

THE NEW CALLIOPE

ers of Clowns of America International

November / December 2022

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Irene
"SlugbugZ"
Spudic



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Irene “SlugbugZ” Spudic

AN ANSWER TO A PRAYER

By Beth Cedarholm

Little did Irene Spudic know how a simple prayer would change her life forever.

Back in 2010, Irene desperately wanted to be involved with the children’s ministry at her church in Hobart, Indiana, but she couldn’t exactly figure out *how* she could contribute. She prayed that God would show her the path to become involved with the ministry in a fun and meaningful way.

One day, while she was working her job as a hospital patient transporter, Irene says she had a vision. “It was like a flash in my mind,” she recalls. “There were four people, and I could only see their backs. The words ‘peace,’ ‘love,’ ‘joy,’ and ‘hope’ were swirling around them. They looked like clowns.”

Irene says she had the same vision a second time later that day and, while she had no idea what it meant, she thought that perhaps God was telling her that she needed to be a clown.

Months later, a friend told her about an ad she saw in the newspaper for a clowning training program, and everything made sense. Irene was at work, so her friend called long-time clown Janet Tucker, who was planning to conduct the eight-week clown school through Purdue University. After talking to Janet, Irene’s friend reported back that Janet was not going to be able to teach the course, due to a lack of response to her ad. When Irene’s friend told her the bad news, Irene immediately asked her if she had asked Janet several questions she had about the training program. Her friend had not, so she called Janet a second time. “Janet told my friend that she was so glad that she had called back, because after she hung up she realized that, even with a smaller class size, she could still conduct the class outside of the university through the Calumet Clowns Alley,” Irene says. Eventually, four individuals—the same number as in Irene’s vision—signed up for Janet’s class, and the group met weekly to learn about all aspects of clowning.

“Everything fell into place after that,” says Irene. She loved everything about clown school. She learned makeup for all of the different characters, but knew she wanted to be an Auguste. “I’d always loved Cooky the Clown from *Bozo’s Circus*,” she adds. Irene said that she and her classmates studied clown books and magazines for inspiration for makeup and costuming. Many of the clowns pictured in those publications are now her friends, she says.

Shortly before her graduation from clown school, she attended the Midwest Clown Roundup convention—just to shop—on a day when the vendor room was open to the public. “I didn’t even know what a clown convention was,” she says, adding that she purchased her first wig at the convention.

The first time Irene put on her entire costume with makeup was the day before her graduation. She said it took her about two and a half hours to get ready, and that she cut out a stencil from a milk carton to help her to create the muzzle. “I couldn’t get it right at first,” she says, laughing, adding that she no longer needs a stencil.

When she was finished, she looked into a full-length mirror and was so taken with her reflection that she began to cry. I remember thinking “I am so beautiful; I wish I could look like this all the time. From that day forward, I knew I was meant to be a clown.”

Irene’s first character was a retro version of her younger self named SlugbugZ, named after the car game where participants “slug” other passengers when they spot a VW Beetle. Irene says that she played the game as a child and had always wanted to own a Beetle.

While Irene recalls being in awe of circus clowns as a child, she never thought much about it. She said that in her hospital job, she used to dress in brightly colored scrubs and socks and loved the way it made her patients smile. It was, perhaps, a sign of what was to come.



Irene “SlugbugZ” Spudic.



From top left: Competing at the 2022 COAI Convention in Atlanta, Georgia. Irene with her husband, Mick. Irene and Mick, as SlugbugZ and Mickey, pose with their son, Michael Spudic Jr. (left). Their unique costumes have helped Mick and Irene win many awards.

Irene's husband, Michael, known as Mick, joined Irene in her clowning shortly thereafter, although it took a little bit of persuasion. When Irene first began clowning, she says that while she could sew a little, Mick, who had grown up sewing with his mother and grandmother, was much more accomplished behind the sewing machine. Mick would accompany Irene on her trips to the fabric store to give his opinion on different fabrics and pattern combinations. "I would hint around that he should be a clown," says Irene. Whenever she saw a fabric pattern that reminded her of something he might wear, she'd say, "Ooooh, you should make something for yourself out of this." Irene recalls Mick



responding "This is *your* vision—not *mine*."

A month later, the couple was back at the fabric store. Mick found a bolt of fabric that looked "circussy—with colorful little wiener dogs on it." When Irene reached out to grab it for herself, he hugged it tightly. "He ended up buying it and making his first costume out of it," she says. Since then, he has clowning as "Mickey."

In 2011, Irene attended the Midwest Clown Roundup as an official registrant. One of her hospital coworkers was also a clown and member of Calumet Clowns, one of three alleys to which Irene belongs. (The other two are the Michiana Clowns and the Krazy Clown Klub.) The coworker convinced Irene to compete in the makeup competition. "I was very nervous, but I did it," she says.

Irene ended up tying for first place in the Auguste category with Lynette McDonald, aka Nettie Belle the Clown. "At the awards ceremony, when I heard my name announced and saw my photo on the wall, I was shocked. I had never won anything in my life," says Irene. She says that she called Mick to share the good news and to thank him for making her costume. She took first



place again in 2012 and by 2015, she had earned enough competition points to be inducted into the Midwest Clown Association's Hall of Fame. Mick still needed one point before he could be inducted, so Irene said she held off until she and Mick could both be inducted at the same time.



From left: Amanda (Sweet Tooth), Irene (SlugbugZ), and Mick (Mickey) working a Fourth of July picnic. Award-winning clowns Irene and Mick Spudic. Mick and Irene visiting her mother-in-law, Carmen Spudic, who was their greatest supporter and loved seeing them in clown.

Irene says that it is a joy being able to clown with her husband. (The two have been married for twenty-two years but have been a couple for thirty-three.) “In the past, I had clowned alone, but it was so much more fun with another clown,” she says. Irene adds that clowning came easily to Mick, because “he’s always been goofy.” She says that Mick understands quality and where to get supplies. “He takes my ideas and makes them better. We work together.”

For example, for COAI’s 2022 convention, Irene competed in paradeability, performing a baseball fly-ball routine. She says she had purchased the materials to make a baseball mitt. “I came home from work, and he had already made it,” says Irene. The couple also works together to create puppets and parade props.

Irene says that Mick sewed her first costume. She helped sew her second costume, and she sewed her third costume all by herself. Now, Irene’s sewing has improved enough that she creates all of her own costumes. She says that her favorite costume is always the one she is working on. She is known for mixing brightly colored print fabrics while completely avoiding solid colored fabrics.

She admits that she appreciates a sewing challenge. Irene recalls her ambitious

ringmaster costume, for which she sewed and “ruffled” a patchwork of bright circus-themed squares together for the bustle. “It took up my entire living room floor,” she says. For another costume, the most difficult she has ever attempted, she created an elaborate pleated ruffle, which she describes as “treacherous.” “You’d think that after that, I’d never want to make another one, but I still had almost a week before the convention, so I made matching cuffs. My husband thought I was crazy.”

She also admits to having acquired a large collection of clown shoes. At last count she had about fifty pairs. “I recently sold about five pairs, but then I bought more,” she says. She said she likes to embellish her shoes with cording and ric-rac, coordinating with her costumes so that everything matches perfectly.

With her extensive shoe collection and ever-expanding wardrobe, she says that she and Mick had to move their original clown room, which was located in a small main-floor bedroom, to their home’s entire third story attic, formerly their bedroom. She said that the room is packed full of fabrics, props, and costumes.

Irene says that one of the first things someone said to her when she started

clowning was that she needed a clown car. In particular, she wanted a VW Beetle. “SlugBugZ needed to have a SlugBug.” That dream came true in 2013 with the purchase of a yellow VW Beetle convertible. They christened the car “Buttercup.” Irene says that it was fun to drive Buttercup in parades and around town, and that the car also brought in business. “People would see us in a parade or driving around town and they would ask us for our business cards,” she says. She and Mick would decorate the car with their photos and polka dot magnets. Sadly, Buttercup was totaled in a car accident.

A second Buttercup carried on the SlugBug tradition until recently, when “her” transmission broke down. Irene reminisces about how they decorated Buttercup with parade themes in mind. For instance, for Red Skelton’s “Painting the Town Red,” they adorned Buttercup with paint splashes, a giant paintbrush, and a paint pallet. Another time, they transformed the car into a firetruck. She said she hopes they can eventually get repairs made and get Buttercup back on the road. “I really love that car,” she says.

Through the years, clowning has been a family affair in the Spudic household, with all of their children participating in

AWARD-WINNING COSTUMES



one way or another. During his younger years, their son Michael twisted balloons. Their daughter Amanda (Irene’s “mini-me”) also twists balloons, and daughter Sonya dresses up as an elf during the holidays. In addition, one of the couple’s four grandchildren has clowned with Mick at Walmart’s Miracle Network. While the younger grandchildren haven’t clowned yet, Irene says that she has, on occasion, dressed them up as clowns.

Irene says that her most memorable clowning event was entertaining families

at the Ronald McDonald House in Chicago. She also enjoys entertaining residents at nursing homes. “One of my main purposes in clowning is visiting people and making them smile, making them happy,” says Irene. She has also been able to accomplish her original clowning objective, to use clowning in her church children’s ministry, where she has conducted object lessons and performed Vacation Bible School skits.

Irene says that she cannot imagine a day when she doesn’t clown. “Everywhere I

go, everything I see, everything I do, I see something that I can use in clowning.”

Her clowning is, indeed, an answer to a prayer. **TNC**

The cover of this issue of The New Calliope was auctioned off at COAI’s 2022 Annual Convention. Thanks to Frank Bunton, who was the high bidder. Frank donated his cover to Irene, a dedicated and deserving member of the clowning community.

What Are Your **RED NOSE RESOLUTIONS** for 2023?

Mike Bednarek



Funny how a flip of the calendar page magically gives us a fresh, clean canvas on which to paint with our palette of curiosity, hopes, and dreams for the new year.

As performing artists, we've endured COVID-19, hit bumps, run into brick walls, jumped obstacles, discovered new audiences and found old ones, while learning and mastering Zoom, YouTube, Facebook Live, Instagram, and TikTok (well, some of us, anyway). A new year seems like the perfect time to think about how to make ourselves better clowns.

What exciting, motivating, and ambitious Red Nose Resolutions can you paint for the growth and improvement of your clown in 2023?

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Before you resolve to single-handedly transform the art of clowning, be realistic. Commit to do one small, simple thing every day that improves you, your clown, your character, your art, or your sense of humor. Have a good reason for it, because when things get tough or you want to talk yourself out of it, "it sounded good at the time" won't hold up.

If your resolutions are broad goals, make specific, measurable plans to achieve them. If you're starting a new habit, make sure you enjoy it. Give it at least twenty-one days in a row, or it won't last longer than a snowman in July. And if you want to make sure you follow through on your Red Nose Resolutions, share them with someone who will support you and help you hold yourself accountable—like a coach, mentor, fellow performer, partner, or spouse.

RED NOSE RESOLUTIONS FOR AN ENGAGING, AMUSING, AND REWARDING 2023

It's not too late to make 2023 the Year of Your Clown. Consider one or more Red Nose Resolutions from these ideas:

1. LEARN SOMETHING NEW

Learn at least one new performance skill this year. Learn to play a musical instrument. Sing funny songs, or songs in funny ways. Tell jokes. Master a new routine. Practice patter in a comical voice. Take a workshop or attend a camp when things

open back up. Make or acquire a new prop and add it to your show. Write a theme show. Or learn a new technical or business skill, like YouTube videos or graphic arts.

2. FIND YOUR FUNNY BONE

Do something every day that makes you laugh out loud, like reading the comics (try GoComics.com) or e-mailed jokes, or watching classic clown YouTube clips. Every day. Consider it exercise for your funny bone. Along the way, you'll discover the kind of humor that best fits your performance style.

3. EXERCISE YOUR CLOWN

Exercise your clown through regular study, practice, and rehearsal sessions. Create the space, dedicate the time, rehearse with enthusiasm and rigor, and discover how fun and rewarding hard work can be.

4. FIND A NEW STAGE AND AUDIENCE

Expand and stretch your character, your skills, your comfort level, and your perspective by clowning someplace you've never clowned before. Find at least one new place, way, or venue to clown that uplifts spirits and brings joy. Volunteer. Get yourself a coach or

mentor to guide you, support you, and help you to hold yourself accountable for your resolutions.

5. GET HEALTHIER

Eat healthier. Move your body. Take a walk, ride a bike, go outside and play, practice yoga, dance, or get some other exercise regularly. You'll feel better, sleep better, clown better, and head off stress. Your clown will thank you with more energy and greater focus.

6. READ

Stretch your clown mind and enrich your clown soul. Have a clowning, performing, or humor-related book in progress at all times, and make continuous, daily progress. Or have your own book or journal or blog in progress and write your observations and reflections every day.

6. BE THANKFUL

Be thankful for everything. Celebrate your gifts, including your clowning, by doing good things with them. "Like" – or somehow acknowledge – every one of those comments, ideas, and suggestions given to you on social media. And send "thank you" notes right away, while you're still thankful.

7. TAKE CARE OF YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Take care of your family, partner(s), coach(es), and close friends, so they can take care of and support you and your clowning.

8. BE KIND

Kindness leads to better relationships, improved self-esteem, compassion, happiness, success, and good mental and physical health. Since we're all trying to make this a better world one smile, laugh, playful moment, and sense of wonder at a time, isn't that what we want for each other in our clown community?

And, in case you're wondering ...

... what are my Red Nose Resolutions for 2023, here's what I'm working on:

Learn a new song and add it to my performance repertoire every month.

Read a clown-related book daily.

Blog every week.

Explore starting a new hospital clown program.

Maintain a daily routine of spiritual readings and prayer.

Avoid snacking after 9:00 p.m. every day.

Those are a few ideas of things you can do or habits you can develop to improve your clowning in 2023. Remember to start simple. Be realistic. Stay committed to your dream. Have fun with it. Allow yourself to make mistakes. Accept and learn from them. Laugh at yourself. Celebrate the good stuff. Write things down, reflect on them, learn from them, and keep improving.

If you find yourself in a tough spot, ask yourself, "If I stick with it and keep on trying, how much further along and how much better will I be in a month? A year?" Then, act on it with that perspective, make the best of it, and do all you can do.

May you find joy and wonder through your clown, always and all ways. Happy Red Nose Year!

Mike Bednarek has been a clown for over forty-two years. He is medical clown Dr. Fun E. Bone, Chief of Stupidity, at Salem Health Hospital (Salem, Oregon) and physical comedian Buster. In his spare time, he spins his wheels cycling, downward dogs, squeezeboxes the concertina, and gets taken for daily walks by his dogs. Find him on Facebook at facebook.com/BustertheClown. TNC

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I WAS MARRIED TO A CLOWN

By Debbie Shapiro

Those of you reading this understand that clowns are the greatest people on earth. As P.T. Barnum once said, “The noblest art is that of making others happy.” That was Rick “Charlie the Clown” Shapiro. It was his purpose in life to make others happy, even when going through his own pain. Rick started each morning with a joyful smile, which continued throughout the day. What a gift that was to me and my family—and everyone else who knew him.

There are too many stories to tell, but I’ll share with you just a few. In 1966, Rick auditioned for a stint with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus ... and WON! He was so excited to work with Lou Jacobs, Otto Griebling, and many of the greatest clowns. In 1968, Rick was classified 1A and went into the Air Force. That same year, he was deployed to Vietnam. What did he do before he left? He packed his clown shoes and other clown gear and performed, a number of times, for a Vietnamese orphanage.

He made sure to bring joy to the worst of situations. Rick was the founder and president of the special events production company Spotfield Productions. Once again, he was creating huge events to spread happiness and boost the morale of company employees. Rick hired all kinds of performers, but always included clowns. At some events, he even created a Clown Alley. When the recession hit, Rick switched gears and became a professional speaker on humor and stress management. He gave his audiences the tools they needed to improve workplace morale and bring cheer not only into the workplace, but their own personal lives. In



Lou Jacobs and Rick Shapiro, Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus.

2001, following the 9/11 tragedy, Rick was invited to be the keynote speaker at Clownfest. It was incredible how he was able to make the clowns laugh, but also give them permission to do the same for others.

Rick always wore shirts with funny sayings. This allowed him to connect with people, with a laugh or a smile, the moment they met. Whenever we were on vacation, he’d bring some smaller props, “just in case.”

It was the greatest joy and honor of my life to be married to such an extraordinary, joyful, loving person. All clowns have a real purpose on earth. We need your joy more than ever before. Rick was so proud of his life as a clown, in every wonderful sense of the word. **TNC**



Left: Rick clowning with Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, 1966. Middle: Rick volunteering and performing at a Vietnamese orphanage in Vietnam, 1968. Right: Otto Griebling with Rick Shapiro at RBBB.

Welcome, NEW MEMBERS!

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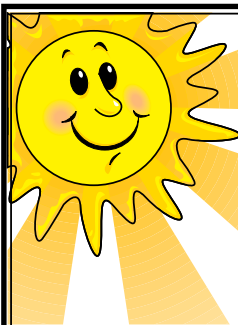
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Full disclosure: This column promotes a product with no connection to magic, clowning, comedy, or family entertainment. But I believe this product is one that all kid-show artists should consider adding to their performance kits.

A few days ago, I was halfway through a birthday party show when I overheard a commotion coming from another room. I watched as adults rushed toward a startling cry for help. My host was aware of my law enforcement background and asked if I was familiar with the Heimlich maneuver for toddlers. Fortunately, another parent (who was an off-duty fireman) leapt in and ejected a chunk of candy from the child's throat. After those terrifying few minutes, we could feel a tangible relief.

I got in my car an hour later and headed home. I routinely listen to podcasts when I drive, and Mike Rowe's excellent *The Way I Heard It* happened to be next in line. This week's podcast title? "Give Me a Sink Plunger and I'll Save the World."

Every now and then I'm hit by odd occurrences that my grandmother referred to as "God Winks." This was one of those moments. Mike was interviewing an inventor named Arthur Lih. A self-made man, Lih built a thriving trucking company on Long Island and was all set to retire. Then he heard a disturbing story about the death of a seven-year-old boy caused by a grape stuck in the child's trachea. The Heimlich maneuver (abdominal thrusts) failed to dislodge the grape and the child suffocated before the EMTs arrived. Looking at his own seven-year-old daughter, he felt a calling to find a solution.

According to the American Heart Association, choking is the leading cause of accidental death among children, young adults, and the elderly. The United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) reports over five thousand accidental choking deaths, annually, with a child dying every five days. Accidental choking leads to more than a hundred thousand emergency room visits each year.

The American Red Cross rates the Heimlich maneuver's effectiveness at dislodging air-blocking objects from the trachea at seventy to eighty percent. The maneuver is reportedly less effective when used on choking victims who are bedridden or use a wheelchair. It is considered safe, but that rating comes with a number of health concerns. Studies note the potential for abdominal injuries, gastric ruptures, and aortic or pancreatic injuries among both the young and old. (Please note that I am not a doctor, nor have I ever portrayed one on television. These points stem from the Mike Rowe interview.)

Arthur Lih wanted a better solution. After years of trial and error, he patented his medically certified LifeVac. LifeVac is an enhanced medical version of a hardware sink plunger attached to a clever valve structure. The valve prevents air from flowing into the mouth during the downstroke and creates a vacuum suction as it is pulled back. It is a non-invasive, pain-free, and single-use airway clearance device designed to draw obstructions from the throat when more common choking protocols fail. According to a medical trial published in *Resuscitation Plus*, Lih's LifeVac safely removed food, coins, and small objects lodged in the throats of medical manikins within 59 seconds, 82.2% of the time. It is effective when used on adults as well as children as small as twenty-two pounds. Adults can also use it on themselves in the event that they're alone.

LifeVacs are built in the United States, and they are built to last. A Philadelphia fire department recently used a six-year-old LifeVac unit to aid a choking fireman in their station. While the LifeVac itself has no "replace by" date, Lih recommends replacing the rubbery face masks every two to three years to ensure a proper seal. Lih also recommends replacing used devices for sanitary reasons. However, his company is happy to send a free replacement for each one of his devices used to save a life.

As I write this column, LifeVac's Facebook page reports nearly six hundred lives saved. Each of these lives is

represented by a photo displayed in Lih's *Hall of Saves*. You can read the stories of these rescues on their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/lifevac. A word of caution: there are other online sellers who stock LifeVac knock-offs. At this time, the only legitimate source for Lih's original LifeVac is through his site at www.lifevac.net.

Each of Lih's kits comes with a pediatric, adult, and practice mask. Practice masks allow parents to train babysitters, school nurses to train teachers, and restaurant managers to train staff. Place, Push, and Pull! It's just that easy.

His LifeVac isn't exactly cheap, but how much is a child or grandparent's life worth to you? LifeVac sells for \$69.95 with discounts available on bulk purchases. A quick Internet search reveals coupons from CapitalOne Shopping, and other coupon sites, for additional savings. I bought home kits for my and my grandson's homes, as well as travel versions for my magic show kit and car.

It's up to you. In over fifty years of performing in homes and restaurants, this recent party is the closest I've come to needing something like this. I may never use the kits I've purchased, and I am absolutely okay with that. In fact, I will be thrilled beyond measure if that proves to be the case. However, it is comforting to know that the kits are there should the cry of a pleading parent ever again hit my ears.

I agree with Mike Rowe that these should be as common as fire extinguishers and automatic external defibrillators in every preschool, school, college dorm, nursing home, and restaurant. If you would like to listen to Mike Rowe's *The Way I Heard It* interview with Arthur Lih (Episode #290), you can find it on most podcast apps or visit lifevac.net/mike-rowe-give-me-a-sink-plunger-and-ill-save-the-world. **TNC**

Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author. Clowns of America International does not endorse specific products, medical or otherwise, of any kind.

Keep It Clean

By Samuel Patrick Smith



When I was eight years old, *The Red Skelton Hour* came on at eight-thirty on Tuesday nights, which meant it ran thirty minutes past my bedtime. Plus, it was a school night. I was such a big fan, however, that my mother let me stay up late to watch the show.

As a youngster, Red Skelton made me laugh; using the same material, he made adults laugh, too. I thought he was hilarious, and during his twenty years on television, millions of people agreed. Sometimes I may not have understood the jokes, but his delivery still cracked me up.

"Exercise?" he said. "I get it on the golf course. When I see my friends collapse, I run for the paramedics."

"I haven't spoken to my wife in eighteen months," he confessed. "I didn't want to interrupt her."

No doubt about it: He had the jokes, characters, expressions, and timing that made him a great comedian. But there was more to Red Skelton than just the ability to make people laugh. He had an extra quality—respect for his audience—that made people love him.

On television and in live performances, no laugh was so important to Skelton that he would stoop to vulgarity to get it. No audience reaction was so coveted that he would leave a spectator feeling worse about himself for having come to his show.

Besides making people feel good, Skelton's approach to comedy made business sense; there was no place he couldn't work, and he need never worry about not getting invited back because he had offended customers by trying to get cheap laughs.

Not all performers agree with Skelton's philosophy of keeping it clean, but he's in good company with Carol Burnett, Tim Conway, Jonathan Winters, Lucille Ball, Bob Hope, and Steve Allen. It's an old and true adage that no one will be offended if you don't use off-color material. It's always safe to choose the high road. This advice may annoy some performers, but instead of getting mad, I hope they see Red. **TNC**

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What Kind of WALKAROUND CLOWN Are You?

By Tricia “Pricilla Mooseburger” Manuel

Walkaround—also known as meet-and-greet clowning—is a basic skill required of all clown arts entertainers. It involves anything from entertaining people while they wait in line to walking around a fair or festival and amusing people on the fly. It sounds simple enough, but ...

The truth is that you’re trying to entertain people while they’re trying to do other things!

My first experience with extended meet-and-greet clowning happened when I was working as a clown at Disneyland, in 1986. It was a collaboration between Disney and Ringling called “The Circus at Disneyland.” I wasn’t going to miss this opportunity, but I was also not prepared. In my day, circus clowns did not do many meet-and-greet events. We spent our time before the show pulling clown gags. It was nothing like what my son and daughters experienced decades later, when the audience was allowed on the show floor and could mix and mingle with the clowns and performers. They became meet-and-greet pros!

I knew how to do a two-and-a-half minutes clown gag and a ten-minute production number. I could ride an elephant, take an awesome picture, and give a good interview. But I did not know how to spend forty-five minutes trying to interact with people who were busy looking for Mickey and Minnie—or the nearest restroom!

Fast forward forty years and I’ve since learned my lessons the hard way, by jumping in the deep end of the pool! I would like to break down for you the different walkaround styles. The biggest mistake that clowns make is when they try a meet-and-greet style that works for someone else, but neither works for nor uses their own specific skills.

Meet-and-Greet Clowning Styles

With a puppet

If you are a meet-and-greet beginner and don’t know what to do, then a puppet can be your best pal. Why? Because all the attention is on the puppet and not on you! I am a novice puppet person but know the basic skills. The first time I took my bunny puppet, Cinnie Bun, for a walkaround I was amazed by how easy it was! Kids and adults alike wanted to interact with my puppet. Since real rabbits don’t make any noise, it was easy for her to be silent. She did whisper in my ear every now and then! Thankfully, no one really expects you to be a ventriloquist, and even adults want to “suspend reality” and listen to a puppet. It’s a good way to start.

This takes nothing away from true puppeteers, who do a fabulous job creating believable puppet pal characters with whom to interact. The more you use your puppet, the better you’ll get and the more fun you’ll have. Puppets are available at all price points and can be either inexpensive or high dollar. As long as you believe that your puppet is alive and real, so will your audience.

My puppet and I had fun arguments. She wanted to keep playing the cake-walk game at the Fall Festival until she won a carrot cake, and I was going broke! Make your puppet a real personality and you will have a partner on hand (LOL sorry)!

Magic

If you like to impress, pocket magic is a fantastic way to entertain. Sleight of hand with sponge balls is a classic, and everyone remembers their favorite uncle who could pull a quarter from their ear! Now, just do it with a sponge ball. If you can gather a crowd, rope and/or card tricks are fun, too. My favorite magician friend, Fred B., likes mismatched dollar bill tricks and hunter’s puzzle knot rope tricks. Even simple magic amazes people. They make sponge bunnies that multiply right in your volunteer’s hand. That never fails to please a crowd.

Funny props

I love using a funny prop to work the crowd, and a toy camera is an awesome way to entertain people on the fly. Try to get a large crowd of people to lean in to a shot, show a child a picture of a monkey after you’ve taken their picture, or take a silly selfie with the audience. The prop becomes the vehicle of interaction with your audience.

There’s also a technique I call the “Hit and Run.” It works great at parades and anywhere else you can quickly move on to new people. You can use a parade board that has a silly sign on it. Ask your



Body puppet walkaround.

audience, “Want to see my B collection?” then flip over the foam-core board to show different-sized, different-colored letter “B”s. There are so many ideas you can use for parade boards. I loved to use parade boards to pull silly gags that get the crowd groaning. Sometimes after they groaned, I would say “Awesome! Here’s another one you won’t like!” or “Laugh, folks, so I can move on!” You can take the same concept and turn the parade board into a pocket-size prop. I received these joke boxes (see picture) from a friend and had a lot of fun with them.

(SEE PICTURE)

Crazy visuals

Roller skating, or riding a unicycle, adult tricycle, or motorized-anything are fun options!

Musical instruments

Kazoos and ukeles are fun. You only need to know a few songs to get started. At the top of my list are “Happy Birthday,” for little kids, and for older folks, “You are My Sunshine.” I love my chick-e-le-le Gladys. I have a fun music book that I take with me on walkarounds or ride-arounds on my chicken mobile. Then I ask a volunteer to hold my music so that I can play a tune (since I’m not very good at memorizing music!). This creates more interaction with the crowd—especially when they forget to turn the page!

SEE PICTURE

Specialized Characters

Creating a character takes more work but is very rewarding. Being a clown waiter or waitress at a fundraising dinner can be very entertaining. I love doing my Church Lady character at our special events, or my Irish Washer woman for our local St. Patrick’s Day parade. A Christmas Elf or Christmas-style costume can make you Santa’s best helper, and you become a comic character in a special way. I carry my naughty-and-nice list with me so that I can check for guilty parties (it’s always the parents).

Be sure to customize your routine to fit your character. This kind of clowning allows you to become part of the scene. You are not there to entertain the audience—rather, you are entertaining them because you are there. One time at Disneyland, two clowns created a dad-and-little-boy character duo, and they were hilarious. As they navigated the park, the little boy clown would pitch a fit while the Dad clown would struggle with

his Disneyland map, which had been taped together from several different copies. He would unfold the big map and ask people for help finding a specific location at the park. Adults always stopped and tried to help, while the little boy clown ran off and got into trouble. It really was genius.

This really just scratches the surface. Here are some performance tips:

1. Your routines should be able to reset quickly and while you are in public.
2. “Keep it short and sweet” is a good rule. Don’t wear out your welcome.
3. Take time to read your audience. Remember what I said: we are trying to entertain people who are trying to do something else! We got in trouble at Disneyland



Pricilla Mooseburger on Disneyland Main Street, 1988.



for keeping people in one place for too long. Make sure that the people with whom you want to play also want to play with you. If you run into any resistance—like crabby people who don’t like clowns or folks who have been drinking—then move on. “Whoops, I have to water the elephants!” Don’t argue, just go and find the people who want to be entertained by you!

4. Mix it up. If you have a longer engagement, switch out your toys and do something different for each set.

5. Play, have fun, and keep it real for you.

It’s very rewarding to connect with the audience on a personal level. That is the best part of meet-and-greet and walkaround clowning. Nothing is stopping you, which means that you can really make fun and meaningful connections with your audience! Ask questions, get to know them, and make a friend! Bring some joy to their life by sharing your own joy of clowning! **TNC**

Tricia Manuel is the unmistakable Pricilla Mooseburger. You can find her online at www.mooseburger.com with Pricilla Mooseburger Originals costumes and supplies, Mooseburger e-Alley and www.rednosereader.org. Or just call her! 320-963-6277! pricilla@mooseburger.com.

JUNIOR JOEYS

By Regina “Cha Cha” Wollrabe,
Junior Joeys Director



The Dance Pin Is Here!

Why should you never dance with a horse?

Answer: Because they have two left feet.

What do you call dancing by the sink?

Answer: Tap dancing.

How many dance teachers does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer: Five, six, seven, eight!

The dance pin is finally here! Members and non-members who want to encourage their Junior Joeys—and even beginner adult clowns—to grow their skills will find this program useful.

When the program started, I thought it would be too hard. But as we complete more pins, I see just how many new and inventive ways they can be used. A parent can order the pins and use them to encourage their child to try out different criteria to earn them. Homeschool clowns, teachers, and leaders could use them to help students develop their skills and order the specific pin they want to work on.

We'll make the criteria book and pins available soon. The pandemic caused a bit of a setback, but things are getting back in order and before we know it, the program will be in full swing.

For clowns, dance is a fun and indispensable skill. Use line dancing to lead audiences both large and small. Learn to perform a dance in clown—or how to dance with a partner (such as swing dancing or square dancing). You can even learn games like freeze dancing, bean-bag dancing, dancing with scarves or balloons, the Hokey Pokey, the limbo, and more.

You can perform successful dances in silence, but your dances will be even better if you use good music. Keep a playlist of dance songs on your phone so that no matter where you are, your music is located in one place and accessible from anywhere. This will make it easier to input your music into a speaker system so that everyone can hear your music. At some events, there may be a sound technician who can access your playlist from a phone, computer, or iPad. Back in the day, we carried around cassette tapes, CDs, and bulky boomboxes. Today, we have Bluetooth connectivity and portable speakers, which allow you to pack light and create more opportunity to use music at events.

Consider taking a dance class or searching for some fun, new kids' songs. Use movement and dance to interact with your audience so that you can laugh together and have fun. Be creative, be funny, and put your imagination to good use, because those are the most important aspects of a skill like dance.

Feel free to contact your Junior Joey Director to ask questions, or to put together a Zoom call so that you can connect with others. Bump a nose! **TNC**





BEGINNING SKILLS IN DANCE

Dance is a fun skill that you can use to entertain while clowning. If you already have good rhythm and like to dance, this may be an easy pin to earn. If you have never danced, we encourage you to take lessons either in person or by video. Practice learning moves that will help you entertain your audience with music and movement that will fill the event with joy. Put on your happy feet and bump your toes!

- Take a dance class.
- Learn some names of dance steps and dance positions.
- Collect five or more dance songs on a playlist.
- Visit a dance supply store in person or online.
- Twist a balloon or do a magic trick to music and dance.
- Learn a line dance, like the Cha Cha Slide, Electric Slide, etc.
- Learn a couple of kids' dance songs.
- Learn a few music games, such as Limbo or Freeze Dance.
- Learn about the different types of dance styles.
- Lead others in a group dance.

25 Years go

By Regina “Cha Cha” Wollrabe



It took me about eleven hours—with a few breaks for shopping, cooking, and cleaning, of course—to get through the November/December 1997 issue of *The New Calliope*. (Let that be a good reminder that if you check out the Vault at www.mycoai.com, you’ll find enough clown reading material to last you for years!)

The cover features beloved clown and Hall of Famer Leon “Buttons” McBryde. Flip the magazine over and you’ll find David “Skinhead” Lewis on the back cover, where he’s holding a giant silk emblazoned with the fitting words, “The End.”

Do you love numbers? I hope so, because this issue has fourteen articles, nine mentions of either conventions or workshops, and over twenty-five ads. Turns out that when you’re looking back at the past, even the ads are fun to read—they’re practically time capsules.

You might even learn something new about a friend. For example, I found out that one of my favorite clowns and friend Julie Varholdt used to create small clown sculptures, using Fimo and Sculpey clay, that she personalized to look just like your clown character.

Reading back issues of *The New Calliope* is another way that we can continue to memorialize the many amazing clowns we’ve lost to time. Ann “Tuttles” Sanders wrote a beautiful tribute to Alley #3 President Regina Annette “Girl Friend” Onley, titled “Clown World Loses a Lady,” which preceded another article written by Regina Onley herself. She wrote it just one month before her passing, and had been so excited to write it that the magazine shared it as part of her legacy. Regina was a proud, award-winning African-American clown who was loved by all. Her admirers included everyone from her clown peers to the people with whom she worked in the Virginia public school system. Regina was a speech language therapist who helped school-age children learn and develop their communication skills.

Here’s a little more about what you can find in the November/December 1997 issue: an article on how to adapt your birthday parties for little ones ages one and

two, tips and tricks for how to perform at nursing homes, how to converse with kids when you’re Santa or an Elf, patter suggestions for magic tricks like the “Pea Can,” a write-up about the Portland, Oregon regional convention that tried competition with a different philosophy (with a picture of me, back when I first started clowning at that convention!), four wonderful pages of color photos from clown camp, and a great article about Leon “Buttons” McBryde—did you know that he started clowning when he was just seven years old?

There was even a short, encouraging letter from President Bill Clinton on page 4, thanking and saluting us for what we do to brighten the days and bring joy to the hearts of people as we celebrated International Clown Week the first week of August. **TNC**

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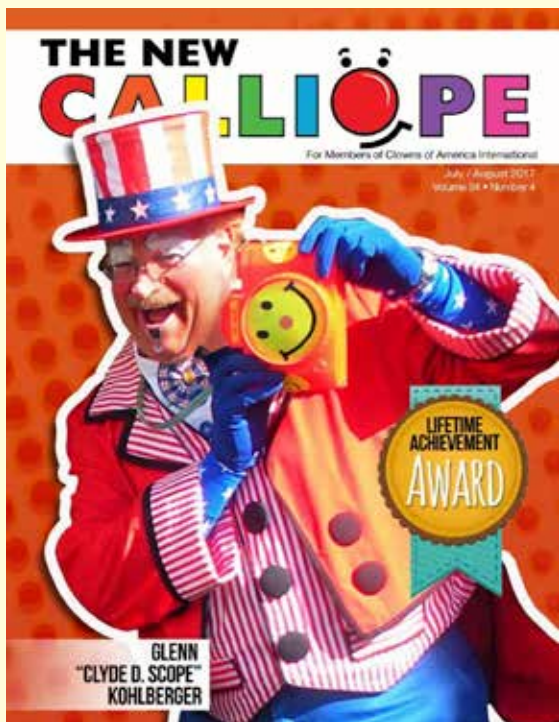
THE RING OF HONOR 2022

The Ring of Honor recognizes COAI members who have passed away but have made a significant difference within our organization. It is a tribute to those who have stood out undeniably as members, guided our organization to new standards by their leadership, or have brought about a profound distinction in the world of clowning and COAI.

Glenn “Clyde D. Scope” Kohlberger

Glenn “Clyde D. Scope” Kohlberger, a powerhouse in COAI leadership, passed away at the age of sixty-nine in June of 2021. His early career focused on music and magic, but he found his true community—and family—among his fellow clowns. Talking about Glenn’s youth, a close friend once said of him, “Glenn was a clown; he just hadn’t realized yet.”

Glenn wore so many hats it’s nearly impossible to account for them all. But we’ll try our best: a professional clown, performance artist, musician, balloon sculptor, parade enthusiast, United States Post Office station manager, and passionate musician who merged his love of music and clowning to write original parody songs. Glenn



performed many of those parodies at radio stations throughout New York and Florida.

In 2017, he made the cover of *The New Calliope’s* July/August issue, when he was awarded the COAI Lifetime Achievement Award. He dedicated much of his life to COAI, which included two terms as COAI’s President (2012–2016), as well as COAI’s Southeast Regional Vice President, webmaster, sergeant-at-arms, merchandise manager, and advisor to the board. He was also a member of World Clown Association and the Society of American Magicians. Glenn was also the creative force behind

the establishment of online alleys Junior Joeys, Teen Joeys, and Giggle-bytes Alley 1000. Then there’s his work with local clown clubs, among them Florida’s KrakerJac Clown Alley. He loved clown education and founded the KrakerJac Clown University—as well as the “Will Work for Laughs” entertainment company.

In 2013 when COAI was in search of a new editor and publisher for *The New Calliope*, as well as a new business office manager, Glenn approached Sammy and Laurel Smith of SPS Publications. It was the beginning of a successful working relationship throughout Glenn’s term of office. “Glenn was great to work with,” Sammy commented. “He was always supportive of the changes we made in the magazine and in the way we handled membership processes in the office. There was only one Glenn Kohlberger. His influence on COAI was profound, and he will be missed.”

Regina Annette “Girl Friend” Onley

COAI and WCA member Regina Annette “Girl Friend” Onley hailed from Virginia, where she began clowning in the mid-1980s as her original clown character Bumbles before reinventing herself as the Auguste clown known as “Girl Friend.”

The clown community has not forgotten Regina’s sudden, tragic passing in 1997. At just forty years old, her life was cut short. Yet she’d filled those forty years with laughter, compassion, and—as her friend Anne “Tuttles” Sanders wrote in the November/December 1997 issue of *The New Calliope*—a “voice of reason ... [h]er quiet manner was her trademark and her laughter her legacy.” Regina credited Tuttles as the friend, and fellow clown, who inspired her most.

A paragon of excellence, in 1997 she became the first clown in the Circus Magic Conference’s eighteen-year history to win first place in every category of

competition—character, costume, single and multiple skits, and single and multiple balloons. As a cherry on top of this already incredible achievement, CMC honored her with that year’s award for Best All Around Clown.

Her accomplishments were many. In addition to her 1997 CMC sweep, she was the 1997 recipient of a Mark Anthony Scholarship to Clown Camp. She was elected both vice president, and president, at different points in her tenure with Virginia Alley #3. There, she played a major role in the Alley’s fundraising activities, charity events, and parade routes. She was passionate about balloon animal sculptures and won many awards for her intricate designs.

Regina was proud to be not just a clown, but an African American clown. She wrote about her experience in a September/October 1997 letter to the editor, stating that, “I have consciously chosen to incorporate my ethnicity in my clown persona, as it is an important part of who I am. I think this can indeed be done without compromising the art of clowning.” She went on to describe the work she did to find a makeup style that would complement her natural skin tone, rather than mask it, so that she not only looked great but could feel comfortable, too.

Regina obtained her bachelor’s degree from Hampton University, and her master’s degree in speech pathology from Tennessee State University. She was a full-time speech pathologist for Prince George’s County, Maryland’s elementary and high schools, as well as a part-time employee of the Infant Intervention Program District 19 in Petersburg, Virginia. She accomplished all of this while not only clowning, but also actively participating in her local Tabernacle Baptist Church and Ladies Unique Social Club of Petersburg, the latter of which she was vice president.

Dorothy “Smiley the Clown” Petty

Dorothy “Dot, Smiley the Clown” Petty, of Leander, Texas, passed away on August 1, 2021 at the age of seventy-two.

Dot never knew a stranger and was a loving friend. She adored carousels, *The Wizard of Oz*, hummingbirds, and oldies music. Few people called her Dorothy—she quickly became Mom, Grammy, or Smiley to most who knew her. Her greatest passion was her children and grandchildren, who she loved fiercely.

Dot could be found playing Bingo!, hitting the slot machines, eating lobster, doing cross-stitch, dancing to country and western, watching game shows, and vacationing at Disney or on a cruise with family—with a giant smile the entire time. She later turned her nickname “Smiley” into her professional clown name and dedicated over twenty years to volunteering through COAI. She belonged to the East Hartford Clown Alley and was a founding member of the Clown Alley in Springfield, Massachusetts. She served in many roles, from alley president to convention judge.

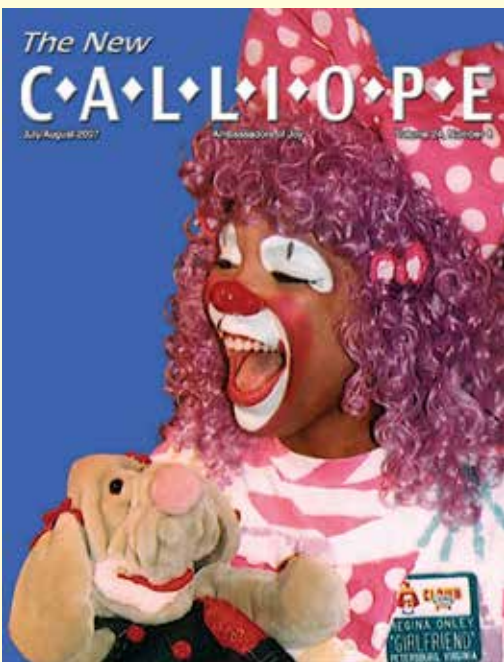
Born November 22, 1948 to Arthur and Ermina Dugas in Lonsdale, Rhode Island, she graduated from Suffield High School and went on to call home



in Pennsylvania and then Connecticut. Dot retired as an inspector at Hamilton Standard after twenty-five years and moved to Texas, where she retired a second time from the University of Texas in 2013.

Dot will be missed by many. She is survived by her children David Glenn, Jr. of Seminole, FL, Norman Glenn of Smithville, Texas, Jamie Glenn and her husband Ryan Searls of Leander, Texas, her sister Diane Dugas and husband Joseph Vaverchak of East Haddam, Connecticut, her grandchildren Katie, Abigail, Tyler, Alex, Sydney, Samantha, and Sophia, as well as many nieces and nephews and her loving pup, Toby. She is also survived by her best friend of sixty-two years, Joan Kiral, and Joan’s husband Gene of Jefferson City, Missouri. Dot is predeceased by her parents Arthur and Ermina Dugas, sister Ermina Hart, brother Norman Dugas, niece Heather Dugas and lifelong best friend Jeanne Woska.

Dot found her passion in clowning to make people smile and laugh. For that, she left the world a better place. **TNC**



THE LAST WALK-AROUND

Rick Shapiro

Richard “Rick” “Charlie the Clown” Shapiro of Fanwood, New Jersey, made his last walkaround on August 6, 2022.

Always smiling, Rick made it his purpose in life to spread joy and delight wherever he went—including an orphanage in Vietnam, where the Air Force veteran was deployed in 1968. His clown career led him many places, among them a job with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. In 2001, he was the keynote speaker at Clownfest.

Not only did he found the special events production company Spotfield Productions, but he went on to become a successful, engaging professional speaker whose important lessons about life, comedy, and stress management never failed to inspire his audiences. It goes without saying that Rick’s life philosophies were “laughter is the best medicine” and “humor works.”

Rick is survived by his beloved wife, Debbie; his sons Barry (Alyson) and David; his sister Joyce; his brother Lester (Vicki); and many nieces and nephews.



Sandra Johnson

Sandy “Sunshine” Johnson of Salisbury, Maryland, made her last walkaround on November 18, 2022.



Sandy graduated from Wicomico High School in 1968 before working at Perdue Farms and obtaining her Real Estate license, which she used to support her renovation business.

Her career as a clown began unexpectedly, after a clown group performing at a Salisbury Moose Lodge children’s party asked her to join them. For thirty-seven years, she performed as Sunshine the Clown across the continental United States and seventeen different



countries, including Russia and Tokyo, Japan. She lived in Tokyo for seven years and was often “treated like a rock star” while there, she told the newspaper Delmarva Now.

Sandy’s other accomplishments include but are not limited to performing several times at the White House, working for nearly a quarter of a century at Ocean City’s Castle in the Sand, becoming an ordained minister in 2012, practicing as a licensed hypnotherapist, and working as Mrs. Clause during the holiday season. A member of both the Salisbury Moose Lodge and Elk Lodge, she had many hobbies: kayaking, watching the moon, spending time at the beach, dancing, creating, and her grandson Gavin, just to name a few.

Sandy is survived by her daughter, Sherry (David); her grandson Gavin; her cousin Nancy; many nieces and nephews; and Juliana Reyes.

George Hallenbeck

George F. “Giorgio the Klown” Hallenbeck of Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina, made his last walkaround on May 18, 2022.



George retired from IBM and Fuquay Parks and Recreation before becoming a volunteer with the Fuquay-Varina food pantry. Known professionally as Giorgio the Klown, he was a member of the Jolly Raleigh Klown Alley. George was also a Boy Scout leader, a Sergeant first class in the Catskill, NY National Guard, a Hope-O-Nose Bowman, and a member of the Elks Club and IBM Quarter Century Club.

He is survived by his wife of sixty-seven years, Margaret; his ten children; and many grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

Donna Shuster

Donna Lou “Spangles” Shuster of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania made her last walkaround on January 5, 2023.



After graduating from Slippery Rock University in 1966, she spent thirty years working as a physical education teacher for children with autism. Donna was patriotic and deeply active with the Forest Hills Presbyterian Church, where she was a church elder, a volunteer choir director, and a member of the Women in the Word group.

As Spangles the Clown, Donna would create balloon bouquets for anyone in need of a pick-me-up. She also dedicated much of her time as a COAI member to training future professional clowns.

Donna is survived by her husband, James; her nephew, Jeff; and her niece, Lisa.

Marty Scott

Margarite Jeanette “Marty” Scott of Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida, made her last walkaround on November 7, 2022.

Originally from Tampa, Florida, Marty and her husband Wayne worked for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus—as a wardrobe specialist and a clown, respectively—before moving to Central Florida in 1970. She and her husband continued to build props, produce clown shoes, and create costumes for various circus entertainers, including the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Clown College, for whom they made clown shoes for twenty-seven years. They also developed props and wardrobes for a number of magicians.

Whenever they traveled to conventions, Marty and Wayne loved to share their knowledge with others. They taught clown and magic skills, as well as how to create props from everyday items. Wayne passed away in 2008. Marty is survived by daughters Gloria-Jean and Fiona and her son Douglas; her sister Kathryn; sisters-in-law Jeanne and Gloria; and many extended family members. **TNC**



NOTICE OF ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The 2023 Annual Business Meeting of Clowns of America International will be held online Wednesday, May 10, 2023, at 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time. To attend, register no later than Friday, May 5 using the link below, or scan the QR code. A Zoom link to the meeting will also be emailed to members in good standing.



<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIkdOCppz0tGdAC4q4oOLZmfaioXliUaKSf>

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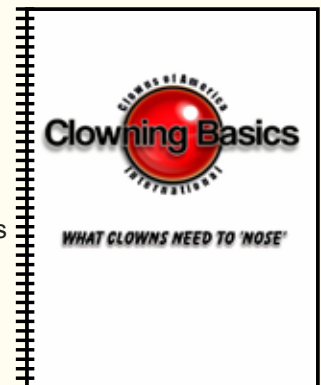
Clowning Basics is our organization's go-to master course for all things clowning. In its pages, the novice clown learns all he needs to know, from choosing a clown type and persona, to detailed instructions on makeup application.

The experienced clown has plenty to learn from this manual as well. Brush up on your clown safety or review the organization's rules for skits and paradeability.

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Best of all—COAI members now have access to this wealth of information absolutely free! Simply log in to your account on www.mycoai.com and start learning!

Printed copies of **Clowning Basics** are still available from the COAI Business Office for \$25 plus \$3 shipping. To order, call 1-352-357-1676.



WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?

By Beth "Pickles" Cedarholm



ARTWORK: ISTOCK

The following are stories from COAI members about their real-life clown blunders (and tales of woe) when gigs didn't go quite as expected. These performers endured some impossibly bad situations but soldiered on to become better—and wiser—entertainers.

Jim Donoughe, Clown

In 1992, I bought my first car: a rolling rust bucket in the form of a 1982 Toyota Tercel. Her body was falling apart, but her heart wouldn't quit. And she was *mine*. Only two of the vehicle's four doors opened—the driver's door and the rear passenger door. I drove this car to college, to shows, and even through blizzards. It would be an understatement to say that she had seen better days. She was my little beauty and she kept going despite it all.



Four years later, I was still driving her and on my way to a show. At the time, I wore a pair of leather chucks in size 21 (I hadn't yet bought my Spear's). Since I wore my regular shoes inside the chucks, I was able to drive in them without any problems.

All of a sudden, the car beside me began to speed up, honk their horn, and yell at me to pull over. I couldn't hear what they were saying—it all sounded like yelling and beeping. I suspected they might be clown fans but wasn't about to pull over for



a group of guys who were shouting. I rolled down my window to wave.

That's when I heard them scream, "You're on fire!"

When I looked in the rearview mirror, I saw smoke and immediately pulled onto a side street with my new friends not far behind. I inspected the back of my car. To my surprise, it wasn't my trunk that was on fire. It was my bumper.

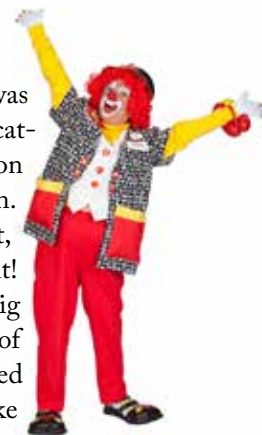
Apparently, the plastic securing the bumper had come loose and the foam inside caught fire. I stupidly either pulled on or kicked the plastic (I can't remember now). The foam, still on fire, fell out! In full clown makeup, I proceeded to stomp out the fire. The guys were still sitting behind me in their car, laughing hysterically and watching "the show." I turned and asked why they hadn't helped me.

They stopped laughing and the driver, without skipping a beat said, "We were waiting for your sixteen friends to get out and help you." Then they fell back into hysterical laughter. (Me, not so much.)

Shaken up but with a great new story to tell, I was still able to make my show and perform. Too bad this happened before cell phone cameras—I'm sure it would have gone viral!

Jo Bailey, Clown

Many years ago, I was competing in the skit category of a competition with one other clown. As luck would have it, I lost my wig mid-skit! Since having my wig fall off wasn't part of the plan, I just pulled it back on (like nothing happened) and continued the performance. Guess what? We still took first place.



What I learned from this experience: the show must go on!

Bruce "Charlie" Johnson, Clown

For eleven years, I performed at Raging Waters. Each day I would put on a variety of shows: stage shows, atmospheric shows, strolling, and line relief. The temperatures would often reach into the nineties.



One blistering hot day, I was strolling and doing a sleight-of-hand routine with two coins. I had one coin hidden in my right hand, in what is known as the classic palm position. Because my hand was sweaty, I lost my grip on the coin and it slipped out. The coin hit the cement walkway with a sharp ring. I knew that I had to react to the coin landing on the ground, so I looked up as if I was trying to figure out from where the coin had come.

While doing that, I also wiped my sweaty palm on my tattered pants. I handed the other coin to one of the children watching me. Using my right hand, I picked up the coin that was on the ground. I performed a sleight called a French drop, which made it appear as if I had taken the coin with my left

hand while retaining it in my right. I acted like I was using my left hand to throw the coin in the air. When I opened my left hand, I used my eyes to follow the coin's imagined, upward flight. Then I paused, still looking up and waiting for the coin to return. While everyone in the audience was looking up, too, I made sure to firmly press the coin (hidden in my right hand) into classic palm position.

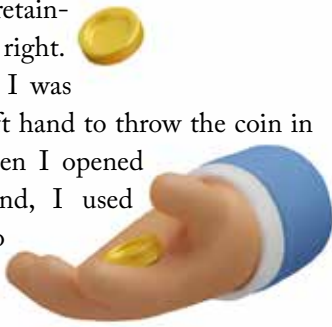
I knew that I needed to let a little time pass. Using my left hand, I took the other coin from the child holding it and tossed it in the air. I caught it when it came back down. I looked at the audience and shrugged, because I couldn't figure out why one coin vanished and the other didn't.

Next, I began my planned coin routine. Even though the audience had seen that I had two coins, they expressed just as much amazement when I transformed one coin into another as they did in other performances. Then I performed a series of vanishes and reproductions, including vanishing the coin by tossing it in the air.

When I finished, a man walked up behind me and whispered, "Whoa! You are good."

I always keep a half dollar in my pocket so that I can continue practicing the classic palm. When I have to wait in a long checkout line, I retrieve the coin and slip it into classic palm position to see how long I can keep it there—and to ensure that I never drop a coin again during a performance.

Do you want to share a tale of woe or a lesson learned? Send it to Beth "Pickles" Cedarholm at clownypickles@gmail.com. All entries are subject to editing for clarity and length.



The Kidshow Way

CANCELED

By Skip Way

The phone rings on a quiet Friday evening. A panicked mother prays that you will be available tomorrow for her two o'clock party, because the entertainer she confidently hired two months ago has just canceled.

Yes, things happen that are beyond our control. The same can be said for less-than-professional performers, who cancel to catch a better-paying gig or hit a major concert or sporting event.

Here's my simple advice for canceling a scheduled event: DON'T!

If you want to dominate your market, make canceling a booking your absolute, last-ditch option. Breaking a single client's trust is guaranteed to lose you not only them, but also every potential client within their social network. The "mom social media grid" will spread warnings faster than a spark through a California forest.

Mothers, teachers, librarians, and event planners put a lot of work into events that generally revolve around you, the scheduled entertainer. They won't care about your excuse. All they'll remember and talk about is your broken promise, their room full of disappointed children, and the fact that you made them look bad.

True professionals operate under three immutable rules. First, your word is your bond, so once you book a show, make that show your number-one priority. Second, cancel an appearance only in the event of a disabling injury, a severe or contagious

illness, or other emergency that is outside of your control. Third, if you must cancel an appearance, do whatever it takes to provide a substitute performer of equal or greater skill at no additional cost to the client—even if you need to pay the difference from your own pocket.

I maintain a close relationship with other high-quality professionals in my area. We refer clients to one another and stand ready to fill in should an emergency arise. I scrupulously avoid any performer with a reputation for canceling events, undercutting, or bad-mouthing others. I know that my friends have my back, and our clients know that we have theirs!

I also have a standing arrangement with my nearby Enterprise car rental agent. Should my car die on me, they will do their best to get a rental to me ASAP. I love them!

To you, it may be little more than a missed paycheck. But to the child whose special day you just ruined, it is so much more. Don't be that loser. **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 kid-show performer named Happy Dan. Reach him by e-mail at rway@nc.rr.com.

SNAPSHOTS

SAN DIEGO ALL STAR CLOWNS AND FAMILY ENTERTAINERS AT CIRCUS VARGAS

Bon Bon, Uncle Rusty, Grandma Huggs, Zeek, Corkey, Miss Toby, Dottie Dancer, and Sugar Bear represented the San Diego All Star Clowns and Family Entertainers at Circus Vargas on January 28, 2023. Before the circus, we performed in the foyer from noon until 1:00 p.m. Bon Bon and Uncle Rusty performed magic. Grandma Huggs demonstrated the bee collection and passed out stickers. Miss Toby had a monkey puppet that received a lot of petting and kissing. Sugar Bear had a dinosaur puppet named Puff, whose favorite food was hot sauce. Corkey passed out stickers. Grandma Huggs shared stickers that said “I met a clown today” with Dottie Dancer to pass out. We were in many group pictures with children. In an effort to gain new members, Bon Bon passed out plenty of our business cards. Thanks to Terry Sunshine for being our Circus Vargas contact.



Bon Bon, Uncle Rusty, Corkey, Sugar Bear, Miss Toby, Grandma Huggs, Zeke, and Dottie Dancer smile and eat popcorn at Circus Vargas on January 28, 2023.



Uncle Rusty, Dottie Dancer, Sugar Bear, Miss Toby, Grandma Huggs, Zeke, Corkey, and Bon Bon at Circus Vargas.



Uncle Rusty, Grandma Huggs, Sugar Bear, Bon Bon, Dottie Dancer, Zeke, Miss Toby, and Corkey show off their 2021 CHARLIE Award at Circus Vargas on January 28, 2023.



Clown family

By Jim “Donuts” Donoughe

The term “Clown Family” is often used at alley meetings and conventions. I used to laugh at the idea of clowns having me as a family member. My own family was stuck with me, a weirdo who loves clowning so much it’s in my blood, and they have no choice but to love me. But to think of a group of friends as my family—a second family who would love my weirdness? That was something I never imagined.

Yes, I do have a group of good friends, like the ladies who took me under their motherly wing after my stroke. Knowing that I couldn’t drive, they made sure I didn’t overdo it while we attended the American Clown Academy together. It had only been a week since my stroke when I fell ill at the Mid-Atlantic Clown Association convention in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

I’d had vertigo before, but nothing like this. I dismissed my dizziness and stumbled to breakfast, feeling very, very drunk as I tried to reach the men’s room without anyone noticing. I made it as far as the bathroom sink. There I was, holding my head against the marble sink so I wouldn’t fall. The cool marble slab felt good against my forehead and since I didn’t think I could move any farther, I decided to stay where I was.

That’s when I felt a cold, damp paper towel on my neck. A kind older man’s voice asked if I was all right. I didn’t know who this person was—I was just relieved that someone else was there in case I fell. He rubbed my back, repeating that everything would be okay and that he was there if I needed him.

That’s when I realized the person speaking to me was John Kraal, president of MACA. I was embarrassed but thankful. He stood with me until I heard the take-charge voice of a lady. Oh no, did I go into the wrong bathroom? Was I in the ladies’ room? No! I was in the right bathroom, but Lorice Bolde’s Coast Guard training had kicked and she was there to take charge. She wasn’t the only woman who entered that small men’s room: my partner in crime Connie Morrow was there, too. I guess she thought if Lorice could come in, then so could she. This left my other friends Tina VanWormer and Patty Docker Ford to find me a wheelchair.

I was dizzy in the men’s room with two ladies, the president of MACA, and me at my worst. When I looked at the next sink over, I felt bad when I saw an older man who was there just to use the facilities. There was nothing I could do to ease my embarrassment or his.

There was also no way I was going to a hospital—I was dizzy, not dying. I knew I just needed to sleep until it passed.

My chariot awaited. After getting me in a wheelchair, the ladies rushed me to my room. I crawled in bed, thinking that was the end of it and that I’d sleep it off like every other time I’d experienced vertigo.

But that was far from the end. Someone was tucking blankets around me to keep me warm, while someone else removed my shoes. Since I thought I was fine, I tried

to make them leave. Everyone left except for Connie, who stayed even after I threatened to kick her butt if she didn’t go to class. She fielded phone calls and visits from others who’d heard what happened. Alene Kraus brought me ginger ale and crackers to settle my upset stomach. After that, I slept for seven hours.

I was humbled and in awe of the care this group had shown me. While I slept, the calls and visits continued. I would hear their voices and think I was dreaming, but when I awakened it was like that scene from *The Wizard of Oz*—the one when Dorothy talks about her adventures being a dream. Connie confirmed that it hadn’t been a bad dream and that I really did hear those voices.

I woke up to ginger ale and food. My visitors brought food for Connie, too, since she wouldn’t leave. These people had given up their time, as well as classes for which they had already paid, to care for me. When I was better and able to return, the love they showed was overwhelming.

That’s when I realized my friends weren’t just friends, they were truly family. I can’t thank them enough for everything they sacrificed while treating me like a family member.

Whenever you’re with your second family, I hope you’ll celebrate the love you feel. I now know that no other family would have my back more than my crazy clown family, and I wouldn’t have it any other way. And yes, if you’re reading this then you are part of my family—please know that I love you all. **TNC**



Fox

By Merrily Johnston

(Inspired by Holly the Twister Sister)

SUPPLIES NEEDED: Three 260s—1 each, orange, black, and white.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



8.

1. Inflate the white 260 halfway. Make a four-finger bubble and twist several times (to give you a little stretch between balloons). Make a second four-finger bubble and, again, twist several times and tie together with a knot using nozzle end. These will be the eyes.
2. Make two four-inch loops to form the muzzle. Set the white balloon aside.

3. Inflate the black 260 halfway. Make a tiny pinch twist (TPT) at beginning, end, and between each bubble (that is, TPT four-finger bubble, TPT three-finger bubble, TPT three-finger bubble, TPT four-finger bubble), and tie knot. Leave three-finger tail, cut off remainder, and tie ends together.
4. Twist the first and last TPTs into the center TPT and set aside. These will be the ears.

5. With the remaining piece of the black balloon make a two-finger bubble and tie the ends together to make it round. Leave the three-finger piece on the end and remove the remainder. Next, inflate the orange 260 leaving a six-finger tip. Tie the nozzle to the end of the black piece.
6. Marriage-twist the two balloons from Step 5 by pushing black into orange, grabbing the knot, twisting several times, and then pushing the knot back into the orange bubble you just formed. This will be the nose.



9.



10.



11.



12.

7. Twist the nose into the center of the white balloon and bring the orange balloon up between eyes while pushing out some of the air to shape.

8. Place the black ears behind the eyes while looping the orange balloon around the eyes and ears and attaching in back by twisting into the eyes and muzzle. Make a one-finger pinch twist.

9. Continuing with the orange balloon, make four four-finger bubbles and form them into a loop

10. With the white balloon, make a six-finger bubble and attach to the twist at the bottom of the orange loop. Make a three-finger bubble and small pinch twist.

11. With the orange balloon, make a four-finger bubble and wrap into white pinch twist. Make a tiny bubble at end of the orange balloon and wrap it into the white pinch twist, forming the tail.

12. Add artwork as shown in the title photo.



Merrily Johnston is a professional clown and balloon twister in Casper, Wyoming. You may reach her by email at merrilythec clown@msn.com.



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REBO'S Clown Bits and Props

By Bev Bergeron
HAT PRODUCTION

ARTWORK BY TONY DUNN

EFFECT: Magician puts Sorcerer's hat on assistant from audience. Silk handkerchief vanishes. Magician states that the handkerchief is under the hat. Removes hat, and another hat takes its place. This is repeated about twelve times. Handkerchief is found under last hat.

METHOD: Buy a nest of cone-shaped party hats from any party shop. Take each hat and restack them so that the elastic band is inside each hat, except for the bottom one. Jam a rolled-up, duplicate silk handkerchief into the bottom hat. If you are careful, the handkerchief will not fall out. Vanish the handkerchief and turn away from the assistant as you remove the first hat, saying, "Here is the red handkerchief." Do a double-take as you discover the second hat. Keep the "takes" coming as you remove the hats. On the last hat, discover the handkerchief and bow. Give the hats away to the children.

COMMENTS: No one cares about the handkerchief reproduction; the fun is in finding the hats. I got the idea for this after seeing a film with W. C. Fields playing a barber who has the same trouble when trying to get a party hat off of a kid's head. This is a good trick to use at your nephew's, or boss's kid's party that you were conned into doing.



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CLOWN COMICS

WHAT'S FOR DINNER?

By Fred "Ozzie" Baisch

★
Featuring Fred "Ozzie" Baisch, Rick "Trickie" Arends,
and Beth "Pickles" Cedarholm.

Photos by Katie Baisch



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