

The Vernon Touch
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I think we should start this first column by saying something about magic in general. A lot of people think that everybody's anxious to see a trick at any time of the day or night. WHEN you do tricks for people is very important. Of course, at The Magic Castle, they're ready at any time to see a trick, but when people are singing or dancing or talking, and somebody comes up and says, "I'm gonna show you a trick . . . now take a card . . . watch this . . . look . . . watch." This is not good for magic. Magic has to be done carefully at the right time, and served in the right way, or sometimes it can become very annoying to normal people.

Also, what you say when you're doing magic is very important. If you're a natural comedian, and when you tell a story people break into hilarious laughter or fall over their chairs, you're probably a funny guy who can tell funny stories, and you can do it with your magic. But if when you tell a story, everybody looks askance or looks away, and nobody laughs... and you do magic and try to be funny, this is a catastrophe. There's a certain fellow who used to live in New York who does mental magic, who can make it about as boring as anybody just by what he says . . . not by what he does, because he does his magic fairly well. Francis Carlyle, a very knowledgeable guy about magic, says that there's never been any book written on magical management, which is very important.

The managing of anything is important. You might know a trick perfectly, but in magic I think it's more important in how you manage. A lot of people don't know exactly how to manage when they do a trick.

Another thing that magicians don't seem to realize, I mean a great majority of them, is that I've never in my life seen a good baritone singer get up and sing "On the Road to Mandalay," and then immediately after he's finished, some other guy jumps up and says, "All right, piano player, play that again" . . . and then HE immediately sings "On the Road to Mandalay." Singers don't do this. Dancers don't get up and hoof exactly like the other guy. When somebody tells a joke, they don't tell the same punchline again to the people. They may say, "Here's a variation of it," or "Here's a similar story," but they don't jump in and try to do the identical thing. Magicians seem to have the attitude, "Well, I do that, but you ought to see the way I do it. Now watch the way I do it." To the people, it's the same trick, and I think magicians just make jackasses of themselves when they step in and try to do exactly the same thing that somebody else does.

The great difference between the professional magician and the amateur magician is that the professional magician knows what an effect is. He knows what the audience sees. It doesn't matter how crude the method of performing, as long as the effect is good he will use it. The amateur is more interested in the method. If the method is very subtle and fine and diabolically clever, he loves the trick regardless of what people think. They may not even understand what he is doing but as long as he feels he's doing all these beautifully subtle and crafty things, he thinks he's doing a great trick.

But he may be boring the people to death. It's like somebody painting a picture. Some guy may paint something on a shirt card, and if he does a beautiful picture, people will look at it and say, "That's beautiful. Look at that picture." Another fellow may use the finest pigments in the world, and have the finest canvas that money can buy, and sit in a beautiful studio with a velvet smock on, but who cares? All they see is the picture.

Well, that's what the professional does with magic. He sees the picture as the people see it, whereas the amateur doesn't. That's something that should be heeded by many magicians. They've got to put themselves in the place of the audience.

Another important thing is the placing of tricks. A lot of people have their finest tricks which they do early, and then they wind up with a weak trick. They should follow the old Vaudeville formula which is ideal. Think of magic as a play. A play has a beginning, a middle and an ending . . . a climax. That's why a trick like the cups and balls is a classic. First, an opening introducing the props dropping one cup through the other. Then it has a little sequence of moves that occur . . . everything different . . . Little funny things happen. Then, BAM, there's a climax . . . a production which must be dramatic, and must be the finish. And it must be the same way with an act.

Most of these fellows have Greater Magic. They should read the introduction by Bamberg which is excellent. When a performer comes on, people see this man for the first time. They appraise him. They look at him and say, "Well, he's a fairly normal looking guy," or "He's a wicked looking guy . . . he's a mean looking guy . . . he's a funny looking guy" . . . but they appraise him when he first comes on. Now, he doesn't have to say anything immediately, because if he talks right away, he lets them know what kind of a person he is. But if he does some little thing to get their attention, they say, "Gee, he did that neatly," or "He did that nicely," and they think, "What kind of a fellow is he?" Now, the first words he speaks, his introduction, is just like a warm handshake, or like meeting a person for the first time. So the introduction is very important. Once he gets started, he can DO anything, but he must wind up with something that hits them . . . a sock. So the old Vaudeville formula of having a fairly good opening, a weak middle and a strong finish, is the formula in getting an act together, or putting a trick together.

One of MY great idols was Hofzinsler, and in one of his tricks he says, "This trick, well understood and capably executed, never fails to get a tremendous effect . . . but otherwise, no effect can be expected." In other words, if you don't thoroughly understand a trick, and capably execute it . . . well, you don't get the effect. That's all.

Anybody who does a trick to entertain should first find a trick they want to do. You can't learn a half a dozen at a time. They think they can, but learning to do one or two or three or four tricks WELL, is better than learning a hundred tricks badly. Decide what trick you want to do, then learn the handling of it. I don't care if it's even to hold a handkerchief out and show both sides of it. You should practice to do it neatly, show what you're supposed to show, and present it nicely and palatably to the people. Now you should work out the sleights. If there are any sleights, or if you have to hide something, do it naturally. Then the most important thing of all after you've learned that is to think it through. Use your noodle perhaps for two or three weeks. Walk around and think, "Now how's the best way to do this? Can I tell some kind of story with it? Can I tell a gag with it? How can I get the opening, middle and dramatic finish on the thing?"

A friend of Dr. Daley's once said that the trouble with magic was that the average person who did magic didn't have good taste. There's a lot of truth in that. Taste is reflected very much in magic. Taste in props, taste in dress, taste in diction, taste in everything. So if you want to improve your act, try to improve your understanding of all things, and it will help the magic.

Some fellows when they start in magic, want to do card tricks and they want to start in with a second deal. He's intrigued with it, but what is he going to do with it? If he practices for 20 years he won't be able to use it to fool anybody. So this is something he shouldn't worry about unless he's amusing himself.

There's so much in magic, you have to have questions . . . you have to know what's on people's minds. When I was a young whippersnapper living in an isolated part of the country in Canada, I had to wait a whole year to see some professional magician come to town, like Leipzig or Nelson Downs or Thurston, just to talk and ask them a few questions. There must be hundreds of questions fellows interested in the art of magic would like to ask. A little word passed on can encourage and help someone a great deal.

I have received one question from David Bornstein in Denmark who wants to know what I regard as the most entertaining trick for laymen, for a group made up entirely of women, and for magicians. We'll talk about this next month. Meanwhile, let me know what questions YOU have about magic, moves, personalities, or any phase of magic and I'll do my best to answer them. Write to me in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles, California, 90028.

October 1968

David Bornstein in Denmark wanted to know what I regard as the most entertaining trick for laymen, for a group made up entirely of women, and for magicians.

I have a million opinions on a thing like this. I mean, there are no rules to be laid down. As every body knows, you've got to break rules. I don't think there's any magic formula . . . just as there's no master parry in fencing. My honest opinion is that lay people, in this day and age, don't want to admit that they enjoy a trick. They say, "I wish the children were here." The only type of trick that appeals to people today are mental tricks. Something that has the semblance of real mind reading, like "The Seven Keys to Bald Pate." Tricks like pulling silks with little bunnies on them out of a box should be gone except for children's shows. But telepathy or memory tricks, like Harry Lorraine does, where people can see it takes some talent or skill to do, are good. They don't say, "Well, I can go down to the store and buy this." They think, "My goodness, it shows you how you can develop the memory, or how you can develop your mental faculties."

But I think the real test of tricks for lay people is what Fu Manchu, my good friend David Bamberg, said. A trick, to please an all around audience, must be given an emotional appeal of some kind . . . and I agree with this.

You take a fellow like Frakson Frakson could take almost ANY trick that might bore some people to death, and he can make it entertaining by getting the people excited about it, and intriguing the women by kissing their hands. By doing all kinds of things, he gets them interested. Years ago, Chang told me the only reason he was successful when he went to South America. He knew that he had to follow David Bamberg. Well, he had some beautiful Chinese gowns, and he stood in the lobby opening night, and every woman who came along, he stepped up in this beautiful robe, kissed her hand, and pinned a rose on her. This pleased the women, probably, more than the show or anything else, and they told their friends what a wonderful man Chang was, and what a beautiful gown he wore.

Now this is not magic, but it is catering to the emotions, so the women weren't bored when their husbands said, "I want to take you to a magic show." They were anxious to go, and Chang had a tremendous success in South America.

It's pretty hard to set down specific tricks, because one trick will lay an egg in the hands of one performer, while with another performer, it will be a master piece. The main thing is to give the trick an emotional appeal. For laymen, I think that's the general rule.

The trick that I enjoy best here at the Castle, is the Ambitious Card. I don't know who gave it that name . . . I think it was either Hugard or Annemann. But this trick is only effective where you have a couple of people in the audience who think they're a little bit wiser than the rest, and they stick their necks out. If you pick on them really, you can make them very unhappy, because everybody will give them the heehaw and laugh at them, but if it's done with discretion, you can get a lot of entertainment from it. It's like the old story of the people laughing when the other fellow slips on the banana peel. It's exactly the same illustration . . . when somebody says, "Oh, I know. I saw what you did," now, if you do this to the whole audience, it's bad, but to the one individual, when you show him he's wrong, the whole audience will guffaw and laugh at this poor fellow for making a mistake, and you can keep this up for quite some time and it's very amusing,

because the people are thinking how dumb This guy is, when really, they all thought the same thing themselves. This gives them an outlet, and seems to be very amusing.

When I first met Leipzig in 1905 . . . now that was a long, long time ago . . . and I patterned some of my card work after his as a boy . . . when I first met Leipzig, he asked me to do a color change the way HE did. When Leipzig did the color change, he'd bring his hand out stiffly, and everyone thought he had the card in his hand, and he'd turn the hand around to show it was empty, and he got a chuckle from the audience.

So I did the color change for him, and he said, "You do it very well, but I don't think you understand. You must look down at one person in the audience when you have your hand held like that, and say, 'I'm sorry, madam' to just ONE person in the audience." This was a very important lesson: You pick out someone in the audience, and if possible, if there IS someone in the audience who the people know is kind of a wise guy, he's the one to pick on, but in a large audience you pick on an imaginary person. Even with a trick like the Die Box (I told this to Loring Campbell years ago), if you look out at just one little boy, the whole audience will scream, because they'll think this one boy was the wise guy, but if you do it to ALL the kids, you'll notice when you open the four doors, there's an awful letdown. It applies to any situation like that. In doing any sucker trick, never . . . never . . . never look at the whole audience. Look at one person only. You cannot fool people badly en masse, you must fool an individual. Then the audience will laugh. And the same thing applies to close-up magic. Never do a "sell" on your audience.

The most deadly thing in magic is to have a superior attitude, unless it's done with a tongue-in-cheek attitude. If you pretend you have a Mephistophelean manner, and they know it's put on, it's not so bad . . . they know you're acting. But to REALLY think you're cleverer than the audience, and have superior skill and ability, and the audience senses this, no matter if you do miracles, they'll hate it. So that's deadly for lay people.

I think the most effective thing that can be done is of the impromptu nature. A trick I haven't done for years is to change one coin into another coin, the way I used to do down in Trinidad or when I went to South America, but the other day, a young boy came up to me and said, "Can you show me a trick with one of these coins?" and he had a dime and a nickel in his hand. Well, I had my hand in my pocket and I had a half dollar palmed, so all I did was one of the moves that Jarrow did, and apparently changed the nickel into a half dollar by passing my hand over it, and both of my hands were empty. Now this, to him, was ten times more effective than if I had pulled a ball out of my pocket, or a handkerchief, and done some trick, because this; looked entirely impromptu.

One time, Malini was walking with the Chief of Police in some town, and a couple of kids were playing baseball, and the ball rolled in front of Malini. He was just going to throw it back to the boy, and the Chief said, "Do something with that, Malini." So Malini threw it two or three times into the air and made it disappear, and the Chief said, "Where in the world did it go?" and Malini lifted his hat and the ball rolled off of his bald head. Now this is what I call effective magic. Something done on the spur of the moment. I think it's equivalent to what you'd call an ad-lib.

An ad-lib trick is more effective than a prepared trick, just the same as an ad-lib remark will get a bigger laugh than a prepared remark, lots of times, if it's a good remark. It has to be a good trick, naturally. I had a few idols in magic, and Malini was one of my great idols, because if Malini wanted to do a trick with a half dollar, he would

never take a half dollar out of his pocket. He'd lead a friend into a bar to have a drink, and he'd buy a drink that he knew was fifty cents . . . you could do that in the old days . . . and he knew there'd be a half dollar in change, and just as the fellow would pick it up, Malini would say, "Wait a minute, I'll show you a little trick with this." Now that was effective. Malini was always like that. He'd say, "What's that over there? Let me see that," and he'd take it up and do a trick with it. This is what Malini did. He'd make the trick occur . . . just occur. You can see how strong this is. It looks casual. It doesn't look as if you brought your own props.

This is very hard to do in a prepared performance, where you have an audience, and they know you have certain things to work with. But even so, that's why it's very effective to borrow some thing from the audience, whereas, if you have your own, you may have the most beautifully made piece of apparatus in the world, if it belongs to you, they know in some way it's fixed or arranged or something. But when you can borrow ordinary things that People use, and do a trick with them, this is very effective for lay people.

Talking about doing magic for women, I have lived a long time, and I don't think really, honestly, I ever met a woman. Who likes magic . . . who REALLY likes magic. They'll watch a card trick to please some guy, but I don't think they really enjoy watching a card trick. Yet, if you give a card trick a twist, if you tell them that if they pick the right card they'll be lucky in love or they'll have a wonderful dream, they're intrigued, and will watch a card trick for an hour, IF you give it some kind of emotional appeal. Women are intrigued by this kind of thing, but if you have a girl think of five cards, and you can tell her all five, she'll say, "Well, you just read my mind, that's all."

Years ago, I went to Brooklyn with about eight women, to see John Booth perform. Now he had a very scholarly kind of show. He did a lot of historical magic, and gave the history of some of the tricks. After we came home, we were discussing the act, and do you know what every one of the women said? They said the most intriguing thing was the way he kept the cord of the microphone out of his way, and swung it around and didn't trip over it. But, as far as any of the tricks, they hardly remembered what he did.

Women who belong to a bridge club might be interested in seeing how they might be cheated at bridge. They'll be a little bit interested because they think this is valuable information, but as far as pulling some silks out of a tube, I don't think they'll go home and rave to their husbands that they had a wonderful afternoon.

I'm not too much in favor of an all woman audience except under certain circumstances. If it's a fellow like Fred Keating, a debonair, handsome young guy, who fascinates the women, they'll be watching how he walks and how he talks, and they'll love it when he holds their hand and reads their mind, but apart from that, they're not too fascinated with a magical performance, unless there's some very brilliant, intriguing patter and some good stories, then they'll enjoy it. But the mysteries themselves, the tricks, are of very minor importance when you're entertaining women. By the way, if there are any normal girls who refute this statement, I hope you'll write in and let me know.

As for fooling magicians, this is very difficult. When I first came to New York as a boy, I was expecting to see miracles, because I had read about Bamberg and Okito and Dr. Elliott and all the famous names of magic in those days. I was very disappointed

when I met Thurston, because I fooled Thurston with a pass when I was about seven. I thought he was teasing me, but I found out that he didn't know the pass. He hardly ever used it himself at that time.

Years ago, I used to love to fool magicians . . . to TRY to fool them. A magician will very seldom admit that he's fooled. He'll say, "Oh, that must be a twist on a thing I know" . . . The average magician won't admit he's been fooled, although the better magicians will admit it. But usually, they think it's a sign of inferiority to admit that they're ignorant of a method.

I am quite convinced that the best trick for a magician, is a trick where the magician understands every move that takes place, but he admires the great dexterity, or how clean it is, or the way it's handled. In other words, if he doesn't understand it, and at the climax of the trick, he doesn't know what caused that climax, he's not pleased at all, and he's not entertained.

Now Flosso, when he loads a hat, I'll guarantee that nobody, seeing him for the first time, will have the faintest idea of how he loads it. Magicians won't like that part of his act, but Flosso entertains them so much, that they don't really care.

Some of the old books say that you must decide when you start to do magic what you're going to be. Are you going to be a clown, or a dramatic performer, or a mysterious performer, or an ordinary conversational performer, or what kind of thing are you going to present to the people? When you do magic, you can adopt a personality. As Houdini said, you're an actor playing the part of a magician. But you have to establish what your medium is, what your best means of expression is, and adapt this, and practice this, and after a time it will become a part of you, and you'll do better magic. But you can't switch around from day to day. You have to be one thing or the other. That's why every good magician has a gimmick of some kind. As my friend Francis Carlyle says, if a fellow can't describe what he saw, and describe the performer, he says the guy is no good, and the trick is no good. People should be able to remember what happened. That's why the "Card On the Ceiling" is a good trick. They can describe this.

Today, fellows have magic handed to them. It used to be very difficult to learn new tricks. They have libraries, they have books, they have people to help them, and it's too easy. They want to go from one thing to the other. They want to be experts the first week. This is not the way anything is built up. The more background you have, the better you'll be some day, and the happier you'll be with your subject.

One of the fascinating things about magic is that there are no cut and dry rules. Take a trick like putting a piece of glass into a paper bag and pushing spikes and ribbons through it. Now this trick is barely a puzzle, and people say it's done this way or that way, but Frakson takes a little trick like that, and with his remarks and presentation, the way he handles it, he makes it a sparkling thing. So how are you going to say what trick is good? Take an Egg Bag . . . some of the great performers like Goldin, DeBierre, Alpagini, Jud Cole, any number of famous magicians, they all did the Egg Bag and got a lot out of it because they presented it. You can make an Egg Bag a very sad, sorry kind of trick. It's all in the presentation of the trick, and the telling of the story. Slydini is a very good example of that. Slydini does some little tricks, but by his Italian manner, his sincerity and the way he sells it, he creates the effect of doing miracles with tricks that other people do. That, to ME is the real art of magic.

I'm very happy to see that the letters have been coming in. The more questions I get, the more I'll be able to discuss in this column. Anything you may have on your mind, about any phase of magic, write to me in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90028.

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I'm glad to see so many letters coming in. It makes me feel that I'm doing the right thing, and it gives me some interesting things to talk about. One of the letters asked about doing magic for retarded children. A mentally retarded child would probably enjoy magic that appeals to his particular mental age. Personally, I would think that anything that makes the children smile, or amuses them, or makes them attentive and interests them, would be of benefit. But if it seems to puzzle them or annoy them, it's certainly no good. When I worked for the Theater Wing (Antoinette Perry and Frederick March were in the group at that time), we went up to Newport and did a show for the mentally disturbed. After the show, the doctors all said that the magic was wonderful. Some of the fellows, who had never smiled before, smiled when they saw the magic. The next day, the doctors said that they didn't know if the magic did more harm than good. After we left, they had to use a fire hose to subdue them. They went into an absolute panic. I would like to have a psychiatrist write and tell me his views about performing for the mentally disturbed and the men tally retarded, because I really don't know.

Another fellow wrote to tell me that he had a mental block about performing, and wanted to know what to do about it. A fellow who's afraid, lots of times, is really thinking too much of himself. The world goes on just the same. It won't make a bit of difference ten minutes after it's over . . . it's past history. You've got to have the right attitude. You've got to gain a little confidence. You learn to have confidence. The greatest thing to give you confidence is to be sure of what you're doing. All great artists are nervous before they go on. Anybody that is sensitive, and wants to do a good job, is bound to be nervous. Paul Fox, who was one of the most knowledgeable guys in magic that I ever met in my life, told me, "Dai, I want to thank you for doing so much for me. You taught me something I never thought I'd ever have the nerve to do. To pass out a pack of cards for examination, and palm a card. Then stand with the card in my hand, and put it back on the pack, without being self conscious or afraid of being caught." The first time you go in front of an audience, and you're going to do a trick where you have some cards palmed, it's exactly like a bad dream. You'll think your hand is getting bigger and bigger. This has to be overcome. You have to be audacious, you have to learn in some way, perhaps when you're not doing a trick, you walk around and have some cards palmed. When people don't notice, you get confidence. Once you acquire even a little confidence, you'll learn to overcome it very easily. The first time, the initial step, is the hard one. "The longest journey begins with a single step." Imagine every thing that can go wrong, and if you have to, if you haven't got the guts to go through with it, you can make a lame excuse. But it's better not to, because if you do that, then it gets easier to make an excuse each time. It's better to break the ice. The first time you perform, pick some self-working tricks. You may not like to do them, but you can get rid of your nervousness by presenting it well. I'd rather be a little nervous than brazen, for ward and pushy. The main thing, when you begin, is to get over the guilt complex. Some gamblers will walk around with a pair of dice palmed in their hand. They shave, they eat, and get so accustomed to the dice, they hardly know that they're there. Anybody who wants to do coins, just palm a coin, and keep it there all day. Then when you go to do tricks, your

hand will have a natural appearance. You can do the same thing with a card. It's very important to form good habits in doing magic.

For the beginner, the main psychological advantage of taking lessons is the stimulus he gets from a source he respects, until he can find the stimulus within him self. Remember, every expert once started as a student who gradually assimilated his own concepts, and tested methods and ideas of presentation, mostly learned from false starts and failure, as well as from success, until he developed his knowledge and ability through hard work and enthusiasm. The most celebrated artist and his most inexperienced student work with exactly the same raw materials. All that the teacher can do is give the student these reliable tools, and he must learn how to use them.

The average beginner makes a great mistake. He goes to the magic store and asks, "What's new?". They always want to know what's new. Joe Berg can tell you about this. They don't know how to do some of the elementary tricks that they should know how to do. They're not ready for "what's new" yet.

A beginner should learn the basics of magic first. One or two moves well learned, are better than a passing knowledge of all the subtleties in magic. One good coin move with a palm or a transfer is better than twenty badly done. Learn the principles underlying magic. This is more important than learning another new move.

Learning anything, whether it's learning to play the violin or to shoot marbles or anything, has plateaus of learning. You go along for a long time, and you think that you're not making any advance. You won't notice, just as if you live with a child and see him every day, you won't notice that he's growing, but a stranger who sees him two months later will say how much the child has grown. This is exactly like learning. You can't see yourself that you're learning. You are gradually learning, but all of a sudden, all these things jell. These things that you've learned, or the practice that you've put in, all jell, and you suddenly jump, and you're on a different plateau. Now, these plateaus keep occurring, and you can go up, up, up, and if you went high enough, you could get to where there's no one in the world who could criticize you except yourself. The thing that will advance you more than anything else, is when you see somebody work who is probably ten times or twenty times better than you are. Then you really get that stimulus that makes you advance. It's an inspirational thing. Don't copy them, but this should give you the desire to acquire what they've acquired.

Beginners want to learn every thing at once. Albert Goshman, who is one of the fine sleight of hand performers we have today, once asked me why he wasn't getting any recognition for his magic. I told him that if he took one trick, and did it better than anyone else, people would know about it. Well, he took "Spellbound" from the Stars of Magic Series, and at the Get-Together in Colon, Michigan he did this trick everywhere, and everyone was following him around just for a chance to see him do it. Every person starting in magic should pick one trick, and make it an identifying trick with him.

I would strongly recommend that any kid starting in magic should start by reading some book that tells about magicians or the history of magic, that will get them interested in magic, and then read some simple book to give them the rudiments of magic . . . books like Hoffman's, "Modern Magic" or "More Magic," or Sachs's, "Sleight of Hand."

Magic is wonderful. There is a fellowship and camaraderie unlike any other. There are no language barriers; there are no class barriers . . . the shoe shine boy can hobnob

with the bank president. If there are any shoe shine boys or bank presidents who have any questions about any phase of magic, I certainly hope you'll write to me, and let me know what's on your mind. I'm still at the same address, The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90028.

December 1968

I was surprised, and at the same time enlightened, by the fact that to date, I have heard from at least three girls who told me that they simply love and adore magic. These may be exceptions to the rule . . . they are really exceptional girls. I still am not firmly convinced yet. I've only known three or four Girl magicians like Lady Frances and Celeste Evans. They like magic because they make a living from it. But I mean the average magician's wife who has to put up with this sort of thing. They learn to hate it. Years ago, my wife, Jean, wrote an article, "I Married Mr. Magic," and gave it to Philip Wylie to read. He said that it was very well written, but it had a tone of bitterness running through it. For this reason, he said, it wouldn't be popular with the public. The public doesn't know the inside. They look upon magic as a rather glamorous thing . . . something that only a few people can do. Years ago, we'd be up late doing magic into the wee small hours of the morning, and my younger son, Derick, used to come and peek in the door. We called him Neepie after Hofzinser, and we'd say, "Neepie, go to bed, it's three o'clock in the morning," and he'd go back to bed, but he'd sneak back again. So finally, Jean said, "Neepie, if you don't go to bed, I'll have your father show you a card trick, and he ran away crying and screaming. He had been conditioned by his mother.

There's no reason why a girl shouldn't be interested in magic. There's a trick in the new book by Eddie Fields with a mat made into an astrological chart. Now a brick like this, if you ask a girl what month she was born in, and you lay the cards down on the astrological signs, any girl will be intrigued, whether she believes in astrology or not. Something like this fascinates them, and they'll pay strict attention to everything. I still say that the only type of magic that entertains women is something where the emotions are brought into play in some way.

Even Hofzinser, the great artist; he'd start out to keep the women's attention. He'd say, "Now ladies, this trick involves a very mysterious secret." Right away, when they hear about a secret, they're interested.

Ray Grismer asked me, "Can you do card tricks for a large audience?" Leipzig worked all the big theatres and he did essentially a small card act. It depends on the tricks a great deal. You certainly can't do any pile tricks. I have done "The Cards to the Pocket" for 6,000 people. This is good because they don't have to see the cards. They see objects going up the sleeve. Some of the classics are excellent for a large audience. Cards to the Pocket, Rising Cards, The Card Sword, The Card Star, these are all stage tricks.

I had a letter just the other day asking me whether I thought you should mix silk tricks with escape work. This is a case of mixing mediums like mixing mediums in art. You don't put a lot of charcoal and pastel on top of an oil painting. As a rule, it's very bad to mix silk tricks with a fellow doing escapes. My personal opinion is that if you're a man who escapes from chains and defies locks, and you suddenly come out and pull some silk handkerchiefs out of a box, it's not very good, although a good showman, like Dr. Cunning, might bring something different in as an incidental, but it wouldn't seem to be part of the show.

Someone else asked if it was wise to mix mechanical tricks with sleight of hand tricks. Professor Hoffman said that a judicious mixture of both in a program is good.

When you do mechanical tricks, try to make them look like sleight of hand, and when you do sleight of hand tricks, try to make them look mechanical. In other words, throw me people off.

Rhythm plays a very important part in magic. Keith Clark, who I think knows as much about stage deportment and poise as anybody, says, "Everything must be rhythmical when you do magic." Keith is a great believer that every good trick has either a beat of four or a beat of three. You don't use 5/4 time or 4/5 time or 12/8 time. Some people don't have to count it because they have natural rhythm. Jay Ose had this sense of rhythm. He was a dancer, and had a natural rhythm in everything he did. The punch-line of a joke must have rhythm. Putting in one extra word and throwing the rhythm off ruins the whole thing. There's a certain way to say something. If you say to yourself different things that you've found successful, you'll find that they have a beat. The first beat might not be a word. It might be a step forward. When you become familiar with a trick, you unconsciously get into a rhythm. The better you do a trick, the more rhythm it will have. When you work to music, this gives you perfect rhythm.

The greatest advice I ever got was from a friend of mine in Canada who's a millionaire today. He said that the most important thing is to use your head. Plan a thing first before you do it. A lot of people start in just practicing, but they don't plan. Think about things like . . . What am I going to do? . . . Is this a tool I'm going to use in a trick? . . . When am I going to use it? . . . Am I going to do it standing up or sitting down? . . . Think about it a little before you start. Very few people really use their heads. It takes ten times as long to accomplish something if you don't do a little planning before you start it. So I think, essentially, anybody getting an act together should try to plan it a little, not just start with one trick, and then learn another trick and then put the tricks together. They should think, "What is my personality? What suits me best? Am I thin, or fat, or short, or tall, or comical?" Plan the tricks . . . decide on what kind of tricks to do. Certain tricks look wonderful in one person's hands, and look ridiculous in another person's hands. All the old books stress the point that there are bricks that fit your type. There are bricks . . . I don't care how much you admire them when you see someone else do them; they just won't look the same when you do them. Type yourself. They should have casting directors for magicians. This would be very beneficial for magic.

So many fellows say to me, "How is it you do the same thing that I do, but I always get caught?" Perhaps they do the move just AS well, but they say some thing wrong, or their whole approach is wrong, or they do it at the wrong time. That's where the rhythm and timing come in. The same identical move in the hands of one performer can be excellent, and in the hands of another performer, very bad. Take a top change . . . if it's not done at the right time, they'll see it every time, but at the right moment it's a beautiful thing, and the same with any trick. The timing and the rhythm is the most important thing in the trick. If you get caught doing a sleight, it's your fault. It's not because the guy is so observant . . . you're doing it wrong.

Anybody who is musically inclined can hear a slight mistake in music. But a sour note, a really sour note, instantly annoys any body. Magicians don't seem to know that they have a nice trick, and they have a terrible sleighting a sleight, it's your fault. This is really a sour note when they do a thing badly. Dr. James William Elliott, one of the great card men, said to me many times, "The secret is so simple. Be natural!" Now, the words

"be natural" is a very trite little phrase, but it means not only being natural in your sleights, but being natural in all things. In other words, not being awkward. Here's a very good example. George La Folette did the trick where a card disappeared from the deck and appeared between two metal plates in his pocket. He did this trick at a big party one time, and it made a terrific hit. Well, he was hired to work for the same group again, and in the letter it said that they particularly wanted him to do this trick again. Poor George didn't know what to do. He said that the worst thing he did was palm a card. He knew that he was able to get away with it once because nobody knew what was coming, so it was easy. But he was afraid to try the same thing again. So the next time he did the trick, he didn't try to palm the card off the top and get it to his pocket. He got the card to the top and took the top two cards as one and explained how some people thought he palmed the card and put it in his pocket, and he told them how impossible it would be for anyone to do this without being seen. He didn't try to fool them with palming . . . he actually showed them . . . but he had the selected card hidden behind the one that he was showing, and when he put it in his pocket, he got the selected card between the plates. Now this is a good subtlety. Anybody can do this. This method, although it may seem crude to cardicians, is so much better than a bad palm. This is an illustration by management, not by cleverness, but by management, how he solved that problem. He had to get that card in his pocket, and he did it in a very simple way. Erdnase said in his book, that a resourceful professional, failing to improve the method, changes the moment.

When you get someone up to help you, and you feel that they're getting confused, or embarrassed, because you're fooling them, and the audience is inclined to laugh at them, I'd whisper to them, "Don't worry, at the finish I'll show you how this is done." Now this makes the guy feel a little more comfortable. Cueing is some thing that the average amateur knows nothing about. Even people of the theatre don't realize what an important thing cueing is. Of all the people I've ever met, one of the greatest examples of good cueing was Judson Cole. He used to take little children who'd never been on the stage before, and make great actors out of them by clever cueing. As a perfect example of this, if you say, "Now Sonny, when I ask you to hold this egg in your hand, and it drops on the floor, I want you to look very unhappy about it. Really look as unhappy as you can and look as though you're frightened." This will turn out pretty bad. But if you tell the boy, "Now look Sonny, there's one place where I have you hold an egg. For goodness sake, don't drop that egg, because if you do, you'll ruin my whole act." Now, when that egg falls, that kid is the greatest actor you'll ever see, because he really believes that he ruined the show.

I know several well known performers who make stooges out of people the wrong way. They tell them to act. When you tell them to act, they can't act. The average fellow doesn't know how to act. So, you've got to be clever in your cueing. "Variety," in the old days, used to write about the kids in Judson Cole's act. Here are a few more ways that he used to cue them. He would get a neat little boy and girl on stage, and introduce them. Just before he introduced the boy to the girl, he'd cue the boy to straighten his tie. Now, here's a little kid about seven years old meeting a little girl, and he's fixing his tie. Well the audience went wild. These are the clever things. When Jud would vanish something, he'd whisper to the kid, "Lift my jacket." This really amused the audience to see this kid looking under Jud's jacket. When he had a kid chewing gum, he'd tell the kid, "Chew that

gum so that everyone can see you" . . . then, out loud he'd say, "Young man, will you throw that gum into neutral?" Now the kid doesn't know what to do, so Jud would whisper, "Take it out of your mouth and put it in your pocket." Now the kid takes the gum and starts to put it in his pocket, and Jud whispers, "The other pocket" . . . now the poor kid has gum in his hands, and it looks as though he doesn't know what to do with it, and the audience is screaming during all this. Now Jud whispers, "Stick it under my magic table," now the kid walks over, lifts up the fringe on the table, and sticks the gum under it. Well, the audience howled. With thought of this kind, you can enhance an act where you have a kid up. Fellows should devote as much time to this kind of thing as they do to learning the sleights.

I would like to say something about patter. This is one of the tritest cliches in all of magic. Patter . . . that's a very good name for it, because that's really what it is. It's ridiculous how some people recite sing-song patter. Patter has to be delivered as though it's the first time you've ever said it. This is hard to do. If you get sing songy, and just sound like a parrot, it's no good. Try to give it spontaneity. Jay Ose had a great facility for this. Some of the phrases were exactly the same every time he did the trick, but it always sounded as though he just thought of the lines on the spur of the moment.

The first step in magic is when you learn a trick from someone else, or if you buy a prop, don't use the same identical patter. Even a trick like "Sam the Bellboy" doesn't have to be "Sam the Bell Boy," it can be something else. This, I think, is very important. Give it a different atmosphere . . . give it a different approach. This is good for magic. Don't always look for something new. Instead, look for a new way to do some thing old. Look at what Norm Nielsen did with the Zombie. He took the principle and made it a thing of beauty. Another one was Don Wayne's Pranky Hank. Magic will progress greatly, with all the clever young minds we have in the world today, if they would only devote time to the proper channels instead of just worrying about how to deal a second.

I consider myself blessed to have so many loyal friends in magic, including Clark Crandall, not only on this side of the pond, but abroad as well. I wish them all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year, and I hope they will derive as much pleasure and happiness from magic as I have.

I've really been enjoying your letters, I hope you'll keep asking about magic or magicians. Write me in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90028.

January, 1969

I want to say something about simplicity . . . making things simple. In any great art, especially in painting, you should know not to keep adding and touching up, because the simpler you can do anything, the better the method. The tragic part in magic, is that known fellows like Martin Gardner or Ed Marlo, who work for years on some little way of doing a certain thing, and after perhaps three or four years of discarding and discarding, and finally getting the ultimate, simple, and precise way of doing some sleight, they show it to some fellow magician, and he says, "Well of course . . . how else would you do it?" They don't realize all the toil that has gone into a thing. But I say, when a thing finally reaches its ultimate, it should be simple. As Leonardo DaVinci said, "Details make for perfection, but true perfection is no detail." This is true, and a very wise saying. The trouble is, once you get the thing finished, you can't tamper with it. You can't tamper with it when it's running smoothly. Perhaps you can't be the judge yourself. You have to have the audience be the judge, or your friends. Anybody knows when they do a thing well, because they get good results with it, and there's a great deal of satisfaction in doing it. But I can't overstress the fact that the simple effects are the best. To prove this, ask anybody, "What did this fellow do?" Well, if he took the deck and threw it up, and one card stuck to the ceiling, they can describe that. Or they'll say, "He put the cards in a glass, and my card rose right out of the deck." This can be described. Or a trick like shooting a card into a balloon. These are good effects because anybody can understand them. BUT, if you have to say, "Well, I counted down 18 cards, then I had to double it, and then he asked me if I could cube the number, and then he asked me to name another number . . ." and you go into one of these things, nobody cares, and ten minutes after the trick is performed, nobody knows what happened, and you've only tired out some poor onlooker. So, as I say, I can't lay too much stress on simplifying things.

The funny thing is, if you take out a discrepancy somewhere in the trick, a new one will crop up in another place. So you have to conform, and find the best final result. Dr. Daley said that every good trick has a discrepancy of some kind. Some people think that tricks can't have a discrepancy that they must be perfectly logical, but magic itself is very illogical. You put a coin in your hand, and you rub it a little, and it disappears. This is not logical. So people think that everything has to be logical, but the result is certainly not logical. In other words, if you deal cards, you don't have to deal them all exactly the same way. You can vary it, and it colors the trick. Some people think that they must do everything the same way to establish the veracity or the truth of their final false move, which is not true. You can vary the method as long as it flows along.

I've been very fortunate to have received a great many letters, some very intelligent letters, referring to the articles, and one of the questions I'm asked most, is about improving a trick, or making a trick your own by adding something to it, or giving a certain patter background to it, or doing something to make it your own, so that you feel, "This is my own thing." If you do it very well, you'll be associated with it. People will ask you to do it, and it will become sort of a trademark. As an illustration of that, in the Castle we have Lou Derman, a performer who breaks up an audience. He's a natural comedian, and I think he would rather get a belly-laugh from somebody, than send them

home worrying about how he did a trick. But he still likes to do things well. Some years ago, he did a color change which was out of Erdnase, but he did it very badly. Well, I gave him a few tips on the change, which was just transposing the two face cards of the deck by a backward and forward movement. I showed Lou how it could be done very finely, using a very narrow margin. Well, Lou played with the thing, and he came up with some ideas of his own, and the consequence is, the change that people used to laugh at when he did it before, he can do it now for a pretty astute audience, and they really enjoy it, and he's delighted in the fact that they don't see how it's done. Well, this is just proof that a fellow can take a thing, and by playing with it, he can make it something that he's proud to do.

We have another member of the Castle name Jules Lenier, who is a very frequent visitor at the club. Now Jules doesn't claim to be Herman the Great, or Malini, but Jules, when he entertains, does some very pleasing tricks for people, because his attitude towards the spectators is a cordial, pleasant attitude. He converses with the people. His explanations are very lucid and very clear, and he does magic in what I would say is a very pleasing way, like Jay Ose did. Of course Jules, in my opinion, does things that Jay could never do, although Jay was a very fine performer. He did certain things like the pass, and did them beautifully, but Jay was more of a manager than a magician. Jay had great management, and so has Jules. Jules is also a comedy writer, and he understands theater, and he understands presentation, but Jules, mainly, in my estimation, if I were to appraise him, get a rapport with the audience. They like him . . . they say, "Well, we like this guy. Now what's he gonna do?" . . . and he does it in a nice, pleasing way, regardless of what the trick is. He's not trying to prove that he can out-do Goshman or out-do Jim Cooper with some dexterous moves. He just does it, and the things happen, and it's a very pleasing performance.

People say, "How do you improve a trick?" So the other night, when I was in the apartment listening to the radio, I decided to take some simple effect that everyone is familiar with, that I've seen over the years, and just play with it a little while, and see what the actual mental process is, how the mind works when you're fooling with the cards. I think that this trick is one that every magician who ever did card tricks has heard about, or knows. It's kind of a color change, and in my opinion, a color change well done is one of the finest effects you can do in magic. Malini and Leipzig both proved this. Leipzig used to slap the end of the card and cause it to change, and Malini used to lift his hand off the card to cause it to change. Both of these performers got a tremendous effect out of this thing which is really trite and cliché. Every magician does some form of color change, usually very badly. In the old days, every performer used to do this effect. It's a color change, but before you do it, you divide the cards into two sections, and move the front half up about a third of the way, to show the faces of two cards. Now, you pass your hand over the cards, and cause them both to change. Clinton Burgess, Houdini, Dr. Elliott, Nate Leipzig, Horace Goldin, everybody I can think of, did this move at some time or other. I never in my life saw this move well done, I mean what I call efficiently and perfectly executed, not even by Leipzig or Malini, who did things superbly. The reason was that they never put any thought in on this, they just did it as a little gag to change the faces of two cards at once, and they thought it was an effective little trick. So, I began thinking about it, to see what I could do with it to make it more effective. Well,

the first thing I thought, was that I've seen this done, and the two cards are perhaps a Queen of Diamonds and a Three of Clubs, and after they've made the change, the cards change into a Queen of Hearts and a Three of Spades, and nobody notices there's been a change. There's no effect there, because they don't remember two cards by just looking at them. So, in other words, one of the most effective things, always, when you do any form of color change, is to be sure that you get a contrasting color. Now, in my opinion, the most effective color change you can do, is to change a picture card into a two or three. More effective than a 5, 6, 7, or 8, is to change a picture card into a deuce or trey, or vice versa. This makes a very startling change, and everybody, even if they're partly blind or drunk, can see that the card has changed. Can you imagine a drunk watching somebody change a seven into an eight? There's no effect whatever. That's the difference between a professional, who really wants to sell, and an amateur. The professional looks after these little details because they're very important. Well, to get back to the trick before I digress, here's my analysis of the thing. First of all, I started by dividing the cards as everybody does, and stepped the front half up. (Photo 1)

Now, first of all, the mechanics of the sleight. You've got to steal a card to do the first part of the thing. Now, the back card can be stolen by pushing down with the left index finger as so many people do it, or it can be taken off with the thumb. Every magician is familiar with one of these steals. Another way is to steal it by pushing with the forefinger against the overlapped pack, but I'll give the steal that most people are familiar with . . . stealing it off the back of the lower pack. (Photo 2)

Presume you've stolen the card off. Now, the next problem is that you've got a card palmed in your hand, you've got to put it on top of the projecting pile, which causes that to transform, and at the same time, you've got to push down a card to cover the face card of the lower packet. Now, if you push down a single card, very often you'll find that it doesn't line up with the others, there's a space there, and it's a bad effect because the cards aren't even. One of the essential things in any color change, is that the cards must be in perfect register. Every card has got to be like a box, squared up. Because if you make a change and the card is put on crooked, you don't get any effect of a color change at all, you just get the effect of having put another card on top. So how do you attain this? How do you get this card down far enough? If you just push one down, you get a messy looking edge on the cards. (Photo 3)

So I began thinking about it. Perhaps the pressure with my thumb and fingers isn't right. So I thought I'd hold them very tightly and see if that will accomplish it. Well I tried that, and that didn't work. So then I think, perhaps when I step the one pack forward, I won't let the two packets contact each other . . . I'll leave a space in between. Well, that works all right, but it leaves a space. The card isn't flat against the other card, so I discard that. Now I think, how in the world am I going to get this card to go back with great efficiency? Now, in the old days, they used to push a whole block of cards back, which is very good, because pushing a block back, you can't control what card is going to show up. Perhaps you have an eight there, and it changes to a seven. This is hard luck, but it happens many times. So the only practical way to do it is to know what card is going to be there, and you have to have a single card. So I say to myself, "How in the world are you going to square those cards up?" Now this may sound peculiar to some of you readers, but I sit there and think, "This is awfully stupid. I've been doing magic

for seventy years, now how am I going to square that card up?" Suddenly, it dawns on me, by God, I've got a finger that isn't working here. My left pinky . . . isn't working. So I say to myself, "Why, when I push this card back, can't I put this little finger against there and square it up?" (Photo 4)

And here we have a simple solution of doing that. But remember, you have to go through these other steps before you finally come to this. But you show it to some friend, and he'll say, "Of course . . . how else?"

Now, another point. How are you going to insure having the right cards come up? I mean, how are you going to have the black cards change to red, or picture cards to spot cards? Now I say to myself, "I've got to know what those cards are." Well, how am I going to know what those cards are? This I can do in a very simple way. When I pick up the cards in the first place, I'm going to make sure I divide it between a red card and a black card when I cut the pack, so we have either a red card on the bottom and a black card on top, or vice versa. Now, when I divide the cards in the center, if I have a red card on the bottom, I run the cards with my thumb until I see a black card followed by a red one, and cut there between those two cards. Now when I divide the packets, I have two red cards. Now, when I steal the back card, which is a black one, and push the other one down, which is another black one, you've got a change of two red into two black, which is effective.

Here's another point. When you want to get hold of exactly one card with your left index finger on the overlapping pack, you have to fidget a little, because, after all, if the cards aren't beveled just right, it's hard to get hold of that card with your index finger. Now that's another objection. So I say to myself, "How are we going to overcome that?" Well, there are many ways. You can bevel the cards very strongly, which will give you the card with greater ease, but there may be a better way. I thought, "Why can't the card be bent back a little? Then when I take the card, there's no hesitation, I can grab the card immediately, but how can it be bent back in a natural way?" Now I've got to go back and reconstruct, and figure this thing out. So, in other words, there are three objections to this trick. The first objection is to get a contrasting change, also, no fidget on getting the card down, and how you square up the cards. Now, I think I've solved these problems. Now I'm going to show you how you can make a very nice little effective trick out of this simple procedure, but it has to be done well, and done neatly.

Give the deck to a spectator, and have him remove two cards of the same suit. Now, you may ask, "Why restrict this?" The reason is, when you ask a person to take two cards, and one is the Nine of Diamonds and the other is the Five of Spades, later on they're not going to be sure of what the cards were. But if they take two cards of the same suit, it doesn't take an Al Goshman to figure out that they're both clubs, and one is the Ace and the other is the Queen. In other words, if they take two cards of the same suit, almost anybody can remember what the two cards are. So that simplifies certain parts of the trick. So you give the cards to a person, and you ask him to remove two cards of the same suit. Now, by your favorite method, and I'm not going into how many ways there are to do this, but you don't have to have them put in different parts of the pack. That's not going to add to the effect at all. Both cards are placed together in the pack. Now, by multiple cuts, or by shuffling, or by subterfuge, or passes, or palms, or

management, the two cards are brought to the top of the pack. Now, the performer deliberately looks at the top card apparently, but he takes two cards, and bends them up.

Now, he says, "No, your card isn't on top" . . . and he takes the top card, and buries it in the center of the pack. When you put that card into deck, you riffle the corner with your thumb and look for a card of the opposite color, and put the selected card below it. Now, turn the pack over end for end, and look at the bottom card. You know the color of the selected cards because you just looked at them, and you must have a card of the opposite color on the bottom. So when you look at the card, if it's red you just leave it there, but if it's black, you take cards off until you come to a red one and stop there. The other cards are put in the center of the deck. Now here's the clever part of it. When you divide the cards in the center, the fact that the selected card is crimped, you can cut right to it, because it naturally cuts there like the Charlier cut. Now, when you divide the cards, you've got two red cards showing. Now steal the back card and ask the spectator to name his two selected cards. Remember, the back card is bent back. So you can grab it with no trouble. Now, when you make the change, you get a very nice contrast.

This is not a great masterpiece, but it's a good idea of how you can take a simple little trick, and make it interesting to watch and easy to understand.

I would deeply appreciate hearing from some young fellows just starting in magic, or enthused about doing magic well, telling me how they have improved some trick. If you have anything that might be of interest to our readers, we might print it at some future date. Write to me in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90028.

February, 1969

First, let me say that it's very rewarding to have people interested enough to write and ask a few questions. I know now, that at least, the column is being read.

Richard Stimson from Washington wanted to know how to handle assistants in a small room. I don't know that there's a great difference between handling assistants in a small room and handling them on stage. If any readers have any thoughts on this, maybe you'll let me know.

I had a very interesting letter from Stan Bertram, in England. He said that Leipzig had the spots on his aces enlarged to make them easier to see. Well, I don't remember Leipzig ever doing that in this country, and I saw him dozens of times, but Warren Keane did do it. He had a trick for which some of the pips make extra large.

Mr. Bertam also said that, when I mentioned a number of egg baggist's, I omitted Larry Crane's name. The reason I did was because I was talking about the standard egg bag, where there's a secret pocket. Larry Crane did it with an ordinary bag, and made all the suspicious moves, which everybody who knew the egg bag would follow. They'd say, "Oh, he's tucking it inside the lining the now . . . now, he's pushing it down to the corner." Well, he'd do all this stuff, but he really palmed the egg, and threw out a real bag. This was a form of selling and showmanship, but you're limited to what you can do with a bag of that kind. Except to the magician who is informed, you fool him, but to the ordinary lay public, it isn't as good as the other effect where you show everything clean.

Horace Goldin did that, and then he threw off his packet at the finish as a challenge, and as he pulled his jacket off, the one bag went into his sleeve, and the good one came out, and then he'd let the guy on the stage examine the bag. Then he reached in with a palmed egg, which was really just an eggshell, and broke it over the footlights, and it looked like confetti.

Frakson, one of the finest and best entertainers who ever lived, told me that years ago in Italy, the first thing they'd ask you about your routine was, "Do you do that trick with the egg and the bag?" And if you said that you did, they'd tell you to take it out because everybody did the trick. It was worked to death. So the fact that everybody was doing the egg bag, made it possible for Larry Crane to do the obvious egg bag. Then, when he threw the egg bag out, this was shattering to the audience. Of course, it was only really effective to the guys who examined it. These things are not as effective as some people think they may be. When you get someone to add up the numbers, and it's a miracle, everybody will say, "Well, it's just a stooge." That's why they knock the ping-pong ball out.

A lot of tricks where fellows knock themselves out for years trying to devise a trick that's going to fool everybody, if they stop to think a minute, this could very easily be done by a stooge, and a lot of people will absolutely think that. If you hand out a list of numbers to be added, or ask somebody to write a name, and they write it, and you tell them what it is, even if you do this by some ingenious method, and they have no idea of how it's done, well, how about the guy who wrote it? "He's a stooge," is their solutions. That's why they knock out the ping-pong ball. Because if you're going to do a trick that's as strong as this, there can't be any question as to how fair it is. The best way to do it, is to take a ping-pong ball and a bat, and have some little girl come up and bat the ball

out into the audience. Don't bat it out yourself, but let some kid come up and bat it out in the air, and have somebody catch it. Or get some kid to shuffle a deck of cards and throw it out in the audience, and they all pick up these cards, and have the person who gets the Ace of Spades come up, now everybody knows that this would be impossible to control. So, you must spend as much thought on the selection of your committee as you do on your trick.

Another letter I got was from Ed Kolchin in New York. He wanted to know how to use the Charlie Miller move in a cup and ball routine. Well, if he likes the cup and ball routine as published in the Vernon Book of Magic, it shouldn't take any thinking at all to realize that this Charlie Miller move, of dropping the ball from the clenched fist through the cup, can be introduced in several places in the routine. I think the ideal place to introduce it, is when you stack one cup on top of the other, and make the balls penetrate one by one, until the three congregate on top of a cup. Now, this is an ideal place to use it, because you put the ball on top of your fist, and then one goes through, and then the second, and then you start to do the third one, and you say, "Oh, you think it's already there" . . . and you put the ball down, show that there are only two there and load the third one, and then drop it through. Now this is an excellent place, without changing the routine in any way, to enhance the so called, Vernon Routine.

Charlie Miller, in my opinion, is one of the most studious, prolific and intensive people I know. Charlie is a real student. I've known Charlie since I met him as a small boy in Wichita many years ago. A lot of people think that I influenced Charlie, but I must say that Charlie influenced me a great deal in thinking. To show the thoroughness with which Charlie pursues anything he's interested in, I don't care if it's studying the life of the chimpanzee, or how to pick coconuts on Mendora, he reads everything on the subject. Now, Charlie, years ago, heard about the great Nate Leipzig, and he heard that Leipzig was Swedish. Well, he had never met Leipzig, but he figured that some day he would and he wanted to make an impression. So he decided to write him a letter, but he thought, "If I write him in Swedish, this will impress him because he's Swedish." So he went to the library and started to learn Swedish. This went on for about six months, and he learned enough that he was able to sit down and write a very credible letter. Well, with the help of a Swedish dictionary, and a few questions asked of different professors at a college that he was acquainted with, he composed this letter to Leipzig all in Swedish, telling him how he was devoted to magic and how he'd love to meet the great master and so on. Now one day, when I was walking along 44th Street in front of Lamb's Club, I happened to meet Leipzig, and he had a letter in his hand, and he said, "Oh, Vernon . . . come over here. Do you know this fellow?" . . . and he showed me the bottom of the letter which was signed, Charlie Earl Miller. And I said, "Why certainly I know him. This is Charlie Miller. I know him very well." Leipzig said, "Well tell me, I can't make heads or tails of this letter. It's written in some foreign language. I think it's Swedish. I don't speak any Swedish. I've taken it to several fellows in the Lamb's Club, and nobody can translate it." Poor Charlie wasted all these months, but anyway, that shows the thoroughness with which this guy will go into something.

Charlie is like me I imagine, we see a lot of magic, and when we get back home, we try to reconstruct it or think of what we saw, and we get all the effects mixed up, and can't remember which was which. If you see a lot of magic in an evening, it's very hard

to cull out the different effects when you get home. So Charlie thought: "I've got the idea . . . a stenotype machine . . . that's the solution. They're small, neat little machines, and I can learn to stenotype." He found that this was quite a course, but he bought a stenotype machine and practiced religiously. In fact, I think Charlie did make a couple of court recordings with the stenotype machine. I don't know anything about a stenotype machine myself, but I do know that there are certain phrases like, "Party of the first part," "Party of the second part," or "Such and such contract," which are all stereotyped, but when it comes to "in jog and run three" or "cut to the break," this is not in a stenotype machine, and Charlie found after he studied this thing for months, that he couldn't take these magic notes down. But at least he put in the effort. Now this shows thoroughness.

One time, Charlie made a very cryptic, very sage, very astute remark to me. Years ago, out west somewhere, I asked Charlie: "I have three ways of doing this sleight. I can't decide in my own mind which is the best of the three. I'll do the three ways for you, and you tell me which is the best way." So Charlie said, "All right, do the first one." So I did, and then Charlie said, "Now let's see it from over here." Charlie does this. He walks to the right side, then he walks to the left side, then he says, "Can I stand behind you?" Then I did the second one, then the third one, and each time, he got a vantage point from different angles. Then he said, "Now, do them all again," which I did. Then he said, "Now do them all again," which I did. So then he said, "Take out the second one. It's inferior to the other two. Now do the first and third again." So I do the first and third. Not once, but if I can remember, it was at least 15 or 20 times. Charlie says, "Well, I can't decide between these two. They're both equally good." So finally, Charlie asked me, which I appreciated very much, "Which one of those is most original with you?" And I said, "Well, the last one is entirely original. The first one is an idea of someone else." "Definitely," he says, "do the last one. Anything that's entirely original with you will grow to greater perfection because it's your own thought . . . your brainchild. You don't know why somebody else thought of the idea in this way. You're limited. It's not your original thought. Your original thought can be carried to greater perfection than something you copied from somebody." Now this is a very clever remark. It's true. If you have a little thought, and create something, you can carry this perhaps, to near perfection, whereas if it was the thought of somebody else, you don't know how it was constructed or why it was constructed, and you're limited with it. Another thing he said was that when you're practicing in front of a mirror, perhaps you choose just the right angle, and you blink a little just as the sleight is made, or the move is made, and you say, "Gee, that's good. I'll really fool the boys with this." But you're fooling yourself. Charlie made the remark: "Practicing in front of a mirror is very good, if you try it from different angles, and turn your hands up and down, and also, you must be very, very strict with yourself. The average person isn't strict enough with himself. He says, 'Oh well, that's good enough . . . that will get by.' But be really strict and say, 'Well, wait . . . perhaps by talking or doing this or that I can make it still better.'" I think this is very important.

If you're doing tricks and somebody says, "Oh, I saw that" or "I know how you did that," don't argue with them . . . agree with them. Just tell them, "That's remarkable. Not one person in 50,000 ever figures that out." A lawyer friend of mine once did some

card tricks for a group of his friends, and one of the group said, "Well, I know you're not a magician, so those cards must be marked." And my friend said, "You're absolutely right, and because you were able to figure it out, I'll give these cards to you, and you can have some fun with your friends." Well, a few weeks later, this guy called up about four o'clock in the morning and said, "Two other fellows and myself have been studying these cards for days with magnifying glasses, and we still can't find the marks." Now this was much better than arguing at the time.

I hope that the readers weren't thinking after the last article, that we're going the way of all flesh, of simple tricks and how to do them, because that's not the purpose of this column. The purpose of this column is the same as the purpose of the Academy of Magical Arts, which has done so much to give respect and dignity to an ancient art. I'd like to give dignity and importance to magic, and not have everybody think it's just a rival thing for children, and that there's no entertainment or value to it. A lot of you may think that the Magic Castle is just a meeting place for magicians, but it's done a great deal to elevate the art, and put it in the proper perspective for people who know nothing about magic. The average person knows absolutely nothing about magic other than they've been to a party and have seen somebody do a few bad card tricks or pile tricks, and they think this is magic. But they come here to the Castle and see a trick like the Rising Cards or the Cards Through The Newspaper or see The Highland Hop or whatever they see, and they realize that this is mystery, it's entertaining, and they say, "Hey, this magic has more to it than I thought." The Academy is accomplishing this, and this is very important, to bring magic to the attention of the proper people, not only magicians, they know about this stuff, but to the public.

I don't want to appear dogmatic or be an oracle or anything, but I've been doing magic for pretty nearly seventy years, and when I met Leipzig, and enjoyed his friendship, Leipzig was one of my idols, and he said that nobody should do more than 3 or 4 card tricks at the most for an audience, close-up or stage or anything. If you've done two and you see somebody yawn a little, or you see somebody a little bored, for God's sake, put the cards away. Take out a coin, take out a chain, take out a ring, take out anything and they'll perk up their interest again. Leipzig's rule is very simple. Do a couple of card tricks and say, "Well, I think you've seen enough." Now, if they coax you, do another, but if they don't answer, put the cards away and do something else. In other words, this gives dignity to the art, and it doesn't let them think that magicians are pests. We're trying to have the same thing continue at the Castle, because the Castle has done so much to bring magic to the attention of the public. I have met people in my life, very clever people who have been all over the world, and I've shown them tricks, and they say, "I've seen things like this on the stage, but I've never seen anything like this right under my nose. It's phenomenal." The average person today, doesn't see good close-up magic. In the Castle, they see it, and they're exposed to it, and I think that is one of the greatest successes of the Castle.

I came out here from New York over six years ago at the invitation of Jay Ose, who told me about the Castle opening. Jay was a very dear friend of mine, who I consider to be largely one of the ones that set the thing off to a fine start. When I came out to visit Jay, I had the pleasure of residing at the Castle on the second floor, before they built the dining rooms. In the Castle, we have had some of the finest entertainers in

the world. We have a very diversified form of entertainment, and you want to laugh and enjoy yourself, Lou Derman, for my money, is one of the best there is as far as this kind of entertainment. Some people may be a little shocked by some of the things that occur, but if you're a modern person, you'll enjoy it to the limit. We also have Tony Giorgio who does a different type of entertainment. He's an actor, and he does a "Three Card Monte" routine, where he plays a character part of a gambler, and he has some girl play the part of a dance hall girl in this interlude between them, and it really breaks up an audience, and it's a very good business, which I think is original with Tony. Then, we have an entertainer who is a little Scot, named Ron Wilson, who does a delightful act. Everybody likes the guy. He's nice, he's pleasant, he's amusing, he does something with a Scot pocketbook which is about a yard and a half long, that he takes coins out of, and different things that suit his personality. He offends no one. His act is clean and high class. Then we have Jules Lenier who doesn't tell you he's the world's greatest when he sits down. He looks something like Herman did when he was a young man, and he delights people because he does things in a charming way, and after each trick he doesn't say, "Look how great I am." He presents magic in a very pleasing way, and people are delighted, and they get around him after and ask him all kinds of questions, and he has all the right answers, because Jules is very versatile, and very well posted, and has a great background in magic. Then we have Johnny Platt, a little fellow who's about a foot and a half tall, in fact, Jules is a giant standing next to Johnny. Johnny comes out with his little fez, and after he removes his fez, he's balder than Canada Jack, and he says that he's the only topless magician at The Castle. And of course, we have Albert, the resident magician, who intrigues and fascinates the people, and he has astounded the many magicians who know him. And there are others who I'll take up at a later date. People like Bob Gwodz, Bruce Cervon, Larry Jennings, Dave Tansey, Don Lawton, Baffling Brooks, and so many others.

I want to wind this up with something that's very important. A few nights ago, while sitting in the Castle, drinking a Bloody Mary with a very dear friend of mine, Jose Frakson, I said, "Jose, you've seen Bob Towner and Irene work, haven't you?" And Frakson said that he hadn't. I said, "Well you must see them." He said, "If you recommend this, I will." Now, here's the tragic part of magic. The first week they worked there, I asked different magicians, fellows who delve into this art and study the books, what they thought of this act. And they said, "Well, they didn't fool me, I caught every move they made. The act is old-fashioned." This absolutely disgruntled me. That's why I took Frakson down to see what his reaction would be, because Frakson has played all over the world. All through the show I was watching his face, and he was delighted, and when the show was over, he said, "Any professional in the world would say that this was superb." Any professional. He knows the difference between an amateur viewpoint and a professional viewpoint. I'd like to say that this act, to me, is one of the finest portrayals of real magical entertainment I've ever seen in my life. I'll give a few of the reasons. In the first place, Torchy Towner, whether he knows it or not, is a fine actor. But he doesn't overact, he doesn't force himself, he doesn't try to be funny. He looks the part of the magician he's playing. When he picks up a blunderbuss, not a fake looking nickel-plated thing that they know is made for magic. He does things in a natural, clever way, and he goes through this bit of business which is real

entertainment. The routine is 5 or 6 beautifully done tricks, and they're all classics. They fool the people as well as entertain them. And most important of all is Irene, who couldn't be improved upon as an assistant. She plays the part of a beautiful assistant and it enhances the act so much. If you ever get a chance to see this act, it's worth a trip to California.

Well, before I go on rambling any more I just want to say I'm really pleased with the letters that you've been sending in, and I hope you'll keep sending them to me, in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90028.

March 1969

I want to start this article by saying that I am the worst letter writer in the world. I don't write to anybody. I'm a terrible correspondent. When my son was at Annapolis, I didn't write him for four years. So, you readers who write in expecting a personal answer, it's hopeless, but I'll try to answer as many as I can in this column. I've had some very nice letters, and I want to thank all the people who have had confidence in me, and consider my judgment worthwhile, I'd like to thank them all.

A letter from Jim Munden came in, and he said that he would like to do magic for a living. I would like to say, from the bottom of my heart, if you love magic, not to do it for a living. I don't care how much you love it. Especially in this day and age. The only market for magic now, is in trade shows, and if you like hard, hard work, it's really a tough grind. It's fun to do tricks for a few friends, but when you've got to do it, and do it, and do it, and you're grinding away show after show, you get punch-drunk. Anybody who hasn't done 10 or 12 shows a day, which I did with the U.S.O. in hospitals, doesn't know what it's like. Jim works for Dupont, and does quite a few shows for them. In trade shows, you can lose your enthusiasm. You can lose your interest in magic when you have to do too much of it, but it's very nice if you can get tied up with a good commercial outfit like Dupont. Then magic is worthwhile. As a dear friend of mine, Faucett Ross, once told Frank Booker, "Don't sell your taxicab." Booker was a taxi driver in London, and he said that this was the best advice he ever had, because there were long terms of idleness, and Frank got the cab out again. I've been a shirker all my life.

I like to do magic when I'm in the mood. I enjoyed working Billy Rose's, Casino De Paris, because we met all the celebrities and movie stars there. That was fun because there was enthusiasm. I didn't have to work hard, and I could duck downstairs to the Nudist Bar, or go upstairs to the main room, and I could hide away when I felt like it. But in the Madison Hotel, where I worked for 11 months just working steady there all the time, I was so glad when finally I was able to quit. It's much better to have magic as a sideline rather than a profession. Besides, there's really no place to play. A lot of young fellows think that there are theaters and places around, but even a guy like Blackstone had to quit. He lost a lot of money the last year he was out. For my part, I wouldn't recommend anybody doing it professionally. Part time professional is fine, but don't tie yourself up with a lot of props and tents and posters and that stuff, not today. That's my opinion anyway, although somebody can come along and revive a lost art, it's possible. So if some young fellow can figure an easy way to do it, he may be the one. Another letter, this one from Paul Matulic, a budding 12 year old magician, asked about books. I'm glad to see boys at this young age interested in this ancient art. I would say to read Hoffman's books, *Modern Magic*, *More Magic*, and *Later Magic*, not so much for the tricks, but to read the history of magic. Also, read anything by Robert-Houdin. You should know something of the time long before Houdini. You should know something about magic to get the proper feeling for it, and know that it's a very ancient art, and it will improve your tricks later. Some young people might find it a little dull, but it's really the first thing to do. Then, if you're interested in cards, I'd recommend Jean

Hugard's *Royal Road to Card Magic*,. This is a very good book for a beginner, because there are a lot of tricks which will keep you busy for a long time.

Emil Ricci wrote a similar letter. He has a 7 year old grandson, and wants to know about books for him. Well, if you want the boy to stay interested in magic, I would suggest that you read these same books to him. Don't let him learn a lot of tricks which he will probably do badly at that age, and get bad habits which he'll find very difficult to overcome later.

I also received a letter from Paul Sorrentino with a question about the classic pass. Believe it or not, the only complaints that I have gotten since this column began, was about putting tricks in it. They tell me that they would just rather read about magic. So I'll try to keep away from describing moves or tricks in favor of just talking about magic generally.

In the old days of Keith vaudeville . . . some of your readers never knew real vaudeville . . . they had some wonderful acts. Everybody liked good vaudeville. The Palace Theater was a must for every New Yorker. In those days, magic was given a third or fourth rating on the bill. The managers always said that magicians were no draw. They weren't box office. It was pretty tough at that time for magicians. There were hundreds of them starving, hanging around trying to get work, even in the days when there were theaters. It was just like musicians who played the saxophone. Everybody played a "C" saxophone. They were starving around New York. Frank Van Hoven was probably the funniest comedian that ever lived, in magic. He preceded Ballentine by many years. The biggest laughs I ever heard in the theater were for Van Hoven. You hear about yocks and belly laughs, but I doubt if anyone, in this day and age, has heard laughs like Van Hoven got from the beginning of his act to the end. Van Hoven was one of the broke magicians around New York. He couldn't get work of any kind. I remember one time, when Van Hoven was standing on Broadway with a number of magicians in front of the Greenwich Bank. There was a brass plate on the building with the name of the bank on it. Well, he took a pocket knife, and he scratched his name on this brass plate, and he said, "You see this name, fellows? Within a year, you're going to see it up in lights at the Palace," and of course, everybody laughed at him. But his prediction was correct. When he did his act, he had to have about five tables, and he had threads connecting things on his table, and threads to pull off-stage, and he had all kinds of nickel-plated apparatus. He was always looking for a job, and he only played a few Y.M.C.A. shows or little clubs, but he never got a first class date, and he was always trying to get into a theater. Well, one day, the Columbia Burlesque Theater was short an act, and they couldn't get anyone else. So they phoned Van Hoven and said, "Can you get over here in fifteen minutes to do an act?" So Van Hoven grabbed some stuff in a frenzy to get over to the theater. He got to the theater and rigged up about three tables, and he had all these threads, and he was annoying everybody backstage with them. Then they asked him if he had his music. Well, he had never appeared in a first class theater before, and didn't have any music, so he told them just to play anything at all. Anyway, the music started to play, and he was just standing there in the wings, he didn't know that they were playing for him, and finally the stage manager said, "You're on . . . you're on . . . they've vamped about six times . . . get out there," and he gave Van Hoven a little push. SO Van Hoven stumbled and tripped, and fell out on the stage. And there was a

yock from everybody, because he got up and was very embarrassed, and he started brushing his clothes off, and he looked down and noticed that he left home in such a hurry that he had one black sock on, and the other was a very light tan. Then, he started to cry because he was so frustrated, and everybody howled. Well, he wanted to get off the stage, but the stage manager said, "Stay out there. Keep them laughing." Well, naturally, nothing went right for him, and this kept up for about six minutes with him crying all the time, and it broke the theater up. They had never seen an act like this before, and when he came off, the theater manager said, "Great! I'll book you for a week. Get a few more lines in there, and do exactly as you did tonight." Well, he went back and tried to do it, and it was the saddest thing in the world, because he was acting, and he couldn't do it. But he was smart enough to realize that this was a new form of comedy, and he developed this crying form of delivery, and he made a tremendous success, as everybody who has read the history of magic knows.

It's hard to visualize how funny this was, but one thing he did in the act was to rush off stage, and come back with a great big Navajo blanket. It was a big heavy blanket, and he'd show it on both sides, and the drums would roll, and he'd throw it down on the stage. When he picked up this big blanket, there was a dinky, sick little feather flower, and he cried and said, "Somebody must like it." Another thing he did at the Palace, right in the middle of the show, and he put this in just for his appearance at the Palace, he just walked up the aisle and out the side door. He stayed out there exactly two minutes, they timed him, two minutes with nothing going on. Everybody was wondering what happened. They thought he might have been sick, and they sent ushers running to look for him. He was sitting next door, in a tavern, having a beer. Well, he came back wiping his mouth, and talking about how good the beer was, and the audience was howling. Now who else could do this? He could do it because he had the audience in the palm of his hand. Of course, everybody can't be a Van Hoven. Years later, Larry Gray, who was the greatest mimic I ever saw, said that the only funny thing that he could visualize in magic, was Van Hoven's act. Even though Larry Gray played some big time houses, he would cry sometimes, because he wanted to be a big name act. But he always said, "I don't feel anything but Van Hoven's act," and he could imitate Van Hoven perfectly, but he would never do it. There was a true artist. He wouldn't do it, because he didn't want to be accused of copying, and he could have starred, but he said, "It's terrible to take a guy's act and do it."

In those days, except for acts like Van Hoven or Houdini, who was a feature because escapes were great then, but for the ordinary magician who did card tricks or the egg bag, it was very tough. Only a few of the real stars, the well-known names who had good entertaining acts, worked often. The average magician who did school shows didn't work, except making in Chautauqua. It was very tough making a living even when there were hundreds of places to play. As my old friend Al Baker used to say, "Last week I had two \$5.00 dates . . . and a couple of small ones."

So theater managers always told the agents not to send any magicians. They always said that a magician didn't draw. Even the finest magicians, like Allen Shaw, were to fill out a bill, but they weren't box office. One fellow who always said that magicians drew people to the theater was Jud Cole. Whenever a magician was on the bill, all the members of the local magic clubs would flock to the theater. Now Jud Cole

knew this, but you couldn't convince a theater manager. Well, Jud Cole never missed a show in his life, except once. One Monday, he was sick. He had a very high fever, and he couldn't play the show. Well, he was billed to appear, and some Scout leader knew about Jud Cole, and he thought it would be just the thing to take the kids to see, so he bought over 700 tickets for the Monday matinee. Well. The show went on, and all the kids waited, but no magician showed up, and finally the show was over. Well, the Scout leader went to the manager's office, and he had to return all the money. So, at least there was one theater manager who knew that magicians do draw the public. If there are any theater managers reading this, I hope you remember this.

One problem in magic is a fellow sees someone do a trick, and it gets a good reaction, so he takes it and does it the same way. Then, he takes something from someone else, and his whole act is stolen like this. Well, he may get some sort of acclaim for what he does, but he'll lose his friends. The guys in magic won't be friendly toward him. They'll say, "Oh, he's just a thief. He stole everything," and even after he gets the fame, he's very unhappy about it. It's like the guy who thinks that when he gets money, he's going to be very happy. So he steps on all his friends on the way up the ladder. Now, the one thing he wants is friends, and who has he got? The parasites hanging around because he's got money. It's the same thing with magic. If you're nice to people, and you don't steal their stuff, they'll be nice to you. It's just a matter of ethics. I was once, a very heavy cigarette smoker. I used to light one right after the other, and I always used to do a lot of sleights with them. But I was very friendly with Cardini, and I knew how bitter Cardini was about anybody doing cigarettes. Countless times, on the boat where I would be away off near South America, I was asked, "Don't you do cigarette tricks?" But I never did, just because I knew it would offend a great friend of mine. I gave up a great deal not doing cigarettes, but I never did it because I didn't want to lose his friendship.

Another man I admired very much was Frakson. Now, Frakson wouldn't say anything like Cardini, he wouldn't resent it like Cardini, but I knew he wouldn't be too happy about it, so I know I retained two good friends that I might have easily lost.

Another good case of that was when Nate Leipzig was working at Texas Guinan's. I was there one night, sitting at a table, and some people recognized me and dragged me over to their table. Well, they wanted me to do some card tricks, and I said, "I'm very sorry, but this is Leipzig's club. He's working here." Well, they insisted, and they brought Leipzig over to the table and asked him if he'd mind if I did some magic. Now, Nate was a gentleman, and he said, "Go right ahead, Dai, it's all right if you do some tricks." But I wouldn't do any. The next day, when I met Nate at the Lamb's Club, he was very gracious. He said, "I couldn't refuse, but I really appreciated what you did."

What would I be trying to prove, that I wasn't as good, or that I was better? In this respect, I knew that Nate was always a dear friend of mine. Little things like that make friends, not only in magic, but in other ways too. It's just being ethical. There were two fellows, one was named Oeinck, and the other name I can't remember, but both learned magic at the same time from an old gambler in New York. Well, it was the other fellow who was working at the Harvard Club one night, and I had already worked that club twice that year. This fellow gave a gambling demonstration with cards. He had a big mirror and lights, and he did a beautiful show. So, after the show was over, they

invited this guy upstairs, and they asked me to come up too. Well, they were all asking questions about gambling and Houdini and different things, and one fellow said, "Well, Vernon, now that we've got you here, we want you to do that gambling trick that you did that night." And I said, "No, this is his night. I've been here a couple of times before." Every time that I met that fellow after that, he thanked me for it. I wouldn't do it. It's just common decency. You don't do those things. Of course, some people break these rules, but the rules are very important. Magic has so many nice people in it, I think they should stick to the rules of ethics.

Everybody has to learn somewhere. The first thing a beginner should do when he sees someone do something, is to say to himself, "How can I do this same thing, and make it look different?" Not exactly the way this guy does it, but make it look different. You've got to use your head a little, and you've got to think, and you've got to play with it, but don't do it the same way just because the other guy has made a success with his way of doing it. There may be a better way of doing it. Try anyway, but even if you can't get a better way, don't go back to his way and copy him. That's a sad thing in magic . . . stealing, stealing, stealing. Magic could be a very great thing if this didn't happen so much, and there are so many ways to circumvent copying. It's so bad, that if a guy uses the front page of Variety to wrap something with, the next guy would run out to buy a copy of Variety. He wouldn't even think to wrap it with Christmas paper or something else.

When I started, I had two idols, Malini and Leipzig. I liked them because they didn't use any visible props. They could pick up anything and do tricks with them. I emulated them, but I never copied them. Occasionally, I've used some lines that belonged to somebody else, but I had their permission to use them. George Jason once heard a line used by a violin act that he liked very much. He asked if he could use it, and they said no, so George never did use it, because he was an ethical person.

Recently, there has been some pressure brought on two very dear friends of mine, Henry Christ and Sam Horowitz, to part with some of their cherished secrets. Warren Keane told me when I was quite young, never, under any circumstances, show anyone how a trick is done. Don't even show your own wife or mother. But if they're good friends of yours and they want to do it, and do it well, and if you think they have the ability or the skill, then help them and teach them to do it. Never tell anyone how a trick is done just to satisfy their curiosity. If magicians would live by this, it would be great. Sam Horowitz and Henry Christ are of this school. They guard magic. If everybody did this, magic would be very strong . . . it would be a power. Nate Leipzig's wife didn't know how one of his tricks was done, and this is how it should be.

I don't want to arouse the curiosity of the readers, but Larry Jennings and I are trying to create new methods of doing things that people aren't acquainted with, and we're not going to divulge them if we're successful. They won't be in the column and they won't be for sale. It's pretty hard to do, but we're trying.

Faucett Ross has asked me several times about Davis, the Miracle Man. He was from New Jersey, and actually stopped clocks, and was the first man to make a \$2.00 bill walk out of a cash register. If anybody is interested in him, write in and let me know, or if you have any information about him, write to me, in care of the Magic Castle 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

April 1969

First of all, I would like to say that I don't want to appear pedantic, and I say things off the top of my head, because I'm not the type to sit and plan what I'm going to say, but I really do try to do the best I can, and try to give good advice. But rules can be broken in anything you do. You can go against all teaching and rules, and be very successful, so don't put too much credence in what I say. If you like it, adopt it . . . if you don't like it, discard it, and say that the old guy is getting a little bit senile. I've absorbed a lot from listening to other professionals, and I certainly have seen many atrocious magic shows in my life. I've seen things that make me ashamed even to be in the game, because there are fellows who get all wrapped up in moves. If they want to do them in their own room in front of their own mirror, it's perfectly all right. But when they get out in front of an audience, who are sitting patiently watching magic, and they work out some of those things that have no effect whatsoever, it makes it very bad for magic, because people think it's a rather silly pastime. As many people in the game know, it can be made very entertaining and very palatable to people, if you use a little thought, and look at it from the audience standpoint, which is the most important thing.

The other day, a letter came from a chap in Australia. I have a tender spot in my heart for Australia; in fact, I hope to visit there some time. I hear the Australians are pretty down to earth, because in the old days, when acts used to play there, even in first class theaters, if they didn't like you, they used to throw pennies or rotten fruit. This very seldom happened in the United States. They would throw things at the performer if they didn't like his manner, or they thought he was too egotistical, or if the act was bad, or he told bad gags, and of course, acts were quite surprised at this reception over there. But they wouldn't do it if a fellow was sincere and really trying to do a good job, and showed them something at least halfway decent.

This fellow asked about what a routine should be. Whether you should do a complete routine, a symphony, and make all your tricks flow one into the other, and have a logical sequence of events. Well, magic is very illogical anyway, and there's no reason why you shouldn't jump from one trick to another, if you change the scene. People are watching, and you've got to create the mood for the next effect. If it's entirely different from the other one, you can say, "Now, we'll have a change of pace. Perhaps some of you people don't like cards. I'll show you something with a piece of string." There's no reason why you shouldn't jump from one trick to another, as long as you tell the audience. It doesn't have to be like a beautiful piece of prose, where each transition has to be perfect. That's not so in magic, at least in MY opinion. Just don't put cards away and take out a coin for no reason. You can at least say, "Well, some people don't play cards and they're not familiar with them, but everybody is familiar with money," then take out the money, which is a very logical thing to do. So, I don't think there is any rule to follow. Of course, a nice melding of tricks from one to the other is pleasing to people, and they can relax and watch the whole thing develop until the climax.

But the most important thing of all, whether it's on a stage, or doing close-up, is to do something at the start that's known to please the audience, and make them like you as a person, so they don't think that you're a smart aleck, or that you're trying to show them up. You're just a pleasant guy who wants to amuse them for ten or fifteen minutes.

And you should do some little thing that's really clever, that their son or daughter or neighbor can't do. In other words, they should like you, and they should like your initial trick. Now, after that, you can poke around and do all your favorite tricks, and if you hit them with a good strong trick at the finish, something that's well done and well presented, you'll not only have a nice reception at the finish, but they'll talk about it after. They may forget everything you did, except this last strong effect; but at least you've pleased the audience, and you've done a good short routine. You should always leave them with a laugh, as George M. Cohan used to say, or leave them with astonishment, so they really gasp and say, "I don't know how he did that last trick. I've never seen anything as good as that." That's a good format to follow, I think, whether you're doing a stage act or close-up. The same thing applies, because after all, a close-up act is just a stage act brought into close focus. On the stage, people can imagine that you have trap doors and mirrors and hidden assistants, but when they're right up close, and they can handle the objects that you're using, and they're right close to you, naturally, the effect is enhanced from that point of view.

As far as mixing a mental trick with other tricks, if you want to sell it as real mentalism, you'll have a hard job. I've tried to do this myself, and I think the only way that it can be done, is to say something along the line of, "You know, when I first got interested in magic, I was fascinated by telepathy, or so-called psychic things, and I wondered if there was anything really to it. Now, I've delved into all forms of trickery and subterfuge in magic, but there are some things that can't be explained. Now, there's one thing I've done ever since I was a boy, and I don't really know how it's done myself, unless it's telepath. I'll leave it to you." Now, a trick can be introduced that way, but not suddenly change and say that you're a mind reader, because they'll assume it's done by trickery anyway, because they know you're a magician. But if you really give them a convincing talk, and are sincere about it, and change the whole atmosphere, you might have some people gullible enough to really believe that they're witnessing real telepathy. But it's very difficult. You have to really SELL that to the audience. You can't throw it in without some explanation of why you're doing it.

Another fellow wanted to know what was the most effective way to vanish a coin by sleight of hand. I was talking to Mike Skinner about that the other day. Now, Malini used to take a half dollar and show a head and tail. He used to say, "a lady and an eagle," he never called it a head or a tail. So, he'd show both sides, then put the coin into his hand and say, "Which is it, the lady or the eagle?" Now, whatever they said, he'd open his hand and the coin was gone, and both hands were empty. He got a tremendous effect out of this trick because, in the first place, they weren't THINKING about a vanish. They were watching for the lady or the eagle, so when he opened his hand, he not only got the effect of a vanish, but he got the effect of surprise. Finley always said that Malini used to make people gasp with this. I once asked Leipzig if he knew the exact method that Malini used in this vanish, and he said, "No, Vernon, I don't, but I would give every trick that I know in magic if I could create the effect that Malini does when vanishing a half dollar." Now, Leipzig was a real showman and a good performer, but he couldn't realize how Malini got this great effect. So, as I say, the best way is to find an approach like Malini, I don't say to copy him, but the approach of vanishing a half dollar with either complete surprise, or to make it look different. So, there's really no best way. It

all depends on yourself, and which you make the best way. One method, in the hands of one performer looks wonderful, while in somebody else's hands is terrible.

Any young fellow who is interested in magic, if he wants to be methodical about it, there are enough books, no matter what his interests are, to learn to do some magic that he can do at any time with no gimmicks, so that he's never at a loss to do something. Some of these little things are very intriguing to people, and he should have at least a dozen of these things that he can do on occasion. Everybody starting in magic can find them in numerous books, and learn to do them well, not just fumble through it. Put a little touch of your own to it, or color it in some way to make it interesting. Even Dante never learned anything like this. But one day, Paul Rossini showed him a little trick with matches, and then Dante did it wherever he went. But it was the only one he knew.

I was talking to Marc McGuire recently. He's a very interesting young fellow because he's STUDYING magic. He's only been doing magic about four years, but he's interested in learning how and why. Marc is a young fellow, he's only eighteen, and he's a good magician now, but he'll do things much better when he's more mature. He's a very Keane analyst of magic. As I say, you've got to put thought into anything, I don't care if it's doing a little close-up routine, or doing a stage act. Even the fellow who broke the four-minute mile; how he studied and angled and worked. He didn't just have a good pair of legs and run, he studied all the angles of it, and he broke the world's record. This applies to almost anything. You can't do anything just haphazardly. You've got to sit down and put a little thought and planning into a thing.

In the old days of vaudeville, there were some awful nit-wits that developed into wonderful acts. The reason for it was simple. They went out, and they were booed, and people laughed at them, and they said, "Gee, I've got to sop that," and in the next town, they were a little better. Well, by the time they played the whole circuit of perhaps 100 different theaters, and came back to New York, they were polished performers. Now, this was done by trial and error. They really developed their acts just by trial and error.

People who are striving to get an act together they don't know what to get, and they read this trick and that trick. Warren Keane, who was a very successful performer, and one of the best sleight of hand performers we ever had, told me years ago, that if you're ever looking for an act, just get hold of a large catalogue. Don't worry about how a trick is done, but those old catalogues covered practically every effect that can be done in magic. Now, look over the catalogues, and see what kind of effects you'd like to do, THEN see how they're done, or if you don't like the way they're done, get another way to create the effect.

You know, this is a funny thing about performing in general, which I don't think I've said before, but the old timers used to talk about "authority" on the stage. Some people, when they walk out on the stage, they have authority. It's a command of the situation and the audience. They have a certain bearing, and the moment they walk out on the stage, you say, "Well, this is a good performer." It's in the bearing of the person . . . their manner, their confidence, the way they enter . . . and the audience instinctively feels that this is a man of authority. It's the same thing with some floorwalkers in a department store. When you walk in, you KNOW he's a floorwalker. At least he has authority in that store. You don't walk up to some guy who's slouching with his hands in his pockets, and smoking an old cigar like I do, and say, "Pardon me, you're the manager,

aren't you?" You know instinctively that he's not the manager. So the same thing applies when on the stage. You look at him and say, "Well, this fellow is a performer." John Barrymore had this kind of authority on the stage. Some people have this naturally, but it CAN be acquired, but it's hard to define. The only way I can suggest to any reader, is to watch different people and notice what they do, and why they have this quality. That's why the approach to anything you're going to do is very important.

A lot of people don't know, but Henry Christ and Mohammad Bey both used to work at Martinka's Magical Palace when they were going to school. There was also a fellow named Julius Dresback. When you walked into Martinka's in those days, it wasn't like it is today, where you see a thumb tip, and a finger tip, and a dye tube all laid out. There was nothing laid out in the cases. Everything was all covered up, and if you'd say, "What's that?" they'd hand you a catalogue and point out the item and tell you the price, but they didn't demonstrate or show anything. You had to be either Dr. Elliott or De Bierre before they'd even talk magic to you. Sam Horowitz was one of the few fellows that were privileged, in the old days, to go into the back room. That was long before I got to New York, so you can see how long ago it was. Horowitz specialized in coins, and he did coin tricks so well, that they let him go back in the back room, which was quite an honor, because nobody got back in that room unless you were Thurston or Kellar. They just didn't allow any of the local amateurs back there. But there wasn't much hanging around in Martinka's, not like Holden's or like Tannen's. Mohammed Bey has been doing magic for a long time; Sam even lost a good job because of the magic. He was working for a big piano factory, and every time the boss looked at him, he'd be standing by the mirror practicing, and the boss said, "Sam, you just can't do this during business hours," and Sam couldn't stop doing the magic, and the boss had to let him go.

Keating made a very sage remark, when he said that the trouble with magic was that it had got Rotarian. There's a lot of truth in that. Magic is too accessible now. If magic had been closely guarded, and they hadn't sold thumb tips in the dime store, it would be a marvelous thing. The trouble is, so many people know about things, and they can find out so easily. Well, perhaps it keeps magicians on their toes, because they've got to come up with better methods all the time, and better ways of doing things.

I imagine that anybody that does magic likes real mystery. We all aim to mystify people. In history, you can read some of the old myths, and there are some things that are completely unexplainable. Of course, the classic is the Indian Rope Trick, and nobody has ever seen it, but still, it intrigues because of the mysterious story. A thing that was very intriguing in New York when I was there a number of years ago, this was at least 30 or 40 years ago, was a man in New Jersey known as Davis, the Miracle Man. I heard about him many times from Horowitz, who lived in Jersey City, and from Johnny Scarne, and from all the different people who lived in Jersey. Herb Hood saw Davis work quite often. I had never seen the Miracle Man, and I once asked Al Baker about him, because I knew that Al saw him. Davis apparently did not do magic, but real miracles. The first trick they all talked about was a trick with a two-dollar bill. He used to go into any bar, and he'd borrow a two-dollar bill, and he'd ask the bartender to ring it up in the register. Now, he'd put it in the register, and Davis would ask him to leave the drawer opened just a crack. The Miracle man would stand on the opposite side of the bar and wiggle his

fingers, and people would be watching him like a hawk, and the darn two-dollar bill would creep out through the crack in the drawer and drop on the floor. Then the bartender would pick it up and look at it, but there was nothing connected to it. He did this, not once, but I'll say hundreds of times, because I've met dozens of people who saw him do this. Now, this was a trick that he was evidently able to do at all times, because he did it so often. This was quite minor compared to some of the other things that he did.

One time, I was with Professor Loewy, who was the inventor of the Loewy Palm. Malini, incidentally, considered Loewy the cleverest card man he ever met. Loewy was very clever. He fooled Leipzig, Horace Goldin, and Frank Ducrot very badly one day. Professor Loewy told me that he brought Davis into the Elk's Club one day. Loewy used to wear one of those old-fashioned watches with a long chain, and he took his watch out and laid it in the center of the table when Davis asked him to, and the chain was out straight. So Davis started wiggling his fingers, and all of a sudden, the watch started to turn slowly, and it turned and turned until the chain was wound completely around the watch. Loewy picked up the watch, and he swore that there was nothing attached to it. That fooled Loewy completely, because he swore that Davis never touched the watch.

Another thing I heard about was a trick that he did at a private home where he went to entertain. The man who hired him even hired a private detective to watch him, because Davis was kind of a seedy looking fellow. Well, David borrowed a square cigar box from the host, and a little later, when he was called upon to entertain, he brought in this cigar box. He was holding it open by the lid, and he got every guest to drop something inside. They put Rings, bracelets, and things like key-chains into this box. All he did, or so I was told, was to put the box in the center of the floor. Then he went about twenty feet away, and he lay prone on his stomach on the floor. The lid of the box was closed, and Davis started wiggling his fingers on the floor, and all the guests looked at him like he was a little bit crazy. All of a sudden, the lid started to open. Now, according to what I was told . . . of course, observers aren't too exact, but this is exactly as he told it . . . David had any one of the guests tell him which item he dropped into the box, and slowly, that object came up and dropped over the side of the box onto the floor. Now, he picked it up and brought it to the person who named it, then he went back and did it again. There were about thirty objects in the box, and he did this with about ten or twelve of them. This fellow said that the guests were absolutely astounded.

One of the things that Herb Hood used to talk about more than anything; he said that Davis would go out to a parking lot with a group of people, and he'd tell them to pick any car and start it. Now, he'd walk over near the car, and the fellow would start his car, and Davis just made a few passes at it, he was about three feet from the car, he just made passes, he'd never touch any part of the car, and the motor would go dead. Herb said that he did this many times with many different cars. He did it on Herb's car one time, and there was no way that he could have known beforehand which car they were going to use. They also claim that he used to do this on the street. A car would be passing on the street, and he'd say, "See that car? Watch!" and he'd stop the car, and the fellow would get out and lift the hood to see what was the matter. At first I thought this was highly improbable, but knowing that he must have been mechanically inclined, I have a feeling that this could be possible, because he might have done something to a car so that the least little jar would stop it or something of this sort.

Of course, the thing that made him famous, I think it was in Jersey City in Journal Square, he promised that in three months time, he would stop the town clock exactly at the time picked out by the Mayor. This got a lot of publicity, and people were talking about it for months. I had a date that day, or I would have been over there. They say that Journal Square was packed with people all watching the clock, and I think it was right at noon he stopped the clock dead, and they had people go up and inspect the clock. Al Baker even questioned the old caretaker of the place to see that he wasn't bribed or maybe got drunk one night and let this guy go up and do something to the clock.

The only explanation that ever came close to the truth, Al Baker who was a real ferret in finding out how tricks were done, found out that Davis didn't work alone. In all the stories that I heard about the Miracle Man, nobody ever mentioned that there was anybody else. But Al Baker noticed that every time he worked, there was a frail young man who was always there, and afterwards, they would go off together and drink beer somewhere. Well, this young fellow was a secret assistant. Now, Al got friendly with this fellow, and brought him some beer and talked with him and showed him a few tricks, and got very friendly with him, and this fellow showed him some wooden matches with hair closely wrapped around them, and he said that this was the whole secret. He didn't tell Al how it was used or anything, but Al went home, and wound some hair around a match, and let it stand for some time, and he discovered that when you take it off, it's all in the shape of a spring. So you could have perhaps ten feet of hair, and take it off the match, and it's all spring-like. Al also found out from this young fellow, that Davis was a clever mechanic. He had BEEN a mechanic, and knew a great deal about watch making. It would be interesting, if anybody knows anything about the Miracle man, or has been an actual eyewitness to him, to write and let me know about it. I really know very little about him. I don't even know what he looked like. I've never even seen a picture of him.

I never saw this either, but down in Greenwich Village there was a woman who was a psychic. Sam Margolies and Dunninger can both verify this, and they both claim that they saw her more than once and never could detect anything. This woman used to take an ordinary piece of newspaper, and let you examine it, and she'd tear off ten pieces about the size of postage stamps, and she'd lay these out haphazardly on the table. Then she'd rub her hands together, and she'd moan and sing hymns, and all of a sudden, she'd scream, and all the papers would jump up, and one piece would stick to each of her fingers, and then she'd let you take them off her fingers yourself. She was a psychic, and this was the only thing she did, and she did it to convince the people of her power.

If you know anything about Davis, the Miracle Man, or if you've ever heard about some unusual magic like the woman in Greenwich Village, let me know, and I'll pass the stories along to the readers. Write me in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

May 1969

I have been getting a lot of mail, and I'd like to thank all of you who have taken the time to write and tell me how much you like the column. As I've said before, I'm a terrible letter writer; but I am trying to answer some of the letters, and some of the others, I'll answer in this column.

Mike Rogers had some interesting questions about Ted Annemann. Years ago, Al Baker put out a trick with the Saturday Evening Post. You'd pass out the magazine and have them open it to any page and fold it back, and you could tell what they were concentrating on. Well, when the page was folded back, Al would see what was on the other side, and when he'd go on a date, he used to memorize these things with mnemonics. Al sold this trick for \$50.00 through the mail, and a lot of guys bought this secret from him.

Now, Annemann was living in Waverly, New York, and he wasn't heard of in those days, but he heard about this trick. Well, he came to New York City, and he began to hang around the boys, and he sold this trick of Al Baker's for about three or four bucks. His method was even better than Al's, because he had a simple way of using a pack of cards, and the information was all written out, so he didn't have to use any memory. Well, Al was pretty sore, because it took the edge off his, so there were some hard feelings there. Some people didn't like Annemann because he started that way.

Then he began writing his "Editrivia" column in the Jinx". My wife, who's quite a connoisseur of good writing, used to say that it was terrible. But she said that it was almost phenomenal as he progressed, he became a very good columnist. If you read the first copies, it's very amateurish, but he really wrote a very interesting column towards the last. It had bite and substance to it. He made a terrific reputation for good writing.

In my opinion, the sobering influence for Annemann was Henry Christ, because every Saturday afternoon, when they put the Jinx to bed, he'd spend all day going over Annemann's stuff. Henry is a genius at arranging tricks and eliminating superfluous moves. It was this man in the background, the "ghost," who really influenced him a great deal. Henry never wanted any attention for himself, but he gave Annemann untold help, and I know that Annemann would be only too glad to agree on this.

I couldn't honestly say that Annemann was a very fine performer. One time at the S.A.M., Annemann, who did take a lot of ideas from others, took Leipzig's "Three Pellet Trick," and did it almost identically the way that Leipzig did. Well, Dr. Daley and I were sitting together with Leipzig, and in the middle of the program, when he did this pellet trick, Doc Daley turned to Leipzig and said, "Nate, he's doing your trick. He's taken every move from you. It's your method." And Nate said, "Yes . . . but he's doing it very well."

The average amateur doesn't realize why, when they have some of these magic affairs like a convention or a club meeting, that certain professionals aren't too anxious to appear, and if they do, they don't like to do their acts. Guys like Galli-Galli and Dunninger don't want their style stolen.

Once I worked with Dunninger for Charles M. Schwab in New York, and he made sure that I was down in the basement when he was working. He wouldn't even let me watch him work. If some of these other magicians weren't such parrots, they

wouldn't mind it, but they feel that other people will spoil it and just do the bare bones of the trick, without all the presentations and drama that goes with it. This is what hurts magic.

Annemann did interminable tricks. He'd take a trick and go on for 15 minutes. His magic wasn't interesting even among magicians because he did too far drawn out things.

I don't know that he had any other interests. He used to bowl a little, but he wasn't interested in music or painting or anything that I know of except mentalism and magic. He was an interesting person . . . a deep kind of person. He was a pretty sociable guy, but hard to really know. He came to New York not too popular with some of the inner boys, but by his cleverness and work, and what he did with the Jinx, he became very popular. In England, he's a very big name.

Al Portwood wrote to ask about using more than one deck when you're doing a show. "Cold Decking," as the gamblers say, is one of the most cherished secrets. Trying to deal seconds or bottoms or middle deal or any of this is all passé, because people are too knowledgeable today. If you're demonstrating this in a show, people will sit back and enjoy it, but if it's "for the money," you can't take chances. Now people aren't knowledgeable about a cold deck, and if it's introduced in a subtle way, nobody can detect anything. But the switch is all essential, and this is not given out in magic books or magazines. The few good ways of doing it are very closely guarded.

A simple way for a fellow like this who wants to take another deck would be to use a narrow deck for one trick, and then he could say, "Perhaps you think I take advantage of the narrow cards, so I'll show you this can be done with wide cards just as well." Or he can take out a Bee deck if he's been using a Bicycle deck, and say, "Now, in most gambling houses, this is the card they use." Or he can say, "I did this trick the other night for some fellow, and he asked me if I could do a trick with his daughter's deck," and you take out a deck with pictures of animals or something like that. In other words, you can introduce two or three decks if you have a logical explanation for it. But if you take out one Fox Lane deck, then put it away and take out another Fox Lane deck, and then take out still another Fox Lane deck, that's strictly for the birds.

Sgt. Ron Bonneau, stationed in Thailand, asked if I would autograph one of my books for him. Well, if you are really an avid collector, and you send the copy of the book to me, I'll be very happy to autograph it for you. I have also had quite a few requests for autographed photographs. I don't have any photographs at this time, but I'm going to have some made up, and I'll send them out as soon as I get them.

A routine was sent to me by Donald Brookover, and you can see he has been thinking about magic, because he's come up with a novel presentation for a coin routine. This is what we need in magic. You start with a good trick, and by thinking about it, you can make it even more interesting for the people. (Mr. Brookover's routine, as well as some of his other ideas, will appear from time to time in the pages of GENII . . . J.L.)

Willard Osman, who is only 15 years old, had an interesting question about ending his show. In giving any kind of performance, you should always let them know in advance that you're going to do your last trick. You might say, "For my last endeavor," or, "Before I leave you, I'd like to show you one of my favorite effects." In other words, let them know before you start the trick that it's going to be the final one. It's just like

musical composition. If you stop without the last bar of music, the audience doesn't know where they are. You should have a definite finish. When that final chord comes, that's the finish.

Another thought about this: Nate Leipzig was always a humble, nice kind of guy, not the least bit conceited or pompous, and he told me it's very corny, when you finish a trick, just bow your head slightly. Don't bow, it's corny to bow, just look down, in servitude you might say, and it will bring a hand every time, because the people kind of like you.

Dana Perkins sent in an improvement on a card rise effect. Actually this method has been in print before. It's the one where you fasten the thread to the bottom of the glass. I think it may have been in Adrian Plate's book, and it's in a couple of other books. This is the kind of letter that I like to see. Thos young man has some very good ideas, and he's really thinking about magic.

Another letter came from Montreal, from a young man named Maurice Nicole. I wouldn't worry about magic becoming a dead art. If I didn't think there was some merit in it, I wouldn't have been playing around with it for as long as I have.

When a young person performs, it's most important not to have a superior attitude. Even doing mental magic at an age like this, you can't profess to be too knowledgeable, or say, "When I was in Tibet . . .," or anything like that. You CAN say, "There are certain things that I do that I don't understand myself. Perhaps some of you brighter fellows could tell me how these things work." In other words, make them feel equal or even superior to you in your own group. The main thing is to remember attitude in presenting magic. As far as routining, that's up to you.

Charles Aste, Jr. had quite a few questions about the Malini book. The only time that Cardini came close to meeting Malini was when he was working at Gamage's. He was practicing in front of a mirror doing the back hand palm, and he became conscious of some fellow standing there at the counter. So Cardini said, "Is there something I can do for you, sir?" And the guy said, "You don't vanish a card like this, you just take the card and it's gone, and that's all you do." And Cardini said that he was absolutely spellbound, he didn't know what in the world happened to the card. One minute it was there, and then it was gone. And he said that this little gut threw a business card on the counter face down. Well, this guy went to the elevator, or lift, as Cardini called it, and went down, and Cardini picked up the card and saw the name Max Malini. Well, he rushed to the elevator, but by the time he got downstairs, Malini was gone, and that was the only chance he ever got to meet Malini.

Malini just vested the card, but he did this beautifully. He had a beautiful flow, and his timing was just right. A lot of the things in the Malini book, I wasn't referring to his method, I was just telling about some of the things that happened. SO many of the things he did, it wasn't the method, it was just Malini. He was an artist at SELLING the effect.

Gary Comenas wrote that he had some of the props used by Howard Thurston. Hand on to these. Anybody who has anything used by people like Thurston, these things become more valuable as time goes on, and collectors will pay a good price for them. Actually, things of this kind are always nice to have.

Richard Wilson wanted to know about switching types of apparatus in a magic performance. I've mentioned this before. You have to be careful with a thing like this. For instance, don't ever use silks and escapes together. With silks, you're doing a kind of a quiet, soft act, and the next minute, you're a he-man getting out of restraints and chains. Certain types of tricks can be mixed, but certainly not silks and escapes.

Fred Duncan is at a radar base in Greenland. He was pretty unhappy about a thumb tip that he bought through the mail. The best kind of thumb tip is to get one that fits fairly well, then have some artist friend paint it to match your hand. There's also a spray paint used by the people who make window dummies that's very good. But very few people can just buy one that's right for them; they should be repainted.

Mike Goldberg asked about the best and most natural way of vanishing a coin by skill. That's a hard question to answer. What's best for one person may not be any good at all for another. Probably the best way, is to have a good Percystence of vision transfer of the coin from one hand to the other, and a good way of sleeving it, getting rid of it completely.

Bill McDonnell wanted to know about starting magic when you're 27 years old. He thinks it might be too old to start. On the contrary, Jimmy Drilling was a successful businessman when he started in magic, and is no doubt one of the most incredible sleight of hand performers in the world. But he really worked on it and studied hard and practiced all the time. Willie Schneider is another who was past 30 when he started, and is an excellent performer. If you start too young, you usually develop a lot of bad habits. When you're young, you can't be a severe critic, because you don't have good judgment. It's really an advantage not to start too young. Maturity is an asset.

Joe Ireland asked who I thought were some of the "bests" in magic. Well, that is hard to answer. With cards today, there are probably about 12 "bests." Each one is best in something else. I think the best I've EVER seen with cards was a gambler named Dad Stevens, who was known as the Mysterious Kid. He was called that, because when he was about 16 years old, he never lost a game. He was left-handed, and made a fortune as a gambler. Some of the world's best card mechanics were left-handed. For pure sleight of hand, two of the best are Cliff Green and Francis Carlyle. Francis is a master at magical management.

Incidentally, don't take your art too seriously. Remember, magic is not a completely logical art. A great mistake among a lot of amateurs, as well as more experienced magicians, is if they have a certain sleight that looks rather awkward, they'll make other bad moves to match that one. In other words, they'll do several bad moves to match a bad move. This is not good magic. You should try to conform to the natural, but don't make the natural conform to the bad. It's far better to use strong misdirection.

Tommy Downs, when he was working before a crowd, forced a card behind his back. If he had a tough customer, and he knew that he wasn't taking the right card, he'd walk away and say, "Did you get one?" and the guy would say, "No." Now, he'd walk backwards and bump into the guy, and drop a card right into his lap and walk away. Tommy didn't miss. That guy was going to get that card.

And it's not such an unpardonable sin to have a fellow make the right solution. If you sleeve a coin, and the guy says, "It's up your sleeve," you don't have to SHOW him that he's right. Just say, "Well, that's an interesting theory," or "That's as good a

guess as any,” but don’t confirm his belief. This is more intriguing, because a person can’t be sure. It’s not that serious if you get caught anyway. Malini was caught once with a palmed card. A great big guy grabbed his arm and held his wrist, and he had the card palmed, and he said, “If I had a mitt like you, I could palm a piano.” And he got a good laugh with this because the guy was so big.

In future issues, I’ll talk about Paul Fox, John Ramsay, and Tenkai. I’ll also answer some more letters, so write me in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

June 1969

I was quite surprised to learn recently that Allen Shaw was a fellow Canadian. John Booth told me that he was born in Hamilton, Ontario. At one time, he did the shortest act in show business . . . only six minutes. That was when he was on bills with acts like the Dolly Sisters and Charles Aldrich and all those well-known acts. He did a very simple, but very beautiful act, and proved that you didn't need giraffes and camels and big boxes to entertain people. He just had two hats on the stage, a silk top hat and a derby, and one little table. The main thing that struck me about Allen Shaw was his form of patter. His opening line was, "The dream of a miser . . . Money . . . How to get it . . . At my fingertips . . . Watch! . . . Look! . . . Listen!" That was his style. In other words, there wasn't any joined patter, but it was very effective and everybody understood what he was doing.

Anyway, Allen used to do the Miser's Dream, with a hat, and did some very nice interludes and passes throughout the routine. Then he did a very simple trick. He put down the silk hat and picked up the derby and a half dollar, and he just threw it into the hat, and immediately, it seemed to penetrate. He caught it on his fourth finger underneath the hat. He'd throw it in again and again, and each time it just seemed to penetrate the hat. He did this very beautifully. Then he put the hat down, and took the same coin, and made it go through his knees from one hand to the other several times, until everybody was convinced he had two coins. Then he'd turn the other hand around and he only had one coin. It was a very dexterous toss of a hooked coin behind the trouser leg, which he did very well, and then he recovered it later. Then he did a production of single cards. He only used about 8 or 10 cards, but it was very beautifully done. Shaw always said that it was wrong to do coins, then do cards, and then go back to coins again. He did it, but he knew it wasn't good.

The most phenomenal thing about Allen Shaw's act was that he wound up just leaning against the table at the side of the stage, and rolled a coin across his hand. He did this with the knuckles tight . . . not with the fingers wiggling. He was the first performer that I ever saw that didn't work up to a big finish. He ended on a very quiet note.

Recently, I was talking to Eric Lewis and found him very fascinating. He did a very clever act at the Magic Castle. He said it was just this children's act, but it highly fascinated the people because the presentation was so good, and because of the comedy situations that he worked out with the little bear. He's a very good performer because he told me the other day that as long as he's been working with that little bear, about 25 years, the other day he discovered something new in the presentation with it. He's been doing this act for years, but he still discovered something new and was able to incorporate it into the act. This is the way all great acts develop.

There's probably no name today among current magic enthusiasts that's better known than Tony Slydini, because he's been all over the country, and pretty much all over the world. People have seen him operate and they've read his books, and they see how carefully and painstakingly he works out the different maneuvers. Of course, it's fatal for anyone watching Tony to try to copy him, because Tony is a unique personality. He's got his own manner and his own style . . . he's Tony Slydini. BUT, he gives out the

basics, which if a fellow is clever enough and used enough thought to adopt the basic misdirection and the idea behind Slydini's work, he'll benefit very highly.

Some fellows make the very serious error of thinking they're Tony Slydini and they can act exactly as he does. They can't do that because he's got a very different approach and he's got a different way of presenting magic from the ordinary accepted style, but it's very effective in his hands. He's an excellent teacher, and if you see his lectures, you realize how painstaking he is to cover every little detail of what he does. Tony's not much of a reader of magic, but he's very quick of perception and he picks up things very rapidly.

Slydini should offer a good example to other magicians, because he took one of the oldest tricks in the world, the one of two silks untying, and made a great thing of it. It's in all the old magic books. There are many ways of doing it, in fact, Horace Goldin always made a feature of doing this. He made a reputation because he would borrow a person's handkerchief and just know the two corners together, and have 7 or 8 knots ties in it, and crumple it up and put it on the table, and just wave his hand, and the knots would all come out. So Tony took an old, old trick, and by playing with it, and specializing on it, and getting handkerchiefs that wouldn't tear or fray, he made a tremendous exhibition out of it. So that's the way to progress in magic. You can take an old trick and give it a new face and a new presentation, and fool even people who are acquainted with the so-called *modus operandi*.

Another excellent performer whom I had the privilege of working with this week is Don Lawton. Don can take any trick and he'll make it delightful, and people will enjoy it. They don't say, "Oh, look at that old trick, I saw my grandfather do that." Don makes them enjoy it because he's got some little things to say with his tongue in his cheek, and when he delivers an old or corny line, with a kind of amused look in his eye as if to say, "Well, that's pretty bad, but perhaps you'll bear with me." Well, this makes all the difference in the world because people love it.

People who are not acquainted with the operation of the Magic Castle may not know that now there's a pretty stiff examination to become a regular member. In the early days, some people got in whom we don't really think should be in. They didn't flunk their examinations because of politics or who they knew, but it's getting stricter all the time. The other night we tested a young man who claimed that he had been doing magic for a number of years. On the board that night was Larry Jennings, who is certainly a technician, and Snag Werris, along with a few others. Now Snag, although he doesn't specialize in difficult sleight of hand, knows from a professional standpoint, having been a top comedy writer for many years, something about accepted presentation for an audience. This is very good, because this way, one person judges the way they present their tricks, while another person judges technique. He was a nice guy, and it was kind of hard to turn him down, but it was obvious that he hadn't given any thought to what he was doing. This is the way it should be, because some people want to say that they're part of the inner circle, but we should prevent that from becoming too easy, so that there is a little honor at least, a little credit to being a regular member.

People sometimes ask me where new tricks come from. Well, it's funny, because you never know. One night, I was having a bowl of chili at the Castle, and I had a cup of coffee with it. I never use sugar, so I reached for a package of saccharin, and the package

was empty. It was still closed, but there were no tablets in it. “Well, this happened seven times. Every package I picked up was still sealed, but they were all empty. So I called over Klause Rüsbro, the Maitre D’, because I thought somebody made a mistake at the factory where they pack the stuff. Well, we couldn’t figure out what happened, but then Klause said, “Wait, I’ll be right back,” and he went into the kitchen. When he came back, he had some packages of saccharin and a cup of hot water, and when he put the packages of saccharin into the water, they dissolved inside the little cellophane bags. But it has to be boiling water, not just hot.

Well, you can make a trick out of this. Take two tablets out of a package, and keep them clipped between your fingers. In the other hand, palm one of these empty packages. Now, if you ask someone for a package of saccharin, you can switch the packets and show them that you took the tablets out without opening the package and you can let them examine the package because it’s really sealed. So Klause came up with a very good, new principle.

Francis Carlyle, one of the rally fine sleight of hand performers, said that there’s never been a book written on magical management. Well, what does magical management mean? What Carlyle meant is that it’s very important how you go into a move. Cardini, when he’s watching a move, or if you show him a move, will say, “Well, I know the move, but how do you get into it?” In other words, the move itself might be good, it might be ingenious or clever or deft or something unusual, but how is it used? The most important thing is the ‘before’ and ‘after.’ Take any well-known move, like a top change. A lot of people do a top change. Now I don’t care if you hold it with the first finger or the thumb, or hold it with two thumbs. Before they do the change, the average guy watching who knows anything at all says, “Something’s going to happen. He’s getting ready.” Like a sprinter getting down to take off for a hundred yard dash, he’s got his toes in the ground, and he’s bending over, and he’s ready to go. Well, you KNOW he’s going to sprint because he’s just like a tiger getting ready to leap. In other words, they tip off. In the old days, gamblers used to call it ‘telegraphing the move,’ which was a very good expression. You’re not talking audibly, you’re warning by a sound that people can understand if they’re initiated. The same way if you’re getting ready to do a two handed pass. The most important thing is to be absolutely relaxed, and be in any position BUT the one you start the pass with. Framing up a move is no good. You can’t let the audience know that you are getting ready. You’ve got to BE ready on an off-shot, and go right into the move.

In the same way, after the move is very important. Erdnase said in his book that it’s one thing to put a card in your hand and turn the hand over and conceal it, but it’s something entirely different to remove it from the deck in such a way that the most observant of spectators won’t suspect, let alone detect the action. Presuming the guy can palm the card well, he hasn’t telegraphed the fact, he’s removed the card from the pack and has it in the palm of his hand, now what is he going to do with the hand. Is he going to pick up a wand, or is he going to cross his arms, or put his hand on his hip or behind his back? The old-timers had the want, which is a very fine basic thing, because you could have anything palmed, and the fact that you were holding the want made your hand look natural, because it was naturally closed. So the wand was an excellent basic form of misdirection, but the modern magician doesn’t want to use the wand.

Malini used a cigar to great advantage that way, because he'd have a cigar in his hand and have something palmed. He used to hold a coin in a finger palm, and smoke and talk, and they never suspected that he had anything because he was holding a cigar. This applies not only to sleight of hand, it applies to everything.

It's just the same if a fellow has a secret button that he has to turn, or a panel he has to slide on the back of a box or something. If he glances toward the panel and you see him going towards a certain spot, he's already telegraphed that he'd going somewhere and he's going to do something. So it applies to illusions or anything. You must do it while still looking at the audience or stroking the box for some unknown reason, never apparently looking for anything. This is VERY important. That's why, as a rule, a good sleight of hand performer, if he ever does take up illusions, will really do a fine job of concealing the modus operandi. You've got to give some plausible reason for making an awkward move or making some surreptitious move, otherwise people will say, "What's the guy doing?" Even people who don't know a thing about it know that you're preparing something. So not telegraphing a move, and what you do after it are very important.

Charlie Miller, one of the really brilliant minds in magic, was once puzzled, as was I, by Malini. We asked Malini why he was so good. In his husky voice, Malini answered, "It's the eye." Well, we could not quite understand what he meant by that, and we thought about it a lot. We finally figured that what he meant was that the eye is so important. Where you look is vitally important. John Ramsay always made it a point to bring out that you should look at the audience. He said that when most magicians were supposed to have a coin in their hand, they would always look at that hand trying to oversell the fact that they had something there. They're afraid to look at the audience. It's the same thing if you're going to make a move. You don't make the move if they're looking at you. You don't challenge them like that, but wait until you get their eye and then make your pass or whatever it is that you're going to do. The eye is very important in this respect. Imagine that you have a coin palmed. You've just made a pass with it and it's supposed to be in your left hand, and you look down at the right hand . . . well, that's stronger than saying, "Here it is!" So the eye is very important. All the magic books say, 'look where you want the audience to look,' but they never tell you, 'don't look where you want the audience not to look.' This comes under magical management again.

Here's an illustration of the importance of the eye. Take a pack of cards and get ready for the pass, but instead of holding a break, just step to the half back about a quarter of an inch. Stand in front of a mirror . . . of course you'll see the step in front, but don't worry about it for this illustration . . . now watch as your thumb lifts the pack to put your little finger in. Now, do it the reverse way. Push the top part forward the same distance, and as you square up the pack, push down on the bottom packet to get your pinky in the break and you'll notice the vast difference in the appearance from the front. With one, you see a lifting up, a tilt of the deck and the finger go in, and the other way, if it's done carefully, you won't see any movement. In other words, you haven't telegraphed that you are getting ready to do the pass. In doing passes, doing changed, doing anything, any movement that is visible, the more the visible movement can be cut down, the better the sleight. When you do a top change, there's a tendency for the left

thumb to lift up to put the card under. That's a movement that can be seen, but if you slide the card right underneath the thumb, you've made an improvement right away by keeping that thumb still.

Houdini was a great writer when he said, "A magician is an actor playing the part of a magician." You've really got to act innocent all the time. When you fake a move, you've got to act as if you did the thing. That's the hardest part of magic. It's very difficult to be doing one thing and acting as if you're doing nothing, or doing something else. This is real acting. I was over at Bib Lansing's house the other day, and he did a trick for some people over there, and just because he's a good actor, he did a great job of it. The presentation was excellent because he acted the part well.

I've been receiving quite a few letters from the readers of this column, and from time to time I'll try to answer your questions. You can write me in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

July 1969

Cliff Green

I want to say, first of all, that I was grieved to hear about the passing of Cliff Green. Cliff and I were about the same age, and we met when we were both very young in Canada. I went to get a shoe-shine at the Russell Hotel, and I noticed that the shoe-shine boy had a deck of cards, so I naturally was curious, and I asked him why he had them. Well, he said he played a lot of solitaire when he wasn't busy, but I noticed that the deck was brand new. Anyway, he told me that some guy had been in the day before and tore his old deck in half, and then tore the halves into quarters. I was interested in finding out who this guy was, and I told the boy to ask him next time he came in. Well, it was Cliff Green, and we finally got to meet.

Now when two young magicians meet for the first time they always ask, "What kind of magic do you do?" Anyway, Cliff asked me, and I told him to shuffle the cards, and I happened to spot the bottom card which was a three of diamonds. In those days, I did a lot of "chance" magic, and I asked Cliff to name a card, and he named the three of diamonds. Well, I just slapped the pack and told him to turn it over, and there was his card, and then I said, "What kind of magic do YOU do?"

That was the way Cliff and I met. He was one of the finest card workers that I ever knew, and the magic world has lost a fine magician and a good friend.

Fire Engine Illusion

Here's something that happened in Rochester, New York, many years ago, when I was a married man with no children. My wife and I were living at the Onondaga Hotel in Syracuse. I was there to give a show for Eastman in Rochester, and I was in Syracuse cutting some silhouettes. The fire chief, who evidently had read some of the magic magazines and must have got hold of my name somewhere, came into the hotel and he asked, "Have you ever seen my illusion? I levitate a fire engine." In those days they had those great big nickel-plated things that weighed many tons. I really thought he was kidding. Anyway, we talked after that, and my wife said, "Boy, we certainly have some characters in magic."

So the next day, there was a big fire, and we were sitting in the lobby of the hotel. Well, after a few hours, we heard the engines coming back from the fire, and all of a sudden, in walks the chief. He had a black raincoat on, and a helmet, and his face was all dirty, and the tears were rolling down his cheeks, and he said, "Vernon, come on right now. I want to take you over there right now because I'm afraid I'm going to miss you. You're leaving town tomorrow." So here he is, fatigued and almost knocked out, and he takes my wife and me down in his chief's car with the siren roaring, and we go down to the fire station. It takes him about 20 minutes to set up, and he's giving orders to all the firemen, and then he says, "Now wait, you stay in this part of the building," and he takes me in and there's this great big fire engine standing there. Now he's giving guys private signals and everything, and all of a sudden, this fire engine creaks and creaks and goes up about two inches off the floor.

Then he had trouble getting this big hoop out of another room. It could hardly go through the door, and he had to bend it a little to get it through the door. Then he takes

this thing, and it rattles, and he passes this gol-darn hoop all over the thing, and when he takes it off he says, "What do you think of that?" He was so proud of that. It's amazing to think of the extent that a fellow will go to. He was really prouder of that than some fellow who learned to juggle seven balls or something. I wish I could remember his name, because I'd like to give him credit at this late stage. He was fire chief in those days, and that must have been 40 years ago.

Syracuse Magicians

There have been quite a few good magicians from around Syracuse. That's where I met Ross Bertram, who was a very clever guy. Arthur Altman was from there, and Mike Skinner, and of course Eddie Fechter. Eddie was an influence on Mike Skinner, and that's very important in magic. There may be one in a group of eight or ten fellows, and if he's good and he had good ideas, not only does he improve his own magic, but he influences all his followers. It helps in magic to be associated with somebody that you aim to emulate rather than someone you look down on.

Horses

I'm not a horse player. I may have a lot of vices, but playing the horses isn't one of them, although I love races and I enjoy going to the track occasionally to make a few bets. Well, one of the few times that I really bet a little money was at a track in Louisville, Kentucky. I played a parlay, and in those days I didn't know much about parlays except that you bet on three horses, and if they all won, you came up with quite a bankroll. Well, luckily, two of the horses I bet on were long-shots, and I collected about \$1700.00 for about a \$30.00 et. I was a pretty happy individual, and when I went up to cash my ticket, everybody was standing there applauding.

Hustlers

Well, some guys there must have spotted what they thought was a young sucker. I had quite a bankroll, because they doled it out in tens and twenties and it looked like a cabbage. Anyway, I stayed around Louisville for a couple of days at the Tyler Hotel, and from there I was going to Lexington where I was going to cut some silhouettes. When I got on the train, the train had no sooner pulled out when a rather nice looking young fellow came over to me and said, "Say, do you play bridge?" And I said, "Well, I play, but not well." So he asked, "Would you like to join us? We need a fourth for a game." I didn't suspect anything at the time, because he looked like a college kid or something. They had a Parlour car, so I went back there and they had a little table set up there, and I noticed that the two guys sitting there weren't like this other kid at all. One of them looked like an old sharper, and the other was a real grifter type.

Well, I smelled a rat right away. So I sat down and we played bridge for a little while, and then the older guy said, "Listen, I don't understand this game. You fellows are too good at bidding. Let's play poker. We don't have much time on this train anyway." I figured that this was it, but they had no way in the world of knowing that I even knew one card from the other, so I put on an act and shuffled with the old "haymow" shuffle and occasionally dropped a card. Now this other guy was doing a pretty bad milk from the bottom and running up the cards, and he'd put them down to

have this partner of his cut, and he'd put them back and say, "Cut them clean. I don't like cards messed like that," because obviously the guy had missed the crimp. I even saw him check the bottom card a few times to make sure. Well, the funny part is, I'd get a Jack in the hole, and a Jack face up. And I'd say, "Gee it's hot in here. I've got to get a drink of water," and I'd turn my hand down and walk away. Well, it was getting tougher and tougher all the time not to get hooked into one of these hands because I knew darn well if I didn't bet one of these good hands, they'd suspect something. So I managed to stall along until I finally got a chance to do a few things, and I really won a couple of nice pots because I double-crossed them.

Finally, this old guy turned to his partner and said, "Listen, I'm an old timer in this racket and you fellows should be smarter. This fellow knows more than he's supposed to know." Well, by this time I had over \$70.00 of their money, and he said, "Come on . . . we're on a short bankroll. We only have about \$125.00 between us, and we've got to get to Lexington and make some money. Will you please give us back out money?" Well, I looked at him and said, "Listen, if you'd won and I told you I needed the money, would I get it back?" Anyway, I thought about it for a while, and then I said, "What's your best game?" And he said, "Six card rummy." So we played a few hands at \$25.00 a hand, and we see-sawed back and forth, and I finally wound up with about \$25.00 of their money.

Incidentally, a thing that a lot of people don't know, it's like reading a murder mystery . . . nobody really wants to do it, but they enjoy reading about it. Well, it's the same way with gambling. A lot of guys think how they could sit in a game and win gobs of money. They'd never do it, but it has a fascination for them to think about dealing seconds and bottoms. A lot of people think that it's easy to get on a ship or a train and hustle like this. When I made all those trips to South America, I didn't notice for a long time that every time we sailed, there were three detectives who always got on the ship before sailing, who were a special detail sent by the police to look for sharpers. Even today, in Las Vegas, all the well-known card hustlers are photographed and are in a book. The notorious gamblers who have been caught swindling, and have taken gambling joints, are mugged and put in this book.

Magic as A Living No Fun

As I always say, magic as a living is no fun. Even if you're successful, it's no fun. All you've got to do is look at guys like Channing Pollock who make a tremendous success, or Cardini, who'd rather be a dealer in magic than a performer, although he's been a star performer. Al Flosso, who's a fine performer, would rather sell you a little piece of apparatus and make twenty cents, than play a date and get the acclaim of a crowd. He loves merchandising. Channing would rather be an actor than a magician. As a livelihood, it's not the fun that people think it is. It's great to play a date occasionally and have something else stable, and it's a hobby that will last all through your life, and you can have a lot of fun and meet a lot of interesting people. However, People who have no particular ability in magic, who perhaps never get the admiration of their fellow workers or brothers in magic, shouldn't worry about it. Some of the most famous magicians were not the best magicians, but they had good business ability had good connections, they were good politicians, or were good showmen . . . good entertainers.

Perhaps a kid could do magic better than they could, but they had a flair for showmanship. Striving for perfection doesn't mean that you're going to make a success out of magic as a livelihood. In fact, it could be a detriment.

George Jason

One very fine performer is George Jason. At one time, he insisted on taking lessons from me. He did a very fine comedy act, and I said, "George, you don't need any technical advice. If you do things too well you'll be a regular magician. This way, you're a comic and you do things well enough for the act." Even Doc Daley said the same thing. He thought that George was free and had flair, but if he became conscious of moves, it would curb him.

Well, anyway, George insisted, and he wrote out a check for \$100 and he and his wife both insisted that I take the money. The consequence was exactly what Doc Daley said. When George went out on stage, he was timid. Moves that he never thought about before, he was conscious of, and it curbed his style and it really ruined him for a while as a comedian. He had to go through a stage for about six months where he was fighting this thing.

What to Charge

A lot of young people ask me what they should charge for a show. They want to know what a good fee would be. Well, why should an oil painting be worth \$22,900.00? Services, you can put any kind of price on. It's not like a commercial product that's competing with other similar products. In selling a magic act, it's the value that you put on it and what the tariff will bear. There's no rule. Get as much as you can. When they approach you about a show, ask what their budget is and find out how much they're planning to spend for a show. Don't be afraid to ask a good price. You can always come down on the price for some reason, like saying it's a charitable affair, or there aren't going to be many people there, or there are going to be a lot of children and you like to entertain children so you'll make a special price for them. This is business ability. A good operator never pins himself down.

Teenagers!

Several kids have asked this same question also. Should you, when you're working for teenagers, work to their level of teenage magic, or should your approach be more for adults? Well, naturally, you work so that people that you're working for can understand it. On the other hand, Eric Lewis does things for adults that have a whimsical, fairy-tale idea to it, but he does these things so well, and puts people in the right mood, and they like this sort of thing even though it's really for children.

Criticism

It's not always easy to accept criticism. Some people resent it, but any good performer knows the value of criticism. A lot of the younger generation doesn't remember Arthur Lloyd, but he started out doing a card act, producing any card called for from his pocket. When he was in Australia, some wise guy called out the fourteen of spades, and everybody laughed because, naturally he didn't have one; but that's the birth

of the fourteen of spades, because he had made one made up. After that, he had a plant call for that card, and he'd produce it and it got a good laugh. I think he also came up with the three and a half of clubs. Well, then he began to think about the thing and he thought about pulling out different kinds of cards. He built this act up until he had 70,000 cards. The cards filled up three trunks, and according to the territory that he worked, he'd carry certain kinds of cards. When he came out, he really weighed something with all these cards.

Well, anyway, he made a tremendous hit with this act, and he played all over the world with it. He was starred in London with this act, and one time somebody called for a chimney sweep's card. Well, he had one, and he pulled it out of his pocket and held it up. Later on, when he came out of the theater, two dirty little kids said, "There's that faker." Well, he called them over and said, "Why do you say I'm a faker?" and they said that the card that he held up was the wrong color to be a chimney sweep's cards, because they were always the same color and this was a different color. So he took them to his dressing room and showed them that it was the right card. Well, he thought about it for a while, and he realized that he was using a rose colored spot to make him look better, and he didn't realize that it changed the color of some of these cards. It made him think for the first time about the color, and why he sometimes didn't get the hand he expected from some unusual cards. Well, by taking that criticism from these two little kids, he said his act improved 50%, because he used nothing but a white spot after that and it showed the pure color of the card.

Modern magicians don't go to the lengths that the old time magicians used to go to. Anybody who has read the history of magic, or books like "The Memoirs of Robert-Houdin," realizes that they did things that were really sensational, like entertaining a city by all four gates at the same time. There's the story about Bosco who came late and everybody was complaining because he kept royalty waiting for an hour, and when he arrived, he had them all look at their watches, and he was really on time because he made time go backwards. These things may be just legends, but they made a great reputation for magic, and magic was a wonderful thing. Malini was the only modern magician to do this sort of thing.

Malini

Several people who knew Malini very well said that some of his best tricks never came off. For example, Malini would plant a card behind a picture in somebody's home. Now, he expected to be back there in six months or a year later, but he never happened to go back, so that card was never utilized. In other words, a great trick never came off because the occasion never arose, but Malini did these things that make reputations. It's possible to hypnotize a chicken by putting its head under its wing and rocking it back and forth. Well, Malini was at this dinner party, and he had a live chicken plucked, and he hypnotized it and put it on a platter, and it was served like a chicken that was cooked. When the host went to carve the chicken, naturally, it jumped up and ran around the table, and everybody thought that Malini brought it back to life again.

Any time you can do a trick that doesn't look planned, it's a much stronger effect. It's like doing a little ball trick using olives instead. If you have to use an extra one, and you've got an olive in your pocket, and you say to someone, "Well, I'd like to

show you a trick, but I've got to have some marbles and I don't have any with me. Say, maybe I can use those olives . . . let me have three olives." Now this is a different effect altogether from taking three little shiny balls from your pocket and doing it. People will talk about this. These things can be arranged so that it looks ad-lib.

Somebody is sending me a letter with some information about Davis, the Miracle Man, and if there's anything interesting in it, I'll write about it in the future. In the meantime, you can write me in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

August 1969

Magic is so accessible to young fellows today, it's rather strange to me that people write and ask so many questions. There are so many text-books on the market, and so much has been written. When I was a boy, I used to wait for the postman, and I'd watch up and down the block for him, and I was thrilled when he'd take out a book that I had sent for from Davenport's in England, or Roterberg's in Chicago, or Hamleys or Gamage's. Gamage's had a tremendous catalogue. It was as thick as a New York telephone book. It wasn't all magic, but it had all kinds of carnival goods and ventriloquial figures and Punch and Judy outfits. It was a marvelous catalogue. I'd love to see one today. So, as I say, I used to wait feverishly for the postman to arrive, but now, they have so many books written on presentation and how to sell your act, that a prolific reader can get almost everything that's ever been said on the subject.

Magic Hard To Come By

Magic was very hard to come by when I was a boy, and I'd walk miles to see some bartender do some simple trick. I was too young to go into the bar, but I'd wait outside for him. I knew about magic stores, but there were no such places in Canada. As I say, magic was very hard to come by, and I think for this reason I was perhaps a little more thorough than I would be if I were a young fellow today. Magic now is just handed to you on a silver platter, but if you have to work for something to attain knowledge, and you have to ferret out something by hard work, you're going to treasure it and really learn to do it better.

Cliff Green

Cliff Green was one of the first magicians that I got friendly with in my hometown. He told me once that he'd been in Detroit and they had a meeting of magicians. Well, this astounded me. I never knew there was such a thing as a group of magicians getting together, and I was always a little envious of Cliff because he'd been to one of these magic meetings. I asked him what kind of magic they did and he told me that they were pretty bad. That was years ago, and I must say that some of them are still pretty bad. Anyway, he told me about these conventions, and then later of course, when I went to New York, I saw my first group of magicians.

Dorny and Berg

One of the conventions that I really enjoyed was when Dorny came to New York. On one of the shows, Dorny made a cornucopia and he poured out one dinky paper flower onto the floor, and he picked it up and said, "If you fellows think I'm going to fold up 300 of these, you're crazy!" Another time, in Colon, Michigan, I think there were seven acts on one show who tore up two pieces of tissue paper and it became a hat. When Joe Berg came out to do his act, he saw all these crumpled pieces of paper all over the floor . . . all paper hats. Well, he picked one up and put it on his head, then he looked at it again and he tore it up and when he opened it up, it was two pieces of paper. Well, this was the hit of the show, because he did it in reverse and it was very funny.

S.A.M.. Convention

Just recently I had the pleasure of attending the convention in Kansas City. Mike Skinner flew to Phoenix to meet Danny Dew, and I met them both in Colorado Springs. We were there to see Paul Fox. Danny Dew has all of Paul's apparatus, some of which are really collector's items. Anybody who's passing through Phoenix, Danny would be only too happy to show you the wonderful collection of magic that he has. A lot of people don't know this, but when the Tarbell Course was written, Walter Baker started the course and then later Tarbell took it over, and at that time, he was a very close associate of Paul Fox. Although they're not credited to Paul, he was the brains behind a great many of the little subtle touches in the Tarbell Course. He is, in my opinion, one of the true geniuses in magic. Paul has practically given up magic now because of his accident, but he still has good ideas in magic, and I was very pleased to find him in such good health. Some of my happiest magical times of my life were back in the 30's when I used to go to Manitou, Colorado, to cut silhouettes, and spend some time with Paul Fox.

I think the fun times at a convention are the impromptu gatherings. Sometimes the shows don't thrill you or make you proud of the fact that you're a magician. I hate to say this, because I don't want to disillusion some of the young fellows who will be going to their first convention soon. But there's not only magic at these conventions, there's also a lot of kidding and joking and a lot of fun.

Two performers got standing ovations at the Kansas City convention. Norm Neilson should always get one. His magic is superlative. Sheehy also got a standing ovation. He does more magic in a short interval than is usually seen at a whole convention.

P.C.A.M. Convention

San Jose was really a highlight as far as conventions go. I only remember enjoying one convention in my life as much as this one, and that was the one that Dorny ran in Chicago years ago. San Jose was really a fine convention. Not only were the big shows packed, but the banquet hall was just packed with people, and the presentations of the trophies were really delightful. A great tribute to Senor Frakson, one of the most beloved men in magic, was his protégé, Nino, winning the Grand Prix. When Frakson took him under his wing, Nino was already a good performer and had a good knowledge of sleight of hand. Nino tried his darndest to pay tribute to Frakson, but he was overcome with emotion. Everybody knew that what he wanted to say was that he owed everything to Frakson.

One reason that this convention was such a success was that everything took place in one convention center, and everybody was able to get around to everything very easily. Everything was very convenient. All in all, San Jose should be thoroughly congratulated for running a wonderful convention. Ernie Nassimbene did a wonderful job as chairman. In fact, everybody connected with it did a very good job.

Masatoshi Furota

A gentleman from Japan, Masatoshi Furota, was at this convention, and he does absolutely beautiful work . . . fanning and card productions and spinning cards . . . his

handling is wonderful. Some of his fans were different from any that have ever been seen in this country. He had a wonderful personality, and everybody liked him.

Another act on this same show had Clarke Crandall, Duke Stern, Dick Zimmerman and myself all listed as doing their specialty. A lot of people thought that it would be bad to have four magicians on stage at the same time, each doing their specialty. Well, Dick and I both came out holding silk handkerchiefs, and then we went over to the piano and started to polish it. Then we sat down and started to play, and the Senator grabbed a banjo and Duke Stern took out a violin, and we broke into a chorus of 'Darktown Strutter's Ball.'

Crandall

Many of the magicians from the convention were down at the Magic Castle after we left there. Among them, was my favorite, Clarke Crandall. When we left San Jose, the Senator and I hitched a ride with Tom Ely. I was surprised to learn that the Senator knew so much about trees and orchards. Others that came down were Tony Griffith and Patrick Page. It was the first time I had ever seen Patrick Page work, and he is a very fine performer. He has a nice personality, has a rich sense of humor, and he knows what people like and how to present it. Charlie Miller saw him and was quite pleased with his magic.

Tony Griffith can show you how to simplify card tricks and make them entertaining. He does a very nice job of presenting things to an audience so that they know exactly what the effect is, and they can understand what he's doing. He does an English version of "Sam the Bell-Boy" and does a very nice job with this.

Holland

I once went to a convention in Holland, and this was really quite a convention, because it's not only sponsored by magicians, but the mayor of the town and the chief of police and everybody is in on this convention. They not only had a parade where all the civic clubs cooperated, but they even had magic being performed on rooftops. Sight magic was done on rooftops and everybody was standing there watching. They really go in for conventions over there.

Japan

I'm looking forward very eagerly to my coming visit to Japan. Years ago, Tenaki and Okinu lived not far from where I was staying, and many times I went over to visit them. Tenaki did absolutely marvelous magic. He did the well-known trick of wrapping up a glass in newspaper and knocking it through the table, but he did this, not sitting down like everybody else does it, but standing up. It was an entirely different method from the usual. Tenaki is a finished artist. He has shown me a beautiful book, all in color, and I hope some day somebody will translate it. He's one of the great sleight of hand performers of all time, and a very nice guy.

Stature for Magic

Arthur Lloyd, the Human Card Index, always said that when you go anywhere, never tell people that you're a magician. They'll look down at you. In England, if you have a pin from The Magic Castle, they treat you with great respect. I don't know how they attained this, but to the man on the street, it has prestige. This is something that every magician should aim at . . . giving magic a dignity. Magic has been cheapened by too many performers doing bad magic. We should try to give magic more importance and stature than it's had in the past.

I think they have this feeling in Japan, and I expect to see some very fine magic there. When I get back, I'll write about some of the people that I met, and tell you what they did.

You can still write to me in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

September 1969

At my age, I wasn't contemplating any extensive trips abroad, but one day, a Japanese fellow came up to me at the Castle and gave me a letter from Tenkai. "This fellow told me that in Japan it was the custom to honor anyone who attained the age of 80, which Tenkai had passed, and the Japanese government would gratify almost any normal wish that a man might make. Tenkai's request was to have 'me pay him a visit and talk to the magicians. Well, of course, this touched me greatly. A few weeks later, a man named Akira Yamada . Came in with a local chap named Ogawa, and he asked me if I would be willing to go to Japan. I told him that I would be happy to go at any time. Anyway, he said that the government was so slow in carrying out these things that it might take months, so he'd advance me the money. Well, one day, the ticket for my trip arrived, and I decided to ask Larry Jennings to go along because he seemed so anxious to meet Tenkai. Naturally, Larry paid his own expenses, and we made the trip together.

I always said that the best magic came from Holland as far as originality and that was my opinion until I went to Japan. I don't want to lose the friendship of Henk Vermeyden, but the people that we saw in Japan, and these were probably 9 or 10 of the top magicians there, I would say are way ahead of anyone as far as originality, variations of magic and poetic presentation. Hofzinser called cards "The Poetry of Magic". Well some of the magic we see today is very far removed from poetry I can assure you, but it CAN be poetic, and these people do just that. Their whole country is like that. They go in more for beauty and refinement. Let me say to my friends in Holland that some things will be coming out of Japan that will keep you on your toes, and you'll have to put out some very fine things to compete. This is good . . . magic should keep improving this way.

When we first arrived, we were met at the airport, and conducted in regal manner to the hotel. We stayed at the Maguro Hotel in Tokyo. The hotels there have every possible convenience.

One thing that fascinated me was that on the roof of one of the big department stores, they have a beautiful stage and rides for the children and soft drinks . . .it's like a miniature amusement park. They have a nice theater up there, and twice a day, they put on a water show. This is the water trick where fountains spring up from everywhere, and this is beautifully done because Tenkai coached the girl who puts on the show. Many department stores have stages, and they put on different shows, and this is very good because it brings more people to the stores and they hang around longer, and I think it would be a great draw for any department store. Something like that should be started in this country.

But to get to the magic, I never in my life had such feelings of humbleness. Just imagine a person learning to play the violin and who's only been playing for six months, and then he hears Heifitz play . . .well, that's just how I felt when I saw some of these Japanese performers. Akira Yamada, who Larry nicknamed "The Brain" because he's the head of the Tenyo Magic Company, has a sincere desire to elevate magic in Japan. It is already very advanced, but he wants to make it more universal in all the cities and all the towns, and he is certainly doing a great job of it. They have a birdcage coming out that

compares with the Martin cage which is the finest ever made, and at a much lower price than the Martin cage.

Mister Yamada is very fortunate to have working with him five very talented people. They work out great improvements on standard tricks and work out puzzles and things of this sort. I showed one of them a puzzle with five coins which has to be done in a certain number of moves. Well, he just sat there and stared at it and Larry kept telling him to try it and move the coins, but he just sat there and looked at it. What he did was work it out in his head without once touching the coins and besides that, he worked out a different puzzle using seven coins just by looking at it and doing it all in his head.

That's why, in Japan, a lot of these fellows are very clever. You ought to realize how difficult it is for them. They get hold of a book and it takes them all day, or perhaps two days, to figure out a trick. They have a dictionary and they have an awful time figuring out one trick from a book. Now, they get the basic idea, the underlying principle, and immediately they start making a variation and what they come up with is really something. I think one of the reasons that they are so good is that they have to put sincere effort into it. It doesn't come easily.

They love magic in Japan. The people are analytical, Observant, and they're very hard to fool. That's why the magicians there are so good. They had to develop themselves to a point where they could fool the audience.

The great SPIRIT behind the whole scene of magic over there is Tenkai. He's coached Many performers and after they get their variations of different tricks, they do them for Tenkai and he puts the finishing touches on them. He really has a great flair for subtle and beautiful magic.

The first time I was really flabbergasted was in Osaka when I met this young dentist named Hiroshi Sawa. He's only 26 or 27 years of age. The interpreter said that he does a very strange type of magic . . . he does "shell magic," he does "pearl magic," he does "smoke ring magic he does "invisible man magic," he does "octopus magic," and so on.

In one of the effects, he had five cards selected and one of them was looked at and the five cards were shuffled. These were placed face down in a row on a Piece of plain white paper. Then he covered these cards with a narrower piece of paper so that they were completely covered. Now, he took a clear glass bottle which was about the size of an ordinary salt shaker, and he said, "In this bottle, I have an invisible man." Remember, this was all through an interpreter which made it very difficult. Well, he opened the lid of the bottle just the least bit, and a tiny, little, squeaky voice seems to come out of it. A moment later, he'd open it wider and you'd hear a screeching sound, and he'd say, "oh, he got out. He's flying around. You can hear him, but you can't see him." Now he makes a grab at something and apparently puts it in the bottle, and when he took his hands away from it, there were tiny footprints and handprints inside. Then he covered the bottle again, and when he took his hands away this time, the prints were gone and the bottle was clear again. Well, he opens the bottle again, and again he says that the little man got out, and again you can hear this sound as he's flying around, and Sawa kept looking up and trying to catch this thing. Then suddenly, he looks down and you look down and on this paper there were about eight little footprints from the edge of the paper right up to the edge of the upper paper. Then he slid this upper paper back and you saw two little

handprints as though they were touching the edge of one of the cards and of course this was the selected card. Now this is really a unique way of finding a card.

My friend Francis Carlyle in New York, who is a sagacious, alert, clever fellow, said to me many times that there is no limit to the way you can find a card. Well, this is a unique way of finding a selected card. It's entertaining all the way through. You go off on tangents, but the climax is that you finally find the card. I could fill this whole column with tricks done by this young man. Sawa gives credit to Tenkai for helping him develop in his magic.

At the convention, they put on an excellent show. Everybody involved did a fine job. Tenko Kanazawa wrote a very good book on cigarettes. He does a whole act with unlighted cigarettes, something like Deven did years ago. He does some very intricate sleights with cigarettes. Hiroshi Matsuzawa is also a very fine pianist. He played the piano and organ at the show besides doing a very fine magic act. Michio Mizuno, even for his tender years did a very fine job. He really was very, very good. Teruo Nishiguchi did a very good five ring routine. Tenkai did a three card trick and completely fooled all the magicians there. He handled the cards like the old ones with the different indexes, but at the end of the trick, he showed that they were just three regular cards. Dr. Kuwashima has the reputation for being the best "Cups and Balls" worker in Japan. He works in a typical Japanese costume and setting. Soichi Ikeda had quite a good idea. This will show you creativity. The top comes out of the bottle like a GENII and spins, and then he does a routine like the "Zombie" with it. Larry Jennings said that if Tenhana worked for any producers in Las Vegas, they'd sign her up immediately for six years. She only does three or four tricks, but they're beautifully done; really graceful and beautiful. Tenko, who unfortunately I don't have a picture of, has his own nightclub in Tokyo. He in this column ever visit Japan, be sure to look up Akira Yamada at the Tenyo Company. I'll guarantee that you'll have the time of your life.

I certainly appreciate the many letters that I've been receiving and I'm glad that the column is being read. I'm also happy that you seem to like the fact that I'm not giving you tricks. After all, there are so many books and pamphlets that you can read.

Do as the Japanese do. Get your basic idea and then try to get as far away from the plot as you can. Make your own plot. Get some little thing that will be your own thought and it will be much better at the finish. I don't care what it is. After seeing them, I look down at everything I do, and I'm going to try to get up some new magic. When I do, perhaps I'll be able to contribute a novel trick to this column, so have patience.

In the meantime, keep writing and I'll try to answer as many of your questions as I can. Write me in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

October 1969

Those people who have never visited the Magic Castle would find it a very enriching experience. Usually, magic meetings are held in some dreary hall or a building resembling an army barracks, but the Magic castle makes up for these deficiencies. It has a great charm, not only for people who are interested in magic, but for outsiders as well. Everybody who comes to the Castle is fascinated by it

Apart from Bill and Milt Larsen, and the Board of Directors, and the staff, and people like John Shrum who have done such wonderful things for the Castle, in my opinion, one of the main things that got the Castle off the ground was the work of Jay Ose. Not only his magic, but the way he greeted everybody.

In the early days, when they first opened, Jay made a point of remembering everybody's name and the names of their wives and children or their dogs and cats, and months after meeting them, when he saw them again, he'd call the person by name. I think Jay had the greatest memory of anybody I knew for total recall of dates and events. He used his OWN form of mnemonics in fact, I used to call him "Bible Jay" because he often would say, "It's simple to remember that number because it's the 14th verse of the 19th chapter of Exodus," or whatever it was. This was very simple to Jay. So he did use association, but not the Roth or the Harry Lorraine systems.

Jay made a fabulous reputation in this club as an expert card manipulator. Certain magicians who are steeped in magic and who love magic always said that they could never understand how Jay got such tremendous entertainment out of tricks that they all knew. Well, to use an old cliché, "It's not what you do, but the way that you do it." It was salesmanship. Jay presented it, but it wasn't just the tricks that people liked. Jay could tell stories and recite poems. He could tell all kinds of stories about the underworld characters and understood their slang.

One of the very first members at the Castle, in fact he's member number seven, is Benny Roth, who was largely responsible for bringing Jay into the picture. If it weren't for Benny, Jay might not even have known about the Castle. Benny brought Jay around and introduced him to people like Snag Werris and Jim Sherman and through them he met other people like Chester Morris and Edgar Bergen and Harold Lloyd and people of that stature.

I consider Benny the Al Flossoof Hollywood because he's essentially a merchant. He would rather sell a wristwatch band or a pair of cuff links and make three cents on it than to be known for his magical ability. He's a born merchant, and a good one. Benny was a Chavez student, and if you meet him, ask him to do the waterfall shuffle. He does this very well. The only other person I know who did it equally as well was Herbert Brooks.

One of the things that brought Benny and Jay together, which was common to both of them, was their love for so-called "underworld" slang. Benny hardly ever says a word without putting it into carnival slang, and Jay was quite an expert on all types of slang.

Some of the people who admired Jay as an entertainer, as well as a friend were Edward G. Robinson, Joan Blondell, Cary Grant, Rock Hudson, Lorne Green, Efrim Zimbalist, Jr., and Karl Malden.

Advice for Young Magicians:

In talking to your magicians, I always tell them that doing magic is just like meeting somebody for the first time. When you walk out to entertain people, I don't care if it's on a stage or doing close-up magic at a table, it's like shaking hands with a person. If you meet someone who gives you an indifferent handshake, or gives you a "dead fish" handshake, and another fellow grasps your hand warmly and smiles and says that he's glad to meet you, you feel warm to this second person right away. The other person may be very nice, but he doesn't have that little magnetism that's so important {in life to be pleasant and friendly.

When you walk out on a stage, you don't just start in on a trick, you look your audience over, you look left and right and center, and you greet and meet everybody. If you smile and are pleasant about it, people will instinctively feel that you're a nice guy. On the other hand, if you walk out with a superior attitude, they won't like you. You may be a very nice fellow, but you don't have this selling ability. Robert-Houdin said to play the part of a magician. Well, I'll paraphrase that and say, "Play the part of a nice guy." Even if you don't feel it, act as though you were feeling well and happy and glad to be there. Frakson is a very successful performer because he sells his personality.

Rapport with the Audience:

I think we have some of the greatest skilled talent in magic in the country today at the Magic Castle, but unfortunately some of the fellows who have this great skill haven't developed this rapport with the audience. If they had only developed this one tenth as much as their ability, they would be great stars. They neglect this because they think the trick will stand up by itself. The trick will, with a devoted enthusiast who does magic himself, but not for the layman. They'll get bored if nothing is happening.

That's the reason I did the "Slow Motion Ace Trick." I analyzed it this way. You take the standard four ace trick, where you put down the four aces, put three cards on top of each one, and the cards transpose and the aces are all together. Now, what happens? First of all, the magician probably has the pack shuffled. Then he takes the cards and he looks through them and removes the four aces. So far, nothing out of the ordinary has happened. They have seen some spectator shuffle, which they can see any time they play cards, and there's nothing interesting about seeing a fellow take out the aces. Now, he puts down the four aces and he puts three cards on each ace. Still nothing has happened. Now he has piles selected and they're eliminated until just one remains. Then, at the finish, the four aces are together.

All through this, which may take some people five minutes, nothing has happened until the finish. This is not good entertainment. That's where I got the idea for the "Slow Motion Aces," making them come over one at a time, because at least there was interest all along the line until the climax. BUT a fellow can get the same effect doing the standard ace trick if he has little humorous things to say, or makes it interesting in some way while he's doing the drab stuff. If you color it in some way, you take the curse off all this ordinary stuff.

This was why Jay was so entertaining. When you're performing, you've got to feel in your heart. "Gee, I love all you people. What a privilege it is for me to be out here entertaining you." Always remember that you're there to please the people, to amuse and entertain them.

To Challenge or Not to Challenge Sometimes, people get into trouble doing magic because they challenge when they shouldn't. In other words, by what they're doing they'll imply a challenge. A perfect illustration of telegraphing and challenging is a force. If you just pick up the cards and don't do anything and spread them out to have a card selected, you have a good chance of forcing one. The trouble with a force is if you do any shuffling, or cutting, or peeking, or shifting first, the spectator sees this preliminary thing and he knows that you're getting ready to do something. The proof of this was Malini. He'd cut the pack and leave a step and put the pack on the table. Now, he'd go into some long story and the cards were out of the Picture. They'd ask him to do another trick, but he'd put it off and just leave the cards on the table with that tiny step in the deck. Now, when he finally decided to do one more trick, he'd just pick up the deck, and 93 times out of 100 he'd force the easel because there was no preliminary set up, no peeking, no twistings, no passes, no glimpsing . . . nothing.

A great many times, when I see fellows doing tricks at the Castle, they get caught not because they do the tricks badly, but it's what they said that got them into trouble. They say the wrong thing at the wrong time and challenge too much. Instead, they should say the right thing at the right time to help cover what they're doing. You challenge them when you want them to catch you, Like during a sucker trick, that's when you challenge them, but you don't challenge them before you make the move. Challenge them after you've done the move, then pretend that you're going to do something.

This is of the utmost importance when you're doing magic, the time element, and I don't think much has been said about this. Make the thing occur under any subterfuge or subtlety you can, and then, when the work is done challenge them. Magic is an art of deceit. The whole idea is to bamboozle them and bewilder them, and lead their logic astray. If you don't do that, it's like teaching a monkey to do a trick. A monkey can learn to do a trick, but he doesn't have the ability to understand the human element.

Branches of Magic There are many branches of magic. There's display magic where you show how clever you are. You want to impress the people that you've practiced for hours and you make beautiful fans, and catch them in heaps off your arm, and spring them from hand to hand. This has its place in magic. It's just like juggling and it's very clever. But magic, to me, should be mysterious. I don't care what it is, it should have a mysterious, occult quality. If people can say, "I don't understand HOW that can be done. It's against all the laws of nature," this is good magic.

I've always tried to notice which fellows pick up magic easily and quickly. I thought for a time that a lot of doctors seemed to like magic. More doctors perhaps than lawyers or architects, but I did make this observation and I think it's a pretty true one. Nearly all musicians, and I don't care what their instrument is, if they become addicted to magic, they become good at it. I think there's a reason for this. Anybody who is a schooled musician knows what it is to study and figure out things and work at it. He doesn't just push a button and learn to play the trumpet or the piano. He's got to practice and analyze. That may be why some doctors are good. They go through a medical course where they really have to study.

Ray Grismer, who is a very fine musician and pianist, has been giving me lessons on piano in exchange for magic lessons. He's been making far more progress than I've been making, not because he's a bad teacher, but because he's a more apt pupil. He works in

Stark's Restaurant, where he not only plays piano, but people now ask him to do some magic because he does it so well.

I brought this up because so many people ask how to go about learning magic. Well, you learn it the way you'd learn to play all instrument . . . you practice, you read about it, you make contacts with people who do it, you ask advice. You've got to live with it and make it part of your being.

Thanks again for all the letters that you've been sending in. Anyone who'd like to write can reach me in card of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

November 1969

Just recently, I was remarking to Jules Lenier that one place I've always wanted to visit was Australia. Strangely enough, Peter Pit, who's in charge of the talent for the cruises on the Princess Lines asked me if I would consider going to Australia. I was quite shocked, but early tomorrow morning . . . it's early for me because I never get up until the crack of noon, and tomorrow I have to be up about 8:30 . . . my dear friend Ron Wilson is going to drive me in his chariot over to Wilmington to board the Princess Italia.

Fine Magicians

There are a lot of fine magicians in Australia. In fact, when I first met Cardini, everything he did he said that he learned in Australia. I understand that there was a fellow named Fagin there at one time who did coins. He was supposed to have been a superlative coin man. According to Cardini, he originated the Coin Star and different things of that type.

The first time I ever saw split fans, which was before I ever met Cardini and probably before Channing Pollock was even born, was shown to me by a fellow named Ardo the Frog Man. He was an Australian contortionist who dressed like a frog and acted like a frog all through the act, but his hobby was magic. He did split fans and I had never seen them before. This was in Chicago in 1919. It's possible that the move originated in Australia, because I knew quite a few very fine card men in New York and none of them had ever seen or even heard about this move.

Stick to the Old Vaudeville Formula

On the ship, I'll adhere to the old vaudeville formula of course, the only good acts are the ones that have been routine and have been done over and over again. On this trip I'll be doing twelve shows and they'll all have to be different, so I'll just stick to the old vaudeville formula. When I get on the ship, I'll make a list of about fifty tricks. Then I'll pick out the strong tricks to open and close with, and in between I can use any incidental tricks.

This was the formula for all kinds of acts if you open with a strong effect, you'll catch their attention and they'll watch the act. Then you close strong because that's what they're going to remember best.

How to Close

A magic act is very hard to find a really good close for. Acrobats can turn triple twists and then the whole troupe does some spectacular thing and this can be a good finish. It's a grand climax. A dance team can do the same kind of thing with lots of swirls and everything, but a quick-change artist has the greatest closing of all. He can walk off in dress clothes and come back for his bow as an old tramp, then he walks off again and this time he might come back as a sailor or something else. Well, the audience keeps applauding to see what else he can do.

Milton Berle uses something like this. He'll tell a good story and as he walks off he says, "I know thousands like that." Naturally, the audience will applaud until he comes back and tells another one and then he walks off and says the same kind of thing again and they'll keep him coming back for bows.

But the poor magician, he pulls the egg out of the bag and he's left standing there and what is he going to do? It's hard to get off gracefully and it's certainly not like the big finish. Cardini had a beautiful walk-off. His wife would give him his cape and his hat, and as he walked off, after all those cigarettes, he'd produce a cigar and then the pipe as he was going off the Stage. It was a nice exit and this is not easy for a magic act.

Jack McMillan

To add to the confusion of getting ready for my trip, one of my dear friends, Jack McMillan, just dropped in. He makes himself quite scarce around these parts. Although he lives on the coast, he seldom comes around to see his friends. He's been an intimate friend of Charlie Miller's for years. Charlie is as prolific at magic as any man living probably, especially with cards. He would show me tricks by the hour . . . all kinds of intricate maneuvers and very difficult moves and all kinds of things. Then, suddenly, he'd come up with a real gem, and I'd say, "Charlie, the greatest thing I ever saw. Where did you ever get an idea like that?" Charlie would say, "That's Jack McMillan's." This would occur so many times that I used to tease the life out of Charlie. When I'd meet him I'd say, "Don't show me any of your tricks Charlie, show me some of Jack's."

When I was with the U.S.O. a number of years ago, I had the great pleasure of spending many hours with Jack McMillan in San Francisco, because we were waiting for a ship to take us to Manila. We were stuck in San Francisco for over two weeks. I was in charge of the unit. The only reason I was in charge was because they paid you an extra fifty bucks a week if you were I had two beautiful girls and a musician with me and I made up the foursome.

A Note about Notes

Anyway, I spent all this time with Jack, and he showed me some very remarkable things. The kind of notes I take, I put a Secret mark at the top which means "This is Excellent" and not to overlook it or ever forget it. Then my notes consist of, "Note third card from the top and then make side-slip." Well, at the time, this is very clear, but I look at this two years later and I haven't the faintest idea of what the trick was. Stewart Judah was a very thorough guy with notes. Martin Gardner was another who'd write down every move and even the patter if necessary. That way there's no mistake and they can revive the things years later. I have a lot of shortcomings, but that's one of my worst ones because I have all kinds of notes and I can't remember what in the world they are.

I've got a note on a Black Jack move and all it says at the top is, "This is the convincer." Now I know what this means, the convincer is the proof. It's satisfying the customer that everything is fair and square, but I cannot recall what the move was. My advice to young, embryonic magicians, if you want to make notes, be sure that you drill is able to understand them at a later date.

Years ago, in New York, we were always reading the magic magazines from the west coast and that was the way that we kept in touch with the west coast. On the coast in those days was Bill Larsen, Senior, who I was very friendly with. He was a wonderful man. I always liked Larsen and Wright's column; this was long before I met Bill. I used to admire be column because they always had something a little bit different, not just a rehash. In the old days, they used to rehash the same moves and tricks over and over again. There was very little bright new material then, but Larsen and Wright always did

have something interesting, and of course, Jack McMillan came up with his famous plunger system. When Leipzig came out to the coast he saw it, and when he got back to New York, he raved about it. He said why bother with rubber bands and threads and clockwork decks, when with enough practice on Jack's idea you could get this beautiful effect and you can do it any time, any place.

A thing which has been very popular with magicians is the fake push-in of cards which a lot of them use. If it hadn't been for Jack McMillan's rising card principle, it wouldn't have even thought about it. It was Jack's brainchild and not mine. I merely adapted the idea.

I've had very few really original thoughts in magic. Original thoughts just strike you. You can't work them out. People ask how you get an idea. Well, it's not really an idea; it's a culmination of working hard and trying to solve something. You try one thing and discard it, then you try something else and discard it, and you keep at it this way. Then, perhaps, you forget about it for a month and then you try it again. Suddenly, the obvious hits you, and now you've got it, but you would never hit that simple thing unless you put in the time.

Anybody who is devoted to a Subject, any knowledgeable magician, a fellow Who really goes in and delves into the art and really tries to learn something, knows where the good magicians are. He knows the men who are particularly clever in different parts of the world. So naturally, the fellows that I knew in New York, like Sam Horowitz, Arthur Finley, Al Baker and Paul Curry and fellows of that type knew all the fellows on the coast even though we never met them.

When I came out to the coast the first time and met all these fellows, I was very fortunate in having a very large turnout at the Roosevelt Hotel. I met fellows like Bert Kalmar, who wrote "Three Little Words," Chester Morris, Harold Lloyd, Edgar Bergen, Peter Godfrey, Jan Grippio, Harry Mendoza, and Larry Gray, who I taught to cut Silhouettes He was one of the greatest entertainers With a pack of cards that ever lived. He didn't know all these dodges of turning over triples and quadruples and the transfer of packets and all that kind of thing, but he knew the basic Sleights and he did beautiful magic. It was the same with Herbert Brooks. He was another one who never went in for the elaborate, intricate things. He did basic sleights, but he managed them well and he performed them well and he presented the tricks very well.

I can't remember the names of all the fellows here, but it seems lately that all the easterners are moving out here. They've been coming out here in droves, except for Ed Marlo. Even Chick Shoke, who is a great politician in magic, makes his pilgrimage out here annually. Now Tony Slydini has moved out here permanently, and I'm sure that, one of these days Del Ray will find his way out here. Bon Voyage

By the time you read this, I will be on the high seas on my way to Australia. In Sydney, I expect to see Rooklyn, a very accomplished performer who's very well liked here. I'll also try to see Les Levante, and I'm very anxious to meet a man named Dearn. He was an old friend of Malini and maybe I can get some more stories about Max.

Naturally, I won't be around to read my mail for a while, but as soon as I get back and Settled, I'll try to answer some more of your questions. In the meantime, write to me in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

December 1969

Judson Brown and Jack McMillan were two idols of mine before I met them. I never did meet Judson Brown, but Jack I got to know quite well. He once brought up a subject that I'd like to mention. He calls it "Recitations of the Obvious." This is where a fellow says, "I will now place this silk in this empty box . . . now, I'm poking it in . . . now, and I'm pushing it down." Well, this is rather sickening to see somebody do this. You wouldn't say, "Now, I'll take two steps towards the table . . . now, I'm going to back up . . . now, I'm going to walk forward." This is the way it sounds. It's painfully obvious. If a person has a big green silk handkerchief and he drops it in a box, you know what he's doing, but if you say, "I will drop this green handkerchief into this empty box," this is a little bit insulting to people. This is done a lot in close up magic also, and it's something that should be well remembered . . . "Recitation of the Obvious."

It's all right to say laker, "Let's review what was done . . . we placed the green handkerchief in the box . . ." after the thing is all over. Then it makes sense, but it doesn't make sense at the time that you're doing it. This is very bad.

It sounds kind of stupid of me to be telling you such obvious things, but having watched thousands of these magical performances at clubs and everything, I have seen this so many times, and as you get older, you get a little disgusted with it. It's just a matter of having a little taste and thinking a little.

People who put a little life and animation into a trick make it interesting. You can take two different people doing a simple card trick, it can be any kind of trick you like, and have them both do exactly the same trick and it will look like two entirely different tricks according to the fellow who does it. If he does it with a stony countenance and he goes through it methodically, in a studied way, and he's thinking what he's doing and he's not bringing the audience in; and another fellow, perhaps one like Frakson who's engaging and smiling, and he excites your emotions and he thrills you, well, it's a different thing altogether.

A fellow like my close friend Clarke Crandall can bake a trick and make it a great thing to see. He does the "Six Card Repeat" and makes a scintillating, interesting, entertaining trick out of what can be a very drab trick with the stock patter that everybody thinks they must use exactly as they got it from the dealer. Roy Benson does this trick also, but it's entirely different. There's no end to how you can color a trick. There is an end to how well you can do a sleight, or how perfect a trick can be, because magic has great limitations. That's one of the fascinating things about magic in my estimation. You can never reach perfection in anything. You can try to attain perfection and the closer you come to it, the better it is.

"Change the Moment"

One of the sagest remarks in the Erdnase book I have discussed often with Larry Jennings and other knowledgeable people with cards. He says, talking about a professional gambler, who has to do things well or he'll get shot or something, "the resourceful professional, failing to improve the method, changes the moment." A move that won't stand up or fool anybody at all, one that's very obvious perhaps, if you use enough thought and resource to do it in an entirely different manner, or at a different

time, or to change the presentation of it, then you've got something that perhaps is very fine. That's where the thought has to come in.

Gamblers Terms

Gamblers have a very colorful word that they use instead of misdirection. All gambling vernacular is very clever. Instead of the word misdirection, they call it "shade." Some of them probably don't even know what the word misdirection means. This is a picturesque and clever way of putting it. In the old days, they used the expression, "the work." If you were-shuffling a pack of cards and were retaining ten or twelve cards on top of the pack, they'd say that you "saved the work." The other part of the deck was called "the dirt." Nowadays they don't call it "the work" anymore. Now they call it a "slug." Keeping certain cards on top of the pack is known as "holding a slug."

I think people are mistaken when they say that all tricks are easy when you know how. A lot of these things are not easy when you know how. Perhaps the method is just to pull out the second card, well it's very easy in theory, but let them try to do it. The execution is far from easy even when you know how. These things have to be practiced

Don't Tell How It's Done!

I always remember what Warren Keane said to me, and this should be taken into consideration by every young fellow who does magic. Never explain how a trick is done just to satisfy anybody's curiosity. You might have a friend who's a nice guy and he asks you how you did a certain trick, and you might tell him, but this is bad, because this fellow loves to be able to explain how a trick is done. He might say that he'll never tell anyone, but he'll tell someone the first chance he gets. In my opinion, even if you're a married man, or if you have a brother or sister, don't show them. Keep them curious. Magic is much better this way. If you have a friend who is devoted to learning magic and wants to practice and he's really a sincere student, that's an entirely different thing.

One of our most enthusiastic magicians, Bob Lansing, recently married a very beautiful young lady. I know that he doesn't tell her how magic is done. Bob proves the statement that a magician is really an actor, because Bob is a very fine actor and he uses this knowledge when he's doing magic. He says that the worst thing a performer can do nowadays is take elaborate bows. The grand gestures of the circus acrobats are out of place. Leipzig always said that when you finish a good trick, one that you know should get a good hand, just lower your head slightly. Don't bow, but just lower your head and look humble. He said that this would get them every time.

Magicians who are aspiring to be magicians and who worry about inconsequential things should spend a little time discussing magic with some knowledgeable people who aren't magicians. People who enjoy magic, like Judge Pierce Young, who is a Rhodes Scholar and went to Oxford; or magicians with other interests, like Bob Lansing, who, although he does some very fine magic, is primarily an actor. It's very enlightening to discuss their viewpoint on magic . . . what they like and what they dislike. If magic is to be an entertaining art and draw the right kind of people, you've got to find out what these people like. I've had some very interesting discussions with both of these gentlemen as well as others.

Frank Ducrot

Many years ago, I worked for Miss King in New York. She never booked a job for less than \$100 so her performers worked for a lot of interesting people. She only handled two other magicians besides myself, Dunninger and T. Francis Fritz, who was Frank Ducrot. People used to call her up for children's entertainment and she got so many calls for these shows that she finally decided to look around for a good children's magician. Well, she had all these brochures and folders and she came across one of a little boy with an Eton collar and Lord Fauntleroy clothes. It was T. Francis Fritz, the Boy Magician. Of course, at that time, he was probably in his late fifties and quite heavy. So she called him on the phone, and Daisy White, his secretary who used to do his booking, made all the arrangements, and Frank Ducrot went out to do the kid's party. Anyway, Miss King got a wonderful report that said that the children just loved it, so she thought she'd book him all the time. Well, she always sent him his checks and never met him, but one day, her secretary said that T. Francis Fritz was here and Miss King said, "Send the little fellow right in," and in walked this huge hulk of a man. She had been booking him for months and never knew that it was Frank Ducrot. She thought it was a little boy in a Lord Fauntleroy suit.

Miss King booked exclusively for the Keith theaters. Keith vaudeville was the real vaudeville. You hear people talk about the old two-a-day. That was when they had a matinee in the afternoon and a show in the evening, but I remember vaudeville when they only had a matinee on Wednesday and Saturday. All the other days it was only one show a day. This was when I first started in magic, in the early days of Leipzig, T. Nelson Downs, Warren Keane, Larry Krane the Irish Wizard and Gus Fowler with his water act. They only played one show a day and you would get booked for 45 or 50 weeks a year. You'd start in New York and go all the way to the coast and back.

Back-Hand Palm

There has always been a great deal of discussion about who invented the back-hand palm. Don't judge by Houdini's book, "Dr. Elliott's Last Legacy." This is a tragic thing because I read the notebooks of Dr. Elliott. One time, when I was going from Providence, Rhode Island back to New York, I got on the ship and just by luck I saw Dr. Elliott standing at the railing. Well, we shared a stateroom and "Doc" showed me some Morocco covered scrapbooks. He had about seven or eight of them, which were all notes on cards and he asked me to make some little drawings in them of some of the moves. After he died, they were advertised for sale, but I was never able to get hold of them. If they're still around, I'd still pay a good price for them because I know that there are some drawings of mine in them.

Somehow, Houdini and Clinton Burgess got them and they tried to rewrite the card tricks. Well, Houdini wasn't a card man by any stretch of the imagination. Clinton Burgess was pretty good, but he was primarily a manipulator with fans and stuff. They tried to write this book on intricate card magic from Dr. Elliott's notes. Well, they were like my notes . . . very brief. So Houdini constructed them according to his own ideas of what the trick might be. It's a terrible card book.

Anyway, in this book it says that Dr. Elliott originated the backhand palm. Elmer Ransom told me once that a Mexican fellow walked into one of the magic shops one day and all he did was back palm the card and reproduce it. Dr. Elliott saw it and played with

it and evolved a back and front move and a lot of other little moves with it, but he certainly didn't invent the original idea.

One of his best effects was the "Card in the Egg." He had a box like a large pencil box and it was camouflaged. This was the box that he took his wand from and it looked like just one wand would fit into this box. He actually had 26 wands in the box to hold every card in the deck, one card at each end of the wand. The box had a little roller inside and all he did was hit this with his hand as he reached in and got the right wand with the right card there was no force card, he would break the egg and find a freely selected card. This was a very strong effect.

Well, once again, the Christmas season is upon us, and I'd like to take this opportunity to wish a very Merry Christmas to all my readers. This is the time of the year when a feeling of brotherhood comes to all men. I think one of the greatest things about magic is that this brotherhood and comradeship seems to exist all year among members of the magic fraternity.

Thanks for all the cards and letters that I've been receiving. You can write me in care of The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, California 90028.

January 1970

Having taken a long journey to Japan, little did I think that I would be taking another trip, but I had the opportunity, through the kindness of Peter Pit, to book a trip to Australia. It was a 42-day cruise and I had to do twelve different shows, which isn't easy. I made a list of perhaps 50 or 60 tricks, picked out good openers and good closing tricks, and I put together twelve programs which the audience seemed to like. I was very particular not to do more than one card trick in any performance. They were all stand up shows and the visibility wasn't too good, but I did the classics which are always sure fire if you present them in a half decent way. I did things like the Cards from Pocket to Pocket, Rising Cards, Cards Up The Sleeve, Diminishing Cards, and The Ladies Looking Glass.

I was going to do a complete gambling expose on the ship, but when I saw that the visibility wasn't good in the big room, all I did was a poker deal at the finish of one program. After that, even though everyone was very friendly, they wouldn't let me play poker or bridge.

This was a very eventful trip. We went all through the South Seas and to all the islands . . . the Fiji islands and the famous island of Tahiti.

To show you how true some old books were, if you read "Our Magic" by Devant, you will read that one of the most effective tricks you can do for a group of people would be the Miser's Dream. It appeals to people of all races and all ages. I think it's in "Our Magic" where it says that if you had to do a trick for a number of savages in the wilds of Africa or in India, although they may not know what those shining disks were that you were catching from the air, still they would be fascinated by the fact that you could pluck these things from places and save them in a hat or a tin can.

To prove that, I was on the ship one day when a very nice looking young lady came aboard for luncheon and I asked her who she was. She told me she was with the Peace Corps and was teaching at a school on Fiji, and she thought it would be wonderful if I could show some magic to the children, because they had never seen any kind of entertainment other than native dancing. These kids were from the ages of four to fourteen and they had never even seen a moving picture of any kind. Well, I said that I would be happy to do a few tricks for them and they closed three schools so that they could all see the show.

There were five or six hundred children there and they sat on the grass while I stood on the veranda of the school. I had an old coffee can that I took from the ship and I had a number of 50c pieces, and I got a little girl up beside me. She was scared stiff and stood completely rigid, and I picked up her long hair and shook a couple of coins into the pail. Well, you never heard such screaming in your life, and they kept saying, "Wi, wi, wi." Later, I asked the headmaster what they meant by that and he said that it was an exclamation of astonishment. That was by far the most outstanding trick that I did.

They loved the stretching of a rope and the changing color and restoring something, but I made a big mistake in doing the Linking Rings. That didn't impress them at all. Eric Lewis told me that he found it to be a good trick for kids, so I'm very anxious to see him do it for small children some time.

I had a lot of fun with the children while traveling around the islands looking at the sights. Years ago, in South America and Trinidad, I would take a rock and call a couple kids over and get them to blow on my hand and change the stone into a coin and give it to the kids, which only amounts to a penny or two. I did the same thing on this trip and pretty soon I had 50 kids following me and the only way I could get out of it was to tell them that the stone was too large or too small or too dirty or something, but every now and again I'd do it and the kids were running around picking up handfuls of rocks. If you really want to do magic for pleasure, this is the thing to do because these kids really do think you change stones into money.

When I got to Australia, I was met by Les Levante. He had a beautiful car and he took me all around to see the koala bears and the kangaroos. Incidentally, if you haven't seen kangaroos in their native country, they really travel. Sometimes, in a car going 70 or 75 miles an hour, the kangaroos will run along side and jump up on the hood. They can jump 20 feet at a time. It's marvelous to see them.

I was very flattered that fellows came from a great distance to meet me and they gave me a very nice dinner at the Indian Tea Shop. I met every member of the Sydney Ring of the I.B.M. Unfortunately, there wasn't a single one that did a trick that night. Rooklyn was there, who many of the readers will know is one of the finest billiard ball manipulators in the world. Rooklyn is not only a very fine stage performer, but also a very fine close-up performer. I've known both Rooklyn and Les Levante for years, but some of the fellows I met for the first time, like Peter Aldridge, who is well acquainted with everybody there. I was treated royally and was invited to the home of Mister "E" for lunch and also had lunch at Les Levante's house.

Some of the magicians there are very prosperous. There's a chap over there who pitches magic and he's made a fortune. They say that he does a very entertaining pitch and he's quite a wealthy man.

In New Zealand, I met Tony Wilson, the President of the Auckland Magicians. I also met Ned Kelly, Peter Evans, and Vic Symonds. Comparing Auckland and Sydney is like comparing Philadelphia and New York. Auckland is more reserved and quieter, but they're swingers in Sydney. Both countries are absolutely beautiful. Almost all the places you go there's a beautiful view, because they have inlets and peninsulas and mountains and ships in the harbor and a lot of sail boats . . . and the beaches there, like Bondi Beach, are just beautiful.

When I got to Auckland, I told them that I didn't see any tricks in Australia, so each of the fellows there did a short bit and I enjoyed it very much because some of them had some original twists that we don't do in this country.

I had a most enjoyable time and I would recommend that any reader who had the chance to visit Australia and New Zealand, do go . . . you'll have a whale of a time. The people there are very hospitable and they'll treat you like a king.

One of the Castle's more prominent members, Judge Pierce Young, is very interested in learning to do magic well, and he's asked me why I don't give the basic moves with coins or cards. Well, what are the Basics? Sure, the old books say that with the palm, the pass, the force and the change, you can accomplish almost any standard

card trick, but there are all kinds of refined methods which will puzzle a man who knows certain things, so it's hard to say what the basics are. I don't think you have to knock yourself out learning every sleight in the world . . . this is unnecessary. I think the best way to do it is first decide what you want to do, and then learn the sleights that fit that particular trick. This is better than learning a bunch of sleights and then wondering what you're going to do with them.

I think the average person enjoys magic if you don't make them look silly or try to show them how smart you are and how dumb they are. This is a fatal thing doing magic. Years ago, Douglas Dexter who was a very fine English magician, spoke better English than most of the people he was entertaining. He was quite a scholar and spoke perfect English, and he told me that it was an awful detriment to him. People don't mind foreigners or natives, but if a fellow comes out and is too erudite, they don't like it, so Dexter said that it wasn't an attribute. He had to try to play this down. Especially with the lower class, it counted against him.

Well, my trips were wonderful, but now I think I'll stay home for a while. I've got a lot of catching up to do. During the past six weeks, a lot of mail has piled up and I'm going to go through it all and try to answer some of your questions. I really appreciate your letters, and you can still write me at the same address . . . in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

February 1970

Inner Circles

When I got back from my Australian trip, I found quite a bit of mail, and one letter in particular interested me. It was from Bob Gunther whose name I have known for many years and who is an intimate friend of Charlie Miller's. He asked me about an inner circle and wanted to know if this was a form of snobbery. Well, I'd like to say right here and now, that I don't consider an inner circle in any phase, whether it's photography or juggling or dancing, a form of snobbery.

Actually, there was an inner circle formed and he may have heard rumors about this. We formed a club in New York in 1937. A very clever lawyer friend of mine, Garrick Spencer, was a corporation lawyer for the Woolworth Company, the New Yorker Magazine and I think, for the Reader's Digest also. He was also the man who laid out the tax system for Sweden which they still use.

Garrick was a student of mine and had only been doing magic for about three or four months when he said, "You know, it's a funny thing, but the public can't discriminate between a good magician and a bad one. They see somebody and they say he's just a magician, but if we had a standard of comparison, if there was some kind of hallmark, a mark of excellence that we could put on a person, it might make a difference. Then you could say that he's a member of the Academy like the Academy of Medicine in France. Right away, this would put a stamp of quality on a performer." He thought that if this club were to keep going, it would eventually put a hallmark on magicians that people would recognize.

Well, we got about 14 magicians together. There were no dues or elections, it was just a case of getting a group of magicians together who loved magic and who were good performers. Just to mention the stature of some of the members, there were Malini, Leipzig, Warren Keane, Cardini, Charlie Miller . . . people who are respected by any professional magician in the world. They knew that these people have a certain quality of excellence.

We called the group the Academy of the Art of Magic, and we had a little medallion that you received when you became a member. On the front were the initials A.A.M., and on the back was the date that you were elected into the group. Ottokar Fischer was also a member. He received his medallion just about three weeks before he died, and his wife said that he was really thrilled to think that these illustrious magicians picked him to be a member of this group.

There was no snobbery about it. It was just a group that got together. It wasn't a case of trying to flaunt the fact that you were a member of this Academy and the next fellow wasn't. I doubt very much if Paul Fox, who was a member, Or Charlie Miller

have even shown this medallion to anyone. I, on occasion have shown it to someone if they asked me about the club, but I certainly don't carry it around with me.

One thing that all the members of the Academy had in common was that they all liked to talk about magic. Some performers finish a show and they couldn't care less, they say that magic is a job and that's all. Leipzig would finish a show and then sit down and discuss moves and sleights with some of his friends for hours. The group met once a year for a dinner at the Waldorf in New York, but that was all. We all pledged that if ever we came across anything good or novel, we'd share it with each other. When we had our annual dinner, there was no politics, we just discussed magic.

Doc Daley was very anxious to start it up again after Spencer died, and I think if Doc had lived, he would have. If we formed another group like this today, I would say that most of them would be right from the Magic Castle. We have no inner circle in the Castle, but I'm quite sure that we could add a number of very fine names to a group of this type.

Another member of our Academy was the well-known New York illustrator, Arthur Finley. He was the fellow who fooled Billy O'Conner when he came to New York. At some later date I'll talk some more about the legendary Arthur Finley.

Magical Societies

I'm constantly asked by young readers how to get into a magical society. Well, from my point of view, magical societies and clubs certainly don't further the interest of magic. It seems to be just a place for people to either become politicians and run for office, or else get up and show how badly magic can be done. They usually stand there and say, "Now, for my next effect . . .", and it annoys me because what they do has no effect whatsoever. If they would say, '(Now I'm going to do something very unusual,' that would be fine. There are countless ways to express a thought. When Leipzig came out he didn't say, '(Now I'm going to do several effects,' he said, "I'm going to do a number of novelties with a deck of cards." You can say that you are going to do a number of unusual things or perplexing things, but they always repeat the word 'effect'. You'd think that they only knew one word.

Then they say, "My next effect is with two silks, one orange and one blue," and everyone can see that one is orange and one is blue. People should use their heads a little bit about patter and what to say. It's really very simple.

Then there's the fact that they always talk about 'silks'. For heaven's sake, can't they call it a handkerchief or a foulard? They could call it a piece of silk if they wanted to, but if it has a hem on it and it looks like a handkerchief, they should call it a handkerchief. Call it a doily, call it anything, but don't call it a silk.

This is a pattern . . . everyone in these magical organizations does the same thing. If only one fellow Call it a doily, call it anything, but when every guy says the same thing, and usually does the same tricks in the same way, this is bad for magic.

Our last meeting of the S.A.M.. was very unusual. Lou Derman ran the show and he was very particular to get good performers like Frakson. He had anybody who could perform a sleight of hand trick. Leon Leon opened the show and he had a very sensible way of doing the Professor's Nightmare. Instead of using three ropes the way everybody does, Leon used shoelaces. His patter was about the fact that one was too short and wouldn't fit the shoe and one was too long for his shoe and he made them all the same size. Then he said that he didn't need three all the same and he changed the color of one of them. Well, it was a logical story and he made a very amusing thing out of it with clever patter. Everybody did good tricks over there that night.

Jarrow and Larry Gray

I've only known two people in my life who really did good magic and were also very funny. Those two people were Jarrow and Larry Gray. There's a reason for this. All of Jarrow's magic was beautifully presented, but he was a Dutch comedian who got howls of laughter. He got the laughter while he was borrowing money, while he was rolling up his sleeves, while he was making preparations, but when he came to the trick, the dramatic part of the trick he was dead serious. No funny cracks, no remarks, nothing . . . and in this way. He combined the two.

Larry Gray did it by impersonating how different people would present the trick. He would do one like Hugh Herbert. Or one like Ed Wynn, or Bing Crosby. Well, they would laugh because it was a character doing a trick, but he did a good trick and at the same time, they were amused by the trueness of the impersonation. Van Hoven, greatest of all the comedy magicians, didn't do a trick. Everything went wrong. Everything was upside down and backwards. Lou Derman. Who is a very good friend of mine gets belly laughs, but he tries to combine the magic and the laughs and you can't do it. He says that when he does something serious, it's a terrible lull in his performance. It's not a lull, but you can't get a belly laugh when the spectators are thinking about the trick.

The Heart of the Matter

I have a letter from Frank Booker and he wants to know if I had completely recovered from my heart attack. These rumors are very silly. It's kind of annoying. I'd like to say, for the benefit of the readers. that my only heart attacks are the ones that I get when I see a pretty girl. And I'm very pleased to say that I will reach the age of 76 on my next birthday in June.

S.A.M.. in Milwaukee

Shortly after my birthday they will be having an S.A.M.. convention in Milwaukee. Rick Rogers, who at one time had worked as an assistant to Virgil, is the National Conference chairman. And Rick is doing everything possible to make this one of the best conventions ever held by the S. A.M. It's only \$25.00 per person, and this fee can be sent right now to the Registrar, Tom Weber, 8613 W. Mitchell Street. Milwaukee, Wis. 532

I still have some unanswered letters and I'm very happy that so many of you have been taking the time to sit down and write. I'll continue to try to answer your questions in this column. You can Still reach me at the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

March 1970

This month, I had contemplated writing about my long association with Cardini. I first met him in 1924 in a silhouette shop that Larry Gray and I had on Broadway. However, I've changed my mind and I'm not going to say anything on that subject at this time. Perhaps I'll reserve that for a future time.

LARRY GRAY

I'd just like to mention that Larry Gray was probably the greatest exponent of the front and back palm of any man that ever lived. I think he was better than Le Paul or Cardini or Clinton Burgess, who was, at that time, the noted card manipulator. It was said that Burgess did an invisible front and back palm, but Larry excelled them all and any old-timer who knew Larry will agree to this.

Our silhouette shop was a very unique place. One day, we kept track, and 60 magicians came by. We had a long table in the back room and Leipzig and Jud Cole and Warren Keane and Al Baker and Wallace Galvin and the members of the local S.A.M.. used to drop in. It was quite a meeting place.

Talking about that brings back memories. During that time, Bob Sherman and Jack Davis were in the magic business, and of course, Frank Ducrot was the main magic shop in New York. This shop, which was originally Herman's, is now owned by the celebrated Al Flosso.

HARRY MENDOZA

Whenever I think of those days, I think of my good friend Harry Mendoza who passed away quite suddenly. Harry always loved to talk about Daisy White and Frank Ducrot. Daisy White was the red-headed gal who was in charge up at Ducrot's. Everybody in the magic business knew her. Harry liked to joke and talk about the old days . . . about the different magicians like Schlausser, who used to sell feather flowers. He was a real character on 42nd Street. Then there was Waters, who said that everybody stole his material, and, of course, Welsh Miller who came on the scene a little later. He was really a character. He eventually ended his life by jumping out of a window, but he got religion. Welsh used to go on the subways to Brooklyn and pull out a collapsible table and set it up on the train and start doing magic. As soon as somebody said something to him, he'd start preaching religion and it always wound up in a fracas of some kind where the guard would put him off the train. They didn't mind when he was entertaining the people, but he loved to talk and get into discussions about religion.

Welsh had a trick that I saw him do in Max Holden's old shop. He would put a card on the wall and the card would crawl up the wall. He had a cockroach with wax on its back and he would stick the card on the cockroach and the cockroach would climb up the wall. It was really funny because nobody could figure out how he did it. They thought he used threads or something like that. Welsh was quite famous, in fact, I could write a column just about him.

Incidentally, he was the first one to sell those rising wands with a knob at each end and the elastic running through the center. He sold quite a few to bandleaders who

were in New York at the time. They used them as a gag because he made them up like batons.

Harry Mendoza used to work for Bob Sherman in Grand Central Station. He had a very nice little magic counter right at the head of the subway stairs. Many times I'd go in and talk to Harry. He knew everybody in New York. Later, of course, he came to California. He was one of the first magicians to settle out here and he did a lot of work. Not only did he do private engagements, but he had parts in several movies. He was also a revered member of the Castle Board of Directors. We're all going to miss Harry a great deal.

New York was a wonderful place in those days if you were interested in magic. We had theaters like the Palace and the Riverside Theater and, of course, Proctor's and many other theaters, and almost every week you could go somewhere and see a good magician work. Now, you get a very bad impression of magic with a few tricks on television where the lighting isn't good or the angles are wrong.

FRAKSON

Through the years, I know of no other performer who has stood the test of time like Frakson. He recently did a show at our Academy Awards Banquet. He told me that he was going to quit the business before the business quits him, which was a nice way of putting it, but I don't think the business is ever going to quit Frakson because he's constantly in demand.

MY FOUR IDOLS

My four idols in magic, when I was a boy, were Nate Leipzig, Max Malini, Warren Keane, and Silent Mora. I didn't live in the States at that time, I lived in Canada, but every year they would play my hometown of Ottawa and I always spent every available minute I could with them. I used to go to their hotel and sit and talk with them and exchange tricks. They were very nice to me as a boy and I always appreciated that.

I get letters from boys of ten or twelve years of age and they ask me if they're too young to start in magic. Well, you can't start too young at anything, but the important thing is not to get into bad habits. If you form bad habits when you're young, you'll find them very hard to break later on if you want to progress in the business. Usually, youngsters stand in front of a mirror and imagine themselves great performers in a big city on a fully lighted stage and they don't realize that they're blinking their eyes on a move or turning their back to the audience or doing other things that wouldn't go well in a show. If you're young, it's very hard to break away from it.

The great thing about seeing many magicians is, not to copy them, but to learn what to do and what not to do. When you see a magician, if you're fascinated by it or you like it, you can analyze why you like it. If you didn't like it, then analyze why not . . . what were the mistakes this performer made . . . was it his presentation or his choice of tricks . . . this is something that can be very valuable.

The more magic you can consume or see and absorb the better background you have. All great artists, in every field, say that you should learn all you can about a subject. Learn the background and the history and keep it in your subconscious . . . it's bound to help. Some people are not real magicians. They've never read anything about

the background or history of magic. These fellows will never really be good magicians because they don't know anything about the subject. They may learn to do a few tricks creditably, but they'll never be what you call a schooled magician.

Years ago, the books that I really enjoyed, the ones that I really got information out of, besides C. Lang Neil's book and Erdnase, were Robert-Houdin's works. When I was a kid, I would have gone for miles or sold my bicycle just to learn a trick because I was greedy for everything I could learn.

JOHN RAMSEY

Recently, I was talking to some people about the new John Ramsey book, and I told them that if there was only one copy of the book available. I would give \$1,000 for it. I would give that much just to read it. I mentioned before about having early idols, well, later on I had other idols . . . Tony Slydini and John Ramsey, because I think that both of these fellows are superlative at misdirection and magic. I can't sing the praises too much about this Ramsey book, but I feel perfectly certain that there are six people in the whole world who will really appreciate this book, because no one else will read between the lines. A lot of people never saw John Ramsay work. They don't know how he worked or what his thinking was. To me, the book is a veritable treasure. It's a marvelous lesson in magic and it gives the true secret of magic which has never been divulged in a book before. Malini said it was the "eye," but Ramsey really explains it.

The main thing that most of my readers will get from magic is the fact that they will meet some wonderful people through the years. How many of you will ever really be professionals . . . probably 1 out of 1,000 will ever make a living out of magic. It's a dubious living, although compared to other professions there's less competition in magic than in any other field. If you try to be a musician or an artist or a lawyer or a doctor, you'll find thousands of clever competitors, but in magic, the competition is very meager. If any fellow is bright and wants to succeed in magic, if he has business ability and will apply it in the same way as selling insurance or automobiles, then there's no reason why he can't be a success.

This column has been very much devoid of magic except for one column about how to analyze and improve a trick, so some time in the future I'm going to annoy every body by describing a very complicated trick. I don't know when it will be, but it will come up some time in the future.

Until then, you can still write to me at the same address, in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

April 1970

In my younger days, I traveled around—quite a bit and met some very wonderful people. One of these was Loring Campbell. Anybody who read any of the old magazines knows that Loring was a businessman. He always kept the magazines posted on this route. Loring did a very nice Chatauqua show for schools, and he made magic very entertaining because he had a nice warm personality. Now, Loring probably has one of the greatest collections of western books that there is. He sold one very large collection to a museum in Tucson, Arizona, and he has another collection which is almost equal to that one now.

Loring, of course, has been a Californian for a long time, but I think we now have more magicians congregated in this part of the country than in any place in world. Ed Marlo may not agree with this, but I really wish he would come out and join the crowd out here. I know that anybody as dedicated to cards and magic as he is would have a wonderful time here on the west coast. I know he'd be received royally by his many admirers who have read his many books. In fact, I'd like to see others like Martin Gardner and Al Leech and so many more come out here.

Chic Shoke is the Ambassador from Chicago. He's been here a number of times. We have a large contingent from Chicago with us now . . . Joe Berg, Senator Crandall, Johnny Platt, Herb Borin, John Brown Cook, to name just a few, and pretty soon we'll start working on New York. My good friend Tony Slydini has come out and I think Francis Carlyle will be out soon. Maybe someday, you will have to come to California to see magic. I don't know what the government is going to say about it, but we're really cornering the market on magicians.

At one time, New York used to be the cruise center for magic. If you wanted to take cruises to South America or the Bahamas, you could book this in New York, but now, due to the Princess Lines opening up, there's a lot of magic being booked on this line. Several of the boys have been taking trips to Alaska and Acapulco as well as other places. Peter Pit is in charge of the bookings on these ships, and if a magician is really qualified, Peter will be only too happy to book him.

The Larsen boys are largely responsible for making California the Magic Mecca. A lot of people don't know that Bill and Milt are really interested in magic. Bill does a nice act with some good standard magic and mnemonics and loves to perform illusions. Milt astounded everybody at the Awards Banquet with a very comical act. It's not easy to get up and do an act that you've only done a few times in your life, but the act looked really professional. One night, after sitting in the Castle, Milt picked up a silk handkerchief and did more knots and twists with it than a lot of fellows who specialize in silks.

Some people don't realize that magic has changed. They still think that if you show a box made of heavy wood and painted with a rabbit or a dragon, and you pull out five or six little handkerchiefs, it's good. They don't seem to realize that this day and age are gone. This may have been good 100 or 150 years ago, but it's pretty tragic today. When you can look into a little box and see pictures from 1,000 miles away with a miniature television, it's ridiculous to do things of this type.

A lot of young people say that they want to be illusionists. They don't want to monkey with the little things. Well, believe me, you've got to learn how to do small tricks before you can be a good illusionist. A fellow who's not trained in magic thinks he can lean over and pull a lever or reach behind something and adjust something, whereas a fellow who's used to doing tricks knows that it's got to be covered in some way. You have to use misdirection or timing to make an excuse to do it. If you understand these things, you'll do illusions much better than someone who has a lot of big boxes.

I remember reading, years ago in some book, that if you become expert with cards, you will have very little difficulty with any other branch of magic. I think this holds true, because in cards you have almost everything. You have concealment, you have misdirection, you have every means to deceive. Once you learn the basic rules about how to deceive with cards, you can apply it all along the line.

Who can say where magic is going? With the gadgets that we have today, any magician who thinks he can take a box and pull some handkerchiefs out of it and mystify people with it has another thing coming. Magic must appear to be beyond any possibility of explanation.

You've also got to realize that the tempo of magic has changed. Doctor Elliott told me one time, that when you read Hofzinser, you've got to realize that those were the days of Chivalry and politeness. To walk down and have a card selected by some lady in the audience might take five minutes. It was done very formally with great courtesy. Today, you can't waste that time. Now, the tempo is very fast.

I think, in the future, magic will become more simplified as far as equipment goes. If some guy comes up with some marvelous thing that would flabbergast people like Robert-Houdin did with electro-magnetism, he's not going to do magic with it. He'll sell it to some big gasoline company or General Electric or somebody who will use it commercially. So I think that the magic of the future will have to be some mysterious thing that happens without any extraneous thing of any kind. Mystery will always have a great hold on people. All of life is mystery, and until they solve that, there will always be mystery. As far as entertainment goes, people will always be amused by engaging entertainment of any kind, so I think magic will always have its place.

Years ago, there was a cartoon in the old Life Magazine, when it was still a humor magazine, by Gluyas Williams. It was a picture of a big crowd in a room where everyone was enjoying themselves. There was a pool table in one corner of the room, and they were playing cards in another, and they were standing around the piano singing, and there was a group dancing . . . and there was one little guy goin' around saying, "Won't someone please take a card?" Well, this is the trouble. Magicians, unfortunately, don't have any discretion. There's a time and a place for everything/

Malini always said never to do a trick for anyone unless they coax you, and then when you do a few, you stop and make them coax you to do more. Don't inflict magic on people. That's what hurts magic more than anything else. If you can create the desire to see a trick by some casual remark, that's something else, but don't just walk over to

someone and ask them to pick a card. People are intrigued by magic if it's done at the right time and the right place.

Well, we've come to the end of another column. I can't tell you how pleased I am with the response that I've been getting from my writing. I have quite a few letters that I will try to answer in my future columns and if there are any others who would like to write me, I can still be reached in care of the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028.

May 1970

Larry Jennings

When I came to Hollywood to visit my dear friends the Larsens and Jay Ose, I came out planning to stay two weeks. I'm still here over seven years later. I had never heard of him before but all of a sudden out comes a guy named Larry Jennings who said: "I came out here because I heard you were here and I wanted to meet you." I was astounded at what this young man knew about cards. I hadn't met anyone in years who could do such beautiful work with cards so naturally we became bosom friends.

Larry Jennings does heavy work for a living but he has a touch like a fragile flower. He is a very, very clever manipulator.

When I went to Japan to see my dear friend, Tenkai, some years ago, nothing could stop Larry. He paid his own expenses and came along. It's very lucky he came because I could sit in the background and bask in his magic. I could let Larry take over. He performed magic in Japan and made many friends. One of them, Kato, came over from Japan just to write a book about Larry's magic which will be published in Japanese and possibly English.

Larry, I would say, is among the half-dozen top card magicians in the world. He is creative. He not only improves things but has ideas on putting things together. For example, some years ago we went to . . . I believe it was Cleveland although it may have been St. Louis. Larry concerned the famous Marlo at the bar and sat beside him. Three hours later, after I had finished shaking hands with old cronies, etc., Marlo was still sitting there watching Larry with the cards and Marlo hadn't touched the deck but rather was watching very closely. This is proof that Larry must be something because Marlo wouldn't waste five minutes with someone who didn't have something different.

Marlo has dedicated his life to cards and both Larry and I are looking forward to having him come out to visit the Magic Castle. He owes us a visit. Congratulations Larry on this, your issue.

Suzy Wandas

Suzy Wandas Bennett was visiting the Castle a few weeks ago. Suzy doesn't go back as far as I do but she knew a lot of the European performers who are now only legends.

She brought a color film which shows she did the backhand palm with cards and did it very beautifully. I have commented that Tony Giorgio should see this because he considers himself a second Channing Pollock. The film shows that she not only handled cards beautifully but she also handled the Rings very neatly and everything was done in a nice style. I'm sorry that I never saw her perform in person but I saw the pictures and I think I'm a pretty good judge and can tell that she was an excellent performer. It was charming to meet her and anyone who has the opportunity should see her films which also include the fine jumbo card work of her late husband, Dr. Zena Bennett.

Convention Notes

A few comments about the recent local I.B.M. Convention in Hollywood. Everyone was very enthusiastic about Larry Jennings' lecture. Also, Dick Zimmerman's "Think Creative" lecture was very fine. Charlie Miller is always good. Charlie has practical, good magic which he doesn't clutter up. He always presents it well. I've known Charlie since he was a youngster and he makes a big hit with everybody.

Pete Biro has unusual and original material for the magicians and puts a novel twist to everything. Magicians expect the usual and are surprised to find the unusual in Pete's hands. Bruce Cervon did a very good lecture and so did Mike Skinner. I liked Bev Bergeron's impromptu levitation and Leon Leon impressed me with the originality in everything he does. If the old days of vaudeville were back, Leon could take his Automation act and make a sensation with it.

On the public show Vic Perry was very good and Dick and Diana Zimmerman were great. Diana has to bask in the reflected glory of her husband. Although Diana has the beauty and the execution, the brains are Dick Zimmerman who created her record act. Very, very fine act and the Zimmermans will go a long way in magic, I think.

The Great Leon

Speaking of Leon Leon above reminds me of a historical fact that some of our readers might find interesting. I met Leon Leon's father, The Great Leon, in Cincinnati many years ago. He told me how he considered himself a failure as a young man and had run away from home. He came back about three months later and discovered that in the short time he had been away, a beautiful big apartment building had been built in a vacant lot where he used to play ball. This started him thinking . . . if men can build a tremendous building like this in just three months . . . what have I done in three months? Nothing! He decided then and there that he was going to settle down and really do something and from that point on he became very successful. It changed his whole point of view of life.

Basic Moves

Let's talk about basic moves. Many consider Herbert Brooks to be the finest entertainer with cards in the history of magic. Yet, Herbert Brooks made only four moves. He did a pass, a change, a palm, and a force. With these simple, direct moves he created a sensation. Of course, he really knew how to dramatize his tricks.

Larry Gray was another who never did a double lift. He was a marvelous entertainer. There's an old move called "Oldtimers Night" which is about vaudeville performers performing in a boarding house. Larry did about fifteen minutes in the film with nothing but giant cards. The Magic Castle would like to buy a copy of this film in case any of you know where a print might be.

Larry Gray

Larry Gray was possibly the greatest card performer who ever lived. To tell you how good he was, we were in Peoria one time in a nightclub where they charged a cover charge. It was a dance affair with a band and Larry and I went. Someone told the manager that there were a couple of magicians there from New York and he asked us to

do a couple of tricks. I declined but Larry agreed to do just a couple of tricks. Mind you, this was a group of teenagers who really wanted to dance and couldn't care less about magic. Well, Larry was introduced and performed on a little platform. There was absolute pandemonium. You never saw anything like it. They forgot about dancing and kept Larry on for two hours with just the cards. Larry Gray entertained the hell out of them and very few guys could have done that. He never did a double lift in his life but what an entertainer! Called "The Dizzy Wizard," Larry was from England originally. He did the backhand palm better than Clinton Burgess, better than LePaul, better than anybody living. He committed suicide out here as you may know.

Chuck Vance

Well, to get back to my travels around the country, you may recall that I used to cut silhouettes, which I did to avoid going to work. I used to make three and four hundred dollars a week which, in the time of the depression, wasn't bad money. I traveled all over the country and finally wound up in Peoria, Illinois where I bumped into a very debonair young man named Chick Vance. He was very handsome and the Navy used him in naval uniform on a poster to encourage men to enlist. Anyway, I met Chuck and visited his family. In fact, his mother wanted to adopt me because she thought I had a good influence on her son. That shows you how I fool people. I got very friendly with Chuck. He came from a very wealthy family and he liked magic. For a time he did an act as "The Marco Polo of Magic." He sold himself and in the act is a very high-class way and commanded a high salary for it. I saw him do many performances under many different sets of circumstances and hope someday he will do an "IT'S MAGIC" show for The Brothers Larsen. He married a beautiful girl from Chicago named Pat who had a fabulous model agency and they now live in Arizona. Everything in his act was immaculate. His apparatus was sparkling and his girls were beautiful. You had to like his act because in addition to being good magic, the act was beautiful to look at.

In those days I used to do only mental card tricks. Instead of having someone draw a card, I would have them think of a card. I must say I was lucky. I often got the card they were thinking of. In fact, I made quite a reputation by letting people think of cards and then finding the card they thought of which is pretty difficult with 52 cards in the pack.

Chuck Vance was one of the few who ever analyzed the theory behind why people think of certain cards which shows what an intelligent man he is in addition to being a good businessman and all-around nice guy.

Faucett W. Ross

I want to say something about my dear friend, Faucett W. Ross, who lives in St. Joseph, Missouri. When he was a young boy of nine or ten, he used to lie on his stomach on the veranda and read Shakespeare and break into laughter and laugh and laugh. "What a prolific little boy" everyone would say. He would read everything and early in life had a marvelous library, but not only in magic but all kindred subjects and everything else.

I first met Ross in New York when he visited with Tommy Downs and Eddie McLaughlin. When Sam Horowitz first met Ross, he asked him where he came from and Ross said he was from Missouri. Horowitz thought and thought and said, "Oh, that's where they grow things, isn't it?"

I got to know Faucett Ross through the years and he's been a great friend of Earl Violet, Tommy Downs, and all the old-timers. He knew everybody in magic.

Ross has really been the mentor of Charlie Miller. When Charlie was a small boy he would write to Faucett for advice and Ross became like an uncle to Charlie, nurturing him along in magic.

Faucett Ross is an unsung magician unknown to many in the magic world, but here's a fellow who has been making \$20,000 to \$25,000 a year on magic. He does not exploit himself but he works consistently. He does three different shows. He has one he can work on a truck for a lot of farmers. He can also put on his swanky Italian tux and Italian shoes and do a show for sophisticates. He has a Rotarian act. He also has a trick for fair grounds and is one of the few magicians who can go in front of a crowd at a fair and hold 8,000 people entranced. He's a very modest guy, but a very knowledgeable guy. I can't praise him too highly. I will be visiting him on a trip I'm about to take and will probably write my next column from St. Joseph. Meanwhile, thanks for your letters and you can continue to write me c/o the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, California 90028 as I will no doubt have returned by the time this issue reaches you.

June 1970

I have just returned from a brief visit to the Middle West visiting old friends in Chicago, Wichita, Kansas City and St. Joseph, Mo. These visits brought back a flood of pleasant memories of the many months I spent there nearly forty years ago and recalled some of the experiences and adventures which may prove interesting to GENII readers.

I would like to preface my remarks by saying that during the 1930's, the years of the Great Depression, I usually spent several months during the summer in Colorado Springs, where I divided my time between cutting silhouettes and discussing the more esoteric aspects of our noble art with my dear friend, Paul Fox.

After Labor Day I would usually stop for a few weeks in Wichita and Kansas City en route back to New York.

It was in Wichita during the fall of 1931 that I confirmed the existence of a fabulous gambler in Kansas City who had perfected a revolutionary subterfuge with cards now known as the Center Deal.

One day, purely by accident, I met the turnkey of the local county jail who informed me that they were holding in custody a Mexican gambler accused of a stabbing. What fascinated me was the fact that he had been entertaining his fellow prisoners with specimens of his uncanny skill with the pasteboards.

I was thrilled when invited to meet the Mexican in the jail that evening, and needless to say I accepted the invitation with the utmost alacrity.

After an informal introduction, the little Mexican was persuaded to demonstrate his dexterity. Actually his skill was more or less elementary, but it was apparent that he was well-acquainted in the gambling fraternity.

Realizing this, I asked him a question that I had often propounded to many others of his ilk- namely- have you ever seen anything with cards that you considered different or unusual? He immediately became greatly excited and exclaimed, "Si, Senor. In Kansas City I met a man who deals the cards from anywhere in the deck."

I questioned him closely and he was certain that the cards actually came from the center of the pack. However, he was unable to furnish the name or the address of the gambler, save that he had seen him in action during a stud poker game in or around Kansas City.

The very next day I was in my car heading for Kansas City accompanied by Charlie Miller, who then a mere youth, was as excited over the prospects as was I.

For several days we made an intensive search amongst the gambling joints, cigar stores, and pool halls, meeting a host of "mechanics", and hustlers of all types. Without exception, they disclaimed the possibility of such a sleight even to the point of ridicule. One competent mechanic remarked that it was tough enough to deal a second or a base and wanted to know what mail order catalogue I had been reading.

After several days of fruitless endeavor, my friends, Charlie, threw in the towel and sadly returned home. However, I doggedly continued, but a few days later I was temporarily forced to return to Wichita for the purpose of a little refinancing made possible by the cutting of additional silhouettes.

As a result, I was enabled to return to Kansas City and continue my quest. For the third time I dropped into the Kansas City Card Co. near 12th and McGee Streets. Here I again questioned the manager, Red Langworthy, and he referred me to his partner, a Mr. Lee, of the company's dice department, who, a short time previously, had witnessed an exhibition of what might have been a demonstration of center dealing, although he was by no means sure. He told me that the man's name was Allen Kennedy and that he lived in a small town called Pleasant Hill, Missouri, located a few miles south of Kansas City.

With this somewhat meager information, I hastened to the little town, and after exhaustive inquiries, I found no one who apparently had ever heard of Allen Kennedy. On the point of giving up and while sitting in my car, I espied a small girl who was looking longingly at several other children munching on ice cream cones. Feeling sorry for the little tot, I called her over to my car, but she refused, evidently having been told by her parents not to talk to strangers. So I strode into the nearby confectionary store, purchased a cone and offered it to the little urchin. Somewhat reluctantly she finally accepted it, and simply as an after-thought I asked her if she knew a person named Allen Kennedy. Without hesitation she pointed to a white house up the street and said this was the residence of Allen Kennedy. Needless to say, I followed the directions of my newly won little friend.

Upon knocking, the door was opened by a somewhat rustic type wearing a pair of overalls. Upon my asking, he admitted to the name of Allen Kennedy and asked, "Who sent you?"

Realizing that my reception might not prove to be cordial, I was forced to concoct a little story. So I said, "Mr. Kennedy, I have heard of you on the Atlantic." This statement appeared to excite him, so I hastened to add that I had heard he could deal cards from the center of the pack. Whereupon he invited me into the house and had his wife clear the kitchen table in readiness for what proved to be an amazing demonstration.

He first placed three kings on the bottom and told me to cut the pack and "carry the cut" which I did. He said, "How many hands?" and I answered "Six." He said, "The game is stud." So saying, he dealt six hands and my first face-up card, to my amazement, was a king. He dealt another round and another king fell to me.

By this time I was watching like the proverbial hawk, and at this point he stopped dealing. I asked him about the last one, and he said, "Look at your hole card." It was the third king and I was utterly stunned.

My first inclination was to offer him considerable cash for the technique and handling. Then it occurred to me that I might have something of value to him, so I proceeded to show him an array of sundry moves and sleights which appeared to impress him greatly.

As a result, he broke down and explained the deal in the greatest detail, omitting the highly delicate technique of feeling for the formed bottom cards.

It is worthy of mention that several years later I gave the handling to the late great T. Nelson Downs, who, although not a mechanic, was most enthusiastic over its possibilities and practiced it almost until the day of his death.

A few weeks later, accompanied by my wife, Jeanne, and son, Ted, I made a second trip to Pleasant Hill. One object, at least, was to convince my doubting spouse of

the actual existence of Allen Kennedy and his work. I had warned my son to make no mention of the fact that his old man was actually a conjurer.

Again Kennedy demonstrated, and my wife, much against her natural inclination, was forced to admit that my enthusiasm was fully justified.

During the visit an amusing incident occurred. I had previously taught my seven-year-old son a simple stacking of four aces. Kennedy- remarked that I had a nice boy, so I said, "Ted, show Mr. Kennedy what I taught you." Whereupon, with a surprisingly deft hand, the child ran up the four aces in quite professional style.

As a result, Kennedy remarked, "Vernon, you sure are bringin' that boy up right."

All this transpired nearly forty years ago. At my present age of seventy-five, would I do it again? My answer must be an emphatic yes!

July 1970

Never at any time, since I was a small boy of five years old, did I have any ambition to become a professional magician with a stage act with boxes, barrels, levitations, and the like. I never cared for this kind of thing, although I was fascinated with magic, and the first time I ever saw a real magician, I saw Harry Kellar at the old Russell House in Ottawa, Canada. I went about six times to see him. In fact, I played hooky from school one time to get to a matinee. I was fascinated by Kellar's performance, not so much by the fact that he had these boxes and illusions, but the way he did the levitations. He really transplanted you from this world to another and as Kellar told me later, "I made the biggest mistake of my life when I gave my show to Thurston because he ruins that beautiful levitation." Kellar made it a beautiful thing. He walked down in the audience and said the little lady can remain suspended for years. Thurston had a lot of crummy looking people milling about on the stage while the girl was floating up in the air and it ruined the whole thing. The whole picture was distorted." It lost the beautiful levitation quality which Kellar put into this thing. I was never and admirer of Thurston, because when I was a boy 7 years old I did the 2-handed pass for Thurston and he didn't know how I got the cards. I said, "Well, I just used the pass, Mr. Thurston," and he said, "What are you doing?" he'd never seen a pass, evidently, and didn't know what it was. I was disgusted. Here's the great Howard Thurston I read about with all the backhanded palming, and he didn't know anything about the finer art of card handling at all. Well, I don't want to say too much about Thurston, because he's an idiot, but I sent some people to see his act once, and they said, "For God's sake, this is the worst thing you could have done. It's like going to a Sunday School entertainment."

Now when I first saw Kellar- I give you my word, this is true- I was just a young boy in my early teens when I – first saw Kellar. He played Ottawa, Canada and they had all the ads in the paper about Kellar, great illusionists, but the ads said, accompanied by Paul Valadon, the world's greatest sleight-of-hand performer. This intrigued me. I watched Kellar but was waiting feverishly for Paul Valadon to come on. I was fascinated by Paul Valadon. He came out on a bare stage. He just had a little stand that held five cards. He was a beautiful performer.

I never saw Herman and I have always wished I had. One of the greatest tricks in Herman's whole show was squeezing an orange out of the end of his wand. I had the privilege of learning that from one of his pupils, Old Man Green in Colorado Springs. He had taken personal lessons from Herman on how to squeeze an orange out of a wand. Simplicity in magic, properly presented, is more important than the most elaborate illusion.

Kellar was a lovable guy. He lived in California. Incidentally, Kellar was one of the few that knew the secret of Dr. Hooker's Rising Cards. I went to see Dr. Hooker's Rising Cards several times in Brooklyn, where you take your own deck of cards and mark a card before you left home. He would take your deck right from you, put it in the houlett, and your card would rise from the deck. This had everybody in the country fooled, and I wanted to know the secret. Now Kellar had the secret and I was very

friendly with Kellar. I said, "I wish you'd give me the full details on this trick." He said, "Vernon, I'd love to do it, but I'm sworn to secrecy. When I get back to California I'm going to build one in my own home. It's not a practical trick. It can't be taken on the road or moved from place to place. I think I'm the only one besides Dr. Hooker who has the secret." Years later John Mulholland and Dr. Bridges both got the secret.

To me, the two finest shows I ever saw in my life in large magic were Kellar and Fu Man Chu. They both had the same quality. They transplanted you from this earth to another planet. They really took you to a fairyland where you lived in a land of fantasy for a couple of hours during the show. They had a hypnotic effect, both of them.

Let's change the subject now and talk about the magician as a creative artist. Any young man taking up magic must know its background. All great artists, sculptors, etc., anyone who is a creative artist MUST study the history of the art. You may never use it and later you can forget about it but at the beginning you must know what's gone before. This applies to magic as well as the other arts. There is no better source for learning the background of magic than Robert Houdin. He wrote beautifully and his words give you a real understanding of the background of magic. He came up with the greatest saying in magic: "A good magician must be an actor playing the part of a magician."

You're not yourself. **YOU PLAY A PART.** As Maskelyne says in his "Our Magic," there are several different kinds of magic. Most people work in the conversational style. They work as they are, which is very easy for them because they're just being themselves. It's not easy to be yourself when you're doing magic because every time you make a surreptitious move, or do a little something under cover, you're not being yourself.

I reiterate again...I never had any desire to be a stage performer. I have many reasons for this. When I was a boy I used to play affairs at the church, the women's club, etc. One night when I'd made quite a hit at a church (I was about 12 at the time) I found my mother crying. I asked her what was the matter and she said, "I'm crying about you." She said, "I was so ashamed of you tonight." I couldn't understand it because I knew I had done a good show and I was proud. She said, "You were so beastly professional." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "All those other children who got up to entertain...they stuttered, they hesitated and they forgot their words. You went up like a brazen youngster. People will think that you belong to a circus or something." She was ashamed of me because I was a professional. From that time I began to think she was right and that I was a clown in a circus. I didn't want to be a clown. I wanted a little dignity.

Years later, in New York, when I was in the Royal Canadian Air Force, I was walking down 7th Avenue and I looked in an alley. There was Willy Howard, one of the great artists of the day, sitting in an ally with his makeup on waiting for the next show. I thought, "What kind of a business is this? I don't want any part of this. I want to live like a gentleman."

Believe it or not I never in my life went to an agent. I've been asked and asked and asked. One time when I was in Atlantic City, Francis Rockefeller King, who was the chief booker for the Keith circuit and the Albee circuit, approached me and said she would like to put me under contract. She signed me up and also Dunninger and I worked

out of her office for many years. In other words, she came to me. I never went looking for an agent. I never WANTED to be a professional magician.

Life with Frances King was easy money. She guaranteed me \$100 minimum when most people were getting about \$20 and I was tickled to death to pick up \$100 every now and again. I worked for her for ten years and many times I got more than \$100. I didn't realize that she got double and triple what she paid me sometimes, but I was getting good money anyway.

I know that a lot of my detractors (I don't have too many), say, "That guy, Vernon. He never made it." Well, I never WANTED to make it and that's the truth. I love the Magic Castle, I love the Larsens, I love the environment and I love to take Kuda Bux over in Gin Rummy. This is my pleasure. I like the cordiality, the friendship and the warmth of the Castle. This is what magic should be. It's a meager living but look at your so-called greats in magic. Most of them died broke or didn't leave much money. It's the friendships, the comradeship that you get out of magic...that's the important thing.

Next month, a few words about Erdnase.

Dai

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My good friend Fred Shields just asked me a very personal question. He asked me whether I got my inspiration to study magic from Erdnase. As a matter of fact, I was very fascinated by magic before Erdnase came out. I was born in 1894. Erdnase didn't come out until 1902, when I was 8 years old. Previous to the time Erdnase came out I had been fascinated by magic.

My father started me in magic. He didn't do any magic nor was he interested in magic. He taught me to play chess and did do a few simple tricks that he learned from his father. One of the tricks was with chalk marks on the dining room table. He took the tablecloth off and made three chalk marks: a red, a green, and a yellow. In those days we had a little cup we used to use for eggs. He would say, "Choose a color." I'd take green perhaps...and he'd take the egg cup and cover it over the green spot on the table. He'd put his hand under it and he'd knock the top of the cup. Lo and behold, when he brought his hand out, there would be a green spot on his hand which had disappeared from the surface of the table. Well, he did it several times for me and I was quite amazed at this trick. One day when I was playing with some kids under the table, we took all of the leaves out of it (we had a large dining room table which took about 6 or 8 leaves). While I was under the table I picked up one of these leaves, and here was a green and yellow chalk mark underneath. That set me to thinking. I thought why are those chalk marks underneath the table? A little later I asked my father to do the trick again, and he did it. I said, "Dad, can I look under the table?" Well, I crawled under, and he's just put his hand under and gotten the impression from under the table. This was one of my first initiations into the secrets of the art of magic.

I was very young (five years of age) when I learned to ride a bicycle. My mother had a white bicycle with no bar across the top and I could stand on the pedals. I learned to skate about the same time. Well, anyway, I loved string tricks, and I had a loop of string I used to carry around. Any time I found somebody who could do a string trick I would ask the secret. I started collecting tricks, and I got up to over 40 string tricks. At this time I was fooling with a little Lord Fauntleroy deck of playing cards and I knew there were 52 string tricks and so I kept collecting. I had an awful time collecting 52, but I finally got 52 tricks- I can probably remember only 10 or 12 of them now. I picked them up from any magazine that I could get a hold of that had a string trick in it or any boy or girl who knew a string trick or any friends of my father. So, by the time I was about 6 years old I had 52 string tricks. This was my main magic.

I don't remember what the 52nd one was. I know I used to tie a knot with my teeth and I was a purest. You were left with about 1 ½ inches of string and I used to swallow this because I wanted to in case anyone wanted to search my mouth.

I was a purist even as a youngster. My father came into dinner one night (I'll never forget this) and said, "David" (my name is David, Dai is a nickname), "David, a very interesting book came in today." My father was in the copyright and trademark branch of the Canadian government and the book had come in to be copyrighted. "It's a

very interesting book. It has a chapter on card tricks but most of it is devoted to gambling. You're far too young to see it, but when you get a little older you can see the galleys." (Incidentally, the drawings were made from photographs which very few people know. The drawings in Erdnase are very exact). "Later on when you get older I'll bring it home and perhaps you can learn some tricks from it." I said, "Dad, please bring it home now!" He said, "no, you're not ready for it now. You're only a small boy and you don't know anything about gambling, this is mostly about gambling." I was 8 years old then. He said, "There's a chapter on- legerdemain and you're not ready for it. But I'll bring you home a little god named 'Billigan'. I was copyrighted, too, and- I'll bring you home one of these." He brought me home this stupid little idol that looked like a deformed dwarf or something. He wouldn't bring home Erdnase. About a month and a half later I was walking along Back Street in Ottawa, and I saw in the window of a well-known book store, "The Expert at the Card Table" by Erdnase, and it was only 25 cents. It had a large King of Hearts on the stiff-board cover, and I walked in and bought this book. I brought it home and showed it to my father. He said, "Yes, that's the book. It evidently hit the market and you can read it now, because you bought it in a store."

Well, that was my initiation into real card work, and I was fascinated. In Erdnase, it said that the only trouble with this trick is the extreme difficulty to master it, but the tyro will not be satisfied until he masters every sleight in the calendar. As a little kid, I remember saying, I MUST remember every sleight in the calendar.

I went to work religiously and by the time I was 11 or 12 I could do everything in Erdnase, and in fact I used to almost know the book by heart. I even took it to school with me and hid it under the text books and studied it instead of geography or whatever. At the end of every term I used to get back several decks of cards, thimbles, etc., that the teachers used to confiscate from me.

A funny incident...we were Episcopalian, and one time we had a pew right down the second row from the front. My father used to always wear a Prince Albert and striped trousers every Sunday and I had to go to church very much against my will. But, I would sit like a good little boy in church and I always had my little deck of Lord Fauntleroy cards. I used to take my father's silk hat and put it on my lap, and with the cards underneath the hat, I used to practice the different Erdnase moves. One day the minister, Reverend Gorman, looked down and stared at me. I knew darn well he knew I had something under my hat. He kept staring at me, and I'll never forget the feeling of guilt I had. Later, in the old days of the movies, when they had the silent movies, and the flickers, I used to always watch the movies with cards in my hands. I used to practice. In fact, every time I had a chance, I used to practice fooling with the cards...it was kind of a mania...a disease.

It amuses me in this day and age whenever someone comes over and shows me something new. When I was 11 years of age, I knew the tricks.

When I first went to New York, I was in the Royal Air Force uniform. Cliff Green came down a little later. But I came down and visited Bamberg, Clyde Powers, Hornmann's Magic, and all the places in magic. I was greatly disillusioned by the magic that I saw, because I had read extensively. I read everything I could read on magic, whether it was a magazine or a book or anything. I read the old Mahatma, before The Sphinx even came out, and I thought when I come to New York I was going to see the

real magic. Everyone in New York asked me where I had learned these things. “Who taught you?” I used to say, out of books, and the ones that I mentioned the most were Lang Neil and Erdnase. They said, Erdnase, that’s like Geometry. Who can understand that jog in, job out business? It’s a lot of nonsense. I said it’s not nonsense at all, it’s very closely written. They said I don’t understand all those terms, and I said, well, that’s where I got most of my information- from Erdnase.

Even Dr. Elliott, who was the challenge, champion card manipulator of the world, told me he’d never thoroughly investigated the book, but there are a few things in there. Dr. Elliott was a very good friend of mine, and after I kept raving about it, he read it more than he had before, and he told me, “You’re right, there are some very good things in Erdnase.” Of course, I was curious to know who Erdnase was, and years later when I went to Chicago, there was a fellow named Myers (he used the name John C. Sprong) who worked in the Post Office having a job where he used to check when the trucks came in or something. He sat in a little cubicle and he had plenty of time to practice cards. He became an expert card manipulator. Naturally, he was a student of Erdnase, which was the best textbook on cards written up to that date. He said he found out from Drake, who was one of the later publishers of Erdnase, that Erdnase is Andrews spelled all mixed up. His real name was Andrews. I asked Mr. Drake who this fellow Andrews was, and he said he was sorry, he couldn’t tell me. So I went back there religiously for months and kept badgering the old man to tell me something about this Andrews. He said he couldn’t betray a confidence and couldn’t tell anything about Andrews. Anyway, he was one of the first men to tell the magical world that Erdnase was Andrews spelled mixed up.

Years later, Martin Gardner, one of my dearest friends and one of the most knowledgeable people in magic, thought he would do some research on this and find out who Erdnase really was. Naturally, he figured out that anybody who would write a book like that would have to have at least a High School education. So he thought he must have attended a high school- maybe a college, but first he would try the high schools. He got hundreds of post cards and mailed them out to all high schools in the territory where he thought Erdnase might have gone, to find out if there was anyone by the name of Andrews that attended any of these high schools. He also wrote to several colleges doing the same thing. He finally got back the name of Milton Andrews who was a gambler and a notorious character. When the police finally caught up with him, he shot himself and shot the girl he was living with, which is quite a tragic story. Now Martin Gardner has written in True Magazine and Detective Magazine, and although Martin is one of my dearest friends, I don’t agree with him. He thinks through purely circumstantial evidence that this is the same Andrews, but this is Milton Andrews, which has no connection with the other Andrews, because Andrews is not an uncommon name, and I’m fairly certain that this Milton Andrews, who was a gambler, was not the one who wrote the book. Erdnase is not only thorough in his explanations of sleights, etc., he was very thorough in concealing his identity. I don’t think anybody has ever found out. They did find an artist named M.D. Smith, who did the illustrations for the book, and I met him in college with Jay Marshall. He wasn’t even sure he was the illustrator. He said, “Well, I’m an old man now and years ago I think I did those illustrations.” In other words, there was circumstantial evidence that he did the illustrations, but I’m not even sure he was the

right man. The whole thing is all clouded in mystery, and I doubt if anybody will ever know the real story.

In my opinion, this is the only book that's ever been written, and I'm talking about card techniques. There's nothing that in all the other later books that isn't included in Erdnase if you read between the lines. There's no finer book that's been written, and there probably never will be another one as good.

There are limitations as to what can be done with cards. Erdnase is the finest work ever written on cards. It has never been surpassed and no one will ever surpass it.

Dunninger has his bible, "Saks Sleight of Hand." Horace Golden's bible was "Greater Magic." When Horace Golden died, I got his bird cage and his egg bag. He only carried the egg bag, a card trick, and a copy of "Greater Magic." His wife gave them to Sam Margules and he gave them to me. I loaned Fred Keating the bird cage, and never got it back. Fred died, of course. Fred Keating was famous for the bird cage. My bible is Erdnase. I would imagine Charlie Miller's bible is Erdnase. Some books are very trite but he covers everything in this book. You have to dig between the lines. You have to use your imagination. It's awfully hard to convey in print. George Jason, who is a very very knowledgeable guy, took up magic after a career teaching mathematics and working in the early days of air conditioning. He wanted to take lessons from me, and I told him, "George, if you learn technique, it'll spoil your comedy...you're not a technical magician, and don't try to be technical, because you'll be very unhappy." But George was a purist, he was a wonderful pianist. I gave him Erdnase and told him, "I want you to study this book." Now George, who teaches higher mathematics at Queens University, said he couldn't understand all this technical stuff...it's a lot of---." I said, "George, you're a teacher, you're a professor, this book is beautifully logical."

Incidentally, Jim Peters in Chicago said this book must have been put together by a lawyer, because the language is so clear, but you have to read it and study it, not just read it like a novel.

Anyone who wants to delve into Erdnase should get any of the articles written by Martin Gardner. Martin is one of the most knowledgeable men about magic. When his book comes out, "Encyclopedia of Magic," it's going to be the finest Encyclopedia available.

Erdnase is wonderful- artifice, ruse and subterfuge at the card table. One of the nicest things about Erdnase is that he says in his book, "The writer offers no mealy-mouthed pretensions of piety or sophistry for his existence, but if it sells, it will serve the purpose of the author." He says, "I betray no confidence. During the time this book was written, 1902, gambling was rampant in San Francisco. In those days, the most prevalent ruse by gamblers was the spread. Nowhere in this book does he mention the spread or give any of the workings of the spread, because he didn't want to betray any confidences. Now this is one of the unique things about him.

That's it for this month. I enjoy getting your letters, keep them coming.

Dai Vernon

September 1970

Presently at the castle we are enjoying the company and magic of Hiroshi Sawa and his friends, Yomoharu Kuno, Hitomi Ando, and Hiroshi Kondo of Japan. Hiroshi Sawa is the young man I enthused so much about in the Japanese Is of GENII. (Vol. 34 No. 1— September, 1969). Now the Castle boys are seeing that everything I wrote about Hiroshi is true---and then some! Beautiful flawless magic!

It was a real pleasure meeting and getting to know Roy Johnson of England. He entertained really entertained--for a week in the Close-Up Gallery. Everyone enjoyed his easy natural style and humor.

Roy told me that he wasn't conversant with sleight-of-hand, but after watching him work I would say that just the reverse is true. Roy understands that, regarding sleights, it's "how you get into it and how you get out of it" that counts. His lecture showed that he thoroughly understands this aspect of sleight-of hand.

During the hectic time Bill Larsen had getting ready to leave for the Milwaukee and Amsterdam conventions. Several typographical errors crept into the column. Names of some of the prominent magicians of bygone days somehow or other were spelled incorrectly. We promise to try harder to eliminate such errors in future columns!

Speaking of tile bygone days, it flatters me that many readers have told me, or written, that they enjoy my reminiscences of those days. This column will be more of the same!

When I was quite young I never aspired to be a professional magician but I was fascinated by magic Of course I had all the catalogs; I had Gamage's and Davenport's catalogs, etc. Living in Canada I naturally got the English periodicals and all the English magazines-Stanyon's serials and all the things being published in England. But I also had Roterberg's catalog and Martinka's catalog. My greatest ambition when I was a boy was to live in New York City—to be down where the magicians were---and especially to see the Martinka magical palace. I thought, "Oh my, what a great place this must be. I would love to see this marvelous castle in New York!"

When I landed in New York in my teens the first thing I did was to look up this 'magical palace'. Fascinated with the thought of actually visiting this hallowed spot I walked up and down Broadway, and I must have passed it several times. I was in the right block but I had walked past the place about Six times (it was a dingy little shop) never dreaming that I was passing the 'magical palace'! Finally I started to really check the numbers—found the correct number and looked in the window. I didn't see any magic displayed because they didn't do then as they do now---display thumb tips, etc. Oh boy, this was secret stuff and it was all in a case in a dark corner of the store. Nothing was displayed in the window but a few books.

I opened the door and a bell rang like the old country store, you know, with the bell on the top of the door. I found out later that it was Mrs. Martinka who was there and she asked, "What do you want?" I replied that I was interested in some magic. "Do you have our catalog?" she continued. Although I had one at home I said no. She said, "Well here, fifty cents," and she handed me a little pamphlet. "Don't hang around here---don't look in the catalog. You go home and look and see what you want and come back, and we'll sell it to you. 'Boy, it was very frigid, you know, very cold inside. So I quickly got outside!

When I went back later I meet Julius Dresback who was a great performer. Julius had the amateur interest in magic. He loved magic and did it beautifully. And in those days Henry Christ, who is still living, used to work there. Henry was the originator of "Dead Man's Hand " which Fu Manchu said was one of the most dramatic tricks with cards that could be done. (Lead trick in issue #33 of Annemann's THE JINX.)

Sam Horowitz and Henry Christ were just young boys at the time and they were helping out at Martinka on Saturdays. They were two of the very few amateur magicians who were privileged to go in the back room of Martinka. This was a real honor—few amateur magicians were accorded this privilege. I mean it was a real honor—only Okito and Ching Ling Fu and people of that caliber would get in the back room. Horowitz was a coin manipulator and Henry Christ was always a very well-informed magician.

I was walking along 42nd Street one day and came across the name of Clyde Powers Magic Shop. I was absolutely amazed—here was a clean up-to-date store, you know, with nice window dressing, and everything nicely displayed. He used to be stage manager for Ziegfeld but he opened this magical emporium, and that's where I met Guy Jarrett and Ching Ling Fu and Dunninger. Dunninger in those days was working at Eden Museum. I met Kellar there—and all the magicians. I also met Alfred Benzon, unheard of today, except to a few, but he was one of the greats then. He had a \$250,000 insurance policy on his hands. In a San Francisco paper they ran a double-page spread about "Here's the man whose hands are insured for \$250,000", along with a large blow-up of his hands doing different card flourishes, etc. He got great publicity from that as he really did have a policy on his hands. If he got a hangnail he was able to collect! He was very smart—quite a promoter.

Later I met Paul Carleton at Martinka. Some of you older readers will remember Paul so well in connection with the Camel ads— "It's Fun To Be Fooled But It's More Fun To Know". Paul was the man they contacted when the Camel people ran the ads. Of course a lot of magicians were greatly annoyed because of the exposures. At that time *Sawing A Woman in Half* (using two girls) Was explained and this brought an uproar from all the magicians. In answer to the howls of protest and threatened law suits the Camel people proved that they got the material out of books that were in the library. Paul Carleton was behind the counter the first time I visited Clyde Powers' Magic Shop. By this time I was getting a little 'cocky' as I had been in a few of the novelty stores up and down Broadway that sold the trick packs like the Svengali Deck, X-Ray Deck and the

Stripper Pack, and I became annoyed at their brash flippant attitude. So I used to walk into a shop and say, "Do you have any unusual card tricks?" and they would show me tricks that I knew so well when I was a kid. Finally, in desperation, I suppose, I would walk into any magic store and say, "Don't waste time showing me the old stuff. I'll pay you \$20.00 for any card trick that will fool me—I don't care what it is—trick cards or otherwise—I'll give you \$20.00." That was my approach—I didn't care if it was double-ended trick cards or what it was.

So I said to Paul Carleton, "Do you have any tricks with cards that are unusual? I'm willing to pay \$20.00 for one." He had a look on his face as if to say, "This poor country boy—he really is pretty conceited." He said, "I'll show you something," and he took out a Stripper Deck. It was finely cut and I didn't recognize it as a Stripper Pack, but I saw him turn the pack around so I knew it was a 'Head or Tail' or a Stripper Pack. So I returned the chosen card to the pack the way I was supposed to return it and he asked me to Shuffle the cards. I took the cards and shuffled them in sideways so they were all mixed up. I did it very naturally and handed him the pack. He made the remark, "You don't even know how to shuffle!" I said, "That's the way I always shuffle." He asked

"Can't you shuffle cards this way?" (Overhand shuffle.) When I said I could he had me take another card and then overhand shuffle the pack. Well, I didn't quite like the way he had inferred I didn't even know how to shuffle cards—this irritated me a little. So in shuffling the pack overhand I managed to drop seven or eight cards on the floor. Picking them up I added them to the pack reversed and squared them up. He said, "You're not a good magician—you're sloppy and you don't know how to handle cards." He didn't realize that I was giving him the business all the time! He was rather ingenious, though, and finally I took a card, shuffled the deck and dropped only foul cards that time! He took the deck and stripped all the reversed cards out and held them up and said, "Reach over and take out a card." I said, "Well, that's the old elimination thing — I know that part." And he said, "But how did I get your card? How do I know it's one of these cards?" I said, "Well, you used strippers." He remarked, "Oh, you know strippers?" I replied, "Yes, I used to make my awn with a pair of scissors when I was knee high." So he said, "All right, now I'll show you something" and he went into a 'Head and Tail' effect. I said, "Well, that's the same principle but you have to look at them "

Next he picked up an X-Ray Deck, you know, with the indices cut out of half the pack. He held the deck up to his head and named my selected card I said, "That's very good but I know what you used I've made them, too. Isn't that known as the X-Ray deck?" He asked, "How did you know I was using an X-Ray Deck?" I said, "Your eyes gave you away!" And oh, he didn't like me! "Where did you learn about magic," he asked. I replied, "From books—especially from Erdnase's 'The Expert at the Card Table'." He said, "Oh, that book—It's like geometry—nobody can understand it. What is all that stuff about cull and in-jog— what does that mean?" I answered "Well, it's very clearly explained in the book." "But I can't understand that stuff, nobody around here understands that book—not even Dr. Elliott." "Well," I said, "I think it's beautifully written— to me it's my Bible."

To cut a long story short he called "Clyde, come out here. ' so Clyde Powers, a portly jolly looking man came out and shook hands with me. When Paul explained that I would pay \$20.00 for a card trick that would fool me Clyde said, "We have a trick, as a matter of fact, that sells for \$20.00. I'll show it to you." Oh I was really thrilled—I was so anxious to part with my \$20.00! "Now this trick is supposed to be done for an audience—three or four people at least—so you will have to act the part of these people." He took a pack of cards and fanned through them and separated about a fourth of the pack and gave them to me to shuffle. Then he ran along the cards again and I could see that he was looking for a mark or something, and he handed me another fourth of the pack, and he handed some to Paul to shuffle.

So I shuffled two sections and Paul shuffled a section. "Now as you shuffle the cards take out any card and remember it." Then he assembled all tile cards and said to me, "Put your card in" and he ran along the cards. I had good eyesight in those days and I saw a little dot in the corner of one card He continued to run through the cards and I saw another dot further down in the pack as he put the next card in the deck. I had never seen this trick before, you understand, and I was wondering what he was going to do. Then he put the deck on the counter and asked me to name my first card. I told him it was the Nine of Hearts and he spelled it out—then asked me for my Second card which he proceeded to spell. Then he spelled Paul's card and said, "That's our \$20.00 spelling trick isn't it a beautiful trick?" I told him that it was but I didn't think I wanted to pay \$20.00 for it because I could see the idea of the trick. I had never seen it before but I knew what it was. "I can see that a lot of cards spell out with the same number of letters and you evidently had all those cards in groups, and you had a little mark on one card so you could give out all those cards in groups. And so on through the deck if you can shuffle the entire deck together and then do the trick I'll give you \$20.00 for it." He was amazed that I had seen the dot, on the cards and fathomed the basic idea, so asked, "Young man, what do YOU do with cards?"

I showed them some stuff from Erdnase which they had not seen before—one handed passes, etc., and I'll never forget—Clyde put his arm around my shoulder and said, "Young man, make this place your home. Any time you want you can go in the back room. When Ching Ling Fu comes to town, or Kellar, or Dunninger come up they always go in the back. And you are privileged to go in the back with them. Have you ever met Dr. Elliott?" I said, "No, but I have read about him." I doubt if I was ever so thrilled before when Clyde said, "He comes in here quite often and he will like you—I'll introduce you to him." So I had an 'open sesame' to his place.

And that's where I first met Dunninger. Dunninger in those days had long hair he was the first hippie I ever knew—and he wore a black cape and always carried an umbrella. He would bang his umbrella on the molding on the wall near the ceiling and the umbrella would be loosely open Dunninger would stand a person in front of the umbrella, take a handkerchief and roll it up, and shoot it over the person's head so it would land inside the umbrella. He had everybody fooled with the vanish that was the first time I had

ever seen the 'over the head' bit (paging Tony Slydini). He would repeat the trick with different fellows and all the handkerchiefs would land in the umbrella. And then Dunninger would open the umbrella at the finish and all the handkerchiefs would fall out! He used to have a lot of fun with that routine. Before this secret leaked out Houdini was badly fooled by a chap in Kansas City who performed it. In fact he stayed over in town an extra day to obtain the secret

In those days my favorite trick was giving a person a pack of cards, letting them cut anywhere, and look at the card cut to. I would walk to the other side of the room during this All I had to see was if they eat a small block of cards or a big block. I could pretty well judge where they cut by a glance and I used to, somehow, by hook or by crook, find their card at a certain number or bring it to the top, etc. I had everyone in New York baffled with this—they called it a miracle. Dunninger was the only one who attempted to do the trick. He would watch like a hawk to see how many you cut— then he would put the cards behind his back and count to that number. Then he'd bring the deck forward, look at two or three cards and put the pack down and reveal the chosen card when it was named.

He was the only one who attempted the trick—everyone else just threw up their hands and said, 'It can't be done,' etc. I've always given Dunninger credit for trying to do the trick and not just giving up.

Well, I see that my space is almost used up. Hope you have enjoyed these ramblings—I enjoy recalling "those good old days"! Next month I will tell you how I fooled Dr. Elliott "with his own weapons," as he remarked afterwards, and also have an amazing story to tell you about the Goldin Sawing a Woman in Half.

Your letters are always Welcome —I enjoy hearing from you.

Dai Vernon

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October 1970

As I write this month's column the Castle is closed for its annual two weeks vacation, during which time Milt and his crew have been doing their usual wonderful work in remodeling and updating the place.

Before closing, we had a great fortnight here as we had two guests whom I consider two of the finest workers in magic in the country, not to mention Charlie Miller and Carlyle and old standbys like Don Lawton and Johnny Platt, etc. Our guests were Sawa (whom I wrote about last month) and Derek Dingle. We had been hearing rumors for sometime about Derek. 's prowess with the pasteboards and coins, and he proved that all the statements made about him are perfectly true. He certainly excelled in both branches of magic and did a very fine performance in the Close-Up Gallery.

Both Derek. and Sawa lectured for the members of the Castle. Time schedules did not permit separate days for the lectures so we had a great doubleheader one Sunday afternoon! Sawa opened with a selection of tricks the likes of which we had never seen before. Tricks with shells, pearls, etc., with a technique of handling that was very different from what we do in this part of the world. Derek. upheld the high quality level with his truly astounding magic with cards, coins, sponges, etc. It was an afternoon that will be long remembered.

The night before the Castle closed there was an unusual show in the Wine Cellar. Everyone had heard that there was to be a guest performer and upon checking the bulletin board we discovered that it was to be none other than Milton P. Larson! I was lucky to find a little space where I could watch as the Cellar was jam-packed. Those who have never seen Milt Larson perform have missed a treat. To give you an example of some of things he did that evening: He tried to cut a rope with a large pair of shears but the rope kept slipping in between the blades and slipping in between the blades and he couldn't sever it. He laid the rope across his side table and picked up a hatchet, wielded a mighty blow at the rope and half the table top went crashing to the floor! Another whack at the other side and the other half of the top went! In desperation he reached backstage and brought forth a large axe. He put the rope on the floor of the stage and swung the axe upwards where it stuck in to the ceiling! After getting it loose he took whacks at the rope. Pieces of ceiling, floor, proscenium, wall decorations, etc., were flying left and right as the curtains slowly closed on the Magnificent Milt!

Anyone not in on the gag would have thought Milt has lost his cool. But since the Wine Cellar was scheduled for remodeling, Milt thought he might as well get a head start on it! Milt has a great style for performing this type of thing and he made it look very real. Before his shattering finale he did several very funny routines that are impossible to put into words. You had to be there! A lot of people don't realize that Milt has the ability to do magic because he is so busy with his other work on projects. One night he flabbergasted Larry Jennings with a series of knots with a silk handkerchief. Milt has a natural instinct for magic which he undoubtedly inherited from his parents. We are more familiar with his Brother Bill's ability as a magician since he and his lovely Irene perform occasionally in the Wine Cellar.

Harry Monti of St. Louis performed for two weeks recently in the Close-Up Gallery. Harry has an easy-going manner and friendly personality that everyone liked, and his magic was performed flawlessly. This was Harry's third or fourth stint at the Castle. We always enjoy having him here.

I hear from the grapevine, and I have an extensive grapevine, that several of my good friends are rather annoyed or peeved at me for the remarks I made about Thurston in a recent column. I know that Thurston is an idol to a great many people. What I wrote was my opinion, and difference of opinion is what makes horse racing possible. If everyone had the same opinion we wouldn't have horse races. Perhaps I allowed my early prejudices to get the better of me. When I was quite a young boy I fooled Thurston with cards. Thurston used to be an idol of mine. But when I did simple tricks for him and he didn't know how they were done, I was greatly let down. I thought he would say, "Here, son, let me show you how to do that properly," or something, but he was absolutely fooled. In fact, he asked me to show him how I did a couple of tricks. Well, this was a great disillusionment for me and I constantly had that in my mind.

Later a wealthy friend, Mr. H. Booth, gave a dinner for Thurston to which I was invited. This man's son, also interested in magic, was my age. During the entire evening we two were expectantly waiting for some words of advice from Thurston...or some little trick. Not once did he even mention magic, but spent the evening talking with Mr. Booth about investments, etc. He left without hardly even talking to us. Afterwards Mr. Booth remarked that he thought Thurston could have been a little more gracious and shown us some trick or made some comments on magic. But he also said that Thurston seemed to be wrapped up in business that evening and that was probably why he didn't have time for two eager young magicians. This was my second disillusionment.

Charlie Miller and I usually see eye to eye on most things, and I feel that way concerning some of his comments in last month's "Intermission" column. I agree that Thurston had a very fine speaking voice. I don't agree with the business of having spectators on stage for the levitation. When Kellar presented this illusion it was a beautiful thing to watch. He would step out into the audience and gaze at the lady floating in air, and make a comment to the effect that she could remain there indefinitely if he so desired, etc. It was a real mystery in Kellar's hands.

On the other hand, Thurston used to get 20 to 30 people on stage from the audience to watch the levitation. The entire thing lost its beauty and air of mystery. To me it was more like a side show performance. Should you try fool 30 people on stage or should you be trying to please and entertain a vast audience sitting in the theatre? I saw the Thurston Show many times and I agree with Charlie that the Spirit Cabinet was remarkable. His Floating Ball was very very good. But, in my opinion, the overall show did not show the perfection that I was looking for in a magician at the time. I will say that Thurston did make a great name for magic and probably elevated magic a great deal. I don't mean to destroy any illusions for you younger magicians. But I have certainly had many of illusions destroyed over the years, such as the time I first saw Martinka's magical palace in New York. It was like finding out there is no Santa Clause!

Last month I promised to tell you how I fooled Dr. Elliott "with his own weapons." When I first met Dr. Elliott he was known as the Challenge Champion Card Manipulator of the World. He offered \$5,000 cash- which very few magicians had then-

for anybody to meet him with an unprepared pack of cards. The conditions were that they had to do ten original things with cards, and then do all the standard sleights, i.e., make a pass, make a change, do a force, etc. Only two people ever accepted this challenge but later backed out- Clinton Burgess and Barney Ives. Both men did certain sleights and flourishes extremely well but they didn't know all the things that Dr. Elliott knew. Dr. Elliott, a Harvard graduate, was a real student of magic.

One day he said to me, "Do you think you could show me a trick that would fool me?" Well, I told him that I wouldn't even deign to think I could fool him but, at his urging, I decided to try. I knew I couldn't get away with any kind of a sleight. Doc had previously told me that a magician who wants to make a reputation should learn to use a shiner or a glim like a real gambler. Of course you couldn't betray it by staring at it- but if you could 'kill' another magician...they wouldn't know what you were doing. So I knew I couldn't fool Doc with a shiner as he knew all about them.

Dr. Elliott had also told me that you could tell when a person was a card manipulator by the manner in which they placed the deck on the table. They always squared them nicely and put them down like a block of wood. They handle the cards neatly. When they take the cards in their hands, the cards are squared. A good mechanic always keeps his cards squared like a little box. Then he makes piles of cards they are neat- not spread all over unless he is acting carelessly on purpose.

With these facts in mind I decided to try a trick on Dr. Elliott. First I let him shuffle his deck. Taking the shuffled cards I said, "I want you to do this behind my back. Executing the Erdnase reversal with one hand, I reversed one card on the bottom of the pack while making the gesture. I handed him the pack which he put behind his back and I told him to remove a card and keep it. I took the pack from him and said, 'If I was to look through this pack, and had a good memory, I might be able to tell you what card you have. Remember, you had the cards behind your back,'" and I made the gesture again behind my own back, and **THIS TIME I TURNED THE PACK OVER**. The cards were now face up with one card face down on top.

Due to the fact that Dr. Elliott always kept the cards perfectly squared I knew he wasn't going to mess them up- at least I gambled on that! And he took those cards so nicely- I'll never forget- and placed them behind his back. I said, "Now keeping the cards behind your back, push the chosen card in anywhere you like- center, near the top or bottom- there are no restrictions." He followed my directions, and I was delighted when he brought the pack out squared nicely and handed it to me. Now his card was upside-down in the pack!

I was thinking, how am I going to finish this effect because he would see me turn the pack over, etc. I felt that whatever I did he would have seen it. Then I had inspiration. I moved my hand (holding the pack) about two feet up and down and in so doing I let the top card fly off and brought the pack down with the backs up. I said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I'm nervous in front of you, Doc!" And I picked up the odd card and put it back on the pack.

"Wait, I'll try it again!" This time I riffled the inner end of the pack, catching a glimpse of his card (which was face up) and continuing on through the pack. "There, it worked that time!", I remarked. I was going to show his card reversed in the pack but on second thought I figured it would give him a clue to the secret. So I just looked at the top

card and called out the name of the card I had seen face up in the pack, and then put the pack in my pocket. Doc shook hands with me and told me he didn't have the faintest idea of how I did the trick. I felt guilty when he asked me how in the heck I had done it. Naturally I was tickled pink to know I had fooled him and said, "Doctor, I'm ashamed to tell you- it's a kid trick." He remarked, "Well, if it's a kid trick so much the better!" So I showed him what I had done. He shook my hand again and said, "You've beaten me with my own weapons!"

After this we became close friends and Dr. Elliott and I spent many enjoyable hours together doing card tricks. He used to rent an empty storage room in a hotel in which he had a cloth covered table placed. Here he would practice and practice- he had a mania for the pasteboards. When exhausted he would retire to his regular room in the same hotel.

The last time I saw Dr. Elliott I was making the boat trip from Providence to New York. I was looking over the rail as the boat pulled out and suddenly discovered Dr. Elliott standing right next to me. I hadn't seen him for three or four years and was I delighted! He was on his way to New York also. He had me cancel my cabin and join him in his stateroom which had double berth so, as he said, "we can stay up all night doing tricks!" At that time I did some illustrations for Doc in some beautiful little morocco leather-bound note books. I have tried to locate them since then but to no avail. Dr. Elliott was one of the really great artists- he had a passionate love of magic in all its phases.

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I was in Cuba in 1921 with Sam Margules and a troupe doing Sawing a Woman in Half for Horace Goldin. At that time there were 22 acts out on the Keith and Pantages Circuits doing the Sawing illusion. Everybody was supposed to pay Goldin \$50 per week "royalty" as he owned the illusion at that time. At least half of them were not turning in the money. So Horace hired Sam Margules as his lawyer. Sam would go backstage and scare them into paying up.

While we were in Cuba we paid \$50 a week for the Goldin method of the Sawing illusion. We had it in Havana Park. We used the Double method- two girls had chaperons- their mothers- who would sit in the wings watching their daughters like hawks! I did magic in between showings of the Sawing- Sleeve, which I still do in Spanish.

When we returned to the States Walter Ferdna was presenting the Sawing down at Coney Island and doing it as well as Goldin. I'd say he was the finest performer of the trick. One time Walter was ill and Sam had to present the illusion. One of the girls didn't like Sam and left. Sam had a show to do so he rushed out and grabbed a little newsboy about 12 years of age and had him try on the girl's shoes. They fit him, so Sam put the kid in the lower part of the box.

Now to fully appreciate what follows you must realize that Sam was a very conscientious person. Like Jerry Andrus, he wouldn't tell a lie. So as he presented the illusion he remarked, "Now on this end you see the little lady's head...and on this end, HIS feet!"

Many years ago when I was living in New York three jobs suddenly came in at the same time. I had a chance to do a week at a Jersey theatre; work a very fine club date in Washington, D.C. ; or accept a position with the concern that was building the East River Parkway. This latter job entailed the reading of blueprints. It was an easy job where I would be through at three o'clock every afternoon. They were all very good propositions so I asked my wife which one she thought I should accept- I just couldn't make up my mind. She said, "Well, you've never worked in your life- why don't you go to work like a man for a change?" So I took the job on the East River Parkway!

It was while I was on this job that I broke my arms. Some people said I tried to commit suicide. It's strange how stories like that get around. It's really ridiculous. I used to go to Colorado every summer to cut silhouettes in Manitou (at the base of Pike's Peak). I did very well there. And, of course, being in the company of Paul Fox was always a delight. I was there each summer for several years. In fact, my youngest boy was born in Colorado Springs. The rumor at that time was that I had tuberculosis! It's ridiculous how stories like that get started. Same thing when I broke my arms. I was in the hospital for six months. The rumors were that I had tried to commit suicide and had done a bad job of it! I think I'd have been a bit more thorough!

The old saying that a person should "mind his own business" applied to me in connection with my broken arms. In fact, I'm lucky to be here today...I had two broken arms, eight broken ribs, 16 stitches in my head, etc.

I was told, when I took the job that I was to tend to my own end of the business- not to interfere with anything or anyone else. I disobeyed this rule. One day a young boy, up five stories on scaffolding, was struggling with a heavy pail, trying to carry it to a nearby tool shed. I asked, "Son, what's the matter. Can't you lift that pail?" He replied that it was heavy so I went over to him and tried to lift it. It took both hands and a great deal of strength because the pail was full of mercury. There was a plank about 12 inches in width between me and the tool shed. It looked substantial so I started across it.

All of a sudden I heard a creaking sound and the plank broke in the middle. The next thing I remember was seeing stars and bubbles (I guess they were bubbles of quicksilver flying around). I fell five stories, hitting one girder after another, and landed on the East River. As I hit that icy water (it was winter) I thought the whole thing was a dream. I heard some one shout "Man overboard" and a heavy rope landed near me. I managed to get my leg through the noose in the rope and was hauled up onto a tug boat. The next thing I remember I was sitting in a large room, like a movie scene, with about 50 men gathered around. I was the center of all eyes, sitting there in a chair. I couldn't move- felt numb- however not in any pain, but I really didn't know what was going on.

An ambulance arrived at the dock and a man in white came in, patted my arm and said, "I'll have to cut this one off." I looked down at a horrible sight- bones protruding from my arm, etc. I said, "What do you mean 'cut it off'?" He had meant merely to cut off the sleeve from my jacket! They rushed me to the Bellevue Hospital. After being bandaged up and lying in bed with both arms and my body casts, a guy came round with a clipboard and paper and said, "Sign this." I replied, "What is this, a gag? How can I sign it- I can't move." He stuck a pencil in my mouth and said, "Make a cross on the paper." I mumbled, "What's it for?", and he answered, "We want your permission to cut off your arms because gangrene is liable to set in." I refused to sign and asked to be put in touch with my friend, Dr. Daley. Dr. Daley had me transferred to a hospital uptown where I remained for six months. I had plaster casts on both sides of my body and on both arms. The fellows who came to see me would put their autographs on the cast. One day John Scarne came in, stood there with arms akimbo, and said, "Well, Dai, it just goes to show you that guys like you and I shouldn't work!" Apparently this was my punishment for not continuing with the magic! John was here in Los Angeles recently and I reminded him of that remark. I still feel to this day that I'm living on borrowed time!

As mentioned earlier, I was booked into the Majestic Theatre in Jersey City for a week. Houdini's brother, Hardeen, was very anxious to manage my act. He said he could get good many for it and later on could add an illusion and really make good money. He was enthused over the fact that I opened center stage with the interlocked fingers production of cards. He liked it because it was typically Chinese in flavor. I wore one of my wife's beautiful Chinese masks which were so real that they deceived people. Hardeen said he would take two of the best agents in New York over to Jersey to catch the act. Well, when I took the job on the East River Parkway I naturally didn't want to cancel the Jersey date so I called up my dear friend, Sam Horowitz.

Sam had never played vaudeville and said he would love to give it a try. He could do most of the tricks that I had in the act (probably better than I could) but he didn't know the interlocked production. I told him that this production was the one item

that Hardeen wanted more than anything so Sam said he's try to learn it over the weekend as the show opened the following Tuesday. Well, he didn't get it down in time but I gave him my mask and gown and he went over to Jersey to impersonate me! He didn't know anything about rehearsing an orchestra so I called Roy Benson for help. He very graciously agreed to go with Sam to the theatre and assist him. Roy, whose mother was the famous Dora Ford (one of the Ford Sisters), knows all the ins and outs of the theatre. Sam, of course, felt much better knowing that Roy was there to help him.

In the meantime I was at work! I planned to go directly to the theatre right after work so as to be there when Hardeen arrived with the agents, and explain the situation to him. Roy told me that Sam became very nervous before the afternoon show. After all, he was doing strange tricks while wearing a mask, was not familiar with the music, etc. When his entrance music started Sam really became all jittery. Roy told him, "Listen, Sam, you are working behind a mask. Don't get nervous. If you forget anything just slow up and make gestures. And if worse comes to worse, just walk slowly off stage. I'll put the gown and mask on and clown around for the rest of the time." This was like a tonic to Sam, knowing that Roy would carry on in case anything went wrong. It gave Sam the confidence he needed. He did the act but it ran about ten minutes longer than the allotted time. The manager was upset and started to give Sam hail Columbia. Roy stood up for Sam, explaining to the manager that Sam was from a distant country, etc., and that the next show would run on schedule. Roy handled it beautifully.

Now here's the funny part of this entire story. Sam was impersonating me. In the evening Hardeen and the agents are to catch the show. As soon as work was finished I changed clothes and rushed over to Jersey, arriving before Hardeen. I went backstage so as not to be seen by Hardeen and told Sam that as soon as the act was over to get back to the dressing room as quickly as possible so that I could put on the robe and carry on from there. This way Hardeen would think that I had just done the act.

Sam was agreeable to this change of plans. After the act we made the switch. I sat at the dressing table and Sam was lounging in a corner of the room when Hardeen and the agents came rushing backstage. He left the agents in the hall, came in and said, "Vernon, you are completely out of your mind! Why did you leave that beautiful card production out of the routine? That was the one thing I wanted to sell to the agents...that great opening...and you left it out!" I told Hardeen that I had to cut down on the time of the act and the card production was the easiest to eliminate, etc. Hardeen continued to bawl the life out of me, calling me a jackass and saying that I'd never get anywhere because I didn't use good judgment, etc. Poor Sam was listening to all this as was Sam Margules who was also in the room.

Hardeen suddenly noticed Sam Horowitz (who had just finished the act!) leaning against the wall and said, "Vernon, don't you know better than to have these "magic nuts" from the magic club hanging around on your opening night?" And he insisted that I get Horowitz out of the room. Hardeen knew Sam Margules and didn't demand the same treatment for him. Sam Horowitz quietly left the room! Hardeen continued to give me hell and complained that the act just didn't seem right. "You were not yourself tonight, Vernon," were his remarks. And I honestly believe that Hardeen never did learn that it was an impersonation that evening! He used to ask Sam Margules about it but Sam would reply, "Now you know that Vernon is the only person who can do the Rings

that way- and all those other tricks.” And, as I said, I do not believe that Hardeen ever learned about the impersonation. Roy Benson used to say, “What a wonderful alibi for a murder!” All my New York friends swore I was playing over in jersey because I was billed there. Fellows who caught the act would come to me afterwards to tell me how much they enjoyed it!

A lot of funny incidents occurred during that week. For instance, I was using a little tripod table made of bamboo with a tray that sat on top of the tripod. The top wasn’t fastened so the least little push would cause it to slide off the tripod. The manager tried to move it one night and upset the tray. Roy Benson came over and said, “How dare you touch that beautiful museum piece! This comes from the Fifth Dynasty in China. This is piece that museums would be glad if it graced their premises. And to think that you touched it!” The manager was apologizing all over the place by then! Roy really had command back stage!

In answers to questions asked throughout the years regarding the mask used in the act. My wife made beautiful masks that had everyone fooled. Since it was a silent act we did not need facial movement. Properly used onstage a mask would look human and alive, when you move or turn slowly the shadows and lights will give this appearance. Carl Rosini was absolutely fooled by it and came back stage afterwards to meet the Chinese magician! This was the time I was doing a Linking Ring routine with 16 Rings. Chang, who was with Rosini that evening, was very much intrigued with the routine and paid me good money to teach it to him.

The method of teaching might interest you. Chang came to my hotel room with his movie camera. He said, “All I want to do is make a movie of you doing the routine, and you can show me some of the holds and moves afterwards. Then I will learn the routine from watching the film.” I had figured it was going to be an all-night session but we finished in remarkably short time. Wonder if that film is still in existence???

Although Chang has been a visitor to the Castle it would be great if he could pay us a return visit! In fact, EVERY magician, amateur or professional, should make an effort to visit the magic center of the world. It will be a visit you will never forget!

Meanwhile, until you get here, feel free to drop me a line if you have any comments or questions. I will try to incorporate them into one of these columns.

Dai Vernon

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December 1970

Just as I started this month's column I received a letter asking the question that has been asked so often: How can a magician jump from the amateur stats into the professional status? This letter, from William Hegbli of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, goes on to state that every time he asks this question the professional magician will either 'beat around the bush' or avoid answering the question. Well, possibly the reason they are hesitant in answering is because they don't quite remember just how it happened to them. They will admit that it was hard work.

If you are exceptionally good and have an unusual presentation the word will get around very fast. And chances are very favorable that sooner or later someone will offer you a professional engagement. It was certainly that way in my case. I was cutting silhouettes in Atlantic City on the Boardwalk. My 'office' was at the back of a Little Blue Book Shop. At that time there was a craze for these Little Blue Books (the Great Literature of the World) which sold for a nickel. One day an engineer from Canada came in and we struck up an acquaintance as I used to live in Canada. He asked if I would come over to his hotel, "The Margo Terrace" and meet some of the boys who were attending a convention. So I went over with him, met some of the chaps, and (at his request) started to do some card tricks in the hotel lobby. We wound up with quite a few spectators.

Afterwards a rather distinguished looking woman approached me and said, "Young man, I was watching you perform and I am wondering if you would be interested in making four or five thousand dollars for a couple of months work this winter?" I had no idea who she was. But when she introduced herself as Frances Rockefeller King "it rang a bell" She was the private booker for the Keith Circuit. In fact, I had been advised by many people in the know to go up and see her but had never done so. So when she, in a rather pompous was, said, "I am Frances Rockefeller King- of course you know who I am", I replied, "No, I'm sorry. I am not familiar with the name." She said, "Well, you certainly don't know anything about show business!" Now this was a little bit of a 'show business' on my own part because I knew her very well by reputation but I didn't care for her approach. Well, anyway, she went on to tell me that she booked all the acts from the Keith Circuit for private engagements and that if I was interested in working some of these affairs to see her at her office.

The next day she came into the bookstore where I was cutting silhouettes at two for fifty cents. She had her silhouette cut and handed me a dollar bill. I gave her a fifty cent piece in change. She said, "Will you make that two quarters, please?" So I gave her the quarters and then she asked if I had any adhesive tape. I found a roll in the cash register and gave it to her. She placed a strip of tape around each quarter and placed her initials on each. She handed one quarter to my wife and the other one to me saying, "This is a little extra for the silhouettes. Always keep them as they will bring you great luck."

They brought us luck that winter! I was pretty low financially around Christmas that year and I suddenly thought of Miss King. So I went up to see her. Immediately she asked, "Are you busy Friday night?" After learning that I was not she said she had an

engagement for me at the South Shore Country Club. A millionaire had just purchased Aeolian Hall and was giving a dinner to celebrate the occasion. On the bill with me were to be several Keith acts and I'll admit I was nervous about playing this engagement. I even offered my friend, Arthur Finley, a hundred dollars if he would work the date for me because I was so nervous I didn't want to go. I had never appeared with big stars before. Finley laughed and said, "This is your big break professionally in New York. You'd better do it yourself." So I played the date and after that I was 'in' with Miss King.

I have told you this story because it illustrates how the agent came to me, so to speak. The same holds true for some of my fellow workers here at the Castle. The agents have come to them because they have distinguished themselves with good performances. So if you give a good performance every time you work, even if it's in a private home, the word will get around: "Hey, you should see (your name!), he's wonderful. You should get him to entertain at your party, etc." You won't know how it happened exactly but, in time, you will be 'in'. I don't care what kind of a brochure you have, or what beautiful photos. You can call all the agents- they get hundreds of would-be professionals, not only magicians but singers, dancers, etc. It's a tough business to break into. But if you have something that is a bit unusual and different, the word get around and the agents will find you. They are looking for business- they want to book acts they can sell.

You don't have to worry about HOW to do it...it will just happen. The important thing is to have something when it DOES happen! I remember my late friend, Carl Jones, who published GREATER MAGIC, once told me that any time effort is expended on anything it will return to you. There's a great deal of truth in that statement. If you put effort into a project you may not see any results for a time, but eventually it will return to you or 'pay off' as the saying goes. Put effort into being pleasant- on being kindly- on anything- it will come back to you and repay you many times. But if you are lackadaisical, don't care, naturally you will have corresponding results.

Moving from philosophy to gambling (that's quite a move!): People who know me also know that my 'Bible' was THE EXPERT AT THE CARD TABLE by S. W. Erndnase. I knew this book by heart when I was twelve years of age. Not only the tricks and moves but also the patter in the legerdemain section of the book. The fact that most of the book was devoted to gambling ruses made me realize that this was a very important phase of card handling. But as I grew older I learned that it is very difficult to meet these people- the gamblers. They don't want to associate with magic at all. Very few magicians understand this. They think that a professional gambler likes to talk to magicians and exchange ideas. The truth of the matter is that there are very few things that a magician uses that a gambler would use! A gambler uses direct methods that will get him money. In other words he doesn't say, "Is it commercial?" He says, "Will it get the money?" If it gets the money it doesn't matter how crude the move may be (in the eyes of a magician) or how badly executed. If it gets the money it must be good!

Charlie Miller and I were talking about this the other day. I maintain that there aren't six magicians in the United States who have the faintest idea of what gamblers do with cards. I don't mean seconds or bottoms. I'm talking about the psychology behind it. They'll watch a gambler who has made thousands of dollars gambling...watch him do a hop or a pass or second deal, etc., and they will say, "Hey, I can see that move. He

could never do that in a game.” The thing is, he DOES it in a game, often under the toughest circumstances, but he knows how and when to do it because of timing. Timing is the most important thing of all. Gamblers call it ‘shade’ instead of ‘misdirection’. You can show a gambler a move- it could be a crude move- maybe a pass or a second deal. It may be crude and not pass muster with your magician friends, yet a gambler will say, “That move is pretty good. What shade do you use with it?” The average magician wouldn’t know what the gambler was talking about. There is a way to do these moves. You can do a top or bottom change and anyone watching closely can see it happen. The two hands have to come together and separate. The gambler would ask what shade you used with it- that’s the important thing! “There’s the rub,” as Shakespeare would say!

Charlie Miller once asked Max Malini, “Max, what is the true secret of your success in magic? You have been phenomenally successful and command ten times the fees that other magicians get. You work in all the fashionable homes. You have a world-wide reputation among the elite. How do you account for this? Is your magic so much better than others?” Max looked at Charlie and in his gruff voice he replied, “Charlie, it’s the eye- the eye.” That’s all he said. At that time Charlie didn’t quite know what Malini meant when he said the whole secret was the eye.

In the recently published book, THE RAMSAY LEGEND, John emphasizes, “Look at the audience-look at the audience.” Without looking at the audience you might as well forget about the tricks. This is the key to the thing. The usual magic book advises you to “look at the hand that contains the coin”. This is true in certain circumstances but not always. The main thing is to look at the audience at certain times. A lot of magicians perform for themselves. They never look at their audiences- they seem to forget the audience. When you talk with a person you must look at him occasionally- not at the ground or all around- or he won’t be ‘en rapport’ with you. You have to communicate.

The eye is very very important in performing magic, whether on the stage or close-up. This is where the gambler really shines- he knows when and how and under what circumstances to make a move. When everyone is staring at him or his hands he doesn’t do anything. But by the use of the eye a move can be done in front of the keenest person. That’s why a card sharp can make a good living at gambling. It’s not completely in their dexterity but in the fact that they know how and when to use these moves.

I have been eternally grateful to three or four professionally gamblers for showing me things that weren’t known to magicians. The first gambler I had the pleasures of meeting was when I was still a boy. My father and I met him on a fishing trip. He had me select a card and then shuffled the pack. He asked me the name of the card and he neatly cut the cards right at my card. I remember that time, (I was 15), feeling that I’d give anything I knew if I could execute that as neatly as he did. He showed me how to put a very mild crimp or crease in the card so it could be cut after shuffling the deck. Of course this principle is now used by magicians.

This was my initiation to the fact that gamblers did things that were superior to what magicians used insofar as cleanness was concerned. A few years later in Chicago (1919) I met a Hungarian chap who showed me some remarkable things with cards. He told me that if I was interested in this type of thing I must see “Old Dad” Stevens. Stevens had made over \$250,000 playing cards and had bought a home in Evanston. It

seems that every Saturday night “Old Dad” would go down to the Waiters Club on State Street and trim the waiters. They had a big stud game down there and he would beat them every Saturday night- that was his relaxation! One Saturday night I went to the club. Sitting over in the corner, wearing a derby hat, was this old gentleman. I introduced myself and he asked if I liked cards. I told him I was very much interested so he took me back to a table (the game hadn’t started yet) and took out three Jacks from the deck. He placed them on top of the pack and then dealt the cards alternately to me and himself. He got the three Jacks. I was puzzled because it was completely different from the currently popular trick wherein you used four Jacks (while apparently using only three) and dealt the three Jacks to your opponent. In this instance I knew he was using only three Jacks and was dealing them to himself. I asked if he would repeat the trick. He repeated it twice more and I still didn’t know exactly what he was doing. Finally I said, “Gee whiz, you must have to deal thirds to do that.” He replied, “You’re pretty smart- you’re right.” I was amazed that he could deal thirds without any hesitation, and what made it harder to follow was the fact that he was a left-handed dealer. He had never heard of the other Jack trick (using the fourth Jack) so I did it for him. He was quite amused.

Then he asked me to shuffle the cards and to name four of a kind. I chose the nines. He shuffled the deck four or five times, gave them a couple of cuts, and turned over the four nines on top of the pack. I said, “You must have been pretty lucky that time.” He said, “No luck about it. I’ll do it again- what cards would you like this time?” I selected the fours and sure enough, he dealt them from the top of the deck after shuffling and cutting the pack. He actually culled the cards while shuffling. I swear that he did this while apparently just shuffling the cards in a normal way. You’d never dream that he was looking for certain cards during the process. As I have told friends, it was so beautiful that it brought tears to my eyes.

When I asked him how he had learned to do culling so well all he would say was, “My boy, that represents eighteen years of practice.” Besides his culling ability he used a shiner with which he showed me several ingenious things. He didn’t use a holdout at all. Incidentally, most magicians don’t know that gamblers have a term for holding out cards- it’s called ‘mucking’. A guy who holds out cards in his hands is called a ‘hand mucker’.

Meeting this old gambler really inspired me. I had no idea of ever wanting to be a professionally gambler, but I was fascinated by professional gamblers and their methods. I spent years visiting all the carnival lots, pool rooms, etc., searching out gamblers or anyone who did things in the gambling field. In New York City I met a man named Sinatra. He called himself Artanis (Sinatra backwards!). We became very good friends. At one time he put out a phonograph record on bottom dealing. It was a very interesting discourse on the bottom deal. I wonder if any of my readers happen to have a copy of this record? Drop me a line if you have!

In forthcoming columns I plan to comment briefly on all out wonderful Castle magicians. I will do this alphabetically. Which reminds me of one of Al Baker’s stories. This was one about the Great Zambini. He had applied for medical aid and when Al met him later he asked, “Well, how do you feel now?” Zambini replied, “They are taking us alphabetically and I’ve had to wait for weeks and weeks. In fact, I’m still waiting!”

Later in they met again and Al asked, “How are you getting along now, Zambini?” He replied, “I am no longer the Great Zambini. I am now The Great Ajax!”

If readers are interested in reading about my experiences with some of these “professional” card players, I shall relate some episodes about “Mexican Joe” Jan Raicahaicus, and the fabulous Dan Cummings. Francis Carlyle and my dear departed friend Sam Margules were both with me at the time we met the latter- fantastic!

January 1971

Francis Carlyle and I have just returned from the Good Samaritan Hospital where we visited Ron Wilson who has been the victim of a heart attack. This came as a great shock to all of us at the Castle as Ron is such an easy-going guy. I am happy to report that he will be discharged from the hospital next week but he will have to take life easy for a while. We all wish you well, Ron, and hurry back to the Castle. (Editor's note: Ron is out of the hospital and recovering very rapidly. WL)

Since Francis is sitting right here beside me I have asked him to stay and help with this month's column. Francis has one of the most retentive memories in magic and can come up with the correct answer to almost any question.

We're going to miss Ron at next week's snooker game. Just last week Ron and Judge Pierce Young (who is a prominent member of the Castle) were teamed up against Francis Carlyle and myself. For next Saturday's game Kuda Bux will team up with the judge while Francis and I will be partners. I know most of my readers have heard or read about Kuda Bux but I'd just like to state that Kuda Bux is probably one of the most extraordinary men in magic. He does things that are absolutely unfathomable. His "Walking on Hot Coals" and his "Blindfold Act" are two gems that have me fooled. I have never met anybody who knew how they are done. Dr. Daley made a movie of Kuda's blindfold routine and studied it over and over but to no avail. A lot of people CLAIM they know how it's done but when the chips are down they just can't do it like Kuda.

As a young boy Kuda thought perhaps there was such a thing as real magic. From the age of 16 to his middle twenties he traveled all over the world searching for this real magic. Kuda claims to have witnessed a real self-levitation of a person, 18 inches into the air, solely by the power of his mind. He accompanied his friend, Robert Ripley, to see this levitation. Kuda also says that telepathy is a fact. He says that the reason people do not believe these things is because they do not have faith. I asked him if he thought it was possible for anyone to transmit a word, one word, from a book to someone else at a distance without any electronic hook-ups or other means of communication, but just the power of the mind. Kuda looked at me and said, "Not only one word, but the entire book can be read by telepathy. I have seen it and believe it fervently."

(F.C.) "You know what I like about Kuda? His billing! 'A Man of Mystery'. That's exactly what he is. His entire manner lends itself completely to mystery. You are looking at a mysterious man when you look at Kuda Bux. Those penetrating eyes, etc."

Francis' comment above brings to mind a question that is asked so often: "How should I present my magic?" As some of the classic books on magic point out, you should find out what things suit you and your personality. For example, it would be ridiculous if Kuda used gags and one-liners trying to be funny. He is a man of mystery. For a fellow like Lou Derman it's just the opposite. He wouldn't want to be mysterious. He uses sight bits and gags that get belly laughs for him during his shows at the Castle.

In my opinion one of the men who was greatly responsible for the early success of the Magic Castle was Jay Ose. Like my friend, Carlyle, Jay had an infallible memory. Jay would astound the early members and customers by addressing them by name even

though he might not have seen them in over a year. He'd ask (example) if they still had their little dog, Trixie. Or he would inquire of a man about his wife, calling her by name. This kind of treatment paid off for the Castle. People literally fell in love with Jay. He accomplished this by recognizing and taking advantage of his particular abilities.

A lot of people don't know that Jay was a dancer or "hooper" in his early years. Jay used to marvel at some of the complicated dance steps other dancers did- claiming that he couldn't begin to touch them. But he could go out before an audience with a little soft shoe or a waltz clog and really "sell it". Other dancers at that time knew intricate steps and routines didn't have the ability to sell it to their audiences. All of which brings us back to the old saying in magic, "It's not so much what you do but how you do it!"

And this brings to mind an aspect of magic that we must not overlook or underestimate. Many of our brother magicians will never be onstage or even in front of an audience so they don't have to worry about "selling". This is the man who will stand in front of his mirror and intrigue himself with tricks and sleights...deriving real pleasure from his hobby. Charlie Miller calls this type of magic "intrigue tricks" which is exactly what they are. This is a phase of magic that I would not belittle.

Other magicians can be diabolically clever and yet never make a success of entertaining in public. They have no presentation ability of showmanship. Yet they are extremely proficient with sleights and tricks. And then there is the magician who has no such technical ability as mentioned above who can step before an audience and be acclaimed the greatest magician that audience has ever seen. They have the ability to sell themselves. We have two fellows here at the Castle who might fall into this category: Berrie Lee and Nate the Great. (Nate is Bill Derman's son- Lou Derman's son- Lou Derman's nephew.) Here are two young fellows who like magic but they are not considered real magic bugs. Both of them have a great deal of authority on the stage-stage presence would be the correct term. Berri has the ability to ad-lib and turn any situation into a really good thing. He has, as Jarrow used to say, "The nerve from an iron horse."

Francis Carlyle once asked Jarrow if Max Malini was as good as I kept saying he was. In answer, Jarrow replied in his guttural voice, "Well, I'll tell you, Francis. The guy (Malini) was pretty good with the cards. He had little hands but he did some pretty clever things. He handled things very gracefully and pretty well. The main thing, he had the nerve from an iron horse!"

When I was a kid studying Erdnase I learned the "Cards Up the Sleeve" routine. In the book it was described as one of the classic tricks of magic. The book went on to states: "Sleights required. Masterly feats of palming, and unflinching audacity." I'll never forget, that, as a kid, I thought, I can lean those masterly feats of palming but I don't know if I can achieve that audacity. I was kind of a shy youngster. But I decided that this was one thing I was going to do; I was going to cultivate this audacity.

I remember reading about Herman going down the aisle and doing the card rising from a bouquet of roses. The book stated that Herman, with his great showmanship, had his entire reputation based on a human hair that pulled the card up out of the bouquet. If the hair broke? Well, this is having audacity and nerve and going ahead and doing it. And this is an essential thing. All the good performers had or have it. Malini first received notoriety in Washington, D.C., when he stepped out into an inaugural parade

and hit a button off the coat of one of the senators! He wouldn't have had a chance nowadays because of security precautions, but at that time, the publicity in the papers was all about "Max Malini, Magician, bites Senator's So and So's button off and restores it during parade, etc." Well, this is what you'd call colossal nerve! Houdini was another person who had audacity and nerve.

(F.C.) A moment ago Dai was talking about the fellows who practice in front of mirrors and never work before audiences. Well, I remember one time when Dai told me that he had worked out the most perfect move that had ever been created in magic. He admitted that it might seem presumptuous of him to make this statement but he really meant it! When I asked Dai if I could see the move he replied, "No- and no one else is going to see it either!" I asked him why in the heck he had developed it if he was going to show it to anyone. He replied that he just wanted to create something that would be absolutely perfect! "Well how do you know if it's perfect if nobody sees it?", I asked. He said, "I just wanted to work out a perfect move. Now I look at myself quite objectively in the mirror and I think I have worked out the perfect move."

(F.C.) Now, Dai, I'm asking you once again, 25 years later, are you ever going to divulge what you developed back then???

No, Francis, I'm not. You can laugh at me if you wish. I'll admit that magicians are a strange breed and I am probably one of the strangest in some ways.

But getting back to the different types of magicians: There's the fellow who enjoys having little cards, etc., in his pockets. Such things as small bills, big bills, three-dollar bills, all kinds of tricks, gadgets, and puzzles. Some magicians tend to make fun of this type of person, stating that they can't do sleights or tricks. We shouldn't make fun of them- this is their pleasure and they, in turn, are passing pleasure on to others. One chap in particular who comes to mind is Chic Shoke of Chicago. You can always count on Chic having things to show you. And Jack Hurlbut of Madison, Wisconsin, is another person who has provided unlimited fun for audiences with his novelty magic items, including his 'Nothing Box', the manufacture of which has developed into almost a full-time business.

When it comes to performing before audiences, so many readers have asked, "How can I become professional?" Well, this is a problem because there are too few places left where magic is in demand. You'll hear people ask, "Where can we go and dance- hear some good music- see a play- or shoot a game of billiards." But you never hear the average person ask, "Where can we go and see some magic?" This just doesn't happen! Yet some magicians seem to think it is so appealing that at any time people, regardless of how they are occupied, should stop what they are doing, to watch a trick, or select a card. Too many performers don't know when to stop. They go on and on. I think the main charm of magic is to just excite your audience by doing a few tricks and then quit. This is something that Charlie Miller has been saying for years. Make them ask for more. Leipzig used to say, "Always make them coax to see a few more. Don't satiate them with magic." Here's a wonderful example of what I'm trying to get across to you:

Last night Francis, Mike Skinner, and I went to a restaurant. We were fooling with cards when the waitress came up. She asked if we played cards. Mike said, "Here, I'll show you a trick. He took out a silver dollar and stated that he also needed some

paper but wasn't sure if he had any with him. She offered him a paper napkin but Mike said he needed photographic paper. He 'found' a little piece of it in his pocket and handed it to her for examination. Then he placed it on the coin and had the girl initial the paper. Next he had her select a card from the pack. He asked to feel her hand to see if it would be warm enough to do the trick. He made a comment about the light perhaps not being just right to do the trick but would try it anyway. He asked her to press on the paper and coin with her hand. When she removed her hand her initials were still on the paper. Mike expressed momentary disappointment but then suddenly suggested that perhaps it had penetrated. She turned over the initialed paper and now on the other side was a perfect replica of her selected card! When she saw this photograph of her card she actually let out a scream and ran into the kitchen. A moment later out came a couple of guys to see the trick. During the confusion Mike had reset and proceeded to do it for them. Well, the effect it had on these fellows was fantastic. I told Mike that he would have the entire kitchen force out next and not to do it again. He said he wouldn't.

The waitress came back and said to Mike, "You're real magic." Then he did one more trick. He handed her a cigarette paper and asked her to tear it in half. He restored the paper and she was agog! Id said to Mike, "You're real magic." Then he did one more trick. He handed her a cigarette paper and asked her to tear it in half. He restored the paper and he was absolutely agog. She said, "I don't understand." I told her it was a special paper that comes from India. She examined the paper and Mike told her to tear it up again. She did, and Mike restored it again! Now at this point Mike could have done 20 card tricks and spoiled the entire illusion he had created. But he didn't – he quit right there!

Since this issue of GENII is the Magic Castle issue I thought it might be interesting to find out what Francis has to say about the place after having been here for eight months. How about it, Francis?

(F.C.) The audiences here at the Castle have been, and are, wonderful! They don't come here to dance- they come to see and enjoy magic! It's a very happy combination and I have enjoyed being a part of it. When I'm not working in the Close-Up Gallery I enjoy shooting the bull with other magicians- watching them work and trying to fool then now and then myself. There is absolutely no other place like it.

Thank you, Francis. As you may remember, I came out here eight years ago to visit Jay Ose for a few months- and I'm still here! Back in those days no one imagined even in their wildest dreams that the Castle would become what it is today. It has been my pleasure to see the Castle become the magic center of the world. In subsequent columns I hope to introduce the regular performers here at the Castle to you. Meanwhile, if you have any questions, or wish me to comment on any particular phase of magic, I'll do my best to oblige in this column. I would enjoy hearing from you. All good wishes for 1971.

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February 1971

TAHITI: Sitting in the Magic Castle discussing “our Art” with a few of the boys recently...little did I dream that three days later I would be here in Tahiti in the south seas!

My dear friend, Bob Muir, an early member of the Castle, suddenly and unexpectedly remarked, “How would you like to leave the day after tomorrow for Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Bombay and Calcutta?” Jokingly I replied that I’d love nothing better. He then said, “Alright, go right now and get your passport and I’ll have everything ready in time.”

This is typical Robert Muir. Once he makes up his mind, things happen and he gets results. In a few short years he has accomplished wonders in the hectic business world. The many who know him will attest that his great success has not spoiled him in any way.

I performed a few “favorites” for three air way stewardesses who are waiting over here in the Taharaa Hotel. We took them to a late dinner and both Bob and myself found them to be a very critical audience. When we leave here we fly directly to Auckland, New Zealand, so I shall be able to renew friendships with many there. Later I shall comment on any differences in their style of performing.

Before leaving Los Angeles I heard from Mike Skinner that his friend, Taylor, had again visited “Silent Mora” in Boston. When I was in my teens, Cliff Green and I spent many memorable hours with Mora. He came to Ottawa two or three times a year. He was a superlative sleight of hand artist and handled everything so flawlessly- always with a slow natural grace, and his sleights were more elusive than any other s I had seen.

Years later in New York City, when I was cutting silhouettes, with Larry Gray on Broadway, Mora came into our studio. He performed the balls from hand to hand, having two people hold a handkerchief by the corners to form an improvised table. This really opened my eyes. What a perfect way to display the effect. I immediately asked Mora if he’d mind if I used the idea. Graciously he replied that “he had no patent on it.” I had practiced the marble trick from Sachs “Sleight of Hand” but the use of small rubber balls and the handkerchief appealed very much to me. A short time later I showed the effect to Nate Leipzig and he fell in love with it. For months he always carried around a small ball. Every opportunity he got he’s sneak in a little practice to try and jump the ball up to the top of the fist without any perceptible jerk.

I was so pleased to hear from Mike Skinner that Mora has lost none of his beautiful handling of balls, handkerchiefs, and coins. He, Warren Keane, Wallace, Galvin, Nate Leipzig, Max Malini, and Emil Jarow were real idols of mine. However, the ones that I really learned the most from with playing cards were some professional gamblers, also Arthur Finley and Larry Gray.

Wish, that through this column, I could convince a few serious students to learn to perform at least ONE effect with as near-perfection as possible.

When I was residing in New York there was a sleight “making the rounds.” The cards were help ala Kelly Replacement and the bottom card hinged down, up and around assisted by the hand not holding the deck. This was merely a strange appearing flourish. However, a chap named Dave Ossip, saw it, like it and learned it. It is now known as the

“Ossip Flop.” No one, and I feel certain of this, can execute the move like Dave. It takes on an entirely different appearance when he does it. It goes to show or prove that constant repetition coupled with determination to improve, produces really remarkable results.

Many years ago, Albert Goshman asked me why he did not receive more acclaim. I told him that all he had to learn to do was perform ANY TRICK better than all the others did it. He asked me to suggest one. “Stars of Magic” had just appeared and I pointed out the simple effect, “Spellbound,” and told him it had great possibilities. Not so long after this we were in the Dixie Hotel where the New York magicians met for luncheon. This particular day we had a visitor from Europe- a coin manipulator. Naturally Alert shoed him “Spellbound.” At the conclusion this onlooker remarked. “Those changes represent the finest exhibition of sleeving that I have ever witnessed.” Nary once had the sleeves been used! Completely deceived by the handling, his only solution was to attribute the effect to some form of sleeving. This trick alone brought the then practically unknown “Baker the Faker” to national prominence in “our little field.”

Jumping back to when I left Los Angeles: We were all delighted to have Ron Wilson back from the hospital. He looks his customary gracious and pleasant self. He is one of our best loved members and does a superlative job when he works in the Close-Up Gallery. Why can’t we have more performers like Ron? Certain skills and knowledge are of course necessary, but the main thing, the pith of the whole affair, is a thorough understanding of the attitudes of our audience towards you and what you are doing and saying.

Nate Leipzig so often remarked, “If the spectators like you, as a person, they will thoroughly enjoy what you do.” A good performer must FEEL the feelings of the audience. If, for some reason, this “Rapport” is not present when you have commenced, you must literally fight to win it.

This month’s column may not be up to par because I usually make a tape recording and a lot of “sifting” takes place before publication. If this be so, please forgive, and long live the Art!

Sincerely,

DAI VERNON
(in Tahiti)

March 1971

As I start this month's column it strikes me as being rather funny that I should be asked to do a column each month because I am probably the world's worst correspondent. It seems as though I can never find the time to write letters, as my friends and relatives will attest. But through this column they can at least "keep in touch" so perhaps all is not lost! Life has been very good to me and it has been primarily through the kindness of all the wonderful friends I have made in magic.

Last month's column was written in Tahiti. If any of my readers ever visit this lovely place be sure to have some sponges, thimbles, coins, rope or string in you pockets as you'll have a ball doing tricks for the natives. They really love magic. In fact, I think they really believe there is such a thing as "true" magic from the way they react. They are a wonderful audience.

We (Bob Muir, his cousin, and myself) went from Tahiti to Sydney, Australia, where I again saw my dear friends Les Levant and Maury Rooklyn. The latter took me downtown Sydney to see Joe Stuthard. In Australia there is a chain of Cole Department Stores where Struthard has the magic kit concession. He has magic packages ranging in price from \$1.00 to \$10.00. This man is making a fortune pitching these magic kits in the stores. He travels from store to store. They give him a prominent spot in which to demonstrate the kits and he does a beautiful job of pitching them. It is an amazing operation.

Leaving Australia we visited New Zealand. It happened to be a Sunday. If you ever want to visit a nice quiet place, try New Zealand on a Sunday! There was absolutely no activity whatsoever! As a result I didn't get to see any magicians but we certainly had a great relaxing day!

Singapore was our next stop where I hit it lucky as the local magicians were having their monthly meeting. Unfortunately I was late in arriving but a dozen magicians were still on hand and we had a nice visit. I had hoped to get out to see The Great Wong. He published a six ring Linking Ring routine but unlike my routine which uses three separate Rings, a chain of three, and a key ring, Wong's routine uses three separate Rings, a chain of two, and a key ring. It is a great routine- Charlie Miller enthused over it. Wong was doing a show that evening on a yacht but due to the lateness of my arrival at the meeting we had to cancel that trip. I did get down to his shop the next day where we had a very interesting session. Wong manufactures some excellent magic apparatus. He also performs quite frequently and is very popular in and around Singapore. I want to thank the members of the Singapore IBM Ring for their friendly reception, the banner they presented me, and for their reaction to the "little tricks from the Western World" that I showed them.

The next stop was Bangkok, a truly marvelous city. A book could be written about the "magic" there.

One of the first things I tried to do upon reaching Tokyo was to call my old friend, Tenkai. If you have ever tried to make a phone call in Tokyo you are in for a real challenge. It's a feat of magic in itself! Thanks to Rob Rossi I finally got the call through and Okinu answered. She was so excited to hear from me. ("Oh- Los Angeles-

Gerald Kosky- Charlie Miller- the Larsens- Charlie Kohrs- Tenkai will live ten years longer!’”) She was so grateful for my having called them and sends her love to all her friends here on the coast.

I didn’t see my friend Hirosho Sawa, whom I consider to be one of the most original magicians in the world. I say this with the utmost sincerity. But I did have a nice visit with Bob Rossi who is now with the Tenyo Magic Company. Also saw Mr. Tamada and the “number one computer” and they took us on a tour of Tokyo. He said that they are far advanced in many ways.

In a recent column I mentioned that anyone who was interested in bottom dealing could profit by obtaining a copy of a record put out some time ago by Artanis. Joe Artanis was a friend of mine. Well, after this column came out I received a letter from an individual in which he commented that he couldn’t understand why I wrote that I was such a good friend of Artanis. He went on to state that at one time Joe had wanted me to write an introduction for an item he was going to release and I refused. I don’t have the slightest recollection of ever refusing Joe anything. In fact, I’ve gone out of my way to do him a favor. This individual goes on to claim that I was trying to milk Joe for information- to grab everything I could from him. It is my personal feeling that this person has been greatly misinformed.

One of the most beloved and likeable persons in magic, Danny Dew of Phoenix, was telling me during a recent visit to the Castle that he is still amazed at the number of people who ask him about Paul Fox. As you know, Danny manufactures and sells some of Fox miracles, and customers wonder if Paul Fox is a trade name or what. Danny can’t understand how people who claim to be interested in magic can say they have never heard of Paul Fox. I, personally, consider Paul Fox to be a genius, yet he was never a publicity seeker. But Paul has contributed so much to magic that it does seem strange that he is not better known. Perhaps a future column devoted to this man would be of interest to you, my readers.

There are other “unknowns” in magic. Many persons believe that Arthur Finley was the man responsible for the Jordan card series- that it was he who ‘traced the dovetail shuffle to its lair’. He was the one who showed that cards could be dovetail shuffled and still retain their sequence. Finley was a great bridge player and was undoubtedly a big influence on Jordan. He was one of my early friends when I first moved to New York and was extremely clever with cards.

Another little known fact: Henry Christ was the stabilizing influence behind Ted Annemann. He spent every Saturday going over the material scheduled for publication in THE JINX- rewriting and editing. I would say that Henry ranks with the very best.

But getting back to recent events! The third annual Academy of Magical Arts Awards Banquet was as brilliant as past banquets and was enjoyed by everyone present. I want to mention two great thrills I had that evening. First was the fact that Bob Lansing, the movie star and magician member of the Castle, was present to award the Close-Up Magician of the Year trophy to his teacher, Mike Skinner. You could tell from the expression on Bob’s face when he opened the envelope and announced the winner that he was really happy about it. Bob has become very proficient with cards and coins thanks to his natural aptitude and to Mike’s help and instruction.

The second thrill for me that evening came when I was expectedly asked to accept a Fellowship Award for Tenkai. It was a real honor for Tenkai and I know he will be thrilled and appreciative of it as he loves Los Angeles and the local magicians.

The following “bit” in closing may be of interest: Take the four letters of the alphabet- J, K, L, M. Years ago I used to say, “J for Jarrow, K for Warren Keane, L for Leipzig, and M for Malini and Mora.” I thought it was interesting that these letters in sequence stood for the names of some of my idols. And Silent Mora certainly was an idol of mine. He used to play my home town of Ottawa, Canada. Everytime a Mora came to town Cliff Green and I would go over to his hotel room and talk with him until the wee hours of the morning. Mora was, and still is, a superlative sleight-of-hand performer. I use many of the original moves, such as the twirling wand vanish of a ball, and the retinal impression or the Percystence of vision with a billiard ball. These were beautiful moves in Mora’s hands. At the present time Mora is living in Boston. Anyone visiting Boston should most certainly look him up.

Keep those letters coming. I may surprise you and devote a column to “Answering the Mail” one of these months!

April 1971

It was a pleasant surprise to see the reproduction of my New York calling card on page 219 of the January GENII. It brought back certain nostalgic feelings about New York City. I was never too ambitious but I did realize one childhood ambition: the desire to live in New York. Living in the big city gave me the opportunity to meet and know all the “big time” magicians. Back in those early days “big time” was the Keith Theatres. “Family Time” and the “Pantages Time” were not quite as important as Keith time but they still had many good acts. The ambition of every act then, including magicians, was to play the famous Palace Theatre. To play the Palace was the ultimate!

In those days an act that had been performing for years but had never played the Palace would finally be booked there. They would always buy a new wardrobe for this important date but they would never dream of stepping right in with their new clothes. They would always go out of town- Jersey City or Philadelphia, to break in their new suit! This is not as silly as it may seem. After all, when you are used to wearing certain clothes you know exactly where every pocket is- how they turn inside out- how you reach for them, etc. A new suit can possibly throw you in that respect. This is very important on the stage, especially for a smooth-running magic act. It could be very frustrating to reach for a prop in your pocket and have to fumble to get it. So all the big acts used to break in their new wardrobe before going into the Palace.

It was really something to play the big time. Back then you used to get tours that could run as long as 48 weeks- going from coast to coast playing all the theatres. It was my good fortune to see many of the famous acts that played the Palace in New York. One that I especially remember was Horace Goldin, The Royal Illusionist. Horace did an illusion show very unlike Kellar, Thurston, or Blackstone. More things happened during the first minute of his act than you could possibly imagine. Productions, vanishes, appearances, transformations; I’d swear that he did about sixty tricks that first minute- a trick a second- bang, bang, bang! It was absolutely flabbergasting.

Horace Goldin was not only a fine illusionist but also a very good sleight-of-hand performer. I had the pleasure of seeing Horace perform close-up for newspaper men and clients many times. One of his main effective items was the dissolving knots. He’d have six or seven knots tied in borrowed linen handkerchief. The spectators would tie the knots. He would cover the knots with the center portion of the handkerchief and place it on the table. After making a pass over it he would lift it and show that the knots had vanished. It was real magic in the hands. He also did several other tricks with coins and string, etc., superlatively well.

It’s strange that some of the great magicians could not do any close-up tricks. They tended to say, “Oh, put those toys away- those jimcracks. I do big illusions. I don’t monkey around with that hanky panky stuff.” A typical case of this was Dante who was in New York quite often. He would walk into a room and say, “Don’t do those simple childish things, etc.” He would always disparage small tricks. But one time Paul Rosini did the crossed paper match penetration trick (using a magnet in the match book cover) and Dante was fascinated by it. He asked Paul to teach it to him, which he did. Dante

became quite proficient with it. After that he never told the guys to put away the jimcracks but would join right in by showing the match trick!

Dante was, of course, going from one extreme to the other in this instance. It is one thing to present illusions as masterfully as he did, and quite another to perform close-up magic. And this is what makes magic so interesting- the different phases. Many fellows start out as apparatus magicians and eventually became expert sleigh-of-hand performers. The present trend seems to be toward humorous presentations. Magic in itself can be humorous, of course. Situation comedy is a subject that is interesting. I think you get the greatest laughs from situation comedy. An appropriate remark coupled with a situation is what gets the belly laugh. The words by themselves may not be particularly funny. A good funny story is based on this principle: the situation is built up in the minds of the listeners- then comes the punch line.

In magic, quite often, these situations come about unexpectedly. It is a good magician who remembers and tries it again later! This reminds me of an incident that happened to me when I was 13 years old and doing a show for a Sunday School affair. Back in those days every man wore a hat, so I had no trouble in borrowing one for a trick. It was a rather grubby looking hat with a dirty sweatband, etc. I said, "Now I have just borrowed this hat- you can see that it is perfectly empty." I looked into the hat and continued, "At least I think so." Well, I didn't mean to imply that there were crawling things in it or anything, but the audience took it that way!

At this same performance I had asked a fellow Sunday School classmate to act as my assistant. I had made a blunderbuss from an old revolver my father had given me by attaching a tin funnel (with a cup gimmick). It was to be used for shooting a borrowed watch from the gun to an empty cloth held by my assistant. Right out of Houdini!

I borrowed a watch and chain, dropped it into the funnel of the gun, and copped out the cup gimmick. As I picked up the ammunition from the table I left the gimmick with the watch behind the folded cloth. I had instructed my assistant to secretly fasten the watch to the cloth as he picked it up. This was covered by my loading the gun, etc. I had also told him to act a little frightened when I fired the gun at the cloth. Well, when I fired the gun he gave a violent start- the watch came off the hook and crashed to the floor! Fortunately the watch didn't break- it was a hunting case type watch. I picked it up (and I was really trembling!), opened it and held it to my ear. I said, "It's still going!" This got a big laugh! It was entirely accidental on my part- I was frightened to death that the watch had stopped and everything, and it was the hit of the show! Everybody thought it was part of the trick! A moment ago I stated that it is a good magician who remembers such incidents and tries them again later. In this case I did NOT try to remember!

The other day someone was doing a card trick here in the Castle. He happened to be using the Seven of Clubs and was doing an ambitious card effect where the card kept coming back to the top of the pack. He asked a girl to put her finger on top of the deck and say the magic word. She replied that she didn't know what the magic word was, and the magician asked her to say SOME magic word. So she said, "Seven up!", which was rather cute. And of course the seven was back on top. Now this is how you pick up patter lines- remember the unexpected lines that come up during performances. The next time this magician does the ambitious card routine I feel certain he will use a seven and his new magic word!

I remember one time working in the Madison Hotel in New York. They had marble topped tables, which used to be fairly cold to the touch. I was doing the Cups-and-Balls, using metal cups, which were also cold to the touch, and crochet-covered cork balls. The girl who was helping with the trick remarked that it was quite chilly in the room and I said the metal cups were cold. And she remarked, "Yes, even the little balls have their sweaters on!" This was a clever remark which I have used occasionally when appropriate.

I started this column writing about New York, and, in a round-about way, we left the city and finally returned (above- Madison Hotel)! I first saw Nate Leipzig in the big city. I had never wanted to copy any but as I watched Leipzig work I thought to myself that here was the ideal way of handling cards on the stage. The man didn't turn his side to the audience- he stood full-face to his audience. I couldn't conceive a better way for presenting, say, a color change, than Leipzig's method. I told Note that I was going to try to do card magic as closely to his style as possible because I couldn't think of a better way of doing it.

So many magicians stand sideways when they do tricks. They don't seem to realize that if they turn to the left that people on their right have to strain and look around- they can't see through a person. This is a great fault with many amateur magicians. They can't see their hands as they practice in front of a mirror, even when they turn sideways, but they seem to remain oblivious to the fact that persons on their right or left, depending on which way they turn, cannot see. I have even seen magicians practically turn their back to an audience when performing a card or thimble move. This is a fault that all of us should try to overcome. Remember to do your tricks so your audiences can see them. Be conscious of angles. Not only should we try to be aware of allowing our audiences to see the tricks- but it works in the other direction as well. We may have some move or sleight that a wrong angle would expose. These angles should be covered in some manner even if just momentarily or until the move has been accomplished. At one point in the Ball and Cone routine I have move my right hand, with a ball palmed therein, completely away from the cone. I discovered that I was flashing the ball to those on the left side. By experimenting I found that I could keep the ball hidden by just bringing my hand back behind and in line with my left arm. A simple answer to the problem but one that I had to discover for myself.

In the past I have written about trying to be original in magic. A short time ago a chap named John C. Wagner came up with a twist on the popular "Glorpy" handkerchief that is an excellent example of using your head and being original. ("Elusive Hank" in issue number 13 of THE TALISMAN.) He first has a card selected and returned to the deck. He spreads the handkerchief on the table and then spreads the cards face down on the handkerchief. The cards are covered by the corners of the handkerchief. Suddenly the center of the handkerchief starts to move and rise into the air as though there was something alive beneath it, or rather, inside the folds. And then, the end of the card comes into view- it has been pushing the handkerchief up. The card is now standing on end half in view. Yes, it turns out to be the chosen card which John hands directly to the spectator. The handkerchief is unfolded, the cards are gathered up, and there is nothing

to be seen in the way of a gimmick or the like. It's an excellent example of making a different effect out of a trick that everyone else does per the instructions!

If you can't give a trick a new twist, at least try to give it a different patten presentation. Everyone doing magic should endeavor to add some original idea, some thought of your very own to every effect you do. With slight imagination and small effort you can think of some little "twist" or some apt remark to help improve your performance.

Class dismissed until next month!

May 1971

Many of my reader probably wonder why I don't explain tricks or certain intricate moves that Charlie Miller calls "intrigue tricks." Well, truthfully, I want to forget a great many- to un-clutter my mind! I have so many of what I call useless things. Yes, they are intriguing, but so much of it isn't practical.

Henry Christ, who is a true genius in magic, once said, "Don't take a move that's very good and try to make a trick out of it." I don't care how undetectable the move is, it's not good to try to construct a trick using that move. The idea is to learn the move and tuck it away in your arsenal of things you can use. Later, when you think of a good effect, this sleight my fit in ideally. Then you will have a good trick. When you try to make tricks out of moves, they are weak tricks. Moves are only tools to produce an effect. First, get an effect and then, when you have to use a sleight and there are eight ways of doing it, pick the best method and work it into the total to produce a good result.

Sam Margules, Doctor Daley, Francis Carlyle and I used to spend much time together discussing magic at great lengths. When fellows like Judd Cole, Dorny, Johnny Paul, and Tommy Martin would come to New York they would join us in our sessions. We'd spend hours discussing not just tricks, but the presentations of tricks, what is good for audiences, etc. The sad fact is that what is good for magicians, is seldom good for an audience.

My old friend, Wallace Galvin, had a beautiful act in vaudeville. He said you could always tell when there was a group of magicians in the audience because they would always applaud at the wrong time! For instance, when he laid a hat on the table and then picked it up, loading it at the same time, the audience saw nothing but the picking up of the hat. But magicians who knew about a servant would say, "Wasn't that a beautiful load?" and they'd applaud. Nothing was supposed to have happened. Galvin was just picking up a hat, but the magicians in the audience would applaud because they like the way he loaded the hat!

Another example of such ill-timed applause was when Tommy Martin placed the fan under his arm and stole the egg from his breast pocket. Magicians would applaud the clever steal!

Well, I don't want my readers to get the wrong impression. I am not trying to set myself up as an oracle or expert, but I do like to discuss things such as this. I will be 77 next month, so I have been in magic a long time...well over 70 years. Lou Derman gave me a line that I like to use in my opening remarks when I work at the Castle: "I am 76 years old and I have been doing magic for over seventy years- I wasted the first six years."

During my life in magic I have always tried to search out tricks. I used to travel miles doing so when I was a kid. In those days magic was not as accessible as it is today. As Keating once said, "Magic has gone Rotarian," which is a very clever remark because magic is very accessible these days.

There is nothing more universally known among magicians today than sponge balls. Very few magicians have ever stopped to wonder where the sponge ball tricks originated. You may remember that years ago you could buy coarse red rubber sponges

at dime stores and drug stores. Back then I heard from Arthur Finley that there was a chap up around Saratoga called "Sponges". I had no idea who he was- he was just called Sponges. I asked Arthur, "What does he do?" Arthur replied that he had a trick where he apparently placed one sponge in a spectator's hand. A second sponge was vanished and caused to reappear in the person's hand with the first sponge. The report was that this man got screams from the spectators- especially if he used a lady to hold the sponges. Now as far as I know, and Francis Carlyle backs me up on this, Count "Sponges" Orloff was the originator of this trick. At least he was the first one to commercialize the effect. This was back in the twenties.

The Count is no longer with us- he and Houdini are probably having sessions as the Count had a lot of the same attributes as Houdini. The Count was a real character. He was very successful around New York- worked Billy Rose's Music Hall and the Trouville Inn. Everything the Count did he did well. In order to get a club engagement one time he mastered the thumb palming and switching of cigarettes. The switch was made as he apparently tossed the lit cigarette to the floor. He never bothered about lighting the other cigarettes. The ones that landed on the floor were in perfect condition. One time a fellow went up to Holden's Magic Shop and asked Max if he had the burned and restored cigarette trick. Max had no idea what the guy was talking about so the fellow explained that he had seen a magician who had tossed a lit cigarette to the floor- and the cigarette restored itself as it hit the floor!

The Count always wanted to be thought of as a big shot. One time he had an oil painting done of himself. The artist delivered the finished portrait to the Count and was rather proud of the likeness he had produced. When he asked the Count for the money, the Count replied, "I'll pay you when you paint a beard and a mustache on it." The artist was astounded, of course, but at the Count's insistence he finally painted a beard and a mustache on it, making the Count look like a Russian Czar. The Count had the painting framed and hung on his wall. Whenever he had guests they would see this painting and remark on how much it looked like the Count. When they'd ask who it was the Count would say, "That's my father." And everyone would agree that they could see the resemblance!

One time the Count bought a genuine mummy and took it home. When Francis Carlyle asked him what he had done with the mummy the Count took him upstairs and showed him the mummy under the baby's crib. Francis asked, "Why do you keep it under there?" The Count replied, "I want the baby to absorb the wisdom of the ages." He was serious about it!

The Count made a study of the occult and ESP, etc., and one day he told us that he had learned to make himself disappear. He was a big husky person- six feet four inches. He said, "You know, Francis, I can really make myself invisible. I proved the other day when I walked down Broadway- a lot of people bumped into me- they couldn't see me and that's why they bumped into me!" And he was completely serious about this also!

I was fortunate in being able to hang around New York for years because that was the meeting place for magicians. Every magician who amounted to anything eventually came to New York. I was always "at liberty," as I avoided work as much as possible back then! So I met all the professionals as they came to the city. I mad the

observation in those days that people who are musical seem to like magic. Just to mention a few: Everyone knows that Richard Himber was an orchestra leader who was crazy about magic. My own music teacher, Ray Grismer, is a very accomplished magician. Bert Kalmar, the song writer who wrote "Three Little Words," was fascinated with magic. Fritz Kreisler, the famous violinist, also comes to mind: I was working a very nice home on Park Avenue one night for a special party. I did not know that Mr. Kreisler was present. As I was waiting and relaxing in the library, a nice looking lady walked into the room and asked if I was the man who was going to do the card tricks later that evening. When I answered in the affirmative she continued, "Oh, my husband is just crazy about card tricks. He'll do anything to watch them." When I asked if her husband did any magic himself she replied, "he does a few little things- he's just an amateur." When I asked her his name she said, "Oh, you wouldn't know him. He's a fiddler." When she finally told me that her husband was Fritz Kreisler I was really excited. She said she hoped I'd be going on before eleven o'clock because her husband had to leave at eleven for an important meeting. Well, to make a long story short, Mr. Kreisler was there until 1:30 and he was absolutely fascinated with the magic. He was a wonderful man.

In my search for tricks I'll never forget the thrill I had when I first met Eddie Fechter. Eddie is from the Buffalo, New York, area and was here at the Castle last year. He endeared himself to all of us as he is a very warm, nice chap besides being an excellent magician. Eddie is a master with the dice cup. Not only does he stack the dice and do all the usual moves but he can make shots with the dice out of the cup. It's fantastic. When I asked Eddie how he learned to do this he told me an interesting story. One day a seedy looking bum-type of a guy came into the place where Eddie was working behind the bar, and asked Eddie if he could set him up with a double drink. Eddie told the fellow that he was sorry but he couldn't give drinks away. Then the chap asked for just one shot of something and again Eddie had to turn him down. Just then he spotted a dice cup on the back of the bar and asked to see it. He did a couple of dice shots with the dice and cup. Eddie was so entranced and intrigued that he immediately set a full bottle of spirits on the bar and said, "Help yourself, stranger!" He says it was one of the best investments he has ever made!

In Pittsburgh during a magic convention Eddie did these dice shots for the boys. Carlyle was rather skeptical when I first told him about Eddie's ability. After seeing Eddie work, Francis changed his tune! He got Charlie Miller over to watch. Charlie observed from every angle and finally conceded that the only place you could see a false move was if you laid on your back below the table and looked up underneath it!

This first line of this month's column refers to "intrigue tricks," a Charlie Miller expression. This is a very good choice of words because too many of us become intrigued with our handling of cards, and overlook the effect that we are trying to create for the audience. We are intrigued because we know the subtleties involved but they don't mean a darn thing as far as the EFFECT is concerned.

Take a painting for example. How many people worry about what pigment was used or whether the artist used a certain type of oil or manufactured his own paint? They look at the result of that picture. And if it expresses something, the viewer doesn't care whether the artist used a sable or a camel's hairbrush, etc. It's the EFFECT that counts.

Doctor Daley was one of the cleverest amateur magicians who ever lived. He was very much intrigued with his methods of handling cards. One time he asked Francis to watch to see if he could detect the move. Francis admitted that he couldn't follow anything but that he knew that at all times Doc was doing something. As Francis remarked, "When you are shuffling cards it should look as if you are shuffling cards, not controlling them! I see or sense control at all times. A shuffle should be a casual, perhaps careless, thing."

Many magicians, watching Al Flosso's Miser's Dream on stage, will be fooled as to when and how he loads the coins, etc. While performing, Flosso doesn't think of technique- but the technique is there, beautifully submerge in his presentation. Magicians should approach magic with this in mind: In working up an act they should think of the audience's point of view- think of the spectator. Don't dwell upon the intriguing methods.

Keep those letters coming!

June 1971

It is with some feeling of guilt that I start this column because so many letters have piled up over the months...letters that have gone unanswered. So not I'll try to catch up partly with the mail. I should mention that I no longer have any photos or brochures to send to those who have requested them. You flatter me by wanting them!

LETTERS

Don Lawton is helping me look over the mail and we're opening letters at random. This one is from John Passmore, Jr., a medical student in Nashville, Tenn. John lists all the card magic books in his library and wonders if he has overlooked any other really good or "must have" books. Well, one book that has always appealed to me, even though it is not all cards, is C. Lang Neil's "THE MODERN CONJUROR." It is the only book I know of containing pictures of performers on stage. It has full length photos of how tricks look while being performed. It has many such photos of Charles Bertram with an assistant which give you an excellent picture of the facial expressions, stances, etc. For this reason alone it is a valuable book to the serious student of magic.

Jon also asks about obtaining a copy of Buckley's "CARD CONTROL" which, I understand, is scarce. I feel that with all the other fine books you have on card magic, John, you don't have to be too concerned in adding the Buckley book to your library. You already have more than enough material at hand!

And a final question from John: "is it really valuable to have an extremely large arsenal of sleights?" In this book, Erdnase refers to a couple of sleights thusly: "These sleights have very little use; however; the tyro won't be satisfied until he has mastered every sleight in the calendar." As a child I wanted to master every sleight but that was just a personal whim. As for performing, it is not necessary to have an endless supply of sleights. Two of the finest performers with cards that I ever saw were Larry Gray ("The Dizzy Wizard") and Herbert Brooks of the famous Brooks' Trunk fame. Herbert used nothing but force, a palm, and a change. Larry did the above three sleights plus a pass-all classic sleights. But boy, could those two men ENTERTAIN an audience. So I maintain that it is not necessary to know a lot of sleights. Better to do a few well and know how to handle them. It is not how dexterous you are, but knowing how to handle the sleights before an audience that really counts.

Magicians talk about misdirection but the average magician doesn't really know what it is. He thinks that misdirection is looking at the hand that is supposed to be holding an object. This is just a tiny phase of misdirection. When you come to the crucial sleight in any trick there should be absolutely no suspicion attached to it. If you tighten up and feel guilty your audience will sense it. They may not actually see what you do, but they will know that you did something and you have killed the entire effect. You really shouldn't be conscious of the fact that you are doing the sleight- it should blend in with your overall presentation and "flow right by", so to speak. A master of this technique, as I mentioned last month, is Al Flosso.

So to sum it all up, John: If you can do ten basic card sleights (useful ones!) and do them well, you are on the way to becoming a "card expert"!

Here's a welcome letter from Eddie Fechter (also mentioned last month!) in which he expresses the hope of sometime having a gathering of magicians at his hotel in Cheektowaga, New York. Until this can be arranged the welcome mat is always out at the Forks Hotel for visiting magicians. If you are ever in the vicinity be sure to stop by and meet Eddie- he's a great guy and extremely clever.

Jumping to the other side of the world, a letter from Lim Hap Hin, president of IBM Ring 115 in Singapore, extends a cordial invitation to visiting magicians. He will make your stay very pleasant...just as he and the other ring members did for me on my recent visit to the Far East. Incidentally, the late Harry Mendoza was the one who first told me about this fine group of magicians who make up Ring 115.

Ronald L. Hawker of Wellington, New Zealand, writes that he has been able to locate a copy of the record I once used in my Linking Ring routine..., "The Chinese Lullaby". (Ganson had mentioned this in my book.) Trying to have the same music that I used is really unimportant. Any oriental music should fit your routine nicely, Ronald. Try listening to several different records and then pick out the one you like best. I happen to like "The Chinese Lullaby" - that's why I used it. And while we're on this subject, I feel it is better to use music that is not too well known. If you use a number that everyone knows it actually detracts from your performance. Choose selections that fit the trick, of course, but try to avoid music that has been played to death on radio, etc. Don Lawton just mentioned that one of the lesser known tracks from the LP album, "Music from Peter Gunn" ("Dreamsville") would be an excellent modern background for the Super-X or any levitation.

FAUCETT ROSS

A couple of weeks ago my dear friend, Faucett Ross, wrote that Danny Dew was very anxious to attend the S.A.M. Convention in St. Louis in July but that he didn't want to make the long trip alone. So he wondered if Faucett could persuade me to go with him. Well, it didn't take much arm twisting! If all goes as planned, Frances Carlyle and I will accompany Danny to St. Louis, with a stop in St. Joseph, Mo., to pick up Faucett. We are looking forward to seeing all our St. Louis friends once again.

While going through back issues of GENII, Jim Hand of Glendora, Calif., came across a reference of my playing Klabberjass with Snag Werris. He would like to know what the game is and how it is played. Your best bet, Jim, is to look it up in Hoyle. If you enjoy playing cards you will like this two handed card game which is often referred to as "Klab". Damon Runyon often used to mention Klab in column.

A young Los Angeles magician, Dan Mindo, who was present for the Mothers Day Brunch at the Magic Castle, sends a nice letter in which he thanks us all for a most wonderful time. These Sunday Brunches are the only time minors are allowed in the Castle and they have become very popular with the members. And it just goes to prove that the Castle appeals to both young and old alike.

My old friend, Chang, has sent me photo-copies of letters that were received by the ship-line regarding Chang's show on one of their cruises. Every letter makes reference to the Linking Rings Trick! This should prove a point. I have always felt that this is one of the best tricks a magician can learn. Learn to do the Rings well and you will be well rewarded for your efforts. I feel greatly flattered that I taught Chang the routine he uses and performs so well.

Bill McLaury of Hiddenite, NC, writes an interesting letter, in reply to my January column. "This particular column shows, I feel, just what a hobby is: A guy enjoying what he wants to enjoy. There are two classes of magic: strictly commercial, and the study, performing, what you have, for pure joy. And this is what you were writing about. I would like to hear more from you on the commercial side of selling an act."

Bob Eads and
Channing Pollock

A few weeks ago the Castle presented a double lecture by Channing Pollock and Bob Eads that was very interesting. Bob's lecture was on the selling of magic. Now I must admit that I know nothing of selling. I have always worked on the theory that if you build a better mouse trap someone will come looking for you, which happened to me. I never in my life went looking for work. I do know, and I have seen it happen so often, that business methods apply to magic. In magic it is very important to sell your own personality. Don't worry too much about making them like your tricks- make them like you personally- to like, respect and trust you as an individual. Make them especially know that you are reliable. A good example of this reliability is Johnny Platt. Johnny is a businessman. A client can rely on his being on time. In his own quiet way Johnny has made a living from magic all his life.

Although I state that I know nothing about the selling game, I think that if you will apply sound business methods to your approach, you will succeed. I warn against using superlatives. To claim that you are the world's greatest, etc. This usually fails to impress prospective clients.

Bob Eads has lecture notes that could be worth their weight in gold to the serious magician. They can be obtained for \$2.00 by writing to Bob in care of the Magic Castle.

A very nice letter from Sid Lorraine came in, announcing a surprise gathering of the friends of Harry and Sophia Smith in Toronto. I wish I could have been present at this affair on June 12th. Harry had a magic shop in Toronto for years- all the magicians love him and his wife. I was especially pleased to know that they are still with us- and I feel certain that the surprise party was a huge success.

Peter Jones of Adamstown Heights, Australia, sends a clipping from a local newspaper- an article on the "Cheat's Bible"- very interesting reading. This "Bible" is, of course, the book that I have so highly recommended over the years; Erdnase's "EXPERT AT THE CARD TABLE". I am going to pass the article (which was written by Peter) on to our editor for possible reprinting in a future issue of GENII.

Barry Seidler of Palos Verdes Penin., Calif., writes most flattering letter, but the thing that pleases me most is the fact that he is using my Cups and Balls routine "with a few Seidler original moves". This is what we need in magic- more originality. I have commented on originality before in this column.

At hand is a very nice letter from Charlie Hudson of Columbia, Mo. Charlie writes a column in the LINKING RING magazine and is certainly one of the well-posted and knowledgeable men in magic.

A big "THANK YOU" to John A. Beck, III of Thayer, Mo., for sending me a copy of the Artanis record on the bottom dealing. I referred to this recording in my December column. His ideas are excellent. I appreciated hearing from you, Charlie.

Well, the hour off to Bill Larsen, so we'll close the mail bag for now with the promise that it will be opened again later on and more letters reviewed for comment. Again may I remind you that under present circumstances it is impossible for me to answer you personally- and I do not have photos or brochures to send out. I thank you all for the compliment given me in asking for such material. With these comments I have possibly cut down the number of letters I will receive in the future but please know that I am always happy to hear from you.

We have just received the tragic news that one of our regular members, Bill Brand, was killed in an airplane crash. Bill and I used to play Klab together up in the Castle library and he was a clever card player. He had also become an accomplished magician in a very short time.

Also hate to announce that Dave Roth passed away peacefully. He would have been 98 years of age this October. I met him years ago in New York and had the pleasure of teaching him a card trick that seemed to depend on a prodigious memory. He was very pleased to get a slight relief from the stress of night after night mnemonics.

Dai Vernon

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July 1971

The photograph reproduced here was taken on January 3, 1942. Yes, that's me in the hospital bed where I was laid up for over six months recovering from a fall on a construction job. This was the accident I mentioned in my November 1970 column- the one of which John Scarne remarked, "Well, Dai, it just goes to show you that guys like you and I shouldn't work!"

The gentleman with the ball and cone is S. Leo Horowitz. Incidentally, this was not a real Cone and Ball outfit. The ball was one I was using to exercise my hands, which were out of the cast at that time. And the cone was a shade from a small lamp! I would imagine that many of the younger magicians of today do not know what a clever chap Sam Horowitz was in his prime. Many years ago when Sam was a school boy, he had Henry Christ (of "Dead Man's Hand" fame) were the only two boys who were privileged to go in the back room at Martinka's magic shop. In those days Sam was known all over New York as a coin expert. But he was also an expert at many other phases of magic, including the dying of a silk by pushing it thru the hand. He learned this from Julius Dressbach who had a different method of stealing the dye tube. In Sam's hands it was a miracle.

Many years ago one of Sam's pupils was a chap named George Kaplan. Years later the book, "The Fine Art of Magic" was published. I was flabbergasted upon reading it to see that Sam's name was not mentioned, yet nearly all the material in the book had been culled from Sam, Al Baker, and myself. I'd say that 80% of the magic should have been credited to Sam Horowitz...or at least that the variations of 'improved versions' of the tricks had been inspired by him.

Sam used to work straight- he was a very neat and beautiful performer- quiet in his manner of working. My wife told Sam that he had lips like an Egyptian and suggested that he take an Egyptian name- feeling that he would do very well in a fez and Egyptian costume. So S. Leo Horowitz became Mohammed Bey and did quite well. He worked the cruise ships to South America most successfully. While his act was silent, he opened each show with a short Egyptian introduction. When a Sister on a cruise was introduced to Sam after a show she was quite amazed to find that he spoke English!

It's a shame that the present generation of magicians never had the opportunity of seeing Sam perform. If memory serves me correctly Sam is the same age as I am-77 – and living in New Jersey. Of course his work is well-known to the boys in and around New Jersey. Of course his work is well-known to the boys in and around New York- and he is highly respected by the public in South America. Some of his superb magical creations can be found in "The Stars of Magic".

Looking at the picture again reminds me of one Sunday afternoon when I had 62 visitors in the solarium and we had quite a session! Dorny and some of the Chicago boys were there. Dorny took over as emcee and we had a real magic meeting and show in the New York hospital!

In previous columns I have written about the importance of being original in your thinking about magic. Dick Zimmerman of Los Angeles is outstanding when it comes to devising new effects and routines as well as methods for accomplishing these effects.

The phonograph record act that Dick created for his wife, Diana, is an excellent example of originality. Quite recently here at the Castle we were privileged to see another magician whose act sparkled with this type of thinking. I am speaking of Pavel of Geneve, Switzerland. He personifies the Art of Magic. He does a silent act. He shows no signs of arrogance or conceit. He has a pleasant smile. People say, "What a nice young fellow." I don't see how anyone can be displeased with an act like Pavel. Oh, some magicians might say, "I know how that trick was done" or "he used a vanishing cane, etc.", but the act as a whole is most pleasing. And he will fool magicians with some of his originations!

I must acknowledge a recent letter from Roger Bruce of Scotland. I was quite surprised to learn from Bruce Cervon, who corresponds with Roy Walton, that Roger is only 17 years of age. What a beautifully written letter and what intelligent comments! He sent me a list of six card tricks that are refreshingly different. I hope I will have the pleasure of hearing from him again. I would say that Roger Bruce is a very clever young man.

And, of course, Pavel is also young but he has the right idea about magic. He understands the principles of magic but you have only to see his act to see and appreciate the touches of originality in almost everything he does. But most important of all is the manner in which he does these things. I keep harping on this, I know, but the manner in which you perform is so important.

Some of my magic friends are exceedingly clever when it comes to magic- they do their tricks flawlessly, but they don't seem to realize the importance of being natural and being themselves. In other words, being pleasant. I have asked some of these fellows, "When you were courting your sweetheart what were you selling? You were selling yourself! You were trying to make this person like you."

An audience is like a sweetheart- try to make that audience like you from the moment you walk on. Look at them- smile at them- take them into your confidence- don't be aloof. Audiences are very Keane- a group of people watching a person out on a stage alone. Any little thing you do on a stage is magnified. Anything that is the least bit distasteful is magnified and stands out like a sore thumb. Your attitude can actually be felt by an audience. My dear friend, Judson Cole, used to say, "Some people have authority on the stage. It takes others years to acquire this authority."

Dr. Elliott used to emphasize the two little words, BE NATURAL. Not only should you be natural when doing your sleights but be natural when talking. If you are an actor (and so few of us are) then you can play any part. If you are not an actor, then for your sake, be natural. No one can be yourself better than you, yourself! This is what makes children so delightful. They are natural. Same with animals- a dog comes up to you wagging his tail- you like him- he is being natural. This is what a performer should aim at- making people like him. Fortunately there are very few nasty people. The average audience is all primed to like the performer. But if you step on stage with the wrong attitude or say the wrong thing, your audience can change. And you'll have a struggle on your hands trying to win them back.

I remember the time when Dr. Daley was going with a young lady. She had never been around magicians before, so he took her to meetings and shows. After she had been to dozens of meetings Dr. Daley asked her, "How do you appraise magic?"

And she replied, "Well, the way I look at it- there are some very nice magicians, but there are also some horrible ones. I think it's a matter of good taste and some have bad taste." Unfortunately this is true- and we should all strive to cultivate good taste.

I was very pleased to see my friend, Peter Pit, performing at the Castle once again. I first met Peter in Holland several years ago. He had entered the convention contests and had performed his Acrobatic Cane routine. I told him, before the results were announced, that as far as I was concerned, he had won the contest. The judges upheld my convictions!

Some time later I saw him working in a very fine dinner club in London. He was doing an act with bottles and the Acrobatic Cane. It was a silent act and very professional in every way. When Peter came to the United States he started doing a talk act. Peter has always been a bright young fellow. I must say that the act I saw recently in the Palace of Mystery here at the Castle is ten times better than it was when he first started talking. Which points out how hard work and doing shows can improve an act. His manner was relaxed and his act was very well received.

Before we leave the Castle (and this month's ramblings!) I want to say that it was a pleasure meeting David Brooker, son of Frank Brooker of England, who was here for several weeks. Channing Pollock taught Frank Brooker his famous dove routine and act which Frank is still doing in England. And just recently David has become interested in magic. When he first arrived in this country David visited Faucett Ross who taught him a couple of tricks. Then David came out to the coast where Charlie Miller showed him a few more tricks. David already has what I have been talking about- he has charm. He is a nice looking, polite, young Englishman. He already has 80% going for him and I know he can acquire the skill of presenting magic.

Incidentally, Faucett Ross has his name misspelled quite often- many tend to spell it Faucett instead of Faucett. The town of Faucett, Missouri, was named after Faucett's grandfather. His grandfather originally spelled his first name with a W. One time he had a big load of grain come to his plant and his name had been spelled Faucett on the packages. He liked the looks of it on all those packages (thousands of them!) and decided to have his name legally changes to Faucett! I'd say that he was a wise old man- think of the money he saved in not having to reprint the packages!

Next month's column will be taped in St. Louis. See you then!

Dai Vernon

August 1971

This column is being taped in Bill Larsen's room at the Jefferson Hotel in St. Louis. It is the final night of the S.A.M. Conference and we're very fortunate in having some of our best friends with us. I think it would be interesting to get their comments on the convention.

First up is Phil Craig whom I have known for many years- going way back to the early days of his Petit Pigalle restaurant here in St. Louis. I want to warn you that if you ever meet Phil don't tell him your birth date unless you want to get a birthday card from him every year from then on! He never forgets a birthday! Let's find out what Phil Craig thought of the convention:

"The fact that you, Dai, and Francis Carlyle and Faucett Ross are here is the big reason I am here...and I must say this has been one of the most enjoyable conventions I have ever attended. The big show last night at the American Theatre was one of the best shows I have ever seen at any convention...it was really great. To me, the highlight of the convention was Francis Carlyle. He did a fantastic job of keeping us all entertained."

Next up is JOE SCOTT whom I have asked to make a few comments on the days gone by in St. Louis: "We had a very active magic club back in the twenties and thirties. Such fellows as Paul LePaul and Bill Baird were members...and I remember that Jud Cole used to be around this area back then. Magic club meetings were different then. Magic was a well-guarded secret. To find out how to do a trick you had to work for it...'prove yourself', so to speak. This convention we have just had was a great affair. I enjoyed every minute of it...seeing my old friends...watching the shows...great fun."

Here is my old pal, FAUCETT ROSS: "When you reach the ripe old age of 70 you become somewhat jaded with magic tricks. So what else is there? An opportunity to meet with old friends; talk over old times. Exaggerate past experiences. To me, these are the significant things about a convention. I have been guilty of telling many anecdotes gathered from experience over the years. I was born with an over-vivid imagination. But it has always been a source of pleasure to relate these episodes, naturally, I have a tendency to 'embroider' these experiences. But, in the main, they have been quite factual. It was a special thrill to be with my friend, Francis Carlyle, these past few days. It has been a grand convention...may conventions and magic continue forever!"

JAY MARSHALL: "There are three versions of the stories that Ross tells: The Ross version, the Vernon version, and the true version!"

Now I am going to ask CONNIE BUSH how this convention compares with, for example, some of the New Jersey conventions: "This convention was one of the best for me because I had the pleasure of being with you, Dai, once again, and with Francis, Faucett, Joe, and Phil...fellows I don't get to see but maybe once a year, if that often. And I can't overlook our host tonight, Bill Larsen. The first time I met Bill he was about 'that high'. I had gone out to his father's place, the old Thayer home, and I remember these two little boys running around- Bill and Milt. Say, I'm really dating myself...I must be getting pretty old. This was a fine convention- but to be with old friends and meet new friends is the best part of any convention for me."

Many of our present-day magicians don't know much about Deland who was a real genius. He devised all kinds of trick cards including one on which a flesh colored photo of the palm of a hand had been printed...so you could have a card palmed and still be able to show both sides of your hand! I must say that the next person we are going to hear from probably has the most inventive mind in modern magic and has outdone Theodore Deland. It is a pleasure to have you with us, BRO. JOHN HAMMAN: "Well, gentleman, I really don't belong in this group. I feel very honored to be here. I have always had a great sense of awe for magicians I have read about, and it wasn't too long ago that I hadn't met any magicians at all. I have yet to meet a group of people that I admire more than magicians. I enjoy magic tremendously. And I enjoy conventions more, I suppose, than anyone else. I'm like a little kid getting into a candy shop! I have the opportunity of being with people of your caliber only about once a year, so all the shows are marvelous and all the tricks are ingenious to me. I have always wanted to meet Francis Carlyle and he absolutely delighted me with his skullduggery and trickery, especially his card in Pocket and his Ambitious Card routine. For me it has been a real fun convention."

Someone just crawled into the room on all fours...it turns out to be DANNY DEW. No, he was not 'in his cups' but was setting up for a real comical story. When I first went to Colorado Springs years ago to cut Silhouettes I met PAUL FOX, one of my dearest friends, and the one person he used to talk about more than anybody else was Danny. Paul said he was not only a great magician but also one of the most loveable characters he had ever met. He even went so far as to say that you could trust him with your wife...well, I don't know about THAT! Let's hear from DANNY DEW: "Well, Dai, when you mention Paul Fox I want to bow because he was my real godfather in magic. It was through him I met you, Cardini, Faucett, and all the greats in magic whom I would not have known otherwise. This has been a great convention. You know, St. Louis is my old stomping grounds. I was here in 1923 and met Charles Lindhorst...they invited me to live in their home. I built equipment for Will Lindhorst's magic shop...this was my start in magic. So it has been great to be back. Well, I'll see you later- and remember- 'What you see is what you get.'"

CAL EMMETT is a man of few words...he does a beautiful cigarette act (Magic Castle members will remember Cal's week in the Palace of Mystery). Let's have a few words from him: "This has been an excellent convention with better-than-average acts. I have enjoyed meeting Francis and Bro. John. And I'm looking forward to seeing you all again next year!"

I think more people came up to me and commented on one thing more than anything else during this convention: "Isn't it wonderful to see how well FRANCIS CARLYE is looking!" So now, we'll let Francis have the floor: "I promised to be here for my friend, GENE DE VOE, who helped me at a very difficult time in my life. And I am certainly glad I could make it as I have had a ball. In fact, I may have been a little bit too enthused as I have been doing tricks on and on and on! My only regret is that I wasn't able to spend more time with Bro. Hamman."

Last, a comment from the women's point of view...MRS. JIM RYAN: "I have enjoyed every minute of the convention!" And now for a word from JIM himself, one of the Magic Castle's favorite magicians: "I agree with my wife- it was an outstanding convention!"

For some reason the recording of the remarks by Ellsworth Lyman failed to be picked up. Few present-day magic enthusiasts know that Ellsworth, over half a century ago, used to market 'secrets' to the fraternity. This was about the same period that Henry Hardin and Arthur Finley advertised exclusive items unknown at the time. None of these men were professional performers but all were diabolically clever and they had exclusive material to offer.

I was extremely sorry that the beloved Johnny Cannon had evidently retired for the night. But I feel sure that by his ever-present happy smile that he enjoyed every minute of the convention. Everyone who knows Johnny really loves him.

Winding up this interview with old friends I'd just like to mention Bill and Irene Larsen added great luster and charm to the entire affair. Not only did they royally entertain the 'late crowd' in their large suite but their performance at the Banquet Show was a big hit. Bill also officiated during the dinner and introduced 'celebs'.

I was tickled to death with the Flower Act that closed the Banquet Show. Francis and I and also that remarkably clever performer, Bob Lewis, were practically overcome. Words fail me. Just ask anyone who was there and witnessed this spectacle.

Before we sign off I must thank the young man who has been holding the microphone for us tonight...EARL KEYSER...who came out to the Castle two years ago and became one of the 'regulars' there. He is now teaching English at a private school. Earl came to our rescue tonight. Bill was originally going to use his tape recorder but discovered tonight that it had mysteriously disappeared (and was never found). So we have been using Earl's recorder.

Arriving back at the Castle after a delightful drive with Danny Dew...more excitement. Derek Dingle had just arrived. Also Peter Gloviczky from Hungary, Maurice Rooklyn from Australia, and George Troseth from Chicago. I hadn't seen George since the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. I was with Maurice during my recent visit to Australia. In next month's column I will write about Derek and Peter. Derek astounds everyone with his miracles. And my dear friend, Frakson, went into 'raves' about Peter's act. Said it gave him a feeling of pride to be in the same profession. These are also my sentiments.

September 1971

During my lifetime I have traveled around this old earth extensively but had never been to one place I really wanted to visit- Alaska. Thanks to Peter Pit I was booked on the Princess Cruise ship, The Italia, for a two-week excursion to Alaska. It was simply terrific! I especially enjoyed being in Skagway, the former home of Soapy Smith, and seeing the so-called Parlour that he had there. Although he was an unsavory and notorious con man he was a very remarkable man. His life story has appeared in print in book form and is fascinating reading.

No matter how much I enjoy my trips it is always a pleasure to get back to the Castle and be with my friends here. Just the other evening one of our local budding magicians was asking Ron Wilson and myself whether charm was more essential to success than the ability to do tricks. It is difficult to say whether one is more important than the other, but it is certain that the person who has charm or personal magnetism has one a great deal of the battle. He can do ordinary tricks but if the audience is 'charmed' by his manner he can get away with so-called 'murder'. I think you must have charm AND ability to do your magic well. And the more you have of each, the more successful you will become. This is simple logic.

Picking up from last month's column, I want to comment briefly on Derek Dingle and Peter Gloviczky. Derek is one of the modern magicians who gets almost completely away from the old style of doing magic and gives everything an up-to-date twist that will fool the average magician. He does a fine job with everything he touches, not only cards but also coins and other small objects. And he appeals to the layman as well, doing an entertaining job with his magic.

Peter Gloviczky, a medical student from Budapest, Hungary, has that charm we were talking about a moment ago. His act runs just 10 minutes but it is a sheer delight to behold. His smile and modest manner of presentation won his audiences over immediately. Frakson commented on this ability, remarking that Peter would 'go over' with any type of audience. He has a nice style and is very clever but he doesn't flaunt this cleverness in front of his audience and they love him.

When we did the "Mail Bag" column a couple of months ago Editor Larsen had to leave out three of my answers/acknowledgements. They follow:

A very belated reply to an inquiry from Hugh Hedrick of Houston: Hugh asks about Warren Keane's Poker Trick where the catch line was, "The Ace always stays on top". I saw him perform many times but I have forgotten the details. I believe that if you will write to Henry Christ in New York he can fill you in with the routine. I am sorry I do not have Henry's current address but perhaps if you send the letter to him in care of Louis Tannen's Magic Shop they could forward it.

Here is another "recent" letter that I am finally getting around to acknowledging with sincere thanks. It is from W. Paul Beard who, at the time he wrote, was with the Peace Corps in Quito, Ecuador. Paul writes: "I am sure that everyone has played the game of which book they would choose to take to a desert island. Recently I was faced with this problem but it was no game. Because of weight restrictions I could take only a

minimum amount of magical apparatus and books. I spent several days reviewing my several shelves of magic books but always came back to the same book: "THE DAI VERNON BOOK OF MAGIC". My traveling library was finally trimmed down to the above book plus your "INNER SECRETS OF CARD MAGIC" series. This letter is to thank you for providing me with years of pleasure and the opportunity to bring a bit of Dai Vernon high in the Andes, helping make friends between Ecuador and the United States."

I hardly know what to say so I'll just say thank you, Paul, and I hope we will meet some day. Don tells me that he knows you personally and that you are one of the "good guys".

"I would like to get a good book on cards- one that deals with fanning, back palming, controls, etc. I am, basically, an apparatus magician but would like to prove to my audience, and myself, that I can do more than just pull a silk out of an empty box!" writes Dan Rickles of Ann Arbor, Michigan. Two excellent books that come to mind are Hugard and Braue's "EXPERT CARD TECHNIQUE" (for the control of cards especially) and Lewis Ganson's "ROUTINED MANIPULATIONS FINALE". Speaking of Lewis Ganson, I think that he is one of the most honorable and reliable persons I have ever known. He is also a hard worker and an excellent performer, author and reporter.

Here is a true story that Francis Carlyle suggested I tell you. It's rather fantastic as I look back on it but it really happened just as I'm going to relate it. One night I met Francis and Sam Margules and we went over to Barney's on Lexington Avenue (New York City) for dinner. Francis is very voluble- you could hear him all over the restaurant. An old fellow who looked very much like Charles Laughton was sitting at a nearby table. I noticed this chap looking over at us several times and apparently listening to Francis. Pretty soon he walked over, sat down at our table, and said, "You fellows have me puzzled. I don't think you are cheaters, but you (pointing to Sam) are obviously the muscle man. You (pointing to me) are the brain, and you (to Francis) are the mouthpiece! But I can't figure you out."

When Francis pulled out his wallet to show his identification the old man spotted a playing card was tucked inside. He exclaimed, "Ah, you ARE card players. You're cheaters!" Now the fact that he used the word 'cheaters' tipped me to the fact that he knew something about gambling because it was an 'in' word back in those days. I spoke up, "Are you a cheater yourself?", and he snapped back, "You keep quiet. Let me talk to the mouthpiece."

"Well, I took out a pack of cards and I asked him if he could do anything with them. He took the deck and gave them a little square-up that tipped immediately to me that he knew something about Faro. So I said to him (being a smart up-start!), "You've dealt the bank." (Meaning the Fargo bank.) He looked at me and said, "You're too smart." I told him that he had already tipped and he replied, "Well, I tipped to you but did I tip anything to you two?", addressing Sam and Francis. Both said they didn't know what he was talking about.

Then he said to me, "You see, you're too smart. You're with the law. The with the FBI." I told him that I had just returned from a trip with the USO and showed him

my USO papers and credentials. And he remarked, "Put that stuff in your pocket. Any FBI agent can get all of that stuff he wants. You're not fooling with me that stuff!"

Well, anyway, he dealt the most beautiful bottom deal and centers and seconds that I have ever seen. He said the whole secret is rhythm, rhythm, and as he dealt those bottoms and seconds he was singing the rhythm. "The only way you practice is practice to a record or to music", he said. Francis went into ecstasies over what he did. When the old man went over to pay his check I followed him. I had about \$80.00 in my pocket. I took it out and said, "Mr. Cummings, I'll give you this \$80.00 if you'll just give me an idea how you get that card out without any finger movement. Just give me an idea so I can practice." And he said, "My boy, it's the touch of a billiard player." And that's all he would tell me.

We went back to our table and he said, "Let me buy you fellows a drink." When the waiter served the drinks Mr. Cummings gave him a \$20.00 bill and told him to keep the change. He did this several times- always paying with \$20 bills and telling the waiter to keep the change. After a while he asked us if we'd like to go with him to a car over on 49th Street. The trip was just about eight blocks and when we got out of the cab Cummings gave the cabbie s \$20 bill and a 'keep the change' comment. At the bar were a soldier and a girl. Cummings (his first name was Dan) took a hundred dollar bill and tucked it into the soldier's upper pocket. When the soldier started to say something Dan said, "Forget it. You fought for your country. Buy your girl a couple of drinks." Then he went around the bar handing out several hundred dollar bills (he had run out of twenties!) and asked the bartender to give drinks to everyone.

Of course we thought the guy had lost his mind. When I told Dr. Daley about it the next day he thought the man must have been in his second childhood! But Carlyle found out later that many times Cummings had gone out to the race tracks and won as much as eight or ten thousand dollars, and had just distributed it among people. He told me a very interesting thing. When he was a kid he used to beat all the professional cheaters with cards. Later in life he didn't bother with those small scores of 40 or 50 thousand dollars! He said he was now in politics where he could make two hundred thousand dollars at a crack. As he said, "This chicken feed- a few thousand- doesn't mean anything. I give it away." All of which goes to show what characters you can meet!

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October 1971

THE MAGIC CASTLE

One of many charms of the Magic Castle is the fact that each week something or someone new and different is here. Maurice Rooklyn, one of the finest manipulators of billiard balls, has been with us for the past few weeks. Maurice is from Australia...in fact, I wrote about him just a few months ago in this column. He told me just before returning to Australia that this trip to the United States and being at the Castle each evening had done him a world of good. (Mrs. Rooklyn passed away a few months ago.)

Visitors like Marvyn and Carol Roy, and Ed and Nanci Keaner always brighten up the Castle. The Keaners have been very successful since they went to Europe. When Jay Ose was the resident magician the Keaners were here and Jay was very anxious to help this young couple if he could. So Jay made arrangements for them to appear on the "Hollywood Palace" television show. They were very nervous about this national appearance...in fact, Ed was so awed by the idea that he didn't want to make the appearance. Jay, genius that he was, arranged for a "try-out". Jay told Ed that he should just do his act as he would later. So they went over and did the "try-out" and it went over beautifully. They did not know until afterwards that they had actually been on the air!

Nic Niberco of Holland has been in the Palace of Mystery this past week and it is a real pleasure to watch his act. The magicians from Europe all have different twists and presentation bits that are a joy to behold. Nic's personality and pleasing manner of working are really great.

Marvyn Roy told me the other day that in his travels around the world he has talked with many GENII readers, and many of the younger magicians feel that I have not devoted much space to stage close-up magic, so it seems! Marvyn points out that there are very few magicians who are making a living with close-up magic.

One of the finest close-up workers in the world, in my opinion, is Ross Bertram of Toronto, Canada. He said there is no demand for close-up magicians. When he does a stage or platform act he can work banquets, etc. But tell an agent that you do close-up magic and he just doesn't have any work for you.

The amazing Johnny Paul is a possible exception. His intimate work is superlative but he also has a stage act.

There is a paper-back book on the market called, "The Escape Artist". If you happen to see it pick up a copy and read it. You'll get a perfect idea of what the agents think about magic as a whole. It will be rather disheartening to read it but it is a fact that many agents have a very low opinion of magic acts. It's not on account of the magic itself, which everyone knows is a fascinating art, but rather, some of the people who abuse it. When a person takes up music, the piano, violin, or any instrument, he has to be good before he can perform in public. He has the competition of thousands of persons all over the country playing similar instruments. Unless he excels he cannot make a living

as a musician. But magicians, if they can do one or two simple tricks, suddenly feel that they can go out professionally and make a living.

GETTING BACK TO MARVYN

But getting back to Marvyn...he said I should expound a little on stage magic...if you want to make money at it. The only way to make a substantial amount of money is to do stage performances. Albert Goshman, who does a superlative job with close-up magic, is working on a stage act right now because he sees the limitations of close-up magic. It stands to reason that you can make more money appearing on a platform or stage. If you can entertain 2,000 persons you can expect to be paid more than for entertaining just 20 persons.

Marvyn said that I should encourage some of the clever young fellows around the country, who want to make money with magic, to develop a routine of stage magic. Now when I say this, I don't mean to get a vanishing cane, a squared circle, a set of linking Rings, and some doves and do some routines that everyone else is doing. Why is Marvyn Roy working? Because he has something unusual to offer. As far as I know, the trick of producing lit bulbs from the mouth (ala needle threading) was first brought out by Eric Lewis. He had the idea years ago but it was Marvyn who took it and developed and exploited it and made a real trick out of it.

As we magicians know, it may seem logical to put a dozen bulbs in your mouth and pull out apparently a hundred! But logic has no place in magic. Magic itself is illogical, and some of the illogical things themselves are better magic than the logical. In fact, Dr. Daley, a very fine observer, said that no trick was good unless it had a discrepancy in it. He said he made a rule of that- a trick had to have a discrepancy or it couldn't be his theory. Trying to make things too logical doesn't go with magic.

The young fellow who wants to make a living with magic- make important money- will be the fellow who comes up with the idea for a different effect. It may use an old time method- but if it has a new approach it will be refreshing to an audience. They can't say, "Oh, it's just another one of those magicians pulling handkerchiefs from a box." It has to be different. Marvyn and Ed both have proved this because their acts have a different slant.

In talking about magic in general I hope I don't seem bitter. When Bill first asked me to write a column for this magazine I wanted to be known as "The Cranky Old Man of Magic". I have been in the game for 70 years and have had the opportunity to spend more time and thought on magic than probably anyone else. I'm a lazy individual and have never worked at anything except cutting a few silhouettes. I made good money at this and had plenty of leisure time. But this time was always occupied by something. If I wasn't fooling around on the piano I was delving into some other hobby. I have been fond of drawing and other hobbies too numerous to mention. So my leisure time was well taken up, and I have never been tied down to any kind of a job where I had to punch a clock. I had plenty of time to meet magicians.

I enjoyed the companionship and association of all the famous magicians going back to Ching Ling Foo, Harry Kellar, etc., and people like Dr. Elliott. I have discussed magic with the greats. Jud Cole, Paul LePaul, Wallace Galvin and I used to sit for hours at night discussing magic. So I'm just passing on to some of you young fellows what I

have learned through the years. And I can't emphasize often enough that the most important thing in magic is your style of presentation. Originality is important but your style of performing is even more so. There are so many very capable fellows who do beautiful work technically but lack so much in delivery.

During the Sunday Brunches at the Castle teenage magicians are given guest spots in the close-up room. This is the only time teenagers are allowed in the Castle. A couple of weeks ago I noticed that a Paul Green would be doing one of these spots. This was a new name to me. Well, I saw the chap before the show... he had a beard and I just glanced at him, thinking to myself, "Well, here's another fellow who probably does just run-of-the-mill magic." Then I thought that just for fun I'd go in and watch him. I'll admit that I walked in with a rather prejudiced attitude. I thought that is this fellow did bad magic I'd try to help him a little by telling him that he was on the wrong track- that he should pay more attention to this or that. Well, I must say that his performance was just the opposite of what I was expecting. He had a very pleasing manner. He presented his magic in a most interesting manner. He talked sensibly and his tricks went over very well. And this is the quality that magic needs so badly- the pleasing way of presentation. Strive to please your audiences. Don't aim to annoy or upset them, or to fool them; this is really unimportant.

Of course, being a magician you will want to fool them, but entertain them while you are doing it. Don't ever lord it over an audience when you fool them. Little comments like: "You know, it fools me every time I do it" or "I'll never understand it myself", etc., help take the sting out of being fooled. Some people resent being fooled. The main thing is to please with your magic.

In my lifetime I have performed in many out of the way places but never in a nudist camp. A few weeks ago Bill Derman and Ringo both appeared in the raw for an entire audience of stripped onlookers. Bill did most of his tricks seated at a table but has confessed that he felt slightly ill at ease when he had to stand up for the last couple of tricks. Francis Carlyle told me that Bill 'missed the boat' by not having a piece of flesh-colored double-sided adhesive tape on his posterior to help get rid of odd cards and coins. Some years ago Francis played one of these dates and did the Hoo Coin using this concealment! Don Lawton wonders if Bill used the Nudist and Stripper decks in his show.

Our favorite mentalist, Falkenstein, just taped the Virginia Graham Show, which will probably have been shown by the time you read these lines. But I mention it because Falkenstein is the most talked-about act at the Castle. When Crystal Dunninger was here recently she caught Falkenstein's act and remarked that it was a good thing Joe wasn't working now or he'd really have something to worry about!

HOUDINI

I knew pretty Houdini pretty well, because I was around New York with Sam Margules, who was one of Houdini's closest friends in those days. Bessie Houdini was my oldest boy's godmother. There certainly is a myth about Houdini being a great

magician. He was a marvelous escape artist- he made escapes really sensational. The average escape artist- in presenting escapes, makes them rather boring and tiresome to watch. Houdini gave them a quality and suspense, which made people sit on the edge of their chairs.

One of the few magic tricks that he performed well was the needle trick- the threading of needles in his mouth. It was very dramatic in his hands. But as far as I'm concerned, Houdini was a very mediocre magician. There were any number of amateur magicians in New York in those days who were vastly superior to Houdini in the presentation of magic. Houdini's fame was in his escape work. Houdini had few close friends, and although a supreme egotist, he was very wonderful to his wife and to his mother.

Every moment of his life was devoted to getting his name before the public. One time when he came to see me at my silhouette shop on Broadway, he said, "Vernon, the only way to make a great success in magic is to keep your name in the papers and magazines all the time. Even if you attend a fire, a murder, or a crap game, whatever it happens to be- get your name in the paper. Regardless of what the article says, good or bad, have them spell your name correctly, and this will pay off."

Houdini almost managed to have a statue of himself placed in Washington, D.C. At the last minute, one of the Senators or Congressman got up and squelched the whole deal. That would really have been something- having a statue of an escape artist in Washington. And he almost made it. It was a bitter blow to him when it failed to pass.

March 1972

It is very seldom that I get any letters of complaint regarding this column but Editor Larsen received one from George Kaplan stating that I was very presumptuous with my remarks about his book, "The Fine Art of Magic." He admits in his letter that Sam Horowitz wrote 80 per cent of the material in the book. However, he doesn't explain how not once in the entire book does he mention the fact that Horowitz had anything to do with the material. By his own admission he goes along with what I originally wrote in this column. I would also like to say that Jean Hugard, who was the ghost writer for the book, did a very capable job with it. (I have heard many fine compliments from magicians on what a fine book it is but I have never heard anyone say that George Kaplan was a clever magician.)

In the book he mentions my Brain Wave Deck by stating that the objection is that you can use it only for one trick. There are many card tricks wherein you use the deck just for a single effect. The childish method Kaplan gives for doing the Brain Wave effect is more to be used as a gag than a trick that would fool anyone. There is quite a difference between having a card chosen by an obvious method and having a person merely THINK of a card.

In one of my columns I mentioned young Doug Henning of Toronto, Canada, who worked a week in the Palace of Mystery at the Castle. He and his girl friend/assistant did an excellent job of entertaining and mystifying the audiences. Since that time, Doug convinced the Canadian Government that magic is truly an Art and was given a scholarship or student grant to further his career by coming to the Castle and studying magic with yours truly as his teacher. I was very flattered that Doug chose me as his tutor. I have been told that the government checked me out carefully before approving the financial grant. I'm lucky that they called on one of my old Canadian friends, Sid Lorraine. I know that Sid did not bend the truth but gave them an honest appraisal and convinced them that I was qualified. They also checked on some of my books. The Canadian Government also makes grants to promising singers, actors, dancers, musicians, artists, etc.

I introduced Doug to Dick Buffum, Los Angeles TIMES columnist, and also a very clever magician himself. He was impressed with Doug's ability and sincerity. He feels, as I do, that he has the right attitude and is going about his magical career in the proper way. When it came to getting a brochure for himself, Doug went to a good advertising man and asked him what style of brochure was being used successfully in today's modern market. In selling his act he didn't talk to magicians but to salesmen, asking them for the best approaches in selling your product or a service. They gave him good advice.

He wanted his assistant, Mars, to appear attractive on the stage so he sent her to ballet school to study poise and grace. Doug, himself, studied pantomime with a man who worked with Marcel Marceau. I'm sure that any of my readers who have seen Marcel's performances will agree that he could do the smallest trick with, say, one coin or a strip

of paper, and make it absolutely fascinating to watch. Even if people detested magic they would love his manner of performing and presenting it.

I'm sure this is the quality of greatness that Doug is shooting for. It will be a long row to hoe but he is making a living at magic now and is a very dedicated man. You just don't go to a magic shop, buy some props, and become a magician overnight. You must devote time, study, and love to the Art or you will not succeed. And you have to be a nice person . . . this is very essential! I predict that if he keeps up with his present schedule of study and dedication, Doug Henning will be a great success in magic, and he will help magic itself consequently.

Making this prediction reminds me of the time back in 1933 during the Chicago World Fair when Dorny, after seeing Carl Sharpe perform, predicted that one day this man would be a great comedian. Today we all know him as The Amazing Mr. Ballentine, one of our funniest men and a great character actor on television and in the movies to boot!

And now, if I may be allowed to "editorialize" for a few minutes: I feel that the great trouble with a lot of clever magicians is that they tend to "cheapen" magic by doing it literally at the drop of a hat . . . On street corners, in the market, etc. Herman had the right idea when he would cut open a lemon and discover a gold piece inside. But he didn't stand in the market place and do tricks on and on and on. You don't see other show people doing this. Singers don't stand around in public singing, unless they have a tin cup in one hand! Magicians seem to think that everyone is dying to see a trick. At the least provocation (and often without it) they will pull out a thimble or a sponge ball and go to work. This doesn't give the Art any dignity at all. As I have mentioned before in this column, if any one man ever gave dignity to Magic it was Nate Leipzig. People looked up to him as a real artist— not put a run-of-mill magician. Nate maintained that you should never do a trick unless someone asked or coaxed you to show one. Never force a trick on anyone.

And now for the news! Jay Vincent, who is the chairman of the 1972 Midwest Magic Jubilee which will be held in Kansas City, has just booked a star attraction that will surely please every magician who attends the Jubilee! I am not at liberty to reveal this person's name yet, but I will say that it is really a feather in Jay's top hat! I am certainly going to try to be in Kansas City for this convention next July.

Karl Fulves, who publishes "The Pallbearers Review," will be publishing the complete notes taken from Dr. Daley's eight or nine note books. I have been asked to write the introduction for this publication which I will do with mingled feelings because I was very fond of Dr. Daley and I miss him greatly. At the same time it will be a pleasure pointing out what a fine magician and fine person he was. As a doctor he helped many of his brother magicians professionally, never charging them for his services. Although he was a little bit sarcastic this was not really his nature. He did it because he believed severe criticism was good for a person. He didn't do it in a nasty way. He said that while

everyone pats a fellow on the back, he wee going to point out his weaknesses as he thought it would help the individual. And he was right!

April 1972

I have been fortunate in having seen many of the world's best magicians and illusionists during my lifetime. One of the finest I have ever seen, to my way of thinking, has been working right here in our Palace of Mystery. I am speaking of Shamada whom I would rate with the very best of them. I think that the two greatest acts of this type (specialty act with an assistant) I have seen are Cardini and Shimada. Their acts are different and both are superlative. I don't think anyone could find any fault with either act. I have recommended Shimada's act to many people and they have all agreed that it is perfection. Judge Pierce Young, who is quite a magical scholar, said that it was a thrill to watch the act and it was definitely the finest he had ever seen. And, of course, an act like this comes about only with hours of practice and performance. It is obvious that Shimada has put a lot of thought into his act. The bit with the appearing and vanishing candle and the thimble production from the Bursting Balloon are examples of this thought- they caught me completely by surprise and fooled me.

On the "IT'S MAGIC!" show at the Ebell Theatre last October Shimada presented a totally different turn- the parasol act- which would be impossible to present in the Palace of Mystery because of space limitations. This act also shows great thought and rehearsal. The act he is doing here at the Castle is of a manipulative nature involving the use of doves, cards, coins, thimbles, and cigarettes. Right away my readers may think to themselves, "Oh, I have seen this type of act before," but I assure you that you have not seen anything as beautifully routined as Shimada's act."

Speaking of 'dove acts' reminds me of an old story about the man who went to the booking agent and told him that he had a brand new act. He said, "I sit on a chair on stage and then suddenly I wave my arms and take off, as though I had wings, and I fly about the room and then right out the window or exit- it's sensational!" The agent replied, "Not interested- it's just another bird act." Unfortunately, this is the way many booking agents think- "just another bird act." Not so with Shimada. He produces eight doves during his routine in a manner that will leave you baffled. I consider Shimada a great artist with the doves. Besides his manipulative skill he has a lot of charm and is a genuine fellow on and off stage. And we shouldn't overlook his lovely assistant, Deanna, who is truly the perfect assistant". She adds so much to the act. Shimada's act points up a fact: Painstaking care and practice and preparation pay off. You can't be too careful- you must consider every little detail.

We recently 'lost' one of our regulars- a chap who is one of the most skillful card men around and who used to work here during the early days of the Castle. Larry Jennings has moved to Lake Tahoe, but knowing Larry as I do, I don't think he will be able to resist flying in every now and then to visit us! We are very fortunate here at the Castle to have men of this caliber around us. Not only so-called technicians but also chaps who are good entertainers. It's a delight to watch performances by fellows like Ron Wilson and Don Lawton. I know that Don says he is not a "magician's magician" but it is a treat to watch him perform for the laymen. He *entertains* them. Ron Wilson would fit into the magician's magician category but he, also, has the ability to "reach" the laymen- they love his wit and charm.

It has been a pleasure seeing Charlie Miller become more active in magic lately. For a time Charlie sort of withdrew from the magic scene but lately he had blossomed out like the old Charlie I used to know. He has been making trips to Mexico on the ships- in fact, just recently he came in from one cruise and went out on another one the very next day. It's fun watching Charlie performs as it is obvious that he is enjoying his work. You just haven't seen the Rice Bowls until you've seen Charlie's routine- music and all!

Speaking of loving your work and your audiences (which I have been doing, indirectly) brings to mind the time many years ago when I took a director and producer of shows to see Fu-Manchu at the Spanish Theatre in New York. I remember that Jean Huguard saw this show seven times- he was so intrigued with it. Many of the local magicians saw the show several times. A friend of mine who went with us, a Mr. Spencer who was a corporation lawyer for the Woolworth Company, was very interested in knowing why Fu-Manchu had such a fascination with the audience. Fu-Manchu spoke Spanish and many members of the audience could not understand a word he said, but they were still charmed by him. The producer friend said that it was very simple and was what all great artists have- the ability to make people believe that they (the performer) love to be out there entertaining the audience and that they love the audience. This has to be a genuine feeling on the part of the performer- an audience can detect and phoniness.

If you walk out with the attitude of "Well, I'd really rather be doing something else, etc.", the audience will 'feel' this attitude no matter how good your act might be. You must feel that it is a pleasure and a privilege to be out there on stage- and that you love to be able to be part of making them happy. David Bamberg (Fu-Manchu) had this ability.

Another chap we have 'lost' for awhile is Martin Lewis. Martin is a chip off the old block, Eric Lewis. Eric was disappointed over the fact that Martin never took up magic. Then, about a year and a half ago, he suddenly became interested in magic- Bruce Cervon was quite instrumental in awakening this interest, and Martin has become very proficient in the art. Martin has that low-pressure charm that I feel is so important in show business. At the present time Eric and his family, including Martin, are living in Oakland where Eric is building magic for Dr. Albo, the celebrated surgeon in San Francisco. Dr. Albo is a collector of Okito magic and Eric is certainly one of the best craftsmen in the business. Eric and Martin won't be lonely up there when it comes to magical companionship as they have Dr. Albo, Mel Brown, Pete Biro, Lloyd Jones, etc., to keep them company. The magicians in the Bay Area are very active.

Before we leave the subject of personal charm and the ability to please an audience I must mention Ricky Jay who visits the Castle about twice a year. This young man, who is the grandson of Max Katz, is another person who projects friendliness and warmth to his audiences. To see Ricky on the street you would immediately think, "There's another one of those hippies", but his is far from being such a person. Although he wears his hair long it is always neat and clean-looking. Ricky has a lot of charm and always does a great job in the close-up room at the Castle. Those who are interested in the juggling of playing cards should see Ricky juggle and throw cards! He threw a playing card over the Castle one day which is quite a feat in itself. He throws cards with unerring accuracy. Not only one but two, and he catches them behind his back which is no easy feat.

Speaking of juggling (which we were!) the King of the Jugglers, Whitey Roberts, is a regular at the Castle. Whitey enjoys performing impromptu magic in the Blackstone Room and really does a great job of entertaining the customers. I was telling Whitey the other evening that the Cascade Shuffle, wherein the cards are interlaced at the ends, held in one hand, and allowed to cascade into the other hand held a foot or so below, was originated by a South American juggler named Notis. I wrote about him in one of my books. Lou Derman does this flourish with great skill- dropping every card but the chosen card- it is very effective. Lou passes himself off as a clown or comedian (and he is a funny man) but occasionally he 'tips his mitt' and does something like this cascade shuffle and people know that he can really do good magic. His color change of a card has fooled many a magician.

I had a delightful visit with Carl Stenquist the other evening. Carl knew our editor's father very well and was also a friend of Jay Ose. Carl does the vanishing glass from under a piece of paper entirely surrounded and no one sees where the glass goes. It is beautifully performed. During his visit Carl showed me something that quite amazed me. He had some very nice little red balls which were quite firm and had a nice weight to them- much better than cork balls or some of the balls on the market. The nice part was that they were not quite round- just a little bit off-round so they wouldn't roll off the table. When I commented on this fact Carl replied that you could make them perfectly round if you so desired- or make them square. I said, "What do you mean, 'make them'?" He said that he could make them almost any place in the world in two minutes. I began to think he was kidding because he has a sense of humor, but he went into our wash room and in less than two minutes he came back and handed me a little ball much like the ones he had shown before. He said, "It's still wet but when it dries out it will be just as hard as the other ones." When I asked him what in the heck it was he replied, "Toilet paper!" As he explained it to me, you take ordinary toilet paper and crumple it, dry, into a ball. Make as neat a ball as you can- just roll it up and squeeze it as if you were making a snow ball. Make it any size you want. Now, dip it in water and squeeze it. Naturally it will become smaller. Keep pressing it until it won't compress any more. When it dries out you will have a nice solid little ball. The original balls had been made from red toilet paper. There are many different colors on the market. Keep this tip in mind for the time when you can't get any grapes or nuts or balls- just make your own!

Some of my readers may remember when I wrote about the "Bathroom Strippers"- now I'm writing about the "Bathroom Balls"! This is Carl Stenquist's idea and I thank him for allowing me to pass it on to my readers. Carl used to write for different magic magazines under the name of Carl Stern. He lives in the San Francisco area now. It was a real treat seeing him again.

It is very gratifying to me to realize that this column is being read in such distant parts of the world. Just today I received a very complimentary New Year's greeting from Antonio Martinic in faraway Chile. All such letters are truly appreciated but I want to state again that it is impossible for me to personally answer all these letters. And I don't have any photographs to send out. So please understand, readers, why some of you have not heard from me. If you have any questions that I might be able to answer in this column feel free to send them along.

May 1972

During my first year at the Magic Castle I met Larry Jennings and was amazed at his technique and skill with cards. It was obvious that he had devoted much time to mastering the pasteboards. Larry kept talking about a fellow 'back home' in Akron, Ohio, named Bruce Cervon. Larry said that Bruce was far advanced in magic, and kept repeating, "Wait until Bruce comes out here...you'll be properly amazed at his skill and knowledge of card magic." Finally Bruce and his very pretty wife, Peggy, arrived on the coast and we learned that Larry had not been exaggerating in his praise for Bruce.

Bruce Cervon is a very clever and knowledgeable fellow. Not only that, but he is also very methodical...keeping notes on everything. Bruce has become very popular with the members and guests of the Castle and is in constant demand as a performer. I would place him right at the top with the other 'greats' in magic. Bruce is well versed not only in card magic but also in all other phases of manipulative magic.

GENII readers should enjoy this special Bruce Cervon issue. He has some very clever and interesting original ideas. Everything he does has been thoroughly studied and worked out. I only wish you could see Bruce perform these tricks in person!

Just received a very nice letter from Henry Christ whom I have mentioned in column previously. He enclosed a copy of a letter he wrote to John Zweers regarding the local S.A.M.. Hall of Fame. Henry was quite amazed to learn that Hofzinser's name was not included in the Hall of Fame. He also suggested that the following greats in magic should be considered: David Bamberg (Fu-Manchu), J. Warren Keane (who was a headliner in Keith vaudeville), Horace Goldin, Roland Travers, Max Malini, Emil Jarrow, Zanzig, and Mercedes and Stanton. I'm sure that John Zweers appreciated Henry's letter and will act accordingly. My idols when I was a boy were Hofzinser, Malini, Leipzig, J. Warren Keane, and Silent Mora.

Talking about magicians at the Castle (Jennings and Cervon), people have no idea how experience in working for an audience smoothes out a trick or an act. I don't care how perfectly you rehearse a trick...if you don't actually perform it for an audience it can never run like clockwork. It is only after repeated performances before audiences that a trick "smoothes out", so to speak. And once a trick or routine achieves this smoothness it should never be tampered with or changed. As soon as you start to monkey with it you'll run into trouble.

A good example of this happened to my dear friend, Jay Marshall. One time when I was in Chicago, Jim Ryan and I went out to see Jay work a show. Jay wanted to add a little spice to the act so during his Lefty routine he threw in a few side lines about Jim and myself sitting in back, etc. Well, just those few remarks upset his remarks. The Lefty routine is so beautiful and well-constructed that it couldn't be destroyed, but he tampered with it that day and it didn't click like it usually does. This is a dangerous thing to do. Once you get a routine perfected and really going for you, don't upset it.

I knew Jay when he was a young boy...a real magic enthusiast. He attended all the conventions he possibly could and would carry his little pal, a vent dummy, around with him. Everybody liked Jay Marshall. He was really a convention nut. He'd hitch-hike or get there one way or another. He wasn't worried about not having a room to sleep in...he'd sleep in the lobby hotel if necessary. That was the least of his worries as

long as he could be around the magicians. It was that youthful enthusiasm that all of us tend to lose as the years roll by.

Another very enthusiastic person is our friend, Albert Goshman. This enthusiasm has played a large part in Albert's rise to the top in magic. I asked his permission to tell this little-known story: When Al lived in New York he wanted to attend a convention in Chicago. He was in the bakery business at that time and really didn't have any extra dough (sorry!) to cover the costs of getting there. He found out that a local company was air freighting coffins to Chicago. So he approached the company that made the crates for the coffins. He talked a fellow into making a crate with air-holes in it for himself, and then got the crate over to the airport freight house where a shipment of coffins was ready to go out to Chicago. Albert was in the crate, of course, but was detected before he could get himself loaded onto the plane. This shows real dedication!

Albert asked me not to make this story sound too bad, and assured me that he isn't broke now! This we know for sure...Albert can ride first-class anywhere today. He has really become a success, financially and artistically, with magic.

Getting back to the acts running smoothly, I'd like to give credit to another Castle magician who has improved so much just by working for audiences. I saw Danny Rouzer a year ago and while he was good then, he was certainly not the polished entertainer he is today. Danny is always practicing. Even when just sitting around here talking with the boys he has a coin or a pack of cards in his hand and is working with them. But by actually doing shows for audiences he has worked up a smooth entertaining act. He has a charm of presentation that his audiences love.

It was good to see Kuda Bux at the Awards Banquet. Kuda has not been feeling well lately but he did manage to get to the banquet and present his amazing illusion wherein two girls vanish from a cabinet. Shimada helped him present the effect and it is truly amazing. Lovelies Irene Larsen and Deanna Shimada were the 'vanishees' while Kuda and Shimada played the parts of the 'vanishors'. Anyone looking for a remarkable illusion that can be performed on any stage would do well to consider Kuda's illusion. No trap doors, mirrors, special backdrops, etc.

Special awards were presented to Faucett Ross and Alex Elmsley during the banquet. It seemed to me that the majority of the magicians present were not familiar with these two names. I'd like to say that I don't know of anyone more deserving of these awards than Faucett and Alex. If it wasn't for Faucett Ross I'm quite sure we wouldn't have a Charlie Miller with us today. Ross has been like an uncle to Charlie over the years. Faucett is well-versed in magic and has made a handsome living as a professional magician. He has lent a helpful hand to many magicians who have visited the Midwest. Faucett was never one to seek publicity which explains why so many magicians have never heard of him.

I would consider Alex Elmsley one of the most ingenious minds we have in magic. What magician doesn't know (or hasn't heard of) the Elmsley Count which swept the magic world? He also did so much to exploit the Faro Shuffle. He was Marlo's inspiration, prompting him (Marlo) to work out his ingenious variations of this shuffle. Years ago Cy Enfield, author of several great books, said that if there was one great genius with cards living today it's Alex Elmsley. Alex lives in England and is involved

somehow in computer work. He has dropped out of the magic scene momentarily but I hope he will soon make his reappearance.

I mentioned in a recent column that a stage or nightclub/ platform magician could make a better living than a close-up magician. I based this comment on the fact that a close-up performer works for a few persons while a stage magician works for many more at one time and can command a higher fee. I have a letter at hand from Piet Paulo (and Yvonne) who has a very unique idea. He approaches the owner of a club or dining room with the proposition that for a set fee per hour he will work close-up magic. He shows the owner or manager a few close-up effects along with a table tent card bearing his picture and the wording: "The management presents...etc." He says that seven times out of ten they okeh five hours of work as a trial. If he pleases the costumers they will let the manager know, and this, in turn, assures Piet of further work. He writes that he has worked all over the country in this manner and has had some wonderful 'vacations' in return for a few hours work each day. At one time he was working five different clubs in one city, doing an hour or so in each place. He has also done shows in return for room and board during his travels.

I have always felt that anyone who is devoted to magic is very fortunate. Just picture yourself as having never done magic. What would you be doing now? Think of the hosts of people you have met through magic...the avenues that have been opened to you because you do magic. Magic is your 'open sesame'. It's like when a fellow falls in love for the first time...he thinks to himself, 'How did I manage to live before I met this wonderful girl? I didn't know what life was until I met her.'

Well, it's the same with magic...if you haven't done magic you don't know what life is! You don't have to devote all your time to magic. You can enjoy other things as well. But magic is that wonderful 'release', so to speak, no matter how young or old you may be.

One of our beloved Castle members is Orlando Bagely who is 87 years of age. A few months ago he lost his pretty little wife after 64 years of wedded bliss. This, naturally, was quite a blow to Orlando, and I know that his interest and love of magic has helped him through the past few months. He is at the Castle almost every evening performing in the Blackstone Room and doing an excellent job of entertaining the customers. The other evening Don Lawton, in commenting to a fellow magician on Orlando remarked, "Boy, I hope that when I am 87 years old I'm that attractive." The other fellow replied, "I wish I was that active right now!"

People often ask the question, "At what age should I start magic? Am I too old? I'd love to learn a few tricks but I may be too old." I think I mentioned once before that it really doesn't make much difference at what age you start in magic. I would say that most of us started out as youngsters. An advantage in starting later in life...you have a better viewpoint and you can avoid many of the mistakes that a young person may make. Bert Allerton started later in life and you all know what a success he became in magic.

By the time you are reading this particular column I will probably be touring Europe. I am giving a series of lectures starting in Paris and winding up in Rome. These lectures are to celebrate the centenary of the death of Robert Houdin. The French, naturally, have great reverence for Robert Houdin, as all magicians should have. The French government has issued a special postage stamp...a beautiful stamp showing the

broom levitation. A reproduction of this stamp and special first day cover appeared in the March issue of GENII.

June, 1972

I hardly know how to begin this column as I am in quite a dither right now. I leave tomorrow for an extended lecture tour of Europe. I'll be in Paris first for a few days. From Paris I will visit the Riviera and then go up to Antwerp and Brussels, over to Amsterdam, and places I can't think of just now. I will eventually wind up in Rome. From there I would like to visit Frakson in Spain. I have never been in Spain and this would be a good opportunity to see Spain and my old friend, Frakson.

It is with a little feeling of fear and trepidation that I go to Europe. I feel this way because I know the European magicians read the various magic magazines and my name quite often appears as one of the 'experts' of magic in the United States. I really feel that I am more-or-less out of the picture now. Some of the young fellows around the Castle are doing magic that is incredible. Magic has really advanced greatly in the last few years. Although I try to? keep up with magic and it has always been a passionate interest with me I still feel rather 'out of it'. I'd hate to go to Europe and let these fellows down. I have no brochures to sell, no moving pictures or lecture notes. All I can do is talk to them. I do think that I have a thorough understanding of what constitutes good entertaining magic.

I am a great devotee of pure sleight-of-hand. Many years ago when I first became interested in magic I used to pick up pieces of apparatus from the magic dealers but over the years I discovered that the true magic is the magic that can be done with ordinary objects that can be found in any household. Even in the old days, in Robert Houdin's time, this was the case. Back then candles were a very prevalent form of illumination. A great many tricks with candles were developed. Today, candles are still used in some restaurants, but not in homes as they were. We still have candle tricks being done. Certain types of tables that were used back in those days are still being used today. I think they look rather old-fashioned and out of place. Magic has to advance.

That statement brings me to a short note I have at hand from Steve Spillman, one of our clever young magicians at the Castle. Steve is not a member yet because he is still in his teens, but he works our Sunday Brunches occasionally and does an excellent job. I asked Steve recently to give me his thoughts on magic. Here is his reply:

"I feel that magic should be up to date, just as comedy and music. The really successful magicians have unique or modern acts, and that is what I strive for in my performance.

"There are some magicians who give magic a bad name. These are the fellows who never practice, but fumble through a card trick and give our Art a bad name. People are often bored by card tricks until they see an expert perform. To me that is the secret of success: being modern, unique, and skilled."

I am pleased to know that Steve feels as I do, that magic has to progress. Of course there are some of the 'classics' that will never die. But the presentations of these classics

should keep up with the times. Among these classics I would include the Cups and Balls, Linking Rings and the Egg Bag. Well done they will always be well received.

When I return from Europe I plan to interview some of our younger magicians and will include their comments in future columns. I have a feeling that many of us could learn by listening to the 'now generation'.

The word 'charm' pops into my head as I think about tricks being well done and not well done. Done poorly, any trick lacks charm. This is the case with some of our very clever magicians who are technically perfect with their tricks and sleights. They neglect the cultivation of charm. It isn't because they are not nice people. They are all very nice. But some of them strive to be something that they are not. They expect someone else get a laugh or a chuckle out of some bit of business or comment and they say, "Gee, I can do that," but when they try, it comes out looking or sounding ridiculous. It doesn't suit their personality.

When Ron Wilson won the "Magician of the Year" award this year it wasn't only because he is a clever magician. His personal charm also played an important part. Everyone says, "What a nice guy this Ron Wilson is!" And being a Scot, when he says that he will do a trick "with a wee eye," it suits his personality. Now we have other fellows at the Castle who may be cleverer than Ron when it comes to sleights and things, but they fail to 'go over' with the audiences. Too often they are trying to be someone or something that they are not. BE YOURSELF! You must cultivate your attributes . . . Accentuate your qualities. Nobody else can be you . . . you must do it yourself! This is a most essential thing. If you don't know yourself, ask your father, ask your mother, ask your friends . . . find out what your certain attributes are and then concentrate on putting these attributes over to the best of your ability. The only thing others can do is imitate you. Be imitated—don't imitate others!

Well, the hour is late and I have quite a ways to travel tomorrow so must cut this column short. I will leave a few taped notes for the editor and also will be dropping him a line or two from Europe for the next couple of columns. If all goes as planned I will be at the conventions in Kansas City, Hawaii, and Texas. Hope to see you there!

July 1972

Many readers of this column may be surprised to learn that it was Ron Wilson who started Larry Jennings in the pursuit of magic. Ron must have given him good advice because, today, Larry is one of the best. Ron defeated all competitors for “Magician of the Year” at our recent Academy of Magical Arts banquet. Not only is Ron highly knowledgeable and skilled in the art of magic but he is at all times a perfect gentleman. He is always pleasant, obliging, and gracious. And the fact that he is also quite handsome combines with these qualities to make him one of our most popular Castle members. Everyone in the Castle likes Ron Wilson. And I feel certain that all GENII readers will like this special Ron Wilson issue. Ron and Charlie Miller left on a lecture tour July 10th. If they are lecturing near YOU, make every effort to see them! (Editor’s Note: Ron was also voted by his fellow Academy members as “Close-Up Magician of the Year- 1972”)

During the past month I certainly missed the Castle. I thought when I visited Japan recently nothing could compare with that trip, but my past month in Europe was really something! Everybody treated me as if I was royalty. I was overwhelmed because, at my age (78), I probably should be sitting in an easy chair watching television or practicing certain deals! You may wonder why somebody my age runs around the country as I do. As a matter of fact, I would prefer to stay around the Castle talking with my friends here. But I sometimes get “involved”, and on this occasion it was extremely pleasant. It all started when I received a letter from Andre Mayette of France, telling me that they were celebrating the 100th anniversary of Robert Houdin. They wanted to wind up the season by inviting me over for a lecture or talk in Paris.

I was very flattered, of course, but I answered Andre, telling him that there were at least twenty persons over here far better qualified for something like this. His reply stated that they wanted me, and asked me to quote a price. I kept stalling but the letters kept arriving so finally I asked Slydini (who was visiting here at the time) what fee he had received for lecturing in Paris. He said they paid him well. So I wrote, saying that I would be pleased with the same fee that they had given Tony.

In the next letter Andre told me that I would enjoy the trip (his enticing offer to spend a few days on the Riviera with Philippee Fialho helped considerably!) and that I would be given the same fee they had paid Slydini. In fact, his reply was to the effect that since prices had gone up during the past few years they would offer me more! I figured that as long as the trip didn’t cost me any out-of-the-pocket money I’d like very much to make it.

I was met at the Paris airport by Monsieur Mayette and Jaques Tandeau, and they drove me to the former’s apartment where I was wine and dined and met his delightful wife who was the perfect hostess. I am not too up on my French but I do know that ‘manger’ means ‘to eat’, and I kept saying that all that happens in France is “manger,” “manger”! I really enjoyed relaxing in Andre’s home for a couple of days before giving the lecture in Paris. The lecture seemed to go over well, and I also appeared on French

television. Everyone was amused at my attempts to do the show in French but I think it went over all right. At least they understood what I was trying to do!

From Paris I flew to Holland where I had a good time seeing my old friends Hank Vermeyden, Bob Droebek, and especially Rink, and all the people over there who were so nice to me on former occasions. Hank arranged a TV appearance for me, and wined and dined me in royal fashion.

From Holland I went to Frankfurt, Germany, where they had wonderful convention. They had many dealers there, and they put on a great show. Some of you may have heard about Sampson, the man with all the tables. I was very much taken with his act- seeing it in person is much better than seeing it on television. We also spent a very interesting day at the beautiful home of Heinz Flessner.

Perhaps one of the nicest things that happened to me in France was the cocktail party and dinner in my honor. Dr. D'Hotel's wife was at the former- a very charming lady. Danny Ray, who acted as my interpreter had cancelled an engagement to be with me during my stay in France, and was also present. He is a great guy and does a beautiful act, and is also an excellent emcee.

The dinner was held at Lamazeres Restaurant, one of the most exclusive in Paris. The owner used to do magic, featuring the vanish of a canary from a paper bag and reappearance inside an egg which was inside a lemon which was inside an orange which was inside a grapefruit. He performed this effect on the after-dinner show. Bramma performed with jewelry and golden coins. Danny Ray fascinated them with his act. A marvelous chap named Delord did an act with ropes- very good. Freddy Fah, who has been very successful commercially, presented his act (as did Sammy Liardet, who is an excellent close-up worker. Sammy has been doing table magic for years in the same restaurant in Paris.

The interesting thing about this special dinner was the fact that the only magicians present, outside of Mayette, Tandean, and myself, were the performers! The acts worked for a lay audience and were very well received. Luckily I didn't have to perform in the face of such stiff competition, but at the end of the show they called me on stage. Someone made a speech in French about me and they presented me with a beautiful case containing a miniature set of Linking Rings. They are about two inches in diameter and gold-plated...displayed in the case on velvet. A gold plate inside reads: "Homage a Dai Vernon- Paris 1972". The presentation really brought tears to my eyes because I don't deserve anything like it. My days in magic are on the decline and I really haven't contributed anything of great importance to magic in recent years. (Editor's Note: You are entitled to your own opinion, Dai, but we don't agree.)

My next stop was Rome but I had heard from the 'grapevine' that I wouldn't be well received there- that the magicians there were "not so hot". I would like to refute this very much! I met some very clever magicians in Rome and they were absolutely delightful in every way. I was even late for my lecture but the president of the club, Mr. Zelli, assured me that I shouldn't worry- "the boys will wait". He was so pleasant about it. Well, when we arrived, everyone was there- and they had cocktails and snacks laid out on the tables. I couldn't have had a better time- I sincerely hope that they enjoyed the lecture.

I have a weakness for leather boxes that are made in Florence, Italy. They make the most beautiful leather boxes in the world, as far as I'm concerned, and I have a sort of mania for these boxes. Whenever my wife wanted to give me a Christmas or Birthday present, she would give me a leather box, knowing that I would be extremely happy with it. I use them for magical gimmicks! Well, we made a round of the shops where I spent quite a few dollars on leather boxes and cases- very happily!

While in Italy I met Klingsor who bought the Kallenag Show. He has a collection of the finest magic I have ever seen. I was particularly interested in some of the things he has that once belonged to Buatier De Kolta. Every magician is familiar with De Kolta handkerchief vanisher or pull which is a pear-shaped device into which the handkerchief is stuffed before it vanishes. De Kolta's pull was made of leather- shaped like the regular pull. This intrigued me because I like things made of leather- it is much better than metal or wood. I am going to have one made. I may never use it but I like the idea of having one!

Upon returning to France my dear friend, Philippe Fialho, took Tandean and myself to see the show at the Lido. I was really a marvelous show. The only thing we have in this country to compare with it is Las Vegas and the shows there. The show stays at the Lido for an entire year and becomes letter-perfect as far as routining and smoothness go- and they have some of the finest acts in the world. It was a delightful evening. Then I went to visit Fialho and his most charming wife, Ann, in their home in Nice. It is on top of a mountain, overlooking the water, and is simply fantastic. Words can't describe it. We also spent some time in Monte Carlo where I invested a few dollars (with no returns!). But I enjoyed playing there on my first visit.

My 78th birthday was celebrated on the Riviera. I really hadn't remembered that it was my birthday- I tend to lose track of things like that. When I was called to dinner that evening I was surprised to find several magicians at the table. And my napkin looked as if it had been placed over a pumpkin or a medicine ball. They told me to lift up the napkin. As I did, they all stood up and sang "Happy Birthday". Under the napkin was a box of Havana cigars and novelties and trinkets of all kinds- presents from all the magicians. While we were dining a messenger delivered several Happy Birthday telegrams which I was delighted to receive. It was quite an evening. The magic club honored me by calling their Ring the Dai Vernon Ring. President Consales is fortunate to have such a fine group of magicians.

All in all, the complete trip was one of the highlights of my long life in magic. A thousand thanks to all who made it possible.

In closing I must say I enjoyed Robert Byrne's article, "Cutting a Pack of Cards" in the May issue of GENII. It was flattering that he chose to include me in the article and, as he so aptly put it, "Keep those cards and letters coming!"

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August 1972

Having returned recently from the convention, the P.C.A.M. Convention in Hawaii, and the Midwest Magic Jubilee in Kansas City. I consequently have seen a great deal of magic and had many discussions with other magicians on "our Art". The thing that stood out most in my mind at the conventions was the congeniality and fellowship of all those in attendance. It was really wonderful to see so many magicians getting along together and having such a good time.

And, it was great seeing all my old friends. In Hawaii, for example, Fred Kaps and Sawa. Both are outstanding as magicians and in entirely different ways. Fred Kaps is a consummate artist on stage or close-up. I don't think there is anyone else in the world who has a better knowledge and understanding of magic than Fred Kaps. And Sawa, whom I met on one of my trips to Japan, is a genius in my book. He comes up with original ideas with which he absolutely fooled some of magic's most knowledgeable people at the Hawaiian convention. I must admit that I was completely baffled by several things Sawa did for us. Later on he let me in on a couple of his techniques which are so different from anything in print.

Another genius in magic at the convention was Jerry Andrus who produces what we would call "off-beat" magic...effects that no one else would even think about. I am a great admirer of Jerry because he is a very talented and clever chap, not only in his magic but also in his thinking on all subjects. Jerry will be republishing some of his books soon and I would strongly urge anyone not acquainted with the Andrus brand of magic to invest on some of these books. You don't have to do the tricks exactly the way Jerry does them but the theory and ideas behind them are excellent. Nobody could help but profit by studying his methods. Jerry is a very honorable fellow. He doesn't tell you that you can learn his tricks in five or ten minutes, but that you have to really get down to hard work and practice them. But if you do, you will be well rewarded.

The same thing applies to Sawa's work. He doesn't do things that are easy to do but, rather, things that are difficult to do. After all, if you aspire to magic you should learn a few of the difficult effects because you will derive great pleasure from mastering them.

There were over twenty Japanese magicians at the Hawaiian convention. They carried off many of the contest prizes and awards as they really excel in originality and novel methods of doing magic. It is very interesting to watch the way they work. It is refreshing because it is so different from the ordinary.

Flip of Holland was another hit at the convention with his unique stage act and close-up Magic. He is not only a talented magician but also very knowledgeable on other subjects. And it was great being with such fun people as Jay Marshall, Duke Stern, Karrell Fox, Billy McComb, and Pete Biro. It's a delight to know people of this caliber...ones I call the "pleasant people".

Upon my return to Hollywood I flew to Phoenix where I joined Danny Dew and we drove to St. Joseph, Missouri. We had a small convention at the home of my dear friend, Faucett Ross. Joining us were Phil Craig and Joe Scott of St. Louis and Charlie Miller and Ron Wilson of Hollywood. We all went out to Faucett's lady friend's home

where Danny, being an expert chef, broiled the steaks out in the open and we really had a feast.

Cal Emmett was also there. You know, we were all a little worried about Cal because he hasn't felt too well lately. He has been using a cane and he remarked to us that he doubted if he could do his act in Kansas City without its help. However, he really did a great job there, without the cane, and received a standing ovation. Another one of the highlights in Kansas City was the closing show which was emceed by Charlie Miller. Charlie has always said that most magicians don't know when to quite...they do too much. It's a great thing to know when to stop...leaving your audience wanting a little more. Well, Charlie was in charge of the closing show and he certainly followed his ideas...it was a wonderful show. Everyone on the bill did a short act and they all performed brilliantly. The entire show was excellent and most enjoyable...well received by everyone. Charlie is to be commended for his handling of the show which proved his theory that too little is much better than too much.

After leaving Kansas City, Danny and I decided to stop off in Colorado Springs and see Paul Fox, who has been a close friend of ours for many years. We had a marvelous visit with this man who, amazingly, is unknown by so many of the younger magicians. Paul Fox is another genius in magic. He has devised more improvements and come up with more original ideas than anyone I know. Years ago Al Baker told me about Paul who lived at that time in Ohio. Al said that Paul was really astounding- having more ideas about magic than anyone he (Al) had met. And we must remember that Al Baker was no slouch either when it came to original ideas in magic. After meeting Paul Fox I had to agree with Al. Danny Dew has done much to promote Paul Fox magic by manufacturing many of Paul's items.

The sketch of yours truly with this month's column was done in the Castle library recently by member Steinhauer. Lawrence is a fine young magician, having worked the Castle on various occasions, with a warm style and personality all his own. He is not trying to copy anyone...an admirable attribute.

September 1972

Last month, in commenting on the Japanese magicians who attended the Hawaiian Convention, I stated that it was interesting to watch them do magic because their presentations were far from the ordinary. It's a pity that more magicians don't devote more time to the presentation of their miracles. You don't have to tell the same story that others are using. Dress the trick up with a different story and different presentation. I don't care how outlandish it might be; try to be different and original.

An example of what I mean is the way in which my Japanese friend, Sawa, vanishes coins from his hands. The average magician will place the coin into one hand from which it disappears. It's like saying, "Look how clever I am. I can make a coin vanish from my hand!" Sawa drops a quarter into one hand and picks up a wand which he sticks into the top of the closed fist, saying, "Look, a slot machine!" He pulls the stick back, opens his hand and the coin is gone- he has 'lost it' in the machine. So he says, "Let's try another quarter in another machine!" Again he loses the coin. This time he decides to try the half dollar machine- placing a half dollar into his hand and doing the wand-lever bit again. This time he 'hits the jackpot' as a dozen half dollars drop out onto the table! You can see how delightful the presentation is- he makes coins vanish but there is a reason.

I think that we have some of the best magical talent in the country right here at the Magic Castle. It's a pity that Ed Marlo doesn't come out here because he is certainly one of the 'giants' in magic. To me it's inconceivable that Ed Marlo could hold a job and also produce such a mountain of material on card magic over the years. Some fellows find it a bit difficult to follow Ed's material because he goes into such detail and has so many variations on effects. But his is a creative mind and he goes into, and explores, every facet of the effect. It would be nice having Ed at the Castle as he has many admirers here. I am certainly one of them! I admire his dedication to our Art. It is my feeling that Ed would have a great time out here meeting fellows like Bruce Cervon, Larry Jennings, Ron Wilson, Mike Skinner, Jules Lenier, Ray Grismer, etc., etc. Think about it, Ed!

That genuinely funny man from Ireland, Billy McComb, was with us again recently. He worked in the Palace of Mystery for a week and won the hearts of everyone with his humorous and baffling routines. Billy has made a comfortable living from magic. He has been able to do this because he has worked hard (and still works hard) on polishing and improving his routines. His new book, "McComb's Magic- 25 Years Wiser" is a gold mine of information and inspiration. Highly recommended reading.

You know, it makes me rather sad at times when I think if some of the 'under twenty-one years of age' chaps who are not allowed to visit the Castle in the evenings and see some of the stellar performers in action. Some of these young fellows are extremely clever and it's a pity that they can't attend the lectures or see the shows here because of their youth. One of these young magicians is Steve Spillman who is authorizing a book right now. As far as I know, I would imagine that it will contain some very good ideas. Steve is quite original and is really making great strides in magic.

At one time I thought magic had reached its saturation point, but with the young minds involved in magic today there seems to be no end to it. There are new ideas coming up constantly. Not new effects, don't misunderstand me, but new methods, new ideas, new forms of presentation for old tricks and different handling. Unfortunately there seems to be a vogue now for turning a great many tricks into comedy tricks and comedy situations. Now if you are a person like Lou Derman, who can handle comedy and knows how to present comedy and makes things really funny, you are indeed fortunate. Lou is known here as "Friday Night Lou" as he presents his act each Friday evening in the Close-Up Room. He has been doing this for years. He really breaks his audience up with laughter.

One night about five years ago George Burns was in the audience. George had known Lou for a long time but he didn't know that Lou did magic. When Lou walked out George was amazed and said, "Lou, I never knew you did this stuff." Well, Lou made an appropriate remark and started his show. George stood up in the audience and said, "Just a moment. Before you commence I'd like to announce that for my money you're the best comedy writer that Hollywood has produced." Now this was quite a compliment coming from a man like George Burns who certainly knows something about what makes people laugh. Lou knows how to handle comic situations. Some magicians think they can do this but they don't understand the build-up or the timing of such situations and they come off looking pretty sad.

I'm only commenting on this to say, for goodness sake, don't attempt comedy if you don't know exactly how to handle it. When you deliver a line or do some bit of business, if you don't get the proper reaction, you should realize instantly that it's not suited to your form of presentation. You must know how far you can go and what you can do and how to handle it. Otherwise the entire thing is a fiasco.

It's a shame, but I have seen and heard fellows who are very good magicians show very poor taste with remarks they try to make which are completely out of place-remarks that should just not be used at all. You can never err by leaving out something that is a little blue or has a double meaning leaning toward the vulgar. A cheap laugh from one or two persons doesn't amount to a thing if you have offended the rest of your audience. It has even been said that if you offend one person that you have lost. Magic is a clean art and should be kept as clean as possible. Try to give it some dignity.

Here is a little thought for you on the right and wrong way of presenting a trick. When performing a trick- any trick- try not to make a person "wrong". For example, you apparently place the Five of Spades face down and then ask a spectator, "What is that card?" When they reply that it is the Five of Spades, don't say to them, "No, you are wrong!" People don't like to be told that they are wrong. If you are doing the Three Card Monte and ask a spectator to point to the Queen, don't tell them that they are wrong. Rather, you can say, "You know, that's what someone thought last night!" or "That's funny, somebody picked that same card last night." And with such a remark you turn the card over and then show them the Queen, etc.

In the old days, the pitchmen who worked on street corners or at fairs selling fountain pens or potato peelers, etc., had a great psychology in living with people. They believed in always addressing remarks to the people that would make these people nod their heads or say "yes". They would keep the audience saying "yes" all the time- never

making a remark that would bring a “no”. When it came time to sell the product, the customers had become so accustomed to saying “yes” that it was difficult for them to say “no”. If someone shook their head sideways the pitchman would remark (at the same time turning his head from side to side then nodding) “Not this way but up and down then if your head falls off you can catch it”.

This is a great psychology that can be applied to magic. Never tell a person that he or she is wrong. This makes them feel uncomfortable. I think I have commented before on the importance of making your audiences, and especially your volunteer assistants, feel comfortable and “right at home”. Jules Lenier does the chain loop trick wherein a spectator tries to pick out the loop that will entrap his finger. He always misses, of course, but Jules never tells them that they are wrong. Instead, with a smile, Lenier will say, “I’m very sorry, maybe you weren’t paying close attention. Let’s try again!” Or he may say, “I’m sorry. Perhaps I didn’t explain it properly. Let’s try it again!” This takes the sting out of being wrong.

Next month’s comments about the Texas Convention.

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October, 1972

Although Houdini was, without doubt, the world's greatest handcuff king and also a great showman, he was not one of the 'greats' that I admired by any stretch of the imagination. He was a supreme egotist, true, but we must be honest and say that it was this egotism, plus his ability to live up to his claims, that made Houdini the famous person he was and still is today! Houdini WAS determined to succeed—and he did. He told me many times, "Vernon, keep your name in front of the public—that's all you have to do. But it must be constant and be sure your name is spelled correctly. Get them to talk and write about you. It makes no difference what they say as long as they talk about you." Harry practiced what he preached!

Very few people know that Houdini could hold his breath for over two minutes. He didn't smoke or drink. When he presented the Chinese Water Torture Cell, which called for him to be lowered upside down into the chest of water, his audiences were spellbound. As he took his last deep breath you could have heard a pin drop, that's how fascinated, quiet and attentive the audiences became.

Houdini's brother Hardeen, or Dash as he was called, told me a rather amusing thing one day. In answer to my question about Houdini's under water stunt, Dash said that he also did the "overboard box escape," the same as his brother. I commented on the number of leg irons and handcuffs used when they got into the case. Hardeen said that the hardest thing they had to do was to keep the darned cuffs and leg irons from falling open while the press and police were watching! He said that if you shook them, the locks would open right up! "You don't think Harry and I are crazy, do you, that we're going to take chances with our lives!" This was very amusing to me because Houdini would never have admitted such a thing, even under torture! But Dash was more "down to earth" and he made this admission!

I believe I have mentioned before that Bessie Houdini was the godmother of my eldest son, Edward.

I'd like to say something about my dear friend, the late Henry Christ. Henry was quiet and retiring, yet he was really marvelous and executed faultlessly all the things he concocted in magic. The trick most magicians associate with Henry is his "Dead Mans' Hand" which first appeared in Ted Annemann's JINX. Henry never cared for any of the finger-flinging or 'diddling' tricks that annoy Charlie Miller so much. He had natural clean-cut ways of doing his tricks, and they always had a good effect. Henry wrote a book over the years and I am hoping that Persi Diaconis, who was a close personal friend, will publish this book. If it does get into print I will certainly recommend it most highly. With the passing of Henry Christ magic has lost one of its great minds. I've never heard anyone say anything derogatory about Henry Christ.

Martin Gardner is another person of this caliber. He is a genius. He annotated "Alice in Wonderland" which has been translated into several languages. He is a regular

contributor to high class mathematical journals and has originated all kinds of different puzzles, many of which appeared in his column in the "Scientific American". He authored a brilliant alphabetical series of close-up tricks in Hugard's Magic Monthly some years ago. This was really a gigantic task. I have always felt that this series should be reprinted as a separate book. Martin Gardner is the author of many fine books on magic including "Twelve Tricks with a Borrowed Deck", "After the Dessert", and "Math, Magic and Mystery". He is an extremely nice fellow who, because of his natural modesty, has never received the magical acclaim rightfully due him.

Magic has lost another 'great' with the death of Silent Mora. Mora was another very nice person but he was a highly opinionated person. He played some of the finest theatres in the country and was very successful in magic. He would have been more successful if he had not had controversies with theatre owners and stage managers. He used to get into arguments with them over some of the union tactics, etc., and they would refer to him as a radical. He really wasn't — he was a fair-minded person who wasn't afraid to speak his mind. And he was a superlative sleight-of-hand performer. Morav and I became good friends. Years ago when I lived in Ottawa, Canada, he would appear there once or twice a year. Cliff Green and I would spend every evening with Mora at his hotel. Mora was one of the finest handlers of billiard balls I ever knew. His wand-spin vanish of a ball is well known by magicians. It was a part of my lecture and I always gave him credit for the move. Mora saw me do this in Boston one time and said that it was a little different from his method and he liked the way I did it. This remark, coming from the master, was very flattering to me. I am only sorry I didn't have the opportunity to visit Silent Mora once again before he left us.

Anyone who owns a set of Silent Mora's Chinese Sticks has a collector's item. He was one of the first to manufacture the Chinese Sticks — making them out of bamboo. Each set was personally decorated and autographed by Mora.

One of the things I remember about Silent Mora (as well as other greats such as Leipzig, Malini, Warren Keane, etc.) was his style of working. Things were done slowly and gracefully — no quick moves. When he passed a coin from one hand to the other it was done slowly and deliberately. It was very pleasing to watch. If a spectator tells you, "Gee, that was quick" or "Boy, you did that fast", he is not being complimentary to my way of thinking. If you are a juggler or an acrobat, sure, do your act fast. But when you are doing something mysterious do it slowly—it has an entirely different effect on an audience. Mora was a master at this.

November 1972

After the extensive trips I have been making the last few years I finally decided to stay home for a while. However, it seems as though something always comes along that takes me away from the Castle. A short time ago Ricky Jay offered to drive me to San Francisco. He was engaged to work for a week at Earthquake McGoon's where they have the Carter collection of illusions and I was somewhat curious to see the place. Besides, I was most anxious to see Frank Shields perform with the pasteboards. Everyone had been telling me about his astounding card work and how beautifully he does the top change.

I am very glad I made the trip because I thoroughly enjoyed the excellent performance of Pete Biro and Martin Lewis (who had been booked for the weekend at McGoon's) and also the incredible close-up work of Ricky Jay. The visit to Oakland to see Frank Shields was a rare treat. He has a warm ingratiating personality and shows the customers the type of card tricks that really mystify and entertain. He is particularly known for his top change which magicians rave about. Everything he does is done in a masterful fashion.

An amusing thing happened in Berkeley when Ricky made a ten dollar wager that he could throw a playing card completely over a three story building. He lost this bet as the high wind caused the card to tumble as it went over the top of the building and it fluttered back to the ground. The building was a billiard academy. We went inside and the crowd was kidding Ricky about losing the bet. Undaunted by this failure he made another bet that he could hit an electric fan that was at the far end of the long billiard room. They had quite a discussion about it and finally agreed that he could use eight cards in the attempt.—He took aim and WHAM., the very first card pitched hit the fan right in the center and Ricky got his ten dollars back! Ricky can throw cards better than anyone I have ever seen. Back in the old days when Thurston used to throw cards into the audience he used a special card that was at least four times as thick as a regular playing card. Ricky can take an ordinary card and really hurl it accurately. In fact, he threw one over the Magic Castle not so long ago.

While we were in San Francisco we were the guests of Matt Corin. He and his family really did everything possible to make our stay enjoyable. I taught Matt the Coins in Champagne Glass while there and he learned the routine in an astonishing short time

I was more than delighted when Ricky was willing to drive up to Lake Tahoe to see my dear friend, Larry Jennings. He has a beautiful home in the wooded area near the lake. Larry, Ricky and I visited several of the gambling casinos and were given complimentary meal tickets by the leading pit bosses. These pit bosses have the greatest respect for Larry's ability with cards. The tales they told us about how people try to beat the house were very intriguing.

Talking about cheating. It always annoys me when demonstrating the methods used by sharpers, to be asked, "But could you do it under fire?" Meaning would you have the nerve to cheat someone in a game for money? To me, this is like saying to a dart thrower

who has just hit a bullseye, "Very good, but could you hit someone in the eye with it?" The answer should be, "Yes, if I decided to do so." Anyone who has had any breeding at all would never have any desire whatsoever, or the slightest inclination, to cheat or rob anyone. However, in self defense I consider it a different matter. On several occasions I have resorted to trickery myself when an opponent was attempting to swindle me. Then it's a case of survival of the fittest.

It is really amazing how many magical activities there are in the Castle and how many different interesting things occur each evening. Besides such regulars as Kuda Bux, Orlando Bagley, Francis Carlyle, Bruce Cervon, Senator Crandall, Lou and Bill Derman, Bob Eads, Glenn Falkenstein, Albert Goshman, Bob Gwodz, Tony Giorgio, Ricky Jay, Don Lawton, Maury Leaf, Jules Lenier, Charlie Miller, Peter Pit, Johnny Platt, Danny Rouzer, Whitey Roberts, Mike Skinner, and Ron Wilson, we have occasional shows by such excellent performers as Don Kellar and Mark McGuire. It is really astonishing how good these two young performers have become at such a tender age. It would do some of our professionals good to study and analyze just why these two performers please their audiences so very much.

Another visitor who worked in our Close-Up Gallery recently was Father James Blantz. His approach to magic is really delightful and the appropriate remarks he makes from time to time add so very much to his performance. Eddie Hamel, our very popular maitre d' and magical booker for private shows, has a Keane insight and is a wonderful judge of knowing what the customers enjoy in the way of magic. Though not a magician himself, Eddie selects the magicians he knows the people will enjoy, and he does his utmost to keep all of the magicians happy whenever possible. VERNON'S "THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH": To excel at entertaining, the most arduous study, the most genuine talent, the most painstaking effort, are not enough if one's innermost thoughts are not directed towards aiming to please each onlooker. Every action down to the most trivial must be infused with integrity in its fullest sense. 'As a man is so he will affect an audience'.

But in spite of his wonderful ability as a manipulator, his favorite trick was the Vanishing Lamp. He would light the lamp which had a shade on it. He would then place a piece of paper around it and it would vanish from the little thin-topped table. He loved it. If I asked him about a certain billiard ball move he would show it to me, and then he would say, "Why don't you let me teach you the lamp trick?" I never learned it because I would have had no use for it. But it was Mora's pet effect.

Hardeen's pet trick was the vanishing and reappearing alarm clocks. As he apparently tossed the clocks towards ribbons hanging from a frame stand, they would vanish from his fingertips and reappear on the ends of the ribbons. Once in a while a clock would fail to reappear as it was a rather delicate mechanism, but this didn't seem to detract from the overall effect. Hardeen loved this trick which he used in "Hellsapoppin'" for a time.

Well, I managed to get to another convention this year. I must say that the hospitality and treatment I received in Abilene during the TAOM Convention was perfect. I enjoyed

the affair very much and we were very impressed with the friendliness of the people. Everything was run most efficiently. Lou Derman presented a lecture on comedy magic that we were very well received. And his new book on comedy magic and presentation sold well. See the ads for complete information about this recommended publication.

All of the shows were good.' Al Lampkin did a clever bit of imitating magicians called at random by the audience. Someone asked for an imitation of Mike Caldwell. There was a short pause and suddenly Al did the famous Caldwell flip in the air, landing flat on his back on stage. It was funny. Dick Shehee and his daughter did an outstanding performance — receiving a standing ovation. It was a beautiful act. Jay Vincent (Jack Patchen) did a great job with the Multiplying Bottles. He got more out of them than anyone I have seen. He made it real entertainment. All in all it was a wonderful convention — I'm glad I could be a part of it.

Paris, July 4-8, 1973, will be the site of a great convention. I was asked (during my recent visit) if I would return for this meeting of magicians from all parts of the world. I told them that it was quite possible that I might attend as a spectator only. Ron Wilson has been talking for some time of visiting his homeland, Scotland. I can't think of anyone I would enjoy a trip with more than Ron. I would love to go back to Paris with him, visiting Scotland and England first. It would be great to be at the convention in Paris, just to walk around and say hello to the boys and watch the other magicians at work. I would suggest to the Paris Convention committee contact Ron for possible appearances during the affair. I know that everyone would be so pleased to meet him and see his magic.

Perhaps Ron and Billy McComb and I could buzz over to Ireland and with the help of Hubert Lambert maybe we could help to straighten out the mess over there!

In closing I must tell you that some way during the transcribing of my tape for the August issue, Sid Lorraine's name was not even mentioned. I had not seen Sid for many years but was really delighted to find him looking so well and besides, he did a really "bang up" job and Jay Vincent could not thank Faucett Ross enough for recommending him.

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December, 1972

Readers may be a little puzzled this month to see this peculiar picture of myself in a baby's outfit! It was taken from the movie short that Lou Derman and Snag Werris produced for last year's (1972) Academy of Magical Arts Awards Banquet. The film is a very amusing, in fact, hilarious! It is devoted to funny things that supposedly happen around the Castle. One scene has Tony Giorgio trying very obviously to force a card on Francis Carlyle. Francis resists Tony's efforts, so finally Tony takes out a 45, lays it on the table, and once more offers the cards to Carlyle who very obligingly takes the right card! The entire film is made up of very funny bits involving the members of the Castle.

My part in the film is a ridiculous sequence of myself doing magic, starting in the days when I was in a crib. The picture shows how I was attired at the time, including a cigar in my mouth which is not shown in the photo above. The scene opens showing hands manipulating cards in a baby's crib and then I pop up with the baby's hat on my head, etc. Possibly some magicians wouldn't want to show a picture like this but at my age it really doesn't matter how I look! Don Lawton says I really have a devilish gleam in my eyes.

When I first started this column I wanted to call it "The Cranky Old Man of Magic" but the editor didn't think it was an appropriate title. I am recording this month's column in the Irma Room of the Castle. This is the room where the ghost of Irma plays the piano every evening, answering the requests of the members and their guests. I drop in afternoons to practice the piano.

We had a visit just the other day from John Scarne. I have known Johnny for well over forty years. Knowing him as well as I do, I was not surprised when he asked me, "How many magicians do you know who have made a million dollars?" I replied, "Very few—in fact, none!" And Johnny said, "Well, I'm on my second million." This speaks pretty well for what can be accomplished in the field of magic. Of course it wasn't entirely in magic that Johnny made his money. Besides his many books on magic he has made money with his games ("Teeko", "Scarney", "Follow the Arrow", etc.) As you know, he does some amazing things with cards. The other evening here at the Castle he did a few miracles for the bartender at the upstairs bar and the bartender is still talking about them. Everyone was very happy to see Johnny out here. He is looking extremely well and seems very happy. I would say that any man on his second million should be feeling very *happy*! I have always admired his dedication to the work he does. Scarne has really worked hard and deserves the success he has had.

The Magic Castle Film Library continues to grow. It now contains some very choice footage from such television shows as "You Asked for It" and the various talk shows, i.e., Johnny Carson, Merv Griffin, Mike Douglas, etc. Every Tuesday evening President Bill Larsen runs films for the members up in the library. Mystic Craig donated many excellent films to the library.

Max Malini was always a great idol of mine. One of the things he did that had everyone mystified was the cigar suspension. He would place his palms over two cigars and the cigars would cling to his palms and fingers. He would have spectators remove the cigars from his hands. Magicians thought he used some type of adhesive on his hands. A friend of mine named Bert Morey once caught Malini when he had just finished taking a bath. He handed Max a towel and told him to dry his hands. Malini was puzzled, of course, but he dried his hands. Bert placed two cigars on the edge of the bathtub and said, "Now let me see you lift these two cigars!" Much to the surprise of Bert Morey, Malini lifted the cigars just as he always did!

Through the years I have puzzled over this and wondered if it was a natural phenomenon that could be done by some people and not by others. Paul Fox was quite convinced that it was a natural condition for some people—that they had skin of a type that would adhere to lightweight objects such as cigars or pencils. The hand was not sticky, yet it had an adhesive quality to it. Well, we have an "old timer" here at the Castle who can duplicate what Malini did, not only with cigars but with coins, cards, etc. I'm speaking about Orlando Bagley. Orlando is 87 years of age and is here every evening, entertaining and mystifying the members and their friends. At that age most persons hands would be extremely dry.

The late Jay Ose was firmly convinced that Orlando used something on his hands to accomplish these levitations. He used to say, "I'll bet that every morning before he leaves his house he puts some kind of preparation on his hands." I told Jay that although he was right most of the time about things, in this case I thought he was wrong. I'd like to state for the record that Orlando Bagley has this quality to cause light-weight objects to adhere to his hands without the use of any *preparations*. He does Chink-a-Chink with regular coins as well as if he was using a shell coin. It is truly amazing in his hands.

I recently had the pleasure of appearing on the Mark Wilson MAGIC CIRCUS television show. And I say it was a pleasure because Mark has the ability of being able to present his illusions in such a clean-cut manner. It is a professional show in all ways. Everything is done in a professional manner. He has the finest technicians working for him. Everyone who knows Mark Wilson and his wife, Nani, are very fond of them. They are a clean-cut couple who are a credit to magic. It was a great honor for me to appear on their show.

January 1973

I was very pleased when Bill Larsen told me that this month's GENII would be the Gerald Kosky issue. Anyone who has read anything at all on the subject of magic during the past 40 years must have run across the name of Gerald Kosky. If you haven't read any of the literature on magic then you must have heard of him through the "magical grapevine". When I first visited California at least 20 years ago I had the pleasure of meeting Gerald and his mother. He is a delightful gentleman to know and 11P is very well versed in the Art of Magic. In my opinion he is one of the best posted magicians in the country. And he is a very clever performer. He and Tenkai were intimate friends which would help explain his great knowledge of good magic. But he, himself, is a great innovator of tricks, having endless original ideas for both effects and presentations. Congratulations, Gerald, on this, your issue of GENII!

IT'S QUIZ TIME, GANG! Can you identify these famous magicians?

1. Joe Piskulick 2. Paul Braden 3. Jack Jungclaus 4. William Keckritz

Central states readers should know them. At one time they all lived in St. Louis. No prizes are offered for the correct answers but I would enjoy receiving YOUR answers on a postal card. The stage names of these four magicians will appear in this column next month.

Joe Cossari, whom I have known for years and who is known magically as "The King of Cards," recently moved to Los Angeles and is a regular at the Castle. Although Joe can do all kinds of magic he has specialized in cards—particularly card fans in black light. His entire magic act is very colorful and quite sensational. All you see are Joe's hands and the brilliantly colored cards, balls, ropes, hoops, etc., in a series of tricks and moves. The vivid colors make for a spectacular show. We are all looking forward to seeing his act at the next Castle lecture. Everyone knows and likes Joe. He makes the most beautiful card fans I have ever seen. He has a very large collection of fanning cards including nil the Japanese fanning decks available. Many of his cards were made to order for use with black light.

Joe also uses the deck that was featured by Cardini. Harry Drielinger was the person who first brought this deck to Cardini's attention. Harry found them years ago in a Walgreen Drug Store and bought several decks. Cardini fell in love with them and started using them in his act. The cards became the envy of the magicians in those days. Cardini bought up all the cards available in all the Walgreen Drug Stores around the country. The card company called in all the decks and sold them to Cardini, and agreed not to reissue that particular design back! They are very pretty cards and Cardini proved how effective they could be in the beautiful act he presented all over the world.

As I said, Joe Cossari is a specialist in card fans and is the only fellow I know who gets the effect of weaving three packs of cards together and making a tremendous fan. It

almost looks like a colored parasol when he forms a complete circle with the cards. He always receives a thunderous round of applause from his audiences when he performs his routine. Joe recently presented his act for members of the Comedy Club. This well-known club is made up of old vaudevillians and show people. Joe didn't use the black light act but did his regular card fanning routine, assisted by his lovely girl-friend, Esther, and it was very well received by the audience.

Even those who don't like card tricks admire and enjoy Joe's routine because it is so well performed and presented. Much as we dislike to admit it, there ARE people who do NOT like magic, especially card like magic, especially card tricks. It is mainly because they have been exposed to bad card tricks. There are many so-called magicians nowadays who are doing bad magic.

It is a pleasure to report that Martin Lewis son of author/magic inventor and performer, Eric Lewis, performed in our Palace of Mystery for a week in February. Martin has been doing magic for only three or four years but he certainly learned well and is a credit to the profession. He asked me to watch his act and criticize it for him. I must say I was delighted with his performance. I had seen him work at the Magic Cellar in San Francisco a few months ago and it was evident that in just those few months he had developed more polish and was more at ease on the stage. Martin has a delightful gentlemanly manner that everyone likes.

In this day and age it seems to me that there are too many brash, impudent or 'fresh' performers of magic. I think the ideal way for a magician to perform is to be always a gentleman. Martin has that way of working and he was most gracious to his two volunteer assistants on stage. It took thousands of years to build up natural graces and rules of etiquette and yet, today, so many people are trying to tear them down. In this country, unfortunately, there is a false assumption among some people that gentleness is a form of effeminacy; that a person is effeminate if they are polite or gracious. Any thinking person knows very well that there is no connection whatsoever. But this is the reason that certain persons will try to appear gruff or use foul language because they think they are proving their manliness. This is truly a fallacy.

Dai Vernon c/o The Magic Castle 7001 Franklin Ave. Hollywood, CA 90028

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February 1973

One of the truest things I ever learned from my parents was that as you grow older time really flies by.

It seems only a few weeks ago that the Academy Awards took place and now here just the other night we had the Awards again, and as usual, it was up to par. Everything ran smoothly and this annual event is something to see!

I was greatly flattered by our President Bill Larsen when he asked me, once again to sit at the head table, as the only "Master Fellowship" holder present. Included at this table were Irene and Bill, of course, Cary Grant, Tony Curtis and the Board of Directors,

Anybody who is in this vicinity at the time they have the Academy Awards should make a point of trying to be here. Not only would you be able to visit the Magic Castle and see the Awards passed out and show, but also meet very interesting visitors. We have visitors from neighboring towns like Phoenix's Danny Dew who everybody loves and admires.

This is an unusual year, because Milt Larsen presented a Spring edition of "IT'S MAGIC" just following the Academy Awards.

I think the awards were very just and very fair. Mark Wilson won the "Magician of the Year," Shimada is "Best Stage Magician," Topper Martyn, from Sweden, who endeared himself to everyone over here, won the "Best Visiting Magician," Bruce Cervon was the "Best Close-Up Magician," and Lou Derman won "Lecture of the Year". Lou's lecture was hilariously funny and everybody enjoyed it very much.

The entertainment at the Academy Awards banquet was very interesting because we had what some might term "Super Stars," like Cary Grant and Tony Curtis, who not only appeal to the general public but make the hearts of all the girls who attend flutter a little.

The show was good. Cary Grant did an act and Tony Curtis also did an escape act. Tony, as the readers know, played the part of "Houdini" in a movie made some years ago. Bobby Fenton did a hilariously funny magic act As the "Incredible Vancine" where everything went wrong. Milt Larsen also added to the comedy of the evening by doing a very amusing act called "The Vanishing Radio." Shimada, as everyone who has seen him must agree, is one of the finest acts that we have at the present time. In fact, I think he is one of the finest acts that I have ever seen of this type.

Of course, I was more than thrilled when they gave a "Fellowship" to my dear friend of long standing, Charley Miller. Charlie received the "Masters Fellowship" which is the highest award that the Academy presents.

Carl Ballentine received a "Special Fellowship". Carl was quite surprised, I think, as he didn't expect to receive an award of any kind, but he certainly deserves it.

I mentioned before that at this time of the year you will meet out-of-town visitors. We had Pete Biro from San Francisco Al Sharpe from Chicago and also some very attractive blondes came in from different places.

I would like to make one comment about an affair like the Academy Awards. Anyone doing magic for any length of time and attending the various conventions, get-togethers, magical meetings, soirees, or whatever you call them, sometimes, in their sober moments, think; "Why am I fooling around with this tawdry art —it's kind of stupid, this kind of thing." Sometimes they get rather despondent about magic and say, "Well, this is a frivolous kind of thing." It's events like this Academy Awards when you see five or six hundred people all nicely dressed congregated in a beautiful ballroom, and you see and hear the fine orchestra and the glamour and you begin to say: "Well, I'm proud to be a magician." This is what everyone who does magic should feel—a feeling of pride for doing it. You should not feel a little bit ashamed to do it.

Unfortunately, there are many magicians who don't try to give magic the dignity and the proper respect it should receive. But there are, fortunately, a great many who do this and I think every magician should strive to give magic dignity. This is very simple to do, give it a dignified appearance. Don't force tricks on people. Be gracious when you do tricks. Try to please people with tricks. Don't annoy them. Don't get them in a corner and sit them down and say, watch this one or here's another one, or did I show you this one? This is what annoys people about magic. With these words of wisdom I shall sign off on this subject for now.

HERE ARE THE ANSWERS to last month's "Famous Magicians" quiz:

Joe Piskulick JOE SCOTT Paul Braden PAUL LE PAUL Jack Junglaus
..JACK HERBERT

William Keckritz BILL BAIRD

Joe Scott still lives in St. Louis and continues to entertain the natives with his delightful magic. (Joe: You must visit the Castle this year. Bring Phil Craig with you!) Both Paul Le Paul and Jack Herbert have gone on to that great Magic Castle in the sky. Bill Baird now lives in Michigan. Bill is associated with an automobile parts supply company but during a recent visit out here he expressed hopes of possibly getting back into show business again. Bill was noted for his excellent billiard ball manipulations.

March 1973

I have mentioned John Scarne's recent visits to the Castle but I don't believe I have told you that John is acting as technical advisor on a motion picture called "Sting" that is being produced by Paul Newman. It is a very fascinating book — I have often thought that it would make a wonderful movie. To my way of thinking Scarne is the perfect choice for technical advisor. John says he has parts in the film for Francis Carlyle and myself. We'll see what happens and keep you informed!

I have known John Scarne for years—I think it was back in 1918 that we first met. The first person to ever tell me about Scarne was the late Sam Horowitz. A number of us used to get together on Saturday afternoons at Frank Ducrot's magic shop down on 34th Street years ago. Frank's shop was formerly the Hornmann Magic Shop which is now owned and operated by Al Flosso. One Saturday Sam came in and told us he had just met a most unusual gentleman named John "Flukey" Scarne over in Jersey. He said the reason they called him "Flukey Johnny" was because he did weird things with cards that they just couldn't understand.

Sam said that Scarne used his (Sam's) deck of cards and played a game of 'Banker and Broker' with him and Scarne always managed to win. This game is played with a shuffled deck that is cut into a number of heaps. Then each person bets on the value of the bottom card of a heap. The one who picks the heap with the highest bottom card wins the pot. This game was very popular in the old days.

Sam went on to say that John always managed to pick out a pile with a King or an Ace on the bottom of it. I said that it was very evident that John was using a crimp of some kind but Sam said that was not the case at all. I asked Sam how he knew this and Sam explained that Scarne drew attention to the fact that he wasn't using any crimps. I, of course, was very anxious to meet Johnny, so a few weeks later Sam brought John over to the shop.

We went into the back room and John demonstrated the game. Just as I had suspected, he did use a crimp, but it was an entirely different type of crimp from those then known, and one that was very difficult to detect. There was no finger action or semblance of making a crimp. I immediately admired John's skill and style. Through the years I have kept in touch with Johnny. He practiced very diligently, not only gambling sleights, but he did back palming, switches, changes, and all type of magic. As you all know, John has authored several books on card tricks and sleights, as well as the very well received volumes on gambling with cards, dice, etc. As I wrote before in this column, John told me that he has started on his second million, which I believe, knowing John as I do. He told me that the magic business is all right, but when it comes to making money, you have to "make money while you sleep". This is very true when you stop to think about it. People who have amassed fortunes have not done it by manual labor. The money is coming in while they are sleeping. And this is true in Johnny's case. In the past

he has had some reverses such as some games that did not sell too well, but overcoming this are all the games and books that did and do sell well.

Spotlight on one of our Castle members, Bob Wagner whom everyone likes and respects. He is a very clever chap. For our Eastern readers I would say that Bob Wagner is the Martin Gardner of the West. In many ways he is very much like Martin; creative and exceedingly clever.

He performed a trick at a recent IBM meeting that I think would be of interest. It is an original trick with Bob and he presented it beautifully at the meeting.

He displayed a dart board with a montage of 52 playing cards affixed to the board. They were all mixed up and helter-skelter, but with the indices of all cards being visible. Five different colored darts were handed to five spectators to hold momentarily.

He asked a spectator to shuffle a deck of cards which he immediately wrapped with aluminum foil, making a neat package of it. The five spectators then threw their darts at the target board. Bob said that if they wished to remove individual darts and throw again they could do so.

Bob then took an ornate scimitar and pushed it through the wrapped pack from side to side. Next he asked the audience to eliminate the colored darts one by one until just one dart remained in the board. They called out the various colors and he removed the darts. At the finish the spectator that if he was not satisfied he could remove the dart and throw it again. The spectator decided to leave it where it was . . . sticking into the Jack of Clubs.

Bob then tore the foil from the pack of cards, removed the scimitar, and showed that the Jack of Clubs was impaled on the blade! It was a bewildering and most entertaining effect and Bob Wagner performed it perfectly. Your attention was held throughout the entire routine.

Just a few minutes ago I heard the very sad news that Max Terhune passed away from a heart attack. In my opinion he was one of the warmest and likable performers I ever saw. Everyone really loved this genuine down to earth magnetic and entertaining man. I shall always treasure his memory.

April 1973

The photo on the opposite page was taken back in the thirties by my friend, Hal Phyfe. Hal and I were schoolmates in Canada. I remember that he came from a wealthy family. At the time he was in school he had his own stable of polo ponies. Later he moved to New York City and became a photographer. He did photos for "Vanity Fair" and also did wonderful pastels and illustrations for various magazines. I especially like this photo of myself because, even though it was posed, it doesn't look posed. I feel that it shows just what the photographer had in mind. It looks as though I am just studying the cards. I'm not showing any ability or doing any card fans, etc. I'm just looking at the cards as though I'm thinking, "What am I going to do with these . . . how can I complete this trick."

The picture may look a bit faded in reproduction but in the original photograph the 'haze' in the picture was smoke curling up from the cigarette. I used to smoke as many as five packs a day at that time. I have noticed that a number of people whom I consider very bright do not smoke. This is not always the rule, of course. People like Francis Carlyle have excellent memories and smoke. But still I think today that non-smoking is better than smoking. I gave up smoking mainly because I used to burn holes in my clothes!

You'll notice that the caption beneath the photo is Dale Vernon. This stems from the fact that many persons were not sure how to pronounce my name—Dai. Properly pronounced, Dai sounds like 'die'. Miss King who booked me on shows in the thirties (she did all the bookings for the Keith circuit. Dunninger and myself were the only magicians she used) told me that she did not want to use the name Dai because it was bewildering to some people. At that time, Dale Carnegie was very popular as his "How to Win Friends and Influence People" had just been published. Over the years this book sold over 1,300,000 copies and was translated into 35 languages. Miss King said that Dale was very close to Dai so why not use the name of Dale Vernon. I played the Music Hall in New York billed as Dale Vernon.

The tag line, "He fooled Houdini" came about from my having fooled him in Chicago back in 1919. I fooled him six or eight times with a version of the Ambitious Card. I had him initial one card on the face and then turned it face down and very slowly placed it under the top card . . . making it now the second card down. And then I very slowly turned over the top card and it was his initialed card, back on top. I did this over and over and I remember Houdini kept saying, "You must be using two cards", but I kept pointing out the fact that he initialed the card and I would have had no way of duplicating it on a similar card. Sam Margules was there at the time and he said, "Harry, admit it—you're fooled!" Well, Harry would never admit that anyone could fool him, but I have a letter from Bess Houdini in which she stated that he had been fooled

My reason for using the tag line at that time was based on Thurston having made his reputation as "The Man Who Mystified Herman". Herman had been completely

baffled when Thurston did the rising cards on stage in Denver. This was the method using a thread stretched across the stage.

And, in case you are interested, in doing the Ambitious Card for Houdini I simply used a double backed card on top of the deck. After it had been selected and initialed it was placed face up on the deck. A double lift and turn over left his card second from the top. I then slowly placed the top card second from the top (this is the double backed card, remember) which placed his card now on top. After turning his card face up, the above moves were repeated with the same results for a variation it was shown singly and placed in second position. Then a double turnover left it again on top. If you'll try this you will see how deceptive it can be. I remember so well how Harry kept asking me to "do it again".

Very few people know that in a deck of cards the Jack of Clubs is known as "Pam". If you'll check Hoyle you'll find that the only other card with a name is the Four of Clubs, known as "The Devil's Bedpost". With this in mind I'd like to tell you about an amusing incident that happened with Jay Ose. Jay had a habit of saying everything backwards. He and Snag Werris were very close friends. Jay never called him Snag, but "Gans," which is Snag backwards! He would ask, "How's my old friend, Gans? And how is Ettolrach?" (Charlotte backwards.) They always got a kick out of it. Jay could instantly pronounce any word backwards—it was amazing.

Well, one day Jay and I were about ninety miles out of Berlin and not too sure of our directions, so Jay stopped a policeman. The man happened to be of Danish extraction, as was Jay, so they were talking in Danish. They were standing outside—I was still in the car. Suddenly Jay called out to me, "The Jack of Clubs." At first I didn't know if he was referring to a Si Stebbins set-up, but I knew that the Jack of Clubs was "Pam." I thought for a moment — then realized that Pam spelled backwards was map, so I took him the map from the car. Jay, with his wry smile, looked up at me and said, "Scotland Yard couldn't figure this out!"

Snag Werris, who was a gag-writer for Jackie Gleason, still uses this backwards talk and gets a great kick out of it. If you want to get a smile out of "Gans" just say something to him backwards. His eyes will light up and he'll show you a trick! If you think he's not a card expert, just play him a game of "Klob" some time.

I hate to end this column on a sad note but the Grim Reaper has done it again. Al Sharpe told me today at the Castle that Carmen D'Amico of Chicago passed away a week or so ago from a heart attack. I admired Carmen very much. He always reminded me, in his presentations of card effects, of the late Paul Rosini. I sympathize very much with Ed Marlo as I know Ed will miss Carmen greatly. Everyone who knew Carmen was very fond of him. This reminds me of what my father once told me: perhaps it isn't good to live to too old an age because you lose all your friends.

May 1973

You know, Bill, I always thought I was pretty good about keeping secrets, but I find that I'm not because I didn't think anybody would remember my birthday this year. They fly around so fast, these days, but I really feel a little uncomfortable because I'm so bad about remembering other birthdays even among my own family. I was certainly amazed and surprised at the birthday party that Joe Cossari and Esther Nilsen gave me to celebrate number 79.

I was invited out by Esther to a small dinner. I expected five or six people. My boy, whom I don't see too often as he lives in Palos Verdes came along with me with his wife. We saw a few people around and when they asked me if I'd go next door and meet a few neighbors I said, "Can't you put that off? There are enough people here, five or six of us, and I don't want to meet any neighbors." He said, "Yes, but they want to meet you." "Well," I said, "put it off until another time, I know enough people." They said, "Well, these neighbors are particularly anxious to meet you." So, I went next door to meet the neighbors and was I amazed when I was ushered into a room with a gang of at least 50 friends all singing "Happy Birthday to You," and the wine, champagne and brandy was flowing. The table was laden with presents and good things to eat. Esther and Joe were so wonderful and put on a really great party. I was overwhelmed by it because I didn't expect anything like it.

Anyway, the evening went fast and everyone enjoyed themselves. We had dancing, we had music, we had a little magic (not too much magic), good spirits and everyone seemed to on joy themselves.

One of the wonderful presents It received was the new book by Dr. Albo, the book on Okito magic. As most readers know, it is a very expensive book, I think it sells for \$60. A number of the boys joined in together to purchase the book for me. My good friend Bob Muir, I think was the first on the list, but he didn't happen to be at the party as he had to go to New York. Others were Eric Lewis who illustrated the book, Ray Grismer, Barry Neighburt, Robert Albo, Hal Robbins and among the signers was one odd name, Ettolrahc. Now very few people would know what Ettolrahc as Ettolrahc is Charlotte spelled backwards. My late dear friend, Jay Ose had a habit of always spelling the Werris' names backwards. He always called Snag Werris, Gans, and so, Gans was there and Ettolrahc, as Gans wife, that's Charlotte

Speaking of Jay Ose, they dug up an old silhouette that I cut one time out of a piece of paper, or wrapper. Jay had bought a hat and this was the paper it came wrapped in. I think Bill is inserting it somewhere

(Editor's Note: Right here Dai)

Of course, we all miss Jay Ose very much. I only wish that Jay could have been with us at this birthday party because he would have been the life of the party. He always had funny stories to tell; he had a hundred anecdotes to tell about past experiences. Yes, he was the most fascinating chap.

I have told many people here in Hollywood, and I'd like to tell the readers of GENII, that if it wasn't for Jay Ose I don't think the MAGIC CASTLE would be what it is today. Jay was the spirit, the guiding magic spirit behind the Castle when it first started and he gave it a tremendous impetus when the Castle first opened. He remembered all names, he was pleasant to everybody. He was a wonderful human being and was beloved by male and female alike. Even the animals loved him. In fact when I first came up to live here with Jay, we had a little cat called "Abe". He was born on Abe Lincoln's birthday, so Jay gave him the name "Abe".

Well, anyway, I really haven't had a chance yet to thoroughly peruse the Bamberg book. I did glance over the section about the Floating Ball which I saw Bamberg do on many occasions.

June 1973

Last month I was telling about Jay Ose. I was talking with Gretchen Fine and Christine Jorgenson at the Castle the other evening and Jay Ose's name came up in conversation. Gretchen reminded me of the time that she had Bill Kennedy (a writer for the Los Angeles Herald Examiner) come in to do a story on the Castle. His first article was devoted to Harry Blackstone — it was a very fine column. And then he wrote a wonderful article about Jay Ose. This was way back in the early days of the Castle and I like to think that these articles helped 'launch' the Castle, so to speak. Jay was very fond of Gretchen Fine . . . he was always happy when she stopped in for an evening. I told Gretchen that I have always felt that Jay had so much to do with getting the Castle off to a flying start. He had a fantastic memory for names. For example, a person might not have been in for six or eight months and yet Jay would greet them by name, ask about their pet dog by name, etc. It was simply amazing.

He even remembered such things as a person's unlisted phone number, their address, etc. He never jotted down notes — he kept it all in his head — it was a wonderful memory bank which I quite never understood. For example, I once asked Jay how he remembered the number 326. His reply was that his grandfather lived at 325 so-and-so street and he just added one to the number! Then I asked how Jay remembered his grandfather's house number and he said he used to go over there all the time as a kid. It was a form of association. He'd remember a name based on the fact that he once had a friend who had a friend of the same name!

I never read the Dale Carnegie book, "How to Win Friends, etc." and Jay would have had no need to read it. Jay had that natural ability to get along with people. He would find what a person's hobby or 'weakness' happened to be. Every time he would meet this particular person, Jay would have something on the hobby to impart to the man. One customer used to like the poetry of Robert Service, the Canadian poet. Whenever this man came in Jay would recite one or two of Service's poems, endearing himself to this person in the process. It's the simple formula of giving a person what he wants or likes. This is something that more magicians should think about when it comes to performing in public!

Glenn Falkenstein just strolled into the library (where I am taping this column). Here is a good example of appealing to what the public wants. Manny Weltman first told me about Glenn's cleverness. He took me over to the Hollywood Wax Museum where Glenn was working at the time. Manny was a great pressman for Glenn. I was properly impressed with Glenn's performance and since that time he has certainly become one of the most popular and favorite performers at the Castle. Throughout the years he has retained the proper attitude and humbleness that I believe is so important to a successful entertainer.

On Page 12 of the January issue of GENII there appeared an advertisement for "The Indetectable Knife Thru Coat—DIAMOND DAGGER" as performed in the Close-Up Magic of Jan (Steve Gokee). A quote, attributed to me, was absolutely correct, and I recommend it highly. (It might be of interest to know that the first time the knife thru coat was done was by a fellow named Harrison from Montreal. He fooled everyone, especially Dr. Daly, by pushing a knife thru a borrowed coat.) Al Baker used to say that many tricks were killed by improvements, but this is the exception. Jan's method for doing this effect is superlative. He has performed the trick, as offered for sale, before countless audiences here at the Castle and has completely fooled everyone. I think that anyone who buys this trick (and the price is not cheap) will not be disappointed. The dagger itself is made of the finest steel. It comes complete with all accessories and gimmicks. You may think that the \$50 price tag is high, but when it comes to performing before the public, price should be no object. A man who might ordinarily pay \$75 to \$100 for a suit is no fool if he pays as high as \$400 or \$500 for a suit he wears when he performs. Horace Goldin was a great example of this way of thinking. He spared no expense when he had special props built for his illusion show. And it paid off! Freddy Fah of France does the Sympathetic Silks. I had never seen such beautiful silks as the ones he used. In answer to my question he told me that the silks had cost him \$30.00 each and he felt that they had been well worth the original cost. At the time I saw him, he had used these silks for fifteen years, and I'm sure they still have many good years left!

I once knew a dentist in New York who thought along these same lines. You know how they have a small towel which they give you so you can wipe your mouth as needed. He bought the finest Irish linen available, complete with a lace edging. They probably ran him around 7.00 each . . . which is quite a price to pay for a little towel. But he told me that when extremely wealthy women patients came in and he handed them one of these towels they would exclaim, 'Doctor, where did you get this beautiful linen?', etc. They would get so worked up that, as he said, "I could add an extra hundred dollars to their bill and they were glad to pay it?" Interesting psychology!

My friend Francis Carlyle always harps on the statement attributed to Robert Houdin — That one of the main essentials for success as a performer is, 'An understanding of people.'

July 1973

I think I should call this column: "Broken Resolutions". I had resolved' not to make any more trips. I was going to stay here . . . very happy at the Castle . . . enjoying chess games and talking with the boys . . . seeing new tricks performed by a new generation of magicians that are springing up.

Well, one evening we were playing "Hearts" up in the library when the phone rang. It was Duke Stern calling from Atlanta, asking me to attend their forthcoming convention.

I'm not too overly fond of conventions nowadays. It seems to me that they aren't nearly as much fun as they used to be. Faucett Ross tells me I feel this way because there are not as many characters in magic now as there used to be! So I turned Duke down cold. He was very understanding, as only Duke could be, and we rang off.

Next evening he called again! "Have you changed your mind?" he asked. I told him that I hadn't—I did not want to make any more trips.

Two days later he called again and told me that he was mailing me a check—and to plan on being at the convention in Atlanta. I wouldn't have to do anything but just be present! I still told him "no", but a couple of days later the check arrived. I was going to send it back — but everyone here told me I shouldn't disappoint Duke. So I decided to make the trip.

The next day I heard from my friends Art Emerson and Larry West, inviting me to stop off in Washington, D.C., and lecture for the club. Well, it didn't take them long to convince me that I should include them on the trip! It's amazing how the news gets around. Two days later I received a call from Ray Corns of Frankfort, Kentucky, inviting me to stop there enroute to Washington and lecture for the boys. I agreed and suddenly realized that I was committed to three stops. And for the topper, Faucett Ross called to suggest that I fly to Kansas City. He would meet me and we would drive to St. Louis for the Midwest Magic Jubilee! So I did exactly that — Faucett, and Claude Crowe of San Antonio, met me at the airport and we spent a couple of delightful days in St. Joseph at Faucett's home.

St. Louis had a fine convention and I enjoyed being present. I met friends whom I hadn't seen in 30 years. Among them, Dr. Leo Wagner, formerly of Philadelphia and now living in Grand Rapids. Harry Rizer looks as debonair and handsome as ever. And it was Harry who was with Duke Stern when the tragedy hit. Duke said that he had a funny feeling in his right arm, and he suddenly fell over against Harry. Harry tried to hold Duke up, but he slipped to the floor. At first Harry thought that Duke was kidding. As you know, Duke could be a practical joker at the drop of a hat. But when Harry looked at Duke's face he realized that something was wrong and he called for help from the fellows

nearby. At first they, also, thought that Duke was kidding, but then they realized he wasn't so they carried him to a cab and off to a hospital. The report soon came back that if he recovered from the stroke, the left side of his body would be paralyzed.

As you know, Duke did not recover. This put a great damper on the proceedings at St. Louis, of course. Abb Dickson, who was with Duke at the hospital, told me that Duke's last comments were regarding the convention coming up in Atlanta. Duke was in charge of that affair, and he told Abb that he didn't want any sadness at the convention. He expressed the hope that I would still be there, and also to see that the wives of the magicians had an enjoyable time. Not to expose them to too much magic but to have special events for their enjoyment. Above all, he wanted the Atlanta convention to be a great success. You must give the Atlanta boys credit as everything was conducted very nicely. Many times you'd hear the comment, "I'm sure Duke is watching and is pleased with how things are going."

Before I got to Atlanta I fulfilled the other two commitments, stopping at Louisville and Washington, D.C. In Louisville I was a guest of Ray Corns and have never been treated better in my life. Ray is a lawyer and is also in the educational department in Frankfort. He arranged a very pleasant lecture for me in Louisville —I left with the feeling that the members had enjoyed my ramblings

From there I flew to Washington where Arthur Emerson saw that I had royal treatment. Larry West was not able to be with us. Art and I flew to Atlanta together and this was the first time I had ever seen him demonstrate magic. I have never seen a person with a more intelligent adult presentation of magic. He is a credit to the Art. Art is a retired colonel (Air Force) and it is a pleasure to see him doing so well in magic.

In Atlanta, I appeared on an evening show called "Open End" . . . a talk-type show. They had a so-called Magical Minister also on the show I told him that I was not too fond of ministers who do magic unless they do it like Rev. James Blantz or Bro. John Hamman. They never tie up a black handkerchief with sin, or a red handkerchief with the Devil . . . they do magic to entertain people. This minister made the observation that he was afraid that most magicians were not really Christians. I told him that you won't find any magicians in jail —you don't hear of any magicians being hooked for murder, rape, etc. He remarked that he thought I was rather cantankerous. I told him that I wasn't afraid to talk. At my age, (nearly 80) you say what you think without pulling any punches. I consider myself a religious man but I do not like this business of tying up magic with religion. Magic is a wonderful hobby — a nice clean art. Why shouldn't a minister or anyone else do magic? But, don't try to tie it into religion.

One of the questions I was asked most on this trip was what I thought were the best tricks to be introduced during recent years. In the illusion field Harbin's *Zig-Zag* would be my choice. In close-up magic I think that by far the three best items I have seen are: (1) *The Floating Cork* as performed by Fred Kaps, (2) *Linking Rings* as performed by Baffling Brooks, and (3) *The Vanishing Nickel* as performed by John Cornelius. You'll

note that I say “as performed by” because no matter how great a trick might be, it can be ruined by an inadequate performance.

Brooks Connors’ Linking Rings consists of three small Rings, the size of bracelets, that link and unlink like real magic. A very effective routine that has fooled everyone who has seen it. I consider these three tricks as the best I have seen in years. Properly performed they defy detection.

Previous to the above three I would unhesitatingly pick Paul Curry’s “*Out of this World*”.

Once again I must make a statement that I hate to make, but I do not answer mail. I always enjoy hearing from readers and friends, but I do not have a secretary and I find it impossible to even attempt to answer letters. I feel guilty about it, yes, but that’s the way it has to be. Sometimes I receive letters from young fellows asking my advice on becoming a professional magician. I feel that no youngster should strive to become a full time professionally magician. Magic is a wonderful hobby but a precarious profession.

August 1973

I would like to start this month's column by thanking GENII readers for their many complimentary letters. I thoroughly appreciate them, I can assure you, but as I have stated many times, I feel that it is impossible to personally answer all these letters. From time to time I will try to answer your questions in the column. A recent letter from George Gore Jr., of Jersey City gives me ammunition for this column. George writes: "At various times you have commented on different magicians but one magician you have rarely mentioned is Paul Rosini." George mentions that he never saw Rosini perform but from all the articles and pictures about him, Paul must have been one of the greats of magic. You are right, George. Paul WAS one of the greats in magic. I don't believe anyone was a better showman than Paul Rosini.

Judson Cole, a very fine entertainer in the old days, billed himself as "Judson Cole in a humorous interlude, assisted by the audience". Judson always kind of pooh-poohed Rosini. He had never seen him work but he thought that a guy with a few card and coin tricks just couldn't be too great. I took Judson to see Paul perform at the New Yorker Hotel. It happened to be Song Writers Night and all the members of ASCAP were there—the place was packed. Paul had only done his first trick, a rope trick that night, and Jud Cole said to me, "My goodness, this man is greater than Herman. He has the audience absolutely in the palm of his hand." And this was so true. Paul Rosini, with his manner of presentation, was a consummate artist. He really held an audience spellbound.

One time Paul was working with Carl Brisson, one of New York's favorite singers, at a certain club in New York. Carl was getting \$1,500 per week and Paul was making a little less than half that amount. Paul was such severe competition that Brisson complained to the management, stating that he couldn't follow Rosini. Carl was supposed to be the star of the show but in reality it was Paul!

When I was in Philadelphia many years ago cutting silhouettes a young fellow came up, said he was interested in magic, and wondered if I was the Vernon who did magic. I admitted to knowing a few tricks and he introduced himself as Paul Rosini. At that time he was working with Zanzig, the mentalist. They had a Parlour in Philadelphia where they used to give readings. Paul was also an expert at using the code.

In the auditorium where I was working the food fair, Paul and I found a secluded spot and we talked magic. Any time I left my stand I was losing money but I always felt that magic was more important than making a few dollars cutting silhouettes! Paul taught me the Coin Star, where the coins appear between the fingers. I believe the Coin Star was originated by Manuel, whose real name was Thomas. His billing was, "Master of the all-mighty Dollar". He was one of the coin experts in the era of Allan Shaw, Welsh Miller, and Tommy Downs. Of course, Tommy Downs was the pioneer in coin manipulations.

I was very pleased to learn the Coin Star because I wasn't acquainted with it at that time. Paul knew very little about cards so I showed him a number of card items that really intrigued him, and he became addicted to cards more than anything else. There was no one that I have ever known outside of Larry Gray, the "Dizzy Wizard", who got as much out of a pack of cards as Paul did. Paul had a knack of making people go "oooooh" and "aaaah" and during his routines he would say, "You 'see' me do something? I did something—By looking in your right eye I can tell you took a red card—No—Sometimes I make a mistake, 'Give Me a Tiny Waltz'."

Paul had never met Malini and he was fascinated by the tales I used to relate about Max Malini. He asked me about Malini's form of presentation — how he addressed his audiences, etc. I told Paul that Max was a 'character' and he talked with a bit of an accent. He would turn to the piano player and say, "Maestro, a tiny waltz." This would get a laugh from the spectators and it built up during the course of Malini's performance. Paul evidently liked this idea and he made it a 'pass word'. For instance, when someone would ask if he knew any good jokes, Paul would say, "I tell you a tiny joke but first we have a tiny drink." Paul also used the "tiny waltz" bit in his shows and it became synonymous with the name of Paul Rosini.

Francis Carlyle is an excellent mimic as many of you may know. One time in Rockford, Illinois, Francis (who was in uniform) was seated in a night club audience watching Rosini perform. Paul spotted Francis and said, "I'm going to call the corporal up to do a trick for you. He does some very good tricks." Carlyle went on stage and Paul introduced him to the audience as a good friend, etc., and asked him to do a trick. Francis turned to the orchestra leader and said, "Maestro, a tiny waltz, please. I take two tiny steps and I do a tiny card trick." He broke up the audience! Francis was and is the perfect mimic. In fact, in the old days he used to break my wife up when he would imitate me smoking cigarettes

I worked the Madison Hotel in New York for a year with Kate Smith, the well-known singer. Many times I would get requests for outside shows which I couldn't accept, so I would recommend Rosini, who lived in Philadelphia, and he would come up to New York and work the shows. Later, when I was working the Casino d' Paree with Billy Rose, people would tell me about a Viennese performer in Philadelphia who did tricks that were so much like mine that they couldn't understand it! They didn't know that I had taught Paul those card tricks and we were both using the same items at that time. I'm sure that Paul got a great deal more out of them than I did.

Finally, getting back to George Gore's letter, he asked about Paul's death, having heard that it might have been a suicide. Paul was very addicted to the bottle which was responsible for his demise. When you think about it you probably could refer to it as slow-suicide. Paul Rosini was one of the finest cabaret performers I have ever had the pleasure of knowing.

WE HAD A NICE RESPONSE to our Famous Magicians quiz- (January GENII). It was pointed out that Jack Herbert's real name was Herbert Junglaus, not Jack

Jungclaus as printed. Next month- ANOTHER CONTEST! I have been having fun at the Castle asking various magicians to fill in the first names of some of the performers who have worked at the Castle. You'd be surprised how many names were missed. Castle receptionist Joannie Wilson has come up with the most correct answers to date.

In fact, she got ME on one name...I couldn't identify Vancine!

September 1973

The sketch of myself heading this month's column was drawn by Castle member. Ted Slater. I would not call it a caricature since none of the facial features are exaggerated. I guess you would refer to it as a clever pen and ink drawing. At any rate, Ted has drawn 81 such sketches to date of various member magicians, many of whom have worked either or both of the theatres in the Castle. These 81 drawings have been lovingly framed by Bill Larsen and are on display at various places in the Castle.

I thought it would be interesting to see how many GENII readers could identify these magicians i.e., come up with their first names. I had thought of limiting the "contest" to readers living 500 or more miles from Hollywood, but have decided to let everyone enter and we will have categories for the winners. We might even come up with a little prize or two for the two or three who give us the most correct first names.

The following alphabetical list of last names is by no means a complete listing of those who have worked at the Castle—just the ones that Mr. Salter has honored to date with a sketch. A few of the names are stage names; others are real last names. So get out paper and pencil and see how many correct first names you can list. Send your entry to me. c/o The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, CA 90028. "Winners" will be announced two months from now.

Bailey Behnke Berg Berland Biro Bixby Blackstone Bongo Boxley Buskingham

Carazini Carlyle Carson Cervon Chaadat Cleve Compton Cooper

Cossari Crandall Cristol Curtis Derman Devon Dietrich Eads Edwards

Falkenstein Flosso Frakson French Goshman Giorgio Grant Griffin Gwodz

Jan Jay Jennings Jones Kosky Larsen Larsen Lawton Leaf Lee Lenier Lewis

McComb Manley Marconi Martyn Marvyn Mendoza Miller Montieth

N Nelsen

Pit Platt

Rinaldi Rinse

Rittner Roberts Rouzer

Shields

Shimada Shine

Silvan

Skinner Slydini

Tansey

Todtman

Vernon Wilson Wilson

Zimmerman

October 1973

This month I am going to discuss a subject that has irritated me for many years. It is the feeble attempt to be funny by uttering remarks that are childish and really stupid while performing. The Art of Magic in its long history has never been associated with comedy; the high priests, the astrologers, the witches, in fact, all who used mystery in their business never mixed it with comedy.

The trouble is that the modern sleight of hand performer is guilty of investing and degrading the Art with so-called comedy. However, not the truly great ones for they minimize the comedy and stress the magic and are great because of their magic. It is the small performer and there are literally thousands all over the world who, because they are not artists and able to deliver real magic, turn their attempts into burlesque and cause people to look upon magic as a gigantic farce and perhaps only suitable to show children.

Personally I believe that attempted comedy does more than all other things combined to drag our Art in the dust. If a professional comedian should attempt magic he should use it only as a foil or butt for this Art. This is so clearly exemplified by Ballentine and the late Van Hoven. Conversely if a professional magician should attempt comedy you can easily see what estimate the professional comedian would put upon it. Comedy is a fine art, as is magic.

Now concerning books; is it not strange that many writers give examples of idiotic patter? They ought to have enough common sense not to inoculate all the poor amateurs who read their books with ridiculous examples of talk that degrades the profession and the Art.

If you haven't real wit in you, PLEASE cut out any feeble attempts at it. To be witty you must have some talent as for any other predominating faculty. If you haven't, making silly remarks will only show your feeble mindedness and destroy your presentation. This so-called patter that is often placed in books has done great damage. A magician should have legitimate lines; this is the term to use, lines, not patter. Of course these should be rehearsed and studied and delivered naturally and with great care and precision.

Now there is a psychological and philosophical reason why the wrong remark can destroy an effect. When one beholds a mystery his attitude of mind becomes serious and studious, endeavoring to reason out and fathom what has just been perceived. To have ones attention distracted by a joke is to kill absolutely the condition of mind that the mystery induced. Especially so if your remark is derogatory to yourself, your audience, or the effect itself.

Be witty without comedy. Wit will give you a high place in the minds of your audience who will realize that the magician's wit as well as his mysterious knowledge and

seeming power is of a superior character. Mysterious power and low comedy do not go together, but if your wit be sparkling, scintillating, unexpected, rare and scattered throughout your performance it will ADD considerably to the effectiveness of anything you do. However, if you put in too much they will see that you are striving to be funny and this can be disastrous.

Wit should be used as a spice, sparingly, then it becomes doubly effective. Keep in mind that people often laugh at the finish of tricks themselves. I think the psychological reason is that the surprise in the result of the experiment breaks the continuity of their feelings, like a disrupted electric current, and the result is that intermittent thing within us called laughter.

Boiling it all down to a simple formula: When that certain mysterious something occurs in the course of an effect, refrain from any remark at this moment. Allow the mystery to register in the onlookers minds.

The sad and lamentable fact is that so few of the current crop of enthusiasts are capable of creating any real mystery. Happily, however, we have several members of the Castle that do more than justice to the Art. Also from abroad come many visitors of extreme cleverness. Just recently Fred Kaps and Johnny Hart, and, a few years ago, some really astounding visitors from Japan. Talking with Mike Skinner and Fred Kaps, we definitely agreed that Japan's Sawa is an outstanding genius.

This coming Sunday Milbourne Christopher is expected here to lecture. He will have a tough time following Jean Merlin of Paris who had many novel and delightful touches to convey to an enthusiastic audience.

On the subject of really mysterious magic, I was delighted to discover the whereabouts of McDonald. Tom Blue, Mike Skinner and I drove down to San Diego to visit him. He is just about my age—a few months older. I only wish that some of you readers could see "Mac" (who has only one hand, having lost his right one when a small boy). He has a diabolical twist to every trick he performs. Readers familiar with his Four Ace Routine can appreciate his thinking. Benny Roth, who lives in San Diego used to be a magic dealer and sold rattle bars, was completely nonplussed when he saw "Mac" perform with them. The photograph of "Mac" was taken by Benny as he stood in the doorway of his home. I hope it reproduces well.

The Magic Castle continues to be a haven for visiting magicians. I was so pleased the other night to be surprised by the appearance of Herb Zarrow and his wife from back East. Herb always has something new and original to show the boys. Of course his false shuffle which carries his name is familiar to all card workers. Many attempts have been made to supercede or alter his method but, to date, it is infinitely the best. I feel extremely fortunate to consider Herb as my close friend.

Also, I am deeply grateful to my close friend, Lou Derman, for the photograph that appeared on the November issue of the LINKING RING. Usually I feel somewhat ashamed of a portrait holding "props". I am a great stickler for candid and natural photographs such as the one used on the cover of the LINKING RING.

November 1973

I was pleasantly surprised at the number of readers who responded to our little 'contest' in which I asked you to give the first names of 81 magicians who have been honored with a sketch by Ted Salter. I was especially surprised at the number of young readers who came up with so many correct first names. And almost everyone who sent in lists stated that they got most of their answers from back issues of GENII. Emil Lowe of winner with 75 correct first names. Runner-ups are: Steve Smith, Sarasota, FL, 68; Erwin M. Schussel, Brooklyn, NY, 64; Paul Chandler, Lakewood, CA, 62; Frank Whitney, Charlotte, NC, 60; Peter DeWeese, Monterey, CA, 47.

The six names that Emil missed (and which gave most persons trouble) are: Bill Devon, Bob French, Harry Monti, Harry Ringo, Bernie Shine, and John Todtman. My sincere thanks to everyone who took time to write.

Fr. Jim Blantz of San Jose is the latest person to have his sketch added to our Rogue's Gallery. Jim just completed another week in the Close-Up Gallery at the Castle. It is always a joy to watch the good Father entertain the audiences. I understand that Senator Crandall was introducing him as "the house exorcist"!

Before leaving 'lists of names', I have always thought it was rather peculiar that the four consecutive letters of the alphabet, J, K, L, and M, contained the names of my magic idols when I was a boy. This list has grown as time went by, and I just compiled a list of 53 well-known magicians, all of whom are no longer with us. Any knowledgeable magician should be familiar with at least 35 out of the 53 in my .T-K-L-M listing. See how YOU rate'.

Jarrow, Jason, Judah, Jaks, Josephy, Jones, Jansen, Johnson.

Keane, Kellar, Keating, Khaldah, Koran, KAllenag, Katz, Kanter, Kreiger.

Leipzig, Larsen, Wm. Larsen, Chas., Lloyd, LeRoy, Lang, Loewy, Lester, Loman, Logan, Laurante, Lampini Brothers.

Malini, Mora, Mendoza, Maldo, Margules, Miaco, Mulholland, McGuire, Eddie, McGuire, Leon, McLaughlin, Manuel, Mahendra, McNicholas, Maurice, French, Maurice, Greasy, Monroe, Massey, Mendies. Miller, Walsh, Merlin, Morris, Chester, Morris, Paul, and Moody.

As before stated all the above have passed away. It seems tragic that not a single one of them lived to visit our Magic Castle.

I most certainly am not a morbid person, but I made a list of all my many wonderful friends that have passed on.

Perhaps at some future time I shall give a talk and pass out copies of this list of well over two hundred names. Then anyone could mention one about whom they would like to learn their specialty, style of work, appearance, and so forth I feel I would be qualified to tell a little of the 'History' of each of those who have added a little something to our art. The list is only of those I knew personally.

In a recent issue of Big Bob's Magic Club News from Cicero, Illinois, Mike Rogers proposes an interesting situation: "Two magicians are going to do the effect of a chosen card passing from the deck to their pocket. This is a simple and direct plot and, moreover, is an effective trick . . . one used by many card magicians. Our two magicians each select an entirely different method of accomplishing the effect. One magician uses an ordinary pack of cards, controls the selected card to the top or bottom of the deck, palms it and produces it from his pocket. The other magician uses a forcing deck of 52 duplicate cards and has a 53rd matching card in his pocket. Given these facts, here is the question: Which of the two men is truly a magician?

"Is it a simple question to answer? Not really. If we can believe what we are told we can assume that both are magicians in the true sense. We are told that the method is not important, only the effect. In the above example the effect is exactly the same, however, I (Mike Rogers) personally, do not support the limited effort of the magician with the deck of matching cards. He has added nothing artistic to the performance of magi, and chances are his performance will show his lack of talent."

I read this problem to Charlie Miller and this is his feeling on the matter: In my opinion, to be an effective trick the chosen card must disappear from the deck—in which case this cannot be done with the forcing deck. Secondly, using a forcing deck would mean that the trick could be done 'too flawlessly', leaving just one possible explanation: "The cards must be all alike!" Finally, you cannot use the deck for another trick!

Mike goes on to state: "Many times the WORKING magician will choose the forcing deck method over the sleight-of-hand method. He is probably using the quick method because of the convenience it offers him. He is doing hundreds of shows each year and he knows what he needs in order to accomplish this task. He KNOWS why he is doing it and this is the important fact. The working magician usually has the knowledge and ability to use the involved and more technical way of accomplishing the effect. For this reason only I will support HIS efforts."

This is, indeed, a thought-provoking article and in future columns I will have more to say about it. Ted Annemann used to say that the EFFECT was more important than the method, yet, we all know that there is no substitute for skill.

Thanks again to all who entered the "first names" contest. The listing in this column is NOT in the form of any contest.

December 1973

Unfortunately in the October issue the photo of McDonald was unsuitable for reproduction so "Mac" himself sent one taken over 40 years ago, when he was known as society's entertainer. I am hoping that Bill Larsen can get him to visit the Castle in the near future and perform some of his bewildering feats for a select few.

In my next column I hope to publish a list compiled by Tom Blue (son of Ben Blue) of well over 50 well-known and skillful card workers. He thinks it would be a good idea to have readers pick out 20 of the "top notchers". In other words, rate them according to their own opinion.

This rating would be solely for their technical skill, originality and creativity and have no reference to their showmanship or ability to entertain.

This idea should appeal to all card lovers and incidentally if you wish for any thing pertaining to cards and gambling you should most certainly drop a line to John Luckman at The Gamblers Book Club, P.O. Box 4115, Las Vegas, Nevada 89106. He is a wonderful chap and thoroughly reliable.

Was quite surprised at the response to the "First Name List". Emil Lowe was decidedly the winner, he had almost a 100 per cent score. Incidentally he tied our popular receptionist Joannie Wilson. Of course Joannie has been with us for years and has met and greeted all our magicians.

In a recent letter Dave Kollar asks me about attending magic schools. He seems to think that such a school is the answer to becoming a magician. Some of our greatest magicians, Dave, never went near a school of magic. They learned magic from books, from magician friends, and with their own creative abilities became fine magicians. I am not depreciating schools because a wonderful example of somebody who attended a magic school is Channing Pollock. Channing did a superb act and was a big success in show business. This, of course, speaks well for the teaching at the Chavez School of Magic. I think it was the only large school of magic we have had in this country, and they turned out some very good magicians.

I believe that Walter Cummings, a good friend of the late Jay Ose, is still teaching magic at his school in New York state. Jay gave Walter the nickname of "Moves Cummings" because Walter knows more moves and flourishes and sleights with a pack of cards than anyone I know. He attended the school and also taught there.

Remember, Dave, that you cannot buy performing skill. If you have a natural ability to appear before people and feel at ease — able to converse with them and entertain them — you have a real treasure.

I still believe that one of the biggest mistakes a person can make is in trying to copy a successful magician. When Cardini was doing cards and cigarettes everyone copied him but none equaled him I am usually pretty evenly tempered but recently here at the Castle I lit into a magician because he was copying a well-established trick of one of our favorite performers. He copied it almost exactly. This is like stealing money from a man's pocket when you not only take his favorite trick but also his method of performing and presentation. I get very upset when I see things like this.

That's the reason Cardini was annoyed all his life. He made a lot of enemies with his abruptness. He was very caustic about everything. But if YOU had something that you treasured and also were making money with, I think you'd feel the same way if everyone was stealing your ideas and routines. Cardini, through hard work, became one of our highest paid performers. At the same time his imitators were working for a small fraction of what Cardini was earning and this naturally made him very bitter.

Getting back to Dave's letter, he mentions that he can back-palm 20 cards in each hand (with gloves on). Now it is interesting to practice such things but I don't feel that it is a good way to approach magic. Card productions have been done and done before and it is not going to create any great furor even if you back-palmed and produced two decks of cards. Cardini and Frakson did all of this many years ago. It is much better to try to create a new effect or routine of your own. Marvyn Roy's light act is a good example. Also Norm Neilson's floating-playing violin.

Years ago Cantu met Paul Fox out in Colorado. Paul saw Cantu's act, after which Cantu asked for criticism. Paul told Cantu that he did his cards, ropes, and cigarettes very well but since they had been done to death already, Paul suggested that he try to do something different—to get away from the usual cards and cigarettes. Well, Cantu followed Paul's advice and became one of the first, if not the first magician to work with doves.

January 1974

Many years ago, when I was living in New York City, Harry Houdini made the following comment: "Vernon, if you want to become famous in this business just see that your name appears in print frequently— every week if at all possible. It doesn't make much difference what they say about you or your talents, just have them print your name and spell it correctly. This will pay dividends—take it from me—I know!"

The debonair gentleman in the accompanying photograph was most anxious that I publish this picture of himself with the replica of the one he adores. I hope my readers will look lovingly and longingly at this picture because here is a man who really is trying to emulate Houdini. He asked me to make a comment about the photograph but to tell the truth, words fail me. So I decided to get comments from different magicians around the Castle, all of whom are familiar with and know the person in question very well.

His name is BOB FRENCH — get the name correct — BOB FRENCH. He performs quite frequently at the Castle in the Palace of Mystery. Phil Eisner said he thought Bob's first name should be spelled with two O's. Phil further stated that, "Bob is the only man in the world who had me change my mind after knowing him for five years; I now believe in birth control."

Visiting magician Brick Tilley stated, "I've never even seen the man but he couldn't look better." Bob gave one of the statuettes to the Castle office girls. They had it made into a lamp and it now reposes on Jeans' desk, casting its rays of sunshine(?) for all to see and enjoy. Receptionist Maria Weber commented, "I think the lamp more than does him justice."

Lou Derman asked, "Which one is the ventriloquist?" Snag Werris quipped, "Bob French's act is a monument to magic—and you know what pigeons do to monuments!" Norm Schultz suggested, "We should shoot it before it multiplies." (The statuette or the subject of said statuette, Norm?) Senator Crandall told me that he took the statuette Bob gave him and placed it on the floor in his apartment. His little Yorkshire Terrier thought it was a fire plug and STILL thinks so!

As you have probably surmised from the above comments, everyone likes Bob French! He is sometimes referred to as "The Thief of Bad Gags" but in reality he has helped himself to some of the best bits of other acts. Whenever Don Lawton wants to see how he (Don) is doing these days he stops in to catch Bob's act! We must give him credit, however, as he does blow his own horn— and if he didn't, who would? (End of free publicity for Bob French—remember that name, Bob French, as in mustard.

The Castle was recently "invaded" by three young men from the East: David Roth, Steve Freeman, and Jeff Altman. These very talented men have really been making a hit with the local magicians. I asked some of our regulars for their comments on these three gentlemen Ray Grismer (who has contributed some fine items to GENII) had this to say: "It is very refreshing to see the skill these young fellows are displaying. They certainly have caused us to sit up and take notice. They are top-notchers already and I predict great things from all three of them. In my estimation David Roth is unequalled in coin work. Steve Freeman can really make a deck of cards "talk." And Jeff Altman, besides being a skilled card man, is an excellent impressionist of famous personalities. If you can

visualize Hubert Humphrey doing a card trick you will have a pretty good idea of Jeff's sense of humor. He also does excellent Bill Buckley and Richard Nixon imitations.

"One of Jeff's funniest routines is his impression of Francis Carlyle and Dai Vernon having a mild (should be "wild") discussion on magic! And his Kuda Bux was breaking us up the other evening. I expect to see Kuda Bux walk in some night as Jeff Altman!"

Barry Nighbert, better known around here as "Sam, the Bell Hop," commented: "Everyone who has seen these three artists at work has referred to them as "the Dai Vernon's of tomorrow." 'And they have quite a few tomorrows to go as they are just in their twenties. They are doing miracles, not mere tricks."

I appreciate the reference to myself but I predict that these three boys will be better known in magic than yours truly ever hoped to be.

I thought it would be interesting to ask these three invaders for their comments on the Castle, so I did!

Steve Freeman: "I think the Castle is the greatest place in the world for magic. It has really helped elevate the Art—I am happy to be here."

Jeff Altman: "The people at the Castle are great and the magic is excellent. I am really enjoying my stay out here." (Jeff's father is Art Altman, well-known card man, who was responsible for Jeff's interest in card magic.)

David Roth: "I always wanted to work at the Castle. It turned out be a thousand times better than thought it would be."

While everyone is being so complimentary about the Castle, what better place than right here to mention the new souvenir booklet just about to come out. Mickey O'Malley, artist supreme, had a big hand in putting this 44-page booklet together. It contains many rare photographs of the Castle, including a photo taken during the construction of the original building back in 1909. It contains a history of the Castle starting with its inception twelve years ago and bringing you right up to date. Mickey told me that he was pleased and honored to have been called in to work as designer, layout man, and artist on the booklet. And he is certain everyone will enjoy the "trip to the Magic Castle" that the booklet offers. Watch for the ads.

Tom Blue's list of card workers, promised last month, will appear next month. Meanwhile, always happy to hear from you even if I can't come back at you with a personal answer. DAI VERNON

c/o The Magic Castle 7001 Franklin Ave.
Hollywood, Ca. 90028

February 1974

I neglected to include a very important fact about Bob French's statuette which was pictured in last month's column. It was sculptured and decorated by Ms. Donna Southern. Considering the subject she had to work with I would say that she did a remarkable job! The hot pants are a sparkling bright red, same as the hot pants Bob wears during his act. It's too bad I couldn't have published Donna's picture instead!

Have just returned from a drive of almost six thousand miles to the East. It was a delight to meet so many of my old friends again. My reason for making the trip was because Joe Cossari and Esther invited me to accompany them to Allentown, Pa. They have not missed working a single convention there for 20 years! So we started out in Joe's Cadillac and in three and a half days we were there.

We stayed with Charley and Irma Dah in their beautiful home in the countryside, and both of these nice persons did every possible thing to make our stay a memorable and wonderful experience. Even their two pedigreed dogs added greatly to our pleasure. Never in my lifetime have I seen two dogs that were so friendly and almost human in their behavior. While there Irma prepared a special dinner and invited Frank Scalzo and Sadie for the evening, and what a feast it was in the world of magic one meets wonderful people. Charley and Irma certainly prove this to be true.

Joe Cossari and I both appeared on the stage show at the annual I.B.M. Ring 32 Convention in Allentown, Pa. Joe and Esther made their annual hit and I was politely received owing to my venerable age. I must say that the banquet before the show was the best magic banquet I have ever enjoyed.

They served real home-cooked delicious food. They also had free beer and root beer, potato chips, etc. This was all due to Frank Scalzo, Lou Harold, Dan Mathews and Ken Santee. I recommend that you plan now to attend next year's convention!

We hoped to see Frank Scalzo work in Lebanon Pa., but had to attend a Stars of Magic Show in East Brunswick, N.J. They dedicated the program to yours truly and had a sketch of myself on the back of the program. This was responsible for my having to autograph over a hundred programs. Flattering but exhausting. My sincere thanks to everyone! Bob Little emceed the show—which consisted of excellent performances by Count Artell, The Amazing Lon, Bob Greer, David Copperfield, Barry Cunningham, and Bill Baker. The latter closed with several well-performed illusions which had the spectators gasping.

After the show we spent the night at the home of Bill Romer and Mildred. I enjoyed thoroughly the excellent meal served by Mildred, especially the baked beans. After the meal Bill showed me some of the apparatus he had constructed. I told him that the only one I knew who could compete with him is Johnny Gaughan of Los Angeles. I also stated that the late Earl Violet was an excellent builder of magic

Being so close to the Big City we naturally drove into New York and went directly to Tannen's. What a place they have! They have opened a new wing where they can exhibit large illusions such as Zig Zag, Levitations and so forth.

I was extremely disappointed not being able to find Doug Henning. We went to the Cort Theatre where his show is to be held but they were unable to tell us where Doug could be found. This young man has great talent and charisma. I have talked about him before in this column and I predict that Doug will do much to revive the public's interest in our Art.

I was very fortunate to be able to spend a couple of days with my very good friend, Herb Zarrow. Derek Dingle and Karl Fulves favored us with a visit and we had a most pleasant get-together. Derek and Karl are among the very top-notchers in my estimation and it was a rare treat to be with them.

We took time out in New York to attend the lunch at Rossoffs. I was somewhat surprised over the high prices for the mediocre food. Three seventy-five for a hamburger (plus tax), forty-five for coffee. Pie a la mode, one dollar and ten cents. This is the real magic! However we did get to chat with Joe Barnett, Larry Arcuri, and a few other magicians.

Incidentally, yours truly presented a lecture in Elizabeth, N.J. The affair was held in a Chinese restaurant in town. Over a hundred and fifty persons crowded into a small room with the ones in the back rows unable in any possible way to see the table top. So what I had planned to do was 'out'. I had to stand on two wobbly chairs and "demonstrate". I assure you it was not easy. But the kindness and tolerance of the audience was amazing and I hereby thank them all.

When we arrived back in Hollywood we had the pleasure of seeing Ted Winkle's lecture and performance in our Castle theatre. Ted has an original approach to magic and is a real credit to our Art. In his lecture he stresses the points that I have so often mentioned. Do not "over prove" and make everything appear "natural".

Next column for sure...Tom Blue's listing of the best cardmen! I'll list Tom's requirements to make the list... why don't you make up a list of your own right now and see how many you select that Tom selected?

Here are the requirements:

1. Must be a card student - presentation is not a prime requisite
2. Must be currently performing or doing card magic. Past cardmen not to be included.
3. Only U.S.A. cardmen.

March 1974

At my age I should be contented to remain quietly here in Hollywood at the Magic Castle. However, when Bev Bergeron called me from Orlando, Florida, and asked me to attend their convention, I simply could not refuse.

The Langford Motel, with its large swimming pool and surroundings, was an ideal place for the many activities. I shared a room with my friend, Mike Rogers, who presented a very fine act on the stage show.

One of the events was a talk show conducted by "Bev". He interviewed Inez Kitchen, Burling Hull, and yours truly. Strange that many of the questions asked by the audience were in reference to Annemann . . . what type of person he was and so forth

Incidentally, I had no idea that Paul Diamond could put on such a truly amusing act. He has real talent as a comic. Before leaving Orlando, I spent time at the beautiful home of Ben Walters. He and Dick Randall drove me in style to catch my plane.

Instead of returning to Hollywood my ticket was rerouted to New York City. Owing to the huge crowds trying to get through the gates the plane was an hour late in departing. Consequentially I felt worried about my son, Derek, who was awaiting my arrival. Upon landing I was more than pleased to see my son, accompanied by Martin Gardner and young Pat Cook. I hadn't seen Martin for many years and was delighted to find him looking so fine and fit. We all drove to my boy's home in Tuckahoe. Pat Cook showed me some expert card work and we stayed up to the usual late hour.

Next day I visited Tannen's and renewed acquaintances with many of my old friends. Was very surprised to see Lou Lancaster there. He had disappeared quite mysteriously from Hollywood. He had spent four years studying engineering and had graduated and taken a position. However he now has decided that performing magic is more to his liking. As many of my California readers know, Lou is extremely talented and does many very difficult manipulations.

Received another surprise when I met Charley Dah and Frank Scalzo in Tannen's Magic Emporium. They had journeyed to New York to catch the Doug Henning show which opened at the Cort Theatre on 48th Street.

That same day I had luncheon at the Cafe de France on 46th Street with many of my old friends. I sat between Del Cartier and my dear friend Dr. Braude. While dining, Bob McAllister ("Wonderama") and Dennis Marks dropped in . . . also Charlie Reynolds.

In the early evening my son, Derek, and I attended the opening of the "Magic Show" as Doug Henning had given me two excellent seats. Jim Robertson reviewed this excellent show in last month's issue of GENII. I must add that I am thrilled and delighted that Doug has received such glowing notices from the country's best critics.

And now—on to Tom Blue's listing of his favorite card workers! Tom prepared two lists for this column: The one being printed this issue consists of fifty card men. As you look this list over you may notice names not included that YOU would have listed. This has been done on purpose. Next month we will run Tom's second list of twenty more card men. Why don't you jot down your list of twenty card men and mail it in . . . see how close you and Tom agree. Remember the "requirements" to make the list: Must be able to

do card work now—do not include any of the past card men. Only USA card men. Skill and ability are considered above presentation

1. Alan Ackerman
2. Jeff Altman
3. Russ Barnhart
4. Leo Behnke
5. Jeff Busby
6. Peter Cook
7. Matt Coren
8. John Cornelius
9. Paul Curry
10. Father Cyprian
11. Darwin
12. Persi Diaconis
13. Bud Dietrich
14. Steve Drawn
15. Eddie Fechter
16. Ron Ferris
17. Gene Finnell
18. Steve Freeman
19. Karl Fulves
20. Tony Giorgio
21. Jimmy Grippo
22. Ray Grismer
23. Bill Gusias
24. Bro. John Hamman
25. Jerry Hartman
26. Ricky Jay
27. Bob King
28. Milt Kort
29. Gerald Kosky
30. Al Leech
31. Jules Lenier
32. Martin Lewis
33. J. W. McDonald
34. Jack McMillan
35. Jerry Mentzer
36. Gene Nielsen
37. Mike Perovitch
38. Barry Price
39. Jon Rachenbaumer
40. Mike Rogers
41. Faucett Ross
42. Howie Schwartzman
43. Alton Sharpe

- 44. Roger Smith
- 45. Dave Soloman
- 46. Bob Stencil
- 47. Steranko
- 48. Frank Thompson
- 49. John Thompson
- 50. Nick Trost

April 1974

I stated in a previous column that I was going to stay situated here in Hollywood at “home base” (The Magic Castle) but I have just returned from over a month’s journey around the country! It all started when I accepted Bev Bergoreon’s invitation to be a part of the Florida convention in Orlando. I was tickled to death to see the wonderful job he has done down there with Disney World. I think he’s set for life! Bev is certainly a hard industrious worker and deserves all the success he is receiving. He did a great job on the convention. I had a wonderful time at this very interesting event doing a little close-up magic and appearing on a talk show with Inez Kitchen and Burling Hull. We three were “interviewed by Bev”. It was a panel show and people in the audience asked questions which we tried to answer. A surprising number of questions were about Ted Annemann.

During the Florida convention I was invited to attend the S.A.M. Conference in Boston so I rerouted my return ticket to New York. I’m glad now that I did this because I was able to attend Doug Henning’s new magic show now appearing on Broadway. “The Magic Show,” certainly an appropriate name, is doing big business, in fact, they had the SRO sign up the night I was there. Most of the critics knocked the show itself, that is, the music, etc., but they praised Doug Henning and his magic to high heavens. Of course I am very pleased as I am fond of Doug and predict that he will go very far in his chosen profession. Francis Carlyle, who is a very strict critic, thinks highly of Doug Henning.

After seeing “The Magic Show” I went down to Bermuda on the cruise ship, The Rotterdam, with Emil Lowe. I had expected there would be quite a convention on the ship as it had been advertised extensively. So it was rather sad and disappointing to find just eight musicians besides Emil, his wife and daughter, and myself. I had expected at least 30 to 40 magicians. Of course the ship had it’s regular contingent of passengers and it was a very enjoyable cruise. Jimmy Renneux appears regularly on the Rotterdam with his excellent acts. He did two completely different routines on this trip and they were very well-received by the audiences. Jimmy invited our “convention” to his stateroom for a delightful visit complete with liquid and solid refreshments. Great fun.

My next stop was Boston for the S.A.M. Conference. These magic conventions are really becoming gigantic. They had over twelve hundred persons at this convention and I understand that Ed Rosenthal said they had refund registration fees to 250 magicians they couldn’t accommodate. They had two very fine main shows plus all the other shows, contests, etc., which I’m sure will be reviewed in full elsewhere. It was a great convention.

I was sorry that my good friend, Mike Rogers, wasn’t able to be with us in Boston. Mike had just purchased a home in San Diego and was unable to get away. We are happy that he is settling down in our part of the country and expect to see him at the Castle quite often. Mike is one of the most inventive magicians around these days, and a most charming person to boot.

Before leaving Boston I must compliment the close-up workers who did marvelous performances under almost impossible conditions. Slydini, Goshman, David Roth, and Del Ray all did beautiful magic- but I would imagine that the spectators at the

back were not able to see and appreciate their skill to any great extent. They did have TV monitors but it was difficult to decide which to watch, the monitor or the performer!

I shared a room in Boston with my dear friend, Ellsworth Lyman, whom I have known for over 40 years. Ellsworth was one of the first individuals in this country to sell secrets by mail. Readers who really delve into the history of magic will really remember Ellsworth Lyman, Henry Hardin (who lived in Connecticut), and Arthur Finley. They all sold secrets through the mail many, many years ago. They didn't sell apparatus, just the secret and directions on how to do the tricks. They were responsible for some of the finer magic that you couldn't obtain from magic books those days. The "Living and the Dead Test" (rough edge) was one of their releases. Another person responsible for many fine secrets was Charles T. Jordan who used to sell secrets before he published his fine books.

Before I forget, I would certainly like to heartily thank my many friends around the country for being so nice to me during my travels. In Boston I was invited to have dinner down at the waterfront with Mr. and Mrs. Kofman, parents of Dave Kofman (who lived in Hollywood for some time and was a regular at the Castle). I thoroughly enjoyed the meal and talking to Dave and his parents again.

Everyone I met treated me royally. Where else or how else could you meet and know so many wonderful people as you do when you join the fascinating world of magic?

Next month, "Vernon's Venturings" continue with a trip to Kansas City for the Midwest Magic Jubilee!

May 1974

Here are the final 20 names of Tom Blue's listing of the top card workers of the day:

Jerry Andrus
Francis Carlyle
Bruce Cervon
Derek Dingle
Frank Garcia
Larry Jennings
Roger Klause
Ken Krensel
Harry Lorraine
Ed Marlo
Charlie Miller
Johnny Paul
Harry Riser
Harvey Rosenthal
John Scarne
Bill Simon
Mike Skinner
Dai Vernon
Ron Wilson
Herb Zarrow

This list is alphabetical but I'm looking forward to receiving your rating of these names. I'll feed them all into my computer and perhaps we'll come up with a grading of this Top Twenty list.

You readers can believe it or not but there has been a serious gap in the tapes this month. We're going to try and fill it in so even the experts won't realize that any tampering has been done!

It seems as though the unexpected is always happening around the Castle. The other evening I was called to the telephone – it was Mike Skinner calling from Victoria, Canada, where they were having the PCAM Convention. Mike gave me the surprising news that Sawa, the extremely clever Japanese magician, had been in Alaska on a fishing trip and had dropped down to the convention. In a few days he would be at the Castle for a visit. I was very excited because Sawa is certainly one of the modern-day geniuses, there's no doubt about that. While I was talking with Mike I was amazed to see the subject of our conversation sitting opposite me in the Castle lobby. He had arrived ahead of schedule!

Sawa had come down to join his friend, Jack Takeda, who is a stage magician from Japan. After visiting here they were going on to Las Vegas to see Siegfried and Roy, Jimmy Grippo, Johnny Paul, and Danny Cross, who are "musts" when you visit Vegas.

Sawa's magic is incredible, literally "out of this world". He is to be congratulated for his magical accomplishments. Sawa is a well-established dentist in Japan, and one of the most creative magicians I have ever known. The regulars at the Castle had a real treat that evening as Sawa performed some of his miracles for them. As the saying goes, you have to see it to believe it- and even then, you won't!

BIG TOPIC OF CONVERSATION right now is the write-ups that Doug Henning received in TIME and NEWSWEEK, two of our leading news magazines. A two page spread of color pictures features Doug, and there is also an excellent picture of Mark Wilson levitating Nani Darnell in front of the Castle.

As I have mentioned in previous columns, I am delighted that Doug Henning is doing so well in New York City with "The Magic Show." From the moment I first met this young man and discussed magic with him I knew that he was not the ordinary would-be magician. He is a very knowledgeable and clever chap. He picks things up very quickly and has a thorough understanding of what is "commercial." He gets to the point quickly – doesn't dally around. And, most important to me, he doesn't have that conceited attitude that so many young performers have, which is deadly for a young man to have when he is doing magic.

I have always felt that the one quality that young performers should avoid is conceit, or so-called brashness. However, a few magicians have become tremendous successes by being pushy and really forcing themselves ahead by pushing others aside. I know magicians who have succeeded by doing this but they are very unhappy individuals. They are unhappy because they do not have the respect of their fellow craftsmen. Not only are they unhappy but they are extremely jealous of some of the meeker magicians! Douglas Henning is just the opposite of all this. It's a treat to see someone like him succeed in the precarious business of being a professional magician. It does my heart good.

GOOD NEWS for all who know him is the fact that Francis Carlyle is back again at the Castle, going stronger than ever. He looks great and is his old exuberant self! Congratulations, Francis, and welcome back!

Lou Derman's new position as supervisor for all of the gag writers of "All in the Family", the hit television show that has been running for three years, kept him from attending any of the magic conventions this year. I know he would have had a great time in Boston with Karrell Fox and Jay Marshall and the others who did so much to enhance the convention in the way of comedy. Lou's "Add Comedy to Your Act" is still going strong, and, as I have mentioned before, he does a very funny act.

Peter Raveen will open with his full evening show in Salt Lake City this September. I had the pleasure of seeing some of Raveen's costumes and beautiful apparatus at Johnny Gaughan's shop recently. It is superlative so far as splendor and flash is concerned. I know that Peter will do credit to it with his lovely and charming wife, Coral. Peter is a masterly showman. It will be great to have to large magic shows, one in the East and the other out here in the West, doing capacity business! I wish Peter all the good luck in the world.

On my return flight from Boston I had the pleasure of being with Mark and Nani Wilson and their son, Greg. Had a lot of fun teaching Greg a few tricks on the way

home. He is a regular “chip off the old block” because he was working out improvements of what I had shown him! Greg has good ideas and is a bright young man.

In a couple of days Mike Skinner and I will drive to Phoenix where we will meet Danny Dew. From there the three of us will drive to Kansas City to be a part of the Midwest Magic Jubilee. Jay Vincent is masterminding the convention and it should be a real swinging affair. David Roth is coming in from New York with Scotty York. Ross Bertram, who hasn't been too active in magic lately, will be there with a very fine film that was taken by the Canadian Broadcasting Company. It is a color movie of himself doing some incredible card work and also tricks with dice. Ross contributed a great deal of original close-up magic to the “Stars of Magic” series. Incidentally, he is also a very fine stage performer.

I was pleasantly surprised to hear from Faucett Ross that Cal Emmett expects to present his act at the Jubilee. Cal has been in magic many, many years and was one of the few cigarette manipulators that Cardini was friendly with. Cal has been “under the weather” lately but hopes to join us in St. Joseph, Mo., where we will have our pre-convention get-together with Faucett Ross. We usually have only 8 or 10 magicians for these affairs but this year it looks as though there will be 20 or 30 on hand to enjoy Danny Dew's steaks.

I'll comment on the Jubilee next issue. Right now I'm looking forward to some great close-up and stage magic.

June 1974

Picking up on my travels: Mike Skinner and I flew from Phoenix and drove from there to Kansas City with Danny Dew. They took turns driving- wouldn't trust me behind the wheel because of my daredevil reputation when it comes to driving a car! For the past few years before each Midwest Magic Jubilee a group of eight or nine of us have congregated at Faucett Ross' home in St. Joseph, MO for a pre-convention get-together. Having been a chef at one time, Danny has always prepared the steaks and we have always had a relaxing time eating food and talking magic. Danny being so beloved by everyone who knows him makes the event double interesting.

This year, prior to the jubilee in Kansas City, thirty magicians showed up! So we moved the entire affair out to one of the city parks where Danny cooked the steaks over bar-be-que pits. Ross's' girl friend, Mildred, prepared delicious salads and baked beans (one of my favorite dishes) and we really put on the feedbag.

Phil Craig and Joe Scott of St. Louis are always with us but Phil couldn't make it this year because of illness in the family. We missed you, Phil!

Allen Okawa traveled the greatest distance, coming in from Honolulu. And it was great having Ross Bertram of Toronto with us this year. Ross showed us some terrific color films of magic and we were all grateful to him for having lugged the heavy equipment and films all the way from Canada. Cal Emmett ("Mr. Cigarette Manipulations" himself) came up from Texas. During a jubilee show he again received a standing ovation for his act. Scotty York of Washington, D.C., was with us for the first time, as were Mike Skinner and Tom Blue of Hollywood, and Dr. Leo Wagner and my old friend Harry Schilling. Larry Jennings took time from his busy schedule to fly in from Lake Tahoe. It was a wonderful day and evening of magic and fun.

The next day we all drove over to Kansas City, a trip of seventy miles, and registered for the convention. I must say right here that convention chairman, Jay Vincent (Jack Patchen) is to be congratulated for his producing one of the smoothest running and enjoyable conventions I have ever attended. He really did an excellent job and was very kind to everyone. Three hundred and fifty persons registered for the convention and everyone had a good time. Although it was very hot outside, our hotels rooms were cool and comfortable. I prefer these smaller conventions as you have time to meet everyone and a chance to relax and talk to old and new friends. I have long felt that magic conventions have become too large and consequently, are not as much fun.

Bro. John Hamman of St. Louis absolutely flabbergasted the fellows with his card work. As many of you know, Bro. John has released a good number of his creations thru the De-Voe Magic Den of St. Louis, starting with his "Final Ace Routine". These fine tricks depended upon clever gimmicked cards although a spectator would not realize this fact. At the Jubilee, however, Bro. John did miracles with ordinary cards. He has come up with one of the few new principles in magic in the way of a count that I was delighted to see. Steve Freeman was especially intrigued with Bro. John's card work and Steve is no slouch himself when it comes to handling the cards.

I was thrilled to be able to introduce David Roth to my friends in magic. David is really a genius with coins- in my opinion he is way out in front of everyone. Once you

see him perform you will understand my high praise for this young man. Another very original chap is Scotty York. He and Martin Lewis set good examples for anyone taking up magic. Both are really original in their thinking and presentation of magic. Needless to remark that Derek Dingle also excels.

Ross Bertram had a birthday while there and many of us went to the Golden Ox for a steak dinner in his honor. Ross, who had been away from magic for five or six years, had several brand new effects which fooled some of the more knowledgeable fellows. One of them is a coin transposition that uses an entirely different principle than the usual method of transferring coins from hand to hand. It is a very novel approach to the basic effect. Ross did much to add to the enjoyment of the convention, as did my old Buffalo friend, Eddie Fechter. Eddie really charmed the folks with his delightful presentations. He uses what I call solid methods of entertaining, using solid effects that register strongly with his audiences. His new book, "Magician Nightly- The Magic of Eddie Fechter", written and published by Jerry Mentzer, is now available and gives you a good look at Eddie's technique and methods.

The various shows at the Jubilee came off very well with everyone doing a good job. Close-up sessions were held both Friday and Saturday which made many magicians quite happy as nowadays so many magicians do close-up magic. Zaney Blaney made his usual hit with his version of the suspension, and his production of a HUGE rabbit! Zaney's "Instant Texas" routine is an excellent example of how an effect can be built up, climaxing with the large rabbit production.

July 1974

Last month Bill Larsen didn't have quite enough space to let me finish my comments on the Jubilee in Kansas City.

It was enjoyable seeing Harry Otto. Hard to believe that he is 93 or 94 years of age. He performed on one of the evening shows and gets around with little or no difficulty. It delighted me to see how well Harry looks. My friends, Joe Cossari and Esther, opened one show with their black light act which is a colorful act indeed. On another show they presented their card fanning routine, also colorful and eye-appealing. Both shows received quite an ovation.

John Cornelius entertained all the boys with his marvelous vanishing nickel. It is truly phenomenal the way he does it. John is from Texas and I believe this was his first time at a Midwest Magic Jubilee. Charlie Miller, who has known John for years, says that John was always very clever with magic even as a youngster.

Our pre-convention host, Faucett Ross, knows more about magic than anyone I know. He is a wonderful correspondent who keeps in touch with many many magicians both here and abroad. "The Magic of Faucett Ross" will be published in England shortly and I highly recommend it to anyone looking for good solid effects.

This issue of GENII honors JOE BERG, one of our best-loved magic dealers and one of the nicest guys in magic. Over the years Joe has earned for himself an enviable position in the world of magic. I have known Joe for years and years. Back in 1933 when I was cutting silhouettes at the Chicago World's Fair, I used to drive Joe home at night sometimes. We would meet Keith Clark and sit in some restaurant until daylight, discussing magic and trading tricks. I have never heard a disparaging word said about Joe Berg. He is a thoroughly reliable business man who has a great sense of humor. If you have ever seen one of Joe's shows you will know what I mean about his sense of humor. His Chinese act which included the Torn Paper Hat to Tissue Papers was a classic. That is the act where he roller-skated off stage at the conclusion! Joe has contributed much more to magic than he is given credit for- including many tricks that are still listed in the dealers' catalogs. I am proud to be a friend of Joe Berg.

Isn't it wonderful now magic seems to have taken a new lease on life? I think DOUG HENNING'S show, "The Magic Show" in New York, has had a lot to do with this, along with the fine publicity in NEWSWEEK and TIME magazines. Doug is still doing a sell-out business. Very shortly I expect to buzz up to Salt Lake City for PETER REVEEN'S new full-evening of magic. He has a very elaborate new show that was built by JOHNNY GAUGHAN whom I consider one of the finest makers of magical apparatus in the world. Johnny was featured recently on the cover of GENII. ALLEN WAKELING is producing and directing the Reveen show; Peter couldn't have chosen a better man for the job.

Usually every evening in the Castle a group of us gather in a special corner of the main bar room and talk magic. The other night, our group included JOE COSSARI, FRANK THOMPSON, STEVE FREEMAN, and others, and we were discussing the

pass. Frank was going through all types of passes. I mentioned the fact that I had listed 37 different ways of making the two halves of the pack transpose, including table hops, in the hands, one-handed passes, etc. Frank went through what seemed like more than 37 ways of making passes, or shifts, as they are called. One could spend hours just talking about nothing but the pass.

WALTER SCOTT once made the remark to me, "How can you teach 'seconds' to magicians in a lecture? You would talk for a week on nothing but the second deal alone." This may seem strange to those who have never gone in deeply for the study of sleight-of-hand but it is true. A good illustration of this is the book published by FRED BRAUE and JEAN HUGARD – "The Invisible Pass". It took many photographs and a lot of text to describe just this one sleight. Braue once told me in New York that if he had to write the book over he could double the text.

Those of you who try to learn sleights from such books as Erdnase or Lang Neil must remember that you have to use your head. All an author can do in describing a trick or move in print is to give you the essentials and some of the details. But to go into it really profusely and carefully takes a lot of study. You have to use your head- figure it out- trial and error. This is true of anything you want to learn- playing the violin or piano for example. The instructors can give you the basics but you have to experiment and try, otherwise you'll never get anyplace. If you are interested in really acquiring skill and learning to do certain things it takes hours of intense study. And if it is not a pleasure, you shouldn't do it! If it is irksome or troublesome, forget it.

Next month I'm going to "introduce" you to some of the Castle regulars whom you may not have read about but deserve mention.

Now, in the pages to follow, the special Joe Berg Issue.

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August 1974

August 1974

I start this column on a sad note: My dear friend, David Bamberg, is gone. Known professionally as Fu Manchu, and the son of Okito, David died recently in South America. How well I recall the times when the late Sam Horowitz and I journeyed to South America- we always visited David. In those days he used to work in Rio de Janeiro for six months at a time. From there he would jump to Montevideo for three months or so and then on to Buenos Aires for four months. He was treated as royalty in South America. In fact, there was a cartoon strip in the newspapers about the adventures of Fu Manchu- not the Sax Rohmer character but our own David Bamberg.

His favorite trick was the "Torn and Restored Paper" with the business of 'accidentally' dropping one piece on the floor. As he continued the trick he would stealthily put his foot over the piece that had dropped. He did the routine to perfection...in fact, he was known as "Papel Papel"...Spanish for paper. Of course he did all kinds of tricks and illusions including the Sawing in Half, an illusion called "A Trip to the Moon", vanishing and reappearing assistants, etc. But the trick the trick that everyone associated him with was "Papel Papel". In that trick he really sold his personality to the audiences.

Cardini often said that when Horace Goldin was at his height in London, known as "The Royal Illusionist" and doing such illusions as "The Lion's Bride," Pictures to Life, Vanishing Automobile, etc., the Trick that made the biggest hit in his show was the Egg Bag! This may be difficult for the young magicians of today to understand: how can old tricks like the Egg Bag, Six Card Repeat, or the Dice Box be made marvelous? Years ago a magician named Cuning, who was also an escape artist (Houdini was always jealous of him), used to present the Dice Box to adult audiences and, believe me, it was a real masterpiece in his hands. Any trick can become a masterpiece but it has to have a presentation that holds people enthralled and fascinated.

It's like a good story teller. The same story can be told in a hundred ways but a brilliant story teller like Lou Derman or Senator Crandall will tell the same story and it 'Rings a bell'...audiences howl. Whereas another person telling the same story "falls flat".

But getting back to Fu Manchu- it's a dirty shame that he has passed away as he was a marvelous magician. When he came to New York years ago with his show he had 31 people with him. The unions made it so rough on him that he had to send most of t

September, 1974

I remember that several months ago I wrote about Joannie Wilson having identified more magicians by their first names than anyone else at the Castle. One reason is the fact that she has met so many of them personally in her position as receptionist at the Castle- a position she held for ten and a half years. We were sorry to see Joannie leave but she has moved on to what I am sure will be an even better position with Leo Behnke's company, *Magic Touch*. *Magic Touch* specializes in trade shows and sales meeting presentations and according to both Joannie and Leo, business is starting to boom. Many of you will remember Leo as having been one of the first magical bartenders at the Castle. He was also the "Magic Hands" that appeared on television countrywide under the sponsorship of the Jack-in-the-Box drive-ins. Good luck, Joannie, and do keep in touch!

MAXWELL GRANT, author of "The Shadow" stories, was a recent visitor at the Castle. Mr. Grant is probably better known to GENII readers as WALTER B. GIBSON, author of countless books on magic. I believe this was Walter's first visit to the castle and he enjoyed it very much. We talked up a storm, naturally, and it was great fun remembering the 'good old days'. Walter is a gold mine of information.

Walter 'ghosted' many books on magic, as well as writing the dozens of books under his own name. I have always liked his "World's Best Book of Magic" as it contains a chapter entitled, "Carl Brema's Exclusive Mysteries" that is extremely interesting. Walter mentioned that he wrote a total of 286 (I believe I remember correctly!) Shadow stories- each a complete book length novel. Some of these stories are now being reprinted in paperback editions, while the original magazines have become collectors' items.

Walter was in Los Angeles to make an appearance on Tom Snyder's "Tomorrow" television show, along with Diana Zimmerman, Mark Wilson, and myself. It was an interesting show but the camera work left a lot to be desired as far as the magic was concerned. I may have mentioned before that the Magic Castle has a large library of video tapes. We were watching a couple of them the other evening. They were MIKE SKINNER's appearance on two of the Johnny Carson shows. The camera work on both shows was excellent. Mark's sleight-of-hand was photographed beautifully, and Johnny and Tony Curtis, along with the other guests (Phyllis Newman for one) were properly amazed. Mike has a nice easy-going manner, and, of course, technically he is flawless.

Another amazing visitor at the Castle, with whom I have had the pleasure of spending considerable time, is FRANK THOMPSON. I have been hearing about Frank Thompson for more years than I care to remember- all about the wonders he performs. Well, everything I ever heard is true! Frank has been out here for a couple of weeks now- he is the guest of JEFF ALTMAN, one of the finest card technicians in the country. Frank has really astounded some of the boys with his skill. He has a remarkable way of doing magic, along with a wonderful sense of humor. It is refreshing to watch him do magic because you enthuse over his work, and it makes you realize how really entertaining the art can be.

Paul Curry, another fine card man, has just published a book, "PAUL CURRY PRESENTS", that I highly recommend. Paul is probably best known for his famous "Out of this World" card trick and in this new book he brings you up to date on the fine effect. I like the fact that whenever Paul uses an idea that was originated by someone else he gives full credit. Paul is extremely knowledgeable and is a great innovator.

Magic is indeed fortunate today in having so many clever and talented 'students'. As I have written before, I wish that some of my friends of yesteryear, such as T. Nelson Downs, Manuel, Allen Shaw, and Welsh Miller could see some of our present-day magicians perform. Downs would be amazed, I'm certain, at the coin work of David Roth. Leipzig would be pleased to see how smooth Steve Freeman is with a deck of cards. And I'm sure that Frank Thompson would please everyone. Frank has been here at the Castle for several weeks now and constantly amazes all of us. His knowledge of cards is truly astounding. He has superlative ideas in magic and is a very amusing, interesting man in the way he presents his tricks.

I recently had the pleasure of appearing on the Dick Cavett show, along with Doug Henning and Derek Dingle. Cavett devoted the entire ninety minutes to magic with all of us performing some of our "favorite miracles."

After the rehearsal I was asked by the Director to cut a minute and a half from my part as the entire show was running overtime. Dick Cavett intervened immediately and remarked, "Let Vernon do exactly what he did at the rehearsal. If you have to cut any time, delete some of my dialogue." Incidents such as this point out what an understanding and regular guy Dick Cavett is. Unfortunately many who exhibit magicians on T.V. have a tendency to belittle the art. However Dick gave the show a dignified and superior quality.

He spent a couple of evenings at the Castle last month and seemed to enjoy the magic and atmosphere of our club. I hope YOU will be able to do the same sometime soon.

And please, all of you practitioners, keep magic free from tawdry, cheap and objectionable presentations and it will long continue to survive.

October, 1974

Every time I decide to stay strictly at home and not leave town something comes up where I seem obliged to leave. Just a short time ago Mark Wilson called me from Las Vegas and invited me up to see his show. I tried to 'beg off' but he verbally twisted my arm so skillfully that I agreed to fly up to Vegas. Mark wished me to see his performance in person and give him any criticism if necessary regarding the show. This request, coming from a man who has probably been seen by more television viewers than any magician in history, was most flattering to me.

I was delighted to learn that Bill and Irene Larsen, Milt Larsen, Allen Wakeling, and Walter 'Zaney' Blaney were also making the trip up to see Mark. We all met at the airport for the late afternoon flight, during which we discovered Bob Fenton on the plane! When we arrived in Vegas we went immediately to the beautiful new MGM Grand Hotel to catch the early Siegfried and Roy show. This hotel is a tremendous place and the complete show itself has to be seen to be believed. It's a multi-million dollar production and seeing something like this in person is an experience you will never forget. It makes the big musicals in films with all the extravagant scenes pale in significance. Siegfried and Roy are a part of this great show. I must say that anyone who hasn't seen their marvelous act has missed one of the greatest that has ever been done in magic. It is absolutely sensational.

Siegfried was instrumental in securing excellent seats for us- third row center is hard to beat. After being seated we looked around and spotted the Senator and Ruth Crandall, along with Tom Ely and his pretty blonde friend, over by a side wall. Before we could say 'hocus pocus' Siegfried had the maitre d' bring them over into the center section near us. This was very nice and goes to show how pleasant Siegfried is to magicians. Carl Hermione of Victoria, Canada, was also there and we had a short chat during the intermission. He gave me some really wonderful Havana cigars- so here I am back on cigars again!

After seeing this show we had just time enough to get over to the Hilton Hotel and again into choice seats before the Mark Wilson show started. I was very, very pleasantly pleased with the show. The format and action was more in line of a musical comedy with the entire presentation having movement, suspense and action. The whole thing personifies what the public likes and prefers in the way of presentation...the show really moves along.

The opening was really appealing because little Greg (Mark and Nani's son) is standing with his back to the audience as the curtain rises. His arms are stretched, full length about his head and he is facing all the illusions and gazing at the splendor of the stage setting. Greg starts the show and he is really a handsome charming little boy who adds a great deal to the presentation. And, of course, Nani is as beautiful as ever. Instead of crawling out of a box or just hauling herself out, she bounces out with great ease and finesse.

To my way of thinking one of Mark's most amazing and effective illusions is the substitution done with a glass water-filled tank. The girl gets into the tank and, holding her breath ducks down into the water as the tank is chained and locked. A curtain is

placed around the tank and Mark jumps inside the tent-like affair. It is an instantaneous change as the curtain is whipped aside. The dripping girl is now standing in full view while the assistants release the locks and chain from the tank! I was very surprised to see him subject himself to such a strenuous and risky illusion but this young man knows the publicity value of such endeavors. All the reviews mentioned this illusion and were very favorable to the entire show. It reminded me of Houdini and his brother, Hardeen, in the old days when they used to do the underwater things (Chinese Torture Cell) in vaudeville.

The entire trip was a wonderful experience. I was disappointed in not seeing my friends Brook Connors, Alan Ackerman, Johnny Paul, and Jimmy Grippo whom I have known for years. We just didn't have time to see any more as it was a one-night deal for us. We caught the 5 a.m. flight back to Los Angeles where we left Zaney Blaney at the airport to wait for his 10 a.m. flight to Houston!

I also want to say how pleased I was to see trained animals in the MGM show. There was a very interesting dog act and they also had a baby elephant, a camel, llamas, and other animals, and it was good to see the trainers using the "kind" method in working with these trained animals. Years ago a group in Europe used to believe that the best way to train an animal was to whip it- to beat it badly if it refused to do the stunt. This is the cruel method. The other method is the rewarding method. It pleased me to see the trainers slip the animals a little morsel or 'goodie' whenever they performed as they had been taught.

A column or two ago I promised to introduce you to some of our Castle regulars. I haven't forgotten. They will be greeting you soon!

November 1974

No- you are not looking at a picture of The Three Stooges! The picture with this month's column was taken during the picnic in St. Joseph, Missouri, prior to the Midwest Magic Jubilee last July. Perhaps we should title it "The Terrible Three"- said threesome being (left to right) myself, Faucett Ross, and Mike Skinner. We do look relaxed and happy don't we! It was a wonderful afternoon/evening honoring Faucett- a day which I have already 'reviewed' in these pages. This photo appeared in the *St. Joseph Gazette* along with a fine write-up of the party. Thanks to my good friend, Ross Bertram of Canada for sending a copy to me.

I get a great number of letters from young chaps, from the age of 12 upward, who are interested in magic. Some of these letters are really amusing to me because these chaps want to know how they can get booked; how they can sell their act; whether they should see an agent or join a magic club; how they can do their act, etc. Please, fellows, keep magic as a hobby. Don't think you can make a good living at magic because it is extremely difficult. Very few can really make any money in magic. But it is a wonderful hobby that will give you a lot of fun and through which you can meet many interesting people.

I hate to reiterate these things, but they are absolutely true. Youngsters who really want to enjoy magic should forget about all the pamphlets on magic and the latest tricks. They should read the 'classics', such as "Our Magic" by Maskelyne and Devant; all of Devant's works; the Professor Hoffman books; the "Memoirs of Robert Houdin", etc. Get an understanding of the background of magic. It will give you real pleasure knowing what has gone on before.

The most important thing, if you want to entertain with magic, is to develop a personality that is absolutely free from conceit or pomposity. Any sign of thinking you are a little smart because you can do something someone else can't could be fatal to a magician.

You simply cannot have an attitude like this. Analyze yourself! If you are an amusing person who can tell funny stories and can make people laugh, you can do 'humorous' magic. But if you are not, for goodness sake do not attempt it. If you are dramatic and can dramatize a story and hold people spellbound while you are talking to them, be dramatic! Jimmy Grippo is a perfect example of dramatizing magic. He does a beautiful job. He dramatizes simple tricks, making them appear gigantic by this dramatization ability. Now if you are an 'ordinary' everyday person, BE an ordinary every day person and use that attitude when you are doing magic. Unless you have great ability and really know something about acting and can change your entire character, your best bet is to 'be natural', just be yourself.

Some people are inherently clever and can turn themselves into something else which is what an actor does. If you have this ability, use it, take advantage of it. In other words, take advantage of your natural assets. Do not try to do something that is beyond your abilities. You have to work your way up there.

It pleases me to know end that Doug Henning, who I had the pleasure of meeting in the Magic Castle and got to know quite well, has done just this very thing. He has

worked hard to reach the point of success that he is experiencing now. When Doug worked here at the Castle I talked to him and even criticized him in some of the things he did. He accepted this criticism in the way it was offered- constructively. Doug is a charming humble young man who is enthusiastic, he loves magic and he wants to express what his feelings are in magic. He has no semblance of being conceited or trying to elevate himself above other magicians. He is a human being. Older people, as well as the young, sense this and it is so tremendously important.

Pertaining to acquiring facility in the performing of magic: I may be repeating myself but a happy balance between theory and practice is the most efficient way to learn anything. If you go too much on theory or too much practice you will never really attain great ends. Sometimes you can waste yourself hours of practice on something if you just use your head. Many people may say, "I always use my head." But I have seen the same type of person hang up a picture. They go up to the wall, put the nail in the wall, hang the picture and then say, "My gosh, I should have hung it a little higher, or a little lower." Now they have to remove the nail and put it somewhere else and hang the picture again. If they had only stopped for a moment and used their head, done a little measuring and figuring, they would have avoided this readjustment. This applies all along the line. I don't care what you are learning- use your head first- THINK. Think how it should be done.

If you find a card or coin move difficult, analyze it. "Am I holding the pack too tightly- am I handling the coin too tightly, or not tight enough?" In other words, use your head- think about it. If you do this and really have a happy balance between practice and theory you will find that you will advance much further more rapidly.

Of course it is bad to go too far one way or the other. Some people just practice blindly over and over. Now by constant trial and error and perhaps years, in some cases of practice, they will eventually come to the easy, the right method. But another person approaching it from a different angle uses his head and he will take days or weeks, where the other person will take years. Keep this in mind when you are practicing any magic.

If you don't acquire some skill in doing magic, some knowledge that is a bit advanced, you will never derive any true pleasure from performing magic. You are bound to feel 'guilty' if you have just a box that has a double bottom and all you have to do is swirl it around or twist it, and the thing works itself, requiring no skill whatsoever on your part. Any normal person will have a certain feeling of guilt in claiming to accomplish an effect that requires no skill whatsoever. There is a certain satisfaction in doing something that takes a little doing and a little practice. You achieve something and this gives you a cleaner and better feeling than just doing tricks that work themselves.

Now I am not saying that you should avoid all contact with the so-called self-working tricks. PROPERLY PRESENTED (there's the rub!) they can become true miracles for your audiences. And properly presented, many such tricks appear (to an audience) to require great skill in performing on your part! But nothing will give you greater pleasure and satisfaction than knowing that you have mastered a difficult move, sleight, or routine.

December 1974

I am really delighted that this issue of GENII is being dedicated to my dear friend, Lewis Ganson. In all the world of magic I don't think you could find a fairer, squarer person than Lewis. He is really a wonderful chap. Not only is he very talented and a good performer but he is also an excellent photographer. Those of you who have read my books know how painstakingly he described every trick and sleight. It was not an easy task. Not only did he do all the writing but he took all the photographs which added so much to the books. At the end of each thoroughly-explained trick Lewis included a synopsis of what he had just written so anyone who had once learned the trick could refresh their memory months later if need be without having to read the entire description.

When I visited England back in 1957 or '58 (I'm very poor at remembering dates) I had no intention whatsoever of writing a book. It was Faucett Ross who started the ball rolling by suggesting to Lewis that he and Harry Clark get together with me convince me that a book should be written. As you know, they succeeded!

During the writing of my first book I stayed with Lewis and his wife at their home in Waterlooville, about 75 miles from London. It is a very picturesque little town and I enjoyed its charm very much. Lewis and I used to go over to a little pub nearby in the evening and enjoy a few ales while talking magic. There is a certain good feeling about English pubs that just can't be found elsewhere. They are delightful places in which to relax between chapters of any book you might be writing!

Years ago my grandfather taught at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. He had left me a sum of money, about 3,000, which I picked up from the Bank of Ireland. It was in Irish pound notes when I withdrew it from the bank and I just stuck it in my raincoat pocket. It was quite a bulky roll, about the size of a head of cabbage, but it did fit into the pocket. When I checked in to Lewis' home I hung the coat in the hall closet and casually mentioned to Lewis that I had some money in the pocket. When he found out how much it was he was quite concerned over the safety of the money. I maintained that it was all right- who would think of looking for money in a raincoat pocket, especially if they didn't know it was there in the first place! But to please him, I deposited it in a local bank informed me that I would not be allowed to take the cash out of the country. If I could purchase something in England and have shipped back to the States that would be okeh.

During my stay I saw the new model of an English car, a Magnet MG, and I took a liking to it. The cost was \$2,500 so I bought one and had it shipped over. I am still driving that car with the original Dunlap tires on it! It's a 'classic' car now and I understand that there are only four or five of them in this country because the company never exported that particular model to the States. All of which has nothing to do with Lewis Ganson other than the fact that I bought the car while staying at his home!

Lewis made it possible for me to meet many of the English magicians. He arranged for Al Koran to spend a couple of days in Waterloo for a most enjoyable visit. Alex Elmsley and Roy Walton are two others I met there for the first time. My old friend, Cy Enfield, whom I had known here in Hollywood years ago, is the one who first

told me about Elmsley. Cy considered him a real genius with cards. After meeting Alex I certainly agreed with Cy. Incidentally, Cy is an excellent card man himself.

January 1975

On the first Saturday of each month the Magic Castle holds auditions for magic acts wishing to work professionally at the Castle. At our December get-together we tried something new; A Symposium of Magic, where members could ask questions of a 'board of experts'. The 'experts' at our first symposium were Loring Campbell, Frank Herman, Ron Wilson and myself. Ron also acted as program moderator and did an excellent job of keeping things rolling along.

I am sure most of you have followed the WATERGATE TAPES with interest. Here now, for your pleasure and possible benefit, are the CASTLE TAPES:

(TAPE TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE: As we start the tape apparently someone in the audience has asked the panel about the value of having an agent.)

HERMAN: An agent is important if he can get you work. Before I became lucky with the "Skipper Frank" television show I had a difficult time getting an agent. Once I got past the first year of television and the second renewal I could have had all the agents in the world!

FROM AUDIENCE: *Yeah, they wanted a piece of the action, didn't they?*

HERMAN: I had a standard answer for them: "I got this much on my own. You get an additional 25 percent work for me, come back, and I'll give it to you." I'd never see them again! Now speaking about personal manager, if you can get a good one there isn't anything better in the world or a better thing that can happen to you. You should be delighted to give such a guy a good chunk because he will keep you working and will see that your publicity, your accounting records, etc., are handled correctly. But finding such a guy is difficult.

The way you find a good agent, or find work, is to have a product out of which somebody else can make some money. People don't hire you because you're a nice guy or you are a good magician. People hire you because you fulfill a need. And if that need is to make money or to draw a crowd for someone, then you are a piece of merchandise. If you're not a piece of merchandise- forget it. So you have to make your act merchandisable. Then you can get a good agent and all the work in the world. Once you have a "good piece of merchandise" you need an agent to handle your shows and bookings. If you try to handle it yourself it will be like handling yourself in court: trying to be a lawyer. You'll get wrapped up in too many things for your own good.

FROM AUDIENCE: *Regarding showmanship on the stage: I've seen magicians appear to be doing magic for themselves and the first row, forgetting the rest of the audience. And they tend to mumble instead of speaking up. Would the panel comment on this.*

WILSON: I'll let Vernon comment because I've heard him talk about this a few times.

VERNON: I shouldn't comment because I'm no longer a working magician. Peter Pit gave a very good lecture on this, about taking in the entire audience when entertaining. Every person in an audience should feel that you are aiming to please THEM. All should have the feeling that "the magician is on stage to entertain ME". You have to look out over the entire audience, smile at different people, establish eye contact with them.

HERMAN: I think the thing that has happened to many of us is this: When we first started doing an act we presented it in church basements, school meeting rooms, etc. And then along came a professional engagement on a big stage or in a night club. The first time you get hit with a professional spotlight it's like getting a kick in the face because you can no longer see your audience. You can't see anything at all! You have to learn to think about the man in the last row. You have to fake eye contact which is so important. When you are speaking you have to project your voice to the last person in the balcony unless you are fortunate enough to be working with a good p.a. system.

Eventually, after the initial shock of the spotlight, you will begin to distinguish people in the first row but if you make the mistake of working to them only, you're going to be dead.

VERNON: This, of course, depends upon the type of act you are doing. Cardini ignored the audience- they weren't there as far as he was concerned. But he had the greatest single act that ever appeared in the world to my way of thinking.

HERMAN: In Cardini's act you were 'being let in on something'. You were watching an event.

WILSON: Wouldn't you say, Frank, that this is a technique you have to learn, like learning sleights? You have to be *thinking* about this while you are working. You have to look up and out at an audience. When you are on stage with bright spotlights it frightens you a little bit if you are not really in the business and you are inclined to lower your head (because of the spots) and consequently everything is toned down. You really should look up so that your voice and your 'eye contact' go out into the audience.

WHITEY ROBERTS: If the spot light is too bright for you ask for the house lights. The audience can see you because of the spot and you, in turn, can see your audience.

HERMAN: It's a matter of courtesy, too, thinking about that fellow in the last row. He paid to get in just like the folks in the front rows. You are not paid to do your act for yourself as some magicians apparently do according to the comment that started this discussion. You are doing your act to create enjoyment for the people who hired you.

Here is something that happens with professionals occasionally that, to me, becomes very disgusting: You have paid money to see an act and a friend of the act happens to be in the audience. Suddenly the act will start doing the entire show for this friend, forgetting the rest of the audience. I've seen pro's make this terrible mistake. It's a very discourteous thing to do. You should be very careful about this.

If there is an important person in the audience, a celebrity or the local mayor, etc., it's nice to acknowledge their presence. Maybe you can use them for a running gag or direct one remark to them during your show, but 99 percent of your act should be for the entire audience. Don't fall into the trap of working for a celebrity or a friend who happens to be in your audience. As I say, I have seen this happen and it destroys an act. The rest of the audience feels cheated.

VERNON: I have an example to relate about a magician apparently working for himself. Years ago in New York I taught magic and one of my pupils was Jimmy Drilling who was a perfectionist. He learned to do magic flawlessly. He wanted to learn the Linking Rings. I used music ("The Chinese Lullaby") during my routine. Jimmy got a recording of the music and really had the routine down perfectly. He came over to my house in Tuckahoe one time and wanted to run through it for me.

He did the entire routine, to music, faultlessly...it was perfect. When he finished he asked, "What do you think?" I replied: "Jimmy, I hope you don't do it for an audience that way." He didn't understand what I meant so I explained that he had taken the Rings and linked and unlinked them, perfectly, of course, but not once had he looked at me! I told him, "You were all involved with the moves. Never once did you look at me. That's like shaking hands with a guy and saying 'How are you?' and looking away as you do it. You have to make eye contact with the person for whom you are working." I showed him that when you display the Rings to the audience you don't look at the Rings yourself. You look at the audience as you show the Rings. He understood what I was driving at and I made him do the routine about ten times before he left.

Would just like to add that Dick and Diana Zimmerman appeared on "The American Motors" show held at the Universal Studios. They performed brilliantly. Dick's astounding production of a real glistening automobile was his own creation. It was the most startling and unexpected thing of this kind I have ever seen.

That evening his wife called me up and asked, "What did you do to Jimmy? It's like a rebirth. I always hated to see him do that ring trick but it was wonderful the way he did it tonight. What did you do to him?" She didn't even realize why it was but she recognized a decided difference! Jimmy had taken his wife into the presentation! But before, when he was doing the Rings for himself, she would be thinking, "That's my idiot husband doing that crazy trick!" (Audience Laughter!)

February 1975

I was at the Academy Awards Banquet the other night and was delighted to see Marian Chavez there along with a lot of my old friends, including Walter Gibson from New York and U. F. Grant from Columbus, who is really an unsung genius in magic. He has contributed a great many novel methods of doing magic to the magicians throughout the years, and I was tickled to death to see him with his wife in such good fettle.

I was also quite flattered to see my likeness up there on the stage in a large photo blow-up with the other Master Fellowship recipients. I was in very fine company with Cardini, Virgil, Frakson, Slydini and Charlie Miller. They had a covered photo in the middle. Nobody at the time knew who it was. It was Dunninger.

My feelings at the time were that a large portrait of Martin Gardner also belonged up there among the others. Later I was quite pleased when they awarded him a Literary Fellowship.

Dunninger was the one that really started the mentalism fad. Of course mentalism has been in existence for years, but Dunninger was the first one, I think, that really brought it out in front of the public in modern times.

Talking about Dunninger, years ago in New York he and I both worked for the same agent. Her name was Frances Rockefeller King. She was the best society agent in New York and the reason she handled Dunninger was that one time Houdini was booked for a show for Mrs. E.T. Stotesbury in Philadelphia. It was a Milk Fund show and Houdini was going to entertain them. Miss King got a very large fee for him, but at the last minute Harry Houdini called her and said, "I'm sorry, I'm going to Chicago and cannot fill the engagement." Miss King was having nervous prostration because at the last minute he let her down. She called up Joe Dunninger who she hardly knew and told him her trouble. He said, "I can do it!" She said, "You can't fill in for Houdini." Joe said, "Yes, I have a lot of leg irons and handcuffs." Well, anyway, he went to Philadelphia and he had no cabinet to hide in like Houdini's big velvet covered cabinet. He just got some people up on the bandstand and had them hold large open newspapers around him in a large circle. With this covering he escaped from countless leg irons and handcuffs and really filled the bill. Miss King received her fee and after that she was very much enamored with Dunninger and gave him a lot of bookings. His fee jumped from a few hundred dollars to as much as \$1,500.00 a week. Well, anyway, that is my little tale about the late Dunninger.

I would also like to say a few words about U.F. Grant. We nick-named him "Gen" Grant. I met him years ago. There was a well-known dentist, Dr. Gordon Cadwell Peck up in Glen Falls, New York, he took lessons from Annemann, Blackstone, Leipzig, Gen Grant and myself. We were all very friendly with Dr. Peck a quite celebrated dentist who never ceased to sing the praises of "Gen" Grant. "Gen" has contributed much to magic and has always been one of the fairest dealers I have known. He is beloved by everyone in magic.

We continue with THE CASTLE TAPES:

VERNON: When I was a kid in my teens I thought I knew every move in Leipzig's act and I told him so. He replied, "Are you sure?" I assured him that I did and he continued, "Well, what happens when someone miscalls a card? They have peeked at a card and I know they looked at the King of Spades, and they say their card is the Three of Diamonds! I can't hold up the show and argue with them...so what do I do?"

I told Nate that I had never seen that happen in his show and he assured me that it happened often..."but you didn't even notice...the show went on just the same. You say you know everything in my act...let me see you do the color change of a card." In the old days everyone used to stand with their side to the audience and people over on the far side could not see the trick because of the bad angle. Leipzig always stood facing the audience- people could see from all angles. The first thing he did was pass his hand over the card, changing it into a different card, and then casually show that the hand was empty. He asked me to do the effect, which I thought I did quite well, but when I had finished he said, "Very wrong!" He pointed out that after I had made the change and then showed my hand empty, I had taken in the entire audience on a "sucker" move. They were being led to believe that the hand concealed an extra card and when the hand was shown to be empty, the audience felt uncomfortable at having been "suckered".

Nate said, "If you will look down at one boy in front and then show your hand empty the audience will laugh as they are thinking, 'look at the stupid kid in the front row- he thought the magician had an extra card in his hand'!"

Same idea when you are doing the Sucker Die Box- play it to one of the noisiest kids in the front and make him the butt of the sucker effect. Of course, if you don't want to catch even one person you can pick an imaginary person in the audience. Don't "sell" the entire audience.

March 1975

We continue with THE CASTLE TAPES:

(The question of how or when a magician should or should not take command of a situation and suggest to his host or hostess the seating arrangements for a show, etc., came up and following are some of the thoughts expressed)

VERNON: Years ago when John McDonald (a man I'm trying to get up here to the Castle from San Diego sometime) was working at the Park Central Hotel in New York. I mentioned to him that he had good working conditions at the tables, etc., but if he went out on private parties he would run into situations that were not so ideal, and, if so, what would he do about it. I told him about the time I went to one such party and the hostess said to me, "Mr. Vernon, we all want to sit on the floor on cushions- could you possibly do your tricks on the floor?" I replied, "Certainly, I can do them on the ceiling- anywhere you like!" At least four or five times in millionaires' homes in New York I have sat on the floor with the guests gathered around me on cushions. It was quite the vogue back in the thirties when I was working professionally. I asked McDonald what he would do in a case like that and he said, "Well, that never happens with me. I tell them where to sit and I make everybody sit where I want them. I don't let them make the conditions- I am the magician and I make the conditions!"

I tried to tell him that you just don't do things like that when you are hired by multi-millionaires to entertain their guests. He assured me that I was wrong by saying, "I am the magician and I am an important person. I tell them what to do." When he saw that I still didn't believe him he told me the procedure he used. It is very interesting and good psychology.

"Supposing Mrs. Astor is giving the party. I ask who her most important guest is- and it may be the governor, for example. I tell her that I am going to be doing my show at a table and I especially want the guest of honor to enjoy the magic, so I am going to do a special trick for him. I ask Mrs. Astor to introduce me to the governor. After being introduced I tell him that I am going to do a very important trick for him and I want him to be sitting on my right at the table.

"Then I meet the next most important person and, using the same idea, I get him primed to sit on my left. If this person's wife or daughter is with him I tell him that I want them to sit next to him. Now, when they are ready for the performance the butler sets up the table and places chairs in position. I say, 'Mr. Governor, here's your seat', and the governor, already alerted to the situation, walks right over and sits down. To the other important guest I say, 'And you sit here' and he does! The others will fall right in line and seat themselves around the table. I direct them with a 'you sit here' and 'you sit there' AND THEY DO!"

McDonald's method worked for him. I know, as he performed at the White House several times and entertained a lot of important people when he was a society entertainer years ago. He was a master of the situation. He didn't let anyone tell him to wait in the butler's pantry until they called him or anything like that!

When I was working for Miss King (booking agent) she told me, "Mr. Vernon, if you ever go to a date and they ask you to wait in the kitchen or the hallway until you are called, you walk right out. Leave, Mr. Vernon, as you say that your performance is over. You'll get your check from me just the same. When you work out of this office I tell my clients that I don't book entertainers, I book ARTISTS, and I expect my artists to be treated the same as any of the guests."

FRANK HERMAN: Sometimes it won't be the head of the family that asks you to wait in the kitchen. It will be the help. I was hired by a very wealthy family who wanted a 'two-rabbit magician' since they were celebrating two birthdays. The butler answered the door and I said, "I am the magician for the party." "Oh", he said, "the servants' entry is around on the side." I asked him his name and then said, "Please tell Mrs. that I was here at 2:15 and I am now getting into my car and leaving." Well, he immediately invited me in through the front door and all went well. I hasten to add that this particular family was not like that at all, but quite often the help will take it upon themselves to 'screen you', so to speak.

VERNON: Frank mentioned rabbits. Miss King never booked any live stock acts. If someone called and wanted a magician who produced rabbits Miss King would say, "Well, we could do rabbits but you know they carry contagents this time of year!" (AUDIENCE LAUGHTER) And the client would agree to using a magician without rabbits!

April 1975

On February 1st we conducted another of our Magical Symposiums at the Castle. This time our panel of experts consisted of Allen Shaxon from England, Peter Raveen from all over, and myself from next door! Dick Zimmerman acted as moderator. DICK: I wonder if Allen and Peter would like to comment on stage magic in general and any differences in that field between this country and other countries.

ALLEN: At the present time there aren't any full-evening shows playing in England that I can recall. Now and then we will have a magician appearing on a bill as a supporting act. In order to fill a theatre you have to have a name that will draw in the crowds. I think about the only one who could do that today in England is Tom Cooper and people like him for his comedy, perhaps, over the magic. Probably the best known magician in my country is David Niven whom everyone knows from his television appearances. When TV goes on the air in England we all see it- not having the wide choice of channels and the many hours (24 hours a day) that you have over here.

It would be difficult to make a living with a full-evening show in England. This past Christmas time was interesting as we had the Magic Circle Show (Dick Zimmerman was a part of this show). The following week we had John Calvert doing his show and also in London we had Sorcar, Jr. This was about the first time in 25 years that we had a full-evening show in the west end of London. Calvert showed for just one week and that was mostly for magicians. Sorcar, Jr. had been touring around in England and, from all reports, doing poor business. He is completely unknown in England which brings was right back to television and the fact that people will only go out to see a TV star.

I've always had the feeling that your full-evening performers here have gone on what we would call 'sponsored shows'. Not in large cities but in the smaller towns with a tie-in with a local service club such as the Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary Club, etc. These organizations sell tickets and advertise the show. We have never had this type of thing in England as far as I know.

DICK: Peter Raveen, as you know, has toured Canada with his full-evening hypnotic show and, lately, with his illusion show. Peter, are there many, if any, stages left for such shows? What is the situation in general over here?

PETER: I think that here in the United States you probably have more stages per square mile than any other country if you take into consideration the high school stages which range from 'fair to fantastic'. You are also building many large auditoriums throughout your country...some being built by cities, others are state-sponsored buildings. The stages are magnificent but they have 80 foot by 100 foot proscenium arch and they go up about 45 feet high. The only production that can afford to build scenery for these type of stages are the local operas who usually have some kind of a grant from the city or state. They can go ahead and lose money without fear of being out of work!

I have played 'Russian Roulette' with my own career over the years mainly because I have chosen to do my own bookings. I took toughest stand with my hypnotic show and that was to book the theatre myself, buy the television, radio, and newspaper advertising, and go into a town with my own advertising, and go into a town with my

own advertising team. If the cards fell the right way I made as small fortune. If they fell the other way I lost a small fortune! It's a dangerous way to play.

Allen mentioned that people will pay to see a television star in person. The way to do this is to use the medium of television to create in any given situation the fact that you ARE a star. Even here in America people are very conscious of television. They will say, "We haven't heard of you or seen you on television" which is indeed a sad situation. But you can overcome this by buying massive advertising campaigns on television. In my own case I have had people come up and say, "We saw you on television doing your act- they saw shots of my act that had been compounded into a one-minute television commercial! If your advertising is done correctly on television you can realize some very spectacular grosses on your full-evening show.

However, I must say that to do this with an illusion show up would need about a quarter of a million to \$300,000 alone just for building up the cities on your show route. You are going to lose in some cities; you are going to make it in other cities but, the point is, once you have the cities built up they are your cities for life providing you go back every year and a half. You can't let them forget you! There are cities in Canada now where I could buy just a few hundred dollars worth of television and sell out a theatre. But this is a result of 10 or 11 years of building up my name with the hypnotic show.

(We will continue this interesting symposium next month as both Peter and Allen, being the professional entertainers that they are, give us information and suggestions well worth your time and consideration.)

May 1975

I'm happy to see that this issue is featuring my old friend, Jimmy Grippo. Jimmy and I have been friends for a good many years and I consider him an excellent performer and wonderful person.

I first met Jimmy Grippo when I was living on East 34th Street in New York City quite a number of years ago. Jimmy used to call me very late at night and ask me to come up and see him in northern New York State where we lived and had hosts of friends. We spent many happy times together as he always was surrounded with interesting people.

At the time I first met Jimmy, he was managing the light heavyweight champion of the world, Bettina. He knew almost everybody in the social and sporting world and had many friends in other walks of life as well. I was always impressed because any time I would walk down Broadway with Jimmy, he'd be stopped 10 or 12 times by this person and that person who had to say, "hello". He seemed to know everybody.

One thing I especially remember about Jimmy Grippo is how he loved to take people with big appetites out to dinner. I remember the well known comic performer who is no longer with us, George Jason. Jimmy would take him to one of the best restaurants in town and literally stuff him with food.

Another thing I remember so well about Jimmy in those days in New York was his generosity. Jimmy told me one time that years before he got into show business and hypnotism, he used to work for the Brooklyn Eagle as a reporter. His salary at the time was \$85.00 a week, which is very small today, but in those days \$85.00 was pretty good money. At the end of the week, one friend or another would say, "Let me have a fin or a sawbuck until next week and I'll pay you back." Jimmy said many times he would lend \$5, \$10, or \$20 to some friend and thought nothing of it.

Later when he became better known and started making really big money, he found that he frequently ended up with less than he had when he was a reporter. This was because people would come up to him and ask him if they could borrow a couple of thousand dollars to start a filling station or a restaurant or what have you. Jimmy would loan them a thousand or two because they were good friends and he couldn't turn them down. That's why he often had less money than he had when he was working as a reporter.

I think the story I most enjoy about Jimmy Grippo was the time in those early New York days when he was in Rigg's Restaurant and Mickey Mc Dougall was also there. Mc Dougall was always a great guy for singing his own praises and, of course, was very successful in show business. Mickey was boasting about how much money he had in his pocket and showing his \$1,500 watch. He pulled out a large bank roll and tried to impress Jimmy. Jimmy floored him by pulling out enough money to "choke a horse".

This became quite a thing with Jimmy. I remember times when we would go in the Havana Madrid Restaurant with Paul Rossini and they would bet the manager that Jimmy had more money in his pocket than the night club had taken in over the weekend. Jimmy was always prepared and it seemed that no matter how much money this guy

came up with, Jimmy would fish around in his pockets and come up with just a little bit more. He used to win about \$50 at a crack and it became quite the thing to talk about among the regulars.

Sometime later at the famous Lindy's Restaurant, some guys decided that they would frame Jimmy to take him down a peg or two. They found a fellow that had \$30,000 in cash and decided they would really give Jimmy a lesson.

Now Grippo was and is a very shrewd man, and through a friend he got word of this "frame-up". He called a friend of his that he knew had a lot of cash on hand and asked him how much money he had in his wall safe. His friend said probably \$45,000 or \$50,000. Jimmy borrowed \$35,000 in cash from him and went on to the restaurant. As the evening went on, someone asked during the course of the meal if he would bet anybody that he had more money in his pocket than they had? Jimmy said, "Of course, anybody, I don't care who they are!" Jimmy's friend said, "There's this fellow here from out of town and he's got a little change. Would you like to make a bet?" They, of course, made a large bet and the man laid out his 30 thousand dollar bills like cards spread on the table. Jimmy was amused and then said, "Well, this must be a frame-up. Who carries that kind of money around?" Everybody laughed and jeered and said, "We've got you now, Jimmy!" Jimmy said, "Now wait a minute", and fished in this pocket pulling out a few thousand from one, a few thousand from another, and then from his wallet a few thousand more to come up with just enough to stop the fellow by a few dollars. Naturally, the story got all around and people still haven't gotten over it. The word went out that you just can't beat that guy. Jimmy Grippo!

Jimmy is, in my opinion, the personification of dramatic ability, as far as projection a trick is concerned. I don't care what kind of trick it is. Jimmy sells it for all it's worth. He is a wonderful example of how magic can be dramatized. I, again, am very pleased that this issue is being dedicated to him.

June 1975

GENII readers should feel grateful that Eric Lewis and his son Martin have so generously contributed their well thought out and entertaining magic to this issue. The time worn saying, "Like Father Like Son", is most certainly verified by Martin.

Only having become interested in the art a few short years ago, it is incredible how knowledgeable and skillful he has become. Both father and son are thoroughly conversant with the EFFECT: the all important thing that separates the amateur from the real professional.

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of accompanying Bill and Irene Larsen, and brother Milt to Dallas, Texas to the opening of "IT'S MAGIC" night club. They took over an older night club and redecorated it with a basic magic motif, and on the opening night when we were there, they had over 700 people packing the building from wall to wall. They gave away free drinks to everybody and had some very attractive waitresses dressed up in cute little magicians' tail suits, abbreviated like the Playboy Club. Everybody was very courteous and pleasant to us and we had plenty to drink on the house. Zaney Blaney worked on the stage and the first show was very difficult because of the problem of the loud music. Later shows proved to be much more satisfactory. Tickets were issued to go into a small room where Bruce Cervon was hired for the first week to do close-up magic. They had a big table patterned after the Magic Castle close-up table and Bruce did several shows for different crowds that came in. He always does a fine show. I feel that the people there appreciated it all the more because Dallas, Texas has not been exposed to as much magic of the type that Bruce does. Actually, few people have, if they haven't been to the Magic Castle. How often do you really see a very clever magician perform right under your nose?

Bruce tells me he thinks the club will go because of the novelty of the magic. They don't have food in the club, just dancing and, of course, the magic. It caters to a younger crowd and that is obviously the group that they are going to attract because the older people wouldn't care for the loudness of the music which you can hear half-way down the block.

Anyway, we had a very nice time in Dallas and we thank the club for inviting us down. The more magic we can have going around the country the better.

In closing, I want to mention that I have just received a new book published by Supreme Magic titled, "Faucett Ross's Magic" written by Lewis Ganson. In just glancing thru it, I see it is replete with photographs, tricks, letters to Charlie Miller and letters that Ross wrote to me over the years. It looks like a wonderful book and I hope to be able to discuss it further in a future column.

Hang on to your chairs because next month I actually am going to describe a trick for my younger readers. I'm sure that some of the older fellows will appreciate it as well. I always enjoy your letters so by all means write me, c/o the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, CA 90028.

You may remember my mentioning Bob Muir who has been so very kind to me and some of the boys at the Castle. He took me on a trip around the world a few years ago and we had a wonderful time.

Last month Bob arranged for Charlie Miller and me to go to Minneapolis for a few days. Bob Muir has built one of the largest shopping sections in the world there called "North Town". We gave shows there and in the Powers Department Store. They had a magic week and Charlie and I judged a contest of youngsters 8 to 15 and an older group from 15 to 21. All the young magicians did fine performances. There was not one bad performer among them. Many built their own apparatus. It was a lot of fun.

Charlie and I were booked on a TV show with Uri Geller while we were there. We were to go on at noon. At quarter to twelve the M.C. came out and asked if it was alright to put Uri Geller on first and then Charlie and myself. It seems Geller refused to be on with us. When Geller was finished the Director asked him if he would like to shake hands with Vernon and Miller and he said, "I don't want to even meet them," and off he went. He didn't make much of a hit.

Charlie and I went on and did a few tricks and later the station told us they got dozens of calls about us but only two about Geller.

Anyway, we enjoyed our trip to Minneapolis and thank Bob Muir for the opportunity.

It is with sadness that I have to wind up this time with the announcement that our beloved Magic Castle Host and Greeter, Clarke "The Senator" Crandall passed away peacefully today, the 19th of June. He had hosts of warm friends and will be greatly missed and long remembered.

Next month I will have a trick for you. Until then, I enjoy your letters even if I can't always answer them.

Dai Vernon
c/o The Magic Castle
7001 Franklin Avenue
Hollywood, CA 90028

July 1975

When I was in England some years ago John Ramsey told me that Edward Brown was definitely the finest sleight-of-hand performer in the country. I never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Brown until just recently, and then not in person, but through his book, "The Magic of Edward G. Brown," published by Trevor Hall. It is an excellent book and I have enjoyed reading it. His version of the "Spelling Trick" is excellent. This trick has been done for the past thirty to forty years in many ways but Mr. Brown has given the routine a climax that none of the other methods had. It is well worth learning.

In answer to many requests from my younger readers to describe a simple trick I am going to devote this column to a version of this spelling trick. For any readers who may not be familiar with the effect, it's the old trick of using a packet of cards and spelling out A-C-E and turning up the Ace, and so on through T-E-N. During the routine a spectator tries his luck at spelling and gets the wrong card.

You use a pack of ten cards- Ace through Ten of any suit. These ten cards must be arranged in the following face-up sequence: 7, 10, 5, Ace, 3, 8, 4, 2, 6, and 9. The 7 is the top card of the packet face up, if you spell A-C-E, transferring one card from the top to the bottom of the packet on each letter, you end up with the Ace now showing on top. You place the ace onto the table (or hand it to spectator to hold) and spell T-W-O, ending with the deuce now showing on top of the face-up packet. Place it on table and spell T-H-R-E-E, ending with the three now showing. Place it on the table.

At this point, your patter runs to the effect that the fellow who was showing you the trick asked if you thought you could spell Four. "I said to him, 'Why this is very simple. It's just an arrangement of the cards.' He replied, 'No, sonny boy, it's not. This is a trick- try and spell the 4.' So I tried it, spelling f-o-u-r, and the 7 came up! The old man said, 'See, you lose! Watch how easy it is to spell four.' He spelled f-o-u-r and the 4 came up."

Backtracking a bit- and following the above patter: The first time you spell four and end with the seven showing, leave the seven face up on the packet do not put it on the table. When the old man respells four and it comes up, then place the four on the table. You may wish to let a spectator spell the four but I prefer to do it myself, making me the butt of the wrong card bit as per the patter story.

You continue to the effect that the old man then spelled the five, and the five came up. Then he suggested to you that surely you could spell the six since it had just three letters. So you took the cards and spelled S-I-X and got the seven again! He took back the cards, spelled six and got it. (Six goes on the table.) Then he said that since seven seemed to be my lucky (or unlucky?) number I would probably be able to spell it. I took the cards, spelled S-E-V-E-N and sure enough, the seven came up!

Now you leave the seven on top of the face-up packet as you continue your patter story. You say that the fellow suggested that you try the rest of the spelling with the packet face down. So you turn the cards face down and apparently pull the Seven off the bottom and place it face down on the table. You really do a glide and the Ten goes face down onto the table.

You spell E-I-G-H-T and turn up the card on the “T”- it is the Eight. Place it face up on the table. Continue by spelling N-I-N-E and turn the “E” card up, showing the Nine. This leaves you with just one card and for a gag you can just turn it around or pass it back and forth between your hands as you spell T-E-N. Give it a snap and turn it face up to show that the Seven is back! Let the spectator turn over the face-down card on the table to reveal the Ten! Don’t tell him to do it- he will without any coaching.

If you will take the time to learn this routine I am sure you will find it to be an enjoyable and perhaps valuable trick. It is very effective to the layman and you have the added kicker of the transposed cards at the end. But how can you arrange the cards in a novel way right in front of the spectators? This is the thing that I worked out and you may have fun doing it this way. The first thing you do is to remove the ten (any suit) and place it face up on the table. This is followed by the nine and on through the Ace which ends up on top of the face-up packet. The rest of the deck is set aside.

You tell a story about when you were a small boy an old gambler showed you a trick. “He asked me if I understood the business of playing with dice- shooting craps. I told him that I didn’t know much about it so he said he would explain the game to me.” Now you fan over the first three cards (Ace, 2, and 3) and you slip them openly between the 5 and 6. You say, “Four is a very difficult point to make (the 4 is now showing on the face of the packet) when you’re shooting crap. They will bet you two to one on the money- it’s a very difficult point to make.”

Now you fan over and push up the 5 and the Ace behind it together- push them about halfway out of the packet as you say, “Five is an easier point to make- it’s a three to two bet.” Continue fanning into the packet and push the three up saying “Now three is crap- you lose on crap.” (The 3, Ace, and 5 are now projecting out of the packet.) You hold these projecting cards and the two under them in the right hand as you display the bAllence of the packet in the left hand, saying, “Now six is a very easy point to make.” Place the two halves back together, fan past two more cards (6 and 7) and push up the 8 to join the 3, Ace, and 5. (The 6 is not pushed up.) Now you casually pull these four cards on up and away from the packet and then place them bellow the packet.

Now fan out the first five cards (packet is still face up) so that part of each card is visible. Put your left thumb on the face of the 7 and your right hand fingers (which are underneath the spread) on the back of the 9. Now cut the four cards (9, 6, 2 and 4) to the bottom. Your left thumb holds back the 7, leaving it now on top of the face-up packet. You say, “the 7 is a very lucky number- it can also be a very unlucky number because if you miss making your point and a 7 comes up, you lose, whereas if you make 7 the first time, you win!”

At this point you are now ready to start the spelling trick!

August 1975

One of the many nice things about the Magic Castle is the wonderful camaraderie and fellowship that exists at the club. As an example of this feeling, just a short time after the passing of Senator Crandall we held a little "remembrance session" in the Castle and the place was packed! Ruth Crandall said it was exactly the kind of party that the Senator would have wanted...champagne and hors d'oeuvres...a Dixieland band playing all of the Senator's favorite numbers including "A Closer Walk With Thee" which he had specifically mentioned to Don Lawton many years ago as being a number he would want played at his funeral as Clarke had willed his body to medical science.

Senator's son, Joel, brought over several boxes of the famous twisted cigars that Clarke enjoyed so much and they were given to those members who wanted a memento of the "gruff old man" with a heart of gold. Ruth Crandall will stay out here in California and we hope she will want to visit her friends at the Castle now and then. It was truly an evening to be remembered and a fine tribute to our departed friend.

Performing magicians who have appeared at the Castle recently include Ger Cooper from Holland who did an excellent job and pleased all the magicians with his original routine with the Cups and Balls; Liebenow and his wife from Germany with fine presentations including his amazing poker chip routines. Incidentally, Liebenow was very nice to me when I visited Frankfort some years ago on a lecture tour. He acted as my interpreter over there but he certainly did not need one for himself over here as Liebenow speaks perfect English. I'm sure he must have made some of the local magicians envious with the good English he used.

I have always felt that there is no excuse for a magician to use poor grammar (unless he is doing a comedy or character act) and I wince whenever I witness a magician murdering the English language. A refresher course in English, along with a course in Public Speaking, could be a solid investment for any magician.

In the June issue I mentioned Faucett Ross' new book. Since then I have had a chance to go over it and would say that it is a very good book for beginners in magic as well as the old-timers. It not only explains how the tricks are done, but also HOW TO PRESENT THEM. If you intend to entertain with magic, the EFFECT is the important part of any trick. I keep harping on this, I know, but still there are so many performers who insist on "improving" tricks. Al Baker made the comment years ago that "more tricks are killed by 'improvements' than any other way".

Years ago my dear friend, Silent Mora, did a trick using two hats and four different colored marbles. These marbles would gather together under one hat. This trick greatly impressed MAGICIANS because they knew the difficulty involved in using marbles of different colors. But the effect is not nearly as strong as when done with four marbles of the same color. The EFFECT is that you cause four objects to accumulate or gather under one hat. When you have different colors to contend with you have to use extra or superfluous moves which can befuddle the spectator and the effect is not clear-cut.

A good example of this happened recently at the Castle when a magician did the coins thru the table trick using a quarter, half dollar, silver, dollar, and an English penny. To a spectator this is no better an effect than making four similar coins penetrate the

table. IF you could do the routine with different coins as clearly as with similar coins, perhaps the effect would be better. But it is impossible to get the clean-cut nice straight forward effect by using coins of different denominations. Extra moves have to be put into the routine to accomplish the basic effect. Please, fellow magicians, try not to improve some of the real “classics of magic” because they have been well thought-out and tested over the years. You CAN improve them with patter and modernized presentations but the EFFECTS are solid and well worked out.

Getting back to Faucett’s book, this is a very good book for anyone to study because of the many excellent presentation ideas and also patter presentations included. I feel certain that this book will become one of the classics and will be well-liked by everyone who reads it.

Young Jeff Altman, who is the son of Arthur Altman of New York, has been working lately in what is called “The Comedy Store” on Hollywood. This is a place where comedians gather to try out routines and acts in front of the public and agents who are looking for new talent. Jeff has been very popular there with his very funny and clever routines. He appeared recently on the Merv Griffin Show but unfortunately they had to cut a good part of his act because of time so we are expecting that he will be called back for another guest spot.

Have just learned from Bill Larsen that this is to be a Derek Dingle issue. If I had known sooner I most certainly would have stated my high opinion of this young and very accomplished exponent of our art.

Will only add that he “ranks with the best.”

September 1975

It gives me great pleasure to know that this issue of GENII is being dedicated to U.F. "Gen" Grant. I've known Gen for many years and consider him a very dear friend. Years ago Dr. Gordon Peck, a well-known dentist in Glen Falls, New York, told me what a genius Gen Grant was (and is). I sometimes think that magicians don't give Gen the credit he deserves. He has made so many fine contributions to the Art of Magic that I think it would be almost impossible to list them all. Not only has he come up with these marvelous ideas but he performs them very well himself. Years ago when he appeared at the S.A.M. in New York he delighted everybody. Up to that time Gen Grant was only a name but when he appeared in New York he verified what Dr. Peck used to say, that he was a real genius in magic.

I got to know Gen best during the time he had a magic shop on 42nd Street below 8th Avenue on the uptown side of the street. All the magicians in town at that time used to congregate at Gen's shop. We used to have huge crowds every Saturday. A rather amusing incident happened there one time.

A gambler named John Rakinakas was present one Saturday. He was a very good bottom dealer and well-known character around New York. Francis Carlyle and Miaco knew him very well and he taught them several things about card table artifice. On this particular day Mickey McDougall happened to drop in. Mickey is known as the Card Detective, and Rakinakas overheard the word 'detective'. Now gamblers, as a rule, don't care too much for the law or detectives, so Rakinakas was, naturally, antagonistic towards somebody called a detective. He did not realize that Mickey was a 'card detective'.

Anyway, Rakinakas was doing some dealing at the counter, and calling out the names of the cards that he dealt the opponent. Mickey said that John was getting a reflection of the cards in the glass top of the show case. So Rakinakas had them place a newspaper on top of the case. Mickey insisted that John use his (Mickey's) cards. John agreed, so Mickey shuffled his own deck, handed it to John, and said that if John could deal one card to him and name it without his detecting it, he would give John \$1,000.00.

As I said, Rakinakas already had his ire up a little bit. He slowly reached into his pocket, took out his glasses case and removed a pick cloth with which he cleaned his glasses. He then dealt two hands of cards, one to Mickey and one to himself. Mickey repeated his statement, "Name one of these cards and I'll give you a thousand dollars." Rakinakas said, "You have a five, a Jack, a nine, a Queen, and a seven." You should have seen the expression on Mickey's face! He was absolutely flabbergasted.

I don't think that Mickey knows to this day that when Rakinakas took the pink cloth out of his pocket to clean his glasses, he also put on a 'shiner', or, as they call it, a 'glim'. Very well posted gamblers call it a 'light'. Some of the old catalogues used to state, when they used a holdout to bring the shiner down the sleeve, they would say, "the light comes down the sleeve". That's what Rakinakas used and Mickey didn't even suspect it. John was such an expert with it.

Well, that's just one of the many memorable things that happened in Gen Grant's magic shop in New York.

As you know, Gen now lives in Columbus, Ohio, and I remember one time when I gave a lecture out there that I am sure Gen will remember also because it ran for eight and one-half hours.

Gen is beloved and liked by everybody in the magic business. He is fair and square and an upright gentleman. He is one of those persons who 'wears well', just like Joe Berg. A person you can trust. I think that my friend and ex-dealer, Don Lawton, will bear me out in these feelings and statements, as I have heard him talk glowingly about his friendship with the "General".

In closing I must say how pleased I was to see how great Gen looked when he was out here this past spring for the annual banquet of the Academy of Magical Arts. He received a well-deserved Creative Fellowship award during the banquet. Gen and his wife, Delores, had a wonderful time here and it was a real treat seeing them once again. Gen: do you happen to have a portrait of yourself in your attic???!!!

Every now and then I like to mention some of our magicians here at the Castle. One of the cleverest fellows in this neck of the woods is Dick Zimmerman. Not only is Dick a very skilled magician and fine performer but he is also one of our most creative members. If you have any magical problems to be solved, Dick Zimmerman is the man who can do it for you. He is one of our most knowledgeable magicians.

Kuda Bux flew back East for an appearance on the Mike Douglas TV Show. Kuda performs here at the Castle quite often and, of course, his blindfold and "Seeing With The Fingertips" has been seen all over the world. Many magicians think they have an inkling as to how Kuda does his blindfold act. I dare say that there are very few who are even close. Kuda joins a group of us nightly at the Castle for some rousing games of Hearts. When fellows such as Joe Cossari, Hy Berg, Bruce Cervon, Whitey Roberts, etc., start playing cards it's really something to see! Although there is never any money involved you might be inclined to think otherwise from the action and reaction of the various players! It's a great way to relax.

October 1975

Years ago when I first came out to Hollywood to visit I spent a lot of time with Chester Morris, who was very active in films then, and with Cy Enfield who was living here at the time. Later on, during the McCarthy investigations, Cy Enfield rather than 'Welsh' on his writer friends, moved to England where he was very successful directing films.

Cy used to tell me about a chap in England named Alex Elmsley and what a positive genius he was, etc. I must mention right here that I never refer to Alex as being an Englishman because, as Ron Wilson points out, Alex is really of Scottish descent, I corresponded with Alex long before I first met him. But, when I did finally meet him in England I had to concur with what Cy used to say about him- he was, and is, the perfect gentleman and a true genius. Alex writes in a beautiful script handwriting and expresses himself extremely well in his writings. As I mentioned, I corresponded with Alex and he sent me many excellent items, including the Elmsely Count, long before it ever came out in print.

Just as Herb Zarrow is associated with the Zarrow Shuffle, Alex is associated with the Elmsley Count. But this count, famous as it is among card men, is just one of his many fine contributions to the Art of Magic.

Alex visited the Castle recently and presented his lecture. In fact, he had to give two lectures as the demand to see this man was so great. Everyone who attended was absolutely delighted and so happy they had the opportunity of seeing this man at work.

It was really a fantastic lecture and everything he did was beautifully explained and expressed. Some of the effects he presented were simply staggering to the mind, yet many of them were simplicity in themselves. You know, simplicity in art is a wonderful thing.

While Alex was here I had the pleasure of a session with him and Persi Diaconis. Just the three of us got together in the Castle library and kicked a few ideas around. Here is a simple but effective little card trick that Alex showed us and I am sure he would like for me to pass it along to you readers.

Any deck can be used and you ask the owner of the deck to shuffle the cards as much as they like. You then ask them to start dealing the cards from the top of the deck into a facedown pile on the table and to stop whenever they like. Your job is to make sure that they stop dealing on the 8th, 9th, 10th or 11th card. Time your instructions correctly and you should have no difficulty in having them stop on one of these four cards.

After they have stopped dealing you comment that it would be impossible for you to know the value of the card they have stopped on. You ask them to look at that card and pick up the entire packet of cards, after having placed the rest of the deck to one side. Looked-at-card stays on top of the packet. Then you ask, "Have you ever heard of the Australian Shuffle?" Regardless of their answer you continue, "It is known as the 'down and under' shuffle."

"But before you start the shuffle I want you to spell 'Australian Shuffle', transferring a card from the top of the packet to the bottom for each letter." They do this,

which means that they have transferred, one at a time, 17 cards. You do not mention this fact, of course.

Now you are ready to do the Australian Shuffle. Deal a card face down onto the table, place the next card under the packet, deal the next card face down, place the next card under, etc., until you are left with just one card in your hand.” They do this. You then ask them to call out the card they looked at and then have them turn the last card over! We hope they will be surprised to see that it is the selected card!

I think this is a very nice little trick as you can do it on any occasion, you don’t have to prepare any thing or get ready in any way. You see someone with a deck of cards just ask them to shuffle them and start dealing, etc.

I must say that this ‘self-working’ trick is nothing compared to the miracles he performed in his lecture, but it is a good representation of the idea of simplicity being effective.

In closing I want again to state that in my estimation Alex Elmsley is a real genius and a true gentleman. I know that everyone at the Castle was so pleased at having the opportunity of meeting this charming affable man.

November 1975

The other evening Bill and Irene asked me to join them with Marvyn Roy for a trip down to Long Beach to see the annual Long Beach Mystics Show. It was truly a professional program in all respects. Everything from the stage lighting and production down to the individual acts was top-drawer. It is good to know that the future of magic is in such capable hands! The show was presented at Millikan High School auditorium which is an ideal place for a magic show. Peter Pit was the emcee and in his inimitable style introduced the following performers (alphabetically): Dave Alexander, Les Arnold, Mike Caveney, Bobby Drake & Donita, The Magnificent Charles, Mark Kalin, Dave Molinar (Vent), S. Earl Statler, David Rheinstein, and Mike Yamashiro, The stage director was Joseph Blendeman, Congratulations to Producer Bill Smith who put it all together and everyone connected with the show.

A little incident occurred which proves that people who attend magic shows have a sense of honor, magicians themselves use deception purely for entertainment. When we arrived back at the Larson residence Irene discovered that her purse was missing. She couldn't remember for certain but thought she had left it on a seat at the auditorium. Sure enough, a young chap had found it and turned it in to the committee which, in turn, got it back to Irene intact. Irene located the honest finder and gave him a generous reward. It is refreshing to know that such things happen in this day and age.

A couple of months ago Castle member, Mike Gold, told me that the Dick Clark Productions company was planning a motion picture for the television program, Wide World Mystery. Authors Bill Lee and Robert Arthur had written a scenario about a murder in a magic studio and one of the characters was a professor 80 years of age. Mike told the authors that there was someone at the Castle known as 'The Professor' (namely yours truly) and that he was in his eighties. Mike told me that I might be able to get the part, and wanted to know if I had ever done any acting. I told him very little except for an occasional magic show, and a few school plays when I was a boy.

Well, it all ended with my going over to the studio along with Sandy Spillman, Castle host and Houdini Séance medium, to read for the two elderly gentleman parts. Sandy got the role of the professor because of his previous acting experience and I wound up in the role of the owner of a night club. We had a lot of fun making the movie. I am not certain as to when it will be shown on television, but it will be a Wide World Mystery entitled "Mr. and Ms." With a possible subtitle of "The Magic Studio Mystery." I think it will be of interest to my readers as there is an excellent bullet catching sequence in it plus other dramatic magic.

In the movie my 'daughter', Barbara, played by Udonna Power, fires the shot that kills Mark Hancock who plays the role of a magician. Thanks to the off-stage work and timing of Jack Hurlbut (another Castle host) and Leo Behnke, the scene was so realistic that one of the producers who was not in on the "how" of it almost fainted! I do hope you get to see this special television program. It was directed by Russ Petranto, who is one of the finest directors it has been my pleasure to meet.

Another bit of magic that you'll be seeing later, on your television screen was filmed recently at the Magic Castle with Flip Wilson. It will be on a Flip Wilson special as a Visit to the Magic Castle. Diana Zimmerman does a couple of nicely presented routines on the show and I do some magic with Flip. The funniest thing in the entire 'visit' is when Mark Wilson levitates Flip who is dressed as Geraldine! As you may have read in the trade papers, Flip goes into these "visits" without any formally prepared script. He is an expert at ad-libbing and he really broke us up during the filming of the levitation. Everyone agreed that Flip Wilson is one of the nicest guys in the business. He took time out to make a trip up to the third floor of the Castle to visit the office girls and introduce them to Geraldine. I am sure you will enjoy this television show when it is aired, in January.

The following "plug" for a new magic shop was scheduled for an earlier column but because of space limitations it was dropped. Bert Green has opened The Magic Corner on Hollywood Blvd. just off Vine Street. It is a beautiful shop with a marvelous array of magic, small and large. And Jules Lenier conducts magic lessons in a back room studio. I was surprised to see a couple of illusions on display in the \$400 to \$500 price range. This was unheard of when I first started in magic. My goodness, if you paid \$15 or \$20 for a small trick it was a fortune. But now they talk about \$500 as if it were a few pretzels or something. But life goes on! Bert, congratulations on your new magic shop and the very best of luck to you.

Friends of Francis Carlyle should know that at the present time he is a patient in the Long Beach General Hospital and is extremely ill. We are all hoping that he will recover from this latest bout and be back better than ever. He has always had marvelous recuperative powers and we all pray that he'll recover again.

MEMO TO BILL AND MILT: How about a "Famous Magicians' Hands" section for the Castle along the lines of the famous handprints in cement at the Chinese Theatre in Hollywood?

December 1975

As you read these lines this year's IT'S MAGIC show will be past history. As usual, it was a great success and played for two weeks to full houses. Milt Larsen has created a 'tradition' here in Hollywood. I had the pleasure of appearing on the show, presenting my routine with the Linking Rings. This acted as an introduction to Mark Kalin, a 15 year old magician, who made such a big impression on us all at the recent Long Beach Mystics Show. His original pool shark routine is great- you'll be reading about it and all the other acts in Bill's review of the show.

I keep hoping that my friend, Danny Dew, of Phoenix, can be persuaded to emcee one of Milt's shows. Anyone who has ever seen Danny work knows what a delightful performer he is. Let's start working on him, Milt!

I was very pleased to see my dear friend, Gerald Kosky, performing in the Castle Cabaret recently. Gerald is one of our more knowledgeable magicians and a charming person to know. Gerald was co-author with Arnold Furst on THE MAGIC OF TENKAI, a beautiful book published by Lloyd Jones.

As I write this column I feel a little nervous because some of my local friends such as Lew Derman and Joe Cossari are trying to convince me that I should go out on a lecture tour next year. What a way to celebrate the bi-centennial year! Well, I have already said I'll do it but I sometimes act hastily and then regret it afterwards. Esther Nilsen, who is handling all the details and bookwork for this proposed tour, is receiving letters from all over the country. What amazes me is why, with so many clever magicians around, the magic clubs want an old timer like me. Of course I've been at it a long time and I do have the distinction of having personally known many of the more famous magicians of the past years. Harry Kellar, Thurston, Houdini, Goldin, Dante, Blackstone, etc., have all been personal friends. The fact that I was never in the business as a professional magician such as the above-mentioned magicians, they tended to confide in me and would pass some of their good ideas on magic, knowing that I would not be in competition with them.

So, as a consequence, during my lifetime I have absorbed a great deal of magic and feel that I can speak with some authority on the subject.

All of which is a nice segue into my next topic! So many young fellows write to me for advice on becoming professional magicians. Unless you can come up with an exceptional idea, your best bet is to have a regular job and do shows 'on the side' for extra income. I have known too many professional magicians who would have one week of work and six weeks of no work. It's hard to pay the bills when there is no money coming in. But getting back to my opening statement about an exceptional idea: Marvyn Roy is an excellent example of this. He took the old Threaded Needles from Mouth trick, changed it to small light bulbs, and preceded to build an act using lights and calling himself "Mr. Electric". He did something that hit the pulse of the public and he had been exceedingly successful. With his charming wife, Carol, Marvyn has toured the world and can present his act from the largest stages or 'in the round'.

Another classic example is Norm Nielsen. He took the Zombie Ball and changed it into a floating violin, a violin that plays while it floats. Those of you who have seen it

in person or on television know what a delightful effect it is. And the recent addition of the violin coming on stage and taking a bow, after it has vanished from the cloth in Norm's hands, is another fine example of originality on Norm's part. He, too, has been extremely successful in the world of entertainment.

Don't make the mistake of thinking you can take the standard tricks and go out and make a fortune with them. You must have something different- something with which you can be identified. In other words, you must have a gimmick of some kind. Siegfried and Roy pop into mind as the most perfect examples of superlative magic "something different". Productions, vanishes, and transformations with lions, tigers, and leopards! No wonder they are the sensations of Las Vegas!

To be successful in show business you must have something that identifies you. Years ago Fred Keating took an old trick, the vanishing bird cage, and did it better than anyone else. It became his trademark and he was very successful in the theatre. So this is my sincere advice to all you young chaps who have written to me: THINK. Use your brain and try to think of some novel way of doing a trick.

One of magic's most original magicians is Sawa of Japan. He has been visiting the Castle recently and the other night he did a couple of tricks that will illustrate what I mean by thinking of new presentations. He showed us small branch with several leaves on it. After showing both sides he said (in his quaint English) "Wind come and blow bugs on tree". Lo and behold, there suddenly appeared little bugs resembling potato bugs. He then picked them off, one by one, and placed them on his palm. He slowly closed his hand and when he opened it there, surprisingly in their place, was one large bug!

Another beautiful Sawa trick had him placing little strips of white cardboard on the table, and then strips of black cardboard, arranging them like keys of a piano. Then he proceeded to play them- with actual music coming forth! At the end of the routine he pushed the pieces of cardboard forward- and that's all there was- just pieces of cardboard. In other words, he took inanimate objects and produced music from them. This is certainly original creative thinking!

In closing may I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy prosperous New Year.

January 1976

I remember years ago when I was a small boy I used to write to Davenport's or Gamage's in England or Roterberg in Chicago for some book or small trick and it seemed an interminable time in waiting before shipment would come through. It's strange that as you get older two weeks seem like a single day. I can hardly believe that another year has flown by and here we are again, starting a new year.

It's really remarkable how things are flourishing around the Castle and what a delightful place it is these days. Over the months I have met so many magicians from all over the world. Just a few weeks ago I had the pleasure of meeting a young Japanese magician named Akima Yamamoto. He is a friend of Sawa (whom I have mentioned many times) and he did a special show for us in which he presented some very novel tricks. He has some new twists that pleased us all and this is very laudable. As I write in a recent column, this is what magic needs today. Young fellows who wish to succeed must give their tricks a new 'face'. Don't be foolish enough to copy the exact words or phrases that another magician is using that you admire. Change the locale, change the phrasing. If you want to use the same theme as his patter that may be all right but please make it refreshing by changing the entire approach to it.

I hate to keep harping over and over about the importance of being 'natural' I don't mean that if you happen to be awkward naturally you should be awkward when you perform! Be as neat as possible. A magician should never be graceful. A female magician can be graceful. A man should never be graceful with his hands, with his stature, deportment or anything. He should be neat and precise but not graceful because this belongs to the feminine sex. A man looks prissy or a little out of place if he tries to be graceful. In other words, be natural, not only in your dress and your manner of speech but in everything you do. This is very important in performing magic. Robert Houdin said that a magician is an actor playing the part of a magician. That is, if you are an actor! Very few people are good actors. But if you are a natural actor, then you will be very successful.

Lou Derman, who does a comedy act, is absolutely natural when he performs, Lou is a comedian who is writing and producing one of the top TV shows in the country, "All in the Family", and he never laughs at anyone's jokes or stories. You can tell him the funniest story in the world and he keeps a dead pan. This is the way he performs, he says hilariously funny things in his act but he doesn't smile- he is dead serious. This is his natural manner. A great many of the leading comedians are like that. They are very funny people but they don't laugh at other person's stories. That's their natural behaviour, and they behave that way all the time which is very essential in doing magic- behaving naturally.

I would say that too many magicians defeat the purpose of their performances by not being natural. They imitate someone else. Or they have seen someone do a certain bit of business or use a gag that they think they can throw into their act with success. This is a great mistake. It really hurts me when I see people that could be so much better

if they would only give up the nonsense of trying to copy somebody else or trying to be funny when they are not naturally funny.

Being natural is what makes little children so charming. Perhaps they come out with some outlandish remark but it is natural to them and it is loveable and that's why people like nicely behaved children.

A magician should be the same way- he should be admired by his audience. If an audience does not like the personality of a performer he could do the most amazing tricks in the world and he would still not 'go over' with the audience. The most important thing is to be liked by the audience. When you walk on stage you should love the audience and they should love you. This is the attitude you must have, even if it is a rough drinking audience, still you must love them. Say to yourself "What a privilege it is for me to be allowed to come here in front of this intelligent audience and give them some fun and amusement." This is the attitude you must have.

And while we are on the subject of attitude, another important thing to my way of thinking is that you do not insult your audience. One of our hosts here at the Castle, Don Lawton, when emceeing the shows tells some of the most atrocious puns you'd ever want to (or not want to) hear. But they are delightful when he tells them because he has a way of delivering them to his audience. As Jud Cole used to say years ago, "I got that one out of the almanac- I think I'll put it back!" Let the audience know that you know how bad the pun is. Then they will enjoy it. But if you look at them and say, "What do you do, sit on your hands?" or "I'll wait for the applause" you have failed. These trite remarks should be taboo. Leave them out- don't use anything that insults the intelligence of your audience.

I few evenings ago we had a visit from John Scarne. I spent several hours with him in the dining room and he demonstrated the effect he performed on the Merv Griffin Show which should air shortly. Tony Giorgio was very enthusiastic about John's ability. Incidentally he contemplates writing a book on Advanced Card Moves. It should be a best seller.

In closing may I wish you a very pleasant 1976. This may be the year in which you will visit the Magic Castle, and if you do be sure to ask our hosts to direct you to

Yours truly,
DAI VERNON

February 1976

It saddens me greatly but I must say a few things about my dear departed friend, Francis Carlyle. I first met Francis in the late twenties. In those days a lot of the young magicians used to hang around Al Baker's and Martin Sunshine's magic shop in Time's Square. Al told me that there was a young boy downstairs in the restaurant he was sure I would enjoy meeting. I was quite fascinated by how clever he was when I met him. He was very proficient in second dealing and sleights that the average magician couldn't do with cards. Francis and I became very good friends. He told me that he had started out in magic with Paul Connelly, and during his school years he won prizes and scholarships with his magic up around Fall River and Providence where he lived. He really was a very clever bright young man.

He met Miaco and the two of them struck up quite a friendship. To give you an idea of how seriously he took their magic, one time Cardini was playing at the Palace-back when they had the feature film and then vaudeville, over and over, doing five or six shows a day. Francis and Miaco were on a box watching Cardini. During the movie you would hear the rifling and shuffling of cards while they were practicing. Cardini noticed them, of course, and after the fourth show he sent out to Lindy's and had some sandwiches and coffee sent over to the box! Cardini had a sense of humor back in those days.

A lot of fellows accused Francis of copying Cardini because he did cards and cigarettes but, as a matter of fact, Francis was a born mimic. He could copy anyone. He used to break up my wife with his imitations of myself. He could imitate almost anyone he met, their walk, their talk. And he was an excellent entertainer- right up to the last. If he had a weakness it was the fact that he couldn't resist copying everything he saw or heard, but he was a genius at this kind of thing.

He had a twin brother who looked exactly like him. When Francis made cruises to South America his twin brother would be down at the dock to meet him on the return, and everyone on board would be amazed because they thought they saw Francis on the dock waiting for the ship to come in and they KNEW that he was on board!

Speaking of the cruise ships, if memory serves me right. Arthur Lloyd and Howard Brooks were the first magicians to make these cruises. And then Sam Horowitz, Francis and I made steady cruises to South America for years. Francis developed quite a reputation on board ship for being a comedian. He would rush out to do his act with a piece of adhesive tape on his forehead and everybody would think that he had bumped into a door or something. Right in the middle of his act he would reach up and pull off the tape, saying, "And now we'll see who won the turkey!" It sounds ridiculous but the way he 'pulled it off' was very funny! (Sorry about the play on words!)

When Francis closed his performances here at the Castle he would look at his audience and say, "When I look out at you nice people here tonight and see these lovely women it reminds me of a beautiful garden of flowers. Of course there are a few weeds here and there!" Some of the local boys criticized Francis for this remark because they thought that the 'weeds' didn't appreciate it, but I find it hard to believe that anyone

could have been offended. Anyway, Francis always got a big laugh with it. Everything Francis did was always received because he was a great entertainer.

It is so very sad that he had to leave us the way he did because of his addiction to John Barleycorn. Everybody loved Francis and he made friends everywhere he went. Many readers of this column, I'm sure, have met and enjoyed Francis and his wonderful magic and stories.

Just recently a fellow named Roger Pierre has put out a book of Francis Carlyle tricks. I'd like to offer one correction in the spelling of a name; Roger mentions Reece Calder as being famous mentalists of the past. He must have received this information over the telephone because there was no such person as Calder. His right name was Kaldah. He was known as an Egyptian mentalist. He was a great friend of Paul Rosini and did some remarkable mental work.

Before concluding I'd like to mention that my very dear friend Eddie Fechter is having a small "convention" for lovers of the art. It is slated for May 7th and 8th at the Forks Hotel in Buffalo, N. Y. If I am in that territory at the time I shall most certainly be there.

Carlyle's real name was Francis Xavier Finnerman. A lot of people thought he was Jewish but he was as Irish as Paddy's pig. When Francis was working for Skee and Armstrong, agents in New York, Skee got a phone call asking for a man who did cigarettes. Skee told the caller, "I have a man named Francis Xavier Finnerman", and that caller asked "What weight does he fight at?" When Skee told this to Francis he immediately realized that he should change his name. So he took over his mother's name, Carlyle, and was known as Francis Carlyle ever after.

Years ago I introduced Francis to a very clever corporation lawyer friend of mine on New York. He took us out to dinner because I had been telling him what a genius Francis was. The next day my friend called me and said, "Professor, I must tell you that your friend is really a genius but he will never amount to very much in life because he is very emotionally unstable." That was the truest statement I ever heard because poor Francis, with his drinking problem, was so emotionally unstable that he just couldn't make it. It was a tragic thing because he was such a lovable guy. Anywhere he went he was the center of attention and made things merrier and happier for everyone. It is a sorry thing that I have to report that Francis is no longer with us.

March 1976

It was well over forty years ago that I spent my summers in Manitau Springs at the foot of Pikes Peak in beautiful Colorado. Paul Fox and his wife, Henrietta, and daughter, Margaret Grace, lived in nearby Colorado Springs. Many of the most pleasant times of my life were spent with them. Paul was, and still is, a genius in magic. He often talked in glowing terms about a chap named Danny Dew and I was impressed and anxious to meet this man. Later on I did meet Danny and I must say that Paul's praise was well warranted. Everyone who has met Danny Dew has been most enthusiastic in their praise for him.

Just last week the Phoenix, Arizona, magicians (I.B.M. Ring No. 55- "The Bert Easley Ring") honored Danny with a testimonial dinner and show. Dr. Leo Coleman was in charge and he really did a "bang-up" job.

Joe Cossari, Charlie Kohrs, and I drove over to Phoenix to attend the affair. While visiting with Danny in his home the phone rang and it was Bill Larsen calling to tell Danny that he and Irene were flying over to join the fun. This really thrilled Danny and his charming wife, Melba. Danny could hardly believe that Bill and Irene would take time out to visit him. He failed to comprehend how much they both admired and respected him.

The convention hall in the Ramada Inn was ideal for the 210 guests who came to honor Danny. After the dinner there was a busy recess during which the seating was rearranged for the show. Then an additional crowd was admitted (at a separate charge) for the show. Brad Zinn started the program with a resume of Danny's life, pointing out his many talents in magic, music, dancing, expert chef, and above all, his self-effacing and genuine modest and most lovable character.

The local talent appearing on the show did an excellent job. Skip Chasey presented his magic in a bright jaunty modern fashion and Kenneth Claire gave a demonstration of mentalism that caused much amusement when he told a Swedish woman about the private things connected with her life. Two nice-looking chaps did a double act that had many novel twists. I am truly sorry that I cannot recall their names but they were very good.

To climax the evening Ron Wilson, "The Uncanny Scot", scored heavily. Ron is one of the regular performers at the Magic Castle and I know that the Phoenix boys were very happy that he could be with them. His Rising Card effect was something really new for the magicians as none of the usual weak points were evident in his presentation. He does not use a Martin deck or any other method sold by the dealers. If you see him perform you will realize that his method is the very best to date.

About midnight Harry Blackstone, Jr., who was appearing at the local Playboy Club, phoned and asked a group of us to join him afterwards at Sambo's Restaurant. About thirty of us drove over and we wound up in the wee small hours of the morning, as is usually the case when magicians get together to relax. All in all it was a great evening and I am so pleased that everything came off so well.

Before closing this month I must say a few words about Charlie Khors. This man is an extremely clever ventriloquist who doesn't use or need a vent figure for his routines. He really has the distant voice down to perfection. When we stopped at the border for fruit inspection the men on duty were quite amazed to hear a voice calling, "Let me out, let me out" apparently coming from the trunk of the car!

Later on, when we stopped at a small restaurant there as a dog standing outside by the screen door. Charlie called one of the waitress's attention to it by saying, "Look, that's the Arizona talking dog!" The dog was making funny noises and started the dog "talking" to the girls and they really believed what they were seeing and hearing! Even the owner of the place thought there was a real talking dog outside- that's how good Charlie is.

On Halloween Day a star was placed in Hollywood Blvd. (sidewalk) recognizing the talents of Harry Houdini. They had a special ceremony during which Mark Wilson performed the Substitution Trunk, one of Harry's favorite tricks. Incidentally, the star has just the name of Houdini- not Harry Houdini- but you really don't have to use his first name because everyone knows Houdini- it is so universally known that it stands alone.

Mentioning Mark a moment ago- this is quite a coincidence- I just received a large package here in the Castle library where I am taping this column and it contained the "Mark Wilson Course in Magic". I must say that he has done a beautiful job with this course. The line drawings are clear and explicit, as is the text, and I like the fact that the book lays flat so you can work out the various moves without having to hold it down at the same time. In just glancing through the book I would say that it is excellent and I can't help thinking how fortunate the young would-be magicians of today are in having such a course available.

A personal note in closing: Just received my mail today, including my Social Security check, and it made me think of how grateful I am to Herb Zarrow for taking me under his wing years ago and handling problems for me that I would never have done. I was, and probably still am, a poor businessman. Thanks to Herb I am now receiving these monthly checks. I have long felt that Herb has not been given the recognition he so justly deserves in magic. He has developed some very fine things over the years. And he and his wife have been very hospitable to magicians. The "Zarrow Shuffle" is just one of his many contributions to magic.

Hope to meet many of my readers during my farewell lecture tour this Spring.

April 1976

One of the things that make the Magic Castle so attractive to members and guests alike is that you never know who you might see, here on any given night. Just the other evening I was introduced to a good looking tall blonde fellow who turned out to be the world's champion motorcycle racer. His name was Ole Olsen from Denmark. He is a three-time champion of the world as a motorcycle racer.

A week ago I was up in the library playing chess with Ray Grismer when Bill Larsen walked in and asked me to go with him to one of the dining rooms to meet some friends. When I walked into the room there seated at a table were Johnny Carson, Dick Cavett, and Orson Welles. John Daniels and his wife and friends were also there and I must say it looked like a panel show! Bruce Cervon had just finished entertaining them and I could tell from their comments that they were very pleased. Ron Wilson was also there and I believe that he, also, had done a show for them.

Johnny and Dick asked me to sit down and join the party. They asked me if I had ever been fooled by anyone with magic. I said "Of course. That's one of the charms of magic to be puzzled and fooled, and this had occurred many times during my lifetime in magic." Well, anyway, Johnny asked me if I could tell him how the following related trick was done:

He and Dick Cavett had been in Las Vegas a few days earlier and had stopped in to watch Jimmy Grippo work at Caesar's Palace. While there, in walked a mother, father, and daughter from Kansas. The parents claimed that their daughter had psychic ability. Jimmy is very much interested in the occult and asked them in which was the daughter was blessed with these gifts.

The daughter, who is 18 years old, asked Jimmy for a pack of cards..."a brand new pack that has never been opened." Jimmy had the house man bring a pack from the house stock and she asked Jimmy to open the pack. She did not touch the deck (according to Johnny Carson as he told me this happening) and she instructed Jimmy to remove any extra cards but to leave the joker in the pack.

She had Jimmy shuffle the pack and then hold it face down in his hands. She then walked over to the wall and stood with her face to the wall and asked Jimmy to start dealing the cards face up onto the table one at a time until she told him to stop. She stated that when she said 'stop' the joker would be the next card. Jimmy sort of scoffed at this statement but he went ahead and dealt the cards as instructed. Johnny said that Jimmy had dealt about 16 cards when the girl called out "Stop". Sure enough, when Jimmy turned over the next card it was the joker!

Jimmy, naturally, thought it was some kind of stooge trick so the girl offered to repeat it and said she would go out of the room. She told Jimmy to shuffle the cards again and start dealing them as before (after she had left the room) and to stop dealing when he heard a knock on the door. She closed the door behind her and Jimmy started dealing the cards face up. Suddenly there was a knock on the door and Jimmy stopped

dealing the cards. And, as before, when he turned over the top card of the deck in his hands, it was the joker!

I told Johnny that it was very difficult to solve a trick just from a description of it. And, judging from what he had told me I, too might have been completely baffled. Both Johnny and Dick said it was the most remarkable things they had ever seen. Johnny is very conversant with magical principles and, as you surely know, worked at one time under the name of The Great Carsoni, Dick Cavett does some magic also, and Orson Welles at one time had a full evening show of magic.

As this column is being written I am getting ready to start on my "Farewell Lecture Tour". The first 10 or so stops will be past history by the time this issue of GENII lands in your mail box, but perhaps the following listing will be of interest to some of my readers. I am including the contact name and phone number just in case you might want to join us.

April 19th - Columbus, Ohio
Frank Seltzer (614) 263-5441

April 24th - Grand Rapid, Michigan
Dr. Vander Wal (616) 942-9645

April 26th - Buffalo, New York
Bob Weill (716) 284- 8266

May 2nd - Allentown, Pennsylvania
George Reiger (201) 454-3553

May 5th - Hartford, Connecticut
Thomas Verner (203) 233-0366

May 7th - Fairlawn, New Jersey
Herb Zarrow (201) 797-8338

May 9th to 18th - Boston, Mass.
Steve Dacri (617) 757- 7373

May 22nd - Quebec, Canada
Herb Morrissey (514) 744- 0414

May 28th - Minneapolis, Minnesota
Tod Ludholm (612) 333-4702

June 5th - Seattle, Washington
Dr. Schultz (206) 624- 7787

Congratulations to all the winners as well as those involved in presenting the Eighth Annual Academy of Magical Arts Award Banquet. I know Bill Larsen will have a full report in this issue for you but I just want to add how proud I was to attend and pick up an Award of Merit for my good friend Danny Dew who was in Los Angeles but too ill to attend. He is better now, I am happy to say. Also welcome Robert Harbin to the circle of "Master Fellowship" holders. He certainly is deserving.

In closing, it seems there has been a rumor circulating around the east that I am no longer among the living. As Mark Twain once said: "The news of my death has been greatly exaggerated."

May 1976

I would like to start this month's column with an article given to me by Luke McKissack, well-known lawyer and member of the Castle.

THE HOBBYIST MAGICIAN'S VIEW OF MAGIC

By Luke McKissack

The father of Greek oratory, Quintillian, once declaimed, "What you are speaks so loud, I can't hear what you say." Although his advice was directed at the Orator who sought to convince his audience, the basic precept (when stripped of semantic frills) amounts to saying the whole character of the person shines through to the audience and leaves an indelible impression; and it is this overall lasting memory which counts in measuring the performer.

Too often the obvious is overlooked. The ultimate question for each viewer will always be, "Did I like him or her?", or "Do I feel pleased with the performance?" Needless to say, skillful handling of magic is a sine qua non to achieving that objective; and, conversely, magic which comes across as rankly amateurish will doom the magician to oblivion. So the pivotal inquiry is, what is it about magical entertainers of roughly approximate skill which catapults some to the top and leaves the remainder as also-ran? Opportunity, exposure, luck, money, and other variables cannot be discounted, but all things being equal it is that intangible quality of personality which is too elusive to define but can generally be described.

The attribute of self-esteem which translates into a warmth and concern for others so that the audience feels the performer is talking and working with them, not to them, and that he shares their delight with his magic is quintessential. While some with perforated egos will rate high the performer who is insulting, condescending, and egotistical because they think they ought to be abused, most people who enjoy themselves and want to experience good feelings will be repelled at such base qualities in the long run, however mystified they may be at the moment.

A magician who acts like an ass and performs excellent magic will at best be an ass who practices good magic. In my estimation, the quality which makes Doug Henning so successful is his ability, for some reason not too often seen in the world of magic, of making everyone feel that he really enjoys entertaining you and cares that you have good feelings throughout his performances and afterwards.

As I once told Charlie Miller, I thought he captured a fundamental precept in his performances, namely that people love to be fooled but not made a fool of. And therein lies a significant difference in one's approach to interpersonal relationships in magic and elsewhere. However technically efficacious is one's legerdemain, ostensible clairvoyance, etcetera, the best performers will always be those who project charm, warmth, and humanity.

A couple of weeks ago "ROBERT HARBIN" presented an excellent lecture here in Hollywood for a large crowd. At the start of the lecture he walked on stage carrying two large canvas bags that contained the entire Zig Zag Illusion which he set up on stage in front of us. He later presented the illusion absolutely beautifully. As you surely must know, Robert is the inventor of this very much copied and, I am sorry to say, abused illusion. Not only does Robert Harbin do his illusions and other magic well but he has a very gracious manner and an extremely delightful way of performing. (This fits right in with Luke's article.) A trick that tickled everyone was his restoration of a piece of tissue paper which he did very cleanly and with which he fooled a great number of the magicians present.

A few days later Robert was on a show at Cal-Tech in Pasadena, with cigarette routines, rope, etc., and he really delighted the audiences with his charming presentations. He truly is an experienced excellent performer. It is not often that such creative people are such good performers but Robert Harbin is a great exception.

And to cap it all off, Robert has performed for two weeks in our cabaret here at the Castle and such hard-to-please guys as Don Lawton could be found there nightly watching the artist at work. As he put it, "It is a genuine delight watching this man. Every magician and would-be magician should see Robert Harbin in action."

Fellow Englishman, Eric Lewis, took Harbin to Disneyland recently. I haven't heard any reports of this venture but it must have been great fun for both of them. Speaking of Eric, he has been very much in evidence recently here at the Castle. He is also working with Johnny Gaughan and making some beautiful illusions which you will be seeing on different television shows.

Emil Jarrow used to say, "I have a lot of nerve coming out here in front of an intelligent audience like this and doing a lousy trick like this..." Well, I have a lot of nerve at my age (I'll be 82 this year) to go cavorting around the country as I expect to, and taking a trip to Vienna with Irene and Bill, and traveling around Europe perhaps giving talks in Italy and Spain. Probably I should be sitting in a rocking chair but I am not in that kind of a mood yet! (More power to you, Vernon!- Ed.)

June 1976

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Dai left Hollywood April 4th on the start of his "Farewell Lecture Tour". It has been rather quiet around the old Castle! This month's column is based on a letter just received from the Professor and will bring you up to date on his travels.)

Our first stop was Grapevine, Texas (a suburb of Dallas), where I was pleasantly surprised and pleased to see my dear and close friends Larry Jennings, Steve Freeman, Ricky Jay and Arthur Emerson in the audience. Although I felt the lecture had been a bit rough since it was the first one of the series, I was happy to hear from Joe Cossari that one person had told him that he had attended several of my lectures over the years and had enjoyed this one the most. As far as I know no one asked for their money back!

Our next stop was Sacramento, California. Now we were in Bob Brown's territory. Not only had he arranged everything to perfection but he also was the perfect host to Joe, Jim and myself. Hy Berg was also with us on this one part of the tour, and I know that he, too, enjoyed the hospitality of Bob and his wife in their beautiful home.

Surprise followed surprise: Bill Larsen and Irene, Channing Pollock and his charming wife, Dick and Diana Zimmerman, and also Larry Jennings and Paul Spencer from Lake Tahoe arrived for cocktails. I had no idea that any of them would be present.

It was indeed a most pleasant surprise or series of surprises. I am happy to report that the lecture was quite a success because the treasury of the club added over six hundred dollars to their assets. I was also flattered that my friend, Persi Diaconis, attended and stayed awake throughout!

From Sacramento it was back to Hollywood and then the start of our long drive across country to Greenville, South Carolina. The facilities there were excellent for a lecture as the seats were tiered. John Murray was an extremely pleasant host who made our stay most enjoyable.

After South Carolina it was up to North Carolina and the city of Raleigh, home of Bill Spooner who entertained so sensationally in our close-up room at the Castle some time ago. And then right on to Virginia where, upon reaching Norfolk, we realized that we had crossed the entire continent and it had been a pleasant trip and why not, with such excellent drivers and traveling companions as Jim Whitney and "Earthquake" Joe Cossari! Before leaving Norfolk I must compliment Roger Sherman for the way he arranged everything as the entire event went so smoothly.

Next stop was Baltimore and Frank Richards was the sponsor. This young man, only 25 years of age, must be highly complimented. He has been interested in our Art for just over a year and it is quite amazing how enlightened he had become. His charming wife, Dorothy, very surprisingly does escapes and presents them in a most entertaining way. Frank took it entirely upon himself to book our lecture against the advice of other members of our craft, who claimed he would lose a considerable sum of money and it would be a disaster. However, he came out four hundred and sixty dollars ahead and I think he deserves great credit for having "taken a chance" on me!

Onward, onward, and onward now to Columbus, Ohio, where we had a very welcome six-day layover. This is the home of U.F. "Gen" Grant and it was a real delight spending some time with this gentleman. He took us all out to his factory where he employs eight people. His son, Joe, is in charge of production and we were amazed at the quality and inventiveness of his many items. Gen's trade mark is Mak-Magic and anyone who deals with Gen can count on receiving the fairest and promptest service.

Another highlight of our stay in Columbus was that we found a Hearts player, Frank Setzer, who is a newscaster on TV Channel 4. Sad to relate that Earthquake Joe did not do too well as Jim was in excellent form and now the present champ of Ohio. On the happy side, however, I must report that Joe has been receiving standing ovations after his act presented during the lectures and, of course, he does his usual dance!

July 1976

EDITOR'S NOTE: This month's column contains excerpts from a tape recording received from Vernon "somewhere in the U.S.A." and a letter from Jimmie Whitney who is making the tour with Vernon and Joe Cossari. As you will see, they are having a marvelous time and the lecture is being well received. Vernon is back now and will conclude his notes on the tour next month.

FROM JIMMIE'S LETTER: We had a 12-day stay in Worcester, Mass., my home town many years ago. Dai gave me a mini-lecture, a big lecture, made two TV tapes, met the mayor of Worcester to receive the key to the city, and made two appearances at Steve Dacri's magic shop where he met a host of his admirers, both young and old. We lived at an apartment house in Westboro, Mass., where I did some old New England cooking for both the boys and Steve and his charming wife, Cheryle. The weather was either very nice or very bad.

Our next stop was Montreal and the trip up was very nice, but they can give Montreal back to the natives as far as I'm concerned- rainy and cold all the time we were there. Herb Morrissey arranged for the lecture and it was a big success with about 135 attending. As you know, Joe is doing his card act as an intermission in the lecture and it has been very well received every place. Both Joe and Dai met many old friends that they hadn't seen for years.

On the trip from Montreal to Chicago we stopped at Kingston, Ontario, and tried to find the military school that Dai attended years ago, but could not locate it. The city has not changed a bit since Dai was last there!

Coming into Toronto we stopped for ice cream (Editors Note: Ice Cream???) and by happy coincidence Dai was able to contact his brother, Arthur, and his good friend, Ross Bertram. We all got together late that evening and had coffee (Coffee???) at the Hotel Triumph where we stayed. It was a very nice visit which I know Dai enjoyed so much.

On to Chicago the next morning- a good trip and we didn't lose our way even once. When we arrived in the Windy City we called Jay Marshall who joined us at our motel. We found a popular bar that features magic and had a drink (that's more like it!) and then off to slumber-land. Dai will lecture in Chicago Wednesday and then it's on to Minneapolis- St. Paul for a lecture on May 28th.

FROM DAI'S TAPE RECORDING:

When we first left Los Angeles I told Joe and Jimmie that we were going to bump into snow somewhere. Well, they certainly razzed me because everywhere we went the temperatures ranged in the 80's and 90's; it was even warmer than it was in Hollywood. But I was vindicated when we got to Buffalo because not only was there snow, but also rain and sleet and cold. Even though the weather was lousy the reception by Bob Weill was fantastic. His group went all out to do what they could do to make our stay a pleasant one. In spite of the weather we had a wonderful turnout for the lecture. Bob

Weill has a delightful sense of humor. I couldn't help thinking of him as a second Lou Derman because he kept coming up with those dry witty remarks that were very clever.

I am taping this at Allentown, PA, the stomping grounds of "The Shamokin Kid" (Joe Cossari). Joe has attended the annual Allentown convention for the past 25 years. We had the honor of sitting at the head table and they introduced us during the ceremonies. Joe was called up to receive a plaque honoring his 25 years of faithful service to IBM Ring 32. At the present time there are only 28 members in the Ring but they certainly put on a whale of a show with Dan Matthews, Lou Harold, and Charles Duh acting as guiding lights.

Incidentally, we are staying at Charlie's home and I don't think there is a more gracious host in the world! Charlie and his wife, Irma, (no relation to the Magic Castle's Irma that I know of) are real magicians when it comes to entertaining guests and making them feel right at home. Great food appears on the table like magic- they have three TV sets in case you are a TV nut- it's so great I will hate to leave it!

One of the tragedies of the trip is that Jimmie's hearing aid has gone on the blink. The batteries are all right but the aid itself is kaput and there is no place locally where he can have it fixed.

I think another reason we like Charlie so much is because no matter how late at night we get home, he is always ready for a game of Hearts! Charlie won the big dough last night- 50 cents!

It has been most flattering to me to discover that several persons have caught the lecture twice! They would drive a couple of hundred miles to do this. One person who did this last night was Frank Richards of Baltimore. I think that Frank and his wife are going to visit the Magic Castle in July. If they do, I would recommend that they be considered for a booking at the Castle. Mrs. Richards, who is a very attractive girl of 24 years of age, does the fastest escape from a straight jacket that will ever be seen in your life. She does this and other escapes in a pleasing way and presents them well. Frank does magic extremely well to my way of thinking and they would make a nice double act for the Castle.

Anyway, we are having a wonderful time. Even so, we are all looking forward to being back at the Castle soon.

August 1976

In last month's column we had arrived safely in Chicago. We didn't have the Windy City booked on the lecture tour, but after being present at one of our other stops. Jay Marshall said he would personally book the lecture. He said he couldn't guarantee the \$1000 fee but he would sell tickets at \$15 each and anything over the thousand would be mine. I, in turn, agreed to accept whatever he took under the lecture fee. I did this because Jay has been one of my favorite persons for years. And Chicago was right on our route.

Well, we were treated royally by Jay and Fran at their home above the Magic, Inc., shop. This was Joe Cossari's first visit to the suites of Don Lawton and Charlie Miller, which are marked by beautiful brass nameplates on the doors of the suites. I had a wonderful time being with the boys in Chicago- nice to see so many long-time friends- and they seemed to enjoy my ramblings. As a postscript to the opening paragraph, Jay handed me a check for \$1,180.00 after the lecture which certainly speaks well of his ability as a lecture manager!

Our next stop was Minneapolis where Tom Lidstrom had arranged for our appearance. And again we had a wonderful time. The Minneapolis Magicians are great guys and I left with the impression that they, too, enjoyed my talk. Tried calling my old friend, Bob Muir, while in the Twin Cities but he was back in Los Angeles. Bob built Northtown which is one of the largest shopping centers in the country and is located just outside of Minneapolis.

It was good to get back to Hollywood and few days rest before taking off again, this time for Seattle. Gerry Schultz was our contact there and we had some delightful chats with this magical enthusiast. Jerry also gave us a tour of Seattle which included a visit to the Space Needle and dinner in the revolving restaurant overlooking the city.

After a couple more days of rest back in Hollywood we set out for the final lecture of the tour- this time in Las Vegas. Our host was John Luckman of whom I must say I don't think there is a finer person you could visit in Las Vegas. He has a most marvelous collection of books on magic and he specializes in books on gambling. John cooperated with Mart Goldstein in booking this lecture and I must say I was a little nervous about going to Las Vegas, home of the gamblers- people who are really knowledgeable about cards. But we had a very nice time and I was flattered that Siegfried and Roy, Mike Skinner, Daniel Cros, and Alan Ackerman took time out to attend the session. Las Vegas was a great place to wind up our tour- the boys made us feel like really important people, and I think they were pleased.

Thinking back over the entire trip I must comment on how we were treated like royalty at every stop. It was amazing how pleasant everybody was, but I have always maintained that magicians are wonderful people. I want to thank everyone for attending- it was great meeting and being with you.

Just one little sour note on the trip was the fact that I lost my ring that had belonged to my great, great, grandfather. I lost it at one of the motels and, of course, never expected to see it again. On my return to the Castle a letter from one of the maids was waiting for me. She wrote that she had found a ring "with a bore's head engraved on

it.” Even though her spelling was off, it was my ring so I sent her a reward and she mailed the ring to me. She had wrapped it up so nicely and efficiently that after receiving it I sent her an additional reward “for a box of candy”. It is good to meet honest people like that. I was happy to get the ring back as I expect to pass it on to my oldest boy, Ted.

On the evening of June 11th I was invited out to dinner by my dear friend, Judge Pierce Young. He had called me at Minneapolis and asked me to reserve the date so I could have dinner with him and also Yvonne Cross, the lovely lady who made the very flattering bronze bust of me. This is now on display at the Castle just outside the entrance to the new close-up room.

Well, the night of June 11th rolled around and Judge Young and Yvonne picked me up for this supposedly quiet dinner. In reality, a surprise Birthday party had been arranged by Esther Nilsen and Barry Nighbert. When we walked into the large banquet room at the Century Plaza Hotel and 160 of my friends bursts into “Happy Birthday” I was the most surprised man on earth! My own son wouldn’t believe that it was a complete surprise to me, but it was, and I have been told that the look of utter amazement on my face was priceless. The entire evening was a sort of “This is Your Life” party- one of the highlights of my life- and I certainly thank all my dear friends around here for such a wonderful evening.

My music teacher, Castle member Ray Grismer (check his rope trick in July GENII “Magicana”), is back from a visit to Idaho and really looks great after inhaling all that fresh air they have up there. Ray visited a small town, which he said is like going back 50 years. A refreshing change from the hustle and bustle of big city life. As you may know, Ray gave me piano lessons in exchange for card technique lessons, and almost every day I will spend a few minutes or hours at the Castle piano (when Irma is not around!). The other afternoon I was practicing and I realized that Don Lawton was in the room with his tape recorder.

I knew it was time to go up to the library and talk a bit for this column (which Don transcribes later on) but I was rather surprised when piano music started pouring forth from the recorder. Don had been taping my practice session. Well, I am like the fellow who practices tricks in front of the mirror in private- it’s for my own amusement only. I could not imagine myself brave enough to play for an audience! Don insists I should let him record more so he, in turn, can try to interest Milt Larsen in releasing an album! I have a feeling that such an album could never be released- it would have to ESCAPE!

Right here I must explain about the coins we had at all the lectures except the first one. The coins were much in demand. Joe Cossari carefully wrapped and sent a batch via Grayhound Bus to my very good friend, Roger Crabtree who had arranged this first lecture near Dallas. Unfortunately the package went astray and they are still trying to locate it. In the meantime Joe will send another supply. This happening was very unfortunate and I felt quite perturbed.

Incidentally, no one thus far has deciphered the letters VOLCN on the coins. Ron Wilson’s two “answers” are the best to date: (1) Very Old Longwinded Cantankerous Necromancer. (2) Versatility, Originality, Likability, Capability, Naturalness. The first answer is very descriptive and truthful!

Before closing I must say how very sorry I am that I was unable to be present at the magic conventions in Vienna, Philadelphia, and Kansas City. I had a nasty fall about a year ago which resulted in a pinched nerve in my left leg. It has been bothering me more and more lately so the doctor advised me against my making these trips. My swan song, as they say, was in Las Vegas. I will never present another magic lecture. I might be tempted in the future to present a lecture on gambling- a sort of why-you-should-never-play-cards-with-strangers type of thing. Meanwhile, I continue to enjoy the friendship of the Magic Castle and hope that someday YOU will join us for an evening of great fun. Karrell Fox was here last night and helped us close the place. His new book is excellent.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Dai mentioned his 82nd birthday party but was too modest to mention the commendation he received from the County of Los Angeles, which is reprinted at the left. Barry Nighbert and Esther Neilson were the instigators of the affair and the fact that 160 friends kept it a secret was the trick of the year. Peter Pit put the evening together as only he can do and made the perfect M.C. Don Lawton, using tapes that Vernon had made for his column, asked questions and got hilarious answers in Dai's own voice. Members of his family were there and it was an evening to remember with fine food, spirits, dancing and the greatest man in magic...82 years young...DAI VERNON!

September 1976

Our editor asked me to make a few comments about the bronze bust of myself that was unveiled at the birthday party in Century City. When I first sat for his bust, which was sculptured by the glamorous Yvonne Cross who is a well-known artist in Hollywood. I sat at Judge Pearce Young's beautiful home in Beverly Hills. Between sittings the good judge had to wet the clay to keep it from becoming hard. One night the weather was very warm and the combination of the heat and the water caused the entire thing to collapse and fall off the armature.

So, we started all over and this time Pearce took great care to see that no accidents happened. I was finally completed and sent out to be cast. The company made a wax mold and was ready to make the bronze casting when suddenly a large trellis in the place fell on the bust and crushed it. So Yvonne started a third bust.

I kept saying that this thing just wasn't meant to be. I'm not superstitious but I thought it would be best to just forget the entire project. However, Yvonne wouldn't listen to such talk and went right ahead and completed the bust. It was successfully cast and at the present time you can see it on display just outside the entrance to the new Parlour of Prestidigitation at the Castle

I wanted to mention how difficult it was getting this project completed and I sincerely thank both Yvonne and Pearce for their patience and confidence. Incidentally, I must apologize for having misspelled the judge's name in previous columns. (No apology needed, Dai. It was the error of the transcriber!)

Before starting out on my recent "farewell lecture tour" I had some special coins struck with my profile on one side and artwork including the cups and balls, linking Rings, etc., on the back. We didn't have the coins for the first lecture in Texas but many of the fellows bought them in advance. As soon as we received the coins we shipped them over to Roger Crabtree who had booked the lecture. Unfortunately they were lost in transit so Joe Cossari made up a second shipment, which arrived safely.

I'm not sure if I mentioned what a wonderful host Roger was for the lecture so I'll say it right here. In fact, everyone was so great. I think I have covered most of them but I must say that whenever I think about the tour I can't help recalling how nice my hosts were, as well as the many fellows who supported the lectures. It was really a highlight of my life.

It was a pleasure seeing Bob Downey of Detroit at the Castle recently. I had a couple of arguments with my best friends about the quality of this act. I think Bob Downey does one of the finest shows I have ever seen. I feel that some of the magicians who watched him failed to understand the presentation. They claimed he worked too slowly. To me this was part of the charm of his performance. He has a unique way of presenting magic. It was very enjoyable and all of the lay people I talked with marveled at his dexterity and skill, and his presentation. I thought he did a delightful act. We have had some marvelous shows in our new entertainment area. I hope they can keep up with the quality of entertainment. I'm sure this is due to word-or-mouth comments.

The interest that has been shown in the mysterious letters that appear on my lecture souvenir coin amazes me. They are letters V-O-L-C-N. They do not have to be

in order. Charles Fahringer of Allentown, PA, sent me three different 'translations' or solutions: (1) Vernon's National Lecture on Cards which utilizes all the letters; (2) Commemorating Vernon's Lecture on Nostalgia, and; (3) Commemorative Of Vernon's National Lecture. You will notice that the letters are not used in sequence. Charles' ideas are clever but they are not even close to the solution.

I mentioned Ron Wilson's guesses last month, which were quite humorous. There are many ways that these five letters can be put together. Everyone seems to be quite certain that the V stands for Vernon. I'm not saying whether it does or not. It might be Voluable. It could be Versatility. It might be Very...in other words, there are many words beginning in V. So don't be thrown off by this. It MIGHT be Vernon and it might NOT! But anyway, a five-year subscription to GENII Magazine to the person who solves this so-called puzzle! (Editor Note: What?)

I was delighted yesterday to see Willie Schneider of New York in the Castle. I haven't seen Willie for a long time and I must say that he looks wonderful- he hasn't changed in 25 years. Everybody in the East and in Florida knows what an exceedingly clever man he is, and what a wonderful person. Willie has been one of the great benefactors to all magicians, especially around New York. It was a delight to see him again. Willie not only does his magic well but he has a great knowledge of the psychology that is necessary when you are performing tricks.

Be on the lookout for the Bill Cosby television show this fall because Jeff Altman, son of Arthur Altman, will be a regular on the program. Jeff is a terrific comedian whom I consider an equal to Rich Little. Jeff is not only an extremely humorous chap but is an expert with the cards like his father. Jeff's impersonations are great as members of the Castle will testify.

I wanted to run an item that was put out locally by the police department because it is a perfect lesson in psychology (which I mentioned a moment ago) but we're out of space so I will schedule it for next month. Watch for "Don't be Caught 'Off Guard'!"

October 1976

Last month I promised to tell you about a shortchange idea that has been used here in California. Refusing to reveal her name, Long Beach con woman told the Los Angeles Free Press:

“The thing you have to do is pick your marks very carefully...if you pick the wrong clerk, you’re screwed. (These are her words!). You start out with a \$10 note. Go into a store and buy something for under a dollar. Now you give the ten to the clerk, and she will start giving back your change, coins first. As soon as she has given you your coins, turn and act as you are leaving.

“The clerk will call you back. ‘Just a minute’, she says, ‘You forgot the rest of your change’. So you turn back and look confused as she hands you your \$9 in your hand. Now, when you have the \$9 in your hand, you say, ‘I’m sorry, but I didn’t mean to give you a 10; I really didn’t want to break it. Can I please have it back and I’ll give you a five and five ones for it’?”

“Most people will say sure ‘cause they don’t want big bills in their cash drawer. The object is to get your ten back. So you ask for it. She gives you your 10, and you give her the five and four ones in your hand. Then you say, ‘Count it to make sure it’s right’.

“Okay. She counts it: five, six, seven, eight, nine. She will say, ‘Well, you owe me another dollar’. You always have another dollar available!

“At this point you have the 10 in your hand. The clerk has nine. You take a dollar from your pocket and add it to the ten in your hand, making \$11 in your hand. She has counted her money and told you that she needs another dollar. You say, ‘I tell you what...you have nine there, right? Here’s eleven more. Eleven and nine makes twenty. Give me a twenty”. Done right, you will have walked in with a ten and out with a twenty”!

The above con game is a neat bit of psychology. I am including it in my column for your information only- not with the recommendation that you try it!

CONGRATULATIONS TO ROGER CRABTREE for his correct solution to the meaning of the five letters (V.O.L.C.N.) on my lecture coin. I received many clever answers but only Roger came up with the right one. For instance, for the letter ‘O’ I received such suggestions as Old-timer, odd, obnoxious, obstinate, objectionable (all flattering, you’ll notice!). The one answer besides Roger’s with a proper name was Ose. Why not O’Malley, our popular and very talented artist. He designed the coin. All I contributed was the profile on the face of the coin. Here is Rog’s answer as received:

V- Vernon, the man; O- O’Malley, Designer of the coin; L- Larsen, supporter of all; C-Cossari, who said it could be done; N- Neilson, who took care of the arrangements. For his correct answer Roger receives a five-year renewal to GENII.

Last Saturday they had JUNIOR MAGICIAN AUDITIONS here at the Castle. Over fifty youngsters (from age eleven to eighteen) each performed for a brief period. My friends Dick Zimmerman and Diana are doing a great deal to help these young

enthusiasts. I felt compelled, after watching dozens of them perform, to say a few words. Where I considered they needed instruction or help was in their approach to the subject. Before they purchase or acquire any type of effect they should become conversant with the classical literature on the subject; namely, the works of Robert Houdin, Professor Hoffman, Sachs, and Neil Lang.

When they have absorbed and get a feeling from these books THEN they can start in with the many effects obtainable. If they wish to excel or make a living from magic they must strive for a different approach. Be different in their manner, and clothe their effects in such a way that they will appear to be new. Strictly speaking there are no new effects but with thought and effort one can give them a new face. This is what one should strive for. Never copy exactly any performer you may admire greatly. The slightest original twist or thought expressed in your own way will stand head and shoulders over any attempted copy.

THE SHOWS here in the Castle are always of good quality but every now and then we “hit the jack pot”. This week every one is entranced because besides the “Great Thomsoni” (Johnny Thompson) and Yutaka Kicuchi (Japan) and Peter Pit, we are privileged to have our genial and popular former host Don Lawton make one of his rare appearances as a performer. Everyone loves Don and he received a terrific hand. Also, Peter Pit does a beautiful job and the reports of his work at the convention in Vienna are all in superlatives. Incidentally, those who do not know Johnny Thompson intimately do not realize that besides his very clever stage act he is a consummate artist in all types of close-up magic.

I hate to mention this again but I cannot find the time to answer all letters, send autographs, photographs, and so forth. Please believe me that I would love to do so but it is physically impossible. I do appreciate your letters- please know that they are read and enjoyed. Such a letter arrived recently from John Carney of Des Moines. John sent me quite a collection of effects, mostly with coins. He is contemplating doing some lectures and I predict that he will have some very refreshing material to teach and demonstrate.

November 1976

Well, the Magic Castle is back in full swing with the return of the many members who went to Vienna recently. Everyone tells me they had a wonderful time at this excellent convention. I must say that I have never heard such complimentary remarks made about any one person as the comments that were made about Peter Pit. Peter emceed one of the big shows in Vienna and not only did he do his usual superb work, but he introduced the acts in six or seven different languages! This, naturally, made a big hit with everyone.

Of course I was sorry that I was unable to attend the Vienna convention, as well as the Kansas City Jubilee, but as I may have mentioned before, I have a pinched nerve in my leg (as a result of a fall about a year ago) which is very painful when I stand for any length of time. I didn't want the hassle of standing in line for immigration, customs, etc.

One of the highlights of my life recently was the visit to the Castle of my dear friend, Faucett Ross of St. Joseph, MO. He was quite pleased that everyone was delighted with his book, "The Magic of Faucett Ross". It is a very practical book and I highly recommend it for the working performer. It contains tricks and routines that are really excellent...not just pipe dreams. Another recent visitor was Persi Diaconis. I was really flabbergasted because Persi had copies of letters I had written to Tommy Downs and Sam Horowitz years ago! One of the letters to Sam contained my explanation of a rear palm, which is quite common today but my letter was the first written description of this sleight. This dates back to the late twenties! I also explained the method of dealing from the center of the deck along with drawings to illustrate my descriptions.

Incidentally, this center deal is going to be fully explained with photographs when Ross Bertram publishes his new book. Anyone who knows Ross Bertram or has seen him work knows how superlative he is in all phases of magic. I consider Ross Bertram and David Roth the two best coin men living today...they both do absolutely beautiful work with coins. I hope Ross will be visiting us again soon. He made a terrific hot when he was here some years ago.

There is a new weekly television show here in the Los Angeles area called "The Magic Shop". Don Lawton is the proprietor of the shop and each week different magicians drop in to chat and perform. I was asked to be on one of the shows, which I was glad to do. Albert Goshman was on the same show. Four of us were seated at the close-up table in the shop (it is a beautiful shop, by the way); Tina Lenert who performed earlier on the program with her original mime-magic act, Albert, Don, and myself. Goshman did his salt shakers and coins, sponge balls, etc., and he was going along so well that when he handed me a deck of cards I said, "No, you keep going. Nobody can top what you're doing!" Well, eventually I did "Triumph" to everyone's apparent satisfaction but I really thought that Albert should have kept on. (Editor's note: Vernon also performed earlier in the show, doing his excellent five coin production, vanish, and subsequent reappearance between the finger-tips. Also the Cards Up the Sleeve as only Dai can do it.)

Back at the Magic Castle: This week we have a young chap named Charles Stanford (billed as "C.W.") doing close-up in put new entertainment area. Charles hails

from Kansas City. Now you know that younger magicians are all craving for “something new” when it comes to magic. Charles has a very different routine with cups and balls which he ties up with a card trick! He places one cup on the Ace of Clubs, another cup on the Ace of Hearts, etc. Then a series of card changes takes place, and for the climax he lifts the cups to reveal the large balls. One ball is covered with diamonds, one with hearts, etc.

Now this is quite a different routine, but, as I told Charles, Al Baker used to say that “more tricks are killed with improvements than any other way.” There’s a great deal of truth in that statement. The modern trend in magic among so many young people just starting is to throw in some unrelated thing. A copper and a silver coin changing places is a direct, beautiful effect when well executed. But, for example, to make four silver coins change places only to have them end up as copper coins is too much! You are doing a transposition and then suddenly a transformation at the finish and it’s befuddling and not good magic to my way of thinking. This kind of magic may be very intriguing to magicians but is usually confusing to the spectators. I always think of Charlie Miller in instances such as this; he calls them “intrigue tricks”!

Robert Houdin, one of the greats of all times, said that the more you can conceal digital dexterity in the trick the more amazing the effect will be to the spectator. This seems to be the trouble with many performers. Some magicians will do all kinds of clever things with a deck of cards such as causing them to swivel out of the deck, etc., and they act in a strange and bewildering way. Now this denotes great skill and people will say, “Boy, I’d hate to play cards with you.” (Certainly one of the tritest statements that has ever been made in magic.) A true artist conceals that skill, using it ‘undercover’, you might say. This is a true artist and he gets much more effect out of magic.

Nate Leipzig never even fanned a pack of cards- making a pressure fan or the like. He just spread the cards out in the normal manner when he wanted one selected. He said he didn’t believe in making even a fan because it showed skill. I’m a great believer in that type of magic.

December 1976

As I start this column the second week of the annual "IT'S MAGIC!" show is playing at the Wilshire-Ebell Theatre. It is really remarkable how Milt and Bill manage to put on such a wonderful show each year. It seems that it would be impossible to top the previous productions but this year "they have done it again!" This seems to be the unanimous opinion of everyone who has seen the show. Of course they have international stars from England, Austria, and Holland on the program. The show really moves right along. I especially appreciated it because there is a great deal of sleight-of-hand. Although I do not tend to be overly enthusiastic about so-called boxes and barrels I must say that Chuck Jones did a beautiful job with several illusions that haven't been seen in some years plus new space-age illusions which he presented in a most pleasing manner.

The opening act, Goldfinger and Dove, got as much applause as any act on the bill. I have enjoyed watching this young man's progress from the first time he worked in the Castle. There is nothing like working for improvement! The word "practice" is rather a dull word that many persons hate to use but, after all, it is practicing and doing tricks and routines over and over that brings improvement. As a good example of this, we had an act at the Castle last week: John Paterson from Vancouver. He and his wife Maureen did a beautiful act on the same bill with such an artist as Shimada and I would say that John "held his own" as the saying goes. It is remarkable how much he has improved since his visit here a year or so ago. Not so much in the tricks (he always did them well) but in the whole manner of presentation.

I would like to comment on Bruce Cervon, who did such a great job last week in the impromptu close-up section of the Castle. The performance I saw consisted of card tricks only but Bruce made the entire presentation so enjoyable. Ricky Jay, who can be as caustic as I am at times, raved about Bruce's performance which was presented well and executed flawlessly. Very entertaining to watch.

Larry Jennings of Lake Tahoe dropped down to catch the Ebell show and spend an evening at the Castle. This man can start at seven in the morning with a pack of cards and wind up at midnight and never repeat himself at doing card tricks! It is phenomenal what he does with cards. Although Larry's occupation involves heavy work his hands are like silk when it comes to handling cards- he has such a light touch. Larry is also right at home with other types of magic; coins, cups, and balls, etc.

I keep harping on the old saying that it's not what you do but the way you do it. (One of Jimmie Lunceford's record hits way back when was "Taint What You Do, It's the Way Cha Do It"!) You can take any trick like one where you deal cards in piles or multiply numbers...any dull trick...and makes it entertaining with presentation. Frakson used to do the trick where a handkerchief was tacked onto a wooden frame, placed into a paper sack, and penetrated with a knife, wand, ribbons, etc. To me this is more of a puzzle than a trick and very uninteresting. But Frakson, with his presentation, made the trick sparkle. When he said "Amazing" it WAS amazing! Frakson was, and is, a true artist who puts life into any trick he performs. And this is what I keep driving at when I get off on these tangents!

People don't really like to be fooled...they want to be entertained. This is the important thing: entertain them as you fool them and they love it.

"The Cranky Old Man of Magic" (that's me!) ruffled the feathers of one of the Castle regulars the other evening. I was talking with John Paterson and Peter Pit, and mentioned to John that if he wanted me to criticize his act (you'd be surprised at how many magicians ask me to do this) the only criticism I would have is that he does too much with the Dancing Cane- they do too much. (This also applies to many Zombie users.) There is an exhaustion point- a point where you should stop. When you try to over-express it's no good. Now Peter Pit is one of the first magicians I ever saw doing the Dancing Cane- it is sort of his trade mark, but even so, I feel that he does too much with it, and I told him so. I suggested to Peter that if he wanted to keep doing the various moves such as around the body, hand to hand, etc., he should do a monologue with it. He laughed at the idea but I think it has possibilities, especially for him, as Peter is a fine stand-up comedian (as well as magician) and does an excellent and entertaining routine here at the Castle. Many's the night I have seen him "tear up an audience" with his comedy routines and emcee work. Absolute dynamite.

In my seventy-five years of doing and observing magic I have reached one important conclusion: I feel that the main thing in presenting magic is to make the audience like you as a person. You don't have to be tall, dark, and handsome, but you must be a nice person and nice to your audience. Everyone knows that some of the homeliest men marry the most beautiful women because these men have an appeal- they are nice people with an inner feeling- a kindness and respect for their fellow beings. People like this quality, and this has to "come over" when you are doing magic. You must be a likeable person. Be agreeable and pleasant to your audience. Showing superiority or flaunting ability is deadly for a magician.

I am so pleased with the wonderful success that my friend, Doug Henning is having. He exudes this quality that I am talking about. Older women think, "What a nice boy- I'd like to have a boy like that for a son." Older men say, "Well, he's a bit of the hippie type but he seems to be a very nice young chap." Everyone likes his sincerity and, as you know, he has been tremendously successful. This alone should let you know how important this quality in a person can be.

I must apologize for the way I jump from one subject to another in these columns with no apparent rhyme or reason. As Al Baker's little dummy used to say to him. "You know, when they get older, they get a little screwy!" And I guess that holds true in my case!

P.S. Quite forgot to mention Billy McComb did several shows in the Palace and delighted everyone with his fascinating way of working.

January 1977

As you read these lines my "home away from home", the Magic Castle, will be starting its 14th year of operation. So I thought I'd try to express in words just how we members feel about this wonderful place. Know that I mention the Castle in almost every column so if I repeat myself in some areas please forgive me. I think all members will agree that we have a great staff of workers — everyone from the bartenders, waitresses, waiters, bus boys, cooks, receptionists, parking attendants, managers and hosts, right on up to the top brass (Bill and Milt) and the general office staff. It is truly magical to have a large staff like this and not a sour apple in the group! That's just one of the things that makes the club so great.

And, of course, our members from all walks of life, are equally as great. They are all interested in magic otherwise they probably would not have joined the Academy of Magical Arts. Our "regular" members are made up of magicians and those who are interested in magic as a hobby. Many of our hobbyists are excellent magicians but do not perform professionally. The "associate" members are persons who enjoy bringing their friends to the Castle for an evening of magical entertainment along with the excellent food and liquid refreshments. They are some of magic's biggest boosters. These are the people who "keep us working" by supporting the Castle and hiring magicians for their own private functions.

This membership is made up of all types of business people who like and enjoy watching magic. And anyone who likes magic simply HAS to have a good time here. This goes for the ladies as well as the men, which is remarkable in itself. In my past days I never felt that the girls specially enjoyed watching a magician but I have changed my thinking since being here. Of course, any effect with a fortune-telling atmosphere to it is doubly enjoyed by the ladies.

As I say, everyone has a good time at the Castle and those who have been here for the first time go away wondering how they can be invited back for a second visit. It is not only the magical entertainment that intrigues them but the physical Castle itself. It is a charming place and really difficult to describe to anyone who has not been here. I understand that Bill and Mickey O'Malley are working on a book about the Castle, complete with dozens and dozens of photographs. I'm sure it will be advertised in GENII when completed.

Not too long ago I was delighted to see Frank Garcia in our club . . . hadn't seen him for some time. He looks very well and prosperous. And Bill Simon was here a short time ago. Frank and Bill were two of my close friends years ago in New York and it was good to see them again. One thing I can't understand is why one of the cleverest card men in the world, Ed Marlo, has never visited the Castle. I'm quite positive that Ed would have the time of his life spending a few days here. I KNOW that everybody here would enjoy having Ed around. Another Chicagoan who would delight our members is Dorny. I have always thought that Dorny would be a perfect host for the castle. So, Ed and Dorny, why don't you both hop right on out — we'll do our best to make you feel right at home!

Last week we had Nancy Falconer of Toronto with us, along with a crew from "Insight Productions". They spent several days photographing the Castle. Inside and out, along with filming the acts of several of our regular magicians. They even brought their cameras over to my apartment, had me sit in an easy chair, and interviewed me for about a half hour. This was all done for one of the TV programs which will be shown in Toronto and, I believe, also in the United States.

Right after that, a group of us went up to Vancouver for guest appearances on a special television show, "Celebrity Revue". Peter Pit did an excellent job as co-host on the show which was shown locally the week before Christmas. In fact, the station offered Peter a full-time position as co-host but he wasn't interested in making the move. We were all treated royally in Vancouver. And it was especially nice to see Carl Hemion who lives in Victoria. Mentioning Carl is like mentioning Danny Dew because these two gentlemen are two of the nicest persons on the magic scene.

Charlie Miller should be very pleased with the excellent writings of Elizabeth Wilson that have appeared in his column the past few months. While "Twinkle Toes" is off on cruises having the time of his life dancing the hours away, Elizabeth has been slaving over a hot typewriter and coming up with delightful articles that are well worth reading.

Just as I was finishing this column I received a phone call from my dear Friend, Danny Dew, telling me of the death of Paul Fox. It would take an entire column (several, in fact) to do justice to the memory of Paul Fox and the many worthwhile things he contributed to the Art of Magic. Paul has never really been given the proper credit he so justly deserves in magic. I will attempt to partially correct this oversight next month. We have certainly lost a fine man with the passing of Paul Fox. Many, many summers I went to Colorado Springs and cut silhouettes in Manitau, located at the foot of Pike's Peak. My main reason for doing this was to be able to visit with Paul, and we truly had some delightful sessions of magic. My heartfelt sympathy to Paul's wife, Henrietta, and their daughter, Margaret Grace.

February 1977

Back in the late twenties I was Driving West across these United States and I still recall vividly how Unbearably hot it was crossing Kansas. When we arrived in Colorado the weather turned delightfully cool so we stayed overnight in Colorado Springs. Remembering that Al Baker had told me some time ago that Paul Fox had moved from Chicago to Colorado for health reasons he had contracted tuberculosis) I was very pleased when I was able to get in touch with him the next day At this time he was living in the Springs with his wife, Henrietta, and their daughter, Margaret Grace.

I was truly amazed at the accomplishment and cleverness of this man. He was a genius. Not only did he have a thorough knowledge of the magic art but Paul was one of the world's greatest metal engravers. On top of this he was an accomplished banjo player, having studied with Eddie Peabody. Paul was an extremely inventive man and it would take more than all the pages of GENII to list his original creations.

In his latter years he put out his famous Paul Fox Cups, his Rising cards, the Fox Miracle Gimmick, and many other excellent items. Danny Dew, Al Baker, Faucett Ross, and Carl Germaine were some of his closest friends. When Harlan Tarbell took over the magic course from Walter Baker it was Paul who helped him so very much. Many of the best ideas in the Tarbell Course in Magic came from Paul's fertile mind.

Before Paul left Chicago he was laying many show dates. He was one of the very first to do cigarette manipulations and it was Paul's idea to set rhinestones into balls and thimbles to make them show up better in large theatres. He also came up with the idea of using hollow steel tubing for the Linking Rings to cut down the weight. Paul's mind was always "working", so to speak, and the following is a good example of what I mean:

One day as we were sitting in a drug store in Colorado Springs the druggist was complaining about not having enough shelf room in his store. Paul looked up and noticed an entire row of shelves filled with cartons. "What are those?", he asked. The druggist replied that they did a tremendous business at the soda fountain each summer and that the boxes contained soda straws. Paul remarked that it was a lot of wasted space because of the straws being hollow. "Empty space takes up a lot of room." So Paul went home and in a few days he had come up with a little machine that made straws! All you had to do was insert a roll of paper, turn the little handle, and out would pop a soda straw.

Paul had many such clever ideas that he developed over the years but would not sell them for the small fees he was offered by various companies. He was very bitter about selling inventions for less than they were worth. Paul's father invented the altimeter but in those days there was very little use for such a device as it was before the arrival of airplanes. It was used for balloon ascensions or could be used in cars when driving up mountains. When the airplane came along the altimeter became a necessity and Paul's father would have become a millionaire but for the fact that the idea was stolen from him

by a company which shall remain nameless. Paul developed burglar alarm systems and all kinds of inventions for which companies offered him "a few paltry dollars" (as he used to say) but he wouldn't sell them because he knew the worth of these inventions.

Paul was an absolute perfectionist. One year Ma Han's Drug Stores had made the largest sale of silver plate ever sold in this country. The dozens and dozens of platters, bowls, silverware sets, etc., were brought to Paul for the engraving of a monogram. I was visiting him one day and we were talking as he was doing the engraving. He was on the last spoon when he suddenly jumped up and I thought he was going into a fit. "My goodness, what have I done have I done?", he exclaimed. When I asked him what had happened he showed me the spoon and said, "Look at that!" I looked but could see nothing wrong with it. I had pretty good eyes and tended to be a bit of a perfectionist in the cutting of silhouettes. I looked carefully at the monogram and couldn't see a thing wrong with it. Paul said, "Put the loop in your eye and look at it!" So I did, and I still couldn't see what he meant. "Look at the serif on the letter A—don't you see it has a little burr on it?" Well, it was so minute that I don't think one person in a million would have noticed it — not even another engraver. However, to Paul, it was a catastrophe— the fact that one letter was a little less than perfection.

Years ago when the Will Rogers memorial was erected on Cheyenne Mountain near the Springs there was a lot of lettering to be done. Being on the mountain the work had to be done from a scaffold and was a bit dangerous. They asked Paul for a price and he said he would do it for three cents a letter. The committee thought that was too much so they brought over a French engraver who did it for two and a half cents a letter! The fellow did about half the job and quit. So they got Paul to finish the work at his originally quoted price!

At one time Tiffany's in New York City had on display a large mahogany frame containing an example of English script. The sign read: "This is the finest example of English script ever executed by the human hand." And it was done by Paul Fox.

It was Paul who talked me into renting a spot in Manitau Springs. Every summer for six years I cut silhouettes at this resort. I think it was in 1932 when Franklin D. Roosevelt visited Colorado. Paul and I entertained his wife, Eleanor, and his son, Elliott. This was just before he became President. He was using a crutch and cane at the time and he, personally, did not feel up to attending the special program of which we were a part. Before he retired to his room in the hotel, however, he sat for a silhouette. While I was cutting it a feminine voice behind me said, "Be careful with his nose- it is his best feature- be very careful." I was becoming annoyed and was just about to turn and say, "Here, lady, YOU take the scissors and do it!" But when I felt a nudge on my ankle and an attorney named Horn whispered in my ear, "That's Eleanor!", I refrained from making the move!

Incidentally, I heard that Roosevelt had the silhouette framed and it was on his wall behind his desk in the Oval office. One was given to Mr. Roosevelt, of course. One

went to his attorney (who had tipped me off about Eleanor), one went to Paul Fox, and I still have one, autographed.

One time Faucett Ross was visiting Paul and they were discussing the paper coin fold. Paul said, "Now let us analyze this thing, Faucett. If I truly wrapped a coin up in a piece of paper and tapped it on the inverted glass as I laid it down, my right hand should come away empty, like this, shouldn't it?" Ross replied, "Yes, but how are we going to do it?" Paul merely flicked the paper off the glass- it no longer contained the coin! Faucett admits that he never figured out how Paul did it, and he still wonders about it!

The silhouette published with this column was sent to me by Paul's daughter, Margaret Grace, who claims that it is a very excellent likeness of her father. I cut it back in 1931 in Maniteau Springs. Paul used to sit for hours and we talk while I was working. I would imagine that my costumers often wondered what all the magic talk was about! I worked out there during the great depression but there was certainly no depression for me. When I would come to work at 6:30 in the evenings there would be a long line of people with their children, waiting for silhouettes. I was really making a very substantial living at that time.

During the last twenty or so years of his life Paul kept very much to himself and his family. Don Lawton tells me that when he found out that Paul lived just two blocks from Don's uncle, he (Don) phoned Paul who, in turn, invited Don to drop by for a visit. It turned out to be two different evenings of visiting, and Paul was most gracious to Don. Don still has a set of four billiard balls that Paul gave him. Paul used to obtain his billiard balls from the Brunswick Company, maker of commercial billiard balls. They were sent to him unfinished. Paul, in turn, would paint them, and use a new set for each show! There again you can see perfectionism creeping in!

March 1977

Sandy Spillman, our evening host/manager, has just returned from a well-earned two-week vacation. Besides his hosting duties, Sandy also conducts the popular Houdini Séances here at the Castle once or twice an evening, depending on the bookings. Sandy pops up on television every now and then, usually in a straight acting role in which he is able to incorporate a bit of magic. On a recent "The Family" episode, Sandy was the proprietor of a restaurant and performed a couple of tricks at the table.

As I write this column, I have just witnessed this week's Palace of Mystery Show and it surely is a winner. Peter Pit is the emcee and had the audience in stitches with his comedy and magic presentations. As I have written before, there is nothing like working before live audiences and Peter has this opportunity since he is the "house emcee", so to speak. Second on the bill is Ron Wilson, known as "The Uncanny Scot" who does a delightful act, and fools magicians more than once during it! Ron is one of the best-liked magicians at the Castle and his charming manners make a big hit with the audiences.

And to top off this week's program, we have none other than Norm Nielsen who is perfection personified. Here is a man who was smart enough to realize that we would get further ahead by being original than by copying someone else. His Floating/Playing Violin is a masterpiece of modern magic. Any aspiring magician should see Norm Nielsen, not with the idea of trying to copy him, but to observe the things that make him stand out as an artist.

Speaking of standing out, I saw the motion picture, "Network", the other evening. The acting of the late Peter Finch is extraordinary as those of you who have seen this film will agree, I am sure. One scene that remains in my mind is the one in which Finch tells his television viewers to stick their heads out the window and shout out in protest at the way things are going. This makes me think that magicians should put their heads out the windows and shout at the tops of their voices, "We are going to put an end to the people who are killing magic—those people who do nothing but copy!" Copying, of course, is a natural trait with us all — we copy from the time we are born. We copy our parents, people we like, etc. But when it comes to magic, to copy an act word for word, to dress like the person and try to copy his every mannerism and use the same props and music he uses is wrong. This should certainly be hollered against and it should be killed. Such copying destroys any art that is in magic. I don't say that magic IS an art but it CAN BE an art when all the different aspects of it are applied. It's a strange thing that magic differs from other great arts. Paintings and drawings are called art because people are acquainted with perspective, proportion, color combinations, etc., and they can judge a picture or a painting accordingly. People can judge music because they who have studied music know the rules of harmony and progressions, etc. But, sadly, the average person does not know how to judge magic. They can tell if they like or dislike it, but as far as judging it as an art, they just aren't acquainted with the various factors. Only a skilled magician can judge whether or not magic is an art.

When a person watches a performance, it is not art, in my opinion, if their only wonder is, "How did he do it?" or "How is the trick done?" The effect on them should be: "How marvelous, how wonderful, how extraordinary!" They shouldn't be thinking, "How

was it done?" because then it ceases to be art. It is art if it has a complete effect of mystifying them without making them wonder how it was done.

A most important thing for all aspiring young magicians: Pick tricks that suit your personality; don't try to suit your personality to the trick. A trick that is appropriate and very suitable to one person can be absolutely ridiculous in the hands of another. Great judgment must be used in selecting tricks that suit you. And try to inject some originality into your presentations. Don't be content with using the same patter that someone else is using. Put your own personality into each trick. Then you will have something that no one else can have because each person has a different personality. Don't be an imitator. Which brings me to an interesting happening:

Years ago Larry Gray got a standing ovation in New York with his imitation of Cardini. He announced it as such—and he did Cardini's act perhaps even better, in parts, than Cardini. And he received a tremendous ovation. But you can imagine what the reaction would have been if he had presented the act without the announcement that it was his imitation of Cardini. People would have accused him of copying Cardini, and I think his act would not have gone over at all.

There is so much talk about being a good showman. Houdini was one of the master showmen. Dunninger also fell into this category. There have been many magicians who were good showmen, but good showmanship alone doesn't suffice to make a great magician by any means. A good showman can do an entertaining act but it ceases to be a magical act. The magic itself has to be up to a certain standard. The secret is to bring your magic up to a certain standard of excellence, then learn how to sell it. Showmanship is like salesmanship—it's learning to sell your product. After you get the tricks in good form, then learns to sell them — and to make them palatable to the audience so they will enjoy them.

Magic is a peculiar art—It is based mostly on misdirection. The books tell you that if you pretend to put a coin in your left hand your eyes must look at that hand. This is the simplest form of misdirection and it's a very weak one as a matter of fact. The only way a coin should be placed from one hand to the other is to free the one hand to pick up some other object or to move something or to gesture. Just placing a coin in your hand for no reason is not good magic. There must be a reason for feigning or pretending to place a coin in the hand. If you apparently place a coin from the right hand into the left hand, and then pick up a lemon with the right hand, you had a reason for placing the coin into the left hand. If you just pretend to place a coin into the left hand and then cause it to vanish from the hand many persons will suspect right away that you actually did not put the coin into the hand.

Misdirection, as I say, takes many forms. Making some action that appears to accomplish something different from what is actually taking place is true misdirection. A very blatant form of misdirection used in gambling years ago when they put in the so-called "cold deck" (they called it "introducing a cooler") was to have some fellow leaning against the wall in a chair. Suddenly the chair would slip and he would fall. Naturally all the card players would look over to see what happened and at the same moment "the cooler would go in". But this was a very bad form of misdirection—it was too blatant. Because after the "big hand" came out (from the cold deck) naturally people would think back and remember this incident and say, "Oh, oh, that's when the switch took place!"

One of the worst faults that a magician could have, in my opinion, is over-emphasis. The legal term would be, "He protests too much. You are over-proving if you say, "Here I have an ordinary envelope." Why use the word 'ordinary'? If the envelope looks innocent why arouse suspicion by referring to it as an ordinary envelope? Don't challenge anybody. Al Baker had a wonderful saying for this: "Don't run if nobody is chasing you!" That's so true in magic. So many times a magician will vanish a coin. It will be a good effect. And then he tries to prove that his hands are empty by some very bad change-over palm or obvious display of dexterity and completely destroys the illusion that he created in the first place. So never protest too much!

April 1977

As I write this column a group of us are getting ready to fly to England to attend a miniature convention in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of John Ramsey. Kuda Bux, Luke and Jeane McKissack, Jim Lewis, Ron Wilson and Hy Berg are getting their passports in order and come Sunday afternoon we will take off into the wild blue yonder.

I have always felt that John Ramsay was one of the world's greatest magicians or, as they say in England, conjuror. Not only was he a great conjuror but one year in England he won the contest for the most entertaining act. Laymen and magicians alike loved him. I think it will be a very interesting convention lasting just two days. I understand there will be no dealer booths. It will be a tribute to John Ramsay. I'll tell you about it next month!

John had a very deep Scotch accent, and he always called me 'Davey'. I remember when he said, 'Davey, the whole secret of the Art is to take and not put.' When you stop to think about this statement it makes sense because a putting move is not nearly as natural as a taking move. John always took things from one hand to the other instead of placing them. The 'pincette' and 'le tourniquet', both French moves, are much more effective than a putting move.

Now a putting move can be very illusive and can be manipulative as a kind of display of skill, but when it comes to really fooling people and throwing them off the track a taking move is much more natural. John used to state this over and over again. He'd say, "You take, don't put."

Dave Roth of New York is planning to attend the Ramsay gathering and I know that he will thrill the English audiences. As I have said before, Dave does superlative work. Another person who is not known as well in the magic world as he should be is Earl Nelson who, up until a few weeks ago, was employed by the Hollywood Magic Shop. Earl is a consummate artist — he really does beautiful magic. Before coming to Hollywood Earl worked as an assistant on the Reveen Show, and at the present time he is with Mark Wilson Enterprises. Incidentally, Peter Reveen is rehearsing his new full-evening show in Canada. If he gets into your territory don't fail to catch him. Reveen has a very elaborate show and I wish him all the best with it. I hope it succeeds as well as his hypnotic show, which was sensational. Reveen made a lot of money with the hypnotic program and I'm hoping this will hold true for his full-evening magic show.

Speaking of Canada as I was a moment ago reminds me that I want to give an advance plug for Ross Bertram's forthcoming book. Those of you who liked Faucett Ross' recent book will think equally as well of Bertram's new book. Bertram is not only a perfectionist but he is an extremely well-posted and skillful magician. Watch for the book—you won't be disappointed.

MORE RAMBLINGS! One of the big problems of any magic show (which consists of several different magicians) is the duplication or repetition of certain tricks. A few that come to mind include the Zombie, Vanishing Cane, Dancing or Acrobatic Cane, and even the Zig Zag illusion. Possibly at magic conventions this duplication is not too bad because I think magicians like to see and study the different presentations, or at least they

should if they are serious students of magic. But for a public show, this repetition of tricks can be disastrous.

New tricks in magic are very few and far between. The person who can come up with a new trick or EFFECT is the one who will advance in magic today. In the field of card magic, for example, we have many different 'moves and sleights' but it is almost impossible to come up with a new effect. I have often said that Paul Curry deserves great credit for having dreamed up "Out of This World" which was an entirely new effect.

One frustrating aspect of card magic is when a magician has worked up an intriguing card effect, possibly working on it for months, and it is full of subtleties. Then they do the trick for, say, some lady and she says, "Yes, my boy does that— he finds the card!" Well, this is perfectly true. The effect may be very involved and contain a lot of subterfuges and different tricky moves but eventually you find the selected card! To the layman, the effect is just the same as any other "Find the card" trick, no matter how involved it becomes.

But, consider the different places in which you can find the card. There is no limit to where you can find a selected card. This is the only way in which you can put a little touch of originality in the finding of a chosen card. Find it in an outlandish place and to the layman you have a different effect. And this pertains to all forms of magic. You must give a trick a different slant or surprise finish.

When I was a youngster my 'Bible' was "The Expert at the Card Table" by Erdnase. In the book is the statement: "The tyro won't be satisfied until he has mastered every sleight in the calendar." That appealed to me as a kid and became my ambition. But this is a mistake—you shouldn't try to master every sleight. Now I am familiar with 31 different methods of transposing two halves of the pack. In other words, shifting the cards, including table shifts, etc. I also have 23 methods of switching a hole card for stud poker. But this is a waste of time. You should pick the best one for you and master it—do it with consummate skill. Of course, sometimes it's useful to have one or two different methods but as a rule It is better to master one method and Forget about all the others.

My advice to young magicians who aspire to make reputations for themselves in magic is to have one specialty, I don't care what it is, just do one trick well and better than anyone else! I told Albert Goshman years ago, "If you do one thing—I don't care if it's vanishing a coin by sticking it in your collar, or a coin roll, or whatever. If you do it better than anyone else you will make a great reputation for yourself. People will say, 'You should see Albert do that trick. Did you ever see Albert do that?', etc." And I would say that today Albert Goshman enjoys an enviable reputation for his close-up work, especially the continual appearance of half dollars beneath the salt shaker. No one can do it like Albert!

Horace Goldin, who was known as The Royal Illusionist in vaudeville, was an excellent sleight-of-hand artist He would borrow a linen or cotton handkerchief and have members of the audience tie four or five knots in it. He would place the knotted handkerchief on the table, make a pass over it with his hands, and the knots would disappear. Now this was long before Slydini ever did his knotted handkerchiefs routine. Horace performed it with great skill, with finesse (there was no strain)— and it looked like real magic. This is what every young magician should keep in mind.

Next month I'll have a full report of the Ramsay 'convention'.

May 1977

Just back from a truly wonderful rip to England, and the John Ramsay Convention in Birmingham, cleverly called the "RAMSAY REUNION". Luke McKissack and his lovely wife Jeannie, Ron Wilson, Kuda Bux, Hy Berg, Jim Lewis and I all flew to London where we were the guests of Luke at the famous Dorchester Hotel, in the Royal Suite on the eighth floor.

The Magic Circle had arranged a very nice banquet in my honor, which was conducted like "This Is Your Life". John Salisse astounded me with the information he had dug up concerning my past crimes! Incidentally, I almost committed the unpardonable sin of lighting up my cigar before they had made the toast to the Queen. Later in the evening they surprised me by electing me Vice-President of the Magic Circle.

The following evening, after Ron's lecture, in Vic Pinto's photography studio, Ken Brooke's lovely wife Barbara invited all of us to a most delicious dinner, which was Ken's way of saying "Thank You" to us all for attending the Ramsay Reunion.

The next day we were off by train to Birmingham. The Ramsay Reunion was organized by the Editors of the magazine of close-up magic "PABULAR", namely Fred Robinson, Nick Bolton and Eric Mason. Fred took over the running of the convention because of Ken Brooke being in the hospital, and really did a bang-up job. How Ken would have loved to have been on hand. To me it almost broke my heart that he couldn't be there. In all of magic, I think the two most beloved persons are Danny Dew and Ken Brooke. Human beings do not come any finer than these two gentlemen.

Pat Page was the Master of Ceremonies for the affair, and after introducing the editors of Pabular, he called upon me to say a few words about John Ramsay to get the festivities under way.

The truly great Fred Kaps presented his lecture — superb as always. This was followed by performances by Gaeton Bloom and Philippe Fialho of France, Ron Wilson of you-know-where, Juan Tamariz and Juan Anton of Spain, and David Roth of New York.

The next morning the sessions began with an excellent film by Lewis Ganson showing the fine close-up magic of David Carre. Next were performances by Kevin Fox, Doug Alker, Trevor Lewis, Geoff Ray, Piet Forton from Switzerland and Bob Read. My head was really spinning because all the acts were highly entertaining and the humor of some of the performers was really delightful, especially Bob Read.

Back in the hotel, a small group presented me with a silver medallion and ribbon, which was engraved by Quentin Mann. It was given by John Fisher, presented by Fred Kaps on behalf of Ken Brooke and his friends. One side bears the Verner Coat-of-Arms, while the other side has a most Flattering inscription.

I must say that this was one of the most pleasant and entertaining conventions I have ever attended. There were no distractions, no running from one place to another, no dealers selling anything, just hospitality, cordiality and excellent performers.

After the convention, Ron and I flew to Nice, as houseguests of Philippe Fialho and his wonderful wife Ann. On to Marseilles, where, after Ron's lecture, which started

without an interpreter!, we had the pleasure of a session with Andre Robert and friends. His excellent card work can hold it's own with any card man.

I accompanied Ron later to his former home, Dundee, Scotland. Another Scot, Jim Boyd picked us up at Edinburgh airport and drove us to Dundee. We were joined there by Harry Carnegie, Peter Moffat from Perth, Gordon Bruce and Peter Duffy from Glasgow. Gordon really amazed me with his knowledge of magic. Not only is he extremely talented, but he IS a fine individual. He is the one who arranged for a private show by Andrew Galloway in Birmingham. The only ones present for this special treat were Fred Kaps, David Roth and myself. Andy does Full justice to the John Ramsay effects, with his superb handling of same. He is a very quiet, retiring chap but boy, can he do magic!

I was greatly pleased to be able to spend a few hours in London with Fred Robinson and Devano. Also to see so many old friends like Goodliffe, Allen Shaxon, Freddy Fah and many others. A great deal of thanks to Pat Page for being our chauffeur while in London. I was disappointed in not being able to see Roy Walton and Alex Elmsley on this trip.

Before winding up this short report of the reunion, I must mention the excellent card work and ideas of Tonny Van Rhee. Together with Gaeton Bloom, in Ken Brooke's studio, they made our last day a very pleasant one with their ingenious effects.

On April 5th I was the guest at Milt Larsen's famous Mayfair Music Hall in Santa Monica. Now I have seen many magic shows during my long lifetime but I don't think I ever saw a show that was put together better than the one I saw that evening! It was presented by members of the Junior Society of the Academy of Magical Arts, under the direction of Diana Zimmerman. It was really wonderful the way this show ran (much credit to stage manager Gary Grayson) and some of the acts were really stellar performances. These youngsters deserve a lot of credit.

Of course, I was delighted to see little Heidi Larsen do the Acrobatic Cane. She is only 10 years old and did an excellent job (credit to her teacher, Peter Pit).

All of the acts were really excellent and I must say that some of the older chaps in magic better tend to their business because these young ones are coming up and are going to pass the older magician with no difficulty. For the record I would like to list their names alphabetically: Dark Arthur, David Barnes, Gregory & Kay, Clark Hunter, Mark Kalin, Scott Kimble, Heidi Larsen, Chuck McQuary, Jonathon Noiry, Kerry Ross, Brett Stevens, Jeff Williams, Jeff Young, and Dan Zalusky. The program was emceed by Steve Hyman and John Noiry. I hope you will have the opportunity of seeing some or all of these fine young performers sometime in the future. My personal congratulations to them all.

June 1977

Gene Anderson is GENII's "Cover Boy" this month and he is truly a delightful performer! His fine sense of humor and most original methods of presentation had Magic Castle audiences enthralled during his engagement here a few months ago. Gene's well-know Torn and Restored Newspaper was featured by Doug Henning in "The Magic Show" on Broadway and received tremendous applause at every show. His rendition of the old Die Box using Bill Larsen, Sr.'s patter, is priceless! Besides being an excellent magician and entertainer Gene Anderson is a warm, friendly human being.

I keep harping on this latter quality but if one does not naturally possess it, it must be faked in some way. In other words, when you are performing for the public you must act in a pleasant cordial manner. Peter Pit's success as emcee and magician is largely due to his natural charm and friendly approach to the spectators.

Every Monday night at the Castle is "Guest Star Night" in the Palace of Mystery. Peter is in charge of these programs, which are made up of different magic acts, all appearing by invitation. Some of these acts are trying out for possible engagements here later on. Others may be breaking in a new routine or trick. Or some acts may have invited booking agents so they can see the act under ideal performing conditions, i.e., a well-equipped stage and a great audience of Castle members, both magicians and laymen.

Last Monday evening, Owen McGiveney's son, Michael, presented his father's famous quick-change act based on Dickens' "Oliver Twist". He uses a superb stage setting. It is hard to believe that Michael can walk out one door and almost instantly reappear from another door as an entirely different character. Many magicians thought he was using other people for the change. Positively not so! Yes, there are Assistants backstage to help him make the instantaneous changes, but it is Michael you see on stage in all the roles!

During the past two weeks we have had the pleasure of watching Vito Scotti's superb pantomime work. His impressions of a magician are hilarious, to say the least. And here again is a fellow whose natural Charm and personality literally pour out over the footlights! Backstage Vito was telling us what a pleasure it was working with Don Rickles recently on the "CPO Sharkey" television show. And those of us who saw it saw another side of Vito's great ability as an actor. In this one he was the pizza man who delivered 30 pizzas to the boys in camp, which according to the script, was entirely against the rules! Very funny situation comedy. "Vito, you are always welcome at the Castle. The magicians love working with you."

There are two good signs to indicate that a person is growing old. One is that you have a tendency to forget things and I really don't remember the other one. But I did forget to mention last month that Hugh Riley of Laguna Beach was also one of the local gang at the Ramsay Re-Union in England! Sorry, Hugh. Hope I am forgiven.

You know, it is really flattering when magicians praise me, but it is also annoying to me. I should take a back seat to such adepts as Bruce Cervon, Steve Freeman, Larry Jennings, Earl Nelson, and Mike Skinner. They are all extremely skillful.

Quite a few months ago I'd received A letter from Ned Balski of Colorado Asking me to comment on the subject of exposing magic. He reminded me that many years ago I

exposed several items on Art Baker's television show, "You Asked For It"; namely, the Farmer and the chickens, the Divided Banana, and a snap color change with a card that Jarrow used to do in vaudeville. Originally when I was engaged to appear on the program I was asked to give a talk on crooked gambling.

When I arrived at the studio the director informed me that the entire program had been changed. They had received a letter from a seven year old girl complaining that magicians never explained a few simple tricks that anyone could easily perform.

The program was sponsored by a peanut butter company. Well, I hastened across the street and bought a few bananas. There were plenty of peanuts on hand so I put together a short routine with explanations. I was greatly censored for this "exposure" by the Society of American Magicians. To me this was absolutely ridiculous. I am firmly convinced that most exposures do no real harm. How many times have second dealing, bottom dealing, shiners, marked cards, etc., been exposed? Good operators can employ any of these doges and no one is any the wiser.

Years ago Camel cigarettes got national publicity in the newspapers with a series titled "It's Fun to Be Fooled, But it's more Fun to Know!" They published the methods, with illustrations, of all the well-known effects being performed at that time. These effects are still being performed today and few know the true workings of them. Science and magic deal with "how it is done". Art—with the manner of performing it. Skill cannot be exposed. At any rate, it is merely an exhibition of clever handling. Legerdemain is essentially a psychological process intended to appear mysterious and to evoke wonderment.

In a previous article I mentioned that my dear friend, Fu Manchu (David Bamberg) claimed that an emotion-appealing effect was essential to success. Young readers failed to understand and wanted to know exactly what is meant by this statement as I have had many letters asking me. I'll explain that an emotion can be curiosity; it can be romance; it can concern sex; it can concern sensation, competition, sentiment, or even glamour. In fact, there are many different ways in which to give a trick an emotional appeal. And with those very heavy thoughts I'll say good-bye for now!

July 1977

This month GENII honors Karrell Fox, one of magic's funniest performers and a real nice guy to boot! His "methods" are very ingenious and he always presents them in a most entertaining and pleasing style. Years ago Karrell was in New York City visiting the late Richard Himber. Anyone interested in dance music and the big band era will remember Himber as the leader of a fine orchestra. Recently RCA-Victor released a two-record album of Himber recordings from the thirties on the Bluebird label which I can recommend to anyone interested in such music.

Most magicians remember Richard Himber as a practical joker who went to great lengths (and expense) to accomplish his purpose. At one time Himber was manager for Rudy Vallee's orchestra which was appearing on the Lucky Strike radio program. They used a sky writer who wrote LUCKY STRIKE every day between the hours of three and four P.M. in the sky over New York. Himber approached the pilot and asked if it would be possible to write ACE OF CLUBS the next afternoon. The pilot said he couldn't do it but, after further talking, agreed to write the card just after four o'clock when he would have finished his Lucky strike commitment! I think the hundred dollar bill handed to him by Himber helped close the deal!

So now we come to the next afternoon. Karrell and Richard were fooling each other with magic in Himber's apartment. Himber had a one way force deck (Ace of Clubs, of course!) and he said, "Here, I'll show you a good trick, Karrell." He had Karrell select one of the cards and put it in his pocket without looking at it. Meanwhile Himber put the balance of the deck in his pocket. He was keeping watch of the time (it was close to four o'clock) and then he apparently removed the deck from his pocket (really another deck minus the Ace of Clubs) and spread it face-up on the table. He started mulling over the cards, adding the spots, etc., saying, "It would be a pretty good trick if I could tell you the missing card, wouldn't it?" Karrell agreed that it would be all right. Of course, Himber was stalling for just the right moment! He asked Karrell to go over to the window and take the card from his pocket. "Look at the card and then look up at the sky and think hard of the card!" Karrell had no idea what was going to happen but knowing that Himber was a "little nutty" he played along. He did as Richard had asked and the timing was perfect! As Karrell looked out at the sky he saw the ACE OF CLUBS being written! It was quite a sensational effect I'm sure you will agree.

This event turned out to be a very profitable thing for Karrell many years later in Detroit. Karrell reconstructed the entire sequence for the son of Henry Ford thereby endearing himself to the Ford enterprises. He worked for Ford for several very profitable years. Now if the foregoing tale is not exactly correct in some details you'll have to speak to Billy McComb who reminded me of the incident!

Another story about Karrell that may be new to readers is what happened on his honeymoon! While Karrell and his new bride, Lynn, were enjoying the various events of a magic convention (yes, some magicians DO spend their honeymoons at magic conventions, right Phil Craig?) someone obtained a duplicate key to their hotel room and, with the help of friends, removed every stick of furniture from the room! Anything that wasn't nailed down went out. So now, after a full afternoon and evening of being congratulated by their magic friends, Karrell and Lynn retired for the night. You can

imagine their surprise when they opened the door and turned on the light! I really don't know the outcome of this practical joke—next time I see Karrell I must ask him!

Many magicians think of Karrell as a clown more than a magician. This is because at every convention over the years he, Jay Marshall, Senator Crandall, and Duke Stern would come up with the funniest routines you can imagine. And Karrell would usually do a spot "in one" with outlandishly corny gags and puns. People would leave the conventions laughing and talking about these antics. Their hilarious skits were the highlight of any convention.

But in reality Karrell is an excellent magician. He is especially good doing close-up magic—I think superlative would be the word. He can hold his own with any of the finest close-up workers in the world. But besides his skill as a magician it is his personality that people remember. He comes off warmly and very entertainingly. Years ago Don Lawton had the privilege of being in an audience at the Chase Hotel in St. Louis where Karrell presented his nightclub act for a private party. (Karrell had invited Don over.) Don tells me that it was a complete revelation to him. Until then he had only seen Karrell at magic conventions. This "different" Karrell Fox was just about the greatest thing in entertainment that Don had seen!

I take my hat off to KARRELL FOX and wish him many more years of continued success!

I just received a nice warm letter from Doug Henning who is in Switzerland at the present time. Some magicians can't understand how Doug has done so well in such a short time in magic. As I have written before (but it bears repeating) there are many attributes in magic that many would-be magicians fail to understand. You can't flaunt magic in front of people. It must be presented in an entertaining way. It must be done with sincerity. You must understand the Art in magic.

Beginners ask me what books they should obtain to help them in magic. I think that every beginner should read "Our Magic" by Maskelyne and Devant. Also "Neo Magic" by S. H. Sharpe. And especially the Robert Houdin books. These are the books that will give you a foundation, the philosophy and the Art of magic. They do not teach you how to do a double lift or a shift. Such things are just "tools"; they have nothing to do with magic itself. Magic is an Art.

The different sleights you learn are tools to create an effect. Many think that the sleight is most important. They like to show off such skill. True magic is different than "juggling", as I call sleights. If you want to show how skillful you are, be a juggler! Juggling takes hours and hours of incessant practice, something many magicians shun.

The other evening my friend Oscar Pladek of Philadelphia and I were sitting at the bar in the Castle talking with Billy McComb. Oscar was enthused about the work of Jules Lenier whom he had seen earlier in the Close-Up Gallery. I told Oscar that Lenier had been voted "Close-Up Magician of the Year" by the members of the Academy of Magical Arts. Oscar replied, "Well, I can see why. He does his magic in such a simple and nice way. His coin and card work was beautifully presented in a pleasingly graceful manner. It wasn't complicated. It was done simply and right to the point." I, also, enjoy Lenier's work.

In direct contrast: We noticed a very attractive girl sitting at the end of the bar with a chap who had a deck of cards. He dealt the cards into piles and, although we could not

hear, apparently asked the girl to count a number of cards and take half the number and deal more, etc., etc. The poor girl looked terribly bored but he was persisting in doing these card tricks. We continued our conversation and about twenty or twenty-five minutes later we noticed that this poor girl was still trapped!

Now it can be torture for some people to have to watch tricks under these conditions. You must learn to "time" your magic. Don't force it on people. Don't say, "Now here's another one", or "Here's one I used to do", or "Here's something new I'm working on!" It may be interesting to the performer but, remember, you are trying to please and entertain people. Going on and on and on will produce just the opposite effect. It makes them hate card tricks. And the reason so many people hate card tricks is because they have been subjected to such magic. Some performers don't know when to stop.

I must stop also but before I do I must say how nice it was to have Peps Zoller, Nicky Hoebel, Kurt Herfurt and Armin Siegel and his wife Inga with us for a few days at the Castle. The photo shows them with me in the area just outside the Parlour of Prestidigitation where we have the street sign that they sent to me last summer. I enjoyed seeing them work and hope to visit them next time.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Dai Vernon celebrated his 83rd birthday June 11th. Congratulations can be sent to him c/o The Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Avenue, Hollywood, CA 90028.)

August 1977

Just received a letter from my dear friend, Faucett Ross, bring me to task for failing to mention the name of Frank Brooker when I wrote a brief account of my recent visit to London. You know, Frank was a taxi driver to whom Channing Pollock taught his complete act. When Ross and I were in England in the fifties Frank did everything imaginable to make our stay enjoyable. He called at our hotel with his cab each morning to awaken us and take us anywhere we wanted to go. He was more than cordial and obliging in every respect. It was also greatly to his credit that he learned to present Channing's act expertly. In spite of this, when he asked Faucett Ross for any advice he could give, Faucett remarked with a smile, "Frank, don't sell your cab!"

At this point I'd like to state that Frank came to see us at the Dorchester on our recent visit and he is still the most self-effacing and friendly chap you'd wish to meet.

Thinking of our trip to London and the wonderful dinner which the Magic Circle gave in my honor I couldn't begin to know how to let all the people concerned feel my great appreciation. Unfortunately I am a hopeless correspondent and almost never put pen to paper. However, as I tape these words I say, "Thank you, thank you, and again, thank you!"

While attending the Ramsay Reunion in Birmingham I was quite surprised to meet a chap who cuts silhouettes. His name is Francis Giles. He graciously cut my silhouette and I made his in return. Noticing that he was using some ideal black paper not obtainable in the United States I gave him 10 pounds and he kindly offered to purchase some and send it to me later. After waiting for some time I failed to receive anything or any word and I felt quite puzzled. A week or so later I was relieved but somewhat saddened when Francis informed me that the cost of mailing the paper would run about \$14.00. I was delighted later when Albert Goshman handed me a package containing a number of sheets of this black-gummed paper. He had just returned from London where he had appeared on a television program for the BBC. Francis Giles had given Albert the package to deliver personally.

One thing that worries me greatly: I failed to get together with Ray Hammond to make a tape for him while I was in London. He is the chap who made tape recordings of several well-known magicians including Lewis Ganson who discussed magic and gave a brief history of his background, etc. Ray wanted me to do the same thing. When Lewis informed me that Ray was a very decent and likeable chap I naturally regretted the fact that I was not able to comply with Lewis' wish. This gives me a great feeling of guilt.

Seeing Lewis Ganson and chatting with him during the dinner was the highlight of an altogether marvelous holiday. Another great thrill was again visiting Philippe Fialho's beautiful home in Nice and enjoying dinner with him and his charming wife, Ann.

Two books arrived in today's mail. One is by Andre Robert who lives in Marseilles. The book is printed, quite expectedly, in French but it looks extremely interesting. I had the pleasure of spending some time in Marseilles with Andre and can vouch for his dexterity and knowledge.

The other book came from Jeff Busby and is a new book by Larry Jennings. The book contains excellently-rendered pen and ink drawings and although I have not yet read any of the descriptions of the tricks and routines I feel certain they will give great

pleasure and enlightenment to the purchaser. Thanks Andre, Jeff, and Larry for the books!

Having now passed my 83rd birthday I trust my readers will forgive any inadequacies and inconsistencies in these columns. The only thing I notice as I continue to grow older is that I lack the patience and understanding that I once had. Also I cannot concentrate for any length of time on anything. However I must state that the hobby of magic is a most worthwhile hobby for all. As a profession, only for the few.

Out of the blue I'd like to ask a question: Can a retired judge still marry a loving couple? I have tried to get an answer to this question but so far the persons I have asked do not know. Barry Nighbert, the local exponent of "Sam, the Bellhop", wishes to marry. He asked me to ask my very dear friend, Judge Pearce Young, if he could do the honors. Incidentally, the judge was of great help to Shimada and others in the business of getting birds in and out of the country. The good judge is also an enthusiastic coin expert, classical pianist, astronomer, and computer expert, which is quite an accomplishment for one man.

I have stated before that the most amazing trick around here is the way people continue to patronize the Castle. During the past two weeks they have been treated to several excellent magicians including Peter DePaula, with his charming assistant, Kathryn, in the Palace of Mystery where they astonished the viewers nightly. In the close-up room from East Germany pleased the crowds immensely and completely fooled some of the more informed card workers with a couple of his effects. I was greatly surprised to learn that anyone could leave East Berlin but Peter told me that exceptions are made for certain people, like artists or entertainers and also certain types of salesmen. Peter will present a lecture at the Castle on intimate and stage magic.

A pleasant surprise was the receipt of a Happy Birthday telegram (cablegram?) from Germany! Thank you Peps Zoller, Kurt Herfurt, and Armin Siegel for thinking of me.

A CLOSING FLASH! I have it on good authority that Judge Young will be officiating at the marriage of Barry and Sally, and I will be the best man.

September 1977

This month GENII honors Frank Garcia. I have known Frank from the time he was a young boy. In fact, years ago I had great feelings of guilt on first meeting him with young Bill Simon. I kept these two boys up all night discussing the aspects of magic! Frank has always had a great aptitude for the "real work". He is well versed in all branches of magic and he possesses a warm friendly manner that endears him to everyone.

Willie Schneider told me that years ago he went over to Brooklyn to see the late Chang present his full evening show. Willie was quite surprised to see Frank Garcia come out between acts of Chang's show and perform manipulations which he did, and still does, incredibly well. So we know that Frank has been around magic for many years, and I trust he will enjoy many more of our Art.

Castle member Ted Salter has drawn hundreds of caricatures of magicians who have worked here, and these framed drawings are sprinkled throughout the Castle. You may consider this just a bit of trivia but I have observed a rather peculiar thing that may interest you. If your name ends in "N" I think you have a better chance statistically of doing your act in the Castle! Just as an example: Larsen (Bill and Milt), Wilson (Mark and Ron), Nelson, Cervon, Goshman, Lawton, Spillman, etc., etc. These plus 35 others who have worked here have names ending in "N"! Most of the names contain two syllables. Falkenstein is an exception! There is one unique name, Kuda Bux, who has 'the exclusive on names ending in "X"! Kuda Bux is certainly very popular around the Castle. It's remarkable how well-known he is because people come in from all parts of the world and remark, "My goodness, I saw you in England years ago", or it may have been Spain or Germany.

Kuda has traveled the world over and his act is still as effective today as it was countless years ago.

I am ashamed to say that I was not acquainted with the name Ken Noyle. He worked here at the Castle a few weeks ago and I was delighted at what a very fine performer he is. He has a very attractive Japanese wife who assists him and he does a really terrific performance because he is a fine entertainer. To me he has the same qualities as Whitey Roberts in that during his performance he gets the audience excited and enthused. In fact, he received standing ovations most of the week. He has a little trick for getting such an ovation which is rather interesting.

Ken makes several remarks about how lucky the people are sitting in the audience, etc. "I wish I could be as lucky as you are sitting out there seeing me!". And he says, "If I do this trick I should get a standing ovation. I hope I can do it!" Anyway, at the end he DOES get a standing ovation and it is really exciting to see him work. Come back again, Ken Noyle!

Another new acquaintance of mine is a young chap named Hiram Strait. He is gracing the Castle with his presence now, having moved down from San Francisco. Hiram has performed in our Close-Up Gallery and in the Parlour of Prestidigitation and does a very entertaining job both places. In the daytime Hiram works on stained glass windows, replacing broken glass and generally repairing them. And as if that wasn't enough to keep him out of trouble, Hiram is doubling as host certain evenings while Don Damaskin, our regular host, is in traction at the hospital getting his back back in shape!.

Talking about young chaps who do magic, young Persi Diaconis, a very dear friend of mine whom I have known since he was 12 years of age, is now a professor at Stanford University. He is the one person many of the young magicians here are dying to meet. Persi was 'in the Castle the other evening but unfortunately two or three of those most anxious to meet Persi didn't show up that evening. They were very disappointed at missing him.

I was sorry I Could not get over to Washington, D.C. for the IBM Convention, but the Castle was well represented by our President Bill Larsen and his lovely Irene. Earl Nelson, who is a superlative technician and entertainer, was also there and met Herb Zarrow for the First time. Now there is a wonderful guy—Herb Zarrow. He is liked by everyone in magic. He and his wife, Phyllis, are wonderful hosts as anybody who has ever visited them in Jersey knows. Herb is best known for the Zarrow Shuffle but he is also very adept with coins.

When I first started writing this column I wanted to call it THE CRANKY OLD MAN OF MAGIC DISCUSSES THE ART but Bill didn't seem to like that title and suggested the one we now use. I think a good name would be VERNON'S RAMBLINGS because of the way I ramble from one thing to another.

We had a rather interesting event take place here a couple of weeks ago. Jonathan Winters is doing a series of television shows wherein he travels around the country interviewing different people in different professions. During Jonathan's "visit" at the Castle he talked with Earl Nelson, Ron Wilson, Albert Goshman and myself. The five of us sat at a table in the Irma Room and during the interview each of us did a trick for Jonathan. Robert Houdin once stated that a magician is an actor playing the part of a magician. Well, Jonathan proved this 100% to our satisfaction by doing a routine with an imaginary girl:

He sat her on a chair and proceeded to saw her head off! As he went through the motions he did his own sound effects. The head fell on the floor. He picked it up and restored the head to the girl's body only to discover, to his horror, that he had restored it backwards! It was one of the funniest bits I have seen, and highly entertaining. As Houdin said, the performer must be an actor, and Jonathan Winters is a superlative actor. He endeared himself to everyone that day with his "between takes" stories and routines. A genuinely funny man, and a nice guy both on and off the stage.

October 1977

I am always happy to comment on newcomers" in this column. There is a chap here at the Castle whose name probably won't be familiar to many readers but he certainly deserves a mention right here! His name is Brad Berlin. Brad is an extremely clever chap in his twenties who is studying law, and I predict that he will be a brilliant lawyer in years to come if he continues his studies and doesn't try to become a professional magician! He is superlative in his magic, working out everything down to the finest detail. People who have seen him perform enthuse about his presentations. I think Brad is a good example of a young fellow who has approached magic in the right way. He personifies what I have stated so often: BE NATURAL!

This is so important — I can't stress this enough—be natural! Any semblance of affectation or superiority or conceit . . . any feeling you may have that is not endearing to your audience is fatal when you're doing magic. The most important quality is to have rapport with your audience. A person can close their eyes when listening to a singer or to music but it is a bit difficult to enjoy magic that way! I am certain Brad will continue to be natural in his magic because I have stressed this to him so many times.

I was a bit upset or perturbed when I recently received four "folios" from my friend, Karl Fulves. They are called the Vernon Close-Up Folios and are being currently advertised. Now I like Karl Fulves and admire him. I believe that he has a very Keane analytical mind. A year or so ago when I was visiting Herb Zarrow I spent a pleasant evening with Herb and Karl. Karl asked me if I would mind if he published the Stevens Riffle. I said the riffle was a difficult thing to do and doubted if many people would be interested but it was perfectly alright with me if he wanted to publish it. Karl thanked me and then asked if he could publish anything from my lecture. I told Karl that I did not have lecture notes available but if he had made notes and wanted to put them together for publication it would be O.K. I certainly gave him permission to do this.

But, as I said, I was a little shocked when the folios arrived because Karl used a lot of biographical material which he claims he got from some tapes I made for Dick Buffum some years ago. This was a bit annoying to me because Elizabeth Wilson has been writing the story of my life, working from the Buffum tapes. The articles by Karl take the edge off some of the writings scheduled for the book. I know Karl is a friend of mine and was probably unaware of the fact that a book is being written. Elizabeth, as many of you know, is the wife of Ron Wilson, and is a very talented writer. Whenever Charlie Miller is sailing the seven seas, dancing his toes off, Elizabeth takes over and writes his column for GENII. Well, to sum it all up, perhaps we should look upon Karl's notes as a preview of things to come! The book by Elizabeth Wilson will be illustrated with photographs and, I trust, will be of interest to all my friends.

As you all know, I love to recall some of the events that have happened in my lifetime of magic. So here I go again! Back in 1957 when I was in London I went to a house party with Faucett Ross and Lord Mountbatten. The King and queen of Sweden were there and I was introduced (or presented?) to them. The Queen asked me to explain the game of dice to her. There was no place to throw or roll the dice except on the floor. The queen asked if I could throw the dice on her lap. So I did just that, and often chuckle

to myself when I think of what you could say I did! Those who know a certain phrase used in the throwing of dice will know what I mean!

Well, the foregoing "memory" is my way of leading into something current. I recently received a letter From a chap named Toledo, of Sweden, asking if I would consider visiting Sweden for their Top Hat Festival the end of September and the first and second of October. They want me to meet their young King and tell him about my experience of shooting dice on the Queen's lap, etc. (I would assume she was his mother.) I tried to discourage Toledo, telling him that there are many young magicians in Europe, artists of the caliber of Fred Kaps, etc., who are much more qualified to be at their Festival. It looks as though my protests were in vain because if all goes as scheduled I will be flying to Sweden the end of September. You'd think a man of my age would settle down!

Which is a deliberate lead-in to my closing paragraph! Speaking of traveling, Joe Cossari and I have just returned from Austin, Texas, and the TAOM Conclave. It was a great convention—I'll tell you all about it next month. But I do want to tell you right now about a new trick I saw demonstrated in Texas that absolutely baffled everyone there! I can't remember during my lifetime in magic when I ever saw a trick that puzzled more people than Sterling Creations' "Hugs and Kisses". I know that some of the most knowledgeable persons in magic have been thoroughly deceived by this trick. It is very different in effect because instead of coins changing places as is usually done in transposition tricks, the "spaces" change places. In this case, a hole in one coin (English penny) changes places with a cross or "X" in another coin (American half dollar)! This strange and startling transposition happens three times (six coins are used). During Sterling's demonstrations in Austin I didn't see anyone who figured it out! It's a marvelous trick for close-up work and I recommend it highly.

November 1977

How time does fly! Since last "visiting" with you I have flown to Sweden and back! Will be telling you about the trip in columns to come. My comments on the recent Texas convention will also be forthcoming. For this column I have more to tell you about local and out-of-town members and performers here at the Magic Castle.

So many fine performers appear at the Castle that it is difficult for me, at my age, to remember them all. One who comes to mind is Harry Anderson, a tall handsome chap from Texas. I believe he is originally from Oregon and spends time living in both states. Harry does both stage and semi-stage magic in a most entertaining manner. He pleases everybody. His humor is far out at times but audiences love him for his warm personality.

Another chap who just finished a week here is Kirk Lovell of Seattle. He has very novel presentations of magic. He really doesn't do anything startlingly new but what he does is done extremely well. Everything he presents has a novel twist and his patter is quite adult.

Professor Flores has worked here in the past and is once again with us. I was never a lover of fire-eating acts but the professor does it very well. I think one of his best and most puzzling items is his version of the Linking Ropes. He uses eight (I think!) ropes of different colors. He ties the ropes into circles and has members of the audience check them by pulling on them. And then he does a routine, very much like a Linking Ring routine, with these ropes and he really does it faultlessly. I told Professor Flores if he did just this one trick and had a good monologue it would be Las Vegas material.

We are really lucky to have such superlative talent around us all the time. Earl Nelson, whom I have mentioned briefly in the past, is now back in the magic shop business, being connected with Bert Green's Magic Corner" on Hollywood Blvd. know Earl will be a great asset to the store as I consider him to be one of the smoothest close-up workers round.

Most of us know Johnny Thompson for his "Great Thomsons" stage act but he takes a back seat to no one when it comes to close-up magic. To me Johnny's stage act is perfection. And he is blest by having a very charming, talented, beautiful wife who adds so much to his comedy act. I used to rave years ago about the act of Cardini. I was doing close-up magic for Billy Rose at the time and Cardini was on the stage. I saw him perform hundreds of times and I couldn't criticize his act. His act was faultless, just the same as Johnny Thompson's act. Not only is the act funny but it is done with consummate skill. Above all, Johnny is a very charming person and everyone who meets him likes him.

I feel a prediction coming on! I think it will be just a short time before Peter Pit is internationally known as a fine comedian. His Emcee work in the Palace of Mystery keeps improving as time goes on. Peter is a bright lad and has an Excellent command of English. As he remarks, "I never had an accent until I came to this country!", but still he speaks English better than a great many persons who were born and raised in this country! Of course, whenever I think of Peter Pit I am reminded of the "Dancing Cane", as Peter was one of the first magicians I ever saw perform the trick. And I'm sure you will remember my viewpoints on this trick, as well as on the Zombie.

I don't know why people who do these two tricks prolong them so much! Do a few moves with the cane or the Zombie and then quit. One of the gravest faults I have seen in the past few years is the prolonging of these two tricks. If I do nothing more for magic I think I would be contributing something if I could get people to cut their routines with these two tricks! (The "Cranky Old Man of Magic" has spoken.)

Harry Monti and his charming wife, Trudy, have just finished a week at the Castle. They hail from St. Louis and certainly endeared themselves to everybody. Not only does Harry do his magic very well but he has a nice ingratiating manner. I told Harry most sincerely that he has the only act that has played here that I couldn't criticize some of his moves. He does his sleights without any "telegraphing" whatsoever. So many performers "telegraph" their moves or sleights. You may not actually see what happens but you know something HAS happened. Or at times you suspect that something is going to happen by the way the performer goes into it. It's like a sprinter ready for the hundred yard dash . . . he's crouched down with his fingertips on the ground, etc., and you know that he is getting ready to take off. Exactly the same thing occurs with so many magicians when they are going to do a sleight.

When they come to that point in the trick where they have to make a sleight or fake movement of some kind, before they make it they get set up for it. They betray this in their manner, their voice, in every way, and this is extremely difficult to overcome. I feel certain that a lot of performers don't realize that they are doing this. Harry Monti has mastered this phase of the Art of Magic. He glides right by the bad points and he is to be highly commended. Anybody who has a chance to watch Harry work will see what I mean. The trick flows along without any bad notes. What I am talking about could be compared with a jarring note in music, or someone getting out of step while dancing and stepping on the lady's toes. It's out of place — you lose the rhythm. It's very difficult to overcome this fault. Most magicians have a feeling of guilt when it comes time to make the secret move or sleight.

December 1977

It seems only a short time ago that I mentioned going to Sweden and here I am back again in Hollywood. I must state that I fell completely in love with Stockholm. It is a truly beautiful city and all the people I met were extremely cordial.

While there, Toledo, who made arrangements, did everything imaginable to make my stay a pleasurable one. He also made contact with the King and I had the honor of showing him a few close-up effects in the Royal Palace. Both Toledo and Dr. Lennart Green accompanied me and there were only the four of us. His Highness is still quite young, under thirty, and he seemed to enjoy this ancient art.

I was also royally entertained by Topper Martyn and Dusenberg the Swedish mentalist.

The very next day after arriving back in California I took a plane for Wichita, Kansas, where Kuda Bux and I were on the main show. Kuda visited the local newspaper office and gave a demonstration that astounded the entire staff. In his act he performed his sharp-shooting with a genuine rifle. This was the first time that he had performed it. However, his aim was as faultless as ever.

Wichita was old familiar territory to me as years ago I lived in the Harrison Apartments with my dear friend Faucett Ross. And it was here that I first met that superlative sleight-of-hand expert Charles Earl Miller who drove from El Paso, Texas, to see Faucett.

One of the main reasons I wished to attend this convention was to meet Susie Cotterall. She was the one that appeared on the Johnny Carson Show and completely bamboozled everyone. Although she misses often she performs real miracles at times. Personally I seriously doubt that anyone knows exactly how she accomplishes some of her startling effects.

Everyone at this affair raved about the way Al Stevens ran everything. He could not possibly have been more efficient. I met many of my good friends: John Cornelius, Roger Klause, C. W. Stanford, John and Maureen Bowery, Roger Crabtree, Irv Weiner, and the girl Marjorie Shockley who years ago mimeographed the Twenty Dollar Manuscript.

I should like to mention that besides Susie, one of the memorable events was C.W.'s beautiful parrot. This magnificent bird was far keener and sharper-eyed than most magicians. Many tried to fool her with three-card Monte, but she would almost always flip over the Queen with her bill. This was most amusing and I hope sometime this bird and her trainer appear at the Magic Castle.

To digress somewhat I'd like to mention the Austin, Texas Convention, which I attended with Joe Cossari and Brad Berlin. Joe was on the main show and even Brad who is super critical was mildly surprised, but pleased with the warm reception Joe received for his most colorful and unique act.

To me one of the things that attracted me was the bearded chap Danny??? (sorry, I can't recall his name). However, he performed the "boomerang" rubber band. I had heard of this novelty years ago but had never seen anyone do it. He twists an ordinary small rubber band around his fingers. Then he allows it to spring off and it propels itself about

twenty feet away. Amazingly it rolls back again! On one occasion he placed his hand palm-up on the floor and the rubber band actually rolled back and up his arm!

I was very pleased to see again my Friend Tommy Martin and his charming wife Rosemary. Few of the youngsters today realize what an outstanding act Tommy had. At the same time Cardini was playing the Big Time, Tommy Martin was gracing the bills also. In those days Jarrow, Leipzig, Warren Keane, Judson Cole, Wallace Galvin and Jack Merlin were the headline magicians appearing in the Keith Houses.

Of course, earlier, Van Hoven was the highest salaried but his act was completely devoid of any serious magic. However people actually would become hysterical with laughter as they watched him perform. The only other performer in the magic field that received a similar high salary was Houdini who, by his constant efforts to obtain publicity, made a lasting name for himself.

January 1978

The Magic Castle seems to grow more popular with each passing week. A great many people wonder why others in different cities do not open up similar operations. Little do they know or realize the background of this fabulous club.

Years ago William Larsen, Senior, had an intense desire to open a place where magicians could meet. He pictured a handsome building with every facility available to members of the craft. Before he realized this dream he passed away. His sons, Milt and Bill, were able to fulfill his wishes and leased this building that is now the world-famous Magic Castle.

Certain strict rules regarding dress and behavior for all members, their guests, and our employees have always been enforced. Bill and Milt were most fortunate in selecting the late Jay Ose as resident magician. Jay made friends with everyone and was a superb entertainer besides. Also the numerous bartenders are friendly and popular with everyone. The waiters and bus boys are polite and pleasing. The hostesses in the entrance lobby and the cocktail waitresses have good looks and charm. And the host/managers are always on the job to see that everyone enjoys their visit to the Castle. All these persons and qualities combine to create an unbeatable combination.

Today I received a copy of the long deceased "Mahatma" magic magazine from Max Goodall of West Virginia. It is the tenth copy published in May of 1899. It brought back memories of very long ago . . . of when I first discovered "Mahatma" in the library of my hometown of Ottawa, Canada. On the cover of this issue is a portrait of my old friend T. Nelson Downs. The magazine lauds him to the sky and deservedly so. There are several effects by Henry Hardin who used to sell secrets, and who, I believe, was the originator of the Living and Dead Test utilizing the rough edges principle. During this period of time Arthur Finley, Ellsworth Lyman, and Jordan were all selling select secrets and exchanging ideas.

There are numerous advertisements in the magazine, among them Milton Chase's of Boston. As our editor will surely agree, ads are an important part of most magic magazines! They are actually a "history" of our Art when you get right down to it. Incidentally, the coin put out by Milton Chase is the finest ever minted and the only person I know who may have one is my friend Roy Benson .

Going back to Henry Hardin for a moment, here is an example of how he altered well-known effects: Instead of the over-done Card Star effect he used a flat metal skull and crossbones. The cards were tossed at this outfit and the four selected cards appeared at the extremities of the bones. At the same instant the two eye openings turned a burning red! Quite dramatic.

In the Palace of Mystery this week Peter DePaula & Kathlyn, Abb Dickson, and Gene Brandt all do extremely pleasant performances. The Close-Up Gallery has Max Maven (Phil Goldstein) who presents his magic most convincingly and makes everything crystal clear so there is no confusion whatsoever. In the other two entertainment spots David Avadon (Parlour of Prestidigitation and Phil Shaps (Conjurors' Corner) are both well received by the crowds.

In a couple of weeks my good friend John Cornelius will be here to entertain and I know he will create great wonderment. Sorry that another friend, John Carney, will have to wait until March for a booking. Bill tells me everything is booked until then.

Have just returned from watching the Doug Henning show. In every respect it was excellent. Furthermore it has effects that will please the most discriminating viewers.

Whether they are uninitiated or conversant with magical methods.

Francis Carlyle was certainly right when he predicted a great future for this bright young man.

I met Doug when he first played the Castle and I thoroughly agreed with Francis.

The fact that he really loves magic and exudes sincerity makes the audience relish everything he does. This quality added to his skill in handling makes for success.

Being a member of the Board of Directors of the Castle I am often asked by magicians how they can get booked for professional engagements. The Board really has nothing to do with this. All outside-of-the Castle bookings are done by Esther Nielsen and Joe Cossari. I'd like to mention that Esther is a wonderful cook and has provided me and others with many a delicious dinner. She is an excellent chef and hostess. Esther is a very efficient person and although Joe takes all the bows, Esther does most of the work when it comes to booking shows! We all like Joe here at the Castle and refer to him as "The Card of Kings"—we have a lot of fun teasing him!

Before closing would like to mention that these past few weeks we've had some delightful sessions here in the Castle. The "Warsaw Wizard" performed some of his close-up routines for a very select gathering of what might be termed the "inner circle": Danny Dew, Earl Nelson, Steve Freeman, Larry Jennings and Ricky Jay. All were unstinting in their praise for Johnny Thompson's work.

Also, just yesterday a real Hindu from Bombay by the name of Niranjan Mather performed with coins and the Hindu Cups. His work was unique and caused great amazement. I hope he gets booked before long so all members will have a chance to witness his work.

GENII, The Conjurors' Magazine

February 1978

Now that we are starting a new year I have been thinking what a lucky person I am. The fact that there is a place like this wonderful Magic Castle where one can meet so many followers of our craft. Also spend time and converse with the countless visitors who attend in great numbers night after night.

Just a short time ago John Cornelius from San Antonio, Texas, gave a really excellent lecture. This young chap is extremely clever and has refreshingly new ideas. Furthermore he and his pretty wife are unusually nice people.

Talking about nice people: Herb Zarrow and his most friendly and attractive wife, Phyllis, spend a short visit here. Herb executed his famous shuffle for Tony Giorgio and Tony, I feel certain, was quite impressed though he, like the great Houdini, would never admit it! During this session Brad Berlin performed a variation of the Stevens Riffle and Tony, failing utterly to understand it, remarked, "Vernon, why do you teach these young fellows my methods?" Must have been stated in jest.

We have so much taking place here in the Castle that I overlook things I should mention. However I would like to say a few words of praise for Harry Anderson, Max Maven (Phil Goldstein) and our beloved manager and entertainer, Don Lawton. The latter is a most wonderful example of a performer who charms his audience. Don can do anything, say anything, and the audience loves it. Why? Many reasons—looks, manner, but above all perfectly at ease and NATURAL.

Another performer who is a constant visitor is Loring Campbell. Although he has retired now he had this likable quality when on stage. Few of the younger set realize how many thousands of shows he gave in years gone by.

When I was constantly on the search for new ideas back in the twenties I was delighted when articles by Wm. Larsen and T. Page Wright started to appear in The Sphinx Magazine. Their contributions were vastly superior to most of the other contents. So naturally I was very pleased when Wm. Larsen, Jr., presented me with a copy of his latest publication, "The Mental Mysteries and Other Writings of William W. Larsen, Sr." This is an exceptional 221-page book and it gives the "REAL WORK". It is Bona Fide! It is handsomely bound and the quality of the paper and type is in keeping with the contents.

I feel very pleased that I had the good fortune to meet Wm. Larsen, Sr., many years ago and spent a most interesting evening with him. He had a delightful sense of humor besides being most interesting and cordial. As an example of the former he writes about one effect that might be construed as genuine phenomena as follows:

"So when the 'super mentality' boys tell you that in doing this type of work you are standing on the last frontier of real mystery your reply should be an immediate sound made by pursing the lips, a well qualified jet of air being then forced thru."

Another quotation directly from this book is ideal for winding up an exhibition of Mind reading or anything similar: "And thus you have seemingly witnessed mind reading. I might even say actually participated in some demonstrations in mind reading. However please don't believe them. Not that I especially wish to arouse questions as to

the feasibility of mind reading itself as a fact, but merely that I would much prefer to leave you as a group of critical thinkers than as a group of gullible believers."

Anyone who aspires to do this type of work can find in this book at least over half a dozen complete acts with excellent patter. Some twenty-five different chapters such as: The Pineal Eye, Pseudo Psychometry, Tarot Telepathy, Contact and Non Contact Mind reading, Fortune Telling, Spook Show Routines, Handcuff Escapes, Hypnotic Act, Dr. Q's Gyrating Tables, and Dr. Q's Simplicity Mind reading.

Sorry to report that Hy Berg, Joe Berg's brother, is still in the hospital for observation. His absence has put almost a complete finish to our Heart games in the library. However the other night Bruce Cervon, Ray Grismer, Howard Hamburg and yours truly engaged in a few games where I managed to win the BLACK LADY nearly every hand. Kuda Bux, a true card lover is very sad when he can't sit in a game of Hearts or Gin. We do not allow him to be blind-folded when he plays which puts him at a slight disadvantage!

It is a pity that we have not had a visit from Larry Jennings lately. He always has refreshingly new ideas and manages to give the "boys" something to think about. I was delighted to see my close friend, Persi Diaconis, again. He was in town from Stanford for a meeting of top mathematicians. Judge Young met him for the first time was impressed by his Keaneness and perceptiveness.

The Judge was chosen to be a member of the Board of Directors of The Magic Castle at our recent election and should be of great help owing to his past experience and analytical ability. So this coming year this marvelous club should become even better if such a thing is possible.

Just out are two other books that all lovers of the Art will thoroughly relish; namely, Paul Curry's new card book and Andrew Galloway's work about John Ramsay.

March 1978

Last week we were fortunate in having three seasoned professionals visit the Castle . . . namely, Jay Marshall, Mike Caldwell, and John Shirley. It was a treat to watch these performers work in our Palace of Mystery. All three possess that rare and essential quality known as stage authority. The moment they walk on stage they make everybody in the audience feel at ease because they have this quality — a quality that can only be acquired by experience. It's difficult to describe what this quality is but to me it's a warm friendly feeling of rapport with the audience. Immediately everyone in the audience feels comfortable. They feel as though this is someone they would like to know. "He doesn't offend me in any way. He has good taste. He's friendly and agreeable and is a person I would like to meet." That's the feeling an audience should have for a performer—and when they have this feeling you can't have anything but success.

It was a treat to see Jay again. I really had forgotten how long I've known Jay Marshall but he informed me that he was only 16 years old when we first met! One of my dear friends, Dr. Daley of New York, was constantly talking about what a wonderful chap this Jay Marshall was back in those days. (He still is!) At conventions he would be carrying a vent dummy under his arm and making friends with everyone! Jay is really looking well these days. I don't think I know anyone who has changed less than he has in all these years. And when you get to be my age you begin to become conscious of these things! I feel very blest to have so many wonderful friends in magic.

I think it's remarkable how some of the young fellows are progressing in the Art of Magic these days. Of course they have access to so much information in the way of pamphlets, books, and periodicals that they can pick up things which were very difficult to acquire in the old days. A young fellow named Wisch (I don't know his first name) gave a lecture recently for the local I.B.M. Ring. Joe Berg said that this chap gave a lecture that was really superb. I understand that he has been a pupil of Tony Slydini — a pupil of whom Tony is quite proud, and Tony can really be a stickler for every little detail when you are performing a trick!

I wonder how many magicians noticed something about John Shirley's act that struck me. When John makes the various balloon animals, etc., there is very little, if any, of the annoying squeaking and noise that accompanies most such acts. It was amazing.

For the past few months Joe Cossari has been working feverishly putting together a pack of fanning cards. Good quality fanning decks are very hard to come by these days. Some of the imports as well as some of the domestic plastic cards are not suitable for the making of good card fans. The colors are not right, the cards do not weave properly, and they don't fan smoothly even when treated with fanning powder. Joe has produced a card that, to my way of thinking, is superior to anything that has been available up to now. They will be manufactured by the United States Playing Card Company and will certainly be a "must" for anyone who aspires to be a card fanning expert. I've been trying to get Joe to get the cards out before we attend, the convention in New York this year but you can't hurry Joe! Eventually they will be on the market and I'll keep you informed of the progress in this column.

A few words to my young readers: I have said it before but I must say it again: Learn the Art of Magic by reading the various books that are available at your local library or from your favorite magic dealer. Learn to do magic with common objects such as coins, a pencil, paper napkins, a length of string, rubber bands, paper clips, etc., etc. Learn a few simple tricks and learn to do them well. You will find people thinking of you as a real magician when you can pick up ordinary objects like those mentioned above and do "miracles" with them. Remember the stories of Malini finding coins inside of bread rolls! Then, if you so desire, you can start adding apparatus to your "act" but there again, learn to perform each effect properly. There is really no such thing as a "mechanical, self-working trick", believe me. It is the presentation of these "self-working" tricks that is so important!

Some of the cleverest tricks in card magic, as far as effect is concerned, are being brought to life by one of the Castle members under the name of "Cards by MARTIN". He manufactures absolutely beautiful trick cards including a Marlo effect (I think it's Marlo's) wherein a poker hand (say four aces and an odd card) visibly changes into a Royal Flush.

I only wish my friend Arthur Finley were alive to see the beautiful cards that "Martin" manufactures. He makes all the trick cards used in Bro. Hamman effects, or the Deland tricks, etc., out of ordinary cards. I understand that these are made to order and that you have to prove you bought the trick originally. "Martin" is an expert at "splitting a card". It is quite remarkable to see him do this, especially if you have ever struggled over the task of splitting a card for a certain trick. I remember years ago Al Baker worked for a long time to split a dollar bill in half. Of course counterfeiters have been doing this for years . . . splitting a dollar bill and a twenty dollar bill and re-gluing them 1/20 and 1/20 so they have two twenty dollar bills when they toss them on the counter twenty side up! It's really quite a job to split a bill because the government uses special adhesives to thwart such schemes.

April 1978

The two big magical events each year out here in Los Angeles are the "IT'S MAGIC!" show and the annual Academy of Magical Arts Awards. Previously held at the Ebell Theatre (show) and a hotel ballroom (awards) this year both events were held at the Academy for the Preservation of Variety Arts. These quarters are ideal and both Milt and John Shrum deserve the greatest of praise for the way they have renovated and decorated the building in such exquisite taste. Since the awards will be written up by our president, Bill Larsen, I'll only mention that everyone was delighted with the entire evening.

During my nearly fifteen years at the Castle we have had many excellent lectures but I must say that Elizabeth Warlock presented one of the very best. Not that she showed any particularly new effects but the way she segued from one effect to the other . . . And the clear and precise way she explained the modus operandi was excellent. Elizabeth endeared herself to everyone who met her. I insisted that she persuade her father, Peter Warlock, to visit the Castle in the near future.

Had a phone call a short time ago informing me that Tommy Burke will be here from New Jersey. He is a close friend of Herb Zarrow and does some exceptionally clever card moves. I know he will be glad to see his friend, Bill Gusias. Bill was an early friend of Ed Marlo and I'm quite sure that he influenced Ed. Bill should feel quite proud because I consider Marlo to be extraordinary. His output of ideas is more than astounding.

Another call the other day from my friend, Jerry Andrus, to tell me he will be here again in a few weeks. Jerry always comes up with something entirely off the beaten path.

I was very pleased to receive another book from my friend, Paul Curry. It is titled "SPACED OUT".

It surprised me that Paul first had the idea of spaces changing places (like the "Hugs and Kisses" effect) way back in 1941. His is performed with two playing cards. The Two of Hearts has a large Spade cut from its center. And the Three of Spades has a large Heart cut in it. Then the two spaces transpose to match the proper suits! If you appreciate excellent effects be sure to pick up copies of Paul Curry's "SPECIAL EFFECTS" and "SPACED OUT".

It seldom happens that any performer is held over for a second week at the Castle but Martin Nash is one. He performs some really difficult card moves and still presents them in a smooth and entertaining fashion. He and Barry Price are two card men who overcome many hazards during their performances. One miss in a series of Faro shuffles and they would be in trouble. To quote Erdnase: they both have "unflinching audacity".

Another visiting magician, Howie Schwartzman, performed very excellent legerdemain and at the end of his week here presented an outstanding lecture. Jack Miller surely must be pleased with Howie!

Just as I was about to hand this column to Bill Larsen during our Friday luncheon one of the members told me that a friend of Eddie Fechter was going to work in the Close-Up Gallery. Anyone associated with Eddie has to be good in my book so I made it a point to watch his offering. Don Lawton, Luke McKissack, Howard Hamburg and yours truly, along with a roomful of members and guests, were rewarded with an

excellent performance. The young man's name is Brian Gillis. Everything was well done and Brian has a most pleasing manner.

He wound up his act by constructing a realistic mouse from a handkerchief. Then as he made it run up his arm the female assistant seated at the table burst forth with a startled scream! Thus concluded a most entertaining act. On the strength of this guest spot Brian was booked for a week at the Castle.

I was talking with Barry Price recently when he was working the Close-Up Gallery at the Castle. He has become an expert at the butt shuffle which, if he misses one card means the entire act would fall apart. But Barry has incredible skill doing this shuffle. I told him that in the old days the Faro dealers were the top-notchers when it came to card handling. They were the epitome of excellence. All the other card mechanics looked up to the Faro dealers because they handled the cards better than anyone else.

When a Faro dealer would meet another card mechanic he would always ask, "Can you put up a perfect split?" And if the guy would answer, "Well, not perfect every time" the dealer would say, "You should do more practicing my boy!" I don't mean putting up a split in the hands the way the average fellow does the Faro shuffle today. The shuffle is done on the table. The cards are split apart and dove-tailed together. The cards are butted and immediately they go up perfect. And the old-timers never missed a shuffle.

Charlie Miller abhors the so-called butt shuffle tricks. His idea of the infernal regions is to go down there and see a lot of old beer barrels with little guys sitting on them doing Faro shuffles! "That's my idea of hell!" he says. But it's just like anything else: Anything overdone is no good. A few tricks with the butt shuffle, if done expertly, are very effective. Overdone it's just like the Zombie or the Dancing Cane — they fail to entertain. Instead of mystifying or pleasing people they irritate them!

In closing, I hope to see many of my old friends when I visit New York for the S.A.M.. Conference at the Waldorf July 5-8.

May 1978

It is truly remarkable how many well-known and famous people one can meet at the Magic Castle. Of course when stars like Cary Grant drop in, the female hearts really flutter. On the other hand, sports fans are agog when they rub shoulders with giants like Wilt Chamberlain.

Many of our younger members were thrilled to meet Dorny when he was here. They had only read of him and never expected to really meet him in person. I knew him years ago when he played at the Riverside Theatre in New York with Elsie Janis. Dorny was the perfect Master of Ceremonies. He had great warmth and the audiences loved every word he uttered. Each time he appeared he was attired in a different sport jacket, and with his cigar in hand he created an appealing picture.

Later in Chicago Dorny organized and ran some of the best magical conventions that have ever been held. He had excellent judgment also because I well remember him telling me that Carl Sharpe was bound to become a star. How correct he was. Everyone has seen Ballentine . . . a screamingly funny act. And lately he is even better known for his television acting roles. Dorny and I are about the same age and both of us have enjoyed the companionship of hundreds of "lovers of the Art" and hope to continue for many more years.

For the past month the Palace show has been devoid of its regular emcee, Peter Pit. He, Ron Wilson, and Chuck Jones are in Hong Kong performing. Many times in this column I have discussed manner of presentation. This week we have had two acts that really demonstrate what I have tried to point out. Laughter, created by situations, is excellent but so-called "lines" usually fall flat. However if the words belong and fit the action the result can be good. The two acts I refer to are Ken Littlewood and Toshi & Rich Marotta.

The former, though doing a silent turn, creates many extremely amusing situations and the whole creates genuine entertainment. Marotta is a talk act and very skillfully and cleverly combines good patter with his actions to provide a thoroughly entertaining program.

An example of a cliché heard far too often: "My boy, hold out your hand. No, the clean one!" etc. How refreshing was Larry Gray's twist: "What do you do . . . walk on your hands?" Don Lawton takes exception to my viewpoints on old patter lines, saying that much of his material consists of such oldies but that they still "play well" for him. Some years ago Don used the holding out hand gag and when the youngster held out the other hand in response to "no, the clean one" Don would push it back down, bring up the first hand saying, "By golly, that WAS the clean one!"

To digress a little I'd like to mention that Steve Freeman, Luke McKissack and his charming wife, Jeannie, and yours truly took the plane to Las Vegas to see the opening of the Doug Henning Show. It was a very interesting three days because Joe Stevens was putting on a series of lectures by the one and only Slydini. Also Darwin Ortiz and Paul Gertner. All three gave the boys more than their money's worth.

The Doug Henning Show with Bill Cosby will play there for two weeks. Doug repeats the beautiful water levitation he performed on television and it really astounds the

audience. Bill Cosby took complete command of the audience with his monologue, which poured, from his lips without effort. He is a superb performer and did the entire second half of the show. The way he tied in the magic and his references to the tiger kept the audience in stitches.

Our Perez and Irene Larsen also attended and spent time with Siegfried and Roy. I had a long talk with my old friend Jimmy Grippo. He performed some of his bewildering card moves and told of even more astounding things he had done in the past. He and his brother, Jan, are two of the most interesting members of the Craft.

We arrived back in Hollywood just in time to attend a lecture by Mike Skinner sponsored by Bert Green. Forty persons were present and Mike "lectured" for three hours. Everyone who has seen him agrees that his handling of even the most difficult sleight is flawless. Bert expects to present other lecturers in the future so we can look forward to some interesting and instructive sessions.

Ending this month here is a little quiz: Jay Ose was extremely apt at giving colorful names to Castle members. See if you can guess the identities of the following: Side Arm Jim; Fingers; Tombstone; Rip Cord; The Hawk; The Claw; Silk Hat Harry; Canada Jack; and Daylight. Those are a few of Jay's nick-names that come to mind. Following are a few that I have met in my travels: The Coffin' Kid; The Fly Kid; The Mysterious Kid; Trey Ball; Titanic; Flukey Johnny; The Deacon; No Coat Charlie; Earthquake Joe; and Butter Fly Boy. The latter are all so called famous names thoroughly conversant with "advantage play" and there are many more lesser known. Identities next month! Until then, keep practicing.

A short time ago I received a copy of the new Ramsay book, "THE RAMSAY CLASSICS", from my friend Andrew Galloway. How I wish I could have owned such a book years ago. I idolized John Ramsay and his diabolically contrived methods and misdirection. Andy has done a great service to the true lover of the Art in publishing this book. The fact that he was a close friend and taught by the master himself fully qualifies Andy to do full justice to Ramsay's superlative methods.

Just to digest the "THINKING" of this genius of legerdemain should be a priceless acquisition and furthermore it will help tremendously with all types of magical effects. This hard-bound book consists of 108 printed pages beautifully illustrated with line drawings and photographs.

June 1978

Things have really been humming around the Castle lately. For the past fortnight we have enjoyed unusually stellar shows, both close-up and in the Palace of Mystery. One of the shows featured Harry Anderson, Bill Chaudet, and Jay Malbrough. The other: Ken Noyle and Yoko, Peter De Paula and Kathlyn, and Mark Kalin and Linda. Nowhere was there any repetition and great variety was evident.

In my opinion Harry Anderson is a delightful performer. Not only does he have great charm but he handles everything he does with knowledge and skill. Bill Chaudet proved that he can thoroughly entertain an audience without props or assistants. His only helpers were two male members invited on stage and with their unrehearsed help he kept everyone highly amused. Closing was Jay Malbrough who had many novel twists that were refreshing to see. His handling of the classic Chinese Rings was a revelation to many.

This past week Ken Noyle and his very attractive wife, Yoko, made a tremendous hit with everyone. During my countless years of witnessing magic illusion I can honestly state that Ken's presentation of his "Lazor Beam" is by far the best and funniest besides.

Not only is Ken Noyle an excellent magician and entertainer but he has also established a reputation in the field of recording. Don Lawton called my attention to some recordings Ken made for "Up Trend Products" of San Diego a few years ago. Still currently available (Don bought his at a Sears Store) these records are designed for the six thru 12 age group (Don got them because of Ken, not that he is in that age bracket!) and consist of such titles as "Robinson Crusoe", "Commander Matt's Space Adventure", "Buffalo Bill's Outlaw Canyon", etc. The backs of the record jackets bear this quote: "Your story teller is Ken Noyle, well-known author and poet and winner of international awards for film narration." No secrets are kept from the Cranky Old Man of Magic!!!

Mark Kalin opened last week's show with his Cue and Pool Ball act. Assisted by Linda (a well-chosen name for such a pretty girl) he treated the audience to a refreshingly different presentation. Peter de Paula and Kathlyn, just recently returned from Hong Kong, really enchanted the audience. Both have good looks and natural grace. These qualities, added to their mastery of mime, combine to make the finest of entertainment.

Another thrill to our members was the return of Shimada. He has endeared himself to everyone. Although he is not currently performing one of his masterly acts his presence alone adds greatly to the charm of the Castle. Deanna will be arriving today from Australia to join him and they are both going to enjoy a rest from their recent engagements in Europe and Asia. Incidentally, I understand that Shimada will soon market his original version of the Dove Production which he has used for the past 18 years. Watch for it!

As readers are probably aware, we have a smaller theatre right next to the Palace of Mystery and many excellent acts are featured there. Just last night I watched Dick Barry whom I hadn't seen since last year. He does a really sparkling show. Every detail is worked out and he really puzzles many of the full-time professionals. Dick tells me he may put his tape recorder effect on the market. If he does I cannot think of a more valuable effect to add to any type of performance, mental or standard.

A short time ago, on a Sunday afternoon, Robert J. Horton brought a group of teenagers from Palo Alto to the Castle. They were mostly members of Explorer Post No. 13 of the Boy Scouts of America. Harry Anderson and I volunteered to give them a few tips and advice, and answer any questions they might want to ask. One of the boys asked which were the best books to read when starting in magic. I strongly advised them not to neglect reading the real classics; Professor Hoffman and Robert Houdin in particular.

I also stated that to my knowledge only one book in years past shows how an effect actually appears to the audience. This was "The Modern Conjuror" by C. Lang Neil. The illustrations were photographs showing the entire figure of the performer as seen by the audience, not just sketches or photos of hands and fingers. However, my friend Tony Slydini's latest books clearly portray how the effect actually appears to the onlookers.

I tried to make one thing very clear to this fine group of young magicians: You cannot buy magic. It is an art you must acquire through Percystence and practice. You must constantly strive with each attempt to do better than before.

July 1978

People often ask me if I am ever completely fooled. I'd like to state that a charming lady named Esther Nilsen deceived me completely no less than three times! The first time was on my 81st birthday. She invited me and Joe Cossari to her apartment for a quiet dinner.

When we arrived Esther asked me to come next door and meet some people who had just moved in. I politely declined saying I knew enough people already. She seemed rather disappointed so I agreed to just say hello and depart. Well, she led the way to the next apartment and the moment the door opened hoards of people jamming the room sang out "Happy Birthday". She had contacted scores of my best friends and planned the whole affair unbeknown and entirely unsuspected by me.

The next year, slightly before my 82nd, I was on tour with a lecture with Joe Cossari. While in Minneapolis I received a telephone call from my dear friend Judge Pearce Young asking me to keep June the 11th open for dinner with him. To get to the point, the Judge and Yvonne Cross drove me to the Century Plaza and I was again amazed by a huge crowd assembled there with many celebrities in attendance. It was really a gala affair and I felt greatly honored.

So last year, to make sure that I would not allow anyone to go to such trouble, shortly before my birthday I took a plane to Las Vegas and spent a few days there.

However, this year Esther, a magicienne not to be thwarted, connived to arrange a party a fortnight before this past June the 11th. This time it was Luke McKissack who acted as confederate or a hidden assistant. He asked me to reserve Saturday evening for dinner with him and his wife, Jeannie.

Luke picked me up in his Mercedes at the Castle and as we drove I asked him why he was going by such a round about way. He said that we were going to a restaurant he thought I would enjoy. Well, to cut a long tail short, once more I was fooled more than ever when we entered the Charter Oaks and everyone started wishing me the warmest greetings. Bill Larsen and Jeannie McKissack kept a constant flow of Chivas Regal appearing in my glass—it was like the Lota Bowl — and this was the cause of my giving a very distorted and repetitive speech but it was certainly with good intentions. Even if I had been cold sober I couldn't have begun to find words to express my appreciation to all my wonderful friends.

Talking about friends, one of my oldest and closest is Faucett Ross of St. Joseph, MO. He has just sent me a tape reminding me of a few incidents which he thinks should appear in this column. Jay Marshall used to say, concerning stories by Ross and myself: "There is the Ross Version, the Vernon Version, and the True Version"

Early in the 1930's when I was spending quite a bit of time with Ross we paid a visit to Marshalltown, Iowa, to visit T. Nelson Downs. We checked into the Stoddard Hotel and got together with "Tommy". One of his favorite tricks was the vanishing of six coins pushed one at a time into his left fist. Then producing them one by one by squeezing them out of his clenched fist.

When ready to leave we were with Tommy in his living room. He said to me, "Vernon, are you going to tip some of that card work to me before you return to St.

Joseph?" I replied, "If you show me the coin gimmick you use for that six coin effect I'll trade you." Tommy remarked, "Damn it, Vernon, I don't use a gimmick. Watch me do it again." However, the effect lacked the brilliance of the original.

Finally, after much coaxing, he reached in his vest pocket and tossed the gimmick on the divan. When I reached for it he grabbed it up and put it back in his pocket. I think it broke his heart but he finally succumbed and let me examine it carefully. I think that this entire effect will be fully described in Ross Bertram's coming book.

When we left Marshalltown, Tommy told us we should stop at Ames and visit a friend living there who had a cafe known as Cooney's Cafe. Tommy's friend was named Trix Cooney and we had no trouble finding his place. We entered the cafe and sat at the counter. Trix was not only the cashier but seemed to be the only one serving food. He spoke to us saying, "You must be new around here." Instead of giving him the message from Tommy we thought we'd play a part. We said we were a couple of salesmen working the territory. We told him that last week we were in Marshalltown at the Stoddard Hotel and we saw a guy catch silver coins from the air and drop them in his hat. He was marvelous.

Trix became very excited and told us he'd known this man for years. Claimed he did everything Tommy could do and several other things that were too difficult for Tommy to master! He rushed to the cash register and took out a grubby deck of cards and executed a very obvious false shuffle. Had us take cards and it was plain to see he had a Si Stebbins deck, but we pretended to be amazed when he named our chosen cards.

I asked him, Mr. Cooney, can I cut those cards myself, not you, and can you still tell the cards we select?" He handed me the cards which I gave a simple cut and took the top card without looking at it and put it in my pocket. I said, "Now, Mr. Cooney, if you can name my card it will be a miracle!" As I made this remark I gave him a good flash of the bottom card as I placed them on the counter.

He was in seventh heaven, remarking, "I'm probably the only living person who can do anything like this!" Triumphantly he named the card and naturally I appeared to be absolutely dumbfounded.

Then he invited us up to his living quarters and opened up countless cabinets and produced all kinds of tubes, canisters, and boxes and we watched him butcher his equipment for at least an hour. Ross and I decided it had gone too far and we could not break the poor guy's heart by letting the cat out of the bag. So we remarked, "Last week we were in Kansas City and saw the Great Blackstone and he made a lighted bulb float in the air!" He replied, "That's one of my favorites. I do that, too. The reason I do it better is because I've had more experience."

We finally left and Trix followed us outside to our car still insisting that we remove any card and he'd name it! A couple of years later Ross was in Marshalltown attending a tribute to Tommy Downs. He was standing in the lobby of the hotel and saw Trix entering. Fearful that he would be recognized, Faucett was figuring how he'd manage it, but, fortunately, Cooney looked him square in the eye without recognition!

Editor Larsen asked me to express my thoughts on Magic Conventions. This could be an exhaustive subject. One thing is certain: They occur too frequently. They are

reaching the saturation point. This frequently cheapens them. I'll have some comments later on.

In closing I want to thank all of my friends who remembered my birthday and sent me a card or greetings. They were very much appreciated.

August 1978

In about a week I'll be leaving Hollywood to attend the S.A.M.. Convention at the Waldorf Astoria in New York. It is with mingled feelings that I shall return to this big city. one with pleasant anticipation of meeting many old friends but another with great sadness when I think of how very many have passed away. One of the latter was Emil Jarrow.

Very few today know what a remarkable performer he was. Not only did his act create great laughter but his lemon trick was truly a miracle on one occasion when Horace Goldin was presenting his famous sawing a woman in half it was announced that way up in lights on a marquee. Across the street in bright lights was a sign, "Sawing A Lemon in Half" and Jarrow did more business in his theatre than Goldin did in his!

Emil was the only magician I know who combined real comedy and superlative sleight-of-hand. Of course, acts like Jack Merlin, Henry Clive, Larry Crane, Judson Cole and a few others created amusement and laughter. But Jarrow got "belly laughs" almost equal to Van Hoven. When he was at the height of his fame an agent from England caught his act at Hammerstein's Theatre and offered him a large salary to play in London.

A short time before he was to sail he met Frank Tinney on Broadway and confessed that he felt extremely nervous about going abroad. He was afraid that the English audiences would not understand his Dutch sense of humor. Frank said, "Jarrow, you open on a Tuesday. If the act fails to register don't worry. Come right back — there's a boat that sails Wednesday!"

Well, Jarrow opened in London on Tuesday. He used to limp to center stage remarking, "The kid's clever but he's got bum feet." This, spoken in a guttural tone with a Dutch accent, accompanied by indescribable facial expressions, caused laughter. Then he'd say to the drummer, "Hit it, George." And after the cymbal crash, more laughter. Then he'd say, "Hit it again!" Next he would remark to the orchestra leader, "Go ahead, kid, fiddle!" Then followed a routine which I'll try to describe although you really should have been there!

Emil would ask, "Mr. Leader, can you tell me why an old maid is like an unripe tomato?" (He would pronounce tomato as tomater.) The leader would reply, "No, why IS an old maid like an unripe tomato?" And Jarrow would reply, "Because it's hard tomater (to mate her)! Hit it, George!"

Now to get to the point of this build-up. As I said, Jarrow opened on a Tuesday. Now the leader of the orchestra, the violinist, is quite a celebrity, wearing white gloves and standing in the spot light when leading the band. So when he hears Jarrow say, "Go ahead, kid, fiddle!" he is astounded. Then Jarrow asked him about the unripe tomato (tomater) and the leader replied, "Tell me, Mr. Jarrow, why IS an old maid like an unripe tomathto?" Emil looked out at the audience and as he walked off stage remarked, "The boat sails Wednesday"!

The management told Jarrow he had to cut-out addressing the leader in such unrespectful terms but Emil showed his contract which stated he was to play

EXACTLY as caught at Hammerstein's. So they put in another person to replace the usual leader for the opening gag.

Hate to skip all the hilarious things that happened during his stay in London but it would take pages to even commence. So I'll pick up at the time he returned to Broadway. He went to the booking office and showed his rave notices from London, saying he should have a raise in salary. He was already receiving top dollars, much more than any other magic act with the exception of Van Hoven, and, of course, Houdini, who did escapes, not magic. After much argument the booker agreed to give him a raise if he would use an assistant in his act. He gave Jarrow a contract for two— a double act. The following week Jarrow played New Jersey and the New York office sent someone over to see the new combine.

But Jarrow just did his usual single act. Going back stage the two scouts asked, "What happened? Where's your partner?" Now Emil never even had the faintest idea of employing anyone to help him. Taken by surprise he remarked, "My partner is very sick". They asked, "What's his name?" Jarrow blurted out the first name that came to his mind which happened to be "Jonson".

Playing in Pittsburgh Emil announced as he started the act, "I'm very sorry but my partner named Jonson is sick but I'll perform his tricks too, just as if he were here in person!"

Then he opened with the paper tree from the rolled-up newspapers, saying, "I have a lot of 'noive' to come out in front of such an intelligent audience and do such a lousy trick. But that's one of Jonsons. Hit it, George! Hit it again!" It's hard to believe but Jarrow played the entire Keith Circuit assisted by an invisible Jonson!

Any of my readers who want to learn more about this fabulous entertainer should ask Danny Dew of Phoenix. When Orson Welles was in the Castle some times ago I told him some of the practical jokes and pranks that this most lovable character perpetrated from time to time. Orson was gracious enough to say he more than enjoyed the tales I told him. Unfortunately this magazine is not Playboy so we cannot use some of the episodes in this column!

On an entirely different note: I have just seen a copy of Joe Cossari's booklet explaining in minute detail every fan and flourish in his act. It should be available very soon with special colored cards that are being printed by the U.S. Playing Card Company. Watch for the ads that will appear in the leading periodicals, especially our GENII.

EDITOR'S NOTE: It's in this issue.

September 1978

My fervent desire or ambition as a youngster growing up in Canada was to live in a big city like New York City. I used to read articles about how all the famous people congregated in New York and that if you stood at the corner of 42nd Street and Broadway, sooner or later you'd meet everyone of importance. Well, I have just returned from this big city, along with Joe Cossari and Brad Berlin, where we attended the S.A.M.. Convention. It was a great thrill for Brad to visit New York as he is just a young man in his twenties. Brad is studying law at one of the universities here and I predict that some day he will be a second Clarence Darrow.

I was really anxious to have the boys in New York see Brad's card work. Brad filled in for Johnny Thompson who was called out of town. He had a difficult spot in following David Roth and Harry Lorraine but he did an excellent job and I know he fooled most of the people with his routines. Now David Roth, to my way of thinking, is almost faultless in everything he does. And Harry Lorraine is probably the world's greatest memory expert. One of the founders of memory work in this country, David Roth (a different David Roth!) told me that in his greatest days he couldn't compare with Harry for remembering names. Harry can not only remember 300 names but in an interval of half an hour later he can take another group of two or three hundred people and call them all by their names! It is fantastic the way he does this. Harry is also very capable with cards and all my readers must know that he has published a great many excellent books on magic.

Originally I thought I would devote this column to the S.A.M.. Convention but upon my return to Hollywood I learned that Patrick Page had supplied Editor Larsen with a fine report on the affair so all I'd say is that it was a wonderful convention that ran like clockwork. And another nice factor, the service at the Waldorf Astoria was superb, as we would expect it to be.

Getting back to New York for a moment, Brad Berlin had always been interested in Three Card Monte but he never seen a real "broad mob", that is, people who toss the cards in the game. They call it a mob because they never work single-handed. There are always a couple of lookouts who watch for the police, a couple of shills, and the operator who throws the cards. At the present time in New York you can find these mobs working certain sections of the city every day in the subways, on side streets, etc. It's really strange to think that a game with whiskers on it like Three Card Monte still commands money from a lot of gullible people.

Brad wondered if I could help him find such a game but not having lived in New York for many years I really didn't know where to go. So he went in search of a game himself, and just a few doors from 42nd Street and Broadway he ran into a game! Brad watched the cards being tossed for a bit and then the operator put the bent corner on one of the cards. The shill said to Brad, "Hey, he bent the corner — bet \$20.00". so Brad put down \$20 and the shill urged him to increase it to \$30. So Brad put down another ten spot, making gestures as though he was going to pick up the bent-corner card. Instead, Brad reached for the correct card and the operator stopped him, saying that if he grabbed the card he wouldn't get paid! There was such a large crowd around that Brad wasn't

worried about anything happening to him. Anyway, the operator gave Brad back his \$30 no more, and even though he didn't profit by the experience, Brad really got a kick out of seeing the operation in action!

One of the big changes to me in New York is the fact that a ride from the Bronx to Coney Island, that once cost a nickel, now costs 50¢! I should be used to such shocks after paying \$3.50 for a hamburger in New York a few years ago when I went back to do the Dick Cavett Show.

I'm really looking forward to this evening here at the Castle because Willie Schneider, one of the really wonderful guys in magic whom I knew in the old days in New York, has invited Joe and I to have dinner with him. It will be a treat to see Willie again. Not only is he a clever performer but Willie has been a benefactor to magicians throughout the years, booking them for lectures and shows in New York in days gone by and now in the Miami area where he lives.

Years ago I was giving magic lessons to Jimmy Drilling and he told me that a friend of his would like to take lessons. I told Jimmy that I already had too many friends and tried to avoid meeting Willie but Jimmy persisted, for which I have always been glad, because the moment I met Willie and shook hands with him I took a liking to the guy! Willie was one of the best pupils I ever had — not only did he learn with ease but he would improve many of the tricks I taught him. Now you know that in the past I have stated that many tricks are improved to death (let's credit Al Baker here) but not in Willie's case!

Willie uses his head in learning and doing magic. Shimada is another performer who uses his head.

If you show a gambler a good move he will say, "That's very good but how do you go into it?" And then he'll ask, "How do you come out of it?" This is very important. When some magicians get ready to make a pass you can see them tense their hands or they move their hands to an unnatural position and immediately you know they are going to do something. No matter how beautifully the move is made they have already aroused suspicion. So I'll keep saying over and over again—be natural and use your head!

October 1978

I had intended to write a full report of the events that took place during the S.A.M.. Convention in New York. However I have just noted the excellent and exhaustive write-up by my friend, Pat Page, which appeared in the August issue of GENII. Was pleased that he did not fail to mention the name Brad Berlin before ending his article.

I announced during my lecture that this young man did a couple of things with cards that were positively unique. I stated then and I hereby state that I doubt if anyone living can duplicate what he does. Dr. James Elliott, Nate Leipzig, T. Nelson Downs, and lesser departed exponents would have proclaimed his skill in the most laudatory terms. Those who attended the close-up session when he performed were completely at sea and had no idea how he achieved his results.

Just had a letter from Red Hill, a member of the Comedy Club, saying that people would call him a liar if he told them truthfully what he witnessed during a lengthy session with Brad. Incidentally, Red is an excellent card player and has really been around and knows the score. I am looking forward to the time that Ed Marlo can see some of the work that I praise so highly. Ed, of all people, will realize the excellent quality.

It was a great pleasure to meet and greet so many of my friends of days past during the convention. Roy Snyder and Warren Kaps were wonderful hosts and went all-out to please everyone. They, unknown to me, invited my youngest son, Derek and his wife and four children, to attend the Saturday show. My boy, entirely out of touch with magic since I left New York nearly twenty years ago, was pleased to meet some of my old friends whom he remembered from his childhood. Especially Irv Desfor, Dr. Braude, Dr. Fries and others. He also enjoyed seeing Doug Henning again because Derek accompanied me to the opening of Doug's show at the Cort Theatre over four years ago.

Returning to Hollywood from the convention was for only a short time. Joe Cossari, Brad Berlin, and yours truly were slated to appear in Kansas City at the Midwest Magic Jubilee. We planned on flying to Phoenix and driving with Danny Dew and Melba to Kansas City. However, we were all greatly saddened because Danny became quite ill and unable to make the trip. He very graciously offered to let us use his car. he said it was in excellent condition and he had just purchased new radial tires so we wouldn't have any tire trouble for certain.

Well, to get to the amusing part, we were speeding across the desert in over a 120 degree temperature (air conditioner working perfectly) when all of a sudden . . . Bang, Bang, Bankity, Bang! It sounded as if the whole trunk in the back had exploded. Upon examination of the rear tires we found that steel was projecting six or seven inches through the rubber of one tire and was pounding against metal every revolution of the wheel.

Luckily we had a new spare. But all the combined strength of the three of us could not loosen the bolts with the lug wrench. In fact we even broke off one of the lugs. Brad walked several miles in the intense heat and located a phone where he contacted a state trooper. This trooper got in touch with a mechanic and he drove to our stranded car.

And what would you know! He showed us that the Imperial Chrysler bolts turned in the opposite direction on the left side of the car. We all felt pretty stupid.

After the two or three hours we'd spent in the intense heat we were delighted to be on our way again. But alas! Bang Bang again and the spare tire behaved the same way. Now we thought we were really stuck but upon looking at the first tire we saw that there was still a small amount of air in it although the steel was projecting at many places. So we put this tire on and drove over 10 miles at a snail's pace to the nearest service station. We were lucky to be able to pick up two used tires and sped merrily on our way.

Danny Dew, the wonderful and understanding chap that he is, tried to take blame for our adventure. Personally I consider it an act of providence that Danny was unable to accompany us. I feel sure the ordeal would have been too strenuous for both him and Melba.

The Kansas City convention was enjoyed by all. Joe Stevenson and his charming wife, Martha, always do a bang-up job of running magic conventions. Was glad to meet Doctor Wagner and Roger Klause. Roger puzzled everyone with an excellent dollar bill change—it was the talk of the convention.

Before we pulled into Kansas City we stopped off in St. Joseph, MO, for our customary visit with my old friend, Faucett Ross. Several of the boys from all parts of the country congregate and have an outdoor steak picnic. Usually Danny Dew officiates and turns out delicious steaks on the outdoor grill. We certainly missed him this time but trust he will be on hand next year.

In conclusion I'd sincerely like to thank my many friends for their many kindnesses and the pleasure they have afforded me through the years.

November, 1978

A few weeks ago Bill, Milt, and Irene Larsen, Lew Horwitz and myself were all invited by Harry Blackstone, Jr., to witness the opening of his full evening magic show in Phoenix, Arizona. He had reserved first class rooms for all of us at the Holiday Inn. This motel was within easy walking distance of the Gamage Theatre where he was to perform.

We all agreed that the show was really excellent. Harry opened with the vanishing canary in the cage and performed it faultlessly. He immediately established a good rapport with the audience with his mellow speaking voice and his well groomed appearance. When he stepped to the wings for "another bird and cage" he returned and requested the help of some youngster on the stage to watch at close range.

"I'll use the first boy or girl who says 'I'." Dozens and dozens of I's were heard so Harry stated, "Who was the first to say 'I'?" Screams came as the kids shouted "I". so Harry smiled and said, "All of you can come up!" and there was a mad rush as the youngsters scrambled up the runway. He was entirely surrounded by a sea of enthusiastic boys and girls.

He received greater laughter when he picked out a tiny tot of a boy and asked him to place his hand on top of the cage. The child could just reach the bottom of the cage by standing on his tip toes! When Harry raised his empty hands above the heads of all these children after the cage had vanished the effect was quite astounding.

The Dancing Handkerchief that was a feature of his father's show was executed extremely well. He performed the Floating Electric Light Bulb even better than his illustrious father. Harry changed attire several times during his performance and his handling of the illusions was a joy to watch.

It would take pages to describe all the effects. Harry played two nights in Phoenix and on both evenings he received a standing ovation at the conclusion of the show. During my long life in magic I have seen many large shows such as Kellar, Thurston, Goldin, Houdini, Dante, Nicola, Fu Manchu, Chang and, of course, Harry Blackstone, Senior. Never did any of these, I truly believe, ever receive such response.

This show consists of 32 people, a donkey, an elephant, and several other animals.

It was most interesting to see how efficiently five or six of the crew packed away everything in a couple of hours.

Talking of standing ovations, a person who should receive one is Joe Stevens of Wichita. Joe has a facility for doing things well and everyone I talk with thoroughly agrees. The get-together in Wichita, which Joe put on, was enjoyed by everyone, and some of the most eminent in the field were present.

Such people as Fred Kaps, Ali Bongo, Jay Marshall, Flip, Johnny Paul, Larry Jennings, John Cornelius, Max Maven, John Carney, Roger Klause, Roger Crabtree, and my longtime friend, Faucett Ross. What more could any lover of our art expect but a perfect "convention".

Besides the above-mentioned names there were half a dozen extremely clever young chaps from Boulder, Colorado, who held the honor of being the "big hit" of the convention. Picture this one presentation: The performer requests someone to concentrate on any card in the deck. Picking up a slate he gazes intently at the spectator

and commences to scribble something on the slate with a piece of chalk. When finished he asks for the name of the thought-of card.

The response is suprisingly uttered in a stutter, "The fif - fif five of di - di diamonds." Turning the slate around, clearly inscribed on it is: "The fif - fif five of di - di diamonds"! It received a big reaction and much laughter as you can well imagine.

Another very amusing bit by this Colorado group: They announced the famous Ed Bux from Pakiston would present his unbelievable blindfold act. They swathed his head with yards of cloth until his head was the size of a large medicine ball.

Then he slowly approached the blackboard and wrote on it: "I can't breathe" and collapsed on the floor and was carried off on a stretcher! Such amusing turns always make a hit at conventions and are long remembered and quoted.

Another of this group presented such a superlative exhibition of juggling that they put him on the main show. This young man received a standing ovation. I predict he will become world-famous if he continues. Sorry I can't recall his name — I think his first name is Barry. At any rate, if someone will set me straight on this I will run it in a future column. How about sending me the names of the entire group!

When Joe Cossari and I visited Wichita last year we indulged in a game of Hearts in the Stevens' beautiful home. We were greatly surprised when the glamorous Martha, Joe's wife, won two straight games. We owe her a trophy!

Incidentally, Joe Cossari finally received his long-awaited Fanning Cards from the United States Playing Card Company and they are going like wildfire.

A few columns ago I wrote about the second surprise birthday party and how I was fooled again into being present! At that time I wanted to include a little poem written by Vic Lozoya but we ran out of space. I think I'll include it right now with just one comment: in the first line it should have been "old man"!

There is a young fellow named Vernon,
Whose magic leaves everyone yearnin'
To do what he does the way that he does it.
Now wasn't that simple— or was it?
He rivals Houdini in making escapes
From parties his friends would plan for him.
He just disappears, leaving nary a trace,
Though we doubt he would say parties bore him
But tonight he is captured, there's no way out.
His friends are all gathered to join in the shout:
HAPPY BIRTHDAY, DAI!

December 1978

Have just returned from a trip to Germany. I was accompanied by a young talented chap named Hiram Strait. Hiram is one of the hosts here at the Castle. Some time ago he received a letter from a former friend, Gerard Slaxon, asking if I would consider going to Berlin. I was quite pleased with the opportunity to visit a city where I had never been. Furthermore, it was not a convention; just a group of half a dozen chaps who wished to discuss the Art of Magic. They had equally shared the cost of transportation and were all devout students.

We flew to London and took the boat train on to West Berlin. I was greatly impressed by the lush emerald green of the countryside as we passed through Holland, and the journey was an enjoyable one. When we arrived we were met at the air field by Gerald Slaxon and a few of the others. They drove us to the hotel where they had made reservations for us and we had a chance to relax.

Shortly after, we all went to a very select restaurant and I was quite impressed how well they conversed and understood English. They claimed that their knowledge of our language was derived almost entirely from reading magical literature. Their names, alphabetically, were Peter Antoni, Manfred Bacia, Gerard Slaxon, Ernst Schosser, Willy Wessel, and Ralf Wichman (Braco).

For about a week we met each evening at one of their homes and "talked and talked". They were all very gracious and seemed to enjoy the evenings. Surprisingly, a constant attendee was Gisela, the attractive wife of Ernst Schosser.

Braco, who published the book, *Floating Routines for Table and Stage*", performed more effects of this nature than anyone I have ever seen. Some of the things he does are really weird and uncanny and they are handled to perfection. To me his only rival is Fred Kaps.

And talking of perfection, Willy Wessel designs and constructs the most exquisite props which rival the work of Eddie Tatelbaum in Holland. When I departed he gave me a gift of a beautifully-made effect in a plush lined box with a golden plate engraved . . . "from his German friends".

One evening I showed the boys a group photo I carry in my wallet and was truly amazed when Manfred Bacia recognized everyone on the picture. They are Cardini, Dr. Daley, Sam Horowitz, Arthur Finley, Al Baker, Charlie Miller, and yours truly. This will give you an idea how much research he must have done to recognize people he'd only read about!

I cannot conceive how anyone could have done more to make our short stay more enjoyable. They wined us and dined us and took us on tours of the city. Not only West Berlin but we went by special bus to East Berlin where we visited the world-famous museum. It always gives me feelings of awe when I witness the work of thousands of years ago, and what a marvelous collection they have. Peter Antoni is in charge of a travel bureau and knows all the ins and outs of getting around.

Of our six new friends Gerard Slaxon, who spent many years away from Germany, was the only native Berliner. He speaks perfect English and was most cooperative in every way. Hiram and I were greatly surprised with the interest Gisela, Ernst's wife,

showed as we kept "going and going". All in all, these things combine as a constant reminder of a most pleasant memory .

When we returned to London we visited Ken Brooks' Studio. I was really delighted to see Ken again. He and Frank Farrow always make visitors most welcome and we used his place as our headquarters. One afternoon we visited my very dear friend, Cy Enfield, and he graciously showed Hiram two of his inventions. One of them will undoubtedly make him millions if all goes well.

I cannot possibly say enough in the way of appreciation for the hospitality extended to us by Pat Page. Of course everyone on this side of the water who has met Pat sings his praises. He goes all out" to do everything in his power to make things easy and pleasurable. Deep thanks to you, Pat.

It is surprising how many magicians from this side have visited London recently. Johnny Paul, Ricky Jay, Don Allen, Steve Freeman, and Phil Goldstein, all so familiar here, are equally so in England. I love London. It is a city that grows on you. Not only is it loaded with history but life is so diversified. Also it is so pleasant to see the unarmed policemen who are always so willing to answer questions and oblige.

Arriving in London on a Monday we were able to attend the monthly meeting of the Magic Circle. Hiram was very pleased when they made him a member after he performed a very perplexing mental effect. I was delighted to spend some time with . He is one of the very top with a pack of cards and even experts are often fooled by his extreme naturalness concealing great skill. I hope in the near future Fred will visit this country and many will have the chance to see him work. Not only a great artist but a real gentleman.

Just before leaving on this trip I received a letter from my friend, Allen Okawa with a little-known fact about the fabulous Max Malini. He died in a house only a few blocks away from where Allan works, His death occurred October 5, 1942. I hope that an article written by Allan will appear soon in the pages of GENII.

January 1979

Many years ago such names as Pinetti, Bosco, Robert Houdin, Alexander Herman, Hofzinger, L'homme Masque, and Frikell were just revered history to me. I devoured and took very much to heart the writings of Houdin. I learned a great deal from studying what this master of the craft had to say. I was also fascinated by L'homme Masque and Frikell. It was the latter who first broke away from the old school of numerous and heavy props of all kinds. Years ago, in the 1850's, he stated his position as follows:

"The use of complicated and cumbersome apparatus, to which modern conjurors have become addicted, not only greatly diminishes the amount of astonishment they are enabled to produce—a defect which is not compensated by the external splendor and imposing effect of such paraphernalia—but the useful lesson that ordinary things that people are familiar with are far superior if one is to create real wonder and bewilderment.

"It has been my object in my performance to restore the art to its original province and to extend it to a degree which it has, I believe, never hitherto reached. I banish all such mechanical and scientific preparations from my own practice, conjuring myself for the most part to the objects and materials of everyday life. The success I have met with emboldens me to believe that I have followed the right path."

The reason I touch on these magicians of by gone days is to let readers know how ancient I feel at times. Nearly every day some younger member of our fraternity talks to me about what, to them, is a character in history: Harry Kellar, Frederich Eugene Powell, Cardini, Silent Mora, William Ellsworth Robinson (Chung Ling Soo), Howard Thurston, Blackstone, Horace Goldin, Dante, Ten Ichi, De Bierre, Bautier De Kolta, Henry Clive, Doc Nixon, Carl Rosini, Fu Manchu, and many other lesser-known, were all very friendly toward me.

Also history to many of the younger magicians are many names of those who were close friends of mine: T. Nelson Downs, Leipzig, Malini, Jarrow, Warren Keane, Allen Shaw, Paul Rosini, Jud Cole, Paul LePaul, Wallace Galvin, Jack Merlin, Ziska, Welsh Miller, Manual, Bill Baird, Annemann, Henry Christ, Dr. Jacob Daley, and Dr. Jaks.

Two of the above met tragic ends: Annemann and Welsh Miller, and, of course, Billy Robinson who was killed performing the bullet catch. It might be of interest to state what the English magician, Will Goldston, said regarding this mishap. Will was a close friend of Robinson and personally thought that he committed suicide, giving the following reasons:

(1) Ching Ling Soo was worried by domestic troubles. (2) He cleared up all his business affairs before his death. (3) He was shot on his last performance on a Saturday night. (4) The gun which killed him had been tampered with. (5) Soo himself was seen handling the gun a few minutes before his performance. (6) The marked (real) bullets which were used were never found. (7) The plate was not shattered by the bullet, proving

that Soo could not have held the plate before his chest according to his usual custom. (8) Soo himself loaded the rifle which fired the fatal shot.

Moving on to a more pleasant note: I was very flattered that the Japanese magicians invited me over this month for a television appearance and lectures in Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya. However, I felt after my return from Berlin, Germany, that I had traveled enough for an oldster. Fortunately, Ricky Jay and Peter Pit replaced me and I feel sure my good Japanese friends really enjoyed them both.

The past two weeks have been of particular interest to me. My extremely talented friend, Steve Freeman, worked in the so-called Vernon Lounge at the Castle and from all reports he pleased and astonished everyone who saw him perform. I consider him one of the very best. Also this week my long-time friend, Jerry Andrus, bewildered and completely deceived everyone with his decidedly different effects using his own original methods.

Was also elated to see the work of Erik Davis and Whit Hadden. Both these younger performers do an excellent job. The former has a unique way of expressing himself and it registers strongly with even a blasé audience. Hadden also has a very different but engaging manner of talking — it is infectious and the audiences loved it. He also performs his magic superbly.

Recently during a Friday luncheon at the Castle I had the pleasure of watching Richard Turner do some superlative coin manipulations. He does the coin roll with five different size coins at one time which is amazing enough, but then he did something I had never seen done before. He rolls two coins in opposite directions across his knuckles! And to top it all off he rolls a giant nickel across his knuckles which is an amazing thing to watch! His dexterity with coins is marvelous. He also does some difficult card manipulations — all in all, a very talented young man.

I must mention that everyone was excited to have Don Allen work here for a week in the Close-Up Gallery. Without even watching him, all one would have to do would be to hear the thunderous applause emanating from the room. Of course everyone initiated into the Art of Magic knows Don Allen and it was a real treat to have him finally appear at the Castle.

February, 1979

Early Christmas morning Ricky Jay and I flew to Toronto to appear on a television show, "Canada After Dark". We had expected to miss our turkey dinner but traveling first class we were served a delicious meal and plenty of liquid refreshment. Not only this, but upon arrival we were invited by the producer of the show, Michael Rhodes, to his home for another dinner with all the trimmings.

I felt very flattered to appear on this program with Frances Willard, Glenn Falkenstein, Charles Reynolds, and Ricky Jay. Anyone who has missed seeing Frances Willard has missed one of the greatest acts in the magical world. Besides doing full justice to her famous father she is a beautiful and fascinating girl to meet.

At the start of the program the host asked me if it was my first visit to Canada and I retorted quite vehemently, "Why, I was born in this country before your father was born!" After that everything progressed smoothly.

I must state here that Ricky really gave excellent suggestions to the director and his ideas were carried out to the letter. The result was that everything ran very smoothly and Frances Willard especially appeared at her very best.

While in Toronto we were staying at the Toronto Hotel, the newest and best in town. I received quite a surprise when I met the manager, Liam Lambert. He was the youngster I met back in the fifties in Dublin, Ireland. His father, Hubert Lambert, is well known to anyone in magic and he is a great guy to know.

The next day after the show we were disappointed to find that Ross Bertram had flown to St. Joseph, Missouri, to spend Christmas with Faucett Ross. However, Sid Lorraine was very much at home. He invited us over and we spent a most interesting afternoon. Among the many things he showed us was a movie of John Ramsay performing the Cylinder and Coins. As he had an extra copy of the film he gave me one to give to Bill Larsen for the Castle collection. To top all this Sid's wife invited us to partake of another turkey dinner, so we wound up with a total of three!

The morning we checked out of the hotel we were delighted to find Ross Bertram waiting in the lobby. He had arrived back in Toronto late the previous evening but managed to get up early enough to be at the hotel to say hello. We all had breakfast, thanks to the kindness of Liam Lambert. I must say that the hotel is fortunate in having such a personable and efficient man at its helm.

A short time ago I received a letter from my dear friend Pedro Christophersen in Buenos Aires. He was a close friend of Fu Manchu and always did everything in his power to entertain any visiting magicians. He was most interested in mental effects but also wrote an excellent fully-illustrated book on mnemonics.

Discussing mental work, I'd like to state that I consider Max Maven's manner of presenting this type of act the very best that I have ever seen. Much better than Dunninger and other well-known names. In my opinion his only rival as far as entertainment and uncluttered presentation and real mystery would be Dr. Jaks if he was still with us.

And speaking of good performers, Americans have no monopoly. Billy McComb has just returned and he "knows the score" and everyone admires his warm friendly manner. Both Francis Giles and Joe Riding of England utterly charmed Chris Michael while they were over here. Chris is one of the Castle's severest critics and he seldom sees anyone perform to his liking.

Very often I think back to my visit to England in the fifties and the clever chaps I met. Alex Elmsley, Cy Enfield, Jack Avis, Roy Walton, David Berglas, Fred Robinson, and, of course, John Ramsay and the much beloved Ken Brooke. I lack space to mention many others.

Yes, magic is universal. Japan has Shimada, Sawa, Yamada, Kato, and Yosizawa Shegio. Holland: Fred Kaps, Drobeck, Henk Vermeyden, and Richard Ross. India: Sorcar, Jr. Australia: Rooklyn. Pakistan: Kuda Bux, and on and on.

Recently I saw the Tom Snyder television show with Ricky Jay, David Copperfield, and John Scarne. Ricky performed really dexterous card work and David Copperfield presented the penetrating' cigarette through coin to Tom's evident astonishment. Scarne was asked to demonstrate some gambling methods but insisted on performing a card trick. After seeing Ricky he should have been smart enough not to try to compete. he should have talked about his stature as an expert on all types of gambling.

The so-called Vernon Lounge at the Castle has had some real talent recently. Jerry Andrus, Max Maven, Bruce Cervon, Ray Grismer, and Ron Wilson all astounded and thrilled the audience. I'm just waiting for Charles Earl Miller to stop dancing long enough to grace the room. And hope that Tony Giorgio will audition for Jerry Blount to see if he is qualified to perform.

Before winding up I'd like to say that two things bewilder me. One is the flawlessness and quantity of excellent lettering and illustrations of the Rice Silk Books executed by Francis Martineau. The other is the amount of research and dedication by Len Vintus in compiling "Magicians of the World". How he accomplished this gigantic undertaking is beyond my understanding. Really astounding.

In closing I'd like to thank all of t my many friends for sending greeting cards during the recent holidays. I really appreciate it.

Thanks for reading.

March, 1979

Around the beginning of the year the Castle honored me by naming one of the performing rooms THE VERNON LOUNGE. This room is where the cream of the sleight-of handers exhibit their skills and effects. So far the selection has been excellent:

Steve Aldrich, Jerry Andrus, Harry Carroll, Bruce Cervon, Magic Christian, John Fedko, Steve Freeman, Paul Gertner, Tony Giorgio, Ray Grismer. Bob Gwodz, Jules Lenier, Nick Lewin.

Max Maven, Daryl Martinez, Harry Monti, Earl Nelson, Johnny Platt, Barry Price, Mike Rogers, Danny Rouzer, George Sands, Ron Wilson,. Dick Zimmerman.

Hiram Strait, and lastly, John Carney, who just became 21 years of age as he started. This boy of tender years is exceedingly clever and can hold his place with the best.

Hardly a day passes without someone asking me if my name is pronounced "Day" or "Die". The correct pronunciation is "Die" although nearly everyone in New York used to call me "Day". This name is a Welsh nickname for David. It was when I was in my teens and I won a fancy diving event they printed my name in large type DAI VERNER, probably hearing someone referring to me as Dave Verner. Thus the origin. Now when people ask I reply, "either or either".

Talking of names, I consider it of great value to have a name that is easily remembered. Years ago Harry Blackstone, Senior, was sitting in the Windsor Clifton Hotel in Chicago. At the time he was known as Harry Bouton. Gazing into the cigar stand he spotted Blackstone cigars. "Now that's a good name. Blackstone Hotel. Blackstone law book. I think I'll adopt it." Thus Harry Bouton became the famous Harry Blackstone.

Judson Cole always bemoaned the fact that he hadn't chosen a different name. Said his name sounded like someone's butter. Many years ago in New York while Jud Cole was managing Tommy Martin, the latter changed his billing to Bradley T. Martin. Then, probably thinking of T. Nelson Downs, he used T. Bradley Martin, and then just Bradley Martin. This amazed Jud exceedingly and so Tommy finally went back to the simple Tommy Martin. Incidentally, Tommy was a top act in the hey day of vaudeville.

An incident just occurs to me concerning Tommy. One day he invited me over to his hotel and after a brief talk stating he wished to add another effect to his act he laid a thousand dollar bill on the bureau. "That bill is yours if you give me, something to add two or three minutes to my presentation, Dai." I was rather amused as I considered Tommy a good friend. I told him I'd try to give him several suggestions but most certainly did not expect any monetary payment.

Well, the next week he played Detroit and taking a short cut to the theatre across a vacant lot he heard running footsteps behind him. When he turned to look he was clubbed

over the head with a bottle and relieved of well over three thousand dollars. He always carried large sums of money and continually treated people when he was out with them. Tommy was working for a San Francisco newspaper when he teamed up with "One Arm" McDonald and they opened stores selling Rattle Bars and other small tricks.

I can't recall if I have mentioned this before but it will be appropriate to mention it at this point. At one time they were in Kansas City and they had a sign in the window that read: "Twenty dollars in gold to anyone who can fool us with a card trick." My dear friend, Faucett Ross, happened to be passing and, seeing the sign, became greatly intrigued. He entered the store and proceeded to show McDonald and a young red-haired helper a card effect. He bamboozled them both but was greatly surprised to see the young chap jump over the counter and run out the door. "Mac" said, "Don't let that disturb you. He behaves that way when he is fooled badly. He'll run around the block and cool off."

To get to the point, Faucett asked about the offered reward. McDonald replied, "Which would you prefer, the twenty dollars or a brand new card effect?" Faucett chose the latter and "Mac" said to meet him the next day at his hotel. The evening before the meeting "Mac" devised a beautiful presentation of a simple card revelation, "You Do As I Do".

McDonald was a genius at giving believable plots to standard effects and to see him perform the Egg on the Fan was a revelation. Only having one arm you can appreciate how he accomplished this. He wet several small pieces of paper in a glass of water and scattered them over the surface of a Saturday Evening Post magazine. Lifting it with his hand he shook it and the papers gradually fell off, but one seemed to come to life and grow into an egg. He laid down the magazine, picked up the egg and broke it into a glass. Remember, all performed with only one hand. However, it was the way he interested everyone initially with his talk about modern methods of incubation, etc.

"Mac" told me that the moves in any effect must be executed faultlessly, of course, but the main thing was to think up a way to make the effect intriguing and interesting by the manner of presentation.

Although I have been fooling with magic well over 75 years I do not feel qualified to perform. One must have a routine and smooth it out until it runs like clockwork. I have neglected to do this. However, a week ago I had the compliment of working with Shimada, Dominique, and Mark Wilson on a Dick Cavatt presentation. I was afraid I had spoiled the show but my sequence was cut and edited by a clever staff so it appeared to the best advantage, for which I am thankful. I very often criticize others but I am severest when it comes to myself. I thoroughly realize my failings. At any rate, some of the younger chaps have more skill and ability than many of the old-timers. But do not be misled. All the cleverness of execution and skillful handling count for naught if the presentation is lacking.

April, 1979

When Bill Larsen asked me to write this column for GENII I suggested the title THE CRANKY OLD MAN DISCUSSES THE ART. However, as can be seen, Bill adopted the term coined by my dear friend Lewis Ganson. The reason I had for wishing to see the former caption was because I could be perfectly honest in my likes and dislikes and not afraid to be highly critical.

I feel very strongly that the Magic Castle should uphold magic in the eyes of the public. We should never book anyone who cheapens the art. Feeble attempts to be funny, timeworn cliches, and suggestive double entendre should be strictly taboo.

What a treat it was the past few weeks to see the performances of Baltazar Fuentes, Jon Brunell, Earl Nelson, and Paul Gertner. Baltazar hails from Mexico and presents truly beautifully executed effects with charm and dignity. It has been a long time since I have met anyone with such a thorough knowledge and understanding of the subject. Also he has many entirely original moves and subtleties.

Needless to sing the praises of Earl Nelson, Jon Brunell and Paul Gertner as they are well known to all who follow what is going on in the magic world. A short time ago Steve Freeman appeared downstairs in the lounge and fascinated everyone with a most delightful routine of superlative magic. Then just last week John Carney of Des Moines performed in the close-up room and showed many of the old-timers refreshing versions of many different effects. It is amazing how talented some of these younger chaps are and the skill they have attained at such a tender age.

The last few weeks have been very eventful. We just had the Academy Awards and, as usual, they were well attended. Bob Barker kept everyone in good spirits with his clever remarks and amusing ad-libs. Bob has been with us now for many years and is excellent in the way he keeps things flowing smoothly.

You will be reading Bill's complete review of this affair but I would like to make a couple of personal comments here. The various awards met with almost unanimous approval and personally I was very pleased that Earl Nelson and Jerry Andrus were singled out. Not only are they extremely clever, but both are real human beings really worth knowing.

The real highlight of the awards show was the presentation of the Spirit Cabinet by Frances Willard and Glenn Falkenstein. It is done to perfection by Frances and the fact that she is such a charming and beautiful woman makes this a most outstanding act. Incidentally she was an award winner and I know everyone thoroughly agreed on the judges' choice.

Peter Pit and Dick Zimmerman did a bang-up job of arranging the entire show and presentations. Congratulations to both of them. After the show many went upstairs to the

Roof Garden for late supper. They were lucky because our beloved Shimada and Deanna presented their famous dove act. What an act! Mere words couldn't possibly describe this truly marvelous presentation. Superlatives after superlatives would fail to convey its appeal and attractiveness.

One of our distinguished visitors was Channing Pollock and it was refreshing to hear him express his admiration for award winners Goldfinger and Dove. They opened the show and were sensational. When a fellow like Channing, a true master himself, gives such credit to another performer it is an admirable quality. Why is it that so many performers seem reticent about praising fellow artists? If they consider it a sign of inferiority or that it lessens their status they are greatly mistaken.

And before I forget, in regards to the show, handsome young Greg Wilson introduced Bob Barker magically, and the beautiful Heidi Larsen decorated the stage for a short interval during this opening bit

A short time ago I received a letter from a reader asking me whom I considered to be the three top card workers. No one could answer this question. I could mention at least a dozen or more starting with Marlo and ending with Scarne. With the great number of youngsters today who have access to all the periodicals, books, and booklets, who knows what wonders they will accomplish.

Some excel with technique, some with subtleties, others lack any skill but by their presentation make people believe they possess great skill.

Another question asked was my opinion of Houdini. Harry Houdini was without doubt the greatest exponent of hazardous and dangerous escapes that ever lived. Not only had he a full knowledge of locks and restraints of all types but he presented them with remarkable showmanship. People witnessing his performances were sure that his life was in danger and he created this feeling with many of his stunts.

However, as a magician he was mediocre and being an extreme egotist he could not bear to have anyone fool him. He was the type who would snatch and grab. For this reason I never admired him. His wife was my older boy's Godmother and I had a letter from her telling how Harry sat up nearly all night trying to figure out a simple card trick with which I had fooled him.

It surprises me that the S.A.M.. in New York keeps trying to keep his name alive. The one and only reason he joined the club was to exploit his own name. Self-interest only. He tried to have the Bernard Ernst Fund changed to the Houdini Fund and other similar things. Bernard Ernst was a true gentleman beloved by all, so Houdini's actions were most decidedly voted down. I could write pages that would be most uncomplimentary but why?

Some of my younger readers may not like what I have just written but it is the gospel truth. How did I get started with this? I'd better sign off before adding more.

May, 1979

Well, here I am back at the Magic Castle with all my good friends.

Just a short time ago I spent four days in Las Vegas—a seminar with Tony Slydini and myself. I felt quite flattered when Joe Stevens invited me to participate for the second time. Next year he even plans on having Tony and me again with the attendance of Fred Kaps as the main attraction. These affairs attract the cream of those who follow our often abused Art.

When we arrived at the Aladdin Hotel we were interviewed by the local press. So Tony and I answered the usual questions asked. Then Tony flabbergasted them with his completely deceiving cigarette mysteries. I was asked to do something but since there were two girls among the reporters I discarded the pasteboards and did a quick coin effect. Girls love to have their fortunes told with cards but few care a hoot about any Card problem.

So to prove what I had told them in the interview—that some of the younger chaps are remarkably clever—I introduced Roger Klauser and John Carney and they both really excelled. The television people took a real close-up of Roger changing a dollar bill into a hundred, and he performed it flawlessly.

Later Tony and I gave lectures, and each afternoon they had close-up sessions with Roger Crabtree intruding the different performers. On two consecutive days they put on stage shows and outstanding was Joe Cossari because he presented something completely different. Every act did coins and Rings, and I ashamedly did the same except for cards up sleeve and balls in the net.

I was really pleased to see my friend Mike Skinner again whom many claim to be the most finished artist of today. Larry Jennings and Mike got together and what a combination. Then there was Jimmy Grippo who watched some of the close-up workers, and Paul Harris, both past masters.

One of those who asked me for an autograph was young Darron Ackerman — a handsome likable little gentleman of very tender years. I am quite sure he was very proud of his father who really was a superlative performer.

The first day there I dropped about fifty bucks at the dice table but the last day I got even and won about the same amount. Talking about so-called systems or Martingales, I think the best, if there is such, is that known as the "Flop Head's Dream". You always bet on a repetition of the last event. Pass, pass again Lose, lose again. This if you are lucky enough to get in on a really "hot hand" or conversely, a cold one, you can win a bundle. The only way you lose is if they "see saw" which seldom Occurs.

Just picked up my mail and a most interesting letter front Hubert Lambert who lives at Vernon Park, Clentarf, Dublin, Ireland. Years ago when Jay Ose and I visited Ireland we stayed at the home of Chris Woodward, and we spent many interesting days with Hubert Lambert and his family. Billy McComb is a close friend of Hubert and can vouch for the cleverness of this boy from Dublin.

Also in my mail was a letter and a photograph of the Foan Family Circus. Sometime ago I lauded them but I did not have all their names, so here they are: Kathi DeFiances. Eddie Goldstein. Steve Aldrich. Sam Kent, Brent Warren, Chesterland Spalks, and Barrett Felkel. If at any time you learn that this group is appearing in your vicinity do not fail to see their unique performance.

Was very glad that I arrived back from Vegas in time to catch Jon Fedko's performance in the Vernon Lounge. John is a credit to the Castle, and on Sunday he gave an excellent lecture. He demonstrated all his effects to perfection and explained the methods with great lucidity.

The way time flies, before I realize it I'll be en route to Brussels, Copenhagen, and London with Bill and Irene and their children. Also John Shrum and that genius, Milt. There will be quite a Crowd leaving from Los Angeles and everyone is looking forward to a very special holiday.

Before winding up I'd like to mention this: In my opinion one of the main reasons for the tremendous popularity and success of the Magic Castle is the courtesy and pleasantness of the bartenders and cocktail waitresses. They are at all times agreeable and cooperative, and go out of their way to please. And of course this goes for the hosts and receptionists also. As I have stated before, the entire atmosphere of the Castle is a reflection of that Royal Family—the Larsens.

June, 1979

The first time I ever heard the name Danny Dew was away back in the late twenties. I had become very friendly with the late Paul Fox. Each summer I left New York to visit Colorado Springs and we spent many pleasant hours together. Paul was a genius. Everything he did pertaining to magic or anything else became polished and refined by his thinking.

He often told me that there was one person he really confided in and trusted implicitly — Danny Dew. Later when I finally met Danny I fully realized the absolute truth of Paul's claims.

It has been my good fortune to meet and know literally thousands of chaps, young and old, not only in the magic world but in athletics and the sports world. Without a shadow of a doubt Danny is one of the most likable all-around human beings I've ever known. Talented, understanding, patient and considerate—all the attributes that combine to make him so highly respected and admired by everyone. I consider myself very fortunate to have Danny Dew such a close and dear friend.

To even begin to list all the many favors and help that Danny has given to others would fill pages. Don't take my word for it—just ask anyone who really knows Danny and read the pages that follow.

I cannot leave Danny without stating that he and Melba did a beautiful act some years ago. Danny has a style of presentation that is really and truly "big time".

I am often asked by visitors to the Castle if there are any women magicians. If they happened to catch the show in our Palace of Mystery this week they saw Diana, the Enchantress, the pretty blonde wife of Dick Zimmerman. Or a few weeks ago they would have seen Tina Lenert who performs delightfully in mime ala Marcel Marceau. Incidentally, congratulations to Tina and Mike Caveney upon their recent marriage' And another lady magician who performs often on Monday nights is Monette Lenier.

Then, of course, in the hey day of vaudeville there were Adelaide Herman, Lady Francis, Celeste Evans and a few others including the well known Dell O'Dell. However, the role of the feminine sex has usually been to assist a male performer. Swan most certainly greatly enhanced Cardini's act. Earlier, Henry Clive was assisted by May Sturgis, said to be the most gorgeous of all show girls. Other "teams" that come to mind are Loring Campbell and Katherine, Ade Duval and True, Danny and Melba, Mark Wilson and Nani, and on and on. Yes, the girls should be acclaimed for their participation.

In the past year we have had here at the Castle Ken Noyle and Yoko, Peter De Paula and Kathryn, Ken Griffin and Roberta, Goldfinger and Dove, Shimada and Deanna, and

our president, Bill Larsen and Irene. I think everyone would agree that the girls add great charm and audience appeal.

At this point I would like to highly compliment Peter De Paula for the most interesting and entertaining way he has brought Kathlyn, his most attractive assistant, into focus. She assists in his ring routine in faultless mime, striking many different poses and stances that add much luster to his performance.

While discussing the ladies I'd like to say that the office staff (headed by Jean Cantor) and the pretty hostesses who greet the visitors as they enter the front door all combine to make the Castle the marvelous place it is to all who visit us. Also the selection of cocktail waitresses has been excellent (take a bow, Ricky) as they are all attractive and cordial to everyone.

Leaving the ladies for the time being, Mark Wilson celebrated the big FIVE-OH (his fiftieth birthday) by being surprised with a very elaborate party arranged by Nani and friends. He had over a hundred guests and for many it was quite a surprise to see what an expensive and beautiful home his magic has made possible. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves and Mark and Nani proved to be ideal hosts. Their home is high on a hill in Encino and through the large picture windows one gets a splendid view of the San Fernando Valley and surrounding city.

I feel greatly disappointed that I am unable to visit the Forks Hotel where Eddie Fechter used to hold forth. They are holding the F.F.F.F. in memory of Eddie who recently passed away. They are to honor Larry Jennings who most certainly deserves recognition from all who admire true sleight-of-hand. Steve Freeman and I fully expected to attend but the air line strike and a few other factors prevented us from attending.

It was a great treat to have Mike Rogers in the so-called Vernon Lounge. (Editors note: It is NOT the SO-CALLED Vernon Lounge' It is THE VERNON LOUNGE') Those who caught his act witnessed a perfect example of good magical entertainment. No attempts to obtain laughter by silly remarks or timeworn clichés. Just perfectly natural handling of props and natural conversation by a thoroughly nice person.

The same goes for Whit Haydn who worked in the Close-Up Gallery. Although entirely different in appearance and manner from Mike, he gave a truly pleasing, entertaining performance. His individual personality came across most effectively and everyone was enthusiastic about everything he did.

Please, please, you younger performers: Strive to be original — don't copy. Everyone is different so develop your own traits and characteristics. No one can be you better than YOU. Love your audience and woo them like you would a pretty girl you wish to impress. If you love them they will return that love. And finally, try to give some dignity to our beloved Art—don't downgrade it.

July, 1979

Last evening I received a very pleasant surprise. Cy Enfield visited the Castle. He was accompanied by his wife and sister. I have known him for many years and have always had the greatest admiration for him and his many talents.

He is in America from London England to promote his remarkable invention the "MICROWRITER". This idea of his is truly extraordinary. The device itself is no longer than a standard tape recorder. It can be plugged into any electric circuit. The operator can feed in manually, any information he pleases. However unlike a typewriter the method of execution can be learned in about 20 minutes. An ingenious application of mnemonics is responsible. Cy's great magical knowledge helped greatly in devising this unique method. It is really revolutionary.

Anything recorded is transmitted to another machine and mechanically typed ready for mailing. Thus the necessity for a stenographer to take down dictation is eliminated.

Cy should make a fortune when this goes on the market and I predict he will.

One of his other inventions is a chess set. All of the pieces from the King and Queen down to the pawns fit together to form what appears to be a magic wand. They can be disassembled and placed on a most ingenious folded board. He made up a few of these in gold and silver for special friends of his.

I wish Ed Marlo would pay the Castle a visit. I feel certain that he would receive a royal reception and would truly enjoy his stay. He has hosts of admirers who study his many books and it would be a memorable occasion if they could have the pleasure of meeting him personally. Also Phil Craig and Joe Scott are two more we would love to have visit us. They hail from St. Louis, the city where Paul LePaul and Bill Baird started their careers. Hey fellows, the next time Faucett Ross plans to head out this way, jump in the car with him' And still another St. Louis name that would be so welcome out here is Brother John Hamman, creator of so many wonderful card miracles, starting with his Final Ace Routine. What a treat it would be for all of us to have this great quartet in our midst'.

In closing, my thoughts are of the late Sam Margules of New York City. Sam was a staunch member of the Parent Assembly S.A.M.. and tried his utmost to open a club devoted to magic. He envisioned a place much like our Castle but never was able to get the idea started. Sam was the one who ran the annual magic show in New York year after year. They were always a great success and profitable. If Sam had realized his dream of a magic club he may have had the same "problem" that we sometimes have out here: Quite often visitors to the Castle may watch someone at a table dealing out packets of cards, little knowing that he is what you would call a rank amateur. And too often these chaps perform very boring uninteresting effects.

All acts that are booked to work in the five different show rooms of the Castle are top-notch, of course. And it is my hope that our guests get to watch some of these shows so they will not leave with having seen just an amateur (in the true sense of the word) magician'

Have just spent a very interesting time in the library with Gerald Kosky and Bruce Cervon. We were admiring Martin Gardner's new book, "The Encyclopedia of Impromptu Magic". This book should be a must for all magicians. Not only does it have a world of information concerning impromptu experiments but the clear terse way they are described is a delight.

Nate Leipzig used to always claim that a professional performer should familiarize himself with all the well known gags, puzzles, and catches that might be currently making the rounds. It can be quite disconcerting and embarrassing if someone with no knowledge whatsoever of the Art arrogantly shows the performer a simple puzzle or gag which he is unable to solve. How much better it would be if this often present individual were shown a twist or presentation that would completely baffle him.

At any rate, Martin Gardner has collected a huge number of useful and effective items and explained them so clearly that they can be immediately added to your repertoire.

Am very pleased this week that Ron Wilson is working in the Vernon Lounge and Daryl Martinez in the Close-Up Room. Both these performers personify what I keep harping about: naturalness. Natural in manner and natural-appearing handling of effects. If one has to make some kind of fancy or manipulative move, please take the "curse" off. Roy Benson used to remark, "Like the village idiot". Jay Marshall would say, "One simple move". Please give our Art a little dignity and not something that our elders think is only suited for entertaining children.

August 1979

Have just returned from the F.I.S.M Convention in Brussels. We left "Belgique" on a 747 S.A.S. plane. There were 36 weary but happy magic lovers on their way back to sunny California. As you may know, the plane seats nine persons across—three groups of three seats. I had the pleasure of sharing three with Bill and Irene Larsen. Across the aisle in the next three were Gerrie Larsen Jaffe and Heidi and Erika, the mother and her charming delightful grandchildren. Brother Milt was at the far side with John Shrum, Castle designer. It seemed to me that every few minutes the stewardesses were bringing trays of food. Being a small eater I only managed to consume one. Also there was a constant exchange of Swedish jokes owing to the fact that the magazine with every seat contained several such jokes. In Europe they attribute all of our Polish jokes either to the Irish or the Swedes.

Arriving at the airport I took a taxi to my dwelling on Orange Drive—the Biltmore Apartments—and dropped in to see my friend Joe Cossari who has quarters in the same building. The first thing to meet my eyes was a huge trophy that Joe had won for his card fanning act during my absence. He must have had to hire a truck to get it home!

After a short rest I visited the Castle and found things humming along as usual. Watched Harry Anderson perform—always a treat because he is brilliant and talented. But speaking of stage acts, I must get back to the convention and state that the quality of all the stage acts was excellent. It would be impossible for me to comment on all of them but will say that Ali Bongo did a really superlative job as emcee and no need to mention his exciting and most entertaining act.

Was also very pleased to see my friend Christian, as suave and polished as ever. Also Liebenow who excels at close-up work did a "bang up job. I must admit that I was completely nonplussed by the Russian act Sara Kabigujina and Sultangali Shukurov. They justly shared honors for the Grand Prix with Ger Copper. Others will review all the splendid acts so I shall just say a few words about the close-up performances.

The reason that John Cornelius won an award and stood out among the many was because his presentation was clear and uncluttered and easy to watch and understand. Some of the contestants were extremely skillful and clever but their effects were confusing—too long drawn out.

Not so Hans ("the butler") when he did his street show. Easy to understand—brief and to the point, and great audience appeal. Jean Jacques Sanvert did a great exhibition. He and Bernard Bilis were kind enough to come to my room late one night and give Bill Strickland and myself a private *tete a tete*. Both are masterful in their work.

Unique for conventions were the outdoor exhibitions in the large beautiful square. There were no seats but there was a large stage at one end. Bob Brown on stage with beautiful Brenda presented his puzzling levitation and would have had a standing ovation if everyone had been seated. There were several street performers who attracted a large circle of people and they performed in the center. At the conclusion they passed their hats and most of the onlookers contributed.

Also on stage the Elder Moretti performed his bewildering sword penetration which baffles everyone with the exception of Kuda Bux who claims two people could be

inside. My friend Luke McKissack and I contest this claim however Talking of Luke, he must have almost gone bankrupt because he purchased three or four dozen steins of beer at the banquet. Our table was conspicuous because we had nearly all the feminine "lookers" (Typesetter: please be careful of the spelling) which attracted the glances of the French, Spanish, Germans, Danish and Japanese males.

One of the real highlights of the entire trip was seeing my dear friend Fred Kaps. We watched John Cornelius together and Fred really enjoyed this most entertaining lecture. Another dear friend I saw again was Ken Brooke. I hope and pray that before too long he will be performing again. I was looking forward to seeing Ray Walton but did get to speak to him on the telephone from Stratford on Avon.

From Scotland came Gordon Bruce and I must say that he ranks with the very best with the pasteboards. He really does beautiful work in a most pleasing fashion. Also everyone was thrilled to see Alex Elmsley.

I spent too brief a time with my cherished friend Lewis Ganson, but Francis Giles had a video tape which showed Lewis performing with Cards, ring and rope, and he ran this for me. Francis still cuts excellent silhouettes. It frightens me a little when I think that it was over sixty years ago that I used to cut out thousands of silhouette portraits. In the past twenty years I have only made a half dozen.

Everyone felt very badly that John Shrum had the misfortune of spraining his ankle very severely. However he managed to attend most of the events with the aid of a couple of canes. It doesn't seem right that at my age I should enjoy the wonderful companionship of so many good friends: The Larsens, the Reveens, the Saunders, the Wilsons, and all the others on our trip who were so very congenial.

The prices for everything on the other side are astronomical. However in Brussels Mike Caldwell and Jay Marshall discovered a small restaurant a few blocks from the place where we stayed and we could dine without losing an arm or leg.

One of the most discussed events of the entire convention was a levitation from a sitting position on a bar stool. I'm sure this will be described in detail by Bill Larsen.

I thank the Magic Castle for making this trip possible for me. I had a wonderful time.

September, 1979

Quoting Houdini's exact words taken from the introduction to "Elliott's Last Legacy":

"I see a most vivid portrayal of an event that occurred long ago. I see two men in Boston, Massachusetts, standing in the middle of the street back of Keith's stage entrance: it is four o'clock in the morning and these men have occupied that same place since the letting out of the show at midnight preceding and they are as seriously engaged as combatants in a duel for defense of honor.

"It was a conflict between two enthusiasts, and the weapon of destruction was a deck of playing cards. The light of conflict flashed from their eyes. Both were heated with excitement and it is doubtful if ever two human beings faced each other in an arena with the conflicting thoughts that these two rivals had. No statesmen. No warrior ever delivered a more sincere speech for love of country, life or liberty, with more obsession-like earnestness than they did over that pack of cards as it was taken from one and handed to the other in a weird mysterious manner: one after the other manipulating the pack with the dexterity that can only be acquired by a passionate love of magic and years of training and practice, in fact, the fingers coordinating, if such a thing is possible, with the mind, and moving with greater speed.

"This was the meeting of Dr. James William Elliott and the editor of this book (Houdini). We had never met before. This was our first meeting although we were vieing in mortal combat, showing our pet moves to one another- and now, by reflection of the mysterious mirror. I can see that we were 20 years ahead of the other manipulators because, even at this date, with due modesty I can say that I recognize no one as my peer.

"Without question, doubt or contradiction, in my mind, Elliott and I were unsurpassed in that particular line of manipulative skill, and I must explain Elliott loved to manipulate cards. He would practice cards morning, noon and night and I know the cards would lie at his bed—side."

When the book "*Elliott's Last Legacy*" first appeared in the early twenties I could hardly wait to obtain a copy and devour the contents. When I read the foreword introduction I was utterly astonished at Houdini's absolutely ridiculous and outlandish claim. He also tried to take credit away from Doc Elliott for developing the so-called Front and Back Palm shown to him by a Mexican gambler in a very crude form in Otto Maurer's shop.

Up to this time I never had any harsh words about Harry Houdini. However from then on his braggadocio and pushing ways and his extreme egotism really irritated.. I think it would be more than fitting for someone to write *The Unmasking of Harry Houdini*".

The great majority of accounts concerning his hazardous exploits and escapes could be likened to the Indian Rope Trick. No doubt about the fact that he was an absolute genius

at securing sensational publicity. And he had the admirable quality of clean living and a true love for his mother and his devoted wife, Bess.

On behalf of Dr. Elliott, whom many of my readers may never have even heard of, I'd like to say that of the hundreds of card handlers I've known he was one of the most skilled. To epitomize what Dr. Ezra Lee Buckey said of him:

I often wonder how my dear friend Dr. Elliott would have felt if he had lived to read the grotesque and hyperbolic claims made by Houdini.

In closing I'd just like to comment on the present shows at the Castle. Don Kellar on the stage show does a really stellar performance. He appears as a handsome sophisticated and stylish young man. His selection of material is well chosen and he executes each effect most pleasingly. On the same bill, John and Betty Todtman please the audience greatly and also have well-chosen effects. His Dancing Handkerchief and the Sword Cabinet truly amaze and delight the spectators.

In the close-up room we've had some truly skillful performers the past two weeks: Bruce Cervon, Martin Nash, Gerald Kosky, and Richard Turner. The cleverness of the first three mentioned is known to all. However, the latter's name should be remembered because he does things that very few could possibly duplicate. With cards — seconds, bottoms, and centers in perfect rhythm. And with coins— he rolls several at the same time with both hands working in unison.

This issue of GENII will be dedicated to Joe Cossari. Joe will attain the "three score and ten" this September the first and I hope everyone wishes him a Happy Birthday.

Joe is one of nature's noblemen and a true diamond in the rough.

One has only to see him break into his little dance during his act to instantly realize what a likeable, warm and friendly person is performing.

October 1979

In a previous column I mentioned that I considered Max Maven (Phil Goldstein) an excellent performer, in my opinion superior to Dunninger. This statement brought a retort from Louis H. Dunninger stating that it was a "cheap shot" and that I might like to hear from the "other side."

I met Joe Dunninger in Clyde Powers' Magic Shop on Forty-Second Street in New York City. The year was 1915 and at that time Joe wore a black cape and carried an umbrella. He was working at the Eden Museum downtown performing magic and presenting a levitation. My close friend, Sam Margules used to often assist Joe...either turning the crank on the "goose neck" or at other times acting as a stooge in the audience.

When Joe was performing the Linking Rings, Sam would heckle him and insist on examining each and every ring. After a tussle (grabbing and pulling) Dunninger would allow Sam to take the "key" which he'd twist and pull on, apparently giving it a most careful examination.

Years later in the late twenties I was in Atlantic City cutting Silhouettes on the Boardwalk. I received a telephone call from Frances Rockefeller King (the top New York theatrical booking agent). She told me that she had a most important engagement for me on the weekend, I told her that I was having a most enjoyable time, swimming in the daytime and making excellent money in the evenings. She seemed quite annoyed and stated that I was a "will of the wisp."

If I had known that it was to entertain the Prince of Wales I most certainly would have made the trip to Long Island. However, she booked Dunninger and he played the date. Miss King told me that his question answering made a big hit.

To regress a little as to how and when Miss King met Dunninger: One day I visited her in the Palace Theatre Building and she was greatly upset because of Houdini. She had booked him to appear at a Milk Fund Affair given by Mrs. E.T. Statesburg in Philadelphia. She told me that Houdini had very abruptly cancelled the date and left for Chicago. "What can I do, Mr. Vernon? Could you escape from some handcuffs? Could you borrow a Milk Can?"

I suggested she get in touch with Dunninger. I told her that he had quite a collection of cuff leg irons and so forth, and I felt sure he also had a Milk Can. To get to the point, Joe played the date. Working on a bandstand in the spacious garden he presented different escapes. Having not had time to secure a cabinet he improvised by having two spectators hold large sheets of newspaper in a circle around him to conceal the operations.

Miss King told me after this that Joe was someone you could really rely on and that she was going to promote him henceforth. So after she had booked him at the party for the Prince of Wales she was able to jump his salary up to a thousand and more for a single engagement. No one else except Max Malini ever received such remuneration at that time.

Later, when Miss King joined NBC, she saw that Joe received good exposure on television. Dave Lustig was the secret helper on many of his best stunts.

I only saw Dunninger once at a private show. I could have seen him when we both worked for Charles Schwab but Joe insisted that Miss King keep me downstairs while he was performing in an upper room. However, I saw his act many times at different places and I still prefer acts like Fogel, Dr. Jaks and Max Maven.

After the appearance of the Joe Cossari issue of GENII I'll probably be deluged with critical and unfavorable comments. However now that Larry Arcuri is no longer stationed in New York I shall have to look to Florida for any favorable remarks.

I was greatly saddened when I heard the startling news of the tragic death of Lord Mountbatten. Visiting and being a Guest at his beautiful home, known as Broadlands, was one of the highlights of my long life. Twice I enjoyed this pleasure. The first time with my dear friend Lewis Ganson and the late Robert Harbin, and the second time with two more of my closest friends, Jay Marshall and Faucett Ross.

Lord Mountbatten was a real he-man respected by all and beloved by even the most lowly sailors. On several occasions he was the last to desert his sinking ship.

It was rather odd the way we happened to be invited to visit his home. When I was attending a party given by Lord De Pas, the A.D.C. to Lord Mountbatten, he showed me a very handsome set of brass cups he had picked up in India. He was most interested in discussing routines for the classical Cups and Balls. He stated that he would love to invite a few of the boys out to Broadlands, the home of Lord Mountbatten.

At any rate, during the party I was engaged in conversation with a most charming English lady discussing Rio de Janiero where she had visited many times. I told her that I, too, had been there dozens of times. The conversation led into the sordid and shocking things of this Brazilian city. I told her that certain events that take place were taboo and not for a ladies ears. However I did take a few liberties and told her a few what I might term "spicy" things.

She was so gracious and pleasant that I finally said that I would like a little advice from her. I mention that I had a relative, Baron Derrick Verner, living in Sussex and that I would like to visit him but was afraid that he might snub me when he learned that I was merely a magician.

"You, as an English lady, can give me some advice." She at once remarked, "I have a great idea. I'll give a dinner for you and have my husband send the Baron a command invitation!" I laughed and jokingly remarked, "You are not really a Queen." She replied, "No, but my husband is first Lord of the Admiralty." I was really shocked and immediately offered my apologies for being so familiar and taking such liberties.

She put her arm around me and said, "I love you Americans. You are so natural and outspoken."

A little later when she was showing me her beautiful flower gardens and she had me by the arm, she remarked, "You might like to know that the only other time I held a man's arm and walked like this was with George Bernard Shaw."

Any one of my readers who happens to meet Jay Marshall will be amused if he tells you the strange events that occurred when the two of us did a few tricks at the party.

November 1979

Two years ago during a surprise birthday party some of the boys did a "roast" on me. It was a real fun evening and I thought you might enjoy reading what Michael Perovitch had to say about the birthday boy. I have asked Bill Larsen to print his remarks. so. without further comment. here is Mike Perovitch:

On or about Dai Vernon's birthday, a year ago. a group of his magical peers gathered to pay him homage. My comments centered on his development as a performer and are given below.

Dai Vernon was born at the age of nine months. He spent those formative days and weeks prior to birth practicing the dice stack and reading Erdnase with a flashlight. Some say Dai was born in Ottawa, others say Toronto. The truth of the matter is Dai was born in Toronto—it's just that Dai's mother was in Ottawa at the time.

His childhood was quite pleasant up to the age of six, when tragedy struck Dai's favorite uncle Bernie sneezed while gargling and siphoned himself to death. For some strange reason Dai did not attend the funeral but spent the day picking up cards along the railroad tracks. When questioned concerning this bizarre behavior. Dai replied cryptically, "Sill and Out."

To fill the lonely hours subsequent to Uncle Bernie's passing, Dai began to cut silhouette's of his beautiful mother. This was greatly facilitated by the fact that she habitually wore cowboy boots and a wooden hat. From this humble beginning Dai came to personally know and to cut the silhouette's of such famous personages as: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Ullyses Simpson Grant. Ludwig van Beethoven, and his lost masterpiece, King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

Then tragedy struck again. We are all familiar with the famous "mercury story." While eating a mercury burger in a Nee York automat the door came down and broke both of Dai's arms. Soon Dai lay despondent in his hospital bed taking stock of his life. His coordination was gone (silhouettes were out), he had no education, and had never been particularly bright. The only logical recourse was to take up magic, and so he did. In fact, to this day he keeps a copy of his idols books beside his bed—Scarne's Magic Tricks.

About this time Dai was spotted in a hotel lobby by Francis Scott Key, a former songwriter turned agent. She came up immediately and said: "Mr. Vernon, you have no peers: many are better than you. But you have no peers." It should be noted that Ms. Key handled but three personalities in the variety arts field: Joseph Dunninger, the mentalist; Dai Vernon, the magician; and Bozo, the clown. One died. one became famous. and the other is with us tonight.

During the same period in his career Dai released two patter books based on his uncanny linguistic ability: "The Undefinable Wit of Adolph Hitler" and "One Hundred and One Party Gags by Joseph Stalin."

Through the following war years Dai took on a wide variety of jobs: stand-in double for Harry S. Truman. technical assistant to Eduard Teller on the Manhattan Project, and for a time he played the bottom half of Max Malini.

But what about those who say Dai Vernon never had a big time act? Besides the famous Harlequin act where Dai played the part of juggling squirrel, there were others

under various names: "Dai Vernon, Half man, half wit." and in the closing days of the Palace, "H.L. Mencken and the Dancing Chicken." This last act was particularly interesting. The performer entered with a trained chicken to whose feet scotch tape had been secretly applied. The result, of course, was a dancing chicken: and ladies and gentlemen. Dai Vernon was that chicken!

It was at this time that I noticed that not only was Dai Vernon asleep but he had changed into his pajamas as well. A fitting end to a trying day.

Thanks again, Mike! Have you ever considered working for Dean Martin?

Considering my age I feel that I should be content to remain more or less in seclusion. However I seem to continually become involved in many ways. The latter part of this month I expect to visit Bob Weil and Howard Lyons in Buffalo. Then the second week in November I shall fly to Wichita, Kansas. Where Joe Stevens is running a tribute to my very close and dear friend Faucett Ross. Following that Ron Wilson, Pete Biro and I shall leave for overseas. We expect to visit Monte Carlo and Nice, then on to London, England, for Ron McMillan's one day convention.

I feel extremely fortunate to enjoy the close friendship of so many of today's clever young magicians. Very sad to contemplate that at least three hundred of my friends of days passed are no longer among the living. What a pity that they are not alive and able to visit the Magic Castle. Particularly John Ramsay, Nate Leipzig. Silent Mora, Emil Jarrow, Al Baker, Paul Rosini, Paul Le Paul, S. Leo Horowitz, Dr. Daley and Arthur Finley. All of these close friends of mine were highly skilled at close-up magic and would have enjoyed to the utmost the atmosphere of this haven for magic lovers.

When Ron and I visit the Riviera we expect to see Philippee Fialho and his charming wife Anne. Philippee is quite a student of magic and performs many entertaining and perplexing effects. I first met him when he booked me for several lectures in Europe. He also did the same for Brother Hamman, Charlie Miller, and Mike Skinner. He might be compared to our Willie Schneider who likewise is an extremely capable performer and has contributed so much to helping and booking brothel magicians.

Just last week Frank Brooker visited the Castle with his wife and brother. Frank is the London taxi driver who befriended Channing Pollock by looking after his young son while the latter was touring the continent with his beautiful dove act. In gratitude Channing taught Frank his entire act.

Frank was truly wonderful to Faucett Ross and myself while we were in London many years ago. He would call for us in the morning at our hotel with his large black taxi. Then he would drive us anywhere we wished to go. At the end of our stay he took us to the airport and absolutely refused any remuneration. However he said that he would appreciate any advice in respect to his act. Faucett said immediately, I have some very sound advice. Frank. Don't sell your cab!"

Nevertheless I must add that Frank went on tour with a large unit, even as far as South Africa, and did a bang up" job.

December 1979

When I was a young man and used to write to Roterberg in Chicago or Gamage's in England for books on magic it seemed like months of waiting their arrival when actually it was merely a week or two. Now at my age time flies by so rapidly that I can hardly believe it. It seems only a few years ago that I left my home in Westchester. New York, to come here to Hollywood, but in reality it was over 16 years ago.

Jay Ose had written to me stating that Milt and Bill Larsen were renovating an old castle to be devoted to magic, and that he was to be the resident magician. He invited me to visit him where he had quarters on the upper floors. In those days there was never any food served—just one bar serving liquid refreshment—and the early members trying to baffle one another. From the start they had "Irma", the ghost, who comes back nightly to play on the Grand Piano any song requested.

There were several unusual oil paintings—portraits with eyes that looked from side to side. Also many "scary" things such as a huge gorilla that seemed ready to pounce upon you. Also an elevator which when the button was pushed an unearthly scream would be heard and a blonde damsel would come tumbling down the shaft. This item was abandoned as too strong an effect.

Besides the magical entertainment and the many interesting and surprising things, all the decorations and fixtures are in the best of taste. John Shrum who works along with Milt does a superlative job, and Jim Williams and Don Damaskin contribute more than their share by keeping the numerous gadgets in working order.

The Larsens made a very wise choice when they selected Jay Ose to launch this now world-renowned club. Jay had an absolutely uncanny memory. When guests would arrive the first time he would learn their names. Amazingly, if they came again even months later, he would address them by name and even inquire about their dog or cat by name if they had mentioned it to him before.

Jay could talk on any subject that might come up and he was thoroughly conversant with such old poems as "The Face on the Bar Room Floor" and "The Shooting of Dangerous Dan McGrew". He was able to read over colorful material such as this just once or twice and, hard to believe, he could recite it word for word even weeks later.

To me it is a great pity that some of our present close-up performers never had the opportunity to watch Jay Ose in action. He actually fascinated people but never, and I emphasize never, used any stupid or idiotic lines or so-called gags intended to induce laughter. Don't think for a minute that he failed to amuse and produce laughter. He always registered very strongly and people thoroughly enjoyed and enthused about his work. It was the situations that he caused and his acute sense of perfect timing. Also he never made anyone feel ill at ease. one should never say "You're wrong". Better to say, "That is what many people think" or the trite, "That's what my grandfather thought! "

Apropos of making people feel uncomfortable: If one is doing the Die Box for children and the youngsters are yelling, "Both doors at once", when the doors are opened all the poor children who were screaming feel very let down. When you open the doors keep your eyes fixed steadily on one spot at the very end of the front row. By doing this all the children will feel happier and enjoy it so much more when they think

that "the wise little boy at the end of the row" was really fooled. It lets them off the hook, so to speak.

My dear departed friend Nate Leipzig who did such a superb card act created amusing situations that caused laughter. The one and only so-called gag was when he handed the knife to the helper. As he riffled the deck he said, "Stick it in anywhere". He then drew back slightly and remarked, "In the deck!"

THE BEST LAID PLANS OF MICE AND MEN, ETC." I am truly sorry that I was unable to visit Bob Weil and Howard Lyons in Buffalo as originally planned. Hopefully I can make this trip later on. The trips to Wichita, Monte Carlo and London are still "go" and I'll report them later.

In answer to many verbal requests I'll close this column with the well known nursery rhyme, "Mary Had A Little Lamb" as it might have been recited by Daniel Webster:

Miss Mary was the possessor of a diminutive and immature specimen of the Ovis Aries, a wool-bearing ruminant quadruped whose flesh is highly esteemed by persons to whose gustatory organs its flavour is agreeable. The shaggy and agglomerated filaments constituting its outer covering, integument, or garment presented to the vision a surface absolutely etiolated and albutied, rivaling in immaculateness the chrysalised vapor which commonly characterizes our winter landscape. To whatsoever locality, contiguous or remote, Mary's fragrant fancy, the call of duty, or perchance the parental magnate impelled her when not otherwise engaged, to partake herself, this juvenescent specimen of the Ovis Aries could be counted upon with absolute fidelity and entire certainty to accompany her.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

January 1980

During the last two months I have attended two magical get-togethers. The first was in Wichita, Kansas. It was put on by Joe Stevens to honor and host my longtime friend, Faucett Ross.

I have known Faucett since he first visited New York City with T. Nelson Downs and Eddie McLaughlin nearly fifty years ago. This reminds me of an amusing incident. When they drove into New York in Faucett's open yellow Chrysler they parked on West 47th Street near the Palace Theatre. The car was splattered with mud and Eddie was huddled in the rumble seat. The car bore a Missouri license plate. A typical wise New York taxi driver approached and, believing them to be from the "sticks", asked them if they would like to taste some of the city's high life.

This infuriated Tommy Downs. He jumped from the car and said, 'Hey, young fellow. See that theatre over there? Well, before you were even born my name was emblazoned on the marquee.'

During the entire long trip from St. Joseph, MO, Downs kept telling Faucett and Eddie, "Now when you guys get to New York city act broke. What we want is liquor and plenty of it. And stay away from them bird stores." Tommy had a thorough dislike of hanging around in a magic shop.

But back to Wichita and Joe Stevens. Everyone, to a man, was unanimous in their praise of Joe and Martha (Joe's wife). These two nice persons couldn't possibly have done a finer job. The featured performer was my dear friend, Mike Skinner. He amazed everyone for nearly an hour and more than lived up to his outstanding reputation. As an added attraction there was a young chap from Sweden. Martha had selected him to appear and a very excellent choice it was as he did a truly artistic and enjoyable act.

Besides these two performers, Larry Jennings, Paul Harris, Alan Ackerman and Louis Simonoff contributed their most original approaches for the benefit of everyone.

The memory of this event had hardly worn off when Joe Cossari and I left for Davenport, Iowa, for a gathering of close-up workers. This unique affair was engineered and promoted by John Mendoza. Not only has John great ability as a performer but he is truly great as an organizer. All the arrangements made by him were really first class.

The room in the Ramada Motel where the lectures took place was ideal. John had rented a projection machine which threw a larger-than-life image on a screen. No one had any difficulty in seeing everything clearly.

I was extremely sorry that I got up too late to watch Paul Harris. However I am well acquainted with his many excellent original approaches to our art. It was quite surprising to me to see the excellent coin effects executed by a couple of young girls at Summers Magic booth. Sorry I'm not sure of their names.

To me the highlight of all was the truly remarkable lecture given by John Cornelius. Without fear of contradiction I feel certain that anyone who cherishes the real art of magic will agree that John does a superlative job.

A very interesting talk by Harold Martin and Joe Stevens was illustrated by a display of some of Okito's ornate and beautifully-decorated apparatus. This was greatly enjoyed by all.

I must say that during my long lifetime I have never witnessed or heard of two young chaps like John Mendoza and Paul Harris who have jumped into such prominence so suddenly and really worthingly. And before closing I'd like to add that my friend, Jeff Busby, deserves a great deal of credit for collecting and publishing such interesting and informative material. All his publications represent the real cream of talent from all over.

(A note from Don Lawton who types this column each month:) Just before Dai left for Europe he asked me to be sure to include Jay Marshall's name in his get-together report. But darned if I know which one it should be included with! As Dai said, "Jay was there with Lefty and regaled everyone as usual." It's good for me to know that the old boy is still holding up after all these years!

February 1980

On the sixth of December around noontime Ron Wilson and I boarded an Air France 747 bound for Cannes. Ron was to lecture at the magic convention put on by Alain Noel. We had to change planes in London and fly to Nice where we were met by Maxim, Victor and Alain Noel. We had a most enjoyable drive to Cannes, only a short distance away, and were taken to the Sportsman Club Hotel.

Very shortly after reaching the hotel Pete Biro and his bride, Bobbie, arrived from Japan. I was delighted to hear from him what a tremendous hit my dear friend Fred Kaps made when he appeared on the Tokyo show.

Alain was most cordial and went all out to make everyone comfortable. He is greatly assisted by his charming and beautiful wife who endeared herself to everybody.

I was somewhat mystified by the strange disappearance of my friend Philippe Fialho. I sat opposite him at breakfast and had a short chat. Then, I caught sight of him at Ron Wilson's lecture but after that I never saw him again. It is too bad that he missed Ron McMillan's lecture. I was really astounded by Ron's skillful and most entertaining performance. Not only is his work really superb but he is such a thoroughly nice Chap that at times it is embarrassing.

The group photograph of the misdirected mayor, M. Roland Perotto, was taken just before the evening show started. You can see that Maxim, Roxy, and Victor are very attentive with Ron Wilson on the extreme left doubtless rather bored. Pete Biro will probably fill you in on the show in his column. However, I'd like to say that it was a real delight to witness the way Gaeton Bloom emceed. He was refreshingly original.

I was quite surprised when I learned that Ron had decided to visit Italy. So when we left Cannes Alain Noel drove us to Torino I was truly amazed at the dozens and dozens of tunnels cut through the solid rock mountains, and the Countless number of signs directing the route to Torino.

Must state that I was greatly impressed by this beautiful City, and the graciousness and enthusiasm of the magicians was really a treat. They took us to an excellent restaurant where we enjoyed the food and spent a relaxed hour or so. After we left Torino we proceeded to Milano where we were also treated with the extreme hospitality and cordiality that the Italians give so freely.

Having such a pleasant time we hated to leave — however, on to London. We arrived at Heathrow Airport and taxied to the Kennedy Hotel. It was here that Ron McMillan kept insisting on buying everyone drink after drink. I cannot say enough in admiration for this wonderful guy. Everyone I met at his one-day convention said, "We didn't think he Could do it again." He's a wizard — this year has topped all others.

Pete Biro will tell you of the show itself and the close-up sessions. Both Tony and Rovi received thunderous applause at the end of their demonstrations, and Terry Seabrook and Jay Marshall kept the show running smoothly. Enjoyed so much meeting Morretti again, and it was especially nice seeing Christian, and Solange Fechner whose act was truly sensational in Brussels

I felt badly about not being able to spend more time with Francis Giles and my very dear friend Lewis Ganson.

Just room enough left to wish you all a very happy and prosperous 1980.

March 1980

Just recently I received a letter asking if I was the originator of the Brain Wave Deck. Well, over forty years ago I was cutting silhouettes in Ashville, North Carolina. I was just about to close shop for the day when a man and his wife entered with their five children. As I started to tell them it was too late for silhouettes one of the boys spotted a pack of cards laying on my stand. He asked what they were for. After I had cut portraits of them all I performed a few card effects for the children. The father, a local judge, seemed quite impressed and asked if I would perform the following day at his luncheon club.

I informed him that I was a professional and charged a fee. This was perfectly agreeable to him. However he told me that one of the club members was well versed in magic and would probably tell everyone exactly how everything was accomplished. This did not worry me in the least and I looked forward to it.

The next day, as I started my performance, I said, "I understand one of your members is thoroughly conversant with all magical methods. Please refrain from exposing me until I finish. Then I'd be delighted if you would come up on the platform and explain everything". To get to the point, the half hour passed without a hitch — not an interruption.

At the conclusion of the performance a tall aristocratic gentleman stepped forward and remarked, "I'd like to Congratulate you for a splendid performance. Particularly for the gentlemanly way you treated the two chaps you had up as a committee". This is when I first met the late Ellsworth Lyman. He became interested in magic when he witnessed a performance by Van Camp whose opening effect was the bare hand production of a Canary. This was at the Vanderbilt home.

All this just to state that the Brain Wave Deck was one of the effects I presented away back in those days. I would like to state at this point that the idea of being able to push or deal off two cards at a time is very old. Some methods the cards were cut in different ways. Others, they were stuck with wax. And an exceedingly diabolically clever method used cigarette papers. However, all these methods were for the purpose of forcing a particular card using 26 duplicates.

The idea of finding a thought-of card reversed in the pack was, as far as I know, original with me. Paul Fox added the touch which made the effect a miracle—the reversed card had a different color back. Theodore Annemann was the one responsible for the name, Brain Wave Deck, and he also coined the term Double Lift. This latter much-abused move was first used by Cliff Green and yours truly in the year 1915 in New York City. It was this move and a short card that completely bewildered all the New York boys.

Annemann also gave the term Roughing Fluid to what was really called Slick Ace Fluid. And it was my dear departed friend, Stewart Judah, who initiated Ralph Hull into the use of this material—also many of the other ideas attributed to Hull.

Speaking of ideas and effects brings me to the present where Ken Rosenthal is demonstrating something extremely novel in the Close-Up Gallery at the Castle this week. Ken is an electronic engineer and constructed this illusion himself. It is difficult to do justice in trying to describe the effect.

What one sees is a wire mesh basket at the base of a stand about two feet tall (the stand). When he turns the device on, two streams of water shoot up and enter two pipes at the top. However these streams of water are in the form of loosely strung beads, each about an inch and a half distance from each other. These "beads" are each elongated and about half an inch in size.

The amazing part of the whole thing is that anyone can reach out and pinch any one of these beads and it instantly becomes just plain water, but almost immediately it resumes its bead-like appearance as it continues to rise upward.

He can also have the water descend at the same rate of speed with the same results if you pinch one of the beads. It is really a fascinating effect to watch.

Let me be the first to wish you Merry Christmas for 1980!

April 1980

To me it is a great pity that some of the younger beginners who start to study magic get off on the wrong track. Concerning cards: Hofzinser and Erdnase are the giants and nothing in modern times has been written to even compare with them.

First to quote Erdnase: we are of the opinion that the less the company knows about the dexterity of the performer the better it answers his purpose. A much greater interest is taken in the tricks and the denouement of each caused infinitely more amazement when the entire procedure has been conducted in an ordinary manner and quite free of ostensible cleverness at prestidigitation.

If the performer cannot resist the temptation to parade his digital ability it will mar the effect of his endeavors much less by adjuring the exhibition of such sleights as palming and producing single handed shifts, etc... until the wind up of the entertainment. But the sleights should be employed only as a means to an end. GOLDEN ADVICE.

Now words from Ottokar Fischer re: Hofzinser Houdini was absolutely baffled when he saw Hofzinser's card tricks for the first time and could not find any solution of the secrets. I remember vividly how he looked at me when I performed the Power of Faith. He was simply consternated.

In spite of how he was fooled he remarked I worship your work just the same and am thankful to you for having introduced Hofzinser and the ingenuity of his inimitable art to the English speaking fraternity.

Fischer states: No more artistic and brilliant phenomena in the field of modern drawing room conjuring in general and card tricks in particular have ever been presented than those which originated in the mind of the genial amateur prestidigitator Johann N. Hofzinser of Vienna. Under his wonder-working fingers there were born new experiments founded on original and, up to that time unknown principles which for decades were the pride of all prestidigitators and are still employed today in the same unchanged form in which they were created by Hofzinser over fifty years ago. (Presently a hundred years.)

What he produced in the domain of card conjuring borders on the verge of the overwhelming.

During the last few years there has been a deluge of effects advertised and written about stating no palming. How much better to listen to Erdnase: The art of palming can be brought to a degree of perfection that borders on the wonderful. They should be palmed from the deck in such a manner that the most critical observer would not even suspect let alone detect the action.

Mike Skinner Jimmy Grippo Steve Freeman, Charlie Miller, Ross Bertram and Larry Jennings, just to mention a few of my close friends, all make good use of this great advantage. Also the standard top and bottom changes create a much stronger effect than any double lift regardless of how perfectly it is performed.

Some of you younger readers please listen to me. Try to learn to execute any one trick, cards or coins as perfectly as possible. Be very strict with your appraisal and continue to practice to bring the trick to perfection. You will derive much pleasure and satisfaction as you continue to improve. There is little to be proud of doing a self-

working trick. Why not really enjoy doing magic? The answer is simple once a little progress is made.

Before finishing this column I d like to mention that completely existentially I neglected to sing the praises of a good friend of mine. Daniel Cros when he performed in Wichita. I overslept and did not see his lecture. So right here and now I d like to state that Daniel is one of the very top entertainers and has a most Charming manner that appeals to everyone when he performs.

Also I feel quite guilty that I cannot comment on some of the clever Brazilian performers whose names appear in Coehindo Magico such as Najan and Darjan. My knowledge of Portuguese is practically nil although I worked the ships years ago.

I thought this photograph would be of interest to you. Left to right: Joe Dunninger Nate Leipzig Dr. James Elliott Clyde Powers and Henry Huber. (Boy with headache is unknown.) I include this photo because two of the men used palming a great deal when they performed. They did not fiddle around with weave shuffles false counts and trick cards. However they stood head and shoulders above all others during their time.

May 1980

Have just returned from Las Vegas where Joe Stevens "did it again". He has the gift of being able to gather together the cream of the magical talent. Sadly, Fred Kaps was unable to attend as he was seriously ill in the hospital. However, they had a telephone hook-up and several of us talked with Fred, and then we all gave him a thunderous ovation which really "got to him". His tears were tears of joy, I know.

Booked in Fred's place was Bob Read who delighted everyone. His form of presentation must be seen to be appreciated. Not only has he great skill but everything he does proves exceedingly entertaining and most amusing. He added a great deal also to the pleasure of everyone by his pleasant and gracious manner at all times.

Another hit was my friend Philippe Fialho from Nice, France. From all the way over there he brought a number of rare tapes showing shots of Fred Kaps teaching and performing some of his favorite effects. Not only were these shown to great advantage but Philippe added appropriate remarks which provided so much to the enjoyment. Philippe also performed his most amusing to the delight of everybody. It was the first time I had seen it and I was fooled at the start.

On the table he had a soft hat and a large pile of what I thought were the fake rocks made of rubber. However as these fell to the floor and others were thrown hither and yon with resounding thumps it left no doubt that they were the genuine article. At the conclusion of his routine he hurled one large rock out over the heads of the audience. It was the only rubber one in the entire lot but caused everyone to really duck their head to avoid injury.

Roger Crabtree is making a name for himself as a most capable emcee.

He keeps everything running smoothly and his pleasing personality and fluently-appropriate remarks add so much to the proceedings.

When the affair started we were treated to a talk by Jimmy Grippo who had some interesting stories about past times. Then Johnny Paul jumped up to the platform and a dollar bill most mysteriously shrank and enlarged and vanished. No one, in my opinion, can approach John in his handling of these switches.

Joe and Martha Stevens, besides making all the arrangements, also made themselves so agreeable and considerate at all times. They didn't forget that tasty food and drinks are relished by all and there was no confusion about serving. Several large tables were heaped with many delicacies and two bartenders served the liquid refreshments at a bar. Everyone helped themselves and there were plenty of small tables to carry your food to, and the sky was the limit!

I was very glad that Richard Turner from San Diego was there. He gave several demonstrations of his great skill at dealing seconds, bottoms, and middles. I was pleased that my good friend, Johnny Thompson, witnessed Richard's work because John, being an expert himself, really understood and appreciated it. In fact there were so many talented ones in attendance that to me it was a little scary.

Tony Slydini, Alan Ackermann, Paul Harris, Louis Simonoff, Daniel Cros, Roger Klause, and a young chap Mike Ammar, whom I met for the first time. Mike performed

the Chink a Chink ala Dave Roth. Dave would really enthuse over the added touch he has given this beautiful effect.

I believe there were over forty registered from Wichita. Morcom always represents the midwest and does much to enhance the proceedings.

One of the main attractions of the affair was the visit to the Stardust to see the absolutely incredible Siegfried and Roy show. For the eighth consecutive time they have won the award for the best Las Vegas act. This amazing record is more than justified.

Another real pleasure for me was the visit to a very excellent Italian restaurant. Bob Read, Jeff Busby and his beautiful little escort Lynn, took me there for a delicious dinner. Incidentally, Jeff surprises me with the thorough way he has assembled much excellent published material and how exactly he attends to all his mailings.

Before winding up I cannot say enough about the hospitality of Siegfried and Roy. They both attended one of the sessions and Siegfried sat patiently autographing, autographing, and AUTOGRAPHING. Next year he also is interested in having Joe Stevens stage one of the WORLD'S LARGEST CONVENTIONS in Vegas. This is quite possible with such beloved performers as Siegfried and Roy backing it up.

June 1980

Legends, rumors, positive statements—how fallacious they can be. Just the other evening I had the pleasure of being invited by Bill and Irene Larsen to dinner. They wished me to meet Fergus Roy, the husband of Betty Davenport. I was rather amused when he asked me if it was true I used to be a gambler on the river boats!

Much more ridiculous were some of the outlandish statements made in the Eddie McGuire letters. These, for some unknown reason, appeared in the INTERLOCUTOR published by Karl Fulves. My very good friend, Faucett Ross, who corresponded with McGuire for many many years, sent me quite a number of these. Poor Eddie I only met him a couple of times but many of his letters were written when he was confined in the mental ward of a hospital.

Some of his brochures had headings such as: Eddie McGuire; Edward Gilland; Tex McGuire — the Gambler from the Golden West; The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo. The one responsible for "The Phantom of the Card Table," namely Walter Scott; The Manager of Max Malini, for whom he made a fortune. Tex McGuire, who rode a white stallion around the circus ring, performing a cigarette act on horse back.

One of these letters stated that I learned to cut silhouettes from Larry Gray. Actually it took me over a year to teach Larry and he never felt able to work along with me. Then the statement that Jud Cole and Larry Gray taught me unknown card moves which I purloined and claimed is utterly false. Jud Cole was a very fine entertainer and did a most amusing and excellent act. However, by no stretch of the imagination could he be considered a card man.

On the other hand, Larry Gray was a superb performer with cards but used only the standard sleights —palming, shifting and false counting. I consider it a little cruel when I am accused of stealing others ideas.

Please believe me when I say that I always stick strictly to the truth.

At times I may be overly enthusiastic about a certain effect of the skill of another performer. Nevertheless I am a very strong believer in integrity and it grieves me to have such flagrant lies making the rounds. I have only mentioned a couple of these but take my word for it that they are all balderdash.

Many times I have been asked about Walter Scott, the "Phantom of the Card Table." Briefly, Eddie McGuire wanted to do a cigarette act. He longed to meet Cardini and heard that he was keenly interested in gambling moves. He dug up Walter Scott who did a very well executed second deal. He arranged to have Al Baker invite Max Holden, Sam Horowitz, Cardini, and a couple of others to meet in his home. Eddie asked Al if there was a nearby drug store, left, and returned with a couple of decks of cards. Unbeknown to all was the fact that he changed these two decks for two that were marked and punched. With these cards which to all intents were ordinary, Walter, aided by his very good second deal, bewildered everyone.

This event started the legend of THE PHANTOM OF THE CARD TABLE. Charlie Miller and I once visited Walter in Providence, R.I. Walter agreed that Charlie did "his vuork" even better than he did. Scott's livelihood was teaching music, playing the guitar.

Also must mention that one of

Faucett's friends asked Malini about McGuire. Max could not recall ever meeting him. Later, however, he remembered and said, "Oh, yes, one time in Newport a kid by that name got me a date at a hotel and I let him take tickets at the door."

And concerning the letter that accused me of having the audacity to write a book about Malini having never seen or met him; This is truly hyperbolic. One of the real thrills of my life was each of the many times that I spent in Malini's company

THE GAMBLER FROM THE GOLDEN WEST. I smiled about this brochure heading as I read a letter from Faucett in which he wrote: "Poor Eddie. I'm ready to wager he never was farther West than Marshalltown, Iowa."

I feel very fortunate that through the years I have made good friends. Many have passed away, but at this late stage in my life I feel obligated to state that these vicious lies are entirely uncalled for. One of the blessings about having an interest in Magic is the nice people with whom you come in contact. Unfortunately there are a few who try to destroy.

To a more pleasant topic: June 10th I expect to leave for Melbourne, Australia, to attend their convention.

July 1980

I have had several requests to write up a card trick for a change. Having for some time admired the exceptionally clear and explicit way that Phil Goldstein describes even intricate effects, I am allowing him to do the explaining. I feel sure his instructions will be readily understood. In a few instances I have taken the liberty to still further clarify the procedures.

The chronology begins in the early part of this century, with the Stanley Collins approach to the four ace assemblies. In that classic routine, the aces were vanished with a counting procedure in which a Glide was used to allow the performer to take two cards cleanly squared as one. In the early 1930's, Tommy Tucker used essentially the same technique as the basis for one of the most popular of all card effects, his "Six-Card Repeat".

That effect in turn generated new counting procedures. What are now known as the Buckle Count and Push-off Count — relatively common knowledge among contemporary magicians—were at that time virtually unknown outside of the "inner circle". To illustrate this point, there is the story of Dr. Jacob Daley attending a convention in the mid-thirties, where he performed the "Six-Card Repeat" using the Buckle Count in place of the Glide action. Various would-be scholars at the gathering praised Daley for his presentation, but saw fit to criticize him for using "incorrect" handling.

In actual fact, the Buckle and Push-off handlings are far better in most applications than the Glide approach, as the latter involves a grip which is, in most instances, rather unnatural. Indeed, the Glide handling is almost never seen today — although it might be mentioned that its original use as a small pocket vanishing procedure is still quite viable.

The Buckle and Push-off handlings remained little-known until popularized by George Sands with the effect, "Super Optical Illusion", which appeared in Hugard's Magic Monthly in 1946.

In the early 1940's, Dai Vernon developed the following routine utilizing these false counting techniques, with some interesting variations. The plot is similar to the Tucker effect, and is a very entertaining routine which plays far better than it reads in cold print. It is being described here for the first time.

To begin, bring the four aces to the face of the pack. There is no need to conceal these actions. Without revealing how many cards you are taking, remove the eight cards from the face of the pack (four indifferent cards behind four aces). Table the balance of the pack face down.

State that you have removed a very nice poker hand, with which you will do some magic. Turn the packet face up, and display the cards as five, using a Buckle or Push off Count. Briefly: the left thumb pushes the top card of the packet over to the right, and this card is taken by the right hand, deep into the thumb crotch (refer to the illustration). The reason for this deep grip is that it will be used in a variant counting procedure later.

The second card is taken below the first. The third card is taken below that. On the count of "four", all of the cards in the left hand excepting the lowermost one are taken beneath the right hand stock. This block is taken squared as a single card, using either a

Buckle or Push off action. Further details on this technique can be found in many card books—for example, Dai Vernon's "More Inner Secrets of Card Magic", pages 84-87, written by Lewis Ganson.

You are left with a single card held in the left hand. This is placed on top of the right hand stock. You have just displayed (apparently) only five cards—the four aces, plus one indifferent card.

Turn the packet face down. State that you will remove one card. Openly take off the top single card of the packet, and return it to the tabled pack. Say, "The strange thing is that I still have five cards". Show this to be the case, by counting the packet face down as five. Again, Buckle or Push-off technique is used—however, this time each card is placed on top of the one before it. This produces a convincing "snap" as each card is counted, giving audial verification for your supposed number of cards. At the conclusion of this count, the order of the packet is, from the top: X, A, A, A, A, X, X.

Say, "However, if I make believe or only pretend to remove one card . . . (mime the action of taking a card from the packet and placing it on the deck) . . . now I only have four cards left!" The packet is counted as four, again with the Buckle or Push-off handling. Again, each card is taken on top of the one before it.

Continue: "But if I really remove a card . . . (take the top card of the packet and place it on the deck) . . . that leaves me with five cards!" Count the packet as five cards, as before.

"Now, that's not logical! But, if I pretend to remove a card . . . (do so) . . . now I have four cards." As before, count the cards as four. Say, "Only four—no more, no less"—and re-count the cards as four. (You must repeat the count here, to bring the cards into proper order for the rest of the routine.)

Continue: "The funny thing is, should I actually take one card away . . . (do so) . . . it leaves me with five cards." At this point, the packet actually does have five cards. Count these into the right hand, in the same manner as you have previously false counted—reversing the order of the cards.

"Now, you know that if I make believe I'm taking away one card . . . (do so) . . . it gives me only four." False count the cards as four. The order of the packet at the conclusion of this count will be, from the top: A, X, A, A, A. Say, "Just four—the four aces". Turn the packet face up, and display the cards as being four aces, using a Buckle or Push-off procedure as done at the very start of the routine, i.e., each card is taken beneath the one before it, except for the final card which goes on top of all. Thus, at the conclusion of this count the order is, from the top: X. Turn the packet face down. Say, "Once again, I will really remove one card". The top card is taken from the packet and placed on the pack. "And yet, I still have five cards." Here, an extremely deceptive bluff counting action is employed. When you read this, it will sound convincing. However, once you get the knack, you will find that it will truly deceive.

The packet is held in the left hand. The first card is taken into the right hand, in the deep grip shown in the illustration. As with the previous counts, the card is snapped off of the packet. This is very important, as it is the sound that enhances the illusion here. On the second count, the hands come together—the right hand card coming over the left hand stock. Again, the right hand's single card is snapped off of the left hand packet. A second card is not actually taken away—there is still only one card in the right hand.

On the count of "three" the next card from the left hand stock is genuinely taken onto the right hand card, the next two cards are subsequently counted onto the right hand stock, for a total of five. This procedure gives a very convincing simulation of a five-card count. The audial evidence—five "snaps" in a row—adds to the effectiveness. The illusion will be enhanced by performing the count in a steady rhythm. Also, as the count is made, gradually raise the hands to bring the cards from horizontal to vertical position.

Properly performed, there will be doubt in the spectator's minds that you still hold five cards. State, "I will make believe I am removing a card—and you know what that does . . ." (Mime the removal of a single card.) "It leaves me with just four cards . . ." (count the face-down cards singly, displaying four) . . . which are the four aces. Never fails!" Toss the four aces face up onto the table. You are done.

The strange contrary logic of the patter makes for an amusing routine. The actual performance takes less time than may seem from reading this description. Presented at a proper tempo, the effect will not drag, but rather last just long enough. When you are finished the audience will have the impression that far more cards were removed during the course of the routine than just four. They may suspect that additional aces were involved—but of course, there are none to be found, and you have nothing to hide.

August 1980

Have just returned from a most pleasant trip to Melbourne, Australia. They were holding their seventeenth annual convention. Most of the events, with the exception of the main stage show, were held in the Southern Cross Hotel.

Graham deserves great credit for the third time in putting together such a smooth running and enjoyable get-together. He was aided by Louis Corvinus, Jules Caffari, Mike Wilton, Jack Roy, Ian Baxter, Richard Bowington, and the organist Lindsey Rietschel, a real live wire.

One of the many things which I considered a good idea was a magical quiz. Half a dozen of the older members were invited on stage and Graham read off several questions pertaining to the Art. If they replied correctly they were allowed to choose any one of a number of cards on a display board. When the card was moved aside it disclosed a listed monetary amount which was given as a reward. Some of the questions could only be answered by a true student of Magic.

During the banquet they put on a floor show, cabaret style, and all the acts were first-class. Joe ZeAllendo proved that New Zealand produces outstanding talent. Watching this show and enjoying an excellent meal at the same time with Mark Wilson Nani, and their two boys, Mike and Greg, was most pleasant.

During the convention they held several competitions and Ross Skiffington made a clean sweep as he won Stage, Comedy, and "my favorite trick". He is a real stylist and presents his effects most entertainingly.

The second day I was there a group took me out to see the launching of a new book by Ridge Van Der Zee — "Juglger". A large crowd showed up and Ridge-gave a very interesting talk. Plenty of liquid refreshments and food was served!

I had a front row seat at the main show and must say that I thoroughly enjoyed Steve Walker. He is ideal as an emcee—nice looking, witty, and has great personal magnetism and real talent. On this show Loris proved that she was more than qualified to hold the title of Champion Australian Magician. I was one of six judges who made the selection. Young Anton Wongtrakun came very close to winning and this youth, I predict, has a great future. I have witnessed countless displays of magic during my long life but have never ever seen anything quite like the closing act by Krozier—fantastic, almost impossible to describe.

Mark Wilson appeared twice on television — the first time on the same day as the main show. Fortunately the TV spot was in the evening and the show was in the afternoon. In this way everyone saw Mark perform and they were unstinted in their praise. Jules Caffari invited a large number out to his home where he really put on a spread of delicious food with an extremely generous bartender on hand.

Before I close I must tell you how surprised I was when the Pan Am flight took off and after some hours in the air, the hostesses and crew came up to my seat with a large cake and sang "Happy Birthday" to me! Unbeknown to me, Luke Bradley (one of the regular pilots on Pan Am) left a note to the crew of the plane I was on, asking them to do all in their power to celebrate my eighty-sixth birthday. They certainly complied and the drinks were most plentiful. Luke is a regular visitor to the Castle when he is in town.

(Editor's Note: Dai thought he could avoid a surprise party this year by going off to Australia!)

Writing of drinks: during the convention a quart of Johnny Walker Black Label mysteriously appeared in my room each day. All in all I received royal treatment and did two guest spots on television and a couple on radio. To all my Australian friends please accept my great appreciation and thanks.

Must add here that I got back to the Castle in time to see Leslie and Kathlyn's new mental act. In my opinion it is a real "class act" and refreshingly different. (Leslie Anderson and Kathlyn Miller.) I consider myself a pretty fortunate individual to be spending the late years of my life with so many congenial people. The Castle provides everything that a lover of the Art could desire. Always visitors from many parts of the world, attractive girls and interesting people. All enthusiastic about the demonstrations of the Art of Magic.

September 1980

The last week of July here at the Castle was of particular interest to everyone. A Japanese television company was taping a documentary of Shimada. The first part was photographed here in different rooms of the Magic Castle. Shimada performed with cards, thimbles, and billiard balls. Superb is the only word that comes to mind. Every move he makes has a touch of originality. The man is a past master.

A couple of days later they completed the taping downtown at the Variety Arts Theatre. The extremely dramatic opening was the spectacular appearance of three huge dragons from clouds of rising smoke. After they crawled off stage Shimada performed his beautiful dove act. Then, after an interval, he did part of his parasol productions and a variety of colorful silk effects. He wound up with his bewildering transformation into his charming and beautiful wife Deanna.

The show also featured Carazini, Peter De Paula and Katlyn, Dick Zimmerman and Diana, and was emceed by Michael St. Claire. I must state that Katlyn and Peter should feel very pleased. With such tremendous competition Katlyn almost stole the show. Her mime was perfection and brought spontaneous applause.

Of course Carazini (incidentally one of my favorite acts) was as great as ever. Dick and Diana performed their truly original routine beautifully, and Peter De Paula and Katlyn filled their spot to perfection. All in all it was a highly specialized exhibition of sensational, spectacular, original and capably executed magic. I must also mention that throughout the entire affair the appearance of an unbelievably attractive little Japanese girl named Nami added a touch of elegance.

As others will probably write more about this documentary I'll change over to some remarks concerning our Art by the late Henry Christ. These are verbatim from a manuscript in my possession:

Food for Thought . . . Henry J. Christ History Repeats Itself

In the 1930's a booking agent would ask a magician looking for work, "Are you a magician or a card fanner?" For the 1970's only two words need be changed. "Are you a magician or a Faro shuffler?"

Card Table Procedure

Magicians who feel they have mastered the art of card magic because they do a multiple card lift, a card repeat count, double cut location, Biddle Count, and Faro Shuffle might do well to think how they would perform their effects WITHOUT using the above moves, none of which would pass in a 1970 card game for money.

The Understatement of 1901

In 1901, the Prague (Bohemia) correspondent for Stanyon's Magic Magazine reported:

"There is nothing new here. The only act I saw was 'UNITHAN' the armless wonder doing card tricks with his feet. I saw him do a two footed shift (pass). He dealt 'seconds' very well and did the waterfall shuffle. "

How about bringing your card work up to the 1901 level?

From Ripley's Believe it or Not (15th Series)

Marie Therese Paradies (1759-1824) renowned pianist of Vienna, Austria, was stone blind—yet she could play cards and, merely by touch, recognize the face value of every card!

Card men, think that one over! An Unsolved Mystery

The late Paul Rosini, a fine performer who presented card effects beautifully, was playing a night club in the East. One night after his performance he was requested to do some close-up effects for a Mr. Thompson. Mr. Thompson was also known as "Titanic Thompson", professional gambler and famous golf "hustler".

After enjoying several of Rosini's card effects Mr. Thompson offered to demonstrate something for Rosini. He said, "Shuffle your deck and hand me about 15 cards." Thompson took the cards Rosini had selected and fanned them, face up, as if memorizing the cards.

He handed them back to Rosini and said, "Shuffle them again and then place them face down on the table." Without touching them Thompson announced the name of the top card of the pile of 15. Rosini turned the top card face up to verify the "call". It was correct. The procedure was repeated until the pile was exhausted. Of course Thompson did not explain how he did it.

As it was closing time for the night club Rosini picked up his cards, put them in the card case, and went to his hotel room. He then examined the 15 cards under a strong light with a magnifying glass, compared them, riffled them, but he could find no marks! Puzzled, he put the cards back in the case and went to sleep.

The next day he met Thompson again. As Rosini removed his cards from the card case Thompson remarked, "I see you are still carrying my 'work' around: The top card is the Queen of Spades." Rosini turned the card over—it was the Queen of Spades! Rosini never found the marks.

The Lota Bowl Deck Switch

Many years ago when Max Holden had his magic shop on 42nd Street (New York) I was in the show room one day when I made the acquaintance of a middle-age gentleman of Italian descent who said he lived in New Jersey. I asked him if he did any card magic. He replied that his whole act was composed of card effects. "Look at my satchel" he said, as he opened up an attaché case. Inside were several decks of cards neatly held in place by spring clips. "This is my one-way forcing deck. This is my three-way deck. This is my Svengali deck. This is my Stripper deck. This is my marked deck, and this is my color-changing deck." I said to him, "You must do some wonderful effects with those cards—but tell me—how do you switch from one deck to another?"

"Easy!", he replied. "When I start my act, my satchel is on a table. Next to the satchel is my Lota Bowl. On the floor is an empty pail. The first thing I do is empty the water from the Lota Bowl into the pail. I then pick up deck #1 from the satchel and do my first trick. After this I walk back to the table, pick up the Lota Bowl in my left hand, and throw deck #1 into the satchel. Using both hands I pour more water from the Lota Bowl into the pail. This gets a big laugh. I return the Lota Bowl to the table and pick up deck #2 from the satchel while the audience is still laughing. I then do trick No. 2."

"After trick No. 2 I return to the table, pick up the Lota Bowl, throw deck #2 into the satchel and pour more water into the pail. While the audience is still laughing I pick

up deck #3 from the satchel and so on." He paused impressively—then said, "I can switch up to 10 decks of cards. I have a very large Lota Bowl!"

The Challenge

One Saturday afternoon, many years ago, I paid my weekly visit to Gen Grant's magic shop. Present were Grant, Dai Vernon, John Scarne, Francis Carlyle, Mickey MacDougal, and an elderly Greek gentleman named John Rakinakis. Vernon and Scarne requested Rakinakis to demonstrate a poker deal. Vernon handed him a pack of cards. He shuffled the pack and presented it for a cut. The cut was made and carried. He then dealt out five poker hands. He turned his hand face up. He had dealt himself the four aces. All was in accordance with strict card table procedure.

Rakinakis gathered in the cards. Suddenly MacDougal snatched the pack from him, gave it a shuffle and cut, slapped the deck down in front of Rakinakis and said, "NOW! Let me see you do ANYTHING with the cards!"

Unperturbed, Rakinakis picked up the face down pack and said to MacDougal, "The game is two-handed Casino. Four cards for you and four for me." Rakinakis then said to Mickey, "Your cards are the two of clubs, three of hearts, five of spades, and 10 of diamonds— big Casino." MacDougal turned his cards face up. Rakinakis was correct!

At this point MacDougal shouted, "I'll give you a hundred dollars for the secret." Rakinakis very calmly replied, "I wouldn't take your money. You know it—but you do not recognize it."

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Will Vernon tell us how he did it next month? What a way to end a column — leaving us all up in the air!)

October 1980

This is to satisfy the curious as to how Rakinakis was enabled to name the five dealt cards (see ending of last month's column). on the first occasion he used the THUMB PEEK but on his "convincer" he made use of a SHINER, often called a GLIM, and also known to the gambling fraternity as THE LIGHT.

Rakinakis removed his glass case from his pocket and with a small pink cloth polished the lenses. As he did this he stuck the shiner to his left palm, completely unnoticed by Mickey. Please don't think it is easy to use this device. It takes a great deal of time and much experimenting to use it undetectably. Even the source of light is vital because if not considered, "butterflies" will dance on the wall or ceiling by reflection.

Some readers have written asking me to tell a few things about the late Paul Rosini. First, let me state that he was a master showman and never failed to register with any type of audience. When he appeared at the Versaille Club in New York City he shared the bill with Carl Brisson, the famous and popular singer. Although Paul was paid less than half of Brisson's salary he made it extremely difficult for Carl to follow Rosini's rapport with the spectators.

I first met Paul in Philadelphia where he was working with Julius Zanzig and we became the closest of friends. As a matter of fact, I felt quite flattered that he performed many of the card effects which at that time were unknown except to me personally.

However, one of his strongest presentations was the "Thumb Tie". We improved on the method which he had learned from Carl Rosini. Later on Paul was sued by Carl for using the name Rosini but, in the past when they had worked together everything went smoothly. It was only later when Paul became so eminently successful working by himself that Carl brought suit. The shrewd business man that Carl was, he waited until Paul was playing the Rockefeller Music Hall where the money was. My dear friend, Garrick Spencer, the corporation lawyer, won the case and Carl failed to collect a penny.

One of Paul's regrets was that he had never met Max Malini and he frequently asked me about his style of floor show. I told him that Max would often turn to the orchestra leader and say, "Maestro, a tiny waltz." That's enough. No more waltz." Well, Paul adopted this and made it his trade mark adding many variations such as, "Give everyone a tiny drink." Although Paul spoke fluent English he adopted a jargon that he used to perfection.

When he was working at the Hotel New Yorker I roomed with him in his luxurious suite. Ralph Hetz, the owner of the hotel chain, idolized Paul and gave him many bookings. The Glass Hat on Lexington Avenue was part of his chain and one time when Paul was performing there this incident occurred: He was presenting the Linking Rings when an inebriated woman walked out on the floor and grabbed hold of the key ring and tried to pull it from his grasp. With his free hand he slammed her over the head with the other seven Rings. She passed out and had to be carried off the floor. If this had happened to anyone else it would have been "curtains". Hetz was told what happened but owing to the fact that the woman had been a constant source of annoyance to the management, nothing came of it.

One more incident: One night while Paul was working at the Walton Roof in Philadelphia he stole several wrist watches from the customers. My good friend Doc Wagner was there that night and Paul kept getting rid of the watches by depositing them in Leo's pocket.

Later, when they were produced from the doctor's pocket one was overlooked—a very valuable one by the way. When Doc arrived home and was retiring he discovered this expensive watch still in his pocket. You can imagine his feeling. He had to redress and go back to town. Luckily the club was still open and everything ended happily.

A final line about SHINERS: A crooked gambler sat down in a card game. He opened an old-fashioned razor (the shiny blade being a perfect reflector). Then he remarked, 'if I catch anyone cheating I'll slit his throat!'

November 1980

Have just returned from a most interesting and thoroughly enjoyable trip to the French Riviera and Belgium. I had the pleasure of doing a dual lecture in Liege with that diabolically-clever coin expert, David Roth. His lecture and demonstration was a real delight and Philippe Fialho did a splendid job as interpreter. The theatre where they held the affair was ideal as the seats were elevated and the stage (like an elevator) was lowered. This made visibility excellent for close-up work.

While in Liege I was the guest of Guy Lammertyn and he really is a wonderful guy. He has a truly attractive wife, Annette, and an extremely pretty daughter. They dwell in a three hundred year old home and words fail me to describe how handsome and luxurious it is with its spiral staircase, rare wooden doors and marble and brass floors. Guy's wife taught me the true secret of scrambling eggs so they come out fluffy and flavorful. Being my main source of nourishment, this was really appreciated. Anyone who visits Liege should make a point of calling up Guy Lammertyn, a true gentleman and a most skillful card expert.

After our delightful visit we took the plane to Nice and joined Philippee Fialho and his pretty wife, Anne. They also have a beautiful home, high on a mountain overlooking Nice. Both Philippee and his wife go all out to entertain and treat visitors royally. Philippee has probably the world's best and most exclusive Videotapes of some of the world's greatest magicians. I was particularly intrigued with one showing Brother Hamman performing for Fred Kaps. He first shows Fred all his devilishly-clever effects utilizing trick cards. Then in another tape he performs really astounding things using regular unprepared cards.

At this point I feel obligated to mention something that really dismays me very much. Fred Kaps and his friends failed to understand this. Why someone in New York who writes magic books has the audacity to take Fred's publicity from around the world and copy it verbatim. He deletes Fred's name and puts his in its place. This man who boasts that he has million dollar hands should know better.

For some time people have known that this person has a great tendency for purloining material of others, but this flagrant plagiarism of publicity is too much and should be brought to light. Kaps was a superb artist and I consider it very bad taste to copy his praiseworthy quotes word for word and substitute his name for Fred's.

On to more pleasant topics: Guy and his wife Philippee and his wife drove me to Monte Carlo where we visited the new Loew Casino. It was opened recently and caters to the Americans. Every croupier speaks English and all signs are also in English. It is a very spacious and pretentious operation and I thoroughly enjoyed having a snack and looking through the large picture window at the beautiful blue Mediterranean and picturesque scenery.

Have just learned that this month's issue of GENII is to be devoted to Magic Christian. When I first met this debonair handsome young man I was truly intrigued by his knowledge and skill. I would like to think that when Hofzinser was young he looked very much like Christian. At any rate I am pleased that they are lauding him. Magic Christian is one person who justly deserves praise and adulation.

December 1980

The trite phrase "How time flies" is more fully realized by anyone my age it was over eighty years ago that the excellent books by Professor Hoffman were published I can vividly recall the great pleasure and thrill which I experienced as I read and reread his clear and precise explanations

MODERN MAGIC - MORE MAGIC LATER MAGIC - magical tidbits How truly fascinating they were to me

Years later when Horace Goldin the Royal Conjuror, died in New York City, Sam Margules obtained his special suitcase Three of the items it contained were a vanishing bird cage, a pack of cards with a large hole punched through the center of each card, and his favorite book, "Later Magic" by Professor Hoffman, namely Angelo Lewis

Before his books came out there had been a great scarcity of information pertaining to the magical art of course, Reginald Scott's "Discovery of Witchcraft" and fifty years or so later "Hocus Pocus Junior" had been written.

With Thanksgiving just over it occurs to me that some of the young beginners starting to learn magic should be very grateful The reason is that lately there has really been a deluge of material appearing from all over Magazines, pamphlets, books, lecture notes and so forth Sadly the true secret is not just knowing or being able to execute difficult or showy sleights.

The big difference between the amateur and the true professional is that the latter knows and thoroughly understands the EFFECT Charlie Miller, my longtime friend, put it very aptly when he names many so-called effects INTRIGUE TRICKS These intrigue the performer himself because he thinks he is performing some maneuver unknown to his spectators Sadly the whole effect is lost and he really accomplished nothing except his own pleasure.

One of the very few books that shows how an effect really appears to the onlookers is The Modern Conjuror by Lang Neil The photographs show the full figure of the performer as he portrays his effects. Usually books show only the position of the hands as they execute the different sleights or moves one can see how the performance appears to an audience

The Castle is very fortunate to have some excellent close-up workers this week Michael Ammar and Daryl Martinez are two of the very best Neither of them tell any stupid stories or attempt to be comedians They really delight the spectators and do credit to the art Card workers should watch brothel Hamman What a pleasure to see clean, understandable, uncanny effects and a natural presentation Why, oh why do beginners use clichés and time-worn lines of patter? Delivering comedy talk is an art in itself and takes understanding, timing, and experience

One of our hosts, Don Lawton, by his excellent stage presence and charming manner can deliver any lines, however hackneyed or over used He entertains and pleases the most sophisticated audience Don is experienced and knows "the how" to put it over and tickle everyone The Castle is striving to keep up a high standard but unfortunately there are hitches

First, because some member is passed by the examining board as suitable to be a magician member he thinks he is qualified to perform. Unfortunately, I personally feel the board is far too lax with the result that we often get extremely inferior talent.

It is truly amazing however some of the much younger chaps are doing so well Jay Scott Berry, Mark Kalin, Dirk Arthur and Dann Weiser. These young chaps behave and act like real seasoned troupers.

There is so much published nowadays that there should be no difficulty in putting together a commercial act. However, the main thing is to strive hard to make the presentation entertaining. Make the effects simple, uncomplicated, and free from feeble attempts at Comedy. Of course, if one has a facility or flair for the humorous (and this is a rare thing) by all means make the most of it.

Before closing I must compliment my friend Jeff Busby, for his remarkable output of interesting material it is refreshing to read honest criticism and reliable reporting.

I consider myself to be very fortunate to have so many friends around the world and I wish them all the very best of the Seasons Greetings.

January 1981

Last night Billy McComb and Ronna, a popular hostess from the Magic Castle, went with me to the Playboy Club to watch Max Maven. Max most certainly fathomed my innermost thoughts when he presented me the accompanying photograph as a Christmas card.

Who said tricks with bunnies were only for children? Pick one out to assist you!

The following list of 50 billings should test your background. Of course some of them were altered from time to time but those listed were the ones used and they appeared on the magicians' personal cards and posters:

1. America's foremost family of magicians.
2. Honest to goodness I only cheat a little bit.
3. The international card expert.
4. The after-dinner entertainer.
5. The king of cards.
6. The suave deceiver.
7. The king of coins
8. In a humorous interlude assisted by the audience.
9. Chinese and oriental mysteries.
10. The Royal Illusionist.
11. A symphony in silk.
12. The master-mind of modern mystery
13. Marvelous East Indian wonders.
14. My brain is the key that sets me free.
15. Past master of the black art.
16. The magical milliner.

17. Where do the ducks go?
18. And a pack of cards.
19. World's master deceptionist.
20. Give my regards to the chief of police.
21. The world's master mystic.
22. Wonder show of the universe.
23. 'The despair of Monte Carlo.
24. The man who mystifies.
25. The wizard of the west.
26. The Irish wizard.
27. The prince of magic.
28. Magic with speed.
29. The second funniest man in the world.
30. Sawing a lemon in half.
31. The human card index.
32. The man with the x-ray eyes.
33. Magic in a class by itself.
34. The Australian card expert.
35. Magico.
36. The dippy mad magician.
37. The enigma.
38. The dizzy wizard.
39. Merely a magician.

40. The challenge champion card manipulator of the world.
41. The world's greatest sleight-of-hand expert.
42. Futuristic Fantasies.
43. The aristocrat of deception.
44. The seer of the South Sierras.
45. A tiny waltz.
46. past-master of the black art.
47. The Coney Island faker.
48. In a wonderful program of original creations.
49. If you're expecting something lousy, this is it.
50. And his ten assistants.

A very Interesting example of humility took place years ago at the Magic Circle in London. There were crowds of magicians handing in their cards. "The world's greatest" - "The King or Prince"—Master of all and so forth, when towards the last, Servais Le Roy — one of the truly greats, handed in his card: 'Merely a Magician'.

Perhaps some of the Slogans used by some modern exponents of the art might be of interest to some or the younger chaps who are beginners. A clever appropriate phrase under your name today is in far better taste than flamboyant superlative statements such as some of the above listed.

A few good examples around today of Castle members and visitors are the following: "The Enchantress", "The Uncanny Scot", "The Magical Punster", "The Magical Chatterbox "Tricks and Chatter". "The Bane of Ennui". "The Perfect Fooler". "Where Nothing Happens Gradually "The Thief of Thoughts" "Sleight of Mind'. Think about it and try to come up with something catchy and original—make it your trade mark.

I feel very fortunate to have so many magical friends. Please accept my very best wishes for the coming year. To all my many lovers of the Art in Ireland, Holland, Italy, South America, Canada, Scotland, England, Australia, Sweden, Hong Kong, Singapore, New Zealand, the United States, and especially in Japan . . . Good Health, Good Luck, and Happiness during the coming year.

February 1981

I'd like to start this month's column by thanking all those who sent me Christmas greetings. I am sorry that I have to decline when I am asked to mail photographs. The cost of mailing large manila envelopes, etc., make this prohibitive. If, on the other hand, I am furnished with self-addressed stamped envelopes I shall comply.

It really puzzles me why I receive so many complimentary and flattering letters. After all, over sixty years ago they might have applied. Back in those days when I first moved to New York City I was passionately interested in the Art. I had painstakingly studied all the Hoffman, Sachs, Lang Neil and Devant works, but especially S. W. Erdnase. I was amazed that most of the members of the craft had only a superficial knowledge of what these works contained. As a youngster I felt very elated when I was able to mystify these big-city magicians.

Today things are very different. These compliments should go to the following persons I now list:

Mike Ammar, Jerry Andrus, Ross Bertram, Bernard Bilis, Ken Brooke, Bruce Cervon, Paul Curry, Computer #1 and #2, John Cornelius, John Carney, Danny Dew, Alex Elmsley, Steve Freeman, Jimmy Grippo, Ray Grismer, Brother John Hamman, Paul Harris, Carl Hemion, Larry Jennings, Roger Klause, Gerald Kosky, Jules Lenier, Harry Lorraine, Daryl Martinez, Ed Marlo, Max Maven, Jack McMillan, Charlie Miller, Earl Nelson, Harry Riser, Fred Robinson, Faucett Ross, Roxy, David Roth, Sawa, Jacque Sanvert, John Scarne, Ray Walton, and Herb Zarrow. (Note from Don Lawton: As many of you know, I have the privilege of typing this column for Dai each month. He asked me to be sure to mention that, due to his advanced years, he may have overlooked or forgotten someone whose name should have been included in this listing. Well, I couldn't help but notice that MY name was omitted, as well it should be, but this note is to those who feel that THEY should have been listed. We don't consider Dai "old" out here — maybe forgetful now and then, but NOT old!)

Every one of the above informed and talented ones deserve much more acclaim than that attributed to me. I am fully acquainted with all of them and they are outstanding. I have arranged the names alphabetically in order to show no preference.

This week at the Castle we have three of those mentioned: Jerry Andrus, Bruce Cervon, and Earl Nelson. All are doing close-up magic . . . and doing it extremely well.

But why, oh why, do so many magicians try to project comedy in their acts? It takes a certain personality, timing, and understanding to create amusement and laughter. Mal Cross, who worked last week, performed the old time "Anti Gravito". He made it play for nearly five minutes, all in pantomime, not a word spoken, yet it was thoroughly entertaining. Usually it is merely a puzzle, but he turns it into a masterpiece. To my way

of thinking Mal is an actor playing the part of a magician and doing a great job of it. The character he portrays is really something . . . or IS that the real Mal Cross?

Getting back to books for a moment: Some of the older books give unheeded advice. Decide what your own personality portrays. Can you be dramatic? Can you appear mysterious? Can you be a little odd? Do you constantly amuse people? Are you shy or diffident? Are you an entertaining talker? This appraisal of yourself is of the utmost importance. By studying or taking a course in acting these attributes can be developed.

This coming fall I expect to visit Japan again. I have received a special invitation from Akira Yamada of the Tenyo Company. He asked me to bring along a magician of my choice. The fact that Steve Freeman has never been there and many have never seen his superlative work should more than please my good friends in Japan.

I have learned that Petrick and Mia will be starting a lecture tour for Emil Lowe. If this charming couple are anywhere near you make every effort to see them. Petrick does a delightful and informative lecture and if they present their regular act you are in for a real treat! I predict that many of you will "fall in love" with Mia just as we all have done here at the Castle. Two sincere nice people you won't want to miss.

And in closing, another of my predictions: I predict that very shortly Jonathan and Charlotte, his most charming wife and assistant, are on the way to fame and, I hope, fortune.

Dai Vernon

March 1981

Living beyond the biblical "three score and ten" has many drawbacks. I feel very blest that in many ways I feel as well today as I did as a youth. However, it is really tragic when so many of your close and beloved friends pass away. In the last few months Lewis Ganson, Goodliffe, Elmer Biddle, Larry Arcuri, Rev. Willard Smith and Dr. George Kemp are no longer among the living . . . and what a shock—just a few days ago our highly esteemed friend Kuda Bux dropped dead in his apartment from a heart attack.

Kuda loved to play Gin and Hearts. Nearly every night up in the library we indulged in one of these games. Joe Cossari and Hal Robbins, both gone now, were some of the early players. Lately the players consisted of Hy Berg, Ray Grismer, Howard Hamburg, and Bennie Roth. Also Phil Goldstein has caught the fever and plays occasionally.

It is a blessing that Kuda did not suffer any long illness. He had just finished three nights in the Parlour of Prestidigitation and had received Standing ovations. He was so very pleased with the receptions accorded him. Some of my readers may not know that Kuda was legally blind but this didn't slow him down a bit. The fact that, as he remarked, 'even though I am 90% blind I can still do the blindfold act!' is certainly amazing in itself. Kuda's son, who flew over from London, has donated one of Kuda's early scrap books to the Castle library. It is a book everyone should see — fantastic reviews of Kuda's years in England and first years in the United States.

Well, Kuda has countless friends and admirers here and will be greatly missed. Still, life must go on so I'd like to say that in writing a column such as this I have difficulty. Last month I mentioned over two dozen names of magicians who should have adulation. I did not even mention the names of Harry Blackstone, Jr., Doug Henning, David Copperfield, and Mark Wilson.

Names like these four do not need mention. Everyone knows how much they have contributed to make the Magical Art popular. I consider myself very fortunate to have so many warm and congenial friends.

I think that I have mentioned before that if you learn to present only one effect better than anyone else you can make an indelible impression on the magical world. Learn to do the sleight or secret move to perfection, then spend hours on what to say . . . the limits are boundless. However, experiment and find out what best suits your individual style. Then perform it over and over again until it really flows.

When you attain this dual presentation it will become "art" and no one can compete.

I am certainly not an oracle but I have been intensely interested in magic for well over eighty years and have enjoyed the companionship of everyone from Kellar to Persi Diaconis and I feel that my opinion is of some value.

I love magic as an Art and hate to see it abused and belittled by feeble attempts to attain laughs. Laughter born of bewilderment—yes. But not otherwise.

This issue of GENII is the Phil Goldstein (Max Maven) issue and should be of great interest to those who are not yet familiar with his many contributions to the Art of Magic and Mentalism. I have the greatest admiration for his manner of presentation and his all around knowledge. His directness of approach and clean cut effects are most effective. No confusion... nothing to tax the memory of an audience combine to make a thoroughly entertaining performance.

Not only on stage but when performing close-up with cards he executes his effects as well or better than the best. I consider myself fortunate to enjoy the confidence of chaps like Max.

At my age most of my very close and dear friends have passed away. However, many of my younger friends are extremely talented and are advancing the Art of Magic. Roy Walton, Paul Curry, Jerry Andrus, Paul Harris and Max Maven have all written excellent books. They should all be studied by anyone who aspires to become proficient in the Art. By no means, however, should one neglect reading the classics: Robert Houdin, Professor Hoffman, Sachs "Sleight of Hand", C. Lang Neil, and Erdnase.

Background is of the utmost importance when studying any art. Knowing what has been done before makes for a fuller and better understanding. Then and only then can one become original. Strive continually to give any effect you perform your own personal touch. I do not mean the VERNON TOUCH but your own individual touch.

Remember, no one, and I mean no one, can be "you" better than yourself. If you do this your magic will be so much better to the beholder. An effect should be 'thoroughly understood' and capably executed' otherwise it falls flat. It will also be entertaining if you behave in a normal manner with no feeble attempts to use hackneyed lines of patter. The cranky old man of magic" has spoken!

April 1981

Before I write anything else I would like to explain a few points. In the February issue I mentioned over two score of names of those whom I thought were deserving of adulation. Inadvertently I neglected to mention my long-time friends Ricky Jay and Jay Marshall. I hereby apologize. The former is extremely entertaining and has great skill, and the latter Jay has great charm and skill. Besides he is one of the most beloved of the many present-day followers of the Art.

It should be needless for me to remark that people like Blackstone, Doug Henning, David Copperfield, John Calvert, and the sensational Siegfried and Roy not only are acclaimed by magicians and the public . . . they and the Magic Castle are solely responsible for the popularity of magic today.

Lately I have received many letters from teenagers asking how they should start to become good magicians. I am most certainly no oracle but I have had over 75 years experience. I have known and spent many pleasant hours discussing the Art with magicians. I have also read everything available pertaining to the history and development of this form of entertainment. This latter word should be the aim of everyone.

I shall now try, to the best of my ability, to give my younger readers a few hints on how to proceed as a beginner. The first thing is to begin right. What is magic? How can one learn to be a successful conjuror or at least perform a few tricks in a pleasing way. The novice should study the theoretical side of the subject before he begins to practice. He will make faster headway and acquire a much better understanding of the Art.

If you have already bought some books on the subject perhaps they appear confusing. They explain

Nothing worthwhile is attained without work or practice. Again, what is magic? Is it using a piece of apparatus with construction of which the spectators are unaware? Or is it magic when skill holds the audience spellbound? Neither of these mystifies the average spectator without the proper dramatic element. The proper presentation, therefore, consists of more than just the mastery of the mechanical-working tricks. Unless the performer carries it through with the proper manner, gestures, and practice, much of the effect is lost.

This is the point where the average amateur fails at the very beginning. He devotes all of his time to the mechanical working of the trick and totally ignores manner, gestures, and the arrangement of his remarks . . . in other words, THE PLOT on which the trick should be built.

In order to conceal his real doings the performer should arrange his remarks to divert the minds of the spectators. Misdirection, therefore, is one of the most essential requirements in the practice of magic. Gamblers use a picturesque word:

SHADE or more often the word COVER.

It would take an entire book to go into detail about the subject. However, at this point I'd just like to mention that when giving a performance your initial appearance when facing the audience is of the utmost importance.

When you first appear allow your eyes to take in the entire audience rapidly left to right, the front row to the rear. Then be sure your words are audible to the back row. Above all, speak naturally and not as a school boy reciting a memorized speech.

BE NATURAL. If your patter sounds as if it has been memorized, forget it. Doug Henning is a perfect example of naturalness and sincerity. This quality comes across when he performs and his success proves that this quality "gets the money", to use another phrase of the gambler.

Must mention that the Castle was very fortunate to be able to book Ger Cooper recently. He gave an excellent and most appealing performance. He charms the spectators by his attitude, and executes all his effects with effortless and perfectly concealed sleights.

The photograph with this month's column portrays an example of an exception to a well-known rule. In this case the spectators fail utterly to follow the magician's gaze. I cannot imagine any stronger and alluring misdirection. Everyone at the Castle knows that I am passionately in love with Irene but I still enjoy the warm friendship of our President, Bill Larsen. It is a good thing that I am not fifty or sixty years younger. Don Lawton continues to be very jealous!

May 1981

Before starting my ramblings for this month's column I'd like to explain something. When Don Lawton added a note to my column in the February issue of GENII he stated that I was not old but sometimes forgetful. How true—the last statement!

When I listed in alphabetical order a number of names of magicians I completely overlooked the obvious; my dear friend Mike Skinner, that diabolically clever Persi Diaconis, Pete Biro, and Peter Pit. And how could I possibly have neglected to mention the real greats of our Art, Siegfried and Roy? I feel certain that since time began there never was an exhibition of such astounding effects so superlatively presented.

Having just returned from Las Vegas and a visit to their magnificent home my memory is very vivid. The beautiful home and grounds, the numerous animals and two swimming pools, but particularly the gracious and charming Lynette Chappel. She miraculously made all the arrangements. Little did she dream there would be a crowd of over three hundred.

To me the highlight was the speech that Siegfried made. He spoke at some length in the humblest and most sincere fashion — right from his heart. His talk touched every listener and when he made a presentation to the world beloved Ken Brooke everyone loved it.

I was greatly tickled when I learned that one of the huge tigers will not go to sleep at night unless Roy gives him a small toy Teddy Bear to snuggle up with! Roy is the one who is mainly responsible for the care and accumulation of such a family of different animals. With love and devotion he has trained these beasts of the jungle and they have become as exceedingly tame and friendly as humans, or perhaps more so.

Irene Larsen, who truly loves all wild animal life, actually entered one of the cages with the small tiger. She proceeded to wrestle with it and they both seemed to thoroughly enjoy their tussle. This astounded many of those watching.

To list those who attended would be like "who's who". However, three of the most beloved members of our craft were happily there; namely Danny Dew, Carl Hemion, and Ren Clarke. Joe Stevens, who arranged the entire seminar, deserves great credit. All the events came off as planned and I feel quite certain that everyone was more than pleased.

Surprisingly there were visitors from Paris; Elizabeth Raton and Gaeton Bloom. Piet Forton from Switzerland, and some from Denmark and Sweden. It was indeed an international affair.

Late Saturday evening, around eleven-thirty, I gave a very disjointed talk or lecture. Unfortunately I fumbled and gave a poor demonstration owing to an injured

thumb. Don would say "thumb excuse". Until recently I never realized how important it is to have all digits in good shape.

Several magicians who were scheduled to appear at the Las Vegas Seminar visited the Magic Castle the week before. Brother John Hamman had dinner with us and met Tony Giorgio and the mysterious Mr. "H". Tony was in good form and Brother Hamman, I feel sure, heard magical tales quite new to him. John showed both of them some of his superb effects.

Another visitor who dined and milled around the Castle was Ken Brooke and his friend, Barry Stevenson, from Leeds. The latter performed a manipulative card production that mystified everyone including myself. It's known as the Leeds Move.

Must mention that after I had checked out of the room that Joe Berg and I had occupied in Las Vegas I was waiting to meet Bill and Irene in the lobby. Joe Stevens took out a hundred dollar bill and offered it to me. I asked, "What's that for, Joe?" He replied that he wanted me to have a little something when leaving. Of course I wouldn't accept it although he insisted.

Finally he said, "Tell you what. I'll lay it on the pass line at one of the crap tables. Sudden death win or lose. If I win I'll keep a hundred and give you the other hundred." I didn't agree but he insisted. Five was the point and the next roll was a seven. Joe smiled and we shook hands goodbye.

June 1981

"I seem to have created a monster", so to speak, when I listed the names of magicians whom I consider worthy of great praise. After the list appeared in print I was embarrassed to realize that I had forgotten to include several dear friends. This oversight was corrected in my next column. And now I have several more names to add to the list! Then this will be it . . . no more lists! The following magicians most certainly should have been included: Tony Slydini, Billy McComb, Pat Page, Gordon Bruce, Danny Tong, Don Lawton, Mike Rogers, Rick Johnson, and Ron Wilson. All of them have contributed so greatly to our Art, and have been inspirations to the younger followers of magic.

While chatting with Danny Dew in Las Vegas he suggested that I write something about some of the great performers of the past. Many of them were close friends of mine. However, to many readers of GENII they are history.

One of Danny Dew's favorites was Emil Jarrow who featured the Bills in Lemon. Not only was he a superb performer but he was an extremely talented comedian. He and Van Hoven, the "Hippy Mad Magician", were among the top money earners. Emil talked with a Jewish Dutch accent which in those days was made famous by Weber and Fields.

It is impossible to describe how he tickled and amused audiences. My description of what he said and did may sound corny or crude, but I'll guarantee you'd have enjoyed every minute of his act if you could have seen it.

He limped on stage from the wings saying, the kid's clever but he's got bum feet." Then he'd say to the cymbalist (drummer) Hit it, George". This would get a laugh. Then he'd say, "Hit it again". When the cymbal crash sounded the second time the laughter increased. Then he'd say to the orchestra leader. "Go ahead, kid, fiddle". Another laugh and he'd repeat "Hit it, George". "Hit it again."

This was followed by. "Tell me, Mr. Leader, why is an unripe tomato like an old maid?" The leader would ask why and Jarrow would say, "It's hard tomater (to mate her)!" Then the running gag, "Hit it, George," etc.

He would tell the audience that he had a partner by the name of Johnson, but Johnson was sick so he would have to do his tricks as well as his own. As he was saying this he was rapidly rolling up a newspaper with which he pulled up a Jacob's Ladder about seven feet in height. He then remarked, "I have a lot of 'noive' to appear in front of such an intelligent audience and do such a lousy trick. But that's one of Johnson's!" Again, when they laughed— "Hit it, George—Hit it again."

Next came something hard to believe. He did a trick with a dime or a nickel, and remember, he played all the largest theatres of that time. He'd ask if anyone in the front few rows would hold a dime or a nickel in their closed fist. Leaving the stage he would walk up to the person and ask them to let him see what coin they were holding. Then when he tossed it back into their hand he'd switch the coin for a penny.

Gradually he would back up towards the steps to the stage. During this time he was constantly talking. "Are you sure you have it? Would you bet your life on it? Yes? Would you bet a nickel? What, you'd bet your life but you wouldn't bet a nickel! Would you bet a drink? . . . For the house? Hit it, George!"

Then he'd get the man on stage, stand beside him, and pull back both his sleeves. His arms were bare as he had short shirt sleeves. He would remove a sack of Bull Durham tobacco and dump out a pile on the upturned palm of his left hand. As he extended his left hand his right would lower and the sleeve would slip down. Under cover of a two handed gesture he would sleeve the tobacco and at the same time pull back the right sleeve. He would ask the helper which hand the tobacco was in. Regardless of the answer he would hold up his empty right hand and hold the left hand aloft as if the tobacco was there.

As he 'vanished' the tobacco the right arm was dropped to his side and as the sleeve slipped down the load was 'palmed'. Then he would reach up and produce the missing tobacco, pouring it back into his left hand. It was a beautiful study in misdirection and psychology.

Next he did the stunt of knocking a tray out and letting the eggs fall into glasses of water. The "kicker" here was a plant in the balcony (really the spot man) who kept calling out "Them ain't real eggs". Ignoring him, Jarrow finished the routine and beckoned to the gallery and the stooge came on stage. Jarrow handed him a glass tumbler, placing it on the heckler's outstretched palm, and then broke one of the eggs into it. Then he held the glass up to show the egg but it was a bottomless glass! Picture the situation! Then came, 'Hit it, George — Hit it again! "

For his final effect Jarrow performed his famous Bills in Lemon. At that time paper money was much larger and the different denominations were of different colors on the backs. After he borrowed the three bills they were displayed in a fan formation and there was no need to waste time taking down numbers.

While collecting the money he delivered many amusing remarks. Such as, "Why aren't you sitting in a box?" if he received a bill of large denomination.

Previously he had told an amusing tale about Heaven and the pretty angel girls. In the story he mentioned that a hundred years on Earth was only a minute in Heaven. He would look up to the balcony and ask, has anyone up there in Heaven a hundred dollar bill they'll lend me?" A voice would reply, Yes — in a minute!

This account is running a little too long, but when Jarrow, framed in a strong spot light, cut open the lemon it was truly dramatic. No levity or funny remarks at this point.

He said to me once, 'What a fool I was when I first started doing this routine. When I cut open the lemon I would say, 'This reminds me of a synagogue when you see the juice come out'." (Read that line aloud.) We live and, hopefully, learn.

July 1981

Well, here I go again! Yes, "that list" keeps popping up to haunt me— a tribute to my great memory! How could I have possibly overlooked or forgotten John Thompson, perhaps better known in magic circles as "The Great Thomsoni"? This man is not only a consummate artist on stage with his clever character act and beautiful dove productions but at the close-up table he is a knockout! John can entertain and fool you for hours with a pack of cards—fantastic, to say the least. My apologies, John and Pam, for taking so long to "recognize" you. And now I hope the list can rest in peace.

Many years ago, June 1958 to be exact as to the year, I watched a magic convention contest in Hilversum, Holland. Hank Vermyden was one of the judges. I paid strict attention and decided that a young chap named Peter Pit was without question the best act. I told Hank that if Peter was not the winner I would never speak to him again. Peter DID win and I was naturally pleased.

Sometime later Tony Slydini and I went to Quaglino's Restaurant in London and saw Peter perform. He did the dancing cane and the multiplying bottles and registered very strongly with a most discriminating audience.

Peter has appeared here at the Castle in countless performances. He not only projects the tricks he does in a most entertaining manner but he has developed a style of delivery that rivals the best of the current comedians. Peter has good taste in dress and in his patter and does a really bang-up job.

In 1968 Peter hosted a television pilot for a half hour program called "Watch Closely". I had the pleasure of being one of two guests on this show. Channing Pollock came out of retirement to be the other guest. As I recall it was fun taping out at

Larsen's Brookledge Theatre. Peter was an excellent host and did clever bits with a rabbit puppet. Since then Peter has done many television specials and shows, always doing a fine job and being a credit to magic.

My dear friend, Danny Dew, convinced me that most of the readers of GENII enjoyed learning about many of the "greats" of by-gone days.

Leipzig was a superb performer and whether on or off the stage he was beloved by everyone he came in contact with. The notes that are reproduced here are from an early note book of mine and were given to me by Faucett Ross who had obtained them from Charlie Maly. They brought back pleasant memories for me. I hope you enjoy them.

August 1981

Many times I have been asked if I ever get fooled. I most certainly was when my good friend Bill Bowers invited me over on a Saturday afternoon to play a game of pool. He picked up Hy Berg and myself and drove us out to his beautiful home.

When we had been there only a short time several guests started to arrive but I went into the billiard room and played a game of eight ball.

Upon finishing a couple of games I left the room and was amazed to find a crowd of around several dozen of my close friends from the Magic Castle. Strung across the entire room was a large streamer wishing me many happy returns on my eighty-seventh birthday. I consider myself very fortunate to have so many loyal friends.

It is difficult for me to realize that nearly 70 years have slipped by since I first left Canada and visited New

York City. Sam Margules, a personal friend of Houdini, took me down to Coney Island where he introduced me to Sam Gumbertz, owner of Dreamland Circus Side Show.

There were 21 attractions such as Cukoo the Bird Girl, the Ossified Man, the Cigarette Friend, Half Man Half Woman, etc.

The final act was Al Flosso the magician. Sometimes he performed as many as 20 shows on a Sunday. He and Malini both were remarkable when it came to the classic force. And Al's Miser's Dream with a boy assistant was one of the truly great acts of the day.

When the original Ching Ling Foo played the Henderson Theatre in Coney Island Houdini visited him. I hope the original photo of them reproduces well—it is quite old.

Also Horace Goldin and Max Malini came to visit the tall Mongolian. The accompanying picture shows Malini in the front seat of a car and Horace in the back seat. The girls are unknown but Sam Margules is seated on the running board. Remember running boards? And notice the right hand drive. In those days at Coney Island they'd holler, "Have your picture made in a real automobile! "

It was in Coney Island where I first met Larry Gray, the "Dizzy Wizard". He was one of the very best entertainers with a pack of cards that ever lived. Later I roomed with Larry for over three years and taught him to cut silhouettes. We both worked at the Toronto Exhibition way back in 1919.

Continuing with the Vernon Photo Album: Can anyone name the five hatted men in the group photo? (Photo A) Also, who is the cigarette-smoking individual holding the Ace of Clubs? (Photo B)

To close, here are three clever "UPSIDE DOWNS" ala Kim executed by Phil Goldstein.

September 1981

The past few weeks have been quite eventful. Let me say that several months ago I firmly resolved to discontinue all future traveling. I am perfectly happy to sit in the Castle night after night and discuss magic and methods with many of the younger magicians of the present generation.

However, a short time ago I received an unexpected phone call from my good friend, Joe Stevens, who informed me that he had purchased air transportation to St. Joseph, Missouri, and thus making it possible to visit my dear friend, Faucett Ross.

Our first evening together was devoted to a discussion of a number of prominent coin manipulators of days gone by. Actually there were four of them who achieved fame and needless to say the best-known was T. Nelson Downs who termed himself "The King of Coins". The others were Allen Shaw, Manuel and Welsh Miller.

Undoubtedly the supreme showman was Downs who, many years ago, showed me a letter that he had received from the celebrated Colonel Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill. The letter was a glowing tribute to the showmanship of Downs. It appears that Downs performed his vanishing matches effect in the center ring of Cody's Wild West show and received a standing ovation from the several thousand spectators. For the above trick he used only three regular wooden matches. Not only was he highly skilled with coins but was certainly one of the most loved and respected figures in all magic.

Allen Shaw, another great coin manipulator, did the shortest act on big-time vaudeville . . . it lasted exactly six minutes. He used both a top hat and a derby. He, like Downs, did a very limited amount of card manipulations. He opened his act with a very brief introduction, saying, "The dream of a miser. Money and how to get it. Watch! Look! Listen!" This was spoken as he dropped the first-produced coin into the hat.

Manuel, the third on my list, billed himself as "The Master of the Mighty Dollar". In the majority of his effects he used extremely difficult sleights. As an example: While standing in the spotlight he held his right hand high in the air with 21 coins classic palmed. In his left hand he held a tumbler at waist level. He then proceeded to drop the coins one at a time into the container below which elicited thunderous applause from blasé New York audiences. This obviously was not a trick of magic but a remarkable demonstration of muscular control.

Later, realizing the lack of visibility in large theatres, he came up with the idea of cementing dollar sized mirrors back to back. Needless to state, when light hit the mirrors they were rendered visible from literally blocks away.

In keeping with his skill, like the others above, he also used cards to perform one of the most difficult of all card sleights. This was the one hand ribbon drop which is fully described in Downs' book, "The Art of Magic"

Finally we must include Welsh Miller who probably invented the Coin Wand but most certainly originated sundry coin droppers still in use today. Unlike the others he eliminated card work in his act. Also unlike the others he never appeared on the big time. Hard to believe, he would get on the subway trains in New York, nonchalantly set up a folding table in the aisle and actually present his act. Often he followed the act with a brief religious discussion.

During March of next year Joe Stevens will feature Charlie Miller at his annual Las Vegas Seminar. Mr. Miller has promised to discuss and explain effects that he has hitherto held sacrosanct to these many years.

Irene Larsen called me here in St. Joseph to tell me that my tickets are all ready for the Munich Convention later this month. I sometimes wonder why I do it but I can't help myself. Bill and Irene are going to be there as will Siegfried, Glenn Falkenstein and Frances Willard.

October 1981

I have just seen a copy of the August issue of this magazine and was surprised to learn that it was a salute to Bert Easley. If I had known I would have most certainly written a few words of praise for this extremely entertaining and skillful artist. The first time I saw Bert perform was in New York City at the Hecksher Theatre. His act was refreshingly different and he was an outstanding hit. Danny Dew's appraisal of him is excellent.

A few days ago I returned to the Castle from a visit to my old friend Faucett Ross. Joe Stevens of Wichita very kindly sent me a plane ticket and I spent a couple of days in his guest home. Martha, his glamorous wife, defeated me in a game of Gin but I'll get even next time. She and Joe were wonderful hosts, and she really knows how to scramble eggs.

We then flew to Denver where we had a visit with Steve Aldrich and Kathy. They took us out to a very nice dinner and we spent some time in his magic shop where we met some visiting magicians. We then proceeded on to Las Vegas where Joe had made reservations at the beautiful Tropicana Hotel. We both tried our luck at the tables—no slots—and luckily we both won a few hundred dollars.

In the evening we visited Siegfried & Roy at the Stardust and I must say that these two marvelous performers are the most congenial hosts I have ever known. We were with them for a couple of hours and, of course, discussed the next seminar to be held in Las Vegas in March of 1982. A big attraction will be the presence of Mohammed Ali, who few realize uses his fists in other ways.

After we left Siegfried & Roy we returned to the Tropicana and had a snack with our good friends, Marvyn and Carol Roy. The time was a couple of hours past midnight but we had a most interesting talk. Marvyn really enjoys his engagement here as he only has to do about eight minutes and registers a solid hit.

Next I flew to Kansas City where I was picked up by my old friend, Chuck Larkey, who drove me the seventy odd miles to St. Joseph, Missouri. This is the home of El Rossio (as T. Nelson Downs called him.) Upon many occasions I have spent time in St. Joseph. It was there that I met Loring Campbell the first time, and the gambler "Lucky." The latter is a long story in itself. Francis Carlyle used to tell of this meeting—very funny.

At any rate, after spending hours with Faucett and Tuffy we had a phone call from John Carney and the next day he arrived to join us. While there, the Pony Express Magic Club had their monthly meeting and I was a "guest of honor." They presented me with a plaque and a very nice little tool kit in a leather case.

A chap named Jim Holt is the president and the ages of the members range from three to well-advanced years. The three-year-old is Jim's son and he does a single when his father works a date.

Another chap whose first name is Charles (I am sorry that I am at a loss as to his last name) does the best straight jacket escape I've ever seen. His arms are really crossed and he performs the whole sequence in a couple of minutes. Really excellent.

This Charles, incidentally, is opening a manufacturing shop and will build illusions. He demonstrated a few of his items at the meeting and they were of the finest quality.

By the time you read this, I will be back from Munich. Bill and Irene Larsen left yesterday as Irene has two brothers she wishes to spend some time with. They live in the vicinity of Munich. I am looking forward to this trip as everyone raves about the beauty of this city. Hope I get to meet her!

I have a feeling that the last line of the above paragraph was inserted by my typist, Don Lawton. (It was! - D.L.)

Have just returned from Germany full of wonderful memories of a great vacation and convention in Munich. Will tell you all about it next month. Meanwhile I want to mention that I came back to a stack of mail and a copy of Richard Kaufman's new book "COINMAGIC." This is a beautifully bound book of 266 8 1/2 x 11 inch printed pages. Written and illustrated by Mr. Kaufman, I am amazed at the wealth of new coin material. There are sections devoted to the coin magic of David Roth, Sol Stone, Geoffrey Latta, Ed Marlo, and Slydini. The illustrations are marvelous—seems to me it would be impossible to go wrong in learning a trick or sleight. While I haven't had time to delve into the book completely I must say that in my opinion, HERE IS A MAGIC BOOK! And while it is not spinal bound, my copy opens out flat so I can study the text and illustrations without having to hold the pages in position. "The David Roth section alone has almost 300 illustrations and over 30 items. It's the first time David has allowed a large chunk of new material to appear in print." (Quoting from the dust jacket.) Kaufman's COINMAGIC will surely rate a spot alongside J. B. Bobo's MODERN COIN MAGIC.

November 1981

I was greatly pleased and surprised on a recent Monday evening to see Kurt Herfurt and Helga Kleiber in the Castle. They are both from Munich. I met them both on my recent visit to that beautiful city. Kurt performed in the Palace of Mystery and his act was refreshingly different. He featured one of Hofzinser's brilliant effects with a number of borrowed bills and the audiences really loved it.

Later that evening he presented me a very handsome album full of excellent colored photos taken at the Munich Convention. It was autographed by Heinz and Lotte Lurz, Tony Forster and Marianne, Sepp Holzer, Jaro Weiser, Peps Zoller, and Kurt and Helga.

What a truly wonderful convention this was. Everything ran smoothly and the gala performance was exceptional. This extremely interesting week was topped off by a banquet that was greatly relished by the over one thousand registrants. While enjoying the delicious meal a floor show was presented and greatly enhanced by a splendid orchestra.

After the convention was over Bill Larsen, Irene and their two daughters left Munich to visit Irene's brother who resides in a near-by town. I remained in Munich at the Eden Wolff Hotel. Each day I was royally entertained by the local magicians.

I am not a great lover of beer but must confess that when Toni and Werner took me out to one of the largest Beer Gardens, I did away with two tremendous mugs of the amber liquid!

Sepp Holzer is the name of a young chap from Austria who had been interested in magic only a couple of years. He astounded me by his skill and I enjoyed his card work extremely. When I left he presented me with several boxes of cigars and a very nice lighter.

If I ever recover from the back pains I suffer I will make a point to renew the friendship of the many I met by again visiting Munich. I was quite flattered that such a large crowd attended my very disjointed lecture. However, the fact that my dear friend, Magic Christian, interpreted for me helped greatly.

Glenn Falkenstein and Frances Willard were greatly enjoyed as they always are everywhere they appear.

Magicians who have never visited the Magic Castle cannot realize what an interesting place it is. Not only the magic shows but some of the talented people in other walks of life. Some time ago my friend, Jerry Andrews, introduced me to Scott Kim, a young graduate student at Stanford University. He has developed a remarkable talent — the ability to twist letters into beautiful symmetric designs. I have gathered a few, from many, as examples.

These are some of ones submitted by others in a recent competition. Most read the same when upside down.

While talking with Scott I gave him a sentence to punctuate and make sense:

IT WAS AND I SAID NOT OR.

He solved it very quickly and responded with the following:

JOHNNY WHILE MAY HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD HAD THE TEACHERS APPROVAL.

Eleven past participles of HAVE seems impossible. Try it. Answer next month.

December 1981

The regular members of the Castle received a great thrill a few days ago. Billy McComb suddenly showed up after his extended absence. He had had great trouble with his passport and credentials and was detained in England, unable to return to the States. All that has now been solved.

Billy is one of the truly popular members and always delights everyone when he performs in our Palace of Mystery.

When he arrived he was escorting a very attractive young blonde named Susanne from Stockholm, Sweden. She had been an assistant for her father, Carboni and Carbonita. He was the one who featured the plastic bag escape.

I feel very fortunate to have so very many warm friends in the magical world. Next week Steve Freeman and I leave for Tokyo on the Singapore Airlines as guests of Akira Yamada of the Tenyo Magic Company. Having been in Japan twice before I can assure you that nowhere in the entire world will you find lovers of the Art to be so cordial and hospitable. However, to say this is hardly fair because in Germany and Italy the groups went all out to do everything in their power to please. My visit to Munich and Berlin will always linger as a wonderful memory.

Lately everyone in the Castle is raving about the really excellent props that Joe Porper makes. Larry Jennings, Ray Grismer, Earl Nelson and others were tickled silly to get a set of the beautiful brass cups and wands to match. Incidentally, Joe is refinishing my M. G. Magonette and it is already looking like a Rolls Royce.

Last night I showed him my Faro Box and he was really intrigued. It is a "sand tell" and "needle tell" brace box. The gaffed inside looks like the works of an expensive watch. However, when it is locked up everything is devilishly concealed. It might be of interest to learn how this box came into my possession.

Years ago in Miami, Florida, I met a gambler who sold me a pawn ticket for this box. It had been pawned for fifty dollars. When I presented the ticket I was told that it would cost one hundred dollars. I tried my best to get a lower price but to no avail.

A few days later we packed our DeSoto full of baggage and my wife and two boys were to drive back to New York City. En route I parked in front of the lock shop (in those days NO PROBLEM). In my pocket I had ten crisp new ten dollar bills, determined to pick up the box. I entered the store and laid out six of the bills on the counter in a nice spread. I pointed out the window and remarked, "You see I'm leaving town and this is my last offer." He evidently couldn't resist because he scooped up the money and handed over this rare treasure which I had longed to own.

There were only three of this type combination box ever made in Cincinnati over a hundred and thirty years ago. The only book I know of that explains these boxes is "Sharps And Flats". I showed my box to an old Faro dealer and he remarked,

My boy, with that box you could impoverish a Prince."

To get back to what is happening here, I am dumbfounded by some of the young chaps who are coming up with refreshing ideas. On this year's "IT'S MAGIC" at the Variety Arts Theatre a young chap only twenty Magic!" years of age presented magic truly beautifully. His name is Lance Burton. I predict much will be heard about him. The entire "IT'S MAGIC" show this year was really excellent but why not with performers

like Richiardi, a real master at presenting illusions. Mike Caveny did a bang up job as emcee.

Of course my dear friend Doug Henning has already proved himself and continues to excel. David Copperfield, another young star, has been exciting everyone on television. Mark Wilson continues great projects having just done two specials in China. Then giants like Siegfried and Roy and Harry Blackstone, Jr., and remember in particular they are all nice people on and off the stage.

Talking of nice people, Petrick and Mia are beloved by everyone who meets them. They are preparing a brand new lecture tour — everything different. His "Penetrating Straw" is the height of ingenuity. (See ad in last month's issue.) They will be in Japan at the same time Steve and I are there.

Recent visitors to the Castle include Mike Skinner, Allen Okawa, Larry Jennings, Jeff Busby, and my very good friend, Jack McMillan, whose lecture and champagne party on the 15th I will miss.

Anyone who plans to visit the Castle should be sure to visit the English Pub downstairs. It is a genuine treat to watch Bob Jardine fascinate the customers with his magic.

January 1982

Having just returned from Japan I am at an absolute and entire loss to find words to express my gratitude to the Tenyo Company. Akira Yamada runs this remarkable establishment and they manufacture and sell unique products of the very finest quality.

Steve Freeman and I flew to Japan via Singapore Air Lines and we were provided first class accommodations, two seats side by side with no one in front of us. The crew did everything possible to make our trip extremely pleasant. We were met at the new Japanese airport by half a dozen of the Tenyo Company.

Takuya Yoshizawa and Hideo Kato, the two that Larry Jennings and I named Computer Number One and Computer Number Two when we were in Tokyo back in 1969. Both these most likable chaps are truly remarkable and surprisingly Keane and inventive.

Shigero Sugawara creates real miracles and also executes excellent art work for Tenyo's instructions and their advertising. Hiroshi Kondo not only helped Hideo Kato translate the entire Tarbell Course but also created the diabolical Cig Zag Cigarette and Midas Machine.

Keige Takahashi came up with the Soft Coins and Crossroads, both excellent effects and a new approach to magic. Masas Ito is the youngest member of the staff and a wizard with mathematics.

The packaging of Tenyo products are mainly due to the talented Teruhide Sonoda. Also Mitsuo Mada excels in judging the colorful art work and ideas for enhancing the mystery of each of the effects.

Akira Yamada at the helm is the all-around expert who manages everything. He makes all the final decisions and is well acquainted with the magic in all parts of the world.

All those interested in the magical art owe a debt of thanks to the Tenyo Company for providing English translations to the multitude of intriguing Japanese effects. These instructions are due to the work of John Kondo, Allen Parsons, and that talented Canadian Gary Ouellet.

Some of the readers of this column may think that I have been overly effusive but if you ever meet Tony Spina, Steve Freeman, Max Maven, Gary Ouellet, Derek Dingle, or: Michael Ammar they will more than verify my enthusiasm.

I was delighted to meet Petrick and Mia shortly before we left Japan. They dropped into the Palace Hotel where we were staying. They expect to visit several cities and I feel certain they will enjoy every visit. They are truly a nice couple and when they return to America they have planned an entirely new act and a lecture which I predict will be unbelievable.

I don't like predictions but I'd like to state without refutation that a young fellow from Louisville, Kentucky, named Lance Burton, will be a famous name within a short space of time. He is only 21 years of age _ absolutely remarkable.

Very sorry to learn that my long time friend, Charlie Miller, will not appear at Joe Stevens' Seminar to held in March of '82 at Las Vegas. Charlie is without question one the very top performers with cards and other magic.

A few nights ago Larry Jennings visited the Castle and performed for a very select group: Michael Ammar, Daryl Martinez, Max Maven, Bob Jardine, Jim Lewis, Jim Patten, Earl Nelson and Lance Burton. In one of his tricks he solved the Hofzinsler problem of the four aces. Only regret that my friend, Tony Giorgio, was not present to watch Larry.

Jeff Busby, an extremely discerning and clever magician, has made available several of Larry's effects. It is refreshing to read the output of Jeff. He is strictly honest and has collected items not generally available elsewhere. And he is ably assisted by his charming little wife Lynn.

He calls a spade a spade and this is really unusual. I consider Jeff Busby the very best source of magical books. Apologies to Jay Marshall!

I'm very sorry to have to report that one of our most popular Castle members died a few days ago. Poor Hy Berg was moved from an intensive care unit in a hospital into a convalescent home. On his birth day, only a couple of weeks ago, a large group from the Castle visited him. Little did we think that he would pass away so soon.

I first met Hy and his brother Joe nearly fifty years ago. Everyone who ever met these two brothers must admit that they were truly likable and humble guys.

Fortunately, Joe is still very much alive and I expect Joe Stevens is trying to put Joe's book out during the holidays.

Hy was very popular and all the Castle staff were exceedingly fond of him. Bill and Irene Larsen took good care of him and the photo showing Hy and Irene was taken only a few days before he went to the hospital where he had a lung removed.

Hy loved to play cards and we had many sessions up in the Castle library. Hearts was the game we played mostly. Kuda Bux, Joe Cossari, Hy Berg and myself played nearly every night. Seems strange that I am the only one left.

Late last evening, Jamal Rofeh drove me over to his club, "The Body Shop", to see Lance Burton perform. It is quite amazing the enthusiastic applause he receives including standing ovations, considering the fact that he is competing with glamorous and beautiful girls. This is a real tribute.

Some time in the near future I hope to be able to have a photograph of our female staff. Those in the offices, the gals at the front desk, and the cocktail waitresses. They all combine to make the Magic Castle the enticing, fascinating club that it is.

February 1982

It is difficult for me to believe that 20 years have elapsed since I first left New York City to visit the Magic Castle. Just yesterday they held a party to celebrate the two decades of continued most-successful operation. After the large crowd had indulged in partaking of the many brands of liquid refreshments and assorted hors d'oeuvres they gathered in the Palace of Mystery.

I have said this before but if it wasn't for Bill, Irene, Milt, John Shrum, Tom Glover, Gerrie Larsen and Jay Ose this Magic Castle could never have arrived.

I have seen countless magical effects performed here but by far the most amazing is how the people, crowds of people, patronize this unique place night after night. Also space is at a premium for the Sunday brunches.

Discussing the Magical Art: One Saturday I was asked by Diana Zimmerman to give a talk to the younger members, mostly in their teens. Some of the topics I discussed may possibly be of interest to some of the younger readers of GENII. The very first requisite for anyone taking up magic is to READ. Not the latest sleights or pamphlets but the classics. First the Hoffman books: "Modern Magic, "More Magic" and "Later Magic". Then Robert Houdin's books and "Our Magic" by Masklyn. Then "The Art of Magic" by T. Nelson Downs, and finally the work of Sachs "Sleight of Hand" and my Bible, "The Expert at the Card Table" by S. W. Erdnase. All books on the subject give illustrations of the hands only, as a rule. The only books with which I am acquainted that gives photographs of the entire body is "The Modern Conjuror" by C. Lang Neil. This book helps you to picture how an effect really appears to the onlookers.

After you have read and studied these books then, and only then, should you strive to work out tricks for yourself. Learn to do one trick as well as possible. Keep at it until it becomes second nature. Be strict with yourself. Not "good enough" but better each time. If you do this, wonderful results will accrue. Remember if you perform any trick whatsoever better than anyone else all magicians will say, "You should see so and so (meaning you!) do that trick. It's a miracle."

The main thing when performing is to be STRICTLY YOURSELF. Not a single gag or movement that is a copy of someone else. Remember, copies of paintings can be bought for fifty dollars when the originals sell for a million.

Do not copy. Be yourself. BE NATURAL and use your head. A person with great histrionic ability can play a part but few are so gifted. BE NATURAL—USE YOUR HEAD.

A wonderful example of deal presentation is Lance Burton. Superb!

Of course there are many styles of presentation. Both Chris Michael and Chuck Fayne, though totally different, excite and interest the audience. Further, Larry Jennings and John Scarne completely deceive and entertain in an entirely different fashion.

Referring back to what I have just said about the importance of Reading the classics let me quote Cicero, Rome's greatest statesman: "Not to know what has been done in former times is to be always a child."

After one has absorbed the contents of the above-mentioned books then, and only then, should he commence experimenting on his own. A book like Sachss "Sleight of Hand" not only explains many very excellent effects but also gives very valuable advice.

The fact that it is sparsely illustrated and contains many pages of nothing but type should not mislead you. "Our Magic" explains only a few elaborate effects but it is a most informative and certainly should be read and understood.

Billy McComb just dropped in, and showed me a reference to Sachss in his book, "McComb's Magic — 25 Years Wiser". "If to this delicacy of manipulation is added suavity of manner, accompanied by a never failing cool daring, then the perfection of a conjuror is attained."

I well remember over eighty years ago when I was reading and rereading "The Expert at the Card Table" by S. W. Erdnase and studying the Card up the Sleeve which he explains in the chapters on legerdemain. He stated sleights required: '*Masterly feats of palming and unflinching audacity.' At the time I felt sure I could master the top and bottom palms but was very doubtful about the latter quality.

I would like to point out before I forget that if one desires to really enjoy doing magic forget gadgets and use your hands, and, of course, your head .

Another thing: When you have striven for days or weeks to master a lift, a shift, a false deal or any form of sleight, try it for friends. If you think the move is adequate or passable, it may be. Friends will often remark, "I heard it or you flashed it or there is too much unnecessary motion." The true test is to use the move in an effect and if it "gets by" then add it to your arsenal.

Gamblers have expressive ways "Does it get the money?" "How do you get into it?" "How do you clean?" or "What shade do you use?"

My good friend Tony Slydini is a master of SHADE. When Tony makes a peculiar move or a funny gesture he has nothing to worry about. At these times he is doing nothing of importance so cannot be embarrassed by being detected. When he executes the crucial move it is underplayed and natural and he produces beautiful routines.

Stage performers like the marvelous Shimada; the Warsaw Wizard, Johnny Thompson; Doug Henning; David Copperfield; Mark Wilson; and of course the son of my beloved departed friend, Harry Blackstone, all realize what the EFFECT is. Amateurs seldom understand this aspect.

March 1982

Frequently I have been asked to write about magicians of the past. Having been intensely interested in the Art for over eighty years I have naturally known many magicians, both professionals and amateurs. Sadly, the alphabetical list that I am giving mentions only those who are no longer with us.

THEO ANNEMANN—Publisher of the JINX which explained many usable mental effects among other items.

AMAC—Presented a giant three card monte where a girl was concealed behind one of the huge cards.

HARRY BLACKSTONE—Had a large stage show. Sometimes he would stop talking and whistle as he performed which was most effective.

ALBERNICE — Originated the card or coin falling through a table into a person's hand.

RICHARD CARDINI—One of the finest acts of all time featuring cigarettes, cards, and pantomime.

JOE COSSARI — King of card fans. A very colorful act.

DANTE—Had a world-renowned stage show, "Sim Sala Bim".

JOE DUNNINGER—Started as a conjuror in Eden Museum in New York and later became a famous television mentalist.

DR. JAMES ELLIOTT — Champion challenge card manipulator of the world. He offered to meet anyone for a prize of \$10,000. Each would have to perform 10 standard effects and 10 original ones. He was the first one to see the back palm performed by a Mexican gambler in Beadles Magic Shop in New York. He developed this to produce cards one at a time, and the reversal of the cards.

Might mention here that I saw ARDO, the frogman, perform split fans at least half a dozen years before Cardini and others exhibited

RALPH EMERSON — Featured the dyed silk through the hand and the card up the sleeve.

PAUL EBLING—Caused a furor with amazing skill with dice.

FU MANCHU (David Bamberg)- I saw his show several times in South America and New York City. Literally a fairy tale come to life. David was an absolute idol in South America. They even ran a comic strip in the papers called Papel Papel and everywhere he appeared he was idolized.

JOE FRAKSON — had a beautiful act with cigarettes and cards. "Amazing" was his by-line.

VICTOR FARELLI — Authored several books explaining some of the diabolical methods of John Ramsay.

LARRY GRAY—Without a doubt one of the best card entertainers of the time. He appeared in a movie using only giant cards and he actually handled them as if they were a regular-sized deck. He and Herbert Brooks were the absolute tops as entertainers with cards.

WALLACE CALVIN — Featured the eggs in the hat . . . also cards al Rings.

JOHNNY GIORDMAINE — An extremely capable Canadian and truly a great children's entertainer

HARRY GORDINE—Was one of the old school who started Jay Ose and Eddie Tulluck off to do great credit to him.

HARRY HOUDINI — A master showman, publicist and escape artist.

THEO HARDEEN— Also an escape artist. In later days did a comedy turn in the Broadway show Hell's A Poppin".

HENRY HARDIN—Sold secrets through the mails. Originator of the Living and Dead Test.

L. L. IRELAND— Magic dealer and a very talented performer.

BARNEY IVES—A card expert who was anxious to challenge Dr. Elliott but could not come up with the \$10,000, and couldn't find any backers.

EMIL JARROW — A marvelous comedian but also a truly great sleight-of-hand expert. He and Van Hoven were the two top-salaried artists on the "big time".

GUY JARRETT— Created many new methods for doing illusions and wrote a remarkable book.

GEORGE JASON—Comedy performer and classical pianist.

STEWART JUDAH — Devised many effects that are used by present-day performers.

FRED KAPS — One of the outstanding stage and close-up performers of all time.

WARREN KEANE—First to perform the untying silk, and a superlative sleight-of-hand artist.

HARRY KELLAR — The first large stage show I ever witnessed— truly a great show.

NATE LEIPZIG — Opened with thimbles and the rest of his act was all cards with a committee on stage. I asked him why he used the thimbles and he said it was deadly to start with a deck of cards because a great many people had been bored by bad card tricks, and you had to first get their attention and establish the fact that you were out of the ordinary. Nate was a superb artist and really bewildered other card men.

LES LEVANTE — An Australian illusionist and excellent performer.

MAX MALINI—One of my all time favorites. The sad part was that the public seldom saw his work as he catered only to the very wealthy and the nobility. Emperors, Kings, Rajahs, etc. From these he received many very valuable gifts besides collecting large fees.

JACK MERLIN—A feature act on the big time. His closing effect was the visible penetration of a glass through a hat.

(Continued Next Month)

April 1982

SILENT MORA—One of the cleverest billiard ball experts of the day and all 'round excellent sleight-of hander.

NICOLA—Had a much-traveled show. His substitution trunk appeared to be instantaneous.

GEORGE and JOHN NEWMAN— Were both muscle readers.

ONAIIP — Which is piano backwards. Actually levitated a piano, player and all.

ORLANDO — Was still entertaining here in the Castle at the age of 94.

PAUL LE PAUL — Another exponent of the pasteboards and one of the best.

PABLO—One of the first to do a dove act suggested to him by Paul Fox.

DR. Q (Alexander)---Did a mental act.

WILLIE ROBINSON (Chung Ling Soo) - Met a tragic end performing the bullet catch.

PAUL ROSINI — Was always in demand by the leading cabarets and niteries.

SELBIT — A talented English inventor and performer. The first to divide a woman.

SORCAR—Billed himself as the world's greatest magician and was very famous in his native land, India.

HOWARD THURSTON—Bought Kellar's show and made quite a name for himself.

ROLAND TRAVERS—Did an extremely colorful artistic act with silks.

PAUL VALADON — Appeared with Kellar billed as the world's foremost sleight-of-hand artist.

HARRY WILLARD—A very excellent tent show performer whose beautiful daughter, Frances, is currently presenting the Willard Spirit Cabinet with Glenn Falkenstein.

DR. X—Did a gambling expose.

CYRIL YETTMAN — Fooled all the magicians with a turban trick. Both ends of the white cloth were dyed red.

JULIUS ZANZIG—The best two person mind reading act of the d Puzzled and bewildered everyone.

COUNT ZANO—Originated the Koo Koo Stick.

I would say that ninety percent of those listed above played the "big time". This list is lacking many names . . . such as Hy Berg, George Boston, Kuda Bux, Francis Carlyle, Lewis Ganson, Robert Harbin, Dr. Jaks, Maury Leaf, Mickey O'Malley, Harry Mendoza, Okito, Hal Robbins, Fred Shields, Ken Smith, and Zingone, all of whom contributed much to the Art of Magic.

Very often younger magicians write to me asking how they can get Work in a restaurant. A young chap named Jason Randal has had phenomenal success here in Los Angeles as an entertainer in high-class dining places. I shall paraphrase some of the advice he gives in his book, "Magic For Professionals".

When I entered a well-known restaurant and asked about working as a magician I received a flat 'No' The Owner now operates a number of places and I am going on my

seventh year as his company's magician. Along the way I've learned that in addition to magic at tables there are tricks to landing and keeping a restaurant magic job.

Restaurant magic is a special branch of entertainment which can be fun and highly profitable if pursued correctly. For many it is an end in itself; for others it's a steppingstone toward other goals. It is also an excellent opportunity to practice and learn what people like. Also, one meets new people who may wish to hire you for other events.

To get hired in the first place you must have a general idea of how a restaurant can use you. Magicians are useful in keeping waiting customers occupied and entertained. Very often the owners, lacking experience with magic, are not convinced of the strength of these points, so do as I did . . .

I offered to work as a host at the door for minimum wage. The first few days I performed a quick effect at every table I seated. When the customers enjoyed it I told them that the magic was a new idea of the owner, and to tell him how much they liked the idea on their way out. He was delighted with comments and I ceased to work as a host and went straight to a magician.

A number of performers such as Daniel Cross in Las Vegas' Desert Inn, Jimmy Grippo at Caesars Palace, and the late Bert Allerton of Chicago's Pump Room, have all made names for themselves by combining magic in a restaurant atmosphere.

Performing in such places . . . long-routined effects have no place. You need things which are fast, dynamic, and hard-hitting. Time is of the essence. People may be called away in the middle of an effect and you don't want to be following them around in a lost effort to finish it.

When Charlie Miller and Ray Grismer came to watch they were most taken with the fast and unimposing manner in which it was done. Effects which require elaborate layouts or lengthy explanations are out. Lapping is usually not possible, so you should manage to deposit things in your pockets under cover of good misdirection. A Topit' can be very useful, and above all avoid cheap senseless so-called gags "in your talk."

May 1982

What a wonderful affair Joe Stevens put on in Las Vegas! Since Bill Larsen is writing it up I shall only make a few comments. First I must say Siegfried and Roy, those two great artists, couldn't possibly have been more gracious and hospitable. They more than endeared themselves to everyone.

Mohammed Ali proved to all what a nice person he actually is. I look forward to next year when I hope he will show us all some of his magic.

It was wonderful for me to meet so many of my old friends again and I feel greatly blessed to have so many. Seeing Roger Klause reminded me of when I met him over twenty years ago. I was driving from New York in my MG and had made a long journey of over eleven hundred miles without stopping.

I arrived in Amarillo, Texas, rather exhausted but telephoned to Borger, a nearby town. I had heard of Roger from my friend, Faucett Ross, but had never met him. Dead tired I checked into a motel to catch some sleep. Before I showered and was able to "hit the hay" came a knock on the door and there was Roger. He kept showing me trick after trick and, tired as I was, I enjoyed his great skill and cleverness.

It was also a treat to see Tony Slydini again. We sat together during the Siegfried and Roy show.

I have said before that it is extraordinary how clever some of the young performers are today. Lance Burton, Michael Ammar and John Carney to name just three. Who can deny that they are not superlative performers. And there are many others almost too numerous to mention.

I was delighted that Jay Marshall received a Fellowship Award from the Academy of Magical Arts (Magic Castle). He was in Vegas and was the moderator for a short talk given by Slydini and myself. I will not say how long I have known Jay because, judging by his looks, it would not seem possible.

However, years ago when he was living with Al Baker in Bayridge, Brooklyn, I was a frequent visitor. At that time he was married to daughter, Naomi. Al was a very talented monologist and before moved in, Al used to tell gags stories about his imaginary so law. After it was a reality and actually lived with the Bakers these humorous stories were no lo amusing to Al.

Dr. Daley and I often visited Al and late one night he said, I have treat for you besides the usual coffee." We went into the kitchen as Al continued, "My wife made a delicious deep dish apple pie. I know you'll enjoy it." He opened the ice box door and exclaimed, "Jay has ready been here!" There nothing but the empty plate.

I could tell many other tales about Jay. Suffice to say that years ago he used to hitch hike to magic conventions in the East and always carried a Vent dummy under his arm. Dr. Daley used to see him seated in the lobby of the hotel and ask him if he had a room. Jay would reply that he was in his room—the lobby. Everyone knew and liked this kid and still do.

After returning to Hollywood and the Castle I spent one of the most interesting weeks of my long life. The reason was because of the visit of Ascanio and Tamariz from Spain who I first met in Vegas. Anyone who dabbles with cards has heard of the

Ascanio spread but I never realized what an excellent move it is until I saw it executed by this master. He was most gracious about performing and delighted all who witnessed his work.

Then his friend, Tamariz, absolutely puzzled and mystified everyone with his truly marvelous card handling. No one had the slightest idea how he accomplished some of his really remarkable effects. In well over eighty years I was never so completely deceived. Another tall young Spaniard with them (and whose name I am not sure of) is an adept handler of playing cards. Luke McKissick was absolutely bowled over with their work and is still raving about it.

And during the same week Jean Pierre from Switzerland did a very pleasing show in our Close-Up Gallery. He is in charge of planning this year's F.I.S.M. Convention and has been over here for a couple of months arranging talent. He left a day ago to play for a week in a new club in Sacramento. Bob Brown, who has befriended so many and has been a great booster for magic, arranged Jean's booking. Bob has been booked to do his unique levitation at the F.I.S.M.

I feel very guilty for not having written to Joseph K. Smidt to thank him for his excellent treatise on cards. Also Eugene Burger for his most informative booklet which has valuable advice. And again I greatly appreciated receiving Roy Walton's new book full of valuable information.

To my readers, please do not request any photographs because I do not have a single one available at the present time. Sorry.

Talking of photos, Gary Ouellet of Quebec sent me a large stack of colored shots taken while we were in Japan with Tony Spina and Steve Freeman. I hereby thank Gary very much, and Steve was greatly pleased also. I cannot possibly say enough in praise for Yamada and all the other Japanese magicians who have been so kind and generous.

June 1982

At my age I like to relax and take things easy. However, for some reason or other I become involved and jump hither and thither. Just a short time ago I flew to Kansas City and traveled to St. Joseph, Missouri, to attend the testimonial to my long time friend, Faucett Ross.

Few people realize that he was truly a pioneer in the so-called trade show performances. Faucett formerly worked in Wichita for the Wichita Beacon newspaper. He decided he would enjoy life more following his hobby of prestidigitation.

The Rainbow Bread Company used to have sales meetings periodically but had difficulty in getting the salesmen to attend. Faucett sold them the idea of giving a sales talk combined with a demonstration of the Magical Art. This proved quite successful and the attendance improved greatly. During this period he also worked many fairs and also put on late-hour spook shows which proved to be very popular.

I first met Faucett over fifty years ago when he visited New York City with T. Nelson Downs and Eddie McLaughlin. Through the years I have, on many occasions, visited him at his home in St. Joseph. He has helped and given sound advice to many of today's clever magicians. Albert Goshman, John Carney, Roger Klause and Charlie Miller will all attest to this. The latter two were at the recent event held in Faucett's honor. Albert had a touch of the flu or otherwise would most certainly have been there.

The affair was held at the Ramada Inn and lasted three days. The above-mentioned Carney, Klause and Miller all performed and C. W. Stamford provided additional excellent entertainment from some of the local chaps and others from Kansas City. I was particularly impressed by meeting young David Sandy who is planning a get-together of stars later in 1983. Also I was greatly tickled by a youngster named Mathew Fenn, only nine years old, who showed great promise with coins and cards. Jim Holt also has a very young son who performs professionally. Jim is the founder of the Pony Express Magic Club in St. Joseph.

I more than appreciate the hospitality extended to me by everyone and it will always be a reminder of a pleasant memory. I was looking forward to meeting my two St. Louis friends, Phil Craig and Joe Scott on this trip, but neither were able to attend. Joe Scott mailed a long list of names of past magicians for me to comment about. However, space only allows for a very limited number of these.

JOHN MULHOLLAND. He was a teacher at the Horace Mann School in New York who took over the job as Editor of The Sphinx after Dr. Wilson left. John put on an interesting show and featured a trick of tearing a pack of cards into three parts and then shuffling each section. Any card was called and he instantly named three numbers, such as five, 18, and 21, and then counted down in each portion and found the three matching pieces. Off the chosen card.

CORTINI. He was a German and I caught his act at the Palace in New York. His newspaper tear has never been equaled. The reason being that he did not "fold" the paper . . . just tore it up naturally with pieces jutting out in all directions . . . then a shake and restoration. He also would light a narrow strip of paper and the ashes floated

upward three or four feet and as they descended he reached up and pulled out the Restored strip.

He also made a tumbler penetrate his knee but his feature was coins. At the finish of his act hundreds of silvered coins (cardboard) showered out of large "Horns of Plenty". Many of these coins fell off stage and were picked up as souvenirs. They had his profile and name printed on them.

ALLEN SHAW. During his time there were three other coin workers: T. Nelson Downs, Welsh Miller and Manuel. Shaw had a real "class act", all coins and a few cards. His opening remarks were, "The dream of a miser—money and how to get it. Watch, look, listen." He did the briefest act on the big time—six minutes in duration.

ARTHUR LLOYD. Years ago in Australia he did a card act featuring pulling out from his pocket any card called for. At one performance someone called "The Fifteen of Spades" —everyone laughed. This gave him an idea. He made up a special card with 15 spots and had the spotlight operator call it out each show.

From this beginning he started collecting every conceivable kind of card. Post cards, Christmas cards, birthday cards, "Keep Off the Grass" cards—on and on. He wound up with over seventy thousand cards of every description. Of course he did not carry all these but would select those appropriate to the place he was working.

His finish was a plant who would call out "a shirt card" and Arthur would reach behind his head and pull one out! One time in Cincinnati, Ohio, I was in the audience unbeknown to him and I called out "a silhouette card". Immediately he pulled one out and said, "Silhouette by Vernon"!

July 1982

When I opened the May issue of GENII I was really startled to see the photograph of Mohammed Ali and myself. Never realized that I was such a decrepit old codger. At any rate, I feel very blessed to be in good physical shape and to have so many wonderful friends in magic.

Very soon I shall be 88 years of age, and I more than appreciate how thoughtful and considerate my friends are. Bill Bowers truly astounds me. Why, please tell me, should he plan on "going all out" and giving a large party for me? I am deeply moved by this but I feel nonplussed. But Bill is always doing nice things like this just out of the goodness of his heart.

A few nights ago I had quite an argument with my dear friend, Larry Jennings. I told him a few lines I was going to run in this column . . . stating that the manipulative side of magic, i.e., skill and dexterity, occupy a very ordinary position and only as an intellectual pursuit can it claim to be regarded as Art. It would be wrong to imagine that the Art of Magic is represented by "sleights" and "fakes". Such devices only constitute a branch, a very insignificant branch, of mechanical handicraft and absolutely nothing more.

Larry contended that the tools are all-important and claimed that a great painter could not create a masterpiece without brushes and pigment. Right, but how many hordes of others have these same "tools" and never produce anything but copies and crudities? Tony Giorgio, well-known to card lovers, agrees one hundred percent with me.

True Art is the creation of something original, something that appeals to the imagination. I cannot too strongly suggest to young readers to strive to be "original". Never, and I mean NEVER, copy anyone else. Remember, effects are very limited but the presentation of effects can be varied in countless numbers of ways.

Finding a chosen card can be done with literally thousands of variations. The many ways of selecting it, and how and where it is reproduced or discovered. Think about it . . . work out your own little "brain child". Then it will be your very own original presentation and not a trite copy.

During my long life I have known many excellent performers and without exception the successful ones all had original touches to their effects. For instance, take Van Hoven, the famous comedy magician. He was an extremely mediocre performer and seldom got any engagements. However on one occasion the Columbia Theatre in New York was short an act and called him up to hurry over to fill the spot.

In his hurry and excitement he put on two different colored socks and grabbed up his several suit cases of equipment and rushed over to the theatre.

Although he did a single act he worked in "two" and carefully set up his two tables. He had all manner of tubes, boxes, feather flowers and what not. He was standing in I he wings and the manager said, "You're on. Don't you hear them playing your music?"

Poor Van Hoven was shaking like a leaf and scared stiff. Remember, he'd never in his life been in a theatre in front of a live audience. At any rate the stage manager gave him a shove and said, "Get out there !"

He tripped and fell, knocking over one of his tables. Backing up he knocked over the other table. Everything was scattered over the stage . . . a total catastrophe. He started to cry and told the audience he couldn't do his act because everything was ruined. He glanced down and noticed that he had odd socks, one tan, one black. He cried and said, "Look, I even have wrong socks on. Everything has gone wrong."

During this fiasco the audience was convulsed with laughter and from the wings came the words, "Stay out there. You're killing them!" Well anyway, this pure accident was how he really stumbled into a completely original presentation and became one of the highest-paid acts on the big time.

Another different act was Claude Goldin. An extremely pompous big guy in a dress suit came on stage asserting that he was the world's greatest card manipulator. He then proceeded to do a very obvious color change with a deck of cards. A rustic, farmerish type of person (Claude Goldin) in the front row laughed out loud and made funny comments. The fellow on stage got into an argument with him and challenged him to come on stage if he could do better.

Claude climbed to the stage and when he was handed the cards he gave them a quick riffle. When the big fellow asked what he was doing Claude replied, "Counting them. There are 53. You must have a joker!" Then when he was told that nobody could count that rapidly he responded, "Ask the audience to name any amount." If someone called a number, Claude immediately handed the requested number in a packet to the embarrassed so called magician.

He would follow this by feeling the spots on the cards in order to name them. He would do this with his back to the audience and with the cards behind his back facing the audience. It was quite amusing when someone would ask him to find say, the five of spades. He would feel the four corners with his fingers and then shake his head as he apparently felt no spot in the center because the card would be a four. This is just a glimmering of the whole act and space does not allow full details. But it was very original.

August 1982

Magicians and lovers of magic from all over the world owe the greatest of thanks and unstinted praise for those who gathered together such an array of talent. I am speaking of Willy Peter, the president; C. V. Rochat; Maurice Pierre and Paul-Tene Martin, assisted by over a dozen others who put together this year's outstanding F.I.S.M. Convention.

Bill Larsen will be reviewing the events so I shall only make a few comments. When our Castle tour made its first stop in London several of us visited Hyde Park to listen to the voluble speakers. There were so many of them that Luke McKissack could not find an available soap box. I'm sure if he had he would have drawn the largest crowd.

In the evening we visited the Magic Circle and were delighted when "our own" (as we call him) Billy McComb acted as emcee. Allen Saxton, one of my favorite performers, was outstanding. I was delightfully surprised to meet Roy Walton who had come down from Scotland. Also to see Francis White and Fred Robinson both in fine form. We were all saddened that Ken Brooke was in the hospital. He is greatly beloved by everyone.

When we arrived in Rome the Italians had just defeated Brazil in the soccer game. The excitement was indescribable.

Unfortunately while in Rome at the get-together, Silvan poured me very plentiful and generous glasses of Scotch and I fell asleep and missed some of the proceedings. Silvan gave a party at his beautiful home. He has a magnificent collection of books and posters. He also performed a marvelous trick for everyone.

When we left by Parlour car for Lausanne we were struck by the beautifully-groomed farm land. So orderly, fresh and clean. Switzerland excels in cleanliness and is a veritable wonderland.

I agree with Gerald Kosky that we witnessed such a great number of acts and met so many wonderful friends and new faces at the convention that we were nonplussed. For this reason it all seems like a strange dream.

It came as no surprise to me when Lance Burton won the Grand Prix. Or when Mike Ammar won the Close-Up competition. My friend, Daryl, won by one-half a point. Jose Carrol was just nosed out. He and the other two magicians, Ascanio and Tamariz, are absolutely incredible and extremely likable chaps.

Richard Ross invited us to his home for drinks and sandwiches. Everyone present received a copy of his new book on the Linking Rings. This is a very handsomely-bound book with excellent illustrations and lucid instructions.

Although everything involved magic we had the chance to see Jimmy Connor win the tennis tournament on television. This was really a thrill.

While in Lausanne we took a trip to the top of the Alps. The highest peak could only be reached by foot. Bill Bowers and Milt Larsen and little Mariko were the only ones who climbed to the summit. The view from a height of nearly two miles was

absolutely breathtaking. Never before during my long life have I seen anything to compare with it.

A few days after returning to Hollywood Bill Bowers, who amazes everyone by his generosity and thoughtfulness, drove Chris Michaels and his wife, Evelyn; Judy Dolan; and myself to San Diego to attend Richard Turner's wedding. There were nearly 150 guests at the church wedding. Afterwards Richard and his bride, Janalee, were driven in a 1929 Ford adorned with streamers to the boat, the Reuben E. Lee. This boat is anchored at the dock and has three decks. They serve three different priced meals on board — \$20.00, \$50.00, and \$100.00. The top deck, the most expensive, is truly elegant and the food the finest obtainable.

From the church everyone congregated on the second deck where all manner of food and drinks was served and they had an orchestra providing music for dancing. Richard is steadily employed here and performs every evening from six until ten o'clock.

I do not think that anyone in the entire world can do some of the things he does with cards and coins. Furthermore, he has many admiring friends because of his modesty, fairness, and honesty. I was honored by being the best man at his wedding and I shall never forget this most eventful occasion.

In closing I want to thank each of my many friends who contributed toward the purchase of a deluxe color television set for my 88th birth day. Chris Michaels made the selection and he came up with one of the most advanced sets I have ever seen. I am looking forward to many hours of television enjoyment thanks to all of you!

September 1982

I feel sure that all lovers of the Magic Art are delighted that Lance Burton won the Grand Prix at the FISM. Few realize that among the multitude of variety acts extremely few perform without some form of audience participation. Norm Nielsen, Channing Pollock, Carazini, Ballentine, and in days past T. Nelson Downs, Allen Shaw, and Manuel, are a select few who worked alone without any outside help.

Nate Leipzig invited a committee on the stage. Wallace Galvin had a boy come up to hold a hat as he produced egg after egg. Jud Cole had a cute girl and boy up during his act. At the finish he'd say, "Bobby, give Mary your arm and lead her back to her seat." As the two left the stage and walked down the center aisle the orchestra played the Wedding March . . . very effective.

Even the greatest of all comedy magicians, Van Hoven, had two bedraggled boys to hold the huge block of ice.

Then, of course, the ones who work with a pretty girl assistant Marvyn Roy and Carol, Shimada and Deanna, Johnny Thompson and Pam, Petrick and Mia, Mark Wilson and Nani, Dick Zimmerman and Diana, Virgil and Julie, and Blackstone and Gay. And three greats from the past: Cardini and Swan, Tenkai and Okinu, and Henry Clive and Mary Sturgess . . . the latter was claimed to be the most beautiful girl in vaudeville.

All the above-mentioned are or were married couples!

A short time ago I heard from the grapevine that I failed to write about the magicians from New York and favored ones from the West Coast. I hereby apologize but anyone will agree that the Magic Castle is the Mecca and nearly everyone known to magic has visited this now world famous meeting place.

It is difficult for me to realize that 50 many of my intimate friends have passed away. These from New York alone: Annemann, Ted Arnold, Al Altman, Al Baker, Roy Benson, Al Bernice, Cardini, Henry Christ, Paul Carlton, Dunninger, Dell O'Dell, Ducrot, Berard Ernst, Eggers, Flosso, Frakson, Wallace Galvin, Cliff Green, Harry Green, Theo Hardeen, Houdini, George Jaxon, Emil Jarrow, Guy Jarrett, Warren Keane, Kellar, Fred Keating, Kaldah, Nate Leipzig, Max Malini, Jack Merlin, Harry Mendoza, Sam Margules, John Newman, George Newman, Nicola, Paul Le Paul, Paul Poole, Rullman, Paul Rosini, Carl Rosini, Bob Sherman, Roland Travers, Thurston, Velma, Bill Williston, Wobensmith, and Louis Zingone.

The above have come instantly to mind and with very few exceptions they were all close friends of mine.

Happily New York still has very well-known and extremely clever, still very much alive performers: Harry Lorraine, Ken Krensel, David Roth, Frank Garcia, Paul Curry, Harvey Rosenthal, Judge Starke, Dr. Fries, Dave Lederman, Sam Schwartz, Ed Levy, and the world famous Slydini.

Of course the large city of Chicago has a true giant; Ed Marlo. It is truly amazing the quantity and quality of his very numerous contributions to the literature of magic.

Before I wind up this column I must express my thanks to all those who contributed towards the purchase of the expensive Zenith television set. This was most certainly an

entirely unexpected most handsome gift. This set is equipped with a space telephone . . . the very latest type.

While the set is turned on to any one of the numerous programs a yellow light flashes and a buzzing sound is heard. When this occurs it is a signal that someone is calling on the telephone. It makes no difference where you are seated at the time if you have the remote control handy. Simply press the button marked 'telephone' and the buzzing shuts off and is replaced by the voice of the caller coming from the screen.

As a matter of fact you can be in a different room, yet the caller can clearly hear your voice without increasing the volume.

I would also like to let all those who attended my recent birthday party to know that Bill Bowers was completely responsible for the entire party. Excellent food and drinks. He also went to the great expense of having made the special boxes of playing cards which everyone of the roughly three hundred and fifty guests received.

A few days later our President, Bill Larsen, further honored me with another party at the Variety Arts dining room. This was entirely unexpected by me. I was greatly flattered that such a crowd showed up. This was an entirely different type of party. While everyone was feasting there was continuous entertainment on the stage.

A very attractive girl named Victoria Jackson acted as emcee and part of her very clever routine consisted of a comical poem about myself, written by Milt Larsen.

At one point she sang "I flip over Dai Vernon" and to the amazement of everyone she suddenly did a beautiful back flip! She used this as a running gag and caused great amusement.

Later I was ushered onto the stage and was crowned with a type of turban and an ornamental shawl. Then a most alluring belly dancer wiggled with the closest proximity. This seemed to greatly tickle the crowd . . . how about me???

Also a very entertaining feature was put on by Johnny Thompson and John Carney who both did imitations of the "cranky old man of magic" .

During the affair there were countless numbers of inflated balloons floating around that were provided by Bill Bowers and were inscribed "Happy 88th Dai Vernon". I am very grateful and thank everyone.

October 1982

Steve Freeman and I have just returned from a flight transversing the entire continent. Our destination was St. John's, Newfoundland. What a delight and beautiful city it is. As a boy when I lived in Ottawa, Canada, I always pictured St. John's as a small fishing village by the ocean. How mistaken I was. It is actually one of the most picturesque thriving towns I have ever visited.

I never realized that it is the very oldest city on the North American continent. Most people know that the first wireless message broadcast to Europe by Marconi, the inventor, was sent from a tower by the Oceanside.

The scenic beauty is truly wonderful and it is a real delight to walk around by the harbor. It is the largest natural harbor in the entire world and one sees many ships anchored. Huge Russian ships down to tiny fishing craft from foreign shores.

Our purpose in making this long flight was to make some video tapes for Hans Zahn. We were met there by Mike Ammar and Gary Oeullet. Gary flew there from Quebec where he lives and Mike came up from West Virginia via New York.

Each day for several hours the four of us sat at a table under strong lights. Two expert cameramen shot pictures from all angles. Hans at the same time recorded the sound. The last evening of our session they invited an audience to attend and we each performed without an exposing (I hope!) .

All in all Steve and I really enjoyed the trip and to top it off we had a real treat on our return trip. We had a nine hour stop-over in Toronto and very fortunately I was able to get in touch with a very good friend, Willis Kenney. He is a true expert with the pasteboards and he invited us to his home. He and Steve had

quite a time performing for each other.

Yours truly thoroughly enjoyed his hospitality and I met there a most charming enchantress named Maureen. Also while there we called our mutual friend, Ross Bertram, who is preparing another book which I predict will be a best seller.

The past month and a half has been most eventful. Bill Bowers, our president, Bill Larsen, and the girl of my dreams who happens to be married to Larsen, all flew to Oakland to visit Dr. Albo. I had never seen his vast and extraordinary collection of magical props. In his large spacious home the entire upper floors just teem with countless numbers of elegant and expensive properties. One room is devoted entirely to Okito's effects and is most complete.

Needless to say we spent several hours enjoying viewing the various items. Dr. Albo is thoroughly conversant with every item and makes the showing of everything most enjoyable and interesting. His charming wife, Marjorie, lends the finishing touch to everything.

Everyone knows that Dr. Albo is a noted surgeon but those who haven't met him personally do not know what a true gentleman he is. Never pompous or aloof but most considerate and understanding to everyone he meets.

A few days before we visited the doctor my friend, Bob Brown, very kindly sent me a couple of tickets to the Festival of the Arts. This is an annual affair and most

extraordinary. In a large framed enclosure real people in appropriate costume pose to portray great paintings. They are amazingly realistic and though each "painting" remains in view for a full minute or so, one cannot detect the slightest movement of even a single finger.

The closing portrayal is Leonardo's The Last Supper. Dead silence prevails as this masterpiece brings to a close a most entertaining and inspiring evening.

A short time ago I was listed in the T.V. Guide to appear on the Carson Show hosted by my friend Dick Cavett. However I suggested he use Chris Michaels in my place. On the show Rich Little took extra time telling a story about Jack Benny and Chris had to cut his very strong finishing effect. However he did an excellent job and received many compliments.

Before the show went on the air I was in the dressing room when a large basket filled with fruit, wine, whiskey, caviar, cheese and other delicacies was delivered. It was at least three feet high and a foot and a half wide with colorful ribbon. All the cameramen and staff members paraded in to see and wonder who sent such a tribute. It was just another one of Bill Bowers' many ideas to do something for others.

Every Monday evening Earl Nelson visits Bill's attractive home and a group of eight or nine study the finer points of the Art we are all interested in. Earl is most certainly more than qualified to teach even the most advanced person.

November 1982

Just as I started this month's column a large package arrived from Tokyo, Japan. It was from my good friend Akira Yamada, head of the Tenyo Company. It contained four of their latest releases. One is still another mutilated cigarette effect but where no less than 10 ordinary ones are penetrated by a card on which is printed a steel buzz saw.

Another is where four metal slugs are transformed into four silver quarters. Also two more devilishly ingenious effects, especially the nonsleight-of-hand effect like Paul Harris' "Twilight" where reflections in a mirror prove to be reality.

To me it is remarkable how these young Japanese chaps devise such new and clever ways to produce these perplexing tricks. I feel very flattered to have so many warm friends in Japan. I attribute it mostly to the close relationship I had with Tenkai Ishida. He is greatly revered and justly so as he was a consummate artist and a most friendly and wonderful person. Hardly a night passes here in the Magic Castle without having a number of Japanese visitors.

Just recently many of our members had the pleasure of meeting Sawa. Nearly everyone had heard of his extreme cleverness but few had met him before. Luke McKissack invited a number of our members to his luxurious home to meet Sawa. Harvey Rosenthal, who just happened to be here from New York City, and John Carney spent considerable time exchanging ideas with this superlative artist.

A reader has asked me about Henry Clive. During the twenties and thirties he played the "Big Time". He was assisted by a truly glamorous damsel named Mary Sturgess noted to be the most beautiful girl in vaudeville. At one point during his act he pointed to one of several digits on a slate he was holding. He'd remark, "Concentrate on this figure". It received quite a laugh as everyone was doubtlessly watching May who was posing seductively at the side of the stage.

Henry was also a gifted painter. One time a sketch of a pretty girl was used on the cover of a Ziegfeld program. Randolph Hearst happened to see it and inquired about the artist who had executed it. He got in touch with Henry and offered him a permanent position on one of his papers. He was to do a weekly sketch of beautiful women to grace the papers of the rotogravure section.

The local Masquers Club here in Hollywood has many of its walls decorated by paintings by Henry Clive.

Incidentally Fred Keating was a great admirer of his style of delivery and tried to closely copy his direct and magnetic style. Much later Louis Zingone tried to copy Keating. This type of copying is quite different from deliberately stealing material. It is a great shame that many beginners see someone perform an effect with perhaps a refreshingly new form of patter or execution . . . and then immediately try to do the same thing as closely as they are able to imitate every move or word.

Last month I mentioned how I had recommended that Chris Michaels appear on a recent Dick Cavett Show instead of myself as I felt that I could not live up to expectations. Many of our members who saw the show were critical of Chris' efforts. However, Dick had seen Chris perform at the Castle on a previous visit and was delighted with his performance. Unfortunately because the show was running late due to

another guest taking up extra time Chris did not get a chance to conclude his very strong finish.

Ron Bauer, one of our cleverest and astute magicians, considers Chris Michaels' name should always come up when discussing competent performers.

The other evening Carl Ballentine brought my attention to the fact that I had neglected to mention Sam Margules and Jimmy Drilling in my list of departed New Yorkers. Strange how the obvious escapes me at times. Both were very dear and close friends.

In the September issue my column gave a morbid list of many of my magical friends who have died. In a more pleasant note I shall list a few very much alive friends who have performed here at the Castle at different times.

The Great Thomsoni, Doug Henning, Ed Estrin, Charlie Miller, Harry Anderson, Tony Giorgio, ?, Bruce Cervon, Jim Carazini, Gene Anderson, Tony Slydini, Jason Tong, Don Lawton, Daryl Martinez, Jerry Andrus, Al Goshman, ?, Ted Compton, ?, Dan Anderson, Martin Nash, Monte Smith, Harry Blackstone, Bill Chaudet, Lee Edwards, Glen Falkenstein & Frances, Goldfinger & Dove, Norm Neilson, Chuck Jones, and Milt Larsen.

Can any of you readers figure out why the above names, ending with Monte Smith, are in the order above? I do not know of any magicians who have played here whose names begin with the letter 'T', hence the question marks in the list.

I am eagerly looking forward to the visit here of Faucett Ross, Jim Nolt, and David Sandy. They will catch the "IT'S MAGIC" show on the 11th of November. Also expect my dear friend, Danny Dew, to be here at the same time. Danny is beloved by everyone who has had the good fortune to know him.

December 1982

During my long lifetime I have had the pleasure of meeting nearly all of the great magicians. In my opinion two of the most colorful and skillful were Malini and T. Nelson Downs. Both of them were entirely different persons in every respect, but each in his own way excelled in every branch of the Art.

Many years ago I visited "Tommy" Downs in Marshalltown, Iowa, with my friend, Faucett Ross. This was sometime after Downs had returned from his triumphal tour of England — sixty consecutive weeks at the Palace Theatre in London. People used to drive up to the front of the theatre in their carriages and holler out, "What time does that American chap go on? O.K. Reggie, let's come back at nine thirty".

The English people had never seen a conjuror who could walk on the stage devoid of any form of apparatus and hold the audience entranced. He was such a superb showman that one time someone backstage had moved the table on which he had his stack of coins. He did his entire act in Pantomime without using a single coin and received the usual thunderous applause. This is hard to believe but is Gospel truth!

On another occasion he stood in the center ring of Barnum and Bailey's Circus and performed with three kitchen matches and received hearty applause. He had great style and was a true master of pantomime.

There was nothing humble about Tommy. On one occasion he and Faucett Ross visited Walter Scott, the famous seconds dealer. As they were on their way back Ross asked, "Tommy, what do you think of his seconds?" Downs replied, "Rossio my boy, next to mine it's the best I've ever seen." Tommy always wanted to be known as a card man and was quite jealous of Nate Leipzig

The first time Downs visited New York both Sam Horowitz and I puzzled him with a few moves with coins and cards. He said to Ross on his way home, "Those two guys are not fooling the old man. They just twist that Jordan stuff around." The truth was Tommy had all the Jordan material before it was generally known. However it was just so much Greek to him so he attributed what we did to Jordan. His favorite expression was "That's the horse sh . .!" Later on everyone was using the expression "Get the shovel, Eddie." It is strange how these sayings get started.

When he and Eddie McLaughlin and Faucett would come East to New York he always made arrangements for hotel accommodations. To the hotel clerk he'd say, "Hey Bud. We don't want no bridal suite . . . just a place to flop. What's the low down?" Doing one of his coin moves he'd remark, "You give it the Oskaloosey push and follow with the Missouri poke. Push— don't shove."

After passing a silver dollar through both knees he'd repeat with, "A little short cut," and pass it through one knee.

When I showed Tommy the center deal which I had learned from Allen Kennedy he became absolutely enamoured with it. Months later he wrote me to say that he had a blister on his second finger from practicing the deal. He was quite excited about it because I had told him this would happen.

Later he'd say, "When I play stud poker at the Stoddard Hotel I give the sucker a couple of jazzboes (Jacks) back to back and take a pair of cowboys (Kings) for myself." He kept telling me that this deal was the greatest thing he's ever heard of. It is extremely difficult to put into words what a likeable and clever individual he was. He could have been a second Yellow Kid if he'd have wished. Next column I'll write about Malini.

I feel very sorry I did not get an opportunity to write something about John Carney in the October column. I didn't know it was to be his special issue. I predict that his name will be "a household word" when anyone talks magic.

I was very pleased that my old friend Faucett Ross made the flight out here at the same time the "It's Magic!" show was playing. He was accompanied by David Sandy, Jim Holt and his pretty cousin Mary Farris. Bill Larsen, our president, invited them and several others to the Variety Arts for dinner. After the meal we were provided with excellent seats to see the show.

The following day Bill Bowers took several of them out to Disneyland. Then in the evening he garnered 20 people and took all of us out to an excellent Italian meal. Besides the delicious food there was an astounding band and three singers with superb voices.

Danny Dew and Melba were greatly impressed. Danny claimed that he had never heard anything to compare and raved about the trombonist.

This club member Bill Bowers is too good to be true. He is continually doing something for others and expects nothing in return. I was talking to Bill and said what a crying shame it was that we had a few real "creeps" among followers of the art.

Young David Sandy told us a miserable magic dealer had tried to cheat him. This boy, David, is an extremely likeable and thoroughly honest young man. It is a dirty shame that anyone should lie about him and take advantage of his tender years.

Yesterday was Saturday and the Larsens invited a large crowd and the entire cast of the "IT'S MAGIC" show to their home for a party.

It was most enjoyable as the liquid refreshment flowed liberally and we were treated to a review of the entire show again on two large T.V. screens. ...

January 1983

Whenever the name Las Vegas is mentioned magicians instantly think of Siegfried and Roy. And why not? For several years they have been acclaimed to be the star attraction among all the other numerous acts. Not only are these superb artists really excellent performers, they are also most cordial and charming individuals. Every action, every move, every gesture has great impact when they perform.

Thinking of past great performers of stage magic . . . Kellar, Goldin, Thurston, Dante, Blackstone . . . all of them were elderly men. Fu Manchu, Okito's son, was the only one who was a young man presenting a full evening of magic. Now, today, Siegfried and Roy, Doug Henning, Harry Blackstone, Jr., Mark Wilson, and David Copperfield are stage performers who all possess the added attraction of youth.

Although the Magic Castle is where many of the best congregate, Las Vegas is the home of many really excellent magicians who are the very top of close-up performers: Mike Skinner, Johnny Paul, Jimmy Grippo, Alan Ackerman, Daniel Cross, George Joseph and Louis Simonoff. Where, tell me, where is there a magician who does not hold these names with the greatest admiration and respect.

Just the other day I received the latest book by Andrew Galloway, *"The John Ramsay Finale"*. It was quite a thrill to find in the pages things of real interest. Andy deserves great credit for making this information available. John Ramsay was a remarkable artist.

I feel fortunate to number among my many close friends those from Japan, Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Canada, and of course this country: Jeff Altman, Mike Ammar, Jerry Andrus, Joe Berg, Bruce Cervon, Milbourne Christopher, John Cornelius, Paul Curry, Daryl, Persi Diaconis, Derek Dingle, Chuck Fayne, Al Goshman, Ray Grismer, Bill Gusias, Paul Harris, Ricky Jay, Larry Jennings, Roger Klause, Ken Krensel, Jack McMillan, Charlie Miller, Ortiz, Harvey Rosenthal, Harry Riser, Sam Schwartz, George Stark, Ron Wilson, and Herb Zarrow, and those I have overlooked.

All of the above-mentioned are warm personal friends and I more than appreciate them.

I mentioned in an earlier column that I would comment concerning Max Malini. The one outstanding thing about Max was his impromptu effects . . . mostly in hotels where they had a bar. Never did he appear to be prepared to perform. He would never utilize anything that resembled a prop. Everything he used was borrowed or just happened to be available.

When someone would receive their change in payment for a drink he might remark, "Let me have that quarter (or other coin) and I'll show you something strange". No one suspected that he had noticed or spotted one coin for which he already had, unbeknown, a duplicate! Much the same way if someone removed the paper from a straw in their drink and started to discard it—he would take it from them and perform a torn and restored effect. Long before he was provided with a duplicate.

One time in his room in a Chicago hotel I noticed in a partly-opened bureau drawer numerous paper covers with the names of different hotels. In this way he could provide himself with the appropriate one for the bar he was to visit.

Such a thing as taking out an envelope and removing a set of cards or any item was completely foreign to his manner of working. The magic just seemed to happen and the effect was so much greater the way he performed.

Charlie Miller once asked him his secret and he replied, "It's the eye. You 'vait'". Charlie asked, "How long do you wait?" "A veek" was Malini's reply.

He told me while we were together in Miami that he was writing a book to be titled, "*Just Malini*". He said he had shown the manuscript to a well known writer and had asked if he would correct the grammar and so forth. Max said he was told to publish it "as is" because otherwise it would lose the color. With this I thoroughly agree.

In regard to the above I could have said, "You hit the nail on the head", or "You said it". "How right you are." "I'll say so." "Positively." "Absolutely." "Indubitably." "Right on." "You said a mouthful." "I'll tell the world." "How true." "You can say that again", and the most current expression, "No problem!"

I never heard or read of anyone remarking that all the above phrases mean practically the same thing, "I! agree."

With this bit of trivia I'll sign off.

February 1983

I can vividly recall Christmas time, as a small boy living in Ottawa, Canada. Everyone used to hope and pray for a "white Christmas". This past Christmas was the first that I have seen snow for many years.

Bill Bowers and I were invited to Lake Tahoe to the beautiful luxurious Harrah Hotel to see the wind-up of the magic show there. Lance Burton and Shimada were featured along with Martin Lewis and Mark Kornhauser. Besides this excellent show there was also one in the lounge which was extremely entertaining. Vince Carmen, the magician, and Philippe Wellford, the juggler, did a real bang-up job.

Of course the line-up of over a dozen topless and attractive girls added extra lustre to a splendid show!

I had a long talk with Carmen and it was astonishing to me how knowledgeable he is. He has great authority on stage and his clean-cut features add greatly to the effectiveness of his act. I asked him if he had visited his hometown, Asheville, North Carolina, lately and he stated that he had had only four open days in the last three years! Quite a performing record, I believe.

I was very pleased to receive a copy of Andrew Galloway's latest book at Christmas. It is titled "The Ramsey Finale". So at this time I feel sure that my readers will enjoy some of the ideas and advice concerning misdirection. I shall quote almost verbatim from the chapter, "The Real Secrets":

The secret of good magic is the attention to fine detail. This Ramsayism neatly sums up John Ramsay's philosophy of magic. The fine detail is evident in the careful construction of his routines with their diabolically cunning methods designed to puzzle and entertain knowledgeable conjurors.

He would take a classic effect and give it his personal treatment but would usually start the trick in standard fashion, thereby lulling the onlookers into a false sense of security! They thought that they were following every action, then suddenly Ramsay would put in a "twist" that would throw them into confusion and from that moment on the spectators would always be at least one move behind for the rest of the routine.

His regard for details in sleights are obvious in all his tricks where even a standard move is given a handling that can deceive a magician who has been using it for years. It was in misdirection, however, that his consideration for minute detail really expressed itself by taking this essential aid to deception and raising it to a fine art.

Ramsay explained his approach to misdirection in one simple sentence: "Where you look, the audience will look." If the performer wishes to draw attention to his eyes and face, he can address a remark to a spectator, or merely look at him. Attention is attracted to the hands by looking at them and following their movements with the eyes and head. If he wants to divert attention away from his hands or props he takes as little notice of them as possible, or ignores them completely.

One of the basic rules of magic is to take advantage of a surprise and when something unforeseen happens, catching the onlookers off guard. Ramsay referred to this as the "psychological moment", which can be placed exactly by observing the appearance of the spectator. We have all had the experience of talking to someone and knowing full

well that he is not taking in a word we are saying because of the look in his eyes. He has a glazed look, indicating that his mind is miles away thinking about something else. and a similar appearance can be seen when we fool a person with a move or trick.

He is trying to work out a solution to the mystery and therefore cannot give his full attention to your following actions. Ramsay called this phenomenon the "Blind Spot" and it is the ideal moment to load a ball under a cup, make a steal or execute any other secret maneuver. Obviously the performer has to take advantage of this blind spot.

On the subject of vanishes Ramsay always asserted that to "Take" is better than to "Put" . . . citing the French Drop as an example. Even when this time-honored sleight is done by a beginner in a no more than competent manner it can still get the desired effect, the reason being that the performer employs proper timing and misdirection without really knowing why. He instinctively moves the hand which has seemingly taken the article away from the other which actually retains it, and follows the hand with his eyes. thereby making use of the maxim that the eye tends to follow the moving object. If, however, he is doing a "put" move he will invariably withdraw the hand that has retained the article from the other that has apparently received it so that the rule just quoted now works. against him.

However, a "put" move can be completely deceptive if executed correctly and if sufficiently practiced. It will fool the keenest observer.

The chapter. "The Real Secrets". has much more but I have given just a few of Ramsay's thoughts. Bear in mind that when you execute an apparent transfer of any object from hand to hand . . . at the moment you never look at the hands . . . only after as the hand supposed to be holding the object moves away.

March 1983

Have just been looking over the long lists of nominations for the forthcoming Awards Banquet. Many first names of performers are repeated. However a few are quite distinctive. For example . . . two J's; Jay Malbrough and Jay Scott Berry. And not listed I think immediately of Jay Marshall and dear departed Jay Ose.

I am devoting this column to a letter from Ralph Arbitelle. It is about the video tape made in the Castle recently. Jay Malbrough was excellent in his portrayal of Chung Ling Soo.

Dear Professor: As per your request, I am writing concerning my recent venture with a project named "The Wonder of Magic". May I start by thanking you for taking the time to sit with Sue and myself to discuss your views and philosophy concerning magic. We agree wholeheartedly that as long as it is done for the pleasure and enjoyment we can pass on to others, it is a great occupation to be in. When the prime concern is the Almighty Dollar, it is no longer "Magic" but tends to become just another job.

This project has certainly been a pleasure. The people involved were very nice . . . it was a wonderful association. The magicians gave one hundred percent of their time and talent. Some of them were cast in roles they had never dreamed of doing and the results were great.

The Juniors proved to be quite professional and certainly an asset to the Magic Castle and Magic Fraternity in general

The Re-Creations were the most challenging and, as you may have concluded, the most fun. We were fortunate in having a wonderful library to research the old Masters. As you know, we used Mark Miller to portray Howard Thurston. He was excellent looking as reserved and sophisticated as Thurston himself.

Harry Houdini was played by my son, Ralph, Jr., and I'm sure Harry would look on it favorably as once again the great man was depicted challenging death by drowning and surviving to take his bows.

I, much to my pleasure, was chosen to play the part of Harry Blackstone, Sr. This is, I am sure the weakest of the Re-Creations but still looks good on the small screen. Good staging and period costumes can do wonders for a weak performance!

The most challenging Re-Creation was undertaken by Jay Malbrough and his sweet wife, Shirley. They portrayed Chung Ling Soo and his wife Suee Seen. The setting was the final performance of Soo. Ending in the fatal shot that disclosed to the world the real identity behind the man known as the world's greatest Chinese Magician.

I would like to point out that even as careful as we were in our recreation of the bullet catch, Jay had a close call. We had two arms experts on hand to assist and play?/ the spectators from the audience. We used two of Abb Dickson's assistants, to play the part of Soo's assistants. On one of the takes a true load was accidentally placed into one of the

barrels of the borrowed weapons. Thanks to the quick thinking of the assistant handling this weapon no harm was done.

This strengthens my feelings concerning the eminent danger of this "effect". I feel that the bullet catch is one illusion that can be too real and should not be performed under any condition. Happily, all turned out well and Jay looks great in his beautiful robe which, by the way is the actual robe Chung Ling Soo wore in many of his performances. Abb Dickson loaned it and many other costumes to us for the shoot.

As to the distribution of the finished product, I am happy to say that B.B.C. is at present negotiating a deal for airing in Great Britain and interest has also been evidenced in the French television system. I'll keep you posted. Yours Without Illusion Ralph Arbitelle.

Thanks, Ralph for your informative letter. I just learned that this column was to be devoted to Petrick and Mia. If I had known in time I could have filled a page with superlatives for this young couple. To me their act is delightful. Petrick's sleights are most deftly handled and Mia adds a sparkling lustre with her graceful and charming assistance. Next month I'll run an interesting and thought-provoking letter from Mike Rogers.

April 1983

Many of the readers of this column still request me to write about "oldtimers". It just strikes me that many of the magicians of the past took great advantage of the art of cueing. When they brought someone from the audience up to assist, entirely unbeknown to the audience they would secretly cue them. In this way the person would act or behave differently from their normal behavior. A good example of this is the following as used by Jud Cole.

The boy assistant was chewing gum. Jud would turn to him and say, "Sonny, will you please throw that gum into neutral". However, secretly he'd cue the boy to put it in his pocket, but as the boy complied he'd cue "the other one". Then a further cue, "Stick it under my magic table". These simple sequences and the consequent actions of the boy resulted in great amusement. Also while performing the Egg Bag the boy was cued to reach up under the performer's jacket, also up his sleeve.

During the simple introduction of the boy to the little girl. "Johnny, have you met Mary?" He'd cue "Johnny fix your tie". To the audience the sight of a small youngster making this adjustment to meet a young lady was always sure of causing laughter.

In the days of the "Big Time" (Keith Vaudeville) there was more variety to the acts. As a matter of fact it was possible to protect an effect that was unique. Years ago even before vaudeville many theatres had a sign posted back stage: "Magicians—NO EGG BAG". Performers everywhere were doing it to death.

Not only did acts vary in their material but also in duration of time. Allen Shaw the coin expert, did the shortest act in the business . . . six minutes. He ended his turn with the coin roll. He walked to the side, of the stage and leaning against the table he executed the roll, first slowly, then with great speed, flipped it into the air and caught it saying, "Try this when you get up in the morning."

In contrast, Jack Merlin sometimes did nearly 10 times as long. His features were the guinea pig and the bottle, and the visible penetration of the tumbler through the hat. His table was center stage and Jack would sit at stage right. Each time he'd glance towards the table the glass would visibly penetrate about an inch. Finally as it passed completely through, he would walk over and prove the effect.

Another performer who did time was Wallace Galvin. His opening . . . he walked on from the wings very slowly producing single cards. As he increased the pace he'd say as he approached center stage . . . "forty one, forty two . . ." and finally "fifty two" as he caught the final card. He actually used thirty-eight but the effect he created was excellent.

The acts that received the largest salaries were the comedy turns. Van Hoven, the Dippy Mad Magician, later the man who made ice famous. Also one of the most lovable of all performers, Emil Jarrow, whose Lemon Trick was a creation of genius.

The exception was Harry Houdini. Not only did he draw the largest crowds and receive the largest salary, but his great genius for showmanship still carries over to this day.

There were several others who did very clever escapes; The Great Leon, Herbert Brooks, Brindamoore, and Minerva the Handcuff Queen.

The following letter was received several years ago from Mike Rogers. Anything written by Mike should be carefully read as he truly KNOWS THE SCORE. I most certainly value his opinions.

"First, let's talk about the magic clubs. I sometimes wonder if they are really worthwhile. Of course old friends get together, and for this they are good. But magic-wise it seems to be a different story. The magic seen is seldom entertaining.

Instead of entertainment we usually see demonstrations, and then they are probably poor demonstrations. There are some good performances, of course, but they are seldom seen.

Then we also see exposure of technique to those who are not willing to properly handle the new ideas and I feel this is bad. Consider this thought: They say that there is no point in trying to fool other magicians; however, if one does magic at only the magic clubs then it seems to me that it is the other magicians that he should try to fool. With this in mind what should be done at the magic clubs? Should we condone poor magic at the magic clubs, and should we welcome exposing methods when it is known that the methods will never be used by most members?

Magicians want to see artistic technique in an entertaining manner, and the laymen simple want to be entertained without regard to technique. Magicians will accept all magic that is either technically good or entertaining, or both, but laymen will not accept any magic that does not entertain. So it boils down to this: Should a young man in magic learn a few tricks well and then work towards an entertaining and pleasing personality, or should he strive for an encyclopedic knowledge of all material with the ability to do each effect to perfection?

I feel that the answer is not the same for all of us. A pro, of course, must entertain without regard to technique, and the others can work in any direction. Once we accept this idea, that others can work in any direction, then we ask ourselves this shocking question: "Does magic really have to entertain?" At first that sounds absurd. but it isn't really. I think that some magic can be technically perfect, fool everyone, and still not entertain in fact the first magicians, THE SORCERERS, I'm sure had no intention of entertaining their spectators.

As for me, though. I think that for magic to be done with confidence it must first entertain Moreover, I don't think that laymen will always enjoy the same magic that magicians enjoy."

May 1983

Many readers of this column seem to be interested in hearing about magicians of the past. When I moved to New York City away back in 1915 I met nearly all the magicians of those days. During this period the so-called "Big Time" was a chain of houses all the way from New York to the West Coast. Then there was also the "Loew" circuit and the Pantages. Though there were a few others these two were the main ones. It was the ambition of all acts to play the "Big Time" because they had to be the best in their field.

When it came to comedy Van Hoven and Jarrow were supreme and they both received much higher salaries than the straight magicians. Judson Cole, billed as a humorous interlude assisted by the audience, also had a most amusing act.

Following is a listing of a few that I can vividly recall who were pretty regular on the Big Time: Wallace Galvin, Allen Shaw, Okito, Tenkai and Okinu, Canaris, Doc Nixon, Herbert Brooks, Jack Merlin, Larry Crane, Great Leon, Hang Ping Ching, Dornfield, Onaip, Tommy Martin, Cardini, Ohms, Frakson, Brindamoore, Nate Leipzig, and T. Nelson Downs.

The great difference today is that so many acts are so much alike. In the hey day of vaudeville each act had something different to offer.

Wallace Galvin entered the stage rapidly counting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc., as he produced single cards that fluttered to the stage. He timed this counting and production exactly so that when he reached center stage he produced the last card as he said "52". Actually he used only 38 cards but no one ever doubted that he had produced all 52!

Incidentally, the art of "cuing" is almost a lost art. When Nate Leipzig produced the final ace with the spectators' eyes glued on the cards he'd whisper to his assistant, "Scratch your head". Also while performing a trick like the Egg Bag the trick can be greatly enhanced by cuing the boy assisting to lift and look under your coat tails. Also to take hold of an arm and look in the sleeve. These are natural actions and add greatly to the enjoyment of the effect.

Allen Shaw did the briefest act in the business . . . six minutes. He entered producing cards singly using the regular palm and keeping back of hand to audience. The cards just seemed to appear from nowhere. He also featured coins and used two hats, a toppler and a derby or bowler. He spoke very briefly, "The dream of a miser . . . Money . . . how to get it. Watch, look, listen." He performed several pretty coin moves with a single coin and hard to believe, he closed his act with the coin roll. There was a table stage right and he would lean on it and roll the coin one way several times and then backwards and forwards. Then he would flip the coin in the air, catch it and say, "Try this when you get up in the morning."

Jack Merlin featured the visible penetration of a glass through a hat. A thin skeleton-type table was center stage. A glass on the table was covered with a handkerchief and the hat was placed on top of the covered glass. Jack would retire to a chair side stage. His presentation was most amusing because every time he turned to look towards the table the hat would sink an inch or so. Finally the hat came to rest flat

against the handkerchief and table. Jack would walk over and remove the glass from inside the hat. A most effective presentation.

Earlier in the list of names one may have puzzled you . . . Onaip. This is piano spelled backwards and Onaip levitated the piano and floated it amazingly in all positions.

The only present-day performers I can think of who compare favorably with those in my list are Lance Burton, Shimada, Johnny Thompson and Norm Nielsen. And I feel sure that all of the "oldtimers" would bow their heads to Siegfried and Roy. They are positively unique.

I'm afraid that my dear friend Faucett Ross will censure me for omitting many names of former magicians. I don't like making excuses but I am still suffering from a recent broken back. At my age they do not knit as rapidly as I'd wish. So please make allowances for this disjointed column.

In all magic there is no one I have known longer than Faucett. I met him years ago when he used to make an annual trip to New York City. He was a particularly good friend of Tommy Downs and Eddie McLaughlin and they accompanied him on his New York trips.

I feel sure that Faucett will agree with me that there is a literal deluge of magic literature. Mostly a never-ending attempt to altar and improve the old standard methods. Sadly these attempts tend to confuse and do nothing to improve an effect. At the recent Las Vegas Seminar my opinion was that most acts tended to confuse. Many years ago Max Malini criticized Charlie Miller for cutting and restoring a rope three times. As he put it . . . once, but really convincingly executed, that's all.

Max would vanish a coin (once) and never retrieve it. He performed a flawless color change twice only. People who saw Malini raved about his skill. His secret: simplicity and clear-cut effects.

At our recent Academy Awards Banquet I was thrilled to meet again John Calvert and Moi-Yo Miller. It had been well over 40 years since I last saw them in New York. And I must say it was amazing to see how young and attractive Moi-Yo still is. Many people attribute the fact that the Dante Show was a hit was due to the assistance of Moi-Yo. She made a stunning appearance and added real glamour to every scene in which she appeared.

Also it was a real treat to see Jack Chanin looking so well. Jack proved he has lost none of his skill with his superb rendition of the Salt Trick. And he had a barrel of fun later on entertaining customers at the Castle with his cigar manipulations. A great entertainer . . . Jack Chanin

June 1983

I have just returned from the Mexican Magic Convention in Acapulco. They most certainly should be congratulated for everything. Dr. Mendoza and Andre Lopez ran the lectures, stage contests and close-up shows. And the Gala shows were handled by Delhi assisted by Carlos Calderon. All the events took place in the luxurious Hyatt Continental Hotel except the Gala shows which were held downtown in the Acapulco Center.

In my long life I have visited many famous spots but I must say that Acapulco is the most exciting town imaginable. The beauty of the place is breath-taking and the Continental Hotel, I am quite sure, is one of the world's finest. You must see it to believe it.

During the convention we were treated to three special shows. Petrick and Mia dedicated to Luis Chiquini. Fantasio to Delhi, and Edmund Spreer to C.M.S., Jr. Doug Kornegay came from Houston, Texas, and acted as a most capable stage manager for all shows.

I only had a chance to catch two of the lectures: Bob Little and Fantasio, but both were excellent. It is truly amazing how many ingenious moves and adaptations Fantasio has come up with for his canes and candles.

In the close-up shows there were some extremely clever young chaps from Mexico. Both Bev Bergeron and Bob Little were greatly admired by the audience and got plenty of laughs. As a touch of variety Paco Miller presented his ventriloquism act. He is a master of the Art. I was very pleased to meet many of my old friends whom I hadn't seen for years. Sorry that I failed to spend time with my good friend John Cornelius but was delighted to see him again.

For true originality Jose Luis was outstanding. He and Milton Larsen, both doing comedy, were the hit of the shows. And for true mystery Mike Caveney excelled.

Besides the Gala shows there were many most interesting things to see. The cliff divers are thrilling to watch. They start from an elevation of 136 feet and have to make their descent at an exact moment. Until the waves wash into the cove the water is not deep enough so their timing has to be, and is, perfect. One of the divers executed a specialty for the magicians. Instead of the usual swan dive he did a spectacular one and a half. Later a couple of the divers met with several of the magicians and were photographed with the group.

All in all, the convention was a great success. Bill, Milt, and Irene Larsen were ideal hosts and wined and dined groups of people in the latter hours at the finest dining places. There were no complaints at this wonderful convention, and Acapulco is an absolutely fantastic resort to visit.

I was very pleased that I arrived back from Acapulco in time to catch this week's Palace of Mystery Show. The acts differ from week to week and are sometimes really exceptional.

This week Tom Ogden was the emcee and he really proved that he is a real trouper. His timing and delivery leave nothing to be desired. After his very funny act Tom introduced Fielding West with his beautiful seductive assistant, Pam (his wife) . They are not "run of the mill" but delightfully different and the audience showed that they realized

it. Then came Michael Marlin, a juggler. In my opinion he is as near perfection as any human could possibly be.

His closing number with a half dozen flimsy silk scarves juggled to classical music is a true masterpiece. Besides he has a most likable manner and does not in any way flaunt his incredible skill.

Of course besides this show in the Palace there were excellent shows in the Parlour of Prestidigitation and the Close-Up Gallery. Bob Jardine, voted Close-Up Magician of the Year, still holds forth in the Pub keeping customers happy with his magic.

July 1983

One of the most enjoyable conventions I have ever attended was held the first week of June in St. Joseph, Missouri, to honor my long-time friend, Faucett Ross. Amazingly, it was organized and run by a teenage boy named David Sandy. Everything ran extremely smooth and all the events were of top quality.

The first of the three days started off with an excellent lecture by Mike Caveney, followed by one from the creative and original Paul Harris. These were followed by a dealers' show. Then another two lectures by the much beloved Petrick and Mia. It is really remarkable how these two who came from Czechoslovakia have learned to speak our language.

Mia, the personification of style and grace, told how a magician's assistant should enhance the act. Those who have seen her work with Petrick will agree that her actions and behavior are truly exquisite. Her talk was of true value.

At seven fifteen o'clock two large busses picked everyone up for a trip to the theatre to see the star stage show at eight o'clock. This show opened with Petrick and Mia presenting an entirely new act. This act ran almost as smoothly as their 'masterpiece' act. Next came my friend, Slydini, and he received a standing ovation as he concluded his most entertaining paper balls over the head routine. Then Fantasio with his warm smile and beautiful handling of his own candles.

After this the lights were dimmed and in a spot light Faucett Ross was slowly elevated from below stage to an appearance seated in a large upholstered chair. He was presented with several plaques and was really tickled when they gave him a special one for his adored cat, "TUFFY." I was called to the stage by emcee John Carney to give Faucett a gold card from Bill Larsen . . . a life membership to the Magic Castle.

John Carney then did an imitation of Faucett using a huge pipe and many matches. Those in the know were greatly tickled with this presentation. John did a great job and put over the cut and restored handkerchief brilliantly. Then he introduced Norm Nielsen. Everyone knows that Norm is one of the very top acts in the business. Besides being a sterling performer he is a most gracious and wonderful person to know.

After the show everyone returned in the busses and at eleven we were highly entertained by Michael Ammar, C.W. Stanford, and Slydini.

The next day, Saturday, started early with a close-up contest at 8 a.m. Then a most entertaining and instructive lecture by Michael Ammar. Mike is truly a genius and a most valued friend. Then came the first all comedy act, Professor Gomer Van Cool. His presentation was most original and some did not realize that this was really Jim Holt.

Next to lecture was John Cornelius. He had everything arranged so he stood close to the mike at all times and all his effects were perfectly shown. John is one of my closest friends and he is truly

After the banquet we again were bussed to the theatre. Petrick and Mia opened with their regular established act. Mia is really remarkable the way she conducts herself. Next my long-time friend, Charlie Miller, who tried desperately to vanish a cane after countless failures. His pretty assistant, Mary Farris, gave him a couple of slaps and grabbed the newspaper-wrapped cane and made it creative and has natural skill.

At five o'clock all gathered for the banquet I felt honored to be seated at the head table with Connie Bush, Mark Wilson, Danny and Melba Dew, and several other well-knowns. During the dinner Mark Wilson showed some video tapes of his trip to China and this was a positive novelty. I was sorry that his pretty partner and wife, Nani, was not with him disappear with ease. But joking aside, Charlie did a bang-up job and when he wound up with his rice bowls routine he received a standing ovation.

The next act is sheer perfection . . . SHIMADA. What a truly great artist. Cannot imagine how anything could be better. This show was emceed by Mike Caveney. He keeps getting better and better. He completely fooled and nonplused everyone with his paper and rope effects. But more important, he delivers his talk so well and shows great authority on the stage. I was sorry that he did not have his talented wife, TINA, with him. Both their acts are excellent.

To close the show Marvyn Roy and his charming partner/wife Carol presented their really sparkling electric act . . . another of the great acts in show business.

I firmly believe this convention was unique. Never before has a convention been given just to honor one individual. David Sandy, assisted by Chuck Larkey and Joe Stevens (just to mention two) put this all together.

Happily, Faucett's dear friend Mildred came with him and shared the great admiration from all his friends. There were so many events and such activity that even greats in our field like Jay Marshall, Roger Klause and Harry Monti, did not have to exhibit their skill but just acted like other onlookers. Personally I thoroughly enjoyed every minute and met so many of my old friends and made new ones. One of the latter was William Lipscomby. Someone located a piano in an isolated location and Bill played for a few of us, including Bill Bowers Danny Dew and Melba, and Faucett. The piano was not in tune but nevertheless Bill's harmonies came through effectively.

I am sorry I do not have the space to write of all that transpired but I must thank Bill Bowers who helped me get up in the morning and get safely to bed in the wee hours!

August 1983

When it was announced that Ed Marlo would attend the West Coast Convention (P.C.A.M.) the registrations promptly jumped from 200 to 700. Everyone with an interest in magic was very familiar with the name but comparatively few had ever met him face to face.

Ed Marlo, without any question of doubt, has contributed more original twists and improvements to handling playing cards than anyone in history. Not only does he come up with entirely original handling but he also executes all these numerous devices in a truly expert manner.

It is truly remarkable that he has put out so many books and articles . . . in view of the fact that he held down a steady job in a machine shop where he turned down an offer to be a foreman. Many of his creations were given picturesque names which have become household words among many magicians.

I had the pleasure of meeting Ed and Carmen D'Amico over forty years ago in Chicago. This was when many well-known and clever magicians used to congregate at Matt Schulien's Bar. Johnny Platt, Bert Allerton, Senator Crandall, Paul Rosini, Paul Le Paul, Johnny Paul, Martin Gardner, Al Leech, George Coons, Dorny, and Chic Schoke are just a few that come to mind.

These were days before the arrival of that most well-known and popular couple, Jay and Frances Marshall

A name that I feel sure is very little known today is Hugh Johnson. He was a remarkably clever card handler and executed one of the very best two-handed passes. Talking of card workers in those days, Chicago seemed to be the place to find them. Jimmy Kater Thompson, John Sprong, Eddie Fish, and the mysterious kid, Dad Stevens. Marlo was conversant with all the moves of the day and improved and simplified many.

Some of the best posted and knowledgeable magicians could never figure why Marlo would not attend conventions or mingle to any great extent. It was entirely due to the efforts of Ron Bauer that Ed came to the West Coast.

The Castle held a special champagne party for Ed. During the course of the event an informal chat was held on stage between, Ed, Charlie Miller, and myself. It seemed to please everyone and certainly provided many interesting and enjoyable comments from the participants. I understand it was captured on video tape which should be fun to watch years from now!

In closing I must say how nice it was to have Mr. and Mrs. Hans Zahn of VIDEONICS, LTD., St. John's, Newfoundland visiting the Castle recently.

(Following the Santa Barbara convention Dai joined the Magic Castle tour group and took off for Hawaii. We continue this column with his comments on this convention.)

John Makar should be more than congratulated for heading such an enjoyable meeting of most of the famous magicians of the day. The fact that Hawaii is situated about halfway between Tokyo and the United States enabled 140 Japanese to attend. Their performances were outstanding and they walked away with nearly all the competitions. I was delighted to again meet Akiro Yamada and Dr. Sawa . . . both very

dear friends. I feel very pleased that all the Japanese I meet are so friendly and cordial at all times.

The opening day of the convention, July the first, Phil Thomas put on a most interesting dealers' show and Tom Mullica gave an excellent lecture. To wind-up the day's events Ring 185 put on a typical Hawaiian Polynesian panorama of magic, music and dance.

The second day, Saturday, the lectures by Dr. Sawa and Daniel Cros were superb and on the Cabaret Show run by Jay Marshall were Allen Okawa, Johnny Paul, Shogeo Futagawa, Alan Ackerman, Paul Harris and Daniel Cros, Sawa, Jonathan Neal Brown, Bob and Ginny Lewis and Tom Mullica. Mike Skinner gave a lecture and more than lived up to his great reputation. He was so popular that he had to give three lectures, one each day. I enjoyed very much seeing George Joseph again. Besides being extremely clever he is a real nice guy to know.

In the evening special large buses were provided to transport everyone to the theatre for the star show. The popular Mike Caldwell was the emcee and with such names as Shimada, Topper Martyn, Bob Brown and Brenda, Goldfinger and Dove, Sanada, and the most amusing and entertaining act, Sigmund and Freud you know it was a top-notch show.

I particularly enjoyed the lectures by Karrell Fox and Fantasio. And the special question and answer panel conducted by Karrell Fox was most informative. On Monday both Gene Anderson and Bob Brown gave most interesting lectures.

The Star Show the last evening was emceed by Gene Anderson. Hard to figure how they could hold up the standard already set but they more than did with Shimada and his famous Dragon Act, Fantasio, Marvyn Roy, Topper Martyn, and Katlyn, all super stars.

Thus this great convention wound up and everyone realized they had thoroughly enjoyed the entire affair. Bill Larsen more than proved his qualities as a tour guide. He kept everyone informed of all proceedings and added greatly to the enjoyment of everything.

Must not forget one of the personal thrills I enjoyed. A few of us were invited to enter one of the latest nuclear submarines in a restricted area of Pearl Harbor. We crawled down and up ladders through manholes. Then we were shown all the equipment which was extremely interesting.

September 1983

Quite often I am asked why I do not write more frequently about magicians of the past. Naturally, my being around for such a long period of time, I have known many. Very sadly several have passed away since I left New York to come out here to Hollywood. Just to name a few:

Joe Cossari who featured colorful card fans and was with me and performed on my last lecture tour. He was a very warm person and left many saddened friends.

Roy Benson who was the son of one of the famous vaudeville team, The Ford Sisters. Roy was a superb billiard ball artist and I was greatly flattered that I was able to teach him the Salt Trick which he added to his regular act.

Francis Carlyle (Francis Xavier Finnerman), one of my dearest and closest friends, was a "slave to the bottle". It seems strange that so many had this craving. Paul Rosini, Max Malini, Bert Allerton, and the great Albin who soaked his bread in liquor and drank himself to death. When I saw Albin he featured the Egg Bag and finished by producing a live chicken from it.

The death of Lou Derman was a terrific shock to everyone here in the Castle. At the time he died he was working for Norman Lear's "All in the Family". One night when he was performing in the Castle,

George Burns was in the audience. Just as Lou was starting, Burns stood up and said, "I'm surprised to see this man do magic. For my money he's the best comedy writer in Hollywood!" Every Friday night Lou performed his hilarious act and the spectators loved it.

Another performer in New York who did a comedy act was George Jason, born in Georgian Russia. His real name was George Ketiladza. Besides his magic he played classical music on the piano. He had a great sense of comedy. In one of his effects he had three lemons on a plate and one of them had a small stars and stripes flag stuck in it. He'd have someone make a selection and if they failed to pick the one with the flag he'd bawl them out in a very amusing way for not being patriotic. On the other hand if they selected the flag lemon he would give them great praise for their patriotism! Don Lawton has always given George credit for his "color changing cane" running gag routine.

When I first met George he was a teacher of mathematics at Queens College in Kingston, Canada. He asked me to give him some lessons in card work and I charged him for the first lesson but would not accept any payment for further lessons. The same thing happened with Dr. Jacob Daley. We became close friends and I simply could not take any money from either of them.

Few knew that the doctor was born in Russia. "Jack" was chief of the French Hospital in New York. Later he took up plastic surgery and was very much against "nose jobs" for cosmetic reasons. He would only operate and improve if they had some nasal trouble.

To change the subject it just came to mind that a group of us were discussing the bullet catching effect and how many had lost their lives. The first that I heard of was a Hindu in Dublin way back in 1817. Then Madame DeLinsky in Germany three years

later, and the same year DeGrisy killed his son. Next, Chung Ling Soo in 1918. Then Herr Bosco in the year of 1926 was killed at Basle, Switzerland.

Just as there is no proof of the real history of playing cards, there are different accounts of the first person to do the bullet catch. Some claim that it dates back to 1631 and was invented by Coulen of Lorraine. One of the simplest and less dangerous methods is the following:

The marksman with the rifle stands at one side of the stage, the performer at the other. An assistant has a bullet selected from a box, has it marked and dropped on a "loading" tray which makes a switch as the bullet is dumped into the marks man's hand. This is a faked bullet, the end being plastic. The tray is carried backstage and the marked lead removed from the shell. It is

stuck to a small sack of red liquid (to resemble blood) and taped to the back of the plate which earlier had been broken in half and cemented together very lightly. While this "dirty work" is being done the marksman is loading his rifle and a committee is examining the performer's mouth.

When the performer receives the plate he grasps it by both sides and holds it in front of his face. When he cries "Fire" and as the gun explodes he jerks the plate back against his face biting off the bullet and the sack of liquid. He breaks the plate with his hands, bites the sack letting the red liquid run out as he staggers and sinks to his knees.

Then a member of the committee is handed a tray that matches the former "loading" tray to catch the marked bullet as it drops from the performer's mouth.

While writing this column here in the Castle I was suddenly surprised and delighted to see Magic Christian and his charming wife, Karin. I did not know that he had been booked to appear this week. Besides being a superlative artist Christian is a true gentleman of the old school. I am Keanely looking forward to seeing him perform in the so-called Vernon Parlour. I asked Don Lawton how he would rate Karin and he replied. "Definitely a Ten"

October 1983

The middle of August, Robert Albo and his charming wife, Marjorie, visited Hollywood. Dr. Albo, as most readers know, has a truly marvelous collection of rare magical apparatus and has published several handsomely bound and excellent quality books. The illustrations are nearly all in vivid color and show each item perfectly. His collection of Okito magic is most complete. Eric Lewis was most helpful in obtaining and rebuilding many of these rare pieces.

Unlike most collections, everything he displays is in working order and the items are arranged in such a way that it is a real pleasure to view them.

Dr. Albo, being the official doctor for the Los Angeles Raiders, took Bill Bowers and myself to the football game. It was nice of him to take us down to the field and introduce us to several of the players before the game started.

In answer to a question sent to me, why did I do a Harlequin act? At the time when I started I was a very close friend of Cardini. I had done only a few "stage" performances. Knowing that Cardini was most bitter about anyone else featuring cigarettes I never did any effect involving them. I racked my brain trying to figure out how to dress to get away from the standard dress suit.

The idea of a harlequin, with skull cap and white makeup could be a perfect disguise. Thus I could lead a double life on and off the stage. I could even ask people their opinion of the act and get a true appraisal. Also I selected classical music acceptable in all countries. Unfortunately few of the current orchestras had violins and they could not do credit to the music.

At any rate I had no desire to continue the trouble of making up, doing four and five shows a day. Also the expense of dry cleaning the colorful costume was too much, as they say. I found it much more desirable to do so called club work and shows in private homes. Some of the New York magicians could not understand how I was able to ask for and receive a fee of \$100 or more.

During this period in the twenties the usual salary was \$50 tops all the way down to \$5.00. Even name magicians would usually get no more than \$25 for a performance. The sole reason I fared so well was because Frances Rockefeller King was my agent or representative.

I mentioned briefly in a past column how I met her in Atlantic City. She only booked stars like John Barrymore, Will Rogers, etc. No magicians. She told me that few of those who did magic could be trusted with a knife and fork so she could not sell them as artists. I mention this only because it should be apparent that the ordinary formalities of behavior are just as important as the performance you offer.

Remember that people will absolutely hate to be fooled by a performer who shows conceit or a superior attitude. Even an awkward and clumsy portrayal will please an audience if the performer has a likeable personality.

Ever since I was a small boy I have sought out the real operators of swindles. The "real work" as actually presented by the professionals. Quite often these were nefarious characters. One of the most famous of these was Soapy Smith. As he was shot and killed in Skagway, Alaska, in the year 1898 I naturally never could have met him. However, I

have read many versions of his extremely colorful life. He was notorious as a "broad tosser," the shell game and the soap swindle. It was his variation and operation of this latter from which he was dubbed Soapy instead of his real Christian name Randolph.

The soap racket at the time Soapy first saw it was this: the operator would push a gold coin into the bar of soap then wrap it in paper and toss it into an open suitcase with several other similar packages. Mixing them up, the onlookers, for a small sum, would endeavor to pick out the one with the gold. Strangely, one of the "shills" (confederates) would always manage to select the lucky one which they would open and allow the others to see.

Soapy realized that people suspected that the coin was slid out in some way and the "lucky ones" loaded in one as they opened their selection. So he changed the procedure and instead of the gold coin he wrapped up hundred, fifty and twenty dollar bills. He later even left a small corner of the hundred dollars peeking out of the wrapped package. This was only a tiny portion of the real bill but enticed the buyers who fell for it.

The reason for this brief introduction is what just happened a few days ago. Vicky Grismer, the attractive daughter of Ray Grismer, was in Las Vegas. She happened to be showing a friend a couple of card tricks. An onlooker, a middleaged man was watching. When she concluded, this man asked her if she knew three card monte. She told him she did but did-not wish to bend her cards so she declined to demonstrate.

She was asked several other questions and this gentleman was astounded that she was so well informed. He finally asked her if she'd ever heard of Soapy Smith. When her yes answer amazed him he told her that he was the grandson of Soapy and had many of his belongings .

To get to the point, he invited her to bring Ray and me to his home to see the collection of his grandfather. What a great treat this was to see these actual things. A Faro layout with the case keeper, the square-cornered cards with no indices, the card press and dealing box. Also a roulette wheel and an actual ivory ball which was cracked. There were so very many photographs, letters. dice, chips, cards. etc., that it was truly bewildering.

One very interesting thing was the actual wooden plaque that marked Soapy's grave. Our host, "Randy" Smith, managed to get it in Skagway. He exchanged it for a stone marker which he purchased at the time for only fifty dollars. While we were there another visitor arrived with his wife.

"Blackie" Gattis. He got his nickname from his association with the late Harry Blackstone, Sr.

I must say that "Randy" Smith and his daughter, Linda, were ideal hosts. The entire tour through his home was fascinating. In many of the rooms pictures on the walls opened like doors to disclose treasures of bygone days . . . some even, entrances to another room. Randolph Smith was formerly employed by Disneyland and made skulls and other artifacts. Now he deals in antiques and is a true gentleman in every way.

November 1983

Several years ago Jay Marshall and I were talking about friends in New York City. At the time we were in a schoolroom in Texas where I was to give a lecture. I left Jay for a brief time and when I returned I was very surprised to find the large blackboard covered with dozens and dozens of names of magicians. Jay told me it would be of great interest to the audience if I would discourse about any one they might select. So at this late stage I am using his idea for this column.

You must remember that each one on this extensive list has passed away. Furthermore, all mentioned are ones that I spent time with in New York. This is one of the many reasons that I declined to visit the Lou Tannen Conventions. To me, a visit there is depressing as I vividly recall the many pleasant times with those dear departed ones. Very difficult to realize.

Theo Annemann, Bert Allerton, Albini, Percy Abbott, Alberto, Ted Arnold, Bill Arenholz, Sam Arenson, Elmer Applegait, Al Baker, Roy Benson, Alfred Benzon, Ken Brooke, Theo Bamberg (Okito), David Bamberg (Fu Manchu), Clinton Burgess, Milton Bridges, Arnold Belais, Bill Baird, Ladson Butler, Francis Carlyle, Dick Cardini, Henry Christ. Senator Crandall. Paul Carlton. Jud Cole, Cortini, Cantu, Henry Clive. Chas Carter, John Brown Cook, Ed Dart, Dr. Daley, T. Nelson Downs, Joe Dunninger, Harry Drilinger, Julius Dresback, Jimmy Drilling, Ade Duval, Frank Ducrot, Dr. Elliott, Bruce Elliott. Arthur Finley. Jose Frakson, Paul Fox, Al Flosso, Ed Fechter, Dr. Fries, Art Felsman. Larry Gray. Gen Grant, Karl Germaine, Lew Ganson. Gene Glazer. Dr Giovanni, Jack Gwynne, Horace Goldin, Roland Goodman. Max Holden, Henry Hardin. Sam Horowitz, Royal Heath, Theo Hardeen, Harry Houdini, Dick Himber, Burling Hull, Henry Huber, Chas Harris, Hank Haskell, Dr. Hooker. Laurie Ireland, Gene Irving, Emil Jarrow, Guy Jarrett, George Jason, Hugh Johnson, Dr. Jaks, Stewart Judah, Fred Keating, Warren Keane, Fred Kaps, Gerald Kaufman, Max Katz, George Karger, Harry Kellar, Nate Leipzig, Servais Le Roy, Paul Le Paul. Max Malini, Jack Merlin, One Arm McDonald, Silent Mora, Henry Mendoza, Tommy Martin, Welsh Miller, Jack Miller, John Mulholland, Eddie McGuire, Leon McGuire, Bert Morey, Paul Morris, Nikola, Paul Nafke, Charlie Nagel, Sig Nathan, Dell O'Dell, Ohms, Count Orloff, Glen Pope, Polgar, Julian Proskauer. Paul Poole, Clyde Powers, Frank Pickard, Shirley Quimby. Paul Rosini. Carl Rosini. Ralph Reid, David Roth, Stewart Robson, Clayton Rawson, Joe Rinn, Elmer Ransom, Rajah Rayboid, Si Stebbins, Russell Swan, Allen Shaw, Frank Shepard, Jack Salvin, John Sprong, Bob Sherman. Chung Ling Soo. Howard Thurston, Lou Tannen, Oscar Teale, Jimmy Thompsons, Roland Travers, Jack Trepel, Dr. Traub. Harry Usher, Audley Walsh, Russ Walsh, Jim Wobensmith, Bill Williston, Professor Waters, Professor "X, Cyril Yettmah, Julius Zanzig, Bernie Zufal, Louis Zingone.

Any reader who would care to know something about any of the magicians mentioned can drop me a postcard I shall be glad to briefly answer in future columns, Please do not ask me for direct answers by mail,

As Roy Benson used to say while performing. "If you wish to examine any of my 'props', it's entirely out of the question!"

Many times readers ask me to send them a photograph. I am sorry to state that I do not have any at this time, Nevertheless I feel flattered that anyone would care for one of an old codger like me Readers should realize that I am "over the hill" and I certainly "doff my hat" to some of the extremely clever young chaps cropping up everywhere.

Also I have had many inquiries about the book that should have been published over 20 years ago . . . "REVELATIONS". This was written years ago in St. Joseph, MO. Faucett Ross and I used Erdnase as a guide and commented on each of the many items. Also explained were many novel ways of taking advantage in card games.

Perhaps in the near future it may "see the light of day", at any rate I hope so. Ask P.D.

Just had dinner with Ray Grismer and he has come up with the best version of the sympathetic cards I have ever seen All done with regular cards.

December 1983

One of my greatest pleasures during the last eighty years has been meeting and getting to know clever exponents of the Art we enjoy. Back in the fifties when I gave my first lecture in London, England, I was keenly interested in meeting chaps I had hitherto only heard about. Cardini told me that Edward Victor was the best sleight-of-hand performer. However, John Ramsay stated quite emphatically that Edward Brown was superior. Of course, as it is said, "We couldn't have horse betting if everyone agreed".

In recent time all the knowledgeable chaps in America agree that Fred Robinson wears the crown. Largely due to the persuasive powers of Bob Reid, Fred came to Hollywood to give a lecture at the Castle. I had the pleasure of having him stay with me in my apartment while he was here.

Luke McKissack, who lives in one of the more luxurious homes, had 21 special guests attend a private lecture in these pleasant surroundings. His charming, dainty little wife, Mariko, had put together platters of delicious food and there was a large table literally covered with all kinds of liquid refreshments.

The audience was a very select one and Fred proved his extraordinary control of the pasteboards. He opened with an extremely clean vanish of a coin folded in his necktie and he stressed the great importance of misdirection. This latter is a very complex subject and takes many forms. Unfortunately few really understand its application.

The conjuror must be an actor— by his expression, by his gestures, by the tone of his voice. In short, by his acting he produces his effects. Every look, besides every word, should tend to lead the mind into the wrong groove. Misdirection is the ground basis of the conjurors' actions. And the more natural the performer's movement in this particular, the more complete will be his success. I am of the opinion that every conjuror can best suit himself if he is only firmly impressed with the absolute necessity for misdirection. This paraphrased from Sachs.

Devant wrote — Calculated misdirection is the most important thing in conjuring.

Nate Leipzig said — "One of the most valuable lessons that I ever had in making the audience like my magic came from actors rather than magicians. Besides, without proper presentation the best sleight-of-hand trick is nothing but a juggling feat."

Card mechanics from the gaming tables refer to SHADE. Watching even the cleverest and imperceptible move they ask, "What shade do you use?" "How do you get into it?" "What cover?"

And needless to remark, they never so much as glance at the cards when dealing either seconds or bottoms.

When Charlie Miller asked Max Malini to tell him the real secret of his magic Max replied, "It's the eye . . . you wait." Charlie asked how long. Max answered, 'You wait a week.' In other words never try the best of sleights until you meet the spectator's eye.

I'd now like to make a few comments regarding so-called PATER. Years ago while having a session with Al Baker he gave me a closing line for an effect I was using. I had given a phoney explanation to what I had done. Al said, "Simply say . . . 'that's my story. I'm going to stick to it.'"

. . .

When I tried it out on the ship enroute to Rio de Janeiro it meant nothing. I had put in the article "and" after "story". Upon my return to New York I asked Al why it did not even get a small chuckle. Al asked me to repeat the line to him which I did. He asked why the "and". Few magicians realize how important the wording is.

Dick Cavett gives some good illustrations in his new book, "Eye on Cavett" One of the chapters is about English being a dying language. It gives good examples of how critics in quoting famous comedians like Fred Allen, Groucho, and others. distort and spoil their subtle and ludicrous remarks when they publish them. As a good example he gives, "That's no lady, that's my wife". Misquoted: "That's no lady. that's the woman I'm married to;". Both mean exactly the same thing but why destroy a classic.

I'd like to say how fortunate it was that Richard Turner and Janalee, his fascinating and pretty wife, happened to be up from San Diego.

Richard came over to my apartment to visit Fred Robinson and they had a "get-together" that was relished by both. What a pair! Without any doubt both execute seconds, bottoms, and middles better than anyone in the world.

Their proficiency can only be attained by, not hours or weeks or months, but years of dedicated application and especially striving and Percystence.

Last night I went to see the opening of the annual "IT'S MAGIC" show. I had the pleasure of being with Bill Larsen's mother, Gerrie, and with Bill Bowers and Andrea. We had dinner and drinks before showtime in the large Variety Arts dining room where we recognized several other Magic Castle members.

The show opened with the appearance of Peter Kersten. He was dressed extremely stylishly and gave a few introductory remarks. His warmth and personality immediately captured the audience and he could do no wrong.

He introduced the Pendragons, the opening act. This healthy and handsome-looking couple, Char and Jonathan, have continued to improve and alter their act for the last several years. Every move, every gesture that either of them make is highly artistic and done with a decided flair. They can most certainly hold their own in the fastest company.

Second came Peter Kersten who more than proved that he was thoroughly conversant with the true Art of Magic. It is well-known to the Castle members that Peter hails from Vienna and every year produces his own full evening show in the beautiful Theatre an der Wien. Besides all this he has a very fine baritone voice and has made many records.

Third came the winner of the Gold Medal for stage magic at the prestigious F.I.S.M. in Lausanne, Switzerland. How refreshing it is to see clever alterations of the overworked Zombie. His presentation has a "poetic" quality and is truly charming

Next came Joseph. John Shrum set off his superlative act in an angular black background which helped greatly to enhance and show up every move of this extraordinary young artist. Words fail me to express my great admiration for this amazing performer.

Fifth came Majax whom I have known for many years. Here in the Castle library we have several of his books which are full of valuable information, Majax is extremely versatile and has a most attractive manner on stage. He comes from France and he is a

typical example of "that continental charm". in Paris he has his own television show and besides he is a qualified actor in films.

Next to closing came Senor Wences who must have been seen by almost everyone. He has appeared all over the world for years and who else has ever been on the Ed Sullivan Show 49 times? Few, however, know that "Pedro" started out to be a bull fighter in Spain, but due to a nearly fatal encounter he decided to try something different. He took up juggling and ventriloquism.

Last night he gave a very good demonstration of both. In my opinion the only ventrilo presentation I have ever seen . . . the only one that even comes close to his "Man in the Box" is Jay Marshall's "If I Had My Way".

To close the evening's entertainment was another gold medal winner. Wayne and Sandy Allen. This original stage illusion act has appeared on all three of the major TV networks and had the honor of three appearances at the White House.

Milt and Bill Larsen most certainly should have beautiful. beautiful feathers in their hats for producing this 30th edition of "It's Magic! "

January 1984

I recently finished reading "EYE ON CAVETT" by Dick Cavett and Christopher Porterfield. One chapter — "Is English A Dying Language" mentions many choice examples. I am going to take the liberty of quoting from his book a few of his observations regarding comedy.

"Comedy is in many ways the most exacting of verbal forms. It puts a high premium on the clarity, precision and grace that I've been talking about. The kind of loose, casual language that may be all very well for other purposes simply won't do for being funny.

"That is one reason why comic writers and performers tend to be our sharpest and most crystalline stylists. Any examples I give are bound to start arguments, but I think of Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, P. G. Wodehouse, James Thurber, Groucho Marx, Evelyn Waugh and Woody Allen, just for starters.

"A joke, an aphorism, a witty saying can be worded only ONE WAY. The slightest change—one too many syllables, a substituted word—and its force and beauty are ruined.

"To those of us who deal in this sort of thing, a misquoted joke or funny line is as painful as it is for a musician to hear Chopin sharpened or flatted in the wrong places.

"There is a gleaming example of perfect wording by Fred Allen that is always misquoted and ends up badly crippled. Allen once said — 'You could take all the sincerity in Hollywood, place it in a flea's navel, and still have room for four caraway seeds and the heart of an agent'. You can readily see how the first half could be turned around and unnecessary words added, but the more subtle distortion comes at the end. 'The Heart of an agent!' almost invariably comes out 'An agent's heart'.

"People still laugh, but they miss the rich deftness of the original. True, the heart of an agent and an agent's heart are the same thing but the lofty, poetic construction of 'the heart of' followed by the mundane word 'agent' provides at least two levels of humor, whereas the misquote has less than one. Would people who settle for the misquote say there is no difference between 'She has the grace of a swan' and 'She has a swan's grace'?

"Allen made a famous crack about a town in Maine that was so dull that 'one day the tide went out and never came back'. The offender rendered the line as '. . . and never came back again'. I realize that in both cases you have a non-returning tide, but the extra word betrays an ear of tin, if not tinfoil.

"To writers or performers with a finely tuned sense of comedy (and hence of language) no detail is too small, no shading too fine to be worth polishing, precisely because the tiniest blurring can be fatal to the effect.

"There is such a thing in humor as spelling it out, i.e., making a joke too clear. It tends, unhappily, to make the joke less funny as well.

"An example: 'There have been many great comedy teams: Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, Jack E. Leonard . . .' Apparently fearing that listing the rotund comedian among comedy teams might be too subtle for the audience, the line was reworded so that a head of cabbage would get the point. It came out thus: 'Laurel and Hardy, Abbott and Costello, and big fat Jack E. Leonard, who is so fat he's a one man comedy team all by himself!'"

Years ago, in the twenties, one of my favorite effects was the Cards up the Sleeve. Watching Arthur Lloyd perform it, he received a nice laugh by remarking, "The cards pass up my sleeve and across my body into the pocket. This is my body where I wear my shirt."

I asked Arthur's permission to use the line which I understood to be the one I have just quoted. I tried it and it meant absolutely nothing. Later I asked why it registered so hopelessly.

He asked me to repeat the exact words I had used. Very stupidly I had deleted one essential word: "This is my body, lady, where I wear my shirt."

I have had several requests to write up a simple card effect . . . one devoid of sleights if possible So here goes:

I'll name it **DOWN UNDER ELIMINATION**. Have the deck shuffled and then lay out 10 cards, face down, and an overlapping row. Ask the onlooker to turn any one of the cards face up and leave it in position in the row.

Then he is told to scoop up the cards into a packet and execute the **DOWN and UNDER DEAL**. Surprisingly the last card will be the one selected.

The method is very simple. If the reversed card is fourth from the right (top) end the cards are scooped up by the spectator and squared. The top face-down card is placed on the table and the next card is placed underneath the packet on the bottom . . . and this is done alternately until one card remains in his hands . . . the chosen card!

If the reversed is fifth from right end (top) the only difference is to place the top card underneath the packet instead of on the table. Then continue the alternating deal until chosen card is left in hands.

The procedure is identical if the fourth or fifth card is counted from the left (bottom) end of the spread. In this case the spectator is told to scoop the cards up and hold them face up in his hands. The deal is done as explained above.

Now if the selected (reversed) card is second or third from either end you must scoop up the cards and palm one card from the bottom of the face-down or face-up packet (depending on which end the reversed card is located). If the card is second the first card dealt goes onto the table. If the reversed card is third the first card dealt goes under the packet and the next card onto table, etc., as before. Try this out with cards in hand, I think you will like it. Don't worry about spectator choosing either end card . . . if they do just make some remark about making the trick more difficult if they don't use an end card!

February 1984

I have just returned from a most enjoyable visit to the magical doings in Scottsdale, Arizona. Our President of the Magic Castle and publisher of this magazine drove Bill Bowers and me back from the Burbank Airport. He mentioned that many of the GENII readers were young people just starting to learn and it would be a good idea to write some helpful advice and a few salient hints to beginners.

FIRST and foremost, you must decide about your aims—your desires —your target.

Many I have known over the years join magical societies. After being members for some duration, it seems strange that they are unable to perform even a simple trick! However, they seem to enjoy the fact that they can talk with authority and convincingly to outsiders about magic and magicians.

Others have large collections of books and take great pride in this fact. They also have only slight ability when attempting an effect of any kind.

With many others, they air to fool and perplex fellow wonder workers. They will waste countless hours trying to perfect a second or bottom deal.

But to take up the art as a hobby and receive true satisfaction, it is necessary to join clubs—to hold office—or to own apparatus or have a library.

However, an absolute MUST is to read as many as possible of the classics.

Two of the very finest ENTERTAINERS I have ever known to use only a pack of cards, were Herbert Brooks and Larry Gray. Both performed other effects in their acts but for impromptu work they were superlative.

The reason I mention this is because both relied solely on the pass, palm, false shuffle and force. No double lift—no packet tricks—just sheer entertainment.

Let me state at the outset that acquiring the art is a very rewarding HOBBY. Simply the fact that you wear a little rabbit stick pin or make it known that you are interested and perform a few simple tricks will act as an OPEN SESAME. You will meet and make pleasant and obliging friends anywhere you may travel.

However, do not neglect the really important and lasting things of life. Schooling, behavior, character and language.

Concerning the latter, Charles W. Elliott, when president of Harvard University, stated, "I recognize but one acquisition as an essential part of the education of a lady or gentleman. Namely, an accurate and refined use of the mother tongue."

Speech, or so-called patter, if used when performing, is most important. Even one small slip or grammatical error can mar and detract from an otherwise fine performance. Needless to remark, the more everything is done in good taste, the more the performance will be appreciated.

Even when giving a silent performance. It is of utmost importance not to embarrass anyone and above all else, not to adopt a superior or conceited demeanor.

Years ago when I used to cut silhouettes on weekends at Coney Island in New York, Albert Goshman would often watch me. Sometimes young boys would ask me if I was Dai Vernon the magician and ask me for an autograph. Goshman once remarked, "I've never been asked for an autograph". I said, "Albert, if you learn to do ANY of the

known tricks better than anyone else. all magicians will remark if they see the trick performed by someone else. 'You should see Goshman do that'."

Albert asked my advice as to what trick he should practice. He said he liked coins. At this time Stars of Magic had just appeared for sale. I told Al that there was an item I had contributed with the superlative name —SPELLBOUND.

To get to the point. Persi Diaconis and Goshman visited Colon. Michigan to the annual Get-Together Abbotts runs. Everywhere everyone was raving about the way he performed this effect. Goshman is probably exhausted today from signing autographs.

The late Fred Kaps told me that there was only one Goshman with coins.

The above was only recorded to say to some of you younger readers that you must decide on any effect that you prefer. Keep practicing it over and over — not just good enough but better and better every time. Think of plausible remarks and if there are sleights involved. figure out good misdirection to cover and conceal the action. Keep thinking about it constantly trying to improve and simply marvelous results will accrue.

Misdirection X as personified in the magic of John Ramsey and Max Malini. "Mechanics" of the gaming table use the picturesque term. SHADE. They never make a false move Without cover of some kind.

When Charlie Miller asked Malini the true secret of his work, he remarked. 'It's the eye. you wait'. Charlie asked how long? The answer was, "a week".

In other words, when eyes are glued on your hands it is well nigh impossible to execute any secret move.

When Revelli wrote for John Ramsay. he did not realize the importance of eye contact. John told him. "Put it in capitals . . . large print . . . LOOK AT THE AUDIENCE". This is the true secret of sure force. Malini. Sam Margules and Al Flosso all used this disarming method. Never. never. never look at the spread when asking someone to "take a card".

I am looking forward to the Academy Banquet next month and the Seminar in Las Vegas. Joe Stevens has a wonderful way of getting wonderful young performers out every year as well as many of our older friends. Then. as I enter my 90th year. we will have a cruise to Alaska. Please forgive me if I don't respond to your letters but I do appreciate hearing from you and if you would like me to write on some particular subject. you can always write me c/o The Magic Castle. 7001 Franklin Ave.. Hollywood. CA 90028.

March 1984

Before I write anything else let me state this: I feel extremely grateful to be treated so fondly by my many friends. Nearly every day here in the Castle someone approaches and warmly shakes my hand. They remark, "You're Dai Vernon, are you not?" Having never met the person before it is flattering that they should know my name.

The only way that I can explain it is the fact of the odd name "Dai" and the over eighty years that I've been around. At any rate it is very gratifying to have warm and congenial friends.

Just a few days ago a young Japanese conjuror named Abeson whom I had never met visited the Castle. He presented me with a handsome wooden set of Cups and a wand to match. Also a Sony stereo recorder. I cannot express in words my admiration for the Japanese magicians. They are so polite, so gracious, and go all-out to make your visit to Japan a lasting memory.

I recently heard from Yamada of the Tenyo Company that they are moving to a new address. Incidentally I nearly always clip on the gold and pearl tie clasp that Yamada gave me on my first visit to Japan.

This week that superlative performer. Shimada, is working in the Palace with his daughter. Usually his beautiful Australian wife assists him but their daughter does a very efficient job.

Naturally some weeks the shows are better than others. These last two have been exceedingly good. Besides Shimada they had Fielding West with his unique presentation of the Metamorphosis and his pleasing personality. Then in the Close-Up Room: John Carney. Jim Lewis, Bruce Cervon, and Eugene Burger. All excellent performers.

Besides Goldfinger and Dove who do an exciting and brilliant act we have had only a few black performers. However. William McQueen in the Close-Up Room really delighted the audiences. In fact. Ozzie Malini. Max's son. told me that the act was the best he had seen in the Castle.

Many visitors to the Castle often see very interesting effects apart from the regular shows. Larry Jennings often drops in and astounds groups who gather around to watch him. Max Maven, Jim Patten. Tom Blue. Gary Harris, and Chris Michaels are often here and they always show effects of interest to mystify the visitors.

For the last 20 years I have been almost a constant visitor to the Castle and I am constantly asked who I consider to be the greatest of days gone by I mention Harry Kellar. Harry Blackstone. Horace Goldin who all did large stage shows. Often they say, "How about Houdini?" Let me state emphatically that Harry Houdini was a very mediocre conjuror. However he was an extraordinary escape artist and an amazing showman.

During my long life I have had the good fortune to meet and know all the past fine performers. Not too long ago Cardini. Channing Pollock. and Tommy Martin were the absolute tops. Today Lance Burton, Joseph, and James Dimmare are shining stars in their specialties. Of course Doug Henning, David Copperfield. and Mark Wilson. Owing to their exposure on television, have done much to popularize the Art.

Very few magicians realize that it was Doug Henning who did almost the same thing as the great Robert Houdin. Instead of the conventional attire, he adopted the casual dress of the younger members of our society. This was unique and his success proves his good judgment. Doug has a great love of magic and his sincerity comes across to all who see him or meet him.

Attitude is especially important for anyone who performs magic. The most deadly fault is to adopt a superior attitude. It is fatal, and most annoying to people. Any hint of conceit when performing is deadly. Great care should be taken to be gracious when attempting to mystify people.

Also when many amateurs are performing they seem to be working in front of a mirror. They fail to look at the audience. When working they should look from person to person, sides, front, and back of the room. This way those looked at feel that you are interested in their opinion and this flatters them.

Also it is extremely important to talk clearly and punctuate your sentences. Never seem to be making a speech. Adapt terse sentences and do not run the words all together.

Two examples of two fine performers . . . Allen Shaw and Judson Cole. The former: "The dream of a miser . . . money and how to get it. Watch! Look! Listen!" Jud Cole: "It's a well-known fact . . . when you produce an American Flag . . . it always produces . . . thunderous applause. Not always . . . but sometimes. Perhaps I'm in the wrong country!"

Talking of stage magic it is important to remember that by the time you have walked from the wings to center stage over half of the spectators have already made up their minds as to whether or not they are going to enjoy your act. Therefore, enter with a cordial and friendly manner. If you do this you will have at least half of an attentive audience.

April 1984

I am very pleased that this issue of GENII is featuring my friend. Joe Stevens. Joe has done a great deal to give prominence to our Art. His seminars, held in Las Vegas, are truly excellent. Under his expert guidance everything runs like clockwork.

I have known Joe for quite a length of time and have visited his home upon numerous occasions. He and his charming wife, Martha, go all out to make a visit memorable. Martha really delights in beating me at Gin. She is also a most capable Hearts player and this pretty blonde lady dishes out the black lady when you least expect it.

The fact that Joe manages to have Siegfried and Roy as features at his seminars is a real feather in his cap. I must state that he has been more than nice to me. I feel very guilty because on my last visit he gave me two hundred dollars to shoot crap, fifty fifty. I played for nearly an hour betting five dollars at a time and taking the proper odds. However, I never seemed to get much ahead, so I switched to twenty five dollar bets and wouldn't you know I ran into an unusual number of double aces and sixes and acey deuceys.

Wichita, where Joe has his store, was a former camping ground for me. It was while living at the Harrison Apartments with Faucett Ross that I worked in the Innes Store for some months clipping silhouettes. Also it was while dwelling there that Charlie Miller visited us. It was my first sight of Charles Earl Miller.

I'll never forget how he asked us both to sit and watch him perform. He executed quite a number of card tricks and asked me if they were done right. He claimed that he had only read the effects of mine as described by Max Holden in his Sphinx column "Trouping Around with Magic". Done right? . . . why some of them had me completely bewildered! He then took some very large yellow billiard balls out of his case and performed a really splendid routine.

It was only a short time before this that the Prince of Wales had started the Windsor Knot, and it was being taught by haberdashers in New York. I said to Charlie, "I'll bet you don't know how to tie a Windsor Knot". He promptly replied, "Come into the bathroom where there is a mirror, take off your tie, and follow my actions." Well, he was a good teacher and I have tied the knot literally thousands of times since.

It was also in Wichita that I met "Where Did the Ducks Go?" Nixon. Besides his famous ducks vanish he performed the needle trick in a most effective way. Not only did he swallow many needles but he emptied a box of matches and apparently swallowed them also. The display at the finish was most effective . . . a match between each set of glistening needles. Strange that no one knows what happened to "Doc" Nixon. Rumor has it that he became a Trappist Monk.

For a time during this period I was quite obsessed with the game of checkers and carried Lee's Guide as a help. While in a store I had rented to cut silhouettes an elderly stranger came in and spotting a pack of cards on my table, picked them up, and I was greatly intrigued by one item he did for me. When I returned to our apartment I told Faucett about this visitor and insisted that he come in the next day to see this above mentioned trick.

This old timer was a neat character and also an excellent checker player. He beat me many games. His favorite expression was, ' Now you see I force you to come up to the morners bench." Or. "Oh. you're going that away . . . I'll go this way."

Following is an item I have had on file for quite some time. I pass it along to you without recommendations! I think you will find it interesting.

One of the country's most successful short-change artists. who averages \$100 an hour bilking unsuspecting cashiers. has revealed her basic technique in an exclusive interview. Refusing to reveal her name, the Long Beach, California. con woman told the interviewer the thing you have to do is pick your marks very carefully . . . if you pick the wrong clerk, You're screwed (these are her words!).

You start out with a \$10 note. You go into a store and buy something for under a dollar. Now you give the \$10 to the clerk and she will start giving back your change. coins first. As soon as she has given you your coins you turn and act as if you're leaving. The clerk calls you back. "Just a moment". she says. "You forgot the rest of your change." So you turn back and look rather confused as she hands you your \$9.00. Now. when you have that \$9.00 in your hand you say, "I'm sorry but I didn't mean to give you a Ten. I really didn't want to break it. can I please have it back and I'll give you a five and five ones for it?"

Most people will say sure because they don't want big bills in their cash drawer. The object is to get your ten back . . . so you ask for it. The clerk gives you your Ten and you give her the Five and four Ones in your hand. Then you say. "Count it to make sure it's right."

You have another Dollar bill in pocket that can be obtained readily while she is counting the bills. She counts the money, "Five. six, seven, eight. nine. you have just nine. . . you owe me another dollar."

At this point you have the Ten to which you have added the One in your hand. she has nine. you say. "I tell you what . . . you have nine there. right? Here's eleven more. Eleven and nine make twenty. Give me a Twenty." So you walked in with a Ten and you walk out with Twenty!

The con woman claims this works. if done properly. and that she has racked up many a dollar using this routine Again ma! I state that I do not recommend that !'011 try!' it just thought it might be of interest and an item for your file'

May 1984

I am always pleased to receive the MAGIC CIRCULAR from London's famous club. Reading of my many English friends is most interesting and also reading news about those I know only by name. Of Keane interest was the January issue.

Ever since I was a small boy I read about Martin Chapender in the magazine MAHATMA. The fact that when the Magic Circle was first founded and they were seeking a name. The Martin Chapender Club was suggested but they finally settled on the Magic Circle. at least using his initials.

Here at the Castle when Kuda Bux was alive he was quite decided in his opinion He claimed that Chapender was the greatest performer he had ever witnessed The account in the Magic Circular by Neil Weaver is most interesting and I trust that if I quote it almost verbatim no one will mind.

Mr. Chapender enters attired in evening dress, wearing opera hat and carrying a cane. Gloves carelessly removed vanish. Hat is placed on table. He then introduces his clever stick trick with which he has so cleverly puzzled many magicians. Stick is first shown to be solid then vanishes and is reproduced from trousers pocket. Two envelopes then shown, each of which exactly fit the stick.

Stick is placed in one of them and the mysterious stick is discovered in the second previously shown empty envelope and is immediately passed out for examination to prove that it is really a solid stick.

Clever card experiments next follow. Color changes by five different methods which, with appropriate patter, introduce his improved version of Rising Cards in which the acme of neatness and effect is reached In this, two cards rise from glass on table and two a la Thurston. The extraordinary part being that no duplicates are used and every card is initialed by the drawer and placed in the pack by him. Furthermore, as each card rises it is handed straight to the drawer and the initials verified.

The single handed diminishing cards come next. This is perfection in itself as there are five changes and the right hand never approaches the cards At every stage the cards are fanned out and both the back pattern and the faces of the cards are shown. This is a Wonderfully pretty trick and a great improvement over the old way of fuddling about with two hands.

His billiard balls, the piece de resistance of his act and for which he bares his arms to show no preparation is presented. It is worth noting that at England's Home of Mystery he so extensive use of patter. The conclusion of his billiard balls is unique. A white ball is wrapped in a piece of newspaper, then torn apart and out flies a pigeon. (Added note: This was back at the turn of the century.)

He then gets avaricious and taking up his opera hat produces in rapid succession a rabbit, live dove, another rabbit and finally a large cockeral The entertainment concludes with the vanishing Watch and nest of boxes.

His stage settings: Extremely artistic and simple. Nothing on stage except glass top table, ordinary chair and two small side tables . . all undraped, while a small box suspended in the air completes the picture.

Chapender's last season (before his untimely death at the age of only 27) was highly successful despite strong opposition in the persons of Chung Ling Soo at the Hippodrome, Ching Ling Foo at the Empire (with the challenge to Soo and the attendant Can Foo sue Foo? Can Soo fool Soo? publicity). and Horace Goldin at the Palace in contrast to THE GUV'NOR. J. N. Maskelyne who was struggling to attract audiences to The Comings Race at St. George's Hall

In conclusion I'd like to say that I hope this account of Chapender's act will spur on some to try for originality.

There has always been a great mystery concerning THE EXPERT AT THE CARD TABLE. All we know is the fact that S. W. Erdnase spelled backwards is E. S. Andrews and that he was the supposed author.

This book was copyrighted in the Department of Agriculture in my hometown. It was in the year 1902. I was eight years old at the time. The bound edition sold for two dollars and a cheaper one for twenty-five cents. I devoured this book and by the time I was 10 years old I was familiar with every item it contained.

Referring to the Cards up the Sleeve, the method he describes states: Sleights required: "Masterly feats of palming and unflinching audacity". At the time I truly failed to have the latter.

My very dear friend, Martin Gardner, made exhaustive attempts to discover who this mysterious person really was. He mailed postal cards (in those days for a penny) to nearly every college and high school asking if they ever had an E. S. Andrews in their school. He received the names of several persons of the same surname but none with the initials E. S. I cannot recall whether or not he mailed any cards to Canada but he should have done so.

Well over twenty years ago while visiting my dear friend. Faucett Ross. in St. Joseph, MO. we wrote a lengthy digest of the book. I very strongly felt that it would be of great value to students of magic to thoroughly understand and relish this outstanding contribution to the art of artistic card handling. It seems most strange that at this late date, REVELATIONS is still shrouded in mystery.

June 1984

The 1984 Magic Cruise was truly a great success. Larry Krams, Eric Girard, Don Fenwick and Rick Rasmussen did a "bang up" job. Everything ran extremely smooth and the fact that a large majority of the passengers signed up for next year should tell the story. Magic Christian, Shimada, James Dimmere, Glen Falkenstein, Frances Willard, Peter Pit and Tom Ogden all more than pleased those aboard.

I shared a cabin with John Carney and though he was not booked to perform he added greatly to the enjoyment of the passengers with his superlative close-up routines.

There was considerable excitement on board when news came over the loud speaker that there had been a shipwreck. Our ship, the Rotterdam, changed course at once and spotted two rubber lifeboats filled with survivors. Poor Magic Christian was just terminating his lecture when his entire audience jumped to their feet and rushed to starboard to behold the two stranded floats with two helicopters hovering above.

It was most interesting to watch as they lowered tandem seats to haul people up into the machines. Fortunately everyone of the 21 were saved. People aboard our ship burst into applause as the last two were rescued.

I was sorry that we did not stop at Skagway. Peter Isaacs from Toronto, Canada, was aboard with Willis Kenny and Maureen. He had sent me a very interesting account of Soapy Smith published by the Northwest Mounted Police. I was surprised to read in the article that Inspector Wood was a great grandson of a president of the United States, and son of an Annapolis Naval Academy instructor. He graduated from the same school I attended—the Royal Military College in Kingston, but exactly 10 years before I was even born.

He then joined the Northwest Mounties. He was largely responsible for restoring Skagway to a normal state. Soapy Smith, whose real name was Jefferson Randolph Smith, had been the solo dictator ruler and king of Skagway. His life story makes fascinating reading and there are many books telling of his "soap racket," shell game and three card monte.

The last fortnight in the Castle has been of great interest to me. Gordon Bruce, having time off from the symphony orchestra, visited these shores for a holiday. He was accompanied by his beautiful young wife who also plays the cello in the orchestra. Gordon ranks with the very top when he handles playing cards. He is a supreme artist and a most ingratiating person to meet. He comes from Glasgow, Scotland, which has produced such as John Ramsay, Roy Walton, Andy Gallaway, and a few teenage magicians.

When anyone of Gordon's stature visits Hollywood it's like moths to a flame. Steve Freeman, Ricky Jay and Stewart Gordon (who rarely grace the Castle) all came to witness a true artist perform. Praise from such as Larry Jennings and Chris Michaels is not handed out at random. Few people realize the thought and practice that Larry has expended on unusual moves and effects. Unfortunately it takes time, usually years, before anyone can acquire proficiency in card handling. Many believe that because they

know a few time-worn sleights that they should be accepted as capable performers. They do not realize that they do more harm to the Art—certainly nothing to enhance it.

While writing this Derek Dingle just arrived from San Francisco where he played a trade show. Derek has made quite a name for himself and is held in high esteem by all who follow the Art

Here's more regarding Soapy Smith:

To the accompaniment of a rapid fire come-on lingo he would mount a soap box and wrapping cake after cake of soap in real bank notes ranging from five to twenty dollars, exhort his audience to step up and get a bargain.

"Come forward, my friends." he would spiel. "There is no reason to be afraid. My father is a very rich man. He lives in Panama and sends me money to give away to lucky, deserving people."

If the crowd hung back as they usually did at first, one of his "shills," posing as an innocent bystander, would come forward and diffidently tender the required fee. Another purchaser would follow suit, and another, and before the eyes of the incredulous onlookers each of them would peel off a genuine 10 or 20 dollar bill from his bar of soap.

The effect was amazing and the spectators, shedding their inhibitions, rushed forward to get the rich cakes. But the vendor's legerdemain was quicker than the eye and the buyer invariably found that he had paid heavily for his childish faith.

Sometimes with only a dozen or so cakes left in the open suitcase he would mix them around and allow a glimpse of a 20 dollar bill, just the corner (and that's what it was . . . just the corner) sticking out. As the price X as a dollar a pick many would choose several in hopes of getting a ten or a twenty.

Note: The cakes of soap were wrapped with regular wrapping paper w with the bank notes apparently being wrapped inside w with the soap

July 1984

Ross Bertram: I cannot state in mere words my great admiration for this superb artist. He not only excels in all branches of conjuring but is a true gentleman in every respect.

I first met Ross long before "Stars of Magic" was first published. The pleasant memory of the time my dear friends Faucett Ross and the late Eddie Fechter spent with Ross in Toronto, Canada, still lingers in my mind as a most special event. Ross is a true perfectionist and has many other accomplishments besides magic.

Many years ago when I gave a lecture in the United States he was in attendance. He asked me if I could come to Toronto and give a talk there. Strangely, I had been considering visiting my mother who was living in Toronto. I did not let him know this.

In those days trains were the main means of transportation. When I accompanied him to the railroad station to see him depart I boarded the train with him. When the conductor called, "All aboard" Ross became nervous and told me I'd better hurry and get off. As the train started to move Ross became quite excited and told me to run quickly and be careful as I jumped off.

However I could not cause him any more worry so I told him the truth that I had already planned to visit my mother. He seemed really delighted and at least greatly relieved. Not only did I visit my mother but I spent many happy hours with Ross in his home. He even gave me a key to his house which he colored red (the key).

Again I'd like to state that I am at a loss to find superlatives to express my feelings. I consider my dear fellow Canadian friend to be one of the most talented and original masters of the Magical Art.

As readers of GENII know, I seldom contribute any magical effects but I consider it appropriate to write up "of all things" a twist on another Four Ace Trick. Here goes:

You secretly have the four aces hidden in your lap. Allow the pack to be shuffled. (Not by Larry Jennings because he'd ask for the rest of the cards') While this is taking place pull up your chair and palm three aces in the left hand (faces to palm) and palm the fourth ace in the right hand (back to palm). Bring up both hands and rest them on the table top, right hand on top of the back of the left hand.

Ask the spectator to cut the deck into four portions. As he finishes, the right hand "taps" the heap on the right as you say, "Keep them apart". The palmed ace is secretly dropped on this heap.

Now all that remains is to pick up the top card of each heap with the right hand and place them face down one by one into the left hand, concealing the three palmed aces. This pick-up is With fingers above as each card is drawn off and placed in the left hand in a fan formation. The ace you dropped on the right hand packet being the last card as you pick them up from left to right.

As the fan of four is closed the three cards in the left palm are secretly added and a break is secured at this time. With all the cards squared the top ace is turned face up and placed back evenly on the group. With fingers at the outer end and thumb at the inner end, the block above the break is placed on the left pile (the ace remaining face

up). and then each of the remaining three cards are shown to be aces. one by one. and placed face up on the remaining piles. Be sure to congratulate the spectator at his skill in cutting to the aces'

Bill Bowers. Chris Michaels. Brad Berlin. Bill and Irene Larsen and I went to San Francisco and I must say we thoroughly enjoyed the Magic Symposium. Adam Fleischer deserves great praise for the remarkable way the whole affair was conducted. And the fact that so many of my close friends were there made it most enjoyable.

Jack McMillan and his friend. Paul. were a true delight and it was a treat to see my longtime friend Harry Lorraine. Seeing Jeff McBride do his fantastic act was thrilling to say the least. I predict that if he visits F.I.S.M. next year in Madrid he will score like Lance Burton did last year.

I am at a loss to tell of the great pleasure I enjoyed meeting so many dear friends. Mel Brown I hadn't seen since he visited Jay Ose and me here at the Castle. Also Jeff Busby who has always been most kind to me. I more than enjoyed his writings and his thoroughly honest criticisms. I also had a chance to talk with his very pretty former wife Lynn I treasure the petty point silhouette which she executed so artistically.

Chris Michaels and I shared a room with Brad Berlin. You would think that after all the days' activities we would retire around midnight. However. no such thing. Around 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. in the early morning . . . Brad and I were fooling with the paste boards while Chris slept soundly.

Everyone in attendance thoroughly enjoyed all the events. It was a real treat to see Brother Hamman perform. His faultless handling of the cards should be a lesson to all who aspire to entertain with this branch of art.

With such wonderful entertainers as Mullica even the most blasé enjoyed every moment.

Many who attended had never met Richard Kaufman. They were intrigued by his pleasant personality and humility.

In my opinion he is by far the best of the current writers on the art and without question the very best of all the illustrators. His art work is superlative.

In closing. needless to remark. that Bill Bowers endeared himself to all he met as he is like Danny Dew one of nature's noblest men.

August 1984

I am actually amazed by the number of attractive ladies who nightly visit the Magic Castle. Quite often they actually out-number the males. I have quite often thought to myself . . . at least some of them must have considered so much magic to be boring. Surprisingly I often overhear them ask as they depart. "How can we be sure of returning again? How can we get another guest card?" (Non-members must be in the company of a Castle member or have been given a guest card by a member.)

At any rate everyone enjoys the friendly atmosphere and the fact that they can meander around — upstairs or downstairs — never being confined to one table. Also not forgetting the friendly bartenders and waiters who always act so obligingly. And, of course, the very nice looking cocktail waitresses and lobby hostesses add greatly to everything.

Talking of the girls—a few days ago a beautiful young actress named Patti made a suggestion. She asked me to suggest to our president, Bill Larsen, to have a week of nothing but magicians of the female sex. As strangers may not know, The Castle has three main show rooms: The Palace of Mystery, The Parlour of Mystery, and The Close-Up Room. The Palace for stage shows — the Parlour for smaller effects and the Close-Up for a more intimate type of trickery. The latter two rooms employ two performers. One early and the other later — each giving three performances nightly. The Palace generally puts on three full shows with three magicians during the evening. This makes a total of seven magicians each evening.

Therefore I consider it very unlikely that it would be possible to gather together seven young ladies qualified to work for a full week. Then again maybe we could if seven of the following were available for the same week: Diana the Enchantress - the graceful Mia - Tina - Gino Demarco - Brenda - Judy Carter - Minette - Paula Panda - and Kathy Diamond. Just this week I had the pleasure of seeing the latter attractive little girl perform. She shows great promise and I predict a great future for her.

Lovers of magic who never had a chance to visit here cannot imagine what a haven this Magic Castle has become. Just a few nights ago among the many present were some of my warmest friends, namely, in alphabetical order: Mike Ammar, Bill Bowers, Lance Burton, Bruce Cervon, Larry Clark, Ted Compton, Bob Jardine, Larry Jennings, Don Lawton, Nick Lewin, Jim Lewis, Max Maven, Norm Nielsen, Jim Patten, Johnny Thompson, and Mike Weber . . . not to mention a host of pretty girls.

I asked Editor Larsen what he would like for this edition and I suggested to him that in the future if he put out any photographs of myself I'd like to see them first! I realize that I am old and well on in years but I feel that I am not the ogre that appeared on the May issue!

Bill said write something about Houdini. Of course Harry Houdini was a master of showmanship but an ego-maniac. He was a master at all kinds of restraints but a very inferior magician. His most redeeming quality was that he was very kind to his mother and his wife, Bessie.

One day in the company of Sam Margules he cried like a baby, telling he made the biggest mistake of his life when he published "The Unmasking of Robert Houdin". One

has only to read Dr. Elliott's "Last Legacy" put out by Clinton Burgess and Houdini. The braggadocio is unbelievable. Dr. Elliott, with whom I spent many happy hours, was a giant compared to Harry.

One day, years ago, I think it was in the year 1917, Houdini was on the stage at a meeting of the magic club. Someone asked him if he could do the one-handed "spring drop". He claimed he used to do it all the time in his act. Someone insisted that he try to demonstrate it. He tried to spring the cards in a ribbon drop and they all scattered over the floor. Dr. Tarbell jumped forward and gathered them all up and handed them back to Houdini. By actual count SEVENTEEN times poor Doc sorted and picked up the cards.

To show the determination of Houdini he kept trying again and again to no avail. He finally dropped the cards not more than an inch or so then took a bow. Self-assurance is a commendable quality but supreme egotism is annoying to say the least. As an example of this, Stewart Judah and I, at Harry's request, visited the theatre in the morning and taught him "Snowtime in China".

We had only started to explain the effect when he said, "I see the whole procedure. I've got it." Well the next day he called up and wanted us over again as he was mixed up on some of the points. We returned and again explained. The next day we were asked to show him again! Three times we gave him all the details which were important. To get to the point, we attended the theatre to see his show and watched as he started to tear the paper and soak it in the glass of water. He reached down to the table for the stick. Suddenly he remarked, "Things are mixed up" and he abandoned the whole thing.

Harry Blackstone, Sr., Harry Kellar, Emil Jarrow. Guy Jarrett. LeRoy, are just a few who knew Houdini was in no way a magician of rank. His own brother, Hardeen, was much more "down to earth" than his famous brother.

EDITOR'S NOTE: With all the lovely ladies commanding Vernon's attention he has forgotten to tell you that his long awaited book, REVELATIONS, is now available. Beautifully produced by Magical Publications it is truly a masterpiece. Check the full page ad in the May issue (Page 330).

September 1984

Before I mention anything else I would like to disclaim the hideous photograph that appeared on the cover of the May issue of this magazine. Old as I am, this portrait portrays me as someone else . . . a real ogre and I assure you, I am not.

Bill Larsen has asked me to say a few words about younger conjurors who are just beginning to take up the art of magic.

When he first starts it would be a good idea to talk aloud and perform his tricks to himself. He should try to imagine that dozens of eyes are watching his every move. However, he must keep his mind off the people watching or he is irrevocably lost.

To the boy who is performing for members of his own family this advice applies just as much as it does to an entertainer who is performing on stage.

The cliché' . . . No man is a hero in his own hometown . . . applies. If he can convince his own family that he is fairly good, then he will have a number of publicity agents who will be truly valuable to him.

Do not be nervous or self conscious, do not think of failing or that the members of the audience are trying to catch you. I am quite certain that everyone watching a magical show likes to be puzzled, or a matter of fact they lose interest if they think they see how it is done. If you convince yourself of this fact, then you have gone a long ways towards achieving an early success.

After you have overcome any nervousness you should strive to cultivate a persuasive tongue and a ready wit.

I must tell you that the modern audience expects to be amused as well as puzzled. My dear departed friend Lou Derman wrote a book, "Add Comedy to Your Act". The magician who is somewhat of a comedian will go farther than his colleagues, and will be much more in demand

It is impossible to state any exact rules as to what to say and how to say it, however it is more important that the very first words you utter sound warm, inviting and friendly. In other words try to 'make love to the audience'.

Remember to develop your personality. It matters little whether you are abnormally tall or short, excessively fat or ridiculously thin. Take advantage of your particular features. There are countless examples of great stars in all phases of show business who come under one of the above categories.

A magic show is not merely a matter of telling people which card they selected or showing them how to link steel Rings together. It is the whole show that counts, and above all the person who is presenting that show. The tricks count, of course, but the personality of the magician counts much more.

I fully realize that many of the readers of this column seldom give so-called 'magic shows', but many are interested in acquiring great facility with difficult sleights and love to fool other magicians.

I personally find great delight in working on and developing so-called 'new moves'. However, I am firmly of the opinion that this is a weakness because many of the masters I have known make use of very few so called sleights and passes.

Two of the very best entertainers with cards — Larry Gray and Herbert Brooks — use only the standard pass force and false shuffle with an occasional top or bottom change.

I mention these two because they were superlative entertainers and never failed to 'destroy an audience'. The reason these two, now both departed, were so excellent was that everything they showed was crystal clear, no confusion, nothing to remember just sheer entertainment.

A most beautiful effect by my highly esteemed friend — Paul Curry 'Out of This World' has been destroyed by so-called improvements. Paul's original instructions should be strictly adhered to.

Al Baker's remark that most tricks were killed by improvements is very valid.

Enough said

October 1984

I must say that I feel extremely fortunate to have so many friends not only in this country but in many parts of the world. I would like hereby to thank the many who sent me cards and letters. I feel very grateful. England, France, Japan, Holland, Denmark, Switzerland and Sweden, all bring back pleasant memories. Shortly, God willing, I shall be visiting Spain with Bill and Irene Larsen on the Magic Castle Tour to F.I.S.M., and renew friendships with the very clever magicians who reside there, and who made such an impression when they visited America.

Just a day or two ago I returned from a visit to Germany. Bill and Irene Larsen were my delightful traveling companions and were too kind to me.

Words completely fail me to be able to tell how impressed I was by our visit to THE MAGIC HANDS. It is truly extraordinary how Manfred Thumm and his charming wife, Em, have founded such a remarkable enterprise. I think that during my long life I have visited many so called "magic shops". However, I feel quite confident in stating that in all magical history I feel there has never existed a more artistic and beautifully constructed operation. Just as the Magic Castle is really a reflection of the Larsen Family, likewise THE MAGIC HANDS is a reflection of Manfred and Em.

The whole atmosphere, every display every item is in excellent taste. Sadly to state this is seldom the case.

Later this month Harry Blackstone, Larry Jennings, and yours truly expect to give lectures for Phil Temple in San Francisco. My dear friend, Bill Bowers, is joining us so we can be assured of pleasant company.

Concerning Lectures: The late Dr. Elliott told me the secret is simple: "Be natural and use your head." The more I think about it the more I realize the great truth of these few words.

"Be natural" not only in your manner but in your behavior, in your dress, and particularly your speech. "Use your head" . . . Think . . . Study. Try to devise the best and most direct way to attain your effects. Remember that you are an individual, a unique personality. There is only one in the entire world "exactly" like you. Endeavor to make the most of your special behavior. Love the audience. Let them know and feel that you do.

This is where you must be somewhat of an actor. They may be rude. They may be inattentive. But you must lead them to believe that you really like them and aim to please.

I have just received some very interesting mail from Jeff Busby. He has studiously gathered together all the private notes written by Fred Braue. He plans on putting these out periodically and they most certainly should be a feast for those who relish real worth.

It might be of interest to some to learn the following. When "Expert Card Technique" by Hugard and Braue first came out I was quite surprised to find over twenty items, ideas of mine not credited to me. At the time I had never met Fred. I asked Charlie Miller who knew him quite well where he had learned about them. Charlie rather sheepishly told me that he was the one who has passed on the information.

However, he hastened to remark, "I never explained the working or technique, but Braue kept asking me to repeat things over and over and he solved the working by himself."

Thus Charles Earl kept his promise to me never to explain these cherished effects of mine. When Hugard and Braue put out the second edition an apology appeared in the introduction. Jean stated that owing to the fact that much of the writing was done by correspondence between New York and California, several omissions crept in.

At any rate, sometime later when I had the pleasure of meeting Braue

I was greatly impressed by his skill and knowledge. So the fact that Jeff Busby is releasing this material should be something to look forward to.

To me it is truly amazing to see and meet some of the young beginners. Of course today there are so many sources from which to acquire knowledge: Videos, books, pamphlets, lectures, and so forth. When I started back in the year 1899 there were few text books and I was able to read just the Hoffman, Angelo Lewis, books.

When "Neo Magic" and "Our Magic" came to light I spent countless fascinating hours reading and rereading them. It was not until I was eight years of age and "The Expert at the Card Table" saw the light that I became obsessed with playing cards. When I first visited New York City in the year 1915 I was astonished that all the magicians there considered Erdnase a difficult book to understand.

The recent publication of my annotated copy of this book I trust will help to bring to others the great admiration I have for this long-unappreciated work. In Germany I had to personally autograph nearly one hundred copies of "Revelations". Manfred Thumm was one of the first to purchase them and I felt quite flattered that they sold so well.

I have just finished this column and Bill tells me that this issue is devoted to my very highly-esteemed friend, Magic Christian.

I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about him.

He personifies the perfect performer in my opinion. Not only does he perform all his effects in a faultless manner but his elegant style and handsome, sophisticated appearance never fails to enchant the most critical audiences.

I feel very flattered that he has taken me into his confidence and proud to have such a talented friend across the seas.

November 1984

A short time ago I had the pleasure of attending the one-day symposium put on by Phil Temple. He most surely should be highly commended for the way he conducts these sessions! It is quite apparent that his motive is not solely to make a profit but a desire to further the advance of Magic as an Art. To me it is very sad that so many try their utmost to make money. It seems to be their only desire. Not so with Phil Temple.

I felt quite flattered that Phil invited me to attend with Michael Ammar, Blackstone, Larry Jennings, and Moi-Yo Miller. The latter attractive and beautiful girl told most interesting stories about her travels around the world with Dante. Then Harry Blackstone gave a vivid account of his most interesting experiences. Mike Ammar illustrated some of the finer points for using a "Topit" and proved that he has a true understanding of every effect he performs.

My close friend, Larry Jennings, demonstrated some of his advanced and superlative card handling. Ashamedly I fumbled through a coin effect and the Chinese Ball Trick which I couldn't remember at the time. Very strange that I could not recall the details of something I used to know so well.

To further add to the enjoyment of the Symposium Bill Bowers and I had the pleasure of again spending some time with that famous Raiders' doctor and magical collector "extraordinaire". It was the first time that Larry Jennings had seen Dr. Albo's fabulous collection. He was particularly interested in the Hofzinser Rose Mirror . . . a truly beautiful and colorful effect.

The real charm of Dr. Albo's collection is that nearly every single item is in working condition. All the elegant Okito effects with their brilliant decorations and adornment are so well preserved and a true delight to see.

Just received a letter from Tom Mullica asking me to write a few words about performers who featured cigarettes. In my opinion, shared by nearly everyone, Cardini was the master. He and his pretty little wife presented a truly superlative act. Arthur Brisbane, the famous columnist, stated that it was the "smoothest" of any act in vaudeville. Also that it personified the "eloquence of silence".

I met Cardini (Richard Pitchford) in the year of 1924 when he first came to New York City. At the time he was working attired in a smoking jacket and doing a talk act. As a sample: "I taught this trick to the King of Siam and he said, "You're very clever." I said, "Yes, I am."

Dick and I were great friends during this time but I pleaded with him not to talk but to feature the cigarettes and forget some of his weaker items. My attempts to convince him failed. He left New York and toured the country, winding up playing the famous "two a day" Palace Theatre on Broadway.

I dropped in to collect a check from Frances Rockefeller King whose office was upstairs in the Palace Building. She asked me if I had seen the Englishman downstairs perform. I replied that I had and she asked, "Why does he talk?" She gave me a note to

give to a Mr. Rogers, the stage manager, to pass me backstage. (They were strict in those days.)

I immediately went to Dick's dressing room and told him what Miss King had said. He remarked to his wife, "Swan, did you hear that?" Nevertheless he persisted and kept talking until one evening in the Casino de Paris he and I were arguing about him not talking. Billy Rose came up and asked what we were discussing. When Dick told him Billy replied, "Listen to Vernon!"

At any rate, Cardini went out on the road with the Crazy Cat Review and then on to England and during this time he performed in silence. He returned to the United States and opened at the Chicago Theatre a top flight star. I think that it was just around this time that women started to smoke cigarettes publicly. This contributed greatly to the fascination of this type of act.

And around this time two very excellent performers also featured cigarettes, namely, Frakson and Keith Clark. To digress a little . . . in London when the latter first met Cardini, Keith, whose real name was Pierre Cartier, wishing to impress, stated that he was the son of Owen Clark, the famous illusionist. Cardini laughed to himself because he was aware that Owen was never married.

Back to Frakson and Clark. They both had excellent acts that in no way conflicted with each other. And they were entirely different from Cardini's act.

The first time I ever saw anyone tongue a cigarette was in a parade of the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Many of the clowns amused the bystanders by apparently swallowing the cigarette and then blowing smoke out of the sides of their mouths. Carazini, who has played the top places and starred on television, is a positive master at this type of work.

Few realize that Paul Fox was one of the pioneers. He gave many suggestions to Al Saal and Cardini. My memory fails to recall the name of the very first to do a cigarette act but I do remember it was performed in Florida by a Mexican or Spanish performer.

It has just occurred to me what a great number of well-known magicians I have known and spent time with. A partial list might be of interest to some of the present conjurors: Allerton, Annemann, Al Baker, Kuda Bux, Cardini, Carlyle, Henry Christ, Joe Cossari, T. Nelson Downs, Jimmy Drilling, Joe Dunninger, Ade Duval, Dr. Elliott, Farrelli, Paul Fox, Frakson, Fu Manchu, Wallace Galvin, Horace Goldin, Larry Gray, Harbin, Hardeen, Sam Horowitz, Dr. Jaks, Jarrett, Jarrow, Fred Kaps, Fred Keating, Warren Keane, Kellar, Leipzig, Le Paul, Levante, Malini, Manuel, Margules, Silent Mora, Nicola, Nixon, Okito, Dr. Q., John Ramsay, Ransom, Paul Rosini, Rouzer, Allen Shaw, Sorcar, Thurston, Volta, Zingone, and Zanzig. Sadly, all these have passed away but are fondly remembered.

I often imagine how enthusiastic some of the oldtimers would have been if they had seen some of the present-day workers. Downs would have been flabbergasted if he'd seen David Roth. Paul Valadon would have been astounded to see Channing Pollock. And I think Houdini would have greatly admired Doug Henning and David Copperfield.

Which reminds me to mention only a few of our present-day workers. I'll mention only those I know personally: Michael Ammar, Harry Anderson, Ed Balducci, Carl Ballentine, Berglas, Blackstone, Bill Bowers, Bob Brown, Eugene Burger, Lance Burton, John Carney, Chic Cerrano, Bruce Cervon, Daniel Cross, Paul Curry, Darwin, Daryl, Danny Dew, Alex Elmsley, Chuck Fayne, Martin Gardner, Tony Georgio, Bill

Gusias, Bob Jardine. Larry Jennings. Roger Klause. Don Lawton. Bill and Milt Larsen, Ed Marlo, Billy McComb. Max Maven. Chris Michaels. Charlie Miller. Earl Nelson. Allen Okawa. Jim Patten. Johnny Paul. Johnny Platt. Harry Riser. Faucett Ross. David Roth. Scarne. Shimada. Siegfried & Roy. Mike Skinner. Willie Snyder, Socrat, Sam Swartz. Johnny Thompson. Roy Walton, Ron Wilson, Herb Zarrow, and Dick Zimmerman. These are all friends of mine and I trust I have not left anyone out. If so. please forgive my faulty memory .

July 1985

When I think that this column appears in thousands of copies of GENII each month I only wish that I had the patience and ability to do it more justice. However, the fact that I have been around the magic scene for such a lengthy time I feel that occasionally I may write something of interest.

I consider myself fortunate to have seen Kellar when I was about 5 years old. He played Ottawa, Canada, my home town. Assisted by Paul Valadon his show was really a "dream come true." It was only a year or two later that T. Nelson Downs and Nate Leipzig appeared at Bennets Theatre (later called The Dominion).

I well remember how thrilled I was to meet them backstage and how pleased I was that they were so pleasant. Later I met Allen Shaw, the great coin artist, and Quinn who wrote *Fools of Fortune*. Although the latter gave a performance exposing crooked gambling methods and a diatribe against its evils, I was truly amazed at the following.

He asked me if my father was a member of the local men's club, the Rideauz. When I told him yes, he said that if he could receive an invitation to visit the club and could get into one of their poker games, he'd really reward me! This surprised me because I deemed him to be sincere in his lecture. Erdnase states: "Mealy-mouthed pretensions of piety." How apropos!

Also it was around this time that I first discovered a chap named Cliff Green who lived in town. From him I borrowed Sachs Sleight of Hand, one of the very best books on all-around magic ever written. Neo Magic and Our Magic added to the above give a really liberal education in the true Art of Magic.

I feel very fortunate to enjoy the warm friendship of so many magicians. Sadly, most of my old New York City friends have passed away. However, Martin Gardner, Paul Curry and Willie Schneider, all beloved and highly thought of, are still going strong. Talking of nice people, it just occurs to me that Doug Henning, David Copperfield, Harry Blackstone, Jr. and Siegfried & Roy (all doing big shows) are extremely warm cordial people to meet and know.

Happily I also treasure the friendship of many Japanese, English, Swedish, French and Canadian magicians. Soon I expect to be meeting again the extremely talented Ascanio and his two marvelous sidekicks.

In a recent copy of M-U-M I was quite surprised to read a column by Harry Riser in which he said some most flattering things about me. Coming from a true perfectionist and as knowledgeable a person as Harry, I more than appreciate his remarks.

What a wonderplace this Castle is to spend time and meet people. The moment one passes through the front door they are greeted by two of the following attractive young

ladies: Florence, Ronna, Jeanine, Nancy, Susie or Suzanne, who check IDs and attire and are always gracious to everyone.

My youngest son, Derek, has just returned to New York after spending a week here. He and I went to Ramada (near San Diego) for a short visit with my older boy, Ted. Ted has two airplanes . . . one a Piper and the other he built himself. He flew Derek around for a short flight but I play percentages and stayed on the ground!

Next Saturday I expect to visit Phoenix to see my very dear friends, Danny and Melba Dew, two of the most beloved persons I know.

Well, the trip to Phoenix became reality in time for me to include in this column! Bill and Irene Larsen, Bill Bowers, and myself flew over to be present for a tribute to Danny and Bert Easley. Everyone knows what wonderful people they are. Robert L. Bluemle organized the whole affair and most certainly did an excellent job.

A moment after Bill Bowers and I checked into our room, a bellhop walked in carrying two baskets laden with delicacies and bottles of wine with a card of welcome. I was so pleased that Allen Okawa was on the same place with Larry Jennings. Allen has really endeared himself to everyone who has ever met him. There were around 150 persons in attendance and many old friends renewed their friendships.

On Sunday we were served a very nice lunch and I had the honor of sitting at Melba and Danny's table. I was seated between Danny and my long-time friend, Harry Schilling and his wife, Mary. Later Bert Easley came to our table and everyone gave him a warm hand as he sat down.

During the meal pictures and shots of Danny and Melba were projected on a large screen. This handsome couple were shown back through the years when they were so actively engaged in magic. A couple of shots showed Melba beside one of her sand pictures which were a strong feature of their act.

After this we were treated to a stage show emceed by Rich Oliver. Like the late "Dorny" he had changed jackets and attire with every entrance. The acts were Jim Strachern, Don Hendrix, Peter Baird, George Sands, Van Cunningham, Brad Zinn and Brenda, and Gene Baker. Then our favorite Castle performer, Peter Pit, really mystified and delighted everyone with his version of the "Eleven Bill Trick".

It was a treat to see George Sands again. He exemplified that presentation and simplicity are "what it takes." I must say I was "pleased as punch" to join in this tribute to Melba and Danny. Two more beloved people would be extremely hard to find.
Love you, Danny.

August, 1985

Before starting this month's column I must state the following When I mention names of magicians past and present I rely solely on my faulty memory. Often the most obvious escape me. Unfortunately in the last issue I omitted Bev Bergeron. In the early days of the Castle Jay Ose, Bev and I spent many hours together. He had many interesting tales about Harry Willard whom he had worked with. I hereby apologize to him and any others I may have overlooked.

I truly consider myself extremely fortunate to have so many warm friends which could fill a book if I listed them all. With the MagiCruise, the N.Y. Symposium, and the Magic for the Hunger in Africa all following so closely, things have really been hectic. Larry Krams and Don Fenwick proved again that everyone more than enjoys themselves on the Magi-Cruises and I have heard that many are avidly awaiting the next one. I had the honor of sharing a stateroom with the extremely talented Michael Ammar. Fernando Keops demonstrated some of his ideas for his visit to F.I.S.M. for Mike and me. His bottom, middle and second deals are superb. He deals all three from the same grip and either one-handed or two-handed.

Also on the ship was Peter Isaacs. Just yesterday he sent me a copy of a sixty-five dollar book. Not on magic but about my father's older brother, Frederick Verner. The book is titled "*The Last Buffalo*". He was quite famous as a painter of the early West . . . Indians and their surroundings. I was slightly disturbed when I learned in the book that he died at age 91.

Excuse me . . . back to magic. All the acts at the Symposium and on the Las Vegas show were truly excellent. On the Ten Thousand Dollar contest it was quite thrilling when the five names of the winners were called in reverse order. When they had eliminated number five, four and three, only John Carney and Scott Cervine remained standing. Both were assured of either \$5,000 or \$2,500 and their expressions showed their appreciation.

For me one of the true highlights was the visit of Marie Akami. She is the sweet young lady who does all the translating for the American television shown in Japan. Her favorite performer is Rocco whose act is distinctly different and flawlessly executed.

To me it is a great pity that so many starting to take up magic make the following mistake: they keep practicing to deal seconds or endeavoring to do a perfect pass. This is truly a waste of time. Some of these chaps cannot even shuffle and deal cards as neatly as the average woman bridge player. It takes time and practice and constant repetition just to learn to handle a deck of cards like an expert.

Kathy Diamond, one of our girl members, handles cards much more naturally than many of our male members. The reason for this is because she attended a course in Lake

Tahoe. The course had nothing to do with magic but was how to handle and deal in a game of Black Jack.

What I am trying to convey is that cards should be handled artistically and neatly. Especially when doing a double lift. A card is a light flimsy object, not a bread board or manhole cover. Just the way a performer displays "two as one" stamps him as a duffer or an artist.

Sitting alone by one's self it is difficult to figure out simple mannerisms. The best way to learn naturalness is to watch and study other people. Watch the way they relax their arms or hands . . . the positions of the fingers . . . in fact, every small detail. If it appears clumsy, ignore it. On the other hand, if it looks natural and neat, learn from it. It is really surprising how many ways a double lift can be shown. Adopt the one that suits you the most and perfect it.

Everyone in the Castle is enthused to have Billy McComb here again. Although Billy is Irish his visits always make me think of my many friends in England . . . and also about how negligent I am about writing to them.

Germany, Sweden, Italy, England and France all conjure up most pleasant memories. I am anxiously looking forward to the coming visit to Spain as it will be my first visit to the country everyone talks about so favorably.

Before I sign off I'd like to state that in the future when whole evening shows are put on I consider it very important to add either a juggler, a ventriloquist, or any kindred act. What a shame that Jay Marshall, who was in Las Vegas, was not asked to participate. Or why not that superb juggler Michael Marlin? Or why not Mr. Electric? And I think an absolute must would have been Goldfinger and Dove. Fortunately their selection of Harry Anderson was an excellent choice. Harry has a real sense of humor and is an all around fine performer. He broke up the audience when he held up both hands, fingers spread, and started to number the acts one by one. He suddenly pulled off one of his fingers and put it in his pocket. It represented the missing act in a very dramatic manner.

A final note: I'd like to highly praise and recommend the booklet by Mike Maxwell and Louis Fallenga. It contains 17 audience-tested routines that will truly delight you.

September 1985

Our Castle group have just returned from a very enjoyable trip to Portugal, Morocco and Madrid. I am pleased and very grateful that Bill Larsen will be writing up a complete account of the F.I.S.M. Congress.

However, he was not with some of our group in Casablanca when we ran into a native kneeling on the ground dealing Three Card Monte. He kept up a rapid flow of patter as he shifted the cards from place to place. He was surrounded by quite a crowd of natives who were all standing. He held a number of crumpled bills in one hand and also one of the cards. As he tossed them back and forth he would ask for bets and suddenly one of the on-lookers would stamp with his foot on a card of his choice. The dealer would then pick up the other two, one in each hand and show them. If the foot was on the winning card . . . he would pay. Needless to remark, when he paid, it was always to one of his several confederates (shills). It was truly amazing to witness this age-old game still winning money in this day.

There was so much taking place during the Congress that Bill did not get a chance to see Rene Lavand from Argentina present his lecture. This extremely talented gentleman has only one hand, but it is miraculous what he can do. Magicians talk of dealing thirds and fourths -- Rene actually deals fifths, sixths and even sevenths. Some of his handling is beyond belief. The spring ripples and strip-outs, false cuts and top and bottom palms is done to perfection. Ricky Jay was sitting next to me while we were watching and his enthusiasm was unbounded.

Bill Saunders from Bakersfield, who is well qualified to judge, said that it was worth the trip over just to see Rene. In my opinion his handling of the cards and an effect he performed with three (3) small balls and a miniature tea cup was absolutely superb.

Talking of card experts . . . Ascanio, Carrol and Tamariz are all natives of Spain. These three are all extremely talented exponents and I doubt if any other city in the world boasts three of equal talent.

During one of the stage shows I had the honor, along with Lance Burton and Richard Ross, of casting rose petals at the feet of Otto Wessley as he made an appearance. When they started to give out the awards I was very pleased that the United States did so well.

To digress a moment, I would just like to remark, that in my opinion most of the modern day younger performers tend to make their acts confusing. They fail to portray something plausible and understanding. Confusion is not good entertainment such as combining fire with a dove production. Overdoing the Zombie and the Dancing Cane routine. Doing long drawn out effects which it takes an effort to follow. Things of this nature all combine to make a very mediocre performance. Let me repeat the words of one of the world's greatest thinkers . . . Leonardo DaVinci . . .

"The means of expression can become so exquisite that you will wind up expressing nothing. "

A vivid example could be taken by the Grand Prix winner Javier and Anal A delightful fairy tale centered around a sweet charming little girl. Easily understood and followed by everyone in the audience. Winner or not, the act was delightful.

Back again in the Castle there is always some excellent magic to be seen. Larry Jennings has just presented me with a very handsome wallet, sent and made by Allen Okawa. It is for the card in the envelope from the zippered compartment. It is made from eel skin which I understand is many more times durable than the finest of leathers. Larry takes delight in fooling the wiser ones here at the Castle.

When it comes to intricate and difficult card moves, Larry Jennings and John Carney are hard to surpass. However, names like Charlie Miller, Johnny Thompson, Paul Curry, Martin Gardner, Paul Harris, Alan Ackerman, Allen Okawa, Ed Marlo, Jimmy Grippo, Harry Riser, Harry Lorraine, Frank Garcia, Fred Robinson, Roy Walton, Alex Elmsley, Jack Avis, Kato, Rene Lavand, Darwin Ortiz, Richard Turner, Brad Berlin, Danny Dew, Daryl Martinez and many I have overlooked. All of the above have great talent and their names are well known to all lovers of the art. Sadly, John Scarne has just passed away.

One thing that I feel pretty sure about is that if it came to a vote, Mike Skinner would most certainly rank at the very top of the list. However, rating performers is almost an impossible task. There are so many attributes to consider that it becomes almost impossible to decide on a true winner. What really matters is not to allow jealousy, or envy to affect the appraisal.

In my opinion there should be no place for rivalry in our absorbing pastime of the paste boards. The most important thing for a performer to bear in mind, especially doing card tricks, is to avoid a "smart aleck" delivery.

Remember to make a card trick . . . "entertaining". This should be your sole object. Never just to show how clever you are. The latter attitude is why so many people hate card tricks.

Remember, people do not enjoy being fooled or puzzled unless the delivery is entertaining or it has an amusing presentation.

October, 1985

The older I get the more sadly I come to realize how fortunate but also how unfortunate I am to still be among the living.

When I realize that six of the nine so-called card stars mentioned in Greater Magic Circles have all passed away and there are only three of us still in good health . . . namely Charlie Miller, Bill McCaffrey and yours truly.

Just recently, John Scarne passed away to join Theo Annemann, Al Baker, Dick Cardini, Stewart Judah, Nate Leipzig and Paul Rosini. All of these clever artists were very close friends of mine besides scores of others who were lovers of the art.

However, on the bright side I consider myself blessed to have so many younger up-coming and extremely clever young chaps. Writing every month as I do, I make many mistakes by failing to mention names or giving credits carelessly.

I most certainly should be ashamed for failing to sing the praises of my dear friend . . . Ross Bertram. For without a doubt he is a superlative artist especially with coins and besides, he is a true gentleman and modest to a fault.

This week is truly unique because all the rooms in the Castle have exceedingly clever sleight-of-hand performers.

Johnny Ace Palmer is a sterling performer, not only are his sleights masterful, but he delights the audience by his manner. Then on stage Scott Cervine is truly excellent. Besides his stylish appearance everything he does has a touch of originality. His self levitation at the conclusion leaves the audience enthralled. Peter Pit does, as usual, a very smooth, well groomed presentation.

Lastly we come to my long time friend, Charlie Miller...Charlie Miller. . . Charlie Miller. The moment he appears by the warmth of his smile and his total bearing he captures the entire audience. He does not bother people in the audience to select cards but merely 'thinks' of them and when he finishes with his amusing Rice Bowl routine he registers a solid hit with everyone.

From this stage show one can follow immediately into the Parlour of Prestidigitation and see Fernando Keops. This young chap from Mexico will be here for another week in the Close-Up Room. He is one of the finest card experts around today. Besides he has a pleasant way of presenting his effects.

A few days ago I had the pleasure of being invited by Ricky Jay to look over the Mulholland Book collection. It is beautifully laid out in the Crocker Bank Building and contains almost everything ever published in magic and also dozens of posters and photographs.

Ricky pointed out that when The *Expert* at the Card Table saw the light in 1902, there was absolutely nothing published in English or any other language to even compare to it.

From the grapevine there are rumblings about Revelations. Please believe me. . . I never had any intention of making money from the book. However, all my life for over seventy (70) years it has given me great pleasure. Each time I open it, it gave me new ideas and I found things I had overlooked.

I felt duty bound to convince others of the wealth of information it contained. Regardless of everything else if it only makes one delve deeply into the original text, I feel that it has accomplished what I truly wished to

I must thank Dr. Robert Albo for a delightful visit to Lake Tahoe for Bill Bowers and myself. Also Bob Brown, for a visit to the Festival of the Arts. And a very interesting visit to the home of Chic Carrano. His pool of tropical fish of all colors numbers in the hundreds and another small pond for the swans seems like a fairyland.

Did not get a chance to play him any tennis on his beautiful court but Bill Bowers and I spent a delightful visit. Chuck is such a great host.

Many thanks.

Just a day or so ago Bill invited several of us to the Houdini Séance at the Castle which is still quite excellent.

"*DETAILS* make for perfection, but perfection is no *DETAIL*." Many times, Castle members have asked me to state how very important it is for talking acts to use proper English. Such expressions as "I seen" or the use of "lay" for "lie" are so very glaring that it is hard to understand how anyone could possibly be so guilty in these days.

Discussing words, it might be timely to quote Mary Had a Little Lamb, as I have many requests to write it out.

Miss Mary was the possessor of a diminutive and immature specimen of the *Ovis Aries*. A wool bearing Ruminant Quadruped whose flesh is highly esteemed by persons to what gastatory organs its flavor is agreeable. The shaggy and agromulated filaments constituting its outer covering, integument or garment presented to the vision a surface of absolutely etiolated and albified rivaling in immaculateness the crystallized vapour which commonly characterizes our winter landscape.

To whatever locality contiguous or remote Mary's fragrant fancy or perchance the parental magnate impelled her when not otherwise engaged to partake herself this juvenescent representative of the *Ovis Aries* could be counted upon with absolute and entire certainty to accompany her.

I am really astonished by Paul Harris. He is extremely original and has most certainly contributed greatly to lovers of card magic. It is not easy to come up with new ideas with cards. Many years ago it was stated that it would be more difficult to invent a new card effect than to invent a new proposition in geometry. Another great originator of card effects that pops into mind is Bro. John Hamman of St. Louis.

November, 1985

The last Monday of every month the Magic Castle holds a so-called 'guest night'. On our stage in the Palace of Mystery, different performers present their acts. In this way they determine whether they are qualified to work on a regular basis. Unfortunately some of them are rather sad. However, some show great promise and have touches of originality.

A recent Monday three of the four acts all produced doves. What I fail to understand is why anyone should combine fire with gentle doves. It is most decidedly a mixture of Mediano. This is to my mind very distasteful. Flowers, ribbons, handkerchiefs, liquids and others yes, but fire is most certainly not in good taste.

When planning an act considerable thought should be expended on the overall '*effect*'. Many years ago One Arm McDonald told Faucett Ross, that he had difficulty in finding effects that he could handle with only one hand. However, after he selected one the real difficulty was discovering a suitable presentation or story to accompany it. Therefore, how much more profitable it would be than to waste hours striving to perform invisible pass or deal an elusive second or bottom deal.

Furthermore the only practice required is to think about a way to present the effect in a clear and entertaining fashion. This thought process can take place during any spare moment of the day.

'Mac' claimed that it often took him a month or more to finally decide on the best approach. One time when visiting Paul Fox in Colorado Springs, he performed the effect featured by Tommy Martin. Bouncing the pellet on a fan and then the change to a genuine egg. He used a large magazine instead of a fan, but Paul said that he told a most interesting and illuminating story about modern incubation and tied it into his presentation.

If more magicians would spend time thinking of the '*effect*' not the '*method*' they would find the art much more gratifying. The name Paul Fox may not be familiar to some, but happily, Jeff Busby is going to publish a book about this true genius of the art.

In discussing with me, he used to state that the average person stops thinking too soon. How true this is. Usually they watch themselves in the mirror and decide that all looks well. Generally not so, it could be much better. If one continues to strive marvelous results will accrue.

Remember the words of Robert Houdin . . . PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE. Of course the very best way in front of an audience. Furthermore accept criticism and think about it. I consider myself very fortunate to have so many warm friends at the present time. And at my age it is a sad fact that dozens and dozens of my closest fellow magicians have all passed away.

The large crop of younger ones today have many advantages. Periodicals, tapes, videos, finely machined props and so forth. They should use brains to try and come up with refreshing new combinations and presentations. It was stated that it is more difficult to invent a new effect with cards than to discover a new proposition in Euclid. Many years ago when Cardini was performing his beautiful act, many other magicians attempted to copy it.

A chap named Canter was one of the many who tried. When he met Paul Fox, he was told . . . "that no matter how expert you become you can never surpass the originator".

Paul Fox went on telling him, why don't you do something different, and he suggested a dove production. Canter took his suggestion and started a real fad. Channing Pollock, Shimada, Johnny Thompson, Lance Burton and Joseph all do outstanding acts and what else, they feature the gentle white (not dyed) doves.

One of the main attractions of the Magic Castle besides the various shows is the people you'll meet. Visitors from all walks of life, including large numbers of attractive girls. All of these girls ask questions and seem most interested to find out how one becomes a magician. who are the best and so forth. Night after night crowds of people come to enjoy themselves and everyone really has a good time.

Of course the inner circle of magicians can huddle together to exchange the latest ideas and try to fool each other sometimes. Today with so many newcomers around many new items are cropping up and some are extremely ingenious. However, most of these are not new effects but variations of the old methods.

I am told this issue will feature Shimada. To write a true critique of Shimada's talents one would have to exhaust all the superlatives. Not only does he excel in three different stage performances but he also is extremely proficient in all branches of so called "Close-up" magic.

When one totals all these together and also adds his most gracious and friendly manner, you must certainly conclude that he is truly outstanding.

Japan has contributed many great artists past and present. Shimada is most certainly an inspiration to all lovers of the art.

December, 1985

Over seventy years ago I made my first visit to New York. I had read so much about this wonderful city and the famous magicians who dwelt there. Particularly Morton Elliott, known as the challenge champion card manipulator of the world and also the famous magical palace operated by Martinka.

When I arrived at the Grand Central Station on 42nd Street, I checked my suit case and walked west, finally unbeknowningly came to Broadway. I stupidly asked a cop how to find Broadway and he replied "Kid, you're right on it". In my mind I could not conceive that, after all . . . it was just another street.

I then turned south on Broadway (which is on the west side) and started looking at the numbers above the stores in search of Martinka's Famous Palace. Shortly I looked at the numbers and they were in the seven hundreds, so I realized I must have passed and gone too far. Could not imagine how I had passed the Famous Palace.

Retracing my steps I again was surprised when I discovered that the place of my dreams was just a small ordinary looking store front. At any rate I went in and was looking over some of the items in a dusty showcase when a woman came from the back of the store and said, "What do you want to buy?" I replied that I just wanted to look around. She pulled out a drawer and handed me a catalogue saying, "fifty cents, look it over and pick out what you would like".

On the first page was an article stating that if you had tried many arts such as music, story telling, comedy or any form of entertainment and had failed, that magic was the answer. As this art required no talent and could be learned by anyone. Rather disconcerting to say the least. After this disappointment, as I was walking back to my hotel, I saw an elderly gentleman drop an umbrella he was carrying. I quickly stepped forward and picked it up, then handed it back to him. I was rather shocked when he said, "are you a New Yorker...?" I replied "NO". Then he said "then mind your own damn business".

I have never been able to figure out the reason. Perhaps it was a signal to someone, something. I am still perplexed.

When I arrived back to 42nd Street I turned left and quite by accident, I came across Clyde Powers Magic Shop. This was where Paul Carlton was performing the linking Rings in the window and was drawing large crowd. I watched for a time, then entered the shop and Paul had left the window and was to be found behind the counter.

I told him I would pay \$20.00 for any card trick that fooled me. This was very far from my normal attitude but I was a little offended by his superior attitude. Well, at any rate he picked out a pack of cards and had me select one. I realized at once that they were strippers so when I shuffled them I allowed a dozen or 50 to fall to the floor. As I started to pick them up he said "never mind, I'll use another pack". He then asked me if I could riffle, not overhand, shuffle? When I riffled I shuffled half one way and the other half the other.

Not to embarrass him further, I told him that I was familiar with strippers. He then opened another pack, an X-Ray Deck, then a Svengali and a few others.

He remarked you seem to know a great deal and you are not a professional . . . show me what you can do".

I used an ordinary pack and showed him a simple spelling trick. He called out "Clyde, come out here". Clyde Powers came from the back room and we were introduced. Paul told him of the trick I had just done and he performed for me a version I had never seen. He used a deck that was arranged with all the cards that spelled with 11 letters in one group then two other groups that spelled with 12 and then 13 letters. The remaining 16 on the bottom. The last card of each group had a pencil dot. In this way after three cards were selected from each group and returned below the dotted card, it would consequently spell out correctly.

Then I told Clyde that I noticed each card was replaced below a dotted card I could then fathom the method.

He seemed quite surprised and said "you have my permission to enter the back room at anytime. Dr. Elliott, Alfred Benzon and Dunninger often came in here and I am sure you would like to meet them. I am certain they would in turn like to meet you.

This made up for the disappointment I had had earlier. Before I conclude, I would like to say how I enjoy reading *Gaming Confidential* by Geno Munari. This is put out every month in Las Vegas.

I am very pleased that Bascom Jones has decided to put out bound copies of *Magik*. These will be beautifully published with a complete index and should be a valuable addition to any library.

Also would like to state that in the OCTOBER issue of GENII the name of Stewart Judah as YUDAH and in the poem "*Mary Had a Little Lamb*" an error crept in" (as Terry Seabrook would state). The word "WHAT" should have been "WHOSE".

At any rate I feel very flattered that so many of you would bother to read the few words I dish out and I wish you all . . . very Happy Holidays.

Sincerely,
Dai Vernon

January, 1986

I am frequently asked about the origin of some of the current effects. Naturally, many of them saw their birth long before my time. While they are quite numerous, they are vastly out-numbered by the multitude of methods for executing them.

I am often asked about sponge balls which Albert Goshman . . . our extremely clever performer transformed into a fortune. Prior to 1915 to my belief there was nothing in print about forming balls from bath sponges.

A New York magician by the name of Count Orloff caused quite a sensation in Saratoga Springs using only two of these rubber sponges. Later in New York City the late Al Cohn did quite a business by selling these at three dollars a pair. The Woolworth stores at the time sold a small brick sized brown colored sponge for 10 cents. With a pair of scissors it was very simple to cut and shape from the block. . . four good sized balls.

It was a case of using a novel and entirely new method to attain old effects. This Count Orloff was a real character. One time he had an artist do an oil portrait of him. Later when it was delivered to him and he agreed that it was a good likeness, he told the artist to take it back and paint on a Russian-looking beard. Later he hung this on his wall and when people would remark about his close resemblance to the portrait . . . he would claim he was RELATED to the Czar of Russia.

On another occasion he purchased a real Egyptian mummy and placed it under his baby's crib. When Francis Carlyle asked him why he did so, the Count said he wanted his child to absorb the wisdom of the ages.

Another time he told Francis that he had learned how to make himself invisible. When asked to give a demonstration he said he could only do it while walking on Broadway. He claimed people would bump into him because they could NOT see that he was there.

Yes, the Count was quite a guy. While I was working for Billy Rose in the Casino de Paris, he was working a short distance away in Billy Rose's Music Hall.

From the ridiculous to the sublime, during this period Cardini was appearing in the Casino de Paris. There was a scene named the "Hollywood Wedding" where he and his pretty little wife, Swan, presented their absolutely perfect act. It was just about that time that women were commencing to smoke in public . . . openly. So Cardini's act had a special appeal to the fair sex.

Arthur Brisbane, a famous columnist of the day, had a line or two here he wrote: Cardini's act personifies the eloquence of silence. The only magical act that created a similar sensation was that of Horace Goldin's "Sawing a Woman in Half". However, this was some time well before Cardini.

In the year 1921, Sam Margules (who was an intimate friend of Goldin) took the illusion down to Havana, Cuba. I went along to perform and did not realize that I would stay on after the show closed. However, I stayed in Havana for nearly a year and for a time cut silhouettes in Havana Park. Later I had a stand on the Prado and was kept extremely busy and did a land office business.

To digress a little. It was rather amusing that whenever we presented the "*Sawing*" the mother of one of the native girls in the box, would insist on being in the wings to keep her eyes on her daughter.

This being the season of good resolution, why not resolve to come up with something entirely original in magic. The Dancing Cane, the Zombie, the Torn Newspaper, card fans and productions, and of course . . . doves.

Let us strive for something off the beaten path and not fall back on Cups and Balls . . . the Rings . . . and finding a selected card, unless you are in some totally unexpected place.

Another rather amusing episode just came to mind. When Sam Margules had the show on Coney Island and was presenting the Sawing a Woman in Half, I was doing the magic but a chap named Walter Ferdna } ways presented the SAWING.

On one occasion, Walter was away for a few days and Sam took over for the Sawing. On a busy Saturday Kitty, the young girl, failed to show up and Sam, in desperation, ran outside running up and down the length of Surf Avenue seeking a likely young girl . . . he suddenly realized that only the feet showed at the lower end of the box. So he collared a young newsboy.

When it came time to put on the SAWING, Sam, being slightly overwrought and nervous. . . blurted out, "On this end you see the young lady's head and on this end (moving down the length of the body) . . . HIS feet.

At yet another time while doing the show, I was performing the 10 cards up the sleeve routine and I was very surprised to see Thurston, Goldin and Houdini all standing in the wings. Houdini was playing the Henderson Theatre at the time and doubtless Goldin and Thurston came to Coney Island to visit him.

I announced that believe it or not *three* of the best known magicians in the world happened to be in the audience . . . I was immediately greeted with guffaws and Bronx Cheers. However, I felt quite flattered that they had taken the time off to come by and catch the show. The theatre we were playing was situated quite near Dreamland Circus side show featuring 19 freaks. Filling out the group was Cuckoo the Bird Girl, the Ossified Man and a Cigarette Friend . . . just to mention a few.

The last attraction was Al Flosso, who performed a great "Miser's Dream" and wound up selling a *slum* package consisting of the following: A diminishing card, a color-changing

February, 1986

This year I decided to make a resolution not to go on any more trips, but I have already broken it. So, next year I shall resolve not to make any more.... resolutions.

I have just returned from Germany with Bill and Irene Larsen. We attended the Magic Hands Convention and Bill is writing up a complete account. Manfred Thumm certainly does a splendid job and he manages to have everything running first class. His display of his various items was most tasteful and he gave a truly excellent lecture.

Irene Larsen has two brothers who live quite near, so both she and Bill went and spent a week with them after the convention.

Personally, I had one of the greatest treats of my life whilst in Munich. For a week I was the guest of Sepp Holzer...his wife and two children. Without a doubt, Sepp is a genius. His ideas are revolutionary and he performs some of the most extremely difficult moves with cards that I have ever witnessed.

I am eagerly looking forward to his visit to the Magic Castle in June. All of the Castle magicians will be amazed, I feel quite sure of this.

He was a most gracious host and he drove me around Munich to visit other local magicians. Alex Wirsching, one of his closest friends came to his home and proved how talented he was. Then I went to meet Thomas Fraps Andy Edmuller and Tony Forster, all of the inner circle.

Sepp has a very complete collection of magic books, many dating back to the seventeenth century. Besides, he has numerous video tapes. His own tape and the one of Michael Rubenstein...photographed by Sepp, is entirely of coins and of great interest.

When Bill and Irene returned on Sunday from their visiting of family, Sepp gave a dinner party for us. In addition to Sepp and his wife Christine and Bill and Irene, there were Nicky Hoebel and Peggi, Heinz and Lotte Lurz, Kurt Herfurt, Herb von Heldt and Ann, Harold Voit and Angelica, Inga Siegel, and my granddaughter, Robin Verner and her boy friend.

Yes, I saw my granddaughter Robin for the first time in nearly twenty years. I had telephoned to Berlin where she has been living for a number of years and she took a plane and arrived in time to attend and everyone thought she was a very pretty girl. I must agree. It was a very happy experience for me and Bill is putting her on the list to get Genu so now we can keep in touch.

All in all, I had a most pleasant trip and saw some excellent magic. Yesterday, when I returned back to the States, I had quite a bundle of mail. One was a book by Hatch on

Hofzinser. This book, to me, is extremely interesting and illustrates how ingenious this great Viennese conjuror was.

Also, for Christmas, from my boy Ted, I received a very massive book on Leonardo DaVinci. This greatest of Italian thinkers has stated many sayings that pertain to our profession of magic. To quote a couple..."Details make for perfection" ... and, "The means expression can become so exquisite that you wind up expressing nothing."

Please fellow mystic workers, do strive to get away from doing the same effects that are seen over and over again. Read the excellent book by Hatch on Hofzinser and see how beautifully he creates different effects and superior methods.

Maybe, we will suffer a great decline in magic if everyone keeps repeating the same overly performed magic that is available today.

In closing, it is not easy to devise new approaches to magic, but at least strive to do so.

More next time.....

March, 1986

After a most enjoyable trip to Germany, I am back again in Hollywood and the Magic Castle. Bill and Irene went to visit Irene's two brothers. They live only a short distance from Munich.

I remained at the Tele Hotel and every day at 1:00 p.m. Sepp Holzer called to pick me up and drive me to his home. He had to go to work at 7:00 a.m. in the morning and work until noon. I must say that I more than enjoyed these visits. He has a wife and two very nice children. The youngest child . . . a little girl of six years was most adorable and actually shed tears when I left at the end of the week.

This chap Sepp had a number of video tapes that I had not seen plus a very extensive collection of books. Some of these dated back to the 16th century. I was extremely interested to find in an old volume several of the methods attributed to Nelson T. Downs. Whether these ideas came from Conradi or from Down's is a little hard to discern.

It is most interesting to see in books of that period (the 16th century) that many ideas, that most believe to be of recent origin actually were devised years ago. One of the tapes that he showed me was of Michael Rubenstein. It dealt entirely with coins and was truly excellent. Also, the tape by Sepp Holzer and Andy Edmuller was most interesting and different.

One of Sepp's friends . . . Alex Wirsching, gave me a private performance and his work with coins and cards was superb. Of note, just last night, I was pleased that Larry Jennings, Jim Patton and Ray Grismer came to my apartment and we ran off a couple of Sepp's videos.

Talking about videos and TV, a couple of weeks ago both Lance Burton and Mike Ammar appeared on the air the same evening. Michael was on the Johnny Carson Show and Lance was one of the cast on the series . . . *Knight Rider*. Both did real credit to their art.

Lance not only performed magical effects but he played his role as an actor like a seasoned performer. It strikes me as being rather lamentable that many of the newcomers try to copy the style of such a superlative artist as Lance Burton. Be inspired by his delightful performance but please don't copy.

I have just finished reading the translation of Richard Hatch's book about Hofzinser. It is truly a fascinating work and really points out what a great artist this creative genius was. To read how much attention he gave to even the smallest details and how he garnished each effect with such delightful and meaningful talk. This book could be of great help to any magician if only to use his ideas of presentation and apply them to your own effects.

Just heard from Irene Larsen that Shimada is back from touring Germany. He told Irene that the audiences were unusually receptive everywhere he performed. At the Magic Hand's Convention he certainly was the hit of the show and Petrick and Mia were enthusiastically received also.

All in all, I more than enjoyed the hospitality and the kindness of Manfred Thumm and the many friends I met on this occasion.

Personally I was very happy to meet my younger son Derek's daughter Robin who has been living in Berlin for several years. She flew to Munich for a visit and was glad to see an old boy friend of hers whom she had not seen for quite some time.

The last night in Munich, there was a party for nearly 20 people in the hotel dining room and this wound up a couple of delightful weeks in Germany.

I am sorry that the last couple of issues of 'The Vernon Touch' had some typographical errors, but in the future I will do a better job of proofreading. Mentioning freaks in the side show . . . Cioaret Fiend appeared as Cigaret Friend.

Just heard that my dear friend Mike Skinner will not be here tomorrow as expected. His engagement in town was canceled owing to a death in his family. I think that nearly everyone agrees that Mike Skinner is most certainly one of our topmost performers.

It may interest some to learn that a few years ago when he worked here at The Castle, he performed 21 shows, each one different, three every night for the whole seven days.

I feel very very fortunate to enjoy the friendship of so many talented magicians. Ray Grismer is trying to persuade me to visit England for a holiday in the near future. I would certainly enjoy another visit and nothing would be pleasanter than meeting many of my friends again.

At my advanced age, very sadly, so many of my very best and beloved fellow magicians have passed away. I am beginning to believe that perhaps it is better to abide by the old biblical quote and quit when reaching the "three score and ten".

At any rate, I would like to take this opportunity to apologize for many of my shortcomings and neglect. I am sorry that I have no photographs and find it next to impossible to answer many questions that are asked of me.

Today there are so many younger boys taking up the study of our art that nothing but good can accrue. Just as long as they continue to strive for originality and never copy others in "word or deed".

Naturally it is almost impossible to come up with an absolutely different effect, but the "manner of presentation" and the so-called patter can be varied in countless ways.

Keep trying and best of luck . . . more later.

April, 1986

The last week at the Castle has been exceptionally busy owing to the Award's Banquet. Bill Larsen will be writing of this wonderful evening and the star performers who really thrilled the large audience. Bob Barker did a superlative job as M.C. and all the events ran like clockwork under the expert leadership of Messrs. Peter Pit and Dick Zimmerman.

The last month I was quite thrilled to receive two most interesting books. The translation by Richard Hatch about Hofzinser and The Unsinkable Titanic Thompson sold by the Golden Gate Magic Company in San Francisco.

I was already quite familiar with much of the things in the former. Because many years ago I met McManus who had many of the personal letters of Hofzinser and the late George Karger translated them for me. Also, I had read everything available that appeared mostly in English publications.

Concerning Titanic Thompson, one of the great regrets of my life is that I never met him personally. However, I did talk to him on the telephone. He called me from Indiana saying he had heard that I had a combination Faro box and if I'd come to Indianapolis and bring the Box we could reap a fortune. He told me he knew a millionaire, a real Faro bug who would part with huge sums of money because of his great devotion to the game.

I told Ti that it was true but that I was not a Faro dealer and had no desire to enter into any such scheme. However, the story of this man's life is almost hard to believe but I feel quite sure it would be truly enjoyed by anyone.

He was a personal friend of Nick the Greek and like Nick, he wagered huge sums of money. Not only in card games, but everything from bowling, pool, horse racing, pitching horseshoes to even golf. The latter was his usual way to win large sums of money. He probably could have won the large tournaments if he had so desired but he made much more money by the way he operated.

On one occasion, Paul Rosini met him in a night club in New York City. Paul showed him a couple of card effects. Then Ti took the deck and counted them, one by one, face up apparently to see if it was a full deck.

He then asked Paul to shuffle and spread them out face down. Ti then said, I marked all the face cards and tens. He then picked out several without hesitation. Paul looked over the cards but could discover no bends or crimps of any kind. He put the cards back into his pocket. Later he showed the deck to Dr. Daley and me to see if we could discover the "work" Even under strong magnification we could find no trace of anything.

A short time later Paul was in a club still carrying the deck of cards in his pocket. Again he met Ti and took out the deck to ask to be let in on the secret and Thompson immediately remarked . . . 'I see you still have the deck I marked'. I have never met

anyone who knew his method of ingenious crimping but many did know that he was deadily opposed to the inventor of plastic cards, because they made it impossible to use his system.

The book by Bill Whittington and Bob Koch sold by the Golden Gate Magic Co. explains no magic but makes most interesting reading for any magician. Talking of interesting things, Gaeton Bloom really presents his magic in a most fascinating manner. I wish to call him the 'Hofzinser of Paris'. Not only his skill but his utter capacity for taking pains "The true expression of genius".

Everyone here in the Castle is getting his version of the (3) Three Card Monte, known as BONNETEAU in the French language. Concerning presentation all beginners should read and re-read the comment that is made at the end of the effect called the "Exclusive Coterie".

In all card entertainment the more palaver the more the interest is excited and the address and patter of the performer will count as much if not more than his skill in manipulation.

Before closing, I would like to apologize for some of the errors that have appeared in this column. In describing the freaks in the side show where Al Flosso worked . . . *cigaret fiend became freed* and when I stated *there was no limit to where a selected card could be found* it appeared as *no limit to where a performer could be found*.

In the future I shall try to proofread the copy before its publication.

Forgot to mention that my very close friend Larry Jennings will shortly have a book out which will be an absolute 'must' for all lovers of . . . "the poetry of magic".

Larry and Bruce Cervon, quite surprisingly, are going to put out a book about me. They claim that they have 60 items, not all cards, that have never appeared in print. Steve Minch is to do the actual writing.

Bruce has asked me to send the word that he is anxious to hear from any readers that have any information about "yours truly". All this is very flattering to me and I don't feel I deserve it. Bruce's address is 433 N. Gardner St., Hollywood, CA 90036.

I must say that this extremely clever chap, Bruce Cervon, has given Mike Caveney the task of putting out two volumes of his own excellent ideas. These two books to fit into a handsome case.

At my age I feel very fortunate to enjoy the friendship of so many well known performers. Lately I have been saddened, however, by the death of Fred Robinson, a wonderful artist and a lovable person. Also Paul Curry who left a legacy -- one of the very few absolutely new effects.

Lastly, I would like to state that the good looking Japanese performer Mahka Tendo does the most brilliant act of all cards that has ever been done. Even people who hate card tricks would be enthused and rave about his spectacular presentation.

May, 1986

As I think back over the years I consider how fortunate I have been to have enjoyed the companionship of so many clever magicians. It was not until I came to New York City when I was 21 years of age that I became so closely associated with many who had been previously just names to me.

Sam Margules, a staunch S.A.M.. member who always put on the annual show at the Hecksher Theatre, took me under his wing and introduced me to Dunninger, Okito, Goldin and Kellar. And then later in Clyde Powers magic shop on 42nd Street I met Dr. Elliott, Alfred Benzon, Henry Huber, Hang Ping Chun, Gene Hugard. Paul Carlton and Guy Jarrett. The latter two worked in the shop and occasionally Gene performed the Rings in the window to attract a crowd.

Paul Carlton was the promoter of the Camel Cigarette Exposer . . . "It's fun to be fooled but it's more fun to know". This ended in a court case the same as the case involving Horace Goldins' Sawing a Lady in Half.

In those days it was down at Coney Island that I met Larry Gray before he became The Dizzy Wizard. Larry was an excellent performer and a highly amusing comedian. On one occasion someone said that Clinton Burgess wished to challenge him to see who could execute the 'back and front reverse' more invisibly.

When they met, Larry went first and Clinton said . . . you're faking, you don't have a card in your hand. When the card suddenly popped up, he could not believe it and that was the end of the challenge.

Larry and I roomed together at intervals and I taught him how to cut silhouettes. When I'd go to see a show and leave him in our room he would cut dozens and dozens of copies of pictures he'd find in the magazines and then lay them out all over a large bed.

At times I thought he would actually cry when I'd return and possibly only find one or two of real merit. But he persisted and was able to spend a profitable summer every season in old Orchard Beach, Maine.

In my opinion he could have become one of the truly greats like Van Hoven and W. C. Fields. His trouble was that he was too conscientious and felt that people would have accused him of copying as he acted and felt the same way as the two great artists just mentioned.

My next close friend was Stewart Judah in Cincinnati. He was a very likable chap and had extremely subtle moves and ideas. I spent some time in "Cincy" and for a time cut silhouettes in the Binton Hotel. Also made many trips from Fountain Square to Covington and Newport where they had large crap and roulette games.

One night I had lost about \$50 00 in a dice game and had only a lone dime in my pocket. I was just about to ask the manager for the customary car fare to get back to Cincinnati. On the way over I passed the roulette table and just for fun placed it on number 34. WHAM . . . it hit right on 34. Now with the \$3 00 I went back to the crap table and ended up with over \$300 00 I would always like to have such fantastic luck.

After this I spent some time in Chicago and cut silhouettes in the White City. While there I spent time with the likes of Joe Berg, Larry Ireland, Rufus Steel, Martin Gardner and Keith Clark. Also associating with Johnny Platt and Gene Glazer.

It was around this time that I first heard from John C. Sprong, of a gambler who could deal from the middle of the deck. He told me he would give a hundred dollars just to find out anything about this. It was much later that I finally located this remarkable operator.

Of course, it was in Chicago that I witnessed "Old Dad Stevens" who without a doubt was one of a kind. Tears came to my eyes when I saw his shuffling and stacking. He kept saying "my boy . . . what you are seeing took 18 years of constant practice."

It was in the late 20's that my wife and I decided to drive westward to Arizona and California. When we arrived in Colorado Springs, it was so delightfully cool that we stayed over for a few days and I was happy to meet Paul Fox.

While still visiting in Colorado in 1932 Franklin Roosevelt, he became president later, came to the Springs and I cut several silhouettes of him. While I was cutting one, a lady's voice behind me kept saying . . . be careful with his (the resident's) nose, he has a very nice nose. Becoming somewhat annoyed, I was just about to turn and give her the scissors, when someone whispered in my ear . . . "Don't lose your temper, that's Eleanor."

It was during these years that I was very friendly with Faucett Ross and he often visited Colorado as he and Danny Dew were two of Pauls' closest friends. It was at the time I was visiting Faucett that we had a visit from one of "Magic's truly greats" . . . Charlie Miller. I had often heard of him but now fully realized why people would rave about his ability.

The last few words are only a very sketchy account of my ramblings. But it would take page after page to write of all the interesting people I have met since moving to California, to name . . . Bill Bowers, Mike Skinner, Siegfried & Roy, Larry Jennings, Bruce Cervon, Ron Wilson, Dick Zimmerman, Tony Giorgio, Steve Freeman, Jim Lewis, Max Maven, Jules Lenier, Chuck Fayne, Earl Nelson, Johnny Thompson, Shimada, Scott Cervine, Ray Grismer, Jeff Busby, Bob Brown, Chic Carrano, Johnny Platt, Leo Behnke, Jonathan Neal Brown, Don Lawton, Mike Marlin, Chris Michaels, Joe Cossari, Eric Gerard & Oz, Bob French, Gerald Kosky, John Carney, James Dimmere, Doug Henning, Petrick & Mia, Richard Turner, Kathy Diamond, The Derman Family, Danny Dew, Darryl, Bob Gwodz, Keops, Brad Berlin, Benny Roth and many other Castle members. I fully realize I have left out some of my best beloved friends but please overlook it.

June, 1986

Last Sunday we Castle members had the pleasure of attending a truly unique lecture. No magic was performed nor discussed. However, the speaker . . . Dick Sherman gave a very interesting talk of how music and lyrics could enhance and add to the interest of magical performances. Not only did he explain everything but he also played a small mechanical piano and projected scenes from his many movies and explained, with illustrations, how effective was a certain instrument as musical accompaniment.

Dick's late father Al and brother Bob with Dick Stillane were among the tops in their field both for music and lyrics.

What more appropriate slogan for a good magician than . . . "Magic with a flair". Just to lift one of their original expressions.

Let me now refer to my favorite text book by S. W. Erdnase, Page 174 at the foot of the page. "In all entertainment the more palaver, the more interest is excited and the address and patter of the performer will count as much if not more than his skill in manipulation." It truly saddens me that so few fail to really fully understand what the written word attempts to describe.

Over forty years ago, back in New York City, Francis Carlyle gave a lecture. About eighty people were in attendance. He asked his first question. 'How many of you can do the 'GLIDE'?' Hold up your hands. nearly all complied.

Next he asked. . . How many will venture to come up and demonstrate?" This time only about a half dozen raised their hands. Each in turn showed their skills and Francis sent all back to their seats. How you "go into it" and the technique are of the utmost importance.

Read the Erdnase description and note particularly the position and use of the fingers. However, no mention is made of how you go into it"

A good method of the latter when forcing is given on Page 46. After the top is tossed off and the lower half placed on top, it is stepped forward about a quarter of an inch. The deck is then picked up by the sides and the index finger presses down to hold the upper and prevent slipping. As the pack is placed into the left hand the right thumb presses down and a little finger break is held.

By using such a method no "get ready" is apparent and the force is not suspected. While on the subject of the . . . glide. I'll explain a sleight used by Mexican gamblers in the games of Monte (not Three Card Monte).

Presume you have had a card selected and it is returned to the deck above a key" card. By a triple cut the two cards wind up on the bottom of the deck. Show the cards to the spectator as . . . by Erdnase. This shows the "key". When the deck is turned down and the

card is slid back about a half inch, the index and second finger reach under and both cards are slid out together an inch or two. Now, by taking the two cards by the right inner corner, index finger on top, they can be perfectly aligned and turned face up and placed on top of the deck. This dodge has many uses and should be added to ones arsenal of sleights.

Again let me stress how important it is to read most carefully. On Page 168 at the top of the page is the word . . . covertly. Neglecting to read and understand no results can be attained.

This is the real secret to "disguise your glance".

July, 1986

At my age I feel a trifle dizzy by so much activity, one convention after another . . . Bakersfield, The Queen Mary then Louisville, KY and in a few days Tokyo, Japan.

Many others will be writing of these and offering their comments. However, I must state that the I.B. M. affair aboard the beautiful ship had some of the very best acts and, sadly, some to the worst, I have ever witnessed.

Among the former appeared in the close-up shows. But the high light was the closing stage offering. Doug Henning and Walter Blaney had some of the best illusions that I have ever seen and Joseph with his sensational climax was spectacular.

Much as I love magic I was engrossingly intrigued by the absolute mastery and skill of the juggler . . . Kris Kremo. Truly phenomenal.

Back at the Magic Castle the past two weeks, Mike Caveney and his talented wife Tina put on a really delightful act. Billy McComb more than pleased everyone in the Parlour of Prestidigitation.

Sorry that the two young chaps from West Germany are leaving Tuesday. One is Robert Loffee and the other is Thomas Hierling. Both work in a large restaurant in Frankfurt. Both of them are extremely talented and have been most generous in performing and explaining some of their new and different effects.

I have been so engrossed for the last week that I failed to write these comments. There was a birthday party for my clever friend Ray Grismer and a few days later he gave a most interesting lecture which everyone thoroughly enjoyed.

Then again another birthday for Johnny Thompson. The Warsaw Wizard who I consider in the same frame with Fred Kaps and Cardini. And what a beautiful and talented assistant he has. Where do you find a girl like this? John is to open in Vegas next week as he has some new effects to add to his already perfect act.

This last Sunday the lecturer was Albert Goshman and he really did a "bang up" job and really amazed everyone by his remarks and talk. As everyone knows he does not perform a talking act, but an outstanding demonstration. He was most articulate and surprised many who did not expect him to talk so lucidly and expressed things so clearly.

While driving back with Bill Larsen from the I.B.M convention I suggested that he should have the Castle buy about twenty doves, two or three 'Zombies' a few dancing cones, some steel Rings and a few hanks of rope besides several decks of cards for back palming. These could be stored in the Castle and when performers arrived they merely

picked out certain items for their acts. How many times can an audience watch someone with a "metal ball on the end of a stick?". . . the last few words I have overheard many times from laymen. We have an excellent library in the Castle. Sachs, Hatton and Plate, Lang Neal, Erdnase. A TREASURE HOUSE of ideas for presenting something refreshing. Otherwise if the trend continues the art of magic will surely fade.

Regarding reading books, a good example of carelessness is in the description in Erdnase of a very mysterious mental effect. The word "covertly" is not heeded which is of the utmost importance otherwise the method will not work.

Remember you must also learn to read "between the lines" as mere printed words cannot always convey the actual way an effect is handled.

On closing, I trust that the coming New York Symposium to be held in Tokyo will be a great success.

Best regards to Sawa, Ton Onosaka,, Yamada, Computer number one and two, and Takagi.. And lastly a dear little girl by the name of Marie.

All for now . . .

August, 1986

I am happy to see that this issue is dedicated to Eddie Fechter. Few know that Eddie Fechter was the one who first inspired that remarkable performer Mike Skinner. The latter used to visit him quite frequently at the Forks Hotel and absorbed many of Eddie's fine ideas.

At this time ask anyone informed who they consider the best of the many close-up workers and the answer will, or should be, Mike Skinner.

Many years ago I spent a very pleasant time with Ross Bertram, Faucett Ross and Eddie Fechter in Toronto, Canada. Eddie thrilled us with his original effects and different moves.

Much later at a convention in Cleveland, Eddie could be seen entertaining a large group with his famous dice shot.

I spotted Charlie Miller some distance away and went over and told him he should not fail to see Eddie perform.

Charlie seemed to be uninterested but at my insistence, he reluctantly came over to watch. Eddie dropped the four dice into the cup and asked Charlie to name a point. "Six." "Alright, point to a spot on the table and keep a finger there."

A couple of shakes -- out rolled the dice helter and skelter with the exception of one in front of Charlie's finger. The "six" uppermost.

Charlie said, "Do it again while I watch from this side." This time the called point was an "ace" and it showed up. Charles, not satisfied said, "Now let me stand over here." Again, without fail, the required point showed up.

The perfectionist Charles Earl Miller still was not satisfied. Eddie said to him, "Hey fella'. Get down on your back in front of my feet and I'll bet you'll not detect it."

This rather amusing incident should stress how flawless Eddie's execution was.

When I first saw Eddie toss out the dice and without fail control one, I was curious to learn the source of this effect.

Eddie said that one day while tending bar, a shabby unkempt individual approached him and asked for a double drink of whiskey. He said that he had no money but that he had the "shakes" and had to have a "belt."

Eddie said he was sorry but that he was running a business and had to be paid.

At this moment the old guy spotted a dice cup by the register. He said, "What do you do with that? Can I see it?" When Eddie handed him the cup he asked Ed to drop in the dice and place his first finger on any spot on the bar. Then he asked him to name a point. Eddie said, "An ace." Out rolled all the dice but right in front of the finger was the ace.

Eddie, without a moments hesitation placed a full bottle of pinch bottle scotch with a drinking glass and said, "Help yourself to all you want."

After a few glasses, he taught Eddie the "real work."

During the war years Eddie, who had been in the Navy, entertained the troupe in the Aleutian Islands. He had the honor of working with the famous movie star Errol Flynn. A truly amusing occurrence happened when both of them entertained in a hospital but that is another story.

During the last few weeks two excellent books concerning our art have been published. The one by Larry Jennings reveals many very clever card and coin effects. These are clearly described and the illustrations make everything delightfully simple to understand. All in all, I personally consider this work truly excellent.

Armed with a copy of Erdnase and Larry's book . . . "who would want more", . . . as the popular Toyota car ads state.

Just heard from Jim Patton that Larry was at Lake Tahoe last week and was called on stage in front of a large audience. He performed one of the effects from his book ... 'The Ambidextrous Travelers'. His presentation more than pleased the large audience.

To present a card trick in front of this large assemblage and have it register, proves the quality of the effect he so well describes in his recent book.

Now, concerning John Booth's new book. Not only writing it to appeal greatly to beginners but old timers will thoroughly enjoy the numerous photographs and stories about the bygone days. John not only tells of well known magicians of the past and present, but explains many of their 'pet' methods.

Here is a man whom you must respect and value what he has to say. He not only knew many that he writes of, but he performed many times as a replacement for them. Cardini as one example.

Dick (the Great Cardini) received an unexpected booking at the new York Music Hall and John filled Cardini's place. The whole contents of this work are replete with accurate statements. Personally I was pleased by the way he handled the myth about Houdini.

John's birthplace was Hamilton, Canada. This was where Allen Shaw, the famous coin manipulator was born. Also, from the land of the maple leaf we have Sid Lorraine and

Ross Bertram. The latter would have puzzled the famous Allen Shaw with some of his diabolical coin moves.

Unbeknown today was a man named Tot O'Regan from Ottawa, Canada, my home town. He played for a brief time on the Keith Circuit doing a handcuff act. He was equally as good as Harry Houdini but hardly known today. He received many requests to open safes where the combination had been loaf. He also did a very fine thumb tie. . . using a shoe lace.

If you desire to be abreast of the past magic scene, be sure to read John's new book.

September 1986

I am very pleased that this months GENII is featuring my very dear friend Johnny Thompson.

For many years I have known and greatly admired Johnny. Not only does he perform a truly excellent stage act with his beautiful and talented wife, but he is a real expert at so called close-up magic.

Besides all this he has been most instrumental in coaching and helping other performers. His stage act is not only highly amusing but every move ... every sleight is executed with flawless perfection.

One of John's earliest books on the art was Erdnase -- the expert at the card table. He like myself considers this book to be of the utmost value. Quite apart from the many sleights described, it contains sound advice applicable to all types of magic.

For example, THE RESOURCEFUL PERFORMER FAILING TO IMPROVE THE METHOD CHANGES THE MOMENT. And, very truthfully, sleights should be employed only as a means to an end. Hidden within the covers are many valuable hints of sound advice and will prove to be of true value if they are thoroughly understood and heeded.

Several times I have been taken to task for failing to mention names. For example one of my very dearest and closest friends Faucett Ross. I cannot recall ever including his name in lists as given. Also many others.

If I were to include names from other countries the magazine would contain nothing but names. Please be assured it most certainly is not deliberate.

In this column I am not supposed to comment on any of the acts currently playing here, but I feel obliged to mention just two very recent performers namely ... David Gripenwaldt and Shinichi Arai from Japan. Both of these performers excelled and were a treat to see.

Before I forget, I must mention that Josy Barkan, the Manager of Tihany,

was a visitor a few nights ago. He informed me that Tihany is to open his extravagant magic show in Mexico City on October 16th. The theatre where he is to perform seats 4,000 people and anyone able to be there should make a point to attend.

I have had several requests to include an effect in this column occasionally. The following is worth doing and will puzzle the on-looker.

Three cards are freely selected and returned to the deck and following a magical gesture of any kind each is spelled to unfeignedly.

In a regulation pack of cards there are over twelve cards that spell twelve letters also thirteen cards that spell with thirteen. And finally eleven with eleven. If you bear in mind that of hearts and of spades contain eight letters. Of clubs contain seven and of diamonds contain ten, it becomes easy to figure how many cards are needed to spell out correctly.

To perform simply arrange the twelve, thirteen and eleven spellers in three groups and place a small pencil dot on the last card of each set. Now it will be evident that if three cards are selected. one from each group and returned to their same group below the pencil dot, they can be spelt to without fail.

Of course, to show the effect the pack is first a false shuffle and cut. Now it is a simple matter to spread the cards and to have one selected from the first set of twelve and returned below the pencil dot of this batch.

Another is chosen from the second group of thirteen cards and treated likewise. Finally one from the eleven group is chosen. This is a really good effect for a large audience. Personally I have always used many different dodges with spelling.

In New York back in the twenties, I used to segregate the different spellers ... all the elevens, twelves and the thirteens over half the pack. I used this to puzzle those who either divided the odds and evens or the red and black. As for how I know no one has ever figured out this method is that I could quickly spot any card placed back in a different group.

HAVE FUN!

October, 1986

For the past several years I have been writing this column, however, I feel very unqualified for the task. I was never one to keep notes and seldom write letters. Also the fact that I am somewhat absent-minded, I often overlook the obvious things. However, I can assure my readers that my intentions are most certainly not so. In my case the old saying about the road to hell fits perfectly.

A dear friend of mine, Ray Grismer, who recently returned to his early home in Idaho, told me something that really saddened me. In route he stopped over in Oregon to visit Jerry Andrus. Jerry thought it was odd that I had never mentioned his name and felt a trifle hurt. The true fact is that he is "exceptional", and is extremely original. He is one of the few I have ever known who 'never' copies or steals other's ideas or thoughts and who has originated countless methods and effects.

He is certainly unique and a most honest and likeable person.

From my defective memory and just off-hand I can recall such names as Faucett Ross. Ross Bertram, Earl Violet, Steve Freeman, Harry Monti, Tony Giorgio, Roger Klauser, Bev Bergeron, Monte Smith and Bob Gwodz. Adding also. Danny Rouzer, Harry Riser. Jay Marshall, Francis Marshall, Ed Marlo, Martin Gardner, Persi Diaconis. Bill Joslin. Howie Schwartzman, Jim Patton, Don Lawton and even more to fill many more pages.

These just mentioned and many many more good friends of mine I feel sure must understand that failing to use their names is in no way done on purpose.

To change the subject, I had intended to visit Japan for Ton Onasaka's and also Germany for Manfred Thumms (of Magic Hands) birthday parties. Although I still, happily, am well and fit, I do not feel up to making these trips. I am truly extremely fond of all the Japanese magicians and many are most talented and I also think very highly of Manfred and his wife Em.

Last week Dr. Albo invited Bill Bowers and me to the re-opening of the Magic Island in Newport Beach. Both Johnny Thompson and Albert Goshman were the headliners.

I cannot say enough in praise about the Warsaw Wizard and his extremely talented assistant Pam. They thrilled me and killed the audience. Of course, Albert Goshman never fails to bewilder his audience and delivers solid entertaining magic.

A short time ago Bill Bowers and I visited Robert Albo and he again showed us how he had re-arranged all his collection of apparatus. Not only does he have exquisite pieces of varied equipment but has duplicates and sometimes many variations of the same effect.

Besides all the beautifully finished Okito pieces, he has the best from the French, German and other European manufacturers. Bill and I were particularly impressed with

some of the things made by Carl Williams. His work is superb and anyone who admires the very finest and well-constructed things cannot secure any item better. and w here.

When Joe Stevens puts on the next Las Vegas Seminar, there will be a Tennis and Golf Tournament staged. I am looking forward to seeing my two good friends, Chic Carrano and Dr. Albo, literally on the tennis courts.

I was quite surprised to receive a letter from Walter Blaney thanking me for a mention in this column and stating that he was pleased to be associated with Doug Henning. Apart from the fact that they both present truly excellent illusions, they are both true gentlemen and most likeable human beings.

This quality comes out across the footlights and the audiences more thoroughly enjoy their performances.

Presenting magic, more so than any other form of entertainment, becomes fatal if the attitude of the performer is not pleasing. To appear conceited or over-pleased in your manner is a sure way to destroy the enjoyment of your audience. Even if the onlookers are all noisy and many intoxicated, they can be silenced and attentive if you follow this simple rule.

As you first appear, look over the entire audience and strongly think to yourself, "What a wonderful crowd. What a privilege to be able for me to entertain them."

Strange as it may seem, this really works and your opening remarks (if a talking act) must be carefully chosen.

I am very often asked how the performers today compare to those of yesterday.

Some of the *effects* of the old timers were outstanding and would be most difficult to improve upon.

When we talk about showmanship we think of men like Leipzig, Downs, Blackstone, Kellar, Maskelyne and Devant, Goldin, Dante and, of course, Houdini with his escapes, and many others in all parts of the world.

However, today, many of the methods are vastly superior to those of old.

On concluding, I'd like to thank all my good friends who tolerate an old man like me and whose letters and compliments give me encouragement and I hope to hang on until the nineteen nineties when I hope to our reach the century mark.

November, 1986

I am greatly pleased that Bill Larsen is dedicating the month's issue to the Tenyo Company. Several years ago, Larry Jennings and I visited Japan and met Yamada and his two assistants . . . Kato and Yashasawa. We referred to the latter couple as computer #1 and computer #2 after becoming familiar with their great genius for solving problems.

As an example, Larry Jennings was performing a coin effect for both of them and at the finish he asked Kato what his partner thought of the novel presentation because he had remained discreetly silent. Kato replied "He was working out an improvement".

Both these young chaps are extremely talented and have contributed greatly to the success of the Tenyo Company. They and Takagi have been a great influence on the magic of Japan.

Of course as far as I know my dear departed friend Tenkai had a truly great part in advancing the art. He and his wife Okinu were a most lovable and talented couple. I spent many pleasant

hours in their company when they were living in Hollywood.

Also, Charlie Miller and Gerald Kosky were great friends and admirers of him and his wife. The late Dr. Daley had the thrill of his life while on a visit to California. When he performed the 'broken thread effect', Tenkai was greatly puzzled by the way he disposed of the pieces. Like a true artist, Tenkai readily admitted he was totally fooled.

It's something I used to know but I just can't remember it. As I grow older I have to admit that my memory fails me when it comes to remembering names. A name like Napoleon is very easy but I am very hopeless with names of many I have seen perform.

I can state with assurance that I have never seen a poor or mediocre act performed by my Japanese friends. Sadly this is not so in this part of the world.

It has just occurred to me that it would be a good excuse to write-up the directions for an odd little effect of mine called 'the computer'. It is fairly well

Now, let us suppose that the spectator when asked to name his thought-of card . . . replies 'tine four of clubs'. You illustrate what you wish him to do by pushing in the projecting cards with your left forefinger. This action pushes out cards at the inner end.

Turning the deck, have the spectator push the cards square and turn up the cards to display the four of hearts. This you explain gives the value of his choice.

Once more turning the cards end for end, the next push shows a club.

One more example, if the seven of diamonds might be chosen it is not necessary to push the first time to illustrate. The first push by the spectator shows the suit, the eight of diamonds and the next three, the four, two and the ace which total seven.

When familiar with the handling and properly presented it may be repeated and any card in the full deck can be known that with an ace, two, four and eight of different suits, any card in the deck can be 'matched'.

I hope I can make this clear, arrange 10 cards as follows: 3H, 4C, 6D, 7H, 7D in any order. However, the key cards must run as follows . . . sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth and joker tenth. In other words, the last five cards -- six to ten will be ace, two, four, eight and joker. These cards are placed face up on the table.

A spectator thinks of one of the cards but not the joker which is turned face down. The speed is picked up and held face down in the left hand. The cards are now given a "reverse Faro". In other words the second and every other card is jogged up for half its length. Say a 'queen of diamonds' is selected. The first action will show the suit, the second the four to make 12 the number allocated to a queen.

When pushing in the first time the cards are held very lightly as only the top card moves which is not in the least apparent. It works very smoothly if the cards are held very lightly at the fingertips and the thumb grips the sides. A very old use of this idea was to conceal the four key cards in the pocket and place the shuffled deck in the same pocket. Then any card called for could be matched in value and suit as cards are withdrawn singly.

I deeply regret that I cannot accept Ton Onasaka's kind offer to visit Japan next year. He has endeared himself to all who have met him and I trust that he will accept my apology. I feel really sorry that I shall not meet and greet all my treasured friends.

There is no place in this wide world where one can witness the type of magic as performed by Dr. Sawa and some of the youngsters.

Many of the new ideas and different effects have originated over there. The fact that I shall not be able to meet again that talented and adorable little Japanese doll . . . Marie Ikami greatly saddens me.

My friend Max Maven has been most obliging in keeping me informed about what is taking place over there. Regarding the 'computer' I failed to say that of course the cards are turned over to reveal the key card -half covered by the jokers back. Also, if any of the 'key' cards are named, they are exhibited after the first push of the projecting cards.

December, 1986

The holiday season is the most joyous time of the year. In expressing assent it seems surprising that there are so many retorts in everyday usage. For a few examples—"you said it"—how true it is — you can say that again — you said a mouthful— "you'd better believe it"—without a doubt — you hit the nail on the head —never a truer word — right from the horse's mouth — it couldn't be truer -it must be so — you call the turn — you know the score — ain't it the truth — I'll say so -positively —absolutely—indubitably—without a question.

There are many more expressions which I cannot recall at the moment.

What puzzles me is that they all express agreement.

On the other hand see how difficult it is to come up with ones that mean the opposite.

I don't agree — Where did you learn that? — Oh yeah — You've missed the boat.

Apparently people are more anxious to agree than otherwise.

While discussing words, it might be of interest to some to learn a little about Australian slang.

Years ago when the English shipped many of their prisoners to this far off island, they took with them the jargon of the underworld.

This was a rhyming patter and to conceal the meaning from outsiders they would abbreviate. For instance, the word for girl—TWIST and Twirl - the twirl was deleted and only the first word was used. As an example:

Pipe the pretty TWIST at the NEAR she is drinking GAY she has beautiful MUMLES and gorgeous BARNET.

Translated:

See the TWIST and TWIRL at the NEAR and FAR she has beautiful Mumbly PEGS and gorgeous BARNET FAIR.

See the pretty girl at the bar she

has beautiful legs and gorgeous hair.

Jay Ose and I used to perplex people in the Castle on many occasions, using such expressions. as:

I suppose—the nose

Thick and thin—the chin
Ups and beneath—the teeth
Snickers and sneers—the ears

The left chalk farm—the left arm The right chalk farm—the right arm

Bottles and stoppers— coppers (COPS)

Storm and strife—the wife

This latter often is used by writers who have no idea of its derivation.

Of course, in this country, the carnival world developed PIG LATIN which became quite well known to outsiders. Less known are expressions like PRAT the GEE—The "G" on the joint. CLEAN THAT STICK. The word SHILL has been replaced by STICK.

The latter expression is used when a STICK who has been entrusted with money to play with starts to walk off the lot. He is a local citizen and trying to make away with the loot.

I just finished this column and I saw a copy of MUM and was more than pleased to learn that they are lauding my greatly admired friend Harry Riser.

Charlie Miller, Tommy Martin, Charles Reynolds and John Thompson are all close friends of mine and they all express their admiration for Harry. I would most certainly like to add that he is one of the very best.

I have always been pleased that both Harry and John Thompson enthuse about Erdnase.

Even after well over eighty years fooling with cards I often check some item and find the extreme wisdom that so many overlook.

I am sorry that I did not have a chance to laud Harry.

However at this time I'd like to state that not only does he know the theory, but his execution of the most difficult sleights is masterful.

Just at this time I received a copy of a most interesting book from Germany. It has been written by Wittus Witt.

I had the pleasure of seeing him perform some years ago in a public square in Germany.

He fascinates the crowds who gather to watch him and is a true credit to the art.

This book, although written in German, can be more than appreciated by anyone not conversant with the language.

The illustrations numbering 150 are most interesting and the format of the whole book is excellent.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy can do so by writing direct to: Hugendubel Verlag, D8000 Munich, P.O. Box.

The price is D-Mark, 19.80.

Before closing I would just like to mention to some of these upcoming magicians that they should strive to make their effects as clear and uncluttered as possible.

Leipzig, one of the greatest, once said that he would give everything he knew about magic if he could get as great a response as Max Maven when he simply vanished a coin.

One perfect vanish of a coin with no detection and no recovery is more effective than a coin roll back and forth and a production from anyplace.

Confusion should be avoided at all costs, aim for simplicity. People will enjoy your magic more. People, not magicians.

Happy 1987 to All!

January, 1987

I want to start my column this month by printing a letter received from Roy McIlwee of Scranton, PA. He writes:

"Dear Mr. Vernon,

I have just read your article in GENII (my first issue, and knowing absolutely nothing about magic, but dying to get involved, I know you are the one I'd like to ask some advice. A few guidelines to a novice would be greatly appreciated! If you cannot, I understand Maybe one of your columns could deal with beginners. Thank you. Roy McIlwee

P.S. Tomorrow I'm going to Tannen's in New York "

Dear Roy,

If you wish to enjoy taking up the art of magic, I would state with confidence that you should make yourself familiar with the classic books on the subject.

Namely - Professor Hoffman's "Modern", "More", and "Later Magic". Also the works by Robert Houdin, "Sachs's Sleight of Hand" and "Our Magic" by Maskelyne and Devant.

I imagine these are available in most public libraries.

There are at present many excellent advanced volumes available but in my opinion, I would not even attempt to interpret them.

The great trouble is that the modern books are filled with methods, methods and more methods. In all forms of magic, what really counts is the EFFECT!

Proof of this is the fact that three of the very finest card performers I ever had the pleasure of

seeing perform - namely Herbert Brooks, Larry Gray and the present Eddie Tollich - all of these excellent artists used only three or four of the standard sleights.

Talking of moves or sleights, I vividly recall a lecture given by my dear departed friend, Francis Carlyle. He had over forty in attendance and he started his talk by asking how many of the audience could execute the "GLIDE".

Nearly every hand went up. Then he asked for five or six to come forward and present an effect using this well known sleight. Out of the whole assemblage, only three volunteered.

The first one finished his effect and Francis said, "Go back to your seat". The same thing happened with the remaining two. Even the very simplest move must be done in a natural manner.

"How do you go into it?" "Too late". "You telegraphed the move." An expert in this line of work makes these comments when he is asked for criticism.

Now, if you truly want to plunge right in, get a copy of "The Royal Road to Card Tricks" by Jean Hugard and Fred Braue. After looking the book over, pick out one of the effects that appeals to you.

Now, learn to do it as well as possible. Don't be satisfied until you've come as close to perfection as you possibly can.

Many years ago I gave this same advice to Albert Goshman who, today, is one of our very top performers. In those days he attended the Abbott Convention with Persi Diaconis. The other magicians kept following him around as he performed SPELLBOUND over and over again.

On another occasion in the Dixie Hotel in New York, he performed for a visiting magician from Europe and this chap who himself specialized in coin tricks, said: "That is the greatest sleeving I have ever seen."

This was truly a great compliment because Albert used dexterity. No sleeve work whatsoever.

I have mentioned these facts to impress upon you how important it is if you wish to excel.

Now, back to you Roy. From the very start, be sure to have the proper attitude. It is fatal to be smug or over bearing or to be a so called "smart alek". What you probably do not realize is how many different reasons there are to take up the art.

Some are just "joiners". They crave to hold a position as one of the officers in one of the magic clubs. In most cases, they cannot perform the simplest effect.

As you get deeper into the art, always strive to give it the dignity it deserves. Some performers really annoy people with their persistent "TAKE A CARD".

Please your audience and if they seem weary or inattentive, put away the cards and take out some coins and you will revive their interest.

I am afraid that I have not been of much help, Roy, but in conclusion, I would advise you to see as many other performers as Possible. But ... never copy any of their mannerisms or tacks.

Do some thinking about what appeals to you and strive very hard to be original. It is difficult, I know, but if you persist, marvelous effects will accrue. Best to you!

February, 1987

All the knowledgeable members of the craft are eagerly looking forward to the coming seminar in Las Vegas. Joe Stevens never fails to put on a truly entertaining affair with something that pleases everyone. This time the emphasis is on comedy presentation.

As I recall times of the past there were very few magicians who skillfully combined talk or so-called patter with their offering.

Outstanding were Van Hoven, Emil Jarrow, Judson Cole and Larry Gray. All these mentioned received the largest remuneration for their acts.

It takes experience, knowledge, and practical exposure to excel in this art.

Few of today's younger performers realize and fully understand how important it is to "build" a so-called gag.

One of the truest examples of this was when Jack Benny was held up with a gun. "Your money or your life." A pause and then his retort, "I'm thinking!" Without the long build-up over the years of his frugality, it would fail to be amusing. This, of course, is the extreme as it was built-up over years of exposure.

A brief example by Larry Gray: "This is my right arm, the one with the sleeve rolled back. Both arms are alike. I explain everything. You can't go wrong."

"Next a novelty with two handkerchiefs—a green and a red one. This madame is the red one. I explain everything. You can't go wrong!"

Notice the word lady in doing the cards pocket.

"They pass up my sleeve, across my body. This is my body lady where I have the shirt."

The word *lady* is the whole key.

Ridiculous as it appears, it gives amusement as the remark is aimed at a supposed onlooker.

Many years ago when I was only 11 years of age, I met Nate Leipzig and had the audacity to tell him that I thought I had worked out each of his effects. He asked me to perform his sucker color-change as I would for an audience.

When I did it and turned my hand up to show the empty palm, he taught me a very valuable lesson. It was of the utmost importance to look forward to one and only one person as the hand is shown empty. Otherwise it is a "sell" on the entire audience.

As a vivid example, when doing the Die Box for children, direct all your attention to one youngster when all the doors are opened. Thus, all will enjoy the effect and laugh at the supposed boy's mistake.

People do not enjoy being fooled but like to see others completely nonplussed.

Two of my very favorite performers were Max Malini and Nate Leipzig. Both used touches of humor. Nate, when he asked the spectator to stick the knife into the pack wrapped in newspaper, Leipzig would say: "Stick the knife anywhere (he would draw back slightly) and say, IN THE PACK!" Also, he would cue his assistants to scratch their heads making it appear that they were very perplexed. All these little bits added greatly to the effectiveness of the act.

Malini used to relate that very few were acquainted with the fact that the Pope was a mentalist. He claimed that after his performance in the Vatican, he was asked how it was that he was not Italian, yet he had the fine Italian name. How could he possibly have known that I was not of Roman birth?" This was amusing owing to the fact that he spoke with a decided Yiddish accent. Max purposely twisted the use of his language and it was very amusing. Incidentally, he probably entertained more royalty and heads of state than any other of the hordes of magicians.

Talking of delivery of patter lines, years ago, Al Baker gave me a remark to terminate a trick I was using. The line was: "That's my story and I'm going to stick to it!" If I prefaced it with "now" or "well" or added *anything* it lost its effectiveness. Brevity is always preferable.

An example I use which I used to find effective and which I was flattered that the late Jay Ose adapted, was to ask a girl to place her finger on the card and press slightly. As she does as requested, simply say the word PERFECT—not that's perfect or you did that perfectly—simple one word . . . PERFECT. It flatters the girl and for some reason amuses.

Avoid long sentences such as, "I shall now place the coin on the table". Preferable, I shall now—place the coin—on the table.

In other words, if a long sentence is required — break it into short phrases. "Now watch me closely" becomes more effective if spoken with pauses, thus: Now . . . watch me . . . closely.

Most important of all is to avoid any sing-song delivery. The words must appear to come naturally from your lips. It seems strange but the deletion of a single word or the use of one makes a great difference.

The late Lou Derman, who Jay Ose named "Friday Night Lou" was a genius when it came to the use of language. Of course, he was a professional comedy writer for top T.V. shows like *"All In the Family"*, *"Mr. Ed"* and many others. Every time he worked, he used different material and he always delighted the audience.

He might, on occasion, start by looking over the audience and remark: "You most certainly look like a very Keane and perceptive group. This worries me. I prefer a less attentive group who have to put on their glasses. This gives me time to make the secret move."

"In this first trick, I usually accompany it with music, but some kid stole my kazoo."

Above all else, one must choose or use lines that suit his own personality.

March, 1987

Some years ago when Jay Ose was working in a magic shop on Main Street in Los Angeles, this happened. A chap walked in and asked Jay if he'd like to see a good card trick. He then asked for a deck of cards and he retired into the men's room. Being gone for about five minutes he walked to the counter and dealing the cards one by one he told a story with about 20 cards which he had obviously "set up".

Jay politely watched and said: "I used to know a similar trick but first you must thoroughly shuffle the cards. Cut off a small packet and hand it to me."

Jay then proceeded to relate a much better story than our intruder.

I often tried to get Jay to use this effect in his performances in the Castle but he claimed that many people were not conversant with the slang names such as "a little fiver" for a five and "a bullet" for an ace. However, he evidently never attempted to change his method.

I have made a list of possibilities and it should not be too difficult to do with a little practice.

Ace—Place, Face, Embrace
2—Tattoo, Produce
3—Tray, Betray
4—Before, Fortune
5—Nickel
6—Basics, Sixty
7—Seven-up
8—Ate, Relate
9—Quinine
10—Often, Eaten
Jack—Jack
Queen—Queeny
King—Smoking, Talking

In one of the old magic books, there is described one of these stories about a Queen going to dig diamonds, using the spades, the clubs and hearts to illustrate.

Then in later years, Frank Everhart used an amusing story named "*Sam the Bellhop*" which used a complete set-up of the entire deck.

To perform, have the deck shuffled and ask for a packet of a quarter of the deck. As you deal each card singly as in stud poker—it gives you a chance to see the card before it is laid down and you thus have the opportunity to contrive a suitable story.

The following is just an example.

I took my girl queeny to a place I'd been before. She hadn't eaten anything but she put her *plate* on a tray and ate and ate and drank a glass of seven up. She'd been taking quinine and objected to *smoking*. It cost me all my Jack down to my last pickle.

This should give you a rough idea of how to contrive the *basics*.

Besides the rhyming ones, you can fill in with the athletic club or golf clubs, spades for digging, hearts for sweethearts or diamonds for Rings, etc.

The last few weeks things have really been humming. The Awards Dinner and Show, The Desert Seminar by Joe Stevens which your editors will report in detail in this issue and a dinner given by Dr. Albo to commemorate the publication of his last book. It is hard to even imagine how much toil and dedication went into the work entailed. These books lend a great deal of stature and dignity to our much beloved art.

Bill Bowers and I flew directly from Las Vegas to Oakland to attend the event put on by Dr. Albo. My friends John Carney and Albert Goshman both performed and added greatly to the success.

I must say I feel very grateful for the way I was treated by my great number of friends and hope to still retain their friendship for many more conventions, banquets and parties.

Regarding the shows recently, it is hard for me to understand why nearly all the acts "overstay their welcome ". Not sometimes but almost always. An audience should wish to

see more, not wonder how long it was to continue.

During the "hey day" of vaudeville, there were very few turns that lasted longer than 15 minutes.

Allen Shaw's act the brightest—only six minutes and he shared the bill with acts like the Dolly Sisters.

I repeat what Nate Leipzig used to often say: "Know when to quit and never do more unless really requested. After a few card effects, and you notice one of your spectators losing interest, by all means put away your cards and perhaps take out a few coins or switch to something else, interest will be regained."

I feel very flattered when I receive so many letters telling me that I have been a good influence in their magic and my advice has helped them. It can be very rewarding if you constantly strive to improve and remember what Paul Fox used to often repeat: "Most magicians stop thinking too soon! " In other words, pretty good is not good enough. It can always be better as you continually must strive.

If you do magic as a professional, what counts far more than the mastering of a few sleights is how you conduct yourself—your manner— your approach to endear yourself to your audience.

Nothing is more deadly than being cocky or acting as a smart aleck.

Woo your audience. Make love to them. This sounds a little strange but if you truly make them believe this, they will return the adoration.

I can't answer all the letters I get but I do appreciate receiving them. You can reach me at the Magic Castle, 7001 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, CA 90028.

April, 1987

The fact that I spend so much time at the "Castle", I meet many people and am constantly asked questions. Not only by magicians, but quite often by others who have no knowledge whatsoever of our likeable art.

From the latter, for example: "How long have you been doing magic?" "Are the magicians of today superior to the ones of the past?" Was Houdini the greatest? Did you know him personally?"

These are only three of the dozens of inquiries from the so called "lay men".

On the other hand, members of the craft ask a great number of questions, most of which are impossible to answer.

For instance: "How can you make the shift invisible?" "Which is the best double lift?" Which is the best type of playing cards to adopt?"

Countless questions- most could be answered by using your head.

As to the best make of cards to use for general use, it is naturally better to use ones with backs familiar to those who live in the territory.

It is of interest to realize that the bicycle back over the course of their history have had eighty-one different designs. However, today only three are in use. The fan - the racer and the rider.

In New York, for instance, the Tally-Ho is much more familiar than it is here in the West.

Walter Scott, a master of the number two or second deal, favored the Blue Ribbon card from the Russell Playing Card Company.

As a matter of fact, different types are most adaptable to certain moves and flourishes than others.

Take for instance the one handed "drop catch" which few have used. Both Manuel and Le Paul could never have performed it without the use of an extremely flexible deck, preferably the old time "Steam Boats."

Now, as to the pass or shift. Note what Erdnase states: "The pass has yet to be invented" etc. Surprisingly, Bruce Cervon, well known for his great skill, has devised a novel mannerism to completely conceal the interchange of the two packets.

It was quite delightful when Charlie Miller -yes Charlie Miller, passed most favorable comments.

When it comes to perfecting such difficult moves as bottom dealing, seconds, and palming- it may take many hours - in most cases years- to attain that goal of near perfection.

The main thing, after facility becomes second nature, is to work out some type of misdirection.

It may be quite simple, such as a tilt of the hands - a light or tight grip- a reach or swing with one hand as the other does "the work".

If it is not fun to fool around like this- learn to play a kazoo!

Joking aside, remember what Paul Fox used to say: "Don't stop thinking too soon". What the late Dr. Elliott kept saying to me was: "Strive each time when learning a difficult sleight to do it just a little better."

If you follow this advice, wonderful results will accrue.

Remember, magic can be entertaining, commercial- and also great fun. Any questions?

May, 1987

On June the eleventh I became ninety three years of age. I want to thank all the Magic Castle members who attended the mid-night champagne party at the Castle. I don't want a big party until my 100th birthday and all GENII subscribers will be invited.

Younger people fail to realize how, as the years pass, friends also pass. Just heard the sad news that my very dear friend, Faucett Ross, died from a heart attack. It was just a few weeks ago that Gerald Kosky, another long time friend passed away from a stroke.

Over the years it is hard to believe how many close friends are no longer among the living. Just a few that come to mind are Cardini, Roy Benson, George Jason, Keith Clarke, Frakson, Dr. Elliott, Wallace Galvin, Jack Merlin, Nate Leipzig, Judson Cole, Herbert Brooks, Max Malini, Warren Keane, Houdini, Hardeen, Chas. Carter, Ken Brooke, Jack Salvin, Fred Robinson, Lewis Ganson, P.T Selbit, Dunninger, Pop Krieger, Clinton Burgess, Frank Ducrot, Sam Margules, Sam Horowitz, Jimmy Drilling, Dr. Daley, Bill Larsen, Sr., George Boston, Harry Mendoza, Orlando Bagley, Mickey O'Malley, Orson Welles, Paul Rosini, Jay Ose, Fred Kaps, Fred Keating, Judge Starke, George Karger, Danny Rouzer, Chris Michaels, Ted Annemann, Judge Young, Lou Derman, Glen Pope. Ellsworth Lyman, Paul Fox, T. Servais Le Roy, Nelson Downs, Manuel, Welsh Miller, John Ramsay, Stewart Judah, Harry Blackstone, Harry Kellar, Horace Goldin, Leslie Guest, Earl Violet, Dante, Fu Man Chu, Okito and Paul Curry.

I consider myself very fortunate to still have a large number of close friends, not only in this country but all over the world.

Please forgive me if sometimes I seem too critical but I assure you I love magic and strive at all times to do right by it.

I am at the present quite surprised that Bruce Cervon and Larry Jennings are putting out some of my ideas in several books. It is an honor and I thank them.

By the way, Bruce has come up with a revolutionary handling of a shift and ;the severe critic, Charlie Miller, has put his "O.K." on it.

Incidentally both Bruce and Larry are among the very best when it comes to skillful handling of the pasteboards.

In the new book by Ron Wilson, Ron states that when, many years ago, he taught Larry a simple card trick, little did he realize that Larry would become one of the very best handlers of playing cards.

Back to my friend Faucett Ross. Years ago, back in the thirties, I first met Faucett in New York City. He had driven T. Nelson Downs and Eddie McLaughlin to the big city for one of the early conventions.

When they drove into the city they parked on Forty-seventh Street, just off Broadway.

Wise guys. spotting the Missouri plates on the car, approached them telling them where to go for a good time. Girls, gambling, etc.

This made Tommy Downs very indignant and he'd say: "You young whipper snappers - before you were even born I had my name up in lights at the Palace Theatre. We are not yokels. We are all 'city broke' so take a walk.

Tommy was quite a character and his language was unique. When they would go to a hotel to check in, Tommy would say to the clerk: "Hey boy. We don't want no bridal suite. Just a place to flop. Now tell me the low down."

Very unlike Downs, Faucett was well educated and even at the tender age of twelve he avidly read and enjoyed Shakespeare. His mother told me that for hours he would lie on the veranda absorbed with Hamlet and the Merchant of Venice.

Faucett, in his early days, was with the *Wichita Beacon* and wrote a column for a time.

I believe he was one of the very first to do a so called "trade show".

In Wichita, the Rainbow Bread Company had a difficult time getting its salesmen to attend their lectures. Faucett suggested doing a half hour show of magic to help create a greater attendance. This was tried and really did the job.

If it had not been for Faucett, I doubt that any of my ideas would have ever appeared in print. When we visited England in the 1950's it was Faucett who talked Lewis Ganson into doing the job.

Previously, Carl Jones had often tried to publish my ideas but I continually refused.

It was Faucett who first introduced me to Downs and he and I often visited Marshalltown, Iowa and spent many enjoyable times watching Tommy perform.

June, 1987

At my advanced age I consider myself to be very fortunate to have so many wonderful friends old and young.

Just a few days ago on my ninety third birthday (June 11th), Bill and Irene Larsen arranged a midnight party and I was very touched at the large number of Castle members who attended. Our popular president Bill took a video tape of the whole affair which I have just seen. It showed me shaking hands with many dozens of my Castle friends of all sexes and being kissed by many of the attractive females. The tape concluded at midnight when everyone sang the Happy Birthday song and I am shown blowing out the candles on the large birthday cake. I certainly do not feel that I should receive such a compliment.

Just a short time ago, the last week of May, Larry Krams invited me to take this year's Magicruise on the steamship Skyward. Having been on the previous ones, I can testify that they are most enjoyable.

This year everyone took the plane from their homes to Miami to board the ship. The main events (which Editor Bill will describe in more detail in this issue) were the presentations to Harry Blackstone and Mark Wilson. Larry Krams solved a rather difficult choice by giving each one an award. This was very diplomatic I consider.

The ports to which we could go ashore were Cancun, Cozumel, Cayman and a private island in the Bahamas. On the return trip they heard that there was a storm in the latter port so instead we docked at Key West for a day.

En voyage, the first event was the presentation to Mark Wilson with interesting comments by Peter Pit.

Next was a lecture by Eric Gerard who also was a great help to all by his helping out.

The Gala magic show was not the greatest but the delightful act by Amos Leftkovitz made it really worth while. This performer from Israel, as far as I know, is the only one who has all the doves return and fly back to him after the usual vanish.

On Friday, Chuck Fayne and Bob Jardine both gave interesting lectures and told how to mystify an audience.

Then we were treated to another Gala show and Blackstone proved why he has become so popular.

Larry Krams was handicapped by the fact that Harry stole some watches and did some pocket picking. Of course, Harry did not know that Larry expected to do some of these things. However, Larry carried through and received a nice hand from the audience although he had to leave out some of what he had planned to do.

I was somewhat surprised when Bill Larsen asked me if I had ever performed magic on Cruise ships.

As far as I know, John Booth and Milbourne Christopher were the two first to work on a cruise to South America. Later Francis Carlyle, Sam Horowitz and I were truly the pioneers because for nearly six years we made trip after trip to Rio, Montevideo and Buenos Aires. These trips took thirty-two days from New York to Buenos Aires and return.

The greatest number of performances I ever had to do on one of these trips was eleven. On many occasions I only did half this number.

The format was almost always the same. A singer, a dance team and a magician.

Upon many of these trips which I took, Fu Manchu would be working in Buenos Aires and I used to work in his show for a few minutes while he set the stage for his shadowgraphs.

Thinking of (David Bamberg) Fu Manchu, it doesn't seem so long ago that Sam Horowitz and I used to teach him magic. He was a nice kid and we were both very fond of him. Few people today know what an absolute idol he was in South America.

When we would walk together on the Prado in Rio, girls would actually try to cut pieces from his suit. The newspapers used to have a funny section called PAPEL PAPEL which featured him daily. He, like his father Okito, was a "ladies man" and he had golden keys made for many of his girl friends.

I was in his apartment in Buenos Aires one day when one of these lovers of his entered with her key. A short time later, as the three of us were chatting, a second young lady entered with her golden key.

You would not believe the confrontation that took place. Hair pulling, dress tearing and screaming—all to the great amusement of David who seemed to enjoy this lively event.

Upon another occasion, I was really amazed when David showed me a metal box filled with solid gold coins— thousands of dollars worth. He said that the way things looked, he wished to be prepared for any situation.

I think that next to Siegfried and Roy, Fu Manchu had one of the greatest stage shows. He used to play in Rio and Buenos Aires for six months at a time. People flocked to see him— performance after performance. How unfortunate that he died so young.

To conclude, I'll tell you a little story. A magician visited an agent to try to get some work. The agent said, "No magicians. They all do the same thing—something incidental, then they produce a dove."

The magician said, "Please listen to what I do. I sit on a chair in the spotlight mid-stage and then just wave both arms and take off and fly all around the audience and back to the chair. "

The agent said, "Just another bird act. I can't use it!"

July, 1987

Bill Bowers and I have just returned from a very pleasant visit to the Big City.

Adam Fleischer managed to produce an excellent convention in spite of the fact that the S.A.M.. held their large one in Las Vegas during the same dates.

Bill's companionship and great help made everything run smoothly on every occasion.

Let me state at this point that Bill Bowers, Herb Zarrow, Willis Schneider and Danny Dew are a quartet of the most likeable magicians. Everyone I know speaks most highly and admiringly when their names are mentioned.

I most certainly was flattered when they had the roast for me. I was seated at the table with my son Derek and grandson Timothy and Tom Mullica M.C.'d the whole session. He did a superlative job and kept the audience in a most happy mood.

The opening remarks were by Herb Zarrow followed by a tape made in England back in 1958 then another taken in Washington in 1974.

The first speaker was J Jackie Flosso the son of my long-time friend, Al.

Next was Ken Krenzel, who excels in pure sleight-of-hand.

Then Sol Stone, who T. Nelson Downs would have loved.

Tony Noyce followed with nice compliments.

Torkova then followed and changed the pace with a truly remarkable performance with the cone and ball.

Next Pat Cook played the piano and rendered a Cole Porter tune and sang "You re the Top. My boy Derek thought this was one of the highlights.

Next my friend Charlie Reynolds spoke kindly. Tommie Burke was next, he does a move with cords no one has ever duplicated.

Willie Schneider followed and I was truly pleased that he came all the way from Florida to attend. He made the gold bracelet that I wear which was presented to me at the Waldorf Hotel in 1978.

Sam Schwartz gave a very complimentary talk and revived old memories.

Then Oscar Weigle, a close friend of the late Paul Curry. Ben Braude. who wrote and put together John Scarne's card book. said nice things.

Again came a magic demonstration of the cups and balls by Gazzo. At the finish the table is covered with six or seven large fruits and he puts his hat down and the climax is a large grapefruit under it.

The finest coin expert in the world came next, David Roth, he too had nice things to say.

Harry Lorraine, who can always steal the show, and who Dave Roth, the memory expert, said was the greatest in this line and said in his wildest dreams he could never duplicate the feats of Harry Lorraine.

John Mintz, John Carney and Max Maven and the one and only Richard Turner were all on hand and I feel very grateful.

Phyllis Zarrow gave a nice little talk and presented me with a very handsome award in crafted case.

I then told them about the time many years ago, Doctor Daley and I were practicing stacking dice. It was around two in the morning. My wife was reading and paid no attention. Suddenly the door to the room opened and my son Derek peeked in. My wife said, "Derek go to bed. You have to get up at seven and it's going on three o'clock." He closed the door. but shortly repeated and again my wife Jeanne said, "Derek close the door and go to bed."

When he returned my wife said, "Derek if you don't go to bed I'll have your father show you a card trick. He let out a scream and never returned. Another time my older boy Ted was pouting about something and I took him on my lap and said cheer up and I'll show you a card trick. My wife said, "How dare you torture that child. Remember, he's mine too."

To change the mood I'd like to say the shows, both stage and close-up, were first class.

I was keenly interested to see how Joyce Beck M.C.'d a close-up show. This girl has a great deal of charm and a great deal of skill.

Another young girl in the limelight was Marie Akami. She does the interpreting for Japanese Television and can speak several languages. She is my secret sweetheart.

In the dealers room Mike Ammar astounded everyone by sticking cards to a really elevated ceiling.

Then pretty little Lynn Healey was there and lent John Carney an egg bag as unfortunately his baggage went astray.

In spite of this he performed with only the bag and a pack of cards and really did a great performance.

He left to fill an engagement in Atlantic City at the Comedy C lute there.

One of the best things I have ever witnessed was the orthodox pass as executed by Bill Kalush. He does superb work with the pasteboards.

Both he and Richard Turner are in a class by themselves. Their work is truly outstanding as far as technique is concerned.

To me it is truly amazing how some of the young newcomers do such clever work.

Sorry that I cannot mention all the fine performers in New York. I enjoyed them all especially —Rocco, Tommy Wonder, Jay Sankey, Richard Kaufman, Peter Samelson, Jeff McBride, Avner the Eccentric, Yuka Shimoda, Michael Finney, VitoLupo, Daryl and outstanding were the acts of the Pendragons and Finn Jon.

August, 1987

Several years ago I published a simple card effect, devoid of sleights called "Down Under Elimination". I have had several requests to reprint it so here it is

Have the deck shuffled and then lay out 10 cards, face down. and an overlapping row. Ask the onlooker to turn any one of the cards face up and leave it in position in the row.

Then he is told to scoop up the cards in a packet and execute the DOWN and UNDER DEAL. Surprisingly the last card will be the one selected.

The method is very simple. If the reverse card is fourth from the right (top) end the cards are scooped up by the spectator and squared. The top face-down card is placed on the table and the next card is placed underneath the packet on the bottom...and this is done alternately until one card remains in his hand...the chosen card!

If the reverse is fifth from right end (top) the only difference is to place the top card underneath the packet instead of on the table. I then continue the alternating deal until chosen card is left in hands.

The procedure is identical if the fourth or fifth card is counted from the left (bottom) end of the spread. In this case the spectator is told to scoop the cards up and hold them face up in his hands. The deal is done as explained above.

Now if the selected (reversed) card is second or third from either end you must scoop up the cards and palm one card from the bottom of the face-down or face-up packet (depending on which end the reversed card is located). If the card is second the first card dealt goes onto the table. If the reversed card is third the first card dealt goes under the packet and the next card onto the table, etc., as before. Try this out with cards in hand. I think you will like it. Don't worry about spectator choosing either end card...if they do just make some remark about making the trick more difficult if they don't use an end card!

September, 1987

Dai Vernon is still taking it easy after having his hip replaced. He is still with Larry Jennings and Larry's wife "BJ". Every Friday the Magic Castle sends over by messenger Dai's favorite lunch - Fish and Chips.

We expect that Dai will be back next issue to write his own column for our holiday issue. Meanwhile this gives us a chance to run the photo below. It is a classic photograph taken in the library of the Magic Castle in 1986 by Rena Small, a professional photographer.

I think you all will agree that Dai Vernon has the most famous hands in the history of magic. Just imagine how many tricks they have performed over 93 years.

Ms. Small's address is 1660 N. Crescent Hts, West Hollywood, CA., 90046

October, 1987

I am rewriting the trick that Bruce Cervon explained in a recent GENII.

The only reason is because the original method is simpler and bears repetition. Bruce is one of the really best and he puts his touch to all the standard moves.

I am going to give the original method which I have used for some time and it can prove quite puzzling.

When the cards are dealt out in a face up row note the position of the chosen card. If the card happens to be in the fourth or fifth position hold the card faces up. However, all other positions the cards are held face down. Thus the first card will be on the bottom and the second from the top will be ninth and so forth.

Now the idea is to deal seven cards until only three remain. These three will contain the selection. It will be in one of three positions. It can be apparently the last one by a single buckle or a double buckle.

When out first dealing if the card is at an even number the odd card on top is dealt first and the even placed under if the card is at an odd position the top card is placed under the first deal. This can be very easily done and appears as a fair deal.

This simple effect may be repeated several times and appears more puzzling on each repetition. I am extremely sorry that I have been unable to write my monthly column.

The second operation lasted nine hours and the fact of my advanced age took longer than usual to heal.

Needless to say I miss being in the Castle but hope to be back very soon.

Words cannot express how much I appreciate the fact that so many of my friends have come to visit me.

The fact that I have been in the home of Larry Jennings and his wife B.J. and they have really treated me royalty is really something. I cannot convey how much they have done on my behalf. No one could do more to make my stay here more pleasant. B.J. his wife is not only an excellent nurse but she prepares the most excellent and palatable meals and no one could be more pleasant and helpful.

I most certainly have been most fortunate to have people like Dr. Albo and Dr. Nicola working on my behalf.

One of my recent visitors was the hearing doctor Leonard Reid. He performed a short routine for Larry and his wife. His whole presentation was delightful. His work was an example of how magic should be presented.

The so called patter was non existent. He was perfectly natural and the whole turn was really pleasant to watch. I know that I keep harping on naturalness, but please keep this in mind.

When working be "yourself" and no one else.

When talking avoid any resemblance of released material. Just talk in a conversational tone and make the talk believable. This should not be difficult. Just be yourself and do not strive to impress. If your tricks are easy to understand and not confusing or complicated your presentation will be pleasing to an audience.

Do not strive to be too clever. Some of the simplest methods are much more acceptable and the fact that they are easy you will be more relaxed and can present them more effectively.

Half a dozen simple effects can be much more effective than six confusing and hard to follow ones.

I love magic and I hate to see really goof. effects ruined by bad presentation.

I was surprised to receive a long distance call from Peter Reveen. He is presenting his show in Canada. Also had a call from Mike Skinner and Richard Turner. Richard is in Vegas for a holiday and I feel proud to have them both close friends.

Casey Jennings called London, England and talked to Alex Elmsley and I had a chance to have a chat with him also.

Alex and Roy Walton also Andy Gallaway are all extremely clever and have contributed greatly to our art.

I expect that very soon I shall be able to get around without the use of a walker.

Tomorrow Thursday, Chic Carrano and Bill Bowers have invited a few of us to dinner at Musso and Franks where the meals are really excellent.

Then I expect to visit the Castle to see Rocco and Bill Wisch who are both fine artists.

November, 1987

I was very thrilled to get back to the Magic Castle after several months absence. Last Friday I had luncheon and spent the rest of the day there.

I was extremely pleased that Jerry Andrus was working in the Close Up Room.

I consider Jerry absolutely unique. During my long life I have never seen anyone else who never performs effects that others use. Every single thing he does is decidedly his own conception and some of his methods are most difficult to execute. Furthermore he totally discards the main weapon of most performers MISDIRECTION.

He invites the closest scrutiny and allows the spectators to pay the shortest attention to every action.

Furthermore he is a true gentleman and he can educate people with his unique ideas on almost any subject.

To add to the enjoyment of seeing Jerry again I was most intrigued and delighted to meet a young chap named David Neighbors.

Never before have I seen such truly beautiful coin effects. His handling of coins is superb. The many moves that he employs are executed with naturalness and pleasing eye. How fortunate I was to spend time there with two great artists. To add extra enjoyment my dear friend Larry Jennings completed this two. Needless to tell readers that Larry is outstanding and is truly one of the very best card workers, not only of today but of the past great masters.

During my recovery period I spent several weeks at Larry's home and I was truly treated like royalty. Both B.J. and Larry couldn't have done more for me in every way. B.J. cooked delicious meals and acted like a professional nurse. Also when Larry returned from work he always came up with a totally new and different card or coin effect. The man is a genius.

How fortunate I am to have so many wonderful and thoughtful friends.

Cards and letters that I more than appreciate. Unfortunately, I am still using a "walker" to get around.

Just today my dear friend Bill Bowers is going to pick me up and drive me to Musso Franks on of Hollywoods finest restaurants. There we have been invited by Chick Carrano to enjoy a delicious meal.

Chic is one of the true nobleman who delights in doing nice things for everyone. He really embarrasses me by continually buying me boxes of expensive cigars.

When Rocco was in Hollywood Chic learned several of his moves and really does credit to them.

Before I conclude, I'd like to say that I do not have any photograph and I'm sorry. I more than appreciate the fact of many requests.

The recent book replete with characters was of the many magicians who have worked the Castle is truly excellent - the portraits of the many are the work of Ted Salter. This is really a monumental work and Ted Salter should justly be proud of doing such excellent work.

Not only are the likenesses there but the short biographical notes are to the point.

There seems to be no end to the books on magic that are coming out.

Daryl Martinez sent me a copy of his latest Impromptu Card. It is full of useful moves of great help to adapt!!

Must add that just a few minutes ago Jim Lewis gave Bill Bowers and I a private showing of his remarkable presentation of a visible penetration of coins through a glass top table. This is a masterpiece and one of the most mysterious coin effects of today.

December, 1987

I am very glad to state that I am now able to be in the Castle again. After being obliged to use a walker for a long period I am now able to amble around with only a cane (My good friend Chic Carrano made me a gift of a very nice one).

I am again surprised to see some of the truly excellent effects by some of our younger members. With so much information available in these days one can start out with information galore.

Besides this they can see Larry Jennings, Bruce Cervon and John Carney (just to mention three). They have this wonderful opportunity to observe and learn the true art.

John Carney last week gave a great lecture and his book really "told the score".

Lately some of the coin work performed by the younger members is truly "beyond belief." However, I dare to paraphrase the words of Leonardo DaVinci: "The means of expression can become so exquisite that the whole effect is lost."

All performers must come to realize that the routining is the thing to aim at. A beginning, a middle and a climax.

At this point I'd like to mention an amusing story. Some time ago one of the bartenders asked me to

teach him something he could show his friends. So I showed him the so called "Hotel Trick". Simple as it was he forgot part of it.

He asked me to refresh his memory so I took him to one of the side tables and asked him to do it for me exactly as he would present it.

He went through the whole procedure but he left out the whole story that goes with it.

I took the cards and said, "George, watch me do it." I, of course, exaggerated the accompanying patter and told him that without the talk the trick would be a waste of time.

The funny part was that an elderly gentleman who had been watching said to me, "Excuse me, are you the one they call the Professor?" When I said, "I'm afraid so", he blurted out, "I can see why they call you great!" He was a case of someone who evidently knew nothing about tricks who thoroughly enjoyed one of the simplest of all self working effects.

It is the "story" that creates the effect. Bear this in mind and strive to remember and give some REASON for what happens.

The following list is of those that come to mind who have all passed away. All these were intimate friends in bygone days.

Some of the readers may be able to supply Christian names to those mentioned:
How many did you know?

They are all fondly remembered as I get older. Annemann, Al Altman, Arthur Altman, Anderson Amac, Albini.

Baker, Benson, Boston, Brooks, Bagley, Joe Berg, Hy Berg, Berland. Cardini, Clark, Carlyle, Christ, Cole, Cecil.

Duval, Devlin, Ducrot, Dunninger, Downs, Dexon, Drilling, Davenport, Dante, Durbin, Davis. Echman, Emerson, Eggers. Frakson, Farelli, Fox, Fay, Finley, Frazee, Gwynne, Guest, Galvin, Geordemane, Goldin. Houdini, Hardeen, Heller, Herman, Hillair, Helstrom, Heller, Himber, Holden Ireland Jarrow Keane, Kalinay, Kellar, Keating, Katz, Koran, Kaps. Leipzig, Laurante, Loewy, London, Larsen, Lang, Lindhurst, Leon, Lyman. Mora, Malini, Maldo, Merlin, Mendoza, Miller. Nikola, Nixon, Notis, Newman. Ose, Okito, O'Malley. Pauline, Pope, Prendergast, Peck. Quin Ross, Rosini, Rose, Rubini. Selbit, Sherman. Thurston, Tarbell. Volta, Valentine. Williston Dr. X Yettmah Zanzig and Zingone.

January, 1988

In a recent Sunday lecture by Eugene Burger, which everyone thoroughly enjoyed, one of the items he had for sale was first published back in 1937 then thrice more in 1968, 1974 and 1981. The title was Programme of Famous Magicians.

Back in the twenties when I often spent time with Max he made numerous trips to England. Upon his return he would bring back reports of the effects being performed by the English.. Many of these are still being used over here.

My very dear friend Bill Bowers suggested that I write a few words about each of those mentioned, so here goes. They were alphabetically arranged, so I shall only mention a few of the first.

PERCY ABBOTT - no mention that he was one of the foremost dealers. I am quite sure that Max overlooked this competition.

AMAC presented a very perplexing Three Card Monte effect. Three large trestles and a girl hidden behind one of them.

NATE LEIPZIG when in England thought this would be a perfect ending to his all card act, but the price too was high. However, he told me he should have bought it and had made a big mistake.

ANNEMANN - Few know that this young chap from Waverly, New York would become so well known that when he started his monthly The Jinx he became a name to all magicians. He coined the term "Double Lift" and also named my effect "The Brain Wave".

One time in Glen Falls while visiting Dr. Gordon Peck he performed the bullet catch. The detective who did the shooting gave him no chance to switch the bullet. He whispered to him to fire to miss him as close as possible. Dr. Peck used to show visiting magicians the mark on the brick wall in front of which Annemann stood. One can only admire the trust and nerve this took.

AL BAKER was a second Mark Twain and he was a remarkable ventriloquist. He actually could slay an audience with laughter and later turn everyone to tears. He seldom resorted to puns, but once when I went to see him entertain at a Pawn Broker convention where they passed out lists of popular songs to open with, the M.C. could not decide which one to commence with. Al remarked why not number seven, it was *all alone*.

WALTER BAKER was the one that started the famous Tarbell Course and had a fine act.

JOHN BLACKLEDGE was a very fine society performer. Incidentally, he was one of the very first to purchase the twenty dollar manuscript.

JOHN BOOTH is and was an excellent performer. He was one of the first to take the cruises to South America. On one trip Carlyle Booth and I all met in the port of Rio De Janiero.

BLACKSTONE was admired and loved by everyone and his show was superb.

Here' is an amusing incident.

We used to play Gin together for very small stakes.

While playing on one occasion, Harry would leave the table w feed his canary in its cage. This occurred several times. I said, "*Leave the bird alone, Harry, he's had enough. He's not hungry.*" Paying more attention, I noticed that he was turning the mirror in the cage to the proper angle to obtain sight of my cards. Harry got a great kick out of trying to take advantage in playing.

HERBERT BROOKS was with Larry Gray, one of the finest card entertainers I ever knew. In his act he performed a fan drop of over two feet. Also any card called from his pocket.

After his act the steel trunk from which he escaped would be carried to the exit lobby and people could thoroughly inspect it.

MILBOURNE CHRISTOPHER -

He craved publicity and laughably to me he offered a hundred dollars if I'd tell him I attained more than he.

He tried by tying up his name with Houdini. He appeared in the larger theatre with Panzy Sandborn doing a routine with ropes. He aspired to bigger things, but never became a Doug Henning or a David Copperfield.

February, 1988

Continuing comments about the magicians mentioned in Max Holden's programs of famous magicians. We come to the letter "C". Cardini was without a doubt one of the most superlative acts of the times. He and his pretty little wife Swan captivated the audience and truly excelled in their flawless presentation.

Dick was one of my closest friends and I kept pleading with him to cut out all the puns from his act. The only one that he received a laugh from was "I performed this trick for the King of Siam and he said 'Cardini, you are very clever.' I replied. 'Yes, I am Miss King, the well known agent, asked me if I had seen Cardini' act in the Palace theatre and how skillful he was. I told her he was a good friend of mine. She said, "Why does he talk?" I told this to Dick, but it had little effect.

Again, one time in the Casino De Pane I was trying to persuade him to delete all talk, Billy Rose came up and said, "What are you telling him?" He then walked away and said, "Cardini, listen to Vernon." This had an effect and later Dick performed entirely in silence. O.O. Macintyre, a well known Columnist wrote, "Cardini the magician personifies the eloquence of silence. I consider his performance the finest example of any vehicle in Vaudeville." He became Cardini" the suave deceiver" and rose to real stardom. The fact that he himself was mystified and perplexed gave the act a very entertaining and pleasant effect.

Another "C" was Carmen who produced live canaries from bare hands. At the finish he gave these away to the audience. He was also one of the first to produce any drink called for from a kettle.

Next Keith Clark who, like Cardini, featured Cigarettes and a very fine rendition of the Sympathetic Silks. Keith Clark was an experienced performer and also performed using his right name.

Pierre Cartier. He was thoroughly familiar with all things pertaining to the theatre.

Cortini, I believe, was the first to perform the Torn and Restored Newspaper. No one since has ever done it as carelessly and expertly as he did. He was from Germany and also featured card manipulation. At the conclusion of his act, literally hundreds of cardboard coins showered out over the audience.

As this book by Max Holden was first published in the year 1937, several of the well-known were left out. To mention two, Max Malini and Wallace Galvin. The former was one of my all time favorites. People never failed to rave about the effects that Malini performed.

The trouble today is that there is too much confusion and repetition. Doves, Zombies and reverse palming. The aim should be to simplify and be concise.

John Thompson, Shimada and Lance Burton all present excellent, entertaining acts. For illusions Doug Henning, The Pendragons and Chuck Jones do real credit to this type of magic.

A short time ago I had the pleasure of seeing the video tape of Charlie Miller by Joe Stevens. A lesson can be learned by watching this tape.

I am glad that I am again able to visit the Castle. With the help of a cane I am able to get around.

March, 1988

Emil Jarrow and Frank Van Hoven were both comedy magicians and both headlined on the big time. Van Hoven's act consisted of nothing but "gags" but Jarrow did extremely clever sleight of hand.

The English bookers offered him work over there. This worried him as he thought his form of Dutch humor would not be understood.

One day he asked a good friend Frank Tinney if his comedy would register over there. "Anywhere in this wide world where they understand English you are sure fire."

Anyhow, Jarrow, you'll open on a Monday and if you are not satisfied Tuesday you sight see. And there is a boat that sails Wednesday and you are back, so why worry?

Jarrow had a most unique style which he referred to as "shtile" and material as "shtuf".

His opening gag, although very corny, with his delivery really "hit it". Jarrow would limp on saying "the kid is clever, but he has bum feet. Go ahead kid, fiddle. All right stop the music. I want to ask you a question. Why is an old maid like an unripe tomato?" The leader was cued to ask, "Why, Mr. Jarrow, is an old maid like an unripe tomato?" But he said like an unripe tomahto.

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Jarrow just walked off stage saying the boat sails Wednesday. To the drummer, "Hit it George. Hit it again".

Jarrow had many ways of getting laughs. He would tell a story about Heaven and the pretty angel girls and the fact that a hundred years on earth were only a minute in Heaven. Later when he was borrowing the three bills he'd look up to the second balcony and say "Has anyone up there in Heaven got a twenty dollar bill? You have? Well why aren't you sitting in a box? Pass the bill down." A voice from the balcony said, "In a minute."

"Hit it George. Hit it again."

In those days the five, ten, and twenty dollar bills were all twice the size of the ones today. The twenties were colored bright yellow goldish, When he borrowed them the three were fanned out and made a distinguished display.

"Hit it George. Hit it again" was a running gag all through his hilarious act.

At any rate after a few changes like pulling in a new leader who did not resent being addressed as "kid", Jarrow teamed up with an acrobatic act who did hand to hand ballancing.

He moved into a boarding house that had a reputation of being haunted. Jarrow, who was a great practical joker, blackened the bare feet of one of the acrobats with burnt cork and by hand to hand balancing made footprints on the ceiling from a window to the door.

He also used the gag of torn wallpaper and used a piece of soap to make it appear the mirror over the dresser was cracked. Jarrow asked the landlady if she had heard any strange noises during the night and when she witnessed the shambles she nearly fainted.

Nearly every evening Jarrow and his two friends would sit and enjoy a midnight snack. Jarrow would never drink anything like his two friends, but they finally persuaded him to sip a few mouthfuls of a bottle of port wine which they bought for him.

As the days passed he noticed that the wine was disappearing and he asked if his companions were taking it. He also asked the maid if she had taken any of it. It became a mystery and he decided to solve it. He put a mark on the label to make sure it was not his imagination, but sure enough the following night the same amount was missing.

He became so annoyed that he took the bottle to the bathroom and urinated to bring it to its former level. Sure enough the next night the same amount was missing.

Someone must have a cast iron "shlumach".

To wind up this odd tale, when this trio were leaving the landlady said, "I hope you boys enjoyed your stay here and I enjoyed having you." Jarrow said, "Everything was wonderful, but I cannot figure out who kept "shteeeling" the wine."

"Oh, Mr. Jarrow", she said "I can explain that. The soup that you all enjoyed so much was due to a few tablespoons of your wine."

In the days of the "big time" vaudeville Jarrow and Van Hoven both received salaries equal to Houdini and the Dolly Sisters.

Strangely both of these talented performers fame and popularity can be expressed as Jarrow would say. They both have a unique "shtile" and different "shtuff".

Before concluding I must mention what a truly remarkable job of book binding for "Lost Inner Secrets" was done by Tom Blue. He only made a half a dozen or so, but they are truly something.

Finally, my sincere congratulations to Johnny Ace Palmer for winning the GRAND PRIX - the first time for a close-up performer and also, I note my old friend JAY OSE is in 25 years ago. I will do an article on this very special person soon.

April, 1988

To continue with the magicians named by Max Holden, the last mentioned was Jarrow, then came Keating in alphabetical order. Fred Keating revived the vanishing canary in the cage and become identified with this effect in which he used a live canary. However, he was arrested and brought to trial as many testified that he killed the little yellow bird on many occasions. When he came before the judge, he twisted a small band around the bird's foot and had the judge initial it. He then left the room and came back very shortly with the bird in cage. Asking the judge to watch closely, he amazed all present with his startling vanish. Leaving the room again, he returned and placed the little bird on the desk for the judge to check the initials. The case against him was dismissed.

Incidentally Keating took some lessons from Nate Leipzig and Nate, owing to his standing in the Lamb's Club, was able to use his influence to make Keating a member. The club was solely for legitimate actors. No vaudevillians were permitted. Owing to the fact that Nate, when a young lad in Detroit, used to go back stage and entertain the many "legit" actors who played at the Temple Theater. One of the things he used to perform for them was to drop a small jade cross

into a glass of beer and upon command it would rise to the surface. Once after performing this effect he could not find the cross and David Warfield thought that Nate had unbeknowningly swallowed it. Whenever he'd see Nate again he'd remark "any sign of the cross Nate?" Strange to say that Nate only used one so called gag to cause laughter. He would hand a knife to his helper and as he riffled the cards he'd say "stick the knife anywhere you like in the pack." Otherwise all his laughs came from the situation.

Paul Braden, Le Paul, was an extremely clever manipulator and some times would conclude his act with the one handed spring and drop catch. Cardini always used to admit that Le Paul executed the reverse palm better than he did.

Arthur Lloyd was one of the first to do magic on the ships. While performing the cards up the sleeve, someone called for the eleven of spades and everyone laughed, so he elaborated on this and changed his act to not only produce playing cards, but every conceivable type of card, such as "keep off the grass", a NO SMOKING railroad ticket, including a short card which he pulled over his head as a finish. One time when I dropped in to see his act in Cincinnati, I called for a Silhouette card and at once he pulled a card which had a silhouette by Vernon. Hard to believe, but he wound up with over 50,000 cards and according to the place he was working he would load up the best ones for the locality.

Long Tack Sam featured a somersault at the completion of which he held a large bowl of water.

Poor little Miaco was a close friend of Francis Carlyle and met an untimely death when a sailor knocked him down with a punch and he struck his head on a foot scrapper. The sailor did not realize that he could not talk and mistook his manner.

Tommy Martin, who at one time worked with one armed McDonald, was an excellent performer. For a long time he couldn't settle on a name to use. He used T. Bradley Martin in an act that was one of the best along with Cardini.

Mulholland was a school teacher at the Horace Mann School. He featured tearing a deck in three parts and naming the position of any card called after the deck was shuffled.

Silent Mora was, in my opinion, one of the finest billiard ball manipulators. In later life he talked and was an excellent performer.

Nixon, in his later years performed the needle trick but also had a wooden match appear between each of the needles. This was very visible as he had apparently swallowed a whole box of wooden matches.

Paul Rosini used to do a double act with Carl Rosini, (no relation) but later worked by himself using the name Paul.

Howard Thurston in my opinion was never one of the greats. Kellar at one time told me he had made a very bad mistake to allow Thurston to carry on his show.

Elmer Ransom was much in demand around the holidays in New York City. He featured the rising cards and was very popular wherever he performed. Allen Shaw did the shortest act in the big time. Six minutes was all, but he had a fine appearance and performed very clearly with cards and coins. Tenkai and Okito were the epitome of excellence. Tenkai was as near perfection as any one could be and he had a great influence on the magic of Japan.

Tarbell put out the famous Course on magic that was started by Walter Baker. He was a great help to many performers. He gave the title "A Symphony In Silk" to Ade Duval and coined the name "Think A Drink Hoffman" who produced any drink called for.

Why Max Holden failed to mention Max Malini really mystifies me.

May, 1988

It has been over 25 years since Magic Castle resident magician Jay Ose appeared on the cover of GENII. He was a very special person and here are just a few of my memories of Jay.

Silk Hat Harry. Tin Ear Bennie. Canada Jack and Friday Night Lou. These are just a very few of the early names that Jay coined.

Silk Hat was the first bartender. Bennie Roth wore a hearing aid, Jack Walsh never ceased to talk of Wood-stock Canada and Lou Derman performed a comedy act every Friday Night. Also Gans and Ettolrahc (Snag Werris and Charlotte his wife. Remarkable as it may seem Jay was not familiar with Mnemonics but as the membership of the Castle kept growing Jay remembered all the names of the new members. Not only that but in their first meeting with Jay if they mentioned having a dog or cat, Jay on their next visit would not only recall their telephone number but would inquire about the pet by its name.

I first met Jay when I gave a lecture when in Hollywood and we became close friends. So when the Castle opened he wrote to me in New York inviting me to join him in this new experiment of a Magic Castle.

He, much to his credit, switched from the "bottle" to black coffee.

In the first days, besides the magic "Irma" the ghost who played the piano, he was the great attraction. There was no food served and the only refreshment was a bar served by Silk Hat Harry.

Jay and I had the entire second floor to dwell in and we had a small black and white cat named ABE by Jay because it was born on Lincoln's birthday.

During his drinking days he met many types of drinkers and really received a liberal education in almost every way of life. He was fascinated by the jargon known as Australian slang and the fact that to the initiates it was abbreviated to prevent understanding. For example "near and far" drops the "far" and only uses the "near". Girl - twist and twirl just uses "twist", Ears - snickers and sneers just snickers, Bees and Honey just Bees avoiding the rhyme. The left chalk form becomes only left chalk.

Police - bottles and stoppers just uses bottles. Stoppers rhymes with copper and then expressed them in Pig Latin.

One day in Norway on our way to Berlin we stopped at an intersection and Jay walked over to talk to a cop leaving me sitting in our car. He called out Six of spades no curse. I knew the nine of Diamonds followed the six of spades. He had said no curses so the next card in order was the Queen of Clubs, I at once realized that according to Hoyle is known as Pam and Pam backwards is map. So I walked over and gave the cop the Road Map.

As I gave the cop the map Jay turned to me and remarked Scotland Yard couldn't figure that Out.

This all sounds very trivial but as Jay acted and endeared himself to everyone it was entertaining and of great interest.

The fact that this Castle is such a tremendous success and such a popular club is largely a reflection of the Larsen Family - Bill, Milton, Irene and Gerrie. They endear themselves to everyone they meet.

When John Shrum passed away Milt wrote a truly touching and lovingly expressed eulogy in the Sunday menu. At my age I have the greatest sympathy for all my good friends who have joined Jay.

Francis Carlyle and Mickey O'Malley were two that could not resist the "fire water". Both of them left their mark and many admiring friends.

Although I could not see my way clear to visit F.I.S.M. this last time, I feel quite flattered to receive the Fred Kaps award. Magicians who read this column must agree with me that confusion and sameness are not helping our art.

Strive for novelty and simplicity. Also brevity. At the conclusion of an act everyone should feel that they want more.

A recent ventriloquist here would be ten fold better if he did "half the time". Too little is so much better than too much.

Also remember the story of the magician who complained to his agent that he was not getting any work. But he told the agent he had an entirely different act. "My assistant a pretty girl enters from the wing and places an ordinary kitchen chair center stage. The spotlight hits the chair and I enter dressed in tails. I Sit motionless for a few seconds then wave my arms up and down and suddenly take off like a plane and fly in a semicircle completely around and return to the chair and take bows."

"Another bird act, can't use it!"

June, 1988

The many fans of *David Copperfield* will be pleased with the cover this month. He is truly a second *Houdini* when it comes to sensational effects.

One time when I was talking to Houdini I said, "Harry, no small child would be fooled by your vanishing elephant." He said, "Vernon, very few see the actual performance. They only hear about it and marvel that such a thing is possible." Harry would say over and over to me, "Keep your name in the press. Not every week, but every day if possible and be sure that they spell it correctly."

This past week has been unique because we had three of the fair sex appearing. *Tina Lenert, Judy Carter and Suzanne.*

As a rule we only had Joyce Beck as a constant visitor. She performs some of the most difficult card sleights to perfection.

From England *Chris Power* and *Johnny Johnson* both did a superb performance. The latter is the one who puts out *OPUS*, a really worth while monthly. Chris Power's illustrations are a great asset and make the explanations very clear and easy to understand.

Chris was a close friend of *Fred Robinson's* and claims he owes much to Fred for his early training. When Fred visited LA some years ago I had the pleasure of his company for a week. We had many interesting talks and exchanges of card handlings.

Speaking of clever people, I must write about the interesting invitation Billy McComb, Bill Bowers and I had to have dinner with *Harry Anderson* at his home.

Harry and his devoted wife Leslie really "have it made". Harry is not only talented and a truly "nice guy", but he is conversant with all forms of show business and is the father of two delightful children Eve and Dashiell.

Harry, like myself, is fascinated by all types of swindles like the shell game and the three card monte.

In his office he has a regulation pool table, some crooked "dealing shoes" and also slot machines and sleeve holdouts. Besides all these he has a very extensive library of rare books.

A few years ago when Harry worked with Leslie he did a mental act. Leslie plays her part to perfection and makes you think it is really genuine.

I am very fortunate to have so many wonderful friends, but feel very saddened that so many have passed away.

Just saw *Harry Lorraine* on the *Carson* show. Truly wonderful how well he remembers the names of dozens and dozen of people.

I again want to thank all of you for your letters. I regret that I cannot answer them but they are appreciated. I am feeling much better now and able to walk up the hill to the Magic Castle which is my real home. I am usually there for Friday lunch and Sunday lectures and many evenings. I hope to see you.

Arid now, Bill Larsen has asked me to introduce David Copperfield!

July, 1988

Doctor Albo, pictured on the cover is well known to all who have an interest in the art. He is a man of many talents.

It is truly remarkable how he finds the time to accomplish so much.

Not only is he a highly skilled surgeon but he has spent large sums of money to do the Magic Island in Newport beach and the one in Houston, Texas.

In some way he finds time to be the doctor for the Raiders and yet he has put out volumes of absolutely beautifully illustrated books. These are nearly all in natural color and depict the elegant quality of much of the apparatus of by gone days.

With Bill Bowers I have had the pleasure of several visits to both of his homes and we both enjoyed a thrilling ride in a speed boat on the lake.

The doctor is a great admirer of OKITO and has many of the handsome pieces he actually used. I feel quite sure that no where in this wide world is there a collection of such quality and so nicely displayed.

Furthermore Dr. Robert Albo is thoroughly conversant with all types of magic, even the most intricate types, of which he has such a huge number.

I have been asked to write something that is not too difficult to do. So here goes.

If you are at a party ask if they have ever heard about Nomad the Hunchback who went to the Fair to see the balloon go up. Get someone to take your hand and you bend over at the waist having told your assist-ant to simply say "There is goes now" when you squeeze his or her hand.

As you are led around in this stooped position, you may remark "Please brush the peanut shells off my back."

Then in a few seconds you squeeze the hand and still remaining stooped walk off as you say Alright let's go home."

This is a sure fire laugh.

Another one, also tragic is an illustration of two convicted prisoners who are not allowed to talk to each-other when they exercise. However, they manage to exchange a few words as they pass each other.

You give someone who assists a stamped envelope to put in his pocket. Now you and your helper act out this little platelet.

You walk past each other and as you go past you say "Hello Killer" then when you pass each other again the other says "Hello Slugger."

Then as they cross again say "How long are you in for?" Then next as they pass "How long arc you in for?"

Next passing "Twenty years" and next other says "Four years."

Then out comes the envelope and you say "Mail this when you get out" as you simultaneously hand over the letter.

In both these eases it is just a minute or two you can give the proper instructions.

Now a very excellent card trick, self-working and arranged by Henry Christ.

Have the deck shuffled and when taken back note the bottom card and then casually shuffle eight cards top to bottom and remember the card looked at is now ninth from the bottom.

Tell the onlooker to play a simple game of four heap solitaire.

He is to deal four face up cards and then on each one deal cards singly counting backwards but stopping if one of the cards agrees with your count. However if you deal until you reach one and a corresponding card does not appear, cover the pile with a face

down card. Now some cards will be face up so these are added and you can name the card which will appear at this number.

Have just talked to Bruce Cervon and he tells me that the new book *More Lost Secrets* has proved to be well liked. Louis Fallenga has done a superb job and should be complimented.

August, 1988

I feel guilty for having to refuse many requests for autographed photo-graphs. The truth is that I do not have any, and do not expect to have any taken. At my age I have no desire to flaunt my image to young readers. However, I more than appreciate the requests.

I am extremely sorry to learn that Slydini is "under the weather". He is a superb artist and I trust that he will soon be his old self.

Next to a subscription to GENII the English magazine OPUS should most certainly be a "must" and I must say that I received a great pleasure from reading the last volumes. J.J. and Chris do a superlative job and the art work of Chris Power is truly excellent. One of the things that J.J. pointed out was how to effectively reply to complimentary remarks at the end of an exhibition to avoid such remarks as "Done with mirrors" or "scotch tape and rubber bands" and various remarks to try to be amusing. Simply thanking them is sufficient.

So often one hears about "PRESENTATION" comprises two factors upon which all calculations must be based. These factors are "personality" and "procedure". Both of these are required for a successful performance.

No magician should ever present any magical feat in which the procedure cannot be or has not been adapted to his own personal characteristic and abilities.

In consideration of matters relating to the personal characteristics of a performer who has a striking personality is an accidental Advantage. This may be of great assistance in the practice of art. Yet in itself it is in no way art, but chance.

There are many performers who without the possession of attractive personality or natural distinction contrive to make their work effective in the highest degree to hold the attention and gain the appreciation of their audiences completely and inviolably.

On the other hand there are men of charming personality who in spite of the natural advantages they possess can never render their efforts convincing to an audience. Men who in private would appear to be gifted with the qualities which could not fail to command public appreciation and yet, who fail to touch even the fringe of success in stage performance or any mode of presentation.

However an effect may be, and however desirable its inclusion in the performers repertoire, he should reject it altogether if its presentation involves any essential feature which he cannot readily provide. If necessary "Business" includes either important details or general methods at variance with the artists stage presence mentality or personal aptitude he should throw aside all ideas of trying the presentation.

Or if there is any need for any form of manual dexterity or other skills which the performer has but indifferently acquired he should wait before he tries the effect in public.

I feel very ashamed that I do not mention the names of many of my dear friends in this country and abroad.

In England, Japan, Scotland, Ireland and Germany I have memories of the most interesting times. It is very depressing that so many of these clever and wonderful magicians are no longer with us. However, on the other hand, Roy Walton, Jack Avis, Gordon Bruce, Hubert Lambert, David Berglas, Alex Elmsley and of course Paul Daniel's are all vivid in my memory.

In Japan Takagi, Ton Onosaka, Dr. Sawa, Kato and Yashasawa all recall most pleasant memories.

Then In Germany where Hiram Strait and I were treated like royalty, not even to mention King Carl the ruling Monarch and Dr. Green.

And so, another year comes to the end. As I approach my 85th birthday I give thanks for the wonderful life that I have had. After almost 26 years The Magic Castle continues to amaze me. Milt is forever inventing new "gimmicks" and Bill and Irene make the perfect host and hostess.

Bill tells me that by next month he should be able to announce the Magic Castle Souvenir book. Bill and the late Mickey O'Malley started work on it almost fifteen years ago. For the last two years, Bill, Paul Butler and Peter Pit have put it together. Paul is a remarkable artist (note the special cover on this issue) and I predict the first printing of 10,000 copies will be sold out very quickly. The book will tell you all the little and big things you have always wanted to know about the Castle.

I am very pleased to see so many young magicians coming up in magic. They are proving that magic can be different and you do not have to copy someone else. I also am impressed with the number of lady magicians that are now working Las Vegas and the Magic Castle as well as other cities. I have always felt that magic can be a beautiful art for a woman. How well I remember Gerrie Larsen when she was the Magic Lady on TV and when she worked with Bill, Sr. and the boys in an old fashioned hoop skirt and a beautiful Japanese costume. My very best wishes to all of you for a Happy New Year. Your letters are appreciated even if I can't answer them.

September, 1988

Spending so much time in the Castle I have the opportunity to see many performers present their acts. The main fault I have to find is the fact that very few show any originality. This applies more to close-up performers.

A young chap named Lorne Michaels presents well known effects but in a different and most pleasing way. At the conclusion of his show when I first saw him the audience all stood and hollered "more" "more"

The fact that he presented each of his effects in such an uncluttered and direct manner more than pleased the audience.

One of my closest friends Richard Turner is working this week both in the Parlour and the close-up rooms.

He does some of the most difficult moves with cards better than anyone I have ever seen. Very shortly he will be written up in the latest edition of The Guinness Book of Facts for some of his coin work.

Just last night I had a visit to my apartment by Steve Freeman and Jeff Altman, two of the most skillful young chaps that I have ever met. Both of them showed me card moves that were faultlessly presented. People like - Mike Skinner, Harry Riser, Johnny Thompson, Charlie Miller, Earl Nelson and Roger Klause are just a few of the better known and more skillful members of our craft.

I have had many requests to explain some simple effects so here is one that is very easy to perform yet has a strong effect.

Tell the onlookers that everyone has heard of "stacking the deck" but few know how it is done.

So saying place, for example, one ace on the bottom of the deck and the other three on top. From this position any number of hands can be "run up". The simple rule is one more than twice the number of players one less the number of players, the number of players, a single card and twice the number of players.

In presenting this you deal out the number of hands each time turning up your hand. Three of the cards come to the dealer but the fourth misses. You then realize that you must deal five cards to complete the deal, so luckily the fifth card matches.

Personally I suggest five hands as I proceed to explain the method.

After placing the three on top and the other of the four on the bottom I show how you use the old fashioned Haymow shuffle. You simply run off one at a time eleven cards and at the finish put them back on top of the deck. Next run off four to the bottom. Then five, next a single card then ten twice the number of players.

Each of the cards arrives in the fifth position until the fourth, but as the miss occurs you state that the five cards make up a hand at poker. Then naturally the last matching card arrives.

When performing you should appear worried as the fourth one misses. Then you realize that only four cards have been dealt and so the fifth card completes the full hand of four of a kind. Aces preferred.

I forgot to mention that for a cut at the finish you remember the card next to the bottom one.

Then at the finish of the run up you turn the cards face up and around the center you spot the remembered card and run one less the number of hands and cut at this point.

Years ago when I used to perform here I used this effect and instructed a girl assistant how to perform the stack. With a little coaching any young lady can do the whole operation.

Forgot to mention that Bev Bergeron and Tom Murphy visited the Magic Castle last week. The latter was the source of much of the comedy material that Francis Carlyle used.

In answer to many verbal requests I'll close this column with a well known nursery rhyme that I published about ten years ago. I call it "Mary Had a Little Lamb" as it might have been recited by Daniel Webster.

Miss Mary was the possessor of a diminutive and immature specimen of the Ovis Aries; a wool-bearing ruminant quadruped whose flesh is highly esteemed by persons to whose gustatory organs its flavor is agreeable. The shaggy and agromulated filaments constituting its outer covering, integument, or garment presented to the vision a surface absolutely etiolated and albufied, rivaling in immaculateness the chrysalides vapor which commonly characterizes our winter landscape. To whatsoever locality, contiguous or remote, Mary's 'fragrant fancy, the call of duty, or perchance the parental magnate impelled her when not otherwise engaged, to partake herself, this juvenescent specimen of the. Ovis Aries could be counted upon with absolute fidelity and entire certainty to accompany her.

October, 1988

The question that I am constantly asked is to make comments about one time magicians. Performers like Malini, Jarrow Leipzig, Martin Merlin, Kellar, Thurston, Okito, Cole, McDonald, Cantu, Carchini, Carlyle, Himber, Hummer, Kaps, Nicola, Goldin, Keane, Galvin, Shaw, Downs, Manuel, Miller, Blackstone, Frakson, Houdini, Jarrow, Van Hoven, Loewy, Goldston, Albini, Dante, Yettmah, Zingone, Cuming, Rosini, and Henry Clive with May Stubeiet.

Outstanding among all these in my opinion was not Houdini but Cardini. His act was truly great. As a famous columnist of the day put it his act showed the "eloquence of silence." This pretty little wife paged him calling "Paging Mr. Cardini". She was the only voice heard and Dick did the whole act without speaking a single word. Perfect.

Among those mentioned the briefest act was Allen Shaw who was on the "big time" and did only six minutes with cards and coins. Most acts did at least ten to fifteen minutes.

One of the few acts that went from the audience to the stage was Claude Goldin the Australian card expert. He would sneer at the pompous performer on stage and when challenged to come on stage and do it better he would come up and take the cards from this unlikable individual. He would riffle them and when asked what he was trying to do he'd reply "Just counting them." He'd say, "Fifty three. You must have a joker in the pack." Then he would proceed to do a beautiful exhibition of card magic. It was presented so well that many in the audience thought it was a gimmick.

Another card act Nate Leipzig. He opened with the production of six thimbles. I asked him why and he said it is deadly to start with a card trick but this was he gets the attention of everyone and then I can go into the cards.

My good friend T. Nelson Downs also did coins and cards and made a tremendous success in England. Sixty weeks in the same theatre. Although Allen Shaw was a more stylish and cleaner performer he never attained the Fame of T. Nelson.

When it comes to making money "comedy" is the most rewarding.

Both Van Hoven and Jarrow were the "tops". The only other act was Houdini with his sensational effects who received a similar financial reward.

Today at my advanced age I have seen hordes of performers and the "Methods" of some of the newcomers are more advanced and cleverly contrived. However, the effects they obtain are not as clear cut and effective as in days of yore.

There is a young chap in the Castle named Danny Silvestor. I saw him perform in the Parlour. I was amazed that he did such an entertaining act. I predict that he will attain great prominence and success.

John Kennedy is another who does great credit to our art. He is most disarming and truly natural with every thing he does.

I have not yet had the pleasure of watching some of the newcomers. However, I cannot understand why so many prolong a demonstration of the Zombie. Lay people say to me why do so many do the trick with the "silver ball on the stick." Another thing why oh why combine pretty white doves with "fire."

Almost "any" effect can be made effective with proper presentation. Watch Billy McComb do the bird cage vanish. It is fascinating to watch. Billy has taste and showmanship and this is most appealing.

Thanks for reading.

Dai.

November, 1989

One of the most original and surprising acts to play the Castle was the one put on by Kevin James. I feel sorry for those who missed it.

He opens with a cut and restored large piece of colored paper. As he opens out the paper at the conclusion he most surprisingly produces a live duck. Suddenly he pulls off its head and tosses it up and the audience is horrified. However, he catches it as it comes down and it is instantly restored.

Towards the conclusion he produces from a box a pair of legs, a torso with shirt and tie and lastly a false hand, a replica of Charlie Chaplin with derby and mustache. These he places back in the box and they unite and a real live human appears. The fact is that he uses a Lilliputian and that he walks off stage a la Chaplin. The typical walk, cane and all.

To conclude he is used for an aerial suspension above the box then after being covered with a sheet he completely disappears and is transposed later from his position into a blower.

One has to really admire Kevin's ingenuity. His many original touches are little short of genius.

When I learned that Marvyn Roy and Carol were to work in the close up room I was rather curious as to what he would do under the conditions. I was truly surprised when I saw him do an entirely different type from his usual Mr. Electric or his puzzling Rings. His close up act can hold it's own with any that appear in the close up room.

To me it is amazing how original and clever some of the younger chaps are. However I dare to state that many of them forget that the effect is what counts. Confusion spoils any effect. strangely, method is of least importance but of course must be adequate.

Beginners ask me how they should begin to learn magic.

I firmly believe that the first thing to start with is to read more magic. *Sachss Sleight of hand. The Modern Conjuror* and of course *The Expert at the Card Table by Erdnase*. learn some of the truly beautiful effects that have been performed in the past.

Kevin James uses one of Buatier De Kolta's effects but the method is varied.

De Kolta years ago, when appearing at the Egyptian Hall, performed an effect he named THE COCOON. He showed a small wooden frame with tissue paper stretched over it. He hung this on a tape stretched across the stage held in position by means of counter weights.

The audience could see the weights and it was obvious to them that the slightest additional weight on the tape would cause it to move. Next the performer drew on the paper a large circle to represent a cocoon. Within this circle he drew a rough picture of a caterpillar.

The paper then burst as under a large ball of golden silk representing a cocoon was seen to be hanging on the tape stretched across the stage.

He then brought forward a ring of metal standing on four slender legs and lowered the cocoon into it. He then wheeled this forward to the footlights and gradually the silk was seen to be breaking apart. Finally a huge butterfly with fluttering wings - or rather a beautiful girl dressed to represent one emerged from the cocoon. Can you younger chaps imagine a prettier surprise?

Back to the Castle:

In just a few days I will be attending the 21st Annual Academy of Magical Arts Award Show and Banquet. I have been to each of these 21 events and it is astounding the number of people the Academy has honored.

While only about 250 of our 2,500 plus magician members voted on the nominees, over 400 voted on the Final awards which will be found in Prez Bill's "GENII Speaks" in this issue. While this may seem a small amount it is actually good because the members voting are those who have seen most of the shows.

As a member of the Board of Directors I can reveal that our highest award this year is going to JOHN CALVERT who will receive our MASTERS FELLOWSHIP, the highest award the Academy can present

I was honored to receive this award the first time it was presented in 1968. Then what a parade of greats.

The award was not presented in 1969 because the Award dates were changed. But here is the rest of the list:

1970- CARDINI
1971- VIRGIL AND JULIE
1972- SENOR FRAKSON
1973 - CHARLIE MILLER
1974 - SLYDINI
1975- DUNNINGER
1976- ROBERT HARBIN
1977- LES LEVANTE
1978- DORNEY DORNFIELD
1979- WALTER B. GIBSON
1980- McDonald BIRCH
FRED KAPS
1981- GENE GORDON
1982- JAY MARSHALL
1983 - JOE BERG
1984- MAURICE ROOKLYN
1985 - ERIC LEWIS
1986 - MURRAY
1987- TIHANY
1988- MARK WILSON

December, 1988

Rave just returned from the Joe Stevens Convention in Las Vegas. It was really thrilling to again meet many of my friends from Canada (Willis Kenny), England (Wayne Dobson), Holland (Tommy Wonder). Australia, France (Pierre Mayer) and Japan (Shigeo Takagi). Also nice to see Barbara McNaughton, Ken Brooke's lady friend, on vacation from London with friends.

The main interest was in the competition, however I found it to be rather ridiculous that nearly every one of the competing acts produced doves. Further more the combining of doves and fire was, in my opinion, very distasteful.

Happily Mark Kornhauser was excellent in keeping the show moving with wonderful bits of comedy between acts.

The comments by Leonardo DaVinci are most fitting for most of the acts competing in Vegas. "Viz" The means of expression can become so exquisite that no effect is produced!

What a treat to see James Dimmere 5 act at the Magic Castle Banquet. This is what they term a "class act

I was very pleased that Fuki with his graceful wife was one of the winners. His act with the parasols was unique on this two day program, and he used no doves.

Chick Carrano, Bill Bowers and myself were invited by Geno Munari to see 'The First Lady of Magic' MELINDA at the Landmark Hotel. We were met by her mother, a former dancer and a strikingly attractive girl, who did all the choreography in the show. Melinda's magic really delights the audience with her dynamic stage presence. The young juggler in her show, Anthony Gatto, is astounding! He's just 15 years old, and to see seven clubs being tossed and caught in perfect sequence is hard to believe. I never saw anyone even come close to his remarkable skill. Geno Munari plays a stooge in the show, and Melinda performs the "head-chopper" on him, which they pull off to great applause.

Later that evening we all went to the "Folies Bergere" and all more than enjoyed Lance Burton's new effects. The fact that he received the warmest applause showed how everyone truly appreciated his stylish and sophisticated act.

A couple of years ago I read about an amazing card man who was a dealer and later a casino manager in Geno Munari's underground paper "GAMING CONFIDENTIAL". His name is Steve Forte and I recently saw 3 gaming videos he made. So I was thrilled when Larry Jennings brought Steve to join us for lunch. What a pleasure to see such beautiful card work. He's developed many new interesting concepts with cards, including his "squared location". He executes the different moves with consummate skill.

Talking about cards, I met a young chap named JUSTIN HIGHMAN who also does some excellent work. He has created moves with the Tenkai palm that are truly original and he performs them to perfection.

Referring to doves, this happened over sixty years ago, when I performed at the Rainbow Room high atop Rockefeller Center. When I tossed out one of the doves, it went out like a stone, absolutely still. It landed in a woman's lap.. then in a second or two, flew away and everyone applauded. On the lady's lap was a small egg. Apparently it was just ready to lay an egg when I tossed it out.

Do not think this effect has ever been duplicated. I am including this write up that appeared over sixty' years ago in a New York newspaper.

Shortly after this, a chap billed as Cantu worked in Leon and Eddies Club. He wore a Mexican serape and produced a couple of doves and told how Paul Fox gave him the idea to cut Out the cigarettes as every one was using them.

When I tossed out the two doves, I had three ribbons offered, white and blue about a foot in length, hanging below them. A beautiful sight.

January 1989

Bill and Irene have just left for a visit to Japan. I am certain that it will be most enjoyable.

When Larry Jennings and I made the trip we certainly were treated like royalty. At that time Tenkai and Okinu were both alive and very active.

Before they left this country I spent many enjoyable hours in their company. Not only was Tenkai a superb performer but he was a true gentleman and I was extremely fond of him.

When Larry and I arrived he checked into our hotel to spend as much time with us as possible.

Needless to say we were able to see him perform many of his delightful effects. His influence on all types of magic is still very evident to all students of our art.

For the last few years a visitor from over there who has endeared himself to everyone here is Ton On Osaka. He is truly a nice person and has many talents. I feel sure that everyone will agree of you have had the pleasure of meeting him.

Another frequent visitor is Takagi who performs the most unusual effects .

An incident that happened while we were on a shopping tour is hard to believe. I had stopped at the window of a store and was making a note of the price and number of a small neat tape recorder.

I intended to return later and purchase it.

I failed to notice that there were three magicians who had been trailing us. Suddenly one ducked into the store and came out with a package that he handed to me. I explained that I would return and pick it up later.

One spoke English and explained that it was a gift. I naturally remonstrated, but the other chap told me I would hurt his feelings and to accept it as a gift. The reason for mentioning this is that the next morning a messenger arrived early in the morning with a package ANOTHER TAPE RECORDER. He said he was so sorry that he did not know that I had a friend, not even with me at the time.

Talk about killing one with kindness and generosity! Hard to believe.

I feel very pleased that Max Maven has been so helpful in keeping up such a warm relationship with all the Japanese. He is unique and the only one I know who can carry on a conversation in their native tongue.

I am very pleased to see all the interesting items put out by TENKO. Yamada and his two companions did everything possible to make our visit a memorable one.

Years ago, I so well remember Paul Le Paul used to say that it was worth the long trip over there just to have a glass of their beer.

Just to mention the latter fluid, Larry Jennings could consume enough for half a dozen people.

When we'd be in a restaurant he'd drink so many bottles that they would run out of supply. However, they'd have a waiter travel some distance to pick up a supply.

I am so glad that I have had the great pleasure of visiting Japan and I cherish the memories.

The fact that Larry and I met the amazing Dr. Sawa was a very unexpected pleasure.

He is extremely original and his effects are superb, unlike anything you will ever see elsewhere.

Just received word from George Sands that he is putting out a book. I feel sure that it will have a terrific sale as his methods and unique effects are extremely practical and most of all entertaining. Many today do not know that George is the one who originated many of today's effects. Especially with ropes, cards and coins.

I am most anxious to get a copy of this book and even without seeing it I can vouch for the material and insure quality of his book.

February, 1989

To me it is quite amazing how many magicians make the trip from the east to California and visit the Magic Castle and vice versa from the west to the Coast.

Just recently one of our favorite members Bill Bowers made the trip from here to New York and his home grounds in Pennsylvania.

While in N.Y. he visited shop where Frank Garcia was behind the counter. Among those present was a chap named Flaco Hernandez. He was truly thrilled to meet Bill when he learned that Bill actually knew Larry Jennings. He went into raves about Larry's work. In his opinion he was the greatest exponent with the pasteboards he had ever heard about but had never met Just to meet someone who actually had seen and known Larry was a real thrill. He could not say enough in compliments and praises about Larry's work only from reading and hearing about his skill and the wonderful effects that he performs .

I truly agree with this as I consider Larry one of the tops

Lately in the Castle we have had many younger fellows who really excel will methods and different sleights.

With all the clever dodges and moves they truly bewilder people but the complexity and cluttered presentation may result in having the true effect become clouded.

Watch Goshman, John Kennedy, Johnny Thompson and today David Samelson for just a few and they never fail to entertain and mystify the spectators. No confusion. A clement effect.

I was very flattered to receive word from Japan from Bill and Irene, also Lance Burton, the Pendragons, Goldfinger, David Novich and of course my sweetheart Maria.

Frances Carlyle used to say over and over again if an effect cannot be described in your repertoire it should be discarded and you should only use tricks that can be described in detail. The trouble is that some of the most subtle and difficult methods defy description.

In other words, simplicity is the key note. The effect is everything.

Sometimes a simple vanish with no reproduction is far superior to the usual reproduction.

Max Malini, one of the truly great performers we have ever had was a perfect master of this and when he performed people would rave when describing what he dial.

I'll never forget the thrill I got when I was a small boy. I saw Harry Kellar and Valodon present their truly magical and bewildering effects.

Kellar told me that it was a great shame to see the way Thurston butchered the truly great levitation.

Kellar would have passed on his show to Valodon, but the fact that Valadon drank and was not really reliable prevented his selection.

In his heyday Harry Blackstone had a much more pleasing presentation than Thurston.

As I shall be ninety five years of age in a few days June eleventh I have seen and been exposed to a great deal of our art.

If some of these extremely clever younger performers would strive for simplicity, clarity and easily understanding effects they would reach their goals much sooner.

Strive to make everything crystal clear by avoiding any extra moves. A simple color change is easily understood and a great effect when well executed. One or two is sufficient, but they must appear magical and not overdone.

Al Baker used to say if you vanish a cigarette then immediately reproduce it from say your ear or anywhere else, there is no effect whatsoever.

Never vanish anything and make it reappear right away. Do not satisfy their curiosity by an immediate reproduction.

When Max Malini vanished a half dollar no one saw where it went and he never reproduced it without a proper time lapse.

A friend of mine Herb Hood used to put a cigarette in his mouth and apparently swallow it.

He never recovered it. Everyone still wonders what happened and he never satisfied their curiosity by a reproduction to destroy the perfect illusion.

I have been greatly grieved to learn that my good friend SLYDINI has been under the weather.

A few of the readers may like to know how he acquired his stage name.

Before he came to the states from Buenos Aires he was known as QUINTINO MARUCCI. Wishing to have a name ending in "i", he asked a newspaper woman try to give him a suggestion such as Houdin"i". She said how about SLY... SLYDINI? and Tony asked, "What is sly?" and she answered, "Sly is like a fox."

This appealed to Tony and he adopted SLYDINI, a very effective name you will agree .

Everyone admires and emulates Tony.

Readers who know Jim Patton will be delighted to learn that Jim is to continue writing the MAGICANA column. He is more than qualified to take over this Charlie Miller column.

Each month he will explain items of interest from the best of the members who have new and novel ideas.

I strongly recommend this new addition and I'm sure it will generate new interest to this popular magazine.

LAST MINUTE NEWS: I was very glad to hear from Ron London that they were honoring Harry Riser because he has been a long time favorite of mine.

March 1989

Well, here I am, 95 years old.

June 11th Bill and Irene gave me a surprise midnight party at the Magic Castle complete with a beautiful cake and lot's of pretty ladies as you will see by the picture led by the one and only Princess Irene.

I am very lucky to be alive this long because of the way I live. I live very carelessly. I almost live on eggs. I drink anything and I still love my cigars every evening. I don't smoke so many cigars anymore because the cost has become prohibitive. Cigars cost ten times more today than just a few years ago. I counted up some of the empty cigar boxes I have in my room and over a thousand dollars has just gone up in smoke.

At my age my hands are dry and I don't try to do tricks anymore but I love to be in the Magic Castle and see other magicians perform. Some of the young fellows are much better than the "old-timers " .

I feel that at my age I am very lucky to still have my wits around. I have a bit of a hearing problem but I really don't like to use a hearing aid. I never make plans for the future.

Every year people make resolutions and very promptly break them. I always make it a point not to make resolutions because if you try to look ahead and things don't work out you are disappointed. I could resolve not to drink or smoke but I enjoy it. The only thing I am completely against is having the young magicians into drugs.

I love to see the young magicians coming up. I have known almost all the famous magicians through the years and I think magic is at an all time high. I feel that everyone should live to be 100 if you are in good health. It's no fun if you are ill. I have great sympathy with people who live to old age and are sick. I feel that if you are old and sick and not happy, why go on living? I think health is a wonderful blessing and I am in good health. I have no aches or pains and I can still climb the hill to the Castle every night. Aside from one aspirin a day which was suggested by my oldest son Ted, I take no medication.

President Bill is asking me if I am looking forward to my 100th birthday. Yes, I am, but I want to live a little longer than that. When I was young my father said to me, what do you want to do. Be a doctor or lawyer or what. Why do you continue to play around in magic. I'm trying to give you a good education. I said, dad, I have only one ambition and that is to live to be 120. Now I said that when I was a young boy in my teens. He said, why do you want to live to be 120. I said, because I believe by that time science will have so much advances that we will find life on the other planets. I want to be alive when they find some form of human life on another planet. It is ridiculous to think that this little dinky planet of ours is the only one in the tremendous galaxy that has life. It doesn't make sense, does it? But I am quite sure that by the time I am 120 they will have discovered

life on other planets. It may be another kind of life that we may not even recognize but it will be human life of some kind.

I have been very lucky because through my life I have only done the things I have wanted to do. The greatest thing that anyone can do is NOT WORRY. Worry pulls you down and the things you worry about so much never come to pass.

Well, enough about my life. Next month more about Jay Ose. Thanks for your birthday wishes.

April 1989

I seldom get up at an early hour however to get to the St. Louis Convention on time, Bill Bowers and I took a very early flight. With us on our plane were Bob Jardine and Mike Douglas and his beautiful white cat. Upon arrival we were met by John Mendoza who drove us to the hotel.

This historic landmark was at one time the largest and busiest passenger rail terminal in the entire world. In its heyday, as many as 300 trains a day traveled through this station. The grand hall of the station which now remains as the hotel lobby has a sixty-five foot barrel vaulted ceiling and probably the only place where Mike Ammar cannot stick a card.

This whole affair was dedicated to Brother John Hamman and those who deserve great credit are Mike O'Dowd, John Apperson and all those who helped them.

Everything moved smoothly and on time. For my part, I was delighted to see my dear friends from the East including Herb Zarrow, Connie Bush and Frank Garcia.

Happily I enjoy the friendship of nearly all the many people I have met over the years.

How could anyone not enjoy knowing Lynn Healey and Bob McKenzie from San Francisco. Such nice people!

I was glad that my friend Richard Kaufman sold out of all the copies of the excellent book of Brother John.

I must mention that a sit down dinner was served for the 600 people which is very rare at conventions these days.

I was truly amazed to see the beautiful coin magic executed by Tom Gagnon who is the illustrator of the VERNON CHRONICLES. I have never seen better.

The lectures and stage acts were all well executed.

The lecturers were Daniel Cros from Las Vegas with his new floating skeleton effect. He had everybody puzzled. Then there was Frank Garcia with cups and balls and McDonalds's Aces.

Jay Marshall did "Lefty" and this superlative act demonstrated how simplicity is the key note.

On stage Mike Caveney and Tina were excellent and Mike's rendition of the rope and knots was super.

Daniel Cros, Frank Garcia, Rocco and Meir Yedid all did well on stage.

For lovers of manipulation, young Roy Davenport did some very clever sleights. Roy is only sixteen years of age. Watch for him to perform.

I wish I could name all 600 registrants. I have said it before and must say it again there are no people like magicians.

My thanks to all who took such good care of me. At the age of 95 I am delighted that I am still able to travel to conventions and I really do continue to enjoy magic.

At the midnight lecture Saturday, assisted by Harry Monti, I was coerced into speaking. To make up for my lapse of memory that occurred at my midnight talk I shall herewith write-out my story of: JERRY THE GIMP

Jerry the Gimp was a half fast pimp that I knew in nine o'five. He had a girl named buck toothed Pearl who barely kept them alive.

She wasn't the toast of the Barbary Coast but she earned their bread and butter.

While Jerry sat, on his skimpy prat in their room at Pearl and Sutter.

Now a pimp was supposed when the houses closed, to pick up his twist and twirl.

If they had the Jack. They'd hire a hack but not little Jerry and Pearl.

I'll have you know, they saved their dough and took this three mile hike.

Though times were tough, they saved enough and Jerry purchased a bike.

He ceased To walk and became the talk of the boys and girls on the stem.

Yes, Jerry the Gimp the bicycle pimp was something new to them.

He'd pick her up at the foot of the stairs and start out to Pearl and Sutter.

He'd sing a song as he pedaled along while poor Pearl trod along in the gutter.

One night in a dump she trimmed a chump for three hundred bucks of more.

She laughed and she cried as she ran outside and handed Jerry the score.

He said old kid, for what you did you've proved that you're all right.

I'll swallow my pride, and you can ride, on the handle bars tonight.

May 1989

It is a sad fact that living to my age one loses so many close friends. Charlie Miller, one of my dearest was the most recent one.

Many years ago while in Wichita, Kansas I was in the same apartment with Faucett Ross when one day came a young boy who said he heard that Dai Vernon was visiting his friend Faucett Ross and he was anxious to meet him. Charlie was a constant correspondent with Faucett for several years prior to this.

Both "Faucy" and I were together at the time in the former's room.

At any rate there was a knock at the door and Charles without ceremony walked in and after a brief greeting told both of us to sit on the bed. He took out a pack of cards from his pocket and for at least twenty minutes did one card trick after another. Then he addressed me "Am I using the right method?"

I failed to understand what he meant.

He then said, "These are the card tricks that Max Holden wrote in his column, but gave no explanation as to method."

Next he took out a large ball and performed a very clever routine and said, "Ross, this is the method we discussed when I wrote to you."

We of course instantly became close friends.

Around this time I had heard from John Sprong in Chicago about a gambler who could deal from the center of the deck. He also stated that he thought this guy lived or worked in Kansas City.

At any rate Charlie and I drove to Kansas City to try to locate this individual.

However, no luck so we returned to Wichita.

Determined not to give up I rented a very elegant car and again made a trip. After many inquiries a gambler said "Why don't you ask 'Snakey Davis'?" He incidentally was the Al Capone of K.C.

After many attempts I finally met him and asked if he knew any such operator. He said, "What kind of catalogue have you been reading?! It is tough enough to get out a second let alone a middle."

To get to the point, after many attempts I had a lead to try Pleasant Hill, a suburb of K.C.

Absolutely hopeless. No one in town knew of any gamblers of any type.

I was sitting in this rented car contemplating what to do next when I spotted a young child who was just finishing an ice cream cone.

The little girl seemed so sad as she had consumed nearly all of it.

I beckoned to her to come over to the car but she shied away. So I tossed a quarter out and told her to get a new one.

She was very delighted and when she came out of the store she came over and thanked me.

I asked the child if she knew any gamblers and she said, "I do not know if he gambles, but he showed me some wonderful card tricks."

This was a slim chance, but I went to the house she had pointed out.

I was greeted as the door was opened by a rugged looking guy.

I took a chance and said, "I heard about you on the Atlantic. You can do something that enables you to work without a partner to cut the cards. In other words, you can whip them out from the center.

The fact that I appealed to his ego and that I mentioned I had heard of him was happily the right approach.

He invited me in and he asked his wife to get a deck of cards.

"Do you play stud poker?" I naturally replied that I did.

He placed three kings on the bottom of the deck and asked me to cut and follow the cut.

He dealt around and my face up card was a king. I watched like a hawk, but all looked perfect.

Determined to catch the next one I said, "Go ahead, deal." He smiled and said "You have the other one in the hole."

My hand went to my trouser pocket where I knew I had over sixty dollars and I was going to plunk it down and say, "Show me the work."

On second thought, I might have something to fool him with. Resorting to a simple double lift and a few other sleights he was completely thrown off and said, "Could I handle some of that work?"

I felt that I had to get the first showing of the handling as he'd be bitterly disappointed.

At any rate he showed me in detail and the only ones I taught the method to were T. Nelson Downs, John Scarne, Ross Bertram and Charlie Miller.

Bill and Irene Larsen are having a champagne "wake" for Charlie this coming Sunday, September the 10th. I'm sure he will be looking in! I wish to thank all of those who contributed to this special Dai Vernon issue of GENII. I don't know why I should continue to be honored after all these years, but I do appreciate it.

I am usually at the Castle on Friday lunch and Sunday brunch and two or three times a week. I hope to meet you when you visit. GENII, The Conjurors' Magazine

June 1989

One of the most remarkable events that have occurred during the last century is the appearance of Siegfried and Roy.

Although both came from Germany it is quite wonderful how well they have learned the English language.

Their collection of animals is most interesting and the love and devotion given to them pleases everyone .

While in Tokyo tickets were so difficult to obtain that as much as \$300 sometimes was paid for a single admission.

Besides their incredible performance they are the most gracious and friendly hosts and they endear themselves to all who meet them.

I feel certain that their New York appearance will be raved about and what a pleasure it is to see such success to two most wonderful people with their collection of different animals .

Back to the Magic Castle where week after week can be seen many performers. Some, of course, are better than others, but strangely some of the new comers like who show great talent as future stars.

I must admit that in spite of my many years in magic I am often quite puzzled to discern how some of the effects are done.

Larry Jennings, Bruce Cervon, Jim Lewis, Dean Stern, John Kennedy and John Carney just to mention a few of my close friends. All do superlative effects and rank with the best in the country. Of course the Warsaw Wizard Johnny Thompson, Lance Burton and Harry Riser stand out as supreme performers.

On the critical side I cannot understand why so many who appear here do too much . Too little is far better than too much. Leave the audience wishing you would do more, not less.

In the golden years of Big Time Vaudeville twelve to fifteen minutes was the score. Allen Shaw who was a coin expert did the shortest act only six minutes and he appeared on the biggest bills with super stars.

Milton Berle after a big laugh would walk to the wings to exit but would hesitate and remark "I know thousands better" and naturally people would be anxious to hear them. Thus he was a master of timing and a great star.

When appearing in front of an audience before entering you should think to yourself what a wonderful audience and my privilege to entertain them. They may be a drunken group of people and some can be a problem but it doesn't matter. Think and think what a pleasure to be able to entertain such a group. This method works for success and the audience will enjoy your act.

The very moment you appear from the wings your manner is most important.

As Nate Leipzig entered people immediately thought "this guy is an artist. "

Bearing and thoughts are important.

David Copperfield will be coming to Los Angeles, in about three weeks and I am looking forward to seeing his show. David is truly a remarkable young man who has used the most creative minds and finest builders in magic to come up with his own style which has proved to be commercially sound. He not only is a fine performer, but a very astute businessman as well. I admire the fact that he can work night after night in city after city and still have the ability to play the top casinos in Las Vegas, Lake Tahoe and Atlantic City.

I remember well when David was not yet twenty one and Bill Larsen would sneak him in the back stage door to see the shows. David still loves to watch magic and always comes to the Magic Castle whenever he has an evening free.

One of the great enjoyments of my life is coming up to the Magic Castle several times a week and almost always for Friday Lunch and also catching the lectures on Sunday. These lectures are a benefit of regular membership in the Academy of Magical Arts and this year alone we have had lectures by Arnold Furst, Lorne Michaels, John Haar, Benjamin Garth, Joe Givan, Mike Shelley, Ron London, George Sands, Barry Wiley, Norman Gilbreath, Aurelio Paviato, Roberto Giobbi, John Fedko, Dave Williamson, Rocco, Fukai, Hary Allen and Irv Cook, Fay Presto, Christian Chelman, James Starr, Trevor Liley, Eugene Burger, Martin Nash, Charles Penton, Tom Craven and just last week Debbie Martell. Coming up before the end of the year will be lectures by Henry Gordon, Hank Moorehouse, Jay Scott Berry, Paul Green, Tom Ogden, and Tony Shiels.

Getting back to Siegfried and Roy, Bill and Irene will be devoting a special issue to them next month. I am looking forward to seeing them at the Desert Seminar in March.

July 1989

For the last couple of months everyone in the Castle was asking, "Are you going to attend the Mulholland Library Conference on Magic History?" It is now real history. A couple of weeks ago it was filled to capacity. The cost was eighty five dollars each and the one hundred and fifty seats were gobbled up weeks in advance. Many of my best friends could not buy a ticket and tried desperately to talk to Joan Lawton and use her influence. It was simply "SOLD OUT" 150 seats and no more.

Fortunately the facilities for the lecture and films were excellent and everything was carried out in an orderly and efficient manner. The first thing on the program was a talk by that talented and expert performer Ricky Jay. He has true stage presence and his voice can be heard without difficulty in the large room. He was joined by Jay Marshall.

Another Jay, Jay Last, and Jim Steinmeyer gave much enjoyed talks while the screen pictured many past performers and apparatus.

There was a short recess and most of the attendants moved to the Dealers Room where several items were for sale. These events were on the first day, a Thursday.

The next day, Friday, Bill Smith said a few words about "The Thurston Illusions", Jacques Voignier showed highlights from his collection, including rarities from the career of Jean Robert-Houdin and Robert Lund talked about "Unknown Dunninger."

After intermission Mike Caveney hosted a panel discussion on Floyd Thayer and the Thayer Manufacturing Company of Los Angeles. The panel members were Bill Larsen, Homer Hudson, Marvyn Roy, Dr. Robert Albo and Mark Burger.

That evening Volcar Huber, Persi Diaconis and the well known writer Maurice Zolotow each gave truly fascinating talks.

Allen Wakeling presented a new generation of an old art: Automata and John McKinven wound it up with an enlightening discussion and demonstration of "DeKolta's Expanding Die."

The last day, Saturday, featured talks by John Gaughan, Rudiger Deutsch and Nicolas Barker.

After a brief intermission Don Bice gave a true explanation of the ghost shows that used to pack the theaters running until the wee hours of the morning.

To myself, also several others it seemed strange that with all the beautiful apparatus it was the performers who really stood out. The ones who excelled and I might say stood out were Max Malini and Nate Leipzig. Among illusionists not Houdini, not Thurston but Harry Blackstone and to me the best Harry Kellar. Just must mention that I was very friendly with Kellar and he told me that one of his biggest mistakes was his allowing Thurston to follow on. He said particularly that he butchered the beautiful illusion by having most evidently "SHILLS" come on stage to apparently examine the props. Of course as a publicist and for sensational effects he was tops in his day. Only David Copperfield aims to out do him.

I was really tickled and pleased that Larry Jennings has this chance to see his idol of the past Nate Leipzig. Also, for my part, I was enthused to hear Malini's son Ozier give such a truly graphic account of some things about his celebrated father Max.

All those who attended were fascinated by the display in one of the other rooms. Beautifully made items, especially the metal work of Martin in England where I had the pleasure of visiting him as he worked out his precision apparatus. I understand that this entire collection is the property of John Gaughan. He was not too friendly with magicians, but Ken Brooke introduced me to him and we had a most interesting meeting.

Extra credit must be given to Johnny for the great work he has done. His "Chess Player" was one of the highlights of the entire conference.

Rudiger Deutsch and Nicolas Barker helped greatly. It is too bad that many of the younger chaps missed seeing these demonstrations because all of them should be given the opportunity to see the "way of the past."

Concerning the "Chess Player", years ago it was on exhibit in Coney Island in the Dreamland Circus Sideshow. This show had twenty one exhibits. Freaks of all descriptions such as the Osified Man, Cuckoo the Bird Girl, Half Man/Half Woman, and many others.

The last one was Al Flosso, the Coney Island fakir. One of these exhibits was the Chess Player.

Flosso told me that the person concealed within the apparatus was an escaped prisoner from Sing Sing.

It happened one day that another jailbird played the Chess Player and recognized the play of his exanimate. Smoking a pipe, he blew smoke inside the base. Presently he heard a cough and the concealed guy inside had to exit the apparatus. This was a perfect hiding place.

August 1989

Editor Bill tells me that this will be a surprise issue for Irene.

The feature article was written by Amy Stevens and published in the Stevens quarterly catalog.

Irene certainly deserves this recognition as she is the greatest magic hostess the world has ever known. In addition to greeting magicians from all over the world for 26 years at the Magic Castle, she and Bill have traveled around the world several times as ambassadors of good will for magic.

I am often asked why it is that there are so few women in the magic field.

The ones that work alone are few indeed. One of the most famous was Adelaide Herman. Dell O'Dell was a very commercial act that could play anything from kid shows to the roughest stag shows.

Okinu (wife of Tenkai) did a beautiful oriental act. Suzy Wandas worked with coins.

Still with us but retired from performing are Lady Francis, Celeste Evans, Gerrie Larsen Jaffee who was the "Magic Lady" on television and Diana Zimmerman who did several excellent acts but who has now given up performing to devote full time to her business.

There are several full time lady magicians performing today.

Those that come to mind are Princess Tenko of Japan who is the only woman to front a full evening illusion spectacular. Melinda has made a big name for herself in Las Vegas. Tina Lenert has a very commercial international act. Judy Carter goes for comedy magic and is doing very well. Frances Willard and Shari Lewis is more into vent but we consider her one of our own.

Then there are those ladies that perform on stage with their partners. Bob Brown and Brenda, Leslie and Harry Anderson and Goldfinger and Dove immediately come to mind.

Of course, there have been and are those beautiful assistants that add so much to the magic art. Beatrice Houdini, Dante's Moi Yo Miller, Kallenag's Gloria De Vos, Swan Cardini, Virgil's Julie, Jane Thurston, Tenkai's Okinu, Bill Larsen Sr.'s Gerrie, Mable Birch, Nani Wilson, Mildred Ross, Valerie and Irene Swadling, Deanna Shimada, Deborah Henning, Mia (as in Petrick and), Gay Blackstone, Charlotte Pendragon, Jennifer Baran, Pam Thompson, Carol Roy, Debbie Daniels, Valerie Swadling, Roberta Griffin, Liz Tucker, Melba Dew, Becky Blaney (who also is an accomplished performer), Liane Brown, and the list could go on and on. I'm sorry if I've left many names out but at my age I can't remember things as well as I once did.

Other lady magicians and assistants both past and present that come to mind are June Horowitz, Jade, June Merlin, Katlyn Miller, Paula Baird, Maria La Fay, Lucy Smallee, Talma, Elizabeth Warlock, my wife Jeanne Vernon, Kathy Diamond, and there must be hundreds of others.

In closing, I must mention one of the great magic ladies of all time, Lynette Chappell with Siegfried and Roy and again Irene Larsen of Castle/GENII fame. Happy Holidays!

September 1989

HAPPY NEW DECADE! I wish all my many friends in magic a wonderful new year. Last week the Magic Castle celebrated its 27th Anniversary and Editor Bill thought it might be a good idea if we went back to the very first Vernon Touch written over twenty years ago. Bill's son Dante found it in Volume 33 No. 1 September 1968.

The article ran about two pages so we will start it in this issue and continue it in the next issue. Here is the first half.

I think we should start this first column by saying something about magic in general. A lot of people think that everybody's anxious to see a trick at any time of the day or night. WHEN you do tricks is very important. Of course, at the Magic Castle, they're ready at any time to see a trick, but when people are singing or dancing or talking, and somebody comes up and says, "I'm gonna show you a trick... now take a card... watch this... look... watch." This is no good for magic. Magic has to be done carefully at the right time, and served in the right way, or sometimes it can become very annoying to normal people.

Also what you say when you're doing magic is very important. If you're a natural comedian, and when you tell a story people break into hilarious laughter or fall over their chairs, you're probably a funny guy who can tell funny stories, and you can do it with your magic. But if when you tell a story, everybody looks askance or looks away, and nobody laughs... and you do magic and try to be funny, this is a catastrophe. There's a certain fellow who used to live in New York who does mental magic, who can make it about as boring as anybody just by what he says... not by what he does, because he does his magic fairly well. Francis Carlyle, a very knowledgeable guy about magic, says that there's never been any book written on magical management, which is very important. The managing of anything is important. You might know a trick perfectly, but in magic I think it's more important in how you manage. A lot of people don't know exactly how to manage when they do a trick.

Another thing that magicians don't seem to realize, I mean a great majority of them, is that I've never in my life seen a good baritone singer get up and sing "On the Road to Mandalay," and the immediately after he's finished, some other guy jumps up and says, "All right, piano player, play that again"...and then HE immediately sings "On the Road to Mandalay." Singers don't do this. Dancers don't get up and hoof exactly like the other guy. When somebody tells a joke, they don't tell the same punchline again to the people. They may say, "Here's a variation of it," or "Here's a similar story," but they don't jump in and try to do the identical thing. Magicians seem to have the attitude, "Well, I do that, but you ought to see the way I do it. Now watch the way I do it." To the people, it's the same trick, and I think magicians just make jackasses of themselves when they step in and try to do exactly the same thing that somebody else does.

The great difference between the professional magician and the amateur magician is that the professional magician knows what an effect is. He knows what the audience sees. It doesn't matter how crude the method of performing, as long as the effect is good, he will use it. The amateur is more interested in method. If the method is very subtle and fine and diabolically clever, he loves the trick regardless of what people think. They may

not even understand what he is doing but as long as he feels he's doing all these beautifully subtle and crafty things, he thinks he's doing a great trick. But he may be boring people to death. It's like somebody painting a picture. Some guy may paint something on a shirt card, and if he does a beautiful picture, people will look at it and say, "That's beautiful. Look at that picture." Another fellow may use the finest pigments in the world, and have the finest canvas that money can buy, and sit in a beautiful studio with a velvet smock on, but who cares? All they see is the picture. Well, that's what the professional does with magic. He sees the picture as the people see it, whereas the amateur doesn't. That's something that should be heeded by many magicians. They've got to put themselves in place of the audience.

Another important thing is the placing of tricks. A lot of people have their finest tricks which they do early, and then they wind up with a weak trick. They should follow the old Vaudeville formula which is ideal. Think of magic as a play. A play has a beginning, a middle, and an ending... a climax. That's why a trick like the cups and balls is a classic. First, an opening introducing the props dropping one cup through the other. Then is has a little sequence of moves that occur... everything different... little funny things happen. Then BAM, there's a climax... a production which must be dramatic, and must be the finish. And it must be the same way with an act. To be continued...

October 1989

As promised this is a continuation of the very first column that I wrote for GENII in September 1968.

Most of these fellows have Greater Magic. They should read the introduction by Bamberg which is excellent. When a performer comes on, people see this man for the first time. They appraise him. They look at him and say, "Well, he's a fairly normal looking guy," or "He's a wicked looking guy... he's a mean looking guy... he's a funny looking guy"...but they appraise him when he first comes on. Now, he doesn't have to say anything immediately, because if he talks right away, he lets them know what kind of a person he is. But if he does some little thing to get their attention, they say, "Gee, he did that neatly," or "He did that nicely," and they think, "What kind of fellow is he?" Now, the first words he speaks, his introduction, is just like a warm handshake, or like meeting a person for the first time. So the introduction is very important. Once he gets started, he can do anything, but he must wind up with something that hits them...a sock. So the old Vaudeville formula of having a fairly good opening, a weak middle and a strong finish, is the formula in getting an act together, or putting a trick together. One of MY great idols was Hofzinsner, and in one of his tricks he says, "This trick, well understood and capably executed, never fails to get a tremendous effect...but otherwise, no effect can be expected." In other words, if you don't thoroughly understand a trick, and capably execute it... well, you don't get the effect. That's all.

Anybody who does a trick to entertain should first find a trick they want to do. You can't learn a half a dozen at a time. They think they can, but learning to do one or two or three or four tricks WELL, is better than learning a hundred tricks badly. Decide what trick you want to do, then learn the handling of it. I don't care if it's even to hold a handkerchief out and show both sides of it. You should practice to do it neatly, show what you're supposed to show, and present it nicely and palatably to the people. Now you should work out the sleights. If there are any sleights, or if you have to hide something, do it naturally. Then the most important thing of all after you've learned that it to think it through. Use your noodle perhaps for two or three weeks. Walk around and think, "Now how's the best way to do this? Can I tell some kind of story with it? Can I tell a gag with it? How can I get the opening, middle and dramatic finish on the thing?"

A friend of Dr. Daley's once said that the trouble with magic was that the average person who did magic didn't have good taste. There's a lot of truth in that. Taste is reflected very much in magic. Taste in props, taste in dress, taste in diction, taste in everything. So if you want to improve your act, try to improve your understanding of all things, and it will help the magic.

Some fellows when they start in magic, want to do card tricks, and they want to start in with a second deal. He's intrigued with it, but what is he going to do with it? If he practices for 20 years he won't be able to use it to fool anybody. So this is something he shouldn't worry about unless he's amusing himself.

There's so much in magic, you have to have questions...you have to know what's on people's minds. When I was a young whippersnapper living in an isolated part of the

country in Canada, I had to wait a whole year to see some professional magician come to town, like Leipzig or Nelson Downs or Thurston, just to talk and ask them a few questions. There must be hundreds of questions fellows interested in the art of magic would like to ask. A little word passed on can encourage and help someone a great deal.

David Bornstein in Denmark wanted to know what I regard as the most entertaining trick for laymen, for a group made up entirely of women, and for magicians.

I have a million opinions on a thing like this. I mean, there are no rules to be laid down. As everybody knows, you've got to break rules. I don't think there is any magic formula....just as there's no master parry in fencing. My honest opinion is that lay people, in this day and age, don't want to admit that they enjoy a trick.

I think the real test of tricks for lay people is what Fu Manchu, my good friend David Bamberg said. A trick, to please an all around audience, must be given and emotional appeal of some kind....and I agree with this.

It's pretty hard to set down specific tricks because one trick will lay an egg in the hands of one performer, while with another performer, it will be a masterpiece. The main thing is to give the trick emotional appeal. For laymen, I think that's the general rule.

So there you have the first article I wrote for GENII about 22 years ago. Next time I will come back to the present. Write me if you have any questions.

November 1989

Looking forward to attending the Desert Seminar and Siegfried and Roy's spectacular new show. They have got to be, in my opinion, the best stage performers today.

The other day Bill asked me what has been my greatest experience in magic. There have been so many wonderful experiences and people in my life that this, as you can imagine, is a very difficult question.

In retrospect I'd have to say that one highlight was when I worked the McCormick Lines for five years and we used to stop at all of the different islands on the way down to South America. One time when I took a tender to shore there were a bunch of kids watching the ship come in. I picked up a pebble, threw it in my hand, changed it into a quarter and gave it to one of the kids. Having several quarters in my pocket I continued picking up pebbles and tuning them into twenty five cents pieces until each child had one.

The next trip to that island, there must have been about five or six hundred kids waiting on the shore. They were all holding pebbles and running towards me. This was the biggest thrill to me. I only had so many quarters and, of course, most of the poor kids were disappointed, but they still believed that

I was a magic man. They simply thought that my powers had to be restored because I was worn out. Yes, that had to have been my best experience in magic.

Another time while working that line I made a big mistake. I told one of the nurses on board her fortune.

(Of course, it was all baloney.) The nurse went around telling people how the magician had told her fortune and after that I never got any peace for the next two or three days. Women were bothering me all the time coming up to me saying, "Please! I don't want to see any magic, just tell me my fortune!"

John Booth, Carlyle and I were working three different ships for the McCormick Lines at that time; The Brazil, The Uruguay and The Argentina. We would all be at port in Rio at the same time and that's where I first met John Booth.

John Booth and Milbourne Christopher were the first magicians ever to work ships. Who was actually the first, I'm not certain.

Bill Larsen's all time favorite magician was Dante and he asked me to name mine. I cannot. I can, however, honestly say that it was not Houdini.

Houdini was ruthless when it came to publicity.

One time I was cutting silhouettes on Broadway with Larry Gray and had one part of the store rented to Jack Davis who was selling magic for Bob Sheldon.

My walls were covered with pictures of magicians. I had a big picture of Dante, one of Kellar, one of Herman, photographs of all the local magicians with SAM and in the corner I had a little visiting card with a picture of Houdini. Written below was the slogan "My brain is the key that sets me free." I always liked that slogan. I don't think Houdini came up with it. Probably some newspaper person.

Anyway, Harry Houdini came into the store and looked at all of the big pictures of Dante, Kellar, Herman and so forth and he hollered, "Where's my picture, Vernon? ! "

I took him to the corner, showed him the little card and told him how much I loved the slogan. "What, that small card?!", he cried. "I'll send you a picture!"

The next day a messenger brought in a great big crate and later Houdini came in asking if I had received his picture. I told him that I hadn't had a chance to unpack it yet.

Well, he wanted to take all of the pictures down and rearrange them so that he was directly in the center. The nerve! Of course, I didn't do it. Larry Gray and I chose to hang it in a more appropriate place.

No, I really didn't care much for Houdini's persona.

One person who absolutely went to town was Sam Margules. He was one of the most generous, nicest guys I've ever met.

One time when we were in the subway a young magician came up to him and said, "Sam, I've got to go get my laundry and don't have the money. I have a date tonight and tried to pay for just the dress shirt, but I must pay for all of my laundry at once. Would you lend me the money?" (About two dollars and something back then.)

So Sam asked, "What size do you wear?" The kid replied, "Fourteen and a half." Sam went into the bathroom, literally took the shirt off his back and gave it to this kid who he didn't even know.

Sam Margules thought the worst of Houdini. Harry Houdini was a bona fide great performer. He just wasn't a very nice person.

Write to me c/o:

The Magic Castle

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December 1989

Looking ahead to the Desert Seminar in Las Vegas and investing a few bucks at the crap table. I am reminded indeed how little many of the magicians know about dice. Of course there are dozens and dozens of ways to "doctor" the cubes, but I shall only explain the percentages with a pair of legitimate ones in an honest game.

When tossed out there are 36 possible ways that they can show up (6-1)(1-6) or (6-5)(5-6) both winners on the "come out" or first toss. On the other hand if (6-6) or (1-1), this termed a crap and loses when thrown.

When betting on a point you can take odds on each bet. Odds on a ten or a four are two to one. A nine or a five three to one.

The so called biggest sucker bet is the field, although it doesn't appear so, as there are so many points that the field does not cover.

When you are given the dice to throw if a (6-6) (1-2) comes up, you-. Lose at once and pass the dice to the next shooter. However, if a (6-5) (5-6) shows you win

However if any other point shows you must make it before a (7) shows up.

Suppose you have made nine for a point you can lay down extra chips as odds behind your bet on the pass line. (3to2)

Also if a five shows the same odds apply. Of course, if you throw a 10 or a 4 for a point, you can take odds of (2to1)

When playing the dice to hit it is up to you to take the odds at all times .

So called sucker bets. "I'll make it or miss it" in two rolls this is uttered when an eight or a six is tossed. The eight can show up (6-2) (2-6), (5-3)(3-5)(4-4). However, the toss of the seven has six possibilities .

So called systems to win all have a failing. The only one that is at all plausible is the Hop-Heads Dream. To use this on even number lets say Red or Black at tables. All you do is to place your bet on what the last color was in this way it can win money if there are several repeats of the color.

Stickmen at a Dice Table do not like this as the constant change of right or wrong keeps them confused.

I was requested to write up the old time trick with twenty seven cards.

To start count off nine cards and give them to the onlooker to think of any one of them. Next count off two more packets each of nine cards. Say altogether I have twenty seven cards and have him name a number from one to twenty seven.

When the first packet is returned it must be placed on top of the center or bottom.

Suppose the number named is four. This is the way to figure the procedure. (1-2-3)(4-5-6)(7-8-9)(10-11 -12) (13-14-15)(16-17-18)(19-20-21)

Four is in the middle of the first group so the pile is placed back in the middle.

The cards are then dealt out singly as in bridge and asked in which pile the card is contained.

Again you ask which packet contains the selected card and as the named number was (four) and it is again placed in the center. Now if the cards are dealt out singly the selected card will show up four from the top.

To again explain and simplify I hope .

Mentally picture three groups of one to 27. (1-2-3)(4-5-6)(7-8-9)(10-11-12) (13-14-15)(16-17-18) (19-20-21) (22-23-24) (25-26-27)

The packet is returned to middle first and last time. The second time you figure backwards.

In other words the four and the six are counted as one.

This old time trick can be done by using the regular Haymow shuffle. Mathematically it is one of the best as it combines combinations and permutations and the fact that the mere action of the order of the packets are picked up bring the card to the selected number.

Back at the Magic Castle, I often think how lucky the Magic Castle Magician Members are.

When I was a young man it was very seldom that I could have anyone explain magic in person. Most of what was learned came from books .

Today magicians all over the world attend Conventions and each convention will usually have two to four "lecturers" plus other "learn in" features. The* fees come from your registration fees. Other clubs will hire lecturers and charge the members \$5.00 or \$10.00 per person.

At the Magic Castle last year we were given 32 lectures. The lectures are held at 3 p.m. on Sunday afternoons and are paid for by the Academy. No charge to the members. They covered a wide field including Close-up, Stage, Mentalism, Magical History, Parlour Magic, Children's Magic, "Jems from Junk", Walk Around Magic and much more,

January, 1990

Leonardo DaVinci once said, "The means of expression can become so exquisite that you wind up expressing nothing." We should heed this remark by one of the world's greatest thinkers.

Upon my recent trip to Vegas with Bill Bowers and Chic Carrano I had the extreme pleasure of greeting again many of my good friends of days gone by.

However, I hate to state that I was bitterly disappointed in Siegfried and Roy's overly extravagant production (although Vegas shows are supposed to be) which in spite of the large effects failed to improve on their last one.

One of the former gags was when the spectator kept reaching for the tail of the tiger. This was amusing and proved most effective.

It is fatal if the performer does not have a sense of humor.

Both of them truly are excellent magicians. I would have liked to have seen them perform the Indian Rope Trick.

Those of you who have seen the likes of the late Charlie Miller can relish the simplicity with direct effect that he showed so delightfully.

While working here at the Magic Castle he used to remark that performers should be careful to use correct English and not to mix adverbs with adjectives .

Charlie and I very often would mention how often magicians would confuse the two verbs lie and lay. You lie down, not lay down. "Hens lay but people lie." The latter is easy to avoid mistakes.

It is more pleasing to the ear to use the correct adverbs and not adjectives. You should do a thing well not "do it good". Do it quickly sounds better than do it quick.

These simple hints are for the few as happily most of today's performers who talk while performing seldom make obvious mistakes which offend the ears of many of the audience.

It has puzzled me for some time why there are so many affirmative replies such as "How right you are" "I'll say so" "Positively" "I'll tell the world" "You said a mouthful" "You can say that again" "Undoubtedly" and hundreds more.

This among many could be used as good publicity for an ad by some of the television writers for commercials: "You said it."

The only person who came up with many of the negative retorts was Mike Perovitch.

The thing that puzzles me is how few negative replies are in common use and how people are more likely to agree rather than disagree.

It is really astonishing how skillful some of the younger members of the Castle are. Some of them would absolutely astound the old timers with their originality.

Also a mere youngster (to me all are) Jim Lewis would have amazed T. Nelson Downs with the great skill he employs in all his work. Especially his Penetration of Coins Through Glass top Table. It is a fathomless effect and mystifies everyone.

Seeing so many performers work I am more convinced than ever that the true secret of presenting a pleasing act is simplicity.

Avoid complex effects that require memory or recall.

For some unknown reason many performers feel they should convince the audience that they are familiar with all types of deception. Remember to keep things very easy to understand and never anything requiring memory or otherwise.

Members of the Castle who attended the lecture by David Williamson were very lucky not to have missed this truly superb lecture and the excellent example of misdirection.

In my opinion he was outstandingly the best to ever lecture here at the Castle.

Speaking of David Williamson, I was so pleased that he won the Close-up Magician of the Year Award this year at the Academy's 22nd Annual Awards show. It was also very nice to meet Princess Tenko and see the tape of parts of her show. It is said that there is great interest in bringing her to Vegas and I hope that this is true.

Congratulations to Peter Pit for Producing one of the best Awards shows yet. I always enjoy watching Peter perform on the Stage of the Palace of mystery of the Magic Castle. Whenever I think of Peter Pit, I think of the Dancing Cane effect. Peter was one of the first magicians I ever saw perform the trick and he did it to perfection and most of all, he kept it brief.

I'm sure you remember my viewpoints on this trick, as well as on the Zombie. I don't know why people who do these two tricks prolong them so much! Do a few moves with the cane or the Zombie and then quit.

One of the gravest faults I have seen in the past few years is the prolonging of these two tricks. If I do nothing more for magic, I think I would be contributing something if I could get people to cut their routines with these two tricks. (The "Cranky Old Man of Magic" has spoken.)

In closing I want to thank Joe Stevens for having me, once again, as his guest at the Desert Seminar. It was most enjoyable and I look forward to it every year.

Cuing, the Webster dictionary defines, as any sound, word, or action that signals an action, guiding hint or suggestion. Everyone has at sometime or other, witnessed examples of this often deceiving art. In the old days of Keith vaudeville, Judson Cole was billed " A Humorous Interlude Assisted by the Audience." As a matter of fact, I helped him a little to solve a simple problem. As he went into the audience, he used to have trouble in finding a boy who was chewing gum. At around this period, Wrigley had just put Chiclets on the market to give his brother some self help. I suggested he use these in his act. When Jud chose a boy in the audience, he would slip him this gum as he took his hand. Back on the stage, he'd cue the boy to chew well on the gum. Then Jud would look at him and say, "Please throw that into neutral." He followed this by whispering "place that in your pocket". As the boy pulled the wad of gum from his mouth, he'd say "no, the other pocket", followed by "stick that under my magic table." This was most amusing to the audience, as they naturally believed the boy did all this on his own accord. With two nice looking children on stage, Jud would address the boy and say "Billy, have you met Mildred?" Under his breath, he'd cue Billy "fix your tie". This caused amusement to see a young boy straighten his tie when | meeting a young attractive girl. Later, he would | vanish an egg and cue the | boy to lift his jacket and | look underneath. He then | asked Billy to offer his arm to Mildred and escort ., her to her seat. As they walked down the center isle, the orchestra began playing the Wedding March a perfect ending to great applause. One of the best examples of cuing is used by hypnotists, more so than magic acts, When people are called on stage and cued to jump up from their chairs .

It is very strange, how a person in an hypnotic., state will do almost anything, and if cued skillfully Can cause great Laughter from the audience. Emil Jarrow used cuing very cleverly. During his joke routine, he told that a thousand years on earth was only a minute in heaven. Then when borrowing the three bills for the lemon trick, he'd look up to the third balcony and ask if anyone up in heaven had a bill. A voice would answer "I have a twenty", at which Jarrow would remark "why aren't you sitting in a box down front." This was a solid laugh, and Jarrow, with his Dutch accent, added to his funny delivery. In spite of the fact that both Jarrow and Vanhoven were the highest paid acts in magic, Vanhoven was all hokum gags while Jarrow was a skilled slight of hand performer. By the way, I should have mentioned that a nice cuing affect was to have a boy's hair stand on end by a thread stretched across the stage overhead. The boy was cued to jump if he felt anything on his hair. The thread was lowered by an assistant and brushed back over the boy's head, causing the hair to stand on end as the boy jumped up. One time in the early 20's, there were actually twenty acts using the illusion of sawing a women in half. If Emil Jarrow happened to play the same town as Horace Golden who performed this illusion, Jarrow would have his marquee read "Sawing a Lemon in Half." Another cuing bit used by Jarrow was when he performed knocking the tray out as four eggs dropped into four glasses. Jarrow cued a stooge in the balcony to yell out "those aren't real eggs." After awhile, Jarrow invited this fellow to come down on the stage He

then had him hold out his hand on which Jarrow placed a bottomless glass. Jarrow then broke an egg into the glass. You can imagine the laughter when Jarrow lifted the glass and the audience saw the egg in the fellow's hand. Certainly very convincing proof that the eggs were genuine.

March 1990

What follows is a tape made many years ago which may be of interest to many readers.

Eddie McGuire was the one who caused quite a stir when he wrote about Walter Scott "the phantom of the card table".

His sole purpose was to become intimate with Cardini and learn as much as possible from Cardini. He knew that Cardini was extremely anxious to learn a good second deal and also many of the ways and means of the professional gambler.

He concocted all these wild tales about Walter Scott to try to intrigue Cardini and later succeeded in becoming intimate with him.

As a matter of fact Walter was a true expert with the "number two deal" and the use of a punch.

Also a fact Al Baker, Sam Horowitz, Cardini and yours truly had many get togethers with the paste boards .

It's also a fact at one time he received quite a sizable sum to demonstrate how he could blindfolded deal out a perfect bridge hand.

On one occasion I visited Walter with Charlie Miller and he was quite surprised to see Charlie execute this deal as well as he could.

Eddie used to write me long letters about the "Phantom" and my wife Jeanne used to be very amused at his amazing descriptions.

Some of his tales, fantastic as they were still circulate and form the history of days gone by. Narrative of FAUCETT W. ROSS from a tape made on March 20, 1980

Well, good evening, Dai.

Needless to say, I was surprised and delighted to get your long distance telephone call early yesterday morning. You recall the subject of our discussion on the phone at that time was devoted to the current issue of Karl Fulves' monthly leaflet, the Interlocutor, and of course it featured a number of letters written by the late Eddie McGuire. I know to the average reader that knew nothing about McGuire he would undoubtedly get the wrong impression. At any rate, I told you that I would be glad to send you all the data that I have available on Eddie McGuire. I actually knew him for over 40 years and was in close touch with him mainly by correspondence although I met him personally several times.

To begin with, I first met Eddie McGuire in June of 1927 at which time the late T. Nelson Downs and myself spent a week at his home at Artic(?), Rhode Island which is a suburb of Providence. At that time, he seemed, as far as I could ascertain, he seemed to be perfectly normal. A very gracious host, he had a lovely sister, Marion, who was very hospitable, and in short, our week's visit was most pleasurable. Incidentally, at that time we first met the 'Phantom of the Card Table'; I don't think I have to tell you his name. Anyway, during the visit McGuire told me that for a lengthy period he had been the manager of Max Malini not only booked him, but he handled his business in general and I had no reason for doubting him. But, about ten years later, a very close friend of mine met Malini in Chicago and asked him about his former manager Eddie McGuire. Malini

looked at him very puzzled and said, 'I never heard of any Eddie McGuire.' Then my friend reminded him of several things and Malini said, "Oh, now I do dimly recall that a fellow by the name of McGuire booked me into a hotel in Newport, Rhode Island for a week and as far as business was concerned all he did was to take tickets at the door." Then he went on to say, "I've always been my own manager, I don't need a manager." Anyway, that was the first rather unusual thing I discovered about Eddie McGuire, who, incidentally, was a very mild mannered person, very generous in many respects and knew a lot of magic.

Now, as I say, for nearly 40 years we exchanged letters. I must have received 75 or 100 of them at least and I can assure you that many of them were most unusual, not to say fantastic. I'm going to quote a few of them which I think will give you an idea, but first let me preface it by saying that a friend once remarked that all magicians live in a dream world. well, Eddie McGuire not only lived in a dream world, but he lived in a world of nightmares; and I think after I quote some of the letters he wrote me over the years, anyone would be inclined certainly to agree with me. Now, here is one letter. Incidentally, he always addressed me as "Dear Old Friend". TO BE CONTINUED

April 1990

The McGuire Letters

Cont'd from Last Month

So, here was one of the letters that went as follows:

"Dear Old Friend,

You will be surprised to know that I am now a patient in the Army Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island. I am at present in the Mental Department and during the past few days I have utterly bewildered the Army psychologists and psychiatrists and mental experts. Yesterday I gave them a simple test, or simple demonstration, of my powers of x-ray vision. They subjected me to a somewhat unusual test which I concluded most successfully. They placed on the floor in front of me a current issue of the Saturday Evening Post, which I had never seen. I asked them to name any page, any page in the magazine and I immediately read word for word the contents, or copy, on that particular page. At no time did I touch the magazine, and as I say I had never seen the magazine previously."

Well that was one of the very unusual gifts of the late Eddie McGuire.

Here's another:

"Dear Old Friend,

As you may have heard, I have recently devised and perfected an original system of beating the horse races. I took the system to the head of the Psychology Department of Brown University and allowed him to read it, which he did with great interest. After he'd completed reading the system he said, 'Mr. McGuire, you should really forget this system for the simple reason that if it is used it will eliminate the gambling element of horse racing. You have completely eliminated the laws of chance.'

Now that, strange as it may seem, is absolutely true.

Another letter: "Dear Old Friend,

Now that I have written the letter I will not be able to mail it for some time as I am in New York and in hiding. I am the only person who knows the whereabouts of Legs Diamond's wife. And should I meet up with Legs Diamond, my life would be worth nothing . "

Apparently, undoubtedly, Legs Diamond was one of the New York gangsters. I never knew he had a wife but at any rate Eddie knew the whereabouts of Leg Diamond's wife. Well, that was really a mild one.

Here's another: "Dear Old Friend,

I have just recently undergone a terrible mental experience. As a result I am suffering from inverted vision. In short, I see everything upside down. Now, my doctor tells me this is only a very temporary condition so I do hope he's right."

I don't know, there may be cases, but I never heard of a person with inverted vision; but Eddie, Eddie McGuire apparently had it.

And now here is still another one: "Dear Old Friend,

Walter Scott and I have just returned from a lengthy visit in Miami, Florida where we had a terrific experience with some of the leading gamblers of that area. I may not

have told you that we have devised a method that we use in playing Draw Poker. I cannot go into details but in order to win at Draw Poker it is not necessary for handle or touch the deck in any way. Nevertheless, we had several high stake games with leading gambles and had no difficulty whatever in winning consistently."

He wrote me several times about being featured in a wild west or rodeo show, and he did something very unusual: he rode a horse at full speed around the rodeo arena and at the same time caught lighted cigarettes something he said that had never been done before. Eddie actually at one time did have a lighted cigarette act as you probably know, and played several outlying theaters over on Long Island, how successfully I have no idea.

He certainly had an unusual array of letterheads, stationery. I recall one in particular was headed "Tex McGuire, the Gambler from the Golden West", and there's a picture at the top showing Eddie in full cowboy wardrobe: chaps, spurs, a silk shirt, a sombrero, a holster with a pistol. And that was the stationery of "Tex the Gambler from the Golden West." I would be willing to wager that Eddie McGuire never got west of Marshalltown, Iowa. Then another, a photograph of him together with a roulette wheel and the heading was "Edward Gilland McGuire, the Man who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo". Then one, "The Great Gilland Presenting Europe's Greatest Magical Extravaganza". And there's a photograph of Eddie at the top in tails, also a photograph of one of the leading musical comedy stars of France, Gaby Delyse(?), whom I doubt that Eddie ever actually saw. But he has featured her in his letterhead as his head assistant. CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

May, 1990

I understand that this is to be a special Bruce Cervon issue so I'll start with a few words concerning Bruce.

I first met Bruce in 1964 when he was a fairly young man. He had moved from his home town of Akron, Ohio to Hollywood and the Magic Castle, which had opened the year before. I soon learned that he was a quite a student of magic, having read all the books and had been doing magic professionally and semi-professionally since he was a small boy. I have always been very interested in sleight of hand magic and in that department found a fast friend in Bruce.

We have had many sessions in the last 26 years and Bruce kept notes on what I told him during the first 10 years or so. Several years ago he put these notes to good use as he started putting out a series of books based on my ideas. I never claimed very many things as original but have spent a great deal of time puzzling out details which have changed other's ideas considerably. These books, Bruce tells me, have been very successful and they are now working on a fourth volume.

In 1970 I accompanied Bruce on a lecture tour and I can still remember what 'a good time I had. We visited with all my old friends, including Faucett Ross, and I also had the pleasure of introducing Bruce to a large portion of the magic world in many cities. His lecture was a great hit everywhere and he won the Academy of Magical Arts "Lecturer of the Year" award that year.

After that tour Bruce spent most of his time building up a clientele of large corporations and movie stars. He did very well with this but never stopped developing new magical ideas.

Now it seems he is releasing another new book this time of his own ideas and I can wholeheartedly recommend as it contains not only commercial material but first class magic. I'm sure you'll enjoy his new book "Ultra Cervon" and this special GENII issue about my long time good friend Bruce Cervon. Next Month: The Conclusion Of The McGuire Letters!

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