



Keeping the Art of Ventriloquism Alive

Ventriloquist Central, June 24, 2008

URL: <http://www.pr9.net/ent/entertainment/8500june.html>

Ventriloquism is making a comeback and with the help of the Internet, one website is helping to keep the tradition alive.

PR9.NET June 24, 2008 - Malden, MA - With the current popularity of Jay Johnson (The Two and Only), Jeff Dunham (Arguing With Myself, Spark of Insanity), and Terry Fator (America's Got Talent winner), ventriloquism seems to be making a comeback. In that grand tradition, the Ventriloquist Central website is also keeping the art of ventriloquism alive.

The idea for the website started at the Vent Haven ConVENTion in 2006. At that convention, collector and ventriloquism enthusiast Dan Willinger met his future webmaster, Steve Hurst. Together they came up with the concept of a ventriloquism website that incorporated the history of the art, current information and also as a showcase for Mr. Willinger's extensive collection of ventriloquist figures.

As owner of one of the largest privately held collection of ventriloquist figures, Dan states, "Since there were very few web sites devoted to both the art of ventriloquism and also the collecting of ventriloquist figures, I wanted to create a website all about ventriloquism and share my collection with every ventriloquist out there. I think it is important that everyone be able to see every style ventriloquist figure and the performers that made this such a great art."

Dan has over 85 ventriloquist figures with some dating back to 1900 all the way up to present. He has figures made by some of the great figure (dummy) builders of the past, such as the Mack Brothers, the McElroy Brothers, and Frank Marshall to name a few.

When asked what builder is his favorite, Dan replies, "Frank Marshall figures are my favorites. I love Frank's style. As a ventriloquist figure builder he was able to breathe life so to speak into each of his creations. They each seem to have a personality before their mouth is even open. To me, he was one of the greatest."

"Frank built some of the most famous figures such as Paul Winchell's Jerry Mahoney, Jimmy Nelson's Danny O'Day and Farfel and Marshall always gave credit to himself for carving Edgar Bergen's Charlie McCarthy. We will never know for sure but Mr. Marshall worked in the Mack shop at the time that Mr. Bergen had Charlie made so it is quite possible."

Dan says that he tries to keep on top of everything that is happening in the world of ventriloquism and updates continually on the website with articles of interest, ventriloquists that are in the news and new acquisitions that he acquires for the collection. He also writes a blog with as much information as he can think of to keep people up to date with ventriloquial happenings, too.

But Dan doesn't take all the credit, he states, "Steve Hurst my webmaster can be given most of the credit for the website because without his expertise I certainly would not have been able to get all this information out to everyone."

Dan goes on to add, "I am from the generation that watched variety on television and ventriloquism was always there. Paul Winchell's Mahoney Time was a great show and of course Ed Sullivan showcased many great ventriloquists. Then in the 1970's we had Willie Tyler and Lester on all the variety shows and we had Jay Johnson on the prime time show "SOAP". After the 70's it seems ventriloquism kind of slipped into the shadows but I can tell you it never went away. It just took a hiatus but now we have Jay Johnson, Jeff Dunham and Terry Fator to thanks for bringing the art full circle and back in the mind's eye."

Dan Willinger lives in the Boston area where he is happy to share his collection with those who want to see a part of ventriloquial history.

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About Ventriloquist Central

Ventriloquist Central is a website where you can find all kinds of interesting information about the art of Ventriloquism. If you interested in past and present ventriloquists (such as The Great Lester, Edgar Bergen, Paul Winchell, Shari Lewis, Jimmy Nelson, Jeff Dunham, Terry Fator and many others)...or maybe about the great ventriloquist figure builders (Theodore Mack & Sons, George & Glenn McElroy, Frank Marshal, Ken Spencer, Jack Coats, Insull, Ray Guyll, plus others)...or just interested in the art of ventriloquism itself, Ventriloquist Central is the right place.

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