

They are trained not tamed, bear show "roars" success

by Sandy Wyman

Crowds four or more tiers deep at three shows a day starting last Wednesday at the Gouverneur and St. Lawrence County Fair proved to one and all watching that the spirit of "Gentle Ben" lives on.

Born in Bridgewater, Somerset, England, Derrick Rosaire II came to America in 1960 with his parents, Derrick and Betty Kayes Rosaire Sr.

"We were from show families, my dad's side had five generations, now seven with my sons and my mother had seven generations now nine in the "show must go on" business, said "Grizzly Adams" in full show costume right after their first appearance on Wednesday.

The elder Rosaire came to America to perform on the Ed Sullivan Show with Tony the Wonder Horse and according to son and bear owner Derrick II, he did not complete the performance and Mr. Sullivan wanted him back for the complete act.

The family had made friends in show business that lived at the time in Waterford, Pennsylvania and the Rosaire group had found employment for the next 28 weeks so they postponed their return across the ocean to home.

After surviving a New England winter, they found life and work in Florida more to their liking and became Americans soon after work visas expired.

"I was 12 years old when I got my first bear and I have been in love with them ever since much to the sometimes chagrin of my wife," laughs



For Peter, a 17 year old European Brown standing 7 foot tall and weighing around 800 pounds, kisses to his handler and friend (at that moment) Derrick Rosaire, it's just part of the act called Rosaire's Bears that took the midway by storm with three shows a day at the Gouverneur and St. Lawrence County Fair. (Sandy Wyman photo)

Derrick while his eyes light up with story after story of being in the "Bear's Den" instead of the proverbial doghouse.

"At one time, our home sanctuary near Sarasota, Florida was a training ground for a few grizzly bears that portrayed "Gentle Ben." They were big fellas and gals, a trade secret for a lot of years was that the bear that became a symbol of the mountains was actually a female and was not the best natured."

Leaning forward in his chair, Derrick went on to add that in the bear world, nine out of ten females are more aggressive by far than their male counterparts.

"I guess why I have been in this business for so long is that there is such a need for people like me and now my sons. Forget the performing and the few tricks, it is a good life but it is not what's important."

"We now have 14 bears including the five here and most are what I call "throwaways." They were on the way to death."

"Twenty-four years ago, an old German bear trainer called me and asked me if I wanted Johnny and Micah, two Syrian bears that he wanted to dispose of, without a backward glance to the pair that no doubt

provided him with a good living."

"Well, the rest of the story is that Johnny is now 36 years of age, real old for a bear and has been retired for the past 14 years. He is a real trooper and when I first went on the road to hit the show circuit, I had to return home as he went into cardiac arrest, not eating or drinking, just pacing until exhaustion overtook him."

"No one ever wants to tell me that bears do not know what going on, there is only one thing and only thing to remember, they are forever wild and never are tame, no matter what."

"My son, Derrick III had one real close call with Peter, the European bear featured in the shows up front and personal. He stepped in to stop a quarrel and a few seconds later was in dire condition. He will tell you instantly that it was his fault, not the bear's."

"We have two grizzly spoiled brats, five European Browns, six Himalayans and Johnny of course." They live in a 30 acre facility with their own swimming pool, tractor tire swings and lots of food."

"I know that I could go on and on about the life with a "honey bunch of bears, but my boys would say I was bragging."

So with that and enough pictures to last a lifetime plus having the opportunity to photograph Indian, minus her cage and muzzle came to an end and the "Mountain Men" of Rosaire's Bears headed off to care for their "treasures" before the next show.

New Carlton Peck award added to Fair's Band Day

by Sandy Wyman

"Lions, bulldogs, knights and a blue devil, oh my!" With a new twist, the popular and long running Carlton Peck Band Day Awards came full circle as the Kelly Ann Award for the most spirited mascot made its first appearance when the competition took place in front of the grandstand on Wednesday, August 6.

Taking the top honors in the new category that will for 2009 feature a two minute routine for judging were Gold Division 1st place OFA (Blue Devil), in second a tie between Gouverneur (Wildcat) and Heuvelton (Bulldog) and Silver Division saw Edwards-Knox (Cougar) take the nod for the award named for Carlton Peck's granddaughter.

There have been seven marching bands that have competed in the past two years and Heuvelton Central School was recognized for the distinction of participating all of the past 44 years that the awards have been offered.

At one time in the second decade of the awards, there were upwards of 25 plus bands in the competition from all over New York State.

Winners in the 157th Gouverneur and St. Lawrence County Fair Carlton Peck Awards for 2008 were:

Isabella Award for Marching Excellence—Gold Division: 1. Gouverneur, 2. OFA, 3. Lisbon, Silver Division: 1. Thousand Islands, 2. Morristown, 3. Edwards-Knox.

Margie Award for Best Flag Unit—Gold Division: 1. Lisbon, 2. Gouverneur, 3. OFA, Silver Division: 1. Morristown, 2. Edwards-Knox.

Carter Award for Best Rifle Unit—Gold Division: 1. OFA, 2. Gouverneur, Silver Division: 1. Edwards-Knox, 2. Morristown.

Elmer Award for Best Brass Line—Gold Division: 1. Gouverneur, 2. OFA, Silver Division: 1. Thousands, 2. Morristown.

Sean Award for Best Percussion Line—Gold Division: 1. Gouverneur, 2. Lisbon, Silver Division: 1. Morristown, 2. Thousands.

Robyn Award for Best Special Feature—Gold Division: Heuvelton for

electric guitar, Silver Division: Thousand Islands for trumpet duet.

Carlton Award for Best Twirling Unit—Gold Division: Heuvelton, Silver Division: Morristown.

Fawnie Award of Merit for Most Improved Band—Gold Division: Lisbon, Silver Division: Thousand Island

Mort Award for Esprit de Corps—Gold Division: Heuvelton, Silver Division, Morristown.

Drum Major Award: Lisbon
Drum Majorette Award—Gold Division: 1. Heuvelton, 2. OFA, 3. Gouverneur, Silver Division: 1. Edwards-Knox, 2. Morristown.



The Carlton Peck Awards for the Drum Major and Majorettes were presented to the Gold winners of (not in order) Heuvelton, OFA, Gouverneur and Lisbon by Sean Peck (back left) and founder Carlton Peck (back right) at the Gouverneur and St. Lawrence County Fair Band Day that was held on Wednesday, August 6. (Sandy Wyman photo)



The Isabella Award for Marching Excellence in Gold was presented by the Carlton Peck family to Gouverneur (first), Lisbon (second) and OFA (third) at the Band Day Competition held in front of the grandstand at the Gouverneur and St. Lawrence County Fair on Wednesday, August 6. (Sandy Wyman photo)

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