



Passing It On

Warren Adams Bacon IV

June 17, 1947 - August 22, 2025

If you believe the reason we are on this planet is to make a positive change, then Warren Adams Bacon IV accomplished his purpose!

Warren was born in Gallion, Alabama to Julia Abernathy Bacon and Warren Adams Bacon III. He grew up working on his family's dairy farm. After graduating from Auburn University, he went to Florida State University to get a Masters Degree in Molecular Biophysics. And that is where his life took an unusual turn: Warren joined the circus. This single choice cascaded to positively and immensely impact the lives of numerous other people.

His sister, Frances Jo Pickron, remembers that Warren used to swing from ropes in the hay barn at home and even made a makeshift trapeze. When Frances Jo was little, she couldn't pronounce his name so she called him "Bubber." He never liked it. And most people in Gallion actually thought it was "Bubba." Once he left Gallion, he left that name behind him.

At Auburn University, he studied zoology, genetics, and paleontology. Warren's tumbling skills got him the job of Aubie, the football mascot. He went on to graduate school at Florida State University where, while studying molecular and marine biology, he joined their Flying High Circus. Warren's gymnastic skills translated quite well into circus. Warren did the teeterboard act where he was the first – and so far only person – to do a full twisting somersault from board to board. He performed pyramids on the high wire, learned to juggle, and did other acts like Russian bar. While there, he also learned a lot about rigging. But Warren fell most in love with flying trapeze doing tricks like one and half and double layout somersaults. His trapeze teacher was the legendary flyer, Fay Alexander. When Warren asked Mr. Alexander how he could repay him for the teaching, Fay answered, "Pass it on!"

Warren got his Masters in Molecular Biology, but did not go into science. He took his circus teacher's advice and, right after graduating, Warren went to start a Circus Arts program at the State University of

New York, Purchase. Tumbling, trapeze, trampoline, and juggling were just some of the skills he taught. One of his students was a young woman named Jessica Hentoff. She also fell in love with the circus and went to work on one for the summer. When she came back, she told Warren, "This is what I want to do with my life. How can I repay you?" Warren replied, "I'll tell you what my teacher told me: 'Pass it on!'"

Warren left teaching at Purchase to go on the road with the Flying Lanes as a trapeze flyer and a Russian bar base. For a short time, he worked at Circus World, a circus theme park in Orlando. There, he was part of the Be A Star Circus where, in addition to performing flying trapeze, he helped audience members try it out.

Jessica reached out to him at the start of the Big Apple Circus in New York City and Warren, along with Jessica, became founding members on this show which represented a renaissance of circus in America. There they performed an aerial perch act under the name of Duo Gandoff, including in a 1978 appearance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. It was also with Big Apple Circus that Warren coached a group of children from Harlem named the Back Street Flyers. This troupe became the inspiration for Circus Harmony's St. Louis Arches.

Warren was then recruited to be a human cannonball for the Coronas Aerial Thrill Circus. They called him the Great Adamo! Jessica joined him and they did the perch act and a juggling act. In addition, Warren did a straight jacket escape, hanging upside down, suspended from a burning rope. Their partnership ended and Warren went on to work with the Royal Hanneford Circus for many years where he did a wide range of circus acts including bareback riding and working with the show's leopard and elephants.

In the mid-1990s, Warren directed Berkshire Circus Camp for two seasons in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Warren's lifelong love of rollercoasters led him to work for a time at Universal Studios Orlando before returning to Gallion to take care of his father, Warren Adams Bacon III, who suffered a stroke. Warren was occasionally visiting Circus Harmony and guest coaching before moving to St. Louis to accept a full time position. He taught all levels and all skills but focused on tumbling which he always said was the building block for all circus acts. Some of his major successes were teaching Elliana Grace the upside down loop walk and helping Sidney 'Iking' Bateman get his round-off double tuck somersault.

While at Circus Harmony, Warren trained and helped launch the professional circus careers Sidney 'Iking' Bateman, Terrance 'TRoc' Robinson, Kyran Walton, Chauncey Kroner, Finn McNamee, Claire Wallenda, Elliana, Keaton, and Kellin Hentoff-Killian among others. He also had a tremendously positive influence on students who went on to other careers but always remembered the life lessons he taught them in circus class. In 2012, he retired to his childhood home, but kept returning over the years to guest coach the next flocks of flying children.

Warren loved magic and often quoted magician Doug Henning who said, "The hard must become habit, the habit must become easy, the easy must become beautiful." Warren also built magic props and other equipment for Circus Harmony. When Circus Harmony launched a Flying Trapeze program, Warren came to help rig and teach it. In a very real way, first because of his influence on Jessica and then because of his direct teaching and mentoring, Circus Harmony would not exist nor have so many successful alumni, if not for Warren Bacon.

Warren could be curmudgeonly. And he was a bit of a perfectionist. But he was also incredibly encouraging. He is remembered as someone who would do anything to help anyone. Warren was generous with his knowledge, his time, his baking (if you never had his pound cake, you missed out), and his caring. Circus Harmony is a social circus— a circus school that uses circus to motivate social change by building character in individuals and bridges between communities. Many of the students came from less than ideal circumstances. For many, he was a father figure and the first dependable,

compassionate man in their lives. Warren was also helpful and inspirational to the other Circus Harmony teachers he worked with and trained.

In the words of Jessica Hentoff, his friend for over 50 years, "Warren changed more than just my life by showing me that circus was an option. Everyone who has attended a class or show either at Circus Harmony in St. Louis or by any Circus Harmony alumni anywhere in the world, needs to know that it was because of Warren and his love of circus and passion about passing it on, that they had that experience." In the words of one such alumni, Melvin Diggs, "Circus didn't change my life; it saved my life."

Warren Bacon was a great teacher, multifaceted performer, an excellent rigger, scuba diving enthusiast, roller coaster fan, baker, animal-lover, mentor, and friend. He will be missed by many. May his memory be a blessing.

Thank you to Anna Katherine Freeman, Jesi Mays, and Sharon Rembert from Southern Care New Beacon Hospice, Lisa King, Shawn Hall, Billy Traeger, and the wonderful people of Project Horseshoe Farms, for caring for and about Warren in recent years.

Both a graveside service in Gallion and an online memorial are being planned. To be notified and also to share memories and photos, please go to: www.circusharmony.org/warrenbacon

If you are moved to make a donation in his memory, please consider The Horseshoe Farms Project (<https://www.projecthsf.org/>) or Circus Harmony (<https://circusharmony.org/>).