

MAGI-GRAM

Official Newsletter of IBM Ring 50 -- The National Capital Ring Volume 60 No. 3 March 2006



WHAT A DEAL! -- *This yellow bird puppet was among a collection shown to Ring 50 by Barry Taylor.*

“What’s New” Night draws large crowd

Our annual “What’s New At Barry’s” drew an enthusiastic crowd of 65 at Ring 50’s February meeting. The star of the evening was entertainer and entrepreneur Barry Taylor of Barry’s Magic Shop.

The popular magical merchant began the night’s program by pulling a 6-foot wand out of a small paper bag. His repertoire included showing a range of club and closeup items. The offerings ranged from D’Lite Flight and a D’Lite glass to a large drawer production box from Ickle Pickle. One of the smaller popular effects was a brass ring and chain routine.

The presentations covered a clever comedy card prediction called Revelation, a beautiful floating rose, Chris Angel’s amazing Quarter Through Soda trick and a slick vanishing silk wand. When the crowd gathered around the sales table after the demonstrations, the merchandise quickly disappeared along with a wide selection of the latest magic DVDs.

Three new members—Chris Biegun, John Cox and Scott McDonald – were inducted into our fellowship by a unanimous vote.

Collectors Convention preview planned

Ken Trombly, a Washington attorney who is the proprietor of www.magicposters.com, will provide a preview at Ring 50’s monthly meeting of the annual Magic Collectors Convention which is coming to the Washington area for the first time ever at the end of March. (See Coming Events on page 2)

The group normally meets in Chicago although it held its convention in Las Vegas last year. Ken, who is one of its organizers, will share his passion for magic collecting with us. He collects vintage turn-of-the-century magic posters and related ephemera. His presentation will cover highlights of his collection, magic posters of the greats and not-so-greats, magic history, tips on collecting and, of course, more about the convention that is about to occur in our own back yard. In fact, if you bring your checkbook, you will even be able to register for the convention after Ken’s talk.

Ken has been performing magic since the age of 10 — and has been a serious collector of magic posters and related items for at least the last couple of decades, when he began collecting original magic posters from the “Golden Age of Magic.”

Ken has shared his knowledge of magic posters with the Magic

Collectors Association, lecturing at their 1995 and 2000 conventions.

Ken is a member of The Magic Circle, the Society of American Magicians (past president, Assembly 23, Washington) and the International Brotherhood of Magicians (Order of Merlin). He is also a past president of The Presto Club and a founding member of The Scorpions.

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Of Magicians Ring 50
The National Capital Ring**

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MARCH MEETING

Wednesday, March 1, 2006
HOLIDAY INN
IN ALEXANDRIA
2460 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA

6:00 Cocktails

6:45 Dinner

8:00 Meeting

Coming Events

Lectures at Denny & Lee Magic Studio
325 South Marlyn Avenue, Baltimore.

March 2-Peter Studebaker, who runs a Las Vegas-based, live performance firm, which uses magic to build trade show crowds for corporations.
Cost: \$20

April 5-Rick Maue, founder of Deceptions Unlimited, who focuses on magic, mentalism and theatrics.
Cost: \$20

April 13-Jay Scott Berry, a magic creator, performer and teacher.
Cost: \$20

April 15-Topit Workshop with Jay Scott Berry joined by Lisa Richards, a magician, costume designer and expert at installing Topits and other custom work.
Cost: Approximately \$35

April 21-Boris Wild, a French magician renowned for his creativity and original approach to close-up magic.
Cost: \$20
Contact: 410-686-3914

SAM Meeting

Date: March 15 at 7 p.m.
Place: National Press Club, 529 14th Street NW, Washington, D.C.
Theme: You can count on me
Contact: Ray Eycler at (410) 798-0176 ceycler1026@aol.com or Dwight Redman at (301) 927-7717 or dredman@comcast.net.



Magic Collectors Association Convention featuring a flea market, lectures, dealers, tours.

Date: The convention begins March 29 with a flea market and runs through April 1, 2006. (You do not have to attend the convention to go to the flea market or take part in it. Tables are only \$10--a perfect chance to sell stuff you never use.)
Place: Holiday Inn in Rosslyn, VA

Registration fee \$200. Attendees must be members of the MCA. The cost to join is only \$25. Check <http://www.magicposters.com/convention/index.html> for registration information.
Contact: Ken Trombly at ken.trombly@comcast.net or 202-887-5000.

Convention presentations begin 11 a.m. Thursday and continue through Saturday. Speakers include Al Cohen, Richard Hatch, Bill Kalush, Charles Greene, Leo Behnke, Gabe Fujari, Ken Klosterman, Mark Milton, David Solomon, Dean Arnold, Arthur Moses, Richard Flint, Gabe Fajun and Marion Trikosko. Saturday morning is an auction conducted by Mario Carrandi. There will be a dealer's room with more than 20 dealers booked. Saturday night's banquet features a show by the Comedy & Mystery Society (Bob Sheets, Mark Phillips, Alain Nu).

Winter Carnival of Magic sponsored by IBM Ring 58 of Knoxville, TN. Now in its 30th year, the convention starts on Thursday with a special opening show and lecture. Friday features two lectures, a close-up contest, a dealer's room and a stage show in the main auditorium. Saturday features the dealer's room, a stage contest (both junior and senior), more lectures, a close-up show, and an evening show. The evening show, called the "Stars of Magic" features some of the top names in magic and is open to the public.

Dates: March 2-4

Place: Pigeon Forge, TN, at the Country Tonight Theater.

Contact: www.IBMRing58.com or contact Country Tonight Theatre. Dial 1-800-792-4308 or 1-865-453-2003.

The Theory and Art of Magic at Muhlenberg College of Pennsylvania.

This popular program is the first ongoing symposium on the magical arts.
Date: Lectures and shows begin Sept. 5.

Creator: Dr. Lawrence Hass, philosopher and magician, from Muhlenberg College.

Featured presenters include John Carney, Jim Steinmeyer, Eugene Burger, Jamy Ian Swiss, James Hamilton and Margaret Steele.

"The Comedy & Mystery Society" is holding "annual meetings" this year often featuring Bob Sheets, Mark Phillips, Alain Nu and Barry Woods among other magical and sometimes zany performers.

Dates: The series of shows premiered Feb. 1. This season's "annual meetings" will continue with performances March 1, April 12, May 31, July 12 (Wednesday nights), March 17, April 8, May 5, June 23, Aug. 11 (Friday nights) and April 8 (Saturday).
Place: 'The Gaithersburg Arts Barn Theatre, 311 Kent Square Road, Gaithersburg, Md., in the Gaithersburg Kentland's development.

Contact: 301-248-6394

Cost: \$15 for residents and \$18 for nonresidents for all Wednesday performances. Prices vary other times. Tickets can also be purchased online by going to the City of Gaithersburg website at: www.gaithersburgmd.gov/RecXpres. For more information and directions, visit:

<http://www.ci.gaithersburgmd.gov>.

National Press Club annual magic show sponsored by the Society of Professional Magicians (SAM)
Date: April 19 at 7 p.m.

Place: National Press Club, 529 14th Street NW, Washington, D.C.

Cost: Free but advance reservations required.

Contact: Dwight Redman at (301) 927-7717 or dredman@comcast.net.

Deadline for annual dues now

Annual Ring 50 dues of \$15 for 2006 were due in February. If you have not yet paid, contact Treasurer Bob Patterson. Come prepared to pay at our March 1 meeting. Make checks payable to IBM Ring 50. You may send a check to Robert Patterson, 3450 Wainscott Place, Lake Ridge, VA 22192. Don't delay any further.

Copperfield in Baltimore

David Copperfield, who has been on an extensive performance tour of both the United States and Canada, appeared in February at the Hippodrome at France-Merrick Performing Arts Center in Baltimore.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

With our March meeting, we begin a new membership year. Hopefully, you all have paid your dues for the coming year. If you have not yet paid up, why not join us at the March meeting where Bob Patterson will be available to collect the dues.

During the past year, we have seen many new people join our Ring. Many of them have taken an active role in our monthly meetings as performers and teachers. Last month, we voted in three more new members. On behalf of Ring 50, I welcome Chris Biegun, John Cox and Scott McDonald. We also have a number of people who have submitted applications to IBM who are waiting for their acceptance. If you see someone at the meeting who you do not recognize, introduce yourself and make them welcome.

This month, we are having a slightly different kind of lecturer. Ken Trombley has accepted my invitation to visit our chapter and tell us about the upcoming Collector's convention. Ken also has a fascinating slide presentation that he does on historical posters. He made this presentation when I first joined Ring 50. He was well received. Many of our new members have not seen his presentation. Even those of us who have seen it will enjoy hearing his stories again. Ken gave us a brief blurb about his presentation. It appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

In addition to Ken's talk, we will be holding another flea market. This is in preparation for our annual auction that will be the feature of our April meeting. At the flea market, you can offer up your less valuable tricks, books or videotapes. That way the auction won't get bogged down with a lot of items most people will not bid on. Save the good stuff for the April meeting. I am getting ready to move and I know that I have a lot of stuff that I no longer use. I intend to bring such things as an ITR that I never could master, an inexpensive egg bag, and a special marked deck that I cannot use.

Also at the next meeting, we will "Spotlight" anyone who wants to



Don Freedman

demonstrate something new that they are working on. This will give you a chance to try it out on an audience before you do it for a paying customer. The membership will provide you constructive criticism in a non-threatening environment. If you have found some new and innovative way to present an old trick, you are invited to share that with us as well. If you are interested in performing at the March meeting, send me an email and let me know.

As I mentioned in last month's column, we are supporting an effort at George Washington University where they are interested in a "Healing Through Magic" program. At the start of our meeting, Chikki Rao will take a few minutes to introduce herself and tell us about what they have in mind. This is a great opportunity to give something back to the community. At the same time, you can get yourself known to potential customers.

One final note. Reluctantly, the Board of Directors has decided that we are not adequately prepared to put on Magi-Whirl in May. There is strong support for the event. It just takes a lot of planning that we have not yet done. Hopefully, we can hold it during the winter or next spring. This will give us ample time to do all the

work necessary to make Magi-Whirl a success.

We have our schedule for the next several months. As I said, April is the Auction. In May, we will hold our annual Dan Lacey competition for the IBM Ring 50 Magician of the Year. We will also have an election of officers for next year. At the June meeting, we will have the installation of our new officers. As is our tradition, the new officers will perform at that meeting.

Plan on joining us for one or more of these meetings.

Here is hoping to see you all at our next meeting on March 1.

Ring 50 Schedule

<u>March</u>	Lecture
<u>April</u>	Auction
<u>May</u>	Dan Lacey Contest
	New officers elected
<u>June</u>	New officers installed, perform

GW Hospital looks at “Project Magic”

By Jason Goldberg

IBM Ring 50 was recently contacted about a potential opportunity that can help bring magic to the lives of people in need. The primary mission of George Washington University Hospital’s Acute Rehabilitation Unit is to maximize their patients’ potential to restore their functional independence. The program is geared towards helping individuals’ re-establish functional skills and capacities to resume life activities. The Acute Rehabilitation Unit strives to continuously improve its program, communication and serve the needs of its patients. It has been actively pursuing opportunities to enhance and build the program’s development and growth.

The unit’s staff first learned about Magic Therapy after a chance reading of an article in Readers Digest about *Project Magic*, which immediately excited them. As Surabhi (Chikki) Rao, staff occupational therapist, said, “Magic will make a unique and wonderful therapeutic learning tool for our patients. We see *Project Magic* as an excellent fit with our program, as it echoes the ideas in our mission values. We at the Acute Rehab Unit at George Washington University Hospital are looking forward to having magicians become an integral part of our rehabilitation team. We hope to provide care to patients in a fun and fulfilling manner through *Project Magic*.”

The Acute Rehabilitation Unit is a 16-bed unit that provides a variety of rehabilitation services to individuals. The unit addresses physical problems including difficulties with mobility and activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing, and cognitive dysfunctions. Patients stay for about two weeks and are treated for neurological and orthopedic problems. The unit only treats adult patients.

Ms. Rao is interested in starting a magic program for both occupational and recreational therapy tool. Now, we just need your help! Details remain to be worked out, and depend on who is able to volunteer and what their

specific interests are. What is envisioned is a mix of teaching and performance. We may perform for the patients, teach them basic tricks that meet their therapy needs, and work directly with the hospital staff in applying magic therapy with follow-up and advice as needed from local magicians.

Magicians and therapists are both important to patient recovery. Magicians bring the sleight-of-hand and a fun atmosphere; therapists bring understanding of healing and patient needs. For example, the therapist might identify a specific skill a patient needs to learn, and the magician could identify the appropriate trick to teach to address that skill. It is a truly collaborative and rewarding partnership for all involved. Patients will often enjoy practicing a trick repeatedly that develops a specific skill, whereas traditional practice required for healing might be perceived as boring and/or painful. Magic provides a measure of self-control for patients, in an environment where such control is often taken away from them.

Ms. Rao has indicated she would prefer if magicians could volunteer their time in the evenings during the week. We would work with groups of about 8 to 12 at a time. A workshop for hospital staff is also possible. Volunteers would have to register with George Washington University Hospital. As it is usually not advisable to use the same props in a hospital that are used in other settings (because of possible contamination issues, etc.), limited reimbursement for props is possible.

Jason Goldberg has volunteered to lead this effort. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact him at magic_seas@earthlink.net.

There are also two websites that provide information on this valuable effort. David Copperfield’s Project Magic program is described at <http://www.davidcopperfield.com>. The Spencers maintain another program, the Healing of Magic, at <http://www.magictherapy.com>. Both programs are complementary and work together to promote patient recovery as an occupational and recreational therapy tool.



David Copperfield started “Project Magic”

The Great Zucchini profiled in magazine as children's magician

For a dozen years plus, The Great Zucchini— Eric Knaus— has been entertaining young children as a magician and preschool teacher. He performs his hands-on, interactive magic shows for more than 250 groups a year.

He was profiled in late January in a cover story in the Washington Post Sunday magazine that gives the reader an insight into the personality and background of an area magician who “makes big money making little people laugh” according to a subhead beneath an article headlined “The Peekaboo Paradox.”

Written by Gene Weingarten, the lengthy story noted that The Great Zucchini on one weekend performed four 35-minute shows for \$300 each on a Saturday and four more for the same fee on a Sunday.

“Do the math, if you can handle the results. This unmarried, 35-year-old community college dropout makes more than \$100,000 a year, with a two-day workweek,” Weingarten wrote.

“There are dozens of professional children's entertainers in the Washington area, but only one is as successful and intriguing,” he said.

Eric Knaus intuitively understands preschool kids, because he's had a lot of practice, Weingarten observed, pointing out that the Great Zucchini worked at Washington area preschools and day-care centers for more than a decade. During a brief stint as a party host at the Discovery Zone in Rockville, he discovered his ability to entertain as well as baby-sit, the profile said. “He was making \$2 an hour, so tips were vital. And he found that the most substantial tips came when he acted dumb, serving up laughter along with the pizza.”

The profile continued that the children's performer decided to go solo four years ago. “It may have been the best decision he ever made,” it concluded.

“The Great Zucchini's clientele is mostly from affluent neighborhoods — Northwest Washington, Chevy Chase,



The Great Zucchini performs at White House Egg Roll

Bethesda, Potomac, Great Falls, McLean, Arlington. He's been to homes the size of small cathedrals and to parties where he was only one of several attractions, including cotton candy and popcorn machines, lawn-size moon bounces and petting-zoo sheep. Most famously, he did a party at the vice president's residence for a granddaughter of Dick and Lynne Cheney” the profile read.

Weingarten first met the Great Zucchini at a coffee shop in White Flint Mall. “In the beginning, I had almost no clients,” the magician told the writer. “I would sit at a table like this in a place like this, and if a mom would be walking by with her 3-year-old, I would pretend to be talking on my cell phone. I'd say, ‘Yeah, I do children's parties geared for 3-year-olds!’ And a lot of times, the mom would stop, and say . . . ‘You do children's parties?’”

“When he first started, he found out what other birthday party entertainers were charging roughly \$150 per show and upped it by \$25,” the magazine profile pointed out. “That worked; it seemed to give him agency. After a while, his weekends were so crammed with parties — seven or eight, every weekend — he felt overwhelmed. So, applying fundamental principles of economics, he decided to thin his business but not his profits by raising his prices precipitously — from \$175 to \$300. It turns out that the fundamental principles of economics are no match for the fundamental desperation of

suburban parents. He still was doing seven or eight shows a weekend.”

Weingarten observed, “For all his swagger, Eric Knaus is instantly likable and effortlessly charming.” On his Web site, Weingarten pointed out, the Great Zucchini is pictured at the White House Easter Egg Roll.

While the article also paints a darker side of the performer, the story quotes others like Jake Stern, a children's entertainer in the Washington area for 27 years who performs as Broccoli the Clown. “He's got an incredible rapport with the children,” Stern related when asked about The Great Zucchini. “I've known guys in this business who are stiff as a board. To them, it's a job, and they're bitter. They hate what they do, and they can't relate to the children.



Eric Knaus is “instantly likable”

This guy relates amazingly to kids. He understands and enjoys them.”

The Great Zucchini maintains a tattered, loose-leaf appointment book filled with names and dates of his scheduled parties, months and months into the future, Weingarten pointed out. “He keeps no backup — no other notes, nothing on a computer disk, nothing anywhere.”

And, the writer observed, The Great Zucchini likes little kids. “Because they are totally innocent and totally nonjudgmental, but they will say whatever they think, and that’s beautiful,” Eric told his chronicler.

Weingarten concluded with one encounter at a performance by the Great Zucchini:

“A little girl in pink walks right up to him — she’s not from the special-needs class, just an ordinary little girl with a special need of her own, right now — and extends a forefinger, straight up in the air. It’s puzzling. Eric meets her eyes. Something indefinable passes between them, something only they understand, and Eric reaches out, seizes that little finger in his big fist, and gives it a shake. The girl breaks into a grin. Then she hugs the most fabulous person she’s ever known in her whole life, the Great Zucchini.”

Ring 50 trio strolls at Veterans Hospital

Three Ring 50 members recently continued the tradition of entertaining Americans who have served our country by doing strolling magic at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Washington. The trio--Noland Montgomery, Dwight Redman and Bert Udovin --were taking part in a salute to veterans. Others from our group have performed in the last few months under similar cir-cumstances.

If you want to begin receiving this newsletter by E-mail only, please let Editor Jim Flanigan know by emailing him at jflanigan@aol.com.