jack shield, a gold trident, and wearing a Greek helmet. The circus lion, Nero, and a lamb sat together at her feet. After this came a string of camels, a herd of elephants, numerous other costumed characters, exotic animals either in cages, or led by their trainers, and of course, the circus band.

As a means of popular entertainment, these travelling shows were a great success in the 19th century and they criss-crossed the country moving from town to town, residing in each for a time before heading off to the next location. There was usually great excitement accompanying their visits, especially when the parades took part. These processions were generally eagerly awaited by the local populace, only a few curmudgeons complaining about the noise, the effect on their business, or the bawdiness of the performers.



***Sanger's Circus bandwagon***

Sadly, a number of accidents and similar occurrences resulted from the passing of a circus or menagerie band in a parade. People were injured or even killed when, through inattention in watching or listening to the band, something happens to them. Similarly, horses bolted and carts and wagons ran away when their draft animals were frightened by the band's sudden appearance or loud music, sometimes hitting or running over a nearby pedestrian, causing injury or death.



The worst of these happened in the USA, in May 1870, when the James Robinson & Co.'s Circus Band, led by Professor M.C. Sexton, was mounted on the roof of the lion carriage.

In turning a corner during the street parade in Middletown, Missouri, the carriage hit a rock causing the roof to give way and throw the musicians in with the lions. Four windjammers were killed and many of the others had severe lacerations.

Contemporary with the circus and menageries, other travelling shows also entertained audiences across the country. These included minstrel shows, waxworks, theatres and sideshow "fairs". Some of these also had accompanying bands.

Another aspect of popular entertainment in the Victorian era was the establishment of the public park, open spaces within which people could meet, congregate, and enjoy various entertainment. To begin with, some of these were private enterprises – such as the very popular Vauxhall Gardens in London – but gradually the "corporation" public parks began to appear and the private, professional parks concentrated more on being an entertainment venue. Many of these earlier amusement parks and gardens had a resident professional brass band to entertain the crowds. Their players would be well-employed during the summer season, but then had a lean time in the winter when much of the activity in such places wound down. The public parks, of course, engaged or allowed local amateur brass bands to perform in their spaces.

During the 19th century there were many of these professional bands attached to the travelling and static entertainment operations. Some were permanent, a fixed attraction which, over time, matured in its competence and quality. Many, however, were transient, often engaged through advertisement as a whole or as individual players for the season or part thereof. In all cases, their employment was dependent on the success of the entertainers and the time of year - some enterprises laid themselves up for the winter. As the Victorian entertainment industries expanded, the various attractions increasingly made use of musicians, sometimes as string bands, but more often as brass bands (with occasional woodwind instruments).



***Fanciful trapeze artists in a multi-ring circus, with horse racing track - no sign of a band!***



# WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME

## Ramon M. Escorcía (1899-1982), Inductee 1979

By Charles Conrad, WJU #1525

Circus bandmaster and musician **Ramon Manuel Escorcía** was born in Tulancingo, Hildango, Mexico on August 31, 1899. His parents were Fernando and Margarita (Torres) Escorcía. In his Naturalization Petition on January 6, 1928, Ramon declared his arrival in the U.S. was at Laredo, TX on March 22, 1918. However, he had been working with a U.S. circus prior to that time.

Ramon Escorcía had two separate circus band careers. The first was from 1916 until 1921, when he played in the **Sells-Floto Circus** band under bandmasters Karl L. King, C. L. Brown, and Don Montgomery. Ramon's first year with Sells-Floto happened to be the last one that included Buffalo Bill Cody. Karl King had a 21-piece band that year and the Assistant Bandmaster was tuba player, composer, and bon vivant Walter P. "Woody" English (Windjammers Hall of Fame 1984). Unfortunately, Woody's health failed during the 1917 season and he died in Denver, CO on June 4, 1917.

For the 1917-1918 seasons, King took on the Barnum & Bailey band and C. L. Brown, a cornetist from the interesting sounding town of What Cheer, Iowa, took over the **Sells-Floto** band in 1917 and stayed for three seasons. This 30-piece band featured "Brown's Saxophone Six," an ensemble that would stay together after leaving the circus and tour in vaudeville.

When Escorcía registered for the U.S. Draft in 1918, he listed his occupation as musician with **Sells-Floto Circus**, Denver, CO and his address as *The Billboard*, Cincinnati, OH. He was still a Mexican citizen at the time and not drafted. He also had added a year to his birthyear, making him 18 instead of 19. Years later when he registered for the WWII draft, he was both a U.S. citizen and back to being born in 1899. At that point he was living at 262 W. 73 Street, a four-story, seven-unit apartment complex in New York City.

No doubt, Escorcía continued his career as a musician, possibly on Broadway, but confirmation of that is missing until 1951. That year he joined the **Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus** band under Merle Evan's leadership. He was a part of this group through the 1955 season, and then in 1956 joined the band of the **Maley Bros. Circus**. He then started the 1957 season with the **Mills Bros. Circus** band under bandmaster Ovila "Frenchy" Leboeuf.

Mid-season 1957, Escorcía left Mills Bros. to join the **Cristiani Bros. Circus** band which was led by A. Lee Hinckley (Windjammers Hall of Fame 1977).

Escorcía started the 1958 season with Cristiani's new bandmaster Phil Doto, but Escorcía soon replaced him at the helm of the ensemble. The 7-piece band on the Cristiani show was outstanding and composed of all "white tops" veterans. It featured both Escorcía and Joe Stefan on trumpets – "the best one/two punch" ever, some would say.

Escorcía would stay in this position for two seasons before taking on the special assignment of leading the **Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey** band on a South American tour. At the same time Joe Stefan (Windjammers Hall of Fame 2007) took on the bandmaster role at Mills Bros. Circus.



Starting in 1962, Escorcía was with the **Sells and Gray Circus** as bandmaster for two years. His replacement for the 1964 season was someone familiar to many Windjammers – Charles Schlarbaum! (WJU #61, Windjammers Hall of Fame 2007).

Escorcía played cornet with the **Clyde Beatty & Cole Bros. Circus** in 1964 with bandmaster William "Boom Boom" Browning, one of the few bandmasters who played the drum set. Escorcía was elevated to bandmaster of this eight-piece ensemble for the 1965 season. He left at the end of the season and was, for the second time, replaced by Chuck Schlarbaum.





For the 1966 season, Escorcía again joined the **Mills Bros. Circus**, this time replacing Joe Stefan as bandmaster. The above photo is from that season. Lloyd Fengel (WJU #42) is on trumpet, front row far left and WJU co-founder Charlie Bennett, Jr. (WJU #1) is sitting next to drummer Dave Mobbs. Bennett has commented that Escorcía “really knew how to program a ‘book’ and was an excellent trumpet player.” He added, “When you were on the bandstand, you definitely did things ‘Ramon’s way’! I learned a lot from this dude.”

For the four years after 1966, it would appear Escorcía was likely back in the **Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus** band under Schlarbaum. Then he spent the 1971 - 1972 seasons with the **King Bros. Circus** band as a co-conductor with another WJU Hall of Famer (2014), Charlie Stevenson. Next, from 1973 until 1976 Escorcía was back with the **Sells & Gray Circus** band.

The April 2006 *Circus Fanfare* featured this quote from WJU co-founder Bennett:

*“I learned a lot from Ramon. I wish I could have heard him in his prime. As it was, he could play the hell out of a trumpet when he was in his 70s. This guy was the fastest double-tonguer I ever heard. The first time*



Ramon Manuel Escorcía

*I sat on his bandstand, on the Mills show, we were playing the usual pre-show concert of several marches. During the first march while I was playing, he shoves the bell of his horn down on my foot. Same time, next strain, he does it even harder. After we concluded he says, ‘no tap your feet on Ramon’s bandstand.’ During the spec he takes his horn and rams my cornet up in the air. I thought I would need a lip operation. After the spec he says, ‘Circus cornets don’t play into the stand, only dance band players do that.’”*

In several hours of interviews with legendary Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey bandmaster Bill Pruyn (WJU Hall of Fame 1997) shortly before his death in 2003, I asked him about Escorcía. He considered Ramon as a friend, although his comments concerning Escorcía’s musicianship were not nearly as kind as those by Charlie Bennett. He said that Escorcía was a good cook and a really nice guy, but that he was a lousy cornet player. He mentioned that Escorcía served as Merle Evans’ librarian and that he used a hyperbolic mouthpiece. This was an experimental oval shaped mouthpiece that was tried by many players in the 1950s and 1960s. He also stated that Escorcía tended to let the elephant music drag and had been fired from the Mills Bros. show in 1966. Nevertheless, Escorcía had a long and interesting career as a windjammer and bandmaster, and in 1979 was named as Windjammers Unlimited’s ninth Hall of Fame laureate.

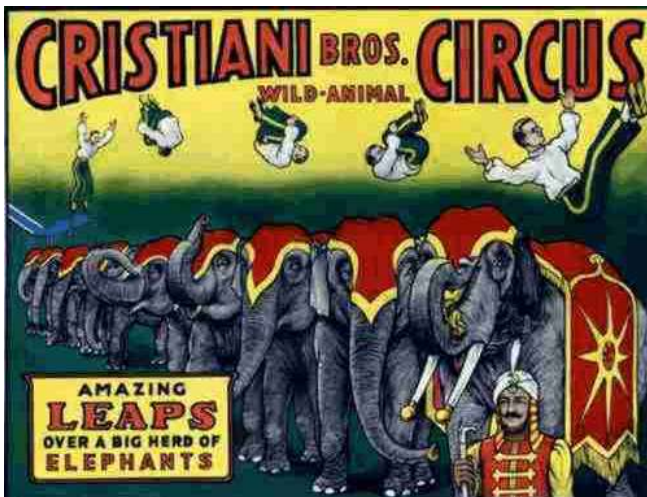
Ramon Escorcía was married to Loretta Frances Snow (1902-1981) and they had three children, Anita Gloria (1923-1992), Dolores (1927), and Ramon James (1928-2006). Ramon M. Escorcía died in Colonia Ex Hipódromo del Peralvillo, Mexico on July 20, 1982 at age 82 of “metastisized gastric cancer and cardiorespiratory arrest” and was buried in Mexico (Los Cipreses Cemetery.)

# Cristiani Bros. Circus 1959 Musical Program

By Eric Beheim, WJU #66



Cristiani Circus Band in Milwaukee, WI on July 15, 1959. Bandleader Ramon Escorcía (WJU Hall of Fame 1979) Photo by Sverre O. Braathen (WJU Hall of Fame 2009). Photo courtesy Special Collections, Milner Library, Illinois State University, Normal, IL.



One of the largest under-canvas circuses to tour North America in the late 1950s was the **Cristiani Bros. Circus**.

Traveling on fifty-two trucks, it was considered by many to be second only to the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey show in size.

The Cristiani Family came to the U.S. in 1934 when John Ringling North convinced them to end their circus operations in Italy and perform their world acclaimed bareback riding act with Ringling-Barnum.

In 1949, the 26 members of the Cristiani family pulled their circus equipment out of storage and went out on their own. As befitting a major circus, Cristiani Bros. carried a traditional band made up of first-class musicians. In 1959, **Ramon Escorcía** (WJU Hall of Fame 1979) was in his second full season as the Cristiani's bandleader. Phil Doto and A. Lee Hinckley were his immediate predecessors on the bandstand.

Thanks to a far-sighted circus fan, a 1959 Cristiani Bros. performance was recorded while the show was playing in Los Angeles. In addition to giving us some idea of what Cristiani Bros. Circus performances must have been like, this recording also provides us with an opportunity to take a closer look at Ramon Escorcía's musical program for 1959.



Here are those titles that Don Covington (WJU #119) and I were able to identify:

**Fanfare** (Evans)

**Introduction:** actor Noah Beery, Jr. as honorary ringmaster

**Display No. 1:** Opening Spec:

**Mardi Gras on Parade, Men of Sparta** (Zamecnik)

**Display No. 2:** Trick Riding on the Hippodrome Track

**The Big Cage Galop** (King)

**Display No. 3:** Eddie Kuhn Mixed Wild Animal Act

**Bravura** (Duble), **Jungle Queen** (Barnard), **Lady of Spain** (Evans), **El Cumbanchero** (Hernandez), **Hindustan** (Wallace-Weeks), and **Walsenburg Galop** (King)

**Display No. 4:** High Wire

**Siboney** (Lecuona), **Begin the Beguine** (Porter), **Stranger in Paradise** (Borodin-Wright)

**Display No. 5:** Clowns

**Trombonium** (Withrow)

**Display No. 6:** Leapers

**Sunshine Galop** (King)

**Display No. 7:** Lady Principal Bareback Act

**Everything's Coming Up Roses** (Styne), Unidentified, **Whip and Spur Galop** (Allen)

**Display No. 8:** Aerial Ballet

**March of the Spanish Soldiery** (Zamecnik), **Fascination** (Marchetti), **Around the World** (Young), **Chaser No. 1**, **Drigo's Serenade Chaser**

**Display No. 9:** Dressage Riders

**El Toro** (Norris), **Marchita** (Ponce), **Tico-Tico** (Abreu) **La Cumparsita** (Rodriguez), **Carmen: Toreador Song** (Bizet)

**Display No. 10:** Con Colleano low wire act

Spanish March and tango, **El Caballero** (Olivadoti)

**Display No. 11:** Roman Riding on the Hippodrome Track

**Circus Echoes Galop** (Hughes)

**Display No. 12:** Jugglers

**Brazil** (Barroso), **Copa Capana** (Walters)

**Display No. 13:** Flying Trapeze

**Valencia** (Padilla), **Nights of Gladness** (Ancliffe), **Galop "Go"** (Jewell)

**Display No. 14:** Elephants

**On the Square March** (Panella), waltz, **I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls** (Balfe), **On the Square March** (trio), **The Hearse Song** (traditional), **Ringling Bros. Grand Entry** (Sweet), **Turkey in the Straw** (traditional), **The Streets of Cairo** (Bloom), **The Merry-Go-Round Broke Down** (Friend-Franklin), **Quality-Plus** (Jewell), **London Bridge** (traditional), **Quality-Plus** (trio), **Aida: Grand March** (Verdi), **Lohengrin Entrance Music** (Wagner), **On the Square**

**Display No. 15:** Clowns - **Bull Trombone** (Fillmore)

**Display No. 16:** Zaccini Cannon

**Garland Entry** (King), (cannon), **Garland Entry** (reprise)

**Exit Music:** **Stars and Stripes Forever** (trio) (Sousa)



## **CIRCUS RING OF FAME Website Comments:**

**The Cristiani Family** was inducted into the Circus Ring of Fame in 1995. The Cristiani circus family can trace its roots back to 1840 when Emilio Cristiani, a gymnast and bareback rider, joined a traveling circus in Pisa, Italy.

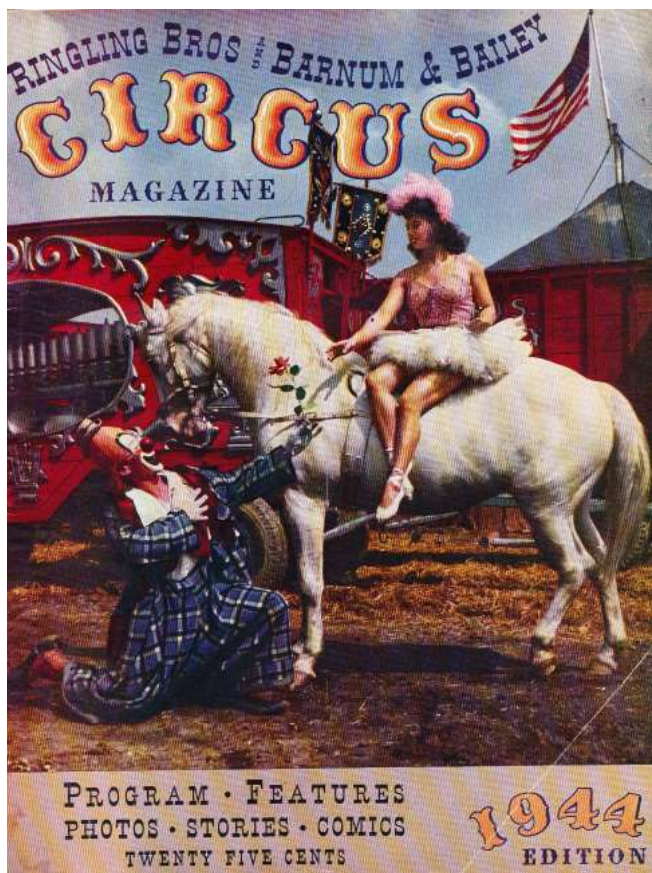
While performing in Brussels, Belgium in 1933, the troupe was "discovered" by Pat Valdo of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. The family came to America in the spring of 1934, making an appearance in Madison Square Garden. However, because of a dispute with the Loyal-Repenski riding act, the Cristianis were moved to the Ringling-owned Hagenbeck-Wallace circus for the remainder of the 1934 season, continuing with Hagenbeck-Wallace 4-Paw Sells in 1935.

In 1936 the family moved over to the Ringling-owned Al G. Barnes Circus where they introduced a teeterboard act to their repertoire. They remained with the newly named Al G. Barnes Sells-Floto circus through the 1937 season. The act moved to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey in 1938. However, the labor strike that cut the season short that year had the family finishing out the season with "Al G. Barnes and Sells-Floto Presenting Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Stupendous New Features" for the remainder of the season.

In 1939 they were back with Ringling-Barnum where they continued to be featured through the 1942 season. The act appeared in Robert Ringling's indoor circus at Madison Square Garden in 1943 prior to leaving the Ringling organization and becoming circus owners themselves

# 1944 FITCH BANDWAGON BROADCAST

By Eric Beheim, WJU #66



In his 1960 book **The Circus Kings**, Henry Ringling North describes the 1942 dispute between the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and the American Federation of Musicians that resulted in Merle Evans and his band being pulled off the show. After the band left, performances were accompanied by recorded music. North also mentions that, once the band returned, each year the entire performance would be recorded just in case there would be any future disputes with the A. F. of M.

Prior to the introduction of reel-to-reel magnetic sound recording tape in the late 1940s, the most practical way to record a live circus performance would have been to use 33-1/3 rpm 16-inch transcription disks, each of which could hold about 15 minutes of audio per side. These discs were referred to as “instantaneous” since they could be played back immediately. A total of ten of these double-sided discs would have been required to record a two-and-a-half-hour circus performance.

Assuming these performance recordings were made, what became of the disks once the season was over and they were no longer needed? More than likely, they quietly ended up in someone’s private collection. Knowing this, you can imagine my excitement when Don Covington (WJU #119) called to say that he’d come into possession of a carton with

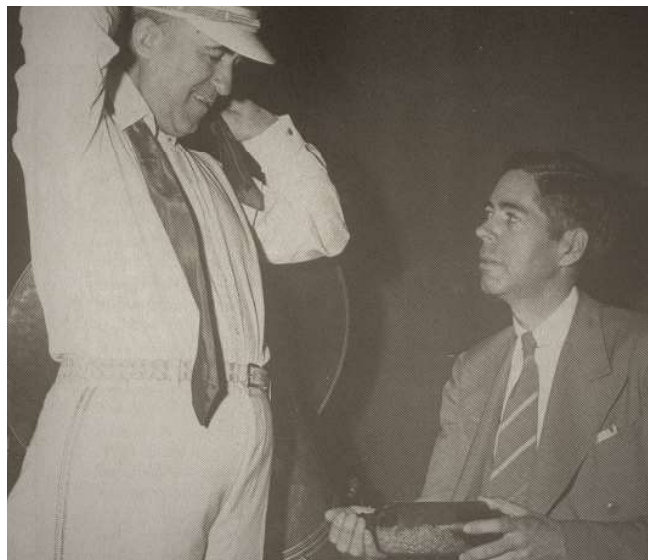
about a dozen or so “instantaneous” 16-inch transcription discs from the 1940s that contained circus material. Since none of these disks had labels to indicate what was on them, the only way to find out was to play them. Knowing that I had one of the special turntables needed to play 16-inch transcription disks, Don mailed all of them to me.

As it turned out, there were no complete Ringling performances on these disks. Nor did all of the disks contain circus material. There was, however, some extremely rare circus audio of great historical value including recordings of the Ringling band’s appearances on the Fitch Bandwagon radio show. (See: **Circus Recording History: Here Comes the Fitch Bandwagon**, which appeared in the April 2008 issue of *Circus Fanfare* and which is accessible to WJU Members via the [mywju.org](http://mywju.org) website.)

These Fitch Bandwagon recordings were probably “air checks” (i.e. recordings made of live broadcasts as they were taking place.) Radio stations in different time zones often transcribed live broadcasts so that they could be aired at a time more convenient for their listeners. For example, if a radio show began at 7:30 p.m. in New York City it would only be 4:30 p.m. on the West Coast. By transcribing the program, West Coast radio stations could air it at 7:30 p.m. local time when more people would be listening.

## RINGLING BAND BROADCASTS FROM MADISON SQUARE GARDEN ON EASTER, 1944

Of particular interest to me was a complete recording of the Ringling band’s Fitch Bandwagon broadcast from Madison Square Garden on Easter Sunday 1944. This was the Ringling band’s fourth annual appearance on the Fitch Bandwagon Radio Show.



Ringling bandleader Merle Evans and Press Agent Bev Kelley

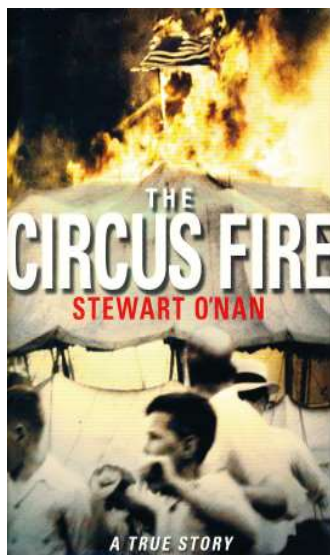




In addition to Merle Evans, veteran circus press agent F. Beverly Kelley was on hand to enthusiastically describe that year's stupendous new features. What made the 1944 broadcast particularly memorable, however, was an on-mike appearance by then-Circus President Robert Ringling, who devotes most of his segment to promoting the show's big spec for 1944, billed as **Panto's Paradise**.

While Merle Evans and the band played the spec's original music score, Ringling and program host Tom Reddy provided a running commentary of what is supposed to be going on: The appearance of various costumed characters and animals, bits of business that were performed by the clowns and other performers, and descriptions of the animal blankets and major spec elements such as the "Jumping Jack Float" and the "Cloud Float" drawn by sixteen elephants.

Just weeks after this broadcast aired, the Ringling big top was destroyed by a fire that began early in a matinee performance in Hartford, Connecticut. The rest of the season was played outdoors in ball parks and stadiums. (Stewart O'Nan's book **The Circus Fire** provides the best account of the Hartford fire and its aftermath. Another good book is Michael Skidgell's **The Hartford Circus Fire - Tragedy Under the Big Top**.)



Some years earlier, I had acquired a 16-inch transcription disk with this same broadcast, but it was the version that had been prepared by the Armed Forces Radio Service for use by our military radio stations located around the world.

As was the standard practice for AFRS transcriptions, the 30-minute broadcast had been abridged to 15 minutes, the amount of audio that would fit on one side of the standard 16-inch transcription disks of the 1930s and 1940s. Further, all references to "Fitch Shampoo" and "Fitch Bandwagon" had been edited out. (Unlike ordinary records, most of these were recorded "inside out". That is, the start of the recording was near the label with the end near the edge of the disc. These discs also had a larger groove, closer in size to those of the typical 78-rpm shellac record. )

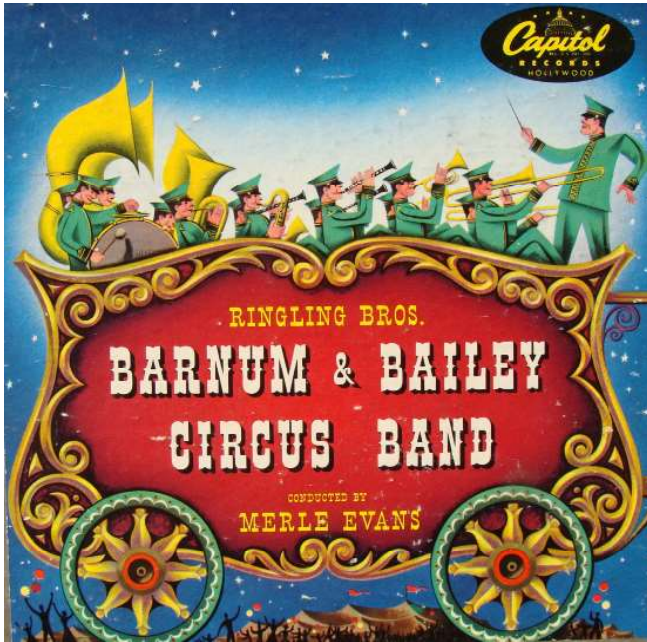
Because the audio quality of the unabridged transcription disk was not as good as that of the AFRS disk, I edited together sections from both disks to create a complete program. As far as I know, none of the dealers in vintage radio programs have a complete version of the Ringling band's 1944 Fitch Bandwagon appearance. However, WJU members can listen to this extremely rare program on our website at MYWJU.ORG and under the Preservation/Circus Music Recordings tab.

All of the usable audio from that carton of transcription disks was later transferred onto a set of CDs which were then forwarded, along with the original disks to the Circus World Museum.

In the months ahead, we will continue sharing more of this rare circus audio with the WJU membership as part of our Windjammers Unlimited Preservation Mission.

# RINGLING's CAPITOL RECORDS in 1949

By Eric Beheim, WJU #66



This is the third in a series of articles discussing the commercial phonograph records that were made by Merle Evans and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus band. The six sides they recorded for RCA Victor in 1930 were discussed in the November-December 2020 issue of *Circus Fanfare* and the eight sides they recorded for Columbia Records in 1941 were discussed in the January-February 2021 issue.

In 1949, William Antes, Director of Radio Publicity for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, arranged for Merle Evans and the Ringling Band to record sixteen sides for Hollywood-based Capitol Records. This most likely occurred while the Ringling Circus was appearing in the Los Angeles area.

Thanks to the vast improvements that had been made in sound recording and reproduction following the end of World War II, the Ringling band's Capitol recordings were its first to be made in true "high fidelity."

These recordings were released as two different albums: **Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Band** and **Circus Parade**.

These albums came out at a time when the record industry was involved in a "battle of the speeds." In 1948, Columbia Records had introduced its 33-1/3-rpm microgroove long-playing records. At about that same time, RCA Victor had introduced its 45-rpm records. Each of these speeds was hoping to become the new industry standard that would replace 78-rpm records, which had been around since the early days of the Twentieth Century.

In the end, a sort of compromise was reached in the record industry's "speed" battle. Long-playing records became the industry standard for longer works such as operas, symphonies, and collections of individual songs that were intended to be played in a certain order such as on a Broadway musical's original cast album. Conversely, 45's became the industry standard for "singles" (i.e. single selections), allowing their owners to play them in any order they wanted.

As was the customary practice back then, Capitol released **Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Band** and **Circus Parade** in all three speeds. The 78-rpm and 45-rpm versions of these two albums only contained three records each, so even if you bought both albums you only got twelve of the sixteen sides that the Ringling band had recorded. In order to get all sixteen sides, you had to buy both of the 10-inch long-playing versions of these albums.

Here is how the track lists ran:

## **Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Band**

*Royal Bridesmaids March*  
*Entry of the Gladiators (Thunder and Blazes)*  
*Quality Plus*  
*Sunnyland Waltzes/The Storming of El Caney*  
*Pahjamah/Bull Trombone*  
*Big Time Boogie \*\**  
*El Caballero*  
*Pageant of Progress \*\**

\*\* only available on the 10-inch album





For this album, the first side opened with a *Merle Evans fanfare* followed by an announcement by Ringling's Equestrian Director/Announcer Harry Thomas: "*Children of all ages, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus presents Merle Evans and his famous circus band.*" Since Harry Thomas joined the Ringling show in 1949, it helps confirm the year these were recorded.



### Circus Parade

*The Circus Bee* \*\*  
*Colossus of Columbia*  
*March Ponderoso*  
*The Cantonians*  
*World Events*  
*March of the Spanish Soldiery*  
*"The Crimson Flush" March* \*\*  
*The Crimson Petal/The Bastinado Galop*

\*\* only available on the 10-inch album

Although the Ringling band had already recorded *Entry of the Gladiators* and *Colossus of Columbia* for RCA Victor back in 1930, most of the traditional circus music on its two Capitol albums was appearing on commercial phonograph records for the first time.

By the mid-1950s 78-rpm records had been pretty much phased out and 10-inch long playing records were no longer being made.

In the early 1960s, Capitol re-released **Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Band** as a 12-inch monaural long-playing (LP) record with twelve of the original sixteen sides. At that time, the audio was reprocessed to give it a "brighter" sound.

**Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Band** as a 12-inch LP. The track list was as follows:

### Side #1

*Royal Bridesmaids March*  
*Entry Of The Gladiators(Thunder and Blazes)*  
*Quality Plus*  
*Sunnyland Waltzes / The Storming Of El Caney*  
*World Events*  
*Colossus of Columbia March*

### Side #2

*Pahjamah/Bull Trombone*  
*Big Time Boogie*  
*El Caballero*  
*Pageant Of Progress*  
*The Crimson Petal / Bastinado Galop*  
*March Ponderoso*

This is the Capitol album that I purchased in 1963 while still in high school. Merle Evans autographed it for me when the Ringling show appeared in the old Cleveland Arena later that year.

Around 1968, after the manufacturing of 12-inch monaural long-playing records had ceased, Capitol remastered **Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus Band** in pseudo-stereo. This version remained in the Capitol catalog up until vinyl 12-inch long playing records were phased out in favor of Compact Discs (CDs) in the late 1980s.

Through eBay, I was later able to obtain copies of the Ringling band's two Capitol albums in both their original 78-rpm and 10-inch long-playing versions.

Just recently, I finally got around to transferring the two 10-inch long-playing albums (with all sixteen tracks) onto my computer's hard drive. Since all four sides were in very good condition, only a minimum of audio restoration was needed to remove all the clicks, ticks and surface noise.

Listening to the playback of those tunes from the 10-inch platter, I was quite surprised at how much better these tracks sounded in their original versions compared to those on the later 12-inch LP with its "reprocessed" audio.

I was particularly impressed with the way the tuba player handled the bass line during the band's barn-burner performance of *The Storming of El Caney*. Whoever he was, he was a true virtuoso.

*[Editor's note: That tuba player would have been WJU's 2010 Hall of Fame laureate Harvey Phillips, who in 1949 was sitting in for R. Clinton "Johnnie" Evans. Evans was out for that season because of personal issues. Evans was the Hall of Fame feature in the SEP-OCT 2020 Circus Fanfare. Phillips was the subject of a Fanfare Tribute in the NOV-DEC 2016 Circus Fanfare. See our Hall of Fame tributes and historic Fanfares at [www.mywju.org](http://www.mywju.org)]*

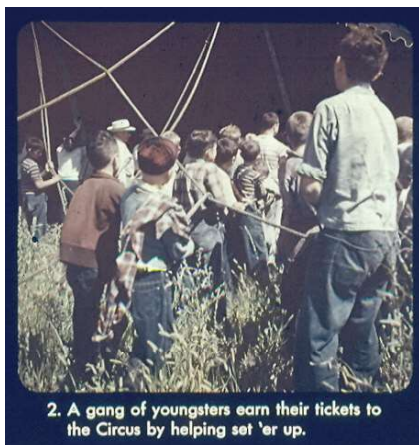
Heard in their original audio versions, the Capitol recordings provide us with fine examples of how Merle Evans and the Ringling-Barnum band performed traditional circus music over 70 years ago.

**The digitized originals of Ringling's 1949 recordings on Capitol Records are worth a listen, and you can do so at our MYWJU.ORG website's PRESERVATION tab.**

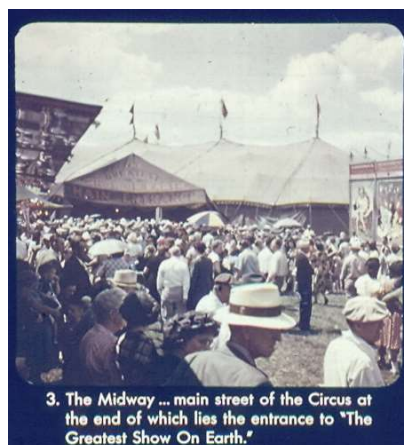
## RINGLING SLIDES FROM THE LATE 1940's:



1. The first of four special trains arrives loaded with wonders from every part of the globe.



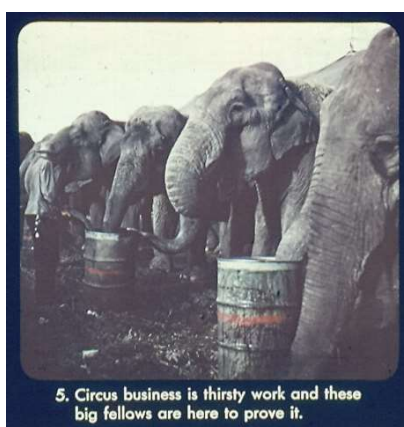
2. A gang of youngsters earn their tickets to the Circus by helping set 'er up.



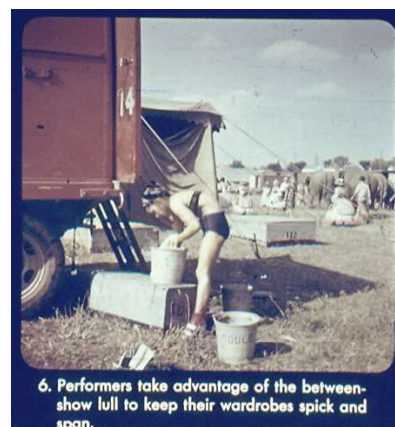
3. The Midway ... main street of the Circus at the end of which lies the entrance to "The Greatest Show On Earth."



4. Gargantua the Great, the world's most publicized gorilla



5. Circus business is thirsty work and these big fellows are here to prove it.



6. Performers take advantage of the between-show lull to keep their wardrobes spick and span.

### Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus

Of the twenty or more circuses that annually tour the country, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey is certainly the largest and most elaborate of them all. From early April until late November, this colossal caravan rumbles its way over thirty-five different railroads, giving two performances daily -- rain or shine -- for over three million thoroughly delighted patrons.

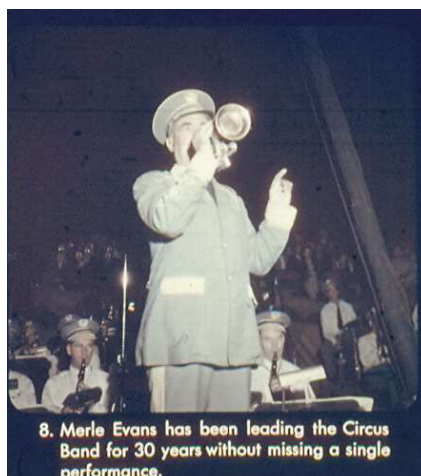
*[From: TRU-VUE Stereochromes slides]*





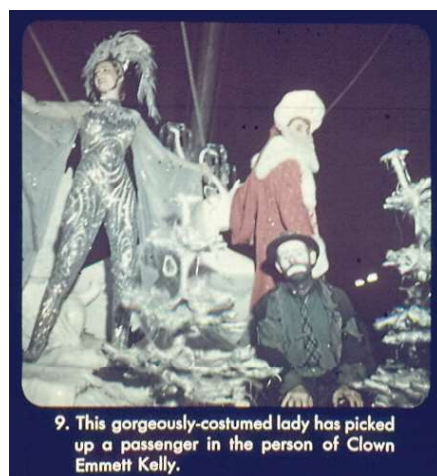
7. Felix Adler rewards Amelia for her part in putting over the act.

Felix Adler & Amelia



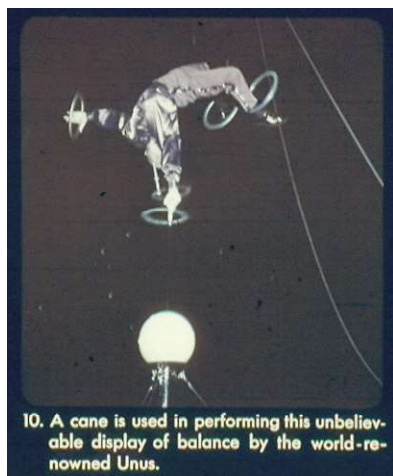
8. Merle Evans has been leading the Circus Band for 30 years without missing a single performance.

Merle Evans & Cornet



9. This gorgeously-costumed lady has picked up a passenger in the person of Clown Emmett Kelly.

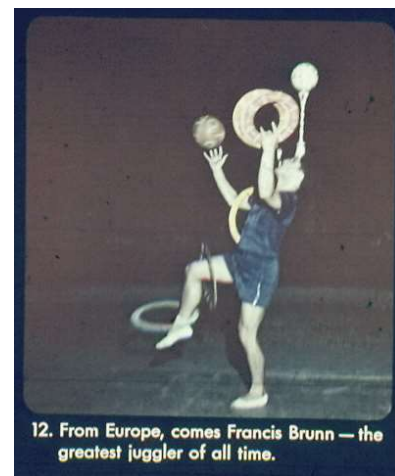
Emmett Kelly & Showgirls



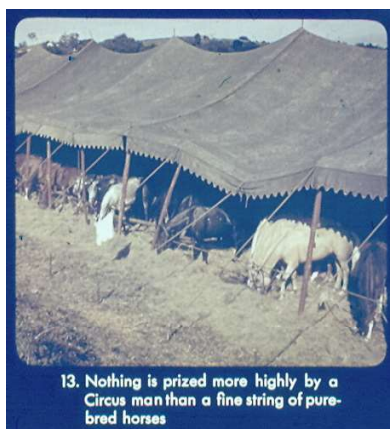
10. A cane is used in performing this unbelievable display of balance by the world-renowned Unus.



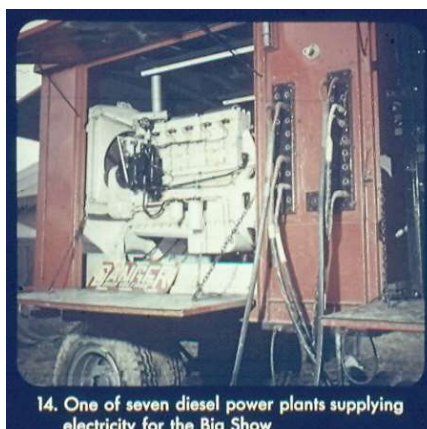
11. A lovely lady in a lovely costume of the Old South



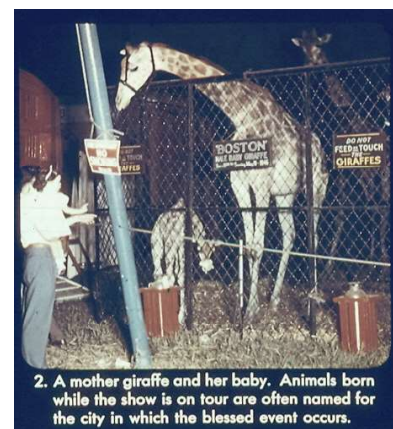
12. From Europe, comes Francis Brunn — the greatest juggler of all time.



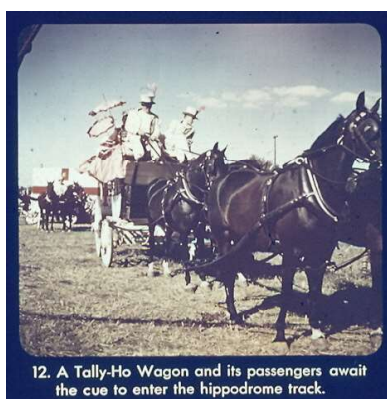
13. Nothing is prized more highly by a Circus man than a fine string of purebred horses



14. One of seven diesel power plants supplying electricity for the Big Show



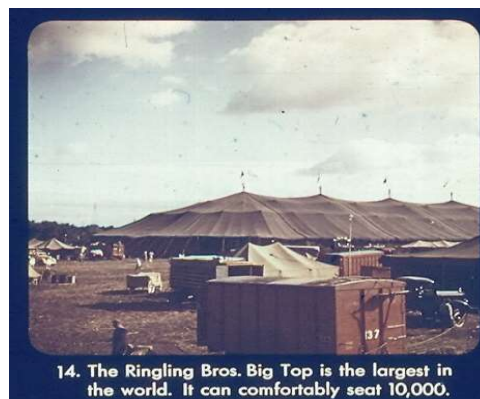
2. A mother giraffe and her baby. Animals born while the show is on tour are often named for the city in which the blessed event occurs.



12. A Tally-Ho Wagon and its passengers await the cue to enter the hippodrome track.



11. Here comes the "Spec."—that gorgeous pageant which each year brings to life some fabulous story from the land of make believe.



14. The Ringling Bros. Big Top is the largest in the world. It can comfortably seat 10,000.



# BELL WAGON

By Rod Everhart, WJU #1351

The Bell Wagon was one of the first major parade wagons custom-built for the Ringling Bros. World's Greatest Shows. Various vendors were involved ... bells, wagon, carvings.

The local Baraboo, WI newspaper reported that the Centennial Bell Foundry of Milwaukee delivered the bells on February 22, 1892. The bells ranged from nineteen to thirty-six inches in diameter at the bottom, and were fifteen to twenty-eight inches in height. The bells were sounded by clappers activated by levers at a rear-mounted console. The wagon, constructed by the Moellers of Baraboo, was completed for the 1893 season. The carvings were supplied by Kuehns & Papke, the owners of the Milwaukee Ornamental Carving Co.

Reportedly, Al Ringling preferred hearing church tunes on the bells, and a *Billboard* correspondent indicated "Rock of Ages" was one of the 1893 tunes, and the 1894 Ringling Route book states "Nearer My God to Thee" was one of the tunes played.

Circus ballyhoo and exaggeration certainly applied to the promotions for the new Bell Wagon. Engravings used in newspaper ads and posters had it towering above parade spectators, and billed it as "The Colossal Cathedral Chimes of Moscow's Famous Kremlin Tower." In one description, printed in the April 2, 1892 *Clipper*, the Ringling's claimed the wagon was so large, a railcar with a cellar had to be built to transport it.

The Bell Wagon was used with Ringling's Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus for awhile, but then it was retired after the 1934 season and returned to Sarasota, FL.



*Circus World Museum Photo*

In 1941, the Ringlings returned the Bell Wagon to service, using it in the Big Top Spectacles. At that time, the color theme was red and gold. It was repainted to white and gold for use in the 1941 SPEC. They also replaced the wood undergear with steel struts and replaced the traditional circus wagon wheels with pneumatic tires. Except for 1943 and 1945, it continued in the Ringling-Barnum SPECS through the 1953 Season and can be seen in Cecil B. DeMille's "Greatest Show on Earth" (1952 Best Picture) movie.

In November, 1984, the Ringling Bros. Bell Wagon returned to Baraboo on loan to the Circus World Museum. Concurrently, the Feld organization provided a monetary grant to fund the vehicle's restoration. That work was done and traditional wagon wheels were once again installed on the wagon. The color scheme was restored to red and gold.

In 2013, Kenneth Feld had the wagons on loan to the Circus World Museum returned to the all new 600,000 square-foot Feld Entertainment winter quarters in Ellenton, FL, where the Bell Wagon and others were put on display.



*Photo from the Robert Spivey collection*



# CONCERT-IN-A-BOX ... WJU Seminar at WCS in July, 2015

By Rod Everhart, WJU #1351.



Using a script that had been used a couple times in the past, a Windjammers Unlimited Circus Band provided an outstanding Circus Music Seminar for the WJU, CFA, CHS, CMB, International Youth Circus, and Clown Association attendees at the Worldwide Circus Summit held in July 2015 at the Big E exposition center in West Springfield, MA.

A video of this 47-minute pre-packaged "concert-in-a-box" was a highlight at our January 2021 virtual Convention and is now available on our website at MYWJU.ORG. Andy Rawls (WJU #3435) did the original recordings and his current editing made this one particularly special to see again and again. The concert was narrated by then WJU President Connie Thomas (WJU #1128, dec.) and conducted by Ron Keller (WJU #492).

The concert provided an example of a typical circus performance from over 100 years ago, offering a walk-through of music similar to that used for each type of circus act, thus giving a taste of the rich diversity of circus music and the skills demanded of the musicians. Andy enhanced the video with the use of vintage posters to represent each of the different types of acts.

In a typical Ringling show 100 years ago, Merle Evans would have included portions of over 200 tunes. This concert included circus-style clips of the following 34 tunes:

**Overture - *The Show World*** - J.J. Richards

**Spectacular - *Crescent City*** - J.R. Lopez

**Cats - *Garland Entrée*** - Karl King; ***Jungle Queen*** - G.D. Barnard; ***The Big Cage*** - Karl King

**Clown Walkaround - *Stop It*** - M.B. Kaufman; ***Bull Trombone*** - Henry Fillmore; ***Broadway One-Step*** - Karl King; ***Symphonia*** - Merle Evans

**Aerial Ballet - *Folies Bergère*** - Paul Lincke; ***Nights of Gladness*** - Charles Ancliff; ***Fredella*** galop - Merle Evans

**Liberty Horses - *Robbin's Bros. Triumphal*** - O.A. Gibson; ***Old Berlin March*** - Franz von Blon; ***Memphis the Majestic*** - Russell Alexander

**Wire Acts - *Gallito*** - S. Lope; ***Copa Cabana*** - Harold L. Walters; ***El Caballero*** - Joseph Olivadoti; ***Mediterranean March*** - A.W. Hughes

**Acrobats - *Transcontinental*** - Harry Hughes; ***Kentucky Sunrise*** - Karl King; ***Gentry's Triumphal*** - Fred Jewell

**Seals - *Burma Patrol*** - Karl King; ***Texarkana*** - G. E. Holmes; ***Walking Frog*** - Karl King; ***Prince of Decora*** - P.G. Lowery

**Elephants - *Royal Degree*** - W. P. English; ***Woody Van's March*** - Karl King; ***The Circus King*** - Charles Duple

**Flyers - *World Events*** - J.S. Zamecnik; ***The Wedding of the Winds*** - John T. Hall; ***Circus Echoes*** - A.W. Hughes

**Grand Finale - *New Madison Square Garden*** - Karl King

**Exit - *Quality-Plus*** - Fred Jewell

# CIRCUS MUSIC SNIPPETS

By Frank Cosenza, WJU #3691

## IN A PERSIAN MARKET (*Curse of the Jade Scorpion*)

by Albert William Ketèlbey (Bosworth, 1920)

Colorful music straight from the Romantic period, this concert work is programmatic and describes the hustle and bustle of a crowded open marketplace and its ever-changing scenes of camel trains, jugglers, arrival of a princess, beggars, and of course a snake charmer. This tune was used for animal acts with camels, llamas, zebras and ponies.

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## GALLITO by Santiago Lope Gonzalo. (Hawles, 1913)

A pasodoble is a lively style of dance written in duple meter and played in march-style. The form actually originated in southern France, but is modeled after the sound, drama, and movement of the Spanish bullfight. In Spanish, *paso doble* means "double step." And, the pasodoble is based on music played at bullfights during the bullfighters' entrance (*paseo*) or during the passes (*faena*), just before the kill. Lope composed *Gallito* and three others (one for each featured matador) for use at a bullfight in Valencia, Spain on June 29, 1905. In the circus, this was sometimes used in dressage by Roberto de Vasconcellos. In the July 2015 WJU circus music seminar, it was used as an example of entry music for the wire act. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6idQEvTjwww>

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## NOBLES OF THE MYSTIC SHRINE by John Philip Sousa.

Published in 1923, this concert-oriented march celebrates Sousa's membership in the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Shriners). His local chapter hosted the national convention in 1923 in Washington, D.C. and Sousa conducted a band of 6,200 members in Griffith Stadium, the largest group he ever conducted. Contemporary versions of the Janissary Band (Turkish royal bodyguards) are a vital part of colorful Shrine marching units and this march was intended to recreate the musical style of this Turkish music. The "Jingling Johnny" or Turkish Crescent (a marching instrument with a pole hung with jingling bells), triangle, tambourine, and a heavy bass drum are highlighted, and we hear sudden fortissimo outbursts in the first section. This march is unique in that it includes a part for the harp. This could be heard in the circus for leopards, jaguars and others. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGQ4CMqXw60>

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## EL CUMBANCHERO (1947) by Rafael Hernández Marín.

Marín was a Puerto Rican songwriter, author of hundreds of popular songs in the Latin American repertoire. He specialized in Puerto Rican styles such as the *cancion*, *bolero*, and *guaracha*. Hernández was Honorary President of the Authors and Composers Association. He was also the founder of little league baseball in Puerto Rico. President John F. Kennedy christened him "Mr. Cumbanchero." This selection got much play in the circus. From wild animal acts, fire jugglers to the Mexican Bike Act, it served multiple acts.

## TRIUMPHAL MARCH from "Aida" by Giuseppe Verdi.

*Aida*, Verdi's grandest spectacle and one of the most popular operas ever written, was intended to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal and the Cairo Grand Opera House in 1869. Act II closes with a spectacular scene that includes the grand *Triumphal March* ("Glory to Egypt"), whose noble strains and majestic gait so inspired the Egyptian authorities that it was adopted as the national hymn of that country soon after the premiere. The *Triumphal March* begins by musicians playing long trumpets leading the Egyptian troops into the city. Dancers follow, waving palms and banners, and the crowds sing a moving song of praise. More troops enter, bringing with them slaves bearing gifts for the gods, and the battle victor appears in a golden chariot. At the height of the celebration, he meets the Pharaoh, who steps down from his throne to embrace him. Because of the grandeur and pageantry, it was a fitting use for the elephant acts in the circus. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzcnmVstM>

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## FATHER OF VICTORY by Louis Ganne.

Composed in 1887, its words evoked remembrance of the great Carnot, known as the Organizer of Victory (he created the 14 armies of the new French republic), and whose grandson, Sadi Carnot, was President of the Republic from 1887-1894. At the beginning of World War I during the presidency of Georges Clemenceau (surnamed "Father of Victory") the march was revived with great success. Father Victory means victory personified - by utilizing "de" in the French title, it is often mis-translated to *Father of Victory*. This tune was used in displays that included camels, elephants, zebras, llamas, mixed acts and liberty horses.

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## THE NORTHWIND MARCH by W. Paris Chambers.

William Paris Chambers (1854-1913) began studying music as a self-taught individual at a young age and quickly became proficient on the cornet. At age 18, Chambers was leader of the Keystone Cornet Band in Newville, PA, and then the Capital City Band of Harrisburg, PA. From his late teens to his early forties, he became known for conducting many Pennsylvania bands. It was his virtuosic ability on the cornet, however, which made him famous, including a phenomenally high range up to the third high C. This march describes musically the winter wind encountered by Chambers on his way to work at the C.G. Conn store in New York City. This exciting march, published in 1895 by Carl Fischer in New York, has long been a favorite of American circus bands. For example, in 1916, Harry Haag James often played the clarinet part on his trumpet - at age twelve. His father, Everette James (Windjammers Hall of Fame 1998), echoed the passage on his own trumpet. Forty years later Harry James still remembered the part, playing it during a session with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Band conducted by Merle Evans.



# MEMORIES

By Scott Bartz, WJU #280; Racine, WI

I joined Windjammers Unlimited when I was in my early twenties. I knew nothing of circus music except for a couple of record albums I owned. That was soon to change as *Circus Fanfare* and tapes from Bob Hills began to give me an education. I learned about the old Band leaders and composers.

I was soon able to tell the difference between a Russell Alexander march and one of Karl King's. I started to be able to identify the tunes during circus performances. During one performance of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, I believed I was the only one in the audience of 10,000 people that knew (bandmaster) Ronnie Drumm and that the band had just played "*Tod Sloan's Galop*."

While watching the circus parade in Peru, Indiana, as the bandwagon passed my wife asked "What are they playing?" I answered assuredly, "*Algeria*" by Karl King.

As for the conventions and meets, I usually attended the ones in nearby Baraboo, WI, although on our way back from Omaha I detoured a bit to catch the concert in Oskaloosa, IA. Windjammers have always been super friendly and welcoming.

I remember the "Battle of the Bandwagon Bands" in Baraboo as well as the pre-show concerts. I recall the first time I heard Charles Post's "*Under the Big Top*" march was in Baraboo and it was, appropriately, under the big top!

Windjammer Jack "Tiny" Stagg and I were standing on the lot of Carson & Barnes Circus in the 1970s. It was an immense show – 5 rings, 20 elephants, and a full menagerie with a giraffe, hippo and rhino. A gentleman walked up to us and Jack said to the man, "Take a good look!" Truer words were never spoken. Then at the matinee I sat by Charlie Stevenson's band and as Charlie barked out "*King Chanticleer*", I gave a good listen!

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# PRESERVATION COMMITTEE UPDATES

By Rod Everhart, WJU #1351

With all of the content being added to the MYWJU.ORG website, we have gained traction on the PRESERVATION pillar of our Mission Statement.

Thanks again to Eric Beheim (WJU #66) for all the mp3 audio files he has provided from his significant collection of circus records and wire & tape recordings of circus and circus music performances. Thanks to Max Goodall II (WJU #1060) for his collection of cassette tapes produced by WJU's first president Bob Hills, Jr. (WJU #71). Those included professional recordings of our first four Conventions and first three Summer Meets.

More recently, Charlie Bertini (WJU #188) sent us two copies of a recording of circus music done in 1976, conducted by Chuck Schlarbaum (WJU #61). Charlie was on solo cornet. Turns out this is platter EE in the Bob Hoe "**Heritage of the March**" series. (Yes, you can listen to it on our website!)

Shortly thereafter, Ron VanderSchoor (WJU #2945) called to offer the 200 CDs he had copied from the entire **Heritage of the March (HOM)** series and we will add those to the Windjammers Unlimited archives. Ron's wife had also converted all the CDs to mp3 audio files and we have those as well. As that series is owned by the Bob Hoe Music Collection Foundation, we requested and enthusiastically received permission from Foundation President Robert Hoe VI to utilize these recordings any way we choose for the benefit of our membership.

When asked how he happened to have the HOM recordings,

Ron replied that in late 2007, Barbara Bailey (WJU #18) called Ed Shevlin (WJU #2014) to say she had two boxes of HOM LPs that her late husband, Buster Bailey (WJU #17) had received from Robert Hoe V over the years. Now moving to an apartment, she no longer had room for them. Ed picked them up and brought them to New Port Richey, Florida, where he and Ron and their respective wives spent their winters. Ron had the equipment necessary to make CDs from the LPs, and then his wife Marge made the mp3 digital files from those, after running the music through clean-up software to remove some of the clicks left by scratches on the LPs. She included the march title, composer, and performing band. Later, Ron visited the HOM library (at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, NY) to borrow the HOM LPs needed to complete the CD collection.

We also have all the video recordings done in recent years by Andy Rawls (WJU #3435). You were able to see some of those during our Virtual Convention and those are now on the website. We will soon add Andy's photos for access.

With all of this, your Windjammers Board has created a Preservation Committee to address how to protect, store, and utilize the physical and digital assets we are accumulating, and to encourage others of you who might have such items to consider how to protect them from future loss. If you would wish to join this committee or have artifacts to contribute, please let me know. The current committee includes: Rod Everhart (chair), Eric Beheim, Roger Blackburn (#3123), Charles Conrad (#1525), Andy Glover (#423), Frank Manola (#3444), and Andy Rawls.

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## GAVIN HOLMAN, WJU #3943

Gavin Holman lives in Arkendale, North Yorkshire, Great Britain, and became a Windjammers Unlimited member in 2020. A tuba player, Gavin has had a lifelong interest in brass bands and that hobby has expanded into an impressive website and numerous publications.



His specialty over the last 25 years has been researching vintage brass bands from the early 1800s to the mid-1900s. Of the many brass bands that have flourished across the world over the last 200 years, very few have documentation covering their history. Even less is known about the players in those bands. He collects information on their formation, histories, pictures, competitions, memorabilia, recordings, publications, etc. He then makes these materials available for all to access via the IBEW archive at [www.ibew.co.uk](http://www.ibew.co.uk).

Gavin studied Mathematics & Computer Science at the University of Bristol, where he played in the University Symphony Orchestra and the Bristol Youth Brass Band. He followed that with a Librarianship degree from Leeds Metropolitan University.

With an academic background of computer science and librarianship, Gavin was responsible for developing the first major in-house online systems for the British Library and completed his professional career there as head of the British Library Information Technology infrastructure, including its many digital archives.

Gavin is a prolific author with over 100 articles accessible via his website, or perhaps more directly at <https://gavinholman.academia.edu/research>. If you get a chance, visit his site and peruse the informative and interesting titles posted there for download.

One of Gavin's articles is included in this Fanfare on Pages 6-7: **19th Century Circus in the British Isles**. Here are some additional titles that might catch your eye:

- **Sightless but full of sound** (blind musicians of the past)
- **Brass instruments and Victorian trade cards**
- **The cornet madam and the trombone actress**
- **Cats and Dogs in Brass** (collection of postcards)
- **A pig and a tale of several brass bands**
- **Music to roll along by** (bands entertaining skaters)
- **Vintage Brass Band Recordings**



His historical 580-page directory of **Brass Bands & Cornet Bands of the U.S.A.** is the result of an extraordinary amount of research, unearthing information and photographs from newspaper reports, museums, archives, attics, and private collectors. Published in January 2021 is one of Gavin's more

significant works. Over 8,700 bands are recorded in this document, but Gavin notes there are certainly many hundreds more to discover. This followed an earlier volume on **British Brass Bands**, with nearly 20,000 discrete bands identified over the past 200 years.

Gavin is currently working on several projects - looking at some of the players in brass bands, the ephemera of brass banding, and significant updates to some existing works. This is in addition to consulting on some musical archive projects in Britain. One of the joys of his research is the discovery of some seemingly small item or piece of information which sparks an investigative journey, diving down various rabbit holes, and leading to a new article or blog entry. The fascinating stories of the brass players of the past, from an early zouave troupe to a Yorkshire reformatory school band, are some of the constant historical diversions that he enjoys – it does slow down his planned work though!

Over the last year, with the coronavirus pandemic restrictions, the lack of band rehearsals and performances has given Gavin more time to devote to his research, but he is looking forward to resuming his playing once more with the Harrogate Band, a Championship level brass band in Yorkshire. Check it out at:

<http://www.harrogateband.org/>





# A Real Dog & Pony Show: Otto Floto & Sells Floto Circus

By Jim Woodrick,

Jim Woodrick is the son of the late J. Rayford Woodrick (WJU #1369) and nephew of Norman Woodrick (WJU #1360).  
Reprinted with permission from Jim's 2013 BLOG **"AND SPEAKING OF WHICH..."**

## Have you ever heard of a "dog and pony show?"

These days, the term is used to describe something that is over-performed and a bit contrived in order to sell something or persuade someone. It is definitely not a term of endearment. At one time, though, there really were "dog and pony shows" in the United States, generally small circuses or animal attractions in small towns. One such show was the Floto Dog & Pony Show, started by a man with the most curious name of Otto Floto.

Born in Cincinnati about 1863, Otto Clement Floto was the sports editor of *The Denver Post* in the early 1900s. He was known to be loud-mouthed, was prone to drinking heavily and was barely literate (he did not believe in using punctuation marks in his newspaper columns). Apparently, the Post hired him chiefly because his name was interesting. In fact, the Post also funded the "Dog & Pony Show" and borrowed Floto's unique name.



Otto Clement Floto

Floto was also a fight promoter, and regularly reported on the fights he arranged. Among other boxers, the great Jack Dempsey owed some of his success to Floto's influence. One person Floto could not best in a fight was Bat Masterson, with whom he had a long-running feud. When the two came to blows in a well-publicized confrontation, Masterson was smart enough to bring a cane to a fist fight and put Floto to flight. Despite his 250-pound frame, Masterson said Floto was "the best runner I ever saw."

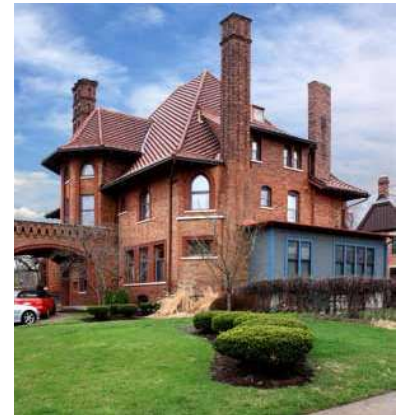
Floto was also involved in a variety of other business interests, including management of an opera house (he claimed to be the grandson of German opera composer Friedrich van Flotow) and a saloon owner in Cripple Creek, Colorado (near Pike's Peak), where he is supposed to have married one of the "working girls." In 1896, a massive fire which started in the Red Light district of Cripple Creek displaced 3,600 people and caused over a million dollars' worth of damage. Among the suspects, although never arrested for starting the fire, was the aforementioned Otto Floto.

The Floto Dog and Pony Show, established in 1902, featured not just dogs and ponies, but elephants too. By 1906, the show became a full-fledged circus and was combined with

an existing circus owned by the Sells brothers of Columbus, Ohio. One of the brothers, Peter Sells, had a much-publicized and rocky marriage. In 1878, the 32-year old Sells married eighteen year old Mary Luker. After moving to Columbus where the circus had its headquarters, Peter built an expensive home designed by architect Frank Packard. His marriage was in trouble, however, because Mary apparently had her eye on several other men, especially local businessman Billy Bott.

In 1899, based on the work of a private detective, Peter Sells sued for divorce. During the sensational trial, Florence Sells, the couple's daughter, took the stand against her mother and Peter was granted the divorce. A Kentucky newspaper, in reporting the verdict, opined that "When a woman is a devil she is the whole thing." Sells died in 1905, only a couple of years after the divorce trial.

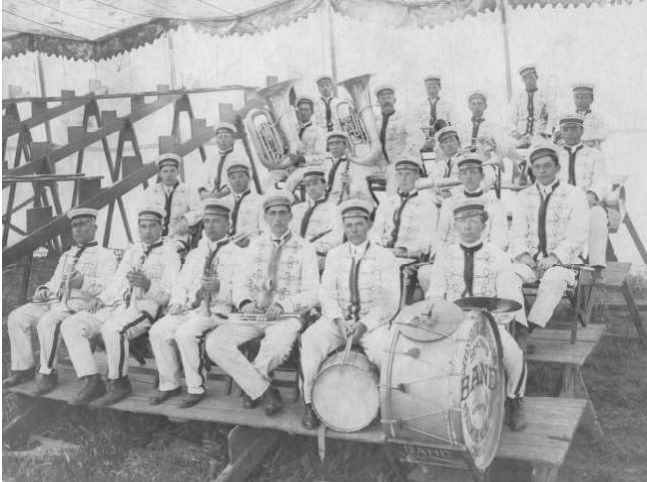
The house he built, now known as the Sells Mansion, still stands in Columbus. The Sells Circus, meanwhile, merged with Otto Floto's show to become the Sells Floto Circus.



Touring throughout the 1920s, the Sells Floto Circus was one of many such traveling shows of the period, including the John Robinson, Sparks, and Ringling circuses. For a time, Sells Floto teamed up with Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show and with Tom Mix, the motion picture cowboy star. Mix, who performed various stunts for the circus in the late 1920s and 1930s, earned as much as \$20,000 a week during the tour season.

Like most circuses of the day, Sells Floto had a variety of acts to attract customers to their shows instead of their competitors'. In the early '20s, though, Sells Floto was a circus without any animal acts, intentionally focusing on human performers. According to a Pasadena newspaper account, *"one of the most outstanding features of the Sells Floto program is the total absence of 'carnival wild animal acts.' No many lions, whose claws are about to drop out or tigers which have to be fed with 'wet foods' because their teeth dropped out through age, or starved elephants which have to be propped up, were presented. Nothing but the highest class circus acts and features worth looking at were on display and the big audience thoroughly enjoyed itself."*

By the mid-1920s, however, the circus had added all sorts of animal acts, and had a herd of about fourteen elephants in the caravan. Sells Floto also had circus music, and at one time employed the famed bandmaster Karl King, whose first conducting job was with the circus in 1914-1915. Later on, he was bandmaster for the Barnum & Bailey Circus. By the end of his career, King had composed more than 300 works, including nearly two hundred circus pieces.



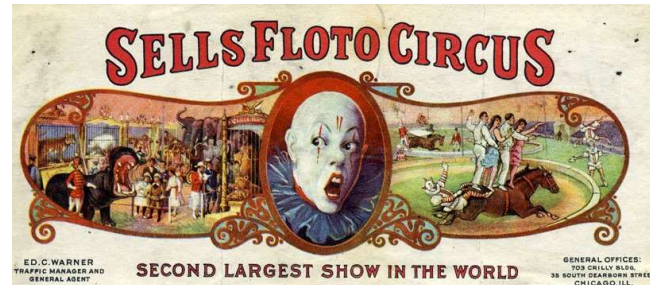
**THE SELLS FLOTO CIRCUS BAND - KARL KING, BANDMASTER**

Sells Floto's tours generally began from their headquarters in Peru, Indiana, and then either went out west or made a huge loop through the mid-west, northeast, and southern states. Other circuses often followed basically the same schedule and intentionally set up their shows in the path of their competitors to try and steal the crowds, even going so far as papering over rival shows' playbills.

Curiously, several of the traveling circuses ended their season in Mississippi. For example, in 1924, Sells Floto played in Gulfport on November 21 and then ended their tour with shows in Jackson, Hattiesburg, Laurel and Meridian. The same year, the John Robinson Circus went to Meridian on October 29 and then closed its season in Tennessee. Other towns visited by Sells Floto throughout the 1920s include Brookhaven, Natchez, Yazoo City, Kosciusko, Greenwood, Greenville, Water Valley, Clarksdale, Corinth and Holly Springs. No doubt, the circuses, in particular the elephants and other wild animal acts, were quite a treat for folks in small-town Mississippi. In 1929, however, the Sells Floto Circus found they were no longer welcome in the City of Jackson.

In 1929, the Sells Floto Circus was winding up its touring season in Mississippi. That year, the circus was part of a consortium of circuses, including the Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Sparks and Al G. Barnes circuses, all forming the American Circus Corporation. The whole group had been purchased that year by John N. Ringling (one of the famous Ringling Brothers) to create a virtual monopoly of shows. However, the Sells Floto Circus still toured under its own name and was scheduled to make an appearance

in Jackson on October 1. As usual, the management sent advance men to put up advertising for the circus, which had been drawing huge crowds because of Tom Mix, the cowboy star. Arriving in the capital city in mid-September, the advance men proceeded to put up posters and billboards up and down Capitol Street until the store windows were "covered with tidings of the show's approach." Unfortunately, this did not sit well with the city council, and the eight men were promptly arrested for "illegal bill posting." Although it was certainly not the first time the circus had to deal with issues involving their posters (on occasion they were dragged into court with other circuses over such matters), Sells Floto clearly had some public relations work to do in Jackson.



There were plenty of other posters and advertising bills in Jackson, so litter wasn't the problem. In fact, there were "luridly attractive" fliers by the thousands nailed to every post and pole from Jackson to Memphis placed by the 101 Ranch Wild West Show, which was scheduled to appear at the Mississippi State Fair. Unfortunately, Sells Floto was slated to come to town at the same time the state fair would be at the fairgrounds, and the city had little interest in diverting customers away from the Wild West Show.

Sells Floto had Tom Mix, though, and had been attracting throngs of onlookers at every stop. After the eight men were released, the circus management (officially Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey) sent a young lawyer to represent their interests. A recent graduate of the University of Mississippi law school and newly married, the circus' attorney would later make a big name for himself in Mississippi politics: Ross Barnett.

After meeting with the mayor and city council (Mayor Walter Scott was actually a supporter of the circus), the 31-year old Barnett informed city officials that the circus show would proceed as planned on October 1, but would be held "outside the city limits, of course." To show his appreciation, Mayor Scott agreed to let the circus hold a parade for those who couldn't afford a ticket to see the elephants and other attractions, including Tom Mix. However, E. L. Bailey, the Jackson school superintendent, refused to allow the schools to close for "show day," as had apparently been the tradition. On the other hand, the superintendent announced that any child attending the parade would be counted as an excused absence. Based on the number of people who met the circus at the rail yard, there were likely very few children in school that day.



On Tuesday, October 1, the Daily Clarion-Ledger reported on the arrival of the circus and gushed over the appearance of the main attraction, **Tom Mix**. Thomas Hezekiah Mix, born in Pennsylvania in 1880, was a bona fide movie star. Appearing in more than 160 cowboy pictures in the 1920s, Mix was known for doing all sorts of tricks with his horse, Tony (known as “The Wonder Horse”).

By the 1930s, **Tom Mix** was on his fifth wife and had blown through much of his personal wealth and then, tragically, died in an auto accident on October 12, 1940, in Arizona. After swerving to avoid a washed-out bridge, Mix was killed when an aluminum suitcase filled with money, travelers’ checks and jewelry flew forward in the car and broke his neck. But that was still more than a decade away. In 1929, he was the equivalent of a rock star. “*Mix, by his athletic living, clean habits and dare-devil prowess...*” the paper reported, “*has endeared himself to the youth of the land, and he is every inch the ideal heroic figure the motion picture camera has depicted.*”



In addition to Tom Mix, the circus also featured Cliff Aeros, the Human Cannonball and Poodles Hanneford with his Famous Riding Hannefords, along with all the trappings of a circus big-top. Born in a circus wagon in England, Hanneford was descended from jugglers who entertained King George III. After moving to the United States in 1915, Poodles joined the Ringling Brothers circus and continued to perform as a clown and trick rider until 1954.

To meet Ross Barnett’s promise to perform outside the city limits, the tents were set up in “Latimer’s pasture” just off of Claiborne Avenue, which in 1929 was the western city limits of Jackson. Thus, while technically “outside the city limits,” it was by a few feet at the most. Meanwhile, the rival 101 Ranch Wild West Show went off without a hitch at the state fairgrounds.

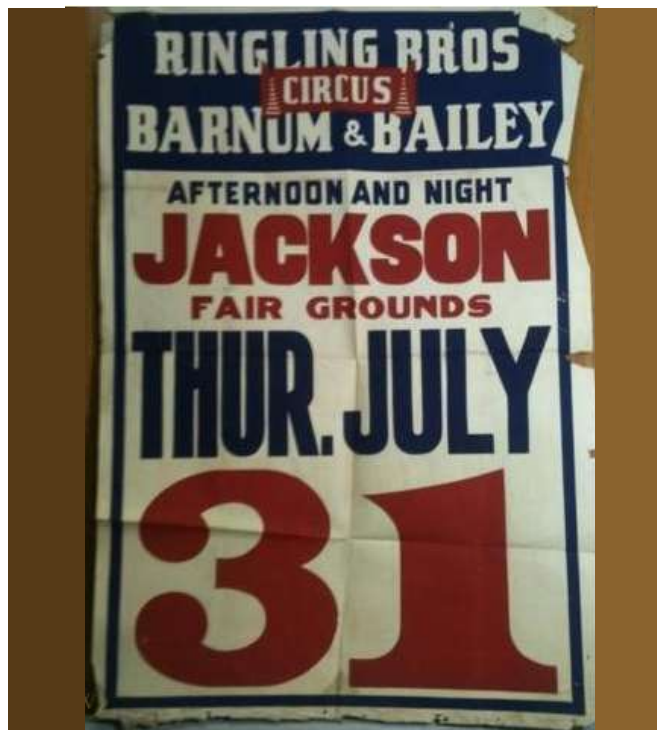
Two days later, the circus moved to Meridian and set up shop there. Reporting on the “big show,” the Meridian Star noted that the circus featured “three herds of elephants, a 50-den menagerie of wild beasts and an excellent side show

of freaks.” After finishing the show in Meridian, the Sells Floto Circus folded its tents and headed home to Indiana, where the circus went into winter quarters.



Alas, the great days of the traveling circus were quickly drawing to a close. The decline was due to a number of factors, not the least of which was the Great Depression, which hit like a hammer at the end of the month. Also, other entertainment venues, especially the same movie industry that made Tom Mix famous, were more widely available to average Americans. Finally, the beginnings of suburban sprawl and traffic meant fewer places for the circuses to go and fewer opportunities for parades of clowns, bands and elephants. By 1932, Sells Floto, along with most other traveling circuses, were no more and in 1939 the horse-drawn circus parade became a relic of the past.

Of course, circuses continue to exist, but fewer in number. When the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus last came to Jackson they advertised a show full of “astounding acrobats, vibrant visuals and prodigious performers.” At that point, however, the “Greatest Show on Earth” no longer had a parade of elephants down Capitol Street. They did, however, get to perform at the Mississippi State Fairgrounds, a location unavailable to them in 1929. And this time no one was arrested for illegal bill posting.



# OBITUARY

## J. Rayford Woodrick, WJU #1369



**James Rayford Woodrick**, 85, died on January 26, 2021 at St. Dominic Hospital in Jackson, Mississippi. A retired United Methodist minister, Rayford was born on May 30, 1935, in Meridian, Mississippi, to Ben and Marie Woodrick. He earned a degree at Meridian Community College, a B.A. in Religion at Millsaps College in 1957, where he played on the Majors football team, and a Masters of Divinity from the Iliff School of Theology in Denver in 1961. He also completed studies in the Doctor of Ministerial Studies at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University and in Clinical Pastoral Education at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

As an ordained elder in the Mississippi United Methodist Conference, he served on the Georgetown-Carson Charge; McLain; Andrew Chapel and Daleville; East End in Meridian; and Briarwood in Jackson. While a student at Iliff, he was pastor of the churches at Hillrose and Snyder, Colorado. In 1983, he became the editor of the Mississippi United Methodist Advocate and the Conference News Director, where he served for fourteen years. He held numerous other positions, including 19 years on the Board of Trustees for the Mississippi United Methodist Foundation.

Rayford had many hobbies and interests. His love of music spanned almost his entire life. A skilled tuba player, he marched with the 1952 and 1953 Mississippi All-State Lions Band, was active in Windjammers Unlimited, was a member of the Capital City Concert Band and one of the organizers of the Mississippi Community Symphonic Band. He played in both the Banjo Band and the Oompah Band. During his ministry in Dekalb, he was the band director at Dekalb High School and later taught sociology at Meridian Junior College. Rayford is survived by his loving wife of 62 years, Rosa Ann Woodrick of Ridgeland, his son Jim and his wife Mary Margaret, also of Ridgeland; grandchildren Adam Minninger (Stephanie) and Molly Minninger; brother Norman Woodrick (WJU #1360) of Ridgeland; and sister-in-law Audrey Hardin. He was preceded in death by his brother Rev. Lavelle Woodrick (3/27/1930-3/9/2020, WJU #1117) and sister Mary Alice Cumberland. The family asks that memorials be made to Millsaps College, St. Matthews UMC or the Mississippi Community Symphonic Band.



## MARCH MANIA

Each year "The President's Own" hosts "**Sousa's March Mania**," a competition in which students and fans around the globe rally behind their favorite marches as they advance through a series of match-ups and onto the championship game! Each day two marches compete head-to-head, while votes for the favorite march determined which one advances to the next round.



The 2021 edition of March Mania was a dogfight like no other! Which marches made it through the Sousa's Sixteen, Enlisted Eight, and Fidelis Four to the final round? If you played the game, you already know.

Three circus marches were in the running this year! *The Melody Shop* (Euphonium team's favorite!); *King Karl King March*; and *Entry of the Gladiators*. Unfortunately, the first two went head-to-head in Round One. The program is intended to expose students to the genre of marches, the history of John Philip Sousa, and of course, outstanding performances by the United States Marine Band.

**The Enlisted Eight:** *The Imperial March* (Williams), *The Melody Shop* (King), *Entry of the Gladiators* (Fučík), *March from 1941* (Williams), *Raiders March* (Williams), *Hands Across the Sea* (Sousa), *The Liberty Bell* (Sousa), and *Washington Post March* (Sousa).

**The Fideles Four:** *The Imperial March*, *Washington Post March*, *Hands Across the Sea*, and *March from 1941*.

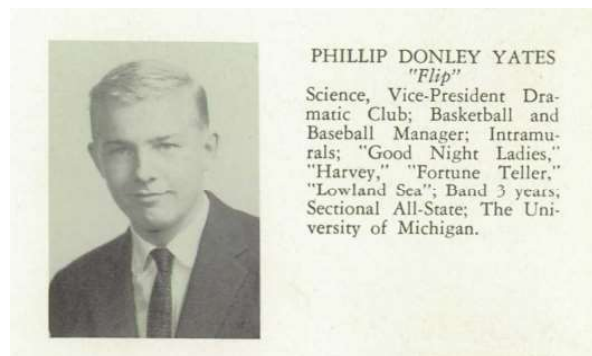
**Final Match Up:** *Hands Across the Sea* and *The Imperial March*, with Sousa's *Hands Across the Sea* as **Champion** of the **2021 Sousa's March Mania**.



# OBITUARY

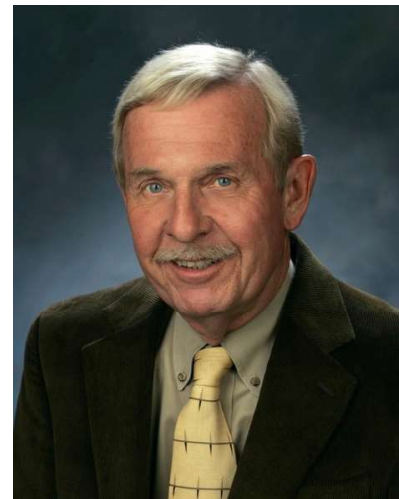
## Phillip “Flip” Yates, WJU #3276

**Phillip “Flip” Donley Yates, Jr.** was born on April 10, 1939, in Rochester, N.Y., to parents Phillip D. Yates, Sr. and Jane E. Jungjohann. He passed suddenly on Feb. 7 after being transferred to Erie, Pa.



Flip was the eldest of ten, including: Mick (deceased), Chris, Jane, Martha (deceased), Linda, Tina, George, Nancy, and Robert. A 1956 graduate of Southwestern Central High School, he went on to study at Allegheny College.

Flip began his career as a salesman for the TruckLite



Corp. and traveled across the U.S. He became president of the Long Beach Ski Club and married a snow bunny, Shiralyn Cattoir, on Jan. 30, 1971. They went on to have two sons, Phillip D. Yates III and John C. Yates. Flip has four grandchildren: McKenna (17) Danny (16) Brooklyn (16) and Josiah (14).

In October 1982, the family returned to Chautauqua Lake to own and operate until 1989 the Ye Hare N' Hounds Inn restaurant in Bemus Point, NY. Flip and Shiralyn were married until 1995. Salesman Yates returned to the lake and sold Ford automobiles for the rest of his career. Flip lit up a room and could make anyone laugh at his jokes. He enjoyed sailing his entire life and was an active member at the Chautauqua Lake Yacht Club whether crewing an E-Scow or snipe, or soloing a C-Scow across the lake. Flip's passion for the arts and music led him to begin dating **Mary Anne Harp** (WJU #1080) and the two actively participated in music and choir at St Luke's Episcopal Church in Jamestown as well as traveling for music festivals, conventions and competitions. While he was a non-playing member with Windjammers, Flip played cornet in his earlier years and fully appreciated his circus music connection via WJU. **For those wishing to provide a memorial gift in Flip's honor, the family suggests those be given to Windjammers Unlimited.**

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## WINDJAMMERS CONTACT INFORMATION

Windjammers Unlimited, Inc. is a 501(c)3 circus music historical society in the education category. It was founded in 1971 with the goal of preserving traditional American circus music. The organization holds its annual convention in January in Sarasota/Bradenton, FL and a summer meet in July at varying locations. Windjammers Unlimited, the WJU Logo, WJU, and Windjammers Circus Band, among others, are trademarks or service marks of Windjammers Unlimited, Inc. Other product, service, organization and company names mentioned herein may be the trademarks or service marks of their respective owners and no rights therein are granted by WJU.

Windjammers membership is open to all of those interested in the preservation, education and performance of traditional American circus music. We welcome playing and non-playing members alike. Membership Dues are for the period January 1 through December 31 and are pro-rated quarterly for new members joining after March 31<sup>st</sup>. Current annual dues are \$10 for Student members, \$40 for Individuals, and \$47 for a Family membership of two members residing at the same mailing address. Optional Tax-Deductible Donations are welcomed. Our Membership Application and additional information can be found on our website at [MYWJU.ORG](http://mywju.org). Student and International Members must opt for *Circus Fanfares* as PDFs.

**Our address is:** 1169 Belle Meade Island Dr., Miami, FL 33138-5253

**Our website is:** [mywju.org](http://mywju.org). Officer and Trustee contact information is shown on Page 2.

The *Circus Fanfare* is published bi-monthly and distributed to society members in either printed or PDF formats. Please email [circusfanfare@mywju.org](mailto:circusfanfare@mywju.org) if you have any materials, suggestions, or comments you would like to offer.



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[mywju.org](http://mywju.org)  
1169 Belle Meade Island Dr.  
Miami, FL 33138-5253

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
DENTON, TX  
PERMIT NO. 438



This issue of the *Circus Fanfare* was printed by  
Gainesville Printing Co., Gainesville, TX



OLDEST KNOWN BANDWAGON TO EXIST

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