

Hospital Clown Newsletter

A Publication for Clowns In Community and World Service

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.....The World Wide Smile Mission

... taking smiles to anywhere worldwide, where a smile is desperately needed.

Members left to right: Ben Kemperman, Clown Bluey (Blue Brattle), Masjolie kemperman, Conk (David Vaughan).

“It all started with a few clowns in England sitting around and chatting about how they could help these countries in desperate need of a few smiles.” says Clown Bluey, aka Blue Brattle of Marchwood, Southampton UK and former Chairman and Secretary of Clowns International www.clownsinternational.com.

They started a small Charity Foundation registered in Amsterdam, Holland. The Charity consists of a small, dedicated group of clowns who commit themselves every year to provide charity performances and clown shows to

orphanages, hospitals, special needs schools, and children and adults who just don't have the opportunity to see entertainment in their environment and who are seriously in need of a smile. The WWS Team take SMILES, LAUGHTER and GIGGLES to the WORLD, wherever they are needed!

Full information can be found about World Wide Smiles Tours (including photo slide shows of each tour) at www.WorldWideSmiles.biz. For reports see: Bluey's Website at: <http://www.clownbluey.co.uk>

World Wide Smile Mission Begins

From Clown Bluey aka Blue Brattle

We were sitting around talking about what we could do to bring smiles wherever needed. We had invited the RazDvaTrie Pantomime Company from St Petersburg, Russia to our first International Clown Festival in Southport. Blanco and I picked them up from London Gatwick airport and Blanco (Terence Browne) got the job of ferrying them back and forth from the festival accommodation to the Southport Festival venue.

The Russians invited us to do a mini clown festival in St. Petersburg. The idea was to do street theater and visit orphanages during the day time. In the evenings, Blanco and I performed in the Russian Company's full-length Pantomime (an all mimed routine). The Russians had a background tape that told the story in Russian as we (acted it out) played it. Because my flight was delayed by two days, I didn't have any time to rehearse as I arrived on the opening night! So during the first night's show, I was being told what scene we were doing next and then we improvised (in front of a live full-house audience) in a two thousand seat theater....!

Blanco had talked about the idea of a Smile Mission to the Russians and the Russians liked the idea also. Masjolie had come with the remaining group of 20 clowns from Clowns International. Masjolie and Blanco formed the World Wide Smile Mission and on her return to Holland, Masjolie formally registered the project as a charity in Amsterdam, Netherlands and became the first (and incumbent) President of The World Wide Smile Mission.

From these small beginning the clowns went back to St Petersburg the second time but this time as The World Wide Smile Mission and not Clowns International. I wasn't involved at this time. The group consisted of Conk, Blanco, Masjolie and Ben (Masjolie's husband) who became the Ring master.

In 2004, after three consecutive trips to Romania, we decided to go somewhere else and we went to Kosovo (formerly part of Yugoslavia) which was very interesting. There is still a very uneasy peace there after the civil war. Kosovo is still not recognized by some of its neighbors. We went to a lot of different places – orphanages, schools, Christian Centers and a battered women's shelter. We felt that on the whole, the children were better looked after than the ones in we had seen in the Gypsy camps in Romania. Even so, we all felt that it had been a worth-while trip and we took smiles to many children and adults who had been involved in a terrible civil war.



Conk and Clown Bluey performing in Albania

The WWSM followed this with two trips to Poland and three trips to Romania, visiting orphanages and hospitals. In Romania we visited mainly the Gypsy Camps which were no more than mud huts (See below). In Ulft, Holland, Masjolie had worked as a volunteer with the Mother Teresa Foundation. They have a big warehouse supply depot and shop there. The Mother Teresa Foundation is involved with building small two - room houses for the Gypsy communities. They have a wood stove, table and chairs in the ground-floor room and pull down "attic steps" to the attic room which serves as a bedroom for the parents and children. So we got involved with that and were there to see the first Gypsy families moving in which was very nice. [See below]



Mission Impossible? To Sri Lanka

Clown Bluey continues: So when the Tsunami hit in December of 2004, we felt that we should try to make a tour to at least one of those areas in 2005. Masjolie found a contact of someone already working in Sri Lanka. They were working to try and relocate children who had lost everybody in the tsunami and working alongside the Island's Education Department trying to get the children back to school. Many of them are traumatized and living on the streets. So the tour was arranged and we also arranged to do school shows and orphanages and wherever we could perform to bring a bit of joy and smiles back to the community. It presented some great financial and logistic problems as we needed to fly, not drive as we have done on all our previous trips (except St Petersburg).

We've always been self funded and there are only five members of the WWSM to date. Of those, only four travel on each trip for logistic reasons. What we usually do is donate the income from one show each once a year into the charity funds. We use Masjolie's village of Ulft as a home base and we use our own transport by land to wherever we are going. For example, Kosova was a two day drive through Holland, Germany and Austria and former Yugoslavia and the same for Romania.

But for this trip we had the logistical problem of flying to Sri Lanka. We did get a deal from Sri Lanka Airlines, but we still need to raise money for the journey.

So They Got a Little Help from Their Friends

From Shobi Dobi:

Clowns from CI (Clowns International) participated in a fund-raising festival in Ulft, Holland to help send four clowns from the World Wide Smile Mission ("WWSM") to clown for the school children in Sri Lanka affected by the great tsunami. They are Clown Bluey, Masjolie, Conk and Ben. The trip was expensive so in order to cover the cost of transportation to the other side of the planet, the Smile Mission asked for a little help from their friends, and there were plenty of friends - 20 clowns from CI and the wonderful welcoming, friendly generous people of Ulft, Holland who hosted the festival.

Ulft has had this festival every year - the Centrum Festival Day with a different theme, this year being the 15th. When the Smile Mission decided to go to Sri Lanka, Masjolie went to the town meeting and asked the town to support the Mission. They did. It became their first International Clown Festival.

Clowns who participated were: Masjolie (Maria) and Ben Kemperman, and Antonio Lody, (Netherlands) Toto, and Shobi (USA), Clown Bluey, Conk, Clown Bobby, Dizzy Dez, Nangaz, Smilie, Flo, Rico, Allyson, Tom Fun and the Rapide Brothers (England), Jester Coco, (France), PeeWee and Klovnen Jo-Jo, (Denmark), Clown Helmi (Germany).

Everywhere we went in Ulft, people were so open to us. The town had not only arranged homes for us where we were given breakfast, but had arranged a place for us to eat our other meals and congregate and store our clown motley. This turned out to be the meeting house of the town band, which made for several



Ben, Masjolie, Bluey and Conk at the Ulft Festival

nights of great camaraderie. They were a wonderful group of chaps and chapettes (Is that the proper way of saying a female chap?).

"We stayed in a lovely home" Flo (Kari Donald) commented, "and their home was like our home. We could do as we liked. We had a lovely garden as well. Everyone was really nice and the grateful. The whole town welcomed us."

Clowns did show at the school and collected envelopes from the children. Before the festival Masjolie and family made up one thousand envelopes for the school children to make donations to bring clowns to cheer up the children of Sri Lanka affected by the tsunami. Conk explained "through the school system the children were asked to do little jobs for one Euro -car washing or tidying up their bedrooms - or instead of having a drink or a biscuit, that money went into the envelopes. We figured one envelope one Euro. At the end of the day when we counted the envelopes instead of one thousand Euros, we had 2, 843 Euros. This meant that the children put more than one Euro in their envelopes and did many odd jobs for the sake of the tsunami children. That kind of generosity from children was amazing." There were other events to raise funds - A Children's Matinee Show and an evening Gala Show. On Sunday morning Everyone attended the Church Service in motley (clown costume for you non Brits) and everyone was well behaved (sigh). It was the first time the Catholic Church had clowns and they were a little nervous. Nangaz, Tom Thumb, Ben and Masjolie participated in the service. The church had a very favorable response and said they had not had such a crowd in a long time.

After the service the clowns passed out red noses. This took longer than expected and the band down the street got the wrong cue and started the parade without the clowns. Bluey and Flo were still in the middle of putting on their stilts but still managed to catch the parade through a short cut, but I lost the parade. I managed to borrow a bike and then rode all over town asking "Hebt u mijn parade gezien? (Or something like that!) "Have you seen my parade?" As the band was taking the parade all over town through back alleys, (they forgot there would be road closures), it was really funny trying to find them.

"Have you seen my parade?"



During the festival day there were six areas that clowns used during the festival. Four performance areas with small 20-30 minute shows each hour. One area was for circus skills workshops and one area had face-painting. Shobi, Peewee and Antonio Lody had the privilege of being the Mix and Mingle Al Fresco Clowns. I think Huggy Bear (Shobi's puppet) shook hands with everyone at the festival. He's still recuperating with a big smile on his face on my bed at home.

Toto Johnson (photo to the right) did some of the shows, but between shows he comments, "During the mix and mingle time, I had so much fun just having conversations with little 3 year olds. They didn't speak a lick of English and I not a lick of Dutch, and we would just laugh and laugh. I would say 'Yah' and they would say 'Nah.' And I'd say 'Yah, Yah,' and they would say 'Nah Nah.' We'd go back and forth. Then I'd say 'Ya ya yah yah yahhhh yay' in the kids sing song teasing song. And they would copy me with 'Na, na, nah nah nahhh nan.' It was just sooo funny and I have no idea what the kids were saying, but they would just laugh and laugh and laugh. Their eyes would sparkle and that's what made it so special for me - that connection with the kids even though we had no words in each other's language."

Toto continued "I was in full Auguste and sometimes that can be intimidating to a 3 year old, but I didn't encounter that at all on that day. I didn't find any kids that were scared. There were some younger children of course that would not get anywhere near me, but even the 3 year olds in Ulft would run right up to

me." I (Shobi) took breaks from the Mix and Mingle and mingled again on a bicycle. The Dutch bikes are somehow bigger and more comfortable. You get to sit straight up AND everyone is riding them. So often at festivals it has been my experience that I am clowning all the time and don't really get to see the town or where the people live or what they do. Well, I found two very nice women who loaned me their bikes alternately. So in costume I would take my breaks around town riding a bike and waving at everyone. It was just wonderful. Everyone was so generous and open to playing. It was amazing.

The festival was not only a success for the WWSM, but for the town of Ulft. There were merchants lining all the streets who said the turn out was terrific. What helped in a big way was the appearance of a well-known popular TV personality - Piet Paulusma - who presents the weather forecast nationally from different parts of Holland. He came on Friday night and miraculously a huge crowd of people and children appeared to meet him. We clowns were all out in the main square entertaining Al Fresco when he arrived. His interviews with various clowns were televised and appeared on national TV at 10 o'clock that night for 30 minutes - a great PR coup for the Festival. Ulft has never had a clown festival and for this little town to be televised on national TV was a big thing and no doubt the exposure brought many more people into the Centrum Festival on the Sunday.

From Conk, "The organization of the festival was so marvelous. And the clowns worked together so well. What happened the first day was amazing. We got the money to pay for the airfare to Sri Lanka on the very first day of the festival from the school children of Ulft.

What was so wonderful about the festival for me was the friendliness and the hospitality of the people. Everywhere we went we were welcomed. And the generosity of the people and the children was amazing. They just gave and gave for the World Wide Smile Mission Squad."

This was a brilliant way to involve a whole community in a project. They/we managed to raise 8462.44 Euros (depending on the rate of exchange approximately \$US 11,000). The children alone (excluding the shows) raise nearly \$US 4000! (€2845.80) And we all had such a good time doing it However, it was a lot of hard work on the part of Masjolie and Ben. Hope we can do it again!



Toto Johnson in conversation with a couple of 3 year olds