



# P·L·A·Y·B·O·A·R·D

The NEWSLETTER OF THE PUPPETEERS OF AMERICA

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

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to all and welcome to our new home. I hope this new location is successful and I continue to welcome ideas and suggestions.

As you are reading this, the new Members Handbook and Members Directory are in the offing. The Board decided to separate the two as the Handbook information changes rarely and the Directory changes yearly. In order to save money, a designated number of Handbooks will be printed, and sent to new members as needed and the Directory will be printed yearly and sent to everyone. The Handbook information has previously been published at the beginning of each directory, so just hold onto an old copy. Much of this information is also available on our website. [www.puppeteers.org](http://www.puppeteers.org)

Speaking of our website, Steve Abrams informs us that our website receives on average 5,000 hits per month, the bulletin board being the most popular page. In addition, the Puppetry Store got 3,000 hits in October. Thanks to Steve and Lindsey "Z" Briggs, our webmaster, for their constant vigilance.

The Puppetry Store staff of Tommy Cannon, Nancy Smith and the Greater Arizona Puppet Theater are to be thanked for their work at the Festival and throughout the year, serving our members and the public interested in all things puppet.

Currently on the Store web page is a Teaser for the Atlanta Festival DVD. Check it out! Pre-sales are being taken at the Store. The finish date is February, 2010.

### REGIONAL FESTIVALS PLANNED FOR SUMMER 2010:

#### GREAT LAKES REGIONAL FESTIVAL - JULY 29 - AUGUST 1, 2010

President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, Springfield, Illinois  
Festival Director – Bridget DePriest  
[bridgetdp@cs.com](mailto:bridgetdp@cs.com)

#### SOUTHEAST REGIONAL FESTIVAL - JULY 15 - 18, 2010

University of North Carolina at Wilmington  
Festival Director – Gina Gambony  
web page [www.portcitypuppet.org](http://www.portcitypuppet.org)

#### NORTHWEST REGIONAL FESTIVAL - JULY 30 - AUGUST 2, 2010

(Friday night through Monday breakfast)  
Seattle University, Seattle, Washington  
Festival Director – Tony DeFilippis,  
[tonydefilippis@comcast.net](mailto:tonydefilippis@comcast.net)

Information will be posted on PofA's website as it becomes available. I believe all three festivals are seeking performers and workshop proposals. It looks like a great summer!

We are a special group of people, artists, writers, performers, teachers, librarians, and more. We are also a volunteer organization. It is because of the dedicated individuals of this wonderful organization that we can continue to present quality festivals, publications, web presentations and more.

We are also living in tough times; PofA is not exempt from the financial difficulties plaguing our nation and the world. We ask your continued support, whether it be renewing your membership, inviting others to join, giving a gift membership or a gift to any of our Funds. Please be generous and no gift is too small.

As the late great George Latshaw said, "Every puppet show is a gift." Please consider a gift to PofA to support this very special of art forms.

Thanks to you all and good wishes for all your Holiday projects.

Anna Vargas, President

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## Playboard

With this issue, we begin the 21st. year of *Playboard* in a new context. *Puppetry Journal* Editor Paul Eide kindly offered a new home to *Playboard*. And here we are! We hope that you will find its inclusion here, convenient and useful. As always, comments are welcome.

*Playboard* has seen few changes over the years, more in staffing than content, and it has evolved somewhat in style. Paul Eide who created the idea of an in-house newsletter in 1989 became its first Editor.

- Nancy Sander with her 'EUREKA!!' column has been offering technical, performance and business advice garnered from our membership ever since 1980. Her column began in the *Puppetry Journal*, and now has come full circle. An amazing record.
- M'El Reum has been a contributor for many years, both in the *Journal* and *Playboard*, writing 'The Guild File,' 'Reum-er has it' and now 'Reum ... with a view' columns. M'El manages to sort through heaps of puppet news and keep us all informed.
- Kurt Hunter, the newest of our writers, stepped in when Rod Young was unable to continue his famous 'Punch's Mailbox' column. Kurt now compiles news from our Guilds and always manages to find a thread on which to tie it all together. Entertaining and fun.
- Every PofA president has written for *Playboard* since its beginning. Their messages reflect the Board's views, report on organizational business or express personal takes on the happenings within and outside of PofA. Thanks to them all.
- Your Editor has the easiest of jobs in that all he does is to make sure it all fits into the allotted space. Your columnists are faithful, dependable and constant. They all depend on YOU to continue to furnish them with news, happenings and tips.

*Playboard*, after all, is a reflection of you, our members. *Enjoy!* - Fred Thompson

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# The GUILD CONNECTION

KURT HUNTER

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Looking for a reason to celebrate?

- **THE DETROIT PUPPETEERS GUILD** never seems to have to look very far to find a reason. They have a birthday celebration every year complete with a dinner and entertainment. This September they celebrated their 63rd birthday with performances of "Dundee's International Flea Circus" and Guy Thompson's marionette variety show "Stringling Brothers Circus."

- **THE PUPPET GUILD OF GREATER ST. LOUIS** is even older. Founded in 1939, they are celebrating their 70th anniversary this year. I don't know if they have a celebration planned. They may be too busy to stop long enough to celebrate. They had their annual Halloween Costume party in October and Puppetfest 2009 in November featuring "The Frog Prince" by Bob Nathanson and a frog puppet making workshop by Ginny Weiss.

- **THE LOS ANGELES GUILD OF PUPPETRY** also had a costume party in October along with their LAGOP Family Showcase. The showcase featured the guild's younger members, Mario Seki and Zane Darcy-Goldrick with master of ceremonies Dyllan Christopher at the historic, yet very active Bob Baker Marionette Theater.

- The annual Puppet Fair at Children's Fairyland hosted by the **SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA PUPPETRY GUILD** is another bit of on-going history to celebrate. The 53rd annual event this fall featured performances by Randal Metz, Nick Barone, Lewis Mahlmann, and Valerie and Michael Nelson. I can only guess at how this works, but there was also a "puppet petting zoo."

- **THE GREATER HOUSTON PUPPETRY GUILD** just completed their annual Houston Puppetry Festival in September. This year's festival featured performances by Julian Franklin and Jean Kuecher as well as more than a dozen workshops, a puppet store, a puppet parade and lunch. I'm always impressed that they pull off such a big event every year. I hope they weren't too exhausted to celebrate their accomplishment.

- The Bowie Center for the Performing Arts was packed with puppets in August, when the **NATIONAL CAPITAL PUPPETRY GUILD** hosted their Day of Puppetry. Those attending got to see "Clowning Around" by Bob Brown and "Dig Those Dinosaurs" by Beale Street Puppets.

- It doesn't have to take long to start a tradition. Artie Poore's summer party for the members of the three local guilds (**THE PUPPETRY GUILD OF GREATER NEW YORK**, **THE PUPPET GUILD OF LONG ISLAND** and **THE GARDEN STATE PUPPETRY GUILD**) surely qualifies. The third annual event was both a reason to celebrate and a celebration itself.

- The newly chartered **WILLAMETTE VALLEY PUPPETEERS** celebrated in September with a potluck picnic at the home of Doris Hicks. Apparently they are a hungry group, because they were instructed to each bring not one, but two dishes to the potluck.

- Marty Richmond, newsletter editor for the **COLUMBIA ASSOCIATION OF PUPPETEERS**, hit a milestone with his 100th newsletter. He decided that milestone was a good time to step down, so now it is time for others to step up.

- "Puppet Treks," stories of interesting puppet travel was the topic for the August meeting of the **BOSTON AREA GUILD OF PUPPETRY**.

- Lots of guilds have been featuring performances this fall. **THE CONNECTICUT GUILD OF PUPPETRY** took a trip to the library in September to see Rolande Duprey of Purple Rock Productions perform her new show "The Basket Case."

- **THE WEST MICHIGAN PUPPETRY GUILD** saw a performance by Ginger Miller and her troupe from Kalamazoo of "Myrtle and Gertrude, the Hasenpfeffer Sisters" followed by a workshop by Joanne Schroeder on writing humorous puppet skits.

- In September, the **FLORIDA SUNCOAST PUPPET GUILD** was treated to a performance of "Mariposa Martinez and More Stories from Latin America" by Katie Adams. In November, they had a Sound and Lighting Clinic.

- **THE ATLANTA PUPPETRY GUILD** met at the home of Lee Bryan in September and Lee showed some previews of a new holiday show he is working on. The featured speaker was Jon Ludwig, Artistic Director of the Center for Puppetry Arts and writer and director of the new show "Little Noodle." He offered some behind the scene information, showed some video, and answered questions.

- **THE PUPPETEERS OF PUGET SOUND** were also treated to some expert advice in September when they met at the studio of Tony deFilipps for a mold making workshop. Tony made molds for the movie "Coraline" so he clearly knows what he's doing.

- The members of the **PHOENIX GUILD OF PUPPETRY** got some hands on experience with sculpting at their September meeting when Daniel Dold led a sculpting workshop. Plaster molds and casting in neoprene are planned for a later date.

Interesting meetings have been happening all over.

- **THE ORANGE COUNTY PUPPETRY GUILD** featured an appearance in September by ventriloquist, puppeteer, magician, sword swallower, juggler and fire eater David Markhan.

- **THE INDIANA PUPPETRY GUILD** met in August at Peewinkle's Puppet Studio for a workshop about "make and take" puppets. Peggy Melchior Pearson had some paper puppets and anyone else with a good "make and take" puppet was encouraged to bring an example.

- **THE PUPPET GUILD OF SOUTH FLORIDA** is working on an interesting idea. They are putting together a "Virtual Puppet Exhibit" for their website. They hope to do a real, physical puppet exhibit at some point, but the virtual exhibit is a great idea whether that happens or not.

Well, that's all the room I have for news this time. Let me know what your guild has found to celebrate and I'll help spread the word.

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I love the fact that I can rattle on in this column, with wild adventures. I really hope you don't mind. This month I hit one of those puppet "co-incidences" that can only happen in the puppet world. I was called to do a puppet workshop for kids. So I returned the call to a young man who hoped he could in a week, develop a show with the kids. You know - "build the marionettes, develop the story, do the scrip, build the stage, paint the scenery and then a performance, all in five days. "Oh yea." I ask him "What made you interested in doing puppets with the kids?" and he replied "My grandfather did puppets and I thought it might be fun for the kids", I said, "What's your name?", and he replied, "Matt Bixby." I in turn replied, "Your Grandfather wasn't Meredith Bixby?" And indeed he said after a long pause. "A, a, a, Yes". A million years ago at one of the first Festivals I attended, **Meredith Bixby of Saline, Michigan**, did a show, one of those wonderful hand carved marionette shows that toured the country. Matt had some great tapes that he shared with me, as well as one of his grandfathers' scrapbooks.

As I searched through the scrapbook, who appeared as a friend and helper, but my old friend **Rick Morse, of Flushing, Michigan**. Also the late **Pat Sutton**. A strange connection - Pat's Sutton's Uncle is a priest at our church here in Denver. The puppet world is indeed a small well-connected world. We never know when some one is connected to someone else.

Puppeteers are as busy as ever it seems. One of the busiest companies is **Heart of the Beast in Minneapolis**. In November they did the 'Story of Thich Nhat Hana' a Vietnamese Monk who generates peace and social change. Their December show will be the return of 'La Natividad.' It is a show that moves from place to place, with street theatre and puppets, parades and candlelight.

**Drama of Works in New York** has returned from a tour of International Audiences in Finland where they performed their 'Warhol,' 'Sleepy Hollow,' and 'How the Earth Got It's Color.'

**Bob Nathanson of Coconut Creek, Florida** is on a jaunt through Iowa and Missouri and then back to New York City doing "Frog Prince." HEY Mid-Westerners !! Catch him if you can.

**Mark Keeler, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** has been working on a new show this year, which sounds intriguing based on the old familiar 'Rumplestiltskin.' It is however, based on pickles and it is called 'Rumple-dill-skin.' How can it miss? His Christmas show is 'Crayon Box Christmas.' Great titles.

**Phil Arnold, Detroit Michigan**, finished children's workshops in Ontario and then collaborated with **Tova Ackerman in New York** to develop a performance that they will both be doing in their own areas.

**Maureen Lawry, Boulder, Colorado** has been working for the wild life people and doing a show on the ECO works of the Prairie Dog. It has been a huge success and even I have a better feeling about the 'lil' critters.

In the nature arena the **Hudson Vagabond Players** have been presenting 'Butterfly, Story of a Life cycle.' It is the story of the Monarch Butterfly merging from caterpillar to butterfly.

A magic friend sent me a wonderful write up in the "American-Profile". The story is about **Erik and Brian Torbeck and sister Robin Erlandsen, The Frogtown Mountain Puppeteers of Bar Harbor, Maine**. They were performing in Roswell, Georgia and the children were awed with their performance. The article continued with the wonderful work and history of **Bonny Hall and Jamie Keithline - The Crabgrass Puppet Theatre of West Brattleboro, Vermont**. Topping the article was a front-page cover picture of TOGO, **Margo and Rufus Rose's** signature marionette.

I know there must be more articles in the papers throughout the country. If you are lucky enough to be written up in your hometown paper, *PLEASE, PLEASE* send me a copy. Everyone needs to know who you are. Share your press with everyone not just your hometown.

The yearly **Potlatch** was held in November at **Pokagon State Park near Angola, Indiana**. Reports from attendees say it was a tremendous success, delightful, imaginative and unqualified fun.

# REUM-

## ...with a view.

M'El Reum

The week before Halloween, Denver had an unbelievable early snowstorm. School was closed for two days (much to my joy) so I found time to read **Bob and Judy Brown's (Oakton Virginia)** new book "Pair of Cockeyed Optimists." I spent my two days laughing, smiling and moments of "Oh, I know feeling." If you have ever dealt with the sleeping, imbibing, union, light, sound

or stage managers, you are required to read this book. The nutty people you run into, the situations you have been in that no one believes you have - it's all there. If you do puppets, you can't help but laugh and enjoy it. A great fun read!!"

Congratulations to **Angela Beasley, Savannah Georgia**, and her **Puppet People**. They are the proud winners of the Family circle award from the Coastal Family Magazine,

Busy Christmas Puppet Productions: "**Peewinkle's Christmas Show**" in **Indianapolis, Indiana**, **Puppet Co. Playhouse in Glen Echo, Maryland**, doing the "Nutcracker" and the **Wonderment Puppet Theatre, Martinsburg, West Virginia** presenting "The Nutty Nutcracker."

A fond farewell to my friend **Pady Blackwell**. We will miss you, but never forget you.

Well good friends we leave '09 and march forward into another year. I have no idea where the time went this year. I look forward to new and wonderful things to come.

Have a blessed Christmas and a wonderful New Year

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# EUREKA!!!

NANCY SANDER

Greetings To All You Fun Peddlers

As I write this column, an old tune is running through my head. I stopped to listen to what it was and guess what? It was Gene Autry singing "Back In The Journal Again." It seemed like yesterday when **Judy Brown** of **Oakton, Virginia** approached me at the 1980 UNIMA Festival with the idea of 'Eureka!' What fun! What a wealth of information has come across my desk.

**PHRASING:** There is not a one of us who has not admired Abbott and Costello's 'Who's On First?' What makes this bit of business work so well is the impeccable timing that these two masters bring to the audience. There is not a nano-second of unplanned silence in the whole piece. We can learn not only the value of rehearsal, but also the value of timing from Abbott and Costello. For the solo puppeteer it's all in the breathing. When should you take a breath? If there were a pause between every sentence of 'Who's On First?' the piece would die a sorry death. The beginning puppeteer usually starts with a 'sentence-breath-sentence' pattern (i.e. he says - breath, she says - breath, he says - etc.). Often this is quite all right but when the cadence picks up, that breath at the end of each sentence must go.

Instead, the puppeteer must finish 'he says -' and continue with the same breath into the 'she says' (and often right into the next 'he says'). One of the fun bits I have in my 'Jack and the Beanstalk' show is when Jack and his sister start a back-and-forth quarrel with the mother trying to break it up. For it to work properly I must not stop for a breath through the whole quarrel, just change voices as I go.

**FLU SEASON:** We all are worried this year about being around all those kiddies with the coughs, runny noses, sneezes and (oh, no!) the Swine Flu. How can we, as up-close-and-personal performers protect ourselves and still relate to our young audiences? **Melanie Zimmer**, of **Vernon, New York**, whose husband is in public health, sent me a long list of tips (wash hands, use hand sanitizers, etc.) and here's one I never thought of: sign any papers using your own pen (like deposit slips at the bank, Melanie? Right?). And Melanie, who has a degree in microbiology, reminds us that if you are one of the lucky ones to get a vaccine, remember it takes two weeks before you are immune. In addition, don't let kids come into your booth, especially if you use a scrim. After the show, take down your curtain, stay in your booth and let the children talk to the puppets from up on your playboard. They are used to seeing the puppets in their puppet space, and the children will take a step back to see the puppets better. And if, by chance, the children touch the puppets, remember that the virus can live outside a host for only eight hours. Pop those puppets into the box, sanitize your hands and don't touch them again until tomorrow's show.

**TRUCKIN?:** On a lighter note, I heard from **Sparky Davis**, of **Cranston, Rhode Island**, about the 'Rock n Roller Cart.' She highly recommends this lightweight cart that folds up and easily fits into the car. She says, 'I can carry my folding wooden stage, stage curtains, sound system and three duffle bags of puppets in one easy trip.' Log onto [www.rocknroller.com](http://www.rocknroller.com).

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**CANCELLING A SHOW:** This is a good time for you to start taking steps in case you have to miss a show. Start by building a list of other appropriate acts that you have seen (!) that could substitute for you in case of illness. Often this list can be reciprocal. Arrange the payment scale ahead of time. Most often, you both will be similar, but if not, never ask the client to pick up the extra. That is your responsibility. But if you are feeling 'punk' don't show up and give every child your germs. Call your back-up act, make sure he or she is available and then call your client. Your client will not be pleased, but will appreciate your arranging talent for him at the last minute.

**SORE THROAT:** Swine Flu isn't the only bug that will be going around. **Rick Morse**, of **Flushing, Michigan**, was bothered by a persistent scratchy throat. He was in his local vitamin store when he happened upon 'Throat Coat,' an herbal tea. He tried it and found that it did the trick. Now he has a cup of tea about a half hour before showtime and has lost the scratch.

**FAKE FUR BRUSH:** She also writes that the FURminator dog brush is excellent to remove hot glue from a fleece puppet. Check out their website at [www.furminator.com](http://www.furminator.com).

**Alice Rhodes**, of **Stone Ridge, Georgia**, reminded me to use a separate brush on your puppets. Do not share the brush with the dog, the cat or yourself. The oils in the hair of the living will hasten the grunge of the puppets. And work hard at keeping those light colored puppets up to snuff. Grunge will be noticed by people who have white carpets, white walls, white towels, white bedspreads, white linoleum, white - ? I digress. Use spray upholstery cleaner to brush into your pastel or white puppets.

**CENTERING THE EYEBALL:** Have you ever tried to hit the exact center of an eyeball for blinking eyes? **Bil DeLong**, of **Minneapolis, Minnesota** has the perfect solution. From the hobby store purchase a brass tube (it looks like a soda straw) the diameter of the shank you want. Next, buy a ball bearing the size of the eyeball you need. Stand up the straw and put the ball bearing on top of it. It will naturally settle exactly in the middle. Then make your silicone mold around the bearing and tube. Now can even pour your *Alumilite* down the tube into the eyeball. After all is set up, you can saw off the metal tube to the length you need and use that as your shank.

**THE TAPPER:** I know I have printed this before, but the Tapper is a very seasonal item and is so useful to my business that I just have to mention it again. Only at Christmas time can you buy the Tapper. It is a wonderfully larger toggle foot button that turns electrical things on and off. It was designed to turn Christmas tree lights on and off with your foot, but I use it for my music (I use tapes) and have used it to ignite a flashpot. You can get the Tapper at your local Walgreen's for about eight dollars. Then pick up a few extra at the after-Christmas sale. I have a bunch even though I have never had one go bad.

I hope you have a profitable holiday season and a good puppeteer's black Friday (December 26?) And when January comes and you are sitting around waiting for the phone to ring (that's not the way to get business, by the way,) jot down a few tips and send them along to me.

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