

# Magic Messenger

The official newsletter of the Ann Arbor Magic Club

I.B.M. Ring 210

June 2017

S.A.M. Assembly 88

## *President's Corner* by **John Russell**

I attended Michigan Magic Day 2017 last month in Grand Rapids. I always enjoy the camaraderie, fellowship, and brainstorming with other magicians... especially those from our backyards! Featured lecturer and performer Dan Harlan (of Penguin Magic and creator of a vast number of effects) shared his "More Than Meets The Eye" lecture. The gist of his lecture was that our routines should have a Beginning, a Middle, and an End. Notice I said, "routine", and not "tricks". In my opinion, "doing tricks" is presenting a puzzle that begs to be solved or figured out. We should avoid "doing tricks" at all costs. Harlan suggested we work to "transfer tricks into an experience". I remember Doug Henning always showed the "wonder" in magic. Do we? Or is our audience "wonder"-ing when the show will be over?

Harlan shared that "the real secret of magic" is the question, "Why?". Why should the spectator/audience care about what we are doing? What is the "hook" that pulls the person in and captures their interest? Think through any particular effect you do. How do you introduce it? If you had magical powers, why would you be doing this? Why should anyone care that you are doing it? I tell a lot of stories with my magic. The story sets up a context or situation in which the effect makes sense (at least on some level). It, according to Harlan, "drives the narrative".

The "middle" of the routine contains the principal actions, or the actual working of the effect. It should build suspense and/or anticipation of the outcome. It may contain conflicts or some complication that requires "magic" to resolve or solve the situation. Be care, he warned, not to just describe "the adventures of the props". For example, you don't have to say, "I have a deck of cards in my hands". If you have a deck of cards in your hands, the audience can see that. Don't insult their intelligence.

The "end" of the routine is where all conflicts or complications are resolved. Magic has successfully been used to bring the situation, the story, the narrative, to a satisfying conclusion. I challenge all of us to take a look at our presentations. Dump the "canned patter" that came with the trick. We can present classic effects in a unique way (unique to us, that is) simply by coming up with our own presentations. Think about Beginning-Middle-End in all of your effects. Work on presenting routines, not tricks. And let's create magical experiences full of wonder, for our audiences to enjoy!

## Club News

We had an interesting exercise last month: what would you buy in an emergency? Your show is stolen, damaged, forgotten, or unplanned. You've got a WalMart or Meijer across the street. The challenge was come up with a list of effects, then make a shopping list of what you would need. Great ideas were shared! I challenge everyone to take some time and come up with such a list. Put it in your phone or somewhere you could retrieve it in case the unthinkable happens!

We also have a new member candidate, Carol Truskowski. Carol has come to a number of meetings over the last few years, and finally pulled the trigger to join us. Welcome Carol... glad to have you part of the gang!

Our June meeting will be unique. We are going to hold a round-robin teaching time. Four of our members (Bob Goodwin, Joaquin Ayala, Scott Mitchell, and Mark O'Brien) will each lead a 20 minute discussion on an area of expertise. You'll pick 3 of the 4 to attend, and have an intimate, hands-on session about cards, coins, magic squares, and whatever else these guys want to share. Should be great! In addition, bring along whatever you're working on these days for our "Showtime". Karl and Bill Rabe showed their version of "Stratospheres" last month, and this is just the kind of thing we're looking for. Whadayagot?

Also, we will be voting on some by-law changes proposed by Dan Jones. We'll hold the vote and any other "business" at the end of the meeting. The proposals can be found after the end of this article.

Coming up in July, we've got Keri Kazz, a local magician with a unique show touring right now (Danger Circus) and a close associate of Franz Harary's (Keri will be performing at his House of Magic in Macau this fall), coming to debut his new lecture on doing restaurant magic. This will be a FREE lecture!

That's all I've got for this month. Hope you stay as busy as you want to be with Magic Bidness! (Sorry for all the "s used above. They were on sale and I got a "really nice deal" on them. Trying to use them before they go bad.)

Stay Magical, everyone!

John Russell

**What is the definition of a will? A dead giveaway!**

**I finally completed the Ex-Lax Marathon and, boy, was I pooped! Everyone who followed me finished in the #2 spot.**

**Need extra money? Try working part-time for a cremation company. There is no limit to what you can urn!**

**The new car I just bought has a fruity smell...I think I bought a lemon!**

**We put in our two cents, but only get a penny for our thoughts. Who gets the extra penny?**

### **BYLAW PROPOSALS**

#### **Proposal 1:**

Article VIII, Duties of Officers

Section 7 (Partial), Present Wording: "The Treasurer shall maintain accurate accounting records of all receipts and disbursements, and report the status of these against the AAMC Budget to the Board of Directors and the AAMC Membership on a schedule as specified by the Board of Directors."

**Section 7, Proposed Wording: "The Treasurer shall maintain accurate accounting records of all receipts and disbursements, and report the status of these against the AAMC Budget, including financial status of club events, to the AAMC Membership on a monthly basis."**

#### **Proposal 2:**

Article XI, Meetings:

##### **Section 2: Board Meetings (New Section)**

**a. In general, all Board meetings are open to all dues-paying members. It is recognized that, in certain conditions, a portion of the meeting may be closed as determined by a quorum of the Board.**

**However, this should be required infrequently. As a general rule, all Board meetings are open, unless a compelling reason is recognized by the Board.**

#### **Proposal 3:**

**b. A minimum of six Board meetings will be held during each calendar year.**

A mother was struggling to get the ketchup out of the bottle when the phone rang. She asked her four-year old daughter to answer it. She heard her daughter say, "Mommy can't come to the phone. She's hitting the bottle."

### *Secretary's Report by Joaquin M. Ayala*

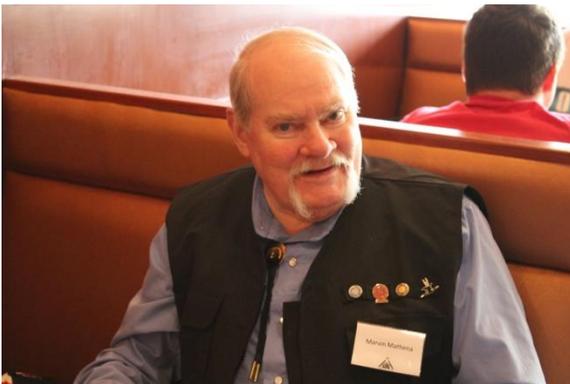
Our theme for May was "**Emergency Magic Kit**" – What is in **YOUR** magic wallet??? What would you buy from any local stores if you lost or forgot your magic kit? How long a show could you do? Many great ideas were shared:

**Ken Magee** would do a Mentalism show using common stationery items and basic techniques; he and discussed making a Zombie with a hanger, an apple and a bath towel! **Mark O'Brien** would use the power of Memorized Decks/Stacked decks (such as Nikola, Mnemonica, Aronson,

etc.) **Andrew Martin Portala** suggested using a bucket to do a *Miser's Dream* routine with whatever coins you could find. **Scott Mitchell** talked about a Book Test-type effect using the advertisement portion on the back of the now-standard Bicycle card box, using rope for *Cut & Restored Rope* effects and finally, using plastic cups with Post-It Notes for Cups and Balls. **Bill Brang** discussed making your own sponge balls out of car sponges. **Marvin Mathena** talked about using a dowel rod to make into a magic wand with which you could perform various effects. Richard Triemer suggested using a bracelet and rope to do a Ring on Rope routine.

Later in the meeting, **Bill Brang** performed an effect that used three small doors, each with a different colored ball on top of the door frames and had someone pick a ball. Bill opened the other two doors to reveal nothing there. Then he opened the final door under the colored ball that was chosen to reveal an arrow pointing up to the ball. Next, **Andrew Martin Portala** performed his Queue Cards effect – various cards were shown with words on them. He had someone pick a number, then counted down through the cards to that number, revealing the word 'hooray'. He flipped the cards over and read the words on each card that was not picked, which read "I knew you would pick the word 'hooray'!"

**Richard Triemer** took us on a journey through a mall filled with stores. A person was asked to pick any store as a starting point. Numbers were chosen from 1 to 10 and after each choice, you moved that many stores in different directions. A wallet was pulled out and a gift card was removed; it was a gift card for the chosen store! Finally, **Marvin Mathena** did a card effect that involved a card being selected and replaced in the deck and lost through shuffling. After cutting the deck in groups to be eliminated, down to one card, the selections were found to be the only card left!



**Marvin Mathena**



**Jim Molnar**



**John Russell**



**Ken Magee**



**Mark O'Brien**



**Michael Doyle**



**Rich and Linda Triemer**



**Rob Krozal**



**Messrs. Bill and Karl Rabe**



**Scott Mitchell**



**Bob Goodwin**



**Andrew Martin-Portala**



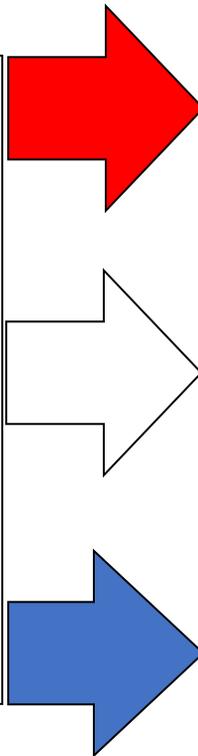
Bill Brang



**TRIVIA QUESTION**

His attempts to be a regular magician in the 1940s were failing until one night when an effect did not work and he made a joke to cover it up. The audience laughed, so he changed his act to make many of the effects flop on purpose. He was on television regularly in the 1950s and 1960s. Who is he???

**ANSWER AT THE END OF THE NEWSLETTER!**



**Ex Libris by Joaquin Ayala, Ph.D.**

Hello folks and welcome to the Ex Libris article for June of 2017! Is everyone enjoying the beautiful weather we have had the last week or so? It has been wonderful, at least in the Downriver area and the surrounding areas. Summer is not officially here yet but it feels like it is starting to arrive, almost as if by *design*...Hmmm, 'design'...That leads me to think of the book we will focus on for this month, which as promised last month is a sort of continuation. The book is ***Designing Miracles*** by **Darwin Ortiz**, his second book of magical theory.

This is the book that followed his *Strong Magic* (which we discussed last month) but it is entirely different in its topical nature. As the title implies, this book focuses on making your magic stronger by using good designing principles and this is, as far as I know, the only book devoted solely to this topic. Other books across the literature discuss this topic in bits and pieces and as such are by far in large, inadequate.

The first chapter of the book discusses criteria that magicians use when selecting an effect for inclusion in a show or a set. He discusses the various points that are both overlooked and ignored and why they should not be. Magicians often select things based on how well they like the method, whether it is clever or how badly it fooled them. The gist of this chapter is that good design means taking all the techniques, sleights, moves, redirection of attention (misdirection as some call it) and putting them together in a way that adds up to an effect which, in and of itself, is greater than the sum of its parts.

Chapter two touches on an old watercooler debate (rather an argument of art): deception vs. illusion; puzzle vs. miracle. Is it art for the sake of art? In this chapter, he talks about the four main (and all necessary) ingredients that go into the making of a finished magical showpiece: Method, Effect, Presentation and Design. Many magic books and certainly, the majority of magic products out there are full of ideas about the effect and the methods used to achieve them. They very often neglect to talk about Presentation and almost never talk about Design. After all, you cannot make a fancy wedding cake with just flour and salt. You need something to bind them together and some sort of design to make them look good.

Chapter three, put simply, discusses causality of effect in the eyes of the audience; that is to say, when one sees something completely impossible, they start looking right away into their immediate, everyday knowledge for an explanation, culling from their knowledge pool of how things in their everyday world work. The gist here is that you can make your magic stronger simply by eliminating causal cues – things that point almost directly to the method.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters deal with three interlinked topics related to distance, specifically distance from methodology. They are Temporal Distance, Spatial Distance and Conceptual Distance. These are all extremely important because in using these principles, it allows you to design effects that are impossible to backtrack and your audiences are left with no option but to give in to the impossibility and enjoy the magic. This is not armchair theory or abstract theory either – Darwin specifically cites various case studies and examples to back the discussion points.

The book goes on to discuss false framing (a technique very much and very well employed by Juan Tamariz, akin to leading your audience down the garden path and then turning the hose on them), the pros and cons of ‘visual magic’ and why it is not necessarily always a good thing and finally, correlations of effects and methods (why they should or should not exist) and my favorite, manipulating memory. In the appendix, you will find a list of 27 rules, called “Darwin’s Rules”, some of which are not his but for which references are given (which, as usual, is something Darwin does extremely well in this book too).

This book is aimed primarily at close-up workers, but there is no reason that stand-up, strolling/walkabout, stage and parlour performers cannot apply these principles to their work with a bit of thought. Mentalists in my opinion might have the hardest time using some of these ideas, but it is still worth the read for the thought stimulation. One small downside to the examples used throughout the book: most of them are card effects and if you are not a card magic performer, you might find it difficult to apply these lessons to your own work, but that does not mean it cannot be done.

This book is yet another that deserves a place on the bookshelf of every serious student of magic, especially given its topic. That is all for this month folks – join me again next month as we delve into the pages of another magical tome. Keep the magic alive! - **JMA**

### **TRIVIA ANSWER**

Carl Ballantine. Born Meyer Kessler in Chicago, Illinois, Ballantine was a magician, comedian and actor. He was the first magician to play in Las Vegas and is generally credited with creating the genre of 'comedy magic'.

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**Check out our Facebook Page “Ann Arbor Magic Club”  
Have a question / suggestion / comment / contribution? Contact us!  
Bring a guest to a meeting! Perform! Join a Committee!**

**The Ann Arbor Magic Club meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month  
at Senate Coney Island Restaurant - 34359 Plymouth Rd, Livonia, MI  
48150-1500. Meeting starts at 7 p.m. Come at 6 p.m. if you want to  
eat.**