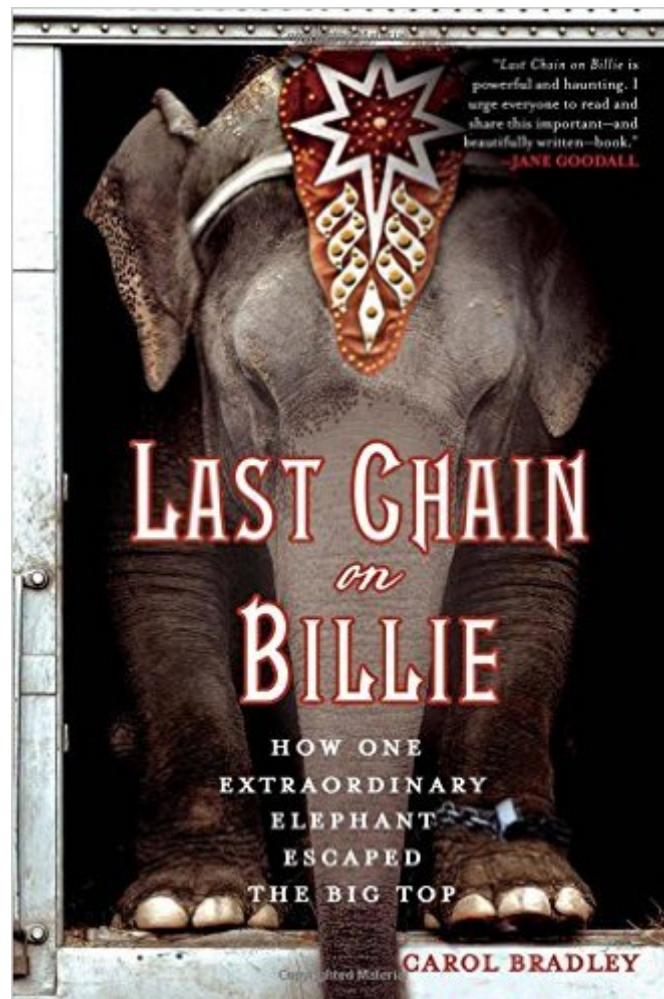


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# Last Chain On Billie: How One Extraordinary Elephant Escaped The Big Top



## Synopsis

Left in the wild, Billie the elephant would have spent her life surrounded by her family, free to wander the jungles of Asia. Instead, she was captured as a baby and shipped to America where she arrived in the mid 1950s, long before circus and zoo-goers worried about animal living conditions. Billie spent her first years confined in a tiny zoo yard giving rides to children. At 19, she was sold and groomed for life in the circus. Billie mastered difficult stunts: she could balance on her hind legs, walk on her front legs and perform one-foot handstands. For twenty-three years she dazzled audiences, but she lived a life of neglect and abuse. As years passed, Billie rebelled. When she attacked and injured her trainer, a federal inspector ordered her taken off the road. For a decade she languished in a dusty barn. Finally, fate intervened. The U.S. Department of Agriculture removed Billie and fifteen other elephants as part of the largest elephant rescue in American history. Billie wound up at a sanctuary for performing elephants in Tennessee at 45, but she thundered with anxiety in her new environment and refused to let anyone remove a chain still clamped around her leg. Last Chain on Billie charts the growing movement to rescue performing elephants from lives of misery, and tells the story of how one emotionally damaged elephant overcame her past and learned to trust humans again.

## Book Information

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Mammals

## Customer Reviews

I could not put this book down. Carol did an amazing job of explaining the history of elephants in captivity and Billie's journey through it all. I heard of this book through The Elephant Sanctuary, as I

love to visit their website and watch the Ele-Cams. This book made me laugh and cry and feel outrage over the injustice these beautiful creatures have to endure. I am thoroughly disgusted by the lack of punishment against Cuneo and circuses in general that abuse their elephants and cannot fathom why they are allowed to get away with such cruelty. Thank God for The Elephant Sanctuary and the amazing work that they do in providing a safe place for these elephants to spend the rest of their lives at. Highly recommend this book to any elephant lovers or those who wish to learn about the "training" practices that circuses use.

Anyone who looks deep down into themselves knows that an elephant does not willingly do a handstand or put their front legs onto the back of another elephant. However, what really goes into those "performances" will blow your mind. And what that life does to one of the most majestic and most intelligent animals on the planet is disgusting and indefensible. Never, ever, go to the circus. You are simply endorsing cruelty if you do. It's time to rise up and show circuses that they are not fooling us any longer. Circuses are a collective stain on human history, one we should be trying to start clean up. This book sheds light on those trying to help. It is a sad, yet uplifting story - one that is worth reading...

I got to read this book for free before its release through NetGalley. I was so happy to learn about another elephant's life that lives at one of the places I do charity for, The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. This is not only about Billie but tells the story of other elephants that got saved by the sanctuary. This book goes in depth about the horrors that are done to elephants in the circus and some zoos. I was appalled that some of these things were going on for so long before the USDA and the courts finally started to help. There are some people out there with no souls, they are cruel to animals and people. I really hope this book opens the eyes of more people as we petition circuses all of the time and know that these animals are beaten into submission and other horrors. This is a wonderful book telling stories of some beautiful creatures.

After reading "Last Chain on Billie" I was saddened by the conditions the elephants endured in their lives with circuses and in zoos. Things may have improved in the past decade or so, but I never want to see another circus, zoo or petting zoo, knowing what they have done to the elephants to keep them docile and in line. It was heartbreaking to read and uplifting to know that at least a few of these magnificent and highly intelligent animals have found homes and families with whom to spend their last days.

More than an elephant 'biography' Journalist Carol Bradley has used a reporter's crisp, fact-oriented style to detail the life of one abused circus performer, an Indian elephant named Billie, captured at the age of 4. But the story is not really a tear-jerker about one case ... Bradley outlines the history of performing elephants in America, delineates the painful "training" used to subdue such powerful creatures and analyzes the failure of government (in particular) to protect these highly intelligent, social creatures. If horses were submitted to such inhumane treatment, there would be a public outcry. Because most of the treatment of circus elephants takes place out of sight, in dirty barns and back lots, it has largely escaped attention until the recent upsurge in elephant "sanctuaries" where rescued animals ... including, now, Billie ... are allowed to roam freely and heal. Bradley's economical writing style gives the story power.

Earlier this year at a circus protest I was participating in, a woman who stopped for a traffic light in front of me looked out her window at my "The Circus: No Fun for Animals" poster I was holding and asked me "Why are you protesting this circus and why is it no fun for animals?". At the time, my response was pointed and specific to the plight of the circus elephant, explaining how these intelligent and sentient beings are essentially living their lives in slavery, being beaten into submission to perform tricks and stunts that they would not normally do for any reason as an elephant in the wild. The next time I am asked that question, my response will be to simply read this book. It is factual, accurate, and completely encapsulates what these poor animals must endure throughout their lives in circuses and zoos. Billie now lives the life of relative freedom at The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee (of which I am an ongoing supporter), but she is one of the few lucky ones who escaped the disgusting and disturbing life she was forced into, even though she will forever live with the post traumatic stress disorder that permeates her existence. Carol Bradley does an excellent job of not only telling Billie's story (and the other Hawthorn elephants who suffered along with her) but she also goes into great details regarding the history of elephants in circuses and zoos in this country, how elephant trainers and groomers feel about their methods of training and their treatment of these unfortunate souls, detailed explanations of those training and dominating methods used to break the elephant's spirit, and the many historical stories about specific pachyderm encounters throughout history, many of which are truly heart wrenching to read. Going to a zoo or a circus does not give the public an accurate depiction of the life an elephant leads in captivity in the 21st century. But this book does. Buy it. Read it. And pass it on. It is that important.

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