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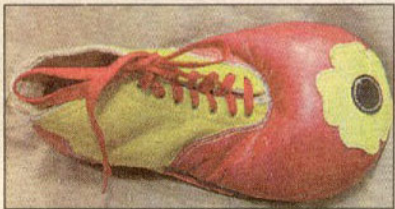
TAMPA

TRIBUNE

THREE PAGES OF NEWS TWENTY-FIVE CENTS

A BUREAU MEMBER

FLORIDA EDITION



## Sole mates are clowns at heart

It's feet first for Wayne and Marty Scott, who make funny footwear for Ringling Bros. Circus.

**FRIDAY EXTRA-18**



FRIDAY, JAN. 5, 2001

THE TAMPA TRIBUNE

# FRIDAY

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TAMPA BAY  
TIMES



A Central Florida couple gives circus clowns happy feet. **PAGE 18**

# BIG SHOES TO FILL



It's feet first for a couple that makes clown shoes for Ringling Bros. Circus.

# SILLY SOLES

By Jennifer Barrs

HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS

**W**ayne and Marty Scott have a few words of wisdom for the cynical or the snide, the dogged or the downtrodden.

Walk a mile in my shoes.

"Everybody in the whole world should have the chance to be in the circus for a year," says Wayne, 71, standing tall in a pair of checkerboard wingtips. "If you do, you will never run down your fellow man. You will realize that if he doesn't agree with you, that's OK. You will learn to live and let live."

It sure seems to make sense up here in Howey-in-the-Hills, on a breathtaking patch of slightly high ground the Scotts call home. The air seems fresher, the sky seems brighter – on a clear evening, Wayne and Marty can see the fireworks explode over Walt Disney World. It's a fact that the Scotts are also surrounded by a sea of swollen leather wingtips and pointed toes seems, well, a perfect fit.

That's because they make shoes for clowns.

They also make shoes for opera companies, television shows and feature films. They once made a pair of clown shoes for Johnny Cash. They often make boots for members of Gasparilla krewes.

And by mid-December, they had finished about 50 pairs of clown footwear for folks in the latest edition of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

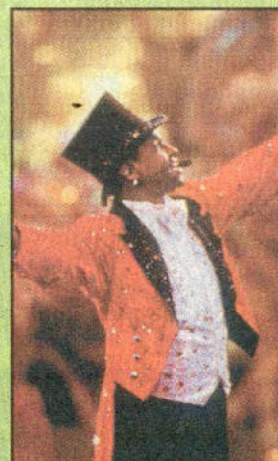
The Scotts, who own and operate Clown Shoes & Props Inc., are among the world's few custom cobblers, making 250 to 300 pairs of clown shoes a year. Typically, they're ordered by circus performers and magicians who need to exude excitement literally down to their toes.

"They need shoes that are bigger than life because their costume – and often their persona – is supposed to be bigger than life," says Marty, 66. "It ties their head to their feet."

It also has secured a respected reputation for the Scotts, who began making shoes in the mid-1970s after their own brief bow under the big top.

The Scotts met at a roller rink on Davis Islands in the summer of 1953 – Wayne's family was on vacation from Michigan and Marty loved to skate when she wasn't working at the Sulphur Springs community pool. On their first date, they visited the sponge docks at Tarpon Springs. After a short hitch in the Navy, Wayne and Marty married.

They drove throughout the South on their honeymoon, and the pair fondly recalls seeing a circus being set up along the road. It was a so-called "mud" show – a small circus set up under a tent – and to this day, it remains their favorite entertainment.



## EVENT PREVIEW

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus

► **WHEN:** Tonight through Sunday in Tampa; Wednesday through Jan. 15 in St. Petersburg. Tampa show times are 7:30 p.m. today and Saturday, 3 p.m. Saturday, 2 and 6 p.m. Sunday. St. Petersburg show times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesday through Jan. 14, 11 a.m. Jan. 12-14, 3 p.m. Jan. 13-15

► **WHERE:** Ice Palace, 401 Channelside Drive, Tampa; Bayfront Center Arena, 400 First St. N., St. Petersburg

► **TICKETS:** \$11.75, \$14.75, \$18.75 and \$28; Ice Palace box office, (813) 301-2500; Bayfront Center Arena box office, (727) 892-5767; tickets also available through Ticketmaster outlets, (813) 287-8844, or at [www.ringling.com](http://www.ringling.com)

SCOTT ISKOWITZ/Tribune photos

In addition to funny footwear for clowns, Wayne and Marty Scott have made shoes for opera companies, television shows and feature films.





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Wayne worked hard and often,  
at jobs that showcased his handyman tal-  
ents. Marty says there was (and still is) very little  
Wayne couldn't fix: cars, furnaces, electrical systems. He  
ran a garage and a marina, drove a truck and repaired  
motors. When a fire destroyed the garage and marina in  
1960, Wayne tried construction, worked in the oil fields  
and began to develop "horrible ulcers." The dog-eat-dog,  
pinch-a-penny world didn't suit his sweet disposition, Marty  
says.

Maybe that's why, in 1968, someone gave him a copy of  
Amusement Business Magazine, which featured a tiny classified  
advertisement placed by Ringling Bros. It read simply: clowns wanted.  
Though he was 39 years old at the time, Wayne had spent years  
preparing for the role, from schmoozing as the company Santa to cutting  
up as the birthday clown. He put together a hobo bit and sent it in.  
Ultimately, Wayne was one of the first to graduate from Ringling's clown  
college in Venice.

Happily, Marty and their four children joined the circus. Wayne was a  
clown, yes, and Marty helped out with costumes. But Wayne also served  
as a night watchman, worked in prop repair and was one of Ringling's elec-  
tricians and mechanics.

**"It was wonderful ... one giant extended family,"** says Marty. "But the  
**kids** - four of them - didn't think they had to study."

Sadly, Wayne says, this situation forced the family to leave the circus  
**after only one year.** Wayne went to work for an air conditioner company in

Orlando and  
retired in 1992.

Still, the big top called.  
When the Shriners asked the  
Scotts to make a pair of shoes for its circus folk in the early 1970s, the  
Scotts happily jumped in - feet first.

They taught themselves how to make custom shoes, learning the dif-  
ferences between a vamp (the front portion of a shoe) and a quarter (the  
back portion). Now, it takes them about six hours to craft a single pair of  
all-leather sneakers or buckled-up Mary Janes, an exhaustive, round-robin  
ritual the Scotts perform in a tiny room on their property.

It begins with a carefully drawn outline of the person's foot. These  
measurements are transferred to a last, a wooden or plastic form of the  
foot, and then leather is cut, stretched and stuffed. Puffy toes are  
crammed with horsehair. Soles are sanded. Heels are nailed.

The Scotts demonstrate the process with a flourish, finishing each  
other's sentences, and giggling and teasing each other along the way -  
Marty says when Wayne has to custom-fit a pair of shoes for a **pretty girl**,  
he usually sends her on an errand.

"I think all of this is a release for us," says Marty with a grin, **though**  
lately she's frustrated by foot problems. Her right leg is confined inside a  
brace to immobilize an injured ankle. "That year in the circus made us  
easygoing. It made us realize that the important thing is  
being together."

It also has made the tougher jobs easier to tackle. One  
year, the Scotts had to make a pair of shoes with individual  
toes that curled up. Another time, they had to make a pair of  
size 24 shoes for Giant Gonzales, a character on Hulk  
Hogan's now defunct TV series, "Thunder in Paradise. And  
when producers of the movie "Eddie," starring Whoopi  
Goldberg, wanted fancy shoes for horses, well, they tried  
that, too.

"We even put them on our neighbors' horses," says  
Wayne, who laughs at their failed attempt at filly footwear.

Clowns and magicians consult the Scotts' catalog of  
styles, which start at around \$200 a pair. They also builds  
props and gags for their kooky clientele, and every year  
travel the country passing on their secrets to clowning with  
creativity.

"The circus really is for children of all ages," says  
Wayne. "Just look at us."



**It takes Wayne and Marty Scott about six hours to craft a single pair of all-leather sneakers or buckled-up Mary Janes.**

► Jennifer Barrs can be reached at [jbarrs@tampatrib.com](mailto:jbarrs@tampatrib.com)  
or (813) 259-7832. To order a pair of clown shoes, telephone  
(352) 324-3256.