

ATTACHMENTS. WHAT WOULD YOU TAKE FROM A BURNING BUILDING?

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When Sylvia Hernandez was 5, her father built her a chair.

It was small enough to fit her lithe body, light enough for him to balance on the end of a 9-foot pole, and strong enough to catch her after she flipped off the family teeterboard. "Flying's the easy part," says Sylvia Hernandez-DiStasi. "Landing's the hard part." In 1990 she left the Hernandez Troupe, then performing 500 shows a year with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. She has since pioneered ways to meld circus and theater and, with husband Larry DiStasi, founded Evanston's Flying Griffin Circus, named for the couple's 1-year-old. "After Griffin was born I wondered, How could my parents ever have thought it was cool to see their children fly through the air?" For the next show, she'll remove the velvet-trimmed chair from the Museum of Science and Industry's "Under the Big Top" exhibit. Again she'll take to the teeterboard, executing the stunt that was once both public spectacle and private triumph for father and daughter. "It's like a testimonial to my dad. It will always be: This one's for you."

- Caption: PHOTO

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