

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A CLOWN?

Reporter Dons Grease Paint and Finds Out at Big Circus in Salem



Capital Journal Reporter—Chris Kowitz, Jr., pictured here as he appears from day to day as a Capital Journal reporter, stops in front of the colorful bell wagon of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus Thursday. Kowitz, who delights in doing the unusual, was sent to the circus by the Capital Journal to gather material for a story.



Ringling Brothers Clown—Believe it or not, it's the same guy. He may not look like Van Johnson, who wore the same costume last month, but Journal reporter Kowitz is shown here as a typically-dressed clown. He appeared in Thursday afternoon's performance to see what it was like to be a circus clown. Kowitz is the only newspaperman to serve as a guest clown

By CHRIS KOWITZ, JR.
I was a clown under the "Big Top" Thursday. Everybody wonders what's behind the smile on a circus clown's face. I wondered, too, so I got Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey to let me join their show at the state fair grounds for the afternoon performance.

A clown is not all smiles and fun, as he looks to the peanut and cotton-candy crowd at the performance.

This is what I found out:
Thursday's circus crowd had waded through mud to get to the ticket lines, then waited in line through a chilly drizzle and a nippy wind. They had been pushed around by a mob of people, had been bothered with hundreds of questions from curious kids in tow.

They paid their way into the "Big Top," perhaps complaining of the prices, then had to fight a mob of people again in finding their seats. After stumbling over rough ground, having their toes stepped on, their hats crushed and their popcorn dampened, they finally found their seats.

It was up to the circus clown to yank laughs out of that sea of faces; to somehow make them forget the discomforts they might have thought they were experiencing and turn them into a group of laughing, carefree circus-goers.

That's why the some 100 clowns who perform with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus take their jobs seriously. That's why there is an art to being a circus clown. As long as circuses have been a part of American life, people have laughed at the antics of the fellow behind the heavy makeup and wondered what it would be like to be a circus clown.

I had so wondered, too. What kind of people are clowns in private life? Do clowns enjoy making others laugh? What do they think when confronted with a "cold," unresponsive audience?

The best way to answer these questions, I thought, would be to become a clown myself for one day. So, with cooperation from circus advance man Frank Braden, and famous clown Felix Adler, I was dolled up in a typical clown costume and turned loose in Thursday afternoon's circus performance.

Before entering the arena, clowns, of course, attire themselves in various costumes and makeups of weird variety. This may sound simple. However, each and every clown is a make-up artist in his own right, and takes pride in his ability to transfer cold ingredients of bottles into a warm, smiling, comical face.

My stage experience having been confined to a recitation of "Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree" in a third-grade Sunday school program, I did not qualify as an expert make-up man.

So Adler adopted the chore of slapping grease paint on my face. Ow! That eyebrow pencil hurt.

Odd thing . . . all the other clowns in the dressing area were

move on to another part of the arena. I was told by veterans of the clowning profession. The only surprise the spectators got from me was the fact that I did no tricks when they expected me to.

I did amble around the arena, however, tagging after Adler and a companion funny-man who appeared to turn into a small elephant then turn back to a man again. It took all my balancing ability to just turn. Those shoes were too heavy.

Back in the dressing room, some of the clowns did a quick change into other costumes for other acts. I did a quick change into street clothes, using a cup of baby oil and a half bar of Lifebuoy soap to get the paint off my face.

I had learned, from the inside out, that clowning is a profession that requires a lot more skill than the circus fan credits the gaily-dressed men of having.

A clown doesn't have time to just walk about the arena and look for opportunities to clown. A circus is geared to speed, and the clown, like every other circus performer, must "hit and

run" with his act. He must act without the aid of dialogue or plot, so vital to the movie or radio comedian. He must rely entirely upon his looks and actions to entertain his customers. And he has only a few seconds in which to do it.

Such men as Felix Adler, Emmett Kelley, Charlie Bell, Paul Jung, Paul Wenzel, Lou Jacobs, Jack LeClair and Paul Jerome are truly great performers. These distinguished and well-mannered gentlemen have mastered an art which has payed off in making a nation laugh. Each one of them is a great actor and a grand person.

Keep 'em laughing, boys.

Petty, the Artist, Picks '10 Best'

Hollywood, Sept. 16 (AP)—George Petty, who draws the Petty girls, came up with his "10 best" nominations today.

It's probably no surprise that he nominated for the "10 best undressed women." In his own words:
"True feminine beauty is not a combination of a dressmaker, a beauty operator, furs and jewels. When a girl is born beautiful in body and face, it's no use trying to improve upon nature."

- The list:
Ljuba Welitsch, Polish singer who danced in "Salome" with the Metropolitan opera last season.
Barbara Ann Scott, Canadian Olympic skating champion.
Joan Caulfield, actress.
Gertrude (Gussie) Moran, lace-panted tennis star.
Vicki Draves, Olympic diving champ.
Gypsy Rose Lee, stripteaser.
Josephine Baker, American star of the Folies Bergere.
Esther Williams, actress.
Paulette Goddard, actress.
Zoe Ann Olsen, women's diving champ.

Italian Aviators Take Long Route Homeward

Lagens, The Azores, Sept. 16 (AP)—Italian Aviators John M. Brondello and Camillio Barrioglio are taking the long way home.

The weather from here to Lisbon (780 miles) is bad so the men decided to fly instead to New York (2000 miles) and re-

turn to Lisbon (2780 miles) by boat.

They took off this morning at 10:13 a.m.

The two flyers abandoned an attempt to make a non-stop single-engine Atlantic flight last week when a fuel pipe clogged. The flyers' New York representative reported that three

hours and 32 minutes after the take-off they bailed that they had flown 340 miles.

Auto and Engine Crash
Portland, Sept. 16 (AP)—A railroad switch engine and an automobile collided in the mid-

of heavy home-bound traffic last evening. In the tangle, one man went to a hospital. Traffic was snarled for several blocks and backed up on two Willamette river bridges. Police said Chester Lee suffered severe head cuts. He was driving the car

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