

**When you've got a project...
We've got solutions!**



Click Here For More Info.
www.invisiblefence.com
or Call 303-499-0220

A Service of the Daily Times-Call

LONGMONTFYI

DAILY TIMES-CALL

[LongmontFYI Home](#) | [Local & Regional News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Community](#) | [Health](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Blogs](#) |
[Find a Car](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Employment](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Submit A Classified Ad](#) | [Subscribe to the Daily Times-Call](#) | [Contact Us](#)

The Daily Times-Call
Delivered to Your Door.

Subscribe today!

[LongmontFYI Home](#)

- News**
- [Local/Region](#)
- [Nation & World](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Faith](#)
- [Schools](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Health](#)
- [More from](#)
- [Johnnie St. Vrain](#)
- [Lafayette Homicide](#)
- [Archive](#)
- [Ramsey Archive](#)
- [News Tips](#)

- Opinion**
- [Editorial Page](#)
- [Poll Results](#)

- Marketplace**
- [Print ads online](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Submit an Ad](#)
- [Find a Car](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [Coupons](#)
- [Advertiser Directory](#)

- Entertainment**
- [Cover Story](#)
- [Events](#)

VALLEY PRE-OWNED CENTER
1-866-293-3071



Publish Date: 6/7/2007

Invitation for activists

Handler asks protesters to come see him in action

*By John Fryar and Rachel Carter
The Daily Times-Call*

LONGMONT — Randy Peterson, Carson & Barnes head elephant handler for the circus performing here, says he wishes people concerned about the welfare of the three elephants under his care would see for themselves how the animals are treated.

Animal-rights demonstrators typically just show up to hold protest signs when the circus is in town, but they aren't around the rest of the day, Peterson said.

"Everybody's entitled to an opinion," Peterson said, noting that the demonstrators have become a predictable background presence. "It wouldn't be a circus without them."

But during a Wednesday afternoon interview outside Carson & Barnes' version of the "Big Top" outside the Boulder County Fairgrounds, Peterson noted that no animal-rights protestors showed up to watch one of the circus elephants help him erect the tent in the morning.

"If they did care, they'd be out here right now and would come and see what we do," Peterson said.


Circus protest
A Times-Call slideshow

Leslie Irvine, a Longmont woman who protested the circus' Wednesday shows, said such an invitation is meaningless because handlers would only put on a show.

Story Tools

[Printer Friendly](#) [Email Story](#)

AA [Enlarge Text](#) **AA** [Reduce Text](#)



Randy Peterson, head elephant handler for the Carson & Barnes Circus, shows some affection to Ila, one of the three elephants in the traveling circus. The circus is performing today at the Boulder County Fairgrounds in Longmont.

Times-Call/Jill P. Mott

View our ads online!



Dillard's
The Style of Your Life.

ALLIANCE
CREDIT UNION

FREE
eStatements
eNotices

Snapshots



Send us your photos!

CENTENNIAL
Bank of the West

12 locations in
Northern
Colorado

[Dining Guide](#)
[Movie Listings](#)
[Entertainment News](#)
[Offbeat](#)

[Web Only](#)
[Rayburn on Sports \(Podcast\)](#)
[Traipsing Outdoors \(Blog\)](#)
[Shatterproof Glass House \(Blog\)](#)

[Multimedia](#)
[Circus Protest](#)
[Big Top Students](#)
[Kids with Cameras](#)
[SVVSD Graduation 2007](#)
[The Karaoke Kid](#)
[Kinetics](#)
[Ft. Lupton Heritage Fair](#)
[The Sound of Youth](#)
[Sentimental Journey](#)
[Seeing her way again](#)
[Sam's Calling](#)
[Colorado Rockies: Opening Day 2007](#)
[Community Review: 100](#)
[Pointe Work](#)
[Losar: Tibetan New Year](#)
[The Masterson and Dineen Family](#)
[Young Artist Competition](#)
[Johnson's Corner Chapel](#)
[Ancient Movements](#)

[Photos](#)
[Readers' Photos](#)
[Memorial Day Ceremonies 2007](#)

Circus audiences don't get an "honest look" at how animals, and elephants in particular, are treated, Irvine said. She trusts people who have gone undercover to capture photos and videos of handlers using "bullhooks" — a tool that resembles a fire poker — to prod the animals to perform.

"Anyone who has a dog knows you can't force an animal to perform the same tricks day after day after day," she said. "Animals just don't do that unless you have a lot of treats. But they don't have treats; they have electric prods and bullhooks."

Ann Swissdorf of Lakewood also came to the fairgrounds to protest how circus animals are treated: not just training methods, but animals being chained, caged and hauled around the country in trailers.

"You have to think about where they come from; they're not allowed to do what's natural to them," she said. "You have to imagine that, to get a tiger or elephant to do what you want them to do, there must be some type of fear."

About five people protested the circus' matinee Wednesday afternoon. A dozen people picketed the evening show, which Carson & Barnes cancelled because of strong winds. Irvine and Swissdorf also plan to protest the circus' shows today.

"These animals do two, one-hour shows a day," Irvine said. "The rest of the time is when the abuse happens."

Peterson, however, said it's unfortunate protesters "don't see what we do 24 hours a day."

He has a three-person crew working with him to tend to the three female Asian elephants — Isla, Opal and Ila — that are part of the Carson & Barnes animal menagerie.

Peterson's message to such protesters would be: "Spend a week in my shoes, or with me," watching how the elephants are handled and treated. "And then, if you still have a problem or want to debate, then let's talk about it."

As for the use of "bullhooks," a pronged stick that's the focus of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' complaints about Carson & Barnes elephant handling, Peterson acknowledged that "we carry them."

Used properly, however, a bullhook "is a tool for guiding" the elephants and is used "only in an emergency" to physically control the animals, he said.

"I put the whole tent up this morning without touching" Isla, Peterson said, "just by using vocal commands."

Peterson, who's been enamored with circuses since he was an 8-year-old Milwaukee visitor to the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wis., started working with circus elephants because a boyhood friend's family owned several.

Peterson said he later met his future wife, Melissa, when she was driving a horse-drawn circus coach at the Circus World Museum. She and their three children — Allison, 10, D'Anna, 8, and D.J., 7 — travel

Bolder Boulder 2007
Into the Dirt
CU Graduation
Cinco de Mayo
2006-Year in Photos
2007 New Year's Ice
Swim
Immigration Raid in
Greeley

with Peterson on the Carson & Barnes performance spring-through-fall circuit and are with him when he and the elephants spend off-season months in the circus' Hugo, Okla., headquarters.

He said he's been with Carson & Barnes for five years and worked with the Ringling Brothers circus for nine years before that.

Peterson, who declined to give his age, said elephants are the reason he made circus work a career and are why he's still in it.

"If it wasn't for the elephants, I'd probably be flipping burgers at a McDonald's or something," Peterson said.

For him, the circus "is not the show; it's not the glamour. It's the elephants."

John Fryar can be reached at 303-684-5211 or jfryar@times-call.com.

Education

2007 Third-Grade
Reading CSAP
Scores
Homework Help
Newspaper in Ed.
SVVSD
Accountability
Report

Special Sections

Back to School
Balance
An Expo for Women
Boomers
Bridal
Community Review
Fall Auto
Fall Home
Health
for Your Mind & Body
Kid Scene
Longmont Magazine
Longmont Visitors
Guide
Readers' Choice
Awards
Salute to Seniors
Savor
Senior Expo 2006
Spring Home
Summer Camps
Vacation Guide

Customer Service

Subscriptions
Vacation Hold
Submit an obituary

[Click here to subscribe to the Daily Times-Call's FREE daily e-mail news alerts](#)

Built For YOUR Life!
STYLE • VARIETY • COMFORT • VALUE

Come See



Prairie Village
on Hwy. 66 & Alpine



D-R HORTON INC.
America's Builder
Melody Series

[Click here for more details on Prairie Village](#)
Or call (303)651-1866



[Advertising Rates](#)
[Corrections](#)
[News Tips](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Employment](#)

at Lehman Communications
Corp.

[Newspaper Route
Opportunities](#)

Search
LongmontFYI



[Click here for
more info](#)





[Click for
Suicide Prevention Hotline
Numbers](#)



DAILY TIMES-CALL

News and Information from Longmont and Northern Colorado

REPORTER-HERALD | OF COLORADO DAILY RECORD | Louisville Times
Lafayette News | Erie Review | Superior Observer

[LongmontFYI Home](#) | [Local & Regional News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Community](#) | [Health](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Blogs](#) |
[Find a Car](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Employment](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Submit A Classified Ad](#) | [Subscribe to the Daily Times-Call](#) | [Contact Us](#)

All content Copyright © 2007 Daily Times-Call. All rights reserved.
This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed for any commercial purpose.
[LongmontFYI Privacy Policy](#)

