

# National Clown Week

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Details for your Education

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A short document with the details on  
National Clown Week – The First Week in August

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# Clown Week Section

## Introduction

NationalClownWeek.org's purpose is to celebrate, promote, and inform on National Clown Week, the First week in August, every year.

Jugglers have a day. Balloon Twisters have a day and Magicians have a day. But Clowns have an entire week - National Clown Week. Check out our sections for information on National Clown Week, and the following info

- Proclamation of National Clown Week by President Richard Nixon
- History of National Clown Week
- Charlie Award from COAI
- Bronze Clown Shoe award from Clown Hall of Fame
- What is Clown Week
- Clown Week Events
- What is a Clown
- Fear of Clowns
- Clown College
- Clown Schools
- Clown Eggs
- Clown College
- Sample Press Release for you to use for National Clown Week
- Sample Proclamation for you to use for National Clown Week

Remember in late July to send out your National Clown Week eCards to your friends

## **How it all started**

There are several versions of "who had the idea" of National Clown week and "who convinced Congress" to pass the Proclamation. We think several people had the idea and several people worked on convincing Congress. We are glad that everybody succeeded in their goal. Many thanks to all of them for their efforts.

Here are the most common versions of what happened.

### **Walt "WABO" Savage**

He is considered by many as the person that first came up with the idea of Clown Week way back around 1950. It is said that this week was selected because it was the week that both of his daughters had birthdays.

### **Frank "Kelly the Clown" Kelly**

Clown Week's humble beginnings were in the 1950's. Not much happened 'till 1966 when the first National Clown Week chairman, Frank "Kelly the Clown" Kelly, was appointed by Ray Bickford, president of Clown Club of America.

In 1967 Clown Club of America members were urged to write to their congressmen and senators requesting a presidential proclamation naming August 1-7 as National Clown Week.

Finally in 1969 a resolution was introduced. After clowns met with Senator John McClellan of Arkansas who was chairman of the Senate subcommittee on Observances and Holidays, success was finally achieved in obtaining a Clown Week.

On October 8, 1970, Public Law 91-443 under the 91st Congress, JJR 26 was passed by both the House and Senate and was sent to President Richard Nixon for his signature.

## **BILL "BOOM-BOOM" BAILY**

Bill was an original member of Clowns of America when it was founded in 1967 and held membership number 81. He was named the U.S. Chairman of National Clown Week.

Because each year a chairman had to be chosen in each state to ask their governor to issue a proclamation honoring National Clown Week, Bill pushed for National Clown Week publicity.

He convinced Congressman Garmatz of Maryland and Congressman Myers of Indiana to introduce a joint resolution in Congress establishing National Clown Week as an annual event. He lobbied congress and organized a visit by clowns to the senate building in Washington, D.C.

The joint resolution was signed into law by President Nixon on August 2, 1971.

Bill remained National Clown Week Chairman for Clowns of America and Clown of America National until his death. Bill was honored by induction into the National Clown Hall of Fame in 1996.

## Since then

Since then Governors and Mayors have had their own personal Clown Week proclamation for their state or city.

Today the National Clown Week has grown to National Clown Week.

## Why is it National Clown Week?

When COA (Clown of America) changed their name to COAI (Clown of America National), they decided National Clown week should be National Clown Week. And while National Clown Week is celebrated around the world, it's only "officially" recognized in the USA. Most clowns just refer it to as Clown Week.

## Public law 91-443

JOINT RESOLUTION

October 8, 1970

91st Congress H. J. Res. 236

Authorizing and requesting the President of the United States to issue a proclamation designating the week of August 1 through August 7, 1971, as "National Clown Week".

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled^ That the President of the United States is authorized and requested to issue a proclamation (1) designating the week of August 1 through August 7, 1971, as "National Clown Week", (2) inviting the Governors of the States and territories of the United States to issue proclamations for like purposes, and (3) urging the people of the United States to give heed to the contributions made by clowns in their entertainment at children's hospitals, charitable institutions, institutions for the mentally retarded, and generally helping to lift the spirits and boost the morale of our people, at a time when it is especially desirable and necessary.



\_ Approved October 8, 1970.

## National Clown Week by the President of the USA



**RICHARD NIXON**

*XXXVII President of the United States: 1969-1974*

Proclamation 4071 - National Clown Week

August 2, 1971

*By the President of the United States Of America*

### **A Proclamation**

Whoever has heard the laughter of a child or seen sudden delight on the face of a lonely old man has understood in those brief moments mysteries deeper than love.

All men are indebted to those who bring such moments of quiet splendor-who redeem sickness and pain with joy. All across America good men in putty noses and baggy trousers following a tradition as old as man's need to touch gently the lives of his

fellowman, go into orphanages and children's hospitals, homes for the elderly and for the retarded, and give a part of themselves. Today, as always, clowns and the spirit they represent are as vital to the maintenance of our humanity as the builders and the growers and the governors.

In the folklore of the world is the persistent claim that the heart of a clown is sad, and that all the gladness he provokes is simply a facade for the pain he cannot reveal to the world. In the myth is the kernel of reason: the clown leaves happiness where he goes, and takes misery away with him.

Yet we cannot suppose there is real truth in the myth. For surely the laugh-makers are blessed: they heal the heart of the world.

To call public attention to the charitable activities of clowns and the wholesome entertainment they provide for all our citizens, the Congress by a joint resolution approved October 8, 1970 (Public Law 91-433), has requested the President to designate the week of August 1 through August 7, 1971, as National Clown Week.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICHARD NIXON, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim the week of August 1 through August 7, 1971, as National Clown Week. I invite the

Governors of the States and the appropriate officials of other areas under the United States flag to issue similar proclamations.

I urge the people of the United States recognize the contributions made by clowns in their entertainment at children's hospitals, charitable institutions, for the mentally retarded, and generally helping to lift the spirits and boost the morale of our people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the one hundred ninety-sixth.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard Nixon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "R".

RICHARD NIXON

**Citation:** John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA.

## Charlie Award

The Charlie Award is a trophy that is given to the COAI Clown Alley which best documents and celebrates National Clown Week (August 1-7).

Adopted in 1974, it was offered to the (then) COAI Alley that did the best job observing National Clown Week.

In 1999, the COAI Board approved a new award was created for the individual member.

The Individual Award is given to a member of COAI which best documents and celebrates Clown Week on an individual basis.

For more information on the Charlie award, visit the COAI website at the [Charlie Award Webpage](#)

## Sample Press Release

Here's a sample press release you can adapt and use. Depending on your computer, you might be able to paste this into a word-processing document and adapt it even further. Thanks again for participating!

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### **Press Release for Immediate Release National Clown Week August 1 - 7, 2018 Press Release**

From August 1 thru August 7, 2018, hundreds of clowns will be clowning around all of the USA, as part of National Clown Week - August 1 - 7, 2018.

Everyone recognizes the importance of laughter and happiness, particularly in the crazy world in which we live today. The importance of laughter and joy and the role that clowns play in bringing us happiness has been recognized by parents, physicians and politicians. President Nixon felt the role of clowns was so important that in 1971, that we signed a proclamation naming August 1-7 as Clown Week.

In \_\_\_\_\_(fill in your community here)\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_(your name here)\_\_\_\_\_ will be sharing their skills at the

\_\_\_\_\_(location)\_\_\_\_\_. (You may want to provide a short quote here, such as the following.)

*"A Smile is a terrible thing to waste!" said organizer - Debbie aka DaMissus the Clown of Springfield, Virginia. It's a way of changing the world – with a little bit of fun at a time."*

Hundreds of clowns participated during 2017's National Clown Week - in schools, libraries, and hospitals. They clowned around in malls, on the street, and even in grocery stores...all for fun, all for free.

Clowning around was observed in many countries around the world.

Again this year, the folks from Clown Resource Directory have joined the fun officially by hosting the National Clown Week website!

For the uninitiated, Clown Resource Directory is where the Internet meets the Art of Clowning

## Sample Proclamation

The following is "suggested" wording to help get many more proclamations. It just makes sense; if someone does the work for the official, the chances are much higher that a proclamation will be issued. The officials are very busy and proclamations are not one of their highest concerns. Start the process as soon as possible to give them as much times as possible

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### National Clown Week August 1 - 7, 20XX Proclamation

**To:** Name of Official

**From:** \_\_\_\_\_ would like to request a proclamation for National Clown Week

Please send the proclamation to:

Possible wording on the proclamation might be:

Whereas clowns have long been known as ambassadors of joy and good will and bring happiness to both joy and good will and bring happiness both to children and adults and:

Whereas: In recognition to the charitable activities of clowns and the wholesome entertainment they provide for all of our citizens: "National Clown Week" has been proclaimed for the week of August 1 thru August 7, 20XX, and Now there for I, \_\_\_\_\_ proclaim the week of August 1 thru 7 " National Clown Week"

For additional information on National Clown Week, check out the website at **[www.Nationalclownweek.org](http://www.Nationalclownweek.org)**

Thanks in Advance

Your Name and Your Clown Name and your Clown Group



## Clown Week Events

There are dozens of events for clown week. Most happen once or twice but a few have occurred so many times, that they have become traditions. Here is couple of them:

### **National Clown Week at Showmen's Rest**

The First Sunday in August

1:00 -3:00 PM

Woodlawn Cemetery,

7750 W Cermak Rd

Forest Park, IL

Phone: 847-691-1545

## National Clown Week in other languages

Internasionale hanswors week

Internacional del Pallassos setmana

National klovn uge

Semana internacional del payaso

Semaine Nationale de clown

National klovn uke

Semana internacional de palhaco

Nationale Clownwoche

Settimana internazionale del pagliaccio

Nationale clownweek

National Clown Wiki

Internationella clown veckan

Rhyngwladol clown wythnoswn veckan

## Frequently asked questions on Clown Week

Q: When is Clown Week? Is the same every year and why?

A: Clown Week is always August 1-7. It is always the same 7 days, the first week in August.

Q: Is it National Clown Week or National Clown Week?

A: It started out as National Clown Week. When Clowns of America reorganized and became Clowns of America National in 1991, they decided to rename National Clown Week to National Clown Week. Most clowns just refer to it to as Clown Week.

Q; who is the sponsor of Clown Week?

A: While the clown group - Clowns of America National is considered the sponsor of Clown Week, many clowns group from the around world celebrate Clown Week include those from World Clown Association (USA), Clowns Canada (Canada), Shrine Clown Association (USA) and Clowns National (UK)

Q: Is there really a law about Clown Week?

A: Yes and it is US Public Law 91-443 and for more details review ["How it all began"](#). To see the official copy of Public Law review this document [Public law 91-443](#)

Q: What do clowns and clown groups do to celebrate Clown Week?

A: Celebrations take on a variety of forms. Such as putting on shows in malls, child care centers, hospitals and nursing homes. Or they can be Educational events about clowning and fund raisers for numerous charitable causes. Or clown appearances in parades, grand openings, greeting people, visiting kids at the hospital, and appearances at other places.

Q: How many clowns celebrate Clown Week?

A: The answer is a lot. Clown Groups from all around the world have a total membership of more than 10,000 clowns and all of clowns in the world do not belong to a clown group. So our guess is that there are more than 20,000 clowns worldwide. We think they all celebrate Clown Week in one shape or another.

## Clown Information Section

### What is a Clown?

It's National Clown Week, and that has us thinking about this ancient figure, which is the primal source of laughter. Our word for "clown" comes from the old Icelandic, *klunni*, which meant a clumsy person, and is related to other archaic words for clod, or clump, or, in old Middle High German, *klutz*. We still use that word today to describe someone who always seems to be tripping over his two left feet.

No one really knows who the first clown was, though Mel Brooks has an answer for that question in his hysterically funny movie, "History of the World Part One," in which the earliest belly laugh is caused when a cavorting, stand-up caveman comedian gets eaten by a dinosaur in the middle of his monologue -- to his tribe's great amusement.

A more likely choice for original clown honors may go to the ice-age drawing of a dancing man wearing a deer's head, which was discovered in a cave in the south of France by three spelunking boys in the early 1900s. This mysterious figure, who is frequently called the magician or shaman, whose spells could

relieve you of illness, is just a few steps away from the "showman," whose incantations can relieve you of the pressures of everyday life.

The Zunis of the American South West had a name for this creature: he was called the Contrary. He appeared, dressed in a striped costume, wearing a cone-shaped hat, at all the most sacred festivals. His job was to make fun of serious things, to call attention to the absurd, impossible side of our experience and thus to complete a kind of cosmic circle. He reminds us of that other shadowy, tricky, wobbly side to our nature. He was supposed to do what you aren't supposed to do -- fall down, eat the wrong things, say the wrong things, behave the wrong way - - everything we were expected to out-grow when we joined the serious adult world.

As kids we somehow felt a kind of kinship with this character -- after all, to some degree we'd been there ourselves, not too long before. And perhaps that is why so many clowns are child-like, from Baby Hermes to Chaplin, to Robin Williams to Adam Sandler.

When you think about it, the job hasn't changed much in, oh, twenty or thirty thousand years.

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## Fear of Clowns or Coulrophobia

The term **Coulrophobia**, the fear of clowns, is a recent coining in response to a surprisingly large amount of interest in the condition, particularly on the Internet, where websites have been developed which are specifically devoted to the issue.

The word has no significant coverage in printed dictionaries, but try an Internet search on **Coulrophobia** and you'll discover a host of websites by **Coulrophobia** (people who fear clowns), the condition being one of the most remarked-upon phobias on the Internet.

Much of the interest has originated with a man called Rodney Blackwell – a web designer who said he was seriously afflicted with the phobia. So he decided to set up several website featuring message boards where fellow **Coulrophobia** could share experiences and he could make some money selling merchandise bearing an 'I hate Clowns' logo.

**Causes of the phobia** in discussions of causes of **Coulrophobia** seem to agree that the most fear-inducing aspect of clowns is the heavy makeup which, accompanied by the bulbous nose and weird color of hair, that completely conceal the wearer's identity.

## Clown College

It used to be that every person who dreamed of becoming a clown also dreamed of attending the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Clown College. For 30 years Clown College taught the basics -- how to apply your clown makeup, how to take a pie thrown at your big clown nose, and to fall down without hurting yourself.

Clown College was the brainchild of Irvin Feld. In 1968, the clown profession seemed to be dwindling and -- Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus had only a dozen clowns, most of them getting older by the day. Irvin Feld wanted to make sure there were clowns well into the future.

So the college directors held auditions at colleges and theatres around the country. Hundreds of would-be clowns showed their stuff.

The competition was intense. Only 30 new clowns were accepted into each year's class.

There, they donned large shoes and baggy pants to learn about makeup, juggling and the fine art of falling down. They took classes in stilt-walking, gymnastics, juggling, and mime.



The classes were free and the best of the graduates took their large clown shoes on the road with the Greatest Show on Earth.

But the Clown College became a victim of its own success. In 1998, there were about over a thousand trained clowns and there was little danger of the profession dying out. So Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus decided to stop offering eight-week introductory classes in funny stuff in Sarasota, Florida.

But what's an aspiring clown going to do today?

Once choice is today's version of Clown College. It lives on in the educational initiatives of three nationally-touring units of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Here, the next generation of circus clowns learns the skills and traditions: character development, improvisation, makeup, gag development, prop and costume construction, acrobatics, dance and the physical skills of slaps and falls, stilt-walking, unicycling, juggling and much more.

And another choice is that some of the graduates of previous Clown College classes have taken on the task of teaching the new generation of clowns on with Clowns Schools, all over the world.

## Clown Eggs

The tradition began in the U.K. around 1946 at what was then the National Circus Clowns Club but is now called Clowns National.

A member named Stan Bult started recording clown images on chicken eggs with the insides blown out. It started as a hobby, and, like many hobbies, it just grew. Mr. Bult kept his collection at home, occasionally loaning it out for show, such as at the 1951 Centenary Exhibition of the Crystal Palace.

The collection continued to be lent out after Mr. Bult's death but sadly most of the eggs were destroyed in an accident at one such exhibit around 1965.

Clown Bluey became chairman of Clowns National in 1984 and resurrected Mr. Bult's practice of recording clown members' faces on eggs. This time a professional artist was used and the faces were painted on china-pot eggs instead of chicken eggs. Over the years, many of the lost older eggs have been reproduced, and new eggs are added frequently.

The current U.K. egg artist is Kate Stone, from Bournemouth, and the collection is on display, with clown-associated pictures, portraits and artifacts at Wookey Hole Caves near Wells in

Somerset. Further information may be obtained from the Curator, Mattie Faint, Tel. 0207 608 0312. (UK Phone number)

According to Clowns National, "The eggs are not just a record of the clown's facial makeup, but an actual portraiture in miniature." In addition to paint, the artist uses samples of the clown's costume material and wig-hair to produce an eggs-act match. A photo of the egg collection may be seen at the Clowns National website.

About twenty-five years ago, Leon "Buttons" McBryde heard about the British practice of registering clown makeup using eggs. He and his wife Linda eventually met the caretaker of the British clown egg registry, and around 1979 started a similar registry for clowns in the U.S. This collection now includes over 700 eggs, covering clowns of all types from around the world. Linda McBryde is the artist and co-creator of the registry.

In the U.S. collection, the faces are hand-painted on goose eggs (more durable than chicken eggs), and decorated with various materials (such as clay, wire, felt, tiny flowers, glitter, etc.) to obtain as accurate a representation of the clown face and costume as possible.

Though not an official registry, the collection is meant to preserve the uniqueness of each clown's face makeup. Quoting from the Department of Clown Registry information sheet: "It is

an unwritten law among clowns that one must never copy the face of another." Linda McBryde told us, "Although this is not a legal institution, the collection is a record of the person's name, the makeup design, and the date it was submitted. In one case that I know of, a person used the registry in a court case in which someone was infringing on his makeup design."

The U.S. egg collection is currently in storage, Pictures of the UK collection, however, can be seen at the National Clown Hall of Fame. Or on the Flickr website in a slide show at this URL [The Clown Egg Register](#)

## **Clown Hall of Fame Member Award**

The National Clown Hall of Fame and Research Center, located in Baraboo, Wisconsin, USA, is dedicated to the preservation and advancement of clown art and achievement.

The Clown Hall of Fame awards the Clown Hall of Member, Bronze Clown Shoe, and the Lifetime of Laughter Awards to clowns for their efforts over a lifetime of clowning.

For more information, check their website at [www.theclownmuseum.org](http://www.theclownmuseum.org)

## Clown Hall of Fame members•

**1989** Lou Jacobs, Mark Anthony, Felix Adler, Emmett Kelly Sr., Red Skelton, Otto Griebing

**1990** Leon Buttons McBryde, Bob "Clarabell" Keeshan, Joseph Grimaldi

**1991** Bobby Kaye, Frankie Saluto, Michael Polakov, Glen Little, Dan Rice

**1992** "Prince Paul" Alpert, Adrien "Grock" Wettach, Paul Jung, Gene "Cousin Otto" Lee, Arthur "Vercoe" Pedlar

**1993** Roy "Cookie" Brown, Steve "T.J.Tatters" Smith, Albert Fratellini, Al Ross, Oleg Popov

**1994** Annie Fratellini, "Bumpsey" Anthony Hulme, Jim Howle, Joe Jackson Sr., Nicolai "CoCo" Poliakoff

**1995** Edwin "Poodles" Hanneford, Dimitri, Jimmy "Happy" Williams, Don "Homer" Bruda, Chester Sherman, Joe Vanni

**1996** Bob "Bozo" Bell, Jackie LeClaire, Bert Williams, Bill "Boom-Boom" Bailey

**1997** George Footit, Raphael "Chololat" Padilla

**1998** Robert Armin, Ernie "Blinko" Burch, Peggy Williams

**1999** Bill Irwin, Richard "Snowflake" Snowberg, Charlie Rivel,  
Bob "Hambone" Hamilton, Umberto "Antonet" Guillame

**2000** George Fox, Francios & Paul Fratellini, Duane "Uncle  
Soapy" Thorpe, Nola Rae, Francesco Caroli

**2001** Billy Baker, Bill Balantine, Charlie Chaplin, Irvin Romig

**2002** Alvin Eisenberg, Barry "Grandma" Lubin, Charlie Caroli,  
Harold "Happy" Kellems

**2004** Earl "Mr. Clown" Chaney, Pinto Colvig, W.D. "Curley"  
Robbins, Giovanni "Nino" Zoppe

## More Clown Resources (Websites)

For more information on Clowns, visit the following great websites:

- **ArtofClowning.com** (Information on the Art of Clowning)
- **Clown-Schools.com** (A directory of Clown Schools)
- **ClownResourceDirectory.com** (A directory of Clown Resources)
- **ClownEvents.com** (A Calendar of Educational Clown Events)
- **ClownHallofFame.com** (National Clown Hall of Fame website)
- **Clown-Names.com** (Information on Clown Names and how to pick them)
- **COAI.com** (Clowns of America National group web site)
- **WCA.com** (World Clown Association web site)
- **ClownsCanada.com** (Canadian Clowns group web site)
- **ClownsNational.co.uk** (UK Clowns group web site)
- **ClownvilleNews.com** (Clowns in the News)

