

# AWAKEN THE FOOL



## CLOWNING IS PEACE IN ACTION

Book 1 of 12

This is a book for fools who know  
that any fool *can* change the world!

*Peace is the WAY and the LIFE*

*Susan Carew-Holmes*

Text copyright © 2026 Susan F Carew-Holmes

All rights reserved



This e-book is the first of a 12 book series. It has been designed for you to be able to click onto YouTube video links (clown cam) to see the descriptions live. The photos in this book are a window through which you can see through the eyes of a clown.

You will learn how to **Awaken the Fool in YOU** and then change your world!

Can you believe I was a trained economist/market analyst and became a clown... maybe parliament is next?

I dreamed I was teaching peace. I was inspired by the wonderful Patricia Cameron Hill and Shayne Yates to become a clown. I was invited to come to Russia by Dr Patch Adams the famous clown doctor (played by the late Robin Williams in the film). I travelled with 40 clowns from around the world visiting nursing homes, hospitals and orphanages and spreading love and joy to those hungering for what many take for granted. Patch taught me about *friendshipism* and that everyone is great but not greater than. He spoke of the love revolution.

Can you believe I was the first clown to win a scholarship to participate on the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. With 19 peacemakers from across the world, we learned from global experts to map conflicts, solve problems and resolve conflict. We visited the Killing Fields (Cambodia), sat with the Khmer Rouge, visited slums, HIV clinics, refugee camps and learned from each other. I became a Rotary clown, plenty of them in Rotary and hopefully expanding (smiling).

I realised I was a World Peace Clown and decided to travel the world, otherwise how can I attest to this title? I clowned around the world visiting the clowns in Asia, Egypt in the Middle East, Europe, UK, USA, the Americas, New Zealand and touching down in my beloved Australia.

I visited orphanages, schools, universities, peace groups, Gandhi's Ashram, children's exhibition, London underground, on the streets, up in the mountains of Costa Rica, hospitals and nursing homes and took local clowns with me as a first!

I clowned around Australia teaching peace and sustainability to kids.

I was invited to clown in India with Humanitarian clowns. We visited orphanages, hospitals, hearing impaired and blind kids, former bonded labour (slaves), visited the disabled at Mother Therese's Missionaries of Charity, clowned for HIV kids, walked on foot to visit the Jawadhi tribes, some had never seen clowns before. I never forget the smiles! I learned to love everyone unconditionally! This is where real peace starts, with me!!

On this journey you will experience the happiness of clowns who inspire an experience of our universal humanity for we are indeed ONE family. Let's replace fear with love. Let's Awaken ALL the fools. Join Me!!

We live in a beautiful world... that is my experience.

Awaken the Peace Fool!!

Have fun and may the *farce* be with you!

## **REVIEW of AWAKEN THE FOOL by SUSAN CAREW**

### **(Books 1-12)**

*Bill Gasperini, Journalist and former correspondent for CBS News in Moscow  
21 September, 2015*

I met Susan Carew in 2002 in Russia when she was part of a “clown group” led by noted clown/doctor Patch Adams. I could see first-hand how she and other like-minded people brought much good cheer and comfort to children with cancer as well as strangers on the streets of a country not known for public levity.

This is what Susan calls her selfless service to others, a way to bring “real wealth” to people, turning on its head the notion that wealth is only measured in monetary terms. Originally a research analyst, in 2001 she found herself at a crossroads “and I asked the question: ‘Do I continue in market research or pursue a direction that is humanitarian?’”

“I was at a point where I was feeling uncertainty and seeking direction. I asked in my heart, ‘What do I want?’ The only word that came to my mind was ‘peace.’ It was not about being at peace, it was more a question about my purpose or my mission in life.”

This is Book 1 of 12 books detailing an account of a life’s work dedicated to peace, so far: an ongoing, fascinating journey she has conducted to scores of countries, starting with her native Australia. Her goal is to bring peace, love and understanding to a world that is in great need of a new way of thinking and interacting among all peoples.

She calls her clown persona “Peacefull, or depending on my mood, Peace Fool. Jesters are known for speaking truth to power, and on this journey I found myself following the invisible threads to weave truth and love.”

She has met many notable people along the way including Helen Caldicott, the noted nuclear disarmament activist who Susan says gave her a ‘green light’ to begin a life of making peace. “I was choosing to live my truth over money.”

Those who delve into this story will find a fascinating array of remarkable elements that have propelled Susan on her way.

These include extensive poems, studies in peace and non-violence at La Trobe University in Melbourne, hosting a Peace Radio program and educational endeavors that include a study for a “Childrens’ Circle Parliament.”

Susan also highlights something she calls the REAL HOPE(S) for Peace Education program, developed as a means to promote peace, nonviolence and confront bullying. She has already used this in schools, hoping to “truly change the world – and not just make me feel good about what I am doing.” REAL HOPE(S) is a newly creative approach to education encouraging freedom of expression aimed at helping people discover a new way of thinking.

At the end of each chapter in the book Susan quotes something she calls **Fool’s Gold**: “Many have spoken of the alchemy of transforming base metal into gold. Perhaps in truth it is really about personal transformation, transforming negativity into positivity as the real gold of life.”

**“The Fool’s Gold:** Free energy is real freedom from insecurity, dependency and special interests. What you give to another returns to the self.”

And the Fool? In using the imagery of the mediaeval Fool, Susan also undertakes her journey in the same way itinerants used in their own wanderings centuries ago. “Yes I did carry a little bundle on my back, this was filled with questions, courage, values, honesty and love. I walked alone yet my intuition guided my steps and gave me the trust to step off the cliff into the unknown. “

Throughout, she has been able to globetrot trusting in the faith that others have in her life’s journey for things like funding, including a grant from the sister of Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch and a Rotary peace program in Thailand. In 2010 she traveled all over Asia, Egypt, northern Europe, the Americas and ultimately back home to Australia via New Zealand; she has also traveled extensively throughout Australia itself.

All along the way she would seek out people to interact with, usually in her clown outfit which helped open doors and referrals to the next destination. Often there would be chance encounters: “I left Srinagar via a Sumo four-wheel drive and travelled to Jammu, and then by bus to New Delhi. I found a friend on this journey - Barkat. He and I became close and talked on this journey. He made sure I was safe and watched over me. I definitely felt supported and protected. You find angels everywhere.”

In each place she would focus on bringing cheer to people of all kinds, including in refugee camps, an HIV clinic in Thailand and Mother Theresa's Missionaries for Charity in India. On other occasions she met Holocaust survivors as well as war victims, even former members of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia who helped carry out systematic mass killings in the late 1970's.

"Sitting with former members of the Khmer Rouge, I reflected on how they were not healed from this horrendous era in Cambodian history. Ironically the Khmer Rouge were still in government, Prime Minister Hun Sen is a former member." Later she visited Wan Nath, the sole survivor of a notorious internment camp who emerged alive because the top commandant liked his artwork.

The book contains many photographs illustrating her stops and interactions, mostly with Susan dressed in her clown outfit. To an interested observer all of this is remarkable, in what amounts to a major memoir of a lifetime (until now) of trying to make the world a better place, step-by-small step. Susan Carew is a woman on a life mission to make the world better, however small those daily steps toward that goal may be.

At the end of "Awaken the Fool" Susan sums things up better than any reviewer can:

"The greatest love of my life is to be a Fool. I stepped out of society's structures and psychological tourniquets to discover the true freedom of flowing through society as the 'clown'. To see the smile on my face mirrored on the faces of those around me was a mirror ball that kept revolving, sending out rainbow light to all and sundry."

Personally I am so much the better for having crossed paths with Susan Carew in 2002, and I wish her well as she continues her mission for peace into the future.

**Note:** Book 1 focuses on the **peace clowning** experience of a peace fool's journey.

*Books 1-12 explore extracts of Peace Fool's life story e.g. Clowning is Peace in Action, Principled Nonviolence is Peace, Pro-Activism is Positive Peace in Action, Universal Peace Education, Peace or Bullying?, Peace Journalism, Worldpeacefull Social business, Rotary Peace Projects, Travelling the World for Peace, Travelling Australia for Peace, Humanitarian Fools in India and Transformational Peace concluding the series.*

**This book is dedicated to the source of all life ...**

*My highest wish is happiness,  
It is the gift I give to all,  
To see the smiling faces,  
To catch them before they fall.*

*To be a clown,  
Is like surround sound,  
It spreads a ray of sunshine,  
To all without discrimination,  
Without impatience,  
To see the world as one,  
To inspire and have some fun.*

*Under the canopy of respect,  
You will never reject,  
The will of others,  
They must travel their own path,  
We need to learn to laugh.*

*Life is the comedy,  
Perhaps I am the Fool,  
But just maybe,  
That is the school  
for World Peace.*

*Note: I wish to offer my peace work for free or by donation, therefore all funds raised from e-books support expanding peace and values based education in the world*



## Contents

|                                                                                          |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| INTRODUCTION: I Am a Fool for Peace .....                                                | 11         |
| CHAPTER 1: My Dream of Peace (1998) .....                                                | 19         |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: Clowning Around is Peace in Action (2000) .....</b>                        | <b>30</b>  |
| Hospital Clowning (2000) .....                                                           | 31         |
| Clowning on the International Day of Peace (2009) .....                                  | 47         |
| <b>CHAPTER 3: Clowning with Dr. Patch Adams in Russia (2002).....</b>                    | <b>59</b>  |
| Patch Adams Healing with Humour Tour.....                                                | 62         |
| Patch Adams Love Revolution Speech.....                                                  | 76         |
| <b>CHAPTER 4: Rotary Peace &amp; Conflict Studies Scholarship, Thailand (2008) .....</b> | <b>82</b>  |
| Emotional Intelligence Clowning Workshop - Chulalongkorn Hospital.....                   | 83         |
| Field Trip: Clowning at Mae-La Refugee Camp .....                                        | 88         |
| Camillian Social Centre, HIV Clinic, Southern Thailand .....                             | 90         |
| Clowning in Andong Slum – Cambodia .....                                                 | 97         |
| <b>CHAPTER 5: Travelling the World for Peace (2010).....</b>                             | <b>104</b> |
| Thailand .....                                                                           | 107        |
| India.....                                                                               | 110        |
| Egypt .....                                                                              | 112        |
| United Kingdom.....                                                                      | 115        |
| Ireland .....                                                                            | 118        |
| United States .....                                                                      | 122        |
| Central America.....                                                                     | 126        |
| South America.....                                                                       | 129        |
| New Zealand .....                                                                        | 138        |
| <b>CHAPTER 6: Travelling Australia for Peace (2011) .....</b>                            | <b>142</b> |
| Clowning in St Mary's Primary School, Charleville.....                                   | 144        |
| Clowning at an Aboriginal Community East of Tennant Creek.....                           | 151        |
| Clowning with Indigenous Children .....                                                  | 155        |
| <b>CHAPTER 7: Humanitarian Clowns in India (2012).....</b>                               | <b>159</b> |
| Preamble to Departure .....                                                              | 159        |
| Seb's Projects and India .....                                                           | 162        |
| Clowning in CMC Hospital, Vellore, Tamil Nadu .....                                      | 170        |
| International Justice Mission and Hope House.....                                        | 175        |
| Hope House (HIV) .....                                                                   | 180        |

|                                                                                     |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Mother Theresa’s Missionaries of Charity, Vellore .....</b>                      | <b>188</b> |
| <b>Clowning for Jawadhi Tribes in the Jawadhi Hills .....</b>                       | <b>193</b> |
| <b>Jawadhi Hills, Clowning in a Remote Village and Night time Performance .....</b> | <b>197</b> |
| <b>Reflections on the Trip to India .....</b>                                       | <b>203</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER 8: Travelling to the United States for Peace (2013).....</b>             | <b>205</b> |
| <b>Clowning on the Streets of San Diego .....</b>                                   | <b>205</b> |
| <b>CHAPTER 9: Travelling to Nepal for Peace (2014) .....</b>                        | <b>213</b> |
| <b>Clowning at Bright Community School, Kathmandu .....</b>                         | <b>215</b> |
| <b>Clowning in Ghara Village .....</b>                                              | <b>223</b> |
| <b>Clowning Ghara Private School .....</b>                                          | <b>228</b> |
| <b>Clowning on Public Transport, Kathmandu .....</b>                                | <b>233</b> |
| <b>Kanjirowa National High School , Kathmandu .....</b>                             | <b>237</b> |
| <b>CONCLUSION.....</b>                                                              | <b>238</b> |

## INTRODUCTION: I Am a Fool for Peace



This book is a fool's journey sharing how I chose to be a Fool and trust my heart against all the odds and follow what I know to be true for me. Yes I did carry a little bundle on my back, this was filled with questions, courage, values, honesty and love. I walked alone yet my intuition guided my steps and gave me the trust to step off the cliff into the unknown. It is a journey you cannot plan and would seem impossible if proposed, yet it unfolded as naturally as placing one foot in front of the other. It was Lao Tzu, the famous old Chinese philosopher who proposed that 'the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step'. This means action taken from stillness. Whenever I step into the air solid ground appears beneath my feet. Some call it landing on your feet, but I have always found that life supports my every step.

From the archetype of the traditional Fool (or Jester) I have created my own clown character *Peacefull*, or depending on my mood, *Peace Fool*. Jesters are known for speaking truth to power, and on this journey I found myself following the invisible threads to weave truth and love. When I closed my eyes I saw Gandhi as a silent traveller beside me gently nudging me to not give up and find the road less travelled. Always his vision came to me to 'be the change you wish to see in the world'. This mantra disciplined me to walk the talk.

In 1998 I had a dream that I was teaching peace and this opened me up to my own quest, though I didn't realise I was reaching for my personal Holy Grail. The question arises is the Holy Grail a real cup or is it a mythical cup? Perhaps it is a metaphor for the real gold of life or what I call the Fool's Gold. Perhaps this is the gold of self-realisation. Many have spoken of the alchemy of transforming base metal into gold. Perhaps in truth it is really about personal transformation, transforming negativity into positivity as the real gold of life.

I am going to take you on a fantastic journey that only a Fool could make. We are going to step off the cliff of what is perceived as the solid ground of life to find the real magic in life. Come with me and let's go on a journey to discover the peace within. Perhaps you are a Fool for Peace?

### *So what is a Peace Fool?*

The Fool is an archetypal figure who embodies living peace or another way of seeing it is that peace lives through the Fool. The Fool steps out into life with innocence, discovering the wisdom as s/he stubs her toe on the stones and rocks of life. Each obstacle becomes an opportunity to 'be' with the pain and learn how to transform pain into the Fool's Gold. If one keeps returning to the same place and stubbing the same toe, then the Fool hasn't learned the lesson or has been in a vague state, not really awake as s/he walks in ignorance.

The Peace Fool carries REAL HOPES in a bag of magic tricks. REAL HOPES is an acronym for: Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Love, Honesty, Oneness, Peace, Enjoyment and Service. These are the virtues that the Fool has inside which give her the strength to step off the cliff of the unknown. REAL HOPES is a metaphor for the rainbow bridge that bridges what divides us or some may say bridging heaven (spiritual) and earth (material).

Each value is the wealth s/he carries. It is the real wealth, but it is the Fool's Gold because everyone thinks it is not real wealth as s/he has nothing material to show for it in life, and so is thought of as a Fool for taking this path. Others are spellbound by the trinkets and material things in the world. Whilst the Fool spends life discovering that the gold is within and watches bemused as the world keeps digging for gold and looking outside themselves to other people and the external world to give them the gold. The Fool is in a frequent state of joy because she has everything in her bag that she could possibly need. Many people in the world are in a frequent state of pain and lack because they are always trying to find the gold out there at the base of what they think is the rainbow, yet what they seek for is the illusion. The Fool knows that when you go with *in* you do not go with *out*. The world has it the other way around when they go with *out* and refuse to go *within*. So the Fool feels full and the people feel empty, and that is the state of play that creates contrasts. The Fool knows that when you empty of 'need' as greed that is when the gold appears like magic bringing the sense of fulfilment or fool-fill-ment. People think if they are empty they must fill their metaphorical stomachs, yet they get hungry again and spend their whole lives trying to be full.

So let's sum up the Peace Fools journey. Let's put together our gold nuggets to find REAL HOPES in life to re-member:

**RESPONSIBILITY** is to know you are responsible that you have the ability to respond. It is in your hands. You have a choice!

**EMPATHY** is to know when you feel empathy for all those you meet on the road, you stand in their shoes and make new friends. All are potential friends some are in disguise.

**AWARENESS** of life is to re-cognise things are not always as they seem. So you 'see first to look' at the world. That is you look within first to your own truth. Know you are here for a journey and that there are no mistakes, it is as it should be. Be aware of the lessons parading as conflict. They are the greatest teachers.

**LOVE** is the answer. When you feel love in being alive, you love life, yourself and everyone. Suddenly life becomes colourful and you attract the most exciting things to yourself and if things don't go according to plan you still feel grateful. If someone is on the side of the road sad or lonely you will go right on up and chat to them and help them out.

**HONESTY** feels clear and it is a simple seeing of what is so. You cannot be a false fool to anyone, you are the real deal. Honesty helps you look at life, as it is, without projecting negative beliefs onto situations. Honesty realises there are many truths and remembers the mirror ball. Every person is a mirror. Honesty knows that the truth sets you free. You no longer carry a story about others but allow others to be who they are. You no longer assume bad things will happen to stop you going into life to explore. Risks are no longer dangerous they are just beliefs you haven't questioned, so you become curious. Why not be an honest fool so people can trust you.

**ONENESS** means that the world is your family and each person has a family, you remember they could be you. You know that everyone is connected and you are open to life just showing you what you need to know; although it seems that things happen in a linear way but somehow you are just choosing your experience from a whole array of possibilities, you are one with life. Oneness is like one of those cool plasma lamps, all these wild electromagnetic currents radiate outwards. When you touch the ball a beam connects with your finger. So it is like you are one with life but at the same time you choose. Oneness is when you see yourself in the other. Separation ends.

**PEACE** is the gold that is not unlike a tempest then a calm sea, it is being a Peace Fool all of the time. The Peace Fool accepts everyone and doesn't resist anything as life is happening in its own rhythm, when you are in harmony with life you don't try and change others, you change yourself. That is why Gandhi said 'be the change you wish to see in the world'. Just lead by example without forcing others to do it your way or fighting for peace. If there is a problem you can use your tool bag to resolve conflict with people, sometimes people misunderstand and get angry. You can gently say how you feel by stating your truth and see what happens, but don't expect them to think like you, empathy has taught you to know better, just let people walk their own path, it is their journey. Sometimes we learn right now other times it may take 20 years. Peace knows everything happens in perfect timing. Peace is aware that beneath the conflict there is wisdom waiting on your welcome.

**ENJOYMENT** is the shiny gold that just glitters and sparkles with happiness. As a fool for joy why not crack jokes and see the funny side of life and feel joy and curiosity about life and what is happening. The fool plays around in a light-hearted way to remember not to be serious, since seriousness has some fear in it, because people may worry if something doesn't happen their way, they won't be happy. Just be happy that life is what it is and you are not in control. It is a bit like a parachute jump where you just allow the forces of nature to take you. Gravity facilitates the fall to the ground, not up to the sky. Enjoy the ride, smile at mistakes and learn with good humour. Enjoyment is in harmony with your true nature. You are on track and life feels great.

**SERVICE** is the journey itself and when you look at your road, it is one less travelled. Your path is unique and fascinating as you meet so many people, you try so many things, and live in a way that you feel is who you are. When you have gathered all the nuggets of gold within you will naturally find that you will want to serve the world. You will find there is no enemy out there, but only unquestioned thoughts within you. You start to realise that you create your life. You realise that events happen but you decide whether to look for the cup half empty or half full. You realise you can create better outcomes in the future based on what you have learned that hasn't worked. You now know what does work as you have found the nugget of wisdom. So you serve by sharing what you know and wishing others good will, or some may say God's will. For all are equal. Whilst our journey may seem hard know that you are carving your own 'Philosopher's Stone'. You are the love and wisdom you seek. Knowing this pre-serves the world as you would serve your Self.

So this is the Fool's journey, it is more like a spiral than a straight line as you keep learning and growing, you reveal your gold when life asks. You share your gold, you never keep it to yourself in a cave. You go out and share it with as many fools as you can. As you do the world begins to catch on as everyone starts to think: Why were we scared of being a fool? It is okay to be yourself and make a fool of yourself, in fact I highly recommend it. You will find a new path opens up for you as you realise that everyone is really a Fool waiting to remember the joke!

Perhaps your little gold nuggets will wake others up so they may realise that they are the gold they are looking for, that they too have a little bag; and if they are ready to let go of the masks they have accumulated and lighten their load to have more fun, then they will magically find they end up on a journey and discover they reach home just in time.

I am a natural poet, poetry is my first language. This poem sings the song of my true purpose. Therefore, 'to thine own self be true' is a Peace Fool's song, it is the gift I possess in my little bag. It is not a trick but indeed holds within it the magic of life which is found within the feeling between the words, it is of the highest value. This is my gift to you and future generations. Peace is who we are, anything else is simply a shadow of fear we decided was real.

My highest wish is y/our happiness and freedom. We are One.

Peace and love,



Susan Carew  
aka Peacefull (fool) clown

Melbourne, Australia

**Websites:**

[www.worldpeacefull.com](http://www.worldpeacefull.com)

[ha.worldpeacefull.com](http://ha.worldpeacefull.com)

**Twitter:** AwakentheFool

**Facebook:** Susan Carew (Awaken the Fool)

**YouTube:** [Uploads from realhopes4theworld - YouTube](#)



## THE GIFT

*My highest wish is happiness,  
It is the gift I give to all,  
To see the smiling faces,  
To catch them before they fall.*

*To be a clown,  
Is like surround sound,  
It spreads a ray of sunshine,  
To all without discrimination,  
Without impatience,  
To see the world as one,  
To inspire and have some fun.*

*I have no enemies,  
I have no-one to hate,  
To me there is no nation state,  
I see the world as my family,  
I just want to bring them home,  
Into the warmth of love and kindness,  
So no-one feels alone.*

*I see every story,  
In its real glory,  
I know the potential of what can be,  
I long to set them free,  
Into a world of their own making,  
Into a world that is no longer breaking  
into fragments of glass,  
Shards of misunderstanding,  
Where we see only a fraction of what is true,  
We assume that it is not safe,  
That is the myth,  
That is the spin,  
That disempowers and tries to win.*

*One truth is that life begins,  
When we step out of the comfort zone,  
The boundaries of insecurity build walls,  
We are not alone,  
And when we step out of illusion,  
Of misconceptions,  
We realize that there is no fear,  
That there are many tears,  
That are flowing down the rivers of separation,  
But they will reach the headwater,  
They will unite in the end,  
The journey is the experience,  
That life sends.*

*I believe in peace,  
I believe in goodness,  
I believe in action,  
I know that for every cause  
there is an equal and opposite reaction.*

*My life is dedicated to principle,  
I know the answers are simple,  
When you throw away judgment,  
When you throw away hurt,  
When you throw away hate,  
And think about what you've learned.*

*Under the canopy of respect,  
You will never reject,  
The will of others,  
They must travel their own path,  
We need to learn to laugh,  
Life is the comedy,  
Perhaps I am the Fool,  
But just maybe,  
That's the school  
for world peace.*

## CHAPTER 1: My Dream of Peace (1998)

*'In clapping both hands a sound is heard:  
What is the sound of the one hand?'*  
- Zen Koen

Many stop and try to hear the sound; they become puzzled. Peace is a puzzle that has not been solved by humanity, as we have approached the problem as two hands clapping. Peace requires each of us to see differently, for in the past we were seeking applause, rather than to pause in the silence to deeply listen to ourselves, for all answers live in the heart of each of us. That is why peace is present in every moment, every day, and expressed in simple ways, as wisely stated by the Rotary International former President Sakuji.

Another question to consider is - *'Is peace present the moment you start thinking about it?'* Can we think about peace, or is what we are grasping for beyond thought? Is it universal? Is it inherent within our very nature?

We are indeed threads within a web of life that is intricately woven and balanced. We did not create this web, we are a thread within it. As we ask questions we open up to possibilities that allow us to see what we cannot see to find that peace is not what we think, it is who we are. Some may ask – is the dream real?

In 1998 I dreamed I was teaching peace to children. I awoke in the middle of the night, excited. The next day I rang a friend of mine who is a teacher and asked: 'Does anyone teach peace to children? Is there a dedicated subject or curriculum?' he stated there was Social Studies which had elements of war and peace in it, but there was no dedicated subject called Peace.

Unbeknown to me this dream would gently catapult my life onto a new track. I subtly began to shift from the secure track of working as a market analyst, to a new life living from what was unknown. I had no idea how I would teach peace to children, but the seed was planted in the dream. I certainly didn't want to enrol in a four year degree to get qualified as a teacher, so I let it go and life showed me the Fool's Way.

I wrote 'Awaken the Fool' in an inspired moment and it seems to me this is the dream that is becoming real. I sensed as I wrote this, the Fool's Way is the real peace movement. I turned this writing into a peace education program. Here is an outline of the philosophy of the Fool's Way.

## Awaken the Fool

Peace Fool is an archetypal figure who demonstrates living peace. The fool steps out into life with innocence discovering the wisdom as s/he stubs her toe on the stones and rocks of life. Each obstacle becomes an opportunity to be with the pain and learn how to transform pain in the future. If one keeps returning to the same place and stubbing the toe, the fool hasn't learned the lesson or has been in a vague state not really awake in the present moment as s/he walks.

The Peace Fool carries REAL HOPES in a bag of magic tricks. The gold in REAL HOPES lives as:

*Responsibility, Empathy, Awareness, Love, Honesty, Oneness, Peace, Enjoyment, Service*

Each value is the wealth s/he carries. It is the real wealth, it is the Fool's Gold because everyone thinks it is not real wealth as s/he has nothing and is a fool. They are spellbound by the trinkets and material things in the world. Whilst the fool spends life discovering that the gold is within and watches bemused as the world keeps digging for gold and looking outside themselves to other people and the external world to give them the gold. The fool is in a constant state of joy because she has everything in her bag that she could possibly need.

People in the world are in a constant state of pain and lack because they are always trying to find the gold out there. The fool knows when you go with *in* you do not go with *out*. The world has it the other way around when they go with out they don't go within. So the fool feels full and the people feel empty. Yet the fool knows that when you empty of desire, that is when the gold appears like magic. Yet people think if they are empty they can fill their stomachs, yet they get hungry again and spend their whole lives trying to be full.

So how can the Fool's Gold be the real gold in life? Let's explore REAL HOPES and perhaps you find your real wealth along the WAY.

## Responsibility

**Responsibility is the ability to respond you can do something!!!** Hmmm what do we mean you can do something? You have the power of choice.

You have the **power to create your life**. Do you believe that? If you cannot respond it means you become a victim of life, you believe you have no options and you just have to put up with whatever people give you. You feel power-less.

If you are **respons-able** then you are able to respond, you know you can do something, you know that even if you haven't got the solution and it feels like the juggling balls are up in the air, just be patient, like juggling it takes time to get it. If you are patient and relaxed you will suddenly get the pattern or the key to your problem. Just get into the flow and it happens.

Just imagine the **outcome** you want and funnily enough life just puts people in your way to help you solve your problem. Life is always **helping**.

## Empathy

Did you notice empathy has 'path' in it hmmm

You can **stand in someone's shoes**, now they could be big clown shoes or small shiny shoes (tight fit) but you walk in their moccasins for a while and get an idea of what life is like for them.

You quickly notice that it feels different from your life so you **no longer expect them to be like you**. You try and be like them and find harmony without losing your shoes.

So it is really **understanding other people** and finding your hug which you might have left behind as you didn't understand them.

## Awareness

What is it to be aware? I always think of my eyes being open, not just seeing what is around me, but knowing the gold here is **noticing what is happening for yourself and other people**. Sometimes when you are used to noticing you will find that not only are you aware of yourself and other people you will be aware of how you are part of a **world family** and who knows maybe even a cosmic family.

So open your eyes and look around you. Remember it is to **see first then look**. That means seeing inside yourself first and listening to those little **intuitions** that push you to walk around a corner or change your day.

Awareness sees your life as a journey and that **you create your life**. How do you do that? By your **thoughts, words and actions**. Ask yourself, **what am I creating?** Is it fearful, hurtful, loving or fun? You are aware you create your response to every **moment**, how amazing are you!

## Love

Oh I *love love*, where are my love glasses? Here they are. I am a **fool for love**. Is anyone else a fool for love?

**Clowns** love everyone. We don't go out and say 'I love you but not you'. We see the love in every person. We are not scared of anyone.

Love is my **favourite apple to eat**. It is sweet and juicy. You can fall in love, you can love a drink on a hot day, you can love your life, you can love what you are doing, love your friends, family and hobbies.

Love is the **warm fuzzies** happening inside you. Love is unity it joins you with people and activities you love doing. Sometimes time just disappears when you love what you are doing.

When we **love people** we snuggle up, we chatter away, we share our things enthusiastically and we don't feel alone.

Most importantly we know that **love is who we are**. So you don't have to go and get it, you are it. You know that love is **inside** you because you feel it. How great is that! So think **good** thoughts, be hopeful and positive. Feel the love as the **cup half full** not half empty.

Always remember that **love is the answer** to all your problems or questions in disguise. Remember when you love you can **never hurt** anyone.

In conflicts always try to **lovingly explain your side** and listen lovingly to what the other has to say. Why not solve the problem and not hate the person. We all make mistakes.

Know that when you **follow your heart** it leads you **home** to who you are. Be a fool, keep your **heart on your sleeve**, never be afraid of sharing your heart with anyone, even if **you get hurt dive in again**. Life is meant to be **up and down** but never dull.

Just because something happened in the past doesn't mean it will happen in the future.

So follow your heart it will never let you down. The purpose of the journey is to follow your heart.

## Honesty

Did you know fools are jesters? What do jesters do? **Jesters** are famous for speaking the truth to power. That was to the king or authority. Why did the Jester's get away with it? The Jester's made jokes and got away with it, they made the King laugh at himself. The King enjoyed having the Jesters in the court as they helped him humorously see himself. It is intimacy – in-to-me-see.

What do you think is the **most intelligent thing you can say**? I could be wrong? How is that intelligent you may ask? Well it allows you to open your mind to other possibilities. Also you are looking for truth, not to be right. That means the real power is **speaking the truth and not taking yourself too seriously**. This is the gold nugget.

When you get the truth you just **suddenly** see, that is what it means to see (within) and then look. Truth sets you free to be who you really are. We can get very **confused** in life as we know there are many truths out there. The best way as a jester I can describe that to you is by a **mirror ball**. Each mirror is a person with their own truth. There are lots of tiny mirrors on the ball. So when you look into the mirror ball you can't see yourself, you become blurry or confused. That is not to say their truth is wrong because you can't see it, it is just to know there are lots of truth's different from yours, it is just the way the world is. Another way to see this is the parable of the **Emperor with No Clothes**:

*A vain Emperor who cares for nothing hires two swindlers who promise him the finest, best suit of clothes from a fabric invisible to anyone who is unfit for his position or "hopelessly stupid". The Emperor cannot see the clothing himself, but pretends that he can for fear of appearing unfit for his position; his ministers do the same. When the swindlers report that the suit is finished, they mime dressing him and the Emperor marches in procession before his subjects, who play along with the pretence, until a child in the crowd, too young to understand the desirability of keeping up the pretence, blurts out that the Emperor is wearing nothing at all and the cry is taken up by others. The Emperor cringes, suspecting the assertion is true, but continues the procession.*

We can live in **denial** to not be seen as the fool. Yet had he not had an ego and was prepared to be seen a fool, he would have acknowledged the clothes were invisible, he was naked before truth. Now if you want to **know your truth** you have to look at yourself. That means that you see inward and ask yourself - is that true? I know of a wise lady who does personal inquiry. She says that whenever we feel negative we are not seeing the gold. The gold of course is love. She says if you question your thoughts and ask is it true? Can you be absolutely sure that it is true? How do you react how do you feel when you believe the negative thought? Who would you be without the thought? And then this is the really amazing bit - you turn the thought around and wear it. Try it on for size. You may not feel comfortable, yet if you are honest you may find what you imposed on someone else is actually your projection. The truth is always in you. What happens is that you **know the truth deep down** and up it comes into the **light of day** to show you that you projected something in you onto the other person. It is like a movie screen where your mind is the projector and the screen is the other person. You realise that it is not true, just like a movie, it **seems real** but when you question it you **start to laugh**. That is why **Jesters are always laughing** we see that everybody is perfectly fine, they are doing their best. The truth sets them free.

## Oneness

Oneness is err a big one, one that few talk about.

Imagine oneness like the **whole world** and all the air that circulates the planet. Imagine that every single person and organism on this earth has breathed the same air.

We all come from the same **family tree**. Every single person comes from the human family. We all have the same designed bodies, those who do differ a bit are also perfectly human.

Every **problem** you have had someone else has had, so you are not alone. We care for others when they cry, when laugh when others laugh and that is the feeling we are one.

Amazingly sometimes when we are **thinking of someone** they may actually ring, imagine that. How can that happen if we are separate. How do we know?

**We all love to be with other people**, we feel warm and safe as we can feel their presence and it feels good.

## Peace

I am Peace Fool so this is another favourite of mine. This is the gold that is more like a **ray of golden light**.

Humans come in all shapes and colours, you can imagine a **rainbow**. When we all come together it is like **white** light.

Peace just **fills your whole body** when you are really happy. How do you know you are really *peacefull*, you just sit there like a Cheshire cat with a happy grin. You may even laugh for no reason.

Even when **things haven't worked out** the way you thought you are still *peacefull* because you are curious about what is going to happen.

You know that **life is not about control but the journey of discovery**, so you realise when it goes differently that you are to just follow your heart and see where the **thread** takes you. As your life is a tapestry. You just can't see the master peace right now.

So you don't resist anything, you just **flow with life** and if anything negative happens you know to question your thoughts and to find peace inside you.

Everything in the world **reflects** us. If we think the world is bad, funnily enough we see bad, if we think the world is great, guess what we see great. It is like the red car in a car park. Say you say to yourself I love red cars. Suddenly you see them everywhere.

Our minds are like that what you **focus on expands**, so if you want peace, focus and **just be it**. As Gandhi envisaged '*be the change you wish to see in the world*'.



## Enjoyment

Enjoyment is not too hard to explain. It has joy in it. What is joy?

Some people think enjoyment is all about pleasure. Do you know the difference between pleasure and joy? **Pleasure is taking, joy is giving.** Yes I know people think just go out there and **do what they want** to have fun and don't worry about other people, even if they have fun at another's expense. We know that is not the real fun.

**Pleasure is different** it is about buying things, escaping into games where you get **distractions** of winning but truly you never win when you go for pleasure. You **spend** a lot of money and then guess what, the next desire comes and you have to have it. How many things are in your room piling up because you bought them impulsively as you had to have the latest whatever, after a while you got bored and started searching again, as you have to **fill your time**. That is taking from life.

Enjoyment has joy inside, this means you are **happy inside**. You don't need things outside you to make you happy. Life is just so exciting and wonderful you feel **alive** and want to **share**.

You know you are living the **life you are meant to and being true to yourself**, when you do the joy just sparkles up, bubbling, shining and you just can't help smiling. Some people will see you as confident and real.

Imagine if you didn't have to fill your time that you were already full on life. That joy was there and you knew that **life would just send you something interesting** when you need it. So you have plenty of space to give of yourself sharing what you know, your talents and caring about other people. This is **giving to life** and life gives to you. You have something to give so you are not empty. Get it!!

So enjoyment is the **jester always laughing and smiling** and looking at people with a cheeky twinkle. Where you just want to go up and meet people. No-one is scary because **you see yourself in them** and just smile. You laugh at life when you see mistakes made as you know everyone is learning you don't take life seriously **you just laugh** as you have been there.

Did you know that **life is the joke**? Do you get the joke? You are here to have fun not to be sad and moping around, you create your happiness as well.

Did you know the **thoughts you think** decide what emotions will come up. If you are always saying that I never get this or that, I am lonely, I don't have money, I am not in control and no-one likes me. Your thoughts will make you feel sad. What if you decided to **sing another song** where you think life is great. For example - I know I need something as I have it, I am here to learn lessons about life, I am not in control, I am on a journey of self-discovery, everyone is doing their best, if someone leaves that is life saying goodbye to them, even if someone dies you know that life is the universal pattern-maker and you are just grateful for what you had.

The real joy that is that **life is meant to be as it is** because it has happened. When we place joy into life we can deal with difficult issues as we look for the gold nugget buried beneath the drama. That is enjoy-ment. It is meant to be, get it!

## Service

This is the last one. To give service makes life such a magical place.

When **we have all are values together** in the one bag, we head out onto the **open road**. We have all we need with us and are open to life, the road is long and exciting. You have no idea where you will end up. But you **trust** life as you have the **gold** with you.

Service is an integration of all the gold into **selfless service** to others as there is nothing that you need, so you share from your little bag the secrets of life. You are living to give.

To be a **foolish** is how you really get to know the world. Imagine everyone is floating on a ship of fools in the ocean of life. Imagine how much fun that would be.

So you just **serve everyone who comes up** knowing they are meant to be there. Perhaps in a quiet moment they even asked for you to come. Sounds like a magic trick hey.

Sometimes **you can serve** by doing nothing, let people work things out, other times you can just love people and that is sending a beautiful vibe to them. Other times you may help them with something or be like a mirror shining truth back to them to see who they really are. They may be surprised how great they are when they see to look into their own book.

Service represents the **highest value of all the Fool's Gold**, like a rainbow each value has a colour of virtue, each positive thought weaves a thread to co-create the world's tapestry.

It is the big picture.

*Therefore, 'to thine own self be true' is a Peace Fool's song.*

Did you know that the Fool's Gold is actually Pyrite. The meaning is as follows:

*Pyrite is often called "Fool's Gold," though there is nothing foolish about this mineral. Within its gleaming beauty is a stone of hidden fire, one that can be sparked to life by striking it against metal or stone. An Earth element, it also resonates with Fire energy, symbolizing the warmth and lasting presence of the sun and the ability to generate wealth by one's own power. It is masculine in nature, a stone of action, vitality and will, and taps into one's abilities and potential, stimulating the flow of ideas. It brings confidence and the persistence to carry things through to completion.*

*As a talisman, Pyrite is a unique protector, drawing energy from the Earth through the physical body and into the aura creating a defensive shield against negative energies, environmental pollutants, emotional attack and physical harm. It also supports one with a spirit of boldness and assertive action when protecting others, the planet, or in standing up for important issues of community. It stimulates the Second and Third Chakras, enhancing will power and the ability to see behind facades to what is real.<sup>i</sup>*

This poem describes my dreaming of world peace. There is a blueprint of peace which is indelible in our DNA. Beneath all conflicts is peace, the challenge is to recognise that each challenge leads us to peace, if we choose. Many are caught up in distractions and dilemmas not realising that peace is really just a breath away. It is always present. Peace is not an ideal it is actually who we are when we become still. Eckhart Tolle speaks of the 'Power of Now', he teaches millions stillness, as peace is wordless when known.

### **A Blueprint of Peace**

*A blueprint,  
A footprint,  
An impression,  
For the sand is impermanence,  
Nature recycles history,  
For no impression has more weight than another,  
All eventually turn to dust,  
For the physical world is in constant change.*

*The peace you seek never disappears,  
Beneath constant change is certainty,  
For the sands of timelessness exist not in physical matter,  
But in eternal truth.*

*All human beings arrived from eternal truth,  
And will return to it,  
The mind of the universe is vast,  
It is timeless and unlimited.*

*The sun is the mother of all life,  
A wheel of electromagnetic fields,  
Sending free energy to recharge the grid,  
For matter and anti-matter is the mirror,  
For all that is physical has the non-physical  
to balance the multi-verses,  
For life is present in a multiplicity of universal forms.*

*Many human minds are focussed within imagined dilemmas,  
Information technology creates the context and flavour of what is believed and then seen,  
The discussions and critiques never step over ley lines of universal enquiry,  
They are contained within a corral of directed scripts and role plays to keep addiction alive,  
As the tail that wags the dog picks at the bone,  
For the blind men cannot feel the pink elephant of their own creation,  
As the family is embroiled in conflict and confusion,  
Fear, suppression and misinformation drives modern life into a darkness with dimmed lights.*

*External influences dramatise events to fuel undivided attention,  
Yet the greatest mysteries are cast aside to make room for the Simpsons and Big Brother,  
To fill inner space with sitcoms, dramas and awakened new fears,  
For paralysis, gossip and a survival mentality,  
Is a contextual field that knows not truth.*

*I close my eyes to feel a rhythm that I cannot hear,  
Yet the breath of life is unmistakeable,  
Nature speaks in a language that has no judgement or pre-conceptions,  
The winds and water courses flow around obstacles to complete the cycle,  
The weather patterns distribute sustenance to a vibrant world alive with the colour of potential,  
For there is consistency in life affirming self-regulating patterns of the snowflake,  
There is purpose in an ecosystem functioning in harmonious unison,  
There are dinosaurs amongst the ancient forests,  
For the tree is the centre peace of stability,  
Inspiration, transpiration, communication, leaf litter, canopies, temperature regulation, soil retention, protection, carbon sinks, oxygenation as the true summit for climate change,*

*Technology is not favoured by natural selection.  
Peace is the REAL HOPE for humanity,  
When one is Responsible and able to respond,  
Conflict resolution awakens Empathy in others,  
Awareness is to seek truth not power,  
Love is the natural life force in harmony,  
Honesty is the outcome of a truthful intent,  
Oneness is the ecosystem birthing life equally,  
Peace is creative action inspiring virtues,*

*Enjoyment is the clown that plays with life and sees the joke as life itself.*

*For the blueprint is known to all,  
But applied consistently by few,  
One can worship great heroes yet the hero is within you awaiting your purpose to flower,  
For the greatest love is to realise that one can create anew with principled leadership,  
As ambition falls away as a child discards a toy,  
As profiteering holds no gain only pain,  
As power exists in the vacuum of the powerless,  
For the greatest leader responds from within,  
Walks alone and speaks out to all,  
Leads by service and acknowledges the value of all without prejudice or favour,  
For the greatest justice is to share fairly with all,  
For some say the meek will inherit the earth,  
For humility is the face of virtue living as unity,  
Unity can only be seen through the hearts  
that see inner peace in the truth of  
Who We Really Are.*

When children integrate the blueprint of natural universal values within themselves, service becomes a natural expression of peace. Peace is service to humanity, it is the light in the darkness. Peace is life itself that naturally sustains. Perhaps this is the sound of one hand clapping?

**The Fool's Gold:** Dreams come true. REAL HOPES in the future is in the hands of children with peaceful expressions.

## CHAPTER 2: Clowning Around is Peace in Action (2000)

I was sitting in my office one day and a fax came in. It was from a friend of mine running a Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) in Queanbeyan, a town just over the border from Canberra. The fax was informing members of an up and coming seminar on humour and healing by Patricia Cameron Hill and Dr Shayne Yates. Patricia was a former nurse and her husband Shayne a former doctor. My doctor friend was sitting next to me and I immediately encouraged her to go to this seminar to help with her work at the hospital. I said: 'I will go with you as moral support'. So she agreed and we went. I had no idea this seminar would change my life.

We joined the audience and a woman came out with bright orange hair and a bright smile. She and her husband, whom she referred to as her 'speed hump', as he slowed her down, presented their humorous material with instructions on how to put in 'funny' so that funny comes out. Yes I know, not rocket science, but we laughed a lot.

There was one part of the seminar that seemed to jump out at me. She mentioned clowns. Something within me just clicked to the idea of being a clown. After the seminar my friend and I met with the presenters Patricia and Shayne. Another friend was with me who is an outgoing person - another person with bright orange hair (says something). She was interested in being a clown. Patricia and Shayne encouraged us to go to the Canberra Hospital and clown with the patients. It turns out they had a book, *You Won't Die Laughing*, and they wanted to distribute it around the hospital.

So with that my friend Carole and I rummaged around a \$2 dollar shop thinking 'funny' and looking for colourful props and inspiration. At the end of scanning the aisles we wound up with a basket full of whistles, balloons, tinsel, hats, bubbles and noise makers. We then decided to head for the Op Shop to find colourful clothes. Overnight we had transformed ourselves into bright colourful hospital clowns.

## Hospital Clowning (2000)

Within 24 hours Carole and I were clowning at the Canberra Hospital. We had no idea what we were doing but just went through the hospital being silly and hugging people. I remember Carol taking exception to my accent saying it sounded German, so I changed it to another funny voice. We had no training and discovered we were naturals. I realised then, that all my years of stirring my brothers and sister, as an annoying teenager, had paid off. I had no idea that I had a talent in playing, as a young person I was seen as annoying but as an adult a clown; I have to laugh. The beauty of being a clown meant I had a bigger audience to play with. I never grew up, which was a great relief. I was waiting for the opportunity to be my real self. At the end of that first day 'Clown Rounds' was established.

We decided to create a fun trolley, we called it 'Wally the Jolly Trolley'. It had skeleton hands (handy), snakes (creepy), balls (bouncy), bubbles (floaty), balloons (party), noise makers (noisy), whoopee cushions (farty), and much more to entertain the staff and patients. Carol bought a nice white coat covered in all sorts of colourful designs and colours. She transformed into Dr. Woo Hoo and I was to become Peacefull the Clown. Patricia and Shayne gave us their book to hand out to the patients. This book helped patients laugh their way to good health. It seemed I was in the right place at the right time.

I never set out to be the greatest clown, if anything I was overly casual about it. I noticed I had little discipline to learn any songs or jokes, I did attempt a few times, but I found I just joked naturally. I see 'funny' in a lot of things and people do make me laugh. Good thing I didn't wear the big clown shoes, without doubt I would've tripped over myself and if I stood too long in one place they would have been speed bumps and I could have tripped everyone up. Good thing we were in a hospital!

My intention was to bring joy to people stuck in hospital. One good thing I noticed is that I had a captured audience, they couldn't run away. So they could laugh to keep you there or painfully smile to pity you, either way I didn't mind, laughter is the best medicine. It, at the very least, distracted them from pain.

Seriousness is the one thing I find the most funny and it is like standing in front of one of those guards at Buckingham Palace (London), the temptation is to just enter into a staring contest or point your finger at his nose and see who cracks up first. Clowning is a bit like that. We break the tension or at the very least create it - ha ha! Hospitals are serious places and our job was to bring that positive humour to help those in pain to forget it for a while.

I have had some truly memorable experiences and some embarrassing moments, foot in mouth comes to mind. I must have a big mouth for those clown shoes. So a few stories...:

When I first clowned at Canberra Hospital with my friend Carole, aka Doctor Woo Hoo, we had some great experiences. One really memorable one was visiting with an old lady. I bounced up to her sitting at the end of her bed with her tray in front. I put on the love glasses and said: 'Don't you look gorgeous, gorgeous,' then continued, 'you can only see love through these glasses they are very special,' I would then look at her and feign being in love, I would fall in love with anyone in the vicinity as well. She smiled at me with her love glasses on. I blew up a balloon (I had plenty of hot air). I started a little balloon game. We tapped the balloon between each other and then she was really smiling. It was a simple moment, but I was to find out it was profound. A lady who was in the bed opposite said she was a nurse, but not well at the moment. 'You don't know what you just did,' she told me. 'What did I do?' I asked. 'That lady has not smiled in six months or moved that arm in six years,' she replied. I was shocked. 'Really' I said. She was serious. I thought there was much about clowning I didn't understand. I now think that clowns access another part of the brain which seems to bypass the logical part, like a fly over (going over your head) or an under pass (under my leg) - ha ha! It seems clowns are able to reach people in different ways. People are very open to clowns; perhaps it connects to their childhood and they are able to simply forget themselves. Perhaps that is the moment of true peace.



Some interesting experiences that were not what I expected: I remember I went to massage a doctor for relaxation and he started screaming, 'Don't touch me!' I instantly saw trauma there and wondered at his childhood or perhaps country of origin (Asian). On that day I realised I had to show them the massager and get their permission to massage them. That way they would have control.

There were times when nurses said they were fearful of clowns. I had some strategies to try and engage them and not freak them out too much. Playfully I said to one of them: 'Turn around and face the wall and pretend I am normal'. I then gave her a back massage to associate pleasure and clowns. She was cured. Nothing like pleasure to bypass that fear button. Massage is a good form of clown therapy. 'Hey Dr. Woo Hoo I had a breakthrough!' I have cured quite a few clown phobias by pretending I am more scared of them and jokingly saying: 'Don't look at me I am scared of people' or 'You are not scared of clowns – you are scared of your thought about clowns'. In truth they have not met the clown, they are just allowing an irrational fear to govern them, the reality that is the only danger is having fun. Yet I suspect the phobia is linked to issues of control, some people don't like masks and fear they don't know you. Yet interestingly this is more prevalent in the West.



My clown buddy Jon, aka Hairy Potter, was around 70 years old and was a successful builder in Australia; he had the attitude and demeanour of an English gentleman (see photo). I found it so interesting to talk to him, he was full of interesting knowledge and had amazing skill in doing paper cut outs. He would do a few snips and then you had a work of art. I first met Jon at a Chernobyl children event in Melbourne. This event was to bring joy to these kids dying from cancer. I had just come back from Russia with Dr. Patch Adams. Jon had his own charisma and I was drawn to him. He was playing his guitar and I noticed a big pink flower on his hat. His demeanour was gentle and kind. We clowned together for around six years intermittently. I will recount some stories of clowning with him.

We used to clown at the Austin Repatriation Hospital in Melbourne for the Veterans and then we would mosey on over to Darley House which was the old people's home and just joke around there. One particular time I remember we saw a guy with cerebral palsy, he twitched and ticked and blow me down, I noticed he had a manual typewriter. I just imagined trying to type on the keys while ticking or twitching, he would have to time the typing. He taught me some people have real challenges. Anyway, I bounced up saying, 'Hello gorgeous' which is my usual introduction. We asked him, 'What are you typing?' We had a look over his shoulder. The guy was a poet typing up the most extraordinary original Australian poetry. This was the poetry you would discover in Banjo Patterson's era, talking about sheep stations, mateship and the rugged beauty of this country. Probably he was a country guy. So I put on my love glasses and did a theatrical rendition of his work. He was so excited, more ticking and involuntary movement with a big smile. I read his precious poetry out putting on my most Aussie accent to give it texture, or as they say in cultivated spaces, in the Australian vernacular. Triumphantly, I announced this poetry to the hospital ward but it felt like the world. My friend Hairy Potter made lots of positive comments to him and did his usual paper cut-outs into amazing shapes that were works of art. These were not ordinary cut-outs, they were elaborate and something you could put on a dressing table or art gallery. Some people call them doilies. Jon does paper mosaics of crosses, love hearts and other designs all linked in this complex picture. It was really astounding stuff. He would do a few snips here and there and ... wallah a masterpiece. I squeaked my nose flashing my multi-coloured eyelashes and then gave this guy a huge hug. We then started to skip off down the hall chatting with people in our usual banter. To our amazement this guy got out of bed and chased us down the hall. He was limping awkwardly as his cerebral palsy affected the balance of his body. He eagerly gave us his address and wanted us to write to him. I gave him my address. We had touched his heart and he touched our lives. That is how love works when you are a clown.

We often played with the nurses, sometimes I lovingly called them Brunhildas, which is slang for the matronly type - tough and no nonsense. Sometimes they were open and friendly and up for some mischief. Nurses have seen it all they are a 'no shit' group, pardon the twang in my slang; having said that they are 'up to their elbows in it' at times.

Nurses are very functional people, so you have to play it carefully. I often went up to reception and told them: 'I heard this was a great hotel, free food, free bed and I'd like to check in please,' with a big clown grin. They looked at this painted clown with long multi-coloured eye lashes and a jingly jester's hat and laughed. I waved my magic wand and sometimes handed out inspirational cards. Fanning them out I'd say, 'Pick a card any card, with a cheeky grin and then playfully teased them by pulling the cards away as they reached for one. They always had a laugh and then refused to take another one. In other moments I blew bubbles, often saying, 'Make a wish.' Or I pretended to eat them and say, 'Yummy!' Kids loved that. Or I'd get out my secret weapon, or what I term my weapons of mass distraction, and then a drum roll, cha boom... the orgasmatron... ever heard of that....? Well I often tell people, if they are adults, that it is better than marriage - ha ha! When I am with kids I call it the giggle stick. I have to tailor to audiences hey. I say to adults to just imagine that you get total pleasure, with no answering back and it never leaves you; they have a giggle. I raise it up above their heads and say: 'Do you believe in a higher power?' or 'Would you like to experience nirvana?' I often get an excited expectant nod and a cheesy grin. Then I give them a head massage. The orgasmatron is made of copper and it feels unbelievable as it is like fingers that massage the whole head, all at once. It is a very efficient, cost effective, little device. I would love to have an audio recording of all the *oohs and aahs* people make and then say to others, 'You must try this'. I often say, 'I'll have what she's having'. I always liked that movie 'When Harry met Sally', very funny. I can do that with laughter in a restaurant.

I've met some interesting characters in the Veteran's area of the hospital. We'd go in and clown around and sometimes play pool with the veterans. They are lovely old blokes. I have asked a few what they think of war. All don't like it, and think it is a waste of time. I remember meeting a veteran who actually witnessed the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima, Japan. He was on the ground, obviously not at ground zero or he would've been a mere shadow on a path. He said he saw the cloud. I was stunned at the time, I thought what are the chances of meeting such a guy? Another guy had some connection with the HMAS Melbourne that was sunk after a collision with HMAS Voyager. I can't remember the details of it, but I was surprised at what life unfolds, when you are open.

Another time when clowning at the Austin Repatriation Hospital, I heard this accent I asked, 'Where are you from?' (Thinking he could be American or Canadian), he said, 'I am an American.' I discovered he was from Texas. I said, 'Do you know George Bush?' He replied, 'Yes, he was my neighbour'. I started to really grin at this point. What are the chances of that, I thought? 'What is he like?' I asked. 'There was a lot of shooting next-door,' he replied. I laughed thinking of Iraq and said, 'So what has changed?' This was whilst George W. Bush was in power. We had a good laugh and moved on. As a clown you meet these characters.

We also used to go the Royal Talbot Hospital which has a lot of spinal unit cases with many people who have had accidents and lost motor skills. So we went there and interacted with the staff. I brought out my puppets as people walked by and just put them up on their shoulder saying, 'Hello Polly, how are you today?' We went to a particular ward where people still talk about us today. I am still invited as a volunteer years after I stopped hospital clowning. We made some special connections with nurses there. When you play with people and bring them joy they really love you for it. When they realise that you are volunteers they become amazed. When we did charge (to be taken seriously - ha ha!) we only charged a very nominal amount. I have to say when I contacted the Veteran's area some years later, I found out that we had been replaced by Simpson's donkey. Simpson was an Australian soldier who had a donkey in the First World War. He became famous for saving many people by transporting the wounded on his donkey. It was nice to remember soldiers who had shown compassion, I did love that. However, the donkey had a higher rank than us *boo hoo*! I said to Hairy Potter: 'I bet that donkey can't juggle, or crack jokes and probably poops all over the place.' I imagined them trying to hug the patients with those hoofs. That would've been a pain in the ass (ha ha!).

I remember going to the Royal Talbot Hospital with all the clowns - Uncle Rad, Clown Lee Lee, Hairy Potter and myself Peacefull Clown. It is really nice when you go as a group. It is much easier to create a positive dynamic. So we went and visited the patients. You have to be sensitive because people may be very sick or depressed. There is a fine line you walk as a clown. We make sure we don't upset anyone as our job is to bring joy. Sometimes leaving people alone is the kindest act.

I remember walking in on a guy who was paralysed and in bed. Uncle Rad started up a song and we all joined in. I pulled out my juggling balls and did some juggling. Jon played his Happy un-birthday song on his guitar. It basically means you can sing happy birthday every day except on their birthday, although we do make exceptions for birthdays as well - ha-ha! This guy's family came in and we threw balls around the group and put a wig on him with a bower (feathers not boa constrictor). We put the love glasses on and the cameras came out and we sang. Uncle Rad was particularly good at bringing groups together.

Another clown gig was with the Melbourne Clown Group (see photo). They had a group of clowns visit the patients at Sunshine hospital. It was run by Hunzy (Hans) who was an architect by week day and who had clowned with Patch Adams. Hunzy is tall and wearing the balloon hat. I loved it when I saw him wear pants that he put over his head. He just looked like two legs walking. It was very funny. Ziggy with the white hair in the back row next to Hunzy was a jester and he and I did a little jaunt in the city after my return from Russia with Patch Adams. He worked for the Gawler Foundation and worked his own magic with cancer patients. He dressed as a clown every day I was told.



My clown buddy is Hairy Potter, he is to the left with the colourful jumper and pink feathers in his hat (later to be a big pink rose – what a man!). He was wonderful with his guitar and happy un-birthday songs and paper doilies he cut out. Uncle Rad with the little bowler hat and moustache did regular gigs with Jon and I at the Talbot. He was great at bringing people together and getting them to sing songs. He intercepted Captain Snooze aka Rod Quantock in Fitzroy as he came out of a shop. He had a woman sing with a book on her head, he was very funny as well. The other clown I only met once but he looked fabulous. As a group we went to outpatients, wards and wandered through the hospital bringing cheer and smiles. We had fun together and met a wide range of patients distracting them from pain and getting a giggle. I recall a woman came up to us very animated and I felt, very clown like. She told us later she was from Ward 12 the psychiatric ward, I had to smile. I felt she would fit in with our group, perhaps we would fit in with hers. She had no fear of clowns and she was very funny and full of personality. In her case she had no boundaries and no fear. Perhaps she wasn't so crazy after all.

Hairy Potter and I used to go to an area called Southbank on the Yarra River right in the heart of the Melbourne CBD. It is a popular tourist destination and is full of bars and coffee shops. We used to clown along the promenade and meet the people with big smiles, bubbles, juggling and jokes. We would have a little coffee break and people would just trail past waving. I got the feeling this is what a natural community would be like, no fear, but just everyone smiling and meeting each other. On one occasion Hairy Potter and I were clowning and a little child came up, as all children do, they are like magnets with clowns actually. She would have been three to four years old. Hairy Potter and I joked with her and blew some bubbles. Then Hairy gave her a Banana in Pyjamas doll. She beamed with delight. We were with her for no more than three minutes. The next day I was driving out of a side street in Fitzroy, dressed normally, and this child was on the street with her parents. She saw me instantly and yelled excitedly, 'Clown!' and pointed. I was shocked and amazed I had been un-masked by a child. I smiled and then drove away. Usually I am hard to recognise as a clown. She recognised me instantly; it told me that children see the person, not the mask. That was an amazing revelation that day and it is why I believe in children's voices so much. They are very clear and honest; they see the truth more easily than adults. We have forgotten, or perhaps we have learned our roles too well.

When Hairy Potter and I clowned on the streets we waved at people, we hugged them and did little dances. I loved to juggle so I dropped my balls and made out I was sad, I often gestured for people to pick them up as I pretended to have a bad back then I raced them to the ball. I would go up to them and gesture to shake hands then pull back and always I got such a cheeky grin. They would try it a couple of times then stop the game, it was very funny to watch them thinking it through.

I remember clowning down Swanston Street in Melbourne and waving to tourists, finding out where they were from and generally joking. I remember seeing this old man who had a badly pocked face. He wore rough clothes and was sitting alone. He looked pretty bad. The people ignored him. I went up and said, 'Hello gorgeous,' and found myself on bended knee whilst he was sitting on the bench. He told me he was from Bendigo and he was an only child. He told me he had been in the Vietnam War and had stepped on a landmine. Now I don't know how he had feet, but he told me he his feet swelled up every week and he had them drained. Wow, poor guy I thought. He was very proud of the fact he wasn't a drinker yet lived with alcoholics. I gave him a big hug and wished him well. As I walked away I thought I couldn't do that as a woman, that is hug him, you have to be a clown to bring that innocent beauty to the man. I never forgot him, and really felt honoured to meet such a brave person. He must have been very lonely.



My friends Eliza and Donita came out another time with Hairy Potter and I. It was wonderful to see their styles of funny. Eliza had my love heart hat on with love glasses (see photo).



She was a funky clown. My friend Donita called herself the 'Harmony clown'. Over the years she has told people she is a clown as she felt so impacted by the experience. It changed her life and she wants to bring harmony and love to others. It is a wonderful way for people to really connect with their community and demonstrate their humanity and humour in their own unique way. Everyone has something to offer, no-one is insignificant when it comes to being the presence of love in action.

The payment for me is when people have said to me my smile or interaction made their whole day. What a society when a smile becomes so special. Patch in his speech to the clowns in Russia, commented that people think that what we do is extraordinary but in truth it is normal. I so agree with that. We don't love each other enough; instead we spend a lot of time judging appearances. Just imagine if you chose to say 'hi' to the person on the train, bus or street. Now even if they looked at you and thought you crazy, you would be changing the world, in just that one act. I talk a lot to people anyway, and everyone is great.

Clowning on Swanston Street I asked a teenager for a go on his skateboard. He was surprised a female clown was asking. He probably thought I'd break my neck. He didn't know I was the first woman in the southern hemisphere to ride a Perspex half pipe - *hee hee*! So I jumped on and started to tick tac (going left then right with the front of the board) the kids were surprised. I did a few 360's (spin in a 360 degree circle). Then I fell off in a classic clown move right on my bum with my legs up in the air and a big grin (by accident). I then heard the tram driver ding his bell (ding ding) and actually speak over a loud speaker and say something like, 'Get up ya clown... ha-ha'. It was a classic moment, and so nice that the driver got into the act adding to the laughter and fun my pain seemed to cause those around me. It was so funny. I love those spontaneous moments.

We went clowning near the University of Melbourne and we chatted with some young people. They told us to come into their house. It was a big old Victorian house from a bygone era. There were staircases spiralling to the top. Then my clown buddy Jon got on the grand piano and played a concerto. He is so talented. We joked with the young people and then skipped off, we had a wonderful time, as did they.

When I moved to St Kilda I got a group together to clown around the streets (see photo).



Hairy Potter's daughter Sam came with us together with my friend Jason, his cousin, clowns Lee Lee and Uncle Rad. We giggled, juggled, joked and blew bubbles down Acland Street, a famous coffee strip in Melbourne and met the tourists, locals and other visitors. I enjoy encouraging people to be clowns at least once in their life so they can feel the joy of giving unconditionally and to experience the public. My friend Jason was like a jester I remember his big steps and dancing style of clowning as he made noises and interacted with the crowds.

What I love is that through these interactions such as these our world opens up. Any preconceived ideas we may have had about people fall away in the instant you connect. That is why bravely embracing life is so important, that is how you learn the reality. Life is not anywhere as serious as we have made it. The seriousness is what suppresses all the levity and humanness which gives life its richness. To me it is not about money, it is about connection and love. I found an abundance that money cannot buy.

I am always amazed at the focus on money, as it has nothing to do with the true abundance within, that is the real wealth or what I call the Fool's Gold.

I cannot convey to you the joy of being a clown. Being a clown is a way of 'seeing', we are all very similar when we call on the highest part of ourselves, it is what makes us feel happy.

It reminds me of Billy Joel's song which talked about a man who chose to be a clown in a Red Army town. Below are the lyrics from Billy Joel's song 'Leningrad' which for me, is very pertinent to the choices we can make. It makes clear the difference between the sad soldier and the joyful clown. One reality destroys lives and the other celebrates all life.

## **Leningrad<sup>ii</sup>**

*Viktor was born in the spring of '44  
And never saw his father anymore  
A child of sacrifice, a child of war  
Another son who never had a father after Leningrad*

*Went off to school and learned to serve the state  
Followed the rules and drank his vodka straight  
The only way to live was drown the hate  
A Russian life was very sad  
And such was life in Leningrad*

*I was born in '49  
A cold war kid in McCarthy time  
Stop 'em all at the 38th Parallel  
Blast those yellow reds to hell  
And cold war kids were hard to kill  
Under their desks in an air raid drill  
Haven't they heard we won the war  
What do they keep on fighting for?*

*Viktor was sent to some Red Army town  
Served out his time, became a circus clown  
The greatest happiness he'd ever found  
Was making Russian children glad  
And children lived in Leningrad*

*But children lived in Levittown  
And hid in the shelters underground  
Until the Soviets turned their ships around  
And tore the Cuban missiles down*

*And in that bright October sun  
We knew our childhood days were done  
And I watched my friends go off to war  
What do they keep on fighting for?*

*And so my child and I came to this place  
To meet him eye to eye and face to face  
He made my daughter laugh, then we embraced  
We never knew what friends we had  
Until we came to Leningrad*

When I clown on the streets I have my face painted and I am wearing my clown suit, I am in the image of a clown. I realise that this is the mask people see. There are some people who are afraid of masks and I can only assume they are afraid of what they don't understand, they can't see the identity. I have wondered if it is a desire to be in control, since the clown appears out of control. The mask is very powerful and instantly people know you are there to be happy, it actually unmask people all around you. I often tell people I see the true face of humanity, what I see is nothing but beauty, in every person, even in a person who is drunk, or unattractive, no-one is unacceptable when viewed through the eyes of a clown. There have been movies that have depicted clowns in frightening ways, I am not comfortable with this as I may be misunderstood in my innocence. However, I do accept there is the yin and yang in everything and that the world is diversity. So I just send love to those afraid and try not to impinge on their space. Instead if they dare to look I may be able to release them into feeling their own joy and dare to connect. The mask gives permission to have fun.

## Clowning on the International Day of Peace (2009)

This is a story I wrote about my return from clowning on the International Day of Peace. I wrote it when it was fresh in my mind. So let me take your hand and take you with me as a clown, to see what it really feels like, clowning as the greatest joy of my life:

*I had tears on my return from clowning today, I felt a great privilege and humility in being a clown, I felt I would share with others what it is like and the incredible insights I have into people's lives as a clown. I have the ability to see the beauty in this world, that so few know, it is not rose coloured, it is reality - we live in an amazing society that is lost in its misunderstandings of each other. This is what my clown buddy Hairy Potter and I agreed on today.*

*Would you like to travel into the city with us and feel what it is like to be a clown amongst the crowds of strangers we call friends? I might add Hairy Potter and I are not street performers, we are clowns. The world makes us laugh, not the other way round. We do it for love not money. To serve society is our greatest reward. That is our pay.*

*Today is particularly important to me as a peace clown. It is 21st September, the International Day of Peace, this is the day that the United Nations have designated as a day of peace and nonviolence for the entire world. All nations are to observe this day and all warring parties are to stop killing for just one day. Is this possible? Out of 365 days per year, just one day set aside where everyone agrees peace is possible. Jeremy Gilley the founder of this day spent two years lobbying peace laureates, politicians and triumphed against all the odds to have this day commemorated every year. In his film Peace One Day he shows footage of the day at the United Nations, Kofi Annan is about to ring the Peace Bell in New York, to the shock and horror of all in attendance the twin towers of the World Trade Centre are imploding, this was September 11, 2001. This was the day the impenetrable facade of the Americans dream was shattered and the shock of vulnerability shook the very foundations of the structure reduced to rubble shifting under all feet.*

*This was the moment terror, or terrorism, was born in the US and had reverberations that changed the global consciousness. In the confusion, the significance of an International Peace Day was lost as the reality of violence floated across New York in dark plumes of smoke obscuring all visions of hope, as the 'war zone' descended like a nuclear winter. This was a reality check of the long road to peace and it is in all our interests to move beyond symbols and start to think of peace within the minds and hearts of ourselves and then watch the world change. As a peace clown I know the magic of love, so let me share a peace with you.*

*My day started when a friend told me to ring 774 ABC radio to let them know it is the International Day of Peace. Having formerly been on community radio, I didn't think they would be interested. Remember the adage 'if it bleeds it leads, peace just aint sexy'. Unbeknown to me I was given the talk back number and explained to the operator the reason for my call. She talked about whether the Chechen dictator should enter the country to attend the Melbourne Cup. The thoughts in my mind went to division. If we are to really become peaceful we have to accept all people, even mass murderers, that doesn't mean you condone what they do but every human has been violent in thought, word or deed. We have to look deeper into the why of violence we all share. This is my central question. I told the talkback girl I didn't know much about the issue and she quickly hung up before I had even finished speaking. I felt tension and rang back to say that she hung up and I hadn't finished speaking. The new operator said it was a talk back line and they were flat out. I said: 'I am a World Peace Clown and I am trained in conflict resolution', but she said, 'We are too busy'. I laughed and let it go. I said, 'Thanks for explaining', and hung up. As I went on my morning walk I contemplated how realistically we can live in a world of peace when there are so many negative attitudes. I wondered how much time the world really has.*



*Anyway this was my day to be a World Peace Clown, so I put the media behind me. I packed my clown gear and caught a tram into the city. As I walked through the mall disguised as an ordinary person I made myself observe the faces and feel the energy of the crowds as I walked through feeling what I call 'the vibe'. A part of myself was slightly daunted at transforming myself into a peace clown and being the centre of attention. There is always a temptation to stay in the comfort zone, where it is easy to be anonymous. I silently said to myself, I am going to explore the difference before and after, consciously. I observed all the serious faces, no-one smiled at each other, separate universes ignoring the thousands of people around them, somewhat lonely in a crowd, a deafening silence and absence of life. They walked, sat down, plugged into music, talked on mobile phones with plain faces in a sea of masks that never questioned, simply accepting - this is the way it is. I felt invisible in the crowd, no-one interacted with me, it was dull and uninspiring, like a black and white movie, kind of like slow motion.*

*I went and saw my friends in a building in Bourke Street and transformed myself into a peace clown in the toilets. I have done this so many times for nine years now. I've clowned in detention centres, at the Australian Federal Parliament, conferences, overseas in slums, refugee camps, HIV clinics, orphanages in Russia, with Chernobyl kids and in hospitals and the list goes on, I guess I am experienced by now. I had nearly finished the final touches to my make-up with glitter when a woman came in and said, 'What are you dressing up for?' I said: 'I am celebrating, it is the International Day of Peace, did you know that?' She said, 'No'. She told me she was starting a business to cook at people's homes and make sauces for rich women who pay a fortune in the shops, she saw a target market. She was positioning herself as premium. I felt she would probably do well a bit like a celebrity chef, perhaps that was what inspired her. Anyway, make-up done, I had to get going and greet the world as a world peace clown.*

*I walked out of the toilet and immediately people were noticing. I had broken the shackles of conformity and could feel immediately uplifted. I had bright coloured hair, multi-coloured eye lashes, bright face paint with a peace sign on one cheek and a love heart on the other (hmm), my jester's hat and bright yellow overalls with purple tights and my red runners. I could feel my bells ringing, actually they were within my heart. You couldn't miss me even if you tried, and believe me many have, but for fun I come up and play. So I switch into clown mode and I become fearless. Not even slight discomfort. I go down in the lift, and say to someone: 'You're coming in my lift you lucky person, won the lottery with me'. The door opens revealing a crowded lift, I say: 'Got room for a clown? Make way make way', the wig takes up a lot of room. Don't worry I don't have a whoopee cushion but plenty of whoopee (as Patch Adams would say), people are just smiling and asking me what I am doing. I tell them about the auspicious day, all didn't know. I break out of the lift and head for Swanston Street. I wave to everyone and make eye contact. I stop in a group of smokers and ask them about this day, they say they didn't know but that they were peace makers. So I hand them UNESCO's Culture of Peace information. They are smiling and laughing as I give them all hugs and ask them to pass peace on. I walk past Asian people having coffee, wave and smile whilst tweaking my red nose. They laugh and I start to connect with all the people moving through my space. I feel very at peace and enjoy the eye contact. I walk down to Swanston Street increasingly speaking with people, waving, smiling and asking them did they know it was the International Day of Peace. Nine out of ten people said no, that is the clown poll and I'd say pretty accurate. I ask them how they make peace, some laugh at jokes and forget jokes, others just nod, 'Peace is natural', one commented and some didn't know etc. I ask people: 'What if we start peace for one day then we can do the second day, the third and so on until we reach 365 days and we are all at peace, do you think this is a great strategy?' Is this an idealistic dream? Or, as Gillian Lynne (choreographer of Cats) once told me in her London home, it is like creativity is like working a muscle, just keep practicing and it expands. I kind of like that analogy when I think of peace. Edward de Bono told me that all people have to do is lateral thinking and world peace will happen. I think he has some good ideas.*

*Another famous nuclear activist said that the problem was 'men' I can hear a loud chorus of women agreeing and men seeing it as human nature (violence that is). Although in truth we are all responsible for the world we create.*

*I met so many different people from all walks of life, all nationalities, all ages, shapes and sizes. Such is the kaleidoscope of life we walk past every day and we just allow it to blend into a shade of grey, why? Because everyone does that! Yet each moment is golden, and the magic of each person is lost when we live on automatic pilot rather than going forth bravely to embrace each amazing story that is inherent behind all eyes. We just see people as people, but to a clown all nationalities are alive with personality and fun and suddenly the differences between us dissolve as we break out laughing and looking for the points where we connect. An eager willingness to engage. This is the magic of the clown, and every person is a magical moment that brings the spark of joy that is continually passed like the light of a candle of peace, lighting up your face with a big smile. Every person is a friend and there is no hesitation to go up and speak to them, we just see the colours and have no doubt we can relate to everyone. What a privilege is it to be a clown. Would you like to meet some more of our new friends on our journey through Melbourne? So let's continue on our international day of peace-making.*

*I met an older gentleman with lovely curly grey hair, sitting on a bench closing his eyes in the sun. I make the comment, 'Lovely to snooze in the sun'. He looks up startled and acknowledges me. He doesn't seem happy in his eyes but I talk to him about peace, he says he knows a lot about it and can look it up on the net. I ask him if he believes it is possible, he says yes. I wish him peace and give him a big hug, he looks surprised. Who knows what he was feeling. We all have our battles hey.*

*As I am walking waving at people I make eye contact with a Hindu Yarra tram driver, I like his turban. Then a kid with a big hand walks past, he catches my attention. I ask him if it has swelled up, but it has a Collingwood colour on it, hmmm very bruised. I ask: 'Did you hurt yourself and were you pointing at the time?' he laughs and keeps looking back. It is good to play, kids are the masters, I do bow to them.*

*I wave at cars but don't play in the traffic, it's not good for my health. I like to indicate for them to stop and let me pass or I wave them through like traffic police. I then notice some young girls, I tell them about peace and ask what do they think, they are smiling and asking for a photo. Then I spot a row of Indian men, two wearing dark glasses, I tell them that no-one knows who they really are. We talk about making peace in the world. One of them says, 'What about making love?' I say, 'Yes of course both, love is peace hey'. I give them a head massage and a Culture of Peace brochure. They think it is possible, perhaps the massage was what did it, just pleasuring them into submission to a higher power, why not. Then I sidle up to an older lady (around 65) and her husband as they are walking, I tell her that I am not following her honest, just walking with her enjoying the sun with a big sunny smile, I ask her what she thinks about peace, is it possible? 'Yes, definitely', she says. I ask, 'How do you make peace?' She says: 'Peace is when people are nice to each other.' I say to her: 'So people have to remember to be nice?' 'They shouldn't have to remember, it should come naturally', she replies. True I nod agreeably. I then 'parallel park' with two young men in their twenties, I ask them about peace and if they knew about the international day, they say, 'No, but it's nice'. They feel that peace should be fun and jokes, but one of them never remembers jokes. I say: 'The main thing is to laugh at your own jokes, even if no-one gets it that is peace huh?' Next I find myself chatting with a woman about the football promotion she was getting people into at Federation Square. I say: 'Wouldn't it be nice to have new games that are win/win? We always have football, tennis, cricket... you don't often see new games. People win or lose, so let's make them all happy and both sides win, that's got to be a winner!' I thought to myself 'I have a preference for that myself'. She said she'd never thought of that and wondered if it would be exciting, I said that I would think one up and make it fun hey.*

*Then I followed Hairy Potter who was chatting to an indigenous man showing him his famous paper cut doilies made of love hearts and a cross. Hairy is very clever at these paper cuts outs and blows many people away with his symmetrical intricate symbols that he unravels before their eyes. He is also a great poet. The indigenous fellow was very intrigued. He looked great wearing clothes covered in dots and colours.*

*My clown buddy asked him what the rock and feather around his neck was about, he said he could make things happen. 'A magic man', I thought. 'Can you pull this rabbit out of a hat?' I fanaticised then tuned back to the conversation. He is like a medicine man for his people. He said he thinks what he wants and gets it, I said: 'Like the law of attraction', and he smiled. He has formulas in his mind. I reflected on how much knowledge indigenous people had, we were privileged to meet this man. He was painting a dot painting on the ground on a canvas; I guess he was going dotty. He said: 'Come back in a few days, it will evolve'. I think we would all evolve hanging out with him. Perhaps he could evolve world peace, forgot to ask that, my big chance missed. Nearly saved the world, oh well have to keep working on it.*

*Saw a wonderful performer sliding a glass ball over his arms and body, it looked like magic as it seemed suspended above his hands as he gracefully rolled it with such precision and control. I watched like a fascinated child and told him how great he was and that he made a difference to people by bringing them such a beautiful performance. Adults and kids alike focused on this magician. He said he was not good at taking compliments, I told him he was wonderful, good practice for him. He was really conscious of me staring and smiling, a fellow clown. He would struggle being one of those stiff manikin like performers who just stand there and stare, pretending to be statues. I am always tempted to get my feather duster out and tickle them, like the guards in front of Westminster Palace, can feel the urge. This street performer was tickled by my costume and I think we made a friend there, camaraderie on the streets - love it. I was so pleased, he showed me how to use the balls, how to do it. I had a little go but I would have to practice for 100 years to perfect it. Perhaps I stick with juggling balls. I did notice him juggle about six of them, impressive wow! Maybe I just blow bubbles and make a wish.*

*As I walked along the road I saw a lovely girl reading a book sitting against a wall. I just made a bee line for her and saw her wondering what this was about. She asked me to speak slowly and I asked her if she knew it was the international day of peace. She didn't, so I gave her a brochure. I said, send peace to someone today.*

*Another girl was from France, she said her English was not good, I said mercy, au revoir and a few other words I knew, enjoying the sound of my own voice, she smiled bemused at my attempts to destroy her language. I said you can make peace there too. She smiled.*

*I told people the International Day of Peace was to make peace visible. 'It already exists, we are sitting here having a nice conversation, and this is peace isn't it?' They just smiled, 'Yes of course'. I asked another man sitting alone and looking down, he was the first who didn't believe peace was possible, he looked very sad, he said, 'No'. For him there was no peace. I saw a deep sorrow in him. As I walked on I waved at business men and smiled. Perhaps our inner world is the determinant of whether peace is possible. If you don't believe it, you don't see it.*

*Chatting with a young boy and his mother I asked her if peace was possible? she said there were a lot of problems in the world, she had done a lot of reading, she was worried at all the money spent on the military and not on social services. She believed peace was possible. Spoke to some well dressed middle aged women who had been shopping, said to them how great life is, every moment is great, just to breathe, they enthusiastically agreed. Did they think peace was possible? They agreed in a chorus, 'Yes!' Another tick in the box, it is looking like there is intent, yay!*

*Met an Indian man looking for his soul mate, he asked my clown buddy if I was his soul mate, he smiled and said, 'Yes'. I just pointed to the sole of my shoe and said: 'Sole and in Australia we say 'mate'. So yes he is under my foot, he is my soul mate ha! I think he was hoping I might be his. I said to him: 'Go up to a girl and say you really see her and read out a poem', perhaps I just wrecked his future love life, but being a poet I liked the romance of it. I guess if you read a poem to each girl, eventually one melts.*

*The children are always great to clown with. As I moved through the crowd and met a mother sitting with her two boys I gave her a 'peace of my mind' by asking her if she wanted to actually feel peace. 'Yes,' she said and bowed her head.*

*I pressed the button to my vibrating massager and then preceded to her boy and placed the head massager, or rather my giggle stick, on his head. They loved it, I said their IQ would jump as I was stimulating the brain. I asked, 'Do you feel smarter?' they just laughed and said it felt funny. I then had a cheeky game with a little boy running rings around me, he wanted a game of hide and seek, that is peace in action or a piece of the action hmm. Although my action has a time limit, who needs aerobics when kids can run you in circles for hours whew... I then met this amazing little girl with intense eyes and glasses. Must be brainy, probably smarter than a fifth grader at age five, a future Einstein who knows. Anyway, she asked me direct questions. She said: 'Why do you wear makeup? Why are you wearing a wig? Why are you a clown?' I felt the magic stripped away as I had to confront the stark reality she was placing before me – logic eek. I thought – Why do we breathe? What makes us walk? What is the molecular structure of the planet? (that is my imagination going off, I just laughed such a sharp kid). I could see her logical mind and she was no fool, although I was, so I could baffle her with 'illogic'. Wow I really liked her style. I said: 'I am not a clown I just dress colourfully' (not true, I am a clown ... really). I looked at the other kids and asked, 'Do you think I am a clown?' They laughed. 'What makes you think I am?' I asked quizzically. 'I could be a taxi driver or rocket scientist, I am just wearing colours to give me energy, ha.' I then offered to shake hands with her and deliberately missed a few times and then let her grab me and faked that she had such a tight grip. (Mighty mouse me thinks.) She was probably going to be the next Prime Minister. You never know who you meet. I once met an ex-soldier who said he was a survivor from the Hiroshima nuclear blast in Japan, he told me he remembered the blast. Who would have thought!*

*It is all fun, nothing serious. It is the seriousness that actually takes our liveliness away and covers our thoughts in a blanket of darkness, clouding the potential of what can be. I have learned that over and over. Thankfully I am a clown, it reminds me of what is important in life. I feel it returns me to my true self, to be a simple fool. I meet too many stern faces in ordinary life and I feel a relief to clown around and remember who I really am. Footloose and fancy free. I was told that I am peace in action.*

*Hairy Potter got the car and I got my bag from my friends at Bourke Street. I waited on a street corner juggling. I waved at a man in the car and hoped he didn't think I was a new type of street worker. I laughed to myself. I tweaked my nose and waved to acknowledge people going about their day. I had a lot of fun throwing the ball under my leg into a cascade juggle. Had them bouncing around like B B Beroccas. Jumped in the car with Hairy and I said to him: 'You know it is all misunderstanding. People just don't know each other'. He agreed, it is amazing the people we meet. We have an amazing life meeting everyone; I have to do this every day.*

*I feel today was the first day of my new life. The 21st of September will signify to me a moment in time where I made up my mind what I wanted to do with my life. I will live my dream of peace, I will no longer desire anyone else, or to do or be anything else. My love will become the source of my freedom. I will no longer cry over small things, but save my heart and compassion for those who need my smile. For me peacemaking is my heart smiling and it is the greatest joy of my life. To just give endlessly to the world is sharing my heart with no expectation of return. Yet funnily enough the treasure I get is the joy I feel, no amount of money could pay me for the honour of my experience. It is my privilege to be with everyone as a friend, the real tribe we all belong to. I am so lucky. I can never convey to anyone the true beauty of the life I live, it is truly great. I honestly feel truly blessed as I see how blessed everyone is. For life is always a mirror of myself and there is nothing that I will reject, it is all acceptable through my eyes, the eyes of the clown see only love. For only love is real in my world.*

*So my original thought – be aware of the difference before and after clowning. What did I discover? There was no comparison. The reality of the clown is unbelievable, it is moving images, colour, dynamism, stories, excitement, spontaneity and above all freedom. The black and white world of conditioned day to day life feels heavy, predictable and lonely. I will opt for the clowning every time. This is the real world, believe me, I meet people and interact, I am not imagining my community, I am getting to know them. It all comes down to communication. That is why I believe in peace, I believe in my community.*



*Now, having said that, many were not aware that it was the International Day of Peace and apparently I heard all events were cancelled, so it looks like myself and Hairy were the only ones celebrating it. I felt inspired to come and did so. However, all the people we met except for one, believed in peace with great confidence, this was affirming for me. I also have no doubt that peace is, not will be, just a question of seeing it beyond the mundane and routine media images. Peace is in the smallest acts of kindness and in the openness of people; I can see it and feel it in the warmth of people, which is why I believe we have real hope for the future. I have real hope for children.*

*So my friends, when I got home my eyes filled with tears as the reality of my life as a clown impacted on me, as the truth I have always known just surfaces in a feeling of humility. To be happy and never forget to smile and let go of sadness, there is much in the world waiting for you and many wanting to love you and waiting for you to love them. Each moment is precious, surely. We just have to give people a chance. Was it John Lennon who said 'let's give peace a chance'? We do that when we open our eyes and hearts to the possibility that peace is indeed a reality. It is only when we believe it, that we see it. That is the secret life of clowns for peace....magic happens...really. Believe it or not...*



**The Fool's Gold:** Clowns are the mirrors of society. To be a clown is a privilege and opens your eyes to love in all its forms. Clowns see the true beauty of humanity and know we are One big fun family. When we lighten up perhaps this is the en-lighten-ment some are looking for. Yet you can never find it, you can only BE it in the moment!

## CHAPTER 3: Clowning with Dr. Patch Adams in Russia (2002)

Towards the end of my year studying Peace Studies I decided one day to dress as a clown and go to the university. After a wonderful day clowning with academics and students, I suddenly felt I was a World Peace Clown. I wondered if there were any other World Peace Clowns in the world? I did my usual 'poke in the dark', a Google search on *World Peace Clowns* and whalla, Patch Adams name came up. I checked out his website and found out he also was into peace:

*Patch Adams runs the Gesundheit Institute in Washington and his magazine is Achoo. Patch is both a medical doctor and a clown, but in reality he is also a social activist who has devoted 30 years to changing America's health care system, a system which he describes as expensive and elitist. He believes that laughter, joy and creativity are an integral part of the healing process and therefore true health care must incorporate such life. Doctors and patients in his model relate to each other on the basis of mutual trust, and patients receive plenty of time from their doctors. Allopathic doctors and practitioners of alternative medicine will work side by side. If you think that all sounds like a utopian impossibility, it isn't. Patch and his colleagues practiced medicine at the Gesundheit Institute together in West Virginia that way for 12 years in what he calls their pilot project. They saw 15,000 patients. Patch Adams has devoted his life to the study of what makes people happy<sup>iii</sup>...*

Patch (see photo) has travelled the world to more than 60 countries including: Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Haiti, Peru, and others typically where there is injustice and poverty.



He demonstrates, through the power of the caring clown, compassion by giving loving service and he inspires people to become clowns to learn to give so that others can feel a desire to live, feeling joy and hope. A movie was made about Patch's life called *Patch Adams*, played by the famous American actor Robin Williams. The movie made Patch famous which enabled him to expand 'friendshipism' and fund his dream for free hospitals. He is a true inspiration.

I wrote to him innocently expressing a desire to clown with him one day. I threw in a picture of myself. To my surprise a few weeks later I received a phone call from Washington. This American voice came over the line and said: 'Hi I am Wildman, I am Patch's brother, he got your letter and would like you to come on his annual tour to Russia'. I asked him 'when?' He told me the tour was in five weeks' time. I was shocked and thought immediately: 'I don't have any money, I'm on \$150 per week on an Austudy allowance'. Something inside me said 'write down his number'. So I did and then I rang a friend excitedly.

I have to say at this point it seemed impossible, but my friend Jane urged me on and said the magical words, 'Make it happen'. Those words echoed in my heart, so I decided to write a proposal and sent it to anyone that might be able to help create that rainbow bridge to Russia. I even rang Robert de Castello, affectionately known as Deek in Australia. He is a famous Olympian. I had worked with him on a research project in schools a few years before. When I spoke of Russia he recalled to me his experience of the Olympic Games in Moscow. I rang Helen Caldicott, she was overseas. She did get a message to me letting me know she was unable to help. I found dead ends, however I met the challenges positively. In my heart I felt I was going.

My funding was to come from an unexpected source. I remembered clowning once with a woman named Robyn at Canberra Hospital when we first started Clown Rounds in 2000. I rang my clown buddy Carole (Dr Woo Hoo) and she advised me to contact her. So I did, I rang her and said: 'I am not asking you to give me the money, but a bridging loan would be great'. She said, 'I'll get back to you in 24 hours'. I was contacted in 24 hours and she and her mother-in-law offered to pay for my trip to Russia the sum total of \$7,500. This was from meeting me once; she said: 'It is the trip of a lifetime, you have to go'. She had been on Patch's Tour and knew how life changing the experience would be. I just sat there and cried at the generosity, stunned that someone I barely knew would give that to me. Years later I discovered that the mystery mother-in-law was Rupert Murdoch's sister, Helen.

I wrote in my diary the following:

*Those few weeks leading up to the departure for Russia were frenetic. I was knocked back by the visa department at the Russian Embassy and had to resubmit the application; in addition I had to undertake my exams in Peace Studies and, I had to create a clown suit. The latter was a little Cinderellish, as I had little money. My mum sent thermal underwear and others gave me iron-on transfers to stick on the suit and we ended up creating a colourful clown costume. I felt like I was truly going to the ball.*

## Patch Adams Healing with Humour Tour

My trip to Russia was at a time of great change, reforms were being initiated by the then President Mikhail Gorbachev. Terms like perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) were part of the new language of reforms that were being ushered in. This was a society that was transiting from a communist state structure, where the state controls every part of life, to a form of controlled liberalism where private enterprise was emerging within a communist framework. As I was flying in to Moscow I saw what appeared to be untouched forests in Russia and immediately I thought of the benefits of a communist system that lacked commercial incentives, our planet gets somewhat of a reprieve. Coming in closer for landing I could see the dilapidated buildings were almost slum like near the airport, and for me, this symbolised the stagnation of the communist system. I understood why Gorbachev chose to introduce liberalism through self-government, open criticism, economic reforms, and social freedoms. The social net was being removed and replaced by a new theology of social capitalism, which was a metaphor for 'survival of the fittest', which translates further into 'survival of the most commercial'. One can only imagine how lost the people must have felt to learn that the State was not going to be there anymore.

I landed in Moscow and I was supposed to be met by someone from the tour, but no-one arrived. It was kind of funny as my father had actually said, 'What if no-one turns up?' I had just laughed not thinking that a possibility. What was interesting was that through sign language I was able to find a phone and I ended up getting help by an airport official. Between the two of us we spoke Russian and English and he worked out where I was going. He organised a taxi for me and I felt sure he instructed the taxi driver to not rip me off. I walked with the driver to the carpark and unwittingly moved to get into the driver's side and the Russian taxi driver indicated with a smile to sit on the other side. We were in the public carpark, I mused to myself that I could have got into a private car and been whisked away. The taxis have no signs and are simple little black square cars. He did have a picture in the car with his ID and as I knew the airport official had organised it, I sat back and enjoyed the ride. Around the time I turned up in Moscow the Chechen Siege in a theatre had just happened. I was contemplating the siege while on route to the hotel.

It seemed an irony that I was here to create peace (on all sides) as a clown and not far from where I was staying people who did not know how to make peace had been engaged in bloody conflict. We truly live in different worlds. Below is an overview of the Chechen Theatre Siege from Wikipedia:

*The Moscow theatre hostage crisis, also known as the 2002 Nord-Ost siege, was the seizure of the crowded Dubrovka Theater on 23 October 2002 by some 40 to 50 armed Chechens who claimed allegiance to the Islamist militant separatist movement in Chechnya. They took 850 hostages and demanded the withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya and an end to the Second Chechen War. The siege was officially led by Movsar Barayev. After a two-and-a-half day siege, Russian Spetsnaz forces pumped an unknown chemical agent into the building's ventilation system and raided it. During the raid, all 40 of the attackers were killed by Russian forces, and about 130 hostages died due to adverse reactions to the gas (including nine foreigners)...the hostages (majority) who died during the siege were killed by the toxic substance pumped into the theatre to subdue the militants. The use of the gas was widely condemned as heavy-handed, but Moscow insisted it had little room for manoeuvre, as they were faced with the prospect of 40 heavily armed rebels prepared to kill themselves and their hostages.[5] Physicians in Moscow condemned the refusal to disclose the identity of the gas that prevented them from saving more lives. However, some reports said the drug naloxone was successfully used to save some hostages.<sup>iv</sup>*

I contemplated the siege on the way from the airport weaving through the streets of Moscow. I arrived at the hotel and met up with other clowns who had joined *The Healing with Humour Tour*. Patch Adams has been making these trips to Russia for approximately 20 years. On this trip there were 40 clowns from across the world. I was allocated a room and met with my room-mate Karen, from the United Kingdom. We hit it off straight away. Later we went downstairs and gathered with the other clowns to meet Patch and get a briefing about clowning in Russia, to understand the culture and the do's and don'ts. We had the opportunity to meet and hear from the other participants who introduced themselves.



To view the real experience click on the **YouTube link** from my film showing Patch Adams introducing the clowns to Russia: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqR1vrCTx2M>

The trip to Russia entailed visiting nursing homes, orphanages, hospitals, clowning on subways and on the streets. Patch talked to us about clowning and that it was wise not to give things out, but to focus on sharing loving kindness. He said the purpose of the trip was to experience a small tribe dedicated to giving love. He was offering us an experience of loving others and ourselves selflessly.



We met Maria, a Russian artist who was the reason Patch Adams came to Russia for more than 20 years. She was wanting to help the orphans and she desperately tried to write to Patch Adams asking him to help her. She used a Russian-English dictionary to awkwardly write. She is a local artist who offers art therapy to the children in orphanages. Patch was so impressed by her determination that he visited her and decided to support her work.



He committed to Maria's Children (see <http://mariaschildren.ru/en>) and entered a collaboration to raise funds over a period that spanned more than 20 years. In that time he would have brought joy to 50,000 children or more. Patch invited clowns to join his *Healing with Humour Tour* to Russia every year and fund-raised to help Maria help the orphan children. The children in the orphanages suffered institutionalisation and we heard stories of exploitation for prostitution. We (as clowns) witnessed some trauma whilst moving around the orphanages. In 2002, there were apparently 600,000 children orphaned in Russia (see photo).



So within our joyful island was a sea of sadness. We hoped that a few red noses, whoopee cushions and cheerful music would bring some colour into their world, even if for only a moment. It is not about the longevity of a program; it is about living in the moment and bringing as much light and love to that moment as possible. Clowning was the conduit to love humanity as it is. This experience was what set the future for my life.

During our visits to orphanages we were informed by the clowns that the children had told them that the Mafia infiltrated these places and would take children for prostitution. They were vulnerable with no parental protection. The children were frightened by this and some were curled up in the foetal position I was told. Our role was clearly to love these children, to give them affection from safe adults, that some would not have experienced. We found ourselves often overwhelmed by the needs of hundreds of children at a time. Sometimes I was not sure how to interact, other times it came easily. However, to love is the key here and that is what all children need.

Patch is a deeply kind person and I still remember him sitting with a little girl who was deaf and dumb (see photo). He pulled out his box of ear plugs, and in a funny way pulled faces, demonstrated to me how to interact. She looked fascinated, her mouth and eyes were wide open.



Then he blew up a balloon and he let the air out which made her hair flick up. She was fascinated and smiled. He often picked out a particularly lonely child. I remember seeing him later on the bus. He looked at a Polaroid photo of her with tears in his eyes. He felt such love for the orphans. He knew what lay ahead for them. When we decide to get involved with people, we cannot help but be affected by their circumstances; love is the light that highlights our presence for good in the darkest places.

I watched other clowns dancing together, blowing up balloons, twisting them, juggling boxes, singing, laughing, playing puppets, pulling out tricks, giving stickers, hugging, kissing and giving flowers. Clowns even came to the wedding (see photos).



It was a wonderful space of love in all its forms.



I remember an orphanage where a little girl grabbed me by the hand; I was her clown for the time we were there. We hugged the children, played with them and joked.

The children were so excited as this was one of the rare moments of receiving love from overseas clowns. For the most part they would feel it from each other.



Anton is a boy I will always remember, he was burned because he chose to jump into a burning tent to save his friend (see photo). He and I played and I gave him my hat to wear. He had a good sense of humour.



Our presence was to bring genuine love to them, so at least they experienced it in their lives. Patch saw the importance of being a loving example to children. In that he is truly great.

An example of the experience from the perspective of two clowns is as follows:

*...I give as much love as I can and receive lots of love in return. Clowning in Russia is about love, very easy to give but difficult to receive, and I believe the secret is to open up your heart. Open your heart to these children, you're able to receive their love and in return they can receive your love, [you can] see it in their eyes, smiles on their faces. Every kid touched my heart. The first time I looked at Sasha and he opened up and gave me a big kiss. He is a beautiful, crazy, fun, enamouring, beautiful individual and I love him.*

*...I track someone down and get closer and closer and closer and pretend it is about squeaking my nose on their nose and as they squeak my nose, gaze in each other's eyes and I look inside their soul and I try to help them open their heart and give love. Open themselves up, to do what you feel inside without the illusion or concern that you may get hurt. To know that the trade-off between getting hurt and the rewards from opening up and giving love is very unbalanced (in favour of love)...*

We visited some famous sights in Moscow. The most notable among them were: Red Square, The Kremlin, The Armoury and some 14<sup>th</sup> century restaurants. Wikipedia outlines:

*Red Square is the city square in Moscow. It was quite cold there. I remember a helicopter going overhead. The square separates the Kremlin, as the official residence of the President of Russia, from the merchant quarter. It was a good place for clowning as many people are walking around. The Kremlin actually means fortress. I first saw it from the bus and noticed the long walls surrounding the epicentre of power in Russia. The Kremlin overlooks the Moskva River. The walls are red but the actual Kremlin is a white palatial building next to the Assumption Cathedral capped with golden domes. This church was utilised for Tsar coronations. Ivan The Great Bell Tower is the highest building in the city and was built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. We visited the Russian Armoury which is one of the oldest museums in Moscow originally a showcase for armour but was later enriched with the treasures of the Golden and Silver chambers of the Russian tsars.<sup>v</sup>*

I can recall the clowns all going into a museum and the staff telling us to 'be quiet'. I had to laugh, how do you get a group of gangly clowns to be quiet? The more they 'sssshhd' us the more I laughed. Sorry, I know it is cheeky but the only way we could have gone silent was for the staff to think laterally and ask us to mime. That would have worked.

Imagine 40 clowns going down to the train station and jumping on board. As we came down the escalator I could hear one of the clowns tweeting like a bird using a little whistle under her tongue, it echoed throughout the station.

We heard and saw tooting, laughing, waving and clowning around (see photo).



We all piled onto the train and tapped a balloon around. It was wonderful seeing strangers interacting and smiling on the train. Clowns became the excuse to connect. Normally people would ignore each other but clowns liberated the spirits of the people to be human again, that is the power of clowning. There was one moment on the train where two crazy clowns were touching tongues (see photo). It was very funny to watch. I had to capture that moment

We visited and saw some of the orthodox churches, museums, monuments and restaurants. You instantly received impressions of history and of incredible wealth. I found myself looking at the people and thinking about the proletariat (working class) and the bourgeoisie (the elite classes) in Russia and the tensions between them. At the same time I reflected on communism and the concept of a classless society based on common ownership. However,

the reality was different whereby the working class lived alongside the incredible wealth of the Tsars and the social elite. This was a tiered social order incompatible with the ideal of communism. The ideal of communism, like democracy, consists of words and concepts which are not truly practiced in the genuine spirit of their meaning. They are used to gain agreement and the perception of unity, but in truth control and advantage is sought.

Patch organised for the clowns to go to the Moscow Circus. On our way to the circus a poor woman came to the window of our car and reached her hand out begging for money, through gestures she indicated she was hungry. She had a baby on her hip. I found the poverty across a wide range of persons of different ages, disturbing. It was surreal finding myself in a cocoon of safety with a group of clowns who had no concept of their desperation and reality. We are on the privileged inside looking out. They are the tired faces with noses pressed against the window, looking in. All we could offer was love and money when we could. The Moscow Circus was an old circus. I immediately noticed animals were used as the attraction and part of acts. I saw alligators at the entrance, in the ring elephants walking on barrels, lions and tigers jumping through hoops and monkeys doing tricks. Whilst it was fascinating to see how intelligent animals are, this contrasted with the ethos of the modern circuses in the West where the use of animal performers is viewed as cruel and banned. I personally prefer animals to be free. However, it was an experience and I watched with wonder - the clowns, trapeze fliers, horseback riders, acrobats and felt as a little child, fascinated. We were on the edge of our seats, peering into a world of wonder and fantasy.

I remember on another occasion walking into the train station and seeing an old woman begging. I looked into her eyes and gave her some roubles. I always try in those moments to give as much love as I can. I smiled at her and rubbed her hands as they were cold. She had the most beautiful old face, I saw the hardship in the lines on her face and the kindness shone in her eyes. I also saw children dancing on the street trying to make money to survive. They were entertaining, but behind this was desperation life was bitterly cold. We were in Russia at the beginning of winter, I could only imagine what it would be like when it really set in.



Another highlight was Patch inviting some of us clowns to visit his friend in Moscow who was a fan of John Lennon. We were ferried by bus to this 'peace house'. We entered the house and noticed Beatles memorabilia everywhere, he was a serious fan. We all sat there nibbling on finger food and listening to Beatles music. I thought 'another peacenik on the other side of the world joining hands with Patch, an old hippy from way back.' Perhaps we could all learn to '*give peace a chance*' as John Lennon inspired.

We met a CBS journalist Bill Gasperini (see photo) and invited him and his son to come clowning. Nothing like getting a member of the global media to come and experience the happiness and joy of giving. Bill was a natural and had a big grin on his face. Perhaps we could take more journalists out and change the world.



Our next adventure was to congregate at the Moscow train station, a gaggle of colourful clowns. We were scheduled to catch the overnight train from Moscow to Saint Petersburg. I looked around the train station and saw the classic Coca Cola logo on a billboard and thought about how corporations are selling old brands to the newly opened Russian economy. I reflected on how capitalism is changing Russia under the guise of freedom.

In Saint Petersburg, myself and a few other clowns went out walking at night undercover (civilian clothes to blend in). We watched as the soft white snow fluttered down covering all the buildings, like icing. I loved looking at the colourful Russian Orthodox churches reminding me of fairyland palaces reminiscent of Disneyland cartoons. It was the most fun I've had without drinking, although I must confess I did have a few vodkas. We did find out that we could buy alcohol from little shops. It is bitterly cold in Russia and I can understand why the tasteless vodka is used, it warms you, taking the chill off the wind. There are many people who cannot afford heating. Drinking is a serious social issue in Russia. A bottle of Vodka was only six Australian dollars, we had to try it once. It was magical walking at night in Saint Petersburg feeling the snow crunch under your feet, the palaces, sleighs and locals in their furry hats. Saint Petersburg was the most beautiful city I had ever seen – statues of horses, canal systems meandering, ornate architecture, elaborate grandiose buildings and the Christmas image of children pulling sleds. I discovered that Saint Petersburg is called the *Paris of Russia*. At one point the clown in me came out. I saw a stump and creatively thought of the 'black stump'. I enthusiastically embraced the persona of the Australian environmentalist the late Steve Irwin and did a little skit. I jumped over this black stump and exclaiming with an exaggerated Aussie accent 'you little beauty.' I then began to explore the details of the stump in exaggerated fascination, jumping over it several times. They all laughed at my antics. We were on a natural high.

Saint Petersburg was once also known as Leningrad. We were taken to a museum where we were shown a black and white film of the Siege of Leningrad. I will never forget watching men pulling sleds with dead bodies.

The conditions were freezing and so many people died from hunger and cold. The Siege is described as follows:

*The Siege of Leningrad, also known as the Leningrad Blockade was a prolonged military operation undertaken by the German Army Group North against Leningrad—historically and currently known as Saint Petersburg—in the Eastern Front theatre of World War II. The siege started on 8 September 1941, when the last land connection to the city was severed. Although the Soviets managed to open a narrow land corridor to the city on 18 January 1943, lifting of the siege took place on 27 January 1944, 872 days after it began. It was one of the longest and most destructive sieges in history and overwhelmingly the most costly in terms of casualties.<sup>vi</sup> The siege lasted for a total of 900 days, from September 8 1941 until January 27 1944. The city's almost 3 million civilians (including about 400,000 children) refused to surrender and endured rapidly increasing hardships in the encircled city. Food and fuel stocks were limited to a mere 1-2 month supply, public transport was not operational and by the winter of 1941-42 there was no heating, no water supply, almost no electricity and very little food. In January 1942 in the depths of an unusually cold winter, the city's food rations reached an all time low of only 125 grams (about 1/4 of a pound) of bread per person per day. In just two months, January and February of 1942, 200,000 people died in Leningrad of cold and starvation.<sup>vii</sup>*

We visited the Winter Palace and walked through the various rooms, on the polished floors and saw period art works. The wealth of the Tsars was truly astonishing. The palace was constructed on a monumental scale that was intended to reflect the might and power of Imperial Russia. 'From the palace, the Tsar ruled over 22,400,000 square kilometres (almost 1/6 of the Earth's landmass) and over 125 million subjects by the end of the 19th century.'<sup>viii</sup> Within the Winter palace is the Hermitage museum. This is a vast museum with a wide range of exhibitions including: Egyptian, Renaissance, fine arts, jewellery and artefacts of antiquity. I recall seeing the royal clothing, hand carved horse drawn coaches and luxuries of every type imaginable that had been given as gifts to the royal family. Significantly, I recall seeing the famous Faberge eggs.

## Patch Adams Love Revolution Speech

We all gathered back at the hotel in Saint Petersburg and Patch asked us all to attend his talk. He spoke about our experience as clowns and the reason why we were clowning together. Patch stated that what we were doing as a group of clowns was what he termed the 'love revolution'. I can still hear Patch's voice when I write this. Here is the speech on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=99BJWChlifs>

*Note: footage is of Saint Petersburg, Patch's speech starts at 5.00.*

Here is a transcript of his speech:

*...A lot of how you speak will not help a love revolution if I could show you how you spoke. You can see that you are inarticulate about the week. If love is to make a difference it can no longer be inarticulate. False humility (Patch refers to a clown) is great to everyone, speaks like she is less great than I. I cannot tolerate this type of thinking any more. If you really want peace and justice, really want Presidents and world leaders and a world that survives, you got to hear that people think you're great, know you're great and get to work. Get articulate about it, great does not mean greater than, it is not a comparison or competition, everyone is great, most people give it up or never see it. Not one of you isn't great diagnostically. Without operating from a base of feeling you are great, you're not going to be able to do your dreams for peace and justice, you will be mouthing them, got to get articulate. Can't stumble over what you experienced on this trip. What it meant 'oh it was great and loving' it is important to analyse it...*

*In a love revolution the money and power revolution operates with a very few people and wanting to lessen that number all the time. And they lead through money and power over model from the beginning of recorded history. The love revolution will never lead from the few to the many. A revolution where everyone is the leader. No one will feel like a 'not' leader. This trip was lead. How you make a group of people that are completely diverse and different, don't speak the language, within 24 hours make them feel part of a team,*

*is a made thing. If you are interested in learning about leadership I can talk to you. The main way it happened is in the people you chose to work with. The MIR team, individual people, exposing you to Maria and her team choosing the five of us who lead the trip. All that made this experience happen, it did not happen by happenstance, happened by direction. Not happened by me ordering things around, it happened by you taking yourself in hand and deciding on this trip to be loving, to be a group.*

*Since 9/11 I've been asking my audiences, 'What is your love strategy?' we know the revenge, fear, violence strategy. People go into the twin towers blow up, let's blow up Afghanistan, boy was the country behind it. Did anyone in the Pentagon say, you know it's never worked, violence has never worked in history, I wonder how love would work on it. So I started to ask: 'What is your love strategy and how are you implementing it?' This trip is a love strategy. It is manipulated to give you two weeks to see what regular day to day loving and service would be like. Ladies and gentleman these are average, it becomes special in a world of loving money and power. These are average days in a loving world. A bunch of diverse people, don't even share the language, really having fun with each other, looking after each other of all ages. We have the first nine decades represented here. We have people who don't speak the language, people watching me not knowing what I am saying (they are) sitting here absorbing something.*

*We don't have a lot of time. You can't be wimpy about being loving, if you like this, you made your part. No-one here made your part in it. If the whole is great [it is] because each one made their part. You can learn it. Learn how to go into an elevator and make the love revolution right there. Walt Whitman was a revolution, Einstein was a revolution, most revolutions have been non-violent. The love revolution is not going to have a violent anything. You notice when you watch people speak last night about loving. What happened, how it happened, your own role in it, how you might carry it on. It was created by leadership. A different kind of leadership. A simple way it is called is servant leadership, have the people leading work harder than the other people. Again, I'm saying these things partly because I have my own concerns about how long humanity can last...*

He indicated that all people were leaders, all were great, but most gave it up by 40 years of age. He was offering us an experience of loving others and ourselves. Love really is so simple and it is truly amazing, so much effort must be put into reminding people of the power of love and how deeply natural and empowering it is. Patch indicated as clowns what we do is 'ordinary' yet it is seen (by society) as extraordinary in a world that is not loving as a natural reflection of our human family, so many are so closed off for fear of others and I would add significantly, they fear their own greatness. We may love our own family or loved ones but it doesn't extend out past our self-created circles of interest or known contacts. We live in a world of repressed needs and it is evident in the way we relate or choose not to.

This is a poem I wrote on this trip:

### **Russian Roulette**

*In Russia it is bitterly cold,  
Long coats,  
Fur hats,  
Working class caps,  
The working class is no longer working,  
For the cold war,  
Was won,  
On the Russian roulette wheel,  
The market of capitalists,  
Had their day in the sun,  
Economic rationalism,  
Creates the schism,  
For Adam Smith's invisible hand,  
Gives with one and takes with the other,  
On the Eve of collapse,  
Capital takes flight,  
The population is in fright,  
For there is no safety net,  
The parents are divorced,  
600,000 orphans forced into crumbling mansions,  
So distraught,  
The former Soviet Empire,  
Caught in the blizzard,  
Of globalisation.*

*The streets of old Moscow,  
The people seem so cold,  
They build Kremlin walls,  
Walking with the wind of routine,*

*Conditioned by social rules,  
I feel the proletariat,  
Mixing with the bourgeoisie,  
Peter the Great,  
The Romanoff's,  
The winter palace,  
So opulent and grand,  
Privilege doesn't understand,  
Outside the peasants stand,  
Awaiting awareness,  
She collects roubles in the rubble,  
Vulnerable,  
A society in trouble,  
For they burst the bubble,  
The greatness and the pride,  
The wretched and tired,  
Died in Chechnya.*

*A state of natural wealth,  
Gas and oil commodities,  
Is it odd that wealth is natural?  
Where natural exploration replaces exploitation,  
Where natural protection replaces extraction,  
Where natural selection replaces genetic engineering,  
Where natural justice needs no court,  
Where natural peace is never bought,  
Nothing is sought in the natural temple,  
For peace is balance,  
When love is simple.*

*When the world is a family,  
Removed from social systems,  
Constructed from history,  
Unable to adapt to changing circumstances,  
For ideology becomes rigid,  
Divisions of them and us,  
Lack of trust,  
Leads to conflict and lust,  
On the international stage,  
In this play the actors are not paid,  
But play out their roles,  
According to accountants' pledges,  
For power over the debtors' ledger,  
Gives the edge,  
Leverage and hegemony,  
Leaves only credit and money,  
Growing on trees without roots.*

*All throughout history,  
Empires rise and fall,  
The people hear the call,  
For equilibrium is correction,  
Corruption creates insurrection,  
Technology is environmental plagiarism,  
Profit maximisation removed from ethics,  
Productivity is not just kinetics,  
The edict of multinational companies,  
Becomes visible on the internet,  
Knowledge carries responsibility,  
And with that we have the ability,  
An opportunity to rearrange,*

*The order of seniority,  
Truth in democracy,  
For the new priority,  
Is social change,  
Where the left becomes right,  
The Self develops new sight,  
Now the time has come to decide ...  
Who we want to become.*

What happened to me in Russia was personally transformative, as I saw that as clowns we were able to reach across cultural, language and social barriers with our humanity. As clowns we were greeted with laughter and love. If only everyone could experience life as a clown, then we would see we don't need weapons of mass destruction, we just need weapons of mass distraction, to distract people back to the true meaning of life which is to love each other. It was a feeling or perspective of peace I was experiencing. It was there I realised that clowning is the archetype of peace as action in the most simple and authentic way. I experienced the Russian people to be very kind but their lives were very hard and as harsh as their winters. Patch chose the right place to start his love revolution.



In harmony with his passion for peace I showed Patch my vision of teaching peace in schools. Patch wrote a testimonial in support of my work.

*Dear Friends,*

*Susan Carew went on my annual clown tour to Russia November 1-16, 2002 and we were fortunate to have her radiant self to spread love and fun at the heavy pace I give them. She shared material and conversation with me of her passion to create world peace and non-violence programs in schools and I was overjoyed.*

*For decades I have bemoaned all over the world that peace and justice are not taught in schools, now I have read over her business plan to implement a program in Australia and I support it whole heartedly. Not only is it a great leap forward for Australia, it also is a pioneer project for the rest of the world to emulate. I feel she has the passion to carry it out, contact me if you want to discuss. [www.patchadams.org/](http://www.patchadams.org/)*

This was written in 2002 and it is now 2015, I am still promoting peace in schools, I am still waiting for schools to open their doors to values based peace education. I am sure they will.

I have REAL HOPE.

**The Fool's Gold:** The Fool gives everyone permission to love. The love revolution is opening the heart and bravely loving the world as it is. To love everyone is truly liberating and fulfilling as you begin to see yourself in every face. As you love others they love you in return, naturally. This is where love leads by example. Unconditional love expects nothing in return. This is what peace on earth feels like, it is unconditional love and fearless. It is the real power of unity.

## **CHAPTER 4: Rotary Peace & Conflict Studies Scholarship, Thailand (2008)**

*"I hope that through this program, peace is not just a piece of paper  
...but a practical tool to end possible conflicts." — Bhichai Rattakul*

The Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program (RPCSP) is a unique short-term certificate course designed for professionals in mid- to upper-level positions who can arrange to take time off from their employment for just a few months to participate in the program. <sup>ix</sup>

The intensive short-term program, offered in English, provided a valuable opportunity for participants to obtain a certificate in Peace and Conflict Studies awarded by Chulalongkorn University, one of Thailand's most respected and prestigious universities.

For up to three months, program participants gain knowledge in both academic studies in the classroom and in practical field training learned through case studies, research and participation. Participants taking the program have the opportunity to network, practice their skills, exchange ideas and develop new personal and professional relationships with diverse industry leaders worldwide.

The program outcomes are as follows:

- Awareness of how to contribute to the shaping of conflict resolution policy at national, regional, and international levels.
- Understanding of skills and methodologies for conflict mapping and analysis, as well as how to apply these analytic methods to fieldwork situations relevant to the participants' areas of concern and responsibility.
- Greater familiarity, acquired through case studies, of process skills (such as mediation, negotiation, problem solving, and dialogue) used in conflict resolution and an understanding of how these may be relevant to one's own fieldwork and locales.
- Ability to rethink and refashion existing models and practices and contribute to the development of innovative ideas and techniques.
- Appreciation of the educational approaches, values, and ideas that underpin the process of peacemaking in order to become agents of change for peace building in appropriate processes of non-violent social and cultural transformation.

To view PowerPoint of RCSP: <http://www.worldpeacefull.com/rotary-peace-program-thailand/>

## Emotional Intelligence Clowning Workshop - Chulalongkorn Hospital

Through contacts at the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Centre, I wrote to Chulalongkorn Hospital exploring the idea of clowning there. I was aware that they had no experience of clowns. I was given the contacts of Doctor Atapol and his wife Pat. Dr Atapol is the Head of the Psychiatric Unit at the hospital. His wife Pat runs the Art Therapy area in Oncology. She utilises art therapy with cancer patients and in particular, children. She is a doctor.

Pat and I collaborated to run a three hour workshop on humour and healing. Approximately 40 nurses and health practitioners were invited to learn the importance of positivity in the workplace, positivity with patients and using humour to heal (see photo). The workshop explored issues of clowning, endorphins (happy hormones), Dr Patch Adams, happiness in our own lives and catalysing happiness in others. The workshop focused on theory and experiential sessions of laughter and clowning techniques.



The last session was a practical exercise of taking a team of health professionals, dressed as clowns, through the hospital to waiting rooms and entertaining the patients and relatives. It was very successful. We also ran a second workshop with occupational therapists, nurses, psychiatrists and others in the children's hospital.

The connection with Pat and her assistant Cherry was very positive. I was assured the work of humour and healing will continue after I leave. I felt deeply grateful to have been given the opportunity to bring love, laughter and freedom to the staff at Chulalongkorn Hospital, it was an experience I will never forget. This was the first clowning workshop in Thailand.







Below are Dr. Pat Sughondhabhirom comments based on an evaluation and her experience.

**The clowning workshop 'HUMOUR & HEALING' 28 March 2008; 9:00 am.- 12:00 pm.  
at Chulalongkorn Hospital, Thailand by Susan Carew : The World Peace Clown**

Supported by Palliative Care Committee of Chulalongkorn hospital, Thailand and HUMAN center : the art center for healing and professional development organized by Patcharin Sughondhabhirom, M.D. translated in the workshop by Sangusanee Nawamarat

*...I was amazed when I heard about Susan Carew and the world peace clown. Well... she must be a very happy person, and it is wonderful that she is into peace but 'what else I can offer her', I asked myself. The answer came to me easily and spontaneously when we met. During our conversation plus dinner, Susan who owns a smiley face shared with me the portfolio of her works. We immediately understood each other how this could benefit the patients in hospital whose routine is painful and sometimes boring.*

*Full with sense of humor, Susan easily spread her joy to others and turned the dinner table to be one of the most enjoyable place on earth. At some point, she made me believe that I could do it myself. I could really be a clown, can you imagine? What a wonderful feeling she gave me that day. Her enormous sense of humor also shined on the faces of others who joined our dinner table, and so do her friendliness and her sense of hope we could feel in our heart that whole evening. We exchanged perspectives of ourselves, our environments, how family functions in the society, how people react to the global warming issue, what the future would be like for children , and etc. Suddenly, we felt we shared many things in common. But the world would not be in peace if we only sat and talked. We felt the need to do something together to make every day more enjoyable. That is the beginning of the workshop. Susan and I, we planned to start from something we already have access, that is to introduce humour into hospital. First we would like to focus on medical staffs at Chulalongkorn Memorial hospital where therapeutic art program is already being applied with chronically ill and terminally ill children by our team including fellow artists from the Human art center, Sangusanee Nawamarat and Pitan Tachaniti.*

*The first clowning workshop in Thailand by Susan Carew, on 28th of March 2008, took place at Bhumiphol Building 18th floor, Chulalongkorn hospital in the middle of Bangkok city. And later we organized another workshop for Susan on 17th of April 2008, for medical staffs in the Children hospital, again in Bangkok.*

***The clowning workshop 'HUMOUR & HEALING' , 28 March 2008; 9:00 am.- 12:00 pm. at Chulalongkorn Hospital, Thailand by Susan Carew : The World Peace Clown***

*...In both workshops, most participants are nurse practitioners who care for patients with chronic diseases, from adult and children's wards. The rest are doctors, social workers and psychologists. Susan let the participants learn the theoretical based and scientific based information first. Then everybody got to learn 'fun to do' clowning skills before we got out and clowned at the out-patient departments and the in-patient departments.*

*'It is a very good feeling' someone said to me after the workshop and she wished that we could provide more space and able to accommodate some more friends in the workshop next time.*

*Most participants feel empowered and promised to bring humour into their workplaces. Some of them also changed their attitudes towards work and the feeling of overwhelmed by the loads of work. To me, the more important is that almost all participants felt free when they clowned. It is fascinating for what we call 'freedom' is usually hard to find, but unexpectedly can be found right there behind those clown masks. It is a kind of freedom that frees us from whatever controlling us in real life. And all that happened, we would like to show our gratitude to Susan Carew, the talented world peace clown.*

*Patcharin Sughondhabirorn, M.D.*

*Director of Human Center: the art center for healing and professional development  
Chulalongkorn Hospital, Bangkok, Thailand'*

### Field Trip: Clowning at Mae-La Refugee Camp

Clowning on the field trips was an experience I wanted to explore to observe intercultural reactions to clowning and the possibility of clowns as peacemakers. Myself and another colleague, a Sri Lankan Doctor were given permission to clown at Mae-La refugee camp. The idea was to explore clowning as a means of creating connection with the Karen Burmese (an ethnic group of Burma). There were approximately 50,000 people resident in this refugee camp.

There were no photos allowed in the camp but one was taken of myself. The lady behind me with light on her, to my amazement, was to come to Australia and become a social worker. She contacted me and we had dinner together, who would have thought she would have been in the photo. Destiny? I think so.





As we went through the camp we were seen as a curiosity but instantly recognized as bringing something to the people. I did some juggling, waving, blowing kisses and generally playing with the children. Myself and another participant had a tribe of children following us. Large groups gathered and we put on semi shows to communicate to the people. There were many smiles around and interactions on a different level. I started to juggle in front of a crowd and noticed it swell to around 200. In the process of clowning I decided to teach them how to juggle. I tried to get a boy to come but he became shy. What I often did was followed the children clown style, many laughed. I mimicked people, smiling and using my eyes and waving to gain their attention. I was always seeking eye contact to make peace with them all, to foster a sense of common humanity, equality and inclusivity. The art of clowning enables one to look into the eyes of the other. As a clown when contact is made - love, acceptance and value is conveyed non-verbally.

As we moved through the camp, we ended up at a makeshift school. Myself and an American, with theatre experience, performed theatre skills for 200 children. This brought together children, teachers and members of this displaced refugee community. As it was impromptu there was a lot of surprise and excitement around it. We conducted a laughter workshop, some clowning activities and theatre (mime). In the makeshift school, I jumped from one desk to the other making noise and they were all laughing and their eyes shining. It was a very positive interaction and deeply fulfilling for me.

## Camillian Social Centre, HIV Clinic, Southern Thailand

As part of the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program we travelled by bus from Bangkok to Rayong, in Southern Thailand. We were scheduled to visit the Camillian Social Center\*which is a HIV clinic.

*The Camillian Missionaries came to Thailand to help poor people access medical treatment. An Italian catholic priest, Father Giovanni, set up the Camillian Social Center to provide shelter, care for the homeless and rejected HIV/Aids sufferers. The Center gave shelter to the most vulnerable women and children. The Center is involved in palliative care, childcare, prevention education, supporting a network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), supervising a self-sustaining rehabilitation community, providing scholarships for affected orphaned children and a center for HIV positive orphaned teenagers. All the projects comply with the latest HIV/AIDS strategy outlined by the World Health Organization. The projects are part of an integrated approach that links prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and support to people living with HIV/AIDS. The Camillian Social Center has taken in 1,670 people living with HIV/AIDS. Of this number 730 (43%) people have died due to complications related to HIV/AIDS and 940 (56%) have been able to return to the community. <sup>xi</sup>*

Father Giovanni ran information workshops for the Rotary participants to educate our group about HIV/AIDS in Thailand.

*'According to The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), it is estimated that 500,000 people live with HIV/AIDS in Thailand. It is estimated that rates are rising in young people becoming sexually active earlier. Other people at risk included: drug addicts, sex workers and men having sex with men.'<sup>xii</sup>*

HIV/AIDS affected people are often shunned, or seen similarly to untouchables in India, and so experience isolation and discrimination. There is considerable work that needs to be done in education and social awareness to promote inclusivity.

As part of our education, we were introduced to a few prostitutes living at the Center who gave us talks about their life experience. Some women were regular prostitutes and one was a high class prostitute. Some women became prostitutes for financial reasons to support their families; others were taken by traffickers as young girls and hooked on drugs never to be seen again by their families. I learned that prostitution originally started because of foreign multinationals. 'Prostitution in Thailand is estimated between 150,000 and 200,000.'<sup>xiii</sup> It is a huge trade in Asia and deeply concerning. One of the women explained to us her experience of having to see men constantly, one after the other, and that she had an internal condom, but that did not protect her from HIV AIDS. As a woman I just shuddered at the thought of such a loveless life and exploitation, thus being used as a hobby horse. The other former prostitute regarded herself as high class, she felt some pride in the fact that she was expensive and had formed some relationships with the men. She earned a lot more than the regular prostitutes. They spoke of their life. As peace scholars we reflected on the plight of women in this country.

There was one funny moment where Father Giovanni, as part of his education program, showed us a curious wooden box with two holes on the top. Apparently you have to put both hands through the holes. Father Giovanni chose Anas Khalifa from Nigeria, who is a Sharia Law Judge. He asked him put his hands into two circular holes and to feel inside the box. What was funny was he felt a phallic object and suddenly jumped pulling his hands out fast. Apparently it was a fake penis and the idea was for men to practice putting condoms on in the dark. Anas was embarrassed, but I could see Father Giovanni was making a point, apparently condom use was prohibited in Islamic communities, so he started with educating Anas. We all had a good laugh when we saw him jump back in shock. It was a funny moment, but at the same time, it revealed how important it was to protect people from the transmission of HIV AIDS.

I recall hearing that some of the participants on our program feared that they could catch HIV AIDS and wouldn't touch the people at this facility. I decided to clown at the facility (see photo) to demonstrate that these patients and kids could be touched and hugged. I thought it was important to show them laughing, just like us. I wished to show inclusivity.

So myself and Pasky (Paskalin) my clown buddy from Sri Lanka, decided to just clown around. Pasky played the drums and I did the usual jumping around and interacting with the kids. It was so lovely to see their shining faces and to see the Rotary participants laughing as well. It brings joy to my heart to feel that energy of laughter and unity in the one room. I asked Father Giovanni if I could run a workshop with the kids, he agreed. Pasky and I went to another room and created a workshop to enable the kids to be clowns. They did funny walks and jumped into the centre being clowns. They were very funny and enthusiastic, we all had a great time.



Laughter is very important for the immune system. It was Father Giovanni who confirmed to me that they had had programs of laughter and noticed that the patients went into remission, so there is method in clown madness. Positive emotions and feelings are very important for health and wellbeing. A positive state of mind can make the difference between life and death. The work we are trying to do as clowns is very important.

Pasky and I visited the small 40 bed facility to meet the patients dying from HIV Aids. I had my rainbow twirling ribbon and played tug-o-war with one lady whose arms and legs were like tooth picks. I will never forget the twinkle in her eyes as I tugged on the ribbon. Her spirit was very much alive although her body was exhausted. I juggled and played with my sliding whistle that sends out high tones then low. I had fun with my squeezey eggs and tomatoes that I throw on the floor. They 'splat' broadly and then regroup giving a really nice visual effect.

I then decided to juggle on the landing outside and I noticed people were not responding. I wondered why this was? It turned out they were blind. So I started to make more noise. I recall a significant moment when I saw a small child around five years old lying on the ground between two parents. She was just lying there. They must have felt so sad. I came up and I had my whistle which sounds high then low when you pull a sliding metal rod. You can make interesting noises with it as you pull the metal rod like a trombone. Anyway, I grabbed her little hand and had her hold it at one end. I blew the whistle and with my hand over hers we pulled the metal rod down so she could hear the low sound, and then pulled up so she could hear the high pitch. When I did this she started to clap and I saw she was so excited. I wondered if this was the first time she had heard this type of sound. I imagined in that moment that she could see colour through the sound.

I walked away deeply happy, here I was in a place where people are dying and not long for this world. These moments were powerful moments in my life and always remind me that *kindness and love* are the keys to peace in the world. On leaving the HIV clinic, I could only feel joy and upliftment rather than sorrow. The moments we shared were so lovely and special for me. I loved connecting with these people, creating a moment of aliveness and laughter. Just live in the moment is what I realised, rather than thinking of the future. I felt deeply happy for having been there. As I mentioned before, I was told many go into remission after a program of laughter; it seems the positive intention boosts the immune system. We clowns know this, who said – 'laughter is the best medicine'? Good 'ol Patch Adams.

We are still waiting on the medical fraternity to see the merit in having humour and laughter in hospitals as part of healing, and why not splash a bit of colour around as well to brighten up the sterility. Can you imagine how quickly they would heal? I am sure Patch Adams would be nodding in agreement.

Wellbeing is connected to homeostasis (balance). Dis-ease is connected to imbalance. To juggle is to find the natural rhythm that flows without arrhythmia. Wellbeing is like juggling it is going with the flow of life and allowing the joy to be in the moment. Fear and depression facilitate dis-ease, anyone can testify to this when they get sick after a period of stress and exhaustion. The body is out of balance. So naturally joy brings well-being.

I wrote this poem inspired by the five year old child with HIV Aids surrounded by her loving parents. This is a tribute to her courage.

### **My Healing Wish**

*This is a tribute to your daughter,  
For she is a bright light,  
And happiness is the medicine,  
Sunshine is the panacea,  
For much merriment and clowning around  
Is the atmosphere of peace,  
In being the Fool is the tool,  
That brings healing to health.*

*May your daughter's life be long and healthy,  
May you share in your grandchildren,  
May your family remain united,  
For they are blessed with love,  
And there is no greater wealth than this.*

*And all I can see is sunshine,  
Even in sorrow,  
For the spirit of God is a powerful force,  
And it requires a trust in the process,  
A faith that there is meaning,  
Yet every life has a message,  
Every life is important.*

*And may we extend the healing wish to all those unwell,  
In hospital,  
In war zones,  
In sorrow.*

*For we can extend a hand to others in empathy,  
For each is family,  
In a world divided,  
That is not balanced,  
So the key is to find the balance,  
And make fairness your measure,  
Love your cup,  
For I am sure it will overflow with goodness,  
For there is much you have done for others.*

*Always remember that the end is not to be feared,  
It is a natural process,  
For which we all return home,  
For our life is a magic moment that must not be taken for granted,  
For the wish to be granted,  
Was to be here.*

*So know that love is healing,  
And be grateful for every moment,  
Whether it be long or short,  
For the real death is not living life to the fullest,  
It is living in fear and anger,  
And you are the most beautiful gift,  
That must be shared,  
Cared for,  
For all to see,  
I wish you a healthy life eternally.*

Every moment of life is precious, as is every person you meet. That is the lesson taught to me by those sick and dying.

Why not live every moment in gratitude this is the attitude of love. Ya clown!







## Clowning in Andong Slum – Cambodia

The Rotary team visited a Cambodian slum called Andong Slum, a brief overview:

*Andong slum was established in 2006. The people in the slum were originally living in Phnom Penh in a place called Sambok Chap. The families were paid off (prices determined at a substantially lower property value) and coerced into signing their land away. They were then herded into buses by armed men and riot police and taken to rice paddies at Andong. They were dumped in an empty field 24 kilometres outside of Phnom Penh. There were no houses, no electricity, no sewage facilities, no drainage pipes to prevent flooding in the rainy season, no trash collection, no school and no hospital nearby. They lost their jobs and businesses.<sup>xiv</sup>*

This is a good example of why we **need to recouple (link) human rights to trade**.

The Rotary participants walked through this slum and saw clearly that the conditions were very poor. The smell turned me off, yet I felt an inner call to go back to the slum as a clown. I was surprised by the power of my own feeling. These poor people had no running water, and it was dirty and disease ridden. I found deeply disturbing the temporary nature of this slum, and the way the people were literally dumped in this area that was the reason I decided to go back. I decided to care. Myself and Pasky, a Sri Lankan Doctor, spoke to Leigh Matthews, an Australian CEO of the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) called Future Cambodia Fund.

The Future Cambodia Fund supply clean water, therapeutic programs, medical and dental help to displaced villagers in Cambodia. According to the website:

*Leigh was a backpacker who started this charity organisation and ended up supporting 8000 Cambodians, a welfare machine with 12 staff, numerous volunteers and an annual budget of \$150,000. She was named Victoria's Young Australian of the Year for 2009 in recognition of her efforts... Leigh won a trophy from Junior Chamber International as one of 10 "outstanding young persons in the world."<sup>xv</sup>*

She was very impressive and an example of what young people could achieve when they put their mind to a cause.

In response to my request to visit the slum as a clown, Leigh organised a driver to pick us up and take us to the slum. Andong slum was on the way to the airport and we calculated we could clown there first and then meet the other Rotary participants at the airport. We were scheduled to go to Siem Reap in northern Cambodia. That decision had ramifications, as it turned out to be a significant turning point in my understanding of real peace.

Pasky and I were taken to a make-shift school with wooden planks for seats. This school was built by the Future Cambodia Fund. It was newly built and the only school in the slum. Pasky and I bounced into the room. I could see the excited smiles, shining faces and enthusiasm. We ran a clown workshop with the kids. I clowned with them and showed them what clowns have in their bags. We all played and laughed together. Pasky played the drum, which was really effective, he knew a few games we could play together. So we combined our techniques to bring music, humour, dance and fun to the clown workshop and were rewarded with the bright smiles of the delightful Cambodian children.







After the workshop we walked with the children along a dirt path (see photo's), we were like pied-pipers.





The kids hovered around us growing in numbers as we walked through the slum. As a clown I smelt nothing, saw nothing unacceptable as I was in a mindset of unconditional love. We took the children into the heart of the slum and met their beautiful shining parents. The children just followed us, amazed at the colourful spectacle. We threw fluffy balls into the crowd and were greeted with wide smiles; they were amazed that clowns would come to their slum. They conveyed an acceptance of our presence and appeared happy at the interaction. All that interested me was the smiles on the children's and parents' faces. I wanted to value people who had been dumped in this slum without infrastructure. They had been forced to leave the inner city, because it was prime real estate, as greedy developers were after it. We wanted to show them how beautiful they are through our eyes. One child showed me his arm with blood on it and gave me the impression that disease was present.

He deliberately encouraged me not to touch him; I was deeply moved by his protection, I felt under the canopy of love.

After an hour we realised it was time to leave, we had to get to the vehicle and go to the airport to fly to the north of Cambodia. We climbed into the vehicle and departed from the slum, de-briefing with our Cambodian guides. My Cambodian translator said: 'It was like a movie, I can't believe it'. The interpreter was stunned at the impact we made and kept saying, 'It was like a movie', he was shaking his head in disbelief at what he witnessed. I was stunned that I made a difference, as I often see myself as average, as a clown. Then I noticed two children were chasing the vehicle. I noticed one dropped off but the other kept running. I intuitively put my hand out the window, this little boy and the clown touched fingers. I realized the child was chasing his dream, I imagined him wanting to keep the dream alive. I grabbed for a puppet and reached out the window handing it to the child. The child stopped still, just staring at the puppet. I felt the dream became real for him in that moment. For me the reality of the experience dawned on me. I realised this was not a small thing we had done, as it had really affected the world of the people in the slum. I saw clearly the connection with this child, as the reality of peace. To truly connect with people is not to be just a smiling nodding face, but to really connect as humans. I felt I had dared to care. Later back in Bangkok, I told this story to senior visiting Rotarians. I cried as I conveyed the experience, I saw it was not about sympathy, it was about heart connection. That is what the little boy taught me in a Cambodian slum. He was indeed my teacher.

I interviewed the head of a NGO dealing with human rights, he asserted it was common for foreign embassies in Cambodia to turn a blind eye to corruption. To operate in Cambodia, they had to become cooperative and complicit. In market research, this is referred to as 'group think' or following the crowd. The same mindset happened to the Australian Wheat Board in Iraq. This cliché comes to mind - *when in Rome do as the Romans do*. We pride ourselves on being democratic, yet those values seem to go out the window, when money is involved.

The situation for the Cambodian people Leigh helped worsened, as there were thousands more innocent people caught up in a system of forcible relocation that mercilessly clears residential areas for future economic development and personal profit maximisation. I later spoke to Leigh in Australia, at the time she was attempting to raise capital to keep helping the people. I was to find out much later in the media, that the Future Cambodia Fund was to close down due to the loss of funding from donors and the Federal Government.

**The Fool's Gold:** We can expand peace in every heart through every workplace or space. Conflict resolution is how we begin to share power which unlocks true potential and creativity. Creativity is the key that unlocks innovation, compassion and wellbeing. We can learn peace at work and work at peace from the prism of a wholistic perspective. Gross national happiness is the real goal and indeed the real gold.



## CHAPTER 5: Travelling the World for Peace (2010)



I called myself a World Peace Clown but that somehow didn't ring true until I actually travelled the world. My world trip was inspired, and the feeling I had at the time was that I had to develop inner peace. My underlying feeling was that I could not bring peace to the world until I was at peace in myself. I investigated how much I needed for a world ticket. At the time it cost \$6,000. So I visualised I needed \$10,000 to go around the world. Life would have to find a way as I did not have any money.

As life would have it, around this time I had been going into a Council in Melbourne as they had offered me a desk to assist me in my unpaid work developing Cultures of Peace. A turn of events meant that I ended up circulating my brochure at the Council about my work. My brochure was received by a woman who was seeking to undertake research into Women in Local Government, given this was the Year of Women in Local Government. So they were looking for a female researcher to do the project. I wrote up a detailed proposal and had a meeting. At the meeting the manager asked me to drop the price to \$10,000 so they didn't have to put it out to tender.



I smiled as she asked, noting that I had asked for \$10,000 in my mind. Over the next few months I ended up earning another \$4,000 through workshops, and all this was directed to the world trip. In a few months I had the funding and was ready to go.

I worked out a one direction trip around the world and at the last minute decided to join Couch Surfing. My friend had raved about staying with locals. Through Couch Surfing a person can put up a personal profile offering a couch or requesting one, people will give you references. You can give a reference about the person you stayed with. So everyone knows what other people are like to stay with or as guests. It is free accommodation and the host typically feeds you and helps you to navigate their city. It is more about inter-cultural understanding and making friends, so in reality it is a peace network. So I joined. I organised to take my clown gear and steri-pen water purifier. Another friend encouraged me to get a Kodak camera which has a USB plug enabling the uploading of photos to Picassa (refer Gmail) and films uploaded to YouTube. It was really handy as I could keep my camera in my pocket. Another friend of the family helped me with all my website and IT needs. He set up my blog so I could record this trip and share it. It turned out to be a great decision.

In my heart I saw the journey was about letting go of control and learning to flow with life. The world ticket covered the places where I felt I needed to go. The idea was to clown when I felt like it, no schedule, just going with the flow. I practiced inner peace the whole journey as my intention was to overcome all fear. Peace for me is love and fearlessness. So I allowed life to show me the way to peace, as life is peace in truth. I saw myself as a world citizen.

Below is the map of the world trip and the places I chose to visit on my trip. The journey covered most of the world except Africa. I visited Thailand, India, Egypt, Greece, UK, Ireland, USA, Central and South America, New Zealand and home (Melbourne, Australia).



I met with my Thai friend Cherry who I had met in Chulalongkorn hospital in 2008. She works in oncology (cancer unit) and always wanted to be a clown. She was a little different from her compatriots and enjoyed following her own rhythm. She had lived in London as well. We had had an instant connection. I knew she wanted to clown and I couldn't let this opportunity go by. So we organised to go clowning, the giant MBK shopping was not far and it seemed like the right venue given it was air-conditioned.

I will showcase the places I clowned around the world.

## Thailand

My first stop was Bangkok, Thailand.

Cherry (see photo) and I were dressed in our clown costumes and we had another Rotary Peace Scholar, Jennifer, come and she filmed us at the MBK shopping complex in Bangkok.



This is a shopping centre that has ten levels for car parking and they actually have cars park perpendicular to parked cars to fit more in. So if a person wants to park their car, the car attendants (official people in the car park) roll the cars forward and backward to make room. The car attendants look like police and monitor each level. I was astounded by how many cars there were. Cherry told me many university students park there as they are not allowed to take cars into the university. The shopping centre is filled to the brim with people, we are talking thousands. The demographic strata I observed were mostly people from middle to upper class Thai's and Western tourists. They had security guards screening people to keep out other Thais without money or street vendors. It was sad to see discrimination there when in my own country, you would never see anyone excluded.

This reflects a country with high levels of poverty transitioning into a western style democracy and visibly reveals the inequality that is structured into social rules. The 'haves' and 'have nots'. I felt like a rich westerner.

As a clown it was fun to go up to people and play (see photo), usually I pretend to shake hands and then connect. We played soccer with one of my juggle balls on the polished floors between customers. I kept saying, 'World Cup' with a cheeky smile as I know they are into soccer.



Then I would follow people and walk the same way, or stand behind them and look over their shoulder with curiosity, or use a puppet to say hello. I juggled with balls and clubs and there was much fascination. Cherry told me people were wondering why we were there. She surmised some thought we were making a film because Jennifer was filming. We blew bubbles and were dragged along by a husband to sing happy birthday to his wife. The man kept saying, 'happy happy' as he walked, looking back expectantly to check we were still following. She thought we were paid for and would have been surprised to find out we were free. Others wanted us to pose for photos. When I passed Moslems I said, 'Shalom', when I passed Indians I said, 'Namaste', and to Thais, 'Sawatika', each gave me a look of recognition

as their greeting connected. There was one moment when I ran up and down the escalator to keep pace with the down escalator. I then juggled on the escalator and more than 500 people were watching as I juggled, with many flashes coming from below, it was amazing. These shopping centres are so huge you can have an incredible audience there. Cherry said the shop assistants were very bored, day in day out, and really laughed when they saw us, there was a buzz that went around us. You could see their eyes shining as the experience transformed the neon sterile environment. There were so many smiles and laughs. I saw a couple of nicely dressed men and put my love glasses on them. It turned out according to Cherry that they were the marketing and management people of MBK. Security people were everywhere and we would have been noticed, definitely. They managers came up and asked where we were from, I said: 'Clown town and I have a clown passport', with a grin. Then I did a quick dance, 'strip the willow', with both of them and started to play with everyone. They were very impressed and asked Cherry if I could come every day, but she said I was leaving the next day. So this was something new for them and my hope was they considered entertainers in the future to bring life and love to MBK. We clowned for four hours and it was really remarkable to have this experience. This to me is real connection with people. When I spoke with Jennifer and Cherry later they said everyone was laughing. I thought, 'peacemaking in a shopping centre, why not!'

Cherry said she felt so happy and commented she would never forget the experience. She wondered if people would remember? I said, 'They never forget'.

## India

The people hosting me in New Delhi I had found on Couch Surfing and would be my first host family. The taxi took me to the front gate and he rang the bell. No-one came for a little while so he rang the number I gave him. Then a young man came out and introduced himself as Navneet. He helped me with my bags and had the big gates opened. I came into the house and met the grandparents; I saw the domestic staff and plush surroundings. I was to stay downstairs and was told there was a British couple staying there as well. It was humid but not boiling. I just soaked in my surroundings. These people were not poor, in fact it turns out they were mostly lawyers but with a special difference. The place was dedicated to universal peace. They had a meditation space with a chart outlining a spiritual hierarchy. Ironically they were situated in a military defence compound in New Delhi. The grandfather, Chandra, and I connected as we were both into peace and he appeared aware of great changes coming to the world. I met Chandra's lovely wife and his son-in-law Navneet and daughter Priya who were a very progressive Indian couple expecting their first child. I encouraged Navneet to clown with me. He bravely agreed.

He took me to the local shopping centre (see photo) and I gave him some tips on clowning. His family members came as well, to watch. So supportive of each other, I observed. The security personnel were perplexed and tried to get us to leave, but my host family were all lawyers and they explained I was a peace clown. I was not breaking any laws nor asking for money, just spreading peace. A hard notion for people to understand as everyone is seeking money. I was allowed to continue. People were smiling and surprised, wondering why we were there. They were very happy to see us clowning and many interacted with great joy. We met ordinary mums and dads, teenagers, foreigners, children and I even met a magician from Saudi Arabia. He was a very interesting guy.

There was one moment which I will never forget (see photo). Navneet blew up a balloon and normally when you let them go they just whiz around in circles as they deflate rapidly.





Well in this amazing moment the balloon hovered around his private parts and literally stayed there looking very much like a penis. He and I giggled as children (see photo), I laughed so hard I was crying. It was one of those magic moments which I doubt the magician could conjure, only life could deliver that joke. So people watched the two clowns laughing like mad probably thinking we were acting, but we were not. It was a beautiful moment where spontaneity, laughter and freedom were what we were promoting and everyone was caught in the magic of the clowns, a reminder that the best things in life are surely for free.



## Egypt

My travels took me to Egypt. I stayed with an Egyptian woman Manar and her American partner (see photo). I caught a taxi to her place. She was very kind and accommodating. They gave me a room and made me dinner. She gave me a rundown on her life and Cairo.



Back in Cairo, my wonderful host Manar invited me to meet her artistic friends who were having a children's art exhibition, she thought I may like to come as a clown. Her friend joined me and the two of us went along (see photo).



We met the children, danced, played and had lots of fun. It was very hot and my face make-up was melting. I did some juggling for the children and adults and through some balls into the audience, some of them glowed in the dark, it was really positively received. Their smiles told me everything.



Afterwards I decided to go and get changed and realised I'd ripped my clown suit, as fate would have it, I found a room full of men with sewing machines (see photo). I've never seen men sew! I went in there and one guy sewed my suit whilst I kept my pants on (ha). I then did an arm wrestle with one of the guys and juggled for them. They had beautiful smiles and it was a lovely spontaneous moment, I will never forget.





## United Kingdom

I travelled on to the United Kingdom and spent some time in London with my friend Jo. I was due to meet Jo after her interview at a café. I started to talk with the café guy. I asked him where he was from but he was reticent to tell me. So I said I don't mind where you are from I am a universal being. To my amazement a woman standing next to me pipes up and says, 'I am a universal being'. I gave her a broad smile and invited her to sit with us. It turned out she always wanted to be a clown. So I invited her to clown on the London Underground the next day and I would do her makeup. She turned up the next day at the appointed time. I did her up and then we went outside to practice. As we walked down the street this guy on a push bike came past and I stuck out my thumb (hitching). He stopped and they spoke in Hindi (both being from Indian backgrounds). It turned out he always wanted to be a clown. So I couldn't say no, I had to take him. So we took him back to the house, made him take a shower (phew) and then the three of us, with my friend Jo, hit the streets. She became my camera person and photo person. So we could record the event. It was amazing to see the serious faces on the Underground (see photo).



From my blog:

I zeroed in on a few children and generally juggled and blew bubbles. It was interesting to watch the social boundaries and the inability for people to relax and allow clowns to entertain them. They were afraid we would ask for money, for me my payment is smiles and just bringing the colour.

*...We clowned with children (see photo), hugged people on the platform, bantered, juggled, threw balls around and included others, and when asked if we wanted a donation, I said: 'Give it to someone that needs it'. Funnily enough the guy said, 'I need it'. I laughed. We then went to Covent Garden and clowned around and I got to have a game of table tennis with a kid, I chased him around the table and made out when playing I was a Chinese expert table tennis player, or indeed a Wimbledon tennis expert. I had a lot of fun playing. I also saw a great juggler and gave him a hug, but I noticed he didn't project the love. He was doing it for money. We do it for love and connection, and for free. I don't take money for something I love and I am leading by example. It was a wonderful day.*





## Ireland

My world trip took me to Ireland. Irish eyes were not smiling there as they had been hit by the financial crisis.

I clowned with Robert, a Quaker on the streets of Dublin. Below are excerpts from my blog:

*I caught the bus and walked to Temple Bar and found the Quaker meeting. It was a Sunday and I dragged my large case and back pack up the stairs. I planned to clown in Dublin, I was unwell but felt it was important. I understood from Siohorn (Irish Quaker) that Robert was the best person to stay with as he had an interest in clowning. He also had worked many years in the Alternative to Violence Project and worked in jails. I came in and as is typically the case with Quaker meetings they sit in silence until they feel the spirit move them to speak. They are Christians, but in the peace area, they are often intellectuals with a keen interest in politics and social justice. So it is always interesting being with them... I went and had a coffee with Robert. I convinced him to clown with me. I was still unwell but pushed forward as I wanted him to have the experience. I have taken a few people onto the streets for the first time, as it is an experience I highly recommend.*

*I dressed Robert up in my orange clown suit that I bought in India (see photo).*





*I put on makeup and tried to find his clown. He said he believes life is about choices, so his clown is about choosing in between this and that, so happy or sad, go this way or that way that people are ultimately responsible for their choices. I felt much truth in that. He looked great. I finished my makeup and the two of us hit the streets. I showed him some techniques and told him what I tell everyone: 'We are not here to entertain, the world entertains us.' There is no pressure to be good at it just send goodwill and find your humour. That is how I clown. It is interesting to see the people around Temple Bar, some are tourists and some are locals. Some walk past and don't interact, this is not so different from Australia as some don't want the attention drawn to themselves. Robert said some may think we want money. Ireland is in recession and people feel insecure and unhappy because of it. There are more people begging, busking and trying to get more money. One person offered me money but I said: 'Give it to someone begging, that would make me happy'.*

*We met lots of children and I did some juggling with the clubs and my new addition, the ring (see photos).*



*I danced in front of crowds where fiddlers and guitarists were playing and tried to get them to do 'strip the willow'. So I just go into the crowd and spin around. It makes them laugh and it gives a bit of energy. We went for a coffee break as my throat is sore and really I don't have much energy for it, but I am doing my best. I feel unable to rest as a couple are with us. Yet Robert is a good chatter, so that helps me rest whilst waiting for my friend Monica to*

*turn up. She watches us clown on the street and takes photos. She told me later it was only through watching me clown that she realized what I do, she said she got it. Robert observed it is hard work as we constantly give attention to people and we are working from the tops of our heads to bring joy and happiness. Continuously responding to the people and playing with children. It is great fun but very tiring.*

To conclude my trip I was given free tickets to a show called Celtic Rising which is Irish dancing. Robert, Monica and myself went and celebrated the fun we had together. Monica actually gave me a place to stay when I couldn't find accommodation. So I gave her one of the free tickets to thank her. It was a real treat to experience the Irish culture, we all absolutely loved it. I left Ireland and indeed, my eyes were shining.



## United States

I travelled to Chicago. I moved to a Couch Surfing place to stay with William a businessman. William picked me up in a Smart car, a tiny two seater with open sun roof, very snazzy I felt. He was able to get my bulky bag to squeeze down to half its size, thankfully the bulk was from toys and clowny stuff. I stayed at his very lovely house in the suburbs of Chicago (eight miles out). It was an American suburb as you would see on television. It was clean and the houses were quite big. He showed me my room in the basement. It was like a little apartment/computer space. He and I had drinks and exchanged thoughts about life and humanitarianism.

From here I decided to go clowning, here is an excerpt from my blog:

*...The Art Institute of Chicago is private, so it is not open to the public. You cannot even go to the toilet. So as a clown I had privileges, they let me in and I dressed up as a clown. I got Tola, an art student, dressed up and gave him a few tips (see photos).*





*We headed for the Chicago Jazz Festival in the park. We walked past some geese which Tola scared off with my puppet, he squawked at them and I tweaked my nose. I laughed as they made noise and moved away, looks like we didn't have an audience there. Then we saw some soccer people and gate crashed their game. I would run up to a player and rather than kick the ball I hugged him. They didn't know what to do, this was a one off. A couple of times I did a good footy kick but mostly stirred them with hugs. Then we waved goodbye and headed to the park. We greeted and chatted to every person as we went along, we even got a smile from of the traffic police.*

*We walked into a field of thousands of picnics there for the jazz festival (see photos).*





*So we chatted, juggled, squeaked, blew bubbles, played pretend cricket and baseball, played with kids and generally had some fun whilst there. It takes time for people to trust you are there for free and enjoy your presence. There is always the undercurrent of 'what do they want from me?' I taught a couple of women to juggle and then met a wonderful*

*juggler who really showed me what to do with those clubs. So I filmed him. I hugged the security personnel. I remember seeing a little girl between two serious parents and her face glowing at seeing the clowns.*

*Tola and I went for a coffee to debrief. He said clowning was hard work and he wasn't sure sometimes what to do. But he did learn from the experience and met many people. Whilst we were there I met a theatre director who is involved in improvisation, he said he would invite me to one of his events, unfortunately I was leaving. Another guy came in a bit pickled and smiling at us. He was so thrilled we were clowns and said orange was his favourite colour. I said it was the clown chakra and laughed. He chatted with us for a while and then left smiling and waving. It was nice to just touch people without doing anything. I feel the presence of the clown is important. You don't have to be the greatest entertainer it is having the courage to engage the public and break down the imaginary barriers we all create.*

It was a wonderful experience in the United States and I so love being up front and personal as a clown and Couch Surfing allows me to step into people's homes and observe another aspect of life. I was tired but really happy. Next morning I got up and went to the airport. I had a plane to catch to Cancun, Mexico. This is the Central American part of the journey. A little daunting but exciting as well.

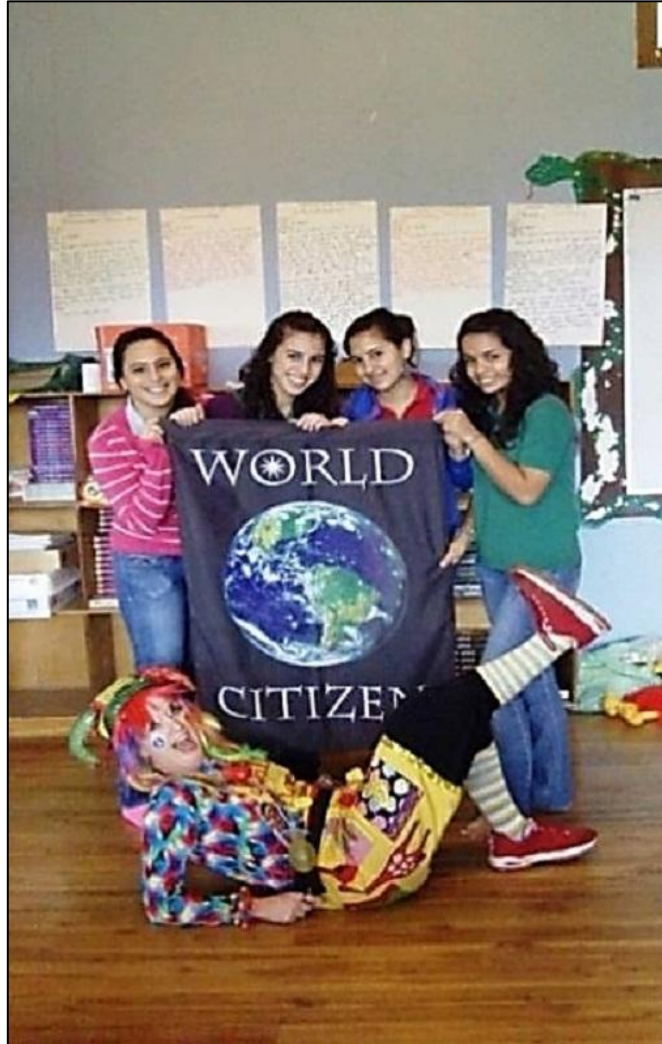


## Central America

I was hosted in Cancun, **Mexico** which was the site of the 2010 Environmental Summit. From the sky I could see why, it is all forest as far as the eye can see. I feel an inward joy when I see nature untouched, when I see no people, the pristine nature of mother earth touches my heart in ways that words cannot describe here.

*It was in **Costa Rica** that I learned they had no army and put their funds into social programs and forests. They did sell off a lot of the forests but many believed it protected them. I ended up in the mountains in Monteverde, Costa Rica. I found myself visiting a Quaker school in the mountains, I was very much at the mercy of life, I didn't have anywhere to stay and was on a tight budget. I just said to myself, 'if I am meant to stay here someone will invite me'. I ended up chatting to an American woman and she asked me to stay. I stayed a week and found another school called Creativa, I went and taught the children peace education, on the International Day of Peace.*

*I was astounded to see the flag of the World citizen (see photo). I think this will be the future.*



*The children were experiencing through me that sense of being a world citizen, given my travels. I showed them how to juggle, I interacted with them to generate joy, I explained my life as a peace clown and had loads of fun with children from ages 5 to 18. The school was a progressive Quaker school, high up on top of mountain. It had a higher perspective in many ways.*

*I absolutely loved the day and met some wonderful children full of life and promise (see photo).*



**YouTube link:** Peacefull Teaching Peace in Grades 4-6, Creativa School  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GI0No1p-Ec>

*I went back to San Jose and stayed at a hostel that was dedicated to peace. It had all the famous peace makers Gandhi, Tolstoy, Martin Luther King, Montessori and many others. I felt at home in their company. There was a peace library there. I ended up sitting in on a peace group meeting. They were activists and they allowed me to join them. I told them about positive peace and that for me, there is no enemy. That is not to say there is no greed, there is, or that there is no violence, there certainly is, but I choose to use my energy in a positive peace vibration and I believe it creates the change. I don't hate anyone. I told them of Patch Adams. It turned out he had been there only three weeks before, it would have been great to catch up with him. They asked me to give a talk which I did as a clown. I find I can express peace more accurately as a clown as it reflects it for me, the archetype of peace. For me the clown embodies unconditional love, acceptance, flow and love for all people. I believe in positive transformation whereby we transmute the negative to positive. I will not hate anyone, I am here to solve the problem and to show another way. So, a few of the people were deeply touched and they deeply reconsidered their approach. One was particularly interested in the clown, she was a university lecturer. We kept in touch.*

## South America

### Peru:

I travelled to Lima Peru and on to Arequipa and Cusco. Below is an excerpt from my blog.

*...In Arequipa, I stayed at a hostel and met a New Zealand couple who I became friends with. I offered to clown at a school. They agreed and I was given the opportunity to clown and speak to 500 kids. My discussion was on peace, I juggled but also demonstrated resistance and allowance, I explained what we resist persists, what we look at disappears. We look right at it and the power of it disappears. I do not resist, I find myself looking for ways to empower people to see themselves as able to be peacemakers. To empower them to not react violently but to understand that peace is cooperation, dialogue and courage. It was very successful and one little girl followed me around happily. We became friends and I told her she could be anything, she said she would not forget me. I felt the bond. After the school I went on the street and up to the square. I clowned with people in the square and through my painted cheeks (peace, love) I was able to ask people what they thought. I actually interviewed them even though I couldn't understand a word of Spanish. They understood my question and answered. There was such a positive vibe in the square, then the police came and told me I wasn't permitted to clown there, I realised it was another form of oppression, interesting. I find clowning a fascinating way to interact with the crowd or audience, live with no script, yet somehow I am able to see more, and through my presence communicate my message without language. Love is my language and as a clown I am permitted by society to express it without limits.*

*In Cusco I had the chance to clown with a local travel book store guy. His name is Rolando (see photo), he expressed he wanted to explore happiness, so I told him to come clowning with me. We organized a gig at a local hospital. We visited people of all ages and spread love and joy. I found the people so generous and loving.*





*After the main hospital, I was to clown alone with children from a special care unit at a hospital down the road. We had a great time going around the wards and spreading love and joy.*

*I then went to see the children with disabilities (see photo).*



*I typically make up my routine as I go. I show the kids all my props and juggle. I work hard at interacting with all children. Even those who appear to not be responding, I spend time giving love to them and assume they can hear and see me. I can pick up the smallest of response, so typically I know when I reach them. I so loved being with these children which I felt were all angels. One of the kids was very animated and she was shouting out very excitedly. She came up and danced with me in the middle of the room and hugged me. She was the one who didn't want me to go. She had the most spectacular laugh, full and hearty, here was a person not inhibited or indeed limited. The children all got their wheel chairs and surrounded me, they were trying to chase the clown. They were grabbing me and trying to stop me from leaving, they were full of smiles and joy. It was a beautiful experience and one I will never forget. The Director of this unit enquired if I was staying and said she would love me to help promote disability. I told her about it being promoted in Australia as not a disability but people that are just like us.*

*I went to Machu Picchu the Inca village high in the mountains. This was another sacred site for me and one I'll never forget...*



Wikipedia summarises the background on Machu Picchu:



*Machu Picchu was built around 1450, at the height of the Inca Empire.[7] The construction of Machu Picchu appears to date from the period of the two great Incas, Pachacutec Inca Yupanqui (1438–71) and Tupac Inca Yupanqui (1472–93).[8] It was abandoned just over 100 years later, in 1572, as a belated result of the Spanish Conquest... Johan Reinhard believes Machu Picchu to be a sacred religious site. This theory stands mainly because of where Machu Picchu is located. Reinhard calls it 'sacred geography' because the site is built on and around mountains that hold high religious importance in the Inca culture and in the previous culture that occupied the land. At the highest point of the mountain in which Machu Picchu was named after, there are 'artificial platforms [and] these had a religious function, as is clear from the Inca ritual offerings found buried under them' (Reinhard 2007). These platforms also are found in other Incan religious sites. The site's other stone structures have finely worked stones with niches and, from what the 'Spaniards wrote about Inca sites, we know that these [types of] building[s] were of ritual significance' (Reinhard 2007). This would be the most convincing evidence that Reinhard points out because this type of stylistic stonework is only found at the religious sites so it would be natural that they would exist at this religious site.<sup>xvi</sup>*

I found out that *none* of the members of this Inca society would be allowed to be hungry, all were looked after in a spirit of oneness and unity. That interested me. Funnily enough I had been directed to join a tour group, but it turned out I was in the wrong one. One guy pointed out he had paid good money for his tour and he inferred he resented my presence believing I hadn't paid. When in truth I had, but he didn't want to share the space with me. I was not lost on the attitudes of me and mine, rather than we and ours. The Incas would have found the attitude foreign, as did I. When I climbed Wayna Picchu, the mountain behind the Inca village, you could see the village was designed in the form of a condor. The mountains were majestic and for me, a sacred site. I found nature incredibly overpowering and a place of great peace. Sometimes when you come to places like Machu Picchu you wonder why we live the lives we do. Many work hard to survive and are never able to visit places so sacred. We live in an incredible world full of wonders that are astounding.

## **Bolivia:**

Below is an excerpt from my blog....

*I travelled to Bolivia and met with a local Quaker there called Ruben and his girlfriend, Rebecca. He kindly organized for me to travel three hours out of La Paz to a Quaker school in the mountains. I taught the kids some clowning skills whilst talking to them about being a World Peace Clown and the importance of peace in our world. The next day I went back to La Paz and stayed with Ruben's partner, Rebecca. It was great to stay with a traditional Bolivian family. They worked very hard and the husband had been quite ill. He was very good at building machines with few resources, yet very resourceful. Ruben organized for me to attend a Quaker Gathering and give another talk to youth. I also did a laughter workshop with them, they really loved it and it was a great photo opportunity. Ruben invited me to a traditional Bolivian wedding (see photo).*



*I took my clowning gear with me so I could make the decision when I got there as I had to be sure it was appropriate for me to be a clown at a wedding. I decided to clown at the wedding and the married couple were thrilled. I did a juggling demonstration and showed them my clown props. I also gave a clown blessing by blowing bubbles over the couple. I put my little yellow duck onto a bowler hat, so it could have a ride, ha (see photo).*

*The kids loved the clown and they followed me everywhere. I got dressed back into normal gear and of course everyone knew I was the clown, being a Caucasian gave me away. I had hundreds of friends and felt very welcome. It was a unique experience and treasured as I was part of their wedding which I felt was a great honour. It was great to give love in this way. I felt I connected with the people. The following few days Ruben took me to another school to give a talk on peace. As I was waiting outside to be beckoned in, a little girl around five years old took a shine to me or rather the clown. I made faces and laughed with the kids and they were very excited. I was invited into the room. Then I saw this little five year old braving this huge room with bigger kids from seven to seventeen walking by herself up the side aisle. She came up next to me and held my hand. Then when I placed my gear on the stage, the little girl sat there and played whilst I was in front of the kids. I was introduced by the Principal. I told the kids I was travelling the world as a peace clown and went into the audience, in some instances I sat on knees or lay down across a few students. In other cases I jumped on the wooden seats and literally stepped over kids to get from one row of seats to the next. I juggled my clubs up and down the aisle. I invited children to come up and tell us what they felt peace was and I asked questions about what is happiness. We recorded the responses. I found the kids enthusiastic and positive. I gave lots of hugs and had photo opportunities and felt the magical connection with others, as I lived the peace I teach.*

From Bolivia I then travelled by bus to Argentina.



## **Argentina:**

Below is an excerpt from my blog.

*...I was starting to get very tired there and fell ill with a cold. I put out a 'couch request' and was invited by some other couch surfer hosts to stay. It turned out the lady there wanted to be a clown. She met me at the station and took me back to her place and made a lovely pumpkin pie. Her partner Javi turned up, he was training as an economist and we talked about the current economic system of winners and losers. We agreed the capitalist system doesn't look after those who don't get jobs and fit into the system. I have found poverty increasingly difficult to reconcile within myself on this journey. My inner feeling is no person should be treated as beneath equality because they have no money or a mental illness. A civilized society takes care of everyone. Reinforcing the wisdom of the Incas who had designed equality into their society.*

*I took Paula out clowning. I wasn't that well and felt my energy was low. Nonetheless I still went out for her. I gave her some tips.*



*As soon as we hit the streets she was out there racing up to people (see photo), helping carry their groceries or building material, she was stretching her arms out for hugs, a real natural clown.*



*I didn't think she would be so outgoing. I realized this is for her. I was exhausted so I took a back seat, but she so reminded me of myself when I first started embracing life openly. I do juggle but I realized it can be a bit of a barrier, I do love it though. We clowned all around her area and met older people, mums with kids, men walking past. I chatted with an American man and he admired my earth ball, so I gave it to him for his children. He was touched I didn't ask for money, I wouldn't even think to. It was wonderful and I could see Paula was inspired. We went to her friend's work, her friend is Anita. She was another beautiful person.*

*We stopped for coffee and Paula kept going, that is what I usually do but I just didn't have the energy. However, it was so nice watching her, blowing bubbles and interacting, chasing people. So funny. It was a real freedom for her. We had coffee and the coffee shop owner gave it to us for free as we brought joy to his customers. See how joy changes people? Then a lady gave us two biscuits each because we made her grandchild smile. I said to Paula see how love works. This is all about love... Paula told me clowning was the second greatest moment in her life. She had always wanted to be a clown.*



## New Zealand

The last leg of my world trip was to New Zealand.

Below is an excerpt from my blog.

*...It was unmistakable that I was in familiar territory as New Zealanders are very similar to Australians. I felt very happy there as my former husband and I travelled there quite a lot, he was a Kiwi (New Zealander). I did stay with a host this time who was not so helpful and had some negative attitudes, however, I practiced peace. I realized I had to find unconditional love in myself, I had to be able to feel the compassion, I did not know the story of others, so how could I sit in judgement? I could create my own boundaries of what I felt was acceptable in respect of myself, but ultimately people are responsible for their lives. The lady who was with this host was the total opposite, incredibly kind and considerate, a very humble person. She had been a nurse and was working in a nursing home helping the elderly. She organized for me to clown there.*

*I decided to clown at an Environmental Exhibition in the heart of the city. The exhibition connected the environment to peace and I was interested. So I asked the organizers if I could come as a clown. They agreed. As soon as I appeared the kids all came around and wanted photos. Then I went into the exhibition and asked people about sustainability and created some humour around it. Many people I talked to had no idea what to do about the planet. The photos they were viewing were taken from a hot air balloon by Yann Arthus-Bertrand. He called the exhibition **'Earth from Above', this was sponsored by UNESCO**. Refer <http://www.yannarthusbertrand.org/en/exhibitions/earth-from-above>*

*The people were inspired by the exhibition but either couldn't think of anything, or could not articulate their voices, I was surprised. Even the children were struggling with what to do for the future.*

*I felt this subject must be discussed more and given the apathy and uncertainty I witnessed, to so it could be engaged with in realistic terms, to connected it to in day to day life. Many I feel felt were disconnected from nature and couldn't conceptualise the reality of it and imagine a new world. This is was a central issue.*



*I spoke to a guy in front of a picture of Chernobyl<sup>xvii</sup>, a city with no people given the radiation leak which spread across Western USSR and Europe. It is a level 7 event equivalent to Fukushima. After that I walked to a giant world map (see photo) on the ground and played around jumping from country to country. I again chatted with the kids and played as a clown with them. I told them that their generation will have to solve these problems, it is a great challenge that we can solve together.*



*I jumped on a skateboard and tic tacked around, the boys were surprised and smiling, it created a bridge to chat to them as one of them. Then I noted the time, I had to leave, the host's partner came and collected me and took me to the nursing home, for my next gig.*

*At the nursing home I spoke of my world trip and danced with some elderly folk (see photo). I also juggled for them and interacted with the staff.*



*I was making it up as usual and tuning into the people. It was interesting to come from a public space to the elderly. Some were non responsive as they were fairly old and with dementia. However, I never mind as it is always an opportunity to give love and spread joy. One fellow put on my love glasses, he did stand out of the crowd. The elderly were wonderful and enjoyed the juggling, jokes and clowning around. Many are clowns themselves.*

**The Fool's Gold:** The world is my oyster and I am the pearl. Travelling the world revealed to me the generosity of people, the kindness, the innocence and love that circumnavigates this extraordinary planet. What I see in the world is a reflection of me and as Gandhi said 'be the change you wish to see'. Nothing is impossible and there are no limits to life's journey.



## CHAPTER 6: Travelling Australia for Peace (2011)

One morning, while in the shower, I had the strongest feeling to travel around Australia. I intuitively felt I had four weeks to make a decision and then the 'window of opportunity' would close. This was an intuitive feeling. It was a fork in the road - I either would go to Griffith University and study the environment or I would go around Australia for the experience. As the days went by the feeling got stronger. The manager of a childcare centre gave encouragement by giving me a 'Boating, Camping and Fishing' card to buy camping equipment, and I felt this was a clear sign that I was to go.



My journey around Australia was about testing myself. I felt it was a trip into the unknown yet again. I knew I was to travel alone. I couldn't have fit anyone in my car anyway unless they went up on the roof rack (if I had one). It was choker block with all my worldly possessions, which I felt was too much stuff. I felt I was going to explore my own response to living out of a tent. I considered the possibility of getting work in schools teaching peace,

conflict resolution and sustainability and I knew I would meet exciting and different characters along the way. I could envisage it would be an amazing journey. I sensed the world trip would be complete when I got to Uluru in the centre of Australia. This is a sacred site, and I knew when I returned from the world trip that the end of the trip was there. I would then continue on from there though I was unsure of what I was looking for, 'just enjoy the process' I thought. I developed a rough itinerary of my trip which changed as I changed my mind along the way. I drove a total of 9,981km.



## Clowning in St Mary's Primary School, Charleville

I contacted St Mary's Primary School in Charleville and asked if I could come and teach the kids conflict resolution. I was given permission to visit the school. Here is an excerpt out of my blog:

*...the kids started to come in Grade 6 and 7's. I firstly asked the kids what conflict means and what resolution means (see photo). Some saw conflict as fighting, others disagreement. I then asked about resolution and one indicated solving problems. I then took them through the REAL HOPE model. Joking about things as I went. I told them that values are very important as they guide us and make us willing to resolve conflicts. It is what brings us together.*



*Then we did a brainstorming session on what is conflict. I asked people why they get upset with others. They said some were mean, others mean, another said irritating and annoying. I asked what happens when we get angry and upset? They said they may get physical and verbal, another said 'sad', go away and be alone. Then I asked do others make us upset?, many said yes, I said is that true. Can anyone make you upset? I said you can choose your feelings. For example I said you could call me a clown, they said you are one, I said let's say they are being mean, I could get offended, but I choose not to. You can*

*decide if it is true or not. Then I talked to them about projection, like a projector onto a screen. I said to them when someone says you are stupid, the thought is coming from them. So projection is that they think they are stupid and are calling you this. I said to not take it personally but to feel compassion for them. I said we don't need to hate anyone. Then I asked if someone is bullying you what can you do? Some said get a teacher, others said go and think about it, another said tell them to stop. I told them we are all community. I said remember empathy (standing in someone's shoes) we feel for others if they are hurt, we make sure we don't hurt anyone and if we want a peaceful community, then we get involved. Everyone can be responsible (ability to respond) and help someone being bullied.*

*Then I showed the kids an iceberg and showed them that in a conflict situation we only know the tip. The rest, 90% is beneath the surface (see photo).*



*Someone may appear a bully but they may have been bullied at home, maybe their parents are divorcing. What they are doing is taking your power, they are a powerless person. Some got that. I said the people with power don't bully they don't need to get power.*



*I then showed them the blind spot test, they didn't need the cards. Nearly all the kids when they covered the right eye and looked at the right spot (two spots on a slide), the other disappeared. I explained when we think we are right we can only see one dot, we can't see anything else. Then I took them through a series of slides showing them perception and how the mind plays tricks. I showed them the 3 faces in one picture. That is a good one as kids learn we can see different things in a situation. We are all unique, which is why we see differently.*

*Then I took them through Dr. Emoto which really looks at how our intent (positive/negative) can affect water. We are 70-90% water. Dr. Emoto had people look at the water in vials with words on it and think positive or negative thoughts. After he froze it he found out that the crystals were either symmetrical (positive thoughts) or erratic (negative thoughts). I explained we can affect someone's health if we are repeatedly negative to them. There are many cases in hospital affected by negativity. It makes people more responsible and monitoring their thoughts. The kids found that interesting. They wanted to know more.*

*Then we did a game on communication, it is called concentric circles. There is an outside ring and an inside ring, kids sit in front of partners. One will speak on a topic for 2 minutes whilst the other listens, then they stop and the one listening tries to reflect back everything they heard. We did a debrief afterwards, and some said that the other added words, got it wrong, couldn't remember parts. I said it is a bit like Chinese Whispers, that is why we don't listen to gossip, mostly we get it wrong. I had said earlier that the most intelligent thing they can think is 'I could be wrong', this opens to possibilities. So the kids could see that we often don't understand each other so it is important to ask questions.*

*I then did an activity called the block and flow game. Basically you stand in front of a partner with hands together and the idea is to push against the other, when we think we are right or defensive we push or fight against. Then I showed what it is to go with the flow, gently flowing in harmony back and forth with the other. To learn to ask questions, to try and solve problems, this is all flowing (energy). So I got them to have a go. I said remember whenever you block others you are being defensive or fighting them. We are looking to conflict resolve, therefore we must be willing to flow with others.*

*After that I did I words, (I statements) and showed them that blaming is pointing the finger (3 are pointing at you), that it is important to say how you feel and what you want. Not to blame them, but to try and solve the problem. That we don't hate people, we solve problems. I gave them examples. Then time was running out (as usual) I quickly took them through problem solving – to look at the problem not person, people see differently (perceptions), I statements 'I think, I feel' etc. to listen to other people's words, feelings and wants, then to look for a solution that both are happy with. I reinforced win/win. That we are not competitive in conflict resolution, we are seeking to resolve issues so both win. The kids really understood that, it was great. I went through a speedy version of role play. The kids were in groups of 5-6 and they picked a mediator, two conflict persons and bystanders. What was interesting the first group of girls talked about being pretty, one said I am pretty, the other said I am prettier, then the 3rd said I am prettier. Then the mediator came in and said you are all pretty and this diffused the competition. Interesting how looks are important for girls. I wonder where they get that idea. Then the boys had a go and there's was a fight about sport.*

*The mediator came into stop them, but was not sure how to do it. I came in and demonstrated listening to both sides and finding out what the problem was, turns out it was a misunderstanding, I then got them to shake hands. It was a quick session but good, as they got an idea that kids can solve problems.*

*I had teachers give me feedback and one indicated that she had learned it is good for kids to learn to solve their own problems instead of sorting out every time. She also liked the mind opening activities before the role play. She saw the children's education in learning not to blame others but to stop and think about the problem. She said they learned how to help others during conflict. The aspect particularly liked was to do with learning how feelings change water crystals. The kids liked the blind spot activity and perspectives. The acting out of conflict and mediation was enjoyed. Concentric circles was also liked the disliked aspect was running out of time. . She felt what would improve the session was more activities and role play and more time with Peacefull. The last comment was particularly helpful. She said this session made us understand that we need to think about what we say during conflict because sometimes the hurt can all be caused by a simple misunderstanding. Peacefull gave us some good advice for solving conflict and for helping others solve conflict.*

*I got a nice stamp. It was very gratifying to get this feedback, as I need to see how my work is received and to improve it as I go.*

*I had a clown session with grades 4-5 (see photo). I had them dress up as clowns. We did a welcome parade, it was interesting to learn that when the kids came through the two columns (as super heroes), that some kids felt a bit embarrassed in front of others, others felt sad as they were not cheered. It was a large group, so kids can run out of cheers if it goes onto long. As a teacher I have to balance it and I use it as a teaching tool. I told kids that the point of the game is to support and cheer each other on, to be aware of other kids missing out and to feel good about ourselves. I also did a laughter game which they really enjoyed.*



*We discussed feelings afterwards and how important it is to create positive environments. We did some funny faces and I just reinforced the importance of being happy. That as a clown I love everyone, I asked them if they believe this, some said yes others said no. I said it is true, I really do love everyone. I said every person is unique there will never be another you. Don't be afraid to be yourself and face fear. A few of the girls had clown phobias, thankfully the teacher had them near her so I knew who they were. All of them got over it, even the one with the deepest fear. I blew them kisses and I could see them warming. That was very gratifying for me.*

*I did a full school presentation. As usual I have no idea what I am going to say or do. I ended up talking about Russia and my experiences clowning in hospitals, HIV clinics, slums etc. I told them that we make people happy in hospitals and gave information on endorphins, happy hormones. To my delight some kids wanted to get up on stage and say jokes, I really love that so I have no issue with it, I put my clown hat on them and off they go. Others wanted me to fall on my whoopee cushion, I think that was the most popular, I asked kids to watch out downwind, they laughed. Funnily enough my clown nose after many years squeaking, stopped. I thought that was funny I often say too many key strokes. I told jokes brought out my singing flower, they don't know if water will come out but it starts dancing, I join in.*



*I had a large earth ball bouncing all over the room. I got some great shots of all the kids holding up the earth. I also was able to interview them about happiness and peace. They seemed to find me the source of that. It is lots of fun. I tried to show them that we are all able to make a difference, to find our happiness and follow our dreams. Two kids came up and thanked me on behalf of the school.*

## Clowning at an Aboriginal Community East of Tennant Creek

I was emailing schools ahead of my visit and made contact with Leonie who had been contacted by the principals of the schools in the area of Tennant Creek. The schools she was connected with were approximately three hours east of Tennant Creek. She offered to take me to a remote community to go clowning with the kids. This is an excerpt from the blog about it:

*...In the morning we got organized and set off. We left at 11:30 am and didn't arrive until 4 pm. It was around a four hour drive but we stopped and looked at the countryside, had lunch and coffee. It was an incredible drive, one I will never forget. Leonie played me the CD of Yothu Yindi's (famous indigenous singer) brother who apparently was blind. The music was so peaceful. He was a guitarist, I really enjoyed listening to it. The countryside was magnificent and I've never seen such beautiful greenery. The road was straight heading towards Alice Springs then we turned off onto Bins Road. I saw on the sign 165km in my mind I went 'wow long way'. The soil was bright red and the landscape a sea of painted red with spinifex, ghost gums and an array of plants. We didn't see any animals but maybe we would on the way back. As we travelled through the countryside you could see the beauty of the red and green painting this landscape and I imagined Aboriginal artists feeling inspired by their country. The rocks were red and rugged, there were rounded mountains, some with flat tops. I think that was to do with erosion and an inland sea in this area. There are indigenous people living in remote areas. The community we are heading for is Canteen Creek and it is a dry community (no alcohol). I am very excited to meet the indigenous kids. They haven't seen a clown. So it should be interesting to experience their reaction. Although I know how fantastic every child is.*

*As we drove we saw a bush fire in the distance, then we could see the flames in the distance, we couldn't be sure if it would spread fast, come towards us or go out. Then we came up and saw the flames quite close to the road, it was a small fire, so neither of us were alarmed. I was mesmerized by the flames, the incredible colours. Apparently the fires are lit by the local aborigines to take out the low level grasses, it then regenerates regrowth. Leonie pointed out how quickly the regrowth occurs.*

*The land is created in harmony with fire, the gums are full of flammable resins which ignite readily and the seed pods apparently open up with heat and regerminate. So the country is designed for fire, but not those that are deliberately lit uncaringly that destroy 100,000 hectares of forest and grasslands. It is technically the dry season and Leonie pointed out how green it seems and where the rivers would run, we noticed dry creek beds.*

*We chatted and drove along in this beautiful place and she shared with me her love of her job, which didn't feel like a job to her, and how she loved going to remote communities. She is a special needs expert so she is in an advisory capacity for school principals on problem behaviours and/or disabilities. She has been a teacher since 18 and is now in her 60s, so is very experienced. She is a very open minded person and as she talks she always points out the other viewpoint, she considers other sides and is seeking to be fair. It was very joyful to see such honesty.*

*We discussed the idea of government funding in growth towns, rather than money going into out stations (indigenous communities). So many Aboriginal people wondered what the point of education is for their kids. Attendance is low at schools and schools work hard to entice them to come. If the family decides to go to Tennant Creek for two months they just go. The kids don't go to school. You can feel it is a different consciousness. I think we underestimate how deeply embedded our own culture is and then even over a period of 200 years, we don't really understand how embedded 50,000 years of ancient culture is. They are not going to become model citizens through money spent on education and housing. They have a deep culture that has been passed on for thousands of generations. The thought patterns of Western/Europeans and Indigenous are different is my feeling. There are different priorities and goals in life. Different ways of viewing the land, one values ownership and productivity (Westerners) and the other sees it as part of themselves and this connection is emotional and linked strongly to identity. This is a major difference as the economic system is built upon property rights. Whilst the Indigenous are viewed as traditional owners, it appears more territorial to me rather than property ownership, such as 'my land'. They speak more in terms of country and specifically to the country they were raised in and the people and skin name they identify with.*

*My friend Leonie said they went for land rights in respect of the white people's law to be able to gain their traditional lands, it was not about ownership for them but I sense more of a going home.*

*My feeling is that they should return to their own culture as I feel it is a healthier life to live traditionally and fully. It has different values about life rather than valuing getting a job and making money which our European style culture is so fixated on. I don't think it brings them happiness. It certainly hasn't brought us happiness. What seems to give them strength are the strong familial bonds, but at the same time there is inter-tribal conflict and violence. So breaking the cycle of violence is very important for them to return to harmony. I sense that the payback system is central and in many cultures across the world this operates from tradition. Although if they do not solve the problem but just hate the person/group then they become locked into conflict that may not end or even end in tragedy. Violence appears to be the way they settle problems and it is based on winning the battle. Alcohol of course inflames this conflict and makes it much more dangerous as people are not in their right mind when drunk. Moreover, they can be vulnerable when drinking.*

*We had a discussion about democracy and the issue of the right to drink alcohol and domestic violence. I felt the alcohol issue was a health issue and there should be intervention given it was brought to them by white people. I am not comfortable speaking about white and black as I feel it creates such a divide. I do recognize there are differences, but somehow we have to find the common ground and be here for each other. To empower is what interests me, where people solve their own problems, they become confident that they can really tackle the challenges before them. The wisdom is inherent in all, we all have equal wisdom. This I have learned.*

*Leonie told me about some Aboriginals that were removed to the north of the Northern Territory, they were not allowed to this leave a place, it was similar to a reservation. The government wanted them to stay. Apparently they just did a walk out and walked 1,000 km. Can you imagine walking such long distances and in this place the temperatures rise to over 50 degrees. You cannot imagine that kind of adaptation to the land. We really have no idea just how profound their knowledge is and their feeling for the land.*

*We would be complaining after 5-10km. I feel the central issue there is that we cannot force people to live away from their territory with tribal groups who are not their own. I kept thinking about the inability of white people to adapt to others, we seem to need people to conform to our worldview. This does reveal ignorance. There can be perceptions of superiority through technology, professional language, education, technology, but for myself, I don't see that. I see all people as equal but different and I don't see anyone having the right to force others. That of course goes both ways.*

*We arrived at Canteen Creek and I loved the sign 'Look for People' (see photo), so gorgeous. Definitely not white people, yet straight to the point.*



*In this part of the world people are rare. We went straight to the school and I met Dean the Principal. He made sure all was organized as he won't be at the school tomorrow when I teach Conflict Resolution. Leonie will come and take pictures, so it will be very interesting. I am so excited to just be with the kids. It is a very nice school. A few houses around the community and what they call camp dogs running around. Leonie told me the other community she had visited on the way to Alice Springs were far worse with dogs, as they were very hungry. This community was very neat and tidy and the dogs looked very friendly and well fed.*

## Clowning with Indigenous Children

From my blog:

*The indigenous kids came in (see photo) and I showed them a presentation of my world trip. My thought here was to open their minds to the world. These are kids in a remote area and very few have travelled further than Tennant Creek. I wanted to expand their vision and show them that anything is possible. They loved the music.*



*I then pulled out my juggling clubs, my fire sticks, juggling rings and juggling balls. I have this very funny singing cow, and singing flower and singing lion. The kids loved them. I danced along with the songs. I brought out my giggle stick, it is a head massager and I use it to interact, I also have a vibrating massager and gave them massages. They loved it and laughed at each other. In between I do a moon walk or I dance around. I tweak my nose and squeak my dummy (giant). I then brought out my whistle that goes high/low and pretended to be a bird and flapped my wings around the room.*

*I then got the kids to dress up in wigs and clothing and did a laughter/clown workshop (see photo).*





*I taught them a bit of mime, funny walks, funny faces and what was really magic was that they were coming out of their shyness. The Indigenous people I would call introverts, I myself am more of an extrovert, although sometimes I am introvert. So I understand they are not used to shining. I had them jump into the middle of a circle and do something crazy. The teachers were excellent and very involved, they found my brightly coloured ribbon stick and called it a crazy stick. When it was wiggled over the kids heads the teacher said you have been touched by the crazy stick go crazy and they did. I loved to see them emerge and for me that was the highlight of the workshop. The workshop was really great and I was able to really connect with the children. It was a joy. The workshop went for 1.5 hours, which is longer than usual. I found the teachers particularly good and they sensitively managed behaviour.*

*I have to report something very funny. In the first workshop the day before a group of dogs tried to come into the room. There was about six of them patiently waiting, one tried to come in. I loved the fact the dogs wanted to join us.*

*The second workshop was with teenagers and it went very well for the first part. I taught some conflict resolution (see photo) and presented information about Dr. Emoto and how when our emotions are directed at water and then frozen, they actually affect the water crystals (molecular structure). If people think loving thoughts the crystals are symmetrical, if the thoughts are negative they form in an asymmetrical pattern. Our thoughts are powerful.*



*The kids loved the juggling, interactions and presentation. Leonie was there taking photos. Some of the older boys did want to participate but they had 'credibility' to live up to, so they held back from getting into the dress ups. I can understand those difficult teenage years. However, I just played with them on the sidelines, trying to encourage them but I didn't force them. The workshop went very well and when I found the energy breaking up a bit towards the end I concluded it with a circle. I thanked them for having me at Canteen Creek and that I would not forget them. That they are a beautiful people. I told them that being a clown was the most wonderful experience of my life and that all people are equal. What I see when I clown is that every person is beautiful. When I make others happy I feel so happy. This came from my heart to them.*

*I left the workshop very tired, as it is hard work. But I was deeply happy and the fact it was given for free is even more enjoyable for me. As it is truly a gift of love. I thought*

*about the chances of ending up in the most remote community 300km south east of Tennant Creek. These children had not seen clowns but they were warm and welcoming to me. I got lots of photos of them and really enjoyed my time there.*

*The Aboriginal ladies I met the day before said there is something magical about these places that they just draw people and they never leave. I certainly felt a call to be with the Indigenous people and I was not disappointed. I felt I learned more about them and my affection for them deepened. I waved and smiled at the folks as we drove past in the car. I was deeply happy.*

*We left the town and saw the wild donkeys on the way out. We drove through the bright red road with the beautiful green backdrop of trees, gums, bushes and grasses. We got to the next station 50km away and realised we forgot the bed spread that I used. We had to drive back (100km) round trip to pick it up. Leonie took it really well and didn't flinch. She was truly an amazing host, not negative or irritable, a real joy to travel with. I so enjoyed our conversations. She even told me on the way to Alice Springs there is a place which is considered the centre for UFOs. Apparently there have been many sightings, so I am definitely going to check that out.*

**The Fool's Gold:** Australia is an ancient land and there is a spirit that responds to us. I was inspired to travel Australia I asked for confirmation and a new adventure opened up. I trusted and allowed life to take me with little money and great uncertainty. To face fear and see that only opportunity greets me is to know life. I love this country and what I do to the country I do to myself. Teaching peace is in harmony with nature. It is the joy of my life. Ask and it is given.

## CHAPTER 7: Humanitarian Clowns in India (2012)

### Preamble to Departure

My friend Tim invited me to join a clowning tour to India. I had undertaken a workshop for the City of Perth and donated the money to Rotary. I had a feeling to contact Tim again and I decided to go to India. I was able to get the money I had donated to Rotary and that became my airfare. I was going to Vellore in Tamil Nadu, Southern India. How exciting.

I thought I'd go to the airport from my friend Kit's place. She organised a health spa pampering for me as she is a masseur and health specialist. It was heaven as I was exhausted and so needed revitalising. I could never have afforded a massage and facial, so she did it for free along with another wonderful woman. How kind this offer was. I then went to her place for dinner and I was to go to the airport from there. I sat happily checking my emails to confirm my flight. Tim had emailed me alarmed as to where I was. Seb's Projects, the non-government organisation (NGO) I was to be clowning for, had sent a driver from Vellore in Tamil Nadu to pick me up but I wasn't there. I suddenly realised I had missed my flight, what!!! I had got the date wrong – yes it was the 29 August today but the flight had left just after midnight, which really meant that the 28<sup>th</sup> August was when I should've been at the airport so as to leave after midnight. I had a sudden shock of panic run through me. I had to ring my friend in Rotary to quickly organise another ticket but this would have to wait until the morning. My only focus was that I had to get to India.

So after the panic subsided I just decided to accept fate, and wonder what would happen as a result of me missing the flight. I met some friends of Kit. Her friend had been to India, she gave me some lavender for the mossies (mosquitoes). Kit's housemate is a lovely guy and he joined us with his friend. We talked about seeing life differently. My friend is a wise soul and I notice she sits back and observes more. She is a former yoga teacher who is absolutely passionate about healing and is a genuine person of service. She has given me a free yoga session in the past. I love the fact that she gets what real service to humanity is. I would deem her a light. So we were all chatting and after our stimulating conversation proposed

an alternative reality, which interestingly, this flatmate said he knew. We ended up learning how to dance. He swept us girls up and danced with us. I loved it and of course clowned around. I jumped on his feet and felt that was a good way to learn, rather than trip over them. We spoke of romance and relationships and I added that we have to love ourselves first so that the relationship is not needy. I could see he was interested. It was a great night and I ended up going back for the last night of my house sit. I didn't sleep well, too much wine, even a couple of glasses is too much for me these days. So at three in the morning I was still awake. Anyway, there was nothing I could do I just had to go with the flow.

The next day the flight was rebooked and another friend of mine covered the costs which I would reimburse on my return to Australia. I wondered why this had happened (spiritually), I don't believe in coincidences anymore. Well I ended up ringing a new friend whom I had met at a peace gathering. I had left my power chord for my laptop in the hills (25 kms out) and she was closer. I thought maybe I could borrow her computer and just check out my emails. Anyway, we ended up talking about cancelled flights and the fact that there are no coincidences, it all happens for a reason. We spoke of a guy called Nick Vujicic, he is an Australian without arms or legs who is just a dynamo, he is so optimistic. Go to [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo\\_24\\_gTNac](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo_24_gTNac) for an inspiring video. He goes to many schools to talk about his life and how to become resilient. Now she told me about this guy and said you must Google his film trailer featuring his new book *Unstoppable*. Now funnily enough I had actually used that word to describe this guy in the course of our communication. The point was to press on and to not allow life to stop you from your own personal mission. I do get this, as I am a peace clown and World Peace is my vision. What's more I do not consider this an ideal, I consider it our birthright to fulfil who we truly are. Anyway, I took on board her comments and unending enthusiasm and excitement about life and encouraging me to go for it. I hung up from her and headed to the shopping centre nearby to have some lunch. I walked through the shopping centre and I felt a definite inner pull to go into the ABC shop. This has lots of videos and books from the Australian Broadcasting Commission. I scanned the books and blow me down there was Nick's book *Unstoppable*. The synchronicity of this was not lost on me. I opened the book at the section that just happens to be on bullying. That of course is my area. I teach anti-bullying (when I can get in the schools).

Anyway, I read it carefully as he described being bullied and how as a boy without arms and legs he was used to receiving disparaging comments about his physical difference. He went onto to describe one guy who always picked on him every day. He was sick to the stomach and felt anxious and depressed. In the end he rolled his wheelchair up to this guy and asked him why he did this, it turned out that the guy didn't seem to realise what he was doing and he stopped from that point. The issue with bullying is the psychological impact on a person who is feeling verbally or physically attacked, it creates all sorts of deep psychological trauma. I myself have experienced bullying and have had some issues with a person regarding power and stonewalling and I saw what had occurred to me as a form of trauma. At the same time it felt as if I had a purpose in this field. I was reminded as I read Nick's words and he went onto describe the statistics on bullying which are up around 30% of kids, this contrasts with some of the statistics I read: 1 in 10 (10%) are bullied, 1 in 20 (5%) are bullying but I sense this is getting higher as cyber bullying becomes an easier way of harassment (this contradicts the 30%). One cannot look at this and not see society in another way, the bullying at work, in relationships, we see it in Parliament and so on. It is part of the culture and has its roots in asserting power over others and in powerlessness. Many grow up in homes that are not that demonstratively loving or have patterns of behaviour that are termed as being 'dysfunctional'. He reminded me of the importance of my work as a Peace Clown. I wondered if my trip to India is about developing this work. Even as I write this now I can feel tears coming, that is always a sign for me. Nick is also a devout Christian and has his faith firmly in the centre. I am spiritual and I know that one must be in alignment with that higher power, which can be called love or truth, it doesn't matter, when you are in alignment with truth your face shines. Certainly Nick's does and he has no arms or legs, he even got married this year, good on you Nick. So his title for his book *Unstoppable* is a message to me. I felt it definitely.

This trip I felt was going to be special. I felt it in my heart. Something would happen on this trip as everything had fallen into place. Moreover, I felt I would be tested.

We clowns were organised to visit orphanages, schools, hospitals, villages, areas where lepers live, and even visit girls who have been trafficked.



We had a total of 30 places to see. So I was sure that energetically it would be full on. What I felt when I spoke to my friend and the lady who owned the health spa was that I felt a strong desire as a clown to shine love into the eyes of the children and the people I would see. I felt it strongly to just pass on the love. You cannot imagine the beauty of loving people like this with no agenda, just to share love. Always I feel the privilege as a clown and I know we are equal. So I don't see myself as a westerner going to India to give to the deserving, I see myself as an equal going to share love with other beautiful human beings, I see them as my teachers. I see that there is beauty in deformities, disability, physical difference, sickness and so on. I wish to be a mirror to those who think they are not beautiful, to see a shining clown laughing and smiling with them. For me that is the most beautiful image I can imagine. Beauty for me is in the soul.

Here are some blog entries, from my trip to India, sharing the incredible experience of spreading peace and love in the guise of clowns.

### Seb's Projects and India

Our first outing as a group was to go to Seb's Projects and meet the friends of Tim who had organised our trip. We were to be briefed about Seb's Projects, meet each other and learn about India and its customs and issues. Here is the blog entry of that first day:

*Today I heard the faint voice 'Lily' and knew it was time to wake up. I decided to change my name to Lily which is the meaning of Susan and in fact means peace. My roommate is called Alex and she is a school teacher from Melbourne. Her clown speciality is puppets and I am looking forward to seeing her work.*

*The group formed and we walked over to the canteen of a nearby hospital. We walked through a beautiful forested area and I found myself meeting Ovidi who is from Spain. He has a warm wide smile welcoming all who come into his presence. We excitedly saw some monkeys. I watched the mother dragging the baby across the roof. Another few were up in the trees. It's so lovely to see monkeys in the wild in the middle of a city.*

*We all ordered breakfast – omelettes, mango drinks, vegetable sandwiches to name a few items. I was hungry so it was lovely to have a meal.*

*The key organiser is an English woman named Geraldine, Gerri for short, from the Seb's Project NGO. She has worked for them for four years and is very experienced. I will speak more about this small but effective NGO as I go through this day.*

*In the 'tuk tuk' (automated bike with a carriage) Jo and Toot were with me. The driver emerged out into the chaos of Indian traffic and indeed tooting is the prevailing sounds that echo like an orchestra of communication that each driver is alert to, for each toot warns that a vehicle is approaching in a 'mish mash' of merging traffic. The city of Vellore is known for housing the CNC (Christian Medical College) hospital famous for health care throughout India. The women in their colourful saris are seen on the streets or riding side saddle on a motor bike. You see little girls and boys going to school. They are in uniforms and they have white ribbons in their hair. I imagined their pride at going to school and being kids. The families here are central and close. There are strong familial networks.*

*We arrived at the Seb's Projects in a wealthy part of Vellore. We passed large mansions and stopped outside a very nice white building. As we climbed the stairs we found ourselves in a large room with shining floors and paintings adorning the walls. It was very clean and modern. They had a video presentation set up and we were welcomed with coffee.*

*Gerri introduced us to Seb's Projects and we all went around the group speaking about our clowning. Some were new to clowning, others worked professionally, some were into puppets, silent clowning, laughter yoga, or just felt inspired to be there. We met our new Indian friends who would be both translators and clowns with us. My friend Tim who organised the project described how as a child he had cancer and recalled going into hospitals. He spoke of being inspired by a magician and he wanted to do it too. He performed for cousins and developed his skills. He said he started going to do children's parties and had some difficulties with people not appreciating his work. He travelled to Africa and found that the wide smiles of children inspired him. The numbers grew as word of the 'magic man' got around. He ended up in front of 200 people and he just loved it.*

*Tim felt the magic of being a magician and making others smile. He also had worked with Seb's Projects here in India some three years ago and he set up an eco trail which has brought in much needed revenue for the villages. It was because of his relationship with Seb's Projects that this clown trip was started. Tim is described by his mother as a hippy, I'd say Patch Adams is as well. I guess what is similar about hippies is their easy going quality and laid back attitude. Tim is that sort of person, he is very much consensus based and goes with the flow. Gerri is the one that can motivate and get things moving, she is very intelligent and capable. She is a young woman, but I have to say that age means nothing to me as these days you meet so many amazing people of all ages.*

*There is a multicultural flavour to the group but mostly we are an Australian bunch but a few are from Spain and Sweden. There is one Australian, Amo, who comes from an Aboriginal background so it will be really interesting to learn from her. In India older persons are called uncle or aunty, I heard Amo speaking to Emma (elderly Indian) and telling her she would like to call her Aunty as that was in her tradition. I reflected on the similarities of indigenous people. There are often overlaps.*

*It is fascinating listening to other people's stories and experiences of life and what led them to decide to be a clown. It is a unique group. Tim believes there are around 10,000 clowns around the world. Certainly clown doctoring has increased particularly with the story of Dr. Patch Adams, the American clown doctor. Tim, myself, his mum Margarite and Lisa have all clowned with Patch Adams. There is another very experienced clown with us, Nigel, who has clowned for a quarter of a century as he puts it. He saw himself as unique and I could see he is. He is very good at balloons, as some of the participants reported from last night whilst I was sleeping. He also has travelled many countries and is an independent soul.*

*We started getting to know some of the Indian volunteers and they have broad smiles and open hearts. One of them, Santosh, who by fate has come to be with us, is a spiritual truth seeker; he and I connected immediately. I saw the artist in him and knew he has joined for a reason. Here is a YouTube interview with Santosh*

*<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNotTxmLxZM>*

*Others also indicated it was fate, and my overall feeling was this is a sacred trip and much joy is going to be generated. All smile easily and there is a warm heartedness that is clearly felt in the group. I know we will all become close as we clown together. Yes it will be exhausting but I know it will be incredible.*

*We are in Tamil Nadu, so the language here is Tamil and I am told people are very proud of their culture. We were given a briefing of the culture here and it was pointed out for women to be modest. It is considered to be a conservative State. The neighbouring State is Kerala, I was pleased to hear this as I studied this part of India and found Kerala had the highest literacy and equality in India. It is a matrilineal society and women are respected. As a result of this dynamic more girls are educated and the State itself has prospered. It is a prime example of why the whole benefits when all members are treated in equality. What I find is that when virtues lead any society, then the whole society grows and prospers. The language of Kerala is Malayalam. What was made clear to us was that the food and customs change as you move States. India is not one, and I recall in the Gandhi movie it was referred to as many India's. I also heard that people of different religions do live in harmony here. The prime religions are Hindu (80%), Jainism (0.5%), Sikhism (2%), Buddhism (0.7%). Christianity (2.5%) and Islam (12%) came at the turn of the 19th century. There is respect for differences and people coexist. A comment was made about politicians causing division and I felt there was truth in that. Certainly the British brought a 'divide and conquer' strategy as a means of control, and often politicians appeal to certain groups for votes.*

*We were informed that Indians have a different notion of space and can come up very close, moreover they can come and stare at you as you are white. I sensed as we travelled around that there are not any western tourists so I figure we will be a novelty by being white and also clowns. I am sure it will create a sensation given how long we are here and there will be incredible ripples that will be sent out by our presence. Ten clowns provide an enormous energy, and as an arrhythmia to the pattern of life this will definitely cause much commotion; I hope we don't cause accidents as the traffic is chaotic and you can just imagine everyone wanting to get a look.*

*We were asked questions about what we had noticed, which I noted as being a strategy of empowerment. Information was not just given to us we were asked questions first. The Seb's Projects team are small but I can see they understand empowerment. They don't impose ideas, rather they draw out knowledge, this of course is a powerful way to strengthen people.*

*We learned how to say hello in Tamil 'Vacuum' and 'Namaste' – the latter means 'the God in me greets the God in you'. We learned 'aka' means older sister, 'ana' is older brother, 'umma' is older lady and 'iyia' is older man (or sir). So it was interesting to see that in this language the way to speak to people was related to family, age and gender. Young people are taught to respect elders and you don't sit above an older person. There are rules and it is normal for a young person to live with family until they get married. There are love marriages here and slowly the caste system is breaking down. Apparently it is still important administratively as they are given certificates to confirm the caste. We were informed of the caste system as forward caste (typically Brahmin, priest class) backward caste – those in shops, most backward caste are typically in agriculture/rural areas, schedule caste and schedule tribe are gypsies and forest dwellers.*

*Interestingly Anup from Seb's Projects has a father who is Brahmin (high caste) and a mother who is a schedule caste. I asked if that was untouchability (the lowest) he said 'yes'. I recall in the movie on Gandhi and my studies that the untouchables did all the lowest jobs such as cleaning toilets and being cleaners. He said there were welfare benefits in being a schedule caste as you could access education more easily, with a lower entry pass of 45% as distinct from the Brahmin who had to achieve 90%. So there was reverse discrimination to bring other castes up to speed. In this area there are engineering technical colleges. I did see the one that was referred to as being a very impressive building. Education and health is notable in this area and when you learn of the difficulties and exploitations of the very poor the need for education is clear.*

*The middle class has become bigger and there was supposed to be more of a trickle down of wealth but this has not materialised. Literacy rates across India are still low, with 74% being illiterate. So there is much work to be done in a population of around 1.6 billion. This is the world's largest population and with size comes great responsibility.*

*Anup felt the government did very well at devising projects but was not good at implementing them, this is where NGOs come in and do much grassroots work. There are major challenges in this country but it was very inspiring to hear what a small group was able to achieve.*

*The number one issue in malnutrition. The rural area have the backward caste and they have barriers with engagement with bureaucracy and gaining certificates to prove their status which gives them entitlement to health and education. Seb's Projects are advocates for the tribal and rural people and will assist with the bureaucratic process which must be adhered to in detail. The government appeared to not issue these certificates and I wondered if it was because they didn't wish to recognise land rights. In Australia land rights is an issue for indigenous Australians who were indeed occupied, or invaded, by Europeans. They are given welfare but there is tension still, as many unresolved issues have not really been addressed. The former PM Kevin Rudd did issue an apology to the people which resulted in much crying and a sense of recognition, but the structures of European society are embedded and attitudes take time to change. The indigenous population in Australia are only 1% so their voice is not powerful. I found when I travelled around and met some of them that they were indeed another country. We do not know them or understand the huge cultural shock of a technological culture dominating a tribal culture with strong ties and a deep knowledge of country. I felt similarities here.*

*Seb's Projects is concerned with helping those in need to help and empower themselves through self determination. We were told, as mentioned before, about malnutrition, and the isolation of the poor who do not have access to education or health care. There are development refugees, issues of child trafficking, bonded labour and illiteracy. Seb's Project's through the Humanitarian clowns have built a school and around 50 children go there. It was interesting to learn that bonded labour occurs when children are sold by desperate parents through the belief that their child will earn 200 rupees per day by a certain date only to find that the end date is extended and they never receive the money. The parents are too poor to do anything about it. Those in bonded labour do not have freedom nor choice of work and receive no pay. People are exploited through economic disadvantage and lack of education.*



*Seb's Projects are affiliated with the International Justice Mission. They speak of homelessness, domestic violence, disempowerment, preventable deaths (of those who die by 50) and cultural disappearance through modernity. HIV and TB are also still issues.*

*Seb's Projects have a DREAM program where they teach through art, dance, drama and sports. The arts help with learning English and building confidence. The performing arts have a significant impact on children. Another program was called Goodbye to Paper and was for women who were poor, some had been forced to go into prostitution, and many had not gone to school when in remote areas school was too far to go to. The women needed to restore their trust. This project assisted them to build their own small business, and helped them with ID documents and micro finance.*

*Seb's Projects also works with the tribal people in the Jawadhi Hills. Apparently 92% of the people here are innumerate and 98% illiterate compared to 74% for the rest of India. The life expectancy of these people is 45 years. I am 50 as I write this book so many will not reach my age, they will die early because they do not have access to medical facilities and nutrition which would extend their lives. It is strange to imagine our different worlds. I just assume I will live to 80 or 90 years, I cannot imagine old age at 45 years, if we live to 90 it is double their life expectancy. Think of all the experiences they would miss out on. In the forest areas there are 7 people in a family, they have an income of \$16 per month. Moreover, infanticide is practiced in India particularly with little girls as the family can't afford a girl. The boys are regarded as economically viable and the girls a cost. I recall my former Afghan partner talking about infanticide in his country. As a female I find it incredible. Being an Australian I can't imagine being worth less and I can only feel fortunate that I have a mindset of equality. Things are changing though, and my inner feeling is that they are changing rapidly. They spoke of the HEAL program which is an acronym for Health Education And Learning. They support villages to access government welfare and further research to improve tribal health care and case work.*

*It was a fascinating day and reminded me of the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program in Bangkok where as a peace scholar I was exposed to NGOs doing excellent work at the grass roots level. I find that very special people are attracted to serve communities.*

*Geraldine and English woman had been involved with Seb's Projects for 4 years and she had a passion for working with the hills people. She is an angel sent to them no doubt. She is articulate and confident, and it is wonderful to see.*

*We as a group did some team building through a helium straw and tower games. With the helium straw everyone places two fingers to hold this long straw. There are people on both sides of the straw, and the idea is to bring it to the floor as a team. We found it got higher and higher. The other team did it in five minutes by placing one finger facing the ceiling the other facing the floor, somehow balancing the straw and enabling group work. The tower game required us to build a tower that was tall and aesthetically pleasing. The collaboration made us look at how we work in teams. I found that I hadn't worked in many teams and I was conscious that I had not been trained as a team player, I saw it as cultural as well. Australians tend to be independent and we all generate ideas but actually sitting down and really working together is not natural to our society. In tribal groups there would be order to their communities and customs. Some tribal groups have lived on the same land for 250 years, so one might imagine they have their way of doing things, their own wise people and lore. I am very interested in clowning in these communities. It will be the first time they have seen clowns.*

*Our day finished with dinner at the canteen in the hospital grounds and a visit to the shop. What I particularly liked is that they wrapped all products in newspaper. So when I go back to Australia I am no longer going to use plastic bags but paper.*

*There were so many stories, so many insights and sharing today. I find myself very much at home with fellow clowns and look forward to learning and growing with others. It is a unique space and one that will be enormously illuminating. To be a humanitarian clown is to utilise clowning as a means of social change, to show others their beauty is my vision, moreover I want to transfer love from my eyes to theirs that is why I am here.*

*The next day we headed over to Seb's Projects to hear a presentation by Nigel. He showed a film on clowns which was interesting and I found myself inspired by this small community of artists and the magic they perform. He then read some chapters out of his book on clowns and I found it very profound and interesting.*

*The rule of clowning is there are no rules, I liked that one. Clowns give people permission to come out of themselves. They are the ones who make the mistakes and make a joke of it. They are like a mirror to humanity showing them to themselves. They are silly people but in truth they use humour to unite with people as people are afraid of being fools. Yet when you are the fool you find there is no fear. For me clowning is spiritual work and I am definitely tuning into where I am supposed to go, I don't think about it, I just intend that I am sent to the right ones.*

### Clowning in CMC Hospital, Vellore, Tamil Nadu

An excerpt from the blog of 5th September 2012:



*...We woke up at 6.30 am to be ready for 8 am to go to the CMC Hospital. This is one of the finest hospitals in India. There were four auto rickshaws waiting for the clowns.*



*Balloons were tied to the rickshaws and we all looked very colourful. As we travelled through Vellore we all waved out the window. I had a colourful bird which I used to catch attention. I was worried we may cause accidents but Indian drivers do have good concentration as everything is so close so there are probably less accidents as a result. It was thrilling to watch smiles break out across people's faces. We had motorbike riders waving, giving us the thumbs up, women on the side of the road catching buses smiling as they looked at these colourful European looking clowns going past. It is so beautiful to see the humanity emerge on people's faces. My friend Tim was very excited. He organised the trip and had wondered how the day would progress.*

*After 45 minutes of weaving, tooting and chaos in the traffic we arrived at the CMC hospital. We got out. I used my whistle to mock directing traffic. I used my feather duster to dust people down. I also juggled and made out the rickshaw was going to run me over in a joking way. I waved at people and blew kisses. The others were a sea of colour and diversity. It is very exciting to watch a group of clowns move through a group and see the ripples it causes as the people come to look. At the hospital there are many families there, some sleep in the corridors as they have sick family members there. The CMC hospital is the most famous hospital in India, and people travel from across the country to access medical care. The place was crowded, apparently 10,000 people a day come to the hospital, numbers you couldn't imagine.*





*I had no idea what was going to happen, quite a few of the clowns with us were not experienced. One of the other experienced clowns being allergic to mosquitoes had been unable to come, so I had to lead a second group. I interacted with everyone. I walked up stairs, juggled, played, giggled, and interacted with my eyes, it was about making contact with literally thousands of people in a space. The Indian people are themselves good humoured, so even those who didn't smile I know were just not sure what to do when clowns are around. I expect they may never have seen them. It is a normal reaction in the West too. So I find I flow through the crowd with a big grin no matter what happens. It is a good metaphor for life as we learn to allow life to be what it is without forcing outcomes, but just living in the moment 100%. I do this all the time and I lose track of time, and who I am with as I am completely living in the moment. It is incredible to live this way.*

*We started in Paediatrics and bounced straight in there, meeting some children in the beds. You have to take it carefully as they can become scared, particularly young children who see a clown for the first time. So I came in juggling and dropped my balls.*

*I get crowd interaction by throwing balls to them. I met some beautiful children. I dragged out my large plastic scissors and comb, and made out I was a hair dresser, doing their hair. That worked very well. One nurse I made out she had nits and picked them out and then ate the nit. They laughed. I played soccer in the hallway with staff. I pulled out my colourful flashing microphone and tried to get them to do a Bollywood dance for me, the nurses were very shy. I hugged some doctors, many males were hugged. I was told culturally you don't hug males that was why everyone was laughing as I broke the rules. I laughed when I was told and said I am a Westerner and I will hug men. I had just hugged the Indian journalist who was doing a story on us. He knew I had a love of Gandhi, and I introduced him to the idea of Gross National Happiness – a concept started in Bhutan.*

*I made a child laugh with my expanding ball. The kids really like the way it is small and then I sneeze and it opens bigger. I use it as a way of bringing people together as I get them to throw it around. The staff were very interested in our antics. The clown team have a diversity of talents, some juggling, others do magic, blow up balloons, apply stickers, play music, so as a team it is very entertaining. There was much talk of inspiration at the hospital level to start their own creative interventions, particularly for long term patients in rehabilitation.*

*I met many boys today and smiled and hugged them. Some were attentive, others were in pain or afraid, so I tried not to upset them. I do cross the line a bit to see if I can engage them but if I feel they are not interested I move on.*

*I had some wonderful interactions with older people and people in the rehabilitation hospital in the afternoon. Many had spinal injuries, amputations, or were disabled in some way. I was able to juggle and blow bubbles to gain the crowds' interest. I also have a ribbon which I twirl and make out I am catching people. I told one guy in a wheel chair I would catch some nurses for him. I actually rode on the back of this chair which had bicycle pedals for the hands as they can't use their feet. It was a steel structure. I jumped on the back and the guy took me for a spin. I was then invited by the doctors to see a patient who they wanted to watch how I went with. I am sure it was experimental for the doctors and nurses and much discussion will take place.*



*We did have a talk afterwards and I spoke of my emotional intelligence training in Bangkok where I had doctors and nurses dressed up as clowns in outpatients. In the evaluation that followed there were comments about feeling freedom for the first time. When you are a clown you are free to be yourself, you are playing with everyone in the vicinity.*

*It is hard to describe the whole day as there was so much activity. In my own consciousness I don't always remember as I am so deeply in the moment. I was told I was amazing by other clowns in my group which I truly found surprising as I don't see myself at all. I can only gauge by people's reactions how I am received. I saw many smiles and it brought much joy as I genuinely love all the people I see. I do feel the sense of family with everyone.*

*There were reports from the other clowns of the magic working, the kids were so excited and one clown said she had a powerful moment with a 17 year old. She held his hand and put stickers on him, some others came around and sang. When she tried to leave he didn't want to let go of her. All the clowns had stories of people they had connected with and we saw some wonderful photos.*



*It was our first day clowning in India and I would say it was an unmitigated success. We created something new and people were truly inspired, intrigued, puzzled and uplifted by our presence. There is nothing like spending time with a group of clowns. The Indian clowns who accompanied us were also enthusiastic and wonderful human beings. They are so loving and kind and there is so much laughter coming from the group as we all start to bond. I truly loved my day today and felt satisfied that maybe I added to the greater peace picture through loving human beings as myself.*

## International Justice Mission and Hope House

International Justice Mission, Chengalpet, Chennai

Excerpts from the blog of 6 September 2012

*...Today we got up early to go to the International Justice Mission (IJM). We were informed only on the bus that we were doing a show, which didn't leave any preparation time. As a group of clowns we have not put on performances together and we had to 'ad lib' it. We arrived at IJM and I had to go and put on makeup. As I came out the show had started and there was no time to confer on how to do this properly. The staff at IJM wanted us to promote the values of cleanliness, money management, trust and integrity. There was not enough time to really do it justice (so to speak).*

*I was pulled into a skit with my friend Toot. She has been a performance clown for a number of years and we do get on well and respect each other.*

*The brief idea was for her to be the bad clown and me to be the good peace clown. We were to excitedly meet and then I would show her things from my bag which we would use to entertain the audience. There were around 100 people sitting there of all ages. They had previously been in bonded labour. So Toot (see photo) and I hammed it up and I ventured into the audience, as my name was called. I made one of the audience members me by putting my hat on them. The idea of Toot stealing my stuff and us then talking to the audience on how that could be done better went out the window. We ended up pulling out props and it finished clumsily in my view.*

*Still I was able to form a deep connection with the audience and found myself blowing up balloons and flicking them to people, it is a good way to get the crowd to participate. I had some men come up and do a dance.*



*I did some juggling and threw the ball into the audience, a woman caught it and threw it back. I had a ribbon which I twirled. My friend Toot brought out a big pole that comes out of a small bag, it looks effective. Apparently the IJM guy then got up and tried to create a lesson out of it. He was speaking Tamil so I had no ideas of what he was saying. I feel we could have been more effective had we spent more time on preparing shows and getting the themes right. The group have a range of skills so they all came out.*

*We were outside which is a different performance space. We just had to go with the flow. I brought out my squeazy tomato and gestured for people to eat it and then squeezed it into a bubble. My expanding ball seemed to get lots of laughter as I threw it and bounced it off people. I taught one woman to juggle (see photo) and she was very happy.*





*I made friends with a group of women (see photo) and was able to convey ideas to them and indicated they were my friends, I could see they were happy.*



*Our friend Ovidi is a good entertainer, he brought out the guitar and introduced the clowns as we took a bow. I managed to make a speech through the interpreter. I felt moved to speak. I spoke of Gandhi and of Satyagraha – how truth and love are the main pillars of life.*

*I see Gandhi as a clown as he had a great sense of humour, they seemed to like that, particularly an older guy in the audience, I am sure he remembered Gandhi. My friend Toot took a leadership role and thanked the organisers and Tim. In the end it somehow pulled together.*

*We all did our bit with the people and they did seem happy. We so loved meeting the people (see photo). We did make bonds which was the purpose. When you see happy shining faces that is a clue that your presence was well received. The Indian people are a gentle and wonderful audience, they are ready to have a laugh and I really love that about them.*



*I spoke to a man through our Indian interpreter friend Lennon. The man was sad and we spoke of God as he could relate to that. He said he was a diabetic and his daughter and children lived with him as her husband died. He felt low in energy and was unable to support them by taking a job. I tried to transfer faith in the form of gratitude for breath, for family, for life. I was mindful I am not in his situation but I felt that with positive thoughts he would be more effective than in depression. I gave him my badge and balloons and we had a lovely connection. It turns out he was from the next village and not connected with the IJM, so it was so interesting that he and I connected. But there are no mistakes in this life I feel.*



*My friend Lennon also showed me plants that close the moment you open them. A bit like a Venus fly trap although they are vegetarian (I am guessing). I was so fascinated.*

*The show was closed and we waved to a grateful group of lovely people and felt good about our moment with them.*



Later we received feedback from staff:

*'I travelled all the way from Vellore and after watching this program, I didn't feel tired after a long travel.'*

*'Though nobody comes near us, you people came near us and interacted with us.'*

*'We enjoyed watching the comedy.'*

*Our clients had enjoyed watching the program, the team interacted with the clients very well.*

These were the feedback from the clients who attended the later Nagari Monthly Meeting on 10 Sep 2012. Below are quotes from clients:

*'We forgot our difficulties while we saw you.'*

*'You are skilful in doing this and had put lot of efforts towards this.'*



*'I don't know who they (referring to the clowns) are.....They had come from far off places. God hath send them to keep u happy. Even after attending the meetings, I had made mistakes. But now I don't want to repeat that. I have a desire in my heart to back to my childhood days. Because, the childhood days are fun. After becoming an adult, I become angry. That's the reason for me to think about my childhood days.'*

*'Thank you for the balloons.'*

*'Though you were ill, you had come all the way to bring joy into our lives'*

*'I had never seen in my country like this (with all these costumes). We can't travel abroad. But you had come all the way to this place to bring joy into our lives.'*

These were the significant quotes from our clients. Once again, we would like to thank your team for their relentless efforts and made our clients to feel special.

T. Praisey Glory Bai, Aftercare Manager

### Hope House (HIV)

An excerpt outlining the experience at Hope House from my blog:

*...We drove another hour and came to the HOPE house. This is a place for HIV positive children. We had at the last minute organised a programme there. The clowns made a make shift stage and kids sat down on carpet. My friend Toot is a leader and she got the show started. Tim did some magic. He and I spoke in the break about just spontaneously going in but I didn't know the others' routines and when it was appropriate to go in. It is clear we are amateurs without any real knowledge of true performance.*

*However, Toot and Ovidi (see photos) came to the rescue and then our newly baptised clown Mingle who is a Tamil, saved the whole show. He had never clowned but he mimicked the kids and it was a big hit. He also had us singing a Tamil song of wanting the other as our friend which was a lot of fun. We clowns were with the kids and playing with them.*



*He then introduced each clown towards the end and they jumped in and all clapped and cheered. The energy was high and it was really wonderful.*

**YouTube:** Lennon teaching a song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNotTxmLxZM>

*I was listening to some of my teachings later and thinking about accepting the moment. It is not a question of right or wrong it is a question of being at peace under all circumstances. I do see clearly that we all create our reality. I am learning to just trust life, what it brings, and just go with the moment.*

*On the bus I introduced one of our other Tamil helpers to some spiritual teachings. He was blown away. We spent the three hour bus trip listening and conferring. He himself is a spiritual seeker and found himself invited at the last minute on this trip as he was around Seb's Projects. He and I immediately connected, something I said triggered him he told me. Listening to the teachings he definitely resonated. It was interesting to find a man with a universal consciousness. He knew about Lao Tzu and already was interested in love and light. So it was great to meet this person. India is the right place for this discussion given the spiritual roots here.*

*I really love the Indian people and we have met so many, we have hugged them. The HIV kids gave us big wide smiles and warm hugs, even the boys were hugging us. They had no parents, so they were orphans. I spoke to the American convenors of this orphanage and found they themselves were special people. I often find angels doing this work, they sacrifice themselves for others and had they not turned up you wonder what the situation of the children would be. The two I spoke with wanted to make the world a better place by giving. The American woman had come in May and really loved the kids. She told me she had had an auto immune disease and had empathy for the kids. We spoke of the gift of illness not to diminish compassion for a moment but to understand that life is what it is, to help children learn to live with the moment in a positive way was our shared belief. How to see the gifts in cancer, how to see the gifts in amputation, in HIV infection this is the work of accepting life in a positive way. Perhaps in this mindset cures are found and others are inspired by the courage. This volunteer said she has to go back to the States in October and is really feeling sad at leaving the children. She said she had learned a lot by working with them. She informed me that the kids receive out of date medication to control the HIV infection. I asked her why? She said it was because they couldn't afford the \$3,000 medicines that were better drugs. They are purchased from the local area. I thought of pharmaceutical companies and generic drugs being made available.*

*I pondered about poverty and the reality that they receive sub-standard medication when it would be illuminating to see all HIV patients receive quality treatment no matter what their socio economic situation. Such is the profit motive.*

**YouTube link:** *Peacefull interviews Britney from House of Hope about HIV kids*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h6atQHlvqZk>

*I then turned to an American guy and asked him about his life in India. His experience had been up and down but he had stayed the path for four years. I felt he must be committed to the kids. Any foreigner working in India does have their challenges as bureaucracy can be slow and there is always politics and social issues to contend with. He said he had witnessed a lot of deaths. I thought of the emotional issues with bonding with these beautiful children, it would be painful to see young lives end. He had married an Indian woman and found his own family back in the States dysfunctional and he himself had somewhat detached from them. He was taking his wife back for the first time. I ventured it would be good for his parents to meet her, he didn't look so positive. He didn't like the lifestyle in the States, we discussed office work and the focus on material wealth. He had chosen to live in another way.*

*I can honestly say the children were beautiful with shining eyes and they had their best clothes on. I tried to imagine their life without a family and how they would grow up as part of a large group. We clowns had no issues touching them or being with them at all. They were well behaved and thrilled to get balloons and be entertained with juggling, fun tattoos, stickers, acrobatics, clowning and lots of laughter. We gave as much love as we could. I gave a performance to the children and they particularly loved 'hair cuts' (see photo below). I just make it up as I go, usually I have no idea what I am going to do just let it happen naturally. It is all about playing and having fun, kids get that all over the world.*





*Social stigma is an issue and the kids get ostracised. Apparently a local high school principal had expelled the HIV kids. They were discriminated against by the local medical centres. They have to travel a few hours to Chennai to gain medical attention. You can imagine how worrying that would be if their condition is serious. So they are battling prejudice, with no family protection and ultimately death if they do not stay in remission.*

*Laughter is effective in maintaining remission. I learned this in Southern Thailand at a HIV clinic. Laughter and positive feelings can turn dis-ease around, so our visit would be helping in their healing. That is a beautiful thought.*

*I reflect on how our world would flourish with more compassion and empathy. However, for this moment we gave them happiness, respect and deep love, and that is our job. With that I am deeply happy.*

*My feet swelled up but I am happy we made a difference. My job is inner peace and balance. So a spiritual practice in just being love. I so love being a clown. I so love people.*

Comments from Hope House Staff:

*The Children seemed extremely joyful and care free. Many of them were able to let go and just have so much fun. All guards were down. Thank you so much for providing our kids with such an extremely fun and silly evening.*

- Sierra Freeman (Hope Foundation Volunteer)

*'When the kids first saw you all, I'm sure they had no idea what to expect. They've never seen anything like the crazy costumes and make up, but you won them over with you silliness and you fun. I know they loved every minute of the show and it was defiantly not something they will soon forget. You made them forget all about their disease and sadness and let them be kids for a few hours. Thank you for your love and joy.'*

- Brittany Stranfield (Hope Foundation Volunteer)

*'Thanks for doing noble service for the Humanity. God will bless you all.'*

Panineer Setram (Program Director Hope Foundation)

Cheshire Home, Viruthampattu

I had a good sleep in as I was pretty tired. I decided to go to the orphanage in the afternoon and meet the children.

An excerpt from my blog, 11 September, 2012:

*...In the afternoon at 5:15 pm we headed to the orphanage. Children had HIV and we think some had leprosy as some kids had lost their fingers. We arrived in three auto rickshaws and they excitedly came out to see us, they were from four to fourteen, with most youngsters around eight years old. They were filled with smiles and wonder at the clowns. Our friend Lennon and some of the adults responsible for the children had them sit down as an audience. Lennon our Indian translator and fellow clown, who we now call Mingle, introduced us and I was to come in and perform. I marvelled at how used I was at just jumping up and making it up. I rolled around the kids in the crowd, juggled for them and did haircuts with my giant scissors and comb. I smiled at how popular this is.*



*Then Toot came on and played scary monsters with them, she had them all stand and they ran from her laughing. You can see the thrill in their eyes. We had Alex do some magic. Ami had her twirling stick and said she felt much better today as she could flow through the crowd. We were outside and it got dark. My glowing jester's hat intermittently flickered lights on then off, it worked well in the dark. I also had a microphone that shone. I had some kids sing their songs and they did so very well. I chased a few around, swung them in a circle and we plopped on the ground. They would come up and hold your hands and we skipped. I then made an effort to hug and kiss them as I recognise how starved for affection they are. The boys and girls were open to affection. They were truly beautiful children. I watched them deeply thinking of the fact they have no parents. It is hard to imagine their life and how they see the world. I saw Emma at the back (CEO of Seb's) and noted her dedication. Alex and Puzzle did balloons and Toot joined in as there were 100 kids. The kids wanted balloons and stickers. I did find that full on but I distracted some of them with hugs. They were so innocent in their demands.*

*We drove away in our autos rickshaws with the kids waving, and feeling a special connection with some of the faces. To be a clown is a privilege and I am so pleased we are doing this work. It does make a difference, it may not change the fact they are in orphanages, hospitals or HIV clinics, but for a moment they can forget their troubles, they can believe in magic, they can be transported to another place, they can feel again and believe that life can send in the clowns.*

*The other part of our group went to a nursing home. One of the members of the group I spoke to spoke of her horror at the fact they were sleeping on concrete in a nursing home. She had been looking for a place for her mum at home and this brought and the realisation that what we have in Australia is just not comparable. She really wants to buy them beds, she had tears in her eyes as the diamond of her humanity shone through the crystal awareness of others.*

*Our fairy (see photo) also cried at the state of the nursing home as she works in one. The love and compassion was overwhelming.*

*They conveyed that people in Australia have no idea of the hardships others go through, so this was a huge emotional learning experience. They spoke of some men not wanting to let them go. They spoke of dancing with the men and women. It sounds like it was an amazing time. So beautiful to share our rainbow light.*



*My love for this group is growing, their incredible generosity and continuous waves to others and their endurance, for it is not an easy pace that we are keeping. I often awaken with puffy eyes and come back with swollen ankles. We do a lot of sitting and a few hours of show and then we come back. Such is the power of love.*

*The streets are dirty and life is a constant buzz here. You see people sleeping in the streets, peeing in the streets, some walking past, others spitting, it is dusty and dirty, yet I feel no judgement. They marvel at we white folk and in clown costumes the streets break open into smiles as those who see us show their surprise and then joy. It is a sea of humanity and we are very small candles in that sea. In fact at the restaurant we took a picture of an Indian woman who was a light in the darkness. I placed Gandhi's image (on the back of my vest) above it, as he was also. I see love as that light, we are tiny candles as Ovidi said, but we are shining and that is all that matters.*

## Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity, Vellore

I was very interested in going to Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity. I wanted to see the work she had done and her legacy. She was a true humanitarian and one of my friends had met her many years ago. She said it was a moment she would never forget and had tears in her eyes. Here is an excerpt from my blog, 12 September, 2012:

*...We were up and out by 9 am to visit the Sisters of Charity set up by Mother Theresa. Our newest member of our team, Brett, turned up from Australia. I was surprised to see him bright eyed and bushy tailed after his 18 hour flight from Australia. He only had a few hours. He came in the auto rickshaw with me and Ami. He was so funny, first time out of Australia, he yells out, 'Like your bike, nice fire', as we zig zag past. He said, 'Honk if you feel horny', well that did it for Ami and I, we will never see India the same as they honk all the time. I made a comment saying: 'That is why the population is so big, they are always honking - ha!' We had a little joking banter in the car that is how we clowns get to know each other. We go with humour to connect. I so love that, no small talk like, 'Where are you from? And what do you do?' we just get into comparing balls and jokes.*

*We travelled on bumpy roads and we were met with the usual surprise and smiles from so many people. This lady smiled as we passed. So beautiful! (see photo).*



*We are touching the lives of hundreds just from the rickshaw. We saw some kids and they kept waving as they walked to school, looking back, waving, looking back and waving. I had my toucan bird out the window of the rickshaw and it makes a 'haw haw' noise. There are three auto rickshaws and we go in convoy. So usually people see the first couple and then we come along so they are fascinated to see more clowns. I saw a man sleeping on a single bed (see photo) oblivious to what was going on.*





*I saw a lady with cow dung which she was patting into paddies. They use them for fires. We were told today that they have gas coolers for fridges. We saw a whole group of women gathering to get government subsidised fuel. We were told last night that our rickshaw drivers get 400 rupees a day which is not much as it is equivalent to about four Australian dollars. So many guys go past and have a look at us. One guy I kept looking at as he looked very serious and was level pegging us, he knew I was there and ignored me for as long as he could then he took a look. I love that. We get so many waves and smiles that you lose count.*

*We turned up at Mother Theresa's Missionaries of Charity. We saw all these middle age to older women in blue and purple home dresses (see photo).*



*Many had mental retardation, mental health and were the most destitute of people. When we got there we broke out puppets, bubbles, balloons, twirling ribbon, noise makers. I floated balloons and got them playing. We gave them heaps of love and kisses. They responded in return and some of them were very funny. We danced with them, they tweaked my nose and other's played with my blowers. A lady and I hooked arms and went and ganged up on people blowing our blowers at them laughing.*

*We even did it to the sisters, they were the authority there, so it was nice for the women to see us play with them. I spoke to one of the sisters who had worked in the United States and Mexico. She looked like a wise woman who had been around. On their ambulance they had 'Peace begins with a smile' (see photo).*



*I told her God told me she should wear a red nose, she laughed. We also ran out the back and played with the staff who do all the physical work for the women. They danced Bollywood style with us. My friend Ami twirled her amazing rainbow dress. Her expertise is in fire twirling. She was having fun I noticed. We also ganged up on her and Alex blowing our blowers at them. Another lady loved my blue balloon and had this huge grin whilst she walked around hugging the balloon, I plied it from her and flicked it to her and she grabbed it. She chased some of the guys it was so funny to see these ladies with rotten teeth, with grins and cheeky playful behaviour. We just adored them. They all felt our love. There was one lady there who kept pointing to her arm as if in trauma, we got her to laugh which was important for breaking the pattern. She leaned her head on me and I sent love from my heart to hers, I held her with both arms and hugged and snuggled. It was so lovely to see these roses emerge from the darkness of their existence. A lovely old lady was speaking poetry to me and smiling and putting her hands in the prayer position. She went down and touched my feet to honour me with the highest*



*honour. I touched her feet. She tried to stop me as she didn't feel worthy but I made her accept the blessing. I was told later she was from an agricultural community and had become destitute. I was told later another lady was found on the street in front of the CMC hospital, Gerri from Seb's Projects tried to get her into the home. She went there once and then went back to the hospital and slept in the same spot in the heat, under the rain waiting for her brothers and sisters to come and get her. Apparently they inherited their mother's house and kicked her out. She went onto the street and went crazy. Gerri said it was so sad that for 40 years she went back to the same place to wait for them but they will never return for her. This group had fallen through the cracks of society and you wondered at their lives. To not be married or mentally okay would be devastating for these women. Some of them were mentally okay and again, how do they keep it together? The Sisters are doing a wonderful job.*

*I even got our rickshaw drivers to do some dancing and they were shy but they are getting into the mood with the clowns which is great. Our new friend Brett, called Jester for his clown name, is a great juggler and he will teach me how to steal the juggling balls from him, he had lots of tricks so am looking forward to playing more with him. He is a lovely guy.*

*All our team are wonderful, it is a joy to be with them and share this remarkable experience of bringing love and peace to others in a non-threatening peaceful way. We are definitely touching lives and making a difference. Collectively this is world peace and I am in bliss as I told Santosh my yoga friend. I said this is the bliss of giving love to others. He is really warming and happy. I can see the effect we are having on all we meet. As a group we are getting more cohesive. It is a fantastic experience.*

Comments by staff:

*Dear friends, from the bottom of our hearts, we thank each one of you, you taking the trouble to come over here and making our Children happy, helping them to have more happiness, you made them laugh and smile with your fun and jokes. Love and Thanks.  
– Sister in Charge*

## Clowning for Jawadhi Tribes in the Jawadhi Hills

All the clowns were excited to get out of Vellore and experience the countryside of Southern India. In particular, we were looking forward to visit a remote tribe that hadn't seen clowns and lived a simple life. They had much to teach us, and we had our joy to share with them.

Journey to Jawadhi Hills:

An excerpt out of the blog, 18-20 September, 2012:

*...We had to get up at 5 am on Tuesday morning to take a bus to Jawadhi Hills. We stopped briefly on the road. Toot and I got out, and what I find so refreshing about her, is that she starts stretching. So I just join in. It's a beautiful morning and we are facing amazing foothills to the mountains. We see the locals coming out of their houses. The bus then continued to the next village where we stopped and had coffee. It was a lovely small village, very neat and tidy. I stopped and chatted to Mike and he was reading the paper. I reflected on the news around the world and how all people believe what they read. I was interested in the issue of monsoons and intuitively felt it was late and I felt concern there within myself. I saw the usual politics and conflicts around the country. India is not one people, it is many countries, languages and cultures under the banner of India. In some places Hindus, Muslims and other tribes live together in harmony, in others there is tension. The challenge is to live in peace. My inner sense is that when people are left to their own devices they do live in peace.*

*The clowns were rounded up to get back on the bus after a break. We travelled a little way and met with the tractor and trailer. Some could go in the tractor up to the village others opted for the five kilometre walk. It was a nice day, not too hot. We walked along this track noticing a little of the wildlife, the different bird songs, the centipedes, butterflies and eagles overhead. I wondered about snakes and wildlife in this part of the world. Apparently there are leopards but they are hardly seen. I am sure with human habitation wild life retracts into what nature is left. We all had chats on our way to the village. We noticed a small dam and I was told this was the reason for the water drying up. I wondered about the water supply for tribal people.*

*I found myself separated from the group (in front and behind) and imagined being in nature alone. I tried to take it all in and feel the peace and energy of this incredible country. The area is mountainous with tree cover and huge rocks everywhere. I noticed crystal in the ground and knew it had high energy. As I walked I saw some thatched houses up ahead in a village, people smiled as we walked through. Our guide Gerri talked to them in Tamil and would be known to the tribal people as she works with them. The villages appear clean to me and their houses are primitive but sustainable and organised. I saw chickens, pigs and goats. The people work hard in the fields all day and at night are freer. We walked on past another few thatched houses, with trees and mountains all around. I just marvel at the huge boulders in the mountains and the energy of this place. I understand the tribal people are disadvantaged and poor but I feel this place as being rich. I really feel for people in cities, they don't have the fresh air and are caught up in the hustle bustle and they focus on money and survival. I see city life as hard. I haven't experienced country life, I am sure it is hard physical work but I wonder if people are happy. I am told the tribal people are kinder and that gives me a clue to their simplicity and happiness.*

*In this area there are dirt tracks coming in and there has been illegal logging as in other places of India. Such is the economic monetary imperative for income. Nature is under pressure and ignorance will just be the juggernaut for exploitation. There are also issues of bonded labour of tribal children. Again, exploitation grows through the ignorance of local people so it is important that they get an education to empower themselves with decision making and understanding in the dominant society they live within.*

*We arrive at where we are staying. A square brick building with a tile floor. I am told this is the eco resource centre. There are display trees with information on them inside the building so you can learn about the environment, animals and life. It is a nice building. Next to it up the hill are the toilets which I notice are clean. They are squat toilets. These are hard for an older member of the group who has an arm injury. Western people are not used to the natural squatting position. This is a natural way of going to the toilet as natural forces are not resisted. In western culture our way of sitting is not as in tune with the body. There are buckets to wash ourselves and water is available. I feel the water here would be okay as it is rainwater, however it is wise to be careful when in India.*

*All the women of the group shared one building and had thin cane mats to sleep on the floor. The men were parallel to the toilets in a small room and also sleeping on the floor. The tribal women were paid to cook food for us. We realised they were up at four in the morning getting wood and cooking. With the fire place they used coals and did not waste wood by keeping the fire burning with flames as we would in the West. They conserved wood.*

*I noticed some huge trees, one in particular in front of our place. It was a beautiful old tree. There was also a tree house built. We all had a go at climbing up the ladder and sat up there reflecting and chatting. Poor old Tim got bitten by ants when he fell asleep up there. I know that must have hurt as I also stepped on an ant and it sent some poison into my toe. Thankfully the pain was quick to lessen.*

*In Vellore, Toot had bought some nets for badminton, together with rackets, shuttle cocks and volley balls. She also bought some colouring books. I marvelled at her thoughtfulness. As she commented to me later, it brought out the best in her. I was impressed by her kindness. They did have some nets there but other villages didn't so I am sure the stuff she brought would be put to good use. I brought some skipping ropes and she gave them to villagers.*

*We all just rested in the afternoon. Myself and Santosh sat listening to some wisdom on my iPod. I enjoyed just leaning up against the tree listening in such a beautiful place. Others went for walks, some juggled, others slept, we all just did our own thing. I love this group very much and there is so much to learn from each person. I love the little interactions we have and how they really get out there clowning. They have more energy than me and I am sure they are all learning a great deal. I enjoy diversity and feel at peace with people. I am usually a bit of a loner but I am finding myself enjoying the company and getting to know people better. There is so much wisdom to be gained when you listen.*

*The idea for us to engage with the locals was to initially door knock after 5:30 pm as people were in the fields. I wondered at clowns visiting houses and how to clown for them in this way. Apparently it is hard to get them together. My friend Toot was quick to*

*mingle with the locals and she played with the children. They just love her and she has a way with children. She has worked with them for years but just wants to eat them, they are so gorgeous. She decided to do my make-up, it was the first time I had changed my look. The kids were involved and she put on red cheeks for them and little noses with glitter. It was a slow process but I was aware this was part of clowning, so I just observed and enjoyed the sweet faces all around us, so curious and innocent. Toot decided to start going to some of the houses so I just went with it and tagged along behind. Tiredness for me has been a reality on this trip and I do what I can when I have energy and I rest when I don't. I find I can't clown every day, usually half a week is what I can manage and I get a sore throat the minute my immune system drops so I watch it, I don't want to pick up diseases nor do I wish to pass anything to others, so balance has been important. Tim is great he says he doesn't want it to be a trip where people feel forced to clown, he wants people to rest when they need it. So for me that is good. I am keen to clown but only when I can give it my energy. So back to Toot I did go with her clowning, admittedly my energy was low but I did get some kids smiling and played a few fun games. It was getting dark so we went back for dinner.*

*I noticed the fireflies in the trees, so exciting, you see little flashes of what looks like electricity, the fireflies just flying around flashing. It is always magic to watch. The last time I saw this I was in Belize in Central America when staying in the bush. I jumped up and down they were so exciting.*

*When we all turned in to sleep, and it took me a while to get to sleep. Sleeping on a hard floor requires some adjustment. I lost my pillow so Toot gave me some of her clothes. I felt quite hot as well. I am taking sleeping tablets on this trip to ensure I sleep as energy is an issue. I didn't sleep much as I am a light sleeper and one of our group coughed a lot. The next day was to be full on, but I didn't worry as I just work with life as it comes.*

## Jawadhi Hills, Clowning in a Remote Village and Night time Performance

An excerpt from the blog:

*...We woke up around 5 am to leave by 6 am. People were pretty tired but hauled themselves up for a bucket wash and breakfast. Some dressed in clown outfit, I thought I would dress up when I got there. I was not sure how I would go energetically so I took my gear and thought I would make the decision when there.*

*The idea was to go to a school, some of the group would stay at the school and entertain the kids, the other group would trek 10 km (round trip) to a village on a hill in a remote area.*

*We all packed ourselves into the tray that was attached to the back of the tractor. Off we went on a bumpy and difficult drive. The roads are very degraded and uneven due to erosion and flooding. So it is bumpy and there's lots of crunching of gears by the driver. We were all crushed in yet people kept in good humour and there were random spurts of copious laughter which I enjoyed. I would expect this from a bunch of clowns. Thankfully the weather is not too hot but we do cover our skin as we are likely to get sunburned. We drove up steep hills and watched this mountainous country emerge from all around us. So beautiful to be in the heart of nature. So many butterflies of blues, yellows, whites and bird song is all around. We see the occasional cow on the way. I watch Santosh stand up on this bumpy ride and learn to stay centred in himself. He is a yoga teacher and a spiritual seeker who has practiced mindfulness. Ovidi tried to surf as he put it, and stayed up for a while but declared it was not easy to do it. Then Santosh just stood there doing pranic breathing and awareness. He said awareness enables him to stay still. I could feel his energy as I sat there. I felt it to be intense. The others chatted in good spirits wriggling to get comfortable from time to time. We finally got to our destination, the school. In that moment Toot asked if I was going and I decided to go. I wasn't sure if I had the energy but I thought I would go for it. I reflect now on Amo's wise words of seeing life as a challenge. She has a lot of courage I felt.*



*So off we walked with Anup as our guide accompanied by Mike, Gerri and Lennon (Tamil friends). There were other Tamil guides who led us through the jungle. I had my red backpack with clown gear inside and strode off. A little way into the walk Amo stepped in a funny way and hurt her knee. She was in a lot of pain and I hoped she had not done any real damage. I found out it was her knee. She is certainly tough and wanted to go on but Tim as leader of the group felt it was his responsibility to take her back. He was right, I doubt she would have made it and could have sustained real damage. So just before they went back Anup encouraged them to have a look at the view. It was breathtaking, a vista across a valley with trees and mountains to the horizon. It was just beautiful. I knew I had made the right decision to come on this walk, even if this view was the highlight.*

*So we walked in single file, sometimes chatting sometimes quiet. I found myself concentrating on the rocks, so it kept me well and truly in the moment. The path could be rocky or loose and sandy so you had to watch your step. We were surrounded by trees that had some likeness to eucalypts but were clearly not. The planet has similarities in different ecosystems and adaptation can be geographically specific or it can also be common in other countries. I enjoyed it and reminded myself that I was in another ecosystem. I watched the nature and the huge rocks and just marvelled at the fresh air, the endless trees and magnificent rocks everywhere. They seemed to me to be very old indeed. A place like this must change you as it is peaceful, perhaps this is why the people are so kind in these tribal villages, they are influenced by the natural world. It was a tough walk at times but we got to a place where Anup indicated it would be a good place to put on clown gear and make up. I laughed to myself on this trip at the willingness to go to remote places to bring joy and felt the theme of 'clowns without borders'. I also thought of the love Seb's personnel have for these people to have us walk 10km (round trip) to visit them. It is highly likely they have never seen clowns. They did know we were coming and Seb's personnel wondered if we should go house to house or do a show.*

*When we got there we waved to the people. I felt myself move into 'clown' and when it turns on for me I feel a naturalness in my interactions. I am sure I could connect with anyone when I am a clown. It so is a universal language.*

*We walked past some villages (see photo) as they emerged from houses or were using handmade shovels to collect cow dung.*



*We walked into an open area and headed for a large treed area. I saw donkeys in the paddock that were hobbled. We waved at people and caused some commotion as word got around that we had arrived. We were on top of a mountain and it was truly inspiring.*

*Under the big trees I juggled for the guys and went to make out I was hugging them, one boy ran away. Others laughed as I played with them. I threw balls, blew bubbles, did some balloons and generally played. The others did their tricks. Both Ovidi and Brett are excellent jugglers so I enjoyed watching them juggle together. Puzzle in his quiet way was wonderful doing his double helix balloon with a love heart. He would then give it to someone in the crowd. Toot played with the crowd and interacted. The energy was high and the audience was engaged the whole time (see photo).*



*We did a lot of hugging of women (we were not allowed to hug men), I tend to go to shake their hand but pull my hand away and they get it immediately. We are all so similar, this human family, it just amazes me how we can communicate without language. At the end of the show we sang to them in Tamil, thanks to the memory of Ovidi. It was a song about 'I want to be your friend'. It was a lovely show and we said our goodbyes to these shining people (see photo).*





YouTube clip of Ovidi clowning <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=whnEhv8iTLU>

*We ended up outside the village under some trees for a rest. Puzzle realised his mobile had gone missing and he tried to find it. Anup went to the village to let them know. So hopefully one way or another he gets it back. Anup was aware of time and got us started back. It was pretty hot in the sun and I did find the return walk very exhausting. I made it thanks to Mike who carried my backpack towards the end and helped me up rocks. I was really tired and sweating. It was full on but absolutely beautiful and such a gift. I find nature very grounding.*

*When we returned to the school the others had had a lovely time with the kids doing magic and tattoos and balloons. So there were so many happy kids there in their best clothes. The teachers had them playing games and our wonderful Lennon was up there getting them going. They did some animal games. Those of us who had returned from the walk were desperate for water, food and a sleep. So we lay on mats whilst the kids did their thing. I was then asked by Mike to juggle. I complied as I had some energy left. I did some juggling making up what I was going to do next. I put my hat on the principal, I noticed after a while he put it behind his back and gently got it back. I then went and pulled up a female child. I noticed the girls were sitting at the back. I wanted to get them involved, I felt we female clowns could be role models for them. I also went to shake their hands and one girl thought I was getting her up but I didn't, I just shook her hand. Then I went to the boys as well. They were lovely kids all of them. I did my bit and bowed, then sat down.*

*After a while the tractor was started up and everyone piled back into the trailer tray. I decided to sit with the tractor driver. It was not easy getting comfortable at the front as I had to wedge one foot behind his bottom and the other below. I was conscious I didn't want to crush my foot. So I was careful. Every now and then I'd move my position. My back got sore from banging against the bar. I watched the terrain in front and again marvelled at how rough it was.*

*We eventually got back to the first village. We got out and some went to sleep, I went and had a bucket shower as I was so sweaty from the walk and also had some water.*

*We all had to prepare for another show. It was done very quickly. I didn't find this easy as I was very tired and not trained in performance but I went with it and made suggestions.*

*Toot did some clowning with the group and then suddenly said for me to go in. I hesitatingly asked, 'Now?' She said, 'Yes'. I was just conscious of my feather duster and I jumped in and made it up. I asked Toot to get a snake as I felt like snake charming using my whistle that goes up and down (high pitch to low pitch). We then ended up clowning around together. It was so much fun, we ended up rolling in the dirt and the audience laughed. We got feedback from other clowns saying it was funny, so I felt happy. When you adlib and just make up the routine it can have the magic or not. Toot and I seem to be very similar and we do gel as clowns. We were both laughing and I was certainly puffing a lot. The other magic moment was juggling with Anup and Brett. We tried to adopt the education theme for children. Brett was the teacher and Anup was the good clown. Toot and I were the two naughty clowns who were not listening and watching while the one good clown arrived on time and learned to juggle. The point was to go to school and learn and not to muck around and be disrespectful. When you focus you learn and achieve your goals. Then the other clowns came on and did their bit, I loved all the performances and felt it was the best ever. I particularly loved the performance where the little glowing thumbs were pressed on and then thrown between people, it looked so effective at night. Then they all gathered the little red lights together and put them in two poyes (a poy is a circus toy consisting of a ball at the end of a long string). Ami then did a show twirling the poyes and it looked so spectacular that we just watched with awe. All the lights were out and the twirling poyes was like a blur of swirls and patterns, it was really great. Then a really beautiful bit happened when Ami touched Tim's clubs and they magically turned on. The two of them then juggled and twirled, it was very spectacular. At the end of the show we all sang 'If you are happy and you know it shake your ... or wiggle your...' and then we waved goodbye to everyone. There were lots of hugs and then afterwards we went and had dinner together. I just looked deeply into the night sky looking at the stars and thinking of the future. I feel a magic in this life and I do trust it.*

*For me this was a special day, I was amazed at my own energy to keep going, particularly after a 10km walk. I am not that fit and it was truly a miracle. I went to sleep tired but deeply happy. I found my pillow and drifted off to peaceful sleep.*

## Reflections on the Trip to India

Clowning in India was the greatest trip I've been on and I made some wonderful friendships, which I will never forget. I came away with a deeper sense of having experienced the love frequency and how this is what changes our beautiful world.

To love continuously for one month is an experience that cannot be put into words, but I can assure you it is our true nature. To learn to emotionally connect, or at the very least, gain a sense of community, is invaluable. To love strangers and to be there to serve without it being about you, is central. You do have to feel the joy to give it and see through the hardship and poor conditions people are in. You cannot dwell on the injustice or pain they carry. You can be the sunlight in their darkness, but curse it not as they say. That doesn't mean condoning it, it means holding the frequency of love. Love is what they need not sympathy, I am very clear on that. I feel the connection to people all over the world, and yes I see them as my family. Racism for me is something I do not relate to at all as I cannot see the differences, I only see that we are one. My only joy is to see a smile, even if it is random. One doctor that was met on this trip couldn't understand the point of clowns coming in as the people would return to sadness. This doctor was quite rude to Tim and just couldn't connect. Yet what the doctor didn't understand that even one moment out of the misery is something. It is a memory, it is an experience where strangers have actually cared when some people may feel no-one cares. It is the colour in the black and white. I recall clowning in a slum in Cambodia and two boys chasing the car as we left. I was told through a translator it was like a movie, they were blown away. The boys were so moved they chased us. I knew when I reached out the window to touch this boy's hand that he was deeply affected by the moment. We touched and I saw it was all about connection not sympathy. In that moment he changed me and I changed him. So yes, one moment makes a difference, it is never a waste of time. This doctor referred to above was clearly not a happy person and perhaps no-one had cared for her, who knows her story. There will be many who don't feel the love.



I found the clowns on this trip very inspirational. They were mostly women who deeply wanted to give to others. We had the most lovely men join us who were also open to love others. I saw such diverse talents, such energy, so much laughter and fun in each person. I just marvelled at the incredibly diversity of the group and support offered by each person to others. I really gained the sense of family. Clowning brings out the best in us, the focus is simply to love and bring happiness to others. It is not about money or personal gratification. When you come into a space with that intention it changes everything. I've been with peace groups who are not at peace, who still harbour anger about the world. I found clowning to be the best expression of peace given that the highest intentions are lived. You cannot help but be changed by such an experience. It made a profound impact on all of us and we gained something special from this trip. I send love to all the clowns and thank them for their part in such a wonderful trip. I will never forget you and you will be in my heart always.

This trip was peace in action, it was without agenda and it was unifying. I have changed and become even more loving and I come back to my own society and I can see the isolation of our technological world. I can see that people are indoors and not outdoors. In India they are living outside and you can see and feel community humming around you. In the West there is a staleness of routine and living for the weekends. In India there is a wildness there and an aliveness. I really felt it. I love Indian people. I know there is corruption there and there is a breakdown of traditions in favour of the capitalist juggernaut. This is a phenomenon worldwide. There is much upheaval and change. However within all this turmoil you can simply love others, so others can simply live.

**The Fool's Gold:** Namaste is the god in me greets the god in you. With love as your guide we are all 'same same but different'. Mother Theresa saw the greatest poverty as lack of spirituality. What this real means is that love is the answer, the question and the way. As clowns we know the way of unconditional love. This is what will heal all dark places.

## CHAPTER 8: Travelling to the United States for Peace (2013)

I travelled to the United States via Hawaii to attend the Rotary Global Peace Forum. The purpose of the trip was to meet peace educators in San Diego. I have extracted from this experience my clowning experience in San Diego, clowning is peace in action.

### Clowning on the Streets of San Diego

In San Diego I met some Clown Conspiracy people and they offered to take me for a drive to Los Angeles to see a 'jugglejam'. The guys I met there I would call masters of the universe, they are excellent jugglers or object manipulators (a new term I learned). They were fantastic to put it mildly.

When I returned to San Diego I did send an email around to clowns in the Clown Conspiracy club to invite them to come and play but there were no takers. So one day I was walking the streets for exercise and this guy happened to smile as he walked past. Half an hour later we saw each other again and this time we spoke to each other. I ended up inviting this young guy for a cuppa (see photo – joking not that big) at a local café. His name was Kyle.



It turned out he was to become my next clown buddy. He was a Christian and had never clowned before, I told him it was about spreading peace. He related to that and thought he'd give it a go. So I invited him to come onto the streets the next day, as a Mardi Gras was happening, so it was the perfect time (see photo). I was tired, but that is not unusual given my life.



Here is the blog entry of that experience:

*I met my new friend Kyle at the Maritime Museum. We got changed in the toilets (bathroom) of the restaurant next door. I painted his face with blues, reds, whites and yellows. I put a nice colourful wig on him and he borrowed my Indian clown suit. He looked great. I gave him some tips on clowning - that we are not here to make people laugh but to be happy and share it.*

*We are careful not to get people out of their comfort zones and to be in harmony with them. If we use the massager we make sure we have permission etc.*

*Diane a former clown gave him more tips as she drove to drop us off near the Convention Centre in downtown San Diego.*

*We waved at some people and said hello. I have to laugh, at the lights this guy was standing with his bull dog and he felt the need to say that my peace symbol was an upside devil symbol and gave it a name, he believed in Jesus Christ. I have no idea where he got that from but all I could say to him is that we were here to spread peace and love I understood it to be a nuclear disarmament symbol. Amazing some of the comments you get. Poor Kyle got to hear this as a first introduction to clowning. He is a Christian, so it seemed funny a Christian saying this. He wasn't that happy. The guy wasn't living peace.*

*Anyway we moved on and were allowed into the Mardi gras. We were early but we said hello to the workers setting up. We taught a woman how to juggle. We saw some huge aliens on stilts, some belly dancers, pirates, pharaohs, rockers, dancers and all sorts of other characters. Kyle and I went for a cuppa at the pub. We were met with smiles from others. Often people ask for photos. I pulled out my fool's tarot, basically I like to find out what sort of fool people are. It is really good. This guy pulled a card as a drunken fool and his mother and girlfriend laughed and said it was true. They liked the cards they got and it started some laughing which was nice.*

**YouTube link** of some rappers creating peace and partying - woo hoo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46VqKVsvPo>

*My friend Kyle was great, he laughed with people, danced and dropped the doggy pool then got a tissue and picked it up, that brought a laugh. I recall one guy saying that people don't listen and Kyle drifted off. He was actually a very funny clown.*

*We wound up getting some pizza. I saw a woman putting salt on her pizza and there were police there. I said to the policeman that the woman was assaulting her pizza, ha ha. To another guy I mentioned we had jumpers not sweaters. I should have said they were hard to get on, and we can't keep them down.*

*I was feeling tired clowning and not my usually bouncy self. I found the crowd was a bit thin. However, it was still fine really, as I love people and I go with the flow.*

*I saw Kyle with a bunch of drummers and he was banging away at his peace tambourine and it looked great. He had courage and jumped in with people. I really felt him to be a natural.*

*I then asked if we could go out on the street. I actually felt better breaking out of the enclosure. We met people on the street, a lady trying to sell happy hour. Perhaps it should be every hour of the day. Funny how we equate alcohol with being happy. There were many on the street that were not that happy drinking. That is why they were drinking!*

*We met a lovely African American guy who had a guitar and played for us. I tried to sing with him and dance. He liked me, me thinks, I gave him a hug and he wanted to get the pacifier out of the way (dummy). He was a nice guy.*

*We met another guy walking around, seemed like a retired academic. He had long grey hair and was interested in comedy. I thought he'd be good and it was lovely to see him at his age living his dreams. I then saw a lady in a wheel chair and gave her \$5. She looked cold and I tried to warm her up.*

*We also spoke to a lady on the street, the two of us sat down and she spoke of security intelligence agencies, much of which I didn't understand, but that she had been born on a military base secretly. She told us about identity theft of her identity. She even said that Steve Irwin (the famous Australian) had sought a hit on her; I thought she meant amorous but she didn't. I was moving into the realm of mental illness and found myself just listening. It was her truth. She said a lot about the system and who knows which bits are true which are not. It is not my place to judge her, so I just listened to her. I told her to write a book. After we left her we saw she had moved to another spot.*

*I thought about mental health and the vulnerability of homeless people. I was told by Kyle that there are around 30,000 homeless, apparently they come to San Diego because it is not as cold. You can imagine that on the east coast, where it is snowing, they would freeze to death.*

*I had a debate with another guy earlier in the week, he was a clown but he felt they were using the system. He said some make a lot of money. I've heard this before and maybe it is so, but ultimately money does not solve the problem. It can give an excuse to people to ignore them and do nothing. I recalled when I was in Machu Picchu in Peru that the Incas had no homeless people. So it can happen in societies when there is a will. I do feel all of us have to look at the problem. When you have people erecting tents on the sidewalk it is a problem. Are they slack or bludgers? Well the protestant work ethic which is drummed into us from childhood would lead you to believe they are losers. In my worldview and having not had a home for two years, it is not easy trying to focus on survival and on finding a place to stay. Socially it can affect your friendships, and family, and if the person has substance abuse, it can cause poor communication, mental health issues, and aggression, and vulnerability. etc. they will be more vulnerable. I met another guy a few days before that and he had black skin but it was peeling off and you could see white skin, he had a skin condition. He was trying to sell paintings to survive. He said his family didn't pay him for work, so how many seek monetary help from family? If we look at ethnic or cultural differences it is clear that there are people in the United States who are seen differently. I saw more Afro Americans riding the buses (as they say). I saw many Mexicans working in servant roles. When I had been in England it was the Mediterranean people that worked driving taxi's, the Pakistanis worked in the newsagents and there was a homeless problem in the London Underground, I understand around a few thousand were homeless and seeking warmth there. In San Diego 30,000 is a big number and I sat today thinking – how do you solve that? I wondered at public investment in public housing. We have that problem in Australia where the government housing stock got sold off so they have a shortage. I thought about people allowing you to stay in their home. Most people won't do that, they would eventually expect you to pay your way, philanthropic assistance as service for as long as needed would be rare, unless you had a spiritual dimension. We live in a world where there are powerful beliefs around paying your way, users pay, ownership, entitlement without a great deal of understanding of structural violence (racial inequality, gender, age, education) which erodes equality for all. These days people have to get an education, not everyone is scholastic, we have artists and drifters and a range of different types of people that must fit in the box. We live in a world of winners and losers and typically white privilege is an issue.*



*My friend is studying as a counsellor and she was reading a paper on it. I heard it again from a peace studies student. It is essentially about the advantage of being white (or what I term in truth as pink, bit of humour there). Anyway, I can relate to this idea and know that when travelling the world I was given special treatment as a white person from Australia. It was because of the perceived beliefs about white people which largely comes out of the American movie industry. Moreover, as a woman I am also given certain privileges as I am not seen as a threat. If I am attractive then doors open more and if I had money, these would be wide open. So yes, we do discriminate, we do it unconsciously and consciously. I must say, as I sat on the bus looking at an Afro American, looking at her and thinking about her talents and the fact she was riding the bus, I thought that it was my loss if the system didn't see her as an equal. I find it incredible that we look at skin complexion, racial background, handicap and so on and alter our behaviour. Yes I've done it too, but I am conscious now so I look at the conditioning and see it for what it is - untrue.*

*So going out on the street as a clown gives me the opportunity to tell an Afro American man that he is gorgeous, to encourage him to find what makes him happy, to let his talents shine and heal the past. He nearly cried when I said these words. Kyle said, 'Words are powerful' and he is right. I tried to show this guy that we can create our own pathway out of poverty. I know it is not easy but it is not impossible, as there is a tad of magic to this world as I know. I've been able to survive for two years now without a house or job, yet I work for peace full time. I am following my passion and just going with life as it takes me. I can understand the feeling of uncertainty plaguing your every step, I know what it feels like to feel alone, to have no money, but I also know that the magic that comes when you dare to reach for your truth, and to bring a smile to another, costs nothing. This guy said he was hungry so Kyle agreed to drop me at a shop to get him a burger. We came back and I gave it to him to help him see that life is kind.*

*Kyle took me home and gave me a video - Women of Faith. He told me earlier he had been part of this group, I joked with him wondering if he wore a dress, but he supported them which I thought was great. Kyle had drug issues in his past which makes him a good person to talk to on the street, he has been there. He prays for people and he said that some like that and some don't want it. He is respectful of both.*

*I guess some just feel that someone cares enough to ask. Kyle is a good person and goes to a local church. He wants to live the message of peace. He took off the clown gear and we hugged and off he went. I was deeply grateful that he had the courage to give it a go and I was glad I got out in the public at least once here. I was tired but it was worth the effort.*

*Clowning is community building because we love unconditionally. I am with a busking clown at Venice beach (see photo), some people fear clowns, yet we are both clowns.*



*The true clown is on the inside, we use the mask to communicate that we are happy. It is not about helping others; it is about meeting others where they are and accepting them as they are. It is about showing them their greatness, not trying to be great through helping the underprivileged. It is about seeing people and giving something for nothing, which inspires trust and peace. These to me is the true nature of peace. It has to have no agenda, but be just for the sheer joy of meeting people. People never disappoint me as they are unique and interesting. I am never bored with them and I realise people need to be heard. We are indeed equal whether you are in a business suit or daggy pants on the street.*

*The challenge is for us to look further than the perceived image, which is not who people are. The same applies for the rich guy, there are many beautiful people in disguise just seeking peace like you and I.*

**The Fool's Gold:** The clown mirrors your greatness. If you are fearful the clown will feign fear if you are happy they will smile with you. What you see in life is a reflection of you. Perhaps consider smiling for no reason and a new universe will open up for you. It is the real world. The USA will find peace when it faces its fear and laughs.

## **CHAPTER 9: Travelling to Nepal for Peace (2014)**

I receive a Rotary on-line newsletter called Rotary Down under. I saw it and suddenly felt to look. I saw an article about smiles in Nepal. It caught my eye and I got excited. I instantly connected to theme of happiness and felt I could bring clowning and peace education to Nepali people. Soon after I contacted Rotarian Peter Hall and met with him and a few others. He told me of his trips to Nepal to bring teacher training to Nepal in remote areas. What I found compelling about Peter is that he is a person that makes things happen, very pragmatic. He comes from a managerial background and is a leader in his own right. He organised crowd funding for me. Crowdfunding is a site where you can put up your fundraising idea and people from the community can donate small amounts. Their names are highlighted by level of donation. You can see who is supporting you. It is great. He raised \$2000 for my trip. I was excited at another journey to deepen my understanding of peace from yet another perspective expanding my perception of the world.

Peter established The Nepali Village Initiatives Project in 2009. Since that time its main focus has become the delivery of teacher training, coupled with volunteer teams travelling from Australia to deliver holiday programs in the remote rural village of Paudwar in Western Nepal. The training had been delivered by Nepalese NGO REED ("Rural Education and Environment Development") which developed its capabilities over 8-10 years under sponsorship from the Australian Himalayan Foundation (AHF), UK Himalayan Trust, UNICEF and others. In 2012, AHF gained AusAid accreditation. The training programs are extremely thorough and professional comprising: a Baseline Survey; Community Orientation Program; 10 days intensive training; some months practice in schools followed by in school review of progress, then 6 days of refresher training. In 2014, a similar program commenced for a neighbouring group of villages. In parallel, a holiday program was delivered for children of Paudwar village. The programs included a range of activities, though perhaps their greatest benefit is giving the children exposure over several days to native English speakers.

My involvement was as a Rotary Peace Scholar and World Peace Clown. My part was to teach Cultures of Peace to teachers contributing to the 10 day teacher training. In addition, I would do what I love, clown around with children and the public.

The trip duration was from 15 April until 12 May, 2014. The principle places we visited were: Kathmandu, Pokhara and the Western Nepali villages of Paudwar and Ghara.

I was to learn that the village of Lumbini was the birthplace of Gautama Buddha.

Nepal is a small country with a population of 27,797,457 landlocked between China, Tibet, Sikkim, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, India and Uttarakhand.



The photo below is Peter with a clown at the airport of all places. This is my favourite picture of him. Perhaps his true self.



### Clowning at Bright Community School, Kathmandu

The next day it was planned that I visit a school as a clown. I was excited to meet Nepalese children. The early starts are not easy for me, but I did my best.

*Peter organised the night before for all of us to be ready by 6.30am to be at a school by 7am. For me this is not easy as I am not a morning person and I have to spend time doing make up. I got up at 5.30am and started getting organised for the school.*

*Our taxi arrived and Krishna (Nepali Village Association employee), Gordon, Pat and I got in a taxi. Kailash, Peter and Krishna's kids were in the other taxi. I was dressed as a clown and had my colourful red parrot. I hung it out the window on the way to the school and squawked at people. I noted the responses I've travelled to many countries now and I have seen a range of responses.*



*I never judge the responses because 'lack of response' doesn't mean what I may think. I sensed some of the people were tired (first thing in the morning) and they were not expecting to see a clown in a car. Those who focused were smiling and mostly people waved when they saw me wave. Some did it before realising who was waving. I sensed a people quite easy going but also in a very busy society where work is hard to find and many are not paid well. This is a poor country and from what I've determined they may earn on average 10,000 rupees per month (100 rupees is equivalent to 1 Australian Dollar). So you can do the maths.*

*I like doing the clowning and connecting as it creates an interrupt to their routines. I love to see their reactions and even in some cases no reaction. Many did smile and wave and children were happy.*

*We stopped at one point as the drivers were conferring. So I decided to get out and juggle. I waved at people on the buses and I could see surprise or not knowing how to react. It was unexpected, out of script. Others tooted, although they all toot so can't be sure what that means. I saw smiles, waves, non-responses and for me it was all good. I am just playing with life to see what happens.*

*We went on and stopped near the school. Some kids were on the path and I played with them from inside the car. Then I got out and blew up a balloon. I was very relaxed and the people were all smiles and warm. Some of the older men wearing Nehru style hats smiled at me. They are a gentle people and accepted my presence. I have no idea who the ethnic groups were, and didn't mind, as my work is to connect with everyone. Sometimes ignorance is indeed bliss. I gave the kids some balloons, blew some bubbles and then was told we were leaving. I guess the taxis were working out where to go.*

*We arrived at our destination - The Bright Community Centre School, Kopan. This Centre is run by an Australian Isabel Amer. I created quite a stir on the street, people coming out to see this white women dressed as a clown. I connected with people and clowned around. I went into the school and was met with the smiles of 15 kids.*

*They were very happy (see photo). Their teacher wasn't sure what I was going to do and when I left I found out that I didn't know what I'd done. I had to smile.*



*I naturally just made up my routine as usual and pulled out props. I juggled for the kids, I clowned around with them sitting on their laps (lightly), I broke out into laughter and they laughed with me. I told a joke and had a child tell another. I had a translator who I thought was a teacher and turned out to be a child. I jumped on the desks and mucked around. I never have any plan just whatever pops into my head. I have some rings so juggled them. I juggled some balls. I had a glowing microphone that bounces on the floor. I pulled balloons out and the kids played with those bouncing them around the room. I hugged and smiled and laughed and they did as well. I asked the kids 'why happiness was important?' Some said 'it is good for their health.' I thought that was a wise idea. I told them about their thoughts and to think positively no matter what happens, clowns think positive thoughts. I talked about the joy inside that you can't buy.*

*Kids usually are the adult's teachers when it comes to joy.*

*Peter and the crew all watched and Gordon gave me some feedback saying it was great and he felt daunted at the prospect of being a clown. I felt that is natural given it was his first time observing. I did bring a clown suit for him as he is a natural and has a really wonderful sense of humour. He is very easy going and would be great with kids. He did put on some of the clown suit and a red nose, I thought he looked funny and he did a few funny things. The kids liked it He did feel confronted but I think he will find his own style if he lets it unfold. Clowning is the unknown as there is no script and you just pull out whatever works. I am feeling more relaxed these days, I am really noticing that I have some experience. I think for the first time I am really feeling the clowning is seamless.*

*One of the girls stood out for me because with enthusiasm she told me she was a joker. We connected in a special way. She told me she loved me. We made contact a few times and both knew we wouldn't forget each other. I took a picture of her. I love for girls to be inspired. Particularly, in a country where apparently they are perceived as less, I am told.*

*We went out the front of the school and took a picture (see photo). I noticed neighbours on the other side of the road and had the children wave at them. They weren't waving back so I risked my life, ran across the road and got a man to wave back. They all got the joke. The kids pulled funny faces and smiled for the camera. It was a lot of fun. It was successful at the school.*



**YouTube links:**

[Peacefull Clown at Bright Future Community Centre school, Kopan, Kathmandu, Nepal - Part 1](#)

[Peacefull Clown at Bright Future Community School, Kathmandu, Nepal - Part 2](#)

[Bright Future Community School kids with Peacefull the clown](#)

*We then left the school and went down the road to a women's sewing group where they make clothing. This is affiliated with the school. Unfortunately there were no women there. The sewing machines were primitive hand rotating manual machines. Probably practical given the power is on after 9pm, so they at least can keep working. We call it home working in Australia and there was talk of exploitation. In a place like Nepal this would be common, people are paid very little.*

*We went to the next place called Swayambhu. This is a tourist place and we had to pay 200 rupees to get in. I clowned immediately, no choice I am dressed that way. I did some juggling and waving at people. I did a lot of waving this day and smiling. Krishna's*

*daughter had the peace hat on with my bird. She walked with me. I met old people, young people, tourists and basically played and clowned around as I went. I was thirsty and feeling tired but kept going. A bunch of boys interacted and I did scary monsters with them (I know they love that). I also said 'I love you' that always gets to boys as they run. I love it. They were saying it back and running. I juggled for them and then got out balloons and blew some up. That was not such a good move as all the children want one. I don't have an endless supply and always kids miss out. So I then had them nagging me for a balloon. I gave out some but decided to not give them all out. Krishna looked for us as we couldn't find the spot we were to meet the others. We did walk around twice and ended up finding Peter who was up an alleyway. Before I got to him an Indian man broke out into dance and we hooked arms and danced Indian style, I did a Bollywood style. Then I did strip the willow (dance from one to the other) which I often do with the public. The kids were so excited before I knew it a few men had hooked arms with me. It was spontaneous and great fun. I love that as a clown.*

Pat, Peter and Gordon ran a holiday program there for a week with the children. I came up to clown with the children.

Excerpts from my blog of this experience:

*... I have a cold and chest infection to add to it. I am not in tip top shape but have to clown. I wasn't feeling that happy either so quite a few challenges to overcome. I put on my clown suit, make up and took my props. In life you just have to wing it and do your best.*

*The school is a public school in Paudwar and it is primary and secondary. I was guided by Gordon to the first class of primary aged kids and I do what I always do, make it up. I never know what I start with but just go with it. Their eyes were shining and faces full of smiles and surprise. That is what brings my clown to life. I showed them my puppet and gave kisses. I had some rubber eggs which I had in an egg carton. I have a plastic chicken as well. So I have that flying around the class and squeezing it to give a good 'haw haw'. I drop the eggs and the kids see they bounce. They are Australian eggs, my own joke given Australian rules and the oval shape of the football.*

*I tend to spontaneously respond to the audience and found myself with a teacher miming a mirror mime. She just went with it and joined in. We don't need language, messages are mostly sent without language. I jumped on the desk and made out I was a mountain climber. I put my peace bag across my forehead as would a Nepali carrying goods. I communicated recognition of that. I jumped from tables and made out I was very scared and pretended to fly and flap my wings. I hugged kids and put on my love glasses. They always love that. I danced, sang and goofed around. I blew up a balloon as a finale and let it go and then tied it up, sent it around and then finally sat on it. I waved and thanked the class, they all clapped.*

*I then visited the next class of teenagers. I started with running up to some students and hugging and dusting them with my duster. I sat next to kids and sidled up to them saying 'Namaste'. I climbed up on the desks and did a moon walk by Michael Jackson, of course mine is a very silly version, I have had to train for years to perfect his moves. They laughed. One of the kids I identified as Elvis as he had his hair jelled (copying Bollywood). I turned another boy's baseball hat around to make him look cool. I jumped into a group of boys at the back. I like to tease them as they are at that age shy of girls and being pointed out. I put my love glasses on one of the boys and played that up. I have a wolf whistling gorilla. So I walked between the desks wolf whistling at him. The kids laughed. I pulled out my glowing microphone and did a Madonna and tried to get them to sing Nepalese. It can bounce on the ground, so it can be fun to use. Gordon pointed out one of the boys was a good dancer so we got up on the desk (like a stage) and danced together. He was good and he reminded me of the talent of the people. I left them with the blowing up of my balloon. They were full of smiles and happy. That was my objective. I did it sick and all, so I think I climbed one of my mountains.*

*Children are vibrant and exciting which is why I like clowning. They are the future, it is in their hands. The question is what direction do they go? Although I am quietly optimistic. They have an amazing life here, freed from freeways, too much technology and breaking families. How long that happens I really don't know.*



*Social ills are here and they are still evolving but it is so easy for them to follow India, United States and become another materialistic society. In my experience we lose ourselves in technology, my preference is to see wisdom, philosophy, life skills, values and conflict resolution taught in schools. I think this creates a foundation and then they have the power to discern what is in their own interests. Critical thinking and community is one of the keys.*

*The interactions with the children was filmed by Peter and I am sure he will edited it for the Rotary Convention in Sydney.*

[Clowning Paudwar middle classes short](#)

[Peacefull clowning in Paudwar Western Nepal](#)

*It will be interesting to note the responses from this. Clowning is not understood, it is seen as entertainment, yet the interactions are far deeper than people realise. It is a way of creating goodwill and connection without language. It is funny I wrote REAL HOPE anti-bullying program for the world with the intention of no language, but really the clowning has been more effective.*

*We somehow in this world have to find ways to coexist with diversity and difference. I do see a great deal of ignorance with communication and sensitivity to others. To learn that life is not about control but to learn to let go and let others live their way, it is a key teaching. Control is at the heart of conflict and lack of awareness of a person's impact on others. It is so important to learn to speak up, I am learning this as well, but to do it in a way that shares power without conflict. You can't control anything in life but you can change yourself. It is interesting to observe nature, it doesn't dominate or control, it blends, interconnects and adapts to change. Nothing is forced, just working for the greater whole; we have much to learn from natural processes and spirit.*

*I enjoyed the clowning and Pat and Gordon did songs, games, harmonica and painting with the kids. It was a successful day and hundreds of kids were happy by this western intervention coming from love and goodwill. The core of Rotary's mission!*

### Clowning in Ghara Village

I decided on the last day to clown in the village of Ghara. I knew the children hadn't seen clowns. Moreover, I wanted to make a point to connect with all castes. I had some untouchable (Dalit) children around me and I wanted them to enjoy a clown. I wanted to demonstrate the equality of all children. I wasn't 100% health wise but nonetheless I decided I had enough energy to go out there and meet the people.

Below is my blog on this experience:

*I got my clown gear on and talked with Gordon. He will photograph me. I was aware that he and Pat had been up to the Dalit (untouchable community) and given out things. They warned me about being mobbed. I wasn't so much concerned about that, my gut feeling was to go to a school, I can reach more children. There is a private school down the hill so I thought let's go that way. I came out in clown gear and immediately thought I'll see Biny (see photo) and show her. I got a picture with her and her husband. They were gorgeous.*



*There are the usual kids hanging around waiting for us, I adore them and feel a special bond. They followed me to the school. The little girl who carries a baby is Dalit and she and I have a bond. She followed along with a little boy I had done popping noises with. They understood I am a clown and they were not trying to get things off me. I try not to give out stuff as it distracts them from play, as they seek to get rather than interact and have fun to enjoy a new experience.*

*My clowning is about sharing love, creating connection and being a presence to connect with people. It is also about transgressing rules but in a gentle way to remind people we are human. We get so caught up in schedules and routines and the right way to do things that we forget about the simplicity of just playing and being human.*



*My work is about reminding people of who we really are. We are not our role, our position, our status, our gender, we are simply people having a human experience and we are all in this together. No person is greater or lesser than anyone else. We all have a right to be here and express ourselves in our own way. I try to demonstrate that and I seldom critique anyone.*





*I like people to be themselves but not in a way that suppresses another or controls them. I like to see people shine. That is my truest desire. Just be yourself and let the light in.*



*As a clown I can show this. I am not the most technically correct clown, or magician, I am just clowning around for fun and I love my own imperfections and living in the moment with strangers who I feel love for. That is my experience.*



## Clowning Ghara Private School

Gordon and I arrived at Ghara Private School. **YouTube:** [Clowning Ghara private boarding school](#)

*I had met the teachers the day before with Krishna and Kailash. So I knew where it was. I forgot it was a private school. Anyway we turned up and I am hard to miss. The teachers graciously allowed me to join their line ups where they exercise. The exercising is formal and somewhat regimented. I found it interesting to watch. The children are very obedient and they follow instructions. So the silly clown stood at the back and emulated what they were doing, part example partly playing. Not too much as it may undermine the authority of the teachers. I have a balancing act there.*

**YouTube link:** [Peacefull giving haircuts to the children of Ghara Village, Western Nepal](#)

*The children were sweet they kept looking back to see what I would do. I expressed through my face (see photo).*



*There was an exercise where the children had to say 1,2,3,4 one after the other until all children had said the next number (see photo below). It came to my turn and I said 81 (80 kids before me) with gusto. Then the next child said a number and so on. I had my feather duster in my bag, and like a naughty school kid just dusted the girl in front of me and pretended I didn't. The kids smiled. I like the child antics that kids get up to and it is nice to break out of conformity some times. Kids will try unless they are in a very authoritarian school. There is some debate about discipline and authority versus more cooperative, consensus styles of teaching. I see that focus has to happen if you want to learn something but I don't believe we have to be robots.*



*I feel to learn to work with the group cooperatively but for teachers not to assert power over children but to model democracy and values. That for me will be the schools of the future. They will be collaborative places where children enjoy learning and expanding their emotional and intellectual intelligence.*

*They will not be competitive places but spirals of understanding and exploration. The very important life skills and values based education will be central and creativity will be seen as intelligence rather than recreation. You only have to look at Sir Ken Robinson's speeches on Ted innovative ideas (creativity in schools) on YouTube to get the idea of the importance of creativity versus boxing people. So for me clowning is a small way of helping people to connect to creativity, play and love.*

*After the formalities of excising the body and mind I was invited to play. I just got up and pulled out my love glasses, I never can remember the exact order. The idea is to communicate the importance of seeing through being love. I tried to put the glasses on a teacher and he pulled back, I could see his credibility was the issue. I did this to an official in a leprosy community in India who immediately took off the wig as she was upholding an image. I like to do this as it breaks down the role. They may see it as being seen as silly, but it is not; it is stepping out of a role. The teacher did allow a few seconds and the children laughed, not at him, but with him. They loved to see him play, I don't think he realised that. I brought out bubbles and the children enjoyed that. I then did some funny walks and hugged kids in the audience. One little boy I recognised as Biny's son and made a special moment for him. I pulled out the juggling balls which I know they will like and started juggling. The kids enjoyed that. I did a few other things and then pulled out a balloon and let it go. The kids enjoy seeing it fly. It is a moment in time that I am creating to bring them joy, it is not about me, it is about them. It is for them I work and that is what brings me joy. I want to see children and adults happy and lightening up so we can all enjoy this short life. The head teacher indicated they were tired, but I sensed he was ready for it to finish. I was happy to oblige and I tied the balloon up. I didn't think that kids would move out of their structured lines to grab it and knew that was too much for the teachers. It is all about keeping order and control. I so look forward to the old methods of teaching to go. They have to in the West as the kids don't do as their told anymore. However, that is another issue which is more to do with children not getting training, security, boundaries from parents. They are exposed to American television which does teach disrespect and answering back. So problems are there.*



*The challenge is to find the happy medium where all can work together as a team yet express their own creativity. That is the challenge for education I feel. I headed back to the hotel making peace (see photos).*







## Clowning on Public Transport, Kathmandu

The last highlight from my perspective I will mention was in Kathmandu when I was teaching anti-bullying with the children at a few schools. On the way to the schools I took out Gordon as a clown and we clowned on the buses and streets. He is a wonderful minstrel he tells jokes, sings songs and has a generally lovely air about him.

Below are highlights from my blog:

*We were up around 8am this morning. The plan was to visit two schools in Kathmandu and do some clowning and anti-bullying education. I convinced Gordon to become Gord-Ouch, another clown. It is his first time but he bravely agreed to be clown number two. I wanted him to go for it as he is always joking and has the spirit of a clown. He loves entertaining people. So I knew it would be great for him to have a go. His family will really love it.*

*We caught the taxi to the office. Poor Peter got a little disoriented, which is not hard for Kathmandu. He did end up getting a sense of where he was going and then we noticed familiar territory. We got to the office and I immediately changed into my clown suit. Gordon came in and I did some make up for him. He put on my Indian clown suit. It is a man sized suit. Everyone made comments when they saw him.*

*We then had to get going as the school was further away. I thought it was half an hour but it ended up being about an hour. Kailash guided us to the bus (see photo).*





*We all got on. Of course Gord-ouch and Peacefull caught the attention of locals.  
I Welcomed people (Nepali expression) onto the bus and I welcomed them on the bus (see photo). I have to smile at mobile phone in the photo, I have to compete with technology.  
How do we get them to stop looking at their phones and look up at life? The clown is live to air he could have filmed it. I smile.*



*I let them get used to me. We were all like sardines in a sardine can. However, I was able to get out my feather duster and dust people down. I wished them a great day as they got off and with a 'Namaste' they left with a smile. I blew a few bubbles as well. I worked my way to the back. Kailash wanted me to sit down but I was enjoying the ride of the bus and meeting the people. They are lovely people full of smiles and probably curious about these clowns.*

*I played with people on the bus with puppets and hung out the window with my feather duster. I dusted a person walking past. I had my love glasses on and blew kisses, I had my large scissors offering haircuts. People just laughed at the goofy looking clowns. A few young guys sat at the back. I sat on knees and made some noise.*

*Gordon was fun. I met a lovely girl who was a psychology student (see photo).*



*I learned about the problems in Nepal, many worry about poverty. Not surprising given 25% GDP is generated by young men going overseas. It is not easy in a changing world. I suggested to her positive psychology. I then spoke to another young man who was all smiles about clowns. He put on the love glasses for fun. Another girl sat with us and I realised she was a clown and really got into the fun of it. I think people really liked to see other people smiling it shows them how wonderful their own people are. We were well received and a novelty.*



*We arrived at our destination and Krishna and Kailash organised us to get off the bus. We walked up to a school and waited around security. Soon after Kailash's partner Selma arrived. She led us to the school.*

**YouTube links:**

[Clowning Kanjirowa outside](#)

[Clowning at a Public School in Kathmandu, Nepal](#) (lunchtime)

*Kids were hanging out the windows and full of smiles to see us. They knew we were clowns. I played with the kids whilst we were waiting and played scary monsters, very popular with kids all over the world. They loved to be chased. We were then asked to do 15 minutes with the kindergarten children. I quickly thought of things I could do. At first I was going to get them to be clowns and jump in the middle, but given time was short I thought maybe just clown around. So I just made it up. I dusted the kids first. I then had my squawking chicken. I shook hands with the kids as well, playing. I then brought a little boy out of the group and put a red nose on him. He and I did some gestures of juggling and then bottom wagging. He was a funny kid. I think I did a little dance with him and twirled him around. He was a great kid. I then did some juggling of the rings. The kids seemed to love it. I then realised we had to go as time was running out.*

**The Fool's Gold:** Similar to Thailand, Nepal is a country of smiles. The birth place of Buddhism instils within the culture a spirituality that rests in silence and yet flowers with creativity. The Himalayas are symbolic of the great power of stillness within change. The clown represents stillness within yet appears changing outside. The alchemy of love was translated through smiles of an innocent people seeking their way in the world. Through the struggle of life we find we are all the same, seeking peace in the stillness.

## CONCLUSION

In my poem at the beginning I speak of being a clown is like surround sound spreading a ray of sunshine so no-one feels alone. It is the true essence of family and community. When you are a peace clown you have no thoughts in your mind, you simply have this feeling of goodwill and you see no-one as unacceptable. The values of REAL HOPES I mentioned in the preamble provides the same interface of a unifying foundation based in the virtues of humanity. The archetype of the fool is to step out in trust, to be open to life, to be the fool and love everyone, even those perceived unlovable. In the work of peace there are no outsiders, especially those society rejects or judges. When you clown around for peace you feel all the social conditioning lift off you, you feel a light-ness, I wonder if it is what enlightenment feels like. You are just full of love to the brink and everyone you want to connect with, no exceptions. Perhaps this is the feeling of unconditional love the mystics speak of, I am sure it is the highest love.

I dreamed I was teaching peace and I was inspired to be a clown. There is nothing more fulfilling then hugging, laughing, playing with people. Suddenly the clown comes out in them and they forget themselves for a while. They respond to the moment and reflect back to you the beauty of humanity and help you to realise that everyone is wearing masks.

Some of the most profound experiences clowning gave me the deepest insights about humanity. I was shocked to learn in hospitals that a smile made a person's whole day. That told me people are not smiling, that such a simple act isn't happening much. I always will remember the man with cerebral palsy, another teacher, demonstrating to me that to show interest in someone and praise them deeply affects a person's life. To meet a person who had actually seen the Hiroshima bomb in Japan (ex-soldier) and another who was George Bush's neighbour made me realise that there are no ordinary people in this world. Yet we walk past them every day either absorbed on iPods, iPhones and iPads. We lose out on life's experience happening now. Instead we escape for fear of connection when that is the making of your day. That is life happening. It is a gift sent to you. Perhaps it is life smiling.

I always recall the lady who had not moved her arm or smiled in a long time and the nurse explaining the miracle of what had happened.



This told me the importance of the creative arts as an intervention in health care and the possibility of the creative accessing a different part of the brain. I interacted with the nurses and staff and felt the busyness of their lives and the seriousness as they focused on tasks and didn't have time to have fun themselves. Some doctors when massaged revealed their own trauma, a few yelled and some nurses were afraid of clowns. I asked one to face the wall (as I massaged) and pretend I am normal (laughing). I wondered at the reasons why they feared clowns – was it the Hollywood movies depicting clowns as evil? Was it the lack of spontaneity in their own lives? The notion of control in the face of a character who appears out of control? Was it the trauma from their past? I often said to those afraid that they are not afraid of clowns they are afraid of *their thoughts* about clowns. Clowns are innocent in truth.

In the emotional intelligence workshops I taught that real power can be in a touch or a smile for a person in hospital. So easily the smaller touches are forgotten in favour of productivity and functionality. Yet the pink elephant is that love heals. Something to contemplate.

I preferred clowning on the streets as I felt free and I loved the great variety. Memorable moments included my friend Hairy Potter playing piano in a student accommodation, clowning in protests and reminding people of democracy and light-heartedness, meeting a man who was a Vietnam vet with swollen feet who had pock marks on his face, I loved calling him gorgeous and hugging him. Many times the generosity of people was evident through the offer of free coffees and food. They were so thrilled we did it for free. I saw the power of giving kindness and people naturally give when you do. I thought of the economic system where the emphasis is on taking. I felt our poverty in that.

Clowning allows you to see the real community around you and feel the warm and connectedness of peace in action. People wave and make a point to say something funny to you as they walk past and I recall thinking this is how a natural society would be. All friends no fear. As a clown people allow you to get up close and personal. They allow you to hug them and they always respond to your gestures, you never know what will happen. On the streets I would meet a wide range of people and learn about their lives and see the real richness in them as they opened up to smile or chat. I just marvelled at the false masks constantly, that none of what we see was real.

My day clowning on the International Day of Peace made it very clear the difference between my normal life (black and white) and then transforming into a clown (techni-colour). I saw one state of being as the controlled contrived and conditioned response contrasted with the natural, spontaneous and totally fearless beingness. I know which I preferred. Clowning was so liberating. It was my true self unfolding.

Patch Adams made clear that the two main dis-eases were boredom and loneliness. Patch made clear that what we clowns do is ordinary in a natural world but in a world that is not loving it appears extraordinary. I found that a sad observation. The gap in our humanity.

In my work in schools it was interesting to find out that children laugh up to 200 times a day whereas adults laugh up to 15 times. The gulf between adults and children was staggering to me and it emphasised how serious adults take life. Who said that we have to be serious? Who says it means we are less productive or somehow diminished by a sense of humour and a bit of frivolous fun? Why does every minute have to be work, like you leave your humanity at the door, why not relax and enjoy life.

The REAL HOPE peace, nonviolence and anti-bullying program showed me that clowns and kids do work happily together. I saw clearly the shift in consciousness of children when I taught them universal values, undertook experiential exercises and pepped the classes with jokes, interesting insights, philosophy and games. The kids absolutely loved it and they saw me as a magical figure they would never forget. Some kids started anti-bullying campaigns, others dressed as clowns and others couldn't wait until the clown came. At the end of my 8 weeks with them I was showered with cards, love and appreciation. I was very clear to have them tell me what they think as the true knowledge is within them, my work is to draw it out not put it in, like traditional education. I want the children to think for themselves, to challenge me, to explore their world in ways that are peaceful and cooperative. I taught by example as clowns love everyone. I saw clearly that I had created a love based classroom and that we had journeyed together through universal values, anti-bullying, nonviolence, philosophy, critical thinking, jokes, and activities to integrate the values so they never forget the real peace.

This program I knew was leading edge but it was incredibly difficult to get the schools to take notice given peace is not a focus in education, typically they go for numeracy and literacy or generally accepted and evaluated programs. So I knew I had to be patient that perhaps someone day I will be taken well err seriously, well maybe not seriously but earnestly or genuinely are better words. Maybe teachers can learn to enter the child's world by playing more and shaping education to appeal to their wonder, their humour, their creativity in a way that doesn't overemphasise thinking but focuses on intergration and being who they really are rather than conforming to concepts that do not harmonise with the planet. I see the arts, values and harmony as the education of the future where we start to empower young people to find their own way and to know they have all the answers within them. Our work is to free them to be who they are, not who we are. We plant quality seeds in the younger generation who can change and adapt. That is the beginning of real peace on this planet.

My clowning as a World Peace Clown has taken me around the world in search of peace *within* (inner) and peace *with out* (external). I felt inspired to travel to 20 countries and really explore the edges of my own fear. I did this without the Lonely Planet as I wanted life to be the director of my script. I wanted to practice inner peace and live the trust I believe in life. I was not wrong, life did not disappoint if anything I was shown over and over again that people are just like me and they are very willing to help a woman travelling alone. I met some brave couch surfing hosts who agreed to come out on the streets and clown with me. My friend Cherry in Bangkok absolutely loved the idea of being a clown and she wanted to use it in her work with children with cancer. I was very happy to go clowning in MBK with her. We played soccer, snuck up on people with puppets, juggled, did funny walks, pulled faces and laughed with so many wonderful Thai people. The marketing manager wanted me to come back, he'd never seen this before. I so loved the Thai cliché '*same same but different*'. For me that sums up the world as we are indeed more alike than different. I felt like a superstar with all the camera flashes going off and the permanent grin on my face not as a performer but as a universal citizen reconnecting with my family. I felt completely fearless, I was completely at peace, exhilarated and fully alive.

Another memorable moment was with Navreet in New Delhi. I loved the support of his family coming to watch. He took to it so well and I loved the way he exaggerated his moments, offered a banana and blew up balloons, particularly when it hovered over his genitalia that was so funny, defied gravity it did. It is so wonderful to watch a person expand through meeting his society and realising they are really wonderful. The Indian people received us so warmly with smiles and chats, I remember seeing the look of wonder on the face of a security guard, for a moment taken out of the mundane to enjoy the smiles and laughter permeating the atmosphere. For a moment to remember that people are more important than profit.

Egypt was a big one as it was a Muslim country, I had no idea what to expect. However, I found as I travelled that people were one big warm family. I loved clowning at the children's exhibition with my Egyptian friend. The kids were full of smiles and I ended up dancing more. They love dancing. They had great music. I did some juggling whilst I danced. After a while my make-up was melting, hopefully I didn't look scary. I would have loved to take the kids out on the street but was told that no-one is allowed to gather.

I loved seeing a room full of men with sewing machines. What are the chances of that? Is that just sheer dumb luck or fate? I wonder? They were so open to a crazy western clown arm wrestling them and juggling. I guess they were very surprised, I can imagine the conversations with wives and children when they got home.

The dark clouds of repression stifled the natural freedom of the people. I saw that starkly when I juggled dressed normally on a railway platform in Alexandria (Egypt). It was so amazing to me in places like India and Egypt how the men were mostly on the street, a very strange phenomenon from the perspective of an Australian coming from a country where mixing genders was normal. Women lived traditional lives there whereas in Australia women were working and raising children.

Gandhi was a natural clown I learned and visiting his ashram and the university in Ahmedabad was a great highlight in my life. I really wanted to share with the young people new ways of engagement with Kashmir where the arts could be utilised in a Gandhian context of truth and love.

Creativity is unlocked when the emotions are open and expressing, when we live in our heads the greater emotional intelligence is curtailed and we literally cannot feel the big picture (as we are connected). The world is yet to realise that creativity is where all solutions will be generated and it is where all people can unite, the intellect is the poor servant to the heart and we can see where it is leading us. Heart based intelligence is the most lively, stimulating and invigorating place to be. Literally.

I had so many fantastic experiences on the world trip and I was just blown away by how great our world really is. Looking out of the window of so many planes I saw glimpses of this great planet and felt the privilege. I saw the impacts of human development, the expansion of capitalism and dislocation of traditional cultures. I saw the melting pot of the world's cultures into the predominant western culture and the uniformity of the youth through satellite dishes and CNN. Our world was becoming a smaller place yet loneliness was increasing and the gap between the have's and have nots widening. Whilst technology was connecting, emotionally people were disconnecting which is truly the real issue that must be addressed globally. Violence and depression will intensify as people feel disgruntled and increasingly isolated particularly in heavily populated communities. It is not about how many people are around you, it is the quality of those connections where there is a genuine feeling of love. I see so many people sitting alone and disappearing into technology, I know it masks a deeper problem that will explode in the future through anger, misunderstanding and conflict. The greatest joy of humanity is loving connection. That is what heals the world. Michael Jackson sang this song and it is the cry of all humanity.

Studying on the Rotary Peace and Conflict Studies Program was an important experience intellectually and more importantly as a clown exploring peace. I am a trained economist and market analyst and am aware of the range of issues worldwide. My work on radio gave me real insights through the eyes of experts and my research into international relations assisted me in understanding a range of human rights, political, environmental and conflict related problems. This course was both practical and theoretical which made it a powerful three months of study. The convenor of the course kindly allowed me to clown in slums, HIV clinics, hospitals and refugee camps. This was part of my own exploration into the power of clowning as a realistic peace in action approach. I have no doubt that I reached many people. I had a quality of interaction that was not possible as a scholar.



I was able to be intimate, to laugh, to transcend culture, to deeply love and share knowledge through clowning and theatre. I was giving not taking. Joy is giving pleasure is taking. I believe the arts are very effective in healing and connection which I discovered is the heart of the real peace work.

One of my greatest teachers was a little boy in a Cambodian slum whom I will never forget. My clowning with my Sri Lankan friend Pasky was profound as we clowned in a make-shift (Australian funded) school with the children and we skipped and played our way into the centre of the slum to meet the parents in a playful light-hearted way. There was no suspicion or resentment, the translator told us it was like a movie and he was amazed. We had no idea of our impact. However, for me the highlight was the little boy chasing us and the moment I put my arm out the window to touch fingers with this child, I got it. It was a 'ah ha moment' and I saw the profound impact the clowns had made on this child. He showed me it was about connection. He was chasing his dream. I then gave him a puppet and he stopped. He had a momento and I had an insight. What an exchange. He was my greatest teacher. Peace is connection, connection occurs through love and peace (values), it is not theoretical. End of story.

I had the opportunity to clown with HIV children and patients near death in southern Thailand. What I learned from Father Giovanni the Italian Priest was that he discovered that humour catalysed remission in some patients. They had programs to generate positivity as the body's immune system responded (I've heard about this with cancer). I felt for the former prostitutes and learned about their lives – some were high class (less clients) and some were like hobby horses (non stop men). As a woman I had some deep concerns about how women are treated yet in the peace world it is important to somehow get the message to women that their self-worth is limitless, they define it. Many came from backgrounds with no education and were easily co-opted into this work to feed families and languish in slavery. I would love the opportunity to work with prostitutes to show them their power. They are women, they are unique and they are of great value. I want them to see their true beauty (within). I saw the spark of light in their eyes when we played and it was a privileged to clown with them and the kids. A blind child clapped her hands vigorously when she heard my funny whistle, I realised then that she saw colour in the music. How I receive from them.

The theoretical information on this peace and conflict studies course was great to know and I learned about other cultures and their challenges with conflict, how to map conflict, disarmament, counter terrorism, nonviolent activism, conflict resolution and so on. Yet my heart was leading me to look at conflict differently, I found myself compelled to look at peaceful transformation. This for me was the real focus on peace. I realised what you focus on expands.

I found The Work of Byron Katie when I followed this impulse and that for me was the higher knowledge. The essence is non-resistance. I learned that we could transform our negative thoughts by questioning them. I found out that all negativity was projection. I realised that as I change my thoughts I change the world. I started to realise that you can't let go of thoughts, they let go of you and that everyone thinks the same thoughts. We share a universal consciousness. This was not something taught in the course but my inner prompting for truth led me to realise that I am the creator of my reality, and so is everyone else. All people have equal wisdom and no-one is greater or lesser than anyone else. This for me was a revelation. I had to stop the temptation of looking outside myself for answers but to understand the answers lay within me and to really get that only love is real. If only love is real then surely peace is easy. Just love unconditionally everyone. Clowning is the greatest training for this as it is experiential. I had just begun my training in peace, there is no way I would have imagined that the clown, indeed the fool was the real master class. Perhaps this is what it means 'the meek will inherit the earth'. I suspect so.

What I have discovered is that unconditional love is not so easy. We have so many conditioned beliefs, we have so much baggage from our lives that we never healed or questioned, it weighs people down and you can feel the heaviness of what is carried consciously and unconsciously. I realised there was a whole mind-set programmed by parents, schools, society and the world consciousness that runs counter to unconditional love. I realised much of my work in peace is about undoing and that the fool is the archetype of the new consciousness that some call the New Earth.

My other trips to India, United States and Nepal were more of the same awakening that clowns connect with people, even those who had never seen clowns. That all children are the same, all their faces shine and their eyes sparkle and the adults want the best for them. I saw the rigidities in different cultures, particularly the more material societies.

There was seriousness and competition exhibited in the way people interact which makes it harder to get new initiatives going. The third world societies were very open to anything western, and if your skin was white (pink) they believed you knew more and had access to wealth and the latest technology. Not quite true. There was the thought of white privilege which I've seen over and over. Of course I know it is a false divide, everyone is great, as Patch says.

The United States for me was about the Rotary forum in Hawaii and I did get the chance to clown there and connect with Rotarians. I tried to show peace in action but I know many of the older generation do have traditional ways of seeing peace and many utilise their professional backgrounds to contribute, which is great, but I found the arts are not well understood in Rotary and the wider society. Clowns were seen as fun but not credible. This is a new pathway and it can take time to grow. I will keep on and I am sure I will get a foothold in the future. I am in the Rotary family so I am sure overtime new ventures will open up. Service above self is my personal creed.

I recall special moments in Tamil Nadu in India that I will carry in my heart forever. I was so blown away when we clowns were in tuk tuk's and I saw face after face open up with a loving smile, to me it was flowers opening. I saw the awakening of humanity in these moments and I knew love was the chariot that would carry us all. I sat in the bus with an Indian man Santosh who meditated with me sending white light into a hospital. The hospital had never had clowns, it was very poor, so you can imagine their faces when 15 clowns turned up with such a variety of talent. I got separated from the group and ended up with a group of women who had mental illness. I put my jester's hat on one and I saw their faces light up. I really noticed that day that clowning was effortless, flowing and I felt as light as a feather. I just interacted with people like they were part of my own body. I felt so relaxed as I draped myself over them and brought out my toys. A few fans followed me as I went in search of more people to bring colour and love to. My heart led me to go to the top floor where I saw my friend Toot up there with patients who were dying. Many never had visitors, just lying there waiting to die. I felt myself move towards a few patients and I found an incredible moment open up whereby I held a lady's hand and looked deeply into her eyes and said 'I love you, I love you'.

It was as if I was saying it to myself as the lines between us blurred, the love was all encompassing and the illusion of separation became apparent. I got back on the bus completely fulfilled and later contemplated the power of intention and meditation.

Mother Therese's Missionaries of Charity was another memorable place, I noted on the Ambulance 'Peace Begins with a Smile'. How true. The women there were all abandoned by their families. Mother Theresa was well known for taking in people abandoned and loving them. She was intent on them learning to forgive their families, to make peace before they died. I was told once that she saw greater poverty in the West. She saw spiritual poverty as the real poverty. I would agree with that. When you know there is a higher power that permeates all of life you realise your life is supported that you are not running the show that you are a conduit for an intelligence that knows what to do. I realised I wasn't that good at directing my own life but love through me knows where to go to heal, to love, to make peace. I realised '*I know I don't know*' is the real wisdom that opens me up to allow life to take the lead. I felt the love tangibly within myself and realised I was the source of it, no-one can give me love, I am literally feeling the love within then projecting it to others. Love does indeed heal, it is like a warm hug.

Lastly, my experience in Nepal was wonderful. I absolutely loved jumping on tables like a mountain goat in a little school in Kathmandu. The kids loved it and translators helped me to convey important messages of love, unity and peace. In Western Nepal I had the opportunity to clown with kids who had never seen clowns. The caste system was apparent and one man, a Brahman threw a stone at a Dalit child (untouchable), this showed me the attitudes were traditional in this part of the world. The buildings were made out of wood and I saw the donkeys going past with their bells chiming and carrying large hay bales dwarfing them. I saw cattle tethered to hoes for agriculture and people working hard in the fields from dusk to dawn. Their lives were hard but they were totally self-sufficient. Many generations had lived there and the old men had grown up together, they were not only community, they were family. They knew how to make things out of nothing. The Himalayas were spectacular and we climbed the mountain to visit a nearby village called Paudwar. Lightening struck as we were sipping lemon tea, it was spectacular and the air was energised, we felt very alive and luckily not charcoal.

We saw the snow on the mountains and was dwarfed by the sheer power of the mountains - jagged, undulating, impressive soaring 8,000 metres. The locals were all expert climbers and they walked up like mountain goats, very fit and very strong. I really loved the Nepalese people and was astounded to discover that Buddha was born in Lumbini in Nepal. Like the Indians they had a deep spirituality, caste system and great diversity in their country. They were full of smiles and hard working. Yet they like many poor countries were sending their young men overseas to work in other countries to bring back income which contributed economically but had the adverse impact of raising prices which affected the domestic economy. So it was interesting to see them reaching for Western education to keep up with the world, to engage with the world of currency and find themselves assimilating technologies uprooting them from their traditions. Like every place on earth they were assimilating into globalisation. So as my mind comes to rest after attempting to paint the picture of being a World Peace Clown and the extraordinary experiences that open up. I feel I've barely touched the tip of the iceberg. However, you get a feel for the greatness of love when unleashed. I feel I've hugged the whole world and the world has hugged me back. I feel I made peace with my planet by just going out and saying hello and hugging the trees. If only the war mentality could be healed through realising 'we are killing ourselves when we kill others'. A soldier said that. I see the future in the safe and warm hands of loving artists. In truth the great intelligence that surrounds us and indeed is us, is endless creativity and endless possibility waiting on your welcome. Just intend happiness, feel it, see it and be it and wallah there it is.

So know that nothing is impossible when you open your arms to life. When you greet each situation with loving understanding and openness you will discover new vista's opening. I feel to say *your happy destiny is unavoidable* when you come on board this ship of fools. So why not liberate the clown within you and be a fool for peace. Why not awaken the fool within you, you will change the world just the same as me. Love is the portal to world peace opening a rising consciousness that ushers in real hope. Can you see the joke!

Peace and happiness to you.

*Love Peacefull (fool) Clown*

aka Susan Carewfa

---

## REFERENCES

- i <http://www.crystalvaults.com/crystal-encyclopedia/pyrite>
- ii <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/billyjoel/leningrad.html>
- iii <http://www.patchadams.org/Gesundheit Institute speakers>
- iv [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow\\_theater\\_hostage\\_crisis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow_theater_hostage_crisis)
- v [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kremlin\\_Armoury](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kremlin_Armoury)
- vi [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege\\_of\\_Leningrad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Leningrad)
- vii <http://www.saint-petersburg.com/history/siege.asp>
- viii [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter\\_Palace](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_Palace)
- ix <http://www.rotarychula.org/>
- x [http://www.camillian-rayong.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=53&lang=en](http://www.camillian-rayong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=53&lang=en)
- xi [http://www.camillian-rayong.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=53&lang=en](http://www.camillian-rayong.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=53&lang=en)
- xii [http://www.unicef.org/thailand/hiv\\_aids.html](http://www.unicef.org/thailand/hiv_aids.html)
- xiii [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution\\_in\\_Thailand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_in_Thailand)
- xiv <http://www.photosensibility.com/2009/03/03/andong-village-story/>
- xv <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/bittersweet-experience-for-a-young-woman-who-believes-in-action-20100622-yvui.html?skin=text-only>
- xvi [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu\\_Picchu](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machu_Picchu)
- xvii [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl\\_disaster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chernobyl_disaster)