



¡Viva el
Amor!

Long
Live
Love

Our view from the stage of Villa De los Niños, a modern new facility for 2000 economically deprived boys from around Mexico.

From Shobi: We had a little plan of walking off the bus and into the auditorium singing “*Oh when the clowns, go marching in . . .*” but when we got off the bus we were faced with this sight. All the boys were singing to us!

Long live love! Long live love!

In the morning, in the afternoon

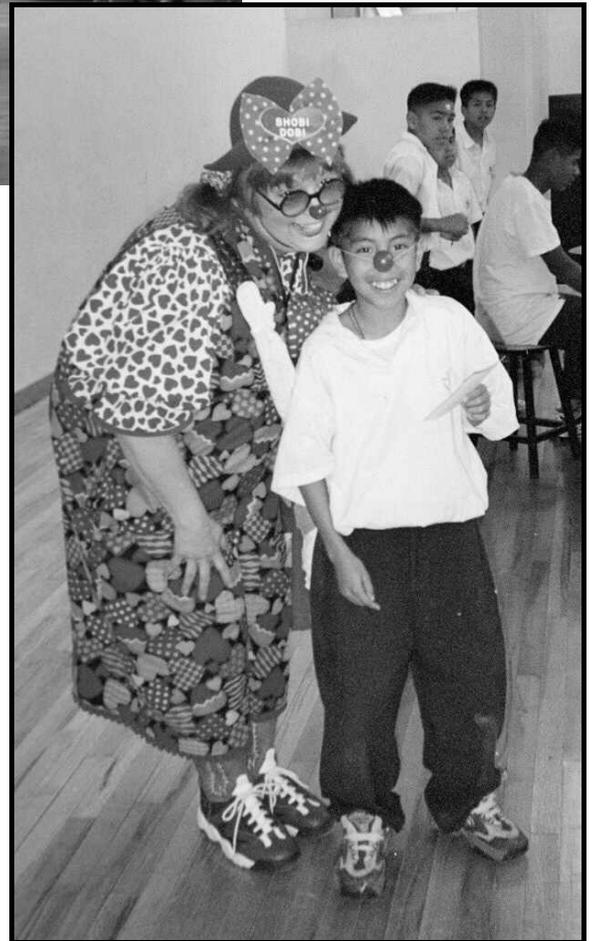
In the rain, beneath the sun

Everything reminds us that there is love. . . .

Yes, we had tears in our eyes. I think that stopped us from being “scared to death” being faced with two hours of “entertaining” so many boys!. So what did we do? We did what we always do. We improvised, i.e., we caused a little cheery chaos in their regimented life. We just went down into the crowd and everyone just did their “thing.” Shobi ran out of the “shtick” she had with her in ten minutes, so she started to just play. In a crush of my little crowd of 50-75 boys, I started to teach them how to do gibberish. Remember I don’t speak any Spanish. After a while a taller boy came over with a smaller boy on his shoulders. He pointed at him and said “Payasos” I had learned this word (dah!) So I asked him to come forward. I taught him some slapstick and he was just wonderful at clowning around. We did some improvisation in the center of our little group and I rewarded him with a special nose (one of the noses I make with the elastic string). I then turned my attention to the other boys.

At one point one of the boys pulled my sleeve and pointed to a group of teachers around my “young Payasos.” They looked like they were taking away his new clown nose. I went over, “He’s a clown. It’s his nose,” I did my best to mime. “Si, Payasos!” So in front of a group of teachers and nuns we did our little slap stick act. He again was just wonderful. About that time all of us clowns were called back to the front stage. I brought him up on the stage too.(pictured to the right)

From Natalie Lovie Shoop of Crescent, PA: A young man at Villa de los Ninos was dancing with *Lovie* and shaking maracas - having a wonderful time. When we were done, I thanked him for the dance, and shared the international sign for *I love you*. In Spanish I said “*te Amo.*” Then I saw these two big crocodile tears rolled down his face. He hugged me and showed me the international sign for *I love you*. I cried with him..



When we were all up on the stage again. Everyone went silent and a young boy read: *We dedicate to you the following message. . .*

***Let your light shine for all the world to see,
The brightness of your life within,
the peace that sets you free.
Let your light shine, to fill your days
and nights,
Men will see the deeds you do,
and give your Father praise.***

But it wasn't just the hospitals, orphanages or schools that touched us, it was the contact with the day to day Mexican people in the streets, the parks, the buses and everywhere we went.



Above *Dooley* Bart Marcy balances a balloon on a feather duster for his "group" of boys at the Villa de las Niños. Later in the trip during a "Family Day" in a plaza, I watched as *Dooley* gave out clickers to a group of little girls. He then gave his "audience" as they gathered around instructions on how to click as he did a clownish Spanish Dance. The faster they clicked the faster he danced. Of course they got to keep the clickers, but he did so much more than just give out a balloon or give away a clicker.



Above Shobi and Huggy Bear play around with restaurant staff in *their* kitchen where the *rubber chicken* is being prepared. Noses are by Gosh of course!

From Sondra Heart Throb Upham - A Personal Small Harmony

Clowning at the orphanage for boys, I decided to try using my clown stethoscope with a red, sink plunger tied to its end. First, I listened to my own heart and jumped at regular intervals as if the volume of each beat startled me. Holding out the plunger end to the heart of a boy around ten or eleven years old, I mimed, asking permission to listen to his heart.

He consented, and after I listened, I drew back in amazement. Patting his heart, I hummed a few notes to let him know his heart was SINGING. He looked up at me in wonder. I hummed a few notes in confirmation. His eyebrows shot up, and he raised both hands above his shoulders, palms open to the sky as if catching rain . . . No, I realized, he was trying to ask, "What is it singing?"

A phrase from high school Spanish class popped out of my mouth in song-Feliz Navidad (Merry Christmas)-enough to tickle him on this March morning. My young friend rushed off and returned with two of his friends; other boys drew near to see what was happening.

As I listened to each one's heart, the other boys crowded close and bent their heads in to see if they could hear their friend's heart singing, too.

Linda Clown Dode Sweig of Chicago, Illinois: In Sayulita, sitting in the gazebo, a little boy (maybe 7) kept coming over to me to show me the treasures other clowns were giving him. After awhile, he looked at me, and said "agua" while pointing to the water bottle from which I was drinking. I reached into my bag and gave him another bottle of water. When he opened the bottle, I tried "toasting" but he didn't know what I was trying to do, so I taught him how to "toast". From then on, before he would take a sip of water, he raised his bottle to me and we toasted and then drank together. It was wonderful!

Chuck Stillwell, a new clown and the husband of our tour guide Susan Stillwell, took the clown name *Palo Alto*.

Chuck (Photo below) writes: At the deaf school, Shobi had painted one of the little deaf boys as a tiger. He came over to me growling. He had his hands up in the air and acted as if he were a cat stalking something and then he would pounce on his imaginary victim. I began to follow him and copy what he was doing. We did this pantomime for several minutes. You could see that he was really in his element. He was being something outside of himself and he allowed me into his imaginary play. It was a great fun and a great experience for me.



The Language of the Heart - Powerful Moments

Connie Nurse Chickie Coble-Roe writes: There were so many poignant heart touching moments during this trip to Mexico. There were wonderfully receptive groups of people awaiting the arrival of the crazy caring clowns throughout the trip. For me though, one of the most rewarding connections came on Sunday after an afternoon of clowning on a plaza in Guadalajara.

There were so many families with young children out to enjoy the day together. The children were easily enticed with my monkey puppet who could shake and, give kisses and be shy, if that's what was called for.



Nurse Chickie and the two working children.

But not all children on the plaza were there to play. Some children were working, selling baskets of food and such. Some of these children were very young perhaps 8 or 9. I gave a sticker to one of these young working girls. She looked at me with her large dark eyes, but never changed her blank facial expression. The clowns then walked to a second nearby plaza to enjoy an outdoor band concert. Many of us stepped over an iron fence so we could sit in the grass when the band played. It was a few minutes later that I realized the young working girl from the previous plaza had followed us. Soon she came over the fence and sat in the grass near me and relinquished her basket of wares. She was joined by another working girl and the two of them remained there and played with us. They put on noses, played with the puppet, posed for pictures and just enjoyed being silly with the clowns. My little friends made me think of all the children around the world who must work to help support their families.

The hour that we shared on the plaza, an hour with the only common language being the language of the heart, was a powerful moment for me. For that hour, these working children were allowed to play and be silly and be accepted by and connected to clowns. It showed how people can respond and open to the caring clown. One of the things I love most about caring clowning is that

by opening yourself to other peoples' sadness and sorrow, you also open them and yourself up to their joy through silliness, play, touch, smiles, laughter, and even sometimes tears.

From Bart "Dooney" Marcy of Tucson, AZ

I guess the most emotional moment I had on the Mexico trip was at the Escuela de los Sordos (School for the Deaf). We were working the playground and I noticed a maintenance worker watering the plants with a hose. I thought he was paying little attention to what was going on. He just went about his business. Word came that it was time to leave and head to our bus. But on my way out of the yard I caught his attention, smiled and waved. Then I purposefully walked over to him. In an exaggerated clown way, I extended my hand and greeted him with "¡hola! Señor." In heavily accented, broken, but understandable English, he thanked me for all that we had done for the children. His voice and manner was so sincere that I was overcome with emotion. Tears came to my eyes and I headed immediately for a hug from a nearby fellow clown. It is the unexpected moments like this that turn out to be the unexpected rewards for what we do.

Lois Elliott, aka Dr. Dot and Zanie, who clowns at Maricopa Medical Center and soon at Phoenix Children's Hospital went on this trip to reclaim her clown soul. "I do so much by myself at the hospital that I needed the fellowship of other dedicated caring clowns. I truly did get renewed on this trip!"

It was the small encounters that really touched Lois on the trip. These little "happenings" occurred by the hundreds as we walked down many, many streets.

Later Lois wrote "I keep thinking of two individuals that I met in Mexico. When our bus pulled into Jocotepec, the mothers and children were waiting to greet the clowns. Well, with a deep breath, off the bus I went. We were laughing and trying to say our names when I met a chubby little girl of about eight years old. I took her hand and said, "Muy bonita!" - Very pretty!. A big smile spread across her face. She kept trying to wave to me and smile even after I got back on the bus. The children were walking up the road and still she was waving. I wondered how often in her life had someone told her that she was pretty.

In one village as the clowns walked down the street, I was passing a middle-aged lady when something inside just told me to stop and greet her. When I asked her, "Como esta?" She replied half heartedly and with no smile, "Bueno." Well, that's all it took. I started doing funny things, and playing and soon she was laughing right along with me. As I left her, a different smile was on my face too as I thought "I trust that her day was better."

Currently it is Dr. Dot who continues to clown at Maricopa Medical Center (the county hospital). I was in the Burn Unit with a Hispanic boy and his parents and it was like being back in Mexico. We had such fun trying to communicate. Everyone was laughing and having fun. Since the census at MMC is over 50% Hispanic I have had several occasions to be "back" in Mexico.

Martha Blossom Gunter clowns in Charleston and Mount Pleasant, SC. I like to clown on the street and the lobbies of the hospital. At one hospital there were people waiting a long time behind a big gate. I found a pink colored broom and started clown sweeping. Then, I decorated it and danced with it. I escorted people as they entered. A man came by who was really sweeping. We danced and played for a while. We didn't speak much, but there was a lot of fun playing back and forth.

Marcy "Nurse Ducky" Graves and Natalie "Lovie" Shoop (pictured below) "We stayed behind one day from clowning because we were tired. So it was recommended to us to tour a historic cemetery. Everyone said 'It's just two blocks or maybe five blocks.' We decided to take a taxi anyway and glad we did, because it was twenty-two blocks. We paid our taxi driver and he went off. Well, the cemetery was closed on Mondays and there we were in the middle of some place we didn't know. But we had a little map and took off walking and walking. I wanted to purchase some rosaries, so we found this cathedral with these two little old ladies in front making rosary beads. They saw us and came over. We made our purchases and when we were ready to leave I said to Marcy "I think we should nose them!" So we gave them red sponge clown noses. They were so overwhelmed that they hugged us and kissed us and hugged us and God Blessed us and they gave us beautiful postcards of the infant of someone or another. We had no makeup on or any indications that we were clowns. A nun who had been watching us came over and got nosed too. It was just wonderful.



On the left Andrea Michaels, AZ Rainbow of Scottsdale AZ and on the right Sarah Anna Banana Hostelley of Wilmington, DE



Nurse Duckie and Lovie

In Our Hearts, Songs, and Laughter - We Were All Brothers and Sisters

Andrea Michaels AZ Rainbow writes: I have traveled extensively throughout the world, but never before have I seen so many smiles! There is something very magical about using smiles, bright colors, silliness and long looks as the connection between cultures. Language skills were secondary.

"Payasos!" "Payasos!" "Payasos!" Everywhere we went, all thirty of us were enthusiastically greeted. The Mexican people love clowns. In general, they seemed much more open to play and high spirits than most norteamericanos. It was amazing to watch the double-takes and then broad grins or big waves from pedestrians and drivers as we rode by in our big bus or as we galumphed down the streets! Never have I felt so anonymously obvious! What fun!

As a caring clown at home, I experience the privilege of being allowed into lives that I might not otherwise know. The anonymity that comes along with my bright red nose and my brilliant blonde hair, makes it safe to connect with a stranger at the hospital. But this was different. This was a cross-cultural wide-open experience on streets, in hospitals, in nursing home and schools.

At an orphanage in Jocotpec, I was captivated by the hundred or so teenagers without parents but so connected to each other as "brothers and sisters." I watched them connecting with each other,

watching each other's reactions to the various clowns, puppets, balloons. I saw them encourage each other's interactions and involvement. Age didn't separate us, nationality didn't separate us -- in our hearts with songs, and laughter, we all became brothers and sisters. As we departed, the youngest gathered around the bus and kept looking for the familiar face of their special clown friends, connecting with long looks. Their reluctance to have us leave brought tears to my eyes and a wish that I could be a parent to a dozen more children than the three I have at home.

In Guadalajara, at the request of a young woman in the Plaza Libertad, *Hearth Throb*, *Anna Banana*, *Clown Dode* and I accompanied her to a house of abandoned babies not far from our hotel. She and two other devoted volunteers help several nuns lovingly care for ten one and two year olds until they are adopted or are moved, when they get older, to a small group home in Jocotpec. We played with the little ones, sang songs, and took photographs of each child to send back to them.

From Patty O'Patches Meagher of Scottsdale, AZ:

I have tried to put into words the joy and how my life has been changed by this trip. I think I learned more from the children and how they enjoy life for just what it is, full of great wondrous miracles and events. Every day is a new adventure for them and they accept life as it comes and never let it pass them by. We who are so dependent on our material needs and comforts got our eyes opened wide.

Our cultural differences were accepted and enjoyed with little giggles and lots of smiles. We could do no wrong. The children and adults were standing with open arms and hearts to receive us and help make our visit with them as comfortable as possible. Who came to entertain? It makes one stop and think! I can't wait to go back and see the boys school and the deaf school. These were my most favorite and touching experiences, for those who have very little have the biggest hearts. I hope I can continue to remember the song they sang to us so it will keep me humble and not taking life for granted. I want to experience the joy they gave us with just a smile.

Los Payasos Con Corazón



Can you imagine anything better than clowning with 2000 of these wonderful, eager, delightful kids? See page 15



Waiting in line at the check in at the airport!



Bill Rigiletto Waters spinning a plate on a hospital ward



Clowns leaving the school



On a public bus Anna Banana on the left made friends with this mom and her little boy, who promptly put his finger up his nose for our photo.

