

Elephants put a new wrinkle in transportation

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Elephants, those rather large gray circus pachyderms with a penchant for painting their toenails red and hiding in cherry trees are coming to Farmington.

As surely as riders will be able to smell the peanuts on the breath of the plucky creatures, adventurous visitors to the Farmington Founder's Festival can fulfill their fantasies of perching on the back of Rudyard Kipling's beasts of burden.

The elephants will be lined up and waiting until Saturday afternoon in front of Bob Sals Oldsmobile, Grand River.

The three Asian elephants owned by Murray Hill of Missouri were imported from Thailand about 12 years ago, according to Denise Hill.

That's about the time the Hills switched from raising chimpanzees to showing elephants. Their chimps were featured in a Chicago television show, "Chatter's World," in the late 1950s and early '60s.

BUT THE chimps were replaced by elephants after the Hills received a letter from an Asian animal importer offering them a baby elephant.

They planned to sell the elephant but that scheme fizzled when they discovered that the market for the creatures

was almost non-existent.

With a bit more knowledge about animal sales and a baby pachyderm to care for, the Hills began to show the animal.

They discovered that people may not want to buy but they like to browse.

The original elephant, now 14, eventually joined by two others which are now 12 and 13 years old.

All of them are Asian elephants which the Hills believe are better looking than the African variety. Obviously, even elephants can be beautiful, or at least appealing.

"African elephants have big ears. They're skinny and they have long legs. Asian elephants have smaller ears and are more compact and they're nicer looking," said Mrs. Hill.

Each of the Hills' wrinkled boarders keep up their strength by downing between six to eight bales of hay daily. They shy away from meat, preferring to munch down on lettuce, vegetables, bread and grain, according to Mrs. Hill.

ALTHOUGH THE ELEPHANTS are vegetarians, Mrs. Hill cautions that even non-carnivores can be dangerous. Elephants possess an uneven temper.

"They're very dangerous unless you know how to work around them. No one was ever hurt by our elephants but you have to watch them," she said.

Hardly the good-natured buffoons of the animal world that Walt Disney

dressed in tutus for "Fantasia," elephants make difficult traveling companions.

Hill chains them into a semi-trailer and plans his trips around a day's worth of travel from his Missouri home.

Th at way, he doesn't have to wrestle with the problem of exercising the elephants while on the road. Although traveling with them poses problems, Hill has been driving them to different engagements since May, a patient Mrs. Hill said.

But she's accustomed to it. "I've been married 24 years and that's how long I've been in the animal

business," she said.

After Farmington, the elephants are scheduled to appear in Akron, Ohio, in August.

Riders of the creatures who like music should bear in mind one precaution. Please, don't tickle the ivories.



Elephant power is far from being an alternate source of energy but the young at heart have a chance to try out Tarzan's version of a wood-paneled station wagon at the Farmington Founder's Festival.

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Disco dancing is festival feature

Area residents will be rocking to a new beat at this year's Farmington Founder's Festival, as the disco sound hits town.

As a new attraction to this year's festival, disco dancing will be featured from 7-10 p.m. tonight in Chatham Square on Eleven Mile and Middlebelt, and from 7-10 p.m. Friday at World Wide Center on Grand River west of Gilt. A live band will perform at Chatham Square while a disc jockey will be on hand at World Wide.

The event was added to give a more diversified entertainment for different interest groups, says festival chairman Terry Sever.

9 area students attain honors

Nine students from Farmington and Farmington Hills achieved a 4.0 grade point average during the spring term at Michigan State University.

Julie A. Gannon and Charles W. Krueger, both of Farmington, made the list of all-A students. Those from Farmington Hills are: Keith J. Dreyer, Kenton C. Green, Sina S. Haznedi, Karen Kalajian, Keith M. Stevens, Robert L. Stoler, and Therese Zappala.

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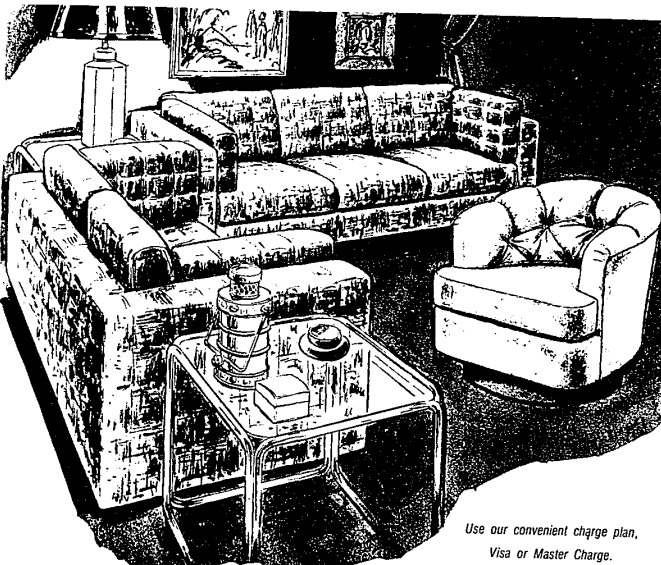
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