

KING POLE

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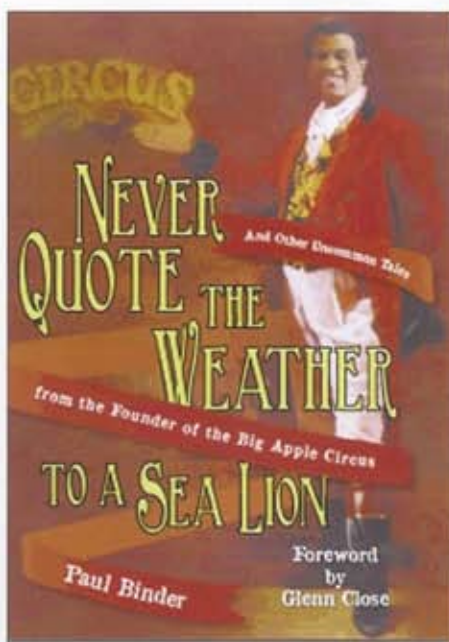
with stiff covers and 64 pages, devoted to ringmasters, Monsieur Loyal being still used as the title for the ringmaster at French circuses, the Loyal dynasty having been the most refined and charismatic of early French members of this elite role.

The book is written by Pierre Fenouillet, known in France as "Docteur Cirque", and who combines his two passions, general medicine and circus. He has previously written two books on the circus director and actor Jean Richard, "Jean Richard et son Cirque" (1998, Editions du Nez Rouge), and "Jean Richard, le risque tout du spectacle" (2011, Editions Bastingage).

There is a preface by Cyril Feraud, a presenter of the show "Slam2" on the France 3 Channel, and co-presenter of Eurovision and of the 2012 Telethon, since he was for a short while a ringmaster with Cirque Medrano. An elegant publication, it gives reference to some of the most famous and most recent of France's ringmaster-comperes, among them Roger Lanzac, Alain Andre (Petit Gougou), Frederic Colnot, Michel Palmer, Jean Drena, Fabrice Fraisse, Francius, Stephan Gistau, Christophe Ivanès, Patrice Roche, Kevin Sagau, Nandy Werl and Sergio, while also paying tribute to others of the world of circus like Norman Barrett, Genis Matabosch, and Johathan Lee Iverson. The text is accompanied by a good number of colour photos which I thought were a trifle small in format. The book is published by Editions Bastingage, 2 Place Mozart, 33400 Talence, France; edition-bastingage@yahoo.fr

It costs 21 Euros a copy plus postage. The ISBN is 978-2-35060-026-0.

Don Stacey



opment and successes, but more an amiable glimpse of his life in the world of entertainment, a life very fully lived and very fulfilling. The title of the book alone gives a clue to the author's wit and irony, "Never Quote the Weather to a Sea Lion, and Other Uncommon Tales from the Founder of the Big Apple Circus" being a huge mouthful but one that foretells of the humour to be found in its 200 pages.

Having known Paul for some years now, from frequent visits to the Big Apple Circus and meetings with him at the Monte Carlo Circus festivals, I have grown to love and appreciate his openness, his wry humour, his passion for circus, and the driving force that took a Jewish boy from Brooklyn to create so magical a show, while maintaining a level-headed approach to life.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, Paul graduated from college to work as a stage manager, a talent co-ordinator for the famous Merv Griffin, and then headed West to learn juggling at the San Francisco Mime Troupe. There he met fellow juggler Michael Christensen and together they embarked on an adventure through Europe, ending up juggling on the streets of Paris and eventually into the wonderful world of Annie Fratellini's Nouveau Cirque de Paris. There they discovered the true beauty of the classic one ring circus, and returned to New York to create something along the lines of the show they came to love.

Binder, assisted by Michael, achieved his goal in 1977, aided by a group of people, who shared his dream and funding which would implement his vision. The show has since then gone from strength to strength with general financial backing from wealthy donors, and Binder became not only the Founder, but the artistic director, ringmaster and moving dynamo of the Big Apple Circus, the quality of which has always been totally unqualified.

Paul Binder stepped out of the sawdust ring in 2009 to leave younger associates to carry on his work, but he is still with Big Apple as a senior advisor, continuing the aim "to invigorate the communities we

serve with the joy and wonder of classical circus".

Paul's mother wanted only one thing for him in life, to be happy, and this book makes it abundantly clear that the circus has brought him great happiness and fulfillment. His earliest thoughts of show-business take him back to his fourth year, when his mother took him to the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, "a New York institution since 1924" which I too have thoroughly enjoyed. Many years later, imagine the thrill Paul enjoyed when he was able to lead the Big Apple contingent from a circus waggon as part of the big Parade.

I am not going to quote any passages from Paul's sparkling and charming memoir as this will spoil your reading of a fascinating book. Suffice it to say that it is well worth buying a copy for a totally new and enthralling insight into Paul's memories of an entertainment he knows so well, and yes, there is a telling piece on Robby Gasser's sea lions which gives the book the title of "Never Quote the Weather to a Sea Lion".

Don Stacey

When Pigs could fly and bears could dance

Published recently in America is a new circus book, "When Pigs Could Fly and Bears Could Dance", a History of the Soviet Circus, by Miriam Neirich, assistant professor in the department of history at the California State University. Carrying the ISBN 978-0-299-2864-1, it is published by the University of Wisconsin Press, 1930 Monroe St., 3rd Floor, Madison, Wisconsin 5371-2059, USA, and at Henrietta Street, London, WC2E 8LU, England, this soft-covered publication of 288 pages sells at 29.95 US dollars a copy. Within its pages there are only 19 black and white photographic reproductions, and I am always sorry not to see colour photographs or illustrations in a book on a subject as colourfully rich as the circus is.

The allusion to flying pigs comes from the fact that a leading Russian animal trainer, Durov, once trained a pig to fly, while Russian circuses were always famed for their dancing bears. With ten years of research, Miriam Neirich has compiled a very lengthy and in-depth history of Circus in Russia, relating it to the political changes throughout the Soviet Union, from the Russian Revolution to the fall of Communism, from 1919 and for 70 years or more.

This is a deeply scholarly book, with nearly 50 pages of recorded notes and bibliography, and will appeal to those who genuinely wish to study the intrinsic history of one of the world's leading circus-orientated countries, and the cultural esteem in which the Soviet Circus has been held for generations. Janet M. Davis, author of another scholarly work, "The Circus Age: Culture and Society under the American Big Top", describes "When Pigs Could Fly and Bears Could Dance" as "a beautifully written, compact history of the Soviet Circus".

Don Stacey

"Never Quote the Weather to a Sea Lion"

Paul Binder, the founder of the Big Apple Circus in America, has written some uncommon tales of the circus world in "Never Quote the Weather to a Sea Lion", published in 2013 by AuthorHouse, 1663 Liberty Drive, Bloomington, ID, 47403, USA, with the ISBNs 978-1-3190-4 (soft cover), 3193-1-(hard cover) and 3192-8 (e). The hardcover Edition, with dustwrappers, costs 24.99 dollars, the softcover version 19.99 dollars, plus postage.

It can also be obtained direct from the author at 730 Columbus Avenue, New York, NY 10025, and no doubt Paul Binder will be happy to autograph your copy.

There are a number of black and white photos within the text along with some amusing illustrations by Eliza Kingsbury, and a foreword by the famous actress Glenn Close, who in 1980 played in the American musical "Barnum" and was taught to juggle by Paul Binder.

Binder welcomed her into the enchanted world of circus when stars Jim Dale, Glenn Close and others had to learn circus skills for the award-winning show on Broadway.

The Big Apple Circus is 36 years old this year of 2013 and was quickly established by Paul Binder and Michael Christensen as America's finest one ring circus. The book is not a history of the show's devel-