



Jack Hay, a student at Ten Mile Road Elementary School, is using his summer learning to be a clown.



Irwin Romig makes up with his students showing how he converts into Ricky the Clown.



Nine-year-old Ann Brown struggles with her first try at applying grease paint.

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Photos by Cyd Abbat

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Brian McKnight, one of the youngest students in the clown school, gets an assist with his new clown face from his teacher.

Students are serious about clowning around

By LORRAINE MCCLISH

About a dozen aspiring clowns entered class in the Farmington Community Center this week armed with cold cream and grease paint, mirrors and wigs for another lesson in the ways of the circus, rodeo and vaudeville clown.

"Don't make-up to look like any other clown or you'll publicize him. Be your own clown with your own clown face," said teacher Irwin Romig.

Romig alternates between his natural voice and the voice he developed for his "Ricky the Clown" character, keeping up a running patter to his students while he puts on powder over his grease paint, helps a youngster paint in his eye make-up, and gives another student a batch of pictures to get ideas.

The session was one of six where clown personalities are chosen, then followed through with costume, make-up, tricks on walking, talking, gags, bits, pantomime and props to turn them into the clown they'd like to be.

SOME OF THE NOVICES in the clown

school already have had a chance to perform with Ricky, who brought them along to help in a Fourth of July celebration.

They will be performing again with Ricky in a show set for July 15 in Tel-Huron Shopping Center, with our man freedom train, our caliano and a lot of bal-lyhoos," Romig said.

Ricky's caliano is a made-up name for a player piano he devised himself with whistles and chimes the clown uses in his shows at picnics, malls, church and school engagements, or any public affair where he performs.

"We give continuous entertainment," he said. "Students in my clown school help with sing-alongs of the old time songs."

Students in the clown school can be of any age, and in the current one in the center, the youngest is seven. The oldest is Wanda Ferguson, a teacher at Redford Union High School, who clowning for the younger ones in class with an "old wig that didn't fit, so I spray painted it red for my costume," she said.

Before the clown school classes end, students will have a session on building or collecting their own props for gags, drawing

on Romig's background as a "producing clown."

THE PRODUCING CLOWN in a circus, the teacher explained to his students, is the one who brings all the props for the others, or the "suitcase clown" to use in the show.

Romig started clowning in the Romig and Hoonoy Circus at the age of seven. His mother was a tight rope walker and his father, a cowboy.

Now, his wife, Rose, whom he calls "Aunt Rose," while the two are performing, assists in the act as straight man. When a comic bit of magic comes into the act, a give-away of how the trick is done, is the finale, affected by Rose in her straight man role.

Rose also assists her husband in the clown school, and performs for the students at the end of each class, and was ready with props when Romig went through his "Professor Ricky" act, then donned a cowboy hat to show how to do a few tricks with a lasso.

A second session of classes begins July 20 and a third session begins Aug. 10. Registrations are now being taken at the Community Center.

Election is on to choose nation's official flower

By LYNN ORR

What could be more appropriate in a bi-centennial-election year than an election of national significance that lacks official sanction: huge conventions and candidates with agreed petitions.

"Help Pick An Official National Flower" is the motto on posters draping ballot boxes throughout the nation at FTD participating florist shops.

"This is a fun election—you don't even have to register," said public relations adviser for Florists' Transworld Deliver Association Ron Odgers, who urges everyone to stop in at a local shop and vote for a sentimental favorite.

Attempting to garner support for their election, the FTD held a kickoff luncheon last week at their new international headquarters in Southfield to announce the balloting that will continue throughout the month of July.

Results will be announced in August and FTD officials hope to present to Congress the results that may solve a "national dilemma."

Lavemakers have introduced various bills in Congress to designate a national flower, but so far the United States has lagged behind other countries in this endeavor.

THE FTD HOPES to change all that with a national election that will give lawmakers a "people's choice." Although write-in votes are allowed, the candidates include the apple blossom, azalea, begonia, black-eyed Susan, carnation, carnation, chrysanthemum, corn tassel, daffodil,

dahlia, daisy, dogwood, geranium, gladiolus, lilac, lily, magnolia, margold, mountain laurel, orchid, pansy, peony, petunia, rhododendron, rose, snapdragon, tulip and yucca.

In 1958, in the only previous public poll for a national flower, more than one million ballots were cast in FTD shops, and the rose won hands down. But Congress buckered rather than legislated, and the rose withered on the vine.

"FTD hopes the public may succeed where the politicians failed," said Odgers. "They won't have to worry about any flower flaps; the people will have picked it."

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Not so, says FTD. Although the vote is one, every state has an official flower; one would assume that problems would have arisen because congressmen were promoting their state flowers.

Tennessee's state flower, Sen. Howard Baker (R-Tenn.) has introduced a bill to

make the margold the national flower, as has Sen. Mike Mansfield (D-Montana).

"THEY SAY THAT any man who would vote against his wife, his mother-in-law and his late father-in-law would have to be crazy," said Sen. Baker. The allusion was to his father-in-law, the late Sen. Everett Dirksen, who lobbied loudly and eloquently, but unsuccessfully, to get the margold voted the national flower.

Some congressmen are pushing Michigan's state flower, the apple blossom, coincidentally the home state of President Ford.

U.S. Rep. Mike McCormack said, "The apple blossom is the all-American flower, just as the apple is the all-American food."

Whatever the outcome, FTD officials hope their "fun election" comes at the

right time to achieve some lasting results.

"It was not a time when the country was looking for this kind of thing," said FTD official Charlie Coyle, referring to the 1958 election. Even though the rose was the primary candidate then, a dark horse may be able to bust out the field.

Trying to maintain an objective stance as possible, FTD has printed a handbook with photos of the candidates and an election newsletter with definitions of the candidates in the "language of flowers."

Although the corn tassel is without a symbolic meaning, some of the candidates' literature include: rose—love, dahlia—instability, lily—purity and sweetness, orchid—magnificence, and the mountain laurel—ambition.

THE PETUNIA's slogan is "never despair," which, if word gets out, may make it a hands-down favorite. Dogwood—durability and daisy—unconcern also may fight a hard campaign if the balloting goes down to the wire.

Expecting about two million votes, FTD hopes the bi-centennial year will produce a national flower like the maple leaf of Canada, the thistle of Scotland, the rose of England and the tulip of the Netherlands.

"We have a national everything-else," said Coyle, "so why not a national flower?"

Why not, indeed? If Michigan can have a state rock in the Petoskey Stone, the proposition certainly seems reasonable. If you vote, you may be your favorite enthroned or at least you will have a say in the "flower flag." Remember taxation without representation?



Shoppers at all Florists Transworld Deliver (FTD) participating florist shops are asked to choose a sentimental favorite to help elect the nation's official flower.