

MUM

MAGIC UNITY MIGHT

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN MAGICIANS

FEBRUARY 2014



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"John Stanfield has discovered an unpublished manuscript that he wrote back in the '80s. *For all magicians, this is no less than buried treasure!* These routines are not pipe dreams. I was privileged to witness John perform this material on many occasions. It never failed to delight and enthrall the audience. Highly recommended!"

DAN GARRETT, S.A.M. National President, 1994-1995

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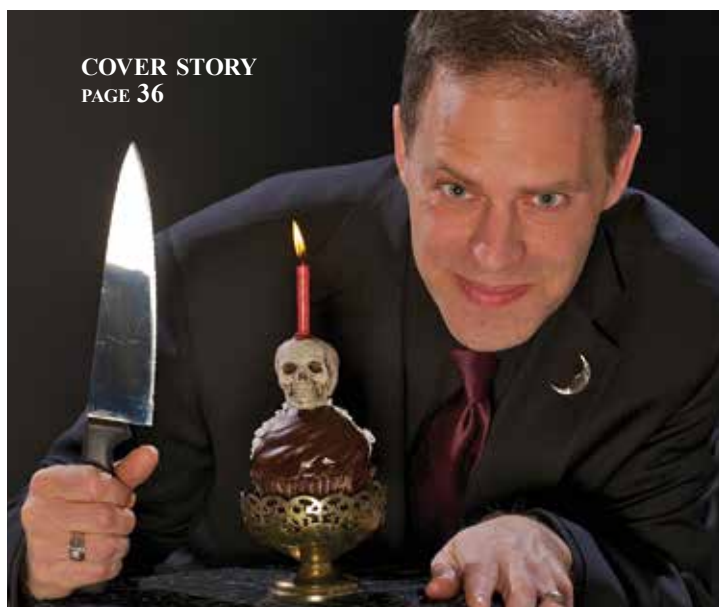
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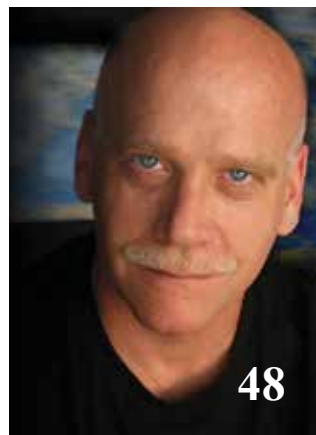
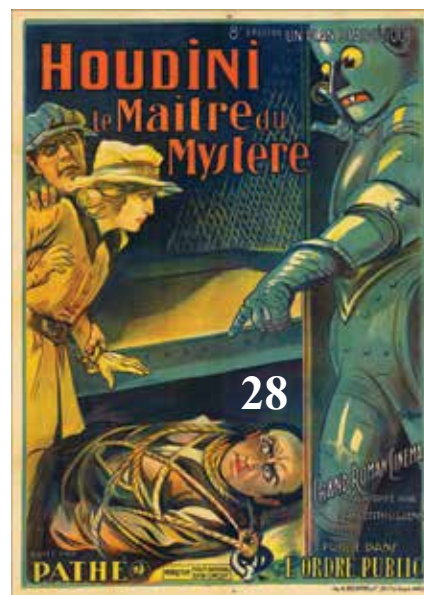
COVER STORY
PAGE 36

S.A.M. NEWS

- 6 From the Editor's Desk
- 8 From the President's Desk
- 11 M-U-M Assembly News
- 23 Broken Wands
- 24 National Council Minutes (draft)
- 26 Good Cheer List
- 31 Newsworthy
- 69 Our Advertisers

THIS MONTH'S FEATURES

- 28 Nielsen Gallery • by Tom Ewing
- 30 Hit the Road • by Scott Alexander
- 32 Not Just Kid Stuff • Jim Kleefeld
- 36 COVER STORY • by Christian Painter
- 42 For Your Consideration • by George Parker
- 44 Illusions of Grandeur • by David Seebach
- 46 The High Road • by Mick Ayres
- 48 I Left My Cards at Home • by Steve Marshall
- 50 Focus on Funny • by Norm Barnhart
- 51 Tech Tricks • Bruce Kalver
- 52 Ebook Nook: Spectacle by Stephen Minch
- 56 The Dotted Line • by Don Theo III
- 58 Cheats and Deceptions • Antonio M. Cabral
- 60 Informed Opinion • New Product Reviews
- 68 Salon de Magie • by Ken Klosterman
- 69 Basil the Baffling • Alan Wassilak
- 70 The Dean's Diary • by George Schindler



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Editor's Desk

Michael Close

Congratulations to compeer Neil Tobin, whose show *Supernatural Chicago* celebrates its tenth anniversary on February 14, 2014. Neil has put an enormous amount of effort, energy, and creativity into this show, which competes for its audience in one of the hippest cities in the United States. Christian Painter talked to Neil and learned how the show came about, and most important, how it continues to draw customers in the Windy City.

MORE ON T-TAG

I received a very complimentary email from Max Maven concerning my trick Topsy-turvy Automatic Gambler, which appeared in last month's issue. Max wrote, "This is one of the best compositions I've encountered in a long time. Congratulations." Max also provided some history for the fake turnover move. Max marketed an effect called Quadrophonic (sic) in 1976 that used the fake turnover without the right-hand cover. Nick Trost had apparently come up with a similar move, possibly in the early '70s.

If you skipped over my trick last month, you might want to go back and give it a try. If you read through the trick but were put off by the two relatively simple sleights (the fake turnover and Lennart Green's Angle Separation), I have good news for you. Shortly after coming up with the method published last month, I came up with a method that is entirely self-working; there are no sleights required. There are trade-offs, however. The deck must be stacked prior to the performance and the dealing procedure takes a little more time. Here are the details. (This will only make sense if you've read through the original routine.)

Remove all the Tens, Jacks, and Queens. Place one Ten, one Jack, and one Queen aside. Shuffle up the remaining nine cards and place them face down in a pile. Remove all the Aces and Kings. Shuffle them and drop them on the Ten/Jack/Queen pile on the table. Place the remainder of the deck on that combined pile, place the single Ten, Jack, and Queen on top, and case the deck. All this is done prior to the performance.

To perform, remove the deck from the case, cut it in half, and give it a legitimate riffle shuffle. If you can, keep the top three cards on top. This is a convincing shuffle (because it's a real one), but it also serves the purpose of distributing the bottom seventeen cards up through the deck while maintaining their relative order. (This property of the riffle shuffle was exploited by Charles T. Jordan.) Pick up the deck and spread it face up between your hands. Throw out the Aces, Kings, Queens, Jacks, and Tens as you come to them, tossing them into a face-down pile. Do not toss out the top three cards. Place the rest of the deck aside.

Pick up the pile and give it a red/black overhand shuffle. (Simply overhand shuffle the pile, running cards singly as you near the middle of the pile.) This brings the Ten/Jack/Queen group to the top. Spread off nine cards and hand them to spectator two to shuffle. Give the other group to spectator one.

Take back the group from spectator one; drop spectator

two's group on them and immediately give the pile a red/black overhand shuffle, which brings the Ace/King group to the top. Spread off seven cards and use them to flip the lower group face up. Drop the face-down cards on top.

Now you explain that you will deal three hands of poker, to player one (spectator one), player two (spectator two), and player three (yourself). Explain that because this is Topsy-turvy Poker, the pile is turned over before each card is dealt. For player one, the pile is turned over once. Do so, and deal the top card to player one. (This will be an Ace or a King, the Jonah card.) For player two, you turn the pile over twice. (This brings the Ten/Jack/Queen group back to the top.) Deal the top card to player two. For player three, you turn over the pile three times. (This brings the Ace/King group to the top.) Deal the top card to yourself.

Now, just follow the above procedure until players one and two have five cards, and you're in the position of having three cards face up in your left hand. Finish as explained in the original version. I find it amusing that this dealing procedure automatically delivers the proper set of cards to each player, and does not require any fake turnovers. You achieve quite a remarkable poker deal without any real sleight of hand.

PASSAGES

The world of close-up magic recently lost four prominent practitioners, whose passing should be recorded here.

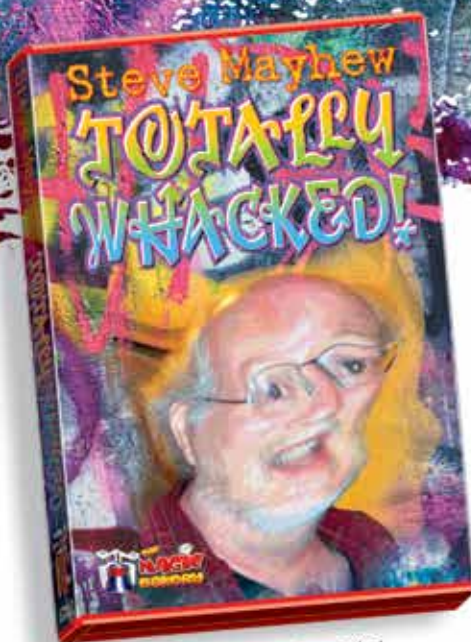
David Bendix, the creator of the Bendix Bombshell Wallet and a contributor to many magic publications, died on August 8, 2013. Mr. Bendix had no surviving family members, but through the generosity of friends was interred in Colon, Michigan, on October 31, 2013. I never met David, but I became aware of him through his articles in Jon Racherbaumer's *Hierophant*. He had a sardonic sense of humor, and as Roy Johnson wrote, "His approach is so sincere and serious that one has been led up the garden path without realizing it." David Bendix was seventy-eight.

Bob Knigge, a former member of I.B.M. Ring 58, died on December 22, 2013. Bob was a retired police officer and an accomplished musician. (He played bass for the Everly Brothers in their prime.) It is likely that you perform one of Bob's magic creations without realizing who came up with the idea: Bob introduced Mini-Pearl, the formation of a poodle from a string of pearls, to the magic community.

Karl Norman, a popular expert close-up and bar magician who worked at Eddie Fechter's legendary Forks Hotel in Cheektowaga, New York, died December 25, 2013 at his home in Kenmore, New York. In the late 1960s, Mr. Norman became a famous bar magician at Fechter's Forks Hotel. He was known for his great comedic sense and powerful magic. In 1982 he was presented the first Fechter's Finger Flicking Frolic Award for the person who contributed the most to that year's gathering. More recently, he was honored when his name was added to Gene Gordon's name as the official name of I.B.M. Ring 12. Karl was ninety-five.

Roderick William Dee died on December 30, 2013, after a long battle with cancer. His friends knew him as Rod the Hop. Rod was an expert practitioner of gambling-related techniques; at some of these techniques he was the best I've ever seen. In one of the most extraordinary afternoons I've ever spent, I watched Rod flabbergast a group of some of the best magicians in the world with his card table artifice. Rod had a good heart and a cheerful spirit. Las Vegas won't be the same without him. Rod was fifty-six. ♦

He's Erdnase with an arrow-through- the-head.



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And if that's not enough, Steve tips four more commercial routines from his working repertoire:

Three by Three (aka **A Balloon, a Cartwheel, and a Pony Ride**); the **James Brown Aces**, **Delores in the Meadow**, and the **Sanborn Switch**. We've also included a bonus interview with Steve, along with outrageous outtakes.



President's Desk

Dal Sanders

I spent most of January on the road visiting many of our great S.A.M. Assemblies and even a couple of outstanding I.B.M. Rings. I went to Oklahoma City and Omaha and then I did a little New England visit of Massachusetts and Connecticut. Of course, I also went to a couple of warmer places. I visited the Fort Worth Magicians Club officer installation banquet and visited other magic friends across the country. Basically I went wherever there are magicians. This month I will go to Magi-Fest in Columbus, Ohio, and the Blackpool Magic Convention in England. I have to admit that I am always happy to get back home to Texas, not just because the weather is warmer, but also because Texas is so weird (and I love weird).

I'm not being negative about my fellow Texans; we all know we're weird. The motto of our state capital is "Keep Austin Weird." Weird is good. Weird is positive. Weird is what sets us apart from others. Take coffee shops for example. Lots of places serve great coffee, but when Starbucks entered the market, it was weird. They played hip music, offered Wi-Fi, and had unusual seating arrangements and weird décor. Even though everything from coffee to Wi-Fi was overpriced, we embraced their weirdness and adopted it as our own.

Being a member of The Society of American Magicians is weird. We were the very first magic organization. In 1902 magicians in New York got together and formed an organization to "elevate and advance the art of magic." No group of magicians had ever done anything like this before. While many magicians immediately joined the new organization, many others avoided it. They thought the idea of magicians working together was weird and unusual. Eventually the S.A.M. grew into the most prestigious organization in the world, largely because of the quality of people who joined the organization. The biggest names in the history of magic have been members of the S.A.M. Many of them went on to become national officers.

In the 111 years that have followed, The Society of American Magicians has done weird things. Many times the weird ideas were met with opposition. Some members would employ what I consider to be the world's seven deadliest words to voice their disapproval. What are those words? "We've never done it that way before." I can almost hear past voices saying things like: "Why should we have S.A.M. Assemblies in other cities? Let them start their own organization. We've never done it that way before." "Why should we have a magazine; why should we have a convention; why should we allow international members? After all, we are The Society of *American* Magicians. We've never done it that way before." They have said, "Why do we need a Magic Endowment Fund; why do we need a media library; why do we need to establish Life Members; why do we need to offer scholarships; why do we need to offer assistance for those who have been through some sort of natural disaster? Isn't that what the church or the Red Cross is for? We've never done it that way before."

In recent years people have used those seven deadly words when SAMTalk was proposed. For the first time members of The Society of American Magicians were able to communicate with a

large portion of other members in real time. Many people "didn't get it." They didn't understand why we needed to be online. Those seven deadly words were used again when the idea of taking *M-U-M* online was first presented. We heard it again when we launched the new website, when the Facebook pages were launched, and when the *M-U-M* online experience was improved. Why have we done all of these things? Not because it was weird; we did those things because they were the right things to do.

When I hear those seven deadly words I am sure that I am heading in the right direction. It's clear that embracing what's weird often means that we also are embracing change. Change is frightening. As we embrace what some consider to be weird, we must have the ability to know the difference between a trend and a fad. We should never change just for the sake of changing. We should consider our changes carefully. Nevertheless, change is good.

In March the National Council will meet in Tucson, Arizona. The meeting will be held March 8 at 10:00 a.m. It will take place at the Radisson Suites Tucson, 6555 East Speedway Blvd., Tucson, Arizona 85710. The room rate is \$109, and the rate is good three days before or after. The night before (March 7), we will be attending Sarlot and Eyed's *Carnival of Illusion* show; we are planning other events with Assembly 136 after the National Council meeting. The council meeting is where the direction of our path is forged. It is where needed change is identified and voted on. It's where we get weird. If you are a Society of American Magicians member in good standing, you are invited to participate.

Not only is change good in our society, it is also good for us as individuals. We should all embrace a little weirdness in our magic careers, routines, and practice. Tony Robbins is credited with saying, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always have what you've already got." In other words, are you happy with where you're at right now? Is there room for growth and improvement? I'll throw a few thoughts at you to get you started:

- Is your magic strong and getting good feedback?
- Have your skills improved? Should you consider taking lessons?
- Have you thought about adding related performance skills to your act like juggling, dance, or acting?
- Have you tried creating new tricks?
- Are you reading books on magic? Studying good videos?
- Have you taken any classes or attended any workshops or lectures?
- Have you been hanging out with other magicians? Attended assembly meetings? Gone to a new magic shop?
- Are you planning on attending any conventions this year? Have you considered the IBM-SAM combined convention in St. Louis?
- Do you find chances to "jam" with other magicians?
- Have you been getting regular critiques of your act?
- Have you tried anything new to stir things up? Looked for new venues to perform in? Used a new agent?
- Have you been performing enough? What has been the audience response?
- Are you spending time writing new material? Can you squeeze more time out of your schedule for writing?

The list can go on forever and is unique to each of us. Spend some time and be realistic about yourself and where you are. It's all up to you.

As I read over what I have written, it occurs to me that you could substitute the word "innovative" for the word "weird" and you would have the exact same article.

Of course, this is just my opinion; I could be wrong. ♦

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HOLIDAY SHOW AT THE PARENT ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, NY— The PA 1 Magic Table was a lot of fun this month with regulars Richard Bossong, Scott Mero, Rene Clement, and Lee and Jerry Oppenheimer attending. We meet for



PA#1 Holiday Show performers. Rene Clement, Ted Lee, Bruce and Mathew Lish, and Dean George Schindler

lunch and to share magic at The Edison Café in the Hotel Edison. It's on 47th Street of 7th Avenue in Times Square. We meet after 12:30 on Fridays. On Saturdays the magicians gather at the "Pizza Place," which has lots of action.

Our monthly meeting of the Parent Assembly was on December 6, 2013. It was well attended, although weather reports indicated a bad storm. The meeting was run by President Throwdini and reports and announcements were given. Ending promptly at 8 p.m., we all were ready for the December Holiday Show.

The emcee for the night was Throwdini; assembly members Ted Lee, Rene Clement, Bruce and Mathew Lish, and Dean George Schindler performed.

Ted Lee did a wonderful Eleven Dollar Bill Trick and two more effects. He is so funny. Bruce and Mathew Lish juggled and Mathew alone did some amazing stuff. They comically announced they were going to do a "Bullet Catch" and tossed a Bullet Blender into the air and caught it to roars of laughter. Bruce did a very nice Magic Kettle effect as well.

Rene did his killer International Six Card Repeat Effect and a beautiful origami paper tear effect with two members of the audience. He closed with his incredible comic arm cutting effect to rolls of laughter. Then Dean Schindler performed doing his Half Dyed Hank Effect, Grave Mistake, Zycho, and a closing mentalism effect. With a paper bag on stage

he asked members of the audience to right down a simple item. The one selected turned out to be a drawing of a ladder. George seemed upset and said this was impossible. Then, like the pro he is, he pulled an eight-foot ladder

out of the paper bag. He got a standing ovation. The just under fifty people in the audience loved the show; one more great Holiday Show goes into the books at PA 1. —Tom Klem

Parent Assembly 1 meets at Mount Sinai Hospital on Madison Avenue in Manhattan on the first Friday of the month usually Contact Tom Klem sampalnyc@gmail.com (212) 725 5258 www.sampal.com for more details.

2

HOLIDAY FROLICS

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—

Continuing our holiday season tradition, mages, their partners, and friends enjoyed a festive dinner party at the Jade Dragon restaurant. The varied array of food pleased the palate and satisfied our appetites. For organizing the fine banquet and selecting the delicious menu, Cynthia Yee deserves our thanks and appreciation. Again Rob Shapiro shaped amazing balloon sculptures to decorate the banquet room. Once the feasting was finished, several mages performed magical marvels and fantastic wizardry.

For his first routine, Corky LaVallee requested the title of a Christmas song and then removed the song's musical score from a sealed manila envelope. Terrie Cardoza assisted Corky with his second effect, involving ESP cards. After each received five cards, each placed one card face down on the table as a pair until all the cards were put down. When the pairs were turned face up, each pair had the same ESP symbol. Rich Seguire, showing his new tablet, asked three assistants — Corky, Stu Bacon, and Mary Caris — for a number, which, when

multiplied on the tablet, was the number Rich had predicted. Rob Shapiro displayed a large paper bag. Revealing that it was empty, he then removed one at a time three glass boxes with flowers inside.

Hippo Lau confirmed that plastic is stronger than silver. Enclosing a silver half dollar in a small case, he inserted several plastic nails through the case, penetrating the half dollar. The coin was undamaged after it was removed from the case. John Caris, relying on Safire Lin's psychic power, unveiled the mystery of Howard Adams's ESP routine Cidentaquin. Corky, inspired by the marvels already witnessed, returned and asked Tamaka, Donna LaVallee, Jourdy Bacon, and Cynthia to select a card. Was it a miracle or only strangeness? Whichever, they each chose a Queen. A drawing for Rob's balloon sculptures concluded the evening's festivities. We went home filled with good cheer looking forward to 2014 and more magical happenings. —John Caris

Golden Gate Assembly 2 meets first Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. at Community Room of Taraval Police Station, 2345 24th Avenue, San Francisco. Contact Tamaka Tamaka3715@aol.com (415) 531-9332. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/249018441875771/> for more details.

4

HOLIDAY PARTY & STAGE SHOW

PHILADELPHIA, PA— Our December meeting featured our annual holiday party and stage show. The holiday party featured a delicious buffet dinner followed by a most entertaining stage show, for which George Hample ably served as the Master of Ceremonies. The stage show featured members of The Society of Young Magicians Assembly 96 as well as members of Assembly 4. SYM member Evan enchanted the crowd with his award winning *Phantom of the Opera*-themed Zombie routine performed to "The Music of the Night." After Evan, SYM member



The Holiday Stage Show Performers: (From Left) Anastasia, George Hample, Rick Greenberg, Eric Lampert, Jeff Carson, and Mort Feldman

Anastasia performed a dazzling Christmas-themed act in which gorgeous feather wreaths changed colors multiple times.

Following the SYM performers, the incomparable George Hample did a very funny routine in which his extremely ferocious pet raccoon, Ronnie, located a playing card previously selected by Donna Horn among the entire deck, which had been tossed into Ronnie's carrying case. Next, Jeff Carson, with the aid of the adorable Sydney Matthews, executed a wonderful Mutilated Parasol routine set to a comical poem Jeff had composed titled "The Dance of the Seven Veils." After Jeff, Eric Lampert garnered hoots, hollers, laughs, and groans when he divided the crowd in half with his funny version of Spotty. Rick Greenberg then wowed everyone with his own unique take on the Invisible Deck, which, to the amazement of all, utilized a perfectly normal deck

of cards that he handed out for examination at the conclusion of the routine. Finally, Mort Feldman ended the evening on a high note with his beautiful Linking Ring routine set to classical music. It was a spectacular night for magic; everyone in attendance agreed that the fine performances of the SYM members make it clear that the future of magic is in excellent hands. —Peter Cuddihy

The James Wobensmith Assembly 4 meets the third Thursday at 7:00 p.m. at the Bustleton Memorial Post, 810 (American Legion) 9151 Old Newtown Road. Contact Information: www.sam4.org/ for more details.

6

HOLIDAY MAGIC

BALTIMORE, MD— Holiday Magic was the theme for our December meeting, but who among this wacky band of rebels ever pays attention to themes? Only Jay Silverman, who did a super-quick holiday-themed silk Blendo before settling in for some good card magic. He had a spectator divide a deck into four packets and shuffle them together. He then quickly “memorized” the entire face-up spread and had the spectator move the chosen card to a new position while Jay’s back was turned. Amazingly, he found the moved card. For his next effect he had the spectator fan the cards facing him, and selected one card. After some counting and dealing by the spectator, the pair of stopped-at cards named the value and suit of the selected card. Jay graciously tipped both tricks.

Resident mentalist Oneil Banks approached the table with a large hardbound book. Ah, a book test? Nope, he used it as an easel to hold five cards with numbers printed on both sides. The spec turned over any cards desired and yet Oneil was always able to divine the total. Oneil tipped the method, attributed to Bill Futrell (a/k/a Dr. Wonderful, a retired math professor in Wyoming). Howard Katz predicted the total of his pocket change plus a spectator’s, then predicted the date on one remaining coin and then the spectator’s original amount. Guest Jason Leh showed two cards, and then buried them deep into the deck. With a quick toss of the entire deck to his other hand, the cards appeared at his fingertips. Craig Feinstein has been studying David Roth’s technique and demonstrated two coins becoming one, and then disappearing altogether. He followed with a Cups and Balls routine with not one, but three large final loads. Craig then



Jeff Eline shows guest Jason Leh how “Drunken Poker” can prevent cheating. Or not.

performed a mighty mysterious Out of This World using a riffle-shuffled deck. Hmm, how did he do that? Master cardician Jeff Eline says he lives by “neverisms” (“Never play cards with a guy named after a state,” for example). He demonstrated the Oklahoma City Switch, including the confusingly named, and quite deceptive, Reverse Double Cross Oklahoma City Switch. He also showed how the game of Drunken Poker can “prevent cheating.” Or not. —Eric Hoffman

The Kellar/Thurston Assembly 6 meets every first Thursday at 8:00 pm at the Magic Warehouse, 11419 Cronridge Drive suite #10 in Owings Mills, Maryland. 410-561-0777. Contact Andy London alondon@comcast.net www.baltimoresam.com for more details.

7

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR

OMAHA, NE— Yes, as the Omaha Assembly closes the books on this successful year there was time for one last gathering to celebrate. President Bob Gehringer started us off with commending the current and future officers for their work and then the fun started at our annual Christmas party.

Dave Arch showed us some mind games that might be beneficial this season: for example, how not to be taken. The he took three members to task with tough questions while Joshua, an SYM member, made everyone humble. Walter Graham vanished a silk and made it reappear in an egg and fooled us into believing his expla-



Bruce Jacoby with assistants Donna and Josh

nation. He then left us reeling by a similar effect with a torn and restored napkin. For his finale he called on assistant Tammy Sikora to select from a deck of cards the three that were chosen by audience members. Amazing!

Bruce Jacoby came in from Lincoln and enlisted Josh to help find the Christmas stocking with the gift. Then with assistant Betty he proceeded to find a card by throwing the deck at two glass plates where the chosen card wound up between. To finish the official program, Jeff Sikora put a peppermint twist on a silk change and then performed a mentalism effect with Johnny Thompson, using his new-found magic from the Warren Mattes collection.

Impromptu magic was then added by Bob Buczkowski, who did his infomercial, Travis Newcombe, who did a Cups and Balls routine with Styrofoam cups and napkins, plus an eaten and restored cookie (you should’ve been there). Scott Klinger captured a cellular phone in a balloon, and then Denny Rourke ended the performances with a creative presentation of the Invisible Deck. This all happened while we were forced to partake in various food and drink that came in the door. —Jerry Golmanavich
Assembly 7, Omaha Magical Society meets generally on the third Monday of each month at the Southwest Church of Christ near the intersection of 124th St. and West Center Road right across from where Hooters used to be. Contact jerry.golmanavich.golubki@cox.net (402) 390-9834 omahamagicalsociety.com for more details.

8

MAGICAL VETERAN HONORED

ST. LOUIS, MO— November 30, 2013, was our Holliday Festival of Magic. We gave the community a glimpse of the incredible body of magical talent that St. Louis has to offer. Steven Barcellona organized the entire event and also emceed the show. This is an exhausting job for anyone, but Steve had great talent to choose from.

First up was PNP Harry Monti, starting the evening of magic with perfectly executed classics of magic, including Linking Coat Hangers and his Egg Bag routine. Harry is a seasoned pro, just back from Magic Castle in Hollywood, California, where just finished performing for his fiftieth consecutive year. This is a record that might not be broken.

Dan (The Great) Todd had big shoes to fill following Harry. He played it safe and performed Silence is Golden by Matt Marcy

— comical mental magic at its best. The list of performers included: Greg Lewis, Randy Kalin, Marty Kopp, and Columbus Smith. (Uncle) Steve Corbitt was the closing act, but then we all came on stage.



Holliday Magic Festival 2013

Assembly 8 congratulated Harry Monti for his fiftieth consecutive year performing at the Magic Castle and presented him with a mini milk can signed by most of the St. Louis and surrounding area magicians, many of them are fellow members of both S.A.M. and I.B.M. Ring 1. Read about Harry in the *MAGIC* magazine January 2014 issue.

At the end of the show we produced Jason Stack as Santa! The audience loved it. This was our third year performing a public show on the church’s stage where we meet. The community loves having us there and they prove it by showing up and encouraging us to do more. Some of the best audience reactions we have ever gotten. Magic is alive and well in St. Louis, Missouri. —Dan Todd
Assembly 8 meets at Mount Tabor United Church of Christ at 6520 Arsenal in Saint Louis, MO 63139 Contact Dick Blowers rmblowers@aol.com (213) 846-8468 <http://Assembly8.com> for more details.

13

2013 HOLIDAY PARTY

DALLAS, TX— December 17, 2013, was our 2013 Holiday Celebration. The members of the Dallas Magic Clubs (S.A.M. Assembly 13 and I.B.M. Ring 174) once again gathered at the home of Dal and Cinde Sanders for food, fun, and fellowship. Even St. Nick himself joined the gathering to celebrate another excellent year of magic. The night featured barbeque, along with a spread of holiday desserts and a fine assortment of beverages. Of special note, some of our brothers and sisters in magic from the Fort Worth Magicians Club (S.A.M. Assembly 138 and I.B.M. Ring 15) joined the celebration, since their own annual holiday event was



**Dave Magee and Santa
(Jeff Halberg)**

affected by the ice storms a few weeks prior.

2013 was a great year for the DMC. We are pleased to have hosted a successful Texas Association of Magicians convention, and proud of our member Dal Sanders on becoming the president of the S.A.M. We look forward to an exciting 2014. Thanks go out to all of the performers, lecturers, and special guests that have contributed to the Dallas Magic Clubs this year!

The Dallas Magic Clubs meet at Theater 166 at Crosspointe Community Center in Carrollton Texas, on the third Tuesday of the month at 7:00. Check out www.dallasmagic.org for directions. Contact Reade Quinton reade.quinton@gmail.com (972) 400-0195

17

HOLIDAY MAGIC

SPRINGFIELD, MA— It was a cold winter night, and the magicians of Assembly 17 were stirring and showing off their bag of tricks. Tom Gentile brought his unique change bag that looked like Mrs. Claus's purse. It turned into many different holiday hats that he placed on his head, making us laugh our "donkey" off. Since we didn't specify which holiday the magic was for, Bob Carroll, being the joker we all love, decided to bring some leprechaun cards (an Aldo Columbini routine) and change them into rainbows with



**Ed Kazar and Brian Dimock
with Genevieve**

a pot of gold at the end. Dave Dimock brought us back to the occasion with a handmade Xmas tree. Using Max Mavin's Clash of Symbols routine, he blindfolded himself and was able to determine which ornaments were chosen to place on the tree. Then he ended with all eight reindeer and Santa in his sleigh. Quite impressive Dave!

Rich Gilbert showed us his bag of Oreo cookies and how to eat the middle out first; he then restored it back to a double stuff Oreo, just in time for Santa. Kyle Barbacki used his Smiley cards to show us how to tell the bad guy of the bunch – the one with the bullet in his head. Guess he wasn't smiling anymore! Ed Kazar had us guessing how he was able to tell the word in the dictionary we turned to. Turns out the simplest way never enters your mind.

Brian Dimock brought his old friend Genevieve. It was nice to see this old prop still working and making us laugh, as she picked the card we chose right out of the deck. Peter Lennis brought his festive Xmas rope and a black sack. We tied his wrists with the ropes; everyone picked a card from the deck and put it in the bag. Someone picked a random card from the bag and it matched the card he had previously sealed away. Jeff Pyzocha ended the evening by showing us how to make roses with burned edges and snowflakes from napkins. Now was the time to head home with all these visions of great magic dancing in our heads and hope Santa leaves us a little magic in our stockings this year.

—Karen Gibson

Dr. I.R. Calkins Assembly 17 meets the first Friday of every month at 7 pm at Rich Pinsonault's RP Magic Shop; 69 East Street; Ludlow, MA Contact Rich Gilbert rgilbertmagic@yahoo.com (413) 210-5725 www.assembly17.org for more details.

19

HOUSTON HOLIDAY MAGIC

HOUSTON, TX— Our December meeting was filled with the magic of the holiday season. Donnie Kornegay brought her home-baked cookies as she does every December meeting so that we could enjoy the magic in style. Gene Protas and his wife Betty will again be hosting their annual holiday party on January 11. Our officer's initiation banquet will be held on February 23. Visit houstonmagic.com for our latest lectures. These are all events you will not want to miss.

Rick Hebert started the holiday magic by showing us how to play blackjack. The selected game

cards ended up being the only ones in the otherwise blank deck. Gene Protas had three cards chosen by Kim Lampkin, Marti Stein, and Allison; he then proceeded to find them in the deck in most mysterious ways. Kyle Hamsher performed a nice Invisible Deck routine with the help of Rick Hebert. All of the standard invisible jokes were included, of course, for the full effect. Dick Olson performed an intuition card effect whereby a chosen card was the only named card in an otherwise blank deck.

Scott Wells performed a behind the back card exchange which ended by confusing many in the audience in a manner he did not expect. Jamie Salinas had an imaginary deck burned and then produced the single named card that was definitely scorched from a fire. Scott Wells returned and had Kyle Hamsher and Kim Lampkin help out in a strange telepathic type of effect in which arm movements by one were sensed by the other. Mysterious indeed!



**Mark Melchor Receives New
Membership Packet from
President Gene Protas**

Rick Hebert had Marti Stein help out as a group of cards changed to all Jacks and then to all Aces. David Hinken tried to "see" Kim Lampkin's drawing, but just drew a blank. Julian Franklin shared a nice elevator card effect in which a family of cards would ride up and down a deck of cards. Mark Melchor's Ambitious Card routine was done in high style. He finished with a great card levitation. Jamie Salinas discerned the month and date of guest Allison's birthday in a nice mentalism effect.

David Rangel found a selected card with a thrust of his knife into a bag of cards. Shane Wilson's prediction card changed places with another chosen card. Thanks to all who performed at our December holiday meeting. —Miles Root
Assembly 19 meets the first Monday of every month at the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE)

Local 51 Meeting Hall, 3030 North Freeway, Houston, TX. A teaching lecture begins at 7:30 pm with the meeting beginning at 8:00 pm. Contact Miles Root milesroot@aol.com (281) 3347508 houstonmagic.com for more details.

22

CHRISTMAS IN LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES, CA—

The December meeting of the Southern California Assembly 22 was, as it has been for many years, a celebration of Christmas, with a great buffet meal and the performance of magic. There is always a large attendance of members, family, and guests, with everyone in attendance contributing to the abundant buffet table, everything from soup to nuts.

After our meal, assembly vice president Mike Perovich ushered everyone into the theater area of our hall to conduct a brief assembly meeting. John Richmond was then introduced as the producer our show and also served as its emcee, presenting his magic between several acts. The evening show had sixteen performers entertaining a very appreciative audience.

Opening the show was Ted "Suds" Sudbrack performing his classic torn tissue paper to Santa hat. Jim Militello did some card magic and Brian Regalbutto did a rope-knotting effect. Jim Callen, always with some unique magic, concluded his magic with a Christmas tree Clippo. Act five was Kim Hallinger performing her new routine with black and white bunnies. Next was Doug Slater, who presented The Story of Christmas using jumbo card effects to illustrate the story. Very nice.

Ed Thomas presented several Christmas-themed effects, including a thought projection of Santa Claus. John Engman presented Repro '71's trick Spotty, a cute trick for kids. Nate Kvetny was up next with a unique revelation of a selected card and some gag gift bags. El Roy Coddling wished everyone Merry Christmas with the greeting popping out of a small top hat. Mike Perovich again demonstrated his considerable skills with a manipulation routine that began with the multiplying thimbles.

Kent Morgan continued the show with a card effect demonstrating to a volunteer assistant if she had been naughty or nice. Guest David Martinez presented a clever Gozinta Box. Ekatrina of Stoil & Ekatrina, using a young boy volunteer to assist, produced a series of Merry Christmas silks.

Dick Shafer, using several dove pans from his collection, produced a snowman that popped out of the pan and a dish of candy for the kids. Making an encore performance to close the show was John Engman divining the identity of a spectator-selected jumbo card.

Another great evening of magic at Assembly 22, who wish all in the S.A.M. a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. —Steven L. Jennings

Southern California Assembly 22 meets the third Monday each month at 8:00 PM, St. Thomas More Parish Hall, 2510 South Fremont Avenue, Alhambra, California Contact Ed Thomas magicmred@earthlink.net (213) 382-8504 for more details.

23

HOLIDAY WHIRL IN NATION'S CAPITAL

WASHINGTON,, DC— The Larry West Assembly, which meets monthly at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., was in a holiday mood during December. Three members – Arnie Fuoco, Dwight Redman and Laurie Curry – performed close-up magic at the NPC's annual children's holiday party. Assembly members also began performing during the month at the press club's dining rooms.

The assembly continued the festive mood later at a monthly meeting. Lars Klores performed an effect by Richard Osterland in which a card was chosen by a fellow member. The selected card was lost in the deck while Lars turned his back, but he was able to not only name the choice but tell its new position in the pack. Noland Montgomery, the president of the assembly, asked two members, Dwight Redman and Larry Lipman, to choose cards that were shuffled back into

they went into the pack Larry's selection rose out of it.

Dwight also demonstrated his prowess at cards with some eye-catching card wizardry. Larry Lipman did Daryl's Amazing Acrobatic Knot and a routine with sponge bananas. Jim Flanigan provided the most seasonal performance by wearing a Santa hat and sporting a red sponge nose. He produced a series of silks including a giant rabbit silk as well as a "Merry Christmas" Santa silk from a Square Circle illusion.

Assembly 23 meets the third Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. at the National Press Club, 529 14th Street NW, Washington, DC 20045. Contact Jim Flanigan at jflanigan@aol.com for information Contact Jim Flanigan jflanigan@aol.com (202) 554-3775 for more details.

25

HOLIDAY MAGIC

ELMWOOD PARK, NJ—

The theme was holiday magic. Regional Vice-President Eric DeCamps told us the S.A.M. is officially taking over maintenance of the Houdini gravesite. Then, Eric made two presentations for dedicated service, one to Bill Schmeelk for his thirty-seven years of service to the S.A.M. and the next to Meir Yedid for his thirty-five years of service.

President Phil Schwartz showed us Joe Karson's Zombie, lighted with a colorful foulard, which qualified it as a holiday effect! Del Dixon showed a new presentation for Aaron Fischer's Panic, basically a deck vanish.

Richard Bangs had Bill Schmeelk and Stu Schneider select or reject cards as Bangs held them up with faces showing. After going through the entire deck, Bangs revealed how Schmeelk had selected only cards with blue backs, and Schneider had selected only cards with red backs. Ideas were offered by Meir Yedid and Ron Wohl. John Henderson was next. He had Bill Schmeelk shuffle and deal as many cards as he wanted face down, then take a packet of cards off the bottom, turn them face up and place them on top of the others. Then John had Bill take any one of his face down cards and show it. John then told him what position that card occupied in John's deck!

Phil Germaine, looking a lot like Santa Claus (with no make-up!) offered a repeat of Envy-lope, in which a signed card transposes from a small envelope in his pocket to his hands, with the deck ending in his pocket and the envelope with the signed card in his hands! Phil then did a four

ace effect in which the Ace at the number freely named turned out to be the only Ace with a different colored back.

Bob Delaney used a silk with the words "Merry Christmas" to produce a red candle that he lit from a book of matches he produced from a folded dollar bill. Bob lit single matches in a book with just his thumb! The candle also changed color and vanished a few times.

Meir Yedid showed a neat card force, only briefly mentioned in *Royal Road to Card Magic*. Ron Wohl offered some thoughts for its use. Eric DeCamps brought things to a conclusion by pushing a silver dollar through his left hand, bones and all! The coins multiplied and traveled back and forth from his pocket. A few vanished, which Eric credited to the IRS! —Del Dixon

Assembly 25 meets the third Friday of each month at the Elmwood Park VFW, 6 Veterans Place, Elmwood Park, New Jersey. Contact Phil Schwartz Quackmagicphil@aol.com, www.livemagicguide.com/sam25 for more details.

26

HOLIDAY GATHERING IN RHODE ISLAND

PROVIDENCE, RI—

Assembly 26 hosted its holiday party on Tuesday, December 3, 2013. This year's event was attended by approximately thirty members and guests. Guests were treated to a Chinese buffet, beverages, and dessert. A raffle of holiday wrapped items followed.

Master of Ceremonies Cameron Ramsay introduced the evening's performers: Evan Northrup and Kayla Drescher. Evan opened with a multi-phase rope routine and followed with a card effect having an *Alice in Wonderland* theme. Kayla opened with a nice Linking Rings routine. She then continued what appeared to be a card trick, only to find that spectator Dan Cipolla kept picking the same card over and over. Little did anyone know she was laying the groundwork for a trick later in the show.

Emcee Cameron performed some nice effects, including his spin the classic needle swallowing. Instead of needles and thread Cameron used breath mints and dental floss. Rather than "swallowing" the mints, Cameron inserted them into his ears, nose, and eyes before finally producing them attached to the dental floss, which he did, in fact, swallow just minutes before.

Evan concluded by locating two spectators' cards simply by using his sense of smell. Though each



Kayla Drescher finds the missing piece of Dan Cipolla's dollar

spectator cut the deck several times, Evan was able to "sniff" the selections, causing each card to rise attached to his nose.

Kayla concluded her set with the classic Bill in Lemon. She asked the same-card-picking Dan Cipolla for a dollar bill from his wallet, which she then proceeded to tear off a corner and gave it back to him, keeping the larger piece. She then vanished her piece of the bill and brought forth a lemon and a knife. I'm certain the audience of magicians thought they knew how the trick would conclude. Upon cutting open the lemon however, inside was the card Dan repeatedly selected. Kayla then said to him, "Look in your wallet." Upon doing so, Dan discovered his torn dollar bill, which matched the corner he had been holding throughout.

For their finale, Evan and Kayla combined their efforts to perform a triple prediction taking an idea from the board game "Clue." A number randomly arrived at by audience members matched a raffle ticket being held by Toby Karpinski. Underneath Tony's seat was an envelope containing the "evidence," convincing the audience that Tony was guilty of the "crime". Evan and Kayla then took bows to well-deserved applause to conclude the evening. Happy Holidays! —Jeff Smith

Assembly 26 meets the first Tuesday of each month September through June at American Legion Post #20, 7 Legion Way, Cranston, RI 02910 Contact Jeff Smith JeffSmith-RISM@Comcast.net (508) 993-4434 www.rismmagic.org for more details.

30

TOP DOG CONTEST

ATLANTA, GA— Since it is December, it must be top dog time! We have had such fun with the Top Dog contest for the past two years that we decided to do it again.

Our three judges for the contest were Keith Rainey, Mark Hatfield (last year's winner), and Camile Elhassain, a producer from CNN.



Jim Flanigan plays Santa

the deck. He found the first card by spelling out Dwight's name. He found Larry's card by pushing two indifferent cards into the deck. As

We also had three contestants. West Evans began the evening with match boxes and coins and performed a three-shell game with the objects – a fine performance that was enjoyed by all.

Rick Hinz had some fun sthick with candy bars and a hammer. He produced coins in a brass box and performed a coin matrix and coins across in his unique style.

Merritt Ambrose was our final performer. He performed a coin matrix using clear cards to cover the coins and produced small liquor bottles as a finale for the matrix. He put the cards in a glass and with some magic they all turned into Queens of Spades. When they were turned over, the Queens spelled out The End. It was choreographed to music and performed beautifully.

After several minutes of deliberation, the Top Dog Award went to Merritt Ambrose. All of our performers were delightful and we are so glad to have so much talent in our assembly. Congratulations, Merritt! —Carol Garrett

Assembly 30 meets the second Tuesday of the month at Piccadilly Cafeteria, I-85/North Druid Hills Road, Atlanta, Georgia For more information contact: President Jim Driscoll jim.driscoll@gmail.com or Secretary Carol Garrett carolmswiz@aol.com

31

ROPES, RINGS AND THINGS

INDIANAPOLIS, IN— The theme of the month was Ring and String magic. President Taylor Martin started us off with an effect that he learned as a young child straight from the pages of *Popular Mechanics*. Using only his mouth, he was able to tie two pieces of twine together. Next, Daniel Lee, one of our up and coming magicians, performed a well polished eight to ten minute rope routine that combined all of the elements of the Professor's Nightmare, a cut and restored rope routine, and a ring and string routine all into one cohesive whole.



Daniel Lee amazes with rope and ring

He credited Richard Sanders for the structure of the routine.

We welcomed one of the area's young magicians (James) to our midst for the first time. He performed a nice card effect in which he had the spectator tell him when to stop as he slowly dealt through the deck. The selected card was an Eight. He counted down eight cards and revealed three more Eights. It was a good presentation by a youth who is part of the future of magic. Phil Dubbs, one of our long-time members, concluded our evening of magic by presenting an entertaining demonstration of the Hunter bow knot. He showed us how he could tie a knot while holding on to both ends of the rope. Furthermore, to prove that there was nothing "tricky" going on, he allowed two spectators to tie the ends of the rope onto his thumbs. When they released his thumbs, we discovered that a knot had been tied in the middle of the rope.

As an extra bonus for the evening, Taylor shared a fascinating introduction to *Clever and Pleasant Inventions, Part I* by Jean Prevost, one of the books from his extensive library. Published in 1584, we learned that it shared many of the same illustrations as were used in *The Discouerie of Witchcraft*, which was published that same year. (Taylor observed that magicians seemed to steal, should I say "copied," ideas from each other even way back then.) He pointed out that *Clever* contains instructions on how to construct many items that we consider to be classics today – such things as the Magic Coloring Book, the Magic Funnel, and Magic Squares. It was illuminating to realize that there really is nothing new under the sun.

—Steven A. Spence

Assembly 31 meets the first Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Irvington United Methodist church, 30 Audubon Rd., on the east side of the City unless otherwise announced. If the first Monday conflicts with a holiday, we postpone the meeting one week. Contact Taylor Martin kazoo23@aol.com (317) 431-1320 www.sam31.cm for more details.

32

MAGICIANS AND FAMILIES CHRISTMAS DINNER

LYNCHBURG, VA— The December meeting of Assembly 32 was a special one because it was our holiday family magic dinner at Charley's, a local Lynchburg restaurant. The gathering was slightly earlier in the month than the usual meeting date to avoid conflicting

with any holiday rush. Magicians attending were Patrick Hubble and wife Bridgett, Bob Wallin and wife Susan, Mike Kinnaird and wife Bonnie, John Jennings and wife Liz, Glen Rae and wife Debbie with their granddaughter Savannah Bauserman, Dr. John Risher, and SYM member Trevor Albright with his parents Mike and Cheryl Albright.

A wonderful dinner was followed by around-the-table magic. Performing first was Trevor Albright and his unique way of determining the value of several selected cards. Glen Rae showed several effects, including a demonstration of a rapid math solution to problems created by rows of brass rods laid out with numbers. He also had an entertaining prediction. Savannah then performed a prediction effect using cards not of the usual value, but with images of flags of various countries.

Mike Kinnaird continued a series of mental effects as he revealed that he knew in advance a "thought-of" card. John Jennings, in recognition of the magic of the season, had a card chosen, the rest of the deck shuffled and dropped into a Christmas stocking and the value of the chosen card determined by finding sight unseen similar cards from the stocking.

Bob Wallin entertained the crowd by performing a version of Cards Across. He also shared a mystery he mentioned came from Tom Craven, a highly unusual box that changed shapes and happened to be a "star" moment of the entertainment. All in all, this evening wrapped up a wonderful year of magic in the south central Virginia area. We all look forward to an enjoyable and a most magical 2014. —John Jennings.

The Hersy Basham Assembly 32 meets (usually) the third Tuesday at 7:00 p.m. at Sharp Funeral Home, 220 Breezewood Drive, Lynchburg, VA. Contact John Jennings investigatefire@aol.com (434) 851-6240 for more details.

37

DUANE LAFLIN LECTURE FOR DENVER

DENVER, CO— 2013 went out with a bang for the Mile High Magicians Society in Denver with two fantastic lectures and a great holiday banquet. In mid November we hosted Duane Laflin. His question to our membership was, "Are you awake, or just dreaming?" He put a deck of cards, a handkerchief, and a ball vase on his table.

He then said, "Just because it's old doesn't mean it isn't good."

He proceeded into a sensational

routine using the three items. His secret to his success was in knowing the audience doesn't like to be "tricked." Duane said, "It is no fun for anyone to be fooled."

His lecture proved he works often because he has an ultimate respect for a real world audience. Lovely Mary was waiting in the wings while Duane finished up with a clever talk on patter development using magic and algebra. He then broke into a funny bit with a mouse and cheese. He finished with a demonstration of a five-minute set up of his beautiful silk-fountain. Several members attended, including Autumn Morningstar and Lindsay Smith.

A couple weeks later, our club was proud to host the unique John Reid lecture. I was unable to attend due to a heavy holiday work schedule. But I did get the following feed-back from Vice President-elect Andrew Bates.



Duane Laflin in Denver Colorado!

"Our December lecturer was John Reid, from Cressey Magic. Along with teaching the secrets of making your own mouth coils, John presented some very fun and special 'magical moments' that you can share with your magical participants. We learned how to make a variety of gifts that can be made with everyday objects (towels, napkins, clothespins) that will be appreciated and kept by your audience for years to come."

To close the year, our membership met at a local establishment called the Empress Chinese Restaurant. All of the festivities were set up by club members John Luong and Larry Betz. The group was treated to a fabulous seafood meal and then a show put together by Sergeant at Arms-elect Gene Gordon. The line-up included feats of magic by President-elect Matthew Brandt, Vice-President-elect Andrew Bates, and sensational stage performer John T. Sheets. A little comedy magic was provided by the always funny Wake Family and the show featured the delightful antics of stellar junior magicians Tommy-Walker, Max Davidson, and A.J.

Perea. Fun was had by all!

—Connie Elstun

Assembly 37 meets at the The Riverpointe Senior Center in Littleton, Colorado. Contact Connie Elstun connie@comedymagicbunny.com (303-) 933-4118 www.milehighmagicians.com for more details.

47

SHAUN ROBISON LECTURE HEADED NOVEMBER MEETING

ROCHESTER, NY— Our November business meeting was very brief because we turned the meeting time into a lecture! We even moved the location to accommodate the extra length in time. Shaun Robison was our lecturer and believe me, if you can get this young man to lecture, do so!

At the MAWNY and FFFF convention in Batavia, NY, he is always sitting outside in the lobby performing close-up and passing on his insight to others. His lecture was no different. Shaun has been performing magic at one of the top restaurant chains in NY at four locations and FL for over ten years. This guy knows his stuff, knows how to approach a table, and he tipped that and several more valuable secrets. Shaun dazzled us with his quickie opener, followed by a longer card trick with a glass. One of his most important points was to, "believe that what you are doing is real." Two of Shaun's star-studded effects were a Gypsy Thread routine, but the thread is precut and a cocoa bean and sugar to Hershey's Kiss using a magician's "favorite friend." (By the way, I have not found a chocolate smelling cocoa bean and I have tried.)

He had lecture notes and some great magic for sale that he invented, including: Phoenix Prophecy (prediction appears when a business card is heated), The Money Card (a dynamite Monte routine with a real money kicker), and my favorite, Cinch (a piece of paper turns into a bill). (I personally have been turning a red piece of paper into a Santa Claus bill during the Christmas holidays).

Again, if you are lucky enough to see this great talent do so. You will not be disappointed!

The December meeting was special in that, along with the holiday theme, we formally inducted new member Joel Gallegos Greenwich into the assembly. What a great kick-off to this meeting! After the induction, we carried on with business. Guests included Joel's wife

Autumn and prospective member Nick VanWormer.

Professor Rem shared with us some more lecture options for the coming year and JP presented ideas in order to garner feedback for an assembly flea market, as well as the proposed magic competition, to take place in 2014. JP also reminded the group that MAWNY approaches.

JP then led the attending members in a discussion on what makes great magic, and the differences between a magician and a show-off guy who does party tricks. This discussion was a real eye and mind opener. Lots of great insight came from this discussion, from both the side of the performer and that of the audience. Thanks to Autumn for her input and support.

On to the magic and fun! Rem presented a visual Christmas carol riddle, with a round of ammunition tied to a replica of barren forestation, which went over very well with the group – rhymes and fun with puns. He then performed a lovely traveling Christmas ornament on knotted rope illusion. Thanks, Professor!

Joel presented a piece of card magic in progress, in order to gain some feedback; it is coming along, very strong. John produced some candy and coal with the help of three volunteers from his magic stocking, using a candy cane wand. The coal was chocolate, and the magic was delicious. JP showed the group his handling of a 3-Fly routine that he is honing. Very smooth!



A smiling Joel holds his S.A.M. membership with wife, Autumn and President JP Lacey at his side.

Nick led the group in witnessing an imaginary reindeer games event, correctly predicting the outcomes of three games. Santa Mike shared a bunch of great magic, as always, including a selection of characters from a clear mesh bag, drawing a prediction, and ending with a great cartoon revelation.

The meeting closed with a reminder of the upcoming MAWNY Convention. Best Holiday Wishes! —Mike Ihrig
Assembly 47 meets the third Tuesday of months September

- May at St. Joseph's School, 39 Gebhardt Road, Penfield, NY 14526 Contact Mike Ihrig ihrigmagic@aol.com (585) 377-1566 www.SAM47.com for more details.

49

ANY TRICK

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL— Assembly 49 held its monthly meeting on Wednesday, December 11, 2013. The theme for the evening was Any Trick.

Roger Firestone did the Gravity Tube in which items placed in only fell out at the magician's command. Phil Labush did his "Unbelievable" card effect in which a chosen card appears at the last letter when unbelievable is spelled. Randy Goodman spread out a pack of cards and the chosen card was seen spelled while the other cards were blank. Sid Marcus predicted a previously chosen number. Mike Easler performed a very technical Aces and Kings revelation. Patrick Pointu and Al Callus did their versions of the Miser Dream. Patrick also did his version of Clink Cans.

Mel Panzer did Card Warp using a borrowed bill and a card. Ron Lubman provided some novelty juggling and held a mini-mini Teach In. Manny Ruskin named five cards chosen by five people. Allen Rubenstein, a visiting guest, using with two assistants, performed two 20th Century Silks routines simultaneously; the finale was a "bra" in one and "panties" in the other. He followed with a straitjacket escape. Mel Boskin produced a live dove using some feathers and a flat book; he followed with a production of three large bird cages from out of one box, however, those doves did not seem alive - go figure. —Billy Byron

Assembly 49 meets on the second Wednesday of each month at North West Focal Point Senior Center at 7pm, 6009 NW 10th. Street., Margate, FL. 33063 Contact Billy Byron at billybyron@comcast.net (954) 522-1466 www.fortlauderdalemagicsociety.com for more details.

51

A NOVEMBER OF MAGIC!

PEORIA, IL— Several magic events took place in November in Peoria. On the 12th, David Gabbay presented his lecture, and a fine one it was. He was very thorough in explaining all the details of his magic; it seems as if most everyone found something new to work with. The following week, we had our regular meeting with a

theme of "Children's Magic."

President Jerry Tupper started the meeting by introducing the membership to our guests, Paul, Andrew, and Jason. He followed with a brief bit of business and then proceeded with the election of officers for the coming year. The new slate is: Rodney Nordstrom, President; Kyle Bassett, Vice-President; Brad Borland, Treasurer; Michael Baker, Secretary; Grant Golden IBM and FCM rep; Jay Zentko SAM rep. Jerry Tupper is, of course, the immediate past president, and will therefore also sit on the board.

The magic began with Kyle Bassett performing a nice little illusion in which he apparently walked through the body of someone standing directly in front of him. It was very effective. Michael Baker gave a talk on warm ups and gags for children's shows. Mike Tate demonstrated how to make the eagle on a coin cry, and cry, it did! At least we hope all that water was tears! He then showed the ring and chain, and a somewhat hilarious discussion followed complete with demonstrations that sometimes worked and sometimes didn't.

Grant Golden performed a Merry Christmas Blendo silks when several silks placed into a canister changed to a large silk with Santa. He also showed us a Magic Painting Frame, and a Change Bag Stocking. Mike Tate then entertained us with some of his fine ventriloquism. Guest, Jason was coaxed into performing and he did a fine job with a reversal of a chosen card in the deck.

Finally, in the month of November, some of us were on hand for a nice reception where the late Gordon Snow was announced and honored as this year's Grand Marshall for the Pekin Christmas Parade. Janie Snow accepted the honor, as several people spoke about Gordon, who had donated his time for twenty-five years performing magic for the winter festival attendees. The parade was held on December 1st, with Janie riding proudly in the car. —Michael Baker

Assembly 51 meets the third Monday of the month, beginning at 7:00pm at Schnucks Grocery in the Metro Center, University and Glen. Contact Michael Baker themagiccompany@aol.com (205)612-3696 <http://peoriomagicians.com> for more details.

52

BIRTHDAY MAGIC

SAN ANTONIO, TX— December 5, 2013, Brother John

Hamman Assembly 52 held its monthly meeting at LaMadeleine Restaurant. President Don Moravits welcomed members and wives.

Tonight's theme was Birthday Magic. Performances tonight were dedicated to President Don Moravits, since he has a December birthday. Starting off the open performances tonight was Ed Solomon, who asked Don Moravits to assist him with a Birthday Card Effect. Next up was newly appointed Vice President Ray Adams, who performed the Rainbow Card Trick. Michael Tallon produced a business card in his iPhone, and John Dahlinger entertained us with 3-Fly Expanded.

Many thanks to Doug Gorman for his close-up performance tonight. Doug wowed us with five different effects: a Coins Across routine, a version of the Vernon Dice Routine, a poker deal, an Ace assembly, and of course, the Cups and Balls. Thanks, Doug for a great performance.

Door prize winners were Doug Gorman, Ray Adams, and Michael Tallon. Doug won a magic t-shirt, Ray won Bottled Air by Tom Craven, and Michael won Trouble Wit by Frank Herman.

Brother John Hamman Assembly 52 meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month at La Madeleine Restaurant, located at 722 N.W. Loop 410. The restaurant is inside Loop 410 on the access road between Blanco Rd. and San Pedro. For more information, contact dougorman@att.net.

59

THE ENTERTAINERS

PORTLAND, OR— The Wednesday before Thanksgiving is reserved in Assembly 59's yearly calendar as a date when our two SYM clubs perform for the adults. In the past we've had traffic jams and packed holiday schedules prevent some from participating, but this year's event went smoothly.

Being one of the mentors of the Salem group, I was deeply impressed with the performances of the students in both clubs. There were routines that went flawlessly. Jaws dropped. Practice paid off.

They were magicians whose prop or method failed. I am especially proud of these magicians, because rather than panic or leave the stage in embarrassment or anger, these magicians soldiered on with humor and dignity. They have learned the hardest lesson of all. Magic is not about tricks. Magic is not about props or sleight of hand or even illusions. Magic is about connecting with people in a very



Bastasch (right) bends a key using only his mind.

special way. Magic is about getting people to sigh in amazement and laugh with delight. Every young magician did that, whether or not the effect went right. Magic happens whether the trick works or not. These young magicians proved that. They are the best.

That evening Assembly 59 also held its elections for the 2014 Board. Members elected that evening were: Mel Anderson, President; Brian Adams, Vice President; Randy Stumman, Secretary; Craig Anthony Perkins, Secretary; John Edsall, Sergeant-at-Arms; Tom Cramer, Member-at-Large; Jay Fredericks, Member-at-Large; and Michael Jaffe, Member-at-Large.

Assembly 59 will not meet in December. The 2013 Board for all intents and purposes has performed its last job and the direction of the club lies with the new board. Craig Anthony Perkins replaces me as Secretary and that makes this my last report for the club to *M-U-M*. I've learned a great deal in my position and value these lessons enormously. It has been an honor. —Glen L. Bledsoe

Assembly 59 meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month except Jul/Aug/Dec at The Beaverton Elks, 3500 SW 104th, Beaverton, OR 97005. Contact Glen L. Bledsoe glenbledsoe@mac.com (503) 967-9151 <http://www.sam59portland.org/> for more details.

77

A BUSY HOLIDAY SEASON

MASSAPEQUA, NY— On Friday, December 6, 2013, we had our annual public show and food drive. Admission to the show was a can of food per person. This year the club collected sixty-four food items that will go to a local food pantry.

President Phil Levy welcomed the audience and then introduced Past President John Lepre, who told a magical tale of King Kong's Christmas visit to the girls and boys of the Massapequas. Joe

Merced performed a fast moving colorful routine of magical classics, including the Linking Rings and the Silk Fountain that left the audience spell bound.

Pat Darienzo presented the Miser's Dream with the assistance of an audience member. He then did an Invisible Deck routine that was unique! Linda Robbins had the youngsters in the audience excited with a showy Silk to Egg routine. Joe Lobue presented another classic of magic to the audience – the Six Card Repeat!

Steve Rodman brought a young lady from the audience on stage to help him as he produced a dove. The expression on the assistant's face and gasp from the audience was a highlight of the evening! President Phil Levy, with the help of the younger members of the audience, finished the show with a combination of Christmas, Chanukah, and Holiday cheer!

Our regular monthly meeting took place on Monday, December 9, 2013. The evening featured a fine lecture by John Reid, owner of Long Island's Tricky Business Magic Shop. Many of us have known John since his teenage years. It is great to see how he has developed into a superb performer, lecturer, and magic shop owner.

One of John's specialties is mouth coils. Many of us write off mouth coils as a turn-off. John offered several different uses of coils without taking them from one's mouth. He presented several new takes on material that we tend to take for granted.

Any assembly or ring looking for a lecture on practical, workable material presented with a very upbeat, enthusiastic manner should check out John Reid. His shop, Tricky Business, is located in East Meadow, NY! —John Lepre

Long Island Mystics, Assembly 77, meets at 7:30PM on the second Monday of the month at Community United Methodist Church, 100 Park Blvd. Massapequa, NY 11758. Contact Lou Johnson loujohnson@loujuggler.com ((516)) 978-7735 www.limystics.org for more details.

88

CHRISTMAS AND/OR GOSPEL MAGIC

ANN ARBOR/YPSILANTI, MI— We had our Christmas meeting at the Denny's Restaurant in Plymouth this year, with about fourteen of our members and a couple of guests in attendance. Bill Brang started us off with the Hippity Hop Santas routine, a holiday-themed variation of the

classic Hippity-hop Rabbits. Bill also had a mailbox with S. Claus written on the side; he showed it completely empty and then pulled a rabbit puppet out. Bill then used a Square Circle to produce what seemed like an endless supply of some really nice Christmas silks.

I, Randy Smith, was up next with a couple of gospel tricks. The first was What God Didn't Promise from Laffin Magic, in which a paper towel is ripped up while explaining that God didn't promise us everything we would want, but provides everything we need, while taking a mouth coil out from inside the torn paper. Then another Laffin Magic trick, Joining Ropes With a Gospel Message, in which a short rope and a long rope are shown to represent God's gifts that people have, some abundant, some few, but all just as important, both ropes are shown the same size, then as one rope, to represent working in Jesus as one!



John Russell Performs Gospel Magic

Jim Folki had a couple of interesting tricks; first he made a cane appear from a long silk steamer. Then Jim showed a bottle that poured liquid and he said it knew when you had enough and the neck of the bottle turned upward... funny! John Russell had a nice gospel trick in which he ripped paper that said BIBLE (Book of Instructions for a Better Life on Earth), explaining that over the centuries people have tried to destroy the Bible but none had succeeded. Then everyone noticed John drop a piece of the paper, covering it with his foot, so after opening the restored "Bible," he picked up the piece under his foot and it was another restored "Bible." Dan Jones showed the Mis-Made Christian Flag with a change bag and three silks, blue, white, and red. Forgetting the red silk, Dan pulled out a white flag with blue in one corner, after putting the red silk and mis-made flag in the bag he brought out the white flag with the blue corner, with a red cross! —Randy A. Smith

Hank Moorehouse Assembly 88 meets the second Wednesday at

7PM at Faith Lutheran Church, 1255 East Forest Ave, Ypsilanti, Michigan. Contact Randy A. Smith randy.remarkable@gmail.com (313) 562-3875 www.aamagic.org for more details.

94

NEW STUFF FOR THE NEW YEAR

SILICON VALLEY, CA—

The last meeting of 2013 began with Kim Silverman teaching his presentation of Out of this World. Then we elected officers for 2014 – really, we continued the existing officers for another year and added two new special offices. Next year's officers are Kim Silverman, President; Ken Gielow, Vice President; Blaine Garst, Treasurer; Joe Caffall, Secretary; and Lyn Bronner, Administrative Officer. In addition, Phil Ackerly was elected to be Chief Magical Officer and Bill Goldman was elected to the revised, more open-ended position of Officer of Miscellany.

Kim described a new performance-improvement opportunity we will start in January, called "A 5 by 4 Challenge" – five minutes, four days. Sometimes we need a little urging and accountability to make progress. So we have a new Silicon Valley S.A.M. Initiative. Participants who sign up will commit themselves to working on a specific project related to their magic, for at least five minutes a day, for at least four days per week, for one month. The month will start on a meeting night, and at the next month's meeting they will demonstrate their progress. This could be learning a new routine or a new technique, adding polish to an existing routine, writing or learning a new script, or designing a new effect.

Performances started with a video of Lyn Bronner miming and lip-synching the song "The Big Sky." Suresh Govindachar performed Anniversary Waltz adapted to patter about the merger of his company with another. Joe Caffall showed us the presentation he is working on for Hopping Half, illustrating the story of two people. Sy Hoff showed a more traditional presentation, featuring coins that hop back into his hand. Sy also mentioned that he is working on a presentation based on a Shakespeare play. Jesse Rosenberg played a game of poker with spectators selecting cards for the hands, but Jesse winning each time. Phil Ackerly showed how he has combined Peter Samelson's Phoenix with his own very personal presentation of Starcle.

Phil also showed us some props he has made or customized. He finished with a holiday-themed Snowstorm in China. —Joe Caffall

We do not currently have a regular meeting location. Please email jocaff@pacbell.net for information about an upcoming meeting. Contact Joe Caffall jocaff@pacbell.net (408) 5788387 for more details.

95

CHRISTMAS MAGIC

VANCOUVER, CANADA—

The annual Assembly 95 pot luck Christmas dinner was held at the festive home of Dave and Cathy Watters in Delta, BC. After the annual club photo in black tie on

Trevor amazingly produced Nicholas's card from the current date door of a sealed Advent calendar, which he then gave to Nicholas. Lon Mandrake showed the King of Clubs, which he used as a card sword to stab into the deck to find a card previously selected by Tony Chris. Ray Roch had two selected cards caught by the Jokers. Rod Chow did a sandwich effect with Santa Claus cards. Steve Dickson performed Coins Across with two coins travelling back and forth in a slick sleight-of-hand routine. Henry Tom had Nicholas assist him in a Knots-off-Silk routine. This was repeated three times, yet Henry showed no holes in the silk.

Shawn Farquhar demonstrated his own variation of the Fred Kaps Eleven Bill Trick with Rod and Jack Chow. He performed

2013, meeting of Assembly 104 was preceded by the Bill Towne School of Magic, where Len Lazar taught the follow up to his previous lecture on coin magic. This was a busy gathering, serving as our pot luck supper meeting as well as the traditional Yankee swap night. The regular business portion flew by, with President Bill Jensen and Producer Evan Buso Jarnis reviewing the highly successful results of SAMCON.

Performances were kicked off by Steve "Doc" Rogers producing Rob Snider's signed card. Steve then produced four vanished Aces from various jacket pockets. Kayla Drescher performed an experimental and unusual interpretation of a stubborn Gypsy Thread. Jay Fraser offered a routine with colored ropes and a Change Bag that led to a festive finish in rainbow colors. Evan Buso-Jarnis presented his own somewhat experimental magic that involved coins, a glass, and a completely irrelevant pineapple. Amid misfires and laughter, Evan's effect resulted in coins believably passing through solid glass and – in the end – transforming into chocolate coins. Jaws slackened.

Vice President Eddie Gardner gamely attempted a card selection and revelation with the help of a local "ghost." The ghost assistant was required to ring an isolated bell, indicating the chosen card. This actually took quite a while as the spirit assistant was apparently recruited from a rival magic fraternity. In the end, pro that he is, Eddie persevered and forced the truth from the reluctant specter. Rob Snider, inspired by Andrew Goldenhersh's SAMCON performance, managed a very funny production of a rubber chicken. Using Eddie Gardner as a seated volunteer, Rob identified Ed's chosen card by name: Fred. Rich Nunziato concluded the magic with his version of the giant nut on rope. The nut served as Harry Houdini, whose repeated escapes from the rope became an excellent finale to the night's performances.



Annual Assembly 95 Formal Photo: Top (L-R) Tony Chris, Henry Tom, Shawn Farquhar, Glen LaBarre, Dennis Hewson, Anthony Young, Trevor Watters, Steve Dickson, and Dave Watters. Bottom (L-R) Treasurer Jens Henriksen, VP Ray Roch, President Lon Mandrake, and Secretary + RVP Canada Rod Chow.

the Watters stage, the evening of Christmas magic began.

Starting off was Anthony Young who had the same card randomly chosen by Jens Henriksen and Nicholas Chow. Anthony drew a card on a large pad, which became the face of a deck of cards from which Dennis Hewson's selected card rose. Dennis showed what appeared to be a live butterfly in a bottle. Dennis opened a book, and a butterfly, which was dressed up for Christmas, flew out with Anthony's selected card on it. Jens Henriksen handed out mini-presents; each was a piece of paper with the word Audience written on it. Jens was left with the only one with the word Magician/Wizard on it.

Dave Watters showed a large board with Santa Claus and Rabbit in the Hat cards. Dave had a volunteer move from card to card ending up on one card, which matched the prediction. Trevor Watters had Nicholas shuffle a deck of cards and name any card. After some comedy byplay,

this several times and finished with exactly ten bills even after adding and subtracting. Tony Chris showed some Christmas tinsel, which he changed to a cane. Tony then showed a feather poinsettia which bent and stood up on his will. In keeping with the theme, Tony did an Egg Bag routine with an invisible Xmas ornament that appeared in a bag. Glen LaBarre won the Christmas hat contest with a folding top hat with a Christmas flower on it, and was awarded a gift bag of prizes from Dave Watters. —Rod Chow
The Carl Hemeon Assembly No. 95 meets the first Tuesday of each month at members' homes. Contact Rod Chow rod@rodchow.com (604) 669-7777 www.sam95.com for more details.

104

POT LUCK DINNER WITH MAGIC ON THE SIDE

WITCH CITY, SALEM, MA—
The Wednesday, December 4,



Rob Snider's revelation leaves Eddie Gardner speechless.

From here, we conducted the annual Yankee swap session (no actual Yankees were traded). As always, each person brings a present and takes a ticket. One by one, with numbers called, each compeer claims a gift. If not wanted, the recipient trades with someone else. The last claimant gets to swap with anyone he wants. We Yankees actually have a lot of fun playing the game. The meeting ended with cleanup and goodwill. In other activities, members Snider, Forrest, Milan and Moses performed again on December 15 at the annual Woburn Elks Christmas Party. —Bob Forrest

Assembly 104 meets the first Wednesday of each month, September-June, 7 p.m., at the First Baptist Church of Salem, 292 Lafayette Street, Salem, Massachusetts. Contact Bob Forrest captainalbrights1@comcast.net (339) 227-0797 www.sam104.com for more details.

112 CONTEST NIGHT

PLEASANT HILL, CA— Our November meeting was a night for magic contests, but first we conducted elections for next year's officers. Among other new faces, Larry Wright will be our new president.

The regular portion of the meeting began with Ric Ewing, who gave a superb presentation of a Coins Across routine as our Trick of the Month. Everyone was then treated to some impromptu magic. Jack Fowler performed a mental effect with a deck of cards. Ray Andrews then performed a Chinese Linking Rings routine.

The scheduled contest for the evening was the One Shot contest, in either Stage or Close-up with separate categories for Professional, Amateur, and Novice. First up was amateur winner, Jerry Barilleaux, who amazed the audience by vanishing a shot glass filled with liquid. He was followed by Bob Holdridge, who presented an ESP experiment in which assistant Sally Porfido was able to match four hidden cards, apparently receiving Bob's thoughts.

Next, Rudy Adamek entertained with a comedic mind-reading performance assisted by Larry Wright and Brittany Kovacich. Professional winner Douglass the MagicMan followed with a unique performance of Three Card Monte using four large cards instead of three. Carole Yvonne Kula, novice winner, performed the famous jumping-rubber-band trick. Amateur winner Roy Porfido performed a close-up version of



Douglass the MagicMan performs his version of Three-Card Monte.

the traditional Rabbit from a Hat using a signed business card. Zappo followed with Card Warp. Professional winner Ric Ewing then performed a routine he calls the Ambitious Coin.

Afterwards, in a separate close-up contest making up for a postponed event from earlier in the year, amateur winner Bill Marquardt performed a color-changing knife routine, after which Douglass the MagicMan presented a routine in which a Mexican centavo and an American coin repeatedly change places and a previously borrowed finger ring appears inside a locked box. Then Zappo, the professional winner, did a bit of card magic ending in a version of Triumph.

Additional non-contest performances were provided by David Miller, Rudy Adamek, Jack Fowler, Ray Andrews, and Zappo while the judges added up scores. Contest winners will be presented with the appropriate awards at the dinner in January.

At the conclusion of the night's regular activities, a Broken Wand ceremony was conducted by Larry Wright and Roy Porfido to honor the memory of three departed Assembly 112 compeers, Albert Gundelach, Jr., Al Katten, and Greg Wilkie. —Bill Marquardt

Diablo Assembly 112 meets on the third Wednesday of every month at the VFW building in Pleasant Hill, California Contact Doug Kovacich douglassthemagicman@hotmail.com (925) 435-4824 http://sam112.com/ for more details.

115 YES, VIRGINIA THERE IS A CHRISTMAS.

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA— Our December meeting found Assembly 115 members gathered together for our annual Christmas dinner and 2014 officer installation. The get-together was held at the Hibachi Grill in Charlottesville, Virginia. Service and food were excellent.

New Officers for 2014 are as follows: George Buckley - President, Wes Iseli - Vice President, Bethany Hall - Secretary, Ed Schmitz - Treasurer, Daniel Hall - Sergeant at Arms. Congratulations to all our newly elected officers and a hardy thank you to our re-elected officers.

After our wonderful dining experience, members and Hibachi Grill staff were treated to some excellent magical effects. Dan Rowen performed his new Ring and Ribbon routine, Wes Iseli talked about restaurant magic and showed some of the excellent routines he has perfected over his many years of restaurant entertainment. Daniel Hall talked about the muscle pass and performed some of the routines he uses the muscle pass in. George Buckley performed his Copper/Silver routine and then performed the same routine with red and green colored disks he uses (and produces) for performing at his children's shows. Wes Iseli ended the evening with an excellent performance of the Illustrated Hotel Riddle, a money routine in which one dollar disappears with each counting of the change. —Bethany Hall

Assembly 115 meets the first Friday of the month at 7 PM at the Forest Lakes Pavilion Building, 1828 Pavilion Circle Charlottesville, VA 22911. Contact George Buckley gbbuckley@gmail.com (434) 409-2643 for more details.

148 WINERS AND WINERS

ELMHURST, IL— This is a combined report on our November meeting (annual contest) and our December get-together (holiday party). By a unanimous vote of the judges, David Schleich, our treasurer, walked away with first prize in the contest for his very original presentation of the razor blade trick. Original because he didn't use razor blades or thread; he swallowed a number of those little square tabs of Listerine that come from a pocket dispenser, followed by a long length of dental floss. Needless to say, the tabs soon emerged from his mouth one at a time, hanging perfectly equidistantly from the floss. Such a feat leaves a man thirsty, so Dave segued into the Passe-Passe Bottles, which soon multiplied to cover his entire table. Runner-ups in the contest were Rudy Alfano and his dancing cane and John Hausheer our master craftsman, who manipulated a gigantic paddle that could have been seen easily in

Radio City Music Hall.

One month later, terrific magic, great fellowship, and marvelous food kept everyone in fine holiday spirits for our Christmas party. As usual, there was a bountiful spread with shrimp cocktail, miniature wraps, sandwiches, cheeses, tacos, plus homemade cakes and cookies brought by members (or more probably, their wives). Then, at exactly the right moment, piping hot pizza was brought over from Elmhurst's best known Italian restaurant. After the feast, the members and their guests enjoyed magic performances by Ivan Tzonchev, Mary Ziemba, Don Clancy, and emcee Tony Noice.

In January, Assembly 148 will elect another board of directors to take the helm of one of the friendliest clubs in the conjuring counties. —Tony Noice

Assembly 148 meets on the third Monday of every month at the Epiphany Evangelical Lutheran Church (downstairs), SW corner of Spring Road and Vallette, Elmhurst, IL Contact Tony Noice noicea@net.elmhurst.edu (630) 993-3740 www.SAM #148.com for more details.

157 CHRISTMAS DINNER

BEAVER, PA— The Mystic Magicians of Beaver Valley (157) held their annual Christmas dinner with twenty members and seventeen guests attending. The Towne Square Restaurant in Beaver, PA, was the host and cook. Food was delicious and the company was festive. President Ray Lucas welcomed everyone and had Tom Chidester give the invocation.



Magical Christmas Dinner

He then announced that the Daryl lecture will be in April at the Airport Days Inn and the Kranzo lecture will be 6/5/14 at Ritter's Diner. Flyers and more information will be coming in the near future. He announced that Eric Davis is to be on the GPMN banquet committee from our club.

Ray wants everyone to be at the January meeting because he is bringing something special. After the dinner, a Chinese auction was done with the magicians. The ladies (most of them guests) had a Chinese auction amongst themselves. Everyone had a great time with much laughter and companionship. —Judy Steed

The Mystic Magicians of Beaver Valley (157) meet the second Thursday of every month at the Towne Square Restaurant in Beaver, PA. Contact Judy Steed heyjude1943@msn.com (330) 525-5389 for more details.

170 DO YOUR MOST FUN TRICK

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO—Mark Modeer of Zeezo's Magic Shop (one of the rare brick and mortar shops) brought some of their supplies (wax, cards, cases, flash paper, IT, and other magical staples) to show what they carry and described the increasing trends he sees in the magic industry. There are changes resulting in more magic, juggling, and business for the shop.

Our youngest magician, Nathan Faux (age six), asked to be the opening act and was charming as he performed the Statically Charged Toothpicks with the help of his lovely assistant Janell Klein. He had just learned this trick in the earlier SYM meeting. Toothpicks jumped and he received his rightful applause.

Mark Weidhass started the festivities with destructive, but very fun routine from Book in English by Woody Argon. Larry Mahan, our Magic Santa, told the story of Blackweird the Pirate and had three different folks cut to a card. Larry stabbed the three chosen cards with Blackweird's cutlass. Deft sword work to be sure.

Dwyane Faux called out his live rope and had it do tricks for us. Duane's puns on raising the rope from a twine on string beans and string cheese brought both laughs and groans. Larry Scott Marsh transformed sponge balls into silks and stumped most of us with his puzzles. Jordan Myers, our resident card shark, demonstrated his love and familiarity with cards by allowing anyone to pick any card. Then he divined the card by feeling what personality what missing.

Tom Paine took a napkin, made a beautiful rose out of it and then enchanted it by handing it to Lisa. With this enchantment the rose, rose. Frank Klein, our corporate professional, made magic happen in the hands of a volunteer with

a Coins Across routine. Frank also performed Inferno, in which cards of an imaginary deck were destroyed by three volunteers, until only one was saved. The spoken card turned visible in a magic box and emerged burnt, but absolutely the chosen card. Frank ended with a very polished signed ambitious card to case. The card repeatedly appeared on the top of the deck, no matter where it was inserted in the deck. It finally disappeared from the deck and appeared in a closed box that had been untouched throughout the routine.

Nathan Faux ended the show, as he had started it. He used the torn cards from Mark Wiedhaas's routine to have his father choose a card from the deck and find its mate on the top of the deck. Dad's quick thinking provided a successful end of the show while we youth trainers plan to teach Nathan the actual magic moves. —Dr Dave Wintermute

SAM Magical Assembly 170 (Pikes Peak Prestidigitators) meets on the 4th Tuesday every month in the Community Room of the Sand Creek Police Station at 4125 Center Park Dr. Colorado Springs, CO 80916. Contact Dr Dave Wintermute, bWintermute@juno.com, (719) 494-0171, for more details.

172 SO JUST WHO ARE ALL THESE TURKEYS?

PORT ST. LUCIE, FL—They are, in fact, a bunch pretty clever guys! Our November meeting turned into a real turkey shoot, with some of our compeers putting their neck on the line for some really great effects while others somehow avoided "the block." But when all the smoke cleared, we'd had another great night of magic.

Our soon-to-be newest member, James Offenhardt, led off with a medley of old card effects (Really! Really old cards, that is.) His handling of several card effects involving the Seven of Diamonds was flawless, and his treatment of the classic Four Ace Assembly was something very few of us had ever seen before. Nice job, James! Doug Lattshaw was up next with his own versions of Twins and The Charming Chinese Challenge. Again, two rather old standards made that much more magical in Doug's hands.

Matt Musgrave presented Election, a magic effect otherwise surrounded by controversy in the Sunshine State. Matt managed to pull it off perfectly. There were no chads involved, and everyone was satisfied with the "election"

results. Jack Durjan presented a nice little card revelation with the help of a written prediction that melded into the name of a selected card.

Al Chiaverini must have had the movies in mind as he presented the newest effect in his mentalism resume, Cinema Verite. He had several spectators select movie posters out of a stack of nearly fifty, and then proceeded to identify each spectator's selection. A very well produced effect performed flawlessly by the Amazing Chiaverini.

James came back up with two more card effects involving the Ace of Spades and Ace of Diamonds and Matt finished up the evening with The Window, which proved to be as amazing as it was easy to perform. And no, I'm not giving it up.

No December meeting because we have our annual Christmas Party at Manero's in Palm City on the 20th. So we wrap up another year at Assembly 172 and look forward to 2014 and whatever it may hold for us. —Dean F. Devitt
Assembly 172 meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month but December at 7:00 pm at the Saint Lucie Lanes on Route 1 in beautiful Port Saint Lucie, Florida. Contact Dean F. Devitt quindar46@yahoo.com for more details.

181 A WORKSHOP ON ENTER- TAINING CHILDREN

HIGHTSTOWN, NJ—Dennis Thomas is living our dream. He is a full-time magician and loving his work. With over twenty-five years of experience, he has specialized in entertaining children between the ages of four and nine with his fun-filled magic shows and balloon twisting. With all those years of experience, he is uniquely able to impart some great pointers at the workshop he did on performing magic for children in December.

He opened this workshop, and his birthday party shows, with Spotty. The routine is interspersed with silly wands, multiplying wands, and color-changing wands. More important than the trick, Dennis taught us to entertain children by keeping them involved and laughing.

Next, he used Lucky 7, an effect from Wonder Imagery that allows you to do seven different routines from one single prop. Dennis modifies this prop further for the different themes of his seasonal and educational shows. The volunteer does the magic, not the magician. That empowers children, and all kids like to help.



**Dennis Thomas with
Bella the Bunny**

Next, Dennis showed us his take on Strat-O-Sphere, which he does with apples so that it fits better into his Farm Show. His final effect was to produce Bella the Bunny from a drawer box because children like productions better than vanishes, and everybody loves to pet a bunny. Another bit of advice: if you vanish something cute and lovable, make sure you bring it back.

In his final piece of advice, Dennis reminded us to "Dazzle them, entertain them, don't try to impress them. Kids don't care what sleights or knuckle-buster maneuvers you can do, they want to be entertained."

Also, in each December, our assembly has been doing a magic show for First United Methodist Church's Little Beavers Preschool. Hank Strasser, performing as ERYX and using sponge rabbits and Future Fungus, opened this year's show. Dennis Thomas completed the show with parts from his Santa Claus and Winter Shows. I think it is important for assemblies to do benefit shows for the community, and it gives magicians the opportunity to perform.

In February, Mitch Geier will present a workshop on the Professor's Nightmare. I know this effect is very familiar to magicians, but I have seen Mitch just amaze lay audiences with it because he does one of the best routines that I have ever seen with Professor's Nightmare. You do not want to miss this workshop. —David Zboray

Assembly 181 of Hightstown meets the first Thursday of every month, September thru June at the First United Methodist Church, 187 Stockton Street, Hightstown, NJ 08520. Contact Stephan Sloan lands10@optonline.net (732) 757-5337 http://www.magicsaml81.com/ for more details.

194 ROUTINING AND PRESEN- TATION

YONKERS, NY— We began

our meeting with Regional Vice President Eric DeCamp's presentation of the S.A.M. North Atlantic Region Award of Excellence to Michael Piacente, Treasurer and Founding Member of S.A.M. Assembly 194, in appreciation for his thirty-three years of service to the magic community promoting, advancing, and preserving the art of magic.

After a few brief announcements, new President, Fr. Dermot Brennan started a spirited discussion involving the basic concepts and techniques of routine and presentation. Drawing from a lifetime of experience, and quoting from Ken Weber's book *Maximum Entertainment* and Steve Cohen's *Win the Crowd*, Fr. Brennan provided us with a number of practical everyday tips to effective performances. He also cautioned against the trivialization of magic, where an "extraordinary event becomes a trick, and a trick becomes a puzzle." He discussed numerous ways for us to improve the mastery of our craft and outlined some basic principles of preparation and performance. Members' performances at a recent assembly show for the Slovak Catholic Club were discussed as real-life examples to further illustrate these points. In discussing the finer aspects of these routines, excellent suggestions were made by assembly members to both improve these presentations and come up with more powerful endings. Quoting from Ken Weber, Fr. Brennan



Michael Piacente (center) receiving the North Atlantic Region Award of Excellence from RVP Eric DeCamp (r), with SAM 194 President Fr. Dermot Brennan

reminded us that "a blur of magic is still a blur," and that it is the mystery of magic that entertains.

Assembly members enthusiastically recalled moments in their performing careers where preparation, planning, and scripting were put to the test – like when the rope in the cut-and-restored routine was actually cut! Or when the Foo Can was overfilled with water and kept on dripping. And, why it is always wise to bring the rabbit or dove back again after

making it disappear!

A discussion ensued regarding how the assembly can proactively help its members improve their routines. A suggestion was made to make arrangements at future events to videotape performers in front of a live audience in order to review them later as a group to help refine and improve these presentations.

This lecture gave each member something new to think about to help them in their performance.

—Roger Burchard
Assembly 194 meets on the third Wednesday of each month (except July and August) at 7:30 PM at the Slovak Catholic Club on Lockwood Avenue, Yonkers, NY. Contact Michael Piacente Piacente mikepmagic@aol.com (914) 709-2947 for more details.

200 DECEMBER MAGIC

SEATTLE, WA— Our December meeting had a light turnout, but the small group shared a lot of ideas, from good local performing venues to stories about dealing with pre-performance jitters. Our theme was "liar, liar, pants on fire," and we saw magic with false counts, multiple outs, and just plain lying.

Tom Payne shared card preparation secrets on how to split, powder, and scrape cards. Danny Dragon amazed us with his version of a John Bannon effect called Royal Scam in which cards magically flipped over and changed their back designs. Michael Jacobs wowed us with a deck of jumbo cards in which every card had been cut in half. Two spectators each chose a half of a card from the deck and they ended up being a perfect match.

Mark Paulson gave us a brief history of the evolution of Tarot cards into modern day playing cards. He then proceeded to have a spectator think of any favorite date in the calendar. The date was looked up in a calendar that had a different card marked on each date. Mark not only had a sole matching card in an envelope, but he had the spectator count the cards in a deck that had been on the table the entire time and there were only fifty-one cards; the prediction was the only one missing. Mark's routine was based on Chronologue by Bob Cassidy. Keeping with the theme of the night, Chuck Kleiner performed a variation of Banachek's Ring of Truth in which he identified who was telling the truth and who was lying. Ric Ruidl gave us some

deep thoughts on the number four and then wrapped up the meeting with a nice presentation of Nick Trost's Four Flush, in which seven Four of Spades turned blank and then reprinted magically.

We all learned something new, which made for an excellent meeting. And that's no lie.

—Chuck Kleiner
Assembly 200 meets on the first Thursday of each month at the a branch of the King County Library from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Please check the calendar for meeting locations. Contact Jim Earnshaw jimearnshaw@live.com (206) 225-6715 www.emeraldcitywizards.org for more details.

206 DAVID GABBAY COMES TO AUSTIN

AUSTIN, TX— Los Angeles-based David Gabbay, a master close-up magician, was the featured performer for Austin's Assembly 206 meeting in November.

The award-winning Gabbay dazzled the membership with various card and coin miracles, and then provided performance tips. Gabbay also performed a number of effects with seemingly ordinary objects, such as a box of Tic Tac mints and a single-serving bag of sugar.

Gabbay ingeniously used



David Gabbay provided top-notch entertainment and education during the November meeting of Assembly 206 in Austin. Photo Credit: Lee Page

black art techniques for some of the close-up effects, and also employed plenty of misdirection. He discussed sleeving and demonstrated a cigar-in-purse routine.

"Remember, make it as easy as possible for the audience; give them the least amount of work," said Gabbay, as he explained his techniques for creating a routine. You can find out more about Mr. Gabbay at his website, www.gabbaymagic.com.

Also during the November meeting a new slate of officers was elected by unanimous consent. They are: President, Mike Brewer; Vice President, Dan Page; Treasurer, Tammy Dietz; Secretary, R.A. "Jake" Dyer; and Sergeant-at-Arms, Will Mannis.—R.A. Dyer

Assembly 206 meets at the Omni South Park Hotel, 4140 Governors Row, Austin, TX, 78744. Contact Jake Dyer jakedyer@yahoo.com (512) 658-0017 www.sam206.com for more details.

215 DECEMBER EVENTS

LOUISVILLE, KY— The Louisville Magic Club ushered in the holiday season with two annual events: the holiday banquet and a visit from Harry Allen of Daytona Magic. The holiday banquet was held on December 7th at St. Matthews Catering with Darshwood the Conjurer (aka Richard Gensemer) headlining the show. Club members Ken Abbott and Michael Raymer also performed. Winners of the November close-up magic contest were recognized; and John Hromada, one of the contest winners, performed his mental routine for the assembled guests.

Two days later, Harry Allen arrived to entertain and make sure that Christmas stockings will be stuffed with new magic tricks. As quick with his mouth as with his hands, Harry entertained and amazed as only he can. Seth Bendorf, a member of the LMC, was Harry's able assistant. Prior to turning the evening over to Harry, we held elections to replace Tom Crecelius and Mike Blanckaert, who have retired after having served many years as club secretary and second vice president respectively. Elected were Mike Raymer (second vice president) and Roger Omanson (secretary). We also welcomed Dale Weldon and Mike Mills, both former members who rejoined the LMC, and new members Ja'honna Galloway and David Alberston. —Roger L. Omanson

The LMC, Assembly 215, meets at 7:00 p.m. on various dates, but usually the first Tuesday of each month, at the Kosair Community Center on Eastern Parkway.

226 A MAGIC WORKSHOP WITH HAROLD WOOD

WILLIAMSBURG, VA— We gathered at 7:00 p.m. at the Norge branch of the Williamsburg Regional Library; eight

members were present. The slate of officers for 2014 are: President – Ron Grossman; Vice President – Alexander Goldberg; Secretary – Michael Heckenberger; Treasurer – Howard Karnes; Sergeant-at-Arms – Watt; Historian – Philip Tho.

President Michael Heckenberger welcomed Michael Ostrowski as an official member of The Society of American Magicians and Assembly 226. Michael Heckenberger presented him with the official membership kit from the national office. Michael has been attending meetings for some time and has displayed a natural talent and enthusiasm in his performances. We are thrilled to have you in the club.

The theme of our November meeting was A Magic Workshop with Harold Wood. Members were encouraged to bring in tricks that were still in the formative stages. In most cases the mechanics of the trick were solved, but the presentation or patter needed work.

Harold Wood, a member and professional magician, provided critiques of the effects that members were working on. To start the ball rolling he described how he developing a new trick. He recently had purchased a gimmick that allowed him to manipulate a sponge ball in a new way. He discussed with us some of the possibilities that he was exploring.

Ron Grossman was working on a card trick. The deck is divided into three stacks. There was audience participation. And the chosen card winds up in a sealed envelope.

Michael Ostrowski brought an unusual gimmick. A small samurai sword is mounted between two upright posts. The sword is threaded into the posts from left to right through vertical slits in the posts. The magician asked a member of the audience for a ring. A cloth bag was drawn over the device. When removed, the ring

was revealed – mounted on the sword. There is a slight noise when the “magic” move was made. One solution was to perform the effect with music.

Alexander was working on a self-working card trick. His opening line was, “People don’t want to play cards with me because I always keep coming up with Aces.” Michael Heckenberger was working on a three shell game of “Where’s the Pea?” It was a fun and informative meeting of magic talk during which members pitched in with help and suggestion. I’ll see you all next year. —Phil Thorp

Baker Temple Assembly 226 meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 4th Wednesday (except August and December) room B at the Williamsburg Regional Library, 515 Scotland Street, Williamsburg, VA 23185. Contact Phil Thorp for more details (757) 229-2329. <http://sites.google.com/site/samassembly226gmail.com> for more details.

266 HOLIDAY MAGIC FILLS THE AIR

LAKELAND, FL —

‘Twas two weeks before Christmas, and around Lakeland town

All the magi had gathered, to spread joy around.

The pancakes from IHOP, filled every plate

For our holiday meeting we ate, ate, and ate.

Dean Bob had attended, but soon flew like a flash,

A new kin was arriving at the hospital fast.

A new member came out; he’s a preacher named Harris.

So we tried to work clean so as not to embarrass;

Pres Jerry took us thru a meeting so quick,

That in no time at all gifts were flying ‘round thick.

The gift exchange brought lots of good natured swapping,

But the spirit won over, no one started hopping.

Next came show and tell and Al played with a Barbie, And a “toy” lie detector that was kinda marvey.

Randy showed up with a hit out of sight,

His Houdini trick padlock perplexed Ed all night.

Beverly showed us gingerbread with a magic gift, And Jerry did shopping and predicted it quick.

Al brought out a list of some items so rare,

And Sammy’s thumb tie almost made Elmo swear.

So when your sleigh brings you to places with sun,

Spend time with our magi, and you’ll have some fun.

This seemed a good notion when I started this poem,

But I wonder in February will just cause some groans.

But true wishes to yours from the magi of ours;

May your holidays be as wonderful as Jim Zee’s Lakeland stars.

—Al D’Alfonso
Jim Zachary Assembly 266 meets the second Wednesday of the month at 7PM at the Lakeland I-HOP Contact Al D’Alfonso keeper0499@embarqmail.com (321) 437-3814 for more details.

293 WINTER WHITE MAGIC

LINCOLN, NE— Yes, the December Lincoln Magic Club theme was “White Magic” –

illusions referencing the color white. But that’s not what you’re going to read about. Instead, you are going to read about the youth club meeting, because frankly, they stole the show this month – and it had nothing to do with the color white. The youth gather one hour prior to the regular club meeting to learn new skills as well as perform what they have



Club President, Bruce Jacoby, performing Slydini “white” silks.

learned. Since it was the last meeting of the year, youth coordinator Luis Villamonte gave a pop quiz: Who can perform the most tricks on the spot that were taught at the club meetings in 2013? The winner gets a prize. And... go! Now, this was fun to watch! It was a quick-draw, back-to-back, magic showdown between the youth members, lasting long into the main club meeting. In the end it came down to Joe Benes vs. Jarod Cernousek. It was too difficult to pick a winner, so both received well-deserved magic prizes. —Vizma Shaeffer

The Lincoln Magic Club Assembly 293 meets the first Saturday of every month from 1:00 – 2:00 at the MagicKits.com Magic shop at 10th & Charleston. The club youth gather an hour prior to the meeting to hang out, learn and perform tricks. For more information go to www.lincolnmagic.com.♦

NEED TO WRITE AN ASSEMBLY REPORT? We Made Your Job a Little Easier

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MICHAEL PIACENTE



Michael Piacente

On December 23, 2013, Michael Piacente, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, magician, and a tried and true friend of the S.A.M., passed away. Michael was a gifted and generous magician. He was also a thirty-three-year member of The Society of American

Magicians and the driving force behind Assembly 194 in Yonkers, New York.

Michael's serious involvement in magic began in the late 1970s when he was a frequent patron of New York's Magic Towne House and later Mostly Magic.

Although Michael and I have known each other for about thirty years, it was not until the last three years that we became very close friends. I would speak to him at least four to five times a week. We would talk about his family (he was very proud of his grandchildren) and his business; he always provided me with sound advice about how to handle challenges within our Society. For lack of a better term, Michael became my magic consigliere. I am going to miss my visits with Mike.

One of the great pleasures in my service with the Society occurred just this past October when I was able to surprise Michael with the Society's North Atlantic Region Award of Excellence for his contributions to our art and for his tireless work for The Society of American Magicians. He never let me forget that I was able to surprise him with the honor.

In 1989, Michael was presented with the Seth Cohen Award for Magic. Only two other members of Assembly 194 have been given this honor. In 2007, he was awarded the first Pino Gareri Magician of the Year Award. In December of 2008, The Society of American Magicians presented Michael with a National Presidential Citation for his longstanding work in our Society and in our community.

Michael also mentored young magicians. For over fifteen years he worked closely with The Society of Young Magicians Assembly 42 in Stamford, Connecticut. Some of the offices and positions he held within The Society of American Magicians include:

- President Assembly 194 (1981-85 and 2001-03)
- S.A.M. North Atlantic Regional Vice President (1984-86)
- S.A.M. National Council (1984-86)
- S.A.M. North Atlantic Regional Deputy (1994-1998 & 2012-13)
- Chairman S.A.M. Insurance Committee (2010-12)

In our magic community to honor the passing of a magician we perform the ritual known as the broken wand ceremony. It was both sad and an honor to presided

over the ritual for Michael. I was proud to see so many Assembly 194 and other S.A.M. members participate and show strength, honor, and love for our departed friend and compeer. Thanks to all who participated in the ceremony. Times like these – as difficult as it may be – prove that our magic world is a real community in the true meaning of the word. —Eric DeCamps

CHARLIE STRUCK

Charlie Struck, Dean of Assembly 47 in Rochester, New York, passed away December 23, 2013, at the age of ninety-five. Charlie had joined Assembly 47 over fifty-one years ago (1962). I was pretty lucky, because I got to know this man of mystery not only through my co-owning a magic shop some years back, but also by my wife's homemade sugar cookies. Charlie worked many years as a builder and was one of the best. He had a very close relationship with Walter B. Gibson, famous magic author and author of *The Shadow* (this goes way back, young magicians).

Charlie had a summer home and was Walter's next door neighbor, near Poughkeepsie, New York. I would visit Charlie and would bring along some magic, and occasionally cookies and bones for his dog. We would talk about his love for family, magic, and magicians. His little cottage was situated on the property also holding the first school in Penfield, New York. Magic was on display and you could tell that Charlie still dabbled in it. It is unfortunate that I will not be able to hang out with him this coming summer, but I will never forget this kind and generous soul.

As Charlie got older, he relied on fellow magicians to take him on long trips or to meetings. It was only recently when he became one-hundred-percent dependent on others. Charlie lit up the local watering hole, The Golden Fox, on Wednesday lunches whenever he would attend. Assembly 47 and all its members will miss him dearly. —Mike Ihrig

DR. RICHARD SCHINDLER



On December 28, 2013, Dr. Richard Schindler, beloved husband of the late Miriam Schindler; loving father of Debbie Waxman, Dr. Irvin Schindler, and Dr. Betty Schindler; devoted brother of Dr. Fred Schindler, Sondra Schindler, and the late Ronald Schindler; dear brother-in-law of Donna Truesdell and Ellen LaVan; loving grandfather of Lauren Hagen, Rebecca Schindler, and Gabriel German died on December 28, 2013. Dr. Schindler

was a long-time member of Assembly 141 and Assembly 6. We will miss him. —Wayne Miller

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN MAGICIANS

NOVEMBER 9, 2013, BOCA RATON, FLORIDA MINUTES (Draft)

Call to order:

Most Illustrious Dal Sanders called the regular meeting of the National Council of The Society of American Magicians to order according to ritual at 10:09 a.m. MI Sanders welcomed Past Presidents Warren Kaps, Jann Goodsell, Don Oltz, Brad Jacobs; and guests Jerry Solkoff and Billy Byron from the Boca Raton/Fort Lauderdale area. PNP Jan Goodsell gave the invocation, after which we observed a moment of silence for departed Compeers.

Approve Minutes of July 5, 2013, meeting:

National Secretary Marlene Clark requested motion to approve the minutes of the July 5, 2013, meeting, with the following corrections: (1) under the Mid-Atlantic report: Maryland Deputy is Theo Rushin, who also is DC Deputy; correct the spelling of John Jennings & Mike Snyder; and (2) correct the Article XI, Section 5c bylaws revision to read, "Neither the accused nor complainant shall participate in the voting."

Motion: Bill Gleason moved the minutes be approved as corrected. **Discussion:** none. **Vote:** Motion passed.

REPORTS

Note: full reports are in the Blue Book except those listed as live reports. The Blue Book is available electronically from National Secretary Marlene Clark, as hard copy from National Administrator Manon Rodriguez, or online in the member-only section at www.magicsam.com.

NATIONAL OFFICERS (all present with reports in the Blue Book)

Most Illustrious Dal Sanders had nothing to add to his Blue Book report, which highlighted his many activities since his election and installation as President. MI Sanders has visited with and/or spoken to many compeers and assembly officers and has attended

several conventions since his installation.

President-elect Kenrick "Ice" McDonald also referred to his Blue Book report, where he discussed attracting young magicians to the S.A.M.

First VP Dave Bowers reported that Technology Chair Bruce Kalver is seeking information about S.A.M. awards that will be included in a new section of the S.A.M. website.

Second VP Jeff Sikora said that the S.A.M. has a great group of Regional Vice Presidents this year and is looking forward to working with them.

National Secretary Marlene Clark thanked those who got their reports in on time.

National Treasurer Eric Lampert said that his report shows that revenue is ahead of budget at this time, but it is not an indication of a trend in either direction.

ADMINISTRATIVE

Absent – report in the Blue Book: Chaplain Michael Douglass, Gifts & Insignia, Craig Schwarz; Investment Committee Richard Dooley, *SYMBOL* Editor Michael Raymer, Roles & Responsibilities Dick Bowman.

Absent – no report in the Blue Book: Member Services Jeff Lanes, *M-U-M* Editor Michael Close.

National Administrator Manon Rodriguez said there has been a recent shift to the positive in member numbers and in increase in requests for the *M-U-M Sampler*. This means everyone is working on getting new members, and we're on an upswing.

Insurance Committee Joseph Caulfield referred to his Blue Book report, where he briefly discussed the difficulty in offering health insurance to our members.

REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENTS

Absent – report in the Blue Book: Mid-Atlantic, Phil Milstead; South Atlantic, Debbie Leifer; Midwestern,

Shaun Rivera; Northwest States, JR Russell.

Absent – no report in the Blue Book: South Central, Jeff Lanes.

New England – Joseph Caulfield updated assembly activity in his region in his Blue Book report.

North Atlantic – Eric DeCamps mentioned his region's newsletter and encouraged members to read it. **Central Plains – Steve Spence** said he hopes to visit every assembly his region in the coming year.

South Central – Michael Tallon contacted those in his region who have requested the *M-U-M Sampler* and is tracking responses.

Southwest States – Ron Ishimaru highlighted assembly activities in his Blue Book report.

Canada – Rod Chow discussed the annual fundraising show that funds National Dues for participating members of Assembly #95. Many council members asked for more details, which could prove valuable to other assemblies. He also reported compeers in the Calgary area are working to get Assembly #75 active again.

COMMITTEES

Absent – no Blue Book report: Assembly Contact Coordinator Kyle Peron; Convention Chairman John Apperson; Ethics, Marc DeSouza; Good & Welfare, Anthony Antonelly; Magic Center Foundation, Dan Rodriguez; Magic for Special Education, Trudy Monti; Member Promotion, Steve Marshall; Member Service Awards, Jeff Lanes; National Deputy Clem Kinnicutt; Historian Tom Ewing; Sharing Awareness Mentoring Program, Bob Carroll.

Absent – reports in the Blue Book: Deaf Magicians Deputy Simon Carmel; Dean George Schindler (Houdini fund, International Deputy Coordinator, Public Relations); Hall of Fame and Magic Museum Inc., John Engman; IBM/SAM 2014 Combined

Convention, Mark Weidhaas; Life Membership, Dan Sclare; Marketing, Brian South; Membership, Kelly Peron; Media Library Curator Mark Jensen; New Assembly Coordinator Les Cooper; SAMtalk, Bruce Kalver; Spotlight, Barbara Dallas; Technology, Bruce Kalver; Veterans Program/Military Liaison Chris Bontjes.

Ambassador of Magic (*no report*), **FISM Liaison** (*report in Blue Book*), **Magic Endowment Fund – Bradley Jacobs** (*live report – MEF*) reported that the net worth of the MEF as of Oct. 31 was \$952,237. The MEF increased by 12.5% in the last four months, thanks to continuing to stay the course. In October 2008, the fund's net worth was \$632,000, when S.A.M. life membership ground to a halt. That trend has changed: since the annual meeting July, the S.A.M. has signed up 8 new life members. We thank them and we thank Life Member Chairman Dan Sclare, whose hard work has produced results. The MEF also grants scholarships to young magicians to attend magic camp. PNP Warren Kaps, who has led that effort since its inception, is stepping down at the end of his term in July, after which Trudy Monti will take the helm. He read a thank you letter from Jeff McBride, who discussed the 2013 scholarship winner to McBride's Magic & Mystery School, Timothy Mason, of Australia. Michael Roth is working on a new brochure for the MEF. The S.Y.M. fund has provided a grant to print 500 bound copies of Joshua Jay's anthology, which will be given to every S.Y.M. member with 3 or more years of membership, to libraries in the hometowns of S.Y.M. assemblies, and those who donate \$100 or more to the SYM.

Conference Executive John Apperson (*live report by MI Sanders*) – items under discussion include the possibility of alternating annual conventions with the I.B.M. and on the 3rd year, holding a combined convention; and handling the convention treasury. The consensus is to confirm Las Vegas for the 2018 annual S.A.M. convention.

Future Conventions include the following:

2014: July 2-5: IBM/SAM Combined Convention, St. Louis Missouri; Renaissance St. Louis Grand Hotel, with a room rate of \$115.

2015: July 1-4: Philadelphia Pennsylvania; Marriott Philadelphia Downtown; room rate: \$115.

2016: July 13-16: Indianapolis Indiana; Indianapolis Marriott Downtown; room rate: \$119.

2017: July, IBM/SAM Combined convention in Louisville, Kentucky.

Facebook – Eric Decamps reported that the Facebook page is celebrating its 2nd anniversary and has 936 members. It is read and/or viewed more than 100 times a day.

Heroism and Patriots Committee – William Gleason reported that the award has a new sponsor, and the committee is considering applicants. The award is open to any magician in the world.

Magic Center Foundation Dan Rodriguez (*live report by First Vice President Dave Bowers*):

The Magic Center has outgrown the 500-square foot room it rents in the Mainstreet Performing Arts Center in Parker Colorado. The Magic Center Foundation hoped to purchase the building from the town, but the town no longer wants to sell it; therefore, the Board of Directors will be tackling the questions of how to handle the growing number of collections and continue the Magic Center's vision of promoting and perpetuating the art of magic. PNP Warren Kaps recommended the board explore the Cabot Street Cinema Theatre in Beverly Massachusetts.

National Magic Week – Jeff Sikora gave out 39 certificates of appreciation for 2013 Magic Week activities, half of which went to S.A.M. Assembly #4 in Philadelphia. He presented two certificates to RVPs Michael Tallon and Steve Spence for their and their assemblies' participation. To be recognized, assemblies must fill out the form on the S.A.M. website. The Humanitarian Award exemplifies the spirit of Magic Week all year long. He will announce the winner at the end of the year.

Paranormal Investigation

Committee – Charles Siebert discussed an increased presence in the S.A.M. via articles in *M-U-M* and a blog on the S.A.M. website.

Young Members Program Director PNP Jan Goodsell stressed that members – leaders and helpers, alike, who work with youths need to fill out the form for background checks. It will prevent problems in the future and will protect the kids. The S.Y.M. is looking into establishing assemblies in Poughkeepsie and Long Island New York.

SPECIAL REPORT

Absent, report in book: USA Science & Engineering Festival – PNP Christopher Bontjes.

Old business

1. Tabled Motion: Motion by President-elect Ice McDonald to approve the Ethics Chairman's finding of facts and recommended actions in the matter of ethics charges against a member (Main Motion).

Motion: Brad Jacobs moved to remove the motion from the table. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** motion passed.

Main Motion: President-elect Ice McDonald moved to approve the main motion.

Discussion: PNP Warren Kaps reported that the parties have come to an agreement, and the Ethics Committee has dropped the charges. He moved to amend the Main Motion.

Amended Motion: Warren Kaps moved that the national Council vacate and dismiss the charges. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** Motion passed.

Vote on main motion: Motion rejected. PNP Goodsell and MI Sanders

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN MAGICIANS

thanked all for working through and resolving the issue.

Motion passed unanimously.

MI Sanders appointed Eric DeCamps to put together a committee to administer/coordinate gravesite maintenance and activities.

Society Business (Items from caucus)

1. Cyber bullying resolution.

Motion: PNP Kaps moved the following: The National Council of The Society of American Magicians has determined that various chat rooms and social media have been improperly utilized as outlets for cyber bullying which targets magic, magicians and youngsters who are interested in magic. The Society of American Magicians opposes and condemns cyber bullying in any and all forms, including but not limited to, all forms of hate speech, the use of words that attack physical appearance, gender, religious belief, sexual orientation or nationality.

Discussion: None. **Vote:**

2. Houdini Gravesite

Motion: PNP Kaps moved that The Society of American Magicians take over the maintenance of the 24 gravesites at the Houdini gravesite at Machpelah Cemetery in Queens, Long Island, New York, receive cost estimates from the Machpelah Cemetery Association and seek an annual grant from the S.A.M. Magic Endowment Fund to cover such maintenance.

Discussion: The Houdini family is no longer associated with the site. The State of New York would agree to the S.A.M. taking over the site, which includes 12 graves on the site. The S.A.M. logo is prominent there. **Vote:** Motion passed unanimously.

3. Houdini Gravesite Curator

Society business (other):

None

Good & Welfare:

National Secretary Marlene Clark acknowledged the work of the S.A.M. in helping compeer David Oliver; his health is improving: he's breathing.

MI Sanders said he enjoyed running the meeting.

Benediction: PNP Jann Goodsell gave the benediction.

Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned according to ritual at 11:13 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marlene Clark,
National Secretary

Good Cheer List

Please take a minute to spread a few words of cheer with a card or note to one of our less fortunate members. Send additions, changes, or deletions to: Anthony Antonelly, Chairman, Sick and Convalescent Committee, (215) 820-3192 ext. 1512. magicforfun60@aol.com

Roger Barr
883 B Liverpool Circle,
Manchester, NJ 08759

Daniel Cudennec
"Dany Trick"
225, Stang-ar-Veil-
d'an-Traon, Mellac-29300,
Quimperle, France

Dan A. Dorsey
98 Woodvalley Dr.
Fayetteville, GA 30215

Joseph H. (Ben) Grant
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Warwick, RI 02886

Charlie Gross
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Roy Horn
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Las Vegas, NV 89108

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Larry Poague
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Churchville, NY 14428

Matt Savin
P.O. Box 7693
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Sybill Simons
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New York, NY 10025

Mario Susi
6 Bristol Rd.
W. Peabody, MA 01960

Jack White
4288 Arguello St.
San Diego, CA 92103

Jim Zachary
2801 South Creek Drive
Mulberry, FL 33860

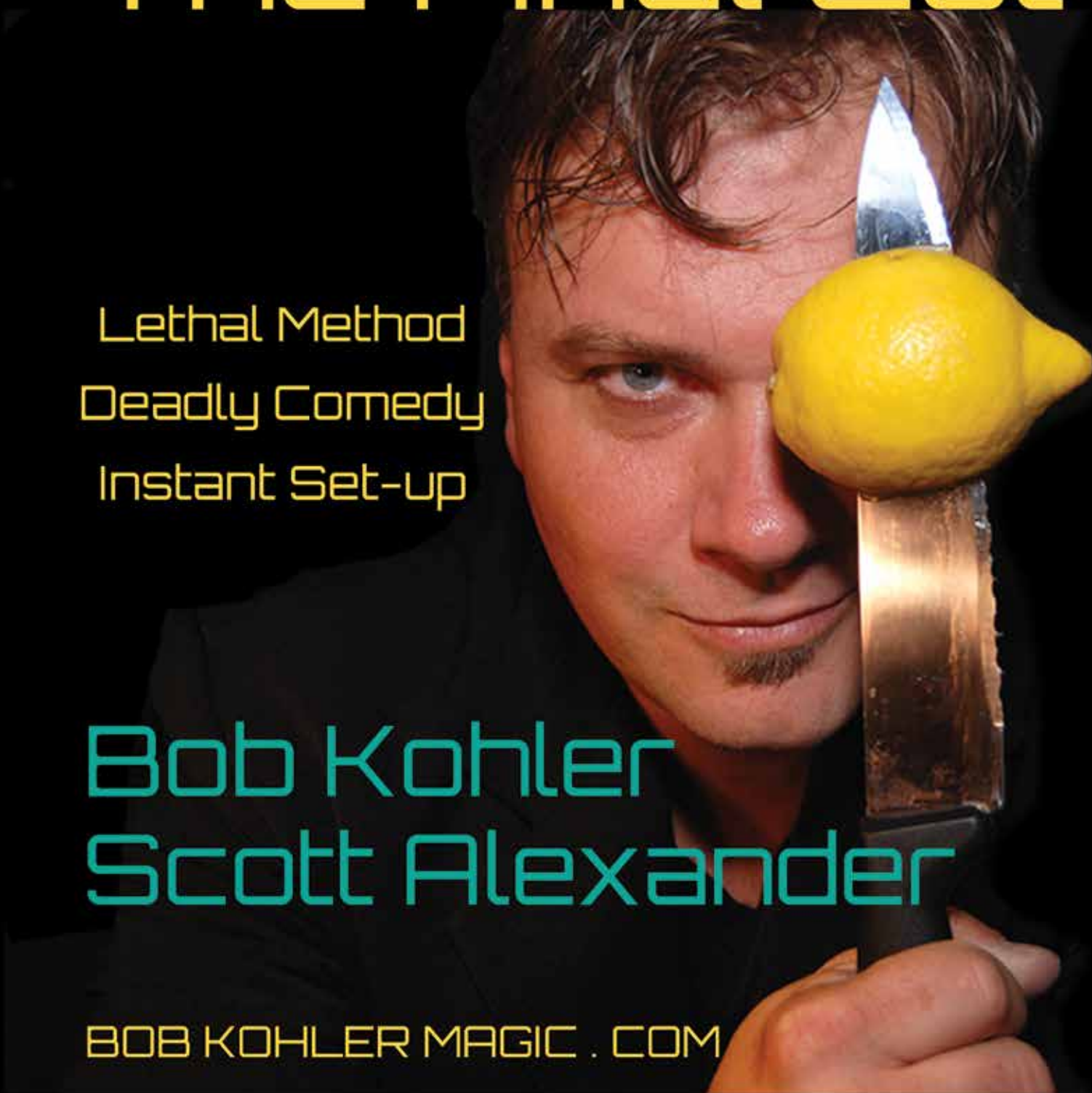
The #1 Signed Bill In Lemon For Pros

The Final Cut

Lethal Method
Deadly Comedy
Instant Set-up

Bob Kohler
Scott Alexander

BOB KOHLER MAGIC . COM



The Nielsen Gallery

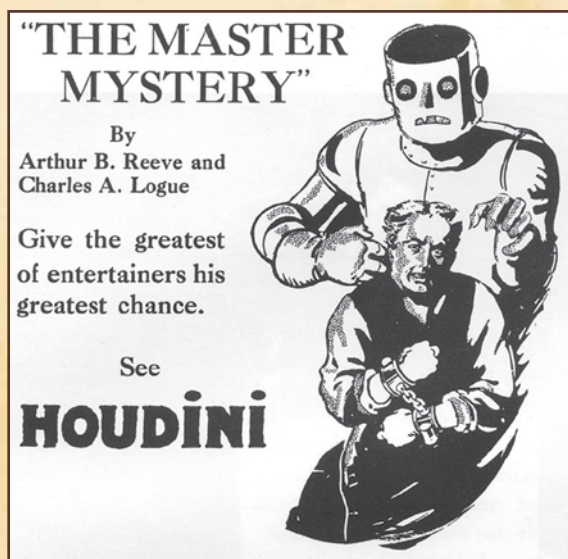
Houdini - Master Mystery (French version)

Dimensions: 2-sheet European 45.5" x 62" • Lithographer: Imp. G. Delattre et Cie.

Date: 1920 • Nielsen Rating: Rare

THE MASTER MYSTERY

Houdini, the world's most famous escape artist, rose from the obscurity of dime museums and sideshows to fame in vaudeville. Then, in the final years of World War I, with motion pictures gaining popularity, he became a movie star. This month's poster is devoted to his first film, *The Master Mystery*.



A Master Mystery advertisement

Houdini was intrigued with film-making since visiting Paris in December 1901, when he went to the *Théâtre Robert-Houdin* to pay homage to the memory of the French magician from whom he had derived his stage name. The great magician had died in 1871, but some of his illusions, as well as short silent films, were still being presented by the current proprietor Georges Méliès. Méliès had used trick photography for the illusions featured in the films, but it was clear to Houdini that movies held great potential.

Production of *The Master Mystery* began in the spring of 1918 in Yonkers, New York. At the time, Houdini was booked for nineteen weeks doing magic and vanishing a 10,000-pound elephant on the stage of the Hippodrome Theater in New York. He took time off to sign a contract with B.F. Rolfe of Octagon Films to star in a movie serial. As Quentin Locke, a Justice Department undercover agent, Houdini worked in the laboratory of a patent firm and utilized his expertise as an escape artist to thwart the efforts of the villain, a partner in the patent enterprise.

In his wonderful book *Houdini: A Pictorial Life*, the late Milbourne Christopher described the plot. "The firm, secretly financed by powerful industrialists, purchases basic inventions solely to keep them off the market, thus saving its sponsors the

vast sums of money they would have to spend retooling plants for improved products. Models of revolutionary engines, safety equipment, and communication devices are stored away in the 'graveyard of inventions,' a cavern beneath the mansion of Peter Brent. Brent, the president of Industrial Patents, Inc., has decided to reform. His partner, Herbert Balcom, is seeking to gain control of the firm by forcing Brent's lovely daughter, Eva, to marry Paul Balcom, his dissolute son."

In the film, Houdini (as Locke), battles a gang of thugs, torturers, an evil hypnotist, a Chinese Tong leader, a corrupt fortune teller, a strangulation expert from Madagascar, and even the world's first automaton villain with electric eyes and steel fingers from which lethal death rays spark out. The ten-part serial ran a total length of 238 minutes; at the end of each episode, the audience was left with Houdini facing certain death.

Over the course of the movie, Houdini is: locked in manacles and leg-irons and thrown into the river; bound with rope and suspended head-down over a cauldron of seething acid; locked in a deep-sea diver rig where his air hose is slashed; strapped to a "Chair of Death" with electrodes attached to the sides of his head and arms; wound in barbed wire on the basement floor of a café while rivulets of acid seep toward him; shackled hand and foot to a wall while a strangler tightens a rope around his neck; and thrown down an elevator shaft where the falling car nearly crushes him.

As with most serials of this type, the villains are defeated and the good guy gets the heroine. According to Christopher, at the end of the film, "Locke finally marries Eva Brent; when she expresses doubt that anything can hold him after his marvelous escapes, he smiles and turns his eyes toward the thin gold band on the third finger of her hand."

To help promote the film, Houdini appeared in the theater where it was being shown and performed some of his famous feats. A few months after *The Master Mystery* was released, Houdini signed a contract to make two feature films for Jesse A. Lansky and Paramount Artcraft Pictures in Hollywood. The first was *The Grim Game* and the second was *Terror Island*. Eventually, Houdini formed his own motion picture company and produced two more films, *The Man From Beyond* and *Haldane of the Secret Service*. None of these films were as successful as *The Master Mystery*. The poster featured this month was printed in French for promotion in that country. ♦

—Tom Ewing

Note: A special collector's edition of *Houdini: A Pictorial Life* that includes reproduced Houdini memorabilia from the Christopher collection is available from David Haversat at www.milbournechristopher.com. DVDs of Houdini's movies are available at www.kino.com.

8^e EPISODE UN PLAN DIABOLIQUE

HOUDINI

le Maître du
Mystère



GRAND ROMAN CINEMA
ADAPTE PAR
JEAN PETITHUGUENIN

EDITE PAR

PATHE

MONDIAL FILM FIRST NATIONAL
EXIB. CIRCUIT

PUBLIE DANS
L'ORDRE PUBLIC

Imp. G. DELATTRE & C^e, 39, r^e du Temple, PARIS



THE JOY OF GLOBAL ENTRY

If you have ever flown to a gig, especially one that is out of the country, you know that sometimes it can be a hassle. With all the new regulations and restrictions put on travel, we all have to get to the airport earlier. Even worse, if we miss a connection or something is the least bit off, we can potentially miss the gig. In the business of show, missing the gig is one of the cardinal sins. Puck had one of those nightmare scenarios. He almost missed a show by being delayed at the airport. After Puck relates this daring tale, I will fill you in on a big timesaving program from the TSA called Global Entry, in the hopes that this type of experience never happens to you.

MISSING THE BOAT

Puck recalls, "About seven years ago I was doing frequent runs to Cozumel, Mexico. I would fly from Orlando to Miami and then directly to the ship in Cozumel. Well, the airline started to limit the flights to Cozumel, so the cruise line, in an attempt to save money, started to revise my itinerary. My new flight was Orlando to Miami and Miami to Cancun. Once in Cancun I would catch a bus to Playa Del Carmen and then hop a ferry to Cozumel. Needless to say this was a giant pain in the butt. The line to get through security in Miami was a monster; I missed my flight and had to get the next one. This put me in Cancun late, so I also missed the last ferry to Cozumel. I found myself stranded in Playa Del Carmen. How was I going to get to the ship?"

"I started asking anyone who spoke English how I could hitch a boat ride to the ship. All I kept getting was shoulder shrugs, blank stares, and the word 'que?' repeated over and over again. I was a stranger in a strange land. All of a sudden, I got a tap on the shoulder that totally

creeped me out. It was a seedy-looking guy straight out of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. He said in English with a heavy Mexican accent, 'Pssst! Hey amigo, I got plane.' Evidently he overheard that I needed a ride to Cozumel. 'I think I can help you out my friend,' he continued in a low whisper. 'I have a plane and can get you there for only one-feefty.' I suspected this wasn't totally legal. I felt like I was in some weird spaghetti western and there was some shady stuff about to go down.

"Out of desperation, I agreed to accept his offer of a \$150 plane ride direct to Cozumel. He then motioned me to follow him down some questionable alleyways past tin roofed shacks and malnourished dogs to a vacant lot about three blocks away where he kept his single engine plane. The plane was scary; it looked like it was powered by a twisted rubber band. Adding to my uneasiness, there was a guy in a ragtag uniform with a thick '70's mustache chewing on a cigar and holding an automatic weapon. I suppose he was guarding the plane. I thought for sure I was going to end up in a bathtub full of ice asking, 'What happened to my kidney?'"

"I loaded my props on the plane and shared the front seat with my new found friend. The plane was so small that I had to work hard to avoid touching the instruments with my knees. We took off and flew a spine chilling seven feet over the water the whole ride! We landed shortly after taking off at the Cozumel Airport, where I was surprisingly welcomed by a Mexican customs official who kindly walked me through the airport where I found a cab and happily made it to the ship before it debarked. The cruise ship office in Miami was very relieved and praised my success in making it to the ship; this didn't hurt my standing with the cruise line. That alone made the whole frightening and worrisome experience totally worth it."

THEY PAY ME TO TRAVEL

A good percentage of the work we do as entertainers involves travel. Once we get to the gig and are doing the show, it is fun; the getting there is the real bummer. There

HIT THE ROAD

WITH SCOTT ALEXANDER, PUCK,
JENNY ALEXANDER, AND ADAM ACE

is a lot of truth in that phrase entertainers utter, "They pay me to travel; I do the show for free." Whether your travel is out of the country or within the US, a program that the TSA offers called Global Entry can make airport security lines virtually vanish and make passing through customs a breeze. The program is for trusted travelers who register with the TSA. Once you are registered, your passage through customs and immigration takes place via a special lane that really speeds up the process. Plus, once you are registered for Global Entry, you are also registered for TSA PRECheck, which means you also get a special line to pass through airport security. In this line you bypass all the regular passengers waiting to go through security. You get to leave laptops in your bags, you can keep on light jackets and sweaters, and you don't even have to take off your shoes. I recently signed up for the Global Entry program. The process was quite easy. As a frequent traveler, the program is life-changing!

GLOBAL ENTRY PROCESS

First, I went on the website (globalentry.gov), signed up, got a user name and password for the GOES program, and filled out an application. From what I have heard from a few fellow entertainers, you must make sure your application is filled out correctly. Any mistakes such as typing your wrong address or misplacing a number or letter can hold up the process. I made sure my ducks were in a row and rechecked my application for errors. On the application I was asked a bunch of questions, including whether or not I had a "checkered past." In other words, if you have a criminal record, you probably aren't going to be approved.

Once I filled out the application, there was a waiting period to be pre-approved. This took a little less than two weeks. You have to keep checking back on the website with your username and password to find out. They don't email you any notifications, so you have to stay on top of it. When my pre-approval notice was online I did as instructed. I printed it

out and took the pre-approval notice along with proof of residency and my current valid passport to a scheduled interview. These interviews are conducted by US customs officers and are usually in their offices at major airports. The website will give you a list of locations and times; you pick the one that best suits you. When you go for your interview, you are asked about your travel habits. I answered all the questions, was photographed and digitally fingerprinted, and told I was officially approved. I waited about a week until my official Global Entry card arrived in the mail; the first time I used it was just a few weeks ago. There was an insanely long line at the airport and I just whizzed right on through without a hitch, feeling sorry for the marks still waiting in line. I should never have to worry about taking a ride from a helpful, yet seedy stranger. ♦



Puck and the small plane

NEWSWORTHY

UPDATES FROM OUR
S.A.M. MEMBERS

AWARDS PRESENTED TO ASSEMBLY 25 COMPEERS MEIR YEDID AND BILL SCHMEELK BY ERIC DECAMPS

On December 20, 2013, Meir Yedid and Bill Schmeelk, two long-time members of S.A.M. Assembly 25 (The Rouclere – Zarrow Assembly), were presented with North Atlantic Region Awards of Excellence for their many years of selfless dedication to the S.A.M. and our magic community, and for promoting and elevating the art of magic.

Meir Yedid (a thirty-five-year member) is a multi-award winning magician who has performed and lectured around most of the world, both live and on

television. He has created and published several hundred magic routines for the fraternity. Currently, Meir resides in Fair Lawn, New Jersey; he operates Meir Yedid Magic (www.mymagic.com), offering the magic community the highest quality innovative effects, literature, and videos from many of magic's leading creators.

Bill Schmeelk (a thirty-seven-year member) is the founder of Wellington Enterprises (www.wellingtonent.com), which has been in business almost forty years. Wellington's products are known for their superior craftsmanship, ingenuity of design, and attention to detail. These beautifully made props are highly desired by both professional magicians and magic hobbyists.

Congratulations to Meir and Bill for embodying the S.A.M. mission statement and spirit! ♦



Bill Schmeelk & Eric



Meir Yedid & Eric



ENGAGE THE CHILDREN

Last month I began this column on performing for children with an important tenet: Every Audience Counts. I will continue to explore what I believe are the core values of a good professional children's entertainer. Along the way, I hope you take note and keep track. Each new topic will be a significant part of an overall philosophy of entertaining children, part of a contiguous whole that makes for a good performer. These topics are not in any particular order. Like last month's concept, the idea of engaging children is central to a professional set of values. Unlike many adult audiences, children *need* to be engaged. Let's examine what this means and why it is so.

Children are not simply small grown-ups. They think and behave differently than adults. This is partially based on experience, but also rooted in a standard continuum of development. Just like a child's body changes as it grows, so does its mind. A young mind is different than a mature mind in significant ways. Conservation of volume is a good example. Follow along. You don't have to track down a kindergarten and bottles of orange juice; the illustrations should be enough.

Imagine two bottles with exactly the same amount of liquid in them, say eight ounces. Also imagine two glasses, one short and wide, and the other tall and thin (Figure 1). Empty the juice from one bottle into the short glass and empty the other bottle into the tall glass (Figure 2). Which glass has more in it? Of course, logic and experience tells any adult they are equal. But if a young child sees you openly pour



Figure 1



Figure 2

eight ounces of liquid into a tall, thin glass and eight ounces of liquid into a wide, flat glass, the child will insist that the tall glass has more. Despite the rational fact that they saw exactly the same amount of liquid go into both containers, the tall one looks like it holds more, so they believe it does. Young children are not capable of rationalizing (or "conserving") that the volume did not change. They cannot hold onto clear facts seen in the (even recent) past in the face of "facts" now before them. Taller container equals more liquid. End of story.

This is but one example of youthful thinking processes that differ from adults. Children also have a very different temporal sense. They perceive most events in the here and now and have difficulty comparing past events with current events. This is a significant factor for a magician, because we deal extensively with changes over time. The red handkerchief went into the box. Later, a white handkerchief came out of the box. To adults this means that, logically, the handkerchief must have changed color. To children, it may mean that earlier you had a red handkerchief and now you have a different white handkerchief. Of course, as children grow older their mind grows, new neural connections form, and they assimilate additional information. Generally, the more they age, the more they will buy into your magic performance. But it is not easy to tell exactly what any given child is thinking at any given moment.

Children are not inherently a good audience. Audience behavior is learned behavior. Preschool children do not know how to be an audience, because they are usually *never* an audience. They are ego-centric and concerned only with what makes them happy or satisfied in any given moment. As they enter school age, they begin to encounter situations where they are told by a trusted adult to sit quietly and watch. At first, it may be a teacher reading a book to her class. Then, perhaps

NOT JUST KID STUFF

BY JIM KLEEFELD

the gym teacher has everyone sit and listen to learn the rules of volleyball. Later, they may walk to the school auditorium once or twice a year and watch a presentation. Or maybe mom takes them to the library to see a magic show. Only after repeated exposure to audience situations do they begin to learn about and practice audience behavior.

Three-year-olds can rarely ever sit and watch someone else do something. Four-year-olds will listen to a story. By the time a child is nine, however, he has been a part of an audience dozens of times – except you have no way of knowing what types of events those audiences watched, or what behavior was taught. If they saw a lot of magic shows at school assemblies, you are in luck. If they yelled and cheered from the bleachers at a soccer game, the first magician they see might be in for a rough time.

All of these indicators and more are what make it important to engage children in a magic show. By that I mean that a child spectator should be focused on you and your events, not on whether his shirt is unbuttoned or what the person next to him is doing. Children in a magic show audience need to watch *you*, pay attention to *your* props, remember *your* storylines, respond to *your* requests, and obey *your* instructions. If they do not, they will not understand or appreciate the magic, and perhaps not even the comedy entertainment. It is your responsibility to engage the children – each and every one of them – in the audience. If you control engagement well, you are likely to have good shows.

Luckily, it is fairly easy to engage children in an audience, but many performers neglect to do so. Engaging children takes a conscience act on your part. You have to almost constantly give the children something to do, say, or remember. If you structure your show so that they are silent spectators, just watching and listening, they will not be engaged. You risk losing their attention altogether. You may think you are doing wonderful magic, but if they talk to each other while you show your box empty, they will not be at all surprised when you take scarves out of it.

There are many ways to engage children. You should use a variety of techniques. You can ask the audience a general question for which you expect a universal response. "Are you all ready for a great

magic show?" you ask. "Yes!" they all shout. A common general response is built into this venerable request, *"On three, I want everyone to say the magic word, 'Alakazam!'"*

You can also ask a general question for which you expect a general non-verbal response. *"How many of you have read Alice in Wonderland?"* you say while holding up the book. Most in the audience will raise their hand. You can ask a specific question for which you expect an individual response. *"Who knows a magic word we can use?"* or *"We are going to use these red, white, and blue handkerchiefs to make something that Betsy Ross made. Can anyone tell us who Betsy Ross was?"* Several children raise their hands and you choose an individual to reply.

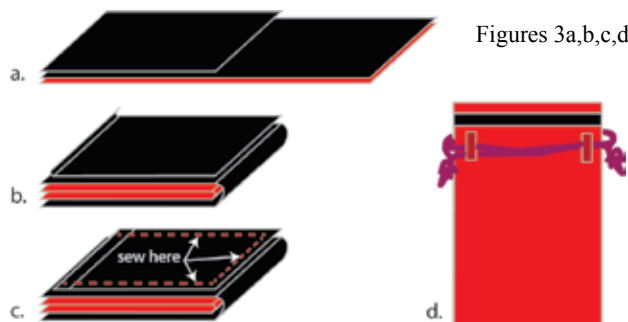
You can also direct a specific general movement. Tell the audience that the magic will work if they stick their hand out straight and wiggle their fingers. Ask everyone to make your wand change color by blowing softly. Or say that you will choose a volunteer who is sitting up straight with one hand up in the air. If you are about to bring out a puppet or an animated prop, you can tell the audience that the character is shy, and to please sit very still and be very quiet.

You can also engage children by proxy. When you select helpers from the audience, everyone engages because they want to be chosen. After you choose someone, many children still engage because they identify with the person who went to the front. If you make it clear that you will choose helpers often, then most of the audience will engage each time you choose someone, because they construct in their mind what they would do if chosen. Using children as helpers engages more than just the ones chosen.

Examine your show for the number of engagement actions. How many routines do you have that are simply show and tell? You bring out two plain silks, tie them together, and set them aside. Then you show a rainbow silk and vanish it. Then you retrieve the two plain silks and show that the rainbow silk has reappeared tied between them. If you expect the children to sit, watch, and listen while you do all of these actions, even with clever patter, you lose their attention. As silent observers, they can only hold onto their need to be polite for so long. If you sprinkle that routine with questions they must answer, hand gestures they must make, or thoughts they must imagine, you are engaging them and have a far better chance of them enjoying the magic show.

Here is a routine that engages children. You will need five similar Change Bags. I prefer flat ones with a drawstring top, each in a different bright color. It would be difficult to find a set like this at a magic shop, but they are easy to make. Get some plain cotton fabric in red, yellow, blue, green, orange, and black. Cut an eight-inch by twenty-inch rectangle from the red and black fabric. Fold over and hem the two short edges of both pieces. Lay them atop each other.

Cut another black rectangle that measures eight inches by ten inches; hem one short edge and lay that atop the pair (Figure 3a). Fold the fabric sandwich in half with the red on the inside (Figure 3b). Sew across the bottom and up both sides of this cloth sandwich (Figure 3c) to make a bag. Turn it inside out so the seams are inside. You now have a red bag with a black interior and a black divider inside. Sew four loops on the outside near the top of the bag and slide two cords through them to make a pair of drawstrings. Your completed bag should look like Figure 3d. Repeat the process with other colors to make blue, yellow, green, and orange bags.



Figures 3a,b,c,d

You also need six purple silks and your favorite method for vanishing a silk. I recommend eighteen-inch diamond-cut silks, which look large but which can be vanished in a thumb tip. Place one purple silk hidden deep into the rear compartment of each bag. Keep the other one handy for the show. My presentation is below. As you read through it, make note of the many types of engagements involved.

"How many of you ever wanted to become a magician? Let's see a show of hands. That's a lot. Maybe we can turn someone into a magician right now. Before I pick a magician, I'll need some helpers. I'll choose someone sitting quietly – with a big smile. If you want to help, raise your hand."

Choose five volunteers. As they come forward, first introduce yourself to each one, and then indicate that they should

grab one of the bags spread out on your tabletop. Have them stand in a line holding their bags as shown in Figure 4. (Actually, the drawstring bags would be pulled shut at the top, but I wanted the illustration to indicate the outer colors and inner linings.)



Figure 4

"These helpers look great. Let's give them all a big hand. And just so we all know, let's all say the colors of the bags as I point to them." Point to each bag as they respond by naming the colors. *"Now I need someone to be a magician. Let me find someone sitting quietly – with a big smile. Would you come up front, please? The rest of you can fold your hands and watch carefully."* Get the child's name and bring out the purple silk.

"Boys and girls, what color is this scarf? Right, it's purple. Jason is going to make this purple scarf disappear. Would you like to see him do that? Jason, I'll put the scarf in my hand; you wiggle your fingers over it and it will disappear. And

you out in the audience can help. You can wiggle your fingers, too."

Crumple the scarf loosely in your hand. Have the helper wiggle his fingers. Open your hand and show the scarf. *"Hmm, it didn't disappear. Everyone say 'awwwwww.' Maybe I need to hold it tighter."* Push the scarf into the thumb tip in your closed fist. *"Now let's all try again."* Wiggle your fingers. Open your hand and show it empty. The audience will react. *"It disappeared! Great job, Jason. Kids, didn't he do a good job?"*

"Now, Jason has to decide where to make the scarf reappear. He has his choice of five different colored bags." Point out the bags one at a time. *"How many of you think he should make it come back here, inside this red one? How about this yellow one? This green one? This orange one? And how many of you want Jason to make*

the purple scarf return inside this blue bag?

"Well, Jason, it's completely up to you. You can make that purple scarf reappear inside any color bag you like. Everyone be really quiet so he can concentrate. Which one do you want to use?" Let's suppose he says "green." "Kids, do you think he can make it reappear inside the green bag? Give it a try, Jason. Step back, get a good aim, and wiggle your fingers at the green bag. And you kids in the audience can all help him." Give a moment for everyone to wiggle their fingers.

"I think he did the magic. Let's give him a hand." Let the kids begin clapping, but then hold up your hand to stop them. "Wait, before we applaud, we should check to see if it worked. Let's see if he made the purple scarf reappear inside the green bag."

Now you will separately open and show the four non-chosen bags. Step to the first person and open her bag for her, holding the back compartment closed. "Look in the red bag and tell me what you see." She will say, "nothing." Grasp the bag and turn the front compartment inside out, showing it empty. Let her hold the bag; friction will keep the purple scarf hidden inside from

falling out. "Everybody say, 'No scarf!'" Let the audience respond.

Step to the second person and open his bag for him. "Look in the yellow bag and tell me what you see." He will say "nothing." Grasp the bag and turn the front compartment inside out showing it empty. "Everybody say, 'No scarf!'"

Step to the third person and repeat the business. "Everybody say, 'No scarf!'" Step to the fourth person and repeat. "Everybody say, 'No scarf!'"

Step to the last person, the one with the green bag, and open his bag for him, holding the front compartment closed. "Look in there and tell me what you see." He will say, "A purple scarf." "Really? It reappeared? Well hold it up!" Let him hold the bag and remove the purple scarf (Figure 5).

"Everybody say, 'Jason did it!'"

Collect the bags and the scarf. "Let's thank all of our helpers as they return to their seats." Shake Jason's hand before he returns to his seat. This will force him to pause with you while the others return. Put your hand on his shoulder to make sure he faces the audience. "Didn't he do some great magic?" The audience will give a vocal response. "Let's give him a big



Figure 5

round of applause. And applaud for yourselves for helping."

This routine clearly demonstrates many interactions that will engage children. There are over fifty acts of engagement in a scant five-minute effect. That's fifty times the children will be reminded to watch, listen, and attend to you and your magic. It's a good routine, and I hope you use it. But if you insert this routine into your act and change nothing else, you have only helped yourself a little bit. Absorb the intent of the routine and then think about your act. Think about how many ways you can apply the principle to other routines that you do. Write out a script and then do it – Engage The Children. ♦

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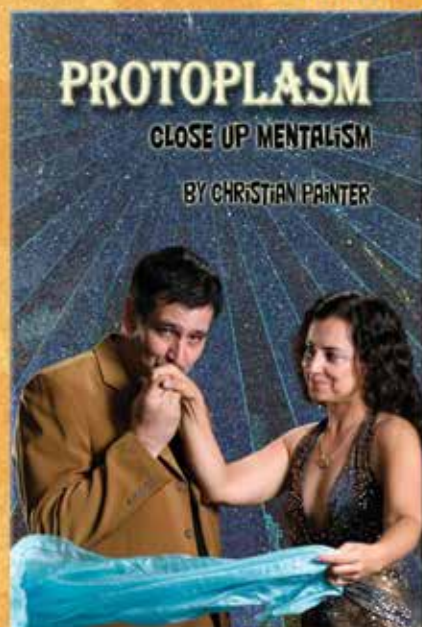
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Neil Tobin— The Beginning and End of a Supernatural Show

By Christian Painter



Supernatural Chicago is a live theater show starring Neil Tobin as your Necromancer. With a dark smile and a pleasant voice, he is your expertly dressed facilitator into the chilling, spirit-filled realms of haunted Chicago.

Tobin and *Supernatural Chicago* have received wildly favorable notices over the past decade from such respected sources as the *Chicago Tribune*, which marveled, “Is it real? Or isn’t it?” RedEye Chicago teased, “He’ll teach you about Chicago’s paranormal history and get you involved in psychic experiments that put Jedi mind tricks to shame.” Time Out Chicago splashed his full-color photo across page four. Newscasters from WGN Morning News exclaimed, “You’re the devil!” Visitors from around the world contributed over a hundred positive reviews to the travel community at TripAdvisor.com, which listed the show among the top ten things to do in Chicago. Neil has also been invited to appear in character on broadcasts by Chicago NPR station WBEZ, *Ghost Adventures* on the Travel Channel, *Dead Famous* on A&E, and on the DVD for the Michael Keaton feature film *White Noise*.

My wife and I saw this theatrical production about four years ago. I wrote about our experiences in my May 2010 Mental Breakdown column. What we really enjoyed was that Neil had created an experience that had meaning. He’s an expert on the ghost stories of Chicago. In his show, he weaves these stories around magic and mentalism tricks that hammer home

the tales of terror for the audience.

After the show, various audience members engaged him in heartfelt discussion. My wife and I leaned in to listen to his after-show interaction. His character did not change. He was attentive, humble, and warm. He answered questions, listened to their personal stories of hauntings, and made each of them feel special.

I was delighted to hear that Neil was coming upon a very impressive milestone for *Supernatural Chicago*. On February 14, 2014, this show will have run for a record-breaking ten years – a remarkable feat for any show. I thought it might be interesting, entertaining, and informative to learn a little more about this passionate performer and his extraordinary accomplishment.

Christian: Let’s start with the obligatory early introduction to magic.

Neil: When I was a kid, I was the typical boy magician. I performed for other kids’ birthday parties and thought I was pretty capable. When I hit high school, I stepped away from it because music and theatre were my big extracurricular interests, and that continued to be the case through college. But after graduation, I stopped performing entirely to focus on concerns like career and relationships. Then one day, while living in Los Angeles, a thought struck me from out of the blue: I was near Hollywood – the Magic Castle is in Hollywood! I called them and explained that I was a magician visiting from out of town – which I technically was – and they let me drop by with a couple of friends. And that was it. My love of magic was

immediately rekindled and I was at Hollywood Magic the next day, looking at books to buy. But with the perspective gained from having spent years away from magic and the theatrical education I’d acquired in the interim, I could see the magic I did as a boy for what it was: totally wrong for whom I had become. The first book I bought that day was Annemann’s *Practical Mental Effects*. Mentalism and bizarre magick are what I’ve done ever since.

As a child of the ‘70s and ‘80s, Doug Henning and David Copperfield were part of the atmosphere that every magic-crazed boy breathed. But the three most direct influences in my childhood were Marshall Brodien, who I watched on local TV nearly every day as Wizzo the Wizard on the *Bozo’s Circus* show; Lee Levin, who was my first magic teacher at the Mayer Kaplan JCC in Skokie; and Bob Higa, who in my youth was the very patient resident magician at my family’s annual little-slice-of-the-Catskills vacation destination, Nippersink Manor Resort in Genoa City, Wisconsin.

As an adult, Eugene Burger tops the list of people who influenced me. Not just because *Spirit Theater* and *Mastering the Art of Magic* were two crucial books in my development as a performer, but because he has personally provided me with so much helpful guidance and support through the years. *Supernatural Chicago* would not be the show that it is without him. Tony Andruzzi was certainly an influence. And without question, Max Maven; if you haven’t seen his *Thinking in Person* one-man show, you owe it to yourself to seek it out.

For years I have made efforts to broaden the appreciation of magic by the public; for example, there's *Magical History Tour*, which I wrote for the Elmhurst Historical Museum in Harlan Tarbell's hometown. This was a temporary exhibit that focused on Chicago's magical contributions and which earned a Certificate of Excellence from the Illinois Museum Association. I've also been a consultant for the subsequent exhibit, *Magic*, at the Chicago History Museum, as well as for several theatre productions, most recently *Barnum* at the Mercury Theatre, for which I taught the Broadway-pedigreed leading actor to perform nearly a dozen hand-magic effects. Through my involvement with the S.A.M., I chair the annual Chicago Magic Competition, which has brought attention to a number of top-notch performers in town.

For those inside the magic world, there are the effects and articles I've contributed to *M-U-M*, *Genii*, *Magical*, *Oracle*, and *Vibrations*. There's also the utility device for magicians and mentalists that I created and marketed the year before *Supernatural Chicago* opened, The Xpert; I'm currently working on a DVD to reintroduce it to the community later this year through Paper Crane and Penguin. I helped edit an excellent book of mentalism called *Protoplasm*; perhaps you've heard of it. And I had the honor of editing and co-writing with Jim Magus and Terry Nosek a biography of one of the men who helped blaze the trail for my own performing career, *Unspeakable Acts: Three Lives and Countless Legends of Tom Palmer/Tony Andruzzi/Masklyn ye Mage*. If you missed the reviews when it came out, Joshua Kane in *M-U-M* called it (let me look this up), "this year's guilty pleasure read...a witty and salacious roller coaster ride through the life of one of magic's most complicated and creative individuals."

I also think it's absolutely critical to look for inspirations outside of magic. Magical performance is a subset of theatre, so the more you can learn in other areas of theatre, the more you can apply to your own work. When I was in sixth grade or so, I wanted to be Gene Kelly and Donald O'Connor after I saw *Singing in the Rain*. I studied every move, every note, every inch of that film. I took acting, music, dance, and technical theatre classes throughout high school and college; and writing, too – my degree is actually in English – and I performed in as many theatre productions as my course schedule would allow. I can say without hesitation that learning to sell a song or a dance and holding the attention of an audience with a compelling monologue is exactly the preparation needed for the work I do today. I'd go so far as to say that the physical aspects of magic are literally choreography, and motivating that movement while naturally speaking a script is essentially what a performer does in musical theatre.

Christian: Let's talk about *Supernatural Chicago*. How do you go about creating a successful and acclaimed one-man show?

Neil: I didn't set out to create something that would be a guaranteed success. I was primarily inspired to do a show that personally mattered to me. And what I was interested in when I put this together was creating a blend of storytelling and magic's interactive qualities. Unlike the magic shows I was guilty of perpetrating in my childhood, I didn't just want to do a disconnected series of tricks and call it a show. To me, a real show needed a theme that tied everything into a cohesive whole. Chicago's spooky history provided that. And as it turned out, people really responded to that mixture, and to the subject matter.

We get everybody from high-school kids to bachelorette parties to seniors on vacation. And I think a big part of our appeal is that I specifically wanted to create theatre that wasn't just for self-avowed "magic fans." That's too small a market. Our art deserves so much more than that. There's a whole world of people

out there who don't know they like magical performance; they might even think they hate it, because the last time they saw it was by an inept performer at a birthday party when they were seven. So I set out to make a show in which the narrative was just as important as the magical or psychic elements. This way it could attract and satisfy people with a general interest in Chicago history or the paranormal or offbeat theatre, while at the same time opening their eyes to magical performance without making it the entire reason for the show.

Christian: I really enjoyed the paranormal theme of your show. How did you discover that?

Neil: As we're seeing today, lots of people are interested in the paranormal; just look at the dozens of ghost-hunting shows on TV. But when we opened, none of those were on the air. Our show fed a public interest in the paranormal that very few entertainment options were tapping into at the time. My own interest in it goes back to childhood. I used to visit my local library regularly to devour their collection of



magic books. And as it turned out, the books on ghosts and allegedly-true hauntings were always conveniently shelved right next to the magic section, so I ate those up, too. Years later, when it came time to work on this show, how could I not recall these stories? They were such a natural fit for the venue, the former Excalibur nightclub.

The Excalibur (now Castle) is a Chicago landmark. The building was designed by the same architect responsible for the city's Newberry Library and portions of the University of Chicago campus, and it's listed on the National Registry of Historic Places. When you first see the massive granite slabs and Romanesque arches that make up this incredible building, you just naturally start thinking haunted-house thoughts. When I was chairing "The Houdini Séance" for Assembly 3 of The Society of American Magicians, it's the first place I thought of for a venue; so I went ahead and made a cold call to arrange a meeting with the manager. The way I pitched it, the event would bring in paying guests early, before the bar business would be in full swing. I also hinted that there was a good chance of media coverage for such an unusual event. Management said they'd give it a try.

I was only going to perform "The Houdini Séance" there, but as it turned out, the media coverage was so impressive that when the séance closed, management asked what I could do for them the rest of the year. Well, I had just invented my Necromancer persona for the séance, and I had this valuable treasure-trove of haunted lore already associated with the building. So it was only natural to build on that and add other local stories to create *Supernatural Chicago*. We opened on Friday the 13th of February, 2004.

Christian: Interesting that you opened on a Friday the 13th. I know you had a ritual for serving cupcakes on any night the show ran on a Friday the 13th. How did that come about?

Neil: It was simply a matter of publicity. One thing I discovered about running a show is that if you want news coverage, you need to create news events. Opening Night is a news event – and even more so with it falling on such a superstition-loaded date to play off the show's paranormal theme. But after the second month

of performances, the media needs something new to talk about. So by continuing to make a big deal out of every Friday the 13th, I've been able to create additional news events. Whenever a show date falls on one, I'm there with press releases and cupcakes for my audience.

Christian: Getting butts in seats is no easy task. How else have you gone about promoting your show?

Neil: If my show were bigger – if I had more seats or ran more nights a week – I could justify spending more on advertising. But since it's one night a week in a fifty-seat house, I've kept advertising to a minimum and stuck with low-cost publicity methods. So in addition to writing press releases at every opportunity, I meet concierges in person and send them info via email. I distribute leaflets to tourism centers and hotels and I try to get into all the theatre and tourist attraction listings online and off. I have separate Facebook pages for Neil Tobin, Necromancer, and Supernatural Chicago, and a Twitter account under @NeilNecromancer,

all of which have essentially attracted my own personal high-school reunions to the show! And I encourage word of mouth. At the end of every show, I invite guests to share their experience with their friends at home and online; this has supplied the show with a steady stream of friendly referrals.

It took a lot of hard work to get the word out about this show. Consider this: Chicago is incredibly rich in theatre choices. On any given weekend, people can see shows that are on their way to Broadway, national tours of Broadway hits, top-notch offerings from Tony-recognized companies like the Goodman, Steppenwolf, and Chicago Shakespeare – and those are just the big guys. Add the storefront companies and it's unbelievable!

To break through the amount of advertising and publicity they're putting out, I've had to wrack my brain. In addition to the above tactics, I've done TV and radio appearances, participated in an all-night experimental performance event in Chicago's Loop called Looptopia, and once I even staged a public performance-art piece called "Chess With Death," in which pedestrians in front of the Thompson Center were invited to play chess with a friend of mine dressed as the

Grim Reaper straight out of Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*; all winners were granted free admission to *Supernatural Chicago*. (The result was coverage in RedEye Chicago and a photo in the *Chicago Tribune*.) It's crazy stuff. But if I wanted to get attention in town when the show was first starting out, I had to somehow compete with a ton of shows that could outspend me in a minute.

These efforts did get me enough in-town notice to stay afloat. But here's something I learned after racking up a year or so of performance time: as hard as it was to attract attention locally, *Supernatural Chicago* had a real advantage out of town. In the online world, it had the rare commodity of duration. Most shows come and go, even at the big-ticket theaters. Meanwhile, *Supernatural Chicago* had ten years to establish itself all over the Internet. That meant greater online credibility and higher search-engine rankings, which pulled in tourists from all over the world.

Christian: One of the strengths of your show is the way you intertwine the magic with the



Supernatural promotional poster

ghost stories. Can you take us on a journey of your creative process as you develop a new piece in your show?

Neil: Each piece in *Supernatural Chicago* starts with a story. So when I first began developing the show, I'd read through all the stories I could find, then actively try to brainstorm effects that would bring the more dramatic stories to life for my audience. Not every pairing was a winner, of course, but enough passed muster that I was able to hammer out scripts and put together a show. As the show has continued and I've created new pieces to cycle in, though, I've found that the later pieces come together without as much conscious effort. I could be reading an effect

in the magic and mentalism literature and, days later, wake up with a way to relate it to a story I had read years before. That's not to say that turning it into a finished piece is easy. After the initial inspiration, I still have to do the hard work of writing a script, testing it out in front of audiences, then rewriting and retesting, again and again, until all the rough edges have worn off. But it's work I love, which is why I'm doing it in the first place.

Christian: Tell us a story about an unexpected benefit of performing your show for ten years.

Neil: First of all, let me say that I generally hate doing live TV and radio appearances. The conditions are so hard to control, and the

effects I do under these circumstances are never anything from *Supernatural Chicago* because I wouldn't want to take away the element of surprise; it's always a stressful situation for me. But when a producer wants to give you free publicity, you do it. And when Chicago's National Public Radio station WBEZ called me out of the blue last year, I expected it to be yet another nerve-wracking experience, until the producer did something I completely didn't expect: she invited me to appear on a broadcast without expecting me to perform any effects. It was a Friday the 13th show, and I was simply there to be an authority on all things spooky while listeners called in and talked about what scared them. It was hilarious, and also kind of a personal breakthrough. Before that appearance, producers had only seen me as an act. But at that moment, after years of doing my show, I was acknowledged as more than an act. I was a personality.

Christian: How have you evolved as a performer over the course of this show?

Neil: When the show opened in 2004, I was a reasonably experienced performer. But nothing I ever did gave me the performing experience of being in front of an audience and perfecting material every week for years at a time. And after ten years, I've been able to do *Supernatural Chicago* so many times that most of the time I barely have to give a conscious thought to the lines, the stagecraft, the methodology, or anything that would take my focus away from my immediate relationship with the audience. That's given me a level of control and assurance as a performer I never could have gotten otherwise.

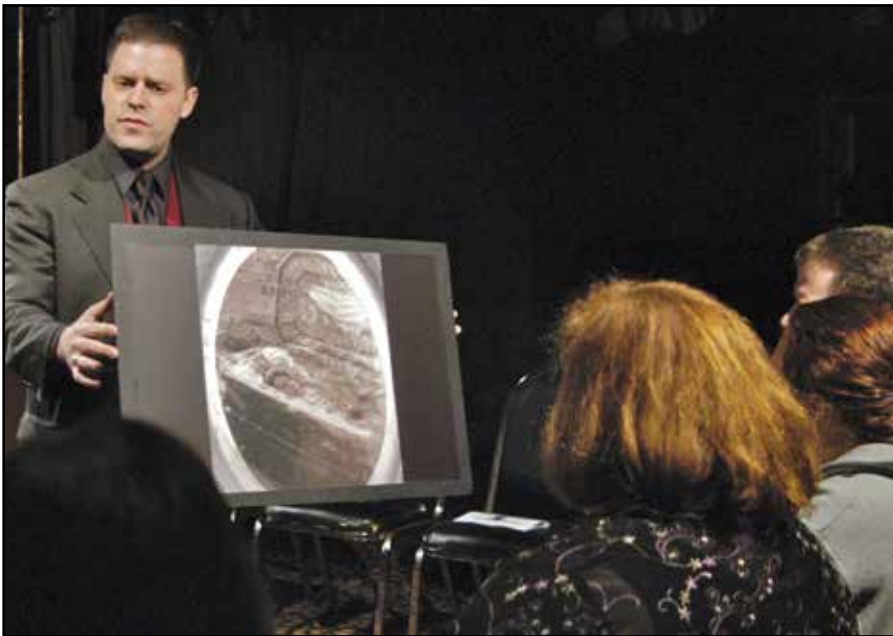
Christian: What was one of the highlights of performing this show?

Neil: It was probably the night that my dad and his cronies – men and women who saw me grow up and watched me perform as a kid – came to the show. One of them started giving me a little bit of a hard time near the start of the show, just as a gag, and I zinged him right back. You wouldn't believe the laughter! They absolutely loved it. I don't think I've ever had a more appreciative audience. We all went out for ice cream afterward.

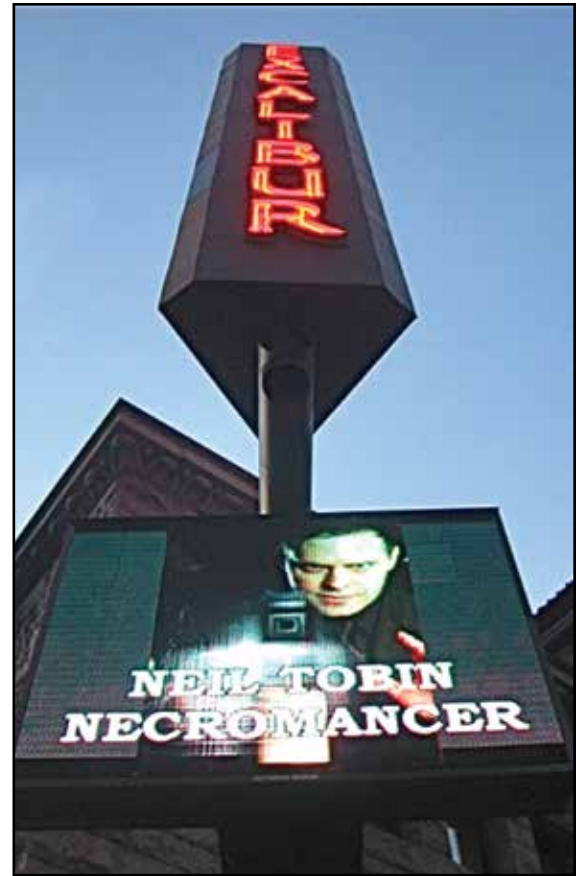
Outside of performance, a major highlight would have to be when I found out that the University of Lincoln in the UK was using *Supernatural Chicago* as inspiration for its theatre class in Site-Specific Performance – very humbling.

Christian: What was one of the unexpected challenges during your run?

Neil: Drunks – seriously. My venue is a private room of a nightclub, and two beverages are included with every admission. While most people will pace themselves, some will get an early start. That means I have had to learn



The Necromancer weaves his tales of the supernatural



(Clockwise from top left) Promotional photo, Sign outside Excalibur, Photo of the Castle (formerly Excalibur), Neil's *Supernatural Chicago* venue

how to handle people with slight impairments, gently defuse disruptions, and maintain command of the room and some semblance of pacing even when seemingly half the audience has had to get up and use the restroom at the most inopportune times. Ultimately, these conditions have made me a stronger performer and sharpened my improv skills immeasurably.

Christian: If others wanted to duplicate your success, what are three things you would tell them they must do?

Neil: First, think long and hard about the type of performance character that comes naturally to you. Then refine this character to make it a totally distinct and specific creation. Second, devise a show that's actually *about something*. If you're Richard Turner, you can make it about how well you handle a deck of cards; but if you want to follow my example, you'll

make it about another subject, preferably one that other people care about. Third, be tireless. That applies to how much you perform your show, even if only four people show up; how closely you listen to your audience reactions; how carefully you revise your work to make it better; and how hard you promote the show year after year.

Christian: You have decided to retire this show as you hit the ten year mark. Why are you closing it down?

Neil: It's not over yet! I hope anybody reading this will hurry to join us on February 14, 2014, as *Supernatural Chicago* celebrates its tenth anniversary, an occasion that places it ahead of any other one-man show or magical theatre performance in the city's history! I'm expecting massive media coverage and a packed house, with fans old and new in attendance for this

once-in-a-lifetime event.

However, two weeks later, on the 28th, the show will close. My reason for doing this goes back to my reasons for creating this show. I wanted to find myself as a performer. I wanted to share these incredible stories with all kinds of people in this absolutely amazing place. And I've done that. For the past ten years, I've enjoyed the rare gift of being able to explore every second of *Supernatural Chicago*. I've learned so much. But if I want to grow as an artist, I need to give myself new challenges, and there are only twenty-four hours in a day. I'm working on a new theatre piece, something that's really exciting to me and which I hope will be exciting to others, and I need time away from this show so I can devote my attention to developing it fully.

Christian: In the course of your ten-year run, have you had the opportunity to see your show

influence others?

Neil: That's been really gratifying. Back when we opened, there was no dependable destination in Chicago where members of the public could go out on any given weekend and see a magical theatre show. There was informal restaurant and bar magic – Chicago has deep magical roots in that area – but nothing with the sense of ceremony and importance of a theatrical show. And after my show opened and people saw that it worked, the local magic landscape changed. Today there are three different theatrical magic shows in Chicago to choose from every week, a fourth a short drive away in Galena, plus a monthly showcase with a changing roster of performers. There's never been a better time for Chicagoans to see theatrical magic!

Christian: Tell me something that people in magic don't know about you.

Neil: If people in magic know anything about me, it's probably through my effects, writing, or performing. So they might not realize that I'm not a full-timer. The rest of my life is divided among earning my living as an advertising creative director and copywriter, being a husband, and helping raise my two wonderful girls.

Christian: Describe yourself in one concise sentence.

Neil: Lucky as hell.

Postscript: Spending time with Neil, you can't help but notice how dedicated and fervent he is about performance art. He seems to be a guy always busy, always involved in a project, and constantly driven by his passions. He described himself as lucky. I would say this is true if "lucky" means hard work and unwavering commitment to one's dreams.

He is a real gem of Chicago culture and has created an impact with his show that will be talked about and missed for years in the Windy City. If you don't get a chance to see *Supernatural Chicago*, you will have missed a golden opportunity to see what a successful, commercial, magic show looks like. However, if you are in Chicago, look up Neil Tobin and see what he's up to. I'm quite certain you will be surprised and you will have a very good time.

If you are in Chicago (or even nearby) before he closes this show, see it. For tickets, contact www.SupernaturalChicago.com or call 800-979-3370. ♦

Photos by Jonathan Cohon/JHC Productions

Experiencing *Supernatural Chicago*

If you're reading this article and you are not immediately making plans to get to the show before the end of February, you will miss *Supernatural Chicago*. Such is the nature of live theatre. No DVD can capture the excitement of an intimate, interactive, you-are-there experience, nor could a straightforward list of the stories told and effects employed do it justice. But maybe this bit of script can give you an inkling of what it's like to spend a few minutes in the company of Neil Tobin, Necromancer.

Excerpt from "The Murder Castle"

Necromancer directly addresses the audience. *Years ago, I wandered into a charming little boutique hotel. On the entry desk, bathed in the light of a Tiffany lamp, there was a golden bell – just waiting to signal the clerk that a guest had arrived.* He shows a classic brass hotel bell and hands it to a guest. *Would you please press the button?* She does and it rings.

Hotels have been welcoming their guests this way for over a century. And there's a good reason why: sound directly triggers emotion. Ordinarily, when you find yourself in an unfamiliar hotel, what's the first thing your brain does? It analyzes every inch of the place for dirt or other unsavory surprises. He addresses another participant. *Ring it again.* She does. *And just like that, your logic's overcome by a flood of happy memories of bright summer days and shiny new bikes and ice-cream trucks!*

So imagine yourself now at the front desk of a boutique hotel in 1893. He gives the bell to another participant. *Here's the bell. What do you do?* She rings it. *Perfect! Right on cue, the proprietor appears, welcomes you, and helpfully leads you to your room. And with the sound of the bell still echoing sweetly in your ears, you don't notice the cheap construction of the building.*

Necromancer moves to the next participant. *Please ring it.* She does. *Your suspicions aren't piqued by the faint chemical smell.* He addresses the next participant. *It's your turn.* She rings it. *You haven't the slightest worry about what fate might await you – and neither did the dozens of others who stayed there before you.*

Necromancer deposits the bell on a nearby table downstage. *The proprietor went by the name of Dr. H.H. Holmes. If you've read The Devil in the White City, you know his little hotel was designed for murder. The rooms were made to close airtight, with gas lines that could asphyxiate lodgers in minutes. A secret chute slid bodies from the top floors to the basement, where they were dissected on the steel operating table, dissolved in pits of acid or quicklime, or burned in the crematorium.*

From the street, it was just a hotel serving visitors to the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Over twenty-seven million people came to town to see the Fair that year. So, who would notice if a few never returned home?

Well, nobody did – until two years later. The hotel was searched, Holmes was arrested, and when confronted with the evidence, he gave a full confession. He admitted to murdering twenty-seven people, mostly young women, though he's suspected of killing more than a hundred.

In his own words: "I was born with the devil in me. I could not help the fact that I was a murderer, no more than the poet can help the inspiration to sing. I was born with the 'Evil One' standing as my sponsor beside the bed where I was ushered into the world, and he has been with me since."

Holmes was convicted and hanged in 1896. And ordinarily, that would be the end of the story. But within weeks of his death, mysterious events begin piling up and attributed to his vengeful spirit: The head detective on his case becomes seriously ill. The judge and coroner are both struck by fatal diseases. The coroner's physician dies of blood poisoning. The priest who delivered his last rites is found dead on church grounds. And the jury foreman dies of electrocution.

As for the caretaker of the Murder Castle, his relatives say he was haunted for months, unable to sleep, before finally being led to suicide by the spirit of Dr. H.H. Holmes.

Well, that's what they say. But how can you prove something like that?

The bell rings unexpectedly of its own accord. ♦

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FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BY GEORGE PARKER

THE IMPACT TO EFFORT RATIO

Sometimes I hate magic.

Creating magic can frustrate me like almost nothing else. I presume this frustration comes from the fact that I strive to create the best magic ever. In fact, I want to create magic that makes all other magic superfluous. I want to create the magic that wipes out all magic in the past and the future. Yes, you heard that right. I confess. Sigh.

Am I a testosterone challenged alpha male? Certainly. Am I a narcissistic megalomaniac? The jury is still out, but I heard them whisper unsettling things. No worries though, because my wife and friends keep me in check. As long as they keep mocking me I'll be fine. Apart from them, reality in general tends to keep me on my humble knees.

Deep love spawns big dreams. And my love for magic runs deep. So I forgive myself for having those "magic world domination" dreams. I'm sure you recognize at least some of it. The desire to create the best magic trick ever can be a highly motivating force to think deeper, study more, and come up with better methods and more creative presentations, which is much needed in my case. I don't have any real talent to speak of, so I need that deep love and the high ideal that comes from it (paired with a high dosage of fantasy and lust for work) to keep me going. That attitude helped me to create a long, satisfying, successful, and blessed career in magic.

Still, there are some side effects of having a driving force in the shape of a delusional ideal. One of the more notable side effects is that, sometimes, I'm afraid that a wise, 394-year-old master magician will walk in on a performance. He stands

in the back of the room, barely visible. He starts to slowly shake his head. When the audience has left the room he looks me in the eye and says, "You know you suck, don't you? There's so much wrong with what you're doing. And the way you do it. I highly recommend you go on a retreat, look deep into yourself, and ask, 'Am I doing everything I need to come up with original, great magic?'" I nod in agreement, walk away to my dressing room, sit down in a corner, and sob for several hours.

I have talked to a lot of artists in many fields; I am relieved that I'm not the only one who sometimes feels this way. Most of them also felt the deep love for their art and the need to be the best they can. In spite of all the energy, effort, money, and love expended on developing ourselves, they also experienced this fear of being exposed as a fake, fraudulent quack. I guess you can't have the one (deep love) without the other (fear of not being who you can be).

One of the big dilemmas I ran into was: Do I want to be successful for magicians or do I want to be successful for lay people? The standards are, as you know, very different. Magicians see magic all the time; they know a lot of methods or at least suspect what's going on. For that reason we can be a judgmental bunch. Lay people tend to be more forgiving. How do I decide what effects I want to perform? I can buy some simple, great packet tricks, perform them well, and be successful for lay people. I can also give in to the desire to master every sleight and method in the book and become the ultimate master magician. It would take several lifetimes to achieve that.

IER

To solve this dilemma I will discuss the Impact-to-Effort-Ratio (IER). Let me explain what I mean by that. The "Effort" part is defined by how much goes into perfecting a routine or act. How many resources (like time, energy, money, help, and overcoming adversity) do you put into

an act?

The "Impact" part is defined by how your audience responds to your routine or act. That includes the instantaneous reaction and also how long they will remember that specific routine and/or your act and/or you. It's hard to measure either part of the equation. But we do have a feel for it and can even keep statistics so we can refine our feel for it.

There are tricks that take little time to learn and have a high impact, resulting in a high IER. There are effects that take years of development that ultimately evoke underwhelming reactions. And there are, of course, routines that have an IER of 1.

For example, it took me less than thirty minutes to learn and execute the Gene Anderson Torn and Restored Newspaper. It took a couple of weeks to write a solid, basic script and a few weeks more to rehearse and refine it. The audience loved it. Last year I used the No Tear version and a map of the world to open my set at the Magic Castle during our fourth annual Magic and Mystery School week. I took parts of the world off the wall describing where we all came from and finished by producing the whole world map – easy to do, high impact, and thus a high IER rating. But as you will read, I also put an incredible amount of effort in developing some routines that flopped – thus a low IER rating.

THE DILEMMA

The dilemma becomes clear. Should I always choose a high IER routine? Should I quit developing a routine when I put in more than X hours, Y dollars, and Z amounts of creative energy? I'm afraid that the answer isn't that simple, at least not for me.

Most of us fall for high IER tricks. Ask any dealer what his fast moving items are. I'm sure they will all say the same thing: the items that astonish us at first sight and are "easy to master." There are a lot of routines that fall into that category. I want

to stress that, as far as I'm concerned, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that. Some of the classics in magic have a high IER. The torn and restored newspaper, Martin Lewis's Cardiographic, and the Invisible Deck come to mind. It doesn't take months or years to learn those effects, and they are a hit for most audiences.

On the other side of the spectrum we find the low IER routines. I won't mention any marketed items because I'm not a reviewer. But I can take one of my own failures. I worked for seven years, on and off, on my version of Simon Aronson's The Calendar Card (on *Sessions with Simon Volume 2*, L&L Publishing). I loved the method and the routine because it didn't involve some kind of diary. So I took the basic method, conceived a premise that I found interesting, and wrote a script. I will describe the routine in the past tense because I left it behind me...I think.

THE ROUTINE

I took out an envelope and talked about fate and free will. I began by saying, *"I asked one of my teachers to talk about how much of life is determined by fate and how much is determined by free will. He gave me a deck of cards and told me to shuffle it, take out one card, and put it in an envelope without looking at it. Then I had to wait until a group of people were assembled and then proceed. It looks like this is the time. We will explore both free will and fate."*

I opened the envelope so they could see (part of) a card with my logo on it (I used Bob Kohler's Black Envelope). There were two other items in the envelope. One was a stapled piece of paper with a nice story on it. The other one was a letter-sized piece of paper with a calendar printed on it (a matrix with months and days). Every box in that matrix represented a date and had a card attached to it. I took out the story and gave it to someone in the first row, saying, *"This is a small gift. It's a very nice symbolic story. Please use your free will to decide whether you want to keep it or you want to pass it on to someone else."* Most of the time, the gift got passed on. I again asked the same question. After a few times, someone would decide to keep the gift.

"Using your free will you decided to keep the gift. But the day you were born was determined by fate. Well, maybe for your parents it was free will, but we don't know that, do we? Maybe they don't even know! (That always got a laugh.) When's your birthday?" She would tell me her birthday and I would instantly know what card was attached to that date. (Since it's published on the Aronson DVD, I obviously can't disclose the method here.) *"Wonderful! You can read this birthday gift on your next birthday!"*

I brought out a deck of red-backed cards. Unknown to the audience, I used a double deck: 104 thin cards – one red-backed deck and one deck with my logo on the backs. One of my friends is a magician and a printer and made that custom deck for me (www.tonbal.com; a Dutch site but you can email him). I used roughing fluid to hold every pair of matching cards together.

This is a stand-up routine, so I would spread the deck between my hands, showing the red-backed cards and saying, *"You probably don't know this, but every day of the year is related to one specific card."* While showing the cards I would look for the card that belonged to the date and split the deck, leaving the roughed "birthday card" on the bottom. (In the stand-up version the card would face me for a moment.) I would place the deck face-down on the table while palming off the bottom card (whose back has my logo) into my left hand. All of this happened while I said, *"The other document in the envelope contains the key. So in a minute we will know what card is attached to your birthday."* I took the black envelope and loaded the card under it while taking out the calendar/chart. I gave the piece of paper to someone in the first row. *"When was your birthday again? Sir, could you look up that date? Before you reveal the card, tell me this: if she had been born on a different day in the same month, would it have been a different card?"* The person looked through the column (all the days of one month) and responded, "Yes!"

"If she had been born on the same day, but in a different month...would it have been a different card?" The person looked through the row (same days, different months) and responded, "Yes!" *"So it's a*

unique card. Tell us, what card is it? The Four of Hearts? Let's take a look at the card." I pulled the Four of Hearts out of the envelope showing it to the audience. *"Wow! It could have been any person in this room with a different birthday and a different card. I guess fate and free will work together. You can have the envelope to put your gift in. And you can use your free will to decide if you will read the story on your birthday or right away. I'm not quite sure if you can contain yourself (smile)..."* I always liked that little sting at the end.

THE PROBLEM

I can't deny that I got excited again when I wrote this up. Unfortunately, it didn't fly for a lay audience. Like I said, I worked on it for about seven years. I would return to it every few months and work on it for a few weeks. I started out with a blue and red deck and changed to a deck with my logo. I made different versions of the calendar and the story. I rewrote my script dozens of times. I changed the choreography. But it never got the reaction I hoped for. And, obviously, the more I worked on it the lower the IER got. More work, similar response.

I don't consider working on this routine wasted time, money, and energy. A low IER doesn't necessarily mean that there's nothing there. I still don't know what calls to me in this trick, but I eventually gave up. Although I have to confess that, on paper, it still looks like something that could work.

If you take a look at your own material and rate the IER, you will be forced to think about the foundation of your choices. Of course, it's nice to have some high IER routines in your repertoire of course. I have found that having a few low IERs in my bag stimulates me to be more creative and study harder, which is just what I need to rise above myself, grow as an artist, and create magic that I completely stand behind. At least I no longer have to be afraid of a wise, 394-year-old master magician walking in! ♦

Illusions of Grandeur

Around the World in Eleven Days

by David Seebach

Back in 1873, author Jules Verne penned a novel about Phileas Fogg, who made a wager that he could travel around the world in eighty days. I didn't make any bets like Mr. Fogg did, but in December I managed to go around the world in just eleven days...and I presented five shows across Asia while doing it.

The performances were all for members of our armed forces and the civilian employees who work at our military bases. I cannot recall an experience during which I felt more appreciated just for being there. Our cast was thanked every day, and it made no difference whether or not these grateful individuals saw our production.

This experience began for me last spring when a fellow who had booked me several times over the years called to ask whether I'd be interested in such an adventure. The financial remuneration was modest (at best), but there would be very few expenses because just about everything was paid for. And the pay was a daily rate, paid every day, including all travel and non-performance days. How could I pass up this adventure?

The fellow who called is a working stand-up comic, but he has clients who turn to him to provide acts and artists at country clubs, comedy clubs, and so forth. He lives out west; I had never met him, but all the previous engagements he had secured for me had gone well, his information was always correct, and payment was never an issue. In short, he had my trust. I agreed because I thought this opportunity might never come again.

I learned that I would be joined by a comedian and a mind reader. My assumption was that my contact, the producer, would also be the comic.

There were logistics to deal with. There were strict baggage limitations, both by size and by weight. I had to fill out forms and provide lots of personal data. I'm sure someone in the government checked me out. (They might be reading this as I type it on my computer for all I know!)

The producer called as things began to come together and said there had been some discussions and it was thought that having a female assistant would be desirable for the show to add an element that the mostly male servicemen would appreciate. Several of my regular assistants were

interested, but there were issues: leaving a "regular" job for almost two weeks in December, securing a valid passport, being absent from a college teaching position, and so forth.

And then I was told that the mentalist who was to be part of the tour was no longer going. I didn't know whether he dropped out or whether the producer had second thoughts about the performer; it may have been a mutual parting. I was asked if I knew anyone for this position.

I had several fellows in mind, people whom I respected and who, I felt, could do the job and also be easy to travel with (always a consideration). I made suggestions, but the producer had the final word, of course. He chose Chicago's Jeff Bibik, one of magic's "good (and funny) guys."

I recommended Karen Burris, also from Chicago, who has assisted me, Tim Balster, Paul Lee, and other magicians, as well as performing her own show with the character name of Mary Macaroni. Karen was out on a tour as a singer (she is a multi-talented performer) and at decision time was appearing in the very city where the producer lived.

Karen met the producer – I'd still never met him – and he was impressed. And I was happy; I knew the mind reader and I had a great assistant in Karen. When Karen signed on she drew exactly the same earnings as the rest of us. How often does that happen for a box jumper?

With just a couple weeks before departure, I learned that the producer would not be the comic. Another comedian had been hired. His name was Marty Pollio, an artist from Louisville. Marty had appeared at an I.B.M. convention because he is skilled in stand-up comedy, mime, juggling, and acting. He had recurring roles on *Night Court* and other TV sitcoms. But what amazed me most was that Marty had appeared with me in the 1980s on the Palace of Mystery stage at Hollywood's Magic Castle!

So I had been asked to be part of a troupe where I knew everyone, except the producer himself.

The five of us met up at Chicago's O'Hare airport on Thursday, December 5th. I had a carry-on bag, one suitcase, and four ATA cases for the magic. I selected the Owen Magic version of the Broom Suspension as an opening illusion and Abbott's Invulnerable Lady as a closer. The latter illusion isn't really a sensation as a finale for an adult audience, but it did fit the height and weight restrictions. All the other apparatus I'd require was squeezed into the four cases that the two illusions required.

The one-way excess baggage charge was \$1,300, and that included Norm Nielsen's Dynamo, a Kovari Pom-Pom Prayer Stick, Abbott's Chain Handcuffs for a humorous "in-and-out again" routine, Owen's Miracle Mirror, and Creative Finance with big \$10 and \$100 bills. They all were in the "packs flat, plays big" category. But the routine that got the biggest reaction, night after night, was the venerable Hollywood Bra.

Frequently I see the bra trick described as the routine that no one should ever do, but I disagree. Some magicians should never do it. I think that magicians shouldn't hit children who are assisting in a trick, but Terry Seabrooke certainly got away with a lot of juvenile mayhem. It's not the trick; it's the presentation. We did it silently to music. Karen wore a short and tight-fitting red-white-and-blue dress and together we did a straight 20th Century Silks routine with an American flag as the silk that vanishes and then winds up in between the tied-together scarves. I placed the knots in the bust area of Karen's dress. At the routine's outset I had beckoned a female volunteer onstage and handed her an American flag, too. It became clear that after working the effect with Karen I'd be



The 3M Tour at Diego Garcia airport

doing it again with the spectator.

Letting the audience get ahead of the performer is a wonderful concept. They could see where this was going and – by the looks on the volunteer’s face – that woman could, too.

I made sure to handle the silks exactly the same way, but Karen interrupted my movement to tuck them into the helper’s clothing. The helper placed her flag into the little cone as Karen had done. Her flag disappeared; Karen and I pulled out the tucked-in scarves and the not-very-realistic Abbott’s silk brassiere. This elicited the loudest laugh of the entire show. To be sure, this magical act can be offensive when it is not presented in a light manner. But, the issue is *not* with the trick; it’s with the performer.

We flew from Chicago up and over the Arctic to get to Hong Kong. After a brief layover we flew on to Singapore, a body-numbing, almost twenty-four hours of continuous travel. Subsequent flights took us to Diego Garcia, Bahrain, London, and then back to Chicago on December 15.

Our first show was at a military base with an outdoor venue that had a family audience with some children. (No bra effect here, just the 20th Century effect with a flag as a musical interlude.) The name of the base’s facility: The Terror Club.



Marty and a camel in Bahrain



The Terror Club in Singapore

Singapore wore two faces. A twelve-ounce Tiger beer (sort of Singapore’s Miller High Life) near our upscale hotel went for twelve dollars. A twenty-four-ounce Tiger beer in Singapore’s seedy Chinatown was only six bucks. A side order of French fries near the hotel was ten bucks.

Our next stop was Diego Garcia, a crescent-shaped British island in the Indian Ocean with an extensive American airfield and naval base. It is one hundred percent inaccessible because, by agreement, there can be *no* visitors, *no* tourists, *no* family members, *no* pets and *no one* under eighteen. The only flights are chartered aircraft for the military’s use. Its crescent shape is almost circular; a gap allows the center to be a “lagoon” that forms a perfect harbor. Anchored in that harbor are supply ships for the Army, Navy, and Marines.

We were invited out to one of the supply ships and the captain showed us around. There were eleven stories of war materiel: howitzers, tanks, Humvees, Jeeps, and enough supplies for thousands of troops for weeks. All these ships are waiting just in case something flares up. They must be ready 24/7.

It was “jungle-hot” in Diego, about ninety degrees with equal humidity. Thank goodness we didn’t have to do an outdoor show.

Our final shows were in Bahrain, where I found much more security with lots of requests for our “papers” and passports and inspections of

our vehicles by personnel in a trough underneath the roadway with dogs brought out to “sniff around.”

We were taken to a Patriot missile base to have lunch with servicemen and women whose duty precluded them from attending our performance. Their commander showed us everything, but couldn’t answer all of our questions for security reasons.

Our performing venues varied from quite crude with no stage lighting whatsoever to at least one big stage with state-of-the-art lighting and LED instruments with a palette of color options.

In addition to assisting me, Karen sang a few tunes in each show. Marty has a very dry wit and was dazzling with his unique juggling. He does a very effective mime skit that I recall he featured at the Magic Castle; he also performed a terrific pastiche of magic that would score very well at any magic convention. His poor assistant, a Barbie doll, was subjected to many indignities (this routine was cut for the family audience).

Jeff scored well with Bruce Kalver’s spinning hypno-disk, which got a great reaction, as did Jeff’s take on the nail under the coffee cup effect with the dramatic crushing of the “safe” cups. His bit with the die and six cards that have activities for “consenting adults” was terrific, too.

Our producer served as an emcee and audience warm-up guy. At our final show, where there were audio issues that kept the eager soldiers outside the venue long after the scheduled start time, I was grateful that Milwaukee magicienne Julie Sobanski had suggested I take my Owen Magic lightweight Linking Rings along as an emergency back-up effect. Our hostess there wondered if there was anything we could do for the big crowd that had been waiting outside the doors. I grabbed the rings; it seemed that they enjoyed the diversion.

Actually, enjoyed isn’t a strong enough word. All the audiences enjoyed everything all of us did. They’re young. They’re far from home. They were more appreciative of everything and thronged around us after each performance for the souvenir postcards of us we autographed for them. Most had cell phones to have snapshots taken with us.

We made sure we thanked all of them for their service to our country. And they thanked us for what we brought to them. It was very humbling.

There was talk of doing this again, probably to different bases. I’d sign on again in a heartbeat! ♦

David Seebach
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KIRK STILES

On a hot August night in the late '70s, a group of conjurers gathered in a meeting room of a bank in Ft. Lauderdale. I had recently moved to the area and had been invited to join the society. The confusion of new names and faces kept me from knowing anyone very well.

During the meeting, new members were encouraged to stand up and share a bit of background along with an effect or two. I informed the group that I was a photojournalist in the U. S. Coast Guard and had been recently assigned to the Miami area. If memory serves, I auditioned with a simple one-coin presentation titled *Dust To Dust*.

After the meeting, a short gray-haired man wearing a worn, plaid coat and a crooked grin stopped me in the hallway. He quietly said, "I like coin magic, too. Would you like to see my favorite? It's really nothing, but you might like it. Do you have any loose change?"

I reached into my pocket and found some coins. This fellow removed two – a penny and a dime – and held one in each hand, pinched between the fingers and thumb. He asked, "Which one should I start with...the penny or the dime?" Since it apparently didn't make a difference, I indicated the penny in his right hand.

The gentleman held the penny up to eye level and began rubbing it gently between his thumb and fingers. After a few seconds, he paused and began rubbing the coin again. Nothing happened. He frowned and mumbled, "I don't get it. Usually the penny is the easier of the two. Mind if I start with the dime?"

I shrugged my shoulders and nodded.

The fellow raised his left hand up to eye level and began rubbing the dime between his fingers and thumb just as before. Suddenly, the man smiled and said, "This is much better...see?"

No, I didn't see. The dime had melted away at his fingertips. His hand was empty. To put it simply, it was there...and then it was not.

While I was reeling from this delicate miracle, the man raised his right hand and said, "Allow me to try the penny again?" I looked over to his right hand and his fingers were rubbing the penny gently. There was nothing rushed or hurried about any of his actions. The old man behaved as if he had all the time in the world. His fingers slowly opened and this hand was empty, too.

I know this may sound cliché, but I had never seen anything like it. In that moment, I understood the definition of the word astonished. I looked at the man square in the eye and silently mouthed the word, "How?" His impish grin told me I wasn't going to find out anytime soon. But he shrugged his shoulders and said, "Here's the hard part."

He rubbed the fingers of his left hand together and I watched as the dime slowly rematerialized at the tips. He looked over at his right hand and the penny gradually reappeared there as well. To say I was dumbfounded would be appropriate.

This curious old man smiled and said, "It was nice meeting you...thanks for letting me use these." He handed my coins back and strolled out the door into the warm south Florida night air.

For me, there was simply no explanation. The man had not made one unnecessary motion. The coins were not tucked away, clipped, or palmed anywhere in his hands. I had just been dazzled, bamboozled, and flabbergasted...with eleven cents from my own pocket.

And that's how I met my friend Kirk Stiles, the quietly reserved master of understated magic.

Though Kirk was mentoring two other south Florida performers, Russ Burns and David Rumfelt, at the time, he still agreed to "take me on" as well. Suddenly I was in very good company. Kirk is a contributor to *Bobo's Modern Coin Magic*. He

THE HIGH ROAD

SCRIPT WRITING, CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT, AND ACT CONSTRUCTION FOR THE MODERN CONJUROR

BY MICK AYRES

wrote, illustrated, and printed a beautiful but short-lived publication called *Magic & Spells Quarterly*. Many of Russ Burns's creations can be found in Jerry Mentzer's *Card Cavalcade* series. Michael Ammar credits Russ Burns's *Liquid Silver* as the inspiration for his own *Coins Through Silk*.

David Rumfelt was an extremely creative and funny performer who marketed several effects through Paul Diamond. For example, in the late '70s Dave created a clever sleight that allowed him to immediately produce a chosen card from the pocket of his short-sleeve shirt – without using a palm. His effect was published in one of Paul Diamond's early lecture notes and years later showed up on a Bill Malone video under the title *And I Don't Even Have a Pocket*. Back then the *Stars of Magic* series offered by Tannen's Magic Co. was incredibly popular. In answer, Paul Diamond created the *Magical Masterpieces* series, which included Kirk's *The Good Letter*, Russ's *Coin of Black Thoughts*, and my own *Pandora's Box*. Good company indeed.

Kirk Stiles influenced Russ, Dave, and me deeply as performance artists. Any success we later enjoyed must be credited in large part to his willingness to teach. In my sessions with him, Kirk often emphasized the "why" of things. Early on, he targeted upon my youthful enthusiasm for collecting new sleights by shamelessly declaring, "Boy, you have plenty of good moves – but you don't have plenty of good tricks to go with them."

One step at a time, Kirk taught how to create and write understandable plots around the moves. Script after script was written (and rewritten) until each effect became strong and fun to do simply because the audience found it easy to follow. It is hard work to make something simple become entertaining, but the process completely changed my attitude and approach to conjuring.

If Kirk hadn't been willing to confront

a friend, the conjuring industry would be occupied by yet one more guy mindlessly babbling his way through a series of moves while being tolerated by polite audiences who can't wait for him to finish. I would be sowing confusion instead of wonder.

For those of you who are interested, Kirk's coin interlude was accomplished with the help of his sleeves. He was particularly adept at the improved version of Delayed Action Sleaving explained in Chapter Seven of *Bobo's Modern Coin Magic*. Kirk would lower his arm to waist level so it was parallel to the floor. He discreetly rested the coin on the tip of his ring finger. With a minute twitch, the coin would "hop" onto the inside cuff of his jacket sleeve. The coin was later retrieved by dropping his arm to his side and allowing gravity to do the rest.

Kirk was equally talented with playing cards, and he was especially skilled at juggling. However, conjuring with coins has been a thread stitching its way through every word of this essay, so I offer you this utility coin sleight supported by a presentation your guests will enjoy.

THE MICK CLICK

So what's new? Well, it certainly isn't the idea of a click pass itself. But would you be interested in a version that is logical in handling, looks natural, has no angle limitations, and can be mastered quickly? Although this sleight is a two-coin click pass, we'll use three coins to describe it. Half dollars will do, but I prefer the larger silver dollars purely for the visibility.

Place the coins in a row on the table and hold your left hand palm up. With your right hand held palm down, pick up a coin, move it over the left hand, and openly drop it onto your left fingers, which close gently around the coin as it arrives. (Already this click pass is different, because there is no false transfer with the first coin.)

Your right hand now picks up the second coin as your left hand opens with the first coin positioned near the tips of the fingers. During the motion of your hands coming together, the second coin is thumb palmed. When the right hand is over the left, open your right hand and close the left simultaneously. As the left fingers close the first coin will "click" against the dangling second coin that remains thumb palmed in

the right hand. With proper coordination, sound and action combine to create the illusion that the second coin has dropped neatly onto the first one.

The right hand now returns to the table and picks up the third coin. Do not reposition the palmed coin for any reason; unnecessary fidgeting of the right hand will be suspicious to the guest. Bring the third coin over to your left hand and mimic the earlier action by dropping it casually onto the first coin. Your left hand will open and close to receive the falling coin, of course, and the sound is identical.

Your guest believes all three coins are in your left hand, but you are now one ahead for any Coins Across presentation.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

I realize magicians consider Coins Across routines a dime-a-dozen, and rightfully so. However, for lay audiences, the rhyming script provided here makes this presentation an out-of-the-ordinary experience. For this effect, you will need three large silver coins in a small, drawstring bag that can be purchased in any craft supply store. Those black, leather coin purses will work, but since magicians seem to be the only people who carry them, I tend to shy away from their use. To the rest of the world though, a drawstring bag is just a drawstring bag.

To begin, position a guest on your right and ask her to hold out her hand. Say, *"Three vintage coins from this tiny sack, with a lady on the front and a bird on the back."* As you recite the line, open the bag and pour the coins into your left hand. Put the empty bag on the table off to your right, a bit out of frame. The opening of the bag should be lying flat but facing the audience. Freely display the front and back of the coins as you arrange them in a row on the table.

Say, *"I'll put them in my hand, just for fun, but they won't stay long...that's number one."* As you recite this line, your right hand picks up the coins and puts them in your left hand one at a time, executing the Mick Click on the second coin. Give your closed fists a brief shake. Your left hand now lays two coins on the table and your right hand gently places its coin on the guest's palm.

"I'll even slow it down, just for you,

but it won't help...that's coin number two." Pick up the tabled coins one at a time, executing the Mick Click on the second coin. Again, give your fists a brief shake. Pause and gently lay the second coin on top of the one already in the guest's palm.

"Each coin is silver...pretty little things; they're fast and quick, like a bird on the wing." Display the last coin front and back and then false transfer it to the left hand using the Retention Vanish.

"If you blink even once, you just won't see; I haven't moved...but that's still number three." Stare at your left fist as you recite this line and then slowly open it. Shift your gaze over to your right hand and open it to reveal the missing coin. Place this coin on top of the two already in the guest's hand.

"This mystery is called Birds of a Feather; 'cause these three coins...flock together." Extend your right hand and allow the guest to drop the coins into your palm. Now you will false transfer all three coins at once using the simple Vanish for Several Coins from page 45 in *Bobo's Modern Coin Magic*. Briefly, the coins are laid in an overlapping row on your right palm. Pretend to dump the coins into your left hand by sliding the coins forward. However, the coins will come to a noisy and abrupt halt against the curled fingers of your right hand. Your right hand turns palm down and drops away as your left hand closes.

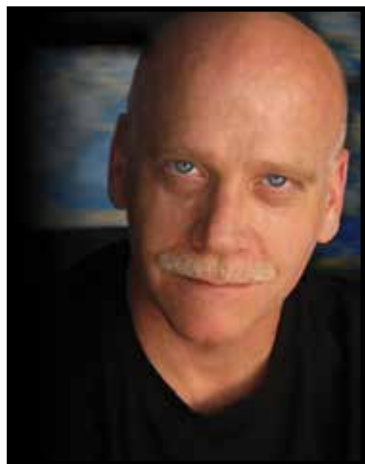
Extend your left hand toward the guest as if to hand the coins back. Simultaneously, pick up the cloth bag with your right hand. Position the bag over the palmed coins. Open your left fist quickly. The guest is expecting the weight of three coins to hit her palm, but gets thin air instead. This is a surprising moment.

Your left hand comes over and grips the bottom end of the bag and pulls it back. Your right hand tilts down so the coins slide into view. It appears as if the coins have traveled back into the bag. ♦

The Mick Click and Birds of a Feather originally published in The Holy City Session (c. 2004). Mick Ayres enjoys an eclectic career as a parlor conjurer, storyteller, and musician – and now, as a writer for M-U-M magazine. He welcomes input and dialogue, and can be reached at www.mickayreswares.com.



MICHAEL AMMAR



The name Michael Ammar should be familiar to you, even if you've only been in magic for a very short time. That is because Michael is a prolific lecturer, performer, author, magic creator, and consultant. He has performed everywhere, from Caesars Palace in Las Vegas to the Presidential inaugural banquet in Washington, D.C., to a private performance at the Vatican in Rome. He also has the distinction of being a repeat guest on *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson* and has appeared on *The Late Show with David Letterman*.

Born in Logan, West Virginia, Ammar earned a degree from West Virginia University in business administration in 1978. From his early writings, and even cassette tapes that he produced, Michael taught about the business of magic and how to sell your shows for higher fees as part of his curriculum, giving magicians much needed advice that went beyond just perfecting a double lift.

Early in his career, Michael was lucky enough to become good friends with Dai Vernon and was able to accompany him on several trips and learn much from "The Professor." I have personally heard Michael tell some stories of his times with

Vernon and, if you ever get a chance to hear him tell them, don't miss it. You will laugh and be amazed by these great stories told from someone who was there.

In 2010, Michael began stage performances with his wife Hannah. Together, they perform a mysterious Victorian illusion, *The Spirit Cabinet*, which dates back four generations in her family. They have taken this act all over the country, and carry on a tradition started by the Willard family. This is truly a remarkable act; I was very pleased when I first heard that Michael and Hannah would be continuing the tradition.

Michael has been an innovator and pioneer of many forms of magic over the years and lectured on magic way before it was the popular thing that everyone does today. Michael has changed his lectures over the years and added modern technology to it. The lecture he performs now, "The Ammar Experience," is something he has dreamed of for over twenty years. It combines modern video and projection capabilities with his live, hands-on teaching, to give the attendees the best live magic learning experience possible.

Also changing with the times are his books and videos. Michael has continued to update his materials over time and now offers many digital downloads on his site as well as the recent rerelease of his popular *Topit* book as an iBook with new and updated learning features.

The thing that is most remarkable about Michael is that, like a true celebrity who continues his or her popularity over the years, he has continually reinvented himself, changing his look and his approach to performing and teaching magic to suit the times.

Michael is one of the current "master magicians" performing and teaching a new generation of magicians how it should be done.

I would also be remiss if I didn't mention here that he just happens to be a heck of a nice guy, too!

I LEFT MY CARDS AT HOME

BY STEVE MARSHALL

THE VANISHING GLASS BY MICHAEL AMMAR

Effect: A stemmed wine glass is placed onto the flat left palm, and covered with a twenty-four-inch silk. At the command of the performer, the shape of the glass melts away and the silk falls flat on the palm. The silk is whisked away to prove that the glass has indeed vanished.

Comments: As in most of the great effects in magic, the method here is simple. It will only take ten minutes of practice with the props for you to realize how visual and effective the vanish really is.

The original concept comes from Tony Miller and Brian Congrove, magic buddies from Parkersburg, West Virginia, with a flair for the different. Through the years I've added some touches, and the instantaneous, visual vanish of the glass is beautiful.

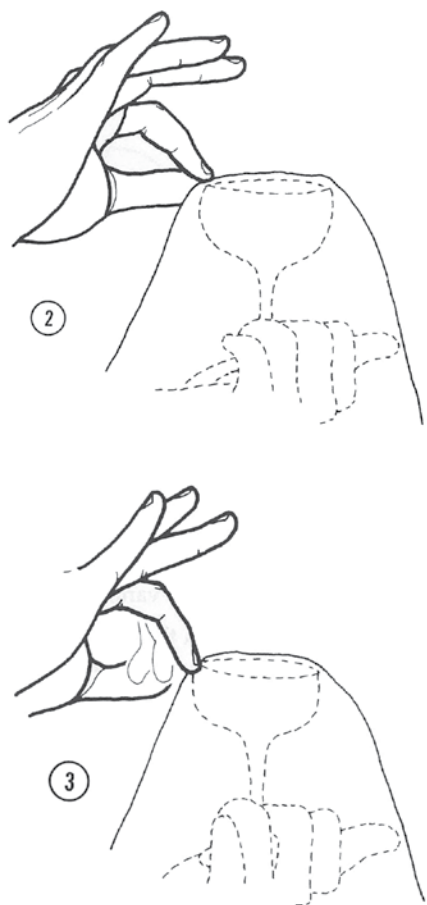
The handling is such that it can be used both onstage and close-up. Onstage the glass can be dumped into a top hat, taken by an assistant, or any number of things. The aid of a friend can be enlisted to help completely vanish the glass in close-up impromptu situations, because the illusion of the glass melting away is just as great when done close-up.

Procedures: The silk, which is displayed openly, should be opaque. It is dropped over the left arm so that two diagonal corners point down towards the floor; the other two corners are along the arm. The glass is carefully placed onto the open left palm. The right hand takes the

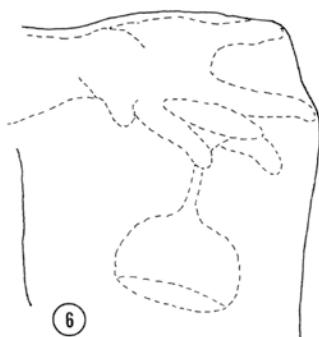
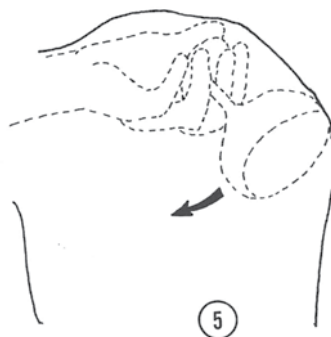
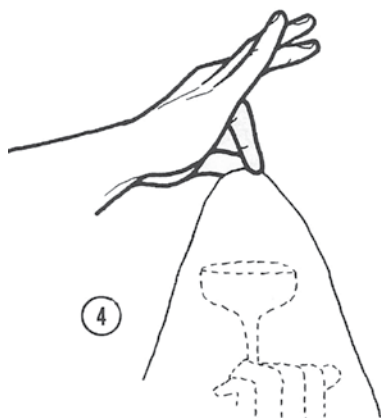


corner of the silk that lies at the left wrist, and slowly covers the glass (Figure 1). The silk drapes over the glass and the hand, with the glass at the center. The right hand taps the top of the glass to show that the glass is still there. As it does so, the left fingers curl in and grab the glass as shown in Figure 2.

Once the left fingers grasp the base of the glass, the right middle finger flicks the glass (Figure 3). This is to prove (without saying as much) that the form is actually the glass.

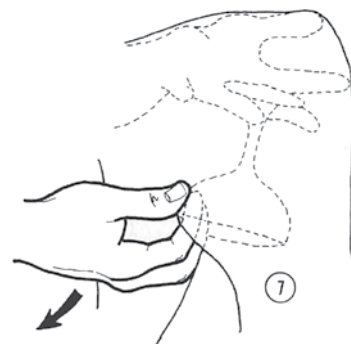


Now, pinch the silk at its center, lift it three or four inches, and drop it a couple of times as shown in Figure 4. The air under the silk will cause it to float back down as it covers the glass again. This is a very important feature of the vanish as you will soon see. On the third drop of the silk, the left hand simply opens out allowing the glass to fall into a back palm of sorts. (Figures 5 and 6 show this action taking place.)



The air that is caught under the falling silk prevents the shape of the moving glass/fingers from being seen. The audience is conditioned to expect to see the shape of the glass under the silk, and is startled to see the silk float down to what is an apparently empty left hand. As Figure 6 illustrates, the left fingers are spread to conceal any sign of the glass. If you properly time the falling of the glass with the drop of the silk, the melting away of the glass is beautiful.

Pause a beat to allow the effect to sink in, and bring the right hand up from below to pinch the rim of the glass through the silk (Figure 7). It takes very little practice for you to know exactly where this will be.



The right hand then whisks the silk/glass down away from the hand and behind you (Figure 8). The glass will remain covered by the silk, and the left palm is seen to be empty. At this point the glass can be dumped into a top hat or taken by an assistant to complete the vanish.



STEVE'S STUFF

Michael told me that having the right scarf is the most important part of the vanish. If the scarf isn't big enough, the glass will move it as it flips around and possibly cause you to drop the scarf. If the scarf is too big, the glass is kind of lost in it.

I first learned this effect when I saw Michael lecture in Florida when I was sixteen years old. I have used it many times over the years in impromptu situations and it always gets a great reaction when the silk falls the last time and the glass is gone. I'm really happy to present this effect here for you to use. Thanks to Michael for generously allowing me to republish it in these pages.

The Vanishing Glass is reprinted, with permission, from *The Magic of Michael Ammar* published by L&L Publishing in 1991. ♦



HOW TO BECOME A BEST-SELLING CHILDREN'S BOOK AUTHOR

Here we are with another "how-to" column. First, a disclaimer: Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Yes, the four books I wrote for Capstone Press have sold over 100,000 copies and are in libraries across North America, possibly inspiring some future Copperfield. I can only share how I did it. And I am still convinced it was mostly luck, with quite a bit of hard work.

First, a joke: I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is, Doubleday loved your manuscript. The bad news is, Doubleday is the neighbor's German Shepherd!

Let's start at the beginning. Ken Scott (a fabulous and entertaining magician from Atlanta) wrote me a note a few years back asking how I got these very nice hardcover children's magic books published. Ken was doing summer library shows and he kept coming across my books at the libraries. Most librarians set out magic books on a table so the kids can check them out after the show. Ken saw the books, looked inside, and said, "Hey, I know that guy!" So in response to Ken and the others who have asked how I did it.

HOW TO BECOME A BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

In my case, the phone rang, it was a publisher, and they asked me to write some books for them. I had never heard of them, but was delighted to be considered for this project. Maybe the secret to becoming a best-selling author is to wait by the phone, hoping it will ring.

I do believe there was luck involved in this process, because the publisher stumbled on my website when they were looking for a magician to write some books for them. But finding my website in the mass of the Internet was the first thing that had to happen, and maybe it was not luck. I have an okay website

that shows my versatility and is filled with testimonials from clients who say that I know something about magic and entertainment. The publisher saw that I had dedication to the art of magic and might be considered an expert. So one key to success is to be dedicated to doing the best job one is capable of. That background of hard work put me up front as a candidate for this project.

They called; it was basically a job interview. As magicians, we are being interviewed by clients all the time for shows. So this process was not too hard. But instead of a show, I was now selling a different product, my writing ability. As in any sales situation, I had to believe in my "product" and demonstrate that it would be a good match for their needs. I really believed that I was the right guy for the job.

I enjoy writing. I had practiced for years, writing columns on children's magic and funny bits of business for magazines and comedy entertainers. The publisher could see that writing was not a whole new deal for me. Here is another key to success: Do what you like to do, even if it is for free; some day the paying gig will come.

All authors have to sell themselves to a publisher; most do so by means of a query letter, or sending the first three chapters, or through writer's agents. Getting published is not easy. There is an excellent resource at your library titled *Writer's Market*. This is a thick book showing what various publishers do and what they require from you if you want to submit something. It is hard work. There are multiple ways of being rejected.

Stephen King was turned down by publishers thousands of times; he has kept a stack of rejection slips from the years before he finally cracked the market. He did not give up, and he is a good example to all who strive for success.

Three keys to success in life: be ready, get set, go!

1. Be ready. Practice your skills. Whether card sleights, coin manipulations, or writing. If you have practiced, you will be ready when the knock comes on the door.

2. Get set. Another factor that helped me get set was the desire to be original. I wanted to invent my own tricks and comedy routines for my show. I do not

FOCUS ON FUNNY

BY NORM BARNHART

claim to be the most original guy in the world. I try to create something every day. I understand that André Kole has a personal goal of inventing many tricks every day. He does this as a mental exercise that has helped him come up with some very amazing magic illusions. Professionally, this exercise has really paid off for him. It is fun to use our creative powers. Magic is a very cool art form and I firmly believe that if you can dream it, you can find a way to do it on stage.

3. Go. When the phone rang, I was willing to say yes to the opportunity. There were some pretty tight deadlines. I suddenly had a part-time job writing in addition to my regular business. I was constantly thinking and brainstorming. It was fun, yet I dedicated every spare hour I could find to researching and developing tricks for the books. I wanted to know what was out there and how I could twist old methods to make these books different. I really wanted them to be user friendly, with lots of photos and clear step-by-step instructions so the children would not get frustrated. The publisher's graphic design department and photo studio made the books look very nice. I also came up with many odd tricks that fit the age group that each book was aimed at.

The first book was beginner magic. It was aimed at kids five to six years old. That is a hard group to teach magic to, but we kept it simple and made it fun. For example, in it is a very simple trick in which a ping pong ball appears from a Styrofoam cup. Most five-year-olds could master this in a short time and then they could concentrate on the presentation. They could actually see an accomplishment. The other books offered progressively more difficult tricks.

Do you want success in your magical life? Remember the almost-famous saying: "When opportunity knocks...don't be out back looking for a four-leaf clover." However, if you do find yourself in a position to get a lucky break in life, you will be more likely to succeed if you are prepared and willing to work hard.

(Over the past year, Norm wrote four more books for Capstone Press. These books are aimed at older kids and teens. They are filled with photos of cool teens teaching the magic. Look for them at a library near you.) ♦

Send Your Thoughts to Me

We've discussed a few versions of this concept in the past: the ability to have someone write things down and for you to be able to know what they wrote. The old billet tear method works fine for many. The tech people have come up with a brilliant device for the general public that can be used magnificently for the psychic in all of us.

Equil Jot Pen is a pen that writes normally, but whatever is written is stored and can be seen on any Apple device via Bluetooth. Why is this version better than others? Here's the number one reason: It works with any type of paper, be it a cocktail napkin, a cheap pad of paper, a piece of flash paper, or an index card. You are not required to purchase a specific brand of paper or to print a template from home. Again: *any paper works!*



Because of the Bluetooth connection, **Equil JOT** instantly syncs with any Apple device (iOS 5 or higher or Mac OS 10.7 Lion or above), so you can see your creation appear in real time on your screen. As the spectator is writing, you watch it happen on your iPhone, iPad, or Mac computer.

Also included are two dedicated apps: Equil Note for writing and Equil Sketch for creative drawing to export your work to Photoshop or as a PDF. With the Equil Note and Equil Sketch apps, any **Equil JOT** creation can be quickly shared using Facebook, Twitter, Dropbox, or email; it can be accessed from anywhere using Dropbox or iCloud.

The pen looks fairly normal, although I would cover up a few things with an advertising label or a rubber grip to hide a button. For \$150 you get the pen, reader clip, clipboard, apps, and complete instructions. I am truly excited by the way this device works. Check out the **Equil Jot Pen** at your local Apple Store or on www.amazon.com.

Keeping Track of Your Book Collection

It is so hard to keep track of your magic books. Often when I go to auctions and conventions and am about to buy a book, I wonder, "Did I already buy this?" Also, keeping track of who borrowed what book can be a nightmare. A life saver for me is a wonderful program called **Book Crawler**.

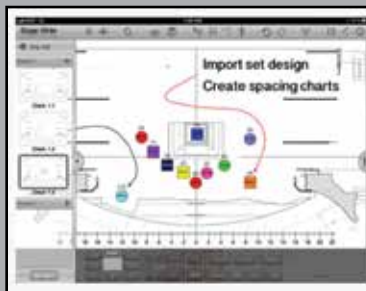
Using your iDevice camera, you can scan a book's UPC code or type in the ISBN number and your book is immediately registered in your personal library database. Aside from the detailed information about the book, you can also keep track of all the books you've read, what you should read, and what the cover looks like.

I was amazed at the number of technical magic books that just popped up when I scanned them. This program allows you to take a photo of the cover for easy identification of your collection. Granted, many magic books do not have ISBN numbers, but once you put in the information by hand, you are helping others to find it. The program also categorizes your books by all the fields such as author, publisher, subject, read, unread, etc.

If you use Dropbox (www.dropbox.com) you can keep track of your collection on multiple devices such as iPhone, iPad, and Mac computer.

Start with the free iPhone lite app and you will be impressed. Then purchase the full version of **Book Crawler** for \$1.99 from the iTunes App Store. The Mac computer version is in the Mac App Store for \$14.99.

Where Do I Go From Here?

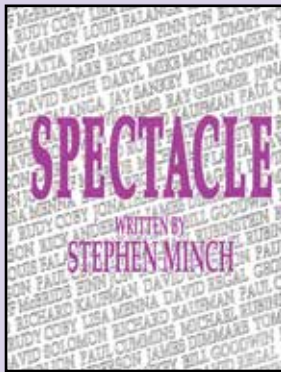


As a theatre major in college, one of my vivid memories was making a stage manager's book and writing down all the blocking or movements for a show. All those coded sentences such as "move UR to couch left" were a tedious and grueling task. But this was necessary so actors would remember where to go on stage. Magicians, especially illusion shows, need this for continuity and flow. A professional stage manager has now designed an app that not only makes the task easier, but actually fun.

StageWrite for iPad is a wonderful app for directors, choreographers, and stage managers. It allows them to easily document choreography, spacing, traffic patterns, and movement. Draw out the stage plan on the screen. Then add shapes and colors to represent the people and props. The icons are stored in the "green room" until they are brought onstage; when needed, drag them to the correct position. All of this gets documented. Watch the flow happen on the screen.

This app has already been used by major Broadway shows and road tours such as *Newsies*, *The Book of Mormon*, *Big Fish*, and *Ghost*. I must warn you that this program is not inexpensive and is not for the average birthday party magician. However, if you do big illusion shows, this is definitely for you. There is a free version to play with just to show you what it can do; the full version is \$199. **StageWrite** for the iPad is available in the iTunes App Store. ♦

Found a cool gadget, app, or website for magic applications? Share your discovery with Bruce to include in a future column. Email him (SAMtalkBruce@cox.net).



Excerpt From:

Spectacle

Written By:

Stephen Minch

Description:

Ebook, 175 pages

Available From:

www.llepub.com

Much like Sid Fleishman's *The Charlatan's Handbook* (which appeared in last month's Ebook Nook), *Spectacle* seems to have slipped under most magicians' radar. Written by Stephen Minch, the book was intended to be released in 1987 as the sixth volume of *The New York Symposium Collection*. Although the material had been collected, written up, and illustrated, Adam Fleischer (who produced the New York Symposiums) decided not to release it. The manuscript was sold to L&L Publishing; it was published in 1990 under the title, *Spectacle*.

If you have not perused a copy of *Spectacle*, you've missed out on some excellent material; there are close-up routines (with cards, coins, and miscellaneous items), mental effects, and two outstanding stage magic routines. The list of contributors is stellar and includes: Geoff Latta (with a three-phase sandwich routine that will establish your skill with cards to any audience), David Regal (with a cute, off-beat, no-skill card revelation), Jay Sankey, Ray Kosby, Paul Cummins, Bill Goodwin, Richard Kaufman, David Solomon, Tommy Wonder, David Roth, Peter Samelson, Jeff McBride, Finn John (with a new method for the venerable Chop Cup), Ray Grismer, Jonathan Pendragon, James Dimmare, and Rick Anderson (with a sensational new approach to the Salt Pour effect). Combine the quality of the material with Stephen Minch's expert writing skills and you have a book that you'll want to add to your ebook collection.

For the excerpts this month I've selected two routines that should be of interest. The first is Daryl's coin routine Elbow, Knee, and Neck. This is a very pretty sequence in which three half dollars vanish one at a time from the left hand and appear at the elbow, the knee, and behind the neck of the performer. The construction is beautiful, and will probably whiz by even experienced magicians. The trick requires only basic coin skills and the presentation is novel and engaging to laymen, a rarity among coin routines. The second routine, Mike Montgomery's Confessions of a Bubble-gum Addict, is a unique close-up effect: a puppet (formed Senor Wences-style from the performer's left hand) chews gum and blows bubbles.

My thanks to L&L Publishing for allowing these excerpts to appear in *M-U-M*.

ELBOW, KNEE, AND NECK BY DARYL

Daryl is a true original in a profession populated by eccentrics. His performing schedule has been so hectic recently, several of his projects have been delayed because of it. However, he has managed to complete several of them, including *Daryl's*

Ambitious Card Omnibus, a major reference work on that classic trick. While cards are Daryl's favorite tools, he departs from them this time around to offer a quick coin trick that he has used for years to baffle both laymen and his peers.

Effect: A spectator is asked to cup his hands before him and the performer drops three silver dollars into them. It is explained that these coins have nicknames: Elbow, Knee, and Neck. It is then shown how apt these names are.

The performer's hands are seen empty. He picks up the three coins, one at a time, and places them unmistakably into the left fist. The left fingers squeeze and one of the coins appears at the left elbow. A second squeeze, and another coin appears at the left knee. A final squeeze, and the third coin is produced from the back of the neck by an obviously empty right hand. The left hand is opened and, yes, it is empty. The three coins have passed in a completely astonishing and entertaining manner.

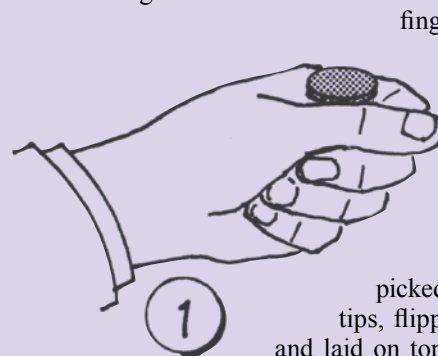
It should be understood that this vanish and reproduction of three silver dollars is virtually angle proof and is done standing without the aid of shells or extra coins.

Method: As stated, only three silver dollars are needed. Daryl usually performs this for a small group, asking the spectator directly in front of him to help. All that is required of this person is that he cup his hands together to receive the coins.

"Each of these coins has a nickname: Elbow, Knee, and Neck." As each coin is named, it is dropped neatly into the spectator's hands. During this display the spectators can observe that the hands are otherwise empty.

"I call them that because each one travels to a different place." As this is said, the coins are taken from the spectator's hands and placed one by one in the left hand. The Jennings pop-up move is used for this to retain one coin secretly in the right hand. Briefly, the action is this:

The right hand picks up the first coin from the spectator's hands, flips it into the air, catches it, and places it flat on the curl of the forefinger and thumb of the left fist (Figure 1). The left



fingers open slightly to allow the coin to sink down into the fist.

The coin should fall deep into the hand, down near the third and fourth fingers.

The second coin is picked up at the right fingertips, flipped into the air, caught, and laid on top of the left fist, just as was the first coin. The fingers open to allow this coin to sink down into the fist, joining the first and clinking against it. The hand shakes the coins several times so that they can be heard. In the process one of the coins is maneuvered into thumb-palm position.

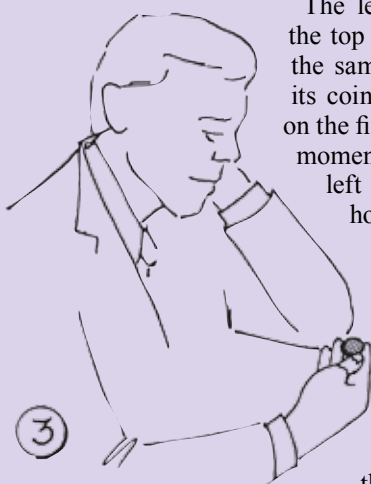
The right hand takes the third coin from the spectator, flips it into the air, and catches it in position to be finger palmed. The right hand turns palm down and it is pretended that its coin is placed onto the left fist. In reality, the coin is retained by the right fingers. The right hand moves directly over the left fist, exactly simulating the actions used to place the preceding coins. As the right fingers momentarily cover the top of the fist, the left forefinger engages the lower edge of the thumb-palmed coin and pushes it straight up through the fork of the thumb (Figure 2, exposed

view). The tips of the right fingers immediately tip the coin back until it rests flat on the curl of the left thumb and forefinger. The right hand then moves away from the left, allowing the coin to be seen. The left fingers open slightly and the coin is once more allowed to slip down into the fist. The left hand gives the coins it holds a shake to confirm their presence and to maneuver one of them into thumb palm.

In this manner, which seems designed to show scrupulous fairness, the three coins have been apparently placed into the left hand. Yet one of the coins is finger palmed in the right hand.

"The first coin, the elbow coin, with just a squeeze, passes through the flesh of my hand, into my bloodstream, and moves up the arm to the elbow." As this is said, the left hand makes an obvious contraction, squeezing its coins. The fist is raised to the lips, which blow on it, apparently to magical effect. The right forefinger points at the hand, then traces the imaginary path of the coin up the arm to the elbow. The left hand is raised and the elbow is pointed forward. The palmed coin is pressed by the right fingers to the elbow and then brought into view by sliding it off the elbow, upon the extended fingers (Figure 3).

As all attention is focused on the production of the coin from the elbow, the left hand swiftly deposits the coin gripped in thumb palm between the neck and the shirt collar. Notice that the hand is brought into perfect position to do this in the action of producing the coin from the elbow (Figure 3 again). The misdirection is exceedingly strong. It will be understood that the left hand coins must not talk as this is done. This silent loading is made more certain by having the necessary coin separated from the other in the fork of the thumb.



The left hand is lowered so that the top of the fist is uppermost. At the same time the right hand flips its coin into the air and catches it on the fingers. As attention is drawn momentarily to this action, the left hand maneuvers the coin it holds into thumb palm.

"The reason this is called the elbow coin is because it starts in the left hand and ends up at the elbow." The pop-up move is again executed, substituting the coin in the left fist for the coin in the right fingers. The coin is laid on the fist just as the left

hand is mentioned, thus providing motivation for the action. The coin is not allowed to sink down into the hand this time; rather, it is tipped off the fist into the spectator's hands. *"We'll eliminate the elbow coin so that we don't get confused."*

At this point, consider the situation that has been achieved. The spectators believe two coins remain in the left hand. That

hand is actually empty. One of the coins is palmed in the right hand and the other is resting between the shirt collar and neck, both ready and waiting to be produced. The trick is over in respect to method; yet the proposed effect has just now been made clear to the spectators. Better odds of discovery were given the breakers of the Purple code. With such an advantage, this is no time to acquire scruples; prosecute the effect in a manner calculated to create maximum impact.

"I'll do it again with the knee coin. It travels up the arm, across the shoulders, down the spine to the left leg and out the knee." The left fist is squeezed and blown upon as this is said, and the described path of the coin is indicated with the right forefinger. The right hand descends to the left knee and produces the palmed coin there.

The second coin is flipped into the air, caught, and placed honestly on top of the left fist, in imitation of the actions used for the pop-up move. However, this time the right hand can be casually shown empty after the coin is placed. The coin is then tipped off the fist to join the first in the spectator's hands.

"The third coin is the neck coin. It travels up the arm, across the shoulders, down the back to the right foot, bounces back up, and comes out at the neck." The left fist is squeezed tight and blown upon a third time, and the path of the coin is traced by the right forefinger. Just before the right hand rises to the neck it is once more allowed to be seen unmistakably empty. It then travels behind the neck and withdraws the coin waiting there. This coin is flipped into the air, caught, and dropped directly into the spectator's hands.

"Elbow, knee and neck..." As the word "neck" is pronounced, all attention is turned to the left fist and it is dramatically opened, punctuating the sentence and the effect. *"Thank you!"* The hands are clapped sharply together once, proving their emptiness and cuing applause in the same gesture.

The construction and economy of this sequence is admirable. There is not one wasted motion. The coins seem to melt away and then appear from diverse locations without a false move. The effect created is totally bewildering. Even magicians who recognize the use of the Jennings pop-up move miss the loading of the coin behind the neck. Therefore, when the left hand is opened at the finish, they are genuinely surprised to see it empty.

The handling just described is obviously designed for performance in a close-up setting. However, Daryl also performs this trick from the platform for larger audiences. In such a case, the coins are not placed in a spectator's hands, but rather in a champagne or wine glass that sits on a side table to the performer's left.

As a final note, it might be mentioned that, when Daryl performs this, each coin vanishes with a *"boop,"* a word of power peculiar to Daryl's magical lexicon.

CONFESSIONS OF A BUBBLE-GUM ADDICT

BY MIKE MONTGOMERY

Mike Montgomery's hometown is Tacoma, Washington. That is where we first met. Mr. Montgomery was in his teens at the time, and enthusiastic about close-up magic.

The first time I saw him perform, he did a brief, well executed close-up set, which he concluded with an extremely novel and original trick with a piece of bubble gum. This trick was both

astonishing and funny. It has been some years since I witnessed it, but the effect remains clear and unique in my memory. That, I would suggest, is the mark of a good trick.

Mr. Montgomery moved from the area several years ago to continue his schooling and I lost contact with him. Through mutual friends I discovered he is presently studying acting and screen-play writing in New York City. I contacted him and asked if he would consider contributing his bubble-gum trick to this anthology. He kindly agreed. I think you will enjoy the trick as much as I did when I saw it. I hope you will try it. It is pure entertainment.

Effect: The performer explains that, as a child, he was a fanatic collector of bubble-gum cards. He would save his weekly allowance and spend the entire amount on gum. His collection of cards grew, but so did the pile of bubble gum that came with them. And there lay the problem: what to do with all that gum? He finally came up with an answer. He had an imaginary friend as a child, and he gave the gum to that friend.

The performer explains that his imaginary friend is still with him and offers to introduce him to the audience. He holds up his left hand and curls the fingers into a loose fist, forming an impromptu puppet with the thumb acting as the mouth. This is an old stunt that everyone has done as a child. Two eyes and a false mustache are stuck to the back of the hand to complete the hand character (Figure 1).

Next a slab of bubble gum is brought out – the kind that comes with bubble-gum card packets. A piece of the gum is broken off and stuffed into the puppet's mouth.

The hand begins to chew the gum in a comical fashion, but then has trouble: The gum becomes lodged in the puppet's throat. The performer slaps the puppet on the back, and then executes the Heimlich maneuver around his wrist. Suddenly the hand puppet expels a well-chewed wad of gum. Everything is fine.

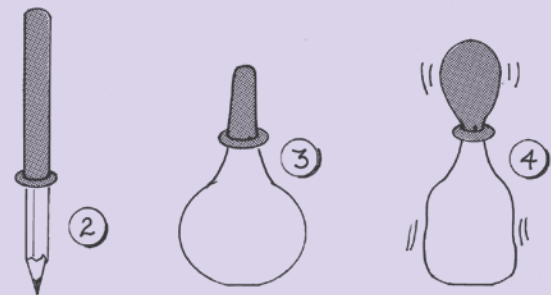
The performer places the wad of gum back into the puppet's mouth and it chews it again. Then it starts to blow bubbles. The puppet is chided for being rude and, when it blows another bubble, the wad of gum is taken from it and discarded. The eyes and mustache are removed and the hand is opened. It is empty and the imaginary friend is gone.

Method: The props required are simple in nature. You will need a sheet of pink bubble gum and a large wad of the gum that has been chewed and allowed to dry. While the hand puppet can be created without the adhesive eyes and mustache, their addition is a comical touch that is worth the effort. Mr. Montgomery draws the eyes on a pair of round white pressure-sensitive labels, which can be found in most stationery departments. The mustache can be fashioned from black construction paper and a loop of tape mounted on the back to attach it to the hand.

One other item is necessary: a gimmick that makes possible the bubble-blowing effect. It is easily assembled from an ordinary pink party balloon and a squeeze bulb. Mr. Montgomery finds that an infant's enema syringe is perfect for the task. An ear syringe will also work. Either can be obtained at a pharmacy.

The balloon must be rolled into a little donut before it is placed over the mouth of the syringe. To do this, insert the eraser end of

a pencil into the neck of the balloon and stretch the balloon down over the length of the pencil (Figure 2). Then, beginning at the mouth of the balloon, roll it up the pencil, forming a tight circle of rubber as you work upward toward the pencil eraser and top of the balloon. Roll up the balloon until only about half an inch of its length remains. Remove it from the pencil. Place it over the mouth of the syringe and partially unroll it down the neck (Figure 3). If you now squeeze the syringe, it should inflate the center of the balloon, creating a pink bubble (Figure 4).



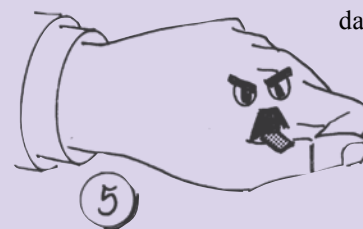
Mr. Montgomery performs this trick while seated. Consequently he takes advantage of lapping techniques. However, there is no reason the trick, with a few simple adjustments, cannot be done standing. The seated handling will be described first; then the changes necessary for standing performance will be discussed.

The wad of chewed gum must be classic palmed in the left hand. The gum wad can be picked up by the hand as it goes to the left pocket to remove the stick-on eyes and mustache, or under some other pretext made possible by the previous trick.

The bubble gimmick is in the lap and the bubble-gum sheet can be anywhere convenient to the right hand.

Introduce the effect with a story of your childhood mania for bubble-gum cards, and tell the audience of your imaginary friend. Bring out the eyes and mustache (and palm the wad of gum if you have not already done so). Stick them onto the left fist to make your puppet (Figure 1 again).

Bring out the sheet of gum and break off a piece with the right hand. Place this piece of gum into the mouth of the puppet (i.e., the fork of the left thumb), but leave it protruding from the hand (Figure 5). You will now apparently push the piece of gum into the puppet's mouth, but will in reality steal it out again with the right hand. This is accomplished with the tunnel vanish,



an old sleight not often used these days because of its somewhat unnatural appearance.

However, it is perfectly suited to the context of this trick and actually adds to the visual humor.

Bring the right hand, palm up with fingers extended but relaxed, to the left fist.

Using the tip of the right thumb, shove the piece of gum directly into the fist (Figure 6). Some humor can be had from this action if it is done with a bit of force. Because of the loose curl of the left fingers, the piece of gum falls from the hand the instant the gum enters it. This piece is automatically caught on the extended right fingers, which lie directly under the fist. Immediately withdraw the right thumb from the fist and turn the right



hand back toward the audience, to hide the presence of the piece of gum.

Move the left thumb up and down briskly, making it appear that the hand is chewing the gum.

The image created can be quite amusing. As attention is directed to this

business, the right hand moves to

the edge of the table and laps the piece of gum it hides. Or it can pick up the remaining sheet of gum from the table and pocket it, along with the palmed piece.

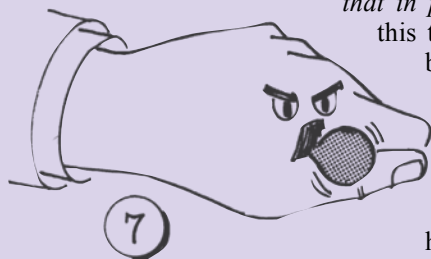
You must now mime the action of the puppet getting the gum caught in its throat. This by-play can be accompanied by little noises if you wish. How this is acted will be very much the decision of each performer.

Slap the left hand on the back of its wrist. Then grasp the wrist, circling it with the right thumb and second finger, and give the left hand a brisk shake. This is identified as the Heimlich maneuver. Release the left wrist, pause a moment, and then jerk the left hand sharply, causing the palmed wad of gum to fly from the mouth of the puppet as if expelled.

Briefly open the empty left hand. Then pick up the wad of gum from the table with the right hand and display it, consequently showing that hand otherwise empty. As attention is momentarily drawn to the gum wad in the right hand, drop the left hand to the lap, grasp the bubble gimmick there, balloon nearest the fork of the thumb, and bring the hand back up to the table.

Address the hand, "Are you all right?" Nod the fist up and down. "Do you want to try it again?" Nod the fist again to show its eagerness to continue. Place the wad of gum into the fork of the left thumb and push it into the fist, again executing the tunnel vanish.

Move the left thumb, in a chewing action. Do not rush things at this point. Let the audience enjoy the comedy inherent in the image of the hand puppet chewing gum. Then, when the moment is right, squeeze the syringe, causing a pink bubble to appear from the mouth of the puppet (Figure 7). Relax the pressure after a few seconds and allow the bubble to deflate and disappear back into the hand.



"That's very rude. You don't do that in public." In response to this the hand blows another

bubble. During the production of the bubbles, the right hand has ample opportunity to adjust the wad of gum it is hiding, from its cradle in

the curled fingers to a clipped position near the middle phalanges of the

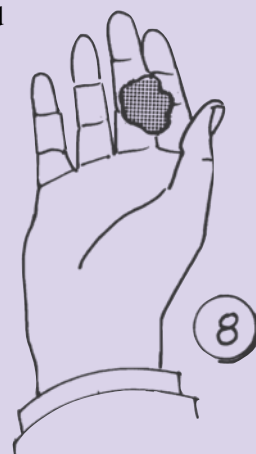
first and second fingers (Figure 8). When the left hand blows its second bubble of defiance, the right hand apparently plucks the gum from the puppet's mouth. This is accomplished by bringing the right hand, open and back toward the audience, in front of the left fist. Simultaneously, the left fingers relax their pressure on the syringe, allowing the bubble to deflate. The right hand then

imitates the action of taking the wad of gum and comes away from the fist. The wad is rolled to the fingertips by the right thumb and is seemingly kneaded there as it is displayed. While attention is directed to this action, the left hand retreats casually to the edge of the table and laps the bubble gimmick.

All that remains is to remove the eyes and mustache from the fist, show the hands empty, and conclude.

That is the seated handling. If you wish to stand while performing this trick, the only changes that need be made are to the method for picking up and unloading the bubble gimmick. One possibility would be to pick up the gimmick from a holder beneath the edge of the coat. It could later be discarded into a Topit. Another attractive approach is to use the pendulum principle, as popularized by John Cornelius. Attach the gimmick to an eighteen-inch (approximately) line with a safety pin at the opposite end. Hang it under the left side of the coat, attaching the pin near the left shoulder. The gimmick can then be easily stolen at the edge of the coat and will swing back under it when released.

No matter which handling is used, Mr. Montgomery's trick is totally novel, hilarious to watch, and ultimately strange. ♦



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THE DOTTED LINE

BY DON THEO III

YOU CAN'T LOSE

There are probably more sales axioms out there than there are salespeople. While that may be an exaggeration, there is certainly no shortage of wise sales quotes; usually there are several to fit any sales situation.

My personal favorite comes from the late sales guru David Sandler. Sandler taught his students wonderful little psychological ploys designed to win the prospect over. The prospect would be psychologically influenced into the sale without even realizing it. For example, he taught a technique wherein the salesperson, when making a sales call to a CEO or other such important decision maker, enters the VIP's office and places his briefcase right on the all-important man's desk. This bit of bravado broke down the wall between the two, and seemed to put them on the same level. Beautiful voodoo!

Back to the sales axiom I mentioned earlier. One of the "Sandler Rules" is, "You can't lose something you never had." Think about that for a minute. In sales it means that every day, across the globe, thousands upon thousands of sales are not made because the salesperson was afraid to push just a little bit more. What is it that is feared? Losing the sale? If you've already lost it, then nothing is really at stake.

How do we apply that to what we do from a performance standpoint? A big risk will usually amount to either a simple failure or a great reward. As professional performers, we sometimes don't want to take that chance for fear of losing our credibility, which is understandable. But what if it was a risk we could take with confidence? What if we had a sort of back-up ripcord to pull that created a situation in which the audience had no idea our attempt was not successful?

PRIMO WISHIN'

You are probably familiar with the classic card effect Premonition. The first

iteration I can find of the effect is titled Prize Winner by William McCaffrey, which can be found on page 564 of *Greater Magic*. Eddie Joseph came along with his version, called Premonition, and since then many a magi has developed his or her own approach using a variety of methods, from multiple decks to expensive mechanics.

The basic premise is that a spectator names a card and then searches through the deck before him to find there are only fifty-one cards in the pack. Of course, the card missing from the deck is the one the spectator just named. The magician then pulls the named card from his pocket.

I am sure you can think of many ways to do the effect. In this version, the deck is ungimmicked, can be handled and shuffled by the spectator, the card truly is missing from the deck, and ends up being the only card in the magician's pocket. (In fact, the spectator can pull the card from the magician's pocket.) This method does not require palming, switches, or even sleight of hand.

In case you haven't figured it out yet, the following version employs a psychological force of a card. I know that seems risky, and may have sent you off to the next item in this issue, but if you hang with me here I think you will find something that you can use.

Here is the script I use to psychologically force the Four of Clubs. (Of course, as with any psychological force, you will want to adjust the wording to fit your character and natural way of speaking).

"Think of a card. When I say that, most people often go right to the Ace of Spades, so obviously don't do that. And then there are people who originally think of the Ace of Spades and then realize it's too obvious. So they choose the path of least resistance and pick a card that is visually attractive, with pictures and bright colors. Then there are those who take the next step; they skip over the Ace, then they skip over a red Queen or whatever, and they go with a low card. But I don't want any of that to influence you, just let yourself go free and think of a card."

Here's what just happened. If you do this nonchalantly and flippantly, then the spectator won't think of an Ace. She won't think of a Spade. She won't think of a red

card or a face card, and she won't think of a "low" card. By mentioning these options in the script, she will usually steer clear of them.

This means that most often she will go with a Four, Five, Six, or Seven of Clubs. Here's where the Jedi mind-stuff comes in. Because you have just described four mental movements that people usually make – the Ace of Spades, then the red court card, then a low random card, and then "miscellaneous" cards – the number four is very subtly and subliminally suggested to them.

Clubs is the only suit you did not mention, since you very gently eliminated the Spades and the red cards. So more often than not, she will think of the Four of Clubs. An extra little tip here is to not give her too much time to think of the card after you have finished the script above. Give her a couple of seconds and then simply say, "Do you have one?" You don't want her to overthink it, but rather to go by a sort of instinct based on the linguistic journey you have taken her on.

Of course, this is not one hundred percent, and it takes a few times to get the feel of the timbre and attitude in your voice to make it seem as if you are just speaking freely with no intended structure, but I think you will be pleasantly surprised with how many times it hits.

[Editor's Note: If you want to increase the odds of a successful "hit," you might use the following addition to Don's procedure. Remove the Four, Five, Six, and Seven of Clubs from a deck and put each in a different pocket. Then put in duplicates of the Eight of Hearts, Two of Diamonds, and Ten of Spades (or whatever cards you want to use) to bring the deck to fifty-one cards. Use the procedure as explained above. If the spectator names one of the four cards you have removed, the deck can still be counted face up (there will be fifty-one cards) and the spectator will not see the named card. The spectator can remove the named card from your pocket. (You indicate which pocket this should be.) Using four possibilities changes your odds from one in fifty-two to one in thirteen.]

When the force is successful, the application of this psychological force to the Premonition effect is inexplicable

to laymen and magicians alike. My experience has been that this works a little more than two-thirds of the time. But what do we do on the occasions when it does not? Remember above how I mentioned having a “parachute?” There are many ways you can keep on moving comfortably through your set with no one knowing that you just took a huge swing and a miss.

I’ll give you a very simple “out” that’s actually very fun to use. Let’s say you are using the script above, so your force card is the Four of Clubs. Your spectator names the Eight of Diamonds. Instead of telegraphing your disappointment in missing the force, you excitedly reach into your pocket and pull out your wallet. In the wallet can be seen a single playing card. You remove the card showing just the back.

“If I turned this card over to show you the Eight of Diamonds, it would be amazing, wouldn’t it?” you say. You then turn it around, revealing that the card is the old gag “52-on-1 card” while explaining how challenging it is to be this amazing all the time. As old as the gag is, most non-

magicians are not familiar with it; to this day it still gets laughs.

You then tell the audience, “Okay, obviously I was just messing around, but let’s get down to business here. You said the Eight of Diamonds? Go ahead and take it out of the deck and sign it.”

Now you can perform the strongest effect you know in which it does not matter whether or not you know the identity of the card. There are many wonderful routines out there that fit this criterion, but my personal favorite parachute is to apparently shuffle the card into the deck while actually keeping it on top. Once there, we all know there are loads of things you can do. I’ll leave it to you to design a parachute that fits your style. In fact I’m sure you probably already have one or two in mind.

The important thing is that you just took a sizable risk and missed; but you are the only one who knows that. Instead of failure, you went on to create an amazing (albeit different) magical experience.

Think about when the original intended

outcome works. There is no explanation for it except what is actually true: you subtly influenced her to think of the one card that was not in the deck. Based on performances by me and some of my friends, I can promise you that this moment creates a memory in your audience’s mind that is truly worth the effort.

I hope this idea gives you the confidence to take a chance at creating a true miracle with the comfort of knowing that if you fail, you will be the only one who ever knew it. This is also a great way to try out psychological forces if you haven’t used them before for fear of them not working.

Remember, as Sandler said, “You can’t lose something you never had.” And by the way, that’s also not a bad little phrase to keep in mind as you go out there to find someone to book your show or hire you for their next event. ♦

If you feel like brainstorming on the subject of parachutes, or anything else for that matter, feel free to shoot me a line at (dontheo3@gmail.com).

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LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF

I thought I'd take this month's column to introduce myself a little better and give you an idea of what to expect in the coming months. As Michael Close mentioned in his introduction, I'm a card expert. I call myself a card expert mostly because I don't know a thing about sponge balls. (If I were required to write *The Encyclopedia of Sponge Ball Magic*, it would consist of a one-page pamphlet that reads, "They're squishy.")

While studying at Brown University to get a degree in Theater Arts, I stumbled across the treasure trove of books that is the H. Adrian Smith Collection in the John Hay Library, and if I thought I could've gotten away with changing my major to Close-up Card Magic, I would've done so on the spot. Looking back, the three books that had the most impact on me as I was developing my early sense of style were *Darwin Ortiz at the Card Table*, *The Complete Works of Derek Dingle*, and *Dai Vernon's Inner Card Secrets* trilogy. With no one around to tell me otherwise, that's what I thought serious card magic was – particularly any techniques or effects related to the card table. So I ended up developing a style based on gambling and card cheating, and a very different sense of what techniques are generally considered "practical."

That doesn't mean that everything I do is a gambling lecture, or that everything I do is full of knuckle-busting moves or brute-force demonstrations of skill. I do plenty of just plain card tricks, use plenty of accessible techniques, and as I mentioned last month I feel that construction, design, and handling are as important to making your methods invisible as hours or years of practice. So in this column I hope to be able to introduce you to some practical techniques, some techniques you didn't realize were as practical as I've found them to be, and some ideas to make the way you approach your card magic more effective.

SPEAKING OF INTRODUCING THINGS...

In business and sales there's a thing known as an "elevator pitch." That's basically how you communicate to someone what it is you do in the fifteen seconds or so that it would take to share an elevator ride. It's an important selling point, and it's also really hard to do. Smart folks will spend a lot of time crafting an elevator pitch to say everything they need to say in that really brief window of time.

It becomes exponentially more important when introducing yourself as a magician, or sleight-of-hand performer, or whatever you decide to call yourself, because people have a number of preconceptions about magicians, and not all of them are good. When I approach a potential audience at my weekly bar gig, if they haven't fallen all over themselves avoiding eye contact, they might assume I'm a magician or ask if I "know any card tricks," but they have no idea what that actually means. They might eventually find themselves enjoying what I do, but they have no real concept of what it might be. It's been my long-standing belief that laymen (or "normal people") do not inherently hate magic, they have very good (albeit vague) ideas about what makes a good magic trick. And they just never seem to expect that that's what they're going to see.

As I said, much of the material I perform is gambling-related: lots of cutting to Aces and poker and bridge deals – all that "how they cheat you" stuff. A lot of those routines tend to be long and rather involved. So, if someone requests "Show me a trick!" I can't just jump in and start dealing bridge hands. But I want and need to set up that expectation, so I've chosen an opening routine that communicates this in a simple card trick. The trick is Victor Farelli's Up His Sleeve (page 48 in *Farelli's Card Magic Part 2*). Farelli called it an "amusing interlude" and said himself that no real explanation of the method should be necessary. However, I do perform it differently than the original so I thought I'd describe exactly *how* I do it and more importantly *why* I do it that way.

CHEATS & DECEPTIONS (FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY)

BY ANTONIO M. CABRAL

ACE UP THE SLEEVE

I begin with the Ace of Spades on top of the deck, and I give the cards some kind of flashy, in-the-hands cut that keeps the Ace on top. "*Among other...questionable personality traits, I happen to have a favorite playing card. Sad, I know, but true!*" I do a double turnover to show whatever card is under the Ace. "*It happens to be this one...*" By this point, my audience is nodding politely and sizing me up as the weirdo I am. I turn the double back down, take off the top card, and hold it face down. "*...the Ace of Spades!*" At this point someone is bound to look puzzled and object. If not, I'll prompt them by observing, "*You're looking at me funny.*" When they bite and say I didn't show them the Ace of Spades, I look puzzled, look at the card myself, then turn it face outward to reveal the Ace while commenting, "*The lighting is weird in here. Never mind, we'll fix that in post.*" This is a bit of byplay I learned from my friend Lance Pierce, and while it seems simple and elementary, it's a mini-introduction in itself. It's easy to forget how strong something like this plays until you actually do it for normal people.

Continuing on: "*It's my favorite card. A little cliché, but you can't beat the classics! We'll get back to it in a moment.*" I place the Ace face down on top of the deck and then have the spectator peek at a card (Photo 1). (I'll be discussing my preferred peek techniques in future



Photo 1

columns.) "*Did you get a good look at that card...a better look than last time?*" (If that cheeky line packs a little more sting than I want, I'll soften it by reminding them, "*It's not you; it's the lighting!*")

*"I'd like you to remember that card, because, hey, this is a card trick! But let's also pretend that it's **your** favorite card for a moment. Just don't admit that you have one in public, 'cause it's kinda creepy!" Under cover of that joke I side steal the card to the top. (Photo 2 shows the action of Ed Marlo's Deliberate Side Steal from *Revolutionary Card Technique*, pages 77-78.) I then do a double turnover to show the Ace again as I say, "Do you know the expression about someone having an Ace*



Photo 2

up his sleeve? That's usually someone to watch out for. Well, this is the Ace, this is the sleeve, and I'm that guy...Okay, you obviously don't read my blog. I'll prove it!" I turn the double back down, take the top card off, and, without flashing the face, tuck it halfway into my jacket sleeve.

"The only reason I do this is because I'm waiting to sneak it out of my sleeve – hopefully without you catching me! But because I like you, I'll do it slowly. At the same time, don't blink!" During this speech I turn the deck face up and side steal the Ace off the back as if for a color change. (Photo 3 shows this side steal from beneath.) With the card palmed, I take the deck out of dealing grip for a moment as I



Photo 3

gesture to display the card sticking out of my sleeve (Photo 4). As I replace the deck into dealing grip, I begin turning the deck face down and add the palmed card to the face of the deck (Photo 5 shows the add-on



Photo 4



Photo 5

as the deck begins to turn over). This is the add-on change from Leipzig's Opener in *Stars of Magic*. I hold the deck face down for a second, snap my fingers, and turn it face up to show that the Ace of Spades is now on the face of the deck. *"Of course the hard part isn't getting the Ace out, it's running through the whole deck, finding the card you're thinking of, and switching it into my sleeve!"* I have her remove the card sticking out of my sleeve to reveal her selection.

Regarding the method changes, there's not that much difference between Farelli's version and mine. In Farelli's original handling, the card was forced and the performer looked through the deck to ostensibly find the Joker, which was shown via a double lift and the trick proceeded from there. Using a spectator peek and a side steal accomplishes a few valuable things. First, the process itself is already different from the standard fan and "pick a card, any card" that normal people expect. Showing the Ace of Spades on top before and after the control is a nice moment, because after the side steal it shows that apparently nothing has changed. With the card seemingly still buried in the middle, the transposition becomes that much stronger. The Farelli original used a standard color change to effect the transposition, and that's how I performed it for a long time. Using the Leipzig change, however, adds a nice moment where the

change apparently happens one-handed. I find the reactions have improved quite a bit by including it.

Method aside, the real reason this became the trick that I lead off with ninety-eight percent of the time is three-fold. If you walk up with a deck of cards, they expect that they're going to pick a card and you're going to find it in the same way they expect a doctor to be able to set a broken bone: it's the basic job description. Beyond that, this trick contains a visual transformation (two, actually) and a transposition. These are two of the strongest simple effects we card magicians have at our disposal, and they're ones that normal people can't learn on TV or out of an activity book. So, I deliver what they expect, but in a way that establishes me as more than a casual practitioner.

More important is getting to use the image of having an "Ace up my sleeve." It doesn't say anything about my ability to bottom deal or whether I know fifty different ways to cheat at blackjack, but it does set up the expectation of cheating at cards, shady dealings, sleight of hand, and the explicit idea that I'm "that guy." It's also humorous, a little tongue-in-cheek, and easy to understand. The way I describe the effect ("switching cards," "running through the deck to find your card") also implies that what I do relies on superhuman sleight of hand as opposed to eldritch forces, pixies, or four years at Hogwarts. So on top of being an impressive little piece of card conjuring, it's also a character piece.

Most important of all: it's short. All of the previously mentioned information gets communicated in very little time, slightly longer than an elevator ride, but even then I could probably manage. It will impress, or at the very least satisfy, someone's curiosity. Either way, if they want to see more, I can work my way around into the card-shark stuff. If not, we can all get on with our lives.

While you might not want to communicate the same kind of ideas as I do, this is still one of the great simple card tricks; you'll find it very rewarding to perform. Moreover, it's worth thinking about whatever your preferred opening trick is and what it actually communicates about you as a performer, besides the simple fact that you are one.

(An earlier, shorter version of this essay appeared in my *Brown Shoe Lecture Notes* for the 2012 Golden Gate Gathering.) ♦

INFORMED OPINION

LATEST PRODUCT REVIEWS Compiled and Edited by W. S. Duncan

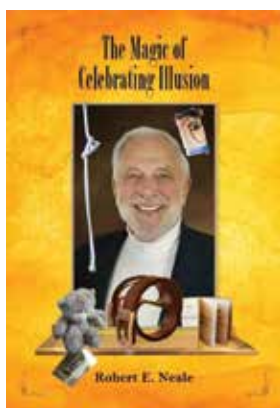
Welcome to 2014. After a year filled with more card tricks than you probably wanted to see, this issue offers some real variety, which makes me happy. Curtis Kam reviews Luis De Matos's very commercial Egg Bag routine (which comes with an Egg Bag!), while Payne has reviews of two new products for fans of the spring snake. I don't count myself among those, but after reading Payne's reviews (and seeing a spring snake appear in his napkin at lunch one day), I have to say I'm considering the prop myself. We also have some good mentalism reviewed by Joshua Kane, and Norman Beck is back with good things to say about the sequel to Gaetan Bloom's Intercessor. Utility devices seem to be coming back in fashion, and Jamie has a peek wallet to tell you about; Marc DeSouza reviews a device that makes sounds appear. Appear?

And Editor Emeritus David Goodsell gives us his review of a documentary. It's looking to be a good year for magic. I hope you will look forward to joining us each month as we see what 2014 has to offer. —Bill

THE MAGIC OF CELEBRATING ILLUSIONS BOOK BY ROBERT NEALE

Available from: www.theoryandartofmagic.com
Price \$29.99

REVIEW BY PAYNE



"I am a magician...and so are you. We are all magicians – illusionists – who survive, take pleasure, and find meaning in life by means of the illusions we create." With these words Bob Neale takes us into his final foray in the world of magic literature.

Final? Yes, in a way, because this book was meant to be published after Mr. Neale's death. Fortunately for us, and the magic community at large, he changed his mind and released these books, hopefully long, long before his untimely passing.

Yes, books. *The Magic of Celebrating Illusions* is the first volume of a trilogy, a trilogy of texts that, according to the publisher, will become the unifying hub for Mr. Neale's previous works on the performance, and, dare I say it, the philosophy of magic. Yes, philosophy. As Larry Hass, the publisher and editor of this volume states in the Introduction, Neale's writings "– on magic, illusion and wonder, respectively – are frankly philosophical in their reach...all of this makes for very rich reading and thinking about the nature of magic and its place in human life."

But don't let this scare you off. Sure the previous quote makes this book sound deep, dry, and somewhat incomprehensible. But it's not. The book is easy and enjoyable to read. The philosophy sneaks up on you. It begins with questioning the nature of magic and how we and our audiences perceive it. So, fittingly, it starts out with that very basic of perceptual bending, the optical illusion. Next he delves into part two, Psychological Illusions, followed by part three, Spiritual Illusions. Spiritual illusions? Yes, Spiritual illusions. But fear not. It's not what it sounds like, because they are not to be confused with gospel magic. This section is devoted to the type of magic Bob's fans have come to expect and love – bizarre magic, or as it should more accurately be called, storytelling magic. This is where Mr. Neale excels, weaving weird and

fabulous tales with the magic he performs.

The volume finishes up with Part Four, which is titled Performance Illusions. All four parts are preceded by an essay, and then followed up by (dare I use the word) tricks to illustrate various points made in those essays.

Yes, this book isn't for everyone. Those looking for the next "hot," yet in the end pointless, trick to "fry" their audiences with before getting regulated to the bottom of the magic drawer won't find much of interest here, even though there are tricks with cards, ropes, and bills to be found between its covers. Those who have grown weary of the redundant, one-note YouTube wonders that permeate the world of magic these days and feel there must be a deeper meaning to be found somewhere in their craft, may find that this is a book to look into.

As I have written in the past, Bob Neale's books are rather pointless to review. If you're a Neale fan you'll purchase this volume regardless of what I write. If you're not, then little I can say will persuade you to pick up a copy.

Those who haven't read or are unfamiliar with Mr. Neale's work in the past will find this a good text to start with because he explains his philosophy on giving magic deeper meaning in a clear, concise, and well laid out manner. Highly recommended.

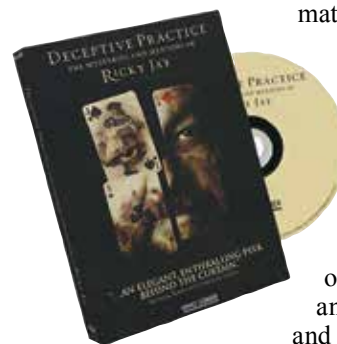
DECEPTIVE PRACTICE: THE MYSTERIES AND MENTORS OF RICKY JAY DVD DOCUMENTARY BY MOLLY BERNSTEIN

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies

Price \$29.95

Also available on Netflix

REVIEW BY DAVID GOODSSELL



As we pursue the craft of magic, no matter what our preference – sleight-of-hand, illusions, close-up, comedy magic, kid shows – there comes a time when we seek to understand greatness. It's part of coming of age in magic, if you will. It is not necessarily that we seek to achieve or even pursue greatness ourselves, but rather to understand and appreciate what greatness is and how others have achieved it. For a

half-century, magicians sought out Dai Vernon, Edward Marlo, or Slydini, and then late in the last century Johnny Thompson or Billy McComb, and of course many others. Today there is a whole stable of arrived and up-and-coming magicians who are truly gifted and are becoming sought after for wisdom and knowledge – Jeff McBride, for example. We but scratch the surface. *Deceptive Practice: The Mysteries and Mentors of Ricky Jay* is a wonderful DVD because it chronicles the pursuit of excellence by one of today's legendary figures.

Ricky Jay is a private man, and almost none of us will become close personal friends with Ricky, the way he was with Dai Vernon and Charlie Miller, for example, or is with Michael Weber; so in a sense his release of this DVD is a gift to us, for to watch it is to appreciate excellence, or greatness, and the dedication it takes to achieve it. Those seasoned in magic can watch it and nod, as Ricky credits Cardini, Slydini, his grandfather Max Katz, Al Flosso, and Francis Carlyle for their collective influence on his love of magic and his abilities as a magician. For those to whom these names mean little, this is an introduction that should lead to further study and appreciation. Every performing art has its "old masters," and it is rare that one achieves greatness in any of the performing arts without serious study of the past. This DVD provides an excellent introduction to that principle, with the bonus of sharing a few short clips of those masters.

Ricky Jay became a magician very early, before his teen years. By his late teens he was on his own and made his way to success through a combination of skill, ambition, and dedication. Over several decades he learned from the best – Roy Benson, Slydini, and especially Vernon and Miller – and he speaks of those experiences, the "pure joy" of discussing card moves with Charlie Miller for hours on end, and the similar joy that comes when practice ceases to be work. His interests in magic expanded and he is now a noted collector, historian, and author of best-selling books, from his first, the unusual *Cards as Weapons*, to *Learned Pigs & Fireproof Women* and more recently *Dice: Deception, Fate & Rotten Luck*. He has also made his mark as a serious film and television actor, both with and without cards. At age sixty-five his life has been full and remarkable, and full of remarkable people, living and dead.

His small circle of close friends who appear in this DVD include like-minded perfectionists such as Michael Weber, Steve Martin, Persi Diaconis, as well as film directors David Mamet and Paul Thomas Anderson. Mamet, who has directed Ricky in several films and Ricky's three major one-man shows – *Ricky Jay & His 52 Assistants* (1994), *Ricky Jay: On The Stem* (2002), and *Ricky Jay: A Rogue's Gallery* (2009) – said of Ricky Jay, "[he has] an ideal of magic in his mind to which he's devoted his life, to teaching it, perfecting it, performing it, and researching it."

We are treated to a number of short pieces of note that Ricky has used for years: Cutting the Aces, Cups and Balls, along with his abilities at throwing cards. He also performs his version of Malini and Hofzinser effects, among other things. There is enough magic to get a sense of just how good Ricky Jay is. These clips cover nearly forty years, and part of the fun of watching this DVD is seeing Ricky Jay with long hair in the Seventies! Bonus material includes Steve Martin as Flydini and Ricky Jay with some of his collection and addressing audiences from Harvard to book signings.

This DVD, which runs eighty-eight minutes, not counting the bonus materials, was prepared for the general public. *The New York Times* called it "Hugely Entertaining," and Woody Allen calls it "a wonderful movie about a great artist, one of the all-time great artists in the field of magic." My guess is that those relatively

new to magic, especially youngsters, will wonder what the big deal is. We hope they put this DVD in their library. The day will come when they will understand. The rest of us can enjoy it from day one. Recommended!

LOOK NO HANDS DVD

BY WAYNE DOBSON, PETER NARDI, GARY JONES, AND MICHAEL SULLIVAN

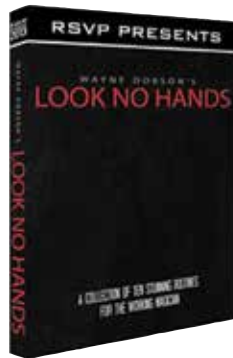
Available from: www.RSVPMagic.com

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies

Price \$30.00

REVIEW BY MARC DESOUZA

Despite the title of this product being *Wayne Dobson's Look No Hands*, Mr. Dobson is nowhere to be found on this DVD. Mr. Dobson is certainly one of this era's finest performers and creators, whose performing career was prematurely ended by a debilitating disease. Despite such a major setback, Wayne continues to create great magical effects for all of us to perform. The conditions he has set and applied to all ten effects on this disc are that they can be done with a spectator handling everything...generally. The magician need not touch any of the props in use.



That being said, many of the effects will work better and safer if we, the performers, do some of the work. Please do not feel short changed by that, or by Mr. Dobson's absence from this disc. The performances and explanations are ably handled by Gary Jones and Michael Sullivan, aided and abetted by Peter Nardi. The ten effects taught are anywhere from good to fantastic, and the handlings are, as deemed by the conditions set, easy as can be.

Eight of the effects involve playing cards and the other two are mental effects, one with coins, and the other with mini-Sharpies. The Sharpie effect (called Sharpie 2...ok, they didn't spend much time on the names) is the revelation of one of four different colored markers selected, reminiscent of an effect contributed to *Tarbell 7* by a young magician from New Jersey named David Kotkin. The coin effect, Best Friends, is a clever variation of predicting which coin will be left after tossing several. This variation allows you to predict coins selected by two spectators using a couple of simple gaffs and a cleverly worded prediction.

The first effect on the DVD, Compatibility, is like an impromptu version of Anniversary Waltz. It is a little process heavy, but the end result is a blockbuster for an audience. Birthday Card is great for any magician who wishes to leave a special guest with a nice souvenir of a special occasion. The performer asks a spectator for her birthday, or other occasion, and a card is counted to, based on that date. The card stopped at matches a prediction that has been on the table from the start. The kicker is that the card is turned over and it reads "Happy Birthday" on the back. This is very direct and requires only the slightest amount of brain work.

WayneMan is based on Joe Barry's Rainman, and provides a lot of impact for the simple key card used. In essence, a spectator names a number and looks through a shuffled deck for the card at that position. The magician takes the deck, memorizes it, and then asks the spectator for the number. The magician can name the card before it and the card chosen. There are lots of little details and ideas for this effect, with Peter Nardi contributing some fine

additional thoughts. This is a worker.

McDobson's Aces is Wayne's take on the classic Ace Assembly. There are no double-face cards used, but a different set of gimmicks that can be easily made in a few minutes. It does not follow the same procedure as McDonald's \$100 Aces, as all three Aces vanish simultaneously, but the spectator does the entire trick. This begs the question, is that good or bad? The magician has not "caused" the effect to happen. This will take some careful routing or presentation to avoid the issue, but this method presents an interesting set of conditions.

Lucky Card is a real standout and is an impossible prediction effect. It is actually one of Wayne's signature tricks and is his handling of Vernon's The Trick That Cannot Be Explained. This deserves some time and practice so that it will become second nature, but if you put in the work, you will have an amazing tool for your arsenal. A Sh*t Trick is a cute spelling trick, but given the high quality of the other effects on this disc, it seems the weakest of the lot. Far stronger is Out Of My Hands, Wayne's handling for the classic Out Of This World. Again, the hands-off conditions coupled with John Kennedy's method makes for a very clean handling. The last effect, Mind Ray, is Wayne's version of a Jerry Sadowitz trick that was, in turn, based on a Bob Hummer effect. It is an absolutely impossible revelation of a card that is made up in the mind of a spectator as she is asked to select a card from a double-blank deck. You will blow away magicians and laymen alike with this one.

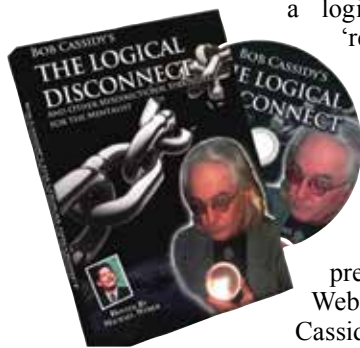
All in all, this is a delightful collection filled with good, usable material. The quality of the production is excellent, as we have come to expect from Russ Stevens's RSVP. The main performers are engaging, and bringing Peter Nardi in for the explanations makes the whole thing very conversational, as well as enjoyable. Wayne Dobson should be very proud of the manner in which his material has been presented here. I highly recommend this for any magician, from beginner to expert. You are certain to find at least one routine that you will want to add to your own repertoire.

**BOB CASSIDY'S LOGICAL DISCONNECT AUDIO SEMINAR
CD-ROM WITH AUDIO FILE AND THREE PDF DOCUMENTS
BY BOB CASSIDY**

*Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies
Price \$47.00*

REVIEW BY JOSHUA KANE

The logical disconnect is a phrase coined by the late Bob Haines "to define a strategy to thwart a logically minded observer from 'reverse engineering' the actual methods used to accomplish particular effects." In short, it is the thought process when designing a routine or method that separates the true mystery worker from the mere trickster. As with Bob Cassidy's previous audio seminars, Michael Weber acts as host and provocateur. Cassidy has an immense knowledge base to draw from and Weber is skillful in moderating and driving the discussion in profitable directions. People who signed up in advance for the seminar received a pre-lecture set of notes from which they were invited to generate and submit questions to be answered in the seminar.



This set also includes an excellent mathematical effect for which Cassidy provides enough disconnects to remove mathematics from the list of reasonable methods. His work on the telekinetic pen changes the effect from a trick into a test. These are included on the CD along with a set of post-lecture notes, which included further details and answers to questions that arose during the two-hour seminar.

The lecture is entertaining and informative. There are some whimsical moments when Cassidy's audio logically disconnects when his phone runs into issues. Weber doesn't miss a beat during these interludes and admirably fills the air time. For the price asked this is a good value. It makes for perfect company for a long car ride or time on the treadmill. Cassidy is always worth listening to and it is wonderful to be able to re-listen to this event and add it to the archive.

**SOUNDZAMAZING PROP/UTILITY DEVICE
BY MAGIGADGETS**

Available from: www.magigadgets.com

Dealers contact MagiGadgets

Price \$112.00

REVIEW BY MARC DESOUBA



I attended my first magic convention in 1968 and saw the wonderful Swiss magician Piet Forton there. Piet did some incredible effects in which he produced a number of sounds at will. When he showed the complex method, I realized this was something I would never be able to acquire or use. Years later, Al Cohen put out AM Ink; this produced the truly magical effect of causing the sound of a radio to emanate from a drawing of a radio. I don't know how many hundreds or thousands of units Al sold, but it was a very popular effect. Several improvements of the technical aspects of that effect have been marketed over the years, but none had the capabilities of Piet Forton's apparatus...until now.

Noted British performer and creator Shahid Malik started a company call MagiGadgets that produced Instant Radio a number of years ago. It was an excellent version of AM Ink that was well made and had a different "trigger" mechanism. He improved this with Instant Radio 2 and Instant Squeaker, another clever adaptation. Now, with the introduction of SoundzAmazing, he has gone way beyond anything on the market and has most of the capabilities of Piet's work.

Spoiler alert! Because of the nature of this product, I have to reveal to you exactly what it is so you can truly appreciate what you are getting. In the space of a small, black, plastic box approximately the same size as an iPhone 5, you have the means to perform AM Ink, but that is only the beginning. With the push of a button, it becomes a fully programmable sound machine allowing instant access to five different sounds of your own choosing. You can switch between any of those five sounds instantly and effortlessly; all it takes is the touch of a button. Best of all, you can load any sounds you want into this little gizmo in five minutes or less with any home computer. Intrigued? Then read on.

First, the packaging is classy and beautiful. Housed in a box with a magnetic flap and custom cut foam are the unit itself, the special switch, and the speaker. The switch is designed to go under your arm and is triggered by simply squeezing down with the arm. It is fully adjustable for comfort as well as sensitivity. The three-watt speaker is about two inches in diameter and can be placed under your shirt or in your sleeve. It is quite unobtrusive in either location. There is an optional five-watt powered speaker available if you are concerned with the sounds being heard in a noisy environment, but the quality of the standard speaker seems quite good and loud. There is also an optional toe switch that I would heartily recommend. I am very accustomed to the arm switch, but the toe switch is even better. You can place it in your shoe and position it with the supplied Velcro or it works beautifully positioned on the side of your foot; just press your other foot against it and you get sound. The directions are well written and laid out, photo illustrated, and easy to follow. There are actually two sets of instructions, one for the Quick Set-Up and one for Performance and Presentations. But the best part of all is the "Extras" section on the MagiGadgets website.

With the package you receive a special password for the User area of their website. There you will find the instructions supplied in the box as well as instructions for several effects. This is also where additional ideas for the unit will be posted. And there is the Sound Library. Wow is this amazing! There is such an incredible variety of high quality sounds and music that can be easily downloaded on your computer and onto your SoundzAmazing unit. Things like a coin dropping into a glass (for an impromptu Copenetro), applause (in case you don't get any), animal sounds, horns blowing, comic boings, slide whistles, neck crackers, watch winders, etc. You also get a variety of verbal card revelations, disk jockey intros of songs for predictions, spooky voices and sounds for haunted type effects and séances, and lots more. You can also load on your own music to use as background for close-up shows. This unit will hold 150 minutes of audio.

You are supplied with several effects. The best of them fully utilizes the ability to quickly change sounds. For example, you hand a CD to a spectator. There are five songs listed on the label. You ask her to name one. You take back the CD, run your finger around it, and the selected song sounds like it is playing right out of the disc. This can immediately be repeated with a different song. You can customize the CD used and the songs. How? There are lots of them set up and ready to go in the sound library.

This is a beautifully conceived and crafted tool with infinite possibilities. I think it is a no-brainer for children and family entertainers. Many performers are going to have a field day with this one. Get yours and start thinking now. I think even Piet Forton is going to want one. I give this my highest recommendation.

THE LEGACY BOX PROP BY DAVID REGAL

Available from: www.DavidRegal.com

Price \$950.00

REVIEW BY JIM KLEEFELD

If you know the Astro Ball Cabinet, then this item may look familiar to you. It is similar in style and effect, but has some major differences. The Legacy Box was designed by David Regal and is manufactured by Owen Magic, hence the hefty price tag. The original Milson Worth prop has been around for some time and versions are currently manufactured by Frontier Magic, Dave Powell, and others. The Legacy Box employs a new method that



makes it possible to accomplish a wide range of effects.

In all previous iterations, you place a glass and a rubber ball inside the box, sitting side by side on the floor of the cabinet. You close the front door, move the box towards the audience, and then open the front door. The rubber ball is now seen resting inside the glass. It is a puzzling, if

brief, effect. The Legacy Box appears much like other models, but it is much more versatile and offers several different effects that can be combined with a storytelling routine.

In the instructions, David claims the box belonged to his itinerant grandfather whose spirit is still contained therein. In this presentation he stacks six dice inside the cabinet, closes the door, and the dice can be heard rattling across the inside of the box as if an unseen hand had thrown them. He opens the door to replace the scattered dice with a cup and then leans a pencil on the side of the cup. He shuts the door, the audience hears a rattling noise, and he opens the door. The pencil is now standing inside the cup. He places a shot glass and a small ring holder inside, along with a spectator's borrowed ring. After shutting and opening the door, the spectator's ring is inside the glass.

All of the props can be examined, even borrowed. It is a very nice collection of very different effects, all accomplished without ever moving the box. Many other effects are possible, and you can invent your own storyline to give them a rationale.

The quality of the box, both the finish and mechanics, is excellent; you are paying for a clever secret that makes this box versatile. The box is a decent size at 10 by 12 by 6 inches, with a single, front-opening door. It is very smooth and richly finished wood. (Mine appears to be mainly walnut.) The interior is clean, polished wood just like the outside, not a dull black. This is possible because there is no need for black art inside the box. Note that you do not have to pick up the box and move it forward in order in order to accomplish the magic. You do, however, have to have the box sitting on a table and you must stand behind it, so consider your prospective staging.

Despite the advent of many new spiritualist and mentalism products that depend on high-end electronics, the Legacy Box is simple and completely mechanical. There are no batteries, remotes, or circuit boards to go haywire and leave you stranded. I personally appreciated this, because my adult mentalism shows already require three remotes. You only have so many pockets (or toes).

My inclination is to insist that you only use this in a serious mentalism show about telekinetic powers or a spirit show to demonstrate evidence of ghosts. That's where my Legacy Box is going. I like that you can use an extended routine with several effects; you don't have to carry around a hefty set of props for one short effect. But non-mentalists could use the prop in a magic show, either close-up or stand-up. It is a bit large to carry around while table-hopping, but would work well in a bar setting. It also reads well in an auditorium for a hundred or more people.

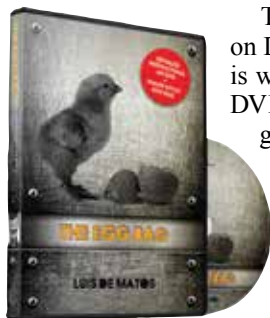
Regal's own presentation is quite light, and he's used it at the Magic Castle in a show along with comedy and card tricks. As of this writing, the prop is out of stock, but Regal has them custom-made in small quantities, and there may be more by the time you

read this. Drop him a line at his website. Yes, it is expensive, but in the right show, this is an outstanding prop with some seriously spooky potential.

THE EGG BAG DVD AND PROP By LUIS DE MATOS

Available from: www.EssentialMagicCollection.com
Price \$35.00

REVIEW BY CURTIS KAM



The box promises “Detailed Instructions on DVD and Malini-style Egg Bag” and that is what you get, and all that you get. On the DVD, Luis De Matos shows and explains a good, solid, professional Egg Bag routine – the very same routine, we are told, that he has used successfully in his illusion show for many years. It’s a three-phase routine designed to be performed on stage with a volunteer from the audience (usually a child), who is seated on a chair. The first phase features a “Balls

over the Head” kind of sequence in which only the spectator on stage is fooled as the egg vanishes and reappears. The second and third phases are solidly built on reliable sequences from existing Egg Bag routines, and fool everyone. The routine ends with the production of a live chick from the bag.

Of course, the magic marketplace is hardly lacking in Egg Bag routines. In recent years, we have seen releases from Jeff Hobson, Bob White, Gazzo, Danny Tong, and others. And you can still easily find routines by Denny Haney, Ken Brooke, and in fact, everyone on the Greater Magic Video library collection (Tom Mullica, Billy McComb, Charlie Miller, Johnny Thompson, and Martin Lewis). So what makes this routine different? Well, the live chick at the end is something you don’t see very often. And Mr. De Matos’s advice about how a responsible professional handles giving a child a live pet is invaluable if you’re thinking about doing that sort of thing. It’s hardly as simple as it looks. There are pains to be taken, but also unexpected long-term benefits, and Mr. De Matos talks about all of them. The De Matos routine is also different in that it introduces the bag as an everyday object, and does so in an amusing way.

What you don’t get here are options or alternatives. This is not intended to be a resource from which one might take ideas and use them to build a routine. The point of the DVD is to teach you this one routine, and that’s all that it does. And while Mr. De Matos does generally describe how he came to the moves he uses (he is the lucky beneficiary of personal instruction from Johnny Thompson), he does not identify the sources for specific techniques or strategies. That being the case, the serious student of the Egg Bag will find himself without much guidance if a particular idea catches his interest and he wants to know more. If, on the other hand, you’re a busy professional who wants to add an Egg Bag routine to your show, and you don’t have time to start from scratch and develop one of your own, then this will do the job for you quite nicely.

You also get a bag, which is a bit smaller than other bags, even the ones made by Lynetta Welch, which are supposed to fit the magician’s hand like a loose glove. This bag is as wide as Lynetta’s, but it’s almost an inch shorter. Regardless, the bag is made of a light, supple material, and it works well. Because of its small size, you will want to use a smallish egg, what we

in America call a “medium” egg. You’ll note that the egg is not supplied. And unlike some of the older Egg Bag resources, no time is spent teaching you to prepare the egg for the trick. There are good reasons for this. First, a perfectly prepared egg is commercially available from Ms. Welch, and Luis De Matos recommends that you purchase one of hers. Second, if you prefer to do this yourself, the information is readily available on the Internet, including detailed video tutorials. I took Mr. De Matos’s suggestion to look this up, and was surprised at how far things have come. Hint: If you’re making more than one hole, or if your mouth is involved at all, you’re old fashioned. (Think canned compressed air, as used to clean keyboards.)

As important as the production of the chick is, I was surprised to find that the little load bag that conceals, contains, and delivers the chick is also not included. In fact, while the bag is described and shown on the video, there’s not much discussion about how it’s constructed or how the release works. People who are used to working with doves and dove bags will know what to do, but newcomers to working with livestock are in for some experimentation. There is quite a bit of information about the care, transport, and handling of the chicks, however, and this advice seems to be spot on. The steal of the chick is also well designed and clearly explained.

In the end, if you want to do a routine in which you produce a live chick, then this is required viewing. In fact, if you’re thinking about giving away live pets of any sort during your show, I’d suggest you pick this up. If, however, you want to do the Egg Bag but want to end your routine in some other way, then it makes sense that you should first study a routine that’s constructed to make the most out of that ending.

HOLOGRAFX MAGICAL TOY/GAME By GOLIATH GAMES

Available from: <http://holografxgame.com>
Price \$25.00 – \$50.00

REVIEW BY JOSHUA KANE



Every year, thousands of train sets and other toys are bought by parents for their children. Most kids never get to play with those toys because their parents are having too much fun. The newest addition to

this category is an interactive scientific toy called HolograFX, which was a big hit at both Toy Fair and Gadget Show Live in the UK this year. There is a Sci-Fi plotline, aspects of Pepper’s Ghost, some classic magic trick technology, and the requirement of a smart phone or iPod Touch. Combining these elements, you will be able to create personalized holographic styled projections of yourself and your kids performing extremely cool effects and illusions.

The box contains props, stages, and a code for downloading the required app to your smart phone. A graphic manual is included and instructional videos are available on the website and in the app. (Note that there are no written instructions.) HolograFX is advertised for ages eight and up, but unless your eight-year-old is a certified evil genius, parental assistance is advised. The order of the videos in the app is much better at taking you through a logical journey of education than the website, where YouTube appears to have organized things by alphabetical order rather than logical order.

There are many pre-recorded characters and scenes that can be played on their own and with which the player interacts using props and in some cases simple sleight of hand. Players can also enter the world of the game by creating their own videos, which can be interpolated into the pre-existing sequences. There is fun stuff that can be accomplished with little instruction, but the real rewards come from a bit of investment of time to interact skillfully with the videos provided and, eventually, to create your own adventures.

All props are made of cardboard and plastic, and there are quite a few small pieces to keep track of (we recommend snack-size Ziploc baggies).

HolograFX provides an excellent introduction in how classic stage illusions work and how much of actual stage magic is accomplished. This works great on the kitchen table and is a no-brainer as a purchase. My seven-year-old thinks this is really cool. It is kid tested and mother approved in the Kane household. I look forward to playing it when my wife lets me have a turn. Recommended.

THE INTERCESSOR 2.0 UTILITY DEVICE

By GAETAN BLOOM

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies

Price \$50.00

REVIEW BY NORMAN BECK



The Intercessor 2.0 was created by Gaetan Bloom, and is put out by Luis De Matos, who is developing a reputation for quality magic products. In the event you are reading this and don't know the two above mentioned names, you are in for a real treat. Luis De Matos has, in the last few years, put out several DVD sets that all have one thing in common: they are all very, very good, or even great. I look at Luis's products as things you could buy and know they were

good without even knowing what you are buying.

I have a word for Gaetan Bloom, a word that, being from Texas, I very rarely get a chance to use, and that word is "genius." In magic there are not many who fall into that category, but Mr. Bloom surely does. The Intercessor 2.0 is a two-and-a-half-hour DVD detailing the operation of a gimmick that lets you do some very good magic. The gimmick is easy to use, because Mr. Bloom has been thinking about this method for years.

The Intercessor allows you to do effects like Card in Orange that use a torn corner as a method of verifying the card when it is found in an impossible location. A product like this is a joy to review because you can see the love and thought that went into it. I think a person will be a better magician by watching this DVD, even if they never used the gimmick. I cannot say enough about how good this is.

INSTA-SNAKE TRICK

By CHANCE WOLF

Available from: <http://www.wolfsmagic.com>

Price \$65.00

REVIEW BY PAYNE

This is a great utility device whose possibilities are nearly endless. At any time and nearly anywhere, you can instantly



launch a forty-inch spring snake from nearly anything. Remove a kid's baseball cap and fire a spring snake from inside of it.

Find one in your shoe ala the old rock in shoe gag. Show a bandana empty and devoid of anything, except that surprising and alarming spring snake. The possibilities and uses are seemingly endless and only limited by initiative and imagination.

Find yourself at a dull dinner party? Find a snake hidden in your napkin, or better yet, reenact the chest-burster scene from *Alien* by having a spring snake erupt from your chest. Use it in conjunction with your Khyber Cobra, Snake Basket, or the recently released Wolf's Magic Snake Fountain. I've had one for the last couple of weeks and have had endless fun with it.

The device is precision machined out of plastic and metal. It measures two-and-a-half inches in diameter and is a tad over an inch thick. It is black and has tread-grip material attached to its sides, making it super easy to hold and conceal in Tenkai palm. It is easily triggered with one hand, yet the trigger mechanism is secure enough to allow it to reside in ones pocket or case without fear of a premature release of the snake.

You'll no doubt want to order two or three of these, because having a snake suddenly appear out of various objects throughout one's performance would make a great running gag.

What more can I say? If you want to add a bit of fun and surprise to your show, get yourself an Insta-Snake. It could easily become the go-to utility device that you'll keep in your kit for all of those spring snake emergencies you didn't know you had until you started using this fabulous little device. You'll be wondering how you lived without it all of these years.

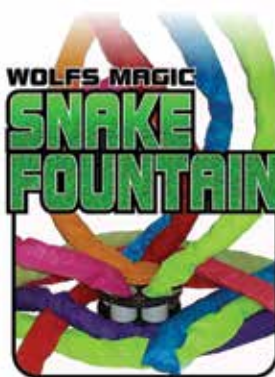
SNAKE FOUNTAIN TRICK

By CHANCE WOLF

Available from: <http://www.wolfsmagic.com>

Price \$350.00

REVIEW BY PAYNE



Anyone in need of a flashy, fun ending to his or her show or to a particular presentation should give Wolf's Magic's Snake Fountain some serious consideration. Mr. Wolf has done it once again and provided the magic community with a unique and versatile utility prop that is unlike anything that has ever been on the market.

Chance's Snake Fountain is a device that can launch a number of spring snakes into the air, one at a time, at any time during the performance. As shipped by Wolf's Magic it is ready to propel five forty-inch snakes skyward (or in most user's case, ceilingward). However, it will hold five eighty-inch snakes or launch ten forty-inch snakes, two at a time, from each of its five snake-holding chambers.

It takes about ten seconds for all the snakes to launch and, as strange as it might sound, it is a marvelous wonder to behold. The

first time I presented this I had all the kids in the audience rush the stage and gleefully grab all of the snakes.

The unit is a little larger than one might expect, measuring nine inches across and almost four inches in height. So, unfortunately, it won't fit into your average size top hat. But it is compact enough to fit in any number of other items and objects. No routines are supplied with it, either. Being a utility device, it is up to you to find the perfect way to include it into your program, a task that shouldn't be hard to accomplish if this prop interests you at all. Simply looking at the device on the Wolf's Magic webpage I instantly came up with a half dozen different things to do with it.

As it arrives from the factory it is a manually operated unit. A simple flick of a toggle switch on the top of the device is all it takes to put it into operation. For those who wish to operate it remotely, the unit has been designed to be easily upgraded. Either you can do it yourself, or Chance has made an arrangement with Nick Wenger to do it for you at the very reasonable cost of \$100.

I decided to go with the remote version; this now allows me to set it off while a good distance away from the unit, as well as giving me the ability to trigger each chamber one at a time. So now I can launch a snake, at my whim, anytime during my show. (This makes the device just that much more versatile, and fun.)

Like all of Wolf's Magic products, this unit is well designed and built like a tank, so it should stand up to even the most hectic of show schedules. It goes without saying that it takes a minute or two to reload the snakes. If you have back-to-back shows with no reset time, you'll need to buy two. Heck, buy two anyway, because having a shower of snakes going off on both sides of your stage at the conclusion of your show will be a hard visual to top, especially these days when pyrotechnics are harder and harder to use in theaters.

Jeff McBride has said that confetti is the new fire. Chance Wolf and his marvelous fountain have made spring snakes the new flash pot.

OCD DECK TRICK

By ANDREW GERARD AND WILL TSAI

Available from: www.SansMinds.com

Price \$35.00

REVIEW BY DAN GARRETT



Some will say that naming a card trick for a mental disorder is not in the best of taste. If you can get beyond that, the effect of the OCD Deck is that a shuffled pack of cards becomes ordered merely by having a spectator shake the cards inside the box.

We are told that the OCD Deck was created by "two of the greatest minds in magic," Andrew Gerard and Will

Tsai. Right away, we get the sense of over-hype, and that raises a red flag.

The narrative briefly mentions that this effect was originally created for television. The performances on the DVD, including the advertisements, are generally performed in David Blaine style – mostly for high school girls at a park or in the mall. Their reactions are, as expected, over the top. Thankfully, the effect also works in the real world. For more sophisticated audiences, my test performances received reactions of genuine surprise. In the minds of laymen, it was a complete impossibility.

This is a one-trick-pony deck. It is made to perform one routine and nothing else. It uses an old principle (probably from one of the true "greatest minds in magic"). If you have an intelligent guess as to how this works, you are probably right.

First impressions aside, I found that everything about the OCD Deck lives up to its claims. The cards are shown to be fully mixed. A card is selected, signed, and returned. The cards are placed in the empty box. The spectator shakes the box. The cards are removed and miraculously shown to be in order. The signed card is now in the proper sequence and may be given out as a souvenir. There is no switch. There is no sleight of hand.

The cards do all the work. If you want to perform a basic routine – a shuffled deck magically becomes (with apologies to Paul Gertner) "unshuffled" – you can do so almost immediately with the cards out of the case. I recommend you spend a little time modifying the deck to perform the main routine with the signed selection as described. This allows you to add some strong convincers from Will Tsai, including giving away a signed card, which helps negate the actual method.

I was under the impression that the US Playing Card Company would no longer print gaffs using their most popular Rider Back design. Apparently I was wrong. These cards are gaffed to the hilt (apologies this time to Don England). Even so, they arrive brand new, sealed in cellophane with a USPCC blue seal. There is no way they could be used to cheat at cards. The deck may not be examined, although it is apparently shown quite freely. A genuine shuffle or even a simple cut is out of the question. The pack will allow for a full-deck false shuffle, if you know one.

The DVD instructor, introduced only as Herman, gives suggestions on what to do if you happen to drop the cards. However, if you are not comfortable enough with card handling to avoid dropping them, you should not be attempting card magic of any description.

The DVD is well produced and edited. The explanations are crystal clear. My only minor complaint is that the deck is packaged loose in the case with the DVD, creating some damage to the paper sleeve housing the disc. This sleeve is easily replaced.

In addition to the ten minutes on the DVD that cover the OCD Deck, there is another full half-hour of ads and demos for other products from SansMinds to whet your appetite. If nothing else, the company is a true master of hype, but the product demos do look good.

If you want to pay for a trick deck that is only good for one quick effect, but is very easy to do, then this will suffice. But if you want to be able to do more amazing things with examinable cards, keep practicing.

LOOKOUT WALLET TRICK

By PAUL CARNAZZO

Available from: www.MentalVoyage.com

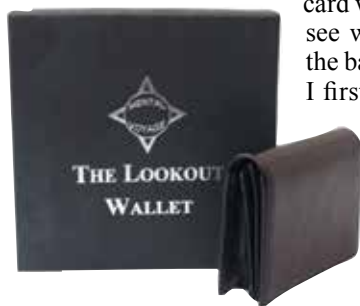
Dealers contact Paul Carnazzo: paul@ment Alvoyage.com

Retail Price \$60.00

REVIEW BY JAMIE SALINAS

I first met Paul Carnazzo four years ago at Mindvention. He is the creator of many great pocket mentalism products. This year Paul has released another new item, a peek wallet called the Lookout Wallet. I really love peek wallets and was looking forward to seeing Paul's version in person.

I have acquired many peek wallets and to this point I have used one exclusively in my paid performances. The Lookout Wallet has now replaced my previous peek wallet. Paul's creation is a business



card wallet that allows you to secretly see what has been written down on the back of your business card. When I first saw the wallet, my initial impression was that it was a little too thick for me and that the leather was a little stiff. The good news is that it looks like something that you would get from a fine stationery store and something that you would normally keep business cards in.

After working with the wallet for a few days, the leather has softened up just enough to make the handling very easy. The peek is done in real time, meaning that you can see what was written almost immediately after you briefly handle the wallet. There is no need to reopen the wallet like some peek wallets. My favorite part is that you can do this close-up and surrounded with careful audience management and natural hand positions. The thicker size means that it will hold plenty of business cards. This is great for me in a strolling situation, because I do not have to refill the wallet as often as I do with other wallets.

The included DVD is very well produced. It includes video of performances. Paul also covers breaking in the wallet, getting the peek, and the overall handling of the wallet, including covering your angles. Paul then details a few presentational ideas. The bottom line is that the wallet is well made, Paul provides you with some great information including handling and performance tips, and is a great value for the money. If you are looking for a peek wallet, I know of no better value than what you get in the Lookout Wallet. It is simple and elegant in design, and I highly recommend it.

CHANGE TRICK By SANSMINDS MAGIC

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies
Price \$25.00

REVIEW BY JAMIE SALINAS



When I first got into performing magic in the '80s, packet tricks were all the rage. Today, you do not see as many packet tricks being offered on the market. This new effect from SansMinds Magic is a throwback to the days of my youth. And the effect is not cluttered with "moves" or a long involved story.

You are supplied with a small packet of cards, a special gimmick, and an instructional DVD that will teach you everything you will need to know to perform the trick. The effect is simple, direct, easy to do, and will get you strong reactions from the spectators. You simply show a spectator a few playing cards, mix them up, and have the spectator place the cards behind her back. She is then to remove one card, remember it, and place it back with the others. She then shuffles the cards and hands them to you.

You now apparently read her mind and remove one card. The rest of the packet is given back to the spectator. You reveal that the card you removed is the very same card that the spectator

selected. Then the spectator looks at the packet that she is holding; all of the cards have changed into the same card that she selected. Everything can be fully examined.

Is this effect that direct? Yes it is. Is everything fully examinable at the end? Yes it is. Is this really that simple to perform? Yes it is. Do you see a pattern here? I was able to perform the effect with only a few minutes of preparation and practice. The reactions you will get are great.

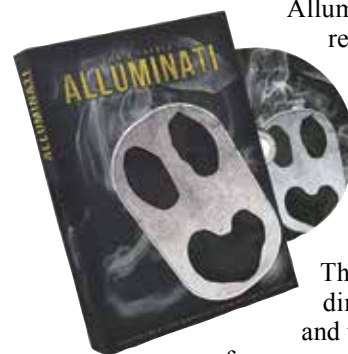
You are supplied with a specially printed gaff that allows you to perform this effect along with the extra cards you will need. There is a small bit of preparation you will have to do, but it literally takes just a couple of minutes to complete and then you are all set.

If you need something that is quick, easy to do, and gets strong reactions, you will want to take a look at this effect. This is perfect for the street performer, table hopper, or strolling magician. I am having a lot of fun performing this packet trick. This is a great buy for your investment.

ALLUMINATI DVD By CHRIS OBERLE AND ANDREW GERARD

Distributed by Murphy's Magic Supplies
Price \$34.95

REVIEW BY JOSHUA KANE



Alluminati is an excellent new card revelation that leaves your spectator with a really cool souvenir.

Effects that seemingly use common objects and leave memorable souvenirs in a spectator's hands are very desirable tools for the close-up worker and 24/7-performer.

This fills the bill. The effect is very direct. A playing card is chosen and the card is revealed in the pull tab from a can of pop or beer that has been sitting on the table from the start. An alternate plotline in which a spectator thinks about the person she loves as you rub the tab and reveal that the hole in the tab has morphed into a heart is also sweet. Alluminati is perfect for the bar, restaurant, and any environment where a soda can is a natural element. The concept is attributed to Chris Oberle.

Andrew Gerard developed the product and provides his usual level of excellent instruction. Card forces, switches, and presets are all taught. The effect looks good and you can close by linking the tab to the spectator's keychain. For regions where the tab is not an exact match, it is suggested that the flame of a lighter be introduced to initiate the process of morphing the metal.

Alluminati is a set of gaffed soda pop pull tabs that have been manufactured by Uday Jadugar in India; one set reveals that one of the circles has morphed into a heart and the second set of tabs can be read as either a Two or an Eight of Hearts. The DVD mentions that refills are expected to be made available, but I have not yet seen this happen. I imagine that one could make their own refills with a soldering iron or similar tool. At first glance, I felt that this was the kind of effect that one found in a magazine or lecture notes. After going through the DVD I am pleased to report that the subtleties and stratagems provided make this a fair value. Recommended. ♦



TREASURES FROM THE SALON DE MAGIE

BY KEN KLOSTERMAN

KELLAR'S VANISHING LAMP



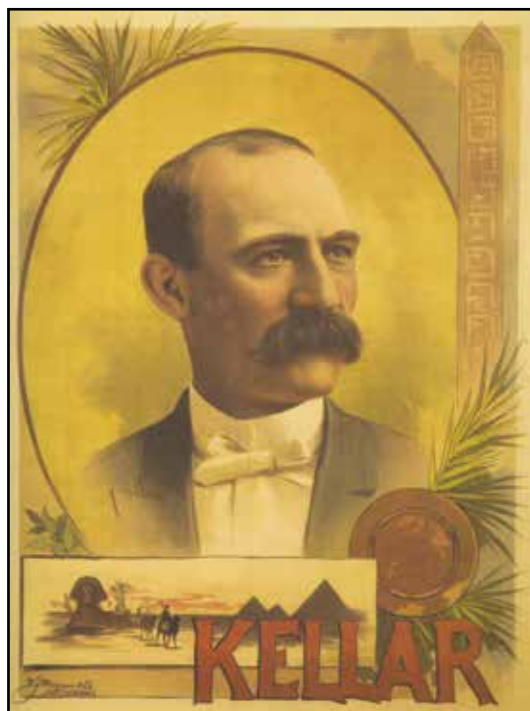
Illusions of modest size were as much a feature of Kellar's show as his full-stage spectacles, such as the Blue Room, an effect in which Kellar materialized and de-materialized on the stage. His programs nearly always opened with handkerchief tricks, and the Growth of Roses was consistently rated as one of Kellar's finest tricks. His version of the Vanishing Lamp illusion was another trick of this caliber.

According to *Kellar's Wonders*, a fascinating book by Mike Caveney and the late Bill Miesel, the trick was invented by Friedrich Conradi and was titled the Yoge's Lamp. The version Kellar used was built by Carl Willmann of Hamburg, Germany. It was introduced in the Willmann catalog sometime after 1880 as the *Verschwindende* [vanishing] *Lampe*, with the injunction, "Beware of Imitations!" Interestingly, in the catalog the accompanying English and French titles for the prop called it the Flying Lamp.

Kellar probably obtained his lamp from the Martinkas in New York, who were American agents for Willmann products. It is shown as item number 685 in the 1889 Martinka catalog with the notice, "This splendid illusion is nightly performed by the celebrated magician Kellar."

The vanishing lamp in the Salon de Magie is the one used by Kellar and then by Frederick Eugene Powell. It is a sixteen-inch-tall bona fide oil or kerosene lamp that could be lit by a member of the audience if Kellar so chose. Other manufacturers' versions involved elaborately faked lamps that could not be removed from their equally suspicious-looking tables. The Willmann apparatus is much simpler in operation than the mechanically intricate

Conradi version of the trick. It was meant to function reliably over and over again, making it ideal for the constantly moving Kellar show. Conradi's prop was noisy and temperamental. Kellar's relied on basic physics, good timing, and one offstage assistant to carry out the trick properly.



Kellar presented the trick with great success as the Mystic Light of Bala in his 1894-95 season and played it for several years, later calling it variously the Yoge's Lamp and the Yogi's Lamp. In performance, the lamp was introduced sitting on a wooden pedestal at one side of the stage. After it was lit, Kellar covered it with a large, lightweight silk handkerchief. The glowing light could be seen through the silk as Kellar carried the lamp to a thin, glass-topped table with a center post only one inch in diameter. He stepped back, the silk was whipped away, and the lamp was gone!

The effect is as astonishing today as in Kellar's time. In the early 1980s I performed the Vanishing Lamp at a Magic Collectors' Association weekend in Chicago. As I stepped backstage after taking a bow, to my delight I was surrounded by magic experts John Gaughan, Charles Reynolds, and Jim Steinmeyer, who all wanted to examine the prop closely. Like Kellar, I had fooled the wise ones.

The prop and the original trunk used to ship it around the world time and again with both Kellar and Powell have survived. After these two men, the subsequent stages of the lamp's provenance were Paul Fleming, Carl Davis, Devon Smith, and finally, the Salon de Magie. ♦

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Burgoon Magic	9
Christian Painter	35
Concept Magic	69
Genii Magazine	2
George Parker	57
I.B.M./S.A.M. Convention 2014	10
Jim Kleefeld	4
Joe Mogar - Magic Stars	70
John Stanfield	3
LaRock's Fun & Magic Outlet	72
L&L Publishing	34
M.H. Magic Magazines	9
Oceanside Magic Invitational	4
S.A.M. Life Membership	71
S.A.M. on Twitter	69
Sawing in Half Illusion for sale	9
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THE DEAN'S DIARY

BY GEORGE SCHINDLER

“PERFECT” COINCIDENCES?

My second trip to England was sponsored by Reiss Games; I was in London to do their department store promotions and sell “compendiums” (magic sets). At the first opportunity, I did what we all do: I looked for a magic shop and I found “Alan Alan’s” on Southampton Way.

As I reached the door, it opened and out walked a short, well-known magician who rushed past me and spouted, “Hi ya George.” It was James Randi, who sped down a street three thousand miles away from where I had last met him in the U.S.

During that same year I was doing TV spots in Chicago for Reiss. I walked down Michigan Avenue and from an office bounced a fellow New Yorker, J. Marberger Stuart, who was also in a hurry and who blurted, “Hi ya George,” and waved as he headed for a waiting taxi.

We do travel a lot; at JFK airport I did a quick “Hi ya Tina” to the girl pushing a packaged harp to the boarding gate of a plane headed for Paris. It’s always fun meeting or waving at magic friends.

The Hilton Hotel in Zurich had a shuttle to take guests to the restaurants at the railway station. We waited a few minutes for it to arrive and once more heard a “Hi ya George” as Topaz stepped off the arriving bus. This time we had a chance to chat. Topaz from Germany and the Schindlers from the U.S. spent a few minutes in Switzerland, which led to booking his show in New York the following year.

Driving to, or coming from, magic conventions, you are likely to meet other performers on the road. Two years ago we passed a van with the word “Magician” painted on the back door. Nina used her cell phone to call the listed number and Bruce Kalver answered. We met for coffee at the next rest stop on the Ohio Turnpike and set off to Abbott’s. A few miles further, on the Indiana Toll Road at another rest stop, I was minding my business at a urinal when the guy next to me asked, “Hello, George. Headed for Abbott’s?” The next year I should have recognized Dave Cresey’s motorcycle at the same rest stop.

What prompted this month’s column was a series of meetings on the road that really must be more than coincidence.

In the 1970s I produced magic weekends at several resort hotels. At Grossinger’s, a woman came to me and asked if she could buy some of my books at dealer prices for her magic shop in Canada. I agreed, and Evelyn and Phil Matlin of Perfect Magic became my new customers and our new friends.

Two years later, I had my event at the Tamiment Hotel in the Poconos. As we drove along on Route 80, a car in the left lane passed us with a woman frantically waving her arms. Nina recognized Evelyn and we signaled a lunch meeting at the next rest stop.

The Midwest Magic Jubilee venue takes turns each year between St. Louis and Kansas City. Phil and Evelyn were driving out west on Interstate 70 toward Kansas City, having come up from New Orleans. Returning from Topeka and a Midwest lecture tour, we stopped in the town of Columbia, Missouri, which is an oasis on the interstate, full of hotels and restaurants. We booked our hotel and drove to a random restaurant, where we recognized the Canadian car in the parking lot. Sure enough, the Matlins were there. A total surprise!



“The Perfect Couple” – Evelyn and Phil Matlin

Returning from a show in Washington, D.C., our old station wagon signaled “low gas,” so we pulled into the gas station at Maryland House on Interstate 95 North. While the station attendant filled our tank, a familiar voice behind me asked, “Aren’t your tires too low?” I turned to see a laughing Phil Matlin. They were headed home from Atlanta and naturally took the same route. It was uncanny; the guy at the gas pump was stunned, seeing the two of us freaking out. No more surprises!

We have since made special arrangements to meet a few times a year. To this day Nina and I scour every rest stop on every road we travel, looking for the “Perfect Couple.” ♦





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