

Clown Camp Memories 1990 thru 2009

(Minus two years)

By Mista Wilt



The year 1990 was a turning point in my life. I had no idea what awaited me in La Crosse, Wisconsin. It was one of my first road trips out of Ohio where I lived at that time. My life would forever change and never be the same again. So many people I would meet, so many friendships, so many learning experiences, so many things to bring back to my life, as it would never be again. I remember that first year thinking how many people really are clowns. There were so many colors, so many personalities, and so many memories. Each year when I arrived in La Crosse was another turning point and growth as a clown and as a person. I would spend each year back in Ohio planning the next year at Clown Camp.

I was so thrilled in 1993 when I was able to move from Ohio to the beautiful state of Wisconsin. Thanks to a friend who I met at Clown Camp I would begin a new job in Wisconsin and better yet be closer to drive to Clown Camp!

Each year I learned new ideas as a clown and a person. The years melted together with all the great friends I had made and continue to keep. The towels, the notebooks, the T-shirts and the CD's. Mementos that I never want to part with...ever.

I will always remember the world's largest pie fight in 1995 at Clown Camp's 15-year reunion. It was the best fight I have ever been in...ever! I look at the pictures that were taken and I remember how I felt. What excitement with the TV crews and the La Crosse fire fighters who were there to "blow off" the remnants of the pies. This was the year I got familiar with the surrounding areas of La Crosse including the "lagoon" area, near Myrick Park where folks could walk and breathe in the beauty of the area.

Many other areas of La Crosse I hold deep in my heart...downtown with the gift shop that sells "cheese things," including cheese head hats and T-shirts, and the ice cream parlor and the candy store. My favorite place to go to see the real beauty of the area is Grand Dad's Bluff. What an awesome view and what a great place to go in my head when I want to get away from it all.

Along came 1996 a year I would like to forget in real life, but once again Clown Camp makes things easier to take! By this time I had a few friends that I would see once a year at Clown Camp. After Clown Camp I knew I could keep chugging along in real life!

The years go so fast and Clown Camp was the highlight of every year. When the year 2001 came I decided to do something different and not go to Clown Camp. Wow what a mistake! Each day of Clown Camp week I recounted the memories of picture day, the auction etc. My thoughts were in La Crosse the whole week even though I was not physically at camp, my mind was there wondering why I was not there! That was one of the worse weeks of my life. In 2002 I decided to try some new things, but again my thoughts were in La Crosse and what was I missing.

By 2003 I once again drove the 228 miles to La Crosse from Milwaukee, but little did I know that would be the last year I would drive by myself. Once again I found new friendships and renewed friendships from years past. Could it get any better?

In 2005 I was able to make a dream of mine come true. I not only made it to Clown Camp in La Crosse, but I was able to travel to Japan with a bunch of clowns. One of my life long dreams was to visit Japan.

Who better to be with than some old friends and some new Japanese friends? Clown Camp in Japan was quite different than La Crosse, but very similar as well. I learned so many things, saw so many things, it was truly an experience I will never forget...ever.

In 2006 I had a new experience under my clown wig from attending Clown Camp in Japan. I found I had lots of new Japanese friends. What fun it was to talk, or try to talk to my Japanese friends who speak little or no English!

2007 was yet another new experience in La Crosse. We would live in dorms that had air conditioning and elevators. I was pleasantly surprised by the changes from archaic to modern.

2008 was another great year. However it seemed the drive to Clown Camp might be my last! The tornados swirled around us as my friend, Darlene, "Darn It," and I prayed we would once again make it to La Crosse despite, the rain, and the wind. We did make it with some scary stories to tell.

Sadly the news came that 2009 would be the last year of Clown Camp. I don't know how I will survive! Maybe I will figure that out during Clown Camp 2009.

Maybe 2010 will bring me to another State for yet another chapter in my life as a clown and as a person. Who knows...the sky is the limit according to my memories of standing on Grand Dad's bluff looking over La Crosse and my many memories of Clown Camp at UW-La Crosse.

Thank you for the great memories of my 18 years attending Clown Camp in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and fulfilling my life long dream of visiting Japan with a bunch of clowns.

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