

Michigan Every Day

By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberely

Sept. 26, 1963

Elephant rampages through Lansing

When brothers Asa and Merlin Schiedel heard loud noises outside their home and looked outside, the men were greeted with a preposterous surprise. A circus elephant charged through their backyard and onto the driveway. As 67-year-old Asa attempted to get away, he inadvertently stepped into the elephant's path. The animal knocked Asa down before butting him and trampling over him. A neighbor who yelled at the elephant to shoo him away was credited with saving the man's life. The elephant, known as Rajje, had been part of the King Shows and Circus, which was performing at a local shopping center. Rajje apparently became irritated at a certain point in the performance and rebelled against her trainer. The trainer said the elephant just walked away and then became confused. One of the elephant's first stops was at Arlan's Department Store, where the elephant burst inside and terrorized crowded shoppers as she marauded down the aisles toward the men's and sporting goods departments. The elephant spent about 15 minutes rampaging through the store, smashing windows and merchandise and causing thousands of dollars in damage, before leaving by a back exit. Amazingly, no one was injured. Rajje led police on a two-mile chase through Lansing, as the berserk elephant attempted to throw a car out of his way. Rajje, a 13-year-old who weighed 3,000 pounds, was finally put down in a barrage of gunfire from police.