

# THE NEW CALLIÖPE

For Members of Clowns of America International

Volume 41 • Number 1



*Connie "Punkin" Morrow*

1953-2024

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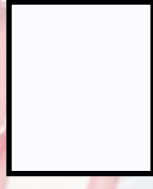
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The mission of Clowns of America International is to organize all members desiring to pursue the honorable profession or art of clowning, the dedication toward its advancement, and the education of its members.

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# THE NEW CALLIOPE

## OUR COVER

**4** In Memoriam: Connie “Punkin” Morrow Brooke Fiedler

## HOW-TO

**24** Among Us Balloon Merrily Johnston

**26** How One Clown Overcomes the Challenges of ADHD

Barb Rosenfeld

## INSPIRATION AND HUMOR

**16** Junior Joeys at Niagra Falls Regina “Cha Cha” Wollrabe

**22** Clown for Any Occasion Kynisha “Daisy the Clown” Ducre

**23** 25 Years Ago in *The New Calliope* Lauren Jurgensen

**30** Living on a Circus Train Pricilla Mooseburger

**32** What Could Possibly Go Wrong? Beth “Pickles” Cedarholm

**37** The Kidshow Way: A Rabbit’s Tale Skip Way

**36** How Clown Clubs Spread Joy Samuel Patrick Smith

**38** Clown Comics Ann “Tuttles” Sanders

## OFFICIAL BUSINESS

**7** From the President Dan Langwell

**7** From the Vice President Alene Kraus

**8** From the Membership Director Bob “Bunky” Gretton

**24** Proposed Bylaw Changes

**25** COAI Annual General Meeting

## NEWS

**9** COAI Competition 2024 Marilyn Barrett

**15** Happy Campin’ 2025 COAI Convention

**27** Richard Smith Membership Drive

**28** International Clowns of Puerto Rico: Clown Party

Angel Morales

**35** The Last Walk-Around

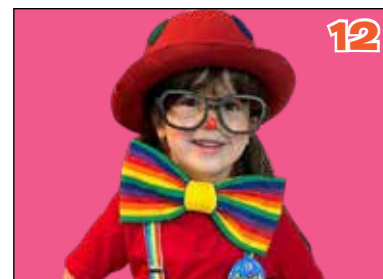
**39** 2025 COAI Convention: Happy Campin’

## MISCELLANEOUS

**2** Officers, Directors, and Committees

**33** Our Good Cheer List

**34** Welcome, New Members



### Permanent Membership Cards

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

# IN MEMORIAM

# CONNIE “PUNKIN” MORROW

By Brooke Fiedler

Connie “Punkin” Morrow, a beloved and influential figure in the clowning community, passed away on April 28, 2024 after a short battle with cancer.

Prior to discovering her clown persona, “Punkin,” Connie held roles as a medical receptionist, assistant bookkeeper, and office manager. Retirement from these administrative positions marked a new chapter in Connie’s life, allowing her to follow her passion while caring for her mother.

Connie’s journey into the world of clowning began unexpectedly in 1996. Encouraged by her sister, Connie joined her to provide entertainment by clowning at the grand opening of a new Goodwill Industries main office. “[My sister] needed someone who didn’t mind making a fool of herself. Naturally, she called upon me,” Connie said.

Connie and her sister had never clowned before and didn’t own clown costumes. Luckily for them, it was Halloween season. They walked out of the local Halloween pop-up shop with two clown costumes, complete with oversized plastic shoes, mini top hats, and ugly wigs. They had no idea how to apply clown makeup, but figured it out on the fly.



Connie as “Cow Patty.”



A professional clown joined Connie and her sister at the event. As amateurs, they felt a bit nervous and wondered what he thought about their performance, but he turned out to be as encouraging as he was kind. The sisters stayed and worked the entire eight-hour event. This experience ignited Connie’s passion for clowning and marked the beginning of her volunteer work for Goodwill.

Connie later caught the eye of someone who recruited her to clown at the Erie County Fair. While there, she met Casper, a seasoned clown who mentored her in balloon art and other beginner clown skills.

Connie spent the next four years working the fair and developing her skills in balloon art and face painting. Eager to refine her craft, she enrolled in a ten-week Clown School program to deepen her understanding of clown artistry.

Clown School was a place where Connie made new connections and realized how much she could learn and grow by befriending other clowns. In 2003, she joined the Buffalo Clown Alley and served as the secretary and newsletter editor. In 2006, she and her sister co-founded the Corn E Clowns Alley, COAI #394. This new alley consisted of clowns from both COAI and World Clown Association, creating an even greater community of like-minded



Connie poses with her plaque for the Individual CHARLIE Award in 2014.

clowns. Under Connie's leadership as founder, president, and newsletter editor, the Corn E Clowns Alley flourished and won numerous awards. The alley later disbanded due to an aging membership that had less time to attend meetings. In 2015, Connie met Jim "Donuts" Donoughe, who invited her to join the Niagara Clown Alley. Although it was a bit of a drive from Buffalo, Connie joined and remained involved with the



Punkin with her namesake.

Niagara Clown Alley for the rest of her life.

Connie's versatility as a performer was impressive. Her primary character was "Punkin," but she developed several seasonal characters and personalities: Santa's accountant "Holly Berry" and an elf named "Forgetful" at Christmas, "Wanda" the bad witch and "Wendy" the good witch at Halloween, and the Easter Bunny in the spring. Connie's country girl persona was named "Cow Patty," complete with brown braids, missing teeth, round glasses, and a distinct country accent. She often catered to party themes by performing as Alice in Wonderland and a variety of princesses.

Connie did it all, from corporate events and singing telegrams to family reunions and children's parties. Once, when she was working an RV show at the Buffalo Bills Stadium in Orchard Park, New York, she created a balloon sculpture of a football player that caught the eye of the Bills' running back, Fred Jackson. Jackson asked if she could make one in his likeness. When she was done, he asked her to autograph it for him. She was amazed that a football star would ask her for an autograph and thought he was very humble and kind.

Connie's favorite aspect of clowning was working with children—a joy she cherished deeply. She entertained at children's birthday parties and maintained lasting connections with "her" kids (as she thought of them), watching them grow into young adults. She considered children to be the most important part of her clowning career, and through her performances, created a big extended family.

Notably, Connie specialized in something many professional clowns avoid—birthday parties for toddlers. She entertained toddlers with bubbles, a mini ball pit, and "Punkin's Kitchen Band." Her summer events featured "sloppy games" with messy activities using paint, water, and shaving cream. At Connie's children's events, her repertoire overflowed

with balloon art, face painting, games, giant bubbles, comedy magic, and beyond. On the subject of magic, she once said she couldn't cut anyone in half because she wouldn't know how to put them back together!

Connie was a dedicated mentor and educator in the art of clowning. In 2015, she began teaching balloon classes at her local library and went on to found her own Clown Club. The club met monthly and included classes for beginners and advanced students in balloon art and other clown skills. Her youngest student was five years old, and her oldest was over eighty. She was always inspired by the enthusiasm and dedication of her students.

Connie was committed to clowning. She advocated for the preservation and promotion of clowning as an art form, addressing concerns about the declining interest in the art of clowning as well as misconceptions perpetuated by negative or scary portrayals of clowns. Connie traveled to elementary schools to educate children about the true nature of clowning and contributed articles to publications like *The New Calliope*, *Clowning Around*, and *The Cross and the Clown*.

She was a devoted volunteer and philanthropist. As the New York representative for the Red Nose Response for many years, she supported disaster relief efforts for the Greensburg tornado and the Virginia Tech shooting. Barbara "Sparky" Bird, who met Connie during the early days of the Red Nose Response, admired Connie's eagerness to help. "This is who she is, whether in clown or not," said Barbara. "She is one who reaches out. Her clown heart glows big and bright."

Connie dedicated her time to Camp Good Days and Special Times, a camp for children who either have cancer or are related to someone who does. She clowned at the camp for several years and eventually became one of their camp counselors. She also volunteered with

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*Punkin performs at the Erie County Fair, 2008.*



*Top right: Connie "Punkin" Morrow and her best friend ("little brother I never wanted") Jim "Donuts" Donoughe take a big break. Middle: Connie as "Sherry Scarecrow." Bottom: Connie as "Holly Berry" with her friends from the North Pole.*

the Hunter's Hope Foundation, a charity founded by the Buffalo Bills' Jim Kelly, which provides research and support for children with Krabbe Disease and other neurological disorders.

Connie earned countless awards throughout her career, all of them well deserved. In 2020, COAI named her Clown of the Year for her service to clowning and her dedication to clown education, appearance, and performance. She also received the COAI CHARLIE award in 2015, and the Spirt and Alice B Awards from the Buffalo Clown Alley. In 2009, she was voted the Nickelodeon Parents' Picks Winner for the Best Children's Entertainer in Buffalo, New York.

Connie competed and placed in many clown competitions for lite auguste, paradeability, face painting, and balloon art, twice landing in the All Top Ten. In 2014, she received the Camp Good Days and Special Times' Teddi Award for Most Helpful Volunteer.

Connie's impact as "Punkin" is marked by a history of service, creativity, and compassion. Her memory will live on through the countless lives she touched and the enduring impact she made, both as an entertainer and a compassionate advocate for those in need.

She leaves behind a legacy of laughter and kindness. Connie is survived by her husband of forty-two years, John, her brother William, and several nieces and nephews.



## From the President

Dan Langwell

Another year is coming to a close and we have much to be thankful for. Clowning gives us the opportunity to put smiles on many faces young and old, including those who may not have much to smile for otherwise. Thinking back over the past year and all it offered brought memories of new gigs likely to return in the future. It also reminded me of events that return year after year, where we can see both young clowns and older clowns grow over time.

Then there are the shows that didn't return and the friends in clowning who have passed on. Dear friends and mentors pass away each year, and it is up to us to keep their memories alive. Not only by sharing those memories, but also by being the best performer and clown you can be, which honors them and their work.

Use what they taught you. This year, we lost several widely known clowns who were staples of the lecture and convention circuits. They taught us so many things that helped us on our journeys to be better. Now that they're gone, we want to honor their memories and share their stories. That is good because they deserve it.

There are others, still alive, who are growing older and can no longer clown as they once did. They're unable to go out and share their hard-won knowledge. The stories that once came to their lips so easily are now fading from memory. Even if they remember the stories, is there anyone around to tell? Clowning takes time and a lot of hard work. Not one of us has gotten where we are without the help of those who came before.

I'm issuing a challenge to every COAI member and anyone else who's reading this. In the next forty-five days—thirty might be better, but let's stick with forty-five—reach out to at least three people who've been important to your clowning journey. Thank them for their friendship and for investing their time in you. A couple of years ago, I was blessed to reach out to a gentleman and thank him shortly before he passed away from cancer. I didn't know it would be the last time we spoke because I didn't know he was ill.

I'm also asking you to please take a few minutes to write a short (or long) tribute in honor of one of your clown mentors. Email your tribute to Sammy Smith, the editor of *The New Calliope*, at [thenewcalliopeeditor@gmail.com](mailto:thenewcalliopeeditor@gmail.com). If you're feeling industrious, consider writing more than one tribute. It's time to pay our respects and honor those friends who taught us so much and embraced the heart, and art, of clowning. **TNC**



## From the Vice President

Alene "Rufflez" Kraus

I am very grateful for the 2024-2026 COAI Board of Directors. They are a committed group of individuals working together for the good of our organization. I cannot fail to thank the many members offering their support to this board of directors. It is heartwarming and appreciated.

As Vice President, according to the Board Handbook, my job description is basically learn and oversee it all. (Yikes!) All things seem to funnel through the Vice President, to Dan and to the board.

It seems our work is partially filling in "holes" to bring COAI into compliance with our by laws, while planning the near future, as well as looking towards and projecting into the next few years.

Here are a few things we are putting into place:

A Welcome Letter will be sent to each new member, chock full of useful information about COAI.

The 2025 Convention is on its way to being a superb learning experience. Julia and the board are planning to balance the old and the new into phenomenal workshops, offering a smorgasbord of choices! Our theme is Happy Campin'. Start thinking about your outfit for the always fun Theme Party Night. Matty Spraggins, along with

Gina Wollrabe were instrumental in creating our logo. Matty is looking into T-shirt options and perhaps a few other imprinted products.

We are thrilled to have the incomparable Lee Andrews as our headliner. Lee is an amazing and generous entertainer, teacher and all around great guy!

We are beginning to talk about 2026 and 2027. Lots of great ideas going on... so stay tuned!

Board members have attended, or plan to attend a number of regional conventions across the USA. Angel Morales, organized a successful conference in Puerto Rico and continues to reach out to our latino members. Circus Magic, Mid-West, Texas, SECA, and MACA all had COAI representation.

If you have questions or suggestions for COAI, please do not hesitate to contact me at [srateach@gmail.com](mailto:srateach@gmail.com) or on my cell at 610-864-5969. **TNC**



# From the Director of Membership

Bob "Bunky" Gretton

My office door is open, and the welcome mat is out—I'm open for business. I've been a member of COA/COAI since 1979, so I have plenty of knowledge and insight to share.

Membership is my top priority. If each of us could get just one person to either join for the first time or return to COAI, that would be amazing.

As I mentioned earlier, my door is always open. I've been clowning since 1979 and am happy to help in any way I can. "Been there, done that, bought the t-shirt."

One important change we want to make relates to nominations for "Clown of the Year" and the "Lifetime Achievement Award." Nominees can now be notified

in advance so they can help with the process.

I also have something new to introduce—it's called "Ask It, Basket It." If you have a question or concern, you can email me and in the subject line write "Ask It, Basket It."

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301-843-8212

## HAVE YOU TOLD A FRIEND ABOUT COAI?

Give an application  
or gift a membership today!



## JOIN US FOR THREE DAYS OF BIG TOP FUN IN CIRCUS CITY USA!

For over 85 years, HUGO, OKLAHOMA, has been the hometown to dozens of traveling circuses, large and small. Many celebrated names in American Circus History originated from, resided in, and are now laid to rest there. For the first time ever in their near 100 year history, the CIRCUS FANS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA will pay homage to Hugo's rich circus heritage at their 2025 convention.

**WON'T YOU PLEASE JOIN US?**



- Your Registration Includes -

An afternoon visit and reception at THE ENDANGERED ARK ELEPHANT FACILITY

An afternoon visit to GROWLER PINES TIGER SANCTUARY

A visit and guided tour of SHOWMEN'S REST at MT. OLIVET CEMETERY

The season's opening day performance of THE CULPEPPER & MERRIWEATHER CIRCUS

DINNER BANQUET UNDER THE BIG TOP

And much, much more!

# 2025 CFA CONVENTION

ELEPHANTS & TIGERS & A CIRCUS UNDER THE BIG TOP!

## March 20-21-22 ★ HUGO, OK

REGISTRATION Just \$195.00 per person until February 18

- Register online at [www.circusfans.org](http://www.circusfans.org) -

Registration increases to \$225.00 between Feb 19 through Mar 14, and again to \$250.00 from Mar 15 until start of event

# COAI Competition 2024

PHOTOS BY MERILYN BARRETT

Due to circumstances beyond our control, we were unable to include the competition photos in our COAI Convention coverage in the last issue (pages 8-9, Volume 40, Number 6). We are sharing them now! Please enjoy the creativity!



1<sup>st</sup>

John Kral, Tim Laynor,  
Ann Sanders

## Group Paradeability



1<sup>st</sup>

Sue Marranconi, Jennifer Bemis

## Group Skit

2<sup>nd</sup>

John Kral, Tim Laynor, Ann Sanders

# Paradeability

1<sup>st</sup>

Jackie Reynolds



1<sup>st</sup>

Merrily Johnston



2<sup>nd</sup>

Ann Sanders



3<sup>rd</sup>

John Kral



# Single Skit



**2<sup>nd</sup>**

Sue Marranconi



**3<sup>rd</sup>**

Merrily Johnston



**1<sup>st</sup>**

Ann Sanders

**1<sup>st</sup>**

Dan Langwell



**2<sup>nd</sup>**

John Kral



# Single Balloons

**3<sup>rd</sup>**

Bonnie-Jean Brown



**1st**

Racine Celeste



**2nd**

Laura Martin



**Multiple Balloons**

**3rd**

Jackie Reynolds





1st

Merrily Johnston

# Face Painting

2nd

Coco Clair



3rd

Jennifer Bemis



Face painting competition was creative and fun. Each competitor was given a bag of unknown objects to paint with, resulting in a lot of laughter and resourcefulness!

# Join COAI in Denver, Colorado for our 41st Annual Convention in 2025: HAPPY CAMPIN'

The 2025 COAI Convention, Happy Campin', is coming to Denver, Colorado! Register now for only \$275 through February 14 by visiting [www.mycoai.com](http://www.mycoai.com) or calling the office at 352-357-1676. Register and reserve your hotel room only at [www.mycoai.com](http://www.mycoai.com).

Classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on April 29, with an option to attend the Christmas Entertainer Pre-Day on April 28 from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for \$100 (lunch included). Don't miss this opportunity to learn from two of the best Christmas performers, Lee Andrews and Myke Hutchings!

We have instructors specializing in various styles of clowning, who are eager to share, assist, and be accessible to each and every one of you. It does not happen often that we gather so many talented professionals under one roof—The Sheraton Denver West.

Here is an overview of our many instructors and classes:

**Nick DiFatte:** Magical Way with Magic

**Oscar Liendo, Jr.:** How to Warm Up an Audience

**Pricilla Mooseburger:** Costumes That Work and Classic Clown Makeup

**Kevin Scharf:** Improv Skills

**Aurora "BeBop" Krause:** Caring Clown Venues and Routines for Audience Participation

**Jackie Newton Banjovic:** Developing a One-Hour Stage Show for All Venues and The Power of Silence in Performance

**Julia Swanson:** Modern Clown Makeup

**Merrily Johnston:** Rainbow Split Cakes and Simple Balloon Designs

**Alene Kraus:** Clowning With Your Therapy Dog or How to "Woof" It Up!

**Lee Andrews:** 90-minute intensive on "Why Clown?," plus Show Creation and The Business of Clowning in Fairs and Festivals

**Jackie Reynolds:** Ventriloquism and Stepping Up and Growing Up into Your Clown

**Rob Balchunas:** Go-to Holiday Balloon Sculptures

and Favorite Bits and Gags Using Balloons

These instructors provide not just years of performing experience, but successful performing experience! We have even more instructors waiting in the "tent" to finalize their contracts.

We can't wait to see you there!



Blondi and Bunky.



Miss Moose.



Bebop.



Jackie Reynolds.



Merrily Johnston.



Lee Andrews.



Rob Balchunas.



Myke Hutchings and Dan Langwell.

# JUNIOR JOEYS

By Regina “Cha Cha” Wollrabe,  
Junior Joeys Director



## JUNIOR JOEYS AT THE NIAGARA FALLS COAI CONVENTION

At the 2024 COAI Convention in Niagara Falls, New York, Junior Joeys of all ages were represented—from babies to teens to young adults. Even adults who began performing as children were in attendance. Junior Joeys are always welcome at our conventions, where they can be mentored, attend classes, and visit the dealer room, which we consider our most educational space.

I'd like to talk about a pattern I noticed among the many wonderful clowns I met at the convention. Can you guess what many Junior Joeys have in common? The answer is that most Junior Joeys begin clowning because of a parent or grandparent in their life who is also a clown.

Of course, there are exceptions, like Lee Andrews, whose parents were not clowns but took him to conventions to meet and learn from other clowns. But the majority of children who become clowns

have a relative who got them involved in activities like parades, shows, nursing home visits, balloon work, or walkaround clowning.

Twenty-two-year-old Hannah “Squirrel” Ellis, from Toledo, Ohio, came to the convention with her dad James “Jimbo” Ellis. It was a complete joy to watch her grow and get costuming tips from mentors at the convention. As she describes it, she was “kidnapped” by clowns who whisked her away for a total makeover on Wednesday and Thursday, helping her find a costume and apply makeup. When I saw her without a nose, I was compelled to give her one of my string noses, knowing I could replace it later. Seeing her excitement in person was inspiring and it reminded me how we all started somewhere. It's good to improve your skills, enhance your talents, learn new tricks, and brighten up your wardrobe to bring fun to the people you perform for back home.

Hannah was seven years old when she started doing puppetry with her dad, and she added balloons to her repertoire during Covid in 2020. Hannah has learned to incorporate her puppets into clowning, and developing her clown character has been an inspirational process for her.

Hannah brought her amazing puppet, Blue Balloon, with her to the convention. She found him on eBay about five years ago. Blue Balloon reminds kids that you can still find happiness even if you are feeling blue.

The monkey around her waist is her favorite walkaround puppet to work with.

Hannah took a class on catchphrases by Mary Langwell, where she learned funny jokes involving little knickknacks that gave her new ideas for her puppets. Hannah took an active part in the entire convention and by the end of the week, you could see she was going



Hannah “Squirrel” Ellis of Toledo, Ohio attended the COAI Convention with her dad, James “Jimbo” Ellis, and her puppet, Blue Balloon.

home with new confidence, a new look, and new skills. Since attending the convention, Hannah has already performed three events on her own this summer.





Barbara "Sparky" Bird's grandchildren Victoria "Boo Boo" Lincourt and Ben "Hippie" Lincourt as young clowns.

Hannah's twenty-one-year-old sister, Abigale "Sparkles," is still playing with the idea of being a clown. Her mom, Shannon, who helps promote and book the family gigs, was also at the convention to be supportive and enjoy Niagara Falls.

Barbara "Sparky" Bird, a longtime active COAI member who was awarded the 2011 Clown of the Year and 2020 Lifetime Achievement awards, brought her grandkids Ben "Hippie" Lincourt and Victoria "Boo Boo" Lincourt into clowning. Ben was



Barbara "Sparky" Bird.

eight and his sister Victoria was nine when they learned how to clown in 4H from a friend named Bill Young, who has since passed away. His heart and love for clowning lives on in the hearts of these young people who learned from him. Barbara encouraged her grandchildren to attend and compete in the 2009 Run for the Noses COAI Convention in Clarksville, Indiana. At the time, Ben was ten and practiced for the competition with his grandma in their hotel room. They placed fourth in the group skit competition for their skit "The Out House."

Now twenty-four, Ben says he had so much fun learning clowning skills when he was a child. He stopped clowning as a teenager, but he later got a job as a direct support professional at a special needs camp for kids ages five to seventeen. He believes the skills he learned as a clown were directly responsible for him getting this job. Benjamin finished college and now lives in Rochester, New York. He came to the COAI banquet in Niagara Falls to see and support his grandma.

Elaine Person was this year's recipient of the COAI Lifetime Achievement Award. She was surrounded by her family of Junior Joeys, including her youngest granddaughter who, at the young age of four, is already clowning under the name Squish. When I met Squish, she was a little timid at first, but after being asked to pick the winning ticket for the raffle



**4th Place: "The Outhouse"  
Ben Lincourt, Barbara Bird & Victoria Lincourt.**



Hannah "Squirrel" Ellis with her dad James "Jimbo" Ellis, who started puppeteering with his daughter when she was seven.



Barbara "Sparky" Bird with her grandson Ben "Hippie" Lincourt as an adult.

she warmed up to the crowd. You could see her inner clown coming out to shine like a star.

I had one award to give away, and I knew when I met Squish that I wanted to give it to her for being the youngest working Junior Joey in our ranks. When I announced it from the podium, everyone clapped for her. You could see her

## INSPIRATION AND HUMOR



Above: Elaine Person and her granddaughter, Squish. Right: Four-year-old Squish the Clown.

face light up and how important it made her feel in that moment. I told her what a special job she has being someone who helps make people smile.

Recently, Elaine sent the cutest photo of Squish on her way to Kingsway Nursing Home with her balloon-twisting grandfather on Grandparents Day. This is what passing down the art of clowning looks like and I hope more parents and grandparents will continue to bring their children to conventions and events. Few kids their age will have these once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and the memories made and confidence gained will last them a lifetime.

Elaine shared that her son, Jody, who has clowning under the name Mr. All-Brite, is now head of the theatre department at a New

Jersey college. Her daughter Melinda, known as Chloe the Clown, is president of the New York State United Teachers, a 700,000-member teachers union. Elaine's nephew George, who has clowning under the name Cavity, is a special education teacher. Elaine said that somehow, no matter how long it's been, they all remember how to make a balloon dog!

Forty-two-year-old Michelle "Blossom" Cunningham, who brought her baby Madelyn with her from Kansas, started clowning when she was twelve. She has clowning internationally and performs clown shows, walkarounds, corporate parties, birthday parties, and parades. I met Michelle and her family during the paradeability competition at the convention. She, her two siblings, and her cousin started clowning as junior joeys after their grandma Diane "Smiley" Reynolds got them started.

Smiley started clowning about thirty-four years ago, which was four years before she brought the kids into clowning. She was a volunteer clown who participated in missions and performed at nursing homes. When she

started going to conferences, she took the grandkids with her and they began clowning with her at nursing homes, too.

Her cousin Abby "Lil' Bit" Reynolds, now twenty-four, started clowning in middle school when she was twelve. She enjoys facepainting and making balloons. Michelle's seven-year-old son Kayson Maurer is a Junior Joey. Her daughter Madelyn, who was born in August, has not officially clowning but she was in her mom's womb when she clowning at corporate events and birthday parties, just as her mom did with Kayson.

Seeing Michelle with her baby Madelyn brought up my own memories of taking children to conventions. It comes with challenges, but when you have help, it's possible to attend a convention, go to classes, and compete. Babies who are born into clowning think it's normal, and will most likely perform at some point in their lives even if it's only for a brief time. As children grow up, the experience of volunteering at a parade or show will give them a unique story to share and learn from.



Michelle "Blossom" Cunningham with baby Madelyn and family.



Michelle "Blossom" Cunningham and family, in pig costumes.



Michelle "Blossom" Cunningham and family.

Michelle said her favorite class at this year's COAI Convention was a hands-on, interactive improv class taught by Kevin Scharf. She also loved Sam T's classes. Michelle added that she avoids classes that only show you how to use a prop. Her favorite part of clowning is feeling kids' energy as they connect with her and interact with her magic and puppets. Clowning also helps her as a physiotherapist, a career in which she often works with kids and adults who have experienced trauma. "I can get on their level, create connection, and approach them with unconditional positive regard," she said.

Eduardo Jesus Barquera Hernández is a charming, silly clown who came all the way from Mexico to attend the convention. He is the same age as my children, and I immediately felt a mama's heart for him when I saw we share the last name of Hernández. It was fun getting to use some of my Spanish skills with him and other participants from Mexico. Eduardo, whose clown name is Cocoy, was three when he started clowning with his dad Joel Barquera Ríos, who goes by Joy Joy. His dad taught him



Eduardo as "Cocoy."

everything he knows. His brother Alan Giovanni Barquera Hernández is also a clown and known as Cocoyin.

After learning from his dad, Eduardo received a bachelor's degree in contemporary and circus arts at the circus school in Mexico. He worked hard to hone many amazing skills in balancing and juggling, including unicycling, rola bola, and the balance ball. He also plays the trumpet, saxophone, bottles, and musical gloves. Among the many circus acts he has learned are the Chinese pole, trampoline acrobatics, and the rotating ladder.



The name of the show that the family performs is Payacocos. Payacocos is a company specializing in children's and family entertainment, with more than twenty years of experience working in circuses, theaters, television, and social work.

Eduardo has a rich understanding of clowning and performance. For a young clown, he's been performing for a very long time. You can see his love for detail and I enjoyed seeing him in character. I imagine the children he clowns for love his



Eduardo Jesus Barquera Hernández.

heart and how he looks from head to toe. He came to participate in our convention and classes, but I have a feeling we could learn a lot from him. Keep up your amazing work, Eduardo and family. It was a delight to meet you.

I met so many people at the convention who have been clowns or entertainers since their childhood that it would be impossible to name them all. If there's one thing I learned at our 2024 COAI Convention, it's that Junior Joeys exist inside many of us. If we bring our kids to these experiences and share our playful imagination, laughter, and other art of clowning skills with them, I believe many more Junior Joeys will join our organization.



Eduardo Jesus Barquera Hernández and family.

The cost to join Junior Joeys is the lowest it's ever been, so now's the time to make the kids in your life members of Clowns of America International. Bump a nose!

# Clowns of America



## Niagara Falls,

# International 2024



## New York

PHOTO BY MERILYN BARRETT

# A Clown for Any Occasion

By Kynisha “Daisy the Clown” Ducre

Every year I plan and organize all the fun ideas that come to mind and keep them within thirty-minute show increments. My creative process consists of spending time outdoors with an inspirational journal and a physical, picturesque calendar side-by-side. Additionally, my go-tos for fun and inspiration are field trips to the zoo, museum, or two different libraries (one mom and pop). Sometimes I also watch episodes of popular cartoons or the latest children’s movies.

Here are ideas for show themes for every month:

January: New Year Construction or Black History Month

February: Love, Inclusion, or Celebrating Others

March: Women’s History Month or Music Month

April: Spring Fun or Sports

May: Cooking or Cinco de Mayo

June: Summer Fun or Games

July: Science or Holiday Pride

August: Animal Safari or Facts and Adventures in Reading

September: Nature or Circus Magic

October: All Things Halloween or Making Fear Fun

November: Thankfulness or Family Traditions

December: Elf Life or Many Holidays to Choose From

This list is just an example, as there are countless national, local, and international holidays to celebrate! And there are new ones created every month. Once you determine the holiday, decide what balloon sculpting, face painting, puppetry, magic, and/or game best fits your theme (choose no more than five activities). With most of my puppets, I try to find a children’s book that has a character like my puppet. Or if I learn a new fable, I adapt the names and characteristics of the story to align with my theme and puppet.

Another important part of show preparation is knowing the age group of your audience or having the ability to cater your show to a variety of ages from a kindergarten class to a senior living facility. Holidays have color standards as well, so attention to details like this is essential. I personally like to insert things such as bells, lights, squeakers, or plastic flowers inside my balloons to match my themes. However,



in doing so I have to ensure I cover the choking hazard liabilities to keep everyone safe. (Side note: Make sure you have performance insurance through COAI!)

Right before a show, I make time to clean, pack, and organize my branded performance bag. I also talk myself through the show twice: once through the basic structure, and then once more with more details. Before every show, I test the Wi-Fi connection and ensure my Bluetooth device(s) are working perfectly with my vision, especially if I am using music.

Before you know it, you will be well-hydrated and in your laundered clothes with the makeup that suits you best. Ensure you have extra time for travel via the navigation app you use to get there.

Now it’s time to shine with the confidence of being well-prepared! P.S. Don’t forget to take photos or have someone snap a couple for you. These will work great for memories and marketing later. And voila, you return home to do it all again soon!

# 25 Years go

By Lauren Jurgensen

The January/February 1999 issue of *The New Calliope* kicked off the final year of the millennium with a cover story profiling COAI's 1999 Clown of the Year, Marie "Mischief" Beck (page 16).

Marie, from Schenectady, New York, had been clowning for nineteen years. She received the award after a unanimous vote. COAI recognized her extensive community service, including her 1993 trip to Bosnia-Herzegovina to bring much-needed smiles to families during the Bosnian War. At the time the article was written, Marie had three distinct clown characters in her repertoire: Mischief (for birthday parties and grand openings), Delight (for Christian ministry work), and Dr. Funnybones (for hospital visits). The article highlighted her "extensive library of clown information and supplies, which she freely loans to anyone who is looking for assistance," as well as her significant contributions as a clown mentor and workshop teacher for local alleys. "You know you are a clown when through your eyes you can see the child in the eyes of the audience," Marie said.

On page 18, Margaret "Maggie the Magical Clown" Clauder shared a detailed guide for performing self-esteem shows to children under the age of five. She said that self-esteem shows tend to be very popular at schools and daycares. "Unconditional love given to children will build their self esteem better than anything," Maggie said. "As a clown and a character, I strive to show and give love through my shows and my actions unconditionally. Sometimes a teacher or a clown may be the only positive reinforcement a little child gets in a day. We must take our job very seriously."

Lee "Juggles" Mullally shared techniques for walkaround magic performances, namely creative ways to reveal selected cards (page 26). Greeting cards, for example, can be customized for different occasions and then opened by the recipient to reveal their selected card. Other clever tips included concealing a selected card inside a book with a modified cover—you can use arts and crafts to convert an old book's cover to say something like "World Famous Card Tricks" by "Drew A. Blank"—and concealing a selected card inside one's hat.

In David "Mr. Rainbow" Bartlett's "What's That You Say?" column (page 34), he explored how rehearsing for a dinner theater show taught him the importance of vocal tone, intent, and variety during clown performances. "Vocal tone can either add meaning to words, diminish the meaning of words, or even contradict words," he said. "Consider the words 'You are beautiful.' Said lovingly, it conveys one meaning. Said laughingly, it diminishes it considerably, and said sarcastically it contradicts the literal meaning." It's not enough to simply say a word or line, he added. They must be spoken in a way that enhances one's intention.

Kathy "Pickles" Dhingra offered sage advice for organizing, maintaining, replacing, and refreshing props and costumes in her article "Pamper Those Props," on page 32. "How's that wig holding up? Is it all matted and discolored around the edge?" she asked. "You can wash it by hand with a little Woolite or gentle baby shampoo. Just gently swish it around in lukewarm or cold soapy water, rinse, and let it air dry. Then carefully brush or comb it out." She said it's time to consider buying a new wig if washing the one you have now doesn't take care of the problem. For special wigs, refer to its care



instructions to ensure proper cleaning. Kathy also shared personal tips for repairing dove pans, breakaway wands, and foam props.

Karen "Peppermint" Reinhold shared her experience clowning in Puerto Rico after attending the fifth annual Three Amigos Clown Convention in Lajas (page 28). Despite not speaking Spanish, Karen attended the six-day, all-Spanish-language event with the convention's headline performer Angel Ocasio as her translator. "The smile of a child transcends all language barriers," she wrote.

The January/February 1999 issue also covered plenty of COAI business. Proposed revisions to the organization's bylaws were presented for member review, a call for bids was issued for the position of *The New Calliope's* editor, COAI Treasurer Tony R. Jones shared the organization's strong financial position, and the COAI Board of Directors meeting report outlined new opportunities for educational grants and international/state ambassador programs.

Letters to the editor (page 4) discussed why individual clown growth should be valued higher than competition, the importance of maintaining professional standards, and an amusing story about one joey's experience showing up for jury duty in full clown makeup.

Old issues of *The New Calliope* shared as much wisdom back then as they do today, and you can read all of them by visiting the vault at [www.mycoai.com](http://www.mycoai.com). We encourage every COAI member to check it out. Bump a nose! **TNC**



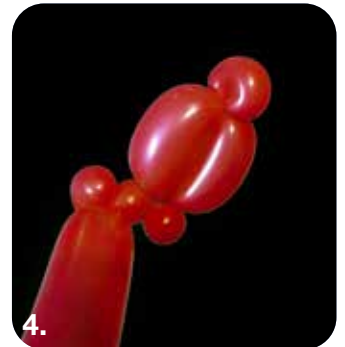
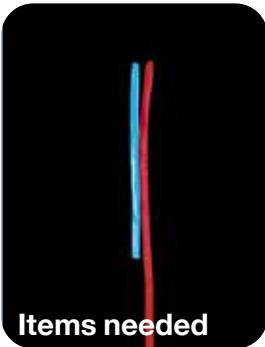
# Among Us

By Merrily Johnston

ITEMS NEEDED:

1 Red 260

1 Blue 260 (use a scrap if you like)



1. Inflate the red 260, leaving an 8-inch tail. Inflate the blue to 5 inches.
2. Make a 5-inch bubble in the red balloon, followed by a small pinch twist, a second 5-finger bubble, and another small pinch twist.
3. Make a third 5-inch bubble and wrap it into a first pinch twist.
4. Make a small bubble, followed by a small pinch twist.

5. Make a 5-inch bubble, a small pinch twist, another 5-inch bubble, then fold over and wrap into pinch twist.
6. Make a 7-inch bubble and wrap it into the opposite pinch twist.
7. Wrap blue balloon into each of the top pinch twists (in front of the 7-inch bubble).

8. Using the remaining red balloon, make a small bubble and wrap it into lower pinch twist to connect. Break or cut off end of balloon and tie so that legs are even.
9. The back will look like this.

## COAI Annual General Meeting

A vote for the following proposed bylaw amendments will be taken at the 2024 Annual General Meeting of Clowns of America International on Thursday, May 1, at 3:30 p.m. at the Sheraton/Marriott Denver West, 360 Union Boulevard, Lakewood, Colorado 80228.

### Proposed 2025 Bylaw Amendments

#### 1. ARTICLE IV OFFICERS

##### Section 8. Election and Qualifications

a. Any member desiring to be a candidate shall submit their declaration of candidacy and requested material by mail to be postmarked by January 15 or to be received electronically via email no later than midnight January 15, to the alley designated by the Board to conduct elections. All declarations sent to any other address will be disqualified.

##### *Suggested Amendment.*

Any member desiring to be a candidate shall submit their declaration of candidacy and requested material by mail to be postmarked by April 1 or to be received electronically via email no later than midnight April 1, to the COAI Business Office, or other location/address as designated by the Board. All declarations sent to any other address will be disqualified.

Rationale—Candidate submissions to be received prior to annual convention and to shorten the process.

#### 2. ARTICLE V MEETINGS

##### Section 2. Notice of Meetings

The notice of an annual or special meeting shall be not less than fifteen (15) days or more than sixty (60) days. The notice shall be by first class mail or printed in *The New Calliope*. In a special meeting, only that business set out in the notice may be conducted. Notice shall be given to all members in good standing.

##### *Suggested Amendment.*

The notice of an annual or special membership meeting shall be not less than seven (7) days or more than sixty (60) days. The notice shall be placed on the COAI website and on the appropriate COAI social media accounts. In a special meeting, only that business set out in the notice may be conducted. Notice shall be given to all members in good standing.

Rationale—Eliminate first class mail and add social media as a means of communicating to the membership.

#### 3. ARTICLE VI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

##### Section 2. Membership

The membership of the Board shall consist of not more than twenty (20) members. They are the President, Executive Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, eleven (11) Regional Vice Presidents, and five (5) Directors at Large.

##### *Suggested Amendment.*

The membership of the Board shall consist of not more than twenty (20) members. They are the President, Executive Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Regional Vice Presidents, and Directors at Large.

Rationale—Eliminate eleven (11) Regional Vice Presidents and five (5) Directors at Large, thus enabling the Board to combine and expand positions when needed.

#### 4. ARTICLE VI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

##### Section 5. Notice

Notice of not less than thirty (30) days nor more than forty-five (45) days shall be given before a regular or special meeting is called. The notice shall be given personally or by first class mail.

##### *Suggested Amendment.*

Notice of not less than three (3) days nor more than seven (7) days shall be given before a regular or special meeting is called. The notice shall be given personally or by electronic means.

Rationale—To allow for Emergency or Special Meetings to be held on short notice.

#### 5. ARTICLE VII EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

##### Section 1. Members

The members of the Executive Committee shall be the President, Executive Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and two (2) other Board Officers approved by the Board.

##### *Suggested Amendment.*

The members of the Executive Committee shall be the President, Executive Vice

President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Director of Membership.

Rationale—Without members, there is no COAI. Director of Membership is a vital position.

#### 6. ARTICLE XII GENERAL AUTHORITY

##### Section 5. *The New Calliope*

COAI shall produce a magazine called *The New Calliope* every other month (six a year), to be distributed only to full members of the organization. A portion of each member's dues annually shall be applied to a yearly subscription to *The New Calliope*. The Board shall set the subscription fee, and it shall be published in each issue of *The New Calliope*.

##### *Suggested Amendment.*

Eliminate this Section.

Rationale—No need to include *The New Calliope*, Board should have full control and be able to set their own rules. The subscription fee is not published. The portion of each member's dues applied to *The New Calliope* has never been determined. *The New Calliope*, being the official COAI magazine with a contracted editor, should not be in said Bylaws but governed by the Board.

#### 7. ARTICLE XII GENERAL AUTHORITY

##### New Section 5.

The outgoing Board (at the end of its two-year term) is permitted to investigate and suggest new locations for the next convention. If a contract agreed upon by the full Board has not been signed by March 31, the outgoing Board will no longer have authority to enter into a contract with the hotel. If the President, Vice President, Convention Director, and Education Director declare for the next term, the next year's convention site may be chosen.

Rationale—Each Board of Directors is unique and is entitled to engage in a contract with which they are 100 percent comfortable with the locale, the terms, and all other items pertinent to a successful convention. In the distant past, convention locations were announced at the current convention. That has not always been the case in recent history.

# HOW ONE CLOWN OVERCOMES *the Challenges of* **ADHD**

By Barb Rosenfeld

I have been a professional clown, magician, and puppeteer for thirty-five years. When I was forty years old, I was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD), or as it is now known, attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD).

The American Psychiatric Association defines ADHD as a chronic brain disorder. It is one of the most common childhood disorders, continuing into adolescence and adulthood. As of 2024, it is estimated that twenty-two million adults in the United States have an ADHD diagnosis.

This is a lifelong condition, which means those who are diagnosed with ADHD must learn how to effectively manage their symptoms. There is no real test to diagnose ADHD. Those who are diagnosed must exhibit several of the following behaviors: distractibility, impulsivity, inattentiveness, disorganization, and performance anxiety, among others.

I personally experience many of the above traits. It makes learning and performing magic tricks and clown gags difficult and frustrating.

ADHD has caused me to go through some trying times. Two things that challenge me are reading and comprehending magic and clown performance directions, because ADHD can impact my working memory and how I process information. I need to read magic and clown instructions over and over before I can really understand them.

When deciding which tricks and props to use in my shows, I lay out all of them on the floor. This helps me visualize which ones will work with the theme of the show. Visuals support my working memory and help me to focus and organize my thoughts.

People with ADHD also have more difficulty making decisions than people who don't have ADHD. It can cause us to overthink or overanalyze problems, especially when given too many choices. My favorite thing to do as a clown is to do magic tricks. I have about six different kinds and sizes of change bags. It takes me a very long time to decide which one to use. By the time I finally make a decision thirty minutes later, I change my mind and decide to use another trick altogether!

But then, I realize I don't know how to do the trick I have selected. I am now running out of time to practice, and I realize I should not have waited until the last minute to start working on my show. Anxiety begins to bubble up inside me. I start feeling depressed, my self-esteem sinks, and I lose any motivation I may have had.

What was supposed to be my show is now spread across the floors of two rooms. I quickly throw everything into a bag and tell myself I can't do this now. An hour later, I finally regain my composure. I buckle down and decide on the final tricks to use.



*Barb puts on a magic show at a California school.*



*Barb performs at a holiday-themed magic show for the Victoria's Secret headquarters.*

I begin to rehearse in front of a full-length mirror but get distracted and start playing with my hair. Self-stimulating behaviors, which can include playing with one's hair, biting one's nails, humming, pacing, doodling, or tapping one's fingers, are unconscious actions that help people with ADHD focus and manage stress.

When I perform my show, even though I have written down the order of the tricks I plan to perform, I can't seem to find the list. I realize I have forgotten it at home. I start to get flustered, but I manage to gain my composure and go on with the show. I have practiced my patter over and over, yet I can't remember the words. I improvise and complete the show as best I can in the moment.

Accommodations can help people with ADHD feel more confident and perform their best. Here are a few of the accommodations I have made to help me successfully get ready to learn, practice, and perform my magic:

**I reduce distractions.** Instead of laying all my tricks across the floor, I put the ones I plan to use in my current show in a bin. The ones I am not going to use go in another bin, in another room, out of sight. When I practice in front of the mirror, I remove everything on top of the countertop so I don't get distracted by what is there.



Barb at the Eddie Bauer headquarters, where she performed a puppet show.

**I use visual guides.** I start working on the tricks I currently need to fit within the theme of my show. I then log into YouTube or watch an instructional video on a magic or clown website. I practice the tricks along with the video.

**I make lists.** I make a list of the order of the tricks I plan to perform. Then I make several copies of that list and put them in different places. If I lose one of the lists, I have more copies in my purse, my pocket, or my magic case.



The author, Barb Rosenfeld, performs at a clown convention.

I am sure there are many other clowns, magicians, and other performers reading this who have found other ways to overcome their ADHD challenges.

After many years performing and teaching clowning and magic, I have learned to master and compensate for all of my performance challenges. I love clowning and magic. I still perform and teach. Doing so gives me such joy and excitement! Because of these skills, I

have developed a renewed confidence in myself and my abilities.

People who have ADHD are generally very bright, creative, and funny. I know I am! Having ADHD has been a true blessing for me. I have accomplished many wonderful things in my life, and I am still going strong.

*Medical information cited in this article is sourced from the American Psychiatric Association, the Attention Deficit Disorder Association, and the National Institutes of Health.*

Barb Rosenfeld is a professional magician, clown, puppeteer, retired assistant teacher for special needs children, and retired preschool teacher. She is the founder and past president of the Attention Deficit Disorder Association of Missouri, and a certified ADHD life coach who has written for several ADHD magazines and books. Barb also works as a healing touch practitioner, Reiki master, certified laugh leader, and a singer and dancer in off-Broadway shows. Email: [barborosenfeld@gmail.com](mailto:barborosenfeld@gmail.com)

## Richard Smith COAI Membership Drive

We would like to extend a huge thank you to Richard Smith for his generosity in offering one hundred free memberships to new COAI members. Thanks to Richard's efforts, nearly fifty new members have already joined the COAI community, and we're excited to continue growing!

Bringing in new members is essential to the vitality and growth of our organization. Each new clown who joins strengthens our community, broadens our impact, and helps preserve the traditions and values of clowning. Richard's drive has been a wonderful help in fostering this growth.

If you know anyone interested in joining, or if you're reading this as a new clown wanting to join COAI, we encourage you to jump in on this fantastic opportunity. Simply send an email to [coaioffice@aol.com](mailto:coaioffice@aol.com) and mention this drive to get started.

Thank you again to Richard for his incredible contribution in making COAI more accessible to so many new clowns. Your support truly makes a difference!

# International Clowns of Puerto Rico Host

## *Paya-Baile (Clown Party) - By Angel Morales*



During the 2024 Clown Week celebration, we at Alley 204—International Clowns of Puerto Rico—came up with the idea of hosting the Clown Week dance on August 31 to end International Clown Week with a bang.

We started promoting the event via WhatsApp, and slowly but surely, we started attracting viewers. Although we started late, our island hosted various Clown Week events through TV stations, podcasts, and radio stations. Our fellow clowns were very active, and most of our mayors provided proclamations on behalf of their counties.

The dance started at 6:00 p.m., but we were there since 2:30 p.m. decorating the center. Kankan, Jenny Lou Rodriguez, her mother, Jovita Gloria E Vazquez, her daughter, Keyssha Ogden, our DJ, Super Tamarindo, and I were all part of the setup. As soon as we opened the doors, fellow clowns began to arrive. Tico the Clown welcomed guests at the entrance alongside Patinin the Skating Clown. When our president, Carmen Carrillo, walked in with her family, the party went into full swing, with music from the '70s and '80s.

The party was decorated with neon displays and balloons, aligning with our theme slogan: "Bring something neon!" Guests were encouraged to wear neon shirts, hats, etc., and we even had a blacklight for added effect. The turnout was fantastic, with about fifty attendees. During the dance, we had a special surprise of organized games and plenty of prizes. At around 8:00 p.m., we called the attendees to form a line for dinner, which was included with the entry ticket.

Everyone ate and had a wonderful time seeing their fellow clowns together for this special cause. We gave out numerous door prizes, and a balloon representative known in Puerto Rico as Sunset Balloons gave away special prizes and held a drawing for 260 balloons in a 50-piece bag. As the evening progressed, we informed the folks that we would be closing prior to 11:00 p.m. The dance went exceptionally well; in fact, attendees asked if we would organize a clown Christmas party as well. They also said they couldn't wait until next year's Clown Week party.



# International Clowns of Puerto Rico Host

*Paya-Baile (Clown Party) - By Angel Morales*



We greatly appreciate the following staff members and volunteers who supported us in making this Paya Party, also known as the Clown Dance, a success. Without their support, it wouldn't have been possible. Excellent job, everyone!

## ALLEY 204 Payasos Internacionales de Puerto Rico

President: Carmen Brenda "Lasitos the Clown" Carrillo  
 Vice President: Angel Luis "Uncle Joblin" Morales  
 Secretary: Jenny Lou "Kan Kan the Clown" Rodriguez  
 Treasurer: Luis "Tico the Clown" Aborno  
 Assistant Treasurer: Gloria E. "Jobita the Clown" Vazquez  
 Vocal: Adalberto "Pisterito the Clown" Perez

Vocal: Agustin "Agufin the Clown" Torres Rosa  
 Vocal: William "Patinin the Skate Clown" Quinones  
 Vocal: Gamalier "DJ the Clown" Morales  
 Vocal: Ricardo "Tio Biombito the Clown" Carambot  
 Vocal: Luis M. "Estrellin the Clown" Perez Velez

# Living on a Circus Train

By Pricilla Mooseburger

As my life speeds by, I realize there are now a limited number of people alive who've had the amazing experience of living on a circus train.

I had that unbelievable opportunity in my twenties, a time when I thought the circus as I knew it would last forever. Not so. Life on a Ringling train has since gone the way of the circus wagon. Now, I want to share some of my circus train memories with you.

I was at Ringling's Clown College in the fall of 1982 when boss clown Tom Parish unfolded a paper floor plan of the train to show us our rooms. It looked like a cocktail napkin! We thought it was a joke, but no: each room was three-and-a-half feet by six feet. Now, that's not so bad for a five-foot-eight girl clown, but the big guy clowns had a tougher time to be sure.

I was the only single girl clown on the Blue Unit. Tammy Parish was married to Tom, so they had a bigger room to themselves. They never thought of letting a girl live on the boy clown car, so they sent me to the showgirl car to be their clown mascot!

Our rooms lined a long hallway down the train car. Pocket doors into our rooms saved space. We had a small sink and medicine cabinet, and part of a window if we were lucky. There were also two gaucho storage areas and a camper-style pop-up table, with three cushions as our bed. A little more storage was available in the ceiling.

Luckily, all of our clown gear was kept inside our circus trunks at the arenas, then hauled onto the trains in wagons. We showered at the arenas, too, since there were no showers on the trains for clowns back in the eighties. There was not much room for anything, but I did manage to bring my sewing machine and a coffee pot.

I quickly learned from the other road warriors how to rig a bed extension. A bed extension was what we used to transform our entire room into a bed during train runs. It was a common sight to see one of the pocket doors slide open and a leg stretch into the hallway, as some poor soul tried to crawl out of their nest while the train was moving. It was a special skill. The "kitchen" was at the end of the train car and contained



Author Pricilla Mooseburger rides an elephant during her days with the Greatest Show on Earth.

a counter, a sink, and a double row of small refrigerators. I used my electric fry pan to make many meals on that counter while fighting with tired hungry dancers for space.

Train runs were a well-deserved heaven for us clowns. Some folks had cars and chose to drive overland to the next town, but I always preferred the train run experience. I remember the sound of train cars banging together, like rolling thunder, as they were hooked together before our commute. You'd better have all of your belongings strapped down before the hook-up began because when your train car hit another train car, everything went flying. It could be a disaster.

The best sleep of my life was on a moving train, rocking us like a big cradle. It didn't hurt that we were exhausted from our grueling show schedule, but there was a special kind of freedom in knowing there was nothing you had to do for a day or two—a guilt-free feeling!

Of course, it was always possible you could miss the train. There was never a scheduled time for move out and no one took attendance. Old timers taught us the ropes and what to expect, including how to jump on a moving train without getting killed. I tried that once and don't recommend it. That's a story for another article.

My fondest circus train memories are of waking up early, turning on my coffee



The Ringling Bros. train, which circus clowns like Pricilla called home for several months each year.

pot while still sitting in bed, and watching the world go by. I was always an early bird, so I would have the train vestibule to myself. The trainmaster, Gerhardt, often stopped by to share a cup of coffee with me (I always had the good stuff!).

I am from a small, rural town of only a thousand people in Minnesota, so at twenty-one it was an eye-opening experience for me to see the world from inside of a train vestibule. Every morning we'd look at the license plates on cars to figure out what state we were in that day. It was fun to watch people staring at the train in amazement from the side of the side of the road as we rolled by. They smiled and waved, and we smiled and waved right back at them.

The train would make occasional stops to water the animals, since you could never carry enough water to quench the thirst of elephants and camels. Each time, we'd jump off the train, stretch our legs, and get some fresh air. Woe to the circus folk who ventured too far from the train—we never really knew how long the train would stop. Sometimes it just stopped and sat there for no reason. Would you have enough time to make it to the convenience store down the road or not? Trust me, when a train starts to move, it picks up speed fast! But we were young and dumb and took our chances many times. There was no train whistle to warn you, just circus folks yelling and cheering you on as you ran for your life



Circus clowns were stacked high at the *Greatest Show on Earth*.

to jump onboard with groceries, beer, or a bag of fast food.

Sometimes the train was sweltering hot and other times it was freezing cold. When it rained, it sounded like marbles being dumped inside a metal tackle box. Yet we still found a way to make the best of our home away from home.

I remember when the circus was preparing to play Minneapolis. They took me off the show early to do PR work and put me up in a hotel. I felt so out of place in that big hotel bed that I wanted to sleep in the bathtub. I was so used to the train that I needed to reach out and touch the walls just to feel safe.

I did my best to make my room on the train as comfortable as possible. Life was a lot simpler back then: I could sit up, start my coffee pot, turn on some music, and gaze out the window at amazing scenery without ever leaving my bed. I rarely lost my keys, and there were no cell phones or laptops. Oh, to have that kind of freedom today!

I saw incredible big cities during my travels and was always amazed by the sight of mountains, deserts, and swamps. The swamps in Louisiana really creeped me out! I remember ocean scenes and amazing star-filled nights as we drove through the wilderness with no ambient light pollution to hinder our view.

One time, a working man got “red lined” in North Dakota. That’s what happened if you got mixed up with the wrong kind of people—you were tossed off a moving train (he lived).

After I left the show, I learned about a train crash that killed my friend and fellow clown Ceslee Conklin and elephant trainer Theodore Svertesky, in Lakeland, Florida in 1994. My heart broke when I heard the news. One year to the day from the date of the crash, my daughter Julia Ceslee Marie was born. The circus stays with you forever.

I am still in touch with my circus friends, and we always pick up where we left off as if no time has passed. Christopher Hudert and I attended Clown College and were on the Ringling Blue Unit



Ringling Bros.' circus clowns at ease.

together. Today, he’s an important part of my core staff at Mooseburger Camp, but many of my staff have the heart of the circus in them. That’s why Mooseburger Camp has lasted twenty-six years and is still going strong. We like to joke that we know where all the bodies are buried because one of us was always holding the lantern!

Circus friends, and dare I say clown friends, are the best friends one can have. They will work harder and laugh longer than anyone else. They will help you pick up the pieces and put them back together, better than before. Sometimes they will just sit next to you and let you cry, but they will always give you the courage to try again. They will come across the country to celebrate with you because no one celebrates quite like people who lived together in a moving tin can on wheels!

*Need some help? I am happy to answer any of your makeup questions! Call 320-963-6277. You can also subscribe to our free monthly newsletter at [www.mooseburger.com](http://www.mooseburger.com). TNC*

*Tricia Manuel is the unmistakable Pricilla Mooseburger. She is the founder of Pricilla Mooseburger Originals, Mooseburger Clown Arts Camp, and the nonprofit Red Nose Readers. Learn more at [www.mooseburger.com](http://www.mooseburger.com)*

# WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG?



By Beth “Pickles” Cedarholm

ARTWORK: ISTOCK

The following are stories of real-life clown blunders and tales of woe from COAI members and entertainers whose gigs didn’t go quite as expected. While these performers endured some impossibly bad situations, they soldiered on, glean- ing tidbits of wisdom from their negative experiences, and becoming better—and wiser—entertainers.



**Brenda “Flower” Marshall**

I was performing for a family banquet in a church gymnasium. I had volunteers on stage with me for the routine. We were doing some clowny movements, and in the middle of one of the move- ments, my kneecap popped out of place. Before I knew what had happened, I hit the floor. Once I realized what the problem was, I reached down, popped my kneecap back into place, and finished the show.

It’s funny that when I’m in front of an audience, the pain takes a back seat to the show. People in the audience even told me that they thought that my mis- hap was part of the routine.

When I finished my routine, a physi- cal therapist in the audience came to me and asked if I was okay. I told him what had happened, and he told me I might want to have my knee looked at.



I had a little bit of difficulty getting home, because I had a forty-five-minute drive in a standard shift truck.

The next morning, my knee was about twice its normal size, so I finally went to the doctor to have it checked out, but it was just a matter of time and heal- ing with some ice. However, I just got medical clearance to have both knees replaced!

The moral of the story is that clowning can be hazardous to your health!

**Colleen “Pockets” Smith**

At the beginning of my clowning days—probably 1987 or 1988—I had



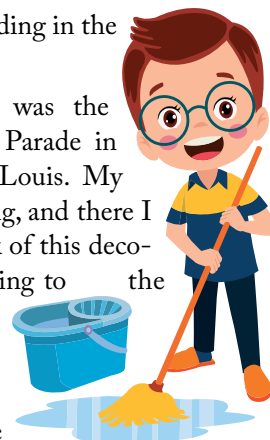
what I called a “pop-up kid” running up repeatedly to look into my bag during my magic show. This little four-year-old kept doing it again and again. I requested that he sit down numerous times, and I con- tinued on with my show. Then this little bugger approached from behind me (we were outside, so I didn’t notice him) and he proceeded to pee on my shoe! I was absolutely horrified! “Clean up on aisle 1!” The boy’s mother came up and led her son away, with apologies. The incident was funny, yet, at the same time, not so funny.

**Barbara “BeBe” Carter**

I decided to show off BeBe the Clown by riding in the back of

a pickup. It was the Fourth of July Parade in downtown St. Louis. My sister was driving, and there I was on the back of this deco- rated truck waving to the parade-goers and having a good time.

Suddenly, the golf cart behind



me, carrying cheerleaders, hit both my legs! Ouch! Parade organizers called an ambulance and, as I was being trans- ferred into the vehicle, the paramedic thought he would get a laugh and an- nounced on the PA, “we have a clown on the way to ER.” (This was not so funny to me at the time.)



I was treated for a fractured fibula on the left leg and a sprain on the right.

“The parade must go on” was not an option for me on that day. Fortunately, I have since healed, and in the recent past have really enjoyed walking in a parade.

TNC

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

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# Our Good Cheer List

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

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

**Miriam “Senorita Soto” Kleinberger**  
2 Maple Lane North  
Loudonville, NY 12211

**Richard “Design-O” Smith**  
97 Grafton Street, Back Door  
Shrewsbury, MA 01545-5646

**Fran “Cuddles” Smith**  
St. Joseph’s Manor  
6448 Main St  
Trumbull, CT 06611

**Good Cheer Chair:**

**Bonnie Corcia**  
bonkybird@gmail.com  
732-718-5840

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# Welcome, NEW MEMBERS!

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Michaela "2-EEE" Ballard Geneva, Nebraska  
Elaine "Tinker Bell" Bell Houston, Texas  
Catherine B Brooks Chesterfield, Virginia  
Cornelius G Brooks Chesterfield, Virginia  
Sheree "Ace" Buttler Houston, Texas  
Andrew "Haggis" Christenbury Mooresville,  
North Carolina  
Kim Marie Connell La Mesa, California  
Edwin "Yogi" Cruz Lufkin, Texas  
Frank "Pokie-Poke the Jongleur" Douglas Upper  
Darby, Pennsylvania  
Dakota Falls  
Cookie Fields Lemon Grove, California  
Kathryn "Toodles" Gunning Webster, Texas

Michelle Healey Denver, Colorado  
Hayley "Dot" Herrmann-Koen Houston, Texas  
Damon "Chubbles the Hobo clown" Hill  
Bartlesville, Oklahoma  
Paula "Penny Sillin" Laxson Humble, Texas  
Yonathan "Yonatan the Wonder Clown" Levy San  
Diego, California  
Sonia "Pinky" Lopez Houston, Texas  
Nancy Lyon New York, New York  
Thomas "Tomi" Marrie Warwick, New York  
Patricia "PattyCakes" Mazzaresse Erie,  
Pennsylvania  
Cassandra "ANNA" McCurdy St Paul, Minnesota  
Matt "Emmanuel" Mitler Brooklyn, New York

Nikolle "NikNak PaddyWack" Nuno San Diego,  
California  
Matilde Olmos Laredo, Texas  
Sydnee "Squid" Peralta Arlington, Texas  
Toby "Miss Toby" Prager San Diego, California  
Jonathan "Nick" Rainone Arlington, Texas  
Marjorie "Flour" Remington-Howes Maywood,  
New Jersey  
Tiki "Suki" Secades Houston, Texas  
Jeffrey "Patches" Tesluk Pasadena, Texas  
Ginnie "Foxy Roxy" Testo Branchburg, New  
Jersey  
Tatiana Tonsil Omaha, Nebraska  
Lorenzo "Keyz" Trujillo Humble, Texas  
Ann "Curley Q" Wasp Houston, Texas

Special thanks to those who have recently gifted memberships:  
Richard Smith, Jackie Reynolds, Linda Lester

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# THE LAST WALK-AROUND

## Charlene Ann “Bizzy” Link

Charlene A. Link, 77, of Haines City, Florida, died on September 26, 2024. She was born on October 13, 1946, in Albany, New York and worked for the New York State Attorney General’s Office in the Civil Recovery Unit. Charlene was actively involved with her church. She was also a professional clown, teaching many clown classes in her community. She loved to play Bingo, penny slots, and Texas Hold’em. Her compassion for others was boundless and she never met a stranger. She loved to travel and was a Diamond Plus member of the Royal Caribbean International cruise line. Throughout her life, she traveled to Italy, Africa, China, Australia, and New Zealand. Charlene was preceded



in death by her parents, Doris and William Rodford; her mother and father-in-law, David and Helen Link; her sister, Darlene Wilson; her brother-in-law, David Link; and her sister-in-law, Barbara Link. Charlene is survived by her husband and love of her life, Michael J. Link; her children, Cindy (Mike) Penello, Dawn (Bill) Houseknecht, Nicole (Bruce) Barton, Amy (Robert) Link, and John (Jeannie) Mara; her brother, Ronne (Janet) Ristau; her sister, Lou Ann (Bill) Evans; and her non-biological sister, Carol Cogtugno. She is also survived by ten grandchildren, thirteen great grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.

## Stanley Stromsky

Stanley J. Stromsky, 78, of Canton, Ohio, died on July 14, 2024. Born in Bellaire, Ohio, he lived in Canton for most of his life before moving to Florida, but returned to the Canton area in 2003. He graduated from Timken Vocational High School in 1963 and served in the United States Army during the Vietnam War. Stan dedicated his life to serving his community by working as a professional fireman for the fire departments in Canton and Cape Coral, Florida. He was a faithful member of North Canton St. Paul Catholic Church, North Canton Council #3777, Knights of Columbus, and Msgr. Graham Assembly #828, Fourth Degree. He was preceded in death by his parents Stan and Virginia Stromsky; in-laws John and Norma Gray, Carol Stromsky, Donald Gray, Ronald Gray, and Judy Kauffman; many aunts, uncles, and cousins; and his beloved sidekick Max. Stan is survived by his wife, Diana (Gray) Stromsky; sons Ronald A. Stromsky and Stephen J. Stromsky, both of Canton; grandchildren Kouryn Stromsky and Cody Stromsky (Olivia Smyser); brother Chet Stromsky; sister-in-law Carol (Girsez) Gray; nieces and nephews; and many dear friends and firefighter brothers and sisters.



## Georgia Lucille “Shananigans” Morris

Georgia Lucille Morris, 79, of Holt, Michigan, died on December 8, 2024. She was born on September 20, 1945, in St. Johns, Michigan, to parents George and Rita McQueen. A graduate of Portland High School, Georgia’s passion for life was paralleled by her dedication to her work. Her career was as diverse and vibrant as her personality. She brought smiles to customers at the Dime Store and Meijer, shared her organizational skills as a Tupperware saleswoman, and brightened the days of many as a receptionist at Michigan State University. However, it was through her unique calling as the professional clown “Shananigans” that she connected with people in a special way, bringing joy and laughter to their lives. She also expressed her love of clowning by serving on the COAI Board of Directors as Midwest Regional Vice President. For Georgia, art and clowning were not mere hobbies but expressions of a loving and adventurous spirit that found beauty and fun in every corner of life. She approached life with a warmth that drew people to her, and she nurtured the bonds of friendship and community wherever she went. Georgia was married to Harold Morris and their love bore fruit in their wonderful children Kurt (Ann) Morris and Todd (Tracy) Morris; grandchildren Gage, Anna, Alexandra, Garrett, Brooke, Arianna, Brendan, and Antonia Morris; and great grandchildren Roman, Charlotte, and Oliver Morris.

# HOW CLOWN CLUBS SPREAD JOY

By Samuel Patrick Smith

A five-year-old attended a clown organization's convention, and the course of his life was set. Today he's a busy, full-time professional entertainer.

A young mom took her four active children to COAI Alley meetings. The time away from home gave them all a break, and they enjoyed the fun experiences of clowning. One became a Ringling clown; another became a musician with a YouTube video topping 2.7 million views; the third is now an actor with film credits; and the fourth is a musician and computer genius, and has helped COAI by working on the website and creating online ballots for the past three elections.

A part-time professional clown in the Northeast gets inspiration and ideas for her career from reading cover stories in *The New Calliope*.

Members of a COAI Alley on the West Coast find joy by visiting health care facilities and spreading smiles to patients whose days would otherwise be dreary.

A retired couple experiences the joy of clowning by reading every issue of *The New Calliope*. They have even contributed articles to share their ideas and knowledge with other members.

A clown with no alleys or other clowns nearby, eagerly reads *The New Calliope* and enjoys participating in online events sponsored by COAI.

Adult children of a longtime COAI member received the issue of *The New Calliope* with their mother's Last Walk-Around, which helped them in their grieving process and reminded them of her kindness to others.

A father whose special needs daughter passed away made a donation to COAI in appreciation of what the organization had meant to their family.

These are just a few of the many positive reports about COAI that we continue to hear about month after month.

Perhaps it's time to remember—and share with others—the rewards that come from being an Ambassador of Joy!

bubble instantly reappears back on the tail. This personal touch is so important.

I grew up in an entertainment-rich tourist environment. I learned my art from the top boardwalk and circus performers. The performers who stood out showed genuine personal interest in me. They skillfully drew me into their magical realm and left me feeling special. Those precious moments created memories that still tickle me today. Keep it personal.

These three simple lessons are not the exclusive domain of the magical character. They apply to everyone who delights in sharing a smile. Whatever your specialty, find a simple and surprising way to make it personal. If you're a juggler, teach juggling scarves or plate spinning. A puppeteer? Give the children puppets then share an open conversation with yours. Invite children and adults to experience our passion for our art. That's real talent. That is the heart of the true clown. **TNC**

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

# The Kidshow Way



## A RABBIT'S TALE By Skip Way

Over fifty years of performing I have managed to hoard two rooms full of magic and comedy paraphernalia. I have boxes, shelves, and cabinets filled with some of the greatest and funniest props, books, files, gags, gimmicks, stage illusions—you get the idea. I have used these countless items in my shows and personal appearances over the years. And no one remembers!

Well, that isn't entirely true. There is one thing that every child and adult remembers clearly. Adults who first met me twenty or so years ago, when they were a child, always ask me to do this one little thing: sponge rabbits. This single memorable "thing" captured their imagination and sparked their belief in magic.

For more than forty years I have found tiny brown spotted rabbits in their children's hair, sleeves, pockets, hats, and books, as well as under their cups, shaken from crayons, and, well, everywhere. Then they vanish as if they never were.

Now, I also perform some amazing close-up card, coin, paddle, and rope effects, if I do say so myself. Yet after each miraculous demonstration, I hear, "Yeah, that's cool. Now, find the rabbits again!" Talk about typecasting! But my finely tuned "Aha!" detection system tells me that there is a lesson here!

**Lesson One: Keep it Simple.** The attention span of the average child seems to grow shorter as I grow older. Short and simple routines are best for capturing and holding the attention of younger children. Complicated and drawn-out routines are far less likely to entertain children and most adults. I have a killer routine where a phrase selected from a Harry Potter book mystically appears on a card in a sealed envelope in the kid's pocket. This seven-minute routine now gathers dust in my "Family" cabinet because the kids don't care! Keep it simple.

**Lesson Two: Make it Surprising.** Young children really do believe in magic. For them, anything is possible and when an adult claims to be a magician, the occurrence of magic is no great surprise. Our challenge is to find ways to magnify the element of surprise in everything we do. Our job is to be unpredictable. Pulling a small carved rabbit from a child's sleeve is unexpected and catches the child completely off guard. When this warren of rabbits vanishes from the child's closed hand, we create a memory that will survive for years to come. Make it surprising.

**Lesson Three: Keep it Personal.** Every child wants to be the center of attention. Even the shyest child gradually joins the rabbit hunt. Creating memorable magic in their hands makes them feel special. One of my buds, Turnip T. Tramp, pulls the bubble from a balloon poodle's tail and vanishes it. With a wave of the child's hand, the

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# CLOWN COMICS

MODERN MATH

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Photos: Tim "Sawdust" Laynor

Script: Ann "Tuttles" Sanders

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Monday my teacher said  $4 + 4 = 8$ .



Tuesday my teacher said  $6 + 2 = 8$ .



Wednesday my teacher said  $5 + 3 = 8$ .



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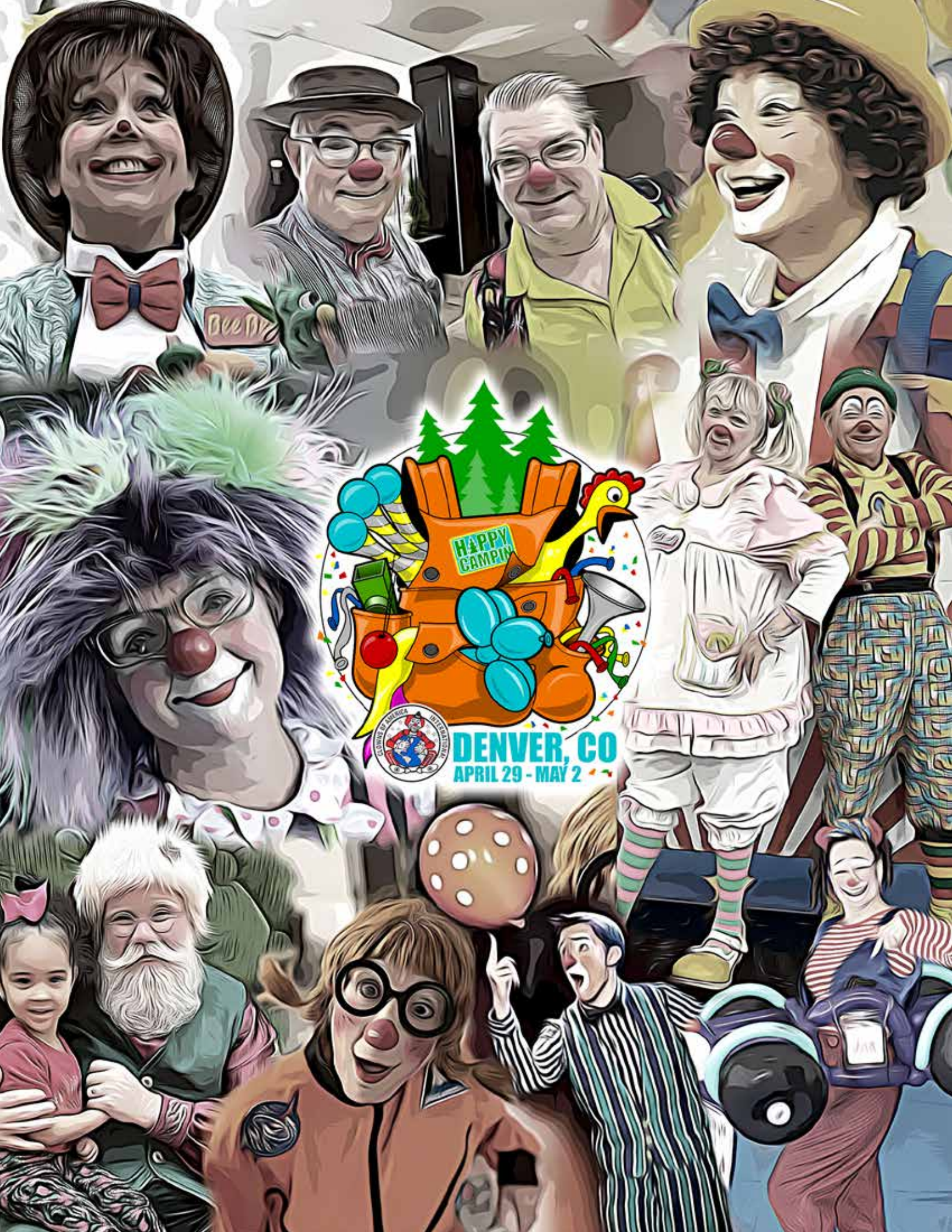
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