

Why you would want to compete in GLSCUA competitions...

All of a sudden, it hit me...

I just went to my third GLSCUA mid year convention. They are always fun. The first time I went, I went to get the 'hours' in makeup. I liked the idea of having a lot of hours in makeup every year. Besides, I needed some hours in makeup to get my Red Nose award. Mostly, it was just a matter of personal pride: I had a lot of hours in makeup. I guess that it's hard to explain. Just part of being a clown for me... if I was going to do it, I wanted to do a lot of it. Quantity, not quality. Does that make sense?

I met some clowns there, from other Great Lakes states (Hubcap, Strawberry, Bingo, and Berkie sure pop into mind). I learned how to put on makeup the right way (I modified that to the fast way). I learned some tips on costume, hospital clowning, cute gags, etc. I found sources for the right clown equipment. In general, I just had fun. It seemed like enough to me.

The first time I got into a competition was the single balloon event at Dayton in 2000. Others were getting into the events, maybe I just wanted to blend in. So I got in the contest. I made a bear that was a crude copy of one that I learned from Hubcap. It took me 30 seconds to make the balloon, and 14 minutes to find a marker in my bag, and then, I didn't know what to write on it anyway. It didn't matter whether or not I did it right, I just did it. the really memorable part of the scoresheet was that it did NOT say '...don't come back neither...' on the sheet.

In Indianapolis in 2001, I got into the Whiteface makeup and costume competition. I have the crummiest makeup and costume in our unit. The good parts of the costume were given to me. But others from my unit kept asking when I was going to compete. I guess that I finally ran out of excuses, and I said that I was going to get in the contest at the April GLSCUA convention.

It didn't take very long to get ready... I don't know any tricks, I don't have anything special that I do. It doesn't take any longer to get ready to be in a competition than it does to go out normally.

I stood with the other Whiteface clowns, and had my official picture taken. The judges called us in, and we walked around in front of them. Then, one by one we were called in front of the judges. The judges scrutinized my makeup and costume for what seemed like five minutes. I fought the urge to tell the judges: I'm not a serious contender... look at my outfit! Look at my makeup! I'm making a mockery of this serious event. All the other clowns sunk lots of time, effort and money into this... they're taking it seriously. And then along I come and think I can just drop in and get judged along with them. But I didn't say anything. I looked at the judge's faces, and they're not laughing. Just let it ride... if no one asks you why you're there, don't offer them an excuse.

That night, we all go to the awards banquet. Along with all the Whiteface clowns, I was called up front to hear who won the awards. Because there were only seven Whiteface participants, I got a 'Top Ten' patch. Pretty neat... the kids up at the hospital don't have to know that there were only seven clowns in my class, I've still got the patch, and I came by it rightly.

When the awards banquet was over, we all went up to retrieve our scoresheets. Some sort of morbid curiosity drove me up there to get mine. There couldn't be any good news on my sheets, one of the judges might even have had the presence of mind to see through my charade and expose me to the world for 'crashing' their serious judging efforts. I kept a low profile, and got my scoresheets.

I was stunned. Two of the sheets gave me scores in the 80's (OK, an 80 and an 82, but still 'in the eighties'). Way higher than I deserved. But the last scoresheet told the whole story for me. The score was a 77, but one of the comments was just what I needed to hear. It said that I was a 'good children's clown'. That's all I ever tried to be. And one of the judges noticed that. I don't think that anyone in the event got a better accolade than that. That judge noticed something that was exactly what I wanted to say: I'm in this for the kids, that's my focus, that's the reason for me joining the clowns in the first place. And now, in a professionally judged contest, a judge said that I had succeeded, that I was a good children's clown.

On the way home from the event, I had time to think about what happened that weekend. I

saw some of the clowns I met before, and only see at GLSCUA events. I met some more new friends at GLSCUA. I hung around and noticed more things that clowns do. I talked to them and heard what they do. Not just how to compete in the competitions, but what goes on at their home temples, what they're doing for their kids at the hospitals. What's happening in Shrinedom. What's happening in other hospitals in the Shrine.

Whatever you're 'into' as a clown, there's someone at a GLSCUA convention who's doing that too. The conventions aren't that far away. You can slip away for a weekend and be there. You can join in the competitions for makeup and costume, or skits, or balloons. Maybe they'll tell you what you need to hear, or at least how to get better at it. If you don't learn it in the competitions, you'll learn it the hospitality suite. Or, you can just watch.

Bruce 'Speedy' Garvin
Speedy@ShrineClowns.com

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