

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Thank You

The 2009 Circus Committee and Chairman would like to thank all the Nobles, their families, friends, and the Shrine Units and Clubs who volunteered at this year's Circus. Without your support, the Circus would not have been successful. As a week-long event, the Circus requires not only a lot of prior planning, but also a lot of man (and woman) hours during the course of the 12 shows. The feedback received so far has been very favorable, and we appreciate your help in making the 2009 Circus a success.

Fraternally,

Roger Metcalfe, Chairman



Peter K. Stone
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



Hermes Boyatis
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Thomas W. Friberg
PRODUCTION MANAGER

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Hank Gilhooly	Rag Top

First Place Dromedary Awards Imperial Shrine of North America

2007, 2005, 2004, 2003, 2001, 2000, 1998, 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994,
1992, 1991 *Honorable Mentions: 2006, 2002, 1993, 1990, 1989*

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New Potentate, New Patients, Less Hospitals? The State of our Hospital System

JUST like the Energizer bunny, the Aleppo Shriners Children's Transportation Fund keeps on going. Illustrious Robert F. Smith has already authorized approximately \$200,000.00 to transport children to our Hospitals. On April 28th, Illustrious Bob was signing a Transportation check for \$29,300.00 when he received a request to fly two children from Mexico at a cost of \$43,000.00. On Wednesday, another request came in requesting a flight from Puerto Rico for an additional \$24,000.00. Thankfully, the upcoming North-South High School Football Classic will help replenish the fund.

You may have heard in the news that we may be closing some of our Shrine Hospitals. This is due to declining donations, and the decreasing Endowment Fund due to the fall of the market and the loss of so many members. However, nothing will be done until the Representatives vote at the Imperial Session in San Antonio, TX.

We will not know for sure what will be presented until we see the call for the Imperial. The Representatives are receiving updates and potential options daily. One option would be to close Erie, Greenville, Shreveport, Spokane, Springfield and Galveston. Galveston was closed due to Hurricane Ike in September of 2008 and reconstruction was halted due to a lack of funding. Currently we have approximately 1,000 beds across the system and our average daily usage for 2008 was less than 400. The extra beds require additional staffing and costly overhead. If all 22 Hospitals were to remain open, they would be facing 25 to 30% budget cuts after already having cut their budgets by 6% this year. This would undoubtedly have an adverse effect on our ability to provide quality care to our children. Our Endowment Fund cannot afford a billion-dollar annual budget, and that is where we are headed. If that were to happen, the Endowment Fund and Hospital System as we know it would come to an early demise. With less overhead, a smaller system, and the Fund growing instead of decreasing, every patient would still receive the required care for as long as we can foresee.

The Staff and Board of Governors at Springfield Hospital have been working diligently to restructure their operations and hopefully remove themselves from the list of closings. As one of the largest outpatient Hospitals in our system, they have cut their 2009 budget beyond the requested 6% and are aggressively pursuing a partnership opportunity with nearby Bay State Medical Center. By expanding their relationship, the needs of their surgical patients would be met in a more appropriate and efficient manner.

Whatever the outcome in Texas, I am sure the ability to help and save children will be preserved for a long, long time. That is why we each can be proud to be a Shriner.

Fraternally,

Peter K. Stone
Board of Governors, Boston

Photo Release Forms Now Available

We now have photo release forms available to all Nobles, Units and Shrine Clubs to fill out if they take photos or likenesses of any Shriners Hospitals for Children patient or family member.

- **What Are They?**
Photo Release forms are necessary if we wish to use photos of patients and their families in the *Aleppo News* or any other Aleppo publication.
- **Why Do We Need Them?**
Since we protect the privacy of our patients in our Hospitals, we need the consent of the patients and their families to display their images publicly.
- **Who Should Get Them?**
Any Unit that holds events with the Hospital patients and takes photos for any purpose.
- **How Do You Get One?**
We have photo release forms available in the Administration Office in the Aleppo Shrine Center.