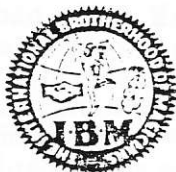
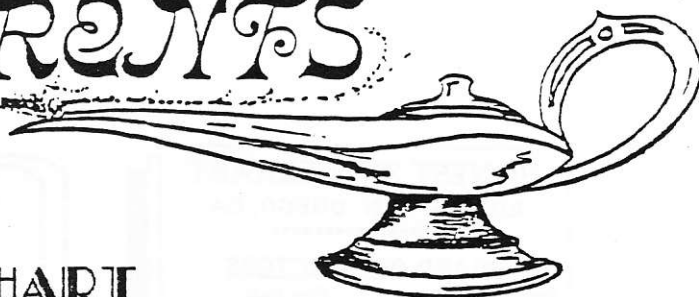


MAGICURRENTS



HONEST SID GIERHART
RING 76, SAN DIEGO, CA



MAY 1989

CONVENTION SELLOUT!!

As of Mid-April, the Sixty First IBM Convention in July is officially **SOLD OUT**, the earliest an IEM Convention has **EVER** been **SOLD OUT** (Told ya so), and the waiting list is already over one hundred - SO, if you're not registered - **YOU MISSED IT!**

There will be no registrations at the door. However, there always a few convention "No-shows", so you may have a tiny chance to get registered on somebody's cancellation if you show up bright and early on the fifth of July with cash in hand and **GET IN LINE** (Eleven years ago the line was over a block long; but I did get in - good seats too.)

The **OMNI HOTEL** is also booked solid, but **THE WESTGATE HOTEL** is taking the overflow at the same Convention special rate. **NOW**, that's a *great deal*!

Information from the Convention Committee indicates that approximately fifteen hundred "show tickets" have been allocated to Convention Attendees, **AND** that another fourteen hundred or so will be allocated to the general public. The specific details on these public tickets are still being determined, and will be passed on as soon as they are known.

This month we are happy to introduce you to "VINCENT THE MAGICIAN", and doubly pleased to welcome new member Jim **WHITING** to our **MAGICURRENT** staff. Some of you will recall Jim's work. **VINCENT** ran in many issues of **THE LINKING RING** in the sixties. Jim has graciously permitted us to resurrect him for **MAGICURRENTS**. Watch for further antics of "VINCENT THE MAGICIAN".

Many, many letters from IEM Central during the month confirming membership processing applications for: John **GOLD**, Bernard **KLEINKE**, Don **HALBACH**, Jim **WHITING**, Danny **THOMPSON**, Marc **HALBERG** and Jonathan **SHICK**. Watch the mails, gents, for your Membership Card, Certificate, and IEM Pin. Also, a magical welcome to our newest **RING 76** Members: Bob **PRIOR**, Marc **HALBERG** and Mallory **Van SLYKER**. Mallory is a Collector friend from Mountain Center, CA, and is forming an IEM Ring in the Palm Springs/Palm Desert area. He is looking for potential members

from that area and has joined **RING 76** as a Newsletter subscriber (our first) in the meantime. Give me a call if anyone of you know of possible members for a Ring up there.

Dues of twelve dollars for the 1989-1990 membership year were payable at the April meeting. Most folks who paid up took advantage of our one-time "Reader's Rebate" (encouraging); but the light turnout at the meeting left many who are now one month overdue. SO - get those checks (payable to

RING 76) to me *clo MAGICURRENTS* or direct to Treasurer **Ed RAYMOND** at 6902-1/2 Mission Gorge Road, San Diego, CA 92120.

Interesting letter (undated) from a **Chad MARTIN** in Chandler, AZ came in recently on spurious IEM Letterhead Stationary asking for our **RING 76** Membership Roster for a computer update. Didn't look or sound just right to me, so a quick call to **Marilyn EDWARDS**, IEM Secretary, verified that it

(Continued on Page 2)



Prez's Mezzage

I would like to take this opportunity to tell all of you

THANKS! Thanks for your being members, your support, your ideas and your thoughts about how this club should be run. It's been a great, growing, building year. Your officers and Board of Directors could not have done it without you. Thank you.

Would you please do me the honor of joining me for dinner on **July third, 1989**? There will be a cocktail hour with hors d'oeuvres and a bar hosted by the Ring at the **Omni** in the **IBM President's suite** followed by a no host dinner at **The Harbor House** next to **Nordstrom's** on the top floor of **Horton Plaza**. This will be a great opportunity to meet **International's** officers--past, present, and future.

There are, unfortunately, a limited amount of reservations being accepted. Of the one hundred and fifty four available, about sixty are already taken, so it will be first come, first served. Reservation forms are included in this missile.

The menu offered is a choice of seafood brochette (halibut, mahai-mahal, sea bass, onions, tomatoes, mushrooms, and peppers on a skewer) served with **Dismal rice** and lobster mushroom cream sauce; or steak & chicken (six ounce filet mignon with a boneless breast of chicken cooked in a ginger-lime sauce). Both entrees are mesquite broiled and are served with the house salad and coffee, tea, iced tea, or milk. The prices, including tax and gratuity, are eighteen dollars and twenty dollars respectively.

This makes me hungry. See you at the meeting.

HONEST SID GERHART RING 76, SAN DIEGO, CA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President.....Dick Dale
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Secretary.....J.P. Jackson
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Sgt. at Arms.....Sherry Luft

MAGICURRENTS

Editor.....J.P. Jackson
Publisher.....Frank S. Syran

LEAD STORY (Cont. from Page One)

was, in fact, a phony and should be ignored. Mr. **MARTIN** is not on the International Membership Committee and is NOT EVEN AN IBM MEMBER. Further, it is forbidden by International By-Laws to give our Membership Roster to anybody - except the IBM office in Bluffton. SO - if anybody else gets one of these, please let me know. Lotsa folks out there make a good living selling mailing lists; and I get enough JUNK MAIL now.

Lastly, Happy Mother's Day. See ya the day after.

APRIL MEETING ---or what you missed

Another busy *RING 76* magic month. Thirty two members and four guests turned out for the regular April meeting, which was *"IMPROMPTU MAGIC NIGHT"*. The premise was "SO YOU'RE A MAGICIAN, -- SHOW ME." and those dreaded "performer's numbers" were put to use for the first time. Each member of *RING 76* has been assigned a three digit "performer number". Over one hundred index cards, each with a "performer number", were shuffled and fanned for random selections; and we waited for: A. A member/performer present. B. A member/performer present who remembered his number. C. A member/performer present who remembered his number and was PREPARED TO DO SOMETHING!

It took lots and lots of chosen numbers, but we did have a great evening. Jack EVANS (No. 075) led off with the hottest item on the West Coast - Color changing Match Box Cars - a mini VW Bug changed color in spectators hand to match a chosen color card. FANTASTIC! -and, I hear, available at your local dea-

ler.

Old Pro/Veteran **James SWOGER** (083) had a helper create a random word from several chosen alphabet cards and then matched it, sight unseen, with his cards. For an encore he slid a blank card into a clear folder, had a card chosen, and removed the blank card to show the name of the chosen card written thereon - very dramatic and a nice mystery.

New member, **David OBOZA** (107), gave us an excellent version of **George SAND'S ROPESATIONAL**, a very nice example of taking something from **George SANDS** last month, and then bringing it back to the membership.

Dorothy (Sunny the Clown) **HAT CHETT** (064) did a very skillful *ML TIPLYING BANANAS* routine to her own rendition of "Yes, we have no bananas" and finished with a long string of sausages from her "Banana Bag".

Magical **Vi FREELAND** (016) had a card chosen from a packet of six, tore up all six, with the help of a spectator, mixed all the pieces in a bag, withdrew four pieces (without

(Continued on Page 3)

VINCENT THE MAGICIAN

by JIM WHITING



April Meeting (Cont. from Page 2)

looking) and assembled the chosen card. Very nice.

V.P. **Mike STILWELL** (065) taught us his personal favorite - making a coin hop six inches into the air from an up turned wrist, starting with a dime and working up to a half. Almost an acrobatic/juggling trick, but very impressive for an on-the-spot magical demonstration. Several members achieved some success on their first tries. It really works.

Treasurer **Ed RAYMOND** (034) did a nice version of the *RING ON A STRING ON A STICK RELEASE*, and **George EDWARDS** (002) gave us a cute paperfold demonstration with a story about an Irishman's funeral. Ex-President **Fred ROHRER** (042) did a good version of *RING FLIGHT*, 2nd V.P. **Ed FORSYTHE** (079) used five cards with holes in them to create a unique "finger chopper" effect, and followed up with a sand-wiched joker which stretched out to be about ten inches long.

Jan (Sandy Jay) EAST-MAN (005) showed us her new *BEAR BAG* clown prop - a very pretty change bag/silk routine which finished up with the bears printed on the silks.

New member, **Chris CAS-TILLO** (103) had a quickie

ROCK IN THE SHOE gag with a real rock (about three pounds worth), and **Loch CRANE** (062) showed us a nice *CARD STAR* effect with four burning envelopes (audience selected) and the fifth (unburned) containing the borrowed bill.

Dave SMITH (105) closed the evening with several great close up effects, including coin productions from a Bic pen; a well done *DRUNKEN SHUFFLE* with the chosen card found in reverse; the revelation of a chosen card, the only red backer in a blue backed deck with lipstick imprints on the face from a blown kiss; and an impressive four half/English penny *COINS ACROSS* transposition.

About forty five folks attended our first Magical POT-LUCK PICNIC/COOK-OUT and Get-Together on a nice April Sunday. **Mike** and **Donna STILWELL** hosted this special event with full use of their lovely home, patio deck, great Bar-B-Que, and Mike's antique Coin Machine game room. FANTASTIC Menu - which resulted in more eating and snacking than magic, including Hors

D'Oeuvre trays galore, **Ed RAYMOND**'s famous cole slaw, **Vi FREELAND**'s great deviled eggs, **Frank SYREN**'s Macaroni/Shrimp salad, several good potato salads, Philippine Pancit and Lumpia, a couple of incredible guacamole dips and a magnificent chocolate cake, which disappeared first! Lots of one-on-one magic (teaching, work-shopping, demos, etc.) and **Loch CRANE** doing the *PROFESSOR'S NIGHTMARE* with dog chains (kinda neat at that). All in all, a super Sunday, and now a new annual event.

Harry BLACKSTONE, Jr.'s actual Birth Announcement:

"Blackstone Special"

1934 MODEL

Produced Under the National Recovery Act
Combining Finest Materials and Workmanship

DESIGNER—Harry Bouton Blackstone.
PRODUCTION MANAGER—"Billie" Blackstone.
FIRST SHOWING—June 30, 1934.
ON DISPLAY—Three Rivers Hospital, Three Rivers, Michigan.

SPECIFICATIONS OF
HARRY BOUTON BLACKSTONE, Jr.

WEIGHT—Seven Pounds.
WHEEL BASE—21½ Inches.
VACUUM FEED.
FREE "SQUEALING."
WASHABLE SEAT COVERS—"What Have You."
TWO INCH PISTON—Self Lubricating (Designer, I. M. Braggings).
SELF DRAINING TANK—Stream Lined.
BALL BEARING EQUIPMENT.
CUSHION BUMPERS—in Rear.
GAS EXHAUST—Non-Clogging.
LICENSE PLATE—Dated July 13, 1933.

(No Jeebs', just a little Kid's)

BATTERIES—(Two Cell) packed with power and long life and guaranteed for years of active service. With automatic recharge. Built to take it.
COLOR—Customary Pink.
LIGHTS—Blue.
HOOD—Black.
INCOME TAX NOTE—This year's production entered under last year's business.

NOTE—WHEN BETTER BABIES ARE MADE

BLACKSTONE

WILL BE TOO OLD TO CARE



The Board met on May first with **Dick DALE**, **Mike STILWELL**, **J.P. JACKSON**, and **Sherry LUFT**. T.V.P. **Joe BERTUZZI** also joined us for a review of Convention Activities planning and action items. Honorary Memberships for **Helen HIESHETTER**, **Mary MARTINEZ** and **Ethyl BERWIN** were reviewed and re-affirmed by unanimous vote. One additional Honorary Membership is still under consideration. A letter from **Bill WELLS**, the Convention Committee Publicity and Program Chairman, provided advertising rates for the sixty first IBM Convention Program. Bill also indicated that it is customary for the local, host ring to take an ad in the program. The Board voted to take out a full page (8-1/2x11) at a cost to the ring of two hundred dollars, which will list all members of **RING 76** under a "WELCOME TO SAN DIEGO" message. (Better get those dues in soon if you want to see your name in the convention program.) **Sherry LUFT** will coordinate our ad sales campaign assisted by **Bob INGALLS** and **J.P. JACKSON**.

At the suggestion of **Ed MORRIS**, the International President, and **Joe BERTUZZI** the Board voted to undertake the production of a benefit magic show at a local children's hospital the night before the convention starts in an effort to publicize the convention and **RING 76**. V.P. **Mike STILWELL** will head the Show Committee, place to be determined, and will be looking for performers.

During the business portion of the next regular meeting, on May fifteenth, the Nominating Committee (**George EDWARDS**, **Vi FREELAND**, and **Jim RILEY**) will present their recommendations for new Ring Officers to the membership, and then open the meeting for nominations from the floor. The

Board proposes that, if the slate is accepted with no additional nominations and, if the membership concurs, elections may also be conducted, time permitting. If not, elections will be the subject of the June meeting on the nineteenth.

Next Board meeting will be at **Dick DALE's** home on Monday, June fifth.

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MAY MEETING ---what's coming

ELECTIONS are COMING. Time for a new slate of **RING OFFICERS**. The Nominating Committee will present their proposed slate during the business portion of the May Meeting on the fifteenth and open the meeting to further nominations from the floor. (See Board Meeting Report.) If we can squeeze it in without too much fuss and bother we may have elections too - if everyone agrees. (June is the normal election month, but the regular meeting on June nineteenth will be our last full meeting before the convention, and we might want to free it up for last minute Convention Activities business.) In any event, if you want to run for office, make your intentions known to the membership and solicit a nomination at the May fifteenth meeting.

We, also, will have a few Convention announcements to make during the business portion so try to join us on the fifteenth. It will be your last chance to let me know how you want your name to appear on your **RING 76 NAME TAG** which will be ordered after the meeting. If you can't attend the meeting give me a call at 569-0096, or I'll have to use your name as it shows on the Ring Membership Roster.

Our entertainment for MAY will be - "DO A TRICK and TEACH IT." A nice opportunity to bring your favorite item, demonstrate it, and then teach us all how to perform it. Call **Mike STILWELL** at 464-4961 to get on the program list.

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Special column this month (and maybe next) to cover several Convention related items which need to be accomplished soon - (less than sixty days before some fifteen hundred IBM'ers show up in San Diego for the biggest IBM Convention yet.)

The Secretary needs to know how you want your name to appear in the Convention Program in our **RING 76 "WELCOME TO SAN DIEGO"** advertisement. (See Board Meeting report.) Unlike the name tags, above, the Convention Program will give you a chance to list your stage name as part of your given name, e.g., **JOE (MYSTIC) McGRIEVEY** or **DOROTHY (SUNNY THE CLOWN) HATCHETT**. Or maybe you'd prefer just your stage name, whatever; but let me know by **May**.

Twenty Sixth (absolute deadline). See me at the May Meeting or call me anytime.

Mike STILWELL needs volunteer performers for the **CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL** benefit show on July Fourth (time & place to be determined). We have been asked officially to do this show as pre-Convention publicity for both the Ring and the Convention. Call **Mike** at 464-4961 if you can help out.

The **PREZZ MEZZAGE** invites Ring members to the Pre-convention Cocktail Party followed by the No-Host dinner on the Third of July. Your Invitation/RSVP letter is included with this month's **MAGICURRENTS**, and the deadline for response is June Fifteenth. Space is limited so it will be a "first come, first served" type event. RSVP's will be numbered as received by me (as they come out of my mail box), and we will

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 5)

take as many folks as we have room for. Send your RSVP to me, c/o **MAGICURENTS**, INDICATING YOUR DINNER CHOICE and include your check payable to "IBM RING 76". I will build the final dinner list on the Sixteenth and have it at the June meeting on the Nineteenth.

We still need volunteers to work at several Convention functions. I have many on my list, so far, but we need more folks to serve on the Welcoming Committee/Hospitality Desk, in the Close-Up and Lecture Rooms, as Stage Contest Helpers, Bartenders for the Night Before Cocktail Party; and, probably, for many other little jobs that will come up. Call me or give me your name at the May Meeting if you would like to help out.



☆ From Stan ALLEN'S **INSIDE MAGIC**. Dean GUNNARSON's second appearance on **THE SPECTACULAR WORLD OF GUINNESS** was scheduled for May Sixth, but has been re-scheduled for May Twentieth - so you can still catch it.

☆ Jan (Sandy Jay, The Sailor Clown) EASTMAN will start her "Beginning Clown Class for Adults, Part II" on June Third at Grossmont College. The fee is Thirty Dollars, and the class runs for four Saturdays, 9:00 to 11:15 AM, until June Twenty Fourth.

☆ **THE FULL MOON** Restaurant/Night-club in Encinatas is still showcasing Comics during the week; but, we hear, no more magic on Thursday nights. Too bad, cause dual member, Ken Ayers, was doing the MC job.

☆ Paul BARTON is still organizing his **PHANTOM OF THE OPERA** trip for Sunday, June Fourth. Anyone is eligible, and your ninety dollars gets you

hard-to-find tickets to a matinee performance at two P.M., and a nice ride up and back. Call him at 268-3911 if you would like to participate. **HE HAS THREE SEATS LEFT!!!**

☆ Our North County friends in **THE MAGIC GUILD OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA** had their new officer elections on May Second with the following results: New President is Bob ALLEN (a Ring 76'er also); Brian TEMPLETON is new Vice President (also a Ring 76'er); Scott FISHER is the Secretary; Jack MARKLEY is Treasurer, again (another Ring 76'er); Frank HERMAN is Program Chairman (still another Ring 76'er). Well done and we look for continued good relations between clubs and some mutual events in the coming year.

☆ Jack MARKLEY reports a nice turnout for his first chapter meeting of the **FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN MAGICIANS** on April Twenty Fourth, and encourages attendance at the next meeting on May Twenty Second, Seven Thirty P.M. at 1524 Buena Vista Drive, Vista, CA.

☆ Again from **INSIDE MAGIC**. Penn & Teller on the **LETTERMAN** Show, recently, pushing their new book, **PENN & TELLER'S CRUEL TRICKS FOR DEAR FRIENDS** (Ought to be a gooder.) Watch for them on a **TODAY** show in mid June, and again on another **LETTERMAN** show in late June; AND yet again on June Seventh with the **AMAZING RANDI** on **EXPLORING PSYCHIC POWERS - LIVE** Hmmm, busy guys!

☆ East San Diego **CLOWN ALLEY** meetings and performances on May Twenty Third, June Twenty Seventh, and July Twenty Fifth. The **ALLEY's** purpose is to promote the art and skills of Clowning for Children and Adults. Meetings at seven P.M. at **BUCK KNIVES**, 1900 Weld Blvd., El Cajon. Call Jan EASTMAN at 582-9727 for details.

CROSS TALK



● Nice letter from member, Roy ARM-STRONG, reporting that he recently met Ken BENGGE's parents; and, as a result, exchanged correspondence with Ken, himself. Some of you may remember Ken as a young juggler in the earlier days of the Ring. He now has an Audio/Visual business presentation company in Illinois and was pleased to be remembered. The following paragraph is quoted from his letter to Roy:

"My early San Diego magic upbringing was a rare gift. Larry GRUMMET, Al KNOX, Art & Pat HANNUM, Ruth PEARSON, Sid GERHART, the San Diego Junior Magicians; I was given a gift by them all that has easily opened most every door in my life. Al would be very proud of my accomplishments, and even happier at my giving spirit to help others along in their search for happiness."

● Good friend, Steve DAWSON from up San Francisco way (actually the South Bay), now has **TWO MAGIC TOUCH** Magic Shops going: one in the **EL PASEO SHOPPING CENTER** of San Jose, and the other in the Milpitas area. The latest issue of his neat newsletter, **THE FLASH PAPER**, provides us with the question of the day: "Why is 'abbreviated' such a long word?" (Now remove tongue from cheek.) Visit him when you are up that way, or visit his booth at the convention in July.

● **ORANGE COUNTY MAGIC CLUB** recently had the George SANDS lecture and, like us, found him to be fantastic. They will host a flea market at their regular meeting on Tuesday, June Twentieth (third Tuesday of each month) at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, 12301 Magnolia St., Garden Grove, CA.

● Nice Newsletter in from IBM Ring 254, **THE INLAND EMPIRE AND KARROLL FOX** Ring in the Redlands area. They meet the second Tuesday of

There are few magicians in this world with a wider, more diversified or longer professional experience than "Skipper Frank" Herman of Carlsbad. Although most of our members do not know him well he first joined Ring 76 in 1983 when he moved to Carlsbad. He is now more active in the North County S.A.M., and runs a magic shop in Oceanside, but is nevertheless a member of Ring 76.

The Skipper was born Francis Joseph Herman in New York City on November eighth 1916, however, when he was three years old, the family moved to Poughkeepsie, N.Y., seventy five miles to the north.

Personality of the Month



CROSS TALK (Cont from Page 5)

- They meet the second Tuesday of each month, and had an **ARNOLD FURST** lecture at their May meeting. Call **Paul SHARTLE** at (213) 792-5220 for magic info if you're up that way on a second Tuesday. They will host a **SWAP MEET** some time in September. Details to follow.
- **RING 96**, Long Beach, has rescheduled the "**TAYLOR HASKELL** Gambling Lecture by **BRENDA**" for Saturday, June Seventeenth. Their next regular meeting on Saturday, May Twentieth will feature their **ANNUAL CLOSE-UP CARNIVAL** at the Iacobi Library, 5020 N. Clark Ave. in Lakewood, CA, starting at Eight Thirty P.M.
- And, lastly - **HOO-RAY** for friend and member, **J.C. WAGNER**, - now the new Bar Manager and Magician at the **CLUB MIRAGE** in Phoenix, AZ. Sounds great! Way to go, J.C.

J.P. Jackson

J.P. Jackson

569-0096

At the age of nine Frank read a **JERRY TODD** adventure novel in which the hero, Jerry, and his friends rigged an old scow up with a stage and put on a black art show, which they ferried from town to town along the canals which criss crossed New York state. With this inspiration he discovered the 798.3 shelf at the public library from which he read everything from Hoffman to C. Lang Neal's **MODERN CONJUROR**. **John Mulholland** was on the library's advisory staff and Poughkeepsie was **Al Baker's** home town so the library tended to have a generous collection of magic books.

Poughkeepsie was not as remote from New York City as the seventy five mile distance might suggest. Frank's father worked for the railroad and the boy had access to a free pass. The journey to New York, the mecca for all magicians in those days, was less than a two hour trip and *Max Holden's Magic Shop* was about two and one half blocks from Grand Central Station.

The Hermanns moved to Detroit when Frank was eighteen. To satisfy his family he got a daytime job as a shoe clerk in Motor City and worked nights at some, of what Frank typifies as, "simply terrible" beer joints and burlesque houses. Scale in the beer joints was four dollars per night and the management wanted three shows each evening.

Then one of the top acts of the day, **RUSSELL SWANN, THE MAGIC MAN**, was booked into the **BOOK CADILLAC HOTEL**. Swann had been featured at the **WALDORF ASTORIA** in New York City and **THE WALTON ROOF** in Philadelphia, but did not do much sleight of hand or manipulation and Frank, had never heard of him. (Another case of the finger flingers being upstaged by the showman.) Frank went to see him, however, and was completely bowled over by two things. Detroit was a dancing town; but every little night club, every little beer joint, had to have three acts. The acts, however, were required to get on and get off so as not to interfere with the dancing. Singers were allowed to do two numbers with one encore. Magic acts were allowed eight minutes. There were no exceptions.

Anyway, when Frank went to see Swann he did *forty five minutes*. As Frank says, "They ate him up! I was absolutely astounded. He killed them! Absolutely killed them! I was so awed I went backstage to see him, which was something I didn't usually do. He was very cordial, very kind, and he asked, 'Where are you working?' Well, as I told him, I was working at an awful joint called **TOMPKINS BLUE RIVER**. He asked what time I went on, and when I told him he said, 'I'll come and see you.'"

The very next evening the Mafia type who managed the **BLUE RIVER** came back to Frank's dressing room (actually the men's toilet) and announced, "Some of your high class friends are out front." When Frank looked out, there was Swann, dressed in soup and fish and accompanied by a beautifully dressed girl. With them was another couple similarly attired.

"I wanted to run out the back door," Frank says, "but I went out and did my act. Swann laughed. He applauded. And after the act was over he called the manager and said, 'Where did you get this guy? What are you paying him?' When the manager refused to tell him he said, 'I know it's not enough!'"

Naturally, Frank became a Russell Swann fan from then on. As he says, "He wasn't a super manipulative magician, but he did very clean magic, and he did everything perfectly. His big thing was the *SNAKE BASKET*. He made an Olsen & Johnson production out of that. We kind of kept in touch for a while, but then I lost touch with him."

When Frank was in his twenties he made his way to L.A. where he got a job demonstrating and selling magic at **Bert Wheeler's** original *HOLLYWOOD MAGIC SHOP*. The job paid only commission so his income was varied and precarious.

Working there he met **Cal Sten** who invited him to join the *MYSTIC THIRTEEN*, a club of young Los Angeles magicians. Other members included **Marvin Roy, Bob Gunther, Bob Haskell, Arnold Furst, and Jim Conley**. The boys received constant help and encouragement from such established magicians as **Loring Campbell, Caryl Fleming, Chester Morris, Maldo, Cantu, Bill Larsen Sr. and others**.

About this time **Russell Swann** was booked into the *COCOANUT GROVE* at the *AMBASSADOR HOTEL*. Frank quickly renewed his acquaintance with his hero, and subsequently Swann asked Frank to write and routine a *PANCAKE IN THE HAT* bit for him. The routine required a stooge, and Frank got the job. When Swann moved to the *MARK HOPKINS* in San Francisco Frank went along.

While they were playing San Francisco Frank was offered the opportunity of opening his own magic shop in Los Angeles and was replaced in the act by **Charlie Miller**, who himself was later replaced by **Jay Marshall**.

The new shop prospered and became the hangout for all the famous magicians of the day. **Paul LePaul, Jack Gwynne, Bill Neff, Ade Duval, Cantu, Maldo and Al Wheatley** were all regular drop-ins. By now Frank was playing regular club dates and having a ball.

World War II ended all that. Frank was drafted into the Army, serving in Texas, Chicago, and finally in the Yukon and the Aleutians. By this time he had acquired a beautiful Canadian wife, **Georgia**, and a son.

In 1949 television was becoming a factor in the entertainment field and Frank was anxious to try the new media. Although New York City was then the television capital of the country Frank, apparently, foresaw Los Angeles as the future center and moved the family there. It took two years to get his first TV show on the air. In the meantime he worked as a novelty salesman, a theater projectionist for **Jim Conley**, and broke into the trade show business.

There were only a thousand TV sets in LA in 1951. As Frank says, "I finally found an advertising agency that would listen to me. They had a marvelous combination of sponsors: there was **Four Fin Tuna, Genuine Chinese Food, and some kind of honey**. (I can't even remember their name.) I put a show on the air called *MAGIC PARTY*. The pay was abysmal, of course, and I had to write it, run it, and come up with the props." Many people, like **Jim Conley and George McCathy**, contributed their talents to the show.

"After a year," Frank says, "everybody got tired of the show. The agency was tired, I got tired, and the sponsors got tired. So we went off the air for a while. The sponsors still hired me to do market appearances after the show was off the air."

All during this period Frank was also playing the lead in the *THE DRUNKARD* in Los Angeles and doing an old fashioned magic act in the olio. Like most magicians Frank had always been his own producer director, but now he found himself under a professional director, even in his olio act. The director would ask questions such as, "Why do you pause there?" or "Why do you turn to the right at that point?"; questions he had never before addressed. He found the act tightened and pointed as it had never been before. This worked to his great advantage as it was, substantially, this act that he played on the USO circuit right after playing *THE DRUNKARD*.

It seemed that everything was coming at once about then. At the time that he was negotiating the USO tour, KTLA called about what, eventually, became the *SKIPPER FRANK* show. No one knew what the show was going to be about. In any case Frank went over and talked to them, and they said, "Yes, that's fine." But nothing seemed to happen, and the date for his USO tour was approaching. KTLA kept stalling and finally Frank told them he was leaving for a two month tour of the Orient. They said, "Don't worry about it," and off he went. When the troupe got over there they discovered that the two shows in front of them had gotten into trouble. Frank never found out what it was, whether drugs or money changing, but the troupes were sent home. Now, instead of two months, Frank discovered he was on a six month tour. He fully expected KTLA to find themselves another guy.

When he got home he was startled to see KTLA running plugs for the show he had expected to be on. He called the station, and they said, "Come on in and talk to us." They made him an appointment to see **Klaus Landsberg**, the program director. Klaus, in Frank's eyes, was a genius. He was the pioneer broadcaster in LA and the first one to run a TV station in the black. Under his direction KTLA innovated TV wrestling and the Roller Derby. His appointment was for eleven thirty A.M. on a Monday morning.

Frank says, "I got there at ten o'clock, naturally. Eleven o'clock came and went. Noon came. One came. Two came. Finally the

secretary said, 'Mr. Landsberg will see you now.'

"So we sat down and talked about the show. The setting was going to be a place called *FLIN ISLAND*. We were going to have cartoon packages: *DAFFY DUCK*, that sort of thing. We were talking very casually at three fifteen when he said, 'We're going to try you for two weeks.' I said, 'Fine. When do we start?' He said, 'This afternoon.' I asked, 'What time?' and he replied, 'Five o'clock.'

"What am I going to be?" I asked. 'I dunno. What do you want to be?' At that time the station was owned by Paramount so I said, 'Will you call the wardrobe dept. and tell them I'm coming. I'm going to find something to wear, and then I'll tell you what I'm going to be.'

"So, I went down there, and all I could find that would fit was a Navy type blazer and a yachting cap. So I got on the phone (it was then twenty minutes to five.) and I said, 'What do you think of *SKIPPER FRANK*?' He said, 'That's lousy.' I said, 'Well, that's what you've got.'

In the meantime Frank had picked up some paper cups, a hank of rope and some newspaper. He got to the station at five of five and found the studio and the director. The director said, "Just stand over here." Frank asked him what he was going to do, and the reply was, "Just wing it." Thus began a program that was to last for nine years.

Frank did some tricks with the paper cups and the rope and made a Christmas tree out of the newspaper. When six o'clock came (it was an hour show) he asked the director, "Did he call?" When the reply was "No" Frank said, "I guess I come back tomorrow." and he said, "I guess you do."

Frank heard from Klaus only once during the first week and a half of the show. On one show he used a *BANG* gun, and Klaus called with the cryptic message, "No guns on the show!" Then on the final Wednesday he got a call to be in Klaus' office on Friday. His two week trial was up.

On Friday Klaus said, "Monday morning they're going to offer you a contract. You should have your agent here. Who's your agent?"

"I don't have an agent," Frank replied.

"You should have an agent," Klaus said. "Those lawyers are tough."

Very boldly Frank said, "You be my agent."

Klaus' jaw dropped, and then he laughed. "OK," he agreed.

Klaus got him a seven year contract with an escalator every twenty six weeks. A very propitious contract as it worked because Klaus died young in the third or fourth year of the contract. He was followed by a succession of managers, most of them inept. Paramount did not believe in the future of television and paid very little attention to the station, sending the jerkiest of its executives to KTLA. Frank would get edicts like, "No live audiences." or again "Live audiences." And then, "No live animals." And finally, "No puppets." After that last edict Frank asked the current director, "Why?"

"Ventriloquial figures look like dead children. I can't stand them."

These were the kind of bizarre problems Frank was fighting all the time, but despite the difficulties, at the end of the seven years he was able to extend the contract for another two years, thus establishing an enviable nine year continuous run.

One amusing anecdote that Frank tells of those years involves **Harry Blackstone, Sr.** During the war while Frank was going to Radio School in Chicago his spirits were at a very low ebb. The discipline and rigorous schedule at the school were very onerous, and Frank had very little contact with magic. He had managed to do a few shows for the local USO, and they had arranged for him to get a few passes. On one of these occasions Blackstone was in town, and Frank went to see him. Frank was so lonely that he conquered his natural timidity and went back stage. Blackstone greeted him like an old friend, and Frank spent the day with him, even overstaying his pass. Blackstone boldly called the school and used some story to extend the pass. The day brightened Frank's life for weeks to come.

By the time *SKIPPER FRANK* was on the air Blackstone and his wife had retired to Hollywood. One day a pet blue parakeet of which they were both very fond got away from their home, and they were both very distraught about it. Someone called Frank to tell him about the tragedy, and ask his help.

"I have twenty thousand detectives to put on the case," Frank said. One of his sponsors was Schwinn Bicycle and he had a bike to give away. "I did a story on Blackstone - how he had given away thousands of rabbits to kids all over the world, and now his pet blue parakeet was lost. Whoever found it and returned it to Blackstone would be given a Schwinn Bicycle. We had the parakeet back in about three hours."

Then came the cruise ships. Like so many of Frank's experiences these too started at the last minute. He had been working for Teleprompter and then Warner, traveling the country showing the Cable Television Stations how to set up local programing with a minimum of equipment. While he was on this job he got a call from **Peter Pitt** at two o'clock in the morning.

"I was supposed to go on a Princess Cruise in the morning, but I got a better paying job. Will you go." Frank had vacation time coming from the cable company so he said, "Sure."

He boarded the ship in San Pedro the next day. He had no trouble finding the purser and getting assigned a cabin, but it

him four hours to find the recreation director.

As Frank tells it, "He said, 'Oh, you're the magician.' I could tell right away what this guy thought of magic acts. He said, 'I'll talk to you in a day or two.' Like go on, don't bother me."

"Two days later he said, 'They want you to work tonite. How long do you do?'"

"How long do you want?" I asked."

"He said, 'I don't want too long. About twenty minutes.'"

"So I went out and did my twenty minutes that night. Then he said, "Oh, I said we wanted you to do one show on the way down, and one show on the way back. But now we want you to do about four shows.' Fortunately, I had the *MAGIC DIGEST* with me. It's like a portable *TARBELLS*. I went down into my cabin and went through it. I got three more acts using newspapers, paper bags, cardboard boxes, anything else; and then I went all over the ship looking for the props. And I did the shows and came home and went back to the cable TV job."

The second cruise ship job came as unexpectedly. The family was living in Seattle at the time, and Frank happened to be in LA on business. He was walking past the office of an agent named **Sonny Miller** and decided to drop in and say, "Hello". Frank hadn't had a lot of work from Sonny, but Sonny had the best clients in the city, and the work Frank *had* had from him had been excellent.

Frank walked in and Sonny said, "Oh, my God. Am I glad to see you. You're going to Alaska in the morning."

In Frank's words, "I said, 'I don't have any of my stuff here. My stuff's all in Seattle.' He said, 'You can do it! Get on the ship.' Lee Grable had been scheduled for the job, but for some reason he had to cancel. Sonny went on, 'I'm just getting in with Princess cruises, and I don't want to lose this account. Do it!'"

"I called my wife and said, 'Do you mind if I go to Alaska?' She asked, 'How long are you going to be gone?' I said, 'Fourteen days,' and she said, 'O.K.'"

"I went over to **Joe Berg**'s and bought a hank of rope. I had wanted a good set of *LINKING RINGS*, but the set I got was awful, like coat hangers. I also bought a couple of decks of cards and things like that, and I got on the ship."

"I found I had to do six or seven shows on that trip. Fortunately the first stop was in San Francisco, and I jumped off the ship and went to **Buma**'s shop and got some more stuff."

"While we were on the cruise they said they wanted me to stay on the ship when we got back to LA, and go to Acapulco. I ended up staying with Princess for nineteen cruises. I enjoyed that work."

"When it came to the Christmas cruise I said, 'No! I'm going to spend Christmas with my wife!' They said, 'Would you come if we hire your wife?' I said, 'She doesn't work any act.' They said, 'We'll hire her as a children's director. She can play games with kids, can't she?' So she went on the Christmas cruise. Of course our kids were all grown up and gone by then. That was the most delightful cruise I ever had. We really enjoyed it."

"On the last ship that I worked in that series', (I did five cruises on that last ship.) the captain gave me the greatest compliment I have ever had. He came down to every show I ever did on that ship. This impressed the crew tremendously. They said, 'He has never done that for any other act!' Immediately, the bartenders, everybody, began to treat me with a special respect."

Nine years ago Frank was in New Orleans concluding a contract to work the New Orleans Home Show when he collapsed in the Shrine of St. Jude. Cancer! Some kind citizen delivered him to the New Orleans Charity Hospital. The first doctor to examine him was **Jim Angel** who also performed the first of five operations which saved his right leg and his life. He spent one hundred and two days in the hospital with brief respites at the home of magician **Ralph Fountain**. Ralph was alerted to Frank's plight by their mutual friend **Bev Bergeron**. Ralph, in effect, adopted Frank.

Frank survived with his life *and* his leg, something none of the doctors had believed possible. After the operations succeeded the danger of infection was so great that they administered large doses of a very powerful antibiotic. The known side effect of this medicine is hearing impairment, from which Frank now suffers. But he still works, doing shows, running his magic shop in Oceanside, and enjoying life.

To quote **Phil Willmarth** from the March 1980 issue of the *LINKING RING* (from which many of the facts in this article have been gleaned):

"Through all of his life with its successes, temporary set-backs, changes of direction and occupation, and so on, the one consistent fulfilling and stabilizing force (in addition to his very supportive wife and family) has been his magic. His magic has provided an outlet for his creative energies, a consistent means of income, and made him many friends. I feel that magic and the world needs more Frank Hermans, and applaud his talent, his generosity, and his indomitable spirit."

-PRW

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