



The Grand Gypsy

A Memoir by
Ottavio Canestrelli
with Ottavio Gesmundo

“Artists from old Italian circus families are the keepers of a precious wealth of historical knowledge. Unfortunately, they rarely write, or if they do, they use the help of a ghostwriter who generally doesn’t truly understand the tenets and traditions of circus life, or even the difference between “high wire” and “trapeze.” Ottavio Canestrelli, however, was an avid book reader who could write, and he wrote about his extraordinary and fascinating life — as lives of his ilk always are.

Ottavio Gesmundo, his grandson, ran away and joined the real life, got a “serious” education, and eventually returned where he belonged — the circus. He thus was the perfect editor for Ottavio Canestrelli’s writings, and a wonderful guide to make us better understand his grandfather’s memories of what is to many an unfamiliar world. The Grand Gypsy is indeed fascinating and highly enjoyable reading, not only for anyone interested in circus history, but also for any curious or adventurous mind.”

Dominique Jando

Author, Circus Historian, and Editor, Circopedia.org

no
C:
g...
g...
ID

p

The Grand Gypsy

A Memoir by

Ottavio Canestrelli
with Ottavio Gesmundo

Copyright © 2016 Ottavio Gesmundo.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted by any means—whether auditory, graphic, mechanical, or electronic—without written permission of both publisher and author, except in the case of brief excerpts used in critical articles and reviews. Unauthorized reproduction of any part of this work is illegal and is punishable by law.

ISBN: 978-1-4834-4894-7 (sc)

ISBN: 978-1-4834-4895-4 (e)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016905116

Because of the dynamic nature of the Internet, any web addresses or links contained in this book may have changed since publication and may no longer be valid. The views expressed in this work are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher, and the publisher hereby disclaims any responsibility for them.

Any people depicted in stock imagery provided by Thinkstock are models, and such images are being used for illustrative purposes only.

Certain stock imagery © Thinkstock.

Lulu Publishing Services rev. date: 6/6/2016

Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ix
Introduction.....	xiii
1 Satana in The Garden.....	1
2 The Old Country	9
The Carpenter's Sons.....	10
The Fumagalli Circus	12
A New Big Top.....	16
3 Gypsy Life	20
A Circus Star is Born	21
The Canestrelli Circus	22
The Hard Road.....	26
4 World War I.....	32
Pizza con a Pomarola an Copa.....	34
The Battle of Caporetto	37
Accusations of Spying.....	43
Turn of The Tide	44
5 On The Road Again	49
Giovanna "Genoveffa" Lentini	52
The Krone Circus.....	55
6 Last Voyage of the Danzig	60
Odyssey Abroad	63
7 The Middle East.....	66

	Reality Theatre in Aleppo.....	73
	Baghdad or Bust	76
8	The Far East	80
	Harry Handy's King Carnival & American Circus.....	84
	Elephants, Scorpions & Monkeys.....	88
	The Isako's Russian Royal Circus.....	90
	A Rally for Mahatma Gandhi	100
9	The Man from India	102
	Ricardo "Rido" Canestrelli.....	112
10	Queen of The Circus	114
	La Tosca Canestrelli	114
11	World War II	127
	Federico Nino Canestrelli.....	127
	Requiem for The Canestrelli Circus.....	129
	Celeste Olympia Canestrelli	131
	The Hangman	134
	London Calling.....	138
	Casa Canestrelli	139
	Elisa Canestrelli.....	146
12	Around The World in 80 Years	150
	Monkey Business	150
	A Growing Family.....	155
	South of The Border	156
	The Grand Finale with Mr. Coco & Company	160
	Epilogue - A New Generation	173
	Photograph Acknowledgements	209
	Links & Resources	211
	Endnotes.....	213
	About the Authors	219

Grand *adjective*

1. outstanding and impressive in appearance, extent or style.
2. impressive, ambitious, and far reaching.

Gypsy *noun*

1. one who follows an itinerant or otherwise unconventional career or way of life.
2. A member of any traditional itinerant groups unrelated to the Romani.
3. A chorus dancer, esp. in the Broadway Theater.

no
C:
g...
g...
ID

p

Acknowledgements

This project has been forty-five years in the making, seventeen of which are on my part, and there are many people to thank that have helped me along the way.

First, and foremost I want to thank my grandfather, Ottavio Canestrelli, from where these remarkable stories began. I have immense gratitude that he was compelled to write down his life story, and I am truly honored and proud to share these with the world.

Then there is my beloved mother, Tosca Canestrelli Gesmundo to thank. Before her passing, she gave me her copy of the manuscript to start this process, and the encouragement she gave me early on provided me with the confidence that I could finish what my grandfather had started.

Gratitude to my late uncle Freddy Canestrelli, who was endearing and kind to sit for interviews in the twilight years of his life. Particularly helpful was the insight he provided on the journey he took with his parents and brother through the Middle East and the Far-East.

Thank you to my aunt Celeste Chi Chi Canestrelli Atayde for her support, patience, and trust, and for the invaluable information and photos she provided of the family. It has been an incredible and exciting journey with her filling in the blanks.

I am also grateful to my other aunt, Aurelia Canestrelli Nock, for her enormous help, insight, sharp wit, and photographs from her personal collection. Cross-referencing between Chi Chi and Aurelia has been a great resource.

Thank you to my sister Elisa Canestrelli Hartzell for her encouragement and support early on and for the wonderful family photographs and information.

Thank you to my other sister Myrna Ezelle and brother Victor Gesmundo for their support.

Gratitude to my cousins Laila Canestrelli, Belmonte Canestrelli, Marco Canestrelli, Tosca Vázquez Atayde, Celeste Atayde, Isolda Atayde, Eugene Nock JR, John Nock, Michelangelo Nock, Bello Nock and Pietro Canestrelli for their support and help with information and images.

Thank you to my relatives in Italy, Elio Canestrelli, Elena Canestrelli, Giulio Canestrelli, Anna Canestrelli, Paolo Canestrelli, Dario Canestrelli, Rosanna Canestrelli, Claudia Canestrelli, Manuela Canestrelli Coluccio, Palo Coluccio, and Stefano Coluccio for their generous hospitality when we came to visit Venice and Padua.

Thanks to my friends and editors Bruce Landon Yeager, Shannon Crozier, and Carrie Jeroslow that have helped me along the way make this story cohesive and clear.

Thank you to Carolyn Lockridge, Justin Scholfield and my design team and publishers at Lulu.com for making this process easy and look so good.

Thank you, Jay and Cindy Gutterman for your support, encouragement, and friendship.

Big thanks to my very good friends Michael “Double O” Davies and Phil LaDuca for challenging me to think outside the box and for suggestions on promotion and marketing. And to my other dear friends Colin “Stuntman” Follenweider and Marcie Follenweider, and Doctor & Professor Randy “Celebrity” Peoples for providing quiet and beautiful homes for their “gypsy” friends to stay in while working on this book.

Last, but certainly not least, immense gratitude goes to my wife, Naomi Brenkman Gesmundo. Thank you for the love, support, patience, and encouragement through all these years, and for the savvy editing recommendations. You are the love of my life and the best partner I could have ever hoped for, and have ever had. Also, thank you to her family Hendrik Brenkman, Antoinette Brenkman, Mike Brenkman and Menno Brenkman for their continued support.



(Left) Ottavio Canestrelli with Egyptian costume Singapore, 1928. (Right) Ottavio Gesmundo with Egyptian costume, Elton John & Time Rice's *Aida*, Netherlands, 2001.¹



Ottavio Canestrelli circa 1928, Singapore.²

Introduction

OTTAVIO Canestrelli was the grandest of gypsies. He traveled the world, from sprawling metropolises to the densest of remote jungles, performing an exotic craft he was born to do. Millions of people witnessed the ancient skills he possessed, which were passed down through the centuries by generations of forebears. He was an impresario and entrepreneur. A driven man with an intense focus, enormous talent, and intuitive instincts. He also possessed a fiery temper, was very strict and wielded a heavy hand. Yet, he was immensely generous, and, if not often, kind. He was all those things and more, but most of all to me he was my grandfather and the man for whom I was named after.

This is the story of a remarkable man who lived through an extraordinary time. A man who experienced amazing adventures and chance encounters with some of the most loved and loathed individuals of the twentieth century.

I was just a child when my grandfather began writing his memoir, but I can still recall him sitting at his desk, reading glasses resting on the edge of his nose and meticulously typing for hours with his two index fingers. The pronounced tapping that emanated from his room drove my grandmother crazy, and she would often tease him, even when she had to admonish me for playing too loud. “Shhh, the maestro is working!” she would say.

After toiling for several years, my grandfather finally produced his manuscript, replete with stunning photographs that document his travels, as well as our genealogy. But for years, it sat as an unfulfilled ambition until I took over the project with the help and support of my family.

My grandfather's memoirs are *italicized throughout* this book, but I have also added some expanded commentary on relevant events that were omitted from his original manuscript, plus notes on the significant differences in our time compared to when my grandfather traveled through these foreign and domestic lands.

The stories from the manuscript take place in and around one of the oldest art forms of entertainment, the circus. I hail from six generations of recorded Italian circus performers, but our family trade goes far beyond the efforts documented here. The circus arts are traditional skills that can be traced back to antiquity.

The Romans produced immense exhibitions that featured equestrian trick riders, acrobats, jugglers, contortionists, and tamers of wild beasts interweaved throughout the day's fierce sporting events at the Coliseum and Circus Maximus. After the fall of the Roman Empire these entertainers dispersed, and through the ages, their ancestors personified a gypsy existence by traveling far and wide to perform in town squares and at courts of royalty for their livelihood. It was not until 1768 that an equestrian trick rider named Philip Astley brought these various acts together again into a ring, thus giving birth to the modern day circus for which he is credited. Astley's performance space in London was modeled after the Roman amphitheater, and throughout Europe, as well as in America, similar buildings began popping up to house the revived ancient art form. But the most significant event for the circus came in the nineteenth century with the introduction of the "big top." The circus industry was revolutionized yet again, as tented shows tapped into entirely new markets.

For over two centuries the circus had reigned supreme as the presenter of variety entertainment, and despite the increased number of challenges and competitors the information age has brought to the field, the industry still tenaciously survives. Millions of spectators attend performances around the world each year, and numerous circus books have been published in North America and Europe. Many of these works contain brilliant photographs along with curious narratives, but mostly all of them are confined to particular shows touring within the Western Hemisphere. The material presented here,

however, has a far larger geographic setting with fascinating stories from a bygone era. My grandfather recounts his harrowing experience fighting against the German and Austrian Armies while serving in the Italian Military during World War I. Plus many other adventures through Asia, the South Pacific, and the Middle East. He explored these regions between the two great world wars of the twentieth century; a time of development and discovery in the chaotic aftermath of the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Ottavio was a charismatic adventurer who traveled to the far corners of the earth when doing so was no easy task, and it is precisely the reason I have dubbed him “The Grand Gypsy.”

- Ottavio Gesmundo



Ottavio Canestrelli with his performing pythons on the back lot of the Harry Handy American Circus. Satana prominently featured on the left and facing left. Singapore, 1928.³

Satana in The Garden

THROUGH the ages, there have been many fables and reported sightings of giant serpents. These stories always remind me of the various reptiles I have known in my life and in particular, one very dangerous serpent named Satana. Satana was one of the largest reptiles ever exhibited anywhere in the world. And in one of the most dramatic and near-tragic events of my career, I almost lost my life within the coils of this monstrous creature.

I first met my Satana in Singapore in 1928. I was searching through one of the many animal stores on Singapore's Market Street for something new and exotic when a farmer brought in a big wooden box containing the huge, wild python, which had been captured the day before. The snake was twenty-five feet long and over two hundred pounds in weight.

The farmer had caught the giant reptile, I learned, by following a well-tested procedure in that part of the world. First, tobacco and water were blended and boiled in a large drum. Then the solution was sprayed on the snake, making him intoxicated. He was then lassoed with a rope noose at the end of a large stick, put into a box, and brought to the animal store. As soon as I saw this magnificent reptile, I purchased it from the farmer, and took it back to the Harry Handy American Circus where I was performing.

To get it out of the box, I used a similar lasso loop around its neck and tied its mouth closed with a cord. Then with the help of eight men, we lifted the snake out of the box and tied it to a tree with a strong rope. This was the first time a man had handled the snake since its capture, and it took me two more weeks before I was able to handle the serpent all by myself.

Satana was never really tamed, so I always had to use the precaution of keeping its mouth tied when handling the great snake. Satana was extremely dangerous, especially at feeding time, which was every three months. The serpent shed its skin while in an almost dormant stage, and on waking, was very hungry, attacking anything that moved. Satana's diet usually consisted of live goats or pigs.

I used Satana with two other large pythons as part of our center ring production. With the huge snakes, my family and a new addition to the troupe, a sensational Indian performer named Kunchy Kannan, we left Asia and returned to Europe in 1931, to work with the Kludsky Circus in Czechoslovakia. The following year I had arranged a booking for our company with the most famous circus of all - Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey. Many rehearsals went into perfecting the extravagant two-part production that would launch our American performances with "The Greatest Show on Earth." First, there was an Indian production with pythons, including the twenty-five-foot monster Satana, then straight into the bounding rope act¹ of Kunchy Kannan, followed by the Canestrelli's three-high, unsupported ladder act. But before all that could happen, my first task was to get the snake to New York.

We booked to travel on board a vessel out of Genoa called the Conte Grande, but the ship's company office immediately refused permission to take Satana aboard when I declared that we had such a reptile in our act. Under no conditions, they said, could a snake be allowed on board, especially one as large as this.

I went out and bought an extra-large suitcase - three feet long by eighteen inches wide, and twelve inches high. I punched a few holes in it and placed Satana inside; he just barely fit. When I brought the case to the harbor to be put on board the ship, a porter grabbed it from me in an effort to be helpful, but he could not lift it from the pavement.

"What the hell do you have in here?" he asked, shaking his head. He was even more bewildered when I lifted the case with one hand and carried it up the ship's ramp to our cabin. This cabin was only for my family, so after we left Genoa, I took Satana out every day for about an hour to let him get some air.

¹ A bounding rope act is similar to a wire walking act, but instead of a cable it has a rope tied to springs, which enables the artist to bounce and turn somersaults. It was also known as a funambulist.

A couple of days before we arrived in New York, a porter came into the cabin while the snake was crawling around out of the suitcase. After he recovered from his shock, he shared this irresistible news with his fellow porters. Finally, the ship's captain found out about it.

When the captain asked me about the snake, I told him that we were circus performers booked with the Ringling Circus in New York and the snake was an indispensable part of the act. To my surprise, he was not angry. Instead, he asked me to do a performance with the snake in the first-class theatre so that the passengers could see the suddenly well-accepted Satana. I was more than happy to do this, and as a result, all the newspapers knew about the snake and our act when we arrived in New York. It was my first trip to the city I have loved ever since.

Upon our arrival, a representative from the Ringling Circus came to the Conte Grande docking area to guide us through immigration. Afterward, he escorted us to Madison Square Garden,² where the circus had already begun its performances. After viewing the performance space, we moved into an apartment right across the street and rested from our long journey. We had a few bad days at sea, which was why we were not present for the circus' opening night.

The day before our opening performance, I met with Mr. Pat Valdo, artistic director of the Ringling Circus, to discuss production details. In our meeting, we had decided that the young Hindu performer known as Kunchy Kannan was to be renamed Bombayo. The circus had already been advertising him in the papers as, The Man from India – The New Sensation, but they wanted something a little catchier.

Bombayo was terrific on the bounding rope, executing forward and backward somersaults with a double revolution. He was a sensation in the circus world at that time.

As an introduction to Bombayo's performance, I had arranged a spectacular production for our opening at the Garden. Even though Pat Valdo altered and reduced my original design, it was impressive nevertheless.

First, there was a fanfare from Merle Evan's famous Circus Band, during which Oriental dancing girls (actually my wife, her two sisters, and my young daughter, Tosca) appeared along with four men in colorful East Indian

² At that time, Madison Square Garden was located on Eighth Avenue between Forty- Ninth and Fiftieth Streets.

pantaloons. Then as the dancers stood in the center ring with their arms folded, the band began to play a Hindustan tune, which was the signal for my entrance. I stepped forth dressed as an East Indian, turbaned and bare down to the waist with the great snake writhing over my shoulders, its body wriggling



(Top) Clipping from the New York Daily News of the Canestrelli Troupe's arrival on April 12, 1932. (Bottom) Family on board the Conte Grande.⁴

and twisting as it trailed behind on the floor. During the entrance, I held his head up high, and after reaching the center, I gathered him altogether and placed him on the floor in front of me. Then he began to coil and slowly rise,

sometimes to a height of six feet while bobbing and weaving in a pattern that matched the rhythm of the music. When he dropped back to the ground, I grabbed him with both hands, holding him high, swing his tail around, and walk off, setting the mood for Bombayo's act. That was my plan for our opening show, but how it worked out was drastically different.

The day had finally arrived for our American premiere - April 14, 1932. We were all set to begin our matinee performance, so around one o'clock, I went to check on the snake. He was grayish in color and just starting to shed his skin. I knew that Satana was a potential killer and had, therefore, devised a muzzle of strong snakeskin to hold its jaws tight during the act. This muzzle was invisible to the audience. But, since he was docile and not very dangerous when shedding, I decided against using it. Our performance was about two hours away, so I didn't anticipate any change to occur in that time.

Exactly at three o'clock the introduction music for the act began. I opened the box, and there before me was the huge brute, it's old skin completely off, eyes wide open, and hissing in an ugly manner because now he was hungry.

"Papa, please put the muzzle. He bite you." I heard my wife say in broken English. But I had not brought it from the dressing room, having already decided to leave his mouth untied. So I grabbed the huge python by his neck in a firm grip, lifted it out of the trunk and headed for the arena entrance.

"No time to muzzle now, Mama," I said, "He no bite, I hold him tight."

The announcement of my act began: "Ladies and gentlemen, for the first time in America, Ottavio Canestrelli, with his twenty-five-foot-long, bone-crushing monster Satana, the first python killer snake ever to be exhibited in the center ring of any circus and Bombayo, The Man from India."

The music cue began, and my wife was swept inside with the dancing girls. The dancers paused and styled as I walked boldly to the center of the ring with my hands around the neck of Satana. The rest of him was wrapped around my shoulders and dragging behind me on the floor. Later, my wife told me that the snake looked marvelous as I entered the ring.

As I stepped into the spotlights, the gargantuan suddenly flipped his tail with terrific force, at the same time wiggling its head free of my grip. With furious strength, he pushed himself up through my hands, and when he was about three feet above me, he opened his mouth and lunged, sinking his fangs into the muscles of my arm near the shoulder. It felt as though a bolt of lightning had struck me. The jaws interlocked around my arm, and instinct

caused the monster to wind its scaly form around my body. Pythons kill by constriction, and Satana was a monstrous bone-crusher.

I widened my stance and tried to be as still as possible because any movement would cause the python to tighten his constriction. Had I fallen to the ground the python would have crushed me instantly.

The massive audience in Madison Square Garden was suddenly nailed to their seats in terror. For a few moments, no one moved, then about twenty male performers and ring boys came to help. By this time, I had grabbed the snake's neck with my free hand and was bending down to put it across my knee.

The people who came to help grabbed the snake so that he would not be able to wrap himself around me altogether. Among those who offered to help was Alfredo Codona, the famous trapeze artist of that era. He tried to pry open the mouth, but his hands were cut by the fangs.

By now I was sweating and bleeding profusely. Codona asked me, "What can I do?" I told him to hold the neck steady, because every time the snake moved, his razor-sharp teeth cut more deeply into my skin. The hungry serpent had the whole width of my arm in his mouth, and he was holding on like a vise. I stood there, eyes bulging, sweat pouring out of my head, blood streaming down my arm, unable to move, and yet my mind was cool. I knew that the only way to get my arm out of the snake's mouth was to force it open.

My brother and I tried to open the mouth from opposite sides, but our fingers were also being cut and without progress in breaking the grip. Meanwhile, someone had given my wife and her sister a large pair of pliers, and they were applying them to the reptile's tail in an effort to make him open his mouth and loosen his grip.

As a last desperate move, I decided to break out the teeth of the snake. I called for a screwdriver, and when it came, I started to break out the teeth, one by one, on my side of the head, my brother doing the same on the other.

After his teeth were removed, my brother and I forced our hands into the snake's mouth. Together, using terrific strength, we were finally able to open it. When I got my arm out, someone gave me a piece of wood to put into Satana's mouth, which he immediately clamped down upon.

I then took the snake by the neck and carried him over my head and out of the ring, just as I had brought him in, except that now blood was streaming down my body from the injury.

After I had put the snake back in its box, I went to see the circus doctor, whose office was in the same building. When I saw him, he asked what he should do, because he knew nothing about pythons. Since I had been bitten many times by snakes in India, I told him to give me some sublimate water, and with cotton, we made a compress. Together, we applied this solution to draw out the germs. Because pythons are not poisonous, I was all right in a couple of days. The following day I was even performing in the unsupported ladder act with a bandage on my arm. However, the injured part of my arm was black and blue for weeks.

I continued to use the snake in the act for several more weeks. However, upon examining Satana after the accident, I noticed that the snake's tail was not moving. The pliers that my wife and her sister had used to try to release the snake's griphad caused severe nerve damage. Satana was slowly becoming paralyzed from the tip of his tail to the middle of his body. The damage was irreversible, and much to my dismay, Satana died weeks later when the show was playing in Washington, DC.

Such was my unforgettable association and struggle with the snake named Satana.



(NEWS photo)

SNAKE ATTACKS MASTER.—This 23-foot python, being held by Octavio Canestrelli, freed its head at circus performance at Madison Square Garden yesterday and sank its fangs into Canestrelli's forearm. Snake's jaws were pried loose.—*Story p. 51.*



(Left) April 15, 1932, clipping from the New York Daily News about the attack.

(Right) Ottavio & Genoveffa Canestrelli circa 1931.⁵

The Old Country

THE story of the Canestrelli family actually begins in the 19th century in a small orphanage next to the Church of All Saints in Padua, Italy. At the time, the orphanage employed a foundling wheel, which is also known as a baby hatch, or as it is called in Italy “culle per la vita” (cradle for life). The device was a window with a revolving crib where parents could leave their unwanted babies anonymously. The first foundling wheel is believed to have started in Marseille, France, in 1188. A decade later, Pope Innocent III had Italy’s first foundling wheel installed at the Hospital of Santo Spirito near the Vatican because he was shocked at the number of dead babies that had been found in the Tiber River. He decreed that these devices were to be immediately installed and used in homes for foundlings. The revolving cribs gained popularity and were commonly used throughout Europe during Medieval times until the late 19th century. Within the last decade, the foundling wheel has been revived and updated with heated cribs in many countries around the world, including Italy, where parents can deposit their newborn babies, such as the one at the Casilino Hospital in Rome.

The wheel described in the following story was decommissioned in 1888, and a century later underwent restoration for a commemorative centennial ceremony in 1988. The orphanage is now the site of a university, with the attached wheel as a Padua Landmark. But I’ll let my grandfather tell the story, because just as I, Ottavio write about my grandfather Ottavio, so, in turn, did he write of his grandfather Ottavio.

About the Authors



Ottavio Canestrelli was born on June 10, 1896, in a caravan on the back lot of his father's circus in Italy. He was a decorated World War I veteran, impresario, and multi-talented showman who performed throughout the world.



Ottavio Gesmundo, Ottavio Canestrelli's grandson, hails from more than six generations of Italian circus performers. He is a Director, Choreographer, and Stunt Coordinator, who has performed on numerous television specials, Broadway, and in over twenty-five productions in Las Vegas. Currently, Ottavio travels the globe performing death-defying crossbow stunts with his wife, Naomi, as **MR. & MRS. G**. Gesmundo lives in Las Vegas, Nevada.

What do Adolf Hitler, Mahatma Gandhi, and Ed Sullivan have in common? Ottavio Canestrelli crossed paths with each. He performed with the Krone Circus in Italy and Germany from 1922 to 1924 on the eve of Hitler's rise to power; he witnessed a rally for Mahatma Gandhi in India in 1931; and he appeared twice on the Ed Sullivan Show during the 1960s.

In *The Grand Gypsy*, Canestrelli, with his grandson, Ottavio Gesmundo, tells the story of a man who witnessed historical events as he toured with his family through five continents and countless nations, including experiences fighting in World War I and the excavation of the Sphinx in Egypt. It shares memories of life in the circus, filled with daring feats and tragic mishaps.

With over one hundred and seventy historical photographs included, this memoir chronicles a circus dynasty from the late nineteenth-century in Europe to the new millennium in the United States.

Ottavio Canestrelli was born in 1896 on his father's circus caravan in Italy. He was a World War I veteran, impresario, and multi-talented showman who performed throughout the world.

Ottavio Gesmundo, Ottavio Canestrelli's grandson, hails from more than six generations of Italian circus performers. He is a director, choreographer, and stunt coordinator who performs crossbow stunts with his wife, Naomi. Gesmundo lives in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Lulu.com

™ Cover image by Ottavio Canestrelli

ISBN 978-1-4834-4894-7



9 781483 448947