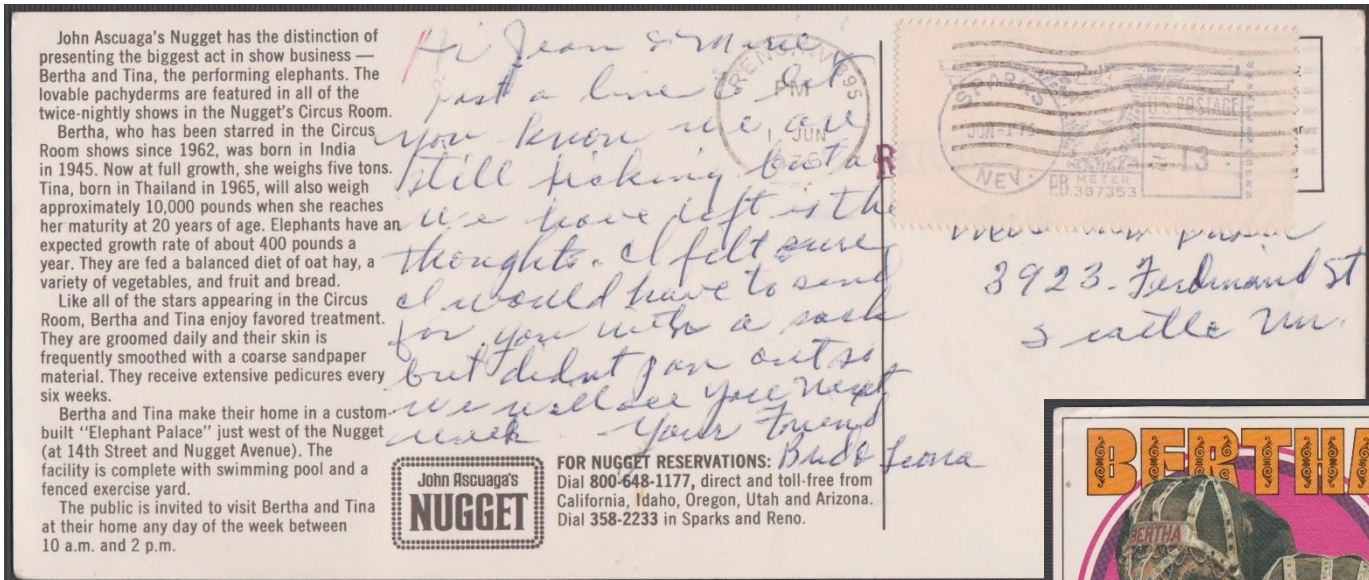


## Ladies and Gentlemen, Boys and Girls...

By Patrick Crosby

...now appearing twice-nightly in the Circus Room of John Ascuaga's Nugget in beautiful downtown Sparks, Nevada, are Bertha and Tina, the World's Most Talented Performing Elephants!

Did you get a chance to see Bertha solo or with Tina from the mid 1960's to the late 1990's? Besides performing in the Circus Room they were regulars in the annual Nevada Day parade in Carson City. According to the featured postcard anyone could visit them daily from 10am to 2pm at their home on Nugget Ave.



Besides the local history, this advertising postcard has some interesting postal history with its postage meter label and its unusual size. Postage meter labels are not typically found on postcards. Notice the violet "R" touching the left edge of the label. Holding the card to a light "Returned for Postage" is easily read.

Let me give an optimistic possibility of what occurred. Bud and Leona were enjoying themselves so much they didn't even think about putting postage on their complimentary postcard at the front desk. They just dropped it in the hotel mail slot. The post office caught the not infrequent error and applied an ancillary postal marking. ("Ancillary" is a more accurate term than "auxiliary" and implies the delivery delay is the sender's fault.)

The post office returned the card to the hotel front desk and the hotel, as a courtesy, placed 13¢ postage meter label from their Pitney Bowes Postage Meter Co. machine, the label covering the ancillary marking. The label reads Sparks, NV, but the card was postmarked in Reno, both dated June 1, 1976. The ink used on the label glows bright orange under UV light so it could be processed in the automatic facing and canceling machines at the post office. The perforated label also has a repetitive security design watermark.

At 8¼ inches long the card exceeds the then 6 inches allowed for the 9¢ postcard rate, so 13¢ letter rate postage was required. The hotel employees were familiar with this requirement on their postcard.

So, as I see it, Bud and Leona got a free night's stay, ate at the \$2 buffet, enjoyed complimentary drinks, won big at the tables, then sent a free postcard for free. I feel I got a good deal also, recently paying \$1.30 for this free postcard.

**Patrick Crosby** is a member of the Nevada Stamp Study Society and collects U.S. postal cards, especially used, including first days; the 1886 Grant Letter Card (or Sheet); UC16, the first U.S. aerogram; and postal history on business or picture post cards.

