



# The Phoenix

The Newsletter of the Garden State Puppetry Guild  
Chartered by the Puppeteers of America 2002

Volume 1, Issue 2

Winter 2008

## Member Spotlight On Betty Sommerville And The Pretty Cool 4-H Puppetry Club

By Betty Sommerville

My organization is the Pretty Cool 4-H Puppetry Club of Somerset County 4-H. Presently the members of this 4-H performance arts club are Jessie Maze, Pamela & Sally Gilligan (all in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade) & my son Willie Sommerville (a junior in high school).



Betty builds a better flower.

This is our 11th year as a club, previously known as Talking Hands 4-H Club, then Practically Prepared Pretty Unpredictable 4-H Puppetry Club. The club has had various members over the years including Helen Horn-Mitchem, who encouraged us to join GSPG in 2003 after we saw "The Frog Princess" by Preston Foerder. Although I used to perform, I now mostly write up the puppet plays after a lot of improvisation &

direct the productions. I create mostly original puppets with various craft & sewing supplies, but occasionally will "gut" a stuffed animal to add to our puppet pool of performers.

Our schedule is very light & purposeful. We've done a skit or two at the past 5 NDOPs hosted by the GSPG. We've then taken that skit & created 5-6 more short skits to perform in a half-hour daily show at the annual 3-day Somerset County 4-H Fair in Bridgewater. We've also performed at various day-care centers around the county.

My start in puppetry began with playing with a fox puppet as a child. I loved watching such TV shows as Howdy Doody, Kukla, Fran & Ollie, Bernie the Bunyip, Andy's Gang' Froggie, Shari Lewis, Topo Gigio, the Muppets on Sesame Street & the Muppet Show, & Pee Wee's Playhouse, as well as Monty Python's Flying Circus pantomime figures. I've tried my hand at small glove, mouth & rod, marionettes, as well as oversized body puppets. I think I enjoy the mouth puppets most of all since they tend to talk back to me. My collection of puppets has grown to be 50+ strong over the years since 4-H folks & local librarians tend to give me their cast-off puppets. So I rescue & fix them up & put them into the wings to wait their turn to shine again.

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## Congratulations to Our New Officers

During our last meeting we elected a new slate of officers to lead us into the New Year. Congratulations. We appreciate the time and energy you contribute.

- President Penny Rapicano
- Vice President Lois Corwin
- Treasurer Steven Hollow
- Secretary Madeline Beresford
- Membership Chair Mickey Talon
- Newsletter Editor Paul Fantini



Vice President and President  
take a spin on the carousel

## Next Meeting TBA:

Please place our email, [gsgpmembers@yahoo.com](mailto:gsgpmembers@yahoo.com), on your safe senders list to ensure that you get all our important updates and added events.

## From the President's Playboard



coin. I'm trying to see the economy as a chance to see how resourceful I am. I'm challenging myself to see how I can save money and still keep living the way I like best. It will not be easy, but with some creative budgeting and taking on some extra work I believe I can keep things going. I took a look at my puppetry and decided to go in some new directions to attract new audiences. At first I didn't want to make big changes, but now I'm very grateful. Change can be scary, and exhausting, but it can also be invigorating and exciting. Now I feel something positive is being created out of something negative. That is the change I really hope to see for myself and all of you in the months ahead.

Sincerely,

Penny J. Rapicano

Dear Puppeteers,

Every morning when I'm walking my dog I try to notice the changes in nature. This time of year it's easy to see changes in leaves and plants. I can feel the change in temperature and I really notice the change in the amount of light. Those have been normal and predictable changes.

Lately we have all seen other changes, a huge downturn in the economy, rising unemployment, instability and uncertainty. Those changes were not as predictable and not welcomed by anyone I know. While those changes can be upsetting and just plain old frightening, I'm trying to look at the other side of the

## National Puppetry Festival

Since 1937, the **Puppeteers of America** has presented festivals to spotlight the best in puppetry in all its forms. **The National Puppetry Festival** is held every two years and brings together puppeteers and friends from all over to study, share, inspire, enlighten, entertain, and be entertained. The 2009 National Puppetry Festival will be held on the campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology in the heart of midtown Atlanta. If you "rarely get to a festival"...make this the rare one. The performance line-up will include presentations sponsored by UNIMA-USA, the American Chapter of Union Internationale de la Marionette. For more information go to [www.nationalpuppetryfestival.org/home.php](http://www.nationalpuppetryfestival.org/home.php).



## What's Going On?

### *The Night Before Christmas and the Steadfast Tin Soldier*

Every Saturday, November 25—January 3 at 2pm; \$9.00

Paper Moon Puppet Theater

at the First Avenue Playhouse (Atlantic Highlands)

<http://www.firstavenueplayhouse.com/pmpt/index.htm>

(732) 291-7552

### *Punch's Magic Lamp*

Performed by Fred Greenspan

Saturday, January 24 at 2pm; \$9.00

Penny Pretzel Playhouse

at the Baird Center (South Orange)

<http://www.geocities.com/pennypretzelplayhouse/>

(973) 378-7754



### *It's The Wolf!*

Tuckers' Tales Puppet Theatre

Saturday, February 28 at 2pm; \$9.00

Penny Pretzel Playhouse

at the Baird Center (South Orange)

<http://www.geocities.com/pennypretzelplayhouse/>

(973) 378-7754

## Invitation to Dine with Puppetry Guild of Greater New York

PGOGNY invites one and all to a **Holiday Pot Luck Party**, Sunday, Dec. 21, from 2-5 PM, at WestBeth Community Room, 55 Bethune Street, Ground Floor, between Washington and West St's., NYC.

**Admission: FREE.** Please bring food or drink to share, and a puppet or two for a show and tell, or brief performance.

Contact Peter Lewis: [ptrlws@nyc.rr.com](mailto:ptrlws@nyc.rr.com) or (212) 866-5156 for more information.

## What Can I Do For the Guild?

Glad you asked. The guild is always looking for exciting programs to present at the meetings, so if you would like to present, or know someone else who would like to, please let us know. We are also looking for shows the guild can attend, so if you know of any shows, please pass the information along. Supporting the guild by attending meetings is great, and it would be fantastic to see every member come to at least one meeting this year! A big part of the guild is sharing ideas and networking with other puppeteers, so please come out to a meeting, call or e mail a fellow member of the guild. You'll be glad you did.

## Change of Date for National Day of Puppetry

The guild will be having it's annual NDOP event on Saturday, May 2nd at the Somerset County 4-H. Please save the date!! We are planning morning workshops and an afternoon show featuring members of the guild and the 4-H puppetry club. Last year's audience was about 130 people and this year we will be advertising to more schools and libraries. A great chance to share your love for the art of puppetry to many people.

The Phoenix newsletter is produced and distributed in the interest of the members of the Garden State Puppetry Guild, a charter organization of Puppeteers of America. Submissions may be edited for length and content. Articles and images for consideration should be sent to the Editor by February 6 for the spring issue (covering March-May). Please send all submissions via email (below) or mail to The Phoenix, C/O Paul Fantini, 1219 Plane Street, Union, NJ 07083.

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## Garden State Puppetry Guild

C/O Paul Fantini  
1219 Plane Street  
Union, NJ 07083

### Not A Member? Join Today!

Chartered by the Puppeteers of America, a national not-for-profit organization founded in 1937, the Garden State Puppetry Guild builds a community of people who love puppet theatre. Among our members you will find professional puppeteers, puppet builders, teachers, librarians, therapists, youth leaders, and hobbyists and audience members who are enthusiastic about puppetry.

For more information go to

<http://www.geocities.com/gsgpmembers/>

OR

<http://www.puppeteers.org>

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## Member Spotlight on Betty Sommerville

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Since 2005, I've successfully found locations for the GSPG's NDOP with twice at the Somerville Library, once at the Monmouth County 4-H Center & then at the Somerset County 4-H Center where we will be staging the next one in 2009. I involved the guild to run a puppetry workshop at NE 4-H Volunteer Forum, which involved 12 other states' 4-H volunteers at a convention down at the shore in 2006.

I was born in 1954 in Somerville, NJ & raised with 3 brothers nearby in Bridgewater. I currently live in Hillsborough with my husband & two sons, both who have been in my club. I have a Masters in Library Science from Rutgers & was employed as a reference, young adult & childrens' librarian for 12 years at the Bound Brook Library. Presently I am a fiber artist & 4-H Association member as well as a volunteer with my

county's 4-H program which culminates in their annual 4-H fair, where I supervise the 4-H Arts Tent & book the entertainment there. Besides running the puppet club, I also ran a clown club for the past 10 years. Presently I have 2 other clubs, one doing magic & the other country line dancing. I'm also a member of the Somerville Library's Friends group & supervise their annual Book Sale. I actively support these efforts since they involve other folks who know how to have fun while building a sense of community.



**Pretty cool butterfly from the Pretty Cool 4-H puppeteers.**