

STARVING MAKES BIG ACTING CHANCES SLIM, TINY LAMENTS

Ex-Arbuckle Double Now Cabby Here

370-Pound Stage Stooge Thrown for Loss in Film Career.

BY JOE COLLIER

Samuel (Tiny) Keith, ex-carnival man, stage stooge and double for Fatty Arbuckle in films, is so big he can live almost as cheaply as one. He weighs 370 pounds. He is driving a cab in Indianapolis now, which he claims amounts as they say in the show business—to being at liberty. He had a chance to go with a carnival this spring, but there were complications and he didn't.

He may go next spring, he says, which will end three and a half years of cabbing here. He came back here when Arbuckle died as he was making film come back, in which Tiny was assisting.

The stage business is gone to stay, Mr. Keith says. And as for Hollywood, he says, the situation for fat people is something like this: "There are so many fat people on the West Coast that none of them can get a job that will keep them. They all starve. When they starve they get thin. Then they haven't any sales point and have to hitch-hike back home."

Great Stage Job Here

Tiny, with a background of carnival barking behind him, was sitting in his cab one evening in 1929 in front of a hotel hoping some one would come along as a fare, when Harry Howard showed up.

Harry Howard was the boss of an act on the stage then at the Lyric. He asked Tiny if he would like to be a stooge for his act. Tiny said yes, turned in his cab and began a theatrical career.

"I was a stooge," he says. "I worked in the audience for the first half of the act, and then I ran backstage and put on a 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' suit of black velvet with a great tie and held a lollipop.

"We wowed them when we came out." (In spite of his poundage Tiny used the "we" to mean others in the company, too.) "Never failed to stop the show."

Finds Act a Pain

"I worked in the company for three and a half years. Had to quit when the girl in the show broke three of my fingers. It was this way. I was back scenes with a carpet beater. I was supposed on a cue, to whom away at the curtain, and in front of the curtain was Harry. He made like it hurt him."

"Then the girl laughed and he said, 'What are you laughing at?' and at that cue I was supposed to whom her."

"Well, one day she stood too close to the curtain and I whammed and she got the full force of it. Ever after that she would unconsciously put her hands back to protect herself. This defected the carpet beater and caused it to hit my hand. That broke fingers, and I walked out on the show in Pittsburgh after I saw it was no use arguing. She said she didn't do it."

"I saw her the other day in the movies. She's doubling for Ginger Rogers. Betty Burrows was her name then."

He Took the Knocks

About his own experiences as a double with Fatty Arbuckle when he attempted, a few years ago, to make his film comeback, Tiny has little to say except that he saw both of the films he was in. They played Indianapolis, he said.

"I would ride a bicycle, or take a hard fall, or get pies thrown at me, or anything he didn't want to do," he says.

"What kind of pies do they throw?" he was asked.

"I don't know what they are made of," he said. "Some kind of a gelatin. You can sponge them off in a few seconds. Also I got plaster of paris crockery thrown at me. That doesn't hurt. It breaks easily."

A Diver, Too

Tiny is 34 years old. He was born in Indianapolis and for years was life guard at various municipal swimming pools. He still does a stint of fancy diving and such things once in a while during the summer.

He says Fatty Arbuckle was one of the "sweetest persons I ever met. He found me in New York when I was out of work, and paid me pretty well for working with him."

"He was," Tiny says, "such a swell guy that he would give any one the shirt off his back."

Which might set anybody to wondering what one would do with the shirt off Fatty Arbuckle's back.

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