

MAGI-GRAM

Official Newsletter of IBM Ring 50 -- The National Capital Ring Volume 60 No. 5 May 2006

Dan Lacey Magician of Year Competition Set

May's Ring 50 meeting will feature our annual Dan Lacey Magician of the Year competition open to all members.

If you want to compete begin your planning now. Each magician will be given seven minutes to a maximum of nine minutes for their performance.

Competitors will be judged on such things as performance skills, entertainment and originality. All

performers will need to be paid up members of IBM Ring 50 in order to compete.

The competition honors the memory of the late Dan Lacey, a former Ring 50 president, who inspired members to explore their limits in performing



Dan Lacey

magic. A bequest from his family and his workplace provided a rotating trophy which is awarded to each year's winner.

Potential competitors should contact Ring 50 President Don Freedman immediately. Check the listing of officers below to obtain his contact phone numbers and his email address.



ON THE BLOCK -- Louis Meyer holds up item for bid as Ring 50 President Don Freedman and auctioneers Bill Wells and Dick Christian look on.

Ring 50 "Spring Cleaning" auction a hit

Going, Going, Gone! Sold to the magician in the back row! That phrase

echoed through the room as a coven of conjurers gathered for the Ring 50's "Spring Cleaning" Auction Night in April. This event always draws a crowd and this sale was no exception.

With about 50 people in attendance, there was something for everyone. Two dozen happy successful bidders won the 80 lots in the live auction.

Bidding was cautious until auctioneer Bill Wells demonstrated

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MAY MEETING
Wednesday, May 3, 2006
HOLIDAY INN
IN ALEXANDRIA
2460 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA

6:00 Cocktails
6:45 Dinner
8:00 Meeting

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Of Magicians Ring 50
The National Capital Ring**

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Coming Events

Lecture at Denny & Lee Magic Studio

325 South Marlyn Avenue, Baltimore.
Swiss magician Pavel, who is based in Geneva, will present a brand-new lecture titled "How to Invent a New Trick" offering his personal approach to magical creation.
Date: May 11 at 7 p.m.
Cost: \$20
Contact: 410-686-3914

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. Dr. Lawrence Hass, a philosopher and magician from Muhlenberg College, is coordinating the event. Featured presenters include John Carney, Jim Steinmeyer, Eugene Burger, Jamy Ian Swiss, James Hamilton and Margaret Steele.

SAM Lecture featuring Bill Goldman

Bill Goldman, who describes himself as a magician and "infotainer," will be the guest lecturer at a monthly meeting of Larry West Assembly No. 23 of the Society of American Magicians. For more than two decades he has been performing at trade shows and impressing guests at sales meeting and hospitality suites. His rare blend of comedy and magic has entertained audiences around the world.



Bill Goldman

Date: May 17 at 7 p.m.
Place: National Press Club, 529 14th Street NW, Washington, DC.
Contact: Ray Eyler at 410/798-0176 ceyler1026@aol.com or Dwight Redman at telephone 301/927-7717 dredman@comcast.net.



"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 dubbed "annual meetings" will continue with performances May 31 and July 12 (Wednesday nights) as well as May 5, June 23 and Aug. 11 (Friday nights).
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>.

Ring 50 "Spring Cleaning" auction a hit

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the entertainment value of the Sponge Sandwich. Then the bidding took off.

Auctioneer Dick Christian hawked item after item from the podium exhorting the audience to ever-higher prices by stressing the positive qualities of the effects and equipment. The items stimulated spirited bidding wars.

Lucky bidders really got some fine magical equipment. Many of the best items included a Card Rooster effect, a set of large linking rings, the ever popular Spikes Thru the Arm illusion and a chair levitation which was snapped up by Reggie Rice. John Roberts was intrigued by Rocky the Raccoon that he eventually pocketed.

The Rice Bowls generated spirited bidding and Mike Taggart came out the winner. Run Rabbit Run ran the bidding upwards with Gil Jackson getting the item. Louis Meyer demonstrated the Dis-Jointed Arm to get the bidding started on this piece of magical equipment. Jim Nance was happy to see his Production Can with three silks get lots of bids bringing in three times more than he expected.

The evening also included a silent auction. When the time ran out and the last pencil was down, 58 different items in the silent auction had disappeared. This event included numerous types of magical items, books, magazines and tapes.

—Bob Patterson

Between Magi-Gram issues, you can get the latest news on events and performers at the official Ring 50 site <http://fibmring50.homestead.com/>.



CLOWNING IT UP!--Ring 50 member Mauny Murray, left, who has been living in Australia for nine months, clowns it up with Jerry Foster during a visit back to the U.S. Mauny and his wife were continuing their journey with a trip to Turkey and Israel before moving to Ventura Calif., later this summer.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Well, another month has past. Again, we have had a very successful meeting that was well attended. There were more than 50 people in attendance for our lively annual auction. I was amazed by the array of things that were offered. Financially, the Ring did very well. Almost \$1,300 worth of merchandise was sold. Another \$450 worth of items were bought in a silent auction. Overall, the Ring netted \$180.43 from the 10 percent seller's fees.

Speaking as an individual, I had a chance to sell some things I no longer find useful. Also, I had an opportunity to pick up things at real bargain prices that I will use. Even those people who were mostly observers (or priced out of the buying opportunity) found the auction very entertaining. As usual, our auctioneers Dick Christian and Bill Wells did an outstanding job of moving things along. I never thought we would get through the number of sales items we had for the auction. Dick and Bill did it while using their extensive knowledge of magic to make the auction enlightening and entertaining.

A number of members came up to me after the auction and told me how pleased they were with the way we conducted the sale. The idea of having bid numbers and lot numbers made the process work very well. Also, settling up at the end worked out well. Our members liked the idea that we had all of their purchases laid out in one spot that we could quickly get to. Next year, we will provide boxes and bags to put the items in for ease in taking purchases home. Also, we will try to speed up the pay process next year by having several cashiers.

I want to thank everyone who made the auction such a success. On behalf of Ring 50, I want to especially thank Dick and Bill for being our auctioneers. Also, thanks to Bob Patterson. He is the one who came up with our procedures and designed the forms that we used. In addition, he did a wonderful job of keeping account of what everyone owed and was owed. I want to thank Louis Meyer for his help at the end in distributing the purchases to



Don Freedman

our successful bidders. To all of you who bought and sold the wonderful collection of things that we had to offer, thank you for your enthusiastic participation.

Moving on to the agenda for the May meeting. The first order of business will be the election of officers. At the April meeting, the nominating committee placed the following individuals names into nomination:

President: Dwight Redman

Vice President: Mike Taggart

Secretary: Bob Fay

Treasurer: Bob Patterson

Sergeant-At-Arms: Geoff Weber

Director-At-Large: Glenn Gary

Director-At-Large: James Munton

If there are any individuals who wish to run for one of the above offices, we will accept additional nominations from the floor at that meeting. After the nominations are closed, we will have a vote electing our new officers for the coming year.

The remaining meeting time will be devoted to the annual Dan Lacey Competition for the IBM Ring 50 Magician of the Year. We will conduct this competition pretty much as we have in the past. Each contestant will receive detailed procedures when he or she signs up for the contest. In general, the rules are as follows:

1. Any IBM Ring 50 members whose dues are paid up for the current year (February 2006-January 2007) may compete.
2. A three-person panel of judges designated by the President will determine the winner.
3. The judges will evaluate each performer using the following evaluation factors:
 - a. Presentation
 - b. Entertainment
 - c. Proficiency in performing the effect
 - d. Originality (effect or presentation)
4. Each contestant will have 7-9 minutes in which to perform (an increase from last year's competition). However, anyone going over 9 minutes will be penalized and may be disqualified from the competition.

If you wish to compete, please let me know by Friday, April 28th. This will ensure that you have a place in the competition. If you don't pre-register, you may still be allowed to compete but that will depend on the number of people already registered for the competition.

Finally, I wish to welcome Marc Carrion, Ron Cote and Brian McDaniel as our newest members of IBM Ring 50. Marc and Ron have been at our meetings the last several months while waiting for their membership in IBM to become effective. Brian just moved here from San Diego where he was already an IBM member and involved in the local Ring.

We look forward to all of our new members becoming active participants in our Ring. It is important to continue to serve our existing members. However, for any organization to remain viable, there must be a steady influx of new people. These people bring the fresh ideas and enthusiasm to the organization that will allow it to continue to thrive.

Here is hoping to see you all at our next meeting on May 3rd.

Don

Presto! A School for Magic Creates Hope Out of Thin Air

By MICHAEL WINES
New York Times

KHAYELITSHA, South Africa — Life is hard for the 750,000 or so people crammed into this shantytown, one of South Africa's largest and toughest. In the last census, in 2001, 6 in 10 adults here said they had no steady income. What little money they have tends to vanish quickly, spent on essentials or stolen in the break-ins and robberies that are endemic here.

The way Phumile Dyasi makes money vanish is rather less common.

"I want to show you this coin," he said one recent afternoon, standing in the tiny parlor of his family's plank-and-tar paper shack. He held out a copper disc. "Now, blow on it," he said. A visitor obliged, and the coin disappeared. Only Phumile's sly grin remained.

For six years, 16-year-old Phumile has studied prestidigitation at College of Magic in Cape Town, a sort of kindergarten-to-baccalaureate institution for aspiring conjurers. Making coins disappear is the least of the tricks he has picked up.

From a shy 10-year-old who knew only Xhosa, South Africa's principal indigenous tongue, Phumile has grown to speak fluent English and handle audiences with aplomb. In 2004, he was chosen the best young magician in Western Cape Province. In March 2005, he was in Las Vegas, honing his skills with some of the world's top magicians. He hopes to make entertainment a lifelong career.

"When he performs, he's shocking," said Guy van der Walt, a onetime College of Magic student who now helps pay Phumile's tuition. "A lot of being a success in life, in many ways, is being able to have that self-confidence and that attitude. It's something that, every time he performs, he develops more and more."

The College of Magic will teach anyone the art of illusion — and indeed, it has about 90 paying customers this year. But the school's heart lies with impoverished children from townships and squatter camps like Langa and Khayelitsha, for whom



Jeffrey Barbee for the New York Times

LEVITATION--*Yanga Mentyisi, 9, performs a levitation on the beach at Table Bay, South Africa.*

a trip to its Victorian headquarters, with its performance stage and blood-red walls plastered with magic-show posters, is every week's highlight.

About 60 such young people are students this year. Their fees are wholly or partly paid by donors like Mr. van der Walt, now a 25-year-old animator for a London advertising agency, or by corporate sponsors.

"We have a special focus on disadvantaged communities," said David Gore, the college's 45-year-old director and founder. "We've never turned a student away. If young people wanted to study and were enthusiastic enough, we'd find a way to educate them."

Mr. Gore started the college in 1980, at age 19, while performing magic at children's parties to pay his university tuition. Although it was technically illegal under South Africa's apartheid laws at the time, the college's first class of 34 students was multiracial — something Mr. Gore calls an eye-opener for blacks and whites who had never before worked together.

Magic, he says, has proved a leveler of the racial playing field because its skills are not just unrelated to skin color, but are displayed onstage, where neither success nor failure can be explained away.

Mr. Gore entered law school and was drafted into the military. But by the time his hitch ended in 1985, he had decided that his career lay in magic, not the courts. The school began to expand its work with disadvantaged children, helped by corporate grants and, later, by the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

The rationale was that magic would inspire young people who could use a push on the road to a better life. "We were seeing at the time the incredible benefits of magic training," he said. "We weren't just teaching tricks. The kids were developing a myriad of life skills."

That, of course, is the mantra of every group looking for charitable support. Yet it may not be so far-fetched: among other things, its proponents say, magic teaches patience, discipline and communication skills. Much of magic's appeal, from membership in a select society to the rapt attention of crowds, is a tonic for young people with little acquaintance with success.

"They'll start off with little tricks, by rote, showing them to the class over and over," Mr. Gore said. "And then they'll have that true moment, the one when they really do fool their mom and dad. They know it — that they can do it — and it really builds their self-esteem."

The classes are taught by volunteers — mostly graduates of the college, but also schoolteachers, entertainers and others. Three years of Saturday-morning courses earn a junior diploma, though would-be entertainers can add classes in juggling, miming and other skills. Another three years of school, with a full-time schedule, concludes with a senior diploma and the status of an accomplished magician. Advocates say the sheer length of that program, as opposed to the transient nature of many do-good efforts, only reinforces its benefits. Some of those benefits are two-edged. Young magicians can literally become neighborhood role models, but they can also become targets.

A skilled student can earn as much as \$85 for a shopping-center magic performance. One student who spent his earnings on clothes "had everything

stolen from him," Mr. Gore said. "He ran home in his underpants." Three students have been stabbed in robberies, one fatally.

For others, however, the program is a savior. Phumile's sponsor, Mr. van der Walt, said that he grew up in privilege but had a deeply troubled youth. The college "gave me an amazing, amazing amount of confidence, and put me on the right track," he said. "It was my saving grace — it sounds corny, but it really was."

For a few, the college proves a gateway into an otherwise unattainable world.

Phumile, who lives near Khayelitsha's main shopping district, has one of the area's more fortunate families; his father, a hauler, owns a car. Yet he shares one of the two bedrooms, barely big enough for a handmade bunk bed, with his sister and two brothers, and the house has neither running water nor indoor plumbing.

This year, Phumile failed to place in a national magic competition in Johannesburg. But one of the lessons he has learned is how to rebound from failure. He will be back next year, he said.

"I like the definition of magic," Phumile said. "It is to make the impossible to be possible."

Published March 27, 2006

Ex Ring 50 member George Blackburn dies in San Antonio

George Blackburn Jr., a former member of Ring 50 who was a Merlin Excalibur of the International Brotherhood of Magicians, died March 31 in San Antonio, Texas. He was 86.

Al Cohen, a longtime magic dealer who now is a columnist for Genii magazine, recalled Blackburn.

"George was a wonderful person," Al said. "When he was a colonel in the Marine Corps stationed in Washington for several years, we became very good friends. He always had a smile on his face and lit up everyone he met. He was a true gentleman. He usually stopped in the shop every week or two and we'd talk magic."

Blackburn was active in Ring 50 and IBM during the years he was here and was always ready to perform. He was also a member of the Washington Wizards and The Virginia Magic Society (VMS).

Blackburn served as an officer with the Marines in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. During World War II he led a company of Marine Raiders in the Fiji Islands. He received a law degree and served as a lawyer and judge advocate before retiring in 1969 as full colonel.

He moved to San Antonio in 1989 and became a member of Ring 18 of the IBM and Assembly 52 of the Society of American Magicians. He served as president of both clubs during his membership. In 1998 he served as president of the Texas Association of Magicians (TAOM).

Blackburn regularly attended the Columbus Magi Fest convention where he loved to rekindle old friendships. He was preceded in death by his first wife Marjorie in 1994. He remarried in 1996 and is survived by his wife Betty Vaughn of San Antonio; his children Elaine Drake of California, George Blackburn III of North Carolina, Julia Sizer of Texas and numerous grandchildren.