



MAGI-GRAM



Official Newsletter of IBM Ring 50 -- The National Capital Ring -- Volume 75 No. 9 September 2021

SPOOKY Magic for OCTOBER

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Are you afraid of ghosts?
Goblins? Monsters under the
bed? Things that go bump in
the night? Zombies?
Vampires? Witches? Spiders?
Goooooooooooooooooooo.

Members of Ring 50 are
preparing some spooky, scary
(or maybe not) magic tricks and
routines for our Oct. 6 meeting,
which will be our first held at
The Lyceum, 201 S. Washington
Street, Alexandria.

The meeting will begin at 7:
30 p.m. Please note:

- Poof of Vaccination is Required.
- Masks will be worn at all times, except when performing.
- Seating will be as spread out and distanced as far as possible to allow comfortable spacing.

Parking is available in the lot
next to the building or metered
on the street.

If you would like to be added to
the list of performers, please contact
Ring president Danny Selnick
at president@ibmring50.org.

Larry Hass Lecture Set for November

Larry Hass, a world-leading
teacher, writer, and philosopher on
the art of magic will be our guest
lecturer Nov. 3, scheduled for The
Lyceum.

Larry, who recently moved to the
Washington area and joined Ring 50,
is the Dean of McBride's Magic &
Mystery School in Las Vegas

For 11 years, Larry ran the Theory
and Art of Magic Program at
Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania.

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Nov. 3 – Larry Hass
 Dec. 1- Holiday Show
 Jan. 5 –Member Teach-In
 Feb. 2 – Henry 'Box' Brown
 March 2 – NO MEETING
 March– Magi-Whirl
 (Date and location TBA)
 April 6 – Dan Lacey Contest
 May 4 – Randy Shine
 June 1 – Members Tricks

November Meeting to Feature Larry Hass

It featured guests such as David Blaine, Jeff McBride, Juan Tamariz, Teller, and other renowned magicians.

Larry has written extensively on the topic of magic, primarily for other magicians, and has been published in leading magic magazines, both in print and online.

His internationally-best-selling books include *Eugene Burger: From Beyond* (2019), *Dying to Change* (2019), *Life Magic* (2018), *Teaching Magic* (with Eugene Burger, 2017), *Inspirations* (2015), *The Show Doctor* (with Jeff McBride, 2012), and *Transformations* (2007).

His philosophy of magic has been the focus of articles in *The New York Times* and *USAToday*, and he has made feature appearances on *The Discovery Channel* and *National Public Radio*, among others.

His writing has been translated into nine languages.



Larry Hass

The Lyceum was built in 1839 to serve as a grand hall to provide a place for lectures, scientific experiments and reading. Magic performances were also a part of The Lyceum's history, and Ring 50 members will be treated to a brief history of magic at The Lyceum from museum director Jim Holloway.

Free parking is available in the lot adjacent to The Lyceum.

Mike Hummer to Lecture at Magi-Whirl

Friends of Mike Hummer...don't worry.

Mike had been scheduled to lecture at our November meeting, but because of scheduling changes caused by covid-19, Mike has graciously agreed to appear as a lecturer at Magi-Whirl. We're still working on details, but plans are to have it sometime in March 2022—bigger and better than ever.



Mike, who worked with Al Cohen for 17 years, will show some of Al's favorite tricks to perform when he was among friends.

Mike will also demonstrate some of his favorite routines and showcase new and improved magic props that he carries.

Over the years, Mike has developed a reputation for carrying high-quality magic props. They may not be the cheapest, but they are the kind of props that will last and perform as needed when needed.

Happy Holidays!

Children's Holiday Show Set For Dec. 1

Ring 50 President Danny Selnick is making a list and he'll check it more than twice between now and Dec. 1 when we are planning to hold our annual non-denominational Holiday Magic Show to benefit disadvantaged local children.

This is a family-friendly holiday-theme magic show that has been a community hit for many years. There is no charge, but guests are urged to bring non-perishable food items and new toys that can be distributed to needy families. In the past our shows have benefited the Salvation Army of Alexandria.

Danny is looking for performers for this show to add to his list—hopefully including some children's performers who have not participated in the holiday show in recent years.

If you are interested in being part of the joy of the holiday season, please contact Danny at: president@ibmring50.org.



Richard Cohn	Sep. 15
Keith Harman	Sep. 19
Larry Lipman	Sep. 19
Alec Negri	Sep. 19
Matthew Nichols	Sep. 19
Bob Carnathan	Sep. 26
David Juraschek	Oct. 9
Gregory Szlyk	Oct. 9
Matthew Biegun	Oct. 12

Ken Weber: Everyone Can Improve

By Jason Goldberg

Ring 50's speaker for our September meeting was Ken Weber, author of the recently updated *Maximum Entertainment*. Ken published the first edition in 2012, when it became an immediate bestseller and an essential reference guide for many magicians, including many full-time performers at the top of our field. Simply put, the book is about how make your show better. If you have the first edition, the new edition is about 80 pages longer, and Ken tweaked a lot of material to make it clearer.



Ken was a popular full-time hypnotist and mentalist on the college circuit for about 17 years. His path as a reviewer started with the Psychic Entertainers Association, when he started critiquing the shows of his colleagues. Today, he is a private consultant for many magicians, including Joshua Jay and Ring 50's own Reggie Rice. The working title of the book was "Raise Your Level." Ken's point is that, regardless of your skill level, you can always elevate your performance and make a show better.

During his lecture, Ken walked through the most salient parts of

his book, starting with his formulation of the Hierarchy of Entertainment, which he says includes three levels about which



people think about your routines. If your show features a *puzzle*, if people think about it, then can figure it out. If it's a *trick*, it's entertaining. If it's an *Extraordinary Moment*, like a great Balducci levitation done right, it's the moment people always remember. As Ken noted, you can make a good living doing great tricks, but you don't want to just do puzzles. It's safe to assume that most people will see one to three live performances in their entire lifetime. Therefore, as a performer, you represent the magic community.

Ken next touched on the Six Pillars of Entertainment Success.

1. Master Your Craft: This seems obvious. You have to perform the trick as well as possible. Watch yourself and get good feedback. The hard way is the easy way. If you just keep learning the basics of one trick after another without focusing on what you want to become better at, you'll never raise your level. Focus on what

you want to learn and get better and better at it. You can't gain traction otherwise. Don't show a trick unless you know you can do a trick well.

2. Communicate Your Humanity: Communicate who you are. Why is the audience spending time with you? Your magic should be great, but you should also be interesting and give people a reason to care about you. Smile, surroundings, tell a story about yourself.



Acknowledge the audience and their surroundings, what's interesting about them? Maintain Eye Contact; even if you're onstage with lights in your eyes, you have to make believe you are seeing everyone.

And be natural; don't take on the persona of other acts. You just become a "cover band." Be the best version of who you are.

Continued next page

Weber: Six Pillars of Entertainment

3. Capture the Excitement: How do you capture the excitement of the miracles if they're happening so quickly that the audience doesn't have time to catch its breath? Multiplying a billiard ball twice is a miracle, but doing it seven times becomes less interesting. And don't do it so casually that the audience think it isn't difficult. You want to give the audience the sense that what you're doing is a miracle.

4. Control Every Moment: Yes, even when you pause. If you do a trick and you say "Uh" or "Um," you'll lose the audience. Don't use filler words. Pause if you don't know what you're going to say. Think about what you're doing. Rehearse. Don't talk too fast. On a



related note, never apologize to your audience if a mistake does occur. Acknowledge what has happened. But don't apologize for things outside of your control. Be Superman to your audience.

5. Eliminate Weak Spots: Your show will have weak spots. Record your act and watch it several times to find out what went right and what went wrong. You can't see what the audience sees otherwise. Direct yourself. In addition, the magic itself is rarely

enough. Anyone can do magic; a 6-year-old can do tricks. There has to be a sense of drama.

6. Build to a Climax: If you're doing a set, the audience should have no doubt that you've reached the end and that you've hit them hard. Your last trick doesn't have to be your strongest trick, it has to be a powerful moment.

Ken next touched on scripting and rehearsing. Writing a script is hard, but it pays off. Use the dictation feature on your phone so you see the weak points and learn what's missing. Be a marksman with your words. You want reactions, including rapt attention (totally fascinating), astonishment,

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John Roberts' Magic Collection Given to Members of Ring 50

Our late friend John Roberts left us with many lasting memories. Last month, John gave Ring 50 members a chance to keep a part of his legacy.



John Roberts

An open give-away of John's magic props was held in the driveway of Ring

50 President Danny Selnick. Ring members were given the opportunity to take John's props and books.





Don't Believe What You Think You See

Sometimes the eye plays tricks on the mind. You think you see one thing when in reality it is something else. You try to connect the dots, but something doesn't match. A good magician can use that phenomenon to advantage.

That was one of the lessons that Youth Activities Director Drew Owen gave members of

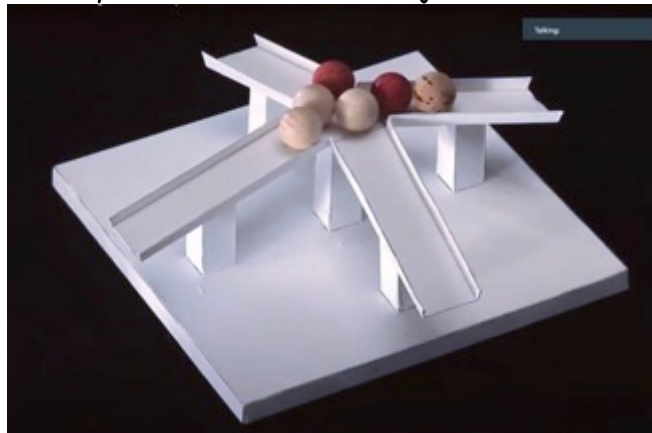
the newly renamed Capital Conjurors who attended the September virtual meeting.

Drew demonstrated this lesson with a short video in which a small structure was shown with slides apparently angled upward toward the middle. Small wooden balls were placed at the bottom of the slides and the balls seemed to travel upward toward the center. Maybe magnetism?

Actually it was a clever optical illusion. The slides were placed and the camera was angled so that it appeared that they sloped upward toward the center. A different view of the

structure showed the slides seeming to slope downward to the center. The Conjurors and Drew discussed ways of detecting the illusion (which I still never resolved in my mind).

Next, Drew showed a piece of construction paper that had been cut



In a video shown to the Capital Conjurors, the balls seemingly rolled up the slopes

in such a fashion that there was a rectangular opening

on either side of the paper and a flap—seemingly the product of the cuts—popped up in the middle of the paper.

But when Drew folded the flap down on either side it did not squarely cover the openings. What gives? After a discussion with the Conjurors, one of whom pretty much figured it out, Drew revealed a secret move that seemed to distort what the eye was seeing so that the flap did not fit the cutout areas.

Conjurors Learn a One-Ahead Card Trick

Using scissors and paper, the Conjurors each made their own versions of the illusion. Further discussion came up with the idea of using a double-sided playing card to produce the illusion.

A clever card trick was the next lesson.

Drew said that a wizard had given him the power to make people do what he instructed them - but the power could only be used for entertainment. He spread a deck of cards backs up and announced that he would instruct a few of the Conjurors to select specific cards. Using a pencil as a magic wand, Drew asked a Conjuror to say "stop" along the spread but told him beforehand he would make him pick the 4 of Clubs. Drew took the card from the spread and held it in his hand. He repeated this twice more—inviting a Conjuror to say "stop" along the spread after naming the card the Conjuror would select.



Finally Drew said he would make himself pick a card and he again selected a card from the spread. Then he revealed the cards one by one and showed the four selected cards were those in his hand.

Drew explained that the trick was based on the One Ahead principle wherein the magician knows the identity of a specific card—which will be chosen last—and then names other card values after he sees the cards each spectator selects. Basically, he names the known card first, but picks it up last and puts it in the first position in the stack.

One of the Conjurors asked what happens if a

spectator selects the known card? Drew said that the trick should end at that point because the spectator has chosen the forced card.

Each month, Drew shows a video of a famous

magician in action. Previously, he has shown videos of Dai Vernon and Slydini. This month, Drew showed a big box illusion by Doug Henning, filmed in the late 1970s. Afterward, the Conjurors discussed why Henning had been such a popular magician.

One reason was his engaging personality. Another was his manner of dress. Henning appeared in a colorful hippie-style outfit complete with bell-bottom pants. Drew noted that Henning's appearance was a radical departure from the then-tradition costume for a magician—top hat and tails.

Then it was back to more optical illusions.

Comedy Now You See It, Now You Don't



Sure, Drew can make the pencil vanish. Even more surprisingly, he made the paper vanish as well.

Holding an ordinary-looking pencil, Drew solemnly proclaimed that he could make it write red. Concentrating on a folded piece of paper, he wrote on it without the spectators being able to see what was written. Then the big reveal: the word "red." Drew said that was just a joke.

Again directing his attention to the folded paper, Drew announced that he would make it disappear. Then he did the old pencil-behind-the-ear move and with a slap of the paper the

pencil seemed to vanish.

When Drew turned to the side, it was obvious the pencil was behind

his ear. But then Drew took

the trick to the next step.

Retrieving the pencil, he brought it down sharply and...the paper had vanished.

Drew told the Conjurors that although many of them were familiar with the pencil-behind-the-ear trick, it often momentarily fooled spectators. A magician could stop there or continue and vanish the paper as well.

At the end of the meeting, one of the Conjurors demonstrated a trick he had devised in which cards are laced

together in such a manner that they are very difficult to pull apart.

The Capital Conjurors is the youth group of I.B.M. Ring 50. It is open to anyone 8 to 15 who is interested in magic. The Capital Conjurors meet at 6 p.m. the same day as Ring 50. For more information, contact Youth Activities Director Drew Owen at youth@ibmring50.org.

The Capital Conjurors will meet on Zoom in October.



In honor of Black History Month, learn more at the February meeting about the incredible story of Henry 'Box' Brown, who went from enslavement to entertainment. Featuring Rory Rennick.



Can't Wait to See You In Person

As you know, our Oct. 6 "Ring 50 Members Perform Spooky Magic" meeting will be in-person at the Lyceum, 201 South Washington Street in Old Town Alexandria, and I'm so ready to be in-person and perform that night.

Quite frankly, I think most, if not all, of us are ready for the same. That said, I think it's important for me to take a moment to explain a bit more about the email I sent to each of you a couple of weeks ago asking if you'd feel comfortable about meeting in-person with the requirements the Ring's board of directors agreed upon.

These are the requirements:

- **Poof of vaccination is required.**
- **Masks will be worn at all times, except when performing.**
- **Seating will be as spread out and distanced as far as possible to allow comfortable spacing.**

The last thing we want in magic is politics, but we wanted to err on the side of extra caution in taking into account our members. So many Ring 50 members are at an at-risk age and/or have complicated health issues. A few members wrote back to me after getting my email

saying that while they might not have agreed with all the in-person meeting requirements, they applauded us for taking these additional precautions because they would be implemented for the greater health and safety of our members. For that, I thank everyone.

Collectively, I think we can all agree on one thing -- that we really want to get back to all-things magic. I hope to see all of you on Oct. 6 at our new meeting place -- which I know you'll really like more than any other venue we've been to in years!

Magically yours,

Danny

Weber: Watch Your Language

Continued from page 4

laughter, even a response to necessary instructions. Every word in your show should be aiming for these reactions. Everything else is filler.

Of course, costuming and how you look are important too. Look the best you can, at least a step above your audience.

When it comes to language skills, Ken is equally candid about his views. Magic no longer needs lines like "How's everyone doing tonight?" Ken believes it makes you trite. Don't ask "What is the name of your card," but instead

simply say, "What is your card?" Cards don't have names. Besides, you don't want to sound like everyone else who says: "Say 'stop' as I riffle through the cards." No one else knows what a riffle is. Say, "Stop when I go through the cards." Don't use jargon. Don't use "Try," you're in control. Stop saying, "Magic tricks." Which is stronger, "I do magic tricks," or "I do magic." Ken is also bothered when magicians ask, "Would you like to change your mind?" The show does not get advanced by asking

that. It slows the show down.

He advises performers to use a handheld mic. He also advises performers to find music that no one else is using.

He acknowledged that there are also a limited number of plots, but as a performer, you can rewrite the stock lines and be original. That said, it's worth the context in which you might be using a piece and the response you're getting. Sometimes, cliches are okay, but think about the purpose in which you're using it.

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Who's Who in Ring 50

Wes Iseli—Combining Magic and Family *'Fool Us' Winner Gives to Community*

It seemed too simple to succeed. All Wes Iseli had was an ungimmicked coin with which he would try to fool two of the world's top magicians who had burnished their reputations by seeing through the tricks of other magicians on national television.

But it worked, and in the end Wes had successfully fooled Penn and Teller on "Fool Us."

Maybe it was appropriate that Wes' big televised moment came with a coin trick because that's how he got interested in magic. When Wes was 7, his father owned a chain of six video rental stores called Video Box Office in and around Charlottesville. One day, a customer pulled a quarter out of Wes' ear. Wes held on to the quarter on the drive home, but when they got there, the coin had disappeared.

"I am sure it rolled under the seat, but in my head at the time the magician made it disappear and that was real magic," Wes recalled. "I talked about that coin every time I got my hand on a quarter, and that Christmas I got a magic kit."

At the video store, Wes was introduced to a bit of magic history, including watching a Houdini biography starring Tony Curtis. He learned to juggle from watching a how-to video.

In high school, Wes performed magic for family and friends and carried an Abbott's catalogue as well as several effects in his book bag. "So I was always ready to perform things like a coin in a nest of boxes, a Svengali deck, a variety of tricks with a regular deck, rubber bands, and whatever else I was working on. My first paid show was when I was 15. It was for a teacher at my school. She saw me performing for friends and asked if I would do her kid's birthday party. I think I made \$25."

While in college at Piedmont Virginia Community College Wes worked at a shop called Magic Tricks, in Charlottesville, and honed his skills.

"The shop was like college to me. I was getting paid to get an education in magic and performing for folks, and learning new effects every day and trying them out on customers who came in off of the street."

After college, Wes continued doing magic shows on weekends and took a job at a bank. But the job lasted less than a year because he was offered a job at Virginia Beach during the 1996 Halloween season where he could make

\$18,000 for one month.

"I jumped at that opportunity. It was at a farm and they had school kids come through in the mornings and pick pumpkins and go on a hayride and I would entertain the folks from a raised platform as they waited in line. They averaged 10,000-12,000 people going through there each day. It was an amazing time! Then, at night, they had a haunted forest where the folks walked through the woods and, right off of the paths, the actors would put on scary skits or jump and scare them," Wes said.

"I created a black-art effect where a bride in her white dress was arguing with her husband and he would cut her head off with a knife and drop her head on the ground and then run everyone off from the scene. It was my first time working with black art on that scale and there was a lot to learn, especially outside in the fall. Every day I was picking leaves and things off of my black felt backdrop."



Wes Iseli: Giving Has Been Part of His Magic

Wes worked Halloween seasons at the farm for six years and eventually had his own nighttime attraction called Wes Iseli's Circus of the Scars, where he did a sideshow/magic show in a 30-by 30-foot tent.

"I would eat fire on a raised platform between shows to attract an audience. I have amazing memories from those days!"

Although Octobers were a good month for him, it was more difficult finding steady magic jobs at other times. To advertise his skills and

availability, and provide a steady income, Wes worked at nine restaurants, six days a week, and did shows on the weekends.

"This was great for me because I met so many people: CEOs, teachers, principals and parents who would all hire me for their events. The way I looked at restaurants was that I was getting paid to advertise."

It was during this point, 10 years into his professional magic career, that he met Natalie, who was attending James Madison University and waitressing for extra cash.

"Within a few months, we were not only dating, but she was working for me full time as well. Now, after all these years, she is my boss."

Wes and Natalie married in 2008 (Wes stood on a stool so he would be closer to Natalie's height) and a few years later had a daughter, Lana. Four days after her birth, Lana made her first magic show appearance with Wes and Natalie and she's been appearing in their shows ever since. A year ago this



The Iseli family takes a bow after a recent show.

month, the Iselis welcomed identical twins Julian and Lex who made their magic show debut within a week of their birth.

With three children and a hectic schedule of shows, Wes and Natalie purchased an RV earlier this year so the entire family, as well as Natalie's niece, Willow, can travel together. A high school senior, Willow is home schooling and helps on the road watching the twins during shows and then bringing them on stage at the end for a family bow.

Wes does about 400 shows a year traveling mainly throughout the Mid-Atlantic area with the family (Lana is home schooled so she can accompany her parents).

About 15 years ago, Wes began "The Magic of Giving Project" as a way to give back in a magical way. For 10 years in a row he stood outside of a Wal-Mart store—the first year in Staunton and the other nine in Ruckersville, near his home—performing magic for 24 hours

straight at Christmas time raising donations for the Children's Miracle Network.

He has given in other ways. He once magically produced a car for a woman in need to keep. The woman had a young daughter who needed a reliable car to get to doctors' appointments. Wes is in the process of turning The Magic of Giving Project into a 501(c)(3) corporation.

"I am so blessed to be able to do what I love for a

living and I wanted to use my gift to give back," Wes said of the Magic of Giving Project.

A member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians since 1997, Wes had been a member of Ring 50 for many years but let that connection lapse when he picked up a restaurant gig on the same night the Ring met. Earlier this year he rejoined the Ring.

Wes, who has an extensive collection of magic books, says he enjoys all forms of magic. That came in handy when he worked for two seasons, starting the second season in 2014, for *The Carbonaro Effect*, a *Candid Camera*-type television show in which the star, Michael Carbonaro, does magic in front of unsuspecting people.

"I was hired as an animal trainer and a magic consultant," Wes recalled. "We worked with anything from a 700-pound ice sculpture to producing mice, dogs, macaws and more."

Having an extensive knowledge of magic has also helped Wes devise and teach Natalie and Lana tricks they can perform in his show.

Keeping Busy With Shows, Podcasts and Reality TV

"I like to give them softer effects, like silks or flowers," he said. When creating a new effect for Natalie, he will ask what she wants to do on stage. She comes up with the idea and Wes creates an effect to make it happen.

"One effect I am proud of was our mail bag/meta-morphosis-style effect I created for her when we had 183 shows on the books June through August and she was very pregnant. I promised my resorts I would do illusions for them all summer and this effect was a fooler that she continued to do even at nine months pregnant, as it wasn't too strenuous for her."

From 2015 to 2020, Wes was sponsored by Vit Hit, a health beverage produced by Pepsico. As a result, he incorporated a lot of magic using liquids into his show. The sponsorship ended because of the covid pandemic. Recently, Wes has obtained a new sponsor, Xpress Copy and Graphics, which makes t-shirts, hats, business cards, postcards, stickers, logo playing cards, buttons, and similar items.

"They lettered my van, and we are currently working on getting my whole RV fully wrapped. When one door closes, sometimes what is hidden behind the next door may be even more amazing, and in this case it was," Wes said.

In addition to his numerous live



With an RV purchased this year, the Iseli family is able to travel together to Wes' many shows with Willow, Lana, and the twins, Julian and Lex. (Photo by Natalie Iseli)

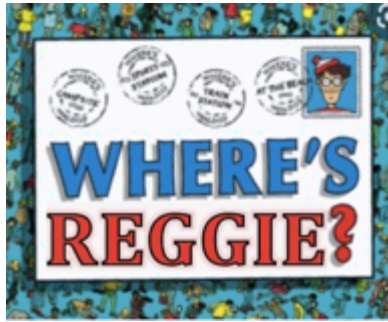
performances, Wes is also busy on audio and video platforms. He and Natalie produce *Wes Iseli's Magiclife Podcast*, now in its second year, in which he interviews leading performers each week, and *Wes Iseli's Magiclife*, a reality TV show about him and his family at home and on the road which is available on JUL-TV.

The TV show came about as a direct result of Wes' appearance last year on *Fool Us*. The show was taped before a live audience in Las Vegas in March 2020, days before the pandemic shut down much of America. But it didn't air until four months later in July. As part of the performance agreement, Wes was forbidden from disclosing whether he fooled Penn and Teller on the show. Most magicians don't. Wes said the pandemic lockdown helped keep him from revealing his secret.

At the end of Wes' appearance, Penn Jillette asks Wes if the coin is gimmicked. Wes says it is not—and the result is that he fooled them. Subsequently, Penn and Teller have purchased the rights to the trick and have incorporated it into their Las Vegas performances. Penn has said that over the nine years the show has run, Wes' trick was his favorite.



Celebrating the moment after fooling Penn and Teller.



Reggie Rice: Have Magic, Will Travel

A real pro is ready for a gig at a moment's notice. So when an asymptomatic magician on a cruise ship tested positive for covid-19 and Ring 50 Sgt. at Arms Reggie Rice got the call asking if he could be a last-minute replacement for two shows, he was quickly on a plane to South Florida and on to the Celebrity Equinox sailing in the Caribbean.

Reggie performed two shows to huge audiences and spent several days on the luxury liner living the life of a professional entertainer.

When not performing, Reggie was eating lavish meals (See his Facebook page for photos.) When not eating, Reggie was working out to offset the eating.



Ken Weber

Continued from page 8

Even the best performer can still have something go wrong. In most cases, you can acknowledge it. If you have built up goodwill, the audience will overlook it. Go into the next trick. Say as little as possible about the error. As Ken noted earlier, the magic is rarely enough. The audience should like you as a person, and you can move on. Also, keep an alternate ending just in case it happens for your last trick.

As an example of Ken's technique, Joe Mielnicki kindly offered a tape for critique, always difficult, and more so when being evaluated in front of his peers. Ken did a thoughtful job, offering positive praise and offering constructive criticism that gave Joe good food for thought.

Ring members had indicated an interest in more lectures like these, and Ken's talk was enlightening and very valuable!



Thor's Hammer

Ring 50 member Chris Bowers runs after school magic classes and is a writer of magic books pamphlets and columns, as well as being known as a "metaphysician."

For those of you who read fantasy books about "real" wizards, R. A. Salvatore's *Icewind Dale* trilogy has always been a favorite of mine. In the books, a Dwarven smithy puts all of himself into a gift for his adopted son: a magical teleporting War Hammer named *Ageis-Fang*. However, after making this incredible artifact he is unable to go back to the forge, as if he's lost all heart to hit an anvil ever again. Why?

The legend, often called "Thor's Hammer" is about how people often have a piece of art, or their "life's work" put into some task or item. The thing they create is so good, that it's well beyond anything they've created before. After that it's... hard to go back to the forge, knowing that you'll never create anything nearly that good again.

How does this relate to *metamagic*? We have many "singers" in Magic, and not as many "songwriters." In other words, most magicians perform acts that were done by others. Most magicians' acts are, in actuality, simply taking from established masters. They are performing (often very well) pieces of magic (rather than pieces of music) written by others.

They know *exactly* where the "off moment" is in a routine in order to do the necessary sleight. They know the perfect jokes to use. They know how to expertly manage the audience, and when and how to do the finale. Some hone these effects over a period of 20 years, or more! It's *Thor's Hammer*.

It's tough for a magician, particularly a hobbyist, to start from the absolute drawing board. Why reinvent the wheel? Why do all that work? It's hard to compare to these luminaries of magic. Are you going to beat the routine he's been honing for 30 years? I don't mean to insult you, but I seriously doubt it.

So if that's true, *why ever* create new, interesting magic? Well: you don't have to. Not if you only want to be a "singer." There's nothing wrong with being a singer, but just be clear about what you are doing. Give credit where credit is due. Be

METAMAGIC *Looking Behind Concepts* By Chris McCauley Bowers



proud you can perform another person's magic *well*, just as proud as you would be if you could perform Beethoven's 9th symphony. Just doing a master's work well is certainly to be lauded (and applauded).

There are other options. When I first saw Jamy Ian Swiss' one coin routine, I was really blown away. And when I saw David Roth's shelled coins across, I was likewise taken aback. Twenty years later, I believe I have created routines that are at

least as good as those. So the question is: Do you want to create your own *Thor's Hammer*? The process for me has been very rewarding, and totally worth the effort. I open every show with my one coin routine, and I absolutely love my coins across (which has no shells, no sleeving, no extra coins, no click pass and no Hang Ping Chien). But ... that's what you get after 20 years of work and experimentation.

Another option is to take the power and magic of one of those routines and give it a completely different packaging. Sure, maybe you

aren't going to invent new cut and restored rope moves. The ones in print are fabulous and maybe you can't top that. But you can make the story or props different. What about cutting and restoring your belt? What about a ribbon taken from a package at Christmas?

The third option is simply this: don't be intimidated by *Thor's Hammer*. You can't expect to compare to its power, but if you *do* invent something it will be *original*. Imagine you created a routine with two delicious doughnuts, which are torn and then restored, and then, finally link together. Even if it was only in the early stages of development, it sounds like a hilarious interesting trick and would certainly capture people's imaginations.

Thor's Hammer is something you should definitely keep in mind. Someone has worked for years on that piece of magic and put it in a book or on video for you. You should use that power! At the same time, there is something to be said for the power of originality. And certainly, with *Thor's Hammer*, if you are patient enough and practice enough, you can make your own. Enjoy the forge my friends!

