

Local



Staff photo by Becky Swanson

Ties in the pocket this year

Elmo the Clown informs Ted Hoef that ties are to be worn in the shirt pocket this year and corrects Hoef's "mistake." Elmo — Elmo Gibb — is a promoter for the Clyde Beatty-Cole Brothers combined circus.

Hoef is a program adviser for the MSC committees. Elmo was visiting The Battalion office and Hoef was there at the office on business.

Elmo clowns around before circus opens

By NANCY WEATHERLEY
Battalion Staff

"I come from a showbiz family; my grandmother was a stripper and sailed on the Titanic. She always was a little dingy." So begins Elmo the Clown in his interview.

Elmo is a clown with the Clyde Beatty, Cole Bros. Circus appearing Friday through Sunday in the local area. His typical dress for the day includes a huge red nose, preppy yellow overalls (they have an alligator on them), a blue checked shirt, huge yellow shoes, plastic two-foot long scissors and an oversized yellow foam-rubber hammer.

Elmo is making appearances in town before the circus raises its Big Top in Townshire Shopping Center.

He really does come from a showbiz family; his mother wrote and produced a children's show for a theatre in South Jersey, Penn.

"Every time she did a show the whole family got drafted to do bit-parts," Elmo said. "I took language and gymnastics in school and got used to amateur performing."

Elmo toured with a Russian and then Polish troupe, learning how to perform in front of audiences and eventually found the circus. "I took my family to see Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and I auditioned for their clown school," he said.

Elmo went to clown college, which he describes as an eight-week crash course in fundamen-

tals, and worked with Ringling Bros. for two seasons.

"You really learn what it's like to be a clown after you start performing before audiences," Elmo said. "It takes time to assimilate the basics and then suddenly, literally overnight, you realize you're funny."

Elmo said beginners tend to go overboard and perform even dangerous stunts. "After you've been at it a while, you learn to tone your routine down and simplify everything. An example might be carrying simpler props."

The clown said that sometimes the funniest moments are when something goes wrong. "We were doing a skit in the main ring where we laid a clown on three swords and when we tried to get him off, the swords stuck."

"We tugged and finally he had to walk off with a sword sticking to his head."

Elmo works a 40-week season with the circus which usually begins in Florida with the Gator Bowl and ends in December. Generally during the off-season, Elmo said he works small circuses like the Shriners', but this year he plans to stay in Florida and build a clown car to use in his act.

He said he has about 25 minutes of corny jokes in his repertoire and gets a lot of them from Groucho Marx books and old George Burns and Gracie Allen shows.

"When you get home from the season, your family can't stand you," Elmo said. "Corny jokes go over well. 'I like to spend time in

Nebraska or Kansas as much as I can."

But seriously, Elmo said he likes to get material from other people. "Morning disc-jockeys always offer good material; they haven't been up long enough to think about what they're saying."

As in any profession, there are always personal risks involved. "Chimpanzees hate clowns," he said. "You sort of look humanoid, but not quite human, so the chimps try to tear you apart."

Elmo said a lot of the animals, such as lions and bears, are afraid of the clowns.

"The heart of clowning is to take something natural and make it so artificial that it appears natural," he said. The unusual appearance of clowns can make small children afraid, just like the monkeys, he said.

"One of the hardest things is to try and be funny in a different language. I played at a south Texas elementary school where the children predominantly spoke Spanish and the children just couldn't comprehend what I was doing."

Circus shows are scheduled as follows: Friday at 4:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.; Saturday at 1 p.m., 4:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.; and Sunday at 2 p.m.

Ticket prices are \$4.50 in advance for adults and \$5.50 on show-days. Children under 12 and seniors, 65 and over, are \$3. Texas A&M students with an ID can get in for \$3.

International group sponsors World Food Day Saturday

The United Nations has designated Saturday as a day of realization of hunger and food issues worldwide.

In observance of the first annual World Food Day, a noon program Friday at Rudder Fountain will focus on hunger issues, farmers' problems, food production and food distribution, Shirley Isbell, a program organizer said.

The World Food Day event is sponsored by International Programs at Texas A&M University.

Master of Ceremonies will be Student Body President Ken Johnson. Scheduled speakers in-

clude: Randy Green, a senior agricultural journalism student; Lony Bauscher, a junior agricultural

economics student; and Gerry Alzes Do O, a graduate student in agricultural economics.

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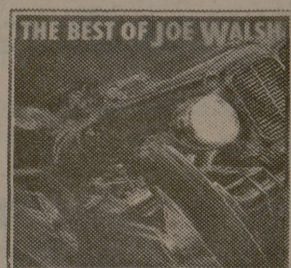
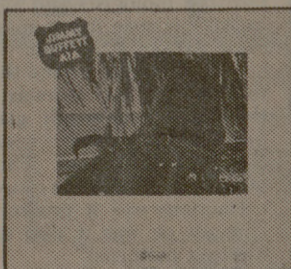
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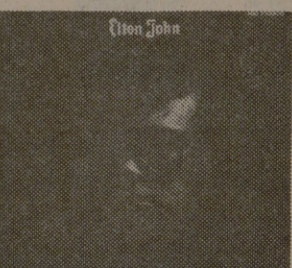
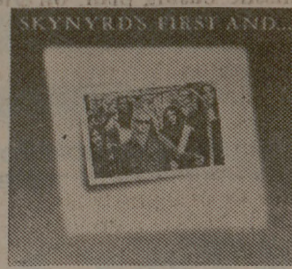
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