

WINDJAMMERS UNLIMITED, INC.

CIRCUS
FANFARE

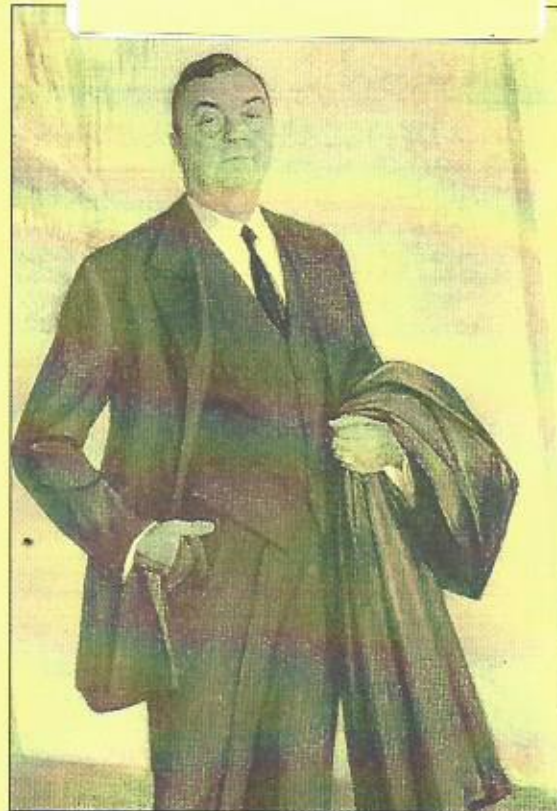
Founded in 1971 by Art Stensvad and Charles Bennett, Jr.

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John Ringling (1927)

Windjammers Unlimited
32nd Annual Convention • January 20, 2004
Sarasota, Florida

Windjammers Unlimited, Incorporated

www.circusmusic.org

CIRCUS FANFARE

Circus Fanfare is published 6 times a year and distributed to Windjammer members. Letters, comments, articles and requests for advertising should be submitted to the Fanfare Editor, Bob Peckham, 195 Kingswood Dr., Athens, GA. 30606.

Change of address should be sent to the Secretary/Treasurer, Mike Montgomery, 1204 Hobson Oaks Ct Naperville, Il 60540-8136 - mike.montgomery@circusmusic.org

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Windjammer membership is available to all those interested in preserving the heritage of traditional circus music by applying to the Secretary/Treasurer. If you have a computer, go to www.circusmusic.org to print out a membership application. For those without a computer, send name, address, city, state, zip, phone number and instrument that you play or else indicate that you are a non playing member. Send this info to:

Windjammers Unlimited
1204 Hobson Oaks Ct
Naperville, IL 60540-8136

Individual U.S. Annual Membership dues - \$20, Canadian Dues - \$27

Family U.S. Annual Membership dues - \$27

Family memberships are available to persons residing at the *same* mailing address. Only one copy of the Circus Fanfare will be mailed to a family

Membership expires at the end of each calendar year.

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WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME RECIPIENTS

Karl L. King	1974	Ramon Escorsia	1979	Earle Moss	1987	Hale A. Vandercook	1995
Merle Evans	1974	Charles Duble	1980	Henry Fillmore	1988	Perry G. Lowrey	1996
Robert Hoe Jr.	1975	J. J. Richards	1981	Douglas D. MacLeod	1989	William Prunyn	1997
Fred Jewell	1975	Albert Sweet	1982	Ward Stauth	1990	Everett James	1998
Vic Robbins	1976	Charles L. Barnhouse	1983	Clinton "Johnnie" Evans	1991	Edward Woeckner	1999
Henry Kyes	1976	Walter P. English	1984	James A. Perkins	1992	Robert D. Peckham	2000
A. Lee Hinckley	1977	Dr. Leonard B. Smith	1985	Ray (Red) Floyd	1993	Jack Bell	2001
Russell Alexander	1978	Paul Yoder	1986	Paul Luckey	1994	Joseph Gorton	2003
						Lewis Bader	2003

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BILLBOARD of COMING EVENTS

January 20, 2004--January 25, 2004
Windjammers Unlimited 32nd
Annual Convention, Sarasota, Fla.

July 20, 2004 -- July 25, 2004
Windjammers Unlimited Summer
Meet, Poughkeepsie, New York

People of Note



Windjammers in the Woods
(Photo courtesy of Charlie Bennett)

NEW MEMBERS

And here is the latest listing of our newest members:

DONALD ROWE, 3452 West Birds Nest Drive, Beverly Hills, Florida 34465. Donald plays the trumpet as his primary instrument in the Kingdom of the Sun Concert Band, the Citrus Community Band, the Center Stage Band (an 18 piece 'Big Band' and the Jericho Band (a Christian Quintet). He knows Windjammers Pete and Kathy Marr and learned about Windjammers through them.

SAM HUDAK, 21 Roosevelt Avenue, Chicopee, Massachusetts 01013-2905. Sam, an embalmer, plays the euphonium as his primary instrument with the trombone as his secondary. He plays in the Northhampton Massachusetts Concert Band and the Italian Festival Band in Springfield, Massachusetts. He also is conductor of the Farmington Valley Band of Collinsville, Conn., The Pioneer Valley Concert Band of Chicopee/Springfield Mass. and the Northwest Convention Band of Torrington, Conn. He learned about Windjammers while scanning web sites for concert bands.

RICHARD SIEGLE, 5959 South 12th Street #1008, Tacoma, Washington 98465. Richard, who plays the snare drum is a museum facilities consultant and plays with the Northwest American Legion Band and the Sun City Pops Band. He is a collector of band recordings in the tape and CD formats. He knows Windjammer Rush Ward and learned about Windjammers through him.

RICHARD GENSKE, 9101 Steilacoom Road SE, Unit 33, Olympia, Washington 98513-6117. Richard, who is retired, plays the trombone in the New Horizons, the Olympia Concert, and the Puyallup Concert and the Washington State American Legion Bands. He collects band recordings in CD format and knows Windjammers Don Cooksey-, Rush Ward, Wayne Killian and Charles Sanders through the Airstream Bands. Richard says he loves circus music, and the four of them didn't have to twist his arm too much to convince him to join Windjammers.

STEVE EICHNER, 9470 Palm Island Circle, North Fort Myers, Florida 33903-5250. Steve is retired and plays the BBb Tuba in the Hafenskapell (a 20 piece German Band) and the Mox Nix Six (a 6 piece German Band). He learned about our group through Windjammer Bruce Orlin who also plays tuba in the 20 piece band.

ARMAND OLEVANO, 3621 Lyndale Drive, Endwell, New York 13760-2439. A professional musician, Orlando plays the trumpet and currently plays in two bands, Night Sounds, and The Jazz Exchange. He collects band recordings in all formats and knows Windjammers Robert Boettger and George Kotrch. He heard about Windjammers through friends.

GEE GEE ENGESSER, 6703 Bobwhite Court, Seffner, Florida 33584. Gee Gee doesn't play any musical instrument but definitely is an expert on the circus and circus business, first as a circus performer and now as an employee of Feld Entertainment, owner of the Ringling Circus, at their Tampa office. She collects tapes and CDs and joined Windjammers at the urgings of Chuck Schlarbaum.

ON REVIEW

'ROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE, Vintage yuletide favorites, The Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, Rick Benjamin, Conductor, RIALTO Recording 6004. Maybe purchased from Walking Frog Records, (WFR 632), P.O. Box 680, Oskaloosa, Iowa 52577, (641) 673-8397 at \$14.95 per CD

For those who are not familiar with the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra and its conductor, Rick Benjamin, a short paragraph is probably in order. Rick, is a musician's musician---tuba player, pianist, arranger and composer. He was fortunate enough to discover Arthur Pryor's society orchestra library in a building being torn down on the New Jersey shore. With his interest in the music of the early 1900's, Rick recruited some friends from Julliard and in 1985 founded the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, a turn of the century 11 piece "society" orchestra which bills itself as "...the world's only year-round professional ensemble specializing in the turn of the century music from ballrooms, silent cinema, and vaudeville. The group has toured extensively in 40 states and numerous countries overseas, and has made six CD's which display the the versatility of the organization.

Your reviewer begs the pardon of all readers in not reviewing the latest CD in time for purchase during the Christmas season, but although the title of the recording hints of the holiday season, the contents will be played year around by those who are aficionados of music from the era.

Among the selections included in the recording are:

Nutcracker Rag, A Sweet Travesty On Tchaikovsky. A "raggy" upscale version by Rick Benjamin of the *Nutcracker Suite*

Variations on "Oh Tannenbaum". Variations on the theme by the Australian cornetist Thomas Short, featuring variations by Piccolo, Clarinet, Cornet Duet, Trombone, cello and string bass trio and a string quartet.

Reindeer Rag. 1915 rag time composition by Joseph Lamb.

Halleljah (Chorus) Trombone. Henry Fillmore's great old smear.

Selections from Babes in Toyland. From Victor Herbert's operetta of 1903

The Tishomingo Blues. Spencer Williams 1918 fox trot

Parade of the Tin Soldiers. Novelty by Leon Jessel 1905

The Snow Baby. From Sousa'operetta *The Bride Elect* 1897

Four Christmas songs of the era sung by Jody Dall'Armi accompanied by the orchestra

The Night Before Christmas. Ballad by Ernest Ball 1912

Please Let Me Sleep. Vaudeville speciality by McPherson and Brown 1902

Mrs. Hooligans Christmas Cake. Music hall song Horn 1883

Mr. Santa Claus, Please Don't Forget Me. Parlor Song by Ellis 1887

'Round the Christmas Tree: Grand Yuletide Fantasia by Tobani 1908

If you are interested in music of 100 years ago, performed in a professional mode by a superb orchestra, get this recording. It will be something you can enjoy for yeras ahead.

THE CEDAR RAPIDS CIRCUS BAND



May 31, 2003 Windjammers and Friends of Windjammers Circus Band Musicians (Official Photo)

*Row 1 (L-R) (cl) Bill Laubengayer, Ralph LaComb, Nancy Olson
(Fl) Joan Jacob, Nancy Breed*

*Row 2 (L-R) (cl) Bob Sternowski (announcer), Robert Taube,
JoAnn Taube*

*Row 3 (L-R) (T-sax) Bill Bell, (A-sax) Jack Hicks, (trp) Nancy
Wombacher, Bob Byse, Don Stevens, Bob Miller, Milt Mikesch (dir.)*

*Row 4 (L-R) (Bar) Dwight Collison, Duane Olson, Mary Lou Pazour,
(F-horn) Diane McNulty, (T-bone) Dan Brindley, Janeen Morel,
Sam Callahan, Lizz Byse*

*Back Row (tubas) Bob Van Hal, Sid Blair, Chuck Stooksberry
(Percussion) Tanice Cumminax, Alan Lawrence*

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Row 4 (L-R) (Bar) Dwight Collison, Duane Olson, Mary Lou Pazour, (F-horn) Diane McNulty, (T-bone) Dan Brindley, Janeen Morel, Sam Callahan, Lizzy Byse

Back Row (tubas) Bob Van Hal, Sid Blair, Chuck Stooksberry (Percussion) Tanice Cummins, Alan Lawrence

OBITUARIES

RAY DCAMP

Ray DCamp, tubist and long time Windjammer from Danville, Indiana died on October 22, 2003. A longtime Windjammer, at the time of his death he was a member of the Brazil Concert Band and the Jackson Township Community Band of Brazil, Indiana. An Army veteran, he was a member of the 5th U.S. Army band during the 1950s.

An engineer by trade, he was an accomplished musician, and much sought after tubaist in many bands throughout his native state of Indiana. He will be remembered for the hundreds of Eb \piccolo parts that he transposed for persons playing the C piccolo, and for his collection of restored tubas and sousaphones.

He was a member of the DCamp Family Band, a group led by his brother Dr. Charles DCamp.

GLADYS (MARGE) ZINSMEISTER

Marge Zinsmeister, Windjammer, wife of Windjammer Oliver Zinsmeister and mother of Windjammer Carol Zinsmeister died on November 16, 2003 in Annapolis, Maryland. Although an extremely talented musician, she never played in any Windjammer Bands, but was faithful in attending all Windjammer conventions and meets, along with her husband of over 67 years, percussionist Ollie.

A graduate of The Eastman School of Music where she was the recipient of The George Eastman Scholarship, and was a professional organist at churches in the Washington, D. C. area for over 20 years she loved playing the organ and the piano.

Marge, with her wonderful personality and interest in music will be sorely missed at future Windjammer events.

RICHARD W. RYAN

Richard W. Ryan, of Mabel, Minnesota, a former member of long standing in Windjammers died on November 13, 2003 from injuries which he suffered 19 months earlier. An accomplished musician, Richard among other professions tuned pianos and played the cornet and alto horn in Windjammer Bands and many community bands in the Mabel area.

WINDJAMMER HEARTLAND HAPPENINGS

by
Charlie Bennett

Besides attending the "Big Shows" in Sarasota and Jamestown this season, Windjammer Members in the midwest had two other meets where they could toot their horns. In both events we worked in co-operation with the Circus Model Builders, a sister circus "buff" organization, a practice we have followed the past several years with benefits to both organizations.

In the spring Janeen Morel and Janice Cummings put together a band for a concert in Cedar Rapids, Iowa in connection with a display by the Circus Model Builders at a local mall. A 25 piece band of Windjammers augmented by some local talent, was the hit of the week-end.

In September, my wife Bev and I ventured cross country to the Model Builders national convention in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. On the way we spent a few days in the Louisville area, with Windjammer Ed Ballenger showing us regional highlights, one of these being a concert of the Danville Ky. Advocate Brass Band. The band, directed by George Foreman, is a group of fine musicians. In addition to the concert we were fortunate enough to catch a concert rehearsal of the band. The band has put out a number of CDs including a fine series dedicated to newspapers throughout the nation. I understand they have just completed another recording which will be released in the near future and which I certainly will add to my complete series of recordings by the band.

The last week-end in October marked another, "Windjammers in the Woods" meet with the Circus Model Builders in Ottumwa, Iowa. The band was well-rounded instrumentation-wise and we ran through a number of selections, with a Saturday concert for the Model Builders and town people. One of the features was a caliope "on the lot" playing sawdust favorites. Music for the event was furnished by Ed Ballenger, Janice Cummings and your scribe.

OTTUMWA BAND PERSONNEL

Bandmaster: Ed Ballenger

Ringmaster Charlie Bennett (Doubled as Equestrian Director)

Cornets:	Dick Thomas	Baritones:	Ed Ballenger
	Connie Thomas		Don Johnson
	Amy Elmore		Jay Kahn
	Charlie Bennett		Jim Weatherspoon
	Dale Thomas (Doubled on Horn)		
		Piccolo:	Sandy Hulbert
Trombones:	Keith Cooper		Bill Foster
	Mary Lu Graves		
	Janeen Morel	Tuba:	Bob Taube
			Bob Van Hal
Clarinets:	Jo Ann Taub		
Lenz	Carol Lenz	Percussion:	Janice Cummings
	Jim Mougey		Bob Unterreiner

(Continued)

WINDJAMMER HEARTLAND HAPPENINGS

(Continued)

Spouses present included Bennett, Ballenger, Johnson, Foster and Cummings. All of us had a good time telling stories (some of which may actually have been true), eating in the cookhouse, watching videos around the lodge fireplace in the evening and playing our horns. Of course we made our annual trip to the Barnhouse Company in Oskaloosa,, Iowa, where I always manage to find some new CDs to purchase,

SELECTIONS PERFORMED AT THE SATURDAY MORNING CONCERT

Overture: Big Four March, King
Spec: Al G. Barns Grand Entry, Post
Cat Act: Burma Patrol, King
 Abdallah, King
 Big Cage Galop, King
Clowns: Teddy Trombone, Fillmore
Dressage: Kentucky Sunrise, King
Elephants: Circusdom, Jewell
Clowns: Sally Trombone, Fillmore
Flyers: St. Julien, Hughes
 Roseland Waltz, Jewell
 Circus Days Galop, King
Finale: Sells Floto Triumphal, King
Chaser: Barnum & Bailey's Favorite, King

Among other selections polayed during the meet were: Junkman Rag, Nights of Gladness Waltz, Father of Victory, The Peacc Maker, Entry of the Heralds, Spirit of the West, and a number of selections out of several band boofks.

We plan on another get together in the woods next year, the last week-end in October, so mark your calendars!!

THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL (CONTINUED)

ROBERT RINGLING ASSUMES CONTROL

The 1943 season, Robert Ringling's first season as president of the circus, opened in New York. No effort was spared by the circus flacks in advertising the fact that a Ringling was now in charge of the Ringling Circus. Such leads as "Circus by Ringling", "Ringling's All" were incorporated in press releases, and Robert even went to the extent of removing John North's middle name "Ringling" from the list of members of the board. Robert made announcements promising that the "old" circus would return with 6 center poles, stages between the rings and tents of white canvas.

Despite his promises, the show continued producing the same type of show that John North had produced for the preceding 5 years. Robert retained Murray Anderson to produce the show, and in fact continued business much the same way John North had been doing. One of the persons that was let go was Art Concello who was replaced by his predecessor as manager, George Smith. One problem was solved when Robert, bowing to James Petrillo's demands, agreed to pay band members \$57.00 per week and the band was restored to the band stand. The most visible change that occurred after Robert succeeded John Ringling North was the return to the 6 pole big top.

The 1943 season was very successful, the show playing to huge audiences at all stands, even playing three shows per day in large cities such as Detroit.

For his part, John Ringling North, at liberty, on the outside of the circus looking in had no income other than what he was entitled to as co-executor of Uncle John's estate. It was during this period that he met Rudy Bundy, an orchestra leader whose orchestra was performing in Sarasota. They became fast friends and continued so until John North's death. During this same period John and Rudy formed a partnership and opened a night club, "M Toto" at the John Ringling Hotel in Sarasota, an enterprise that ran for over 10 years.

THE HARTFORD FIRE

The 1944 season followed the pattern of earlier seasons, opening in New York for the usual stand, and then going on the road. and playing various dates until reaching Hartford, Connecticut for a two day stand on July 5th and 6th. An audience of 8,000 had filed into the big top for a matinee performance on the opening day. The performance got under way with a cat act featuring May Kovar and the Wallendas were already on their rigging preparing for their act when a flame was observed in the corner of the big top. Sensing the danger, Merle Evans and the band immediately broke into the disaster march (*The Stars and Stripes Forever*) alerting circus personnel to the danger.

The entire tent was soon in flames, and was completely burned down in 5 or 6 minutes. The actual cause of the fire was never established, but there was ample evidence as to why the fire had spread so fast. Following the practice of a number of years, the Ringling show, as with most circuses, had water-proofed the big top by mixing melted paraffin with gasoline, and then brushing the mixture into the canvas. This practice certainly water-proofed the tent, but in no way did it fire-proof the tent. In fact, the practice undoubtedly caused the fire to spread faster than if there had been no water-proofing.

(CONTINUED)

THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

Merle Evans and the band continued to play *The Stars and Stripes Forever*, over and over until the quarter poles came crashing down around the band stand. The audience was bent on one thing getting out from the inferno which surrounded them. The final count was 167 persons, the majority of them being women and children, killed, either by the fire or by the mad rush for the entrances. No circus personnel were lost in the conflagration.

Immediately after the fire, public officials from Hartford started an investigation as to how the fire started and who, if anyone, was responsible for the tragedy. A hearing was conducted on July 6th by Commissioner Hickey with the public prosecutor in attendance. A large number of witnesses were questioned and the hearing continued all night, finishing at 5:00 AM on July 7th when the public prosecutor issued warrants charging five circus officials with manslaughter. They were:

James Haley, vice president of the circus. Haley an accountant who had advised both John North and Aubrey Ringling on financial matters and had just recently married Aubrey. He obviously belonged to the Robert Ringling group

George Smith, the manager of the circus

Leonard Aylesworth, the canvas boss who customarily circled the tent before each performance to ascertain the "seatmen" were positioned for fire safety, but who had been away from the show on the 5th of July on a trip to Massachusetts to lay out the lot for the next stand after Hartford.

Edward Versteeg was in charge of diesel generation of electricity for the show and was responsible for fire extinguishers at various places within the big top.

Deacon Blanchfield in charge of the four water trucks that were kept on stand-by in case of fire.

But where was the president of the show, Robert Ringling? He was at home in Evanston, Illinois and received news of the fire from Haley. When it became obvious that the lack of fire proofing caused the tent to literally explode, Ringling was quoted as stating that the fire would never have happened if the government had made fire-proofing compound available to the circus to use on the big top. His statement completely ignored the fact that Art Concello, after being fired from the Ringling Show by Robert had taken over as manager of the Clyde Beatty Circus in California and had been able to obtain enough of the fire-proofing mixture to treat the big top and in fact the circus in its run up the west coast, had "re-fire proofed" the tents with the compound every month to make sure they wouldn't burn.

Recognizing that there would be a tremendous number of suits against the circus based on the 167 deaths and 487 injuries, the board of directors approved, with John North voting no, to pledge every penny of profit from the circus to pay off fire claims that would be settled by arbitration. An office was established in Hartford, staffed by a circus attorney Edward Rogin and ten thousand dollars given to the Red Cross to help cover the cost of treating the burn victims.

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

Hartford officials impounded the circus and all of its equipment to insure that the show would meet its obligation to answer claims from the next of kin of those killed and those who were injured. The next question that had to be answered was what do you do with the circus? There was no unanimous proposal from the board. Robert wanted to finish out the season in open air stands, while John North wanted the circus to return to Sarasota and go into storage until the war was over.

North saw in the disaster, an opportunity to put the blame on his cousin Robert and his group by issuing statements in Florida indicating that Robert and his group were guilty of negligence. This was echoed by Robert's sister Hester, who when she heard the news of the fire, broke down and said that she knew "it would happen!"

The circus then surrendered to officials in Hartford \$380,000 in cash; two fire insurance policies worth \$125,000 each, and promised to devote their Lloyds of London policy to pay claims arising out of the fire. The court approved this arrangement and the circus was permitted to leave town, one section going to Sarasota, and the other section going to Akron, Ohio to begin the open air performances.

The next chapter in the Hartford fire occurred in March of 1945 when the 5 defendants were brought to trial. Each man was charged with 10 counts of involuntary manslaughter. Attorneys for the defendants (retained by the circus) entered nolo contendere (no contest) pleas, and indicated that there was in effect an informal agreement whereby the circus would pay all claims and the defendants would not receive sentences to confinement, the theory being that the circus could not function unless the defendants were able to travel with the show.

The judge would have none of this reasoning and found all of the defendants guilty and fined the circus \$10,000 for negligence. The court granted a stay in the proceedings until April 6th, so that the defendants could get the show on the road for the 1945 season before ordering execution of the sentences. He also permitted testimony and arguments on the sentences on the execution date.

April 6, 1945 brought both Robert Ringling and John Ringling North to the court room to offer testimony. Robert stated flatly that the 5 defendants were practically indispensable to the circus and without their help, the operation of the circus would be jeopardized. With regard to Vice President James Haley, he merely stated that Haley was a great help to him.

For his part, John Ringling testified that none of the five were indispensable in the operation of the circus, naming people that were available and could replace the defendants on the show. He testified that he himself, was thinking of bringing suit against the current executives for mismanagement of the circus. When asked by the defense if he was unfriendly with Robert Ringling's administration of the circus, he freely admitted he was. He also testified that his vote as a board member against the arbitration agreement was not based on principle, but on certain provisions in it.

Each of the defendants was permitted to address the court and the court then proceeded to sentence the defendants. Haley, Smith, Versteeg and Aylesworth each received a sentence of a year and a day, with the possibility of parole at the end of eight to ten months; Blanchfield, who had testified before the judge that he wasn't an indispensable circus employee must have impressed the judge, for he "walked" after the judge revoked his sentence completely.

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

RAMIFICATIONS FOLLOWING THE HARTFORD FIRE

Former Vice President James Haley, finding himself serving a prison sentence soon developed bad feelings concerning Robert Ringling and the fact that Ringling let him take the "rap" for the fire without coming to his rescue and soon switched sides to the "Anti-Robert" group.

John Ringling North capitalized on this feeling by visiting Haley in prison and establishing a rapport with him, with the ultimate aim of removing Robert Ringling from control of the circus. This could only be accomplished by using the stock North, as co-executor of the John Ringling estate controlled and the stock that Haley's wife, Aubrey controlled. The occasion to do so occurred in the 1946 meeting of the board of directors following a set-to between Haley and Robert Ringling. At the meeting Haley appeared with a power of attorney from his wife Aubrey, entitling him to vote her shares of stock at the meeting. Teaming with John North, the two voted Haley in as president with John North as first vice president. Robert Ringling was downgraded to a meaningless position, the newly elected officers adjourned the meeting and took control of the circus, firing a number of executive employees that were "Robert People" and bringing back to the show such famous individuals as the clown Felix Adler who had been dismissed by Robert for playing winter dates at other circuses when the Ringling Show was in winter quarters. Under John North's direction the 1946 season was a winner in every sense of the word.

The Robert Ringling camp did not take their defeat at the board of directors meeting lightly. Robert and Edith immediately mounted a legal war to regain control of the show. The ultimate law suit was one filed alleging that Aubrey had violated the terms of the "Ladies Agreement" by giving a power of attorney to her husband James Haley to vote her shares instead of following the 1941 "Ladies Agreement" wherein both Aubrey and Edith had promised each other to vote their stock together and if they couldn't agree as to how the stock should be voted, to turn the matter over to Attorney Loos who would vote the shares.

The case came on for hearing and the court found for Robert and Edith, in effect holding that the election of Haley as president was invalid. On appeal, the decision was affirmed and Robert obtained a court order that required another meeting of the board of directors. The meeting was held on June 6, 1946 in Washington, D. C. Robert's victory in attempting to overturn the actions of the earlier meeting was an extremely hollow one. The two ladies, Edith and Aubrey, could not agree as to how their shares should be voted, so Attorney Loos, under the agreement, voted the stock for the Haley-North slate and Robert and Edith again were out in the cold.

The year (1946) also witnessed a fight over the disposition of the 300 shares of stock in the John Ringling estate. The State of Florida, the ultimate beneficiary under the will, faced estate debts, executor fees, and attorney fees in excess of \$3,000,000 with a total value of all assets approximating \$3,400,000. Florida was anxious to get out of the circus business and close the estate. The secretary of State of Florida suggested that the shares of circus stock owned by the estate amounting to 30% of the total stock, and valued at \$500,000, be sold. North made an offer of \$500,000 for the circus stock and agreed to forfeit all executor fees and assume all liens against the estate, and would receive all the assets of the estate. Robert and his mother Edith submitted a bid approximating that of John North's,

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

but the state of Florida turned both offers down. A year later John North, after making several other unsuccessful bids, finally succeeded in making a modified offer which the State of Florida accepted.

With the shares which John North received from the estate in the deal, he still did not have 51% of the shares and he had another problem. North and Jim Haley had come to the parting of the ways over expenditures the circus was making to hire John Murray Anderson lay out the shows. As a result, Haley switched sides and moved into Edith and Robert's corner on circus matters.

The hostility between Edith and John North cooled for several reason---her son Robert had suffered a heart attack and was in poor physical shape and John North during his tenure in operating the circus had financially successful seasons which the share holders, Edith among them, appreciated. The Haley's tiring of the constant warfare over circus management, decided to sell Aubrey's shares of stock which they did, John North acquiring sufficient shares to give him 510 shares with Edith and Robert holding 490 shares. After the deal had been struck, John North, still short of funds, called Art Concello, and told him he could have his old job as General Manager of the circus back, but that North, needed \$100,000 which he wanted to borrow from Concello. Concello immediately sold the Clyde Beatty circus which he owned and was operating, and headed for Atlanta, Georgia where the transfer was to take place. On October 27, 1947, John Ringling North took over the show, owning 51% of the stock, thanks to the money from Concello, and immediately installed him as manager, firing George Smith. James Haley returned to Sarasota, ran for Congress and was elected to 11 successive terms.

JOHN RINGLING NORTH'S SECOND REGIME

Concello immediately took the reins of the show and brought about a number of changes, most of them extremely beneficial to the circus. For his part John North sat back and let Concello run the circus. Art's entire program involved "streamlining" some of the venerable circus traditions and methods of operation. For example he started using tractors instead of horses to load and unload the circus trains, changed the center ring poles from Douglas fir to aluminum, cut the train was from 108 cars in 1947 to 70 cars in 1951, and invented the seat wagon.

The seat wagon containing rows of seats that were attached to a platform and folded out providing seating for spectators without having to go through the laborious process of putting knocked down seats together each day, then taking them down each night as the show moved, Concello designed the seat wagons and proposed that the show invest in them. John North thought they were a great idea, but didn't have the funds to invest in purchasing the wagons. Art Concello, stepped forward with the necessary money and the seats were constructed and leased to the circus with Concello receiving the annual fees for the use of the wagons.

John North paid little or no attention in the day to day operation of the circus, leaving it entirely in the hands of Concello. North's only contact was an occasional call to Concello to insure that the books were in the black.

For his part North seemed content to keep his hands on the staging of the annual productions, each

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

one costing more than the one the year before. Nevertheless, the circus did very well financially during the 1946 season, and turned \$1,000,000 over to the Hartford fire fund at the close of the season. North sought to reduce the annual payment to the fire fund to \$100,000 per year but changed his mind after objections from Hartford. The entire fire fund of over \$3,900,00 was finally paid off in 1950.

With the circus under the direction of Concello, North began spending more and more time in Europe where he allegedly was looking for acts to sign. For his part, Concello ran a tight "ship" cutting unnecessary expenditures in the actual operation of the show, and managed to make a small profit annually, only to see North's cost of the staging new shows increasing yearly.

The cost of operating the show was increasing by leaps and bounds with the show carrying over 1200 employees from town to town on 100 railroad cars, feeding them, renting a 14 acre lot, and Concello was constantly trying to reduce the cost of operation of the show. One of his favorite targets was the train and he constantly was attempting to reduce the number of cars, much to the consternation of John North who wanted to continue with the 100 car trains. The cost of moving the show by rail in 1942 amounted to \$115,000. By 1956, the cost was \$600,000. Art persisted in his desire to cut the size of the train, by 20. In fact he dropped North's private car, the Jomar from the train for two years, much to the consternation of North. At the end of the 1953 Season, North informed Concello that he wanted 10 more cars on the train plus an additional 100 laborers and the issue was joined, ending with Concello's resignation from the circus in January 1953.

John North took over the actual reins of running the circus and hired a number of managerial people who had been let go over the years. One of the first rehired was North's good friend, orchestra leader Rudy Bundy who eventually was made a vice-president and stayed with the show until it was sold. Another was George Smith the ex-general manager who did "time" as a result of the Hartford fire.

The 1954 season was a great one financially, but was beset with problems. The management of Madison Square Garden raised the daily rental fee of the Garden from \$6,000 to \$10,000 plus an additional \$200 per day when air conditioning was needed. The circus even had to borrow money from Madison Square Garden to pay the railroad cost of moving the show from Florida to New York.

Another problem was beginning to surface--television-- which was featuring all sorts of circus acts as part of television programming, thus giving viewers the opportunity to see, at no cost, the same performers they would pay money to see at the circus.

Newcomers were added to the staff of the show. An individual named Michael Burke, whose sole tie to the circus was his friendship with Henry North was hired as general manager, and became involved in the operation of the show despite his protestation that he knew nothing at all about circuses.

In 1955 the circus debuted at Madison Square Garden to excellent press reviews and a record breaking advance ticket sale. But, trouble was never too far away from North and the circus. The year's biggest problem occurred in St Paul.

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

Over the years a racket had persisted in the circus involving grifters, employed by the show who would sell the same ticket several times for the same performance by simply not turning in the ticket when the initial purchaser surrendered the ticket when entering the show. This type "grifting" was known to management and it was assumed that the reason it continued was that some people in the higher echelon were receiving a pay off to allow the practice to continue.

Michael Burke wanted to put a stop to the practice and told Frank McClosky, manager of the show, and two of his cohorts to put a stop to the "grifting" which they did not do. Burke called the three to his office just before an evening performance in St Paul and told them they were fired. They told him that without them, no show would go on that night. He ordered them off the lot..

At that point the entire show broke down as the rank and file of the labor force walked off the lot, leaving the audience sitting in the big top with nothing to watch.. Faced with an empty tent and no laborers to tear it down, North turned to the show's "fixer" who knew some of the leaders of the laborers' and sent word for them to come and strike the tents.

The show continued its tour through the middle west and wound up in San Francisco where more labor trouble awaited the show. McClosky after being fired went to Jimmie Hoffa and lodged a complaint against the circus. On reaching San Francisco, North found a lot of labor unrest. The show had to run the gambit of 2000 longshoremen and teamsters as the circus left the Cow Palace in San Francisco to load the train for the trip to Los Angeles.

North was beset with lawsuits for unpaid bills in addition to the labor problems the show faced. At the end of the season, the circus found itself one million dollars short of the "nut" for 1955. Other problems loomed when Merle Evans, elephant trainer Hugo Schmidt and vocalist Harold Runk left the show.

The 1956 season was bad news from the very beginning. Upon reaching New York for the opening, the show found itself being picketed by Hoffa's teamsters with some performers refusing to cross the picket line. Laborers would quit the show, and a day or so later hire back again, only to quit several days after returning. The new "band leader", Izzy Cerovone, added violins to the ensemble and turned from traditional circus music to "pop" tunes. Elephants stampeded, Hoffa's men slashed tires, labor was so unreliable that matinees were constantly late, and the crowning blow was when Burke was arrested in Buffalo, New York for "labor violations."

The final chord for the circus under the big top sounded in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, when North decided the show would go back to Sarasota, canceling the rest of the 1956 season, but announcing the show would open in April 1957 and play solely at indoor arenas.

North's action was met with a fire storm of protest from circus lovers across the nation and from members of the Ringling family, who blamed North for his mismanagement of the show. This feeling of the Ringling relatives soon progressed to the point that a law suit was considered. For his part, North offered to purchase all the circus stock the various family members owned, but his offer was quickly turned down by the family group which wanted to see the show under canvas again.

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

ART CONCELLO RETURNS

Having committed himself to the future operation of the circus in indoor arenas, John North looked for help to supervise the modification. He turned to the one person he knew could handle the operation, Art Concello. For his part Art played hard to get, and finally accepted the position as executive director, with a seat on the board of directors and 10 per cent of the stock of the show.

With a deficit of \$1,800,000, the show was forced to retrench so far as North's expenditures were concerned. Concello trimmed the daily operating "nut" to one-third of what it had been, reduced the number of paid employees including performers to less than 300, and eliminated the trains and tents, moving the circus by trucks.

The various changes introduced by Concello did little to change the financial picture of the circus, and John Ringling brother Henry, and Art Concello were soon back in the public's eye when Aunt Hester Ringling Sanford filed a suit against the them seeking \$20,000,000 in damages for mismanagement of the circus. The suit alleged that John North had closed the circus without permission of the board; had raided the treasury of the show by charging his personal expenditures to the show and that the three had countenanced grifting on the show. A month later, another suit, making the same allegations was filed by the assorted cousins of the Norths, which in turn was followed by a second suit by Aunt Hester seeking to have John North removed as executor of the John Ringling estate, alleging that he hadn't followed the terms of the will and had failed to make annual payments to the heirs from the estate.

Intra-family litigation continued into 1958 when the cousins et. al. filed an action seeking an injunction restraining John North and Concello from selling the train, destroying circus equipment and wagons, and an order prohibiting the circus from sending a smaller unit to Great Britain for a tour. At the same time, the group appealed to the American public for support in returning the show to the Big Top.

The seemingly endless litigation came to a stop in the last days of 1958 when it was disclosed that the circus had made a profit during the year. Again, in 1959 the show turned a profit, and apparently the relatives' ire were soothed somewhat.

During the years 1960 and 1961 the circus made money. During 1961 a special unit was sent to South America to play in the larger cities with great success. During this entire period (1958--1961) John North, spending more and more time in Europe, withdrew from actual management of the show, leaving things in the hands of Art Concello. In 1962, North and Concello signed an agreement with the 1963 World's Fair to produce a one ring circus for the fair beginning in 1964.

During this period John North kept arguing with Concello over a special unit that North felt would be a success in Europe. Discussions concerning this unit went on for server years until Concello finally gave up and went along with the proposal. The show opened in France to moderate acclaim in 1963, but soon had a number of problems. The European edition became a point of conflict between

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

North and Concello, the biggest problem being the name of the show which Concello had dubbed "Ringling's Barnum and Bailey" a title which North detested. After having a heated discussion on the fate of the show, Concello told North he had to get back to New York to go to work on the World's Fair show. He packed and as he was leaving was informed by one of the executives of the show that North had just fired him.

Concello returned to Sarasota where he sought payment of \$40,000 in back wages which were due him. He ultimately had to file suit against the circus to recover his back wages. In the meantime, the World's Fair officials were worried about their contract. Although no longer a Ringling employee, Concello stepped in the breach and for \$50,000 got the circus together, ready to show.

JOHN RINGLING NORTH'S THIRD REGIME

Without Art Concello at the helm, John North soon was back in the creative end of the circus. He appointed Rudy Bundy Vice President and special assistant, his brother Henry, Vice President, and in a return to the "good old days" purchased a 22 car train for the show's travels. He also had the foresight to retain some of the tried and true circus employees to run the show.

For his part he spent an increasing amount of time in Europe, even going behind the iron curtain to sign new acts, and in the period 1964 through 1968, introduced over 100 new acts from Europe to American audiences. There is no argument but what this four year period marked the high point in John North's career as a circus impresario.

As the years rolled by, North thought more and more about retiring. He once said that his litigious relatives bothered him constantly. There were a number of cousins, nieces and nephews, most of them recipients of yearly stipends from the various trusts, who were constantly filing suits, none of them having any interest whatsoever in running the circus.

Over the years there had been a number of putative offers for the circus none of which met with North's idea of what the circus was actually worth. For quite some time two brothers in Washington, D. C. Irvin and Israel Feld who had been booking dates for the Ringling show were interested, but lacked the funds. Eventually, the Felds, with the assistance of their monied partner, Judge Roy Hofeinz, owner of the Houston Astrodome, offered to buy the circus for \$8,000,000. The offer was finally accepted after North bought back the shares that Art Concello had been given when he came back to work with North in 1957 and in November 1967, after 83 years of operation by the Ringling family, the show passed to its new owners.

POSTSCRIPT

The Felds had asked John North to continue to produce the yearly shows, and he continued to do for several years, but was slowly edged out. In 1971 the Hofeinz-Feld group sold the circus to Mattel, Inc, which formed the basis of a suit by the Ringling heirs alleging that in the deal, Mattel had overstated the value of its stock, which was part of the purchase. A settlement was worked out, providing that

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THE RINGLINGS--THEIR RISE AND THEIR FALL

damages in the amount of \$30,000,000 be awarded the plaintiffs. The Felds subsequently purchased the show back from Mattel and have operated the show since.

For his part, North continued his *bon vivant* life, in Europe with visits to the United States annually. He visited the circus performances several times and was so upset that he told friends that the show had to be saved by his purchase of the circus--an idea that died quickly when he learned of the financial status of the show.

He told family members and friends that he sold the show solely to be free from the constant feuding with family members, and that if he could have purchased the shares the relatives owned, he would still be the owner of the circus.

The life of John Ringling North came to an end on June 4, 1985 in his suite at the Brussels Hilton Hotel as he was preparing to dine at the finest restaurant in the city, and the chapter relating to his life as a circus impresario ended.

The death of John North apparently didn't cause an armistice in the legal battles of the Ringling clan. The final one occurred in 1990 when Henry North sought to bury the bodies of his Uncle John Aunt Mabel and his mother Ida North on the Museum grounds in Sarasota. The suit was lodged by relatives who argued that Ida (mother of John Ringling North and Henry North) had nothing to do with the circus and should not be buried on Museum grounds. The courts finally granted permission for all three to be interred at the museum,

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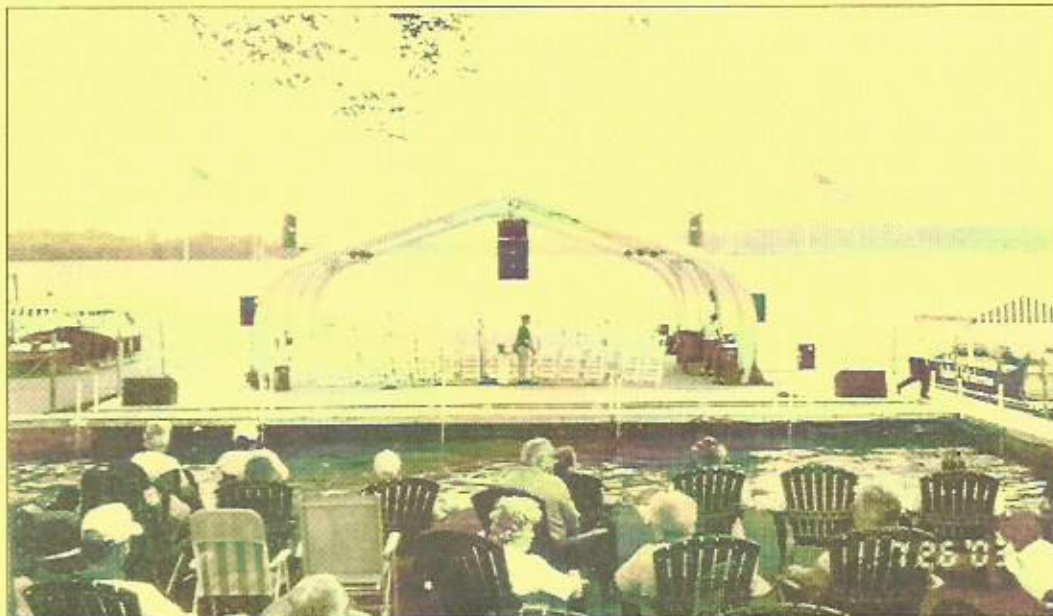
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MORE PICS FROM THE JAMESTOWN MEET



Where's the band. Vacant float, sight of Bemis Point Concert.
Photo courtesy of Warren Wilson



Hank Carr conducting the ice cream band at the ice cream shoppe at Bemis Point.
Photo courtesy of Stan Howell

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2004 Dues Reminder

Just a reminder that all memberships expire on December 31 of each year. The Board of Trustees voted an increase in dues beginning with 2004. This is the first dues increase in 13 years. The new dues are as follows:

Individual Membership - \$20
Family Membership - \$27

Canadian Individual Membership - \$27

For your convenience, a return envelope is enclosed.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Montgomery', written in a cursive style.

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