

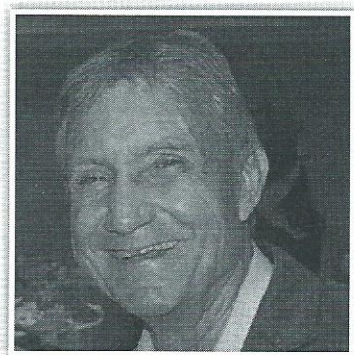
WINDJAMMERS HALL OF FAME

At the banquet close of the 45th Annual Windjammers Unlimited Convention, Charles Conrad, Chair of the Windjammer Hall of Fame Committee, announced two new Hall of Fame inductees for 2017. They are Keith Greene and Paul Edmund Bierley.

Keith Greene (2017 Inductee)

Keith Greene has been involved in creating and performing circus music since 1973, when he joined Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus as a touring lead trumpet player. He was pressed into duty as the conductor as well as trumpet soloist when the conductor was sidelined with a heart attack. He did a great job, and continued in the position for 27 years! Keith's brilliant trumpet solos and spectacular high range ability became a hallmark of the Red Unit, and they often featured big trumpet solos made famous by Maynard Ferguson and Doc Severinsen. Since leaving the full-time touring world, Keith has written, produced and performed circus music for many shows and special events.

We were honored to have Keith present at our banquet and he was quite surprised to be pressed into service as our after-dinner speaker. He was quite humorous and enlightening. He stayed several hours afterwards talking to Windjammers members.



For Keith Greene, life is a 3-ring circus band

by Jay Sharbutt (1941-1992), The Associated Press; Reprinted from *Chicago Tribune* June 3, 1979

New York - Keith Greene always thought he'd be a jazz musician. That is, until the circus came to town and he was asked to sit in and play lead trumpet for a few weeks. He has been doing it for six years. He now also leads the 15-piece band of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. He was on vacation back home in North Carolina when he first joined it.

Before that, Greene, 33, had studied jazz at the famed Berklee School of Music in Boston, then worked in groups led by Art Mooney and Dixieland pianist Billy Maxted. "I had no idea I'd ever be playing with the circus," says the trumpeter, who has turned down offers to join the big bands of such jazz stars as Buddy Rich, Woody Herman, and Maynard Ferguson. "The circus was not what I had in mind for my future at the time. I wanted to play on the big band circuit, and hoped someday I'd have my own band, or work in the recording studios." But he found circus work a constant challenge and enjoyed the camaraderie. And he wasn't on "the road," the grueling string of one-nighters and long bus rides that are the lot of big bands. True, he travels -- 29 cities this year -- but he doesn't pack and unpack, check in and out of hotels. He lives on the circus train in a large, spacious compartment complete with kitchen. "It's a home on wheels, he says. "You go to bed Sunday night, you wake up Monday in the next town."

He spoke while recuperating, in a sense, from the three-hour shows he has been playing twice a day, three times on Saturdays, here in Madison Square Garden. It's said circus music is the most difficult of all, particularly for trumpeters. You need chops of steel to handle the extremes in range and tempo. You've got to play long, loud, and often very high.

"There's nothing to compare with it," agrees Greene, who, on the song "Feelings", soars up to a C above high C, which for lesser trumpeters can cause hernias -- or at least a lip blowout. "This is definitely a musician's job. You've got to be in shape. We've had ambulances come in and pick up four or five guys with heart attacks and strokes, just from working the job."



His band has five full-time members. He hires 10 more local musicians in the cities in which the band plays. The band plays 300 pieces of music per show, backing acts that range from the Flying Farfans of Chile to Gunther Gebel-Williams' 20-beast animal show. Constant change is the name of the game.

There are show tunes, rock songs, waltzes, and marches. Now, Greene is even writing an arrangement of "Give It One," first played by high-note trumpeter Maynard Ferguson, on which he'll solo. Of course, it's a jazz piece. "It never crossed my mind," he said in his soft drawl. "If anyone had told me I'd be playing with the circus one day, I would have said, 'You're crazy.' Straight-ahead jazz was all I wanted to do."

Backstage At The Big Top: Look, There's The Band!

By Mike Holtzclaw, Reprinted with permission from *Daily Press* March 5, 1999

Thousands of people flock to the arena for every performance of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. And every so often, after all the animals and acrobats and clowns have gone away, one of those spectators will glance into the darkest corner of the building. "We see the people leaving," Keith Greene says. "and sometimes you'll see someone look back and say, 'Look, there's the band!'"

That's all the recognition necessary for Greene, who plays trumpet. Amid the bright lights and visual spectacles of the circus, the band is strictly background. You never notice the music, Greene says, but you would definitely notice if it were not there. A new score - mixing dramatic crescendos and quieter lulls in order to accent the performances in the three rings - is composed for each tour. The music is performed live and nonstop by a nine-piece band of trained jazz players who must stick to

their sheet music even as the drummer spontaneously throws in drum rolls and cymbal clashes to punctuate the high-wire acts.

It was at a circus stop at his native Asheboro, N.C., that Greene first played trumpet with the band. He figured he would sit in for a few gigs, but when the musical director had a heart attack about a week later, Greene took over. He's been at it ever since - "through 26 years and three wives," he boasts. And he still enjoys every minute.

"It beats work - the money is great and the music is challenging," says Greene, 53. "It takes a lot of endurance; every bar has a different meter, and the keys are hard keys. We enjoy playing together so much that sometimes late at night, we'll come in here after everyone's gone and just jam."