

THE NEW CALLIÖPE

For Members of Clowns of America International
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Lillian Knight Faison

"Sunny Hope"

Your COAI Officers

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OUR COVER: Congratulations to Sunny Hope, who won the bid on our annual cover auction at the 2024 COAI Convention.

THE NEW CALLIOPE

OUR COVER

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Kynisha “Daisy the Clown” Ducre



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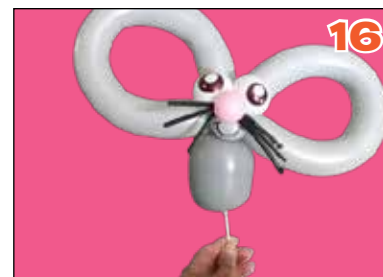
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Permanent Membership Cards

Membership cards sent out by the COAI Business Office are intended to be permanent, so no expiration date is included. Your card is valid only as long as you are a current member. In years past, a new membership card was generated and mailed each year. During the pandemic, the COAI Board of Directors voted to discontinue that practice as a cost-saving measure. If your card is damaged or lost, you may still request a replacement.

'SUNNY HOPE'

LILLIAN KNIGHT FAISON

By Kynisha "Daisy the Clown" Ducre

Lillian Knight Faison—better known as Sunny Hope—believes that if you believe in magic, life will be magical.

She has been a clown for ten years and is the owner of Sunny Hope Umbrella Agency in Kingman, Arizona, which she founded in 2019. As a clown, her goal is to touch the hearts of her audience and ignite a positive spark of joy, hope, and love to anyone who's grumpy or blue.

In her other life as Lillian, she has been a nurse for forty-one years. She is also a former Rochester police officer and sales manager, and a member of Toastmasters International.

By combining her diverse background with the art of clowning, she created a powerful opportunity to share her gifts with the world. For example, Toastmasters taught her that it's important for public speakers to use facial expressions and bold movements. It also taught her to avoid taking oneself too seriously. She loves to dress up, and she understands the power of a smile.

"Being a nurse brought me down at times," Lillian said, explaining how the work environment of a nursing home could be a challenging place to maintain a positive mood. The lack of smiles she witnessed in the workplace, as well as the lack of teamwork among her co-workers, often made her feel blue. Then there were the lonely elders who wanted someone to spend time with them.

Some days at the nursing home were excellent for Lillian. But on the days that were less than excellent, she found herself wanting to crawl under a bus or dig a hole under her bed, quit her nursing career, and take a job at McDonalds instead.

At the end of one of her toughest work days, Lillian turned to her coworkers and said, "I'm going to go be a clown." She repeated this line for the next six years. Every time she said it, her coworkers laughed.



Lillian "Sunny Hope" Knight Faison poses with friends during a story time event at Irondequoit Library in Rochester, New York.



Top Left: Lillian Knight Faison, when she's not spending time as Sunny Hope. PHOTO BY MLOUZEEZ PHOTOGRAPHY **Top Right:** The Grease Paint Alley Clowns, based out of Rochester, New York, of which Lillian is a member. **Bottom:** Lillian's eye-grabbing clown aesthetic embraces brightly colored psychedelic patterns and retro prints.

Eventually, the universe heard her. She was working in the rehab unit at St. Ann's Senior Living Community in Rochester, New York, when one of her fellow nurses walked in with a balloon flower in her hand. Lillian noticed the balloon flower and thought to herself, "Clown."

The nurse told her she was caring for a patient who was a professional clown. Lillian immediately walked down the hall to meet him and learned his name was Wannabe. His wife, a fellow clown named Kiddo, was visiting him at the time.

Wannabe and Kiddo told Lillian they were members of the local Grease Paint Alley. Excited, she explained that she wanted to learn how to be a clown. Wannabe said he'd let Lillian know when the next session of the Alley's clown school was scheduled to begin. "In the meantime," Wannabe added, "would you like to come over to my house and make some balloon art?"





Left: Lillian learns whiteface at the Grease Paint Alley Clown School. **Center:** Before she became a clown, Lillian was a police officer with the Rochester, New York, police department. Photo circa 1980. **Right:** Lillian and friends take a breather while entertaining at Kathryn Heidenreich Senior Citizen Center in Kingman, Arizona. Left to right: Christina Robinette, Booodiddly, Lillian, and visitors.

Soon, Lillian was creating squeaky balloon flowers and animals. She made the most of her free time until she got the call from Wannabe that clown school was back in session.

Clown school taught Lillian about makeup, props, and balloons. It also taught her about the foundations of building a clown character. She discovered how unique the art of clowning is within the greater context of the entertainment world, given that clowns must be an audience and a performer at the same time. “A clown opens a door inside themselves to set their inner child free,” she said.

Lillian graduated from college school on April Fool’s Day ten years ago. Now, looking back, she says that one of her greatest successes was when nursing homes and schools started hiring her to perform as Sunny Hope.

One of the first things people notice when they meet Sunny Hope is the small heart on the tip of her nose. She also has a jewel at the center of her forehead. Her

wardrobe is layered with stuffed animals, toys, and flashy buttons labeled “Smile Inspector,” “If You’re Looking for Fun, Follow Me,” and “My Last Name is THE CLOWN.”

Becoming Sunny Hope has helped Lillian find her loving inner child to share with others, she said. Whenever she senses negative energy, she is quick to share her warmth, delight, and love of fun with those around her.

For her, clowning is a vehicle to heal the world. Nothing gives her greater satisfaction than the sparkle she sees in the eyes of children, adults, and the elderly when she’s entertaining them.

Asked what advice she’d give to someone who wants to become a successful clown, Lillian said they should be enthusiastic, friendly, happy, empathic, spontaneous, kind, imaginative, creative, smiling, and patient. “Have a strong desire to bring joy and happiness, and to elevate another person’s mood,” Lillian said.

Lillian and her husband relocated from Rochester, New York to Kingman,

Arizona a few years ago. In 2024, she participated in the Ms. Senior Arizona Pageant, where she placed third runner up and performed her first single-person clown skit as Sunny Hope. Lillian was excited to use the pageant as an opportunity to bring more awareness to the art of clowning.

Becoming Sunny is how she learned how to step outside her comfort zone, she said. Today, Lillian is excited to spend her time mentoring new clown enthusiasts in Kingman, as well as performing at nursing homes, hospitals, schools, and parades. She looks forward to future projects—including a clowning workshop under development—and to adding more skills to Sunny Hope’s repertoire.

It’s always a magical day under the umbrella of Sunny Hope.

To learn more about Sunny Hope, visit her website at www.sunnyhope.agency.



From the President

Dan Langwell

Hello and welcome to a new season for COAI! We've hit the ground running and have several new faces on the board, bringing a lot of excitement and energy to our meetings.

Everyone has been settling into their new roles. During our almost weekly Zoom meetings, we've been getting to know each other and looking at COAI from one end to the other. Messages, texts, and phone calls have been flying around every day from early morning to late at night.

Patricia and Alene have had several meetings with our hotel contacts in Denver to flesh out our plans. I was part of a virtual walkthrough and was pleased with all the space we have to work with, as well as the relationship being developed with the hotel staff. Patricia has been furiously researching the area and reaching out to people. Julia is getting settled in as education director. As I write this, we are very close to

announcing our headliner, and a number of other details about the 2025 COAI Convention. Check out our website to register and learn more information.

Speaking of the COAI website, have you visited the vault? It's not just back issues of *The New Calliope*—we now have added more than 5,000 pages of the original *Calliope* magazines available to read. That is exciting news!

I also want to give a big shout-out to Paul Greggs and Hal Grant. They're the current and former leaders of the Gig-a-Byte Clown Alley, the other electronic home of learning for COAI members. Originally, Gig-a-Byte was for clowns who did not have a local alley to join and learn from. Now, Gig-a-Byte is available for all members to participate, and I strongly encourage everyone attend a meeting if you can. Once you do, I have a feeling you'll become a regular. They are that good!

Our board is currently looking at a variety of puzzle pieces. The world has changed drastically since the founding of Clowns of America International. The last five years alone have been a rocket ship of change, with online communication becoming the dominant way to talk to people and get things done. Connie did an amazing job with her Northeast Regional Facebook page, and Jim is continuing what she started. In that vein, we're encouraging and assisting more of the Regional Vice Presidents to do the same.

Be sure and check out all the hard work Bob Gretton has been putting into the new COAI Membership Facebook page. Reach out, ask a question, make a suggestion. We talk all the time, making sure you get the best answer we can offer. Bob has even offered to make up answers if needed!

We have a positive, energetic, talented, and committed group working together for COAI and every member. We look forward to hearing from you. **TNC**



2024 COAI Convention Review



By Jim “Donuts” Donoughe

PHOTOS BY REGINA “CHA CHA” WOLLRABE

As I sit to write this, it’s been exactly one month since the Fortieth COAI Convention, “Once Upon a Time,” in Niagara Falls, New York. All thank-you cards have been written, all medals have been mailed, and the COAI officer election is over. Here’s the recap.

Since there was no Competition Director for this year’s convention, I stepped in to do double duty. We had some great lectures and educational competitions, and of course the introduction to the challenges were very well received. Many attendees shared positive words about how much fun they had. Others said they wished they had participated, but took tool bags to try the challenges at home.

The premise of the introductory challenge was: “Some evil nasty man stole all your sponges and fancy brushes. But the show must go on! So, visitors collected a strange bag of tools for you to use.”

Fifteen people signed up to compete and thirteen submitted designs. First place went to Merrily Johnston for her zombie design, second place went to Coco Clair for her green troll, and third place went to Jenn Bemis for her raccoon.

This challenge was no easy task, as the contestants were given a bag of tools that was all they could use besides their fingers. The bag of tools included a cotton ball, a makeup removal sponge, a spoon, a fork, a feather, a rock, a popsicle stick, two cotton swabs, a cheap plastic water-color brush, and a tongue depressor.

I thought I was too tough on them, but the contestants loved it. I knew the cotton ball, paint brush, and sponge were red herrings that could be used but would be difficult to work with. Some contestants even said that the feather and the rock were the best tools, and they plan to add them to their kits.

The Balloon Challenge was just as fun, with twenty-five people competing in this fun bit of craziness. Again, the premise was: “That same evil man stole all your balloons, at least all the rolled or bagged balloons. But again, the show must go on!”

The contestants were tasked with making one single balloon creation and one multiple-balloon creation using at least three balloons. The only real rules were



Left to right: Kesha “Laydee” Beckley. Kevin “Waldo W. Wowser” Scharf. Bob “Bunky” Gretton and Sam Tee, Uncle Button.



that the contestants could only use *one* 260 for the multiple-balloon creation, and they could not use any outside balloons! Additionally, they had to work alone, so no trades were allowed. The contestants were left with what was at the bottom of their balloon cart or bag. Yes, I was that evil man!

Hats off to the challengers —wow, they did not disappoint! The sculptures were voted on by fan favorites in each category. Bluetooth balloon dog speakers were given to the first-place winner in each category, while the second- and third-place winners received balloon dog ornaments.

The bag of balloons that were given to each contestant was a very strange mixed bag. There was a twelve-inch round smiley face, two five-inch eyeballs, one big bear head, a five-inch round solid, a 646, a 350, two spiral workers, a 160, two 260s, two twelve-inch rounds, a rabbit head, a 321, a geo, a six-foot garland, glue dots, and feathers.

We had about 105 attendees at the convention, including walk-ins and day-of registrants, so we had a good turnout. Not super, but we ended in the black, and that's a good thing. Thank you to all who attended.

Competition photos and results will be published in the next issue of *The New Calliope*.



Clockwise, from upper left: Sue "Squeeze" Marranconi. Adam Schill. John Kral and Merrily Johnston. Gloria Sterrett. Barbara Bird and Regina "Cha Cha" Wollrabe. COAI 40th Anniversary cake. Jim Donoughe. Chagy.

First Impressions

ON ATTENDING THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY COAI CONVENTION IN NIAGARA FALLS, NEW YORK

By Rick “Albert Ping Pong” Heath

This being my first clown convention, and though Bill “Dabbles” LeBlanc kindly and patiently answered a tsunami of questions during a lengthy pre-convention phone conversation, still, in a sense, I knew not what to expect. Sometimes, “having no idea” is liberating. And, I figured if the five days of official proceedings were destined to plummet into buffoonery faster than a proverbial “lead balloon,” I could always go over Niagara Falls in a barrel, as did the intrepid Annie Edison Taylor more than a century ago.¹

Perhaps the whirlwind adventure began very early in the morning of Monday, May 13, at Boston’s Logan Airport where, while chatting with a fellow passenger-to-be just before boarding, I said, “Have a safe flight.” Then it occurred to me, “Wait a minute. It better be safe, because I’m on the same plane!”

The flight from Boston to Buffalo was a short hop, barely long enough for the flight attendant to deposit a scalding “infusion of caffeine” and a bag of sawdust-flavored chips, cruelly referred to as a “snack” (only smaller) on my tray. The pilot, whose nickname could easily have been “Cowboy,” hit the brakes hard as we landed, so we passengers on flight 515 from Boston did (thankfully) disembark at the assigned gate and not in the terminal’s food court.

Now, I’m a relatively seasoned traveler, and living out of a suitcase in a hotel room is “no big deal.” Yet, to my utter amazement, it took me three days to effectively adjust the room thermostat to create an ambient temperature that was not too hot, not too cold, but just right. And, it took the same length of time to pinpoint the exact setting so the morning wake-up shower was not too hot, not too cold, but just right. Furthermore, within only two days, to my great satisfaction, I was able to remember, when closing the door to room 467 behind me, that only a *left turn* led to the elevator.

A wee bit of biographical information might be warranted here. For thirty-five consecutive years, from 1977 to 2012, I was an artist for a resident stage magic troupe in Beverly, Massachusetts, called *Le Grand David and his own Spectacular Magic Company*. For twenty-five of those years, I was also a comic sidekick known as Albert Ping Pong. Our company owned and operated two historic theatres and performed two different two-hour illusion shows, one in each theatre. I lived across the street from one



Rick Heath as Albert Ping Pong.

of the theatres, and magic, art, clowning, and theatre were my work, and my life, 24/7/365. From the final curtain in May 2012 to the present day, I’ve been building, restoring, and painting custom magic apparatus for magicians and magic collectors from coast to coast under the aegis of Magician With A Paintbrush.

So, I came to this gala gathering of clowns from the “world” of magic. Over more than four decades, I’ve attended at least several dozen national and international magic conventions, where, for whatever reason, to attire oneself in black is *de rigueur*² for magicians. Consequently, from the warm welcome at the COAI registration table to the farewells following the banquet, I was struck by the superabundance of color. There was color, color, color—everywhere, color. The colorful faces, the colorful costuming, the colorful hats and oversized shoes, and the colorful balloon creations, all began to work *their* magic on me by creating a rainbow-like atmosphere of vitality, cheer, and exuberance. Color reigned supreme, and it felt good.

Not long after feeling at home in the welcoming world of color, I realized that clock time began to give way to a sense of timelessness, and that the “outside world” began to loosen its stranglehold and recede in importance. The clock, that impersonal instrument by which we measure, or allow to dictate, every minute and hour of our day, was no longer my master, but had taken its rightful place as a now infrequently needed servant.

The ever-present smiles, giggles, and laughter, and even the mirthful puns intended to elicit a good-hearted collective groan, tickled my funny bone. It now mattered little whether one was rich, powerful, famous, or a “big shot” in life. Rather, it became evident that when one is good, true, beautiful, and fun-loving inside, whatever one does will be good, true, beautiful, and full of fun. A new thought entered my consciousness. Perhaps a red nose and several well-placed dabs of grease paint might be the great equalizer, and ego neutralizer, desperately needed today.

As one surprise-filled day gave way to the next, I began to feel a collective identity emerging—a palpable sense of togetherness, that we were all in this together. My own private definition of magic has long been one of togetherness: magic is the movement from “I” to “we.”

Minor miracles can occur when one jet-tisons the “I” and the “me” and thinks in terms of “we” and “us.” For five days *we* enjoyed the glorious privilege of creating *our* own unique world *together*. Though it may have been comparatively small, its significance was anything but.

This was the first time, the last time, and the only time in all of human history our little world existed. It was a meeting place for longtime friends, and for we first-timers to make new ones. It was a secure haven for childlike innocence, and a playground where frivolity and zaniness were not stifled but encouraged. It was a marketplace for purveyors of enough gadgets, gizmos, getups, and gear to make any card-carrying clown feel like a wide-eyed kid in a candy store. And, though there were no “second takes” in the live performances, it was a safe testing ground for new skits and ideas before a supportive, enthusiastic, and appreciative audience. It was a realm of once upon a time, of no “unbirthdays,” where “Cha Cha” could have a Happy Birthday every day! Why not?

It was also a world where “Aha!” moments could occur without warning, as one did during Chagy’s revelatory skit that might be called “Do Not Touch.” So brilliantly conceived and performed in its simplicity and austerity. One clown, one chair, and one admonition: “Do Not

Touch.” The sudden realization came—the *forbidden* implicitly creates temptation. The cookies in the cookie jar, when off limits, become irresistible. It was apparent that the forbidden, in whatever form in which it is encountered, is a universal theme just waiting for clowns to probe, to explore, for its infinite comic potential. Such a wonderful insight was, as is said, worth the price of admission.

Of course, there was an overflowing cornucopia of classes and events from which we could all freely pick and choose. Because nothing was “obligatory,” very soon I found myself feeling the “wish to” attend a lecture, rather than feeling the compulsion of “having to.” And, it was heartening to see teachers with a sincere desire to pass on to others what they considered important and valuable, in a manner both useful and enjoyable. Useful and enjoyable, the hallmarks of any *true* endeavor.

Sometimes an unanticipated encounter took precedence over scheduled activities. One day, as Jackie “Bee Bee” Reynolds and I engaged in a lunchtime chat, she revealed, much to my delight, that among her many interests, two were the iconic clown Dan Rice and the equally iconic physicist Albert Einstein. Immediately, two new, stimulating, and previously unconsidered opportunities for inquiry lay before me to pursue.

Returning to Boston’s oppressively dreary, damp, and chilly Logan Airport with its incessant noise, acrid exhaust fumes from buses, and its never-ending traffic jams, was a jarring reintroduction to conditions far different than those of the bright, sparkling world from which I had come. The clock had again begun its inexorable ticking.

Involuntarily, I found myself a-thinking about a small book called *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Euxpéry, written over eighty years ago. It’s the

Though my “Plan B” was in jest, in actuality, on October 24, 1901, her sixty-third birthday, Annie Edison Taylor, “The Heroine of Niagara Falls,” became the first person to go over the Falls in a barrel. The barrel was custom-made for the stunt, and Annie Taylor emerged relatively unscathed.

Using the French expression, rather than simply saying “fashionable” or “all the rage,” is quite impressive, *n’est-ce pas?*



Rick Heath.

inspired story of a pilot who is forced to land in the middle of a desert and who encounters a magical character he affectionately calls the “Little Prince.” The book is filled with passages of nearly miraculous beauty and crystalline clarity that began to emerge from long, long ago.

At a critical point in the tale, the Little Prince meets a wise fox who asks to be “tamed.” The fox says that to “tame” means to establish ties, and that when he is tamed by the Little Prince, it will be as if the sun came to shine on his life, and that his heart will be happy.

As with the fox, I now realize that for five enchanting days I, too, was being “tamed,” and that ties, invisible to the eye, all the while were being established. Perhaps, deep inside, without my conscious awareness, there was a wish to be in a sequestered place with people who would be like the sun shining on my life, and who would make my heart happy.

Today, as I write, the happiness continues to gently and graciously linger, and I find myself missing all of you. I hope to see all of you again, down the road.

In addition to continuing his work as Magician With A Paintbrush, Rick is also a periodic contributor to The Linking Ring, the official monthly magazine of the International Brotherhood of Magicians. Rick can be contacted at rick.heath@magicianwithapaintbrush.com.



Annie Edison Taylor, Heroine of Niagara Falls.

JUNIOR JOEYS

By Regina "Cha Cha" Wollrabe,
Junior Joeys Director



SLAPSTICK COMEDY PIN

Knock, knock. Who's there? Theodore. Theodore who? Theodore is stuck. Open up!

Hi, Junior Joeys! In this column we're going to open up about a form of physical comedy called *slapstick*.

The term slapstick comes from a device that was made of two flat slats or pieces of wood fastened together at one end so that it would make a loud slapping noise at the same time an actor acted like they were slapping a person or maybe runs into something. It was an illusion that made it appear the actor was getting hit when they really were not. The unexpected loud slapping noise would cause people to laugh. It was used in commedia dell'arte in Italy in the sixteenth century.

Slapstick has become the name of a type of humor that is exaggerated physical activity. While the idea of hitting people is a violent thought, some comedy does not involve hitting someone on purpose. The act might show a person accidentally hitting their head or falling, or a person holding a broom might take a turn and accidentally hit a passerby. This type of humor was found in acts performed by Charlie Chaplin and Mr. Bean. The over exaggeration of the hit and the sound at the same comical effect.



Bean. The time makes a funny

he touches on some of the criteria we are suggesting in this pin. His name is Joe Dieffenbacher, author of *Clown: the Physical Comedian*, available on Amazon.

Good slapstick takes a lot of practice and safety is our number one objective. No one should get hurt if slapstick is done correctly and when working with a partner you will rehearse cues that will help with the safety aspect in the choreographing of an act. Some physical comedy will require having a thick mat to practice on and supervised help. Add one or two of these to your act:

THE TRIP

The trip is a funny little technique that can get a laugh and not too hard to master:

Walk forward about five steps and then suddenly put your left foot behind your right foot and then catch yourself as the left foot releases and takes a step.

As both feet are on the ground stop, look back to see what you tripped on and then shrug it off and keep walking. When you look back you can also use



Continued on page 14



SLAPSTICK PHYSICAL COMEDY

Good slapstick takes a lot of practice, and safety is our number one objective. No one should get hurt if slapstick is done correctly. When working with a partner, you will rehearse cues that will help with the safety aspect in the choreographing of an act. Some physical comedy will require having a thick mat to practice on, and supervised help.

- Safety: Use mats, and find teachers to help guide your act and skills.
- Describe what a slap stick is.
- Learn how to do a fake trip.
- Pretend to run into a wall or pole (slapping it with your hand instead).
- Walk over a chair. (Use a sturdy chair and not a folding chair.)
- Fall backwards, and try adding a somersault. Use slow motion.
- Fall forward into a plank.
- Try to slap a partner. They bend down and you miss.
- Fake a hit while the person being hit makes the clap sound while throwing their head backwards.
- Try pie throwing. (Carve a foam pie crust and fill with shaving cream.)
- Try water spitting and spraying. (Practice outdoors or in the shower!)
- Parent/Jr. Joey Leader Signature: _____

Date: _____



Continued from page 12

the comedy technique called a double take. Where you almost look and then look again.

HITTING A WALL OR POLE

While this is dangerous in real life but done in comedy it can create a comical moment. The technique requires slapping your hand on the wall or pole making a slap sound, then jerk your head up, grab your forehead with the hand that just made the slap sound.

WALK OVER A CHAIR

Please make sure you have coaches to work with you on this technique. It requires a sturdy chair. Not a folding chair. Step on the seat and put your other foot on the back of the chair tipping it to the ground.

FALL BACK

Fall back with a mat under you. Try slowly falling to your hind end and slowly roll back. Legs can go up and then fall. It's like a slow-motion fall. As you practice, try a faster fall.

FALL FORWARD

Fall as if to go into a push up or plank. You can try to go down slowly on your knees using a mat and roll down to your chest using your hands to catch yourself.

SLAP AND MISS

Act as if you are about to hit the person next to you. They duck or bend forward so you miss them completely. Make sure you cue your partner by tapping them on the shoulder or looking them in the eye, so they know it's going to happen.

Practice with counting possibly, so that by the time you actually perform it, it looks natural, and your timing is perfect.

PIE THROWING


Pie throwing is a real art and takes a little practice. There are many ways to throw a pie. Find a mentor in clowning that can help you with this. Camps like American Clown Academy and Mooseburger Camp are two places that teach the art of pie throwing. Some people think that we use real pies with whipped cream but it's not true. We use shaving cream foam, either in a pie tin or better yet a carved-out foam that looks like pie crust. Real pies can hurt your face, and whipped cream turns yellow on clothes and can ruin your costumes. With shaving cream, you need to make sure your eyes are closed because it can sting. I have even worn swimming goggles when practicing. Just remember if your eyes are closed and you get hit with a pie with shaving cream to wipe the shaving cream out of your eye area. Another safety factor is never throw a pie at someone who is not expecting it!

WATER SPITTING AND SPRAYING


Water spitting is more of a stream. Fill your mouth with water and let out a stream, then stop and let out another stream and stop again. See how many times you can spit out a little stream before the water is gone. With Spraying, fill your mouth with water and purse your lips and blow, it will let out a spray of water all at once. You might make a sound like when you blow into a trumpet.

Physical comedy, pie throwing, and water spitting are some of the silly fun things we can do as a clown, but please make sure you are safe. It would be great if you could find an experienced clown who can help teach you some of these clown antics and how they can be used in a performance of any kind. Bump a nose!


Foam Pie




1 Drawing with a permanent marker, use a pie dish as a stencil on a square piece of foam.



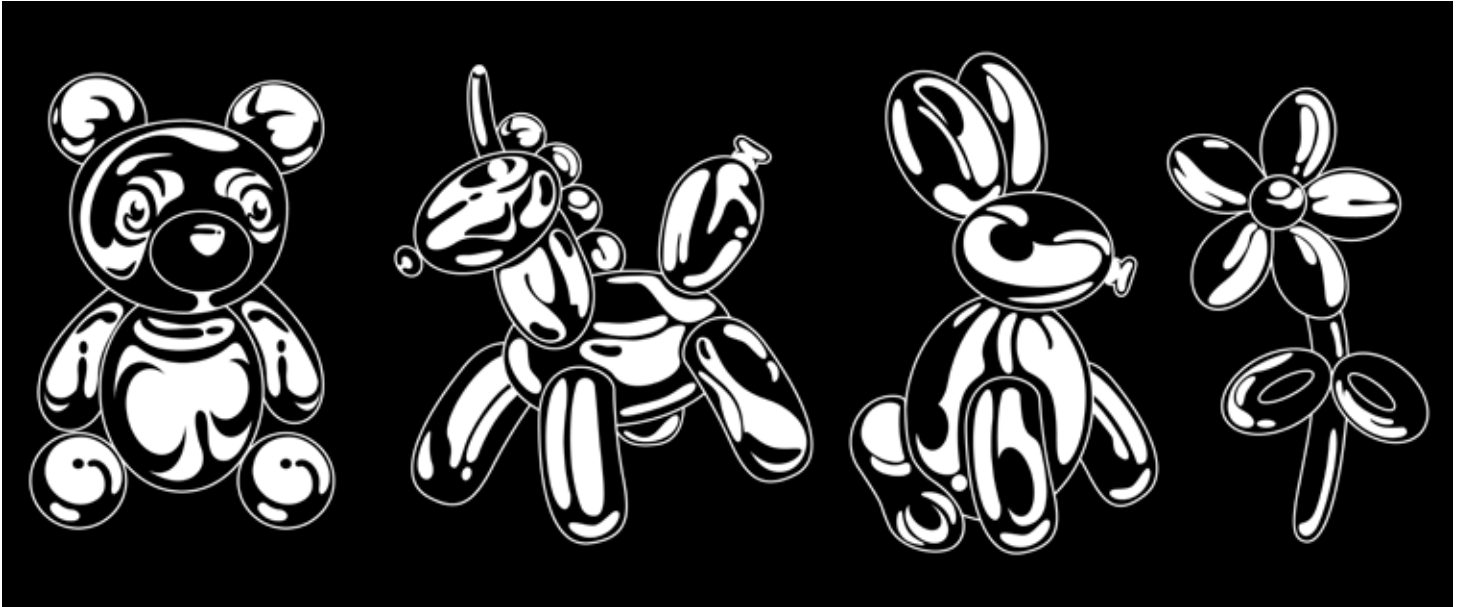
2 Using an electric turkey knife cut the outside of the foam pie crust. (Only with adult supervision!)



3 Cut down one inch. Then, using scissors, cut out the inside of the foam pie crust so it will hold shaving cream.



4 For pie crust detail you can make a small cut every half inch to one inch around the pie crust.



ISTOCK/VALERIA MIRONOVA

THE SORROWFUL FAREWELL OF QUALATEX BALLOONS

By Brooke Fiedler

Qualatex, a renowned name in the balloon world, known for their high-quality latex and foil balloons, bids an unfortunate farewell after decades of being the top choice for clowns, balloon artists, and more. Established in 1917 under the Pioneer Balloon Company, Qualatex quickly became a top choice for all in the balloon industry, setting the gold standard for quality and innovation.

Initially specializing in latex balloons, Qualatex gained popularity for durable, vibrant-colored balloons. As the demand grew for more intricate designs, Qualatex expanded their inventory to include different shapes and sizes, eventually incorporating foil balloons into their product line. Qualatex carried every color and shape one could possibly need for any occasion. Their product line also included unique pearl, metallic, and chrome balloons.

On top of their balloon production, Qualatex also hosted balloon events and conventions, including the World Balloon Convention (WBC). The WBC was the world's largest assembly of balloon enthusiasts and professionals, bringing people in the industry together like never before. Their website was also a great resource for anybody in the balloon industry, as it included balloon catalogs, balloon art inspiration, educational resources, multiple balloon-related publications, and more.

However, like many businesses, Qualatex faced some unforeseen challenges in the recent years, exacerbated by the global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic greatly disrupted Qualatex's supply chains and operations, making it increasingly difficult for the company to operate at full capacity and maintain their pre-pandemic production levels. Despite their efforts to adapt to the changing business environment, the economic strain proved to be too severe to keep the company afloat.

In September 2023, Pioneer Balloon Company, the parent company of Qualatex, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection. This decision was a strategic move aimed

at reorganizing the company amid the financial strain they faced, with hopes of securing a sustainable future for its operations.

White Oak Commercial Finance acquired Pioneer Balloon's assets following the filing and formed the new Pioneer Blue Balloon LLC to continue the company's legacy. While the new company wishes to preserve Pioneer Balloon's prestige and continue to offer some product lines from the original company, they made the decision to discontinue Qualatex. This conclusion marked the unfortunate end of an era for Qualatex, a brand that has left an indelible mark on the balloon industry.

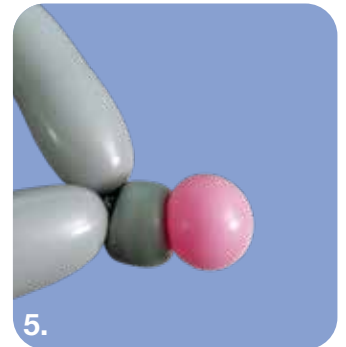
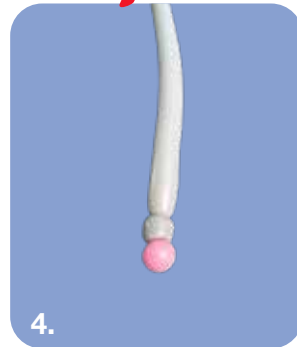
On July 23, 2024, Qualatex auctioned off their remaining equipment, signaling the definite end of the brand. In a post on their Instagram page, Qualatex urged their customers to secure any remaining Qualatex inventory through their distributors before it's all gone.

While Qualatex can no longer be the top choice in the balloon industry after its discontinuation, its products will surely be missed by many. Now, following the fall of Qualatex, one can only wonder who will rise to the occasion and become the next big name in the balloon industry. **TNC**



Mouse on a Lollipop

By Merrily Johnston



1. Inflate gray 260 leaving 2 finger tail. Inflate pink round to two fingers. Trim leaving a two finger uninflated tail. Tie nozzle ends together near nozzles leaving excess uninflated balloon between the two.
2. Push finger against knots and into center of gray balloon.
3. Using thumb and forefinger of opposite hand, grab knot and twist several times.
4. Push knot back toward pink balloon. (This helps to hold the knot in place.)
5. Wrap gray uninflated end into the twist between the gray nose bubble and remainder of balloon.
6. This forms a large gray loop.
7. Pull center of loop toward you to find center point and twist.
8. Push back toward nose and wrap into same spot you wrapped the gray uninflated end into. This will turn the large loop into two smaller loops for the ears.
9. Inflate 5" white round to three fingers.
10. Twist in half to form eyes. And twist into place between the nose and the ears.

ITEMS NEEDED:

**Items Needed: 1 Gray 260,
1 Gray 350/360,
1 White 5" round,
1 Pink 5" round,
3 Black 160s**



11.



12.



13.



14.



15.



16.



17.



18.



19.



20.

11. Inflate 350/360 to four fingers. Knot at least two times to give you more to hold onto.

12. Push index finger into knot pushing it through the balloon to the other side.

13. Using your opposite index finger and thumb, grab knot and twist several times. Wrap the uninflated end between the knot and the inflated part of the balloon several times.

14. This is what the other side will look like.

15. Now wrap the uninflated gray 350/360 end between the eyes, nose, and the ears to hold in place and trim.

16. Using the remainder of the 350/360, make a small three finger bubble and tie in back. Pinch twist. Secure and trim. This helps to hold the ears forward.

17. Blow a puff of air into a black 160. Push it down just enough to stiffen (not inflate) the balloon. You should end up

with approximately 2/3 of the balloon filled with air. Tie knot to hold air in place. Repeat this on each of the three black 160s. Trim excess.

18. Tie the three 160s together in the center forming the whiskers.

19. Wrap between pink and gray segments of the nose. Add artwork.

20. Add lollipop if desired.

CARTOON CHALLENGE

B-O-Y, That's a Good One!

By Ann "Tuttles" Sanders (article and photos)

Supplies Needed: Paper, Pencil, crayons, or pen

This trick is great for entertaining children and their families while they are waiting for their food at a restaurant.

boy

Start by printing the word "boy," using all lowercase letters. Leave a little bit of space between the letters so they aren't touching each other. For our example, the letter "y" is not curly at the end. (There are other versions where the curly "y" forms an ear, but I am going with the one that has fewer details.)

Next, issue a challenge: turn the letters into a boy! Allow the budding artist sufficient time to attempt the task and then, if asked, show them how it's done!

boy

To form the jaw, connect the bottom of the letter "y" to the bottom of the stick portion of the letter "b."

Next, to form the forehead, connect the top of the letter "b" to the top to the left shorter side of the "y."

boy

boy

Draw a line from the right longer side of the "y" across the top, drawing the hair. You can make the hairstyle silly or even bald!

boy

Lastly, add the details. The "o" and the "b" form the eyes. Give the face as many details as you would like, such as eyebrows, a nose, and a mouth.

It is fun to experiment with facial expressions and hairstyles. The masterpiece can be colored if using crayons or colored pencils. You can leave your audience with an additional printed "boy" and let them be as creative as possible when turning the letters "boy" into a "boy."



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25 Years go

By Lauren Jurgensen

Long before she was the cover star for *The New Calliope's* November/December 1998 issue, veteran columnist and professional clown Karen “Peppermint” Reinholt was someone who simply wanted to wear a clown costume for Halloween.

The year was 1980. She used her local public library to source as much information as she could about clown makeup and wardrobe, then headed home to fashion a wig by dying a mop the color red. She washed off her makeup at least four times before she was happy with the results. Karen ended up winning “best costume” at that year’s Halloween party, and decided it would be a waste to not reuse the costume.

You can read the rest of Karen’s clowning journey, including how she landed on the name “Peppermint,” by visiting the vault at www.mycoai.com. That’s where you can find every back issue of *The New Calliope*.

On page 8, Karen also provided some terrific tips for entertaining at children’s birthday parties that take place during the holidays. First, ask the parent if they want you to include the holiday in your show, or only focus on the birthday. If they do ask you to include the holiday in the show’s theme, “don’t get so caught up in the spirit of the season that you forget to honor the birthday guest of honor,” wrote Karen. Second, make subtle modifications to your magic tricks to incorporate the season – for example, incorporating Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer’s nose into a sponge ball routine (using red sponge balls, of course).

In her article “How to Split Your Personality,” Margaret “Maggie the Magical Clown” Clauder talked about how she’s managed to develop so many different clown characters—and why creating more characters can benefit your clown business. For one, schools and daycares that want monthly entertainment, but don’t want to hire the same person every time, are more likely to hire you again if you can offer them something different each time. Flip to page 12 of the November/December 1998 issue to learn about the three different methods she suggested for becoming a “split personality” clown.

David “Mr. Rainbow” Bartlett explained on page 14 how writing a biography for your clown character can do more to hold you back than help. “The writing of character biographies is a very effective theatrical tool,” he wrote, “[but] that really doesn’t apply to clowning.” The purpose of the character biography is to create the necessary material to support the character’s motivations and behaviors. However, it should be used to liberate your character, not constrict it — such as one clown who felt like an enormous burden had been lifted when David explained that her clown character could be “ageless” instead of forever six years old.

Jim “Crazy Frosty” Adams shared his favorite children’s magic tips and guidelines on page 16. Bruce “Charlie” Johnson dives into the subject of clown idea theft in his article “Larceny: A Problem for Joeys?” on page 20. Mike “Buster” Bednarek continued his article from the previous issue, about using “whacks” to stimulate one’s creativity, on page 22. And even though it’s now twenty-five years old, you may still find some



timeless and useful tips for working with an agent in Kathy “Pickles” Dhingra’s column on page 24.

Mike “Buster” Bednarek authored another article on page 26 that features gift ideas for your favorite clown. Most of the suggestions are about the spirit of the gift, rather than the material gift itself. Among his suggestions? An accordion (or better yet, a good accordion teacher); “kooky” anything (“It just sounds clowny, ‘specially with lots of oatmeal and raisins”); and “youthfulness” in the form of “attitude, curiosity, humor, energy, innocence, resilience, and thirst for making the most of every day.”

You can also find short and sweet tips for becoming a ventriloquist on page 30 (“The ABCs of Venting” by William “Willy from Philly” Clegg), best practices for professional clowns on page 31 (“Helpful Hints for the Working Clown” by Jim “Crazy Frosty” Adams), and tips for using a 50-50 force deck during your walkaround performances on page 32 (“Walkaround With Your Own 50-50 Force Deck” by Lee “Juggles” Mullally).

This summary doesn’t even cover the full issue! There’s never an end to the reading material you’ll find in the vault, so visit www.mycoai.com whenever you’re ready for a walk down memory lane. Bump a nose! **TNC**

Of All The Things I've Been Called ...

By Alene Kraus



I've been twisting balloons at a local restaurant chain for more than eighteen months.

The restaurant business is cyclical. It's logical to believe that the income I earn there depends on how many people with children enter the restaurant. Back when I started, I would have agreed with that.

There are three veterans who come into the restaurant and like to chat. If a table with children sits near them, they tell the parents to call over the balloon lady. Sometimes, the servers run by me and ask me to stop by one of their tables because the food is coming out slow or the child is crying because the "Balloon Lady" hasn't reached their table. When staff bring in their moms, siblings, or grandparents and ask me to make balloons, it's a hoot!

I am not a balloon machine. I spend time at each table and I welcome them to kids' night. I talk with the family and always get them to laugh. I spend time slowly helping a child with autism get comfortable. I want to share a fun and positive experience with every single person.

I have built trust with staff, management, and customers. I have been blessed with "my regulars." There is a dad who brings his son most Tuesdays, and a family of six who tell me, "We come here for you! Can't miss a Tuesday night!" Parents tell me "That balloon wand lasted two weeks!"

I even have a favorite kiddo who brought me her yearbook to sign. I admit my eyes teared up. It was a sweet and kind thing for her to want to do. I would not take a tip from her parents that night.

The restaurant is a great little reflection of the neighborhoods it serves. It is a very diverse area in every possible way: I've met bikers, tradespeople, lawyers, police officers, firefighters, truck drivers, teachers, active military, nurses, small business owners, former students, and the son of a Tuskegee Airman.

Twisting balloons at this restaurant is selfishly uplifting! Whenever I receive a meal to go, it's always labeled "BL." One day I finally asked, "What does BL mean?"

"Balloon Lady," the manager replied. "That's what we all call you!"

I am now their Balloon Lady. Of all the things to be called ... it has a nice 'pop' to it!

**SEE YOU IN DENVER FOR THE
2025 COAI CONVENTION!
DETAILS ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER!**

We've Got Mail!

We wanted to share a letter we received from Carol Shire, editor of *Klown Kronakul*, the newsletter for members of COAI Alley #431 (Niagara Clown Alley). Carol, who does a wonderful job with this newsletter, received the COAI Best in Press award in May 2024 for excellence in publishing.

Hi!

Thank you so much for the COAI Best in Press award! What a nice and total surprise it was!

Jim Donoughe was so excited and proud of me that he phoned me the night after the banquet! Connie Morrow encouraged me to mail/send the NCA newsletters to you a few years ago. She explained the award too. My purpose has always been the enjoyment of relaying information to our NCA members, but I decided to make Connie happy and submit the newsletters anyway. Of course, now my sadness is that Connie isn't here to see her goal come to fruition. But then again, she just might be celebrating this accomplishment in a higher realm!

Thanks again! The award just confirms my effort and the love I put into each newsletter!

Sincerely,

Carol Shire

Congratulations, Carol!



Left: Carol Shire, newsletter editor for Niagara Clown Alley, with COAI Director of Education Jim Donoughe. Right: Carol Shire's COAI Best in Press Award.

THE NEW YOU

By Bonnie Corcia



I've had many conversations with some of our aging clowns, and I keep hearing the same things over and over: "I'm not the same clown I used to be," "I am not able to do what I used to do," "I have physical issues," "I'm old," "I'm tired," "I can't do a show any more," or "I can't do a birthday party."

Yada, yada, yada.

Well, I say, "So what! Be the new clown you're supposed to be."

Yes, I am tired, but I was out there several times during our recent Clown Week, sharing the joy of clowning. I kept my makeup very light and no one said "Hey, that's not enough makeup!" They were looking at my heart, not my face. Because of the Florida heat, I also kept my costume very light, and once again—no judgment, just smiles.

Stickers, jokes, smiley faces, and laughter were shared with everyone I came in contact. I went to the nursing home, library, bank, and a restaurant. I created some simple handouts that I give to people to make



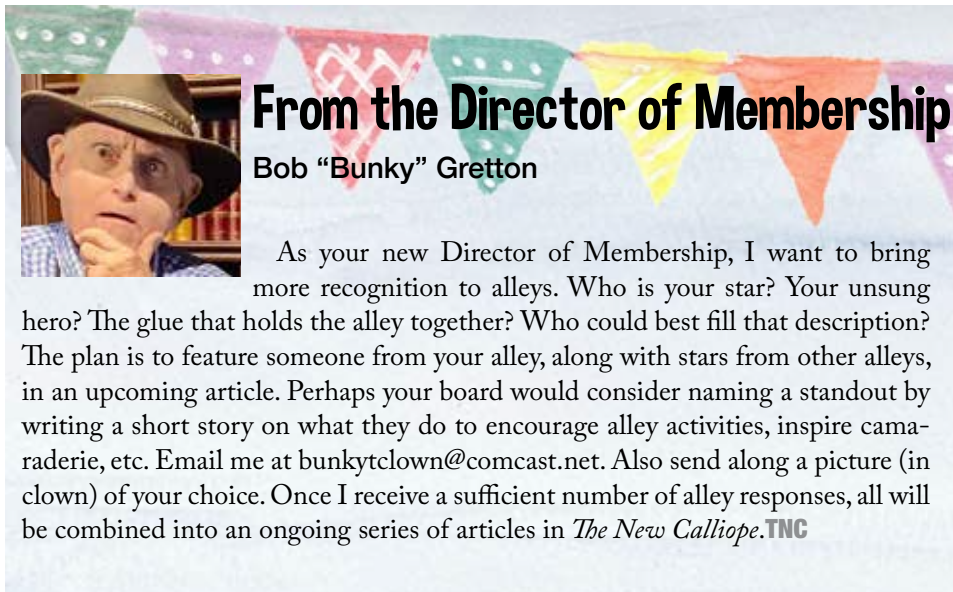
INSPIRATION AND HUMOR

them smile. For example, I have a circle that says "Round Tu It." When someone says "I'll do it when I get around to it," I hand them a Round Tu It, and give them another one to share with others. I also make a boomerang magic trick and share it with people, giving them one to keep and one to give away. Additionally, I have some "I Am Special" stickers. These are a very valuable commodity these days, but still a great way to let them know they are special to me.

It only takes a few minutes to bring joy and laughter to others. I will continue to do my best to bring out my "clown" as much as possible. It is as much for me as it is for the recipients. I love clowning too much to make excuses to not do it. So how about you? There are so many ways we can still share the joy of clowning when the mind is willing and the body is not quite so able.

Please don't let all the love and talent you have inside of you be put on a shelf. Begin to create a new you and go share your love of clowning. This old world needs clowns more than ever.

If you have ideas to share, send them to me at bonkygbird@gmail.com. You can also contact me if you need some inspiration—I have plenty to share.



From the Director of Membership

Bob "Bunky" Gretton

As your new Director of Membership, I want to bring more recognition to alleys. Who is your star? Your unsung hero? The glue that holds the alley together? Who could best fill that description? The plan is to feature someone from your alley, along with stars from other alleys, in an upcoming article. Perhaps your board would consider naming a standout by writing a short story on what they do to encourage alley activities, inspire camaraderie, etc. Email me at bunkyclown@comcast.net. Also send along a picture (in clown) of your choice. Once I receive a sufficient number of alley responses, all will be combined into an ongoing series of articles in *The New Calliope.TNC*



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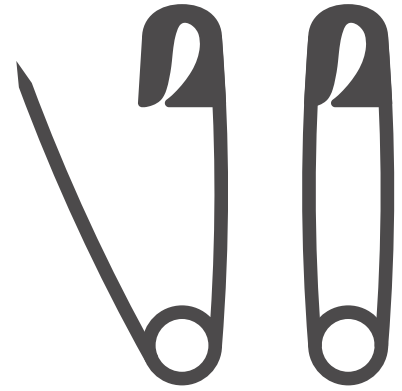
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WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

By Beth “Pickles” Cedarholm

ARTWORK: ISTOCK



The following are stories from COAI members about real-life clown blunders and tales of woe when gigs didn't go quite as expected. While these performers endured some impossibly bad situations, they soldiered on, gleaned some tidbit of wisdom from their negative experience, and becoming better—and wiser—entertainers.

Ray “Jobee” Belanger

Back in 2006, I was in graduate school, but my mind kept wandering to clowning. I finally gathered up the courage to “clown up” for the very first time, and I drove to the Chattanooga Choo-Choo. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Chattanooga Choo-Choo, it is a hotel, resort, and entertainment complex housed in Chattanooga, Tennessee’s grand old restored train station.

I figured it would be a great spot for my hobo character, “Wheeler,” to make his debut. I drove my pickup to the Chattanooga Choo-Choo and started wandering around. I really had no skills but I was there to be a clown. I made a few kids smile and I posed for photos. At the end of the day, I was tired, but happy that I had gotten my “clown fix,” and I headed back to my truck. Peering through the driver’s seat window, I was



horrified to see that my keys were still in the ignition of my locked truck.

The terror that filled me was immense. I was in my twenties, alone, broke, already stressed from college, and “clowned up” for the very first time. All I could do was call a tow truck. When the tow truck finally arrived, the driver acknowledged the awkwardness of the situation, and I nodded in agreement. Luckily, he was able to jimmy my door open. I then drove back to my apartment, cleaned up, and cooled down my anxiety.

Much has happened since that day at the Chattanooga Choo-Choo. But I’m happy to report that, while life has at times dictated that my clowning be put on hold, I am back to clowning around.

Regarding the anxiety I felt that day, I try to remember what Bruce Lee told us: “Nerves are the body’s way of telling you that you are ready. I am ready! And you can be certain that I always check to make sure that I have my car keys with me before I lock up.

Beth “Pickles” Cedarholm

I started clowning around in 2001 and, although my clown closet is full of fun and colorful costumes, I’ve had many of them since my early clowning years. They are quality costumes and have held up well—except for the elastic in my bloomers. I’ve noticed over the years that much of the elastic in my many pairs of clown bloomers has become stretched out. I’m not much of a seamstress (tape is my friend), so the few attempts I made to tighten the elastic in my bloomers failed miserably, and I had resorted to using safety pins to tighten the elastic around my waist. This is a dangerous way to



ensure that my bloomers stay up, because on more than one occasion, a safety pin has sprung open, stabbing my belly while I'm performing magic or twisting balloons.

Every year at the end of my busy clowning season, I'd vow to take my six or seven pairs of bloomers to a seamstress to have the elastic replaced, but then I'd forget about it and, when clown season rolled around again, I'd bring out the bucket of safety pins.

Anyway, this summer, I was on day one of a four-day county fair, performing a magic show for children and their families. I was in the middle of doing a mis-made flag routine, when, suddenly, I noticed that my bloomers had fallen and slid all the way down to my ankles. Mortified, I shouted "wardrobe malfunction" and darted behind my magic case, where I quickly pulled up my bloomers. My audience had been "into" the magic, and I'm not certain how many of them even noticed the mishap. After the show, I retreated to the fairground bathroom, where I added another safety pin to help me get through the day without further incident.

That evening, when I got home from the fair—before I even removed my grease paint—I contacted a local seamstress and told her about my elastic troubles. The next day, she started replacing the elastic in all of my bloomers. Luckily, I have several pairs of clown bib overalls, so I was able to wear them until a couple pairs of my bloomers had fresh elastic. And I am happy to report that Pickles was able to get through the rest of the summer wardrobe scandal-free.

Kynisha "Daisy" Ducre

While entertaining children on a missionary trip in Wuhan, China, I encountered a little boy—probably seven or eight years old—who had clearly never before met someone of African descent.

The first day, the little Chinese boy kept rubbing my hand with his. I realized that he was trying to figure out why



my skin was so much darker than his and trying to rub off the pigment.

On the second day, the same little boy approached me, perplexed, and asked if I lived by the equator.

On day number three, the boy approached me, with the same great curiosity, and asked if my skin had been burned.

Since this was a Christian setting, I took advantage of the moment and explained to him that God makes people with many different colors of skin and hair. I also brought out a magazine—similar to National Geographic—and showed him photos of people from different parts of the world, so I was also able to turn the situation into a science lesson.

Do you want to share a tale of woe, lesson learned or "What Could Possibly Go Wrong" story? Send it to Beth "Pickles" Cedarholm at clownypickles@gmail.com. All entries are subject to editing for clarity and length. **TNC**





Our Good Cheer List

Please take a moment to spread a few words of good cheer with a card or note to one of these members.

Ruth "Sweet Sue" Hoppe
Parkview Manor
516 13th St. Room 111
Wallman, IA 52366

Miriam "Senorita Soto" Kleinberger
2 Maple Lane North
Loudonville, NY 12211

Richard "Design-O" Smith
97 Grafton Street, Back Door
Shrewsbury, MA 01545-5646

Fran "Cuddles" Smith
St. Joseph's Manor
6448 Main St
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Good Cheer Chair:

Bonnie Corcia
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Welcome, NEW MEMBERS!

- Briana "Kandi" Kirk, San Jose CA
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 Emmanuel "Ping inin" Montes de Oca.C, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
 Keiko Taniai, San Marcos CA
 Charlie "Chuckles" Graves, Woodstock GA
 Richard "The Magical Balloon Guy" Lansdale, South Bend IN
 Diana "Dinah" Cilenti, Jackson Heights NY
 Ray "Jobee" Belanger, Painted Post NY
 Jennifer Bemis, Meadville PA
 Dawn "Polka Dot" Erikson, Columbia CT
 Charles "Chuck" "Chuck" Ludlam, Washington DC
 Eugenio Adorno, Fort Worth TX
 JoAnne "JoJo" Duffy, Little Falls NJ
 James "Animal" Cunningham, Fair Play MO
 Bippy's World, Houston TX
 Lillian "LilyPad" Garcia, Ridgefield NJ
 Katherine Kurth Overland, Park KS
 Kathleen "Zig Zag" Bradley, Weehawken NJ
 Caitlyn "Cait the Clown" Papa, Worcester MA
 Sonja "Jazzaroo" Chavez, Monroe MI
 Jose Gonzalez, Mundelin IL
 Annie Pritchett, Brookhaven GA
 Dawn "Ditzzy" Scott, Budd Lake NJ
 Aaron "Ima Silly Dilly Dill" Jule, Rye NH
 Mike Klem, Canfield OH
 Amy "Corbi" Corbin, San Antonio TX
 Andrew "Mr. Topp" Long, Anchorage AK
 Gillian "Gillybean the Clown" Vesper, Ralston NE
 Lisa "Kuddles" Ciliotta, East Meadow NY
 Karina Valdez, Bedford TX
 Grace Lacheneay, Summerville SC
 Ashley Hood
 Elizabeth "Freckles" Brown, Richmond VA
 Tony "Smaxy" Seal, Three Oaks MI
 Cheryl Seal
 Pamela Grant, Ramsey NJ
 Barbara Danuser, LoneJack MO
 Tracy Lord, Salem MA
 Special thanks to those who have recently gifted memberships: Richard Smith
- Damen "Whimsi-Cal" Gleason, St. Louis MO
 Fay "Gismo" Shoup, Sun City AZ
 Jenny "Jenny" Wagoner, Harrisonville MO
 Preston "Barnie Yard/Coop" Wenz, Trout Creek MT
 Alicia "Kurly Sweet" Wenz, Trout Creek MT
 Jose luis "Chocolate the clown" Carreras vazquez, Toa Baja Puerto Rico
 Joshua "Meatball" Dummitt, Brookfield CT
 Perrin "Undecided" Mayor, Freeport IL
 christine "Miss Sparkle, EggNutz" wof, The Villages FL
 Brooke "Blitz" Fiedler, Eustis FL
 Stan Cook, Wolcott IN
 Anette Gross, Silver Creek NY
 Celeste Smith, Kansas City MO
 Makhan Singh, Raikot, India PB
 Jeff "Jethro the Clown" Estes, Paducah KY
 Renee "Unknown" Cramer, Reno NV
 Thea Love, Haleiwa HI
 Kathy "Chatty Cathy" Costigan, San Diego CA
 Mary "Rosie T. Clown" Love, Pāhoia HI
 Margie "Beans" Mercado, Brandon SD
 Chloe "Ram-Boing-Shus" Eyers, Englewood CO
 Mario Mercado, Brandon SD
 Anthony Morelli, Maple Grove MN
 Barbara Walz, Lakewood CO
 Mary "Bobb E" Canzona, Englewood CO
 Kim Connell, La Mesa CA
 Terrie "Perriwinkle" Stafford, Thomasville NC
 Matt "Marble" Marlowe, Odenton MD
 Rose "Rosie" McKenzie, Yuma AZ
 Robert Scrimgeour, Pickering ON
 Tammy Nguyen, San Diego CA
 Becka "Huckleberry" McMurray, Iowa City IA
 Carlos Alberto Puchaux, Navarro Cuba
 Sharon Joy "Sharon Joy" Levine, San Diego CA
 Sharon Evinger, Scuppoose OR
 Yumi Kawata, San Marcos CA
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What's Your Catchphrase?

“Matty McFun” Spraggins

As a professional clown, I want to be set apart. Whether you're a clown for hire or one who has fun for free, we should all have our own character traits and personality—something fun that helps our characters stand out. A fun and memorable catchphrase is a great place to start.

Picking the Perfect Catchphrase

The most memorable personalities in history are often known for their great catchphrases.

Think Matthew McConaughey's “Alright, alright, alright,” The Rock's “If ya smell what The Rock is cookin’,” or Santa Claus’ “Ho Ho Ho.”

So, what's your catchphrase? What makes you memorable?

These are not the same as magic words. Your magic words should be unique and memorable as well, but this is about having a catchphrase that you can say apart from your magic words.

I have one in my show that I say when I mess up, and it always makes the kids laugh: “That's not funny!”

The more I say, “That's not funny!” the more they laugh and tell me, “Yes, it is!” I say it several times throughout my magic show.

Your catchphrase should fit your personality. If you're a shy clown, you could use something like, “Don't look, don't look!” while turning away and hiding something.

If you're a bold and boisterous clown, you might shout “Watch this!” before a trick, or “That's what I'm talkin' bout!” after the trick.

A smart clown might say, “What? You don't believe me? I'm shocked!”

A cute clown who wears a lot of pink could repeat, “Pink is my favorite color!” every chance they get, followed by, “It is. Pink is my favorite color. Did I tell you that already? Well, it is. Pink is my favorite color.” She could use this catchphrase any time she pulls out a pink prop, for example, or brings up a helper who's wearing a pink shirt.

Do Your Puppets Have a Catchphrase?

Catchphrases aren't just for clowns—they're great for puppets and other props, too.

Do your puppets have their own catchphrases? What about giving a funny name to a certain prop, and making it something fun to say over and over?



I have a spring raccoon named Mr. Fluffy Butt. The kids love his name. They all laugh every time I say it, it's great.

Use your catchphrases as a marketing tool. Put your catchphrases on your branding and signage. Set yourself apart!

Get your audience to react to your catchphrases and you'll have the most fun show they've seen in a long time.

Tha, tha, tha, that's all folks!!!

Matthew “Spraggins serves as COAI's South Central RVP. You may visit him online at www.mattymcfun.com.

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THE LAST WALK-AROUND

Jim Hancock

Jim Hancock, a member of Big Foot Clown Alley of Washington state, recently took his Last Walk-around. Jim, who was deaf due to a childhood injury, began clowning as his character "Rainbow" in the late 1980s. He was an impeccable whiteface and sported classic costuming. Jim was always passionate about the deaf community and often worked with a sidekick who was hearing but knew American Sign Language (ASL). They were a perfectly matched pair!



The Red Nose Brigade, near Olympia, Washington, was formed in 1994 with Jim as a founding member. He was also a member of Clover Park Clown Alley and later Big Foot Clown Alley in Tacoma, Washington.

Jim was a member of both COAI and WCA.

Jim was always eager to learn new clown skills, especially magic and balloonology, by attending Moose Camp, Clown Camp, and local educational events. His second character, "Rainshine," had a passion for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, often granting "wishes" to children of all ages. Hospital clowning was a passion of his, as well as local community events and birthday parties. He was a founding member of Signing Santa, which paid tribute to Jim this year for his years spent chairing the event. Jim was also very active in his church and taught sign language to the youth so they could give Bible Studies in ASL via YouTube.

"I remember one incident that touched my heart. I'd booked a child's birthday party and while party planning with the child's mom, I learned the child was deaf. I knew no ASL! What to do? Call Jim. He asked to come with me, and he signed my entire party. I offered to pay him but he refused. He said, 'I was happy to share your party with the birthday child.' That was Jim! He loved being a clown and sharing joy wherever he had the opportunity. He will be missed." – Gayle "Stormy" Lindeblom

Thelma "Miss Muddles" Jones

Thelma Jones was born on November 3, 1942, and took her Last Walk-around on June 18, 2024. She was born at St. Mary's Hospital in San Francisco, California, to Lloyd Jones and Evelyn Byrd, and obtained her education at Garfield Elementary school, Horace Mann Junior High, and Mission High School. After graduating, Thelma worked while attending San Francisco State College. She enjoyed her time working as an usherette for the San Francisco Giants football team, and also worked at several offices throughout her career. One of her most beloved memories was picking fruit with Cesar Chavez when she was thirteen or fourteen.



Thelma was married to Ray Garcia from 1965 to 1978, when the couple divorced. She moved to San Diego, California when Ray, who was in the Navy, was relocated there. She had no children.

Thelma's creative spirit led her to become Miss Muddles the Clown. She was active in the San Diego All Star Clowns and enjoyed participating in the Lupus Walk. However, she eventually stopped suiting up because of her health. In her younger years, Thelma was an active hiker. A few of her hiker friends plan to honor her memory by spreading her ashes on her favorite trails.

In May 2024, she was admitted to Scripps Memorial Hospital and later transferred to Grossmont Acute Care Center. She was advised that the surgery she needed was too risky, and she was discharged. She passed away at home on June 18, 2024.

Thelma is survived by her brothers Ron Jones and Ken Jones.

Addis "Big Red" Scott

Addis "Scotty" Scott took his Last Walk-around on July 28, 2024. Scotty, who was known in the clowning world as "Big Red," loved being a clown and especially enjoyed entertaining children and the elderly.

Scotty was born in Texas and raised in Louisiana, Texas, and the Gulf Coast region. Growing up, he moved several times across the United States thanks to the Navy, and eventually landed in San



Diego, California, in 1958. He graduated from San Diego's Kearny High School in 1961, and married his lifelong love, Cookie, on April 14, 1962.

In 1963, Scotty started working for the San Diego Gas & Electric Company, where he progressed from a gas crew laborer to the supervisor of the rate support group before retiring in August 2000. During his time there, he earned his college degrees by attending night school.

His clowning career began in July 1983 when the Optimist Club needed a clown to entertain one hundred orphans from Mexico at a Padre Baseball game. This introduction to the world of clowning ignited a passion that led him to immerse himself in the craft through books, conventions, and active participation in organizations such as COAI, WCA, Western Regional Clown Association, Family and Variety Entertainers, the San Diego All Star Clowns, and the Happy Clowns of Hemet.

As "Big Red," Scotty donated his clown entertainment to nonprofit community service organizations. He frequently visited hospitals, convalescent homes, and children's centers. He also appeared in many local holiday parades.

In January 2005, Scotty and Cookie moved to Hemet, California, where he continued his clowning endeavors while running his own consulting business, Energy Price Solutions. In 2011, Scotty started working as an independent contractor, specializing in balloon twisting for Valley Events and other entertainment booking agents.

Scotty is survived by his wife, Cookie Scott; daughter, Janice (David Newton) Scott-Newton; son, James Scott; grandson, Dylan (Caroline); granddaughter, Holly Newton; great grandsons Maverick, Liam, and Connor (Natalie); and great granddaughter, Lainey.

Beverly "Lollipop" Steele

Beverly "Lollipop" Steele took her Last Walk-around on May 27, 2024.

During the fall of 1999, Beverly took her first clown classes at North Tonawanda High School and graduated in December at the Dale Center in Lockport, New York. She became a member of NCA, attended meetings, and participated in parades once the season began. Often, she would include her grandchildren, especially Megan "Lady Bug" Steele Kropp. Beverly was a member of the Shawnee Fire Company Ladies Auxiliary, and in that capacity, she was instrumental in arranging the NCA meetings to move to Shawnee Fire Hall, where they've been held ever since.

When NCA held its first "Clown College" at Niagara University, Beverly attended along with her daughter Kathleen "Shamrock" Steele. They graduated on April 16, 2003. Beverly



was thoroughly invested in NCA and the Shawnee Fire Company. She opened and closed the doors for the NCA meetings, provided plates, cups, napkins, and other supplies, and made coffee for every

meeting. She and Kathy clowned for the fire company's activities and got the members of NCA to participate in the Shawnee Fire Company field day parades. Because of all her work and effort for NCA, Beverly was presented a Certificate of Appreciation in April 2010—definitely well deserved! She continued that service to NCA until her health no longer allowed it.

Face painting and parades were her favorite activities because she enjoyed the interaction with children. She also enjoyed baking and was an excellent cake decorator. She made many of the cakes and cupcakes for the clown classes and other special events. Beverly always had a warm welcoming smile for everyone and loved her clown friends. She touched many hearts and certainly will never be forgotten, for she will always hold a special place in our hearts, too!

She now joins her husband Graham "Sandy" Steele, who enjoyed the NCA activities and parades and predeceased Beverly. She's survived by her children Randall G. (Jennifer) Steele and Kathleen J. Steele, as well as several grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. **TNC**

Send notices of clown friends and family who have made their last walk-around to the COAI Business Office at coaioffice@aol.com. When possible, include photos in clown and also out of makeup. Thank you.

Ring of Honor Recognition

By Teresa "Blondi" Gretton

The Ring of Honor is a special recognition by Clowns of America International to members who have passed away but made a significant difference within our organization. The "Ring" is a tribute to those who stood out undeniably in guiding COAI to new standards with their leadership and brought a profound distinction to our world of clowning and COAI.

The Ring of Honor was created in 2012. Since that time COAI has mourned the loss of nineteen of these meritorious COAI clowns whose lives centered on leadership, education, creativity, and entertainment of varying degrees and avenues of clowning. It is an extension of their "Last Walkaround."

To bring renewed remembrance of these souls, *The New Calliope* will be highlighting their clowning accomplishments, beginning with this issue.

Judy "Dear Heart" Quest

October 9, 1948–Feb 9, 2023



Judy, the seventh COAI President served one term from 1998-2000. Prior to her presidency, she served several terms as Treasurer. She was a visionary. She initiated the concepts for several of the programs and awards COAI has today. She also continued her service both on and off the board working with the president and education director in selecting scholarships. In 2012, she felt a calling to fill the role of Regional Vice President for the North Central region

until she was elected for the Office of Alley and Regional Support in 2016-2018.

Judy lived up to her clown name, as she was truly a "Dear Heart" in everything she believed and was known to give out "dear heart" awards in her presidency. In 2008 she was named Clown of the Year, and in 2019 she became the recipient of the COAI Lifetime Achievement award. She was a mainstay in her Alley #147, Omaha Wild Clowndum, as their treasurer. She created what has become the infamous Rubber Chicken Orchestra (which played at her funeral).

Jeanne "Freckles the Clown" Woska

June, 1947–January 24, 2021



Jeanne Woska never occupied a seat on the Board of Directors but she was very active on Standing Committees and vocal within the membership. Jeanne promoted conventions with details in efforts to bring attendance and attention to competitions, membership meetings, theme parties, and banquets. She would announce through the group information on recipients of special awards, like the Clown of the Year, Lifetime Achievement, and Ring of Honor. Jeanne also wore the badges of 2010 Clown of the Year, 2018 Lifetime Achiever, and 2021 Ring of Honor. She also lent knowledge through the Historian Committee.

Jeanne's professional clowning life was filled with the love of others. She invested much of her time in her region of clown education through the Northeast Clown Council running regional conventions, judging competitions, and serving Clown Alley 107, The Greater Hartford Clowns. She was a die-hard competitor as well with many competition awards in all makeup categories plus both single and group skits. Her advice and assistance to new and experienced clowns proved to be fruitful in the clowning world. She is recognized for having the heart of a clown.



ISTOCK

Newborn babies communicate through cries and laughter. Emotion was our first language! However, as we mature into adults, we strive to suppress and control these emotions. Releasing these submerged feelings is important for our mental balance and health. When we help those around us to shed a tear then laugh aloud, we lift an overwhelming weight from their chests. The melding of laughter and tears are nature's greatest healing tools.

This masterful level of clowning is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit — a gentle reminder that even in the face of life's challenges, we can find reasons to smile and laugh through our tears. This unique connection helps observers with a genuine fear of clowns to look past the character and establish a rapport with the person beneath the paint. Touching the hearts of the unreachable is the mark of a true artist. **TNC**

Skip Way has been a professional children's entertainer for more than forty-five years. Upon retiring from the Air Force, he settled in Raleigh, North Carolina, and began working stand-up comedy and military clubs along the East Coast. While lucrative, he missed the laughter of children and returned to a career in family entertainment as a classic kidshow performer named Happy Dan. Reach him by e-mail at rway@nc.rr.com.

The Kidshow Way



THE HEART OF A CLOWN

By Skip Way

I believe that the peak for a great clown occurs when a child or adult approaches and confesses, “Clowns generally frighten me, but there’s something different about you.” I treasure these moments above all others.

If we ask the average street Joe to describe a clown, we’ll hear about garish make-up, bright wigs, colorful clothing, floppy shoes, and buffoonish behavior. Ask your average club clown to define the qualities of a great clown and they’ll run down the list of white gloves, full facial paint, pristine custom wardrobes, and beautifully timed Vaudevillian skits.


Both views miss the most important and the only true defining skill behind the best clowns – The Heart. Our emotional “hearts” house the theatrical elements of comedy and drama. Comedy induces amusement and provides an escape from the rigors of daily life. Drama draws upon the burning depths of tragedy, love, and loss. Yet, when a talented artist merges these two diverse emotional streams, something magical happens.

Our brains allow us to learn through the experiences of others. We see ourselves in roles portrayed by different people, in different settings, and at different points in time, by merely watching or listening as they tell a story. We don’t laugh or cry because of something that happened to the clown. We react because the clown has tapped into a memory hidden deep inside of our hearts. The clown’s invitation to react releases some of the residual pain connected to that memory.

Aristotle introduced this concept of “catharsis” in his Greek tragedies. He observed that including deep emotional suffering in his plays lead to emotional healing in his audiences. He watched audiences leave his plays feeling uplifted and cleansed after confronting their own feelings, fears, and vulnerabilities through his scripted portrayals.

The true masters of this unique skill include such luminaries as Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Lucille Ball, Emmett Kelley, Lou Jacobs, and David Copperfield. Their storytelling skillfully carries us to the brink of tears and then invites us to laugh. And it’s okay! They resonate with us because they mirror the complexities of real life.

From the earliest days of commedia dell’arte and pantomime, the clown has served as a fulcrum balancing these two theatrical traits. Clowning from the heart is rooted in the idea of authenticity and being true to oneself. It is about mirroring real emotions and experiences in a way that is both entertaining and meaningful.



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CLOWN COMICS

OH BABY!

Fred "Ozzie" Baisch

Featuring: Ann "Tuttles" Sanders and Tim "Sawdust" Laynor
Members of Kolonial Klowns – Alley #357

Script: Ann "Tuttles" Sanders

Photos: Ann "Tuttles" Sanders and Tim "Sawdust" Laynor

911.
What's your
emergency?



My wife is going
into labor.



What should I
do?



Is this her
first child?



No...



This is her
husband!





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April 29 – May 2

Name: _____ Clown Name: _____

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First time at a COAI Convention? Yes No

Registration Amount

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(compensation for exchange rate)

Daily rates \$150

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