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## **The Billy Schultz Indoor Circus, a feature Manitowoc attraction in the 1930's which received national attention. Monograph 43 1981**

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# THE BILLY SCHULTZ INDOOR CIRCUS, a feature Manitowoc attraction in the 1930's which received national attention

FEB 2 1981

By Marcie Baer, Manitowoc

## William G. (Billy) Schultz . . .

### The Man — His Circus and His School

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When I first heard of Billy Schultz it was a word here or there but it never really meant anything to me. This past year, however, after interviewing a former circus performer on an unrelated subject, she told me more about the school. This piqued my interest.

This past summer I visited her again. She expressed the wish that the history could somehow be recorded (while there were still people alive who lived at that time in history). That remark set the wheels in motion. Mr. Ed Ehlert gave the suggestion to the Board of Directors and they in turn gave their whole-hearted approval to a monograph being published.

It has been both an educational and a pleasurable experience. With the help of a lot of good people and reams of news stories I have put together what I hope is a picture of Billy Schultz, the man — his circus and his school.

Today, if I had to describe Billy Schultz, the man, from what I've heard and read about him, I could do so in one word — love. Love for his wife and children; love for his performers — his other kids; and his love of a strong body.

Special thanks go to Billy Schultz, Jr. and to Dorothy Schultz Hecker; to Mead Hansen; to Syd Herman, who shared not only news clippings but also photos and negatives so history could be recorded. (Many of those stories were written by him and the pictures captured by him while he served as volunteer public relations man for the circus school.)

Thanks are also due to Don and Emily Underberg and to Wesley (Bob) and Marie Boswell. Particular thanks go to Wesley Boswell, who, because of his close friendship and long term relationship with Billy Schultz, was able to fill in a few more missing gaps in the story of his late mentor and friend. Others shared through the stories written about their accomplishments as performers.

This monograph is about Billy Schultz but it also takes a lot of people to put a circus together and he would be the first to say so. While this monograph includes only the names of those listed on the programs, there were countless others who helped in some way, from teachers, students, to those who lent their moral support, to the guy who purchased a ticket. There were posters and programs

to be printed, costumes to be made, equipment to be made or readied for action. The prop men were vital to keep the show moving. Then there were the ushers and those who sold the goodies, so much a part of a circus, and just so many it would be impossible to list them all. They know who they are. Just as the performers, their reward was in the applause of the crowd and just knowing they were a part of this important part of Manitowoc history.

I realize there is always a chance for human error in copying information. Slight differences in stories from various media were checked as far as possible for accuracy. If there are errors they are not intentional.

Through the use of personal accounts and excerpts from many news stories I hope I have been able to draw a picture . . . a picture of the man who made it all possible . . . Billy Schultz, the man — his circus and his school. For those, like myself, who knew little or nothing about this man I hope you will enjoy reading about this very vital part of Manitowoc history.

## BILLY SCHULTZ, the Man . . .

### PERSONAL HISTORY OF WM. G. SCHULTZ (from 1939 Souvenir Program)

"It is the stars, the superstitious will tell you, that foretell the day of our birth, the profession and characteristics which will haunt us all the days of our life. If this be true the stars must have swung with vigor in their orbits on that October 1, 1880, when William G. Schultz was born, for before many years had passed this brilliant young man was swinging too, and in short order was himself a brilliant star in the orbit traveled by the luminaries of the professional show world.

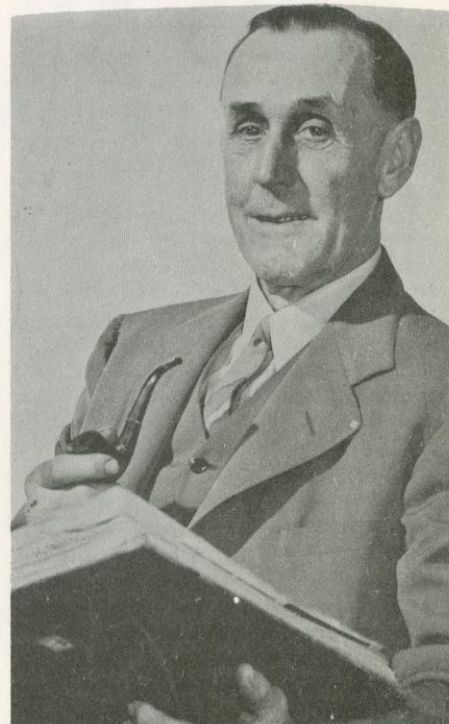
"He began at eight years of age to perfect himself in the glamorous art of professional acrobatics. The beginnings, at first, were but feeble efforts. Yet they resulted in some really good 'back yard circuses' which he and his playmates began presenting each summer.

"When he was nine-years-old, Billy moved with his parents to Milwaukee where they opened a store a short distance from the historic Schlitz Park, famous Milwaukee amusement center

during the latter part of the 19th century. Billy hung around the dressing room doors of the show people who frequented the place, and one day spotted Adonis Ames, a famous contortionist, practicing his act. 'I can do that stuff too,' piped up little nine-year-old Billy, and the great Ames, piqued, gave him a chance to show his stuff. So well did the imitation go over that Bill spent the rest of two summers appearing in the act.

"At the end of two years, his family moved back to this city and Bill went to work training at the Turner Hall. Encouraged by his success with Ames, he frequented practice sessions of other troupes which appeared in circuses and vaudeville here. From them came many helpful hints which were to stand him in good stead in the future. Practice sessions formed the major diversion for the years between his performances with Ames and the time when he became eighteen-years-old.

"During Manitowoc County Fair



William G. (Billy) Schultz  
October 1, 1880 — June 19, 1958



week in (1899) Bill Schultz and his brother, Ferdinand, staged one of the first attractions in front of the grandstand. In the following winter the future took a brighter turn as Bill was given the job of physical director for the "Turning Society". He stayed there for one year. Shortly after his 20th birthday, Bill and his brother went to Chicago where they obtained work at the old Howard theater. They stayed on to play in minor roles and to help with running the stage until illness forced Ferdinand home to recuperate.

"After making many contacts at different theaters, Bill had taken for his partner a Pole who had changed his name to Mack. Bill had a cousin whose name was Lester and because he liked that name he decided to change his own name and thereafter became known professionally by the stage name of William Lester. Mack and Bill's new act was soon booked for appearance with the internationally-known Whitney Family Circus which started out from Emily City, Michigan. When the circus went into winter quarters, Mack accepted a job in the printing trade and Bill drifted over to the Kilin Family whom he taught acrobatics and broke into his act. In his

spare moments he taught tricks to a small girl in the troupe. This girl later became one of the most famous bareback riders of all time, Rosa Rosalind. The new act played at music halls around Chicago and later in 1902 joined the John Robinson Circus. At the end of the show season Bill joined with the Ryand Brothers in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Billed as Ryand, Lester and Ryand they toured the country playing at fairs, in vaudeville, and in indoor shows.

"In 1905 Bill and his troupe were added to the Al. G. Fields Minstrel Show in which they did specialty acrobatic acts. Illness again reduced the troupe to where they were billed as the two Lesters and when the third member had recuperated, the act was billed as the Three Lester Brothers. In 1906 the troupe was taken into the Chas. K. Champlin Repertoire Co. which specialized in dramatics but played specialty numbers between acts. Here Bill got his start in legitimate stage work, playing stock roles besides inter-act acrobatics. When the show closed down in 1907, Schultz joined with the Humpety-Dumpety Musical Comedy Company. He played the role of Mephisto and, in that summer, played Manitowoc as

part of the circuit. In 1908 he returned to the Champlin Co. where he met the Creighton Sisters. He "framed" an act and taught them the routine. At the end of the show season, the Lester Brothers and Creighton Sisters played their act throughout the South, in Florida and spend eight weeks in Cuba. Five weeks were played at the National Theater in Havana and three weeks in the interior.

"With the routine well settled, the Lester Brothers and Creighton Sisters left the act and the Lester Brothers played the circuits alone, going south, contacting the Pantages circuit, playing the Panhandle, and then back to New York. This continued up to the opening of the World War. Bill's two partners shouldered guns and marched off into eternity after answering their country's call. Bill registered but his age conscription was not reached until shortly before the Armistice.

"His act shattered by the loss of his comrades, Bill joined the Eugene Troupe, one of the most renowned acrobatic acts that ever came to this country. He toured with them for two years and turned down an offer to go with the troupe to Australia. When the act sailed, Schultz got a job posing as model for artists and sculptors in the art schools of New York City. This was in 1920. The call of the sawdust ring sounded again, however, and when the opportunity arose, Bill trailed off to join the famous Pitchianni's internationally-known Italian teetotal board artists. At the close of the season, during which he starred in Ringling's show, Bill joined with Ben and Griffin in Canada from Quebec to Vancouver, playing fairs, indoor circuses, parks and vaudeville until the day he retired.

"In 1922, while playing the Shriners Circus in the Orak Temple in Hammond, Indiana, Bill took the "plunge". Immediately following the matinee performance, bill went up into the Temple quarters where he was joined in matrimony to Linda Geisler, his boyhood sweetheart. Together they toured the circuses until 1923, when Bill, Jr. was born and then the new "trouser" toured with them. Approximately 14 years ago today, the elder Schultz retired from active circus life and shortly after, the local community circus idea was born — the forerunner of today's show.

"But despite his retirement, the family tradition has not died. The show must go on — and when old Bill can no longer carry on, his son, Bill Jr., now fifteen-years-old and his twelve-year-old daughter, Dorothy, will be ready to take up the torch. The book, however, is not closed, and the best part of his life lies ahead. Its chapters will probably never be penned by this scribe — they shall be written in the hearts of the boys and girls whom he has made strong, of young men and



Billy Schultz shows his daughter, Dorothy how to apply makeup. At top left is Phyllis Thieson. Girl in lower left corner is unidentified.



young women who got their start in the show world through his conscientious and friendly help — and in the roar of the giant presses which already have begun to record his progress for the eyes of the world."

*The following accounts are from the Manitowoc Herald Times unless noted otherwise.*

## April 17, 1937 TUTOR TURNS OUT ACTS FOR THE BIG TENT

by Harry Chandler

"In his rare moments of relaxation, Billy Schultz, one-man faculty of the only circus 'prep' school in the world nines himself to his 'office' high above the bleacher seats in the Vocational School Gymnasium.

"The office was intended to be a projection room for the school's moving picture equipment. But the visitor's first impression is that of entering a property room of a theater.

### A Mass of Things

"Billy's desk is buried under a mass of program proofs, fan mail, clippings, scrapbooks and odds and ends. Pictures are on the walls. Over in one corner is a trunk, a very theatrical-looking trunk marked: 'William Lester'.

" 'Lester' is Billy's stage name

"Gymnastic rigging, a battered trombone in two pieces, a huge tin sledge hammer — the kind that explodes, (the front half of a grotesque animal that Billy refers to affectionately as 'Sparky'), a cigar-box violin, a table filled with white shields (for living statues, Billy explains), a battered brown felt hat with a pathetic little red feather (wear it one way and you look like Napoleon, turn it another way and you look like one of the Marx brothers), ropes, medicine balls, and a hundred and one other bits of paraphernalia clutter this room.

### Thinks Only of His Kids

"Billy obligingly clears a mess of trapeze ropes, bars off a chair and offers it to his visitor.

" 'So you have the only circus prep school in the world?' the interviewer begins.

" 'That's what they say, I don't know of any others,' says Schultz.

" 'You're really getting to be known all over the country you know.'

" 'I suppose so but I've never asked for anything. If the kids make it work that's all I care about. They're a fine bunch. You know this stuff isn't learned easily. Practice, practice, practice, that's what it takes. Why, that troupe of seven boys that went to New York last Saturday stuck together for four years. I can show you their pictures taken when they started and another taken this year and you won't know they are the fellows. Gosh, how they filled out. Would you believe it, they missed only one day of practice in the last two years. But now, they've got it. They're going places.

### Doesn't Lecture Much

" 'No I don't lecture the kids much. I don't object if they take a glass of beer, that is the older ones, and I don't preach about cigarettes. They find out for themselves how much it means to keep in condition. But when they go out on the road I talk to 'em like a Dutch uncle. Whiskey and women — that's what I tell them to watch out for. I tell you I gave that bunch a nose-full before they left Saturday. I had them for four years and I know they're okay.

" 'The only time I scold is when they fool around with some other trick that isn't their own. That's when accidents happen and we don't want to spoil our record. Then there's the little easy tricks. A boy or a girl will take the easier part of their trick without thinking much about it, forget to be careful and then something happens. It's happened to all of us.

### Natural Ability Needed

" 'All of them don't make good. I have to find out what sort of performing they are best suited for. You can say what you want to, a performer cannot be 'made' as you would turn out a doctor or a lawyer. The boy or girl must have some natural ability, must be healthy and must have the right temperament. Some of them haven't the right attitude. I weed them out in a hurry. Oh, I don't fire anyone. I just don't give them any attention and then I find out very soon whether they really want to be someone or whether they are just coming out for the fun of it. If they come in and complain, we sit down and have a good talk and get a lot of things settled, one way or the other.' "

Jan. 12, 1939

## BILLY SCHULTZ AND BILLY VAN RECALL TROUPE Days of 25 Years Ago

" 'Two of God's children' spread a four-ring circus over the floor of the Vocational School office last night and relived incidents of the days when the only union in the circus business was a red-underwear clown costume.

" 'God's children,' according to Billy B. Van, veteran troupier, mayor of Newport, N.H., businessman and speaker, are circus and vaudeville performers.

" 'One of God's children' himself, Billy Van spent an hour or more reminiscing with Billy Schultz — another of 'God's children' another veteran troupier and Manitowoc trainer of circus performers.

### Old Friends

"The two Billies knew each other 'since the beginning of time,' Billy Van said last night as he met Billy Schultz for the first time in 25 years. For the first time since they played together on the old Orpheum Circuit up in big-time vaudeville.

" 'What 'ya mean, Schultz?' Van shouted after he and the local Billy finished pounding each other on the



*Billy Schultz gives directions to Winifred Kanter on ladder and Gaylord Becker in clown suit.*

back and pumping hands. 'This guy isn't Schultz, he's Billy Lester. Why I've known Billy Lester for years. I can't remember when I haven't known him. I've known him since the beginning of time, I guess.'

"The two Billies went back to the beginning of time as far as circuses and vaudeville performers go in the gab-fest that followed their meeting in the vocational school office after Billy Van had finished his talk on the first session of the local safety school. If there ever lived a performer they didn't drag up out of the past he must have been a whirling dervish in some walled city of India.

" 'Remember Zeno?' Billy Van would shout, grinning from ear to ear, his pipe waving in Billy Schultz's face.

" 'Zeno! Remember him? Say I'll never forget him,' the other Bill would shout back.

### From Z to A

" 'Good old Zeno! I remember he played with a ham circus one time and things weren't going so well,' Billy Van broke in. 'The end of the season came and they started paying off — alphabetically, like they always did. When they came to Zeno they didn't have any dough left. So the boss called him in, patted him on the back and said: 'Zeno, you come back next season and you'll get your money then.' Well, Zeno was a nice guy, you remember him, and he left without his pay . . .'

" 'Yeah, we always used to say if they don't pay you the first week, they won't the second.' "

"Billy Schultz laughed.

"Sure, well the next season came and Zeno goes back to the show see. He walked on the lot and the boss saw him. 'Hey, Zeno,' he yells. 'How are you?' Zeno looks at him and yells back. 'What 'ya mean, Zeno? I changed my act. I'm Ajax!'

" 'Why, we used to play the Orpheum Circuit when the whole blamed thing was New York, Chicago, 'Frisco, Los



Angeles and back to New York,' Billy Schultz said after he finished laughing about Zeno.

"'Sure, but we stayed in those spots two or three weeks or more at a time,' Van added.

### Recall Old Days

"Then both Billies stopped and look at each other, laughing at nothing at all except the pleasure of renewing old acquaintanceship and recalling old days.

"'I tell you, Lester, they're God's children, those old troupers,' Van said. 'They are the kindest, friendliest, gentlest, pleasantest, most loyal, downright best people on earth. Why not one of 'em would't do anything in the world for you. Right now you can go to any of 'em and they'll give you the shirt off their back.

"'At the start of the depression, you know, we had the actors' kitchen in New York. We fed 3,000 of 'em there every night. Everybody connected with the show business could get in. If you had the money you paid two dollars and fifty cents for your meal and fifty cents each for three other guys. If you didn't have two bucks you didn't pay anything. You'd go in and sit down at a table and everyone you ate with might be eating free, but you never knew it. They're God's children, I tell you.'

"And Billy Van, who says he slept more nights on a ring bank than in a bed, puffed his pipe emotionally.

"'Remember Prevost?' Billy Schultz shouted. 'He used to be teamed with Joe E. Brown?'

"'Sure,' Van grinned. 'Say, Brown's doing pretty good for himself, isn't he? He made good. Out in Hollywood now.'

"'I used to throw Joe in an act years ago,' Billy Schultz said. He was a swell kid.'

"'Sure, swell kid,' Van mused. 'You know, I started in the circus when I was six-years-old and that was my first act. I was thrown across to a cock-eyed guy. He used to worry me. I never knew if he was looking where he was catching or catching where he was looking.'

"'I'm training my kid,' Billy Schultz said 'He wants to learn.'

### He's Got Rhythm

"'He's good. He knows how. He's got the rhythm,' Van said. 'Say, I left the road in 1924 with my wife. She was a prima donna. We have three kids and they were all little tykes. We said to ourselves, no one-night stands for them. They aren't going through what we went through. So we got a farm up in New Hampshire. Well, you know, we had ten trunks of equipment. When those kids were able to walk they got into those trunks. There must have been circus germs or something in 'em, because ever since then they have been singing, dancing, playing musical instruments and string wires and trapezes and ropes all over the place. When there's a show within 50 miles

we take 'em or they hike out themselves. But its a good thing. They got something to sell now if they can't get jobs.'

"'Sure, they get the germ,' Schultz laughed. 'My kid's got it. Say, talking about germs, remember those early circus wagons?'

"'Remember 'em? They crawled.'

"'Yeah, they had to fumigate 'em every Sunday and then we had to go to a hotel to sleep.'

"'Remember Sime Silverman, used to run Variety?' Van asked.'

"'Sure.'

"'He died, too bad, nice guy,' Van went on . . .

"And they both went on. Dragging up one old trouper after another. One old rope climber who did an act despite the fact both legs were cut off, is a millionaire real estate dealer on Long Island. Another runs a chicken farm. Another a boarding house. They are scattered all over the face of the earth, and the Billies brought them back for a few moments of reminiscence.

"'God's people,' said Billy Van. 'Everyone one of 'em''

### May 26, 1942 STATE BOARD WAIVES RULES TO MAKE BILLY SCHULTZ AN ACCREDITED INSTRUCTOR

"The State Board of Vocational and Adult Education has made William G. (Billy) Schultz, director of the circus school classes here, a duly accredited instructor in recognition of his work with Manitowoc young people.

"A certificate . . . designating Mr. Schultz as a 'Senior A Vocational teacher,' was presented . . . at a dinner tendered 150 persons who took part in the recent circus by the local Vocational Board . . .

### Requirement Waived

"The certificate gives Mr. Schultz an accredited rating as an instructor.



Clown with coke bottle, Don Underberg, Frances Wick, center and Bucky Ramming, clown at right.

Ordinarily, the requirements for such certificate are a college education and summer school credits. . . it has been awarded in recognition of the outstanding work and accomplishments of Mr. Schultz in physical education.

"'All of us teachers spend a great deal of time studying psychology and most of us have acquired a voluminous college education,' said Mr. Nimtz making the presentation. 'Billy Schultz had none of these, yet I feel he could all learn a great deal about psychology from him. He is a better teacher and deserves the high commendation that we can award him.'

"'Many times at conventions and teachers' conferences throughout the country I have been asked if I could a circus man to start a school in this city or that city. My answer is always the same. I tell those school men that they can get the same equipment, that they cannot get a Billy Schultz and without a Billy Schultz there can be no circus.

### Modestly Accepts

"Mr. Schultz in accepting the award said that it made him very happy with characteristic modesty he gave credit for the success of the show to performers and his 'old timers' expressed the hope that they would be together again for a bigger and better performance in 1944."

(The war intervened, however, there was no performance in 1944. The next one was in 1946.)

### April 26, 1946 BILLY SCHULTZ SPELLS CIRCUS TO LOCAL FANS

"William G. (Billy) Schultz, . . . again busy with his acts whipping the indoor show into shape for a week performance . . .

"Schultz, now 65-years-old . . . never lost enthusiasm for the circus. Whenever a gang of youngsters are together for a bit of circus play School is generally nearby, puffing his present pipe and quietly watching.

"When St. Boniface' Cub Scout Chapter 66 held its annual circus night last week, Billy and his wife, Linda, were sitting inconspicuously in the front row off to one side when a nine-year-old youngster in a clown suit recognized him.

### Young Admire Him

"'Will you show me how to paint like a clown, Mr. Schultz?' he pleaded. A moment later, despite the fact that he was dressed in his Sunday best, he was backstage, hands full of gray paint and at work creating a masterpiece. In less time than it takes to tell about the word got around and Schultz had a crew of youthful admirers around that almost stopped the show. School is a natural with the youngsters and when he worked he spun them yarns about his early days with old wagon shows. When the evening performance





*The Gauchos — perhaps one of the greatest acts Schultz developed, the Gauchos include: Ray Thielen, Eugene Rosinsky, Ray Rosinsky, Gordon Powalisch, Richard Jagodinsky, Bernard Armstrong, Harvey Rosinsky and Clarence Albrecht. Their five high somersault is recorded in the Guinness World Book.*

over they corralled him again and he had a tough time breaking away to keep a late appointment.

"A lot of people like to look through old albums and scrapbooks to relive the past. This is my album," Schultz answered in response to a question concerning his interest. "I started out this way with backyard circuses and I can remember all the dreams I had in those days. Seeing these youngsters and their make-believe takes me back a long ways."

"All this comes back to him now as he watches the kids perform, so if Bill isn't mingling with the acts on the Vocational gymnasium floor, and you really have to see him, don't look for him at his home. Inquire around the nearest neighborhood backyard circus. You can lay odds ten to one that's where you will find him, puffing his pipe and having the time of his life."

#### **June 7, 1946 SCHULTZ CIRCUS IS A FIXTURE HERE**

"Speaking last night at a banquet given for the circus troupe . . . Schultz dispelled rumors that the show might have given its farewell performance. "Quitting now would be like cutting off my right arm," Schultz said, "as long

as I can get around to handle things the show will go on and on."

"There were tears in his eyes as he noted the enthusiasm with which his performers applauded his decision . . ."

William G. (Billy) Schultz and his wife Linda Geisler Schultz who were married Nov. 14, 1922 at Hammond, Ind. celebrated their silver wedding anniversary with 200 guests at a buffet dinner at the Veterans Club. Another milestone reached.

In 1948, yet another circus was held but this one was the last. He continued to teach however.

#### **March 30, 1950 ACROBATIC PAIR OF ANOTHER ERA HAS A REUNION**

"There was a happy reunion in Manitowoc . . . The occasion was the visit here of Giovanni De'Liberto, member of the Vaudeville act of Coco, Steve and Eddy now appearing at the Capitol Theater. One of his partners in a nine member troupe, the Karl Eugene Acrobats . . . was Billy Schultz.

"When Giovanni had a choice of

bookings in Chicago he chose Manitowoc so he could visit Schultz whom he had not seen in nearly 10 years. So when Billy went home to lunch Wednesday noon, who was seated at the dinner table but De'Liberto. . .

"Last night Schultz visited the Capitol. De'Liberto stopped his act and had Billy stand up and take a bow from his seat on the first floor. It was a tribute from one veteran performer to another."

#### **August 3, 1953 SCHULTZ, CIRCUS PAL REMINISCE**

"Circus day is always an exciting one for most people but there wasn't a child in Manitowoc more excited or anxious than William G. (Billy) Schultz . . .

"For him it was more than just a circus day — it was 'old home week'.

"For him it wasn't the elephants and gay colored wagons. Schultz a former circus performer himself, had his finger on the pulse of the circus and to him circus day meant meeting a host of old friends with whom he had trouped the country from one end to the other.

"Of primary interest was a visit with Charley Bell . . . Bell, an old partner of Schultz . . . has a get together with Bill each year. When the circus misses Manitowoc, Schultz hits the road and catches it at the town nearest home. . .

"Bell, 69-years-old, has forsaken his role as a top acrobat and like many of the former stars, has settled down in Clown Alley.

"Early Sunday morning Schultz and his wife piled into the family car and drove out to Calumet Yard where the cars of the performers were sidetracked and they picked up Charley for a day at the Schultz home." (Scrapbooks were hauled out and many triumphs were relived by the pair.)

#### **August 4, 1953 TRUNK WITH PAST REJOINS CIRCUS**

"A familiar sight absent from the Ringling retinue for a number of years, resumed its rightful place with the company Sunday and although it may be slightly changed, many of the old timers recognized it immediately.

"The item was a large theatrical trunk, its side emblazoned with a collection of stickers. . .

"Billy Schultz . . . parted with it willingly — but there were tears in his eyes. Throughout the years the trunk had been dutifully dusted and waxed and Billy spent considerable time with it, going over his costumes and storing his scrapbooks in it.

"Why the tears?"

"I kind of hate to see it go," Bill said, "but I'm sure glad to see it going back into show business."

"The parting came about as the result of Schultz's recent visit to the Ringling lot. . . Going through Clown



Alley (with Charley Bell), Schultz noticed one clown with a dilapidated trunk which showed excellent promise of falling apart. A short talk and they made the trip back to the Schultz home where Billy hauled the prized possession from the attic, emptied it and presented it to its new owner.

"It was bread cast upon the waters. Scarcely had the trunk been unloaded in Clown Alley than one of the clowns walked up to Schultz, slapped him on the back and introduced himself. He was one of the former Aerial Cromwells, once one of the best known trapeze families under canvas — a friend whom Schultz had neither seen nor heard from in almost 20 years."

### **October 1, 1955 MR. CIRCUS IS JUST A 'MITE TIRED' ON 75th BIRTHDAY**

"The city that forgot grew young again and the odor of tanbark and the glamour and fascination of pink lemonade took over once more as townspeople remembered and dropped in to say happy birthday to William G. (Billy) Schultz as he observed his 75th birthday.

"... He was just a 'mite tired' but you might have been too, had you spent Friday afternoon in training and tumbling with some 60 boys and girls — little tykes mostly; who swarm to the Vocational School gymnasium after school each day to work out with 'Mr. Circus'.

"Part of the day he slipped away to his favorite fishing hole on the Shoto River, settled down with his ever-present pipe and watched the corks of his pickerel poles weave patterns in the warm autumn sunlight. Next to the circus, fishing is his major concern. Yet even as he sits and fishes he becomes the hub of a group of youngsters asking him questions designed to get him started on another of his many tales of the circus..."

In regard to his students who became professionals the article said: "He donated his training time, made the contacts with agents and acts for those willing to go on the road and never took a penny for his labors. Long distance telephone calls and telegrams came out of his own pocket.

"Many delinquent youngsters were turned over to him by probation authorities and he helped many misfits find themselves in a lucrative profession."

### **October 3, 1955 MR. CIRCUS GETS WISH FULFILLED**

"Earlier in the day, in answer to a question as to what he would want if he could wish for one thing, he said, he would like most to see his old 'grads' of his former circus school together again.

"Saturday night, believing he was

going to have dinner with a friend's family, he walked into Kubsch's at Kellnersville to be greeted by more than 60 of his former student circus stars who had planned a surprise party.

"It was a festive occasion in which Mayor Walter Koepke was the guest speaker and he paid high tribute to Billy Schultz.

"Let other cities talk about juvenile delinquency," Mayor Koepke said, 'they never had a man like Billy Schultz. If we had more men like him in Manitowoc, our problem with youngsters would be solved.' He told how he had been the first to sign the testimonial which the city council presented Schultz in 1948...

"... He commented that, living across from Schultz, he had seen Billy cutting grass after dark Friday night. 'At 75 years he does this and after reading in the papers about that workout with the youngsters in acrobatics before he came home I can't help wondering why,' he puzzled. Schultz interrupted with 'it had to be finished if I wanted to go fishing Saturday morning...'

### **November 2, 1955 BILLY SCHULTZ' LONG SERVICE TO YOUTH ACCLAIMED BY LIONS**

"The Lions Club Tuesday night honored a man who has devoted the last 30 years to community youth service.

"William G. Schultz was presented with the club's 10th annual distinguished service award.

"As Alexander Georgiady presented the certificate to the 75-year-old circus trooper, a crimson and gold Ringling Bros. Circus poster unfurled down the wall of the Hotel Manitowoc dining room.

"A ringmaster's whistle shrilled and the Marine Band, which slipped unseen into the corridor, blazed into the 'Billboard March.' Three clown... tumbled into the dining room and went through the bucket brigade routine... Schultz's son, William, Jr. ... made a surprise appearance. He sprang onto the speaker's table executing a somersault and a handstand.

"The honored guest stood bathed in a glare of camera lights, a cigar clamped in his broad smile. His voice breaking with emotion, Schultz said, 'Everything I want to say would take hours — many hours. This is something I'll always remember — something I'll take to my grave with me. You are all wonderful — God bless you all.' He received a standing ovation."

Borrowing a page from Ralph Edwards' book on "This is your life," Georgiady cited highlights in Schultz' 75-year career including his birth, circus career, marriage, birth of a son and daughter.

"Georgiady recalled that the University of Illinois (in 1941) wanted

Schultz as a consultant for their gymnastic productions, but he chose to stay at home. 'It is the time of war, and his graduates spread throughout the world to serve their country. Our guests wrote and received 20 letters a week from them. He did what he could to keep up their morale,' Georgiady stated.

"In 1946 Schultz retired to half-time service for pay, but he maintained full-time service to the youth of the community without pay..."

"Georgiady cited four incidents typical of Schultz' career with youth.

"A fifteen-year-old delinquent developed, under Schultz' training, into a nationally known-teeter board artist. His name is enshrined amongst those who died in the Battle of the Bulge.

"A little mentally retarded girl today has a trained dog troupe under the big-top, thanks to Schultz' training when no one else seemed to care.

"Undernourished and underprivileged youngsters never knew they were receiving charity when Schultz gave them coins for performing tricks.

"When Schultz collected fees for his troop's performances they were equitably divided among the youngsters. Schultz received no recompense.

"Today," Georgiady concluded, 'he is a rich man — not in the sense of money, but in deeds and friends. Tonight we honor an illustrious citizen, for our guest has left strong bodies, straightforward youth, and pride in his home and city.'

### **June 22, 1956 BILLY SCHULTZ PACKING HIS CIRCUS GEAR FOR LAST TIME**

"Tradition fell by the wayside Thursday and seeing a habit of thirty



Safety was practiced at all times but especially when performers were learning an act. Schultz watches Dale Maule in chair preparing to jump. Others are unidentified.



years standing brought to an end added poignancy to the situation for those who watched William G. (Billy) Schultz packing his circus gear for the last time."

(Schultz resigned as physical director effective September 1, will sell his home and move to Bay City, Michigan, where he and his wife will live with their daughter.)

"Regularly as clockwork he would take out his Sherlock-Holmes type pipe before he set to work and the grotesque painted eyebrows arched even higher as he drew the light down into the bowl. Then, for a matter of a few minutes, he ceased to stare out into space and you could almost hear the blare of the Ringling's band, the roar of the menagerie and see the spotlights blinking in his eyes. As the pipe glowed out, he removed the hat and suit, folded it lovingly and packed it away in the old trunk. Off came the makeup and down the trunk lid. Schultz was ready for another performance.

"Thursday was different. The pipe was missing for now there were no more circuses to look forward to. Gone too, was the trunk. . .

"The old clown suit was ceremoniously folded Thursday, minus the makeup and minus the pipe and packed tenderly into an old suitcase. It will become the property of Bill Schultz, Jr., for many years a star in his father's show, and presently physical director of the Oshkosh YMCA. Young Schultz also came with a truck and hauled away the circus equipment which the Vocational School Board had given to his father after a farewell dinner last week.

"The schools tradition, apparently will not die. It will merely change identities. For many years young Bill aided his father and learned all the tricks of teaching acrobatics. He learned, too, how to spot faults and correct them. Many times he had watched his father straighten out such world famous roustabouts as the Ringling Yacopi's when they stopped here between engagements to iron out bugs in their act.

"Young Bill has already started circus classes in a small scale in Oshkosh and has built some of his own equipment. After the 'Y' gets permanent quarters there the Billy Schultz Circus School may again attract national circus scouts — and national headlines."

## **SOME FINAL NOTES on Billy Schultz, the man. . .**

On July 3, 1956 Billy Schultz was cited for his work by the Manitowoc City Council.

In a small news item of August 21, 1956 it noted: Last week he hit the jackpot and caught two big northerners. He averages about three or four a week and since the teachers gave him that lasting outfit as a farewell gift he has

gone back to wheeling them in on a daredevil again."

Billy and Linda Schultz left for Bay City, Michigan in early September, 1956. In the summer of 1957 word was received that the 77-year-old Schultz was teaching mens' conditioning class and in May of that year he directed a group of 95 boys who presented the Bay City YMCA home-talent circus.

Another, far greater award awaited William G. (Billy) Schultz. He died June 19, 1958 at the home of his son as he visited there while recuperating from surgery. His wife, Linda, died February 14, 1964.

## **BILLY SCHULTZ — his circus and school. . .**

Billy Schultz was "Mr. Circus". His training school became famous through news stories in such papers as the Milwaukee Journal and Christian Science Monitor; films produced by Pathe News and Paramount Pictures; via NBC radio national hookup; and through such prestigious publications as Billboard, Colliers, Life, Redbook and the Saturday Evening Post.

His local involvement came about, according to the 1939 souvenir program, when Billy Schultz developed a cold which stiffened his back muscles. "After trying several nationally-known doctors without success he returned to a local practitioner, a good friend of his. Within three days after his arrival he had obtained relief," but then through the suggestion of his doctor and the responsibility of raising a family he decided to settle down here.

"While waiting for complete recuperation Billy purchased a hot dog stand on Eighth Street."

## **BOY SCOUT INVOLVEMENT**

In their free time area Boy Scouts gathered at Schultz's stand to buy hamburger, hot dogs and pop and listen to his accounts of circus life. Some of the boys talked to Mead Hansen, Boy Scout executive, about Schultz.

## **Mead Hansen Relates . . .**

Mead Hansen shares this information of that time from his boy scout history account and with his permission, we include that portion here.

"In 1925 the highlight of the year's program was the first annual scout circus and every troop entered a nice sum for the troop treasury. Then in 1926, a William G. Schultz, who was operating a refreshment stand on South 8th St. . . was engaged as a part-time gym instructor at the Orpheum. The big event of the fall season (1926) was the second annual scout circus consisting of eight acts trained and directed by William G. (Billy) Schultz. All performers were scouts or scout

leaders except two girls (Ione Kletzien and Eleanor Hansen). There were several side shows and a service program augmented by band concerts featuring the Aluminum Goods Marine Band and the Lincoln High School Band. The Orpheum was jammed to the doors all three nights of Thanksgiving week."

## **THE BEGINNING . . .**

Because he was one of Schultz's "old timers", and also a personal friend, I've asked Wesley Boswell to include some remembrances from those early years.

## **Interview with Wesley Boswell**

Wesley (Bob or Bozzie) Boswell was one of those young men who hung around Schultz's refreshment stand listening to him spin his tales of circus life.

Bill Schultz, he recalled, was a witness to the first (1925) carnival type Boy Scout circus and that's what got him enthused. "It was right after that he and Mead Hansen got together and the first Monday in January, 1926, we met for the first time at the Orpheum. There were 16 or 18 boys. . .

"Originally we met below the stage in a little gym . . . We started to learn to do hand stands and exercised to build muscles."

Stage scenery was used to build a trick house for a clown act. "It had doors that went round and round and windows that went in and out," Boswell recalled. "We'd dive in and out or roll in and out during the act."

Swinging ladders suspended from the 60 foot high ceiling, spliced ropes for trapeze, trapeze rings and standards were all made by the members under Schultz's direction.

In the summer the Aluminum Goods had a picnic and they hired Billy Schultz and his old partners, Bell and Griffin to perform. "Bill had recovered enough so his back was decent. . . The trio was the one act that was in demand all over the U.S., Canada and Mexico and while they toured, Barnes and Caruthers (booking agency) had six other acts out — all called Lester, Bell and Griffin. . .

"Bill would tell us how they'd go into a town and the first thing the theater manager asked was 'are you Lester, Bell and Griffin, and if not you're out'. They put on acts and the managers were always happy. There were complaints about the others," Boswell said.

Another boy scout circus was held at Easter time in 1928 at the Orpheum. When they could no longer use the Orpheum (it was razed in 1932 — Turner history) they had to look for other practice sites usually empty lots and mostly outdoors. The souvenir program stated: "A Manitoween celebration was prompted to curb Halloween's destructive tendencies and a circus demonstration by Schultz



(and 6 or 7 others) played a major part in the entertainment proceedings."

While "Bozzie" wasn't sure of the years he said he attended two such celebrations, one on the southeast corner of 7th and Jay Streets (Rahr has a silo there now) and one year on the courthouse steps.

Schultz's old partners tried to persuade him to return to their act. He sold his stand and prepared to leave. But then a number of influential businessmen intervened and he was offered a job which he accepted (at Adams School)

The practice scene then switched to the Adams School. "At first we had to practice after 9 p.m. at night in the third floor gym. About six months or so later classes were changed so we were able to go in there at 5 p.m. and practice until 6:30 one or two nights a week.

"Then when the new school (vocational) was built, we went over there. The first indoor circus at the new school was held in 1933 and was for the benefit of the gym equipment," Boswell said. (Other circuses were held in 1935, 1937, 1939, 1942, 1946 and 1948.)

Performers provided some of the circus equipment. Trapeze ropes were wrapped in butcher-type linen and sewn. Girls made their canvas slippers. "When we put up the five-bar it was necessary to put something in the ceiling to hold it up," he said.

Using scaffolding, Boswell and Archie Schuette drilled holes through plaster and wire mesh. "We drilled holes all the way around in a circle in this one beam and then went over to the other beam and did the same thing. The job then was to get this great big heavy four-inch extra-heavy pipe with a steel rod up inside there." They "worked and sweat" but got it done, and then tacked the pipe into the beam to make it solid.

They were, he said, always informal and always managed to have a good time. Boswell's job varied from holding little kids doing hand stands, sommersaults and cartwheels, to working with the perch pole, Risely work, juggling kids on his feet, the rocking tables, to participation in many of the clown acts, in particular with Don Underberg and Archie Schuette. (Today, those who remember still refer to them affectionately as the "three clowns".)

Boswell smiles as he recalled the exploding 12-gauge shotgun shell used in an act. "Everyone got a charge out of that one," he said.

And while they performed and clowned, Boswell said, they also learned discipline. The circus always began promptly at eight o'clock. "If anyone was late they got it verbally. With Bill it was better if you were 15 minutes to a half hour early. He believed in promptness and felt it helped people in learning discipline."

Again we turn to the newspapers. In a September 1, 1936, Milwaukee Journal, Ione Quinby Griggs writes:

"The gym is as atmospheric and busy as the big top when they start putting up trapezes and props. Mr. Schultz is everywhere directing his workmen and performers and showing them a hundred and one things about circus art. Now he is in the dressing room giving a quiet suggestion to a clown for his makeup. Now he is showing a new girl how to wrap her arms with tape to keep from slipping when another holds her . . .

"All circus work contains an element of danger, so each parent is obliged to sign a slip agreeing not to blame the school or instructor for accidents. To date there have been few accidents.

"The instructor tried out the pupils on the ground first. Some he never allows off the ground. 'Everyone isn't fit for work in the air', he said . . . In picking out acrobats Mr. Schultz scrutinizes the aspirants thoroughly and picks certain ones for 'top notchers . . . understanders and . . . middlemen'."

Mrs. Griggs also quoted one of Schultz's students when she said, "Mr. Schultz never gets mad at us when we don't seem to catch on. Sometimes he grits his teeth and walks away for a minute. But in a moment he'll turn, smiling and say, 'Let's try that again'."

### Circus talk . . .

"Anyone who sits alongside the performers between acts," Mrs. Griggs wrote, "gets an earful of circus parlance . . . doing a belly well meaning twisting feet together and making revolutions around the bar. A duck lock is simply hooking the thigh around the rope. The hock hold means to hang by your ankles. The front roll standing with your feet on the bar birds' nest — well that's hard to explain . . . (Imagine) a picture of a girl with her head hanging down on one side, her hands somewhere else and a final sommersault."

### 1937 — Herald Times (Chandler)

"Sounds of activity from the gymnasium reaches the 'master office'. School starts at four o'clock every afternoon and continues three to four hours. Up near the roof couple of girls are swinging on the trapeze. . . Over in a corner a girl stretching out precariously on the rung of a steel ladder held by muscular young man. They a husband and wife both intensely interested in show business. A group of twelve-year-olds are turning hand springs. An embryo 'Poodle Hanneford' is riding bareback on a paper mache horse, peeling off vest after vest, and a youth attired only in trunks is walking unconcernedly up a tight rope stretched from floor to ceiling."



Clown acts were an important part of the circuses and the summer acts for picnics, fairs, etc. Here are L. to R. Bob Boswell, Don Underberg and William G. (Billy) Schultz performing their favorite routine.



"Schultz, attired in blue pants and gray sweatshirt, goes from group to group, offering advice in a quiet, friendly manner. He seldom raises his voice. Frequently he demonstrates, going through the difficult phases of the performance in slow motion while the youngster watches.

"And he clowns, Billy Schultz becomes Billy Lester. He dances a jig, rolls his eyes, puts on a show. Now he's a snake charmer, a slimy green reptile entwined around his neck. He does a slinky hip-weaving dance. And then back to work, but the tension is broken and rehearsal goes forward smoothly.

"Billy sometimes has to take a beating to get his ideas across. His nose has been battered countless times. He's been kicked in the mouth, his clothes torn and he has been punched in the eye, but he's saved many a youngster a nasty tumble.

"Their muscles are tight, you know," Bill says. "and it's just like getting hit with a broom handle. As they get better, they learn that they must relax in order to perform the right way. . .

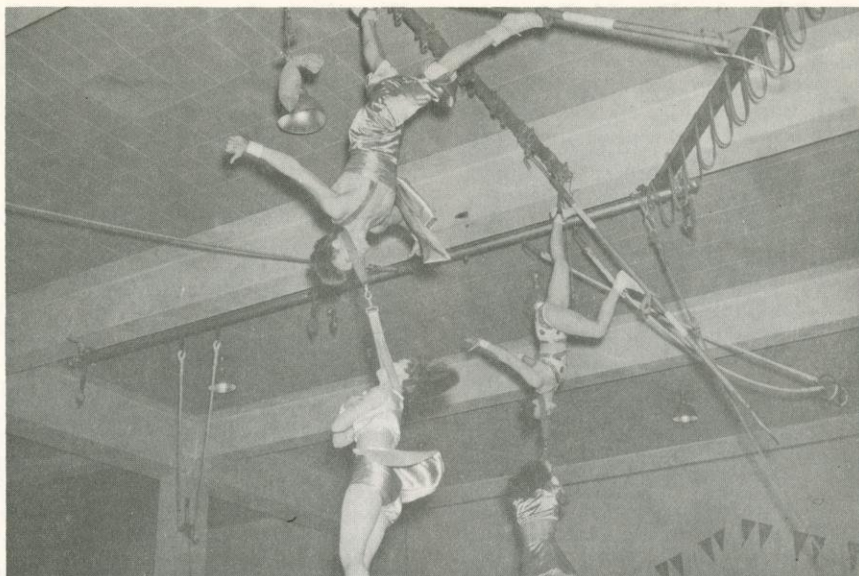
"When the circus is in winter quarters the scouts head for Manitowoc. Bookers for picnics, small fairs and celebrations throughout the state get their preview at the time of the indoor circus."

#### February 13, 1941 — Herald Times

By 1941, 52 Manitowoc area boys and girls have been placed in the amusement world through their activities in the training school. Scouts from circus and vaudeville circuits come from America, Europe and Australia.

Schultz supplied most of the talent used in the Loyal-Repensky, Bell Trio, Yacopi, Stolic Shows, Three Arnolds, the Nelson Family, Engford Show, Pitchianni's and the dozen or more of the Morris Troupes now touring America and Canada. Fifteen of his graduates are now with Ringling Bros. and nine with Cole Bros.

Among the 52, many have since retired in favor of marriage or a job in business, etc. Those who joined professional ranks for a time or still performing in 1941 include: Richard (Dick) O'Connor, Howard Martin, Oliver Lutz, Ray Rosinsky, Harvey Rosinsky, Richard Jagodinsky, Bernard Armstrong, Clarence Albrecht, Ray Augustine, Ray Thielen, Clarence Traurig, Gordon Powalicz, Nick Everard, Noel Anderson, Bernard Frazier, Leslie Brodkorb, John Krumdick, Charles Haese, Johnny Armstrong, Robert Maurer, Anita Fidler, Deloris Wensing, Winifred Franz, Violet Herman, Lawrence Hall, Calvin Green, Dorothy Drill, Rose Gadzinsky, Kenneth Hecker, Don Schmidt, Elaine Griebeling, Josephine Junk, Elaine Buehl, Jean Hebert, Hazel Steffen, John Schmidt, Bernard Novy, Alice Theyerl, Eugene Hilke, Bob Moentenich, Eugene Mrotek and Orville Matte.



*An aerial act which gives a view of some of the equipment used in producing a circus. Performers are not identified.*

Others also left later to become part of the entertainment world. — a 1953 story includes the names of Clarabelle Griebeling and Mary Herman.

#### August 5, 1943 — Herald Times

World War II intervened and many of Schultz's graduates joined the various branches of service. In August 1943 he was in contact with some 37 of his proteges, writing some 20 letters a week. Charles (Chuck) Hejda was a Japanese prisoner of war; Bob Kelnhoefer was killed in a plane crash. Schultz's son, William, Jr. was a recreation supervisor at the Marine base in San Diego. Dorothy Drill was in the WACS.

Others were: Ray Rosinsky, Norman Hanson, Eugene Rosinsky, Harvey Rosinsky, Ray Augustine, Richard Jagodinsky, Calvin Green, Oliver Lutz, Bobby Maurer, Bernard and John Armstrong, Leslie Brodkorb, Clarence Albrecht, Clarence Traurig, Eugene Mrotek, Eugene Hilke, Orville Matte, John Krumdick, Jr., George Haese, George Brandt, Arthur Tuesburg, Billy Sorge, Paul Heffernan, Gaylord and Clayton Becker, William Kennedy, Richard Franken, Carl Geisler, Martin Kelnhoefer, Robert Wordell, Jim Gehrig, Howard Krieser and Kenneth Hecker.

The draft, the story said, is still making deep inroads into circus personnel and each contingent which leaves gives Billy at least one more letter to write. "He's looking forward to the day when all his 'boys' come back."

#### Final Curtain Call

The final circus performance was held in 1948 but the achievements and the love of the instructor for his kids will live on in the memories of those William G. (Billy) Schultz left behind. We would be remiss indeed if we did not include the names of the performers as they are listed on the programs. They are the final tribute to the man, his circus and school.

**Boy Scout Circuses  
— Orpheum Theater —  
Thanksgiving Week, 1926  
April 12, 13, 14, 1928  
(Billy Schultz was involved  
with the above)  
as well as Vocational School  
— Vocational School —  
Indoor Circuses**

Nov. 28, 29, 30, Dec. 1, 1933 — April 23-27, May 7-9, 1935 — April 19-24, 1937 — April 24-29, May 1-3, 1939 — May 4-9, 1942 — May 20-25, 1946 — May 17-22, 1948.

*(Editor's note: At the time the list of names was put together, we were unable to locate a 1942 program and as a result some names may be left off. Because of getting monograph to printer we were unable to wait until a program was obtained.)*

Charles Albrecht, Clarence Albrecht, Jeanette Albrecht, Dean Allen, Noel Anderson, Bernard Armstrong, John Armstrong, Geraldine Augustine, Raymond Augustine, Georgiana Barnes, Geraldine Barnes, Gordon Bartelme, Harold Bartelme, Alice Bassman, Clara Bauer, Lydia Baumann, Allen Becker, Clayton Becker, Gaylord Becker, Ruth Bellin, Geraldine Belongia, Ruth Bentley, Janet Berkedal, Dean Boettcher, Marie Boswell, Wesley Boswell, Marion Brandt, George Brandt, Leslie Brodkorb, Pauline Bruechert, Virginia Bryant, Edward Buerstatte, Elaine Buell, Lillian Burish, Delbert Butler, Harley Caldwell, Samuel Caldwell, Virginia Carter, Bernice Cerkas, George Chapleski, Juanita Cherney, Vlasta Cherney, May Chynoweth, William Chynoweth, Fred Clemens, Paul Clemens, Raymond Connors, William Cushman, Dorothy Czaplewski, Márleen Dehne, Bill Dicke, Vernon Diegle, Robert Dokey, Dorothy Drill, Leonard Duebner, Harry Dwoskin, Dorothy Edstrom, Ida Mae Edstrom,



Dennis Edwards, Donald Edwards, Mary Eisenschink, Robert Ellig, Nick Everard.

Grace Felber, Henry Felber, Laura Felber, Marie Felber, Anita Fidler, Richard Franklin, Winifred Franz, Bernard Fraser, Ambrose Gadzinski, Rose Gadzinsky, Francis Galbraith, Jack Garrigan, Carl Geisler, Paul Geisler, John Gelhausen, Lawrence Gleason, Faith Goff, Sally Goff, Adolph Gospodarek, Frank Gospodarek, Sylvester Gospodarek, Calvin Green, Clara Griebing, Elaine Griebing, Elroy Griebing, Gladys Griebing, George Haase, Lawrence Hall, Russell Halverson, Eleanor Hansen, Norman Hansen, Ralph Hansen, Russell Hansen, Sereno Hansen, Joan Hanson, Jean Hebert, Edward Hecker, Kenneth Hecker, Walter Hecker, Paul Heffernan, Charles Hejda, Elsie Herman, Syd Herman, Violet Herman, Ralph Heridith, Helen Hernin, Mary Herrmann, Ruben Hertel, Delmar Heyduk, Emy Hidde, Eugene Hilke, Lester Hilke, Frank Hoffman, Florence Howard, Lambert Hunt.

Jane Jacobson, Richard Jagodinsky, Paul Jaklin, Earl Jung, Josephine Junk, Ray Junk, Anna Kaboth, Winifred Kanter, Martin Kelnhofer, Sylvester Kelnhofer, Adeline Kempka, Lambert Kempka, Leonard Kempka, William Kennedy, Margaret Kernin, Edward Kieper, Erwin Kletzien, Emily

Kletzien, Ione Kletzien, Paul Klingholz, Dawn Koch, Butch Kohls, Leo Kozaczuk, John Krumdick, Geraldine Kubichek, Edward Kummer, Louis Lambries, Marcella Lehman, Phyllis Lenhardt, Oliver Lutz.

Lewis Mally, Orville Marquardt, Howard Martin, Leonard Martin, Orville Matte, Robert (Bobby) Mauer, Dale Maule, Joan McGinnis, Howard Meindl, George Meisner, Chester Michalek, Betty Miller, Earl Miller, Lawrence Mitcheltree, Bob Moentenich, Danny Mrotek, Eugene Mrotek, Lucille Mumpy, Betty Nimtz, Bernard Novy, Francis O'Connor, Richard O'Connor, Louise Panosh, Joe Piefer, Sadie Ploeckelman, Gordon Powaliscz, Rosemary Pyne, Margaret Radandt, Irene Radey, Dorothea Raih, Bucky Ramminger, Dorothy Roepke, Arlette Rosinsky, Eugene Roskinsky, Harvey Rosinsky, Raymond Roskinsky, Earl Rugowski, Florence Rystikan.

Richard Schaus, Don Schmidt, Harold Schmidt, John Schmidt, Mary Schmitz, Patricia Schmitz, Archie Schuette, Alvin Schultz, Billy Schultz, Jr., Dorothy Schultz, Marvin Schultz, Grace Schwartz, Clyde Severson, Arthur Sobieski, Billy Sorge, Bernard Stadelman, Robert Stadelman, Sandra Stanzel, Delores Steffen, Hazel Steffen, Danny Stroub, Arthur Strupp, Julius Stupecky, Ralph Sullivan, Jim Sweeting, Deloris (Dolly) Swiggum,

Eleanor Sypnewski, Alice Theyer, Vernon Theyerl, Edward Thiele, Raymond Thielen, Phyllis Thieso, Alice Toedter, Clarence Traurig, Violet Trost, Arthur Tuesberg, Edward Tveten.

Donald Underberg, Robert Van Haren, Mary Ann Van Lanen, Joe Ward, George Webster, Dolor Wensing, Eugene Wergin, Francis Wick, Max Woellert, Robert Worden, Eva Yohanek, Serena Zandala, Upton Ziesler, Violet Ziarnik, June Zimmerman.

Some 235 performers are listed above. But some of the programs also listed a number of other people who were part of the show and we will also list those as far as possible (*Editor's note: if a person was also listed in the band and as a performer, they were only listed once under the performers.*)

1926 — 1928 Boy Scouts (musicians and singers): L. Brennan, Gordon Hansen, Paul Hansen, William Hansen, Charles Kippen, John Napiezinski, M. Peterson, P. Rasmussen, P. Sweetman, Emanuel Teske and R. White.

1939 — Program committee head Irene Braun, Amelia Danielson, Walter Drill, Raymond J. Johnson, M. Kitzerow, Marie Kohlbeck, Marjorie Levenhagen, Esther Miller, Elmer Nesheim, A.L. Nimtz, Naomi Price, Ludd Schuerer, Chas. Tuesburg, Leona Voss, Wm. Trefz, David Watson, Violet White, NYA Boys; Equipment donation, George Sladky; vocalist Wilfred Strube.

1948 program — property men William Bergquist, Walter Horstketter, Glen Owen, Ray Peronto, Lloyd Schaefer.

1939 and 1948 programs — Band members listed: David Baldwin, Marshal Boyd, Genrose Brunner, Paul Clark, Betty Cox, Robert Dickerson, Harold Evans, Helen Evans, Leonard Gospodarek, Don Groll, Tom Hansen, Howard Hanson, Keith Hanson, Hubert Haupt, Elton Jelinek, Ed Kovecy, Ed Krysak, Fritz Kuhl, Donald Leider, Martin Lohse, F. Luchsinger, Thomas Melville, Ruhl Metzger, Burnett Muench, Arnold Novak, Alvin Novy, Pauline Nuhs, Lloyd Olson, Anton Putz, Ralph Rydzewski, Eugene Schwartz, Paul Skarvan, Gen Sobieski, Susan Tadych, Alvin Titterton, Milton Vetter, Wm. Waak, Clara Wacek, Bill Wagner, Robt. Woytal and Floyd Zeman.

To all the above named people and those countless others who participated in any way — for a moment close your eyes and once again listen to the music, the sound of applause and for just one more time take a bow friends — you deserved it. And then take just one more for the man who made it all possible, William G. (Billy) Schultz.



A billboard advertising the 1942 circus. Children on photo unidentified.



# AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM L. (Bill) SCHULTZ JR.

(October 11, 1980)

The pride in his eyes is evident as Bill Schultz, the son, talks about his late father. But there is also a sense of sadness. "We just didn't listen enough to his stories — we heard them so often — but then who does," he says quietly. "Now he's gone and you try to recreate what he's done and so you end up with a couple of scrapbooks full. It's a fairly good story but it doesn't give you some of the details you'd like to know."

The scrapbooks do have a story to tell. As he pages through, Bill Schultz points out posters, letters, hand bills, etc. which tell of his dad's friendship with the near famous and famous of another era such as Jack Benny, Joe E. Brown, the Marx Brothers, Tim McCoy and Oscar Hammerstein. He was an excellent acrobat and a good gymnast, who, while he did play the circuses, a great deal of his time was spend in vaudeville and fairs. Not only was he a tap dancer and actor, he could play the drum, piano, flute, etc. — by ear or with notes. "He designed and developed all his acts," Schultz, the son said.

Among the clippings there is a family history of sorts. Grandfather 'Christian Frederick Schultz, bodyguard to Frederick the Great in the 1800's, came from the Black Forest area of Germany to escape the Battle of Napoleon to the Town of Meeme" where they were farmers.

His father, Ferdinand, who died Oct. 5, 1915, for a time worked as a house manager and janitor at Turner Hall. It was through him that his son, Billy, was able to practice there. Mother, Bertha Huebner, was born June 20, 1848 in Brandenburg, Germany, and died Feb. 5, 1900. She came to America to the Town of Meeme when she was four. Ferdinand and Bertha were married 28 years and had nine children.

Another article in the scrapbook written the year after Billy Schultz, Sr.'s marriage to Linda Geisler in 1922,

said: "he was home for a two week visit, his first in a number of years and met the only girl (actually his boyhood sweetheart). Last fall they were married and during the winter, though his wife was with him most of the time, he lost his taste for trouping. Three weeks ago she came home for a visit from Pittsburgh and last week Schultz came home to 'chuck the game'.

"He had the entire summer booked for the state fairs and Shriners Circuses, but he decided he would 'quit while the quitting is good.' He's back in the old home town, the best on earth he says, and he will have his own home and after a short vacation he's going to look for a regular job that will give him a chance to live as normal folks live.

"That's what a wife can do for a fella," said Schultz, "but I'm glad of it and I'm tickled to death to give up the game. I made some money but I figured I have more than earned it."

Bill Schultz, the son, closes the scrapbook and begins to talk about his dad as he knew him. "His greatest fun was to have enough for a nickel cigar, 50 cents for minnows, put his poles on an old car and drive out to Shoto and fish. I fished with him every weekend.

"To him there was no place like Shoto. I used to gripe because we didn't go up north . . . but he never had any money to do that. In the long run I think we caught more fish here than anyone who went up north. He built his own fish box, a big beautiful one," Schultz said.

"Denny Edwards (sometimes Syd Herman) fished with us all the time," Schultz said. "One day Denny and I wandered down the river bank and when we came back dad was soaking wet. He was laughing. 'What happened?' we asked. What happened was that he had a fish on, a huge northern, and he got him up to the shoreline and it got off. My dad dove in after the fish and caught him (in his arms) and brought him out.

"There were times when it would be cloudy and he'd lay down, saying he didn't feel well. As soon as the sun would shine, he'd say 'you know, I feel better now', and off he'd go fishing. That was his relaxation." But nothing ever really remains the same. On his way to Manitowoc for this interview Bill Schultz drove past the old Shoto fishing spot. The banks were crowded with fishermen and somehow, said Schultz the son, "I don't think my dad would have liked it anymore."

During the summer young Schultz traveled with his dad and various circus school acts which were available for hire (19) to present acts at fairs, picnics, etc. In 1936, for instance they were at Abbotsford, Weyauwega, etc. He also recalled the summer at Oconto when he broke his leg.

"He just never accepted anything," Bill Schultz said of his dad. "All those

years of teaching his biggest salary was about \$3,000 a year and he never took anything for teaching the kids after school. No one ever said, 'Bill, I'll give you a dollar for a lesson or \$10 a lesson' — it was always free."

While Schultz was proud of all his kids, "The greatest troupe he ever produced was the Gauchos. I'm a consultant for the Guinness Book of Records for Circuses. This (Gauchos and their act) is the first time the five-high sommersault was ever done and it's now in that book.

"My father died of a heart attack but," said Schultz the son, "I don't think he really cared anymore. He didn't have his heart in it after he left his school, Manitowoc and Shoto. Sure he worked in the YMCA program in Michigan, but," said Schultz, "it wasn't the same. There he was an unknown — and he liked to be known. He had to start over again and it was too much."

"He had," said Schultz the son, "a particular knack of being able to teach and this was proven in this circus school here . . . the majority of the performers my dad had could make the big shows today. All the performers could make some show today. My dad was tremendously dedicated to serving people. He wouldn't have put it that way but he enjoyed giving of himself to others.

"The only way he could have done this is through teaching. He had the ability so he gave it and because he gave it many people profited. . . Every person needs some help, I don't care who you are, and he drew them to him. He had the knack for being able to take the cripple and build him into a fine body; to take the person who was not as intelligent as he should be — encourage him to read, to learn; to take the kid who was a delinquent — to have him understand that there's more to life — you should be kind, you should be helpful — and there's another way to live. For the kid that needed some love and attention he was able to put his arm around him. For the kid who was spoiled he was able to unspoil him. He had the knack. Yet he never thought 'I'm going to do this for this one or that one' — he did it unconsciously . . .

"When people think of him I don't think they think of him as a great teacher of acrobatics as much as they think of him as a person who helped them personally . . . there were people in jail that he would go and see, or he'd walk into family situations that were miserable.

"He was the same at home," said Schultz, the son. "We had no big arguments. Sure my mother would get aggravated with him once in awhile as all wives get aggravated with their husbands, but he was a good husband and father.

"There was a lot of love in our family . . . Today I try to do the same with my



Wherever he went children gathered to listen to his stories. Above, Darlene Kummer, daughter of Ed Kummer listens to Schultz as he talks about his circus days.



own children. But not because he did it therefore I'm going to do this . . . you do these things because you want to do them. Years later you realize you were doing the same thing. I think my kids will be the same way. I can see the way my son, Jim teaches . . . to be a good teacher you have to have a sense of concern.

"He had a tremendous ego about physical culture. He liked strength. He liked the power, the beautiful physique because he had it. Then when I developed a physique he enjoyed the fact that my chest was so big and my arms were so big. He liked that. Now if he'd see his grandkids, my gosh . . . they (boys) are huge and muscular.

"This trend of strength and the perfect body and no smoking and

drinking and live the healthful life that he liked I carried on and now my kids have done the same thing. He would have enjoyed that." said Schultz, the son.

(William L. Schultz, Jr. and his wife, Grace, (Polly), who live at Madison, Wisconsin, have four sons: William A. (Bill), Robert L. (Bob), James R. (Jim), Timothy P. (Tim); and daughter, Thelma L. (Tammy); who have gained many awards for their physical endeavors. Schultz is presently director of the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin, and his own achievements would fill another monograph. We thank him for taking time from his very busy schedule to be interviewed.)

## An Interview With Dorothy Schultz Hecker

(by mail — October 1980)

To Dorothy Hecker, her father, Billy Schultz, was a "millionaire". Not in the monetary sense, however, since he had little money, but rather he was rich in friends and in his love for them.

"He was quite a man," she said, "always interested in others — whether child or adult. I think he lived his life with the motto, that God came first — other people second — and he came third.

"He never took any of the money he made on the circus. When he booked his acts in the summer and weekends throughout the year, all the money — after expenses — was divided up between the performers. Everything he did was because he loved 'his kids' and his work.

"I started when I was eight-years-old in the Risely act and floor work. Later I did the swinging ladders, single and double trapeze and the five-bar trapeze. I performed with the circus until I was nineteen-years-old. Then I joined the Ringling Bros. Circus for a few months, but became homesick and came home — to my father's delight. I think he knew I wasn't cut out for that life, but he had to let me try and find out for myself — very wise. If he had not let me try, I always would have thought I missed my calling.

"When I got back I went to the University of Wisconsin Extension for two years. I again performed with my dad's circus and at twenty-one-years-old I got married and moved to Madison where my husband was attending the University of Wisconsin. After he graduated he began his career in the Y.M.C.A. in Beloit, Wisconsin. We then moved to Y.M.C.A.'s in Michigan, New Jersey, and finally to Pittsburgh, Pa. There was always a gym in the Y's so consequently I taught acrobatics and put on Gym Shows and circuses at the various Y.M.C.A.'s.

"We now run a family resort camp in the mountains of Pennsylvania, called Deer Valley. It is a Y.M.C.A. year-round family camp and we serve

approximately 10,000 people a year. It is one super place to be.

"Growing up in a family like I did has helped me to relate to people. Seeing and living with the love and warmth my dad and mom had for us and everyone around them, has had a great influence on me and my husband. Now we are able to give the same love and concern to all who come to Deer Valley. I know we fall short on what they were — but we are trying.

"I did not meet my husband, Ed, in the circus. We went together in high school and did not start in my father's circus until after that. He was in it for about two years as a catcher in the flying act.

"We have two children. Our daughter, Kathy is married and has two children, a boy and girl. She lives in Akron, Ohio and is a teacher. Our son, Dan is twenty-seven-years-old, and is a Y.M.C.A. director at Richmond, Va. While our children were both excellent swimmers they were never acrobats. I am pleased to say

that our grand-daughter is in the Ohio School of Gymnastics and is quite talented. She is only six-years-old and already in a class with twelve-year-olds. She loves it.

"My mom and dad came to live with us after he retired. Dad died a year later, but during that year, the Bay City, Mich., he taught and gave circus at the Y.M.C.A. of Bay City — so he really never retired. He also did the without getting paid — he just loved the circus and helping kids. Mom meant nothing to him.

"There are many stories and I am sure my brother and all of dad's other 'kids' will relate them, but one stands out in my mind to show what kind of person he was.

"His partner of many years ago came to visit us at our home in Manitowoc. I was about sixteen at the time. He told me many things about my father when he was 'on the road'. He said — after a show they would have a cup of coffee and a piece of pie before going back to the hotel. This one night my dad only had a quarter to his name. The coffee was a nickel and the pie was a dime. He left the waitress a dime tip.

"He was like that throughout his life. He gave us so much. My mom had to stop letting him take money to school with him because he would come home with nothing in his pocket. He gave his students lunch money, bus money, money for shoes or whatever. But it all came back to him in love and that's what meant more to him than anything.

"If anyone deserves to be remembered for the good he did for others, my father does. I could write a book about Bill Schultz — my dad, but then a lot of people could. One day maybe one will be written," Mr. Hecker concluded.

(We thank Mrs. Hecker for sharing her memories of her father with us in this monograph.)

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