

Bob Cassidy's

Fundamentals

A Guidebook to Mentalism



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Preface

Eventually this book will appear in bound form. Some copies will be purchased by “collectors” and carefully mummified in airtight shrink wrappings to insure their future value should the author become famous, infamous or dead. (Or, with just a little bit of luck, infamously and spectacularly dead, thus insuring maximum returns for a modest investment.) One copy will, according to my statistical surveys, find its way into one of several cardboard boxes labeled “Grandpa’s Anderson’s Magic Stuff,” where it will remain hidden and forgotten in the back of a private storage shed until it is discovered in January, 2058, by disappointed great grandchildren who, as his only living heirs, hoped to find several million dollars in cash and securities.

Many copies, perhaps most, will be quickly scanned and discarded by those who still believe that there are closely guarded “underground” secrets out there that will bring them instant recognition as “truly unique mystifiers” as long as the “Magic Secrets on the Mall Superstore” doesn’t start selling that kind of thing to just *anybody*.

It is probable that a few copies of the book that will be actually read and studied. Whether they’re praised, condemned or ridiculed, these will be the only permanent copies. The others are just paper, ink and dead ideas.

“Fundamentals’ was originally a four part series. Halfway into it I realized that it would probably take more than four parts to complete the project I had in mind. I made the mistake of saying as much to my subscribers. Additionally, I wrote that Parts Three and Four would include responses to questions asked by readers of the first part and would also include their worthwhile insights and contributions.

As I should have known, no contributions or questions were forthcoming. That didn’t stop a few subscribers from loudly complaining, however, when the envisioned Parts Five and Six did not appear, “I don’t care that he originally advertised it as only being four parts. He said in Part Two that there would be two extra parts and, damn it, he owes us that!” (These complaints were, of course, largely from those who were mute when it came to responding to the request for questions of insights that were to have been included in the series.)

Fundamentals

Be that as it may, "Fundamentals" is now complete. It is not what I thought it would be when I began the project, but I am still quite happy with the way it turned out. I have included, among other new things, a close-up handling the classic Princess card effect that I think will find favor with many of you. It is one of my strongest close-up bits.

One last loose end - In the original Part One there was a "Bonus Effect" called "Test Conditions." It was an abbreviated description of an effect I later released in a detailed photographically illustrated e-book called "Laboratory Conditions." In the ad for the e-book I made no secret of the fact that the effect was a re-release of an effect I put out in 1997 or thereabouts. I said the same thing in the description that appeared in Part One. To be totally honest, when I did "Laboratory Conditions" I had completely forgotten that I had included an abbreviated version of the effect in Part One. When I realized it I didn't figure there was much of a problem because I SAID IN BOTH VERSIONS that the effect was the one released almost thirty years ago as my first commercial release. Nonetheless, there are those who have seized upon this as 'evidence' of an evil *mens rea*. It is not. I haven't, however, included the effect in this volume, so those who possess the originals now have collectors' editions.

Good thoughts to all of you.

Bob Cassidy
Seattle, September 2003

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FROM THE TARBELL COURSE IN MAGIC -

It should be noted that there is a psychological difference in the appeal, in the manner of presentation, between what we call two branches of the mystic art – ‘magicians’ and ‘mentalists’. While both accomplish their effects by trickery, the mentalist rarely admits it. There is an important reason for this attitude of the mentalist. His mysteries of the mind are impressive only when cloaked in an atmosphere of genuine phenomena. Long experience has taught the wisdom of this serious and earnest presentation. Ample proof of these statements will be found by observance of the leading professional artists – those occupying the topmost rung being accepted as genuine by a great majority.

Performers of mental and psychic mysteries usually preface their demonstrations with a statement to the effect that they make no claims to possession of supernatural powers, and that the presentation is solely for the entertainment and amusement those present, who may draw their own conclusions as to the means or methods by which it is accomplished. However, the performer proceeds to do his act as though it were a genuine example of unusual powers: - which, in fact, it is! **If presented as mere tricks, the act would not command anywhere near the same interest and spellbound attention – if indeed, it didn't fall flat.** [emphasis added]

- Harlan Tarbell, *The Tarbell Course in Magic, Volume IV.*

Introduction

The first thing that an aspiring mentalist needs to know is that there is a very real difference that exist between mentalism as presented by mentalists and mental magic as demonstrated by magicians. While their methods and devices are often similar, the mentalist is able to employ certain psychological techniques unavailable to the magician.

It is a well known fact, for example, that if you speak to someone they will generally look at your face. If you are a public speaker or a standup comedian, this is almost always true because there is no compelling reason to look anywhere else.

Not so for the magician. People know in advance that a magician performs tricks, and since everyone imagines that they might see “how it’s done” if they watch closely, their attention will go back and forth between the magician’s face and his hands (or the particular prop he is using). The magician, therefore, must employ misdirection to insure that attention is directed appropriately.

If a magician includes a mental effect in his act the same requirement applies. Even though he may state that he is about to demonstrate a phenomenon of the mind, audiences are well conditioned not to believe anything that a magician says and will continue to look for trickery.

It stands to reason, therefore, that if an audience has any reason to suspect that a performer is performing sleight of hand or "magic tricks," his words and actions will be subject to far more scrutiny than those of a public speaker. (Unless, of course, the speaker is running for office.)

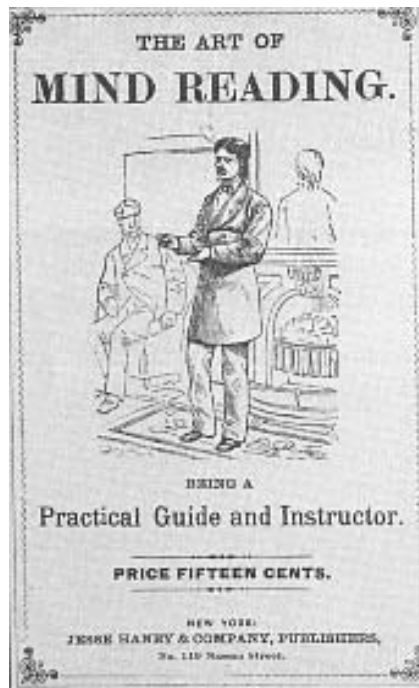
This is why mentalists can effectively employ methods that would be transparently crude and obvious if used by a magician.

In the quote on the previous page, Harlan Tarbell observes that the mentalist should seem to possess an "unusual power." (Note that he merely advocates that the performer attribute his effects to some "unusual power." This claimed "power" needn't be paranormal. One of today's most successful mentalists claims to be an expert on body language and non-verbal communication. Many similar approaches are available to the imaginative performer who does not wish to claim or imply psychic abilities. The important point is that effective mentalism cannot be presented as mere magical trickery.)

Upon witnessing a mentalist totally dumbfound an audience with bold and simple effects, some magicians, who, due to lack of talent or aversion to practice, often decide to "get into mentalism." No psychic ability is necessary to accurately predict what always happens when they foist themselves upon an unsuspecting audience.

It isn't pretty.

This guidebook is not for those who seek self-working magic tricks with a mental or psychic theme. It is, instead, intended for those who wish to obtain a solid understanding of the principles and psychology of the art of mentalism.



How it All Began

To understand the art of mentalism and many of the debates which surround it today, nothing is more illuminating than a brief review of its early history. As a performing art, modern mentalism evolved during the period spanning the latter half of the nineteenth century through the early years of the twentieth. It was a theatrical response to the public's fascination with Spiritualism, Theosophy, hypnotism and early psychical research.

The first "mentalists" did not have conjuring backgrounds, although they did, unquestionably, make use of sleight of hand, gimmickry and misdirection to accomplish their feats. Without exception, however, all claimed to possess – either explicitly or implicitly – genuine paranormal abilities. All were subject to attacks and exposures by magicians and skeptics and, as a result, many careers were short lived. Only a select few were able to survive the onslaughts and controversy to enjoy successful careers as public performers.

In short, not much has changed.

A Few Members of the Original Cast of Characters



Anna Eva Fay

In the mid 1870's, Anna Eva Fay had established herself as a stage medium. Her most famous feat was a spirit cabinet routine she called "The Cotton Bandage Test." (The feat is still performed today, most notably by "Falkenstein and Willard".) Later, she added a question answering routine utilizing waxed pads to obtain secret impressions of spectators' written queries.

In 1875 she hired Washinton Irving Bishop to be her manager. In 1876, Bishop wrote a complete expose of Fay's act and began his own career as a mentalist. His performances included an expose of Fay's "fraudulent" tests and, later, demonstrations of his own "genuine" thought reading abilities.

In 1889 she publicly mocked Bishop in the press.



John Randall Brown

In 1872, as a reporter assigned to covering seances, Brown invented the thought reading technique now known as muscle reading. (Based on detecting what is now referred to as 'Involuntary Muscle Response', or 'IMR'.) Taking to the stage, he billed himself as 'The First and Original Thought Reader' and began a successful career in mentalism. In 1877 he taught his technique to Washington Irving Bishop.



Washington Irving Bishop

In 1877, after learning muscle reading from Brown, Bishop added it to his act and became the most successful practitioner of the technique. He went to England where he billed himself as 'The First and Original Thought Reader' and drew the attention of the magician John Maskelyne, the first of the magician/exposers to attack stage mentalists.



Samri S. Baldwin and John Neville Maskelyne

Bishop, hastily leaving England to avoid the enforcement of a court judgment obtained against him by Maskelyne, returned to the United States. Brown, in the meantime, was no longer calling himself 'The First and Original Thought Reader' but, instead, had become 'The First and Original White Mahatma' (in response, apparently, to the growing popularity of Madame Blavatsky's Theosophical movement.) Unfortunately, the title was already in use by Samri S. Baldwin, the apparent originator of the one-ahead system as applied to question answering acts, who responded by calling himself "The REAL and Only Original White Mahatma".



And that is basically the way it was. They claimed to possess real paranormal abilities, while attacking and exposing the competition and stealing each others billings. In the meantime, they defended themselves against, or did their best to avoid, attacks against themselves by magicians and skeptics.

Like I said, not much has changed.



IMPORTANT LEGAL NOTICE

Pursuant to The Political Correctness Act of 1995, the author hereby certifies that use of the masculine pronouns "he," "him," and "his" in the following text is not intended to exclude the feminine, or those who have been neutered, and are used for convenience and readability only.

Overview

Mentalism may be the most interactive of the performing arts. Its primary illusion is that of mind reading. While the mentalist may claim to be using body language, superior powers of observation, advanced psychological techniques, or whatever "unusual power" he desires, the basic impression is that he is able to determine or control people's innermost thoughts. Unless he finds it amusing to read his own mind, the illusion is impossible without an audience.

In addition to a solid understanding of the psychology of mentalism, the most important assets of an effective mentalist are acting and communication skills, and the ability to think on his feet in high pressure, and occasionally unpredictable, situations. My goal is to give you an approach to learning and presenting mentalism which develops all of these essential skills.

The Psychology of Mentalism

As I noted in an earlier work, the word "mentalism" originally referred to a philosophy that held reality itself to be a mental phenomenon. For our purposes it shall be defined as a performing art in which the mentalist entertainingly demonstrates mystifying "powers of the mind."

Unlike most magical effects, the illusion of mentalism is not primarily visual. (The exceptions, of course, are "mind over matter" effects such as bending or moving small objects by apparent psychokinesis, etc.) While visual aids are often employed - ie. the performer exhibits a book from which a word is selected, or a spectator draws a picture which the mentalist attempts to duplicate - the actual illusion takes place in the viewer's mind.

Imagine, for example, that you are vacationing abroad and see a mentalist on television. Imagine that he is speaking a language completely unfamiliar to you. It is likely that you will have no idea what he is doing - he could be a game show host for all you know.

If you were watching a magician, however, you would quickly recognize that he was performing magic and would probably understand what he was doing regardless of the language barrier.

But in mentalism, the illusion itself cannot be created without effective verbal communication and misdirection.

Plausibility

In successful fiction, as in magic and mentalism, the plot, actions and events must be consistent with the rules of the imaginary world set up by the author. You can't, unless you have created a skewed parallel universe, have General Custer calling for reinforcements on his cell phone. Nor can a mentalist who claims to be an expert in interpreting body language, believably demonstrate the ability to bend metals with his mind or to see while blindfolded. The latter effects are simply not consistent with the ability claimed.

There are many who feel that somber dress, a humorless approach and a mysterious demeanor are enough to establish believability. Actually, the opposite is true. There must be a modern naturalness in the mentalist's appearance. Not only does this put an audience at ease, but it strikes down psychological barriers that individuals may have regarding authority figures.

The same applies to the mentalist's attitude. A superior attitude can cause an audience to react negatively and will inhibit their cooperation and willingness to participate in the program. A friendly and enthusiastic approach, on the other hand, puts an audience at ease and in a frame of mind that will be far less skeptical and analytical of the mentalist's claims.

Mentalism, to be effective, must appear to be an actual demonstration of some unusual ability, as discussed above. Its plausibility is inversely proportional to the number of abilities claimed. In other words, the more unusual abilities you claim and demonstrate, the less believable you will be. Before you can begin to select effects and develop a presentation you must first create a plausible subscript - a detailed description of your stage persona's powers, how he got them, how they seem to work, and what his limitations are.

If you have never done so before, it would be a good idea to write an imaginary biography of the character you portray on stage. Many mentalists create a character very similar to themselves, but this is hardly a requirement. It's easier, however, for those who have no training in acting to be internally consistent if the history of their fictional character closely corresponds to actual events in their own lives.

Now ask yourself if you have the knowledge, physical characteristics, education and background to plausibly portray the character you have invented. It would be extremely difficult, for example, for an eighteen year old to convincingly portray a parapsychologist or a professor of metaphysics.

Take a serious look at the "unusual ability" you select for your character. See how the actual claim, whether it be express or implied, controls the manner in which the following effects should be presented. The effects, by the way, illustrate some of the fundamental physical, psychological, and misdirective techniques of mentalism.

The Path to Mastery

The effects in this guide are first described in a skeletal or "bare bones" fashion. This is the foundation upon which the illusion of mentalism is built. Far too many beginners, believing that the acquisition of effects and methods is the path to becoming a mentalist or magician, do not develop their presentations beyond this stage.

The truth is that no effect or act is truly learned unless ALL of the following requirements have been met:

1. The actual mechanics of each effect and the accompanying script have become second nature. Many beginners believe that it is more effective and natural to forego the use of an actual script and to simply improvise their presentations along an appropriate theme. While improvisation is an essential skill to the expert mentalist, both as a means of "connecting" to an audience and responding to unexpected situations, it cannot be utilized unless there is something to improvise upon. And that "something" is the script. Improvisation is the adaptation of the stage persona and script to the requirements of the moment. It is emphatically NOT simply making things up as you go along.
2. The subscript is assimilated and the stage persona has become a "real person."

3. The presentation has been “blocked .” This simply means that all of the elements of actually staging the performance – the placement of props, the positions the performer and volunteers take on stage, angles of visibility, etc - have all been analyzed and optimized for maximum effectiveness. Even informal performances must take these elements into consideration . It is highly recommended that every mentalist or magician become acquainted with the basics of stagecraft.
4. The effect or act has been performed many times before a live audience .

A note on rehearsal-

I am often asked if it is wise to practice new material or effects before friends or family. Generally speaking, it is a bad idea, for they will never react the same way as a “real” audience. They “know” you are not a mind reader. They “know” that your character is just an act. They usually will not respond, therefore, to the subtle bits of psychology and stagecraft that are essential elements of illusion-making. It is equally useless to practice before the local magic club. Even if you were actually reading minds they would still be convinced there was a gimmick.

“Who can I practice for , then?” you may ask. The ability to relate to and communicate with people from all walks of life is a requirement of effective mentalism. To develop that skill requires that you get out there and meet people. The character you wish to portray on stage also has to get out and meet people. He cannot be shy. He needs to try out new ideas on people who have accepted him as a mentalist. Mentalism is not something that you can really learn amongst family or friends or by staying at home.

The answer , then, is really quite simple. To find people to test your material before, you simply need to go out there and meet them. Cultivate friendships wherever you go. Not only will this enhance your performing skills but it will later open up many venues for your performances.

A mentalist cannot let shyness or a tendency to introversion stand in his way. The meek may well inherit the earth. None of them, though, will amount to squat as performers.

Fundamental Structures

The following effects are, as I’ve indicated, fundamental structures upon which presentations will be created and developed.

To gain the maximum benefit from this guide book you should first decide who your stage persona is, and what unusual abilities he possesses. You should also begin to read and study everything you can about the ability claimed. In other words, if your character is a master of interpreting nonverbal communication, you should study everything you can about body language, lie detection, etc. If you are claiming one or more of the various alleged psychic abilities you should familiarize yourself with the *current* research in the field. (An excellent starting point is the recent material published by *Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research* which may be found at the following web page <http://www.princeton.edu/~pear/> .)

Next go over the basic methodology with materials in hand. Once mastered, develop a presentation that coincides the the “unusual power” described in your character’s subscript.

A final note: It is extremely important that while you are in character, you actually believe in the ability you’ve claimed, even if that belief is totally contrary to what you believe in real life. Your character’s belief or skepticism will either immediately or eventually become clear to your audience and will directly effect their perception of your performance. Unless you are a rather accomplished actor, it is probably best that you choose an “unusual power” that you personally believe is at least theoretically possible. The very important rule you must remember is this:

To be believable, you must first believe.



The Early Days

-from the Magic Consumer Alert Files

Dear Magic Watchdog-

I want to warn everyone about the biggest ripoff piece of junk there is. It's called "The Connector" and the ad in "Little Nickel" said

THE BIGGEST SECRET OF THE WORLDS GREATEST MINDREADERS

Probably the greatest gimmick every devised. Comes in a black velour pouch. Carry it with you everywhere and you too will be able to control the hearts and minds of any audience.

The Connector ONLY FIVE DOLLARS!

Dr. Bob's Magic's Greatest Secrets Mega Mall Super Discount Store, Fremont, Washington

So I sent five dollars and got a little bag in the mail. Inside was a little white metal badge that has the words "Stay Connected" on it. I looked at the instructions and they said, "Read the instructions on the badge and memorize them."

But there were no instructions on the badge and the thing is junk and then I found out that there isn't even a mega mall in Fremont. WHAT A RIPOFF!!

Oh, yeah - can someone at the Watchdog tell me where I can buy the "David Blaine's Biggest Secrets CD" – the one that has where he floats around and eats a guy's quarter?

Your Friend,

Magic Jimmy

Fundamental Problems

The Most Misunderstood Statement in Mentalism

I am often asked seemingly innocent questions that reveal common misunderstandings of many beginning mentalists and more than a few performers who really should know better.

(1.) “You’ve suggested that mentalists should limit the claims they make. You say that a performer loses credibility by presenting a program in which he explains the various forms of psychic ability and then demonstrate every one of them. So let’s say that I just claim the ability to read thoughts and influence them and I ‘prove’ it by doing a billet test and a prediction. Then what? I’ve already shown what I can do. Everything else would just be a variation of the same thing. Won’t people want to see me do something else?”

Superficially, this appears to be a very simple query. It is not. It contains a false assumption made by almost every mentalist and magician who puts an act together for the first time. The same assumption is also hidden in the following question, which is seen almost daily in one or another of the many Internet discussion groups devoted to magic and/or mentalism:

(2.) “I am putting together an act. I own and have learned the following effects. [List of effects follows] Which effects should I use and what is the best order in which to present them?”

The stock answer to the latter question is - “Open with a short but convincing effect that establishes your credentials and gets their attention. You want them to think, “Now here is a man who knows his business and is worthy of my attention. Don’t make any outrageous claims to supernatural powers. Just present the next several effects as entertaining examples of science and psychology in action. This approach maintains their attention because it seems so educational and cerebral. That’s why even people who hate straight magic are completely intrigued by mentalism.”

Unfortunately, while the foregoing answer contains at least one valid observation, it completely ignores the questioner’s hidden assumptions about the inherent entertainment value of mentalism. It also fosters the common, but

wrong idea, that his varied demonstrations show that he is not only a skilled entertainer, but is also well versed in the hidden powers of the human mind.

The myth that mentalism is ideally suited to intelligent audiences provides a convenient scapegoat, the stupid audience- to explain away failures actually caused by a performer's own misunderstandings of audience psychology.

If you doubt that many performers hold these beliefs, a simple search for mentalist's sites on the Internet will prove that I am not making this stuff up. But you might well ask why these assumptions are false and why they are rarely challenged.

The hidden assumption contained in the first statement is that mental effects are inherently entertaining to intelligent audiences. This is false. Entertainment value comes entirely from the performer. It's absence will indeed cause an audience to ask, "What else do you do" after the first effect or two.

The following scenario provides a somewhat clearer illustration because it has nothing to do with mentalism or magic, but with the concept of entertainment in general:

A singer performs a song very well, thus 'proving' that he has the ability to sing. Will his listeners then say, "So you can sing, what else do you do?"

If the performance was an audition for a movie role or a place in the chorus line, the answer is likely to be "yes." But was there ever an instance where an audience member said to Frank Sinatra, "Ok, already, so you sing. But can you do a Modified Elmsley Count?"

[Actually this may have really happened in 1952, when Sinatra was a guest at the First (and last) Annual Public Show of The Hoboken Magic Club (defunct since 1952), but I still think that my analogy makes a valid point.]

The second assumption, that variety of effect provides inherent entertainment value is false for the same reasons, although the demonstrator may get a way with a few extra tricks before the questioner asks, "So, is that it then?"

Both of these assumptions, as well as the equally false notion that mentalism is particularly popular with intelligent audiences, can be traced back to one of the biggest misstatements ever made about the art mentalism. It evolved from an early statement by Ted Annemann that “audiences go for Mental Tricks more than ever. It is more of a grown up phase of magic and mystery.” The idea that Mentalism, no longer referred to as “mental tricks,” was a “grown up form of mystery” was embraced enthusiastically by a later generation of mentalists, who realized that mentalism was hardly the same type of “family entertainment” offered by traditional magic.

Eventually, many mentalists began promoting their shows as the as a sophisticated form of mystery entertainment uniquely appropriate for the dawn of a New Age. The idea of presenting mentalism as entertainment uniquely suitable for the intelligent (read: “enlightened”) was really nothing more than a good marketing ploy by the same generation who would later assure us that “The Truth is Out There” (for those intelligent enough to see what was “really” going on.)

The important principal to be remembered is this:

**If you make people think they’re thinking, they’ll love you.
If you really make them think, they’ll hate you.
-Don Marquis**

Think about it.

Really.

Try not to hate me too much.

The Opening Effect Comes Second

It's unfortunate that the first actual routine presented by a mentalist is usually referred to as "The Opening Effect," or just "The Opening." The actual opening of an act begins at the moment the performer appears on stage. (Other important things may happen before the first appearance, such as introductions, music, preshow work, mood lighting effects, etc. While very important for setting up mood and tone and preparing the audience for what is to come, I like to think of them as a "prologue" and they will be discussed in another section.)

In my *Theories and Methods for the Practical Psychic* I discussed the importance of "The Thirty Second Rule." The rule states that in the first thirty seconds of the performance, indelible impressions will be formed about the performer's appearance, his professionalism, his likeability, his charisma, and all other factors that will establish his level of command and rapport. This is called the "connection."

That thirty seconds is the "opening" of the act. An experienced performer realizes that this critical period will pretty much determine the how the show is going to proceed. During his first routine, he is either seeking to strengthen a weak connection or maintain the level of a strong one. His skill at creating, manipulating and controlling the connection defines his ability as a performer.

That's why the myths I have been discussing are so dangerous- they ignore the fact that the real secret lies in the skillful maintenance of a "connection" that is established well before the first effect begins. The assumption that effects are "inherently entertaining," leads to the conclusion that the "connection" is automatic, especially with "intelligent audiences."

Mastering the "connection " requires an intense awareness of its existence and careful observation of how it responds to your every word, action, and thought. No one can tell you exactly how it works because it works differently for everyone. Just be sure to stay constantly aware of its existence and you will eventually be able to literally feel it and control it.

[This is probably the best-kept secret in the business, even though Dr. Bob sold it by mail order for years. His instructions were a little vague, but he included a little reminder badge that reminded you to always "Stay Connected."]

Some Fundamental Principles



The Bulldog Deck and The Scary Movie Routine

- an illustration of the complimentary use of mechanical and psychological principles

The Bulldog Deck is a practical principle that can be used to create innumerable routines and effects. Over the years the basic idea has appeared in many different forms, but the underlying principle is based on the use of long/short card pairs, invented by Burling Hull and commonly referred to as "The *Svengali* Principle."

Later variations included the *Mene Tekel Deck* and the *Psychomatic Deck*, two extremely versatile principles that have been applied not only to playing cards, but to postcards, posters, photographs, books, envelopes and just about anything else that contains several flat, flexible objects that are easily held in the hands. In this routine it utilizes index cards held together with a bulldog clip.

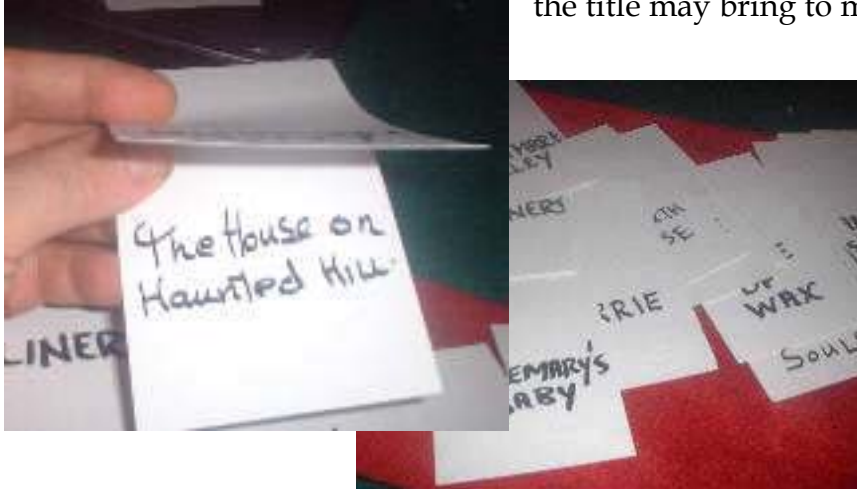
I present it to you here in the form of a routine called "The Scary Movie" which is especially appropriate for Halloween programs. (Although I use it year round)

The mentalist exhibits a stack of forty-eight 3x 5 index cards, which are held together on the short ends with a bulldog clip. The cards are held vertically. Removing the clip, the mentalist shows the cards to the audience and explains that on each one he has printed the name of a famous horror or suspense movie. The top card of the pack has "Great Psychological Thrillers" printed on it. (I'll refer to this card as "The Cover Card.")

The performer freely shows the cards to the audience, either spreading through them so one individual can verify that they all contain the titles of different films, or, in a close up situation, by spreading them out on a table.

The mentalist places the cover card to one side and thoroughly mixes the pack. He holds the cards writing side down and replaces the cover card before he turns it face upward. (This conceals the name of the movie on the top card.) The bulldog clip is replaced.

The performer explains that spectator is to lift up a block of cards from the lower end of the stack and to remember the name of the movie she sees. The performer pockets the cards or casually tosses them aside. He then asks the volunteer to visualize a scene from the movie or to concentrate on an image that the title may bring to mind.



Since the name of a film has been forced upon the spectator, the remainder of the presentation is devoted to the dramatic revelation of the spectator's thoughts. But before he ultimately reveals the name of the chosen film, the mentalist first successfully describes the scene or image the volunteer has associated with the film. He then has her concentrate on the title of the film and he writes his thoughts down on a pad or dry erase board, which he then places face down on the lap of another spectator.

The onstage volunteer is asked to tell the audience the name of the film and mentalist shows the audience his written impression, which is seen to be absolutely correct.

Turning to another audience member the mentalist states that he almost got confused because he was receiving conflicting images from her about a different film entirely. He tells her the name of the film she was thinking of and is, again, correct.

There are two parts to the method, one mechanical, and the other psychological. The psychological ploy takes all of the heat off of the pack of index cards because it creates the impression that the performer is able to reveal random images from the spectators' minds in addition to the title of the selected movie.

A Fundamental Psychological Ploy

I always use this “double-barreled” approach when using a force. It provides an effective “psychological disconnect” by demonstrating that the cards have no bearing on my ability to reveal thoughts, thus destroying a possible “link” that a perceptive or skeptical spectator might make between the selection and the revelation.

The mechanical method is simple and essentially self-working. The pack consists of twenty-four pairs of cards, which have been glued together at the top edge. The card on the face of each pair is a long card (a regular, uncut, index card) and the card on the back has been cut short, on the lower short edge, by about 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch. (I have found it unnecessary to cut the “shorts” too finely, since index cards are not cut to the exacting tolerances that make “coarse cut shorts” too obvious in a standard deck.)



This is a photo of one such pair. The “House on Haunted Hill” card is the back card of the pair and is cut short. It is important to note that the top edges of the cards are flush. The “step” formed by the short is at the bottom edge only.

Also note that the movie title is printed (with a Sharpie marker for visibility) on the lower half of the vertically oriented card. The top card of the pair has the name of a random horror movie on it. (You

can see the names of some of the films I used in my pack in the second photo above.) Once assembled, the pack can be freely spread and overhand shuffled. If you riffle the pack from front to back – riffing from the top card down- the *Svengali* principle comes into play and you will only see the top cards of each pair. Riffing from the bottom up you will see the same movie on every card. Having pointed this out for completions sake only, I urge you NOT to display the cards by riffling them. For one thing, you may remind someone in the audience about the *Svengali* deck he had when he was a kid. This is not an image you want to evoke at this time. But even more importantly, you don’t want to illustrate the riffle move and then explain to a volunteer that you want her to select a film by lifting up a bunch of cards and remembering the name of the one movie that she sees.

If you have previously used a riffle to show the cards to be different, you run the very serious risk of having the spectator riffle them while making a selection. Why risk that? I insure that this doesn't even happen carelessly by telling the volunteer to be sure to only peek at one card. "Otherwise," I tell her, "Many images will pass through your mind and it will be very difficult for me to receive a bunch of conflicting images at the same time."

The preceding photograph shows how you want the spectator to make her selection. Demonstrate this to her. Just stand so that she cannot see the name of the film you are looking at.

These points are not as obvious as you might think. And when it comes to giving instructions to a volunteer, there are no such words as "obvious" and "assume." Never assume that a spectator knows exactly what you want them to do. Show him exactly how you want him to hold the deck, the book, the whatever. Demonstrate it for him.

When you have the movie selected you can either hold the pack by the clip and turn your head while the volunteer peeks, or you can put the pack into her left hand and position her right hand so she will lift the cards exactly the way you want her to. Use the approach that you feel gives you the most control over her actions.

She's peeked at a movie; you've put the cards away.

Now you enter the psychological phase and ask the volunteer to visualize a scene from the movie. Pause for just a second while looking her in the eyes. If she starts to say that she never saw the film, cut her objection short by immediately continuing your sentence with "...or think of any image that may that you may associate with the film or that the title may suggest to you."

Once you understand the psychology of what happens next, you will be able to use the principle with many other movie or book titles. I have forced the film "House on Haunted Hill" because it is an old movie with a very basic story line that is pretty much summed up in the title. It's about a bunch of people who have to spend a night in a haunted house. If you ask someone who has seen the movie to visualize a scene from it, she will either visualize the exterior of the haunted house, or she will imagine a bunch of people in the house being terrorized by what appear to be ghosts of the dead. (It turns out that they're not ghosts at all, just a complicated way an eccentric gets revenge on his unfaithful wife.) I have never met anyone who remembers even this much about the film.

And the only image that the title itself brings to mind is a haunted house and maybe some ghosts.

Whether or not your volunteer has seen the movie, you can accurately describe the image in her mind if you say:

“Focus on the scene or image.”

Turn to the audience and say,

“Some of you might be able to receive her thoughts as well, and maybe you will. But, please remain as quiet as possible while I attempt to read her thoughts. If you pick up any thoughts please do not say them out loud because if you are not absolutely correct you will introduce conflicting images into our minds and could prevent this test from succeeding. After we’re finished, I’ll see if I can pick up what you folks were thinking as well.”

Turn back to the volunteer.

“ I get the sense of a house, a sense of darkness and fear. Do you see dead people? Maybe a ghost, maybe not, but I think so.... That’s the image in your mind, isn’t it? Yes, or no?”

You ask for a ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ because you don’t want her to blurt out the name of the film by saying, “Yes, House on Haunted Hill, you’re right. “ You just want a ‘yes’ because you are supposed to be revealing TWO things. First, a scene from a movie, and then, the title of the movie.

Note that in describing the scene you have NOT included the words “haunted” or “hill.” There are three reasons for this. If you used those words, some people in the audience could possibly guess the name of the film themselves. It would also reduce the contrast between the description of the image and the name of the film. If you first say, “You’re imagining a haunted house on a hill,” and later reveal that the title of her film is *House on Haunted Hill* it would look like you were just revealing the same thought twice.

Finally, without the key words “haunted” and “hill,” the description applies to lots of movies, but it contains one line - “Do you see dead people?” that is very likely to make some people in the audience think you are describing a scene from the recent, and extremely popular film, starring Bruce Willis, *The Sixth Sense*. If you haven’t seen it -and you really should because it ‘s excellent- it is about a little boy who **can see dead people**.

Since you are, of course, **connected** to the audience and thus very much aware of their level of involvement, you will find it very easy to spot a flash of

recognition in the eyes of someone who has picked up on the “can you see dead people” suggestion.

It is quite possible, of course, that many members of the audience will pick up on the *Sixth Sense* which will create a good deal of excitement in the room. This is exactly what you want to happen because now most of them will be thinking that “The Sixth Sense” is the name of the selected film. This serves to make the your revelation of *House on Haunted Hill* even more surprising.



A thought to ponder

It has often been observed that one of the biggest problems with most mental acts is that they lack the important element of surprise. When a spectator is asked to think of a word, for example, everyone knows what is coming next - the mind reader will reveal the word. This is a valid criticism and is why mental acts fail to generate the excitement and suspense that is the norm in popular entertainment

Today.

In “The Scary Movie” I’ve illustrated just one way to introduce surprise into a routine by making a carefully planned result - *The Sixth Sense* revelation - appear to have “just happened.”

The concept of using loaded phrases into your speech in order to bring predictable associations into peoples’ minds is extremely versatile, and very powerful if done properly. The phrase must logically relate to what you’re talking about, yet at the same time implant a separate thought into someone’s consciousness that you can ‘suddenly’ pick up later.

This powerful ploy represents just one of the many techniques that have been developed in what is sometimes called the Psycho-Linguistic approach to mentalism, which has been brought to the level of art by my good friend Kenton Knepper, whose many works on the subject are highly recommended.

And remember...

Stay Connected!

The Shuttled Newspaper Test

The following is a simple impromptu mental effect which uses an easy pellet switch based on a standard magician's sleight. It is derived from a more complex feat popularized by Maurice Fogel, but I think you will find it to be, nonetheless, extremely effective. It also illustrates the proper use of the mentalist's technique of equivoque (pronounced "ee-kwa-voke")

EFFECT:

A page is removed from a newspaper and is torn in half four times, resulting in a stack of sixteen pieces. Three of these pieces are freely selected by a spectator who is asked to roll them up into small balls. The three balls of paper are handed to another spectator who is asked to select just one of them. She opens up the selected piece and selects the most interesting word she can find on either side of the paper.

The mentalist, of course, correctly reveals the selection.

METHOD:

The basic effect is accomplished by a simple force. Prior to performance the mentalist tears another sheet of newspaper into sixteen pieces. He finds one piece that has a small headline on one side and a photograph on the other. The longest or most interesting word in the headline shall be the force word.

When the spectator is asked to think of a word, the mentalist instructs her as follows:

“I want you to think of a word on either side of the page. Is there a small heading or headline on either side? Yes? Good. Look at the longest or most interesting word in the line.”

Since there is writing on only one side of the paper, the spectator really has no choice at all despite her apparent freedom of selection. (Where the performer goes from here depends on the presentation.)

The performer forces the correct paper ball in the following manner:

Prior to performance the force paper is in the right pocket. It is rolled up with the photograph on the outside. This makes it distinguishable from the other balls later in the effect. While the first spectator is selecting three of the sixteen pieces and rolling them into balls, the force paper is obtained in finger palm position at the base of the right third and little fingers.

The performer extends his left hand to the spectator to retrieve the three selected balls. Bringing his hands together, and being careful not to prematurely reveal the piece in the right hand, the performer turns to the right and *at the same time* dumps two of the balls in the left hand into the right hand. The right hand does not turn palm upward until the hands are touching. The left hand holds back one of the original three balls. I accomplish this by simply putting my left thumb on one of them as the balls are transferred.

The balls are now held out on the extended right hand to a spectator on the performer's right.

This is where the simple equivoque is performed. The spectator is told to pick up two of the balls, one in each hand. If she does NOT take the force ball the performer immediately says, “And throw them away.” If she does take the force ball he quickly adds “and hand one of them to the gentleman sitting next to you. If she keeps the force ball, the performer gives the ball in his hand to the gentleman and says, “You can keep these as a wonderful souvenir.” If she hands the force ball to the gentleman, HE becomes the volunteer who will select the word. This sequence must be handled in a brisk yet nonchalant manner. There must be no hesitation whatsoever in the performer's actions or words.

There are at least five different ways the revelation can be made. How do you imagine the following individuals would reveal the selection?

1. A telepathist
2. A body language expert
3. A human lie detector
4. A remote viewer

5. a clairvoyant
6. a spiritualist
7. a psychokinetic
8. a hypnotist

Your answers to the above, not the specific details of the effect or method, determine the appropriateness, strength, believability and impact of the routine. One of the above individuals might well dump a box of wooden matches onto a tray. Suddenly, the matches would begin to move around and form themselves into letters which spell out the selected word. If such a revelation is entirely consistent with the mentalist's persona, the effect would be utterly sensational.

Get the Lead Out

This effect was originally used by 19th Century spirit mediums. This is the most reliable method I have found to date.

EFFECT and METHOD:

The mentalist writes the numbers one through five in a column on the left side of vertically held index card. The card, along with the performer's pencil, is handed to a spectator, who is asked to print a name or word next to any of the numbers.

[Once again, the actual presentation will determine the nature of what is written. It may be a friend or sibling's name, the name of a famous person or acquaintance who is deceased, a place, or perhaps a word selected from a dictionary. The more categories you can think of, the more presentational possibilities will arise. Try to come up with as many categories as possible before focussing on a final presentation.]

The spectator is now asked to write "dummy" names next to the unoccupied numbers. Alternatively, the card may be passed to other spectators who fill in the empty spaces with selections of their own.

As I have said, this is a classic effect and the methods are legion. The original method, still recommended by many writers, but not entirely reliable in performance, uses just one spectator.

The spectator is asked to think of a name. He is then told to start writing any names next to each number, putting his original selection next to the number of his choice.

Careful observation will usually reveal the spectator's choice. First of all, it will usually be written in the third or fourth position. Second, the spectator will hesitate slightly before writing the odd names because he hasn't been given a real chance to think before he is told to start writing. He will not hesitate before writing the actual selection because it is already in his mind.

Finally, when the performer looks at the list, one of the names will usually stand out like a sore thumb. (As Banachek notes in his excellent *Psychological Subtleties*, spectators have even been known to print the actual selection and write the others in longhand!)

Other methods were later devised to make the effect more reliable and to allow several spectators to fill in the remaining spaces. The first was simply to sharpen the pencil to a needle-like point. The numbers from one to five are actually written on the card prior to the performance and the mentalist merely pretends to write them on the card.

The spectator is asked to write the selected word next to any number. Then he is requested to fill in the other spaces. Later, when the performer looks at the list, one of the words will stand out because its first letter will be finer than the first letters of the other words.

This method sometimes actually works. It is hardly as reliable as it would seem. If a spectator, for example, keeps the pencil at a low angle to the card while writing, he will not significantly dull the point if he dulls it at all. If he unconsciously rolls the point between words he will actually be sharpening the pencil rather than dulling it!

You can file a small notch near the tip of the point, causing a tiny bit to break off when the first letter is being written. This, of course, leaves a noticeable mark. If the spectator writes with a light hand, however, the point may break off in the second or third word, or not at all.

Modern "improvements" involve the application of various substances to the tip of a ballpoint pen rather than a pencil. The most reliable, to my mind, is the late Ned Rutledge's brilliant effect "Voice Print." The German mentalist Punx (also late, greatly lamented and, like Ned, one of our former brethren in the Psychic Entertainers Association) and most recently Werry (in his marketed effect "Psi Power") have also explored the "secret substance" route.

A delicate balance comes into play with these later methods. Too much substance and the method may become obvious. Too little and the mark may be somewhat hard to find. (The Werry presentation actually has the performer closely examining the paper, a less than ideal approach as far as I am concerned.)

(Those interested in other variations of the effect might want to look up an effect by Robert Parrish in *Do that Again*, an excellent, but regrettably out of print, volume by Parrish and Oscar Weigle, which simply involved the undetectable smearing of the first word which is, in this case written in chalk on a school slate. The smear is accomplished while handing the face down slate to another spectator.)

All other things being equal, however, I have always preferred sure-fire and virtually fool proof methods. Here is the simple manner in which I accomplish the effect.

Go to an art supply store and purchase a set of drawing pencils. You may be able to purchase the pencils separately, but it is essential that they look basically the same. You will need a very hard pencil and a very soft one. I use a # 3H and a # 6B. Also purchase a bag of the little erasers that you can put on the ends of eraserless pencils.

Cut both of the pencils in half so that they are the size of golf pencils. (The fact that they are short will cause the spectator to bear down slightly while writing, making the difference in writing even more obvious.) Use the half of each pencil that does not have the lead type printed on the shaft.

Put an eraser on the end of the soft pencil and carry both pencils in your right jacket pocket.

In performance you simply show an index card and remove the hard pencil from your pocket. (You can find it by touch because it is the one without an eraser.) Number the card and give it and the pencil to the spectator. Have him think of a word and print it next to any number. Tell him to turn the card face down when he is finished. Retrieve the pencil and drop it back into your right jacket pocket while you explain how it would be impossible for anyone to know the spectator's word or the number he wrote it by. Apparently as an afterthought, say the following:

"But let's make this even harder. I'll tell you what, sir. When I turn my back to you I want you to fill in any words you like next to the empty spaces. If you like, you can even pass the card around and let some other people fill in the empty spaces."

As you say this, you put your right hand into your jacket pocket and pick up the soft pencil with the eraser. Pop the eraser off, take out the pencil, and hand it to the spectator. Apparently you have just given him the same pencil back.

There is absolutely no need to use any clever switches with the pencils. Remember what was discussed earlier. If you have properly established your persona as a mentalist, no one is looking at your hands anyway. As described, the simple manner in which the pencils are switched is completely undetectable.

Do not be concerned that the difference in the thickness of the lines will be noticed by the audience. While it will be almost painfully obvious to you it will get by without suspicion. At this stage the audience has no idea where you are going with the routine and that you will soon be looking at the card.

When all of the spaces have been filled in, the performer retrieves the card and indicates that one, and only one, of the words on the card, is the actual word the spectator initially chose.

He now proceeds to reveal that word. (It will stand out like a sore thumb so the successful conclusion of the effect is based entirely upon presentation.)

How would the following characters present this effect?

1. A telepathist
2. A body language expert
3. A human lie detector
4. A remote viewer
5. a clairvoyant
6. a spiritualist
7. a psychokinetic
8. a hypnotist

Three Canisters and a Bill

[I developed the original version of this effect back in 1979 . I shared parts of it with a limited number of fellow mentalists , but have kept the complete version to myself until now. I think it has all of the hallmarks of good mentalism. It is direct and uncomplicated, requires no special props or gimmicks and has a strong climax.]

EFFECT:

The performer exhibits five 35 mm film canisters and five pieces of newspaper which have been cut to the same size as dollar bills. Each of the canisters has a round sticker on the front upon which is written a number. They are numbered one through five.

The mentalist rolls up each of the pieces of newspaper, puts one into each canister and snaps on their lids.

A spectator is asked to remove a dollar bill from his pocket and to crumble it into a ball. The mentalist takes the bill and the spectator accompanies him to the stage or the front of the room.

The mentalist picks up a small paper sack into which he places the canisters. He shakes the sack up and turns his back to the spectator. Holding the sack behind his back he asks the spectator to reach in and to select one canister. The spectator puts the selected canister behind his back and the performer places the sack back on his table. At this point no one knows which canister the spectator has selected.

Keeping the canister behind his back, the spectator is instructed to open it and remove the paper ball. The mentalist trades the crumpled bill for the piece of paper and the spectator puts the bill into the canister and snaps the lid back into place. (The numbered canister remains behind the spectator's back at all times.)

The mentalist walks away from the stage and into the audience while he asks the spectator to pick up the sack with his free hand and to place it behind his back with the hidden canister. He is told to put the canister back into the sack and to shake it up. He now is instructed to bring the bag out from behind his back, remove the canisters, and arrange them in a row on the table in numerical order. At this point it would seem completely impossible for anyone to know which canister contains the selected bill.

There is plenty of room for variation in the above procedure. Any sort of container may be used in place of the sack. You may use any procedure at all which allows the bill to be switched for a piece newspaper so that no one knows which canister contains the bill.

At this point the performer, even if he chooses to remain standing in the back of the room, is able to reveal which canister contains the bill. The onstage spectator may open all of the canisters to reveal that the mentalist is correct.

As a kicker, the performer now asks the spectator to open the bill and look at the serial number. The mentalist correctly reveals the number in any manner he chooses.

METHOD:

The serial number divination is the simplest part of the effect. The performer merely takes the spectator's crumpled bill and places it into his right **trouser** pocket while he escorts the spectator to the stage. When the volunteer removes the newspaper ball from the canister behind his back, the performer simply removes his own crumpled bill, whose serial number he has previously memorized, from his right **jacket** pocket and trades with the spectator. Since there has been no indication whatsoever that the performer will attempt a serial number divination, there is nothing out of the ordinary in this procedure.

Knowing which canister contains the bill is equally simple. The newspaper ball the spectator trades for the bill tells the performer which canister has been chosen. It works like this:

The first piece of newspaper that the mentalist crumples up and places into canister number one is cut from a section of newspaper that has the text of news articles on both sides.

The piece of paper that goes into canister number two has been cut from the comics section and has cartoons on both sides

Canister number three contains newspaper from the want ad section.

Canister four's newspaper had photographs on both sides.

Canister five has a headlines or blank space on both sides. The performer, obviously, has memorized which newspaper ball is in each canister.

Since each piece of newspaper, which superficially appearing similar to the others, is uniquely identifiable, the performer will know the number of the selected canister the moment the spectator trades his newspaper ball for the crumpled dollar bill.

Apart from the bold switch of the bill and the coding of the newspaper balls, the important principle introduced in this effect is the concept of using one effect to set up the next. In this example it is the canister test that sets up the serial number divination.

By now you know the ritual. How would the following people present this effect?

1. A telepathist
2. A body language expert
3. A human lie detector

4. A remote viewer
5. a clairvoyant
6. a spiritualist
7. a psychokinetic
8. a hypnotist

Later, you will realize how presentational choices and the performer's persona create incredible possibilities with the above effects and methods. To derive the greatest possible benefit from this book it is suggested that you complete all of the exercises presented to you thus far.

Every mentalist who has in him the creative instinct of the artist, and aims therefore at putting something of himself into his work, must of necessity be to some small extent a masochist.

-Dr. Robert Delacroix, *The Mojo Mind*, second ed. (1932)

An Essential Secret

Imagine the following scenario:

Michael is from Seattle, Washington. He's an excellent stage illusionist and magician and has successfully entertained audiences throughout the state. Tired of setting up his truck load of props before every show, and sensing that he may be able to command greater fees with less effort, he has decided to become a mentalist. He's managed to obtain a booking to perform mentalism at a major event in Portland, Oregon.

He sincerely wants to make a strong impression before what will be an audience of about five hundred people. Since he's never performed in Portland before, he figures that it is the perfect place to establish himself as a mentalist. A large number of acts are appearing at the event, so he has been asked to keep his act to no more than ten minutes. This isn't a problem because he doesn't yet have enough solid material to do a longer show.

After a great deal of thought, he decides to present a clean and direct thought-reading effect in which he will divine a word merely being thought of by a member of the audience. He thoroughly masters the mechanics of the effect and carefully rehearses his presentation.

He tries out the routine and fools all of the guys at the Seattle Magicians Club, but he is smart enough to know that magicians don't see things the same way lay people do. To see how "real people" will react, he presents his act before a group of non-magician friends and they, too, are completely entertained and baffled.

So far, Michael seems to be going about things in the right way. He knows that by making his first appearance as a mentalist in a town where he is not known as a magician will add to his credibility. He has selected the best effect he knows and has rehearsed in thoroughly. While he has obtained good feedback from his magician friends, he has also wisely tested the routine before before a group of non-magicians.

He's also visited the ballroom where the affair is to be held and has made certain that proper lighting and sound will be available.

Despite his careful preparation, Michael is unaware of an essential element of successful mentalism. It is virtually certain that his act will be less than memorable.

Before you read any further, think about what that missing element might be.

While you were thinking about that, Michael has completed his first performance as a mentalist. Here's what happened:

After a glowing introduction, Michael took center stage and dramatically pointed to an intelligent looking spectator seated at a table near the front of the packed ballroom. He politely requested him to come forward.

"And have we ever met before, sir?" he asked. To which the spectator responded, "No we have not!"

"You seem rather happy about that," quipped Michael, which brought forth a few giggles from the crowd.

He handed the gentleman a hard bound best-selling novel, and asked him to verify that it was exactly what it appeared to be. (Michael detected an undercurrent of chatter spreading through the room so he slightly increased his volume and stepped up the pace a bit.) He instructed the volunteer to open the book anywhere at all, and to concentrate on a word which he found to be interesting and which he could easily visualize in his mind. *[This is the actual effect of one of the best book tests in mentalism – Ted Karmilovitch’s “Mother of All Book Tests.”]* After seemingly intense concentration, Michael proceeded to dramatically reveal the word and the volunteer appeared genuinely flabbergasted.

Michael graciously thanked the volunteer and then the audience. He gave a brief bow and left the stage to a smattering of scattered applause.

What went wrong? If Michael could have heard the conversation at the bar in the back of the room he might have had an idea of what the problem was.

“So, how do you think he did that? Do you suppose he’s psychic or something?” the girl asked her date.

“C’mon, what’s so great about that?” sneered her companion, a look of superiority on his face. “The guy from the audience is part of the act! There is no way he could do that if I were to think of a word.”

[Dr. Bob, a genuine mind reader who was also at the bar, advises that the girl actually thought of the word *hole while smiling demurely at her date. She actually thought Michael was rather cute even if his trick wasn’ t that good. Knowledge of this fact might have cheered Michael up a bit. But, alas, they were never destined to be in each other’s presence again.]**

(I have edited Dr Bob’s actual words in deference to those more sensitive and politically correct readers who would find it offensive if I actually spelled out the word “asshole” in the preceding paragraph.)

One of the most important things a succesful mentalist must do is overcome an audience’s initial belief that he is using stooges or prearrangement to accomplish his effects. He must successfully create two impressions:

- 1) that he can read almost anyone’s thoughts. (or their body language, etc. as discussed in Part One), and
- 2) that any person in the audience may suddenly become part of the show.

An understanding of the two major categories of mentalism, and how they differ, is essential to the creation of these impressions.

I first discussed the two categories of mentalism in 1978 in *The Art of Mentalism*. I described them as *major* and *minor* effects and concentrated primarily on their respective values in creating audience involvement. As I've learned in the last twenty-four years, there's a bit more to it than that.

A *minor effect* is simply a routine involving from one to no more than four or five audience volunteers. This category actually includes almost all of the possible effects in mentalism. Book tests, predictions, object divinations, psychokinetic effects and pinpointed (one-on-one) telepathic routines are all examples of minor effects. It is important to note that whether or not an effect is "minor" depends, to a great extent, upon the manner in which it is presented.

Major effects are those which involve, or potentially involve, almost everyone present. A good example is the classic "question answering" or "audience reading" act in which the entire audience is asked to concentrate on questions or specific bits of information. While the mentalist generally reveals the thoughts of only five to seven people, everyone's interest is sustained because no one knows whose thoughts will be revealed next. Since everyone is actually, or potentially involved, the suspicion of collaboration or prearrangement is effectively negated. Anyone who has suspicions along those lines would soon realize that the whole audience can't be stooges.

A program presented before a small audience (about 10 or 15 people) may consist entirely of minor effects. The limited size of the group assures that almost everyone will have a chance to participate.

Interestingly, a full evening's public performance (ninety minutes or more) may also be comprised completely of minor effects. This is because the sheer number of volunteers employed during the performance also precludes the stooge hypothesis.

It should now be obvious why Michael's act was not a resounding success. He was working before a large audience of people who were strangers to one another. The volunteer from the audience was just "some guy" in the crowd and was considered by many to be "part of the act." You might conclude that Michael should have used a "major" effect, like a question answering routine, which would have involved everyone. Unfortunately, Michael only had ten minutes to present his act. Hardly enough time for a Q&A act - nor, seemingly, enough to make five hundred people feel the excitement of actual personal involvement.

Actually, there was nothing wrong with the use of the book test. As I indicated earlier, most minor effects can be made into major effects by altering their presentation. In this example, Michael's major problem was not primarily a matter of sustaining interest. It was, rather, his failure to convince the audience that the volunteer could not possibly be a stooge.

An obvious solution would seem to lie in simply randomizing the selection of the volunteer, by, throwing a basketfull of ping pong balls into the audience, for example, one of which is marked with an "x." While this may demonstrate that the volunteer has been selected by chance, it raises the frightening possibility that the marked ball may be caught by the village idiot, or, at least, by a less than ideal participant.

Here is a much better solution:

If, instead of looking at the audience member as a volunteer, we should think of him or her as an "audience representative." If the spectator is truly seen to be a "representative" of the crowd, the audience will become vicariously involved. **In other words, a "representative" is a person known to most of the audience with whom they can strongly relate and whose integrity is beyond question.**

Since Michael's act was at a public event attended by about five hundred people, it would have been a simple matter for him to learn the identities of any local celebrities, popular business people, or politicians who were present. (Local politicians will show up at almost all major public events and will make no secret of their presence.)

The use of a local celebrity as an audience representative creates a very positive image for an otherwise unknown performer and greatly increases the possibility of some valuable media coverage.

Caveat: Unless you are fairly well known, it is very likely that you will often receive a polite refusal if you approach a public figure prior to a show and ask him if he would mind assisting you on stage. It's not because he wouldn't love getting up there, it's because he has no idea who you are or if you're going to try embarrass or exploit him in a potentially negative way.

If, by some chance, he eagerly agrees to assist, you will have a more serious problem on your hands. His eagerness is a warning sign of what I like to call the "Little Big Man" syndrome, a common affliction among minor celebrities and those who think they are.

Most minor celebrities, particularly politicians, who eagerly agree to help you, do so because they love the of appearing before an audience. Unlike average people,

they are not the least bit nervous at the prospect of a public appearance. It actually makes them very happy. It sometimes causes them to salivate. And, here's the bad part, it always triggers an inborn instinct that will cause them to think of ways to insure that they, and not you, will lead the proceedings.

It's far better to just pick out your volunteers during the show. I mean that literally; don't ask for volunteers for you have no way of controlling who you will get. Just pick out your prospects during the show, tell them what to do, and then thank them for "volunteering." That way they don't have time to think about it, are less likely to refuse, and will usually do as they're told. You'll see how Michael could have handled that in just a minute.

But it was still possible for Michael to give the audience the experience of actual participation even if the mayor, for example, acted as their symbolic representative in the performance of the book test. This is because a "major" effect doesn't actually have to be a specific "effect" in the general sense of the word. A series of psychological forces in which the whole audience is asked to receive the mentalist's thoughts is often used by experienced performers to create a sense of total involvement.

Similarly, simple suggestibility tests, as often used by stage hypnotists, can also be done with the entire audience with the explanation that these tests illustrate just how the powers of concentration must be focussed in order to send or receive thoughts. (This explanation, of course, presumes that the mentalist has adapted the persona of a "thought reader." A "body language expert" might use similar tests to illustrate ways in which the senses involved in observation can be heightened and attuned, etc.)

Since Michael is entirely a figment of my own imagination, I have decided to give him a second chance at glory. Here, then, is an example of one way to make a minor effect into a major routine.

[Dr. Bob says I should even let him get to meet the girl at the bar who thought he was cute. He insists, however, that I first dispose of the *hole.]**

Here's what happened at the show:

After being glowingly introduced as a mind reader, Michael took center stage. He gave a brief dramatic pause, smiled and said, "Before I begin, I just want you all to know that even though I'm a mind reader, I am not going to reveal any thoughts which would embarrass anyone... unless I think it's really funny.

“Only kidding, the fact of the matter is that I actually don’t read minds at all. I’m simply able to sometimes send and receive thoughts on what I call my mental movie screen. You can do it too, let me show you. Just try this... imagine that you are sitting in a movie theater. The theater is dark and the screen is filled with nothing but white light. In just a moment I am going to project a thought onto your mental screen. If you really visualize this in your mind, I guarantee that most of you will actually *see* a picture of my thought on your imaginary screen. Focus on the screen and don’t try to guess. Just wait until I clap my hands. Something will suddenly appear on your screen.

“Since this is probably the first time most of you are trying this I am going to narrow things down just a bit. When I clap my hands I will concentrate on two simple designs, one inside of the other. Like a square inside of a square, for example. But both of the designs will be different.

“Ready? Now!” He clapped his hands and continued. “You should all have two designs in your mind. I was projecting the images of a triangle in a circle. How many of you saw that on your screen? Just raise your hands” An astonished gasp erupted from the crowd and at least four hundred hands shot up. Most of the audience began to laugh and the rest either looked totally puzzled or sternly skeptical.

Turning to one of the skeptical faces, Michael laughed and said, “I know, you’re thinking that it wasn’t really all that difficult since it was a rather limited choice. Isn’t that right? But let’s take it a step further and make it much more difficult. This time I am going to have one of you project a thought to me. Not a picture this time, but a word.”

Looking toward the back of the room, he interjected, “No sir, not that word. You should really keep that thought to yourself!”

Whatever tension and skepticism that may have existed in the room began to evaporate. The audience listened attentively as Michael turned toward the mayor and asked, “How did you do, sir? Did you see the triangle and the circle? You know, I don’t think you did, because I get the impression that you have far more important things on your mind. In fact, you seem to have a remarkable ability to focus your thoughts.”

Michael seemed to hear a comment from another spectator and replied, “Really? You’re kidding, right?” Turning back to the mayor, he said, “Is that true? You’re the mayor?”

The mayor replied “You’re the mind reader! You tell me!”

“Okay,” Michael said as he nodded sagely, “I get the impression that you are the mayor. Yes, you are the mayor.” And then, to the audience, “It’s nothing, folks, it’s just a gift I have.”

The audience laughed and Michael knew that he was in complete control.

“Mr. Mayor, since everyone here seems to know you and since you are, after all, their elected representative, I’d like you to act on their behalf and take a look at this book. It’s a recent best seller, perhaps you’ve read it. Just tell us how many pages it contains...”

Michael then went into his well rehearsed presentation of the book test which concluded with a completely astonished mayor acknowledging that Michael had correctly guessed the word he was thinking of. Michael smiled and said, “Thanks a lot for letting me catch your thought. Your focus is just incredible- how about a nice round of applause for the mayor?... I want to send good thoughts to each and everyone of you. Thank you all very much. I hope to meet you all again one day.”

His show was, obviously, a resounding success and there was a nice article about him in the next days newspaper accompanied by a photo captioned *Mayor’s Mind No Mystery to Mentalist*.

[Shortly after the show Michael went back to the bar for a shot of Cuervo. He met the girl, who had, conveniently, just told her boyfriend to get lost. After a short courtship they were married and are presently living happily ever after at their hideaway condo in Bayonne, New Jersey.]

While Michael is entirely fictitious, the presentation given above is, with minor variations, the exact one I have used successfully for many years when I’ve been booked to do a short act.

Many newcomers to the art completely underestimate the power of the psychological force, which, in the above example, is used to create the impression that most of the audience correctly received the mentalist’s projection of a triangle in a circle. “What’s the big deal?” they often ask in the Internet forums where magicians share their opinions. “That stuff is too obvious for me to use.”

As far as the actual effect goes, they are arguably correct. While it may amaze people for just a moment, I imagine that anyone who bothered to give it a bit of thought would soon conclude that there are only a few simple designs that people are likely to think of when suddenly asked to do so.

The fact of the matter, though, is that very few people bother to think about it. Why should they?

The performer himself acknowledged that the first test really wasn't all that difficult. Look at what the mentalist actually says in the above script:

“I know, you’re thinking that it wasn’t really all that difficult since it was a rather limited choice. Isn’t that right?”

This is a very important line. Not only does it discourage any analytical thinking regarding the design selection, it subtly reinforces the idea that the mentalist actually **is** reading thoughts. (“I know, you’re thinking that...”)

The actual purpose of the psychological force, then, has very little to do with its deceptiveness. As described above, its real function is to create a major effect by transforming a group of five hundred strangers into a cooperative and attentive group. A single entity who will soon accept one individual as its representative. In the sport of boxing you might call it the left jab that sets up the knock-out punch.

And that is one of the essential secrets that seem to elude many aspiring mentalists. Without an understanding of audience psychology, effective and believable mentalism is an impossible goal.

(No reflection on the mythical Michael, but any half-way experienced entertainer should have been able to command an audience's interest for ten minutes merely by speaking to them. And, parenthetically - but we're already in parenthesis, aren't we?- here is an essential exercise for anyone who is just learning mentalism.)

EXERCISE:

Write an entertaining, ten minute monologue about anything at all and present it to your local service club, public speaking class, or on an "open mike" night at a poetry jam or comedy club. If the idea makes you nervous, that is all the more reason for you to go ahead and do it anyway.

Alternatively, you may set up a soap box on a street corner and see if you can gather a crowd just by talking. Those of you who can successfully do so, without getting arrested or beaten up, are directed to go to the head of the class. If mentalism is not to your liking you are nonetheless destined for greatness.

**NOTICE FROM THE DEAN OF THE UNDERGRADUATE DIVISION :
Many students may come to the conclusion that the preceding paragraph is included merely as a humorous interlude. They are mistaken. "Public Speaking" is not an elective. You must successfully pass the course if you expect to graduate.
Dean Martin**

You cannot learn public speaking without speaking publicly (!)

Handling

"Handling", as I use the term here, defines the manner in which the secret moves in a routine are carried out. Apart from the mechanics of the secret moves themselves, "handling" also refers to the timing, pacing, and misdirection that work together to create effective and deceptive mentalism. To illustrate how all of these elements work together, I will take you step by step through the development of an effective handling for a classic effect in magic and mentalism - Nate Leipzig's version of the Princess card trick.

For those of you not familiar with the basic effect, it goes like this:

A spectator is shown a fan of five cards and is asked to think of one of them. The mentalist turns the cards towards himself and carefully studies them. Finally he removes one card, which proves to be spectator's selection.

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This version of the effect is readily available in most magic shops. It utilizes five cards, four of which are misindexed, as seen in the following photograph:



The cards are shown to the spectator in a fan, like this:



If you were to purchase the trick – and if you don't have it, I recommend that you do – the instructions that are included generally go something like this:

Show your spectator five cards and have them think of one. Remove one and place it in your pocket. When you show the remaining four cards, their card will not be among them – therefore it must be the one you placed in your pocket.

HOW IT IS DONE: Four of the cards are gimmicked. You begin by showing the five cards in a fan with the real card (King of Hearts) in front of the gimmicked cards. After they think of one of the cards, you remove the real card (King of Hearts) and while doing this you turn the other four cards upside down. The audience will now see the four indexes that were previously hidden, none of which will be their card. At no time do you let them see the card that you placed in your pocket, they will assume it is their card.

Of course, if you were to perform the effect as described in the above “instructions” you would have what is known in the business as “a pretty shitty trick.” Too bad, because with proper handling the effect is in the miracle class.

To be fair, some dealer instructions contain an added tip – occasionally credited to its originator, Leipzig himself. Instead of putting the King of Hearts into your pocket, just put it under your arm. Turn the remaining cards toward the spectator and simply say “Did I get it?” Since their card will not be there, the answer will be yes. The card under your arm is rapidly returned to the packet before anyone asks to see it.

The latter bit of business is an example of effective “handling” not contained in the original instructions. It neatly addresses the problem that would arise should the spectator ask to see the card you pocketed.

That is, however, about the best you will get with dealer instructions. Unfortunately, many so-called mentalists and magicians actually perform the effect this way.

[The basic idea is also used in the ubiquitous mind reading trick found all over the internet these days. You see a screen with five cards and are asked to think of one. You click a button and a new screen comes up that says “keep concentrating”. You click another button and a new screen comes up that says, “I will remove one card.” One more click and you are taken to a screen that shows four cards, none of which is the selection, and the question “Did I get yours?” Of course, since the four different cards

shown in the last screen are so similar to the originals – only the suits have been reversed – it appears that the program has successfully read your mind.

I actually used to have this effect on my own website. What surprised me were the many friends who did it over and over again and STILL couldn't see how it worked!]

With a little thought regarding handling, however, the trick is extremely powerful – in fact you will even fool those who bought the trick in a Vegas magic shop or who saw it on the internet. Here is how to make it look like a real experiment in mind reading:

First off, you cannot take five cards out of your wallet or pocket and expect anyone to believe you are attempting an experiment in mentalism. No one – repeat NO ONE – carries five cards in their wallet unless they are “special cards” Everyone in both the civilized and uncivilized worlds knows this to be true. You must put the cards into a regular pack and remove them as you begin the effect.

You cannot run through the pack looking for specific cards without some sort of a rationale for doing so. Here is the one we will use:

“I’ve going to remove five picture cards from the pack. I want five cards that look very similar because I wish to test your powers of concentration.”

That may not make much sense to you are me, but it is plausible in the context of what you are doing.

Remove the cards and arrange them as shown in the second photo above. Note that the gimmicked cards are arranged in Clubs, Hearts, Spades, Diamonds - **CHSD** – order. There is a very good reason for this. In the heat of performance there is a slight possibility that you will forget whether or not you have turned the cards end for end prior to showing them to the spectator the second time. If you have them arranged in a known order, you eliminate this possibility and add greatly to your peace of mind; for, after you turn them end for end, they will no longer be in the CHSD sequence.

Okay, you have removed the five cards from the pack. You now show them to your participant. Since the cards in fact DO look very similar, you don't simply want to say “**Think of one of these cards.**” If you do, sooner or later – probably sooner – you will discover that the effect doesn't always work out as you would expect it to. The spectator will, very often, think of a card THAT WASN'T EVEN THERE TO BEGIN WITH. Don't risk letting this happen. You have already explained that you purposely selected five similar cards to “test her powers of concentration.”

Tell the participant, “**Look at one of these cards very carefully, for they are all very similar. Mentally repeat the name of your card to yourself – first**

its value and then its suit. Be sure your mind is completely focussed on the card's identity. Have you done that?"

I guess I should mention that, prior to performing the effect, you have placed five duplicate ungimmicked cards in your right trousers pocket. (They match the five cards initially shown to the participant) You also have an index card in your pocket. You will see why in a moment.

Turn the cards end-for-end so they are facing you. The end-for-end turn also reverses the indices. Casually mix them around as you look at them individually. Work a bit slowly here and remind the participant to concentrate.

Finally, remove the King of Hearts with your right hand and place it under your left arm. (Actually right under the armpit – but I didn't want to put it that way for reasons of good taste.) Here's where we add a bit of professional handling that often makes all of the difference in the world. If you go back to the second photograph, you will note that the second card from the left is the Queen of Hearts. This is not a coincidence, it is very intentional. It's identity and position in the spread ALMOST GUARANTEES that the spectator will think of either it or the King. That's right, the gimmicked cards are really just a backup in case the participant doesn't think of the Queen or King of Hearts.

Here is how you proceed after placing the card under your arm. Say to the participant, **"Looking at you I had the very strong feeling that you were thinking of a red card, were you not? In fact it was a heart, wasn't it?"**

If she says 'yes' to the above questions you are home free. And it is very likely that she will say 'yes' Why? Because three of the cards are red and two of them are hearts. Even forgetting about the psychological factors favoring the Queen of Hearts, you have very good odds of being right simply by chance.

If she says 'yes' to "it is red" and "it is a heart", say **"You're not thinking of the Queen of Hearts by any chance?"**

If she says 'yes', turn the four cards toward her, keeping the lower index of the face card covered with your fingers (it doesn't match the other index, remember?) Say, **"And I got it, didn't I?"**

Since there is no Queen of Hearts in the spread she will agree, and will also be quite amazed. Casually return the card under your arm to the packet and drop all of the cards into your right pocket. Be sure they go on the opposite side of the index card from the five ungimmicked cards that are already there. (This last bit is for the purists. When the effect ends as just described it is highly

unlikely that anyone will wish to see the cards. In the third alternate ending, which we will get to shortly, there is a remote possibility that someone will ask to see the cards. The index card separator makes it a very simple matter to quickly reach into your pocket and bring out the ungimmicked set of five without any fumbling.)

If the participant says "No," when you ask if by any chance she was thinking of the queen, simply take the King out from under your arm and display it, saying, **"I didn't think so, that's why I removed the King."**

The above scenarios cover about ninety percent of all performances. Invariably the participant will think of the Queen of Hearts. The King is the second most likely choice.

Now, if the participant says 'Yes' when you are getting the color read and then says 'no' when you say 'a heart', you know that she is thinking of the Jack of Diamonds. Conclude by saying, **"It's a good thing I removed the Jack of Diamonds."** (Show her the four gimmicked cards as you say this, she will see that the Jack is not there.)

I hope you see the major point so far. Unlike the original effect, in which the spectator figures that you must have removed her card because it is not among the four you show her at the end, you seem to actually read her mind and name her card. Showing that you removed it from the packet of five prior to naming it is simply an afterthought that acts as a strong reinforcement and also proves that you weren't pumping or playing "twenty questions" with her.

Okay, suppose you say, **"You are thinking of a red card,"** and the spectator says 'No.' The odds are incredibly strong that she is thinking of the Queen of Spades, the center card of the spread. Proceed with the same phraseology used in the first example - **"You wouldn't be thinking of the Queen of Spades by any chance, would you?"**

If she says 'yes', simply show her the four cards, saying, **"And that's the one I removed."** If she says 'no', say **"That's why I removed the Jack. You were thinking of the Jack of Spades, weren't you?"** Again you show her the four cards and she sees the Jack of Spades is no longer there.

Drop the cards into your pocket, as described above. If someone should ask to look at them give them the regular packet. In any event, be sure to return the regular cards to the deck proper soon after you have concluded the effect.

I have just given you one of my strongest close-up presentations. I think it is the best possible way of performing this version of the Princess. As you can

Fundamentals

see, it is all in the handling, which is quite a bit removed from what was described in the dealer's instructions.

Quiz

Review the highlighted portion of this Anna Eva Fay program. Why is there no intermission between Part Second and Part Third, even though Miss Fay requires "a complete release" from her high mental strain between Part First and Part Third? (See page 90 for the answer. No peeking, see if you can figure it out for yourself.)

ANNA EVA FAY.

PROGRAMME.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

Read carefully. Everything done is the result of natural causes.

SPECIAL EXPLANATION TO THE PUBLIC.

MISS FAY wishes it distinctly understood that the results produced, especially in the "Somnolency" and "Materialization," are weird and bewildering, but the forces and means employed, although at present not thoroughly understood by the mass of people, are perfectly natural, and may, at some future day, be utilized by scientific workers.

PART FIRST,

Anna Eva Fay will introduce many Novel Features in her peculiar line of
✻ Cabinet Experiments. ✻

MISS FAY having appeared for nine consecutive months at the Queen's Concert Rooms, London, and later for three weeks at the Crystal Palace. For three months Miss Fay was the guests of Prof. Wm. Crooks, F. R. S., No. 20 Mornington Road, W. C. During that time Prof. Crooks built the Galvanometer, an electrical machine to test physical demonstration.

During Parts First and Third, in which Miss Fay appears, and during which she is at such a high mental strain, it is necessary for her to have a complete release from the same some-time during the performance, consequently the following will be introduced in

PART SECOND.

MR. WETHEREL RHOADS' ROYAL ENGLISH MANNIKINS

Harry D'Esta, Wm. W. Rhoads, L'Mal D'Esta, Manipulators.

No intermission between Part Second and
PART THIRD.

The entertainment will close by placing Miss Fay in a Hypnotic Condition and she will give her weird and startling visions of what she sees and hears in Hypnotic Dreamland by

"SOMNOLENCY."

An Introduction to the Interaction of Physical, Psychological and Presentational Principles in the Performance of Mentalism.

“A Startling Thought Reading Effect”

This section is primarily about the interaction of the principles named in its rather lengthy title. It really has very little to do with card tricks, so don't be misled by the following discussion about playing cards or by the card trick that takes up the rest of the lesson.

The section begins with a piece called “An Interesting Fact.” Most of the information it provides is true, although it is not recommended that you try the science experiment. You may find the facts about Maverick Playing Cards to be very useful, and I think you will if you play with the idea.

The card routine, which I've chosen to call “A Startling Thought Reading Effect” is, in fact, an overly complicated presentation which opens with an audience volunteer being subjected to a form of psychological coercion which would be used far more subtly in an actual performance. Experienced performers will immediately think of simpler and more direct methods of accomplishing the same effect. My purpose, however, is not to teach you a cool card trick.

The effect is simply a vehicle I have chosen to illustrate some very important physical and psychological principles which have broad applications in the art of mentalism. I have included as many of these principles as possible to give you an idea of how they can be used to:

make seemingly difficult moves rather easy by providing “visual precedent;”

psychologically “coerce” a spectator's actions and thoughts;

get an audience to start mumbling things like “No, it can't be... there's no way he can do that!” and, finally, to

create an unexpected and powerful climax

The rather complicated opening sequence, for example, is simply a convenient way to illustrate how the concept of “visual precedence” is established and how it interacts, in this instance, with the principle of “psychological coercion.” You will find many useful applications for these important techniques.

So don't take the following too literally. This is one of the few times I will describe a routine in which the underlying reasoning is more important than the effect itself.

Keep the foregoing in mind, and don't let yourself be misled by the mind games I'm about to play with you. It's good for you.

Trust me.

An Interesting Fact

Near the end of the last millennium, The United States Playing Card Company, manufacturers of the popular “Bee” and “Bicycle” brands of cards, significantly reduced its competition by buying out a major competitor - Hoyle Products. The Hoyle line of products is being continued, but they are now being manufactured at the U.S. Playing Card factory in Cincinnati, Ohio, and at an unnamed facility somewhere in China.

UPDATE: The new card players guidebook, "Poker According to Aunt Bee," is scheduled for release in early December. Upon hearing this, Edmond Hoyle, author of the classic "Hoyle's Rules of Games," applied to the Federal District Court in Chicago claiming copyright infringement and demanding immediate injunctive relief. The court, while very sympathetic to Mr. Hoyle's impassioned plea, denied his request, ruling that Mr. Hoyle's death in 1769 effectively denied him the right to seek judicial relief.

As a result of these events, there are now on the market two seemingly identical packs of “Hoyle Maverick Poker Size Playing Cards.” Actually, they have some unique differences which can be very useful to the mentalist who

either seeks to create entertaining mysteries, or who simply wishes to cheat his lodge buddies on Poker Night.

Here is how you can distinguish one pack from the other:

In most stores you will probably find that the packs are indiscriminately mixed together, which is totally understandable considering that they look virtually identical to the untrained eye.

Hoyle Products manufactured after the acquisition have "Hoyle Products, Cincinnati, Ohio 45212" printed on both sides of the box. These post-acquisition cards are actually made by the U.S. Playing Card Company. You will find the same Cincinnati zip code on all U.S.P.C.C. cards including the "Bicycle" and "Bee" brands. If you carefully examine every pack you find in the "Maverick" line of Hoyle cards, you will occasionally come across a pack that has the following printed on the box- "Hoyle Products, St Paul, Minnesota 55164." These are the "real McHoyle." If you look very carefully at the Ace of Spades design on the front of the pack and compare it to the front of a "Cincinnati" pack you will observe a noticeable difference in the amount of detail in the design at the base of the large spade. If you turn both packs over you will see two seemingly identical back designs. A closer look will convince you that the designs are actually slightly different. The cross-hatching on the sides of the design is much bolder on the "St. Paul Cards," but not obviously so.

The difference in appearance is due to the fact that the back design of the "Cincinnati" cards is slightly smaller in scale than the design on the "St. Paul" Cards. It has apparently been subjected to a slight photographic reduction.

If you open both decks and shuffle them together you will instantly understand how useful this difference really is. The back design of the "Cincinnati's" is slightly smaller because the cards, themselves are slightly smaller by about 1/64 of an inch- both in width AND height. Trade the aces between the decks and your "Cincinnati" deck will have four slightly long and wide aces which could be easily cut to the top by a blind man with normally sensitive fingers. Any "Cincinnati" cards in the "St. Paul" pack will be slightly short and may be easily found by riffling. Because both the long and short cards have identically rounded corners, they are far superior to hand-cut cards, usually made by trimming the corners with a nail clipper or shortening an end or side with a razor blade.

Once you find some of the "St. Paul" decks you will probably want to buy as many as you can. "Mavericks" have sufficient quality for even rather advanced sleight of hand. I realize that Bicycles are favored by most magicians. As a mentalist, though, I am well aware - as is anyone else who has ever visited

a magic store at Disneyland, the Vegas strip, or even the local shopping mall, that there are many, many “trick cards” that are made with Bicycle backs. Mavericks, on the other hand, are found only at drug stores, department stores, and discount stores. Almost everywhere for that matter.

But not in magic stores.

Ubiquitous, cheap, and proudly bearing a Wal-Mart price sticker, their obvious innocence is what makes them so valuable to the mentalist.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that it would be a waste of time to exploit the difference between the two decks just because the “St. Paul Mavericks” will eventually disappear from the stores. (They may, however, reappear as a professional hockey team.) It doesn't matter because you will always be able to find minor differences between seemingly identical packs of cards. Sometimes they are cut differently, and sometimes the inks have subtly different hues. These differences exist because of the realities of the manufacturing process.

Almost all playing cards sold annually are eventually used for gaming purposes, not for magic tricks or mentalism. The casinos on the Vegas strip, for example, probably use more decks of cards in a twenty-four hour period than have been purchased by magicians since 1949. (with the possible exception of Martin Nash) As long as each case of playing cards sold contains virtually identical packs, they meet every possible personal and casino gaming requirement. There is no need for playing card companies to insure that all productions runs produce decks that are identical to those manufactured in other runs. It is not unusual, therefore, to find slight differences in hue or margin size when comparing various packs of cards produced by the same company.

A manufacturer may use several machines to cut cards. There is no critical need to insure that the dies and templates used to cut decks are sized with the same microscopic exactitude that would be required, for example, in the manufacture of jet engine parts. Cards cut on different machines, therefore, may not always be precisely the same size. Such differences, while they may be invisible to the eye, are often detectable by touch.

You may have been led to believe that the ability to detect these slight differences is possessed only by legendary safecrackers and cardmen. This is not true. Everyone possesses this talent. That's because the sense of touch is far more discriminating than the sense of vision. “Touch reading,” in fact, is a principle often used by mentalists and will be dealt with later in this course. But

if you would like proof that the sense of touch, or feeling, is far more sensitive than vision when it comes to detecting small differences, simply try the following experiment:

Activity Time with Dr. Bob

Find a single grain of sand. Put it on a sheet of white paper and shine a light on it. Without using a ruler, try to estimate its diameter. Write down your answer. We will call this measurement "A"

Now stick the grain of sand in your eye. Use your sense of feeling to estimate its diameter.

Feel around for the piece of paper and write down your answer. We will call this measurement "B"

Which is bigger, "A" or "B"?

Did you ever have a really hard time seeing a nearly invisible splinter embedded in the pad of your thumb? How big did it feel?

-Excerpt from Dr. Bob's *The Way Things Really Are Whether You Are Paying Attention Or Not*, Chapter Three "How small is that thing anyway?" by Dr. Bob

All that really matters, as far as card games go, is that all of the cards **in a given deck** are of identical quality, with identical back designs and margins. That's what's being guaranteed in the little notice on the Ace of Spades or Joker that offers a free replacement for any deck that is found to be defective.

The important thing to remember is this- no two decks are identical unless they were printed on the same press with the same die on the same day and with the same batch of ink. They also would need to be cut with the same template on the same machine, and, preferably, by the same worker. (who, of course, must either be drug free or able to maintain a constant level of cannabis in his system throughout his shift.)

In most cases these differences are minor and have little or no applications of interest. But if you carefully compare all of the decks of cards you have laying around I am sure you will find some differences you never noticed before. In the two versions of the "Maverick" deck, it is the difference in size that will be exploited in the routine about to be described.

A Startling Thought Reading Effect

If you purchase a blue deck of "Cincinnati," a red pack of "St. Pauls," and some roughing fluid, you will have the makings of a very direct mental

effect. It's really a variant of an old effect that was originally performed with a trick pack called "The Mene Tekel Deck."

The current wisdom seems to hold that "Testor's Dull-Cote," a spray lacquer available wherever model airplanes are sold, is the cheapest and best roughing fluid available. (By the way, you can instantly guess the approximate age of any magician you meet on the Internet if you ask him for the name of the stuff you use to make cards cling together. If he says "roughing spray" he's probably in his teens or early twenties. Either that, or he's a fifty- nine year old entrepreneur who sticks "Roughing Spray" labels on the Testor's cans and sells them at three times retail. If, on the other hand, he refers to the substance as "roughing fluid," he's almost certainly starting to get up there in the age department.)

The "Dull-Cote" is actually excellent, cheap, quick drying and easy to apply. If the hobby shop is fresh out you will find that "Testor's Gloss-Cote" works just as well. Since playing cards in their natural state (particularly Mavericks) have glossy finishes anyway, you may actually prefer the "Gloss-Cote." (Since cards were originally roughed by slightly sanding their surfaces, thus removing the sheen, many have assumed that a gloss finish means slick and a dull finish means rough. Both "Dull-Cote" and "Gloss-Cote" are spray lacquers. They both work equally well as "roughing" fluid.)

Here's the effect:

The mentalist removes a red-backed pack of "Mavericks" from their case (which bears a \$1.99 "Buy a Red Deck and a Blue one is free" sticker from WalMart) and says, "I bought these at a special sale yesterday."

He gives the box to a spectator and asks him to keep it in his pocket for the time being. Spreading the cards face-up between his hands, the mentalist has the spectator verify, "for the benefit of the skeptical guy over there who thinks they're all aces" that the cards are, in fact, all different.

"I'm going to flip through the cards very slowly, just like this," explains the mentalist, "I want to make sure that you can see the cards as they pass in front of your eyes."

The mentalist holds the pack in his left hand in dealing position. He then raises the cards to eye level so that the spectator is gazing directly at the index pip of the face , or bottom, card.

The performer slowly riffles the cards, with his right fingers, so that their faces visibly pass through the spectator's line of vision. Once again, he asks if the spectator can clearly see the index pips of the cards. When he says that he can, the performer turns his head away and begins to riffle the cards. At the moment he turns away, however, he imperceptibly tilts the deck just a little bit away from the spectator. At this point the spectator is no longer able to see the index corners. The performer begins to riffle anyway and offers to stop when ever the spectator sees a card that he likes. When the spectator says that he can't see the cards, the performer turns his face back to the spectator and adjusts the pack so the indices are once again visible. He reinstructs the spectator, turns his head away, tilts the cards out of the spectator's line of vision once again and starts to riffle. When the spectator complains that he can't see the cards, the performer faces him and brings the cards down to waist level in face up dealing position.

Feigning near exasperation, the mentalist spreads the cards face up from hand to hand and tells the volunteer to "Look, just name any one of these. I don't care what it is. This isn't a card trick and no one is going to try to guess what card you picked. No one has to guess because everyone is going to look at it. We just need to be sure that the actual identity of the final selection is entirely up to you and that you are convinced that you haven't been influenced in any way."

(At first glance it would appear that the mentalist is almost intentionally frustrating and badgering the volunteer. Actually, the performer is employing a very subtle mind game that is setting the spectator up for what is to come. If this sort of approach frightens you, you can just as easily spread all of the cards out at the very beginning and simply ask the spectator to name one. But first read my rationale behind this little psychological ploy and you will see how it greatly enhances the apparent fairness of the ultimate effect. It also serves to set the groundwork for a bit of misdirection that completely covers a sometimes tricky bit of sleight of hand that comes later in the routine.)

The spectator freely indicates one of the face-up cards and the performer cleanly cuts it to the top of the pack. The spectator is asked to hold out his hand. The performer deals the card onto the volunteer's palm. It's face remains in full view until it actually touches the palm. The performer flips it face down and places the remainder of the pack onto the table, if one is available, or simply places it into his left hand where it is held face down, at waist level, for the rest of the routine.

Adapting a more serious attitude, the performer asks the spectator to "once again give me a completely honest yes or not answer to this question. Did I, or anyone else, for that matter, influence you or otherwise force you to think of that particular card? Yes or no.

“No... and you are absolutely certain of this?” The spectator, who by now is probably starting to think that the mentalist is beating a dead horse with this issue, insists that he is absolutely certain that no one influenced his choice. (And, if the mentalist has played his role correctly, the spectator will insist, if only to stop the performer from harping upon something that is obvious to everyone.)

“That’s funny,” replies the mentalist. “I don’t know if I mentioned it to you earlier, but I bought these cards at a special sale at Walmart. Did I mention that? You have the box in your pocket. Would you mind taking it out and, if you would, read out loud what it says on the price sticker.”

The audience will suddenly get the feeling that something very unusual is about to happen.

The spectator reads the label and the mentalist continues. “Yeah, it was a two for one sale. You buy a red one and you get a blue one free. Earlier today I was playing a game of solitaire with the blue pack and for some reason the game wouldn’t come out right. It wasn’t until I was going out the door to come here tonight that I noticed a blue backed card lying on the floor. No wonder I couldn’t win the game, there had been a card missing from the deck.

“Well, to make a long story short, I didn’t have time to find out which drawer I’d put the blue deck in, so I just picket up the card and put it in my pocket. So I could put it back later, you know.

“I have it right here.” As he speaks this line the performer reaches into his left inside jacket pocket with his right hand. He removes a blue backed card which he holds against his chest, keeping its identity concealed.

“Would you mind just sticking your hand into my jacket pocket, just to satisfy anyone who thinks I’m hiding fifty-two cards in there? There are no more cards, are there? No, just one. That’s it.

“Now I know I just about had you swear on a dozen Bibles that you freely selected any card, and that there is absolutely no way that your choice could have been influenced by me or anyone else. But don’t you think that it’s just a little strange that your card, the red-backed Four of Clubs- just turn it over and show it to everyone again- is exactly the same as the blue backed card I’ve been carrying around in my pocket all day?”

The performer shows the face of the blue backed card. It is the Four of Clubs.

Method, Notes, and a Myriad of Important Principles (How many can YOU find?)

If you follow the basic script I have given you, the audience will start to mumble when you remove the blue backed card from your pocket. During the last paragraph of dialogue you will probably hear some of them utter things like, "No way! There's no way that could be." The rest of the audience will hear them, too, and many of them will start to become audible. This is a very typical reaction to mentalism that uses playing cards, not as magic props, but simply as the ordinary things they are in the consciousness of normal human beings- (ie. Not magicians, not mentalists. Laymen. Real People.)

All of the important elements of the routine and its presentation are exactly as described above.

The script, while seeming off the cuff, is actually very carefully crafted to obtain the strongest possible effect with what has to be one of the simplest of possible methods.

As I indicated to you earlier, the deck is basically a *Mene Tekel* variant.

The original *Mene Tekel Deck*, though probably covered with dust in forgotten back room drawers, remains in the stock of many dealers. That's probably because 93.4 percent of the guys who used to buy them are now officially listed as dead. I understand that the remaining packs are all blue-backed Fox Lake originals (See: *Read 'em and Weep, a Statistical Sourcebook for Tarot Card Readers*, (Skye and Karmilovich, Garfields, 1987).

If you are not familiar with the basic construction of the Mene Tekel pack and its traditional uses, and even if you think you remember how it works, read the following before you continue:

[For those unacquainted with the Mene Tekel, it is based on the same long/short principle as the well known Svengali Deck. The cards, however, are all matching pairs. A short two of spades, for example, is followed by its duplicate- a long two of spades. The deck is comprised of twenty-six such pairs. If the deck is riffled for a "say stop anywhere" type of selection, you need merely cut the pack at the same point from which the spectator has removed his card. Even though you may allow the spectator to push his card anywhere at all into the tabled pack, its duplicate will, nonetheless, remain on top of the deck. With just a bit of sleight of hand it is a very simple matter to allow four or five spectators to select cards. Instead of cutting the deck after each selection, you need merely side slip the duplicates to the bottom of the deck as you go. The duplicates can be surreptitiously dealt off into your side jacket pocket thusly- if the deck is in your right hand, turn to your right and begin to walk toward one of the volunteers who is standing on that side of the room. The pocket is now on your upstage side and is completely concealed from view as your right hand deals the dupes into the pocket.]

The necessary misdirection is minimal. Since the actual selections are still in the possession of the volunteers, there is little or no “heat” on the deck itself. When you arrive at the spot on your right where the volunteer is standing, simply hand him the deck and ask him to return his card and shuffle the pack. Tell him that you don’t want to touch the cards and have him pass the pack to the other volunteers, who similarly shuffle in their selections. There is no need, in this case, to worry about the dupes being spotted. It’s very unlikely, for one thing, and your casual handling of the deck seemingly “proves” that everything is above board. This is the same sound audience psychology that allowed Joseph Dunninger to entrust one way force decks (52 identical cards) to the hands of an audience volunteer without fear of detection.]

To perform the “blue card in my pocket” effect you will need a red/blue *Mene Tekel* deck, set up in reverse order, which has been treated with roughing fluid. The pairs, as explained earlier, are assembled from two decks of “Maverick” cards- a blue “Cincinnati” deck, comprised of short cards, and a red “St. Paul” deck, consisting of long cards.

Remove the same twenty-six cards from each pack. Spray the **backs of the blue cards** and the **faces of the red cards** with roughing fluid. One smooth spraying motion, with the can held at least a foot from the cards, will rough them perfectly. There is no need to overdo the spray.

Let the cards dry for at least an hour. They may feel dry to the touch in about ten minutes, but if you pair them up at this stage, they are likely to glue themselves together permanently. If, for some reason, you are in a rush, you can speed up the process by blow-drying the cards. **(You must not blow dry the Jack of Hearts under any circumstances! He prefers the natural look, and firmly believes that hair dryers are not used by “manly men” who have survived the trauma of disco and the horrifying Tales of the Brothers Gibb.)**

Normally, the *Mene Tekel* cards are assembled in face down matching pairs with the short card on top. The handling of this effect is simplified greatly, however, if the order is reversed. Thus, the pairs are assembled as follows- the top card of the pair is a face down, red-backed card, followed by its face down, blue-backed duplicate. All of the pairs are now gathered into what appears to be a red-backed pack of Mavericks. Because of the roughing treatment, the pack can be freely handled in the same manner as a Brainwave, Invisible, Mirage, or Pop Eyed Eye Popper deck – **with one exception**. In a traditional “rough/smooth, long/short pack” a short card is on **top** of the deck. In this variation, you must remember that it is the **bottom** card which is short. Although the roughing treatment will help prevent the bottom card from dropping to the floor when you handle the cards normally. This **will not be the case** in the closing moves of the routine, when the vertical position of the deck may cause the bottom card to fall to the floor when the deck is grasped between the right fingers and thumb, respectively located on the top and bottom edges of the vertical pack. You must hold the pack firmly at this point.

This could be a serious problem if the face card falls and lands on the floor face up, for it will be an exact duplicate of the face card of the pack which is directly facing your volunteer. By seeing your way safely through this dangerous position, you will soon discover that it offers a wonderful hidden benefit, which I'll describe in a moment.

If you keep this in mind, and be sure that your fingers remained curled around the ends of the pack, you will not experience an unexpected revelation.

If you just follow the routine with the cards in hand you will find that most of the handling is natural and self-evident. You should note that the script is constructed in such a way as to create the impression that the volunteer has an absolutely free selection from a fifty-two card deck. The wording (thanks to my recent OD on Kenton Knepper material!) is everything. Be sure you understand how each word serves to create an inaccurate impression. Then you can change it around any way you like.

The real purpose of the little mind game at the beginning of the effect is to create a bit of anxiety in the spectator as he attempts to follow the performer's instructions. When the performer acts a bit exasperated the spectator will become even more anxious and is not likely to engage in creative thought regarding the selection of a card. When the cards are finally spread face up before him and he understands that IT DOESN'T MATTER which card he names, he is suddenly presented with the attractive path of least resistance and simply names the first card that he can positively identify. The same technique, in fact, can be used, after a bit of practice, to psychologically coerce a spectator into naming what ever card you desire, simply by placing it in a position of prominence (For example: it may be the only black picture card in the early part of the spread, which is otherwise composed of red spot cards) While this is an advanced psychological technique that will be examined in depth later in this series, the important thing to remember is that he will later insist, whether you obviously drew his attention to the card or not, that no one influenced his choice. To say otherwise would put him right back into the state of anxiety from which he just escaped.

And that's the last place he wants to go.

In the context of the present effect, the ploy merely insures that he will name one of the cards that he actually SEES, and not simply call out any card at random. If he were to do that, there would be a fifty-fifty chance that his selection would be not even be in your pack of twenty-six duplicates.

But, like I said in the beginning, you may decide that it's just as easy to spread the cards face up and have the volunteer name any card that he sees. It's a bit transparent, if you ask me, and if you do elect to take that approach you

will miss the chance to start sharpening your skills at psychological forcing and control.

You will also lose the opportunity to render a one-hand top palm completely invisible, as you will now see.

The only tricky part of the effect, as far as physical technique goes, comes after the spectator finally names a card. Apart from the psychological usefulness already discussed, the riffing sequence creates a visual precedent for the moves that follow. By “visual precedent,” this is what I mean:

You are about to bring the cards to the same eye-level position that they occupied during the riffing sequence. The sequence has served as a visual precedent. After the spectator has named a card from the face-up spread, the selection is apparently cut to the top of the pack and the cards are returned to their original vertical position, just as they were at the outset.

If you were to omit the riffle sequence and just have the spectator blatantly name one of the face up cards, the audience would have no visual precedent for the eye-level position in which you now hold the cards. It would be the first time that you held the cards this way, and the position serves no noticeable purpose related to what comes next, the simple dealing of the selection onto the subject’s outstretched palm. All it would serve to do is attract suspicion at the time you least need it.

If, on the other hand, the selection is preceded by the riffle sequence, the return of the cards to eye-level position simply creates the impression that you are going back to where you left off earlier.

Having a prior “visual precedent” for the position, therefore, removes the suspicion that would otherwise attach to an unexpected, and seemingly pointless, hand and deck position.

Let’s now go back to the point in the routine immediately following the naming of the card.

The performer cleanly cuts the selection, actually a roughed pair, to the top of the of the face-up pack.

(Important note for those who are entirely new to card moves: Whenever moves involving playing cards are described, time honored definitions and conventions are employed. The “top” always refers to the side of the deck which displays the back design. Similarly, the “bottom,” also referred to as the “face” of the pack, always refers to the side of the deck which displays the face of a card. Even if the pack is turned face up, the face is still referred to as the bottom of the deck and the top card remains the top card even if your own senses try to convince you that it is actually on the bottom. We’re not talking reality, here. We’re talking communications.)

The spectator is asked to hold out his hand. The performer brings the pack back up to the eye level position it occupied during the hopeless riffing sequence. He grasps the deck with his right hand. The two middle finger tips are centered on the upper short edge of the vertical pack, and the right thumb is centered on the opposite short edge of the pack- that is to say, the edge which presently faces the floor. The performer's right palm directly faces the volunteer and the entire surface of the bottom card is exposed to the spectator's view. and the top card the pack with his left hand, the mentalist clearly keeps its face in view as he brings the card to the volunteer's outstretched hand. A cuts it to the top of the pack. The spectator is asked to hold out his hand. The performer brings the pack back up to the eye level position it occupied during the opening riffing sequence. He grasps the deck with his right hand. The two middle fingers are centered on the upper short edge of the vertical pack and the right thumb is centered on the opposite short edge of the pack which presently faces the floor. The performer's right palm directly faces the volunteer and the entire surface of the bottom card is exposed to the spectator's view.

The left hand releases its grip on the pack and draws the top card gently off of the pack to the left. This **must** be done gently or you will actually deal off a roughed pair. You may find it helpful to use your right thumb to gently lift the top card away from its mate to facilitate the removal of the top card with the left hand. Put the top card onto the bottom of the deck so it faces the volunteer. Position the pad of your right little finger directly on the surface of the top card at the upper right corner. (You will find that it is already in just about the correct position.)

If you were to move the upper edge of the pack away from you, and the bottom edge toward you until the face card was parallel with the floor, you would find yourself in perfect position for the classic one-handed top palm, a move described in great detail in many books. A particularly good description may be found in Jean Hugard's *Card Manipulations* (1-2) , published by Dover and available in paperback at major bookstores or at Amazon.com.

For the sake of completeness, here is a very brief description of the move as it is used in this effect:

When you are about to deal the face card to the spectator's palm, you will have already noticed that the top card of the pack, now facing you, has a blue back. It is the duplicate of the face card. You should be facing the audience and the volunteer an an oblique angle to insure that the back of the top card is not visible to the audience. The fact that the deck is held in a vertical position makes the top card much easier to conceal than it would be if the pack were held parallel to the floor.

As soon as the spectator's palm is face-up in front of you, you will perform three simultaneous actions. When your left hand removes the face card, the pad of the right pinkie will push slightly forward on the upper right corner of the top card. This action will cause the bottom right corner of the card to pivot out slightly to your right away from the grip of the right thumb. As soon as the bottom card has pivoted out, apply downward pressure with the right pinkie on the upper right corner which now extends over the corner of the pack by about a quarter of an inch. This will cause the top card (the blue back duplicate of the spectator's selection) to spring upwards into the right palm.

At the exact moment that you begin the move, drop your right hand to waist level, bringing the face of the pack parallel to the floor. It should reach this position at just about the same moment as the selected card is deposited on the spectator's palm.

It is, as you can see, the downward motion of the right hand provides perfect cover for the action of the palm. And it is the psychological riffle ploy and the principle of "visual precedent" which have made the entire sequence invisible, natural, and completely undetectable.

The rest of the routine should be obvious. You need merely put your right hand into your inside jacket pocket and bring out the previously palmed card.

Whether or not you actually put this routine into your show, it is very important that you attain a fair mastery of its underlying physical, presentational and psychological principals and the way in which they all work together to create a baffling effect.

They will serve you well.



Commercially Available Effects and Gimmicks

There is actually very little among the thousands of commercially available effects and gimmicks that can be considered essential to a working mentalist. Most professionals – mentalists AND magicians - tend to avoid effects that are readily available in magic shops. The reasons should be obvious.

Even when commercially available tricks are used, they are generally disguised and routined in such a manner that their origins are well concealed. If the effect is a book test, for example, the covers of the books are usually replaced and the routine substantially altered and revised.

When it comes to gimmicks – various devices which are never seen or recognized by an audience – the disguise is not necessary. But very often the handling, routining and timing will be changed to hide the fact that such a device is in use.

That being said, valuable additions to a mentalist's tool-kit include such items as nail writers, Jak's type wallets, Himber style switching wallets, Vernet thumb and finger tips, pocket writing devices, card and billet indexes, impression devices, forcing decks, specially printed books for use in book tests, and various other utility type items. Items that are obviously "special props" are for magicians, not mentalists. The popular "Mental Epic", for example, looks too much like a magic prop to be of use in mentalism. (There is no rationale whatsoever for the specially partitioned slate – especially when the mentalist uses pads and magic markers in other parts of his act.)

Persona and Subscript – the Keys to Believability

Earlier, I presented several effects and asked you to come up with presentations for the following personae:

1. A telepathist (a mind reader)
2. A body language expert
3. A human lie detector
4. A remote viewer
5. A clairvoyant
6. A spiritualist
7. A psychokinetic (one who can move or influence objects with his mind)
8. A hypnotist

I pointed out that that your answers determined the appropriateness, strength, believability and impact of each routine.

One of the effects involved forcing a piece of newspaper that contains information previously memorized by the performer. A piece of newspaper had been torn up and the pieces crumbled into balls. One ball was ultimately selected by a spectator (the “force” ball). With the performer’s back turned (or with the ball otherwise out of his view) the spectator opens the piece of newspaper and concentrates, say, on a prominent headline or word. Since the force ball only contains one prominent headline, revealing it poses no problem to the mentalist. The manner in which it is revealed will determine the ultimate believability and success of the routine.

Now of course many of you are thinking “There’s nothing new about this. We already know that it’s not what you do, but how you do it, that counts.” But all too many performers think that just means dramatically building up the revelation.

It is, as I’ve tried to illustrate, much more than that. In addition to being dramatic, the revelation must be consistent with the mentalist’s persona – the character that he portrays onstage. And to believably present that character, the mentalist must have developed a subscript.

The Subscript

It’s been said, “the world is a stage and we all play a part.” It’s easy to play ourselves because we are naturally consistent with our beliefs, education, life experiences, heredity, etc. It’s not so easy, however, to play a role that is inconsistent with our backgrounds and beliefs.

If you personally believe, for example, that parapsychology is pseudoscience and that telepathy is impossible, you have a major hurdle to overcome if you decide to present your mentalism as a demonstration of psychic phenomena. Unless you have prepared, and thoroughly assimilated, the subscript of a “psychic” persona, astute audiences will sense your insincerity.

So how do you go about preparing a subscript for a psychic persona? You may start out by studying “real” psychics - how they act, what they believe, how they feel about their abilities and how they explain them. You’ll soon find one or two who can serve as models for the character you will create.

Next, you fill in a background for your character. The more similar you can make it to your real life the easier this will be. You can, of course, create a completely new background for yourself, but the more it differs from your

actual life experiences, the longer it's going to take you to believably "get into character."

Ultimately, you must be able to walk out onstage and become the character you have created.

This is why it is so important that the technical aspects of your effects must be completely second nature. It is difficult to stay in character if you have to focus too much attention on your secret moves and subtleties.

If your persona claims paranormal abilities, you may find it helpful, in addition to immersing yourself in pro-paranormal literature, to adopt or create a belief system and history for your character. I wrote "Riding The Web," which first appeared in my *Principia Mentalia*, to give my original stage persona some beliefs of his own that would govern the phenomena he exhibited on stage. What follows is the essence of what I wrote. Keep in mind that this doesn't reflect what I really believe to be true or what really happened in my childhood. My first stage persona, however, accepted every word of it as Gospel. My current stage persona is somewhat different in that he plays down the paranormal aspect of it. It's still there, but he just doesn't talk about it as much. (And that is an important thing to remember about the subscript - you don't have to tell it or explain it to anyone. You just have to keep it firmly fixed in your own mind and let it govern the way you present your effects on stage. It gives you an inner consistency that will be reflected in the genuineness, sincerity and believability of your performance.)

Riding the Web - the original subscript for my psychic persona

(A somewhat different version appeared in the first edition of *Principia Mentalia Part One, Fire*. In addition to the theory of the web, the following also contains a childhood event I invented for this persona.)

With minor variations, this subscript can be applied to any psychic persona. (Numbers 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 in the list given at the beginning of this section.)

The subscript (which appears in bold type) begins with an explanation I have created for the abilities my character will exhibit on stage. Everything this persona, or character, does on stage will be consistent with this explanation. The theory of the "web" is what my character "believes" to be the explanation for everything he does.

The character does not present or explain the subscript to the audience. The only time he ever actually reveals portions of the subscript to the public is in promotional material for appropriate venues, or in answering questions posed to him by the press or by members of the audience following a performance.

ESP, or "psi," as parapsychologists now call it, has long been a phenomenon without an identifiable scientific basis. But, if we imagine for a moment that our individual "minds" may actually be parts of an infinite "universal mind," psychic ability is easily explained. This simple change in our reality view allows us to speculate that psi may actually be nothing more than the ability to decipher signals that are passing through a network, or, by analogy, vibrating throughout a web.

Imagine a spider web of infinite size whose strands connect everything that exists. You and I, as individuals, are at the center of the web. Everyone and everything is at the center - because the web is infinite, its center is everywhere.

Because of cultural and biological programming, western man has come to view himself as an entity distinctly separate from his environment and the rest of humanity. This feeling of separation, coupled with the mechanistic views of modern science, serves to keep most people from allowing themselves to accept unifying experiences as "real." They need to "see it to believe it." In the case of the web, though, "if you don't believe it, you'll never see it."

It is only when we transcend the illusion of separateness that we begin to appreciate our connection with the web. A vibration emitting from any point travels throughout its infinite expanse. Since everything that exists is in a state of vibration, the web resonates with a symphony produced by the orchestra of all things.

The web is "real." It is our sense of separation that is the illusion. History is filled with instances of people suddenly experiencing a connection with the web. Many who spoke of their experiences were misunderstood. Frequently, they were persecuted by those who mistook the illusion of separation to be the reality of existence. Operating from the premise that all minds are separate, telepathy, for example, cannot be understood within the confines of accepted physical laws. To medieval minds, it was seen as supernatural and, thus, a form of magic or witchcraft.

When I was growing up, I sometimes "knew" what people were thinking, and was often surprised when they said or did something I had just been thinking about. I couldn't control it, though, and I couldn't always distinguish between my own thoughts and the thoughts of others.

I wondered how I was supposed to know whose thoughts were in my head, so I asked my father about it. He just stared at me and looked a bit upset. Suddenly a thought nearly shouted in my mind - I knew it couldn't be my own, because it was a word I never heard before, and it seemed to be coming from my father - it just "sounded" like him.

"What is *schizophrenic*, and why are you thinking that?" I asked him.

He kept staring for a moment and then asked quietly, "You heard me think that?"

"Yes, I heard it," I replied.

His eyebrows lowered and he said, "I didn't realize I said it out loud." I was about to tell him that he didn't, but I didn't want him to get angry and thought that maybe I shouldn't have asked about whose thoughts were in my head.

"What do you mean about other peoples' thoughts being in your head?" he asked.

I was afraid to explain what I meant, so I said, "No, I mean how do you know if an idea you thought up yourself is really your own or if somebody else thought of it first?"

I could tell by the look of relief that passed over his face that I had said the right thing.

I soon realized that "hearing" other peoples' thoughts wasn't something to talk about, unless you wanted people to think you were crazy.

[This last statement covers any past associations I have had with the world of traditional magic. As the character grew up he found that he could reveal people's thoughts without frightening them if he pretended he was just doing magic tricks based on trickery, psychology or body language. He learned that most people, when presented with a seemingly impossible occurrence, would accept the first explanation that seems logical to them.

That's why he rarely has problems with skeptics - he just tells them it's all a trick. Those few who do understand what he is doing obviously aren't threatened by the idea and accept him for who he is.]

I eventually learned, though, that all minds are actually connected by a unifying web-like structure. To read another person's thoughts, I must first focus upon my connection with that person. Then it is a matter of listening to the thoughts passing through my mind, and distinguishing between my own and those of the person I have connected with.

Interestingly, I have found that if I focus my attention on my own thoughts, they often find their way into the other person's consciousness. This is how I apparently "send" thoughts to my audiences. I'm not really "sending" at all, I'm just tuning everyone in to a common point on the web.

Now suppose you have adopted a *persona* who exhibits expertise in mnemonics, hypnotism, or perhaps as an interpreter of "body language" or "non-verbal communications." You may feel that a subscript isn't necessary in these cases, because all of these abilities, unlike the paranormal ones, are generally accepted as "real" by social scientists and laypeople alike. But without a deep subscript, (meaning quite a bit of experience, expertise and character history) it can actually be very difficult to present these characters convincingly. Because these abilities are widely accepted as "real" and "learnable," you must find a way to make your character appear unique or "special." That is where the trickery comes in.

The only way to create an effective subscript in these areas is to actually become an expert in your claimed ability. If your only familiarity with the art of deciphering non-verbal communications is what you read in pop psychology classics such as *Body Language*, or *How to Read People Like a Book*, you are out of touch with many aspects of "people reading" that are well known to the thousands of corporate personnel, attorneys, sales people and others who have attended one of the many in depth seminars and courses currently being offered across the country.

Similarly, the fundamentals of mnemonics have been included in self-improvement courses and seminars since the day Dale Carnegie started winning friends and influencing people. Consider this- in any large corporate audience there are probably at least two people who can do the giant memory test almost as well as you do. Several more are familiar with the principle and believe that it is not that difficult to learn. Unless you can present mnemonic feats very rapidly and entertainingly, the fact that you can remember twenty or thirty objects in and out of order is not as impressive as many mentalists seem to believe. While premises such as these do add believability to a mentalist's performance, believability is only one part of an effective presentation. Your subscript must not only serve to convey the impression that you believe in what you are doing, but that you have developed your ability to nearly supernatural levels. For years, I have closed my act by demonstrating the rapid memorization of a pack of cards that has first been shuffled by several audience members. I actually

explain the basic memory techniques used to memorize playing cards. I always see three of four audience members nodding their heads knowingly because they are familiar with the basic principles of mnemonics. Thus, I have established the element of believability.

If I didn't explain mnemonic technique, these same fellows would later be nudging each other and winking as they said, "It's done by mnemonics, you know. I learned how it's done at a seminar. Not at all as difficult as it seems." But by explaining what many people already know about memory systems, I've taken their attention away from the technique, which they may perceive as commonplace, and focused it on what appears to be my uncommon expertise in its application.

[By the way, if you are one of the mentalists who constantly refer to the art of memory as "mneumonics" or "pneumonics," and pronounce it "new-mon'iks," please do not attempt to present yourself as a memory expert. Many members of your audience will not understand why an expert cannot correctly spell or pronounce his field of expertise. It's *mnemonics*, pronounced "nem-on'-iks," and is derived from the name of the Greek Muse *Mnemos*.]

The method I employ in the effect, however, has nothing to do with the mnemonic devices I describe. It is actually done with a stacked deck. Now since I *have* studied and practiced mnemonics extensively, I am sometimes asked by fellow mentalists why I just don't do the effect by legitimately memorizing the cards. My reason is very simple – no matter how quickly I can memorize the cards mnemonically, there is no way that I, or anyone else that I have ever seen, can call back the cards as quickly as I can when using a stacked deck. Even those guys in the audience who are familiar with mnemonics are stunned by the rapidity with which I apparently apply the technique.

In other words, the effect as presented gives the impression that it is accomplished by mnemonics, but the speed at which it is accomplished makes me look like one of the fastest memory experts in the world. And that is the approach I believe you have to take if your basis premise, and the foundation of your *persona*, is a generally accepted and accessible human ability. You have to show that you have taken an otherwise common talent and elevated it to phenomenal heights.

Earlier I said that it was very important for performers to write out scripts for their acts. You need to have a subscript, too. If the script is the body of your performance, the subscript is its soul.



The Thirty-Nine Steps

A Mentalists Library of Essential Works

Recent Thread on an Internet Magicians' Forum -

Question: "What book or books are essential reading for someone just starting out in magic, particularly mentalism?"

First Answer: "Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects* and Corinda's *13 Steps to Mentalism* are essential reading for every mentalist."

Second Answer: "Annemann and Corinda are out of date. The best book is T.A. Waters' *Mind, Myth and Magick*."

Third Answer: "Waters wasn't a performer and most of his effects aren't very practical. All you need to study is Corinda."

Fourth Answer: "A great book for the beginner is Henry Hay's *The Amateur Magician's Handbook*."

Fifth Answer: "Don't forget Larry Becker's *Stunners!*"

Sixth Answer: "Banachek's *Psychological Subtleties* and Richard Busch's *Peek Performances* top my list of essential reading for the modern mentalist."

While all of the respondents mentioned valuable works, I agree with only one of the answers - the fourth. It is the only suggestion that answers the original question. None of the other books are particularly suitable for those "just starting out in magic, particularly mentalism."

The Amateur Magician's Handbook provides a broad based and practical foundation in the psychology and techniques of magic. While most magic books aimed at beginners start out by teaching self-working effects, Hay wisely devoted the first half of his book to the "hard stuff." In his words

...If you start off with a few self-working tricks that you can plod through undetected, you may puzzle people, but you won't entertain them. Worse, you won't have entertained yourself. Easy come, easy go. Familiarity breeds contempt... Some notion, at least, of magical acting can be taught in a book; but it takes time to sink in. The time required to memorize a self-working trick is not long enough... The time required to learn a fairly simple sleight probably will be long enough for you to absorb the acting that goes with it.

...In short, you can learn to do a moderately difficult trick more easily than you can a perfectly easy trick. On a sleight of hand trick you can't skimp; on an easy trick the temptation is almost irresistible. You won't dare to show a feat of skill that is only half practiced - and this is one of the basic axioms in all conjuring.

It is quite possible to create a complete mental act based on subtleties and self-working effects. Because of this, magicians who have an aversion to "practice" occasionally decide to go into mentalism because they think it is "easier" than straight magic. Their inevitable failure and embarrassment is a fate they could have avoided if someone had recommended Henry Hay's book to them in the first place.

The section on "mental magic" [see note below] comes in the second half of the book and it is, unabashedly, based on the works of Theodore Annemann. Hay recommends that those wishing to specialize in this branch of the art should obtain a copy of Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects*.

I don't think it's accidental that Hay doesn't discuss mentalism, or recommend Annemann, until after the student has "paid his dues" by developing a facility with fundamental sleights.

As you may have guessed, *The Amateur Magician's Handbook* was, back in 1962, my gateway into the world of magic and my first step to mentalism. It would be another five years before I heard of a guy named Corinda.

Note: The distinction most of today's mentalists make between "mentalism" and "mental magic" was rarely, if ever, observed until the 1970's, over twenty years after *The Amateur Magician's Handbook* was written. By 1978, the majority of magicians and mentalists who said there was no real difference between "mentalism" and "mental magic," no longer held

that opinion. (Basically, this was because of death - Nature's way of illustrating that, in the great scheme of things, she doesn't give a shit what you think.)

Postscript:

Henry Hay (pseudonym of the late Barrows Mussey, 1912 - 1985) wrote his book in 1949 and it was first published the following year. It has remained in print on the mass market ever since. When I worked in a magic shop in the 1960's and early 70's, I often recommended the book to customers, but was surprised that very few of them bought it. Instead, they usually opted for more expensive, though in my opinion, distinctly inferior, books that were not available to the public. When I began asking customers why they didn't want the Hay book, then available in hard cover for \$9.95 and paperback for 95¢, a majority answered that their goal was to become "professional" magicians. Why would they want to buy a book obviously intended for amateurs?

I honestly believe that if Hay's book had been given a different title - *Hay's Handbook of Magic*, for example - it would today be ranked among the top twenty magic books ever written. There's an important lesson here:

While people will agree that you can't judge a book by its cover, they do it anyway.

(It saddens me when I hear newcomers to the art advising neophytes that classic texts on the art are "outdated" - these are usually the same guys who are surprised when they learn that the latest "miracle" on the market was actually introduced in a 1939 issue of Annemann's "Jinx," or that the actual inventor of the "missing puzzle piece" effect - a current controversy among those unfamiliar with "outdated" material - has been dead for several years now. He introduced the effect almost forty years ago.)

What's on the List, What's Not, and Why Not

Following is my annotated list of thirty-nine works that I believe will, if they are carefully studied, provide the student with a well-balanced background and a respectable degree of expertise in the art of mentalism.

The most important books to me, of course, are the ones I pored over and studied in the sixties and seventies. They provided me, after all, with the

knowledge that enabled me to develop my own style and approach to the art. And all of them, I believe, are still worthy of serious attention. But succeeding generations of authors, building upon the foundations laid by their predecessors, have made valuable, and important, contributions to the literature. I've included a representative sampling of those modern works that I predict will be called "classics" by future generations.

Some readers may notice that several excellent books do not appear on the list. That is because this is a list of those works that I feel are "essential" in one way or another, to a well-rounded education in mentalism. It is not intended to include every mentalism book I have ever read or found interesting. I've included books that introduce, develop, and lucidly explain important principles, as well as those that deal with the psychology of mentalism and important presentational skills.

And, besides, the list is called "The Thirty-Nine Steps," not "The Forty-Seven Steps" or "The Hundred and Twenty-Five Steps." After I set the list parameters, I reviewed my entire library and selected all of the books I thought would qualify. From those I selected the top thirty-nine. While I do feel that some of the books are more essential than others, I did not want to engage in the subjective chore of ranking them from one to thirty-nine. They are, therefore, listed in alphabetical order. I will though, explain why I think that two books deserve to be at the top of the list. Because of my self-imposed restrictions, books that deal with important related subjects such as business methods, stagecraft, acting, comedy, etc., are not included. Neither have I included any videos, electronic publications, lecture notes, or single routines published in booklet form.

My own works are not on the list, although they are obviously on my shelves. I leave it to others to determine which, if any, of them might be considered essential. My opinion can hardly be considered objective.

The Thirty-Nine Steps to Mentalism

While most of the following books are readily available through magic shops or from the Internet, some of them are temporarily or permanently out of print and may be hard to find. Successful searches, however, will be well worth your efforts.

Anderson, George – *It Must Be Mind Reading*

You, Too, Can Read Minds
Dynamite Mentalism

A part time mentalist and a full time television writer, Anderson dressed his mentalism with highly commercial presentations. But it was his development of the “no questions written” approach to the Q&A act, first introduced in *It Must Be Mind Reading* and brought to full fruition in *Dynamite Mentalism*, that warrants the inclusion of his three books in “The Thirty-Nine Steps.”

Andrews, Val – *Simplicity, Audacity and Bluff*

While the book appears to have been typed on a defective 1932 Remington, its production values at least serve, by comparison, to make Al Mann manuscripts look snazzy.

But just as a book cannot be judged by its cover or title, neither can its type to mistype ratio measure the value of its material. This is brilliant and ballsy material. All practical, all professional, and almost completely unknown to today’s mentalists and magicians. Contains the definitive work on the “Electric Chair Routine” and the “Light and Heavy Bar” made famous by Chevalo. No gimmicks, no electricity, and no magnets. The title of the book says it all- three of the most important secrets of the professional mentalist.

Annemann, Theo- *Practical Mental Effects,*
Annemann’s Mental Bargain Effects
Annemann’s One Man Mental and Psychic Routine
“The Jinx”- complete file
En Rapport
202 Methods of Forcing

A common misconception among new mentalists is that Theodore Annemann was the author of *Practical Mental Effects*. He never saw the book. It was published in 1944, two years after Annemann’s untimely death. *Practical Mental Effects* (recently re-released by Dover Publishing under the title *Annemann’s Mental Magic*) is a compilation of what John J. Crimmins, Jr. thought were the best mental effects and routines that had appeared over the years in Annemann’s magazine, the “Jinx”. Many excellent mental effects were left out and others were edited in such a way that the flavor of the original routine was lost or obscured. The best mental effects with playing cards were compiled in two books of card tricks culled from the magazine and later published by Max Holden. They, too, are presently being published by Dover.

This is not to downplay the value of the material contained in *Practical Mental Effects*. If someone tells you that the book is outdated, it is probable that he has never really studied it. The methods and routines are, for the most part, as effective today as they were in the 1930's and early 40's.

The best way, however, to get a real understanding of Annemann's central role in the early years of twentieth century mentalism is to read his words as he originally published them. All issues of the "Jinx" are still readily available in three hardbound volumes available through most magic dealers.

Unlike the compilations, the "Jinx"'s articles and photographs, Annemann's legendary editorials and the unedited versions of effects from the era's greatest minds in magic and mentalism, arguably make *The Complete Jinx* the most important volume in my essential library. If you have just the *Jinx* and a complete set of Bascom Jones's *Magick*, which was to the second half of the twentieth century what the *Jinx* was to the first, the knowledge and history of a century of mentalism would be at your fingertips

Just reading the editorial columns brings life to our history. Annemann is still in there; he's still occasionally controversial; he sometimes is less than coherent; most often, though he is completely brilliant and his unedited, raw genius is still there for all of us to learn from and argue with.

Actually, the only reason I included *Practical Mental Effects* in my "Thirty-Nine Steps" is that it is an easily accessible, organized, reference work of important effects, which are naturally hard to find quickly in their original format. It is, though, only a very pale substitute for the *Jinx* and the other Annemann volumes listed above.

Mental Bargain Effects is notable for its extremely well thought out methodology. Those who thought that the card case impression device was a recent development will find the original, and still superior, version in this booklet. It also contains, among many other gems, the first major improvement to the ancient one ahead principle devised by Hewitt and explained by Annemann.

Annemann's Complete One Man Mental and Psychic Routine is an excellent act requiring a minimum of props. But, more importantly, it is a brilliant lesson in effective routining and time delay misdirection. If someone were to ask me to name just one book, which influenced my style of performing more than any other, this would be the one.

En Rapport is an easily mastered two-person act that uses a minimal amount of cuing and excellent routining to achieve a convincing demonstration

of thought reading. Even if you never intend to present a two-person routine, there is some excellent billet handling that you will not find in Annemann's other works. In fact, for some of Annemann's best billet work you will have to locate a copy of J.G. Thompson's *My Best*, which has also earned a place in the list.

For reasons that I don't really understand, I have recently come to consider *Annemann's 202 Methods of Forcing*, one of my standard references, to be an excellent companion volume to Banachek's *Psychological Subtleties*. When the past and the present come together, the possibilities are endless.

Baker, Al – *Al Baker's Mental Magic*

One of Anneman's early influences, Al Baker, primarily remembered as a master children's entertainer and comic magician, was also the creator of the very practical and illusive Al Baker billet switch. He was also the first to publish an instant access tear, a method of reading the contents of a folded slip of paper in the act of tearing it up. The technique was later refined by many different mentalists including Bruce Bernstein, Richard Osterlind, T.A. Waters, Al Mann, and many others. All are among the true creative masters of present day mentalism. In the hands of Barry Richardson, and because of his own creative contributions to the basic principle, the tear has reached a state of near perfection.

Creativity does not flourish in a vacuum. And art develops much more quickly and effectively when we know the history of our creative endeavors and share our ideas with those who love and appreciate the art and its history.

Al Baker's Mentalism was a seminal work containing ideas and clever subtleties that continue to influence the mentalism of today. As such, it earns a well-deserved place in my list.

Banachek, Steve – *Psychological Subtleties*

Steve Banachek is acknowledged by his peers as one of the most creative and original mentalists working today.

While his book is occasionally recommended to beginners, it will yield its most valuable fruits to those who have become fairly well "versed and rehearsed" in the art. Only then can its true value be appreciated. But if you are a beginner, it won't be entirely useless to you. It will act as a barometer of your development as a mentalist. When it starts telling you something new every time you open its pages, you will know that you are headed in the right direction.

Becker, Larry- *World of Super Mentalism,*
 World of Super Mentalism Part Two
 Stunners

Occasionally some mentalists, myself included, have described the work of Larry Becker as “mental magic” rather than “mentalism.” I seem to recall Larry telling me that he, too, considered many of his effects to be “mental magic.” Either that, or he told me that he didn’t give a shit either way, and who am I to argue with a guy who picked up my tab after I just bought drinks for the whole room? (I don’t think he knew about that when he grabbed the bill.)

Actually, Larry doesn’t have to worry about labels. His creative genius and his alternatively playful and dramatic approach to performing have earned him the label attained by few – People don’t see him perform and say, “He is a mentalist,” or “He is a magician.” They don’t go home after a performance and tell people that they saw a mentalist today.

His unique brand of whatever-it-is-that-he-does leaves his audiences remembering just one thing – they saw Larry Becker today.

That, of course, is the ultimate goal of any entertainer – to wear a label that says who he is rather than what he does. Since Larry’s routines are primarily based on subtlety and psychology rather than difficult moves or switches, most of the performer’s efforts can be directed to achieving that goal.

Larry is the creative force behind the most powerful effects presented by many of the leading mentalists in show business today. His routining skills result in presentations that are direct, and as effectively deadly, as a sharpshooter’s bullet.

Read these three books very carefully- don’t be deceived by Larry’s easy writing style and his clear descriptions.

You will then be tempted to just present the routines as written and you will miss the true value of his work. Instead, pay close attention to the way he thinks and the way that his routines are put together. These are lessons that will be invaluable to you as you develop your own style, methods and presentations.

Don’t just read these books and perform the effects as the “mentalists” out there, who, every day futilely struggle to become Larry Becker, present them.

It won’t work.

The position is already taken.

Bernstein, Bruce - *PsiKicks*

Bernstein is one of mentalism's greatest thinkers. His development of Annemann's classic "Pseudo Psychometry," his modernization of older techniques and methods, and several very commercial routines, warrant the inclusion of this book in *The 39 Steps*. As with the works of Larry Becker, and most of the other authors on this list, your greatest lessons will be learned as you analyze his thinking.

Corinda, Tony- *13 Steps to Mentalism*

13 Steps to Mentalism is often referred to as one of the two cornerstones of modern mentalism. The other common choice is Annemann's *Practical Mental Effects*.

As I explained earlier, I believe Annemann's work is indeed worthy of "cornerstone" status. I don't agree that *Practical Mental Effects* adequately represents his substantial contributions to the art; but it contains such a wealth of valuable material that I will not argue if we settle on giving it second place. But since I think first place should go to Annemann's *Jinx*, it's hardly fair to let *Practical Mental Effects* remain at number two. All of its contents are already included in the "Jinx".

But does Corinda's book, admittedly an important work, deserve to take over second place? This is where things get a bit subjective. I got my first copy of Annemann about 37 years ago. Since then, I have always kept a copy of the book nearby. I suppose I probably know most of it by memory now, but I still refer to it frequently.

(I think my handwritten margin notes would add another thirty pages to the book if I had them printed up.) The same with Henry Hay; he's was another one of my constant travel companions.

I first read Corinda around 1969. I re-read and studied it and it provided valuable information about areas of mentalism that called for further study. But after a year or so, I rarely referred to it anymore, except to check references when I started writing my own books several years later. I simply had moved on to more specialized works that picked me up where Corinda left me off. But while Annemann certainly inspired me to explore hundreds of other books and resources, he never "left me off." There was always something interesting to

come back to. Things that seemed better and better as my experience in the art grew.

That is not intended to be a criticism of the book. For, unlike Annemann's work, the 13 Steps is primarily a textbook, a primer aimed at readers seeking to learn about the art of mentalism. It is the best, and most complete, introduction to mentalism ever written. Textbooks are stepping stones to more advanced studies.

Corinda is primarily a book of description; Annemann's works constitute creation and innovation. Corinda took the art of mentalism and put it into context. Annemann's works, on the other hand, are part of the art itself.

Is Corinda, then, one of the foundations of the art? No, not at all. It is simply a description of the foundations that were laid many years before by Annemann and the other creators in the field. (Corinda's book does contain many effects, which are used as examples in each section. But if the 13 Steps was simply a collection of these effects, I would not have included it on the list, there are just too many better books of effects and routines available – many of which I have included in this list.)

To someone just starting out in mentalism, I would recommend Corinda first, the "Jinx" second (or *Practical Mental Effects* if the "Jinx" is not available), and then Bascom Jones "Magick". A solid background in the necessary magical skills can be obtained from Henry Hay's *Amateur Magician's Handbook*. The "Jinx" and "Magick" will lead the student to all of the other important books and resources in the field. (Both of them provided reviews and recommendations of new material pretty much as it was released.)

Dewey, Herb and Seville, Tom - *Red Hot Cold Reading*

The late Herb Dewey was known as "The King of the Cold Readers." I thought I knew a lot about cold reading until I first saw Dewey work many years ago. *Red Hot Cold Reading*, which he co-authored with Doctor of Psychology, and P.E.A. member, Tom Saville, was the first book on the subject that went far beyond the memorization of canned character readings. It remains an essential piece of work, even though more extensive books have followed in its wake, because many of his approaches, lines, and ploys are as effective on stage as they are in one-on-one readings.

Goldstein, Phil - *The Color Series of Mentalism*

Four books explaining some of Max Maven's most powerful routines. In his classic "Four-Sided Triangle" he lucidly explains the psychology behind pre-show work, a tool whose many applications justifies the claim that mentalism really does take place in the mind. Hard to find, but well worth whatever they cost.

Hay, Henry - *The Amateur Magician's Handbook*

You already know why I have included this one. I've already worn out four or five copies of the book and I will probably wear out a few more. If you haven't read it, or for some reason do not want to read it, you are directed to explain yourself by writing a one thousand word essay titled *The Amateur Mentalist's Excuse Book*.

Hilliard, John Northern - *Greater Magic*

Simply the most ambitious, important and extensive magic book of the first half of the Twentieth Century. Many important contributions by Annemann and some very powerful mentalism.

Hoy, David- *The Bold and Subtle Miracles of Dr Faust*

Hugard, Jean - *The Encyclopedia of Card Tricks*

Contains quite a bit of believable mentalism with a pack of playing cards. Most important, though, because it also contains a complete exposition of the Nikola Card System, which is the basis for the incredible "Any Card at Any Number" effect, a version of which has attained almost legendary status in the hands of English mentalist David Berglas.

Jones, Bascom - *The Compleat Magick*

Refer to my comments about Annemann's Jinx. The Compleat Magick is a hardbound collection of all of the issues of "Magick," the most important mentalism periodical of the second half of the Twentieth Century. Want to be a part of what really went down in the Seventies and Eighties? I can trace my own development in these pages as well as everyone else I knew during these incredibly productive decades. Like Annemann, Jones didn't pull punches in his editorial columns. He said it like it is, and he's still saying it in the pages of these priceless volumes. Dr. Bob says, "Do not hesitate to sell your car or knock over a liquor store in order to obtain this monumental work. Take this into the joint with you and doing time is a snap!"

Knepper, Kenton - *Wonder Words*
Completely Cold
Miracles of Suggestion

Different, original, powerful, mind-expanding, seminal, important, essential, Kenton occasionally comes under fire for some of his radical approaches to our art. His work, though, is the most important development in mentalism of the last decade.

This is the stuff that turns skeptics into believers.

Koran, Al - *Professional Presentations*

It is very easy to tell when a book has been written by a professional performer. You will find niceties of handling and safety precautions, which indicate that the effect had been subjected to the rigors of actual performance – not for the boys at the magic club, but for the paying public.

The effects in a working professional's repertoire are usually almost foolproof. Careful attention to detail and preparedness for anything that could possibly go wrong characterize Al Koran's thoroughly professional approach to mentalism.

Koran's contributions to the art include his famous "Gold Medallion Routine," the "Torn Newspaper" prediction, his presentations of the "Linking Finger Rings" and "The Flying Ring," as well as his classic "Five Star Miracle," which was the inspiration for the methodology I employed in the "Chronologue" effect.

In addition to examples of Koran's unusually straightforward effects, this book contains an excellent description explanation of "The Koran Center Tear." Unlike most traditional handlings, Koran's version is designed to be "fumble free." The center is cleanly stolen and is automatically positioned in perfect position for what is known as the "umbrella move". Koran's handling of the "read" is clever, natural, and has no angle problems if handled properly.

While the strength of the performance material alone would qualify this book for my "Thirty-Nine Steps," I have included it as a perfect example of how a professional structures his effects and handlings.

Many professionals consider this book to be among the top ten works in mentalism. I would have to agree.

Kross, Ford - *Out of the Deep Freeze*

Kross is the only individual in the world of mentalism who has known me since I was a teenager. We go way back and have had some pretty interesting adventures, including winning the last witchcraft trial held in the State of New Jersey.

Ford and I have been sharing ideas and interesting escapades for over thirty years. Since he is such an old friend I often forget that he is one of the most talented readers in the business; It's hard to categorize him as a "cold reader" though, because many of his techniques are based on his considerable skill as a hypnotist as well as psychological techniques he developed on his own.

His book, "Out of the Deep Freeze" is uniquely original and contains innovative, powerful and very useable material, but the only way you can get a copy is to personally ask him if you may buy one. He won't sell it to anyone who lacks the experience required to use his methods properly. You may think that this rather unusual. You're right. Ford IS unusual and it is he, not you, who will decide if you may buy his book. Since Ford is currently the membership chairman of the Psychic Entertainers Association, as well as one of its earliest members, he is not particularly hard to find.

Just don't try to bullshit him.

He'll know.

Larson, William, Sr. – *The Mental Magic of William Larson Sr.*

I understand that this wonderful, but presently out-of-print book, will soon be reissued by "Genii, the Conjuror's Magazine." This is excellent news for it contains the "Dr. Q" material, including the legendary "Dr. Q's Hypnotic Act," In addition to excellent mentalism routines used by Larson, Sr. in his performances at clubs and resort hotels, the book contains what Dai Vernon once described as the best explanation of muscle reading ever to see print.

The book is not only an essential part of my "working performer's library," but it is a valuable piece of history that will likely become a valuable collector's item.

Lesley, Ted – *Paramiracles*

Again, a book written by a working performer for working performers. Ted Lesley's material is well known for its originality, commercial value, and powerful impact. This is not just a collection of excellent routines; it is a storehouse of versatile utility items, including one of the best gaffed envelopes I

have ever seen. Lesley's explanation and development of the valuable "Kornwinder" principle is certain to inspire every mentalist's creativity. His professional presentations of Eddie Clever's "Calcutta Mystery" and an original version of the "Bank Night" Routine are object lessons in the art of performing mentalism effectively. If you take the time to build and experiment with his "Bending Champagne Glass", you will have a routine that is Gelleresque in its magnitude. Not only does the stem of a champagne glass begin to visibly bend while you simply stare at it, but glasses all over the room start to do likewise. The routine, whether you actually use it in your act or not, is another excellent example of how a mentalist can use psychology to convince audiences they have witnessed a miracle.

Lorayne, Harry - *How to Develop a Super Power Memory*

While he has authored many books on the art of rapid memorization, his first, *How to Develop a Super Power Memory*, is still his best. The book contains everything a mentalist will ever need to learn about mnemonics - techniques that not only enable you to perform standard memory effects, but which can be used to effectively enhance demonstrations of apparent mind reading, psychometry, rapid calculation (as in the "Day for any Date" effect, the "Knight's Tour" and almost any other type of "mind power" demonstration.

While mnemonic techniques are familiar to a large percentage of the public, it is in their covert applications that they are such a powerful and essential tools. The best way to accomplish something is almost invariably the simplest and most direct. Yet, many mentalists who want to exploit the effects made possible by a memorized card stack, for example, utilize "calculation stacks" that they believe to be "easier" and more accessible than memorization. What they don't seem to realize, is that when the stack is memorized (and that is really quite easy once you have mastered the mnemonics), and a person names a card, you instantly know its location in the pack. You will not need to apply an intermediate calculation to arrive at the proper position.

"But the calculation is easy," you might reply. And it may well be "easy." The problem is that the calculation may suddenly become very difficult if you try to do it while interacting with the audience. Of course, you can just stand there and stare up in the air for a second while everyone wonders if you are having a stroke, thus adding some unexpected drama to your act.

Or you can come to the realization that the hard way is actually the easy way. And besides, the calculation stack is a one trick pony. When you learn to memorize a deck of cards you automatically learn to memorize just about anything else.

Lorayne's writing style makes for very easy and entertaining reading. By the time you are ten pages into the book you will be amazed at just how easy mnemonics can be.

All you have to do is try it. Believe me, it is far easier than learning to do a good double lift. (You'll have to buy Harry's other books if that's what you're into.)

Richardson, Barry - *Theater of the Mind*

Many who read my original version of "The Thirty-Nine Steps" were amazed that I didn't include any works by Barry Richardson on the list. While I had read most of Barry's wonderful contributions to the magazines and periodicals, I had not at the time had the opportunity to read his excellent *Theater of the Mind*.

Theater of the Mind is the perfect example of how presentation and careful preparation are the heart and soul of effective mentalism.

Sharpe, Sam- *Conjuring Psychological Principles*

Originally published by Micky Hades, Sam Sharp's book is well worth finding. The principles described cover all of the magic arts in addition to mentalism. Probably every psychological and mental technique ever devised can be found somewhere in this painstakingly assembled work. This is not a book that will be of much use to the beginner, but for the writer, researcher, creator, and experienced performer, it is a gold mine of information and an excellent source book.

Shiels, Tony "Doc" - *The Shiels' Effect*

The Shiels' Effect was originally released as a special "supplement" to Tony Raven's "Invocation." (There were two books in this series. The first was my *Pseudomently Yours* in 1977. The Shiels's book appeared shortly thereafter. As far as I know, these were the only two such supplements Raven published. He must have published quite a few of them, though, because they appear to be readily available.)

The Shiels's Effect appeared while Uri Geller was still a major, and very controversial, figure on the psychic scene.

It was Geller's leap to fame that provided the book's premise - how to create a psychic superstar. From the ground up Doc Shiels' chronicles, the rise to fame of "Tim Finnegan," from the creation of his image, the methods behind his "psychic" abilities, and his publicity campaign.

There is a lot more in the book that is of great value to the psychic entertainer who is contemplating a new publicity campaign.

Tarbell, Harlan - *The Tarbell Course in Magic*

Volumes Four, Five, and Six of Tarbell's monumental course in magic cover major blindfold methods, question and answering routines and mentalism in general. Much of the material is not available elsewhere.

The fact that these books are still an important part of my working library is proven by the fact that the "billet stand" I described in my "Godfather's Billet Routine" (Theories and Methods for the Practical Psychic Part 3) was inspired by the holder used in one of Tarbell's Q&A routines.

Tarbell's theories about the presentation of mentalism often raise eyebrows among those who think it is unethical for a mentalist to claim psychic abilities. Sam Sharpe severely criticizes Tarbell in *Conjuring Psychological Techniques*, a book that is also included in my "Thirty-Nine Steps."

Thompson, J.G. - *My Best*

Three years after Ted Annemann's death in 1942, J.G. Thompson released this fantastic collection of material contributed by the leading creators and performers of his generation. The biographical sketches at the end of the book were each written by the contributors themselves. They serve to make this entire generation of performers come alive.

I was fortunate enough to meet many of the contributors in the late sixties, when I became the youngest member of the Parent Assembly of the S.A.M. in New York. Most of them were very old men by that time and I hadn't heard of many of them or their contributions.

But when I read Thompson's book, I was transported back to the time when these men were in their primes.

That's one of the reasons that this book is included in my list. It serves as a partial bridge between Annemann's "Jinx" and Jones' "Magick". You can complete the bridge by obtaining complete files of two major publications that appeared in the interim, "The Phoenix" and "The New Phoenix". (I haven't included these in my list because they are not focused primarily on mentalism, although many mental effects appeared in their pages over the years - besides, my list isn't long enough to include everything.)

Apart from its historical value, though, the book contains what each of the contributors believed to be his “best” creation. The book lives up to its title. In addition to all forms of magic, you will find in its pages some of the best mental effects ever created.

Waters, T.A.- *Man, Myth, and Magick*

This book could accurately been titled *The (Nearly) Complete Works of T.A. Waters*. It is an indexed, edited and updated collection of almost every mentalism book and booklet he wrote in his all too short life.

Waters was a major figure on the creative side of our art. Many performers have justifiably noted that his effects were not always suitable, in a practical sense, for the working mentalist. I find that to be true of his earlier works but much less so in his later ones. Since the material in the book is presented in chronological order, you can literally follow the progression and refinement of his thoughts as he became an influential figure in the world of mentalism.

Like some other works on this list, *Mind, Myth and Magick* is often recommended to beginners. And newcomers will indeed benefit very much by reading it. His essays, in fact, should be required reading for. While he may not have been a top performer of mentalism, he was one of its greatest thinkers and theorists.

As with many of the books in this list, the value of Water’s volume does not lie primarily in the effects he describes, but in the creative inspiration they provide. I don’t think I have ever performed any of his effects in the manner he described them. But the reasoning underlying his effects, approaches, and methods, is what qualifies his book as essential reading. It doesn’t matter if you agree with him or not. (Waters and I differed on many points and, on at least one occasion, our differences were extreme.) The point is that Waters works will make you think. And they’ll make you think every time you re-read them.

Mind, Myth and Magic is the living testament of a finely tuned creative mind and deserves to be read by every thoughtful performer.

The books listed in the “Thirty-Nine Steps” span an entire century of magic and mentalism. Looking back over the list, I was struck by an amazing realization – all of the authors are still alive!

It’s true.

Ted Annemann, Tom Waters, and everyone else on the list who you may have thought was dead, had actually stumbled upon the secret of immortality. They put their thoughts on paper and shared them not only with their contemporaries, but also with unborn generations of mentalists who followed them. They still live between the covers of their books and will happily talk or argue with you anytime you'd like to visit them.

Their immortality is conditional, however. It will last only as long as their books are read.

ANSWER TO ANNA EVA FAY POSTER QUESTION:

At the conclusion of Part First and during the performance of the marionettes in Part Second, Miss Fay's assistants passed among the audience and obtained wax impressions of questions written by audience members. They also took note of the seats occupied by the querants. If there was an intermission between the second and third parts, the risk exists that people would no longer be occupying the same seats – or, worse, yet, the questioners may not return on time!

Some Thoughts on Performing

It's one thing to amaze your friends at school or at work with feats of mentalism. It's an entirely different ballgame, though, to give a formal performance on stage before a paying audience who expects to see professional entertainment.

To perform professional mentalism effectively, you need to have a strong ego and nerves to match. You need to spend hours EVERY DAY rehearsing and perfecting your routines. You need to be able to read audiences to understand how they are responding to your material and how best to interact with them.

If you want to be a successful entertainer it is important that you get out there and watch the professionals at work. Not just the mentalists – they can be pretty hard to find – but the stand up comics and the other types of performers you are likely to find in your area. Study their techniques. Watch how they work an audience. If you can't see them live, watch them on television or rent or purchase videotapes or dvds.

When you have the opportunity to watch mentalists, try to figure out the persona each performer has adopted and how they the individual effects and routines serve as reinforcers of the character they have created.

Before you get on stage, you have to figure out what you are going to say. As I've indicated elsewhere, you cannot depend on improvisational ability to deliver the right words to you every time. You need to write down your material first. After the act is written and learned, THEN you can improvise around it.

After you have written out your material, do your best to edit the routines to make them shorter. The average audience has a short attention span. Many times they have been drinking and they are not going to be able to follow a long setup to an effect without losing interest. They want to be easily entertained. While, as a mentalist, your act deals with the mind and with thought, you really don't want to give the audience too much to think about in terms of understanding your effects.

Another important thing to work out in your presentations is your timing. There is no easy way to teach this. It is something that some performers are born with and that others just have to learn. Timing is the way and manner that you deliver your lines and your punchlines. You need to learn when to just stop talking and say nothing at all. Most of this only comes with experience, but, once again, you can learn an awful lot simply by watching the pros in action.

The easiest place for a beginner to get performing practice is a comedy club. Call the ones in your area and ask if they have open mic nights. Be sure to get there early enough to sign up and be prepared to do about five to ten minutes if you are selected to perform. Although, if you are really bad they will probably turn the mic off on you halfway through your act. Don't let this discourage you, though. This is a business that requires a thick skin and a determination to forge onwards.

Record every show you do. Review what works and what doesn't. Get used to it because it is a habit you will want to continue throughout the rest of your performing career.

Besides comedy clubs, many bars, night clubs, and coffee shops offer open mic nights where aspiring performers can practice their craft. But after you have done this a few times you will have to decide whether or not you have what it takes to continue. If the audience applauded and like what you did, then you were good. If not, your act either needs work or you need to find another type of work.