

Behind The Scenes And Into The Spotlight

BY TYRONE TAYLOR

Since 1994, audiences at Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus have witnessed in wonderment the natural harmony of Tyrone Taylor and his sleek tigers. The tall, young African-American performer has reached the pinnacle of his profession. Watching him work with the big felines today, few can imagine the twists and turns of Tyrone's long road to the spotlight of The Greatest Show On Earth. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus appears at the Portland Memorial Coliseum, September 13 through 17, 1995.

When Tyrone Taylor first found Ringling, he wasn't looking for a career. "I was doing well in modeling and with my dancing," explains the native New Yorker. "I'm not from a circus family so becoming involved with the show wasn't a natural thing for me." He recalls his fateful encounter at Ringling. "I was visiting my mother in Detroit when I was 17. She asked me to take my brothers and sisters to the circus. Somehow I wandered backstage and someone asked me if I was looking for a job. Instead of saying 'no,' I said, 'could I work with the animals?'" Tyrone had always loved animals as a child and dreamed of owning his own horses.

Tyrone did take the job with Ringling -- as a concessionaire; but his interest was in the animals and the man in charge of the magnificent menagerie, legendary animal trainer,

Gunther Gebel-Williams. "The first time I saw Gunther perform, I was overwhelmed. He had such charisma. He was a ball of fire -- a flash! And he had a connection with the animals," Tyrone remembers.

Soon Tyrone got a job grooming horses and then began working with the elephants. "One day Gunther decided I should be his top assistant with the tigers. I didn't understand why he wanted to make this change but I trusted his instincts," he comments. For 13 years Tyrone worked alongside the man he still calls "Boss." "All I wanted to do was to be his best worker," he says.

In 1990, Gunther Gebel-Williams retired from regular performance. Tyrone's life was also in flux. He was now married and apart from his family. After 15 years with The Greatest Show On Earth, Tyrone left. He and his wife Linda performed with a number of smaller circuses and then settled down in Fort Worth, Texas. "I had a house, a good job working with the elephants at the Fort Worth Zoo, and a horse; it was a good life but I missed Ringling," he says. Linda Taylor reveals, "He talked about Ringling every day and I knew he wanted to come back."

Linda began a letter-writing campaign on her husband's behalf to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus producer Kenneth Feld. "I would send him a different message every week, outlining the various

reasons why Tyrone would be a good performer," she explains. Her persistence was rewarded. Kenneth Feld called one day during their child's birthday party. "I made all the kids go outside so I could talk to him," recalls Tyrone.

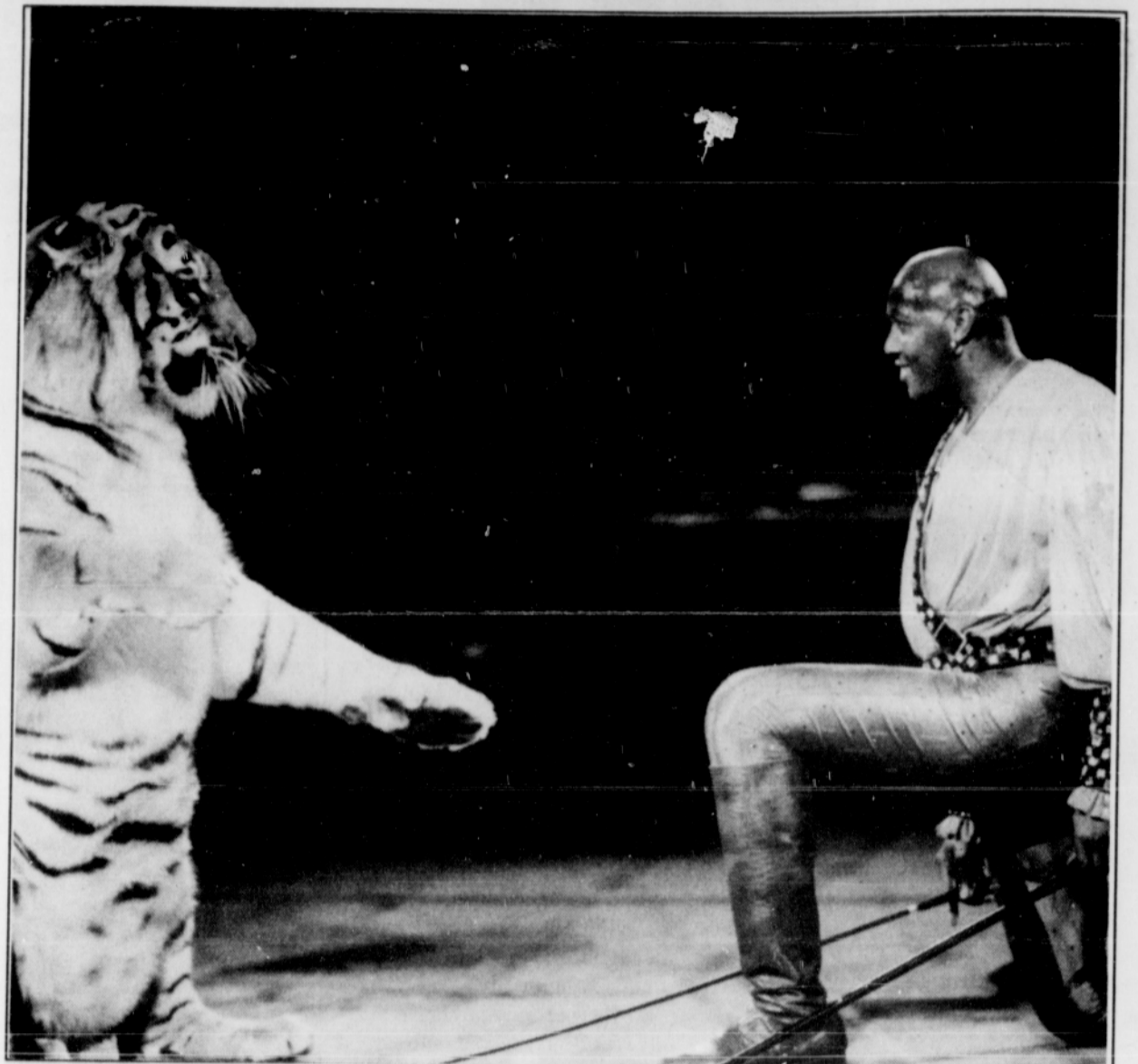
So -- Tyrone packed up his family and returned to Ringling. He began working with the same tigers that Gunther himself had presented to audiences. "I have known many of these cats since the day they came to Ringling," Gunther Gebel-Williams is now vice president of animal care and often present during the show, offering advice and support to Tyrone and the other animal trainers.

And Tyrone Taylor is a happy family man as well. His wife Linda and children Emeralds, Chelsea and Tevin travel with him.

Is the next generation of Taylors going to follow in their father's performing footsteps? "It's too early to tell. My son Tevin is learning gymnastics and loves to hang around the Chicago Kidz," says Tyrone. "Whatever they decide, Ringling is a great place for families and I'll support their decisions."

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is celebrating its 125th year and will appear at the Portland Memorial Coliseum, September 13th through 17th.

Tickets are on sale now at the Coliseum box office and all TicketMaster locations.



America's own Tyrone Taylor demonstrates that humans and animals live and work in harmony in the all-new 125th Anniversary Edition of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.

For a Black Squadron One Enemy Is Not German

The year is 1943. A group of young black airmen en route to Alabama from the North are ordered to leave the comfortable rear car of a troop train and move to the dirty and noisy first car beside the locomotive.

As the airmen step out, they stare at the men taking their place: German prisoners of war.

The real-life incident is one of the memorable, if shocking, moments in "The Tuskegee Airmen," a drama on Home Box Office about the first squadron of black fighter pilots in World War II, who faced two powerful enemies: the Germans abroad and bigotry at home.

The drama, starring Laurence

Fishburne, premiered on HBO this summer.

"The story is timeless and timely," said Frank Price, the film's executive producer. "We're still examining how African-Americans have been treated and how our society should be set up."

It has been Price's ambition for more than 10 years to turn the story of the legendary black squadron into a film, an ambition that was long thwarted by script problems and more important, by the reluctance of movie studios to take on a project with a mostly black cast about a historical moment 50 years ago.

"People were not breaking down

the doors to get this project," said Price, a former chairman of the MCA Motion Picture Group and of Columbia Pictures.

The story involves a group of young black men, many of them from small towns, who passed rigorous tests to join the Army Air Corps' "Fighting 99th," the highly decorated squadron of the 332nd Fighter Group.

As they began training in Tuskegee, Ala., the men found themselves the target of military racism and almost unendurable pressure to prevent them from flying in combat.

It was only after the intervention of Eleanor Roosevelt (played by

Rosemary Murphy) that the airmen were sent into combat in North Africa. The film is based on real events, but many of the names are fictional and the characters composites.

The film's cast includes Allen Payne ("Jason's Lyric"), Andre Braugher ("Homicide: Life on the Street"), Courtney Vance (Broadway's "Six Degrees of Separation") and Malcolm Jamal-Warner ("The Cosby Show"). Also in the cast is John Lithgow, who plays a racist senator.

The teleplay, directed by Robert Markowitz, was written by Ron Hutchinson, Trey Ellis and Paris H. Qualles, a television writer whose

father, John, was a Tuskegee airman.

"My dad didn't talk about it much," Qualles said. "The frustration these guys felt was pretty severe. My father was the first one I went to when I got the assignment. What struck me most was the heroism of these guys. They had to fight so many battles. Even their flight equipment wasn't always the best, and there were quite a few deaths because of it."

"Being black, I thought I was well versed in the racism that they would have encountered," he said. "But I really wasn't prepared for the virulence of it."



Leftover Salmon is a new group from Colorado with growing popularity. Their second album, Ask The Fish, has just been released. The group is known for weaving together Cajun, funk, bluegrass, reggae, zydeco, rock and polka, creating a sound all of their own.

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