

# REUM- ...with a view.

M'EL REUM

Suddenly it's 80 degrees outside and I am sooo far behind I can't believe it. The past three months have been ghastly and I am ready to spend the summer having fun and adventure.

My mail box has been gathering dust. Nothing in it. I hope you are all too busy and you just couldn't whip off a note. Now if you read that sentence, sit down at your computer and let me know where you are going and what you are doing.

I hope everyone has saved enough money to go to a festival or workshop or the like. It always gets your juices flowing and hopefully makes us creative.

**Philip Huber** of **Cookeville, Tennessee** visited the Arizona puppeteers and charmed them with his marionettes and **Jim Napolitano** of **North Haven, Connecticut** recently delighted the Detroit puppeteers with his shadow performance.

**Natalya Khusid** from **Royal Oak, Michigan**, was trained in St.Petersburg Russia and willingly shared some of her history with the Detroit puppeteers. I wish we could gather all the people with puppet knowledge together just to sit and talk and share,

**Portland, Oregon's Jason Ropp's Dragon Theatre Puppets** have a whole summer of dates for his new show "Little Bugs, Big World."

**Paddy Blackwood** is headed down to **Celebration, Florida**. He and **David Eaton** are thinking theatre, and might be interested in good help if you are down that way.

I asked last time about strange places that you have done puppet shows. I got a great e-mail from **Bernie Beauchamp** of **Reno, Nevada**. Bernie does a festival known as the Burning Man. It is held in a dry lakebed. They all survive in the desert with wind, rain, dust storms and 100% temperatures. OK that's weird.

**The Parasol Puppets** – **Peter and Debbie Allen** left **Jamesport, Missouri** to journey to Seattle and the Northwest region. Debbie said they had a wonderful time.

Check out this new and fast growing computer site: **Puppet Hub**. <http://www.puppethub.com>. Created and hosted by **Moe and Laura Gans-Pomerantz** of **Pawcatuck, Connecticut**.

Had a great note from **Randal Metz**, of **San Leandro, California**. Randal reports from **Fairyland** at **Oakland**: **Lewis Mahlman** is doing well and has donated 40 years of puppets to the Fairyland theatre.

I understand that **Bob Nathanson's** book: "Diary of a Doll Wiggler: A Bob's-Eye View Into the Wacky & Wonderful World of Puppetry," is in the stores. Bob's from **Coconut Creek, Florida**. I'll have to get mine this summer at a Fest. Denver can't read anything unless it deals with sports.

Now that summer is here. Let me know what is happening in your puppet world. Have a great summer. M'El

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope this issue of the Playboard finds you and yours safe and well. I have three important pieces of news to report:

First, the Election is OVER!! The Puppeteers of America Board of Trustees election is over and the results are in. The new and/or returning Trustees are: **Steve Meltzer - California; John Scollon - South Carolina; and Peter Zapletal - Mississippi**.

Thank you to all candidates who ran in this election. Congratulate these new Trustees and give them help and support by volunteering your time and talent to our effort to promote the art of puppetry.

Thanks, too, to the Nominating Committee who presented us with an outstanding slate of candidates. Chaired by **Steven Widerman**, with **Valerie Nelson, Joanne Schroeder** and **Lisa Sturz** serving on the committee.

Second, there's more to this summer than elections and politics—it's time for puppet festivals! Now with all the turmoil over gas prices and an uncertain economy, puppeteers, like others around the country, are carefully shepherding their finances and looking toward the future with not a little trepidation. Budgets are tight; people are reluctant to travel far.

Fortunately, this is the summer of regional festivals, so most members won't have far to travel to participate in a gathering of puppets and puppeteers. The eastern United States has the greatest concentration of festivals.

The **Pacific Northwest Region** is trying something different this year with their, "**Rolling Regional Puppet Festival**" (<http://pnw-rolling-regional-festival.org/>) which actually started April 27 in Portland Oregon and continues through August 23 in Victoria, British Columbia.

### WEB SITE COORDINATOR

The Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the appointment of **Steve Abrams** as our new Puppeteers of America **Web Site Coordinator**.

The Board reviewed resumes and conducted interviews with several candidates and made their selection in April.

Steve, who hails from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is a long time member of PofA and has served the organization in several capacities over the years. As a former Board member, and past President of PofA, and presently an associate Editor of the *Puppetry Journal*, Steve brings a wealth



## P.L.A.Y.B.O.A.R.D

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PUPPETEERS OF AMERICA

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**The Southeast Region's "Puppet Gumbo" - June 12-15 in Savannah, Georgia** (Check the cool website <http://www.southeast-puppetfestival.org/>).

**The Great Lakes Regional Festival - June 26-29 in amazing Shippshewana, Indiana.** ([http://www.mousetraptheater.org/index\\_files/Page877.htm](http://www.mousetraptheater.org/index_files/Page877.htm)).

**Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Regions - July 10-13 hold their joint festival in College Park, Maryland** (<http://www.puppetfest2008.org/home.html>).

If you haven't already registered, please consider attending a regional festival. These programs offer generous helpings of not only local talent but acts from across the continent!

And third, you've undoubtedly heard by now that the Puppeteers of America has changed it's membership year.

of knowledge to this newly created Appointed Officer position. Steve has been serving as web coordinator for several years and has worked closely with Lindsey Briggs, the PofA Webmistress to develop an outstanding and informative web site.

Our web site, designed by Lindsey will continue to evolve, which, along with the *Puppetry Journal*, will bring the face of the Puppeteers of America to the world.

Check out Steve and Lindsey's efforts at: [www.puppeteers.org](http://www.puppeteers.org)

Starting this year, memberships will run from mid-September to mid-September. How will this affect you? Not at all, really, other than if you are a current member, your membership will be extended through September and you'll get a free Journal (yippee, something free! Pretty unusual these days). Fred Thompson and the Board of Trustees have worked closely to come up with a plan that will better serve the needs of members, festival staffs, and clarifies how late year memberships and so on are handled.

This is one of those instances where everyone wins, and is a fine example of how well this organization operates with everyone working together. I've got a couple of more examples, but they'll have to wait until next time.

Catch a festival and have a great summer!

Wayne Krefting - President.

### DID YOU KNOW...?

The Post Office charges a **substantial** fee for returned publications with incorrect mailing addresses. The Post Office destroys the Journal and only returns the cover. Besides the cost of postal fees, the initial cost of printing and mailing the Journals is wasted.

We do not presently charge for replacement Journals as a matter of courtesy. Budgetary considerations may require us to alter that policy.

**PLEASE**  
LET US KNOW OF ANY CHANGES IN YOUR ADDRESS OR EMAIL ADDRESSES.

Thank you for your cooperation.

# the GUILD CONNECTION

KURT HUNTER

In my last column, I reported inaccurately that Ed Johnson had been elected president of the **Phoenix Guild of Puppetry**, because he made the mistake of leaving the room during the elections. It was in fact, Ed Rogers, a most gracious gentleman, whose absence led to his election. Ed Johnson, for the record, served as both P of A president and festival director in 1948/49 and was also a pioneer of early television. His marionettes, including Applesauce the Dragon and Gee Whizzer, were fixtures on Detroit television for many years.

- **The Cincinnati Area Guild of Puppetry** has also been taking a look back at the early years of television. In cooperation with the Media Heritage Voice of America Museum, March 15<sup>th</sup> was celebrated as “Larry Smith Day” to honor the local television and puppetry legend. The guild presented him with a “Founders Award” hereafter to be known as “The Larry Smith Award,” because Larry is also the founder of the guild. The exciting day also included performances by Wayne Martin and the Frisch Marionettes.

- Coincidentally, the **Chicagoland Puppetry Guild** was also visiting the early days of television puppetry in March. Mary Chase Lombard, responsible for the marionettes in Borden’s “Elsie’s Little Show” starring Elsie the Cow and later “Fearless Fosdick,” was the guest speaker.

- Reaching a little bit farther back in history, the **Puppetry Guild of Greater New York** took an exciting field trip in March to the sixth floor of the Butler Library of Columbia University where the Brander Matthews Dramatic Museum is housed. The collection includes the ten foot tall marionettes made by Remo Bufano for Stravinsky’s Oedipus Rex. Although those Bufano puppets were still in storage, they did see a scale model of the 35 foot tall clown figure that Bufano made for a 1935 production of “Jumbo.”

- **The Greater Philadelphia Area Puppetry Guild** took a field trip in March to see the exhibit “The Puppet Show” at the Institute of Contemporary Art. In April, they saw “Handmade Puppet Dreams,” curated by Heather Henson with live music and video by Maple Rabbit.

- April saw lots of events celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual National Day of Puppetry. **The Connecticut Guild of Puppetry** featured performances of “The Emperor’s New Clothes” by Lionheart Puppet Company and “Meet the Samsas” by Puppet Art Production. The day also included a lecture/demonstration “Taking the Mystery out of Marionettes” by Fred Thompson.

- The Mousetrap Puppet Theater was the site for the NDOP event sponsored by the **Indiana Puppetry Guild**. They featured performances by Dave Herzog’s Marionettes and the Melikin Puppets and a sock puppet workshop by Bryon Thompson.

- The Rolling Regional Festival of the The Rolling Regional Festival of the **Northwest Region of the Puppeteers of America** was kicked off in April by the **Columbia Association of Puppeteers**. The day included two afternoon performances, Sheri Munske’s Wool Horse Theater presenting “Wonder Tales from Africa” and Jason Ropp’s Dragon Theater Puppets presenting the new show “Little Bugs, Big World.” There was also an evening adults only cabaret presented under the banner “Diamonds to Duct Tape.”

- **The Puppet Guild of Greater St. Louis** brought in guest puppeteer Leon Van Weelden for their Day of Puppetry.

- **The Greater Houston Puppetry Guild** held their Day of Puppetry at the Children’s Museum of Houston. They presented a showcase of short performances by guild members as “Puppets on Parade”.

- Lots of performances have been showing up at guild meetings as well. Pat Lay Wilson performed for the April meeting of the **Orange County Puppetry Guild** as Mother Goose. Susan Wall presented a new work in progress, “Bob the Bunny Show,” for the March meeting of the **National Capital Puppetry Guild**. For the March meeting of the **Puppet Guild of Long Island**, Shirley Joory presented her Purim show assisted by Sean Keohane.

- **The Los Angeles Guild of Puppetry** co-sponsored their Day of Puppetry with the Craft and Folk Art Museum. The day included a hands-on shadow puppet workshop lead by Thom Fountain and a performance of “Lotsa Levity” by Len Levitt.

- **The Puppeteers of Puget Sound** were treated to Thistle Theatre’s “Billy Goats Gruff” for their May meeting. The performance was followed by Q and A with the puppeteers, a backstage tour and puppet manipulation workshop by Jean Enticknap.

- **The Savannah Coastal Puppetry Guild** has had a string of interesting workshops over the last few months. February was on working with found objects as puppets. March was soft-sculpture puppets and April was “Super Simple Polyfoam Puppet Making” lead by Angela Beasley.

- In April the **Phoenix Guild of Puppetry** had a shadow puppet workshop lead by guest artist Jim Napolitano of Nappy’s Puppets. “Humor in Puppetry” was the workshop presented by Stephen Babcock of the Poobley Greegy Puppet Theater for the March meeting of the **Boston Area Guild of Puppetry**.

- **The Detroit Puppeteers Guild** had an intriguing workshop on tap for their May meeting. Natalya Khusid, who trained as a puppet performer in St. Petersburg, Russia, led a hands-on workshop to make and manipulate a unique frog puppet.

- **The San Francisco Bay Area Puppeteers’ Guild** tried something new in March offering a master class in object theatre to the general public lead by Liebe Wetzel. Guild members were given a discounted rate and two weeks of early sign-up. It worked a little too well, however, as guild members took 18 of the 20 workshop slots.

Unfortunately I’ve already exhausted my corner of Playboard, but I have to thank the **Atlanta Puppetry Guild** for the wonderful potluck that they hosted for P of A and UNIMA-USA joint meeting in January. They put out a very tasty spread.

Until next time, keep the news coming.

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# EUREKA!!!

Greetings, Fun-peddlers! As I write this I am in the throes of final rehearsals for the summer opening. Eat? Not I! Sleep? Not I! Walk the dogs? Not...well, I guess I better. But it is a hectic time, and I know you have been there.

But now it’s time to share some tips that have accumulated in the piles around my computer.

**BATON TWIRLER:** In my parade I wanted a baton twirler that really twirled her baton. My thumbs are nimble, but not that nimble! But I found a great solution that is both simple and dependable. I went to the Dollar Store (don’t you love ‘em?) and purchased one of the toy helicopters, the ones where you pull the string and the helicopter goes flying off. But, thought I, what if the helicopter was attached? It would just go around. So, building a rod puppet that had her hand in the air, I duct-taped a piece of coat hanger to the helicopter launcher and attached the baton at the other end of the wire, just above her hand. By pulling the launch string, voila! I used a piece of halogen pencil for the baton, and attached glittery streamers (from tinsel of the Christmas Tree).

**DRAGON FIRE:** I discovered from my audience that the baton tinsel, reflecting the spots, appeared to be lit by fire. “Hmmm,” says I to myself, “I could use some fire...for my dragon’s nose.” Previously, I had attached red ribbons into the nostrils of my dragon, so than when he talked, the ribbons flapped around and appeared to be shooting out (It always is a laugh, by the way, when he stops talking and his ribbons hang down.). What if I were to use red, yellow and silver tinsel...a great fire effect, safe and dependable.

**SOCK PUPPET IMPROVED:** We all make them. We all use them for workshop puppets, but don’t you just hate the way the mouth always becomes mushy and unmanageable as it creeps out, trying to become a sock again? **Noreen Bobersky**, of **Warren, Ohio** gave me a great mouth-creep prevention. She puts on the sock, dents in the mouth and then takes a wide elastic band and puts it over her fingers deep into the thumb-finger crotch. Not only does it prevent the creep, but now she has a great way of attaching hair or head cloths, by tucking them under the elastic band at the knuckle.

**GROWING OLD:** As I write this column three puppets are looking directly at me. They want to be heard. So, Chris, Christopher, and Old Columbus, I will oblige. These three are soft sculpture puppets, all created for the Christopher Columbus show. I needed Chris (age eight), Christopher (age thirty-five) and Old Columbus (age seventy-five). The project was simple: how do I make them all look alike, but just older and older? For Chris, larger eyes, a higher forehead and a shorter nose did the trick. But the interesting one was Old Columbus. I studied the old men at church (usually during the sermon) and began to realize the effects of gravity on our faces (oh, don’t say it! I know! Other parts, too!). The nose and the earlobes continue to grow (look at LBJ), and sagging starts with the eyelids. Below the eyelids, the eyebags head south. Likewise, the filtrim (between the nose and the lips) elongates and (emphasize these) the jowls sag. And any older lady can tell you that the skin below the chin not only plumps out, but sags as well. Then all you need to do is to add wrinkles, glasses and gray hair, and you really have an old person.

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**DOUBLES:** And when you want to make soft sculpture doubles, don’t make one and then the other. Make them side-by-side, each step done at the same time. Otherwise, they never come out looking the same.

**STORING PAINT:** My many bottles of acrylic paint are getting old. Some are drying up; some are separating out. I was chatting with doll maker, **Marge Thomas**, of **Bernard’s Bay, New York**, and she said that she stores all her paints upside down. That keeps the air from penetrating, and keeps the concentrated colors where you want them. A dab of paint on the bottom helps her identify them in her drawer. Again, I my mind jumped ahead, thinking of how many bottles of Gorilla Glue “froze” over the top. Or how about anything that has fumes? The highly concentrated fume air in an upside down can would prevent hardening. Just be sure the can is tightly closed.

**EARLY AUDIENCES:** In an ideal situation, the audience doesn’t enter the theater space until you have had the chance to set up and test the sound system. But that isn’t always our luxury. Children and parents arrive early and begin staking out their places. I always hated to be saying, “Check. Check. One, two, three, four,” with the audience listening to me. But the sound level has to be checked. Being the fun-peddler that I am, I now have fun with the sound check. I have the puppets count for me, all in funny voices. They even talk to each other behind the curtain as they jockey for their positions. The children love it, and it starts to set the tone of the event to come.

**Lois Harmeyer**, of **Monrovia, California**, is a person after my own heart. She identifies her puppets. She writes, “When I make a puppet I like to put a tag inside that lets people know that I made it. I use a woven name label from a company called Name Maker, Inc. The actual size is 7/8” X 2-1/4”, there are many designs to choose from: Name Maker, Inc; P.O. Box 43821, Atlanta, GA 30336; 1-800-241-2890; Fax: (404) 691-7711; www.namemaker.com”

**OUTDOOR VENUES:** I have become increasingly anxious about the danger of UV rays from the sun. I have added to my contract: “For outdoor venues, safety against eye damage due to sun is essential. The site must not have either the puppeteer or the audience staring directly into the sun. No unshaded audience should be facing east or west. In addition, NANCY SANDER, PUPPETEER, cannot perform in the rain (due to electricity) and a rain site is required.”

Which makes me think that I’d better get back to getting that summer show ready. I have added to my essential list of gadgets I must have: a phone that has a memo pad attached. Now I can jot down tips as I see them, even when I am not at the computer. If you have such a devise, create an Eureka file and send me a bunch. I need them!

Have a great and profitable summer. Don’t let the gas situation get you down.

\_\_\_\_\_ Nancy