



## What's Happening at the IJA ?

# Art Jennings 1913 - 2007

### Happy Dayze Are Here Again

By Robert Nelson (*The Butterfly Man*)

Years ago, there lived a man  
Who juggled tears of laughter  
He had a simple dream in mind  
To live forever after

Each breath he took, he tossed aloft  
To soar throughout the air  
A skillful gift he gave for free  
For all of us to share

I caught his breath like many do  
And pitched it to and fro  
And watched in awe, him come alive  
In each and every throw

The patterns he created  
Will never go away  
His breath between the objects  
Forever here to stay

So watch the space above you  
And listen now and then  
You might hear the angels laughing  
Happy Dayze are here again



*The following is an English translation of a 2003 article which was originally published in Les JAQasserries, the newsletter of Les Jongleurs Associés du Québec*

**Art Jennings - Father of the International Jugglers' Association** by Don Lewis

Art grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where his parents managed a Woolworth five and dime store. Instead of a baby sitter, 5 year old Art was often taken across the street to the Harris Family Theater where 20 vaudeville acts played continuously twice a day. A ticket cost \$0.30 for ten hours. This was in 1916, when vaudeville was the most important type of stage entertainment in the country. Over several years, Art would have seen all the great entertainers of the time. These were fabulous old theaters with elegant decorations, carpets, and painted ceilings. There were live musicians, large stages with impressive curtains.

Art has insatiable curiosity. Over the years, he has mastered many trades. He has been an engineer, pattern maker, magician, pilot, clown, silversmith, slack wire artist, and of course, juggler. He created one of the first theme parks in the US - Story Book Forest.

His performance career started with magic. He got involved with the International Brotherhood of Magicians in the 1930's. At the time, jugglers were a small special interest group within the IBM. There was no association especially for jugglers. Art Jennings would go on to change that.

Art often managed two careers. He would work at a "day" job as an engineer, and perform in Vaudeville theatres at night. He developed a solid clown act based on his character Happy Dayze. He maintained a set of index cards with every magic and juggling trick he had mastered. He had over 450 tricks in his deck of cards which he could mix and match to tailor his show to any audience. He toured his shows 39 or more weeks a year for over 17 years, all across the country.

He loved big cars, and had a custom made Cadillac that was half limousine and half Coupe de Ville built on an ambulance chassis. All the trunks and bags of props and costumes for his shows fit precisely into the car. When he had a gig at a school, he'd do a few tricks in the parking lot before "allowing" the kids to carry his gear inside.

Art has always been fascinated by native American culture. He would regularly do shows on reservations that other stars wouldn't bother with. Art is a master at producing

silver jewelry. His designs are often influenced by native patterns.

Art now lives in San Antonio, Texas. His mobility is a bit restricted, but he manages to live on his own in a comfortable house. He did not attend the IJA festival in Reno Nevada this year. I had taken one of our JAQ monogrammed shirts to present to him at the festival. So, I sent it to him by courier from Reno and he appreciated getting it while the festival was on. He sent a letter thanking all of us in Montreal and offering his good wishes.

The IJA was founded in Pittsburgh, July 17 1947. Some jugglers were in town for a meeting of the International Brotherhood of Magicians and didn't feel they were getting much respect. Art decided that it was time to create a group just for jugglers. Eight professional jugglers met over lunch and created the first set of by-laws for the new Association. It took several attempts to decide on a name, some wanted it to be the American Jugglers. But Art convinced everyone to call it International so that no-one would be excluded. He also insisted that the name have three words, because he had already designed a logo with three clubs. And so, they decided to call their new group the International Jugglers' Association.

The only requirement for membership in the new association was a pledge to "Render assistance to fellow jugglers". The IJA has had as many as 3000 members, over 50 annual festivals and produced numerous videos. Each year it sponsors the only organized juggling competitions in the world.

In fact, our own Emile Cary won a silver medal in the juniors competition on the IJA's 50th anniversary. Later in the evening after the competition, a group of us went back to the hotel to help Emile celebrate. Art Jennings was in the lobby along with two other juggling greats - Ernst Montego, winner of the IJA's historical achievement award, and Albert Lucas, the world's fastest juggler at the time. All three congratulated Emile and signed autographs. Art talked about some of his experiences, and I discovered that it can be really difficult to try to do a running translation when the speaker never stops! Art loved Emile's routine, because he created a character and told a story with juggling in the vaudeville tradition. He offered this advice: "Be kind to the people you meet on the way up the ladder, because you will meet them all again on the way down".

*Note: Some of the material in the above was found in a definitive Juggler's World article,*  
[www.juggle.org/archives/archives2/39-2/39-2.p20.htm](http://www.juggle.org/archives/archives2/39-2/39-2.p20.htm)

*The following is reproduced from Juggler's World: Vol. 39, No. 3*

**Remarks by Art Jennings** (Here is an edited version of remarks made by Art Jennings, an IJA founder and its first president at the IJA Birthday Party in Akron.)

For me to even attempt to say how I feel at this momentous occasion in any length of time would be absolutely impossible. It is overwhelming to see so many dedicated jugglers who have done so much to further our beloved art. Therefore, may I just raise one of my old juggling clubs in salute and tribute and say, "Happy Birthday!"...

1947 was a year of beginnings. All years are, but the beginnings of that time seemed more dramatic and more important. No beginning was as important to me as the realization of my dream to have a friendly organization of jugglers where they would help each other and preserve our beloved art. And to me, juggling is an art. Sadly, at that time some of my juggler friends would not talk to each other, and it was not uncommon for a professional juggler to eliminate a trick or two if another juggler was in the audience....

Talking pictures had sounded the death knell of vaudeville as we knew it... But there were lots of places for a variety act to work. Not only the theaters and the many clubs, but circuses

and ice shows and roller shows. Most of the fraternal organizations would have live shows on the weekends. There were more than a dozen legitimate theatrical agencies in Pittsburgh with national and even international connections. A good variety act could work around a major city almost indefinitely...

Still, there were those of us who truly believed that juggling might fade away just as the song and dance act had done. You see, juggling was not a sport. Juggling was strictly a part of show business. Consider the availability of props. Harry Lind was one of the few people producing professional quality juggling props, and he was becoming very selective in his clientele.

With all of that, for me to say that the formation of IJA has been responsible for the phenomenal growth and development of juggling would be an irresponsible statement. Yet I, for one, would like to believe that the organization of IJA was perhaps the catalyst, the beginning, perhaps even the foundation upon which that development has been built.

One cannot deny that the membership of IJA and the associates has provided the nucleus and the market for the books and the props and the schools without which that development and growth might never have taken place. For all you have done in the past 40 years, I thank you!

#### **Help Promote the IJA**, by *Steve Rahn*

The IJA is currently forming a Promotions Committee. This group of individuals will be tasked with coming up with ideas and then implementing them to the effect of having the IJA grow. Our goals will be to increase membership and to create a larger awareness of the benefits of membership to the public.

We are in the process of looking for individuals who would be interested to serve on this committee. There may be a

variety of different methods used to achieve our goals: for instance, one is expansion of our website for useful information for beginning jugglers, another is development of a 'This is the IJA' video that would need a nicely worded voice-over to be composed for it.

Anyone who is interested to be on this committee please email [promotions@juggle.org](mailto:promotions@juggle.org) and you will be contacted.

#### **Open to Members** by *Don Lewis*

The IJA Business forum will eventually be restricted to members. It is currently accessible by the world at large on the internet. A significant number of members have complained that the sometimes heated debates project a negative image of the IJA. It is important that all members have access to the forum, so this change will not be implemented until some changes are made to automate provision of forum access to members.

#### **Festival 2008 - Lexington KY July 14-20 2008.**

Richard Kennison has been appointed Festival Director. He will be working closely with John Satriano and Sandy Brown.

#### **Flying Props** by *Don Lewis*

I flew home from the festival in one day, but it took my prop bag nearly two weeks. After a succession of delayed flights I wasn't too surprised to find only one bag made it home with me. A daily call to the baggage call centre convinced me that the bag was evading capture. After a few days of no news, I started getting inquiries that the call centre seemingly knew nothing about. "Hello, this is Newbourg NY, why is your bag here?" I don't know, send it to Montreal, "Hello, this is Charlotte NC, we have your bag, but the tag says Montreal?". "Hello, this is Philadelphia, we're sending your bag to Montreal". Hello, this is Richmond VA, we have your bag?" And finally, "Hello, your bag is in Montreal, please pick it up before it escapes again". Thus proving the virtue of painting your name on your bag!

**A Bouquet of Year End Circus School Shows***by Melissa Legge*

This spring, students from three of Québec's circus schools showed audiences that juggling isn't just about throwing and catching anymore.

"For the end of the year show, we were asked to create a number that represented fire," said Véronique Provencher, who just finished her first year of the spécialité program at the École de Cirque de Québec (ÉCQ). "From there, it was two months of full-time creation with my partner, Jérémie Arsenault."

These numbers are a far cry from the sport juggling acts highlighted at competitive events. Although many of the performers featured in the shows performed feats of numbers, none of the acts were without strong artistic focus reaching far beyond the realms of technical elements combined with simple choreography. Strong character development was a significant part of this difference.

Gonzalo Locomo, a recent graduate of the École Nationale du Cirque (ÉNC), spent months working with creative directors from many different backgrounds on his graduation show. In the end, he finally modified his own number to make it more dynamic and to include more interaction with other performers.

"She wanted us to get involved in the story and develop our characters as we felt them," Locomo said, referring to his creative director, Catherine Tardif. In his show, Locomo played a drag queen who invaded a bank to stir things up. He said that the hardest part of the creation of the show was understanding what Tardif wanted, and being able to pull it off.

Another juggler who faced similar challenges to Locomo was Johann Fradette-Trépanier from the ÉCQ. His own artistic juggling number, which has evident dance influence, was adapted to the fantastic world in which his end of the year show was set. In his show, Trépanier played the fair elf.

Group juggling numbers were also featured in the ÉCQ and École de Cirque de Verdun (ÉCV) shows. At Verdun, over 40 students from various programs participated in a finale juggling number. Juggling coach Éric Soulard choreographed the number, which involved spinning for the less advanced students, and juggling for the more advanced. Although the number was far from perfect when the show premiered, it was a brave undertaking.

"We had been having a hard time because all of the jugglers of the group were soloists," said Ryunosuke (Ray) Yamazumi from ÉCQ. At his school, seven jugglers were asked to create a juggling number using umbrellas, and eventually also UV-sensitive rings. "It was very memorable for me that Francis, our juggling coach, one day gave us 15 minutes," said Ray. "All the jugglers had to think of three movements with umbrellas in that 15 minutes, and after we presented the movements that we found. That was so fun, to see what other people found since all the jugglers had different specialties; some liked to juggle with balls, somebody clubs..."

The jugglers and trainers of the circus schools in the province of Quebec are pushing their limits this year – and it's not to be able to juggle eight clubs or eleven rings... it's to take juggling to places that it has never been creatively. It will be interesting for circus enthusiasts worldwide to see what happens when graduates of these schools finally hit the stage.