

# THE NEW CALLIÖPE

Members of Clowns of America International

November / December 2020  
Volume 37 • Number 6



**Steve and Debbie Finch**

**“Dr. Bud” and “DaMissus the Clown”**

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# “Dr. Bud” and “DaMissus the Clown”

## Steve and Debbie Finch

### FOUR DECADES OF CLOWNING TOGETHER

By Rose Cardenas

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL MESSING

When *The New Calliope* announced that this year’s COAI cover auction would be held online since the convention was postponed, Steve and Debbie Finch participated in the auction to celebrate reaching the milestone of clowning together for forty years. The Finches and their three children have provided family entertainment at fairs, festivals, parades, corporate events, birthday parties, picnics, and more with balloons, face painting, and magic for more than four decades.

Steve got his start in clowning as a marketing strategy for his toy store in Plano, Texas, back in 1982. Since then, both he and Debbie have studied at Clown School and gained the skills they’ve needed to carry them into life as full-time performers. In addition, they have participated in COAI, WCA, and Circus Magic conventions and benefitted greatly from them. Steve and Debbie belong to Just Clowning Around of Northern Virginia, COAI Clown Alley #170, and Steve has served as the Alley’s vice president in the past.

The Finches have invested in the art of clowning by teaching classes on magic and balloon art for others. In addition, they have made it possible for top-quality clowns, including Glen “Frosty” Little, to come to the Alley to share and develop the clowns’ skills. For the past twenty-five years, they have also maintained the website for International Clown Week.

Performing as “Dr. Bud” and “DaMissus the Clown,” the Finches have done everything from small birthday parties to magic shows before thousands of spectators. Debbie specializes in face painting, and Steve is a balloonologist. Their clown characters



have evolved over the years, and their makeup has moved from typical white face to lite auguste. Steve feels strongly that, as a large man, heavy makeup can increase the tendency of children to be

afraid of him. Currently, the Finches use a light makeup or none at all in their performances.

One of the most important aspects of the Finches' performance lives has been the participation of their three children. All three have been a major part of their shows. Their son not only performed with them but has also taught balloon classes with them. Their younger daughter began sculpting balloons when she was two or three years old. As a teen, their son was often embarrassed to be a part of the shows, but he was also proud to have the opportunity to juggle (fake) chainsaws on the Mall in Washington, D.C., before a thousand spectators! Steve and Debbie are thrilled with the arrival of their first grandchild and await a new performer for their shows.

Over the years, Steve and Debbie have experienced many opportunities to create memories in their lives and the lives of many others. Their most memorable performances include the White House Easter Egg Roll and a Harley Davidson show on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Although these top-level performances



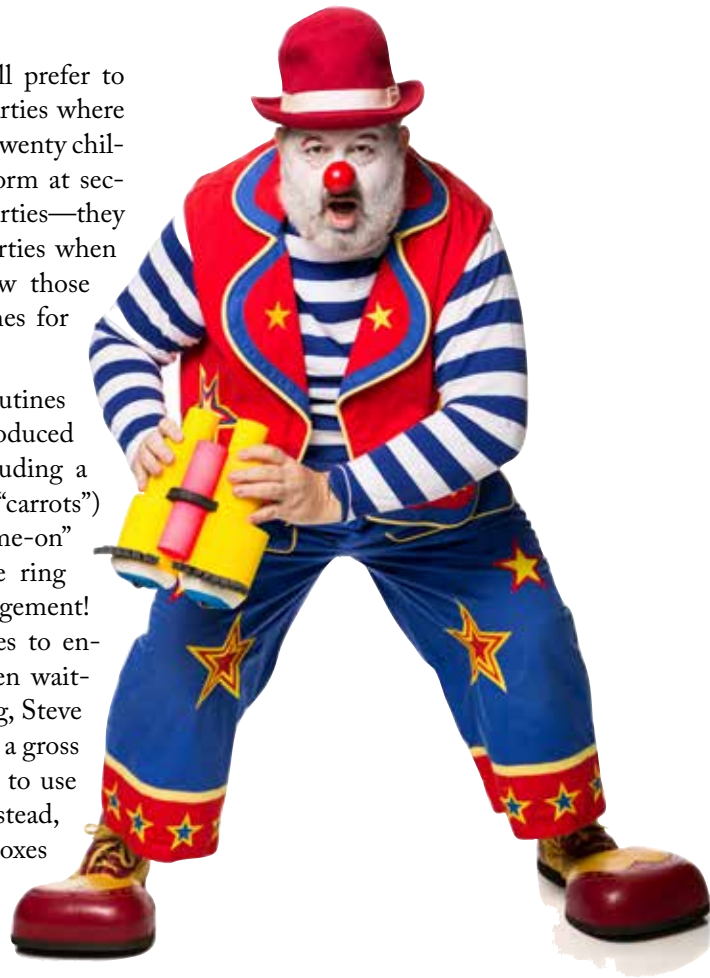
are exciting, the Finches still prefer to perform at small birthday parties where they can interact with ten to twenty children. It thrills them to perform at second-generation birthday parties—they performed at the parents' parties when they were children, and now those same people book the Finches for their own children's parties.

One of Steve's primary routines involves a series of rings produced to entertain the crowd, including a three-carat ring (with three "carrots") and a diamond ring (a "dime-on" ring). At least one of these ring routines led to an actual engagement! While planning new routines to entertain the crowds of children waiting for Debbie's face painting, Steve ordered what he thought was a gross of magic wands for children to use in his change bag routine. Instead, they ended up with a 144 boxes of wands, each containing 144 wands! Steve and Debbie had plenty of wands to present to the children who helped in their act.

One of Debbie's fondest memories was the thrill of walking in the Falls Church Memorial Day Parade with their children carrying the Alley banner in front of the Just Clowning Around clowns.

One mom booked the Finches for the birthday party of her triplets. Though they shared a birthday, the children's mother wanted each of them to have a different magic show. Steve pulled out all his tricks, including his rabbit routine. When he produced a white rabbit for one child, a black rabbit for the second, and then a black-and-white rabbit for the third, the children were astounded.

Steve and Debbie Finch have devoted their lives to sharing the happiness of clowns. Steve says, "Laughter is better



than anger." They have not only been able to bring that laughter to their audiences, but they have also brought that laughter into their community to diffuse difficult situations. Steve and Debbie have been involved in special education classrooms, guiding teachers and aides to deal with tension and frustration by adding humor. In addition, Steve has acted as a consultant with the police department to help officers understand how to diffuse anger with laughter. These efforts have made a positive impact on their community.

What a wonderful opportunity to celebrate forty years of magic! Steve and Debbie Finch have loved these years in clowning. For them, it has been the perfect way to raise a family by including their children in their acts, vacationing at clown conventions, and being a clown family. They have met and shared their lives with many wonderful people in clowning and magic. They have touched many lives and created amazing memories, and they are not done yet! **TNC**

# THE PROFESSIONAL FACE PAINTER

By Richard “Design-O” Smith

with Rachel Strnad

Happy holidays!

In my last article, I touched on a couple subjects that I realized need articles in their own right: face painting and balloon sculpting. Especially in the last decade, more and more people are specializing on one or the other of these art forms, many times shedding the clown costume, skits, and gags, and focusing solely on the chosen art form. This article will discuss face painting specifically, and we’ll tackle balloon art in the next one.

I’m sure I don’t need to tell many of you that as an entertainer, and thus a small business owner, the task of figuring out your business’s (you, in this case) professional look falls to you. If you are just starting out as a new entertainer, this task can be daunting, but it is essential.

Let’s start with your personal presentation, since you’re the face of your business. Especially if you are going as a plain clothes artist, with no clown costume or makeup between you and your client, you should give your personal appearance the same consideration as though you were coming in costume. Do you look clean and professional? Are you careful on the drive over that you’ve not gotten rumpled or disheveled in the car?

Do you keep up with your face painting education either online or by taking classes? I always try to take face painting classes at conventions to keep up with the latest trends in equipment and designs. I then practice new designs at home to see if I’m able to do them. I keep an eye out particularly for designs that work for boys: a tribal design or some tattoo. We seem to have plenty of designs for girls, but not as many for boys.

Beyond being prepared in general, how prepared are you for this specific event? Do you know what designs you will be offering appropriate to the occasion and have you practiced them enough so you have an idea how long they will take? Ninety-eight percent of my work is corporate, which means I have hundreds of children to make happy at any given event. Thus, I’ve narrowed my designs down to ones I can do in seconds and made up cards with my menu, as it were, that are easily visible for the kids while standing in line. Make sure your clients know what you’re offering with a clearly laid out card or booklet they can look through

Have you made sure none of the designs could be offensive? This may seem like a minor detail, and it seldom happens in my experience, but it is worthwhile to think carefully about your design choices.

Do you have ideas in place to be flexible? Someone might ask for something “off menu.” Are you prepared to accommodate with something that will take a similar amount of time as the rest of your designs? Also keep in mind that you might end up doing that design, or even one of your pre-planned designs, over and over again.

Do you have ideas for making it unique to the child and to prevent it becoming monotonous?

For example, I offer a unicorn on my list of face painting designs. Many times, that is what every little girl at my event wants. However, there are plenty of things I can do to change up my unicorn. I ask each child what color they would like, but I also add glasses, goatees, hats. Pretty much anything can be changed up on the basic design.

Do you know how many people you will be expected to paint? That factors into what designs you might choose, but also how you prepare yourself emotionally and physically. If you are an introvert and you’re going to be talking almost



non-stop with people for several hours, it will do you good to schedule in some alone time beforehand so you don’t burn out. Since you will be sitting for a long time and might not get breaks, making sure you’ve eaten beforehand and have stretched are also good ideas.

Do you have a business card or brochure of some kind explaining who you are and what you offer? If your clients appreciate your work, they will likely want to hire you again and will ask for your contact information to keep on file.



You also might have other guests asking for information, so you need to be ready with something that provides an accurate, professional representation of your business along with up-to-date contact information.

Now that you are all ready to go, how about your equipment and paraphernalia?

I've included a couple examples from my own arsenal and I'd like to point out a few things.

First, notice the elements in each kit: paint, brushes and/or sponges, a vessel for washing brushes between colors, a visual list of available designs, and cleaning solution (I use alcohol and water). I have not included these in the pictures, but you will also need towels or some kind of cloth to clean up.

While, as you can see from the pictures, paint kits come in various sizes as appropriate to your event, they should all have these elements, and each element should meet the following criteria: it's safe, good quality, and long-lasting.

When purchasing paint, I recommend finding a simple, professional kit that has a good reputation among face painters if you are first starting out. I've built up

my collection over many years, and researched and tested different brands till I've found ones I liked. I highly recommend this process, not only to make sure your paint is safe (even trusted brands might still have some duds), but to find the kind of paint you enjoy working with the most. Remember, this is your primary tool. If you don't like working with it, you won't get good results and *you* won't last many events. This is another reason to get larger quantities of paint than you might find in your typical Wal-Mart kit. Not only will you need enough to last you through more than one (preferably ten or more) corporate event, but you should be testing your paint on any and everyone who is willing to sit for you to make sure it yields consistent, high-quality results on all skin types.

This same consideration goes for brushes and sponges. I would also add that they should withstand multiple cleanings as well without looking too ratty and be replaced the moment they start down that path. Your brushes are likely going to be your most frequently replaced piece of equipment.

Once you have your supplies, how do you store them? Notice that, regardless of the type of face painting case I use, my paint is always in contained jars or vinyl, bead-box-like containers that are sealable. This keeps the paint from mixing or spilling. My water jars also have sealable lids. Even if you have more solid, or paste-like paint, you have no idea how the case itself is going to be handled. The last thing you need is to open up your case at the event and find a mess of spilled paint and leaking jars.

This consideration also influences how I structure my cases. I have each paint container velcroed to the bottom of my steel Louis Vuitton suitcases, so they aren't budging an inch no matter which direction the case is turned. My leather bags are still structured very much like a cube, so the paint containers have a framework to rest in. Since the bag is also much less floppy than my secondary bag, which never has paint in it, you or



anyone else with sense is not going to shove it in a car or corner upside down or sideways, or any which way other than on its bottom.

Speaking of bags and cases, these should meet the same criteria as the rest of your supplies. I made all my bags and covered the Louis Vuitton case myself, so I know exactly how well they are made. However, even if you aren't planning on taking this extra step, be very selective in your choice of case or bag. It should last you longer than your first few changes of paint. It also needs to look professional; showing up with a Rubbermaid of supplies is not going to cut it for very long. On a personal note, I also recommend choosing specifically a vinyl or metal case over a wood one, or at least a vinyl covered case. Even if your wood case is finished well, dings and scuffs will show up a whole lot quicker than on a vinyl case.

Vinyl is also fairly easy to clean up quickly. Cleanliness is a priority in this business. I've had clients complain they don't like working with face painters because their equipment is always messy. You can help change that bad reputation by making sure your equipment is always neat and clean. This means cleaning your equipment thoroughly with the proper cleaning solution (again, research and testing are your friend here) after each event.

This is easier said than done, I understand, especially if you have multiple events in a day. Some of the advice I have already given will help speed up this process, like how you store your paint

and brushes. If everything is essentially ready to go when you open your case, that speeds up your prep and strike time immensely.

In addition, as I said before, bring your own spray bottle of cleaner. I recommend also using dark towels. They will hide a multitude of sins, especially if you have several events in a row and can't wash them in between. Lastly, bring a vinyl (remember, vinyl can be easily and quickly wiped down) cover for your table, especially if you are being provided with a table. This will not only protect the surface, but it's one more element to helping you create a polished look in your set-up. I store all this extra material in my second bag, which is much less structured, as you can see.

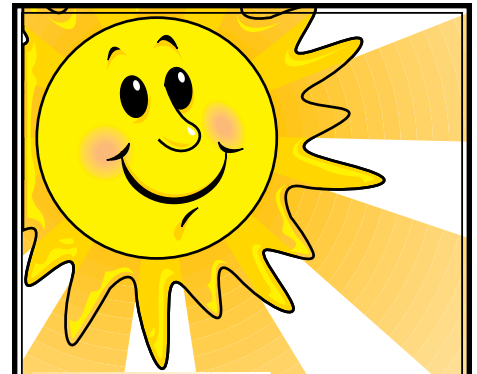
As with your actual painting, I also recommend practicing your set-up and strike routine so you can move quickly on busy days. I've been doing this long enough that it literally takes me seconds

to wipe everything down, put the extras in my secondary bag, and close everything up. At the next event, all I might have to do is change out my water.

And with that, you're all set! If you follow even some of the advice in this article, you're already well on your way to success as a professional face painter. I will leave you with this one last bit of advice—after you've done your event and gone home, send a thank-you to your host and the kids for letting you come make them smile. Not only are you ending on a gracious note with them, you are ensuring you stay in their memory the next time they need a face painter.

I hope this article was helpful. I'd love to hear your ideas and advice on what makes a good face painter. Please feel free to look me up on Facebook under Richard Smith, or e-mail [thenewcalliope@gmail.com](mailto:thenewcalliope@gmail.com).

Until next time, bump a nose! **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.

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## Are You Enjoying Your New Member Benefit?

All COAI members may now access free books on the COAI website at [www.mycoai.com](http://www.mycoai.com). The growing library is a companion to The Vault, which hosts thirty-seven years of *The New Calliope*. In the "Free Books" section, members can now read such titles as COAI's *Clowning Basics*, David Ginn's *Starting in Magic* and *Keep It a Secret*, Leslie Ann Akin's *Adventures in Clowning*, and Samuel Patrick Smith's *Big Laughs for Little People*. Additional titles will be added throughout the year. These books have a retail value of more than twice a COAI annual membership. Please note that these are not available as downloads but may be read online using your computer, smartphone, or tablet.





## From the President

Adam Schill

Our board has been busy coming up with new ways to engage our membership and provide value to you! In October, we began hosting monthly educational opportunities via Zoom that we like to call Zoom Booms! These are virtual workshops that last an hour to an hour and a half, teaching all sorts of different skillsets that are valuable additions to the art of clowning and family entertainment. So far we have had Halloween-themed face painting and balloons in October, I taught a class on Balloon Candy Cups in November, and former COAI President (and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient) Brenda Marshall taught a class on Mrs. Claus (valuable to any Christmas Performer) in December. We have had a great turnout every month. If you've missed any of them but would like to see the recordings, just e-mail me and I'll send you the links!

We have a couple of board positions and committee spots that have recently opened in a variety of different sectors of our organization, so if you're committed to giving back to our amazing industry, and looking for a way to get involved with our amazing

organization, please get ahold of me, and we will get you plugged in! Anyone is eligible for most committee positions.

Board positions require that you have been a COAI member in good standing (dues paid) for at least the last two years.

In the meantime, if you have any ideas of ways that we could make our organization even more valuable to our membership, we'd love to have you reach out with your ideas!

TNC



We are super excited to announce that we have set up an

## online merchandise store

for all of the coolest COAI gear to make your friends jealous! At the moment we have three different designs, with many different merchandise options for those designs. A portion of all sales comes back to support COAI and helps us to keep dues low and provide quality benefits for our members! We have everything from T-shirts, sweatshirts, onesies, phone cases, mugs—you name it! Everything is available in men's, women's, children's, and babies' sizes. And they all come in a huge rainbow of different colors! You can check it out at [www.teespring.com/stores/coai](http://www.teespring.com/stores/coai).





**First-Time Lecturers  
for the 2021  
COAI Convention  
“The Mighty”**

By Connie “Punkin” Morrow

“The Mighty” 2021 has added new lecturers to the 2021 COAI Convention, to be held April 6 through April 11 in Niagara Falls, New York. Easily Amused started out as the Flower City Vaudeville Troupe. They were well known around the Rochester area in New York with members Ward Hartenstein and Richard Hughson. In 2019, a new partner, Joanne Brokaw, joined the pair, and the group became Easily Amused. Juggling, slapstick, music, and just about anything to make you laugh are their claim to fame.

As they consider their lectures knowing they don’t do traditional clowning, Ward says their group has looked at their material and asked themselves what will work for clowning. They came to the conclusion that anyone who likes Lucille Ball, Carol Burnett, The Three Stooges, and Red Skelton will find humor in what they do. Even people not old enough to know these famous comedians will laugh at the Easily Amused show.

Here are short bios of each of these entertainers and others who will be presenting a lecture at the 2021 Convention.

### Joanne Brokaw

Joanne grew up in Gates, New York, a suburb of Rochester. As a child, she loved gathering friends to put on shows in the garage. She says, “I wrote stories, made greeting cards, drew, dreamed, and played. But like many adults, as I aged, I left behind my sense of play.” In college, she realized that she could still choose a creative life and began writing for newspapers, magazines, and humor columns.

Joanne now leads workshops to help people push past fear and embrace their creativity. An award-winning humor columnist and freelance feature writer, Joanne has won several awards. Her second book, *Suddenly Stardust*, is a wonky little memoir about fear, freedom, and improv.

Joanne is an avid birder and battler of the squirrels in her spare time. She has two dogs, Bailey and Bandit, and a chicken named Lucy who is eleven years old and the last of her flock. She is a big fan of British TV and binges on BritBox and Acorn TV.

### Ward Hartenstein

After ten years of piano lessons during his childhood, Ward was sure he never wanted to perform in public again. Performance art came about in the late 1970s, and the rules changed. You could perform any kind of weirdness, and no one would know if you made a mistake.

Ward has a degree in ceramics from Rochester Institute of Technology. After finishing his degree, he began producing and marketing unique percussion instruments and sound sculptures made of clay. This led to a twenty-year series of guest composer and performer appearances with the Eastman School of Music’s Percussion Department. Along with these gigs, he was writing and performing music for choreographers, filmmakers, poets, and local rock bands. One of his greatest joys was working with local choreographer, Anne Harris Wilcox, to write and perform the music score for a Halloween modern dance suite.

Ward later veered off into education, which is still his mainstay. He has been a teaching artist for over three decades, performing workshops and interactive music-making activities in area schools, libraries, and cultural institutions. If he is put in front of a group of four or



Rich, Joanne, and Ward are Easily Amused.

five-year-olds, they will follow him anywhere. Who wants a parade? To this day, he judges his humor against what makes a five-year-old giggle.

Ward's other interests include kite flying, running, gardening, cooking, and crossword puzzles. He has lived in upstate New York since 1967.

Ward Hartenstein is a performance artist who claims that he can make a musical instrument out of just about anything. Well, maybe not oatmeal. But hold on, he just had an idea for a gravity-assisted oatmeal splat-o-phone! That is how Ward's mind works. As a manipulator of objects, he is irrepressibly drawn to things that make sounds—weird sounds, silly sounds, musical sounds, and sounds that defy description.

### **Richard Hughson**

Richard Hughson has an alter ego named Loopy. He has always loved clowns and recalls being taken to a one-ring circus when he was just a little clown. It was the mid-1950s, and a clown entertaining in the midst of the audience. Everyone loved it. Then, the clown looked straight at him and started to walk toward him. He was thrilled! "He was coming right to me! Little, old me!" He couldn't believe his luck of being singled out by the clown. Then, his little sister started to cry. She was too young for that clown to be that close to her. Being kind, compassionate, and professional, the clown turned and went in the direction of another family. He still blames his sister for that clown not coming to him.

Rich has explored acting, directing, mime, improv, and experimental theater, along with martial arts, all done to enhance his clowning performances. In his non-clown life, he was a mechanic and machinist. When retirement came along, he was set to be a full-time performer. Richard has said that he is a natural show off. He has always enjoyed performing, but his greatest joy is working in hospitals. He could write a book about



*Bill Baldwin.*

all the things that will tear your heart out and make it grow ten times its size!

When asked about awards, Rich says he won an award at Seaside Heights, New Jersey, with an original skit once, but he says that, because he's lazy and likes to rest on his laurels, he hasn't competed since.

Rich has played in a variety of venues, including the Rochester Fringe Festival. He's even performed his Rola-Bola routine on top of an old hay wagon, which was doing its own Rola-Bola beneath him.

Since 1993, Rich has performed solo and with various partners. He has known Ward Hartenstein's work for over a decade and been impressed with Joanne's improv work. When the Flower City Vaudeville Troupe disbanded, Ward and Rich reached out to Joanne Browkaw. They wanted to see if she was crazy enough to work with them. They found themselves fortunate that she was eager to jump in.

### **Bill Baldwin**

Another new lecturer at the COAI Convention is Bill Baldwin. Born and raised in Kenmore, New York, a suburb of Buffalo, Bill began clowning over forty years ago with a local youth group. He became a member of Buffalo Clown Alley and the Jolly Raleigh Alley and later served as Vice President and Education

Director. In 1987, he graduated from the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Clown College and was on his way as an RBBB clown! Through Ringling, he performed on Main Street, USA, at Disneyland's Circus Fantasy in 1988.

During his performance career, Bill has worked the amusement park circuit across the US and Canada, performing at Riverside Park in Springfield, Massachusetts, Lake Compounce, The Great Escape, and Boblo Island. However, his primary performance venue has been his hometown park, Fantasy Island. He's done clown shows, a Dixieland clown band, costume character shows, puppet shows, song and dance reviews, and magic shows, but he's been performing his Western stunt show in which he plays the nasty bad guy, Black Bart, for the past twenty-four years. I can vouch for the entertainment value of Black Bart! I've even seen him fall off that roof!

Bill has a bachelor's degree in technical theater, and he specialized in set design and construction, costume design, and lighting design. These got him into working, designing, and building haunted attractions across the US, especially Castle Blood in Monessan, Pennsylvania.

When he's not falling off roofs for a living, Bill loves soccer, the outdoors, and horseback riding. (He says that sounds like a dating site entry!) He has won numerous awards and taught makeup and performance at both regional and international conventions.

In his lecture, Bill will talk about how to be less pedestrian and more "clowny!" Using how we move, communicate, and we present ourselves, he will build your clown into what makes you different from the others.

Be sure to register for the 2021 COAI Convention to be held at the beautiful Sheraton Niagara Falls, Tuesday, April 6 through Sunday, April 11 in Niagara Falls, New York! Visit [www.coaic convention.com](http://www.coaic convention.com) to register online.

# ARE YOU READY?

By Patricia “Pricilla Mooseburger” Manuel

Are you ready? You may be thinking, “Ready for what?” Are you ready for the pandemic to be over and get back to clowning around? That’s right! It is time to formulate your entry back into clowning.

Napoleon Bonaparte said, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” We are in the middle of winter, and many of us are still experiencing health and travel restrictions. With the vaccine on the horizon, there will be an end to this pandemic. We will be able to move on within the next six months. Things will not immediately go back to normal, but we will see a lifting of restrictions. Events will soon start being planned. If we don’t plan to get back into action, we will be left sitting on the curb.

If you are a volunteer, make sure you keep in touch with the places where you usually perform. We don’t know who is in charge anymore, but a simple letter, phone call, or e-mail should do the trick. Keep it short and sweet because these people will be very busy after the restrictions are lifted. Here is an example:

Dear Activities Director,

I hope this letter finds you, your staff, and residents well. Please keep The Clown Rounds in mind for when you start scheduling entertainment as visitation restrictions are lifted. We are ready to bring joy and silliness to you all! I look forward to sharing our ideas with you.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe The Clown Rounds

E-mail, phone number, address

Now that we have that done, it is time to look at our tools. Wash those wigs, polish those shoes, and try on your favorite costume. Don’t assume it will still fit after nine months of being packed away. You might need to order some new items, replace old makeup, and complete other preparation tasks. Don’t wait—plan these now.

We may be avoiding the coronavirus, but sheltering in place is not good for anyone’s health. Chances are we have put on a few pounds and lost some of our fitness level. Now is the time to make a concerted effort to change this. For those up north, you can start walking once the ice and snow have melted. Get back to the gym or start an exercise routine to improve your cardiovascular health. I’m no health nut, but I do know that it is hard to jump right back into activity if you have been stuck on the couch for nine months.

Next, start practicing! What is the one thing you really wish you could improve on before we hit the stage or street again? Puppetry, magic, face painting, storytelling? Now is the time to get on a practice schedule.

My friend, Iman Lizarazu, is the most dedicated performing artist. She brought her violin with her to Mooseburger Camp all the way from California. She is a middle-aged woman who decided she wanted to learn how to play the violin, which is not exactly like picking up the kazoo or ukulele. I will tell you, the first time I heard her play it sounded like someone was pulling a cat through a keyhole by the tail! But the next time I heard her, a year later, she had really improved. She practiced every day. She took lessons, and she had a goal. I have no doubt we will see her performing with that violin in the near future, and it will be wonderful. How did she do it? She had



dedication, and she had a plan. She surrounds herself with positive people who encourage and challenge her.

I know a group of women, the Red Nose Uke Chicks, who get together every couple of weeks to practice their ukuleles. The most important thing they gain is laughter and happiness. You can’t help but feel better after a session with them. No concert dates have been set, but they are improving. I can watch the stress and frustration with the isolation of the pandemic melt away as they bang out the tunes.

You may not become an expert, but that is not the point. It is about engaging in something new. It is about the journey, not reaching the goal, that really counts. I have been talking about getting that bunny puppet for years! Now is the time for me to do it. I am excited about the Puppets Only meeting we will be having with Karen Hoyer for the Mooseburger e-Alley. I will be a true novice, but I am very excited about learning a new skill. How about you? Don’t get left on the curb. Make that plan. There really is no way to fail. Just remember to have fun!

The pandemic will end, and we will see it in the rearview mirror of history. Let’s make sure we have a happy ending by using the skills we have gained. The new ideas generated from this mandatory reset have the potential for good, our own good. Create one small goal to achieve by next summer. Create a realistic schedule and ways of measuring your progress. Then, tell me all about it when you see me at the next convention or Mooseburger event! **TNC**

# A Season of Giving

By Samuel Patrick Smith

In February 1920, in the dead of winter, the great American magician, Harry Houdini, took his show to Edinburgh, Scotland. He was shocked to see barefoot children on the street. According to biographer William Lindsey Gresham, Houdini placed an announcement in the newspaper inviting children without shoes to come to the theater. Then he ordered footwear for three hundred and, with the enthusiastic help of the theater's cast, began fitting the barefoot youngsters. When the supply was exhausted, he took the remaining children to local stores and bought shoes for every one of them.

Historian Kenneth Silverman wrote of Houdini: "for all his penny-pinching on small matters, his generosity on large ones was prodigal....He often handed gold-pieces to the down-and-out and sent checks to 'folks in need.' Not only checks: he gave many benefit performances at charity hospitals and orphan asylums."

He asked no compensation for his charitable work, and received none, other than the satisfaction of helping alleviate the suffering of others. Houdini noted, "My sympathies always go out to the old and helpless."

A sympathetic spirit indicates emotional intelligence, mental maturity, and humility. For all of Houdini's self-promotional bluster, he apparently felt in his heart the sentiment of John Wesley: "There, but for the grace of God, go I." Houdini had known poverty and disgrace; he was not inclined to judge others who were still trapped in an economic quagmire.

Howard Thurston, another famous magician of the day, also gave generously of his time and resources, especially to disabled children and orphans. Like Houdini, Thurston had known the pangs of poverty; unlike Houdini, who died in 1926, Thurston again experienced financial havoc during the Great Depression. Yet even in the 1930s, as his once-fabulous career crumbled and people had to choose between food and tickets to his show, Thurston found a way to deliver gifts to orphans.

Like all of us, these two great magicians had shortcomings. Yet Houdini and Thurston shared the admirable quality of looking beyond their own interests, of feeling sympathetic toward others—and then doing something about it.



Houdini entertains at a Milwaukee children's ward, 1925.

When we're too busy examining the holes in our shoes, we may overlook the fact that others are barefooted. Feeling that the world revolves around us—and treating others as if it does—is an absurd confinement from which we should all be so lucky to escape.

Traditionally, December is a month of giving, but why shouldn't we—like Houdini and Thurston—exemplify this spirit throughout the year? Those who do are truly among the greats in the world of entertainment. **TNC**

## Write for The New Calliope!

We count on you to keep this magazine chock full of interesting and educational clown fun. But you may be thinking, "I don't have anything to write about." Never fear! Here is a list of topics we'd love to see featured in upcoming issues.

**Your Favorite Story:** Share a favorite experience in your clown career that makes you pause and say, "This is why I do what I do."

**Costumes:** How do you make a costume on a budget? How do you care for and clean your costume? How does your clown face affect your costume choices?

**Noses:** Tell us about them. What goes into choosing a nose? What are the pros and cons of a glue-on versus a nose attached with string? We'd even welcome hilarious incidents with clown noses.

**Wigs:** How do you choose a wig? What constitutes a quality clown wig versus a cheap knockoff? How does your clown persona affect choosing a wig?

**Skits, Patter, and Movement:** We'd like some in-depth looks on the process and methodology behind putting together a good clown routine.

**Marketing and Taxes:** How do you market yourself as an entertainer? How do you handle payments? Do you know an accounting expert? How about interviewing them.

**Hospital Clowning:** Benefits, cautions, best practices.

**Places We've Been:** Are you a globe trotter? Maybe you've clowned in all manner of strange places here in the States. Tell us about your adventures!

If you're interested in contributing, e-mail us at [thenewcalliope@gmail.com](mailto:thenewcalliope@gmail.com).

# Intro to Walk-Arounds

By Jim “Donuts” Donoughe

When we as entertainers are hired or volunteering to do walk-around, entertainment is what the costumers want. Walk-around is a way to hone your skills as a beginner while you work on other skills. It is also great for small entertainment and perfecting your craft.

You don't want to just hand out stickers, and that be that. They can pay a kid a lot less to walk around and hand out stickers. Don't forget the entertainment!

When doing walk-around, always follow the golden rule of KISS: Keep It Simple, Stupid. Your audience will change every few feet. Show two or three gags, depending on the complexity of the interaction, and then seek out a new crew. This allows you to set the pace and determine how hard you work. Some guests will walk away on their own, and some won't. If you don't know how to break away after a few gags, simply say, “I hope you have a great day,” and tell them that you need to go and entertain others. Another technique is to say, “Excuse me!” and call out, “Larry! Hey, Larry!” as you walk away. “Larry” could be your running gag as you walk around calling Larry or any other name. People will get used to hearing it and ask if you found him yet. You can come up with any number of stories of how you keep missing them.

## Great Walk-Around Gags

### Stickers

Stickers are the go-to giveaway, and that's fine, but you have to make them entertaining. Make it seem like a sticker is stuck to your finger and try to shake it off. When it won't come off, try and grab it with the other hand. Then, it will be stuck on your other hand. Allow the child to save you by pulling off your finger. It's entertaining!



*Assembly. Ring a Dings.*



*Donuts and Punkin.*

### Handshakes

The best gags are totally free! A simple handshake can play big and requires nothing. These three handshake gags are easy to do with kids.

**Sticky Touch.** Act like your hand is stuck or glued to the kid when you shake his hand. Don't let go! Act like you want to get unstuck or ad lib with the kid about the sticky hands. You can also get a laugh by saying, “Spiderman! I won't tell anyone you're here! That's why I must be stuck!”

**Super Strong.** As you shake hands, jump up and down as if the child is lifting you off the ground. Comment on her strength and then let go of her hand and proceed. Again, you can call her by any strong superhero name like Superman.

**Shake Hurts.** Shake a child's hand and then act like the shake was so strong that it hurt your hand. Comment on how strong the boy is and say, “I don't want to make you mad. You must be the Hulk!”



*Mirrors.*

### Clown Makeover Mirror

I ask a child if she would like a free makeover. Then, I sprinkle invisible dust on her, show her herself in the mirror, and wow! She's become a clown! Take a cheap hand mirror and glue these things on it: half a foam clown nose and a piece of a feather boa or even fun fur for clown hair. Tell the children that it is your clown makeover mirror.

### Entertaining Giveaways

**Free B's.** Hand out a card with a "B" on it. When they look puzzled, say, "It's not worth anything, but it's free!" You could also hand out cards with bees on them.

**Ring a Dings.** Punkin (your 2020 COAI Clown of the Year) and I entertained a large group of adults at a sports event, and a favorite with all was our Ring a Dings, made from a simple hair tie with a pom-pom glued onto it.

I would approach a group and talk about the freebies. I handed them one or used the makeover mirror or another intro. Then, I simply asked who was single in the group. I acted very excited when I picked my person, pulled out the hair tie, acted a little coy, and then dropped to one knee to ask her to marry me! The ladies loved it as I'd skip away,



*Bead dog.*

saying, "I'm getting married!" It was even better when the person who had the clown makeover and the ring person were the same. I'd even use it if no one was single. I'd still propose to someone, tell her to call me if she changed her mind, and skipped away. After the first few, I was sought out to propose to others. This simple gift was entertaining as everyone shared the joy.

With kids, I play up the Cinderella situation, acting like I'm looking for the princess that lost her ring to see if it fits. Little girls love the rings. You can also call these clown nose rings for a laugh.

**Bead Dogs.** These are another inexpensive giveaway that entertain. Mardi Gras beads are sold at party stores, Walmart, and the Dollar Tree. You need seventeen beads which you form into a poodle, just as you would a balloon dog, as follows: Skip one, twisting four onto the one that's the head, skip one, and twist four more together for the front legs. Skip one and twist the last four, leaving the last two for the back legs and tail.

Make this in front of someone for added surprise. At the start, ask if he would like a worm and then when he says, "No!" Do some mad scientist work and make the dog!

I hope these get you started on your walk-around routines. Punkin and I will discuss over a hundred more in our lecture, "Wacky Walk-Arounds," at the 2021 Convention in Niagara Falls! I can't wait to see you there! **TNC**

# HARRY'S HILARITIES

**Comedy force.** You have three colors to choose from. [Speak softly.] Do you want red? [Speak very loudly.] Blue? [Speak softly.] Or yellow?

**Introduced unexpectedly.** I was so surprised to get this nomination, I almost dropped my acceptance speech!

**Comedy greeting.** Clown: Have you ever seen me before? Spectator: No. Clown: How do you know it's me?

**Street performer.** Please give any amount. Just fold it up so it doesn't blow away.

**Birthday party.** A birthday cake is the only thing you can blow on and spit on, and people run to get a piece.

**Old trick.** This trick is so old, when it was first performed history wasn't a subject in school.

**Balloon gag.** Do my balloons break often? No, only once.

**Suspension or floating trick.** This is known as the Law of Gravity. They laughed at Galileo when he said that. Wait a moment—Newton said that. No wonder they laughed at Galileo!

**Linking Rings.** Is this ring solid steel? Good! You got the right one.

**Wave your hand over a prop.** I do all my own choreography.

**Shoes.** Do you like my shoes? They're made out of banana skins. They call them slippers. You buy them by the bunch, not the pair.

**Thin.** When I was younger, I was so thin I walked into a pool hall and they tried to chalk my head.



*Harry Allen is the co-owner, with Irv Cook, of Daytona Magic in Daytona Beach, Florida. Harry tours extensively with his dealer show, demonstrating the latest in magic supplies, combined with his quick-witted delivery. Visit him online at [www.daytonamagic.com](http://www.daytonamagic.com).*

# My Nairobi Currency Exchange

Kynisha “DaisyTheClown” Ducre

Every year, I am grateful to have the opportunity to visit another continent, explore new cultures, share God’s love, and be inspired beyond measure by people who I thought needed me more than I needed them! I have slept in five-star hotels, a jungle glasshouse with netting over the bed, an igloo, and many humble variations in between. But the place that has captured my heart most is Nairobi, Kenya, with all its beauty!

During both my trips to Nairobi, I was a featured instructor teaching clowning, face painting, balloon twisting, balloon décor, and some improv at a puppetry conference. The depth of raw talent of the attendees and performers was amazing. Some of them performed with the Project Hands Up organization at school shows, private events, and malls.

I happily paid for my flight, and my host covered my room and board. Of course, if you are in any part of Africa, you must visit a national park, wildlife reserve, and local market. You must also cross a bridge that requires a prayer first! I stayed at the Kitchengela Glass House in what was the outskirts, traveling through dirt roads, small towns, shopping areas, and public transportation hubs. I passed a couple camels and herds of animals led by a beautiful barefoot Maasai woman with a smile to light up a night’s sky! My host leads Project Hands Up and does puppetry shows covering a vast array of subjects in multiple languages for kids and adults.

Amidst COVID-19, with gatherings and work halted, as well, the team, some attendees, and those who live in the slums of Kibera were struggling more than we



could imagine. Unfortunately, no unemployment benefits were available as they are in the US. Futwax, one of the guys I met there, is a local musician, model, and community activist. He sent me an Instagram message asking for help. The





*Photos from my trip to Nairobi, one of the most rewarding humanitarian missions I've ever experienced.*



last time I was there, one of the local puppeteers had taken me for an unannounced stroll through parts of the slum as “DaisyTheClown,” and the kids had found me. I had been armed with twisted balloons from the conference, my balloon bag, and nose stickers. That day, I felt like I adopted more than a hundred kids in my heart. Visually matching their faces to a real need, I began plotting.

Since I'd already saved for my flight, I knew I could donate half of those intended funds, and then, I created a Facebook fundraiser. My clown business is a nonprofit 501(c)3, so it was easier than collecting for personal use or projects. My Facebook friends know of my travels and servant heart, so many of them donated. I raised twice as much as I expected, \$1,250!

In Nairobi, they call me Daisy, too, and I wish I could remember each of their names with as much enthusiasm as they say mine. I can work on that and practice some of them a bit more. One thing life has taught me is that, when you do things to serve others and do God's work, your blessings are immeasurable. Acts 20:35 highlights giving over receiving, yet their presence gave me so much!

Enjoy these pictures and witness the joy and gratefulness, too! “Daisy and Friends” fed many families during the pandemic. This has definitely been one of my most rewarding humanitarian missions to date. Feel free to message me at [clowninaroundtown@gmail.com](mailto:clowninaroundtown@gmail.com) and follow me on Instagram (@daisythecrown) or Facebook (clowninaroundtown).

Be a light! **TNC**

# POCKETS'S

## Handy Giggles

**Heather  
"Pockets"  
Wuersching**



Just in time for the Christmas festivities and Santa's visit, we have more fun bags for you to play with and get people talking and laughing. They provide the opportunity to establish a moment that will be recalled and spoken about for a long time to come. Pockets is not just handing out stuff; she's creating memories.

We have set up a page of four labels which you can print and use if you do not want to design your own. Just email me and ask for the pdf of the labels called "Christmas Chuckles." The previous eight sets of labels are still available if you want any of them, as well.

**MAGIC REINDEER FOOD:** Everybody wants to make sure that the reindeer can bring Santa and his sleigh to the house.

"Place small amounts  
Of this magic food outside.  
Spread them out,  
But not too wide.  
This food that reindeer all adore  
Will lead them on to your front door."

Place about a half cup of any cheap breakfast cereal in the bag, just as long as it looks a bit crunchy and something that reindeer might actually eat.



**CANDY CANE PUZZLE:** This is a special puzzle for beginners with only six pieces.

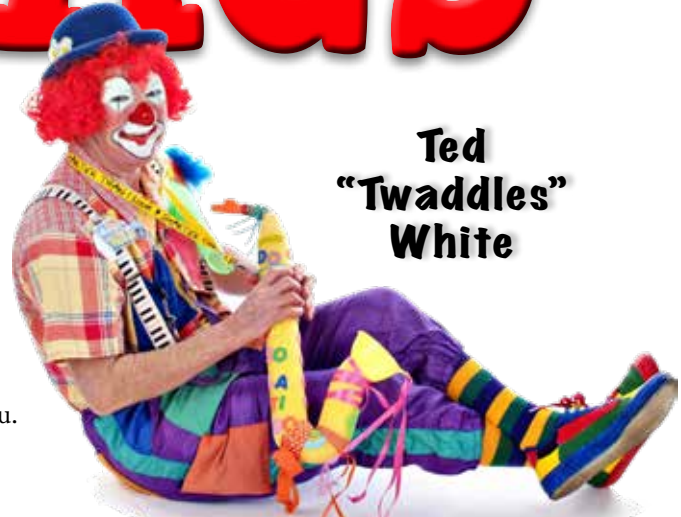
Pockets just breaks a large candy cane into six pieces and pops them in the bag.

# GAG BAGS

By Ted "Twaddles" White

The clear plastic resealable bags currently in use are about four inches across the top, so these labels are four inches long. If you want to use narrower bags, you may prefer to have the page of labels sent to you as a jpg, and you can adjust the size to suit.

Most importantly have fun. Have fun making them and have a lot more fun handing them out and interacting with the people in front of you. Contact me by e-mail at [twaddles2014@hotmail.com](mailto:twaddles2014@hotmail.com). TNC



Ted  
"Twaddles"  
White



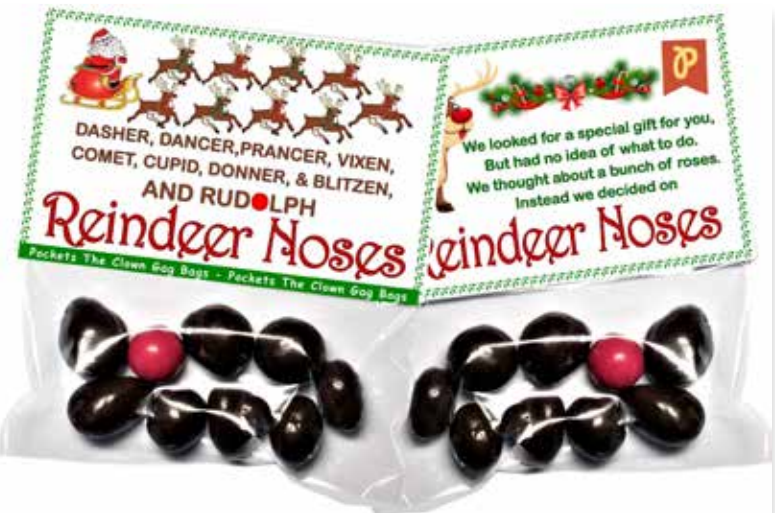
**SNOWMAN SOUP:** Here we have something for a cold winter night. On one side of the label is written:

"When the winter winds are chilly,  
Snowmen make a special brew.  
Here's the secret recipe  
So you can make some too."

On the other side is the recipe:

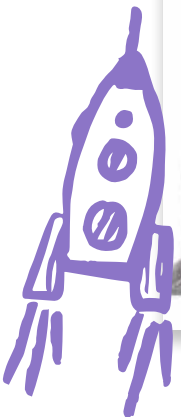
"Make a mug of steaming cocoa,  
Or hot chocolate, make it quick.  
Slowly add marshmallows  
Stirring with the candy stick.  
Keep adding more and stirring  
Until it's nice and thick."

Pockets places about a cup of small marshmallows and one candy cane into each bag.



**REINDEER NOSES:** Here we have a nose for each of Santa's reindeer, with a brown one for Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner, and Blitzen and a red one for Rudolph.

This year, we are using eight chocolate-covered almonds for most of the reindeer and a raspberry-coated chocolate ball for Rudolph. No doubt, with a browse around the candy store, you will be able to find many suitable options.



# KID-LIBS

By Samuel Patrick Smith



**H**ave you ever noticed that no two kid-shows ever turn out the same? Not even when performed on the same day by the same person. Kids pipe up with funny comments, off-the-wall questions, and irrelevant remarks, making each performance a unique event. Your ability to handle such diversions will help establish your reputation.

The chemistry of each kid-show audience varies widely. Some groups are calm, while others have their springs wound to the breaking point. Some audiences seem to consist of happy, healthy, well-adjusted children. Others are full of kids who woke up on the wrong side of the bed or who have just had a bag of sugar and two cups of coffee. One never knows! You have to be prepared for the unexpected. A well-placed ad-lib here, a proper response there, and you have increased the professionalism of your show.

Here are a few off-the-cuff comments which have come to mind in my own shows. The lines don't have to be hilarious. Your ability to come up with a line on the spot makes the comment itself funnier.

**Situation:** A baby cries during the show.

**Kid-lib:** Nodding in the baby's direction, comment, "One of my fans." Or, "Oh, you've seen this before?"

**Situation:** A kid laughs out of place.

**Kid-lib:** "You're hired."

**Situation:** Kid applauds unexpectedly.

**Kid-lib:** "It's nice to have family in the audience." Or looking at the child, "Thanks, Dad."

**Situation:** You bring out a puppet. A child says, "You've got your hand in it!"

**Kid-lib:** Nod affirmatively and say, "Yes, that is the way a puppet works!"

**Situation:** You need to confirm that a box, bag, or other device is empty.

**Kid-lib:** You see a mother holding an infant. Walk over to the baby and say, "Excuse me, sir. Do you see anything in here?" After a brief pause, say, "He says nothing at all!"

**Situation:** A volunteer comes on stage wearing a cap.

**Kid-lib:** Remove the cap and set it aside. Do the routine. Afterward say, "Marty, as a souvenir of our show, I'd like you to have this fine cap." Return the boy's head gear.

**Situation:** You ask a volunteer his name. He tells you his name is Neil.

**Kid-lib:** Immediately get down on your knees and say, "Okay, now what's your name?"

Part of the success of these kid-libs will depend on your positive attitude. Avoid turning ad-libs into retorts. They're intended to be unprepared reactions to changing events in your show. The adults in your audience will appreciate your clever handling of these situations. A funny remark always has a better impact than impatience.

I once attended a family-night program at a school during which the magician was on edge. Maybe he was ill or just in a bad mood, but whatever the reason, his off-the-cuff remarks were too harsh. For example, he wanted to get some kids away from the stage although they really weren't creating any problems. As he walked over to the side of the stage to pour water out of a Lota Bowl, I heard him remark, "Watch out, kids. This is acid." Later, he alienated his entire audience by ad-libbing this classic line: "Shut up! [Uneasy silence with the audience wondering if this is a joke.] And I'm not kidding!"

Sometimes in shows during which children are seated on the floor, a child may – for no apparent reason – stand up. He's not trying to cause any problems. He's just a four-year-old who wants to stretch or get a better view. There are two ways to handle this situation, and I've seen magicians try both. The first way is to walk over to the kid and say, "Look, here, young man. If you can't sit down and behave yourself, you're not going to pet the rabbit! [Angrily] Do you understand me? All right, then, Happy the Clown is going to finish this show..." Incredibly, I've heard such harshness directed toward unsuspecting children. They're not even sure why the magician or clown is barking at them. The second solution to this stand-up scenario is to

# LOOP THE LOOP: *Magic in a Moment!*

By Tim “Sawdust” Laynor

Photos by Ann “Tuttles” Sanders

treat the volunteer with respect. When a lone child stands up in the middle of a routine, I pause, look at him, then say quietly, “Sit, please.” As I speak to the child, I maintain a steady gaze until he slowly sits back down. In this same situation, a performer could look at the child and say sarcastically, “Sit. Stay. Roll over.” That would probably get a laugh. But would it be worth it? Absolutely not. The joke would be at the expense of the child, and when that is the option, it’s better not to take it.

Good ad-libs at strategic points can enhance the entertainment value of your show. In some situations, a well-placed ad-lib can be the hit of the show. I remember one magic convention at which a badly assembled hotel stage slowly fell apart during the evening show. With every act, curtains fell, backdrops tottered and collapsed, and at one point, a large beam fell and struck the master of ceremonies, who had to be taken to the hospital. The audience was in a state of disbelief. I think a lot of people were getting ready to go home! But Mike Caveney saved the day. Paul Diamond, the replacement M.C., introduced him. The audience waited. But there was no sign of Mike. Then, we noticed a slight stirring of the rubble on stage. A moment later there was more movement, and finally Caveney came crawling out on hands and knees from a pile of curtains and framework! The audience roared! And his act was the hit of the show. In this case, the ad-lib was an action. Mike didn’t have to say a word, but he won the audience instantly, and here I am years later remembering how funny that was. That’s the power of an ad-lib, whether you’re saving a collapsing convention program or doing a kid-show. **TNC**

*Samuel Patrick Smith has performed four thousand shows as “Sammy the Magician” for children’s audiences since 1982. He is the author of nine books and co-author of two children. Reach him by e-mail at sps-books@me.com.*

**L**oop the Loop is a clever puzzle with a solution that is perplexing and entertaining.

**PROPS:** You will need a potholder craft loop, rubber band, or cord tied in a loop and a ring (Fig. 1)

**SET-UP:** Thread the loop through the ring (Fig. 2). Place one end of the loop on the thumb and the other on the index finger. For smaller hands, you can have the audience member make a fist, put her hands side by side, and use her index fingers (Fig. 3).

**CHALLENGE:** Remove the ring without removing the loops from the finger and thumb.

**SECRET:** Take a section of the cord and make another loop over the finger on the side of the ring (Fig. 4). For the trick to work, you must put the second loop below the first loop.

Take the original (top) loop and carefully lift it above and off the finger. Let go of the loop, tighten the cord, and the ring will drop off while the string is still on the fingers (Figs. 5-7).

**NOTE:** I prefer to use craft loops when issuing this challenge. They are inexpensive colorful bands that you can wear on your wrist. You can present the bands, let your assistant make a selection, and once the trick has been completed, she can keep the loop. I bet she will continue the fun by performing the trick for her friends! **TNC**







# From the Director of Education

Alene Kraus

This pandemic has created a few voids in our creative and funny world. I won't pretend to have any answers because I don't even know what the questions are!

I gather from conversations with other performers that we all feel a little frustrated, maybe even a bit angry and fearful about our lack of work. I feel all of that, too, though I am ever hopeful.

We are a community of sharers. We share smiles, laughter, and fun, and we can still do that. We may not get paid much for it right now, but we can plant seeds. I go out with my clown smile face mask, and often strangers respond by saying, "Hey, I love your mask! Thank you! You made my day. Where can I get one?"

Now, you're able to plant your seeds. I tell them what I do and slide a business card their way. It's free, and it is a pretty good advertisement these days. They see me in person. I talk with them and leave them with an enjoyable and personal impression. I tell them where they can see video of my partner and me and wish them a great day. I feel pretty happy after these interactions. It's a great endorphin booster for me and for my new contact. I ask for their email addresses so I can add them to our contact list and let them know when we have a public appearance.

Just reach out to people in your own clowny performer way! **TNC**

**U.S. POSTAL SERVICE STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)**

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Laurel Smith, Business Office Manager.

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## Sharon "Chip" Powell

Sharon "Chip" Powell, 79, of West Des Moines, Iowa, passed away Saturday May 9, 2020 at her home. Sharon was born in Portland, Oregon. After graduating from Oregon State University, she started a lifelong career with Girl Scouts of the USA. Her Girl Scout career began in Mapleton, Oregon, as a Director of Outdoor Education. She retired in 2007 as the CEO of Girl Scouts of Greater Iowa.



grooming, and training center for dogs. She also owned numerous dogs over the years and entered some of them in the competition show ring.

In her leisure time, Sharon showed her artistic talent by becoming an avid woodcarver.

Her first clown experience was attending Mooseburger Clown Arts Camp in 2009. As a clown she enjoyed face painting, magic, and the smile she put on children's faces. She even incorporated her

show dog into the preschool programs she presented.

Everyone was important to Sharon, and she leaves a legacy of love to all the lives she touched.

Sharon was an avid dog lover and became the first woman president of the Des Moines Obedience Training Club. She owned and operated a boarding,

**Welcome,  
NEW MEMBERS!**

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 Alfonso "Funso The Clown" Thornton  
 Buffalo, NY

**A big thank you to  
Faye Watt  
for gifting memberships!**



## BALLOON ARTIST

# SPLASHING AROUND, AND TWISTING AWAY

With each twist of his balloons, clown John Sullivan brings smiles to kids of all ages

By **Johnathan B. Paroby**  
*South Schuylkill News*

At 8 a.m. Saturday morning, retired state worker John Sullivan of Pottsville started putting on his makeup.

"I'm going to start with a white makeup and create what is called a lighted goose effect that shows more skin," said Sullivan. "Putting on the face takes me about 15 minutes. I learned how to do this going to several different clown school workshops in different states over the past 35 years."

That's right. John Sullivan, 71, is Splash the Clown.

"Way back when in 1978 I was a young Jaycee and there was an air show at the Schuylkill County Airport, they needed someone to sell balloons," Sullivan said. "So I put an outfit together, put on the makeup and sold balloons. It was fun and I never stopped having fun with it since that day."

Sullivan didn't know it back then, but what he found holding those balloons behind the makeup would grow into something embraced by the Schuylkill County community with an almost celebrity-like status. If you're out with the kids at a community event, there is a good chance you will have a Splash the Clown experience.

## Kids of all ages

At a recent downtown Pottsville event, Tracey Holden, Auburn, was with her two children and they found Splash making balloon art.

"He's great with the kids and you can just tell he finds something special in doing what he does," Holden said.

Kids, it seems, can be found at any age.

"Look at this balloon sword he made me," Holden said with a laugh. "I'm 38 and he asked me



JOHNATHAN B. PAROBY — SPECIAL TO SOUTH SCHUYLKILL NEWS

It's 8 a.m., and John Sullivan of Pottsville begins his transformation by putting on powderless makeup. Sullivan, 71, is well-known as Splash The Clown throughout the Schuylkill County area.

what I wanted. I wasn't sure so he made me a sword. It's great!"

## 'Splashing around'

Sullivan said the name Splash originated when he was in the tub splashing around, though he admits his wife back then may have helped him come up with the name.

"That was about 20 years ago," Sullivan said while in his home summoning his clown persona.

Sullivan's Pottsville home, dubbed Splash Headquarters, is almost like moving around a mad scientist's laboratory inside a clown museum. Dozens of Splash outfit parts are organized ready to be chosen to perform together. A room upstairs is where Splash

practices twisting, the art of making balloon art and animals using long stringy balloons of silver, red, green — every color imaginable.

Professional grade makeup in the bathroom is ready to be put to use in front of a large mirror. Piece by piece, orchestrated by Sullivan, this is where Splash the Clown comes to life.

## The Charlie Award

Among his greatest achievements was being honored with the Charlie Award in 2011 by the international organization, Clowns of America International. The award was bestowed upon Sullivan for his efforts to celebrate International Clown Week throughout the Schuylkill County area.

According to the website, inter-

nationalclownweek.org, the purpose of the organization is to celebrate, promote and inform during International Clown Week, which is the first week in August. Jugglers have a day. Balloon twisters have a day and magicians have a day. But clowns have a seven-day stretch.

"That was quite an honor. I still remember receiving that letter in the mail," Sullivan said. "I still have the award plaque hanging on the wall."

While Sullivan said that was his greatest achievement, his greatest recognition happens each and every time he hands a child a balloon he has created just for them.

## A busy, full life

These days Sullivan contin-

ues those efforts to celebrate everything about being a clown by keeping busy performing at 10-15 events a year.

On a recent Saturday Sullivan was up early packing his clown-mobile with supplies for a performance at the Pottsville Elf on the Shelf Scavenger Hunt Small Business Saturday event held Nov. 30. Performing inside the Majestic Theater on North Centre Street, he took requests for balloon animals and performed several magic tricks for the crowds of children.

On a typical outing Sullivan says he makes about 150 balloon art animals. A menu-type board at the front of Splash's table helps the kids decide which creation they would like.

"I want something blue. A flower," a young voice says. Splash offers the child a few blues to choose from and goes to work twisting away. Minutes later the child reacts — visibly excited seeing what Splash created for her. Other children start cheering out requests — a dinosaur, a train, a fish.

Splash chuckles.

"My pleasure," he says with a smile and goes to work with the next balloon.

"I've been fortunate enough to have had some really great people teach me how to do this," Sullivan said. "Doing this makes me feel good. Being able to share smiles with others and the children. I love the children's faces while I perform. And I kind of feel that I'm led by the Holy Spirit to share my gifts being Splash. I just feel blessed that I'm able to do this."

For more about Splash the Clown, visit him on Facebook.

Contact **Johnathan Paroby**:  
570-385-7358 or [news@southschuylkillnews.com](mailto:news@southschuylkillnews.com).

Congratulations to John "Splash the Clozwn" Sullivan for the positive full-page newspaper coverage shown here. John lives in Pottsville, Pennsylvania, and has been a COAI member for twenty years.



JOHNATHAN B. PAROBY — SPECIAL TO SOUTH SCHUYLKILL NEWS

John Sullivan as Splash The Clown makes balloon art animals for a group of children during this year's Schuylkill Haven Borough Day.

**MASSIVE CLOWN CONTENT**  
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**Jest for Clowns** magazine covers featuring various clowns and their acts, including:
 

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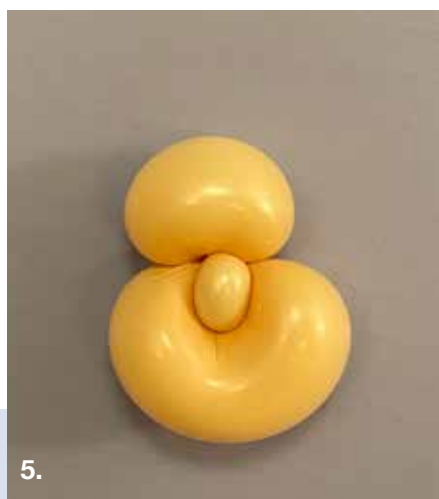
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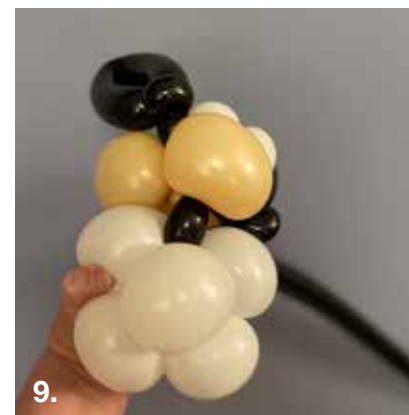
# Lamb

I use three different colors to demonstrate how to make a triangle hat base.  
For the dragon, I use three Key Lime Green balloons by Betallic.

By Patricia "Pockets" Bunnell



1. Inflate a white 360 about halfway and tie it off. Make a very small and very soft loop.
2. Make four more very small and very soft loops. Center one loop on top of the other four.
3. Make a very small pinch twist. Deflate the remaining balloon, tie off, and discard the rest. This small loop will become its belly. Set this aside.
4. Inflate a flesh-colored 360 about halfway. Make a very large soft pinch twist, followed by a grape-sized bubble.
5. Pinch twist the grape-sized bubble. Make a very soft bubble large enough to wrap around the grape-sized pinch twist. Set this aside.
6. Inflate a white five-inch round to the size of a golf ball. Tie off.



**7.** Twist the white golf-ball-sized bubble in half and twist in at the bottom of the large flesh-colored pinch twist for the eyes.

**8.** Inflate a black 160, leaving a six-inch tip. Make a six-inch loop, followed by a pinch twist. Finish with a one-inch bubble. Twist in at the eyes. Repeat for the other ear. Inflate another black 160 about halfway.

**9.** Make a small grape-sized bubble and twist in at the white cluster.

**10.** Make a three-inch bubble for a leg and four small loops for the feet. Finish with another three-inch bubble for the other front leg. Twist in with the other leg.

**11.** Make another three-inch loop, twist in at the feet, and finish with one more three-inch bubble for its last leg.

**12.** Add artwork!

*Patricia "Pockets" Bunnell is an award-winning balloon artist from the Portland, Oregon, area. You may reach her by e-mail at [oddballoon@gmail.com](mailto:oddballoon@gmail.com).*



# SPRING SNAKES

## MAKE KIDS LAUGH

By David Ginn

Children love snakes in a magic or clown show, especially if the snakes are dead. Better yet, if they were never alive! I'm talking about metal spring snakes, the cloth-covered variety, that pop out of cans, jars, and boxes, resulting in making children laugh. These are the kind of funny spring snakes my dad unleashed on me when I was maybe five years old. One came out of a jar of strawberry jam. Once I learned how to cram it back inside, I had the pleasure of offering it to many visitors to our house!

In my book, *Clown Magic*, I spend an entire chapter talking about my love of these snaky friends. I talk about how kids react when spring snakes pop out, based on my 15,000 live shows of experience. What do children do? In a nutshell, they act scared, and then they laugh!

Let me state that another way: The moment spring snakes pop out, children are momentarily frightened. Yes, there is an initial scare, but that is followed almost immediately by laughter. If you or I play up that sudden snake appearance with comedy, it produces even more laughter. The key method of doing that is to act scared yourself so the children won't be.

### Not Scary Snakes?

I've worked thousands of shows for children at schools and preschools, and the snakes are seldom a problem. My six to twelve-year-old audiences may jump and scream when the snakes pop out, as you see happening during my snake can routine in the photos, but they aren't really scared.

When working programs with younger children are present, however, I've had three, four, and five-year-olds get scared when the snakes popped out. I've had a few cry or run and hide behind a teacher. I think this happens occasionally for these reasons:

- The child has never seen a spring snake and thinks perhaps they are real;
- The child gets startled;
- The child is one who gets easily excited or scared at anything;
- The child is so young that anything unusual or sudden will startle him.

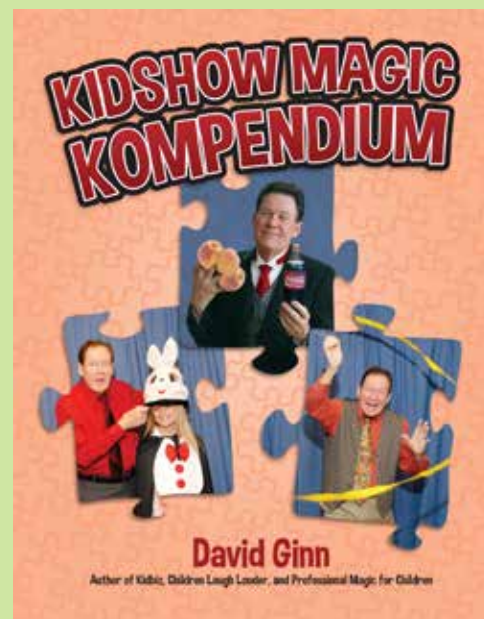
As one kindergarten director told me a few years ago, "This year we have five or six children who cry at the drop of a pin. They cry if they drop a cookie or if you say, "Boo," or if they turn around and don't see their mother in sight. It's not the spring snakes; it's just anything!" That made me feel better after three kids in her kindergarten cried before the show was over. In fact, one cried during my opening warm-up!

Still, I thought to myself, I wish that none of them would really be afraid of my spring snakes. As a kid, I loved spring snakes, even when my dad first handed me that loaded jar of "strawberry jam" with the snake inside.

The solution hit me in the middle of one kindergarten show: familiarity and understanding might be the key. If I told the children what the snakes were, showed them the snakes, and even let them feel the monsters with their own hands, maybe they wouldn't be afraid anymore. It would be educational for them and fun at the same time.

Thus, my routine began its development. This is what I started doing after a snake trick where young children are present, especially if I sense some are frightened. Picking up a spring snake that has just appeared, which I have purposely kept at a distance from the children, I bring the snake forward and show it.

"Do you know what this is?" I ask and then wait for their answers. "This is a toy spring snake." I find the use of the word "toy" helps them better understand. "It's not a real snake, though. It's just a pretend snake. Does anyone know why it's called a spring snake? No, it's not because it was born in the spring season of the year. It's because it has a spring inside of it. In fact, that's all it is, a long spring covered with some cloth. See?" I collapse part of the spring and let it pop open again. Then, I extend one end of the snake to a few kids on the front row. "Here," I say. "Would you like to touch the snake?" Most of them do and laugh at it. I let only a few touch it and then move to another side of the audience and repeat. If kids grab at the snake and try to pull on it, I stop them. "Oh, please don't pull on the snake. You might stretch his spring and then it wouldn't pop out!" After a few children have felt the snake, I resume my place at front center. As I





talk, I collapse the snake down into my hands.

I say, "When I was a little boy about five years old, my daddy gave me a jar of strawberry jam and told me to open it. When I opened it, a funny spring snake popped out just like this!" As I say that, I let the snake pop open up into the air. The children react with shouts and laughter. "Do you know what? That snake scared me a little at first. But you know what else? After I was scared, I started to laugh. Then, I stuffed the snake back into the jar."

I collapse the snake again in my hands and say, "...And I went and played the same trick on my little sister. When she opened the jar, the snake jumped out on her." I let the snake pop open again, and the kids laugh more. "Then, my sister and I played the snake trick on our grandmother and grandfather and all our friends." Out pops the snake again.

"I just wanted all of you to know that because these spring snakes are just for fun. Anytime you see one in a magic show, a clown show, or anywhere else, you just remember that they are not real snakes. They're just funny pretend snakes. Okay?" The show continues, and

I have delivered a little education, taken away a little fear, and supplied a few minutes of extra fun and humor.

I used this routine again just two days ago in a day-care center with lots of two and three-year-old children present. If I wanted to, I could probably do five minutes of just collapsing and expanding the snake in front of them. They like it, and it does them good. Why not try it yourself and see?

### Some Spring Snake Rules

1. *Never* shoot the snakes into the audience for two reasons: (1) Someone may get hurt trying to grab a snake, and (2) if the children grab them, they will end up stretching the springs and destroying your snakes.

2. *Always* use cloth-covered spring snakes. The plastic ones are generally not porous, so air doesn't rush into them and let them pop open. They creep open. Take the plastic off, if that's what you have, and recover them with cloth. I personally prefer colorful cloth, not snake material. It is more kid-friendly.

3. Let the snakes spring out on you, the performer. Notice the photos, shot by John Doyle on my United Kingdom lecture tour. I am screaming as the snakes attack me! Kids love that sort of thing.

4. Do not attempt to collapse a spring snake and then put it into a can or jar. Instead, feed it bit by bit into the can or jar, collapsing it as you go. That is the proper way to load a spring snake into anything.

5. Keep snakes open when not in use, if possible. Last summer, I used the Amazing Snake-Go gimmick in all my library shows. After the snake popped out, I shook it around and then threw it loose into my suitcase, where it traveled loose to the next show.

### Snakes at My Front Door

For over forty years, I've spent Halloween at home. Before we had our daughter, Autumn, it was fun for Lynne and me to see the little children trick or

treating on the front porch. During the years Autumn was a child, it was fun to have her dress up, and most of the time, Dad dressed up with her.

When she was three, Autumn dressed as Strawberry Shortcake, and I was Frankenstein. I took her hand and started walking her next door to our neighbor's house. She looked up at me in my black suit and full head mask and said, "Daddy, is that really you in there?" "Yes," I told her, and we proceeded. Once, she dressed as a magician, and I was a six-foot rabbit. Harvey? Maybe.

Now that she's an adult living many miles away, Lynne and I still enjoy seeing the kids at home. I usually dress up and do a quick trick or two at the front door. Changing a silk to a Fantasio-appearing cane is a good one. "What color is this yellow scarf?" I ask after they say, "Trick or treat!" They say, "Yellow!" Suddenly, it changes to a green cane, and I say, "No, sorry. It's green!"

Another front-door favorite of mine is Rocco's D'Lites. After dropping some candy into the bags of the children, I reach into a bag and pull out the red light. Then, I do a quick fifteen-second routine, making the red light appear and disappear from my hands to their ears, bags, elbow, or noses. "How did you do that?" they yell. "The question is not how," I answer. "The question is why? And I say, why not have fun? Hey, that's what magic is all about!"

In summary, make more fun for your kid-show audiences: include spring snakes! Just be careful when you do. Don't let those spring snakes take a bite out of you! Instead, make them work for you to make children laugh!

*Visit David Ginn online at [www.ginnmagic.com](http://www.ginnmagic.com), where you will find free books, free Good Reads, mini-magic classes, interesting magic videos by other performers, and links to David's two hundred YouTube videos. He is the author of ninety-five books and instructional videos, including the mammoth Kidshow Magic Kompendium.*

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## Memorial Contribution Honors Lisa “Happy the Clown” Kraemer



The family of Lisa “Happy the Clown” Kraemer has made a contribution to Clowns of America International in appreciation for the joy that COAI and *The New Calliope* brought to her life. Lisa passed away earlier this year. Her Last Walk-Around appeared in the May/June issue. We thank the Kraemer family for their thoughtful gift and for letting us know how much COAI meant to Lisa.

To honor a loved one through a memorial contribution, contact the COAI Business Office at [coaioffice@aol.com](mailto:coaioffice@aol.com) or by calling 1-352-357-1676.

## LIABILITY INSURANCE UPDATE

As a member of COAI, one of your benefits is the option of purchasing performer liability insurance at a reduced rate. Our new insurance company, American Specialty Insurance, is a branch of Brown & Brown. Brown & Brown transferred the policies to American Specialty Insurance and kept the same website name, [www.insurecoai.org](http://www.insurecoai.org). The website is more user friendly and their customer service has improved. When you sign into the website, be sure your membership is up to date and have your member number handy. To reach American Specialty Insurance by phone, call 1-877-441-4011.



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# CLOWN COMICS

## SOLE FOOD

By Ann "Tuttles" Sanders

★ Stage Manager: Harold "Ducky" Wood. Starring: Jeremy "Dilly" Manning and Courtney "Dally" Harri. Members of Kolonial Klowns of Williamsburg – Alley #357

Photos by Tim "Sawdust" Laynor



# FOUR FUN-TASTIC CHRISTMAS ROUTINES

to Make Your Holiday Shows a Success!



Art by Gina "Cha Cha" Wollrabe

## RUDY REINDEER!

Show a colorful cardboard plaque of Rudy Reindeer. Rudy couldn't fly like all of the other reindeer, so Santa gave him a magic cape – and a special job. Rudy flies from house to house scouting out which houses have chimneys and which ones have doors, so Santa will know ahead of time where he needs to use his magic key.

To demonstrate Rudy going down a chimney, you slide him into an envelope printed with a chimney design. One volunteer holds Rudy in the chimney envelope while another helper holds an empty envelope with a printed door design.

The audience shouts the magic words, and the plaque is pulled out of the chimney envelope, Rudy is gone! A cut out area where he used to be is all that remains.

When the door envelope is opened – oops! Rudy is NOT there! His little green silk cape tumbles out, but no reindeer. The cape disappears, but Rudy is nowhere to be seen. Finally, after a frenzied search and lots of enthusiastic "advice" from the audience, Rudy Reindeer is found to be clinging to the second helper's back! "He made it to the next house – he just went around to the back."

Be the first on your block to own this fabulous flying reindeer. Everybody needs a little R&R – that's why you need Rudy Reindeer! **ONLY \$20!**



Art by Selina Frederick

## BIG RED NOSE!

Rudy starts out as a blue-nose reindeer. The children object so you magically turn his nose to red. You like it better the other way but when you try to change it back, the color vanishes from the reindeer's nose. The children howl as the red nose ends up on you! Complete with glossy cards and a high quality, red foam nose. **ONLY \$20!**



Art by Selina Frederick

## PRESENTS OF MIND!

Display a set of jumbo cards, each with a different holiday picture (candy cane, Santa, snowman, candle, gifts, ornament, angel, etc.). Two spectators think of any picture. You roughly sketch the pictures you think they have mentally selected. Place your sketches on a stand, and when you reveal your drawings, you have correctly guessed the pictures

they chose! Absolutely NO artistic skill is required! Complete set includes cards, card stand, and marker. **ONLY \$35!**



A fun idea by Silly Billy

## MAGIC CHRISTMAS PICTURE

Show a black and white drawing of a rooftop with reindeer and sleigh ready to land – except the sleigh is empty! No color, no Santa, no presents, oh no! A volunteer picks several crayons and writes his name on the sign in front of the house, colors the reindeer's nose, and adds some smoke coming from the chimney. The child holds

the picture while everyone says the magic words ("Out to Lunch!"). When the picture is turned around, Santa and a sleigh full of presents – complete with a Christmas tree – appears, all magically colored with crayons! The child keeps the magic drawing as a souvenir of the show! 20 refills included. **ONLY \$20!**

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