

From the Board

From the 2003-2004 President

By Arthur Pedlar

By the time you read this our Jacksonville Convention will be upon us, an enormous amount of really hard work by a handful of dedicated persons has gone into its planning; until I attended the October meetings, magnificently chaired by President Rich Snowberg, I had no idea of the amount of detail necessary to get the 'show on the road' with Carol Coleman-Spaulling carrying the main weight of responsibility.

Rich will be reflecting on his presidential year in this issue so I must place before you a sketch of my ideas for the year ahead. Under Rich's inspired leadership some exciting and innovative projects have been successfully launched or given a hefty push forwards, such as Janet Tucker's Long Range Planning Committee, Julie Varholdt's Alley News Letter, and the really amazing response received to the Jr. Joey Cyberspace Alley Newsletter, animated, colorful, created by Ruth "Angell" Matteson to appeal to youngsters whose ages are mostly in single figures. With a current membership of 70 this Cyberspace Alley must be the largest in our association and the 'seed-bed' of our future membership. I have heard from Israel how much this alley means to their juniors, they know they are now part of an international brother/sisterhood of performers and not alone in a desperate yet beautiful country.

Whatever the political situation forebodes, there is exciting and encouraging news for and from Israel. On the financial side I've heard from our Administrator Pat that \$300 has been received from our president and his alley, an excellent start towards the \$500 matching WCA bonus; my local branch of the Council for Christians and Jews have donated £200, and the International Committee of the Rotary Club of Southport have promised £500: these two latter amounts will almost cover the total cost of the three unicycles and two walking globes, including freight; these items are now in stock and the supplier is sending me their catalogue so I can choose small items which will fill the space left in the square boxes holding the globes - i.e. juggling balls, plate spinning, diabolo, devil sticks etc. all better than exporting fresh air! This consignment should arrive in Israel mid February. In the not too distant future I should like to send them a special unicycle made by a super engineering firm costing around £400, it has two heights, five and eight foot, it comes with two sets of chains and a three foot extension which locks in

between the pedal crank and wheel fork. It is a spectacular prop and no more difficult to ride at 8 foot than 5 foot, I speak from experience, just further to fall! In fact it is easier to juggle at eight foot because one's head is stationary and the wheel moves like a slow pendulum. Perhaps one of the Regions would like to make this their project? I



had an exuberant e-mail from David Berry awaiting my return from Monte Carlo (more about that later), he's the Founder/ Artistic Director of the Israeli School, telling me they had received a large grant to take the school to perform in Cyprus, another Middle-East trouble spot fought over by the Greeks and Turks where an uneasy truce is just maintaining peace and now great efforts are being made to unite the island. After ten years of grind and effort the authorities are beginning to recognise the true value of the school; a major step forward was the first open-air performance they gave in November outside the Arts Centre which was attended by 300 multi-

racial parents, the headmistress of the local Primary School, and the town's mayor who told them the promised initial grant towards the restoration was still on the council's budget but not the top of its priorities! The huge low-ceilinged room under the stage is now being used for meetings and floor acrobatics but the main auditorium needs £13,300 (\$21,330) of work to be completed to make it habitable. Visit web site www.israelcircusschool for latest progress reports. Should any of you know a charitable organization which would be interested in making a direct contribution to the school's restoration fund a cheque can be sent to their registered charity (No 58-039-562-2) account in the name of "Association for the Development of Circus Arts in Israel", Account Number 277507, Bank Hapoalim, Branch No: 719, Yehuda Hanasi 1, KIRYAT TIVON 366091, ISRAEL. If it can be sent in Israeli shekels so much the better.

I have just returned from ten days in Monte Carlo, Monaco, in the south of France where, with members of the Circus Friends Association, I attended the two programmes of the World Circus Championships over the first weekend, then Val joined me for three days holiday and had to fly back for work while I stayed on as one of the jury for "Festiclown II" for young and/or new clowns seeking a 'shop window' for their act. Prince Rainier III founded the Championships 27 years ago and attended every performance. They have

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become the focal point of the very best circus acts in the world who compete for the Bronze, Silver, and Gold Clown Awards as well as other sponsored prizes for Animal Husbandry, most innovative act, etc. I can't begin to describe the brilliance of artistry and supreme skills - ask me at Jacksonville! I'll move on to "Festiclown" where Princess Stephanie of Monaco chaired the jury; others included two clown teacher/directors from schools in Paris, a Madame Johanne Chasles the Artistic Casting Director of the Cirque du Soleil and the winner of the first Festiclown two years ago. The five competing acts appeared before the interval during which the jury debated and decided the winners. After the interval a good dancer girl clown worked to barrel-organ accompaniment and the show closed with Ruben Madsen as guest artist doing his famous balloon and bells act. The winners of The Golden Nose were Les Chiches Capons which roughly translated means The Stingy Cowards, two thin men, one VERY tall and the other small who mimed their way through

a very funny and nonsensical routine, slightly eccentric costumes and no clown make-up; they just pushed 'our' Rone & Gigi from Japan on to the Silver Nose Award by very few points, nevertheless the girls were 'over the moon' when their names



were called out and I was asked to present them with the lovely trophy on stage at the end of the show. The jury spent a lot of time discussing these two top acts, I had an excellent translator sitting next to me. From their appearance and skills I thought the girls should have got the Gold, other members felt that the Can-Can music was inappropriate, with its Parisian Night Club connotations, for a Japanese act like theirs. The independent Cirque du Soleil award also went to Les Chiches Capons, as did the Children's Award when the programme was repeated the following afternoon - it was only the children who voted and many were very young indeed. This followed the same pattern as the first Festiclown when the children voted for the same act that won the Cirque du Soleil Award, neither of which could be called traditional circus clown routines. Rone & Gigi are taking the jury's advice and will aim to have Japanese type music ready for their programme in Jacksonville.

See you there! Arthur V. Pedlar ■



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