

# Thank You for 40 Years of Enjoying the Fair Industry

**MY FATHER STARTED OUT** as a magician, travelling all over North America in the early 20's. He became involved with Paddy Conklin of the Conklin & Garret Shows and the Garden Brothers Circus. Returning to Canada, he put on a high dive act and girly shows at the CNE and then moved on to become a booking agent.

Alex, my brother, and I grew up on our parent's children's camp "The Little Buckaroo Ranch" in Oshawa, Ontario during the 40's, 50's & 60's. We were allowed to have any type of animal we wanted.

As we grew up, we went off to Rodeos all over Canada during the late 60's & early 70's. My wife Jennifer came into the picture at a rodeo in 1968. She soon left her modeling career and our menagerie started, as she wanted to save every goat, lamb, or animal of any description from the local sales barns. She hasn't changed to this day!

We married in October 1970 when she decided to share my dream of going into show business. We realized that there were lots of children who had never petted or fed a farm animal. The KenJen petting zoo changed things from "the Ol' McDonalds" style display to letting everyone into the pen to have the fun of full contact with the animals and birds. We still do that today.

To launch the zoo, we attended the Ontario Fairs and Showmen's League Convention in February 1973. We went totally unprepared for what lay ahead of us. No brochures, no booth, no hotel room and most of all NO EXPERIENCE at trade shows.

Harold Fagen, who sold novelties at a local sales barn, took Jenny and me under his wing by getting us tickets to the President's Ball and helping us print up flyers on an old hand crank copier in his room. We didn't sit with him, but sat with Mr. South from the Brigden Fair. It turned out that not all his delegates came, so he gave us a room. The rest is

history, as we signed the CNE for that summer and most years since. Welland fair and Belleville fair also signed us that year and many other Ontario fairs followed over the years. Returning to Belleville for pig racing in 2011 and 2012 plus Welland in 2012 for pig racing and the petting zoo has been a treat.

In 1974, while at the same convention for the Ontario Fairs, a gentleman by the name of Jack Sirrs, from the Calgary Stampede was in the adjoining room promoting the Grey Cup for Calgary. He told us about C.A.F.E., so off I went to that convention in Calgary. That was the best move we ever made. We learned a great deal from those men and others along the way. Now we try to do the same by taking newcomers under our wing and teaching them the ropes – even though some go on to become our stiffest competition. But this is good for the industry.





Some of the fairs, knowing of our love for pigs, asked again and again about the possibility of pig racing, so we started on another adventure. Thinking up BOARing jokes, colourful costumes, including some of our other animals, and finding ways to get the participation of fair boards and the audience has given us a new road to follow.

We have become outstanding in our field.

Along the way we have also used our animals in movies, TV shows and commercials.

Blah, Blah, Blah!

Brandy, our daughter, is following in the animal business. You may remember her from the C.A.F.E. conventions selling 50/50 tickets. She also played in and choreographed the pig races. Currently working at the Calgary Zoo, she is now putting her talents to work to use with their new Penguin display. If you are lucky, you may get a behind the scenes tour like Paul Brandt and his family.

Looking forward to working for another exciting year of 2013. See you down the road!



By Ken Lasalle

Owner and Operator of Ken Jen Animal Stars and Celebrity Pig Races



Julius Serr