

# Elephant knocks down and kicks circus trainer

## That elephant had a prior

By BILL LUCKETT  
Star-Tribune staff writer

CASPER — A circus elephant named Sue giving rides to children knocked down and repeatedly kicked one of its trainers at the Central Wyoming Fairgrounds Friday afternoon.

Other trainers regained control of the animal, but not before it kicked the trainer so badly that she had to go to the Wyoming Medical Center for treatment.

The trainer, whose name was unavailable, was released and resting in a trailer less than three hours later.

The Casper appearance of the Jordan World Circus was sponsored by the Casper Shrine Club of the Korein Temple out of Rawlins. Casper club President Bill Walford said the trainer was fine and would probably be back to work for the Friday night show.

Assistant elephant trainer Terry Wire said a horse spooked the elephant, causing it to jump into the trainer, who was beside it adjusting the children's position on the elephant.

"She was trying to move the elephant out of the way to keep her from the horse," he said.

"All she did was move her out of the way and move herself out of the way."

Eyewitness Lucy Milham, whose granddaughter was one of five or six children riding the elephant at the time, said the elephant charged the trainer and knocked her down. The trainer then rolled into the elephant and the elephant started kicking her, Milham said.

The trainer stood up once, but fell down again, Milham said.

Other trainers finally moved the elephant away from the trainer.

Milham said she did not see any children fall off of the elephant, but eyewitness Bill Huggins of Medicine Bow said one girl fell off before the elephant attacked the trainer.

The girl did not appear to be injured, he said, but the trainer appeared to have hurt her head and back.

"Natural response"

Wire, who has worked with the elephants for about 10 years, said Sue the Elephant is in no danger of being euthanized.

"The animal didn't do anything," he said, "it was the hu-

**"The animal didn't do anything, it was the humans. People have been killed because of man's stupidity."**

TERRY WIRE,  
ASSISTANT ELEPHANT TRAINER

mans. People have been killed because of man's stupidity." He said Sue's jump into the trainer was "a natural response" to being spooked by the horse.

Wire himself was once hurt when an elephant doing a merry-go-round act fell on top of him, but he stayed in the business. "That's a risk you take when you work with animals," he said.

He said people widely misunderstand how well circus animals are treated, citing their abundance of food and fully-insulated, air-conditioned trailer.

"These elephants get the best care and everything they need," he said.

He stressed that circus people differ from carnival people because the circus people are "working for money for themselves, not themselves."

"We're not here to make a buck," he said. "We're here to make people happy."

Profits go to hospital

This year's circus was about 4,500, split nearly evenly between two shows.

It was a hot day in the evening, he said, with collecting tickets for the Friday night's show in the 70-degree weather.

Cooperated

Shrine Club President John Huggins said

men for the show and sell the animal cages.

Children's tickets are bought by business sponsors and the Shriner's give them away to school kids, he said.

The Shriner's donate about \$6,000 to \$7,000 a year to the Shriner's hospital in Salt Lake City, the closest one to Casper.

Editor:  
Your report about the circus elephant knocking down and repeatedly kicking one of her trainers while giving rides to children at the Central Wyoming Fairgrounds on June 24 does not reflect the entire story.

On April 8, 1994, this same elephant, while giving rides to children during a performance of the Jordan Brothers Circus, attacked her trainer Rex Williams, severely injuring him, and then went after her female trainer Mary Brna, kicking her and breaking her finger. Therefore Sue was dangerous and should not have been giving rides to children. Indeed, she should not have been in any kind of public display.

There are many factors to be considered here, the most important of which is that in both cases, the Shriners sponsored the show. The Shriners have repeatedly been informed about the dangers of promoting these circuses which give elephant rides to children, and thereby expose the public to serious dangers. One can only be grateful that no children have been seriously injured. However, if this practice is allowed to continue, it is only a matter of time before some child pays with his life.

I would seriously urge city officials in your town to discontinue the dangerous practice of elephant rides.

PAT DERBY

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(This letter was edited.)