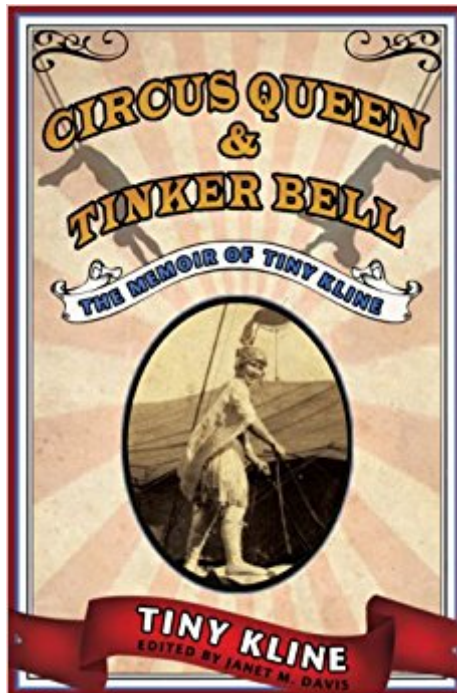




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# Circus Queen And Tinker Bell: The Memoir Of Tiny Kline



## Synopsis

This engaging memoir follows the life and career of circus performer Tiny Kline (1891-1964) from the burlesque house to the circus tent, and on to Disneyland and the silver screen. While working for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Kline became well known for her signature "slide for life" stunt, an "iron jaw" act in which she slid to the ground while dangling from trapeze rigging by her teeth. Kline renewed her spectacular acrobatics at the age of seventy when she played Tinker Bell in the "Fantasy in the Sky" fireworks show at Disneyland. In that same year, she also began writing her life story. Extensively annotated by Janet M. Davis, this memoir documents twentieth-century changes in popular amusements, while providing fresh insight into circus personalities such as John Ringling, acrobat Lillian Leitzel, and big cat trainer Mabel Stark, as well as mainstream entertainers like Florenz Ziegfeld, John Philip Sousa, and others. Kline also provides intimate details about the daily machinations at the circus, including fascinating accounts of its sexual politics, racial dynamics, risky nature, and labor relations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"It was great fun reading Tiny Kline's fascinating and quirky story of the circus. There is nothing quite like her insider account. I found myself getting wrapped up in her personal descriptions and in the vagaries that confronted her both in and out of the entertainment profession. Her insights are crucial in understanding several important transitions in circus history."--Don B. Wilmeth, editor of *The Cambridge Guide to American Theatre*, 2nd edition

Kline's fascinating story provides

remarkably vivid descriptions of the day-to-day life of performers on the circus circuit and glimpses of well-known entertainment figures. Davis deftly places Tiny Kline's story amongst important questions about the role of popular amusements in class formation and Americanization of immigrant populations; about the meaning of bodily display and the exceptional body; and about early twentieth-century gender roles and transgressions."--Joy S. Kasson, author of *Buffalo Bill's Wild West: Celebrity, Memory, and Popular History*"With this indispensable volume, Davis again demonstrates how the study of circus in particular and popular culture in general can enrich understanding of the world. . . . Highly recommended."--Choice

This engaging memoir follows the life and career of circus performer Tiny Kline (1891-1964) from the burlesque house to the circus tent, and on to Disneyland and the silver screen. While working for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, Kline became well known for her signature "slide for life" stunt, an "iron jaw" act in which she slid to the ground while dangling from trapeze rigging by her teeth. Kline renewed her spectacular acrobatics at the age of seventy when she played Tinker Bell in the "Fantasy in the Sky" fireworks show at Disneyland. In that same year, she also began writing her life story. Extensively annotated by Janet M. Davis, this memoir documents twentieth-century changes in popular amusements, while providing fresh insight into circus personalities such as John Ringling, acrobat Lillian Leitzel, and big cat trainer Mabel Stark, as well as mainstream entertainers like Florenz Ziegfeld, John Philip Sousa, and others. Kline also provides intimate details about the daily machinations at the circus, including fascinating accounts of its sexual politics, racial dynamics, risky nature, and labor relations.

While a person's memoirs of life as a circus performer may find a relatively narrow audience, the editors here are deserving of our combined appreciation for their devotion in allowing the late Tiny Kline to tell her own story. Too often, the daunting process of gaining permission to publish such a work so many years after the author's passing can discourage even those with the best of intentions. Thankfully, editor Janet M. Davis and University of Illinois Press understood the value in preserving this very special story. To understand the heart of Tiny Kline's own story is a gift worth celebrating.

I love reading about the circus, but this writer could not keep your interest from the start.

These memoirs, brilliantly edited by Janet M. Davis, Ph.D are a wonderful seldom seen view of

circus life, and the important roll that circus played in the 19th and 20th centuries in providing entertainment to the masses. I remember my dad talking about Tiny Kline when she made history in 1932 by crossing Times Square on a strung wire from the Edison Hotel (still there) to the roof of the Palace Theater, suspended by a fine wire with a bite plate attached. Such was her "Iron Jaw" act that she performed up to her 70's. For such a tiny little girl and woman, she proved to be a brave and wonderful athlete as she did so many other things in the circus. This book whetted my appetite and I subsequently ordered Dr. Davis's book, *The Circus Age*. Wonderful and interesting reading. Norman L. Rosenberg

If you have ever dreamed of running away with the circus, read this first. Tiny is such a strong personality, a true showman, and with Dr. Davis's help, wrote an amazing autobiography.

Interesting lady and I enjoyed a good chunk of it but it gets wordy

Tiny Kline spent her entire life doing stunts. From youth to middle age, she worked with the circus, her love for which is apparent throughout the pages of her memoir. She continued doing iron jaw stunts, descending inclines at ridiculous speeds suspended only by her teeth, into old age and performed as Tinker Bell at Disneyland when she was in her 70s. By all accounts, Tiny Kline had a fascinating life. She really wrote two memoirs in an attempt to share that life with us. One contained mainly personal anecdotes, related to her work on the circus. The second mainly contained circus history and was stripped of these more intimate details. The editor, Janet M. Davis, combined the two to produce a memoir that is still Tiny's but in a form readers will be more eager to consume. This book was a very educational experience. Circus history, while an interesting topic, is not something that I've ever learned in school and there don't seem to be many accessible books written on it. There is the fiction bestseller, *Water for Elephants*, which I read and loved earlier this year, but that's about all I've seen on my book radar. When this popped up on LT Early Reviewers, I knew that I simply must read it. And good choice by me; this is a terrific memoir. The combination of memoirs is brilliantly done and I never noticed a gap between Tiny's two styles of writing. It's fascinating to see how the circus changed over time, the insider's view of circus politics, and just how some performers climbed the career ladder faster than others. Tiny's ambition was tremendous and it's easy to see why she advances so quickly. The book does read precisely as someone's account of their life. Tiny was not the best writer and it's evident at times that she had little training, but it never hampers this book, just makes the author more real, if that is possible. It reads like a

letter written by a friend; conversational, easy tone. There were some nice touches put in by the editor, such as including photographs with Tiny's descriptions of some of her fellow performers, all bringing the circus to life. Tiny admits one lapse in her introduction; she included some fictional romances to make the book more "exciting", even though she never had a romantic interlude after her husband died shortly after their wedding. The fictional parts are obvious and only in one part of the book; I don't count this against it, especially as she admits their existence before the book even begins. I'd definitely be recommending this book and if you're interested in circus history, you shouldn't miss it. I'm glad that I didn't!

I loved this book! Having worked in the film industry I could relate to the show biz stories. Tiny Kline was an amazing hard working woman who deserves a lot of credit. It is a fascinating book about a fascinating woman.

This is a really fascinating book..with great detail..on the circus life..gets below the surface.and takes you into the corners of this amazing underworld..Simply written..it rings with truth..

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