

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The email messages and phone calls started almost immediately. Frantic.

Where are you? Is everyone ok? Nervous. Was that the bridge we crossed on the way to Paul Zaloom's show?

In both the puppetry community and in the larger community of friends, neighbors, and acquaintances, people drew together in their concern for one another.

Community. That word was really brought home to me in the wake of the disastrous collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis this past week. In our local area, among our various circles of loved ones, family, friends and acquaintances, the anguish and relief swirled as we sought reassurance of their safety.

Community. In the larger context of a national, continental, and international village, messages of concern poured in to the puppetry family here. The electronic campfire of instant messaging and email has knitted a scattered group of people close. Where, formerly, letters of anxiety and fear might take days or weeks for answer, today's online communication brings more immediate relief.

Community. What struck me, though, was the encompassing, family nature of the messages. Instead of individual letters or phone calls, our communiqués reached a broad portion of this puppetry family all at once.

All of this comes on the heels of the very successful National Festival in St. Paul Minnesota this past July. Our "family gathering". Indeed, as has been mentioned many times in the past by me and others, the puppetry community, especially the Puppeteers of America, is a large extended family. The National Festival past was just another affirmation and celebration of that familial tie. The worried concern of this family in the past few days only serves to reinforce that connection.

WEB AND ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Applications for the new Web and Online Communications Coordinator, an appointed officer position are now being taken. This position will oversee the Puppeteers of America website operation and email communications.

For further information on the specific duties of this position and the applicant information required, please contact Trustee:

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• July - August 2007 •

Editor: Fred Thompson • 26 Howard Avenue • New Haven, CT • 06519-2809

So far, all this sounds so solemn and somber. And I guess that is the nature of the events of this past week.

But the president's message, especially after a festival gathering, should be upbeat, rallying enthusiasm for the organization and calling for renewed commitment to furthering our work to advance the Art of Puppetry. Consider that done here.

In fact, consider for a moment what it means to be an extended family of artists and supporters of the art. We are concerned for each other as evidenced above. But a family also works together, finds ways to support each other, too.

As an arts organization, the Puppeteers of America has need of many hands to do our work, your work. Consultants, committee members, officers. Large jobs, small jobs. All tremendously important to our goal. Please consider committing a few hours of your time to helping your family. Call a trustee to volunteer for a committee and to help on a task that needs to be done.

Support can be given in other ways, too. Although the financial position of our members varies greatly, even the smallest financial contribution (and, ok, large ones are great!) to the endowment fund, scholarships, and even the general fund can help greatly. Gifts to the general fund especially can help keep membership costs down, particularly for the next generation of puppeteers, and are a wonderful way to grow the Puppeteers of America.

At the present, the Puppeteers of America stands in really good financial and organizational shape after a bit of rough sailing. With the tremendous energy coming off the National Festival and the sense of community, of family, I think we engendering, this organization is poised for even greater service to Puppetry in the days and years ahead.

Hope the rest of your summer is safe. On to the 2008 regionals and Atlanta in 2009!!

Wayne Krefting - President.

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Contact information for the officers and Board is available online at www.puppeteers.org under Executive Committee, or in the Membership Directory.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

THANK YOU FOR
RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP!!!

If you have not renewed, PLEASE do so as soon as possible so that your PofA publications will not be interrupted.

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the GUILD CONNECTION

KURT HUNTER

It's hard to believe that Puppet Rampage has already stormed through Minnesota leaving delirium and a delicious haze in its wake. As usual all the festival sights and sounds are still sinking in. It was a fine festival. That much has already sunk in and the underlying euphoria is still with me. As amazing as the performances, exhibit, workshops, store and all the other events were, it is the people that make up our marvelous community that really put the icing on the cake for me. (Or maybe they are the icing. It's something like that, anyway.)

- As usual the festival was an opportunity to put faces with names. I met Kristin Charney, the editor "Puppet Life", the incredible newsletter of the Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry. It's almost more magazine than newsletter thanks to the contributions of folks like Christine Papalexis, Alan Cook, Beth Fernandez, Evey Brown, Dan Destler and Jackee Marks. The summer issue featured the smiling face of Gayle Schluter on the cover as Gayle and Don have moved from California to Colorado. That puts her in our Great Plains region, so LA's loss is our gain.

- My own **Twin Cities Puppeteers** spent the June meeting getting ready for the Rampage, specifically for the Puppetry Store. After inheriting collections of Puppetry Journals for twenty some odd years, we decided it was time to get them back into circulation and collect some cash for the guild in the process. We sold an awful lot of stuff, but we still have a lot of Journals left. If you are looking for specific issues to complete your collection, let me know. We'll give you a good deal.

- The members of the **Greater Houston Puppetry Guild** had a working meeting in July at the home of Jean Kuecher. They were stamping and labeling the full color brochures for their Annual Houston Puppetry Festival coming up in September. It's an event that must hold great appeal to educators and families. This year's event will feature a puppet parade, puppet store, 18 workshops and performances by Jean Kuecher and David Caranza. Educators can also walk away with 6 education certification clock hours.

- Also in the appealing event category, the June meeting of the **San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers' Guild** featured a performance of "Rex and Boots Supper Sleuths" by Anita Coulter and Tim Sweeney of Swazzle as well as a workshop on "Making Puppets Come to Life" by Mike Wick. They are meeting at the Museum of Children's Art (MOCHA) in Oakland and encouraging the public to attend guild meetings. It has been a bonus to have kids in the audience for the shows and MOCHA is happy to have them.

- **The Puppetry Guild of Greater New York** is another group with a great meeting location. Their March meeting at the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre in Central Park featured a performance by Sean Keohane of "Polichinelle, Merchant of Blows-With-a-Stick." The play by Louis Duranty was translated by Sean from the original French.

- **The Columbia Association of Puppeteers** tend to roam for their meetings. In June they met at the home of Candace Dobson to get a taste of what she is putting together for a show based on Celtic legends for her Imagine That Theatre. The July meeting was scheduled to be a trip to the Sherwood Robin Hood Festival in Sherwood, Oregon to see guild president Jason Ropp perform "The Reluctant Dragon".

- Summer is an excuse to get together and kick back for some social time for many guilds. **The National Capital Puppetry Guild** will be gathering at the home of Bob and Judy Brown in August for their annual picnic. In addition to the traditional burgers and hotdogs, the menu includes toasted marshmallows and S'mores. Bob will also have a stage or two set up for a picnic pot pourri.

- **The Atlanta Puppetry Guild** met in April for a BBQ chicken potluck (I guess summer comes earlier in Atlanta) at the home of Lee Bryan. In addition to food and fellowship, they got to see Lee's new show "Circus De La Suitcase", which of course packs down into a couple of suitcases for easy transport.

- **The Twin Cities Puppeteers** will be journeying out of state (well, actually a mile or two into Wisconsin) to gather for our annual picnic at the lavish estate of Diane Rains and Stu Janis. (I haven't been there, so the "lavish estate" part is just a guess.)

- Sticking with the tried and true model of dinner and a show, the **Detroit Puppeteers Guild** met in July at the home of Marty Boatman for their hotdog and hamburger potluck and, of course, a chance to perform. Taking the model a bit more upscale, they are planning for their annual guild birthday party in September at the American-Polish Century Club featuring a performance by Dave Herzog and his patriotic puppets.

- The gathering that I envy the most is the **Connecticut Guild of Puppetry's** annual end of the year picnic at the O'Neill Theater Center. They meet in June at the conclusion of the O'Neill Puppetry Conference to take in the conference performances.

- The annual summer drought of guild news has hit, so I've been forced to look for news in other pastures. As the Internet is an easy pasture to get to from here, I've been wandering through guild web sites. The news isn't as full and ripe on most web sites as in the newsletters, but I'm not picky when I'm hungry. (Actually, I'm not picky when I'm full either.)

- **The Lone Star Puppet Guild** had their National Day of Puppetry event at the Dallas Public Library. It was probably a great event, but the website was thin on details.

- **The Columbus Puppetry Guild** had their NDOP event at the Whetstone Library with performances of "Rapunzel" and "Cinderella". A bit more detail from that website

- **The Puppet Guild of Greater St. Louis** had their NDOP event at the Missouri History Museum with Leon Van Weelden as their guest performer. I also caught up on St. Louis news at the festival while chatting with Michelle O'Donnell. It sounds like the guild is in fine health with Glen "Papa" Wright moving into his third year as president. Enthusiasm is Papa's middle name, so I'm sure his energy is doing great things for the guild. The guild has also managed to break out of the membership mold that most guilds are in and boasts considerable racial diversity.

Well, that's what I have to offer this time. Whether it's a two sentence email or a magazine like newsletter, I'd love to hear from you.

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EUREKA!!!

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Greetings All Summer Schleppers and Puppetophiles Everywhere. Once again I have thrown my stuff into my cases and have headed for the great state of New York. I'm spending the next several months cruising the Adirondacks and being a summer tradition to all the folks in the small towns where I "walk on water." What a great life!

CD REMOTE SOLUTION: I am still learning about my computer. This week I learned that I could actually view e-mail that had been bumped off by my spam blocker. I found some things that I wish I had seen earlier. One was from **Peter Rizzi**, of **Salinas CA**. He wrote, "(For my remote CD solution) I have gone with the Virtual Soundman I Cue system (www.virtualsoundman.com) and have found it a worthwhile investment. I purchased the wireless foot pedal and a belt clip remote and now use it with a Sony Minidisc, thought I use a Sony CD as a back up. The whole thing (including minidisk player) cost a little over \$1000, but I put it to the test during my busy December (nearly fifty shows). It worked wonderfully. The great advantage is that when you step on the pedal it plays the track then pauses at the next track. No need to step on the remote to start and then step again to pause. I was able to start my show by having a phone ringing (a cued sound effect) and then pretend to talk on a prop phone hidden behind the playboard. I was also able to do an encore with my polar bear ice skater by simply recueing the track via my belt clip remote." [Peter, I stopped reading at the "fifty shows in December;" I'm in a state of zombie...NS]

ANOTHER CD HINT: **Robert Boehm, Jr.**, of **Farmington, NY**, may also have a solution. He wrote to tell me that one of his Puppet Guild of Long Island members said that the ones used by DJ's pause, and can be hooked up to a foot pedal. Has anyone tried this, or knows of a brand name of one of these? How about one of you in Long Island?

HELPERS BEING (ACTUALLY) HELPFUL: **Elaine Woodall**, of **Allerton, PA**, says that she built her PCV rig to come apart in as few steps as possible, so she glued many of the parts together. When she is done performing folks always want to help her dismantle her stage so she lets them. (Now, that thought freaks me out!) The ends that come apart she painted green; the glued ones she painted red. Now she sits back and tells the helpers to take apart only at the green..."and put them in that bag over there"

COOL...NO, HOT IRON: Another tip that went the way of the cybernapper was from **Peggy Pearson**, of **Greenwood, IN**. She wrote: "I found a mini iron, electric, about 4-5" in length, at JoAnn Fabrics. It is just the perfect size to fit in your toolbox when you are on the road or if you are doing little things by the sewing machine. It will be great for me at day camp. I love gadgets!"

HITTING THE HOLE: I love gadgets, too, Peggy and I also really love simple solutions to picky annoying problems. For instance, did you ever try to drill a hole in a round piece of PCV pipe, only to have it slide off again and again and again? I was watching an onsite plumber tackle this very problem. After putting the pipe in a vice he took his hacksaw and lightly scored the pipe straight across at right angles. Next he scored the pipe at a forty-five degree angle across the original cut. Presto! X marked the spot and his drill stayed put straight through.

SMOOTHING PLASTICINE: I am not a stickler on perfectly smooth puppet heads, but I work toward a nice look to my puppets. I can't help but wonder how those doll makers get such perfection in the smoothness of their heads. **Jim Rose**, of **Yellow Springs, OH** gave me a slice of broom handle, about three and a half inches long, sharpened like a pencil at both ends. He uses it like a rolling pin over larges spaces and as a modeling tool in tight ones.

BIG JOBS: **Iver Johnson III**, of **Syracuse, NY** takes the door hole cutter (those round ones that you attach to your drill), stretches it out a bit [flattens it] and then uses the toothed side as a clay comb. This makes quick work out of hills and valleys.

A REAL SMOOTHIE: To get a smooth, smooth surface, I have tried Vaseline, baby oil and spit, but now I have to try another. **Mathieu René**, of **Toronto, Ontario**, says the Skin-So-Soft by Avon is the ultimate product for smoothing. He says it's miraculous: it softens your hands, it smoothes your clay and it keeps the mosquitoes away.

Does it get any better than that?

BUSINESS STUFF: In our continuing quest for tips on business etiquette, **David Herzog**, of **Chicago, IL** provides two more tips to add to the list. First, never call a client or perspective client by his or her first name unless given permission to do so. [You're right, Dave. I lost a perspective gig that way. NS] Second: if you make a mistake on the contract price and the gig requires more time or effort than you had originally thought, don't come back to your client for a "second scoop." Better that you absorb the extra cost than to have your client--ex-client--telling everyone how you ripped him off.

PACKING RIGHT: We had the Melikin Puppets for our guild banquet and are always so impressed by not only the show, but also the professionalism they bring to the puppet community. **Mel Biske**, founder and creator of Melikin Puppets said, "It's easy enough to buy some of these commercial storage containers, but please don't show up sporting cardboard boxes that say "48- 12 oz. cans of green beans." If we have some puppets or props that just don't quite fit in a commercial container, we build a box to fit those items exactly. **Dick Myers** gave me the idea of making your own containers. Make a box out of heavy duty cardboard, cut it down to fit your puppets, make a lid to slip over the top, cover the box and lid with muslin material. All our containers are black for easy touch-up. By adding a piece of 1/4" plywood to the bottom, you can install swivel casters. You can also cut out slots in the box or add rope handles for easy transport.

PROFESSIONALISM: Again and again, it is important to look at everything you do with the eye of the professional: What does the customer see? Pretend to be the pickiest, fussiest, most uptight and nitpicking person in the world and look at your business through that person's eyes. And on this note, I think I am going to sign off and go touch up my playboard (If your playboard is black, magic markers are great for covering nicks.)

And remember, I could really use a few tips.

See ya! Nancy

REUM~ ...with a view. ■ M'EL REUM

I have returned home after two wonderful weeks seeped in puppetry. I was at Puppet Fest Mid-West to start out and there, took a shadow course from Jim Napolitano, I sometimes am amazed at how little we know and how much there is to learn about puppetry. I have been teaching kids shadows for years, but now I know how to do real adult shadows. I learned a new and totally different way to do shadow controls and new and different materials that will work for shadows. I also met seven new puppeteers that were classmates. Jim was awesome and has inspired me to get to work on a real shadow show. My thanks to Debbie and Peter Allen Directors of PFW. I love the chance to devote a full week to specific areas of puppetry. We drove to The Rampage and I was delighted to see not just the old faces, but lots of new faces. Where have all you people been hiding? What a joy to see so many puppeteers in one place the old and young, men and women all shapes and sizes. WE ARE NOT ALONE, WE ARE ALL CRAZY.

The shows were great, the workshops outstanding and the friendship overwhelming. Bob Nathanson and Drew Allison are to be congratulated for a wonderful job. I would also like to thank all the other people who worked so hard and made the Festival such a success. I love my week or two weeks in the summer when I can just eat sleep and soak in all the puppetry I can get. (We ate lots of soup last winter as I stashed away part of the grocery money to go to the Festival. There are ways to work these things out.) My spirit is renewed and my imagination is on ... wild.

One of our first timers at the Festival was Michele Redman. She teaches at a correctional facility for girls. She uses the puppets in teaching life skills, relationships, and character education. Michele said when she got home from the festival she headed for stores to gather up "stuff" for all her new ideas.

Up in Oregon Jason Ropp of Dragon Theatre Puppets is performing

at the Robin Hood Festival. Wayne Martin is doing "The Beat Goes On" at the Boston Public Library.

Alynn Gooen in NY this past spring did a show in Bombay and his Wife Annie is building a new bug costume for a month long gig in Longwood gardens in PA. Marilyn Price in Michigan presented her Magic Whirl of Puppets at the Kalamazoo Public Library.

There was a write up in the Seattle Post about the Aurora Valentinetti Puppet Museum. The museum is small but the collection is large and displays change often.

A nice note and a brochure from Elka Schumann and the Bread and Puppet Theatre in Vermont filled me in on the new Bread and Puppet Museum. It is one of the biggest collections of the

biggest puppets in the world. If you are up by Glover, Vermont stop in and see it,

It is always good to hear of young people getting into the act. Up from Virginia to the Washington young Candace Hudert joined her dad Christopher to help with a show. I understand they even got a quick coverage from CNN.

Joe Santoro is remodeling a Victorian building he acquired in West Virginia into -yes- he is turning it into a puppet theatre. Joyce McCarthy has opened a new puppet related store in Detroit. She has books, CD, puppets and parties.

Debora Hawkes also has a store in Detroit called "Puppets and Stuff".

Drama of Works in NY has two new shows "Words, Words, Words" and "Puppet Kafka". The Arts Center is hoping to present an Alice Festival with special guests from all over the country.

Special greetings to Mel and LaVerne Biske, "The Melikin Puppets", who celebrated their 50 th Anniversary and congratulations to Paul Vincent Davis celebrating 30 years at the Puppet Showplace.

Summer is disappearing and I have to go back to work. It's hard to believe school is starting. E-mail me and let me know what you are up to. Yours in Puppet Recovery ... M'El....

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