

Fun under the Big top

Circus offers weekend of thrills, spills, and delights

The circus. An evening out for some, a way of life for others. But when the house lights go down and the three rings glow with spotlights on sequins, it's fun — for spectators and performers.

"It's a thrill," said Grace McIntosh of M&M Circus International. "As a performer, you live for that applause."

McIntosh is the director of the Sesostris Shrine Circus, which will perform through this weekend at the state fairgrounds coliseum.

Verneita Kisey, 73, of Lincoln was one of the spectators at the circus Wednesday night.

"It's fun," Kisey said. "I like it all — I'm just like a kid."

Travis Brandenburgh, 8, son of Russell and Snady Brandenburgh of Lincoln, was also in the audience Wednesday night.

"I think I liked the acrobats on the tight ropes," Travis said.

Travis said he was slightly scared when the acrobat rode a motorcycle on the wire.

If he could be in the circus, Travis said, he would like to be an acrobat.

Karen Zeller, 26, of Lincoln, said she had never been to a circus before.

"I loved it, especially the elephants," she said.

Another elephant-lover was Carey Jaques, 4, daughter of Marvin and Cathy Jaques, Lincoln.

"I liked when the two elephants stand on one elephant," she said.

Carey said that if she could be in the circus, she would like to "do a flip." Carey's brother Jon, 7, said he liked the clowns.

"It's a family show," McIntosh said. "They don't have to be afraid to bring their little kids, and there's so many acts, they're bound to like some of them."

The circus is a family show in more than one sense — it is a show for families, by families.

"It's always families," McIntosh said. "If a family has three children, at least two will stay in show business."

McIntosh said she spent her entire life in the circus. A third generation member of a circus family, she said she has never considered life outside the circus.

"I never knew any other," McIntosh said. "It's a hard life. You have to like show business. I'm proud of my work — I want it to be the best."

"There's vanity in everybody," she said. "I have a terrific reputation in this business. I bring the best shows. I demand the best, but I give the best."

She said the circus has changed more for the audience than for performers.

"There is not that much difference in the work," McIntosh said. "There's a difference in the audience. They are so much more trick-wise. They admire talent."

McIntosh said she considers her shows a success when people think they have gotten their money's worth. And she plans to keep giving them just that.

"I love the circus," McIntosh said. "It's my life."

Story by Christopher Burbach

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