

# THE BIG TOP

Mid-Atlantic Clown Association Newsletter

Feb/Mar 2018

## 35th Annual Mid-Atlantic Clown Association Convention

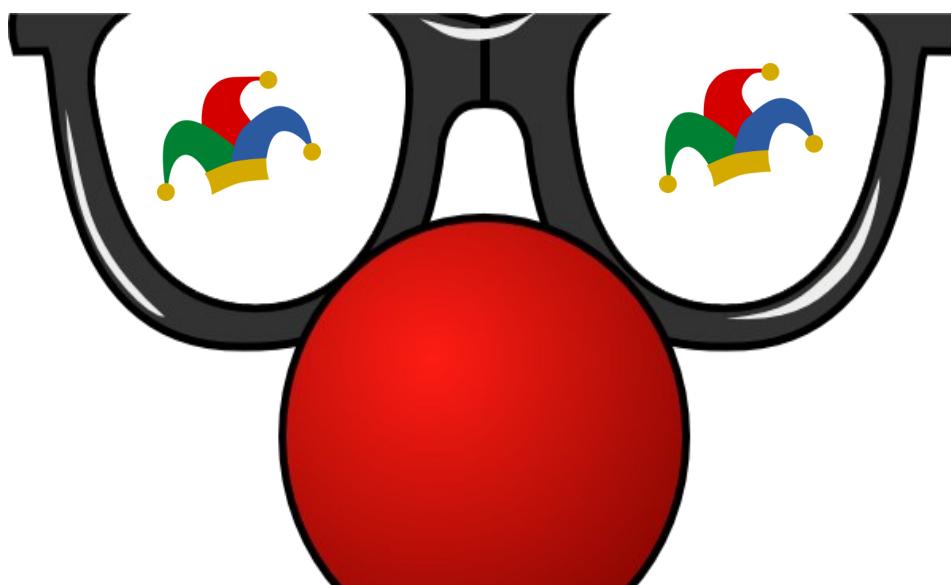
### *Birthday Bash!*



Happy Birthday



November 8-11, 2018  
Red Lion Hotel  
4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg PA 17111



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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Pat Stevenson  
MACA President

## Message from the President...

Wow—we are already four months into the MACA clown year. I see so many pictures on face book of our clowns doing many different events and gigs, but no one is sharing on our page or here in the Big Top. Let us know what's going on, what other conventions you have attended and send us some pictures.

As I mentioned, plans are underway for November 2018. Susan has been in touch with vendors and lecturers. We have asked for suggestions many times with little response. NOW is the time to let us know if you have a suggestion.

Also from posts on fb I am noticing many clowns like the idea of an educational convention vs one that primarily focuses on competition. While competition allows you to learn how to be the perfect clown under the rules, many simply buy wardrobe to compete but when they are working they use different faces and outfits. Working clowns are asking for classes on performance—walk around, parades, comedy magic, event/stage performance, etc.

I am thinking MACA is right there!

Going through some papers, I found the Big Top from 1987. There are competition rules for every category you can think of! Not much different from today...that just shows that competition hasn't changed while the world and clowning has evolved . Listen to today's clowns and performers to keep up to date.

Balloons and face painting are arts that need to be honed and practiced...we will be having jams ever night.

Bump a nose and see you down the road!

**Pat "Patty Cake" Stevenson**

Clowning is Not dead. Keep the world laughing!



Happy Birthday MACA!

Be the person who makes someone smile today!



# MACA CLOWN ALLEY STATE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

***Want to Read My Secret "Little Black Book?"***

***By Keith "Bobalouie" Karas, Maryland State Director, MACA***

I have been earnestly studying and practicing the performance art of clowning for the past 15 years. Perhaps your investment in our art has been of a greater duration, and so I count myself fortunate to be called a colleague of yours. By my calculation, my participation at conventions, workshops, and formal schooling adds up to about 25 weeks of wonderful (and sometimes expensive) learning opportunities. I cherish the investments I've made in my training – attendance at these venues has allowed me to learn, grow, and experience success as both a performer and competitor. I have also found time to share a cup of coffee, partake in breakfast or lunch, or simply chat in the dealer's room with my fellow clown artists – and have discovered much learning takes place outside the classroom.



But my time with these fellow clowns and esteemed lecturers has been limited – if at a Convention I may only renew our acquaintance once a year. I may have seen a particular clown or heard a noted lecturer only once in these past 15 years. So, I'd like to share with you a little secret which has allowed me to capitalize on my investment with the clowns/lecturers I've met at conventions and workshops. This little secret allows me to experience their friendship, wit, and wisdom over and over again.

*Here's how I do it...*

I'd like you to consider all the notes you have taken on little scraps of paper, you know, those little complimentary notepads left on the hotel nightstands, typically printed with the name of the hotel where we are staying, sometimes paired with a complimentary pen (which is usually out of ink, forcing you to press so hard that you make a 3-D image of the Appalachian Mountains on the paper). Sometimes, we forget to take the notepad left on the nightstand. This bout of forgetfulness results in us writing notes on napkins, or asking fellow conventioneers if they would be kind to share some pages from their spiral notebook, or writing notes on the back of our nametags, or writing on the back of our hands, etc. I'd like you to also try and remember all the hilarious wit and wisdom you've heard from professional lecturing clowns such as JT Sikes, Joe Barney, Norm Barnhart, Dave Risely, Leon McBryde, Bob Abdou, Dave Hill, Chagy, Randy Christensen, Dave Bartlett, Pricilla Mooseburger, or the host of other funny folks.

*Ever wish you could just remember what so-and-so famous clown said at a convention that was so brilliant?*

There is a one sure-fire, low-tech way to capture these wonderful hints, tips, tricks, shortcuts, one-liners, etc.

*Consider this...*

I remember on the show "Happy Days" the character *Fonzie* kept a little "black book" listing girlfriends he could call on at any minute. In the book "Clown Alley" by Bill Ballantine, Bill recalled a time when he offered Master Clown Lou Jacobs a ride to his house in Sarasota. During the ride, Bill asked Lou about suitable gags for the then brand-new Clown College. Lou pulled out a well-worn small pocket-sized book and said "their all in here – every gag we need – every one of 'em ...and props too. 50 years of ideas."

I was privileged to be a guest clown on the Kelly-Miller Circus in 2013, and I got to have some one-on-one time with Ryan Combs, one half of the performing team of Steve and Ryan. Steve and Ryan have been likened to a live version of a cartoon, as their makeup, clown gags, props, and sound effects seem straight out of a Looney Tunes cartoon (think Road Runner, Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, etc.). In between acts in the ring, Ryan and I sat down in the grass behind one of the Kelly-Miller Show trailers. As we sat there in the 95 degree heat, we discussed the creative side of clowning, and Ryan asked me questions about my particular brand of clowning and how our Alley was progressing. After a few minutes, Ryan invited me into his trailer and showed me his "gag file," a large binder containing colored sketches, concepts of potential gags, list of props/materials, etc. Ryan said he and Steve always "story board" their ideas for ring gags, much like a cartoon artist would do when he has an idea for a cartoon. Story boarding allows you to see the concept - the who, what, when, where and why of the act. Ryan then asked if I had a "gag file."

I was caught off guard and sheepishly replied I did not have a "gag file." Ryan seemed adamant I should start building one. He said, "Keeping a 'gag file' allows you to recall things which worked and what doesn't work. You really need to write things down – it also allows you to share ideas with your alley mates, especially about props for parades, etc. You should seriously think about starting one."

# MACA CLOWN ALLEY STATE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

I sensed Ryan was serious, – perhaps he sensed I too was serious about my clowning and about the future of our Alley as I was then serving as its President. I don't know why but right then and there I resolved to keep a "gag file." However, Ryan and I are different clowns, and so I had to tailor my "gag file" to meet my/our needs. So, here is the secret I have been using to improve my clowning– perhaps this can work for you.

I simply call it "my little black book."

I went to Walmart and purchased a small, black, 3x5 leather notebook. It has about 100 pages in it and comes with a stretch strap to keep the cover closed. It fits nicely into a jacket, shirt, or pants pocket. I think it costs about \$5.

On the inside cover I wrote my name and my clown name. On the pages which followed I transcribed all of the lecture notes which had been written on those scrap papers I had saved. I tried to date them as best I could. I also was able to put my thoughts about clowning in the little black book, especially about my favorite props, my clown character Bobalouie and my development as a performer, etc. For me, I find it important to date my thoughts and musings, as it allows me to reread them and see how much I have grown. I also recorded my first memory of a clown in this little black book (it was 1968 at the Baltimore Civic Center). I put my favorite quotes from Grock, Red Skelton, Tex Avery (the creative genius behind Looney Tunes), I placed the date I learned to juggle 3 clubs, my participation in parades and Circuses, what lessons I learned from an event, etc. When I visited a special clown performance called "Laughter for the Left Behind" given in honor of the late clown Pat Cashin, I was able to get all the performers to autograph the book (Bill Irwin, Greg DeSanto, Tiffany Riley, Dick Monday, and a host of other notable performers). Somehow their signatures authenticates my clowning- maybe this sounds corny (and unnecessary), but I derive a sense of confidence in just having their stamp of approval in my book (even though they don't even know who I am! LOL!)

Over the past 5 years I have taken this small black leather book to every learning opportunity and recorded things which were important to me, i.e., tidbits, words of advice, funny things said, etc. I always date the page and list the lecturer and the topic being covered. Afterwards, I ask the lecturer to sign the top of the page. I find the lecturers seem flattered when I ask them to sign my book.

Now you may be saying: I didn't take notes, I don't know what I did with the notes I wrote, I am not good at taking notes. Don't worry - You still have hope.

You don't need to write everything down being said by a lecturer. Listen, learn, and laugh - and if something resonates (hits you and makes sense) then write it down. Remember you are not being graded on your ability to take notes. It has been said that the dullest pencil is sharper than the greatest mind. We're human, we forget. If you forget something when you are writing, ask for it to be repeated. If that seems too out of place at the time or is going to detract from the presentation, perhaps you could visit with the lecturer after the presentation in the hallway or the dealer's room.

So, I have 15 years of tips, tricks, development and growth in my "little black book." I plan to attend the COAI Convention in Richmond, Virginia and I think I will reach the last page in this book. I have shared this book with my clown friends, and they seem to enjoy thumbing through the pages to see what people said at a lecture and how I progressed through my clowning. I guess it is kind of like my clown diary. It is a well-worn, snapshot of my clown career which I carry with me at every clown gathering. It provides encouragement, sound professional advice, and brings back fond memories of the lessons I learned in my clown journey. My 15 years of experience is strengthened by the many years of experience captured in this book. And what happens when my "little black book" is completely full? Hey, I already have another small, 3X5, leather black note book with blank pages, all ready to capture my next 15 years. Another \$5 well spent.

I hope this article has inspired you to start a "little black book" or something similar to record your clown development. If we ever meet, ask to see my book – I will gladly share it with you – and I might just ask to record a great piece of advice I learned from you – and then ask for YOUR autograph.

*About the author: Keith Karas is a graduate of the Red Skelton Clown School and the American Clown Academy. He is a member of COAI, WCA, MACA and the Free State Clown Alley #30. When not clowning, Keith serves as the Director of Human Resources for the Little Sisters of the Poor, Baltimore Province.*

## 35th ANNUAL MACA CONVENTION NEWS

# 35 Years of Fun and Frivolity!

What was clowning like in 1982?



What does it take to be a clown in 2018?

Our *Birthday Bash* will be educational, fun and rewarding.

November 8-11, 2018

Red Lion Hotel Harrisburg Hershey

4751 Lindle Road

Harrisburg, PA

**35th Annual Mid-Atlantic Clown Association Convention**  
**Birthday Bash!**  
November 8-11, 2018  
**Red Lion Hotel**  
4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg PA 17111

To register, complete the form below by filling in the blocks on your computer, print out the form and send, with check made payable to MACA Convention, to: TBD.

*Full registration fee includes dinner Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.*

*Thursday theme - Throw Back Thursday night...*

*Friday theme - TBA*

*Saturday banquet - Business Casual (Theme and Show TBA)*

Registration Fees:

- |                          |                                |               |                          |                                  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Full - \$185.00 thru 9/30/18   | Daily Rates:  | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$30.00 per day -Thurs. & Sat.   |
|                          |                                |               |                          | \$60 Friday (no meals)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Full - \$195.00 thru 10/31/18  | Dinner Rates: | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$40.00 per night -Thurs. & Fri. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Full - \$205.00 after 10/31/18 |               | <input type="checkbox"/> | \$50.00 Saturday night banquet   |
|                          |                                |               | <input type="checkbox"/> |                                  |

Total registration fees: \$

Hotel room rate - \$89.00 single per night includes breakfast. \$99 double per night includes breakfast for two. Additional persons in room do not get breakfast tickets. You must reserve before 10/26/2018 to be assured this rate. If you make reservations thru Sunday and check out earlier, you will be charged a \$50 fee. (717) 939-7841.

Easy on line check-in available - control + click to go to hotel website (TBA)

.Control + Click here to book:

Control + Click here to book:

\*\*\*\*\*Please note\*\*\*\*\*

\$25 processing fee for cancellations before 10/01/18. No refunds after that date.

Face painting supplies and latex products will be used and sold at this convention.

All are welcome to attend, however, you must be an MACA member and have paid registration to participant.

Name:

Clown Name:

Address:

E-mail:

City:

Phone:

State:

First MACA convention?:  No  Yes

# MACA CLOWN ALLEY NEWS and MEMBER COMMENTS

## Using the Gift Every Day

by Bob "Bunky" Gretton

Having the Gift of clowning in our hearts is something we should use each day. There are many things we can do to bring smiles in or out of clown in our day to day life. The one thing I enjoy doing is performing random act of kindness. What are Random Acts of Kindness? They are acts performed by a person wishing to either assist or cheer up an individual. There will generally be no reason other than to make people smile. A Smile, what a wonderful gift to give someone? There are many tools we can use to perform an act of kindness. Our favorite is the Paper Napkin Rose. They are easy to carry and easy to create. The Paper Napkin Roses are great for Hospital Clowning, Nurse Home Clowning, and Assistance Living Centers. Bringing smiles to everyone, including staff. Bank tellers, receptionist, wait staff at a restaurant. Ticket counter, office staff. The list is endless. It takes so little time and effort to bring a smile, plus it makes you feel good. Catching people "off guard." The reaction can be priceless. You don't know the impact of a simple act of kindness.

Following in just one of the many stories. A few years ago, we were on tour with the Cole Bros Circus. After a long day of shows, we all cleaned up and went to a small home town restaurant for dinner. Quietly sitting next to us was an elderly couple eating their meal. Our marketing director turned to the couple, told them we were with the circus and would they like tickets to the show. The man said no thank you, the lady didn't look up. That's when the bell went off in my brain. Time for an Act of Kindness. I pulled a napkin paper out of my wallet, started folding into a rose and handed it to her. I said, "I would love to give you this rose." Suddenly, a tear started rolling down her cheek. The man said, "You don't know what you have done." The lady turned to me, holding the napkin rose. She said, "Yesterday, our house burned to the ground. We lost everything, but now I have a rose. You took the time to make me a rose." She stood up and asked if I would give her a hug. You never know what joy a Random Act of Kindness will bring to someone.

Want to know more about the Napkin Paper Roses, you can email at [bunkyclown@comcast.net](mailto:bunkyclown@comcast.net). Put Roses in the Subject Line.



Give a Rose, Get a smile....

# MACA CLOWN ALLEY NEWS



The Freestate Clown Alley  
is always active!

Most meetings, clown  
props, wardrobe and stuff is  
swapped for cash in the  
treasury.

Big Apple Circus  
Skip and Joel



Mardi Gras! (assisted living)

Easter >



< St. Paddy's Day!



New clown Rosie—  
Willey helped with  
Makeup >



## MACA Information Center

or Things you may not know about MACA

### CLOWN SEARCH

Did you know that the Mid-Atlantic Clown Association provides a way for people to contact it's MACA clowns on our website?

We have a link on the site menu "Clown Search" where anyone accessing the site can find a clown in their area to perform. Your listing as a member is free BUT... You need to provide your information. We do not act as a booking agency. The information is there for contact purposes only.

If you would like your contact information to be published on the website, please send your information :

Clown name  
Email address  
City , State  
Phone Number

to the webmaster, Thom Stevenson  
Skootchee3419@gmail.com.



### MACA MEMBERSHIP

Looking for some help in your clowning career ?

Looking to meet some new and some well established clown ?

Join the mid-Atlantic Clown Association (MACA)

Our purpose is to promote the education in and the preservation of the ancient art of clowning.

To become a member, click on this link to apply for [membership](#).

Changing the World One smile at a time



Send YOUR Alley News and items you may want to share with other members to the Newsletter Editor.

The MACA Newsletter is distributed bi-monthly and submission are due to the editor by the 20th of the month before publication. (Articles are due by June 20th for inclusion in the July/Aug newsletter).

Please, no hand written articles. Pictures may be blurred if the megapixels are not high enough.

Send articles to Editor: Thom Stevenson at  
skootchee3419@gmail.com



## Scholarships

### Scholarships are important!

Not only for the recipient for financial reasons but for the learning experiences.

We do not just "give it away"! We ask each applicant to provide information about their current abilities, their performance jobs, their clown group participation and their clowning goals.

We ask the individual to pay the fees upfront to show their dedication to learning and the art of clowning.

We expect each to attend as many classes at the convention as possible and prepare for a lifetime of laughter.

There is also an interview. Just a sit down talk about why you want to clown and to go over all that you have presented on your application. If you have any recommendations from other MACA members or the clowning community, make sure you attached the items to your application.



MACA wants to help as many new attendees as they can. Some years there have been no scholarships...some years several. We also realize that the tuition/registration and trip is sometimes just too much for a new clown.

If you know someone who really wants to come, but can't afford the whole package, please contact Sandi Smith.

**Be the person who makes someone smile today! Keep the world laughing!**

### Clownatarian

The MACA is the only clown organization that gives a Clownatarian award every year and that's because, we made it up! Way back, when the MACA was being formed, The Keystone Klowns decided they wanted to give an award to a clown for just being a great clown person. There was a gentleman worked with new clowns and who on several occasions paid for registration fees, hotel rooms, etc. for clowns who were just starting out and did not have money to come to a convention. It was decided this fellow was a Humanitarian and hence the name Clownatarian.

This award was never intended as a Clown of the Year type award but as a thank you to a good human being who was always there to lend a helping hand in any way they could to other clowns. For the first, at least 15 years the trophy award was purchased and given to a person chosen by the Keystone Klowns, eventually as many of them passed away or left the clown world for various reasons, the MACA decided to take over the presentation of the award.

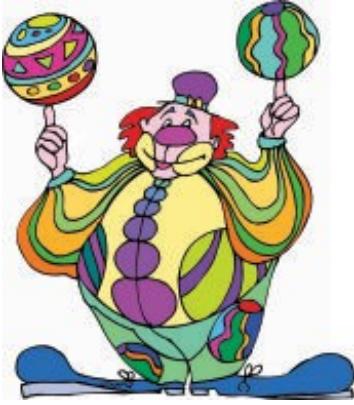
This year we have re-organized the selection committee to include more currently active members and have decided this committee will be made up of previous Clownatarians award winners that are currently serving on the MACA Board of Directors. Therefore, this year's selection committee will include Nellie May, Darlene Morgan, George Caban, John Kral, Sandi Smith, Bill Schober, and Mark St. Marie.

To be selected as a Clownatarian, a clown is nominated by a member of MACA by submitting a letter to the selection committee stating why this person should be considered for this award. These letters are reviewed without names of the person being nominated or the person nominating them being noted so that the nomination is based on good deeds only.

Please send any nominations you have for the 2018 award to me at [dottheclown@comcast.net](mailto:dottheclown@comcast.net) or to my home 169 Buckingham Dr., Southampton, NJ 08088 and I will see to it that the current selection committee receives your nominations.

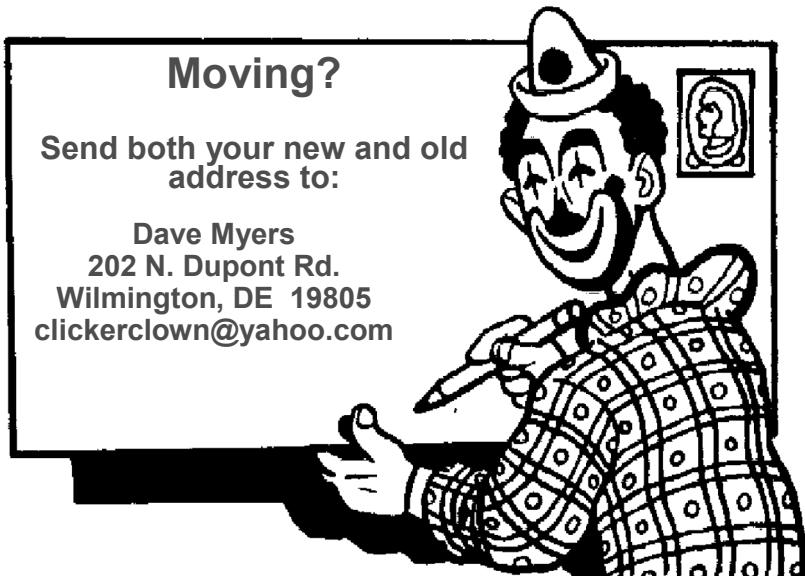
Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions and I will try to answer.

Sandi "Dot" Smith



**Moving?**  
Send both your new and old  
address to:

Dave Myers  
202 N. Dupont Rd.  
Wilmington, DE 19805  
[clickerclown@yahoo.com](mailto:clickerclown@yahoo.com)



### **MID\_ATLANTIC CLOWN ASSOCIATION INC.**

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