

Circus Wagon is no longer; show biz memories linger

By Doug Funke
staff writer

You can take the circus wagon out of the family, but you'll never be able to take the family out of show business.

The wagon, actually a trailer decorated like a wagon, belonged to Grace McIntosh and was recently parked in front of Elizabeth Romig's residence on Rochester Road in Troy.

McIntosh was moving to Oklahoma and didn't want to be bothered with the trailer.

McIntosh's brother, Irvin Romig, bought the trailer when it didn't sell after a couple of weeks. He painted it white to make it more marketable and now has it in his yard in Southfield.

McIntosh and Romig have another sister, Fay Snyder, who lives in California.

None of these names ring a bell, you say?

Well, Irvin Romig is better known as Ricky the Clown. Now 63, he had his own kiddie show at WXYZ-TV from 1953 to 1964. Romig still makes personal appearances at different events in the metropolitan area.

Snyder, now in her late 50s, is an animal trainer whose animals have been

used in many movies and television productions.

McINTOSH, in her late 60s, is a circus producer.

Elizabeth Romig, the matriarch of the family, is half of the famous Romig & Rooney team which delighted audiences with the Ringling Bros. Circus and later with their own show.

Now 86, Elizabeth has lived in Troy since the early 1940s. She says she's not surprised all her children have remained in the entertainment business over the years.

"They were just brought up in it," she said. "They liked it, really liked it. It (the circus) was like having a family of your own."

Elizabeth Rooney met her husband-to-be, Carl Romig, when both were with the circus. She was an aerial artist and rode horses bareback. Carl was a horseman with a flair for western-oriented theatrics.

They were married 62 years, until Carl died in 1979.

"We broke the children in and travelled with the circus," she recalled.

Irvin Romig says with a laugh he wouldn't be surprised if his mother could still walk the tightrope today.

ROMIG GIVES the impression he hasn't really considered anything but a career in show business. "When you're with a truck circus, it's like a big family," he said recalling the early days.

Romig also fondly remembers the act the family put on at local theaters, such as the Macomb and Redford, during the Depression years.

"We had a circus stage show with animals right on the stage," he said. "We never had to go on welfare."

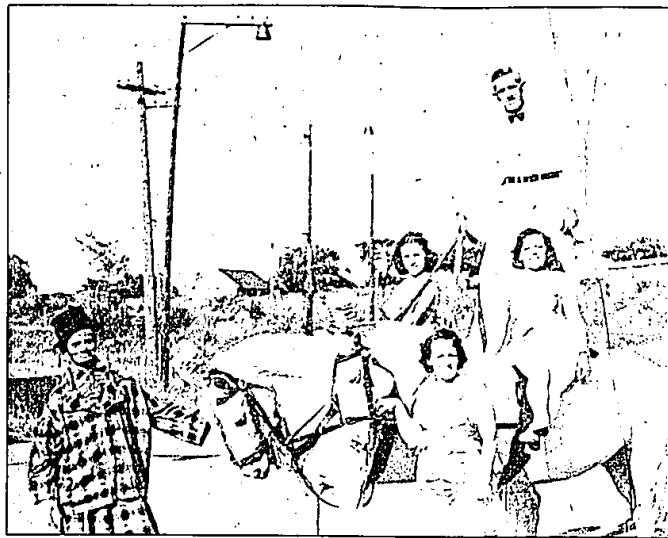
As the siblings grew older, they went out on their own, but have always remained in show businesses in one way or another.

Romig always wanted to be a clown. His wife, Rose, who never had a desire to be an entertainer, said she prefers to remain behind the scenes.

Fay married a man who was part of a trapeze act. Grace married the head mechanic of a circus company.

It's not as easy to be an entertainer as it may seem.

"With training animals, you have to have a lot of patience," Romig said. As for being a clown, "you don't know what I go through for a half-hour (TV) show. You lie awake at night. No one writes your material. Thousands of people watch you."



This picture, taken about 1934 at the Ann Arbor Fairgrounds, shows the Romig Family — Irvin (far left), Elizabeth (standing), Grace (seated on horse in foreground), Fay and Carl.

Residents on fashion panel

Three Farmington-area high school students have been chosen to participate in the 1983 Fairlane Town Center Fashion Panel.

They are Kathleen A. Keller, a student at North Farmington High School; Kim Galasso, a student at Our Lady of Sorrows High School; and Julianne LaFleur, a student at Harrison High School. In all, 25 persons between the

ages of 13 and 25 were chosen to participate. They were among 40 semifinalists competing in a talent, personality and poise contest held Jan. 26-30 at the center.

Members of the fashion panel at Fairlane gain experience in modeling, dancing and other performing arts as they become integral parts of the fashion presentations featured at the center.

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