

PENN PREMIER SHOW

Show Playing We

By Bill Hall

There is still a niche for small family type shows, says Lloyd Serfass, owner of L.A.M. Enterprises/Penn Premier Shows. The 20 ride operation based in western Pennsylvania plays 28 - 30 spots a year around the Pittsburgh area periodically splitting up into two units. According to Lloyd, "The show opens in mid-May and closes in mid-October. We are content with being a small family owned show and our route is consistent having played most of our

dates for many years since 1993 when the show was founded."

Lloyd's carnival background goes back to his early childhood days, however, he only has vague memories of his dad's original Penn Premier Shows. "My dad passed away when I was five. That was in 1961 and the show folded in 1964," said Lloyd. He attended grade school in Florida, later relocating to western Pennsylvania where he attended vocational school. Lloyd said, "When I was sixteen my mother passed away. She did not want



SHOWS TITLE REVIVED

Western Pa. Dates



me to go into show business. But the memories I had of my dad's carnival kept pulling me back to life on the road. A family friend helped me buy some rides that needed refurbishing and we put together a small carnival."

In the 1980's, Lloyd joined Fun City Shows where he worked his way up to being the show's ride superintendent. According to Lloyd, "Dave Robb and Dick Janas taught me a lot but my real carnival experience came when I joined Childress Shows. I stayed with Bob Childress for four years managing

the show's second unit and getting an education on how to run a carnival. I had some of my own rides and games booked with Childress. The two units would combine for the fair season."

In 1993 Lloyd Serfass launched his own carnival and named it after the first initial of his name, his wife Angie's name and his daughter Melanie's name LAM Enterprises. But still recalling the nostalgia of his father's show, the Penn Premier title haunted his memories so in 2017 the old show title was revived and Lloyd began re-lettering equipment



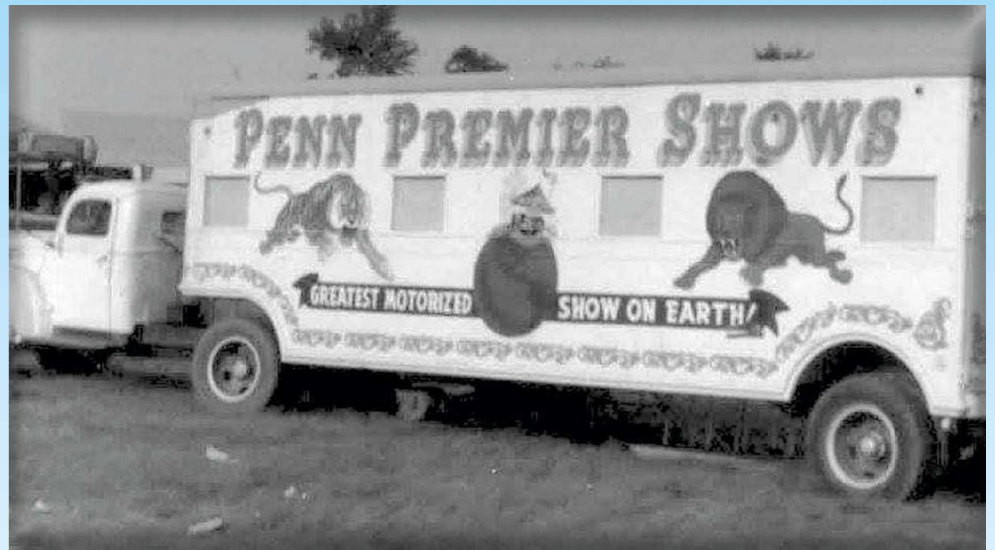
and started touring as Penn Premier Shows, a fitting title for his western Pennsylvania route.

The show is now in its 28th season. Lloyd is a “hands on” owner doing whatever needs to be done on the midway. Wife, Angie, oversees the food operation and daughter, Melanie, oversees hiring/firing and manages the second unit when the show splits. Charles Dib and Jim Ohler supervise the rides. The show uses H2B labor and Lloyd says, “We are very fortunate to have the same group of workers return each year. They have been an asset to our operation.”

At the time of the interview with Carnival Magazine, Lloyd was busy in his winter quarters in Lowber, Pa. getting ready for the 2020 tour. “Every 3 years we rotate our equipment through our winter quarters - rides, trucks and food trailers. This winter we are installing new LED light packages on our Sizzler and Nittany Ferris Wheel,” said Lloyd.

When asked about his future plans Lloyd said, “We enjoy being a small carnival and returning to the same county fairs every year where we have made many loyal friends and associates. We are content and have enough rides to interchange them from year to year for that fresh appearance. If in the future, opportunities arise, we are not adverse to adding more rides and booking new dates, but not at this time.”

Lloyd's father, with the same name, was known to other showmen as “The Dutchman”, as some people from Pennsylvania where referred to as “Pennsylvania Dutch” in accordance with their German heritage. The elder Lloyd founded Penn Premier Shows in 1937, perhaps not a good time to launch a carnival with World War II on the horizon. Serfass was called into the marines to serve his country and although the show managed to struggle



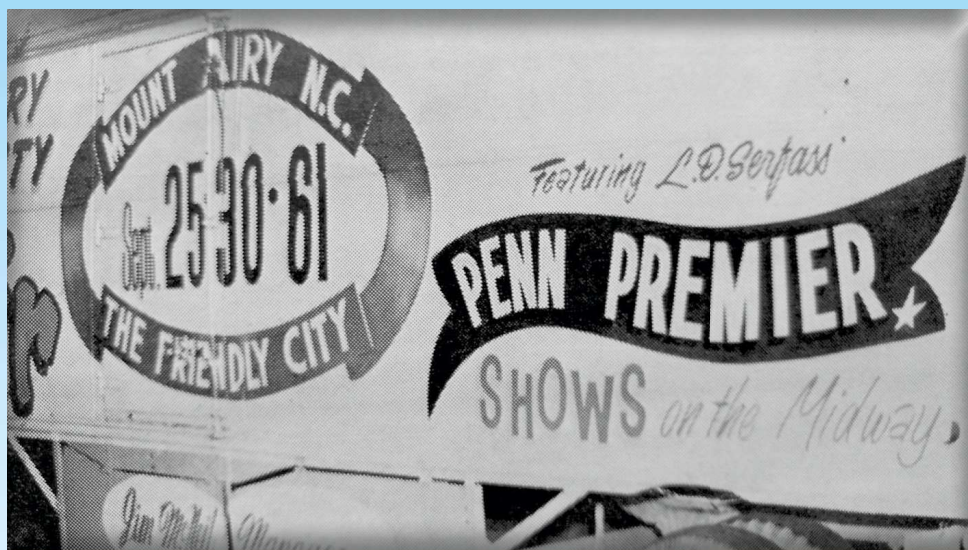
along while he was on duty, other shows took advantage and took over some of the show's route.

It took until 1949 for Lloyd Serfass to build back the show and then tragedy struck. A \$300,000 fire wiped out winter quarters before the show hit the road. But with help of others, Penn Premier rebuilt into one of the largest truck shows in the country. By 1961 Serfass owned over three dozen rides and had a route consisting of 24 county fairs and 19 celebrations, all on the eastern seaboard. But his plans to tour two other units - Keystone State and Keystone Exposition - never materialized when he passed away in April of that year.

Upon the founder's passing, longtime associate Harry (Buster) Westbrook made a valiant effort to keep the show

going but time, money and help worked against him. Some of Penn Premier's best dates, held for years, were lost and others showed declining profits. The show began selling rides and booking more independents. The midway's appearance was not what it had been in the past with rust beginning to show on rides and malfunctioning lighting creating an overall shabby appearance. It was apparent that shrinking income, increased costs to operate and a lack of good help was taking a toll on the show as the route got smaller each season.

In 1964, following the Dixie Classic Colored Fair in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, the show declared bankruptcy and was closed by the government. Show equipment was moved to the fairgrounds at Sumter, S.C. for disposal.



Included was the show's Merry-Go-Round, twin Ferris Wheel, Octopus, Roll-O-Plane, kiddie rides, light plants and support equipment.

It is interesting to note that Penn Premier Shows once called "The World's Largest Motorized Midway"

and the World of Mirth Shows known as "The Largest Midway on Earth" met their demise on the same fairgrounds just a year apart.

Carnival Magazine appreciates the interesting interview with Lloyd Serfass and wishes him continued success with the new Penn Premier Shows. 🎪

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