

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

History: A mystery at the 1937 Desert Circus parade

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“Howda do! Guess who?” read the large banner depicting the pyramids and sphinx draped over the side of a full-grown elephant walking down Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs in 1937. Atop the pachyderm rode a mysterious figure in exotic costume.

It wasn't too hard to guess who would have the imagination and wherewithal to find elephants to parade through the middle of town.

The newspaper article the following day revealed all: “Mrs. Nellie N. Coffman, founder of The Desert Inn, has been awarded the grand sweepstakes cup for best entry in the Desert Circus parade for the third time, and now the cup is hers to keep. She won the cup in the parades of the first and second Desert Circus, two and three years ago. Last year the Carnell building was the winner, but this year Mrs. Coffman won it for the third time and consequently no one can take it away from her. Mrs. Coffman entered the elephants in the parade, and she was the veiled and turbaned lady who rode in the howdah on the huge beast that headed the parade.”

Thanks for reading. “Thanks for the Memories” will be abbreviated for the next few weeks with the regular column returning on June 18.

Nellie N. Coffman in the 1937 Desert Circus parade. PROVIDED BY THE PALM SPRINGS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

