



Newsletter

March, 1972

Volume 24, No.3

Official publication of the International Jugglers' Association.
Editor, Roger V. Dollarhide, 873 West Boulevard, Apt. 410, Hart-
ford, Conn. 06105. Subscription by IJA membership. Advertising,
\$15 per page or prorate for fraction.

Dear Roger & Members,

April 20, 1972

As an IJA member and as one who visited Hartford last year for the IJA Championships I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the event.

Although I was a novice, I enjoyed competing and watching the other performers and also I liked the ideal location, the well-organized facilities and the spirit of the event.

This brings me to the purpose of my writing. For those members who have to plan well ahead and for those who are "toying" with the idea of attending the Championships this year on Saturday, Sunday and Monday, July 1st, 2nd and 3rd, I urge you all to travel to Hartford, enter the many events and take this opportunity to meet old and new friends as I did last year - you will find it an enjoyable and refreshing experience !!!

Besides watching the competitors do their stuff, during the practice sessions one has ample opportunity to socialise among the old and new members and, during this time, one can also pick up some useful tips on juggling and props - while your family can be enjoying the seclusion of the swimming pool or watching TV in your motel room. - as an alternative to watching the events !.

Situated in the quiet countryside of Connecticut, the site offers a new Howard Johnson Motor Lodge with restaurant and swimming pool (where the Championships are held) and another motel and with these facilities a very enjoyable family weekend can be spent.

So, please, make the effort and decide to come up and help to make this year's Championships really one to remember... Remember, it's not the winning ... but playing the game.....

Yours truly,

Ivor J. Price

EDITORS NOTEBOOK

Do you realize that the IJA Convention is only 2 months away? (I am writing this in the last week of April.) I just made arrangements yesterday for a great banquet at a different location than last year and better in every way and \$.95 cheaper. Ivor Price is right (see front page) this is a perfect place for our convention and competition. Full convention details in the next Newsletter.

This month's NL is king size due to Adrian Sullivan's excellent article on Francis Brunn. Hope you enjoy it. Not only did Adrian put a great deal of work into writing this article, he also paid for the printing and mailing of it at (what was then) the per page advertising rate of \$10.

And I might add and you might notice that Doc Crosby has had Chapter 2 of his story printed at his own expense. When I received Doc's package of all those pages of his story already printed, I got to thinking and just as a rough estimate, I would say that approximately 1/2 of the money required and spent for the IJA is donated money. There are members right now who are donating money on a regular basis, but who wish to remain anonymous. With the dues from several new members and "old" members in so far for '72, we are only up to half normal membership and our treasury contains about \$450, enough to publish 5 or 6 more Newsletters of the prevailing number of pages. So much for now. RVD.

* * * * *

BOOK REPORT by R. Dollarhide

"If You-Juggler..." by Alexander Kiss. Pub. in Moscow, Russia, 1971.

ROLAND WEISE HAS SENT ME A FANTASTIC BOOK ON JUGGLERS WRITTEN IN RUSSIAN BY ALEXANDER KISS AND PUBLISHED IN MOSCOW IN 1971. THE TITLE IS "IF YOU - JUGGLER...". OF COURSE, I CAN'T READ A WORD OF THIS 54 PAGE PAPER COVERED BOOKLET, BUT THE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE SOMETHING TO SEE, AND I WILL HAVE THE BOOK FOR VIEWING AT THE CONVENTION. THE PHOTOS ARE FULL PAGE AND ARE AS FOLLOWS: CANDID PORTRAIT OF KISS; KISS IN CIRCUS RING JUGGLING 4 BATONS WHILE VIOLETTA (HIS WIFE OR DAUGHTER) DOES ONE HEAD STAND ON HIS HEAD, SPINS A HOOP ON HER LEFT ARM AND A LARGE BATON WITH HER FEET; KISS'S "PICTURE TRICK" - ON ROLY POLY ATOP 4 FOOT HIGH PEDESTAL, BALANCES 5 FOOT LONG POLE WITH BALL ON TOP AND JUGGLING 3 RINGS; JUGGLER WITH UNIDENTIFIABLE NAME BALANCING A 10 FOOT POLE WHICH HOLDS 5 BASKETBALL-SIZED BALLS AND JUGGLING 6 RINGS; NIKOLAI OLKOVILCHOV STANDING ON GALLOPING HORSE BALANCING GLASS TRAY WITH GLASSES AND DECANTER ON 5 FOOT POLE ON FOREHEAD; MAN AND WOMAN IN FULL DRESS COSTUME EACH JUGGLING 3 BALLS; ALBERT ABERT WITH 10 RINGS GOING; A PLATE SPINNER WITH APPARATUS SIMILAR TO ERIC BRENN'S; MAN ATOP 2 10-FOOT LADDER "PYRAMID" ATOP A LOW TABLE SPINNING A HOOP ON EACH ARM AND BALANCING ON HIS FOREHEAD A 10-FOOT LADDER ATOP OF WHICH IS A WOMAN SPINNING 2 HOOPS ON ONE LEG, 2 ON EACH ARM AND 2 ON A MOUTH STICK; WOMAN IN RUSSIAN FOLK COSTUME ROLLING 2 12-INCH DISKS ACROSS HER OUT-STRETCHED ARMS FROM HAND TO HAND - IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS; AND THE GRET-SHOVI TRIO ON LARGE SLACK WIRE APPARATUS - ONE MAN ON WIRE JUGGLING 3 CLUBS, THE OTHERS EACH HANGING BY FEET FROM THE SUPPORTING POLES AND PASSING 5 CLUBS.



International

ORGANIZED JUNE 1947 BY

Harry Lind
George Barvinchak
F. R. Dunham
Art Jennings

Bernard Joyce
Jack Greene
Eddie Johnson
Roger Montandon

Jugglers' Association

"HOW 'TAS IN JUGGLE TOWN

Chapter #2

The Old Timer usually dropped in, to juggle and chat, every two or three days, but since he got the notion for us to write the story of how 'twas we got our wonderful Jugglers Association, he had not brightened my door.

From my long acquaintance with this adorable character, I knew his odd quirks well and I was sure that when he said, "we" would write the Story, that he would do the "telling" and I would juggle the pen.

Prepared for that certainty, I hied myself over to his house.

His door Plaque "JUGGLERS, DON'T KNOCK! WALK IN!", had become a habit with me.

Eagerly I thumbed the latch and bolted in.

Through the stillness of the empty house, mingled with the familiar clip clap of passing clubs, I heard the Old Timer's voice, counting,—"one—two—three—
—Shower 'em Hettie"! he said.

Absorbed in the shower, he did not see me sneak back of him into position for the six club run around trick.

I gave Hettie the wink and, pro that she was, shifted her juggle slightly and slapped 'em over to me.

But we didn't fool the Old Timer long for as her first club smacked in my hand he said, without turning his head, Hi, Juggie, keep 'em a goin'.

Then as he flashed his last club to Hettie, he ran down beside her, faced me and said, "come on Juggie SOCK 'EM TO ME!"

After a few peppy go 'rounds, Hettie, that cute little mite under those graying brown locks, finished neatly with all six clubs.

Back in the house Hettie tied her apron on and busied herself preparing lunch.

The Old Timer returning from his cluttered prop room where he kept clubs, motioned me to a chair and sat down near me.

Meditating, he ran his fingers through his hair, and said, "Juggie, 'bout this story of how 'twas we got this wonderful Jug's Association, I been doin' me some thinkin', so you get yer pen an' paper ready an' I'll tell ya how 'twas".

I adjusted my writing pad, drew my pen from my pocket, and imitating him, said, "ready Boy, sock it to me".

He furrowed his brow thoughtfully, "Let me see—'twas the year nineteen forty seven", he began, an' the Magicians were havin' their "sight unseen -- how'd he do it? Magic convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, -- an' 'course there was a bunch of Jugglers there".

"Well sir, that ol' jug spirit, jes' like 't always does, drew them jugglers together in 'nother one of them Jugglin' fests, jes' like 'twas with us ol' timers, only they had better props to Juggle—Well, after a while they went to the Embassy Restaurant ta get a snack ta eat."

"'Course they were doin' more talkin' than eatin' an' then somethin' happened to 'em, an' to this day I don't reckon they know what 'twas."

"There was eight of 'em, --- The Great Eight, I calls 'em."

"Memory do yer stuff", he said to himself as he counted on his fingers,

"Yep, -- there was, Harry Lind, George Barvin, Floyd Dunham, Roger Montandon, Bernard Joyce, Jack Greene, Eddie Johnson, 'an' Art Jenninhd" -- "WHAT A CREW, our own GREAT EIGHT!"

"Like I said, they didn't know it, but the greatest Magic trick there, happenéd--fer", - he leaned toward me, and with a far look in his eye, said, " 'Twas That Ol' Jug Spirit, an' all of a sudden, -- SWOOSH!, --- It swooped down on 'em an'---BANG! ----- the idea to form our Jugglers Association comin' on down from way back yonder, hit 'em right in their Noggins, an' they went into mettin' formation an', he rose to his feet, and with a sweeping gesture to emphasize the greatness of it all, said, They formed our NOBLE JUGGLER'S ASSOCIATION !"

At this point of the climax in his climactic story, told as only he could tell it, He became more Calm and sitting down again said gloatingly, "Juggie, that was the greatest trick jugglers ever did, -- for with the breath of their voices they blew the SPIRIT and breath of LIFE into our own GREAT ORGANIZATION!"

I jumped to my feet and shouted excitedly, HURRAH for the GREAT EIGHT! Then more camly I ask, "did they elect officers?"

They sure did an' some dang good ones, 'twas Art Jennings fer President, an' Eddie Johnson fer Vice President, an' George Barvin fer Secretary, an' then he burst out laughing,--

"What's so Funny about that", I ask?

"Ha! Ha!" He laughed, -- "OH, --- They elected Roger Montandon treasurer -- but then - the treasury wont nothin' but a wishin' well".

"What, I blurted, No -- money -- at -- all! ! ? ?"

"Well, -- they voted a measly dollar a year dues an' all the jugs there, 'bout ten er twelve, of 'em, chucked in a buck a piece so, thare 'twas, -- that puny little speck, -- way down in the bottom of the well, -- an' buried under a heap of big ideas an' hopes."

Hopefully I ask, "did they have any plans for activities"?

"Sure did, Juggie," he answered, "after they voted to have a Jugglers Bulletin, printed every month, they 'course had to have an editor, so they jes' about pushed Roger M' into the Job".

Laughingly, I said, "may be, they learned that trick from Ching, the rickshaw boy who said, "big load-big grunt push-he go," but it was smart, for it gave them the member to member news".

"By crackie", he said, "then they stuck their necks out longer 'n a giraffe an' voted to have a Big Toss Up Convention the next year".

"What! ? They came up with that idea in that first meeting?"

"Yep, they had ideas a poppin' in their heads like a bunch of firecrack ers,-- an' along with them they had some mighty good ideals".

"Listen to this, Juggie, --- they dedicated our Jug's organization to -- promoting the future of jugglin' an' to teachin' it too".

Suddenly in a moment of reflection, while the, Old Timer was deep in thought, the greatness of the Great Eight Burst up on me.

Organization was the future of juggling. They had given it to us!!

The Old Timer, moved by emotion, rose to his feet, grasp the old topper and waving it above his head, said in a clear triumphant voice",-----,

"Then they gave I. J. A.. a great send off with this ringing TOAST-----,

Here's to I. J. A. --- May it live in the hearts of Jugglers -- for ever ! !

Then Stanin' there, jubilant, finally, Art, got the mettin' back to order an' proclaimed:--

"MEETING ----- ADJOURNED ! !

Then in ecstasy, the Old Timer tossed his hat up, bounced it off his head, rolled it down his arm, caught it by the brim and flipped it up to his head, where after a triple bounce it settled squarely on his head.

Finally the, Old Timer, broke the silence of our deep apreication.

"Destiny, Juggie", --- he yanked the old topper to it's usual jaunty angle, -- "as I was sayin' -- Destiny is really somethin'".

"Now fer instance take that mettin', even before Art closed the mettin', Juggie, you were destined to have the Honor of being the first chairman of the first Big Toss Up Convention in Jugglin' hostory."

"WHAT!?!?!?", I almost shouted, "do you mean that old Jug spirit had me too?"

"Hold your props, Juggie", he laughed, and said, you're red hot, on jugglin' aint You?"

"Hotter than Blazes," I shot back zestfully.

"Well, -- there you are, bustin' - full of that ol' jug spirit, a perfect set up fer destiny an' --- when they needed a Dang good Chairman,---It je' tightened up on you."

"Amused as I was by this seeming fantasy, I could not laugh it off." The way Art Jennings cornered me and verabllly pushed me into the chairmanship, --- Well, -- who knows, -- He may have been, fate's Right Hand Man", I said.

"Like as not, Juggie, he said, but tell me, that Juggler's Convention, bein' a bran' new thing, Did you have a lot of problems?"

"Problems? -- Problems you ask? WHEN! I'll say so"!!! I was drenched in them but, just as I had them whipped, BANG! Then, from out of the blue came the stunner! --well, it came so near to ending the big Toss Up, that the shock almost put me in the Hospital, for I knew that failure at the first convention could ruin I. J. A." And somehow none of us on that committee have ever told that story." --And it's no secret, but I guess we just never got around to telling it".

"Juggie, he enthused, that's another great story, an' as soon as you've got "How 'twas We got our Great Jug's Association story ready, with all them finishin' fixin's, -- fer the Jug's to read". ---- "You an' me, - we'll put our thinkin' heads together an' write that "Smasher" 'bout how we built that first terrific Juggler's Convention an' "How 'Twas in Juggle Town".

With evident satisfaction of a story well told he filled his old brown meerschaum pipe with shag tobacco, lit it, and puffed away, contented with a job well done.

"I'll have this story all finished in a few days", I said, as I was making a few "finishin' fixin's", as he called them, and then, I assured him, we'll write the story of "How 'Twas in Juggle Town".

Page 4.

Satisfied with my script, I gathered up the papers, tucked my pen in my pocket and with a parting affectionate, "So long" to both him and Hettie, I stepped through the open door.

They came to the door as they always did for those last lingering words, and with their final Hand Wave, I heard him say, "Hettie, I've had the time of my life a writin' that story - but -- Oh, Hum - I'm goin' to take a nap".

"THE NIJINSKY OF THE MAGIC GLOBES"

by Adrian Sullivan

One summer day a few years ago -- when the dog days of August descend without mercy on our asphalt jungle here, and the air, stagnant, is a suffocating oven rank with dust and humidity -- we decided, as one of our many vain efforts to beat the heat, to beat a retreat straight for Jones Beach, out Long Island way, and thus in keeping with what we considered to be sound judgement, we packed our gear and boarded the subway. But what we could not know, as we did so, was that we had just begun a trip into the near-distant past. For what we were to come upon, within the next hour or so, was the materialization of images which, a decade earlier, when we were on Ringling, had been planted in our minds by the hushed braggadocio of roustabouts' rumors; and images which, for all who were at the beach that afternoon, were to reflect the glory of he who for us is, still, a beach ball wizard.

As we were, then, that hour or so later, pacing, methodically, the sands of the beach in search of a remoter, and relatively isolated, section -- as we had never been noted for our abundant gregariousness -- we came upon a phenomenon which seemed rather unusual outside of Muscle Beach. About a hundred yards ahead -- as we entered, in a more outlying region, a long, flat stretch of hard, compacted sand -- was a cluster of people, gathered in a circle, whose attention was fixed, rather fascinatedly, on a group of acrobats who were performing in the center. Three of the acrobats formed a two-high pyramid where the third, or topmounter, stood on the shoulders of the other two; and the fourth, a young brunet fellow, short and agile, was facing them a few paces away. He seemed to be the object of the most attention, but it was difficult to see just what was happening until we drew closer to them.

As we came upon them, and wedged our way through the crowd, we could see that he was a juggler or soccer player or something, for, while standing on his left foot, he balanced a ball, about eight inches in diameter -- brown, and with a few white, decorative rings on it -- on the back of his right one -- which was about a foot off the ground and two feet in front of him -- and he raised his arms in a kind of grand gesture. He faced the other acrobats with a stern, forceful expression, and the ball, swaying slightly with his foot, seemed almost restive from eager, but subdued, animation. His long, wavy hair was slightly mussed.

The topmounter presently raised his arms, and hooking his fingers together, formed a large, horizontal O. He then said, "Okay." Whereupon the energetic little guy with the ball went into action. Studying the O for a moment, he tensed himself, and with a quick, brief movement of his lower leg, flipped the ball up onto his forehead, where he balanced it. Then he made some gestures in front of it with his hands; then swept his hands down to his sides, in a second pose. Finally, he tensed again, and rolled the ball straight over the top of his head to

the back of his neck, dropped it from there down over his back, and hit it with his heel. The ball, arcing high and wide, shot like a rocket back over his head, soared for a moment, and then descended, passing gracefully through the arms of the topmounter. As someone shouted, "Ten!", there began a clapping of hands, and the lithe little athlete, inspired by triumph, took a brief but friendly bow. We were dumbstruck.

* * * * *

As we stood there, dredging up memories from the far and hazy past; in an effort to determine just who this guy might be, since he did, come to think of it, seem more than vaguely familiar, although we could not, so help us, recall ever having actually met him, we hit on a recollection of images which we had carried with us ever since our days on Ringling, some decade ago, when every time a juggler would be performing in the ring, one roustabout would turn and whisper to another all the ways under God's very sun in which he was not as great as was the Great Brunn. Now could this fellow here today be the Great Brunn himself? He whom we had longed so long to see? After all, the physical descriptions did pretty well match except that the fellow here today seemed just a shade older than the fellow we remembered having been described to us but then, wouldn't that very same fellow be a shade older himself by this time? Anyway, it was not enough, by itself, to place the man. The nature of the trick which he had just done was not enough to go on, either, by itself -- we were the victims of frustrating doubt.

One thing, however, did spring to mind: a remarkably identical character. As we stood there, studying the man, noticing how his crystal, glistening perspiration ran down over his now-livid complexion in strings of little beadlets, and how weak, shaky, breathless he seemed to be, as if, through having purged or spent himself through his previous exertions, he was now reduced emotionally to an almost confessional state, a mental movie of many rapid images suddenly flashed through our mind. We saw scenes -- as depicted in rumors a scant decade before -- of the great Francis Brunn, billed, "The Nijinsky of the Magic Globes": practicing in a trailer; on a sleeping coach; on the back lot; under the big top; on a bally box: six hours a day, almost every day, in the morning and in the afternoon -- but sometimes also in the evening; the same drone, the same drudgery, of countless practice hours, of countless tricks, done the same way every day, and for the same reason -- spending six years on one trick alone, which was three tricks combined; growing bored, tired, sick, and discouraged -- but never relenting, nor even repenting: doing a twenty-minute act which but telescoped his talents: spinning two balls on two sticks which he balanced on the head, while spinning two hoops on his right leg and juggling ten others with his two hands; spinning a ball on his finger, and then finding twelve different ways to get a second one, without using his hands, to plant itself on top; taking one, two, three, four, five, or even six, balls -- color or size being almost irrelevant -- and using hands, feet, arms, legs, knees, fingers, face, forehead, nape, chest, back, calf, heel or temples, proceed to throw, catch, spin, roll, bounce, balance, spin-bounce or spin-roll, one, two, three, four, five, or even six, of the balls at a time, in any several of the thousands and thousands of possible combinations you could in a century conceive of; but then, like all humans, growing bored, tired, sick,

or discouraged from time to time, and like all humans, having, thereby, a need to amuse himself, he would then sometimes amuse others: perhaps by flipping a stray tennis ball back and forth from one foot to the other, as if it were ever so easy, and then catching it in his hand and spinning it on his fingertip -- before returning it, almost boyishly, to the girl who, racquet in hand, had fouled it off the court only a minute or so earlier; or perhaps by spinning a beach ball on a bystander's forefinger, looking away, pausing, then retrieving it; or perhaps by borrowing the ball from a basketball team, and, just as here a couple of minutes ago, making a basket by what might, tongue-in-cheek, be termed a non-manual, blind, heel drop kick; or by rolling your silver dollar over his chest: there was no end to it, really, except for eating and sleeping: Brunn would "rest" by practicing poses and etudes for ten minutes -- only to resume, at the end of that time, his unreasonably intense pace -- as if he never got too much of practice: no matter how weak, shaky, breathless, or confessional he ever became, he was always able, at the drop of a ball, to summon new bursts of sustained energy. Yes, the man we saw today -- insofar as we were experts on the present state of jugglers -- could really be none other than Francis Brunn himself. Doubles are usually doubles only in the eye of the camera. We could see the concentration written all through him. No juggler before -- save for Rastelli -- had ever tried so hard. This thing here was just like the good old days (although we ourselves had never known of them except by second-hand). This thing here was like Francis Brunn.

* * * * *

Strangely enough it did turn out to be him. We say strangely because we cannot say miraculously. We knew darned well that Brunn was the only juggler since Rastelli who had developed that line of juggling to any significant degree. And as to this fellow possibly being an unknown, could he also be the physical double of Brunn? As well as have the same force of application? It seemed so unlikely that the question seemed academic.

By now the man was rested and more vibrant-looking. There seemed to be a lull in the unusual activities. The topmounter got down and the pyramiders disbanded a little. The juggler fellow made small talk with a bystander; who asked him all sorts of naive questions.

As we approached, he stopped chatting, and briefly eyed us with an intense, but sort of bemused, searching look; then looked away and started chatting again. We came upon him, managed to get his attention, and introduced ourselves: Adrian Sullivan; juggler; I.J.A. member; the works. Well, he didn't exactly become ebulliently friendly and voluble -- at least all of a sudden -- (frankly, he had never even heard of us), but he did seem like a friendly enough sort of fellow -- although understandably disinterested -- and was certainly courteous and considerate. He dropped his small talk with the other fellow for a minute to give his attention to ourselves.

He introduced himself as Francis Brunn and asked the usual run of appropriate questions: how long had we been juggling; what kind of juggling did we do; where were we playing right at the moment. Well, we didn't have a heck of a good story to tell him, so we wound up talking mostly about that which regarded himself. He didn't seem to mind although he likewise didn't seem particularly interested in impressing us.

We told him about all the stories we'd heard about him over on Ringling and all the posters we'd seen announcing him "the greatest juggler of the ages." Also about the Ed Sullivan show we'd seen him on; and -- even more important -- how glad we were now to at last be meeting him in person. We were enthralled by the lucky experience.

Now he did warm up a little and begin to tell us things about his status quo and background. He told us all that was entailed in becoming a great juggler. In so many words, how it was really just the proverbial "blood, sweat, toil and tears"; but in his own words, how it was just talent, love and hard work. Talent in the sense that -- assuming you are of normal health and intelligence, of course -- you may, for a fast and lively style such as he has, need to be born short and flexible, such as he is, so as to be mobile, and light on your feet; or if you wish to be a waltzing gentleman, as was Michael Kara, be born tall and graceful. But really anyone not an idiot or cripple can learn to juggle. Hard work through a love of the art was the only magic formula Brunn had to give. Force of character is the only salvation.

More important to us, of course, than his latest successes were his early beginnings. He told us how he had had to struggle for every rung of the ladder, every inch of the way. How sometimes he had felt like giving it all up -- but how he had never been able to actually bring himself to doing so, because he liked what he was doing so much, and because by then he had come too far to turn back. He was really by now a slave to his profession. He must practice, practice, practice just not to lose it all -- let alone to learn new things: one or two hours a day in the studio, at performance level; and then three or four hours a day at home at near-, and sometimes better-than-, performance level. It is no bed of laurels and never has been.

He told us how -- in Frankfurt, Germany some years ago -- he would march himself, purposefully, to a certain church every morning, under a clear, cloudless canopy of bright, twinkling stars, and unlocking the door before even the janitor or caretaker had arrived, enter with his bag of props, and burning his feet on the cold stone tiles, not too unlike the far-famed Cantalbert, then proceed to steal a few hours, extra, before the day's activities, of practice at his juggling, which though excruciatingly at first, was gradually growing and slowly ennobling him, and which, one day, would even deify him. How that went on for months and months; and how in one month he learned six hoops.

* * * * *

As we left him some time later, he was rapidly executing, in-place, a back flip, and catching on the tip of his finger a furiously spinning beach ball which he had just spun on that same finger and then hurled high into the air. Then he grabbed it in his fingers, stopping it, and clutched it with determination; while picking up with his right foot the previous brown ball. Then he re-spun the beach ball on his right forefinger, made a loop-the-loop of his foot over the ball which was balanced on it, and then flipped the ball on top of the beach ball, where it skidded a little, then turned in unison. When the momentum died, he dropped the littler ball back down on his foot again and re-clutched the beach ball in his hand. For the third time he spun it on his forefinger; and then executed the most quick and perfect pirouette, flinging up from their places of rest, both balls -- the brown one from his foot; and the beach one from his finger -- to promptly catch them back again as if nothing at all had happened.

Brunn had been recognized by someone and asked to juggle. His props, which almost always go with him when he is away from the house, on business or to practice, had been conveniently in the car nearby. And so now he was doing a little impromptu bit -- not all of which is in his seven socko minutes -- but all of which is in our memories.

And he makes seven out of ten of his Globetrotter "baskets."

II

The unique and vivid opening of the world's greatest juggler -- Francis Brunn -- is a clear example of dramatic stage artistry. Starting with darkness, stillness, and silence, and ending with light, color, sound and rapid motion, its keynotes are contrast and surprise. The first example is the shattering of the darkness by the flashing on of the stage lights. The second is the contrast of a shiny white hoop as against the austere black of his costume. And then the third and fourth come together: silence and stillness become sound and movement, and the action we expect to come from the right wings comes instead from the left wings -- it is a flurry of hoops which hurl toward him as he whirls about to face the opposite direction.

* * * * *

Sitting as we were -- as guests of Brunn, having been invited earlier that day, at the beach -- in the midst of the mammoth night club, we found ourselves, romantically enough, surrounded by a forest of flickering little table candles, which aside from the footlights which illuminated the stage curtains, were the only thing penetrating the almost utter darkness. It added a rather relaxing touch, but yet a strange effect.

The silence, as we awaited the beginning of the show, was broken only by the faint, occasional tink, clink of colliding silver service. Otherwise, there seemed to be an almost funereal calm: an atmosphere of passive expectation.

Then the MC, illuminated by the spotlight, walked out, pulled up the mike, and announced the show; and after the usual run of more or less funny jokes, Francis Brunn, who would open. Then he disappeared back into the wings. All lights went out and the curtains parted -- on a dark stage. There was a moment of silence, and of suspense. And here is what it was then like.

Suddenly the stage lights flash on and there is a building roll of tympanies. Chiseled-out in bold relief by the powerful flood of lights, is a solitary figure in tight, black costume: a trim, young man who poses dramatically in the center of the stage, his back to the audience. He poises, statuesque, on the balls of his feet, his head turned to the right, and in his right hand holds high in the air a white and shiny hoop, which contrasts vividly with the dark simplicity of his costume. He seems, as if with the barely subdued tension of a coil spring ready to snap, about to leap, without the slightest forewarning, into a quick, surprising action.

The tympanies stop, Brunn whirls about, to face left. He raises his arms in a high and narrow V, somewhat like the wings of a descending eagle. Then there is another brief, prophetic drum roll. And

another short but utter silence. And then he explodes into motion.

As the frenetic tempo of Khachaturian's "Sabre Dance" surges from the orchestra, Brunn marks time with machine-gun rapidity, and snatches from the air a flurry of hoops which rocket at him from out of the left wings. The act is on.

He takes one step back into a flamenco stance, whirls one of the hoops once around his hand, and then strides forward several paces, in a sort of side-to-side dance gait. He stops, smacks the hoops together, once, flatwise, and then issues them rapidly up into the air, into a spraying fountain of criss-crossing circles.

Then, with the final hoop sailing higher than any of the others, they clack together as they collect in his hands, and Brunn concludes his prelude. He leaps to the footlights to face the audience. Stabbing the stage with the balls of his feet, he lands in a third pose, hoops under arm, erect and rigid. He has indeed announced himself. And the applause is effusive.

* * * * *

That which follows now is a visual experience not easy to forget. But it is difficult to remember, or even to behold, every detail of the performance. What is retained by the average spectator is a collective impression, a visual symphony, with a few salient features. For in seven brief minutes Brunn brings before the eyes of the viewer more juggling than could be learned in twice that many years. The stage becomes a scene of action, pause, and action; of bouncing, dancing balls, and gyrating hoops. The juggler's pace ranges from a frenzy to frozen balance. The balls don't always hop and leap: sometimes they roll and poise. But there is not a single dead moment: every "rest" or pose is but a contrasting transition from one feat to another. Every step on the stage is put there for a reason -- and has been arduously rehearsed for months and years. Through a marvellous combination of tumbling, contortion and equilibrium, with ballet and flamenco, as a vehicle for the presentation of juggling, Brunn has applied an imaginative use of theatrics, and, whether when gesticulating to an animated, but obedient, ball, or when exchanging props between routines -- in which, between him and his assistant, the air over the stage is filled horizontally as well as vertically; and that which, when taken with back-flipping and barrel-rolling over the stage, magnify his relatively miniscule size with respect to that of the stage, and make him seem less alone out there -- has created a hurried, furious pantomime of poses, leaps and gestures that yet have the grace, flair and perfection of the brilliant artist of the stage -- and not a mere circus performer. Of the dozens who have attempted to imitate the act, not one has achieved such a stage personality. Francis Brunn remains novel, unique, timeless.

* * * * *

By now his assistant, an attractive Russian girl by the name of Sascha, has come on stage from the left wings, and is standing beside a prop table which holds his many different balls, hoops and mouth sticks. She receives the hoops which Brunn hands to her -- in a broad, grand, overhead, sweeping movement -- and picks up the props for the next trick: a large, red soccer ball with thin, white seam lines; and a white, conical mouth prop which is shaped like a megaphone -- only about one-half as long and one-fourth as wide -- and which has a

slingshot-shaped, two-prong tooth-grip fork stuck into the smaller end. Brunn, meanwhile, executes, in-place, two backward cartwheels; then catches the ball. "Sabre Dance" continues.

He places the ball on the floor, grips it tightly between his insteps, and straightens and stiffens into a flamenco pose. Then he catches the white prop and puts the prong between his teeth; he bites on it and faces ahead, toward the right, and is sideways with respect to us, with the stick horizontal. He then strikes another pose.

Now he does a forward half-handspring onto his hands -- or into a handstand -- and balances, inverted. The ball is carried up with his feet and is now above the rest of his body, which is straight and vertical. His face and the front of his body are facing left, and the mouth prop, level over the stage, also points to the left. Then he snaps his neck back so that he faces, and the prop points, level over the stage, to the right. Then snaps forward into the first position. Then backwards again, and holds it. The rest of his body did not move. Now his head and prop do not move and the rest of his body does. Facing right, and with the prop, level over the stage, pointing in the same direction, Brunn now bends his knees until the ball touches the backs of his thighs. Then he snaps his legs straight again. Then repeats it. Then snaps his legs straight again. Brunn now bends his entire body backwards until it forms a semi-circle from his head to his feet -- which causes his toes to parallel the prop and point in the same direction, to the right. The soles of his feet are level over the stage. He balances for a moment.

Now his feet come all the way down to the top of his head -- which in turn, bends all the way back to meet them -- until the ball between his feet touches his scalp and the circle has been completed; whereupon, starting with the ball at his feet, a perfect oval now extends from them up and around through his legs and body and back around to his head, which touches them. Then, using his toes, as if tiptoeing over the ball, Brunn rolls the ball down the middle of his scalp until it reaches the mouth prop, whereupon he releases his feet from it and returns to the semi-circle position. The ball balances between the prop and his forehead.

A moment passes. Then, snappily, Brunn whirls onto his feet. He executes a backward half-handspring that flings the ball up into the air as the prop under it comes up with his head. Brunn lands erect on his feet -- but with his head bent slightly back so that the prop is vertical. The ball does not go high, and comes down to balance in the concave end of the prop. Again there is a brief -- but very brief -- pause. And again he is rigid and erect.

Then he snatches the prop out from under the ball, bounces the ball once on his head -- so that it comes down in front of him -- and catches it between his feet the moment it strikes the floor. Then he leaps in a pirouette down to snatch it up, jump erect again, and make pantomime -- stern but artful -- with his face, with the ball in one hand and the prop in the other, clutched to his body. Crispness is his keynote.

He breaks, throws the ball to Sascha, hands her the prop -- in a swooping-over movement of the arm, as with the hoops. The routine is completed and "Sabre Dance" has ended. Brunn again does two backward cartwheels, in-place, and prepares for his third presentation. Sascha


hurls him a ball -- brown, and with a few white, decorative rings on it -- about eight inches in diameter. The same one that we saw at the beach this afternoon.

* * * * *

What proceeds hereafter is a super-condensed presentation of the seeming infinitude of ways in which a ball, or group of balls, can be manipulated with the body. Like an overflowing treasure chest, Brunn's repertoire spills all over the stage, first in one place, and then in the other. Every fleeting second yields a nuance, and the unrelenting continuity of his surprises commands the undivided attention of his audience. With astonishing synchronization of reflexes, Brunn throws, spins and bounces his paraphernalia through the air, with a definiteness of speed and accuracy that makes him seem little concerned with the prodigiousness of the behavior he commands in them. He gives the impression -- and few jugglers ever did -- that he could seize a collection of even everyday objects and soar with them to the apex of his art in a single lithe and rhythmic motion. The mechanism of his body, through which, effervescently, spontaneously, his feats seem to emerge, produces a constant mystifying effect. The classic spheres, awakened and enlivened by his strokes of genius, climb up and down his limbs, hop on and over one another, and, in general, make a carnival scene of exotic sights.

Beginning with the brown ball, with which Brunn poses*

 *(Standing on his right foot, he balances the ball on the back of his neck, with his arms and legs straight: left arm points down to floor, is parallel with right leg; right arm and left leg are perpendicular to both right leg and trunk, and are in a horizontal line, his trunk being bent forward 90 degrees from his right leg.)

and  which he then holds on his nape with his left hand while using his right to execute, in-place, two forward cartwheels; and then rolls over his arms and shoulders, from the back of one hand to the other; bounces on his head, shoulders and knees, in various heights and rhythms; balances on his forehead; rolls between his temples, in various cadences; rolls around his crown, then to his nape; flips to and spins on his finger; sits on his forehead; spins to a stop, balances; rolls to nape; drops from there down over his back, to be hit with the heel and knocked back up over his head, to fall down the front side of him and be caught on the foot, just off the floor; and which he then flings up, bounces once off the head; then catches at the floor, between the legs, in an Arabian squat, Brunn unleashes the full fury of his juggling prowess -- a bedazzening kaleidoscope of jugglery. If one were able to capture on paper the entirety of these episodes, and if the manuscript included all that had been invested in them -- over four years of practice for each minute in performance -- then the writings produced would be voluminous indeed; but such a manuscript would be a biography. It is, perhaps, sufficient to say that people who usually bore of jugglers never tire of Brunn: for never twice does he look the same. Now whether this is due to the fact that you can neither see nor remember it all, or that Brunn may subtly vary certain tricks or executions, is for yourself to decide -- but the essential act remains unchanged. Being a masterpiece -- the elements of which are but a relative few of the trick's in Brunn's

bag of them -- it is as streamlined, as crystallized, as perfected as can be: you can neither add to, nor take away from, it, without hurting it: it is seven socko minutes. It is the very man himself. Brunn, the man, the artist.

The telescoping encapsulation, overlapping without repetition, of the act of the world's greatest juggler, plus the buoyancy, the ease, the accuracy, of that juggler's execution, in the face of the difficulty which his tricks must surely present, even to himself, make for a stunning effect such as has not been seen since the days of Enrico Rastelli; and that, because of the longness of Rastelli's act, superb as it was, may not have been seen even in Rastelli's day. Perhaps, for the sheer ability of leaving you with your tongue hanging out, this impressionist, inspirative little man of our day is truly "the greatest juggler of the ages."

* * * * *

Holding in his hand a mouth stick and soccer ball -- the latter a beautiful quiltwork of pink and white trapeziums -- Brunn now hurls a third ball, a tennis ball, high into the air -- so high, in fact, that it almost brushes the rafters: it goes out of sight, at its apex, behind the top of the proscenium -- and he bounces it, on his head, seven or eight times at that height. Then it falls behind him, hits the floor, bounces up. Bounces low, to a stop, on his forehead. Rolls between his temples. Rolls around his crown. Drops to his foot. Is flipped up, bounced off his left instep, caught back on foot. Is flipped up and caught in his hand.

The soccer ball, spinning furiously, now bounces low and fast on his forehead, then between forehead and mouth stick. Rolls around his crown, then bounces between head and stick again. Then like a stone skipping across a pond -- in a treadmill sort of way -- the ball goes through a rapid series of stick-to-neck-to-knee-to-foot-to-stick hops -- with Brunn half-pirouetting each time -- and gives the impression of glancing off the high points of the juggler's body. Then it is flipped from stick, up, and bounced to a stop on his forehead; rolled from there to his nape; dropped to heel; bounced over head to stick. Then flipped into head bouncing, caught between feet at floor. Thrown up over left shoulder and caught back on foot. Thrown into head bouncing and into stick catch. Then come barrel rolls, backwards, ball stick-to-stick: three times. Ball bounces on head while Brunn rises to feet. Then he does a back flip, in-place, ball stick-to-stick, and lands down on one knee, finally to rise again while bouncing the ball on his head.

* * * * *

A white pedestal, which is shaped like an hourglass -- or better, like two cones whose vertices are stuck together; and whose bases are concave -- rests on a ball which in turn rests on a mouth stick, which Brunn grips horizontally between his teeth; and a second ball rests in the upper cup of the pedestal. The whole tower, always vertical, jumps back and forth between the stick and Brunn's forehead. Then the pedestal, all alone -- after the balls are flipped to Brunn's hands -- somersaults on the stick, and produces the impression of being kept bouncing on its ends.

Brunn, with a rod in the mouth, executes three back flips furiously across stage, and landing on all fours, waits for a ball which, hopping

after him, comes to rest on the rod, as if posing for a picture.

A ball dances between his feet while three dance between his hands, and he himself skips rope.

A ball bounces on his head while four dance in his hands.

Balls dance around mouth sticks, bounce on knees and shoulders. They sail around his body and land on his feet; hop between his feet. Vault over each other in his hands. Spin on his forefingers. Or on his forehead. Or roll around his foot and face. Or up the leg or around the head. Or over the arms and shoulders. Or bound on the head. Or balance on top of each other. Or rock back and forth between his temples. They land between his insteps. Between his heel and thigh; or between his toe and shin. Or else just on his toe; or just on his finger; or just on his forehead; or on his nape or palm. Or they fly from his foot, sail over his head, and land on his foot -- as the juggler half-pirouettes. Or just soar straight up, fall straight down -- from the foot, to the foot -- as the juggler full-pirouettes. Or combine to bounce on the head while spinning on the finger. Spin on the finger while bounding from the heel; or from the toe. Balance on the head while rolling over the arm; or on the foot while bouncing on the head (and while a third one spins on the finger -- which passes it between arm and body and around). Spin one on top of one another. Or roll across stage and be scooped up on mouth rod. Or volley through the air as their turns come and go.

Balls bounce, hoops whirl, sticks balance. Like the rainbow reflections of glistening, dancing waters -- and as invigorating as their sun-filled mists -- this delectable, beautiful phenomenon is a single symphonic movement, and is a marvellous piece of deliberation and coordination.

* * * * *

The crescendo of startling effects which for just over six short minutes has erratically but progressively grown, is now to culminate itself in a piece de resistance which will mirror and telescope all that has gone before in a single stupendous feat -- a finale that is Brunn's feature trick. It is this conclusion which completes the circle, hems the fabric: the act which began with a flurry of hoops, ends with a flurry of hoops -- and with Brunn's artistic manner of catching them furiously.

Hurling at him with every bit as much force and energy as there was at the beginning of the act, seven colored hoops announce his finish trick. Four large, then three small, ones sail through the air -- and are accompanied by the staccato effect of a tympany drum which booms in unison with their lodging in Brunn's palm. Otherwise there is silence -- and suspense.

Then two head pedestals -- silvery -- come wheeling slowly through the air, in high arcs. Followed by a beach ball and a medium ball, in similar arcs. And then, finally, a second medium ball -- which bullets at him, straight across, as he crazily pirouettes, props clutched to chest. He catches this last ball with the stance of a bullfighter: in his hand which is ^{HELD HIGH} ~~HELD HIGH~~ The ball smacks right in.

He struts forward as "Sabre Dance" begins. Then stops, balances on left foot. Affixes a mouth pedestal between his teeth -- vertically -- and spins the last ball onto a cup on its upper end, which then turns with the spinning ball. He then takes two of the large hoops, and hanging one on his thigh, spins the second one on his (right) ankle. He then puts up a forehead pedestal, balances it parallel to the mouth

pedestal, and spins the other medium ball onto its cup, which like the first one, then turns with the revolving ball. Then he starts the thigh hoop turning; hangs other two hoops on right upper arm; spins the beach ball on his right forefinger. Then starts the arm hoops whirling -- in opposite directions. And finally, with his free, left hand, juggles the three remaining smaller hoops.

The whole thing becomes one single clockwork; moves with one tempo: the leg hoops spin at the rate of "Sabre Dance," which is twice exactly the speed of the arm hoops, each of which turns over once for every toss of a hand hoop. It is one beautiful bobbing and turning motion, and can thoroughly be seen from every angle as Brunn slowly pirouettes on the ball of his left foot.

Twelve objects manipulated six ways at the same time.

* * * * *

Brunn hastily snatches down the props and clutches them between his body and left arm. Then he poses -- as the music stops. A solitary prop remains: the ball on the forehead pedestal.

He snatches out the pedestal, bounces the ball once off his head -- so that it falls down in front of him -- and catches it between his feet at the floor. Then, with a crisp, Spanish style, he does a pirouetting leap down to snatch it up, and lands down on one knee (right), clutching it in his hand. Then he does a pirouetting rotation around the ball of his left foot, keeping his right leg straight, and out; then rises -- in a sort of backward stepping motion -- breaks, and faces the audience. He bows -- and thus signs his signature to his concluded act.

Now the slow-building, almost continuous, previous applause comes full and strong. It is wild, loud, and enthusiastic. One person is whistling. Another shouting bravo. They will not let him go.

Simple, tired and friendly, Brunn smiles and takes his curtain calls. Then disappears into the mystery of the wings leaving behind him the same terse darkness which just seven minutes earlier he had shattered with his startling appearance.

III

To be the world's greatest juggler doesn't necessarily mean that you can do every trick that every other juggler can do, or that some of the other jugglers can't do some tricks which are better than some of those that you do -- it only means that you are generally better than anyone else. The two things that most jugglers wonder about as to Brunn are: (1) where he learned all that juggling (of course); and (2) where he gets all that energy. Well, the answer to this -- such as Brunn gave us, after the show, back in the dressing room -- is that you must have the regimen of a Moiseyev man: no skill or stamina is possible otherwise. Food, rest and exercise must be proper; and there must be little alcohol or coffee and no tobacco. You may even go so far as to take vitamins and physical culture -- to an extent -- but Brunn, incidentally, is not, for example, a vegetarian: he eats meat three times a day. (He told us an interesting story along these

lines where it was harder to fork a bony fish than it was to roll a tennis ball up his right leg.)

The man who John Ringling North called "The Nijinsky of the Magic Globes," Jimmy Cannon said was one of the greatest athletes he had ever seen, ex-President Eisenhower said was the greatest juggler he had ever seen, and who stopped the show at the Prince of Wales Theatre, in London, when doing a command performance for the Queen of England, is a fiery little dynamo to whom gymnastics are second nature. He has been at them since the age of five. But his true greatness is probably due more to his temperament and character than to anything inherent in his physical make-up. He's a strong-willed, persevering individualist; a forceful, tough personality; is patient, determined and ambitious. And then added to these emotional qualities is his intellectual side -- his vivid, virile imagination, and his coldly rational, realistic reasoning. In the end, these things probably mean much more than his high metabolism and short, quick limbs.

We indeed are convinced that the greatness of Brunn lies more in his style than in his mere juggling prowess, for if Brunn only juggled, then despite the fact that he is at the zenith of technique -- that many of his feats are surprising and astonishing -- a number of his more standard feats would soon be boring to those who can see them over and over; but he does not merely juggle, and is always as fresh as ever: he juggles with a style that is dramatic and original, varied and constantly improving. He ever ascends to theatrical perfection.

Although, with Rastelli, the most skillful in history, Brunn as a juggler is more than a juggler -- he is an artist; and at that, an artist of the stage, whose character and technique combine in style to comprise an incomparable excellence. By bringing to juggling some higher arts -- such as dancing and pantomime -- Brunn has made of juggling an art which is just as high as they are; and this is what others should try to do, too.

* * * * *

Born in Aschaffenburg, Bavaria some forty years ago, Francis Brunn started as a high diver -- such as his father was who made tours through the south of Germany. He practiced hours each day from the age of five and soon, also, picked up tumbling. By the age of ten he was a first-rate acrobat. Then one Sunday afternoon, his father, who while in a French concentration camp during WWI, had occupied himself by learning to juggle with three, four and five stones or potatoes, showed the boy what he had thus casually acquired, to see if there might be any continuation of it via his children, and thus inspired the boy to practice. Francis grew interested in it and began to practice juggling along with his tumbling -- and to combine the two. By the age of fifteen he was also a first-rate juggler. He could juggle seven balls, four clubs, or eight hoops; as well as do many spinning, rolling, balancing, and bouncing tricks with varied soccer balls. From the first moment he put a ball upon a mouth stick, he could walk around with it -- and it would stay on as if glued.

Then Francis decided to go into show business and to star as a juggler. Accordingly, he began to practice every day, all day. And soon the rumor was out that a new Rastelli had been born. Memories of Rastelli were quite fresh at the time -- and so there must have been something substantial in such a comparison. Many of his early

appearances were at waterfront cabarets.

With the onset of war, the family moved to neutral Sweden, and for several years Francis had to be content with mainly Scandinavian appearances. But then the dark clouds rolled away and the sun came out again over the long-battered continent. As Europe began to pick up the pieces, Brunn began to tour the various countries. In 1946 he was discovered in Spain by John Ringling North. North signed him up for a three-year contract to begin in 1948.

Brunn came over, became a citizen, and now lives in the Bronx with his wife and baby daughter. He is a good father and a good son: he provides his parents with a luxurious apartment -- near the quiet, clean atmosphere of a city park -- and is more or less the man-of-the-house for all three generations. One small room -- a sort of combination of studio and bar -- has a huge Australian skip rope on one wall, and on the other, a plastering of snapshots depicting his successes. For since those days in '48, he has been everywhere, done everything that could ever be of benefit to him professionally (except pay for publicity, which he believes should come of its own accord: maybe that's why there are not more people who know him by name): played all the number one night clubs and TV shows; got the best write-ups in the best papers; made the big time and four-figure salaries; made friends of performers from Hollywood and television. And novelty manufacturers have used his endorsement. He's a regular at the Concord -- which doesn't book jugglers.

* * * * *

Talent, love and hard work.

Juggling today has indeed paid off for Francis Brunn. But he has earned every red cent of the riches now showered on him: a dreary drone of dull and lonely practice hours are the only key to success.

The man who in South America was carried off-stage by a band of enthusiastic Indians, who, buoying him^{up} on their shoulders, thought he was a god or devil or something, was but a juggler when he first came to America. Great as he was, just a juggler. But then -- under Antonio, Argentina's greatest flamencoist -- he studied flamenco for two hours a day for two years, ~~and~~ and became an artist ^{average} of the stage.

For this, his style and showmanship, may we salute him, this lordly theatrician, Francis Brunn, who among living jugglers is in a class by himself, and who has only Rastelli for a peer and a colleague toast he, "dynamic artist of balance," who was once compared to Nijinsky.

-- FIN --

New York
April 21, 1964