

Parades by Gerry Biram

There is something about most parades that makes the heart beat just a little faster and brings smiles to the faces of those who watch as each enjoys every new part as it passes by. Perhaps it is the stirring rhythm of the marches being played by the various bands or the beautiful floats that bring the joy especially to the faces of the children. I love to watch them – some showing a feeling of incredulity, some of surprise, others of disbelief and some even registering a little fear or lack of understanding.

I have been to the Rose Bowl parade at Pasadena several times and always come away with a feeling of awe at having witnesses several hours of beautiful flower featured floats, stirring bands, and outstanding horsemanship. Veteran's Day parades are solemn events and I have participated in many of them as a member of the Ladies Auxiliary to the VFW. The parade at the University of Wyoming to honor fifty year alumni was an event I shall never forget. Seeing those with whom I went to school all those many years ago was wonderful but it was sad to learn how many had already passed on or were unable to attend due to health problems.

Of all the parades I have seen, the ones that I most enjoyed and will never forget were the circus parades of my childhood. Barnum and Bailey used to pay an annual visit to Laramie and my father was enough of a kid that he just could never miss either the parade or the afternoon show. The circus traveled on a train which would arrive in our town in the early morning hours. The cages carrying the exotic animals as tigers, lions, and bears were unloaded and hooked up to teams of horses that would take them to the circus grounds east of the town. In those years all events took place in big tents that were erected mostly by the elephants and their trainers. By about eight o'clock the circus performers were ready to pass by on the streets and set up for the afternoon show. The whole town turned out to see them proceed. The music from the band, the costumed trapeze artists, and antics of the clowns all were exciting to both young and old. I do not know how my father arranged it but several times we were allowed to watch the erection of huge tents by the elephants.

How methodically they moved with perfect coordination as they unrolled the canvases, carried the tent poles and placed them as magically the tent arose followed by placement of the seats. The trapeze equipment was placed in position and the rings were laid in the center of the tent. How those great beasts carried out the set up so quickly was always a mystery to me but all was always done by show time.

Few circus events are played in tents any more but rather in stadiums and parades are probably a thing of the past. I feel privileged to have enjoyed them as a child.