



THE CJA'S HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



Welcome to the Christian Jugglers Association. I'm not sure whether something like this has been attempted before but I feel led of God to make an association like this possible. The thought of an organization like this has been on my mind for a few years. The reason I was inspired to learn and continue on with juggling was due to the fact I wanted to combine it with ministry. I have always seen juggling as a ministry and always will.

My frustration has been trying to find others who sought to do the same. Until this summer the only other Christian jugglers I knew were my juggling partner Neil Moody and my friend Bob Cates from Hamilton. My first attempts at getting to know other Christian jugglers were with the Christian Alliance for Performing Artists (CAPA) and the Fellowship of Christian Magicians (FCM). Both of these organizations have members who are jugglers but there has been very little dialogue between them in their publications.

It was not until this summer that the number of Christians jugglers I knew suddenly tripled. I took a trip to Chicago this July and at Willowcreek Community Church I met Don and Debbie Bursell. They juggle as a full-time ministry; something I did not think was possible. Next came my trip to Burlington, Vermont in August, for the International Juggler's Association's (IJA) annual festival. There Bob Cates arranged a workshop that 6 Christian jugglers attended. David Cain mentioned that he had also wanted to bring Christian jugglers together. So once again, the Christian Jugglers Association came to mind and this time I decided to act.

The association's humble beginnings started with 3 letters. I wrote both CAPA and the FCM to find out if I could receive mailing lists of jugglers in their associations. I also wrote *Juggler's World* to place an ad for the association. I further made a list of all those I believe are Christian jugglers while looking through old issues from CAPA, FCM and *Juggler's World*. After I was finished the list had a total of 21 names, 17 with addresses. (Since then, I have advertised on rec.juggling on the Internet and the number of names has increased to 36. Also I have found out that CAPA no longer exists, and so far the FCM has unfortunately not responded.) I was elated, but now the real task at hand; a newsletter of some form had to be made.

This is where the CJA stands. Actually the Christian Jugglers Association may not necessarily be its final name. Since it is in the beginning stages, I want to get suggestions for other possible names and a title for the newsletter. Any good suggestions? How about the logo? Does anyone have

another idea for the design? Another idea I'm tossing around is whether the organization should have a statement of faith, and if so, what should it include? I think a missions statement is needed but I have not firmed one up yet. Input on all these questions would be very helpful. You can either write me at the CJA address or email me on Internet <cs911455@ariel.cs.yorku.ca>.

Unlike the IJA, CAPA and FCM, where you can become a member and never get involved, I trust that everyone will have input into the CJA. The articles in future newsletters I trust will be material sent in from you and other Christian jugglers. Actually without input from other members I do not think that this newsletter will have much depth to it. One idea would be to write a short autobiography about yourself, your juggling and your ministry, like the one of me in "Meet the Christian Juggler" in this issue. Be sure to send along a photo with it. Another article idea is how to incorporate the gospel message with a juggling routine similar to my "Juggling with A Gospel Message" article. Other possibilities are accounts of interesting opportunity of ministry that you had, stories about how God has helped you in certain situations, and verses that have been key to you and your ministry. The possibilities are endless. Just send me something!

You may be wondering what I think regarding what denominations should be involved or what I consider a Christian. I personally am a Baptist, but what I like to say to people is "I'm a Christian with a capital 'C' and a baptist with a little 'b'." I also go to an interdenominational Christian seminary with students from over 30 denominations and I think it is great. So, I hope that this association will have a diversified background, from a wide range of denominations.

Not everything is up in the air (excuse the pun); there are a couple of things that I am sure of about the association. First, I plan to have four issues of the newsletter a year. Second, is I am going to send out a yearly CJA roster, once it gets established.

I debated about the membership cost. At first I thought I would make it a gift donation basis so that those who could not afford it could still be involved. Instead I have decided to make it as affordable as possible and for the first year it will be only \$6.00 US, for the U.S., \$7.00 CDN for Canada, and \$8.00 US, for foreign. I trust everyone will be able to afford these prices. It costs no more for a family subscription but please let me know exactly who the Christian jugglers are in the family. You can either send cash, a cheque or money order. Please make the cheque payable to Michael Koehler and not the CJA. This will cover the cost of the newsletter and the roster. If you

could donate a slightly higher amount than that, it would be appreciated since all the initial costs are coming from my pocket. As the only person really working on this so far I will gladly volunteer my time and effort in order to make this organization a possibility.

The best form of advertising for this association is you. Please send me a list of names and addresses of any Christian jugglers you know that might want to be a part of this association so that I can send them a free issue. Does anyone have the address for the following people? Ralph Dewey(FCM), Dan Fleming(CAPA), Michael Miclon(CAPA), and Daniel Nethercott(CAPA).

I'm also contemplating having a festival next year. Right now I'm thinking a Thursday to Sunday morning festival in June. It would be held at my church which is quite large and has nice high ceilings. It is located just outside of Toronto, Canada, about 15 minutes from the International airport. The cost for the festival would be minimal, with the possibility of sleeping at the church for accommodations. It would also give you a chance to see Toronto, a world class city and home of the World Champion Blue Jays! Please let me know if you would be interested and able to attend such a festival and which weekends in June would be possible for you.

Well that's about all that I have planned so far. Like I said, these are the humble beginnings to an organization that I hope will exist for years to come. I trust that when the time comes that I can no longer continue this ministry, someone else will take up the reins and see that the organization exists until the Lord returns. Please pray along with me, that this association will be used by God to help Christian jugglers be better ministers of God's grace.



Michael Koehler is the President and founder of the CJA.

MEET THE CHRISTIAN JUGGLER

"Hi there! Let me introduce myself. My name is Mike 'the Kleckerhead'. You are probably asking yourself, 'What on earth is a Kleckerhead?' Well, let me explain. A Kleckerhead is one who does Kleckerhead juggling, which comes from the German word 'Kleckern' meaning to mess up. So, when I mess up, I mean to do it! It's all part of the act. Therefore when I mess up I want you to cheer, laugh, and applaud." I open all of my acts with this explanation and continue throughout the show getting the audience involved with my juggling.

It took a few years for my partner and I to finally settle on a name. We thought about using names like "Perpetual Motion" and "No Strings Attached", only to find out that they had been used. We thought the name "Passing Like the Wind" was a little bit risqué. We finally settled on the name "The Kleckerheads", which my Youth Pastor had jokingly given us. (Actually he thought the "Neo-spastic Kleckerheads" was in order.)

I started juggling in May, 1989. Neil Moody, my juggling partner, and I would go to a friend's company to play some ping pong after working hours. While chatting at my friend's desk, I noticed three juggling bean bags. Like I had a few times before in my life, I again tried to learn the juggling pattern. With no one to teach me and just two onlookers who laughed at me, I started to make out the pattern. Before I knew it I had made 8 successful throws and was elated.

After that I was determined now to learn how to juggle. Over the next few weeks I would practice either in my room, which my parents did not like too much, or outside using all of our large backyard. Most of the motivation to continue learning came from the idea, that I could use juggling illustrations in a testimony I had to give to the youth group. Since I hated public speaking, I thought it would help take the attention off me and be kind of neat too. I never did give that testimony but I was hooked on juggling for life. About a month after learning, Neil decided that he wanted to learn too and so I gave my first juggling lesson. This started our juggling partnership that has lasted over 5 years.

I went to camp for the summer and did not think it was too "cool" to be juggling, so I did not practice much. By the end of the summer though, the camp director found out that I could juggle and had a juggling testimony in mind. So, at a church service we did in the town's Baptist church, I did the children's story. I was nervous because I did not like public speaking. Well the routine went fairly well. I focused on looking at the adults as one little gal had not learned how to sit in a skirt properly. I also had one of my balls end up in the second pew. It did not matter though, the people enjoyed it and complimented me afterwards. I knew then that I found something that I enjoyed.

The following Christmas, my skills leapt as I purchased a set of Jugglebug juggling clubs (Ouch!) from a Magic shop in Tampa, Florida. The next summer I was again at camp, but this time juggling was now "cool". I ran some juggling classes and taught many kids how to juggle. I also took opportunities to perform when I could.

Neil and I had been practicing pretty faithfully once a week for about a year. We entered the big

time when a man from my camp wanted us to come and juggle for a boy's group. We arrived at the church to find a small poster advertising us as "Two Outstanding Christian Jugglers". We joked they must mean "Two Outstanding Christians, who just happen to be jugglers." This would be the first of many fun gigs that we would have together.

Probably the gig I got most nervous about in my life was at a college and career Christmas banquet. It was the first time I would be juggling in front of my peers. I was so nervous that I could hardly eat dinner. I spent the whole day trying to get a 3 ball routine and 3 club routine to work, each lasting only a couple minutes. The performance went really well, and everyone loved it. I remember one person after the show telling me "I didn't think you were so coordinated."

By now I was really hooked and I purchased rings, real clubs in the form of Dubes and a unicycle. The summer of '91 I went to Ecuador for the second time on a missions team with Sprint. I had the summer of my life down there. It included having a five minute spot in each church service we did, doing some ball and club juggling. The Ecuadorians who are really reserved would always break out into applause as they appreciated what I had to offer. I would then read for them in Spanish the parable of the talents. I also taught numerous people, Ecuadorians and team members alike, how to juggle. I was even successful in teaching a team member to pass and we did a couple shows together.

Neil and I continued to practice together and do the occasional gig. The next summer I was back at camp, this time as program director. I made sure juggling was an integral part of camp. I organized a fun day called "Circus Day", so I could teach everyone in the camp to juggle as well as perform feats. I had two other apprentices, so, I tried some three way passing for the first time. Midway through the summer, my partner and I, along with my folks headed to Montreal for the IJA festival. I call it my piece of "juggling heaven". We were blown away. To be among 1000 people as crazy about juggling as we were was something else. The props again increased as we picked up devilsticks (What a kind of prop is that for a Christian? I say, "Hey we beat on it, just like we do on the devil!") and cigar boxes.

The worst gig I have had thus far was when Neil and I showed up at an old folks home at 7:00pm as we were told by the caterers who got us the gig. When we arrived, we found out the banquet started at 5:00pm, and the caterers had left along with half of our audience. We rushed on with no warm up, did 10 minutes of absolutely pathetic juggling and got our tails out of there. Another gig that I had ended in an unusual way. It was my first gig for a new agent, so I wanted it to be good. I did my finale of 3 machetes on a rola bola with a blindfold. When I finished I turned around to reveal the hole in the blindfold. One kid yelled out "Cheater!" and soon every kid was chanting "Cheater! Cheater! Cheater!" Not quite the way to end a show!

Probably the best gigs I have had were up at a winter retreat for my denomination's college and careers. There are usually about 400+ there and in

front of them you can do no wrong. I enjoy trying out my new bits there and seeing how they go over.

This summer was my best juggling summer by far. I did a few gigs throughout the first part of the summer. Then in August, I quit my job and went down to Burlington, Vermont. Again, it was another excellent festival. Except for the questionable Renegade act, I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I picked up two diabolos, to join the new craze. Then a week later, I had the opportunity to be the best man at my juggling partner's wedding. After I gave my speech, I got to juggle. This is something that we had planned years earlier. We agreed to be each other's best man and juggle at the reception. I did a little tribute to Neil and juggled every prop I had learned to juggle in a five minute routine to music. It went over really well. The last two and half weeks of the summer I was able to juggle daily at the Canadian National Exhibition. I had an amazing audition at the beginning of the summer and made it. It was my first real street performing opportunity and I enjoyed it. It was also great making some good money, doing something I love to do.

Looking back on these last five years of juggling, I am very thankful. The Lord has given me a wonderful gift that I hope I have used effectively for him. At times it has been difficult when the focus is on me, to realize that all I am is a result of God's wonderful grace. I trust the Lord will continue to use me and my juggling as I seek to do his will in the future.

I am currently in my last year of seminary. Next summer I plan to juggle full-time, and do as many ministry engagements as possible. After that only the Lord knows, as I hope one day to be a foreign missionary.

My little piece of wisdom to all those who juggle and claim the name of Christ is: "Keep your eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."



JUGGLING WITH A GOSPEL MESSAGE

MY TESTIMONY

Even though I have done many church gigs, this is the only juggling routine with a gospel message that I have invented myself. I did it less than four months after learning how to juggle for the kid's story at a small church. Even though it was intended for children, I think adults could appreciate some of the lessons that it contains. All that is needed for this routine is a set of 3 juggling balls, preferably bouncing ones. Basically the routine is a comparison of the similarities between my life as a juggler and my life as a Christian. First I explain some aspect of juggling and do a trick. Then I compare it to something similar in my Christian walk. Instead of writing out the whole thing, I will do a couple of examples of parallels and then give you the complete testimony in point form. Please feel free to use any or all of these examples in developing your own juggling testimony. Maybe in a future issue, I will write it out in detail.

Example #1 Pretending to be A Juggler/Christian.

Before I knew how to juggle I would pretend that I was juggling by throwing one ball around in my hands [shower one ball in both hands] or even try to do a more difficult trick and juggle two balls in two hands [shower two balls in both hands]. But I knew that I wasn't really juggling. I was only pretending to juggle because you need to be using more props than hands. In the same way, until I was 13 years old, I was pretending to be a Christian. I would go to church and say all the right things making people believe that I was a Christian. This would all change though when I went to school where I would swear and fight. I knew that I was just pretending to be a Christian.

Example #2 Still drop my juggling balls/still make mistakes

Even though it has been 5 years since I learned how to juggle, I still make the occasional mistake and drop a ball. That's why I'm called "the Kleckerhead". The key though is when I drop a ball I do not just give up and forget juggling. Rather, I go and pick up the ball and continue to juggle. In the same way, in my Christian walk, I occasionally make a mistake and sin. Instead of just giving up on Christianity, I ask God for forgiveness and he picks me up and I continue to live for God.

Here is the point form version of the entire testimony. Actually a few points are those I have thought of but never included in the actual testimony. The left column is the juggling illustration, the middle is the juggling trick and the right is the Christian parallel. A couple you'll notice are not parallels but rather juggling illustrations. (e.g. life turning around.)

-Intro: Tell them what I am about to do

JUGGLING EXPERIENCE

- see jugglers in circuses, on T.V.
- pretend to juggle
- try to juggle
- committed myself to juggling
- life was going one way
- time to practice
- read books about juggling
- like to talk to experts
- still drop balls but pick them up
- patterns were confusing to learn
- distracted from balls
- go fast with balls
- proud of my juggling
- parents didn't like the noise
- determined to do tricks
- cannot see my hands but trust them
- grabbing hold of balls
- not a perfect juggler

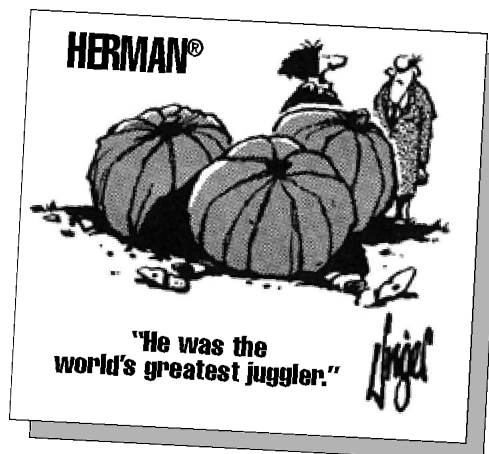
JUGGLING TRICK

- [couple of easy tricks]
- [one/two ball shower]
- [clumsily with three]
- [no juggling]
- [left shower to right shower]
- [trick that takes lots of practice]
- [trick learned from book]
- [trick learned from expert]
- [drop and pick up]
- [Mill's Mess]
- [look away and drop]
- [juggle real low and drop]
- [trick with a drop]
- [bounce hard on floor]
- [trick that took determination]
- [trick where always looking up]
- [clawing]
- [trick with drop]

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

- see Christians at church, home
- pretend to be a Christian
- try to be a Christian
- committed to Christ
- Christ came in and it changed directions
- time to grow
- read God's book the Bible
- like to talk to God
- still make mistakes but God picks me up
- confused sometimes with Christian walk
- distracted in Christian walk
- take walk to fast and not patient enough
- took too much pride in my Christian walk
- friends didn't like the fact I was a Christian
- determined to do God's work
- cannot see God but have to trust him
- grabbing hold of areas of my life that I should give to God
- not a perfect Christian

-conclusion: Sum up with a challenge



JUGGLING IN SCRIPTURE

Did you know that juggling is actually mentioned in the Bible? Here are a few verses about juggling that I managed to find while going through a KJV concordance. Try and see if you can find other juggling verses in different versions of the Bible. If you find some be sure to send them along and I will put them in the next issue.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,...`Thou shalt cast four rings of gold.'" Exodus 25:1,12

"He cast four rings" Exodus 38:5

As much as I hate clubs being called pins I guess that is what they called them back then.

"All the pins of the court, shall be of brass." Exodus 27:19 and Exodus 38:20.

Who would have thought that even the Lord would get involved in juggling?

"In that day the Lord will take away...the rings...and the crisping pins." Isaiah 3:18,21,22

Once again the Lord gets involved.

"Behold, the Lord will..toss thee like a ball." Isaiah 22:18

The best juggling verse that I found in the KJV, is a good piece of advice for all you ring passers, like myself and my partner.

"As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful." Ezekiel 1:18

PRAY FOR THE CJA (Adopted from CAPA)

- 1.) That the CJA would glorify our Lord Jesus Christ and be effective in helping to carry out the Great Commission.
- 2.) That God would continue to build our network of Christian jugglers.
- 3.) That God would provide all the resources that CJA needs to carry out its mission.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THESE CJA MEMBERS

That they would continue to grow in knowing Christ and making Him known, and that God would give them wisdom, faith, vision and humility as they minister through word, deed and performance.

- 1.) Michael Koehler, 16 Grovetree Pl.; Bramalea, ON; CANADA; L6S 1S8
- 2.) Neil Moody, 12364 Kennedy Rd. N.; Brampton, ON; CANADA; L6V 1A1
- 3.) Bob Cates, Konarskio 6-81; Vinius 2009; Lietuva-LITHUANIA (Until May, 1995)

PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN YOUR CJA APPLICATION

NAME(S) ... ADDRESS ... CITY ... STATE/PROV. ... COUNTRY ... ZIP/POSTAL CODE ...
HOME PHONE # ... BUSINESS PHONE # ... LOCAL CHURCH AFFILIATION ... OTHER VARIETY ART INTERESTS ...
EMAIL ADDRESS ... AND HOW YOU CAME TO KNOW ABOUT THE CJA.

Please send \$6 US for U.S. membership, \$7 CDN for a Canadian membership and \$8 US for a foreign membership. It is payable in cash, cheque or money order. Please make cheque payable to Michael Koehler.



SEND TO:

CHRISTIAN JUGGLERS ASSOCIATION
16 Grovetree Place
Bramalea, ON
CANADA
L6S 1S8
Phone # (905) 791-1372



FINAL THOUGHTS

I truly hope you have enjoyed the premier issue of the Christian Jugglers Association Newsletter. I trust you have enjoyed it enough that you will become a member of the CJA. It has been a joy to write and I look forward to future issues. I hope that many of you will write with stories, ideas and recommendations. Also make sure to let me know about your thoughts of a festival for June 95. My sincere thanks goes out to Kevin Brandon who helped me do the layout and design. Also thanks to Tracy Sproule, Neil Moody and my Dad for proofreading this; without them this would have been a mess. May God continually bless all you jugglers who seek to follow Him and do His will.

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart,
as working for the Lord, not for men,
since you know that you will receive an inheritance
from the Lord as a reward.
It is the Lord Christ you are serving."
Colossians 3:23,24.