



MagiCurrents

Honest Sid Gerhart Ring 76

Volume XIV No. 1 January 2000

Message from the President

I am so EXCITED, REALLY EXCITED about the Close-Up Contest. My real love in magic is stand-up and stage, but when I heard the list of contestants, I was really impressed to be a part of a revitalized magic thrust. We, of course, have time for more contestants to enter. This is no hype, I am sincere and can hardly wait. January 10, 2000, be there or be missing the talent of our local ring.

I have done something I thought I would never do, and I hope this is an inspiration for you. I went to a back issue of Linking Ring. I know all of us find it easier to WATCH a magical performance and then perform it and make it our own. So, I thought of the challenge to read a trick, blindly, no matter what and see if I can self teach myself. It is not easy. But the best part is you have to get into the reading and experience the trick....

"the coins should have a shiny surface so they catch the light. You also need a dark 18" or 24" silk handkerchief. Take a corner of the silk with your left hand and draw or slide it through your partially closed right hand.....now palm up...between your thumb and fingers....rotate both hands counter-clockwiseA half turn...

"The Linking Ring, Volume 75, Number 12 December 1995, Multiple Rising Coins, page 82

It takes concentration to learn a trick. Get a table mirror to watch yourself perform. Get a partner to read the trick to you. Get a partner to critique the trick for you. Think about how the inner you really experiences the depth of a trick with more senses than watching others perform a trick. NOW when you perfect this newly learned close-up affect. It is really yours and your personal presentation can never be taken away. This experience is one of the thrill of magic.

President

Julie Dale

From the Editor

As we went to press we learned that "Skipper" Frank Herman passed away. Even though this is not a "news" letter in that sense, as editor I felt that this passing was significant enough for a re-write. This issue is dedicated to Skipper Frank, those who knew him, and those of us who wished we knew him better.

Several other things to note in this issue. There are no "Board Meeting" notes because the Board of Directors does not meet in December. We are also lucky to have two guest editorials this month. In an effort to bring the members of Ring 76 the best information, MagiCurrents will continue to solicit articles and information from sources all over the world of magic.

Farewell "Skipper" Frank Herman

Just before press time, we learned that Skipper Frank Herman passed away. To his family and close friends, Ring 76 sends its thoughts, love and prayers.

Skipper Frank left a legacy of magical creation and enterprising talent. "Skipper, you'll not only

be remembered as a fellow Ring 76 magician, but as a magical inventor, dealer, TV Magic Show Host, performer, lecturer, and skillful prestidigitator.

On behalf of the Ring we wish you Godspeed Skipper,

Julie Dale

December Meeting

The December Meeting is our traditional Holiday potluck dinner and show.

Seventy-six members and guests attended the meeting, held in the big room of the American Legion Hall. The pre-meeting cocktail and hors d'oeuvres were accompanied by walk around magic provided by the **San Diego ACES**. This is a group of very talented junior magicians, loosely mentored by our own **Rick Bruce**. They once again demonstrated the "magic" of the holidays.

The Ring provided a turkey and ham, as well as a vegetarian lasagna. The rest of the bounty was provided by Ring members. Salads and sauces, rolls and pastas, carrot sticks and carrot cake, lined the tables in the rear of the hall. There was something for everyone, and seconds to boot.

After the dinner and dessert there was a quick gift exchange, and VP of Membership, **Tom La Chance** gave a thanks to all who attended and made this year's potluck so special. With that, VP of Entertainment, **Dick Dale**, took over a master of ceremonies for the evenings formal entertainment.

The first entertainer was the ever popular soothsayer, "**Shamandon**." This master of the mystical arts looks remarkably like Member-at-Large **Don Soul**, and has the wardrobe of a flood victim. This year he claimed to have upped his standards, and encouraged us to up ours (more or less). From members of the audience he "borrowed" a silver platter, a box of Cracker Jacks, and a \$20 bill. The bill was signed by volunteer Ashley McDaniel, and promptly placed in a small Bank, that turned out to be a shredder. Not to worry, Shamandon opened the Cracker

Jacks, containing real crackers, jacks, and a LARGE \$20 bill, signed by Ashley. The applause was deafening. Shamandon finished by using his oriental powers to answer questions about audience members futures. This he did one cookie at a time.

Next on the bill was the talented **Bryan McDaniel**. Ring 76 has had the pleasure of watching this talented performer develop over the years, and tonight was no exception. Calling a member of the audience up, Bryan had her pick a lemon, any lemon, sign it, tear off a corner and retain it, and return the lemon to him. Then after turning the lemon into a bag of lemon drops, he proceeded to produce the signed lemon from the middle of a jumbo card. Good turn on an old trick. Bryan then used the magic of the VCR to satellite link with his old friend Billy Bob. Together they endeavored, through well timed comedic antics, to find a card chosen by a member of the live audience. Though the first attempts failed, the correct card finally turned up in a can of snuff. Bryan took a well deserved bow, and Billy Bob was simply turned off.

The final performance of the night was by talented junior magician

Joel Ward. Joel won the Teen Stage competition at this year's IBM convention. His score was high enough that he was allowed to compete against adult magicians in the Gold Metal competition. Tonight, with a lot less



pressure, he delivered a professional dove act that impressed the whole house. We look forward to seeing more of Joel on stage, and in the next Lance Burton Teen Showcase airing in February.

With both food and entertainment to the fill, a grand evening was had by all

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Longtime Magician and TV Personality Skipper Frank Herman Remembered

By Jack White

Francis Joseph Herman, known to several generations of television viewing youngsters as Skipper Frank died after an on going battle with a variety of health problems. He was 84. Frank Herman's launching pad for his magical career was a "A.C. Gilbert Mysto Magic Set" he purchased for one-dollar when he was 10-years old. He became a professional magician at the tender age of 15, giving his first paying performance at the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt's mother at Hyde Park New York. Mrs. Roosevelt so enjoyed young Frank's work that she gave him a \$5-dollar tip and invited him back to perform again the following spring. Herman was born and raised in Poughkeepsie, New York. As a boy he sold newspapers on trains and at stage doors of vaudeville theaters. He became acquainted with many top performers of the day, but was especially interested in meeting and talking with magicians. During the 1930's he created a modest magic act and worked in nightclubs and bars performing his act in New York, Detroit and Chicago. In 1938, with friends, he drove to Los Angeles where he worked at Bert Wheeler's Magic Shop on Hollywood Blvd., and later at Thayer's Magic Studio which was one of the most famous magic emporiums of its day. During this period Frank Herman worked with movie stars Chester Morris, Edgar Bergen, Orson Wells, George Murphy, and baseball great Babe Ruth, as well as magicians that included Russell Swann, Harry Blackstone Sr., Jack Gwynn, William Larsen Sr., Jay Marshall, the current Dean of American Magicians and card expert Charlie Miller. Shortly after December 7th 1941 Frank joined the U. S. Army Air corps. After basic training he was sent to Alaska. He saw action in the Aleutians, and in addition to being a soldier he was called upon to entertain troops in the Yukon Territory. In 1943 in a blinding snow storm the train Frank, and a group of entertainers, was riding on got stalled in the blizzard. The entertainers, carrying their props got off the train, hiked five and a half miles into the next town where an audience of GI's were waiting for the show to begin. In 1944, while stationed in Canada, Frank met a beautiful young woman by the name of Georgia McCool. At first she would have nothing to do with him, but later she gave in and went out on a date with him. They were married for 55-years and have four sons, Westly, Bruee, Vincent and Gregory. The Hermans have seven grand children.

After World War Two, Frank stayed in Edmonton, Albert, Canada and went to work on radio. On Saturday's he did a show at a local theater called the "Magic Show," which was broadcast live over the radio. Doing magic and

ventriloquism his show was a hit with the audiences. By 1949, Frank, Georgia, and their four boys, moved back to Southern California. Frank continued to do his magic shows and work in the theater business. One day an advertising agency asked him if he would like to do his magic on the new medium of television? He was paid \$80-dollars a week to write, produce, perform and build the props for his 15-minute daily TV show. Frank even had to do the commercials, live. The television program would not pay all the bills for a family of six, so Frank also worked at night as an actor in the long running old fashioned melodrama, "The Drunkard," at the Los Angeles Theater Mart. He also performed his magic act in the vaudeville section of the show. In 1952 Herman headed up a U. S.O. unit to play Korea and, once again, entertained troops in a war zone. The tour was to be six weeks but wound up running five months.

When he arrived home he received a phone call from television industry giant Klaus Landsberg at KTLA who offered Frank the hosting chores of his new afternoon kids show. When Frank asked Landsberg when the show was going on the air, the producer said "this afternoon, so you had better get in here right away." He became

"Skipper Frank" and, as such, had a loyal following of viewers. So loyal that his program regularly had better ratings than Walt Disney's Mickey Mouse Club. The Disney organization was so impressed with what Frank was doing on Channel 5 they regularly hired him to appear and do magic at Disneyland. After more than nine, very successful, years, the Skipper Frank program was taken off the air in Los Angeles.

Frank then moved to KFMB-TV Channel 8 in San Diego and hosted "Sundown" five evenings a week. That variety program lasted just over a year and was canceled when the station changed ownership. He then built a new magic act and began performing on cruise ships including the "Love Boat."

See **Skipper Remembered** on page 4

Skipper Remembered

Continued from page 3

They cruised up and down the west coast for more than a year. Then he and his wife Georgia opened a fast food restaurant in Laguna Beach. In 1978, he was invited to be part of a show in New Orleans and while there became ill and collapsed. Doctors told Frank he had terminal cancer. He refused to accept the diagnosis and after five operations and 102-days in the hospital he was pronounced "clean," totally clear of cancer. However in treating his condition doctors used powerful drugs that gradually destroyed his hearing.

In spite of being deaf he continued to perform and create new magic tricks and routines. He has been honored by the International Brotherhood of Magicians, The Society of American Magicians, made a lifetime member of the Magic Castle in Hollywood, and honored by the Magic Collector's Association. In the early 1980's the Hermans moved to Carlsbad, California where Frank operated a magic shop in nearby Oceanside, and later a mail order business from his home. In 1989, Frank made suggestions on a trick being used by Magician David Copperfield. In a letter, Copperfield thanked him for his suggestion and for his many years of hard work in helping to make magic an important art form. Copperfield went on to thank Herman for paving the way for new wave magicians like himself. In the 1990's Frank did a series of magic programs for various Southern California libraries, encouraging young people to read. He also presented many programs for senior citizens groups. Though he could no longer hear what people said he could still hear their applause when he did a good job. He said that is what kept him going, knowing his audience was applauding his efforts.

He was working on a book about his life as a magician and performer when he died. The book would be titled, "Isn't It Amazing?"

Services will be Sunday, January 9th, in Oceanside, at the Eternal Hills Chapel at 1 PM.

Dick Dale will be doing a broken wand ceremony. The Herman Family will have a special section set a side at the services for Magicians and their families.

I Remember Frank

No magician's passage should go unnoticed. Below are some of the remembrances of members of Ring 76, and how Skipper Frank effected us all. His sudden passing, and issue deadlines, limited how many responses that could be posted. More of these stories will be posted in the next issue. If you have a Skipper Frank story please send it to MagiCurrents. --ed.

Don Soul

"I think everyone knows my devotion to Skipper Frank as having introduced me to performing magic as a kid via the magic of television in its infancy.

Later in life, getting to meet Frank and having one of the most entertaining evenings at dinner with him and the Whites in Las Vegas was a delight. To cliché the words 'this character will be missed' goes without saying and I'm glad to have had the opportunity to cross paths with one of my childhood TV idols."

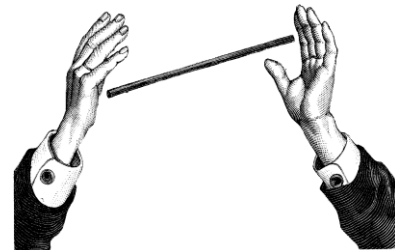
Rick Bruce

The entire time that I knew Skipper Frank he was old. Really old. He seemed to have trouble hearing, seeing, concentrating, everything. I always saw him selling this trinket or that at an auction or swap meet. I'd bought things from him from time to time. I didn't really appreciate his history until I saw him perform at a Ring meeting. I don't recall what he did. Perhaps it was troublewit. I don't even recall if it was Ring 76 or the North

County group. What I do recall, very clearly, is that in those moments when he was performing he was funny and in possession of a clarity of speech, vision, hearing, and purpose that I'd never before observed in him.

Perhaps its the best that can be said of a performer, that talent is the last thing to go.

Regards,
RB



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Subscriptions to MagiCurrents are \$10 per year for out of area magicians.

Membership Questions should be sent to the club treasure, Gary Dismukes.

All Ring 76 members must be members in good standing with the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Articles, contributions, and letters should be sent to:
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Guest Editorial

MagiCurrents will always be pleased to offer opinions and information from its readers and other members of the magic community

New Millennium Resolution: Become a Better Magician?

By Jon A. Hand

So, you are a developing intermediate magician. You know far more magic in your head than you can ever perform, and you want to be better than you are. How do you improve? Quit wishing, and stop reading your fourth course in sponge ball manipulation; instead, SET GOALS!

It's far too easy to spend a lifetime learning to do difficult sleights and never do any magic! Card magic, for example, has so many moves that CAN be learned (some essential, some fun but not-so-essential, and some totally impractical but good for fooling other magi or seeing if you can conquer the moves) that it threatens to run away with the whole field of magic. Just how many of the moves do you really want/need/actually use? Whom do you wish to entertain, laymen, or other magi? Do you wish to be a card specialist, or merely a magician who shows a few killer card tricks? Set goals! Coin magic, while not as broad, can certainly take years to master as well. Stage manipulation of cards or billiard balls requires the confidence of a superbly mastered routine. Set goals!

How do you set goals? First, decide where you want to be in magic a year from now and five years from now. Do you want to be a superior amateur? Do you want to be a part-time professional? Do you want to be a full-time professional magician? Where do you want to be? Then, determine what steps you must take to make your goal happen. Map out smaller daily, weekly, and monthly

goals. A small amount of serious daily progress toward your goals far outstrips nebulous learning of your umpteenth palming technique, or learning sleights as divorced from specific tricks.

For example, if you have mastered ROYAL ROAD (no easy feat in itself), you may have everything you need to do the card magic you want to do. If not, you might proceed to EXPERT CARD TECHNIQUE or the CARD COLLEGE volumes. But first decide if you really want or need more advanced techniques for what you want to do with your magic.

Little goals add up to big goals. To stick with my card example, suppose you want to perfect your double lift, top change, false shuffles and cuts. Set aside some daily time to work on each. Then begin using these sleights in tricks that require them, so they are not merely exercises. Get comfortable enough with each sleight in the context of its trick that you can execute the sleight, do the acting/ misdirection/patter that makes the sleight undetectable, and make it all automatic. How long will this take? Not half as long as it would if you don't set goals and work toward them regularly, that's for sure! Then devise routines, and practice them until they are second nature. Perform for as many different people as you can, learn from each performance, and set new goals (i.e., for better routining, or better audience management, or better tricks, or better patter, or whatever).

A diary of realistic daily/weekly/monthly goals and some realistic assessment of the progress made toward those goals will keep you on track, which in turn is encouraging enough to keep you going. Looking back at that diary months or years later will show you just how much (or how little) you have accomplished. Regular revision of your goals as you learn what is truly realistic is necessary, of course, but as long as you continue to make daily progress, you are doing fine.

This advice works for actors, musicians, dancers, etc., just as well as it

works for magicians; in fact, these artists know the value of daily practice and goal setting far better than most magicians. So, set goals, and work to meet them. Your magic and your self-respect/self-image will grow as you meet your goals and then set new ones. Five years from now, you will be five years older whether you set (and meet) goals or not. Make the best of your next five years if magic is important to you.

Jon A. Hand, age 47, is a lifelong amateur magician who started at age 8. He is a frequent contributor to MagiCurrents

Kids Shows

By Olde Rabbit

Over time I've come across a lot of Magi who wanted to do kids shows, including myself. For some reason one never makes this decision until one is an adult, so one tends to think tons of incredibly studious preparation is necessary, as well as investiture in expensive kid-looking props, books by famous kid show folk, etc. However, nothing could be further from the truth.

This is what I have learned. I heard it first from Bob Brown, who may feel free to deny it if he wants, then later found it true, on my own. And I have found it to be so true I'm sharing it with the rest of you now.

You don't need incredibly funny or goofy patter, or highly intelligent and well thought out routines, or tons of props with pictures of rabbits and Pokemon on them, or a minor in Child Psychology, to be a great kids' magician. In fact, none of that stuff will guarantee you any success at all.

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Kid Shows

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What you do need is the ability to come across to the kids as a nice

person, a warm person, an open and friendly person, with something interesting to share with them. That's all you need. The rest can certainly help if you have the abovementioned qualities, but you need a kid-friendly personality/image first.

A kid sees you at a birthday party, he asks "Hey Mister. Are you a magician?" He has no idea what a magician is, but you're the only adult he doesn't recognize, so you must be it. He isn't expecting Copperfield, or even Smith or Ginn. Probably he's never heard of any of those guys anyway.

He hopes you are a nice person, so you won't get mad at him or shout at him and make him cry. He hopes you are friendly, as he loves people and animals who are naturally friendly. He hopes you have something interesting, or new, or colorful, or surprising, or magical to show him. Any or all. Pick one or more. He doesn't care which. Everything to him is new, interesting, surprising, and magical.

He also hopes you will need some help, and will teach him how to help you, and let him help you. Kids love to help, even, or especially, when they have no idea what's going on.

He also hopes you will give him occasions where it's ok to shriek with laughter, jump up and down, shout magic words, make magic happen. These are really fun things for kids to do, and most adults skip this stuff in favor of sitting quietly and politely, which is really boring.

So if you want to be a great kid show magi, get together some good tricks you know. Put on your open, friendly, happy personality, and show the kids the cool stuff you brought for them to see. Act as if you know how some of the magic works, and as if some of it is as much a mystery to you as it is to them. Watch them react. They will say cute lines you'll use for the rest of their life. You'll know at a glance what is working, what isn't, what might, etc.

And as Disney-esque as this sounds, you'll sort of become a bit of a kid again for the length of the performance, and catch yourself having as much fun as the real kids are. Even if you're not fancy, or amazing, or glitzy.

Then, after about ½ hour or so of magic, get out some balloons. They will crowd around you so close you'll have to tell them to back off, as there'll be no room for the balloons. They'll smile and talk to you, tell you little secrets, interesting things, their names, what their brother ate last night in the basement, everything. And they'll let you know they just happen to think you are the best friend they ever had or ever will have.

Until Mom brings out the cake and ice cream.

'Olde Rabbit, also known as John Evernden, lives in Seattle, Washington, and enjoys performing for kids in a parlor setting."



Close-Up Competition

This month's meeting will feature Ring 76's annual Close-up competition. **All members in good standing are invited to perform**, in front of a large audience, and be judged by your peers.

The Winner is determined by a vote of the attending audience, so if you are not going to perform, show up and cast your vote. The winner will be announced at the Installation Banquet in July.

All manner of Close-Up magic will be featured, and is welcome.

This is one of the best showcases of Ring 76 talent and a show not to be missed.

So come on down to the American Legion Hall, Monday, January 10, 2000. Pre-meeting is at 6:30, with the competition starting after.

See you there!



Magic on Television in the Month of January

*Check your local listings for exact times
on your cable network.*

January 9 On the Family Channel **Lance Burton, Master magician: Top Secret**

Lance Burton makes a stealth bomber disappear and has himself tied to the tracks of the fastest roller coaster in the country.

January 10 on AMC (3:05 am)

Kentucky Kernels (1934)

Two magicians and an orphan heir spark a Southern family feud.

January 12 on WGN

Knight Rider

Michael and KITT chase **Lance Burton**

January 12

Donny & Marie

Magician Mac King and Psychic Maria Papapetroe

January 21 on TLC

Don't Try This at Home

Magic's greatest illusionists with never before seen archival footage.

January 21 on TLC

Nothing Up My Sleeve

Fast paced magic by today's legendary illusionists.

January 26 on A&E

Eternally Yours

Loretta Young, married to magician David Niven, wishes he would pay as much attention to her as he does to his other tricks.

January 29 on TLC

Greatest Magicians

Today's top magicians recreate some of Harry Houdini's most famous feats.

You Know You're a Magician When...

Thanks to Dick Dale

...you are the only one driving to work while practicing palming a quarter.

...you pull five bucks out of your waitresses ear to leave a tip.

...you just bought more toys at the dollar store than your kids, because of a trick you plan on making.

...you always walk around with three different decks of cards in your pockets because each one is set up for a different trick.

...you pull the four aces out of the deck ... only to lose them back into the deck ... just so you can find them again!

...instead of just spreading four cards and showing that there are four you count them!

...you save your wife's/girlfriend's stockings with runs in them.

...you refer to everyday objects as "ordinary".

...you have more than a dozen open decks of cards and cartons of unopened ones.

...you accidentally do a double lift while playing "Go Fish!".

...every coin that you receive gets "accidentally" palmed.

...you have a deck of cards and some half dollars within arms reach of the toilet bowl!...you have 101 retorts for the question "How did you do that?"

...you're willing to pay \$15 to learn how to make \$1 disappear.

...you own more than three tuxedos.

...your twin boys are named Siegfried and Roy.

...your idea of a fun date involves a lady and a saw.

...you have a dog named "Houdini".

...you go to the S&M store for handcuffs but not for the reason they think.

...you are back-ordered for rabbits and doves at the pet store.

...you have more than three decks of cards on you at any given time.

...you introduce your wife as "My assistant."

...someone ask for your card you give them the Ten of Diamonds.

...you wear black on the Anniversary of Houdini's death.

...you try to teach your cat to jump through burning hoops like Siegfried and Roy's tigers.

...your best pick up line begins with "Pick a card".

...you watch the space shuttle lift off and start thinking of ways to make it disappear.

...you have never been to the loony bin, yet you own a straight jacket.

...you have - at least - eleven fingers.

...you paid \$25.00 for a quarter.

...you are playing cards with the guys and when someone asks you to shuffle the deck, you get a blank look on your face and ask "You mean a real shuffle?!"

...you can't help but wonder what those cups would look like mouth-down on the table.

...the thought of bending or writing on a playing card doesn't throw you for a loop anymore.

...you get a strange pleasure when you hear any of the following words or phrases in normal conversation: "spellbound," "triumph," "pass," "assembly," or "oil and water."

...you'll buy two copies of the same newspaper, and not read either of them.

...you walk into a magic shop and stay there for hours, only to purchase a rubber band for your folding coin.

...you're happy when you get a half-dollar in change.

Upcoming Events

- January 10 6:30 pm American Legion Hall- La Mesa
Pre-Meeting: Close-up magic
Meeting Theme: **Close-up Competition**
- February 14 6:30pm American Legion Hall- La Mesa
Pre-Meeting: Teach-in (What do you want to learn? Let us know)
Meeting Theme: Dealer Demo
- March 13 6:30pm American Legion Hall- La Mesa
Pre-Meeting: **SWAP MEET**
Meeting Theme: Auction and Donations for Ring 76

January 2000

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