



0. ROSIE the CIRCUS ELEPHANT - Story Preface

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**3. ROSIE the CIRCUS ELEPHANT**

4. GREAT CIRCUS DISASTERS

Although elephants are a much-loved part of the circus, their fans also want to be sure that these animals are never mistreated. Protests "in defense of animals" have helped to alert the public about animal mistreatment. Image online, courtesy IDA (In Defense of Animals).

Carl Fisher - the man behind the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and the original developer of the town of Miami Beach - bought a circus elephant named Rosie. In the days when elephants could be more helpful than bulldozers, to clear out oceanfront debris, Fisher turned his pachyderm into a Miami Beach mascot. It was a brilliant idea:

*This Asian elephant, Rosie ... was famous for her sweetness. She was agreeable to having people hit golf balls off her back, and with people diving into pools from her back.*

*A developer of Miami Beach knew that if an elephant gave children birthday party rides, pulled gondolas along the water, and planted coconut trees, those stunts would attract attention. And attention could increase sales of homes in the new city. That's how an elephant on the beach became a daily fact of life in south Florida. (Florida's Famous Animals, by Jan Godown Annino, page 102.)*

Rosie even acted as a caddy for Warren Harding when he was president-elect:

*...While he was in Miami Beach, president-elect Harding played golf. Rosie worked as his caddy.*

*At other times for publicity Rosie walked to the edge of one of Fisher's pools and stood very still. Then swimmers would use Rosie's back as a diving board into a pool...*

*To bring more customers into a bank, she walked right into the bank, stood before a teller's window, and handed the teller a bank deposit book with her trunk. Local legend has it that she also made her own "unplanned deposit" on Miami Beach First National Bank's marble floor. That brought a chuckle and even more attention. (Florida's Famous Animals, page 107.)*

According to another historian, Seth Bramson:

*In a sense, Rosie was Miami Beach. She was photographed more than Carl Fisher [the town's developer] was, and was known and loved by all of the children who came to the beach. She became a national icon and symbol of the beach. (Seth Bramson, quoted in Florida's Famous Animals, page 108.)*

When a vicious hurricane struck south Florida, in 1926, people stopped building new houses at Miami Beach - at least for awhile. That meant Rosie needed a new home.

According to Jane Fisher (Carl's ex-wife), Rosie went to Atlanta after she left Miami Beach, and was thereafter sold to a traveling circus:

*In 2000 a history of Zoo Atlanta said that a private Atlanta zoo helping stock the public zoo in 1935 sold an elephant named Rosie to a traveling circus show. Was this Rosie the same as Miami's Rosie? It's very likely. (Florida's Famous Animals, page 110.)*

In other words ... who's to say that Rosie, the Miami Beach mascot, didn't end up with a traveling circus like the Benzini Brothers?

How long did Rosie live, after she left Florida? According to Jason Ferguson, in *Moon Florida*:

*Rosie died in the late 1930s.*

Most of the stories we personally remember, about the circus, produce happy memories. Yet ... there have been some horrific circus disasters. What are some of them?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ROSIE-the-CIRCUS-ELEPHANT-Water-for-Elephants>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ROSIE-the-CIRCUS-ELEPHANT-Water-for-Elephants>

## Media Stream



### Rosie the Circus Elephant

Photo of Rosie, the circus elephant and mascot of Miami Beach, online courtesy Florida State Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rosie-the-Circus-Elephant>

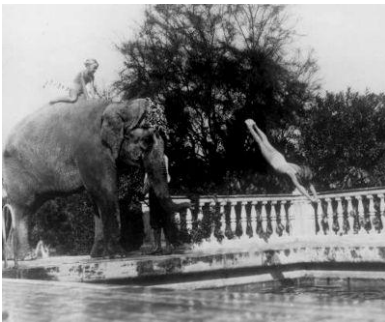


### Rosie the Elephant - Golfing on Her Back

Image online, courtesy Florida State Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Rosie-the-Elephant-Golfing-on-Her-Back>



### Rosie the Elephant - Diving from Her Back

Image online, courtesy Florida State Archives.

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### Rosie the Elephant - Loved by Children

Photo by Claude Matlack, from the Claude Matlack Collection, Historical Museum of Southern Florida, Image number: Matlack 35-33. Online, courtesy Historical Museum of Southern Florida.

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### Rosie - Circus Elephant at the Beach

Image online, courtesy Florida State Archives.

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## Circus Arriving in Town

Image online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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