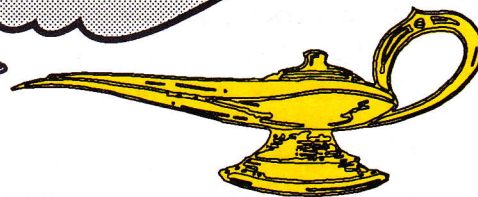


MAGICURRENTS



HONEST SID GERHART
RING 76, SAN DIEGO, CA



VOL. IX NO. 1

JANUARY 1995

PRESIDENT'S PAGE

Welcome to 1995! I hope that the year is already goin' your way. Before I get started on this year's business, I would like to finish up a bit of 1994. First, I would like to apologize for not leaving directions to the potluck with the Hungry Hunter. It was not until the drive home that it occurred to me. I hope nobody showed up at the Hunter. We attempted to phone all members prior to the potluck to confirm attendance. It appears that some of our records are incomplete or out of date. A few members were unable to be contacted by phone. Any corrections or changes should be reported to Don Soul who will see to it that it gets entered into our records.

I would like to thank all of the members who attended the pot luck as well as those who called to express their regrets. Several of our members who are seldom able to attend meetings left messages for me wishing the club happy holidays. As it happened, many members who were able to attend the pot-luck told me that they had a great time. Most would have liked to party for a while longer, but we had a time limit on the room.

Two members wanted to get a group together for the New Years Eve bash up in Escondido, but we never reached the ten person discount limit. If anyone went anyway, please let me know how it was, or better yet, write it up for the newsletter.

On to new stuff...

At this month's meeting you will receive your copy of the Ring 76 membership directory. This booklet contains information about those members who chose to participate in our survey a few months ago. The next time Dues are due, we will update the club's information on all members. Information that is not determined to be "confidential" by the member will be included in the next version of the membership directory.

MAGICURRENTS

Thanks go out to Mike Lowe for his work, along with board member Dick Dale, on our newsletter over the last few years. During his tenure as publisher, *MAGICURRENTS* has grown in both size and quality. Due to time commitments in developing a new business, this issue will be Mike's last. We owe him a debt of gratitude for his dedication to the club. Keep in touch, Mike!!!

(continued on Page 6)

BOARD MEETING

by Mark Flores

Rick Waterhouse hosted the December board meeting, which was attended by Dick Bush, Dick Dale, Julie Dale, Greg Wauson, Mark Flores, Don Soul and Rick Waterhouse. The board discussed details about the upcoming Holiday Gathering. It was decided that the event would take place at the Recreation Center of the trailer park where Dick Bush resides. A potluck dinner, cozy atmosphere, low cost and the past success of this location were the main reasons for this choice.

The Holiday Gathering was held on Monday evening, December 12th, times to be announced. Everyone should receive a phone call from an officer (of the club, not the law) to coordinate food dishes. The club will provide a smoked roasted turkey and would like to get as many people as possible involved in the entertainment of the evening. If you are interested in contributing a thematic performance for this special event, please let Rick or Greg know when they call. It was also mentioned that the little ones would be enjoying a special visitor named Clara Claus, so be sure to bring along the small ones!

The Membership Directory is ready to go to print and will be distributed at the January meeting. Thanks to Rick Waterhouse for putting it all together and the membership of Ring 76 for their active interest and participation.

The search for a club historian is still underway and Dick Bush is looking for a few (old?) members to come to the aid of their organization. We need a researcher and writer to help construct and maintain the prestigious, if not obscure history of our club. If you have information, clippings, articles, photographs, minutes of past

meetings, please contact Dick Bush or one of the board members.

Lastly, the board agreed that last month's selling event was successful overall. It was an experiment, we learned much from the experience, and most everyone enjoyed themselves. Thanks again to all who were involved, both sellers and buyers!

(Editor's Note: By changing past tense to future tense, this article will reflect how the Holiday Gathering came off!)

LAST MEETING or what you missed

by Mark Flores

The November meeting of Ring 76 was the occasion for the annual selling event. This year, the club held a combination swap meet and auction which proved to be a huge success! Prospective bargain-hunters arrived early to peruse the excellent deals, including books, videos and package deals, as well as many classic collectibles. Quick sales were made right from the start and there was something for everyone. The swap meet was held on the upper balcony area of the restaurant while a silent auction convened in the main meeting room. Items with a brief description were displayed on tables and bidders could write in their bid for each item.

After the swap meet, the club adjourned to the meeting room where Mr. Dick Dale aptly presided as auctioneer. Due to the professionalism and expertise of Mr. Dale, the live auction was the highlight of the evening. Many thanks, Dick! There were many good buys throughout the evening, and the participation of everyone in this year's selling event was the main reason for its success.

GAUGHAN FISHIN'

By Rick Waterhouse

On the evening before the last Magic Castle Swap Meet, the talent was incredible. Marcia and I were looking forward to seeing Mike Caveney and Tina Lenert perform, but were somewhat puzzled that John Gaughan shared the bill with them. As the bookcase slid open we heard the buzz. John Gaughan was presenting something truly wonderful to behold. As a caretaker of a wondrous museum he, aided by Lenert, was demonstrating impossible feats pulled straight from the pages of entertainment history.

For only the second time in my short experience with the castle, I was treated to a program. It promised "An Evening of Enchantment, Music, & Foolishness". Awaiting our pleasure were a recreation of Robert-Houdin's Mysterious Orange Tree, Zoe the mechanical artist, and little Antonio Diavolo, the prototypical horizontal bar gymnast (in miniature) fully restored to his original abilities. The audience was enchanted with the performance. Marcia and I watched the show twice, and each time felt like we were allowed to briefly touch the genius of our predecessors.

The following day I tracked down John Gaughan, master illusion craftsman. I was eager to learn what made his clockworks tick. It is a testament to the man's generous nature that he invited me to his workshop and allowed himself to be questioned at such length for a local Magic Club's Newsletter. The material which follows was culled from that conversation. I hope that it will help you, in a small way, peer inside one of Magic's most respected master craftsmen.

Monday October 17th, 1994

John Gaughan and Associates, a modern wellspring of magic, resides in an unassuming little building in a small industrial complex. Its a little like walking into a garage filled with woodworking and metalworking tools, raw materials, and a few half completed illusions. The high walls sport huge magic poster recreations partially eaten by the shop's Parrot. Making our way to the back we pass down a small cluttered hallway that seems to double as storage for extra materials, some Disney paraphernalia and yet more posters. On the wall outside John's office is a poster of David Copperfield and the Statue of Liberty. Marcia tells me that the inscription reads "Dear John, Thank you for making this happen, David Copperfield".

John's office is small and dark. It couldn't be a more wonderful place. A sizable collection of books surround the room. Each bookshelf seems to hold an expansive array of texts arranged by topic, Automata; Engineering, Design, and Building; and the ever present Magic texts. The fourth wall plays host to display cases filled with the magical apparatus of yesteryear. It is, in fact, most of his apparatus collection. The rest of his collection including Books and Automata resides at his home.

During our interview, John's phone was ringing almost constantly. The hubbub of his shop could be felt, more than heard, in his office. Throughout the experience, John's pleasant voice and relaxed demeanor made us feel more like welcome guests and less like distractions from his real work.

RW: John, you've been here for 27 years?

JG: Yes

(continued on page 4)

RW: I understand that you worked for Mark Wilson?

JG: I started working for him when I was 14 years old in Dallas Texas After School and on the Weekends. I used to run errands and actually put together his little magic sets that he would sell in department stores.

RW: How did you get hooked up with Mark in Texas?

JG: Just hangin' around the local Magic store there, a great magic store, Douglas Magic Land, and a he would come in there and he always needed guys to help him out on his personal appearances, shopping centers and such. He was very active. He was on local television there and he had a great sponsorship, Dr. Pepper, so he was all over the map in that area.

RW: Did you work with him on the TV show?

JG: Yes, and when he started the Magic Land of Alakazam, I came out here that summer, 1960-61.

RW: How old were you?

JG: 21, 20? Been out here ever since.

RW: Did you ever have a professional life doing something else before you got into magic?

JG: No. My background was always design, furniture design. While I was working for Mark, I got my degree in industrial design. Furniture design. I also taught out at Cal-State University, Northridge. Furniture Design. But I was always working with Mark, 40-60 hours a week.

RW: Tell me about working on the Magic Land of Alakazam?

JG: Well it was, of course, a weekly show and sometimes we would do two in a row so we would have two weeks rest, or two weeks to prepare for the next show. But usually it was a weekly thing with a major illusion that had to be built in one week... and there were over a hundred of the Alakazam shows put out, I believe, so when the season came around, we were really chargin' to get that stuff done.

RW: When you design an Illusion, what comes first, a method that you want to apply or an effect that you try to find a method for?

JG: Well usually I don't get involved into concepts. I let the magician or the venue dictate what they want or the direction that they want to go in and then we enhance their ideas, we build the prototypes, and let them see what it is, and then (deliver) the final product.

RW: Do you have a favorite Illusion that you have been involved in designing?

JG: Do you mean from watching it performed, or from the mechanical building or...?

RW: For being involved in building it.

JG: It was a trick on Doug Henning's show where there's a big library table where he produced a huge trunk on the table and then Brooke Shields came out of the trunk. Well, this was a really mechanical thing where the trunk has to fold all up in the table and also you have a star that has to be in the table. So you don't have a lot of room for either one of them. Its not like a box jumper dancer where you can really squash 'em down. So that was a real challenge. (Marcia: She was like 6' tall). Yeah, she was a big gal. So from a mechanical standpoint it was good, from a performance standpoint, it was nothing. I mean the presentation wasn't right, but...

RW: The apparatus is important in achieving the effect. How important do you feel the apparatus is to the audience? You know visually or ...

JG: I think to a David Copperfield, a strong personality, the apparatus is really secondary. Really as a builder, naturally I want my stuff to be the star of the show, but that's not the way it should be. Its... You want the audience to say "That magician sawed the girl in two". The fact that he had needed boxes and all of this other stuff to do it with should be... You don't want 'em to say that. You want them to say "Well, she floated in the air", or "She was sawed in two". So the apparatus should be minimal.

- RW: Almost invisible?
- JG: Yes.
- RW: How do you, or can you, establish ownership of an illusion design or concept?
- JG: Well, its difficult, but like with Jim Steinmeyer's Origami and Interlude, it is just something that is established verbally, real strongly, up front. There is legal protection on those two illusions but still, its hard to fight that in Sicily or Kuala Lumpur. By and large we've been very successful in protecting those things.
- RW: There are so many illusions out there. How can you know what design concepts you are free to use?
- JG: Early on I used to do all of David's Copperfield's Television special in the first part of the year, and in the fall, I'd do all of Doug Henning's show. And so Naturally they don't want their secrets carried on to the other guy, but yet both benefit from whatever I've done in the past. Whatever principles, whatever nuances that I bring to an illusion, the next guy benefits from all that. So without out and out taking a working performer's principle, that's how this fella is making a living, I mean naturally you stay away from that sort of stuff. You do a best effort to learn from things that are in the past, but you don't want to steal from them, if you can understand where I'm coming from.
- RW: How do you feel about illusion exposures?
- JG: Well... illusion exposures? I exposed the Chess Player, but we did that in our conference. There have been over 800 books written on the exposure of that illusion so, it was nice to bring it back around and say here's how it really works. Unless you were really keenly tuned into what that thing is, no one knows how that thing works, even though I showed em how it works. All they know is that a person is hidden inside.
- RW: But that's not it.
- JG: Yeah, that's not it.
- JG: What do you mean by illusion exposures?
- RW: Illusion exposures like the TV show that explained thin table sawing or the new Bennett book coming out?
- JG: Oh? Well that's... You know the more popular that David Copperfield is and magic is, your gonna get that. But hell, we all know that those books have been in libraries for years. You can go to any library in any little town and see magic books on how that stuff works. As we "professionals" know, its not the trick, its the performer pulling it off. I am always amazed when I build, oh, lets say a crystal box, the same one for two different performers and somebody in the [one] audience will say "my isn't it clever how that girl was hidden inside that box". And in the other (audience) someone says "Where'd she come from?" They're completely amazed. And yet, the physical illusion is the same, it's just the presentation (that's different). So, I don't think that means anything. I think that we should all just kinda keep quiet about it and let it roll.

The Automata proved to be a passion of John's. In our discussion he spoke of the creations with barely subdued enthusiasm. Magic and Automata are old companions. So much so, in fact, that a search for Automata in my encyclopedia leads straight to the entry on conjuring. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, performers like Giuseppe Pinetti, Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin, and Nevil Maskelyne demonstrated impossible machines. These golems were displayed in theaters such as the Theater Robert-Houdin in Paris and Egyptian Hall in London. One was a druggist who dispensed spices upon request. Another was the Pastry Cook of the Palais Royal, a machine which would produce fresh pastries at the audience's pleasure. These clockwork machines could apparently move, play games, solve complex problems, draw, and write. One was even a mechanical tree which caused fruit to grow as the audience watched. By any definition, they were mysterious.

(To be continued...)

I was very pleased to see both a member and an applicant for membership volunteer to fill the gap left by Mike. Dick Dale has also agreed to help oversee the transition of duties. I think the newsletter is in good hands. In my opinion, the only thing that would improve **MAGICURENTS** is a wider base of contributors

1995

We have a few lectures coming up in the next six months, including Ron London, Billy McComb, and probably a lecture to accompany our annual installation banquet. When we are not attending lectures, we will be trying to provide more teach-in sessions, performance opportunities, and fellowship.

Finally, a question: How did you like being a member in 1994? What was good? What was bad? What would YOU like to change? (WARNING: another "Get Involved" spiel coming up!!!) Your officers and board of directors are doing their best to provide you with an enjoyable and enriching experience. We want Ring 76 to be a class act, a quality ring of the International Brotherhood of Magicians. Nevertheless, it is beyond our ability to be all things to all people. If there is something more that you feel you could bring to the club, please contact one of the officers and come to a Board Meeting. The more people we have working for the club, the more we can do with it! Thanks for all your support in 1994 and I hope that you have a great 1995!

Richard A. Waterhouse

COMING UP

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Jan. 9, 1995 | Ring 76 Meeting
Location: Hungry Hunter
6:30pm Pre-meeting:
"False Shuffles"
7:30pm Meeting
Theme: "Old Tricks" |
| Jan. 23 | Ring 76 Board Meeting
7:00pm Mark Flores' |
| Feb. 13 | Ring 76 Meeting
Ron London lecture |
| Feb. 27 | Ring 76 Board Meeting
7:00pm Mark Flores' |
| Mar. 9-11 | Desert Magic Seminar
Las Vegas, NV |
| Mar. 13 | Ring 76 Meeting
Location: Hungry Hunter
6:30pm Pre-meeting:
"Showmanship & Patter"
7:30pm Meeting
Theme: "St. Paddy's Magic" |
| Mar. 27 | Ring 76 Board Meeting
7:00pm Sherry Luft's |
| Apr. 10 | Ring 76 Meeting
Location: Hungry Hunter
6:30pm Pre-meeting:
"TBA"
7:30pm Billy McComb lecture |

HONEST SID GERHART RING 76, SAN DIEGO, CA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Rick Waterhouse
1st Vice President	Greg Wauson
2nd Vice President	Don Soul
Secretary	Mark Flores
Treasurer	Julie Dale
Sergeant-at-Arms	Dick Bush
Past President	Sherry Luft
Director	Jeff Marcus
Director	Dick Dale

MAGICURRENTS

Publisher	Mike Lowe
Editor	Dick Dale
Editor Emeritus	Frank S. Syren

MAGICURRENTS

2447 Nielsen Street
El Cajon CA 92020-0123



Roy & Betty Armstrong

2548 Littleton Road
El Cajon, CA 92020