



# WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME



## Charles E. Stevenson, WJU #55, Inductee 2014

By Rod Everhart. WJU #1351

**Charles Everett Stevenson** was born to James Everett and Margaret Webb (Blanton) Stevenson on March 29, 1921 in Mart, Texas (near Waco) and he was forever proud of his Texas heritage. A white Stetson was his symbol, and he frequently wore it while on the bandstand.

He was often addressed as "Colonel Stevenson," although that may have been a more honorary designation as other records and his tombstone reflect his being a Staff Sergeant. He did serve with the 143rd Infantry Regiment of the Texas Army National Guard, was in Italy with the U.S. Army during World War II, and served in the Korean War. He participated in the Fifth Army Band, among others.

Charlie played the 1945 season with the **Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus** band under Merle Evans. He then returned to the army playing in bands for several years before returning to show business. Having served several tours of duty, he was last discharged from the military on December 31, 1963.

While he conducted bands with the military, his first position as a circus bandmaster appears to have been in 1970 with **King Bros. Circus**. He stayed with them five years. (See 1972 photo next page.) He once reported his pay was what he earned from running the pre- and post-show pony ride, and it was one of his best paying jobs ever.

In 1976, he was on baritone for a partial season with (WJU #61) Charles Schlarbaum's **Clyde Beatty – Cole Bros. Circus** band. There they called him "Gramps."

In 1977 he led the **Great American Chautauqua** band and in 1978 he took on leadership of the **Carson & Barnes Circus** (Western Unit) band.



In 1979 and 1980 he was bandmaster of **Circus Genoa**. His 1979 band was comprised of Charlie on baritone; Gene "The Green Buddha" Holm, Vincent Seyfriedt, and George Heavilin on trumpet/cornet; Tony Greiner on trombone; Dan Reynolds on trombone/tuba; Rex Martin on tuba; and Randy Fulton on drums. Vincent was known for playing a trumpet call in the backyard to signal 15 minutes before "doors." Rex later played for the Chicago Symphony.

In 1982 Charlie returned to the **Carson & Barnes Circus** as band director. He remained with Carson & Barnes until the end of the 1987 season when the show then phased out live music.

While the majority of circus band leaders played cornet or trumpet, Charlie's instrument was the baritone. His "book" was quite traditional, including the marches, galops, waltzes, and other works by Karl King, Russell Alexander, Fred Jewell, and other great composers from the golden age of the American circus band. Each season brought a new alignment of tunes tailored to the acts and/or circus theme.

He often played "*Wedding of the Winds*" for the trapeze flyers and "*March of the Wooden Soldiers*" for high stepping horses.

In 1978 with Carson & Barnes, the cat man, Wayne Regan, was particularly fond of "*Joyce's 71st New York Regiment*" march. But Charlie wouldn't program it, presumably for it not being sufficiently "circusy." However, he would have the band play it on occasion for warm-ups, and at the season's end when Wayne's act was ending, Charlie added "*Joyce's*" for that final occasion. Wayne was most appreciative of that gesture from "The Colonel."



1972 King Bros. Circus Band, Charlie Stevenson, bandmaster. WJU Co-founder Charlie Bennett, Jr. kneeling on right.

In an article trombonist Tony Greiner wrote for **Circus Report** (March 14, 1994), he commented that he had toured one summer with Circus Kirk and afterwards had responded to an ad for a circus band trombonist. That resulted in a long-distance call from Charlie Stevenson from Saskatchewan, Canada. Because of the expense of such calls, it was short and sweet: "Tony, this is Charlie Stevenson with the Carson & Barnes Circus. I understand you want to play with the circus?" "Yes sir", Tony replied. Then the audition was composed of just three questions: 1. Do you know what circus life is like? 2. Can you read music? 3. Can you be here on Tuesday? Tony responded "Yes" to all three.

Tony was in Charlie's circus bands in 1978 (C&B) and 1979 (Genoa.) In his article, Tony remembers vividly Charlie standing in front of the bandstand, cradling his baritone in his arms, his cowboy hat perched at a jaunty angle on top of his balding head.

Tony recalled when they played King's "*The Walking Frog*" for a rola-bola act, Charlie would make a fist at the start of the trio, thrust it against his waist, and begin a little dance in front of the band. Another memory was when Charlie would say, in a Texas drawl, "Listen up! Next up is '*In Storm and Sunshine*.' You be the storm and I'll be the sunshine," wiggling his fingers over the valves as he delivered his

punchline before turning and continuing with the show. However, Tony never recalls actually playing that tune for any of the acts!

Charlie thought quite highly of WJU Hall of Fame Bandmasters Merle Evans (1974), Ramon Escorcia (1979), and Charlie Schlarbaum (2007), and in turn they had great appreciation for Charlie's baritone playing skills.

Charlie was one of Windjammers Unlimited's earliest members. He joined in 1972 as WJU #55 and continued through 1990. He attended a number of conventions during that time, along with his wife, Annafred "Ann or Annie" (Hall) McGuffin Stevenson (1906 - 2005.) Charlie greatly enjoyed his connection with Merle Evans, Paul Yoder, and Chuck Schlarbaum at those events.

The Stevensons lived at 1401 Cambridge Ave, Corpus Christi, TX throughout their married lives. Ann had two children, Charlotte Jean and William Watson McGuffin, from her early marriage to Gene McGuffin. Charlie was 71 when he died January 27, 1993. He was buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery (Section 21, Site 749), as was his wife Ann when she passed twelve years later at age 98.

Charles Everett Stevenson was added to the Windjammers Unlimited Hall of Fame in January, 2014.





### Charles E. Stevenson

Charles E. Stevenson, a World War II veteran and a member of the Fifth Army Band, died Jan. 27, 1993. He was 71.

Survivors include his wife, Ann; a daughter, Charlotte Sebesta of Corpus Christi; and a son, Bill McGuffin of Corpus Christi.



Col. Charles Stevenson - Always on top of the situation  
riding herd on the band

# 1979 CIRCUS GENOA MUSICAL PROGRAM

Charles E. Stevenson, Bandmaster

## OVERTURES

(selections varied)

Strike Up the Band - Berlin  
The Minstrel Man - Talbot  
Reign of Rhythm - Talbot  
Vanguard of Democracy - King  
Iowa Centennial - King  
Ohio Special - King  
Symphonia - Evans  
Northwind - Chambers

## CAT ACT

Bravura - Duple  
Jungle Queen - Barnard  
Woody Van's - King  
Pink Panther - Mancini  
Night in June - King  
Born Free - J. Barry  
Big Cage Galop - King

## CONTORTION ACT

San Francisco - Cross

## SPANISH WEB ACT

Hello Dolly - Herman  
Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody - Berlin  
By the Time I Get to Phoenix - Webb

## CLOUD SWING ACT

Tesoro Mio Waltz - Bucucci

## LIBERTY HORSES

Espana Cani - Marguina  
Broadway One-Step - King  
Stop It Galop - Kaufman

## ELEPHANT ACT

Pan American - King  
Algeria - King

## CRADLE ACT

Enchanted Night Waltz - King

## JUGGLING ACT

Copa Cabana - Walters

## MENAGERIE ACT

Limehouse Blues - P. Graham  
Hi, Neighbor - J. Owens  
Great Day - W. Rose  
Broadway Melody - Freed  
Happy Days Are Here Again - Ager  
Are You From Dixie? - Cobb  
Swanee - Gershwin  
Pennsylvania Polka - Lee

## REVOLVING LADDER ACT

Trombonium - Withrow  
Walking Frog - King

## ELEPHANT ACT

Hosts of Freedom - King  
The Huntress - King

## WHIPS and KNIVES

Bill Bailey - Van Auken  
When the Saints - traditional

## HIGH WIRE ACT

Dr. Zhivago - Jarre  
Flamingo - Anderson  
The Breeze and I - Lecuona  
Shadow of Your Smile - Mandel  
Tequila - C. Rio

## TRAP ACT

Sunnyland Waltzes - Rosner

## SWINGING LADDER ACT

Among the Roses Waltz - Barnhouse

## LOW TRAPEZE ACT

March of the Spanish Soldiery - Smetsky

## FINALE

Iowa Band Law - King

WJU's first president, R. P. "Bob" Hills, Jr. (WJU #71) reported on the **Circus Genoa** performance in Hillsdale, MI on June 22, 1979. WJU members Charlie Stevenson (WJU #55) and George Heavilin (WJU #408) were in the band, and George's wife, Barbara, was a teacher and ticket seller with the circus.

The band, led by Stevenson, consisted of six members, down from eight when they started in Alabama. Bob reported, "The band was snappy and crisp and displayed a

repertoire of tunes which is unbelievable and could only be conceived by Col. Charles. The cut-offs were clean and the chords clean, and the sound from a small six piece combo was amazing. Just a glance through the (above) list and any old time circus buff will agree that this is ***the music which made the circus.***"

"Col. Charles took the music very brisk; it may not have been as clean as possible, but it was certainly circusy and bright. Our hats off to Charlie Stevenson for a great band!"