

"THE ARRIVAL OF A GOOD CLOWN EXERCISES A MORE BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ON THE HEALTH OF A TOWN THAN TWENTY ASSES LADEN WITH DRUGS."

THOMAS SYDENHAM, PHYSICIAN AND PHILOSOPHER, 1620



*"BY LAUGHING AT ME, THE AUDIENCE REALLY LAUGHS AT THEMSELVES, AND REALIZING THEY HAVE DONE THIS, GIVES THEM A SORT OF SPIRITUAL SECOND WIND FOR GOING BACK INTO THE BATTLE OF LIFE."*

*EMMETT KELLY, CIRCUS CLOWN DURING THE DEPRESSION, 1930s*

I was honored when Laurie and Jill asked me to edit the issue on Therapeutic Clowns.

I've been a clown since 1975 and a therapeutic clown since 1990.

Clowning has evolved over the years, as I've described in the overview article, and therapeutic clowning is a one of the newest styles.

Therapeutic clowns offer moments of delight and amusement to those who feel isolated, alone and anxious. We see this type of clown in the hospital, nursing home, refugee camp, disaster shelter, and more.

Therapeutic clowns transform the emotional atmosphere by providing a visual re-focus of attention and encouragement for those who feel isolated and alone. I have gathered the "voices" of therapeutic clowns from around the world, each sharing their unique perspective, experience and insight. I hope you come away with a new understanding and appreciation for the value and power of therapeutic clowns.

*Patti Wooten, Guest Editor*

*Patti Wooten is the editor of this Therapeutic Clowning edition of the Humor Voice. She is a nurse and Therapeutic Clown who has practiced since 1975. Patti also is the co-author of What Clowns Need to Know about Hospitals.*

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by Ed Dunkelblau

# Heart matters

By Michael Christensen

Medical clowning, therapeutic clowning, hospital clowning, healthcare clowning, clown doctors, dream doctors, giggle doctors—there are many names for the activity of donning festive attire, applying makeup and attempting to ease the suffering of various vulnerable populations through humor. Those costumes may or may not include a white doctor's lab coat but most certainly, every makeup will incorporate some form of red nose, ranging from a grease-painted pea size dot to a red rubber bulbous honker. Likewise, skill and experience levels vary dramatically; highly trained, paid professionals who have devoted their lives to the performing arts and are totally integrated into clinical teams on one end of the scale and untrained, inexperienced, unskilled, well intentioned, good hearted volunteers on the other.

My invitation to this world began with a unique telephone call that would change my life.

I was sitting at my desk in the administrative offices of the Big Apple Circus in the spring of 1986 when Virginia Keim, from Babies' Hospital in New York City called. Evidently, she was in love with my alter ego, Mr. Stubs, a raggle-taggle, Emmett Kelly inspired hobo clown I created with the Big Apple Circus. Mr. Stubs had waddled from the ring directly into her heart. *Ginny*, as I would come to know her, invited me to appear in an event called Heart Day, a celebration for all of the young patients. I accepted.

In preparation, I toured the facility in plain clothes for an afternoon with Linda O'Neil, a dark haired and light spirited nurse. We visited the in-patient services, out-patient clinics, the Intensive Care Unit for seriously ill children and, of course, nursing stations, waiting areas, hallways and elevators. For me, dominant images included shiny floors, shiny halls, shiny walls, whispered conversations, slow elevators, tense waiting rooms, rolling carts, rolling beds, a gaggle of white coats and a sea of sinks; here a sink, there a sink, everywhere a sink, sink.

In 1977, my friend, Paul Binder, and I had founded the Big Apple Circus as a not for profit organization dedicated to serving communities in which we performed. At this point, a little history will be helpful. Circus began in 1761 in London with equestrian demonstrations. In order to compete with other entertainments, they soon introduced variety artists into performances, including acrobats, jugglers and clowns, and in so doing, created classical circus.

One of the comedic tools of the circus clowns was parody: Lights dim to a soft blue glow. Lyrical music bathes the ring as fog transforms sawdust into clouds. Red, velvet curtains glide open and an ethereal ballerina dances atop a loping white horse, a sublime moment. Immediately afterwards, a fool in a tutu circles the ring on a donkey attempting to execute the same movements to the same music. Parody.

I shared my hospital observations with my two Big Apple Circus clown colleagues, Barry Lubin, who portrayed a feisty old woman character named Grandma, and Jeff Gordon, a fall-down-go-boom physical clown named Mr. Gordo. We employed the art of parody to integrate medical information into sketches.

First, we identified the authority figure, which was easy. In the circus it is the person in the red tailcoat, master of the ring; in the hospital it is the person in the white lab coat, master of the sinks.

Then, we asked ourselves, "What do doctors *do*?" We concluded that doctors question; doctors log information on clip boards; doctors examine; doctors make you wait; they test; they consult; they prescribe, send samples to laboratories, receive results, collaborate with other doctors, perform surgeries, operate complicated machines, study x-rays, peer through microscopes, and send bills.

Of course, physicians perform many other tasks but from a clown's eye view, these actions lend themselves to loving mockery. We immediately donned lab coats and *medicalized* our names. I became Dr. Stubs; Grandma was Chief Dietician Grandma and Mr. Gordo, well, he was a natural, Disorderly.



Clowns work as well as aspirin, but twice as fast.

Groucho Marx

Continued on next page

## Heart matters (continued)

### Heart Day

**“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.”—Mark Twain**

The day I was born was January 15, 1947; the day I found out why was May 18, 1986. Patients, families, clinical staff, department heads and the Director of Pediatrics jam themselves into Alumni Auditorium of Babies Hospital at 168th Street and Broadway on a spring Manhattan morning.

Heart Day is here. Nobody is aware that three professional idiots from the Big Apple Circus in full makeup and dressed as healthcare personnel await their entrances. In my right hand, I hold an old black leather doctor's bag, a gift from my brother Kenneth who had died of pancreatic cancer a few months earlier. However, instead of serious life saving equipment, it now contains a stethoscope that blows bubbles, an oxygen tube tuba, a large fake spider, a whoopee cushion for hearing tests, colored juggling balls for eye exams, several red noses and of course, Leonard, my trusty rubber chicken companion.

Dr. Peter Salgo introduces me. He cites the prestigious journals in which I am published; he details several surgical innovations I have initiated; he shares how grateful he is to have studied under me at school and he delivers all of this information with absolute sincerity, straight. In short, he sets me up. It is one of the finest introductions I have ever received. When he concludes, everyone expects a heavy, pompous piece of medical furniture to roll onto the stage. Instead, Clown Dr. Stubs shuffles to the podium in his crisp medical whites. Laughter abounds.

Dr. Stubs begins, “It's great to be in charge of another hospital. And now that I'm the boss, I'm making a few changes around here. It has come to my attention that children are eating at regular intervals. Well, from now on, they can eat anytime they want and anything they want as long as it comes from the four major food groups: popcorn, pizza, chocolate cake and beer.” Parody. Chief Dietician Grandma demonstrates popcorn-devouring techniques. Disorderly Gordoan dispenses an entire roll of toilet paper into the air with a leaf blower, an essential skill for all well-trained Babies' employees.

Prior to the performance, we identified a little girl who had undergone a heart transplant. Her physician, Dr. Rose, sits in the audience. We invite them on stage and assist her as she attempts the world's first red nose transplant. Examining his schnoz with a pair of hotdog tongs, I ask, “How long have you had this tiny, pale little thing, Dr.?”

“About forty two years.”

“Let's bubble down!” We fill the air with soap bubbles. His pulse is slow so I activate the high tech HSCA, (Hairy Spider Cardiac Accelerator) which I dangle in front of him. Wearing a cat mask, Disorderly Gordoan conducts a thorough CT scan. Purrrrrrfect! Finally, we tease his funny bone--it's healthy. He is fully prepped.

We extend a bedpan filled with red donor noses. “Doctor, as you can see, there are many styles here. So, take a deep breath, relax and pick your nose.” Good-natured Dr. Rose points to a robust specimen and the child carefully positions it on his face. “This is the critical period where the nose may begin to reject you.” We wait... Silence...Yes! It takes. The world's first red nose transplant is successful! As the audience erupts with applause and the little girl beams, the shimmering light of play envelops everyone.

These are the most fulfilling twenty minutes of my professional career.

My life and the world of pediatrics will never be the same.



**God's children and their happiness are my reasons for being.**

**Red Skelton**



#### **Author Michael Christensen**

*Michael Christensen is a pioneer in the field of medical clowning. Michael founded the Big Apple Circus Clown Care Unit in 1986. Directly and indirectly, this program has inspired many organizations to integrate the skills of professional clowns into the medical facilities worldwide. Michael has received over the years: Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Award, the Red Skelton Award and the Service to Mankind Award. Michael has lectured and led workshops worldwide and has been designated a New York City Living Landmark.*



# Fools, Clowns and Jesters (A HISTORY)

By Patty Wooten RN, BSN

The “fool” has always played an important role in society. Egyptian pharaohs enjoyed the court fool. Early European cultures, laughed at the “village fool” providing a feeling of superiority. Native Americans of the Hopi nation used “sacred clowns” (Koshari) in ceremonial dances. These clowns add much needed “comic relief” during serious ceremonies that can last for several days. The clown provides comical antics and the audience feels energized by the laughter.

During the middle ages, kings had their “court jesters” to entertain and advise. Today’s jester cap is an adaptation of the early tradition when jesters wore donkey ears on their head. The bells at the tips of the donkey ears jingled and alerted the court audience that the jester was in the room. The court



jester was allowed to say things to his “bauble” (face on a stick) and the king could choose to listen or ignore it. The jester did not feel the threat of beheading because, as everyone knows, the jester is “just a fool” and not to be taken seriously. Historians reveal that jesters actually persuaded the king to make a more skillful decision.

In the early 18th century, a new clown appeared in France. The elegant, clever, white faced clown, Pierrot, performing in French theaters.

In the middle of the 1800s, the ‘Auguste’ clown was born. One day, a circus worker got drunk and fell asleep in a steamer trunk. The trunk was then moved to the center ring for the next performance. During the middle of the performance, the drunk awakened and stumbled out of the trunk, his nose red and swollen from the whiskey. His confusion was comical and the audience roared with laughter. Voila, the Auguste clown was born.



**“Incongruity, they say, is one of the main ingredients of humor. Maybe it's because everybody can feel superior to me. I honestly don't know.”** Emmett Kelly



During the US depression in the 1930s, the tramp clown entered the circus ring. The audience could identify with the hobo character, a man who had lost everything but never gave up. Emmett Kelly Sr. and Otto Griebling were two of the most popular tramps. They knew the impact on the audience.

The clown and fool archetype create a strong foundation for the comedy artists today.

The fools, clowns and jesters from the beginning of time, continue to inspire new evolutions of comedy.

Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton were comical characters in the 1920s. Their physical comedy, facial expressions, and foolish characters struggled with the plight of everyday man and we laughed at their folly.

*Continued on next page*



**I had a friend who was a clown. When he died, all his friends went to the funeral in one car.**

**Steven Wright**

## Fools, Clowns and Jesters (continued)

Laurel and Hardy, Lucy and Ethyl, Burns and Allen were all successful comedy duo's who played off each other to create hilarious comedy. The "fool" is with us once more.



Two of my favorite comedy character creators are Robin Williams and Lily Tomlin. Who could forget Mrs. Doubtfire or Ernestine, the telephone operator from the Laugh In TV show.

In the 1980s we saw the evolution of a new style of clowning. The therapeutic clown's audience was in the



hospital, cancer center and refugee camps.

The therapeutic clown is called by different names: caring clown, hospital clown, medical clown, clown doctor, Dream Doctor, and Clowns without Borders to name a few. There is no doubt that their ability to elicit smiles and laughter can become an important part of the healing process for many people.

International organizations provide a network for therapeutic clowns to share professional skills, research studies, and program development. Several are listed below.

### Healthcare Clowning International:

Conferences 2016 in Florence, 2017 in Lisbon, 2018 in Vienna.

### Red Nose International:

Consortium of clown troupes from ten countries across Europe.

### Dream Doctors:

Medical clowning in many hospitals in Israel with successful integration of medical clowns into the healthcare team. Publishing research on effectiveness of medical clowning.

### Therapeutic Clowns Canada:

Network of hospital clown programs across Canada. Sets best practice guidelines and supports members with training and mentorship.



### Patty Wooten

*Patty Wooten has been clowning around since 1975, for over 40 years. She started her 4-year nursing career in critical care and ended with a board certification in infection control running a hospital infection prevention department. Patty traveled to 12 countries and 49 states during her speaking career, helping healthcare professionals understand the benefits of therapeutic humor. She has written two books and over 50 articles in professional journals. She has co-authored the book, Hospital Clowns – A Closer Look with Shobi Dobi and taught at Clown Camp for many years. Patty was an contributing editor for the Journal of Nursing Jocularly and in 2002, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor.*



**Only comedians can talk about death, life, God and Virgin Mary. If I was a tragic actor, I couldn't allow myself. But with this accent I can do it. I can talk with death in person because I am a clown. Yes. And I am proud to be a clown - very much.**

**Roberto Benigni**

**He deserves paradise who makes his companions laugh.**

**Anonymous**

# The medical clown and the multidisciplinary care team

By Dr. Amnon Raviv

Medical clowns today fill an active role in a diverse range of medical procedures alongside the care team. Studies demonstrate how their work greatly contributes to reducing fears among patients, both prior to and during medical procedures. Thus, the medical clown provides enhanced working conditions, enabling the medical team to conduct procedures with greater ease. The dynamics that are generated through the physician-nurse-medical clown triad during medical procedures offer a new operating model for many nurses, physicians, and even for the medical clowns themselves. This article characterizes this unique collaboration of the multidisciplinary medical team for patients' and their families' ultimate wellbeing.

## The involvement of the medical clown in medical care procedures

The presence of the medical clown within the healthcare system as an integral part of the multidisciplinary care team is an outstanding development. An increasingly growing number of medical clowns now participate in medical procedures, especially over the last decade. Initially, the medical clowns were involved in routine procedures such as drawing blood and inserting IV lines. Over time, their involvement grew, to include a far wider spectrum of treatments of patients. It became clear that a medical clown's presence in the treatment room was practically indispensable: The clown could provide significant assistance during the procedure by lessening the patient's fears and anxiety, thus significantly easing the work of the healthcare team (nurses and physicians).

The professional literature, especially over the past five years, has reported on the medical clowns' significant contributions to improving young patients' feelings and easing their fears during their hospitalization and particularly during medical procedures. This, in turn, aids the medical team in performing medical procedures with greater ease and less resistance.



Medical Clowning in Action

The first international conference of its kind, on Medicine and Medical Clowning, was held in Jerusalem on October 23-26, 2011, to mark the first decade of the Dream Doctors Project for medical clowning. Medical clowns from 22 countries attended the conference which was primarily devoted to the medical clown's participation in medical procedures. Senior physicians also participated, sharing their knowledge on the subject. Discussions focused

on a broad range of medical procedures, such as the presence of medical clowns when injecting botulinum toxin injections in children with CP; with IVF patients; as a substitute for anaesthetics in radionuclide scanning; while examining victims of sexual abuse; in treatment for dementia patients; idiopathic arthritis sufferers; and in treating people with PTSD. These are just a few of the procedures in which medical clowns take an active part. Their presence in different departments continues to expand; medical clowns are now present during treatments such as dialysis, treating burns, rehabilitation and physical therapy (especially for children), radiation therapy, and chemotherapy.

The manner and extent of the medical clown's involvement in a particular procedure result directly from, and are shaped by, two variables:

- (a) the medical clown's capacity to assist the patient during the various medical procedures, influenced by the nature of the procedure and its effect upon the patient
- (b) the characteristics of the interpersonal relations between the clown and the interdisciplinary care team and the quality of their teamwork.



Photo Credit: dreamdoctors.org.il



Photo Credit: dreamdoctors.org.il



Photo Credit: dreamdoctors.org.il

**Each year in Israel over 200,000 child patients benefit from their encounter with Dream Doctors.**





## Medical Clown (continued)

Both children and adults experience anxiety, pain, fear, and other negative emotions before and during medical procedures. Studies demonstrate the medical clowns' role in significantly reducing fears among pediatric patients who require a range of medical procedures and painful treatments. Hanson and colleagues (2011) researched how the medical clown's presence impacts on children undergoing botulinum toxin injections in a hospital in Denmark for over two years. The research population comprised almost 60 children who required repeated treatments, for a total of 121 procedures. Study results confirmed that the clowns' presence positively impacted the treatment, especially when



female medical clowns were present during injections with female pediatric patients. Certain procedures are likely to increase emotional trauma among children who were sexually abused, since the diagnostic procedures are invasive yet often necessary to provide legal validity. Medical clowns lessen young patients' anxiety, trauma, and pain during these examinations. Tener and her colleagues (2010) reported that the presence of a female medical clown in these cases significantly helped the sexually abused child experience the exam more easily. The writers stated that the

children perceived the medical clown as their ally, and her presence alleviated the pain because the medical clown activated dissociative mechanisms in the children and therefore facilitated distraction and suppression of the pain.

Children and their parents experience anxiety before and during procedures: the intensity of the fear and apprehension increase as the surgical procedure becomes imminent. Studies by Golan (Golan *et al* 2009), have shown that anxiety is significantly reduced when a medical clown accompanies the child into the OR. When the medical clown remained with the child patient until anaesthesia began. The clown's presence provided distraction and decreased the fear of surgery. The study also found that anxiety intensifies as the anaesthesia mask is placed over the child's face, and the patient can no longer see the clown. Medical clowns working with the Dream Doctors Project (Dream Doctors 2011) addressed that precise critical moment by finding a solution to children's anxiety from the anaesthesia mask. The medical clown played with the mask, together with the child, before the procedure. As a result, during anaesthesia, the mask served as one more prop in their imaginative play.

Another study conducted on 40 children in a hospital in Florence, Italy (Vagnoli *et al.* 2005) showed that children accompanied by a medical clown prior to their pre-operative anaesthesia presented significantly reduced anxiety levels.

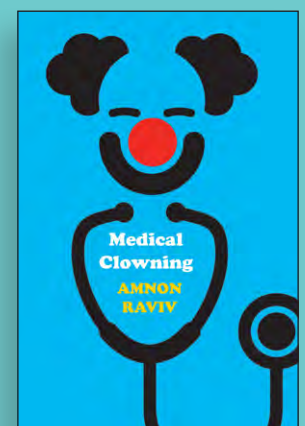
Medical clowning has entered a new era in recent years. No longer confined solely to the hospital room, the medical clown is increasingly becoming an integral part of the multidisciplinary healthcare team, and is involved in a growing number of medical procedures.



### Author Amnon Raviv

*Amnon Raviv is a pioneer in the field of medical clowning. He works as a clown doctor in hospitals, as part of the Dream Doctors Project and is the first practitioner to earn a PhD in medical clowning. Author of Medical Clowning: The Healing Performance, he leads the first MA program in Medical Clowning-Drama Therapy at the Tel Hai College.*

**Israel boasts 90 medical clowns in 22 hospitals, and many of them earned bachelor's degrees from the University in Haifa's theater department, while others have taken special courses.**



Access to online publication of research studies can be obtained:  
<http://dreamdoctors.org.il/program/work-in-hospitals-2/>

# Send in the Clowns

## Professional training for non-circus clowns

By Richard Snowberg, EdD

Creating Clown Camp was our humble effort to begin some sort of clown educational program that was different than circus training.



Clown Camp opened in 1981, and I was 'thrilled'. Clown and costume designer Betty Cash came to share her wisdom and experience of becoming a professional clown.

Soon afterward, Leon McBryde and David Ginn joined to contribute their knowledge. Circus clowns also wanted to be a part of Clown Camp to share their knowledge and experience. Mark Anthony, Jim Howle and Lou Jacobs joined us from Ringling Brothers. It was remarkable; no one ever turned us down when we asked them to be on staff at Clown Camp.



A new style of clowning started to evolve around 1980. These clowns visited hospitals and nursing homes to bring joy and delight to a vulnerable audience. I wrote the book *Caring Clowns* to help clowns understand the sensitivity and gentle ways that are needed to work in this setting. We invited successful *Caring Clowns* to join the faculty at Clown Camp. Shobi Dobi, Aurora Krause and Patty Wooten were all caring clown faculty at Clown Camp.

I dedicated my book to my father who never wore greasepaint, but had the spirit and actions of a caring clown. He had a caring heart for everyone, and added a dose of levity. If you decide to become a clown, I hope that you too, find a fitting role model to assist you as you grow into a true caring clown.

As an effective caring clown you have immense power to make a difference in people's lives. What will you do to carry forth this responsibility?



**Author Richard Snowberg, EdD**

*Richard is the founding father of Clown Camp.*

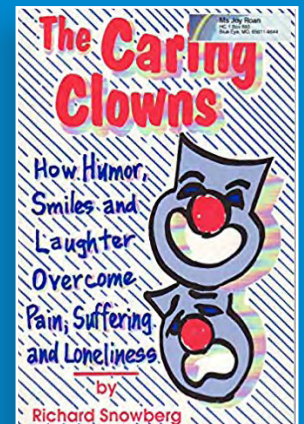
*Their professional team of clowns have trained thousands of clowns, from around the world, every year for 30 years.*



**“While dispersing therapeutic humor as a caring clown, or confronting individuals experiencing untold pain, you may never know what impact you've made on given individuals.**

**While a stage clown measures success by audience laughter or applause, the caring clown's reward is a smile, a tender “thank you,” or tears.”**

*Richard Snowberg (Junior)*





# Shhhhhh — Clown at Work

## A day in the life of a therapeutic clown

By Kathy Keaton/“Piccolo”

**CLOWN DAY!! CLOWN ROUNDS!!!** I always look forward to Tuesday and Friday — those are the days I clown in the hospital. My hospital is about 170 beds and I clown for adults mostly and staff, family members, the Pepsi man, the elevator man and anyone else who might be in the hall.

When I am dressed as a clown, I am a clown for everyone.

I begin by deciding on the costume of the day. I have large hair bows, tights, gigantic shoes, barrels of suspenders and sequined vests of all colors. Sometimes my costume choice depends on my mood or if there is a season theme. Other embellishments are an oversized whistle hanging from a string of pearls around my neck. I have a red bird in a nest in my hair. I wear an ankle watch, to remind me when it's “time” to change my socks! Each item has a purpose. I hope that it will stimulate questions and begin the playful interaction. If people make comments about my props or costume, it begins a conversation.

When I apply my make up, I talk to myself in the mirror. “Good Morning Piccolo!” The transformation begins inside as well as on the outside with a prayer asking that I might be led to those who need a lift; that I might say and do the right things to make a difference. After sticking on my signature ponytails and gluing the small red heart to my nose – there she is and I greet her again. Good Morning Piccolo! This is going to be a great day!

My day begins as I begin to drive, smiling and waving at who notices me. In the parking lot I greet drug reps, nurses changing shifts, family members visiting patients or firemen coming for breakfast. Inside the hospital I am greeted by volunteers waiting to hear my “bad joke of the day.” I joke in the elevator on the way to my first floor and check in with the nurses to see who might need or like a clown visit today. They advise me if someone is on their way to surgery, those who have recently gotten a cancer diagnosis or tried to commit suicide and those who may be a bit confused. All those tips help me decide how to approach a patient.

I'm allowed to visit all areas of the hospital except surgery and I always keep my hands clean ... an important goal for any health professional. I clown in the rehab, pediatrics, wound care, ICU, Cath Lab, kitchen, pharmacy and anywhere there might be anxiety, stress, fear, or pain. Cleanliness is most important so I clean my hands as I go into and out of each room. I have an empty bag and anything a patient touches goes into that so germs are not spread from room to room.

What I do depends on the patient. I usually begin with a song on my kazoo. While playing I can observe the patient, the room, any visitors to see reactions so I can decide what to do next. Sometimes a song is all that is needed. Other times I share my stool sample (a tiny wooden stool inside a specimen cup); maybe my chicken cord-on-blue dinner (a rubber chicken with a blue cord wrapped around its neck; or my cat scanner (a small beanie baby can I scan over the patient). With children I share coloring pages, puzzle pages, bubbles and a little magic or juggling now and then. Where serious illness is present I merely stand in the door ask if anyone needs a hug. That gives me permission to enter ICU or a room. This often opens up tears and a flood of emotions. People are often scared and need someone to listen to their story.

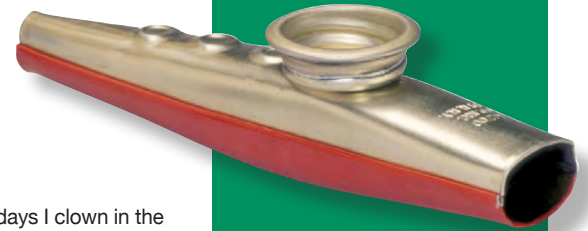
Sometimes it is not the patient that needs attention but perhaps a loved one, a brother or sister of a patient, a young mother of a new baby or perhaps even a staff member.

I never quite know what the day will bring, I just clown with an open heart and hope that I will make a difference to those who struggle. Most people welcome the surprise and the humor I deliver. It can make their day, decrease their stress and even help with pain. I may just offer a smile, a wink or a wave. Those actions do make a difference when you are in the hospital.



### Author Kathy Keaton

*Kathy has been active in AATH for 20 years! She graduated from The Humor Academy. For the last 40 years, Kathy has delivered humor and laughter to people who struggle. Some years she has been in make-up more than 300 times!! Kathy is Membership Director for The San Angelo Chamber of Commerce in Texas.*



**I'm a clown, which could be a public health role. I'm really interested in moving our society away from a society needing Xanax and Prozac, and that is really feeling depressed, to one that is celebrating, and so I find just walking around in colorful clothes, people smile.**

**Patch Adams**

# The Transformative Role of the Clown

By Jeff Gordon



I was approached a number of years ago, by a voluntary medical clown organisation here in Israel, to teach the wider community the fundamentals of Clowning and its application in the hospital setting. I was faced with the challenge of taking people with no previous performing arts experience, yet with a strong desire to provide laughter for those in pain and provide them with the techniques and tools that would empower them to be successful in their endeavours. It was clear to me that I needed to approach the art of Clowning from a different angle and in doing so gain a greater insight into this essentially human role and its possibilities for healing, both for the individual enrolling into Clown and those they encounter. I examined the role from a Dramatherapy approach, being a trained dramatherapist.

The role is clearly paradoxical, holding oppositional roles in a wonderful balance beyond tension and conflict. Where normally such contradictory positions do not allow the individual to navigate their life in a harmonious way, in Clown it provides for an absurd take on life and a total embracing of everything that makes us fully human. In a normal situation, the individual denies a part of themselves to allow another part to find expression. The introverted side will be suppressed in order to project extrovert behaviour, the child will be silenced in order

for the adult to feel in control, the vulnerable side hidden in the fear that we will be seen as weak. In order to be in Clown, no aspect of ourselves can be suppressed, silenced or hidden. There is a complete honesty about who we are and the social masks we wear in different social situations, often to protect our sense of vulnerability, are no longer relevant or needed. In Clown our authentic nature is revealed and we are therefore free and empowered to choose how we act and not be bound by social conventions and the 'normal' rules of a sick and alienating society. It holds the possibilities for individual liberation and growth, allowing for a greater spontaneity, an increased playfulness and a deeper engagement of the imagination and the possibilities for an enriched encounter with the world around us.

Realising the powerful psychological nature of this role and its social and therapeutic possibilities, the challenge became to develop a clear methodology for the non-performer for invoking it. Taking an eclectic mix of theatre and drama games and exercises and dramatherapy projection and role techniques, the participants in the medical clowning course that I developed together with a dramatherapy colleague, explored, their repetitive patterns of thinking and behaviour. Understanding better their inner and outer conflicts, they were guided with our support to identify their dominant role plays which became the basis for their Clown. Giving a physical expression to these dominant and oppositional roles, the Clown emerged through their bodies, the confident and shy, the controlling and the chaotic, the child and the adult in beautiful juxtaposition and common to all of them, a renewed energy for life, a burning curiosity about the world around them, a fresh innocence and a strong desire to play with everybody and every object around them. Being in Clown, led people to create improvisations that reflected life's absurdities, that generated laughter about the human condition and that brought immense pleasure and fun to both the Clowns and to those observing them. In standing at a bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive, a group of Clowns interacted in their own unique way that made the banality of the situation magical and funny. In Clown, the adult no longer interfered with their child at play and with such emotional flexibility created endless possibilities of being in the world, beyond self-doubt, self-criticism and self-judgement.



**It's a powerful thing when you've got this little red nose on. It's a mask, the smallest in the world, but it unveils you. You stand up there and do these exercises that free you, let you play, and see what comes out. What comes out is the truth.**

**Becky Lynch**

*Continued on next page*



## The Transformative Role of the Clown (continued)

The participants self-empowered by their Clowns, were ready to take their Clowning into the hospital wards and meet people at their most vulnerable and in being in such an empathic place support them to see beyond the boundaries of their illness and towards the possibilities for healing. Approaching the patients with a light and open heartedness, a self-belief and a personal insight and knowledge of emotional transformation, their impact was clear in both the smiling faces and the change in energy in and outside the rooms. It became clear that the hospital was not the only place that could benefit from such an encounter and the street, the elderly home, the school for kids with special needs became further contexts for the individual to meet others in a transformative way, evoking hope, optimism and possibilities for genuine social change. What Dr Patch Adams had been doing with so many wonderful individuals for so long, became clearer and possible for a wider population. If 70% of illnesses are regarded as being stress induced, the tension needed to be reduced at all levels of the society, beginning with the individual discovering their Clown.

It was after a medical clowning training with rehabilitated drug addicts who served as counsellors in various intervention centres, that it became clearer than ever the possibilities of this work in psychotherapy and a program was created for drug addicts and alcoholics in recovery. The core elements and insights that had been gained, were applied in a twelve session therapy program, with the focus on the individual discovering and connecting to the role of their Clown, each in their own unique way. Conducted in a group setting, everyone became a witness to each other's personal transformation and the psychological impact it created. The final exercise, psychodramatic in nature, has the individual talking about a specific challenge they are dealing with and having it fed back to them while they are in the role of the Clown and able to react and respond to it from this unique perspective and in doing so discover a new way of being and acting in the world, a way that also involves more love and compassion.

The Clown has always served an important role in society and has always held a mirror to its imperfections and while there is still an important place for the art to be practiced there is also a place for introducing this fundamentally human role into every individual's life, to connect them to their deeper authentic selves, to open them to a life that embraces, health, positivity and a shared humanity. The Clown being such a powerful psychological role, supports the individual to go beyond what they have been taught and to discover new meanings and greater possibilities for a fulfilling and enriched life.



### Author Jeff Gordon

*has a background in Community/Social Theatre, Clowning and Dramatherapy and has worked with people of all ages and backgrounds to support them to find and give expression to their authentic voice. He has guided and supported many individuals to become voluntary Clowns in both hospitals and various community frameworks and together with a colleague has developed Clowning in the context of Dramatherapy, as a Psychotherapy for recovering substance abusers and beyond. He also lectures and runs workshops on 'Happiness as a way of Life', applying the principles of Positive Psychology for increasing wellbeing in personal and social development.*

**The clown's simplicity is one key to his special status....One walk-around by a covey of sawdust comedians probably releases as much tension as weeks of therapy at the hands of a clinical psychologist, para or otherwise.**

**Georgia Bishop, The World of Clowns**



# The Hospital Clown Play Zone

By Shobi Dobi, the Clown (AKA Shobhana Schwebke)



The “zone of play” for a hospital clown is created from an awareness of the hospital environment while playing like a spontaneous child. For me, being present and mindful in every moment allows me to be constantly aware of the hospital environment. Spontaneous play is the land of my inner child — goofy, spontaneous, joyful and unexpected. AND, the red nose I wear allows me to play in society and in the hospital.

How does one play spontaneously and still abide by all the hospital protocols? I used to call this, “Observing the Inner Director,” a term actors use to describe stage presence while reciting memorized

dialogue. Searching the Internet one night late I came across a term — Wide Angle Meditation. I thought, “that really explains it.” It’s a Wide Angle Observation. The Wide Angle Observer hovers behind our action like a warm embracing cloud. It becomes a partner to the spontaneity of the hospital clown. It allows us to perform safely and continue to take risks. I have learned to trust that open door from the Universe and trust builds with experience.

One day, while getting my supplies ready to take to the hospital, a stuffed bunny rabbit kept flying off a top shelf and landing on my head. “OK. OK you can come with me. Maybe someone needs you today.” In the Intensive Care Unit, the nurse told me not to go into a certain room as the woman was screaming at everyone. “Is it OK if I try?” I asked. “It’s your funeral,” she responded.

I peeked into the room and sure enough there she was sitting next to her bed yelling at me “Go away, too sick, too sick.” I took the bunny out of my cart held it up for her and with great clowning caution brought it to her. She looked up at me and said, “For me?” in a small quite voice. I nodded. She took the bunny, held it to her chest and started rocking it. I backed out the same way I came in — passing the very same nurse who now had a tear on her cheek.

So often in the Emergency Department, a patient will be looking up at me with so much pain and fear. One woman asked me to pray with her. I didn’t even get to think “What religion” before the words came out of Shobi’s mouth. “Have you ever walked down by the ocean?” She looked up at me. “Close your eyes and remember the sounds and the sand between your toes.” And I lead her into deep breathing relaxation and she went to sleep. I had never done that with a patient before — but I sure will do it now!

Another instance comes to mind – a patient was in unbearable pain and the nurse asked me to visit. I saw so much pain in his eyes and again, before I could ask my inner director for help, the words came out of my mouth “Maybe you need to listen more to the love in your heart, than the pain in your body.” I can’t remember ever thinking that thought. My comment brought tears to the patient’s eyes as he squeezed my hand and smiled softly. We did some deep breathing together.

“Swimming in the Zone” is a term to describe a spontaneous performance arising out of the collection of knowledge with the “Wide Angle Observer” guiding the way. Whew!

We often describe hospital clowning as “heart-to-heart” clowning. Clowns go to the heart of everyone, while our peripheral vision is mindful and observant. When clowns are being spontaneous, there is a part of us that is watching everything, not judging, just observing. Somewhere the appropriate action just happens.

One Christmas day I was making clown rounds in the ICU. I knocked gently on a door and asked permission to enter. The patient spoke softly “Yes, come in.” However, as I entered, he began shouting loudly at me. It frightened my inner child clown. I maintained my clown character and jumped up against the wall and then



*Continued on next page*



## Hospital Clown Play Zone (continued)

backed out of the room. As I went out the door, I looked into the next room full of visiting family who heard everything. I slid into the room up against the door like the frightened clown I was, and said, "I need a hug." They all laughed. Well, guess who needed the hugs — everyone in the room started hugging each other. As I did this, I was observing and scanning the whole room — seeing the patient, the absence of medical personnel, etc. That is what I call my Wide Angle Observer.

My Wide Angle Observer is aware of everything in the room — not judging, not instructing, just observing. It's like adding the awareness of the moment to a mix of information.

When we see everyone and everything with equal vision, it lifts us into oneness.

There is love and stillness in this oneness and we move into a connection with the Universe.

We open ourselves to that universal guidance. We know when this happens. It is our experience of that moment. It is the Wide Angle Observer who opens the back door and also watches the front door ... then we are in the Clown Zone. Then we can proceed with spontaneous action.

Spontaneity allows the goodness of the Universe to shine through us. As hospital clowns, when we jump off the diving board of compassion, selfless service and nonjudgmental vision, the door to the Universe is open. It is like being kissed from the inside and also given a gentle shove at the same time. Through experience we not only learn to trust that "shove," but we are renewed and refreshed by taking a long swim in the Clown Zone.



### Author Shobi Dobi

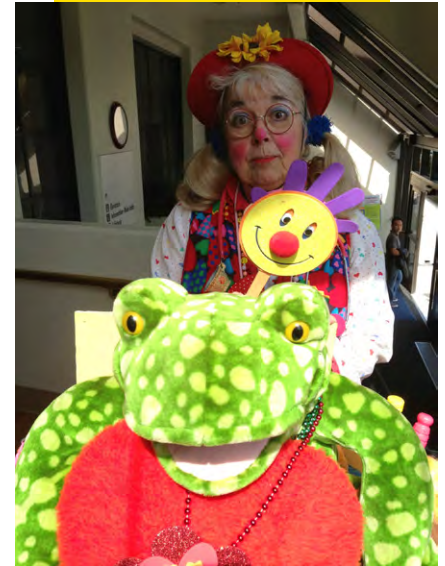
*Shobhana (Alice) Schwebke, has performed as Shobi Dobi The Clown all over the world. She teaches the gentle art of the caring clown and is the creator and editor of the Hospital Clown New Letter.*

**No earthly power can rid the world of accident and tragedy, but the clown, in his own humble way, attempts to redress the imbalance, to put the odds back in our favor.**

**Paul Cline, Fools, Clowns & Jesters**

**Jesters do oft prove prophets.**

**Shakespeare**



**"My Wide Angle Observer is aware of everything in the room — not judging, not instructing, just observing."**

# A Brief Canadian History

## The Evolution of Therapeutic Clowning

By Joan Barrington

In 1986 Karen Ridd, aka Robo, a freelance children's entertainer and Child Life Specialist, noticed that the most disempowered were children in hospital. Determined to do something about this, she used her student grant to initiate a pilot therapeutic clown project at the Winnipeg Health Sciences Centre.

Child Life specialists provide the psycho-social service aimed at helping alleviate stress and anxiety for children and their families as a result of hospitalization — a perfect marriage for Robo and Child Life.

"The clown gods were aligned." In 1986, Michael Christensen, aka Dr Stubs, created the Clown Care Unit (CCU) in the USA not knowing about Karen in Canada. In 1989 David Langdon, aka Hubert, and later Onri, took over the direction of the Winnipeg Children's Hospital program after Karen's departure. In 1994 Paul Hooson in Vancouver developed the first "Clown Doctor" program in Canada, through a solo verbal clown doctor, Doc Willikers.

In 1987 I was having lunch with my youngest son watching the Midday News when Karen, appearing as Robo, enlightened the public on the benefits of therapeutic clowning. It was an epiphany for me. It brought back a night dream I had had in the mid 80s of me shifting into clowning as a career. From this point on, I set my sites on becoming a "therapeutic clown" instead of the entertainment clown I had practiced since my dream.

After giving the Winnipeg TV station my number, Karen called me back and sent me her paper, "There Ought to be Clowns: Child Life Therapy Through the Medium of a Clown." Her work inspired me to approach The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, the largest children's hospital in Canada, about incorporating a therapeutic clown program.

After three years of fundraising, studying clown and acquiring an Arts Management certificate, The Therapeutic Clown Program at SickKids Hospital came into existence in 1993. We were full-fledged members of the interdisciplinary team under the umbrella of the Child Life Department.



Bunky was born that summer, mentored under Karen, Robo and a Child Life Specialist. Bunky's name came to me through my youthful play in "the Bunky" at the cottage where imagination ruled and adults were forbidden. After a year together, Robo said goodbye and Bunky was left to cover the whole hospital, and I continued as sole Fundraiser for program growth, Manager/Trainer and Therapeutic Clown Practitioner.

The contrast from entertainment to therapeutic clowning could not have been more stark. There was no need for me to perform because the emphasis was on compassion with the most vulnerable as partners. It was about using innocuous forms of play to create safe environments that led to trusting relationships.

I quickly learned that therapeutic clowns become managers of the "unseen", the unknown. Conversations began after assessing the "temperature" of their space for grief, joy, anger, fear, pain or depression. Only after permission to enter was given by the child, does verbal or non-verbal communication begin. In Bunky's case, he/she was for many years non-verbal.

*Continued on next page*



**"Bunky's name came to me through my youthful play in 'the Bunky' at the cottage where imagination ruled and adults were forbidden."**



## The evolution (continued)

Bunky evolved into a non-verbal therapeutic clown by handing the voice, control and leadership over to the child. The "clown conversation" happened through his eyes, body and the tapping of his feet. Everyone, adults and staff included, understood "Bunky language." Listening is often our most valuable contribution and this was an integral tool in restoring choices.

Choice is taken away for the hospitalized child; they have no choice over their treatment or medications, who comes and goes in and out of their rooms or how long their stay will be. The therapeutic clown restores some of that choice, such as choosing whether Bunky is male or female and if he can come into the room or not. They choose to play or not play. We are the only staff they can say no to.

The therapeutic clowns have an aura of innocence, vulnerability, spontaneity and authenticity. They are humble, take risks, are easily confused, curious, compassionate and of course, silly! They carry with them a sense of wonder that hopefully spills over to the child. Therapeutic clowns see these patients as children first and secondly, as sick children. Limits are set by the patient and not the clown. It is an intuitive reaching beyond the illness to coax out the unencumbered spirit and playfulness within each child, offering hope.

From 1997 to 1998 the Canadian hospital clowns gathered for brainstorming work sessions around the future of therapeutic clowning in Canada. In 1999 I became a Co-Director of Therapeutic Clowns Canada (TCC) Foundation with Mary Hirst and Heather Spinks. It was formed to seed and train therapeutic clowns across Canada.

From 2001 to 2005, West Coast and East Coast sessions took place. In 2005, CATC/ACCT was formally established with 27 charter members and representation from all Canadian programs developing Statement of Principles, Code of Ethics and the definition of "Therapeutic Clown." In 2011 the 7th Annual CATC/ACCT symposium was held in Winnipeg, celebrating 25 years of therapeutic clowning and clown doctoring in Canada and the United States. Here, Michael Christensen and Karen Ridd finally met.

In 2014 Holland Bloorview kids Rehabilitation Hospital hosted a Symposium where CATC/ACCT members voted to restructure the Association as a Network and to adopt the name Therapeutic Clowns Canada (TCC), as the original TCC had met its mandate and closed in 2007.

In 2014 I launched Therapeutic Clowns International (TCI) a not-for-profit to share the profession and best practices of therapeutic clowning within and outside the borders of Canada. I also created the "Elderflower Clown," Beatrice, for visits to elders. Since 2008 my major contribution has been in holding workshops to help the Cubans form their own Group of Therapeutic Clowns of Cuba.

As a dream come true, it is both humbling and heartwarming to think back on the many young patients, their parents and healthcare professionals who embraced Bunky and my profession. Their stories of bravery will live with me forever. But dreams are not shaped in isolation and I will be forever grateful for those who lifted me up along the way, so that the dream will continue.



### Author Joan Barrington

*Joan Barrington successfully launched Ontario's first therapeutic clown program in 1993 at The Hospital for Sick Children, The Therapeutic Clown Program at SickKids. In 1999 Joan was Co-Founder and Director of Therapeutic Clowns Canada Foundation (TCC), a driving force behind seeding, launching and training therapeutic clowns for many of the major pediatric hospitals across Canada. In 2005 Joan was one of a number of founding members of the first Canadian Association of Therapeutic Clowns (CATC-ACCT). Joan has been focusing on the growth of Therapeutic Clowns International (TCI) facilitating the momentum of therapeutic clowning globally. She has successfully trained, is mentoring therapeutic clowns across Cuba as well as Hermosillo, Mexico.*



**A Clown is an  
angel with a red  
nose.**

**J.T. "Bubba" Sykes**

# Clown as Catalyst

By Tim Cunningham, DrPH, MSN, RN

It is neither the nose nor costume. It has little to do with the slapstick or the imaginary ball that soars through the air into the paper sandwich bag that then materializes into a foam ball — only to disappear again into the clown's hand. Ultimately, it has nothing to do with the clown herself. And yet it has everything to do with the clown. This article examines the clown as catalyst. Through the action of the catalyst — a medium through which joy, laughter, playfulness, lightheartedness and a therapeutic effect may arise — we find the clown. This article explores the clown as catalyst in humanitarian response settings such as war zones, refugee camps and other zones of crisis.



A Consultative Partner to UNESCO, Clowns without Borders International (CWBI) serves as the governing body of 15 international chapters of Clowns without Borders. Each chapter is an independent non-profit organization that shares a collective objective, "To improve the emotional wellbeing of communities, especially children, in areas of crisis through performances and other artistic interventions." In 2016, CWBI chapters sponsored 1,870 interventions (performances and

workshops) in 48 countries. They worked with more than 300,000 children and families. People often ask, "What do Clowns without Borders clowns do and what are the impacts?"

Though challenging to measure, the impacts of CWBI's work are life-changing and important to share.

In July, 1993, the founder of Payasos Sin Fronteras, Tortell Poltrona was invited to perform at a refugee camp in the Istrian Peninsula. A group of children had written a letter asking for someone to come bring playfulness to a camp where children and families had fled the slaughter in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The head of Circ brought his performance to an audience of 800 people. The first question they asked after the show was over was, "When are clowns coming back?"

From that day forward, Tortell invited other artists to join him in performing in that camp and others. The artists came from various other countries and were inspired by this work to form their own chapters of CWB. As past Executive Director of Clowns without Borders-USA (CWB-USA), I had the privilege to continue the legacy of clown work inspired by Tortell and others.

That legacy landed an invitation, in 2015, to give a presentation at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund about the work of CWBI. After I described our work, objectives and practices, a woman, who works at the World Bank, stood to ask a question. She told the audience that she had grown up in a refugee camp in the early 1990s and witnessed one of the first ever CWB performances. She told us that for years after the clowns visited, she and her friends would retell the stories of the day that the clowns came. She reflected on the joyfulness of the clown show, not only the day of the performance but also the playfulness that would arise among her friends when they told stories about the clowns. The impacts and stories have a lasting effect; with them is a re-inspiration that can bring smiles for years after a clown intervention.

**Both clown and saint find themselves in conflict with the world that seems infinitely resourceful in its devices for crippling or murdering the self; as a minimum requirement, the clown understands the reality, the saint transcends it, and in the most optimistic embodiments, they transform reality.**

**David D. Galloway**

*Continued on next page*

## Catalyst (continued)

The founder of CWB-USA, Moshe Cohen, discusses a concept he calls “lightfulness” that comes from this clowning. It is the positive human connections that arise from the play and humor that lightfulness represents. The clown, as practiced by CWBI clowns, can be a medium for lightfulness. One method of creating space for lightfulness to occur is by the simple act of bringing people together. After the landfall of Typhoon Yolanda (also referred to as Haiyan) in 2013, clowns were immediately requested by NGOs such as Plan International and Médecins Sans Frontières to travel to some of the hardest hit areas to provide shows and workshops. Seven different groups of clowns performed for thousands of children. One team was charged with the goal of providing clown-based and theatre workshops to university students who had lost their homes, but who wanted to learn different approaches to teaching. These students participated in two week-long workshops that focused on story-telling and creative methods to address the traumas related to the typhoon. The clowns partnered with psychosocial specialists and social workers — we maintain that our clowns are not therapists themselves, that they must be advised by licensed therapists during any sort of work that we would call “therapy” — and developed games to address methods by which workshop participants can bring people together. The students in the workshop shared ideas and games for young children; they also created their own clown-based performances and shared them with each other. While the CWB workshop team facilitated these trainings, they also offered free shows in various neighborhoods that had been destroyed by Yolanda. The workshop participants observed the shows and started recreating many of the clowns’ scenarios.

Months after the CWB clowns left, the students from the workshops received transportation funding from a local NGO which allowed them to take their workshop games and the performances that they had created to more regions in the Philippines that were too far for the CWB clowns to visit. The shows continued, the practices of bringing people together continued, lightfulness sustained itself by the initiative of these workshop participants, young teachers, who formed an “unofficial” group called “Clowns Without Borders Philippines.”

There is power in the present moment and that is evidenced by countless anecdotes. CWBI clowns use lightfulness and play as a way to connect and simply “be with.” We know that when people come together, healing may begin. So if I were asked what “therapy” do humanitarian clowns provide? I would say just that — togetherness.



All the world loves  
a clown.

Cole Porter



### Author Tim Cunningham, DrPH, MSN, RN

*Tim Cunningham, DrPH, MSN, RN has worked as a clown and an actor, and has trained at Del'Arte International. He has volunteered with Clowns Without Borders since 2003 and currently sits on the CWB-USA's Board of Directors. Tim has worked in disaster zones and trauma centers worldwide and is currently the Director of the Compassionate Care Initiative at the University of Virginia where he holds an Assistant Professorship with a joint appointment at the School of Nursing and Department of Drama.*





## Member Spotlight

By Cynthia Keeler, M.A, CLL, CHP

### Piccolo the Clown Author, Motivational Speaker, Humor Therapist and Therapeutic Clown



Our very own long-time AATH member, Kathy Keaton, aka "Piccolo the Clown," can now add published author to her extensive therapeutic humor resume! In her new book, *Prescription Humor, RX*, Kathy writes about many of her poignant hospital experiences in her 40+ years in the world of clowning.

In writing this book, Kathy wanted to help clarify what therapeutic clowns do in hospital settings. "It's not about the clown, it's always about changing the focus from suffering to relief and helping others step out of their stress by offering moments of laughter and joy," she writes. These are the words by which "Piccolo the Clown" lives. Kathy began her career as a self-taught clown, believing from the start that she wanted to give back to the community. Soon she had her wish and was approached by Hospice to share her gift with them. Some seven years after that first encounter, "Piccolo the Clown" was bringing humor and laughter to the San Angelo Hospital.

Along with her humor and music skills, Kathy is known for her compassion and vulnerability. The San Angelo Hospital said they consider Kathy a "valued and respected member of the hospital team."



When not visiting the patients, Kathy runs the Laughter Yoga group for the hospital staff and various support groups for cancer patients and survivors. She has also helped the hospital to develop the "Therapeutic Clown Protocol" that the hospital uses today, and participates annually at Camp Agape Texas, a grief camp for children.

When she's not clowning-around and bringing humor and joy to the hospital, she also shares her clown persona, "Piccolo the Clown," with the community-at-

large; performing at birthday parties and delivering singing telegrams. Kathy is also a motivational speaker. During her "happy hour," she proves without a doubt that humor really is good medicine. She boosts morale, motivates, educates and entertains! Audiences are encouraged to laugh and learn as Kathy's clown "Piccolo" skillfully guides a group or organization through life's everyday situations with an energetic attitude and always a twist of humor.

Voted "2005 Woman to Watch" by The Texas Business and Professional Women's Club and "2008 San Angelo's Funniest Grandmother," Kathy in her character as "Piccolo" continues to raise the "clowning bar" to a new level while delivering her funny-over-the-top honest look at everyday life through the eyes of humor. As a speaker and entertainer Kathy delivers a very important positive message in her own unique way and observers walk away refreshed with new tools to help decrease everyday stress and anxiety. You can contact Kathy at [Kpiccolo28@juno.com](mailto:Kpiccolo28@juno.com).

Kathy's associations also include: The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor, The Texas Clown Association and Clowns of America International.

Kathy is a contributing co-author in the book *Wake Up and Live the Life You Love – Moments*, published in *The Hospital Clown Newsletter*, *The Hospital Clinical Newsletter*, as well as, *The San Angelo Standard Times*.



#### Author Cynthia Keeler, M.A, CLL, CHP

Cynthia is a professional clown with a Master's degree in Mental Health Counseling. She has a strong interest in health and well-being through prevention. Cynthia offers retreats and workshops using Therapeutic Humor, Therapeutic Drumming, and Expressive Arts as catalysts for mindfulness, renewal and joy. Contact her at [cynkeeler@gmail.com](mailto:cynkeeler@gmail.com).



# Texas Clowns High on Humor after Conference

By Kathy Keaton - Therapeutic Clown and Author

Four members of The Texas Clown Association were honored to be invited to be the official welcoming committee for guests and caregivers attending The Comedy Caregivers Event at the Association of Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH) Conference held recently in San Diego California.



Piccolo and Miss Cookie with Yakov Smirnoff.

Famous comedian Yakov Smirnoff, quadriplegic bicycle champion Sean Simonson and cancer survivor and funny lady Brenda Elsanger entertained at the event.

## “Resilience – Harnessing the

**Power of Humor”** was the focus for the four-day conference. Judy “Peep” Cornett and Martha “Miss Cookie” Warren were the recipients of The Caring Clown Scholarships and Claudette “Miss Motzi” Webb received the Patty Wooten Nursing Scholarship.

Kathy “Piccolo” Keaton presented a session on “Clowning During Crisis and Challenge.”

“The stories I heard of resilience and the way people were able to bounce back after very challenging circumstances with the use of humor impressed me,” said Martha. “I was excited to learn of all the studies, research and resources available to validate the importance of what we actually do as clowns.”

“Humor is really a much bigger deal than I thought,” said TCA President Judy Cornett. “I walked away with a clear understanding of the actual power of humor on our health. I took away new information and I ideas I can use in my hospital work. Now I laugh on purpose while alone while in my car. It makes me just feel happier and makes me want to make others happy as well.”

Claudette Webb said, “It opened my eyes to how valuable what we do really is. It will now make me stop and think a little more about how we can really affect people in a positive way, especially adults and not just children. The conference helped me begin to look for signs of when I can use humor and apply it appropriately even when not clowning.”

As a twenty-year member of AATH and passionate about sharing the health and wellness part of humor and laughter with others, I was excited to have other Texas clowns be able to attend the conference with me this year. Understanding the true value and health benefits of humor and laughter has helped give me confidence as a clown and speaker and also helps my credibility as a professional in my field as a therapeutic clown and certified humor professional.

Note: This article is reprinted from *Texas Clown Magazine*.



## Author Kathy Keaton – Therapeutic Clown and Author

Kathy has been active in AATH for 20 years! She graduated from The Humor Academy. For the last 40 years, Kathy has delivered humor and laughter to people who struggle. Some years she has been in make-up more than 300 times!! Kathy is Membership Director for The San Angelo Chamber of Commerce in Texas.



Miss Motzi-Peep, Piccolo, and Miss Cookie.



Scholarship winners: Claudette Webb and Judy Cornett.



Texas clowns met other humor professionals from all over the world.



# Bringing Vision and Joy to the Practice of Medicine

by Patch Adams and co-writer Maureen Mylander

When the topic is Therapeutic Clowning, why not go to the source? Still on my library's shelf is *Gesundheit!* by Patch Adams and his co-writer Maureen Mylander. This book was first published in 1993 with a reprinting in 1998 to announce "now a major motion picture starring Robin Williams."

AATH folks know Patch Adams, but if not for that movie that general population may not (and some still don't). The subtitle of the book: *Bringing good health to you, the medical system, and society through physician service, complementary therapies, humor, and joy.*

As Patch writes, "Modern medicine is crying out for hope ... Never have we better understood the mechanisms of body functions. Yet doctors, nurses, hospitals, clinics, and health care professionals are rarely vibrant with the joy of human service."

"For the health of the patient, the staff, the medical profession itself, patients and staff must strive toward friendship in the deepest sense of the word. Friendship is great medicine." That is what therapeutic clowning creates. Clowns impact the entire environment.

We've come a long way since this book was written and *Gesundheit!* does not focus on clowning, but has a few nuggets. "People crave laughter as if it were an essential amino acid."

The book is still worth a quick skim and I'd suggest you re-watch the film if you haven't seen it in a while. We now are so used to the red noses, but it was a revolutionary move at the time. Patch did start something.

I've heard through the grapevine that some people may perhaps have mixed emotions on the real Patch, even those who have trained with him and toured the world with him as a Caring Clown. So be it. I saw him speak a couple years ago and the message I took away with me is three words: Practice relentless love.

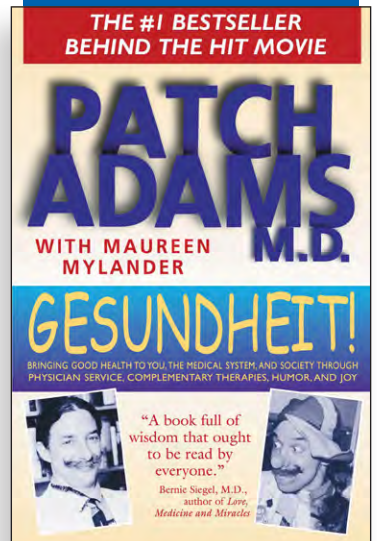
Much of this book is the history and the vision of the Gesundheit Institute. Certainly Patch Adams has dared to dream. And also has some good basic life advice: "Learn to like yourself, for you are your own most constant companion. Try to experience life as a journey toward your fondest dreams. This is the surest path to personal happiness, which I believe, is the foundation of good health."

This book led to the film which led to a speaking/teaching career and humanitarian clown missions across the world which still continue today. You can see the latest trainings and functions at [www.patchadams.org](http://www.patchadams.org).

One interesting benefit of the book is the 30-page bibliography. Although 25 years old, the list is extensive and some stand the test of time, including the section of Health & Humor Resources citing some AATH names like Lee Berk, Paul McGhee, and Patty Wooten.



The role of a clown and a physician are the same — it's to elevate the possible and to relieve suffering.  
Patch Adams



## Reviewer Kelly Epperson

Reviewer Kelly Epperson believes in igniting joy everywhere, especially in healthcare. She just learned of an organization that provides Lollipop Trees in cancer hospitals so kids can have great-tasting but sugar-free suckers to help relieve that yucky taste and mouth sores that accompany cancer treatment. Visit [www.handinghope.org](http://www.handinghope.org). And visit Kelly at [www.kellyepperson.com](http://www.kellyepperson.com)



# Trivia quiz: Jesters who jested

By Kathy Laurenhue, CHP

Because the precursors of today's clowns can be found in the jesters of the Middle Ages (late 5th to late 15th century), this quiz offers a lighthearted history quiz on the species. We're concentrating on the *late* Middle Ages, because originally, jesters were a motley crew.

1. **Their range:** The earliest European jesters were said to be similar to ancient Rome's comic actors. Although jesters are usually associated with medieval Europe, historical records of jesters could be found in a variety of other countries, and virtually all continents except Antarctica.

a. True \_\_\_      b. False \_\_\_

2. **Their talents:** The predecessors of the Medieval jesters were the Jongleurs (French for jugglers) who often accompanied traveling troubadours in playing musical instruments, singing, storytelling, reciting poetry, dancing, and acrobatics. Which one of the following (as far as we know) was NOT among their performing talents?

- a. Fire eating \_\_\_
- b. Training of dogs and monkeys for their acts \_\_\_
- c. Limbo skating \_\_\_

3. **An unusual talent:** Henry II (1154-89) gave his court jester Roland the Farter 30 acres at Hemingstone in Suffolk in return for an annual Christmas Day jump, whistle and fart routine. Farting jesters go back more than 1,500 years. What famous church leader was amazed by performers who he said could 'produce at will such musical sounds from their behind (without any stink) that they seem to be singing from that region'?

a. St. Augustine \_\_\_      b. Martin Luther \_\_\_      c. St. Thomas More \_\_\_

4. **The outfit:** Jesters' clothing evolved from motley to gaudy, with the legs of their breeches or stockings in different colors and their overall costume brightly attention-getting. Their cloth Fool's hat or (cockscorn) consisted of three floppy points with a bell at the end of each point. The three points represented:

- a. The trinity (holdover from the Catholic church) \_\_\_
- b. An ass's ears and tail \_\_\_
- c. Irony, ad-libs, and wordplay \_\_\_

5. **Jesters carried a mock scepter**, known as a bauble, which was generally adorned by a carved head or:

- a. A carved mermaid \_\_\_
- b. A larger bell \_\_\_
- c. The inflated bladder of an animal \_\_\_

6. **Women could not be jesters.**

a. True \_\_\_      b. False \_\_\_



In bygone times bodily deformities were looked upon as a special mark of the Lord.... Sometimes, ambitious parents even created such deformities by binding or other means, so that their offspring might aspire to be coveted position of the fool.

Regardless of whether the maimed ones were touched by the miraculous hand of God or by the underhanded tricks of man, they often proved to be human beings of unusual depth and wisdom....

Sallie Nichols,  
Jung and Tarot

*Continued on next page*

## Trivia quiz (continued)

7. **Their role:** Because he posed no threat to power, the court jester was one of the few characters there who could freely speak his mind without causing offence. Overall, a jester's success was measured in laughter, and they used their wits and multi-talents to lighten the mood in dining rooms and throne rooms. They also often played other roles. Which of the following was NOT one of them?

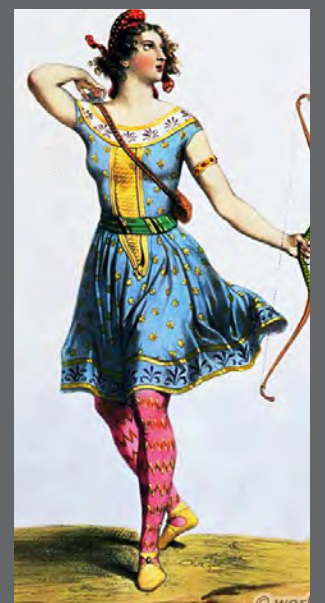
- a. Because banquets were rare and didn't require a daily performance, some jesters were expected to carry out other household duties, such as hounds keeper. \_\_\_
- b. Jesters were frequently also court judges. \_\_\_
- c. Some jesters were required to go to the battlefield with their masters to carry messages between the leaders of warring armies. Sometimes the enemy did "kill the messenger." \_\_\_
- d. Jesters were also sometimes brought to battlefields to boost the soldiers' morale both before and during battles (by cavorting up and down between the soldiers making jokes and mocking the opposition). \_\_\_

8. **Their fame:** Many jesters were household names, almost equivalent to a popular television comedian. Some lived luxuriously, often dined with the king and were given gifts. Which one of the following stories about a jester is NOT true?

- a. Twisty Pole, the Chinese Imperial court jester, is famous for saving thousands of lives by talking the Emperor Qin Shi Huang out of lacquering the Great Wall of China (after thousands had died building it). \_\_\_
- b. William 'Will' Sommers (or Somers), court jester of Henry VIII of England, was said to be the only one who could lift the king's spirits when he was troubled by a painful leg condition. \_\_\_
- c. Tarlton, jester to Queen Elizabeth I, was a popular fencing master, playwright, actor and ad-libber \_\_\_.
- d. Gasper, the Friendly Jokester, helped King George I recover from opium addiction. \_\_\_

**Notes on 1.** Among the non-European countries where jesters were popular: Russia, India, Japan, and China, which has the longest and best-documented history of court jesters. Among the Murngin people of Australia it is the duty of the clown to act outrageously, ludicrously imitating a fight if men begin to quarrel. In making them laugh at him, he distracts their attention from their own fight and dispels their aggression.

**Notes on 6:** The most famous female jester was probably Mathurine, a 17th century jester at the French court during the reigns of Henry III, Henry IV, and Louis XIII. Her jester uniform was an Amazon warrior outfit, including long flowing robes, armor, shield, and wooden sword.



**Author Kathy Laurenhue, CHP**

*Kathy is the creator of Wiser Now, [www.wisernow.com](http://www.wisernow.com), which aims to promote healthy aging by using a lighthearted touch—backed by science and fueled by fun.*

Answers: 1. a 2. c 3. a  
4. b 5. c 6. b 7. b 8. d

## Clowning Around

By Deb Gauldin, RN CHP

You don't have to like clowns to be a part of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor. We have some members who clown professionally and others who save clowning around for important AATH board meetings. We embrace professionally trained clowns, people with a mild interest, as well as those who avoid clowns and find them creepy ... just creepy.

Having made a disastrous attempt at portraying a clown once, I have a whole new respect for the character development, costuming, and acting acumen required.

Years ago, I was informally mentored by the best, our very own iconic nurse clown, Patty Wooten. I was also fortunate to spend some time with her dear friend, Ringling Bros. Barnum & Baily Circus Clown and Circus Official Artist, Jim Howle. Jim showed me how to apply clown make up and a silicone fake nose only slightly more turned up and pig-like than my very own.

While clowning wasn't my forte, I cherish the memories of Jim sharing circus stories and of Patty and I dressed as nurses Kindheart and Krapinka, waving from the mall escalators on our way to a photo shoot.

Recently I told my husband I would be going to Chicago on business. When I told him I would be meeting up with Jimmy the Clown, his eyes darted my way. "One of Al Capone's buddies?" he asked, conjuring up images of violin cases. No, I scoffed. This Jimmy is a real circus clown, and childhood friend of our friend, Irene. When she and I first met, Irene told me about Jimmy and some other interesting men, like a nurse friend who collects sand from all over the world and displays the samples in test tubes and a fellow she dated who had lost his lower legs in a tragic motorcycle accident.

A few years ago, Irene's photographs and stories were being featured at an art gallery and I proudly attended the exhibit opening. After the formal event, her close friends remained and relaxed over drinks. Some of the guys were horsing around. One in particular would leap over a sofa and suddenly reappear across the room. I swore at one point he did the splits. I was mesmerized.

As I was leaving, I pulled Irene aside and marveled over how agile and dexterous her friend Jimmy is. "He's so handsome and personable. No wonder you dated him. He's made a remarkable recovery!" I went on incredulously.

Irene looked puzzled and then she began to laugh out loud. I thought the engaging man doing pratfalls and sofa gymnastics was her ex with the prosthetic legs. I was completely astounded by this man's rehabilitation.

Of course the fella was Jimmy the Clown, a person I've grown to love and admire for many reasons. That's the way it is with clowns and especially AATH member clowns. You don't necessarily have to understand or like them, but if you get an opportunity to know them, you may just find you love them.



### Author Deb Gauldin, CHP

*Deb is a former obstetric nurse and life long champion of women's causes. This year Deb earned third place in Jeanne Robertson's prestigious Comedy with Class competition where Robertson presents a simple challenge: MAKE US LAUGH. You can watch it yourself: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7lowA0jZZw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7lowA0jZZw)*



*Deb Gauldin Clowning Around with Ringling Bros. Barnum & Baily Circus Clown and Make-Up Artist, Jim Howle.*



*Paintings by Ringling Bros. Barnum & Baily Official Circus Artist, Jim Howle.*



*AATH Members Patty Wooten (Nurse Kindheart) and Deb Gauldin (Nurse Krapinka).*



*It's still kind of fun having "Jimmy the Clown" listed under my Chicago contacts.*





# CONGRATULATIONS

**Congratulations to the following award recipients at the AATH 2018 conference!**

## 2018 Doug Fletcher Lifetime Achievement Award

**Laurie Young and Kay Caskey** This award is presented in recognition of: Dedication and service to AATH, and their significant contribution to the understanding and application of humor and/or laughter over an entire career with a definable body of work through one or more of the following: speaking, teaching, research, publications, and professional practice.



*Laurie Young and Kay Caskey*

## 2018 Esther Hyatt Spirit Of Aath Award

**Don Baird** This award is given to honor the memory of Esther Hyatt, a member who dealt with severe pain and found relief through laughter and humor with her AATH friends. This recipient demonstrates good humor, grace, and verve and a spirit of determination in the face of life's challenges and uses applied humor in work, life, and play.



*Don Baird*

## 2018 Heart And Soul Award

**Bobbe Lyon** The recipient of this award honors a person who has demonstrated heartfelt empathy and support towards member of the AATH family and a deep commitment to the AATH mission.



*Bobbe Lyon*

## 2018 Red Nose Award

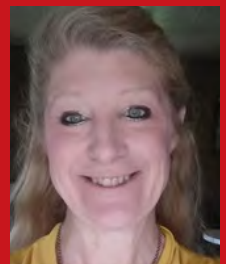
**Debra Joy Hart** This award is given to recognize extraordinary volunteer service to the AATH mission to study, practice, and support healthy humor.



*Debra Joy Hart*

## 2018 Award For Outstanding Academic Achievement

**Linnea Heintz** Created to recognize those who have contributed to our knowledge and understanding of the many roles humor plays in our lives.



*Linnea Heintz*

**Like the wire-walker, the clown treads a narrow path; he walks the knife-like edge which divides humor and pathos. He holds the balance between action and repose, between the clearest madness and the cloudiest sanity.**

**Anthony Hippisley Coxe, A Seat at the Circus**

**The fool can offer us fresh ideas and new energy....Without the Fool's blunt observations and wise epigrams, our inner landscape might become a sterile wasteland.**

**Sallie Nichols, Jung and Tarot**



## CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to the following award recipients at the AATH 2018 conference!

### 2018 Doily Lama Leadership Award

**Chip Lutz** The Doily Lama award celebrates extraordinary leadership in AATH. Recipients provide both inspiring vision and consistent support in fulfilling the mission of goals of AATH.



Chip Lutz

### 2018 Humor Academy— Making A Difference Award

**Jill Knox** Given to a person who has demonstrated ceaseless passion and commitment for applied humor in teaching and/or participating in the Humor Academy.



Jill Knox

### 2018 Notable Newbie Award

**Jennifer Keith** This award is given to a person who has exhibited leadership skills and volunteerism with the first 3 years of their AATH membership.



Jennifer Keith

### 2018 Book Award

**Allen Klein** Given to a member who has contributed an outstanding new book that illustrates the use of humor in theory or practice.



Allen Klein

### 2018 Humor Academy Valedictorian

**Cynthia Keeler** Selected by her peers as an outstanding member of the Humor Academy graduating class.



Cynthia Keeler

**If by chance some day you're not feeling well and you should remember some silly thing I've said or done and it brings back a smile to your face or a chuckle to your heart, then my purpose as your clown has been fulfilled.**

**Red Skelton**

**In some Tarot cards the Fool is pictured as blindfolded, further emphasizing his ability to act by insight rather than eyesight, using intuitive wisdom instead of conventional logic.**

**Sallie Nichols, Jung and Tarot**

# A Humor conference on resilience?

By Roberta Gold, R.T.C., CHP

**A Humor conference on resilience? Yes, Of course!** What could be better than the pairing of humor and laughter for resilience?

**Resilience: Harnessing the Power of Humor** was the theme for the 2018 AATH annual conference held in San Diego, California. With the incredible talents of Heidi Hanna and Karyn Buxman co-chairing and President Nila Nielsen assisting, we were in for an inspiring, empowering, and entertaining 4 days. People came from all parts of the globe – Japan, Nigeria, Norway, Australia, Canada, Netherlands, and 29 States from the USA – WOW!

We started with the Humor Academy where the first, second, and third year students and CHP's (Certified Humor Professionals) met separately to bond, network and learn from their advisors and some of our own gifted speakers. The general session opened Thursday evening with fabulous keynote, Srin Pillay, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard University. A beach party reception followed, putting everyone in a humor spirit for the weekend.

The great lineup of keynote and breakout sessions throughout the weekend were packed with all the ingredients needed to learn and lead with humor and laughter in order to build resilience. Research was presented adding to the credibility of what we already know to be true. Real life tales of bouncing back from various adversities with grace, courage, humor, and resilience demonstrated the importance of incorporating therapeutic humor in our lives. A panel of experts answered our questions and gave us much more to think about as an association, as we move forward in our quest to promote, facilitate, research, and advance our knowledge of therapeutic humor.

This year was the inaugural Comedy for Caregivers event, created by Heidi Hanna, where local caregivers were invited to share with the attendees an evening of laughter and love celebrating all those who serve others. The event was highlighted by well-known comedian and actor, Yakov Smirnoff. Several of our AATH members also shared their amazing stand-up talent. It was indeed an evening to remember and I am sure will be a permanent part of our AATH conferences.

No AATH conference is complete without honoring our own for their dedication, commitment and tireless volunteering to AATH and the field of Therapeutic Humor. This year we gave the highest honor, the Doug Fletcher Lifetime Achievement Award to two very deserving members whom I am blessed to call my friends, Laurie Young and Kay Caskey. They in turn used their time in the spotlight to teach all of us how to juggle! Thank you to Laurie and Kay for again giving of yourselves.

AATH conferences for me personally have become a place to see and hug my "Family." Yes, AATH is a big family of incredibly talented, compassionate, knowledgeable, loving people who come together to share their expertise while absorbing the latest research and techniques for applying Therapeutic Humor in the world.

A very big Thank You to Heidi Hanna and Karyn Buxman for all they did (and they did a lot!) to put on one of the best AATH conferences! A very big Thank You to our management team Kathy Velasco, Michele St. Clair, and all those from V2 Marketing! Thank You to all our generous sponsors! And Thank You to all the conference committee volunteers who helped in any and every way needed!

I am honored to be part of this wonderful family and I hope to see all of you in Chicago in 2019!



## Author Roberta Gold, R.T.C., CHP

*Roberta Gold created Laughter for the Health of it with a mission to empower everyone to have a more positive outlook by seeing the Humor instead of the horror in our wonderful world! Roberta is a keynote and breakout speaker, a consultant, author and a coach. She is a past board member and advisor of the Humor Academy Graduates for AATH.*

# RESILIENCE

## Harnessing the Power of Humor







# SAVE THE DATE

29TH ANNUAL ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED  
AND THERAPEUTIC HUMOR CONFERENCE  
**APRIL 4-7, 2019**  
DOUBLETREE, CHICAGO-OAK BROOK



ASSOCIATION FOR APPLIED  
AND THERAPEUTIC HUMOR

**t**  **o**  
**soon?**  
  
THE TIMING OF  
HUMOR

# Message to Members:

## Welcome to the AATH Humor Voice Magazine

Welcome to our **Therapeutic Clowns** issue.

## Next Issue

### Humor, Tragedy and Crisis



The topic of our next issue is *Humor as it relates to Crisis and Tragedy*. Ed Dunkelblau is the guest editor. If you have a story to share or are interested in contributing an article to this edition contact Ed at [drlaugh01@aol.com](mailto:drlaugh01@aol.com)



*Daphne looks on wide-eyed as Finn carefully explains her duties as the new AATH Voice grandbaby.*

*Thanks to all the authors who have helped make this magazine a reality!*

## Editorial staff:



**Jill Knox**, Past president of AATH, CHP, speaker, writer, and peace activist, a believer that we can all make a positive difference in the world. You can contact Jill at [jillknox@hotmail.com](mailto:jillknox@hotmail.com).



**Guest Editor: Patty Wooten**, nurse and clown extraordinaire, a pioneer in the field of therapeutic humor as used in the field medicine and healing.



**Sporty King CHP**, Master of All Things Correct, known for his ability to create wonderful "on the spot" poetry, and his knowledge of ... well, just about everything!



**Yvonne Brehan, Spotlight Seeker-CHP**, wanting to spotlight those of you who are willing to be interviewed for our magazine. You can contact Yvonne at [yvonnebrehan@comcast.net](mailto:yvonnebrehan@comcast.net).

## AATH Voice Regulars:

**Kelly Epperson** Of course Kelly Epperson has been giving us great reviews since our first issue. Contact her if you have a book. [kelly@kellyepperson.com](mailto:kelly@kellyepperson.com).

You may have noticed **Deb Gauldin, CHP**, heads up our "Funny Page". If any of you have stories you think might be a good fit, please send them along to her at [deb@debgauldin.com](mailto:deb@debgauldin.com)

**Kathy Laurenhue, CHP**, creates quizzes to go along with the focus of each issue. [kathy@wisernow.com](mailto:kathy@wisernow.com)

**Allen Klein**, leader in finding just the right quotation at the right time. He is the author of numerous books. His new offering, *Secrets Kids Know...that Adults Oughta Learn: Enriching Your Life by Viewing It Through The Eyes of a Child*. [allen@allenklein.com](mailto:allen@allenklein.com)