

The Advance Car

The Official Newsletter of the Circus Historical Society

February 2025

Greetings from the Circus Historical Society! We are excited to bring you another edition of *The Advance Car* to share updates and highlight our members.

2025 got off to a rousing start at the CHS! In January, over twenty CHS members attended the International Circus Festival in Monte-Carlo, we hosted a *Circus History Live!* tribute session in honor of the late circus historian Bill Taggart, and we began planning for our 2025 Las Vegas convention.

All these activities are the results of the efforts of our officers, trustees, and members who volunteer vast amounts of their time, talents, and treasure to help us preserve circus history. If you want to volunteer, see the **Volunteers Wanted** section below for new opportunities to help.

We send this e-newsletter to CHS members and to non-members who have expressed an interest in the Circus Historical Society. If you are not already a CHS member and want to start receiving our scholarly *Bandwagon* journal and enjoying all our other membership benefits, [join today](#).

See you down the road!

Bruce Hawley
President
Circus Historical Society

2025 International Monte-Carlo Circus Festival



CHS Members Visited the 2025 Monte-Carlo Circus Festival

In recognition of our work in preserving the rich history of the circus, the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque in Monte-Carlo recently honored the Circus Historical Society with Associate Membership status in the Fédération. Under the honorary presidency of H.S.H. Princess Stephanie of Monaco, the Fédération is known worldwide for its efforts in the preservation and promotion of the circus arts through World Circus Day, the Global Alliance of Circus Schools, and especially through its support of the annual International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo.

As an associate member, the CHS participates in Fédération meetings during the festival. In January, CHS president Bruce Hawley briefed an international audience of Fédération members about the CHS. About twenty other CHS members from the United States and Canada also traveled to Monte-Carlo to participate in Fédération activities, watch festival rehearsals, and attend two of the festival's competition performances. They witnessed circus history in the making when the Mexican American Gold Clown award winning Flying Caballeros trapeze act completed three consecutive quadruple somersaults in a single performance!

Because of our affiliation with the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque, CHS is allocated a limited number of rehearsal access badges and free tickets to two of the festival's competition performances each year. By attending both competition performances, CHS members can see all the acts that will be competing for awards. Travel, lodging, and meals are at our members' own expense.

CHS members who are interested in applying for the limited number of free tickets and rehearsal access badges in connection with the 2026 International Circus Festival of Monte-Carlo, should send an email to President Bruce Hawley at president@circushistory.org before September 15, 2025. If you are not already a CHS member, [join the CHS today](#).

CHS Member Spotlight

Recognizing our members and their dedication to the preservation of circus history



Photo courtesy of Peggy Adler

Peggy Adler

CHS member Peggy Adler won a prestigious IndiFEST Film Awards laurel for her video *Emil Pallenberg & Snookums*. The video is based on Adler's book about the Pallenberg Wonder Bears and their human family.

[Click here](#) to watch Peggy's video.



Photo: Courtesy of Bruce Hawley

Bruce Hawley

CHS president Bruce Hawley was recently a guest on the [Celebrity Museums](#) online program where he gave a one hour presentation about the Circus Historical Society and the rich history of the circus.

[Click here](#) to view the recording of the session with Bruce Hawley.

If you're a CHS member who has recently promoted circus history through publication, presentations, media appearances, or community talks, let us know! We try to highlight as much as possible in each issue. Email CHSmarketingpr@gmail.com

Upcoming Events



**CIRCUS
HISTORY
LIVE!**

BLACK HISTORY MONTH FEATURING
BERNICE COLLINS

SUN FEB 23, 7PM EST
FREE ZOOM EVENT (REGISTRATION REQUIRED)

In celebration of Black History Month, our February *Circus History Live!* program will feature **Bernice Collins**, the first African-American female clown with Ringling Bros and Barnum & Bailey Circus!

After graduating from Clown College in 1977, Bernice performed as a clown for two years. Desiring to be a showgirl, she studied dance while clowning and was offered a showgirl position. In 1982, she asked Irvin Feld if she could be trained as a tiger presenter. He agreed and asked legendary animal trainer Charly Baumann to mentor her. Bernice went on to become both a tiger and a horse presenter and later a tour manager with Ringling. After leaving Ringling, Bernice became company manager for the Big Apple Circus and later the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. CHS vice president Chris Berry will host this session.

[Click here](#) to register for this program.



Website Update: We are updating our main [website](#) to better serve the circus history research needs of our members. Our Website Committee is looking for volunteers with experience in website design and/or database entry to serve on their committee.

Circus History Book Club: To encourage group study of circus history, we may be forming member-only book clubs that will meet periodically on Zoom to discuss circus history books. At this point, we are seeking volunteers with Zoom experience who would like to lead our book club groups.

Bandwagon Articles: For over 80 years, CHS members have been accurately preserving circus history by authoring scholarly well-researched articles for publication in our *Bandwagon* journal. For further information about writing for *Bandwagon*, see [Write for Bandwagon](#) on our website.

Members who are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities should send an email to Bruce Hawley at president@circushistory.org.



Costumes in storage at Milner Library

Milner Library's Ueckert Circus Wardrobe Collection Opens

Illinois State University recently concluded a two year, grant funded project to organize, research, and describe the Ueckert Circus Wardrobe Collection. "I'm excited about the research potential and the learning possibilities that this world-class collection offers! The sky is the limit with regard to the topics and fields of study these materials could provide," says Maureen Brunsdale, Milner's Special Collections Librarian and CHS Trustee.

The collection is an unparalleled assemblage of circus costuming, accessories, and props dating from the 1880s to the early 2000s. It includes over 1,200 artifacts from many notable American circuses and features everything from functional staff uniforms to elaborate works of wearable art. [Click here](#) for a detailed, comprehensive, item-level finding aid.



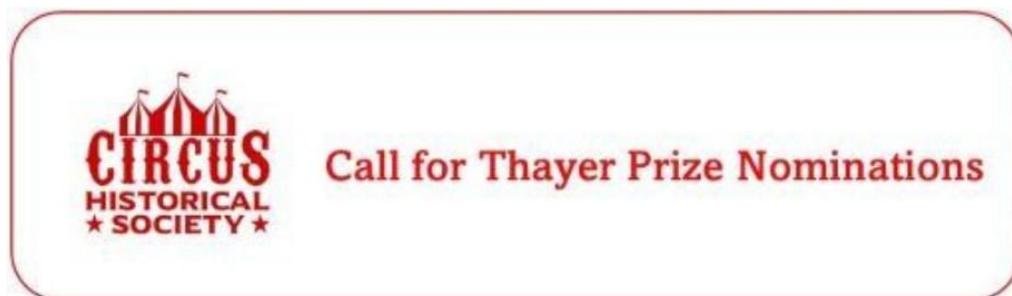
Digital-Only *Bandwagon* Option

Based on feedback from members, *Bandwagon* is now available in both printed and digital-only formats. Many of our international members prefer the digital-only format. And, due to increasingly long delivery delays of periodicals by the US Postal Service, many of our US-based members are also opting for digital-only format as well.

Print - This is the default option for those who prefer receiving a printed copy of *Bandwagon* via mail. Members who receive a print copy also have access to digital copies from the previous three years via the members only Back Yard website. Members who want to keep receiving a printed copy of *Bandwagon* by mail do not need to take any action.

Digital-Only - This is the option for members who have expressed interest in no longer receiving a printed copy of *Bandwagon* via mail, preferring to read it online via their computer or mobile device. With this option, you will not receive a paper copy of *Bandwagon*, but will be notified via email when the new issue is available each quarter on the members only Back Yard website as a PDF.

Members who want to switch to digital-only can log on to their Profile on the [CHS Back Yard website](#) with their email address and password, click the *Edit Profile* button, and select the *Digital Bandwagon Only* field.



The CHS Thayer Prize Committee is now accepting nominations for the 2025 Thayer Prize. Only Circus Historical Society members in good standing are eligible to make nominations. Members may nominate one or more works, including their own. [Click here for additional information.](#)

Only non-fictional works published, issued, or released during 2023 and 2024 are eligible for nomination for the 2025 prize. Members must submit nominations on either the *official online form* or the *official mail-in form*. Full eligibility criteria and

nomination forms are available on the Thayer Prize page on the members-only CHS Back Yard site. Members can log on to the [CHS Back Yard site](#) with their email address and password.

The deadline for submission is **March 31, 2025**.

CHS Member Obituaries

Cheri Valentine

We were deeply saddened to hear about the recent loss of Cherie Valentine, CHS member and celebrated circus historian, who shared her immense knowledge regarding the rich circus aerialist history of Bloomington Illinois and of her own family.

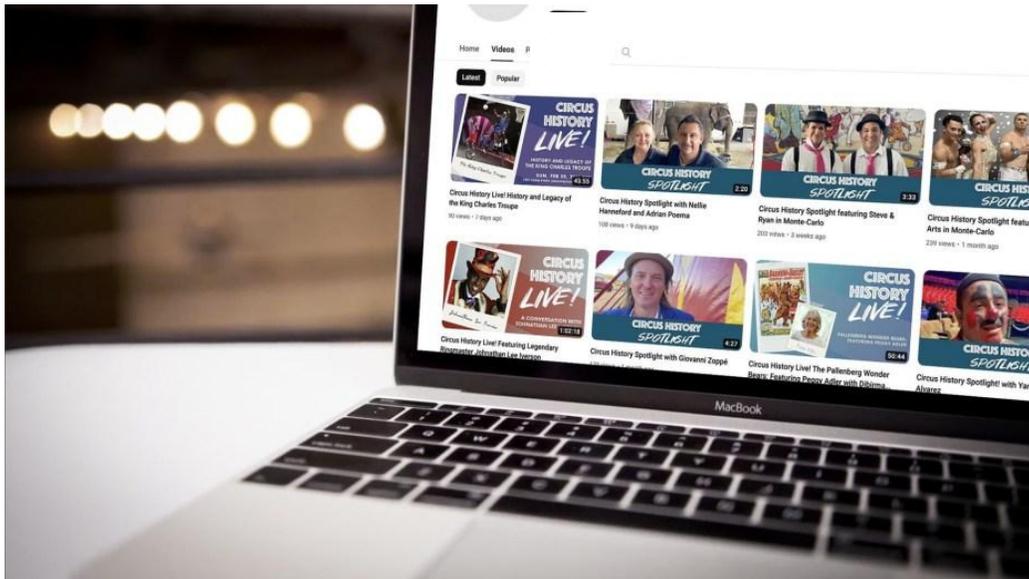
Join us in re-visiting Cherie's work in the *Bandwagon* Collection on the Internet Archive, including *The Valentine Family of Flyers of Bloomington, Illinois* published in [Bandwagon Volume 60, Number 4 \(2016\)](#).

Chester Cable

Circus industry legend and CHS member Chester Cable passed away on February 5. Chester's circus career dated back to the Cole Bros. Railroad Circus of 1949. Over the years, his magnificent career as a foot juggler allowed him to perform on some of the biggest circuses and arena shows in America and overseas.

After a long stint with the television program *Circus of the Stars*, Chester and his partner Wini McKay provided props for Hollywood blockbusters such as *The Greatest Showman* and *Water for Elephants*.

Chester and Wini were guests on our *Circus History Live!* program a couple of years ago. We hope you will take a few moments and [click here](#) to watch the recording of this session and learn about Chester's amazing life.



Want more circus history? [Click here](#) to visit the Circus Historical Society *YouTube Channel* and watch the recordings of our *Circus History Live!* and *Circus Spotlight* interviews!

Photo credit: Special Collections, Milner Library, Illinois State University

**JOIN CHS
TODAY!**

Members have access to publications, events, a bookstore, and more!

Become a member at **circushistory.org**

If you are not already a member, please join us today! For only \$60 a year, you will receive our scholarly quarterly journal *Bandwagon* and enjoy all the other benefits of a CHS membership. For additional information about the CHS, click [here](#).

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