

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

The Christmas shopping season is now behind us. There is usually a lot of encouragement to buy locally thus supporting the local merchants which helps the local economy. I am all for that but I hear from various sources that the attitude of the local business person sometimes is not the best and then the question arises "Why buy locally, sometimes paying more, and get lesser treatment?" If you happen to be a local merchant, you might keep this in mind as an on-going improvement for your business. If you were a customer with a complaint, I hope that you contacted the merchant involved and told him of your bad experience so the problem can be corrected. The news is out on the closure of the Ringling Brothers/Barnum and Bailey Circus, the last of the big ones. I remember the days when the circus would come to town in the Nineteen Thirties prior to World War Two. First appearing on the sides of buildings all over town were the colorful circus posters giving all the information as to their planned arrival. To stop and read the poster contents and the art work involved was a thrill in itself as the excitement built. The circus traveled by train from the bay area and was a huge event for an isolated place like Eureka. The arrival of the trains was an experience within itself. In those days the area bounded by Fairfield, Henderson, Spring and Harris Streets was one big vacant lot and provided plenty of room for a circus. The colorful circus wagons, loaded with equipment and the circus animals, were taken off the rail road flat cars and hauled to the circus site via Broadway and Fairfield streets. They were pulled by the circus horses, zebras and elephants. I was a kid and not allowed around the rail road yards so we would pick a spot on Fairfield Street and watch the very colorful procession. All of the wagons, containing the circus cats, were shuttered while being moved and you could hear the growling and snarls from within. We would then hurry to the site to watch the unloading of the equipment, the roustabouts driving tent stakes and the methodical spreading of the canvas followed by the raising of the big top, done through a series of ropes and pulleys being pulled by the elephants. The total preparation and rising of the big top was a sight to behold with all moves perfectly choreographed. In the meantime, the older kids vied for jobs feeding and watering the circus animals which paid off with a free ticket to the performance. The last circus to arrive in Eureka via the railroad was the Clyde Beatty circus in the Fifties. I took the family down to the railroad yards and watched then load the train for the return trip south. What great memories.

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