



On The Earie

by Tom Powell, OABA News Ambassador

Memorial Day, sometimes referred to as **Decoration Day**, has been described as a day that honors those who died defending our freedom and democracy. It was **Celebration Day** for me on May 30, 1961, as my daughter Alice Stanley was born, about the same time A. J. Foyt was taking the checkered flag.

As a sports writer for the **Nashville Tennessean**, I covered the **Indianapolis 500** from 1959-1972, watching Foyt win three times, along with Rodger Ward, in 1959, Parnelli Jones, Al Unser, etc. Eph Hoover, who owned a paving company in Nashville, had two drivers in the races in those days, Don Branson, and Bobby Marshman, and he had a plane at my disposal to make the 300-mile trek from Nashville to Indianapolis. The plane, for some reason was not available that day, and it seemed like the longest ride back home before I got to see my beautiful new daughter.

Needless to say, I have missed many of Alice's birthdays. If I wasn't covering the Indy race, I was judging barbecue contests in Cleveland, Kansas City, Minneapolis or Memphis. One year I was with George Smith, a building manager, and good friend, and a great story about him just popped up. Rex Post, who used to work with **Monster Trucks**, sent me the news that Smith had died at the age of 83 in Rochester, Minn., where he once managed the **Mayo Civic Center**. George would call me every April 1 and say he was in jail somewhere in Puerto Rico, and needed bail, and he would then hang up.

One of the more interesting stories recalled by Post was about the convention of arena managers in Minneapolis in the mid 1990s. "It was after the golf tournament and the so-called **Tom Powell Memorial Softball** game (that was held for 25 straight years, and Christine has the tee shirts to prove it) in the **Metrodome**. I was on the injured reserve due to some poor cart driving while getting out of the facility, so I was nursing a dislocated toe. Three of my mentors decided I needed to have some sustenance and liquid medication due to the pain. The details will remain for another time since I believe the Statute of Limitations might still be in play," said Post.

"But George Smith, Tom Powell and Don Sandefur (who once ran the **Harlem Globetrotters**, and **PGA West**), plus Tom's wife, Christine proceeded to take me to a nearby **Ruth Chris Steakhouse**. The waitress was given an order of every 15 minutes to refresh the table with beverages. The trio must have known there was extra Scotch on hand. After an hour or two, we decided it might be wise to order dinner, and soon after, Denzil Skinner (the first manager of the **Louisiana Super Dome**, New Orleans, who was known as the founder of private management), cigar in hand, joined us, and needless to say, it was a festive eve. The next day George found me and had one question. Did we actually eat dinner?"

I knew Howard (Max) Mosner was manager of the **Maryland State Fair**, Timonium for more than 40 years, but I didn't know **F. Grove Miller** was honored recently for 40 years of service as chairman and president of the **Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society**. Edie M. Bernier, publicity director for the fair which will be held Aug. 23-Sept. 3, said Maryland State Fair scholarships will be named after him.

I received an interesting letter from William Ratchford that said, "I have been reading your columns and articles ever since I bought a big fat **Spring Special** edition of **Amusement Business** from a news stand in Raleigh, N. C., in 1978. I subscribed for a number of years, and then I reverted to buying off a news stand, or an agent on whatever show I would be on.

"I was confounded (as were many others, including me) when AB ceased publication and I have been astonished that nothing on the Internet, or in print, covers the industry like the old **Billboard** and Amusement Business did. How, in the information age, is this an improvement? I'm writing today (May 15) to impose on you one question.

"Did you ever cross paths with **Sam's Sanitary Kitchen**? I think his last name was Delvecchio. He ran a cookhouse on **Deggeller's Magic Midways** in the late 1960s through the 1970s. He doesn't owe me, and I don't owe him. This is just a history exercise. Any recollections of Sam would be welcome. Thanks!"

I vividly remember Sam Delaney, who had Sanitary Sam's cookhouse, but I believe he traveled with **Royal American Shows**. He threw a terrific party at his house which Christine and I attended in the late 1970s. I remember the guests included Johnny Welde, who had the great bear act, and food concessionaires Jack Libbertt and Grace Yeager. Andy Deggeller or Dale Negus may be able to help further. I hope so. Sam was also active with the **Greater Tampa Showmen's Association**. Let's see where this leads?

Christine and I have not made it back to Scranton the last several years, so I've missed going to my favorite pizza place in all the world, **Arcaro's**. So I was happy to get a note from Frank and Sally the other day which read, "Just a quick note. Hope this finds you and Christine in good health. Sally and I are hanging on. It has been a long winter, with lousy weather.

"Sally's brother, Gehrie Aten, and brother-in-law Bruce Williams, are both retired. Health is like the rest of us. Old age has caught up. I still love to read your columns even though I have lost touch with most of the people. Still nice to hear about old friends like you."

Arcaro's hosted my 80th birthday, which was attended by my four children, and just about everybody I ever knew while growing up. Aten and his wife, Norma, owned **Bill Hames Shows**, which is now **Carnival Americana**, and run by Gehrie's daughter, also named Norma, and Alan Cockerham. Williams traveled with many shows over the years, mostly **Skerbeck's**. It's really a small world.

I receive the most interesting mail. From OABA Director Holly Swartz of **Hitch-Hiker Mfg.**, came, "I hope this finds you and Christine doing well. I was thinking I should send you some news that makes Jeff and I very proud. We have been keeping busy on the concession trailer manufacturing front and are proud to see our two kids taking an interest in our business and our industry.

"Our daughter, Jessica, is recently graduating and will be attending college in the fall for business and graphic design. She was one of the recipients of the OABA – Duke Smith Memorial Scholarships awarded this year. She is very talented and has been designing digital graphics and content for our Hitch-Hiker digital menu systems. Her first big project happened earlier this year when she created three beautiful menu designs for three trailers purchased by Danny and Galina Ottaway of **Ottaway Amusements** in Kansas. It's nice to see the next generation stepping up, but we're definitely not retiring soon."

