

MAGI-GRAM

Official Newsletter of IBM Ring 50 -- The National Capital Ring Volume 59 No. 9 September 2005

Children's magic spun at August meeting

Laurie Curry was the emcee for the Ring 50 meeting in August when a half dozen magicians performed children's magic for a receptive audience.

Former Ring 50 President John Roberts introduced his bunny buddy Waldo to offer his delightful rabbit in a hat routine. Larry Lipman, another former Ring 50 president, appeared as "Lorenzo the Great" charming several young assistants who came forward for his magic.

Noland Montgomery, who is becoming a widely known children's magician in the region, offered his variation of the Miser's Dream among other effects.

Eric Henning, still another former Ring 50 president, opened his portion of the night's entertainment with his popular head magnification illusion. He offered a nice bit with a blank silk turning into a chosen card. He also did his bit with his needle through a balloon.

Keith Pass put on a doctor's lab coat and extracted some magic potion from

IBM president appeals for magic mentoring

The International Brotherhood of Magicians, founded in 1922, is the world's largest and most prestigious organization for professional and amateur magicians.

Roger Miller, the IBM's newly elected international president, is now posing the question of how does magic perpetuate itself? "Can it survive with only books and magazines and videos and DVDs and the Internet?" the Kansas magician asks.

"After attending our convention in Reno, I am more convinced than ever that magic needs the 'personal touch'," Miller said. "I saw groups sharing magic constantly.

"I hope that you, as members of this organization called The International



Photo by Larry Lipman

FURRY FRIEND--John Roberts talks to a furry friend while performing at a Ring 50 children's magic night in August.

the body of a young audience member.

Hugh Turley, one of the Washington area's premier performers of children's magic, showed everyone a rare Quacky the Duck apparatus. He also used his version of a Professor's Nightmare to deliver a traffic safety lesson. He concluded with a sword through the neck illusion.

Brotherhood of Magicians, will help mentor someone and pass on to the next generation this exciting hobby called Magic," he said.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Wednesday, Sept. 7, 2005

HOLIDAY INN
IN ALEXANDRIA

2460 Eisenhower Avenue
Alexandria, VA

6:00 Cocktails

6:45 Dinner

8:00 Meeting

Back to School Teach-In Planned

A Banquet and Cabaret (Stand-up) Magic Teach-In is planned for the September meeting of Ring 50. If you perform this sort of magic regularly and would like to teach, contact President Don Freedman.

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International Brotherhood Of Magicians Ring 50 The National Capital Ring

President

Don Freedman
(703) 742-9078 (Home)
(703) 633-8158 (Work)
dfreedman16@yahoo.com

Vice President

Dwight Redman
(301) 927-7717
dredman1@comcast.net

Secretary

Bob Fay
Phone (unavailable)
E-mail address (unavailable)

Treasurer

Rucj Uffelman
(703) 938-6184
rucj@erols.com

Sergeant-of-Arms

Geoffery Weber
(703) 501-2333
gweber@gmail.com

Magi-Gram Editor

Jim Flanigan
(202) 554-3775
magiwhirl@aol.com

Coming Events

Magicians Alliance of the Eastern States (MAES) 2005 Convention

Dates: Sept. 8-10, 2005

Place: Hilton in Cherry Hill, NJ.

Headliners: David Williamson, General Grant, Dean Gunnarson, Kohl & Company, Howie Schwarzman and others.

Contact: www.maesonline.org

Dave Shepherd Close-up Magic

Dates: Wednesdays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Place: Mama's Italian Restaurant, 9715 Lee Highway, Fairfax, Va.

Contact: 703-385-2646 or 703-623-3952.

Web site: www.daveshepmagic.com

SAM Meeting

Date: Sept. 21 at 7 p.m.

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

Theme: Night of the Chameleons (Color Changes)

Contact: Ray Eyler at (410) 798-0176
ceyler1026@aol.com

Bob Little's Super Sunday Convention

Date: Nov. 20 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Place: Holiday Inn, 3499 Street Road, Bensalm, PA. Phone: 215-638-1500

Cost: \$30

Contact: Bob Little Guaranteed Magic, 27 Bright Road, Hatboro, PA 19040. Call 215-672-3344.

Mathemagics at Smithsonian Institution featuring mathematician and magician Arthur Benjamin.

Dr. Benjamin, a professor of mathematics at Harvey Mudd College, has appeared at the Magic Castle in Hollywood and other venues.

Date: Oct. 29 from 1 to 3 p.m.

Place: Ripley Center, Smithsonian

Cost: Smithsonian members, \$12;

senior members, \$11; general

admission, \$15. Students, ages 10 and above, \$10.

Contact: Call 202-357-3030 Monday through Friday to register.



CRAZY GUYS--From top to bottom, Alain Nu, Mark Phillips and Bob Sheets.

Wednesday Wizardry at Gaithersburg Arts Barn

Who: Now in its third season, this family friendly magic show suitable for ages 10 and up continues on most Wednesday nights through November. It stars Alain Nu, Mark Phillips and Bob Sheets. In addition to Nu, Sheets, Phillips and his partner Karen Beriss, other top magicians will make guest appearances.

Where: The Gaithersburg Arts Barn at 311 Kent Square Road in Gaithersburg, MD.

When: Wednesday night performances are scheduled for Sept. 14, 21 and 28; Oct. 5, 19 and 26; and Nov. 9 and 16.

Cost: Tickets are \$15 for residents and \$18 for nonresidents for Wednesday performances. For information and tickets please call 301-258-6394. Tickets can also be purchased online at

www.gaithersburgmd.gov/RecXpress.

Contact: For more information and directions, visit the Arts Barn website at www.gaithersburgmd.gov/artsbarn.

Magic Collectors Association Convention

Date: Spring 2006

Place: Rosslyn at the Marriot Hotel.

Ring 50 Schedule

2005

September 7
**Banquet/Cabaret
Magic Teach-In**

October 5
Spooky Magic

November 2
Lecture TBA

December 7
Holiday Magic

2006

January 4

TBA

February 1

What's New At Barry's

March 1

Lecture TBA

April 5

Auction

May 3

Dan Lacey Contest

New officers elected

Saturday, May 20 (Tent.)

MAGI-WHIRL

June 7

**New officers installed,
perform**

Switch to email delivery today

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

Washington, D.C.'s Spy Magician

If there is one thing any aspiring magician ought to hear and put into practice it is to be original. Originality can come in many forms, but one of the most important is in terms of the character one portrays when performing. Here is a success story based on just that approach. Meet...

James Munton a.k.a. James Wand!

By Jim Flanigan

"The name's Wand. James Wand." He introduces himself coolly in true spy fashion, but the only secrets magician James Munton is keeping are those behind the tricks he performs as his alter ego in the James Wand Secret Agent Magic Show.

James, who started doing magic as a hobby in the streets of London as a child, has been a big fan of spy films and novels for years. After moving to Washington, D.C. in 1997, he befriended professional magician Bradley Fields, who told him that to be successful, an aspiring wizard needed to create a distinctive and unique character.

"The name came to me immediately—James Wand," recalls the personable performer, who is often mistaken for the movie actor and fellow Londoner Hugh Grant.



James Munton

James honed his skills as a close-up and sleight-of-hand artist and began a steady stream of restaurant work. At the same time, he set about assembling a birthday party show featuring James Wand. As he perused standard birthday effects, he looked for items that would fit his spy theme.

James believes that it was important to create a fun and interesting storyline, rather than have the show consist of series of unrelated tricks. Eventually, he created a series of magical adventures featuring James Wand and his evil enemy, Dr. No-No. The format was such a hit that Washington Families magazine named him the area's best kid's entertainer.

James is pleased, but not surprised, at the success of the show. "Espionage and magic are a natural fit," he says. He further proved this point by performing at the International Spy Museum. To prepare for the shows, he met with the museum's leadership, all former operatives at the CIA and discovered that magic is a popular hobby among spies. As he retells it, "We discussed the similarities between magic and spy trade-craft. Both use misdirection, which is the act of drawing attention away from your actions by diverting the observer's attention. It was fascinating to hear about how some of the techniques we magicians employ regularly were used in dangerous, real-life situations." The shows quickly sold out.

James promotes his act by focusing on his specialty as a spy magician much the same as a surgeon differentiates himself from a general practitioner. He also wasn't shy about asking other area performers how much they were charging for their performances. James adopted some other rules to guarantee success. He followed the adage of "pack small, play big" in going out on shows. It meant leaving out some larger tricks, but it streamlined his engagements. He chose to forego live animals realizing he also wouldn't have to worry about the mess.

"To be a success has less to do with tricks than enjoying yourself as your character," he philosophizes.

While the birthday show continues to be popular, James has diversified. He expanded the spy magic show to include an educational theme and now presents 40 to 50 school shows a year up and down the Eastern Seaboard. He also performs at corporate events, company picnics, country clubs, library



James Wand character

programs and scout groups. Living in the Washington metropolitan area has its unique benefits. James has twice performed at the White House and provided entertainment for the U.S. Secret Service's annual holiday party at the home of Vice President Dick Cheney.

James remains active in the local magic community. He served as president of The National Capital Ring, IBM Ring 50 in Washington. He is working on a lecture for magic clubs and has a few products he plans to release in the next few months.

Living in the nation's capital has also given James a special appreciation for his adopted homeland. Of the many magical experiences he has enjoyed since arriving in the United States, one of the standout moments was his naturalization ceremony to become a U.S. citizen late last year. "It happened just in time for me to celebrate Thanksgiving as an American," he recalls. "I truly have a lot to be thankful for."

**Reprinted from The Linking Ring
Volume 85 Number 8 August 2005**



SHOW EMCEE--Laurie Curry, who entertained young members of the audience with her special magic, served as the show's host.

Children's Performers Wow Crowd

Story and photos
by Larry Lipman



IT HAS TO WORK!--Hugh Turley demonstrates the proper way to shove a sword through someone's neck with the help of a Boy Scout from South Dakota. As Turley said, if it didn't work, the volunteer would be the first to know.



LORENZO THE GREAT--Larry Lipman assumed his stage name to bring smiles to young helpers like this one.



COIN MAGIC--Noland Montgomery finds a missing coin in a most unusual place with the help of a young assistant.



PIERCING EFFECT--Eric Henning pierced an inflated balloon with long needle after hypnotizing it.

Rocky and Waldo, after a bit of naughty business, found the cards; a balloon and a Boy Scout were harmlessly impaled; and kids produced silver dollars and a magic potion from their elbows. Such were the highlights of Ring 50's August meeting: Kids Night.

Led by and closed by emcee **Laurie Curry**, six other Ring 50 magicians delighted a large audience which included about two dozen youngsters ranging in age from just above toddlers to high school Boy Scouts camped out at the Alexandria Holiday Inn.

Larry "Lorenzo the Great" Lipman got the magic going by producing a solid bubble, but then had a little trouble locating the bloom of his magic flower until helped with the magic word by the audience. With the aid of a volunteer and a series of malfunctioning magic wands, a mouth coil and a giant tooth, Lorenzo then produced a giant wand and a wizard's hat. Another volunteer helped Lorenzo make a magic potion worthy of a certain school of witchcraft and wizardry which, with a flash, produced Rocky. Rocky did his stuff including counting, rolling over and impersonations before – after a few refusals – finding the volunteer's missing card.

John Roberts – the "real" John Roberts, not that guy nominated for the U.S. Supreme Court – displayed a couple of residents of Grand Rabbits, Mich., who found it amusing to change colors as they changed houses. The black one showed up in the white house and the white one showed up in the black house. The audience roared for John to turn them around, and after a bit of by-play he said he would but the audience wouldn't like it. Of course, when they turned out to be completely different colors altogether – red and yellow – the audience roared even more. Next John and Waldo, his amusing pet rabbit in a hat, tried to find a missing card. Waldo pulled out a carrot and a banana and practically every card in the deck before finally finding the right card. But success at last.

Noland Montgomery produced his pet thimble "Thom" who continuously showed up on Noland's finger after clearly being removed and put in Noland's pocket. Finally an exasperated Noland thought he'd gotten rid of Thom only to find four thimbles on his hand. Helped by a

volunteer who professed a love for money, Noland then produced a flurry of silver dollars from all sorts of unlikely places on his and her body in a slick miser's dream.

That was followed by a Coins Across routine in which coins completely disappeared from a cloth-covered glass and showed up in a handkerchief held on a stick by the assistant. But wait, one was missing. After a bit of by-play, Noland convinced his assistant – a "yes girl" – that she was hiding the missing silver dollar up her nose. She said "no" but then Noland held her nose and produced the final coin. The girl's jaw dropped a foot and her eyes bulged in surprise. What a moment.

Eric Henning reprised a portion of his Magi-Whirl performance by "growing" his head. Then Eric and a volunteer placed a silk with the picture of a blank card into an empty card box. With the help of a second volunteer and a bit of by-play, Eric's volunteer removed the silk to show that it now had a picture of the missing card.

Then Eric hypnotized a balloon, putting it to sleep. That was necessary, he said, so the balloon wouldn't feel anything when pierced by a giant sewing needle. While the balloon was asleep, Eric impaled it on the needle, warning the audience not to applaud. After the balloon had been completely pierced, the audience applauded and the balloon woke up and popped! Kindly, Eric then shrunk his head.

Keith Pass got a volunteer (Michael Curry) to hold a newspaper rolled into a funnel shape and poured a magic potion into the funnel. But when Keith returned from his table, the potion had disappeared entirely from the newspaper.

Yikes! Maybe the potion had gotten into Michael's body. It has to be removed quickly! Dressing another volunteer in a nurse's smock and donning a doctor's lab coat, Keith then proceeded to extract the missing magic potion from Michael's elbow – literally milking his elbow until the entire potion had been removed.

Hugh Turley demonstrated how balloons have a mind of their own until one of them produced Quacky the Duck. Then Hugh taught a lesson dealing with three ropes named "Stop," "Look," and "Listen." Although the ropes appeared to be different lengths, Hugh said they were all equally



QUICK CARE—Keith Pass performed an "emergency operation" on Michael Curry.

important when crossing a street – and suddenly all three ropes became the same length. Hugh said the three skills should be thought of as one, and suddenly the three ropes became one rope.

Next, with the help of a visiting Boy Scout from South Dakota in town for the Boy Scout Jamboree, Hugh demonstrated how his sharp sword could puncture an unsuspecting balloon held in a wooden frame. (It was a tough night to be a balloon.) But when Hugh looked for another balloon, he found that the only one left was too thin to stay in the frame. With no other suitable balloons at hand, Hugh volunteered the Boy Scout to demonstrate that a sword in the right hands could pass through someone's neck. He later made a balloon sword and dubbed the scout "Sir Loin of Beef."

Emcee Laurie placed a bunch of silks in a cloth bag and then had a volunteer help by waving the magic wand – wait a minute, now there are two wands. As I said, had a volunteer help by waving – wait a minute, now there are three wands. What's going on here? Had the volunteer help by waving the – wait a second! Now there are four wands! After six wands appeared, and Laurie had called up half the kids in the audience and given them wands to use, the silks changed into one huge silk that read: Thank You — even when held backwards and upside down.

Wild applause greeted the performers who were showered with money, hotel room keys and lacy underwear from adoring fans. Oh, wait a minute; that was a Rolling Stones concert. Never mind.



MAGIC CAMP--Ring 50 magician Jerry Foster, lower right, conducted a four-day magic camp for 13 youngsters this summer at Locust Shade Park in Virginia. It culminated with a show for family and friends. Here he is showing his charges how to make paper roses.

Ring 50 members invited to join Kidabra International group

Ring 50 members Larry Lipman and Noland Montgomery became charter members of the newly formed Kidabra International, the association of family and kidshow performers, during the recent Kidabra Conference held in Gatlinburg, Tenn.

As the name implies, the new association is dedicated to those performers, including magicians, clowns, face-painters and story tellers, who specialize in children's entertainment.

Ring 50 members interested in joining the new group, which is attempting to form a Washington area chapter, should contact Larry or Noland.

Gatlinburg, which is situated in the foothills of the Smokey Mountains on the eastern border of Tennessee, is just a ways down the road from Pigeon Forge, the birthplace of Dolly Parton

and now noted for Dollywood. Kidabra, now in its 14th year, was

started by Mark and Tami Daniel, Steve Kissell and Lou Page.



Larry Lipman, left, and Noland Montgomery at Kidabra

Abracadabra, and then your money disappears

Magician Holds No Ordinary Yard Sale

By Peter Carlson

Washington Post Staff Writer

Ring 50 member Wayne Alan held a yard sale at his suburban house in Riva, Md., recently, hoping to get rid of stuff that was cluttering up the place — a levitation machine, two tables designed for sawing ladies in half, a box used to make rabbits disappear, and, of course, some body parts.

“If anybody wants a body part,” Alan announced to the shoppers, “we have these mannequin pieces here.”

He smiled. “They do cost an arm and a leg.”

Alan, 54, is a professional magician. He has been working theaters, conventions and trade shows for more than 30 years. And he has accumulated a lot of tricks — or, as he prefers to call them, “illusions.”

Some people lose their illusions. Alan decided to sell his, or at least the ones he no longer needs. So he organized this yard sale and — to ensure that no trade secrets would leak out — admitted only official card-carrying magicians.

About two dozen magicians appeared, from as far away as Norfolk and New Jersey, shelling out \$10 to ponder Alan’s illusions.

“This is a sword levitation,” said Jack Julius, 44, a magician from Annapolis. He was squatting on the grass, checking out a device containing three long, curved swords. “You take the girl and you lay her down on top of the swords. You remove two swords and the third is still sticking in her neck.”

“That sounds like it could be dangerous,” said Julius’s wife, Tanya, 34. She looked a tad worried, which wasn’t surprising, considering that she would be the “girl” lying on the swords if Julius bought the illusion, which was priced at \$600.

“You just have to stay straight and be hypnotized,” Julius said. “It’s like acupuncture. It’s like you’re lying on a bed of nails, except it’s three swords.”

He looked very calm about the whole idea. She did not.



Susan Biddle — The Washington Post
SLICING HER UP--Tanya Butchick watches Wayne Alan “cut” Morgan Cully in sections

A few feet away, Louis Hofheimer peered into a red steamer trunk.

“This is a nice box,” said Hofheimer, 43, a magician/security consultant from Alexandria. “How much does he want for this?”

“Eleven hundred dollars,” said Dan Miller, 61, another Alexandria magician.

“That’s a lot for a box,” said Hofheimer.

But this was no ordinary box. It was the “Tip-Over Trunk,” a magical box that makes people appear — or disappear.

“You show it to the audience and they see it’s empty,” Hofheimer said. “Then you close it and you padlock it and when you open it back up, there’s a lady inside. It’s a great illusion.”

Hofheimer, who bills himself as “Captain Token, the Magician,” wanted the trunk. But he didn’t want to pay \$1,100.

“That’s a lot of money for a used box,” he told Alan.

“If you wanted a new one, you’d pay \$5,000,” Alan said. “I’ll give it to you for \$1,000.”

“Can I buy it for \$900?” Hofheimer asked.

“It’s yours,” Alan said. “You’ve got yourself an illusion.”

Alan shook Hofheimer’s hand. Then he stepped over to the Zig-Zag box — a red wooden box about the size of a telephone booth — and announced that he was about to perform a feat of magic.

“Morgan, would you step inside please?” he said.

Morgan Cully, a 16-year-old girl from across the street, stepped into the Zig-Zag box. She stuck her smiling face out of one hole, her fingers and toes out of other holes.

Alan picked up a wide silver blade and slid it into a slot in the box, about chest high. It got stuck. “It probably needs a new guide in there,” Alan said.

He pushed a little harder. The blade slid in.

“There’s blood dripping out of the bottom,” Hofheimer yelled. (He was only kidding.)

Alan slipped another blade into the box around Cully’s abdomen.

“Is her heart still beating?” Hofheimer yelled.

Alan ignored the heckling. He grabbed the middle of the Zig-Zag box — the part containing Cully’s belly — and shoved it a few feet to the side, leaving a frightening gap between Cully’s face and Cully’s feet.

“Tah-DAH!” Alan said. He puts the box back together Cully stepped out, bloodless, smiling and still in one piece. Amazing!

Jack Julius was impressed. He had already bought the sword illusion. Now he was thinking about buying this one, too.

“I’m debating the Zig-Zag,” he told Alan.

“Jack, you need the Zig-Zag,” Alan said. “The Zig-Zag is gonna really put you in the big time. It’s a strong illusion. The illusion I used to win the World Championship of Magic is based on that.”

Alan frequently claims to be America’s only world magic champion — and he’s not too shy to mention that, especially when he’s trying to sell a used Zig-Zag box for \$1,300.

“I just think the Zig-Zag is a great illusion,” he told Julius.

“When you do it,” Julius asked, “do you have one girl come out or two?”

Alan smiled. “If we tell you,” he said, “then we’d have to kill you.”

Julius laughed. He also bought the Zig-Zag.

Apparently Alan’s magic still works. He can make people’s money disappear.

“Break a leg,” Alan said as Julius left. “And thanks for coming.”

Between Magi-Gram issues, you can get the latest news on events and restaurant performers at the Ring 50 Web site www.IBMRing50.org.

An essay on vanishes vs. productions

By Denny Haney

Denny and Lee Magic Studio

I received an interesting email from one of my customers who wanted to make a few things vanish. He wanted some suggestions. He was thinking of using a Square Circle Production Box in reverse. He would drop the items into the tube and then go through the motions of showing the tube and box empty to cause the vanish. I recommended using a "Flip Over Box" for the vanish rather than the "Square Circle."

This brings up a very interesting discussion concerning "vanishes versus productions" and I thought that this would be a nice little article to publish for all of my newsletter subscribers.

A good vanish is much more difficult to pull off than a good production. It's all psychology. We must understand how the audience's mind works as we perform various effects.

Let's study the effect of a production: If you were to come on stage, pick something up and show it empty, the audience does not know what to expect. They are not looking for anything because they don't really know what is going to happen next. All of a sudden you start producing things from this item that you just showed empty. They wonder where it all came from since they just saw you show it empty. The key here is that the mind really can't "backtrack" and remember exactly HOW the tube or box was shown empty. The relationship between the "showing" and the "production" cannot be compared with each other at the same time. The "showing empty" process is long over before the production begins. As more and more items are produced, the audience begins to applaud and appreciate the effect. They never had a chance to look for places to hide things as you were showing the prop empty. They didn't look for hiding places because they didn't know what was going to happen in the first place. They are caught off guard and are surprised.

Now let's look at the effect of a vanish: You place an object inside of a

box and then show that box empty. The object has vanished, or has it???? From the moment the audience no longer sees the object, they begin looking for where it could be. All of a sudden this thick table, double walled box, mirror box, or whatever principle you are using is instantly noticed by a spectator. The principle you use may be fine for a production but as a vanish it is not effective. The audience assumes that the object is still there and begins looking for how you are hiding it.

I hope you can see the difference in these two effects. In a production, you are using the "principle" of showing something empty FIRST. The effect of the production is SECOND. In a vanish, the effect of the vanish happens FIRST and then the "principle" of showing something empty comes SECOND. This can be a deadly blow to your performance. The audience now has the time to figure out where the object went. So how do we overcome this problem??

Some of the greatest vanishes ever done are vanishes wherein the object being vanished is long gone before the audience even suspects that it has left. When you cause the object to vanish, you are left clean because there really is nothing there. They can't see where it could be hiding.

Take a look at Harry Blackstone Junior as an example of how this theory works in real life performance. Harry had a wonderful routine that he called "Magic for America." It was a tremendous production of flowers and silks from various items and it literally filled the stage. At one point he produced two large six foot silks and two assistants on each side of the stage held these silks stretched out for display. At the end of the routine, Harry pulled one of the silks away and there was a live donkey!! The other silk was pulled away and there was a live elephant!! This brought gasps from the audience. They did not expect it and therefore no one was looking for a place for an elephant or donkey to hide. How could they look for a hiding place when they didn't know that an



Denny Haney with pet pig

elephant and donkey were hiding in the first place? So how was it done??? As the assistants held these outstretched six foot silks between them, a backstage assistant walked a donkey on stage and took his place behind one of the silks. Another assistant did the same with the elephant on the other side of the stage. Harry was standing center stage producing silks or flowers from some other production device holding the attention of the audience. He then just walked to stage left and then to stage right whipping away the large silks and there was the elephant and the donkey.

Now try this in reverse as a vanish. Have an assistant cover a donkey or elephant with a six foot silk and then try, just TRY, to hold their attention somewhere else by producing some silks. No way!!! They will be watching that donkey and elephant with an eagle eye because they KNOW it's there!! Have an assistant walk onstage and walk the elephant and donkey offstage. Do you think your audience will see it happen? Of course they will.

The Asrah Levitation is the perfect example of a great vanish because when it is done correctly, the audience believes that the young lady is still under the cloth as she floats in mid-air. The vanish comes as a complete and instantaneous surprise. There is no "hiding place" for a spectator to look for because the hiding place has left the stage long ago. If you have convinced them that the lady is still under the cloth then you are set to do a miracle!!!

The most effective vanishes are usually fast!! If you ever saw Richiardi vanish doves in a take apart box then you know what I mean. Pieces of boxes went flying everywhere!!! I never understood why magicians “gingerly” take a box apart to show something has vanished. If the dove is actually “gone” then the box no longer matters, does it?? Just rip it apart and sling it around.

The newspaper Tear Apart box vanish is another example of a good vanish because the box is nothing but simple wooden frames covered with newspaper. The dove is vanished and then the paper frames are burst through showing the simplicity of the box. A strong vanish with a lot of action. Of course I have seen magicians do the Tear Apart Vanish without the action by sl-o-o-ow-ly taking each piece one by one and “precisely” placing them on the assistant’s arms in an obviously rehearsed position. This absolutely KILLS the effect. It gives the audience time and reason to study the pieces of the box and ample time to figure it out.

Another deadly way to perform a vanish is to place a clever “vanish box” on top of a suitcase table or some other table that the audience cannot see under. I see this many times in magicians’ acts. No matter how clever your box vanish is, the audience is going to think that the vanished object simply went down through a hole in the top of your table and inside the table. Again, you are leaving your audience with a possible “hiding place” for the vanished object that is staring them right in the face. Sure, the audience is wrong but it doesn’t matter if the audience thinks they are correct. It still kills the effect of the vanish.

The perfect vanish is a perfect vanish when there is absolutely nothing left as a hiding place. Don’t leave your audience with a possible explanation. Now you can understand why a good vanish is much more difficult to pull off than a good production. Many a great magician has created a reputation by making something vanish rather than producing something. David Copperfield vanished the Statue of Liberty and Houdini vanished an elephant. “Where did it go?” is stronger than “Where did it come from?” Nixon

created a sensation with his “Where Do the Ducks Go?” The construction and psychology behind this vanish was so strong that he actually challenged the audience to see where the ducks go. That is what made it so powerful.

The same psychology of a vanish can be applied to close up magic. Let’s face it, a vanish is a vanish whether it be the Taj Mahal or a coin.

Have you ever seen a beginner in magic vanish a silk in a thumb tip? They have a tendency to stick the silk into their closed left fist and then instantly show both hands empty by waving the hands in the air like a maniac. The correct theory is the same as in the Asrah Levitation. The vanish must take place before the audience suspects it. The silk is poked into the left fist. The right hand comes away with the tip and silk in a casual manner allowing the audience to see that the right hand is empty. This leads the audience away from the “hiding place.” They have just seen the right hand come away empty. The only hiding place left is the left fist into which they just saw you poke the silk. The spectator is now convinced that the silk is in the left fist. NOW you pretend to make the silk vanish by slowly rubbing the left fingers together or tossing in the air. The actual effect of the vanish takes place long after the object is gone. Simply shoving the silk into the hand and then immediately showing both hands empty allows your audience to look at both hands at the same time looking for the “hiding place.”

Fred Kaps had a wonderful little touch in his stage act when he caused items to vanish. He would apparently place the object in the left hand and yet retain it in his right hand. When he wanted to cause the object to vanish, he would blow on his left hand, then open it just enough for him to see inside his hand. Then he would blow again, finally showing that the object had vanished. Can you see what he was doing?? He was creating the impression that the object was still in the left hand. It was very subtle. It seemed that the first blow didn’t do the job so he repeated the blowing at the hand and NOW the object vanished. The audience is led to think that the object vanished at just that moment rather

than at the beginning when the object was first placed into the hand.

Fred Kaps had another little subtlety when doing the salt pour. He would pour the salt into his left fist, steal the gimmick into his right, and then vanish the salt from his left hand. He would then act as amazed as his audience and very quickly he would open his coat by using both hands as if he himself wondered where the salt went. Even though the right hand now contained the gimmick, the fact that he used this hand to open the right side of the jacket convinced the audience in a subtle way that the hands were absolutely empty. The actual empty left hand did the same movement by opening the left side of the jacket. Both hands worked equally convincing the audience that both hands were the same.....empty!! He would then look up, reach into the air with the right hand, grab the vanished salt and then begin the continuous pour of the salt.

Mark Wilson used a clever and humorous subtlety in his Asrah Levitation. As the young lady began to float a few inches up from the couch while covered with a sheet, her hand would “accidentally” drop into view, apparently from under the sheet. Mark would see a nice shiny bracelet on her wrist and then remove the bracelet, place it in his pocket, and then shove her hand back under the sheet. He gave a sly little wink and grin as he apparently stole the bracelet. It was a funny gag but, most importantly, it convinced the audience that the lady was actually still under the sheet.

THE GREATEST VANISH I EVER SAW

Dominique was a famous pickpocket from France. Although the pickpocket act was his claim to fame, he was also a very good magician and actually mixed magic with pick pocketing during his act. Perhaps 30 years ago or so, Dominique made an appearance on the Mike Douglas television show and performed a very special trick for that show. Mike Douglas even stated that this is something very special that Dominique only does when he wants to do something spectacular. You must read this effect very closely because it sounds too good to be true.

Dominique asked for a lady volunteer from the audience. She came onstage and Dominique stated that she is to participate in the "World's Fastest Striptease." After a few funny reactions and remarks, a man came onstage carrying a small cloth screen. This was a simple square frame with cloth hanging down from it so that the frame could be raised and lowered for the young lady to step inside. The man simply held the sides of the frame with his hands. He lowered the curtained frame enough for the lady to step inside and the man raised the cloth curtain so that only her head was visible. Dominique gave her an extending pointer with a flag on the end and told her to duck her head and keep waving the flag above the top of the small screen. The music started playing and as she waved the flag, bits of her clothing began flying out from the top of the screen. The male assistant walked her and the curtain around the stage for all to see and yet never came near the wings, back of stage, or close to anything else. The stage was bare!! Then bits of underwear came flying out. Finally Dominique said "Give me the flag!!" He took the flag. The man immediately dropped the small curtain perfectly flat to the stage. The lady was gone and in her place was a live goat!!! The goat then followed Dominique and the male assistant offstage. It brought the house down and made me gasp also.

I pondered this illusion over and over in my head. I replayed the video over and over. Finally, while reading through an old classic magic book titled "Illustrated Magic" by Ottokar Fischer, I stumbled across the principle of the illusion. There were no illustrations and the principle was merely an idea that took up only a paragraph. I went back, replayed the video, and there it was!!! A wonderful effect.

I am sure that all of you are imagining how this could have been done. Well, I'll tell you a few things. This effect can be done on ANY stage. It can also be done surrounded. There is no special lighting and it is done in full bright lighting. There are no backdrops or wings anywhere near the lady or the assistant holding the curtain. When the lady vanishes, the

small screen falls perfectly flat to the stage. The male assistant is NOT wearing any type of flowing robes or clothing. In fact, the vanish involves the principle I have been speaking of. She vanishes long before the audience even suspects it. Just about everything that makes a vanish "perfect" is in this one effect. A real masterpiece of magic!

I will leave you to ponder this wonderful effect that I feel very fortunate to have seen. From what I understand, this was the only time he ever performed this on television, at least here in the United States.

If you are really into the theory behind great vanishes and the attention to detail that goes with these vanishes, I highly recommend "Hiding the Elephant" by Jim Steinmeyer. This little paperback book takes you into the minds of some of the greatest magicians of our past and how they accomplished their miracles.