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**THE LATE DAVID MERRIFIELD: HELICOPTER TRAPEZE ARTIST
COMMEMORATED IN THE BIG E'S CIRCUS WALK OF FAME**

The late David Merrifield was known by many as “The Flying Merrifield” and “The Space Age Super Sensation” for his helicopter trapeze act. This year, he will be memorialized with a star on The Big E’s Circus Walk of Fame. The ceremony is open to the public and will take place in The Big Top Tent on Sunday, September 15, at 3:30pm, prior to the Circus Spectacular performance at 4pm.

The Circus Walk of Fame was established in 1992 to commemorate those that have left their mark on The Big E as entertainers and impresarios. The walkway can be found inside Gate 7 on the Eastern States Exposition grounds, leading up to the Big Top Tent.

At the age of 11, Merrifield hung a homemade trapeze from a tree in the backyard of his family home in Summit, New Jersey. Merrifield’s part-time passion was revolutionized when he, at 17 years old, persuaded a helicopter pilot to enhance his act.

Throughout the 37 years that he toured globally, Merrifield was the only successful helicopter trapeze act to pay no heed to safety wires and harnesses. He became the highest paid novelty act of all time.

Merrifield’s harrowing performance took aerial acrobatics to new heights—100-400 feet, to be exact, thanks to a Bell-47-G2 open-cockpit helicopter—and found favor with the public. He was featured on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, panel game shows such as *What’s My Line* and *To Tell the Truth*, and opened for international shows for Johnny Carson, Phil Collins, Liberace and Evel Knievel. Merrifield also piqued NASA’s interest, as the organization requested to use him to study the effects of gravity on the human body.

One of Merrifield’s earliest shows took place at The Big E in 1964. “This was an act he remembered fondly,” shared Merrifield’s spouse, Howard Cowdrick, of Bradenton, Florida. John Juliano Jr., former director of Special Events for Eastern States Exposition, first met Merrifield at an industry conference in the late 1980s. “I have tremendous admiration for Dave Merrifield, both as a personal mentor and performer,” Juliano said.

When Merrifield retired from his trapeze act, he and Cowdrick began “Sho Pros,” a stage management and production coordination company. Sho Pros partnered with many names in the entertainment industry during their more than 25 years of business, including Eastern States Exposition, for more than two decades beginning in 1990.

“Dave’s courage and skill were unmatched,” Juliano continued. “He had an unwavering dedication to his craft and his showmanship left an indelible mark on the entertainment industry.”

Juliano now runs Mellowship Entertainment and continues to manage the Special Events and Entertainment department at The Big E. The coordination of the Circus Walk of Fame induction for Merrifield falls under Juliano’s team’s purview.

Merrifield passed away in Sarasota, Florida, at 81 years old on July 18, 2018. His place on The Big E’s Circus Walk of Fame will serve as a token of appreciation for his commitment to ESE and a memorial for a gentleman that is remembered for his humility as much as his doughty performances.

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The Big E, brought to you by Eastern States Exposition, takes place September 13-29 in West Springfield, Mass. The Big E is the seventh largest fair in North America and is recognized as the largest event on the East Coast by attendance numbers. Advance discount tickets are now available at TheBigE.com and select Rocky’s Ace Hardware locations. Visit the website for a full schedule of events and check out the fairtime excitement on social media!