

Hospital Clown Newsletter

A Publication for Clowns in Community and World Service

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Move Over Snowflake, Here Comes Snowflake Junior



For twenty years, *Snowflake* has emerged out of his role as Associate Professor of Information Technology at the University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse to lead us all at Clown Camp®. This year he has made his decision to retire.

Hold on! Don't fall off your chair, or pull at your wig! He is only retiring from his position at the university. Clown Camp® will continue under his direction.

Snowflake Junior will continue Snowflake's clown antics and promises more. Richard now says he will devote more time to his caring clown role – to the work he so ably guided us through in classes at Clown Camp®.

In his Clown Hall of Fame acceptance address Richard commented "I believe my being inducted in the HOF is somewhat unique. I got there on the merits of others. If anything, I was a catalyst, bringing together outstanding clown arts entertainers, and educators and folks hungry to learn more about clowning."

That has been no small job for Richard. In his 20 years as Director he has taken Clown Camp into being the oldest and largest clown training program in the world. Richard is, we could say, our *Catalyst Champion*. Isn't it wonderful that we have such a champion? Like a knight in the shining armor of a great clown, he has gone out there and worked for all of us to establish clowning in the hospital. Maybe it is more like shining "amour" - love, that has done it all.

This year the first week of Clown Camp focused on the Caring Clown. Many of the clowns who have contributed to this newsletter were instructors. The session was popular and drew many more clowns than was anticipated. We are hoping it will be a mainstay of Clown Camp.

His book *The Caring Clown, How Humor, Smiles and Laughter Overcome Pain, Suffering and Loneliness*, published in 1991 is a must for every hospital clown and all those interested in the Caring Clown.

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Richard Snowberg and The Caring Clown



Snowflake Jr. clowns around with Gigi and Rone from Japan's Clown Group - Open Sesame at Clown Camp Canada 1999.

[An interview with Richard Snowberg at Clown Camp]

"As a kid I was interested in magic. In 1973 when I moved to Little Rock Arkansas I was in a community that had a Magic Club. One of our members was a clown and in one of his demonstrations he used magic. I thought "I'd really like to do that," but I didn't want to copy his act, so it wasn't until I moved to La Crosse, that I created my clown character and started to do magic as a clown. I was a magic clown - that's how I billed myself.

"There was no alley here at all, but the magic stores had some books and information on clowning. I bought my first make-up at a magic shop. Of course, it was water based stuff and streaked and ran all over the place. That is how I started -- with very little information. In one sense I was self taught. But I quickly learned about the national organizations and started to attend conventions and in 1979, I went to the COAI convention in Chicago. That was very impressive for me. I met many of the people that are on staff at Clown Camp today at that convention.

"After teaching my first clown class, the students didn't want to quite clowning so they started a club. Out of that clown club came the caring clown program - Clowns on Call. The staff in the hospital called us when they needed clown intervention for a birthday party, or in special situations.

"During those early days of clowning, we did some basic education, but mainly we just thought we'd bring some laughter to sick children. That was the depth of the thinking at that time. There was no thought of a program or what the magnitude of the effect could be, as well as, some of the cautions. We were not thinking of whether we should or should not wear gloves or use latex. There was no focus on infectious control at that time. We didn't really realize the potential of clowning in hospitals. We would entertain adults and staff if they were around, but our focus was on the children..

By Chris "Rountuit/Seamore" Montross of St. Luke's Clown Connection, Cedar Rapids, Iowa / June 2, 2000

Ode to Richard Snowberg

*Dr. Richard Snowberg . . . a true master of the art,
A clown for all seasons with "mountain size" heart.
He's the one, the only "Snowflake" and he hails here in LaCrosse;
The Founder of Clown Camp . . . at UW he's the Boss.*

*The father of caring clowns for Joeys like me,
A professor of great wisdom and Clownology.
He's authored many books with binders full of knowledge;
On this wonderful campus . . . clowns can go to college.*

*With hospital pastoral clowns, our kinship's forever strong,
A member of the Clown Connection at St. Luke's, Rich does belong.
There's an aura of healing that amazingly takes place;
By a caring clown movement blessed by Richard Snowberg's grace.*

*'99 a signature year in Richard Snowberg's life,
The birth of a grandchild of him and Jan , his wife,
A bouncing baby boy . . . Blaise carries on the family name;
And he has a famous grandpa in the CLOWN HALL OF FAME*

*Lots of education, two decades of Clown Camp,
Best tradition in the world....a real tribute to the champ.
This Millennium's no exception and with Buddy "Jiggles" Lee
They've assembled a Clown Gala for the likes of you and me.*

*An evening of special roasting from UW he does retire,
But never from the joys of clowning, all of us he will inspire.
It is with great pride, Rich, and we want you to know;
If it weren't for YOU...clowns like us could never grow!*

"Actually when we started doing hospital clowning twenty years ago almost all those clowns going into hospitals were Shrine Clowns doing work through their burn centers. They, like us, had no training, but they had big hearts and did a lot of fund raising. The first time I was in a Shrine Hospital I saw little interaction taking place with the children. By and large most of the clowns didn't know what to do. They had the clown face, but didn't know how to interact with these children. I think that was pretty common with all of us at that time.

"All this made us begin to talk about the lack of clown educational programs anywhere including Clown Organizations. Conventions were doing competition and some sharing was taking place, but there were no educational classes. Competition is adversarial in many ways, and doesn't fit well with learning and sharing. So we saw an opportunity to go in a different direction and started Clown Camp. We had a policy of no competition. Actually, because we started doing more education, conventions are adding more classes every year. By 1984 we had added caring clown classes to Clown Camp.

"The movie "Patch Adams" has raised the awareness of the general public to clown possibilities and I think it also raised concern on the part of health professionals. I think a lot of them think that it is just one more thing to manage. We clowns can do a lot to facilitate health care professionals by giving them guidelines and information on how clowns can fit with their routines."

[Richard was instrumental in implementing and developing Clowns for Children's Hospital in Milwaukee [Reported in Vol. 5 No. 1] - a program under the auspices of The International Clown Hall of Fame and Children's Hospital of Milwaukee. Three cheers and a millions clown hugs to our champion for another mark in clown history.]