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# Renewing a Mummers' rivalry

## Come New Year's Day, Bill McIntyre's Shooting Stars and the Jokers NYA will look forward to adding a new chapter to their 65 years of highly competitive history.

By Jim Julia

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Look up the word "rival" in the dictionary, and it reads: "to be in competition, to act as a rival: compete, to be in competition with, to strive to equal or excel, competitive."

Surprisingly, there was not a picture of the logo's of Bill McIntyre's Shooting Stars and the Jokers NYA. Since both of these clubs were formed in the late 1940s (Stars '47 and Jokers '49), they have been in competition with each other. For those counting, it would be 65 years.

And it was as impressive as it was immediate. Between '50 and '61, the first 12 years of Brigade prizes were all won by the Jokers or the Shooting Stars (six by the Stars from '50 to '53, '58 and '59) and six by the Jokers ('54 to '57; '60 and '61).

While most will say the rivalry is in good humor, there have been occasions when it may not have seemed as such. While most will sight the dominance of the two clubs during the '50s and early '60s as a reason for the rivalry, there is a rumored story about a captain's suit that caused a problem. Also in '93, there was a timing issue that led to some frayed nerves and a one-point victory for the Stars. In addition, eight times they have finished first and second. Twelve times they have finished just ahead of the other.

But these clubs are connected in so many ways that keep the competition fun. During the '90s, for a number of years the Jokers and Stars amazingly, given the competition and the secrecy for which Mummers are known, shared a warehouse at Fifth and McKean streets. Fred Keller shared a story about how he spent one Christmas Eve setting up his floats so the painter would be ready to go on Christmas Day (don't ask ... they are weird). When Keller showed up on the 26th, none of the Jokers' floats were painted. The Stars had hi-jacked the painter saying he did not complete what he had promised them.

The first year the Brigades elected members into their Hall of Fame, they elected two, a star (Bill McIntyre Sr.) and a Joker (Joe "Sheiky" Walters), of course.

There are numerous family connections between the two clubs that also make for some interesting holiday dinners. Two of the more notable among them are the Stars vice president Jim McCullough to Casey Olkowski. The Olkowskis have been in the Jokers since the '70s. The McCulloughs have been in the Stars since the early '80s. There is also of course the Adams-Gallagher union. Former Stars Captain Mickey Adams' daughter Allison is married to longtime Joker Dan Gallagher's son Joe "Bad News" Gallagher, who is captain of the Jokers. When Mickey stepped down as captain in 2011, his son Michael, Joe's brother-in-law, succeeded him.

Mummer historian and former captain of the Stars Franny McIntyre related some stories to me about the rivalry that he believes are all in good fun. He recalled that when he was a young captain of the stars, the Joker captain was Bud Krajicek. They decided to celebrate the rivalry by rolling a keg down to the brigade who

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 A grid of 12 small photos showing various scenes, likely related to the South Philly Review. The photos include people, events, and possibly the jester character from the Jokers NYA logo.

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finished higher. The roll would take place on the night of the serenade. Franny noted that one year when the Jokers finished better, the Stars rolled the barrel down to them. They returned later that night to ask if they could borrow it back when they ran out of beer. Fran said despite the years that have passed, life-long Joker Bill Wickert Sr. will not let him forget it.

Finally, come New Year's Night when the results are known, if they did not win, their next question will be "where did the Jokers/Stars finish?" If it is behind them, despite the disappointment of not winning, a competitive smile will appear across their face.

*Jim Julia is the president of the Philadelphia Mummers Fancy Brigade Association.*

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