



MagiCurrents

Honest Sid Gerhart Ring 76

Volume XIV No. 10 October 2000

Message from the President

Hey here I am! From the back seat President.

This is our month to shine. Got a great new audience platform, that could hone your close up skills in one quick fashion. Halloween!!! When those cute, ugly, scary trick or treaters come hollering at your door-- Well, like this: "Trick or Treat?"

"This house we only give tricks, want to see one?" "Naah, we want a treat." "To get a treat at this house, you have to see a trick." It's really fun. The young kids and older kids love it. Dick and I have kids remembering our house because this is where the magician lives and he does tricks before we give treats. The older, late night

trick or treaters bring their friends. "Look, do some magic Mr. Dale."

Oh, how we have done our practice. How many times have we looked in the mirror at our magic? How many times have we now bored our families?"

The flow of presentation is the exchange between the magician and the audience. So try a real live audience exposure. And the added benefit is that they come to your house. What more can you ask? You need the genuine reaction of a fresh audience. Try it and tell us about it.

President

Julie Dale

Martin Lewis is Comming!

This month's meeting will feature the talents of magician Martin Lewis. Best known for "Cardiographic" and the original "Sketch Pad Card Rise" (used by David Copperfield on stage and TV), he also invented the classic monte effect "Sidewalk Shuffle."

Son of magician Eric Lewis, Martin has contributed to the book "Martin's Miracles," is the resident magician at San Francisco's Earthquake McGoon's, and won the Magic Castle's "Visiting Magician of the Year" award. He has worked for several major cruise ship lines, hotles

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and resorts, and has been the opening act for such stars as Robin Williams and Harry Anderson.

This lecture will cover all skill levels, and include material for close-up effects, platform, mentalism, comedy, and children's close-up.

Almost all of the effects in this lecture will be covered in the lecture note. There will also be professionally made props for sale at reduced prices.

This lecture is "FREE" to Ring 76 members in good standing, and will only be \$15 for all guests. It will be held Monday, October 9 (our usual meeting night) at the American Legion Hall, 8118 University Ave., in La Mesa (see map on last page). Doors will open at 6:30pm and the lecture will begin at 7:00. For more information call Tom at (619) 441-3747.

September Meeting

Our September pre-meeting was a surprise teach in, hosted by **Dick Dale**. It featured a variation of the old "gypsy thread" routine, this one involving dental floss. Each member received his own container of the waxed string, and Dick demonstrated how to cut it into many small pieces, and restore it to one length. Mr. Dale avoided patter on proper oral hygiene, but the humor was more than implied.

The meeting was called to order by president **Julie Dale**, with all board members present.

Next month's meeting will feature a lecture by Martin Lewis. This is a free lecture for all members in good standing, and only \$15 for guests. Doors open at 6:30, with the lecture beginning at 7:00.

Gary Dismukes, treasurer, reports that the Ring account is in good standing. Julie Dale reported that Ring 76 will continue the practice of having magicians audition for membership. This, she said, shows a proof of sincerity in the magical arts.

Loch D. Crane reported that there will not be a magic day at Villa Montezuma this year. Scheduling conflicts with the villa have made it impossible. He hopes to put on a Christmas show and encourages all Ring members interested to give him a call.

Alphonso Vasquez continues to produce his magic show on various military bases. His next program will be Saturday, September 23, at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, in San Diego. It will feature an anti-drug message. His programs have impressed his audiences and commanders, and he is now expanding to other military bases in southern California. He is always in need of magic talent, and Ring members should feel free to give him a call.

Michael Feldman reported on this year's "West Coast Wizards" magic camp. He reminded the Ring that Jeremy's juggling was a tribute to Geoff Laverdy, who was involved in a fatal auto accident this last year.

Secretary **Richard Ustick** concluded the business meeting with a reminder that the next issue of the newsletter *MagiCurrents* will be the annual Halloween issue. Members are encouraged to submit their favorite spooky tricks and scary show stories. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

The evening magic theme was "Rope and String Tricks." **Jeff Marcus** opened the show with an impressive routine involving one rope with three ends. The rope continued to morph to a rope with four ends, two middles, two ropes, and finally into one rope with

two ends. Despite his apology that he, "rarely does rope magic," the audience found his skill most impressive.

Cable TV diva **Diane Lane** was next up. She presented her new assistant Cassi, an umbrella cockatoo. This white plumed bird helped her with the "professor's nightmare." **Jeff Smith** was the next up with a rather large piece of limp rope, which became stiffer with some attention. **Loch D. Crane** demonstrated the floss effect learned at the teach-in, then showed his version of the magic computer, using thirty-one numbers on the back of old west photos. An interesting twist on an old favorite, and blended well with Loch's wild west persona.

Gary Schwartzwald was unsure if he could perform his intended effect, but fortunately two members of the audience had the rope, wand, and rings that he needed. It was a good thing that both



Julie, and **Jacob**, Schwartzwald, were in the audience. With the help of the colored silks, which Gary DID remember, the penetration went off with out a hitch.

Ring 76 had the pleasure of a visit from president **Nick Brown**. He was in San Diego on business and delighted us all with a cut and restore routine using the dental floss that was so handy.

Tom Kassner finished up the evening's entertainment by calling up professional assistant **Sherry Luft** and **Gary Schwartzwald**, and showing them the "ties that bind," so-to-speak. After tying a length of cord to their wrists, and looping them together, he challenged Gary and Sherry to escape. With the verbal aid of the audience, they eventually did.

On the 18th of October, Bryan McDaniel will be doing a Stage Hypnosis Show at the Great Escapes Enlisted Club on Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. I would like to invite interested parties from the Magic Club to attend as my guests. All are invited! It should be a good time. For additional information contact Bryan at "Bryan McDaniel" <orientxp@san.rr.com> or call the Great Escapes Enlisted Club at Miramar.

Board

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The October meeting will feature a lecture by Martin Lewis. Doors open at 6:30, with the lecture starting at 7:00.

The November meeting will start with the audition of two new members. James Thayen and Rob Soul will both be demonstrating their magic skill. November is also "Dealer Night" and this year will feature Mary Coley from "The

Having strung out the performances as long as polite, the meeting was adjourned

Board Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by president Julie Dale. All Board members were present.

The treasurer reported that the Ring's current balance is around \$800. The fee for Martin Lewis's lecture, in October, will be \$200. This is a free lecture for members, and guests will only be charged \$15.

Territorial Vice-President Dick Dale reported on IBM business. The "Linking Ring," the magazine of the IBM, is now available on CD. The cost for the 30 volume set, covering the years of 1923 through 1999, is \$300. The Ring may look into purchasing a set, for the library, in the future. IBM national dues are now \$40, with Junior membership \$35, and Associate membership \$10. If you do not want the Linking Ring, then subtract Magic Shop," at Sea Port Village. All IBM members will receive a 10% discount on items purchased.

December will feature Ring 76's traditional Holiday Pot Luck banquet. As of now, we are planning on holding it in the big room at the American Legion Hall. This year we will also be inviting the members of the La Mesa chapter of the American Legion to join us in calibrating the holiday season. Entertainment is still being considered, and at this time Michael Caveney is being contacted.

The next meeting will be Monday, October 23, at the home of Dick and Julie Dale. As always, all members are welcome to attend.

I.B.M Ring 280

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"The Mark Wilson Ring"
Presents A Lecture by :

\$20 from the membership price. The 2001 convention will be in Orlando, Florida. The 2002 convention has yet to be decided, but will be in either San Francisco, or San Diego, California. IBM has also announced a new publisher for the Linking Ring. What changes in style, size, or format this will mean is not yet clear.

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Dean Dill

The lecture in October will feature the incredible mind of magic, Dean Dill. His unparalleled style of sleight of hand coupled with his ability to create jaw dropping routines has earned him the attention and respect of world renowned magicians such as David Copperfield, Johnny Carson, Dai Vernon, and Larry Jennings.

The lecture will be October 12th at 7:30 P.M. at the Hilton Garden Inn, Valencia Six Flags, 27710 The Old Road, Valencia CA. The cost is only \$10. Contact Scott Berry (harryhoudini@magiccastle.com) or call (661) 298-0125.

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

Membership Questions should be sent to
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All Ring 76 members must be members in
good standing with the International
Brotherhood of Magicians.

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Magic notes from Jack White:

The Ghost Show.

a forgotten entertainment forum:

Ed Alonzo's one-man show "Magic and Mayhem" will be returning to Knott's Berry Farm's Halloween Haunt for its seventh year beginning October 5th through Halloween Night.

Many say Alonzo's show reminds them of the Ghost Shows or "Spook Shows" that played movie theaters at midnight during the 1930's 40's and 50's. The "Spookers" as they were called by theater managers made big money in their hayday and were welcomed because they offered an extra show to theater operators.



A typical Ghost Show presented an on stage live performance by a magician or mentalist that featured effects like the *Rapping Hand*, *Dancing Handkerchief*, *Talking Skull*, *floating Ball*, *Spirit Paintings* and the all important **Blackout**.

Following the blackout there was an intermission for the theater to make money at the concession stand and time for the stage crew to strike the props and the movie screen dropped into place for a second rate B Horror Movie. Admission for these shows ranged from 90 cents to \$1.50 and the theater split the profit 50/50 with the show operator.

Most theater historians agree that the first midnight Ghost Show was presented by magician Elwin Peck in 1929 in Salt Lake City, Utah. *El-Wyn's Midnite Spook Party*, thus became the first successful show of its kind to play major motion picture houses exclusively.

Part of its success was the unique advertising campaign and the gaudy billboards in front of the theater and the on

GHOST SHOW

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For a time magicians John Calvert, Robert Nelson, Ormond McGill, Johnny Cates, Joe Karston, Phillip Morris and Kara Kum all toured with Ghost Shows.

My own experience with a Spook Show came in 1959, when theater owners John and Robert Seigel helped me produce and booked, "Dr. Bloods Zombie Show" and toured it throughout Southern California. I became what was known in the trade as a "200-miler" playing theaters within two-hundred miles of my home base.

screen film trailer that ran for weeks before the shows play date.

Elwin Peck may have been the first but other enterprising operators jumped on the bandwagon and quickly formed their own Ghost Show with new thrills and illusions of terror.

For a time in the 1930's Thurston, Blackstone and Rajah Raboid were all touring the country with a Midnite Spook Show.

In 1939 a booking agent needed a Spook Show to fill some dates for a large theater chain. Arthur Francisco Bull put together "Francisco's Midnite Spook Frolic" and toured his show for the next 20-years. His 60-minute stage show opened in total darkness with weird music playing and an 8-foot skeleton materialized in a puff of smoke. As the house lights came up the skeleton was magically transformed into Francisco.

The big shows of the 30's and 40's were both entertaining and scary. But after World War II the shows were more of a glorified magic show than a real Spook Show.

There was one exception. Magician Bill Neff whose best friend and assistant in his magic act was movie actor James Stewart, mounted a Spook Show that played to packed houses on Broadway in 1946 and 47.

Neff's "Madhouse of Mystery" featured nightmarish, expressionistic sets and painted backdrops, it was considered the most elaborate Horror Show to play crowded movie houses across the country. But the wide-screen process forced the Neff show off the road in the 1950's.

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Neff's Burned Alive Illusion 1948, from "The Madhouse of Mystery".

The most eagerly awaited part of the Ghost Show was the Blackout when all the lights in the auditorium were turned off and the supernatural manifestations began on the stage and in the audience.

Most operators had the projectionist run the sound track from the ghost show movie trailer with out any picture on the screen. Featuring loud cries and mysterious music with chains rattling. Luminous skeletons, goblins and astral light that had been hidden in the footlights were paraded across the stage in the darkness. Some on long poles reaching out over the audience. Ushers with squirt guns fired into the audience producing more screams. The blackout lasted only a minute and when it was over the performer dared the audience to walk home alone in the dark.

Jon A. Hand has been regular contributor to this fine publication for over a year now. Even though he is not a member, he has been more than generous in shoring his magical knowledge with

If you must do the weird and spooky Halloween show (guillotine, arm twisting, fake blood, etc.), don't do it for kids! These are for upper teens and adults, who enjoy getting the shivers a bit and won't emulate you with disastrous results, as kids might.

If you need a good book on ghostly conjuring, check out these: Marvin Kaye's HANDBOOK OF MENTAL MAGIC has a layout for an entire spook show that builds to a smashing conclusion. Recommended if you want an eerie evening! The standard book of stage weirdness is Janel's STARTLING EFFECTS, still available at Magic Inc. in Chicago. (magicinc@uss.net).

If you want a more general magic show with a Halloween theme, though, here are some ideas for you.

Wal-mart, Kmart, Target, Dollar Tree, Everything's a Dollar, Dollar Tree, Dollar General, Odd/Big Lots, and Family Dollar (all discount stores) stock hundreds

in the theme and great for kid shows, these types of tricks keep the mood going.

Look at your existing tricks to see what you can adapt. Many standards can be adapted to a Halloween theme if you push your thinking a bit. The joy is that you soon become adept at this type of re-invention.

Big production number! From your square circle, take the two inner tubes to Wal-mart. Find a large plastic Jack O'lantern that they will fit into. Buy it and cut out the bottom and the black painted eyes, nose, mouth, and use the Jack

By 1965 the Midnight Ghost Show had run its course and had come to an end. Theater managers were afraid to book such shows for fear their theaters could be torn apart during the blackout.

If you would like to know more about Ghost Shows I have a now out of release tape titled "Spooks A Poppin" I will be happy to loan it to interested parties. It features interviews with spook show operators and clips of various shows as well as old spook show movie trailers.

E-mail me at prestooone@home.com or call 619-283-4375 I will get the tape to you.

of Halloween items in September and October, most of them very inexpensive. Cruise through the stores looking for appropriate items and think creatively.

Examples:

Wal-mart has black plastic cauldrons in about 3 different sizes. Either of the largest two could be great visual atmosphere until being used, and then could be shown empty (line with black cloth to deaden plastic thumps) and loaded just like you would load a top hat in a regular show. Produce silks, individual wrapped candies, or even a rabbit in the large cauldron. How about vanishing an item early in the show, trying unsuccessfully to make it reappear during the show, and then finding it strung on a ribbon around the rabbit's neck when the rabbit is produced from the cauldron? The smallest size, about 6", could be used with dry ice and water to make a foggy mist throughout the show.

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O'lantern for the outside of your device, instead of the original Square. Produce the usual silks, ribbons, etc. Wal-mart also has little Jack O'Lanterns (about 2.5 inches) that you could produce, in packs of 6 or 9. Close with self inflated balloons (instructions below), a small goldfish bowl with live fish (Wal-mart has all different kinds of clear glass vases that will do, in every size imaginable, and goldfish are about 20 cents each), and then enough little loot bags of candy to give one to everyone in the audience. Make sure your candy is the type that the manufacturer wraps

A View from the Cheap Seats

Ring 76. From this point on he will no longer be a "guest columnist," but will have his own space. It will be called . . .

Halloween is the real beginning of the holiday season for us magicians. It is the time when parties are planned, and entertainment needed. Savy magicians know that they should tailor their show to fit the traditional Halloween atmosphere, but may be surprised how inexpensively that can be done. Let me share a few things I have come across, in my travels.

VIEW

Continued from page 5

Set one on each of two side tables, add water, and watch the mist flow down the sides and across the floor (watch the kids, though; dry ice could injure them if handled).

There are lots of easy-to-build kid's tricks in a budget book called SPOOKY TRICKS that you can usually find for under \$5 at Barnes and Noble, Books-a-Million, or Amazon.com. Not wonderful apparatus magic, to be sure, but

individually, because you don't want lawsuits from parents over unwrapped candy. Your production will go over with a bang!

Regarding the goldfish, Wal-mart (and others) are carrying small candy dishes which stack, and look exactly like tiny terrariums! They are only about 3.5" in diameter, so they will fit into even the tiniest square circle. Stack up three or four with some water and a goldfish in each one, and tuck in your silks around them. Produce a bowl, then some silks, then another bowl, etc.

You could get some nylon taffeta in bright colors at a dollar a yard, 52" wide (!), cut to desired sizes, and hem the edges to make "silks". Do the math: from 36" x 52", you can make a lot of production silks (e.g., two 24's and four 12's, or a 36 and two 16's, or numerous 18's). IF you want profusion without taking up load space, cut each 18" silk into two triangular silks, hemming the long side. After producing several "whole silks", start producing these "half silks" by holding them up from one corner (which makes them look whole)! You could stretch whole silks out with pins on a backing board and have an artist draw on the taffeta with permanent markers: bats, ghosts, cats, etc. Or go to the craft store (or Wal-mart again) and just pick up cotton Halloween bandannas to produce.

Colored ribbons 1" wide in 10 ft. lengths can be stitched together in varying colors to make an impressive 100 ft. streamer; pull the streamer out of your production fast and furiously. Cardboard or plastic Halloween theme cups nest

together into a tiny space, and can hold other production pieces in the topmost one; produce the cups singly and make a huge cup pyramid on the floor. Japanese or Chinese Lanterns in orange, yellow, or black can be decorated to look like jack o'lanterns or other thematic elements; they fold flat for loading, and will unfold automatically upon production if you put a couple of small weights on the bottom of each one.

By the way, to make a self-inflating balloon (3 or 4 in the production is enough), go to the florist and get the dram size flower holders. and some floral silk thread. Fill them with vinegar, or lemon juice (either is a mild acid). Put a teaspoon of baking soda in each balloon with a dry kitchen funnel, cork the dram containers, and put the mouth of the container into the balloon, wrapping the neck of the balloon tightly with the silk thread. To produce, pop the cork when reaching in for another item. The acid reacts with the soda to make CO₂, and the balloon inflates over several seconds. Experiment with amounts of the dry and wet chemicals to see how much you want it to inflate; the round balloons inflate faster and better, and look neat when produced.

Get a refrigerator appliance box and cut the back two sides off together. Now you have two backdrop screens that stand in the V shapes. Paint both sides of both

screens black (painting one side only will make the cardboard curl up), and decorate as you desire. Next to closing (close with your big production above), form up the two halves into a box with your assistant slipping behind the front screen from the back screen as you show each one separately. Then, using identical Faceless Costumes (black hooded robes with faces hidden by black gauze-like material), you can pass momentarily behind the screens to close them up, and your assistant can exchange places with you. Quickly take off your costume, and then call out a magic spell from inside the box, which sounds like you are outside the box in the costume. Push over the front half, and you have appeared inside the box! The assistant takes off her costume, and you have made a metamorphosis!

I have seen cassettes and CD's of eerie Halloween sounds and strange music to set moods, and I have seen similar recordings of Halloween pop tunes such as the "Monster Mash." A decent portable stereo with a 3 CD changer would enable you to program your background music as you wished, just before the show (obviously the stereo can be tax deducted from your magical income if you use it only for magic purposes, and you can use it year-round).

Happy Halloween!

"Jon Austin Hand"
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