

Tuesday, June 18, 2002

Elephant heads downtown, as people scatter

MENOMONIE, Wis. (AP) - An elephant bowed out early from a circus performance and headed down Main Street, walking about two miles through the city before being corralled.

"All of a sudden the elephant doing a performance went over the ring and right through the center ring," said Shirley Kistner of Menomonie who was attending the circus Monday afternoon with her 6-year-old granddaughter, Kaitlyn.

"People in the stands and everybody kind of scattered, and out the door it went."

After the 6-year-old elephant named Mary broke loose at the Dunn County Recreation Park, the fire department responded with lights and sirens, prompting Mary and another elephant, 21-year-old Tory, to begin running in opposite directions, officials said.

Tory was quickly recaptured, but Mary continued into the business district of Menomonie, a western Wisconsin city of 14,000, and onto the University of Wisconsin-Stout campus until authorities managed to block its way, Police Chief Dennis Beety said.

"People were just dumbfounded," firefighter Tim Koleski said. "It was amazing."

Elephant trainer Billy Morris used Tory to calm Mary, her daughter,

and got both elephants loaded onto a semitrailer truck to take them back to the circus.

One child was treated for a slight scrape, the only injury reported.

A door at the park was damaged, as was a city water truck that was used to block the elephants. One elephant backed into the truck, causing about \$600 damage, police reports said.