



Shelley Powers

Ringling Brothers

**The Greatest
Show in Court**

Appendix B: List of Circus Elephant Incidents

After the elephant named Janet broke out of the circus tent in Florida in 1992 and was subsequently shot, an unnamed circus official told a People Magazine reporter that such incidents were "terribly rare. It's the first one I can recall."

The reality is that negative incidents between humans and elephants are quite common, especially when you consider how few elephants there are in the country (there are only about 500 elephants in the United States, today, and half are in zoos or sanctuaries). In this Appendix, I list out negative incidents I've been able to discover related to circus elephants in the United States since 1800. Note, I don't guarantee that the list is complete, as many incidents were never reported, or the reports have been lost to time.

Incidents From 1800 to 1849

1816 In 1816 one of the first elephants in the US, known as Old Bett (Big Bett or Betty) was shot and killed by a farmer by the name of Daniel Davis. Records differ as to why he killed the elephant. Some accounts say he did so because he considered it sinful for Old Bett to perform on a Sunday; others state he killed the elephant because he was enraged that the elephant's owner was charging people like him a quarter to see her, and he was about to lose his home.

1826 Little Bett (or Betty) was following her trainer across a bridge on the way out of town when she was shot in Chepachet, Rhode Island. Six (or seven, accounts vary) men were found accountable.

1839 December 31, 1839, an elephant named Columbus attacked and killed his keeper's horse, and then killed the keeper. It tore off down the road outside New Orleans in a rampage, killing a drayman and his two donkeys. Spying a black man sitting on a fence, the elephant smashed down the fence and grabbed and killed the man. The man was a slave, so Columbus' owner was compelled to pay the slave owner \$1,800 for the elephant's actions. Columbus was successfully caught after it had rampaged for four hours. It died in 1854 when it fell through a bridge. Daily Alta California, 1870.

1849 According to a Sacramento Daily Union article from 1892, an elephant named Hannibal struck and killed a man who had given the elephant water.

1849 The same Sacramento Daily Union article mentioned that an elephant named Columbus killed his keeper, as well as two camels, and a llama. No indication if this was the same Columbus mentioned earlier.

Incidents from 1850 to 1899

One can see the impact of increasing numbers of circus elephants in the country in the latter part of the 1800s. More elephants equate to significantly more negative incidents between people and pachyderms.

1850 Pizarro, with the Raymond & Warings Menagerie, Museum, and Circus United killed his keeper, two camels, and then ravaged the countryside. However, other reports have Pizarro dying in 1847, so there is some confusion about when (and if) this event happened. Considering the reference to two camels, this could be the same incident with the elephant named Columbus, in 1849.

1854 In June of 1854, the same Hannibal from the 1849 incident broke free of a menagerie, attacking several horse drawn carriages, killing the horses, and badly injuring several men. From a New York Times story about the event, horses were the primary target of the elephant—the people were hurt only because they were in the way. Eventually, Hannibal tired and was recaptured. The Sacramento Daily Union, 1892.

1856 While traveling from Philadelphia to the southern US in 1856, an elephant was lost overboard from the steamer ship Thomas Swan as the craft was tossed about by a storm. Elephants were transported on deck in those days. New York Times, January 16, 1856.

(Today, elephants are still transported on ship decks, but in containers. The elephants that Tom Rider worked with in Europe were transported from the US on the ship's deck.)

1862 In 1862, a Van-Amburgh & Co elephant named Hannibal (possibly the same from the earlier escapade), killed a "partially deranged" man who irritated the elephant (the 'partially deranged' may be redundant, since anyone irritating an elephant has to be deranged). The elephant's owner sawed off the elephant's tusks to prevent him from further injuring other people. The Richmond Times Dispatch, October 18, 1862.

1867 Hyatt Frost of the Van Amburgh Menagerie recounted a fight between an elephant named Tippo Sahib and his handlers that happened the week before. The elephant became aggressive when a new handler was employed. The handler grabbed nine assistants, forced Tippo to the ground using ropes, and beat the elephant mercilessly until it was subjugated. During the beating, a dog that was a companion to Tippo attacked the

handler and had to be forcibly removed from the room. *New York Times*, November 11, 1867.

1867 Romeo killed his handler, William "Canada Bill" Williams, in the Forepaugh circus winter quarters. "Mr. Williams, up to the time of his death, had entire control of the animal", according to an article in the 1868 *Daily Alta California*.

Romeo had quite a reputation. In 1865, he battered down the building in which he was held and terrorized the community until a marksman shot the elephant in the left eye. Romeo survived, to the detriment of William Williams. And he wasn't finished, either.

1869 Forepaugh's Romeo was again involved in a violent incident, this time in Indiana. A female elephant escaped her bounds and joined Romeo where he was chained. When the handlers attempted to remove the female, Romeo picked one of them up and threw him several feet. He also crushed a dog that ran at him. His handler, Tom Williams, shot Romeo's trunk with buck shot. While the elephant was reacting in pain, Williams managed to wrap chains around his ankles. He and assistants yanked on the chains until Romeo was laid flat. They they beat Romeo with clubs 8 hours, "until Romeo cried, Hold, enough!", according to the *Daily Alta California*, December 25, 1869.

One is not surprised that Romeo is rumored to have killed seven elephant handlers.

1871 Another *Daily Alta California* newspaper article recounts the tale of when John Robinson's elephant, Old Emperor, was set upon by indians from a nearby village. In pain from several arrow wounds, Old Emperor decimated the village until the elephant was rescued by the circus people. According to the article, Old Emperor was taken by a group of young braves wanting to create a sensation in their village. I couldn't verify the truth of the story, though it is known that Robinson did have an elephant with this name in 1871.

1874 In a circus show in Virginia City, a miner tossed an elephant a chew of tobacco. The elephant grabbed at the man, tearing his clothes, but not causing him direct injury. *Daily Alta California*, 1874.

1875 A procession including two elephants frightened several horses pulling carriages along the road, causing several people to be injured and damaging various carts and wagons. *Sacramento Daily Record*, May 14, 1875.

1875 P. T. Barnum's elephant Betsey broke out of her quarters in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and attacked a tiger in its cage. The tiger escaped and managed to avoid the elephant. Betsey then broke out of the building and wandered down to the railroad depot, where she tried to knock a train engine over—only giving up when she burned her trunk. Her keepers tried to get her to return to her quarters, but she knocked one of them over. She lifted one of the circus boys in her trunk, but then gently let him go again. Finally, an entire crew of circus workers surrounded her, beating her with clubs and poking her with

pitchforks until they could get her tethered. Daily Alta California, December 5, 1875.

1878 Several elephants in the Robinson Circus got into a fight while crossing a river. One elephant, Chief, threw another, Bismarck, over a bridge. Bismarck was saved from drowning with the help of several circus people and another elephant. New York Times, May 4, 1878.

Elephants are excellent swimmers, which makes me wonder whether Bismarck was saved, or just re-captured.

1879 Robinson's Chief is at it again, this time killing his keeper, John King. Los Angeles Herald, 1880.

1880 Chief isn't finished. Ringling Brothers master of transportation, Tom Sullivan, entered Chief's enclosure while drunk and prodded Chief with a bullhook. An enraged Chief picked Sullivan up, squeezed him with his trunk, and then dropped his limp, dead body. New York Times, December 26, 1880.

1881 Willis Wilson, a "colored" man according to newspaper accounts, was attacked by an elephant on a circus train in Virginia. Though severely injured, he wasn't taken for medical help until the train reached its final destination. New York Times, November 16, 1881.

1882 Four elephants escaped the Barnum Circus, injuring several people and causing general havoc. "Patrick Ryan and his wife were knocked down by one of the elephants. The former was probably fatally injured." New York Times, August 3, 1882.

1883 Pilot, a Barnum and Bailey elephant, became so difficult to work with that the circus owners decided on an unusual course: to have him killed. Typically, elephants weren't destroyed when they killed people, because they were so valuable.

However, Pilot had a long career of killing and injuring keepers, as well as the occasional dog that ventured too close. On this day in 1883, Pilot attacked another elephant, and then wouldn't be subdued—even attacking a handler who could normally work with him. Pilot was shot with a gun that fired a 48 caliber ball. He died after three shots. New York Times, April 6, 1883.

1883 Queen, from the Barnum circus, killed Harry Packer, a Barnum circus employee. "The elephant was standing beside one of the circus wagons, and Packer undertook to pass between her and the wagon. As he did so, the brute leaned over toward the wagon so heavily as to nearly upset it. The pressure broke several of Packer's ribs and flattened him almost as thin as a board." New York Times article, August 28, 1883.

1885 A Barnum elephant, Albert, attacked a circus helper, James Sweeney, striking the

man with its tusks and feet, and throwing him to the ground. After Sweeney died, Albert was taken to a ravine, his heart and brain marked with chalk, and thirty-three members of the Keene Light Guard shot him. New York Times, July 21, 1885.

1885 The elephant Empress attacked John Kimberline, 20 years of age, as he tried to make a bed of hay under a lion cage in the tent where she was chained. Empress stealthily approached Kimberline, grabbed him and threw him violently against the tent pole. According to newspaper accounts, this is the third person she had killed that season. New York Times, September 1, 1885.

1885 The jewel of P. T. Barnum's circus, Jumbo, is accidentally killed by a train during off-loading. When his trainer realized a freight train was fast approaching the elephant, he yelled at Jumbo to run. Jumbo ran, but in his panic missed a fence opening. When he turned back to go through it, he ran straight into the train. He died within the hour. The train engine was also heavily damaged. New York Times, September 17, 1885.

1885 In October, Empress is at it again, attacking and killing a circus night watchman at the Forepaugh circus winter quarters. The stories note that Empress would never give any indication of dangerous behavior before attacking. She would be seemingly docile, and then suddenly attack.

There is talk of having her put to death, but in those days, what usually happened is the elephant is renamed and sold to another circus. Empress changed hands rather frequently, until she was eventually sold to the Harris Nickle Plate Show, and renamed Gypsy. We'll meet Gypsy again, later in this section. New York Times, October 12, 1885.

1885 A lion killed its trainer and escaped its cage. It entered the elephant house, and attacked an elephant named Bolivar. The elephant crushed the lion to death. New York Times, December 10, 1885.

1886 Though not exactly a circus incident, an elephant named Alva, in the play "Around the World in Eighty Days", grabbed his handler after a performance and slammed him to the ground. The handler, Hazelton, died an hour later. Daily Alta California, October 20, 1886.

1887 In March, an elephant tossed a "Mexican pony" against a leopard's cage. The leopard broke through its cage, and attacked the pony. The leopard then attacked the elephant but was "worsted", according to the news story. As the leopard sat and nursed an injured paw, it's tail stuck out under the door of the building. People grabbed the tail, holding the leopard in place until it could be re-caged. The story doesn't note whether the pony survived. New York Times, March 9, 1887.

1887 Empress severely injures another keeper, Eugene Mordinez, as he tried to calm her. Daily Alta California, July 22, 1887.

1887 A Los Angeles Herald story covers a circus appearing in town. Among the animals in the circus menagerie is Prince, reported to have killed fourteen men, and be over 140 years old. One of the challenges I faced putting this list together was sifting through the elephant stories—to separate the real from the hype that was a hallmark of circus promotion in the 1800s. We know the elephant was not 140 years old, but it wasn't unknown for an elephant to have killed several keepers. Consider this story hype, with a possibility of fact. Los Angeles Herald, October 10, 1887.

1887 Fire has always been the bane of circuses. On November 20, 1887, the main building of Barnum's winter quarter caught fire, killing many of the animals trapped inside. "Six of the elephants were terribly burned. Great pieces of flesh fell from their sides, and their blood spattered the ground as they ran." New York Times, November 20, 1887,

1888 An elephant named Zip, owned by the Shelby Circus, killed her handler in Pennsylvania. The Elephant Database.

1888 Forepaugh's Tip killed an animal handler, John Poffy, when Poffy was trying to unload Tip from a rail car. Some people by the train were teasing Tip, giving him apples spiked with pepper and tobacco. These actions angered the elephant, who then gored and trampled Poffy. Sacramento Daily Union, September 26, 1888.

1889 In December, again in Barnum's circus, one elephant attacked and killed its keeper, while another slipped and fell on top of another worker. From the story, it seems that the second worker survived. New York Times, December 4, 1889.

1890 A Forepaugh Circus elephant named Columbia fell out of its train car and was hit by a freight train. It was badly hurt, but the circus didn't seek medical help for it until almost a month later. By that time it was too late. New York Times, June 27, 1890.

1890 According to another New York Times story, another Forepaugh circus elephant also escaped a train and was wondering the tracks, causing delay to several trains. However, this story said the elephant was re-captured. It could be that multiple elephants had escaped at the same time. Multiple escaped elephants wasn't unheard of for Forepaugh. New York Times, May 25, 1890.

1891 A drunk man went up to a Forepaugh elephant and tried to pour whisky into his trunk. The elephant, Tip, "resented this invitation to drink, and in about five seconds was wiping the ground with his tormentor." The drunk was rescued by circus workers who notified Forepaugh of the event. Forepaugh, knowing that the town would probably delay the circus if they reported the incident, grabbed the man and took him on the train with the circus. According to newspaper story, when the man awoke...

Forepaugh sent for him and told him in his choice vocabulary of adjectives that he was a nice

man to hire out to the show and then get drunk and fight with the elephants the first night. 'You are discharged sir! You are discharged!' the old man thundered, and the fellow sneaked away, utterly collapsed.

San Francisco Call, July 6, 1891

1891 In On July 6, 1891, an elephant in a menagerie giving children rides was frightened by a hot air balloon, and crushed a young child to death. New York Times, July 6, 1891.

1892 An elephant in the Wallace Brothers circus killed his keeper, Joe Anderson. According to the Los Angeles Herald, "The animal became ugly and chased the whole police force and an excited group of citizens." That's the last story on this particular elephant. There was never any follow-up story about it being captured or killed. For all we know, some day some hiker is going to stumble across elephants bones while exploring a nearby wilderness area. Los Angeles Herald, June 3, 1892.

1892 Charley, a Washburn circus elephant, broke loose while being taken to the train, and escaped into a nearby swamp. The next day he was re-captured, but then broke away again. He charged a team of horses, killed a cow, and then headed back into the trees. Insects eventually drove him directly into the swamp waters, where the circus men left him. The story notes that the options considered at the time were re-capturing Charley, feeding him opium laced oats, or getting the militia out to shoot him. New York Times, July 13, 1892.

1893 After three days of frenzied behavior, Zip the elephant dies. Though unusual for the times, a necropsy was performed, and a four foot long iron chain was found in Zip's stomach. Los Angeles Herald, January 5, 1893.

1893 Thirty Barnum & Bailey elephants stampeded while being unloaded at the circus winter headquarters. No one was hurt, and only minor structural damage occurred. A statue of P. T. Barnum was knocked about a bit but wasn't harmed. A crowd of "men and boys", come to watch the unloading, fled in terror. New York Times, May 29, 1893.

1895 A horse hitched to a carriage was spooked by a passing procession of elephants. It ran into a crowd of people, injuring several, and killing two people, including a three year old child. New York Times, March 23, 1895.

1895 The Harris Nickel Plate Circus elephant Gypsy (listed earlier under the name of Empress, and also known as Gipsy and Gyp), came close to killing her trainer (evidently she had killed six trainers, earlier). The trainer fell during a routine and Gypsy accidentally stepped on him. However, "feeling bones breaking" supposedly triggered Gypsy into a frenzied attempt to finish the job. According to the paper, the trainer remarked, "I suppose, when I get well, I will have to Subdue her anew, and show her again that I am master." Reading the next entry demonstrates how well this plan worked. New York

Times, September 1, 1895.

1896 Gypsy reacted to being jabbed with an iron hook by killing the keeper, a man who was normally responsible for the lions. When the dead keeper's body was moved into a building, she tore down a wall trying to get at it. Eventually the circus people calmed her down and moved her into a barn, but when the doors closed, she knocked the doors down. The elephant "had her own way for about four hours", before being recaptured. The San Francisco Call, March 26, 1896.

1896 After killing yet another keeper, the owner of the Harris Nickle Plate Circus decided to have Gypsy electrocuted. "She'll be more value as soap", he states. However, a permit is denied for a public execution. Aspen Tribune, New York Times, and Sacramento Daily Union, December, 1896.

1897 Several cars for the Forepaugh & Sells circus are derailed, including two cars loaded with elephants. The newspaper article didn't mention if any of the elephants were injured. New York Times, September 1, 1897.

1897 Syd, a Robinson and Franklin Bros. circus elephant, grabbed his keeper and tossed him twenty feet. When the master of animals tried to control Syd, the elephant knocked him down. The animal handlers then decided they would subdue Syd, first by chaining him to the ground, and then hitting him with cudgels, and stabbing him with pitchforks. One of the pitchforks went through Syd's ear, and he pulled it loose, himself, and threw it away. When Syd refused to be subdued, they laid straw under him and set him afire. They burned him until "great sheets of his skin fell off". Eventually they put the fire out, covered him with Vaseline and vowed that if he killed another man he would be killed. San Francisco Call, October 19, 1897.

(I can't find anything more on Syd, but did locate a Sid, mentioned in the next section.)

1998 A Forepaugh & Sells circus derails yet again, and yet again, cars containing elephants were knocked over. Several elephants were injured, but none were killed. New York Times, September 27, 1898.

1899 A keeper in the Lemen Brothers circus, Frank Fisher, returned to the tent drunk and attempted to get the elephant, Rajah, to perform. He hugged Rajah, and told him to open his mouth. Rajah crushed the keeper to death. Newspaper accounts stated that Fisher was Rajah's ninth victim. Los Angeles Herald, April 10, 1899.

1899 A William Leggett was killed by an elephant of the Gaskill's Midway Company. Leggett had hit the same elephant with a hammer several weeks prior to Leggett being killed, with the implication being an elephant never forgets. New York Times, October 15, 1899.

1899 John Myers with the Hagenback Menagerie, is having a bad week. One day, his hand was bit by a leopard. The next day, one of the elephants picked him up and hurled him against a wall, seriously injuring him. New York Times, December 16, 1899.

1899 Well known elephant trainer M. J. Meagher, also known as Patsy Forepaugh, was killed by an elephant, Sid, when Meagher poked the elephant with a stick. Sid hurled the trainer to the ground, and then fell on him, piercing Meagher with his tusks. New York Times, December 21, 1899.

Incidents from 1900-1950

Elephants were rarely put down when killing handlers in the 1800s because the animals were so costly. Handlers were usually easier to replace.

During the last twelve months at least a dozen elephant trainers have been killed—more than have been killed in ten years previous.

Los Angeles Herald, March 21, 1900

This state changed in the 1900s.

1900 Dick, a dancing elephant in the Forepaugh & Sells circus, was strangled to death when ropes were put around his neck and then pulled by two other elephants, in an attempt to get him to move. "It was thought that if he were partially strangled, he would give in." New York Times, April 23, 1900.

1900 Sport, an elephant in the Hagenback show, is killed because of injuries he received a few weeks prior during a train wreck. He backed against the train car door, it broke and he fell through. He was left partially paralyzed by the accident. To "euthanize" Sport, he was hanged by a chain wrapped around his neck that was lifted by a construction derrick. New York Times, June 8, 1900.

1901 Big Charley killed elephant keeper Henry Huffman in Peru, Indiana. Big Charley grabbed Huffman while the keeper was bathing the elephant in a nearby river. Big Charley then held Huffman under his foot in the water. After killing Huffman, Big Charley tore about a nearby field until someone loaded apples with strychnine and tossed them to the elephant. An hour later, Big Charley collapsed in agony and was shot. San Francisco Call, April 26, 1901.

1901 Lightning struck a circus tent, killing an elephant, and injuring other animals. New York Times, June 29, 1901.

1902 A Forepaugh & Sells elephant named Tops (Topsie) killed one of her handlers, Joseph Blunt, when instead of shaking her offered trunk in the morning as was customary, he shoved a beer glass into it. Tops then grabbed Blunt, knocked him to the ground, and crushed him to death. San Francisco Call, May 8, 1902.

The New York Times had a different take on Blunt's death. According to an article published May 29, 1902, Blunt (the New York Times used "Blount") was just a hanger-on, not an employee, who got drunk, snuck into the tent where Tops was secured and started to tease the elephant. Enraged, the elephant grabbed the man, and killed him.

1902 Though happening in France, a Ringling Brothers elephant broke its chains at a railway and tried to kill its keeper. "Two hundred men tugged at the rope which strangled the elephant." San Francisco Call, June 13, 1902.

1902 An elephant on exhibition at an Elks' carnival, escaped and broke into the home of a candy manufacturer. The elephant tossed the bed holding two children and their mother, badly bruising one child and severely injuring the mother. It was then subdued by its keeper. San Francisco Call, September 23, 1902.

1902 The elephant Gypsy (Empress), who killed at least five keepers in the 1800s, killed James "Jimmy the Bum" O'Rourke outside of Valdosta, Georgia. There are two different accounts of the events surrounding Gypsy's actions that day. One account in the New York Times had it she had been through a train wreck earlier in the day, and remained agitated on the relief train. Her keeper entered the car to quiet her, but was killed, instantly. Another account, detailed in a Lowndes County Historical Society newsletters, stated that Gypsy and her keeper had helped to tear down the tents after the final showing in Valdosta and were walking back to the train. Later, Gypsy was found wondering alone, and her keeper was found dead—crushed to death. During the killing, Gypsy's tusk was broken off at the base, the pain of which drove an already temperamental elephant, mad.

Regardless of the events leading up to the end, Gypsy rampaged throughout the night, hurting several circus people trying to re-capture her, and waking the towns people. Eventually, the town citizens cornered her in the fair grounds where the Chief of Police, Calvin Dampier, shot her with a high powered rifle. Lowndes County Historical Society and Museum, <http://valdostamuseum.com/exhibitions/online-exhibits-2/gypsy-the-elephant/>



Figure B-1. Gypsy and her killer

1902 A Barnum & Bailey elephant named Mandarin became unmanageable and the circus owners decided to have him killed. A thick cable was tied around his neck, attached to a winch, and tightened until Mandarin strangled to death. His body was then weighed down with chains, hauled out to the sea, and sunk. San Francisco Call, November 9, 1902.

1903 In one of the more famous elephant executions of all time, a Forepaugh elephant named Topsy is condemned to public electrocution by none other than Thomas Edison. Edison wanted to film the event to demonstrate how 'unsafe' alternate current was compared to his own direct current technology. Topsy was condemned because she had killed three men in three years. A copy of the film can be seen at the Wikipedia page about Topsy, at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topsy_\(elephant\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Topsy_(elephant)).

1903 Alies Kaldy was transporting two camels and an elephant to the Jabour circus, when he was crushed to death by the elephant. Los Angeles Herald, May 26, 1903.

1903 A major train wreck claims the lives of 23 circus performers, as well as one

elephant and two camels, from the Wallace Bros. circus. San Francisco Call, August 8, 1903.

1904 An elephant in a show in St. Paul, Minnesota in January, attacked his keeper, Conrad Castens, most likely injuring him fatally. Those caring for the elephant believe it was maddened because the cold had froze its ears and trunk. Los Angeles Herald, January 25, 1904.

1904 A Campbell Brothers circus train caught fire, burning to death three elephants, four camels, two bears, three water buffaloes, a cage of monkeys, and several horses. New York Times, May 3, 1904.

1907 A Forepaugh elephant, Mac, protected its younger elephant friend from a train fire, and was badly burned. "Shortly after the circus train left Poughkeepsie a great trumpeting was heard. The train was stopped, and it was found that the car containing Mac and his mate was filled with flames. When the door was opened it was seen that the hay used for bedding was on fire. Mac was standing over his mate, stamping on the burning hay and trying to thrash out the flames with his trunk." New York Times, August 1, 1907.

1907 A horse was so frightened by a parade of elephants, it dropped dead in the street. New York Times, August 23, 1907.

1908 A group of elephants from the Sells-Floto circus are startled by an explosion at a nearby Standard Oil refinery. They ran through the community of Riverside, killing an Ella Gibbs, injuring others, and smashing an inn and several other buildings. Imperial Valley Press, 1908.

1909 Tom (also known as Tom-Tom), an elephant in the winter quarters of an unidentified circus, killed his keeper, Charles Bellew. He then ran through the circus park, knocking over wagons and uprooting trees until shot to death. San Francisco Call, April 9, 1901.

1910 Twenty elephants in the Ringling Brothers circus stampeded during a ringside parade when one of the elephants took off after the circus horses and riders. The crowd of 7000 at the circus panicked, and several people were hurt when they tried to rush for safety.

This is the first instance where we see circuses actively work to downplay such events.

"I am usually keen for newspaper space", said Press Agent Guy Steeley, "but in this case I can't see anything doing. Really it was only a trifling incident. The girl that thought she had hurt her chest merely had lost her breath. The elephant Billy, did not run amuck, but his hood slipped over his eyes so that he could not see where he was going. It was all over in a minute or two.

"Yes, now that you mention it, some of the light fence was torn away where Billy bumped into it, but I'm sure he didn't mean to. He's too well educated".

The Chicago Tribune, April 10, 1910

1910 Rajah knocks down his keeper, Tony Nustano, and then tramples him. The newspaper article notes that it's doubtful Nustano will survive. Los Angeles Herald, May 12, 1910.

1910 Gypsy Queen kills her keeper, Robert Schiel, October 20. On November 26, she's fed potassium cyanide, and killed. Los Angeles Herald, November 27, 1910.

1912 An elephant, supposedly maddened by lack of water, broke out of its chains at a wild west show near Chicago and ran wild through the suburbs where the show was taking place. It treed police sent to contain it, smashed fences, and overturned a couple of small buildings. It was eventually recaptured by the circus people. August 21, 1912.

(Hopefully they finally gave it some water.)

1916 "Murderous Mary", an elephant in the Sparks' circus, killed her handler, Walter Eldridge. The circus employees stated he was the eighth man she had killed. Authorities ordered her executed, so the circus owner wrapped chains around her neck, and hanged her from a construction derrick.

Mary's death has been documented in numerous publications, including an infamous photograph supposedly showing her hanging. However, the authenticity of the photo is in much doubt.

1920 A Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus elephant, Sanchen, steps on her trainer while learning a new trick. The man, Charles Herbert, was seriously hurt and "there's doubt he'll survive". New York Times, March 24, 1920.

1922 An elephant, frightened by barking dogs, breaks away from a circus train and tears down fences and overturns cars in North Carolina. New York Times, October 11, 1922.

1924 A fire at the Ringling Brothers circus winter headquarters kills a large, black ox, and seriously frightens both elephants and horses, but none were hurt. New York Times, February 3, 1924.

1927 A train crashed into the Hagenback-Wallace circus elephant herd as they were being moved. One rider was crushed under one of the elephants knocked to the ground, while three others tossed their riders and stampeded through the streets. At least four other circus employees were seriously hurt, and one of the elephants died. The circus was on its way to a memorial for the Hammond, Indiana train wreck of 1918 that killed many circus people. New York Times, July 11, 1927.

1929 An elephant broke loose from the Christy Brothers circus winter quarters and destroyed several fences before a dog barking at a farm house seemed to calm it down. New York Times, March 29, 1929.

1929 Black Diamond, a Al G. Barnes circus elephant, knocked down his former trainer and grabbed his new employer, Eva Donohoe, fatally injuring her. The decision was made to kill Black Diamond since, it was rumored, Mrs. Donohoe was not his first kill. He was taken out into a field and shot between 50 and 100 times before he finally died. New York Times, October 14, 1929, and the Texas Observer, October 1, 2012.

1932 An elephant trainer gave a baby elephant bootleg whiskey, for "colic", and the baby subsequently fell and broke her leg. Shooting her was "out of the question" because her value "was too high". They set the leg. New York Times, April 7, 1932.

1935 Prince, an Al G. Barnes circus elephant, gored and killed an elephant trainer preparing a group of the elephants for a movie. New York Times, May 22, 1935.

1935 Elephants in the Atterbury Brothers show circus stampede, causing injury to several people, and killing a nine year old girl. One of the elephants named Virginia, was frightened by a large dog that snapped at her, and caused her to charge through the tent before she was finally subdued. New York Times, June 7, 1935.

(What was especially interesting about this story was the note that the elephant trainer was being held for a possible charge of second-degree manslaughter. This is only the second instance I know where circus people were actually charged a crime when one of their elephants hurt or killed someone. The second one is detailed towards the end of the listing.)

1936 Major, the dominate elephant in the Cole Brothers-Clyde Beatty circus, attacked and seriously injured the lead elephant trainer during a training session. A few weeks later, Major is shot by circus employees. New York Times, January 19, 1936.

1936 Tribly, a one eyed elephant owned by Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus, killed a circus worker when he frightened her out of a sound sleep. New York Times, October 9, 1936.

1936 Cole Brothers-Clyde Beatty elephant Jumbo 2nd was given bottles of soda by trainers. The elephant dropped one, breaking the glass. It then ate the glass, and died a short time later. New York Times, November 27, 1936.

1937 Rosie, a Works Project Administration (WPA) circus elephant, escaped from the vacant store where she was housed, and walked through Brooklyn towards the grounds where the Ringling Brothers circus was held. Rosie was a former Ringling Brothers elephant, and conjecture was, she missed her old herd.

(Circuses were having a great deal of difficulty during the Depression. Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey was no exception; a year later, it will ask workers to take a 25% cut in pay. Circus unemployment led to the Works Project Administration (WPA) circus, the only state run circus in the US.)

1938 Mabel, from the Hagenbeck-Wallace circus, killed a trainer, George Page. The trainer "struck the elephant with a bull-hook and the beast retaliated by butting him into the door of a feed truck." New York Times, July 4, 1938.

1938 Elephants from the Al G. Barnes circus, a subsidiary of Ringling Brothers, drove two elephants through the picket line of workers on strike. "The circus drove a pair of elephants through the street, the sheriff said, in what he termed an effort to break up a picket line of an estimated 1,000 Janesville union members and sympathizers." Chicago Daily Tribune, July 20, 1938.

1939 A Russell Brothers circus employee and elephant were killed in an accident, and one elephant, Elsie, escaped for some time in the Northern Virginia countryside. New York Times, August 7, 1939.

1940 On February 20, a fire broke out in the winter quarters of the Cole Brothers circus. "Six lions, two tigers, and two leopards, all regarded as so dangerous that they could not be released, burned to death in their barred enclosures." Among the other animals lost was an elephant that could not be rescued before the fire reached it. New York Times, February 21, 1940.

1941 Early November in South Carolina, eleven elephants in the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey circus die under mysterious circumstances. The elephants are supposedly poisoned with arsenic, and a circus worker is initially arrested and charged with their deaths. He's eventually cleared.

Later, people speculated that the elephants were poisoned by plant growth contaminated by a chemical factory next door to where the elephants were housed in a previous location. However, nothing was ever proven and the cause was never determined. November, 1941. Numerous publications including the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune.

1942 The menagerie tent of the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus caught on fire, killing 45 animals, including four elephants. "In fifteen minutes the tent had burned, cages were charred, the howling of caged 'cats' had heralded their fierce death, and the rout of elephants, zebras, and camels had subsided to a tense quiet." New York Times, August 5, 1942.

1943 A nasty little boy sicced his dog on Gilbert Brothers elephants heading to the train, causing a stampede through the streets of Newark, New Jersey. It took several hours to

finally calm the elephants, and return them to the train. Luckily, no one was hurt or killed. No word in the article whether the little brat was punished. New York Times, June 7, 1943.

1943 Old Pitt, last surviving elephant from Robinson's Great Combination Show, was struck and killed by lightning in Montana while part of the Cole Brothers Circus. The Elephant Database, August 7, 1934.

1944 Pearl, a former Ringling Brothers circus elephant, was led into a grave dug for her and then shot. She had hurt her foot two years earlier, and it never healed properly. New York Times, March 4, 1944.

1947 A young elephant with the Ringling Brothers circus grabbed an elderly woman as they paraded past, causing the woman to be thrown to the ground. New York Times, July 4, 1947.

1947 A 79 year old Hamid Morton circus employee was found trampled to death in a train car containing three elephants. New York Times, November 7, 1947.

1948 A trainer for the Ringling Brothers circus, Hugo Schmidt, is charged with cruelty to animals for "wilfully torturing an elephant". An employee with the ASPCA witnessed Schmidt beating the elephant about the ears and eyes with a three-and-a-half foot hickory club, as well as punching the elephant in the stomach with it. The Judge dismissed the case, admonishing Schmidt "to take this as a lesson to be more gentle in the future with animals". New York Times, May 5, 1948.

1948 A King Brothers circus elephant, Alice, broke loose in Malone, New York, and went on a rampage for several hours. She knocked down telephone poles, dented cars, and damaged a house and shed. No one was injured and Alice was re-captured. New York Times, June 6, 1948.

1949 An elephant traveling in a circus truck in West Virginia broke out of the truck and refused to budge out of the way on the busy highway. She held up traffic for several hours until a farmer with cornbread lured her back to the truck. New York Times, March 26, 1949.

Incidents from 1950-Today

The numbers of elephants traveling in a circus decrease significantly towards the end of the 1900s. To be expected, the number of negative incidents also decrease, but the severity of the many of incidents remains the same*.

1950 Dolly, a Ringling Brothers elephant, seized a five year old boy about his waist, threw him to the ground, and stepped on his head. Two days later, Dolly was killed with cyanide, despite many protests who recommended she be given to a zoo, instead. Chillicothe Constitution Tribune, March 29, 1950.

1951 Central Park Zoo trades Chang, a 25 year old bull, for two younger female elephants and a llama. The zoo decided Chang was too dangerous after it had injured several keepers. The final destination for the elephant will either be Metro Goldwyn-Mayer, or Ringling Brothers Circus. "Both outfits, it was explained, have had some success with recalcitrant elephants." Chances are Chang will show up later, but under a different name. New York Times, January 26, 1951.

1951 Four young elephants, frightened by flapping flags, panicked during an indoor parade and ended up breaking the rib of their trainer before being calmed and chained. New York Times, February 24, 1951.

1951 A trainer is injured by nine "hot and excited" elephants in a railroad car, and had to be hospitalized. He ends up losing his thumb. He'd lost one arm in an earlier elephant mishap. Since the event is in Sarasota, Florida, I'm assuming the elephants are Ringling Brothers, though the story doesn't note the circus. New York Times, March 8, 1951.

1952 A large animal truck and trailer owned by Cole Brothers circus overturns, killing a llama, and allowing two elephants to escape. The smaller elephant stayed near the truck, but the other larger elephant, disappeared into the surrounding forest.

1952 A King Brothers and Cristiani circus truck overturned, throwing two elephants through the roof of the trailer. They were injured, but still mobile. New York Times, July 28, 1952.

1953 An 18 year old dies when supposedly an elephant he was working with grabbed him and tossed him over the elephant's head. He'd only joined the Diano Brothers circus a few weeks before the event. New York Times, August 12, 1953.

1955 An elephant escaped from its owner, breaking down fences before being re-captured. New York Times, April 19, 1955.

1955 Vicki, a Ringling Brothers elephant, escaped from an amusement park into the countryside near Charlotte, North Carolina. Veteran elephant handlers attempted to catch her, but it was a group of high school football players and volunteer fireman who finally brought her in. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, September 17, 1955.

1955 An elephant hit by a car in Orlando, Florida, dropped dead in the circus grounds later in the day. New York Times, November 30, 1955.

1956 Two baby elephants escaped the Ringling brothers show before an appearance in Madison Square Gardens. Forty police tried to capture them, beating at them with clubs, and holding on to their tails. However, it was bringing two adult elephants to the area that finally reigned the babies in. New York Times, April 4, 1956.

1956 An 1800 pound baby elephant loses its balance and falls on a family of 4 at the Ringling Brothers menagerie. Luckily, no one was seriously hurt—including the baby elephant. New York Times, June 14, 1965.

1956 Ringling Brothers elephant Emily, suffering from illness over several weeks, collapsed and died while being moved to the train. She was on her way to another circus showing. The circus employees sawed off her chains, and left her body for sanitation workers to manage. New York Times, May 14, 1956.

1956 Forty-two Ringling Brothers elephants stampede in along the Washington D. C. train tracks before handlers get them under control. New York Times, May 25, 1956.

1958 A Hagan Brothers elephant named Dorothy killed a circus worker, Donald Lloyd. Dorothy knocked Lloyd to the ground, and then stood on her head on his body. New York Times, November 25, 1958.

1960 One elephant begins to crush a man in an elephant trailer in the Cristiani Brothers circus. Another elephant grabs the man with her trunk and tossed him out the trailer. The news story claims the second elephant saved the man, which is true, but it was unlikely that the elephant was being altruistic. New York Times, May 6, 1960.

1961 Jewel, a Wirth circus elephant, seriously injured her trainer, Eric Frodelius, as she was being led into the ring. The incident occurred in front of over 3000 spectators, who weren't aware he was being attacked until the end. New York Times, March 26, 1961.

1961 An elephant that had been giving rides in a shopping mall parking lot in San Angelo, Texas, suddenly went on a rampage, killing a passer-by, James John Orr, and seriously injuring her trainer. The Spokesman-Review, April 25, 1961.

1962 A Mills Brothers circus truck crashed and caught fire. Luckily, the circus employee was able to free the two elephants in the truck before they were killed. New York Times, November 27, 1962.

1963 Seven elephants stampeded during a circus parade in Oklahoma. The elephants' keeper was thrown off the lead elephant and seriously hurt. New York Times, June 26, 1963.

1966 An 8 year old elephant was killed when it broke away from a tourist attraction and was hit by a semi-truck. New York Times, April 13, 1966.

1969 Lightning hit a circus tent pole being raised by an elephant, killing the elephant and injuring two circus workers. New York Times, August 21, 1969.

1973 The Ringling Brothers circus contacted the police in order to have them kill 14 year old Tyler. Tyler had gone after her trainer several times that day and "had lost her fear of people", according to circus officials. The police fired two shots from a high powered rifle into Tyler's head as she lay quietly, tranquilized by the circus vet. New York Times, October 1, 1973.

(Kenneth Feld, current owner of Ringling Brothers, would have been a circus executive in 1973.)

1975 Two Carson and Barnes circus baby elephants, Lily and Isa, escaped the circus while it was in Oklahoma, and managed to elude searchers for over two weeks. July 28, 1975.

1976 Carson and Barnes elephant Barbara was being used to help right an overturned truck when she was spooked and escaped into the Arkansas countryside. She remained at large for over a week before being re-captured. New York Times, October 25, 1976.

1977 Colonel, a Circus Vargas elephant, escapes from a broken down truck into the Florida Everglades. It takes six days to find and capture him. St. Petersburg Times, December 29, 1977.

1978 A Hawthorne Circus chained elephant killed an employee, David Farr, in Chicago. The man had been pestering the elephant—pushing at her face, and putting his hand in her mouth. Evidently, he was trying to get the elephant to perform. New York Times, March 13, 1978 and the Leader-Post, March 13, 1978.

1981 Police were surprised to encounter an elephant walking down the middle of a highway, north of Columbus, Ohio, trailing a four foot chain. The elephant continued down the highway until the police fetched her keeper from the Carson & Barnes circus.

1982 A Ringling Brothers elephant that had just finished towing a stagecoach with children ran out of the arena, crashed into a showgirl dressing room, and tried to enter the shower. New York Times, March 14, 1982.

1982 On May 14, five elephants escaped the Carson and Barnes circus and fell over a 25 foot ledge into a coal pit. One of the elephants was crushed to death under the weight of the others. The Telegraph-Herald, May 17, 1982.

1982 Charges were dropped against two animal handlers after pathology reports showed a young woman had been killed by a blow from an elephant, not from being beaten to death with a baseball bat. The men were still charged a misdemeanor for not reporting

her death. The Milwaukee-Sentinel, Sept. 28, 1982.

1983 The owner of the Hoxie Bros. circus is injured by an elephant named Janet, who had stepped on him. He was hospitalized for 100 days with a broken back and hips. His injuries are serious enough to cause him to sell his circus—including Janet, to the Great American Circus. Janet is the same elephant mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. She's featured a little later, in a tragic incident in 1992. Sun Sentinel (Florida), February 5, 1992.

1983 An elephant named Toomai gored well known animal trainer Roman Schmitt in the leg at Circus World. The elephant was sold to Gary Jacobson, elephant trainer at Ringling Brothers. The Victoria Advocate, April 17, 1983.

1983 On May 25th, a spectator supposedly tried to blow into the trunk of a Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. circus elephant named Freda. She wrapped her trunk around him and flung him to the ground, severely injuring him. May 25, 1983.

1983 A Chicago radio station manager, Diana Migala, fell off an elephant during a race called the "Pachyderm 500", and was seriously injured. The Albany Herald, July 18, 1983.

1984 An elephant being used to raise a circus tent was electrocuted (most likely by lightning), falling on her trainer, Tim Mericash, and killing him. The incident happened in Springhill, Louisiana. Ellensburg Daily Record, April 18, 1984.

1984 The Atlanta Zoo claims that an elephant named Twinkles died while at a farm where she was sent to aid her crippled legs. However, an investigation brought out the information that the zoo had lent Twinkles to a small traveling circus, where the mistreatment she received led to her untimely death. This incident led to exposure of the close relationship between circuses and zoos at the time. Miami Herald, June 7, 1984.

1985 Freda the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. elephant responsible for injuring a man in 1983 was chained with seven other elephants to stakes in a parking lot. An inebriated woman attempted to climb her, and was killed when Freda threw her. July 7, 1985.

1987 An elephant with the Great American Circus broke away from handlers and headed to her feeding area on July 10. A four year old girl was injured falling off her back, and another child was injured when the elephant rushed past. Luckily, both children only suffered minor injuries. AP, July 10, 1987.

1988 Susie, an elephant with a 'traveling zoo' named Wonder Zoo was extremely ill and undernourished when arriving in Gainesville, Florida. Eventually, she had to be euthanized. Columbus Dispatch, September 4, 1988.

1989 A bull elephant named Casey killed trainer Joe Allen at Busch Gardens in February.

He's included in this list because Busch Gardens sold Casey to Ringling Brothers.

1989 An elephant named Irene broke away while giving rides on February 4. Several people had to be rescued from her back, but no one was hurt. Orlando Sentinel, February 5, 1992.

1990 An elephant attacks her trainer in the Great American Circus in Reading, PA. She also breaks through a barrier and runs towards the spectators, scattering them. According to witnesses, the trainer had been hitting the elephant in the side of the head before the attack. Orlando Sentinel, February 4, 1992.

1990 A Hanneford Family Circus worker is killed by an elephant named Carol, after she was startled by a passing car. Carol is later shot in the shoulder by an unknown assailant while in Tupelo, Mississippi. performing with the Ringling Brothers circus. Sun Sentinel, June 21, 1990.

1991 Several witnesses tell of Great American Circus employees beating a baby elephant with a shovel until the elephant shrieked. The elephant's shrieks were so loud, they could be heard within a nearby restaurant. The employees stopped when they noticed they were being watched. Burlington Free Press, September 19, 1991.

1992 Janet (aka Kelly), who earlier had injured circus owner Leonard Tucker, was being ridden by a woman and several children before the Great American circus show started in Palm Bay, Florida. She suddenly rammed into the cage around the circle, and then kept ramming the cage. They tried to take the children off the elephant, but she tossed a handler several feet away. She broke out of the circus tent and took off down the street. A police man tried to rescue the children and was also tossed several feet. Eventually, another handler came up on another elephant, and was able to help get the kids off. The woman jumped off on her own.

Janet headed back into the circus tent, running through crowds of panicked circus patrons. Fearing for their safety, police started shooting Kelly. The continued shooting her, until she died. Various publications, February 1, 1992.

1992 An elephant in the Tarzan Zerbini International circus stopped suddenly, causing the elephants following to bump into it, as well as a barrier around the ring. Several spectators received minor injuries in their panic to move to safety. Chicago Tribune, July 17, 1992.

1993 Axel Gautier was knocked down and killed by an elephant he was working with at Ringling Bothter's Elephant Farm in Florida. The News-Journal, May 8, 1993.

1993 An elephant chained to nine others crushed a man to death in the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus. The man was crushed by being pinned against a wall. New York Times, June

7, 1993.

1993 The Hawthorne Corporation loans Tyke to Circus America for a show in the Jaffa Mosque, where she charged through an entryway, tearing down a wall, and causing \$10,000 in damage on April 21. Also in 1993 while with Circus America, Tyke bolted from a tent while the show was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. *The Vindicator*, August 24, 1994.

1993 Tyke, injured an elephant keeper while they were rehearsing for a show in Minot, ND in July. The keeper suffered serious injuries. *St. Louis Dispatch*, August 25, 1994.

1994 A Jordan circus elephant named Sue was giving a ride to two children when she tossed her trainer to the ground and stepped on him, seriously injuring him. Another trainer trying to intervene was also injured. *AP*, April, 1994.

1994 A Circus International elephant named Jack rammed a fence around the arena, knocking one spectator into another row, and pinning nine other people. *Boston Globe*, August 15, 1994.

1994 In one of the better filmed and more well known elephant incidents, the Hawthorne Corporation elephant Tyke, mentioned earlier, but at that time leased to Circus International, went on a rampage. She killed her trainer, severely injured an elephant groomer and circus publicist, and ran wild through the streets until she was shot down. It took 86 shots to kill Tyke. Various publications, August 22, 1994.

1994 Bela Tabak from the King Royal circus beat his young elephant, Mickey, so badly, it was forced to the ground, screaming. Tabak had his license to handle elephants suspended by the USDA for five years. *Oregonian*, September 20, 1994.

1994 An interpreter for the Moscow State Circus was severely injured when she was attacked by a circus elephant just before a scheduled appearance on *Live with Regis and Kathie Lee*. *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1994.

1994 Mickey from the King Royal circus slightly injured a 3 year old girl. *Oregonian*, December 24, 1994.

1995 Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. elephants were also involved in a rampage in Hanover, Pennsylvania, damaging both buildings and cars. One elephant was injured. A spectator noted that the elephant trainer was screaming at the elephants, beating at them with his bullhook. *Gettysburg Times*, May 19, 1995.

1995 While loading circus equipment, a Tarzan Zerbini International circus employee was stepped on by an elephant named Rosie, who was startled by a loud noise. The man was seriously injured. *News-Sentinel (Fort Wayne, IN)*, July 4, 1995.

1995 Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. elephant Frieda, responsible for an earlier death and injury was finally retired after being involved with an altercation with another elephant, Debbie, during a performance in Queens. New York Times, July 11, 1995.

1996 Joyce, a Circus Vargas elephant, died under anesthesia while having dental surgery. She was found to be suffering from advanced tuberculosis—a disease that can be transmitted between elephants and humans. She had lost over 1,000 pounds in weight over the last 10 months, but still had to perform the day before she died. Reuters, March 11, 1997.

1996 The Jordon World Circus elephant named Sue, mentioned earlier in an incident from 1994, knocked her trainer down at the Central Wyoming Fairgrounds. Sue was supposedly frightened by a horse. The trainer received minor injuries. Casper Star Tribune, June 15, 1996.

1996 A Circus Vargas elephant named Hattie died one day after being in a performance, while on transport back to her owners, the Hawthorne Corporation. She collapsed while being off-loaded from the truck. San Jose Mercury News, August 10, 1996.

1997 A King Royal Bros. circus elephant named Heather was found dead in a trailer that also contained two other elephants and eight llamas. The truck was in a parking lot, and the temperature inside was 120 degrees. Necropsy results stated that Heather died of salmonella poisoning, brought on by malnutrition and stress. Albuquerque Journal, August 14, 1997.

1998 Another of the elephants leading to the ASPCA et al vs. FEI lawsuit, Kenny, died after being made to perform in the Ringling Brothers circus while ill. Various news sources, January 31, 1998.

1998 An elephant brought in for a high school circus, Tonya, knocked down her trainer during an act, opened a door, and escaped from the building. She was recovered a quarter mile away. Ledger Enquirer (AP), February 17, 1998.

1998 Several Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. circus elephants were found with bullhook wounds. USDA inspectors noted wounds on two different occasions in June. A USDA press release noted that the circus used the bullhook abusively on several different elephants. USDA APHIS Press Release, April 20, 1999.

1999 Luna, a Royal Hanneford circus elephant, became disoriented and lost after performing a trick, and stepped out of the ring into the audience. There were some minor injuries as people moved to get out of Luna's way. Poughkeepsie Journal, February 23, 1999.

1999 One of the elephants that led to the ASPCA et al vs. FEI lawsuit, Benjamin, dies in a

pond while being transported via truck.

1999 A Tarzan Zerbini International circus employee is severely injured when an elephant broke free of restraints. An ambulance worker notes the smell of alcohol on the man's breath. Duluth News-Tribune, April 21, 1999.

2000 USDA inspectors found numerous violations in the care and handling of elephants at the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. circus. One elephant bled while she urinated, another had a partially paralyzed tail. Daytona Beach News Journal, February 12, 2000.

2000 A Ramos family circus elephant, Kenya, trampled and killed one of her owners after breaking free from restraints. Kenya died two weeks later from intestinal difficulties. St. Petersburg Times, January 27, 2000.

2000 An elephant escaped from the Culpepper and Merriweather Circus in Yucca Valley, California, seriously injuring a ticket taker. She was eventually recaptured. The Intelligencer, April 21, 2000.

2002 Elephants named Tory and Mary escaped the Shrine circus in Wisconsin, injuring a child and damaging a building and a truck. Reuters, June 18, 2002.

2002 Tonya, owned by Robert Childress and leased to various circuses escaped and fled into woods near Easley, South Carolina. She was eventually re-captured. This was her fourth escape.

2002 A handler for the Sterling and Reid circus is charged with animal cruelty after being accused of beating an elephant severely enough to cause bloody lacerations. The Virginia-Pilot, August 25, 2002.

2003 An elephant in the Bobby Roberts circus fled through a residential area after being spooked by a motorcycle. She was eventually recaptured. The Daily Record, December 24, 2004.

2003 Authorities seize Delphi, an elephant owned by the Hawthorn Corporation (an agency leasing animals to circuses), because of severe health issues. She was turned over to the elephant sanctuary in Tennessee. Various publications.

2004 Ringling Brothers personnel were training a baby elephant named Ricardo, having it get up on a tall stool, when the elephant fell off, breaking both its back legs. Ricardo had to be euthanized. Wildlife Advocacy Project, the event happened on August 5, 2004.

2004 Two Hawthorne Corporation employees were injured by an elephant in the company's training grounds. PETA, November 2004, in McHenry County, Illinois.

2004 A Liebel Family Circus elephant named Nosey attacked a circus worker who was attending to the elephants water container. The elephant picked the man up with her tusk and threw him down an incline. The worker required stitches for a head injury. PETA, July 4, 2004, in Clinton, Iowa.

2004 A George Carden circus elephant attacked an arena worker at the El Maida Shrine circus. The man was seriously injured, requiring surgery. PETA, August 29, 2004, in El Paso, Texas.

2005 A Tarzan Zerbini circus worker, Pierre Spenle, fell into a trailer with three elephants and was trampled to death. CBS News, February 11, 2005.

2005 A Ringling Brothers employee, David Mannes, suffered serious injuries at the company's elephant compound in Florida when an elephant named Tova knocked Mannes down and kicked him. PETA, April 13, 2005.

2005 A Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. circus elephant named Jewel grabbed a woman's wrist with her trunk when the woman reached out towards her at a county fair in Pleasant Township, Pennsylvania. The woman was treated and released for a sprained wrist and possible torn ligaments. PETA, August 25, 2005.

2005 Two Ringling Brothers elephants were startled by a barking dog and ran around the arena, uncontrolled, for a time. They both received minor injuries from brushing against arena seats. PETA, December 12, 2005.

2007 An Enterprising Elephants employee was seriously injured by an elephant while performing at the Arizona Renaissance Festival in Apache Junction, Arizona. PETA, March 6, 2007.

2008 While in Kansas, two elephants owned by Animal Encounters broke loose when startled by a tornado siren. They caused no damage or injuries before being re-captured. KARE News, June 6, 2008.

2009 An elephant giving children a ride bumps into a stairway where other adults and children waiting for a ride are standing. Several of the people suffered minor injuries. Times Herald-Record, March 7, 2009.

2009 One of the Animal Encounters elephants that escaped in 2008, Kamba, escaped again in Oklahoma, and was hit by an SUV. The people in the SUV were not harmed, but Kamba suffered several injuries. EnidNews.com, November 5, 2009.

2010 A Ringling Brothers elephant took a wrong turn and broke through a door leading into the arena during a circus pre-show. The elephant ambled past the spectators on the arena floor, before it was placed back under control. The State, February 7, 2010.

2010 An elephant named Dumbo, performing in the Irem Shrine Circus, kicked a handler named Andrew Anderton, killing him. The Hamid Circus staged the show, and the elephant was leased from Joe Frisco's Wonderful World of Animals. The accident was investigated because of a possibility Dumbo had been shocked by a live wire. Huffington Post, April 10, 2010.

2010 A Carson & Barnes elephant named Isa stepped on her trainer, moderately injuring him. PETA, quoting a USDA report.

2010 A Carson & Barnes elephant named Viola, leased to Cole Brothers Circus, escaped, sending circus patrons running before falling into a ravine injuring herself. The circus claimed she had been spooked by a rabbit. WSLS News, April 28, 2010.

2011 Feld Entertainment, Inc., and the USDA reach a settlement agreement, with Feld paying \$270,000 in civil fines for violations of the Animal Welfare Act. This the largest fine ever paid for AWA violations. USDA Press Release, November 28, 2011.

2013 Carol, the same elephant that accidentally killed a trainer in 1990, was shot in the early morning hours in April, in Tupelo, Mississippi, as she slept in a tent in a parking lot. She was on lease to Ringling Brothers for the Gold Unit circus. Various news sources.

So much for these incidents being "terribly rare".

* My thanks to Performing Animals Welfare Society (PAWS), People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) for providing lists of negative incidents post 1950, several of which I incorporated into this list.