



Staging the Great Circus Parade (Images of Modern America)

By Jim Peterson, Donna Peterson



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Milwaukee was home to the Great Circus Parade for almost 30 years. Beginning in 1963 and continuing until 1972, the parade became an annual tradition, except in 1967 when the event was cancelled because of civil unrest. Revived on a smaller scale in 1980, the parade traveled between Baraboo and Chicago until it returned to Milwaukee in 1985. Each year, it grew in size and scope, gaining national prominence. The old-fashioned circus parade became an event of mammoth proportions, requiring an army of volunteers working behind the scenes.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Jim Peterson grew up in Milwaukee and volunteered for the first run of the Great Circus Parades. By 1980, Jim was married with a young family when Circus World Museum called and asked him to volunteer again. He agreed as long as his wife, Donna, could volunteer as well. Like Jim, she was assigned to the flag and banner crew and was hooked, participating in every parade through 2009. During this time, the Petersons amassed a collection of photographs that documents the extensive volunteer effort dedicated to putting on a magnificent show, with the best from the archive seen here.

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