



Heart of the RING

“Quality Ring Award Winner”

February 2007 Newsletter

Regular Meeting

Feb 1—7 PM

Best Western

Teach a Trick by Mike Melito

Stage Magician of the Year Contest

Feb 3 doors open at 5:30PM

Roland Park Community Center

Board Meeting

Feb 15—7 PM

Denny's Restaurant

9001 Shawnee Mission Pkwy

Don England Lecture

Feb 19—7 PM

US Toy Magic

NEXT MEETING

Feb 1, 2007 7:00 P. M.

Best Western

Rainbow & Southwest Blvd.

(directly behind Applebee's Restaurant)



Terry Elton

Current Stage Magician of the Year

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H. Claude Enslow Stage Magician of the Year Contest 2006

What a truly great way to honor one of Ring 129's premiere magicians, H. Claude Enslow. Once a year our entire ring gets together and celebrates the accomplishments of a remarkable individual. Some of us knew him for many years; others have no clue who he is. But look around, and see his influence in how we perform our routines and his efforts to further the enjoyment of magic.

Mr. Enslow had that kind of personality that personified magic as we know it. He was an inaugural Sorcerer's Circle member, and was responsible for its name. Mr. Enslow was known as well for his expertise in the close-up arena. He inspired each person he had contact with to perfect their presentations and sleight-of-hand capabilities.

Those that are performing do so in honoring the legacy that preceded them. There are several members that have qualified this year to participate in this honor. They are, in no particular order, **Roger Miller, Barron Stringfellow, Eric Woods, J. E. Mastin, Marty Isenberg, Steve Steiner, Mike Melito, Harris Duetsch, Josh Chaikin, Larry Warshaw, Justin Brewer.**

We return to one of our favorite venues – Roeland Park Community Center, located at 4850 Rosewood in Roeland Park (a few blocks west of Roe near 48th St.). The event is scheduled for Saturday, February 3, 2007. Doors will open at 5:30 pm with reserved seating, and dinner will be served promptly at 6:00 pm. This year's menu is similar to last year's, which included Roast

Brisket of Beef, Grilled chicken breast, sweet glazed carrots, robust green beans, and pan roasted potatoes, along with a fresh garden salad, tea and coffee service, and of course, the best part of the meal – dessert. We promise you a great lead-in to a grand evening!

Costs for the event are the same as last year - \$17 for regular members and guests, and \$15 for Sorcerer's Circle members. **BRING YOUR CHECKS MADE OUT TO RING 129 OR YOUR CASH TO THE February 1st MEETING.** Seats are reserved on a **FIRST COME PAID RESERVED BASIS** (First one with the cash wins!!). Our cutoff date for all seats is January Feb. 1 2007.

If you cannot send or bring your checks to the February meeting, be sure to call Julia Clark at 816-478-9787 or Alan Goodheart at 913-648-0331 to make your reservations. As of this publication, we are just over half sold out, so hurry to get the best of the remaining seats available.



WEATHER REPORT!! We will make it a top priority to promptly inform you of any changes due to inclement weather conditions. If the weather is bad please check www.ring129.com to be sure scheduled events are not cancelled.



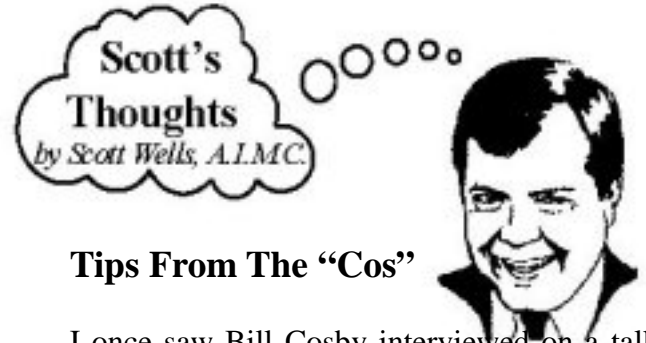
President's Column February
2007

No incoming president should start the year without thanking an outgoing president. Actually, Ring 129 owes a lot of thanks to Chuck Macan for jumping in and leading us during this past year. He maintained the momentum, enthusiasm and membership. Chuck we thank you a lot for all you have done for our magic club.

Despite the cold weather, we have great attendance at Ring functions. Attending events is a good way to network, learn some new ideas and meet new people in our club. When you attend an event, wear your name badge so people will get to know you and you to know them. Walk up to the new person and introduce yourself. I once walked up to a person and introduced myself and the person replied, "Why have you come up to me at the last two meeting and now this one to introduce yourself? Do you not remember me?" Actually, he was correct; I did not remember his name. I have actually gotten over the embarrassment of this type of situation. I actually will keep coming up to someone and introduce myself, until I can remember who they are. Maybe I need to take a digital picture and write the name down, so I can have better recall. Actually, that may not be a bad idea! If you see me taking pictures of folks, it is to help me better know my friends in magic. Humor me, please!

I am not a New Years resolution type of person, so I do not make promises that I might break. I will say that this year it is a good opportunity to resolve one thing: "as a club we want to have fun , enjoy the magic, learn more and make new friends that are always a part of our Ring 129 events and membership!" Thanks to all of you for being part of our club and starting the New Year off great.

I look forward to your calls, emails and suggestions.
Michael "doc" Blum



Tips From The "Cos"

I once saw Bill Cosby interviewed on a talk show, and what he had to say about comedians also pertains to magicians. The main two points that snapped my synapses were on audience responses and the use of "off color" material.

Gene Anderson suggests in his lecture that you audio tape your performances. There may be some good lines that were used by the audience or ad-libbed by you that may be lost and forgotten if it weren't taped. Equally important is for your own sake. Specifically, you may think that during your performance that you were not getting the response that you should have gotten. Perhaps you may have been concentrating on your performance rather than paying close attention to the audience's response to your routine. When you play back the tape of your show, you may be surprised to find out that the audience response was better than you thought at the time. Furthermore, you may learn what part of your routine caused your audience, in your opinion, to be rather non-responsive. Here is where Bill Cosby's advice comes in. But before I make my point, let me digress once more.

Many, many years ago Walter "Zany" Blaney performed in Omaha before a group largely comprised of magicians. In Walter's opinion, he bombed. There was little or no audience response. He was disappointed and discouraged to the point that he was concerned about his act and future and particularly about his act the next evening in Des Moines. Fortunately, he went on to his next engagement and presented the same show, word for word, for an audience where no magicians were present. He went over great! They loved him! His future (and self confidence) was secure. He just crossed off the unresponsiveness of the Omaha group and went on to success much the same way that a professional golfer must forget a bad shot and not let it get him

down on the way to winning the tournament.

Bill Cosby said that there are no unresponsive audiences . . . only different levels of responsiveness. Some audiences will hoot, holler, clap and whistle while others may occasionally give you polite applause (or what I call a “golf clap”.) Neither of these responses nor any range in between is bad, just different, and appropriate for that audience at that time. Little to moderate response does not mean that they don't like your show as you may be appealing to their intellectual level. Likewise you may not be the best thing that the hoot`n holler`n audience has ever seen as they may give the same response to a pig who can walk on his hind legs. Just as you have always heard it to be true for magic, so it is with audiences . . . timing. But an audience doesn't have to respond enthusiastically to enjoy your show. As a matter of fact, I usually elicit the best compliments after my show from those audiences that were the most reserved. I have always wanted to say to them, “gee, I wish that you would have shown how much you liked the show DURING the show.” As “Cos” says, there are no unresponsive audiences, just different levels of responsiveness. I have heard it said that you know if the audience is from Minnesota because they cast a shadow. Another level of appreciation, I guess.

I see audiences as a mass of people who can respond like a mob. It only takes a few “leaders” in the group to get the mob moving in your direction. Many things contribute to their reaction that may have nothing to do with you act . . . the size of the group, whether they know one another, are they comfortable with one another, the time of day/night, the environment/venue, how much (if any) alcohol has been consumed, how they are dressed, the temperature, and many other factors. Any one or more combinations of these factors can be in play when determining how your audience will respond and the thing is that you cannot do anything about these outside influences! You can only do your act and try to entertain them so that they can forget the troubles of the day . . . at least for a while. That's why it is so important to win over the audience from the moment that you start your act. You have to show them that you like them and that there is no place that you would rather be than entertaining them right then. You must first like them before they will like you.

And if you can get a few people “rolling” with you early in the show, then you have a better chance of getting the rest of the audience to join in and respond enthusiastically. Even though the audience may be thoroughly enjoying the show, we as performers always seem to feed off of the audience's reactions, and it's hard to give them your top performance when they set on their hands and just stare (in amazement?). This is where professionalism really enters in when, just “Zany” Blaney did, you need to go beyond the moment and give your best show despite their reaction because you know from previous experiences that your show is solid.

As to Cosby's second point, off color, dirty, or “blue” material has no place in magic. “Cos” pointed out that in the days of vaudeville when the comedian didn't get the laughs from the audience that he thought he should get, then he dropped his pants and resorted to debased humor. Many of today's comedians and some magicians use “blue” material or “potty” humor as the mainstay in their act. His point was that if they start with this kind of humor and it doesn't work, then where do you have to go to get the audience to laugh, particularly if you have alienated most of them to the point of no retrieval? Their pants are already down so to speak and they have nowhere to go except to pull them up and go home.

Along this same line of thinking, once you have started working “dirty”, then it's difficult to change your image as you mature. People will remember the joke or trick you did or line you used and ask you to repeat it. You may have moved on from there and no longer want to be associated with that kind of humor or reputation. But an image has already been created and you are stuck with it. So the best thing is not to use it at all and not resort to “dropping your pants.”

Magic itself is funny enough. People laugh or smile as a natural reaction to being fooled. You can only make it more enjoyable by weaving a web of joviality with “clean”, family, G-rated humor.

So be known as a “clean” entertainer that appeals to the widest variety of audiences regardless of their reactions. Take a tip from “Cos” because you can't knock success.

**The City of Mystery:
Being a Historical Account of the Life and Times
of Magicians in Kansas City and the Role of the
Magician in American Society.**

...Continued
By Eric Woods

(Skipping past the Herrmanns and Royal Dynasty of Magic)

...for now we venture to the American stage.

The first American magician to gain recognition in his own country was, Richard Potter (1783-1835). Potter, often called “Black Potter”, was born near Boston, Mass. the son of a slave. He served as cabin boy on a ship that ended up in London where he became a servant in a traveling circus.

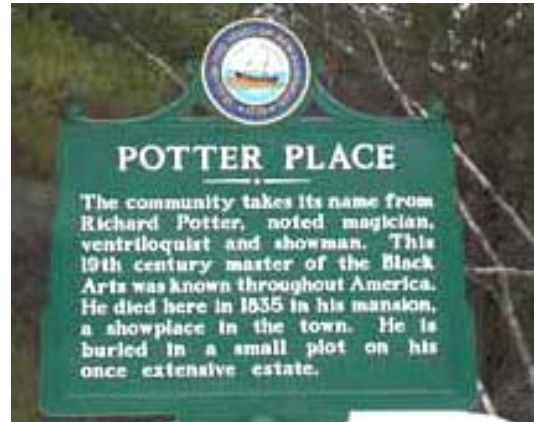
By the age of fifteen he was working as a performer in the circus when the troupe became the first circus to come to America. He stayed with the circus until he was 18 then began working fulltime as a magician. While he was most well known in the New England region, he traveled all of the early United States territory.

Due to the color of his skin, Potter was refused a hotel room in Mobile, Alabama. In spite of the prejudice he netted a profit of close to \$5,000, performing in the city. In 1814 he settled down in Andover, New Hampshire and purchased a 175-acre farm. On the plot he built a two story mansion; the second floor was all one room and was a showplace for the town. Today that area of Andover is called Potter Place.

Another interesting African-American magician was Henry Box Brown. Few details of his life are known, but his claim to fame is revealed in part of his name: “Box” An excerpt from an old playbill put it best:

Prof. H. B. BROWN, Whose escape from slavery in 1849, in a box 3 feet 1 i n c h long, 2 feet wide, 2 feet 6 inches high, caused such a sensation in the New England States, he traveled from Richmond, Va. To Philadelphia, a journey of 350 miles, packed as luggage in a box. He has recently returned to this county after a lengthened tour of 25 years in

England, where he traveled extensively in various entertainments... (Price, David. *Magic: A Pictorial History of Conjurers in Theatre*)



Further excerpts indicate his act contained the familiar routines of the era (c. 1875) including, a second sight act and spiritualist exposés. While Brown’s escape was one of the most important in American history, no one in magic is better known than the grand escape artist: Harry Houdini.

He was born Ehrich Weiss, in Budapest on March 24, 1874 but came to Appleton, Wisconsin as a child. His story is one of the greatest “rags to riches” stories of our time. The word magic and his stage name, Houdini, have become virtually inseparable; all future magicians would have to live under the shadow of his legend.

He chose the name Houdini, in his teen years after reading the *Memoirs of Robert-Houdin*, and a friend suggested he add an “i” to Houdin, meaning “Like” Houdin. Harry was known by his friends as Ehrie of Erie, and so Harry became a better English spelling of how the name was pronounced.

Houdini had two boyhood passions: locks and the circus. Growing up in near poverty, junk piles became his toy box and discarded locks his treasured toys. Everything about locks fascinated the young boy; in later years he pestered a locksmith with so many questions that he eventually hired Harry. Within months he was able to repair almost any lock in the world, but the locksmith went out of business and Harry had to find other employment.

When the circus came to town, Harry was not

content to merely watch the performances, he had to become involved. He hung around and imitated acrobats until, like the locksmith, he was hired on as a local “boy wonder.”

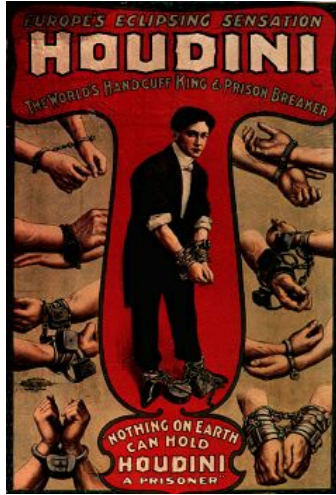
In the circus he also learned a few simple tricks and found that magic, “like the locks that fascinated him, opened doors, too. Doors to friendship and popularity.”

During his late teen years, he moved to New York City and began working various odd jobs, until finally producing a magic show with Jack Hayman: the very friend who helped come up with the name Houdini. They were billed as the Brothers Houdini and worked together for only a few months, but one very important illusion was created by the union. That is the Substitution Trunk Mystery, known as “Metamorphosis.”

Metamorphosis is an illusion where the performer, who is locked in a box, changes places with an assistant outside the box. The illusion was not new, as it had been part of Herrmann’s show but it was Houdini who came up with the selling points that make it a strong illusion to this day. He was the first to tie the performer’s wrist to add drama, and make the switch in a matter of seconds. It was also the only one of his earlier illusions to remain in later shows throughout his career.

Houdini’s real brother, Theo replaced Jack and the Brothers Houdini moved to Chicago to work the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. The following year Houdini met and married Bess, and she replaced Theo. The couple worked various dime stores and side show acts, performing anywhere they could throughout the United States and then Europe. It was a decade of near starvation before they meet with any real success.

The publicity stunt that created the Houdini sensation was that of escaping from an “escape proof” jail in Russia, in 1903. He was stripped, searched and shackled and then locked in the cell, of course he escaped and began to use the same stunt throughout



the world. By that time Houdini had also gained a mastery over handcuffs and introduced the new idea of the Straightjacket escape.

Handcuff escapes were not originated by Houdini but his showmanship and added twist were what made it legendary. He stated: “I am the originator of the Challenge Handcuff Act, which consists in the artist inviting any person in this audience to submit handcuffs of his own from which the performer may release himself.” Every town wanted to be known as having the jail that could hold Houdini. Locksmiths worked, sometimes for years, to invent locks that he could not free himself from, but no cell, nor chains ever held him. His life was truly an allegory that nothing is stronger than determination.

Contrary to popular belief, Houdini did not die performing his water torture illusion, as portrayed in a Hollywood film about his life. He actually died from a ruptured appendix, caused by several blows to the gut by a college student. Though in severe pain he completed his final three hour show the following evening. Three days later, October 31, 1926 at 1:26 PM, the world’s great showman died. Even his death was mysterious and magical, Halloween afternoon at the age of 52, poetic for the man that first billed himself “the Kings of Kards.”

...To be Continued.



Reminder for all members that would like to compete in the monthly contests and open performances. There is a time limit of 10 min. Please make sure that you performances are with in the aloted time. Make sure that you are aware of the fire policy as well.

You can find all the details for performance rules on the ring website.

******* STAGE MAGICIAN OF THE YEAR CONTESTANTS*******

Be sure and visit www.ring129.com/downloads.htm

Download the Stage Magician of the Year Contest Rules and the Judges Score Sheets so you are familiar with judging criteria and know what is expected during competition. Good Luck to all the performers!!!

December Meeting Winners!



Stage Winner
Rod Sipe

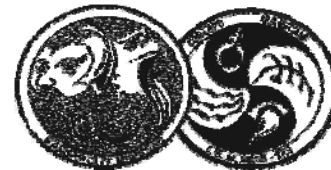


Close-up Winner
Justin Brewer



Dennis Burks won the dessert!

Congratulations to all the winners!!



Our Web Page
Go to www.ring129.com
User Name: ring129 **Password:** aj
See all the new changes that have been made and that you can download!! If you have questions, contact Ken Reedy at 816-734-1484 or email him at ...
webdesigners@kc.rr.com.
Ken Reedy

Sick and Convalescent
If you know of a ring member or their family member who is hospitalized or has passed away Contact:
Carl Macan
913-648-1465
crm130@aol.com (if e-mail is sent please contact Carl by phone to let him know to check his e-mail account)

Magician of the Month Winners

Magician of the Month Winners			Magician of the Month Winners		
	Stage	Close-Up		Stage	Close-Up
01/07	Rod Sipe	Justin Brewer	07/06	_____	Mike Melito
02/07	_____	_____	08/06	_____	_____
03/07	_____	_____	09/06	_____	Blake Silvernail
04/07	_____	_____	10/06	_____	Ken Reedy
05/07	_____	_____	11/06	_____	Jason Dean
06/07	_____	_____	12/06	_____	Laird Wilcox

Kirk DeWeese

634 SW Walnut
Blue Springs MO 64014

The Heart of the Ring is published monthly as a service to the members of IBM Ring 129. Views and comments do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Ring 129 officers, the IBM, or the Editor.

Members are encouraged to submit articles and comments for publishing and earn additional Sorcerer's Circle Points.

Articles must be in the Editor's office by the 20th of the month.
ewoods20@hotmail.com

Dues are past due. Be sure and pay your dues soon to insure that you continue to receive the Newsletter . Thanks for you continued commitment to Ring 129 and the art of magic!!!

This Month

Regular Meeting
Feb 1—7 PM
Best Western

Stage Magician of the Year Contest

Feb 3 doors open at 5:30PM
Roland Park Community Center

Board Meeting

Feb 15— 7 PM
Denny's Restaurant
9001 Shawnee Mission Pkwy

Don England Lecture

Feb 19—7 PM
US Toy Magic

RING 129 AGENDA

Tentative Lecture Schedule

No Lectures scheduled at this time.
Check the ring website: www.ring129.com
for up-to-date info on all lectures.

Monday, February 20th, 2007
Don England Lecture
7:00 PM

Thursday, March 22nd, 2007
Andi Gladwin & Tyler Wilson Lecture
7:00 PM

Thursday, April 19th, 2007
Pendragons Lecture
7:00 PM

Unless Specified All lectures held at:

US Toy Magic
2008 W. 103rd Terr.
Leawood, KS 66206

Sorcerers Circle: \$5
Regular Member \$6
Non-Member \$15

**2007 Agenda
coming soon!**