

# Hospital Clown Newsletter

A Publication for Clowns In Community and World Service

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Photo by Mike Paugh

*We Caring Clowns go not to mock tragedy, but to caress it with our compassion,  
 We march straight into the battlefields of grief,  
 Armed with unconditional love, and our joyful silliness,  
 We bring a reminder of the resilience and brilliance of the human spirit.  
 Gently tickling the heart and gathering forces in play, we give fear a hearty shove.  
 Ah, Maybe the trickster Coyote has a soft belly after all.*

– Shobi Dobi

Down on the front line of New York City Ground 0 with members of the New York City Firefighters are: left to right behind top row: Wes "Poppy" Flener; John "Clem T" Kapferer; between the two firefighters is Connie "Nurse Chickie" Coble-Roe; from left clockwise: Maureen "Ouchee" Mould; Diane "Sparkle" Paugh; Lucy "Feather" Sheffield; Irene "Honey Bee" Rubin; firefighters; Sharon "Sha Sha" Di Tino; Walter "Waldo" Kautz; Jenny "Lottie Da" Herrick; Thelma "Happy" Miller and kneeling Marty "Sassy" Sassin who's granddaughter is not picture - nor is Barbara McIntosh who drove the bus or Mike Paugh the Photographer.

# From the Joyful to the Profoundly Sad and Back Again

*Connie "Nurse Chickie" Coble-Roe of Wexford, PA*

When Ochee (Maureen Mould) first suggested we needed to go to New York City and do something to spread love with our clowning, I thought "we can't do that at Ground Zero." That would be inappropriate, irreverent, and insensitive. If Ground Zero was where people wanted to clown, I just didn't think I could go. ShobI Dobi, recommended that we go to the shelters and maybe deployment areas where workers from Ground Zero depart from and return to. Now that sounded perfect! We could spread joy and share love through our clowning without being disrespectful to those in close physical proximity to Ground Zero! So 'Sign me up'!

But life had other plans for us, as it often does. We ended up spending all day Saturday and most of Sunday at precisely Ground Zero, dressed in clown, and we were exactly where we needed to be. Police officers, firefighters, construction workers, ambulance personnel,... were so needing a reason to smile, a reason to laugh. Their response was beyond anything I could have imagined. What we heard was "Thank-you for coming," "You're just what we needed", "Can I redeem my hug coupon now?", "I know I had two hugs, am I good for a third?" I never heard a word or saw an expression that expressed anything but pleasure at our presence.

There were so many moments that were totally overwhelming with emotion.

From our first glimpse of Ground Zeros with smoke from smoldering fires and then the realization that Ground Zero was a crematorium for many of the unrecovered victims of 9/11.



*Connie "Nurse Chickie" Coble-Roe is in "white" in center*

To Our visit at the 1st Precinct Police Station where the desk staff put on red noses, smiled and posed for pictures, the walls of the station house papered with letters from people around the country and world expressing their sorrow and support;

To Our clowning in the streets with residents of NYC, visitors to NYC, firefighters, police officers, with shopkeepers, with street vendors, leaving smiles and clown noses everywhere;



To putting red noses on two patrol officers in their car early on Saturday and then later that day having them pass us on the street in their car, honking, laughing, and still wearing their noses!



*It was Thumbs-Up all the way!*

To Our visit outside Ninos with the memorial to the police officers lost and seeing their photographs and realizing just how young these men and women were, and then posing outside Ninos with the Statue of Liberty replica and thinking about our freedom of choice as American to live the lives we choose - what a gift!;



To Our visit inside the union bar Dakota where the burly construction workers were so very in need of a hug;



*The men and women with hardhats and soft red noses!*

To Our visit to the restaurant Suspenders, closed to the public, but providing meals to the firefighters and feeding them whole lobster dinners with all the fixings which had been donated from somewhere in Maine the day we were there - It was here that a waitress came to me and said "I need you in the back room, There's a small group that needs cheering up," and as she

walked past me she included, "They just came from a funeral." I took a big gulp and entered the back room. There were 6 firefighters who suddenly had a temporary diversion from their sorrow. Other clowns joined me and soon all 6 firefighters were wearing red noses, smiling, and sharing some laughter.

Instead of clowning seeming irreverent and disrespectful to the tragedy, it was reverence for the living, the joy and love of the living. WOW!!

Another poignant moment was when Lottie-Da and I were leaning on each other with our heads together, gazing down the street at the remains of buildings blown apart when we were enveloped in a bear hug by a shop keeper who just didn't want to let us go. He said "I saw you and just had to come out and thank you for coming." I realized that every day he is looking out the shop window into the terrible destruction left behind on 9/11. On that day, he looked out the window and saw clowns instead, and how much he appreciated that!



*Sharing their theme song -- "There's No Business Like Nose Business, Like Nose Business I Know . . . ."* in a NY fire station

There are many other incredible stories such as Fire Station No. 7, where outside the doors, was a memorial to lost firefighters with pictures, flowers, and candles. I thought surely we would be pushing things too far by entering here! But soon the doors opened. And soon firefighters were wearing red noses, joking, and posing for pictures. It was here that the fire captain said, "Every morning I awake and I ask God to help me get through one more day, and today he sent the clowns!" He then proceeded to tell us how clowns (Big Apple Circus), had helped his daughter when she was 3 recover from open heart surgery and what a special place clowns held in his and his family's hearts!

It's hard to believe we were there only one weekend but we experienced one incredible overwhelming moment after the next. It truly was hard to leave on Sunday afternoon when I felt there was still so much work to do. But it was such a privilege and honor to share our love and compassion with those in need and to have it so graciously accepted! I continue to be overwhelmed by memories of this most profound experience. I can't imagine any other way we could have brought this magic to those we touched in New York City except through our clowning. I certainly came away from this experience with a profound respect and reverence for clowns!

## **God Bless Clowns!!!!**

**Jenny" Lottie-da" Hendricks**  
*from Sioux City, Iowa*

Clowning as a group in our own country was a profound and awesome experience. I feel so honored and fortunate to have had the opportunity to be with my beloved China clowns again and to be clowning our hearts out for the rescue workers at Ground Zero for two wonderful days! Oh, what tales we have to tell and what memories will stay in our hearts and minds forever.

I firmly believe that a clown's appearance on the scene (and I do mean ANY scene will change the chemistry of the situation instantaneously - even in the aftermath of a tragedy as horrendous as that of September 11th ) God Bless Clowns!

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## **You Had to Be There to Believe It!**

**From Mike Paugh**  
*of Le Mars, Iowa. ~ Official Photographer*

Clowning at Ground Zero, what an experience! I am not a clown but I was honored by a very special group of clowns to go along as the official photographer. I have never witnessed anything so moving and gratifying before in my life. Before this my idea of a clown was someone who made people laugh, or walked around in hospital hallways visiting patients to try and make them feel a little better. But after spending Nov. 17 & 18 with the clowns at Ground Zero, I now know that clowns have a special gift. Watching the smile on the faces of the people in that area was something that you could only appreciate if you were there to witness it.

Each morning we took a chartered bus to the area where we were going to clown. On day one we arrived around 11:30 am and clowned till 4:30 pm. We walked for blocks on this day but it didn't seem to bother any of the 12 clowns that were there. The second day we clowned from 11:00 am to 2:30 pm. During this 3 ½ hour period we only made four blocks up and four blocks back. There were so many people that just engulfed the clowns on day two that the four blocks was all we had time for. At night we sat around and talked about what experiences we all had that day.

I knew that this trip was going to be something special as soon as we departed the bus. We walked over to a restaurant called Nino's. A woman came out of Nino's in tears. One of the clowns, Sparkle, also noticed this woman. As the woman sat in her car crying her heart out, Sparkle tapped on the window and said to the woman that she noticed that she was really sad. The woman informed Sparkle that her brother, a New York City Police officer, had been lost in the collapse of the World Trade Center. She wasn't from New York and had just arrived in town to see if there was any news yet. The only information that she got was that they hadn't brought him out yet. Sparkle explained to the woman that they were a group of clowns from across our great nation and they had come to Ground Zero to try and help some of the people of New York City smile again.

Sparkle then gave the woman a shoulder patch from the Le Mars, Iowa police department. These patches were donated by the Le Mars Chief of Police to be given to police officers in the area to let them know that even in rural America we haven't forgotten them. The woman thanked Sparkle and smiled and said that she had brought some happiness, if even for a moment, back into her life.

As far as I was concerned everything else from here was the icing on the cake.

After visiting ground zero and witnessing the damage first hand, and realizing that the store owners, workers and people that live in that area, have so much sadness in their lives everyday, it really make me proud to have been part of such an elite group of wonderful human beings that brought even a little bit of a smile to hundreds of people.



The play of the day was surrendering to the red nose brigade

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## **The Awesome Power of Giving**

**Lucy Feather Sheffield**  
*of Haddonfield, New Jersey*

The awesome power of giving and red noses was affirmed. I grew up in NY and the events of September 11 were both terrifying and unreal to me. Being able to offer my caring in NY was a great help in regaining a sense of balance, humor and connection. The experience also gave me a new sense of appreciation for firefighters, police and rescue workers. We saw many of these people at their off duty "hangouts" -- as well as at the firehouse, police station and on the street. They loved our " free hugs" and " free smiles" cards and real hugs and smiles of course, our give away red noses, our group song "Getting to Nose you , getting to Nose all about you . . . "

We even had police cars doing U Turns to come see us and shouting Thanks to us over their squad car loud speakers.

So where did all those clown noses come from?

ShobI called **Steve Goshman** of **Magic by Gosh** and told him what **Clem T** was doing at Ground Zero in New York City. (Reported in the last Newsletter) Steve sent a huge box of red clown noses, stars, hearts, and all kinds of good stuff.

John (Clem T) Kapferer reported that *"There had to be thousands of goodies in that box.. They really made a big hit with everyone.*

# When I Saw Clowns, Happiness and Hope Came into My Mind

**Maureen "Ouchie" Mould**  
*from Yakima, Washington*

I was able to go back into the City on Tuesday in hopes of doing some reverent gospel mime at St. Paul's Cathedral. However, upon arriving the priest felt that the people were not ready yet for a clown. So down the street I went with "Happy Heart", Bobby Ross a new clown friend, who had come into the city with us on Sunday.

Immediately a lady approached us and introduced herself as a reporter from the Los Angeles Times and asked if she could interview us. She asked me "Why are you clowning here at Ground Zero? I, in turn said: "Why do you think we're here?" She replied, "I'm interviewing you, remember!" Just then a woman walked by and stopped in front of me "Excuse me for interrupting but want to thank you clowns for being here." The reporter turned to her and asked her what she thought of when she saw the clowns. Immediately the woman responded: "Happiness!" She went on to tell us that she lived in the City and had lost two friends on September 11th. This was the first time she had mustered the emotional strength to come down to see the remains of the towers. "But when I saw clowns, happiness and hope came into my mind." I turned to the reporter and said: "There's your answer."

This type of encounter happened minute by minute with police officers, fire fighters, work crews and any type of folk who walked by. Again we gave out red noses and sang "Getting to "nose" you, getting to "nose" all about you", accompanied by my clown trombone.

Then a TV crew from Japan stopped us to ask us the same question, plus more. They were very interested in us. Then the reporter said abruptly, "Do some magic for us". At first I was put off because I felt she hadn't gotten our message. But then I remembered the red construction paper heart I had with me -- something I was going to use at St. Paul's. I pulled it out and began to mime talking to God and miming how broken my heart was, pointing to Ground Zero with all its destruction. I tore the heart up in pieces in frustration and hurt. A crowd began to form around me. Then I mimed reluctantly giving my heart over to God to take away the pain, and at that time I restored it to wholeness. There was a hush over the crowd and there were no more questions from the Japanese reporter. I think she got my message.

Happy Heart and I searched out another fire station -- Station #6. The guys there were thrilled to see us, receive red noses and play around. They had lost four of their fellow firemen. They spent time telling us about each of them and showing us their pictures. We bought some shirts and hats, designed specifically for their station with the guys names on the shirt along with a bible verse: "And He will raise you up on eagle's wings, make you to shine like the sun and hold you in the palm of His hand."



Down at Ground Zero, I had been handing out small gold lapel pins in the shape of an apple with a small cross in the middle. [The Apple is a symbol for New York City, known as The Big Apple as in Big Apple Circus as well as me coming from Yakima where our major industry is apples.] I reached in my pocket to pull out some pins to give one of the firemen to pass on to the families. All I had left were 4 pins. That was a "God-incidence".

Yes, we clowning with joy and playfulness, but with respect and reverence, and it seemed to be appreciated by all. We even made it over to the NYU Downtown Hospital and they let us in to clown on the pediatric floor! Interesting that this hospital served primarily the Chinese population there and I had clowning in China last September with the other clowns who had come to NYC to commemorate our time together last year. While waiting for permission, we visited the gift shop and heard stories from the woman working there how she witnessed the whole terrorist attack on Sept 11 from her apartment window. She shared about how she and the other tenants were shipped over to N.J. and how much the Red Cross helped everyone. She was out of work for 3 weeks until the apartment was cleaned up from the ash and ready for everyone to return. She wanted to talk and talk and as she did she mesmerized us with her stories.



Ouchee with members of the New York Fire Department.