the
circus

*Harvey is Rick

Friday, May 28 - 65

Dear Lonnie - thanks for the letter.
The owner of the Beatty circus sent his chauffeur down to Washington for us — in an air-conditioned $10,000 Cadillac, just as promised. There wasn't room for most of our things including your stuff — and we left a note for Jean to send it collect by Railway Express. She never has yet

We are advertised as the world's greatest knife-throwing act. Yesterday they took pictures of the acts, all together in a group. May send you one later. - Then it's a great.

No word yet if our act will go on the road with the circus or not. They are full up — wanted to "beef up" their show for Philadelphia. So — ? - They had no way to carry us. We have no car. So, today

Mr Fuller, expecting the our whole family as he saw it in Hyattsville, had a beautiful motel room ready for us — at $17.00 a day. Ha Ha! TV & all. We took another smaller room.

We've been here a week. To tell you all the action that has occurred, would entail writing a full length book.

Look, we need a permanent address so agents can contact us. I'm going to give you as my permanent address, & you forward my mail to me. Okay?
For instance the father of our great flying trapeze act — all his sons & daughters (he's a clown) — wants to get us booked with Mexico's biggest circus in Mexico City - Bell Circus for a month there. But he'll need a permanent addr to contact me. cause I'll be gone from here.

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Our day goes like this: Flag goes up (red) in front of cook tent at 12 noon, which is signal for all performers to go eat. Food is excellent. All you want, plus big pitchers of hot coffee. Beau has been too excited to eat. From doing absolutely nothing in Washington, to doing everything here, has lit him up like a light-bulb.

We have a 12:30 to 1:00 show call - we go to our giant tent (this isn't what you saw at Hyattsville - really 4 or 5 of these are combined giant shows - circuses) and go onto our stage, where our board is set up. Inside the tent it looks like this:

Sun. May 30 — Jean hasn't sent our things yet!

(Last nite while Bobo The Rubber Man was doing his act one of the marks (crowd) jumped on his platform and heckled him. So Bobo picked up his barrel and hit the mark on the head with it, knocking him off the platform.)

Let's take the acts. See page 2 — the chart.

Bobo is very famous, written up by Ripley's Believe It or Not. He's from the Ringling Circus, where he was Emmet Kelly's partner. One thing he does is step inside a narrow barrel, bend over, put his head, shoulders & arms down inside the barrel — & push the barrel up over him. He somehows gets both legs up back of him — back of his shoulders — and swings on his hands. He's without a doubt one of the world's best contortionists. He filled us in a lot on psychology of the crowds, how they think & act.

Now pass on to Myrtina, The Electric Girl's platform. She's a pretty blond in gold tights, who stands on a plate which charges her up with electricity. If you hand her a light bulb it lights up. If you touch a kerosene-loaded torch to her hand or tongue — it bursts into flame. Lots of things like that.

Sealo is advertised as Half-man half-seal. He was born with little teensy flippers attached to his shoulders. He's very happy, shows the crowd how he shaves and eats, etc (he's a regular sleight-of-hand artist with those flippers.) Also he's the "circus philosopher." All the acts like to hang around Sealo's stand because he's always so happy & jolly. He's really so. (Sealo keeps yelling at Bo and flipping him the wrong gun.)

Buck is the Giant. He's also crazy about Bo and picks him up and plays with him constantly. He's 8½ feet tall & at our eating table in the cookhouse he sits in the center and can reach any part or end of the table. You'll see Buck The Giant Sealo & all the rest soon as I get this pic copied & send it to you.

Buck was in Disney's movie "Jack & Beanstalk".

Bristy is the priest Fire Eater in the world. Any of the most difficult fire-eating tricks he can do. Last year he told us he was badly burned in Canada doing the "blast" — this for fire eater is like a triple-somersalt to the trapeze people. To do the blast he fills his mouth with a whisky glass of gasoline and somehow spews it out in a way where he lights it with his torches. In Canada, just as he shrayed it

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± and the wind blew them the tent & blew the flames back onto him — burning off all his hair, etc, & roasting his face.

Steel, the magician, came from the Ringling Circus. A 25-yr. old kid, he was "inside talker" on the mike — directing the crowds from act to act. Unfortunately his act came just before ours. Every time he did his act the crowd would walk away from him, half-way thru his act, to our platform, wanting to see the knives. This made him furious, and the first two days he'd cut our act short on purpose. Jealous. We'd do knives around & set up for teeth balloon or blindfold — & he'd send the crowd on. But the manager got him straightened out.

Then some brunette he liked in the crowd dated him one night. She was married. He "went to New York" the next day. The following day, when he "got back" the husband & the girl's father were at the circus gunning for him. The girl had vanished. She hasn't been found yet. Evidently he's a good magician.

Next act — Bogardo & Lovella. My knives in that champagne bucket I bought — look good. Also Peanuts (I'll get to him) loaned me 10 knives he used to use. We'd open with knives around (10 knives covering board.) Then teeth balloon. Then blindfold. We did the shield a few times. We only had time for 2-3 stunts. They use code words. Manager walks around in front of each platform & holds his fingers close together means "short act" — "fast" — because the crowd must tip he rushed to the Blade Box, where they make extra money. If he stretches his fingers far apart, means do a long act. If they say over the mike "Is Johnny Robinson in the crowd" then all acts do short acts, to rush the tip out to make room for a new tip.

Bo was a hell of a problem. First two days Martha would hold him back of the platform until our act began, then we'd ask a nearby act to hold him until we finished. Finally we discovered if we put him down in the center of the tent he'd play & run & watch the acts — & we could watch him from the platform. Everybody was crazy about him, & they'd keep an eye on him too. If he tried to sneak out the front of the tent then Duke, the Hawaiian, beating the tom-toms, would shoo him back inside. Once

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grabbed one of the Duke's tom-tom sticks away from him & the Duke had to chase him all over the tent to get it back. So finally (he's very sharp) discovered by watching a kids trying to sneak under the tent in, that he could lift the tent & sneak out. Boy! First time he vanished we found him on a kiddy-ride outside, having a ball. He just went over & got in a car & rode & rode & rode. The operators nearly died laughing. They all got to know him cause Martha took him on all the pony rides, car rides etc (they had so different rides.) Bo would swagger around the tent like a grown up man, beaming at people, petting babies. One colored woman had a pretty 2 yr. old colored girl by the hand. Bo grimy dirty by this time in late afternoon, walked over to the little girl. Her face lighted up in a big smile & she held out her tiny hand. Bo took her hand and the 3 went hand in hand around the tent. Finally a colored teenager son of the colored woman came into the tent & went up to his mother. He saw Bo, his face registered utter astonishment, & he pointed a finger at Bo & yelled "Where did he come from?" Only once did Bo elude us. I searched high & low. Finally went to the police van. There he was sitting in a chair, calmly jabbering in that Chinese way of his at the cops. I identified myself and one cop said to me, "This is impossible, Bogardé. Your boy is talking Korean!" I said ha ha. But he was serious. "He absolutely is," he said. "I spent years in Korea, I talk in Korean to him & he answers me." You figure that one out.

During the day a half-dozen cops clambered onto our platform, at my invitation, put down their billy clubs, & learned knife-throwing. They ate it up. And they told me things about their work. In the race riots here weeks ago negros ~~trouble~~ dumped bushel baskets of bricks off the roof tops onto the cops below. One cop is in the hospital from being struck by the bricks, not expected to live. Then the negros poured Drano down onto the cops. De Feo, who told me about it, had a shot gun at the ti

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+ was on the roof tops trying to get these negros. One day they caught a negro who had just flung a can of Drano down onto some cops. De Feo's partner was real mad about it and when their sergeant hollered up from the street, "Get that damn Drano-thrower down here fast" De Feo's partner picked up the negro + threw him off the roof into the street below. They told me many fascinating stories, while I taught them.

Next act, Tiny The Fat Man. 6 ft 3, 762 lbs. Bad-tempered, hates people. He just sits there + sells pictures. They had to pile 15 coke cases together to make a chair for him. Tiny is not jolly. One day he slowly laboriously got himself off the platform and massively moved to the coolhouse for lunch. But they were an hour late. So he bawled out the cook. (Now, he eats a loaf of bread, 2 dozen eggs, 2 lbs. of bacon, and 3 pots of coffee just for breakfast.) Well the cook complained to the manager, + the manager told Tiny to apologize to the cook. Tiny refused to do so, and from that time on refused to eat in the coolhouse. He'd wait until the show was over, then take a cab downtown + eat somewhere. We knew how this hurt Tiny, because he's the tightest man with a dime you've ever seen. On last day he astonished all the acts by holding out his hand to little Bo, who took it, and Tiny shook his little hand with a smile. Since Tiny is cold as ice, this puzzled everybody, including us.

Next, The Count, one of our best friends. Colored, colorful, tremendous personality. Been all over the world. Uses a special table with heavy iron legs. To fast jazz music he leaps onto the table on roller skates and tap dances + roller skates like mad. A terrific entertainer. He held Bo for us the most.

Now, Peanuts came next, until he got fired, and that's quite a story. Peanuts swallowed bayonets, clothes hangers, swords, etc. In addition with wild eyes, he'd dash off between shows to the

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nearest bar and drink. He also drank some kind of dope. He had a rep as a bad, very bad man. But he quickly made friends with me. (What I didn't know was he wanted to take over our knife act.) He took me to his car and took out 10 knives he had made & used. Told me to use them - that his eyes were bad. I said I'd buy them. He said, well, I could use the knives during my stint, and he'd consider selling them to me. Two days later, before my show, he asked for his knives - said he'd like to practise on my board. I gave them them to him but he went out to his car. At showtime he came in and handed them to me in a stack. I put the stack in my bucket & went on to do the show. On the 3rd throw I felt terrific pain in my fingers. There I was, halfway thru knives around, about 300 people watching us. I glanced down & saw two fingers ripped open, deep. Without pausing I grinned at the crowd to cover my slight pause, licked my fingers to get up the blood, & proceeded to finish the act. After the crowd passed on I went to the board & examined that 3rd knife, which had bounced out of the board. Peanuts had taken pliers and twisted the point around so that there were two razor-sharp projections guaranteed to ruin any hand. I used PK instantly, and the cuts were completely healed within hours. Naturally the shows couldn't stop, so I adapted a grip utilizing other fingers. I called Len asst. mgr. over, showed him the gaffed knife. Then came the double-cross. He went to Peanuts, bought the knives for himself (discovered he wanted to start a knife act - he'd been showing me handcuff escapes in exchange for knife lessons.) Then they fired Peanuts. This made me furious, because I'd been double-crossed. I feel sorry for anyone using those knives after this - & was spitting enough when I left to warn Len that those knives had better not be used around a live target. You understand?

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3)

Next, the Blade Box. A pretty girl gets in the box and 13 long swords are run thru it at every angle. Then for a time the crowd can walk back of the box & see how the girl has eluded the knives.

This is a real money-maker. Worked fine until the magician who performed it vanished for a day, and a sub came in to do it — and cut the girl twice, putting the knives in. (He didn't give her time enough to guide the blades past her.)

The first Blade Box girl, Jane, was secretly smooching with Fuller, the owner (as well as about 20 other assorted males around) until Fuller's wife arrived. Then the girl got fired & they used Julie (Mystina) to run over after her act & do the Blade Box.

There are dozens of exciting & wonderful things I could tell you about if I could just think of them. Oh, last nite I almost got run over by a camel. Those things are like trains! I was standing inside the tent when suddenly the side of the tent lifted and a camel plunged right at me — knocking the steel tent pole into my arm. I jumped out of the way & Bat, the elephant tender, ran the camel out the opposite side. The crowd was at the opposite end of the tent & they'd decided to run the camels thru our tent to load them in trucks.) Just as I was recovering from the shock of this, another damn camel came busting under the flaps & at me. It was out of control & just missed me. They got it & took it out.

Lots of excitement. We got paid & after advances & 50% deductions for taxes — we had 3.00 left after hotel rent. I sold my watch for 20.00. Sound familiar? Ha ha!

We love you, and Harvey. Be a good girl, and help Harvey be a good boy. (It's your job, as big sister.)

Dad — over for P.S.

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P.S.

Oh, second day with circus tornado warning came. They got everybody out of tents for 4 hrs (very dangerous in a tent during windstorm.) Martha + baby + I crouched behind the elephants, which were flattened up against a high brick wall. Things were flying thru the air — must have been 50-75 mph wind. Rained for several days. (Naturally.)

Incidentally, have taken off rain PK — put up sun sata inside PK cover. Harvey knows what this means.

Drought — everywhere. Heat. No water.

You'll be reading about it. Worst summer in history of U.S.

They asked for it, + they deserve it.

Love,

Dad

(PK Man)

(Bogarelé)

turn page over —

P.P.S. Thumbs down to no meant "the front is off" i.e. no more tips (crowd) to bring in, so they hung "closed" on the outside - just chains across the front, + closed the tent-flaps. So if a tip was still in the tent, we did one more show for that tip, + were off for a half-hour to 2-hrs., depending on the day. Mon., Tues., Wed., we didn't work too hard. Each day the crowds grow progressively. Fri., Sat., + Sun. are hard days. One show after another in "grind" fashion. If the "grind" is on they talk

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P.P.P.S. Martha reminded me of some things —

While we were doing our act, several times, we noticed that Bo had left the center of the tent getting behind our platform, and was climbing up the steep steps of our flat bed truck to get to us. So, with a kinfe in my hand I'd hiss at Count or somebody for heaven's sake get the kid. They did, every time but once! That time he got loose & I was winding up for a throw with the crowd looking on — and Bo slowly appeared in front of me — between me & Martha — dragging his blanket. I waived him on (hoping he'd go on past) & he did, and we completed the act. The crowd roared. It looked like it was rehearsed.

Then, between shows, one day Martha yelled "Look out!" I looked around & Bo who was up on the platform with us, had sneaked over, reached up & pulled a knife out of my bucket, toddled over to the board, and threw the knife at the board. He was to do this many many times. Evidently watching me from the ground he'd observed this and was imitating. Also he'd go up to the board like Martha, stand exactly in the center, facing me, with a grin & point to the knife-bucket.

I found a fine cig lighter, a beautiful ring for Martha, a hat for Bo, during the circus. Many of the acts brought him gifts — three dolls, from Duke, a doll and candy from the Scotch Bag piper (82 years old - a hero of WW I — chewing gum from Sealo — boxes of crackerjack from Fuller & The Scholtsman - Buck the Giant a toy dog — Bristy a toy.

Martha, one nite, carrying Bo, fell over a chair and skinned her knees badly — and Bo's head hit the ground real hard.

At the cookhouse, alongside Buck The Giant The Fire Eater, The Magician, etc, Bo sat on a plastic crate to reach his plate (he got full meals with everybody else.)

One man who operated a dandy hamburger stand on the midway always gave Bo free a 15¢ pack of cream puffs, or a doughnut. I asked him why he kept it up (about 8-10 times) "Because," he said, "the kid brings me luck. Business always picks up after he's been here."

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