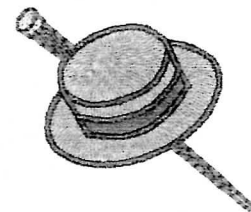


Ring 76 Chartered by the International Brotherhood of Magicians in 1948



MagiCurrents

San Diego, California



Celebrating Sixty Years of Service to the Magic Community

Honest Sid Gerhart Ring 76

Website
www.ring76.com

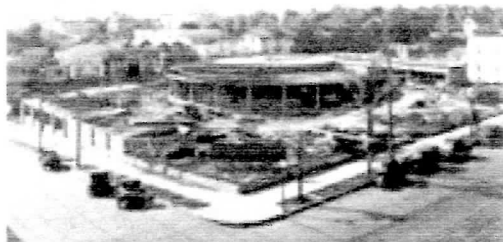
Volume XXII 1 January 2008

Ring 76 begins its 60th Anniversary celebration

By Jack White

Ring 76 is getting ready to celebrate its 60th year of service to the greater San Diego community. The editors at MagiCurrents have been for some time now pouring over old records and documents in an effort to piece together an early history of our Ring. We have found in our research that the first organizational meeting of the Ring was held on December 12, 1948, at Valle's Restaurant, a prominent eatery since the late 1920s, and located on

Kalmia, between 4th and 5th streets in the Uptown area of the city. The restaurant was raised



Valle's Restaurant under construction in 1926 near 5th & Laurel.

in the 1960s and today is the location for apartments and condos. Those present were the original signers of the Ring's Charter and included: Tom Oliver, Ted Angell, James E. Thompson, Stewart Wilson, and Kevin Berry. Members included: Howard Valle, Richard Stahl, Howard Chernoff, R.W. Hafler, Edward Harrison and Bill Risling.

Like all good magic meetings, once the first order of business for the evening, selecting the officers, was out of the way those assembled began doing tricks at the dinner table for each other causing quite a stir among the patrons of the restaurant. However, one of the owners of the restaurant, Howard Valle, was a member of the new I.B.M. Ring, so nothing was said about the magical disturbance. The second meeting was again held at Valle's Restaurant on January 16th 1949, but it was decided that all subsequent meetings would be held at the various member's homes and Howard Chernoff would host the first meeting on the first Monday of the month. February 7, 1949, was the third meeting and was held at

the Chernoff home in La Jolla. Visiting La Jolla for the winter, from the mid-west was I.B.M. member F.W. Thomas, a prominent amateur magician who presented an impromptu magic lecture featuring some of his sleight of hand skills to the delight of the new Ring 76 members. Thomas also signed up that evening as a new member of the newly formed Ring. He paid his \$1 annual dues and attended the next several meetings at various members' homes before returning to his home Ring in the mid-west.

Howard Chernoff was a prominent and influential businessman, known throughout the United States for his charitable efforts. He is best remembered in San Diego history books for his work as a trustee for the San Diego Zoo and being an outspoken member of the San Diego County Grand Jury. In the early-1970s he single-handedly rounded up an endangered species of small wild horses known as Preswaldsky's Horses, and brought them to the Wild Animal Park in the San Pasqual Valley where they enjoyed such a successful breeding program that today they are no longer on the endangered species list. During a television news interview in the early 1970s, Chernoff told reporter Jack White that he had had a life long interest in magic and was a longtime member of the I.B.M. and one of the founders of Ring 76. He told White he became a "magic dropout" in 1952, because of new demands on this time in the business world brought on by the Korean War, but he added his interest in magic never waned and he hoped to one day again become part of Ring 76. But that wish was never realized.

At the April 4th meeting of 1949, one of the topics of discussion was a Magicians Round Table that would be held on Saturday night at Valle's Restaurant. The new round-table would be made up of Ring 76 members and members of the older San Diego Magic Club.

During the January meeting in 1950, Ted Angell was elected President of the Ring and several new members were introduced, one of the new members was Len

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Ring 76 history story continued from page one

Cardoza, who is still an active member of our Ring today. Len does not drive at night any longer, so we do not see him at many meetings; however, he is still an active dues paying member of our Ring and takes part in events that include Blood Drive Shows and other fund raisers as well as being an active magic enthusiast at various magic conventions. Len Cardoza is then our longest surviving active member of Ring 76, having become a member in 1950.

H. Adrian Smith was the International President of the I.B.M. when Ring 76 was chartered in 1948, he said at the time: "The role of the I.B.M. is to organize and associate individuals interested in the practice and promotion of the art. In considering such individuals they must (1) Be gentlemen and show an interest to learn, improve and honor the art. (2) They must have a genuine interest in magic and work to preserve it as an art form." Those words still today stand as the meaning and the foundation of the Roll of the I.B.M. Adrian Smith was a scholar and collector of magic books; his very considerable library of magic publications is now housed at the Brown University Library in Rhode Island. Smith was the first person to be the Presidents of both the S.A.M. and the I.B.M.

Throughout 1951 and into 1952, Ring 76 continued to grow in membership and its meetings continued to flourish. It was during this period that San Diego was enjoying new growth and a bit of a rebirth. The Korean War had begun and local military installations were reopened; industrial plants to build aircraft and arms opened their doors again throughout the county. They were all retooling and restaffing for the winds of a cold war that was sweeping over the world. Suddenly there was no longer time for a local magic meeting.

No one knows or remembers exactly how it happened in late 1952 and early 53, but the Ring very suddenly lapsed into a period of lethargy. The leaders of the Ring were also at the time leaders in the community and they channeled their talents and interests in directions other than magic. By March of 1953, even fragmented and occasional Ring reports from San Diego stopped appearing in the Linking Ring magazine, it is clear that I.B.M. Ring 76 had been abandoned by those who International President Smith only a few years earlier had charged with "carrying on the art of magic."

In 1956, the Society of American Magicians opened an Assembly in San Diego and a whole new list of names suddenly began to appear as members of that magic group. Prominent among those names were Pat and Art

Hannum, George Edwards, and Sid Gerhart. In late summer of 1958, Art Hannum and Sid Gerhart decided they needed another night of magic club meetings every month. The two of them decided to reactivate the old I.B.M. Ring 76 charter and in December 1958, the Ring opened for business again with new leadership and a new period in history.

That period from 1958, to 2008 is yet another story in the history of magic in San Diego, and will have to be told in another installment and another edition of *MagiCurrents*.

December Holiday Party a success

Our December 10th meeting was the annual Ring 76 Holiday Party, which this year was a potluck dinner. Richard Ustick and his daughter Christina are very instrumental in pulling all of the loose ends together and making this event a success and this year was no exception. Richard and Jeff Marcus both baked turkeys, president Lunceford brought a great beef roast, Kenny Shelton supplied several side dishes and Diane Lane brought the mashed potatoes, dressing and gravy. Other member brought a variety of dishes that ranged from salad to pizza. There was more than enough food to feed the 84 people that showed up for this special evening of fellowship and magic.

The highlight of the dinner portion of the evening was the vast array of desserts, everything from cookies, pies, cakes, some special Mexican pastries and even a big dish of brownies. No one went away from this event hungry.

Jack White introduced a special guest for the evening: Mr. Charles Gray, who was the Court Magician for the past three Kings of Saudi Arabia. Mr. Gray carries I.B.M. membership card 999. Then Terry Lunceford introduced the entertainment for the evening: Joe Mystic, who presented his full evening show for our members.

This was a very special treat because many of our members have never seen Joe do his big show with lights, music and assistants. Joe's magic is always entertaining, whether it is a close-up effect with a book of matches or a big illusion; he can get a lot of entertainment value out of his props. His new routine with the "Floating Table" is a knockout effect. His production of a rabbit brought a loud audible gasp from the audience and his closing illusion with the girl in the box was a joy to watch.

Dr. Hooker's Impossibilities

By Gary Dismukes

Imagine being transported back in time nearly a century to bear witness to one of the legendary moments in magic history: a performance of the Hooker Rising Cards. If it doesn't sound familiar, don't feel bad. Dr. Samuel Hooker, an English-born chemist of some renown, was not well known outside of a few magic circles even in his own time. He wasn't a performer in public venues, but this largely unsung genius made his mark all the same, dumbfounding some of the greatest magic minds and showmen of the post-Victorian era with invitation-only, limited showings of his miracles to intimate groups in a small theater he constructed at his own home in Brooklyn Heights, New York (circa 1915). There, he amazed and befuddled the likes of Kellar, Carter, Al Baker, J.N. Hilliard, Harlan Tarbell, Houdini, and Nate Leipzig for more than a decade.

The most memorable of these performances centered around a version of the classic rising cards effect of his own design, which he presented under the banner of "Impossibilities." The rising cards was a well-worn plot even then, and in fact had all but been done to death by stage performers of the time. Not merely another variation on the plot, Dr. Hooker's rendition took it to a new level, if not a new dimension, with performances running in some cases in excess of an hour, captivating his onlookers with one miracle after another, each more baffling than the last.

Hooker's hook, so to speak, was his ability to engineer a set of effects based on methods unknown and unfathomed by other magicians, even to this day. By perplexing his distinguished viewers, he not only puzzled them deeply, but planted the seeds of inspiration, hoping to nudge other magical thinkers into reinventing their art.

After Hooker became too infirm to carry out the performances himself, he enlisted no less a luminary than John Mulholland (editor of the Sphinx magazine for many years and an accomplished stage performer in his own right) to continue the tradition during the early 1930s up until 1935, around the time of the good doctor's death, still using Hooker's theater as the venue. This theatrical wonder then fell into near oblivion, while gaining something of a mythic status, and many came to doubt

that the claimed miracles had ever really happened, at least in the way that witnesses had reported.

Now, let's fast forward to the present day. Thanks to the guiding hands of the organizers of the Los Angeles Conference on Magic History, a biannual event dedicated to the preservation and remembrance of magic marvels of the past, Dr. Hooker's brainchild was brought to life again! And not merely as a museum piece, but fully fleshed as a real staged re-creation using many of the original props from Hooker's home theater. John Gaughan, illusion builder extraordinaire as well as curator and mastermind of this restoration, had the good fortune to acquire the remains of Hooker's rising card apparatus from a member of the doctor's family. The first revival of his Impossibilities took place at the 3rd Conference on Magic History in 1993. Many thought it would never be done again, but here, fourteen years later, the attendees of the 10th L.A. Magic History Conference plus limited audiences of a few additional showings were presented with the opportunity to experience this wonderful reenactment.



Dr. Hooker
circa 1934

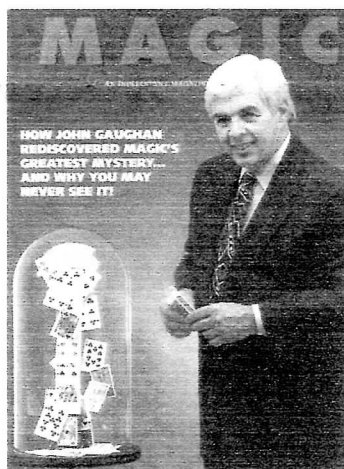
As I had the good fortune to be a spectator at one of the few extra showings on the weekend before the conference, I'll attempt to give a flavor of what this special event was like. Just keep in mind that reading about it is definitely not the same as experiencing it in person. While I had read accounts of Hooker's performances some years ago, and found the descriptions to be little short of incredible, I could only wonder if they were really accurate, and doubted I would ever have the chance to see it for myself.

After registering for the event, which I learned of thanks to Richard Kaufmann's editor's column in Genii magazine, I was informed by e-mail of the secret location where it would be staged. This turned out to be a hotel in the North Hollywood area. After arriving the evening of the event I was given a copy of the program for the L.A. Conference and my ticket for my reserved seat. The audience was limited to fewer than fifty people per showing. I entered the cozy performance room and took my seat in the second row. The first row was only about 6-8 feet away from the front of the stage.

The event opened with a 20-30 minute presentation by Jim Steinmeyer, the well-known illusion designer and author, who is also one of the L.A. Conference's organizers. Mr. Steinmeyer gave some background on Dr. Hooker and set the stage, so to speak, with remarks on the historical context of the "Impossibilities." This was followed by the performance we had all been waiting for. The maroon curtain that had been obscuring the stage (in fact the original one from Hooker's own stage) parted, revealing a small but elegantly decorated and well-lit

stage scene, with ornate tapestry backdrop and several small tables. I should mention that these tables were disarmingly simple metal tripods, with round tabletops covered in red felt, perhaps 15 inches in diameter and no thicker than about half an inch. Two of the tables shared the center of the stage, about four feet apart, the left table bare, and perched upon the right table was the rather large head of a furry toy bear. On a third table at the back of the stage sat a large bell jar, and a fourth table at the front left corner of the stage held a few props for the rising cards.

John Gaughan took the stage, and for the next thirty minutes enthralled us with Hooker's Impossibilities. Following is a partial run-down on the highlights of the effects presented. To begin, Mr. Gaughan introduced his assistant for the performance, the aforementioned bear, dubbed "Miltiades" by Dr. Hooker. (Note: Miltiades was an integral part of Hooker's Card Rise performances, helping to add a humorous air to the proceedings.) The bear's head



John Gaughan on the cover of MAGIC Magazine with the Hooker apparatus.

suddenly came amusingly to life, his head turning from side to side, the eyes moving back and forth, and the jaw opening and closing in simulated speech (Gaughan serving as the bear's interpreter). Next, Gaughan held up the small brass houlette that would serve as a holder for the cards. The houlette was shown freely to have glass on the sides and bottom, while being open in front and back. A red Bicycle deck was then opened, divided into three equal portions, and handed out to three audience members for shuffling. The deck was then reassembled, openly placed in the houlette, and situated off center on the table to the left of Miltiades. And then the mysteries began!

Upon command, the queen of hearts rose from the deck, and was removed by the performer and set standing upright beside the houlette, but apparently unsupported by anything. While the queen stood watch, other court cards introduced themselves by arising in succession, both rising and descending at the magician's command. A spectator freely named a number, and cards began to rise one by one until the chosen number was reached. Then

all of a sudden the joker rose from the deck, visibly upsetting Miltiades, and causing the queen to fall over in a faint.

The joker was placed aside, and spectators were requested to freely call out the names of arbitrary cards. The deck was removed and shuffled by one spectator, replaced in the houlette, and then, one by one, as commanded, each selection would slowly rise from the deck, and then just as mysteriously descend back. This was truly astonishing to see! At any time the houlette could be lifted from the table and shown all around.

The joker was then taken and cut in half using a scissors, much to the animated delight of Miltiades, and the two halves were laid across the bottom of the houlette, the deck replaced and cards continued to rise and fall, dispelling any notion that the cards might be in contact with some mechanism within the thin-topped table.

Then, to deepen the mystery, a borrowed deck was provided by the audience (from among several being offered), the borrowed deck's seal broken, and its owner asked to shuffle the deck, freely select and sign one card, replace it reversed in the middle of the deck, and finally note the cards on either side of the selection. The borrowed deck was then cleanly taken and dropped into the houlette. After a pause, slowly a card rose from the deck, its back to the audience. The card was named by the audience member, the deck carefully removed with the card still extended, and turned around to reveal the named selection, and returned for verification that its position in the deck was undisturbed.

The performance continued to the next level, by again having three cards freely named by the audience. The first card was called upon to rise from the houlette, which it did without hesitation. An audience member was then directed to raise and lower his hand at will, as the card tracked the spectator's erratic up and down commands. For the second selection, the houlette was placed upon three cylindrical glass pedestals, and again the selection arose upon command. For the third selection, which I had been privileged to designate, the houlette was suspended from two long red ribbons running up to the sides of the stage, and just as the selections before it, unerringly ascended from the deck when I announced its name.

And there was still more to come, with the next stunning segment of the performance, known as "Conquest of the Air." The large glass bell jar, which was a good two and a half feet in height, was placed on the table, isolating the houlette and deck. But even under these stringent conditions, yet another card rose gradually from the deck, cleared the top of the houlette, and miraculously continued its ascent, until reaching nearly the top of the

Hooker Cont

bell jar, then slowly descended, until, incredibly, it reinserted itself within the deck.

It was then Miltiades turn to be the focus of attention, when the bell jar was placed over him, whereupon the bear's head itself lifted off the table and floated up nearly to the top of the jar, all the while his eyes shifting, jaw wagging, and his head turning from one side to the other. As the bear's head lowered back to the table, the jar was lifted while Miltiades was still nearly a foot above the felt top, and he then gracefully completed his descent. The bell jar was then replaced to cover the deck again, the cards began to fly out of the deck in quick succession, cascading up and off the sides of the jar, forming a veritable fountain of pasteboards, and bringing the performance to a truly thrilling finale and serving as a fitting tribute to Dr. Hooker and his wonderful Impossibilities.

In conclusion, I think it's fair to say that all the audiences who have had the privilege to experience a performance of Dr. Hooker's legendary effects have found them marvelous and profoundly baffling. The letters of thanks and congratulations from the famous magicians of Hooker's day that were posted on the back wall to be read by attendees attest to this, and it's not a stretch to say that scarcely any viewers of the spectacle came away with much of a clue to the inner workings. Without a doubt this was a magical event that I'll ponder, puzzle over, and treasure for years to come.

Editors Note: We thank Gary Dismukes for this excellent article on the Hooker Card Rise. We encourage other members to write about their adventures in magic and share their stories in these pages.



Message from the Ring 76 President

We are beginning a new year and Ring 76 celebrates its 60th Anniversary. We have some great things planned for our members in the year ahead, as well as some unique opportunities to expand your knowledge of magic. Before I get too involved in what is ahead, let me thank all of you who helped with the food for our December potluck dinner; your efforts made our Holiday Party a great success. Of course the musical entertainment by Mago Ruly was a wonderful addition to the evening. I want to especially thank Joe Mystic for bringing his big show to our stage and being our entertainment for the evening. It is always special when a club can feature its own members as the starring acts, then to have those members do a great job really makes me feel proud of being a part of Ring 76.

Our January 11th meeting will include a brief broken wand service for all of our friends in magic that we have lost in 2007; we will officially induct all of the people who joined the I.B.M. and Ring 76 in the past year and we will allow anyone that wants to perform a standup routine to get up and do their magic.

Terry Lunceford
President Ring 76



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*denotes Past Ring President

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

News

In case you missed the Mother Goose Parade, one of the cable television channels has been running a videotaped rerun most of the month of December. One of the stars of the rebroadcast is our own **Kenny Shelton** who did the entire line of march on roller skates and juggling three clubs. The marching distance for this parade is five miles plus the get ready and all the stops (where Kenny skated from one side of the street to the other) to wait for the rest of the parade to catch up. We now believe that Kenny probably skated eight to nine miles in that one afternoon.

Toni Perrine is in a new play that is being presented January 25, thru February 10, at the Sunshine Brooks Theater at 217 North Coast Highway in Oceanside. The play was written by **Pat Cook** and is titled "Death and Taxes." That is something we can all identify with this time of year. The Sunshine Brooks Theater is a beautiful venue, a converted old movie theater that has been the recent showcase for **John Carney** and his magic friends. It would be great if our members could get out and support this great little playhouse that is used for a variety of shows. For more information on show times and ticket prices you can call (760) 529-9140.

Magic was very prominent at three of the "First Night" parties in the county. **Kenny Shelton** performed at the event in El Cajon and **Michael E. Johnson** presented his act at the party in Del Mar at the fair grounds. **Dick Dale** was at the Escondido "First Night" celebration. January 15th Michael will be performing for the Oceanside Newcomers Club. The meeting is actually not being held in Oceanside; instead, it will be at the Bellefleur Restaurant in Carlsbad.



"The Magic Bug" is a new brick and mortar magic shop located next to the Carlsbad Theater at 2808 State Street in downtown Carlsbad. The shop is owned and operated by **Michael Wulffhart** and opened for business in early November. Michael is feeling his way along with the kind of merchandise he stocks, but hopes to become a full service magic shop for all of San Diego county in the year ahead. He is currently open 7 days a week from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and often times he is there a little later on the weekends, their phone number is (760) 434-5922. The only way a local magic shop can be successful is to have the local magi support it. So drop by and make your magic purchases at a local shop instead of the Internet. To everyone at The Magic Bug, Ring 76 sez "Welcome to the local magic scene and we wish you much success in the future."

It was just reported January 1st that the registration for the Combined I.B.M./S.A.M. Convention, to be held July 21, to 26th in Louisville, Kentucky, is now just over 1500. If you are thinking about going to the convention and have not booked your room the Galt House Hotel, headquarters for the Convention of the Century is 85% full. So don't wait to sign up for your room. Hotel registration is (800) 843-4258; convention registration is (618) 451-9749. Convention registration has now jumped to \$495.

Rumors continue to circulate that

Briefs

Siegfried & Roy will open in a new show on the Las Vegas Strip in 2008. In December, **Roy Horn** threw away his cane and took part in the Las Vegas Great Santa Run & Walk, which is a warm-up to the Las Vegas Marathon, which is held the next day. On December 3rd in Las Vegas at the Fantasma Ring 257 Salute to **John Calvert**, **Jack White** asked Siegfried if there was any truth to the story of the team doing a new show? Siegfried answered by saying: "You never know what will happen, if you keep hearing the story over and over again there is probably some truth to what you hear." Jack's guess is that if Siegfried & Roy make a comeback, it will be at the "Wynn Hotel & Casino."

On a sad note we lost **Dick Ryan**, a pioneer trade show magician and later agent for dozens of other trade show performers. Ryan was 79, he was a former Marine in the Korean War, and a performer for 60 years. He wrote a popular series of three books titled: "Confidential Booking Report" and tipped the inside workings of the trade show business.

Bob Ingalls has been on the sick list, says he is feeling much better and taking new meds. **Joel & Arlene Moskowitz** are in New Zealand, guests of magic publisher **Michael Woolf**. (It is summer in New Zealand and 84 degrees.) **Sumit Dua**, in San Diego during the holidays spent a Saturday afternoon watching **J.C. Wagner** work the bar crowd in the South Bay area. **Tom McCarthy** and **Craig Stone** were both busy this holiday season working the many Christmas parties at the Gathering Bar & Grill in Mission Hills. **J.P. Jackson** spent the holidays in Seattle, Washington with family members and caught a cold on the way home. J.P. says Christmas was nothing to sneeze at!

Coming Attractions

Monday, January 14th, New members night and an opportunity for all members who want to perform their favorite trick. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. at Jack's Magic Place, 4275 University Ave.

Tuesday, January 29, Eric Anderson lecture, how to market yourself, book more shows, get paid more money. Lecture at 7 p.m. at Jack's Magic Place, all seats assigned, see Craig Stone for details, his phone number is (619) 287-0293.

Monday, February 11th, the annual Ring 76 Close-up Contest; all Ring members are eligible to enter. The performers will go from table to table doing their act of 10 minutes. More details of the rules in the February MagiCurrents.

Monday, March 10th, Magic Teach-in Session. If you would like to be a teacher, see Kenny Shelton for details.

Monday, January 21, Ring 76 Board meeting, 7 p.m. at Jack's Magic Place. All members are welcome to attend board meetings.

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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.