

# Obituary: **Inez Hubbell Beares** / Circus performer, trapeze artist

By Paula Reed Ward / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

At a time when the Sels Floto Circus was drawing more than 10,000 people each day, Inez Hubbell Beares worked with her three sisters as part of the **Flying Wards**, a famous family of trapeze artists.

Eventually, she became a catcher with the flying act.

Mrs. Beares, formerly from the Pittsburgh area, died Sunday at a nursing home in Brandon, Fla. She was 94 and had lived in Apollo Beach, Fla., for 25 years.

**Born in Canton, Ill.**, just 70 miles from Bloomington, which housed a popular flying school, Mrs. Beares was just 16 when she joined **her sisters in Sels Floto**, the second-most popular circus in the country at the time behind Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey.

The Flying Wards, said Robert Sabia, the president of the Circus Historical Society, was "one of the best known names in circusdom in regards to flying acts."

Mrs. Beares was one of the few women who worked as a catcher.

"Only because of the physical stress -- when you catch dead weight coming across, it was very difficult," he said. "Most women didn't have the physical strength. It would have been unusual and special."

Mrs. Beares' name is listed in a program from 1930 as performing in a couple of aerial ballets, Mr. Sabia said. In addition, it listed her as performing with thoroughbred horses on the hippodrome track -- the oval track that stretches around the three rings of a circus.

Tom Mix, a famous cowboy of the day, joined Sels Floto in 1929, and later formed his own circus. **Mrs. Beares, who was Mr. Mix's sister-in-law**, joined him.

In addition to her trapeze work in the center ring, she also worked as an elephant trainer.

Mrs. Beares met her husband, Charles L. Beares Jr., when she was performing at West View Park in 1932 and he managed the park. She was performing a high pole act -- complete with handstands 100 feet in the air on a swaypole.

They married in 1936 and lived in Mt. Lebanon, Fox Chapel and Perrysville.

Mrs. Beares is survived by her son, Charles L. Beares III, of West Hampton Beach, N.Y.; younger sister, Dorothy H. Adams, of Anaheim, Calif.; three grandchildren, Samantha B. Russell, of Leesburg, Va., Brooke B. McMorrow, of Sewickley, and Christopher M. Beares, of Boston; and two great-granddaughters.