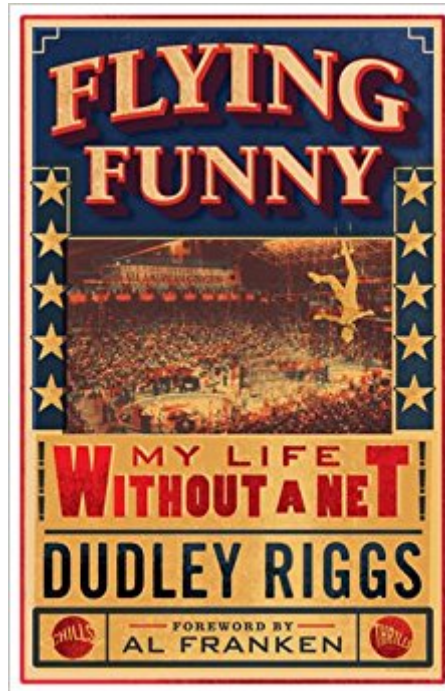




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# Flying Funny: My Life Without A Net



## Synopsis

Dudley Riggs didn't have to run away from home to join the circus. Home was the circus. Son of the acclaimed aerial flyers Riggs and Riggs, he made his circus debut as a polar prince parading in a wagon pulled by a polar bear. At the age of five, he graduated to a risqué vaudeville act during the circus off-season; at eight, he outgrew his cutes (and his child stardom) and joined his high-flying parents on the trapeze. Eventually he had to learn to "fly funny" because he grew too tall to fly straight. In one way or another, Riggs has been flying ever since. The rest, as they say, is history. And what a story it is. In *Flying Funny*, Riggs shares many highs and lows while describing circus life and the evolution of America's popular entertainment during the twentieth century. From his early life in circus and vaudeville to his creation of the Brave New Workshop, we see how his show business experience and instincts helped him create in Minneapolis what became the "next wave" in American entertainment—improvisation. As a young man, Riggs lost everything in a tornado, got an education on the fly, and sailed with the All American circus to postwar Japan. On a slow boat home and restless about his future, he developed the idea of Word Jazz—creating a script on stage as it is being performed—and shortly after he opened the Instant Theater in New York. Later, he moved to Minneapolis where he founded the Brave New Workshop, launching the careers of comic greats such as Penn and Teller, The Flying Karamazov Brothers, Louie Anderson, Peter Tolan, Pat Proft, Nancy Steen, Liz Winstead, Al Franken and many others. Today, the Brave New Workshop thrives as the longest running improvisational theater in America. From flying funny on the trapeze to theater without a net, Dudley Riggs's story is filled with hearty laughs and eyebrow-raising insights. With a wry sense of humor and infectious warmth, he shares the exhilaration of flying whether through the air or on the stage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Dudley Riggs not only brought comedy to thousands of people, he paved and provided a safe environment for artists to stretch the boundaries beyond the norm. He made people think, but mostly he made them laugh their asses off. He's an American institution, a Minnesota treasure, and my earliest mentor and friend. If you love show biz, comedy, the circus, or just want to laugh your ass off, you'll get his book Flying Funny!" •Louie Anderson"The great Dudley Riggs is a titan of comedy. There was no laughter west of the Mississippi before him. He let us perform at his theater when we were just getting started, so we owe him a blurb. So buy this book." •Penn & Teller"It's a lucky person who finds their wings in order to fly in this life. Dudley Riggs had the good fortune of being born on the high wire with no other option but to fly. And fly he did! Life without a net is a brave and honorable journey, and Dudley shares exactly this in his story. One can equate Riggs's big-top lifestyle to their own everyday circus and perhaps find some wings of their own." •Mo Collins"Always wanted to run away with the circus . . . but your busy schedule never allowed it? Well, this book is the answer. It will pull you by the sleeve and set you on the tightrope or the flying trapeze . . . until you find yourself landing on the stage of an improv theater. Bravo, Maestro Dudley Riggs!" •Philippe Petit, high wire artist and author"Riggs is known nationally as founder of the Minneapolis-based Brave New Workshop, but his memoir Flying Funny: My Life without a Net doesn't dwell on the comedy club. It's about growing up among circus people, his brief career as an aerialist and the 'stubborn, recurrent notion I had of creating an original scene onstage while performing it.'" •Pioneer Press"Like Riggs himself, his book is warm and a bit bashful in tone, avoiding the acres of melodrama and flamboyant flimflam found in many show business autobiographies. It reads like the work of a man with more good cheer than worry, making it through life's travails without deep scars on his body or spirit." •Star Tribune

Dudley Riggs is a fifth-generation member of a distinguished show business family. He has worked in circus and vaudeville as aerialist, clown, movie actor, comedian, writer, stage director, and producer. Since the early 1960s, Riggs's Brave New Workshop—where he is artistic director emeritus—has produced topical and political satirical shows and regular

improvisational performances for enthusiastic audiences and for entities such as NPR's All Things Considered, International USO shows, and colleges. Al Franken, an American politician, writer, actor, and comedian, is a United States Senator from Minnesota. He began his career in improvisational theater and political satire as a member of the Brave New Workshop.

When I lived in Minneapolis I often attended shows at Riggs' Brave New Workshop. Great improv guests. Delighted that Dudley has written this all-consuming book. BOFFO!

Interesting and fast read with lots of circus info. If you loved the circus as a child, you will find this book full of fun, interesting facts. A bygone time that is not disappearing, but Changing.

A delightful account of a fascinating life by a master storyteller. Someone alive today who actually grew up in the circus! A trapeze artist no less. I read it to my partner and we both laughed out loud over and over. I don't know which stories I liked best--how Riggs' father used him as a tot in the circus and vaudeville, how as a terrified young man he had to drive a huge truck filled with lions and tigers across the Canadian Rockies or how he inadvertently caused an international incident right after WWII when the circus performed in Japan and he met the crown prince. I also found his long path to political comedy and the founding of the Brave New Workshop theater, which sent so many talents to Saturday Night Live, fascinating. You don't get to spend time very often with someone who's had this kind of life.

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