



Photo by Jimmi Harris

Tigers, elephants and daring performers in sparkling sequins make the circus a big event in the life of a child, but things don't always look the same through older eyes. A recent Circus Vargas visit to Eugene offered older circus-goers a chance for comparison.

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Nostalgia returns with circus, tent becomes time machine

By JOHN HEALY
Of the Emerald

The long line of people in front of the enormous canvas tent was familiar. So were the elephant rides and the souvenir sellers. But long steel tent spikes driven into . . . asphalt? And cotton candy going for a dollar?

What happened to sawdust on the floor of the big top and cotton candy going for a quarter and the smell of hay and circus barkers offering you — just you — a last chance at buying one of those big red balloons and the security of knowing there was someone to protect you from that ugly gorilla that likes to chase kids and steal fat ladies' purses?

Well, the rise in the price of cotton candy and general admission tickets (\$5.75) is a direct result of inflation. But why does it seem that the man in the gorilla suit (you mean the gorilla isn't real?) is the same one who performed in the first half of the show?

It's called age inflation. While the cost of living (and cotton candy) has been rising at a 10 percent rate for the last few years, we've been getting older,

and older, and older.

Circus Vargas came to Eugene last week (June 27 to July 1) for 12 performances in the Valley River Center parking lot. It bills itself as "a time machine that transports its audiences back to all the glamour, all the grandeur, all the heart-pounding excitement of the authentic old-time circus." For \$5.75 it takes its audience back to the turn of the century for a good dose of old-fashioned entertainment under "the world's largest big top," or so its advertisement claims.

The opening performance on June 27 included clowns, trapeze artists, aerialists, exotic animals and acrobats under a tent that measured 300 feet by 165 feet and supposedly could hold 5,000 spectators. Nine elephants, a cage full of Bengal tigers, two troupes of dancing horses, colored lights and performers in radiant outfits were part of the show.

Trapeze artists soared and sailed five stories above the three rings. Acrobats flew and flipped about, and a man balanced on one finger. Clowns were everywhere, running and falling and laughing and just being clowns.

The circus just isn't the same thrill that it used to be. It's fun, and it's entertaining, but somehow different. Circuses are made to be seen through the eyes of a six-year-old, not an adult's. The price of fluffy pink cotton candy doesn't matter to a child.

Everything was so much bigger and brighter and more real when you were six. The clowns made you laugh no matter what they did. But then you find yourself realizing that clowns are merely a diversion while new equipment is put in place for the next act, and wondering why anyone would teach an elephant to sit on a stool.

But deep down, Circus Vargas hits a nerve. For a night you return to your childhood. You are six again, and you ooh and aah at every triple somersault that the Flying Padillas perform. It is a gradual metamorphosis, but by the end of the night you are clapping louder than anyone around you.

And the clown who kept having to stick his nose back on or the "disco dancing" horse that really didn't disco dance become secondary to the sheer enjoyment of the performance. Circus Vargas takes you back to another era in history and in your life, and you enjoy it, which is what circuses are all about.

Student travel can be cheap

By STEWART WRIGHT
Of the Emerald

Students with travel plans for the summer should not overlook the International Education Center (IEC), a non-profit, student-run organization located on the second floor of the EMU. The IEC is not a travel agency, but refers students to agencies and advises them on the best and most economical ways to travel.

Chris Erickson, the director of the center, says, "We want to provide the student with enough information so that he can go to an agent and know what he needs."

Students should remember that many airlines offer special discount rates if tickets are purchased 30 days in advance, says Erickson. Another type of airfare to consider is the excursion fare. With this fare the traveler is required to return before a certain date, up to 60 days after departure.

Another vacation bargain for students is the Eurailpass, which can be purchased at any travel agency. The railroad pass costs \$280 and allows the buyer unlimited travel, by train, in 15 European countries for one month.

Although the center does not sell tickets, International Student Identification cards can be purchased there. When visiting abroad, these cards can provide students with discounts on travel, accommodations and cultural events.

During the academic year the staff averages two work study students and six volunteers, while in the summer there are only three staff members, all volunteers.

Tuesday, July 3, 1979

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