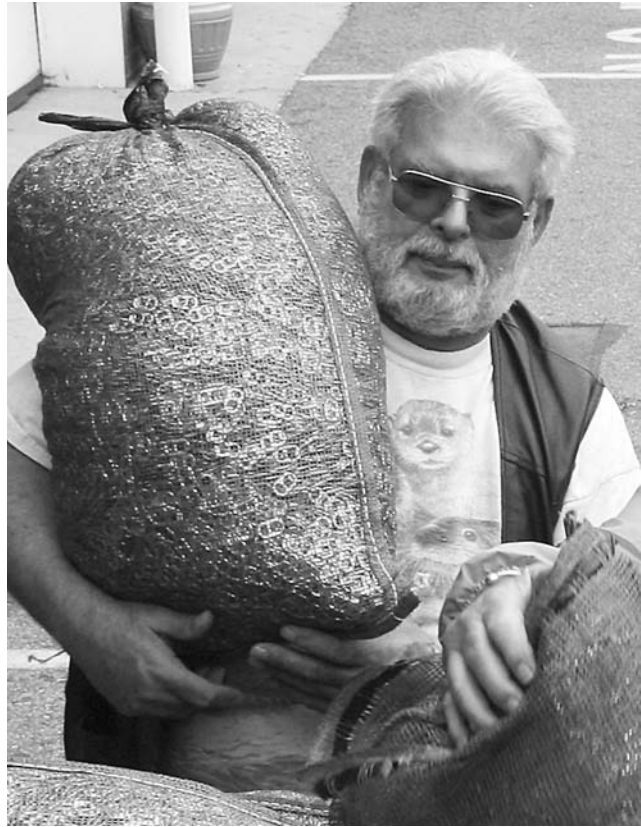


# Paul J. Agostino

## Tab's Are Coming Out of His Ears!

By HERMES BOYATIS

**Y**OU can find Paul in the garage at the Aleppo Shrine Center bagging tabs. Tabs come in all types of containers, including the seven 55-gallon plastic drums that were dropped off recently by John T. Heard Lodge in Ipswich, MA. At any given time there are over twenty bags of tabs ready to go to the recycling center. All sorted (the steel tabs, screws, and other items screened out) and weighing between 35 and 40 pounds each,



Paul helped load up the pick-up with bags of tabs to be recycled.

they make up a mountainous green backdrop for the tab operation.

They will load up a pickup truck every now and then and bring them to the recycle center, usually leaving behind some bags that didn't fit in the truck. There has not been a single moment where there weren't any tabs lying around. Needless to say, Paul has tabs coming out of his ears! Paul and his helpers spend countless hours dedicated to this program, which has contributions from schools, businesses and individuals.

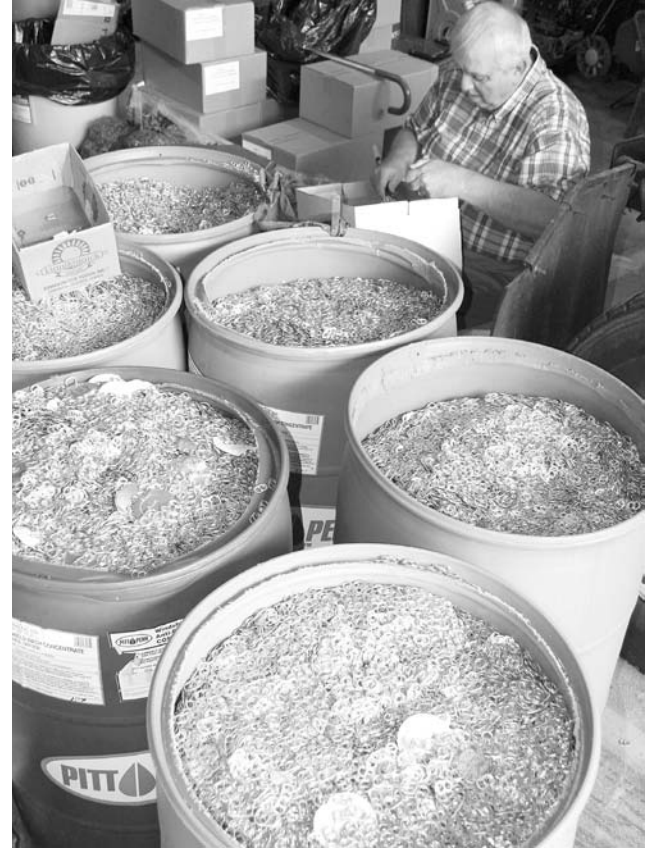
Not only is Paul overwhelmed with tabs and his role as Chairman of the Aleppo Shriners Children's Transportation Fund, but he also volunteered an immense amount of time for the 2008 Aleppo Shriners Circus, setting up before and also during the circus. A member of the Aleppo Rag-Top Unit, he also finds time to attend parades, as well as volunteer for the occasional driving of a patient to the Boston or Springfield Shriners Hospitals.

Paul served four years in the United States Army from age 17 to 21. "We escorted atomic weapons around the world by helicopters and trucks," he proudly said. "I graduated in technology from Boston's North Bennett Street School seven years ago."

"My funniest memory," he adds, "was when my handicapped son said, 'Dad, you're so old it takes you 90 minutes to watch 60 Minutes!'" His son, Kevin, was multi-handicapped, and only two years-old when he became the first child in Boston to receive radiation and chemotherapy simultaneously. With the help of a loving mother, Kevin was able to survive to the age of 21.

Paul says about his family: "I have three children and my wonderful wife Marsha also has three. She is a retired infertility nurse - an incredible lady, especially to put up with me. Some say she looks like Meryl Streep, only prettier."

So why did you become a Shriner, Paul? "To



FELLOW RAG-TOP member Hank Gilhooly stopped by to give Paul a hand sorting through some of the tabs in the seven 55-gallon drums collected by John T. Heard Lodge in Ipswich, MA.

become a Shriner was a goal of mine. Nine years ago my granddaughter Emily was badly burned when a tea kettle fell from the stove onto her knees and shins. Today, thanks to our Shriners Burns Center, she has no scars, no muscle problems, and barely remembers the fearful event. This is my way to give back and help other children to live normal lives despite the hurdles they need to overcome. So here I am, helping children find their way to healing, collecting tabs, working for the circus, passing out flyers, talking to firefighters and to anyone else who will pause to listen. I can give much more time than money." Keep at it, Paul!



Paul and Marsha at the Steve-N-Friends fundraiser.

## Freedom Fingers

*A father shares how his experience at Shriners Hospitals as a child impacted his life*

**M**Y name is Ryon and I was born with multiple birth defects. My understanding of fatherhood has been amplified by the birth of my own son. Now I know one of the first things a parent does is count toes and fingers to make sure all is well.

My mother and father were not so lucky 30-some years ago because I was born without functioning thumbs (the left one was missing completely). I was born in a rural hospital in southwest Idaho, so options for correctional surgery were limited.

My mother had family in Utah, so the Salt Lake City Shriners Hospital very soon became my new home for a while. I received various surgeries before I turned one. My right thumb was functionally boosted by the rearrangement of muscles in my hand. My left index finger was removed, repositioned and reattached as my new left "thumb." A truly amazing feat considering the advent of digital microscopes and laser microsurgery were yet to be discovered!

Even more amazing is the fact that these talented medical professionals were donating their time to help improve my future life.

I can remember seeing a clown painted on the floor of the hallway as I was being rolled in for surgery after disconnecting a ligament at age 4. The arm cast was so heavy afterward that I had to be in a wheelchair. I would return many times to the Salt Lake City hospital for yearly check-ups. My last official visit when I was 16 was so emotional.

Years later, my wife and I had a business trip to Salt Lake City and went by the "ol' homespital" -- but learned it was gone! But the "new" hospital that was built on the old site still resembled it, even down to the clown on the floor in the hallway!

I can still taste the water in the lobby fountain that was in the shape of a giant fish. I can still remember playing with my electronic battleship that came out of the toy room. So many memories of my home away from home so many years ago.

The change in my life with the new thumb is incomprehensible to me today. I have the freedom to play the guitar, I can type at 40 words per minute, use hand brakes on a bicycle and even text message left-handed on a cell phone. The only complaint has been the fact that I can never find a glove that doesn't have one too many fingers!

To the doctors, nurses, administrators, Shriners and those who have volunteered or donated over the years, THANK YOU for all you have done to bless my life.



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