

Hospital Clown Newsletter

The Gentle Art of The Caring Clown

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As I was leaving for my trip to India and Russia, *Pookey Do*¹², my shaggy sheep dog puppet, caught my eye. After all my puppets are as real to me as my pets. On an impulse I said to him, "All right you can come along." So I picked him up and tucked him under one arm. There I was a middle aged red headed woman traveling with a large shaggy stuffed animal.

Pookey was the hit of the trip. He licked faces, scratched his ears, cocked his head, and sniffed half way around the world. Don't ask me why, but the military, especially military border guards with guns, particularly liked him! He was always there to break the tension. And the kids of all ages in Russia and India loved him!

From warm, open, colorful India to sub-zero snow-covered Russia was quite a shift; however, despite the exterior differences, we human beings of all ages have a child inside longing to be touched by the clown.

You learn a lot about your own country when you visit another. On my hospital rounds in California on Christmas day, I was struck profoundly by the poverty of joy. I'm not referring to the poverty of "not having enough material possessions," but the poverty of not having joy and wonder in everyday life. I did not find that poverty in the Netraprakash Eye Camp. The Indian people taught me how to be their clown. We played together, we laughed together and cried with gratitude. It is hard to express how they touched my heart. I could only speak a few sentences in Marathi, the local language, but the communication was extraordinary.

Bending over and listening to this mother's heart with my silly teacup stethoscope, I found the warmth that is India.



Travels with Pookey Do