

## 10 (or so) questions with...

By **Steve Lange**

Photo courtesy of Randall Munson



### **Randall Munson,** former IBMer-turned-motivational speaker, author, magician, ventriloquist, clown and president of Creatively Speaking

**Rochester Magazine: The next few months, you'll be speaking and performing in Texas, California, Ontario. How many days a year are you on the road?**

Randall: It varies greatly from year to year. Sometimes I am gone maybe half the time and some years I am gone relatively little. One week I may be doing seven presentations all over the world and other weeks I am at home.

**Does your wife go with you?**

She's gone with me to places like Hawaii and Singapore and London. She doesn't go with me to Dubuque, Iowa, though.

**Tell me about your family.**

My wife Sharon and I have been married now for 43 years.

**Any kids?**

We have three kids. One of each.

**OK. Huh?**

They're all girls. Except for the two boys.

**So, there are two boys and one girl?**

You got it! My daughter is Sheryl Vold and my sons are Russel and Scott.

**You worked at IBM (as a software architect) for 20-plus years?**

I started in 1977.

**How did you get started with ventriloquism?**

I started doing it as a little kid. There was a

ventriloquist puppet in [the Sears catalog] of Knucklehead Smith. My mother said 'Would you like one of those?' I said, 'Yeah, I would!' Under the Christmas tree I found Knucklehead Smith. For weeks, months, years, I was devoted to learning how to do that. I taught myself by sitting in front of a mirror and trying not to move my lips when I talked. I got sore throats and hoarse and finally conquered the skills for it.

**Were you annoying the hell out of your brothers and mom with the ventriloquism as a kid?**

Absolutely. Between that and the card tricks and the practical jokes...

**And you've been doing clowning for years.**  
Since 1971.

**You recently performed with the Ringling Bros. Barnum and Bailey Circus.**

It was amazing. Even as a young kid, I was determined to be a clown. To me, that would be the ultimate profession.

**You have an eight-foot ostrich dummy?**

I created that for a parade act ... I made mine fluorescent orange and yellow, eight-feet tall, and I made him into a ventriloquist figure so he could turn his head and talk to people. Once, I was doing an interview with a national news organization, and the lady was doing the interview and finally the sound man stopped

and said 'I'm not picking up the ostrich.' She was holding the microphone to the ostrich's mouth when he talked. It took them a while to realize that the ostrich was not really making any sound.

**You led the first Rochesterfest parade in 1983?**

Yes. With that ostrich. I had just won a top clown award, and the TV picked up the story and the P-B, too, and out of that came an invitation to lead the Rochesterfest parade.

**Can you spell 'accommodate'?**

I can try, but I won't put any likelihood of correctness to it.

**You're a bad speller?**

Yes. I'm more of a mathematician because I like things that make sense. For example, birch church perch. Those words should only vary by the consonant at the front. It makes no sense that they would be spelled with different vowels.

**What is 12 squared? Quickly!**

144.

**You've only spoken on six continents? They just don't like you in Antarctica?**

I can't get a booking there! They dress up nice in those little tuxedos, but they will not hire me.

**You garnered more than 100 gold medals in the International Speaker Olympics?**

True.

**And you've passed every doping test?**

Yes, I have.

**Tell me about the time you got pulled over by a cop in full clowning costume. And I mean you were in full clowning costume, not the cop.**

Well, I was on my way from Rochester to Minneapolis to clown for the children at the University Heart Hospital in Minneapolis Children's Hospital. I was in a bit of a hurry, and for some reason he decided to pull me over. I thought I would be OK because here I was in makeup obviously going to help cheer up the children and I thought he would be sympathetic to that. ... As it turned out he didn't have that disposition. Especially awkward was the fact that not only was I in costume and makeup, including clown shoes, but I was also wearing a false arm. So I actually had three arms at the time he stopped me.

**It must have been nice to be able to hand him the title, registration, and your license all at once, one with each hand.**

Right! He did write the ticket. But just before he left he did say, 'Please don't contest this, because I could never identify you.'