

Being a clown takes know-how

By ETHEL EDWARDS

Finding one's identity isn't easy, especially when you're a clown. First you've got to settle on a name, and then you've got to find a face.

David Dery of Northville, now known as Dee Dee the Clown, used to be the little name kid. They called him everything from "Rudolph" at Christmas to "Mr. Clown" and "Ducky."

His new name, which he plans to keep, was chosen for him by Bill Krum, manager at Northville Charley's where Dee Dee performs Mondays at Family Night. Dee Dee stands for his initials.

The clown face he wears is chalk white with a big red nose and an incredible red and green mouth. His round eyeglasses are topped with fringed eyelashes.

"THIS IS the first face I've ever been happy with," he said. "I don't want to change faces ever again."

It takes Dery two hours to put on his make-up, and he usually does this at the restaurant, for understandable reasons. If

he does it beforehand, "I get some of the strangest looks," he said.

Once, driving to the restaurant already made up, he was stopped by a police car. The officer demanded, "What are you doing?" The question turned into a friendly chat, and suddenly Dery realized, "I was five after five and I was going to be late for work."

The helpful officers "broke a flashing light through Northville" to escort Dee Dee to work.

Being a clown isn't only fun. It's hard work and expensive too. Dery estimates it costs him \$8 an hour, including his costume and the balloons, at four cents each, he blows up for the children.

Actually, Dery is a cook at Northville Charley's. When he isn't clowning on Mondays, he works in the kitchen making bread and pizzas.

HE GAINED experience as a clown at another restaurant where he used to work. A clown Dery starred him here, and also taught him to make several balloons. Dee Dee, all at all, five-inches of him.

is dressed in a green and yellow suit of clove-patterned fabric. His hat is a derby with a flower sticking on a wire. His shoes are green sneakers with bows.

Talking about the high cost of clowning, he said clown suits are not cheap. He pointed to his leather hat. "I just bought this wig today. It cost me \$28."

Then Dery extended a sneezed shoe. "I've got to get some clown shoes. You mail away to New York for them."

When Northville Charley's opened last fall, Monday Night Football on a giant screen was an attraction. After baseball another feature was needed, and Dery offered his services as a clown.

When families arrive, they are asked, "Are you here for Dee Dee the Clown?" and ushered into the back room if they are interested. There's a kiddie menu with Wing Ding chicken wings, burgers, hot dogs and a cone sundaer.

For the grove-ups the regular menu offers ribs, Chef Larry's pizza and a variety of fish and seafood, in this informal Chuck Murr restaurant.

Dee Dee the Clown blows up balloons for the children, and their parents, too. Some boys and girls ask for exotic animals. He said such as an Alaskan Schweeser or a Pregnant Cow.

"I get letters from kids that can't write or kids talk to you that can't talk," Dery said.


One child approached the table during the interview to ask Dee Dee, "Were your Mom and Dad clowns?" He said yes. Another day a little girl leaned over to give him a kiss. "She got a whole faceful of white make-up," he recalled.

A niece of Northville 28-year-old Dery lives at home with his parents. He performs for charities without charge.

"I do the freestyles and charge my friends. I'm getting experience," he said. Giving some tips on balloon artists, he said, "The only trick is not to be afraid of them that they're going to pop. Don't blow them up all the way and do them about them from one end."

To get the balloon started, "Blow from your lungs down from the diaphragm. There's no secret. You've got to get used to it. Try blowing up 250 of these a night."

Dee Dee the Clown stretches out with Ricky Fenstermacher, 5 (left); Heather Sixt, 5, and Chris Sixt, 9. (Staff photo by Art Emanuel)



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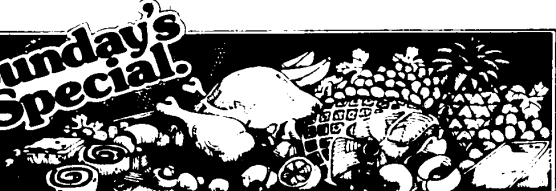
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