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It was most encouraging to witness the attendance of clowns at our last three conventions. New Orleans, Las Vegas and St. Louis were very well attended. at all three there was tremendous competition in all categories. Thanks to all of you who attended. Now let's look forward to Gatlinburg, TN, in the Smokey Mountains. We are preparing for a great convention and competition. This is BAG-O's year. let's show him our support by attending. He and Marilyn have planned a superb Mid-Winter.

I want to remind all you competitors that all competing clowns are winners. Remember, if you were in the top ten at any one of these competitions, you are outstanding. If you are in the top three you could be lucky. Judging is subjective, and as much as your officers try to get you the best judges in the country, their personal preferences are always going to influence their choices. So if you did not do as well as you thought you should have, come to Gatlinburg and try again.

At the last convention in St. Louis, "Sparkles," "Skeeter" and "Clyde" witnessed some excellent one and two man skits. Most of you are taking the time to prepare an effective and "funny" act. One comment that all three of us shared was how much more effective the performances would be if you would consider the following suggestions:

1) Try to work music into your skit. This adds a great deal to the professionalism of your performance. It also can give you a time monitor throughout your presentation. Music is also very effective in capturing your audience and more important, those "finicky" judges. Give it a try... you have everything to gain!!!

2) In almost all cases when the clowns were speaking they could not be heard by the audience or the judges. If the spectators or the judges cannot hear what you are saying, your skit becomes ineffective, and you could have a great act. Try to use the mike that is available or bring your own. Most music boxes are equipped to take a mike.

3) Now let's review the fundamental parts of a skit: First of all, let's remember a skit is not a magic act or an instrument playing contest. In order to be judged as a skit, the skit must consist of three distinct and important parts.

" a) A skit must have a clear beginning or introduction. You enter and let the audience know something about what you are going to do up there. Hint: If you can do something funny right at the beginning it will set the stage for the rest of the act. Maybe you take a bow, removing your hat and under you have a smaller funny hat.

" b) Your skit must have a distinctive main body. If you remember in the banana bandanna skit, the main body has the up front clown going through the gyrations of folding the quarter in the bandanna, while the buffoon in the background is folding the quarter in the banana. Great body, funny, and a winner if acted right!

" c) The most important and critical part of your skit is the blow off. Without the blow off, your skit is totally ineffective. Nobody in your audience knows it's over, so you walk off and the judges wonder what you were trying to tell them. How do you think they are going to score you?

Make sure you review your skits. You will be judged on whether you have a beginning, a body and a blow off. Music and hearing you on stage are critical. With the above, any judge should score you low. All of you competing clowns know all of this, but sometimes a reminder may be helpful to you to rethink what you are doing. Let's keep up the excellent work and plan to attend Gatlinburg. We are going to have a "Hillbilly" time in the Smokeys. Rumor has it that BAG-O has really gone all out for this Mid-Winter. He might even dress as a "Hillbilly???" Come and see for yourself!

See you down the road!

Oscar Cloutier
"Clyde"