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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RINGLING BROS. STATEMENT REGARDING
DEATH OF YOUNG ASIAN ELEPHANT**

Vienna, VA – July 26, 1999 – Today, we learned that Benjamin, a young Asian elephant with *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey*®, died suddenly while playing and bathing in a pond on private property outside of Houston, Texas. He and his companion, Shirley, another young Asian elephant, were staying overnight on the property as a stopover en route from Houston to Dallas.

We are stunned and saddened by today's news. Benjamin was born at Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation on February 3, 1995, and has performed with Shirley, his companion since birth, on Ringling Bros. Blue Unit since January 1998. Benjamin's passing is especially poignant since he represented a new generation of a dwindling species we are committed to preserving.

A local veterinarian was called to the property immediately. After the examination, Benjamin's body was taken to the veterinary school at Texas A&M University where a necropsy will be performed. A preliminary report is expected to be completed tomorrow. Final results of the tests will be completed within a few weeks. An internal review began immediately in order to collect all the facts surrounding this unfortunate incident.

Updates will be provided as soon as the information is available.

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