

# Clowns do make a difference . . . . . . . . . . and I have the memories to prove it.

*From John Kapferer aka Clem "T"*

**John Kapferer** aka "Clem T" of Ramsey New Jersey would be the last person to call himself a hero. He says, "Ah, it's nothing." But to the police and fireman and displaced grieving people of New York City it is something. Two other clowns from John's clown alley went into NYC: Sharon Di Tirro - *Sha Sha* and Judy Beeber - *Sassafras*

Here are two emails I received from John while I was in England. [Yes, Shobi was in England on 9/11]

## **Email September 14, 2001**

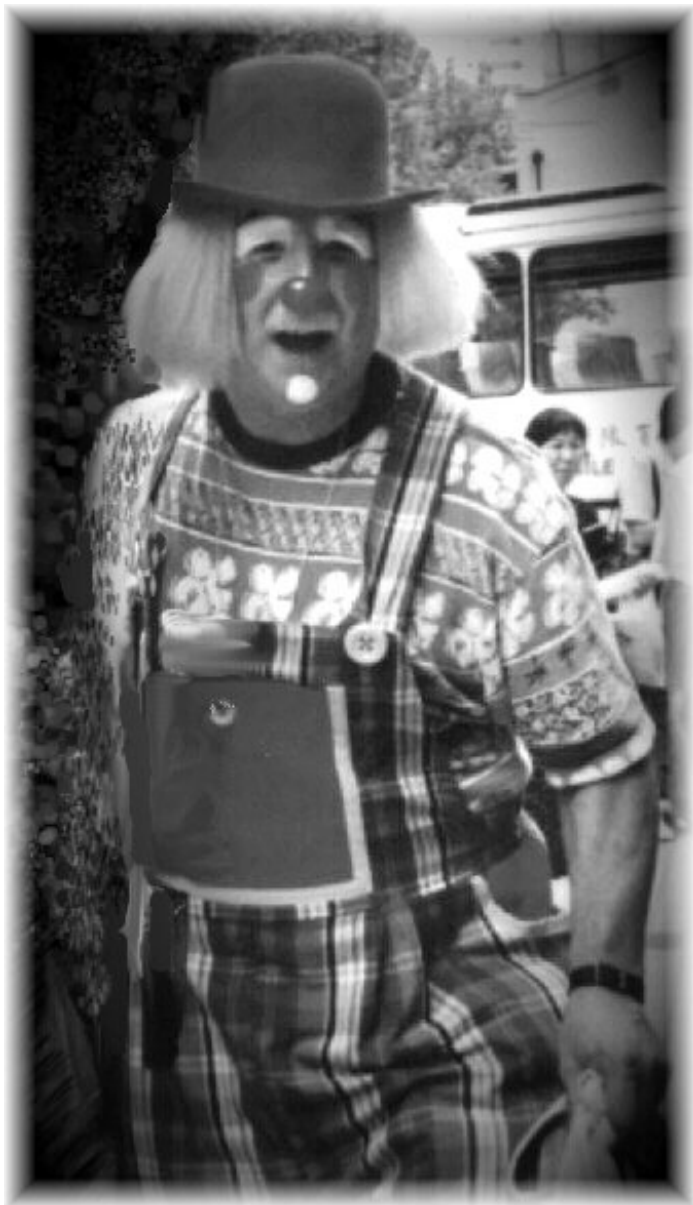
"On Tuesday (9/11/01) I was on my way to a meeting at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ when I heard on the radio that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. Knowing that my daughter often goes into NYC for meetings at the World Trade Center I called her cell phone, office number and home to see if she was okay. Needless to say, I could not reach her anywhere. I called my wife at home and had her start making calls and watch the news on TV. Additionally, my brother in law works for Merrill-Lynch in the World Trade Center and we had not heard from him either.

"I left a message on my daughter's cell phone to call home and went to my meeting. After the meeting, I called home to find out that my daughter had planned to go to NYC in the morning, but decided to stop in Jersey City, NJ for another meeting, on her way to her World Trade Center office for that meeting. Additionally, my brother in law left his office after the first plane hit the World Trade Center and got on a ferry back to NJ.

"My daughter is now responsible for computer support for Merrill-Lynch Disaster Recovery and has been working 12 - 18 hours daily.

"Once again I tried to share my clowning with those in need by traveling to NYC. I am not allowed to get anywhere near the World Trade Center, but I am entertaining the Search and Rescue teams at night. I work in New Jersey during the day and go home, change into Clem T and board a train to Penn Station in New York City for an evening of clowning, caring and spiritual support. It takes forty-five minutes to an hour on the train to Penn station and then a subway down to Canal Street. Most of what I have been doing is just being there for the people looking for missing friends, talking with children and entertaining on a limited basis for the people of NYC. This is not a time for jokes and laughter but a time for caring and support.

"At about 12 midnight I retrace my steps back to Penn Station and home (because I do have a job). I've have gotten to be known by many NYC Police Department and Fire Department personnel so I hope to get to ground Zero soon. But until then I am doing whatever I can do to help out, even if it is from afar.



"This weekend I plan to spend both days in NYC and hopefully bring some comfort to the friends and co-workers of the missing.

"Let me tell you all one thing -- The newspapers, TV and radio can not describe what it is like in lower Manhattan. This is far worse than what I saw in Vietnam, Desert Storm, Peru and some of the other places I have been defending the freedom of the people. I can't begin to describe the utter devastation, damage, loss of life and destruction of this city.

I have seen a lot in my life, but it does not compare to the sights I have seen over the past week. I can't find the words to describe what is there (not that I would ever want to try).

## *Clowning at Ground Zero Continued*

### **Report from John Kapherer**

#### **Email of 9/21/01**

On TV New York City's mayor said they don't want unnecessary people being in NYC. I respect him, but I am going by what the New York Police Department, Fire Department and the searchers have been telling me. "You're a spark of light to us." They say they really appreciate a clown being there for them and for the families who have missing loved ones.

I don't push anything anywhere. If they say I can't go someplace, I don't go. It's that easy. There are so many places to go, but I've actually gotten all the way down to within a block of Ground 0.

I would not go somewhere ever day where I am not welcomed and wanted. I know if anyone goes into NYC as a clown they will be treated as I am, "A true volunteer and helper."

I met Mayor Giuliani and the governor and all they could say was "Thanks for being here, you are what we need right now" Clowns do make a difference and I have the memories to prove it.

Security has increased over the past 2 days and I am limited in my activities and places that I can go -- the morgue, Canal Street, and the hospitals all have people who need love, hugs and understanding.

My street clowning techniques that I developed in Russia, Bosnia, and China have been a great benefit to me this past week.

Clem T loves to flirt with the women and I guess I have 2000 new girlfriends or engagements over past weeks. Also I've given out 500 red noses and 5000+ Hug Coupons. I've given out about 5000 hug certificates, smiley face rings, some heart balloons, and sponge noses are a big hit.

I hold hands and hug people. It's easy to hug a clown. I spend a lot of time talking to the police, well, listening. Like being a listening post. I give out hug coupons. Sometimes the police see me and ask for more hug coupons so they can give them out.

When they see me they start laughing. A lot of the police want their pictures taken with me. And they want the senior officer to hug a clown and have their pictures taken. I've been interviewed by TV but I don't think any of it has aired. I had a German TV follow me for an hour and a Spanish TV crew follow me all day. They see it as something actually colorful and wonderful, but the editors probably have a different take.

I'm exhausted. I've been going for 9 days, so I am going to take a couple of days to recharge my batteries and spend some time with my family, but I have left Red Noses, Hug Coupons, and Clown Drawings for the kids of all ages -- with the NYPD.

I will be back in NYC all day Sunday 9/23/01. Anyone who feels up to it, look for me on Canal Street or follow the smiles and hugs from the policemen and firemen.

I'll be there next week, just a couple of times a week. This is when it's just grueling. It's when it's all the horrible time of just cleaning up. Those are the people who need help.

We might have a few NYC police individuals who want to join a clown group and work with us if I can set something up for November when several of the China group plan to be in NYC.

NYC is on its way back, but has a long way to go. Anything we can do to keep their spirits up will be greatly appreciated.

Sometime I plan to sit down and write about my experiences so that you all can have an idea of the devastation here. That is something for the future and right now I have my hands full.