

Dolly T. Llama



Today, Thursday, is the 50-year anniversary of one of the most embarrassing mix-ups in American history. It happened when the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, and Dolly The Llama, a featured attraction of the Dinklaker Brothers' Circus, arrived at New York's Idlewild Airport on the same day. Due to an administrative error, Dolly was given a royal welcome that included an honorary key to the city (which she ate) and whisked away by taxi to Radio City Music Hall, where she was fêted by Mayor Wagner. The Dalai, on the other hand, was put in a straw-lined cage for an hour till he was collected by a circus roustabout, who can be excused for not immediately noticing anything awry since the humming of a llama sounds remarkably similar to "phal-skad," or Tibetan vernacular speech – especially when the speaker is a trifle bewildered.