

Dr Alain Frere's Circus Museum

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Ever since I was 4 years old, I've had a passion for the circus, but at that time there were no circus schools and so I was never able to make my dream of becoming a circus performer come true.

I was equally passionate about medicine, and after completing my studies at the University of Marseille, I did my internship at the Princesse Grace Hospital in Monaco for two years.

I established my practice as a General Practitioner in 1967 in the town of Tourette-Levens, near Nice.

In 1983, I became Mayor of my town of Tourette-Levens, with its population of approximately 5000 inhabitants. Later, I became Vice President responsible for culture for the departmental council of the Alpes-Maritimes (government of the Cote d'Azur) and Vice President in charge of culture for the great city of Nice.

In 1980, I worked with Minister Jean-Philippe Lecat to gain recognition for circus as a cultural performance.

What I was unable to do myself, I managed to achieve for the children of Tourette-Levens, by building a circus school which is used by 80 children, thanks to the efforts of a former aerial acrobat, Corinne Edon.

Since childhood, I have collected all manner of paraphernalia and documents relating to circus, especially programmes, flyers, postcards; in addition to visiting all the circuses which passed through Nice.

However, it was during my tenure as a General Practitioner that I invested in the acquisition of paraphernalia for my private museum, which is located in a 180 m² space in the basement of my villa.

I also received numerous donations over the years, as I was the personal physician to Jerome and Violette Medrano, to the Bouglione family, the Gruss family, and the great animal tamer Alfred Court.

Having established the Festival du Cirque de Monte-Carlo alongside Prince Rainier III, I became acquainted with all the great circus families and numerous performers who gifted me their costumes.

Currently, I possess about 200 costumes of which 154 are exhibited in my museum: among them are the costumes of Yuri Nikulin given to me by his wife; the tamer Pavlenko; the Zapashny brothers; Gia Eradze; and also David Larible...

My museum also boasts the costumes of the great clown Grock and the Fratellini brothers.

It is a true sanctuary for the circus!

The most ancient object in my collection is a Chinese sculpture depicting an acrobat which dates back 2000 years.

I also loan costumes, posters and china to the Vatan Circus Museum.

I regularly lend my collection on **Buffalo-Bill**: this year, it was featured in the museum of Villeneuve-Loubet near Nice.

Every year, I contribute an exhibition on the theme of circus in the cultural centre of my town of Tourette-Levens. After Clowns, Toulouse Lautrec and the circus, the next exhibition will focus on the documents of my collection: “Art puts on a circus”, featuring paintings, programmes, posters, circus-themed plates dating from the 19th century, and sculptures by renowned artists...

I have the enormous pleasure of gifting to the delightful curator of the Circus Museum of Saint Petersburg, Mrs Catherine Shaina, a photograph of a unique poster: the arrival of the Frenchman Touriaire in Moscow, written in French and Russian, c. 1820.

My museum is private and is only visited by performers, directors, friends of the circus and, of course, free of charge.

My website museeducirqueralainfrere.com receives 120,000 visitors per year, a number which is steadily on the rise.

It is with great joy that I will soon be visiting the Circus Museum of Saint Petersburg.