

Caring Clowns International

"Enriching Lives Through Joyful Connections"



Jed Selter a.k.a. *Duffy*, the clown pictured above stepping out of the truck, has been a volunteer clown for more than 30 years working in orphanages, hospitals, retirement homes and schools in the United States and internationally. He is a cofounder, President and the Executive Director (volunteer) of Caring Clowns International ("CCI"). Also pictured inside the truck is *Scooter* a.k.a. Don Hill and in the back is *Pockets* a.k.a. Jeff Taylor

Our Mission

We clown to heal and expand the human spirit: people-to-people, country-to-country and culture-to-culture. We fund projects which improve people's lives.

A Unique Organization

We raise money to accomplish Good in the world – helping to fund humanitarian projects through well-established nonprofit organizations. And, we clown to help awaken the human spirit: making people laugh, helping to heal, and connecting people to their individual humanity.

Clowning is an unusual art form. It is buffoonery, freeing people to become aware of how connected we all are to each other. It is jubilation to experience life.

The clown creates a safe harbor for people: for the young, and the old to enjoy the reverie of unabashed laughter for its own sake. Clowning is joy expressed openly by a stranger (the clown) to the audience. It is self-effacing foolery. It is insane! Yet, it touches people of every culture and every generation. Clowning is a micro-moment of loving and caring devoid of hate, politics, conflict, tension or personal agenda.

Our clowning beckons adults to become children again, and magnifies the happy childlike qualities of children themselves.

We operate in the United States and internationally, touching children and people of all ages, cultures and life situations. We honor diversity and multi-cultural connections, and open the human spirit among and for the good of people.

From *Duffy* the Clown a.k.a. Jed Selter

I began as a "klown" (as we spell it) in the Boeing Management Association (BMA) Klown Klub in Seattle, Washington. The Klub, which has been in existence for 50 years, is also known as ambassadors of Boeing even though The Boeing Company does not officially sponsor the Klub. We clown at special community events and clown in Children's Hospital and retirement centers and some Boeing functions.

Since I spent years managing Boeing's Security and Fire Protection organizations, including the uniformed security officer corps, I was, until recently, "*Duffy* the Keystone Kop Klown," outfitted in a complete Keystone Cop costume. As I didn't want to travel with CCI to third world countries with a law enforcement persona, I became just "*Duffy*." My Keystone Kop outfit has been pretty much retired.

After my clowning trip to Vietnam in 2001, I was inspired to write *Behind the Grease Paint: A Clown's Chronicle in Vietnam* about my experiences [See some verses reprinted on pages 13 and 14]. When I am feeling low or kind of want to meditate and bring down the pressure level, I will sit and reread the verses in the book. It melts me away because it brings back such unbelievable memories.

I've traveled to third world countries and seen the devastation which still exists there. In Vietnam many of the disabled children are from that war. When we dropped all that Agent Orange to defoliate the jungles, it leached into the ground water and into the plant and food sources. It has caused the birth of severely deformed children. Agent Orange has a half-life of 500 years. So the Vietnamese are still giving birth to deformed children. "Returning" [a verse about a soldier in the Vietnam war, reprinted on page 13] is not about me, I was in the US Air Force in a non-combatant assignment at the Pentagon; I've only traveled to Vietnam as a clown. "Returning" is about the tragedy I feel about political war, and this fuels my desire to help the children of war-torn countries

Our First Project - A Pig Farm in Vietnam

We committed to funding a US\$25,000 Teaching/Working Pig Farm for disabled children in Cam Lo, Vietnam, started by Kids First Vietnam. The farm is wheelchair accessible and attendees learn animal husbandry and how to raise pigs. They leave with a micro loan to buy an impregnated sow and six months of feed to start their own small farm. Then the youth sell pigs they have raised back to the Kids First pig farm. These are all wheelchair youth doing this. It's kind of a "teach them how to fish thing" [Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day, teach him how to fish and you feed him for the rest of his life]

Trying to raise money just to go clown is impossible. What we do with CCI is not only clowning, it is raising money and putting money in places that will really change children's lives. We have contributed over \$35,000 to help needy children internationally and in the U.S. We clown as volunteers annually in over 100 events internationally and across the U.S. This includes orphanages, hospitals, retirement centers, VA hospitals, community celebrations, prisons, military homecomings and schools. We have clowned in Africa, Brazil, Canada, the Caribbean, Hong Kong, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam, and soon in Peru.

So how do we raise money to fund all these projects? We beg a lot. We do what it takes. We have a base of contributors and events we do to raise money. We do auctions for other organizations like Rotary. For one auction this fall we (clowns) will serve the dessert (Twinkies with clown noses on them). We will sell a couple of things and also auction ourselves off. CCI keeps 40% for our own projects. That is one way we raise money.

The Navy is a big presence around Seattle as there are several bases. We do a lot with homecomings and crew/family parties. I'm getting connected with one of the chaplains of Fort Lewis, which is a US Army base, and we will start clowning at homecomings for soldiers. So we do a lot of that. We also make money for our projects that way. When we do something aboard one of the aircraft carriers (walk-about, balloons, face painting etc.), the Navy will normally give us money for our projects. This comes from their MWR Fund (Moral Welfare and Recreation Funds).

The Projects We Support

We have a list of 15 projects we are currently funding all over the world. Our five-year goal is to raise and responsibly donate

between \$250,000 and \$500,000 to support needy children. What we have chosen to do is not take on direct projects ourselves because we don't want to be in the business of managing projects. We want to be in the business of funneling money to creditable non-profits that are professional project managers. So we raise money to help them do projects to help children in the world. The way we decided to do that is to have key partners.

Our Key Partners

One of our key partners is World Vision. We have been raising money for their Tsunami relief. Another is Prosthetics Outreach Foundation. We have given them money for prosthetic arms and legs for children and for helping them to start their mobility clinics in Sierra Leone, Angola, Vietnam and Ethiopia. We just committed to raise \$10,000, which will buy 36 limbs for children in Africa and Vietnam. We will be doing a joint fundraiser with them this fall. We provide them money for them to do what they know how to do.

Some of the non-profits and others we support with clowning and donations include: Candlelighters; Children's Hospitals; The Detlef Schrempf Foundation (helping needy children); First Book Sno-King (a literacy program-free books to low income family children); Helping and Loving Orphans (HALO) – Afghanistan and Vietnam; Kids First Vietnam; Peace Trees Vietnam; The Prosthetics Outreach Foundation - Angola, Sierra Leone, Vietnam; Tree House (assisting needy families); and Vision House (living assistance to battered women and children)

We are also Key Partnered with Komedyclub - a group of surgeons out of Boston. They contacted CCI because they were looking for an entertainment arm to work with them internationally. This year June 8-18, 2005, we went to Lima, Peru. See next page

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Above, in Peru, the doctors of the Komedyplast and Peruvian team receiving red noses

Komedyplast



Duffy continues: And, Oh! That Komedyplast Team! They were absolutely extraordinary. A number of the doctors are world renowned as the best in their fields. If you could have seen the 'before and after' surgery results for the 20 or so children on whom they operated, you would be awestruck. These people are angels from heaven - I have no doubt. The doctors took time away from their practices, volunteered and paid their own way to Peru to do this. Their knowledge, professionalism, skill and constant caring for their patients, their Peruvian counterparts, each other and us clowns was wonderful. And their surgical support and PR teams, and those who hosted us and helped to make this mission possible were amazing as well! All of them are just marvelous humanitarians. We are indebted to all of them for this experience.



Pictured above "Duffy, CoCo, Pockets, Scrubs (Dr. Weinzweig) and Scooter

From Dr. Jeffrey "Scrubs" Weinzweig, Founder and Executive Director of *Komedyplast*

"Our maiden mission to Lima, Peru was an absolute home run! Each of our goals was accomplished. And then some. We have changed numerous children's lives, their families', and our own . . . forever. We have introduced the Peruvian plastic surgeons, neurosurgeons, head and neck/maxillofacial surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses and other staff at the Instituto de Salud del Nino (the Children's Hospital) to craniofacial surgery, a field of surgery that had not previously existed at this level in Peru (or anywhere in South America). We have strengthened existing bonds and established new ones between the multiple teams in Lima who have a great interest in caring for their children and learning how to improve the care they can provide. They love their children as much as we love ours. Now, as one American-Peruvian family, they will have the opportunity to have them receive the care they need for complex craniofacial abnormalities.

Dr. Weinzweig continues "Most important, however, is that in addition to sharing our expertise with the Peruvians, we delivered a promise behind which we firmly stand: we will return to Lima year after year after year to ensure the children are receiving the appropriate continuity of care while our Center of Excellence in Lima blossoms. This Center will serve as a craniofacial training and treatment referral center for all of Peru and, ultimately, all of South America."

Finding a Need and Filling it

When CCI travels internationally, we will try to find an organization in that country to leave money with. Such an organization was *Armonizar* in Peru. They are the 15th project that we are now supporting

A good part of the success of the Peru trip was organized by this small nonprofit clinic call "Armonizar" which means "Harmony" run by a Catholic Brother, Lucas Sempe. They provide cleft palate speech therapy and dental work and family counseling free for needy children. They service around 200 children from the Lima area to the Amazon. One child travels 30 hours by bus with his mother each way twice a month for therapy. They did the initial screening for the cleft palate children. They also did all the arrangements for the trip. They had pre-screened children and the *Komedyplast* doctors did the final screening while we were there.

Surgery was done on 20 children from minor two hour surgery to complete facial and neurosurgery. The complicated surgeries are like 15 hours. The Komedyplast and Peruvian doctors worked every day, non-stopped. They were unbelievable. We clowned with the families and the children waiting to be screened in a big gymnasium. When the surgery started, we visited almost all of the 700 beds one-on-one in the hospital. We were in Lima for ten days and clowned in 15 other venues. We clowned for eight hours a day. We were filled with joy, but just exhausted. I couldn't complain though - the doctors were working 15 hours a day. There were four of us. We gave away 1000 clown noses too.

The trip to Lima was the highlight of my life. The Peruvian people are so warm and so appreciative. We just felt like we were part of the anchor for the team of doctors. (What we did when we first met the doctors and the administrators in the hospitals was to put a clown nose on everybody. [See photo at top of page] You could see all the political tensions melt away. It was amazing. (It was the power fo the red nose!)

We will also be submitting a grant application to help Armonizar purchase nasal scanning equipment to use in their work with children. (The equipment is \$15,000, and considered crucial to adequately support their patients.)

Scrubs [Dr. Jeffrey Weinzweig] and I will be planning CCI's future involvement with Komedyplast missions. We will be planning a five-city trip in Peru to clown in poor areas, including work in the Amazon jungle.

Photos by Komedyplast www.komedyplast.org