

STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2nd Session of the 48th Legislature (2002)

SENATE
RESOLUTION 43

By: Rabon

AS INTRODUCED

A Resolution praising the Carson & Barnes Circus; commending the Carson & Barnes Circus for their humane treatment of animals; and directing distribution.

WHEREAS, the corn growing "as high as an elephant's eye" is part of the lyrics from the musical production "Oklahoma." For many years it was not uncommon for a circus to spend winter months in Oklahoma. This makes the circus a proud tradition of the great State of Oklahoma; and

WHEREAS, Hugo, Oklahoma, the county seat of Choctaw County, is known as "Circus Town USA" as it is the winter headquarters of both the five-ring Carson & Barnes Circus and its sister circus, the Kelly Miller Circus. At one time five circuses claimed Hugo, Oklahoma, as their winter home. While every town has a cemetery, the Mount Olivet Cemetery in Hugo, Oklahoma, has a special section known as "Showmen's Rest." It is a special section set aside as a final resting place for circus people. At the front is huge monument topped by a dancing elephant and the inscription "A Tribute To All Showmen Under God's Big Top." In 1961, after the death of his brother, Kelly Miller, D. R. Miller bought all the plots in this special section of the cemetery; and

WHEREAS, D. R. Miller, was born on August 27, 1916, in Smith County, Kansas. D. R. and the rest of his family saw their first circus, the John Robinson Circus, in McCook, Nebraska. D. R.'s father fell in love with the circus and started his own show with just a dog and a pony in the early 1920's. He married Isla Marie

Beach when he was 17 years old and she was 15. Together they made an enormous impact on the circus world and were both inducted into the Sarasota's Ring of Fame in January 1995. D. R. coupled his love of animals with Isla's attraction to style and beauty to found a dynasty based on honesty, respect and hard work that spans four generations. D. R. Miller and Isla went on to found many circuses, including the Carson & Barnes 5-Ring Circus; and

WHEREAS, begun in 1938 by Obert Miller and his sons, Kelly and Dory, what is now the Kelly Miller Circus has entertained millions in North America. The show travels in a fleet of 25 vehicles and requires 90,000 square feet to set up. Along with its sister circus, the Carson & Barnes Circus, the Kelly Miller Circus calls Hugo, Oklahoma, its winter home; and

WHEREAS, the Carson & Barnes Circus celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1986 amid wide choruses of acclaim. Since then the Miller and Byrd Families have continued their tradition of providing excellent entertainment suitable for the entire family. Since 1937, Carson & Barnes Circus has performed for over 50 million people, raising millions of dollars for charitable organizations; and

WHEREAS, throughout its distinguished history, the Carson & Barnes Circus has been inspected continually by various federal, state, and local humane agencies with regard to its animal care procedures. Carson & Barnes Circus has been cited as one of the most progressive circuses on the road. Whenever reasonable suggestions for improvement have been offered, Carson & Barnes incorporated such suggestions into their protocol and procedures. According to circus spokespersons, no documented case of abuse of its animals has ever been uncovered with regard to Carson & Barnes Circus; and

WHEREAS, the circus is inspected frequently by the United States Department of Agriculture and other organizations overseeing proper and humane animal care. According to official spokespersons from

the United States Department of Agriculture, the Carson & Barnes Circus has not violated the Animal Welfare Act, 7 U.S.C. Sections 2131-2156, and complies with all requirements. On the circus grounds, the area housing the animals is open to the public for all to see their level of care. Carson & Barnes Circus maintains sound business practices, and adheres to all public laws including immigration, drug testing, and animal care regulations; and

WHEREAS, the Miller Family, owners of Carson & Barnes Circus, has established The Endangered Ark Foundation in order to preserve species that are in jeopardy. As part of this program, a successful elephant-breeding compound has been established near its headquarters in Hugo, Oklahoma. Research has demonstrated that circus elephants are less stressed, more peaceful, and livelier than those located in zoos. A study in Great Britain established that circus animals receive better care and live longer than those in zoos and in the wild; and

WHEREAS, to the Carson & Barnes Circus, animals are more than a huge financial investment. They are part of the family. One beloved elephant has been part of the Miller family for more than 50 years and was named for, and grew up with, Mr. Miller's granddaughter in the circus.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE 2ND SESSION OF THE 48TH OKLAHOMA LEGISLATURE:

THAT the Oklahoma State Senate praises the Carson & Barnes Circus for its many years of contributing to the economy of Oklahoma by providing excellent entertainment suitable for the entire family.

THAT the Oklahoma State Senate commends Carson & Barnes Circus for its humane treatment of animals and concern for their welfare.

THAT a copy of this resolution be distributed to Barbara Byrd, D. R. Miller's daughter; and the Carson & Barnes Circus.