



MagiCurrents

Honest Sid Gerhart Ring 76

Volume XIV No. 2 February 2000

Message from the President

***ENCOURAGE! ENCOURAGE!
ENCOURAGE!***

That message is from me!

Your Board has decided to devote a meeting night for us to do whatever we want or like. Even if you do just one trick; talk or review a new magic book that is new for you; recall a great magical performance you did or viewed; bloopers of magical performances you did or viewed; please just participate. One of the nicest and warmest audiences you will ever have is US. Ring 76 is a caring ring.

Also we'll have a great pre-meeting teach-in. I also feel proud that we are offering yet again an exciting experience with teach-in's. The membership comments most often positively when

we learn and share together. See you at the Ring 76 happening!!

One final note. Diane Lane, noted magician and Ring 76 member, has been gravely ill this past month. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her, and we hope she will be better soon, and once again entertaining us with her magic.

President

Julie Dale

The January Meeting and Close-up Contest

For Ring 76, the January meeting is one of the most anticipated. That is because it is our annual "Close Up Competition." This is the time of year when all members in good standing can compete for the title of "Close Up Performer of the Year."

President **Julie Dale** and Treasure **Gary Dismukes** sent their regrets, so the meeting was ably run by V.P. of Membership, **Tom La Chance**. There was no pre-meeting this month, so the business meeting started right away.

The first order of business was a moment of silence for departed magician **Frank Herman**. Better known as "**Skipper Frank**," he was an honored and beloved member of the magic community for over half a century. His absence will be keenly felt. The next item was the presentation of IBM pin and membership certificates to new members **Michael Feldman** and **Terry Godfrey**. Ring 76 looks forward to the magic these gentlemen will bring to the organization. **Jeff Marcus** then announced that the "Art of Magic," the companion book for the PBS series, was available at a reduced rate, and well worth the money. **Tom Kasner** reported that "Caesar's Magical Empire," in Las Vegas, may be closing soon. Most members present lamented that this would be a loss to magic and recommended that the membership visit this establishment, while it is still open. With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

This year's Close-Up competition featured five of Rings 76's most colorful performers. It was led off by **Michael Feldman**, who talked of the "Rules of Magic," and how they were to be broken. After taking two borrowed bills he proceeded to pass four coins, one at a time, through them. He then produced a large, foreign, coin from under the bill, followed by an even larger American coin.

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Meeting

From Page 1

He then repeated the trick, against the rules, and revealed the secrets, all to the amazement, and confusion, of the audience. He ended his routine by changing the name of the Treasury Secretary, on a borrowed dollar bill, to the name of the bill's owner. This was a cleaver, and well presented, routine.

Next up was **Richard Ustick**, and his lovely assistant, **Cristina**. Noting that magicians must keep up with the times, he presented Paul Green's "One More Chance," in a game show format. An audience member was called up and a series of questions asked. With each correct answer, **Cristina** would ring a bell and the audience member would progress toward choosing the right card, and winning the "Big Money." Tension rose at each level as the question, "Is that your final answer?" was heard again and again. The card chosen was the card in the wallet (wow) and the audience member won the "Big Money," an 8 x 14, one million dollar bill. You could cut the tension with a knife.

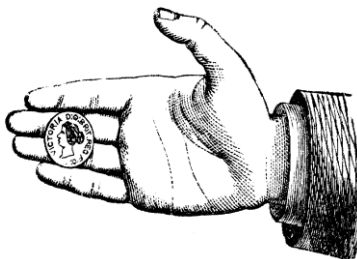
Bryan McDaniel came on the stage next. With a member of the audience at his card table, Bryan started with a deck of "Casino cards," with holes in them. A card was chosen, replaced in the deck, then the deck was threaded with ribbon. The chosen card then "escaped" from the deck, falling to the floor. Bryan then entertained the audience with a collection of card manipulations including a deck of blue backed cards that changed to red, kings that changed to aces, then back again, and four aces that traveled through the deck, seemingly at will.

Loch David Crane, A.K.A. Baffling Bill Codie set out with his collection of rare Indian magic. With stories of tribes and times gone by, he entertained with the flair of an Old West show.

Terry Godfrey rounded out this year's competition with a manipulation of five silver dollars between his well trained fingers. He told the story of the moon and the magic ring, liberating the ring from a chain that held it fast. He finished his show with a fine Cups and

Balls routine that amazed and entertained us all.

After the show all present voted for whom they thought was the best Close-Up performer. The winner will have to wait however. Results are not announced until the installation banquet in July.



The January Board Meeting was called

Board Meeting

to order at 19:00, at the home of past president Gary Schwartzwald. President Julie Dale called the meeting to order. All Board members were present.

The first order of business was the February meeting. Scheduled on the 14th, the pre-meeting theme will be a teach-in. No ropes, bands, or stings, this year, instead the high-lights will be basic coin sleights, card sleights, Elmsley count, Double lifts, and matrix. The Board unanimously agreed to ask Michael Feldman to be this year's instructor. He will be contacted, by mail, by secretary Richard Ustick. All attending members are also welcome to demonstrate, and teach, their favorite piece of legerdemain.

The next order of business was the scheduled dealer demo. The Board decided to postpone it at this time in favor of an open performance night. A "do what you want to do" theme night where any member is free to show their favorite trick, or the one that has given them the most trouble. Mental or coin, stage or close-up, crude or comedic, it will be at the discretion of the individual performer.

March will be the annual Swap Meet/ Auction. Table space will be \$5 in advance, and \$10 at the door. After the Swap Meet there will be a Ring benefit auction. Members are asked to donate a magical item, valued at least \$15, to be auctioned, with the proceeds

going to Ring 76. Following that will be an open auction, with Tom La Chance playing auctioneer. All those participating in this auction MUST donate an item to the Ring auction. That is the only cost. This will be a great chance to clean your closet, lighten your book shelf, and empty your video rack, of all those priceless treasures. It will also be a great chance to pick up some great bargains. Guests are welcome. However, guests with money are more welcome.

The April lecture, is still open at this time. Suggestions from the membership are welcome. The Board is currently contacting Monique Monros, Lisa Menna, and Gae Blackstone. It was felt that the role of "Women in Magic," is an area that the membership would like to explore. Something new, different, and at times overlooked in this male dominated area of entertainment.

The Installation Banquet was next on the agenda. Fast approaching in July, the entertainment needs to be addressed soon. Terry Lundsford, Larenso Clark, and Tom Ogden were mentioned as possible choices. Once again, suggestions from the membership is always welcome.

June will be the final competition for the year. The annual Stand-up show always brings out the best and the brightest of Ring 76. If you have not yet done so, please contact Dick Dale, and have your name added to the list of this year's contestants.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned. Next month's meeting will be on February 28th, at the home of Gary Schwartzwald.



Monday's Magic! You Decide!

This Monday's theme is
Magic **you** want to do.

That's right, it is time for you to have the chance to do the tricks you like, rather than be restricted to the evening's theme.

The Pre-Meeting, starting at 6:30, will be the semi-annual "teach-in." This time, however, instead of a theme (bands, coins, clips, etc.,) you, the members, get to choose what will be taught. Experts in almost every aspect of magic will be on hand to answer your questions. Having trouble with a double lift, matrix, Elmsley count, or that packet trick you won at the raffle last month? How about the bullet catch, or Table of Death? Here is your chance to have your questions answered, and hands-on instruction.

After the teach-in, any member is welcome to perform the tricks he wants, before the best audience you will ever have. Your favorite trick, or that new routine you want to try out before you hit the road. This is your chance to open 'Off-Off Broadway.' See you there.

Australia's Irish Magician "Pat-Trick" Here in San Diego

On Thursday, March 2, Pat-Trick, Australia's latest export, will be lecturing at the American Legion Hall in La Mesa.

He will be presenting a lecture and pet routines from his "Corporate Punishment" book and video. This includes Close-Up, Stand-Up, and Kid's magic, plus some welcome advice on performing techniques. He has toured Europe and Australia, sharing his unique blend of magic and Irish comedy, for more than 20 years.

Peter Booth saw his lecture in Australia, and called it "quite an enjoyable evening."

The lecture will start at 7:00pm, and is only \$12 per person, both members and guests. Profits will go to Ring 76 (a good reason to attend), and for this small amount you'll have the opportunity to see something really different.

For any questions, or to get tickets in advance, call Gary Schwartzwald at 619-697-9468.

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Doug Henning Dies

by Brian Dean (About.com) & AP

Doug Henning, the "hippie" magician, who helped revive the popularity of magic as mass



entertainment with a series of Broadway shows, television specials and a traveling act, died February 7. He was 52 and had suffered from liver cancer for five months.

Born in Winnipeg, Canada, Henning - recognizable by his trademark long hair and tie-dyed shirts - became well-known in the United States in the 1970s and '80s.

He started magic back on the road to recovery in the mid 70s with The Magic Show, a Broadway show about magic. Audiences flocked to the Cort Theater and the attention he won on Broadway helped Henning land an NBC special called "The World of Magic." NBC made the show an annual event, and it won Emmy awards, and made Henning the world's best-known magicians.

Later, Henning left magic to devote his life to Transcendental Meditation and the creation of Veda Land, a TM theme park.

Recently, Henning announced his comeback to magic and was planning his new show. His dying wish was to continue his dream of opening a magic theme park, Veda Land, in Niagara Falls.

Doug Henning studied under some of the greats of magic like Dai Vernon and Slydini. Henning is survived by his

Guest Editorial

wife, Debbie (pictured above).

MagiCurrents will always be pleased to offer opinions and information from readers, members, and other areas of magical information-Ed.

On one of the Internet magic discussion boards, someone lamented that his magic (close-up specifically) wasn't new and exciting. He was particularly concerned that all close-up magic looks essentially the same. Another writer was wondering how to create NEW and ORIGINAL magic. Still others have been asking why they aren't getting the desired response from effects they have taken so long and worked so hard to master. As I sat here reading these letters (all within a period of three days), I realized I had gone through this stage of consideration myself, and I was QUITE opinionated about it. What follows was supposed to be a few short paragraphs of response, but has turned into an essay.

Like pop music, magic goes through cycles. Back in the early 1990s pop music once more received a heavy blues infusion much the same as it did in the early 1960s. Magic, also follows a similar trend, with certain styles and effects being more popular at one time than another, and then repeating the cycle all over again. By examining these periods and the effect they had on magic,

I hope to begin to illuminate a path into the next cycle of magic.

Several periods of modern magic can be identified as crucial turning points. I'm referring here to PUBLIC reaction and perception, not necessarily from a magician's viewpoint. Robert Houdin ushered in the modern age by taking magic off the street, out of the wizard's robes, and into the grand theater. He is generally accepted as the father of modern magic, and certainly should be the first stop on our trip.

When Houdin appeared on the scene he was new and innovative. Attired in evening dress popular at the time he looked like any well-dressed gentleman off the street. His style was direct, personable, and entertaining. Houdin turned magic into an art, and by doing so, brought it to the masses.

The next major influx in popularity came during the mid 19th century when spiritualism became all the rage from Joe the Butcher to Mr. and Mrs. Highbrow. Mr. Everyman was fascinated with the idea of life after death, and it was during this time many a wise magician (call them charlatans if you must) took their skills from the stage and placed them in the parlor for intimate gatherings with rapping tables and spirit writings. Was it ethical? That's another discussion. But did it raise the public's perception of magic? Absolutely!

During the industrial revolution, and until World War II, magic received a phenomenal surge in popularity: Vaudeville. There were many reasons for this, a few of which are particularly relevant to this discussion.

1: With the new technology, and greater personal wealth available, Johnny the Magician was able to produce and perform effects like never before. Bigger toys brought in bigger and happier crowds.

2: The common man was relieved of many of the mundane chores and duties that had been essential to life. Less work = more free time = more need for entertainment. What better entertainment than going to see Blackstone float a LIGHT BULB???

3: More and more people were getting themselves edu-ma-cated, and

magic is certainly an intellectual art. No longer content with just sitting around and talking with their neighbors (too bad,

actually) they sought out new and exciting CHALLENGES.

See **Adapt** on Page 5

Adapt

Continued from page 4

It's at this point in history where we, as magicians, gained and lost a lot! With more people wanting to pay for entertainment, there was a boom in working magicians. HOWEVER, as folks got more educated, they stopped being fooled by what had been some old standbys.

So, what did the magic world do? IT ADAPTED! Real innovators came out of the woodwork and changed the face of magic nearly as much as Houdin. Dante, Chung Ling Soo, Houdini, Dai Vernon and others. They threw out the magic books they had grown up with and wrote their own. Old standards just didn't cut it for the "new intellectuals" of the day.

Fast forward through a couple of World Wars and we come to the 1950s. Television and movies became the bread-and-butter of entertainment media. They were new toys, and people couldn't get enough of them. Live art certainly didn't die, but many fine performers assuredly worked less than they might have otherwise if it weren't for the big and little screens stealing their admission tickets.

Again they ADAPTED. Like Blackstone and his light bulb, pioneers of TV magic combined new technology with the oldest art and entertained people in the comfort of their homes.

Over the next 25 years, an interesting thing happened. Despite the fact that more people watched magic specials on the "tube", they seemed to become less interested in the more "mundane," live shows, that most magicians could afford to do. How often have we heard "WOW! That was a great coin TRICK, but can you do REAL magic like Copperfield?" Answer: Too often.

So, we HAVE come to another period of time that future rant-writers will call a turning point in magic. The old axiom "If the audience thinks they know how the trick is done, THEY DO!" has NEVER been more of a concern than

today. So what are WE going to do about it?

ADAPT!!!

Several important folks in magic have declared a "back to basics approach". The last couple of years have seen more books and videos about "classic" effects and manipulation than ever before. For example, Lance Burton and Jeff McBride have made manipulations "cool" again. Acer, Darryl, and Ammar have dazzled us with some mighty fine close up effects. And could there POSSIBLY be a higher interest in mentalism than there is today? Others have said that returning to basics isn't enough, and we REALLY need to explore our magical roots. Burger's and Neal's book "Magic and Meaning" is a few hundred pages long and has no more than six effects in it. What it does talk about is meaning! This is almost certainly the secret ingredient that has been missing from many a repertoire. This is absolutely something that can only help the art. Kenton Knepper, in his Wonder Words series, suggests you go through EVERY SINGLE NUANCE of EVERY EFFECT you even think you MIGHT perform and ask yourself "WHY?" Why am I asking the spectator to hold a half-dollar in their hand, putting a rubber band around a deck of cards, or stuff a colored silk hanky into a closed fist and pack it in with my thumb? IS THERE A REASON??? Can an audience member RELATE to it? Does it MEAN anything?

Let's take a real world example from the turning point we discussed earlier with the Vaudeville era. The floating metal ball was hardly a new idea. Was it REALLY appropriate for the time? Magicians had performed this effect for years, but with the higher education level of the lay audience, more and more were whispering to their friends that it HAD to be done with wires. Blackstone Sr. solved this dilemma by floating a LIT electric light bulb. How could THAT be

done with strings? How could electricity POSSIBLY get to it (no Energizers back then)? Did he build this effect from scratch? Heck no! Did he fine-tune it for his modern, less deceivable audience? You bet! Does it have the same impact today? Sort-of... it will ALWAYS be a beautiful effect... but the idea of a battery powered light bulb isn't out of the conceptual reach of Joe Everyman anymore. Time to ADAPT again. How about a light bulb that lights up in your hand, a spectator's hand, or even on the table.!

Again, not NEW, but CERTAINLY easier and more practical than ever before!

The old joke in the magic shop was you could always tell an "amateur" when they walked in and asked "Is there anything NEW?" I always got a chuckle out of that. Suddenly that joke isn't so funny. I've caught myself saying it recently, and I'm thrilled! There REALLY are new things if you look in the right places.

Two last thoughts:

1: The Marines have a saying "Improvise, ADAPT, and overcome". Think about THAT the next time your favorite effect isn't wowing them like it used to.

2: Merlin would NEVER have said "For my NEXT trick...". He would have just fired up the old finger, lit his cigarette, and never acknowledged it was anything other than ordinary. Thank you and good night

Jim Keplinger (Kep!) has recently returned to the world of professional magic after being paroled from ten years as an U.S. Air Force meteorologist. He credits his eclectic magic style to his even more eclectic teachers and influences including Fred Baische, Jeff Hobson, and Eugene Burger. Not given to modesty, he describes himself as a philosopher, sophist, and brewer of fine coffee. He lives with his wife Lisa and two daughters in Tooele, Utah.

Upcoming Events

- February 14 6:30 pm American Legion Hall- La Mesa
 Pre-Meeting: Teach-in (bring your questions)
Meeting Theme: performance by the members
 Board Meeting: 02/28 at the home of
 Gary Schwartzwald
- March 13 6:30 pm American Legion Hall- La Mesa
 Pre-Meeting: **Swap Meet**
 Meeting Theme: Auctions
 Board Meeting: 03/27 at the home
 of Gary Dismukes
- April 10 **Dues Due**
 Pre-Meeting: Collect Dues and Lecture sales
 Meeting Theme: Lecture (TBA)
 Board Meeting 04/24 at the home
 Of Gary Dismukes

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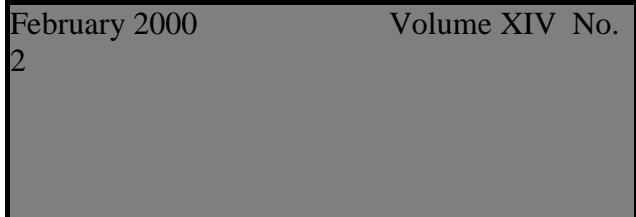
Subscriptions to MagiCurrents are
 \$10 per year for out of area magicians.

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: MagiCurrents

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