

## The CUBA PROJECT 2006 to 2021

**Bonnie Eccles, Adrienne Hunter, 'Tim' Cremata,**

**and Bunky/Joan Barrington**

### **Summer 2008 Serendipity!**

Through **Bonnie Eccles**, Teacher, Travel Agent,  
**Joan Barrington**, Founder, Fundraiser, Trainer and Therapeutic Clown 'Bunky' of **The  
Therapeutic Clown Program at SickKids (in Toronto)**

meets

**Dr Adrienne Hunter**, PhD, Canadian Language Advisor to The Cuban Ministry of Public  
Health, at a party in Guelph.

Adrienne asks Joan **'What is a therapeutic clown?'**

Joan's explanation of therapeutic clowning prompts Adrienne to invite *Joan and Bunky* to come to Cuba and play with her husband, Lionel, who has suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and does not speak.

Some weeks later, Joan shows Adrienne the educational therapeutic clowning video **'Beyond  
Laughter'**.

Adrienne realizes the impact this video would have in Cuba. She decides to make a Spanish version and take it to Havana.

Back in Cuba, Adrienne shows the video to **Carlos Alberto 'Tim' Cremata**, Founder and  
Director of **La**

**Colmenita**

(Little Beehive),

*Cuban Children's National Theatre Company*

He is enthusiastic about Joan's work.

## Winter 2009

Through an invitation from Adrienne, Joan travels with 'Bunky' to Cuba to play with her husband Lionel. The interaction and connection with Lionel produces a positive response. He speaks for the *first time!*

During this visit, Joan, as **Founder and Director of Therapeutic Clowns International (TCI)**, meets

### **Carlos 'Tim' Cremata**

. He is eager to get involved and find a way to introduce therapeutic clowning into Cuba. A Round Table meeting takes place with 'Tim' and his staff at the headquarters of La Colmenita.

## Fall 2010

**Cremata** arranges for Joan to demonstrate therapeutic clowning at the **Wm. Soler Pediatric Hospital**. The video '**Beyond Laughter**'

is shown to the hospital Director. He is enthusiastic about this new model of clowning, so different from clowns that periodically visit his hospital to *entertain* the children in a theatre setting.

## Spring 2012

At the invitation of **Cremata**, Joan and her Mexican TCI colleague, **Lucy Ibarra**, Clinical Psychologist and Actor, offer a

***one-week workshop***

on the fundamental aspects of therapeutic clowning to 12 adult instructors from La Colmenita.

**Adrienne**

and

**Bonnie**

take part as TCI observers and recorders.

The **Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP)** through **PAMI** ((Programa de Atencion Materno Infantil, Programme for Maternal Child Care)

**request a proposal from Joan**

for the inclusion of health-care personnel in the training of therapeutic clowns.

**The proposal is accepted in January 2013.** Joan prepares to return to Havana with Lucy Ibarra.

**Spring 2013**

A TCI-MINSAP ***two-week workshop*** is held at the **Wm. Soler Hospital**. This is the first workshop requested by PAMI of the Ministry of Public Health to train therapeutic clowns to work in children's hospitals throughout Cuba. The 12 participants include psychologists, physical rehabilitators, professional clowns, actors and three of La Colmenita trainees from the previous workshop in 2012.

Contact is made with the **Cruzada por la Alegria** (Crusade for Happiness) of hospital clowns working in Santiago de Cuba. Their **Director,**  
**Dr. Manuel Verdecia, Oncologist,**  
visits the workshop to observe the TCI model of therapeutic clowning and presents his Cruzada model.

### Summer 2013

The 'La Colmenita Project' begins therapeutic clowning in the children's ward of the Cancer Hospital, in Havana one day a week, and the 'Wm. Soler Project' establishes a Therapeutic Clown Centre, and two trainees clown twice a week in that hospital.

### Fall 2013

A **third workshop** is held at the Wm. Soler hospital. **Adrienne Hunter** attends and reports to Joan. The two instructors are Joan's Cuban trainees:

**Aniet Venereo**

from the 2012 workshop, and

**Reyna de la Paz Campos**

from the 2013 workshop.

Many of the 16 participants are subsequently incorporated into the '**Wm. Soler Project**'. Three new projects begin at three different children's hospitals in Havana.

### Spring 2014

The 'La Colmenita Project' travels to Santa Clara to demonstrate therapeutic clowning to the **Expressive Arts Project**

,  
**Por Una Sonrisa**

(For a Smile), centred at the Las Villas provincial pediatric hospital. The

**Director, Tanya Ortega Hernandez,**

expresses interest in incorporating therapeutic clowns into their project. This takes place nine months later.

The 'Wm. Soler Project' makes a presentation of therapeutic clowning at the ***International Longevity Conference*** held at the Havana Convention Centre. They also participate in the **Festival de Narices Rojas** (the Red Nose Festival) in Matanzas. The 'La Colmenita Project' is featured at **the Clown Festival in Las Tunas** as therapeutic clowns.

## Winter 2015

In February, **Joan Barrington** returns to Cuba with her professional clown persona, *Bunky*, to shadow and supervise the two Cuban therapeutic clowns whom she trained in 2012 and 2013, and who have become trainers. She is accompanied by

**Adrienne Hunter**

, now TCI Representative in Cuba, and

**Bonnie Eccles**

, now TCI Administrator. The TCI members are joined by

**Dra. Milagros Dominguez**

of

**PAMI**

(Programa de Atencion Materno Infantil, Programme for Maternal Child Care, of MINSAP) and the two Cuban trainers,

**Aniet Venereo**

and

**Reyna de la Paz Campos**

They embark on a *cross-country tour* to visit two existing hospital clown projects in **Santiago de Cuba**,

directed by

**Dr. Manuel Verdecia and Dr. Eduardo Montoya**

. After exchanging information and experience with these two projects, the six-member Canadian-Cuban group goes on to

**Santa Clara**

. Here, the new Cuban trainers, Aniet and Reyna, offer a

***one-week workshop***

to members of the

**Expressive Arts Project. Joan**

is pleased with their progress and development.

At the end of the tour, the **First Meeting** of the **Group of Therapeutic Clowns of Cuba** is held in **Havana**

**ana**

with representatives of the existing seven projects nationwide.

**The Group of Therapeutic Clowns of Cuba**

is formally organized and

**Aniet Venereo**

is elected

**National Coordinator**

, with three regional coordinators (western, central and eastern).

## **SPRING 2016**

Aniet Venereo, Adrienne Hunter and Joan Barrington present the paper **'Building a Therapeutic Clown Community in Cuba'**

at the

*International Meeting of Healthcare Clowning*

(HCIM 2016) in

**Lisbon, Portugal.**

Important international relationships are established during this conference, with future visits to Cuba from some of these participants.

## **FALL 2016**

Joan Barrington is the Keynote Speaker at the **Scientific Meeting of Therapeutic Clowns of Cuba** in **Santiago de Cuba**, October 2016.

Adrienne Hunter presents the Montreal, Canada

**Jovia**

video,

*La Belle Visite.*

**Joan** and **Aniet** are requested by **Dr. Manuel Verdecia** to give a **one-week pre-meeting**

**workshop**

to train

their hospital clowns in the TCI Model of therapeutic clowning.

**Laura Fernandez**

joins this workshop as a

**Guest Trainer**

from

**Germany.**

**SPRING 2017**

The unexpected rapid growth of therapeutic clowning in Cuba overwhelms the resources of PAMI. Sponsorship is transferred to the **Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation,** both part of **MINSAP.**

**Therapeutic clowning is recognized as a legitimate therapy.**

**Marianne Clarac of Rire Medicin, France** visits Havana and offers a **three-day workshop** on the intricacies of therapeutic clowning with infants.

**Aniet Venereo**

organizes the workshop with representation of all the therapeutic clown projects in Cuba.

**FALL 2018**

The Group of Therapeutic Clowns of Cuba and the Cardio Centre of the Ledeia Children's Teaching Hospital in Havana announce the **Congress of Therapeutic Clowns: Art and Health 2018** to be held in Havana, Cuba, *October 17 to 19, 2018*

Wm. Soler  
**First Cuban**

The Keynote Speaker is the **Canadian Director of Jovia, Montreal, Melissa Holland**. Eight Canadian therapeutic clowns participate in this Congress.

**Joan Barrington, TCI,**

and

**Sarah Patterson, SickKids, Toronto**

present a paper entitled

**'Partners in Play'**

(the relationship between the therapeutic clown and the Child Life Specialist).

**2019, 2020, 2021**

Plans are being made for a ***Second Cuban Congress of Therapeutic Clowns*** to be held in **October 2021**

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Because of Covid-19, this is postponed to **January 2022**.