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CIRCUS REPORT
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BOOK REVIEWS

By: *Herbert B. Ueckert*

Binder, Paul. NEVER QUOTE

THE WEATHER TO A SEA LION...

Bloomington, Indiana, AuthorHouse, 2013. 201 p., illus. ISBN 978-1-4817-3190-4 (soft cover; also available hard cover).



Despite perhaps its unusual sounding title, Paul Binder's new book is a delightfully entertaining collection of reminiscences and anecdotes concerning his long association with the Big Apple Circus.

Beginning with Binder's friendship with Michael Christensen and after their working together as jugglers performing with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, the two decided to try their success as street jugglers and entertainers in England. From there, they trouped across Europe supporting themselves with the usually meager funds obtained from impromptu audience members. It was in Paris that Binder and Christensen met French clown Annie Fratellini, the granddaughter of Paul Fratellini, who with his brothers were famous performers with Cirque Medrano in Paris. The pair experienced a new style of circus, Nouveau Cirque, which became the powerful impetus for their future Big Apple Circus.

Upon returning to America the duo began to develop their dream and goal in the late 1970s for a one-ring classical European-style tented circus and a school of circus arts in New York City. These struggles are told through the brief chapters populated by a veritable

"who's who" of great circus entertainers in the circus world of the late twentieth century, including—but not limited to—names such as Philippe Petit, Katja Schumann, Bello Nock, Barry "Grandma" Lubin, the Woodcocks, the Herriotts, the Flying Gaonas, the Rios Brothers, Dolly Jacobs, Roby Gasser (hence the sea lion in the title), Jeff Gordon, Francis Brunn, and many others.

The reader will discover what it's like to have a trailer hitch break while towing a trailer load of camels across the Verrazano Narrows Bridge; why elephants can create a problem at Lincoln Center; why the leaking of the sewage holding tank on an RV can be troublesome; and the intricacies associated with a troupe of Chinese acrobats, some of whom wish to defect to the U.S.; and many other vignettes, any of which will bring forth a smile or chuckle or two. Whimsical drawings by Eliza Kingsbury and black and white photos illustrate the text.

The book certainly is not a scholarly volume on the Big Apple Circus, but rather the very personal look at the institution Binder and Christensen lovingly created more than thirty-five years ago. Recommended!