



Jackie Le Claire

May 11, 1927 - March 17, 2019

Jackie Le Claire (born John Le Clercq on May 11, 1927, in Fall River, Massachusetts) left us on March 17, 2019, at his home at Bay Village. Jackie was a prominent figure in the hearts and minds of circus fans and performers for almost eight decades. For his first salaried position he worked in partnership in clowning with his father on Ringling Brothers & Barnum and Bailey Circus. At age 18 he became an aerialist, but soon returned to clowning. He did maintain his aerial skills, however, and even performed as a double on the trapeze for Cornell Wilde in the academy award winning film *THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH*.

Jackie attended Marquette University in Milwaukee and then again worked for Ringling, taking his father's place when the show played in Havana, Cuba. After a few years booking his one-man act on fairs, auto thrill shows and other circuses, he returned to Ringling and became a producing clown for the unit sent to South America in the 60's. He was with the first American circus to perform in the Soviet Union and he made numerous appearances across Europe. He did not only promotional advertising and school assembly shows, but also taught at clown camps and conventions, gaining the title of The Children's Clown. He has also been a teacher-lecturer-clown performer for a number of clown associations around the country.

Many awards were bestowed upon Jackie over his long career. In 1996 he was inducted into the International Clown Hall of Fame and in 2002 a wheel was added for him in the Circus Ring of Fame at St. Armand's Circle in Sarasota, Florida. In 2009 he was given a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Sedona Film Festival and was honored at the 2010 John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art Circus Celebrity Night.

Although he officially retired as "Ambassador of Mirth" for Circus Sarasota his clowning days were not over. He continued to spread joy through programs such as Laughter Unlimited. The entire community has recognized Jackie with feature articles and even on the covers of several newspapers and magazines. In his later years, he resided at Bay Village in Sarasota and there and everywhere else Jackie went, laughter followed. No matter what the circumstances, he helped those around him appreciate and accentuate the positives in their lives.

Funeral services for Jackie will be held at 4:30 pm on Sunday, March 24, 2019 at the First

Brethren Church, 150 N Shade Ave, Sarasota with the Reverend David Stone presiding. A Celebration of his life will follow at Showfolks of Sarasota, 5204 N Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota, for all of his friends and acquaintances.

Remembrances may be made to Showfolks of Sarasota, P O Box 1476, Sarasota, FL 34230 and Circus & Traveling Shows Retirement Project Inc. P O Box 15121, Sarasota, FL 34277.

Arrangements are under the direction of Gendron Funeral & Cremation Services located at 135 N Lime Ave., Sarasota, FL 34237 941-365-1767 www.gendronfuneralhome.com

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