by Walter "Skeeter" Seavey (Dec 97/Jan 98 issue of "Clown Alley")

Every clown has different ways to get ready for a competition. I personally try to have things ready to go well in advance. I make sure I have ALL the make-up suppplies by performing an inventory. You may even go as far as making a checklist. The worst feeling in the world is to go to a competition somewhere only to find that you left one or more of your things back home.

The competition helps make us better clowns. It is a major learning experience. Every judge has a different idea for each category of clown. Generally all of our judges are certified. Still, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. With that in mind, here are a few tips that may be overlooked and could weigh on the judges mind.

1. Costumes: You do not need a NEW or even store bought costume. The important thing is it should be clean, unstained, crisp and ironed. You would not believe the times I have seen a wrinkled costume in competition. Also, there are contestants that do not want to clean their costume for fear of losing its crispness. Believe me, you will lose more points if there is an odor to your costume than for the minor loss in crispness, that is, if the judge walks up for a closer look. The costume should help reflect your type clown. By the way, I worked in my "Competition Costume." It has had many trips to the cleaners and has been worn countless number of times.

2. Shoes: With the exception of some tramp clowns, a clown should have "Clown Type Shoes." Most purchased from a vendor are not cheap. I have seen the contestant make his "Clown Type Shoes" and do well. I personally do not have the talent to do that. Wherever you get your shoes, they should be clean with no scuffs. My trick is to go to a shoe repair shop and purchase shoe paint for my shoes. Some repair shops have every conceivable color you may need. I give them a coat of paint before competing. My last pair of shoes had 3 colors. I had to tape them and apply each color separately. Also, make sure your shoe laces match your shoes and your outfit. I've made that mistake. I had a red and blue costume and shoes with white shoe laces. Those shoe laces stood out like a sore thumb.

3. Accessories: Make sure your outfit is complete. I have seen a number of Whitefaces and Auguste clowns in competition without a hat or gloves. This is considered a NO-NO in the clown world.

4. Noses: Generally sponge noses do not work well in competition. They are usually too big for the face and do not look as well. If you are a Whiteface or Auguste clown, try getting some kind of shiny nose matching the size of your face and the type of clown you are depicting. There are a number of nose makers from which to choose. I have seen several clowns make their own nose. The simplest homemade nose was a ping pong ball. It was cut out for the nose with caulk applied to the edges. The nose was then painted with fingernail polish.

5. Hair: A very large portion of competitors do very little to their hair. It should be well groomed. Even with a clown like Bozo, every hair is in its proper place. My hair is rolled. I have straight hair, but by using large rollers, it gives it body to countour the face.

6. Posing: You will be asked to "Strike a Pose." With your make-up on, practice in front of a mirror and also ask family and friends what looks better. Remember, no "Stick." That doesn't mean the pose can't be funny.

7. Relax: When in competition, relax. This was one of the hardest things or me to do. I have had comments stating, "You are as stiff as a board." This comment usually meant a lower score. Try to look a natural as possible.

8. Practice: Practice your skit. It takes practice to perform a skit properly. If you get a chance, try it out in a show before the competition. Remember: Practice! Practice! Practice!

As you may have seen, a new set of rules was issued in our last issue of Clown Alley. These rule changes were mainly brought about at your request. There are a lot of changes, so anyone planning to compete should read them (CLICK HERE) carefully. Here is a summary of a few of the major rules changes.

1. For One Man Paradeability and One Man Skit Competition, a first, second and third place will be awarded along with a top ten patch for EACH of the following categories:

* Whiteface
* Auguste
* Tramp
* Character

The contestant MAY enter both the One Man Paradeability AND the One Man Skit Competition, if he chooses (this has not changed).

2. A person showing up late for a competition will be disqualified.

3. In balloon competition, an audience will be allowed to watch the competitors make their creation.

4. In skit competition, a person will be available to turn on a tape as the clown enters the stage.

Every clown should make an effort to attend this Mid-Winter, if at all possible. If that is not possible, each unit should have at least one person representing their unit at the convention. This is a very special event where only Shrine Clowns from all over the country get together. We vote on things that may affect ISCA members for years to come. I feel when you go, you always bring something new back home. It may be a new idea for your costume or make-up. It may be an idea for a skit. If you see something you like and you don't know how he didi it, ask him. Just about every clown is more than willing to share ideas. That is how they learned most of them.

I have just come back from a trip to Gatlinburg, TN. We stayed at the Holiday Inn where we are holding this year's Mid-Winter Convention. It is going to be a great place to have our convention. I am really looking forward to it. I hope everyone is planning to attend. See you there.

Walter "Skeeter" Seavey