



# Utah Jesters April 2007



## Upcoming Events

Thurs. April 17, Alley Meeting at Hires

Thurs. May 15 Alley Meeting at Hires

Thurs. June 19<sup>th</sup> Alley Meeting in park

I wondered why the baseball was getting bigger. Then it hit me.

Police in Oklahoma were called to a daycare center today where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.

He drove his expensive car into a tree and found out how the Mercedes bends.

## Summer Meetings

During the summer months we will be meeting outside in a park. We usually have a pot luck picnic and a seminar



I couldn't quite remember how to throw a boomerang, but eventually it came back to me.



## Summer Parades

If you know of any parades in your area. Let me know and I will put them in the newsletter

Did you hear about the doctor in Idaho who had the habit of drinking while putting on patients' casts. He was soon plastered.

A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.

Show me a piano falling down a mineshaft and I'll show you A-flat minor.

## April Meeting

Our Meeting this month will be at Hires 7 pm on April 17<sup>th</sup> The topic will be skits

A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two-tired.



## WRCA

It is not to soon to start planning to attend the WRCA convention in November. It will be the 9<sup>th</sup> through the 13<sup>th</sup>

The latest WRCA newsletter The Klown Klatter is on their website. Check it out at [Westregionclowns.org](http://Westregionclowns.org) You can also go there to print up a registration form

A thief attempted to steal paintings from the Louvre in Paris, but was caught 2 blocks away when his van ran out of gas. All the thief could say for himself was: I had no MONET to buy DEGAS to make the VAN GOGH. But I tried for it anyway because I had nothing TOULOUSE!



Did you hear about the baker who had a knife so big that he could slice four loaves of bread at the same time? He called it a "four loaf cleaver".

## March Meeting

Thanks to everyone who attended and helped out at the March Meeting Lots of people helped with the balloons and makeup.

There was once a cattle rancher who had several sons that ran the ranch. The name of the ranch was "Focus", so named because that is where the sun's rays meet and the sons raise meat.



I've been reading something very interesting Stephen Hawkings latest book about anti-gravity. I just cant put it down.

Ancient humans, venturing across the ice bridge to North America, got lost quite often. They found it very hard to keep their Bering Strait|.

Did you hear they found a narcissistic male lion whose females had turned on him? It was his pride that did him in

Thanks Newsy for getting the newsletters on our website

Did you hear about the hungry clock? It went back four seconds.

# Bits of Clown History

In 1932, Coco, famous clown with Bertram Mills Circus, made a pilgrimage to St. James Church in order to lay flowers on Joseph Grimaldi's grave. Bertram Mills told him "Coco, you are doing a grand job. I am very glad you do not forget your predecessors, and please go on remembering them, I am proud of you."

Why is it important for clowns to remember their Predecessors?

First, because they deserve recognition and respect. Footit and the Fratellini's were excellent dramatists. Dan Rice and Vladimir Durov were expert animal trainers. Dan Rice trained a rhinoceros, and Vladimir Durov was given a center for the study of humane training methods by the Soviet government and is responsible for the quality of animal acts the Moscow State Circus is known for. Grock, hating what the Nazi's stood for, but realizing the common people were not responsible for what was happening, spent WWII entertaining wounded soldiers voluntarily, and was nearly bankrupt at the end of the war.

The more clowns know about their past, the more pride they will have in the art. Midget clown Alvin Schwarts was given a Carnegie Hero Medal for diving under a Falling aerialist preventing serious injury. Paul Horompo, another midget clown, prevented an escaped tiger from getting into the Madison Square Garden lobby that was full of families entering the show. Yu Sze is remembered as a national hero in China for saving thousands of lives by convincing the Emperor that the Great Wall of China did not need to be painted which would make the laborers easy targets for their Mongol enemies. A sailor who was deaf and mute due to sunstroke was cured by watching a performance by Grimaldi. The Native Americans believe their clowns have the ability to cure certain diseases, and modern medicine is discovering that there actually are physiological changes brought on by laughter that can help cure some conditions.

Remembering those who have gone before us can help us be better clowns today. Leon McBride tells a story about when he was on RBB&B. In a hurry to get to the showers at the end of the show, the clowns rushed past a little boy standing near the performers entrance. As he went through the curtain, Leon looked back and noticed everyone had ignored the boy, except Mark Anthony who was kneeling to talk to him. Leon always concludes the story by saying, "I learned about the heart of a clown from Mark." Now whenever I am in a similar situation, I remember that story, and I stop to pay attention to the other person. Charlie Cairolì had a long engagement at the Blackpool Tower Circus in England. It has been said that the key to his success was his rapport with children and his respect for the audience. I strive to always treat my audience with respect.

Remembering those who have gone before provides clowns with specific material they can use to entertain today's audiences. Some of my most popular acts incorporate a routine called Dead & Alive that was created in 1870 by Secchi and Alfano, and passed down from clown to clown. I don't copy a routine exactly as it has been used before, but adapt a lot of gags I've learned from historical research and recombine them. In one act I may use material from Emmett Kelly, Otto Griebling, W. C. Fields, and Mark Anthony. The best clowns have always based what they do on what has been done in the past, and they are quick to acknowledge the debt they owe to those who preceded them.

Knowing our past can help point the way to our future. Throughout the history of clowning there have been pairs of characters, a clever rogue and a naïve simpleton, or they could be thought of as a bully and his victim. The identity of the pairs change because characters evolve. They tend to become wiser. Originally in the Commedia Dell Arte, Harlequin was stupid and the victim of Brighella. Gradually performers playing Harlequin made him wiser and more of a bully, and a new victim was needed.

Whiteface Clown was introduced as a country yokel, the victim of Harlequin. Both characters continued to evolve. Harlequin became too elegant and sophisticated to be a bully, and the Clown became wiser. Harlequin faded away, replaced by Clown, and a new victim was needed. The Auguste was created. We are in a period now where whiteface Clown has become elegant and Auguste wiser. The Auguste is starting to replace the Clown. I predict that in the near future whiteface Clown will be a rarity, and a new stupid character will be introduced to be the victim of the Auguste.

The one constant about clown history is change. Clowning is a living art that thrives on creativity. It is important that we know our traditions, because they can help us become better, but clown traditions are not a restriction locking us into one approach as some instructors try to use them. When I hear an instructor or competition judge put down a creative clown because something they did does not correspond to that instructor's view of clown traditions, I want to ask them what era they are talking about. Depending upon what period of history you are discussing it is equally accurate to say, "traditionally Clowns sang popular songs and answered questions from their audience," as it is to say, "traditionally Clowns are silent."

It is important that we gain an accurate picture of our past because of conclusions based upon them. During the 1980's, a common misconception was that Emmett Kelly was the original tramp clown, and thus the prototype everyone should emulate. Using their image of Emmett late in his career, instructors were declaring that to be a tramp clown you had to be silent, sad, and elderly. Emmett missed being the original tramp clown by fifty years, and he epitomized only one of the options of a rich and varied clown type

Thanks to Bruce "Charlie" Johnson's book JEST IN TIME  
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