

ALL WRAPPED UP IN THE CIRCUS

BGSU freshman masters tricks that fulfilled his Big Top dreams

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BOWLING GREEN - Not many students come to college with a resume of skills like Logan Jacot. The 19-year-old freshman at Bowling Green State University can twist himself to fit inside a microwave oven. He can hammer a nail into his nose. He can walk on broken glass.

Don't believe him? Check his references. There's Firefly, the "World's Smallest Woman"; Poobah, a fire-eating Munchkin who supposedly appeared in *The Wizard of Oz*, and a man billed as "The Living Torso." They'll vouch for him.

A lot of kids dream of running away with the circus, and their numbers probably will grow when the Zenobia Shrine Circus comes to town Thursday, but Mr. Jacot actually did it.

His interest began innocently enough five years ago when he saw a performance by Cirque du Soleil on television, followed by visits to a few circuses that passed through his hometown of New Philadelphia, Ohio. As a gay teen of Latino heritage in a small town, he saw the circus as an escape of sorts, an accepting place built on the notion of being different.

"I realized that the circus was my calling right then and there," Mr. Jacot said.

VIDEO

[Logan Jacot performs his fire-eating, contortionist, and "human blockhead" acts](#)

All he needed was an act. First came the gymnastics lessons that he hoped would transform him into an acrobat, but he faltered on the landings. Then he tried to become a contortionist with the help of a Swedish handbook. That wasn't so easy either.

"I couldn't even touch my toes," he said.

So the teenager began stretching for four hours every night while watching television. After six months, he still hadn't noticed much progress. Then suddenly things clicked. He was able to do one trick, then another, and another.

Mr. Jacot said his parents weren't quite sure what to make of all of this. He had been through phases before — wanting to be a veterinarian, a cook, a member of the Peace Corps — but nothing like this.

"All of a sudden their son wants to run off with the circus? It sort of threw them for a loop," he said.

But if Mr. Jacot is anything, it's determined, said his brother, Michael Erdos.

"If he wants something, he's going to do it," he said.

Mr. Jacot joined a small circus during the summer at the age of 15. Later, he convinced his parents to let him work on the road full-time, completing his high school course work by computer. His new life was too exciting to give up, even for a few months.

"In the morning, I'd wake up and hear tigers growling, and then I'd come back to New Philadelphia and hear the same old, everyday cars drive by," he said. "I miss waking up and moving to a new town every day."

It was more than just different towns. It was the different people he was surrounded by in the circus, as well as the sideshows and monkey races that he worked for in the years that followed.



Logan Jacot performs some of his circus tricks. (THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH)

"Circus people have different values than, as they say, townies do," Mr. Jacot explained. "There's not really racism or sexism or homophobia in the circus. They really look at what you can do [rather] than how you were born."

And Mr. Jacot can do a lot, according to April Goins, who was manager of World of Wonders sideshow when he worked there.

"As a performer, he would definitely push his body to the limit," she said. "He had just a wonderful sense of how to shock the audience."

One move he made up was called the Pony Boy, and it involved him bending all the way backward and then twisting his upper body 180 degrees so that his feet and head faced different directions as he walked around.

"He would go to grocery stores and do that just to get a little bit of attention and shock people," she said. "It looked so good that people thought he was actually handicapped and would try to help him."

Any normal person might cringe at this point. Or pass out. But the bushy-haired Mr. Jacot, who still stretches about an hour a day, simply smiles, then prepares for his next trick, putting one foot behind his head while standing on the other.

He also learned to play with fire, using his mouth to extinguish wands lit with campfire fuel or other flammables. Even though he's a veteran at the art, the wind can still make things tricky, and there's always the danger of catching his hair on fire.

It's safe to say that Mr. Jacot can be a lot of fun at parties, but that's not why he took a break from the Big Top and came to BGSU. About a year ago, he was in a serious car accident that shattered his right leg, collapsed a lung, and limited his contortion act.

"It became clear to me that I may not have a career as a performer," he said.

He could still have his own show one day, though.

"If I go to college, I could learn to make special effects. I could learn to make costumes. I could learn to make a better show," he said. "That was my big push to go to college."

So now the theater and business major is working to create the next generation's greatest show on Earth, maybe even a circus for social change where proceeds would go to good causes. He's already started working on assembling his first troupe, to be called Circus Vera, mostly from other students on campus.

One of them is his roommate, Brett Strauss, whom Mr. Jacot is teaching to tie razor blades together with a string in his mouth. (They're at two razors right now, but hope to get up to seven eventually.)

"He's like a big kid," Mr. Strauss said. "He just has this childlike wonder in him. It's infectious."

Which could explain why Mr. Jacot is so optimistic. Already he's scheduled to perform March 24 before a screening of the movie *Freaks* at BGSU's Dorothy and Lillian Gish Film Theater, and he's setting up circus performances beginning in late April.

In the meantime, Mr. Jacot continues to look for good talent. Or maybe it's the other way around.

"People tend to find me," he said.

After all, a guy who can bend back so far that his face touches his foot is pretty easy to spot.

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