One day, while I was taking an afternoon jog from my house on Capitol Hill, I saw that my costume-making neighbor Ms. Cobus was having a yard sale. A local collective called Street Legal Theater was looking for bargains, and Amber Merriweather was improvising a traffic-stopping fashion show as she mixed and matched outfits from Cobus’ racks and boxes. She was still going at it when I returned from my run - her combination of furry pillbox hat and polka-dotted coat was particularly hilarious, and I immediately drew some sketches so I wouldn’t forget.

We met again at Club Axis, where she tended bar, (see Angela Brown's photo above, autographed by Amber,) and I gave her one of my drawings. Street Legal Theater did outrageous animations throughout the city. Fire, stilts, satire, and sexual taboos were the company's stock in trade, and Amber was the Hoop Queen. They eagerly worked towards their annual performance at Burning Man in September.

Because of them, I saw some amazing events, including a performance by New York's Bindlestiff Family Cirkus, enroute to the East Coast after appearing at Burning Man in Nevada during 1999. Besides musician Sxip Shirley and stuntman Rocket Johnny, the Bindlestiffs also went through the heavy labor of bringing a BOOKSTORE on their journey. A sword-dancer named Princess oversaw sales while Cirkus madness ensued onstage. Stephanie (Ringmistress Philomena) Monseu and Keith (Kinko & Pennygaff) Nelson spit fire, cracked whips, threw knives, did magic, juggled, and spun plates in certain ways that I never expected to see!

I spoke with them afterward and learned that Hovey Burgess was on their Board of Directors. We have stayed in touch for over twenty years. They are exemplars of true foolery, and their mission is: Keeping the Variety Arts Alive! They sponsored monthly shows at Dixon Place in NYC for many years. I met a lady at one of Katie's performances in Amsterdam during 2012, who was actually at one of those gigs earlier that same year, as one of the Good to Go Girls, miming an Esther Williams-style aquacade with their faces in separate bowls of water, instead of swimming in a pool.

The Bindlestiffs also produced a weekly variety gala via Internet during the Covid 19 pandemic that helped dozens of performers pay their rent every month, and treated the world to Hovey Burgess' scholarship about Circus History. When Salt Lake City attempted an outdoor Buskers Fest on Main Street in the summer of 2021, I was taking photos and writing about it for the West View newspaper, and many invited performers were well-acquainted with Keith and Stephanie!