

Grease Paint

April 2020



Special Thanks to Jim Caffrey

Jim gave Brian a bag full of tapes to be converted to DVD for the Quad City Clown Troupe library. They cover many subjects and include a few performances.

To convert them to DVD was a major project. Brian could do it but the process required running/capturing the tapes in real-time. Then they would have to be converted before digitizing to DVD. This would have taken a couple of months.

Since the project (14 tapes) was so large a quote was received to convert them. Many of the tapes were longer than the 105 minutes and required additional DVDs. A total of 29 DVDs were digitized for the entire project.

The troupe discussed and voted to pay for the VCRs to be converted. This enabled the library to be set up and functional quickly. The index has been uploaded to the clown troupe website: qcclowns.com. You are welcome to view the DVDs available there.

Going forward Brian will handle the VCR to DVD conversions unless the total project is over 10 tapes. Brian will charge the troupe cost of materials only. But for now, thanks to Jim's donation, the library is really starting to take shape.

Jillyan added a couple tapes and Brian added a few of his. They are included in the library. More materials will be added as the library continues to grow. But for now, we have DVDs available for checkout.

Library Update: The library is coming together. There are a few DVDs that have already been classified and set up.

Clown Class: QCCT's Clown Class 2020 information.

Super Savings Cups/Balls: Special price, limited quantity cups and balls magic for sale.

Famous Failures: Some of our most successful people were once told they would not amount to anything.

Library DVD Review: Brian writes a short review on the circus DVDs available in the library.

Pet Frog Routine: A short, simple routine that can be done with a sponge frog.

Give the Audience Time: An article on giving the audience time to enjoy the moments.

RI Parks Department Show: A recap of the show done for the kids through the Parks Department

Library Update

The library is coming together. There are a lot of good DVDs available for check out now. One of the VCRs that was transferred to DVD is: "Make your face paint come alive". It is very well illustrated showing you how to paint on the face where the natural movement enhances the art.

An example would be a shark that is painted on the face as it swimming forward. The mouth is painted over the lips so when the person speaks it appears the shark is snapping its teeth. The DVD is by Genevieve Gagne and is very well done.

Ringling, the Greatest Show on Earth has a strong section in the library. There are five DVD editions of the circus. All the acts are included. Clowns, the ring master, acrobats and other performers are covered.

If, you are looking to get started doing kid-shows there is a DVD you might interested in. "The Magic Ingredient" teaches kids show magic. Some is extremely easy to perform. All have patter (storyline) materials that work well with kids. "Surefire Kids Shows" is also a good DVD.

We will also have a section of Clown Shows. Look for many classic skits such as Busy Bee, performed by Jay J and Bennson. Some may be variety shows that blend magic with clown skits. All will give you enjoyment and some ideas you might want to incorporate in your own clowning.

This is just the start. There are plenty of DVDs available now. Look for more DVDs, and other materials available soon. Newsletters, magazines and skit information will be added in the future. This is the year the library will become functional once again. The index of materials will be published on the website.

Those who are interested can send email to have their items available for checkout during one of our meetings. When you are finished with them, you may bring them to a meeting to be checked back in. If you cannot make it to the meeting, contact one of the officers to make arrangements to return it.

If you have materials you wish to donate to the library, bring them to a meeting. They will be categorized, indexed and set up for check out. Periodically, I hope someone will give a report on what they checked out. A couple sentences that can be added to the index would be appreciated. There are many ways to learn. Working with library materials, both the clown troupes and the local libraries are good sources. Look for more announcements as the library continues to grow.

Clown Class 2020

Time once again to start planning the clown class. The class will take place at the Family Fitness Center, as it has the previous years. Discussions are taking place on hosting one or more classes. The last few years the class was one day. Careful planning takes place so we do not teach everything. We highlight areas and entice students to come our meetings to learn more.

The troupe has funds to pay for materials, as needed. Over the years there have been detailed discussions on how to promote the class. What has proven best is a combination of individual marketing done by troupe members, a guest appearance on local television, flyers and mentioning the class in the Parks Department summer activities magazine.

We have plenty of talent in the troupe, and can host a very good quality class. However, we need a chair person to step in and head the class project up. This individual does not, and should not have to do everything. But he/she needs to coordinate what is presented, the schedule, and work with troupe volunteers who will teach.

Last year, WCA gave away a free online membership for clown class attendees. Nothing has been said yet, but I suspect they will offer that again. The troupe gave the attendees the rest of the year as fully paid memberships.

From the troupe position, the class has been a positive draw to bring in a few new members. As promotional materials for the class are distributed the traffic to our website increases. The site has been redesigned and carries more information. More detailed class information will be posted as known.

Ladies and gentlemen, clowns of all ages, it is time for one of our troupe members to step up and be the class chair person. Remember, there is plenty of experience within the troupe so you will not have to do this all by yourself. In fact, you will be surprised at the response and support you receive once you assume the class leader position.

To volunteer, or if you have questions, feel free to speak with Jane Foust. She hosted the class last year and it was a huge success. She can give you an idea of tasks that need to be done, activities to be covered, and other information. The sooner we have a chair person step up the easier the class planning will be. No one likes to try to produce a class in the last minute. It takes time to coordinate between the volunteers and work out the schedule.

How about it? Who wants to head up the 2020 Clown Class?



Super Savings on Cups and Balls Magic Trick

You may have seen this trick performed before. Three cups are shown and three pom-pom balls. They are set out on the table and one pom-pom placed on top of a cup. Another cup is used to cover it and the pom-pom appears to have passed through to the bottom cup. It can be repeated where two pass through and eventually all three. This trick is easy to perform as the manipulation is very smooth and completely concealed.

Pocket sized magic that can be taken out and performed then quickly packed back into a large pocket. I like to refer to this type of magic as “take it or leave it”. If you have a group that would enjoy the routine “take it” out and perform it. But if you are working a group that you feel would not enjoy it “leave it” in your pocket.

The only difference between the picture, and the item being discounted and sold is the color of the cups. One set will be all red and the other all yellow cups. Brian has seen this trick at prices from \$2.50 up to \$9.00 for the plastic cups like these being sold. Metal cups are a lot more expensive.

Only two sets are available. Brian will sell a set of either a red or yellow cups/balls \$2.00. This is a one time opportunity, as no more wholesale orders will be placed. Items will be new and packed in their original box. The four pom-poms will be included along with instructions.

To order yours send email to: magicwithbrian@yahoo.com. This special is being offered through the end of April, while supplies last. Contact Brian with any questions you may have.

As mentioned, this is a one time discount opportunity for a classic magic trick. Sales will be first come, first sold. When you email your order you do not have to pay. Payment is expected with delivery of the trick. When possible delivery will take place during one of the clown troupe’s regularly scheduled meetings.

Famous Failures

You can be what ever you want to. You can accomplish and reach any goal you set. All you have to do is be willing to study, practice and work for it. If you go through each day with your goals in focus and take actions to work towards them you will get there. The only difference between you and the next person is the amount of time it takes.

My father always told me a successful person picked himself off the ground one more time than the one who quit. The same holds true with our clowning. Good clowns keep working at it. They learn from each other. They study articles, books and other sources on the Internet to perfect their clowning. Good clowns never stop learning or quit. They never give up. Neither did these people:

After being cut from his high school basketball team he went home, locked himself in his room and cried. (Michael Jordan)

He wasn't able to speak until he was almost four years old. His teachers said he would never amount to much. (Albert Einstein)

She was demoted from her job as news anchor because they felt she was not fit for television. (Oprah Winfrey)

He was fired from a newspaper for lacking imagination and having no original ideas. (Walt Disney)

A high school dropout whose personal struggles with drugs and poverty culminated in an unsuccessful suicide attempt. (Eminem)

They were rejected by Deca Recording Studios. The studio executives didn't like their sound. They said they have no future in show business. (The Beatles)

His first book was rejected by 27 different publishers. (Dr. Seuss)

I cannot imagine what our world would be like if these people met rejection and a lot of negative then decided to quit. Don't give up. Keep working at it.

Library DVD Review

Here are 5 reviews in one. The “C” series: 101-104 are Ringling Greatest Show on Earth editions 118, 119, 130, and 131. DVD 105 is titled “Canine Cunning” and it helps you teach your dog tricks.

If you long to remember the circus, these are the DVDs to check out. They are professionally produced and highlight the acts that were performed in those editions. One can sit down with popcorn and enjoy some of those golden years.



Pet Frog Routine

The focus is turned up for clowns to entertain from a distance. Now, more than ever, people need to be entertained. However, they want to avoid risk of contact and infection. A simple pet frog routine might be in order. This can be done with, or without any talking. All you need is a sponge frog and a pocket you can get to very easily.

This will end up being a pet frog, so I do not recommend you beginning with the “frog in your throat” opening. You might squirm a little as if something is crawling under your shirt. Palm your frog and pretend to pull it out of your costume.

Bring the frog out for people to see. Pretend to be talking with it. Pet it. Remember this is your friend. You can point and tell it to go back into your pocket. Of course when you try to put it there it does not go. You can use the sponge ball vanish manipulation to palm it again. Your empty hand goes into your pocket. You notice it is not there and are surprised to see it in your other hand.

This time when you repeat the same manipulation you turn slightly to put your empty hand in your pocket. As you do, push the frog onto sticky tape you have somewhere on your costume. Now when you notice the frog is not in the pocket you also notice it is not in your other hand. Time to start looking for it. Let the audience help you find it stuck to your costume.

Laugh, pet the frog once more and finish the routine by putting it gently into your pocket.

Give the Audience Time

Part of the timing associated with performing is to allow your audience time to enjoy the moment. Too many clowns get nervous with dead air and just start moving the skit along. It is never a good idea to stifle your audience. The late Red Skelton was a master with this. He often fell out of character, making short comments to his audience in small conversation. When the laughter began to die down he would fall back into character and continue.

The problem is that you cannot always predict when the audience will appreciate the pause. When they are laughing it is best to let them go. You can move around a little and use some facial expressions. Just let them enjoy the moment. We know that blow offs and other punch lines will generate laughter. But when they respond when not anticipated, do not shut them down. Let them enjoy the moment.

Bilbo and Topper performed Busy Bee for the Parks Department show. What would have been a short 6-minute routine spread out to about 12 minutes. Bilbo would say something and Topper respond. As he did, the audience yelled and laughed. The more that was said, the louder their laughter. Rather than talking through it they just allowed the kids time to have fun.

In fact, after Topper got wet he chose Bilbo to sit down. The moment he did the kids all started cheering “do it”. They continued shouting until Bilbo finally sat down. Then when Topper came back with the honey to give to Bilbo they responded again. When Topper said he was not playing fair and repeated the key phrase Bilbo sprayed him again. The room burst into laughter once more.

The key to entertainment is making an audience connection. When they are responding, laughing and reacting, let them do it. They are involved with the performance, and their responses play an active part at making and holding that connection.

As you perform, remember that it is not the prop, storyline, or skit that makes the audience laugh or respond. It is the way it is performed. A simple story can be read for the people to listen, or read with pauses and facial expressions that enhance the people’s experience. Do not hesitate allowing time for the audience to enjoy those precious moments.

This concept holds true any time you are clowning. It does not have to be a skit or done on a stage. Simple walk-arounds and mingling with people open the doors for the same consideration. If they are responding, they are involved. You have that connection. Work with it. Give them time to enjoy the entertainment.



Rock Island Parks Department Show

It is part of our agreement with the Parks Department to perform at three events. Those events are our exchange for the free meeting room they provide for us. One of those events was to put on a show for the kids. Jillyan volunteered to put the show together. She worked up the team, helped them rehearse and acted as the producer/director.

The show went very well. For a couple of our clowns, this was their first time performing with the troupe. There was some stage fright, but once the performance began, everyone just stepped up and did their part. The show mixed some magic with storytelling and skits. At the end, Jillyan sparked a sing-along with her ukulele.

Hats off to Jillyan for a fantastic job. And, applause for all troupe members who participated. The kids were laughing, yelling and responding which made the show a lot more fun for everyone. Somehow Brian is going to figure out what goes wrong with Busy Bee. Every time he performs that with Dwight he ends up getting wet. Maybe some day it will all work out. LOL

Special thanks to Brenda for passing me the pic to include in this newsletter. I think this was one of the best shows we have done. I cannot remember any shows in the past where the audience was so involved. They were calling back to the clowns, clapping, laughing and talking with each other. This was a great example of how an audience can be engaged with the performance.

Finally, thanks to each clown for their work. Do not misunderstand me. Performing with the goal of entertainment can be classified as work. It is pleasant work. But work, just the same. We played well with each other, worked through any ruff spots as a team and gave the Parks Department a fantastic show.

The challenge is to remember the skits and your individual parts. The next time we are asked to perform, we have a hand full of skits that were rehearsed and should be ready to perform.

Grease Paint Subscriber List

Brian publishes two newsletters that are open to the public for website download. One is Grease Paint, and the other Abraca-Poof. Both are available at no charge. Once in a while a magician will download Grease Paint. I have received positive reviews and comments from magicians on this newsletter too.

A few times in the past I have been contacted. I just received another request. When I receive them I refer them to the last page of each newsletter. I specifically state the subscriber list is not available beyond my immediate office.

The readership is handled as a protected asset. I do not share it, use it to distribute massive email (spam), nor do I make that listing available to others. My subscribers know they are welcome to email me, and feel confident I will not place their email in a posture others can copy or use it.

If they submit articles they are confident I will share their bio as a contributor. But, I will force anyone wanting to reach out to them, to send email through the publishers office. At that time, I will contact the reader for instructions as to pass their contact information along or not.

Brian T. Lees, Publisher



Don't Forget It

The world around us is packed with skit opportunities. The best skits play on ever day events in our lives. When you run across an idea that might make a good skit how do you keep it? I used to come up with a few new ideas each week and could never remember them when I got back to my desk.

Today I carry a pocket recorder in the car, I use the note/message feature on my cell phone, or I have a small pad of paper I write the idea down. Granted, not all ideas amount to a skit. But if I didn't make notes I would never have the chance to work with them. Do you have something you note those ideas on? If not, perhaps you should start to carry scratch paper in your car. Or, start using your cell phone to make notes of them.



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Send articles and the release documents as a PDF files to:

topperhtc@yahoo.com.

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