

Ring 76 Chartered by the International Brotherhood of Magicians in 1948



MagiCurrents

San Diego, California



Recipient of the IBM's Quality Ring Award

Honest Sid Gerhart
Ring 76

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Website
www.ring76.com

Volume XX 11 November 2006

Teach-in set for our November meeting

The theme for the Monday, November 13th meeting is a "Magic Teach-in." These teach-in sessions are among the most popular meetings presented each year. Five large round tables are set up and members gather around each table. An instructor or teacher has about 12 minutes to teach his or her students a pet trick or routine.

In years past Ring members have walked away from this meeting with new insight into the working of a favorite magic trick. Some sleight of hand is taught during these sessions, but for the most part it is kept simple. Jeff Marcus has given his students in years past several interesting rubber band tricks. Terry Lunceford has taught several very clever coin moves, as well as a great card trick. Michael E. Johnson has given students a great rope trick and taught his highly entertaining sponge bunny routine. This year a new group of teachers will be standing by to teach new routines.

Many members have written that this is one of the most useful meetings of the year, especially for the close-up performer. Each of your instructors has been working at perfecting their teaching session and will again offer something truly unique. This is a valuable meeting for the beginner and advanced member alike.

This year's instructors include Nelson Bui, Michael E. Johnson, Bob Elliott, Bob Ingalls, Terry Lunceford, Bob Pozner, Sal Barajas, and Diane Lane. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. sharp so plan to get there a little early so as not to miss this exciting evening of magic.

Jim Swoger, magic dealer, performer, & builder, dead at 88

Ring 76 Honorary Lifetime Member Jim Swoger died, Thursday, November 2nd, at a Vista nursing home after a brief bout with pneumonia. Jim was admitted to Tri-City Hospital in Oceanside in late September for complications of lung and heart disease, as well as diabetes. After two weeks of treatment at the hospital, he was sent to a Vista rest home to regain his strength. During the last two weeks before his death, he slipped into a coma and did not know his many friends who visited him. He died peacefully in the evening a few months short of his 89th birthday.

His wife Betty has planned no services; his body was cremated and will be interred in a family plot in Oceanside.

Jim Swoger was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and developed an interest in magic at an early age. His father operated a piano company, and Jim became both a musician and magician, but it was magic that became his life's work. As a boy during the depression growing up in Pittsburgh, he produced large stage shows featuring magic and music. He began building the tricks and illusions himself in the high school wood shop.

His work at building magic apparatus became so proficient at an early age that he started selling many of his homemade effects to magic dealers. As he grew older, he began to purchase power tools and set up his own shop in the family garage and began turning out magic of his own design. In addition to building the effects, he also painted and decorated the various trick boxes and tubes. He then opened a small retail shop in the living room of the family home and called it Regows House of Enchantment. Regows was Swoger spelled

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Spooky magic theme for October

On Monday, October 10th, San Diego, was still rebounding from a Padres (baseball) loss in the playoff series and a come-from-behind win by the Chargers (football) the day before our Ring meeting. Both games were a topic of conversation as 56 Ring members and their guests arrived for the October meeting that was to feature Halloween or spooky magic.

Prior to the meeting, Craig Stone, a professional and very popular restaurant magician in Southern California, held a brief teach-in for any member who wanted to take part. Craig shared some of his very clever coin sleights with a handful of enthusiastic students. These teach-in sessions are very informal but quite beneficial to our beginner and veteran members alike.

Ring 76 President Bob Ingalls called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. sharp and made several announcements. He asked two of our members from south of the border, Mago Ruly and Armando Torres, to talk about the 5th International Magic Festival on Sunday, October 29th, in Tijuana, Mexico. The men have formed a car pool for Ring 76 members, from the border to Morelos Park, where the Festival was to take place.

Then our entertainment Vice President Terry Lunceford took over the program and began to introduce the various members who had signed up to perform. John London was first and tested out some new comedy material he has been working on and followed with a very nice mental effect with a volunteer from the audience.

Our Ring 76 Lifetime Achievement member Jack Evans was next with a sensational glass penetration that he had built himself. Jack makes all of his props and costumes and his shirt was in the Halloween motif. Jack Evans has a style all his own, and he is very entertaining and always quite original. This was a performance our members could learn from.

Toni Perrine, in a wizard's costume took a wonderful old trick of a banana cut into four pieces inside its skin and gave it a clever new look. Jeff Marcus, our Territorial Vice President for Southern California, and a hard working pro, gave us a look at a very original card in wallet effect with the card predicted on three one dollar bills. Another very unique effect.

The always-clever Joe Mystic stole the show with an item he found at the Costco discount stores. It is a talking head inside a bubble that lights up; Joe paid \$50 for the

unit and then put together an outstanding card routine with the talking head in the bubble inviting a spectator from the audience to help him on stage. Very mysterious and very eerie! Joe did the entire effect from outside the building using a wireless microphone.

Greg Wauson did a six-bill repeat with real dollar bills and tailored his routine to trick or treaters. Alex Greenbaum, dressed in a very spooky costume, did a clever card effect and was followed by his mother Donna Greenbaum, who is just learning magic. Donna did a Six-Card Repeat, with some unique graphics to help in telling her story. Nelson Bui is a member of Ring 76 who is very proficient in card magic. Using a deck with the Magic Castle on the back of the cards, he told a story about a haunted house and the cards changed colors, very nice and clean magic.

Kenny Shelton, who was made famous on the TV program, "America's Got Talent," presented a very nice floating pumpkin ala the Zombie. Jack White closed the show with a spooky trick from Steve Bryant's book, "The Little Egypt Book of Numbers." Jack used an alleged bucket of "dirty" Mississippi River water to find three chosen cards and in doing so he also found a big snake in the bucket. His blank firing gun woke up anyone who had gone to sleep. Then Jack and Bob Ingalls poured some of the river water into another bucket and threw it into the audience. The water had turned into confetti.

Following the performance, members gathered around tables for a close-up session and it was all out and over at 9:30 p.m.



Craig Stone in pre-meeting teach-in session.



Jack Evans spooky pencil through glass. An original effect.



Joe Mystic's clever talking head in the bottle. With help from Alex Greenbaum.



Greg Wauson and his Halloween 6 bill repeat.



Toni Perrine and her Witche's outfit and a clever Trick or Treat effect.



Jack White found more than a selected card in a bucket of Voodoo river water. A diamond back, Gary Dismukes wondered.



All of our performers: Jack Evans, Jack White, Toni Perrine, Joe Mystic, John London, Kenny Shelton, Jeff Marcus, Alex Greenbaum, Greg Wauson, Donna Greenbaum, and Nelson Bui.

Jim Swoger Obit Continued

backwards. He was always afraid that his magic enterprise might bring disgrace to the family name so he operated under a different name.

During this period he also continued to do lavish magic shows with six assistants for audiences in the Greater Pittsburgh area. Jim never learned to drive a car so he transported his entire show and company of performers by bus or taxi wherever he performed. When World War II came along Jim enlisted in the U.S. Army and served in Special Services with fellow magician Melbourne Christopher and comedian Herb Schriner. In addition to magic, Jim also did a vent act during the war.

While stationed in New Guinea, he created the "Vanishing Jeep" illusion that was presented at dozens of camp shows as the closing effect of Jim's act. One day the U.S. Playing Card Company delivered a quarter of a million decks of cards for the G.I.s in that theater of war. Jim had a group of natives assigned to him so he taught them how to carefully open each deck of cards and short corner the Queen of Hearts on all 250,000 decks of cards. That meant that Jim could walk into just about any military club and do a series of card tricks with a seemingly ordinary deck of cards.

After the war ended, he returned to his home in Pittsburgh and opened yet another magic shop. Not having enough product available to supply his shop he quickly dusted off his tools and began turning out magic apparatus to supply his store. He also continued to do shows to supplement his income. In the late 1940s Jim met Harold Rice, who sold Swoger a large supply of his colorful magic picture silks. Because of the large quantity of the purchase, the price was very reasonable. Swoger said he had so many silks he didn't know where to store them all so he hid many of them away in a storage cabinet in his shop where he forgot about them. Years went by and Rice silks became very expensive and hard to buy. Jim found his stash of silks and put them on the market at a tidy profit over his original purchase price. It was those silks that saved his magic business.

In the 1950s Jim began making magic for the U.F. Grant Magic Company, producing a variety of box tricks that included a Break Away Dove Vanish, Egyptian Water Box, Vanishing Head, Ring Off Ribbon Box and a dozen other effects. Perhaps the most popular of the Swoger/Grant effects was the "Topsy Turvey Bottles" which Jim made from beer bottles he found in the trash at the VFW Hall down the street from his shop. He claimed to have made thousands of sets of the bottles and applied the "Wild Cherry" labels to each set himself.

Standing right next to the front door of one of his magic shops in the Pittsburgh area was an ugly utility pole. Jim tried to have it moved but the utility company said it had to stay where it was. One warm summer day Jim with a large ladder painted the pole black in the middle and six foot white tips on the top and bottom so the pole resembled a giant magic wand. The utility company became incensed that Jim had taken the liberty of turning their pole into a magic wand. Meanwhile several newspapers and a couple of television stations did stories on the unusual magic wand and after all of the positive news coverage the utility company decided to drop their complaint. The utility pole became a landmark of sorts and guided many a visitor to Jim's House of Enchantment.

Ed Mellon, a mentalist and creator of mental effects was a good friend of Jim's and in the 1960s Ed began distributing his mental effects on an exclusive basis through Jim's magic store. Jim bought his first advertising in the Linking Ring Magazine in the late 1950s and quickly built up a strong mail order magic business when he added the Mellon Mental effects to his line.

From the late 1950s to the mid 1980s Jim could be found every year in the dealer's room of an I.B.M. Convention pitching his wares. Jim had a story about every city and every convention. The last convention he attended was the I.B.M. in San Diego in 2002 and worked Jay Leslie's booth pitching magic.

Jim Swoger had his own thoughts and strong feelings about how magic should be presented and how magic clubs should be run. Those opinions sometimes caused Jim to not be welcome at magic club meetings. But after a period of time all was forgotten and forgiven and Jim would return to the meetings.

In 1989, Jim and his wife Betty had had enough of cold Pittsburgh winters and decided to move to the Southern California beach community of Oceanside, just north of San Diego.

Jim bought a little home and set up his workshop behind the house and very quickly began turning out small magic props and selling them to Frank Herman, who operated a magic shop in downtown Oceanside. But by the mid 1990s the work became more difficult and Jim began selling off many of his tools. He attended magic meetings and kept in touch with magic friends during the last years of his life and continued to develop new techniques for doing old tricks. A performer to the end.

On the next page a tribute to Jim's 60 years in the I.B.M. This was put together in 2005, on the occasion of his 60th anniversary with the I.B.M.

Magic Book Review by Dr. Joel Moskowitz



A review of the new Houdini book

Who would dare to resist a new story about an old mystery where the actors are like fireworks spectacular, thunder and lightening in color, having the ability to shock and delight? Such is the book whose proposition is that Houdini was the first superhero. Those of religious persuasion might have other choices. But Harry Houdini, his mother Cecilia and failed Rabbi father, brother Hardeen, wife Bess, Robert Houdin: hero with clay feet, friend: A. Conan Doyle; nemesis: the medium Margery and a myriad of other players adorn the stage of this magical drama. A single sentence alleged to have been crafted by Conan Doyle as he amended a draft relating to a scandal involving Houdini's widow, Bess, and a friend, Ford might apply to this book in its entirety i.e. "It is true that in the last resort we are dependent upon the veracity and honesty of Mrs. Houdini. But I, for one, am not cynical enough to question it. Authors Kalush and Sloman, revelation that Houdini was a covert agent for the British government warrants the same raised eyebrow. "The Secret Life of Houdini: The Making of America's First Superhero Atria, to be released exactly 80 years after Houdini's untimely death on October 31st, 2006, notably Halloween, points to suggestions that Houdini's career was enhanced by his friendship with detectives and that he gathered information for the U.K. and U.S.A. are interesting.

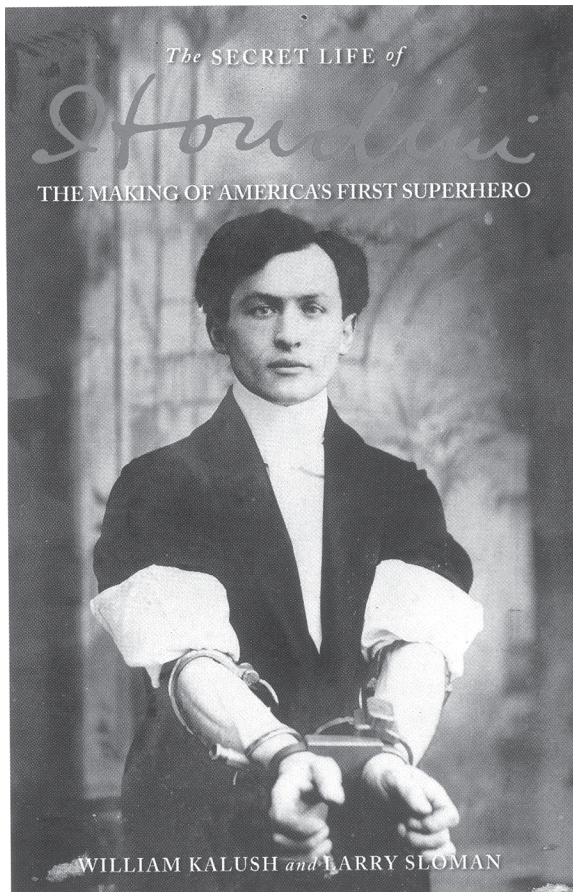
The draft this reviewer had available was 689 pages and the price unknown. This is the work of William Kalush, magician and originator of The Conjuring Arts Research Center in New York City. Mr. Kalush publishes *Gibieciere*, a periodical devoted to magic literature. Larry Sloman is a professional writer who has worked with radio personality Howard Stern and was also associated with David Blaine in the preparation of Blaine's book, "Mysterious Stranger." David Blaine seems to be the link between Sloman and Kalush and Houdini. Kalush worked with Blaine on the production of his television specials. Blaine is a modern Houdinesque popular survivor of extreme death challenges. QED: the interest in previously unknown aspects of Houdini's life would likely have appeal to Kalush and Sloman.

The authors were apparently stimulated by inconsistencies, in the available history of Houdini. Why incon-

sistencies can be troubling is illustrated by the detail that "As it happened, Sloman had read all of the major books about Houdini. Later the reader learns that after working on Blaine's "Mysterious Stranger," Sloman became interested in Houdini. Perhaps, author Sloman read about Houdini in conjunction with his collaboration with Blaine's literary effort or after. But on the face, a questioning observer might experience doubts about how and when Larry Sloman developed his interest in this legendary showman. This potentially explainable, conflict is illustrative of how readily one may discover provocative inconsistencies. Because the essential theme argued is that Houdini was a secret associate of law enforcement organizations and the hypothesis is predicated on inconsistencies and hints, being wary is a valuable posture for the reader.

This story of a previously unreported dimension of Houdini as a spy has been reviewed previously: In the August 29, 2006 issue of The New York Sun, an author and collector of Houdini material, Arthur Moses, is quoted as saying: "Some of it may be true "Some of it may be true," an author and collector of Houdini material, Arthur Moses, said, "but it's hard to believe it's all true." Famed biographer of Houdini, Kenneth Silverman, while reserving judgment until he read the book yielded, "I'll believe anything that there's evidence for," Although the authors begin their tale by describing the voluminous records, which they had, available, they readily agree that there may well be more that they have not been able to see. Why should anyone be surprised? Houdini's business was not to reveal how he accomplished his miracles. We know that British legerdemain artist; Jasper Maskelyne was employed by his government to construct illusions to deceive the enemy in the North Africa conflict in WWII (See the War Magician). Kalush and Sloman recognized the need for primary source documents. They refer to the showman's personal scrapbook in excess of 17000 pages. They allude to 150,000 letters penned by Houdini and the probability of an equal number of responses. Some of the correspondence was from a person whose role in Houdini's life is uncertain. The authors concede that much may be lost to history. If Kalush and Sloman hoped to substantiate their supposition that Houdini had secret connections to police entities, it would have helped their argument had they been able to present credible references. Apparently they came to see a diary of an intelligence personality who mentions Houdini. How Houdini is mentioned is left to our imagination. The incomplete reference is rationalized that spy writings are notoriously incomplete. Their book is bereft of footnotes, endnotes, or enlightening documentation. This is especially troubling because Mr. Kalush is the founder of an organization dedicated to research relating to the conjuring arts. The organization boasts a sophisticated computer research

tool entitled Alexander (a famous mentalist who professed to know all). If we accept their effort as fiction based upon a thin hint of veracity, then we might have enjoyed a story where Houdini functions as an intelligence operative. Dan Stashower, himself an escapologist, has written three mysteries where Houdini stars as a detective. Instead, the reader is allowed to wander and wonder amongst some of the people who populated Houdini's life. The mental deterioration of Houdini's widow, Bess, adds little to the proposition that this master mystifier was affiliated with detectives and espionage professionals. But what happened to Bess opens the door to another mystery. Somewhere, Bess hoped, would ultimately be discovered a safety deposit box whose contents would provide her needed sustenance and elucidation of previously unknown facts. The box, which it is presumed Houdini had taken under an alias, never surfaced. Would it be wholly inappropriate to ask a forensic psychic to divine where it may be located? It is virtually certain that authors Kalush and Soman, as well as all Houdini addicts, would thirst for such a discovery. If a reader desires a romp in the world of inference, suspicion, conspiracy and scandal, this much-publicized book will entertain if not-enlighten. As such, it is a pleasure to recommend it.



Don Soul new Ring 76 Webmaster once again.

Don Soul has announced he will take over the design and upkeep of the Ring 76 Web site. This is the second time in Ring history that Don has stepped in and filled the gap of keeping the online news operation for Ring 76 functioning. Howard Harris, our past webmaster, has been called to Los Angeles on business and was unable to keep the site updated. The Web site had actually fallen into abandonment when Don came back and picked up the pieces and got it going again.



Don Soul

Soul reminded us that a good Web site is worth its weight in gold in letting the members know of upcoming events, breaking news affecting the Ring and having our monthly newsletter online as well. When he took over, the site had not been updated in many months and the officers on the board were out of date. If you have not taken a look at our Web site in a while we urge you to take a look; it is at www.ring76.com.

"MagiToon"

by Jim Whiting & Ellen Friedman



"When I retired from the magic show they gave me an invisible watch."



Message from the Ring 76 President

I want to begin this month by telling you how happy I am that Don Soul, Past Ring 76 President and longtime member, has agreed to take over the Ring Web site again. I say again because over the years Don has been one of the founders and developers of the site itself. Then during his last year as president and during the year that followed he continued to keep our site up and going.

After some arm twisting and begging on our part he has once again taken it over and given it a much needed updated look. To keep our Web site up to date each month Don needs your help. He needs information about shows you are doing, pictures of our members working or doing magic. He needs interesting magic items and news material. Whatever you have, send it over to Don and he will see that it is properly posted. His e-mail address is; dsoul@san.rr.com and he will see that your contribution is used.

Hard to believe we are on our way into the holiday season and that means we will all be doing a few extra shows during Nov. & Dec. If you are going to be purchasing new effects or apparatus in the weeks ahead I hope you will give Grand Magic in Escondido a chance at your purchasing dollar. J.P. Scirica is working hard to make his new shop on Grand Avenue a success, and he needs the help of the San Diego magic community.

We are continuing to put together our December holiday meeting program. We will not have a potluck this year; instead, the Ring is serving finger food and dessert. The program will be exciting so plan to attend that meeting.

I am very excited about our teach-in session that is planned for this coming Monday evening. Six members of Ring 76 have each put together several effects to teach our members as the instructors go from table to table. With the holidays coming this is an opportunity to add to your close-up material for parties and close-up shows. This is a very useful and exciting meeting so plan to attend.

Bob Ingalls
President Ring 76

Happy Thanksgiving



From Ring 76



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For information on membership, or Ring events, contact Jack White, Ring 76 Secretary by e-mail prestoone@cox.net or by phone at 619-299-9037

News

J.P. Jackson just returned to San Diego from the Yankee Gathering, a big magic meeting for magic collectors in the New England area. One of the guest performers was 95-year-old **John Calvert**. During his act he fell on stage, but after hitting the floor he jumped up and continued to do his act. His wife Tammi said John has always been prone to falling but learned how to not get hurt in a fall. When he was making movies his stunt double taught him how to roll with the fall and not be injured. The real magic is that he is 95 and still working.

Jack White is continuing to recover from open-heart surgery. The five-bypass operation took six hours. Doctors say it will be 12 to 14 weeks before Jack is fully recovered. He and **Bob Ingalls** are planning their annual scholarship banquet show for the La Mesa Optimists Club on November 15th.

Syd Segal is bringing the talented **Steve Reynolds** in for a lecture on card and coin magic Monday, November 20th. The lecture will be a unique learning experience and will begin at 7 p.m. at Jack's Magic Place. Advance tickets are available by contacting Syd at BTL6380@aol.com or you can purchase your ticket at the door for \$20. Steve is moving up on the magic scene very quickly and this is an excellent opportunity to see him in action.



Jason Latimer is looking at the Shrine Temple in Mission Valley as the venue for his San Diego magic show in January. Ring 76 has used that facility several times in the past for shows. The stage is a nice one but may not be deep enough for some of Jason's original illusions. There will be a walk-through with the theater management in the next couple of weeks. More details to be announced in the next few weeks.

J.P. Scirica, who operates the Grand Magic Shop at 130 Grand Avenue in Escondido, is looking for some part time employees for the coming holiday season. The phone number at the shop is 760-741-0835. J.P. says one of the hottest items to fly off his shelves in recent months is the new 4 volume DVD set of "Jaw Droppers"; he says it is ideal material for the beginner and veteran performer as well. The regular retail price is \$150. For the set, however, at Grand Magic it's going out the door for \$75.

Diane Lane, who works the Corvette Diner in Hillcrest, Tuesday and Wednesdays each week doing strolling magic, was surprised to find that the producer of the popular TV show "America's Home Makeover" brought his entire crew to the restaurant for dinner and requested to have the magician perform for their table. The segment they were filming in San Diego is a real heart-wrenching program. It will air on Channel 10 in late November.

Briefs



Diane Lane and patrons at the Covette Diner during a recent evening.

The San Diego Blood Bank is excited to have so many Ring 76 performers signed up to work the various events at the Chargers Blood Drive on November 21st. Entertainers are needed to keep donors busy while they wait to donate the gift of life. The Chargers Blood drive has been existence for 27 years and is one of the largest single-day blood drives in the nation.

Jeff McBride has scheduled a lecture tour of Southern California in February. Ring 76 has booked him for that event. We will have details coming soon about this super magic lecture for San Diego.



Coming Attraction

Monday, November 13, Ring 76 Teach-in. Come and learn a new trick or sleight as 6 top performers teach our membership some new magic effects in small group sessions.

Monday, December 11, Ring 76 Holiday Party and Show. Light buffet served by the Ring and some special entertainment. Further announcements next month.

Ring 76 Board of Directors meeting will be Monday evening, November 20th, the last board meeting of 2006, at Jack's Magic Place, 4275 University Ave. This meeting is open to all members. It begins at 7 p.m. sharp.

Watch for our re-opening soon



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MagiCurrents is published monthly by Ring 76 and is edited by Jack White; Associate Editor is Jim Riley. We encourage articles, stories, and news items. All material should be submitted to Jack White by e-mail at prestooone@cox.net. or written manuscripts may be submitted to Jack White, 4288 Arguello St., San Diego, CA. 92103.