

The circus marches into College Station

Today Aggies can be found under the

Big Top

By GRAY WHITTEN
Staff Writer

Tonight the lights will go down in Reed Arena for the first College Station performance of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus, and, if all goes according to plan, this first of three shows will be seen by as many as 11,000 people.

The three-ring show will begin at 7:30 p.m. and will be repeated at 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, and each show will be preceded by the Three Ring Adventure, where the arena floor becomes an interactive experience for all ages.

Attractions such as walking a low-wire, bouncing on a bungee or trying out a trapeze will be available, as well as the chance to try on circus costumes.

Performers from the circus will be on hand to supervise all events, according to circus promoters.

Mary Helen Bowers, associate director of Special Events Facilities at Texas A&M University, said she anticipates an entertaining yet hectic time in Reed Arena over the next three days.

"The circus is a very complicated show because there is just so much more involved," Bowers said. "The animals and performers and the tent all require a great deal of work."

Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey will present Zusha, the Queen of the Nile, the only performing hippopotamus in the world, and other trained animals including horses, Bengal tigers, zebras, camels and a herd of elephants.

"The elephants and horses will be in a large tent in the parking lot," Bowers said, "and the sea lions will be in the loading dock area, where they have access to power and water."

"There will be three rings on the floor of the arena, some will be lit while others are changing sets, and most of the show will be there," she said.

Other features of the circus' main show will be the Guerreros high-wire team and the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Oxygen Skate Team, featuring the first circus appearance of an in-line skating stunt show.

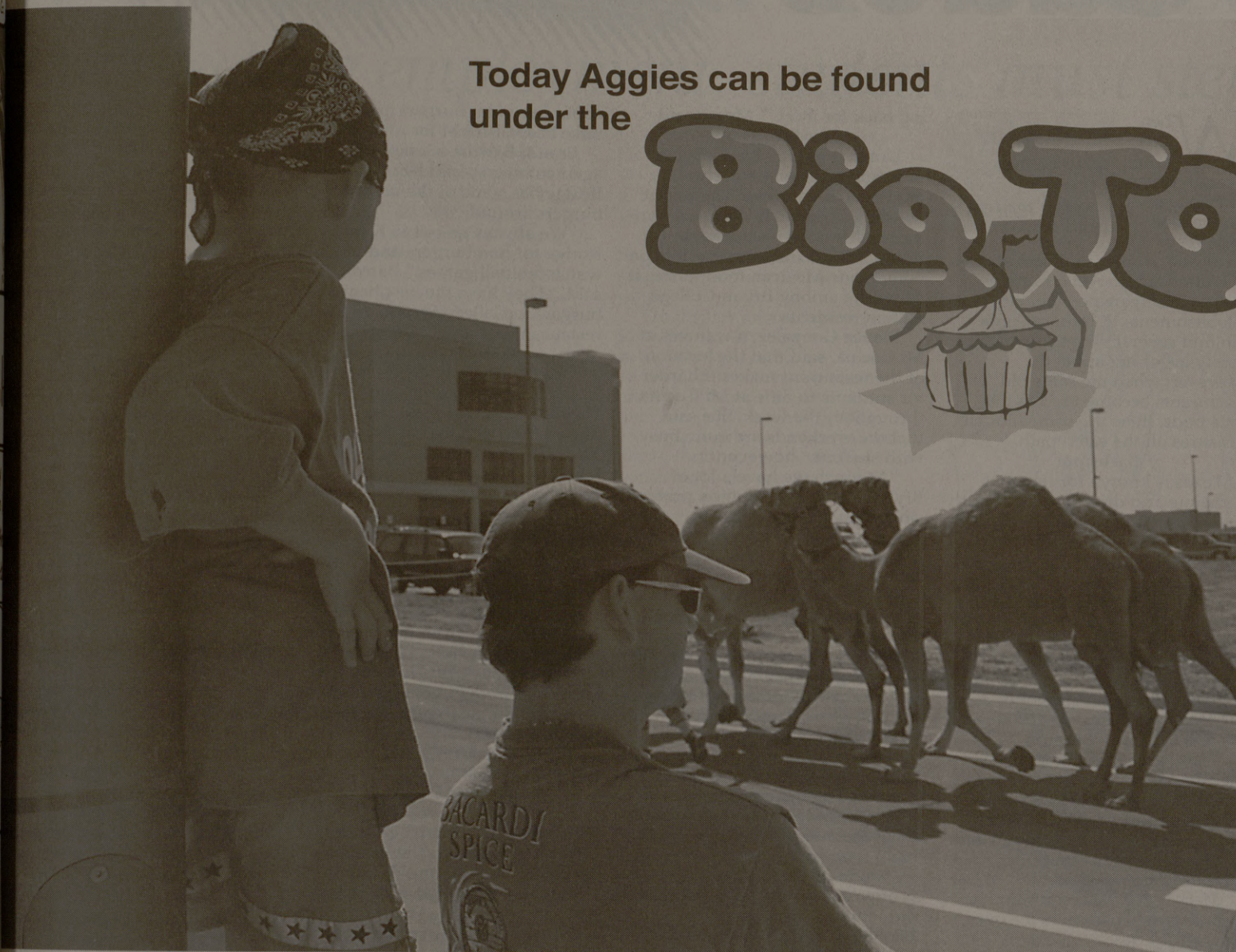
The Flying Caballeros trapeze troupe from Mexico is one of the circus' other prized features, circus sources said. Also featured will be KCT, INC, a unicycle-riding basketball team.

The staff of Reed Arena has been working in conjunction with circus officials to ensure that each of the shows goes smoothly in the new venue.

"We went to see the show in Austin, and it was really impressive," Bowers said. "I was able to get a feel for how the show would go, and that was helpful."

Bowers said some floor seats were sacrificed to provide the necessary room for the circus to operate, and several additional spotlight platforms were added in the upper levels of the Arena to meet the needs of the circus. This brought the capacity of the Arena to approximately 11,000, she said.

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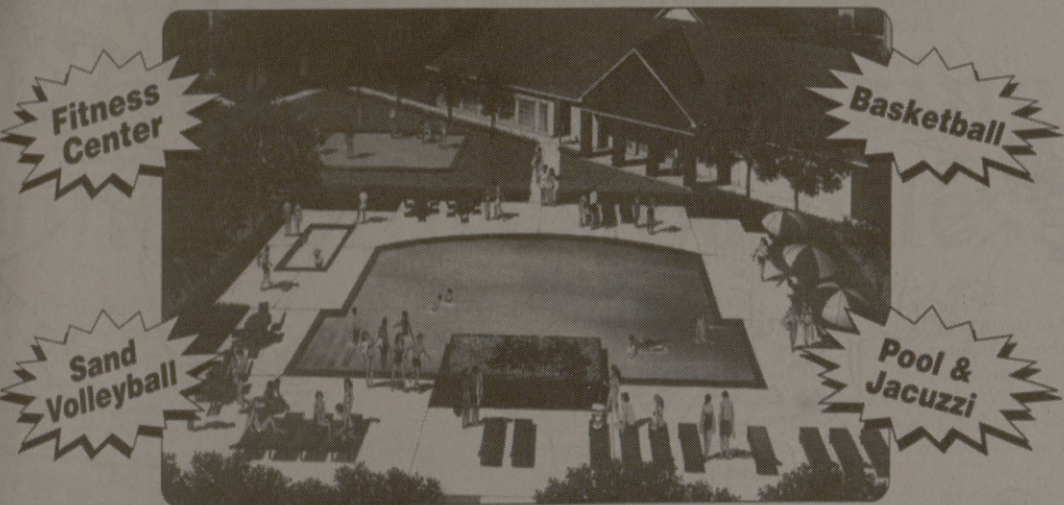
Five-year-old Matthew Telg leans against a post for a better view of the camels making their way to Reed Arena for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. College Station resident Drew Martin watches at street level.

PHOTO BY JAKE SCHRIKING / THE BATTALION

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