

For almost a century, announcers for Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus have called spectators "children of all ages."

Every time, they've gotten it right.

Of all American institutions, one of the most enduring has been the circus, attracting everyone from toddlers to oldsters. Memories of past circuses, instead of fading away, become more vivid and colorful as time passes.

The biggest and most enduring of America's circuses is Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey, and its arrival in every town became a holiday during its peak years from 1920 until the mid-1950s.

Circus fans in every town got up before daylight and headed for the circus route. Cafes along the route opened early to sell coffee to grown-ups and soda pop to kids. Long before daylight, sidewalks along the route were crowded.

Ringling Bros. traveled in nearly 100 double-length railroad cars. Gaudy wagons with cages holding lions and tigers, men on horseback, elephants and camels strung out along the route from the railroad to the circus grounds.

Circus agents had arrived earlier, marking the route to the circus grounds, putting up posters and ordering supplies from local businesses.

A typical order list included 226 dozen eggs, 2,200 loaves of bread, 2,470 pounds of fresh meat, 200 pounds of coffee, 285 pounds of butter, 300 bales of hay and 400 sacks of assorted feed for the circus animals.

At the circus grounds, a hundred or more local residents waited in the half-darkness before dawn. When the circus began pulling into an empty field rented for the occasion, the local men quickly formed a line.

They were there to work for the circus. Able-bodied men were hired for a dollar

The day the circus came to town

for a half-day's work unloading hay, moving trunks and boxes, helping to carry huge tent poles and forming long lines to drag tons of acres of heavy tent canvas into place.

Meanwhile, circus roustabouts formed circles of three men each to strike tent pegs with sledgehammers. Elephants in harness pulled on heavy ropes to inch the canvas up the poles. There was a steady swell of sound - trumpeting, roaring, thudding, creaking.

Shortly after daylight, the local workers joined the circus regulars for a huge breakfast of fruit, potatoes, scrambled eggs, ham and sausage, biscuits, sweet rolls, coffee and milk. This meant more than the dollar, even in hard times. For a half-hour, the men could pretend they were regular circus hands.

At noon, the locals lined up again. Each got a dollar bill and became a spectator again.

The circus, with afternoon and night performances, was a spectacle bursting with color, noise and energy. Spectators tried to see everything at once in three different rings and in the air.

When the circus ended, crowds emerged from the main tent to find half the circus gone. The main tent soon came down and the last of the circus moved toward the railroad station. Shortly after midnight, the train pulled out and silence again enveloped the town.

That's how it was, year after year.

Then, in 1956, it stopped. To understand it, we have to go back to the beginning.

In 1825, Joshua Brown staged the first U.S. circus under a canvas tent.

Another promoter, William Coup, went farther, using trains to carry his circus and introducing multiple rings during performances.

Not else changed until Phineas Taylor Barnum

showed up. Then all kinds of things happened.

A self-described "freak show" operator who hired unusual people like bearded ladies, fat men, contortionists, sword-swallowers and midgets and displayed them in carnival sideshows, Barnum was a born promoter.

Barnum joined James Bailey to form the Barnum & Bailey Circus, and toured the country profitably. When Bailey died, Barnum bought the shares from his widow and became sole owner of the circus.

Barnum died in 1891, and five Ringling brothers who already owned a large circus, bought the Barnum

& Bailey Circus from Barnum's widow for \$400,000.

For several years, the Ringling brothers operated their two circuses separately. In 1919, they combined the two and created Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus, the biggest circus in American history.

The circus business boomed in the 1920s. The number of circuses traveling on rails peaked in 1922 with 32 circuses of various sizes touring the country.

Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey dominated the decade. It took 100 double-length railroad cars to carry the circus. Its tents held 10,000 spectators. The circus required 14 acres of land to hold its tents, people, animals and equipment.

Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey employed 1,600 people. At every stop, local merchants, planning well ahead, stocked up and sold the circus an average of 400

dozen eggs, 4,000 loaves of bread, 4,000 pounds of meat, 300 bales of hay and 2,000 bags of feed for the menagerie.

The good times ended with the stock market crash of 1929 that brought on the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Between 1929 and 1932, dozens of circuses went broke. By 1933, only three circuses traveled on American railroads. Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey was the biggest.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and America entered World War II. Despite tight travel restrictions, President Roosevelt issued an executive order allowing Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey to use the railroad system.

The war ended in August of 1945 and hundreds of veterans returned to the circus. As competition widened, costs increased and crowds dwindled, change was inevitable for

Ringling Bros.

It came in Pittsburgh on July 16, 1956, when the huge tent came down for the last time and the circus became an indoor show.

Irvin Feld, considered an expert in rock 'n roll production, staged indoor circuses for the Ringlings until 1967, when Feld formed a new group and bought the circus.

The circus, still named Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey, is now split in half, with Red and Blue units traveling far and wide.

Indoor circuses are fun. But folks who remember getting up before daylight and hurrying to the circus grounds to work a half-day for a dollar and breakfast liked their circuses better that way.

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Don Kingery Special to The Chronicle-News

EDWARD JONES FINANCIAL FOCUS

None of us can see what the future holds for us. But you have to make certain assumptions if you're going to create a strategy for building the resources you'll need for a comfortable retirement. But what happens when those assumptions prove unrealistic?



Lori Hoffman Edward Jones Financial Representative

Unfortunately, many people are wrestling with this very problem. Specifically, they plan to work until a certain age — but they leave the work force earlier. Obviously, this can have a big effect on a variety of other retirement income factors, such as the amount of money they need to put away each year while they're still working and the age at which they should start collecting Social Security and begin tapping into their IRA, 401(k) and other retirement

Plan now for unexpected early retirement

accounts.

Just how big a problem is this? Consider the following statistics from the Employee Benefit Research Institute's 2009 Retirement Confidence Survey:

Forty-seven percent of retirees left the work force earlier than planned. Of that total:

*42 percent did so because of health problems or disability,

*34 percent left due to their employers' downsizing or closure, and

*18 percent left to care for a spouse or another family member.

So here's the bottom line: Even if you think you're going to work until, say, 65, and you want to work until 65, you may be forced to quit at 62, 60 — or even younger. And during those years you won't be working, you're not just losing out on earned income — you're also not contributing to

other employer-sponsored retirement plan.

*Invest for growth. Include growth-oriented investments, such as stocks, in your balanced portfolio if appropriate for your objectives, risk tolerance and time horizon. While it's true that growth vehicles will fluctuate in value, you can help reduce the effects of volatility by buying quality investments and holding them for the long term.

*Create alternative plans. While you may want to construct an investment strategy based on retiring at a certain age, you'll also want to come up with some alternative scenarios based on different retirement ages and corresponding differences in other factors, such as amounts invested in each year, rate of return, age at which you begin taking Social Security, and so on. A financial professional can help you develop these "hypotheticals."

You can't predict the future. But you can at least help yourself prepare for those twists of fate that await you as you plan for retirement.

Two Raton school bands in state competition

By TIM KELLER
The Chronicle-News

Band director Russell Woods will be taking both his bands, from Raton Middle School and Raton High School, to New Mexico state competition in Los Lunas next month. The bands qualified for state by earning the highest rating, Division I Superior, at district competition last week in Los Alamos, where they competed with schools from throughout north central and northeastern New Mexico.

Each band competed in two categories. In the concert section, the band performed three pieces to demonstrate a variety of playing skills. Then, in the sight-reading section, each band was given a new piece of music. They were allowed 10 minutes to confer with their director, but not to touch their instruments. Then, the entire band played the assigned piece together, one time. The judges were band directors from successful schools in other regions; ratings ranged from Division V Poor to Division I Superior.

Raton Middle School won the superior rating in concert division and Division II Excellent in sight-reading. Raton High School won Division I Superior ratings in both sections. Both bands improved on last year's results. Woods pointed with amazement at the middle school band, saying, "Half of those kids just began playing their instruments this year!"

As for the high school players, Woods said, "Their performances were nearly perfect. This year we reached as high as we can reach."

The high school band won third place in state 3A competition last year and is expected to be a formidable force when the NMAA State



Photo by Tim Keller

Raton High School band members are feeling good after earning superior ratings at the district competition in Los Alamos. Band director Russell Woods is at far right in the back row.

Henson, Ashley Hester; and Clayton LePlatt; 7th graders Kristina Jansen, Jerry Jiron, Shyanne Lucero, Renee Martinez, Tara McDonald, Jonah Rael, Caylene Romero, Jerry Sanchez, Heather Segura, Tarryn Trujillo, Joseph

band consists of seniors Mallorie Salazar, Dale Proctor, Chris Simpson, Beki Henson, Seth Romero, Jimmy Carroll, Bubba Martinez, DeAndra Gonzales, Erica Hopper, Alex Hester, and Ben Trujillo; junior Sara Mayes;

Both the Raton High School and Middle School bands qualified for state competition by earning by the highest rating, Division I Superior.

Vigil, Collette Village Center, and Savannah Fleming and Darrell Segura; and freshmen Melanie Alderette, Saphire Encinas, Raeanne Fissel, Alysia Gomez, Forrest McConnell, and Devon Segura.

sophomores Mariah Fleming and Darrell Segura; and freshmen Helen Segura, Warren McConnell, Lucas Jansen, Noelle McDonald, Michael Valdez, Zach Strand, Callie Wilson, Robby Caldarelli, and Hunter Garcia.

Concert Band Contest convenes April 23-24 in Los Lunas.

Following the state contest, the Raton High School band will travel to the Mississippi River to perform at the St. Louis Heritage Music Festival April 30. Woods explains, "I've been doing a lot of research, trying to get our kids out to perform for many audiences, and particularly where they can be heard by college representatives for scholarship considerations.

"We don't have much opportunity in our own area to be heard by large audiences, so I've been looking farther away. My goal is to help place many of our young musicians in university music programs, with either a major or minor in music. For some of them, this can be the incentive they need to further their educations."

Raton Middle School's state competition band will

include 8th graders Cody Flores, Christian Gonzales, Angeli-Stone, Katherine Max Gonzales, Toby

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